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LAYARD'S TREASURES: THE IMPACT OF NINETEENTH CENTURY ARCHAEOLOGY
ON MODERN QUESTIONS OF ANTIQUITIES OWNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the case of Sir Austen Henry Layard, a French-born Englishman who excavated the Assyrian site of Nimrud in the mid-nineteenth century, as a lens through which to study complex issues of antiquities ownership. For centuries, Western museums have been the stewards of non-Western antiquities. In recent years, non-Western countries have questioned this paradoxical arrangement, and the repatriation of antiquities to their sites of origin has become a hotly debated issue by historians, museum professionals, and even politicians. This issue has its roots in the nineteenth century, when Western archaeologists—often aristocrats with little formal training—led digs at some of the world’s most ancient sites and claimed the excavated artifacts for themselves and for their countries. This sparked a flood of antiquities into European museums and private homes, and the results of this influx are still on display in institutions like the British Museum, where Layard donated the Assyrian antiquities which he excavated.

The life, work, impact, and ethics of Sir Austen Henry Layard are a valuable case study through which to explore the question ‘Who owns antiquity?’ This case study provides a concrete lens through which to study the broad topic of antiquities ownership and the ethics of nineteenth century excavations, characterized by themes of provenance, privilege, and nineteenth century Orientalism. The implications of Layard’s work—and the work of many archaeologists like him—influence modern museums. With the historical context gained through this case study, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the debate surrounding modern-day claims to antiquities.

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Introduction

Each year, millions of visitors crowd the British Museum to marvel at a diverse collection of artifacts ranging from Chinese ceramics and African textiles to Egyptian mummies and Assyrian sculptures. Over the course of centuries, the British Museum—like many prestigious Western institutions—has gathered together artifacts of different eras and geographies for exhibition under one roof, allowing visitors to explore a variety of world cultures without ever leaving the museum. As evidenced by the high visitation rates of the British Museum and others like it, this model works. However, do many visitors stop to wonder why these cultural artifacts are being exhibited hundreds or thousands of miles removed from their sites of origin, under the care of curators who are not from the artifact's culture of origin?

The exhibition of antiquities presents an obvious paradox. Many of our world's most prized antiquities come from Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization. Yet, for centuries, Western museums have been the unquestioned stewards of Mesopotamian antiquities, as well as the antiquities of other non-Western civilizations. In recent decades, this paradox has become the subject of much debate, epitomized by the simple, powerful question posed by James Cuno, art historian, curator, and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust—who owns antiquity?¹ Ownership has been claimed both by the modern-day Mesopotamian societies descended from these ancient cultures and by the Western nations that excavated and displayed these artifacts.

¹ Cuno, James Bash. *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle Over Our Ancient Heritage*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). 2.

To understand the Western claim to antiquities, it is necessary to understand the process by which Europeans gained provenance—legal ownership—of ancient artifacts. Many of these artifacts were excavated in the nineteenth century by individuals who can be referred to as “armchair archaeologists.” Consider the modern phrase “armchair historian,” essentially a self-taught, amateurish historian. An armchair historian may be a great conversationalist at dinner parties or more well-versed in a particular historical subject than the average person, but they are not qualified to, for example, teach a college-level course or write a book. In the nineteenth century, “armchair archaeologists” had a similarly amateurish background, but, due to their social connections, were given the incredible responsibility to lead digs at some of the world’s most ancient sites, despite their inexperience.

As these armchair archaeologists uncovered stunning ancient treasures, they claimed the artifacts for themselves and for their countries, causing a flood of antiquities to arrive in European museums and private homes. Today, the results of this nineteenth century antiquities influx are still on display at Western institutions, which claim legal ownership of the artifacts based upon the fact that the antiquities were gifted to the museum by the European archaeologists who excavated them.

The battle for the world’s antiquities is just beginning, however. As the non-Western countries which are home to these ancient sites have established their own museums, they have started to question the Western tradition of antiquities stewardship and exhibition. A notable advocate for the repatriation of antiquities is Zahi Hawass, Egyptologist and former secretary-general for Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities, who regularly—and very publicly—calls

out Western museums for their exhibitions of non-Western artifacts.² As more non-Western museums establish themselves as capable stewards of antiquities, other voices have joined Hawass in advocating for the repatriation of antiquities to their origin countries.

The controversial work of nineteenth century European archaeologists has left modern museums and nations with challenging ethical and legal dilemmas which beg discussion by historians. However, the complexity and broadness of the antiquities ownership issue makes it incredibly difficult to dissect in its entirety. One way to put the issue of antiquities ownership into focus is to study it through the lens of a case study. Case studies are a concrete way to explore the relevant themes surrounding antiquities ownership, both in the nineteenth century and in the modern day.

This thesis will use the life, work, impact, and ethics of Sir Austen Henry Layard as a case study for the broader question of antiquities ownership. Layard was a French-born Englishman who began his career as an armchair archaeologist and ended it as one of the greatest contributors to modern knowledge of the Assyrian Empire. Studying Layard's life and excavations raises important questions regarding provenance, privilege, and nineteenth century Orientalism, questions which are also central to the issue of antiquities ownership. Through this case study, readers can observe the reality of antiquities excavation and ownership in the nineteenth century, which provides insight into modern-day questions of antiquities ownership.

To understand the context in which Layard was excavating, the first chapter will look at the three empires—the Assyrian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire—that impacted Layard's excavations at the site of Nimrud. The interactions between the empires will

² Waxman, Sharon. *Loot*. (London: Old Street, 2009). 1.

also be explored in this chapter. The second chapter will look at Layard's upbringing and the influence which his social background had upon his ability to succeed in the Mesopotamia. This chapter will also explore Layard's six years spent excavating the site, as well as his interactions with local Arab tribes and Sheiks. The final chapter will study Layard's return to England, and the British reception of his findings.

Layard's case is the compelling story of a man who uncovered the remains of an ancient empire, and who used this discovery to spark a public interest in the Assyrian Empire which continues into the modern day. However, it is also an example of the impact that nineteenth century archaeology can have on modern museums. The artifacts from Layard's excavations still form the heart of the British Museum's Assyrian collection, and the museum's records still indicate Layard as the original owner, a provenance used to justify the museum's continued exhibition of the artifacts. This case study provides a concrete lens through which to study broader questions regarding antiquities ownership and the ethics of nineteenth century excavations and provenance. With the insights gained through this case study, readers will gain a better understanding of the complex issues surrounding modern-day claims to antiquities, allowing each individual reader to personally answer this central question of 'Who owns antiquity?'

Chapter 1

Three Empires

Sir Austen Henry Layard's excavations sit at the intersection of three great empires: the Assyrian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire. By the time of Layard's excavations at Nimrud from 1845 to 1851, the Assyrian Empire had long since fallen, its memory preserved in archaeological sites like Nimrud. In the mid-nineteenth century these Assyrian sites located within the Ottoman Empire were excavated by European archaeologists, like Layard. As a French-born Englishman, Layard came from an empire on which the sun never set. During this time period, the British Empire was reaching the peak of its political and geographic power. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire was on the decline, quickly earning its title of the "Sick Man of Europe."

To understand the historical and political context of Layard's excavations, one must first gain an understanding of these three empires, specifically the history and significance of the Assyrian Empire; the political situation of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century; and the attitudes of the British Empire towards Mesopotamia and Ottoman antiquities. Woven throughout the narratives of these three empires are three relevant themes which reside at the intersection of the Assyrian, Ottoman, and British Empires, and which impacted Layard's excavations at Nimrud in the mid-nineteenth century.

First, the interactions between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire were influenced by Orientalist attitudes. In this dynamic, power shifted in favor of the Europeans, who viewed Mesopotamians as "the other." In the nineteenth century, Arab culture was romantic and dangerous, mysterious and primitive. While this fascinated Englishmen like Layard, it also

contributed to the European belief that Eastern cultures were not adequate stewards of valuable artifacts. Mesopotamian preservation methods were considered rudimentary and, distrustful of these conservation methods, Europeans decided to take it upon themselves to become stewards of the physical history of these cultural legacies. This precipitated a flood of Assyrian and other ancient Mesopotamian artifacts into European museums.

Second, the interest in ancient artifacts was influenced by the religious convictions of mid-nineteenth century Europeans. In the Victorian era of enlightenment, Europeans sought to integrate their long-held religious beliefs with their new appreciation for science. Middle Eastern archaeology served as the perfect bridge, something which Layard would capitalize upon after he returned to England. From this fascination with Biblical archaeology arose a new niche category for historical artifacts. Unlike Greek or Roman artifacts, these items were not recognized by Europeans for their beauty or sophistication, but rather for the fact that they were—even if only vaguely—rooted in Biblical times and history. Layard recognized that Assyrian artifacts fit this niche perfectly and he used this trend to popularize his discoveries.

Finally, a central theme at the intersection of these three empires is the practice—adopted by the British, the Ottomans, and many other modern societies—of appropriating the legacy of ancient societies. Both Europeans and Ottomans saw themselves as heirs to the great ancient societies, with the Ottomans asserting their empire to be the “Second Rome.” For the Ottomans, the association was geographic; they now occupied the territories which had once been home to great societies like the Romans and Assyrians. The British justified their association by maintaining that their culture had built upon the art, science, and other advancements initially made by ancient societies. Having possession of ancient cultural artifacts solidified this

connection and, as a result, such artifacts became powerful political and cultural tools during the mid-nineteenth century.

When Layard set forth to excavate in Mesopotamia, he was excavating in the context of all of these factors, with the historical backdrop of the three empires. Each empire had achieved greatness—whether in the distant past, the recent past or the present—and used their influence to make a mark on Mesopotamia. Their influence and these themes would be felt throughout Layard's excavations, and remain relevant even in the modern day.

The Assyrian Empire

Ashur—the Assyrian capital city from which this empire derived both its name and its primary god—sits on the Tigris River in the agriculturally rich land of northern Iraq. Ashur began establishing itself as a trade city in the early second millennium, after the collapse of the Third Dynasty of Ur, which ruled Mesopotamia from 2100 B.C.E. to 2006 B.C.E.³ Textiles from Babylonia, as well as some textiles produced at Ashur were the primary trade goods, along with tin. The city, with its rich agricultural land, control of the Tigris River, and location along a trade route, was ideally suited for merchant activity, and the city steadily began gaining regional power from the twentieth century to the fourteenth century B.C.E., a period considered by modern historians to be the Old Assyrian Empire.⁴

The Middle Assyrian period was ushered in under the reign of Assur-Uballit I (1365 – 1330 B.C.E.). This period is marked by Assyria’s entrance into trans-regional politics, evidenced by Assur-Uballit I’s initiation of correspondence with the Egyptian King. Assur-Uballit I wrote to the Pharaoh, “I have sent my envoy to you, to see you and to see your land. I have entered into communication with you today as up to this time my forefathers never entered into communication.”⁵ The gifts which Ashur-Uballit I sent with this envoy—which include a chariot and “a jewel of real lapis lazuli” —are classified as *šulamnu*, a gift intended to spark both a political and a commercial relationship between the two countries. Although this relationship, along with other political and trade relationships, would come to fruition during the Middle Assyrian period, Ashur-Uballit I nonetheless set off a period of aggressive expansion.⁶ By the

³ Saggs, H. W. F. *The Might That Was Assyria* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 27.

⁴ Oates, Joan, and David Oates. *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2001), 14-15.

⁵ Saggs, *Might That Was Assyria*, 42.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

end of the Middle Assyrian period, however, Assyria found itself threatened by the immigration of Armaeans from across the Euphrates River. The threat became so dire that Assyria allied with Babylonia, an empire with which the Assyrians had repeatedly clashed over their attempts to expand. This alliance weakened Assyria, which did not begin to regain strength until the latter half of the tenth century, when the Armaeans began settling in organized kingdoms.⁷

From this, the Neo-Assyrian Empire rose. King Ashur-nasir-pall II (883-859 B.C.E.) stands out as one of the most powerful and influential kings of this period. Under his leadership, the Assyrian Empire permanently expanded into northern, eastern, and western regions where the empire had gained only temporary control under previous kings. Ashur-nasir-pall II encouraged a particular focus on northern expansion and recognized the importance of moving his base of operations from Ashur to a more northern city. Instead of building upon an existing city, Ashur-nasir-pall II decided to found a new capital, called Calah or Kahlu.⁸ He chose a site approximately twenty-two miles south of Nineveh, a city which had been inhabited for centuries and was home to a palace and several administrative buildings.⁹ Ashur-nasir-pall II could have restored Nineveh as the Assyrian capital; indeed, Nineveh was closer to the northern reaches of the empire than Kahlu. However, Ashur-nasir-pall II wanted to establish a city that was entirely his own, a lasting, physical testament to his legacy.

The city was laid out in roughly a square, encompassing approximately nine hundred acres, with a wall of squared stone blocks around the perimeter. Along the western wall ran the Tigris River, although, in the centuries since the city was built, the river has changed course.¹⁰

⁷ Saggs, *Might That Was Assyria*, 65-69.

⁸ Saggs, *Might That Was Assyria*, 72-74.

⁹ Oates, Joan, and David Oates. *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed*, 23.

¹⁰ Oates, Joan, and David Oates. *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed*, 23.

The city's primary structure—spanning approximately six and a half acres—was the North West Palace, which Layard discovered, excavated, and documented extensively. This structure served as the primary royal residence at Kahun, and consisted of an entrance courtyard (*babanu*), domestic quarters (*bitanu*), a throne room suite, and various administrative spaces.¹¹ Ashurnasir-pal II's palace, although incomparably smaller than Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian palace, is considered to be one of the most impressive Mesopotamian structures due to its ornamentation and artwork.¹²

Ashurnasir-pal II's monumental citadel and his aggressive expansionism were just the beginning of the Neo-Assyrian Period's successes. Under Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.E.), for example, power was taken away from regional governorships and centralized under the king. Through this, the empire asserted direct control over its vassal states, which had previously maintained a degree of independence. With this, the Assyrian Empire expanded west of the Euphrates River, which had been the traditional border of the empire for centuries.¹³ During this period, the Assyrian Empire became a major power in Mesopotamia, alongside Egypt, Babylonia, and Urartu.

A notable historical event of the Neo-Assyrian Period was the Assyrian sack of Jerusalem, an episode recounted in 2 Kings. The Hebrew people were, at this point in history, divided into two nations: Israel, with its capital at Samaria, and Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem. The *Bible* describes the capture of Samaria, the deportation of the Israeli people into Assyria, and the subsequent siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.E.). "In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified

¹¹ Oates, Joan, and David Oates. *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed*, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³ Saggs, *Might That Was Assyria*, 86.

cities of Judah and captured them.”¹⁴ Sennacherib quickly turned on Jerusalem, although the city was ultimately spared. According to the 2 Kings, it was saved by the grace of God. Assyrian accounts, however, show that Judean King Hezekiah paid tribute to Sennacherib.¹⁵

The ascension of Ashurbanipal (672-627 B.C.E.) to the Assyrian throne marked the beginning of the end for this empire. Ashurbanipal launched two campaigns which succeeded in destroying Elam, a kingdom in southwest Iran. Ashurbanipal was an unusually vindictive king; he deliberately desecrated Elam’s temples, cult objects, and graves, and killed livestock, making it difficult for the Elamites to rebuild.¹⁶ In contrast to his martial actions, Ashurbanipal left an extensive library, as well as written record of his military exploits, although the surviving written documents describing the empire’s downfall provide little insight into what brought down Assyria.¹⁷ The extant documents do demonstrate that Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.E., after a three-month siege undertaken by a coalition of tribal peoples including the Medes and the Ummanmanda, along with the Babylonians. After Nineveh fell, the Assyrians scattered, and the remaining Assyrian royal family—with Ashur-uballit as king—reached out to the Egyptians for support. The Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, attacked the Egyptian-Assyrian forces, leading to the collapse of the Egyptian army and the end of the Assyrian empire. With this victory, Babylon became the new political and trading center of Mesopotamia.¹⁸

While the Assyrian Empire’s chapter of history came to a close, its influence was far from over. Thousands of centuries later, Layard’s excavations unearthed Ashur-nasir-pall II’s city—now called the mound of Nimrud—providing Europeans with a physical connection to the

¹⁴ 2 Kings 18:13 NIV

¹⁵ Saggs, *Might That Was Assyria*, 101.

¹⁶ Saggs, *Might That Was Assyria*, 114.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

Mesopotamian empire which they had read about in the Hebrew *Bible*. The reliefs and artwork excavated at Kahun introduced Europeans to the Assyrian style, sparking debate as to its merits, its beauty, and its significance. The Assyrian Empire may have met its end, but such a powerful empire is never truly forgotten, and would again emerge into the public mindset in the mid-nineteenth century as both the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire began to explore the Mesopotamian past.

The Ottoman Empire

By the seventh century C.E., the Byzantine Empire was beginning to weaken. Over the following centuries, an empire that had once spanned from Mesopotamia through North Africa and into southeast Europe was forced to focus on defending its heartland—Anatolia—as its former provinces fell to expanding states like the Umayyad Caliphate, the Bulgarian and Serbian kingdoms, and the Venetian and Genoese merchant states. Another threat came from the Turkish nomadic tribes on the Byzantine Empire’s eastern border. These Turkic invasions began with the Seljuk invasion of the eleventh century and continued with the Ottoman Turks in the thirteenth century.¹⁹ In 1299, Osman I loosely united these Turkic tribes into the Ottoman Empire. Over the course of a few generations, the Ottomans gained significant land from the Byzantines. The final blow to the Byzantine Empire came in 1453, when the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II (1451-1481) conquered the Byzantine capital of Constantinople.²⁰

The capture of Constantinople, and the subsequent fall of the remnants of the Byzantine Empire, allowed the conquerors—Mehmet II and the Ottomans—to inherit the Roman legacy as it had been passed down through the Byzantines. Constantinople was known as the “Second Rome,” and this was not lost on the Ottomans; Mehmet II claimed the title of Caesar, and Constantinople—paying respect to the city’s Roman founder—was included on Ottoman coins and correspondence.²¹ This idea of inheriting a cultural legacy and representing it in the modern day is a theme that will be prevalent throughout the sources for this thesis. Modern empires—the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, the French Empire, and others—often sought to associate

¹⁹ Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13-15.

²⁰ Goldschmidt, Arthur, Jr., and Lawrence Davidson. *A Concise History of the Middle East*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 121-124.

²¹ Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 4.

themselves with the grand traditions—including government, religion, and artwork—of ancient cultures. Having gained control of Mesopotamia, the Ottomans saw themselves as heirs to the Assyrian and Roman cultures, and to these cultures' tradition of empire.

In the centuries following the fall of Constantinople, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed near-constant expansion, particularly under the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566). Sultan Suleyman launched a “sixteenth-century world war,” battling in such diverse places as the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the city of Vienna.²² After Sultan Suleyman's death, Ottoman victories were less constant, but expansion, nevertheless, continued.²³ As the nineteenth century dawned, however, the power of the Ottoman Empire was waning. The Ottomans faced two primary threats: the Russians to the east, and the Egyptians to the west. The latter were former Ottoman subjects who, after being occupied by Napoleon, had gained independence from the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Muhammad Ali.²⁴

The Ottomans looked to France, which had traditionally been their strongest ally, for support, but found none. The French were supportive of Muhammad Ali, who was a Frenchman, and had celebrated when the Egyptians had taken Syria from the Ottomans in 1831.²⁵ Instead, two unlikely countries stepped forward to protect Ottoman borders: Russia and the British Empire. In 1833, Russia signed the Hunkar-Iskelesi treaty with the Ottomans, promising to protect Ottoman borders from Egypt.²⁶ For many, this treaty seemed counter-productive for the Ottoman Empire; after all, Russia was closing in on the Ottomans from the east, while protecting the Ottomans from the Egyptian advance on the west. However, the Russians were concerned

²² Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 20-24.

²³ *Ibid.*, 20-24.

²⁴ Goldschmidt, Arthur, Jr., and Lawrence Davidson. *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 143-144.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

about the possibility of Egypt conquering the Ottoman Empire. If Egypt succeeded, Russia would find itself with a strong state, one that was allied to France, as its neighbor.²⁷

The Ottomans' other unlikely ally proved to be the British Empire. With British colonial power concentrated in India, the British had seen little reason before the 1830s to intervene politically in the Ottoman Empire. Improved technology in the nineteenth century, however, allowed the British to utilize a land route through Mesopotamia in order to reach India. In exchange for Ottoman protection of this route, the British allied with the Ottomans. The discovery of the land route made Mesopotamia strategically significant to the British, who became focused on defending the region against Russian territorial advances. The British feared that the Russians wished to dominate the Middle East and, in response, the British became leaders of an anti-Russian coalition. Through treaties with Arab leaders and the occasional deployment of British forces in Mesopotamia, the British established themselves as a strong ally and protector of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸

As was its tradition, the Ottoman Empire granted generous capitulations privileges to its British allies. For centuries, the Ottoman Empire granted capitulations—legal exemptions for foreigners living in Ottoman lands—as a way to build relationships with European powers.²⁹ The reciprocity of this agreement—Ottomans living abroad were exempt from European taxes and laws—was very advantageous to the Ottoman Empire.³⁰ When the Ottoman Empire was at its strongest during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this diplomacy balanced the power between the Ottoman Empire and its European counterparts. By the nineteenth century, however,

²⁷ Quataert, Donald. *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 58.

²⁸ Goldschmidt, Arthur, Jr., and Lawrence Davidson. *A Concise History of the Middle East*. 144.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

the balance of power was heavily in favor of European nations like Great Britain, largely as a result of the privileges which the Ottomans had granted to the British, coupled with the Ottoman Empire's waning international influence. Desiring to strengthen the commercial relationship between themselves and Great Britain, the Ottomans had limited import tariffs on British goods to nine percent, causing an influx of British exports. On the positive side, this made the Ottoman Empire the biggest purchaser of British products and a major supplier of raw materials to Britain; on the negative side, the flood of British manufactures was detrimental to local Ottoman merchants, many of whom went out of business because they were unable to keep up with British factories.³¹

While the balance of economic and political power was skewed in favor of the British Empire, the Ottomans still had history on their side—literally. The lands of the Ottoman Empire were rich with antiquities from cultures including the Greeks, the Romans, and the Assyrians, as well as religious artifacts from the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. Many of these antiquities were on display in the Ottoman style, through a preservation method called reuse. In this method, antiquities were collected and displayed “by incorporating them into new structures and thus produc[ing] new contexts and meanings for old forms.”³² Reuse was popular not only in the modern Ottoman Empire, but had been employed both by Islamic Turks, Christian Byzantines, and Venetian Christians after the Fourth Crusade. This method crossed even religious boundaries; the Muslim Ottomans preserved Christian reliefs in the Constantinople city walls after the city was captured from the Byzantines.³³ However, European attitudes towards the

³¹ Goldschmidt, Arthur, Jr., and Lawrence Davidson. *A Concise History of the Middle East*. 156.

³² Shaw, Wendy M. K. *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 36.

³³ *Ibid.*, 38-41.

reuse preservation method were not favorable, and resulted in a migration of Ottoman artifacts to European museums from the seventeenth century to the early 1900s under the guises of protection.

At the time of Layard's excavations, the Ottoman Empire's antiquities were one of its few advantages over the British Empire. Still, this advantage was no match for the economic and political might of the British Empire. Thus, British archaeologists, like Layard, were able to gain access to Ottoman archaeological sites through the support of the British Empire. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the Ottoman Empire began to use its antiquities to its full advantage, namely to exercise some degree of control over European states and re-establish a measure of balance between the Ottoman Empire and Europe.

The British Empire

As discussed in the previous section, the British Empire had a relatively short political history in Mesopotamia prior to Layard's arrival. It was only in the early nineteenth century—after discovering a viable overland route to India—that the British gained an interest in the Ottoman Empire. The British may not have politically intervened in Mesopotamia prior to the nineteenth century, but one should not take that to mean that the British were unconnected to Mesopotamia prior to the British-Ottoman alliance. On the contrary, the British—along with the French—developed a uniquely European attitude towards Mesopotamia, an area that was also referred to as the Orient. The European attitudes affected Layard's excavations and, on a larger scale, the relationships between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire in regards to antiquities.

In 1978, Edward Said explored these attitudes in his book, Orientalism. While Said primarily studies Orientalism as it came to fruition during the early-to-mid twentieth century, he points out that these attitudes were propagated over centuries, including the mid-nineteenth century when Layard was excavating in Mesopotamia. Said defines Orientalism as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in the European Western experience;” namely, that Mesopotamia became, especially in the British and French mindsets, a representation of “the other,” “the source of [Europe's] civilizations and languages,” and “[Europe's] cultural contestant.”³⁴ Operating under this definition, Said argues that

³⁴ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1.

Europeans were able to place themselves in a variety of relationships with Mesopotamia—for example, scientist, scholar, missionary, trader, or soldier. In each relationship, the European had the upper hand. This was because, according to Said, Europeans were able to interact with “the Orient” with very little resistance from Orientals, like the Ottomans.³⁵ Said summarizes this power dynamic, noting that:

“The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination... True, the relationship of strong to weak could be disguised or mitigated, as when Balfour acknowledged the ‘greatness’ of Oriental civilizations. But the essential relationship, on political, cultural, and even religious grounds, was seen – in the West, which is what concerns us here – to be one between a strong and a weak partner.”³⁶

This Orientalist dynamic can be observed in the European-led archaeology which took place in Mesopotamia during the mid-eighteenth century. In this context, the relationship between the British Empire and the Ottoman Empire was like that of a scholar or scientist and his subject. The history of the Ottoman Empire was being unearthed and it was the responsibility of the British to interpret and preserve Mesopotamia’s past. Out of this relationship developed a preservationist mindset: that the Ottomans were not fit to preserve their own past and required the assistance of Europeans.

For example, the Ottoman method of preservation—reuse of antiquities—was deemed primitive and ineffective by most Europeans, including the British. Instead, European museums, relatively new institutions at the time, were considered the appropriate location to house antiquities and art, without regard to the fact that the antiquities and art were Mesopotamian and not European. Many Europeans believed that gathering together artifacts from various archaeological sites into a unified collection imbued the artifacts with new meaning. When left in

³⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

Ottoman hands, the physical remains of great cultures—cultures that Europeans had “recently appropriated as part of the European patrimony” —were in danger of being damaged, destroyed or, in the best case, simply under-appreciated.³⁷

This is not to imply that Assyrian antiquities were considered high art in Europe. As will be discussed in later chapters, Layard’s discovery of Kahlu/Nimrud played an important role in shifting European attitudes regarding Assyrian antiquities. In fact, it would take several years after Layard’s discoveries for Assyrian antiquities to take hold in Great Britain. Prior to this new appreciation sparked by Layard, Assyrian antiquities were respected primarily for their Biblical connection. Consider, for example, an 1853 interview with Sir Richard Westmacott, Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy and Sculpture Advisor to the British Museum Trustees:

“The [Kahlu/Nimrud] marbles are very curious, and it is very desirable to possess them...It is very bad art... but as monuments of a period eight hundred years before Christ, they are very curious things.”³⁸

When asked to compare the Assyrian sculpture from Kahlu/Nimrud with the Elgin marbles from Greece, he continues,

“Persons would look at the [Kahlu/Nimrud] marbles and be thinking of their Bible at the time they were looking at them; they would consider them as very curious monuments of an age they feel highly interested in; but the interest in the Elgin Marbles arises from a distinct cause; from their excellence as works of art.”³⁹

This interview provides an interesting insight into the mid-nineteenth century British mindset regarding Assyrian antiquities. While Assyrian reliefs were not considered aesthetically pleasing, the Assyrian Empire was respected for its prominence in the Old Testament, justifying

³⁷ Shaw, Wendy M. K. *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 37.

³⁸ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997). 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

the British decision to remove Assyrian antiquities from the Ottoman Empire for preservation and display in Europe.

This thesis will continue to explore the complex British and Ottoman mindsets surrounding antiquities, with the next chapter delving into Layard's excavations as a case study for the larger subject of British excavations in the Ottoman Empire during the mid-nineteenth century. Understanding the background of British Orientalist attitudes and the British perception of Assyrian antiquities is crucial to studying Layard's interactions with Ottoman officials, the journey of the artifacts after they left the Ottoman Empire, and more.

To conclude, the history and politics of three great empires—the Assyrian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire—were at play during Layard's excavations in the mid-nineteenth century. Beyond this, the themes of Orientalism, Victorian interest in Biblically-related artifacts, and cultural appropriation by modern empires would impact Layard's work. The following chapter will delve into Layard's excavations at Nimrud and the social factors which positively impacted his success in Mesopotamia.

Chapter 2

Layard in Mesopotamia

While Sir Austen Henry Layard gained fame as a British archaeologist, he was—by birth and by lineage—a Frenchman. The British Layard family was descended from Peter Raymond de Layarde, a member of an established French Huguenot family which claimed Raymond of Toulouse⁴⁰ as an ancestor. Upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, de Layarde fled to England, anglicized his name, and joined the British army, rising to the rank of major. Settling in Canterbury, he became the forefather of the British line of the Layard family.⁴¹

Over the centuries, the Layards rose to success in the British army and the Church of England, notably when Charles Layard—Austen Henry Layard's paternal grandfather—became the Prebendary of Worcester, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King George III, and Dean of Bristol. Charles Layard proved to be an uninvolved father to his sons, including Henry Peter John Layard, father of Austen Henry Layard.⁴² Henry Peter John grew up separated from his family, but eventually joined his brother, Charles Edward, in Ceylon, where their father had arranged civil service appointments for the young men. Charles Edward would remain in Ceylon—now modern-day Sri Lanka—and establish a Layard line which gained prosperity through senior civil service positions and coffee planting. Henry Peter John, however, was an unhealthy man who struggled with asthma and malaria throughout his life, and returned to Europe, where he married

⁴⁰ Raymond of Toulouse was a French nobleman and leader in the First Crusade (1095-1099) who established the Latin county of Tripoli in the Holy Land.

⁴¹ Brackman, Arnold C. *The Luck of Nineveh: Archaeology's Great Adventure*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978). 15-16.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 16.

Marianne Austen. The couple welcomed Austen Henry Layard—born Henry Austen Layard—on March 5, 1817 in Paris, France.⁴³

Layard's childhood was spent primarily in Italy, which had a warm climate that improved his father's health, and the family provided Layard with an informal education. In Italy, Layard writes, he "acquired a taste for the fine arts, and as much knowledge of them as a child could who was constantly in the society of artists and connoisseurs."⁴⁴ Although Henry Peter John Layard was not a wealthy man, his family name was respected throughout Europe, and the family dinner table was often crowded with notable guests, including several who sparked Layard's early interest in archaeology.⁴⁵

Under family pressure, particularly from Marianne Austen Layard's brother, Benjamin Austen, young Austen Henry Layard returned to England in 1829 to be formally educated at the school of Reverend John Bewsher. While Layard's parents remained on the continent for the majority of his education, Benjamin Austen and his wife, Sarah, adopted him as their own.⁴⁶ Upon Layard's graduation at the age of seventeen, he entered into a five year law apprenticeship with Benjamin Austen, with many believing he would succeed his uncle as a partner in the law firm. During this apprenticeship, Layard lived simply, as his parents could not afford to furnish him with a large allowance, and also continued to rely on the Austens, particularly after the death of Layard's father in 1835.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., 17-18.

⁴⁴ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 6. London: J. Murray, 1887. April 04, 2013. Accessed November 17, 2016. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433082471917>.

⁴⁵ Brackman, Arnold C. *The Luck of Nineveh: Archaeology's Great Adventure*. 22.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.

In 1838, after nearly four years apprenticing in law, Layard began to realize that he was not suited for this career path and sought the advice of Charles Edward Layard, his late father's brother and a high-ranking member of the Ceylon civil service. Charles Edward suggested that Layard travel to Ceylon, where he could pursue a career in law, the civil service, or even coffee-planting.⁴⁸ Layard decided to travel with a companion, Edward Mitford, who he had been introduced to through his uncle. Mitford, some ten years Layard's senior, had a fear of sea travel and the men decided to take the overland route.⁴⁹ Layard reflected on his excitement as he prepared to undertake the journey, writing,

“The idea of visiting Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad and Isfahan greatly excited my imagination, which had been inflamed with the desire to see those renowned cities of the East when, as a boy, I used to pore over ‘Arabian Nights.’ In addition to this fascinating book, I had greedily read every volume of Eastern travel that had fallen in my way.”⁵⁰

Before setting off on his trip, Layard corresponded with a number of individuals and groups that implored him to gather information while in Mesopotamia. Sir John MacNeill, who had represented the British Empire in Tehran, asked that Layard bring home both political and geographic insight; he wanted to know if the Russians were endeavoring to draw Persia out of the sphere of British influence and was also anxious for Layard to confirm the little-known geography of certain Asian regions. Similarly, the Royal Geographic Society asked that Layard record the topography of the region and even asked if Layard and his companion might take a route that, while more treacherous, would pass through “the ruins of ancient cities and remarkable monuments.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid., 35-36.

⁴⁹ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 7.

⁵⁰ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 7.

⁵¹ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 9-10.

Through his social connections, Layard's personal trip through Mesopotamia had turned into a fact-gathering journey for such prestigious institutions as the Royal Geographic Society. However, Layard was not especially qualified for this type of political, geographical, and archaeological exploration. In preparation for the trip, Layard took a few lessons with a retired sea captain who was familiar with navigation tools, but this was very basic training. "The instruction which he gave me was of the most elementary kind; but it enabled me to add not inconsiderably to the maps of the countries which I traversed," Layard wrote. In addition to this, Layard also took the initiative to get basic medical training, and consulted with others who had traveled in the region for advice. For example, one adventurer suggested that Layard paint the face of his watch black, "so that the sight of the bright metal might not excite the cupidity of the wild people."⁵² Still, these crash-courses provided only a rudimentary education. Layard's training—which had not been successful—was in law, not cartography, diplomacy, history, or archaeology. He even admits in his memoir that he had little knowledge of the scientific instruments which would calculate latitude and longitude, despite the fact that one of his primary responsibilities was gathering information to create more accurate maps.

Why was Layard selected for this task, despite his obvious lack of relevant training education? It seems that Layard's qualifications for this task were three-fold. First, he had an interest in the Middle East; Layard had read extensively on this region and its history. Alone, this would not have qualified Layard; many educated people of the time period were knowledgeable about and fascinated by the Middle East. This interest was paired with a willingness to travel to

⁵² Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 13.

Mesopotamia. The mere fact that he was one of a few people who actually wanted to travel to this dangerous, unknown region was as good a qualifier as any.

On their own, these two qualifications—an interest in the Middle East and a willingness to travel there—would not have made Layard’s journey possible. As a British citizen and, further, a member of the British upper-class, however, Layard had a distinct advantage. With the British Empire spanning the globe and upper-class British citizens holding leadership positions throughout all of these regions, a well-connected individual like Layard could harness the power of his social network anywhere in the world. Despite the fact that Layard was not a wealthy man, he was able to use his British citizenship and family name to successfully journey through Mesopotamia.

This is illustrated by Layard’s experience traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus. While the route to Jerusalem had been well-charted and relatively easy to navigate, the more challenging part of the journey began upon leaving Jerusalem. Layard and Mitford had arrived in Jerusalem on January 9, 1840, and both wished to journey to Damascus, however they disagreed upon the route. Layard desired to take a more dangerous route which would pass through the ruins of several ancient cities, including Petra. Layard writes,

“We had, moreover, been assured that it would be impossible to pass through the dangerous country beyond the Dead Sea with safety without the protection of some powerful Arab sheikh and a strong escort, for both of which we would have to pay a considerable sum of money, and with our limited means this we could not afford to do.”⁵³

As a well-connected British citizen, Layard had become acquainted with the British Consul in Jerusalem during his stay in the city, and, when he asked for the Consul’s opinions on the route, he was once again encouraged to take the safer alternative. Layard was unable to be

⁵³ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 18.

persuaded, however, and the Consul agreed that he would assist Layard, although would take no responsibility for any difficulties that might befall him along the route.

“He then offered me any assistance in his power, and kindly procured me letters from the Egyptian authorities to persons of influence at Hebron, who, he believed, might obtain for me the protection of sheikhs of the Arab tribes through whose territories I would have to pass. It will be remembered that at that time Syria and Palestine were in the possessions of the Egyptians under Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Mehmet Ali who had recently defeated the Turkish army at Nizib.”⁵⁴

When Layard arrived at Hebron, he carried with him letters of introduction from the British Consul at Jerusalem to “a native Christian, Elias”—who he soon discovered had been jailed—and the Muteselim, or governor. On the way to the governor’s house, Layard encountered Yusuf Effendi, a colonel in the Egyptian army who, “although not the governor was higher in authority.” The British Consul had considered providing a letter of introduction to Effendi, but believed that he was absent in Hebron. Upon realizing that Effendi was in the city, Layard approached him and presented him with the letter of introduction which had been intended for the Muteselim.

Colonel Effendi would prove to be an incredibly helpful connection. Aware of Layard’s interest in visiting two ancient sites located outside of the city, Effendi assisted Layard in bargaining with an Arab sheikh who had offered to arrange traveling protection for Layard at an exorbitant price. Upon the colonel’s threat of holding the sheikh hostage until Layard returned—as a way to ensure Layard’s safety—a better deal was struck, and Layard was able to visit both sites at a considerably lesser cost, although he still comments on the inexperience of his Arab guide.⁵⁵ Layard also notes that other European travelers—who likely did not have the most

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁵ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 33.

powerful man in the region supporting them—paid ridiculous sums to visit the ruins.⁵⁶ While the sheikh continued to complain throughout the journey that he had been extorted by Colonel Effendi, he and his men loyally provided protection to Layard, even in several very dangerous situations concerning rival tribes.

These letters would sustain Layard on his journey, with one notable exception: Mehmet Taki Khan, a powerful Bakhtiyari sheikh. When Layard presented his firman—a Turkish government document which was intended to serve as a letter of introduction, Mehmet Taki Khan threw it aside, proclaiming that the Turkish government had no control over the Bakhtiyari.⁵⁷ Fortunately, the sheikh was hospitable and Layard was invited to stay on as a guest, eventually earning the protection of Mehmet Taki Khan when Layard's European medicines were administered to save the life of Khan's young son.⁵⁸ In this circumstance, it was not Layard's connections which allowed him to succeed in a dangerous situation, but rather his advantage—in this case, a scientific advantage—which he had simply as a European with access to advanced medicine.

With the protection of Mehmet Taki Khan, Layard gained the unique opportunity to live and travel among the Bakhtiari tribe, a group which lived on the border of Iran and Iraq.⁵⁹ This was a particularly remarkable feat. Layard describes this group as “notoriously the most lawless of the Persian mountain tribes.”⁶⁰ As has been discussed, Layard was not initially qualified for the tasks which he had set out to complete in the Middle East but, by the end of this journey—

⁵⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁷ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 371.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 377.

⁵⁹ "Austen Henry Layard." Collectors. Accessed November 17, 2016. <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/collectors/austen-henry-layard>.

⁶⁰ Layard, Austen Henry. *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia, including a Residence among the Bakhtiyari and Other Wild Tribes before the Discovery of Nineveh*. 2.

which was derailed from its original destination of Ceylon—Layard had become somewhat of a regional expert as a result of the fact that he had survived and flourished while living with the tribe.

Layard would not rest on his social connections for his entire career; they were used primarily to launch his career. His experience with the Bakhtiari tribe was very impressive, a qualification which he certainly earned and on which he would build the rest of his career in Mesopotamia. Still, Layard's initial connections as an upper-class British citizen were what allowed him build a successful foundation in Mesopotamia which he used to create a career for himself in the region. Without these initial connections, Layard surely could not have established himself for such success in the Middle East.

In this, there is an interesting paradox. The accomplishments of gentlemen archaeologists like Layard cannot be downplayed, as they made tremendous academic contributions. However, it must not be forgotten that their initial opportunities came as the result of their social connections, not their qualifications. A well-rounded study of Layard requires recognition both of his accomplishments and of his unique privilege.

Layard's experience with the Bakhtiari tribe had caught the eye of Lord Stratford Canning, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, and Stratford began employing Layard in an unofficial diplomatic capacity. Layard writes that it became known to the English Foreign Office that his reports were influencing Lord Canning, which caused controversy. Some alleged that, despite his unofficial position, Layard was taking on the airs of an official diplomat while traveling abroad and these allegations stalled his entrance into the civil service.⁶¹ In his memoirs,

⁶¹ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. Vol. II. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903). 42.

Layard reflects on this desperate time when he almost gave up on the life he had built for himself in Mesopotamia.

“My position in consequence became so embarrassing and caused me so much anxiety, that I had decided in despair upon abandoning the career that I had chosen for myself in the East, and on returning to England and the profession of law.”⁶²

While Layard’s personal wealth had sustained him for some time, he now found himself unemployed in Mesopotamia and with his only potential employer—the British government—skeptical of him. It was at this point that he began considering returning home to practice law. With Lord Canning’s encouragement, Layard decided to stay in Mesopotamia as a correspondent for the *Morning Chronicle* and, eventually, the *Malta Times*.⁶³ Recognizing that it would be some time before he was permanently appointed to a government position, Layard decided to suggest to Lord Canning a way in which he could use his time productively: excavations.⁶⁴

“I, therefore, suggested to [Lord Stratford Canning] that I might proceed to Mosul and continue the excavations in the Assyrian ruins, which M. Botta had now abandoned. I was confident that there were other mounds on the supposed site of Nineveh, such as Nimrud and Kouyunjik, which M. Botta had not explored, but which, if adequately examined, would yield no less important archaeological treasures than those discovered by him at Khorsabad. Sir Stratford not only agreed to my proposal, but offered to share in the expenses which would be incurred in making tentative excavations in the mounds I had indicated.”⁶⁵

Paul Emile Botta, to whom Layard refers, was the French archaeologist who excavated at Khorsabad. Born in 1802 in Italy, Botta had an unconventional background and well-connected social situation similar to Layard. Botta’s father was a well-known historian and physician, and Botta also became a trained doctor. Instead of practicing medicine, however, Botta became a

⁶² Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 142.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

member of the French diplomatic corps.⁶⁶ At the recommendation of Middle Eastern scholar Julius Mohl, Botta was dispatched as an archaeologist to Khorsabad on three qualifications—his interest in ancient civilizations, his knowledge of Arabic, and the fact that his father was a historian.⁶⁷ In the early 1840s, Botta discovered the first Assyrian monument at Khorsabad although, as the building was excavated, he discovered that it had been destroyed by fire and, once exposed, would crumble. Layard recalls that “no precaution could arrest this rapid decay,” and “almost all that was first discovered speedily disappeared.”

In A Popular Account of Discoveries at Ninevah, Layard applauded the French government for the support it showed Botta. Layard recalls that “ample funds” were given to the archaeologist, which paid for not only the excavations but supported an artist to draw the ruins before they crumbled. Botta left Mesopotamia in 1845 with, as Layard describes, “many fine specimens of Assyrian sculpture for his country... a rich collection of inscriptions, the most important result of his discovery.”⁶⁸

It is likely that Layard highlights the French government’s generous support of Botta because Layard had very few financiers. In his memoirs, he recalls that Lord Stratford Canning—contrary to popular belief at the time—did not completely fund the excavations. Canning personally contributed about £60 towards Layard’s work and Layard also received £100 annually from public funds as “a remuneration for [his] services in the Embassy.” The rest of the funding came from Layard’s own pocket, augmented by loans from his mother. Eventually,

⁶⁶ Fagan, Brian M., ed. *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ Schlager, Neil, and Josh Lauer, eds. *Science and Its Times*. Vol. 5. (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2000).

⁶⁸ Layard, Austen Henry. *A Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875). 10.

Layard was reimbursed for all of his expenses by the Trustees of the British Museum, and he paid both Lord Canning and his mother back for their loans.⁶⁹

It should also be noted that, while Layard consistently refers to his excavations at Nineveh, his excavations which pertain to this thesis actually took place at Nimrud. There was some confusion among archaeologists as to which site was which, and, as a result, Layard's accounts can be somewhat misleading as to which site he was actually excavating. For example, Layard published Nineveh and Its Remains, although this book is actually a misnomer; shortly after the book was published, it was definitively confirmed that the site was actually Nimrud.⁷⁰

Layard departed for the site of Nimrud in October 1845 and, by November 1845, he had already recognized the significance of his excavations. "I have now no doubt that the whole mound of Nimroud, vast as it is, contains the ruins of one great palace and that, if I am able to continue my excavations, I shall be richly rewarded," Layard wrote to his mother on November 19, 1845.⁷¹ As Layard continued his excavations at Nimrud, he quickly discovered that his findings were even more significant than Botta's discoveries at Khorsabad, primarily because Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud was in much better condition than the palace at Khorsabad.

Although Layard noted some fire-related damage to a corner of the mound, he found many well-preserved artifacts, and, in July 1846, reported that he had packed up twelve cases of Nimrud antiquities for transportation to England. In a letter to his mother, Layard notes that the

⁶⁹ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 156.

⁷⁰ McKee, Gabriel. "Austen Henry Layard and the Early Exploration of Nimrud." Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. July 5, 2015. Accessed November 18, 2016. http://isaw.nyu.edu/library/blog/Layard#_edn2.

⁷¹ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 160.

sculptures were becoming more impressive and better preserved the further he excavated into the mound.⁷²

Some of the most impressive artifacts unearthed by Layard were colossal lamassu. Lamassu are intimidating stone structures which are intended to guard a palace. A combination of man, eagle, and bull or lion, these imposing figures would have communicated to any palace visitor that Ashurnasirpal II was a powerful leader. The initial lamassu that Layard uncovered were damaged; however, in a letter to his mother, it is clear that he was already anticipating finding better-preserved lamassu which he could bring back to Britain.

“These extraordinary animals are sculptured in very high relief upon a solid block of marble, 14 feet long and 16 or 17 feet high! Unfortunately, the two I have now discovered are much damaged. Should I discover one sufficiently preserved to deserve removal, I shall have pretty work to move it. Those of Khorsabad, which were much smaller, could scarcely be dragged by 500 men. Mechanical power in this countries is unknown. How the Assyrians moved these immense blocks, I cannot conceive.”⁷³

Layard did find several lamassu that were “sufficiently preserved to deserve removal,” and also determined a way to transport these monumental sculptures back to Britain. In another letter to his mother, Layard describes the detailed and ingenious process by which he separated the lamassu from the palace wall, then, using ropes, lowered it on its side onto a set of rollers. From here, the statue rolled down “a kind of railroad of wood upon which ran rollers.” The pathway led all the way down to the river and this moving process took several hours before reaching the river where the lamassu—transported briefly by a cart pulled by 130 men—could be loaded onto a ship.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid., 173.

⁷³ Ibid., 163.

⁷⁴ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid.* 177.

Layard's time at Nimrud is marked not only by fascinating archaeological discoveries, but also by complex interactions with the local Arab community. Layard was in the unique position of being at the whim of local rulers while still being a respected foreigner who was regularly called upon to pass down judgments for the community. In the mid-eighteenth century, rule within the region was very localized; while Layard had, through Lord Stratford Canning, obtained permission from the Sultan to excavate, he still found his excavations occasionally stalled by the local Ottoman ruler, the Pasha.⁷⁵ Throughout his letters, Layard references the frequent change of local leadership, with each Pasha adopting very different attitudes towards Layard's excavations and the local Arab tribes.

The frequent change in Pasha necessitated regular diplomacy on the part of Layard. For example, in 1846, Layard noted that the new Pasha changed the region's policy towards Arab tribes, adopting a "conciliatory feeling towards the Arabs." Arab tribes began settling the lands around Nimrud, resulting in increased theft at the Nimrud site. Layard recounts,

"[The Arab tribes] are picturesque, but at the same time very troublesome neighbours, as they steal everything within their reach, for the mere love of pilfering, and are as mischievous as monkeys. I have just been to call upon the Sheikh of the principal tribe, and have given him a silk dress in the hope that it will induce him to keep his people a little in order, and will bring back such stray things as may reach his tent."⁷⁶

Successful relationships with local tribes and leaders were key to the success of Layard's excavations. However, there were instances where Layard clashed violently with the locals. In April 1846, Layard writes about an incident on the Tigris where he offended a local leader—the Cadi—of Mosul by occupying the most respected seat on the boat, right next to the steersman. Layard recalls that the Cadi called out, saying "Shall the dogs occupy the high places, whilst the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁶ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 163.

true believers have to stand below?’ and then mumbled some curses on Christians in general.”

Layard lost his temper, struck the Cadi with his staff and, when they arrived at Mosul, the Cadi—with blood streaming down his face—ran through the town exclaiming “that he had been assaulted and beaten by a Giaour—an Infidel—and that the Prophet and his faith had been insulted.” Fortunately for Layard, Layard had built a relationship with the Pasha of Mosul, who also was feuding with the Cadi, and Layard faced no consequences.⁷⁷

While Layard faced hostilities, he was treated by many with great respect. Layard describes how the local Arabs would come to him with their grievances against one another and he would pass down judgments. In July 1846, he writes,

“In the evening I receive the Arabs and others of the neighbourhood, hear complaints, and dispense justice; for, you must know, I have kind of Cadi’s power down here... It is curious to see a Christian thus appealed to; however, they find it cheaper, as they have neither to give a bribe or pay fees, which they would have to do, did they go to their own authorities.”⁷⁸

Layard commented that the most common complaints surrounded women; “scarcely a day passes without a Helen and Paris case.” He found this frequent issue largely alleviated when he raised the value of a “respectable female” to twenty sheep.⁷⁹

As Layard acknowledged in his writings, it is interesting to consider that the justice system in this part of the Ottoman Empire was so flawed that largely Muslim Arabs were willing to go to a Christian man to mediate their disputes and that they accepted his judgments, which Layard said were rarely appealed and always respected. While Layard had obtained some legal training in England, he was not a judge. Once again—as had occurred when he initially arrived

⁷⁷ Ibid., 169.

⁷⁸ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 174.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 174.

in Mesopotamia—Layard's background as an upper-class British citizen were considered credentials enough.

Layard would remain at Nimrud until 1851, with his days primarily spent excavating the mound and his evenings spent passing down judgments to the local community. News of Layard's discoveries were making waves in Europe and England among the academic community, many of whom wrote to Layard and offered him advice or their assistance. With his funds nearly exhausted and the promise of fame waiting for him back in Europe, Layard prepared to leave Nimrud.

Chapter 3

After Nimrud: Layard's Return to Britain

“I was very anxious to go to England without delay. I had brought with me a large collection of drawings which I had made of the sculptures and other objects I had discovered in Assyria, and of cuneiform inscriptions which I had copied. I was desirous of publishing, or of otherwise making known to the public, these results of my explorations—and indeed I considered that, after the grant of public money upon which they were carried on, it was my duty to do so.”⁸⁰

In March 1847, Layard wrote to his mother expressing not only a desire to return to England—from which he had been absent for over eight years—but also to publish his findings, which he felt obligated to do because he had received public funding for his excavations. Physically exhausted and out of funding, Layard left Nimrud in June 1847.⁸¹ Upon returning to Constantinople in July 1847, he learned that Lord Palmerton, Minister for Foreign Affairs, had agreed to officially attach Layard to the British Embassy, and that he was contemplating appointing Layard as a member of the commission which was settling the boundary dispute between Turkey and Persia.⁸² This job offer was far from ideal; while being a member of the commission would come with a paycheck, simply being attached to the Embassy—which was the only job offer that Layard had secured with certainty—would not. Additionally, both positions would require Layard to remain abroad, despite the fact that he desperately wished to return to Britain.⁸³

⁸⁰ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. Vol. II. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 180-181.

⁸¹ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997). 36.

⁸² Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 180.

⁸³ Brackman, Arnold C. *The Luck of Nineveh: Archaeology's Great Adventure*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978). 203.

For Layard, this must have been an incredibly frustrating situation. Layard had left Constantinople to excavate at Nimrud largely because he was unable to secure a paid position at the Embassy. Now, two years later, he was in nearly the exact same professional position, despite the impressive archaeological work he had done in the name of the British Empire at Nimrud. This was not lost on Layard; he writes that he “kept lingering on at Constantinople, uncertain as to my position, and with a mind as ill at ease as when I was there in a similar state of uncertainty before my expedition to Assyria.”⁸⁴ Eventually, he accepted the unpaid position, but petitioned Lord Canning—who was now in England—for a leave, which would allow him to return home. Lord Canning never responded. Layard explained in a letter to his mother that he believed Canning’s unwillingness to grant Layard leave was a result of the fact that Canning was returning to Constantinople and wanted Layard on hand to assist upon his arrival.⁸⁵

In the interim, Layard accompanied Lord Cowley, who was “in charge of the affairs of the Embassy with the rank and title of Minister.”⁸⁶ While accompanying Lord Cowley, Layard began sharing his drawings from Nimrud, at one point stopping at the British Embassy in Therapia, a city in the Ottoman Empire. There, he discovered that people had a great interest in seeing his drawings, to the point that he was concerned that the drawings would fade due to the fact that “people use their hands rather than their eyes” to look.⁸⁷ In an unfortunate turn of events—which would ultimately work in Layard’s favor—he caught malaria during his travels with Lord Cowley and, with a physician’s orders and the blessing of Cowley, he was sent back to

⁸⁴ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 181.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁸⁷ Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1968). 178.

Britain, which had been his desire for several months. He recovered from his illness while quarantined at Malta, then set off for Britain in October 1847.⁸⁸

Eager to present his findings, Layard scheduled stops in both Italy—where he met with leading archaeologists as well as visited with family and childhood friends—and France.⁸⁹ In France, Layard was invited by fellow Assyrian archaeologist Paul-Émile Botta to speak at the Académie d'Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, which he recounts in a December 1847 letter to his mother.

“All this was very gratifying, and, had I not remembered that I was on the banks of the Seine, I might have left the Académie very well satisfied with myself, and fully convinced that I had bestowed upon some fifty most intelligent Frenchmen the happiest day of their lives! However, the substantial and, to be serious, the most influential members of the Académie were kind enough to propose that an Extraordinary meeting should be held on the following day for the further discussion and examination of the drawings, and informed me that it was their intention to propose me as a Corresponding Member of the Institute (an honour, I believe, much coveted in Europe) on the next vacancy. In fact, if the results of the Nimroud excavations create half as favourable an impression in London as they have done in Paris, I may hope that something may be done towards publishing them.”⁹⁰

From this account, it is evident that Layard had impressed the French academic community. Layard left France with confidence in the significance of his findings and also assured that his drawings would be well-received in Britain. For Layard, getting published was the priority. While Layard had told his mother that his desire to publish his drawings was out of duty to the British citizenry, he may have had other, more self-serving motivations as well. Shawn Malley, in his essay “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum,” posits,

⁸⁸ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 181.

⁸⁹ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 182.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

“Out of work when the excavations were brought to a close in 1847, Layard realized that his future with the Foreign Office lay in winning public approbation for the Assyrian past.”⁹¹ As a published author, Layard’s overall job prospects would improve and, in particular, his chances of securing employment at the British Embassy would be much better.

Layard’s friends at the British Embassy recognized the positive impact that a published book would have on Layard’s professional career, and offered him advice for writing a book that would sell. For them, the key was finding a way to connect Layard’s excavations to the *Bible*. “A spice of the *Bible* and the old chroniclers would render the dish very palatable,” wrote Henry Rawlinson, the British Resident at Baghdad. Charles Alison, the Oriental Secretary at Constantinople, suggested that Layard “fish up old legends and anecdotes, and if you can by any means humbug people into the belief that you have established any points in the *Bible*, you are a made man.”⁹²

With the age of enlightenment, many eighteenth century thinkers had become skeptical of using the *Bible* as a historical source. At the same time, Christianity was still a powerful force in Victorian Britain. Rightfully, Layard’s colleagues realized there was money to be made for the person who could bridge this gap by providing archaeological evidence to support the Christian faith. With this in mind, Layard’s book opened with a verse from Ezekiel and cited the *Bible* throughout.⁹³ As will be discussed later, Layard made considerable personal profit by playing off this Victorian sentiment in his book.

⁹¹ Malley, Shawn. “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum.” (*Nineteenth-Century Contexts*: Vol 26, no. 1). 5.

⁹² Malley, Shawn. “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum.” 5.

⁹³ Larsen, Timothy. “Austen Henry Layard’s Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain.” (*Journal of Religious History* 33, no. 1). 69.

Whether or not he fully realized it, Layard planned to take advantage of the British Victorian environment to appropriate Assyrian culture by connecting it to the Western Christian tradition and then exploiting this connection for both professional and financial gain. This is further supported by the fact that Layard himself was not a religious man. Raised in the Church of England, he adopted an anti-Catholic attitude while living abroad as a child. As a young adult, he was exposed to the Unitarian denomination and “positioned himself on the boundary line where Unitarianism crossed over into freethought; Freethinkers often openly scoffed at the *Bible* and actively sought to expose it as false.”⁹⁴ Layard’s religious opinions were so radical that they created a schism with Benjamin Austen, and this schism helped prompt his Mesopotamian travels. On his travels, Layard would flaunt his radicalism by traveling on Sundays, a practice frowned upon by traditional Victorian Christians. In 1850, Layard even declined a friend’s request to serve as godfather to her child due to the fact that he was not “capable of discharging its duties” as “[his] opinions on religious subjects differ very materially from those generally professed in England.”⁹⁵ Layard was not a religious man making archaeological connections to his faith; he was a religious skeptic who planned to use archaeology’s Biblical connections to gain readership.

Layard sought the support of the British Museum in publishing his drawings. In January 1848, Edward Hawkins, Keeper of the Department of Antiquities, presented to the Trustees a plan to publish 200 folio plates for £2400. The Trustees accepted this plan, applying to the British Treasury for a grant. This request, however, was denied by the Treasury and the Museum pulled its support for Layard’s publishing efforts. Layard attributes this denial to the fact that

⁹⁴ Larsen, Timothy. "Austen Henry Layard's Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain." (*Journal of Religious History* 33, no. 1). 76.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

1848 was a year of revolutions on the continent, and the British government was preparing for the potential outbreak of war. In February 1848, Layard received a publishing offer from Smith, Elder & Co., who suggested a smaller publication—100 folios—but also had the condition that Layard partially fund the project himself.⁹⁶ By the end of February 1848, Layard's chances of publishing his findings—and, with it, reviving his professional career—seemed slim. In early March 1848, he wrote to a friend,

“The state of finances, and the events occurring on the Continent, have driven Nineveh and all other antiquities out of people's heads. The recommendation of the Trustees that £4000 should be given by Government for the publication of my drawings, which would have been attended to at any other period, has been rejected, and I am inclined to think that nothing will be done. I am now trying to see what may be done in the way of subscriptions and personal sacrifices, but my stay in England is so limited that I do not expect I shall be able to settle anything.”⁹⁷

While the situation seemed hopeless, two women—Lady Charlotte Guest and Sara Austen—stepped forward to support Layard's publishing endeavors. Sara Austen, as discussed in the last chapter, was Layard's aunt.⁹⁸ Lady Guest was Layard's cousin—her mother was the sister of Layard's father—and she was married to Sir John Guest, a wealthy iron tradesman who had been a commoner at the time of their marriage which shocked the British nobility.⁹⁹ While the Austens had known Layard since his youth, Lady Charlotte met her cousin for the first time in February 1848.¹⁰⁰

Upon Layard's return to Britain, the Austens introduced him to influential individuals during a series of dinner parties thrown in his name at their London residence, Montague

⁹⁶ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 41.

⁹⁷ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 189.

⁹⁸ Larsen, Timothy. "Austen Henry Layard's Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain." 76.

⁹⁹ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Brackman, Arnold C. *The Luck of Nineveh: Archaeology's Great Adventure*. 213-214.

Place.¹⁰¹ Sara continued to encourage Layard to publish his findings, writing that, “In this reading age a good book makes a man’s fortune here more certainly than by any other rapid means.”¹⁰² While Sara provided encouragement to her nephew, she was unable to offer him a place to stay while in Britain. Due to the fact that Benjamin’s business partner had recently disappeared with a large sum of money, the Austen family was facing a crisis and was unable to take Layard in.¹⁰³

Shortly after having been denied publishing support by the British Museum, Lady Charlotte Guest opened her home, Canford Manor, to Layard. Unlike Layard’s patronage relationship with Sara Austen, which had been built over decades, Layard’s relationship with Lady Guest was secured in a matter of days. Over the course of a week in early March, Lady Guest—who kept a detailed diary throughout her life—writes about seeing Layard’s drawings, discussing publishing plans with him and, finally, meeting with the publisher John Murray to secure a book deal for Layard.¹⁰⁴ While Lady Guest may have negotiated the final deal, Sara Austen’s influence cannot be forgotten. Austen corresponded with Murray, providing editorial advice about Layard’s book, and her correspondence may have been what initiated Murray’s interest in Layard’s manuscript.¹⁰⁵

Still, much historical emphasis is placed on Lady Guest’s influence. This whirlwind patronage relationship appears to largely have been built upon Lady Guest’s fascination with Assyrian antiquities. From Lady Guest’s diaries, it appears that Layard arrived at Canford Manor with a hospitality gift—an Assyrian fragment depicting a man’s head, which Lady Guest would

¹⁰¹ Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. 180.

¹⁰² Malley, Shawn. “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum.” 5.

¹⁰³ Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. 182.

¹⁰⁴ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 42-46.

¹⁰⁵ Brackman, Arnold C. *The Luck of Nineveh: Archaeology's Great Adventure*. 214.

later display at society events and meetings to drum up interest in Layard's work. In late March, Layard took Lady Guest to the British Museum to see the—albeit small—collection of Assyrian artifacts which he had shipped from Nimrud.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, Layard worked to secure more Assyrian artifacts for Lady Guest's personal collection, writing to an archaeologist still working at Nimrud,

“Lady Charlotte Guest, my cousin, is very anxious to have some specimens from Nimroud or from any other place they can be got without interfering with the British Museum. I have promised her to do what I can and I should feel greatly obliged if you would direct Bainan to proceed immediately to Nimroud and to employ a few men in securing the following specimens.”¹⁰⁷

The letter was accompanied by a very specific list of artifacts, as well as a sketch of the requested antiquities. With this request coming just days after Lady Guest agreed to support Layard in his endeavors to publish his findings, it appears that the gift of these antiquities—which would not arrive at Canford Manor until October 1849—helped Layard secure Guest's patronage.¹⁰⁸ This gift, as well as subsequent gifts which Layard gave to Lady Guest, raises ethical questions about the ownership of these antiquities. These Assyrian artifacts had been excavated through the support of public funding from the British government, but Layard gifted them to Lady Guest as if they were his. These artifacts would then remain the Guest family for decades to come, inaccessible to the public.

Lady Guest's patronage came not in the form of financial support—for Murray, the publisher, recorded no payments from Guest—but in the form of connections. Murray had agreed to publish 100 folio plates on the condition that Guest recruit a list of subscribers to the

¹⁰⁶ Brackman, Arnold C. *The Luck of Nineveh: Archaeology's Great Adventure*. 53.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 54.

book.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, Murray required that Layard commit to writing a book about his Mesopotamian travels and his excavations at Nimrud, believing that this book would appeal to the public more than the folio plates.¹¹⁰ With that, both Guest and Layard set to work. The initial list of thirty-four subscribers—who were subscribing to receive a prospectus of the book—primarily consisted of friends and relatives of the Guests. The second version had fifty-eight subscribers, including the East India Company. By the third version, there were 170 subscribers. In March 1849, Monuments of Nineveh was published and sold 300 copies within the year.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, Layard received news that he had officially been appointed to the commission settling the border dispute between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and he began hurriedly writing his memoirs so that he could return to Mesopotamia in his new position.¹¹² Sara Austen would once again prove to be a helpful patron. Austen reviewed the proofs of Nineveh and Its Remains, which was published in early 1849, after Layard had returned to Constantinople.¹¹³

The book proved to be an enormous success; even today, it is considered as a book which launched a genre and “still ranks as the greatest bestseller in the history of its field.”¹¹⁴ The impact of the book was keenly felt at the British Museum, which had recently moved the Assyrian antiquities into their own exhibit space, albeit a temporary basement gallery. Still, the popularity of the book resulted in a constant crowd at the exhibit.¹¹⁵ Edward Hawkins, Keeper of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁰ Malley, Shawn. “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum.” 5.

¹¹¹ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 49-51.

¹¹² Ibid., 55.

¹¹³ Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. 187.

¹¹⁴ Larsen, Timothy. "Austen Henry Layard's Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain." 67.

¹¹⁵ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 57.

the Department of Antiquities—the man who had initially submitted the request to the Museum Trustees to support the publishing of Layard’s findings—saw the popularity of Nineveh and Its Remains as leverage to petition the Trustees for funding expeditions and allocating more space to the Assyrian display. In April 1849, Hawkins wrote,

“I am getting quite impatient to have objects of such immense importance as these Assyrian antiquities pour in upon us... I long also to see our walls... bursting, that my vision of having the four parts of the Museum in the four streets which now surround it, when enough of Assyria shall have been transported to us as to occupy at least one side of the Square... I should like to see our menagerie [of antiquities] so large and numerous that the walls would burst and the Trustees compelled to provide more and better stalls or dens.”¹¹⁶

Like Hawkins, Layard was keenly attuned to the incredible success of the book and the impact of this popularity. Shortly after the book’s release, Layard reflected on its success in a letter to a friend, writing

“I had very little idea of publishing when I returned to Europe after my Nineveh explorations, but my friends pressed the thing so much, the Trustees adding their request, and Murray was so kind that I *nolens volens* felt bound to rush into print. I can assure you that I did so tremblingly, and had very great doubts indeed as to my probable success... In every way the most sanguine expectations of my friends (I will not say my own, for I had none) have been surpassed. Of notoriety I have plenty, and the very liberal arrangement of my publishers has enabled me to release a *very handsome* sum. Nearly 8000 copies were sold in the year – a new edition is in the press, and Murray anticipates a continual steady demand for the book...”¹¹⁷

This passage brings up several points of interest regarding Layard’s Nineveh and Its Remains. In terms of financial success, Layard was indeed making a handsome sum of £1500 per annum, although he underestimated the book sales; in fact, nearly 12,000 copies were sold within

¹¹⁶ Malley, Shawn. “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum.” 16-17.

¹¹⁷ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 191.

the first year.¹¹⁸ He had also gained fame. Layard's colleague in the British Foreign Office commented "Nobody asks, 'Have you read it?' That is taken for granted."¹¹⁹ The new edition—an abridged version entitled Popular Account of Discoveries at Nineveh—would be released in October 1851.¹²⁰ As for Layard's assertion that he had low expectations for the book, and that he had only published at the encouragement of his friends, this is likely untrue, as evidenced by many letters—written on his return journey to Britain—in which he references a strong desire to publish his findings.

The book was a turning point not only professionally and financially for Layard, but also in regards to both the public and government support which he received for his excavations of Nimrud. Layard's book had captured the heart of the public, evidenced not only by the incredible number of books sold but also by the glowing reviews written by newspapers and magazines. As the public gained interest in Nimrud, they became critical of the British government's lack of support. One review questioned why the British government had generously funded Lord Elgin's excavation of the Parthenon while withholding funding from Layard's excavation of Nimrud, a site far less accessible and with less reliable local stewardship than the Parthenon.¹²¹

Public pressure was certainly a considerable factor in the decision of the British Museum Trustees to fund Layard's excavations, as well as the British Foreign Office's approval of a leave of absence for Layard who, along with an artist and a doctor, would travel to Nimrud to continue his work. Still, Layard was displeased by the funding he had received, which amounted to

¹¹⁸ Larsen, Timothy. "Austen Henry Layard's Nineveh: The Bible and Archaeology in Victorian Britain." 67.

¹¹⁹ Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. 190.

¹²⁰ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 58.

¹²¹ Cohen, Ada, and Steven E. Kangas. *Assyrian Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II: a Cultural Biography*. (Hanover: Univ. Press of New England, 2010). 14.

£3000.¹²² This grant would cover everything from travel to living expenses to salaries, leaving, by Layard's calculations, only £300 to £400 for excavations and transportation of the artifacts, even less than Layard's funding on the previous expedition.¹²³ Layard reflected on this lackluster funding in a letter, writing,

“The British Museum, elated at the success of the first expedition and delighted at the crammed houses which the new entertainment brought them, determined upon producing something new; and, well imbued with the economical spirit of the times, determined to do the thing as cheaply as possible. So they have sent me back with a ridiculously miserable grant to satisfy the exalted hopes and demands of the British public. The consequence is, that I am terribly crippled and without my own resources could really do nothing at all.”¹²⁴

Despite Layard's displeasure with the funding of the excavation, significant headway was made at the British Museum in regards to recognition of Assyrian antiquities. The architect of the museum's new galleries presented a plan—which was accepted by the Trustees and the British Parliament—to expand the Assyrian exhibit into two galleries and two transepts along the museum's western side.¹²⁵ Today, this plan remains largely unchanged, and the British Museum's Assyrian collection is one of the most impressive collections of Assyrian art outside of Iraq.

While the British Museum was physically impacted—with the addition of gallery spaces—by the popularity of Layard's published works, his writing also sparked an attitude shift in Britain. The British public fell in love with Assyria. Over the course of the next several years, dozens of books would be written about Nineveh, plays would feature Assyrian-inspired sets and

¹²² Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. 196.

¹²³ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 60.

¹²⁴ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir A. Henry Layard, G.C.B., D.C.L.; Autobiography and Letters From His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*. 191-192.

¹²⁵ Malley, Shawn. “Shipping the Bull: Staging Assyria in the British Museum.” 18.

costumes, and an 1854 London exhibition devoted to showcasing the world's greatest architectural styles would feature a reconstructed Assyrian palace.¹²⁶ Assyrian antiquities—which had, just a few years ago, been considered far less sophisticated than Greek or Roman antiquities—were now in high demand.

In all regards, Layard's decision to publish his findings had achieved the desired results. Layard had returned to England with a desire—born both out of obligation and personal interest—to share Nimrud with the British public. Although he had initial support from the British Museum, the political uncertainty of 1848 due to revolutions on the continent resulted in his grant being denied by the government. For most people, this would have signaled the end of their quest to get published. However, Layard was not an ordinary man; he was a well-connected British citizen with access to Assyrian antiquities and a keen understanding of his prospective audience.

As in Mesopotamia, Layard used his connections to build an initial foundation. With the patronage of Sara Austen and Lady Charlotte Guest, Layard was able to publish his findings and gain access to upper-class British citizens, both in-person at social gatherings and through his book's subscription list. Layard's privileged social status afforded him these initial advantages—a book deal and access to the British upper-class—but these advantages did not guarantee his success. Layard could have written an unpopular book or made little impact at the social gatherings to which he had access. Instead, one can once again observe Layard using his privilege as a springboard. As he had done in Mesopotamia, Layard built on the initial

¹²⁶ Russell, John Malcolm., Judith McKenzie, and Stephanie Dalley. *From Nineveh to New York: the Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*. 57.

foundation—afforded to him through the distinct advantages of his family name and social connections—by applying assets and skills which he had personally developed.

Layard had the sensibilities of a businessman; he understood what his audience wanted, and he was keenly aware of supply and demand. His Victorian audience wanted to bridge their enlightenment interests with their religious convictions, and Layard saw the opportunity to fulfill this need in his book. Connecting the concrete science of archaeology with Biblical history created a best-selling product, a book which captivated Layard's British audience. While many ancient cultures have Biblical connections, Layard marketed an Assyrian image which was inextricably tied to Victorian religious interests. Layard was able to create a public image which associated Assyria with the *Bible* and this generated a British fever for all things Assyrian.

As the only British archaeologist excavating Assyrian antiquities, Layard was the only supplier of the artifacts which the British public now demanded. The British Museum was impacted by this demand, as floods of patrons crowded the small Assyrian exhibition. Layard, along with Edward Hawkins, used this as leverage to expand the Assyrian exhibit. He also leveraged the demand generated by his books to convince the British government to provide funding for his next excavation.

While this fascination with Assyrian antiquities generated a new respect for oft-discounted Assyrian art and expanded academic interest in Assyrian history, it also benefitted Layard. Layard was not only now supported in continuing his excavations, but he was a British celebrity. Capitalizing on public interest, Layard published additional best-selling books, making him a very wealthy man.

From his excavations at Nimrud, which were academic, Layard was able to build commercial success. His first book, because it was so well-suited to his audience, generated a

public interest in Assyria which would support the sale of additional books, create a public notoriety for Layard, and push the British government and the British Museum to support Layard, both through a grant and through increased respect for Assyrian antiquities. While Layard had benefitted from the initial privileges that came with his social status, it was ultimately his business knowledge which had allowed him to build the successful empire which would support him—financially, professionally, and socially—throughout the rest of his life.

Conclusion

Sir Austen Henry Layard went on to become a diplomat, eventually being appointed to the prestigious position of Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as well as an out-spoken Member of Parliament. Layard retired in Venice in 1884 with Enid Guest Layard, his wife and the eighth child of Lady Charlotte Guest.¹²⁷ After ten years spent in retirement, Layard suffered a tumor which sent him back to England in the spring of 1894. While in London, he developed a blood clot in his lung which would prove fatal. Layard's enduring fame is evidenced by the fact that, when news of Layard's condition reached the Queen, she requested a regular bulletin on his progress. At the age of seventy-seven, Layard passed away on July 5, 1894.¹²⁸

Despite the fact that he passed away at the close of the nineteenth century, Layard's excavations at Nimrud—and the work of his fellow archaeologists of the time period—have implications in the modern day. As a result of nineteenth century collecting policies which sourced artifacts from Western archaeologists like Layard, many renowned museums have recently faced controversy. For example, the British Museum has faced constant criticism since the early 1980s for their decision to continue displaying the Elgin Marbles and, in July 2016, a bill was introduced in the British Parliament to return the Elgin Marbles to Greece.¹²⁹ To understand the current debate surrounding antiquities ownership, it is key to understand the issues which were at play in the nineteenth century, because this debate has its roots in Layard's lifetime.

¹²⁷ Waterfield, Gordon. *Layard of Nineveh*. (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1968). 309.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 482-483.

¹²⁹ Williams, Mark. "Parthenon Sculptures: Return to Greece; Bill 2016-17." U.K. Parliament. July 11, 2016. Accessed April 04, 2017. <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/parthenonsculpturesreturntogreece.html>.

One of the challenges of nineteenth century Mesopotamian archaeology is that it was led by Europeans and resulted in a flood of Mesopotamian antiquities out of Mesopotamia and into European museums and private homes. As discussed in the first chapter, this European involvement appears to have stemmed from the Orientalist attitude of European dominance over Mesopotamia. Many Europeans believed that Eastern societies were not qualified to be the stewards of the world's ancient treasures. Layard spoke to this concern anecdotally in his memoirs, sharing the story of Assyrian antiquities being destroyed by an Arab tribe.

“In the year 1820, [British explorer Claudius James] Rich... returned to Baghdad by way of Mosul. Remaining some days in the city, his curiosity was naturally excited by the great mounds on the opposite bank of the river, and he entered upon an examination of them. He learned from the inhabitants of Mosul that, some time prior to his visit, a sculpture, representing various forms of men and animals, had been dug up in a mound forming part of the great enclosure. This strange object had been the cause of general wonder, and the whole population had issued from the walls to gaze upon it. The ulema having at length pronounced that these figures were the idols of infidels, the Mohammedens, like obedient disciples, so completely destroyed them that Mr. Rich was unable to obtain even a fragment.”¹³⁰

Of course, this is just one, unconfirmed anecdote. By and large, the Ottomans appear to have had great respect for antiquities. The Ottomans chose to display these antiquities not in Western-style museums, but through the method of re-use, incorporating artifacts into modern buildings. While this may have demonstrated the Ottomans' respect for antiquities, Europeans still found this preservation method to be inadequate and dispatched their own archaeologists, believing that they were more qualified to handle the world's ancient treasures.

However, were the European archaeologists excavating in Mesopotamia actually qualified? As discussed in the second chapter, Layard had no formal training in archaeology, and, in fact, had not even been intending to lead excavations when he departed on his journey.

¹³⁰ Layard, Austen Henry. *Sir Henry Layard Autobiography and Letters*. 163. Vol. II. New York, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.

He was primarily qualified by his interest in Mesopotamia, his willingness to travel there, and his social connections. At the beginning of his journey, Layard's success relied on the letters of introduction which he carried with him. He used those initial letters to create a Mesopotamian network of powerful British ex-patriots with connections to the Middle Eastern ruling class. Without this network, Layard would not have been able to secure protection, lodging, or employment for himself.

While Layard's social connections allowed him to get his footing in the Middle East, his reputation for traveling with the notoriously dangerous Bakhtiyari tribe played a key role in establishing him as a regional expert of value to the British Embassy. This unofficial position led him to his excavations at Nimrud, the experience which would serve as the basis for his future success. There, he became recognized not only for excavating Assyrian artifacts, but for serving as a judge among local Arab tribes and for conducting diplomacy with Sheikhs. These things—the Assyrian antiquities and his tales of Mesopotamian living—would prove to be the key to Layard's success later in life. Layard would donate his antiquities to the British Museum for display and would gift antiquities to patrons to secure their support. He would also publish his findings and memoirs in a number of best-selling books. Using these successes as a springboard, he then went on to establish a political career.

From Layard's success, two questions arise. First, did Layard earn his success? In every aspect of this case, one can observe how Layard's privileges inclined him to success. From letters of introduction in Mesopotamia to the patronage of his aunt and cousin, Layard used his social connections to build a foundation for success. However, Layard did not rest on this foundation; he built upon it. As discussed in the third chapter, Layard—in each instance—used his own skills, knowledge, and experiences, coupled with his social advantages, to become a

successful archaeologist and author. Layard may have used his privileged upbringing to gain his initial success, but his ultimate success—as an archaeologist, author, diplomat, and politician—was earned through hard work and skill.

The second overarching question which arises from Layard's case is whether or not he had rights to these antiquities. As discussed, Europeans did not believe that the Ottomans were adequate stewards of ancient treasures, so they sent—often in an official, governmental capacity—European archaeologists. Layard, however, was not there in any official capacity and, as discussed in chapter three, believed these antiquities to belong to him as a result. In Layard's opinion, his hard work of unearthing these antiquities served as his claim to ownership. Layard believed that he was being a generous citizen in donating his antiquities to the British Museum. Still, he kept several antiquities for himself which he used as leverage with his patrons.

For example, Layard gifted lamassu—the enormous Assyrian protection sculptures—to Lady Charlotte Guest. The lamassu stayed in the Guest family until they were purchased from Ivor Churchill Guest by Dikran Kelekian in the 1920s. Kelekian was a noted collector of Islamic, Chinese, and modern art.¹³¹ In turn, he sold the lamassu to J.D. Rockefeller in 1927. In 1930, Rockefeller gifted the lamassu to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where the statues are currently on display.¹³² While these Assyrian treasures are accessible to the public today, they were, for many years, in private hands, and they were gifted to the private Guest family by Layard, whose claim to the artifacts is murky at best.

¹³¹ "Dikran Garabed Kelekian." Freer and Sackler Galleries. February 29, 2016. Accessed November 19, 2016. <https://www.asia.si.edu/collections/downloads/Kelekian-Dikran.pdf>.

¹³² "Human-headed Winged Bull (lamassu)." Collections. Accessed November 15, 2016. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/322608?sortBy=Relevance&ft=lamassu&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1>.

Layard's right to the excavated Nimrud antiquities—and, by extension, the British Museum's claim to Layard's Assyrian collection—is a case study for the larger question of antiquities ownership. In recent years, this question has arisen time and again as non-Western countries begin to advocate for the repatriation of antiquities which were excavated within their borders. Many of today's most prized antiquities were excavated in a similar fashion to Layard; without involvement from the country of origin, by an unqualified but well-connected individual who would claim them as his own and gift them as he saw fit. Today, museums which benefitted from this ethically nebulous practice face questions of how to move forward with this complicated institutional history. In the case of the British Museum—and the Metropolitan Museum, home to one of lamassu excavated by Layard—these artifacts have not been repatriated to their origin countries, and it does not appear that they will be returned in the near future.

Ultimately, the question of 'Who owns antiquity?' has no single answer. However, case studies—like that of Layard—provide valuable historic insight which can inform modern-day decisions regarding provenance and ownership. This issue has deep roots, and to understand the modern-day complexities of the antiquities ownership debate, it is essential to understand the historic themes of this issue and the implications of nineteenth century cases like Layard. As historians continue to examine nineteenth century archaeological case studies—as was done in this thesis using Layard as a case study—the academic community can move closer to establishing an informed, ethical approach to determining the provenance and ownership of the world's most prized antiquities. Until then, museums must continue to grapple with the controversial legacy left by archaeologists like Sir Austen Henry Layard.

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- Write gift proposals and develop annual giving appeals in support of a multi-year, university-wide giving campaign
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