RED LIST OF
ENDANGERED CULTURAL OBJECTS
OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

Belize
Costa Rica
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Experts from Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama have prepared the Red List of Endangered Cultural Objects of Central America and Mexico in order to combat looting and destruction of regional archaeological sites and theft from churches and museums, as well as illegal trafficking, thus helping police, judicial and customs authorities in their work, building public awareness and promoting international cooperation to protect the cultural heritage of these countries.

This Red List is the seventh in the series published by ICOM to date.*

**Introduction**

The cultural heritage of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama consists of items that may be identified by their specific characteristics. They were produced by various prehispanic, colonial and republican societies, and represent the historic memory of these nations.

The rich cultural heritage of these countries is affected by illegal trafficking, despite being protected by national and international legislation. Over the past twenty years, illegal exports of cultural objects have been intercepted, proving the increased interest in antiquities on the international market. This demand has encouraged clandestine diggings in archaeological sites, as well as increased theft from churches and museums.

Illegal trafficking of cultural objects from the region causes irreparable damage to the identity of these countries and is a severe cultural heritage loss for mankind.

**Objective**

This Red List has been designed as a tool to help museums, art traders, collectors and customs and police officers in the identification of objects that may have been illegally exported from Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. The list describes several categories of endangered objects that may be subject to illicit trade.

Because of the wide range of objects, shapes, styles and periods, the Red List of Endangered Cultural Objects of Central America and Mexico is not exhaustive, and the origin of any antiquity from the region should be subject to detailed scrutiny and precautionary measures.

These objects are protected by legislation in each country, which specifically prohibits their traffic, export and sale. Therefore, museums, auction houses, art traders and collectors are urged not to purchase them, and are invited to report their presence to the relevant country's diplomatic mission, to local police authorities and to Interpol.

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* Red List of African Archaeological Objects, 2000
* Red List of Latin American Cultural Objects at Risk, 2003
* Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk, 2003
* Red List of Afghanistan Antiquities at Risk, 2006
* Red List of Peruvian Antiquities at Risk, 2007
* Red List of Cambodian Antiquities at Risk, 2009

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The cultural heritage of Central America and Mexico is protected by:

### NATIONAL LEGISLATIONS

**BELIZE**

**COSTA RICA**
- Constitution (1949).
- Law 7 on the Defence of the National Archaeological Heritage (06.10.1938), and Regulations “a” in Decree No. 14.
- Law 6703 on the Protection of the National Archaeological Heritage (19.01.1982), and its Regulations.

**EL SALVADOR**
- Legislative Decree No. 513 - Special Law on the Protection of El Salvador's Cultural Heritage (22.04.1993).

**GUATEMALA**
- Decree No. 17-73 of the Penal Code (01.01.1974).
- Decree No. 26-97 - Law on the Protection of the Nation's Cultural and Natural Heritage (09.04.1997).
- Regulations for Archaeological Research and Related Disciplines (16.03.2007).

**HONDURAS**

**MEXICO**
- Sections 27, 28, 29 and 31 of the Constitution (1917).
- Federal Law on Archaeological, Artistic and Historic Monuments and Zones (06.05.1972), and its Regulations (08.12.1975).

**NICARAGUA**
- Decree No. 1142 - Law on the Protection of the National Cultural Heritage (29.09.1980).
- Decrees No. 21 and 22 on Archaeological and Paleontological Ruins and Deposits, Archaeological Excavations, Removal of Idols or Other Property of Historical Interest (1949).
- Decree No. 29 on the Export of Archaeological Property (15.02.1923).
- Decree No. 304 on Archaeological Excavations.

**PANAMA**
- Law 67 on various provisions relating to Monuments and Archaeological Objects (11.06.1941).
- Constitution (1972).
- Law 14 on Measures for the Custody, Conservation and Administration of the National Historical Heritage (1982).

### INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

- Accepted by: Mexico (04.10.1972) and Panama (13.08.1973).


- Accepted by: Costa Rica (03.06.1998), Guatemala (02.10.1985), Honduras (25.10.2002) and Panama (17.07.1962).

- Accepted by: Costa Rica (03.06.1998), El Salvador (27.03.2002), Guatemala (19.05.1994), Honduras (25.10.2002) and Panama (08.03.2001).

**Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.** Paris, 16 November 1972. Ratified by: Belize (06.11.1990), Costa Rica (23.06.1977), Guatemala (16.01.1979), Honduras (08.06.1979) and Panama (03.03.1978).
- Accepted by: El Salvador (08.10.1991), Mexico (23.02.1984) and Nicaragua (17.12.1979).


### BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

- **Belize-Mexico; El Salvador-United States; El Salvador-Mexico; Guatemala-United States; Guatemala-Mexico; Honduras-United States; Mexico-Bolivia; Mexico-United States; Mexico-Peru; Nicaragua-United States.**
THE RED LIST INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:
(These photographs are not reproductions of stolen objects; rather they are examples of the categories of cultural objects that are traded illegally.)

ICOM wishes to thank the following organizations for the illustrations provided.

- **BIA:** Belize Institute of Archaeology
- **DIA-FS:** Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, United States of America
- **IHAH:** Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia, Honduras
- **INAH:** Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico
- **MAC:** Museo de Arte Colonial, Guatemala
- **MCD-MLA:** Museo del Libro Antiguo, Guatemala
- **MCD-MUNAE:** Ministry of Culture and Sports, Cultural and Natural Heritage Bureau, Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala
- **MNN:** Museo Nacional de Nicaragua
- **MUNA:** Museo Nacional de Antropología “David J. Guzmán”, El Salvador

## PREHISPANIC PERIOD

### Ceramics

Earthenware vessels of various shapes and decorations, with painted, sculpted or bas-relief designs.

#### A/ Polychrome vessels

Painted with various colours, with geometric, human, animal, plant motifs and ancient writing.

1. Maya polychrome tripod plate, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 7.7 x 34 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
2. Maya polychrome vessel, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 14 x 10 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
3. Nicoya polychrome vessel, El Salvador, 900-1524 AD, 20.9 x 12.9 cm. © MUNA
4. Drinking bowl, El Salvador, 250-900 AD, 7.7 x 16.6 cm. © MUNA
5. Ulua polychrome tripod vessel, Valle de Sula, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 23 x 19.8 cm. © IHAH
6. Polychrome bowl, Ometepe Island, Nicaragua, 1350-1550 AD, 15.5 x 17 cm. © Maya Bracher, MNN
7. Mixtec tripod vessel, Mexico, 1300-1521 AD, 16.4 x 11.2 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH
8. Jicote polychrome vessel, Gran Nicoya, Costa Rica, 1000-1400 AD, 33.4 x 20 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS
B/ Vessels with effigies

Vessels with shapes depicting humans, animals, and/or plants.

9. Pataki polychrome vessel, Gran Nicoya, Costa Rica, 1000-1400 AD, 34.5 x 25.5 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS
10. Incense burner lid with bird-like figure, Nicaragua, 800-1200 AD, 29.5 x 20 cm. © Maya Bracher, MNN
11. Ometepe polychrome vessel with effigy, Nicaragua, 1350-1550 AD, 19 x 14.5 x 20 cm. © Maya Bracher, MNN
12. Las Vegas polychrome vessel with effigy, Valle de Comayagua, Honduras, 1200-1500 AD, 17.4 x 11 cm. © IHAH
13. Whistle vessel, Guanajuato, Mexico, 900-1100 AD, 21.3 x 10.4 x 27.6 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH
14. Maya zoomorphic vessel, Guatemala, 250-600 AD, 19.8 x 14.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
15. Leadern pot, El Salvador, 900-1524 AD, 18.4 x 18.3 cm. © MUNA
16. Rosales vessel with human effigy, Gran Nicoya, Costa Rica, 200 BC-300 AD, 23.5 x 20 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS
17. Funerary urn, Quiché, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 52.5 x 47 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

C/ Stamps

Flat or cylindrical objects used to print designs.

18. Flat stamps, Valle de Sula, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 7 x 3.5 cm. © IHAH
19. Anthropomorphic stamps, Valle de Sula, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 7 x 3.5 cm. © IHAH
20. Cylindrical stamps, Valle de Sula, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 7 x 3.5 cm. © IHAH
D/ Figurines

Human, animal and/or combined human/animal figurines.

21. Anthropomorphic figurines, Quiché, Guatemala, 600-900 AD, 21 x 11 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

22. Figurine, Copán, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 12.4 x 8.8 cm. © IHAH

23. Jaina figurine, Mexico, 600-900 AD, ca. 20 cm. © INAH.

24. Anthropomorphic figurine, El Salvador, 1200 BC-250 AD, 16.6 x 8.7 cm. © MUNA

25. Whistle, High plateau of Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 14 x 7 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

26. Hollow anthropomorphic figurine, Central Veracruz, Mexico, 200-650 AD, 55 x 32 x 35 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH

E/ Musical instruments

Flutes, drums, rattles, ocarinas, whistles of various shapes.

27. Anthropomorphic ocarina, Valle de Sula, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 10.2 x 9 cm. © IHAH

28. Ocarina, Petén, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 10 x 5.1 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

29. Double drum, Altar de Sacrificios, Guatemala, 900-1524 AD, 19.3 x 9 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

30. Flute with skull effigy, El Salvador, 250-900 AD, 21 x 5 cm. © MUNA
METALS

Objects and ornaments made of gold, silver and copper.

Ornaments

Pectorals, pendants, ear ornaments, nose ornaments, rings, bracelets and bells.

Shells and bones

Objects and ornaments made from shells and human or animal bones and teeth.

A/ Ornaments

Pendants, ear ornaments, pectorals, necklaces, rings.

41. Batch of pierced shells, Aguateca, Guatemala, 600-900 AD, average 6.5 x 2.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

42. Shell pendant and ear ornaments, Dos Pilas, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, ear ornaments: 5.5 x 1.9 cm; pendant: diameter 5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

B/ Ceremonial objects

Fashioned shell, bones and teeth.

43. Bone musical instruments: flute, Iximché, Guatemala, 900-1500 AD, 21 x 4 cm, rasp, Altar de Sacrificios, Guatemala, 600-900 AD, 14.3 x 4.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

44. Maya carved bone, Petén, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 14 x 6 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
PREHISPANIC PERIOD (continued)

Stone

Fashioned objects made from various types of volcanic rock, sandstone and sedimentary rock.

A/ Jade and other green stones

Ornaments such as masks, figurines, pectorals, pendants, ear ornaments, necklaces and beads.

45. Anthropomorphic mask, Petén, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 12.3 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
46. Jadeite plate, Petén, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 9.5 x 8.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
47. Zoomorphic figurine, Petén, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 16.2 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
48. Mexico necklace made with green stone, serpentine and diorite beads, Mexico, 1300-1521 AD, 2.5 x 52 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH
49. Jade pectoral, El Salvador, 250-900 AD, 7 x 10.4 x 1.6 cm. © MUNA
50. Stone pendant, Caribbean coast, Costa Rica, 100-500 AD, 7.4 x 3.8 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS
51. Jade pectoral, El Salvador, 250-900 AD, 6.9 x 3.7 x 1.3 cm. © MUNA
52. “Axe god” pendant, Gran Nicoya, Costa Rica, 1-400 AD, 12.9 x 5.2 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS
53. Batch of two ear ornaments, Petén, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 1 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
54. Pectoral with grass matting motif, Copán, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 20.1 x 3.5 x 1.9 cm. © IHAH
B/ Sculpture

Human and animal figures, grinding stones, stellae, vessels, panels, segments of buildings, petroglyphs.

55. Merlon, Teotihuacan, State of Mexico, 200-650 AD, 27.5 x 17 x 5.8 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH

56. Head portrait in volcanic rock, Caribbean coast, Costa Rica, 1000-1400 AD, 15 x 13 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS

57. Zoomorphic mushroom, Kaminaljuyú, Guatemala, 400 BC-250 AD, 28.5 x 14.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

58. Zoomorphic petroglyph, Las Lagunas, Nicaragua, indeterminate date, 150 x 95 cm. © Edgar Espinoza, MNN

59. Anthropomorphic cylindrical sculpture, El Rama, Nicaragua, possibly 800-1350 AD, 50 x 15 cm. © Edgar Espinoza, MNN

60. Grinding stone with bas-relief and grinding implement, Gran Nicoya, Costa Rica, 600-1200 AD, 23 x 22 x 134 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS

61. Zoomorphic tenon, Kaminaljuyú, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 70 x 145 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

62. Maya limestone lintel, Mexico, 650-900 AD, 84.5 x 43.5 x 6 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH

63. Warrior with axe and trophy head, Atlantic coast, Costa Rica, 1000-1400 AD, 61 x 38 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS

64. Glyph panel, Petén, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 76 x 39 x 27 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

65. Stele No. 3 from Machaquila, Petén, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 180 x 93 x 22 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
C/ Ceremonial objects

Eccentrics, ritual axes, yokes, masks, ornamental sceptre tips and scale models.

66. Maya green stone votive mask, Campeche, Mexico, 200-850 AD, 10 x 10 x 5 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH

67. Ceremonial mallet head, Gran Nicoya, Costa Rica, 1-500 AD, 8.5 x 7.7 cm. © Dirk Bakker, DIA-FS

68. Mescal green stone zoomorphic mask, Guerrero, Mexico, 900-1100 AD, 12 x 10 x 8 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH

69. Anthropomorphic axe, South coast, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 29.6 x 22.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

70. Bird-shape ceremonial axe, El Salvador, 250-900 AD, 26.2 x 21 cm. © MUNA

71. Mescal green stone scale model, Guerrero, Mexico, 400-1100 AD, 13 x 9 x 2.9 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH

72. Yoke with animal decoration, South coast, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 10.5 x 38 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

73. Eccentric, Copán, Honduras, 600-800 AD, 30.9 x 12.5 x 1.4 cm. © IHAH

74. Flint eccentric, Altar de Sacrificios, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, 13 x 5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
D/ Marble and alabaster
Smooth or bas-relief containers.

75. Four-legged plate, Tierras Altas, Guatemala, 400 BC-250 AD, 6.8 x 22.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

76. Marble vase with animal-shaped handles, Valle de Sula, Honduras, 700-900 AD, 15.7 x 11 cm. © IHAH

E/ Obsidian
Projectile heads, eccentrics, punches, knives.

78. Punch and knives, Petén, Guatemala, 550-900 AD, punch: 17 x 4.4 cm; knives: 16.3 x 1.5 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

79. Eccentric figure, Uaxactún, Guatemala, 250-550 AD, 13.7 x 7 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

F/ Weapons and tools
Arrow heads, knives, axes, scrapers, polishers, mallets.

81. Stemmed macroblade dagger, Belize, 250 BC-250 AD, 22 x 45 cm. © BIA

82. Knife and chisel, Petén, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, knife: 17 x 7 cm; chisel: 17 x 8 cm. © MCD-MUNAE

83. Jade axe, El Salvador, 250-900 AD, 13.4 x 6.7 cm. © MUNA

84. Stone ring, South coast, Guatemala, 250-900 AD, 12 x 6 cm. © MCD-MUNAE
COLONIAL AND REPUBLICAN PERIODS

Painting

On canvas, wood or metal, with religious (virgins, saints, angels) and civilian (portraits) themes.

85. Crucifixion, Guatemala, 18th century, 264 x 600 cm. © MAC

86. Our Lady of Sorrow, Guatemala, 18th century, 133 x 100 cm. © MAC

87. Oil on canvas with wood frame signed by R. D. González, El Salvador, late 19th century, 88 x 74 cm. © MUNA

88. St Joseph the Patriarch with child, Honduras, 17th century, 200 x 140 cm. © IHAH
Sculpture

Figures, reliefs or fragments of altarpieces representing religious images, carved in wood, paste, ivory and plaster.

A/ Figures

Virgin, saint, Christ and angel figures.

89. Polychrome wood sculpture of flagellated Christ, El Salvador, 18th century, 51 cm. © MUNA
90. Archangel, Guatemala, 18th century, 100 x 60 cm. © MAC
91. Saint Anthony of Padua, Mexico, 18th century, 62 x 21 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH
92. Saint Michael Archangel, Mexico, 18th century, 40 x 35 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH
93. Saint Joseph and sleeping baby Jesus, Guatemala, 17th century, 117 x 50 cm. © MAC
94. Articulated wood sculpture of Saint Joseph, El Salvador, 17th century, 50.3 x 18.5 cm. © MUNA
95. Immaculate Conception, Honduras, 18th century, 165 x 50 cm. © IHAH
B/ Reliefs, altarpieces and architectural elements

Religious scenes, plant and ornamental elements.

96. St Joseph and baby Jesus, Guatemala, 18th century, diameter 171 cm. © MAC

97. Nuns of the Order of St Clare, Guatemala, 18th century, 220 x 181 cm. © MAC

Documents

Manuscripts, antique documents, maps, plans and prints.

98. Printed page with decorative border, Guatemala, undated, 41.4 x 30.4 cm. © MCD-MLA

99. Document with seals of the Spanish Crown, El Salvador, 18th century, 21.5 x 31 cm. © MUNA

100. Bound book (The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha), Guatemala, 17th century, 22 x 14.5 cm. © MCD-MLA

101. Leather-bound manuscript, Guatemala, 19th century, 28.8 x 20.5 cm. © MCD-MLA
Silverware

Religious and civilian silver and gold objects such as: chalices, incense burners, crucifixes, crowns, stands, shields, tabernacles, altar fronts, chandeliers, utensils, decorations, vessels, etc.

102. Chalices, Honduras, Colonial period, 20 x 14 cm. © IHAH
103. Anonymous monstrance, Mexico, 19th century, 52 x 24 x 14 cm. © R. Velasco Alonso, INAH
104. Silver tray, Guatemala, 18th century, 40 x 28 cm. © MCD
105. Candle holder, Guatemala, 18th century, 40 x 16 cm. © MCD
106. Imperial crown, Guatemala, 18th century, 11 x 10 cm. © MCD
107. Silver tabernacle front, Guatemala, 18th century, 108 x 121 cm. © MCD
108. Processional cross, Guatemala, 17th century, 45 x 28 cm. © MCD
109. Silver stand, Guatemala, 19th century, 40 x 38 cm. © MCD
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With over 27,000 members in 151 countries, ICOM is an international network of museum professionals expert in a wide variety of disciplines.

Established in 1946, ICOM is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization (NGO) with formal ties to UNESCO and with United Nations Economic and Social Council consultative status.

ICOM considers combating illegal trade in cultural goods to be one of the core aims of its programme of action. The Red List of Endangered Cultural Objects of Central America and Mexico was prepared to prevent the illegal export of cultural items and to help protect the cultural heritage of these countries. This list is an addition to the published collection of Red Lists for Africa, Latin America, Iraq, Afghanistan, Peru and Cambodia.

http://icom.museum/redlist

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