

According to these Ottoman state documents, Place's activities at Khorsabad were destined to end in disaster. It is clear that Place encountered serious problems before and during the transportation of the artifacts, including the revolt of the Arab Muntafiq tribe, the resulting insecurity of the roads, the inappropriateness of the method of transportation, the lack of protection from Arab bandits, and the likely harm to be done to the transported antiquities. But despite frequent warnings and advice that he should wait, Place did not want to leave behind the artifacts that he and his team had unearthed. Thus, in his own subsequent account, he listed various justifications for the immediate transportation of these antiquities. According to him, pressures caused by the impending arrival of the ship from France to take the artefacts in Basra, the costs of a long wait, the likelihood that the *keleks* would quickly decay, all placed him in a difficult situation. Under these circumstances, his solution was to send the Khorsabad finds under Clément's supervision. Place insisted that stone antiquities would not interest Arab tribesmen, and he assumed that simply distributing presents to them would take care of that potential difficulty.

Other problems included the replacement ship in Baghdad being in a poor condition, and Arab bandits coming to know of the smuggled merchandise that was secretly reloaded despite having earlier been removed by the British vice consul Jones in Baghdad. In earlier accounts, these efforts of Jones to protect the crates that were destined for the British Museum do not seem to have been mentioned. The subsequent reloading of these smuggled goods after the ship had left Karara upset the balance. They undoubtedly attracted the attention of various looters along the river, and this, together with inaction on the part of Clément (whether knowingly or unknowingly), directly contributed to the disaster. In the end, Place failed to take the dangers that awaited him and his finds *en route* to Basra sufficiently seriously, and by focusing instead on the impact that the Khorsabad finds would create in France, he became a victim of his own ambition.

The Khorsabad/Dür-Şarrukin excavations, which had begun with Botta and continued under Place, laid the foundations of Assyrian archaeology. The permanent abandonment of Khorsabad/Dür-Şarrukin following Sargon II's death in 705 had resulted in the preservation of that period of Assyrian history albeit under the ground. However, the destruction caused by these mid-nineteenth century excavations and the loss of the finds in the Tigris irreversibly destroyed Khorsabad and its memory. Accordingly for the last c.165 years the world of archaeology has been discussing the artefacts that constituted the physical memory of Khorsabad and the artefacts recovered from the excavations in Babylon, Nimrud and Kuyunjik. Hopefully, we will not be waiting for another 165 years before these artefacts and associated epigraphic material are retrieved from where they sank back in 1855.

BÜLENT GENÇ
Mardin Artuklu University
bulendgenç@hotmail.com

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

01 Haziran 2022

Wittek, Paul

210333

*An Ottoman Historian in Troubled Times. Five Letters
from Paul Wittek to Sydney N. Fisher, 1938–1949: The
Testimony of a Friendship*



COLIN HEYWOOD

Abstract

The present short study publishes five hitherto unknown letters written by the Ottoman historian Paul Wittek (1894–1978) to the American Middle Eastern historian Sydney Nettleton Fisher (1906–87). Fisher was a graduate student of Wittek for a few months in 1938; the letters were written during two short periods (1938–9 and 1946–9), when Wittek was attached firstly to the Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves at the Université Libre, Brussels, and secondly, from 1948 onwards, to the University of London. In the intervening years (1940–6), Wittek was a political refugee twice over in England. The letters manifest the development of a close friendship between Wittek and Fisher who, as two supplementary letters written to him by the British Arabist and Islamic scholar H. A. R. Gibb show, was also active during the war years in attempting—unsuccessfully—to facilitate Wittek's acceptance in the U.S.A. as a political refugee.

In a thoughtful and incisive Preface which he contributed to the reissue in 2012 of Paul Wittek's *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, Evrim Binbaş observed that “[w]e are still at the beginning of understanding Wittek's *oeuvre*. There are still many unanswered questions, especially relating to his London years [1948–61]”.¹ There are also many unanswered questions relating to Wittek's Brussels years (1933/4–40) when, as Evrim Binbaş has cogently remarked, Wittek thought (as late as the mid-1960s, when he wrote his seminal article on ‘The Taking of Aydos Castle’) that in the 1930s he was “in a pit, dreaming about the Messiah, or the super-*ghâzi*”.² Materials that will allow us to reconstruct Wittek's life and

¹İlker Evrim Binbaş, ‘Paul Wittek: A Man in Dark Times’, preface to Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire. Studies in the history of Turkey, thirteenth-fifteenth centuries*, (ed.) Colin Heywood (London, 2012), p. xv.

²*Ibid.*, p. xvi, n. 30, citing Heywood, ‘Spectrality, “Presence” and the Ottoman Past: Paul Wittek's *Räumliche Studien* and other Ghosts in the Machine’, *Osmanlı'nın İzinde: Prof. Dr. Mehmet İpşirli Anmağam*, (ed.) Feridun M. Emecen *et al.*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 2013), vol. II, pp. 57–78.