



LAYARD, AUSTEN HENRY

LAYARD, Austen Henry, Sir (b. 5 March 1817, Paris; d. 5 July 1894, London), French archeologist and politician ([FIGURE 1](#), [FIGURE 2](#), [FIGURE 3](#)).

Layard is chiefly known for his excavations in northern Iraq between 1845 and 1851. He worked mainly at the Assyrian sites of Nimrud and Nineveh, in the North-West Palace of Assurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE) and the South-West Palace of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) where he found many stone bas-reliefs and colossal stone figures, as well as large numbers of cuneiform tablets and small objects in bronze, glass, ivory and other materials. Many of these objects are now in the British Museum. But it is less well known that, prior to these excavations, Layard travelled widely in Iran, where he described a number of important monuments, mostly rock reliefs in the Bakhtiari Mountains.

Layard's family was of Huguenot descent, and his father had retired from the Ceylon civil service for health reasons. Layard spent his childhood on the Continent, since the family had settled in Florence where they enjoyed a cultured existence. When he was twelve, Layard was sent to England to obtain a more formal education. He lived with the family of his uncle Benjamin Austin, and in 1834, Layard was articled as a solicitor's clerk in his uncle's London office. But the legal profession had little appeal for him.

In 1839 Layard set out with a companion, Edward Mitford, to travel overland to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) where he hoped to practice as a barrister or to join the Civil Service. After reaching Istanbul they made their way slowly through Syria and Palestine, via Mosul to [Baghdad](#). In May 1840 they joined a caravan



travelling into Persia. In August 1840 Layard and Mitford parted company, with Mitford deciding to continue directly to Ceylon. Layard, however, remained in Iran until May 1842, with the exception of two relatively brief visits to Baghdad. He spent most of this time in Khuzistan (Kuzestān) and Luristan (Lorestān), staying with members of the [Baḳtiari tribe](#). He had a particularly good relationship with Moḥammad Taqī Khan, the chief of their Čahār Lang division. But Layard also met a number of European travellers, among whom the Russian diplomat Clement August baron de Bode (fl. 1846-70), the French painter Eugène Flandin (1809-1889), and the French architect Pascal Coste (1787-1879; see [FLANDIN AND COSTE](#)) are the most important.

Layard described his travels in Khuzistan in a long article (1846), for which he was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Geographic Society, and in a much later memoir, titled *Early Experiences* (1887). The copies of several inscriptions are included in his *Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character* (1851). In addition to much valuable archeological and historical information, Layard's writings are an important source for the state of the Baḳtiari tribe in the early 1840s and their relations with Manučehr Khan, the governor of [Isfahan](#).

Layard was originally drawn to Iran because he was eager to investigate the suggestion by Henry C. Rawlinson (1810-1895) that in ancient times there were two cities with the name of [Susa](#): the Greek Susa at Shush on the River Karkheh and the Biblical Shushan, where Daniel had his vision, at Susan on the upper reaches of the River Karun (1839, pp. 83-95). Rawlinson, the later Assyriologist and diplomatist Sir Henry, was a major in the service of the East India Company, and could not visit Susan himself. But Layard could, and so he found at Susan, just over 50 km to the east of Masjed-e Solaymān and more than 150 km from Shush, some ruins and a tomb, reported to be that of Daniel. Since there was not anything on a scale to justify identifying this site as ancient Susa, Layard therefore argued convincingly that Susan could not be Susa (1842; 1846, pp. 61-62, 91-94; 1887, I, pp. 11-12, 399-424).

In his writings Layard frequently refers to ancient mounds, bridges, dams, and roads, old caravanserais, destroyed castles, and the ruins of settlements, many of which he wrongly attributes to the Sasanian period (224-650 CE; see [SASANIAN DYNASTY](#)). Of greatest interest, however, are his descriptions of ancient rock reliefs in the Plain of Izeh (Iḏa/Mālamir; see [IDA](#)) and in the Valley of Shimbar (Šembār) because he, as he himself stressed in his memoir (1887, I, pp. 342, 353) was the first European to have visited these monuments.



In the Plain of Izeh Layard discovered rock reliefs at four different places (for the precise location, see De Waele, 1981, p. 48, fig. 2).

(1) *Kul-i Farah (Kul-e Fara)*. The Elamite (see [ELAM](#)) reliefs I-VI are located in a gorge, known as Kul-i Farah, on the plain's east side (Layard, 1846, pp. 75-78; 1887, II, pp. 12-14). Layard (1851, pp. 36-37) copied the 24-line cuneiform inscription (see [CUNEIFORM SCRIPT](#)) on relief I, and five of the short epigraphs on some of the figures. The reliefs (Scheil, pls. 23, 27-30; Calmeyer, pls. 33-37; vanden Berghe, 1983, pl. 2; De Waele, 1989, pls. I-VI; cf. for the cuneiform inscriptions König, no. 75) are located in an area that was probably an open-air sanctuary for religious ceremonies involving the sacrifice of animals. Three are on rock faces, while the other three are on large boulders. They depict scenes of sacrifice, processions and a banquet, and three show groups of musicians (see [MUSIC](#)). The inscription on relief I mentions Hanni, the son of Tahhi, and is therefore dated to Hanni's time (7th century BCE?). But the reliefs may belong to several periods, with reliefs III, IV, and VI dated to the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE (Calmeyer and Stolper; Seidl, pp. 200-202).

(2) *Shah Savar (Šāh Savār)*. This rock relief is located in the south-east part of the plain. Since the sculpture is in bad condition, so Layard's account is of particular value: "A monarch is seated on a throne, and five prisoners, with their hands bound, stand before him. The figures are about 2 feet in height, and so much defaced by long exposure to the weather that they are now scarcely distinguishable. A place beneath the sculptures was probably once occupied by an inscription, no trace of which however now remains" (Layard, 1846, p. 78; 1887, II, p. 12). But Layard's description is misleading, because this sculpture seems to show a seated deity faced by a line of five supplicants (vanden Berghe, 1963, pl. XXV; Börker-Klahn, fig. 116). This relief is tentatively dated to the 17th or 16th century BCE (Calmeyer and Stolper; Seidl, pp. 199-200).

(3) *Shikaft-i Salman (Šekāft-e Salmān)*. Four reliefs are placed inside and outside a cave on the south-west side of the plain, known as Shikaft-i Salman (1846, pp 78-79; 1887, I, pp. 404-406). A well preserved 36-line cuneiform inscription stands to the left of the figure in relief IV (1851, pp. 31-32). In relief I a line of two men, a child and a woman face an incense burner or altar, while relief II shows a man, a child and a woman facing to the left. In both reliefs the men wear helmets of characteristic Elamite type, and plaits of hair are hanging down to their shoulders. Reliefs III and IV are now in very bad



condition, but Layard described them in some detail: “In relief III he recognized that the figure “has its arms elevated and its hands joined in the attitude of prayer; a tunic descends to its knees; its head-dress is similar to that of the other figures” (1846, p. 78). Layard thought that an inscription had existed to the left of this figure, and suggested that “water percolating through the rock has completely effaced it” (*ibid.*). He also recognized a fragmentary cuneiform inscription on the figure’s dress. About the figure in relief IV Layard noted that it “has a long robe descending to its ankles; its arms appear to have been folded on its breast. The beards descend in curls almost to the breast, and the head-dress resembles that worn by the priests of the Magi. It appears to consist of a cap fitted close to the head, and advancing in a double fold over the forehead” (*ibid.*). The dress of this figure was also inscribed with a cuneiform inscription, and only to the left of this figure did Layard find the above mentioned cuneiform inscription. The style of the figures in all four reliefs (Scheil, pls. 24-26, 31-33; vanden Berghe, 1963, pls. XXII-XXIV; 1985, pl. 1; Calmeyer, pls. 38-40; De Waele, 1981, pl. IV) seems to indicate a date in the 12th century BCE, but the inscriptions are of the time of Hanni. It is therefore thought that the inscriptions (König, no. 76) were added by Hanni at a later date (Calmeyer and Stolper; Seidl, p. 200).

(4) *Hong-e Nowruzi*. In a gorge at the north end of the plain, on a large lump of rock, is a relief from the Parthian period (see [ARSACIDS](#)). Layard (1846, p. 79-80; 1887, II, p. 12) called the gorge “hong,” which is the Lorestāni variant of *hang* and common in the names of mountain depressions bearing rock carvings (see [HANG-e AFRĀSIĀB](#)). The relief shows a man on horseback in profile, with four standing figures facing front, to his right. It is related to the Elymaean kingdom (see [ELYMAIS](#)), and probably dates from the 1st or 2nd century CE (vanden Berghe, 1983, pl. 12; vanden Berghe and Schippmann, pls.1-6).

On the west side of the Shimbar Valley, north-east of Masjed-e Solaymān and north of Izeh, Layard discovered two Parthian reliefs in a gorge, called Tang-e Botān (1846, pp. 84-86; 1887, II, p. 255-61; see [BOT](#)), and did not fail to notice the Elymaean inscriptions on the larger one (1846, p. 85). In his memoir Layard (1887, II, p. 260) described how well their location protected the reliefs from discovery: “They were high up on the mountain-side, very difficult of access, and so hidden by trees and brushwood that any one not acquainted with their exact site would scarcely have found them.” On the larger relief (vanden Berghe and Schippmann, pp. 46-53, pls. 11-17), 12 figures form five



groups, who are arranged in a long row and all of whom face to the front. In each of the first four groups one or two people have bushy hairstyles, are dressed in Parthian trouser suits, and stand to the right of a figure, representing Heracles/Verethraghna (see [HERACLES](#)). The figure of the god is repeated four times, but the fifth group does not include the god and consists of three smaller figures in Parthian costumes. The five inscriptions (Bivar and Shaked) on this panel are written in a script that [Walter Henning](#) (1908-1857) correctly identified as Elymaean. To the right of this large relief is a smaller relief with a single figure, again dressed in a Parthian costume. These Elymaean reliefs are thought to date from the 2nd century CE.

In Layard's memoir, his descriptions of Masjed-e Solaymān and Susa are also of interest. He noticed at Masjed-e Solaymān, which [Roman Ghirshman](#) (1895-1979) later excavated, that "The remains consisted of an artificial platform, reached by a broad flight of steps built of large blocks of stone roughly hewn. Upon this platform could be traced the foundations of a building. But I could find no remains of columns nor other architectural ornaments, nor inscriptions on stone, marble, or brick" (1887, II, pp. 266-267). At Susa he paid particular attention to the Tomb of Daniel, in addition to providing a survey of the ancient site (*ibid.*, pp. 295-304).

Finally it should be mentioned that Layard's memoir contains interesting comments about other places in Iran which he visited between 1840 and 1842: Širin o Kusrow (1887, I, pp. 213-14), [Dokkān-e Dāwud](#) (I, p. 216), Sar Pol-e Zohāb (I, p. 218), Ṭāq-e Gerra (I, p. 220), Ṭāq-e Bostān (I, pp. 225-26), Kermanshah (I, pp. 231-41), [Bisotun](#) (I, p. 242), [Kangavar](#) (I, pp. 245-46), [Ecbatana/Hamadān](#) (I, pp. 269-71) including the [Tomb of Esther and Mordechai](#), [Ganj-nāma](#) (I, pp. 272-73), and Isfahan (I, pp. 329-31).

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