



# Monumental Fight

## Countering the Islamic State's Antiquities Trafficking

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November 2015



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FDD PRESS

A division of the  
FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES  
Washington, DC



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## Executive Summary

In the four and a half years since the Syrian civil war began, the terrorist group known as Islamic State (IS) has become one of the most destabilizing actors in the Middle East. Its growth is funded mainly through revenues from its well-documented seizure of oil fields,<sup>1</sup> but less understood is its trade in looted antiquities – a market fed largely by Western demand. Although the antiquities trade is considerably smaller than other elements of the IS financial portfolio, it offers the group the prospect of high mark-ups, global demand, a low likelihood for military disruption, and a willing pool of civilians who supply labor for the trade.

Assessing IS revenue from antiquities is difficult given the opaque nature of the black market, but official U.S. trade data indicate a 23-percent uptick in antiques arriving from the Levant region since 2010. Islamic State's antiquities trafficking benefits from a global market, and goes hand-in-hand with its broader aim to purge society of pre- or non-Islamic influence. The group deals in antiquities by exerting state-like dominance, including a bureaucracy to control excavations and smuggling, and uses a variety of techniques to profit from pillaged artifacts. IS leverages the financial self-interest of civilian populations who locate and smuggle antiquities, but this reliance may become a weak point if policy efforts successfully stifle the underground market.

Combating IS funding through antiquities trafficking will require a multi-pronged approach: leveraging national and international economic tools, creating new data collection and enforcement capabilities, and facilitating cooperation among public and private entities. Success will mean not only depriving a brutal terrorist group of crucial funding, but also preserving the priceless relics of our past.

1. "Where Islamic State Gets its Money," *The Economist*, January 4, 2015. (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/01/economist-explains>)



*IS militants smashing antiquities at a Mosul museum*

## Introduction

Islamic State operates over roughly half of the territory of Syria,<sup>2</sup> controls several major cities in Iraq,<sup>3</sup> and unleashes tactics of astonishing brutality on the populations under its control. It has been dubbed the world's richest terror army.<sup>4</sup> Unlike older internationally funded jihadist groups like al-Qaeda and state proxies like Hezbollah, IS generates enough revenue within the territory it controls to cover a payroll of hundreds of millions of dollars in its fighters' annual salaries.<sup>5</sup>

Islamic State is comprised of former Iraqi regime elements, foreign fighters, local tribes, and others who

2. Kareem Shaheen, "Isis Controls 50% of Syria' after Seizing Historic City of Palmyra," *The Guardian* (U.K.), May 21, 2015.

(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/21/isis-palmyra-syria-islamic-state>); Armin Rosen, "What Everyone is Missing About ISIS' Big Week," *Business Insider*, May 22, 2015. (<http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-control-of-territory-2015-5>)

3. Christopher M. Blanchard, Carla E. Humud, Kenneth Katzman, & Matthew C. Weed, "The 'Islamic State' Crisis and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, June 11, 2015.

(<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf>)

4. "The World's Richest Terror Army," *BBC Two* (U.K.), April 22, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05s4ytp>)

5. Mirren Gidda, "ISIS is Facing a Cash Crunch in the Caliphate," *Newsweek*, September 23, 2015. (<http://europe.newsweek.com/isis-are-facing-cash-crunch-caliphate-333422>)

have sworn allegiance to the group for ideological reasons or simple fear. In its core regions of Syria and northern and western Iraq, IS has developed coherent, state-like bureaucratic structures. The group now supervises a broad array of everyday activities, including “tax forms for electricity services, licenses for excavations of antiquities, phone subscriptions, fees for sanitation services, agricultural crop plants, unified Friday sermons, vaccination programs, and fixing rent rates for property.”<sup>6</sup> IS helps individuals open businesses while providing “medical, social, policing, and rescue services” as well as enforcing civil, criminal, and strict religious laws.<sup>7</sup>

Captured documentation suggests IS earns several million dollars per day from its diverse financial portfolio<sup>8</sup> – generally balancing its books and even running a surplus.<sup>9</sup> Oil remains the group’s most important commodity, followed by theft, taxation, kidnapping and ransom, and extortion. The role of foreign funders – directly through cash or indirectly through Islamic charities – remains the subject of

debate,<sup>10</sup> but one recent estimate suggests that in 2013 and 2014, IS earned some \$40 million from Saudi, Kuwaiti, and Qatari donors.<sup>11</sup> IS often uses cash to avoid leaving a trail of transactions while also exploiting the Qatari and Kuwaiti banking systems, which are less rigorous at monitoring transactions than their Saudi counterparts.<sup>12</sup>

One income stream in particular gives the group significant strategic advantages against existing counter-terror finance efforts: illegal antiquities. The main buyers are, ironically, history enthusiasts and art aficionados in the United States and Europe – representatives of the Western societies which IS has pledged to destroy. This poses several challenges to policy makers, as well as opportunities. This report explores the history of antiquity smuggling, details the way IS exploits this trade, and offers suggestions as to how Washington and its partners may stem the flow of this important financial stream to the world’s most dangerous terrorist organization.

### **Historical Context**

Antiquities theft has occurred since antiquity itself. Ancient Egyptian court cases include records of tomb robbing, and countless archaeological sites show signs of looting. Since antiquity, local profiteers have treated

6. Aymenn al-Tamimi, “The Evolution in Islamic State Administration: The Documentary Evidence,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2015. (<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/447/html>)

7. Laith Alkhouri & Alex Kassirer, “Governing The Caliphate: the Islamic State Picture,” *CTC Sentinel*, August 2015, page 18. (<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/governing-the-caliphate-the-islamic-state-picture>); For context on ISIS see: Jessica Stern & J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror*, (New York: Ecco, 2015), and Michael Weiss & Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, (New York: Regan Arts, 2015)

8. Bryan Price, Dan Milton, Muhammad al-`Ubaydi, and Nelly Lahoud, “The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, December 2014.

9. Patrick B. Johnson, “Countering ISIL’s Financing,” *Testimony Before the Committee on Financial Services, United States House of Representatives*, November 13, 2014. (<http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT419.html>); Charles Lister, “Cutting Off ISIS’ Cash Flow,” October 24, 2014. (<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2014/10/24-lister-cutting-off-isis-jabhat-al-nusra-cash-flow>)

10. Janine Di Giovanni, Leah McGrath Goodman, & Damien Sharkov, “How Does ISIS Fund Its Reign of Terror?” *Newsweek*, November 6, 2014. (<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/11/14/how-does-isis-fund-its-reign-terror-282607.html>); Carla E. Humud, Robert Pirog, & Liana Rosen, “Islamic State Financing and U.S. Policy Approaches,” *Congressional Research Service*, April 10, 2015, page 11.

11. U.S. Department of State, Overseas Security Advisory Council, “International Non-Military Measures Against ISIL,” October 19, 2015, page 4. (<http://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ISIL.pdf>)

12. Janine Di Giovanni, Leah McGrath Goodman, & Damien Sharkov, “How Does ISIS Fund Its Reign of Terror?” *Newsweek*, November 6, 2014. (<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/11/14/how-does-isis-fund-its-reign-terror-282607.html>)

archaeological and heritage sites as resources to be mined – both for their man-made treasures and even for their nutrient-rich soil for use as fertilizer.

Starting in the Renaissance, Europeans in particular began to collect and trade antiquities, helping to preserve the Classical tradition of Greece and Rome. During the 19th century, the Mediterranean and the Middle East became focal points for individual and national European collections and museums, which competed to acquire, research, and display ancient artifacts.

That competition, increasingly tied to European imperialism, also spurred the development of scholarship on the ancient world. Egyptian hieroglyphic texts were first deciphered in 1822 on the basis of the Rosetta Stone, acquired in Egypt by Napoleon and later taken to London. The expansion of upper class and then middle class European tourism to these regions in the late 19th century expanded the market for artifacts further still.

While official permission was required to excavate in the territory of the Ottoman Empire, antiquities markets were essentially unregulated until the emergence of independent nation-states; Egypt's first antiquities law was issued in 1835, while the Ottoman Antiquities Law dates to 1874.<sup>13</sup> Today, most states nominally regulate the ownership and excavation of antiquities, but regulations regarding the export of artifacts vary.

Looting by conquering armies is also as old as war itself, but the connection between antiquities theft, organized crime, and terrorism is of more recent vintage. The modern-day theft and resale of antiquities

by organized crime networks is well documented,<sup>14</sup> and like any commodity, the antiquities market is driven by fluctuations in supply and demand. The relationship with terrorism is more recent still but difficult to isolate, as terror groups often work alongside organized crime networks.

### *A Strategic Revenue Source*

IS, in the midst of the collapse of state authority in Syria and much of Iraq, has made headlines through its destruction of heritage sites. While a casual observer might conclude that IS takes sledgehammers to every non-Islamic artifact, the group is in fact deeply involved in antiquities looting, which provides a significant funding source – estimated in the tens of millions of dollars<sup>15</sup> or as high as \$100 million annually.<sup>16</sup> Some of the looting appears to be conducted by local populations who, amid the economic devastation of war, resort to combing archaeological sites for materials they can sell. Since gaining control of more territory in the region, however, IS leveraged this black market and has become a key facilitator in the looting, licensing, taxing, extorting, and marketing of antiquities.

Antiquities also have advantages similar to extracted natural resources like diamonds. There are numerous categories or gradations that fetch different market

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13. Morag M. Kersel, "The Changing Legal Landscape for Middle Eastern Archaeology in the Colonial Era, 1800-1930," in G. Emberling (ed.), *Pioneers to the Past: American Archaeologists in the Middle East 1919-1920* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute Museum Publications), pages 85-90. (<http://traffickingculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Kersel-2010-Changing-Legal-landscape-Pioneers-to-the-Past.pdf>)

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14. Peter B. Campbell, "The Illicit Antiquities Trade as a Transnational Criminal Network: Characterizing and Anticipating Trafficking of Cultural Heritage," *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 20 (2013): pages 131-153. (<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8937643&fileId=S0940739113000015>)

15. Heather Pringle, "ISIS Cashing in on Looted Antiquities to Fuel Iraq Insurgency," *National Geographic*, 2014. (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140626-isis-insurgents-syria-iraq-looting-antiquities-archaeology/>)

16. Rick Gladstone, "U.N. Resolves to Combat Plundering of Antiquities by ISIS," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2015. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/29/world/middleeast/un-resolves-to-combat-plundering-of-antiquities-by-isis.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/29/world/middleeast/un-resolves-to-combat-plundering-of-antiquities-by-isis.html?_r=0))

values.<sup>17</sup> Less valuable items sell easily and en masse, providing consistent low returns, while the rare and highly valued ones are difficult to move but yield an impressive return on investment if sold.

The importance of the antiquities trade for IS lies not just in the funding it generates, but in the market's strategic and operational benefits. The illegal trade of artifacts does not generally risk provoking outside military disruption or a local rebellion. Unlike oil facilities, excavation sites are not likely to be targeted by missile strikes. Moreover, criminal and financial methods such as extortion, kidnapping, taxing, or the outright takeover of private and public establishments embitter locals in ways that antiquities looting typically does not.

Antiquities trafficking is now even more important to Islamic State, particularly as some of its other revenue sources have become more difficult to manage. Since 2014, U.S.-led airstrikes<sup>18</sup> have harmed IS oil profits, estimated in 2014 to be at least \$100 million<sup>19</sup> or even \$263 million.<sup>20</sup> The French and coalition air strikes on

oil installations after the IS attacks in Paris in November only deprived the terror group further.

With pressure increasing on other revenue streams, the IS antiquities trade in Iraq and Syria is likely to expand.<sup>21</sup> There are thousands of archaeological sites in Syria and Iraq under IS control available for excavation and looting, as well as many museums, antiquities depots, and heritage sites. Although earnings from antiquities are less robust than those from oil revenue, looting represents a more stable, less capital-intensive revenue stream that is extremely difficult for the West to strike.

### *Antiquities Looting in Modern Iraq*

Modern Iraq has a robust illicit economy that feeds off looted antiquities. Iraq has some 30,000 documented archaeological sites,<sup>22</sup> and looting has skyrocketed since the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime were deeply involved in smuggling and black market activities (particularly oil).<sup>24</sup> These "shadow economies" thrived at all levels as Saddam's

17. Michael L. Ross, "What do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?" *Journal of Peace Research*, May 2004. (<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/ross/whatdoweknow.pdf>)

18. Howard LaFranchi, "The Islamic State Economy: How Syrian Antiquities Fuel Terrorism," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 25, 2015. (<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2015/0825/What-Syrian-antiquities-reveal-about-Islamic-State-s-billion-dollar-economy>)

19. U.S. Department of State, Overseas Security Advisory Council, "International Non-Military Measures Against ISIL," October 19, 2015, page 2. (<http://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ISIL.pdf>)

20. Bryan Price et al., "The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, December 2014, page 58; "ISIS Revenues Hit After it Loses 'Large Oil Fields' in Iraq," *Al Arabiya* (Saudi Arabia), April 9, 2015. (<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/09/ISIS-revenues-hit-by-lost-Iraqi-oil-fields-Report-.htm>)

21. Jesse Casana & Mitra Panahipor, "Satellite-Based Monitoring of Looting and Damage to Archaeological Sites in Syria," *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies*, 2014. (<https://muse-jhu-edu.proxyau.wrlc.org/journals/journal-of-eastern-mediterranean-archaeology-and-heritage-studies/v002/2.2.casana.html>); Jesse Casana, "Satellite Imagery-Based Analysis of Archaeological Looting in Syria," *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 78 (2015), pages 142-161.

22. "Iraq's Most Significant Sites and Monuments," *CENTCOM Historical/Cultural Advisory Group, Cultural Property Training Resource*. Accessed November 19, 2015 (<http://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/iraq05a.html>)

23. Neil Brodie, "Scholarship and Insurgency? The Study and Trade of Iraqi Antiquities," presented at an Institute of Advanced Studies Workshop, "Illicit Traffic of Cultural Objects: Law, Ethics and Realities," August 4-5, 2011, *University of Western Australia*. See Jonathan Goodhand, "From War Economy to Peace Economy?" Originally presented at State Reconstruction and International Engagement in Afghanistan, May 30 – June 1, 2003, *London School of Economics and Political Science and University of Bonn*. (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28364/>)

24. Brodie (2011), pages 16-17.

control gradually broke down. Ba'athist Iraq was in effect an organized crime state, constituting of many "crime families" – the most important of which was Saddam's Tikriti clan.<sup>25</sup>

In the chaos following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, looting became a major economic enterprise.<sup>26</sup> The April 2003 looting of the Baghdad Museum was perhaps the most famous incident,<sup>27</sup> but looting also occurred at hundreds of unprotected archaeological sites across the country.<sup>28</sup> Crime soon began to finance the anti-U.S. insurgency.

Former regime elements were at the core of the insurgent movement opposing the American occupation.<sup>29</sup> These officials developed a more religious orientation as a result of Saddam's "Faith Campaign" – a program beginning in 1993 that pushed for greater religious identity within Iraqi society as a means to co-opt Iraq's Islamist opposition.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the insurgency became identified most prominently with a new group, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which then joined other jihadist groups

to form the Islamic State of Iraq. After the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011, the group rebranded itself the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. As early as 2005, the appearance of looted antiquities from the National Museum in bunkers alongside weapons, ammunition, and uniforms<sup>31</sup> suggested that antiquities had a role in funding this evolving network.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Looting Locally for a Global Market***

Islamic State today seeks to leverage its antiquities smuggling for both propaganda and marketing purposes. The propaganda is straightforward, with the group attempting to present itself as a defender of religious purity.<sup>33</sup> The marketing aim is geared toward a separate audience: antiquities aficionados concerned by the cultural loss from pillaging. Antiquities dealers have exploited this fear to market their merchandise to collectors and museums.

The destruction presents an image of imminent scarcity, thereby raising the value of smuggled goods on the black market. Broadcasting choreographed devastation at heritage sites therefore supports both propaganda and marketing aims. Nineveh

25. Phil Williams, "Criminals, Militias, and Insurgents: Organized Crime in Iraq," *Strategic Studies Institute*, June 2009, pages 22-26. (<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub930.pdf>)

26. Williams (2009), pages 38-45.

27. Matthew Bogdanos, "The Casualties of War: The Truth About the Iraq Museum," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 109 (2005), pages 477-526.

28. P.G. Stone and J.F. Bajjaly (eds), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press 2008); L. Rothfield (ed.), *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008); G. Emberling, and K. Hanson (eds), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (Chicago: Oriental Institute Museum Publications, 2008).

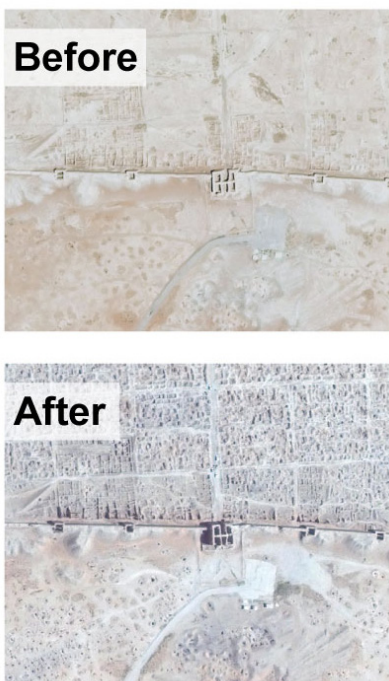
29. Christoph Reuter, "Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State," *Spiegel Online*, April 18, 2015. (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-files-show-structure-of-islamist-terror-group-a-1029274.html>)

30. Amatzia Baram, "From Militant Secularism to Islamism: The Iraqi Ba'ath Regime 1968-2003," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, October 2011. (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/militant-secularism-to-islamism>)

31. Matthew Bogdanos, "The Terrorist in the Art Gallery," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2005. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/10/opinion/the-terrorist-in-the-art-gallery.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/10/opinion/the-terrorist-in-the-art-gallery.html?_r=0))

32. This particular seizure is in some ways analogous to the 2015 raid against IS leader Abu Sayyaf, which also recovered a large variety of antiquities. In both cases the financial significance of the antiquities recovered has both been touted and rejected. See Loveday Morris, "Artifacts looted during the Iraq invasion turned up in the house of an Islamic State leader," *The Washington Post*, July 15, 2015. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/07/15/how-ancient-artifacts-looted-during-the-iraq-invasion-turned-up-in-the-house-of-an-islamic-state-leader/>)

33. Mark Vlasic, "Does Timbuktu have Lessons for Palmyra? ISIS and the Long Arm of Justice," *World Economic Forum Agenda*, October 6, 2015. (<https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/10/why-we-need-to-bring-the-perpetrators-of-cultural-destruction-to-justice/>)



Signs of looting can be seen on both sides of the walls of Dura Europos. (Photo: U.S. State Department, Humanitarian Information Unit, NextView License [DigitalGlobe]. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT)

(an Assyrian capital which in Jewish and Christian traditions is the city to which God sends the prophet Jonah), and Nimrud (a later Assyrian capital) have been important IS targets. Indeed, the video of IS destroying stone reliefs from the Neo-Assyrian palace of Assurbanipal II (ninth century BCE) at Nimrud – and then ostentatiously detonating the entire palace – was aimed at least in part at creating the impression of devastation while concealing the reliefs' removal for subsequent sale.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, while IS in 2014

videotaped members smashing iconic sculptures in Nineveh, the enormous site contains many items that have yet to be unearthed.<sup>35</sup>

Forgeries add to the complexity of the antiquities market. Artifacts have been forged for centuries – particularly religious relics<sup>36</sup> and coins<sup>37</sup> – but the modern growth of international antiquities markets has given rise to a corresponding growth in the manufacture of forgeries around the world.<sup>38</sup> In some cases, state seizure of black-market antiquities caches includes more forgeries than authentic ancient artifacts. The markets for forgeries rely on collusion between sellers, academics, and buyers.<sup>39</sup>

The global antiquities market is worth hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars. Historically, some 98 percent of the final sale price of purchased antiquities accrued to middlemen. Like diamonds, items for which finders were paid a few hundred dollars could ultimately be sold for tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in the final transaction.<sup>40</sup>

34. "Islamic State B-movie of attack on Nimrud," *Conflict Antiquities*, accessed April 12, 2015. (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/04/12/iraq-nimrud-buildings-destroyed-site-not-bulldozed-islamic-state/>). For indications that material had been looted from Nimrud in 2014 see Janine Di Giovanni, Leah McGrath Goodman, & Damien Sharkov, "How Does ISIS Fund Its Reign of Terror?" *Newsweek*, November 6, 2014. (<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/11/14/how-does-isis-fund-its-reign-terror-282607.html>)

35. Eleanor Robson, "Modern War, Ancient Casualties," *Times Literary Supplement*, March 25, 2015. (<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1535646.ece>)

36. Benjamin Radford, "A History of Religious Hoaxes," *Livescience*, October 1, 2012. (<http://www.livescience.com/23609-religious-hoaxes.html>)

37. Robert Conn, "Prevalence and Profitability: The Counterfeit Coins of Archaic and Classical Greece" (2007). Unpublished M.A. thesis, Florida State University, Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations, Paper 3470. (<http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2621&context=etd>)

38. "Fake Works of Art Common from Syria," *BBC News* (U.K.), February 16, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31495042>)

39. Oscar White Muscarella, *The Lie Became Great. The Forgery of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

40. Neil Brodie, Jenny Doole, & Peter Watson, *Stealing History, The Illicit Trade in Cultural Material*, (Cambridge: Macdonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2000), pages 13, 16.

Profits on “everyday” transactions in antiquities may not be large, but relatively small amounts are significant at the local level. If IS engages in numerous transactions from discovery through delivery, profitability is potentially multiplied. In other words, there is economic logic in having as much control over the supply chain as possible.

## Islamic State and the Economics of Antiquities Looting

IS involvement in antiquities looting has evolved considerably since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. What was once primarily local, ad-hoc activity has increasingly come under the group's direct control. A growing body of evidence shows IS now uses five main methods to raise money from antiquities: licenses, taxation, theft, direct looting, and direct marketing.<sup>41</sup>

### Licenses

Islamic State administers its bureaucracy under various departments – known as *diwanat* – one of which is the *Diwan* for Natural Resources. Documents recovered by U.S. Special Forces during a May 2015 raid on senior IS leader Abu Sayyaf al-Iraqi reveal the existence of a formal antiquities division within that *diwan*,<sup>42</sup> and sales receipts included the division's official seal. According to the documents, in late 2014, IS designated Abu Sayyaf as head of the antiquities division and prohibited anyone within the group's

41. Kathryn Tully, “How to Buy Antiquities,” *Financial Times*, September 4, 2015. (<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d0784c78-50b0-11e5-b029-b9d50a74fd14.html>)

42. Andrew Keller, “Documenting ISIL's Antiquities Trafficking,” *U.S. Department of State*, September 29, 2015. ([https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/final\\_presentation\\_to\\_met\\_on\\_isil\\_antiquities\\_trafficking\\_for\\_das\\_keller\\_9.29.2015\\_.pdf](https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/final_presentation_to_met_on_isil_antiquities_trafficking_for_das_keller_9.29.2015_.pdf))

territory from excavating without a stamped permit. Some of the seized items also originated in the Mosul Museum. The presence of items looted from a museum several hundred kilometers away demonstrates how antiquities circulate far and wide.<sup>43</sup>

Other reports show *diwan* management of antiquities revenue. In one example, the so-called *Diwan* of Bureaucracy issued a free excavation license to an individual who lived near the archaeological site of Mari on the Euphrates River. However, as part of the deal, he was required to give 60 percent of the proceeds to the department.<sup>44</sup> A license or permit system also likely exists in Raqqa, the de facto IS capital, and IS “inspectors” monitor excavations, destroy human figurines which they consider idolatrous, and take a “tax” from what they do not demolish.<sup>45</sup>

### Taxation and Antiquities Revenue

The most significant way that IS secures its stake in the illegal antiquities trade is through taxation. Taxing sales of illicit goods is a time-honored means for organized crime, and reports indicate that IS typically applies a tax known as a *khums* on the value of recovered goods. *Khums* means “fifth” in Arabic, but the tax can reach as high as 50 percent.<sup>46</sup>

43. U.S. Department of State, “ISIL Leader's Loot,” accessed September 15, 2015. (<http://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/iraq-cultural-heritage-initiative/isil-leaders-loot>)

44. “Al-Rikaz Department of ISIS Licenses Excavation Works in Exchange for Monetary Percentage,” *Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology*, accessed September 15, 2015. (<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/al-rikaz-department-of-isis-licenses-excavation-works-in-exchange-for-monetary-percentage/>)

45. Simon Cox, “The Men Who Smuggle the Loot that Funds IS,” *BBC Magazine* (U.K.), February 17, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31485439>)

46. Amr al-Azm, Salam al-Kuntar, & Brian Daniels, “ISIS' Antiquities Sideline,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 2014. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/opinion/isis-antiquities-sideline.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/opinion/isis-antiquities-sideline.html?_r=0))

The concept of *khums* is explicitly Quranic: “And know that out of all the booty that ye may acquire (in war), a fifth share is assigned to God” (chapter 8:41), and the concept is elaborated further in *hadith* oral traditions and classical Sunni scholarship.<sup>47</sup> IS also adapts the war booty concept to justify subjugating and trafficking non-Muslim women and girls as slaves.<sup>48</sup>

The tax offers Islamic State a significant stream of funding. An article from early 2015 quotes a middleman based in southern Turkey who claimed to have had a single item sold for \$1.1 million.<sup>49</sup> A 20-percent tax on a \$1.1-million sale would represent \$220,000 in passive revenue for IS, although it is unclear if the quoted price was the wholesale amount or retail.

Other reports show that IS has gone beyond simply licensing and taxing to becoming a kind of investor by marketing metal detectors for local residents to unearth new antiquities.

### ***Theft and Dispossession***

The scale of IS physical destruction of antiquities is subject to dispute. Some reports point to industrial-scale destruction including bulldozing archaeological sites.<sup>50</sup> When the group released video footage of its destruction of statues in the Mosul Museum from the Hatra archeological site, however, observers suggested that many were plaster replicas and that the group had

stolen most of the originals with the intent to sell them. It has also been suggested that Islamic State's well-publicized seizure and destruction of statues from Palmyra<sup>51</sup> was aimed at covering its theft from an unauthorized looter, with some or all of the genuine materials being retained for future sale.<sup>52</sup> It is a plausible prospect: IS internal financial documents reveal that the group gets significant revenue from “confiscations.”<sup>53</sup> This is not necessarily limited to items taken from original owners; it can include goods seized from looters operating independently of IS. The *Diwan* of Natural Resources strictly enforces its licensing power and compels unauthorized looters to hand over pillaged goods to IS.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Direct Looting***

It is difficult to distinguish between looting that is licensed, taxed, and facilitated by IS and activity undertaken directly by the organization itself. Several reports suggest the organization is involved directly in some archeology sites, organizing equipment and

47. “Khums: An Un-Islamic Tax for an Islamic Antiquities Market,” *Conflict Antiquities*, August 17, 2014. (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/08/17/syria-iraq-islamic-antiquities-trafficking-tax/>)

48. Kenneth Roth, “Slavery: The ISIS Rules,” *Human Rights Watch*, September 5, 2015. (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/05/slavery-isis-rules>)

49. Simon Cox, “The Men Who Smuggle the Loot that Funds IS,” *BBC Magazine* (U.K.), February 17, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31485439>)

50. Charlene Gubash, “ISIS Looting Syrian Sites ‘Into Oblivion’; Fear Mounts for Palmyra,” *NBC News*, May 16, 2015. (<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-looting-destroying-ancient-syrian-sites-industrial-scale-n359461>)

51. Tom Wyke, “ISIS Takes a Sledgehammer to Civilization Once Again: Activists Caught Smuggling Palmyra Statues to Safety are Lashed - Then Forced to Destroy Priceless Antiquities in Front of a Baying Crowd,” *Daily Mail* (U.K.), July 2, 2015. (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3147298/ISIS-sledgehammer-civilization-Islamist-group-capture-activists-trying-smuggle-ancient-statues-safety-force-destroy-lashing-baying-crowd.html>)

52. “Palmyra: Looting under the Rebels, the Assad Regime, and the Islamic State?” *Conflict Antiquities*, July 3, 2015. (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/07/03/palmyra-looting-rebels-regime-islamic-state-propaganda/>)

53. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, “The Archivist: Unseen Islamic State Financial Accounts for Deir as Zor Province,” *Jihadology*, October 5, 2015. (<http://jihadology.net/2015/10/05/the-archivist-unseen-islamic-state-financial-accounts-for-deir-az-zor-province/>)

54. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, “The Archivist: Unseen Documents from the Islamic State's Diwan al-Rikaz,” *Jihadology*, October 12, 2015. (<http://jihadology.net/2015/10/12/the-archivist-unseen-documents-from-the-islamic-states-diwan-al-rikaz/>)

directing operations.<sup>55</sup> A number of reports indicate that IS looted materials from Nimrud prior to blowing up portions of the site.<sup>56</sup> It is unknown whether the group looted specific items at the request of a collector or simply in anticipation of future demand.<sup>57</sup> It increasingly appears that IS does not loot and sell artifacts at random, but prioritizes acquisitions according to worth. This indicates that the group's ranks likely include individuals with archaeological expertise who consult with the group willingly or under duress.

### **Direct Marketing**

Several reports suggest that IS is actually marketing stolen antiquities, including through social media applications such as WhatsApp.<sup>58</sup> Looters, smugglers, and middlemen use such platforms to exchange photographs of artifacts,<sup>59</sup> and, occasionally, even sell them to journalists. It is unclear, however, whether

official members of IS are themselves marketing, much less transporting, looted antiquities directly to dealers in the West.

### **IS Favors Artifacts from Particular Time Periods**

Satellite imagery indicates IS looting has been heaviest at Classical- and Islamic-period sites.<sup>60</sup> Certain categories of artifacts found in Syria during the Classical (roughly the fourth century BCE to the sixth century CE) and early Islamic periods (seventh to 11th centuries CE) are easily mistaken to originate from elsewhere. They share stylistic or artistic features with other regions of the Middle East and the Mediterranean away from the conflict. Misidentifying artifacts or attributing to them a generic origin lessens the scrutiny on the part of middlemen and buyers who want to avoid purchasing looted wartime artifacts.

55. Sangwon Yoon, "Islamic State is Selling Looted Art Online for Needed Cash," *Bloomberg Business*, July 28, 2015. (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-28/isis-has-new-cash-cow-art-loot-it-s-peddling-on-ebay-facebook>)

56. "Islamic State B-Movie of Attack on Nimrud," *Conflict Antiquities*, April 12, 2015. (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/04/12/iraq-nimrud-buildings-destroyed-site-not-bulldozed-islamic-state/>); "ISIS extremists bulldoze Ancient Assyrian site near Mosul," *The Guardian* (U.K.), March 6, 2015. (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/05/islamic-state-isis-extremists-bulldoze-ancient-nimrud-site-mosul-iraq>)

57. For a comprehensive discussion of "looting to order," see Samuel Andrew Hardy, "Is Looting-to-order 'Just a Myth'? Open-source Analysis of Theft-to-order of Cultural Property," *Cogent Social Sciences*, September 14, 2015. (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2015.1087110>)

58. Joe Parkinson, Ayla Albayrak, & Duncan Mavin, "Syrian 'Monuments Men' Race to Protect Antiquities as Looting Bankrolls Terror," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2015. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/syrian-monuments-men-race-to-protect-antiquities-as-looting-bankrolls-terror-1423615241>)

59. Mike Giglio & Munther Al-Awad, "13 Exclusive Photos of Looted (and Fake) Syrian Artifacts for Sale," *BuzzFeed*, August 5, 2015. (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/13-exclusive-photos-of-looted-and-fake-syrian-artifacts-for#.laGMKbxld>)



Coins recovered from the raid on IS leader Abu Sayyaf al-Iraqi displayed at the Iraqi National Museum, July 15, 2015. (Photo: SABAH ARAR/AFP/Getty Images)

60. Jesse Casana & Mitra Panahipor, "Satellite-Based Monitoring of Looting and Damage to Archaeological Sites in Syria," *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 2 (2014), pages 128-151. ([https://muse-jhu-edu.proxyau.wrlc.org/journals/journal\\_of\\_eastern\\_mediterranean\\_archaeology\\_and\\_heritage\\_studies/v002/2.2.casana.html](https://muse-jhu-edu.proxyau.wrlc.org/journals/journal_of_eastern_mediterranean_archaeology_and_heritage_studies/v002/2.2.casana.html))

Coins and other metal objects have emerged as particularly attractive items for IS. The organization finds coins advantageous due to their ease of transport and the ability to smuggle them among other objects. Some coins can also only be attributed generally to a period or region, making it possible to more effectively disguise their Syrian or Iraqi origins.



*Iraqi women standing next to artifacts displayed during a ceremony at Iraq's National Museum where looted artifacts recovered by the US military during a recent raid in Syria are handed back to the Iraqi authorities, July 15, 2015. (Photo: SABAH ARAR/AFP/Getty Images)*

Coins formed a significant portion of the collection of artifacts U.S. Special Forces recovered in the May 2015 raid on IS leader Abu Sayyaf.<sup>61</sup> They have also been featured in caches shown to journalists by middlemen.<sup>62</sup> At least one scholarly book on classical coins was captured from an IS group by a Kurdish militia.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, several coins have been offered

61. U.S. Department of State, "ISIL Leader's Loot," accessed September 15, 2015. (<http://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/iraq-cultural-heritage-initiative/isil-leaders-loot>)

62. Mike Giglio & Munther Al-Awad, "13 Exclusive Photos of Looted (and Fake) Syrian Artifacts for Sale," *BuzzFeed*, August 5, 2015. (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikegiglio/13-exclusive-photos-of-looted-and-fake-syrian-artifacts-for#.laGMKbxld>)

63. "YPG Confiscated a Numismatic Book from Turkish Islamic State Fighters in Syria. Do you Recognise it?" *Conflict Antiquities*, June 4, 2015. (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/06/04/ypg-confiscated-a-numismatic-book-from-turkish-islamic-state-fighters-in-syria-do-you-recognise-it/>)

for sale on eBay that reportedly originated in Syria or Iraq,<sup>64</sup> although the role of IS has been disputed.<sup>65</sup>

### *Data Suggest Rise in Illegal Trade*

Trade data for several key nations in the Levant suggest a pipeline for moving illegally acquired antiquities to the United States. U.S. imports of art, collector's items, and antiques from Iraq increased by 412 percent from 2010 to 2014, according to the U.S. International Trade Commission (see Chart 1).<sup>66</sup> This increase was generated by declared and ostensibly legal imports, but it is likely that some importers manipulated the customs-declaration process to smuggle illicit materials.<sup>67</sup> To be clear, the U.S. is not alone. Similar activity is taking place in capitals throughout Europe and other first world economies. This means that those countries purportedly leading the fight against IS are simultaneously funding the enemy through the antiquities trade.

We don't need data to know that the war in Iraq and Syria is catalyzing the movement of artifacts from the Levant. Items previously unavailable to collectors outside the region are now more accessible given the fractured border security and degraded protection of heritage sites. Data show that coin exports, in particular, are rising from the region. Turkey and Lebanon, in particular, appear to be key hubs.

64. Jack Crone, "Ancient Artefacts Looted by ISIS from Ancient Sites in Iraq and Syria are Being Sold on EBAY," *Daily Mail*, March 14, 2015. (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2994538/2-000-year-old-artefacts-looted-ISIS-ancient-sites-Iraq-Syria-sold-EBAY.html>)

65. "Conflict Antiquities from Apamea do not Finance the Islamic State – They Finance the Assad regime," *Conflict Antiquities*, March 18, 2015. (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/03/18/syria-apamea-ebay-islamic-state-assad-regime/>)

66. U.S. International Trade Commission, "Interactive Data and Trade DataWeb," accessed September 10, 2015. (<https://dataweb.usitc.gov/>). All data were retrieved as general customs values.

67. Rick St. Hilaire, "Conflict and the Heritage Trade: Rise in U.S. Imports of Middle East 'Antiques' and 'Collectors' Pieces Raises Questions," *Cultural Heritage Lawyer Blog*, October 6, 2014. (<http://culturalheritagelawyer.blogspot.com/2014/10/conflict-and-heritage-trade-rise-in-us.html>)

- Imports of collector's coins from the eastern Mediterranean to the U.S. increased significantly in recent years. Non-gold collector's coins brought into the U.S. from the seven countries listed in Chart 1 increased 177 percent between 2010 and 2014, while imports of gold collector's coins increased 48 percent during the same period (see Charts 2 and 3).
- Non-gold coins imported from Turkey more than doubled, from \$1 million in 2010 to \$2.3 million in 2014. Turkey also witnessed a dramatic increase in the subcategory of "historical, archaeological, or ethnographic" exports to the U.S. during the same period (see Chart 4). In 2010, no such items were exported between the two countries, but in 2014, roughly \$1.2 million worth was registered.
- Lebanon also had no historical, archaeological, or ethnographic goods declared entering the U.S. in 2010, but exported roughly \$214,000 of them in 2014.
- Israel saw a 466-percent rise in non-gold coin exports to the U.S. during that period.

### ***Buyers and Smuggling Routes Still Poorly Understood***

Numerous reports indicate that recently looted antiquities from Syria are appearing in art centers, including in London,<sup>68</sup> Geneva,<sup>69</sup> and even the Far East.<sup>70</sup> The pipelines

68. Rachel Shabi, "Looted in Syria- and Sold in London: The British Antiquities Shops Dealing in Artifacts Smuggled by ISIS," *The Guardian* (U.K.), July 3, 2015. (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/03/antiquities-looted-by-isis-end-up-in-london-shops>); Daniela Deane, "Islamic State is Selling Looted Syrian Art in London to Fund its Fight," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2015. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/is-looted-syrian-art-showing-up-in-london-to-fund-activities/2015/02/25/785ab630-bcd0-11e4-b274-e5209a3bc9a9\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/is-looted-syrian-art-showing-up-in-london-to-fund-activities/2015/02/25/785ab630-bcd0-11e4-b274-e5209a3bc9a9_story.html))

69. "Following the Trail of Syria's Looted History," *CBS News*, September 9, 2015. (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-looted-syrian-ancient-artifacts-black-market-us-and-europe/>)

70. Joe Parkinson, Ayla Albayrak, & Duncan Mavin, "Syrian 'Monuments Men' Race to Protect Antiquities as Looting Bankrolls Terror," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2015. (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/syrian-monuments-men-race-to-protect-antiquities-as-looting-bankrolls-terror-1423615241>)

that move antiquities to markets invariably transit states bordering Syria and Iraq. Turkey and Lebanon are the best documented among these,<sup>71</sup> but Jordan has also served as an important conduit.<sup>72</sup>

Reports indicate that through 2014, Turkish border and military authorities had turned a blind eye to smuggling<sup>73</sup> or had even been participants.<sup>74</sup> In 2015, under Western pressure, Turkey began to crack down on smuggling,<sup>75</sup> and additional trafficking activity was reported through Lebanon. Thanks to the presence of Iran's proxy Hezbollah, Lebanon is a known transit point for weapons, drugs,<sup>76</sup> migrants,<sup>77</sup> and antiquities.

71. Simon Cox, "The Men Who Smuggle the Loot that Funds IS," *BBC News* (U.K.), February 17, 2015. (<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31485439>); May Abboud Abi Akl, "Looters Find Path to Export Antiquities via Lebanon," *Al-Monitor*, July 30, 2015. (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/07/middle-east-smuggling-antiquities-lebanon.html>)

72. Taylor Luck, "Syrian Rebels Loot Artifacts to Raise Money for Fight Against Assad," *The Washington Post*, February 12, 2013. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/syrian-rebels-loot-artifacts-to-raise-money-for-fight-against-assad/2013/02/12/ae0cf01e-6ede-11e2-8b8d-e0b59a1b8e2a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/syrian-rebels-loot-artifacts-to-raise-money-for-fight-against-assad/2013/02/12/ae0cf01e-6ede-11e2-8b8d-e0b59a1b8e2a_story.html))

73. Boris Mabillard, "Ayham, Profession Contrebandier," *Le Temps* (France), August 19, 2013. ([http://www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/a5d7c99e-0909-11e3-9546-75af46e87984/Ayham\\_profession\\_contrebandier](http://www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/a5d7c99e-0909-11e3-9546-75af46e87984/Ayham_profession_contrebandier))

74. "Report: Seized USB Drives Reveal Turkey's Links to ISIL," *Today's Zaman*, July 26, 2015. ([http://www.todayszaman.com//diplomacy\\_report-seized-usb-drives-reveal-turkeys-links-to-isil\\_394672.html](http://www.todayszaman.com//diplomacy_report-seized-usb-drives-reveal-turkeys-links-to-isil_394672.html))

75. Tim Arango & Eric Schmitt, "A Path to ISIS, Through a Porous Turkish Border," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2015. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/world/europe/despite-crackdown-path-to-join-isis-often-winds-through-porous-turkish-border.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/world/europe/despite-crackdown-path-to-join-isis-often-winds-through-porous-turkish-border.html?_r=0))

76. "Beirut Airport Authorities Bust 3 Drug Smugglers in 1 Day," *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), January 4, 2015. (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-04/282980-beirut-airport-authorities-bust-3-drug-smugglers-in-1-day.ashx>)

77. Ruth Sherlock & Carol Malouf, "Rich Refugees Pay Thousands to Flee War Torn Syria in Luxury," *The National Post* (Canada), November 15, 2013. (<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/rich-refugees-pay-thousands-to-flee-war-torn-syria-in-luxury>)

**Chart 1. Works of Art, Collectors' Pieces, and Antiquities<sup>78</sup>**  
Turkey, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Jordan

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent change 2013-2014	Percent change 2010-2014
	In \$1,000						
Turkey	26,444	22,779	24,799	44,732	29,401	-34.3%	11%
Israel	13,746	18,497	38,556	26,798	23,906	-10.8%	74%
Syria	9,935	4,553	4,759	11,149	5,251	-52.9%	-47%
Iraq	695	2,871	781	4,625	3,555	-23.1%	412%
Lebanon	920	1,382	2,121	3,351	1,628	-51.4%	77%
Cyprus	305	275	1,306	1,392	464	-66.7%	52%
Jordan	414	201	733	244	359	47.2%	-13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,460</b>	<b>50,558</b>	<b>73,055</b>	<b>92,291</b>	<b>64,563</b>	<b>-30.0%</b>	<b>23%</b>

**Chart 2. Numismatic (Collector's) Coins, Except Gold<sup>79</sup>**

Turkey, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Jordan, Annual Data – U.S. General Imports

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent change 2013-2014	Percent change 2010-2014
	In \$1,000						
Turkey	1,009	2,562	1,656	3,007	2,314	-23.1%	129%
Israel	152	1,663	539	996	861	-13.6%	466%
Syria	192	303	27	12	265	2092.6%	38%
Iraq	0	8	9	43	147	239.8%	N/A
Lebanon	34	124	55	282	264	-6.7%	676%
Cyprus	20	2	16	63	63	0.1%	215%
Jordan	13	13	8	34	20	-39.2%	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,421</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>2,310</b>	<b>4,438</b>	<b>3,933</b>	<b>-11.4%</b>	<b>177%</b>

78. U.S. International Trade Commission, "Harmonized Tariff Schedule: commodity code 97," accessed November 17, 2015. (<http://hts.usitc.gov/?query=antiquities>)

79. U.S. International Trade Commission, "Harmonized Tariff Schedule: commodity code 9705000060," accessed November 13, 2015. (<http://hts.usitc.gov/?query=commodity%20code%209705000060>)

**Chart 3. Gold Numismatic (Collector's) Coins<sup>80</sup>**

Turkey, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Jordan, Annual Data – U.S. General Imports

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent change 2013-2014	Percent change 2010-2014
	In \$1,000						
Turkey	1,222	3,108	2,846	3,496	2,063	-41.0%	69%
Israel	458	658	311	284	275	-3.1%	-40%
Syria	15	0	0	4	38	747.8%	153%
Iraq	0	0	0	55	7	-87.1%	N/A
Lebanon	0	7	4	6	43	670.0%	N/A
Cyprus	0	0	4	26	81	216.1%	N/A
Jordan	0	5	0	6	0	-100.0%	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,695</b>	<b>3,778</b>	<b>3,166</b>	<b>3,877</b>	<b>2,508</b>	<b>-35.3%</b>	<b>48%</b>

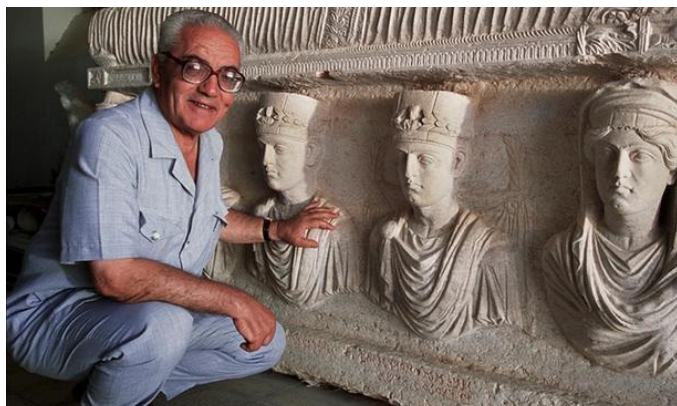
**Chart 4. Archaeological, Historical, or Ethnographic Pieces<sup>81</sup>**

Jordan, Israel, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria (Cyprus and Iraq data unavailable), Annual Data — U.S. General Imports

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent change 2013-2014	Percent change 2010-2014
	In \$1,000						
Turkey	0	124	399	148	1,245	743.0%	N/A
Israel	60	112	598	1,179	254	-78.4%	323%
Syria	0	24	7	101	0	-100.0%	N/A
Lebanon	0	110	7	300	214	-28.7%	N/A
Jordan	253	4	5	8	119	1390.2%	-53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>1,016</b>	<b>1,736</b>	<b>1,932</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>485%</b>

80. U.S. International Trade Commission, "Harmonized Tariff Schedule: commodity code 9705000030," accessed November 13, 2015. (<http://hts.usitc.gov/?query=commodity%20code%209705000030>)

81. U.S. International Trade Commission, "Harmonized Tariff Schedule: commodity code 9705000070," accessed November 13, 2015. (<http://hts.usitc.gov/?query=commodity%20code%209705000070>)



Syrian archeologist Khaled al-Asaad posing in front of a rare first-century tomb in Palmyra in 2002. IS beheaded al-Asaad in August 2015. (Photo: Marc DEVILLE/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images)

Some reports suggest a rise in buyers in Persian Gulf states.<sup>82</sup> There is reason to believe that the antiquities are then re-exported,<sup>83</sup> but documentation on this is still fuzzy. Gulf states, however, have been documented as centers for transshipping looted Afghan antiquities leaving Pakistan for Europe.<sup>84</sup>

European border states also likely play an important role. These pipelines are well understood with regard to other illicit commodities but barely at all in the context of antiquities. The “Balkan route” into Europe through Greece and Bulgaria is a known

82. Nigel Morris, “Call for UK to Take Tougher Action to Save Antiquities from ISIS,” *The Independent* (U.K.), February 11, 2015. (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/archaeology/call-for-uk-to-take-tougher-action-to-save-antiquities-from-isis-10039793.html>)

83. Sam Hardy, “How the West Buys ‘Conflict Antiquities’ from Iraq and Syria (and Funds Terror),” *Reuters: The Great Debate Blog*, October 27, 2014. (<http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/10/27/how-the-west-buys-conflict-antiquities-from-iraq-and-syria-and-funds-terror/>)

84. Peter B. Campbell, “The Illicit Antiquities Trade as a Transnational Criminal Network: Characterizing and Anticipating Trafficking of Cultural Heritage,” *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 20 (2013), page 121. (<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8937643&fileId=S0940739113000015>)

path for drugs and migrants.<sup>85</sup> Greece, for example, is within the Schengen Area, which does not require passports or border controls.<sup>86</sup> It is unclear whether the current migration crisis will lead to stronger European border controls.

## Recommendations

The global annual trade in illicit art and antiquities is estimated at between hundreds of millions and several billion dollars.<sup>87</sup> Unscrupulous antiquities collectors are dogged and markets are highly adaptive. Looted objects are sometimes hidden for long periods, false documentation on their provenance is routine, and transactions have proven difficult to track through traditional customs enforcement and financial intelligence. The challenges are great, necessitating new means to counter them. The following recommendations may help policymakers better address the illicit antiquities trade:

### ***1. Impose terrorism sanctions on artifact smugglers and buyers***

Despite the proliferation of artifact watch lists, highly publicized seizures, and the repatriation of looted objects, few sanctions have been applied to smugglers and buyers. The connection between antiquities looting and terrorism calls for stiffer penalties.

85. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Drug Trafficking,” accessed September 17, 2015. (<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/>); “Western Balkan Route,” *Frontex Website*, accessed September 17, 2015. (<http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/western-balkan-route/>)

86. “Shengen Visa Information,” *Schengen Visa Information Website*, accessed September 17, 2015. (<http://www.schengenvisa.info/>). Bulgaria remains on target to join in 2016 despite European concerns over corruption.

87. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “The Fight Against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Objects: Information Kit,” March 2011. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001916/191606e.pdf>)

Applying terror sanctions by the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC), the European Union, and the United Nations against antiquities smugglers and buyers is long overdue. The museums and collectors who benefit from the market's opacity would undoubtedly oppose such moves. But even a handful of strategic designations imposed on the worst offenders would likely have a chilling effect on both sellers and buyers, given the financial risks and fines associated with these sanctions. Designations would also spur U.S. diplomatic, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies to focus more attention on identifying and isolating antiquities traffickers.

## ***2. Make antiquities looting an intelligence and law-enforcement priority***

Despite the rise in antiquities looting, U.S. federal law enforcement has yet to indict anyone for supporting IS through the illicit trade. At present, it is unclear who in the U.S. government is even responsible for countering antiquities trafficking. To be sure, the State Department and FBI are involved, along with components of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement. However, policymaking appears to be ad hoc, and coordination and intelligence sharing are lacking.

Reform can only come about by declaring antiquities looting and cultural property crime a national security priority. For the issue to avoid being lost in an interagency void or turf war, the White House must designate a lead organization and provide adequate authorization and resources.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Human Rights Violators & War Crimes Unit at the Department of Homeland Security could be a good choice. The unit conducts criminal investigations utilizing forensic and historical sciences to track war criminals who

have entered the U.S.<sup>88</sup> These types of cases have analogies with antiquities looting and trafficking.

While the State Department is not equipped to lead law enforcement investigations, its new project, the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) Cultural Heritage Initiatives, can also provide valuable support. The project, a model of a private-public partnership, tracks the destruction of antiquities sites and the trafficking of looted artifacts utilizing a range of intelligence: human, open-source, and geo-spatial.<sup>89</sup> ASOR is in close contact with archaeologists in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Lebanon and monitors news and social-media accounts to track site destruction, looting, and movement of goods.<sup>90</sup> Efforts should be made to monitor the visible art and antiquities markets within other countries, too.

## ***3. Incorporate cultural-property crime awareness into intelligence community and U.S. Special Forces training***

Threat finance is already emphasized in courses taught at the Joint Special Operations University.<sup>91</sup> Despite the relevance of antiquities to the funding of jihadist groups, such courses do not appear to emphasize their financing role.

88. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Human Rights Violators and War Crimes Unit," accessed September 15, 2015. (<http://www.ice.gov/human-rights-violators-war-crimes-unit#wcm-survey-target-id>)

89. Michael D. Danti, "Ground-Based Observations of Cultural Heritage Incidents in Syria and Iraq." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78 (2015), page 132-141.

90. "Weekly Reports," *American Schools of Oriental Research Website*, accessed September 15, 2015. (<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/weekly-reports/>)

91. "Counter Threat Finance Course," *Joint Special Operations University*, May 25, 2015. (<http://jsou.socom.mil/Pages/CourseInformation.aspx?courseName=Counter%20Threat%20Finance%20Course>)

The U.S. Joint Forces Command has a handbook specifically on integrated financial operations, highlighting the need to coordinate across agencies as well as with nongovernmental and international partners,<sup>92</sup> but it lacks any reference to antiquities. Cultural-property crime has only begun to appear in the literature on counterinsurgency, but does not appear to have reached stability-operations or post-conflict resolution doctrines.<sup>93</sup> The curricula must change to include antiquities.

This change must also occur within the intelligence community, where awareness of threat finance has grown exponentially over the last decade but largely fails to include antiquities. Indeed, antiquities must be the next frontier.

#### ***4. Elevate antiquities trafficking as a focus in international AML/CTF monitoring***

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) – an intergovernmental body that sets anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards – has acknowledged that IS uses antiquities trafficking for part of its funding.<sup>94</sup> However, FATF has not emphasized the illicit trade as a typology for terror finance to combat through effective legislation and enforcement tools.

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92. Defense Technical Information Center, “Integrated Financial Operations Commander’s Handbook,” November 2, 2010. ([http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/doctrine/jwfc/ifo\\_hbk.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/doctrine/jwfc/ifo_hbk.pdf))

93. Christopher Jasparro, “The Case for Cultural Heritage Protection as an Element of COIN,” *The Future of Counterinsurgency: Contemporary Debates in Internal Security Strategy*, Eds Lawrence E. Cline, Paul Shemella, (New York: Praeger Security International, 2015), pages 91-120.

94. Financial Action Task Force, “Financing of the Terrorist Organization Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL),” February 2015, page 16. (<http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Financing-of-the-terrorist-organisation-ISIL.pdf>)

Through FATF’s evaluations, monitoring programs, and identification of high-risk and non-cooperative jurisdictions, it can hold nations accountable for failure to address enforcement inadequacies dealing with end-buyers, smugglers, and looters. FATF should zero in on antiquities trafficking, taking advantage of case studies, law enforcement, and intelligence data which member states can provide. Such research will allow FATF to set appropriate standards and effectively monitor the countries that play a role in the antiquity smuggling pipeline.

#### ***5. Improve coordination of public-private partnerships***

After four years of war in Syria, numerous stakeholders involved with antiquities and heritage issues have emerged. These include local residents, domestic and foreign archaeologists, professional archaeological organizations, and lay people with in-country expertise. These groups are not always fully coordinated with one another, the public, or respective national governments. And while archaeological groups tend to cooperate on petitions and calls for action, there appears to be little systematic interaction with law enforcement.

Formalizing coordination through the State Department’s Cultural Heritage Center<sup>95</sup> would help define priorities, create task lists, and reduce duplication of effort. The State Department can play a role in raising public awareness through high profile informational campaigns, perhaps even through celebrities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also has a role to play. The organization’s Goodwill Ambassadors who support its many projects can

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95. U.S. Department of State, “Conflict Antiquities,” accessed November 14, 2015. (<http://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/conflict-antiquities>)

bring antiquities and cultural issues to the public in new ways. Exposing the issues, educating the public, and shaming the market have succeeded in shifting attitudes regarding fur, wildlife trafficking, and conflict diamonds. The hope is that a similar campaign could work here.

## 6. *Expand registries of art and antiquities*

Registries of stolen art and antiquities are commonplace. The Art Loss Register, for example, was created in 1976 and operates as a private company.<sup>96</sup> Law enforcement databases and red lists from international cultural organizations like UNESCO<sup>97</sup> serve the same purposes, permitting law enforcement, customs, and dealers to access central data with photographic and other information.

But new technologies make it possible for art and artifacts to be tagged and tracked in real time. Molecular markers attached to artifacts, for example, can be scanned in real-time to determine the identity of an item.<sup>98</sup> An expanded registry initiative, unfortunately, will do little to halt current antiquities trafficking in Syria and Iraq. Over time, however, by tagging large numbers of objects with unique identifiers, a chain of custody will be created that will enable stolen or forged artifacts to be identified when sold or seized.

Tagging and registering objects is likely to be an expensive undertaking. But technological standards for markers are at early stages of development, as are credentials management for accessing databases. The

endeavor should become more manageable as more countries participate.

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IS's exploitation of antiquities gives the long-standing problems of looting and illicit markets added urgency. These recommendations represent the first steps in what will undoubtedly be a long, complex, and multifaceted battle. Success will mean not only defeating a brutal and nefarious force but preserving the past for humanity's benefit well into the future.

96. "About Us," *Artloss Company Website*, accessed November 13, 2015. (<http://www.artloss.com/about-us/our-company>)

97. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Special Protection," accessed November 15, 2015. (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/protection-of-cultural-property/special-protection/>)

98. "What is i2m," *i2m Standards Company Website*, accessed November 13, 2015. (<https://www.i2mstandards.org/i2m/>)

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the following people for their constructive input and suggestions on this report: Michael Danti, Tess Davis, Michelle D'Ippolito, Mike Giglio, Mark Vlasic, and Juan Zarate. We also are grateful to Jonathan Schanzer for substantive edits which helped refine our argument. We'd like to thank Oren Kessler and Nicole Salter for copy edits that helped tighten our prose and Erin Blumenthal for her hard work and creative input during production. Also thanks to interns Brandon Silberman and Mark Torrey for assistance throughout the research and drafting process.

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