

PITCHER
Preventing Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage:
Educational Resources



Open Educational Resources

International trafficking and geopolitical issues

Topic: Theft of antiques and works of art, Sale of stolen objects, Traffic channels and actors' identification, Fight against the traffic, Provenance research and traceability, Return of stolen objects, Preservation of memory of missing artefacts and Why it is forbidden, what consequences?

Age Group: 11-14, 14-18 years old

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Erasmus+

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Preface

The *PITCHER* project (Erasmus+ Programme, 2021-2024) intends to design and test of a set of open educational resources focusing on improving the capacity of teachers and educators in preparing new learning experiences to support the fight against looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods. The project intends to propose a new model for raising awareness of young people about the problem of fighting the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural goods, initially focusing on schoolteachers, to raise their interest and enhance their professional development in this field.

PITCHER builds on the final recommendations of the European project NETCHER (H2020 - 2019-2021) coordinated by CNRS, which implemented a strong trans sectoral network as well as Recommendations on the fight against looting and trafficking of cultural goods. One of the components of the recommendations is the need for awareness-raising and guidance toward Educational communities.

The project idea comes from ENSP (the Research Centre of the French national police academy), and the Michael Culture association - members of the NETCHER consortium - and brings together BIBRACTE major actor of Archaeology, MUSEOMIX a reference in mediation for museums, and schools from France, Greece, Italy, and Spain, in order to co-design and implement the PITCHER project.



Photo: Pexels, Oleksandr Pidvalnyi

We hope this resource will bring a new dimension to your work, as well as use it to develop these activities with your students. The selected topics have been chosen together with teachers and educators coming from France, Greece, Italy and Spain through focus groups and surveys. Each resource is accompanied by key learning points as well as several interesting facts or pieces of information, which are intended to be used to provoke further discussion.




Wherever possible we have included a short interactive activity that can be carried out with students or a series of suggested questions to ask, in order to introduce the topics of each learning module. Should you wish to explore certain topics or themes further, each resource includes a link to other related ones. When available, a general list of additional resources related to the topics is provided. The resources and accompanying texts are designed as standalone educational aids. In this respect, the resource is intended to provide an overall framework from which you can pick and choose the issues most relevant to your activities. The module can be used within any country any context as it deals with issues, which are cross-border and universal.

For more information about the *PITCHER* project, please visit:

<https://www.pitcher-project.eu>

The PITCHER Educational Offer

The *PITCHER* open educational resources include the following learning modules, here listed according to subject matters and suggested age of the target students:

	 7-11	 11-14	 14-18
All the themes		Case Studies	Case Studies
		The Cobannus hoard affair	The Cobannus hoard affair
		Looting is not a game	Looting is not a game
		Traffic International	Traffic International
		The Raiders of the Lost Art	
Theft of antiques and works of art	Looting in the Village	Looting in the Village	Looting in the Village
	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project
	The Mysterious Theft	The Mysterious Theft	Guilty Treasures
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
		Protect the sites!	Protect the sites!
		Voiceless	Voiceless
		PillarT	PillarT
		The Talking Clay	
Sale of stolen objects	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
		Voiceless	Voiceless
		PillarT	PillarT
			Guilty Treasures
Traffic channels and actors' identification	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art

		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
		Voiceless	Voiceless
		PillarT	PillarT
			Guilty Treasures
Fight against the traffic	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Protect the sites!	Protect the sites!
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
		PillarT	PillarT
		The Talking Clay	
Provenance research and traceability		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		PillarT	PillarT
		Touch, Don't Touch	Touch, Don't Touch
Return of stolen objects	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art	Traffic 'Art
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
Preservation of memory of missing artefacts	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project
		Touch, Don't Touch	Touch, Don't Touch
Why it is forbidden, what consequence	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project	Vade-mecum Educational project
		Crossed interviews	Crossed interviews
		Journey of a Stele	Journey of a Stele
		Protect the sites!	Protect the sites!
		Voiceless	Voiceless
		PillarT	PillarT
		The Talking Clay	

Summary: International trafficking and geopolitical issues

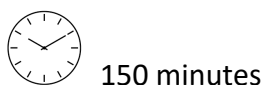
Topic: Theft of antiques and works of art, Sale of stolen objects, Traffic channels and actors' identification, Fight against the traffic, Provenance research and traceability, Return of stolen objects, Preservation of memory of missing artifacts and Why is it forbidden, what consequences?

Age range:



Educational programme: History, Geography, Moral and Civic Education, History of the Arts, Geopolitics and Political Science.

Time:



Materials and tools: Pen, paper, internet access

Skills achieved: Analyse a document, summarise a file.

Learning objectives: Understand the phenomena of international illicit trafficking and their networks; to understand the economic and heritage issues at stake, from a national and/or geopolitical perspective.

Instructions for teachers

This resource brings together three case studies, chosen to reflect the diversity of the geographical areas concerned by the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. These are recent situations involving States, customs or police forces and criminals as they may operate today.

Each case study can be analysed individually and separately. Taken together, these documentary files provide a more global approach to the phenomenon.

The first two studies, which are relatively complex, are aimed primarily at lycée students. The third, designed to be more accessible, is also suitable for students at the end of secondary school.

How to use this educational resource



Instructions

This resource presents three documentary files:

- Illegal sales of bas-reliefs from Tabbet al-Guesh, Egypt
- Destruction and trafficking archaeological objects by DAECH in Syria
- Restitution of a Mayan stele from Guatemala

Each documentary file can be studied in depth. This study can be part of the HGGSP speciality course and can be used as the initial basis for a presentation at the Grand Oral.

Group work can be envisaged within the class. The various files can be divided between several groups pupils, who will dissect and analyse the situation collectively. A presentation of the results to the class of the various pieces of work carried out the pupils a more general view and enables them to draw more general conclusions for an overall approach to the phenomenon.

Each dossier has its own characteristics, which are explained below. A set of questions is proposed, designed to draw students' attention to these specific features. The nature of the questions, whether general and synthetic or specific, must be adjusted according to the expected objectives and the level of the students.

While the first two dossiers are fairly complex and aimed more at high school students, the third dossier has been designed to be more easily adapted to middle school students.

Comments for teachers

File 1: Illegal sales of bas-reliefs from Tabbet al-Guech, Egypt

The dossier consists of 6 documents. The first three relate explicitly to a case study and the other three extend the subject to the question of Egyptian heritage in general.

- Document 1: The photograph of the two blocks is the hook for the file. They are the object of the traffic. Although it is difficult to read the inscriptions, the caption helps identify their respective owners and to make the link with the site, mentioned in the report (document 2). These two blocks have been virtually repositioned by computer graphics on their original site and can be recognised in Figure 3 of the report. Block 1b, in particular, shows continuity of the inscriptions with the parts that have remained in place.
- Document 2: The report by the archaeologist who excavated the site provides evidence that these two objects were stolen. His main arguments are as follows:
 - The names of the deceased correspond and their rarity ensures the blocks belong to the grave
 - The original position of the blocks can be restored with certainty, When he opened the site in 2000, the upper layers were still intact (sediments, later burials...).

The report also includes copies of the certificates for the old pseudo-sales, dated 1974. These documents are necessarily forgeries if the objects were cleared after 2000. The expert report also notes several approximations and errors in these documents.

- Document 3: This press article highlights the importance attached to the event by the Egyptian authorities, who are very involved in the issue. It highlights case law which, for the first time this type of case, gives precedence to Egyptian law over French law.
- Document 4: This graph highlights importance of art market for Egyptian antiquities. This is not illicit trafficking, but the legal market. However, the size of the monetary volumes involved indicates the financial stakes involved, and the scale of demand can be seen as an incentive for illegal trafficking.
- Document 5: To combat trafficking, particularly in easily transportable objects, Icom has drawn up a Red List indicating the types of object most likely be trafficked. This institution, which is part of UNESCO, is helping organise a joint fight against trafficking and provides support to local authorities and forces.
- Document 6: S. Pioda's article looks at the economic implications of archaeological heritage for the Egyptian state. He emphasises the importance of tourism, which seems to take precedence over issues of heritage and identity.

File 2: Destruction and trafficking archaeological objects by Daech in Syria

The dossier is made up of five sets of documents. It is based in particular on the actions of Daech in Syria, through the destruction and looting, particularly of Palmyra. This dossier provides a broader perspective on the theme of "blood antiquities".

Starting point: The theme can be introduced by two quotations, which set out the importance of the phenomenon, the geopolitical issues involved and the resulting awareness.

- Document 1: The map shows the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern area. It shows the relationship between supplier and buyer countries. In particular, it highlights the connection between the political situation in a country and scale of looting and trafficking. The link takes you to the full article, which comments on the map and puts it into context.
- Document 2:
 - A. Double photo of Palmyra showing an old view in the foreground and the same site after the destruction by Daech in the background.
 - B. Reaction from the head of Syrian antiquities on the destruction and the symbolic and cultural issues surrounding heritage.
- Document 3:
 - A. Presentation of the Syrian red list. This is the introduction, which presents the Syrian problems and the very principle of the red lists drawn up by UNESCO: to present the archetypes of objects most threatened by looting. The full list, with examples of threatened objects, is freely accessible online.
 - B. UNESCO clip on the consequences of looting in Iraq.
- Document 4: Traffic and returns: This last document looks at how objects are found in the art trade and returned to their country of origin. It looks at the issue from a European perspective, with the moral issues that are changing attitudes in this area. The official procedures and the institutional and legal aspects are developed.

Feature 3: Restitution of a Mayan stele from Guatemala

This dossier consists of 6 documents presenting the restitution of a stele and placing this episode in the more general context of trafficking in pre-Columbian antiquities. It is a little simpler to access than first two files, with more targeted questions additional information on the historical and geographical context.

Context and vocabulary: provides basic vocabulary and basic chrono-historical information on the main pre-Columbian civilisations.

- Document 1: Summary of Guatemala today
- Document 2: This article reviews the successive stages leading to restitution. It discusses the proof process (old photograph) and the goodwill of the owner: current legislation does not oblige holders of looted property to return it if they are acting in good faith.
- Document 3: Photograph of the restored stele and the main protagonists of the restitution. The institutional importance of these events bears witness to the interest shown by politicians in these initiatives, which are on the increase but remain relatively rare.
- Document 4: This video clip shows the handover ceremony at UNESCO, including the thanks given by the Guatemalan ambassador.
- Document 5: This online article recontextualises the Guatemalan example within the broader context of Latin America. It estimates the scale of the looting phenomenon and discusses the role of UNESCO's Red List in the fight against this traffic.
- Inset: Chronology of the main stages in the development of international law. This international legislation stems mainly from the UN, via its cultural body, UNESCO. Heritage elements, in particular the red lists, are dealt with by ICOM. The last major convention was signed in 1995 by 54 countries. France was one of the original signatories, but the document has not been ratified into national law and has therefore not come into force.

File 1: Illicit sales of bas-reliefs from Tabbet al-Guech in Egypt: the economic stakes of heritage

Instructions

A number of Egyptian objects have recently been rediscovered, both in the Budapest Museum and on the art market. Their uncertain origin (apparently the site of Saqqâra, near Cairo) has aroused the suspicions of certain specialists, who have sought to verify whether these objects were not smuggled out of Egypt.

Questions :

1. What means are used by traffickers to sell looted objects?
2. What arguments does the expert archaeologist use to demonstrate that the sale was unlawful?
3. What are the legal particularities of this trial?
4. What are the economic and heritage issues involved in combating the trafficking Egyptian artefacts?

Educational objectives

→ Show the political and geopolitical significance of preserving heritage, in a context of economic crisis. Use the example of Egyptian antiquities.

You can use the case study as basis, supplemented by your own research.

Keywords

Heritage - Tourism - Museums - Looting - Trafficking - International law - UNESCO/Icom - Restitution - Egypt

Document 1: The objects

a: Haou lintel acquired by the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts in March 2013 (inventory no. 2013.1-E). DR



b: Limestone representing Haou and his wife Khouti, auctioned in Paris in June 2012. DR



Document 2: Expert report (extracts), by V. Dobrev, Egyptologist.

The Tabbet al-Guech site lies at the northern end of Saqqara South [fig.1]. It lies 700 m south of the famous Step Pyramid of King Djoser and just 100 m north of the pyramid of the 6th dynasty king, Pepy I.

After a few test pits in October 2000, the Mission resumed its work in October 2001, descending more than a metre below the surface. The discovery of small intact structures confirmed that this part of the plateau had not been excavated before October 2000 [fig. 2].

The enclosure walls uncovered are the visible part of four funerary complexes comprising tombs dug into the mountain for priests and their families who lived during 6th Dynasty (2330-2150 BC). Most of the façades were discovered either intact or partially collapsed, as can be seen with the façade of Pepy-ankh in TG2. Two other examples of a façade with collapsed stones in front of it [were uncovered] in TG3. Here too, all the decorated stones on the façades were found and then put back in place.

Eleven months later, on 12 October 2002, work resumed, with the priority being to excavate the main entrance to the Haou chapel (T5). It was now clear that the façade was not intact. Despite this worrying fact, there was still hope that the façade had collapsed over the centuries and that its decorated stones had fallen in front of it. Unfortunately, it turned out that all the decorated stones on the façade were missing, with the exception of the door frame. Fresh cracks in existing parts of the door clearly indicated that the missing stones had recently been stolen. His name, Haou, was not yet attested in Dynasty 6(th) and that of his wife, Khouti, was rather rare at the time.

However, something unexpected happened in March 2013, when the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts bought three stones decorated with the seated figure of a certain Haou [doc. 1a] at the Maastricht Antiques Fair, for the sum of 350,000 euros! Given the rarity of the name Haou, the palaeography of the hieroglyphic signs, the content of the text and the composition of the lintel, it is certain that these stones come from the façade stolen from Haou's tomb at Tabbet al-Guech. Following this "astonishing discovery" at the Budapest Museum, it has emerged that another stone from the same façade, depicting Haou and his wife Khouti [doc. 1b], was sold at auction on 1 June 2012 in Paris by Pierre Bergé & Associés.

As can be seen in the virtual restitution of the Budapest and Paris stones with Haou's façade, as it is visible today in his tomb [fig.3], the stolen stones fit perfectly. The blocks of the Budapest lintel and the lintel of the doorway in Haou's tomb even share the same fractures. On the left-hand side of the same lintel can be seen two fragmentary cartouches of King Meryrê, of which the one on the left fits perfectly with the end of the cartouche seen in the upper right-hand corner of the Paris block.

According to the purchase dossier for the Budapest lintel blocks, they were acquired by Rupert Wace from the private collection of Dr René Schwartz of Basel, who in turn purchased them on 14 November 1974 from the Galerie d'Antiquités "Mythologies" in Paris (sold in the name of Mme France Lucas, the owner of the blocks). The invoice that Dr Schwartz received in Paris does not mention the name of the signatory and contains many errors, including the name of the buyer, which is misspelt (Shartz). After their "purchase in 1974", the three blocks reappeared 30 years later in Paris.

As for the block with the Haou couple and his wife Khouti, sold at auction on 1 June 2012 in Paris by Pierre Bergé & Associés Paris, it is said to come from a private collection, acquired in 1975.

It is curious to note that all these blocks sold at auction on the European antiques market in 2012 and 2013 were initially acquired from private collections in Paris 1974 and 1975, which means that they would have left Egypt much earlier. This is in total contradiction with the fact that the site from

which the blocks came was discovered intact by the IFAO Mission in 2000, with layers of pebbles and compact sand accumulated over centuries above the façades of the chapels from which the blocks were stolen. On 6 November 2001, the Mission discovered a whole ancient skeleton above the façades of chapels T2 and T5. If thieves had descended on this spot in the 1970s, they would have destroyed this skeleton.

Our conclusion is that the stones purchased by the Budapest Museum in 2013 and those sold at auction in Paris in 2012-2013 come from the Tabbet al-Guech site in southern Saqqara, from where they were extracted clandestinely, in other words stolen, during the eleven-month period between 14 November 2001, when the IFAO Mission closed its season, and 12 October 2002, when the Mission resumed work on the site.

From V. Dobrev, Report on the stolen stones with hieroglyphic inscriptions from the archaeological site of Tabbet al-Guech, Cairo, 2014

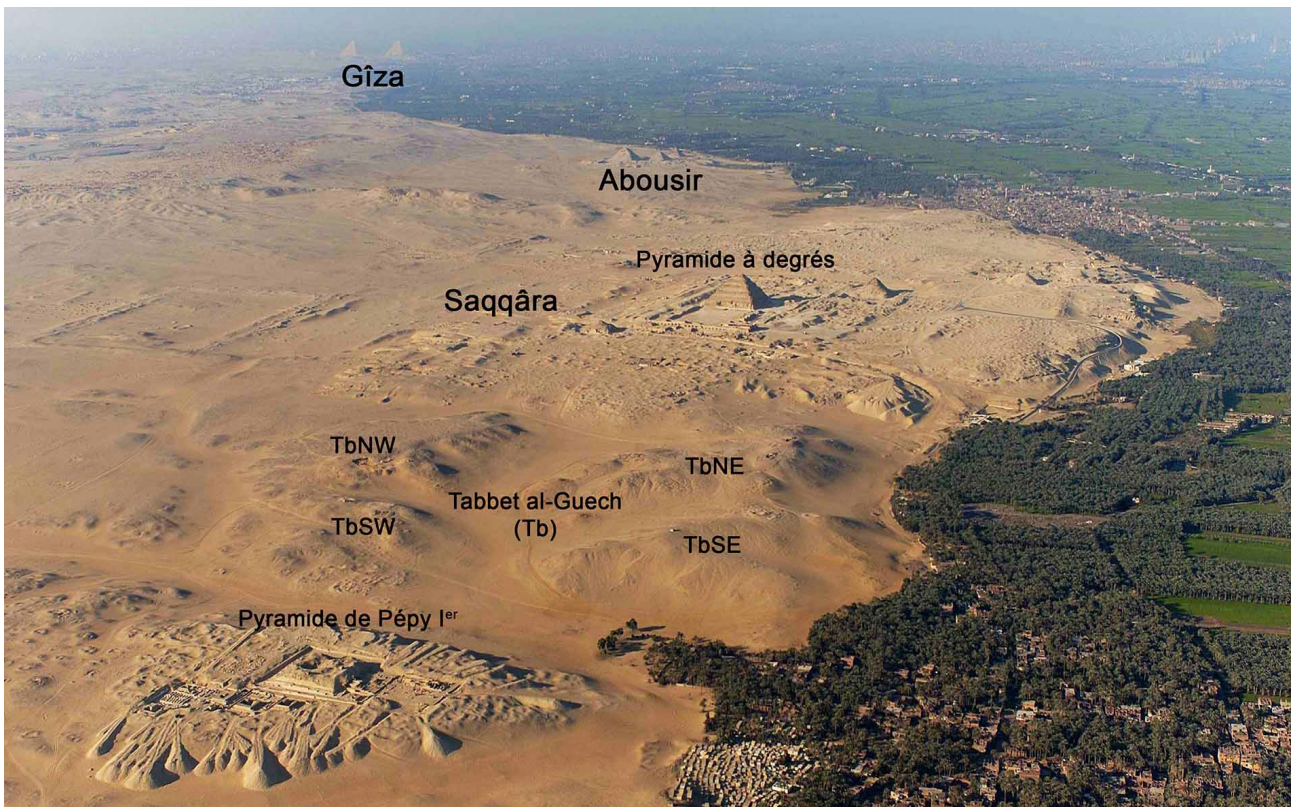


Fig. 1: View of the site of Saqqâra (Egypt), with the location of the Tabbet al-Guech excavation.

Photograph by V. Dobrev

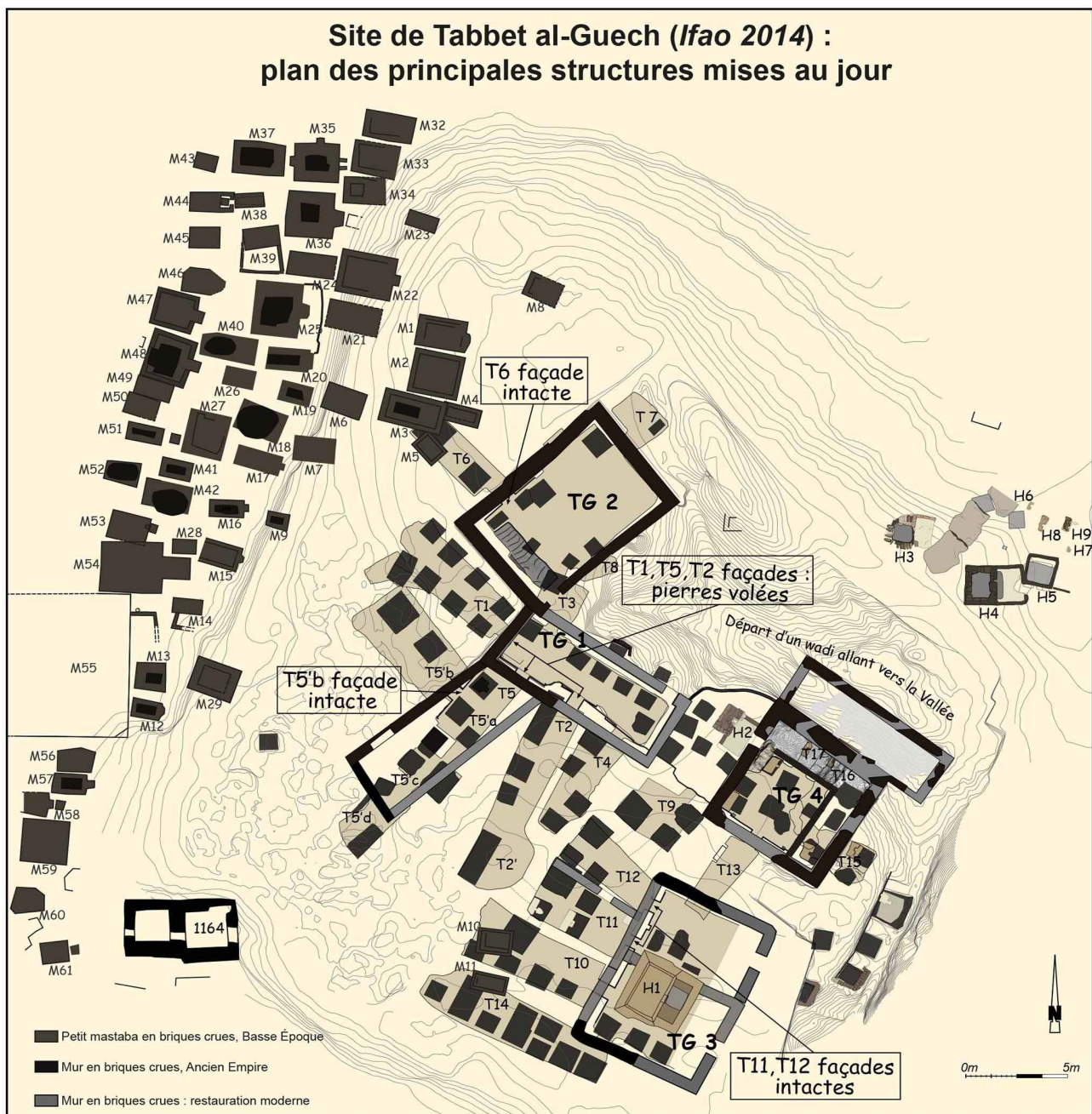


Fig. 2 Map of the archaeological remains at Tabet al-Guech. Plan: V. Dobrev and O. Onézime



Fig.3 Virtual reconstruction of Haou's façade in his tomb with the stolen stones.

Photograph by V. Dobrev

Document 3: Press article following the trial (extracts)

"This match will not be the last; we will continue the fight until all our looted antiquities have been fully recovered, with God's help"... At the Egyptian embassy on the morning of Monday 12 June, the spirited speech by Hamada El Sawy, Attorney General of the Arab Republic of Egypt, sounded like a warning: something has hardened in way Egypt intends to recover its looted heritage, and in the way Western investigators are now struggling to dismantle the sprawling networks of traffickers.

The two very fine blocks of gilded stone, covered in hieroglyphs, which have now been returned to Egypt, came from the tomb of the priest Haou, discovered in 2000 at the Tabbet el-Guech site archaeologist Vassil Drobrev. Ten years after this discovery, the stones were offered for sale by Didier Wormser, a Paris dealer at the Pierre Bergé et Associés auction house - which is also involved in the case of the looted antiquities exhibited at the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Presented as allegedly bought in 1974 and 1975, one of these stones was then acquired, via an intermediary, by the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts, and the other was bought by a businessman. But thanks to the report by Vassil Dobrev [see doc. 2], commissioned as a precautionary measure by the Hungarian museum, and above all thanks to the undoubtedly formidable work of the investigators from the OCBC (Office central de lutte contre le trafic des biens culturels) in France, the truth finally came out: these two blocks had been looted between 2001 and 2002 and taken illegally from Egypt.

Restitutions of this kind have of course already taken place. But this one is historic, because it introduces case law in France that should discourage many unscrupulous buyers...". Under French law, according to article 2276 of our Civil Code, 'in the case of movable property, possession is equivalent to title', so the possessor in good faith of a stolen object cannot be ordered to return ", explains Maître Boissavy, lawyer for the Republic of Egypt. In theory, therefore, the businessman who acquired one of these two antique pieces without knowing that it had been looted should not have been obliged to return it. But for the first time, in the judgement handed down on 18 October, the court gave precedence to the Egyptian law of 1983 - establishing the inalienability and imprescriptibility of Egyptian national cultural property - over our French Civil Code. This is why, despite being compensated by the condemned dealer, the buyer is now surprisingly able to reclaim his property. "This case law already existed in England and the United States, but in France it represents a real turning point in the fight against antiquities trafficking", says a delighted Maître Boissavy¹.

(...)

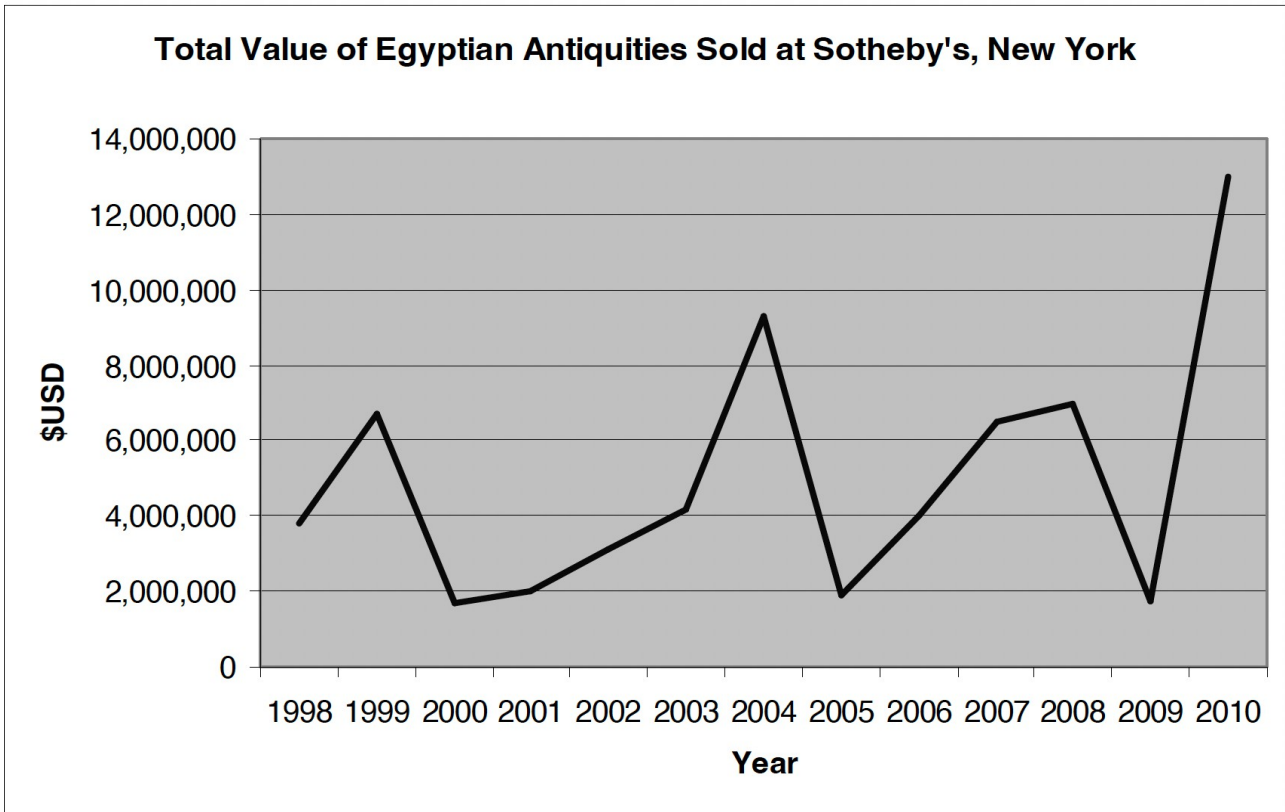
V. de Montclos, "Restitution of antiquities: Egypt wins the day un nouveau bras de fer", Le Point, 12/06/2023

Full article:

https://www.lepoint.fr/culture/restitution-d-antiquites-l-egypte-remporte-un-nouveau-bras-de-fer-12-06-2023-2524047_3.php

¹ To date, the Haou lintel in Budapest has still not been returned. Only the Paris blocks were involved in this trial

Document 4: Changes in the value of Egyptian antiquities sold at Sotheby's



From D.W. Gill, "Egyptian Antiquities on the Market in Managing Egypt's cultural Heritage, 2015, p. 68.

Full article: https://www.academia.edu/6991432/Egyptian_antiquities_on_the_market

Document 5: ICOM - Egypt red list

Why a Red List for Egypt?

The purpose of the Emergency Red List of Egyptian Cultural Property at Risk is to help art and heritage professionals and law enforcement officers identify Egyptian property that is protected by national and international legislation. In order to facilitate their identification, the Emergency Red List describes the categories or types of cultural objects that are most likely to be bought and sold illegally.

Context

Egypt recognises that the illicit excavation of archaeological sites destroys the context an object and reduces its cultural and historical significance. The resulting gaps in knowledge impoverish our understanding of Egypt's rich past and, consequently, of important stages in human history. Since 1869, Egypt has created and improved the legal framework protecting its cultural heritage. The Egyptian government has stepped up its efforts to counter illicit trafficking, demonstrating its long-term commitment to protecting the country's heritage.

Despite these efforts, theft, looting and illegal export remain constant threats. Combating illicit trafficking in cultural property is everyone's responsibility in order protect and preserve Egypt's rich heritage, a heritage that offers a glimpse into the cultural, artistic, scientific and historical evolution of humanity.

<https://www.icom-musees.fr/ressources/liste-rouge-durgence-des-biens-culturels-en-peril-egypte>

Document 6: The Egyptian State faced with trafficking in antiquities (extracts from a press article)

In Europe and the United States, art dealers have been brought down and a museum director incriminated, but what about Egypt? The priority there seems to be the tourist industry rather than the fight against trafficking and illegal excavations on its own territory.

What is the Egyptian government doing about the trafficking in antiquities at a time when the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) has once again been postponed? (...) The inauguration of the GEM will be an international event, making it the largest archaeological museum in the world devoted to a civilisation, but it is impossible to know when. (...) However, this vagueness is incompatible with stated ambition and the resources deployed to boost tourism, an essential manna for the country's economy, the next major project being the development of hotel infrastructures and an airport around the monastery of Saint Catherine in Sinai.

On the trafficking front, the Egyptian National Committee for the Repatriation of Antiquities (ENCRA) is keeping a close eye on the art market to identify suspect pieces. Restitutions are regularly announced. In 2021 Egypt Today magazine reported that nearly 5,000 objects had been repatriated from the United States, 115 from France and 36 from Spain. In September 2022, 16 works arrived from the United States (including nine from Michael Steinhardt's collection and five from the Metropolitan Museum), and in October, a bronze statue of the goddess Isis from Switzerland. Since the Arab Spring in 2011, Egypt has recovered a staggering 29300 objects that were stolen or illegally excavated (...)

Last April, the Egyptian courts were relatively severe in sentencing businessman Hassan Rateb and 17 other people, accused of smuggling antiquities abroad, to five years in prison and a fine of one million Egyptian pounds (around €55,000) each, as well as a former member of parliament, Alaa Hassanein, to ten years in prison. In 2020, Raouf Boutros-Ghali (nephew of the Secretary-General) was sentenced to 30 years in prison and fined £6 million (around €330,000) for smuggling with Italy (...). The smuggling involved more than 20,000 objects. Despite these rare judgements, thefts are still on: four people were arrested on 22 October with 59 objects stolen from the museum of the Faculty Archaeology at Sohag University, in the south of the country, and in mid-August, 97 items were seized at Luxor international airport.

While we appreciate the crucial importance of promoting the Pharaonic heritage for the Egyptian economy (the aim is to attract 30 million tourists, compared with 13 million in 2019), sometimes to the detriment of other parts of the country's history - note the ruined state of the tomb of the poet Taha Hussein (1889-1973), the father of the Arab intellectual renaissance - it is hard to understand the policy of the Ministry of Justice in the fight against trafficking in the country itself.

S. Pioda, "L'État égyptien face au trafic d'antiquités", Le quotidien de l'art, no. 2486, 24/11/2022

Full article: <https://www.lequotidiendelart.com/articles/22738-l-%C3%A9tat-%C3%A9gyptien-face-au-traffic-d-antiquit%C3%A9s.html>

More information

- Article in English on the Tabet al-Guech artefacts:
<https://veerone.com/searches/notable-cases-recovered-stolen-antiquities-egypt-7c8sgmN>
- Article in Le Monde (subscribers):
https://www.lemonde.fr/m-le-mag/article/2022/09/18/l-egypte-reclame-justice-pour-recuperer-ses-antiquites_6142098_4500055.html
- Podcast on trafficking Egyptian antiquities: "Why is an investigation involving the former president of the Louvre being opened?"
<https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/la-question-du-jour/trafic-d-antiquites-pourquoi-une-enquete-impliquant-l-ancien-president-du-louvre-est-elle-ouverte-6830000>
- Article of Libération about Louvre :
https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/trafic-dantiquites-lancien-patron-du-louvre-jean-luc-martinez-mis-en-examen-20220526_5XOZWT3QWVF2LCLYBTLNEB6T6E/
- Brief report on tourist numbers:
<https://french.xinhuanet.com/20220928/1b0172aa27624bca97a50552dee464c6/c.html#:~:text=S'exp>
- Statistics on tourism in Egypt:
<https://www.donneesmondiales.com/afrique/egypte/tourisme.php>

File 2: Destruction and trafficking archaeological artefacts by Daech in Syria: heritage preservation, between tensions and competition

Instructions

Questions :

1. Describe and compare the photographs of the Temple of Beel in 2014 and 2016.
2. In what political and geopolitical context did the destruction of the Temple of Beil take place?
3. Change scale. Show the international nature of illicit trafficking in works of art.
4. Who are the international players seeking to combat this trade? By what means? What obstacles are they facing?
5. Using an example, explain the process, the issues involved and the limits to the restitution of a looted work.

Educational objectives

With the help of the documentary file, questions and further information from your personal research :

→ Show the political and geopolitical significance of preserving heritage in context of conflict. Use the example of Syrian antiquities.

Keywords

Heritage - Destruction - Looting - Blood antiquities - Trafficking - Free ports - International rules - UNESCO - ICOM - Red list - Repression - Prevention - Preservation - Reconstruction

Starting point

Statement by François Hollande 17 November 2015 at UNESCO (extract)

The first of these priorities is the fight against trafficking in cultural goods. At this very moment, the terrorist organisation, Daech, is issuing excavation permits and levying taxes on works of art, which then go on to supply the global black market, transiting through free ports that are havens for handling stolen goods and laundering money, including in Europe.

Full text: <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/196898-declaration-de-m-francois-hollande-president-de-la-republique-sur-la>

An investigation by Arnaud Roy for Secrets d'Info (video)

Trafficking archaeological artefacts in areas controlled by terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria brings in 30 million dollars for the Islamic State, through a tax on the resale of looted goods: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x44fq3g>

Document 1: Regional context

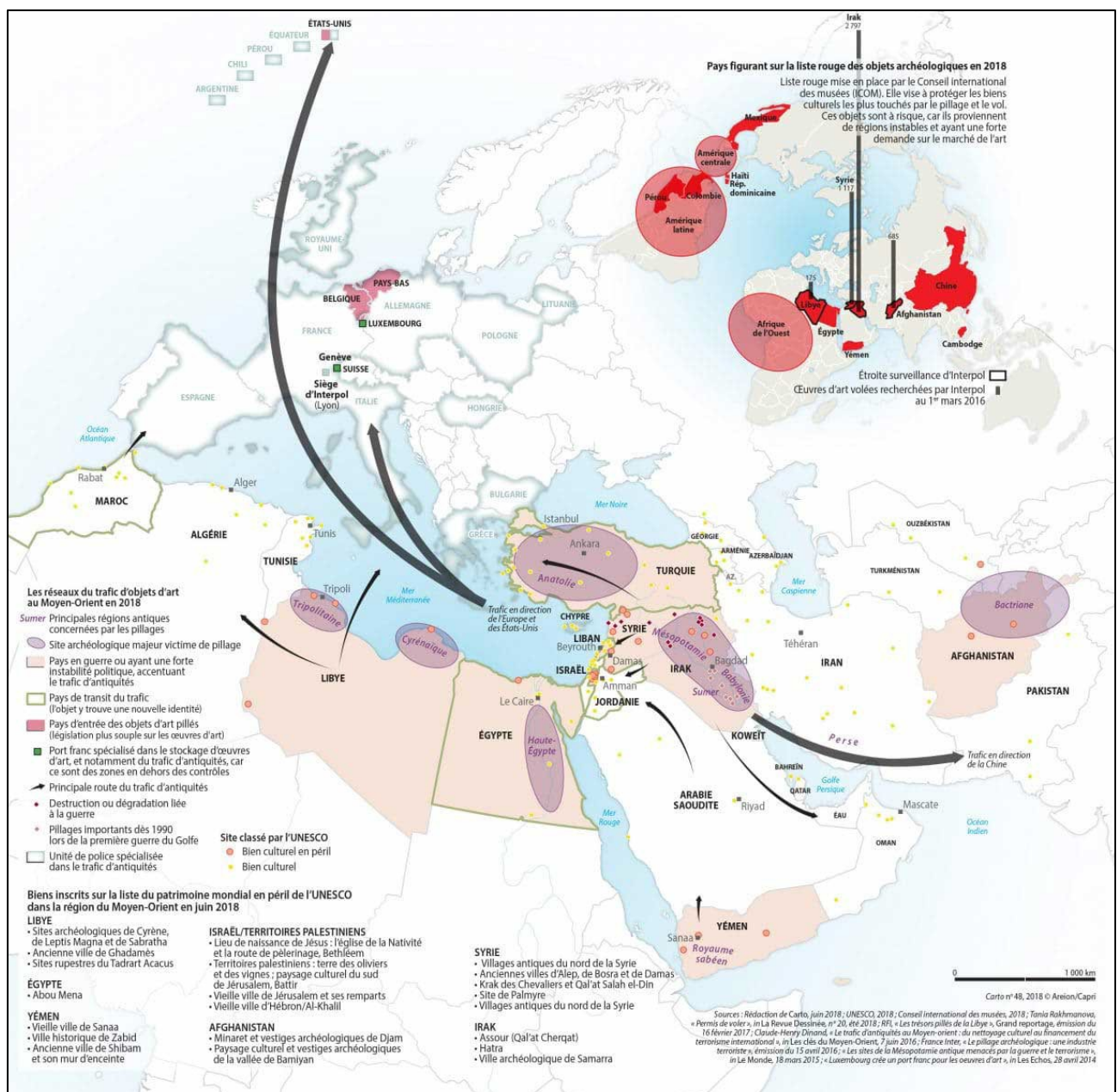
A. Destruction, protection and restoration of heritage: geopolitical issues in Syria - Géopoliticus (video)

Released on 13/05/2022 - Director: Maxime Chappet; Writer: Victor Pelpel; Producer: France Télévisions; Executive Producer: Corner Prod, with participation of IRIS

<https://www.lumni.fr/video/destruction-protection-et-restauration-du-patrimoine-enjeu-geopolitique-en-syrie>

B. Map of the Mediterranean and the Middle East

Based on G. Fourmont, L. Margueritte, "Un trafic au cœur des guerres régionales", Carto n°48, "La Mésopotamie : 3000 ans d'histoire entre Tigre et Euphrate", September-October 2018. DR



<https://www.areion24.news/2018/10/16/antiquites-un-traffic-au-coeur-des-guerres-regionales/>

Document 2: Palmyra

In May 2015, the Islamic State (EI) group took control of Palmyra, an ancient Syrian site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and carried out massive destruction using dynamite, as revealed by satellite photos. It also executed Khaled al-Asaad, an archaeologist who had devoted his life to the site, for refusing to reveal the location of hidden ancient artefacts. The Syrian army liberated Palmyra in March 2016 only to discover the destruction of emblematic monuments such as the Temple of Bêl, the Temple of Baalshamin and the Arch of Triumph. After a brief recapture by the EI in December 2016, the site was once again liberated in March 2017. Restoration efforts are underway, but the cultural loss remains immense.

A. Before and after photos

Joseph Eid, AFP photographer and coordinator for Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, was present at the liberation of Palmyra in March 2016. Using old photographs taken in March 2014, he compared in situ the state of the city and its main monuments before and after the occupation by the jihadist group. He reveals the scale of the disaster by juxtaposing old views with current ones. You can see these juxtapositions at this address:

https://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/patrimoine/palmyre-apres-le-passage-de-daech-un-vaste-champ-de-ruines_3278235.html

B. The reaction of the Head of Syrian Antiquities, M. Abdelkarim

From day one, I expected this scenario. We had already witnessed the terror during the first occupation of the city and, frankly, I didn't think Palmyra would be occupied a second time", added a distraught Maamoun Abdelkarim. "The battle for Palmyra is cultural, not political. I don't understand how the international community and those involved in the Syrian conflict agreed to the fall of Palmyra.

AFP, 20 January 2017

Document 3: Red List of Syrian cultural property at risk (Icom)

A. Extract from the "Syria" red list

For several millennia, the territory of Syria was home to a variety of ancient cultures and kingdoms: prehistoric tribes, Islamic societies, European crusaders, Persian merchants, and the Abbasid and Ottoman empires. Supported by the development of national legislation, Syrians have conscientiously preserved and protected the material traces of these past cultures. The events that have shaken the Arab world have triggered a wave of concern about the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. Of particular concern is the threat of long-term damage to heritage sites. Objects from these sites are highly coveted on the international art and antiquities markets and are therefore subject to theft, looting and illicit trafficking.

The fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property requires the strengthening of legal instruments and the use of practical tools disseminate information, raise public awareness and prevent illegal exports. Following reports of damage and looting at numerous heritage sites in Syria, ICOM decided to publish the Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Property at Risk to help art and heritage professionals and law enforcement officers identify Syrian objects that are protected by national and international legislation.

<https://icom.museum/fr/ressource/liste-rouge-durgence-des-biens-culturels-syriens-en-peril-2/>

IMPORTANT NOTE: a Red List is NOT a list of stolen objects. The cultural goods presented in the List are objects inventoried in the collections of recognised institutions. They serve to illustrate the categories of cultural property protected by legislation and those most exposed to illicit trafficking. ICOM would like to thank all the institutions and individuals who generously provided the photographs presented in the Emergency Red List for Syria.

B. UNESCO video against the looting of cultural property, 2 December 2014 "Looting heritage hurts societies - Iraq" (38 seconds) :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h23oV1ihhGk>

Document 4: Traffic and refunds (press article)

P. Zimmermann, "La Suisse restitue trois objets antiques à la Syrie", Tribune de Genève, 24/11/2021.

<https://www.tdg.ch/trois-objets-antiques-sont-restitues-a-la-syrie-182121040939> (for subscribers)

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More information

- Antiquities trafficking in the Middle East: from cultural cleansing to financing international terrorism. By Claude-Henry Dinand. Published on 07/06/2016
<https://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/Le-traffic-d-antiquites-au-Moyen-Orient-du-nettoyage-culturel-au-financement-du.html>
- Syrian antiquities: on the trafficking routes: Chris Huby Hédi Aouidj Jalal Al Alepi. Published on: 01/05/2015 <https://www.france24.com/fr/20150501-reporters-antiquites-syriennes-traffic-passeurs-patrimoine-turquie-syrie>
- Article FRANCE INFO+ video EXPERT FRANCE 24: The fight against antiquities trafficking in Iraq and Syria just wishful thinking? By Laurent Ribadeau Dumas. Published on 15/12/2014, 10:00
On a global scale, trafficking in cultural goods is one of the biggest of its kind, along with drugs and arms. This trafficking objects, often from clandestine excavations, is particularly intense from Iraq and Syria. How can such a scourge be combated? There are a number of initiatives, coordinated in particular by UNESCO.
https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/syrie/le-combat-contre-les-trafics-dantiquites-en-irak-et-en-syrie-un-voeu-pieux_3068721.html
- Video : Heritage, a bridge between past and future: Yves Ubelmann. By combining several 3D scanning techniques and the use of drones, Yves Ubelmann produces ultra-realistic digital doubles of archaeological sites around the world. What if technology were a major hope for the conservation of our world heritage?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpyHrxOwOue&list=TLGGyg1nPe9kJ4wwNzA2MjAyMw&t>
- Legal article: Helga Turku, Translated from the English by Francine Lavoie.
When cultural property becomes a weapon of war: law, politics and international security
<https://intergentes.com/fr/cultural-property-becomes-tool-warfare-law-politi>

File 3: Pre-Columbian art, an archaeological heritage under threat

Instructions

- 1) Document 1: Where is Guatemala located? What pre-Columbian civilisation lived there?
- 2) Documents 2, 3, 4: Put the facts together. What happened?
 - In the 1960s?
 - - In 2019?
 - 25 October 2021?
- 3) Documents 2, 3, 4: Who are Manichak and Jean Aurance? Can they be accused of theft? Justify your answer using the documents.
- 4) Document 2: How can Guatemala lay claim to this fragment of a stele? In other words, how can the State prove that this property belongs to it?
- 5) Documents 2, 3, 4: Which international organisation facilitates dialogue between Guatemala and France?
- 6) Document 2: Was Manichak Aurance obliged to return this work to Guatemala under the 1970 Convention? Justify your comments.
- 7) Document 5: Why is the looting of pre-Columbian archaeological sites so important?
- 8) Documents 1 and 6: Who carries out this looting? Why is it favoured in Guatemala?
- 9) Documents 1, 5, 6: Name another country that is a victim of this plundering and trafficking. Demonstrate that this traffic is extremely lucrative (= makes a lot of money) and specify what it is used to finance (at least two answers are expected).
- 10) Documents 5 and 6: Does the current legislation (= set of laws) act as a deterrent? Justify your comments.

Background and vocabulary

Pre-Columbian civilisations: these are the societies of America (mainly Central America and Peru) that existed before the continent was "discovered" by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and conquered by the Spanish in the 16th and 18th centuries.

Heritage: all the assets handed down by inheritance from generation to generation within a single nation or country. Paintings, sculptures, ancient monuments, etc. are all part of heritage.

Archaeology: the science of studying past societies. Archaeologists base their work on the monuments and artefacts found in these civilisations.



Location of the three main pre-Columbian civilisations
ALRM, Bibracte - fond de carte d-maps.com

<p>Aztecs ca. 1200 to 1521 AD</p>	<p>Mayas ca. 2600 BC to 1520 AD</p>	<p>Incas ca. 1200 to 1533</p>
 <p>codex Mendoza, photo. H. Stanbury (CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0) https://www.flickr.com/photos/stanbury/16298474174</p>	 <p>Fragment of a mural painting (Public domain) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maya_mural_of_coastal_town_Temple_of_the_Warriors,_Chichen_I_tza.jpg</p>	 <p>Meeting between the Inca and Pizarro, photo. FUEIXJDK (CC-BY-SA 4.0) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Encuentro_entre_Manco_Inca_y_Francisco_Pizarro.jpg</p>
 <p>Tenochtitlán Photo. CarlosVanVegas (CC BY 2.0) https://www.flickr.com/photos/carlosvanvegas/5722057756</p>	 <p>Palenque Photo. Jan Harenburg (CC BY) https://www.flickr.com/photos/carlosvanvegas/5722057756</p>	 <p>Machu Picchu Photo. Zielonamapa.pl (CC-BY-SA) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Machu_Picchu,_Peru_%282018%29.jpg</p>
<p>Empire destroyed by the Spaniard Hernán Cortès, who seized Mexico on behalf of Charles V.</p>	<p>The causes of their "disappearance" are many and are not yet clearly established.</p>	<p>Empire conquered in 1533 by the Spaniard Francisco Pizarro, who later became Governor of Peru.</p>

Document 1: Identity card for Guatemala



Domaine public. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guatemala_carte.png

Surface area: 109,000 km²; the 3rd largest country in Central America (almost twice the size of France).

Population: 17.11 million in 2021. It is the most populous country in Central America. (But 3 to 4 times less populated than France).

Political system: Republic.

Official language: Spanish.

Context: President Alejandro Giammattei has been in office for 4 years since 2020. The country is plagued by corruption, violence, crime and poverty. A political crisis is raging: adoption a controversial budget and migration pact, fraud, poor management of the Covid 19 pandemic, repression and authoritarian excesses, drug trafficking, attacks on the rights of women and sexual minorities, malnutrition in almost half of children under the age of 5, etc.

Document 2: Press article on the restitution of a Mayan stele

A fragment a stolen eighth-century Maya stele that narrowly escaped auction was returned to its country of origin, Guatemala, by a French collector on 25 October 2021 in Paris.

In 2019, during an auction at Millon et associés [= auction house] in Paris of around a hundred pieces, mainly from the private collection of Manichak and Jean Aurance, Guatemala claimed that a fragment of a stele came from Piedras Negras, a famous Maya archaeological site [in northern Guatemala] looted in the 1960s. The stele had been photographed in situ [=at its location] by archaeologists at the end of the 19th century [in 1899], proving its origin.

Withdrawn from sale at the request of Guatemala

Manichak Aurance, who had bought the piece with her husband from an antique dealer in the 1960s and was unaware its fraudulent origin, decided to withdraw the item from the sale. With the mediation [= intervention to reconcile, bring to agreement] of UNESCO [the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Organisation, founded in 1945, which fights, among other things, against the looting and trafficking of antiquities], she began negotiations with Guatemala.

On 25 October at UNESCO, the Guatemalan ambassador to France, Francisco R. Gross Hernandez, was delighted to recover this object "which tells us more about what happened 1,300 years ago on our earth". This fragment shows the upper part of the superb headdress of a former ruler of Piedras Negras, who acceded to the throne in 729 AD. It will now join the collections of Guatemala's Museum of Archaeology. However, its ambassador has called on other countries and UNESCO to do more, explaining that only around 5% of the works claimed by the country have been returned.

Voluntary restitution

France and Guatemala have both signed the 1970 UNESCO Convention [= pact, agreement] on the prohibition of the illicit import, export and transport of cultural property. However, this convention is not retroactive [= the law cannot be applied to events that took place before it was promulgated or came into force]. So collector Manichak Aurance voluntarily chose to return the fragment of the stele in her possession. "My dearest wish is that the fragment will be reunited with the rest of the fresco", she declared when it was handed over to the Guatemalan ambassador.

Sabine Gignoux, "Une stèle maya restituée au Guatemala par une Française",
in La Croix on 26/10/2021

<https://www.la-croix.com/Culture/stele-maya-restituee-Guatemala-Francaise-2021-10-26-1201182319>

Document 3: Photographs

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, the Guatemalan ambassador to France Francisco Gross Hernandez and collector Manichak Aurance at the official presentation of the stele bearing the effigy of a bird of prey at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.



Photos : UNESCO/Christelle ALIX

Document 4 : Video

Video recounting the facts and highlights of the handover ceremony:

<https://fr.euronews.com/video/2021/10/26/une-stele-maya-derobee-il-y-a-des-dizaines-d-annes-va-etre-rendue>

Document 5 : Plundering Latin America's heritage (online text - extracts)

The pre-Columbian civilisations, like the Mayas and Incas, left us a cultural heritage made up of monuments, stelae, burials and a wide range of objects, including vases, jade pendants, textiles and gold coins from all over Latin America. This rich heritage, which has suffered irreparable damage, is in danger.

From the 1960s onwards, the looting of archaeological sites in Central America and the Andes reached alarming proportions, resulting in the irretrievable loss of hidden treasures. At the time, the reasons for this tragedy were varied: chance discoveries by local people, negligence, tourist excursions and urban development. Today, the destruction of heritage is increasingly the work of organised criminal networks who finance the research of local people.

The areas targeted are remote, sparsely populated and beyond the reach of the police. The work generally takes place at night. The means used are axes, tractors and explosives (to gain access to burial sites or to tunnel through archaeological ruins). Looting destroys or ransacks the places where the objects are found, thereby hindering the reconstruction of the context of the discovery, which is essential for understanding archaeological sites. These sites are often the only source of information about specific historical periods. The objects that fall victim to looting can be small and easily transportable, or large stone sculptures cut into several blocks (...)

The Red List of Latin American Cultural Goods in Danger is one of the tools we have at our disposal to combat the illicit trafficking works art and antiquities. It identifies the categories of pre-Columbian and colonial objects (on the scale of the Latin American continent) that are most looted and most often found in auction rooms or on the black market. All these categories objects are protected by national legislation and their export is expressly prohibited. Under no circumstances may they be offered for sale.

The Red List is a plea to museums, houses, art dealers and collectors to stop buying these objects. It is also intended as a verification tool for police and customs services, as well as art dealers. It is by no means exhaustive. The fact an object is not on the Red List does not mean that it is authorised for sale. (...)

Every year, 800 million dollars' worth of Pre-Columbian artefacts are smuggled out of Peru. Weak regulations encourage this traffic. For example, a gold plate from the armour of a warrior found in the tombs of the "Man of Sipán" - and confiscated on 7 October by FBI agents - was sold on the black market for 1.6 million dollars.

It is estimated that 80% of known archaeological sites in the Yucatán Peninsula [State of Mexico] have been looted. Mayan polychrome vases [= in several colours], jade pendants and reliefs from stelae or other monuments are the most prized objects. In their search, looters have not hesitated to destroy monuments and tombs in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, thus preventing any historical reconstruction (...)

All these thefts took place despite national legislation prohibiting the purchase and export of these objects, which form part of Latin America's cultural heritage.

Terra Peru, "Plundering Latin America's heritage",

<https://www.voyage-perou.com/info/art-culture/patrimoine>

(Terra Peru is the website of a French-speaking Peruvian tourism agency)

What does international law say about the illicit trafficking in cultural property?

1970: UNESCO Convention to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property.

1990: Icomos Charter on archaeological heritage management.

1992: Malta European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage.

1995: Unidroit Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.

2014: The UN takes action against trafficking in cultural property (resolution 69/196).

The European Union adopts a directive on the restitution of cultural objects that have been lost or stolen unlawfully left the territory of a Member State.

2019: UN Resolution 2462 against the financing of terrorism.

'The International Council of Museums (Icom) regularly publishes **Red Lists**, which are tools presenting typical cultural objects that are likely be stolen, exposed to export and illicitly resold. Despite all these measures, works of art represent **the world's third largest form of trafficking**. According to Interpol, trafficking in illicit works of art has been on **the increase** over the last decade, particularly **in conflict zones**.

Bertrand TRIBOULOT, archaeologist and engineer with the Île-de-France Regional Department of Cultural Affairs, who spoke on 15 May 2023 at the "Looting is not playing" training course organised by PREAC, Bibracte's archaeological heritage centre.

Further information

- Le "Monstre de la Terre", jewel of Olmec archaeology, is back in Mexico, Courrier International, 26 May 2023 online (The Olmecs are an ancient pre-Columbian people of Mesoamerica who flourished from 2500 BC to 500 BC. They lived on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico):
<https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/culture-le-monstre-de-la-terre-joyau-archeologique-olmeque-est-de-retour-au-mexique>
- Theft of 80 pre-Columbian cultural objects - UNESCO website, 13 June 2022.
<https://www.unesco.org/fr/articles/lunesco-appelle-la-protection-du-patrimoine-culturel>
- Customs hands over seized archaeological objects to the Peruvian authorities, April 2021. The 9 objects seized in Poitiers in 2012 include jewellery, ornaments, ceremonial objects and ceramics from the Cupisnique (1000-200) and Chimú (900-1400) cultures. These are civilisations that predate the Incas: the Cupisnic civilisation flourished 1,000 BC, followed by the Moche until 600 AD and beyond, then the Lambayeque until the year 1,000, then the Chimú until the Incas around 1500.
<https://www.douane.gouv.fr/actualites/la-douane-remet-aux-autorites-peruviennes-des-objets-archeologiques-saisis>
- Argentina returns six coins stolen from Mexico, article by Mélanie C, 22 March 2017. Information, reliability sources: the MayAzteque website is run by a journalist from Le Parisien:
<https://www.mayaztequemexique.fr/largentine-restitue-six-pieces-volees-mexique-872>
- Italy finds 12 stolen coins and returns them to Mexico, article by Mélanie C, 29 December 2016. Information, reliability of sources: the MayAzteque website is run by a journalist from Le Parisien:
<https://www.mayaztequemexique.fr/litalie-retrouve-12-pieces-volees-rend-mexique-770>
- A stolen Olmec bas-relief returned to Mexico, article by Mélanie C, 26 September 2015. Information, reliability of sources: the MayAzteque website is run by a journalist from Le Parisien :
<https://www.mayaztequemexique.fr/un-bas-relief-olmeque-vole-rendu-au-mexique-269>
- UNESCO Red List for Latin America :
<https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Red-List-Latin-America-English-and-Spanish.pdf>

Suggestions for further activities

Did you know?



On 12 and 13 October 2022, the Musée d'Histoire de Marseille hosted an international symposium entitled "[Working together to combat archaeological looting and the illicit trafficking of antiquities](#)" as a prelude to the exhibition "Trésors coupables, pillage archéologique en France et dans le bassin méditerranéen" (16 December 2022 - 12 November 2023).

The video recordings of this conference, as well as those of complementary events, are all available on the Musée d'Histoire de Marseille's YouTube channel:

- Symposium: Working together to combat archaeological looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities, 2022
 - [Working together to combat archaeological looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities 1](#) (03:13)
 - [Working together to combat archaeological looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities 2](#) (05:03)
 - [Working together to combat archaeological looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities 3](#) (02:26)
 - [Working together to combat archaeological looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities 4](#) (03:51)
- Conferences
 - [Combating trafficking in cultural goods in conflict zones](#) (01:59)
 - [Preventing and combating looting at archaeological sites](#) (01:47)
 - [How about a treasure hunt? Archaeological heritage issues](#) (01:04)
- Training "A new challenge for Artistic and Cultural Education: the fight against the looting and illicit trafficking of archaeological objects", Bibracte PREAC:
 - [Combating the looting and illicit trafficking of archaeological objects 1](#) (01:50)
 - [Combating the looting and illicit trafficking of archaeological objects 2](#) (04:18)
 - [Combating the looting and illicit trafficking of archaeological objects 3](#) (04:16)

Ideas for additional tasks

Pupils who have worked alone or in groups on the files in this educational resource can then propose graphic renditions to present the subject in the school's corridors or Documentation and Information Centre, making it accessible to all pupils.

This output can take the form of posters, comic strips, etc., for example to illustrate the history of an object, and can be used in conjunction with art classes in secondary schools or optional courses in high schools.