FACEBOOK'S BLACK MARKET IN ANTIQUITIES

ICOM RED LIST ARTIFACTS OFFERED ON FACEBOOK

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Cover Photo: Keith Gardner / U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

2019 Antiquities Trafficking and Heritage Anthropology Research (ATHAR) Project

www.atharproject.org

Twitter @ATHARProject
Since 2017, the researchers of the Antiquities Trafficking and Heritage Anthropology Research (ATHAR) Project have led an investigative study documenting and analyzing the illicit trade in antiquities on Facebook. The research has revealed a vast transnational criminal network involved in trafficking, terrorism financing, and organized crime. An analysis of 95 Arabic Facebook Groups created to traffic illicit antiquities indicates that there are 488 individual administrators (admins) or moderators controlling a collective 1,947,195 members across 95 Facebook Groups.

ATHAR’s investigations have yielded evidence of widespread trafficking across the Middle East and North Africa. The ATHAR Project’s June 2019 case study on four Syrian based Facebook Groups found that an astonishing 80% of the posts offering artifacts come from conflict zones or countries bordering those in conflict. Many of the items offered resemble those on the Red Lists for the Middle East and North Africa that have been compiled by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

The ATHAR Project has documented thousands of illicit artifacts on Facebook with tens of thousands more still left to document. The artifacts captured by ATHAR span a variety of periods, materials, and geographic areas. A selection of artifacts offered in antiquities trafficking Groups on Facebook from 2014 onward have been compiled in this catalogue to provide a window into the range of items matching those found in ICOM Red Lists for Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.¹

ICOM Red Lists are not lists of stolen objects, but rather examples of documented cultural goods that are vulnerable to illicit trafficking. However, the artifacts offered on Facebook and shared in the following images are in fact illicit.

This catalogue is compiled to illustrate examples the illicit cultural goods that are in fact stolen and match those compiled in the ICOM Red Lists. The catalogue is not meant to serve as a marker of authenticity nor as an exhaustive list of antiquities trafficked. In every case, the ATHAR Project has documented multiple examples for each Red List item, only a selection are shared here.

¹ https://icom.museum/en/resources/red-lists/
Funerary elements – Human remains and associated objects (Pharaonic era)

**Material:** Wood/Vegetal

**Type:** Containers/Vessels (Coffin)

**Country:** Egypt

**Date Offered:** 29 Sep 2015

**Facebook User Location:** Cairo, Egypt

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Architectural elements (Pharaonic era)

**Material:** Rocks/Stones

**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving

**Country:** Egypt

**Date Offered:** 29 Sep 2015

**Facebook User Location:** Cairo, Egypt

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Funerary elements – Wood (Predynastic, Protodynastic, Pharaonic and Nubian era)

**Material:** Wood/Vegetal

**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving

**Country:** Egypt

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Architectural elements (Predynastic, Protodynastic, Pharaonic and Nubian era)

**Material:** Rocks/Stones

**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving

**Country:** Egypt

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Funerary elements – Human remains and associated objects (Predynastic, Protodynastic, Pharaonic and Nubian era)

**Material:** Human/Animal Remains

**Type:** Human remains

**Country:** Egypt

Source: ICOM Red List
Funerary elements - Animal mummies (Predynastic, Protodynastic, Pharaonic and Nubian era)

Material: Human/Animal Remains
Type: Mineral/Animals/Plants
Country: Egypt

Funerary elements - Human remains and associated objects (Predynastic, Protodynastic, Pharaonic and Nubian era)

Material: Human/Animal Remains
Type: Human remains
Country: Egypt

Date Offered: 21 May 2014
Facebook User Location: N/A

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Funerary elements - Human remains and associated objects (Pharaonic era)

Material: Wood/Vegetal
Type: Containers/Vessels (Coffin)
Country: Egypt

Date Offered: 29 Sep 2015
Facebook User Location: Cairo, Egypt

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Religious or ceremonial portraits (Egyptian Graeco-Roman and Nubian Meroitic era)

Material: Wood/Vegetal
Type: Paintings/Drawings/Engravings
Country: Egypt

Date Offered: 27 Aug 2018
Facebook User Location: Alexandria, Egypt

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Source: ICOM Red List
Religious or ceremonial portraits (Egyptian Graeco-Roman and Nubian Meroitic era)

Material: Plaster/Stucco/Paste
Type: Paintings/Drawings/Engravings
Country: Egypt
Date Offered: 29 Sep 2015
Facebook User Location: Cairo, Egypt

Books, documents, and manuscripts (Islamic era)

Material: Paper/Writing medium
Type: Documents/Manuscripts/Books
Country: Egypt
Date Offered: 7 Feb 2018
Facebook User Location: Giza, Egypt

Statues - Ceramics (Predynastic, Protodynastic, Pharaonic and Nubian era)

Material: Clay/Ceramic
Type: Sculptures/Relief
Country: Egypt
Date Offered: 3 Sep 2018
Facebook User Location: Cairo, Egypt
**Stamps and seals - Cylinder seals**

*Material:* Rocks/Stones  
*Type:* Seals/Stamps  
*Country:* Iraq  
*Date Offered:* 14 Aug 2018  
*Facebook User Location:* Baghdad, Iraq  

**Source:** Facebook via ATHAR Project

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**Figural sculpture - Sculpture in the round, Stone votive statues**

*Material:* Rocks/Stones  
*Type:* Sculptures/Relief carving  
*Countries:* Iraq  
*Date Offered:* 2 Oct 2017  
*Facebook User Location:* N/A

**Source:** Facebook via ATHAR Project

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**Vessels and containers - Glass**

*Material:* Glass  
*Type:* Containers/Vessels  
*Countries:* Iraq  
*Date Offered:* 22 Jul 2017  
*Facebook User Location:* N/A

**Source:** Facebook via ATHAR Project
Architectural and furniture fragments
Material: Clay/Ceramic
Type: Architectural elements
Country: Iraq
Date Offered: 21 May 2017
Facebook User Location: Kirkuk, Iraq
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Coins - Islamic
Material: Metals
Type: Currency/Medals/Postage stamps
Country: Iraq
Date Offered: 24 Sep 2018
Facebook User Location: Kurdistan
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Tablets
Material: Clay/Ceramic
Type: Plaques/Steles/Tablets Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Iraq
Date Offered: 20 Jul 2017
Facebook User Location: Baghdad, Iraq
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
Figural sculpture – Reliefs
Material: Rocks/Stone
Type: Plaques/Steles/Tablets
Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Iraq
Date Offered: 8 May 2019
Facebook User Location: (Current) Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, (From) Kurdistan
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Stamps and seals – Cylinder seals
Material: Rocks/Stones
Type: Seals/Stamps
Country: Iraq
Date Offered: 16 Jun 2016
Facebook User Location: Baghdad, Iraq
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

Architectural elements – Foundation elements, Clay cones
Material: Clay/Ceramic
Type: Architectural elements Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Iraq
Date Offered: 27 Dec 2017
Facebook User Location: N/A
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
**Accessories and instruments – Lamps**

**Material:** Clay/Ceramic  
**Type:** Tools/Instruments Furniture  
**Country:** Libya  
**Date Offered:** 23 Mar 2018  
**Facebook User Location:** Kabaw, Ghadamis, Libya

**Sculptures – Stone**

**Material:** Rocks/Stones  
**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving  
**Country:** Libya  
**Date Offered:** 30 Mar 2019  
**Facebook User Location:** N/A

**Reliefs, plaques, steles and inlays – Stone, stucco and bronze**

**Material:** Rocks/Stones  
**Type:** Plaques/Steles/Tablets Sculptures/Relief carving  
**Country:** Libya  
**Date Offered:** 4 Aug 2018  
**Facebook User Location:** Tripoli, Libya

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project* 
*Source: ICOM Red List*
** Coins **

** Material:** Metals

** Type:** Currency/Medals/Postage stamps

** Country:** Libya

** Date Offered:** 22 Nov 2018

** Facebook User Location:** Benghazi, Libya

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** Sculptures - Stone **

** Material:** Rocks/Stones

** Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving

** Country:** Libya

** Date Offered:** 24 Mar 2018

** Facebook User Location:** Ottawa, Ontario (From) Libya

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** Architectural elements - Mosaics **

** Material:** Rocks/Stones

** Type:** Mosaics

** Country:** Libya

** Date Offered:** 23 Apr 2017

** Facebook User Location:** N/A

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Reliefs, plaques, steles and inlays – Stone, stucco and bronze
Material: Rocks/Stones
Type: Plaques/Steles/Tablets
Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Libya
Date Offered: 2 Nov 2017
Facebook User Location: Tripoli, Libya

Sculptures – Stone
Material: Rocks/Stones
Type: Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Libya
Date Offered: 18 Dec 2018
Facebook User Location: N/A

Rock Art
Material: Rocks/Stones
Type: Paintings/Drawings/Engravings
Country: Libya
Date Offered: 1 Nov 2017
Facebook User Location: N/A

Source: ICOM Red List
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
Cylinder Seals
Material: Gems/Pearls
Type: Seals/Stamps
Country: Syria
Date Offered: 12 Mar 2019
Facebook User Location: Jableh, Syria

Sculpture in the round – Bronze male figurines
Material: Metals
Type: Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Syria
Date Offered: 16 Apr 2019
Facebook User Location: Damascus, Syria

Accessories and instruments – Weapons and tools
Material: Metals
Type: Tools/Instruments Weapons/Military
Country: Syria
Date Offered: 2 Feb 2019
Facebook User Location: N/A
**Sculpture in the round - Statues**

**Material:** Gems/Pearls Rocks/Stones

**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving

**Country:** Syria

**Date Offered:** 15 Oct 2018

**Facebook User Location:** Sarmada, Syria

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

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**Accessories and instruments - Jewelry**

**Material:** Metals

**Type:** Jewelry/Personal adornments

**Country:** Syria

**Date Offered:** 2 Feb 2019

**Facebook User Location:** Damascus, Syria

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

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**Sculpture in high and low relief - Limestone funerary reliefs**

**Material:** Rocks/Stones

**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving

**Country:** Syria

**Date Offered:** 20 Mar 2019

**Facebook User Location:** N/A, Syria

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural elements - Mosaics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong>: Rocks/Stones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong>: Mosaics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong>: Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Offered</strong>: 4 Jun 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facebook User Location</strong>: N/A, Syria</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sculpture in high and low relief - Ivory reliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong>: Human/Animal Remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong>: Sculptures/Relief carving, Plaques/Steles/Tablets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong>: Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Offered</strong>: 26 Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facebook User Location</strong>: Damascus, Syria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sculpture in the round - Votive figurines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material</strong>: Clay/Ceramic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong>: Sculptures/Relief carving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong>: Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date Offered</strong>: 29 Jul 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facebook User Location</strong>: Idlib, Syria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
Writings
Material: Metals
Type: Documents/Manuscripts/Books Plaques/Steles/Tablets Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Yemen
Date Offered: 23 Jan 2018
Facebook User Location: Shabwah, Hadramawt, Yemen

Accessories and tools
Material: Metals
Type: Tools/Instruments Furniture
Country: Yemen
Date Offered: 23 Jan 2018
Facebook User Location: Shabwah, Hadramawt, Yemen

Sculpted objects - Statuettes
Material: Rocks/Stones
Type: Sculptures/Relief carving
Country: Yemen
Date Offered: 26 Oct 2016
Facebook User Location: `Ataq, Ma’rib, Yemen

Source: ICOM Red List
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project
**Sculpted objects - Stelae**

**Material**: Rocks/Stones

**Type**: Plaques/Steles/Tablets

**Country**: Yemen

**Date Offered**: 18 Feb 2018

**Facebook User Location**: Aden, Yemen

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project*

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**Sculpted objects - Stelae**

**Material**: Rocks/Stones

**Type**: Sculptures/Relief carving

**Country**: Yemen

**Date Offered**: 18 May 2016

**Facebook User Location**: N/A

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project*

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**Accessories and tools - Incense burners, astrolabes and lamps**

**Material**: Rocks/Stones

**Type**: Tools/Instruments

**Country**: Yemen

**Date Offered**: 6 Nov 2017

**Facebook User Location**: Sanaa, Yemen

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project*
**Sculpted objects - Statues and busts**

**Material:** Metals  
**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving  
**Country:** Yemen  
**Date Offered:** 20 Feb 2018  
**Facebook User Location:** Sanaa, Yemen

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project*

**Sculpted objects - Statues and busts**

**Material:** Gems/Pearls Rocks/Stones  
**Type:** Sculptures/Relief carving  
**Country:** Yemen  
**Date Offered:** 16 Mar 2018  
**Facebook User Location:** Aden, Yemen

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project*

**Accessories and tools - Weapons**

**Material:** Metals  
**Type:** Weapons/Military Tools/Instruments  
**Country:** Yemen  
**Date Offered:** 10 Feb 2018  
**Facebook User Location:** Ma’rib, Yemen

*Source: Facebook via ATHAR Project*