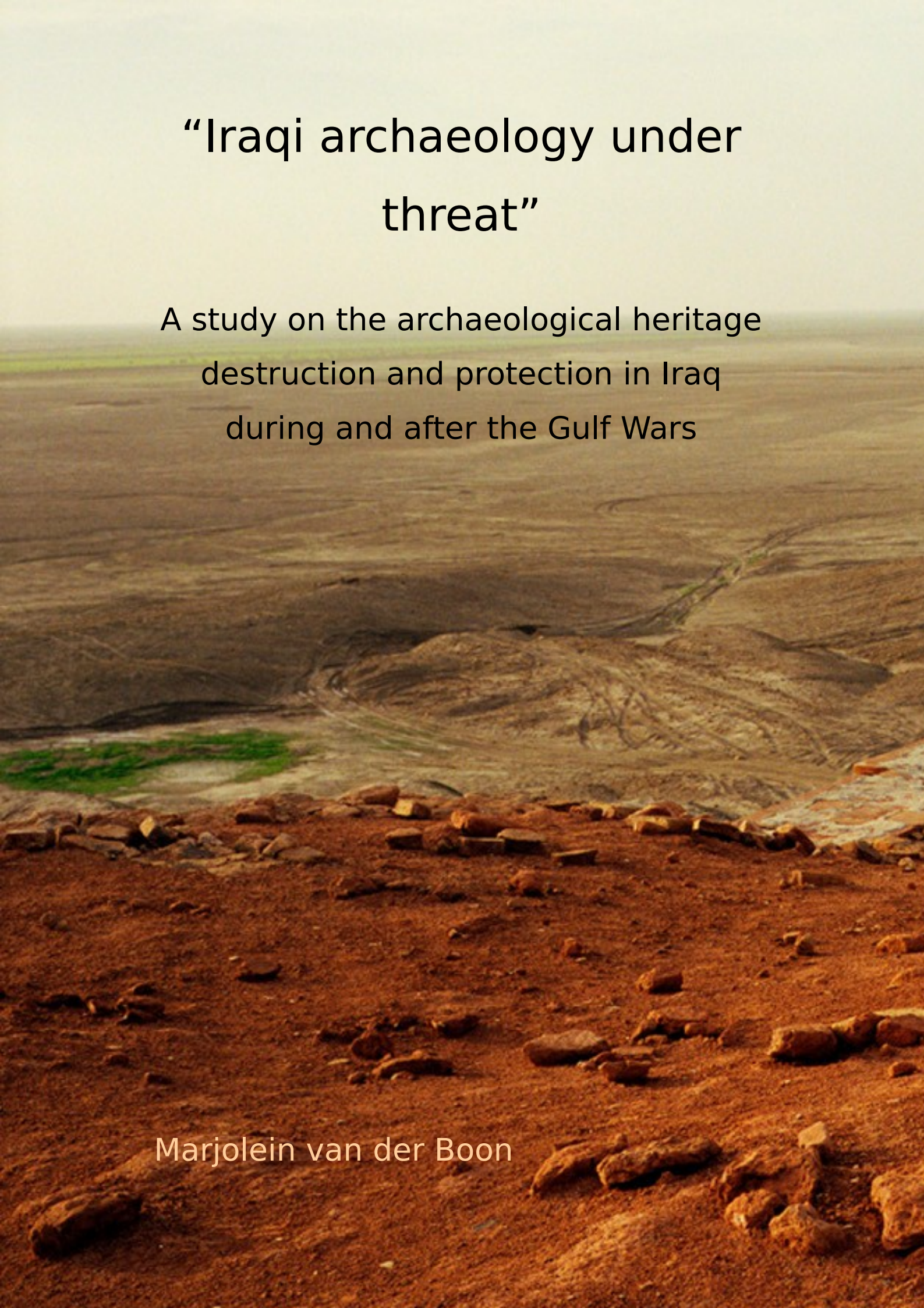

“Iraqi archaeology under threat”

A study on the archaeological heritage destruction and protection in Iraq during and after the Gulf Wars

Marjolein van der Boon

Figure on front cover:

Soldier looking out over the desert from the top of the Ziggurat in Ur

http://www.theroadtonasiriyah.com/

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“Iraqi archaeology under threat”

A study on the archaeological heritage destruction and protection in Iraq during and after the Gulf Wars

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Bachelorthesis: 1043WY

Supervisor: assistant professor O.P. Nieuwenhuyse

Near Eastern archaeology

University of Leiden, Faculty of Archaeology

Leiden, 21-08-2013, second version

Shapes of men carrying their shovels blended into the desert in the distance. In their silent language of power, they understood each other. And that's what makes the tribal system simultaneously so strong and dangerous. At times they are even more powerful than governmental institutions.

(Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008, 51)

Figure on previous page:

The traces of looting by a family at the Sumerian site of Arido

http://vero-de-viguerie.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Looting-of-iraqee-cultural-heritage/G0000rjziGzLvFv0/I00001wIOQo9w_Z4

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Foreword

During my studies at Leiden University, I have tried to start combining archaeological science with more social and current aspects. I find it very interesting to see what kind of impact material from thousands of years ago still has on us today. Archaeology matters: people feel connected to it, even if it is not their own heritage. Since ten years we have now been confronted with the Second Gulf Iraq war and its consequences. Iraq is known for its broad, long and intriguing history, but in the last couple of decennia, it has become much more known as a country of fear, war, chaos and destruction. People have been subjected to danger, threats , hunger and death. Next to all this, the war has caused a major strike in the country's archaeological remains.

When I was supposed to choose a subject for my bachelor thesis, I have decided to study the relationship between archaeological remains and the issues around current conflict: I have been able to combine the present with the past. The protection of archaeological heritage in Iraq is problematic, complicated and frustrating at times, but also very intriguing. To face the problem, we have to step out of a theoretical framework. One of the most important things I have learned by writing this thesis, is that the archaeological study of any kind in a conflict area is complicated, never black and white, and one can never take information for granted as so many stakeholders are involved with dissimilar experiences, opinions and profits.

I would like to thank my supervisor, assistant professor Olivier Nieuwenhuyse for his support and assistance in this thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction

One decade ago, the Second Gulf war started in Iraq. It has been a major topic in the newspapers all over the world and it has influenced many lives. The war caused death, fear, suffering and hunger. Unfortunately, many problems did not end after the official "end" of this war in 2011. One of them is the ongoing looting and other forms of destruction of archaeological sites, which is an increasing problem ever since 2003. This thesis studies this increase in destruction of the country's archaeological heritage. It is meant for anyone interested or confronted with the subject.

Iraq houses many ethnicities. The Shias and Sunnis are the two main Arab ethnicities dominating the southern areas. The north of Iraq is dominated by Kurdic peoples, they have a relatively autonomic area with an own language, flag and culture. Currently this is the most prosperous and stable region of Iraq. Iraq is almost completely closed in by its neighbouring countries: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Iran. Although Iraq is very dependent on its neighbouring countries for water, it has very rich resources of petroleum and natural gas of its own, being very wanted by the rest of the world. To archaeologists, Iraq is a sacred chamber full of treasures waiting to be revealed. It has known an incredible history which tells the story of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Aramians, Persians, Arabs and Turcans, and knew times of enormous prosperity. The roots of the script and of the wheel lie in the fertile grounds of the Euphrates and the Tigris, the two most important rivers that flow through the country and have created areas with fertile grounds between the mountain, desert and savannah grounds (Figure 1). During the reign of the Arabian Muslims, many regions knew an important period of scientific and cultural breakthrough. This complex and magnificent mix of cultures and ethnicities has left us a grand diversity of archaeological materials, sites and features, which is a major component in our understanding of the past and the rise of civilisation.

Unfortunately, political affairs have severely disrupted the country's landscape for about half a century. Iraq was part of the Ottoman empire until 1917. It then became British territory, interrupted by several years of independence, from 1932 until 1941. The

British monarchy ended in 1958 with the coupe d'état of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath party. Saddam Hussein, a member of this party, became president in 1979. His

Figure 1: The Map of Iraq (www.mapsofworld.com)

dictatorship formed a reign of terror in which he banned out every possible way of opposition. In the three decades of his reign, Iraq has known three great wars. The first was between Iraq and Iran, from 1980 until 1988. The second one started with the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and is known as the First Gulf War. Kuwait was freed one year later in 1991 during "Operation Desert Storm", led by an international coalition. This involved the imposition of severe sanctions on Iraq. The third war, the Second Gulf War, started in 2003, when the " Coalition of Willing" (led by the United States and the United Kingdom) declared war to Iraq. Saddam Hussein was then banned and the Ba'ath party was disbanded. Since then Iraq has housed a parliamentary democratic system, and several elections have been held. Different parties have had dominance, a process in which many thousands of civilians have been killed. In 2006, Saddam Hussein and some of his closest associates were hanged. The extensive violence only started to diminish in 2007, and it was as only as late as 2009 that the civilian death rate started to decrease. The years between 2003 and 2007 have known a terrifying amount of violence: insurgency against the Coalition and against government troops, as well as severe conflicts between Shias and Sunnis. American troops handed over their security

responsibilities to the Iraqis and on the 15th of December 2011, they officially left Iraq, resulting in the official end of the Iraq War.

To some extent, Iraqi archaeological heritage has underwent damage for thousands of years. However, it was since the first war in 1990 that the increase has become a truly concerning matter. This was at the first place a direct result of war: sites and monuments were affected due to bombs, mines, tanks that drove across archaeological sites, air craft bases, etc. At the second place this was because of the large-scale looting of archaeological sites and museums by Iraqi inhabitants, especially in the southern rural areas. This literature study examines the destruction and methods of protection of Iraqi archaeological heritage before, during and also after the 2003 war. The types of destruction, its provenances and causes, development, difficulties, stakeholders, consequences, and possible solutions will all be discussed in order to answer the main research question:

What can be done to better protect the Iraqi archaeological heritage in the future, looking at the events during the Gulf wars?

This research is important because looting is still happening with an unknown speed today. Action must be undertaken fast to be able to preserve what is left for the future. We have to do so by studying and learning from the past, to avoid repeating mistakes, and it will hopefully serve as a wake-up call that forces us to undertake action. Despite its political situation, Iraq is a country with much to offer. In this thesis, I have tried to use a multi-disciplinary approach by not only involving heritage and archaeological matters, but also taking into account the political, economic and social situation of the country, which is inevitable in this topic.

The thesis is subdivided in seven chapters. This first chapter has given a general background. Chapter two introduces archaeological heritage: what it is, what it means (in conflict situations), and what conventions have been institutionalised to protect it. Chapter three explains the causes and performers of destruction and then goes into detail about who looters are, and how looting has developed. Then several case studies will be discussed in chapter four. They cover the plundering of the Baghdad museum in 2003, cases of looting and military damage. Chapter five describes why the counteraction of looting is so problematic. It will also elaborate on the illegal trade market with which it is intertwined. This is followed by a chapter which uses the information from all previous chapters to discuss possible improvements of the

destruction situation for the future. Finally, everything will be concluded in chapter seven.

Chapter 2: Archaeological heritage in conflict areas

The material culture which is being destroyed falls in the category "archaeological heritage", or "cultural heritage". What this is and why it is so important will be explained below. This chapter also includes a selection of conventions that have been held in the past in order to protect this heritage. Although its effects are not as effective as one hopes it would, it is an important factor in future prohibiting of archaeology destruction.

2.1 What is archaeological heritage?

To be able to study archaeological heritage and its protection, we first have to determine what "archaeological heritage" is. There are countless definitions, but the following two are often used (Skeates 2004, 9-10):

1. The material culture of past societies that survives in the present.
2. The process through which the material culture of past societies is re-evaluated and re-used in the present.

The first definition is mostly used by national governments, cultural agencies and professional bodies. The second is being used by critical historians. This is interesting because those critical historians in reality perform the first definition, whereas governments and organizations actually use the second (Skeates 2004, 10). They define what is heritage and what is not, and then make decisions about what is to be preserved and what is not. These "selections" attracts tourism, which is good for the economy but not necessarily helpful to the archaeological science, in which all sites and objects must be treated as equally important.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) created the following definition for cultural heritage: "*Monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value*" (Skeates 2004, 11). This definition is very useful in the study of archaeology as it contains all material that is remarkable in any way, whether scientific or aesthetical. It therefore also focuses on the material that is re-evaluated and re-used in the present. The looting of sites, however, concerns damaging of all archaeology and especially its context, so not only valuable elements or objects. Therefore, the definition

for archaeological heritage that will be used in this thesis is the very first mentioned and the most comprehensive: The material culture of past societies that survives in the present (Skeates 2004).

2.2 The importance of archaeological heritage during conflict

As mentioned, archaeological heritage is a phenomenon that speaks to many people in a lot of different ways. Of course, during war, the preservation of heritage is not the main item of importance, especially to the army. This is on the one hand very logical: everyone will agree that political affairs, feeding the hungry and saving lives are more important than preserving remains of the long past. On the other hand, however, for many people the importance of national heritage is reinforced during war. It represents national pride and that people are a part of the perceived history. This gives a feeling of togetherness as people have common origins.

The term “heritage” has both positive and negative aspects. Theme parks and open-air museums, for example, have an optimistic interpretation of heritage: they want to show how beautiful and valuable it is and try to transfer this to the public. However, (archaeological) heritage can also be seen as a symbol of nationalism, which in extreme situations can provoke xenophobia and ethnical-religious tensions. This has caused iconoclasm, the devastating intentional destruction of religious objects. It is also the foundation on which ethnic cleansing is based: the destruction of people’s cultural, religious and historical identities to completely remove competitors (Zainab Bahrani in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008; Foster *et al*. 2005). Attempts to this were made by the Serbs as well as the Bosnian Croats during the Balkan war from 1991-1992. Churches and mosques were destroyed out of aggression as cultural genocide. To trigger outrage from opponent factions entire towns were destroyed because of their cultural history and significance (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield 2008). It also caused the destruction of the famous Mostar Bridge. The deliberate destruction of sites and monuments can in these cases be seen as the extreme results for the manipulation of history (Perring and Van der Linde 2009).

Countless groups or nations have pursued their identity, proved a rule or the greatness of a nation by manipulating archaeological evidence, using only the information that tells the right story, ignoring contradicting evidence and twisting facts. This has

happened over millennia, but the phenomenon seems to have increased in recent history, or maybe we have just become more aware of it. A well-known example of this is the abuse of archaeological evidence to prove the superiority of the Aryan race during the Second World War. The difference from such an example from cases in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, is that they actually have this great archaeological history: they first extended agriculture, introduced writing and the first great civilisations have risen here. A manipulated interpretation of this however is just as wrong. Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi president from 1979 until 2003, also realised the political potential of archaeology (Bernhardsson 2005). He underscored his intentions to protect archaeology, while in reality he twisted the Iraqi history to create his own national culture. Poets, archaeologist and historians were to prove that Saddam was the direct heir of the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar, Hammurabi and Sennacherib (Bernhardsson 2005). This way he legitimised his oppressive rule.

Competing versions of the past can exist, which all wish to promote, support or challenge arguments about ancestral rights to supremacy of ethnic groups, of a political system or of world views (Perring and Van der Linde 2009, 198). For archaeologists, it is difficult to work with this, as they are the ones that able to provide the actual evidence. It is up to them to notice this and try to make people aware of it.

Archaeology and politics in Iraq are inseparable. The destruction, movement, theft, reinterpretation or damaging of archaeological collections, sites or monuments for military strategy occur in about every large conflict and war all over the world. Within the Near East, examples exist by dozens. The terrifying destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan in 2001 and the results of the current Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, are only a few of them. Destroying heritage is just a further way to mentally damage people during times of war.

This destruction is not only organised by suppressing leaders. Looting and thieving of sites in Iraq have contributed to the undermining of the country's security situation, as the objects are being smuggled through the same black market networks as illegal weapons and drugs (Katharyn Hanson in Stone 2011). During the second Gulf war, the antique flow from Iraq to Iran funded arms, explosives and roadside bombs, which were used against the coalition and Iraqi security forces. The resources provided by smuggling also finances clashes between violent clans and tribes (Katharyn Hanson in

Stone 2011). The dangers that accompany looting areas result in a fast decrease of tourism potential, which is an important source of income for many countries.

Documented and undocumented archaeological sites are being plundered and objects are smuggled over the borders and sold to rich collectors and museums all over the world. Not only are objects damaged in the transport, once looted it is impossible to reconstruct an objects' context, which makes it scientifically useless. Although the looting of Iraqi sites has been happening for a long time, it has more severely increased in the last two decades than it ever has before and is still getting worse every day: protection of archaeological sites must be a priority and their safety has to be increased, because at this moment this is not being done sufficiently. If we do not face this problem now, there will be nothing left for future generations to learn from.

2.3 International conventions

Because of the importance of archaeology and the effect it has on people, several conventions have been internationally adopted in order to protect it. Especially after World War II a greater focus has been placed on them. Unfortunately, as will become clear further on, the enforcement and implementation of these conventions are very problematic. Heritage protection does not have the highest priority during war and is mainly not included in the goals of military missions.

1954

The first international convention that concerned heritage is known as the 1954 Hague Convention: it is the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. It was written by UNESCO in direct response to the massive cultural destructions that had occurred during the Second World War. The convention exists of three parts: the Main Convention, the First Protocol and the Second Protocol. They all contain several obligations for the parties that have agreed to the convention. Those who are most relevant to the Iraqi looting situation are the following:

The Main Convention (UNESCO Convention1954):

- "…to *prepare in time of peace for the safeguarding of cultural property situated within their own territory from the effects of warfare* (article 3)."
- "*Parties to the Convention must refrain from using cultural property and the nearby area from strategic or military purposes if this would expose the cultural property to harm* (article 4)."
- "*Parties must not target cultural sites and monuments, in cases where military necessity imperatively requires such a waiver* (article 4)."
- "*Undertake to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property*" (article 4) (this is

probably limited to the withholding of looting by the own army, and not that of the local population).

This fourth obligation intends to prohibit looting. However, it is most likely that this has been interpreted in the past in such a way that a party's army (in the 2003 war this concerned the Coalition) had no right to loot, but they were not obliged to prevent the local inhabitants from doing so.

The First Protocol (UNESCO Convention1954):

- *An occupying power is obliged to prevent the export from occupied territory of any movable cultural property.*
- *Any nation that is a party to the Convention must take into its custody any illegally exported cultural property that is imported either directly from the occupied territory or indirectly through another nation.*
- *At the close of hostilities, any notion that is Party to the Convention must return illegally exported cultural property to the competent authorities of the formerly occupied nation.*
- *Any cultural property taken into custody during hostilities must be returned at the end of hostilities.*

Of the 60 countries that were member of the Coalition, the United states, the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland were the greatest. Those have all signed the 1954 Hague Convention (www.portal.unesco.org), but only Poland and Iraq have signed the first protocol in 1954 (www.portal.unesco.org). The Second Protocol is not relevant for the subject of this thesis: although it was introduced in 1999, it only came in effect in 2004, and therefore none of the (greatest) involved parties were a party of it.

1970

The second international convention concerning heritage was the 1970 UNESCO Convention of the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The main reason for its adoption was the increasing international art market after World War II, which contributed to the theft and illegal export of cultural property, to the looting of archaeological sites and to the damage being performed to other cultural monuments (Foster *et al*. 2005). Therefore,

the main focus of the convention is the illegal art market. The United States was one of the first nations to sign the convention, although most market nations nowadays have ratified it.

1972

Since the 1970 UNESCO convention, other conventions have followed to reinforce the matter. One of them was adopted in 1972: the "Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" (UNESCO Convention 1972). It provides a system in which nations can nominate sites with natural, cultural or mixed significance, for listing on the World Heritage List (Foster *et al*. 2005). There is also a List of World Heritage in Danger. This brings attention to sites threatened by war, looting, development, tourism or the environment. The lists themselves do not imply legal consequences, but they attract public attention, and therefore also public (and private) financial investment and tourism (Foster *et al*. 2005). Although these are positive effects of the lists, there is also a downside. First of all, the listed sites are not equally spread over the world. They are mainly Western, and Europe has by far the greatest majority in listed heritage sites (http://whc.unesco.org/en/list). Second, the list creates a divergence between sites and monuments. Those that are chosen are in general monumental and have a high aesthetical value. Finally, only listed sites receive increased popularity and probably better conservation, which improves tourism and finance. Sites that are not listed get less financial support and might become neglected by tourism. Also, when a selected site needs research, it is much harder to get permissions for this as the rules to secure sites are very strict. This way, its protection is safeguarded, but archaeological research is complicated. Archaeologists need to be impartial when it comes to sites, which is hard when such factors play a role.

1995

A comparable convention to the 1970 UNESCO Convention is the 1995 Unidroit Convention on Cultural Property, as it also "*aims to control and inhibit the illegal market in cultural objects*" (Foster *et al*. 2005). The difference is that this 1995 convention focuses more on national laws that affect private conduct, and the 1970 UNESCO convention focuses on nations that are part of the convention.

1996

In 1996, the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) has been set up to protect the world's cultural heritage from wars and natural disasters. It marked cultural sites

with a symbolic Blue Shield to protect them from attacks during armed conflict (see figure 2). The Blue Shield was derived from blue shields that were specified during the 1954 Hague Convention. It portrayed itself as the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. Unfortunately, it had almost no funding, and was therefore internationally practically insignificant although it did not stop existing (Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008).

Figure 2: the Blue Shield (www.en.wikipedia.org)

2003

A couple more UNESCO heritage conventions have been adopted, concerning amongst others underwater heritage and intangible heritage. In 2003, UNESCO initiated the UNESCO Declaration concerning the International Destruction of Cultural Heritage, this in response to the intentional destruction of art pieces by the Taliban in march 2001, including the Afghan Buddha statues in Bamiyan. The destruction of the Buddha statues illustrates how international laws are still insufficient, and how difficult it is to enforce principles on other nations (Foster *et al*. 2005). The 2003 Declaration mainly calls on all nations to respect the principles and norms that have been agreed on during earlier conventions, concerning the preservation of cultural heritage (Foster *et al*. 2005).

Chapter 3: Looting the cradle of civilisation

*The damaging of heritage can be caused by diverse factors: routine agricultural activities, construction, development projects or natural forces (erosion) (*Foster *et al*. 2005*). In conflict areas, the events can be categorized into a few main general causes of destruction, as will be explained in the first paragraph. The second paragraph focuses on looting. It discusses who looters are, and why they loot. The third paragraph gives an overview of the history of looting, as the events of the (recent) past are important to learn from. It is subdivided in four different periods.*

The definition of looting is "the illicit, unrecorded and unpublished excavation of ancient sites to provide antiquities for commercial profit" (Renfrew 2000, 15).

3.1 The causes of cultural heritage destruction during war

A general important reason for damage to in-situ archaeological remains is the large-scale devastating effect of farming and agricultural activities in rural areas. Fertile grounds are used for agriculture, without taking into account the archaeological remains underneath. When archaeological sites are bulldozed in order to create agricultural lands, looting can also be a side effect because finding valuable pieces of archaeology is rather easy this way (Bernhardsson 2005). Peter Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly have classified three other reasons for destruction to occur (Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). The first is "The targeted destruction of cultural heritage in an attempt to gain political advantage". The second is collateral damage, "in which the cultural heritage is destroyed as an 'innocent bystander' as fighting takes place". The third concerns destruction of antiquities caused by the illegal trade in authentic objects, which includes the looting of sites.

In the past, long before the first gulf war, destruction was mostly a result of one of the first two causes: fighting or a predetermined policy to destroy the physical memory of a vanquished enemy, or collateral damage. The illegal trade in antiquities already existed then, but only since the 1990s looting and illegal trading have been

increasing severely. In some regions, there seems to be a standard combination of certain elements for looting to occur: there is a cultural heritage which is desired by collectors and museums, there is a breakdown of local law and order and there is poverty under the local inhabitants (Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). In other words: looting is principally caused by an unstable economy. Obviously, the main reason for people to turn to looting is that it yields money. People are poor and it keeps them and their families from starvation. Impoverished villages in the south of Iraq, like Fajr and Raffae, have grown wealthy from “farming antiquities” (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005). It can provide the looter and his or her family of resources and therefore survival.

Furthermore, the past has shown that looting has also occurred as a form of protest, or as vengeance against a fallen regime. This happened during the uprisings. People attacked and looted (state) museums in the south of Iraq because they reminded them of Saddams government (Bernhardsson 2005). This further underlines the symbolic influence of archaeology and its strong meaning to people which has been discussed earlier.

Looting in Iraq was formally considered illegal. However, it was, and is, impossible to control: the giant desert, especially in the south of Iraq, is littered with archaeological material. The pillageable area is so large and there is so much to dig that it can impossibly all be guarded.

3.2 Who are the looters?

This is the process: antiquities are stolen from sites, museums or collections, passed on to smugglers and then divided all over the world with the illegal market. So on the one end there are these rich individuals or institutions who buy ancient objects for their precious collections, ignoring the problems, conflicts and even victims they cause. On the other end, there are the people who dig for the materials. Who are these people? Why do they steal these objects while it is a part of their own history? Do they value this material at all? I would like to emphasize that the scholarly conceptions about this that will be described below are general conceptions. This does not mean that this accounts for every looter and every tribe all over (southern) Iraq, it just gives a general idea of the local view on the matter.

Farchakh Bajjaly has studied the nature of the looter and described a restricted interest. “History is a people’s own past” (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008, 136). That what is connected to your ancestors, and to the history of the tribe, might be meaningful, but that is it. Especially in the Sumerian desert, in Southern Iraq, people do not know (or care) a lot about the ancient civilisations that have flourished there thousands of years ago. Those that rule over a region directly own its possessions, whether these are “fields of pottery” or oil fields (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008, 136). When needed, they take every opportunity to make some money. Digging for an inscribed find, which is the most valuable category of finds (together with decorated objects), can provide much more than half a month’s wage of a field worker. Some looters justify their activities by pointing out that they are unemployed, and have to provide for themselves and their families. Others justify looting as taking back objects that were possessed by a regime by entering their former facilities, or just to show their anger and vandalizing objects (Kila 2012).

Most Iraqi looters are peasants living in villages nearby sites. They cultivate wheat, barley and lentils, and loot on the side when they have a shortage in income. Whether they work in the field, or dig up antiquities, it is all the same for them: it is all work generating an income (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). During the day, but

mostly during the night, hundreds of people come from villages to the nearby areas to come dig in groups of five to ten people (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005). Some looters work on their own, while others are part of well-organised (art) gangs. These can vary from smaller groups to entire clans, also called tribes. This goes very strongly especially in Southern Iraq. A tribe, a “qabîla” in Arabic, consists of several layers. The first one is a house (bayt), which is based on a patriarchal scheme. When the sons marry they enlarge the house. The combination of all such families form a union which is called al-fakhdh. The authority of the union is called a shaykh. All the fakhdh together form the ashira: the clan. This is again lead by an overall shaykh: the shaykh al mashyakha. This shaykh makes decisions which involve the clan members, often together with the shaykhs of the fakhdh. There is a very strong bond of kinship between the tribe members, especially between those who are blood-related (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). This strong community-feeling contributes to their strength and powerfulness in their regions.

In many areas, the shaykh al mashyakha’s have the power, and are more important than the local police. There are tribes that are very involved in the illegal trade market, and many of the members will loot as their profession. Unfortunately, looting is not being recorded by the police as a real crime: they document people “digging for artefacts”, and not as thieves. Within tribal society, being a thief is a major insult: dignity, honour, righteousness and loyalty are of main importance to an honourable tribesman (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). Looting is clearly not seen as a case of thieving and that reveals that they do not really take it that heavily.

During Saddam Hussein’s reign, looting was punishable under the penalty of death. However, the ransacking of sites continued unhindered, partly because people had no other way to obtain money, partly because it was impossible to control the entire desert, partly because they were protesting against his reign, and partly because Saddam and his inner circle were involved in looting themselves, leading to the funding of rebellion, militias, and terrorists (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). This all resulted in the further destabilisation of the country. This again stresses the fact that politics and archaeological protection are completely intertwined, and therefore so complicated. Because of the sanctions that were put on Iraq by the United Nations, Iraq has known periods of great poverty and economic decline. If people did not loot, they would starve. Everyone would have done the same. There is not one identifiable guilty party which we can blame for the destruction of the cradle of civilisation: many parties are involved, and we cannot simply compare our interests and motives to those of the Iraqi rural people.

In critical situations everyone would participate in looting as it provides the money that is so very much needed. However, it cannot be excused anymore when looting becomes the road to easy money. Today, extensive smuggling networks and trails are laid out in an extremely well-organised way, and people are experienced and efficient. Looting is no longer a rescuing way to survive, it has become a normal job to farmers. When we compare this to other countries, we can not be surprised that looting continues even when people do not have to. It is not restricted to Iraq, nor to countries that are destabilised. In the Netherlands treasure digging also exists a lot. Although we do not call this looting and the scale is incomparable, it is a fact that the heritage that we have is being stolen, just like the heritage in Iraq is being stolen. The difference is just that Iraq has much more of it, and it is easier to find.

3.3 The history of Iraqi heritage looting and protection

Although Mesopotamian archaeology has been appreciated since the Roman period, the history of looting has known major turning points in the aftermath of the First Gulf War in 1991 and at the beginning of the Second Gulf War 2003 (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster 2005). Ever since the invasion in 2003, looting has only increased.

3.3.1 Before 1990

For a very long time, there has been a strong difference between urban societies and rural societies in Iraq, and they only connected through the economical market in agricultural products. In the battle against the United Kingdom in the 1920 Iraqi Revolt they become allies. The revolution started with mass demonstrations against the British occupation and spread all the way to the Shia regions in the middle and low Euphrates regions. Sunni and Shia communities, tribal and urban communities worked together in these protests. However, social differentiation between Iraqi's remained until 1958. That was the year of the coup d'état by the Ba'ath Party. The prime minister that was then assigned, Abdel-Karim Qassem (he ruled from 1958-1963), instituted a system of socialization of tribes by means of social reforms. In the period between 1948 and 1990, the understanding of the Iraqi history changed (farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008) and a new interest in it could be seen (Bernhardsson 2005). After centuries of decline, Baghdad had become the capital of culture again (in the Arab world). People started to develop an interest in archaeological sites and visiting museums. An intellectual society came to existence as wealth and intellect rose and job opportunities grew (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). Iraqi citizenship became something people were proud of. Iraq was an emerging power in its environment. Rapidly developing state institutions slowly replaced the need of being part of a tribe and dependent of a shaykh. Education for boys as well as girls became obliged in the 1930s. The history of Mesopotamia started to be taught in schools, and peasants developed an interest in city-life.

In 1969, the government announced that "*all graduates from the Department of Archaeology at Baghdad University would find full-time employment in the Department of Antiquities*" (Bernhardsson 2005). They changed their Antiquities Law from 1936 by giving "antiquities" a definition with a wider interpretation, for better protection. After the revolution of 1958, the government also forbade looting and the export of antiquities. From then on, this was punishable by fines or imprisonment. It resulted in a looting-free period that lasted until the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

In 1979, presidency was taken over by Saddam Hussein. He started to politicise the history curriculum taught at schools as he was aware of its political potential. He was able to do so as the general public was not that familiar with the basic facts about their pre-Islamic history, nor were stories of the old Mesopotamian culture part of their popular culture (Bernhardsson 2005). Therefore, Saddam was able to "use the history" to create a new national identity. In one of his speeches, in 1979, he said the following, directed to Iraqi archaeologists:

"*Antiquities are the most precious relics the Iraqis possess, showing the world that our country … is the legitimate offspring of previous civilizations which offered a great contribution to humanity*." (Bernharddson 2005)

Although he allowed archaeological sites to be conserved or rebuilt, he mainly used archaeological themes to express his personality and to claim his blood relation with anciet Babylonian kings. Saddam also presented his government as the successor of earlier great empires that ruled over the areas around the Persian Gulf. The government therefore spent large amounts of money on archaeological projects, celebrated the ancient past of Iraq and underscored how it contributed to world civilisation.

3.3.2 During the early 1990s

The late 1980s were characterized by a decline in the world economy. In this period, Iraq was in war with Iran (from 1980 to 1988). This war was almost immediately followed by the Kuwait Crisis in 1991. Severe economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq by the international community because of this. This resulted in a new period of suppression by Saddam Hussein (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005). These circumstances led to the complete end of the prosperity in Iraq in the 1990s: Iraq became a nation of chaos and destruction. This is the period in which the Iraqi history of looting started.

Many regional archaeological museums were looted in the North as well as the South of the country in 1991, and massive looting took place looting in the desert area between the Tigris and the Euphrates (Gibson in Emberling and Hanson, 2008). This had let to the strong growth of the market for Mesopotamian antiquities, with Iraqi ones in particular.

Because of the decline of the world economy, investors had to come up with new projects to invest in. Simultaneously two very famous and old private collections: the Moore and Erlenmeyer collections, containing many Mesopotamian artefacts, were put up to auction (Gibson in Emberling and Hanson, 2008). As these collections were still largely unprotected (collected made before the 1970 UNESCO Convention), everyone was free to bid on them. Many museums and institutions did so. In the process of these events, archaeological (Mesopotamian) objects gained a lot of popularity: the demand for them grew fast.

The First Gulf War in 1990-1991 had a disastrous effect on Iraq's archaeology: bombings destroyed many sites, and the war resulted in many uprisings by the Iraqi populations. Furthermore, Saddam suppressed a Shia uprising in 1991, which was extremely bloody. The UN imposed a no-fly zone on Iraq from the 33rd parallel southward. This no-fly zone disconnected Saddam from the countryside, and therefore the tribal powers revived (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). People started to attack and destroy museums in order to upset the government, making money from it at the same time. The government did not succeed in stopping this looting, although Saddam did try it by installing the death penalty as a punishment for looting. However, Iraq now suffered both from debts from the war with Iran, and from the sanctions that were imposed by the United Nations. This had caused hunger, unemployment and poverty to the country. So looting waves came up, as it was the only way to make money. The antiquities market was very willingly to respond to this rising wave of looted material (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). All over the world, a rise of auctions in Iraqi antiquities could be seen and the demand for ancient Mesopotamian objects grew. The (illegal) market prospered. In 1991, this market was supplied with thousands of extra objects, as nine regional archaeological museums had been looted. The explosive increase in the trade in Iraqi antiquities was visible in the catalogues of all major auction houses. A major collector in New York declared that the 1990s were "the Golden Age for collecting" (Gibson in Emberling and Hanson 2008). John M. Russel called it "the perfect storm" (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). It could not be restricted, and illegal digging became more and more common. Entire tribes became specialised in this illegal

trade and they became more professional: techniques and heavy equipment evolved. International sanctions were unable to stop it, and only had the unfortunate effect that legal (foreign) excavations were now forbidden too.

The looting of the major Sumerian sites in southern Iraq started in 1994 and 1995. The region of Ancient Sumer was damaged worst. Looters acted largely unpunished as they were apparently unhindered by Saddam Hussein's security forces, some were even helped by his inner circle (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). Smuggling routes branched from several central towns in southern Iraq to Europe, Japan, the Gulf and the United States. The most important central centres in these smuggling operations were the towns Al-Fajr in the Dhi Qar governorate, and Al-Bdair in the Qadissiya governate. Efforts against these actions were not effective: the United States, for example, enforced on the one hand an extremely severe sanction regime against Iraq, but on the other hand allowed the sale of tens of thousands undocumented antiquities onto the US market: at large auction houses, but also on the upcoming unregulated and more importantly anonymous world of internet, including eBay (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008).

Also in Iraq itself the defence against the massive looting was weak. The Iraqi archaeological service, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), which oversees all archaeological sites and museums in Iraq, was unprepared for it as looting on this scale was a new phenomenon: before 1990 it only occurred occasionally. The SBAH lacked personnel, guards, vehicles, and funding. Only from 1998 on it was provided with adequate equipment. Until then, it could do nothing but stand aside and let the digging happen. The looters all lived nearby sites, so whenever the SBAH came to stop an illegal dig, the thieves just left for a while, went to another site and came back afterwards.

3.3.3 From 1998 to 2002

In 1998, Saddam tried to regain support from the tribes and clan leaders. To do so he offered them full control over the areas where their tribe members lived. A powerful resurrection of the tribal system therefore emerged. Saddam's government funded programs to put an end to the looting of sites. The SBAH then finally got funding too, and was therefore able to come up with an effective system against looting. They held year-round archaeological excavations at the largest sites, and offered the local peasants

legal jobs: to work for the archaeologists. This supplied an economic benefit for tribal communities, and therefore their support. It was a very clever initiative: by hiring the local workmen, the sites could be permanently guarded, while at the same time the former looters got an actual job so that the need for them to become looters disappeared.

Looters did indeed not return to those guarded sites, so this was effective, but unfortunately the supply of Iraqi antiquities on the US illegal market did not cease, so they probably continued elsewhere. However, the archaeological sites in the south of Iraq were at least somewhat better protected.

The full-time excavations ceased in November 2002, when the coming invasion of the Coalition became too threatening. This led to a new increase in looting, and people were now also able to return to the major sites.

3.3.4 From 2003 to today

In March 2003, the Second Gulf War started. People had a great lack of income, and the invading Coalition forces did not buy agricultural products from the local farmers, which made it worse. So the farmers returned to digging for valuable objects, this time as professionals. Because of their work for the SBAH archaeologists they were now experienced and knew exactly where to find the most object-rich layers. They even got better paid now that they could deliver objects without having them damaged during the “excavation”. Tribes in southern Iraq became very well-organized in the plundering of archaeological sites (Farchakh-Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008).

On April 10, 2003, ten days before the invasion of the Coalition, all efforts of the SBAH (or what was left of it) vanished completely. The national museum in Baghdad, being the greatest deposit of Mesopotamian objects in the world, and the SBAH administrative offices, were attacked by looting groups. In addition to the destruction and theft of about all the exposed objects, all the furniture, equipment and vehicles were stolen. Subsequently the SBAH employees were unable to do their jobs and their funds were cut off, because the ministry of Finance did no longer function after the invasion by the Coalition forces, which now occupied the nation.

There exists a heated debate about the role of the Coalition in site protection during and after the 2003 war. In theory, it was up to them to take responsibility for the protection of Iraq’s cultural heritage, including archaeological sites, as they occupied the

nation. Mainly the United States were looked at in this regard as they had the greatest potential to do this. Comprehensive efforts were needed, regarding the scale of the problem. Until early June, the marines had indeed undertaken several actions and held patrols to prevent some sites from being looted, which was very effective, but then they were transferred and had to hand over the patrols to the Iraqi police. Since then, the US did not undertake much more action to protect the country's archaeology, although the UK and the US did have archaeologists working for them. Neither did they have a clear plan for after their military victory.

There are probably several reasons for the United States to have reacted so poorly to this problem, although opinions differ about this. First of all, they might have considered looting to be an Iraqi problem (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). Also, they might have feared tribal revenge when counteracting looters. These explanations would, even if partly true, not explain such an abandonment. The most important reason was that most coalition parties simply did not protect cultural heritage because it was not part of their missions: it was not a priority (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005). Whatever their intentions might have been or not have been, fact is that the troops were already unpopular with the local people, and the not defending their heritage lost their trust even further. Many Iraqis blamed them for being "indifferent" towards their archaeology, and many were not convinced that the United States had other priorities beyond the control over the Iraqi oil (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). We must however not forget that some of the population themselves destroyed the archaeology, which makes them also relatively indifferent towards their own heritage.

There was one coalition force that did take effective efforts against plunderers: the Italian Carabinieri. As this is also part of their function in Italy, they had the expertise, and they actually understood the social and financial devastation caused by heritage destruction. They were assigned to the Dhi Qar governorate, coincidentally the region that had been hit hardest by looting. They performed several missions to cease the looting. An example is operation "Antica Babilonia", in which they assisted the SBAH in Dhi Qar to bring site looting under control. They provided training, equipment, financial and logistic support, joint reconnaissance and interdiction missions. They carried out preventive activities, suppression activities, and management activities (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). Although their methods were efficient, several problems persisted. The looters could just put a guard on top of the mound on which they were

digging, in order to look out for patrols. As the desert landscape was so flat, they were warned a long time before the patrols actually arrived. Therefore, they were always able to disappear in time when a patrol came by. Of course the SBAH guards also used this technique to spot looters, by using observation towers constructed by the Carabinieri. Also, the Carabinieri trained the local police in law-enforcement techniques, with the intent that they would take over at a certain point. A UNESCO training course was organised in Jordan for the local Iraqi police commanders (Oslo in Bianco 2004). Unfortunately, the looters did not respect the local police. They were hired from the common people, and could therefore be intimidated by local tribe leaders (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). If they shot a looter, they were subjected to tribal vengeance. The impact of tribes on archaeology protection will be discussed further on.

Chapter 4: What happened: case studies

To give a more detailed view on the gravity of wartime archaeology destruction, several famous case studies will briefly be discussed in this chapter: first the Baghdad Museum, followed up by Babylon and Ur, two sites that have been damaged by military troops, and finally the Di Qar district and Umma will be discussed: an extremely intensive looted area and site.

4.1 Introductory remarks

The attack of the national museum in April 2003 has become a media event that reached every corner of the world. Just like the statue of Saddam Hussein on Firdaus Square, many ancient statues in the museum were pulled down from their pedestals and walls. The museum lost about 15.000 artefacts. In the same month, the Iraqi National Library, Archives and the Ministry of Holy endowments and Religious Affairs where also looted and the Library was even set on fire. Universities, research and cultural centres also got severely damaged. The Baghdad Museum of fine arts lost fifteen hundred modern paintings and sculptures. To make things worse, these events were followed up by an extensive increase in looting of sites all over the country, the south being hit hardest. Thousands of sites were destroyed and are still being destroyed today, at a rate of about 10 percent a year (Rothfield 2008). In general, looters prefer sites that already have been excavated, as they know that it already yielded valuable material (Katharyn Hanson in Stone 2011). However, unknown smaller sites all across southern Iraq are also destroyed. This might be even worse, as nothing of these sites has been documented yet. Sumerian sites in Southern Iraq, especially from the fourth and third millennia BC, are being plundered most severely. The scale on which this happens is enormous: two hundred to three hundred looters working at the same time at sites like Isin, Mashkan, Shapur, and Umm al-Aqarib (Foster *et al*. 2005). Hundreds of thousands of objects are stolen from these sites. The most popular objects are cylinder seals and cuneiform tablets.

4.2 The Baghdad Museum

The National Museum in Baghdad is the largest museum of Iraq, and it has the greatest repository of artefacts from Ancient Mesopotamia in the world (Foster *et al*. 2005). The attack on the museum started on the 10th of April 2003 and lasted three days. The first day, a professional group of thieves entered. They knew exactly where to be: it is likely to have been an insider's job. At least they had information about the location of the highly prized antiquities and the keys to the cabinets. Within the cabinets, they only left the coin collection and most of the seals, probably because they had no access to them. It is unclear whether they took anything from the public galleries. Later that day, a second group of looters from the immediate neighbourhood attacked the museum. This group stole all of the furniture and electronic equipment from the offices and labs: desks, chairs, tables, drapes, computers, fans, air conditioners, electrical fixtures, and the building's wiring (George in Emberling and Hanson 2008). They ransacked what the first group had left in place: they entered the public galleries and ripped thirty-four artefacts from their positions. Many objects had been removed earlier by the museum staff (see chapter 2.7), but they had left the very large and very heavy objects, which they thought unlikely to be taken. Unfortunately, now they were taken after all. The thieves also entered the storeroom on the ground floor. It will remain unknown how many object were taken from this room as it had not yet been inventoried. Also many objects had lost their nametags over the years. Finally, they tried to set the building on fire, by lighting piles of paper records. On the 12th of April, the looting finally stopped when international journalists arrived to document what was happening. The United States only sent troops to guard the museum from the 16th of April onwards, and the inventory of what was lost and damaged started about a week later. The Baghdad Museum had lost over 15.000 items in total. About 6000 of them are said to have been recovered, some of them very important, some of them fake (George in Emberling and Hanson 2008). Some of the objects were returned voluntarily and others were intercepted by law enforcement in several counties, including Iraq (Foster *et al*. 2005). Amongst the objects that are still missing today are about 30 well-known objects, and about 5000 cylinder seals (Foster *et al*. 2005). A very complicating factor was that almost all records

of the museum and the antiquities service were mixed, damaged, or destroyed. Therefore it was very hard afterwards to make an inventory of the damage. The US troops had not stopped the thieves while they were robbing the museum, because they did not have the means to do so (Bogdanos 2005).It is not possible to blame a single party, because although the troops did not stop the looting, Iraqi people performed it, so they have guilt too. However, it is very exceptional that so many (important) objects were returned: thieves regretted their actions, or at least felt the need to reverse it. This is a hopeful process, which might indicate that people are not that indifferent towards archaeology after all. Figure 3, 4, 5 and 6 give a good impression of the gravity of the event.

Figure 3: After the looting of the Baghdad National Museum (www.boston.com)

Figure 4: After the looting of the Baghdad National Museum (www.boston.com)

Figure 5: After the looting of the Baghdad National Museum (www.boston.com)

Figure 6: After the looting of the Baghdad National Museum (www.boston.com)

4.3 Destruction by military forces

4.3.1 Babylon

It is inevitable that in a country with such a rich material culture great harm is being done to it when war breaks out. This damage can be partly unintentional and partly intentional, as heritage damage is often taken up in military strategy because of its impact (see paragraph 1.2). Since 2003, seven or eight major Iraqi sites have been used as a military base by the United States. One of them is Samarra, in which they built a camp in the ancient heart of the city. Its famous shrine was bombed in 2006. The most famous example is probably the ancient city of Babylon (or Babel), used as a Coalition camp between April 2003 and the 22nd of December 2004 and is better known as "Camp Alpha". The true reasons for the decision to use archaeological sites for US camps remain partly unclear. Colonel John Coleman, who spoke to reporters of the BBC in 2006, claimed that everything their troops had done to Babylon, was "*in close consultation with the SBAH*" (Zainab Bahrani in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). The alleged

intention was that by occupying the site, it would be protected against looters. Zainab Bahrani contested this, very sharply:

"*....and even if US forces had wanted to protect it, placing guards around the site would have been far more sensible than bulldozing it and setting up the largest Coalition military headquarters in the region.*" (Zainab Bahrani in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008, 169).

Babylon had only partly been excavated in the past, and large parts still lay in situ. Therefore, the troops have indeed destroyed irreplaceable, undocumented archaeological material. So it is doubtful whether the US statement that they intended to "protect the site", can be justified, as it can be expected that military forces have many activities that contain "*digging*, *cutting*, *scraping*, *levelling*, *and the creation of earth barriers*" (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008) in and around their camp, in order to defend and fortify it.

With the plundering of the Nebuchadnezzar and the Hammurabi Museums during the invasion, the offices of the Babel project were also ransacked (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). All its reports, maps, excavation records, and restoration records were burned or stolen.

4.3.2 Ur

Another famous example of a site damaged as a direct cause of war is Ur, known for its temples, royal palaces, royal burial site and its great Ziggurat (see figure 7). Between 1991 and 2003, Ur was used as a military training area of Saddams army. A garage, a workshop for the repair of tyres and military equipment, a chemical storage and a room for chemical decontaminations and many barracks were built (Abdulamir Hamdani in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). Anti-aircraft equipment like cannons and batteries were placed around the ziggurat and near the Temple quarter. In 2003 the site was taken over by the Coalition, who used the former Iraqi bases and built new ones around Ur. They frequently visited the site while wearing heavy army boots, or even driving heavy military vehicles. The fragile archaeology in the ground underneath became therefore more damaged every day.

The Coalition constructed asphalt roads around and in the archaeological site, which obviously did much harm to the archaeological material around and underneath

the roads. Other damage that has been done to Ur was mainly caused by an air base about three kilometres away from the site. This air base has been in use for about three decades. It was constructed by the Saddam regime and the Coalition also made use of it. Therefore, there was continuous activity by military fighters, helicopters and aircrafts. These activities produced loud noises and therefore vibrations, that may have caused cracks in the archaeological remains (Abdulamir Hamdani in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008).

Figure 7: An American soldier looks out over Ur, with its Ziggurat visible in the background (www.aliraqi.org)

3.4 Destruction by looting

4.4.1 Di Qar district

"The Sumerian capitals of Umma, Larsa and Jokha looked like the surface of the moon. Hills and piles of broken pottery, craters and mounds of sand, mixed with mud brick tiles. The walls of the temples had been broken into pieces because some of these mud brick tiles had the stamps of the Sumerian kings engraved in them – thus becoming a sought after and valuable object for the market. Iraq's archaeological sites are simply becoming providers of beautiful and valuable objects" (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008, 136).

The Di Qar district is the district that was most affected by looters during the Second Gulf War (see figure 8 for its location). For a very long time it was completely controlled

by looters: they guarded the roads that led to the major sites, to protect the diggers. These hundreds of diggers were farmers, who came to live on the sites and dig for dealers, leaving their families back home (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). They were well-equipped and used shovels, hammers and lamps. They dug from before sunrise until late in the night, with only a few hours of rest during the afternoon, when the heat was at its highest. They systematically dug, or better, destroyed, ancient Sumerian cities covering surfaces of about 20 square kilometres. Every square meter was completely searched through.

Figure 8: the location of the Di Qar district in Iraq (www.en.wikipedia.org)

4.4.2 Umma

Umma was one of the many sites that has been so damaged that almost nothing has remained of the upper three meters of the site (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005). Umma was one of the most important Sumerian city-states.

The moon landscape visible in the right part of figure 9 used to be the ancient town Umma (with its original shape on the left). It is now one large field of craters and mounds of sand, the entire site being dotted with pottery shards and mud brick tiles. Walls have been torn apart in search for brick stamps: tiles that contained the marks of Sumerian kings are valuable items on the market. The nearby site of Larsa is very similar: nothing is left of it. Umma is perhaps the best known site in regards to looting. It was being excavated between 1996 and 2002 by the SBAH. It was an emergency excavation by the SBAH as a reaction to the increased looting at the site (Garen and Carleton in Palk

and Schuster, 2005). Unfortunately, as was the case by so many other sites, excavations had to be stopped because of the threatening invasion (also mentioned in paragraph 2.2.3). As soon as the archaeologists had left, Umma was hit by looters. They dug horizontal tunnels up to 10 metres under the ground to reach the most object-rich layers of the site (Katharyn Hanson in Stone 2011).

Umma is, like every other ancient tell site in southern Iraq, very easy to identify and therefore an easy target. A tell is an archaeological mound, used by people for centuries before it was abandoned. Umma was first looted in the 1990s, and then it was continued at the beginning of 2003. In May 2003, when the invasion ended, its condition was irreversible. However, the looting continued.

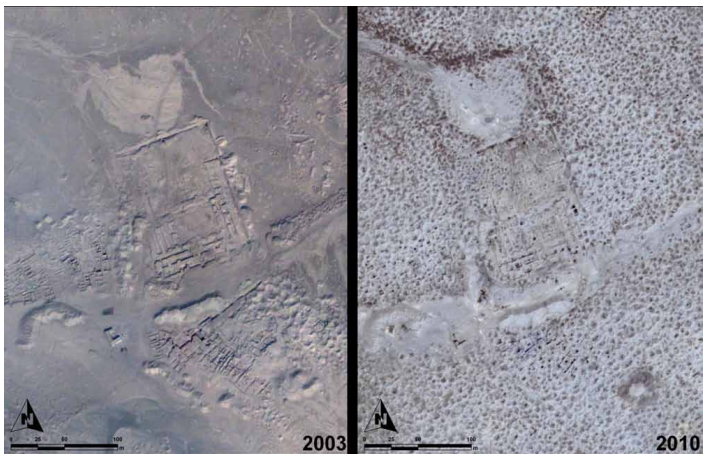

Figure 9: The site Umma (Left: before the Second Gulf war (2003), Right: in 2010) (www.globalheritagefund.org)

Chapter 5: Why looting is so hard to stop

There is no one guilty party identifiable which can be blamed for the destruction of heritage. It is completely intertwined with the political situation, and it is very much influenced by the illegal trade market, a network that contains many stakeholders and is extremely widespread. This makes it impossible to follow all of its traces. Although archaeological remains have suffer gravely because of troops, tanks, attacks, and other direct aspects of war, the greatest, and most complicated threat is the long-term process of looting. The reasons for this are discussed in this chapter. The first paragraph explains the professionalism, dangers and effectiveness of the well-organized tribal systems. This is followed by a paragraph which shows the perseverance of the illegal antiquities trade market, and finally the many different interests in the heritage will be discussed in the paragraph "many stakeholders".

5.1 The Iraqi tribal systems

Iraqi people effectively used the possibilities of archaeological remains as an extra source of income by becoming trained diggers. Looting became the actual profession for many people. It is very hard to come up with a working anti-looting system because people have so much experience in it now: it has become a very easy and common way to earn money. Furthermore, the archaeological remains in the Iraqi desert are very easy recognisable, as tells and mounds can be seen from a great distance. Iraq has about 10.000 sites, all of which are poorly guarded (Bogdanos in Rothfield 2008). The supply of antiquities is almost limitless.

The presence and importance of clans and tribes are another major reason why efforts to stop looting do not succeed: people are so strongly connected to each other that they will spare no one in order to protect each other. The system of tribal looting and smuggling is extremely well-organised nowadays. The leaders of the tribes, the shayks, are very powerful, in some regions even more powerful than governmental institutions (Farchakh Bajjaly in Rothfield 2008). Interfering in the sites, or counteracting looting is extremely dangerous as anyone trying gets in great trouble as soon as a shaykh or one of his sons turns against him or her. Therefore, arrested looters that are part of a powerful tribe are mostly released very quickly. Local policemen themselves are part of tribes too, which makes the situation still more complicated. Also, it is very difficult for archaeologists to carry out proper research projects as tribal leaders have to approve them (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). Support from the police can also only limitedly be expected as they receive pressure from different parties.

Furthermore, professional looters and smugglers are adaptive, often armed and will shoot at every unfriendly vehicle that approaches them. They can be merciless and will do everything in their power to achieve their goals. They do not care about what kind of work they do or what they smuggle, whether this is drugs, arms, bombs, radioactive material or slaves, as long as it provides money. They will make use of political instability, war and lax enforcement and exploit weaknesses (Russel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). Unfortunately, Iraqi rebellions are also part in the antiquity trade and use it as a source of income. Artefacts are now even being smuggled through weapon smuggling routes. According to Bogdanos, the illegal trade in antiquities has generated such a growth in income for rebellions, that it ranks just below

kidnappings for ransom, and “protection” money from local residents and merchants (Bogdanos in Rothfield 2008).

5.2 The illegal trade market

When military people were searching for stolen antiquities in 2003, they came across weapons and got confronted with violent groups. When security forces today are looking for weapons, they find antiquities (Bogdanos in Rothfield 2008). This phenomenon is ironic, but a true representation of the current situation in Iraq. Looting archaeological sites used to happen once in a while when people needed extra income. Since the start of the first Gulf War, the art and antiquities markets have been expanding immensely and the demand for Sumerian artefacts is still increasing today. Objects that are sold on markets may be stolen from private or public collections, or looted directly from sites, which leaves no record of theft. When they are thereafter being sold on the internet, it is extremely hard to trace their trail and origin. There are countless internet-sites offering antiquities up to 7000 years old. They probably sell more fake objects than original ones, but nevertheless the looting continues.

A major problem which withholds antiquities from being exported, is that military forces do not see it as a threatening activity, like the export of weapons. Also, it generates so much money that people just allow it to happen (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). Another problem is that the trade of the Iraqi antiquities is extremely well-organized, making use of all its five neighbouring countries. Very powerful people from these countries and Iraq itself are involved in the trade which involves millions of dollars. All kinds of transport methods are being used: trucks, cars, planes and boats. The objects are mostly transported to Europe, the United States, the Arab Emirates and Japan, where enough collectors live to purchase them. The country with the greatest import of antiquities is the United States, with New York as the heart of its art market (Foster *et al*. 2005).

The desire to own and collect objects that are thousands of years old is a very common human characteristic. Seeing something extremely old and wanting to feel it, or visiting an ancient site or monument and wanting to bring a stone fragment as a souvenir, basically belongs to the same category, only less extreme. Collecting is an instinct, it is a psychological phenomenon concerning everyone to a certain amount. Objects from Iraq, the cradle of civilisation, have a great attraction to people who value and study the past. There is an enormous group of rich art collectors and antiquity cognoscenti who have a great desire for Mesopotamian archaeological objects. Unfortunately, they are unaware, or simply careless about the fact that they are profiting from human misery.

The counteracting of the antiquities market is very problematic as the more forbidden objects are, the more valuable they get. Furthermore, the great demand obviously only encourages the looting process to continue. The conventions and efforts made by UNESCO are insufficient to stop the import of illegal artefacts in foreign countries, although many countries have ratified them. They do discourage trading in artefacts, which is a start, but it is not enough. Furthermore, normal law enforcement methods are mostly unable to track the origin of a stolen object (Foster *et al*. 2005).

5.3 The stakeholders

Although looting can provide a peasant and his family a relatively stable income, in the end almost all of the money goes mainly to important leaders, chiefs and investors. The looting network is incredibly complicated as it contains many profiteers which work together, against each other and along each other, containing tribes, strong blood lines, clans, wealthy, powerful Iraqis and even political organisations that collude in the trade (Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). In other words: many stakeholders are involved with the Iraqi archaeological heritage. Governmental leaders can use archaeology to unite people for political purposes, or to represent themselves in a politically strategic way, like Saddam Hussein did. This way of "creating" history, the twisting of historical facts to the benefit of a suppressing leader happens much too often. However, there are also many Iraqis who do wish to protect the remains. Archaeological remains can have a function for tribes and common people. They not only provide money or knowledge, but people can have personal connections with them, as they represent the ancestors of people: their own past. This can, for example, have a religious functions. Archaeological

remains often have different meanings for all the surrounding tribes that consider it as significant. Then there is the antiquities service, SBAH (State Board of Antiquities and Heritage) and the museums and archives who endeavour its protection, and aim to educate people about their heritage.

Not only national stakeholders take part in the material culture of Iraq, it is also important to people and institutions abroad. International museums, for example, have a great desire for Mesopotamian objects. This can have a positive as well as a negative effect. On the one hand they will ensure the safeguarding of objects by taking them in custody while a country is unstable. On the other hand, museums also tend to accept objects with an "uncertain provenance", mostly meaning that they are looted from sites or stolen from collections or museums. By accepting these objects they safeguard them, but they also stimulate the illegal antiquities market, and therefore looting. In this way, they counteract the archaeological science, which a museum however is supposed to stimulate. The Metropolitan Museum in New York, for example, is known for having possessed antiquities with an unknown provenance, although they have returned some of them to their country of origin. The policy of this museum is somewhat odd: when they buy an archaeological artefact, they require the documentation of the last ten years of the object's history. However, as it is now 2013, the museum can, in theory, buy stolen artefacts from the Baghdad Museum, as its robbery happened longer than 10 years ago. Nothing forbids them to buy such objects, not even if they are very likely stolen or looted (Bogdanos in Rothfield 2008). A second example is the St. Louis Art Museum in Missouri, which possessed an Egyptian Pharaoic mask. It actually broke off the negotiations with Egypt about it when the Egyptian authorities claimed it as stolen and smuggled out of their country. There are countless more examples of museums possessing antiquities of an uncertain provenance which they do or do not return. There are so-called "source-countries" that take legal actions against the incorporation of "stolen" objects in collections (Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008), but unfortunately this is by far not enough.

Other stakeholders are evident: archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, epigraphs, etc. are a very (internationally) involved category. Unfortunately, Iraqis who wish to study their own archaeology, have to go abroad to do so. Furthermore, involved parties include international governments, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), museum curators and staff from all over the world, or anyone else with a common interest in the long and impressive history of Iraq. Rothfield has summarized all the involved stakeholders of Iraqi national heritage in

2002-2003 in table 1. This impressive list includes national as well as international parties. When working with (the protection of) heritage, it is very important to have this bigger picture in mind.

Next page: table 1: The stakeholders involved with Iraqi national Heritage in 2002-2003 (Rothfield 2008)

Policy Stakeholders Involved in Cultural Heritage Protection Efforts in Iraq, 2002-2003

NGOs and Nonprofits

U.S. Professional Associations

- American Coordination Committee of Iraqi Cultural Heritage (ACCICH)*
- American Anthropological Association
- American Oriental Society
- Archaeological Institute of America
- Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD)
- College Art Association
- Society for American Archaeology
- Society for Historical Archaeology

University-based Research Institutions

- British School of Archaeology in Iraq
- Cambridge University [UK]
  - McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
  - Illicit Antiquities Research Centre
- English Heritage [UK]
- SUNY-Stony Brook
- University of Chicago
  - Oriental Institute
- University of Michigan
- University of Pennsylvania

Government Organizations

United States Government

- **Central Intelligence Agency**
- **Department of Homeland Security**
  - Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- **Department of Justice**
  - FBI
- **Department of State**
  - Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
    - *Cultural Heritage Center*
  - Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
- **Department of State (cont.)**
  - Bureau of Near East Affairs
  - Bureau for Population, Migration, and Refugees
  - Future of Iraq Project *[at Middle East Institute]*
  - U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
    - *Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)*
- **Library of Congress**
- **National Security Council**
- **NEA** and **NEH**
- **White House Office of Science and Technology Policy**

Military and Police

U.S. Military and Police Forces

- **Department of Defense**
  - Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict
  - Defense Intelligence Agency
    - *Operational Environ-mental Analysis Division*
  - Military Departments
  - Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense
    - *General Counsel's Office*
  - Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

* The ACCICH is comprised of representatives from the other professional associations listed here, as well as individual scholars

NGOs and Nonprofits

Museums

- British Museum [UK]
- Getty Conservation Institute
- International Council of Museums (ICOM)*
- Iraqi National Museum
- Metropolitan Museum of Art [NY]
- Smithsonian Institution

U.S. Philanthropists

- **Foundations**
  - Packard Humanities Institute; Getty; Mellon; Pew; Rockefeller
- **Corporations**
  - American Express
- **Individuals**

U.S. Collectors/Dealers

- American Council for Cultural Policy (ACCP)

International Organizations

- International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS)
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)‡
- Saving Antiquities for Everyone (SAFE)
- World Monuments Fund (WMF)

Government Organizations

Foreign Governments

- **British Government**
  - Department of Media, Culture, and Sport
  - Parliamentary Archaeology Group
- **Iraqi Government**
  - Facility Protection Service
  - Iraqi National Congress (in exile)
  - Ministry of Culture
    - *State Board of Antiquities and Heritage* (SBAH)

International Governmental Organizations (IGOs)

- **United Nations**
  - Department of Peacekeeping Operations
  - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Military and Police

- **Department of Defense (cont.)**
  - USCENTCOM
    - *Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC)*
      + 352nd Civil Affairs Command
    - *Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)*

Foreign and International Military and Police

- **Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale** [Italy]
- **Ministry of Defence** [UK]
- **Interpol**§
- **NATO**
  - Civil Military Co-operation/ Cultural Affairs (CIMIC/CA) Unit [The Netherlands]

* ICOM is an international organization comprised of national museum associations
‡ ICOMOS is comprised of national associations for monuments and sites
§ Interpol facilitates coordination between the police organizations of 186 member countries

Chapter 6: Protection of archaeology

After having discussed the complex situation of archaeology destruction in Iraq in the previous chapters, this chapter will now discuss its protection. It consists of five paragraphs. The first mentions options for the protection of museum collections, mostly in reference to the National Museum of Baghdad, which will serve as an example. The second paragraph is about ways to diminish the looting of archaeological sites. It discusses counteracting looting as well as the illegal trade market. Paragraph three emphasizes international cooperation. Then, in paragraph four the important aspect of creating awareness will be explained, and finally an important tool to enable all this will be given in the final paragraph: the media. Most paragraphs will also discuss what has been done, what we can learn from it and what should be done in the future.

6.1 Protecting museum collections

Every Iraqi museum has been under threat, as each of them could be the next victim of thieves and looters. Therefore their protection is essential, but this is complicated because some areas are so dangerous that guards are unable to protect a building. The Baghdad museum, for example, is situated in an extremely unstable area. The guards that worked there have been in danger since May 2003. They were attacked and wounded by men who drove by in cars using automatic weapons, and once the garden was struck by a rocket. We also cannot count on the electronic security equipment as a reliable power supply is not always available in times of war. Due to this, Iraqi museums had to come up with other ways to protect themselves. All museum administrators working in threatened areas should be prepared for worst-case scenarios (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008).

Very practical, this includes fortifying museums and safeguarding their collections. After the First Gulf War, regional museums were looted and therefore the staff of amongst others the National Museum in Baghdad had undertaken some preparations in 2003 to protect the archaeological objects from a similar attack. They built walls across the doorways and windows of the museum to prevent people from entering. Unfortunately, the thieves did find a way in through a small door at the back of the museum. The museum staff had left the very large and heavy museum pieces in

place, like stone reliefs that were attached to the walls, considering thieves would be unable to take them. They had also put sandbags in front the objects in case they would fall over by bomb explosions. This did not happen, but the looters did take the heavy objects and reliefs. Furthermore, the museum staff had brought objects from outlying museums to Baghdad, thinking they would be safer there. They could not have known that Baghdad was hit hardest. Fortunately, there were also preparations that worked out better. Ever since 1991, museum employees had been storing the most valuable objects in the Central Bank. They have been kept there ever since, also during the 2003 war, and have never been damaged. Furthermore, the Manuscript House, a building not far from the National museum, was completely emptied from its manuscripts, as the curators hid them in a bomb shelter in the west of Baghdad. This has preserved thousands of artefacts. The SBAH did the same with the most important museum records, central registers and library books. Those have all survived. The museum staff continued with the closing off of doorways and the storing of valuable objects after the looting of the National Museum. Furthermore, they emptied the administrative areas of the museum and distributed all staff members to other SBAH departments to ensure their safety (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008).

In general, the moving and hiding of objects is an effective method to protect them. In the case of the National Museum the material was still at risk due to inside information, but it has nevertheless saved thousands of objects. All Iraqi museums should be prepared to move objects to well-protected storerooms when needed, either in- or outside the country. Some people even imply that the Iraqi archaeological masterpieces are better off in museums and private collections abroad in general, considering the threats in their own country. UNESCO could thereby serve as an enabling body (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). This would indeed safeguard the objects, but it would also result in difficult situations, as the deportation of objects to another country would have to be accompanied by a great amount of trust between the cooperating nations and antiquities services. As shown in the previous chapter, this is not always possible. Furthermore, the intentional deportation of objects only justifies the illegal market.

Although methods of “self-defence” of museums and deportations of collections are essential in Iraq, they are still insufficient and have downsides. So more comprehensive plans to secure Iraq’s museums and sites have to be formed. This includes the digitalization of paper (excavation-) records by scanning or photographing them. They

should also be backed up and saved somewhere else, preferably on different locations and perhaps even abroad. More internationally recognized depositories should be created, in which duplicates of museum catalogues, photos, general records and databases could be saved (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). This points out the following important subject: the creation of databases. The staff of the Baghdad museum has used computers since the 1980s, but they often crashed due to computer viruses. They started to make a database of their collection one year before the invasion, but unfortunately this was not finished in time and this complicated the making of an inventory of stolen objects after the invasion. Also, many objects had lost their labels in the chaos: there should be a development in the system of keeping an object and its information together. Labels are insufficient: they get too easily loose and lost (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008).

Although it would be best if museums started to create catalogues and databases themselves, an emergency program should also be formed to rapidly be able to make a catalogue for museums in threatened areas (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). After the theft and destruction of the National Museum and the State Board offices, a computer network was installed. This enabled the staff to work more efficiently. UNESCO and the SBAH made arrangements for a comprehensive digital data program for the museum´s collections. Seventy specialist from the Baghdad museum staff were sent to Jordan for database management training. But although efficient equipment arrived at the museum, the work could still not be properly performed as the security situation in Iraq was still offended. Many of the staff could therefore not get to work and the museum was sealed.

Next from digital arrangements, photographs or detailed drawings should be made of all objects, so that it will be much easier to track them down and identify them when they get stolen. UNESCO could set up a program for this for threatened countries (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). Due to the UN sanctions regime that was placed on Iraq after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the Baghdad Museum had not been able to obtain supplies for photographs, although they did have many negatives of objects. Therefore, after the plundering of the museum, photographs made by foreign excavators were used to track stolen artefacts. However, the process to ask for them, receive and incorporate them in a list took weeks, which is enough time for a thief to cover his or her tracks. Although the museum staff was aware of the importance of a photographic record in the

years leading up to the 2003 war, the staff was diminished and many objects were put in storage for safekeeping: so the scanning for the database was limited .

Finally, in an ideal situation, funding should be applied to the training of local staff, to the purchasing of adequate equipment and to the furnishing of expertise for museums. This could be made available for museums through national programs or international efforts (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). It would be beautiful if international museums could organise exchanges of staff as a learning process, organise courses for local staff and/or further assist Iraqi museums in protecting their collections.

6.2 Long-term solutions to looting

The greatest problem, the looting of archaeological sites in desert areas, demands a different approach. Here, the major problem is not the theft or the damaging of the objects themselves, but the destruction of their contexts. As already mentioned, the problem of site-looting is considerable and not easy to diminish. Therefore, a true solution, if it exist, will have to be found on the long term, although smaller projects might also contribute to a regional reduction. If many approaches were combined it truly might have a certain effect. Unfortunately, the processes on the long term are not easy, as will be discussed further on. It will not be possible to banish out the entire looting situation, because there is a market for antiquities, looting is easy and valuable objects are relatively easy to find. So our final goal should not be to let looting disappear, but to enable the SBAH to control the looting situation by themselves again: we have to reduce the scale. An essential factor to this is that the Iraqi antiquities service gets more funding, so that they will be able to invest more in the protection of monuments and sites.

6.2.1 Prohibiting and counteracting looting

As mentioned earlier, looting during the Iraq war has been caused by several factors. Although there were some efforts to protect sites, the scale of destruction was immense (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005). It is debatable to which amount we can blame the coalition forces for not having prevented this. They could have undertaken more action and it is sure that if they would have done so, this would have made a difference. Scholars differ in opinion about the reasons for not undertaking more action. The main reason is that it was not a priority, as discussed in paragraph 3.3.4. Furthermore, the division of labour activities regarding to cultural heritage in various agencies of the US was opaque, and there was none of them that had responsibility for the efforts to secure Iraq's archaeological heritage. The oversight of culture in the US was decentralized and therefore uncoordinated, and the communication of knowledge and information about heritage across the government therefore has to improve (Wilkie in Rothfield, 2008). However, not only the United States should be addressed here. Policymakers never really allowed the looting of antiquities, but there was a general lack in oversight of the situation, created by a deficiency of communication between

government agencies. This resulted in chaos at the Iraq Museum and also at the sites through Iraq (Wilkie in Rothfield, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial that better communication, cooperation and a more transparent system between different layers within organisations should be created.

As to looting today, now that the war is "over", other changes also have to be made as Coalition forces are no longer involved. It is crucial that the farmers in the rural area of Southern Iraq are provided an alternative to looting. This means that proper employment has to be created. During the looting waves in the 1990s the SBAH came with a good solution: hiring local inhabitants to help archaeologist excavating sites. This way, they earned a sufficient income and therefore looting was no longer necessary. The reason that this initiative failed was the starting of the 2003 war. A pragmatic solution today might be to repeat this process, and to hire the local people for archaeological projects again. Farchakh Bajjaly, however, is convinced that this is exactly what should not be done:

> *"Even if it were possible, which it is not at present, rejuvenating Iraq's rural economy must not be linked to employment on archaeological sites. People have to be driven away from this option. They have to forget about this experience and find alternatives and better income solutions. Then, and only then, can one start hoping to save Mesopotamia."*
> (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008,140).

A possible alternative might be to stimulate farming, as Iraq has a great potential for agriculture and originally most of the looters were farmers anyway. According to the USAid report of 2007, farming in Iraq could provide for more than a third of the national income, if it were developed properly (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). Farming and dairy production on an industrial scale might replace looting as a source of income for the rural population, but only were it extremely well-organised and managed. Such an alternative way of employment and income would, however, only work if supported by tribal leaders.

Furthermore, the punishments for looting should be better implemented and maintained, so that people will know that when they get caught, there is no way out (Farchakh Bajjaly in Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). Before the Gulf Wars, Iraq had one

of the best records to guard sites effectively, due to their strongly committed government (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). Implementing this again means that the strong influence of the tribal system on local authorities has to be diminished severely. If the reinforcement of imprisonment is successful, looting will at least become a less common thing to do, and people might become more aware of its consequences. One way to address this matter might be by starting to register looters as “thieves” in police records. As honesty and dignity are important values in tribal societies, looters, then becoming “thieves”, might no longer be socially accepted by their peers. This might scare them away from looting. However, the institutionalisation of such a change will take a long time.

To catch looters, a better overview of the sites needs to be created. Hundreds of thousands mounds exist in the Near East: any untrained eye could mistake them for hills. Spatial Analysis could be applied in order to map all the (looted) sites in Iraq. It would enable scholars to study what kind of sites are being looted, which areas have the highest concentration of looted sites, etc. Like this an anticipation can be made. The site locations can be documented by using a GIS (Geographic Information System). The SBAH has cooperated with international bodies to train its staff in such GIS techniques, for example satellite imaging. It is also establishing a database for Iraq’s archaeological sites, in cooperation with the World Monuments Fund and the Getty Institute. Although this program does not safeguard Iraqi sites, it does monitor the pace of destruction through the generation of new images (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). This imaging can also record the spread of looting over time.

The relatively small Carabinieri army has shown how effective looting combat can be. They approached the looters with helicopters, chased them and trapped them between the helicopters and upcoming Carabinieri. It was a great technique, but there were not enough helicopters to continue the actions. Working at night was also a problem. But their anti-looting tactics were impressive, fast, persuasive, and their surveillance capacity covered a huge area. Of all coalition forces, only the Italians were prepared to use their helicopters for this purpose. Imagine a larger army using such techniques, for example the army of the United States; its impact would incredible. However, even if the United States made an effort towards the protection of archaeological heritage, many looters and tribal superiors would be killed in the battles. This would provoke much resistance from the Iraqi population. However, if looting were to be controlled, terrorists and undesirable regimes would be cut off from an unlimited source of income.

6.2.2 Stopping the illegal Antiquities Market

Next to tackling the looting situation in Iraq, the illegal market in Western countries must also be approached, as this is just as important. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the appreciation for ancient material culture goes back for millennia, and collecting items is a characteristic of human nature. However, collectors must no longer look away and ignore the consequences of collecting. Although the supply of antiquities seems limitless, people have to start realising that this is absolutely not the case: at a certain point there will be nothing left of Iraq's cultural heritage to learn from. Although awareness is growing and committees against the illegal antiquities market have risen, change goes only slow. Large campaigns should be organised to make clear that owing a stolen object is not something to be proud of. People must be made aware of what they cause by stimulating the illegal art market. It would be very helpful if the trade in antiquities became a taboo, like the trade in endangered animals. This, however, is a process that takes a long time and will not be easy to create. Increasing awareness will, however, at least be a start to change the public opinion (Renfrew 2000). The academic community and the media could play a role in this, by making clear to the public that the purchasing of illegal objects stimulates the destructive looting process, and funds terrorist groups and rebels (Renfrew 2000, Foster *et al*. 2005). This could all be accompanied by efforts in legal advances to prevent private collectors and museums from trading on the illegal market (Foster *et al*. 2005). The Philadelphia and British museum decline to buy, accept or even loan unprovenanced materials (Renfrew 2000). Other museums should follow them.

Next to moral measurements, international communities should also maintain stricter policies in regards to the antiquities trade. Governments that are not a party to the UNESCO conventions mentioned in paragraph 2.3, or other international agreements that concern heritage, should be stimulated to join. Every nation should subscribe to the UNESCO and Unidroit Conventions (Renfrew 2000), especially the 1970 UNESCO convention, but unfortunately their enforcement and implementation are problematic as there is so much money involved. The United States, for example, which is the largest nation in the purchase of antiquities, has a ban on the illegal market. But apparently this is insufficiently enforced to make it work. This should be stimulated. Furthermore, the export checking on borders by the military have to start being performed much more

securely. Today, military forces do not see it as a threatening activity, like the export of weapons. It is also tolerated as millions of dollars are involved.

From the side of Iraq, the illegal trade is accompanied with a lot of corruption, complicating every effort of diminishing the process. On a governmental level there is a deep involvement, and the same goes for Iraqi elites. As hard as we might want to try to change the moral around antiquities and tighten international policies, efforts will be useless as long as this corruption continues. In the entire matter of discouraging looting, counteracting the market will therefore probably be the hardest part.

6.3 International cooperation

A very important aspect within the protection of archaeological museums and sites is the international cooperation of institutions. The British museum has worked together with different organisations to help Iraqi museums to protect their collections during the Second Gulf War. After the looting of the Baghdad museum, they provided condition reports and listings of damage (John Curtis in Stone 2011). Together with the New York Metropolitan Museum they also provided staff for the National Museum to help them repair the damage done to their collections (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield, 2008). The University of Chicago has made a database that lists all the important stolen objects (Reichel in Emberling and Hanson 2008). Altogether, 1.7 million dollars was allocated for the repair of the Baghdad Museum (Hannah in Bianco 2004). Other academic institutions made exchange programs in which they trained Iraqi archaeologists and they helped Baghdad's university to rebuild their capacity in archaeology. Such kind of private support with institution-to-institution efforts (which complemented official support to Iraq by foreign governments through UNESCO), were mainly based on private support of donors, which was also meant as a sign of goodwill (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield 2008). Foreign academics have assisted their Iraqi colleagues after the 1991 Persian Gulf war, before, during and after the 2003 invasion. They have supplied lists and photographs of stolen objects that they documented during their own excavations, to assist official bodies like Interpol and the FBI to identify them and to be able to recognize them at the borders. They were also able to comment the events on television as they were familiar with the country and the museum. They informed the general public of the significance of Iraq's cultural heritage (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). International excavation teams have also made efforts to secure the Iraqi sites where they had worked in the past. One of them was the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. They helped to secure the Kish region, where they had previously performed archaeological research. They made attempts to rally professional resources, governmental attention and public interest, but unfortunately this all became insignificant due to the uprising chaos (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield, 2008).

All these cases have shown to be very effective. Such cooperation between international colleagues within museum staff and cultural ministry personnel could be expanded, as its effects are very positive.

Furthermore, international cooperation can also be improved on a higher level. An idea raised by Burnham and Urice is to create an overarching body which represents the different interests within the heritage sector, in the form of a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield, 2008). This is a very good initiative, as it is very important to be able to engage with all the involved audiences, including both professional and indigenous communities (Perring and Van der Linde 2009). As many stakeholders have a right on cultural heritage, it is extremely important to balance the interests (Kila 2012).

> *We need to promote methods that reinforce dialogue and debate, and which work towards readdressing the imbalances in power that fuel conflict* (Perring and Van der Linde 2009, 205).

The NGO proposed by Burnham and Urice would focus on the improvement of the coordination in the cultural heritage section in post-conflict situations. It would develop the necessary linkages between cultural institutions, individuals, governments, the military and diplomatic personnel. The final aim is the protection, conservation and reconstruction of cultural heritage (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield 2008). The NGO would be non-profit, charitable and would represent various interests. It is a very good initiative, as it involves many stakeholders and it intends to stimulate a good cooperation. The overarching body could contain members from NGO's, intergovernmental organizations (IGO's), and individuals with relevant missions or expertise. The four key activities would be research and education, advocacy, coordination and fundraising (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield 2008).

The NGO they describe is orientated on the United States, as its further target is to assist the US's cultural community in minimizing the damage to the worlds cultural heritage during war, and to assist America's government and military to protect it. Those institutions are needed as they work effectively with other militaries and governments and can provide logistical support (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield 2008, 263-264).

The idea of NGO's for heritage protection is not entirely new. Before and during the 2003 War, the nongovernmental cultural sector became proactive in the protection of Iraqi cultural heritage. They provided information to the US Departments of State and Defence about cultural sites and monuments that were at risk in the case of armed combat. After the 2003 war, several Western NGO's have also searched ways to restore

the damage that had done and established communications with Iraqi counterparts without including governmental parties (Burnham and Urice in Rothfield, 2008).

6.4 Creating awareness

It has already passed a couple of times during this thesis, but a crucial factor in the protection of cultural heritage is creating awareness amongst people about the value of archaeology. This is relevant to all stakeholders. It might stimulate the local population to diminish looting, it might create a moral issue about the antiquity trade, it can result in the army treating sites with more care, and it could enforce the conventions and policies about heritage protection. These are of course very extreme results and it would be incredible if this already worked for only one stakeholder, but it is a basic fact to start from.

Educational programs for military forces are already being performed. There have been a number of efforts to educate soldiers about the importance of archaeological sites. However, it is impossible to reach all soldiers and units with one single program. Several people have been working on this, like Michael Fahy an Gil J. Stein, and different programs with specific target-group oriented lectures are being given to, for example, marines, civil affairs personnel, military leaders, etc. (Emberling in Emberling and Hanson 2008). This is important, because the only way military forces will truly start protecting Iraqi's archaeological heritage, is when it is made a part of their mission. Another example of creating awareness among soldiers is described by Joris Kila. The Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO, together with the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science have developed archaeologically-themed playing cards and sent 100.000 packs to troops working in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each card shows an artefact or a site, or it gives advise on how to help preserve antiquities (Kila 2012, 203-204). The cards are based on other sets of cards which show the most-wanted former regime officials. The "heritage-cards" were part of an awareness program to stimulate troops to preserve the heritage they come across.

All armies should be trained in the recognition and respect of Blue Shield markings (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008). Unfortunately, there is a proviso in the Geneva Convention, which excuses the destruction of cultural sites that are used by fighting forces. This can be used as an excuse for heritage damage, even when looting takes place days or weeks after battle. This also happened in Baghdad. Official regulations should be created to the extent of the use of this proviso, as it is getting out of hand. Furthermore, occupying forces should have real plans to protect cultural

property, as well from their own troops as from local looters (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008).

Awareness of the looting disaster has to be created amongst Iraqis as well as amongst Western people. This can be done by organising extensive campaigns and teaching children at school about the value of archaeology. Also, investments should be made in the education of Iraqi students. If the younger generations were better educated about the matter, things might change over time. Today, Iraqi scholars and students wishing to study their nation's archaeology have to go abroad. If archaeology were better integrated in the educational programs in schools and universities, this might contribute to people's knowledge and appreciation of their heritage.

It is also very important that Iraqi locals get more involved in the protection of their heritage, so that they will feel more connected to it and assist in the conservation of monuments and sites in times of conflict and warfare. Obviously, this is very complicated to do. It would be useful to have agreements with local tribal leaders, but the 2003 war has shown that these agreements ceased to function as soon as the war started. Looters even went to guarded sites and drove off the guards (Gibson and Youkhanna in Rothfield, 2008).

In the end, people will truly have to face the problem. This also counts very strongly for the governmental leaders of the Iraqi nation. If Iraq wants to recover from everything that has happened in its past, it has to come to terms with that past. It is thereby essential that this time, we learn from it. People could get motivation and guidance out of it (Bernhardsson 2005), to create a better future.

6.5 Using the media

Being a journalist in Iraq, especially during the Iraq war, is an extremely dangerous job to pursue, as kidnapping and death are of the order of the day (Rothfield 2008). Information therefore was, and is, hard to collect. Press and other media however have an important influence on the attention subjects get in the world. This also counts for archaeological heritage under threat in conflict areas. The media make a selection of what is to be told, and what is to remain unknown. They can give worldwide attention to a matter, which can be very efficient to exert pressure, but when a problem is a slow and long during one, media tend to be no longer interested and the problem is likely to be forgotten. As the plundering of Iraq's desert is a fast-running and a slow-motion disaster at the same time (it has been going on for years on high-speed, and nothing actually changes), it is unfortunately not really a media item.

The looting of the Baghdad Museum from 10-13th of April 2003 was an international sensation, but media attention died quite quickly. The number of its losses were rather exaggerated: people spoke about the loss of 170.000 objects instead of the real number of a few thousand. When American and British columnists noted this, they twisted it completely by telling that the museum staff and some foreign archaeologists were lying, and that they had made it all up. On July 3, 2003, there was a "one-day opening" of the museum, which actually only lasted a couple of hours. The goal of it was to welcome some journalists and the Coalition Provisional Authority head J. Paul Bremer, in order to show the progress that was being made. However, the exposition existed of items that had been stored unharmed in the Central Bank, and returned there immediately afterwards. However, this "opening" led to the end of the story of the Baghdad Museum as far as the media were concerned. Their conclusion was that things were getting back to "normal": there were "expositions" again, the museum was restoring and the losses were probably negligible. But in reality the museum had not progressed at all: it was still closed and in chaos. In fact, the museum has only opened about 20 times since 1980, when the Iraq-Iran war started. Local inhabitants called the museum "Saddam's gift shop", as it only opened for special occasions to show off. It took months after the looting in 2003 before the antiquities offices could be used again, and people could pick up their jobs again. From then, the museum was rarely open until November 2011, when it was finally opened for real.

The exposure in the media, however, also had a positive effect: it led to the return of thousands of items to the museum. Scholars at Chicago and in Britain posted pictures of important items belonging to the National Museum on much-visited websites. This made it impossible for looters to sell them, which often led to their return. *The more publicity an investigation receives, the more resources it is likely to receive* (Bogdanos 2005, 493). Furthermore, the publicity of the items learned border officials what to look for, and it reached dealers and collectors so that they were told what not to buy. When an object is made famous by much publicity, it can never be sold on the illegal market.

Another application of the media is, as described in the previous chapter, to create awareness of the looting and trading situation of Iraqi antiquities. An interesting option to better inform people is a movie, as that appeals to many. At the moment, a movie is being made about plundering in Iraq: "the road to Nasiriyah" (www.theroadtonasiriyah.com). This is an initiative of the Umma foundation in New York. It will be interesting to see what kind of effect this will have.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

In this thesis I have tried to make clear how extensive the destruction of archaeological material during and after the First and Second Gulf War was (and is). I also hope to have made clear how urgent it is to undertake action. In this final chapter, I will summarize once more the development of the problem, what we can learn from the past and what it says about possible solutions for the future to be able to answer my main research question:

What can be done to better protect the Iraqi archaeological heritage in the future, looking at the events during and before the Gulf wars?

Before 1991, Iraq had one of the best records to guard sites effectively. This changed completely after the Persian Gulf War and the Kuwait Crisis in the early '90s, when the country suffered from international sanctions that were imposed on it and from the general decline in the world economy. This had enormous human and environmental consequences. Iraq was in chaos and poverty and tribal powers revived. People started to massively dig Sumerian sites in southern Iraq to search for valuable antiquities which they could sell to collectors or museums abroad, mainly as an alternative way of income. Any efforts in the years following trying to counteract this were wiped out in 2003, when the Second Gulf War began. This created a renewed increase in looting. People were now experienced and even more effective than in 1991. The looting of the Baghdad Museum was the greatest archaeology-related publicity scandal during this war, and it has reached all corners of the world. Many other museums had a similar fate, and countless sites, well-known or lesser known, have been completely destroyed in the search of saleable objects. Furthermore, several major sites have underwent collateral damage by military forces.

In some way, history has repeated itself in regards to looting. Unfortunately there has not been paid sufficient attention to this in the leading up to the invasion. Although the strategy of looters and a repeat of the damage activities in 1991 was partly foreseen by archaeologists and other professionals, British and American military authorities did only little to act on it. Heritage protection is not the army's primary concern. Furthermore there was a lack of (governmental) oversight on the matter. Many sites damaged in 1991 were left unguarded in 2003. However, we do have to realise that

even if we would have taken these earlier plunderings into account, we would still have been surprised by the new speed and magnitude. Although the situation in 1991 caused an extreme increase in looting, there has never been a situation in which looting was so efficient, fast and dangerous as after the Second Gulf War. Studying this afterwards, we do see a parallel between looting periods and periods of violent political circumstances in Iraq. After the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 the country turned into distress, and looting occurred in the regions with political instability, poor economic conditions and a lack of centralized government authority (Foster *et al*. 2005). People grabbed any opportunity they had in order to survive, which logically led to an extensive wave of looting and smuggling in antiquities. The same situation had occurred in 2003. It can be concluded that looting is caused by impoverishment in an unstable economy, especially in areas where there is an absence of authority (Garen and Carleton in Palk and Schuster, 2005).

The devastating destruction and plundering of many museums, libraries, archives and other institutions tells us that nothing was learned from the past, as only little preparation was made to protect them. Only when the National Museum in Baghdad was looted and the media got involved, action was undertaken. However, the fact remains that during the war and even after the attack of the museum, insufficient measurements were taken to protect the archaeological heritage.

The looting and destruction problem is very comprehensive: politics and antiquity trade markets are completely intertwined. Furthermore, (tribal) looters are professional, adaptive, armed and merciless. Influential tribe leaders are more powerful than governmental institutions. There is no one-way solution to the problem of destruction; no pocket guide for “what-to-do-when-people-loot”. A true recovery of the situation can only happen on the long-term, and needs to be approached in several ways.

The first is to approach the Iraqi people. The only way to discourage people from looting is by giving them a reasonable alternative way of income. This means that people’s financial, social and living situations all have to be improved. This is already happening in Kurdistan, but the south of Iraq remains problematic. Jobs will have to be created. This could be farming, as Iraq has a great potential for agriculture. However, this will only be possible were it managed extremely well, and were it supported by tribal leaders. Furthermore, punishments like imprisonment for looting have to be implemented so that people will know they cannot longer get away with it, and it won’t be such an easy way to make money anymore. Also, future Iraqi generations have to be better taught about the value of archaeology. The education of Iraqi students could have

an increased focus on this. It should be involved in learning methods for children at school, or taught through campaigns. Also, the education of history and archaeology on a higher level has to become more available at the universities. Furthermore, better cooperation between stakeholders has to be created. Burnham and Urice proposed to create an NGO that would serve as an overarching body of involved institutions, individuals, governments and the military.

A second approach is the discouraging of the illegal market, which will be very hard as it concerns millions of dollars and powerful (political) people are strongly involved. It would be a start to stimulate international governments to become part of heritage-related (UNESCO-) conventions and agreements, especially the 1970 UNESCO convention, to diminish the public sale of antiquities. Unfortunately, the enforcement and implementation of conventions is extremely problematic and are still insufficient to halt the import of illegal artefacts in foreign countries. Therefore, international communities should maintain stricter policies in regard to the antiquities trade. This could start by a more securely performed export checking on borders by the military. Furthermore, there must be better communication, cooperation and a more transparent system between different layers within organisations and governments, so that a more clear overview of the situation can be created.

Third, the Mesopotamian art and antiquity collectors have to be approached. They are uncaring or unaware of the fact that they stimulate looting and profit of human misery. Although there will always be a demand for Mesopotamian (Iraqi) antiquities, we have to try to address people's minds and goodwill by getting their attention and create awareness. Large campaigns should be organised to make clear that owing a stolen object is not something to be proud of. People must be told what they cause by stimulating the illegal art market, in an effort to make it a taboo. The media, the academic community, museums, institutions and involved individuals should all participate in this. Furthermore, legal advances and changes should be made to the way that private collectors and museums collect. Unfortunately, this is complicated because smugglers, dealers, sellers and buyers of illegal objects are very hard to trace due to the anonymity of the internet.

As to the protection of archaeology in museums, the fourth approach, we can learn a lot from the plundering of the Baghdad Museum. Is essential to protect museums in threatened areas from attacks by fortifying them and by saving as much valuable objects as possible in storage areas elsewhere. Furthermore, all the material should be documented, preferably digitally in the form of databases and catalogues.

Also, funding for institutions and museums should become available: to hire local staff, to purchase adequate equipment and to furnish expertise for museums. The assistance of foreign academics to their Iraqi colleagues have shown effective in the past. Therefore this should be further stimulated. International museums could assist Iraqi museums by protecting their collections or providing them courses, or organising exchanges of staff to learn from each other.

Every effort to improve the archaeology protection in Iraq faces problems and is hard to perform. However, it is essential that we try, and that the approaches mentioned above are combined. It is thereby crucial that there is as much cooperation between stakeholders as possible. As looting and archaeology destruction is intertwined with Iraq's political situation and deals with much corruption, an amelioration of the process will not be easy or fast. Even a small success will already be a great accomplishment. However, as the end of the war did not mean the end of archaeology destruction, it is important that we start acting fast. The process of looting, smuggling and trading Mesopotamian antiquities is a process which takes lives, worsens tribal conflicts, undermines the country's safety and destabilises it. We have to stop looking away from the problem and break out of the pattern. We have to face the past and learn the lessons from it. This is an effort we have to make together, as, in the end, we are all together responsible for the large-scale looting of archaeological sites and thereby of the destruction of Mesopotamia. It is time to stop blaming parties and to take a step into the future.

It is time to face reality.

Summary

For the last couple of decades, Iraq is known as a country of war, danger, fear, hunger and terror. Three wars have occupied this period, bringing along terrible consequences. The chaos and poverty of the country, in combination with an destabilised authority, has made people to start large-scale looting of archaeological sites in the desert of Southern Iraq, as an alternative way of income. the antiquities they dig up from the ground are sold to smugglers, which again sell them on to collectors, museums and institutions all over the world through the illegal trade market. Unfortunately, the looting and selling of these ancient objects does not happen occasionally, but it happens on a gigantic scale and gets worse and worse. Entire villages, clans and tribes are involved in the trade and profit from it. Furthermore, powerful elites mingle in the trade, which is why it is completely intertwined with the country's political situation. Starting in 1990 with the first Gulf war, the problem has never had such a magnitude as with the start of the Second Gulf War in 2003, and it is still increasing today. Not only is this process destructive for the archaeological objects, monuments, and science, it also further destabilizes the country as looting groups are armed, merciless, dangerous and powerful. Furthermore, especially during the 2003 war but also before, sites have been damaged by military forces and bombs, and museums have been robbed. This bachelor thesis explains what kind of archaeology destruction has occurred in the past of Iraq, how looting has developed and why, why it is so hard to stop and most importantly, how we can counteract it.

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Gedurende de laatste decennia staat Irak bekend als een land van oorlog, gevaar, angst, hongersnood en terreur. In deze periode hebben er drie oorlogen gewoed, die vreselijke consequenties met zich mee hebben gebracht. Doordat het land in chaos en armoede verkeerde, gecombineerd met een gedestabiliseerde overheid, zijn mensen begonnen met het plunderen van archeologische sites in de woestijn van Zuid-Irak om een bron van inkomst te hebben. De objecten die ze opgraven worden doorverkocht naar smokkelaars, en worden dan over de illegale markt verkocht aan verzamelaars, musea en instituten over de hele wereld. Helaas gebeurt het plunderen en doorverkopen van antieke objecten niet sporadisch, maar op een enorme schaal en het wordt erger met de dag. Gehele dorpen, stammen en clans zijn betrokken in deze handel, en het is daardoor volledig vermengd met de politieke situatie in het land. Het probleem is begonnen in 1990 met de Eerste Golfoorlog, maar het heeft nog nooit zo'n omvang gehad als in het begin van de Tweede Golfoorlog in 2003. Vandaag de dag nemen de plunderingen van sites nog steeds toe. Het proces is niet alleen destructief voor de archeologische objecten, monumenten en wetenschap zelf, het is ook een manier waardoor het land verder wordt gedestabiliseerd, omdat het gaat om gewapende, genadeloze, gevaarlijke en machtige groeperingen die het merendeel van de plunderingen uitvoeren. Hiernaast zijn sites ook beschadigd door militairen en bommen en zijn museums geplunderd, voornamelijk tijdens de oorlogen zelf. Deze Bachelorscriptie beschrijft wat voor vernietiging van archeologisch materiaal er in het verleden heeft plaatsgevonden in Irak, hoe de plundering van sites zich heeft ontwikkeld en waarom, waarom het zo moeilijk is om dit te stoppen, en uiteindelijk hoe we het tegen kunnen gaan.

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