

unpublished notes and drawings, Turner's original plan was to present his findings in a series of journal articles, but such was the vastness of material that he ended up writing the book under review. After his death in 2018 the task of bringing his typescript to publication fell to John Russell, the foremost expert on the current state of preservation of the archaeological remains at Sennacherib's palace. No one could have been better qualified to edit Turner's typescript and see it through the press.

The resulting volume begins with an introduction to the documentary sources: Layard's notes, plans and sketches. The central part of the book is a narrative account of the excavations, in five chapters organized chronologically, beginning with Layard's arrival in Mosul in October 1845 and ending with his return to England after his second series of excavations in June 1851. Chapter 1 is devoted to the initial, unproductive attempts at Kuyunjik, which led Layard to switch attention to Nimrud, and to the final six weeks of this first campaign, when he returned to Kuyunjik and uncovered Sennacherib's throne room.

Chapters 2–5 cover Layard's second campaign of excavation at Nineveh, from September 1849 to April 1851. The division of this narrative into chapters coincides with Layard's three periods of absence: in the Khabour (spring 1850), at Lake Van (summer 1850), and in Baghdad (winter 1850–51). During these 18 months Layard's workmen, led by his foreman Toma Shishman, worked through all the seasons without a break. They exposed, mostly by tunnelling beneath the surface of the mound, several miles of interior and exterior walls in Sennacherib's palace, and in this way recovered the plan of the major part of it. Though the building had been emptied and burnt, much sculpture remained, and, dumped in a bathroom, lay the clay tablets that accelerated the decipherment of cuneiform and revealed the political, cultural and socio-economic history of ancient Mesopotamia.

Chapter 6 is a study of the excavation of a suite of chambers called the Southwest Terrace Wing. Much of this was explored not by Layard but by his successors, especially L.W. King in 1903. This part of the palace still presents formidable problems in interpretation. A seventh chapter is a general account of the excavations at Nineveh immediately after Layard had departed, supervised by Christian and Hormuzd Rassam and Henry Rawlinson. The book is concluded with plates, plans, bibliography and indexes.

The outcome of Turner's research is a report of Layard's two campaigns of excavation at Nineveh that reliably describes in minute detail and with critical acumen what Layard found and where. The exact archaeological context of many of the finds thus emerges for the first time. Between them, Turner and Russell have given present and future scholars a magnificent resource that must be the starting point of all future study of the excavations at Nineveh and the discoveries made there. In effect, this is the specialists' report on the earliest archaeological investigations at Nineveh that has been lacking for so long.

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AGNÈS GARCIA VENTURA and LORENZO VERDERAME (eds):

Receptions of the Ancient Near East in Popular Culture and Beyond.

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This book is a collection of 18 essays based on lectures and workshops organized between January and May 2016 by the editors at "Sapienza", Università degli

Studia de Roma, under the title *Storia degli studi sul Vicino Oriente Antico*. The essays examine the reception and development of Ancient Near East motifs in the popular culture of the past two centuries. With these essays, as Paul Collins says in the foreword, “we discover just how significant the Ancient Near East has been in influencing popular culture”. The areas of popular culture influenced by the Ancient Near East include: the visual arts; the performing arts; film and television; and novels and comics.

One of the strongest influences has been the idea that human civilization was initiated by aliens from outer space. This idea, primarily promoted by Zecharia Sitchin (1920–2010), has been entertained by American presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton and by spokesmen for the Papacy. It is a widespread cultural phenomenon in the modern world. Zecharia Sitchin’s 11 books have been translated into many languages and millions of copies have been sold worldwide. He argues that the Anunnaki, a group of deities in the texts of Mesopotamian mythology, were extraterrestrial beings who travelled to Earth from the planet Nibiru. They bred with creatures on Earth to create the Sumerians who created Mesopotamian civilization using alien technology. The Anunnaki eventually left Earth but they may return, possibly in 2022. The ideas in Sitchin’s books have been further popularized in the American TV programme *Ancient Aliens* and in the 2012 film *Prometheus*.

Another strong influence on modern popular culture is the idea that evil originated in the Ancient Near East. Among those who supported this idea was E.A. Wallis Budge (1857–1934), keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum. The exhibition of Assyrian archaeological finds in European museums and publication of translated texts from Mesopotamian mythology had a great impact on popular culture. The name and fame of the Mesopotamian mythological demon Pazuzu spread across the Western world. Pazuzu and the idea that evil originated in the Ancient Near East have featured in many films since 1922. The best known of these are the two horror films *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Evil Dead* (1981). *The Exorcist*, directed by William Friedkin and based on the best-selling novel by William Peter Batty, tells the story of the demonic possession of an American girl and the exorcism performed to save her soul. The film begins in an archaeological site in northern Iraq where a stone statue of the demon Pazuzu is discovered. In *The Evil Dead* five young people spending the weekend in a cabin in the woods of Tennessee encounter and are possessed by a demonic presence after they find a copy of “The Book of the Dead” containing Sumerian burial practices and rituals.

Receptions of the Ancient Near East in popular culture also include the work of visual artists Joan Miró (Spanish) and Michael Rakowitz (American). In the performing arts there was the historical pantomime Sardanapal at the Royal Opera in Berlin in 1908. In the 1980s Norway was the home of black metal rock music with the song “Ea, Lord of the Depths”. In 1991 an episode of the TV science fiction series, *Star Trek*, featured a retelling of the Gilgamesh epic.

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