Stories of long ago.

Festschrift für Michael D. Roaf

Herausgegeben von
Heather Baker, Kai Kaniuth
und Adelheid Otto

Zeichnung: Cornelie Wolff

Preface

Heather D. Baker / Kai Kaniuth / Adelheid Otto

To present this Festschrift as a tribute to Michael Roaf, someone who has often fulminated openly about the proliferation of the genre, is not something we undertake lightly. In searching for inspiration for this Preface one turns – where else? – to Wikipedia. There one reads: "Die Herausgabe von Festschriften ist freilich nicht unumstritten".[1] Indeed. Even worse: „a Festschrift frequently enough also serves as a convenient place in which those who are invited to contribute find a permanent resting place for their otherwise unpublishable or at least difficult-to-publish papers".[2] And that's without even mentioning the "graveyards of scholarship"! We have done our best to navigate the pitfalls, knowing full well that whatever we do it will irritate the honorand but will perhaps thereby afford him some little pleasure. In any case, it is a testimony to Michael's breadth of scholarship, and to his incisive critical perspective, that so many friends, colleagues and students past and present were willing to risk such an exposure and to offer their contributions to this collection of essays presented on the occasion of his retirement from the Institut für Vorderasiatische Archäologie of Munich University. We hope that the contents reflect in some small way Michael's varied interests which have encompassed mathematics (the subject of his first degree) as well as the archaeology, art, architecture and history of the Ancient Near East, especially Mesopotamia and Iran, ranging in time from the Ubaid period through to the Achaemenid. On behalf of all involved, we thank him for enriching our lives as scholars and we wish him a happy and productive retirement.

This volume could not have been completed without the invaluable assistance of F. Grops, K. Zartner, M. Neumann and F. Sachs, who took care of preparing the text for printing. We thank M. Dietrich for accepting the volume for the series Alter Orient und Altes Testament and K. Metzler for his assistance in the editing process.

1 http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festschrift, accessed 9 April 2012.

2 The neuroscientist Endel Tulving, as cited in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festschrift, accessed 9 April 2012.

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Another Scot in the East
Robert Wilson on his Way to Persepolis

Kai Kaniuth

Introduction[1]

The role of Scotsmen in the creation and administration of the British empire has been acknowledged since long (for different emphases compare Devine 2003; Fergusson 2003; Herman 2002). Setting out as merchants, administrators and soldiers, most of them went with a solid classical education provided by one of Europe's most advanced school systems; some developed a keen interest in local customs and cultures, but above all for antiquity, which provided both a link to and a secure footing in the two traditions at the heart of enlightened Europe, the Bible and the canon of classical writers. The aim of this paper is to introduce one such traveller to the Middle East, Robert Wilson of Banff, surgeon, trader and benefactor. The range of countries traversed and the amount of papers left by him exceed those of better known figures, but his accounts were never published and have consequently remained largely unnoticed.[2] I offer this paper with the highest expectations, because a previous contribution on another 19th-century gentleman scholar, Robert Ker Porter (Kaniuth 2007), was the only paper from this author which Michael Roaf actually claimed to have "very much enjoyed reading".

Robert Wilson was born in Banff on 25 April, 1787 into a family of locally resident masons and builders. His mother's gravestone in the Old Churchyard cemetery of Banff describes her as "a woman of a liberal mind", and it was in this spirit that Robert was educated at the local grammar school before entering Marischal College Aberdeen in 1802. There he studied the arts before enrolling for his second year in medicine. From 1804, he complemented his skills taking classes at Guy's Hospital, London, and serving an internship in a small doctor's surgery. It was these qualifications but above all a

1 For their help in preparing this essay I am indebted to Florian Knauss (Staatliche Antikensammlung und Glyptothek, München), Elisa Roßberger (Institut für Vorderasiatische Archäologie, München), Kim Downie and Michelle Gait (Aberdeen University Library).

2 Robert Wilson has been the subject of an insightful tribute by Henry Hargreaves (1970). An unpublished biographic sketch by Thelma Watt (1995) forms the basis of an entry to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Watt 2004). The catalogue of an exhibition in the Marischal Museum, Aberdeen (Hunt 1982) was unavailable to this author. Wilson is mentioned twice in articles by Julian Reade (1998; 1999). I have not been able to find further reference to his travels in the archaeological literature.

network of fellow North-East Scots in the capital which earned him a post as surgeon on board of the East Indiaman *Glory* the following year (Watt 1995, 65–75).[3] Until 1814 Wilson completed five return trips to India and survived a shipwreck off the Kentish coast.[4] When at home, he underwent further medical training in Edinburgh and London but else enjoyed spending his earnings "as liberally as and in ways that sailors usually spend their money" (Hargreaves 1970, 375). After resigning from East India Company service he finally graduated M. D. at Aberdeen in 1815. While a dutiful and judicious surgeon, Wilson devoted considerable time to private trades, at the time a legal and welcome opportunity for Company staff to improve their salaries. By 1816, he had acquired a small fortune which enabled him to follow his lifelong ambition of travelling. Starting in France, he set off on a seven-year Grand Tour through Europe, the Near East and India. Wilson died on 24 September 1871, bequea-thing a large part of his estate to Marischal College, Aberdeen. His private collection formed the core of Marischal Museum.[5]

Fig. 1: Oil painting of Dr. Robert Wilson, dated 1824 (Aberdeen University Museum, ABDUA 30553). Wilson is wearing Oriental dress and carries a scroll listing places he visited on his journey, and a dagger and sword acquired as souvenirs (ABDUA:63523, 63524) (after Hargreaves 1970, pl. A)

Wilson describes himself as of small stature. In his papers, he comes across as an energetic and resourceful personality, humorous and sociable, but also self-opinio-nated and vain (Hargreaves 1970). In his commonplace book (MS 425) an

3 It remains unclear how exactly Wilson secured this lucrative position, because he was both under age and even seems to have failed the required exam for surgeon's mate. Hargreaves (1970, 374) suggests that, if nothing else, it proved that rules could be broken.

4 The *Admiral Gardner* was wrecked on the Goodwin Sands on 24 January 1809. Part of its cargo consisting of 54 tons of copper coins minted for the EIC was recovered in 1985. The "X" and "XX Cash" pieces have since become valued collectors' items.

5 More than 500 objects are registered in the University of Aberdeen Museum's (ABDUA) database <http://calms.abdn.ac.uk/Geology/DServe.exe?dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=Search.tcl> (accessed 15 November 2010) as having been acquired through him.

entire section is devoted to "Narratives of his encounters with women during his eastern travels". Three likenesses have survived. Two of them date to the year 1824 and were commissioned in Rome: an oil painting showing him in Oriental dress set before an idealized Athenian background (Fig. 1) and a marble bust, attributed to Berthel Thorvaldsen (Fig. 2).[6] A miniature shows him in his mature years (Watt 1998, 20).

Fig. 2: Marble bust of Dr. Robert Wilson (ABDUA 50151; ©Aberdeen University)

All documents pertaining to Robert Wilson's life are held, according to his will, by Aberdeen University Library: The Mss. 411–443 comprise his travel journals, several volumes of correspondence and medical notes taken during his voyages to India, lecture notes and an unpublished novel, as well as an autobiographic sketch.[7] Of particular interest for our purposes are the journals dealing with his travels to Greece (MS 413), Egypt (MS 415), the Levant (MS 418), Mesopotamia (MS 419), Persia (MS 417) and India (MS 416), countries he traversed between 1818 and 1823. The individual folios number between 120 and 400 pages. They are in neat and consistent handwriting and were either copied after Wilson's return or only then expanded into the full travelogue, a technique common for 18th and 19th century travel writers. Some sheets bear watermarks as late as the 1830s. The original notebooks kept en route are not preserved, but drawings and watercolours made or commissioned by Wilson on the spot are bound in; resulting inconsistencies or inaccuracies are not overly apparent. The entries follow an original log format, but they are rarely dated, so that his progress must often be traced through letters sent or received.

6 This attribution is problematic. The catalogue of Thorvaldsen's portraits (Kai-Sass 1965) does not list a portrait of Wilson, neither does Wilson claim to have commissioned one, so the bust was probably the work of another artist. Wilson is quite informative about having supplied "Thor Waldson" with sketches of Persepolitan reliefs and Macedonian coins for "the great sculptural design of Alexander the Greats victories" (MS 425, quoted after Watts 1995, 499) – probably the version of *Alexander the Great's triumphal entry to Babylon* destined for the Villa Sommariva in Tremezzo – and specifically mentions two busts of the King of Oudh for the making of which he had received more than £ 1000 from Ghazi ud-Din Haidar himself (MS 425; on these busts see Kai-Sass 1965, no. 133).

7 A complete list of the Wilson papers can be found through the Aberdeen Special Libraries & Archives homepage <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/Intro.shtml> (accessed 13 March 2011).

Travels

Robert Wilson was not an atypical traveller for his age in that he expanded on his professional trips to accommodate his antiquarian interests. The journals show him to be a lay scholar of considerable erudition, who prepared his journeys meticulously over the course of several months by reading up on the classical authors as well as the latest geographical works. His solid background in the sciences and his medical expertise were of great help during his journeys, if only to gain the favour of the mighty. His elaborations are mostly free of Biblical allusions, and his route lead him to the sites of classical antiquity instead:

> … far however from being satiated with traversing nearly all the Classic ground of Europe I determined on exhausting the Geography of Herodotus – following up as far as I could the route of Alexander and the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks under Xenophon – with this view I returned to my native home and pursued a course of severe study making copious extracts from the Anabasis, Arrian, Quintus Curtius, Strabo, Pliny, Diodorus Siculus and Herodotus; reading with great attention Vincents Periplus, Rennels ancient Geography and the best modern Books of Travells in Egypt, Syria, Babylonia and Persia. (MS 425, quoted in Watt 1995, 347)

In late 1818 Wilson arrived in Greece. Next to Athens, his primary interest was in the sites of Delphi, Mycenae and Olympia, as well as in the battlegrounds of Marathon and Plataea. Everywhere on his route he bought antiques, but a major pastime was wresting them from the ground. Together with the Hungarian Count Szechenyj, he targeted ancient burial grounds in East Attica:

> One of my greatest delights was in excavating and collecting antiquities. Cape Zoster, six miles from Athens, was a rich mine, above ground even; for the plain was literally covered with tumuli that afford the resurrectionist a certain harvest. The marble coffins are generally on a level with the ground, and covered with a mound of earth, some ten or twelve feet high. The lid of the coffin consists of two slabs, and nothing can exceed the interest which removing the first stone produces, when the development of vases, lachrymatories, specula, lamps, and unguatories gladden the eye of an antiquarian. All these with many brass and bronze ornaments, I have carefully treasured, and for a very humble person, my collection may be justly considered both a curious and extensive one (MS 413, 93–94).[8]

A number of these spoils appear to have found their way through the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal to the Indian Museum, Bombay (Anderson 1883, 473f.). After his arrival in Egypt in early 1820, Wilson passed by the Delta and headed for Cairo, where he befriended Henry Salt, made the acquaintance of Giovanni Belzoni and extracted a *firman* from Muhammad Ali, allowing him excavations anywhere in the country. Travelling down to Nubia, planning and sketching temples and buying

8 For the settlement history and necropoleis of Attica see Mersch 1996. The "Cape Zoster" (or Kap Zoster) probably refers to the modern Voula-Vouliagmenia region, a favourite spot of early 19th-century antiquity hunters, being close to Athens and on the much frequented route to Cape Sounion. The mention of tumuli and marble coffins points to post-Archaic graves.

antiquities, the most noteworthy episode was his descent into the infamous cave of El-Maabdeh opposite Manfalut, from which he was happy to emerge alive and in the possession of a crocodile mummy (MS 415, 72f.).[9] In Edfu, heavy taxation from the passing army of Muhammad Ali that the *fellahin* were eager to sell their objects, and Wilson meant only too happy to oblige. Judging from the Aberdeen Museum's register, Egyptian artefacts amounted to more than half of his entire collection. The journey up the Levantine coast was uneventful, a highlight being an excursion to the Hauran, where the unconditional hospitality of a poor Arab sheikh particularly impressed him (MS 418).[10] Having successfully completed the leg from Egypt to Aleppo, by March 1821 Wilson felt secure in his mode of travelling:

> My dress was oriental – I had a suitable growth of beard – and was long familiarized to the eastern modes of squatting, eating, sleeping – without either inconvenience, or being a day indisposed, since three years previous – I had entered Greece. (MS 419, 2)

In spite of his immersion into local habits, Wilson never declined falling back on the established networks of European residents and their mostly Armenian trading partners. In Aleppo he met the English consul John Barker, his Dutch and French counterparts Jan van Maseyk and Hyacinthe-Constantin Guys and from Baghdad the Bishop of Babylon and the French consul Jean-Baptiste Rousseau. He also accepted, if somewhat reluctantly, the Manchester businessman John Hyde[11] as travelling companion to Baghdad on the grounds that

> …I should traverse the country in any way I pleased, remain in places, as long as it suited me, and excavate at any ruin I might deem necessary, the expense of the latter to fall entirely to me, and the produce to be exclusively mine … (MS 419, 3–4)

terms to which Hyde "gladly" agreed. Armed with the obligatory letters of recommendation and another *firman*, the two set off for Mosul, witnessing the siege of Antep by the Pasha of Marash and local skirmishes in Urfa, all the while measuring river depths, temperatures and distances, showing a keen interest in local history (the fighting in Urfa did not prevent Wilson from visiting the citadel and surveying Abraham's mosque) and picking up more antiques along the way. On the road, he made good use of his medical knowledge, mostly practising on Hyde, who was coping less well with the conditions:

> Poor Hyde was alarmingly ill, for some hours during the night, vomiting excessively, which was only checked by a large doze of laudanum, and it left him very languid in the morning. I believe we had both eaten some of the carp, which was brought from Beer, and my stomach also suffered. (MS 419, 41)

Hyde was at last able to repay him in kind, when a spear wound suffered by Wilson during one of the repeated Kurdish raids on their caravan inflamed (MS 419, 89–110). In Mardin their host, an Armenian merchant named Michel Ebn Shaade,

9 There are several crocodile mummies in the University of Aberdeen's Museum, but none is catalogued with reference to Robert Wilson.

10 This episode is related in some detail by Hargreaves (1970, 377f.).

11 Hyde's papers are located in the British Library, Add. MS 42102–42108.

lamented the grave situation for the local Christian population ever since, a few years earlier, a French servant had walked Claudius James Rich's dog in the streets of Mardin. The local population had taken the encouragements of "Allez! Allons-donc!" as an insult to Ali and killed the animal. In retaliation, Michel amiably suggested to poison the Muslim sheikhs during an invitation for coffee, with the toxin to be supplied by Doctor Wilson.

Via the ruins of Nisibis the party made their way to Mosul, where a three-week long intensive survey ensued. Wilson and Hyde "rode about the country – excavating wherever we chose among the ruins, for remnants of early art" (MS 419, 198).[12] Later in April, Wilson made a detour on John Macdonald Kinneirs tracks to Lake Van, before floating in a *kelek* downriver, with passing glances at Nimrud, Ashur and Samarra. In Baghdad they took up quarters in the British residency, which at the time was deserted. Regarding Babylon, Wilson closely followed James Rich's account and sided with him against Rennell's reconstruction of the topography of the site. Beyond Rich's observations, however, he had nothing more to offer. Of his Mesopotamian finds, a number of cylinder seals are now in Marischal Museum, and remain to be studied.[13]

Persepolis

By 7 July, 1821 the party had caught up with the British resident in Basra, ready to leave the country for Persia. Rich dissuaded Wilson from crossing the Iranian Plateau all the way to Samarkand and convinced him of the comparative advantages of the Persian Gulf route to India. During the trip to Bushehr, a bout of ophthalmia was cured through the liberal application of opium wine. Upon arrival (on 24 July, 1821), Wilson set off with a new travelling companion, the Company surgeon James Todd, for Shiraz, where a Major Litchfield of the Bombay Army joined their party for the trip to Persepolis[14]. Wilson now closed in on the primary objective of his journey, which he reached sometime in early August. His emotions at the magnificent sight of the remains of Persepolis ring through the description:

> [the buildings on the platform] exhibit a variety of sculpture, which makes them secondary to none I have seen in my travels; But what surprised me more than any thing was the astonishing dissimilarity and variety in the architectural designs and decorations of these ruins, to all other that are met with in the world; a new order,

12 Wilson's Mesopotamian exploits will be the subject of a separate contribution.

13 An intriguing piece, ABDUA 59799, probably from Nineveh, contains the easternmost attestation of the Cypriot script (Masson 1961, no. 353 fig. 109). No less interesting is a bronze bust (ABDUA 59778), excavated in the Ibrahim el-Khalil mound of Borsippa, which Wilson mutilated in the process and described as having enormous ears "like Bengale children's" (MS 419, 309f.).

14 The association with Todd and Litchfield proves the graffito on the Gate of All Nations to have been made by Dr. Robert Wilson, and not by the later resident to Bushire, Col. Robert Wilson (*cf.* Simpson 2005, 67).

more composite than the flowery Roman is displayed in the remains of Persepolis, and animals more monstrous than Egyptian Sphinxes or Indian Demi-Gods are sculptured in a style of minute detail and precision, that gives them the united characters of both Egyptian and Grecian art; but at the same time they possessed features altogether indigenous, that seem to belong peculiarly to Persepolis. I remained many days in the vicinity of the ruins and took a cool, and, I trust, accurate survey of all that is now left for observation, and assuredly the grandeur and beauty of the ruins which are dispersed over the plains of Merdasht, equals almost anything I have yet met with. (MS 417, 38f.)

[on the palace of Xerxes] Assuredly this is the most splendid design ever exhibited to modern observation for the accommodation of Man; Gods were enshrined in Temples which exhausted the industry and wealth of Nations, and I have now seen all that is admirable in their points; but the assemblage of superb apartments and ornamental decorations here displayed leaves no room for comparison with any thing in Italy, Greece or Egypt. (MS 417, 54)

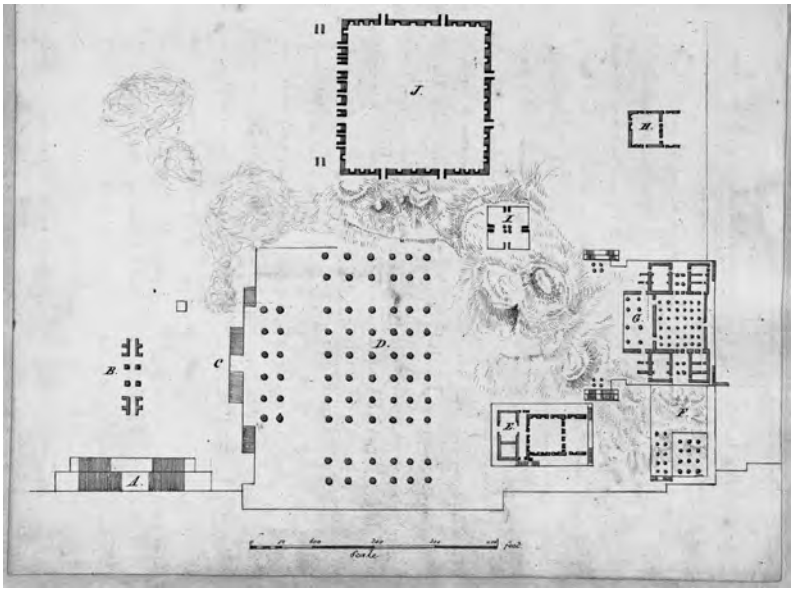

Fig. 3: Plan of the Persepolis terrace (MS 417, inbound between pp. 54–55; ©Aberdeen University)

Almost immediately, the survey of Persepolis began under a strict regime. Up before dawn, Wilson used to ride from his quarters in Marv Dasht towards the Takht-i Jamshid, where he described and charted the visible remains (Fig. 3). After 300 years of research, his plan contains no new information, but it compares favourably with those of Morier (1818) and Ouseley (1821, pl. 41.1), and is on par with Niebuhr (1778, pl. 18) while the drawings of the reliefs were already bettered by those

of De Bruyn (1737) and Porter (1821). Wilson's views of the Apadana columned halls (Fig. 4) are no fanciful pastiches but explicitly based on the facades of the Royal Graves, and constitute the earliest sound reconstructions of these pillars, abstaining from any unwarranted speculation concerning portions above the architrave.

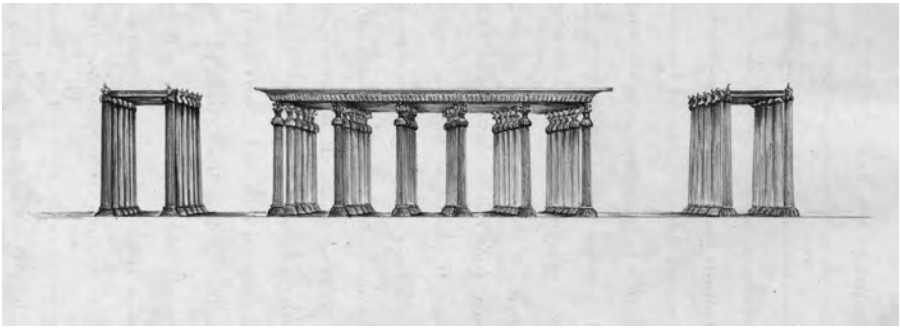

Fig. 4: Reconstruction drawing of the Apadana collonade (MS 417, inbound between pp. 46–47; on paper watermarked "Dobbs 1816"; ©Aberdeen University)

Shortly after his arrival, Wilson made an attempt to investigate Royal Grave VI northeast of the terrace, which he thought to be the burial place of Darius Hystaspes, but which is now attributed to Artaxerxes III (Schmidt 1970). His sketch (Fig. 5) of the façade is in some respects deficient: The central panel is reversed, the small figures on either side of the dais are omitted and the lower side panels show three guards per row as opposed to two. Still, his attention to detail helps identifying Grave VI beyond doubt: The frieze of lions separating the two parts of the façade are centred by a lotus tree, a detail absent on Grave V[15], while the Naqsh-i Rustam graves entirely lack the lion frieze.

When works elsewhere did not proceed as planned, Wilson returned to this monument and started clearing the entrance. What followed is one of the most appalling examples of early 19th century vandalism:

> My first visit suggested the idea of exploring the interior, although much encumbered with rubbish and aluvia. Several days were occupied in removing the superincumbent earth, and the present view [Fig. 5] displays the cemetery after four days' labor with six, eight and ten men; after I had cleared the door I found only about three feet between the base and the roof of the interior, and on digging downwards, came to two sarcophagi, of which the accompanying representation of the one next to the door [Fig.7] will give an

15 Not all draughtsmen (or engravers) are accurate in this respect. In de Chardins publication of Graves V and VI (1711, figs. 67 and 68, quoted after Calmeyer 2009, Abb. 6,1 and 6,2) both friezes are reproduced with a lotus tree, while the absence of this element from the Grave VI façade is clear after comparison of photographs published by Schmidt (1970, pls. 63 and 70).

exact idea; they were about 8 feet long by 3 ½ in breadth and 5 in height, composed of solid masses of marble with curved lid, and projecting cornice; with much labour I cleared them both, but found little worthy of my toil; a few arrowheads [Fig. 6] and a small brass image was all that I gained by my zeal: but I was satisfied with having exhausted all that was curious in this memorable mountain.

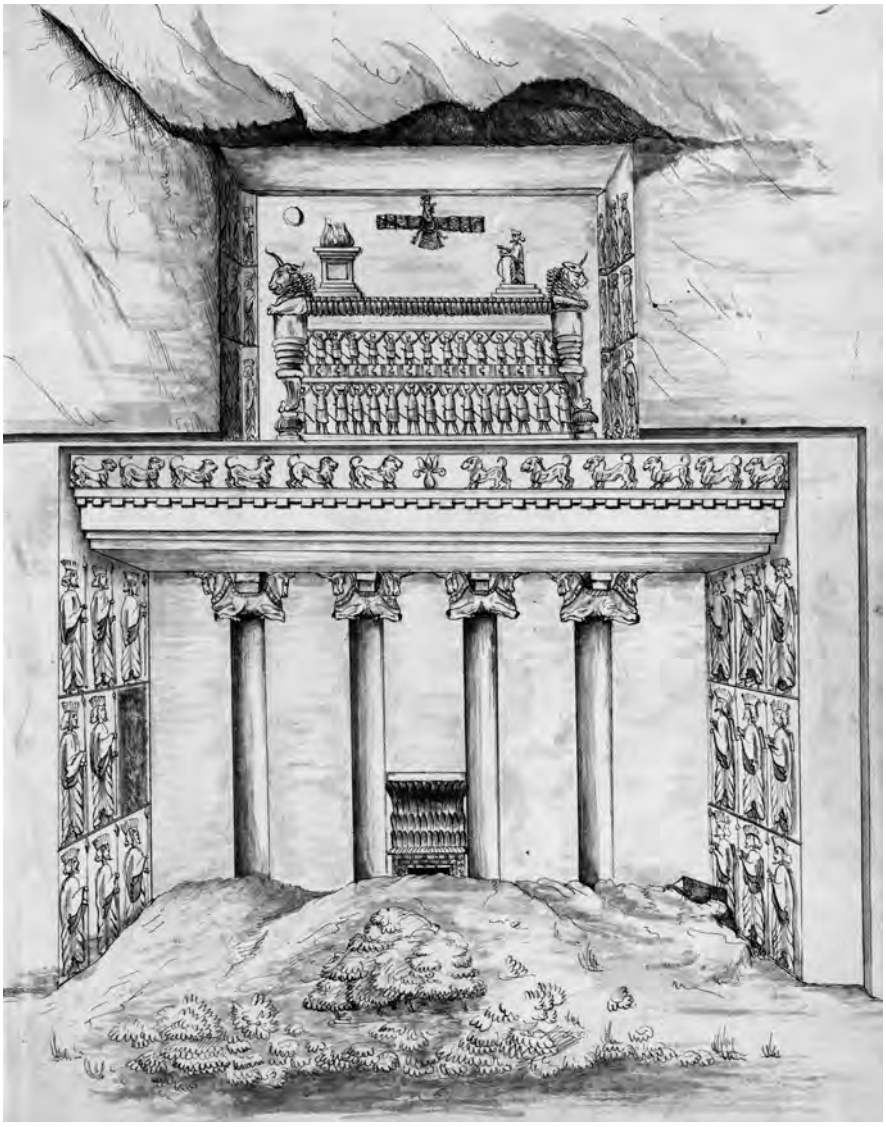

Fig. 5: Sketch of Persepolis Royal Grave VI (MS 417, inbound between pp. 65–66, on paper watermarked “J. Whatman 1821”; ©Aberdeen University)

> The weather was excessively hot and the want of air in the interior of the tomb more than sufficient to paralyze the arm of the most enthusiastic. I used therefore to pass the forenoon on a seat placed in the shade of the Southern wall, and visit the interior at intervals. All the efforts of our hirelings were insufficient to raise the lid of this ponderous Sarcophagus, and I was unable to resist the temption of seeing what were the contents, therefore determined to blow it up with gunpowder, a sacrilege which cost me a pang, and will be the source of regret to future travellers, as the top is now rent in twain. (MS 417, 66)

Fig. 6: Arrowheads found by Wilson in Royal Grave VI (ABDUA 63388; ©Aberdeen University).

The words of regret cannot mask the fact, that this wanton destruction was neither in its aim nor in its results different from the vandalism Wilson so frequently berated in local treasure-hunters. To be sure, he was certainly not the first to intrude on this Achaemenid king's final resting place, as the arrowheads found by him (Fig. 6) are probably medieval.More problematic is the drawing of the sarcophagus (Fig. 7), which simply speaking cannot have been there. The mention of two sarcophagi conforms to the situation in Grave VI, where a single cavity had been dug to accommodate two burial places.

However, the sarcophagi were not free-standing within a chamber with semicircular roof, as suggested by Wilson's drawing, but hewn out of the rock. The shape of the chamber agrees with the actual cavities preserved in the monument, and so does the semicircular shape of the lid, but what caused Wilson to reconstruct a free-standing coffin must remain mysterious. Also, we are not informed of the sarcophagus' contents, but it is a safe assumption, that it was completely empty.

Grave V, further to the south, he considered unfinished and refrained from closer inspection as the place was "a duplicate of the one described [Grave VI], but the interior is very different; it does not seem finished and was tenanted by the cattle of some Eelauts that were encamped on the plain" (MS 417, 69).

Next on his route lay Pasargadae and another royal tomb, the Mesjid-e Madre-e-Suleiman which was spared a fate similar to Artaxerxes' tomb not by considerations of expedience but thanks to the spirited defence by the local population:

> This remarkable structure is built on a rising ground in the valley of Moorg-Aub, surrounded by heaps of rubbish, and the remains of a Perystile of 24 columns, the greater number of which are still erect, but without capitals; in the centre of this area, rises a pyramidal building to the height of 20 feet; it is in the shape of a parallelogram and composed of seven layers of marble steps, the lower blocks of which are of magnificient dimensions, and the whole terminates in a very elegant Greek structure […]

unfortunately the jealousy of the Persians with regard to the Monument of Madre Suleiman is such that only a superficial survey can be effected; a galaxy of females were the guardian knights of this holy sepulchre, and although I promised to prescribe for all their complaints if they would only leave me for half an hour to examine the interior, I found them inexorable, and the greatest boon they would grant, was allowing me to peep in at the diminutive door which fronts the west; however I managed to elude the vigilance of a few old Harridans who were my immediate guards, and pounced into the chamber, which was of elegant proportions although very diminutive in size; being little more than three paces long by two in breadth, and about 8 feet high; it had been richly ornamented with sculptured details and flowery imagery; but I observed nothing like an ancient inscription; the whole is much dilapidated and overcrusted with Black, evidently from smoke; the roofs flat in the interior, but sloping or rather triangular exteriorly, with an overwhelming cornice, which although of rude workmanship forms a beautiful outline, and nothing can exceed the solidity and simplicity of this indestructible monument, which modern travellers have denominated the Tomb of Cyrus, King of Kings, and ruler of the world; […] I should also have liked to commit a petty larcency upon the fabric, as I thought the marble slabs which cover the floor sounded hollow and their removal might have led to some unexplored remains being discovered; but I had already incurred the penalty of female abuse, and had no inclination to emulate the destiny of the Macedonian governor [Polymachus], so that I left the treacherous spot with many imprecations on my head … (MS 417, 89–91)

Fig. 7: Sarcophagus from Royal Grave VI (MS 417, inbound between pp. 65 and 66; ©Aberdeen University).

This was but a minor setback for Wilson, but without a doubt a positive sleight of hand for archaeology.[16] For the remainder of the trip, the journal briefly glosses over Bishapur, but leaves room for a detailed description of his audience with Prince Ali Mirza and of a ward round to the harem. From Bushire, Wilson sailed for Bombay, where he arrived in late October and travelled across the plateau for more than a year. By the end of 1823, he had returned to Livorno. When plans to organize direct trade between the Mediterranean and India failed, he took up a position as private secretary to Lord Hastings, the newly-appointed governor of Malta, in 1824. From 1830 onwards, Wilson lived in Forres, Moray, 40 miles from his native Banff, only occasionally journeying to neighbouring European countries.

Epilogue

The case of Robert Wilson illustrates the conditions under which early research into the antiquities of the Ancient East began. It was under threat as much by its own practitioners as from the local populations, who are habitually described as ignorant of their countries' past, the great line of tradition spanning the millennia and oblivious to the need for scientific study. Even if Robert Wilson cannot be counted among the great figures in the history of Near Eastern scholarship – mainly because his accounts remained unpublished – the Scottish gentleman's contribution remains significant through the posthumous donation of his collections to Aberdeen University along with the notable sum of £ 8000.[17] The Robert Wilson Trust sponsored a biennial archaeological travel scholarship (also known as Wilson Travelling Fellowship) from 1872 onwards. The guidelines for the scholarship were meticulously laid down in Wilson's will:

> They shall nominate a Graduate of Medicine in the University of Aberdeen … for the purpose of exploring Asia and Africa … and the person so selected shall have a practical knowledge of Astronomy … [and] be furnished [with] photographic and drawing materials, before leaving Britain, also a Sextant, Quadrant, artificial Horizon, Aneroid Barometer and Thermometer, a Log and Lead line to measure the depth and current of rivers, a small Calder's Compass and portable Medicine Chest with Books of Travel suitable to the routes to be followed … and the first route I should like explored … (Hargreaves 1970, 384)

Not surprisingly, initial response to this program worthy of a Mungo Park or Alexander von Humboldt (if some 80 years late) was apparently low.[18] Fortunately, university authorities showed some flexibility and a number of noted scholars have

16 Even so, it seems doubtful whether Wilson would have been satisfied by the results of his intrusion. Robert Ker Porters description of the place in 1819 (1821, 497–501) makes it clear that major damage to the monument had already been done.

17 His natural son, Aylmer St. Aubin Wilson, had passed away in 1859.

18 See a comment in the British Medical Journal No. 618, Nov. 2, 1872: "An appointment, opened to graduates in medicine of [Aberdeen] University under the age of twenty-eight, is offered by the trustees of the late Dr. Robert Wilson, 'to travel in Western Asia, or Eastern Africa or Northern Africa, making observations, of which a report is to be transmitted,

over the years benefited from Wilson's endowment, among them William Mitchell Ramsay (1902–1905) and Margaret Hardy Hasluck (on three instances between 1911 and 1928). His most lasting legacy, the copious volumes of travel journals held by Aberdeen University Library, is still awaiting its full appraisal.

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and collecting antiquities and objects of interest.' The remuneration, we suppose, is not included in the 'travelling expenses'; otherwise, graduates had better stay at home."

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