

## **More than 2,000 artifacts returned to Iraq Museum**

By Ammar Imad

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Ordinary people have surrendered 2050 artifacts to antiquities officials in southern Iraq, according to a senior Antiquities Department archaeologist.

The pieces were handed over to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in a ceremony in Baghdad, said Ali Kadhem.

Kadhem heads the Antiquities Department's branch in the southern Province of Nasiriya, home to some of the most fascinating remains of the Sumerian civilization, including their fabulous capital city of Ur.

He said 1100 pieces were metal coins belonging to various Mesopotamian epochs.

"The collection is bound to enrich the magnificent possessions of Iraq Museum's numismatics gallery," he said.

The other pieces included pottery jars and utensils of various shapes and decorations.

But most intriguing, according to Amira Aydan, head of the Antiquities Department, has been a "door hook whose presence in the past has almost always led to the discovery of a Mesopotamian temple."

But the scientists would have first to know where the hook came from since they did not come across it while digging but was passed to them by an Iraqi man as part of the department's campaign to collect pieces that have gone missing either due to looting or illegal digging.

Aydan said nearly 4,000 missing artifacts have been returned to the Iraq Museum which was looted shortly after U.S. troops landed in Baghdad five years ago.

The pieces handed over to the Museum recently were not part of the nearly 15,000 artifacts, some of them unique and priceless, which were stolen in the 2003 U.S. invasion aftermath.