



ESSAYS: ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND MISSIONARIES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIPLOMACY AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA'S ACQUISITION OF SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

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Following the American Civil War, as veterans returned home and tried to pick up the pieces, Washington sought to bind the states into a reunited nation. On the global stage, Reconstruction America struggled to regain its identity. Republican liberal nationalists advocated a “purified United States” with the mantra “civilization,” a word with a global currency at the time. Leading men of letters in America believed that the United States’ morale, identity, and standing in the world could be raised by the contemplation and acquisition of artistic works of classical Greece. To get them, they advised archaeological excavations, but problems negotiating foreign excavation permits, raising money, and finding seasoned field men with interpretive experience challenged early efforts.

Consular officers served as liaisons between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, aiding U.S. citizens in commerce at eastern Mediterranean emporia and obtaining visas and bills of lading. When qualified Americans were unavailable, polyglot levantines sufficed, often serving more than one nation. Prominent British expatriate families, such as the Calverts, often held consulships throughout the empire. Although the coveted title elevated one’s social status, its remunerative benefits depended upon the volume of traffic served. Poorly recompensed, consuls augmented meager salaries with private commercial enterprises. Several took up archaeology. Frank Calvert (1828-1908), U.S. consular agent at the Dardanelles, amassed a

sizable collection of metal artifacts, vases, and sculpture from small excavations during the 1850s and 1860s at a score of sites on family properties and throughout the Troad and Gallipoli Peninsula. The autodidact published preliminary reports with plans, sections, and artifact drawings in the *Archaeological Journal*, and by 1863 he had begun excavating his property at Hisarlik with the intent of identifying it as Homer's Troy.¹

Naturalized U.S. citizen and Civil War colonel Luigi Palma di Cesnola (1832-1904) took up archaeology while serving as U.S. consul to Ottoman Cyprus in 1865 and eventually also represented Greece and Russia. With a *firman* granted to him as U.S. consul, Cesnola dug in fields near the consulate out of boredom and began to collect antiquities as a commercial enterprise, bartering them for privileges in hopes of securing a better position. The adventurer, who rarely visited the sites he hired locals to pillage, amassed tens of thousands of artifacts, including vases, sculptures, glass, and bronzes. The industrial scale of his activities cannot be described as archaeology or compared with Calvert's work. Recording his midnight acquisition of finds at Golgos (Athienou), the proud colonel wrote, "I captured rather than discovered these stone treasures." By 1868, Cesnola was selling pieces to the Royal Berlin and the Vienna Kunsthistorische Museums. From the Larnaca consulate, he marketed his "Phoenician Museum" *en bloc* to the Louvre, the Hermitage, the British Museum, and "The Society," a group of New York landed gentry who intended to create a museum in Manhattan.²

William James Stillman (1828-1901) was a college-educated American painter. Before the Civil War, the Rhode Island native engaged Cambridge and Newport literati, such as Charles Eliot Norton (1897-1904), to write for a graphic arts journal that he published. When it failed because of a lack of subscriptions, he took up photography and headed to the Adirondack wilderness. Rejected by the Union army as unfit, Stillman (who was easily caught up in politics

¹ Allen 1999.

² Cesnola 1877; Marangou 2000.

and had once volunteered for a secret mission to aid Hungarian revolutionaries) served as unsalaried U.S. consul to Rome from 1861 to 1865. After becoming *persona non grata* with King Victor Emmanuel and losing his job, Stillman sold his photographs and dabbled in journalism.

From 1866 to 1869, Stillman served as U.S. consul to Ottoman Crete, living with his American wife and two children in Candia (Iraklion), a remote outpost with almost no American commercial traffic. “Having no occupation but archaeological research and photography,” Stillman explored the island thoroughly. In September 1866, the Christian population revolted, demanding independence and union with Greece. Despite Ottoman support of the North during the Civil War and the tradition of American non-intervention in European power politics, Stillman championed the Cretan Christians. He submitted articles to the *Nation* and *Atlantic Monthly*, which brought their plight to the notice of the Western world and persuaded the Great Powers to send ships to rescue civilians. Among Americans who responded were Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-76), a philhellene veteran of the Greek War of Independence, and his wife, Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Together, they raised over \$37,000 and obtained two hundred cases of donations and four hundred breech-loading rifles, which they brought to Crete. Mrs. Howe also organized the Newport ladies concert on behalf of Crete and began publishing a journal titled *The Cretan*, while Dr. Howe tried to rally U.S. government support for the Cretan Christians.

The Cretan uprising also had geopolitical implications. Crete was, according to the *New York Times*, “the opening wedge” in the Eastern Question. Great Britain and France sided with the Ottoman Empire to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean. European powers sought to discern U.S. foreign policy. Dr. Howe accused them of acting like “Asiatic despots sacrificing the island to propitiate Turkey.” He and other American interventionists advocated that the United States begin to exercise an intervening influence in European affairs in favor of free institutions.

According to them, American diplomacy should bring in line the “strength and mission of the republic” without leading to war. On October 23, 1866 *Saturday Review* reported that the United States had demanded an island from Turkey at the instigation of the Russians or Reuters. *La Turquie*, the official newspaper of the Sublime Porte, remarked upon

the attempts of the United States at this time to obtain a new port of supply and refreshment in the Mediterranean.... This ambition would seem natural on the part of any other nation, but what would the United States say, if we, laying hold of the Monroe Doctrine, and turning it in our favor, should attach to their essay at intervention in European affairs the same susceptibility which they affect in regard to any intervention of Europe in American affairs....The United States government is as infatuated by its strength as [it is] unscrupulous in its means of action. Americans see in all countries only commercial points for improvement or ports of refuge for their numerous fleets.³

Rumors flew. The French believed that the United States contemplated the purchase of the island of Melos. The island in question was, in fact, Crete. Meanwhile, Sir Henry Elliott, British ambassador to the Sublime Porte, reported the following to the foreign office on May 19, 1868: “anxiety... shown by the Americans to obtain a port on the Mediterranean... The United States aspired to establish itself in the Middle Sea.” What partly inspired this nervous reaction was the appearance in European waters of an American naval squadron that Cesnola hoped to deploy in order to transport his antiquities to market and Stillman hoped to persuade to intervene in the Cretan uprising.⁴

As “the recognized official protector of the Cretans,” Stillman feared assassination by the Turkish authorities. For his own safety and that of his family, in September 1868 he transferred the consulate to a yacht. Then he resigned and moved to Athens, where his wife, undone by stress, committed suicide. Destitute, Stillman photographed the Acropolis in 1869 and published his views in 1870, combining the picturesque with scientific accuracy. Then he returned to Rome, where having burnt his consular bridges, he married a Greek and freelanced as an

³ *La Turquie*, December 15, 17, 1866.

⁴ *Saturday Review*, October 13, 1866; Driault and Lheritier 1925-26, 192.

itinerant Balkan correspondent for the *Times* and American journals that Norton edited.⁵

In the midst of blurred lines, braided discussions, and overlapping arenas, Cambridge, Massachusetts became the center of America's "great moral solar system." During the Civil War, Norton had risen to prominence there as "the conscience of America." Through his writings, the independent scholar encouraged the United States to look to its classical roots and bind the nation's image to its ancestral democracy, ancient Athens. He exhorted citizens to lift themselves out of the morass of materialism that had engulfed the increasingly multi-ethnic industrialized North and embrace high culture by contemplating ancient art. Although the elite could always do so by crossing the Atlantic to see masterpieces at the British Museum, for the masses in Reconstruction America, classical art was available only in the form of plaster casts.

In 1874 when Norton joined the faculty at Harvard University, he taught fine arts using Stillman's images of the Parthenon and the Acropolis and the plaster casts of the newly founded Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. As the value of authenticity rose, so did Norton's desire for excavated works of art. Following unification, the German government practiced *Kulturpolitik*, in which archaeology figured prominently in the country's foreign policy. Bismarck's new regime established a school in Athens that was administered through its foreign office. In addition, it inaugurated and funded excavations at the iconic sites of Olympia (1875) that generated great symbolic capital. The Austrians plumed Samothrace (1873, 1875), and France established a claim on Delos.

Norton despaired that the United States might enter the fray too late. Then Colonel Cesnola, proffering his collection to the Louvre, the Hermitage, and the British Museum (after being tipped off to a change of legislation whereby the Ottomans intended to block his export of antiquities), smuggled his collection to England in 1872. Simultaneously, Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890) raised the profile of prehistoric archaeology through excavations at Troy, where he

⁵ Stillman 1901, 380, 417, 455, 457.

unearthed volumes of gold and silver artifacts that he christened “Priam’s Treasure” and smuggled out of Turkey in 1873. After surviving a lawsuit with the Turks, Schliemann considered moving to Boston, which he found to be “the earthly paradise for the ladies,” or presenting his antiquities collection to the Smithsonian, but did neither.⁶ Cesnola later sold his antiquities collection, comprised of over thirty-five thousand unprovenanced artifacts, vases, and sculpture, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for a tidy sum and a role as trustee, and later, director. By contrast, Boston, the self-identified “Athens of America,” had no antiquities collection.

Beyond raising the moral and aesthetic consciousness of American society and staking an American claim to archaeology in the Mediterranean, Norton hankered after authentic ancient Greek sculpture and vases for the new Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. After the German Archaeological Institute’s semi-centennial in 1879, Norton proposed the creation of a learned society to promote “archaeological and artistic investigation and research.” In May 1879, the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) was founded with Norton as president. Norton promoted it as a national endeavor of great symbolic value, although it was anchored in Boston. In firm opposition to the predations of the mercenary director of the Metropolitan, Norton stressed “the increasing interest in archaeological science...the importance of historical and artistic results of properly conducted explorations ... in the New World as well as in the Old ...in order to encourage and aid the efforts of individual explorers, and to send out special expeditions such as no individual could readily undertake.” America had had “little share in the splendid work of rediscovery of the early civilizations of the Old World” and had “reaped but small benefit from it.” By changing this situation and transforming the United States into producer of knowledge and antiquities, Norton hoped to reinvigorate American scholarship and bring

⁶ Allen 1999.

attention “not only to the science of archaeology, but to Classical and Biblical studies, and to the fine arts, by quickening an interest in antiquity.”⁷

With the clout of a national organization behind him, Norton encouraged American scholars to enter the arena of archaeological diplomacy. To do so, Norton, who had never set foot in Greece, needed to secure a site worthy of U.S. aspirations. With funding from a Boston patron, Norton gave Stillman a renewable commission for six to eight months to reconnoiter on Crete. Stillman returned to the island in the spring of 1880 with assurances from its governor that he could “make explorations” anywhere with “every assistance given.” Because of his “friendly relations with the Christian inhabitants” and his “familiarity with the history and geography of Crete, and the prospect of the favor of the authorities,” investment in Stillman looked promising. Norton hoped that besides the “increase of knowledge, objects of archaeological and artistic interest would be found which, by open and secure means, could be secured and brought home....to enrich the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.”⁸ Envisioning a “thorough investigation” focusing on the remains of ancient architecture, Norton asked Stillman to produce a careful “record by means of drawings, photographs, and measurements” and to obtain for Boston fragments of ancient buildings, especially with carvings, sculptural adornment and application of color, ancient inscriptions or squeezes thereof, and to send an abstract at the end of two months’ work. He advised Stillman “not to purchase already excavated objects unless of exceptional interest,” since he was interested in “original investigations” rather than the acquisition of objects in the hands of unscientific explorers, and he gave Stillman free rein to choose the sites of exploration. In return, Stillman would make monthly reports for publication in the AIA’s journal or Annual Report.⁹

⁷ AIA Archives Box 1.3.

⁸ *AIA Annual Report* 1881, 32-35.

⁹ Norton to Stillman November 6, 1880; *AIA Annual Report* 1880.

The AIA applied for a permit through the Department of State to excavate “Gnossus and Gortyna,” and Stillman arrived in January 1881 with his assistant, John Henry Haynes (1849-1910). As agent for the AIA and the MFA, Stillman went to Knossus with the proprietor and Minos Kalokairinos, the Cretan excavator of Knossus and Arkhanes, “Pelasgic Juktas.” Aware of the site’s “extreme antiquity,” Stillman recorded burned gypsum orthostats, stone benches, and walls six to seven feet high. He was particularly interested in mason’s marks, thinking them keys to the labyrinthine plan.

But the island was again restless. Because of Stillman’s previous political activities, leaders suspected that “his real object was political rather than archaeological.” The permit process stalled. While waiting, Stillman and Haynes visited Mt. Ida, Mallia, Mirabello, Axos, and Olus. After three months, Stillman resigned and returned to Athens to re-photograph the Acropolis and teach Haynes photography.¹⁰

Norton also pinned his hopes on two young American architects. In 1878 he dispatched his protégé, Munich-educated Joseph Thacher Clarke (1856-1920), and MIT-trained Francis Henry Bacon (1856-1940) on a project to discover the origins of Doric architecture. They reached Aegean waters in 1879, and, hoping for a “scientific result,” Norton commissioned them to prospect for the AIA at Assos, Sardis, Samos, and Samothrace, all part of Ottoman Turkey. Although Norton preferred a site in Greece, he convinced the AIA to fund one season of excavations at Assos because of the Ottomans’ relatively lenient antiquities legislation. Impressed by Clarke’s ability to produce a German-style treatise with scholarly apparatus, Norton appointed him director.

Again Norton sent a team into the field without a permit. At Assos, however, it was comprised of completely inexperienced young Harvard students, apart from Haynes. They wasted the first season in the field waiting for a permit, thus necessitating a second and third.

¹⁰ *AIA Annual Report* 1881, 41-49.

Fortunately, photography commenced in the second season, as did the collaboration of architect Robert Koldewey (1844-1925). That year the dig received the imprimatur from visiting classicist R. C. Jebb (1841-1905)¹¹ and the Boston Society of Architects. To signal American presence at the Dardanelles, the AIA gave Calvert an oversized American flag that he flew from the roof of the consular mansion on the shores of the Hellespont. To display their acquisition of cultural capital, the AIA gave plaster casts of the temple sculpture to Berlin and the Louvre Museums. The AIA secured one third of the finds and blocks representing a complete profile of the temple and hoped in vain to buy the government's share. But Osman Hamdi Bey called the "attention of the Turks to the material advantages and eminent honor derived from the possession of classical remains" and retained the government's share for the Imperial Ottoman Museum in Istanbul. Thus, the latter portions were lost to Boston, America, and the AIA.¹² Still, Norton hoped for a "scientific result" and funded Clarke to publish the excavation immediately, but Clarke was unable to do so.

In 1884 Norton and the AIA published Stillman's *Prehistoric Walls of Italy and Greece*, illustrated with his own photographs. Meanwhile, tobacco heiress Catherine Lorillard Wolfe (1828-87) financed the Wolfe Expeditions to Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Clergyman, Orientalist, editor, and AOS member William H. Ward (1835-1916) was to accompany it and Clarke was to represent the AIA after completing Assos. Pressured by Norton to finish the Assos publication, Clarke resigned precipitously from the Wolfe Expedition. So Haynes and Sterrett accompanied Ward, though Sterrett dropped out.¹³ Clarke, still unable to complete the Assos report, wanted to secure an academic position or consulship at Smyrna so as to be able to support his research and writing, but instead Haynes was recommended for the consulship. Within four years, Sterrett published promptly and thoroughly his 1884 and 1885 Asia Minor Expeditions,

¹¹ *AIA Annual Report* 1883, 39-45.

¹² *AIA Annual Report* 1884, 24.

¹³ Haynes to Norton October 29, 1884; minutes October 11, 1884, AIA Archives Box 1.1.

including 651 inscriptions and maps by Berlin professor Heinrich Kiepert (1818-99). Yet Assos languished.

Norton did not want to lose momentum. In 1886, he announced that two other areas, Magna Graecia and Cyrenaica, presented “the possibility of obtaining for America at least part of the works of art that may be found,” “where Turkish laws against the export of antiquities have no force. Now is the time ...to outfit an expedition which shall not only add to the artistic wealth of the country, but also promote the interests of archaeology, and increase our knowledge of Greek antiquity.” With private support as well as that of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Haynes offered to undertake a photographic survey of Hittite and Early Christian sites connected with the journey of St. Paul in Lycaonia and Pisidia in the region of Southeast Anatolia from Antioch to Marash.¹⁴

The AIA also approved \$1,000 and the AIA’s Baltimore Society contributed \$2,000 to Clarke and Alfred Emerson (1859-1943), another Munich-educated archaeologist who taught at Johns Hopkins, to undertake work in Magna Graecia in order “to investigate some monument of importance to the history of art, thus making a distinct addition to the history of science” and “to secure some works of Greek art from various periods.” Clarke and Emerson collected painted vases (*kylikes*) and architectural terra-cottas at Naples and Capua, as well as Gorgoneia from an archaic temple at Capua. After a reconnaissance tour of Velia during which Emerson made a detailed plan of the fortifications and noted all visible remains, Clarke pronounced it unpromising and moved on to Potentia, Siris, Croton, Sybaris, Metapontum, and Herakleia and found that the Italian government was interested in the latter three. They chose to work at Croton on the largely pillaged and unexcavated site of the temple of Hera Licinia with the landowner’s permission. Clarke surveyed the temple and dug with a small party, recovering the plan as well as pedimental sculptures, cornice blocks, sima, marble roof tiles, and bronze coins. After two

¹⁴ For the AIA’s New York Society, see *AIA Annual Report 1885-86*, 40-45.

months' work, however, he was shut down by the government for working without an official permit.¹⁵ In the struggle between Calabrian regional officials and Roman bureaucracy, Clarke lost control of all the finds, which were sequestered and in part reburied.

Again Norton wanted to keep Clarke in the field even though he had still not published *Assos*. In 1887, Clarke planned to move to Cyrene, a site which the New York Society championed, but could not fund. Clarke went there on a prospecting mission without a permit, but then Norton and the AIA were derailed in favor of Delphi, which went to the French.¹⁶

In 1888 Norton offered Clarke a field position in Egypt, but he declined. An AIA society in Pennsylvania was founded that year with the express purpose of supporting and directing excavations in Babylonia and the East. It prepared to send professors Hermann Hilprecht and John Punnet Peters into the field with Haynes to follow up on the Wolfe Expedition with an archaeological excavation in the East. They hoped to secure a permit covering a broad area of mounds and planned to partner with the AUB, which proposed to found an archaeological department "to give aid to future American investigations in Eastern lands."¹⁷

Unlike Schliemann, Cesnola, and Humann, Norton insisted that the AIA behave properly to the Ottoman Turks in dividing the finds. Because of Clarke's departure before the process had been completed, the AIA could not export the architectural fragments that they had been allotted in 1883. By February 1884, the legislation had changed. Subsequently, the AIA abandoned Turkey for more profitable realms.

From 1878 to 1888, all but one of Norton's planned Mediterranean excavations to Magna Graecia, Cyrene, and Delphi failed. Norton and the AIA had little understanding of the complexities of excavation in the Mediterranean. Their objectives were overly ambitious. They

¹⁵ *AIA Annual Report* 1887, 40-47; *AIA Annual Report* 1889, 40; Dyson 1998, 74-76.

¹⁶ Clarke to Norton March 5, 21 1884; AIA Minutes December 10, 1884; Ware to Norton March 13, 1884, AIA Archives Box 3.2; *The Nation*, April 21, 1887 [1138], 342; Frothingham to Norton April 26, and June 5, 1887, AIA Archives Box 5.6.

¹⁷ *AIA Annual Report* 1888, 40-44.

lacked experience, government funding and diplomatic clout, as well as an appreciation of the time necessary for the labor-intensive process of interpreting excavated material and producing a scientific result. In the case of Assos, the AIA's only successful dig, the result was the acquisition of only a fraction of the excavated material desired for American museums and a publication long-delayed and woefully incomplete. Thus, the Department of State and the AIA learned the hard way to practice archaeological diplomacy with the Ottoman Empire.

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