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Reporter: Lucas Waagmeester

Translation (Dutch-English) item on looting and illicit trade starting at point 17.06 to 20.12

Translation

Newsreader: (Background: Islamic State [IS] destroys statues in Mosul Museum). With these images, IS managed to shock the world once again. Art that is thousands of years old, is being destroyed because it is thought to be blasphemous. But not everything is being destroyed. If it is small enough it can be sold abroad and IS makes a lot of money this way. There are two important smuggling routes to export the art out of Syria and Iraq; via Lebanon and via Turkey. Via these routes the art arrives at the Gulf states and Europe.

Reporter: It is an old country, the borderland between Syria, Iraq and Turkey. Thousands of years of history can be found in this soil and nowadays this history is being moved.

Aslan: A friend sent me a photograph and told me: 'We have a lot of artifacts from Mosul, Iraq. Could you try to sell them for me?'

Reporter: On the markets along the Turkish border, the trade in looted art treasures is thriving. Oddly enough, no one seems to know anything about this until we meet Aslan who is willing to talk in private.

Aslan: He sent me this picture and told me that it is worth 800 thousand dollars (shows picture of a stone statue on his smartphone). I had to sell it; I said 'It is just a stone'. But he told me that these kind of things are worth a lot of money in Europe.

Reporter: That is a question for the man with the most knowledge about antiquity here; jeweler Metin Ezilmez comes from a family of archaeologists. He is sad about all the looting and destruction that has taken place lately. Aslan's statue could be 3000 years old.

Metin Ezilmez: (Looks at the picture of Aslan's statue). This comes from Syria, I think it's marble. Probably stolen from a museum. It seems to be from a very old civilization, given the script. It's from Syria, that is for sure.

Reporter: Still there is hardly a sign of anything happening to stop the smuggling of antiquities. You do not hear a lot from the police, except for scarce news about the occasional interception or discovery of artifacts. These artifacts are being stored behind the high walls of the Archaeological Museum in Mardin. The odd thing is that none of the state's institutions, not the police, nor the museum nor the university, are willing to tell us something about the smuggling. If there is such a big problem, and no one is allowed to talk about it, this often means there is something wrong. Turkey is not able to control the illegal trade of artifacts from Syria.

Metin Ezilmez: There are so many antiquities floating about in Turkey. One in a hundred may be intercepted, the state has a hard time explaining this.

Reporter: The scale on which plunder and looting takes place, remains a mystery. Nor is it clear how the trading exactly works, Aslan, however, thinks differently.

Aslan: You saw on TV how the IS destroyed those old statues. The rest of the artifacts is being looted and sold; it goes from hand to hand. Until it is in Turkey, where it gets into Europe via Istanbul.

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