EMERGENCY RED LIST OF IRAQI ANTIQUITIES AT RISK



Red List
Liste Rouge
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EMERGENCY RED LIST

OF IRAQI ANTIQUITIES AT RISK

Suspicious characteristics

Any object with reference numbers written on it and any object that shows traces of reference numbers in ink. The inventory numbers of the Iraq Museum generally follow the mention "IM" (abbreviation for "Iraq Museum"). [illus. 0]

Any object with cuneiform ("wedge-shaped") writing on it. This writing is composed of horizontal, vertical or oblique strokes with triangular ends, impressed or incised into the material. Cuneiform looks like a lot of small triangular depressions arranged in patterns. Early examples look like picture writing. It is found especially on objects of clay and stone, but also metal, ivory, and pottery. [illus. 1]

Any object with Aramaic writing on it (alphabetic writing, mostly engraved or in ink). [illus. 2]



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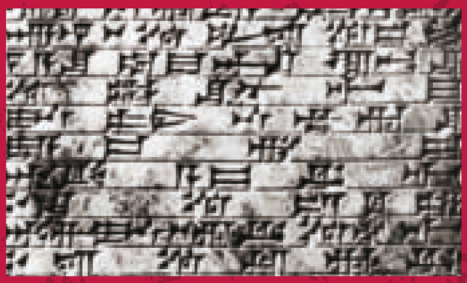

1



2

0. ©Iraq Museum/Salvini
1. ©Iraq Museum
2. ©Musée du Louvre

This Red List was drawn up by a group of 12 international experts during a meeting held at the Interpol headquarters in Lyons (France) on 7 May 2003.

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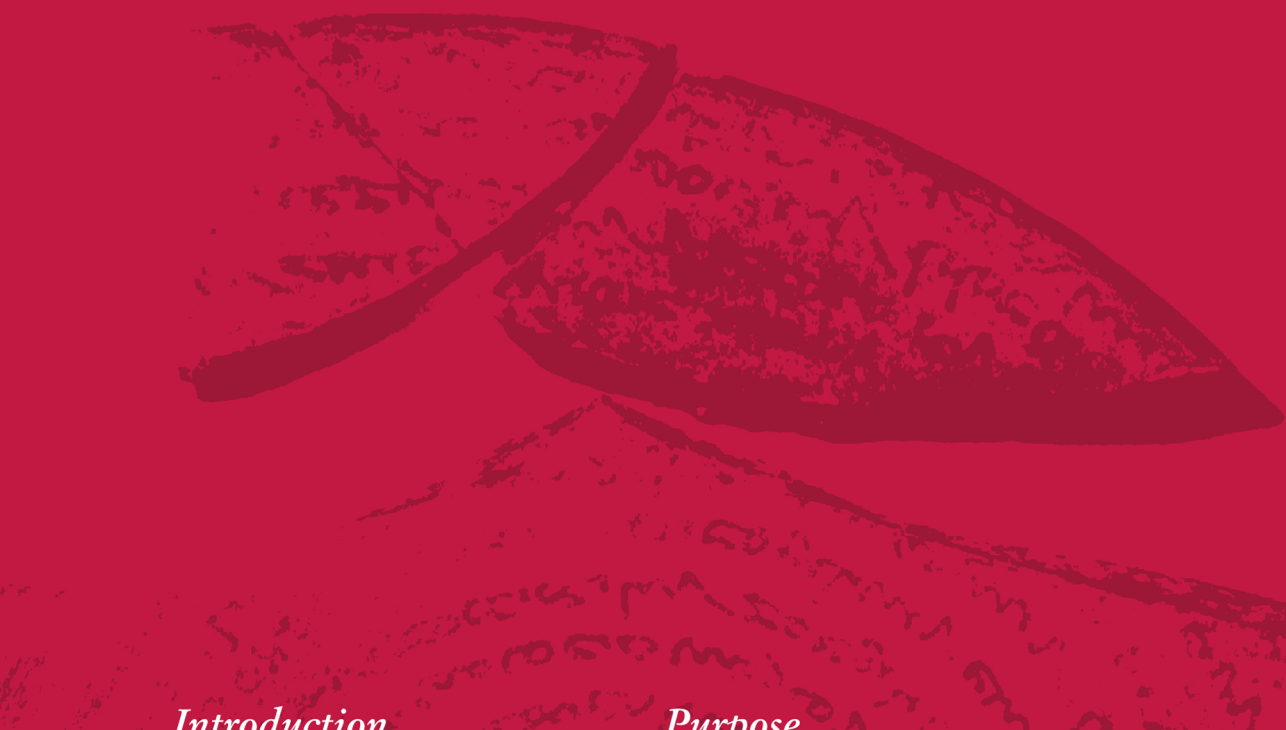


Introduction

Cultural heritage in Iraq has suffered seriously as a result of war. Many objects have been looted and stolen from museums and archaeological sites and risk appearing on the market through illicit trafficking.

Although the Iraq Museum in Baghdad is not the only place that has suffered, it is certainly by far the most important institution. The museum has been looted and is missing a great part of its former collection. The Iraq Museum is a national archaeological museum that serves as the repository for all artefacts from excavations in Iraq. It contains hundreds of thousands of objects covering 10,000 years of human civilization, representing many different cultures and styles. The bulk of the collection dates between 8000 B.C. and 1800 A.D., and comprises objects made of clay, stone, pottery, metal, bone, ivory, cloth, paper, glass, and wood.

Purpose

This document has been designed as a tool for customs officials, police officers, museums, art dealers and collectors to help them to recognize objects that could originate from Iraq.

This *Red List* describes the general types of artefacts most favoured by the illegal antiquities market, so that these may be identified and detained wherever they surface. They are protected by legislation, banned from export and may under no circumstances be imported or put on sale. An appeal is therefore being made to museums, auction houses, art dealers and collectors not to acquire them.

This is a list of the types of objects from Iraq which are particularly at risk and are likely to have been stolen. It is in no way exhaustive. Because of the tremendous variety of objects, styles, and periods, any antiquity from Iraq should be treated with suspicion.

Iraqi cultural heritage is protected under:
- Law Prohibiting the Smuggling of Antiquities No. 40 of 1926
- Antiquities Law No. 59 of 1936 and the two Amendments (No. 120 of 1974 and No. 164 of 1975)
- Law No. 6 of 1942: Regulations regarding the Registration of Old Manuscripts
- Antiquities and Heritage Law No. 55 of 2002

On 21.03.1968, Iraq ratified the *1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,* and its *First Protocol.*
On 12.05.1973, Iraq ratified the *1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.*

THE RED LIST INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF OBJECTS:

(These images serve to illustrate the categories of objects which are the target of illicit traffic.)

Tablets of clay or stone with cuneiform writing.

Most common are pillow-shaped clay tablets (one side rounded, the other side flat), square or rectangular, sometimes round. They typically range from 4 x 5 cm to 20 x 30 cm in size. They sometimes have a casing (often fragmentary) sealed. They are usually sun-dried and must be handled with extreme care. If not stored under controlled humidity, they may disintegrate (optimum relative humidity: 45-50%). For identification, they should be photographed under raking light coming from the upper left. [illus. 3, 4]



3



4

3. Clay proto-cuneiform tablet with early pictographic writing, end of the 4th millennium B.C. ©British Museum
4. Clay cuneiform tablet, still partly in its envelope, beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. ©Musée du Louvre

Cones and any other objects (bricks, prisms, vases, sculpture, etc.) with cuneiform writing.

Most common are clay cones roughly 15 cm long with a flattened head (disk-shaped). [illus. 5]



5



6

5. Baked clay foundation cone with cuneiform writing, end of the 3rd millennium B.C. ©Musée du Louvre
6. Stone cylinder seal, beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C., Musée du Louvre. ©RMN/Franck Raux

Cylinder seals of stone, shell, frit, etc.

These look like large cylindrical beads with pictures engraved on them, and often a cuneiform inscription. They range in length from 2 to 7 cm, and in diameter from 1 to 3 cm. [illus. 6]

Stamp seals of stone, shell, etc., and their impressions.

Stamp seals are small lumps of stone, often animal or gem-shaped (about 3 or 4 cm), with pictures carved on one side (about 1.5 to 3 cm). Impressions are lumps of clay with small pictures from cylinder seals or stamp seals impressed in them. [illus. 7, 7bis]



7



7bis

7. Stone stamp seals, Jamdat Naser period, about 3000 B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence
7bis. Stone stamp seals in the shape of animals and their impression, about 3000 B.C. ©Musée du Louvre

Ivory, bone plaques and sculptures.

Any object made of ivory that looks old. Most common are small flat plaques (8 to 20 cm) carved with figures or ornament, originally used as furniture inlays. Many look Egyptian. [illus. 8]



8. Ivory plaque from Nimrud, 9th-8th centuries B.C. (stolen). ©Iraq Museum

8

Sculpture, 3-dimensional and relief.

A. Stone, dark or white. The most common types of figures are:

- Standing figurines in white stone (or marble), about 10 to 15 cm high. [illus. 9]
- Under-life-size standing or seated figures with folded hands, ranging from about 15 to 60 cm high (sometimes life size). [illus. 10, 10bis]
- Figures in provincial or oriental Roman style from Hatra, especially heads. [illus. 11]

B. Clay. Small figures, usually unbaked. The most common types are:

- Human and animal figurines, often crudely made (about 8 to 15 cm high). [illus. 12]
- Models and "toys" of beds, boats, chariots, houses, etc. (about 10 to 20 cm high, sometimes more for the houses). [illus. 13]
- Mould-made plaques, often naturalistic, representing scenes from daily life and scenes of worship (about 8 to 15 cm high). [illus. 14]

C. Bronze figurines (often oxidized). One common type has the lower body in the shape of a peg (about 12 to 20 cm high). [illus. 15]



9



11



10



10bis

9. Stone figurines from Tell es-Sawwan, beginning of the 6th millennium B.C. ©Iraq Museum
10. Stone Sumerian statue, about 2400 B.C. ©Iraq Museum
10bis. Sumerian alabaster statue from Ur, about 2400 B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence
11. Stone statue from Hatra, 2nd century A.D., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence



12



13



14



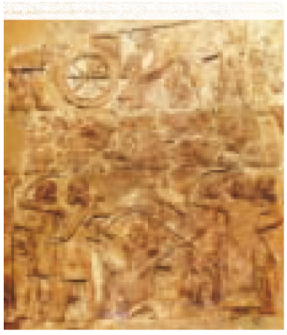
15

12. Terra cotta Sumerian figure from Tello, about 2000 B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence
13. Clay chariot model, beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C., Musée du Louvre. ©RMN/Lewandowski/Raux
14. Terra cotta relief: cult scene from Khafaji, about 1800 B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence
15. Bronze foundation figurine, end of the 3rd millennium B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence

D. Stone plaques and slabs, often in fragments, carved in relief. [illus. 16, 17]



16



17

16. Stone Assyrian relief fragment from Nineveh, about 700 B.C. (stolen). ©J. Russell
17. Panel carved in relief: Assyrian warriors from Khorsabad, end of the 8th century B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence

Vessels/Containers, large or small.

A. Pottery/Ceramics, often broken or incomplete. There is a tremendous variety of decoration: plain, painted, inscribed, decorated and/or glazed. [illus. 18, 19]

B. Glass. Old glass often has a shiny metallic iridescent sheen. It is often decorated with wavy patterns. [illus. 20, 20bis]



20



20bis



18

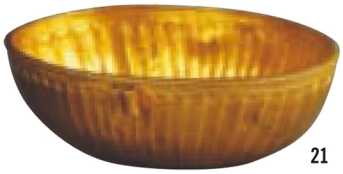


19

18. Pottery jar decorated "scarlet ware" from Khafaji, beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C., Iraq Museum. ©photo Scala, Florence
19. Islamic monochrome lustre ware cup, 10th century A.D. ©Musée du Louvre
20. Glass bottles from Nimrud, 3rd-7th centuries A.D. ©British Museum
20bis. Cup, 13th century A.D. ©Iraq Museum

C. Metal (bronze, silver, gold), plain or decorated. [illus. 21]

D. Stone, sometimes carved in relief or inlaid. One type is made of marble or alabaster and is quite small (miniature vases). [illus. 22]



21

21. Gold bowl, Royal Cemetery of Ur, about 2500 B.C. ©University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

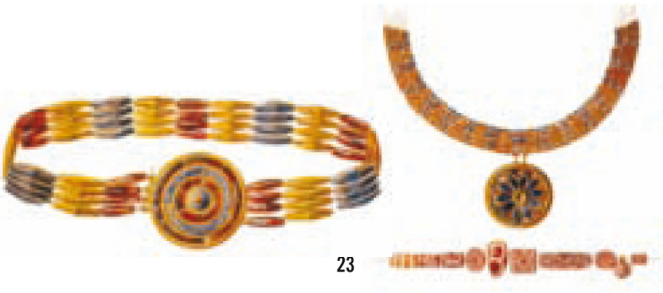
22. Small alabaster vessels, Tell es-Sawwan, 6th millennium B.C. ©Iraq Museum



22

Jewellery, carved gems and personal adornments: gold, silver, bronze, shell, stone, etc.

Inlays and multicoloured stones are commonly used (predominantly lapis lazuli, carnelian, agate, rock crystal and turquoise). [illus. 23]



23

23. Jewellery board, Royal Cemetery of Ur, about 2500 B.C. ©Iraq Museum

Manuscripts, calligraphy, books and archival documents.

[illus. 24]



24

24. Islamic manuscript page in Arabic. ©Iraq Museum Library/Tabbaa

Architectural and furniture fragments: plaster, wall painting, tiles, decorated bricks, wood.

Islamic examples are often decorated with intricate patterns that may include Arabic script. [illus. 25, 26]

25. Islamic carved brick architectural decoration. ©Iraq Museum/Tabbaa
26. Islamic wooden panel. ©Iraq Museum

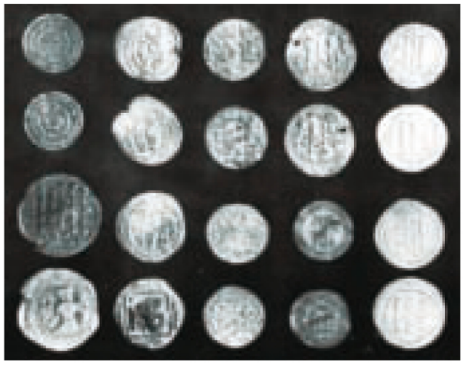


25



26

27. Islamic coins. ©Iraq Museum



27

Coins.

Antique coins are hand stamped, so the subject is often off-centre. Pre-Islamic coins usually include pictures. Islamic examples are decorated only with Arabic script, which often identifies the place of production. [illus. 27]



The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is the principal international organization of museums and museum professionals committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.

With over 24,000 members in 147 countries, ICOM is an international network of museum professionals expert in a wide variety of disciplines.

Created in 1946, ICOM is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization (NGO) maintaining formal relations with UNESCO and having a consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

The fight against illicit traffic of cultural goods is one of ICOM's core commitments. The *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk* has been compiled to prevent cultural objects being sold illegally on the art market, and thus to ensure the protection of Iraqi heritage. To date, ICOM has published *Red Lists* for Africa, Latin America, Iraq, Afghanistan and Peru.

http://icom.museum/redlist

This Red List was developed with the generous support of:

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