
Archaeologist, Collector and Antiquities Agent:

The Activities of Captain Robert Mignan of the Bombay

European Regiment during the Early Nineteenth

*Century**



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Abstract

The ancient site of Babylon has long attracted the interest of European visitors. With the expansion of British geopolitical interests into the Middle East and India during the eighteenth century those in the service of the East India Company were afforded new opportunities to examine and explore regional antiquities. The historiography of archaeological exploration has traditionally focused on the contributions of key Orientalists such as Claudius James Rich and Paul Émile Botta. This has been at the expense of other equally significant individuals who also undertook a range of supporting scholarly, archaeological and museological activities. This article will redress that balance by considering the work of one of these unsung heroes of the East India Company, Captain Robert Mignan.

Keywords: Babylon; Mesopotamia; Middle-East; Archaeology; Collector.

Introduction

On the day of his election as a non-resident member of the recently-formed Royal Asiatic Society in 1829, Captain Robert Mignan of the Bombay European Regiment donated to the Society some fragments of human bone found in an earthen sarcophagus at Mujelibé, and two kiln burnt bricks with arrow-headed characters on them dug up near the Kasr, or palace, all of which had come from his personal excavations at Babylon.¹ To Mignan his election to the Royal Asiatic Society perhaps made up for some of the recent scholarly

*I am particularly grateful to Dr Jonathan Taylor of the Middle East Department at the British Museum for advising me upon a number of aspects of Babylonian and Mesopotamian archaeology that are discussed within this article.

¹Royal Asiatic Society, Donations Register 1831–43, p.133.

and professional disappointment he had experienced in East India Company service. The scholarly activities of Mignan and other Company officers in the Near East received relatively little attention outside of the Royal Asiatic Society although the editors of *The Lady's Magazine* did happen to observe at much the same time as Mignan's election that "There is still a prevailing desire among enterprising men, to discover the remains or ascertain the situations of cities which once were famed and illustrious. The name of Babylon, in particular, tends to excite a spirit of research among the officers of the services of the India Company".²

Notwithstanding those comments, however, the more recent historiography of nineteenth-century archaeological investigation in the Near East has largely glossed over the contribution by East India Company Officers. Unsurprisingly, historiographical interest in Babylon and Mesopotamia has centred on the work of British Orientalists like Claudius James Rich, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson and Austen Henry Layard, as well as French Orientalists including Paul Émile Botta, and their wider role in the geopolitical rivalries and state-sponsored initiatives that often accompanied their scholarly work. The second decade of the nineteenth century witnessed increased British activity in and around Babylon. In particular, the detailed work at Babylon in 1811 and 1817 undertaken by Claudius James Rich, the East India Company's Resident at Baghdad from 1806, soon came to dominate early studies of the region and largely overshadowed the impact of any work undertaken by a number of the Company's military officers. The East India Company's impact was undermined further by a series of descriptions and drawings that were also provided by James Silk Buckingham and Robert Ker Porter who visited Babylon in 1816 and 1818 respectively.³

The published work of less prominent officers of the East India Company in recent literature has become characterised increasingly as travel memoirs and in consequence scholarly observations within their publications are now seen to carry relatively little scholarly weight.⁴ It should be remembered, though, that Rich was in fact assisted by another Company officer, Captain (later Lieutenant-Colonel) Abraham Lockett, at that stage Assistant Secretary at Fort William in Calcutta, and a member of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. Lockett was a distinguished scholar and expert linguist but his contribution to the study of Babylon has been completely subsumed by Rich. All that emerges of Lockett's role in the excavations is that he supervised the workmen and prepared the drawings of the site according to results of Rich's survey.⁵ Yet Lockett conducted extensive research into the region and its

²*The Lady's Magazine, or the Mirror of the Belle Lettres*, 10 (London, 1829), p. 630.

³E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Rise and Progress of Assyriology* (London, 1925), pp. 25–29, 30–32; S. A. Pallis, *The Antiquity of Iraq* (Copenhagen, 1956), p. 51; S. Lloyd, *Foundations in the Dust: The Story of Mesopotamian Exploration* (Revised edition, London, 1980), pp. 10–21, 27–72, 91, 94–129; J. E. Reade, 'Early British Excavations at Babylon', in J. Renger, (ed.), *Babylon: Focus Mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege Früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne: Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 24–26 März 1998 in Berlin* (Saarbrücken, 1999), p. 48; B. M. Fagan, *Return to Babylon: Travellers, Archaeologists and Monuments in Mesopotamia* (Boulder, CO, 2007), pp. 45–68, 109–155; B. M. Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists and Archaeologists in Egypt* (Boulder, CO, 2004), pp. 59–61, 96–96, 109–120, 129–130, 150, 146–147, 156–157; Mignan also refers to natives collecting for French and German Consuls: Mignan, *Travels in Chaldea*, p. 74.

⁴D. Gange and M. Ledger-Lomas, (eds.), *Cities of God: The Bible and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 171.

⁵T. Roebuck, *The Annals of the College of Fort William* (Calcutta, 1819), p. 53; *East India Register and Directory* (2nd edition, London, 1819), p. 121; C. J. Rich, *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (3rd edition, London, 1818), p. 3.

antiquities and even prepared a volume for publication detailing his travels and explorations. Lockett, according to one report, had spent three weeks at Babylon. His volume sadly never made it into print—although the plates to accompany it were apparently prepared. Lockett in addition collected artefacts, some of which he donated to others including Sir William Ouseley, and also purchased manuscripts for himself and for the college at Fort William.⁶ Similarly, Captain (later General) Edward Frederick of the Bombay Infantry, and Assistant Commissary-General in Bombay from 1813–1822, accompanied Colonel MacDonald Kinneir on his exploratory missions in Persia in 1808. It is possible that Frederick had some engineering experience, later serving as the Supervising Engineer in the Bombay Presidency. His skill-set certainly included surveying which he presumably employed during his own visits to Babylon where he made his own observations and sketches which received favourable reviews in contemporary journals.⁷

All too often these subsidiary East India Company figures have been ignored, either as the result of the relatively short duration of some of their site visits or the loss of their personal papers and correspondence; yet there were many Company servants, civil and military, actively travelling and exploring Anatolia, the Near East, India and North Africa in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars who made important observations about the condition of the sites at those particular moments in time, and accumulated significant antiquities along the way; a fact reinforced further by articles which appeared in learned journals. In the case of Rich and Ouseley's associate, Captain Abraham Lockett, his activities and the antiquities he obtained including a number of gems can only be pieced together through the publications and correspondence of those including Sir William Ouseley and Edward Landseer.⁸ Unlike Lockett and other Company officers, however, Captain Robert Mignan stands apart. The publication of his own set of volumes detailing his travels and explorations in the Near East and Caucasus along with the survival of some of his personal correspondence presents an opportunity to reassess the career of one of these lesser figures; and in the following analysis the author will use the career of Mignan as a case study to suggest that the contribution of the East India Company's military branch to Near Eastern academic studies and the collection of antiquities should be revised and the significance of their work reassessed.

The Early Career of Captain Robert Mignan

Robert Mignan was apparently born in about 1803 at Honiton in Devon. He came from the Anglo-Scottish gentry, albeit a rather impoverished branch, but his father, Colonel George

⁶*The Classical Journal*, March and June 1819 (London, 1819), pp. 321–323; J. Landseer, *Sabaeen Researches... on the engraved hieroglyphics of Chaldea, Egypt, and Canaan* (London, 1823), p. 6.

⁷J. MacDonald Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* (London, 1813), pp. 272–277; *The Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* (London, 1826), IX p. 625. Frederick was subsequently Commissary-General at Bombay until 1838.

⁸W. Ouseley, *Travels in Various Countries of the East, more particularly Persia* (3 vols, London, 1819–23), I, pp. 98, 417, 425; II, p. 204; III, p. 28; E. Landseer, 'The Engraved Gems brought from Babylon to England by Abraham Lockett, Esq, Secretary to the Council of the College of Fort William in Bengal.', *Archaeologia*, 18 (1817), pp. 371–384; A cylinder seal acquired by Lockett and also later in the collection of Sir William Ouseley is now in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York: <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/323781?sortBy=Relevance&ft=Abraham+Lockett&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1> [Accessed 02.02.2018]

William Mignan of the Bombay Native Infantry was a distinguished soldier who had served in India during the late eighteenth century and fought in the wars against Tipu Sultan.⁹ In a letter written at Bombay on 5 December 1830 Mignan told Aylmer Bourke-Lambert, grandson of the last Viscount Bourke of Mayo and Vice-President of the Linnaean Society that he was, in fact, the rightful heir to the baronetcy of Sir Richard Strachan; his father, Colonel Mignan, being Strachan's first cousin. There was even a distant relationship to the Dukes of Roxburghe which he appeared keen to point out.¹⁰ How useful his social background was in his subsequent career is uncertain. Nevertheless, there was in this particular piece of correspondence a clear desire for his station in society to be recognised. Mignan's education had been typical of 19th century gentry. He had attended school at Loughborough House near Stockwell in Surrey, a preparatory school "for the education of noblemen's and gentlemen's sons", and from there he had been put forward for a military cadetship in the East India Company through the influence of his father. There is no evidence that Mignan went to the Company's military seminary at Addiscombe. However, his cadet papers stated that he had been educated in the Classics and mathematics, the former subsequently proving invaluable in his subsequent scholarly investigations.¹¹

In September 1819 Mignan had been posted to Bombay as an ensign. Shortly afterwards, in May 1820, he was promoted to Lieutenant.¹² In August 1820 he had visited Muscat on the Arabian Peninsula towards the end of a journey from Moscow to Kurdistan before then proceeding onto Baghdad, Basra and Bushire. In 1821 he had been part of the Company's expeditionary force sent from Bombay to Oman to conduct operations against the Bani Bu Ali. In 1825 he again returned to Muscat. By 1826 Mignan had been appointed to command the bodyguard at Basra of the Company's Political Agent in Arabian Turkey, Captain Robert Taylor. Taylor had served as Rich's assistant before succeeding him in 1821. Taylor was an accomplished scholar in his own right and was an acknowledged expert in Arabic and Persian. He was well known to the wider network of scholars who worked on Persia and the Near East and to the more intimate group of scholars connected to Rich that also included Captain Abraham Lockett.¹³

Based for the foreseeable future in the Near East Mignan, who already had studied Classical history at school, took an interest in the antiquities of the region. In this he was probably encouraged during the early stages by Taylor. However, Mignan did not find it easy to progress during the 1820s, lacking in his own opinion the substantial backing necessary to break into existing circles that could enhance his career prospects. He had returned to England in

⁹In Robert Ker Porter's descriptive sketch, 'The Storming of Seringapatam' Colonel Mignan appears on the extreme left of the picture: *Narrative Sketches of the Conquest of the Mysore effected by the British Troops and their Allies in the Capture of Seringapatam, and the Death of Tippoo Sultaun, May 4, 1799* (Hull, 1804), p. 3. A portrait of him survives at the National Army Museum: NAM. 1964-05-74-1.

¹⁰British Library [hereafter BL], Additional Ms 80876, p. 21; R. Mignan, *Notes Extracted from a Private Journey written during a tour through a Part of Malabar, and among the Neilgherries...* (Bombay, 1834), p. 51. Mignan dedicated some of his publications to the Duke of Roxburghe in 1839: R. Mignan, *A Winter Journey through Russia* (2 vols, London, 1839).

¹¹BL, IOR/L/MIL/9/135/563-67.

¹²*Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, 11 (1821), p. 80; T. F. Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life* (2 vols, 1836), II, p. 67.

¹³T. C. Mitchell, 'Two British East India Company Residents in Baghdad in the Nineteenth Century', *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie*, Band 1, 2008 (Berlin and New York), 378-382; BL, Additional Ms 80876, p. 9; *The East India Register and Directory for 1819* (2nd edition, London, 1819) p. 292.

1828 hopeful of being included in the projected surveys of the rivers of Turkish Arabia and had received some encouragement from Mr Peacock at East India House but in 1829 his request to survey the Euphrates had been declined. Nevertheless, he had been tipped off that the refusal had been politically motivated and that if a survey was to be approved, it would be the government in India that would in fact set things in motion. Mignan had thus returned to the Middle East where he had expressed himself optimistic about receiving the patronage of Sir John Macdonald Kinneir, the East India Company's envoy at Tehran from 1824 onwards.¹⁴

When Mignan had arrived back at Tabriz he had been kindly received by Kinneir and was hopeful of undertaking a survey of the Euphrates as a means of providing easier access by steamboat between Britain and India. Indeed, Kinneir had taken a great interest in his proposals. However, the political resident, Robert Taylor, now a Major, marginalised Mignan and instead secured the position for his own brother, James Taylor and another surveyor. In *Travels in Chaldea* Mignan had been complimentary about Taylor, thanking him for his assistance in translating certain Arabic inscriptions but this was probably no longer what he felt beneath the surface.¹⁵ Mignan had been left much embittered by the Euphrates incident which he described at much greater length ten years later. In fact, Mignan quoted a subsequent (but undated) letter he had received from Colonel Chesney on the subject that acknowledged the importance of the former's observations and recommendations to the later 1835–37 expedition to survey the Euphrates.¹⁶ Nevertheless, after his arrival in India he had applied to Sir John Malcolm to return to Persia but his request had been refused. Even his offer to survey the Euphrates at his own expense was turned down. He asserted that "I am shelved to make room for Sir John Malcolm's Scotch protégées". Mignan was clearly an unhappy man having also been left financially-disadvantaged by his ambitions.¹⁷ Undeterred he continued to foster both professional and scholarly ambitions and to seek the patronage of those in Bombay. In 1830 he presented a series of lengthy observations to Lord Clare, Governor of the Bombay Presidency, on the possibility of a Russian invasion of India. At the same time, he sent selected antiquities he had already collected to those he thought might be able to assist him including a Babylonian clay tablet to the Duke of Somerset.¹⁸

Mignan's Persian Network

It is reasonable to suggest that Mignan's arrival in Persia during the mid-1820s coincided with an expanding network of professional and scholarly contacts in the region. One of Mignan's closest friends was Major Isaac Hart, of the 65th Regiment of Foot. Hart was attached to the service of Prince Abbas Mirza and, as commander-in-chief of the Persian army, he was where much of the political influence in the region was located. Credited

¹⁴Mignan, *A Mignan, Winter Journey*, II, pp. 124, 126.

¹⁵Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, p. viii; Mignan, *A Mignan, Winter Journey*, II, pp. 127–128.

¹⁶Mignan, *Winter Journey* II, p.120.

¹⁷Mignan went on to observe about Malcolm that "the reputation of being a firm supporter of the humblest efforts of enterprise is a reputation which I must now humbly think he does not deserve". Presumably his gift of a Babylonian brick did not have the desired results: BL, Additional Ms 80876, p.19; Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, p. 192.

¹⁸Mignan, *Winter Journey*, II, p.147; BL, Additional Ms 80876 p. 22.

with modernising the country's armed forces Mignan spoke warmly of Hart on a number of occasions. After hearing of Hart's death in 1830 he wrote "With good talents, he combined an invincible perseverance, a masculine understanding, and great energy of mind. These gifts were accompanied by qualities of far greater value – a generosity of spirit, a purity of spirit, and a most affectionate temperament of heart....".¹⁹ Regrettably, there is limited evidence of personal friendships or acquaintanceships other than occasional references to friends and acquaintances. In his memoirs Mignan mentions Captain John Parsons of the Royal Navy and Captain Joseph Luyken of the 17th Regiment of Bombay Native Infantry. The nature of the friendship between Parsons and Mignan is unclear but in the latter instance Mignan and Luyken had been at school together.²⁰ Nevertheless, as the commander of the Political Resident's bodyguard at Basra he would have regularly met the steady flow of civilian and military visitors who passed through either on their way to India or back towards Europe including the influential Willock family. The Willocks were, of course, important representatives of British interests in Persia and Mignan interacted with them professionally and socially.²¹ Their shared professional backgrounds and scholarly interests presumably enabled Mignan to become acquainted with a number of individuals from the Bombay establishment including Captain Robert Melville Grindlay, formerly of the Bombay Native Infantry. Grindlay, like Mignan, was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. By 1828 Grindlay, now on the half-pay list, was acting as a financial agent and personal consultant in London. That he was willing to act on Mignan's behalf during the latter's dispute with Sir Thomas Phillips suggests there was at least a degree of mutual trust between the two men based on shared experiences and interests.²²

1. Mignan as Archaeological Investigator

I. Early Explorations

Mignan was apparently part of the network of Company and British Army officers who actively took pleasure in studying the history, antiquities and culture of the eastern Mediterranean, the Near and Middle East, and India.²³ Yet as with his frustrated professional ambitions, he seems to have experienced some trouble breaking into established intellectual circles and appeared to work largely on his own initiative, although there is some evidence towards the end of his concentrated period of archaeological activity to suggest he collaborated with some fellow Company officers. Mignan's first recorded exploration in modern-

¹⁹Mignan, *Winter Journey*, I, pp. 140, 155. There were naturally other officers, too, who made a favourable impression on Mignan during the course of his travels and professional duties. On one occasion Captain Wyndham of the Indian Navy was noted for his kindness. The Mignan family stayed with Captain Minchin, commander of the Wynaud Rangers, at Manontoddy Station whilst travelling in southern India in 1833. Mignan described him as "particularly attentive and hospitable". Mignan had a particular interest in seeing this station; his father had commanded there thirty-five years earlier; Mignan, *Notes Extracted from a Journey*, pp. 39–40.

²⁰Mignan, *Winter Journey*, II, p. 244; Mignan, *Notes Extracted from a Journey*, p. 71.

²¹Mignan, *Winter Journey*, I, p. 142; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 17 (1860), pp. v–vii (Annual Report); *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2 (1835), p. xxxix; Royal Asiatic Society, Donations Register 1831–1843, p. 192; *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, IV (1836), p. 183.

²²<http://www.manfamily.org/PDFs/GrindlaySBank.pdf> [Accessed 29.03.2017].

²³He also claimed the antiquarian John Robert Steuart as a friend. Steuart had a substantial collection of Near Eastern antiquities; Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaea*, p. 193; 'Cabinet of John Robert Steuart' in *The New Scots Magazine*, No. IX, Vol. II (July 31, 1829), pp. 357–360.

day Iraq was at Ahvaz (Ahwuz), about seventy miles north-east of Basra. In September 1826 he had set out, armed with Kinneir's *Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* as his guide. He observed the mounds that were littered with stone, burnt bricks and pottery. It was at the base of the ruins, though, that he dug into graves from which he extracted a number of stones with inscriptions. His observations were subsequently forwarded onto the Royal Asiatic Society by the then Captain (later Major) Taylor, Political Resident at Basra, who included additional comments based on manuscripts from his private collection.²⁴

Mignan's enthusiasm for exploring the region's antiquities was given further impetus the following year in 1827. Nevertheless, by the time he came to investigate Babylon and then publish his observations, Mignan faced an uphill academic struggle for there were already established commentaries on the region produced by the East India Company's Persian establishment. The most significant of these were by Claudius James Rich, Major James Rennell and Sir John Macdonald Kinneir. Nevertheless, Mignan accepted and acknowledged these as vital sources of information for him, although he was not afraid to disagree when he felt a factual error had been committed, particularly in the misidentification of objects or materials.²⁵

In the preface to his own volume Mignan was quite candid about his aims in exploring Babylon and Mesopotamia. Noting that Rich, Rennell and Buckingham had previously written on the region (Rich restricting himself to Babylon), he stated:

"I have endeavoured to extend the researches of the two former, and to verify their conclusions.....as well as confirm the hypothesis adopted by Buckingham, whose observations on the ruins appear to me to be more critical, correct, and comprehensive....than those of any other modern traveller".²⁶

Mignan was certainly not asserting that he was the first individual to properly consider the antiquities here. His aim was first and foremost to survey Babylon methodically in order to identify the principal features of the site, his intention always being:

"...throughout this work....rather to delineate the various remarkable objects that presented themselves to my attention, than to enter deeply into useless theory and speculation:-in short, to furnish an accurate account of the existing remains of ancient grandeur, to describe their present desolation, and to trace something like a correct outline of the once renowned Metropolis of Chaldea".²⁷

2. Mesopotamia and Babylon

One of Mignan's outstanding qualities seems to have been his methodical approach to the investigation of the antiquities of the region. As Pallis noted, Mignan sought to determine

²⁴Some Account of the Ruins of Ahwuz. By Lieutenant Robert Mignan, of the First Bombay European Regiment; with Notes by Captain Robert Taylor, Resident at Bussorah', *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1830), 203–204, 208. Mignan managed to misidentify the sandstone ridge behind the town as part of the ancient city's walls: G. N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (2 Vols, London, 1892), II, p. 351.

²⁵Mignan, *Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 3, 24, 31, 302; E. Frederick, 'Account of the Present, Compared with the Ancient, State of Babylon', *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*, I (1819), pp. 120–139.

²⁶Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, p. vi.

²⁷Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, p. ix.

the local topography of Babylon through excavation.²⁸ He undertook more thorough exploratory excavations at a number of sites which served to set him apart from his contemporaries. Indeed, at the turn of the twentieth century the German-American Assyriologist, Hermann Volrat Hilprecht, wrote approvingly of Mignan. For Hilprecht it was not so much that Mignan covered the ground extensively on foot, but that he had undertaken exploratory excavations in an attempt to prove the veracity of his theories about Babylon.²⁹ When Mignan set out on his journey on 22 October 1827 he was venturing “into the heart of Babylonia to investigate cities little explored and poorly described”. Rich had performed at least two digs at Babylon. The first involved him organising a gang of men who worked all day eventually revealing a statue that was “a lion of colossal dimensions standing on a pedestal of a coarse kind of gray granite and of rude workmanship; in the mouth was a circular aperture into which a man might introduce his fist”. The second instance proved more interesting, however. In the northern face of the Mujelibé mound identified by some at the time as the Tower of Babel which lay towards the northern end of the ruins, Rich had set twelve men to work who dug into a shaft lined with brick laid in bitumen. They had found a variety of objects including a brass spike and earthen vessels and some date tree wood. They then dug for a number of days into a narrow passage way filled with rubbish before revealing a wooden coffin containing a well-preserved skeleton.³⁰

Mignan himself excavated at the village of Elugo (modern-day Felujia) which occupied a part of the traditional site of Babylon. He also dug into the huge mound of Mujelibé. This was the exact spot where Rich had also dug, subsequently discovering the wooden coffin with an extremely well-preserved skeleton. This caused Mignan “to exert my utmost attention....I set men to work twenty yards eastward of the niche. Mignan took the work of Rich further, however. “After four hours’ digging”, he remarked, “they discovered six beams of date-tree wood running apparently into the centre of the mound. In half an hour after, I pulled out a large earthen sarcophagus nearly perfect, lined with bitumen, and filled with human bones; but on attempting to remove it, the vessel broke in pieces....On the slightest possible touch the bones became a white powder....From digging in an easterly direction, every five or six yards, I verified Mr Rich’s conjecture, that the passage filled with earthen urns extends all along the northern front of the pile....”³¹ Close by he employed thirty men to dig along the western face of the fallen statue to a depth of twenty feet. Here he found bricks “where bitumen alone was found to be the binding material”. Mignan had no trouble removing them with the aid of a pick-axe like tool. These struck Mignan as remarkable – “The writing was more deeply engraven [sic.] on these bricks than on any others I had met with. I found one with the Babylonian writing both on its face and edge, but unfortunately it was broken. I regard it as a unique specimen; never having seen or heard of another like it”. As he dug further and cleared away more from the base of a pilaster “I laid open a bricked platform beautifully fastened together with bitumen....I venture to assert that these bricks are the largest hitherto found....”

²⁸Pallis, *Assyriology*, p. 53.

²⁹H. V. Hilprecht, *The Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia* (Cambridge, 2010) originally published 1904, pp. 51–54.

³⁰Claudius James Rich, *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (London, 1818), pp. 25, 31.

³¹Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 170–171.

Mignan also explored subterranean caves and passages. In one passage he “discovered a granite slab fifteen feet long, and five and a half wide...”.³²

The excavations that Mignan organised were not dissimilar to those undertaken by Rich. Moreover, he also concentrated on the same areas as Rich had done. Building on Rich’s work, though, he was able to extend those original investigations as well as unearthing more examples of Babylonian culture. Mignan obviously thought in his own mind that he had gone further than Rich. In contrast to those instances where he thought Rich was wrong, he was very complimentary of Major Rennell’s observations, in one instance remarking “Major Rennell is unquestionably correct in announcing this ‘the deserted bed of the river Euphrates’. It is indeed surprising that the idea did not immediately occur to Mr Rich”.³³ Mignan appeared to admire the work of Rennell greatly. “This gentleman has been pleased to express his approbation of my labours; and I feel peculiar satisfaction in thus publicly acknowledging the many acts of kindness which I have experienced from him”.³⁴ He took great delight in showing where he and Rennell agreed on particular aspects, “an opinion likewise adopted by that venerable and highly distinguished geographer, Major Rennell”.³⁵

3. Later Archaeological Investigations

Mignan was clearly highly motivated by his Babylonian and Mesopotamian archaeological experiences of 1827. Having returned to England he had been elected a non-resident member of the Royal Asiatic Society in March 1829.³⁶ On his return to Persia in 1829 via Moscow and then south through Georgia and Kurdistan he undertook further excavations of some mounds near Dawlakey, in the Persian province of Fars. There he found amongst the debris bricks resembling those at Ctesiphon, an iron seal ring, and some Sasanian (which he referred to as Shapoorian) coins.³⁷ In his letter to Sir Thomas Phillips on 26 December 1830 he remarked that following Lord Clare’s appointment in place of Sir John Malcolm he was hopeful of returning to Persia where he would “devote all my time to the discovery of antiquities”.³⁸

Another aspect where Mignan stood apart from Rich and others was in his attitude towards objects. He clearly wanted to test theories and hypotheses in practical manner. He examined and studied his finds in some depth. One area in which he certainly maintained an interest was the bricks he found in the region. On 11 September 1833 the *Morning Post* published an article that had first appeared in the *Bombay Courier* on 19 March of that year. Mignan was quoted at some length agreeing with the observations by Dr Gerrard on the mud idols of Bamean and discussing the properties of various materials based on his own experiences in

³²Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 190–191.

³³Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, p. 199.

³⁴Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, p. vii.

³⁵Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 162, 170–171, 186, 196. Mignan was clearly happy to verify Rich’s evidence but also to point out quite categorically when he thought Rich was wrong. For instances where he states categorically that Rich is wrong see pp. 104, 203 (also Ker Porter), 224.

³⁶*The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, XXVII (1829), p. 725.

³⁷Mignan, *Winter Journey*, pp. 26–29. He also gathered more bricks from Ctesiphon: *ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁸BL, Additional Ms 80876, p. 26.

Babylonia.³⁹ He apparently also took time to examine and observe some of the finds from Rich's collection which had gone to the British Museum after his death as well. It is no surprise that Mignan found cuneiform writing fascinating. He already had one inscribed clay cylinder in his own possession, which had been reproduced in his book. Having included Rich's comments about the writing system, however, Mignan restricted his own observations, very sensibly, to the style of letters, "it appears that the Babylonians had three different styles of written characters, answering to our large hand, small text, and round hand". The eventual decipherment of cuneiform, of course, came through the more extensive work of Henry Creswicke Rawlinson that began following his arrival in Persia in the early 1830s and which culminated in his principal publications during the later 1840s.⁴⁰

Mignan continued to take an interest in the antiquities of the region but how active he was remains open to question. His final exploration was at the Medieval Islamic city at Wasit (Waesut) on the southern banks of the Tigris, which some at the time also identified with an ancient Greek city often called Cascara.⁴¹ This expedition was probably undertaken about 1830, although on this occasion Mignan had been accompanied by Lieutenant Henry Ormsby of the Indian Navy. Ormsby had not only taken part in the recent Euphrates expedition but was also highly regarded by the political resident, Robert Taylor. Mignan and Ormsby, however, only found evidence of the medieval Islamic settlement.⁴² After his investigations at Wasit there is little evidence to indicate any further activity by Mignan during the 1830s. This can be explained in part at least by spells in England and professional service obligations in India. In 1840 he had returned to active duty in India from Europe. It was about this time that Mignan was appointed 1st Class Agent in the Commissariat Office within the Bombay Presidency as well as taking charge of the Treasure Chest at Karrack.⁴³ It might well have signalled the end of his Babylonian studies as career considerations clearly took precedence. In 1849 Mignan, now a Major, was given the brevet rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army.⁴⁴

2. Mignan as Collector

During the course of his time in the Near East, and especially as a consequence of his excavations, Mignan acquired a modest quantity of objects. It is largely due to his publications

³⁹'Idols of Bamean', *Morning Post*, Wednesday September 11, 1833.

⁴⁰Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 223–225, 229; Wallis Budge, *Assyriology*, pp. 31–32; M. T. Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land* (Copenhagen, 1994), pp. 79–87, 177–227; L. Adkins, *Empires of the Plain: Henry Rawlinson and the Lost Languages of Babylon* (London, 2003), pp. 74–85, 89–103, 216–225.

⁴¹I would like to thank Dr Jonathan Taylor for confirming that Wasit was generally identified with Cascara by 19th century scholars.

⁴²J. Wellsted, *Travels to the City of the Caliphs along the shores of the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean*, 2 vols, (London, 1840), I, pp. 171–172; C. Rathbone Lowe, *History of the Indian Navy*, 2 vols, (London, 1877), II, pp. 32–33; W. Francis Ainsworth, 'Ascent of the Tigris', *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, (ed.), W. Harrison Ainsworth (London, 1847), pp. 508–509. In 1842 the traveller and explorer, John Baillie Fraser, referred to the 'recent' investigation by Mignan and Ormsby—presumably meaning the 1830 mission: J. B. Fraser, *Mesopotamia and Assyria from the Earliest Ages to the Present Times* (1842), p. 135; Mignan, *Winter Journey*, pp. 94–99. Rawlinson subsequently proposed that the true location of Cascara was more likely to be Kashkar (which he spelt as Kartsikar, or Kabsikar, located on the opposite bank to Wasit): H. Rawlinson, 'On the Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 12 (1850), p. 491.

⁴³*Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* 31 (1840), p. 90.

⁴⁴The *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, XXXVIII (1842), pp. 62, 245; *Allen's Indian Mail* (1849), p. 379.

that his collection is one of the few that we know to have been formed by an East India Company officer, and more is known about it before its subsequent dispersal than that collected by Captain Lockett for example. Other long-term East India Company residents in the region like the Willocks at Tehran in Persia certainly collected souvenirs from the region, principally Persepolis, but were not motivated by scholarly ambition.⁴⁵

In his pursuit of antiquities Mignan had not simply organised workers to dig and extract objects like many other visitors to the region; he had carefully sifted through the spoil heaps afterwards. This was a methodological technique far in advance of most of his contemporaries. As he says, “In making a very careful and fatiguing search throughout the accumulated earth, which we removed from this fine platform, my labours were amply compensated by the discovery of four cylinders [ie., *inscribed clay cylinder*], three engraved gems, one of which is represented in the frontispiece to this volume; and several silver and copper coins.....On cleansing one of the copper coins, I found it to be of Alexander the Great”. He also seems to have acquired a number of bronze figures of men and animals.⁴⁶

It is no surprise that Mignan also collected objects for his own personal enjoyment. How large a collection Mignan gathered is simply not known. Similarly, the quality of the pieces he gathered is unclear. The Political Resident at Basra, Robert Taylor, considered that many of the objects brought back from Ahvaz by Mignan were Islamic with the possible exception of a few intaglios on cornelian.⁴⁷ Sadly, the veracity of Taylor’s opinions cannot be considered. Apart from objects within particularly large or well-known collections establishing the provenance of items has long caused difficulties for curators and the museum community more generally. These difficulties are magnified for the more modest accumulations of collectors like Mignan. The full extent and the variety of objects which he gathered continue to remain obscure. Similarly, the extent to which he acquired other objects through purchase to supplement his archaeological possessions is equally unclear. Mignan’s will was made in 1846 and finally proved in 1852 following his death at Pune (Poonah). Regrettably, it offers no clues about his collection or whether any objects he had obtained had subsequently remained in his possession in the longer term, although it has been suggested quite reasonably by Reade that he had probably kept those objects that he illustrated in his publications. There is no evidence either that Mignan offered items to the British Museum or to other institutions apart from his donation to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1829.⁴⁸ In the wake of his death all his goods and possessions passed to his wife and this presumably included

⁴⁵Henry Willock’s brother, Captain Frank Gore Willock of the Royal Navy, probably visited the region’s antiquities where he had acquired some pieces for his own collection. In 1834 eight casts of sculptures from Persepolis, a brick from Babylon, a Cylinder and, rather curiously, a whistle that had belonged to the recently deceased Willock were donated to the Royal Asiatic Society on his behalf by his brother, Sir Henry Willock. Henry Willock, for example, created a modest coin collection which he later donated to the India House Museum: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2 (1835), p. xxxix; Royal Asiatic Society, Donations Register 1831–1843, p. 192; *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, IV (1836), p. 183.

⁴⁶Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 192, 229–230.

⁴⁷Some Account of the Ruins of Ahwuz. By Lieutenant Robert Mignan, of the First Bombay European Regiment; with Notes by Captain Robert Taylor, Resident at Bussorah’, *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1830), p. 208.

⁴⁸J. E. Reade, ‘Tablets at Babylon and the British Museum’, in *Babylon: Myth and Reality*, (ed.), I. L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour (London, 2008), p. 75. I am also grateful to Dr Jonathan Taylor of the Middle East Department at the British Museum for determining that there is no surviving correspondence between Mignan and the Museum about the sale or gift of his personal collection of antiquities.

any antiquities still in his possession. Unlike other collectors there is no evidence to suggest that Mignan or his wife put objects up for sale. This does not mean, of course, that objects were not sold. Ultimately, the most likely explanation for any antiquities remaining within the family is that they became dispersed over time.⁴⁹

2.1 Objects known to have been collected by Mignan

- (1826) Stones with inscriptions⁵⁰
- (1826) Gold coin (purchased)⁵¹
- (1826) Small intaglios⁵²
- (1827) Three antique gems including the one below illustrated on frontispiece of *Travels in Chaldea*⁵³



- (1827) silver and copper coins (Alexander the Great, Syrian, Parthian, Roman, Kufic)⁵⁴
- (1827) Ancient Vase⁵⁵
- (1827) Decorated tile⁵⁶
- (1827) Urns and vases containing human bone⁵⁷
- (1827) Sarcophagus containing human bone (but not the Sarcophagus)⁵⁸
- (1827) Bronze Figure⁵⁹
- (1827) Bronze clamps⁶⁰

⁴⁹The National Archives, PROB 11/2162/122. Mignan had married Mary, daughter of the London merchant and ship owner, Joshua Jepson Oddy, an active member of the Russia and Levant Companies as well as a writer on political economy. Between them Mignan and his wife went on to have at least six children: *The General Weekly Register of News, Literature, Law, Politics and Commerce* (1822), p. 251.

⁵⁰R. Mignan, 'Some Account of the Ruins of Ahwaz...with Notes by Captain Robert Taylor, Resident at Bussorah', *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1 (1829), p. 204.

⁵¹Mignan, 'Some Account of the Ruins of Ahwaz', p. 205.

⁵²Mignan, 'Some Account of the Ruins of Ahwaz', p. 206.

⁵³Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 192.

⁵⁴Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, pp. 192–193.

⁵⁵Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 198.

⁵⁶Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 198.

⁵⁷Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, pp. 46, 51–52, 68–69.

⁵⁸Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 171.

⁵⁹Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 103.

⁶⁰Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 196.

- (1827) Cylindrical Brick with cuneiform writing⁶¹
- (1827) Pieces of architectural decoration⁶²
- (1829) Iron seal-ring from Dawlakey⁶³
- (1829) Silver Shapoorian coins from Dawlakey⁶⁴
- (1829) Bricks from Ctesiphon⁶⁵
- (1829) Intaglio at Babylon⁶⁶

3. Mignan as Antiquities Agent

In common with the early explorers of Egypt who acted as agents for the British Museum, Mignan and some of his fellow East India Company officers in Turkey, Persia and India also found it expedient to serve as middle men back in England as a way of continuing their own personal studies. It is entirely possible that Mignan also knew Captain Thomas Newbold of the 17th Madras Native Infantry who came to act as an agent for the British Museum.⁶⁷ Mignan obtained objects not only for himself but also for the avid and eccentric collector, Sir Thomas Phillips, as well as for Mr Lambert of the Linnaean Society.⁶⁸ Subsequent analysis of Phillips's library shows that Mignan also supplied thirty-four Arabic and Persian manuscripts to Sir Thomas.⁶⁹

The personal relationship between Mignan and Phillips can be dated back to at least 1829. In fact, Phillips was a godfather to Mignan's son, but how that arrangement came about remains unclear and the relationship between them certainly soured during the 1830s. Nevertheless, before his departure from London in 1829 Mignan had undertaken to collect manuscripts for Phillips in Mesopotamia. Mignan had already sent some coins to Phillips which had piqued his interest and the latter had largely left it to Mignan's judgement about what he should subsequently obtain on his behalf. In November 1830 he notified Phillips that he had just arrived in London with a consignment of curiosities for him. On Boxing Day 1830 he again wrote to Phillips informing him that he had sent him some Babylonian antiquities which ought to arrive in England by April 1831. Moreover, he was also about to send a large collection of coins and gems from his excavations.⁷⁰

Where Mignan suffered, however, was from the erratic and temperamental behaviour of Phillips. Despite repeated requests to Phillips for payment he never received a penny. His agents, Messrs Finlay Hodgson also wrote to Phillips seeking payment but were likewise ignored. On 23 April 1831 they tried once again explaining that payment was needed for the educational expenses of Mignan's son. There were clearly further exchanges between

⁶¹Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, pp. 228–229.

⁶²Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaeae*, p. 293.

⁶³Mignan, *Winter Journey*, II, p. 27.

⁶⁴Mignan, *Winter Journey*, II, p. 27.

⁶⁵Mignan, *Winter Journey*, II, p. 90.

⁶⁶Mignan, *Winter Journey*, II, p. 99.

⁶⁷In 1847 Newbold was approached by Frederick Madden at the British Museum who asked him to purchase ancient manuscripts, particularly Greek whilst in Syria and Egypt. Newbold was also corresponding with Austen Layard: BL, Egerton Ms 2844 f. 241, Additional Ms 38979, f. 106r.

⁶⁸Mignan was hopeful of election to the Linnaean Society: BL, Additional Ms 80876, pp. 17–23.

⁶⁹A. N. L. Munby, *The formation of the Phillips Library up to the year 1840*, *Phillips Studies Series 3* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 56.

⁷⁰BL, Additional Ms 80876, pp. 1–3, 5–7, 9–11, 25–27.

the agents and Phillips for in a letter to Phillips on 31 August 1832 Messrs Finlay Hodgson said that they would accept £50 for the box of antiquities from Mignan that Phillips now had in his possession. Any further claim by Mignan would have to be dealt with between him and Phillips though. Despite the very obvious difficulties they had experienced, they then reminded Phillips that they still had in their keeping the box of coins that Mignan had sent to them and awaited Phillips' instructions.⁷¹ Phillips secretary subsequently replied on 6 October stating that "he cannot think of sending the £50 unless he receive an acquittal for the box altogether. If Captain Mignan saw the box he would acknowledge that it was not worth anything for the inscriptions are not legible, and moreover Captain Mignan has not kept his word with Sir TP for he was to send only the large Babylonian cylinders with Persepolitan inscriptions upon them, not one of which he was sent. Sir TP is sorry for his son but he cannot submit to be so treated".

It is very unclear what happened in those years following Mignan's return from Persia. In 1833, as the result of poor health, he had left Bombay with his wife and children to take a journey to the Neilgherry Hills, about seventy miles south of the city of Mysore.⁷² However, the survival of a letter dated 27 February 1838 from Mignan to Phillips suggests that their relationship had become increasingly acrimonious. This letter provided a neat summary of Mignan's position by that point. He had reached the limit of his patience. Mignan claimed that Phillips had been clear in his desire that Mignan visited Babylon and, if he is to be believed, even quoted Sir Thomas's exact words to that effect. Phillips had also offered £200 that could be drawn upon for expenses. Furthermore, Phillips had offered £300 for the Babylonian inscribed clay cylinder. Mignan's associate, Captain Robert Melville Grindlay, had written too and visited Phillips in an attempt to reach an accommodation during 1832 and 1833. Needless to say all these attempts had come to nothing. Phillips own private papers indicate that Mignan eventually placed the matter in the hands of his solicitor but without any apparent success.⁷³

Mignan clearly had an eye to the future by considering the acquisition of sculpture for display in Britain. Reputations could be made through the high profile acquisition of objects. When he was back in Babylon he observed that a couple of hundred yards to the east of the Kasr mound (located to the south-west of the Mujelibé mound) was to be seen:

"lying on its right side a lion; beneath him is a prostrate man, extended on a pedestal, which measures nine feet in length, by three in width....The head of the lion has been knocked off by the violence of some modern Vandal. When Mr Rich visited Babylon, this statue was in a perfect state.....I trust I shall be believed when I state, that the want of funds was the only reason that prevented my transporting this valuable relic of antiquity to India; where no great expense would attend its embarkation for England".⁷⁴

⁷¹BL, Additional Ms 80876, pp. 33–34, 37–38.

⁷²Mignan, *Notes extracted...*, p. v.

⁷³BL, Additional Ms 80876, pp. 41–42. For a detailed account of the probable fate of the Phillips inscribed clay cylinder, see <https://tobyburrows.wordpress.com/2015/04/18/the-philipps-babylonian-cylinder-ms-3902-tales-of-the-philipps-manuscripts-4/> [Accessed on 01.02.2018]

⁷⁴Mignan, *Mignan, Travels in Chaldea*, pp. 186–187.

Mignan does not mention any approaches by the British Museum or other interested parties yet he was definitely aware of the possibilities that his work in the region could open up – and was probably just a little frustrated and exasperated that he was unable to continue those endeavours. Twenty years later Austin Layard was to do exactly that at Nimrud when he transported a colossal sculpted winged lion back to England.⁷⁵

4. *The Legacy of Robert Mignan*

What any assessment of Mignan as archaeologist, collector and agent must always take into account is that first and foremost he was a professional soldier in the employ of the East India Company and the antiquarian investigations and business services he performed were always balanced against other official duties. Moreover, Mignan's efforts were simply overshadowed by the greater public impact of Rich, Rennell, Buckingham and Porter. Rich had got there first; Rennell was a skilled surveyor; and Porter had a greater public reputation. What is most significant about Mignan the archaeologist is his technique and methodology. Mignan did not make substantial new discoveries in Babylon and Mesopotamia. Those would only come about with the excavations of Layard from the mid-1840s onwards. Similarly, his excavation of an inscribed clay cylinder went largely unnoticed by contemporaries. Mignan's work largely refined and corrected some of Rich's initial findings through the application of a more rigorous methodology.

Yet despite these caveats, it should be acknowledged that Mignan's investigative work on Mesopotamia and Babylon was generally well received by contemporary commentators. Judged by the standards of the day it had much to recommend it. In 1829 the *Gentleman's Magazine* received Mignan's *Travels in Chaldea* very favourably, concluding that "Captain Mignan has highly gratified us, by a book full of curious matter, and most valuable confirmations of Scripture prophecy".⁷⁶ Other publications thought Mignan was right to correct the research of more prominent authors. The *London and Paris Observer* was moved to comment that "Captain Mignan has here presented to the world a work of such pretensions, both with respect to the subject and the mode of treating it, that general praise upon the part of the critic would be superfluous.....Our author is extensively and deeply read in his subject, and he has in numerous instances submitted to admeasurement, objects which have been much misrepresented by men of great renown...."⁷⁷ Such favourable views were similarly endorsed in the *United Service Magazine* which remarked "It appears extraordinary, that in the existing rage for topographical investigation, so small a number, comparatively, of modern travellers should have directed their researches to this doubly classical scene".⁷⁸ The *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* was impressed by "the staid and sober style of the author" along with the fact that "His predecessors have all of them surveyed the ground hastily, or even at a distance; whereas Captain Mignan has traversed the whole region on foot, and anxiously examined every vestige on the spot".⁷⁹

⁷⁵A. H. Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London, 1853), pp. 201–205; A. H. Layard, *A Second Series of Monuments of Nineveh* (London, 1853), plate 2.

⁷⁶Review – Captain Mignan's *Travels*, *Gentleman's Magazine* (1829), XCIX part 2, p. 533.

⁷⁷'Review of New Books', *The London and Paris Observer* (1829), V no. 236, p. 782.

⁷⁸'Captain Mignan's *Travels in Chaldea*', *United Service Magazine* (1829), II, p. 624.

⁷⁹'Critical Notices', *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (1830), III, p.7.

Some publications did express reservations though. The *Edinburgh Literary Journal* took a diametrically opposed stance to the *New Monthly Magazine*—while happy to accept the corrections on certain points by Mignan—they were, “disposed to rest more confidently on the statements of the late Mr Rich, because that gentleman’s observations and measurements were made at more leisure”.⁸⁰ *The Monthly Review* also adopted a more cautious assessment. The author’s details, it observed, “do not add so much to our previous information as serves to confirm what had been previously ascertained”. It also criticised Mignan’s approach, noting that “His aim, he tells us, is rather to delineate and describe the remarkable objects which presented themselves to his attention, than to enter deeply into useless theory, and vain speculation. At the very commencement, however, of his journey, we find him theorizing on the supposed site of the Garden of Eden”.⁸¹ Some commentators thought he had added little to the prevailing level of understanding. The *Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer* adopted a mildly critical stance, simply observing that “He dissents from the opinions of Mr Rich in regard to the Mujelibe and the Birs Nimrood, and agrees with those of Mr Rennell. His arguments, however, are satisfactorily answered by the investigations of Rich, Porter and Keppel”. It was probably small comfort for Mignan to read that the publication’s praise for his illustrations, “The plates of Porter’s large quarto are on a more magnificent scale, but none we have seen are so much to the life as those contained in the volume of Mignan”.⁸²

As a collector and antiquities agent Mignan was unsuccessful. While it is unfortunate that his collection became dispersed it should be remembered that so, too, did those of other significant Orientalists like Sir William Ouseley who, unable to find a long-term academic position or patronage, also sold off his collections.⁸³ Mignan seems to have taken the decision to collect and become an agent as a way of developing his scholarly career; and all the time he was stationed in Persia he was afforded every opportunity to do so. The objects Mignan subsequently collected, including those he donated to the Royal Asiatic Society in London, all indicate a man fascinated by the archaeology of the region. At the same time he could also see the potential benefits for continuing study and how the acquisition of long-term patronage from sponsors including the Duke of Somerset could also lead to increased financial gain. That venture as an agent, however, turned sour very quickly as his principal client, Sir Thomas Phillips, proved too difficult an individual to deal with. With a modicum of official support from the Bombay Presidency it is quite possible that that Mignan would have gone on to undertake more investigations across Persia; that, however, never happened and his studies gradually waned.

During the 1840s Mignan found himself back in India whose antiquities did not seem to generate in him the same kind of enthusiasm as those of Persia. Here he was even less a part of the scholarly networks than he had been in the Near East with no apparent access to the patronage that would enable him to continue down this path. He did not become a member

⁸⁰ ‘Literary Criticism’, *Edinburgh Literary Journal* (1829), II no. 53, p. 335.

⁸¹ Art VI, *The Monthly Review* (1829), XII, p. 538.

⁸² ‘Notices of Recent British Publications’, *The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer* (1829), VIII, pp. 246–247, 249.

⁸³ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ouseley-sir-william> [Accessed on 01.02.2018]; ‘Ouseley, Sir William, 1767–1842’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online Edition*, 23 September 2004 [Accessed 01.02.2018]

of the learned societies in Bombay or elsewhere and apart from his newspaper article of 1833 does not seem to have published anything further on subjects that interested him. To all intents and purposes thereafter his professional duties appeared to take priority and his scholarly pursuits subsided into the background. Yet rather than seeing him as a secondary figure to Rich and others, Mignan should more reasonably be applauded for leading the way as one of the earliest East India Company soldier-scholars who started to put into place the standards for the explorations that were to follow a few decades later. Malcolm.Mercer@armouries.org.uk

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