CORE CONCEPT

Protecting Cultural Property Course: Antiquities Trafficking and Provenance Due Diligence

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Introduction:

Protecting cultural property through action on antiquities trafficking and provenance due diligence is the subject of this 1-week course for heritage protection, border control, criminal investigation and museum acquisition functions, ending with a Cultural Property Anti-Trafficking Action Plan for a case organisation. Looted coins and manuscripts cross borders on forged export papers and reach auctions and online marketplaces because inventories are thin and buyers skip provenance checks. Nominees already inspect consignments, handle seizures or approve acquisitions, and practise through case studies on shipment files, sale listings and ownership histories. CoreConcept Training Center delivers this protecting cultural property course.

Course Objectives:

- Apply the UNESCO Convention on illicit import, export and transfer of ownership and the UNIDROIT Convention to decide whether an object can be claimed, seized or returned
- Record cultural objects to the Object ID standard and build inventories that support theft reports and international alerts
- Screen consignments, sale listings and online offers against ICOM Red Lists and the INTERPOL Stolen Works of Art Database
- Conduct provenance research and due diligence on a proposed acquisition, documenting gaps in the ownership history and export papers
- Prepare seizure, evidence handling and restitution files that hold up in court and in return negotiations
- Coordinate joint investigations between heritage authorities, customs, police and INTERPOL channels with agreed roles and information exchange

Target Audience:

- Heritage protection units responsible for archaeological inventories, export permits and theft reporting
- Customs and border control units responsible for screening consignments, passengers and postal shipments
- Criminal investigation units responsible for art and antiquities theft, looting and fraud cases
- Museum acquisition and registration units responsible for vetting purchases, gifts and loans
- Legal affairs units responsible for restitution claims, return requests and mutual legal assistance
- Market supervision units responsible for monitoring dealers, auction houses and online sale platforms

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Course Outline:

Day 1: Antiquities Trafficking Landscape and Cultural Property Definitions

- Cultural Property Categories Under International Conventions and Domestic Heritage Laws
- Trafficking Chain Mapping From Looted Site to Final Buyer
- Site Looting Indicators and Community Watch Reporting Arrangements
- Laundering Techniques With Forged Export Papers and Transit Routes
- Current-State Gap Assessment of Inventories, Alerts and Controls

Day 2: UNESCO and UNIDROIT Conventions, Ethics Codes and Return Mechanisms

- UNESCO Convention Articles on Import, Export and Ownership Transfer
- UNIDROIT Convention Rules on Stolen and Illegally Exported Objects
- Possessor Compensation and the UNIDROIT Due Diligence Test
- International Code of Ethics for Dealers in Cultural Property Obligations
- ICPRCP Mediation and Conciliation Route for Return Requests

Day 3: Object Identification, Screening Tools and Provenance Research

- Object ID Standard Fields, Photographs and Distinguishing Marks
- ICOM Red Lists Used as Customs Screening Aids
- INTERPOL Stolen Works of Art Database and ID-Art Searches
- Provenance Research Worksheet for Ownership History and Export Papers
- Acquisition Due Diligence Checklist for Purchases, Gifts and Loans

Day 4: Art-Market Monitoring, Seizure, Evidence and Restitution Risks

- Online Sale Listing Monitoring With Image and Keyword Searches
- Auction Catalogue Review and Dealer Record Inspection Routine
- Seizure Procedure, Chain of Custody and Expert Authentication Report
- Restitution Claim File With Ownership Proof and Legal Basis
- Joint Investigation Team Roles With Customs, Police and INTERPOL

Day 5: Case Study Practice and Anti-Trafficking Action Plan Build

- Case File of an Intercepted Shipment of Excavated Coins
- Case Review of a Museum Purchase With Provenance Gaps
- Case Online Marketplace Listing Traced to a Looted Site
- Inter-Agency Alert and Information Exchange Protocol Drafting
- Cultural Property Anti-Trafficking Action Plan Completion and Panel Defence

Skills You Will Gain:

- Cultural Property Legal Classification
- Object Identification Recording
- Red List Consignment Screening
- Provenance Gap Analysis
- Online Antiquities Market Monitoring
- Chain of Custody Management
- Restitution Case Preparation
- Inter-Agency Investigation Coordination

Why Attend This Course:

- Present a Cultural Property Anti-Trafficking Action Plan for a case organisation to the heritage protection director and the head of customs enforcement
- Decide whether to detain a consignment, refuse an acquisition or open a restitution claim on documented provenance evidence
- Avoid accepting looted objects into collections, releasing suspect shipments and losing claims through broken evidence chains
- Equip colleagues with the Object ID sheet, provenance worksheet and seizure checklist used throughout the case studies

Conclusion:

Back at work, the participant gives the heritage protection director, customs enforcement and the museum acquisitions committee a Cultural Property Anti-Trafficking Action Plan that sets inventory targets, screening rules, market monitoring routines, seizure steps and inter-agency contacts. Enforcement units use it to decide which shipments and listings to stop, and acquisition staff use it to approve or reject offers. After the first seizure or rejected acquisition, the organisation should review alert speed, evidence quality and the outcome of any return request, then revise the plan.

Frequently Asked Questions FAQ:

What should participants know before a protecting cultural property course on antiquities trafficking and provenance due diligence?

Participants should already inspect shipments, investigate thefts, manage heritage inventories or vet acquisitions. No archaeology or law degree is needed. Bringing anonymised seizure files, export permits or acquisition records helps them apply the case studies to their own unit.

How does a protecting cultural property course on antiquities trafficking differ from heritage site management or museum collections care courses?

It concentrates on stopping stolen and illegally exported objects: conventions, screening tools, provenance checks, seizure and restitution. Site management courses cover conservation and visitors at a place, and collections care courses cover storage, display and loans of objects already lawfully held.

Why does provenance due diligence matter when protecting cultural property against antiquities trafficking?

Because a buyer who cannot show a documented ownership history and lawful export risks returning the object, losing the price paid and reputational damage. Under the UNIDROIT Convention, compensation for a possessor depends on whether due diligence was exercised, including checking registers of stolen objects.

What do participants take back from the protecting cultural property course on antiquities trafficking and provenance due diligence?

Participants take back a Cultural Property Anti-Trafficking Action Plan for a case organisation, with an Object ID sheet, a provenance worksheet, a screening routine based on Red Lists and stolen art databases, a seizure checklist and an inter-agency information exchange protocol.