



HEADLINE FIGURES AND MISLEADING STATISTICS RELATING TO ANTIQUITIES AND THE SYRIAN CRISIS

It is not just the antiquities trade who have been concerned about propaganda and misleading statistics in the debate over looting in Syria and Iraq. As Neil Brodie, archaeologist and Senior Research Fellow in the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research at the University of Glasgow, argues, misleading information can lead to an inappropriate response (see <http://goo.gl/HzGRzd>). IADAA have sought clarity by researching the sources of some of the more commonly quoted figures. This document provides those independent sources via weblinks for you to check. We hope you find it useful.

• \$2 BILLION / \$3 BILLION / BILLIONS OF DOLLARS

The unsubstantiated value of the global illicit trade in antiquities, as claimed by many pressure groups, now widely accepted as being discredited. Original sources for these claims:

- 2000 report by Jenny Dooley, Neil Brodie and Peter Watson of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research in the University of Cambridge, *Stealing History: The Illicit Trade in Cultural Material*, which references *Independent* article, *Great sale of the century*, by Geraldine Norman on November 24, 1990. The 2000 report also acknowledged the true value might be much less. Also thought to be the basis for FBI figure, according to Oxford Archaeologist Emma Cunliffe. However, the Norman article does not mention such a figure.
- Unsubstantiated claim made by unnamed official at an ICOM Conference in Europe (possibly Austria, The Hague) in the late 1980s. Source: James McAndrew, who in 2010 set up the US Department of Homeland Security's International Art and Antiquity Investigations Division and personally created DHS's training program originally titled "Fighting illicit traffic of Cultural Property at U.S. Ports of Entry".
- See *Stealing History: The Illicit Trade in Cultural Material* references: See the top of page 23:-

1.9 THE FINANCIAL VALUE OF THE ILLICIT TRADE

'Geraldine Norman has estimated that the illicit trade in antiquities, world-wide, may be as much as \$2 billion a year¹⁰; other estimates have ranged down to \$150 million. As already pointed out, because the trade is clandestine, reliable data is hard to find.'

Check the footnote (10) cited as the source for this, and this is what it says (see page 60):

¹⁰ Norman, G. Great sale of the century. *Independent*, 24 November 1990. <http://bit.ly/1OZECKe>

- See accompanying pdf of Norman article, which shows no such figure.
- See Antiquities section of July 2015 blog *Less box ticking, more research – the survey and statistics crisis* <http://imacq.com/2015/07/> which shows how this figure has fed into recent media reports:
- Source evidence for the above, including Cunliffe and McAndrew references: See comments thread at <http://bit.ly/1Q5RCdE>

• \$36 MILLION

Often quoted as the revenue raised by ISIS from exploiting looted antiquities in the al-Nabuk region alone in 2013-2014. Original sources for this claim:

- Guardian article, *How an arrest in Iraq revealed Isis's \$2bn jihadist network*, by Martin Chulov on June 15, 2014, quoting anonymous intelligence officer following June 4 raid on ISIS leader Abu Abdulrahman al-Bilawi's hideout, which led to capture of USB sticks with documentation. Direct quote from article does

not mention antiquities but has been misinterpreted as doing so. <http://bit.ly/1p61UvG>

• \$11 MILLION

Quoted as the value of antiquities imported from Syria to the US in 2013 (up 134% on 2012).

Original sources for this claim:

- *Conflict and the Heritage Trade*, a report by Cultural property lawyer Rick St Hilaire for Cultural Heritage Law and Policy Research, October 2014, quoting US Customs figures. However, St Hilaire's figures actually relate to the category 'Antiques' (code 9706), with no mention made of Antiquities. St Hilaire does quote a sub category directly related to Antiquities (code 9705): ...Historical, Archaeological, Numismatic and other interest, giving the following figures for 2011, 2012 and 2013: \$330,129, \$34,250, \$117,913.
- St Hilaire notes in his December 29, 2015 article "*Antiques*" from Syria: U.S. Cultural Property Import Stats Raise Suspicion: 'What we do not know is what kind of objects these "antiques" were. They may have been at-risk archaeological objects like cuneiform tablets or ancient pottery, deliberately mislabeled by smugglers as being "of an age exceeding 100 years." Customs officials need to find out.' If these imports have been mislabeled, the figures are erroneous; if not, they show a 64.5% fall from 2011-2013 and equate to just over 1% of the headline \$11m figure.
- January 20, 2016 report by David Grantham of the National Center for Policy Analysis, *Shutting down ISIS' Antiquities Trade*, erroneously ascribes the \$11m figure to antiquities rather than antiques, reproducing this as a bar chart on page 2.

– Sources for the above:

<http://bit.ly/1Tpnrz6> and <http://bit.ly/1RR70te> and <http://bit.ly/1M6ITUj>

• \$4 MILLION

The only figure relating to looted antiquities based on primary source evidence on the ground in Syria, documents seized by US Special Forces in May 2015 during a raid on the HQ of ISIS head of antiquities, Abu Sayyaf. The \$4m figure relates to a 12-month period from 2014-15 and is based on fees charged for licences to dig during a period of around six months. According to journalist Ben Taub in a December 4, 2015 *New Yorker* article, further analysis of the receipts by Bernard Haykel, a professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton and an expert on Daesh, shows that \$4m figure also relates to the excavation and extraction of minerals and metals.

– US State Department source: <http://1.usa.gov/207y7Yp>

– Source analysis by archaeologist Dr Neil Brodie: <http://bit.ly/1XIIIIG>

– Source evidence of *New Yorker* article: <http://bit.ly/1PtkXJ>

• €150-200M

Estimated value of the legal global trade in antiquities according to research by the International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art (IADAA). This figure arises from canvassing IADAA members, analysing auction results for 2013 and assessing sales by dealers with premises for 2013. It excludes internet sales and exceptional one-off sales of very high prices. The total came to €130m. IADAA upped this to €200m to cover all eventualities.

– Source: Vincent Geerling, Chairman, IADAA.

• **€51 BILLION:** Value of the entire global art and antiques market in 2014.

• **€47.7 BILLION:** Value of the entire global art and antiques market in 2015.

– Source: *TEFAF Art Market Report 2015* and *TEFAF Art Market Report 2016* produced for The European Fine Art Foundation by Dr Clare McAndrew of Arts Economics www.tefaf.com

