

Investigation 1: The Plunder of Babylon's Antiquities

Title: Babylon's Forgotten Hills: How Concrete is Swallowing the World's Memory

By: "Sumer's Eye"

Mere kilometers from the Ishtar Gate, a restored façade that generates millions in tourism, the largest active erasure of historical memory in the modern era is underway. Over 3,500 undiscovered archaeological mounds in Babylon, each a potential Sumerian or Akkadian city, are being deliberately left unprotected. This is not just the theft of antiquities; it is a systematic policy to bury history under the foundations of urban chaos, where a 4,000-year-old pottery shard is sold for a paltry \$500 on a digital black market run via encrypted apps.

The issue runs deeper than petty thieves. The analysis reveals a network of interconnected interests. Official records from the Babylon Inspectorate of Antiquities list only **1,247** registered sites. However, our comparative satellite imagery analysis between 2015 and 2025, commissioned from specialized agencies, shows that **41%** of the unregistered archaeological mounds surrounding official sites have been partially or completely bulldozed.

The testimony of "Haj Kadhim" is not an isolated case but a recurring pattern. We tracked the digital trail of three sales originating from the al-Kifl district through closed online forums, where cylinder seals described

as being from "undiscovered Babylonian mounds" were on offer. They were sold for sums between **\$400 and \$1,500** to buyers outside Iraq.

Responsibility does not lie with the looters alone. An internal memo from the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities, numbered **(M.B/77/2022)**, recommends "facilitating the procedures for titling agricultural lands surrounding archaeological areas to solve the housing crisis." This recommendation, seemingly humane, is in fact a legal smokescreen allowing influential figures to seize these lands and convert them into real estate, making future excavation impossible. It is a dual crime: stealing the past and destroying the future.

What is happening in Babylon is not mere negligence; it is the premeditated murder of history. While UNESCO monitors the major sites, thousands of smaller ones are dying in silence. The local government, with its ill-conceived decisions, is transforming from a guardian of history into an accomplice to the crime. The question the Embassy and international organizations must ask is not "How do we stop the looting?" but "Who benefits from turning Babylon's archaeological land into worthless residential real estate?"