

CAPTURING RUINS FROM ASSOS: Evaluating John Henry Haynes' Contribution to Archaeological Photography

The photographs that John Henry Haynes produced during the excavation of Assos in southwest Anatolia in 1883 represent the beginning of his prolific career in photography: his Assos Album contains over 250 brilliant images of various aspects of the site and excavations.



Although Haynes' photographs were meant to serve primarily as archaeological documents, most exude his creative urge to capture the picturesque 'modernity' of Assos' antiquity – to portray in his photos how Assos' past was still shaping the world around it in the current day.

In each photographic 'theme' – i.e. panoramic landscape, Greek workers, and monuments – Haynes utilizes photographic techniques such as taking the photo from a distance or a side view, or creating sharp disparities between shadows and light. His own creativity, as seen in his positioning of workers within the ruins and his arrangement of objects, dispels the notion of archaeological sites as being totally isolated in their past.



Photograph by John Henry Haynes

LANDSCAPE

In photos depicting the landscape of Assos, Haynes locates the acropolis of Assos in a wider geography by including much of the surrounding landscape. The distancing of the focal point of the composition lessens the stiff monumentality that characterizes other contemporary photos of sites and monuments, such as the common frontal views of the Athenian acropolis or the Parthenon.

WORKERS

While Haynes placed Greek workers in his photos to show the scale of the monuments and artifacts, he was acutely aware of the Greeks' rights to their cultural heritage. Through highlighting Greek workers by positioning them casually standing or sitting within the remains, Haynes' photos implied that they were the true "owners" of the artifacts. They often came to dominate the picture



Photograph by John Henry Haynes



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MONUMENTS

These photos represent the most concrete evidence of Haynes' objective skills in archaeological photography. They also simultaneously reveal his own subjective interpretations of the ruins. Many photos are taken from an angle and include excavation tools. This objective perspective presents the archaeological unearthing of Assos' monumental remains as an essential aspect of the site's history.