Antiquities Trafficking Networks in the Context of the Syrian Civil War

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PERSPECTIVE

The Syrian war created a chance for increased trafficking of antiquities and has resulted during a renewed awareness on the part of a worldwide audience. The persistence of criminal and organisational networks which facilitate antiquities trafficking networks (ATNs) has been recognised as significant, leading to increased interest within the event of latest and improved methods of understanding such networks. While this field of research has traditionally been dominated by relevant areas like archaeology, law, art and museum studies, there is a clear gap in crime prevention research. This paper presents a criminal offense script of Syrian antiquities trafficking networks during the Syrian war which has been generated from open source journalistic data. In creating a broad crime script for such a prevalent issue, this paper aims to demonstrate the need for further crime script analysis and specifically crime prevention research more generally within the study of antiquities trafficking.

Antiquities Trafficking Networks (ATNs) is a term used to refer to the looting, trafficking, and selling of illicit antiquities. Illicit antiquities are often defined as "archaeological objects that are illegally excavated or exported from their country of origin for monetary gain." Essentially, this refers to any cultural, historical, or archaeological object which is illegally excavated. Antiquities trafficking represent a bootleg network that happens on a worldwide scale, and which operates as a market, meaning that it operates within the grey area between legal and illicit markets. As an example, the term 'black market' is typically used to ask a market which operates outside of legal market—or in an illegal manner, because the antiquities market is self-regulated. With no incentives to enforce strict buying/selling procedures, the consequence is that the antiquities market operating within the grey area between licit and illicit. In recent years, more criminological research has been conducted on ATNs and this work has served to document important aspects of the trade—including the recognition that ATNs operate as organised crime, are transnational in nature, and are a market (as against a black market or a legitimate market).

Typically, an object is transported from its site or location of origin before being sold or traded, and intrinsically, a smuggler is usually required at some point within the process. The role of smuggler are often a private person or are often taken on by a private playing multiple roles (For example Looter/Smuggler or Smuggler/Middleman). This role simply represents an action of illegally or covertly transporting an antiquity. It's a rather traditional role when it involves illicit networks, and a few smugglers engage within the transit of varied sorts of objects (weapons, guns, drugs, and people).

The decisions of whether an object must be disguised or concealed are often indicative of how a smuggler operates, how they're meaning to smuggle an object, and therefore the sort of object being smuggled. For cases in Syria, there's a scarcity of knowledge concerning smuggling specifically, but enough data exists generally to form deductions concerning what proportion preparation of an object takes place. Within Syria, there's a definite lack of evidence that smugglers are trying to cover objects, a results of less secure borders from the conflict, which successively has been exasperated by the migration crisis.

The crime script presented here provides a start line for the utilization of crime script analysis within the research of antiquities trafficking networks. The quantity of research concerning crime prevention remains lacking within this field, and crime script analysis provides a relevant, efficient, and accessible sort of analysis which will be considered during a field which incorporates a good sort of expertise. Throughout this text, the problem of gathering such data to finish this crime script has been discussed. This unfortunately also reflects a reality of studying such networks—they are often fragmented and disjointed, with various actors becoming active within the network, or leaving the network, at various stages.

This article has sought to demonstrate, that prevention analysis—such as crime script analysis—can still be relevant and effective even when faced with disjointed sorts of data and research. We must introduce prevention research—even in an imperfect form—if we hope to actively prevent illicit antiquities, and not resort to reactive measures. The Syrian script provides a basic model of actions essential to traffic an antiquity. With this script there now exists a broad framework which will be expanded upon or altered to satisfy specific conditions or samples of antiquities looting, transit, or marketing specific to Syrian antiquities trafficking. Crime script analysis provides a flexible framework which researchers and enforcement alike can utilize to think about further points of intervention against the script actions themselves, and therefore

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Citation: Velasco R (2021) Antiquities Trafficking Networks in the Context of the Syrian Civil War. Social and Crimonol 9: 223.

the wider circumstances that facilitate them. If we seek to use effective prevention measures, we must first understand the actions and motivations which drive this network. Crime script analysis is that the method by which this will be achieved and can ultimately end in a far better understanding of how we'd tackle antiquities trafficking networks.