

the market for conflict antiquities and fake conflict antiquities

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Radiocarbon Dating and Protection of Cultural Heritage

Zurich, Switzerland, 16th-17th November 2017

a matter of definition

blood antiquities

cultural objects that have been extracted through violence by politically-motivated forces

conflict antiquities

cultural objects that have been handled to finance politically-motivated forces

from plunder and expropriation to looting and extortion

always and forever

spoils of war as incentive or payment-in-kind, for example, British Expedition to Jalalabad in 1842, Anglo-Burmese War of 1852...

at least since 1860

fundraising for state forces via private antiquities market, for example, Franco-British Expedition to China during Second Opium War

at least since 1974

fundraising for nonstate forces via private antiquities market, for example, Turkish ultranationalist deep state theft during Cypriot Conflict

state crime, from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first

British Empire

French Empire

Coupist regime in the Ottoman Empire

Bolshevik Russia/Soviet Union

Nazi Empire

Communist China

Communist Cuba

Communist East Germany

Communist Bulgaria

Khmer Republic, Khmer Rouge and Vietnam People's Army

Yugoslavia

Indonesia

Assad regime in Syria

Where else?

South America

para-state forces in Argentina

AUC/PEPES in Colombia

Asia

Phalangist Christian militia in Lebanon

Pasdarán in Iran

Mujahideen, jihadis, Taliban complex and Northern Alliance in Afghanistan

LTTE in Sri Lanka

Sunni insurgents and Shia Mahdi Army in Iraq

PKK in Turkey

jihadis in Yemen

al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, Islamic State, Jund al-Aqsa, al-Huwwa Billa and Free Syrian Army in Syria

Europe

Turkish deep state in Cyprus

IRA and UVF in the Rainy Islands

para-state spies for Bulgaria

shadow state forces in Ukraine

para-state spies for Russia

jihadi fundraisers in Spain

jihadi fundraisers in Germany

Brussels attackers in Belgium

Africa

warlords in Somalia

shadow state forces in Nigeria

militia in Democratic Republic of Congo

rebels in Liberia

militia in Central African Republic

jihadis in Mali

jihadis in Libya

looting and theft to order

Cypriot civil war, 1963-1974

‘One “exporter” will even send photographs of available items to overseas customers and arrange delivery. Payment is made on delivery and pieces may be subjected to laboratory tests.’
(Hopkirk, 1971: 4)

Syrian civil war, 2011-present

either clients provide ‘detailed information about the artifact and its location along with a picture’ to an unidentified militia in then Jabhat al-Nusra territory or they ‘send in a team to the site under [the militia’s] protection’
(Anjarini, 2014)

espionage: public cover and private financing for state intelligence

Communist Bulgaria

Multi-commodity trafficker Francesco Gullino was arrested while smuggling (according to investigative journalist Hristo Hristov, cited by Walsh, 2005; Kelly, 2013). Pressed into service as Agent Piccadilly, active as an antiques dealer, he assassinated dissident Georgi Markov.

Putinist Russia

Traffickers from Russia are being caught, then pressed into service as 'spies and informants in an attempt to destabilize' Estonia (Roonemaa, 2017a). One antique book smuggler has confessed to being approached, but chose imprisonment over recruitment (Roonemaa, 2017b).

Praying for Palmyra: Russian maestro leads orchestra in ruins of ancient city

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The Museum of Historical Treasures denied the fact that Scythian gold has been exported from Ukraine.

В Крыму открылась выставка экспонатов, изъятых у "черных копателей"

Kremli propagandalauliku ikoonide saladus (31)



Holger Roonemaa
holger.roonemaa@epl.ee

11:21 14.06.2017 (обновлено: 16:18 14.06.2017)

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[Перейти в фотобанк](#)



Assadist forces

Tell Hamoukar was looted 'under the noses of the security services' (Hadidi, 2011)

'Even the regime is dealing [in] antiquities, because they are collapsing economically. They need cash to pay the shabiha [henchmen/thugs]' (multi-commodity smuggler Abu Khaled, cited by Baker, 2012)

'Everybody does it.... Every katiba (military camp) [Tout le monde s'y est mis.... chaque katiba]' (multi-commodity smuggler Ayham, cited by Mabillard, 2013)

Palmyra suffered 'looting using heavy machinery' while occupied and fortified by the regime (UNITAR, 2014)

opposition forces

‘The rebels need weapons, and antiquities are an easy way to buy them’ (multi-commodity smuggler Abu Khaled, cited by Baker, 2012).

looting is ‘a vital source of funding’ (FSA leaders, paraphrased by Luck, 2013)

‘Some days we are fighters; others we are archaeologists’ (FSA fighter Jihad Abu Saoud, cited by Luck, 2013).

FSA soldiers are making deals via smartphone and exporting via transit countries (Soguel, 2014)

Kurdish autonomous cantons?

local political authority	looted sites
Kurdish	28%
“opposition”	27%
Islamic State	21%
regime	16.5%

local political authority	looted sites, seriously looted
Islamic State	42%
regime	23%
“opposition”	14%
Kurdish	9%

(Casana, 2015: 150)

jihadist forces

‘jihadists [have taken] control of the traffic’ (Ayham, cited by Mabillard, 2013)

Jabhat al-Nusra are making deals via Skype smuggling boutique traffickers in and out (Anjarini, 2014)

‘according to a man from Manbij [in Aleppo governorate,] the local (Jordanian) #IS Emir is digging with teams [paid] 700 SP [\$4] daily’ (Esther Saoub, 2014)

according to an eyewitness, a ‘Roman mosaic found by local people was confiscated by #IS and sold to Turkish traders who came to Manbij’ (Esther Saoub, 2014)

antiquities from Islamic State-controlled sites are being sold to collectors via Whatsapp (Parkinson, Albayrak and Mavin, 2015)

al-Huwwa Billa/MIT ‘brought illicit antiquities [historical artifacts] from Syria to Turkey’ (Söylemez, 2015; Taştekin, 2015)



Evidence from Popular Mobilisation Unit raid on Islamic State near al-Alam in Iraq
© Al Sumaria TV, 15th February 2016



Evidence from Iraqi Special Forces' raid on Islamic State in Mosul in Iraq
© Sinan Salaheddin, 25th January 2017



Evidence from raid by People's Defence Units (YPG) on Islamic State around Rojava, western Kurdistan, Syria
© Kovan Direj (@kovandire), 14th October 2016



Has Avrat
@hasavrat



Following

cc: @conflictantiq Photo from YPG forces
items/ documents captured from ISIS.
Noticed book with ancient coins.



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5:40 PM - 3 Jun 2015

Has Avrat (3rd June 2015)



**İŞTE
ERDOĞAN'IN
YOK DEDİĞİ
SİLAHLAR!**

'Here are the weapons that Erdoğan said did not exist!'
(Can Dünder, Cumhuriyet, 28th May 2015; Gerçek Gündem, 29th May 2015)

mass forgery and/or limited interception

law enforcement agencies in Assad regime territory seized 7,000+ objects between 2013 and 2016 (according to DGAM, cited by Cornwell, 2016)

in 2013, 1/3+ of seized objects were fake objects

in 2016, 2/3+ were fake (according to DGAM, cited by Cornwell, 2016)

massive flows across borders

by 2014, millions of dollars' worth of Syrian antiquities had already been seized in Lebanon (Ali und Saoub, 2014; Jaber and Arbuthnott, 2013)

by 2016, 23,000+ Syrian-type objects had been confiscated by Turkey (according to the RTMCT, cited by Luke, 2016)

in 2016, still only 1/3+ were fake (according to the RTMCT, cited by Luke, 2016)

big pieces, big buyers

neo-Assyrian stone bas relief

looted in now lost territory of Tall Ajaja Shahadi, north-eastern Syria, before February 2016

stashed in or evacuated to Deir ez-Zor, eastern Syria

offered for sale by Abu Laith al-Dairi, for \$200,000 in May 2017 (Faucon, Kantchev and MacDonald, 6th August 2017)





Revenu, le Parisien, 21st September 2016

long-distance laundering

stolen from a church in the Euphrates Valley across Iraq and Syria

shipped from Lebanon, through France, towards Thailand, for USA

intercepted in France (Faucon, Kantchev and MacDonald, 6th August 2017)

private online trading

Ukraine

pro-Russia and pro-Ukraine looters sell/barter cultural objects, such as communist statues, for paramilitary funding

‘If there is anyone who says, “I am ready, let’s say, to provide a battalion of soldiers with winter underwear and uniforms”, then we will give him [the nose].’
 (“Oleksiy”, Facebook, 28th September 2014)

‘The money collected will go toward a thermal camera for the Kharkiv-1 battalion.... Make me an offer.’
 (Aleksandr Makarenko, Facebook, 30th September 2014)

Syria

Mohamed’s ‘phone buzzes endlessly as he receives photos via WhatsApp from sellers trying to catch his interest and fellow traders wanting advice’ (cited by Giglio and al-Awad, 2015)

photos ‘pass constantly between smartphones’, from looters to intermediaries and dealers (Giglio and al-Awad, 2015)

‘A flood of potentially stolen art objects from the Middle East is showing up on Amazon, eBay, Facebook and WhatsApp’ (Kantchev, 2017)

Iraq, before the current crisis

Mesopotamian clay tablets

purchased in the UK after the 1990-1991 war (Estrin, 2015)

displayed by Bible Lands Museum in Israel since 2015 (Baker, 2015)

Iraq, before the current crisis

National Museum artefact

stolen after the 2003 war

held in Italy until 2017

intercepted in Morocco (Febvre, 2017)

Syria, before the current crisis

Hama's mosaics

looted by VP Rifaat al-Assad (Quds Press, 2007)

smuggled via Lebanon

seized by Customs in Canada between 1991 and 1998 (Brodie, 2015: 325)

Syria, before the current crisis

Palmyra's sculpture

smuggled via Qatar

deposited in free ports in Switzerland in 2009 and 2010

identified by Customs in 2013 (AFP, 2016)

crisis antiquities trafficking from West Asia and West Africa

‘There is no more work in our region.... We want to feed our children, we do not want more [In unserer Region gibt es keine Arbeit mehr.... Wir wollen unsere Kinder ernähren, mehr wollen wir nicht]’ (illicit diggers in Idlib, Syria, interviewed by MDR/ARD, 2017)

‘Since refugees wanted to take their wealth [into and out of Iran] with them, that traffic interfaced with the black market in gold, foreign exchange and antiquities from which Pasdaran members collected a tithe’ (Naylor, 2008: 232)

‘I don’t care if the artifact is coming from [rebels] or from ISIS. I just want to sell it.’ (refugee family-supporting dealer in Turkey, cited by Giglio and al-Awad, 2015)

three third-millennium-B.C.E. figurines from Mesopotamia were recovered in a refugee shelter in Slovenia (RTV MMC, 2016)

‘an indispensable treasure [un trésor indispensable]’ for refugees from Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Nigeria (Dune Voices, 2015)

the ‘greatest guarantee of being able to afford the costs of the journey [plus grande garantie pour pouvoir se payer les coûts du voyage]’ (Salima, cited by Dune Voices, 2015)

bartered or sold en route to freedom through Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia

feeds into existing drugs-and-antiquities trafficking (Maniscalco, 2006: 57)

exploited by drug dealers to launder money (Sharpe, 2012)

PAA has 'never knowingly purchased or sold any looted items, let alone items looted by IS'

names

in 2004, Hicham Aboutaam was convicted by the USA of falsifying customs documents for antiquities from Iran

in 2004, Ali Aboutaam was convicted by Egypt of smuggling antiquities to Switzerland

in 2016, Belgium confiscated alabaster stelae from Mari, Syria, which were being displayed at Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair (BRAFA) by Phoenix Ancient Art (Frederic Loore, 27th October 2016)

places

Ali and Hicham Aboutaam are being investigated for conflict antiquities trafficking by Switzerland, France and Belgium

in 2017, Ali Aboutaam's driver was caught with an oil lamp in Geneva, revealed as couriating antiquities from Switzerland to the USA in luggage

then, Bilianna Voden Aboutaam moved antiquities out of Geneva free ports (Benoit Faucon and Georgi Kantchev, 1st June 2017)

‘ISIS hasn’t commented on the trade in antiquities’ (Faucon, Kantchev and MacDonald, 2017)

antiquities restorer “Abu Karim” wilfully assisted the Free Syrian Army, as he ‘hoped the money would pay for things like weapons and schools’, then was forced to work for the Islamic State (cited by Giglio and al-Awad, 2015)

Muhammad Hajj Al-Hassan ‘began regularly digging antiquities’ for the FSA in 2013, then consulted and traded for the IS from 2015 (cited by Faucon, Kantchev and MacDonald, 2017)

‘ISIS is increasing pressure on this line of trafficking’ (French security official, cited by Faucon, Kantchev and MacDonald, 2017)

locals are licensed by IS; previously taxed 20%, now paid 80% of value

antiquities are smuggled out among refugees, aid, exports

good at trafficking, bad at archaeology

normally through Turkey or Lebanon

frequently through Bulgaria or Romania

occasionally through Singapore or Thailand

frequently through Germany or Switzerland

Omar al-Jumaa bought a bronze “Roman” statue for an unknown price, paid \$1,000 just for it to be smuggled across the border, then learned that it was “possibly” a 1920s replica.
(Faucon, Kantchev and MacDonald, 6th August 2017)



USDSCHC, 20th July 2015

‘There are customers for everything [Für alles gebe es Kunden]’ (illicit dealer in Idlib, Syria, interviewed by MDR/ARD, 2017)



A 650-year-old Ottoman plaque ‘looted’ from a ‘Syrian shrine’? © Tulli via Yle Uutiset, 5th June 2015



A 120-year-old Persian tile that may have been made for export © Tulli via International Business Times, 5th June 2015

‘Syria/Iraq/Daesh has become a perverse selling point’



A Roman statue? © Jandarma via İhlas Haber Ajansı, 24th November 2015



Tiberius's wine chalice? © Jandarma via İhlas Haber Ajansı, 24th November 2015