

## IADAA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY / FEBRUARI 2016

### ***Shutting Down ISIS' Antiquities Trade***

January 20, 2016. February 28. Policy analyst David Grantham has made several suggestions to beef up the US senate's

The Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act in Shutting Down ISIS' Antiquities Trade. They include that Congress tighten the language of the bill to explicitly address the ISIS antiquities operation and that it be

accompanied by a sunset clause, which should expire within five years of enactment.

However, the article includes a number of inaccurate figures, which Grantham has since acknowledged are a combination of

recently debunked figures and his own calculations, but the article and his suggestions are worth a read nonetheless.

Ivan Macquisten has now challenged David Grantham over the errors in his report, and he has admitted that he should have been

more attentive and clear in his approach. The Gates of Nineveh blog on January 12 is a key piece of reading on this and other related topics.

See the comments thread, including Ivan's analysis of the Grantham report. Note, too, the comments by James McAndrew, who set up the

Homeland Security Antiques and Antiquity division. See also The Guardian article of February 28 (reported towards the bottom of this newsletter),

which makes similar errors.

See the following:

<http://goo.gl/yVbv4B>

<http://bit.ly/1SbTHpw>

### ***Isis and Antiquities: The Missing Pieces and To Defeat Isis, Study the Antiquities Trade***

January 25, 2016. Archaeologist and historian Alex Joffe and former CIA analyst Yaya J. Fanusie, co-authors of the Monumental Fight –

Countering the Islamic State's Antiquities Trafficking document (Foundation for Defense of Democracies) published in November 2015,

have both written articles questioning figures relating to ISIS's profits from looted antiquities. In articles published on the same day in

January, they suggest the figures have been greatly exaggerated – an apparent U-Turn on what they wrote previously in relation to these figures.

“Far from initial claims that ISIS was making tens of millions or more from stolen antiquities” writes Joffe, “the true figures are likely far lower.”

While Fanusie writes, “probably no one outside of ISIS knows exactly how much money the group is making by trafficking ancient artefacts.”

Read Joffe's piece for the National Interest here: <http://goo.gl/0sQtMD>

and Fanusie's at CNBC here: <http://goo.gl/dsxY6l>.

### ***Progress on HR 1493***

February 1, 2016: antiquities dealers' lobbyist and Committee for Cultural Policy board member, Peter Tompa, has been heavily involved in the

HR 1493, the bill designed to protect cultural property in times of war and strife. In his Cultural Property Observer blog he updates us on the

progress, including the controversial State Department “Cultural Property Czar” and the “safe harbour” for Syrian artefacts. He writes,

“The major remaining concern deals with how such restrictions will be implemented. Will the State Department and US Customs revert to standard operating procedure and restrict items solely based on them being of a type manufactured in Syria hundreds or thousands of years ago?”

Read his blog here: [culturalpropertyobserver.blogspot.co.uk](http://culturalpropertyobserver.blogspot.co.uk)

### ***Robin Symes Loses his Heads***

February 4, 2016. Following the discovery in 2014 of 45 crates in Geneva owned by the disgraced British antiquities dealer, Robin Symes, which has only recently been reported in the media, archaeologist and blogger Neil Brodie writes that two Etruscan heads and a fresco from the hoard appear in the Medici Archive of photographs. “Between 1979 and 1986, Symes conducted at least 29 transactions with convicted Italian dealer Giacomo Medici.

He also sold material through Sotheby’s London.” Read more from this blog here: [marketmassdestruction.com](http://marketmassdestruction.com)

### ***ISIS Erasing Our Cultural Heritage in Syria***

February 5, 2016. Lawyer, writer and Middle East commentator Franklin Lamb has questioned the validity of “hundreds of millions of dollars” figure widely reported in the news and suggests that digging for antiquities as akin to gambling in a Las Vegas casino, in an article for Counter Punch. Lamb writes “while “untold quantities of archaeologically vital artefacts” have been looted, sold and displaced through ISIS, their projected looting income, “has not been backed up by probative, material data.” As for the argument that holes in the ground are evidence of antiquities looting, Lamb adds, “In fact, locally the activity is a bit of a gamble. As in a Las Vegas casino, many can wager but with only a long shot holds the prospect of a high payoff.

The vast majority of artefacts currently being unearthed at sites in Syria are of great archaeological importance but have little value on the worldwide art market.”

Read more here: <http://ow.ly/YfzSR>

### ***Public Policy and the Media***

February 12, 2016. Neil Brodie has asked what the relationship is between media coverage and policy initiatives by collecting a dataset of articles using key words from Google News. From his research he concludes it is clear that policy actions have become more frequent as media coverage has increased.

But, he asks, is policy responding to media concerns rather than to what is actually happening on the ground? If so, this is worrying - “because media reporting is known to be unreliable – biased by the commercial and political interests of proprietors, editors and other opinion formers.”

Read his blog here: <http://www.marketmassdestruction.com/public-policy-media/>

### ***Investigations on in disappearance of 157 artefacts from Saqqara galleries***

A report February 13, 2016. A report has been sent to Egypt's prosecutor general accusing the minister of antiquities and the director of Saqqara archaeological galleries of responsibility for the disappearance of 157 ancient Egyptian artefacts from Saqqara archaeological storage facilities.

Read more here: <http://goo.gl/Y8aC1v>

**Peter Tompa** notes in his blog that Egyptian authorities are “belatedly” investigating the disappearance of 157 objects from Saqqara. He adds,

“The Antiquities Coalition has yet to comment on such cultural racketeering and the distinct possibility that high level insiders are involved.

Hopefully, this will not be yet another case where investigations of high level officials go nowhere. As CPO has previously observed, grandstanding is easy, but taking real care of one's cultural heritage is hard.”

### **Egypt to Receive Stolen Ancient Artifacts Seized in Germany**

Germany's Freiburg Court has issued a verdict affirming Egypt's liability in repatriating a pre-dynastic Egyptian stone vase to its homeland.

The ruling came as a result of Egypt's antiquities ministry providing evidence showing that the vase in fact belongs to Egypt and that it had been illegally smuggled out of the country during the security vacuum that emerged in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. Read more here: <http://goo.gl/dZKF3d>

### **India must start working to reverse plunder of our national artistic heritage**

February 15. The Economic Times reports that around 20,000 idols, sculptures and other antiquities have been stolen from India and sold in foreign countries

since 1980. The estimated market value of these antiquities is over \$10 billion. Read more here: <http://goo.gl/dQyKzu>

### **Italy sets up Unesco task force to protect antiquities in conflict areas**

February 16, 2016. The Art Newspaper reports that the Italian government and UNESCO have launched an Italian taskforce that will protect heritage sites in conflict zones worldwide. The agreement was signed in Rome on February 16. The taskforce may be called by UNESCO member states to assess damage, plan conservation efforts, and combat looting and trafficking in cases of terrorist attacks or natural disasters. They will also provide training for local restorers.

An initial core of 60 members includes officers from Italy's specialist police force for art crime, the Commando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale, as well as art historians, scholars and restorers from four of the country's top conservation institutions. University professors may be able to volunteer to join in the future. A training centre will be based in Turin. Read more here: <http://goo.gl/4z4Q7R>

### **Stolen archaeological pieces seized in Qamishli**

February 24, 2016. It was reported by the Syrian Arab News Agency that archaeological pieces were seized by locals and public figures of Qamishli city in the Hasaka province, which they said antiquity thieves had hidden in order to 'smuggle and sell them'.

The seized pieces include a number of pottery vessels and ancient pieces stolen from different archaeological sites in ISIS controlled areas.

It is claimed the Syrian government is 'trying to preserve its heritage against thieves' vandalism and destruction acts.' According to the Director-General of the

Antiquities and Museums Directorate, Maamoun Abdul-Karim, 1043 archaeological sites in north east Syria are now secure and safe from illegal excavation works, vandalism acts and thefts carried out by antiquity gangs. In 2015, Antiquities and Museums Directorate announced restoring 6500 archeological pieces stolen by terrorist groups.

Find the article here: <http://sana.sy/en/?p=70588>

### **How western art collectors are helping to fund Isis**

February 26, 2016. Leila Amineddoleh writes in The Guardian that Isis are looting ancient sites with the market in mind. While carefully and correctly laying out what documentation is needed to determine whether a piece has a legitimate provenance and therefore whether it should be acquired, the article is undermined by the

use of data (US import figures) incorrectly applied, to back up its argument that an increase in the amount of Syrian artefacts are entering the West. Furthermore it contradicts itself by stating that legitimate antiquities with solid provenance “typically sell for significantly higher prices” and “if a work is revealed to be looted, there may be a cloud on its title that vitiates its value and makes the work vulnerable to seizure.” The author fails to realise that this is exactly why serious Western collectors (who she appears to be directing her comments too) will not touch an antiquity without the proper paperwork; it makes no sense to risk spending huge amounts of money on an illegitimate artefact. Also not addressed is the conundrum of why people who have allegedly looted millions of dollars of antiquities would then bring them to the attention of the US Customs.

Read the full article, and Ivan Macquisten’s views in the article’s comments thread, here: <http://goo.gl/MStcEp>

### **Police seize 1m euros' worth of antiquities from three suspects**

February 26, 2016. The Kathimerini daily newspaper (published in English in Athens and distributed exclusively with the International New York Times in Greece and Cyprus) reported that three suspects have been accused of possessing illegal antiquities with a commercial value estimated at around 1m euros, according to the Greek police.

The suspects were arrested in different parts of Athens after searches of their homes turned up a host of precious relics, including the torso of a marble statue believed to date to the Hellenistic period, an arrangement of four bronze figures from the late geometric period, and ancient coins and jewelry.

According to the article, there is evidence that suggests the suspects had been conducting illegal excavations in Melitaia in the Fthiotida region and selling their finds on the black market since 2013. More here: <http://goo.gl/FyhePJ>

### **Some Take Massive Risks To Save Syria's Cultural Heritage**

February 28, 2016. An NPR news piece based on an article written in the Smithsonian by reporter James Harkin sheds light on the courageous attempts of those in Syria racing to save Syria's archaeological treasures.

Both articles can be found here: <http://goo.gl/xG64PA> <http://goo.gl/vFTIbZ>

### **Simon Schama: The Obliterators, BBC Radio 4**

February 28, 2016. TV Historian Professor Simon Schama focuses on iconoclasm and ISIS. Included is an interview with **John Curtis FSA**, Chief Executive Officer of the Iran Heritage Foundation and former Keeper of the Middle Eastern Department at the British Museum.

Much of the programme deals with ISIS’s campaign of destruction, but 21 minutes into the programme Curtis reflects on history of looting in Middle East, starting with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and moving on through the first and second Gulf wars. Colonel Matthew Bogdanos follows with his views on the revenue value of antiquities to ISIS. At 23 minutes and 40 seconds he states that for every piece of destroyed, hundreds of other line ISIS’s coffers to pay for bullets and bombs via the illicit antiquities trade. Schama follows Bogdanos by saying that evidence is hard to find of any of this. He talks of the discovery of 19 statues and reliefs found in a shed in Eastern Bulgaria a few weeks ago, ‘probably from southern Iraq and probably looted’. Schama also notes the ISIS licensing programme for digging. At 24-25 minutes in, Robert Bewley FSA tells him that we do not know where the looted material is and that fakes are also a problem. “It may be that they are being stored so that they can sell them at some point in the future,” he concludes, “because to really make the good money, they’ve got to have a good provenance”. Bogdanos follows with the important point that once you destroy the cultural identity of a people, it is but a short

step to destroying the people themselves. He cites the razing of Warsaw prior to the Nazi genocide and the looting of Cambodian artefacts prior to the Killing Fields, as well as Mullah Omar's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas prior to 9/11.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b071s6nr>

***What do we really know about Islamic State's role in illicit antiquities trade?***

March 1, 2016: The Arts Newspaper reports on a February 27 London symposium at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Under the subheading 'Experts at London symposium warn against misinformation and lack of evidence', archaeologists, academics and, notably, investigative journalist Mike Giglio who patrols the Turkish border for much of his time, warn against demonising the people digging up artefacts and then smuggle them out. "It's a sign of the desperation of the people affected by the conflict... they see artefacts buried in the ground as their ticket out of their current hell."

Much of what is smuggled out is low value or fake, says Giglio, with ISIS focusing on coins because it is easier to sell them internationally. He blames much of the misinformation on propagandists on all sides.

Sam Hardy of the American University of Rome, an archaeologist who tracks the illicit sale of antiquities online, says he is sure 99% of the statistics linked to the value of looted artefacts are wrong. There is no hard evidence to show how much ISIS is benefiting from this trade, he says.

He advocates sustainable development and changing the life opportunities for the people involved on the ground as the best way of stopping looting.

The trade comes in for criticism from some quarters, but none offers any evidence to support the claims. It is also noticeable that yet again the trade was not invited to join this debate or give evidence. <http://goo.gl/u1NWdl>