

# The Tell Halaf Reliefs

## From Excavation to the Present

### 1899

Baron Max von Oppenheim first visits Tell Halaf, then under Ottoman rule, and begins unofficial excavation of the site.

### 1911

Von Oppenheim obtains an official permit to excavate and unearths 194 orthostats (stone slabs carved in low relief) created in the 10th–9th century B.C. for the palace of Kapara.

### 1914–20

14 of the reliefs are shipped from Tell Halaf to Berlin and seized en route by the British Navy. They are acquired by the British Museum, London.

### 1927–29

Von Oppenheim returns to Tell Halaf, now under control of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, and discovers that 61 reliefs left at the site have disappeared. Government authorities divide the remainder: 34 are given toward the creation of the National Museum of Aleppo; 2 are given to the Louvre; and about 80 are shipped to Berlin as von Oppenheim's share.

### 1930

Von Oppenheim founds the Tell Halaf Museum, in Berlin, with his share of the finds.

### 1931

Von Oppenheim takes 8 of his reliefs to the United States to sell but, failing to find buyers, leaves them in storage in New York.

### 1943

The reliefs left in New York are seized by the U.S. Office of Alien Property Custodian, put up for auction, and enter the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

### 1943

World War II Allies bomb Berlin's Tell Halaf Museum and 14 reliefs are destroyed. In total, 27,000 fragments are eventually recovered from the rubble and kept in storage.

### 1991

In the wake of German reunification, 59 of the Tell Halaf Museum reliefs are deposited in the Pergamon Museum as part of a long-term loan agreement.

### 2001

The Pergamon Museum launches a nine-year conservation initiative to reconstruct the Tell Halaf artifacts destroyed during World War II.

### 2006

Syrian and German teams resume excavations at Tell Halaf. They are interrupted in 2011 by the outbreak of conflict in Syria.

### 2011

The Pergamon Museum opens an exhibition dedicated to the reconstructed artifacts from the Tell Halaf Museum.

### 2016

Rayyane Tabet visits The Met with a request to produce rubbings of the reliefs in the Museum's collection.