

March 11, 2014

Nr : 252/2014

Mr. Hamed Al-Hammami
UNESCO Office in Beirut

Dear Mr. Hammami,

We would like to draw your attention to the forthcoming auction of Bonhams scheduled for April 2nd, 2014 in London, where Lot 99*^w, entitled 'A Monumental Neo-Assyrian Black Basalt Royal Stele of Adad Nerari III of Assyria', will be put up for sale.

Our preliminary research indicates that this object could not have been excavated in the nineteenth century neither by archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam nor by his colleague Sir Austen Henry Layard. It is also highly unlikely that the stele had been dug out by Hartmut Kuhne during the excavations conducted in Tell Sheikh Hamad, Syria, in the seventies (please see attached documentation).

Considering that the mandate of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) includes the "protection of cultural heritage",

Considering the strong stance that the UNESCO has taken against the "illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property" as per its 1970 Convention as well as against the "laundering phenomena in cultural goods trafficking",

The Saadeh Cultural Foundation hereby requests you to take immediate action to halt the sale of this monumental piece and to arrange for its repatriation to Syria as soon as the circumstances permit.

We sincerely hope that you will give the matter the attention and consideration it deserves.

Sincerely,

Deputy President
Halim Fayyad

Attachments

- Bonhams Auction Details, Antiquities, London, New Bond Street, 3 April 2014, Auction 21926
- British Museum- Image gallery: Basalt stela of Adad-Nirari III
- Millard, A. R., Tadmor, H. Adadi-Nirari III in Syria. Another Stele Fragment and the Dates of His Campaigns.

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/4199951?uid=3738432&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21103711749993>.