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Museums 301 Midterm Question Two

The film *Robbing the Cradle of Civilization*, about the 2003 looting of the Iraqi National Museum, provides a case study for exploring ethical issues surrounding ownership and care of the world's cultural heritage. According to this film, who are the “major players” in the world's antiquities market and what motivates each of these groups to participate? Specifically, what role do museums play in this network? Finally, in your opinion, which of these groups is ultimately responsible for “robbing the cradle of civilization”? Use specific examples from the film, class readings, or lectures to support your answer.

When the United States led coalition invaded Iraq in 2003, it was the beginning of a long and bloody conflict that still continues today. The invasion was largely based on the claim that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction, along with the goal of freeing the Iraqi people. The invasion began in mid-March of 2003 and coalition forces quickly reached and captured the capital Baghdad by early-April.¹ During the Battle of Baghdad, the Iraqi National Museum was looted consecutively for three days, with thousands of pieces of history systemically stolen. The history of Iraq is extremely old, as it is the site of one of the first civilizations, ancient Mesopotamia. Many of the stolen pieces were thousands of years old and are worth thousands of dollars.

¹“Iraq War 2003-2011,” *Britannica*, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War>.

Works Cited

“Iraq War 2003-2011.” *Britannica*. Accessed October 24, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War>.

Robbing the Cradle of Civilization. Directed by Robin Benger. 2003. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2003. TV.