

# The Assyrian Sculptures in the Mosul Cultural Museum: A Preliminary Assessment of What Was on Display Before Islamic State's Attack

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## Introduction

After the video released by the Islamic State (hereafter, "I.S.") group on February 26, 2015 showing the destruction of the treasures of the Mosul Cultural Museum in Iraq, there has been much speculation among scholars about the number of artifacts on exhibit and the presence of plaster casts as opposed to original pieces. By drawing on a new set of photographic evidence provided by Suzanne E. Bott, a U.S. Reconstruction Advisor in Iraq between 2007–10, this article focuses on the Assyrian Gallery and provides an assessment of its finds at the time of the I.S. attack. The article carries out a preliminary audit, and identifies plaster casts, in order to establish an inventory of items on display and their exact location in the premises. Through a virtual tour of the gallery, it is possible for the first time to document the historical importance of the Mosul Cultural Museum and its valuable pieces, thus providing relevant knowledge about a section of an institution which is lost forever.

\* I wish to thank Suzanne E. Bott, John Curtis, Muayyad Said Damerji, and Klaudia Englund; my thanks also go to Elena Guida, Claudia Händl, Natascia Pecorari, Franco Reuspi, Antonella Tonelli, Christopher Woods, and Seth Richardson; and to John Russell whose many helpful comments added to this article.

## Setting the Scene: First Tentative Inventories

In the aftermath of the propaganda video released on February 26, 2015 from I.S. showing the destruction of the sculptures in the Mosul Cultural Museum, there has been much speculation about the number and authenticity of the objects from Hatra and Neo-Assyrian sculptures present in the galleries at the time of the attack. From the comments of authoritative scholars and others, it would appear that there is a great deal of uncertainty about how many artifacts were stored in the museum, and the precise number of casts as opposed to originals.

Initial reports emphasized the destruction of replicas, but as Eleanor Robson puts it, "it soon became apparent that the iron bars running through the statues were holding together reconstructed composites made of ancient fragments and new. It was only our first hurried attempts to interpret what was going on that caused the *Daily Mail* headline about the 'fakes'."<sup>1</sup> Christopher Jones tweeted that "most of the destroyed statues seem to be from Hatra. Most of the Assyrian relief sculptures in the

<sup>1</sup> Eleanor Robson, "Modern War, Ancient Casualties," *The Times Literary Supplement* (25 March, 2015): <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1535646.ece>.

museum are replicas,”<sup>2</sup> with a prompt negative reply from the British Museum: “We can confirm that none of the objects featured in this video are copies of originals at the British Museum.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the British Museum denial, in its Weekly Report 30 for March 2, 2015, ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI) still referred to Jones’s interpretation, stressing that “apparently, most of the destroyed originals were from Hatra, while most of the destroyed reproductions were from Assyrian sites.”<sup>4</sup> CHI also quoted Sam Hardy’s blog, “Conflict Antiquities,” as regards objects destroyed, in which there is clearly an under-estimate of the original pieces.<sup>5</sup>

Most recently, emphasis has been placed on the destruction of original artwork, such as when Elizabeth Stone pointed out that “the Mosul Museum was not filled with replicas.”<sup>6</sup> This was also reported by Ahmad Kamel Mohammed, Director of the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, who specified the presence of three types of artifacts in the museum at the time: “original pieces, original copies made by antiquities experts, and replicas made of gypsum.” It was also reported that Iraqi officials said “they were not able to determine which category the destroyed statues fall into based

on the footage posted by militants.”<sup>7</sup> Added to this confusion is the fact that no detailed inventory of the museum materials was provided by any academic institution worldwide, and although the Mosul Museum staff could have produced a complete inventory of the objects on display anytime between 2003 and 2014, it is likely that I.S. took over the administrative offices before inventories could be evacuated.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, to my knowledge, there are only three summary databases of the artifacts that were present in the Mosul Museum at the time I.S. invaded the city. All show noticeable discrepancies. The latest list, issued on July 21, 2015 by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq, reports “85 artefacts in all; 22 from the Assyrian Hall, of which 3 are gypsum copies.”<sup>9</sup> A statement was also released by Saba al-Omari, a curator at the Mosul Museum, in an interview in the BBC documentary “Civilization Under Attack,” broadcast on June 30, 2015; without mentioning the single galleries, she noted that of “116 pieces, only 7 were replicas.”<sup>10</sup>

The main inventory is that posted on March 1, 2015 by Lamia Al-Gailani Werr to the *Iraq Crisis* moderated mailing list of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (see Table 1).<sup>11</sup> Table 1

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Jones, @cwjones89 (26 February, 2015): <https://twitter.com/cwjones89/status/571072106961764353>; Christopher Jones, “Assessing the Damage at the Mosul Museum, Part 1: The Assyrian Artifacts,” *Gate of Nineveh* (February 27, 2015); <https://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/2015/02/27/assessing-the-damage-at-the-mosul-museum-part-1-the-assyrian-artifacts/>.

<sup>3</sup> The British Museum, @britishmuseum @LacusCurtius @cwjones89 (27 February, 2015): <https://twitter.com/cwjones89/status/571072106961764353>.

<sup>4</sup> Michael D. Danti et al., “Weekly Report 30, March 2, 2015,” *ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq* (2015): 112: [http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ASOR\\_CHI\\_Weekly\\_Report\\_30r.pdf](http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ASOR_CHI_Weekly_Report_30r.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> CHI reports the following: “*Originals*: 1 *lamassu* (human-headed winged bull), 7 statues from Hatra, artifacts from Nineveh. *Reproductions*: 1 Statue of Assyrian King Sargon, wall mounted casts” (ibid.: 112). This list is based on Samuel Andrew Hardy, “Islamic State Has Toppled, Sledgehammered and Jackhammered (Drilled out) Artefacts in Mosul Museum and at Nineveh,” *Conflict Antiquities* (February 26, 2015).

(<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/02/26/iraq-mosul-museum-nergal-gate-nineveh-destruction/>), which in turn quotes Jones’ tweet (see n. 2), and UNESCO.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Bawaya, “Experts Struggle to Confirm Archaeological Damage in Iraq,” *Nature* (26 March 2015). <http://www.nature.com/news/experts-struggle-to-confirm-archaeological-damage-in-iraq-1.17155>.

<sup>7</sup> Delawit Mesfin, “Artifacts Destroyed by Islamic State Were not Fakes, Says Iraqi Museum Official,” *NRT News* (April 26 2015): <http://www.nrttv.com/EN/Details.aspx?Jimare=2591>.

<sup>8</sup> According to Muayad Said Damerji, former director of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, “Employees were also locked out of the building after militants apparently changed all the locks,” and “There was nobody in the museum at that time, and most of the museum’s employees were women and forbidden to return to work under the militants’ mandate preventing Mosul’s female residents from working” (ibid.). See also Lamia Al-Gailani Werr, who stressed that “the administrative offices of the museum had become Daesh’s Islamic Tax (Zakat) office”: “Mosul Museum,” in *Iraq’s Heritage. A Treasure Under Threat*, ed. Gina Doubleday and Michael Gibson, UNESCO, World Heritage 77, Special Issue on Iraq (London, 2015), 16: <http://en.calameo.com/read/003329972abc1dd3f9878>.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, “The Official Annual Report of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq for the Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Province of Nineveh, from June 10 2014–June 10, 2015 (Arabic),” *Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq* (2015): 23: <http://www.tourism.gov.iq/upload/upfile/ar/12.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Cruickshank, “Civilization Under Attack,” *BBC Four* (June 30, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Lamia Al-Gailani Werr, “Mosul Museum Inventory,” *Lost Treasures From Iraq*, Iraq Crisis, A Moderated List, The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (1 March 2015). <https://lists.uchicago.edu/web/arc/iraqcrisis/2015-03/msg00000.html>.

**Table 1.** Mosul Museum provisional inventory provided by Lamia Al-Gailani Werr (“Mosul Museum Inventory”).

	Number of artifacts	Originals	Casts
Assyrian Hall	24 reliefs and statues from Nimrud and Nineveh	21	3 reliefs: battle and hunting scenes
Hatra Hall	30 statues and reliefs	26	4 sculptures: statue of Hercules; seated female holding a sphere in one hand; relief of the horoscope; a restored spread winged eagle, part original stone, repaired with gypsum.
Islamic Hall	30 objects	30	
Total	84	77	7

shows that according to Al-Gailani Werr, there were eighty-four sculptures in total (and not 116), of which seven were copies, three Assyrian reliefs and four Hatra pieces; this means only 8.3% were plaster replicas, a statistic which matches those of Saba al-Omari, although the precise number of objects does not.<sup>12</sup> No reference is made to the Prehistoric Hall of the Mosul Museum, but the general procedure followed in this case was that portable objects had been moved for security reasons to the Iraq Museum in Baghdad before the second Gulf War, while large and fragile objects, which are also valuable—as indeed the majority of the Assyrian and Hatra sculptures—had been left in place. According to Al-Gailani Werr, it should be added that there were also a “. . . few objects in the storerooms, one fragmentary statue of Ashurnasirpal II and pottery, mostly broken objects.”<sup>13</sup> As suggested by the former director of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Muayad Said Damerji, due to I.S.’s lightning takeover of Mosul, the museum staff did not have enough time to secure such particularly heavy objects or transfer files and documents from administrative offices.<sup>14</sup>

Although the collection and evaluation of these remarks is a first important step forward in the assessment of the contents of the Mosul Museum, this is by no means an inventory of the individual objects. Another reference to the museum contents and its importance is John Curtis’s recent remark that

“of about fifty pieces,” only “a small number were casts.”<sup>15</sup> Here the sheer number of artifacts reported by Curtis does not match Al-Gailani Werr’s reference to eighty-four artifacts. According to the Associated Press, Iraq “has sent lists to the International Council of Museums, the U.N. and Interpol detailing all the artifacts that might have been looted from the museum in Mosul,” but these lists are not available to international scholars.<sup>16</sup> According to Al-Gailani Werr, “a short list of the objects left on display in the museum galleries was compiled by an employee who worked in the Mosul Museum for some ten years, and a more detailed list is now being prepared for publication.”<sup>17</sup> The existence of *detailed lists* is denied by Muayad Said Damerji, however, who has stated that “officials from Baghdad say they have registration books listing items, but no detailed documents on individual pieces.”<sup>18</sup> Mosul Museum employees reported that “members of I.S. have seized inventory lists of items in the museum,” and this may explain the lack of exact information.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> John Curtis, “Current Concerns on the Ground and International Response: Iraq,” *Culture in Crisis*, Yale University, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (14 April 2015). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYfjCZmtOcA>. See also his similar observations: “. . . of more than 50 sculptures in the museum, only half a dozen were casts”; John Curtis, “Letter: John Curtis on the Cultural Desecration of Northern Iraq,” *Apollo, The International Art Magazine* (April issue, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Paul Schemm, “Iraq Says IS Demolishes Ruins to Cover up Looting Operations,” *Associated Press* (May 12, 2015). According to Iraqi museum officials, about 173 artifacts were stolen from the Mosul Museum in the last year; see Mesfin, “Artifacts Destroyed by Islamic State Were not Fakes.”

<sup>17</sup> Al-Gailani Werr, “Mosul Museum,” 16.

<sup>18</sup> Mesfin, “Artifacts Destroyed by Islamic State Were not Fakes.”

<sup>19</sup> “False Idols: ISIS Puts Mosul’s Ancient Artefacts and Manuscripts Away for Safekeeping,” *Niqash.org* (June 27, 2014): <http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/security/3479/>.

<sup>12</sup> However, Al-Gailani Werr’s figure of eighty-four sculptures in total is similar to the eighty-five pieces reported by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq, “The Official Annual Report of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq for the Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Province of Nineveh, from June 10 2014–June 10, 2015 (Arabic),” *Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq* (2015): 23. <http://www.tourism.gov.iq/upload/upfile/ar/12.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Gailani Werr, “Mosul Museum Inventory.”

<sup>14</sup> Mesfin, “Artifacts Destroyed by Islamic State Were not Fakes.”

In sum, as also stressed by Mesopotamian scholars such as Eckart Frahm, “one problem with the Mosul Museum is that one does not exactly know which artifacts were housed there,” and more precisely “which objects were evacuated to the Baghdad Museum in 2003 or kept in Mosul.”<sup>20</sup> In this uncertain scenario, the aim of this research is to focus on the evidence available to further clarify the contents of the Mosul Cultural Museum at that time. I have particularly tried to create a tentative inventory of the Assyrian sculptures, as they appear undamaged in the I.S. video, and thus may have, at least in part, been sold on the illicit antiquity market sometime before the attack on the Mosul Museum.<sup>21</sup> In fact, as recently suggested by Qais Hussein Rashid, the head of Iraq’s State Board for Antiquities and Heritage, the I.S. demolition of ar-

tifacts in the Mosul Museum and Assyrian sites could be “a cover-up for looting operations.”<sup>22</sup>

By answering questions about the number, archaeological significance, and authenticity of the individual artifacts, the present assessment may be helpful to Interpol and other international institutions concerned with the recovery of smuggled cultural property, as well as having intrinsic historic value in view of the difficult conditions for the museum and its collections prior to I.S. destruction.<sup>23</sup> Far from being a comprehensive assessment of the Assyrian sculptures, it is a preliminary analysis of the evidence available. Given the impossibility of accessing the Mosul Cultural Museum’s general catalogue, the analysis has drawn on the sources described below.

### The Data Set: The Mosul Museum Images 2008–2010

In order to fill the gap in the scanty information available about the museum contents, and to avoid further confusion, I have drawn on a series of photographs posted on March 2, 2015 on the Iraq Crisis Mailing list by Suzanne E. Bott, a U.S. Reconstruction Advisor in Iraq between 2007–10. Reference is also made to UNESCO’s Preliminary Assessment carried out in 2009, an important report on the conditions of the structure and its collections a few years before the I.S. attack.<sup>24</sup> While the UNESCO Preliminary Assessment includes only a few images (only one shot of the Assyrian Gallery and two photos of the storage areas), and they are mostly not useful for compiling an inventory of Assyrian artifacts, Bott’s set of photographs of the Mosul Cultural Museum taken between 2008–2010 do provide first class information on the actual contents on site in 2010.<sup>25</sup> As stressed by Bott, “It is un-

<sup>20</sup> Eckart Frahm, “Current Concerns on the Ground and International Response: Iraq,” *Culture in Crisis*, Yale University, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (14 April 2015).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdFopmuWEag>.

<sup>21</sup> The looting of the Mosul Museum is corroborated by the presence of some of its artifacts in a cache recovered on May 15, 2015 by U.S. Special Operations Forces during a raid in al-Amr (eastern Syria) to capture I.S. commander Abu Sayyaf. The objects were returned to the Iraq National Museum on July 15 by the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and work is being carried out to try to establish the provenance of each artifact: United States Department of State, “ISIL Leader’s Loot,” *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs* (July 21, 2015); <http://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/iraq-cultural-heritage-initiative/isil-leaders-loot>; Samuel Andrew Hardy, “The ‘First Material Proof’ That Islamic State Is Trafficking Antiquities,” *Conflict Antiquities* (July 15, 2015); <https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/07/15/syria-iraq-islamic-state-conflict-antiquities-trafficking-forensic-evidence-mosul-museum/>. The images available are scant, however, and it is not possible to identify Assyrian objects. Further, that objects from the Mosul Museum may easily be sold on the European black market is suggested by German academic Ulli Seegers “for the solid infrastructure that the European art market provides.” The German government has recently put forward a draft law on artistic imports, but critics argue it is not enough to prevent illicit trade: see “Looted in Mosul, sold in Munich?” *News24.com* (July 31, 2015): <http://www.news24.com/World/News/Looted-in-Mosul-sold-in-Munich-20150731>. However, despite claims by popular newspapers as *Die Zeit* and *Die Welt* which consider Germany “a trade hub for illegal art,” a place where pieces “looted in Mosul” may arrive to high-profile auction houses in Munich (*ibid.*), this is very unlikely to happen: German scholars monitor antiquities sales in their country as do scholars anywhere, and would urge that looted pieces be seized.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Schemm, “Iraq Says IS Demolishes Ruins to Cover up Looting Operations,” *Associated Press* (May 12, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> See the assessment of the museum carried out by UNESCO: Stuart Gibson, *Mission Report. Preliminary Assessment Of Mosul Cultural Museum, Mosul, Iraq 7–9 April 2009* (UNESCO, 2009). <https://sites.google.com/site/iraqcrisis/assessment-of-museums>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> The photographs were taken by Suzanne E. Bott, Col. Mary Proffit, U.S. Army Reserve; and Ms. Diane Siebrandt, former U.S. State Department Cultural Heritage Officer. The topographic surveys and assessments of cultural sites around Mosul, including Nineveh, Nimrud, Hatra and others, were carried out by U.S. Army civil engineers with the support of the U.S. State Department through the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The

likely that much had changed since then, and as noted in other reports, the bulk of the collection had been moved to Baghdad for safe-keeping.<sup>26</sup> These photos, sometimes redundant and taken from different angles, allow extensive examination of the Assyrian Gallery and its remaining displays.

### The Mosul Cultural Museum

The second largest museum in Iraq after the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, the Mosul Cultural Museum was originally located in a former palace belonging to King Faisal II of Iraq, built in the early 1940s, and then moved in the early 1970s to a new Islamic-style building constructed in the palace gardens with fine use of stone, glass and wood. On the ground floor, four galleries (prehistoric, Assyrian, Hatran, and Islamic) are surrounded by a mezzanine; two storerooms are located behind the museum, and the windowed basement hosts the library, a 112-seat auditorium, a conservation laboratory, and various offices.

The UNESCO preliminary assessment, based on two short visits on April 7 and 9, 2009, highlights some problematic conditions, which were only in part improved in the following years, when some renovations were carried out in view of a possible reopening just before I.S. took control of the museum in June 2014.<sup>27</sup> In general, owing to the unstable situation in Iraq and consequent lack of funding, the absence of various documents is noteworthy: a global development strategy, a museum master plan to upgrade the obsolete state of the galleries, ranging from poor artificial and natural lighting, to scanty and out-of-date didactics and signage (in English and Arabic),

photographs were taken at different times, including during visits by the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Antiquities representative Qais Rashid, UNESCO representatives, museum expert Stuart Gibson, and various journalists. Museum staff are rarely shown in the photographs for security reasons. See Suzanne E. Bott, “Mosul Museum Photos 2008–2010,” *Iraq Crisis* (March 2, 2015): <https://lists.uchicago.edu/web/arc/iraqcrisis/2015-03/msg00002.html>; Suzanne E. Bott, “Nimrud Photos and Topo Survey +,” *Iraq Crisis* (April 13, 2015): <https://lists.uchicago.edu/web/arc/iraqcrisis/2015-04/msg00030.html>. For specific information on the important work carried out by the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) see also Suzanne E. Bott, “Mapping the Heart of Mesopotamia: A Bittersweet Legacy in the Landscape of War,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78/3, Special Issue: The Cultural Heritage Crisis in the Middle East (2015): 162–68.

<sup>26</sup> Bott, “Mosul Museum Photos 2008–2010.”

<sup>27</sup> Gibson, *Mission Report; Niqash.org*, “False Idols.”

as well as inadequate storage.<sup>28</sup> This is also clearly notable in Bott’s photographs of the Assyrian Gallery, in which there is no apparent chronological, geographic, thematic, or pedagogic ordering in the sequence of artifacts displayed, and labels are generally very vague when present. The museum has been closed since April 2003, when it was badly looted during the second Gulf War. As a preventive measure, according the 2009 UNESCO report, about 1,500 movable pieces were sent into storage in the Iraqi National Museum of Baghdad, days before the looting, but some extremely important artifacts that were difficult to move—i.e., the heavy immovable Assyrian and Hatra statues and wall reliefs—were left in the galleries, and these sculptures are the ones portrayed in Bott’s photos.<sup>29</sup> Major losses included thirty bronze panels decorating the Neo-Assyrian Gate of the Balaawat palace, and dozens of clay tablets and pots which were stolen from the storage rooms.<sup>30</sup>

Until 2009, an internal and manual system was used to catalogue all museum holdings, including those kept in the Baghdad Museum, with only basic information provided for each artifact, often without provenance and images. This was integrated with a newly-computerized register (based on Microsoft Power Point) of the limited number of objects *in situ* (apparently with high-resolution color photographs), but the database is not available to international scholars.<sup>31</sup> This late register is not as complete as it would seem, however, given that the UNESCO Committee had recommended, among

<sup>28</sup> Gibson, *Mission Report*. The UNESCO Committee also suggested that the Mosul Museum should develop a general master plan, while upgrading its level of internal scholarship, curatorial and museological skills and security training for its staff (*ibid.*: 16–20).

<sup>29</sup> However, the number of items and the date of their removal to the Iraq Museum in Baghdad provided by UNESCO (*ibid.*) do not match with those suggested by Al-Gailani Werr (“Mosul Museum”) who reports “1,000 objects on display in the galleries” (and not 1,500) and their removal to the storerooms of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad “in the wake of the unrest that followed the first Gulf War of 1991” and not days before the second Gulf War. See also Gibson, *Mission Report*, 4. Cruickshank’s “Civilization Under Attack” report suggested that the portable artifacts were evacuated in November, 2002, when the journalist paid a visit to the Museum and filmed the already empty display cases.

<sup>30</sup> Gibson, *Mission Report*, 4–5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Add to the confusion that, owing to lack of access to The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage’s national registry in the Iraq Museum of Baghdad, the Mosul Museum has a parallel cataloguing with numbers given to objects previously numbered with the national registry (*ibid.*, 12).

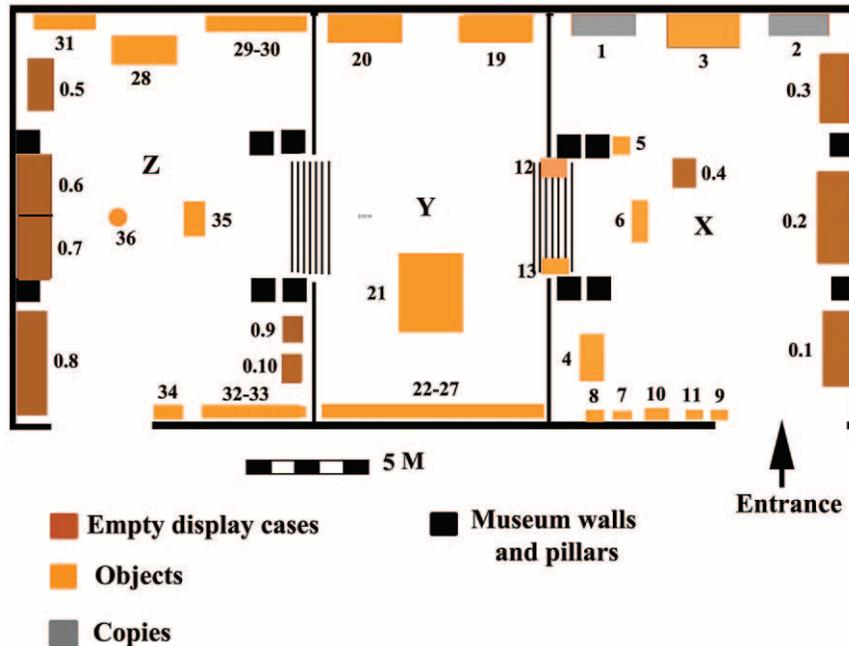


Figure 1. Plan of Assyrian Gallery at Mosul Cultural Museum with objects *in situ* (numbers refer to list of objects in Tables 2–4).

other things, that the museum “proceed in establishing and implementing inventorying and cataloguing policies and procedures.”<sup>32</sup>

### Inventory and Historical Analysis of Sculptures: a Tour in the Assyrian Gallery

A database of 116 photos has been carefully scrutinized to build up the inventory of the Assyrian Gallery and show the historic significance of each artifact. It should be stressed that by comparing the photographic framing of different objects and their architectural contexts, it has been possible both to define the artifact positions within the gallery as well as the location of the empty display cases. The Assyrian Gallery consists of one large rectangular hall of approximately 32 × 16 m, accessible by two ground-floor entrances located on the same side, while staircases provide access to the windowed mezzanine. A sketch plan of the gallery with the position of display cases and objects is reproduced here to facilitate the analysis (Figure 1).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>33</sup> The approximate size of the gallery has been determined through the fixed measurements of specific objects: the replica of the British Museum stone panel of Assurnasirpal II’s lion hunt (original: length 2.24 m); the Nimrud panels L25–L30, whose size occupying the all extension of Sector Y was reported by the Polish excava-

The gallery is subdivided into three sectors, respectively designated X, Y, and Z: the two on ground-floor level (X, Z) are separated by one middle area below ground (Y), accessible through two seven-step staircases. The virtual tour starts from Sector X (Table 2).

#### Sector X

On entering the gallery from the access on the right-hand side (See Table 2), a hypothetical visitor would see three empty display cases on the wall to the right (Figure 1, Nos. 0.1–3), and, moving towards the opposite wall (with respect to the entrance), the central display case with the remaining bronze panels of the Balawat Gate (ancient Imgur-Enlil) and two modern replicas of Neo-Assyrian reliefs on both sides (Figures 1–2; Table 2). The cast to the left (Figure 1, No. 1), of a typical gray, opaque color, is a copy of the British Museum stone panel BM 124534 from the throne-room of the North-West Palace of Assurnasirpal II

tor (total: 10.75 m)—see Janusz Meuszynsky, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud 1)*. (Raume: B.C.D.E.F.G.H.L.N.P). Baghdader Forschungen 2 (Mainz am Rhein, 1981), 69; two winged human-headed lions very similar to BM 118802 (Length: 3.71 m), and a colossal statue of a lion which can be compared to BM 118895 (length: 2.24 m).

**Table 2.** Mosul Cultural Museum, Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: list of displayed objects and empty showcases as they stood before the I.S. attack.

Position	Type	Subject	Provenance	Date
0.1-3. Wall right from entrance	3 Empty display cases			
1. Wall opposite entrance (left)	Copy of relief BM 124534	Lion hunt	Nimrud, NW Palace, throne -room	Assurnasirpal II
2. Wall opposite entrance (right)	Cast of Sargon II throne base	Royal chariot, soldiers and besieged town	Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad)	Sargon II
3. Wall opposite entrance (center)	Bronze panels of Balawat Gates from Mamu Temple	Celebrative scenes	Balawat/Imgur-Enlil	Assurnasirpal II
0.4 Central part of room	One empty display case on pedestal			
4. Central part of room	Altar from Nineveh dedicated to the Sibitti (MM 2)	Inscription	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III.
5. Central part of room	Marble plinth	Festoon motif	Lower Town Palace ( <i>bīt hilāni</i> ), Nineveh	Sennacherib
6. Central part of room	Royal Road stele	Inscription; king worshipping symbols of gods	Nineveh	Sennacherib
7. Wall left from entrance	Inscribed brick	Inscription		Neo-Assyrian
8. Wall left from entrance	Inscribed brick	Inscription		Neo-Assyrian
9. Wall left from entrance	Relief	Activities in an army camp	The governor's palace at 'Ana	Neo-Assyrian
10. Wall left from entrance	Relief	Horse and soldiers in mountainous landscape	Nineveh, SW Palace	Sennacherib
11. Wall left from entrance	Relief	Dying enemy (?)	Nineveh, SW Palace (?)	Assurbanipal (?)
12. Staircases	Cult pedestal	Carved with Humbaba mask	Temple of Karana (modern Tell Rimah)	Nuzi period (sixteenth century BC)
13. Staircases	Cult pedestal	Carved with the Bullman between Palms	Temple of Karana (modern Tell Rimah)	Nuzi period (sixteenth century BC)
14-17. Garden near museum entrance	Four tripod altars		Khorsabad, temple of Sibitti	Sargon II
18. Entrance hall	Tripod altar		Khorsabad, temple of Sibitti	Sargon II

(883–859 BC) at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) (Figure 3). The scene of symbolic significance—celebrating the monarch's power to protect and fight for his people—depicts a royal lion hunt with the beast leaping at the king's chariot, incited by two soldiers, while a dead lion lies beneath the bodies of the galloping horses.<sup>34</sup>

The relief to the right (Figure 1, No. 2), depicting a fortress attacked by Assyrian soldiers using a siege ladder, is a cast of the throne base of Sargon II (upper part restored), whose original is in the Iraq Museum,

<sup>34</sup> Paul Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures* (London, 2008), 35.

Baghdad (Figure 4).<sup>35</sup> Although the throne base was badly damaged by stone-robbers, the relief carved on the northeast side is relatively well preserved: it depicts the king on his chariot halting over the body of a fallen enemy, while a pyramid of heads is piled up by

<sup>35</sup> The throne base was found in the throne room VII of Sargon's royal palace at Dur-Sharrukin ("Fortress of Sargon," modern Khorsabad) reinvestigated in 1929/30 by The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The base measures 4.6 × 4.0 m; its height was probably more than 1 m above the floor level. See Gordon Loud, *Khorsabad, Part I: Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate*. OIP 38 (Chicago, 1936), 65.



Figure 2. Assyrian Gallery, Sector X, view from entrance. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (88).

his officers in the centre of the scene near the fortress. The battlefield is near a river or the sea, as shown by a horizontal band in which fish are swimming around.<sup>36</sup>

The bronze panels of the Balawat Gate (with chased and embossed figurative decoration) in a display case in the Mosul Cultural Museum were excavated by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq under the direction of Max Mallowan in 1956 in the Temple of Mamu (the god of dreams), built during the reign of Assurnasirpal II (Figure 1, No. 3).<sup>37</sup> These gates were in very bad conditions when recovered, as they were

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 65, Fig. 79. This relief has some features which resemble stone carvings from the Central Palace of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC) at Nimrud: for example, the style and conventional representation of the ladder (right), the king standing under a particular kind of parasol (left), a royal prerogative which appears in this period to protect the king's symbolic space, as well as the elaborate and ornate horse harnesses. As regards the conventional representation of the ladder, see, for instance, stone panel BM 115634–118903 (Length: 2.11 m, Height: 1.09 m), while for the typical parasol and horse harnesses look at relief BM 118908 (Length: 1.88 m, Height: 0.97 m).

<sup>37</sup> Two other gates of the palaces of Assurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC) were excavated by Hormuzd Rassam in 1878 but they are now in the British Museum. These were in a

destroyed in antiquity by a fire. They were sent to the British Museum for conservation and study in 1965, and the reconstructed gates were then returned to Iraq (Mosul Museum) in 1974. After R. D. Barnett's preliminary analysis, the British Museum specialists completed their study and published them (together with the gates from Assurnasirpal's palace at Balawat) in a volume edited by J. Curtis and N. Tallis in 2008.<sup>38</sup> In the period 11–19 April 2003, during the second Gulf War, the Mosul Museum was looted and the gates were largely lost. The 2009 UNESCO report states that “the largest single loss from the looting was thirty bronze panels. . . . Forty-five other panels from the same gate were left behind, although the looters damaged some trying to remove them.”<sup>39</sup> However, as shown by the close-up photograph (see Figure 5),

much better state of preservation than the gates from the Temple of Mamu.

<sup>38</sup> John E. Curtis and Nigel Tallis, eds., *The Balawat Gates of Ashurnasirpal II* (London, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Gibson, *Mission Report*, 4. Despite their small dimensions, the gates were not evacuated to the Baghdad Museum before the outbreak of the second Gulf War in March/April 2003 because the museum staff probably reckoned this display as one large object



Figure 3. Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: (above) cast of stone panel BM 124534 (below) from the throne room (Room B, Panel 19) of the North-West Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), Length 2.240 m, height: 88.650 cm. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (107); photograph courtesy of the British Museum.

it is misleading and not useful to determine either the exact number of items *in situ* or the missing fragments, owing to this damage and the originally poor degree of conservation of the gates. How much of the bronze bands were looted in 2003 can only be determined by comparison of what was there before and what remains now. After careful analysis and measurements of Marjorie Howard's drawings, the British Museum team could establish the original arrangements and dimensions of the gates,<sup>40</sup> which consisted

and thus may have decided not to remove the single pieces to avoid possible damage.

<sup>40</sup> R. D. Barnett et al., "The Gates of Ashurnasirpal II from the Temple of Mamu," in Curtis and Tallis, ed., *Balawat Gates*, 52–53,

of eight bronze bands on each door-leaf, mounted up on modern wooden blocks.<sup>41</sup>

Table 4.2, Figs. 55–56. An accomplished artist and a conservator at the British Museum, Marjorie Howard was the main supervisor of the excavations of the gates from the Mamu Temple at Balawat (*ibid.*, 48).

<sup>41</sup> The left-hand leaf and the right-hand leaf includes bands L1–L8 and R1–R8 respectively, with a numbering from the top register to the bottom. The dimensions of each band and their original arrangement are reproduced assuming the principle that the door-posts would have tapered towards the top. The two door-leaves have an unequal width, the left-hand leaf being only c. 96–98 cm, while the right-hand leaf is 106–108 cm. The overall length of the flat part of each band varies from 96 cm to 108 cm, the length of the



Figure 4. Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: (above) cast of relief carved on Sargon II throne base from Khorsabad; (below) original relief, Iraq Museum, Baghdad. Bott Photoshopped Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (94); photograph Loud, *Khorsabad*, Fig. 79.

By drawing on the British Museum measurements and proposed arrangement, it is possible to calculate the surface of the missing pieces and to roughly estimate the percentage of bands surviving at the time of their recovery. The amount of the items stolen after the looting in 2003 can be established by careful comparison of Curtis's and Tallis's reconstruction of the gates and Bott's 2008 photograph (Figure 5, above and below, respectively).<sup>42</sup> When discovered, the bands were in an incomplete and fragmentary state, and only approximately 51.5% of the original bronze work survived (Figure 5, above). During the looting in 2003 a further 36.1% was stolen, leaving just 15.2% still mounted on the wooden supports (Fig-

ure 5, below).<sup>43</sup> Thus, most of the surviving pieces of bronze band have been stolen.<sup>44</sup> This is clearly shown

<sup>43</sup> Owing to the poor conditions of conservation and the irregularity of the fragments, percentages could only be calculated with approximation. Working on the arrangement proposed by Curtis and Tallis (*ibid.*, Table 4.2, Figs. 55, 56), through Photoshop, it has been possible to reckon for each band the surface area in cm<sup>2</sup> of the missing bronze work and then compare it against the total surface area in order to obtain the percentage of the lacking parts. In sum, before 2003, of a total surface area of about 48,860.24 cm<sup>2</sup>, approximately 23,663.7 cm<sup>2</sup> were missing (48.5% of the bronze work); after the looting in 2003, some 41,489.06 cm<sup>2</sup> were missing (84.8%).

<sup>44</sup> J. E. Curtis, D. Collon, K. Uprichard and B. Christensen could verify the damage during a visit to Mosul on June 21, 2003; Curtis also took some photographs of the gates after the pillage: John E. Curtis, "The Excavations and Discoveries at Balawat," in Curtis and Tallis, *Balawat Gates*, 19–20, Plate 39, a–c, where he reports that "at least twenty-nine pieces of decorated bands were taken from the doors, and only two of the sixteen bands were left undisturbed. . . . After the looting, two pieces of bronze were re-

bands around the doorpost ranges between 42 cm to 60 cm, while their height is 18–20.9 cm (*ibid.*: 52–53, Table 4.2).

<sup>42</sup> Curtis and Tallis, *Balawat Gates*, Figs. 55–56.

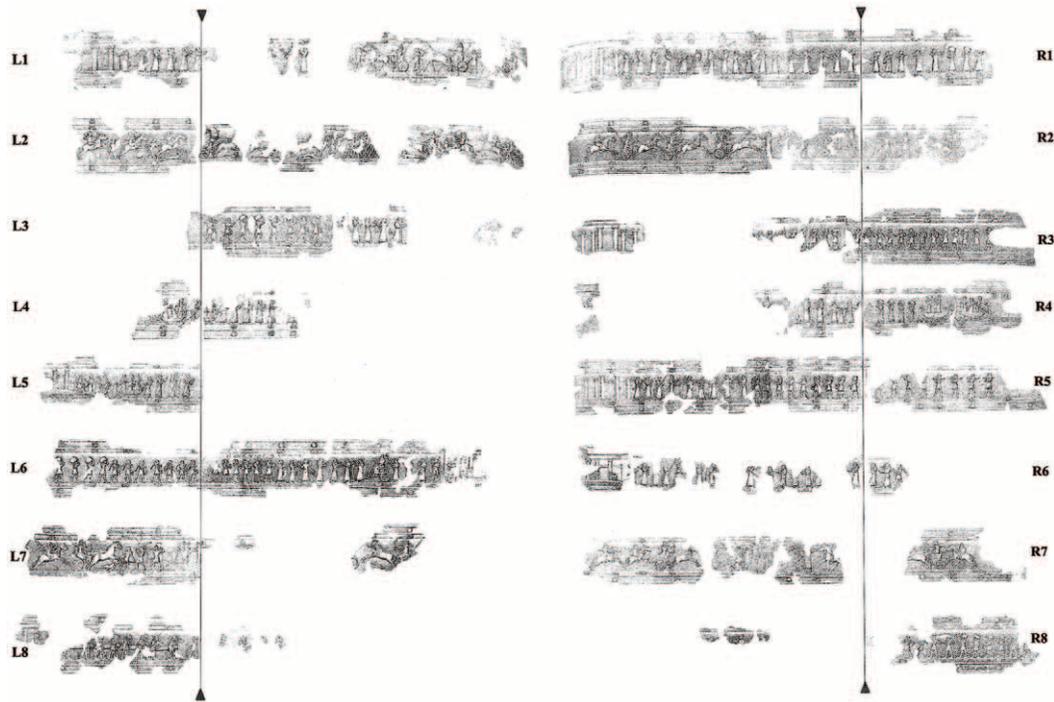


Figure 5. Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: bronze panels of the Balawat Gates from the Temple of Mamu, (above) drawings of the original arrangement of the bands (Barnett et al., *Balawat Gates*, Figs 55, 56), (below) Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (109) after looting in 2003.

trieved from the Museum garden.” In this respect, one of the pieces retrieved is likely to be from band L4 (depicting tribute from a Phoenician city) which is not extant in Curtis’s photograph, but is in place in Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08

(109). Another group of pieces from band R8 is visible on both Curtis’s and Bott’s photographs, but is lacking from the original drawing of the door: Barnett et al., “Gates of Ashurnasirpal II,” Figs. 55, 56; sometime after the gates reached the Mosul Museum

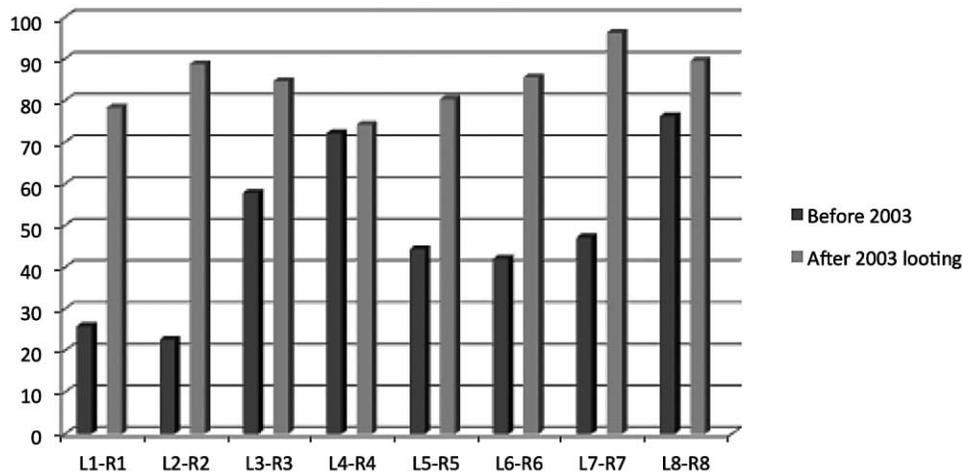


Figure 6. Bronze panels of the Balawat Gates from the Temple of Mamu: percentage of missing bands before and after the looting in April 2003.

by both photographs (Figure 5) and by the graph in Figure 6. The bands of the top register L1–R1 (depicting tributes from Carchemish and Suhu) and L2–R2 (campaign to Mt Urina and against Bit Adini) suffered the most from the looting, with an increase of missing bronze work from 25.8% (before 2003) to 78.2% (after looting in 2003), and from 22.6% to 88.7% respectively. A remarkable variation is also shown in the bands L5–R5 (tribute from a Phoenician city and from Azamu), L6–R6 (tribute from Suhu), and L7–R7 (campaigns scenes against Bit Adini), with an increase from 44.3% to 80.3%, from 42% to 85.5%, and from 41.1% to 96.2%, respectively. Relatively fewer missing parts are reckoned for the bands L3–R3 (tribute scenes), L4–R4 (tribute from a Phoenician city), and L8–R8 (tribute scenes), with an incremental lost area from 57.8% to 84.6%, 72.1% to 74.2%, and 76.2% to 89.5%, respectively.

Standing in the middle of Sector X, a small empty display case set up on an iron pedestal can be seen (Figure 1, No. 0.4), as well as three artifacts: a stele just next to the case (No. 6), a stone plinth located near the staircase (No. 5), and a stone altar on the far side near the border with Sector Y (No. 4). Their texture and color suggests they are all original pieces. The latter is a stone rectangular altar found accidentally “within the walls in the plain or ‘chol’ of Nineveh, but a more precise provenance is not given. It is now in the Mosul Museum (MM 2)” (Figure 7). As shown

in 1974, they were probably reassembled in an arbitrary way without following any particular arrangement.

by the cuneiform inscription engraved in the recessed central panel (ca. 22 × 81 cm), it was dedicated to the divine Sibitti by Shalmaneser III “for his life.”<sup>45</sup> Like the round altars from the Sibitti temple at Khorsabad and Neo-Assyrian altars in general, it has crossbars and legs carved in relief, and is supported by lion paws on its four sides (Figure 7).<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, in the garden near the entrance to the Mosul Cultural Museum, there are four such tripod altars from the Sibitti temple at Khorsabad, and another in the entrance hall (Figure 8). In the 1950s, the Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities excavated the temple and found thirteen of these limestone altars in its cella, including the five on display in the Mosul Museum.<sup>47</sup> They bear Sargon II’s

<sup>45</sup> Two Greek inscriptions, engraved later on the opposite long side of the altar, record the name and the titles of an official, “Apollonios, (son) of Demetrios, the Archon,” and specify the dedication of the altar “To the city”: John Nicholas Postgate, “An Assyrian Altar from Nineveh,” *Sumer* 26 (1970): 133–36; A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II: (858–745 BC)*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 3 (Toronto, 1996), 153–54.

<sup>46</sup> Its size is reported in Postgate, “An Assyrian Altar”: 133, and Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II*, 153: 103 cm long, 68 cm high, and 74 cm wide. Postgate also describes the material as “rather coarse, gritty yellowish stone, possibly sandstone” (*ibid.*, 133). The label visible in Figure 7 presumably fell from the wall and was put on the altar by mistake: it belongs to the nearby Assyrian relief from Sennacherib’s palace shown in Figure 13.

<sup>47</sup> Fuad Safar, “The Temple of Sibitti at Khorsabad,” *Sumer* 13 (1957): 219–21, and Fig. 3. Their dimensions are not reported by Safar, but they may be about 1.50 m high as the remains of the standing wall of the cella are ca. 1.30 m in height, slightly lower



**Figure 7.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: stone altar from Nineveh dedicated to the Sibitti by Shalmaneser III (MM 2); 103 cm long, 68 cm high, and 74 cm wide. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (105).

dedicatory inscription along the round edge to the temple of the gods Sibitti—“the Seven” protective spirits associated with the Pleiades—in Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad).

The stone plinth in white marble is one of the column bases found in the Lower Town Palace (*bīt hilāni*) at Nineveh (Figure 9).<sup>48</sup> This was recovered in the central door between the two central rooms which formed the “Dual-Core Suite” of the palace of Sennacherib.<sup>49</sup> The plinth is decorated with a festoon

than the altar top (ibid.: 219, and Fig. 3). Three other altars from Khorsabad are now respectively in the Mesopotamian Hall of the Museum of the Ancient Orient in Istanbul (4784), in Room 4, ground floor of the Richelieu Room in the Louvre (AO 19900), and in the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad: C. E. Fant and Mitchell G. Reddish, *Lost Treasures of the Bible: Understanding the Bible through Archaeological Artifacts in World Museums* (Cambridge UK, 2008), 138. These are comparable, for instance, to a similar round, tripod-shaped altar originally located in front of Assurnasirpal II’s stele in the Ninurta temple at Nimrud, excavated by Layard and now in the British Museum (MN 118805).

<sup>48</sup> David Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces* (New York, 2015), 158–59.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 159. Its diameter is ca. 1 m. Note that the larger column base (ca. 1.50 m in diameter) in the Mosul Museum garden is from the same building (see p. 239).

portraying stylized buds, but in other cases carved decoration may include various animals (e.g., bulls). It is well known that the Nineveh royal buildings (both the South-West Palace of Sennacherib and the North-West Palace of Assurbanipal) were characterized by free-standing supports employed for external entrances of the *bīt hilāni* kind, as well as for creating alcoves on both sides of a rectangular space.<sup>50</sup> As shown by the inscription, the rounded-top stone slab is Sennacherib’s Royal Road stele, discovered in 1999 by a farmer at Nineveh (southwest of Nebi Yunus) and engraved with a text of the king recording the building of a fifty-cubit-wide royal road and the erection of steles as boundary stones on both sides of that road (Figure 10).<sup>51</sup> The limestone relief is very worn

<sup>50</sup> For instance, so-called spaces “à quatre saillants” open into the *bītānu* Court XIX of the South-West Palace (rooms XXIV, XXVII, XXIX, XXXIV), while similar spaces B-P, I, and S are in the North Palace at Nineveh. They are also present in the Southern Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BC) in Babylon. See Antonio Invernizzi, *Dal Tigri all’Eufrate. Babilonesi e Assiri*, vol. 2 (Firenze, 2007), 187–90.

<sup>51</sup> A. Kirk Grayson, and Jamie Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC) Part 1. The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/1* (Winona Lake, 2012),



**Figure 8.** Assyrian Gallery, external space and Museum entrance hall: (above) four tripod altars near the Museum entrance, and (below) one in the hall; temple of Sibitti, Khorsabad, Sargon II's reign; Height: c. 1.50 m. Bott Photographs MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (10), UNESCO MP Jan2010 240 (65).



**Figure 9.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: stone column base with festoons from the Lower Town Palace at Nineveh, diameter c. 1.00 m. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (107).



**Figure 10.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: Sennacherib's Royal Road stele from Nineveh (southwest of Nebi Yunus), (right) with detail of Sennacherib before divine symbols (left); c. 126 × 63 cm. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (108).

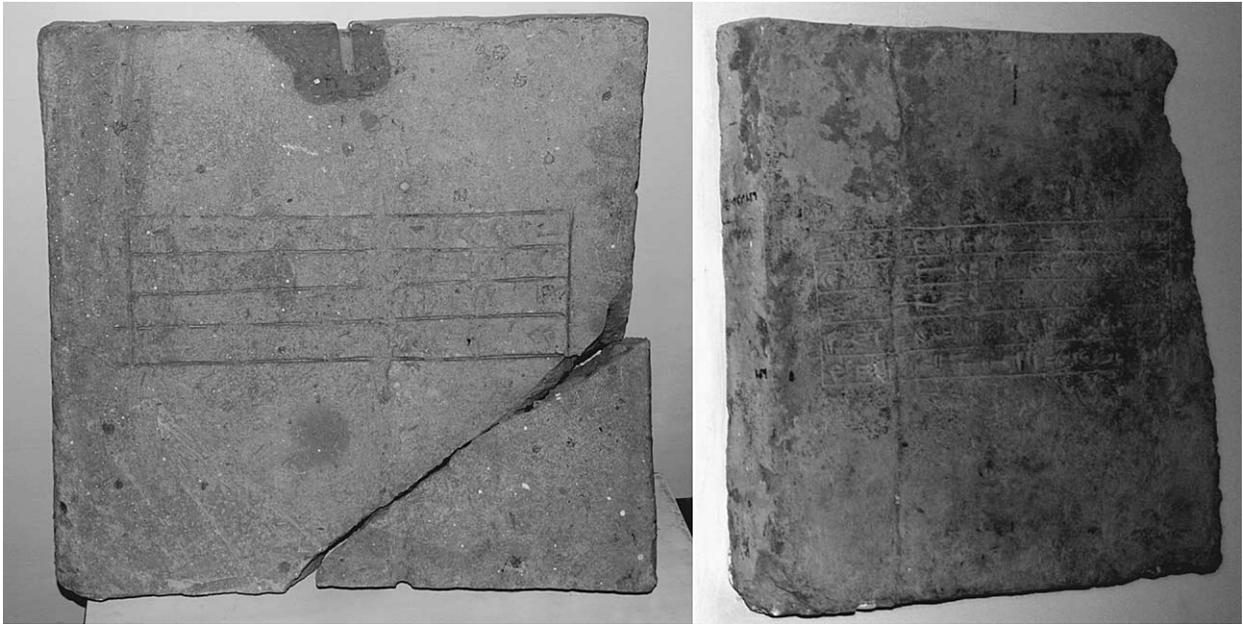


Figure 11. Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: inscribed baked bricks of the Neo-Assyrian period; c. 35.5 × 32 × 8 cm. Bott Photographs MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (100), MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (101).

and partly restored. It portrays the Assyrian king Sennacherib praying in front of divine symbols, while below runs a long cuneiform inscription detailing royal achievements in war and building works. The style and iconography of the king's figure, wearing royal dress with a simple vertical pleat and a small fringe at the bottom, is similar to that of the two additional steles from Nineveh (like ex. 2, the image of the king faces to the left) and other sculptures representing Sennacherib (704–681 BC). Sennacherib appears several times with such a simple robe, in the *appa labānu* (“to touch one’s nose”) gesture of worship before the gods, a pose which may be hypothesized also for the Mosul Museum stele.<sup>52</sup>

237–40. The royal road mentioned in the inscription possibly crossed Nineveh from the Ashur Gate in the south wall to the Sin Gate or the Nergal Gate in the north wall. In addition to this (ex. 3), two similar examples (exs. 1 and 2) were found by H. J. Ross in 1848 and by E. A. W. Budge in 1888–89, respectively, to the southeast of Nebi Yunus and at the foot of Kuyunjik, Nineveh. Example 2 is BM 124800 (*ibid.*, 237, Figure 9). The size is reported only for examples 1 (104 × 63 cm) and 2 (128 × 63 cm), but the stele from the Mosul Museum should have similar dimensions.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, the Khinnis (i.e., Bavian, 60 kilometers north-east of Mosul) rock relief.

Against the wall to the left of the entrance, there are five artifacts all in poor condition, three reliefs and two inscribed bricks (Figure 1, Nos. 7–11).<sup>53</sup> The latter (Nos. 7 and 8), without captions, are baked bricks originating from royal buildings of the Neo-Assyrian period (Figure 11). A dedicatory inscription, almost illegible, is stamped in a four-line frame in the center of the brick. Inscribed bricks from Nineveh are usually square, ca. 37 × 37 × 12 cm, but Neo-Assyrian specimens in general are of similar sizes, thus making it impossible without deciphering the inscription to definitely identify the brick donor and the provenance.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Two other inscribed bricks, once hung on this wall near the remaining bricks by two sets of holes, were stolen during the second Gulf War. This is also reported by a joint team from the University of Chicago and National Geographic who carried out an *in situ* assessment of the Mosul Cultural Museum in May 2003: Tony J. Wilkinson, “Cultural Assessment of Iraq: The State of Sites and Museums in Northern Iraq,” *National Geographic News* (May 2003). [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/06/0611\\_030611\\_iraqlootingreport2.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/06/0611_030611_iraqlootingreport2.html).

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art 54.11729: “Brick with inscription of Assurnasirpal II” (35.61 × 36.8 × 11.4 cm); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, “The Collection Online,” (2016): <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/324342>. There are also some baked bricks from the



Figure 12. Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: relief with activities in an army camp probably from the governor's palace at 'Ana; c. 42 × 40 cm; Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (97).

Two of the reliefs analyzed in the photographs have captions too small to be legible, and the third has no caption at all. All panels are in very poor conditions of preservation. The first (nearer to the entrance: Figure 1, No. 9), divided into two registers, shows activities in an army camp that seem to imply refreshment and care for high officials (Figure 12). This relief has specific themes and coarsely-drawn and poorly-

time of Sennacherib who entirely renovated the new capital Nineveh, employing millions of bricks. Examples of this kind from the British Museum are a similar size of approximately 35.5 × 32 × 8 cm and the inscription reads "Sennacherib, the powerful [king], king of Assyria." See, for instance, BM 90210: search at [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online.Search.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online.Search.aspx).

proportioned figures which are not common of the well-known Assyrian palaces, but the style recalls some published reliefs from the governor's palace at 'Ana, and probably it comes from this site. In the upper scene, a servant tends a horse carrying booty (a table), while another person fans a senior officer laying on a bed. At bottom left, a high official sits in front of a table laden with unidentified objects while drinking from a cup and/or offering a libation; at bottom right, the panel is damaged and partly missing: a servant carries a cup, and other vessels are represented nearby. No such folding camp tables are attested in the Sargon II, Sennacherib, or Assurbanipal camp depictions, which generally focus on sacred ceremonies involving



**Figure 13.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: relief with horse and soldiers in a mountainous landscape; South-West Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh; ca. 57 × 68 cm. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (99).

the use of draped ritual tables and oil burners.<sup>55</sup> The iconography, especially the bed and the men seated in front of a table, are also different from a panel of Tiglath-pileser III depicting a camp scene.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Julian E. Reade, "Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture," in *Rituals and Politics in Ancient Mesopotamia*, American Oriental Series 88, ed. Barbara Nevling Porter (New Haven, CT, 2005), 16–19, Figures 12–17. A similar folding camp table is shown in an Assurnasirpal II camp scene from the North-West Palace of Nimrud (BM 124548), *ibid.*, 15, Figure 10.

<sup>56</sup> R. D. Barnett and Margareta Falkner, *The Sculptures of Aššur-Našir-Apli 2. (883–859 B.C.), Tiglath-Pileser 3 (745–727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Pal-*

The second relief (Figure 1, No. 10), a panel depicting a horse and soldiers in a landscape filled with vegetation, has novel features in terms of composition, style, and landscape detail, with scale patterns to represent mountains. These features point to its being a carving from the South-West Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh (Figure 13), perhaps one among many of the military campaigns against the Western cities of the Levant including the capture of biblical

*aces at Nimrud* (London, 1962), 18–19, pl. LX. See also Reade, "Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture," Figure 11, BM Original Drawing I, 14.

Lachish.<sup>57</sup> It presumably originates from one of the rooms of the South-West Palace re-excavated by the Iraqis, namely Rooms I, IV, or (most likely) V in the throne room suite. The third panel (Figure 1, No. 11), the photo of which is almost illegible, has a design which is difficult or impossible to distinguish from patterns caused by damage (Figure 14). If the image is Photoshopped, the outline of the crossed legs and a foot may be barely visible: the pose of the human figure may be tentatively identified as a dying enemy, a subject that becomes popular with Sennacherib's grandson, Assurbanipal, when there is an increasing psychological interest in the humiliation and suffering of the enemy, rather than a stress on royal activities in the battlefield. If so, this panel may originate from Assurbanipal's South-West Palace (in which the king resided for most of his reign), and may be part of the grand scenographic battle of Till Tuba against the Elamites, with its densely packed imagery and a smooth, atmospheric background.

On both sides of the staircase leading to the lower section of the gallery (Sector Y), there are two carved blocks of stone in a parallelepiped shape, which can be identified with the Humbaba II and the Bull-man-between-Palms figures, placed as apotropaic figures on both sides of the ante-chamber door of the great temple of Karana (modern Tell Rimah) (Figure 1, Nos. 12, 13; Figure 15).<sup>58</sup> The two sculptures are assigned to the Nuzi period in the sixteenth century BC both on stylistic and archaeological grounds.<sup>59</sup> Nude above the waist and with a long belted skirt, the Bull-man has a bull's tail and massive bovid ears; his forehead is badly eroded but, based on comparative material with

<sup>57</sup> The label indicates: "Marble illustration of two men, one of them tending a horse in a wood, notice that the upper side is deteriorated. Found at the palace of the Assyrian king Sennacherib (Nineveh/Tell Kuyunjik. 705–682 BC)." Note that, being almost illegible, the label has been processed through Photoshop to glean the caption's meaning. Presumably it fell from the wall and was mistakenly put on Shalmaneser III's altar from Nineveh (Figure 7).

<sup>58</sup> Their measures and cutting are identical, and the wooden lintel was carried by transverse indentations, while the paired holes in the sides of the block were used to fix the pole for the door hanging: Theresa Howard-Carter, "An Interpretation of the Sculptural Decoration of the Second Millennium Temple at Tell al-Rimah," *Iraq* 45/1 (1983): 70, Plates IIIa, Va. The approximate size of the carved blocks can be determined through fixed measurements of specific objects (see note 33): ca. 70 cm in length, 40 cm in width, and 57 cm in height.

<sup>59</sup> They were not properly "excavated but recovered in the fill at the time of the clearance of the East Temple Gate in 1970" (*ibid.*: 66–67, 70–71).



**Figure 14.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: relief almost illegible, possibly a dying enemy, South-West Palace of Assurbanipal at Nineveh; ca. 43 × 41 cm; Bott Photoshopped Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (95).

terracotta reliefs of the second millennium BC, a quadruple horned headdress can be restored. As shown by Theresa Howard-Carter, the iconography of the deity standing between two palms and holding the vase with the sprinkling water "seems to relate to the thematic spirit of the Rimah temple: viz. date palms and fertility, flowing water and the goddess Ishtar."<sup>60</sup> The lustral aspect would complement the apotropaic significance of the demonic god Humbaba, depicted on the other altar, normally represented with a canine face with abnormally bulging eyes, a well-known Assyrian and Babylonian demon and protective spirit against disease-bearing winds of the first millennium BC.<sup>61</sup> Except for the eroded forehead of the Bull-man relief, both sculptures are relatively well preserved.

### Central Sector Y

In Central Sector Y, the photographs show four monumental pieces from the archeological sites of Nimrud: two winged lions near the wall to the right

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*: 68.

<sup>61</sup> Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia. An Illustrated Dictionary* (London, 1992), 147–48. The Humbaba masks are first attested on the terracotta reliefs from Ur which antedate the Isin-Larsa period. See Howard-Carter, "An Interpretation of the Sculptural Decoration": 72, for Humbaba masks being displayed in cult scenes involving the goddess Ishtar.



**Figure 15.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector X: carved stone pedestals with the Humbaba II (right) and the Bull-man between Palms (left) from the temple of Karana (modern Tell Rimah); Length: c. 70 cm, Width: c. 40 cm, Height: c. 57 cm. Bott Photographs MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (119), MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (116).

**Table 3.** Mosul Cultural Museum, Assyrian Gallery, Central Sector Y: reconstruction of displayed objects as they stood before the I.S. attack.

Position	Type	Subject	Provenance	Date
19. Wall to right	Relief	Human-headed winged lion	Nimrud, Ninurta temple	Assurnasirpal II
20. Wall to right	Relief	Human-headed winged lion	Nimrud, Ninurta temple	Assurnasirpal II
21. Center of room	Inscribed throne base	Inscription	Nimrud, NW Palace, Throne Room B	Assurnasirpal II
22-27. Wall to left	Reliefs	Purification ritual before a sacred tree by human-headed genii	Nimrud, NW Palace, Room L (slabs L-25, L-26, L-27, L-28, L-29, L-30)	Assurnasirpal II

(which featured in the I.S. video), the base of a throne in the center, and six decorated panels on the opposite wall (Table 3). The former are two colossal alabaster statues of inscribed human-headed winged lions, iconic symbols of the Assyrian empire placed as guardians on both sides of the external doorway of Room a/4 in the Ninurta temple of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud (Figure 1, Nos. 19, 20; Figure 16).<sup>62</sup> Ex-

<sup>62</sup> See Julian E. Reade, “The Ziggurat and Temples of Nimrud,” *Iraq* 64 (2002): 205–206, for Layard’s unpublished excavations notes of the temple area. Ms, D 36, in particular, specifies

cavated by Austen Henry Layard in the 1840’s and by Mallowan in the 1950’s, the Mosul Museum *lamassāti* were composite creatures depicted with five legs em-

“Ch. A. Entrance 1. Two colossal human headed lions - drawn. . . .” These correspond to the “colossal human-headed winged lions in horned helmets, facing left and right respectively. Mosul Museum” (ibid.: 168, 205). An original water-colour of the temple façade by F. C. Cooper shows the two colossi *in situ* during the excavation (ibid.: Fig. 31), while the arrangements of the inscriptions are reconstructed on the drawings in Figs 48–49 in ibid.: 190. These include the usual blessing and curses as well as the name of the winged lions, called *ú-ma-am* beasts (ibid.: 205).



**Figure 16.** Assyrian Gallery, Central Sector Y: two human-headed winged lions from the external doorway of Room a/4 in the Ninurta temple of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud. Length: 2.90 m, Height: 3.30 m. Bott Photograph MCM Stuart Gibson Assess 07April09 (42).

bodying the strength of firmness when viewed from the front, and a striding, aggressive attitude towards evil when viewed from the side. Although they look severely deteriorated and heavily restored, as shown by the white plaster at the back ends of their body and hind legs, their iconography and style fit closely with the *lamassu*-figures from the Nimrud North-West Palace: for instance, the stone mythological guardians that flanked one of the entrances into the throne room now in the British Museum (ME 118802, ME 118802) are very similar to the Mosul Museum ones.<sup>63</sup> They share the horned helmet as well as the

<sup>63</sup> Their provenance, throne room B-a-1 and B-a-2, is provided by Samuel M. Paley and Richard P. Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and their Positions in the Northwest-Palace at Kalhu (Nimrud) 3: The Principal Entrances and Courtyards*, *Baghdader Forschungen* 14 (Mainz am Rhein, 1992), 53. ME 118802 is also published on the BM website: The British Museum, “Colossal Statue of a Winged Lion from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (Room B),” *The British Museum*. [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/me/c/colossal\\_statue\\_of\\_winged\\_lion.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/c/colossal_statue_of_winged_lion.aspx). Their size (3.5 m high and 3.71 m long) is rather bigger than the Mosul Museum specimens, which are about 2.9 m long and 3.3 m high (the size has been de-

hairstyle of thick hair which falls neatly on the shoulders and the full Assyrian ringletted beard typical of royal figures.

In the middle of Sector Y, visitors could admire the great inscribed throne base of Assurnasirpal II, re-excavated by Mallowan in 1951 in the North-West Palace at the east end of the enormous Throne Room B, measuring 45.5 by 10.5 m (Figure 1, No. 21; Figure 17). It was discovered by Layard a century earlier, in Mallowan’s description: “This was leaning at an angle of about thirty-five degrees, presumably as he left it, and has now been moved to the Mosul Museum.”<sup>64</sup> The limestone throne pedestal measures

terminated through fixed measurements of specific objects, see note 33). Layard reports for M1–2 a height of 16.5 feet, or ca. 5 m but “Gadd noted that this was 1 m too high”: Reade, “Ziggurat and Temples of Nimrud”: 205. A similar, smaller size can be found for the *lamassu* from the main entrance, g-1 and g-2 of room WG, in the “West Wing” sector of the North-West Palace at Nimrud: Paley and Sobolewski, *Reconstruction of the Relief Representations* 3, 40, Plate 7.2.

<sup>64</sup> Max E. L. Mallowan, “The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalhu), 1951,” *Iraq* 14 (1952): 10, Fig. I.



**Figure 17.** Assyrian Gallery, Central Sector Y: inscribed limestone throne base of Assurnasirpal II, Throne Room B, North-West Palace, Nimrud (3.00 × 2.30 m). Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (115).

3.0 × 2.3 m and, very much like the Shalmaneser III throne base from Fort Shalmaneser,<sup>65</sup> it has a stepped top, with the upper part divided by a single step into two levels, each with a projecting tongue on the central axis. This was an iconic place of power behind which, in a shallow niche, was the famous stone relief depicting the double figure of the king flanking the sacred tree and receiving investiture by the supreme god Assur portrayed in a winged disc.

Against the wall opposite the winged lions, Bott's photos show six carved panels from Nimrud featuring protective genii before sacred trees (Figure 1, Nos. 22–27; Figure 18). In order to identify the original location of the Nimrud slabs within the North-West Palace, Bott's photos of the Mosul Museum that are at my disposal have been compared with the comprehensive list of the North-West Palace slabs from Nimrud, whose modern location is indicated to be “Mosul Museum” in the “Nimrud NW Palace” online project directed by Klaudia Englund.<sup>66</sup> Not only are

the reliefs sorted by country, city, and museum, but the respective numbers and room of provenance are also provided. The six panels can thus be distinctly identified with the series L-25, L-26, L-27, L-28, L-29, and L-30 reported in Englund's list, and published with their drawings by the Polish archaeologist Janusz Meuszynski, who worked with his team on the North-West Palace between 1974 and 1976.<sup>67</sup> Originally located against the north wall of the southern sector of Room L (a ceremonial locus with a bath provided for drainage and an ablution slab) in the *bitānu* area of the palace and transferred to the newly opened Mosul Museum in 1974,<sup>68</sup> the six slabs depict

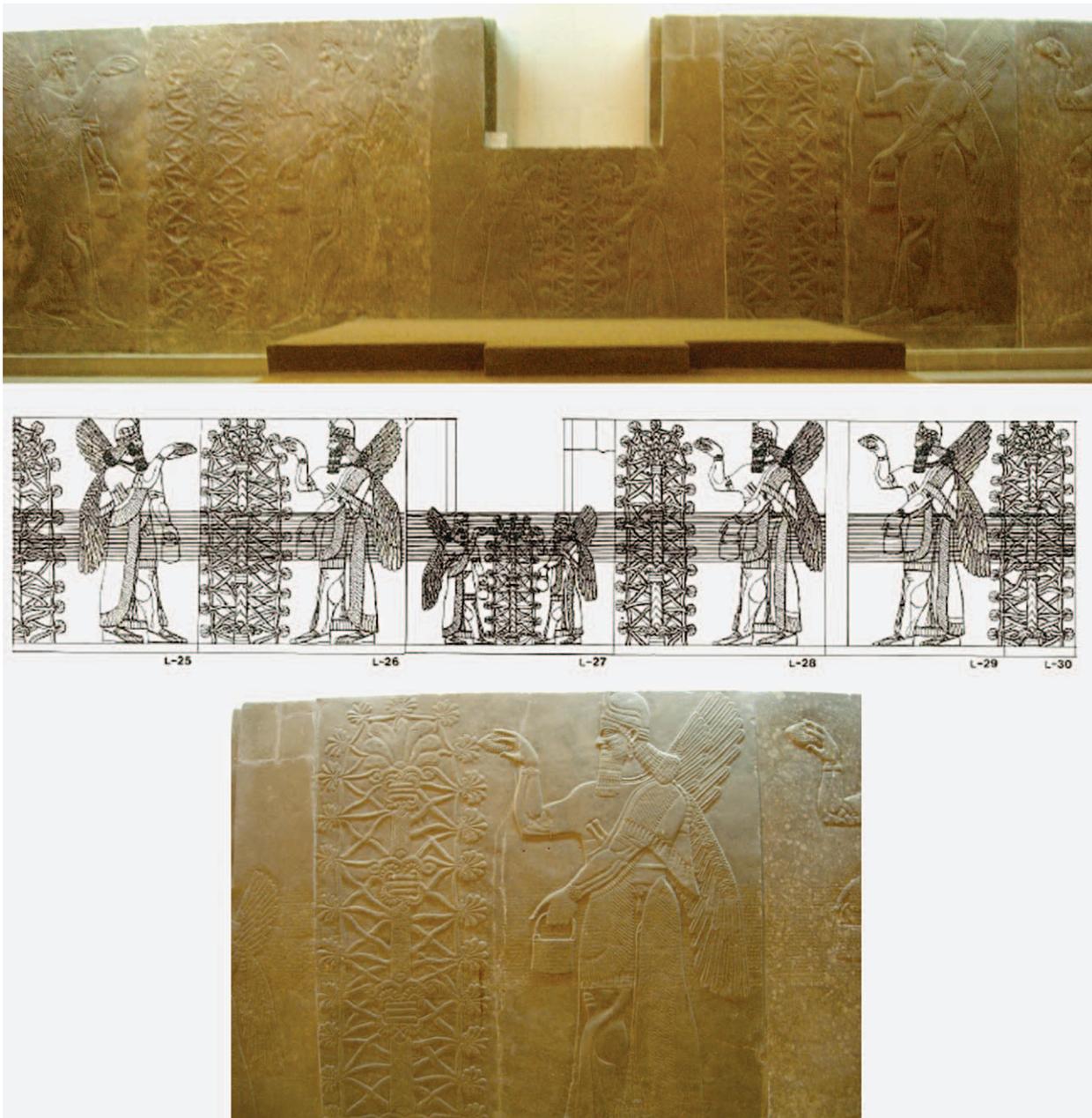
Palace of Assurnasirpal II.” The list of the Mosul Museum slabs is available at <http://cdli.ucla.edu/projects/nimrud/fulllist.html> (2016).

<sup>67</sup> Meuszynski, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, 69, Raum L, Tafel 15, 2–3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 64. The slabs from Room L were re-excavated between 1969 and 1970 by the Iraq Department of Antiquities under the direction of Muzeser Said al-Iraqi: “Bas reliefs from the North-West Palace at Nimrud,” *Sumer* 38 (1982): 93–102; see also Manhal Jabr, “The Work of the Iraq Department of Antiquities at Nimrud,” in *New Light on Nimrud: Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11th–13th March 2002*, ed. John E. Curtis et al. (London, 2008), 47. For

<sup>65</sup> Joan Oates and David Oates, *Nimrud. An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed* (London, 2001), 173.

<sup>66</sup> Englund provides an online and up-to-date “List of all currently catalogued reliefs and relief fragments from the North-West



**Figure 18.** Assyrian Gallery, Central Sector Y: (above) general view of six slabs carved with human headed genii performing a purification ritual before sacred trees; (middle) drawing in Meuszynski 1981, Tafel 15, 2–3; (below) particular of genius in L-28; slabs L-25-L-30, Room L, North-West Palace, Nimrud; Total Length: 10.75 m (range between 0.73 m of L-30 and 2.20 m of L-28), Height: 2.35 m. Bott Photographs MCM Stuart Gibson Assess 07April09 (40), MCM Stuart Gibson Assess 07April09 (41).

the following scenes: two winged figures with men’s head and horned hats holding a bucket (*banduddu*) and cone (*mullilu*), performing a ritual of purification before a sacred tree,<sup>69</sup> a highly stylized date palm

their location in Room L, see also Klaudia Englund, “Northwest Palace at Nimrud.”

<sup>69</sup> The meaning of this magically protective ritual is very controversial, but as suggested by Jeremy Black and Anthony Green

(*Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia. An Illustrated Dictionary* [London, 1992], 46, 163, 171), “it is highly likely that the principal purpose of the rite was a ritual of purification” carried out by winged genii interpreted as the Seven Sages (*apkallu*), antediluvian mythological figures. This is suggested, for example, by the meaning of *mullilu*, “purifier,” and the presence of figurines of genies holding such attributes within buildings for protection from evil spirits and demons. By contrast, Nevling Porter suggests a

**Table 4.** Mosul Cultural Museum, Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: reconstruction of displayed objects and empty display cases as they stood before I.S. attack.

Position	Type	Subject	Provenance	Date
0.5-8. Wall facing staircase	Four empty display cases			
0.9-10. Near staircase wall	Two empty display cases on pedestals			
28. Wall to right	Relief	Lion colossus	Nimrud, temple of Ishtar	Assurnasirpal II
29-30. Wall to right	Relief	Purification of sacred tree by eagle-headed genii	Nimrud, NW Palace, Room F (slabs F-13, F-14)	Assurnasirpal II
31. Wall to right	Relief (three registers with Standard Inscription in the middle)	Above: two human-headed, winged genii kneeling before a sacred tree; Below: purification ritual by two winged, eagle-headed genii before a sacred tree	Nimrud, NW Palace, Room I, (slab I-08)	Assurnasirpal II
32-33. Wall to left	Relief	Royal parade in mountainous landscape	Nimrud, NW Palace, West Wing, Room WG (slabs WFL-23, WFL-24)	Assurnasirpal II
34. Wall to left	Inscribed slab	Unsculptured. Three registers with Standard Inscription in 27 lines in the middle.	Nimrud, NW Palace, Courtyard Y	Assurnasirpal II
35. Middle of room	Banquet Stele	Cuneiform inscription; inset panel carved with king before tutelary deities	Nimrud, NW Palace, Room EA, near entrance to Throne Room B	Assurnasirpal II
36. Middle of room	Stone oil/incense burner		The Sibitti temple at Khorsabad	Sargon II
37. Upstairs room	Bronze coffin		Nimrud, NW Palace, Room 57, Tomb III	Assurnasirpal II
38. Upstairs room?	Wall painting	Guilloche border	Nimrud, NW Palace, Room F or Rooms 42, 59-61	Assurnasirpal II

with a large palmette on the top and a network of branches forming an arch around the central trunk (L-25, L26)<sup>70</sup>; an identical but half-height scene is in the orthostat cutout for the ventilation shaft in the upper part (L-27); and two other winged genii are shown in procession before the sacred tree (L-28, L-29), while another tree closes the scene on the right-hand side (L-30). Assurnasirpal's Standard Inscription of twenty-six lines, featuring his titles and royal achievements, runs through the middle of the slabs.<sup>71</sup>

fertility ritual of pollination symbolizing agricultural abundance as a divine gift to the king and his subjects: Barbara Nevling Porter, "Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona of Ashurnasirpal II," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52/2 (1993): 138.

<sup>70</sup> The half tree on the left-hand edge of L-25 is part of the L-24 scene where it matches another half tree: Meuszynsky, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 15,2.

<sup>71</sup> The slabs are of the following sizes: L-25 = 1.91 m, L-26 = 2.13 m, L-27 = 2.16 m, L-28 = 2.20 m, L-29 = 1.62 m, L-30 =

#### *Sculptures from Sector Z (Table 4)*

After ascending the staircases leading to Sector Z, on the right-hand wall there is a lion colossus and two reliefs from Nimrud (Figure 1, No. 28, and Nos. 29-30, 31, respectively), while in the center of the room the visitor's attention is captured by the famous Banquet Stele of Assurnasirpal II (No. 35) and a tall marble burner (No. 36); on the wall to the left are two more slabs from Nimrud (Nos. 32-33, 34). Against the wall facing the staircase are four empty display cases (Nos. 0.5-8) (see Table 4).

The lion colossus is one of a pair which once flanked the entrance of the temple dedicated to the goddess Ishtar at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) (Figure 19). As re-

0.73 m, the height is ca. 2.35 m, while the edge measures 0.20 m. The recess of L-27 is 1.36 m high from the bottom and 1.29 m wide (ibid., 69).



**Figure 19.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: lion colossus originally protecting the entrance of the temple of Ishtar at Nimrud (Assurnasirpal II's reign); Length: 2.24 m, Height: 2.59 m. Bott Photograph UNESCO MP Jan2010 240 (54).

ported by Muzahim Mahmud Hussein, the director of the 2001 Iraqi excavations at the site, in 1851 Layard excavated two lions protecting an entrance to the north of the courtyard leading to a throne room.<sup>72</sup> The best-preserved lion was sent to the British Museum in London (ME 118895),<sup>73</sup> while the other lion, owing to its bad condition, was left *in situ* until 1973, when it was transferred to the Mosul Museum. Fortunately, the missing part of the head was recovered in the 2001 Iraqi campaign,<sup>74</sup> and in fact heavy reconstruction work is visible in Bott's 2008–2010 images of the lion. Roaring angrily to symbolize Ishtar's aspect of warfare, the British Museum and Mosul lions are of similar size (length 2.24 m, height: 2.59 m), and both bear Assurnasirpal's cuneiform dedicatory inscription

<sup>72</sup> See Layard's drawing in Muzahim Mahmud Hussein, "Recent Excavations in Nimrud," in *New Light on Nimrud*, ed. Curtis et al., 93, Fig. 12–o.

<sup>73</sup> The British Museum, "Colossal Statue of a Lion."

<sup>74</sup> Hussein, "Recent Excavations in Nimrud," 92, also Figure 12-n.

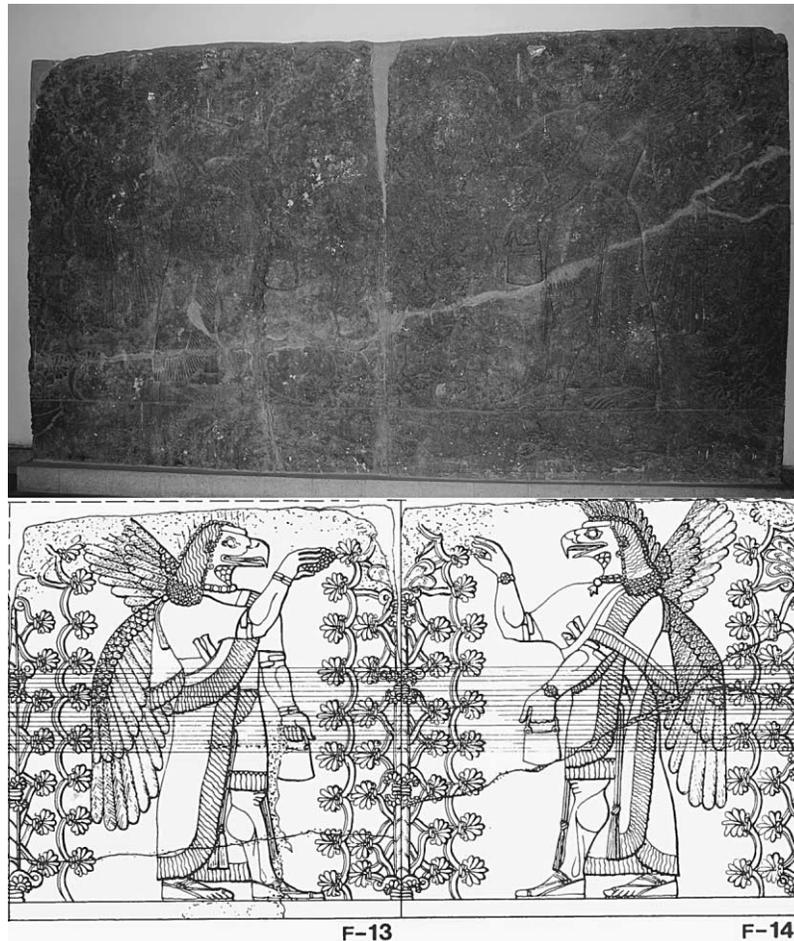
with a prayer to a local version of Ishtar called Sharrat-niphi, the epithet after which the temple is named.<sup>75</sup>

Three of the four remaining reliefs from Nimrud can be identified with certainty. On the right-hand wall (near the staircase wall) are slabs F-13 and F-14, carved with the scene of a pair of colossal eagle-headed genii facing the sacred tree and performing a purification ritual, much in the same way as found in the L-25–30 series (Figure 20).<sup>76</sup> The two slabs, each composed of two half trees and a genius, originate from the south wall of Room F (to the west of Entrance F),<sup>77</sup> a highly

<sup>75</sup> In the spring of 2001 the Iraqi archaeologists discovered two other lion colossi flanking a gateway in the eastern sector of the Ishtar temple "larger than the examples discovered in the nineteenth century (see fig. 12-o), or those still standing in the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II." Being near the surface, they were badly damaged and "the upper parts have been completely destroyed" (*ibid.*, 91); see also Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*, 11, 271.

<sup>76</sup> The genii are represented here as "griffin demons," a variant iconography to indicate the Seven Sages in bird-guise: Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 100–101.

<sup>77</sup> Englund, "The Northwest Palace at Nimrud."



**Figure 20.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: (above) eagle-headed genii performing a purification ritual before the sacred tree, (below) drawing in Meuszynski *Nimrud I*, Tafel 7,3; slabs F-13, F-14, Room F, North-West Palace, Nimrud; Length: 2.13 m (F-13), 2.20 m (F-14), Height: 2.10 m. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (150).

ritual space connecting the throne room and the inner *bitānu* Courtyard Y. Excavated by Layard in June of 1846, it was re-excavated between 1971 and 1974 by the director of the Mosul Museum, Hazim Abd-el Hamid, who sent the two reliefs to the Mosul Museum.<sup>78</sup> The Polish team reported sizes of 2.13 m for F-13 and 2.20 m for F-14 with a height of 2.10 m;<sup>79</sup> the Standard Inscription of eighteen lines is also present. Both reliefs appear badly damaged and were restored in the middle junction and across the slabs, a reconstruction also visible on the Polish drawing.<sup>80</sup>

Near the corner of Sector Z, next to F-13 and F-14, lies the Nimrud relief I-08, a complete slab restored

<sup>78</sup> Meuszynsky, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, 38; Jabr, “The Work of the Iraq Department of Antiquities at Nimrud,” 47.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, Raum F, Tafel 7,3.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, Tafel 7,3.

from three pieces as shown in the cross-junctions that form a reversed “T” of white plaster (Figure 21). In these circumstances, it is not easy to discern the scene depicted on the slab photographed in Bott’s 2008–2010 report. With the help of the drawing published by Paley and Sobolewski,<sup>81</sup> it is possible by enlarging Bott’s photograph to determine the scene which repeats the basic composition of all reliefs from Room I: in three registers, with the Standard Inscription in twenty-two lines running in the central band, one has, below, a purification ritual carried out by two winged, eagle-headed (griffin demon) *apkallu* facing the sacred tree; and, on the upper register, two human-headed, winged genii kneeling on either side of the sacred tree

<sup>81</sup> Paley and Sobolewski, *Reconstruction of the Relief Representations* 3, Plate 1.

with arms outstretched to gently touch the crown of branches.

Unfortunately, the left margin of the slab is cut away in Bott's shot, and since the relief of the upper band is particularly deteriorated, it is hard to recognize the outline of the kneeling genii. Owing to the poor conditions of preservation, the motifs on the right side of the slab are also difficult to distinguish: the half tree in the bottom register to the right of the standing genius, and the tree on the upper band behind the kneeling *apkalle*. These could be identified only with the help of the Polish drawing,<sup>82</sup> and they complement the scene of the adjoining slab I-9, a recessed orthostat. All the figures are of a smaller size than the genii from Room L or F, with the lower figures about one half the overall height of the slab of 2.26 m, the upper about one-third the height of the slab whose total length is 2.11 m.<sup>83</sup> According to the Polish report, "relief I-8 was found *in situ* during the Iraqi excavation and restoration work and removed to the Mosul Museum" in 1973.<sup>84</sup> It was found on the southern wall of the north sector of Room I, a ritual space of the *bitānu* area with lustral installations, just at the corner where the space bends to form an L-shaped locus.<sup>85</sup>

On the opposite wall of Sector Z of the Mosul Museum, with the help of the drawing published by Paley and Sobolewski,<sup>86</sup> it is possible to identify the slabs WFL-23 and WFL-24, originally found by the 1970s Iraqi expedition near the west wall of WG in the West Wing (German "Westflügel") of the North-West Palace in Nimrud (Figure 22); they are reported as "Mosul 2" and "Mosul 3," respectively.<sup>87</sup> Arranged in two registers, with the central band of the Standard Inscription inserted between them, they are carved with a narrative scene describing the capitulation of

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., Plate 1. Note that I-8 is classified by the Polish team among "the completely or nearly completely preserved reliefs" (ibid., 3), and has thus possibly severely deteriorated over the course of time.

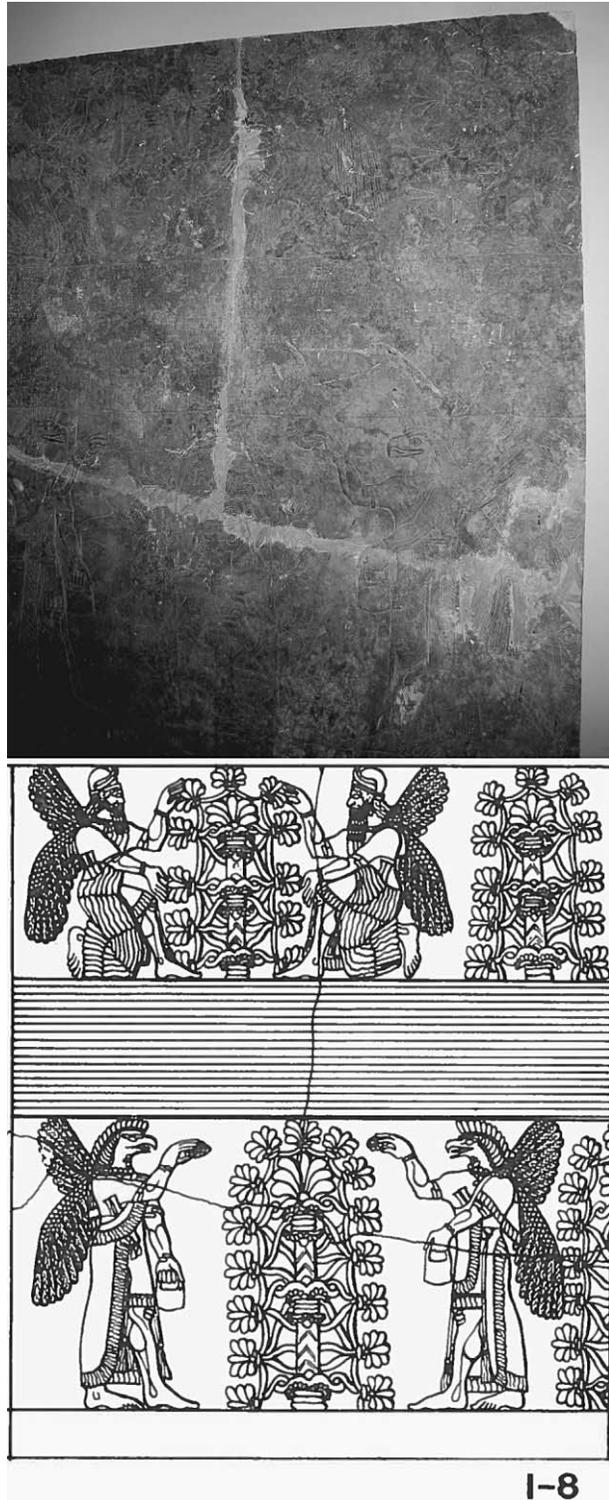
<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 3, n. 4, 12. Slab I-8 is referred to as "Mosul 1" in ibid., 12–13, where it is reported as "unpublished."

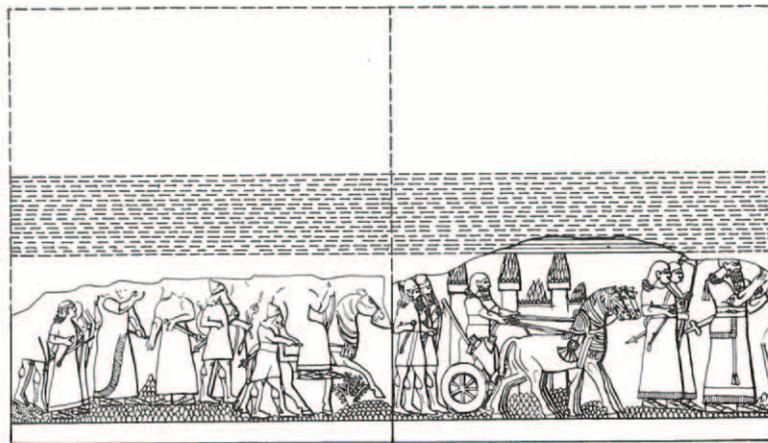
<sup>85</sup> Englund, "The Northwest Palace at Nimrud."

<sup>86</sup> Samuel M. Paley and Richard P. Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and Their Positions in the North-west-Palace at Kalhu (Nimrud) 2*. (Rooms: I.S.T.Z, West-Wing) (Mainz am Rhein, 1987), Plate 5,9.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 78. Joan and David Oates (*Nimrud*, 55) refer to these two slabs "showing a chariot scene" as "recovered from WM," "though it is not clear that this was its original position."



**Figure 21.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: three-register relief with (below) a purification ritual by two winged, eagle-headed genii facing the sacred tree, and (above) two human-headed, winged genii kneeling before the sacred tree; drawing in Paley and Sobolewski (*Nimrud 2*), Plate 1; slab I-08, Room I, North-West Palace, Nimrud; Length: 2.11 m, Height: 2.26 m. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (175).



WFL-23

WFL-24

**Figure 22.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: (above) relief with royal parade, and (middle) detail of horse and king (right); (below) drawing in Paley, Sobolewski *Nimrud 2*, Plate 5,9; slabs WFL-23 and WFL-24, Room WG, North-West Palace, Nimrud; Length: 2.06 m (WFL-23), 2.10 m (WFL-24), Height (with plinth): 1.18 m (WFL-23), 1.32 m (WFL-24). Bott Photographs MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (152), MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (183).

a city and the royal parade.<sup>88</sup> The upper register is missing and the composition of the bottom band is described in detail in the Polish report:<sup>89</sup> in a mountainous landscape symbolized by scale patterns, soldiers and officials walk up and down in a royal procession in which the king is represented twice at two different moments of the action. On the left of WFL-23, he is sitting side-saddle on his horse, while near the right margin of WFL-24, he stands in the well-known presentation scene holding arrows upwards and with the end of his bow resting on the ground. As found in most Assyrian historical reliefs, the procession is punctuated by typical scenes, for instance, a courtier acting as an usher directing the parade toward the king (center left in WFL-23), or eunuchs holding the king's parasol and the royal chariot driven by a soldier (center right and center of WFL-24 respectively).<sup>90</sup> As shown in Bott's photograph, the register of WFL-23 is very eroded, while in WFL-24 the details are more recognizable, although this slab shows heavy restoration work across its length, with an oblique white line continuing in part through slab WFL-23. Comparing Bott's 2008 photograph with the drawing published by the Polish team in 1987,<sup>91</sup> there appears to have been a definite worsening of the preservation of both slabs in recent years: the drawing shows deterioration only in the top part of the register of WFL-23, and the oblique line of restoration work does not yet appear in WFL-24.

The last relief from Nimrud in Sector Z, near a doorway on the left hand side of the room, is problematic but may be identified "with one of the eighty-seven individual slabs lining the courtyard Y" of the North-West Palace (Figure 23).<sup>92</sup> As shown by Paley

and Sobolewski, "Except Y(P)2-4 carved with figures of geniuses and slab Y-8 which was uninscribed, all the rest were cut only with the Standard Inscription." More importantly, it is stated that "one of these slabs is now preserved in the Mosul Museum."<sup>93</sup> The Standard Inscription is normally twenty-two lines, but in this case "the cuneiform signs are larger and the inscriptional bands are wider on these slabs than on those cut both with relief and inscription. There were 27 lines of inscription on each slab. Complete or portions of about 60% of these slabs survive."<sup>94</sup> From Bott's 2008 photograph, it would appear that the fragmentary slab is very badly eroded, and it is thus almost impossible to see any imagery. However, when manipulated in Photoshop, the slab shows an inscription in twenty-seven lines taking up most of the available space, with no evidence of any relief carved on the remaining narrow spaces above and below.

The fragmentary relief I-14 from Nimrud is entered in the inventory of the Mosul Museum by Englund where its original provenance is also given from the corner of the west wall in the northern sector of Room I (Figure 24).<sup>95</sup> However, judging from Bott's photographs, there is no evidence of it in the Mosul Museum. Though mentioning the 1970s Iraqi Department excavations and the restoration of Room I, the Polish team reports this slab as "*in situ*" at that time in Room I, an L-shaped space provided, like Room L, with stone drainage slabs with stele-shaped basins.<sup>96</sup> The question is, when was it transferred to the Mosul Museum, if indeed it was? It may have been an involuntary omission, but Paley and Sobolewski do not refer to any further move of I-14 to the museum. Instead, their report specifies that "only a socle is preserved *in situ*" and "the following fragments are identified as originating from this slab."<sup>97</sup> These are fragment "Nimrud 47" on the upper register to the left, depicting a the sacred tree; and "Nimrud 51" to

<sup>88</sup> In the West Wing, investigated by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and by the 1970's Polish expedition, the only narrative reliefs outside Throne Room B were recovered, "suggesting that this western wing was second only in importance to the throne room suite" (ibid., 40, 54). Room WG, opening with a monumental portal onto the *bitānu* Courtyard Y, was another possible reception room of some importance.

<sup>89</sup> Paley and Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations* 2, 78.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., Plates 5,29. WFL-23 and WFL-24 are 2.06 m and 2.10 m in length respectively; their heights with plinth and carved decoration only are 1.18 m and 0.78 m respectively (WFL-23); and 1.32 m and 0.82 m (WFL-24). In the middle band, the Standard Inscription is fragmentary in three lines (ibid., 78).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., Plate 5,9.

<sup>92</sup> Paley and Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations* 3, 35.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 35. No size for this slab is provided here, but it may be tentatively established by comparison with the nearby carved slab WFL-24 (see n. 87): Length: c. 1.30 m, Height: c. 2.40 m.

<sup>95</sup> Englund, "List of All Currently Catalogued Reliefs." Englund specifies that "only seven complete reliefs have survived from room I," but I-14 is not listed among them.

<sup>96</sup> Paley and Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations* 2, 15. The relief drawing of I-14 is published there in Plate 1,4.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 15: the total size reported for this slab is 1.17 m in length and 2.26 m in height.



**Figure 23.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: unsculptured slab with inscription in 27 lines from courtyard Y, North-West Palace, Nimrud. Length: c. 1.30 m, Height: c. 2.40 m. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (161).

the upper right, “a fragment of the figure of a winged, human-headed genius, wearing helmet, kneeling, hands outstretched.”<sup>98</sup> Perhaps, owing to their fragmentary condition, these pieces were placed in the Mosul Museum’s storerooms. The missing scene in the bottom register is reconstructed on comparative grounds since this relief “is a corner composition made of I-14 and I-15 equivalent to the configuration on the right side of I-10 and the left side of I-11.”<sup>99</sup> The lower composition is thus as follows: on the left side, a sacred tree possibly with seven palmettes, and to the right an eagle-headed genius with bucket and cone performing the usual anointment ritual. The overall

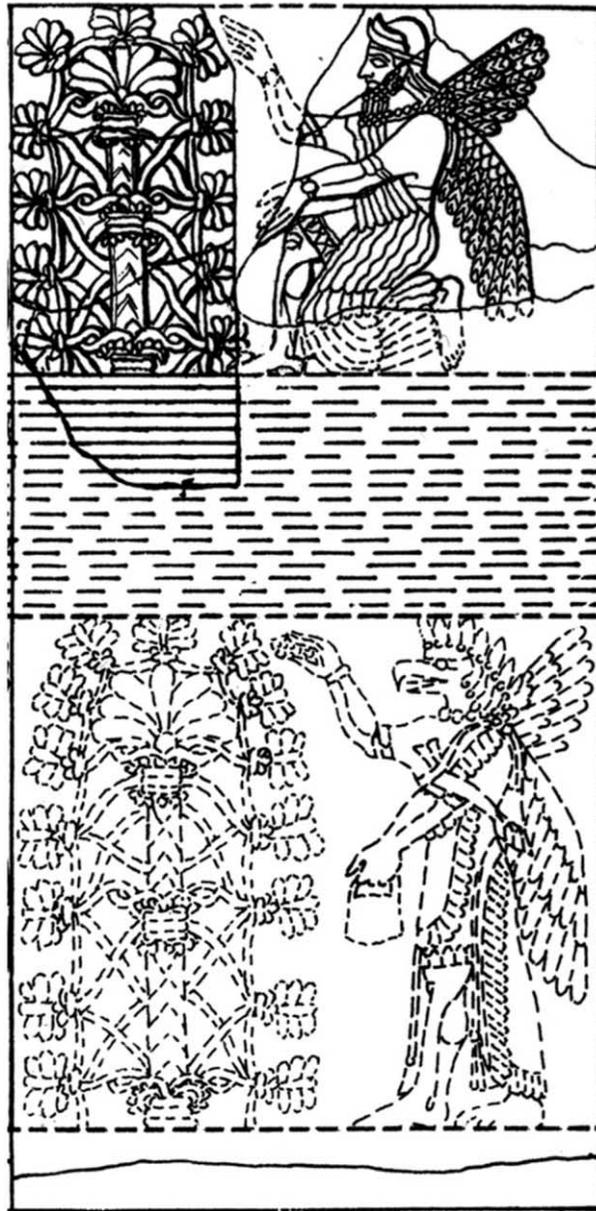
scene can be reconstructed as follows: in the upper register is portrayed a human-headed genius kneeling on the right side of the sacred tree, and in the lower band an eagle-headed genius stands before the tree. This pattern fits entirely with a corner composition.

The unassigned relief fragment 001 (Excavation #ND 01122) from Nimrud is entered in the inventory of the Mosul Museum by Englund,<sup>100</sup> but it is not possible to trace it in the relevant Polish and British publications quoted above, nor do any of the fragmentary objects scrutinized so far refer to this entry. Unfortunately, its identification is unknown and remains unassigned.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 15: fragments “Nimrud 47” and “Nimrud 51” are 0.94 × 0.45 m and 0.77 × 0.74 m, respectively.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>100</sup> Englund, “List of All Currently Catalogued Reliefs and Relief Fragments from the North-West Palace of Assurnasirpal II.”



**I-14**

**Figure 24.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: three register relief with (below) eagle-headed genius before the sacred tree, and (above) a human-headed genius kneeling before the sacred tree; drawing in Paley, Sobolewski, *Nimrud 2* (Plate 1,4) and Englund, “Northwest Palace.” Length: 1.17 m, Height: 2.26 m.

The last two artifacts of Sector Z are the famous Banquet Stele of Assurnasirpal II, originally from the North-West Palace in Nimrud, and a tall marble stand for burning incense or oil from the Sibitti temple at

Khorsabad (Sargon II’s reign), both located in the middle of the room. The latter, found in the temple courtyard by the Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities in the 1950s, is a widespread type of oil/incense



**Figure 25.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: marble oil/incense burner from the Sibitti temple at Khorsabad dedicated by Sargon II; Height: ca. 150–160 cm. Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (154); Safar 1957, Fig. 4.

burner, depicted in Neo-Assyrian narrative reliefs since at least Assurnasirpal I's time (Figure 25).<sup>101</sup> Fuad Safar describes it as “an elongated chalice with a shallow basin on column,”<sup>102</sup> and similar types are generally portrayed near an offering table in wine libation scenes performed by the king or priests for the temple, for the carving of rock monuments in distant territories, in the camp or after a lion hunt.<sup>103</sup> Their function

<sup>101</sup> Safar, “Temple of Sibitti at Khorsabad”: 221, and Fig. 4. Its height may be tentatively defined as ca. 150–160 cm (not inclusive of the modern base, ca. 20 cm high) by visually comparing the burner (clearly taller) with the nearby “Banquet Stele” 128 cm in height: see D. J. Wiseman, “A New Stela of Aššur-Našir-Pal II,” *Iraq* 14 (1952): 24, both portrayed in Bott’s photograph *MCM Qais Rashid visit DAMay 08 (186)*.

<sup>102</sup> Safar, “Temple of Sibitti at Khorsabad”: 221.

<sup>103</sup> One of the earliest examples of this tall burner is that depicted on the White Obelisk from Nineveh of the time of Assurnasirpal I (1050–1031 BC) (or Assurnasirpal II) with a ritual scene in front of the temple of Ishtar (BM 118807). See also the bronze gates of Shalmaneser III with the ritual for the celebration of a newly-cut stela (BM 124662); rituals performed respectively by two priests with a tall hat in a Tiglath-pileser III camp (Barnett and Falkner, *Sculptures of Aššur-Našir-Apli 2 . . .*, 18–19, pl. LX) and by officials in Sargon’s general camp (Paul Émile Botta, and Eugène Flandin, *Monument de Ninive*, 5 vols. [Paris, 1849–50], II, pl. 146), as well as in Sennacherib’s camps (Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*. 2 vols. [London, 1849], II, 469; BM, drawing IV, 21;

as burners is clearly demonstrated by the fire carved on the top of the large terminal bowl; it is likely that the oil was scented, but these are different from the smaller incense burners providing a sweet scent of aromatic resins.<sup>104</sup>

In April 1951, Max Mallowan unearthed the Banquet Stele, one of the most historically important artifacts discovered in the North-West Palace of Nimrud (Figure 26). The sandstone parallelepiped block of 128 × 104.5 × 57 cm, which originally stood within a deep alcove (room EA) near the eastern entrance to Throne Room B, was then removed to the Mosul

BM 124914–5); Assurbanipal’s libation ritual over a lion from the North Palace in Nineveh (BM 124866) (Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” 13, Figure 7; 14, Figure 8; 15–16, Figures 11, 12, 16–17; and 13–15, Figure 24]. The one which more closely resembles the stand from the Mosul Museum is that depicted in the ritual scene in Tiglath-pileser III camp originating from Nimrud. The other representations show sharper variations in the general shape of the pedestal, which in Shalmaneser’s time is often without the ring decoration, or where in Sargonic periods it is in the middle of the stem; more often in Sennacherib’s time the recipient carved on the top of the burner has a beaker-like shape, while the Assurbanipal’s example in the lion hunt scene is quite close to that of the Mosul Museum specimen, but is rather more elongated and slimmer.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



**Figure 26.** Assyrian Gallery, Sector Z: (above) Banquet Stele of Assurnasirpal II with particular of inset panel carved with the king figure; Room EA, North-West Palace, Nimrud (128 × 104.5 × 57 cm), (below) copy of “Banquet Stele” positioned *in situ* in the North-West Palace, Nimrud. Bott Photographs MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (148–149), Nimrud Assessment SBAH DS May08 (32), Photograph NIMRUD Site Survey 94th Engineers.

Museum.<sup>105</sup> Erected by Assurnasirpal II in 878 BC in order to commemorate the building of his palace and the refounding of Kalhu, it owes its name to the lavish feast recalled in the long cuneiform inscription which provides the detailed account of the food prepared for the entertainment of 69,574 people (local and foreign officials) during the ten-day-long festivities. Most

<sup>105</sup> Mallowan, “Excavations at Nimrud (Kalhu), 1951”: 7; Wiseman, “A New Stela of Aššur-Našir-Pal II”: 24; Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*, 39–40.

beautiful is the inset panel (ca. 47 cm high) at the top of the stele, representing the king standing with his royal insignia (long stick and mace) surmounted by the symbols of his tutelary deities Sin, Shamash, Ishtar, Assur, Adad and the Sibitti (the Pleiades).<sup>106</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Mallowan, “Excavations at Nimrud (Kalhu), 1951”: 20–22; Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*, 40–41. See Wiseman, “New Stela of Aššur-Našir-Pal II”: 24–44, for publication of the cuneiform text inscribed on the front and back with 154 lines of text.



**Figure 27.** Assyrian Gallery, upstairs room: bronze coffin from Tomb III, Room 57, North-West Palace, Nimrud, eighth century BC (1.47 m × 68 cm, height 57.5 cm). Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (258).

Fifty-seven years after its discovery in 1951, in Bott's four 2008 photographs (*MCM Qais Rashid visit DS May08* nos. 148, 149, 155, 156), the stele looks slightly more eroded than when unearthed,<sup>107</sup> but is in generally good condition, with the cuneiform inscription still readable. It is noteworthy that a copy of the stele was in the Nimrud Museum before I.S. blew up the site in the winter of 2015; in Bott's PDF posted to the Iraq Crisis forum in March-April 2015 (entitled *NIMRUD Site Survey 94th Engineers* [156th survey design]), among the survey images of the site there also appears the Banquet Stele copy, captioned "stone tablet in entrance way of Northwest Palace" (Figure 26). In Nimrud near the entrance of the North-West Palace, this replica was thus set up in Room EA (a small room with side benches) by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, in the exact location where the original was discovered in order to recreate the original setting of the ancient Assyrian "museum." In fact, in Bott's other photo reports, a U.S. soldier appears in what seems to be a small one-room museum with side benches posing for a snapshot in front of a repro-

duction of the stele which is also portrayed in three additional photographs whose captions read "Nimrud Oct 09 MP stele copy" (Figure 26).<sup>108</sup> As is usually the case in major archaeological sites in Iraq (e.g., the museum at the archeological site of Babylon), local museums had been set up in various sites for visitors to admire some of the objects excavated there.<sup>109</sup>

The bronze coffin shown in Bott's 2008–2010 photographs (*MCM Qais Rashid visit DS May08* (258) and *UNESCO MP Jan2010 240* (58)), is clearly located on the mezzanine (Figure 27) (see the presence of windows which are absent on the ground floor), apparently in the same position reported by Curtis:

<sup>108</sup> See *Nimrud Assessment SBAH DS May08* (32) for U.S. military posing in a small room with side benches in front of the stele; in *Nimrud Oct 09 MP* (136), the exhibition room with benches is visible; *Nimrud Oct 09 MP* (84) and (141), and *Nimrud Assessment SBAH DS May08* (39) are all close-ups of the stele. In *Nimrud Oct 09 MP stele copy* (1), (2), and (3), the caption stresses "stèle copy"; in the former the room is visible, and the latter two are closeups of the stele.

<sup>109</sup> Interestingly, at the archaeological site of Nineveh, near the Nergal Gate, before the I.S. attack was there the so-called Nergal Gate Museum which displayed fragmentary reliefs, copies of rock reliefs, and models of temples and aqueducts from the region.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*: Plates II–III.

“In June 2003, one of these bronze coffins—in poor condition—was on exhibition in an upstairs room in Mosul Museum.”<sup>110</sup> Curtis also published photographs which confirm it is the same coffin portrayed in Bott’s set of images.<sup>111</sup> Evidently, it was not evacuated with the other hundreds of objects in the months preceding the second Gulf War, and was still there in 2008. This coffin is one of three similar specimens recovered in the antechamber of Tomb III, one of the spectacular graves of the Assyrian queens discovered under the floor of Room 57 of the North-West Palace of Nimrud in the summer of 1989 by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities. Its size is 1.47 m × 68 cm, height 57.5 cm; it has a rectangular shape with straight sides, one squared off and another rounded end; and a ledged rim and pair of handles at both ends. Also visible in the middle of the long sides are the joins covered by vertical strips of bronze held in place by rivets. Typological analysis suggests that this characteristic bronze coffin can be dated to the eighth century BC, from the reign of Sargon II.<sup>112</sup>

Altogether, Bott’s nine photographs<sup>113</sup> provide a useful idea of the coffin’s preservation in 2008 and 2010 when the shots were taken. It looks badly damaged and heavily restored: at least three large vertical bands of white plaster are visible, two on one side, and one near the handles of the rounded end; the bottom end is also fixed with plaster on one side; and one end is completely missing. This is indeed also evident in Curtis’s photograph taken in June 2003 during the British Museum inspection of the archaeological sites and museums in the north of Iraq, in the aftermath of the second Gulf War.<sup>114</sup> It appears to be the only item

on display in the upstairs room, and it is surrounded by empty display cases along the balcony of the mezzanine.

### Wall paintings

One of the most interesting features of the Neo-Assyrian palaces in the main capital cities were their brilliantly-painted decorations, with a variety of colors and bands of figural, geometric, floral, and animal patterns. One such ornamental wall painting is shown in *MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (185)*, a close-up from which it is impossible to locate its position in the gallery (Figure 28). This shot is among other images of objects from Sector Z, but as it is not discernibly in that area, it is also possible it was set up in the upstairs room where the bronze coffin stood. It is a fragmentary painted guilloche outlined in black with S-twist ribbons colored in cream, blue, red, and green on a blue background, while in the center are prominent black dots; the end of a second series of guilloches can be also seen at the bottom of the frame. The guilloche normally serves as a divider or border decoration of representational scenes, and its use was widespread in Neo-Assyrian times, particularly in the ninth century BC.

The Mosul Museum painting is in many ways similar to some specimens from the North-West Palace of Nimrud, and may thus originate from this site, possibly from Room F (in the throne room suite) which was reportedly decorated with such a motif,<sup>115</sup> or the private living quarters in the southern sector of the palace: the large suite of Rooms 42 and 59–61 to the south of Courtyard AJ (which possibly belonged to Assurnasirpal’s queen) ornamented with human, floral, and geometrical designs.<sup>116</sup> Guilloche borders of this kind appear also on glazed bricks and terracotta tiles dated to the ninth century BC, such as the lower decorative border of the painted glazed tile (30 cm high) with the triumphant procession of Assurnasirpal II and his officials, and the glazed brick fragment with guilloche

<sup>110</sup> Curtis, “Bronze Coffins from Nimrud,” 163.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 164, Figures 20-bi and bii.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 163–64. See also Yasmina Wicks, *Bronze ‘Bathtub’ Coffins in the Context of 8th-6th Century BC Babylonian, Assyrian and Elamite Funerary Practices* (Oxford, 2015), 5–15, for an understanding of the bronze “bathtub” coffins from Nimrud and the general context of regional funerary practices. In these three coffins, an extraordinary amount of gold jewellery was found, including the famous gold crown. The main grave should belong to Mullissumukannishat-Ninua, wife of Assurnasirpal II, whose inscription was found on the sarcophagus’s lid. Note that, for security reasons, the exquisite jewels found in Tomb II, belonging to Queen Yaba’, wife of Tiglath-pileser III, were taken to the Mosul Museum for cleaning and restoration immediately after their discovery in 1989; fortunately they were soon after transferred to the Iraq Central Bank.

<sup>113</sup> *MCM Qais Rashid visit DS May08 (255–259)* and *UNESCO MP Jan2010 240 (55–58)*.

<sup>114</sup> Italian Assyriologist Frederick Mario Fales contends that this coffin was deliberately vandalized by looters during the second Gulf War in March–April 2003 in his *Saccheggio in Mesopotamia. Il Museo di Baghdad dalla nascita dell’Iraq a oggi* (Udine, 2006), 314. If true (though Fales does not mention his source), this is a detail

not reported by Curtis which might explain his comment on its “poor condition” in June 2003: see Curtis, “Bronze Coffins from Nimrud,” 163.

<sup>115</sup> Learning Sites, “The Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud. An Interactive Publication Prototype. Room F Renders,” *Learning Sites* (2011) [http://www.learningsites.com/NWPalace/NWP\\_RmF\\_renders.html](http://www.learningsites.com/NWPalace/NWP_RmF_renders.html)

<sup>116</sup> Pauline Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting In The Art Of The Assyrian Empire*. Cuneiform Monographs 28 (Leiden, 2005), Fig. 1b; Eleanor Robson, “Assurnasirpal’s Northwest Palace,” in *Nimrud: Materialities of Assyrian Knowledge Production*, The Nimrud Project at Oracc.org (2015): <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/nimrud/ancientkalhu/thecity/northwestpalace/index.html>.



**Figure 28.** Assyrian Gallery, upstairs room or Sector Z: painted wall plaster with guilloche border, possibly from Room F, or Rooms 42, 59–61, North-West Palace, Nimrud; ca. 40 × 45 cm, Bott Photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (185).

design, both from Nimrud.<sup>117</sup> A guilloche border may also be found on a gold royal stamp seal from Tomb III in the North-West Palace of Nimrud: the scene of worship with the queen Hamâ includes a scorpion which, like the guilloche pattern, is probably a symbol of the royal household.<sup>118</sup> Examples of guilloche are also found on decorated ivory carving in the Assyrian style, mostly dated to the ninth century BC: the Mosul Museum guilloche is made up of two ribbons around a circle with a dot center.<sup>119</sup>

#### *The Museum garden*

Joan and David Oates reported that a tomb similar to the Nimrud specimens can be seen “reconstructed in the garden of the Mosul Museum.” This was originally found by Dr. Jabr Khalil Ibrahim and Sd. Abdul-

lah Amin Agha of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities in the early 1980s, near the village of Humaidat, on the west bank of the Tigris, about 16 km north-west of Nineveh.<sup>120</sup> No associated building was excavated, but the tomb looked like a family vault belonging to a high official or a member of the royal family buried in his country estate. There is no indication of whether the stone sarcophagus and a small terracotta coffin recovered in the grave alongside the funerary equipment were also positioned in the Mosul Museum garden.<sup>121</sup>

Three of Bott’s photographs of the Museum garden are probably shots of the reconstructed tomb from Humaidat (Figure 29).<sup>122</sup> Near the corner of the garden entrance, protected by a steel roof, the shaft with the brick stair, presumably leading to an antechamber, and the barrel-vaulted main room are still visible. Although neither burial chamber is in the photograph,

<sup>117</sup> The painted glazed tile is in the British Museum (BM 90859), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art has the glazed brick fragment (Roger Fund 1958, 58.31.59): Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting*, pl. 34. Other ceramic examples include knobbed plates and wall attachments unearthed at various Assyrian sites (*ibid.*, 102–104).

<sup>118</sup> Al-Gailani Werr, “Nimrud Seals,” in *New Light on Nimrud*, ed. Curtis et al., 155–56. See Farouk N. H. Al-Rawi, “Inscriptions from the Tombs of the Queens of Assyria,” in *ibid.*, 136, Text No. 16, for the inscription on the seal of Hamâ.

<sup>119</sup> Pauline Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting*, 104.

<sup>120</sup> Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*, 89–90.

<sup>121</sup> See *ibid.*, 90, for the description of funerary goods: “no gold was found, but the grave goods included an intricately decorated shallow bronze bowl, and a number of other bronze and pottery vessels, very similar to examples from Nimrud.” It is likely, though not certain, that the relevant funerary items were transferred in due time to Baghdad before the second Gulf War.

<sup>122</sup> Bott, *Museum Exterior 07April2009 (1, 2, 4)*, *Museum 17 Jan2010 031*.



Figure 29. Museum garden: reconstructed Neo-Assyrian vaulted tomb from Humaidat. Bott Photographs Museum Exterior 07April09 (4), Museum Exterior 07April09 (2).

their reconstruction is suggested by comparison to similar tombs in Nimrud: “a slightly larger version of those found at Nimrud.”<sup>123</sup> Bott’s images clearly

<sup>123</sup> Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*, 89–90. See comparison with Tomb IV from North-West Palace at Nimrud reported in *ibid.*,

88–90; and also Hussein, “Recent Excavations in Nimrud,” 83, for a detailed description of this tomb: the rectangular shaft is 2.48 × 0.90 m, the nearly square burial chamber 2.27 × 2.48 m with the corbelled vault 1.74 m high, while the antechamber, 76 cm wide, narrows at the top to 68 cm.

demonstrate that the area of the garden where the tomb was rebuilt is in poor condition and lacks proper care (much rubble nearby, etc.), and the burial stairs are littered with detritus (a packet of cigarettes is on one step).

All the remaining photographs of the exterior space are taken from the staircases of the museum entrance-way (Figure 30).<sup>124</sup> They focus on the entrance area of the garden, with a modern stone platform in the foreground, upon which stands a large stone plinth from the Lower Town Palace (*bīt hilāni*) at Nineveh similar to that stored in the museum.<sup>125</sup> In a shot from May 2008,<sup>126</sup> a heavily reconstructed statue stands nearby (Figure 30, above, middle): this is the cast of Iraq Museum 60496, a fragmentary statue of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud (Figures 30–31).<sup>127</sup> The cast's head is missing, the hands are folded in prayer, and the central part of the body has probably fallen, suggested by one stone piece lying nearby; the iron bars of construction work are noticeable (Figure 30, above). *P5210041*, an additional photograph of an unspecified date but probably taken before May 2008 when the cast was already broken, is a shot of the museum façade. Zooming in on the image, it is possible to glean a frontal view of the platform and cast; surprisingly, the latter appear in better condition: the bust had not fallen yet.<sup>128</sup> In fact, it is noteworthy that one year later, in 2009, the modern platform looks partially altered in *MCM Stuart Gibson Access 07April09 (50)*, with at least one stone slab removed from the side (inner brickwork is visible), and the by-now broken cast fallen against the plinth (Figure 30, middle). Finally, *Museum 17 Jan2010 032* demonstrates that by 2010 the cast had disappeared from the garden (Figure 30,

below). This shows both neglect and interference with the museum objects from the garden in those years.

### Storerooms

The two storerooms of the Mosul Museum were examined by UNESCO inspectors in April 2009. They reported that “the storage room, located behind the museum with an exterior entrance, was in disarray with broken pottery on the floor,” as it was looted in April 2003, while “the second storage room is sealed and access is currently prohibited.” A third storeroom in the museum basement “had been previously converted to a conservation laboratory.”<sup>129</sup>

This summary examination can be integrated with the visual data gathered from an analysis of Bott's twelve photographs of the storerooms which were taken on April 7, 2009 during the UNESCO inspection. The images probably are of the looted storage area located behind the museum and accessible by an exterior entrance, the only storage space that could be visited, according to the UNESCO report. Heavy stone objects, visible in *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (7)*, include at least two remarkable Assyrian pieces (Figure 32): in the foreground, the limestone statue of a deity (only the bust is visible) with a horned helmet, holding a basin whose beard ringlets, earrings, and the rigid structure of hairdress recall Adad-nirari III's statues from the Nabu temple at Nimrud.<sup>130</sup> This is likely to be the same statue drawn by Boutcher and described by Mallowan as missing (Figure 33, above), when he found the matching headless one standing in its original position in the recess against the north jamb of room NT2.<sup>131</sup> The latter, with most of the head missing, presumably may be identified with the statue of a deity holding a box visible at the far left of Bott's photo (Figure 32);<sup>132</sup> it may be the statue

<sup>124</sup> Bott, *MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (7)*, *MCM Stuart Gibson Access 07April09 (50)*, *Museum 17 Jan2010 032*, *Museum Exterior 07April09 (5)*, *P5210041*.

<sup>125</sup> Kertai, *Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 158–59; the plinth stored in the museum is discussed here, p. 217.

<sup>126</sup> Bott, *MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 (7)*.

<sup>127</sup> Jørgen Læssøe, “A Statue of Shalmaneser III, from Nimrud,” *Iraq* 21 (1959): plate XL. The original limestone statue (140 cm high, and 35 cm wide at the base) was found in 1956, in many pieces, by a peasant working near the south-east side of the acropolis; it probably originates from the temple of Ninurta at Nimrud. Restored in the Iraq Museum soon after its discovery, it bears an inscriptions recording the events of the reign of Shalmaneser III (ibid.: 147–57, Plate XL). The king's beard and hair are shown worn long and he wears the Assyrian crown and a fringed robe.

<sup>128</sup> In this photo the folded hands are more clearly visible.

<sup>129</sup> Gibson, *Mission Report. Preliminary Assessment Of Mosul Cultural Museum*, 5.

<sup>130</sup> This would not fit with Al-Gailani Werr's reference in her “Mosul Museum Inventory” to “one fragmentary statue of Assurnasirpal II.” Further, also the Dur-Sharrukin statues of deities do not resemble this one: they hold vases, not boxes, and their horns are more widely spaced.

<sup>131</sup> For Boutcher's drawing see C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria. The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture, their Recovery and their Original Position* (London, 1936), 36, Figure 1; and Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London, 1966), 261, Fig. 243.

<sup>132</sup> An orthostat slab is also visible in the background, perhaps of the unsculptured type from Nimrud's North-West Palace, but it is askew in the photo and thus not identifiable.



**Figure 30.** Museum garden: sequence of interference—with modern stone platform and stone plinth from the Lower Town Palace at Nineveh, and cast of Iraq Museum 60496, a fragmentary statue of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud—between (above) May 2008 (Bott's photograph MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08 7), (middle) April 2009 (MCM Stuart Gibson Access 07April09 50) and (below) January 2010 (Museum 17 Jan2010 032).



**Figure 31.** Statue of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud (IM 60496), white limestone, Height: 140 cm, width: 35 cm, Photograph Læssøe 1959, Plate XL. Iraq Museum, Baghdad.

that Mallowan published in Fig. 243, also from the Nabu temple (Figure 33, below).<sup>133</sup> The peculiarity of this pair is that each holds a box, “perhaps the container for the tablets of destiny controlled by the god Nabu.”<sup>134</sup>

*MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (8)* shows many badly-eroded slabs of a square type and similar size

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, Fig. 243.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

in the foreground: they would seem to be roughly dressed limestone blocks for masonry, such as are particularly well documented at Khorsabad for utilitarian purposes, e.g., for facing the palace terrace, as drainage covers, and as paving internal gateways.<sup>135</sup> Some of the stone mortars and undecorated pottery—both broken and entire jars shot in *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (9)* and *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (16)*—may also belong to the Neo-Assyrian period.<sup>136</sup> In the background of *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (9)* is a big jar belonging to the “Khabur Ware” class, however, wheel-made pottery with monochrome painted decoration in brown (Figure 34). The design here is geometric as usual, and shows simple horizontal bands with cross-hatched triangles. Typical of northern Mesopotamia during the Old-Assyrian period (ca. 1900–1500 BC), it is comparable to a similar jar from Chagar Bazar, northern Iraq, now in the British Museum (BM 125429).

The remainder of the room, as shown in *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (10)* and *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (17)*, is full of stone slabs of the Islamic period, possibly mihrabs elaborately decorated with carved Koranic inscriptions. *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (18)* portrays fragmentary stone objects put on shelves; *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 6* and *MCM Storage Areas 07April09 7* are shots of the external space near the storeroom.

### Sculptures from the Mosul Cultural Museum in I.S. Video of February 26, 2015

Additional evidence of the Assyrian sculptures can be gathered from images extrapolated from the I.S. video of the destruction of the Mosul Museum posted on social media on February 26, 2015. I do not wish to discuss the I.S. video as such, but only use it to gain further information about the Assyrian sculptures.

While it is generally claimed that the video was entirely shot in the Mosul Museum, this is not true. Instead, I would argue that the only Assyrian artifacts from the Mosul Museum in the video are the display case with bronze panels from the Balawat gate filmed at 0:50–0:55, the two winged lion colossi at

<sup>135</sup> See P. R. S. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence* (Winona Lake, IN, 1999), 346, for a description of the use of stone in Neo-Assyrian architecture.

<sup>136</sup> Al-Gailani Werr also reports “pottery mostly broken objects” from the storerooms (“Mosul Museum Inventory”).



**Figure 32.** Storerooms: two limestone statues of deities holding a box from the Nabu temple at Nimrud, Adad-nirari III's reign; the statue at the far left of Bott's photo is the headless one. Bott Photographs MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (7).

1:10–1:12, and the cast of Sargon II throne base from Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad) at 3:42–3:44. All are among Bott's images of the museum and have been studied in the present essay.<sup>137</sup> In fact, it is clearly a montage, with scenes filmed (from 1:13 to 1:55) at the Nergal Gate Museum at the Nineveh archaeological site showing some of its artifacts (both copies and originals) on display. A comparison of the artifacts shown from 1:13 to 1:55 with photographs of the same objects posted in spring 2015 to the Iraq Crisis forum by Bott, in a file titled "Nineveh + Nebi Yunis photos 2008" allowed identification of the Museum in the Nergal Gate at Nineveh, a two-rooms structure located near the Gate entrance, one of the gates on the

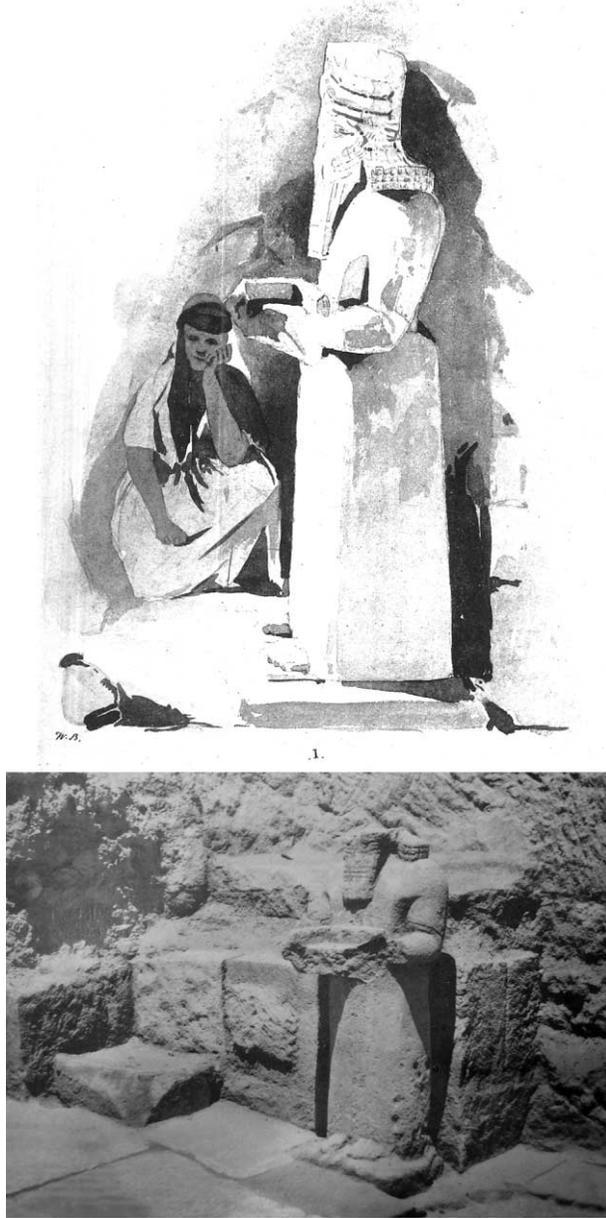
north side of Nineveh's fortification wall. It was here that I.S. filmed the destruction of the four winged human-headed *lamassu*-bulls protecting the gate.<sup>138</sup>

### Conclusions

In the years before the I.S. attack portrayed in the video of February 26, 2015, the Assyrian Gallery of the Mosul Museum had thirty-eight objects on display, ranging from a lion colossus from Nimrud to small bronze fragments of the Balawat Gates. Five of these items were tripod altars from Khorsabad, placed near the entrance of the museum. As shown in Figure 35, the majority of the reliefs and guardian colossi

<sup>137</sup> See, for instance, Bott's *MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08* (103) and *MCM Qais Rashid Visit DS May08* (94). In the I.S. video, the winged lion colossus on the left is wrapped in plastic sheeting, while in Bott's images it is not.

<sup>138</sup> See Paolo Brusasco, *A Study of the Assyrian Sculptures from the Nergal Gate Museum at Nineveh Before Islamic State's Attack* (forthcoming) for the inventory and study of the artifacts from the Nergal Gate Museum at Nineveh.



**Figure 33.** (Above) Boutcher's drawing of the statue of a god holding a box from the Nabu temple at Nimrud; (below) Mallowan's illustration of the headless statue of deity from the Nabu temple at Nimrud. Photographs Gadd, *Stones of Assyria*, Figure 1, Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, Fig. 243.

(42.1% of the total items [16 of 38]), originate from Nimrud (North-West Palace), while only 5.2% (2 of 38) are from Nineveh (South-West Palace). Altars, of the square type with lion legs from Nineveh (1 of 38), or with double armrests from Tell Rimah (2 of 38), and the round, tripod examples from Khorsabad (5 of 38), are the second most common items with a rate of 21% (total 8 of 38); while stele, inscribed

bricks, and bronze objects have each a 5.2% rate (2 of 38 items for each type). Although few in number, the latter group are reckoned among the masterpieces of the museum, especially the inscribed Banquet Stele of Assurnasirpal II, a royal manifesto of his architectural and ideological program, and the fragments of the spectacular Balawat Gates dedicated to the temple of Mamu at Imgur-Enlil by Assurnasirpal II. The analysis suggests that, when discovered, the bands were in poor conditions, and only about 51.5% of the original bronze work survived. Unfortunately, a further 36.1% of the surviving pieces of bronze band were stolen during the looting in April 2003, leaving just 15.2% still mounted on the wooden blocks. Noteworthy, and of historical importance, are also items such as the throne base of Assurnasirpal II, the marble oil/incense burner, and the fragment of wall painting, despite their each being 2.6% of the total number of objects.

It is notable that 94.8% of objects were authentic, with only two copies (5.2%, or 2 of 38 objects) on display in the museum at the time of the I.S. attack: the royal lion hunt of Assurnasirpal II from Throne Room B of the North-West Palace at Nimrud, a replica of stone panel BM 124534, the relief depicting the fortress attacked by Assyrian soldiers using a siege ladder, and a cast of Sargon II throne base from Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad). As shown above, it is possible to determine that additional copies featured in the I.S. video originate from the Nergal Gate Museum at Nineveh.<sup>139</sup> The ten empty display cases confirm that, for safety reasons, movable objects were evacuated from the museum in the wake of the second Gulf War.

Although the museum upkeep was probably ameliorated in the years after the 2009 UNESCO visit, in anticipation of the eventual opening of the structure to the public, scrutiny of visual imagery available in Bott's footage suggests that the Assyrian Gallery was in relatively bad conditions at least between 2007–2010 when the photos were taken. However, it must be stressed that statistical analysis evidences the overall state of conservation of the artifacts when excavated, while the museum's efforts of preserving these objects, and/or trying to restore them to new condition, are beyond discussion. As shown in Figure 36, the general conditions of preservation of the objects on display was mostly very poor. Of thirty-eight objects, only

<sup>139</sup> See previous page, and Brusasco, *Study of the Assyrian Sculptures from the Nergal Gate Museum at Nineveh*.



Figure 34. Storerooms: “Khabur Ware” jar in the background. Bott Photograph MCM Storage Areas 07April09 5 (9).

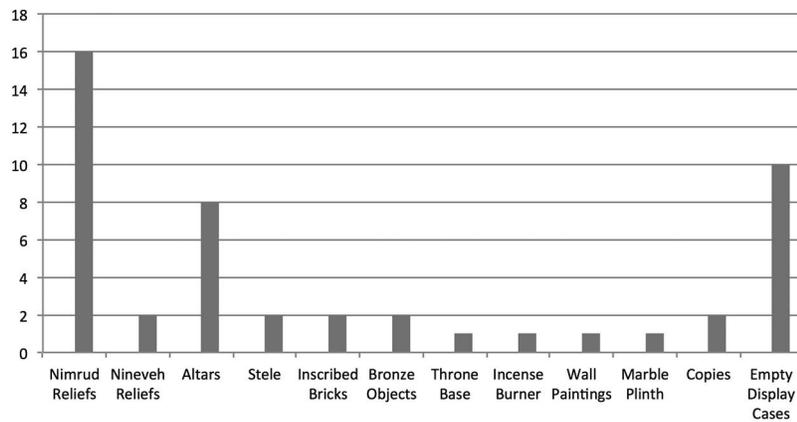


Figure 35. Frequency of artifact type in the Mosul Museum before I.S. attack.

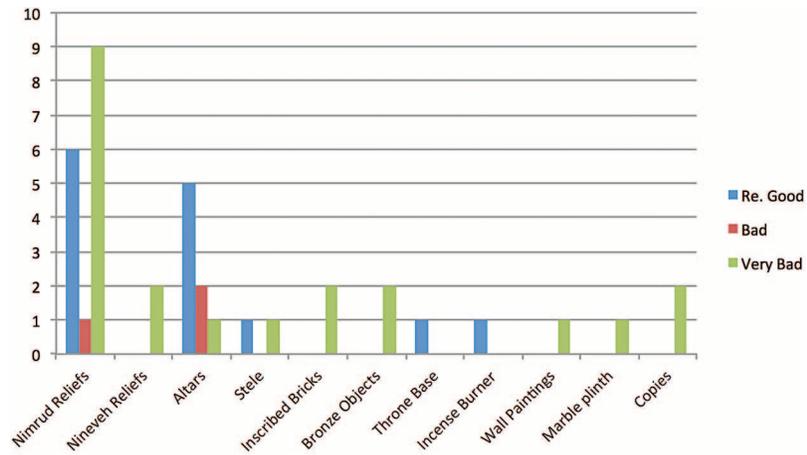


Figure 36. Conditions of preservation of objects in the Mosul Museum before I.S. attack.

15.7% (6 of 38) of the Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud were in relatively good condition (the six slabs L-25–30), and the remaining slabs from Nimrud, and the reliefs, stele, and altars from Nineveh were badly or very badly damaged. A few other objects in relatively good condition are the five altars from Khorsabad rating 13.1% of the total (5 of 38), Assurnasirpal's Banquet Stele, his throne base, and the incense/oil burner from the Sibitti temple at Khorsabad.

Figure 1 highlights the distributional pattern of objects in the Assyrian Gallery: all the monumental and relatively better preserved reliefs from Nimrud (Figure 1, Nos. 22–27: notably slabs L-25–30 with the “cone smearing” ritual) are concentrated in the Central Sector Y, the more badly damaged reliefs from Nimrud are in Sector Z (nos. 28–34), and objects (reliefs, stele, Balawat Gate bands) in poor condition from Nineveh or other Assyrian sites are in the entrance Sector X (reliefs nos. 9–11, altar no. 4, stele no. 6, and band no. 3). Captions were generally absent or vague and imprecise at best when not wrong, overall maintenance was poor, and most objects look badly damaged and in need of conservation. The garden premises also require upkeep (see rubble and cigarettes near the reconstructed Assyrian tomb from Humaidat) and there has been tampering with the stone platform and

the cast of a fragmentary statue of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud (Iraq Museum 60496) in front of the museum's main entrance. The storeroom was also in bad condition but held remarkable items such as the two Neo-Assyrian deities from the Nabu temple at Nimrud and a complete Old Assyrian Khabur vase.

In sum, while photographic evidence alone, without direct inspection on the ground, cannot provide definite evidence of conditions in the museum, it has been at least possible to acquire some idea. This general assessment reveals the richness and uniqueness of the finds of the Mosul Cultural Museum. In the video of February 26, 2015, none of the Assyrian treasures are shown being destroyed by I.S. militants (the so-called Sargon statue and the *lamassu* are from the Nergal Gate Museum on the north side of the fortification wall of Nineveh). This is in sharp contrast with respect to the Hatra sculptures, which were all brutally smashed with sledgehammers; a contrast which might indicate that most of the Assyrian items from the Mosul Museum are being trafficked by I.S. on the antiquities market at this very moment. The hope is that this inventory may help show not only the historical significance of these objects, but may also guide Interpol and other institutions to trace these unique artifacts worldwide.