



ESSAYS: ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND MISSIONARIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA 19TH CENTURY EXCAVATIONS AT NIPPUR

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While travelers had been bringing first-hand knowledge of the geography and antiquity of what is today Iraq to Western audiences since the sixteenth century,¹ Claudius James Rich, British East India Company Resident at Baghdad, initiated the first serious and sustained Western investigations of the region's ancient past in the early nineteenth century. Large-scale excavations followed in the 1840s, when the French Consul at Mosul, Paul Emile Botta, worked at Nineveh and Khorsabad (ancient Dur-Sharrukin) and the British adventurer, Austen Henry Layard, dug Nimrud (Kalhu).² American archaeological activity in the Near East only began in the late nineteenth century and coincided with the rise of research universities in the country. By the early 1880s a number of people who were nominally a committee of the American Oriental Society and the Archaeological Institute of America, but in fact acting as individuals, were endeavoring to arouse enthusiasm in the United States for explorations in Turkish Arabia.³ The committee included David G. Lyon (Harvard University), Francis Brown (Union Theological Seminary), and John Punnett Peters, Assistant at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, New York, who had recently returned to the United States after having studied Semitic languages at the

¹ Ooghe 2007.

² Lloyd 1980, 32-42, 57-72, 87-129.

³ Peters 1897, 1: 1-10.

Universities of Berlin and Leipzig. The proposition to send out an expedition was formally put on the table at the New Haven meeting of the American Oriental Society in October, 1883.⁴ It was formulated in explicitly nationalistic terms: “England and France have done a noble work of exploration in Assyria and Babylonia. It is time for America to do her part. Let us send out an American expedition.”⁵ It was decided that if \$5,000 could be raised, a reconnaissance expedition could be sent out. Peters approached Catherine Lorillard Wolfe of New York City, and she agreed to give the entire sum necessary, though Henry C. Bowen, editor of the *New York Independent*, had earlier pledged \$500.

The Wolfe Expedition

The Wolfe Expedition, led by William Hayes Ward, Associate Editor of the *New York Independent* and a self-taught Assyriologist, set out for Mesopotamia, then under the control of the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople, in September, 1884.⁶ After stopping in London to consult with colleagues at the British Museum and in Paris, where he visited the Louvre to examine Ernest de Sarzec’s finds from French excavations at Tello, begun in 1877, Ward continued on to Constantinople. Though he faced some delay, Ward eventually got the permits he had asked for. Once in the land between the rivers, Ward and his party, including J. R. S. Sterrett and John Henry Haynes (Robert College), both of whom had been with the Archaeological Institute of America’s Assos excavations, and Daniel Noorian, an interpreter, traveled overland by well-

⁴ Peters 1897, 1. Peters mistakenly cited the date of the New Haven meeting of the American Oriental Society as October 1884. The American Society met at New Haven October 24-25, 1883; it met at Baltimore in October 29-30, 1884.

⁵ Peters 1897, 1: 1.

⁶ Ward 1886. Peters (1897, 1: 318-75) published the portion of Ward’s diary covering the Wolfe Expedition’s travels south of Baghdad to its return to Palmyra and Homs. Haynes’ diary is in the University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Nippur, Box 1.

worn routes from Jerablus and Bireçik across northern Mesopotamia to Mosul, where they stayed for several days, visiting Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus, the two main mounds of ancient Nineveh, and Khorsabad (Dur-Sharrukin). From Mosul, Ward explored Nimrud, where he found “long lines of friezes, covered with figures and inscriptions, which have lain exposed to the action of the air” since Layard’s excavations,⁷ and then traveled on to Erbil. He was struck by Erbil’s “immense artificial mound or acropolis, on which the old city was built, still occupied, surrounded by its wall, to which an ascent goes up the side of the hill, till it enters the gate.”⁸ He was sure the mound hid “great treasure,” but would be impracticable to excavate. Ward then moved on to Baghdad, passing through Altün Kupri on the Lesser Zab, Kirkuk, Tawuq, Salahieh and Karatepe before arriving in that city on the Tigris. After nearly two weeks in Baghdad, Ward set out for Hillah and nearby ruins mounds, Abu Habba (Sippar), Babylon and Birs Nimrud (Borsippa). South of Hillah Ward entered largely uncharted territory. As he noted, “The country through which we were to go had not been visited by any European traveler for over thirty years, and portions of it never. No American traveler had ever been through the district.”⁹ Ward stopped at Uhaimir, part of Kish, Zibilyat, Niffar, which he described as a “mound of vast extent” that would “richly repay extensive exploration,”¹⁰ Bismya, Dhahar, Hammam, Fara (Shuruppak), Yokha (Umma) and Umm al-Akarib before reaching Shatra. From Shatra Ward explored nearby Tello (Girsu) and Zerghul (Nina) and al-Hiba (Lagash), the principal centers of the early Mesopotamian city-state of Lagash. After several days in Shatra he departed, following the Shatt al-Hai (or Shatt al-Gharraf) to its juncture with the Euphrates. He crossed the river to visit Mugheir (Muqayyar), Ur of the Chaldees, near Nasiriyah.

⁷ Ward 1886, 15.

⁸ Ibid. 15-16.

⁹ Ibid. 18.

¹⁰ Ibid. 20.

Mugheir marked the southern terminus of the Wolfe Expedition's reconnaissance. From there Ward turned back, stopping to visit Warka (Uruk or Erech), before reaching Hillah. After visiting Abu Habba a second time, and Tell Ibrahim (Cutha) he returned to Baghdad, visiting Aqar Quf, the Kassite capital Dur-Kurigalzu, before heading up the Euphrates. Near Fallujah Ward stopped at a ruin mound called Anbar, Sassanian Firuz Shapur or Perisabora, also used as a capital city by the early Abbasid caliphs. The site was not on any of the maps Ward had with him and its size astonished him. He wrote, "For size and importance the ruins of Anbar compare well with the very largest cities of Babylonia, Babylon only excepted."¹¹ He crossed the Euphrates and traveled up its west bank, passing through Hit and Anah. Just south of Kiamal (Qaim) he spotted the ruins of an important Assyrian town, protected by square walls. Ward was particularly interested in Tell Jabiriyah or Sheikh Jabar, probably ancient Hindanu, because of the remarkable preservation of the fortifications and buildings. As he wrote, it was the "only place where we have found the unburnt clay walls of a city still standing in part."¹² Ward and his party left the Euphrates at Deir ez-Zor and crossed the desert to Tadmor/Palmyra, where they stopped to photograph the ruins, at the request of the President of the American Archaeological Institute, and to make squeezes of Greek and Palmyrene inscriptions. After five days in Palmyra, Ward traveled on to Homs, Damascus and Beirut, before returning to New York ten months after his departure.

Even after such an arduous journey, Ward was enthusiastic about the prospects of further explorations and particularly excited about excavating Niffar or Anbar. Though fully aware that Ottoman policies prohibited excavations, Ward was sanguine about the possibilities of securing a permit, but argued that geographical and other work, including exploring the courses of old

¹¹ Ibid. 24.

¹² Ibid. 25.

canals, could be done without excavations. In any case, he observed, collections of antiquities could always be obtained from the markets.

Pursuing Excavations

At its October 1885 meeting in New York, the American Oriental Society unanimously passed a resolution urging excavations and the acquisition of antiquities.

Professor C. A. Briggs, of the Union Theological Seminary offered the following resolution, which was passed without dissent

Resolved. That this Society expresses its gratification at the valuable discoveries made by the Wolfe Expedition; that we regard it as highly important that ruins discovered by Dr. Ward in ancient Babylonia be thoroughly explored as soon as possible; and that we recommend to the American public this object as one worthy of liberal contributions, in order that a second expedition be sent out at an early date to make the excavations, and that the Assyrian and Babylonian antiquities may be acquired by American museums.¹³

The American Oriental Society apparently did not pursue the matter further, but Peters, appointed Professor of Hebrew at the University of Pennsylvania in 1886, and others, including Paul Haupt, Professor of Assyriology at Johns Hopkins University, tried independently to spark interest to send out a second expedition to excavate. Their efforts were unsuccessful until the summer of 1887.

In mid-July 1887 Peters was visiting the house of a friend at Intervale in New Hampshire's White Mountains, where he met Edward White Clark, a prominent Philadelphia financier, and his hostess's brother. As Peters related the story one Sunday morning while waiting on the

¹³ "Proceedings at New York" 1889, lxxxi.

verandah for a wagon to take them to church, Clark asked him about Assyrian and Babylonian explorations. He told Clark what had been done by foreign archaeologists and also gave him an account of the Wolfe Expedition and his failure to secure funds to follow it up. Peters had no idea Clark would be interested, but in fact he was. As the wagon came to the door, Clark told Peters, "I think we can send out an expedition from Philadelphia. I should be glad to contribute, and I am sure that my brother will do the same. When we return to Philadelphia in the autumn, come and see me and we will arrange the matter."¹⁴ Though Peters did not know it at the time, after an extended tour of western Europe in 1852-53, when he was just 25 years old, Clark had traveled on to Egypt, where he sailed down the Nile, as far as the Second Cataract, and through the Holy Land and northern Levant to Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, and Lattakia. He had also be an avid reader of Layard's accounts of his travels and excavations.¹⁵

Peters planned the expedition in August and September, and contacted Clark by letter on October 1, enclosing the New York *Independent's* story on the Wolfe Expedition.¹⁶ He had tea with Clark at his house in Germantown on October 11, soliciting his advice and help.¹⁷ Clark was true to his word and took up the task of raising the necessary funds. After a few pledges had been made, it was decided that it would be advantageous to affiliate the proposed expedition with the University of Pennsylvania and to ask the University's Provost, William Pepper, to act as president of the fund. Pepper agreed to the involvement and a meeting was held at his house on November 30. Clark included a brief note about the gathering in his diary:

¹⁴ Peters 1897, 1: 4. Clark was at Intervale from July 13 to July 25, 1887. He made no reference to his discussions with Peters in his diary, but noted Peters' arrival at Intervale on July 18, as well as drives around the area with Peters on July 19 and July 20. See E. W. Clark's diaries. Clark and Madeira Family Papers, University of Pennsylvania Archives, Box 2, FF 12.

¹⁵ E. W. Clark's diaries. Clark and Madeira Family Papers, University of Pennsylvania Archives, Box 1, FF 2-12; unattributed and undated newspaper clipping, Edward W. Clark, Alumni Records Files, University of Pennsylvania Archives.

¹⁶ Peters to Clark, October 1, 1887. University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Nippur, Box 3, Folder 13.

¹⁷ E. W. Clark's diary, Clark and Madeira Family Papers, University of Pennsylvania Archives, Box 2, FF 12.

I went to Dr. Peppers in the evening. Called to meet Dr. Ward of N.Y. and Dr. J. P. Peters of W. Phila[delphia] in relation to a proposed expedition to Chaldea in which I have taken an interest and have tried to help him to raise \$15,000. There were some 20 to 30 present of whom only a few were of the kind to give large sums – we had already pledged H. C. Lea, H. C. Gibson, my brother Clarence and I each for \$1000 and this evening C. C. Harrison, W. W. Frazer and J. D. Potts each promised the same amount and others now offered \$500 – so that we have half the sum pledged. Dr. Ward and Dr. Peters each spoke well about the opportunity offered for research and the interest of the subject.¹⁸

The meeting at Pepper's house brought the Babylonian Exploration Fund, as it was later called, into existence and virtually assured a Philadelphia expedition. The Babylonian Exploration Fund supported and guided excavations until 1898, when it ceded its property and position to the university.

Pepper put the question of affiliation between the university and the proposed Babylonian expedition to the university's board of trustees at its monthly meeting on December 6.¹⁹ The board agreed to the affiliation on the condition that all the finds that could be exported legally would be shipped to Philadelphia and become the property of the university. The only condition that the organizers of the expedition proposed was that the university should furnish a suitable accommodation for the finds in a fireproof building.

At the time he agreed to the affiliation, Pepper had no intention of putting up a building specifically to house the finds from the expedition. In late 1887 he was preoccupied with funding the construction of a fireproof library building (designed by noted Philadelphia architect Frank Furness and known today as Fisher Fine Arts Library). He allocated space in the proposed library

¹⁸ Ibid. Peters called on Clark at his house on November 25, 1887, just five days before the meeting at Pepper's residence. Clark noted in his diary that Peter had made "some considerable progress" since they had last met.

¹⁹ Zettler 1992, 329.

building for the display of artifacts that would come to the university and contrived one more argument for convincing the board of trustees to build the library.

Babylonian Expedition

Philadelphia's Babylonian Expedition conducted four campaigns of excavation over the years 1888 to 1900.²⁰ The site eventually selected was Niffar or Nuffar (ancient Nippur), one of the sites Ward had been most enthusiastic about in his report on the Wolfe Expedition. Nippur, located in the center of the southern Mesopotamia floodplain, about 180 kilometers south of Baghdad and eight kilometers northwest of the small town of 'Afak, near Diwaniyeh, was one of the largest and most important cities of ancient Mesopotamia.²¹ It was the site of Ekur, or Mountain House, the temple of Enlil, the head of the pantheon, and throughout its early history Nippur was Mesopotamia's pre-eminent religious center. Nippur was an immense ruin mound, divided into eastern and western parts by the dried bed of a watercourse that locals called the Shatt al-Nil. It measured more than a kilometer and a half across and covered ca. 150 ha; the mound's steep sides rose to as much as 20 meters above the surrounding plain. As Ward noted, "No digging worth mentioning has ever been done here."²² Layard excavated for roughly two weeks in January and February 1851, but concluded that "on the whole, I am much inclined to question whether extensive excavations carried out at Niffar would produce any very important results."²³

²⁰ On the Nippur expeditions, see Kuklick 1996.

²¹ On Nippur, see Gibson, Hansen, and Zettler 2001.

²² Ward 1886, 20.

²³ Layard 1853, 562.

The first expedition took place in the early months of 1889. The expedition left the United States in the summer of 1888, but owing to a long delay in obtaining permission to excavate, did not arrive in Baghdad until January 8, 1889. The members of the expedition included John Punnett Peters (director), Robert Francis Harper and Herman V. Hilprecht (Assyriologists), Perez Hastings Field (architect), John Dyneley Prince (secretary to the director), John Henry Haynes (business manager and photographer) and Daniel Noorian (interpreter). Haynes and Noorian had been with the Wolfe Expedition.

In his letters to William Pepper, Hilprecht, appointed Professor of Assyrian at the University of Pennsylvania in 1886-87, complained bitterly about his treatment on the journey to Nippur. Among other matters, he complained about the horse he was given. In a letter written after the problem had apparently been resolved, for example, Hilprecht wrote, "After very hard words between myself and Peters, I got a good horse now. But it was not before my refusing to continue the journey. I had namely got the worst horse in the lot for the first eight days, and it was so weak, that it fell twice with me, while walking slowly. Peters became afraid of the results of another fall."²⁴ Peters was nettled by Hilprecht's criticisms. With regard to matter of the horse, he wrote to Edward Clark, "Hilprecht's horse is the fastest walker and runner in the party, but he does not like it, and I do not think he would like any horse but a strong cow."²⁵

²⁴ Hilprecht to Pepper, January 14, 1889. University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Nippur, Box 4, File 2. Peters (1899, 122-23) reported an incident that occurred in late December 1888, that perhaps explains in part Hilprecht's complaints about horses. While traveling down river, just after leaving Deir ez-Zor, Peters noted, "As soon as our road brought us to the river-banks, we went down to the river, as usual, to water our horses. Hilprecht's horse, Marduk, which was very short-necked, undertook to step a little into the water in order to drink with greater ease, the result of which was that he and Hilprecht both fell in. The water was only about three or four feet deep; but when a man who cannot swim falls into a river, especially if the river is icy cold and he is on the top of a plunging horse, he is very apt to feel sure that he is drowning, and to do everything but put his feet on the bottom. For everybody excepting Hilprecht, who thought that his last moment had come, and the horse, which seemed to share the same conviction, it was a very ludicrous five minutes before horse and rider could be pulled out of the shallow water and set on *terra firma* again."

²⁵ Peters to Clark, January 14, 1889. University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Nippur, Box 4, Folder 2.

Pepper was seemingly exasperated with the backbiting and recognized the threat posed to the success of the expedition. He admonished Hilprecht,

Your letters are very full of criticisms of your companions. You have constantly spoken in severe terms about them. I cannot decide as to the justice of this, but I wish you to understand, that many things besides scholarship and zeal, are requisite to make a great expedition a success. There must be no pushing ambition, on the part of any one member. There must be invariable courtesy, and untiring willingness to accord to each, credit for the same good intentions, that is, the promotion of the success of the expedition. You seem to have brought yourself into a position of antagonism. Don't imagine that your companions have not criticized you. They freely acknowledge your scholarship, and have expressed regret for some mistakes that have occurred. But they do not feel, that you have yourself been above criticism in your bearing and remarks, toward your colleagues. I can well believe that is so, from the outspoken way in which you write to me about them. Very possibly Professor Harper cannot read old inscriptions with facility. We know he is not as profound an Assyriologist as you are, but he is an earnest and zealous scholar, and the relations between you and himself, should be charming and brotherly. For Heavens sake let us have nothing but expressions of mutual confidence and courtesy hereafter.²⁶

The first campaign ended disastrously in mid-April 1889 when the excavators became embroiled in a blood feud and local tribesmen set their camp, high on top Nippur's west mound, on fire and plundered it, stealing two saddle bags. Hilprecht's was recovered, but Haynes's bag, containing two hundred Turkish liras in gold, was not found.²⁷ Peters was desolate. He wrote,

Our first year at Nippur had ended in failure and disaster. I had failed to win the confidence of my comrades. None of them agreed with me in my belief in the importance of Nippur . . . The Arabs proved treacherous. The Turkish authorities disbelieved our story of Arab treachery, and suspected us of plotting with our Turkish commissioner to carry away antiquities. I was sick and nervous, having suffered for two months almost incessantly from severe facial neuralgia and consequent sleeplessness. In fact, I was on the verge of collapse, and the world had never seemed quite so black before."²⁸

²⁶ Pepper to Hilprecht, March 26, 1889. University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Nippur, Box 4, Folder 2.

²⁷ In 1989 the Oriental Institute's excavations in Area WG on the highest point of Nippur's western mound uncovered part of Qal'at America, as Peters referred to the Expedition's encampment. The excavations revealed the burned stumps of reeds that made up the walls of the huts and yielded wire, rifle shells, fragments of medicine bottles and clay pipes (see Gibson 2002: 82).

²⁸ Peters 1897, 1: 288.

Amazingly, the Babylonian Exploration Fund did not give up, and a second expedition to Nippur followed close on the heels of the first. It lasted from January to May 1890. John Punnett Peters was again director. He had with him only Haynes, who served as business manager and photographer, and the interpreter, Daniel Noorian.

The third expedition lasted with but few breaks from 1893 to 1896. Haynes was alone at the site for most of those years. Joseph A. Meyer, whom Haynes encountered by chance in Baghdad, assisted Haynes from June to December 1894. Meyer, a graduate student in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was on a two-year traveling fellowship to Europe and the Orient to study architectural schools and styles. While at Nippur Meyer made superb plans and drawings and kept a diary with detailed information on the excavations and finds, but Meyer's work was cut short. He contracted a serious illness, perhaps typhoid, and died in Baghdad on December 20, 1894.

The fourth expedition took place from early 1899 until May 1900. Hilprecht was scientific director, though he was only at the site during the last three months of excavations. Haynes managed the work and his wife, Cassandra, accompanied him, serving as his secretary and tending to the house. Haynes was assisted by two young architects, Clarence S. Fisher, an 1897 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, and H. Valentine Geere, from Southampton, England.

Both Peters and Hilprecht published accounts of the University of Pennsylvania's excavations; Geere wrote a popular account of his travels and work.²⁹ Hilprecht laid out plans for the formal publication of the results of the Babylonian Expedition in four series: Series A,

²⁹ Peters 1897; Hilprecht 1903, 289-577; Geere 1904.

Cuneiform Texts; Series B, Art and Archaeology; Series C, Transliterations and Translations and Series D, Researches and Treatises. In all, some twenty volumes in Series A and D appeared. Hilprecht served as general editor of Series A and inaugurated it with the publication of a volume entitled *Old Babylonian Inscriptions chiefly from Nippur* in 1893. Fisher published the only volume in the planned series of final reports,³⁰ but Hilprecht prevented him from publishing further reports.

Results of Excavations

The Babylonian Expedition focused its efforts largely on Ekur, the temple tower (ziggurat) complex at the center of the east mound; “Tablet Hill,” the triangular rise at the southern end of the east mound; and the southern end of the west mound. But the excavators also sank numerous exploratory trenches and tunnels throughout the site, leaving only the westernmost slopes of the mound and the topographically low extension that marks the southern corner of the site untouched.

Philadelphia’s excavators exposed the ziggurat and much of the temenos after removing parts of a massive Parthian Fortress, built in the first and second centuries CE, from above and around it. They also cut tunnels into the ziggurat to investigate its construction, and sank a deep trench in front of the structure to investigate earlier levels. The expedition was able to establish the basic stratigraphy and building history of the temple complex at a time when Mesopotamian studies were in their infancy.

³⁰ Fisher 1905.

Diane Taylor, a PhD student at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, began a dissertation on the ziggurat complex utilizing unpublished information from the Nippur field records in the University of Pennsylvania Museum's Archives, but also drawing on the results of later seasons of excavations. Though a handwritten draft manuscript exists, Taylor never completed the dissertation. Edward Keall's University of Michigan dissertation focused largely on the Parthian fortress, and like Taylor drew on field records in the University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, as well as the results of excavations in the mid-to-late 1960s.³¹

Aside from the ziggurat complex and Parthian fortress, the more coherent architectural remains uncovered by the expedition include stretches of the fortification wall;³² the Court of Columns, a Parthian (ca. 100 CE) building featuring a megaron hall with prodomos opening off a columned court on the western mound, Peters' Mound I,³³ and a fire temple, apparently dating to the Sassanian period, on the northwest end of the eastern mound.³⁴

In addition to architectural remains, the Nippur expeditions discovered a wide range of artifacts spanning the whole range of Nippur's occupation from the sixth millennium BCE to the ninth century CE. Arguably, the most significant finds were tens of thousands of clay tablets and fragments.³⁵ In addition to economic (administrative and legal) documents, the tablets included lexical lists and literary texts that have yielded much of what we know of Sumerian literature. The specific findspots of individual tablets or groups of tablets, today housed in Istanbul and Philadelphia, remain difficult to determine, but some general information can be gleaned from field records and published accounts of the excavations. The excavators found pre-Sargonic tablets and records from the time of the Dynasty of Agade (ca. 2334-2154 BCE), apparently in

³¹ Keall 1970. See also Keall 1975.

³² Fisher 1905.

³³ Fisher 1904; for the date of the Court of Columns, see Gibson, et al. 1978, 19 and Gibson 2002, 80-81.

³⁴ Hilprecht 1903, 423-24.

³⁵ Though the exact number is not known, figures given, for example, in Hilprecht 1903, 342, 408, 511, 524, suggest more than 50,000.

secondary contexts, in the ziggurat complex, as well as on the western mound.³⁶ At least some of the tablets dating to the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2121-2004 BCE), uncovered in the second expedition, were in private houses at the southern end of the western mound.³⁷ Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian tablets came from private houses on Tablet Hill, where Hilprecht claimed to have uncovered a temple library.³⁸ In fact, Haynes recovered more than 17,000 tablets and fragments from Old Babylonian houses dating to the time of Hammurabi's son, Samsuiluna, (1749-1712 BCE³⁹) in the "East Section of Tablet Hill" between December 1899 and March 1900. Judging from daily references in his diary to rectangular and pentagonal prisms (typical formats for school exercises containing literary excerpts⁴⁰), the bulk of the Sumerian literary tablets currently housed in Istanbul and Philadelphia probably came from the East Section of Tablet Hill. Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian tablets also came from the southern end of the western mound.⁴¹ The bulk of Kassite tablets, dating to the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE, were from the southern end of the western mound,⁴² but several hundred were below but near the southwest wall of the Court of Columns.⁴³ Later tablets derive from Tablet Hill⁴⁴ and the western mound. The more than eight hundred private legal documents that record the business dealings of the Murashu "banking firm," dating from the later fifth century BCE—that is, the middle of the reign of Artaxerxes I through the time of Darius II—were from Mound I, near the Court of Columns.⁴⁵

³⁶ Westenholz 1975, 2-3; Westenholz 1987, 21-23, 59, 87-88.

³⁷ Peters 1897, 208-10.

³⁸ Peters 1897, 197-203; Hilprecht 1903, 508-32; Geere and Fisher 1901.

³⁹ For the date, see McCown and Haines 1978, 62-63; Goetze 1964.

⁴⁰ Delnero 2010.

⁴¹ Peters 1897, 208-12; Hilprecht 1903, 342-44 and 408-10.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Peters 1897, 188-89; Hilprecht 1903, 340.

⁴⁴ Peters 1897, 200; Hilprecht 1903, 511.

⁴⁵ Stolper 1985, 157-68.

Despite its limitations, the Babylonian Expedition, nevertheless made an important contribution to the young field of Mesopotamian archaeology and epigraphy. But the personal animosities, so evident from the beginning, led to an unfortunate aftermath. In the years 1905-1908 Peters and Hilprecht, became embroiled in a bitter dispute, which engulfed not only everyone connected with the Nippur excavations, but a good number of scholars in the field. Reacting to Hilprecht's 1903 version of the Nippur expeditions, Peters alleged in newspaper interviews and in papers at scholarly meetings that Hilprecht had exaggerated claims of having found a temple library; he had also misrepresented purchased tablets as excavated artifacts and falsified the findspots of other excavated artifacts. Peters also questioned the ownership of certain artifacts that the Ottoman sultan had given to Hilprecht. While in Constantinople working on the Nippur finds in 1893, Hilprecht was asked to reorganize the Imperial Ottoman Museum, and he was involved in that task over a period of many years. In recognition of his efforts, the Ottoman sultan presented Hilprecht a large number of tablets and other artifacts excavated at Nippur or purchased while the expedition was in Mesopotamia. Hilprecht maintained that the artifacts were his personal property, but he gave the bulk of them to the museum, while keeping a substantial number, including some unique pieces (e. g., a Kassite map of Nippur) for himself. Hilprecht's critics argued that the Ottoman sultan's "gift" was a legal fiction, designed to permit a division of finds from the Nippur excavations. They suggested that the finds really belonged to the University of Pennsylvania Museum as the institution sponsoring the excavations and that Hilprecht had at least a moral obligation to turn all of them over to the museum.

The trustees of the university appointed a committee to act as a court of inquiry in the so-called Peters-Hilprecht Controversy on March 27, 1905. In its report dated June 26, 1905, the committee found the charges unsustainable and untrue, although the evidence indicates that Peters' allegations were essentially correct. The court of inquiry's report—and the publication of the

proceedings⁴⁶—did not end the controversy. The uproar and subsequent problems, such as the controversy arising over Hilprecht's publication of a Sumerian cuneiform tablet fragment, which he claimed confirmed the biblical flood story, eventually led to his resignation from the University of Pennsylvania in 1911.

Hilprecht died in 1925. In his will, he left the bulk of the antiquities and small finds that he had retained from the Nippur excavations to the University of Jena to be known as the Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities. Hilprecht had maintained a residence in Jena from 1899-1905, and his first wife died there in 1902.⁴⁷ Hilprecht left two copper-alloy heads of Markhor goats, supposedly acquired at Fara, but in fact purchased, and a nearly complete boundary stone, the so-called Hinke kudurru, dated to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1126-1105 BCE), to his second wife, Sallie Crozer Robinson, and his stepson, W. Attmore Robinson, for their lifetimes. He ceded them to the University of Pennsylvania Museum on their deaths, stipulating that the three artifacts were to remain "permanently exhibited" and labeled the Sallie Crozer Hilprecht Collection. Hilprecht left other collections, including antiquities from the Nippur excavations, to the city of Philadelphia to be exhibited in a museum, then under construction at the entrance to Fairmount Park, the later Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Though the University of Pennsylvania Museum ended the Nippur excavations in 1900, it nevertheless maintained an active interest in continuing excavations at Nippur until 1925, when in the fourth season of the Ur excavations, the Museum Director, C. B. Gordon, wrote C. Leonard Woolley, asking him if he would go to Hillah to clean out a storeroom the museum had

⁴⁶ Hilprecht 1908.

⁴⁷ Oelsner 1985. Hilprecht's will, dated July 10, 1922. University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives.

been renting there since the close of the excavations.⁴⁸ Penn joined with the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago to resume excavations at Nippur after World War II, but withdrew from the project after the third field season in 1951-52.

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⁴⁸ Letter from G. B. Gordon to C. L. Woolley dated December 29, 1925. University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Ur, Box 1.

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Illustrations



figure 1: Nippur from the southwest. Nippur 1962-63.
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