

KHORSABAD RELIEF FRAGMENT PROJECT

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For more than three summers progress has been made on uncrating, cleaning, conserving, photographing, registering, and cataloging the hundreds of fragment of Khorsabad sculptures and inscriptions that have been stored in the Oriental Institute since 1930. This major project has resulted in the registration of some ninety-one large fragments of sculpture and several groups of adjacent sculptures. These groups are collected under a single registration number. One has thirty-six separate fragments that fit perfectly together. Other groups have as many as five to fourteen fragments. Several interesting individual pieces have been identified, while the majority of the pieces fill in most of the sculptured decoration of room 10 of the palace at Khorsabad, in northern Iraq.

A number of people from the Oriental Institute staff have dedicated their time to the several aspects of this project. Erik Lindahl, Laura D'Alessandro, Alison Whyte, Anna Ressler, Helen McDonald, and Susan Allison. John Brinkman is compiling the inscriptional material for future study. Without the help of this team of specialists this project could not be undertaken. The project is partially supported by grants from the Shelby White-Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publication. Gil Stein has assigned the essential Oriental Institute staff to this project. His support has been essential to advancing this project.

In the very first stage 355 small sculpture fragments were registered and cataloged. These included some interesting pieces including two fragments from the palace throne room. One is a fragment with a man fleeing on a camel. The other is a fragment with a date palm with the limb of a falling man (fig. 1). Both confirm that the throne room was decorated with battle scenes from southern Mesopotamia. Several fragments reconstruct the head of a monumental foreigner in a turban, probably from room 8. These may be the only fragments surviving from this room in the West. At least three other fragments must be from the upper registers of room 13 or 14 (fig. 2). They were



Figure 1. Date palm and limb of falling man. Throne Room.
OIM A150532



Figure 2. Falling warrior. Room 13 or 14.
OIM A70605

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Figure 3. Evergreen tree. Room 7.
OIM A150565

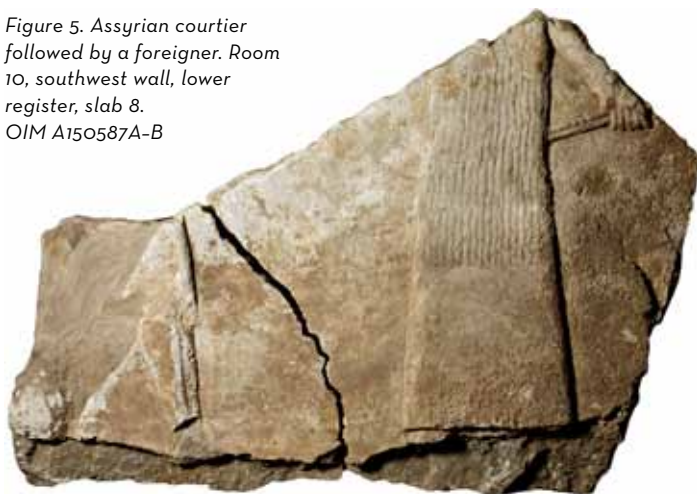
found in the fill above room 10. Two of these fragments show parts of falling warriors from battle scenes. The third fragment shows a feathered horse

crest, smaller and carved to a different style from those in room 10. The feathers of the crest alternate with red and blue pigments and are well preserved. This confirms Botta's observation that the sculptures of rooms 13 and 14 are brightly painted. More than twenty-six fragments of evergreen trees from room 7 have been discovered, nearly all with substantial remains of blue pigment on the spines. One example, shown in figure 3, retains a small amount of green coloration as well. Research on the blue pigments is planned to determine whether the original color of the trees was blue or green, and the nature of the blue pigment. Two interesting large fragments each present the lower half of a winged genie. The larger of the two, probably from the entrance doorway to room 7, is presented in figure 4. It has remains of red pigment on the stemmed poppy pods or pomegranates it carries. This one was registered but undscribed in 1930. The other is among the newly registered.



Figure 4. Lower half of winged genie with branch of poppy pods or pomegranates. Entrance to room 7. OIM A58121

Figure 5. Assyrian courtier followed by a foreigner. Room 10, southwest wall, lower register, slab 8. OIM A150587A-B



Most of the newly registered and cataloged large fragments are from the corridor named room 10. Among the groups of fragments of special interest are the fairly well-preserved, well-fitting pieces registered as A150587A-B, from the southwest wall, lower register (LR), slab 8, with an Assyrian courtier followed by a foreigner, leading the procession of foreigners with horses toward the inner courtyard of the palace (fig. 5). These two large fragments are enhanced

by the small fragment A62133 with the excellently preserved right boot of the foreigner on A150587B and part of the slab base. Substantial remains have been cataloged for the other three courtiers who lead the other three processions of room 10, southwest wall, upper register (UR), slab 8 and the northeast wall, UR and LR of slab 9. Several large groups of fragments comprise nearly all of several LR compositions of foreigners and horses. A detail photo from fragment group, A150591 of the southwest wall, LR, slab 1, shows the elaborate horse trappings with significant amounts of red pigment surviving on the reins and chest strap (fig. 6). The large tassels alternate red and blue pigments. Another fragment from the southwest wall, LR, slab 7, illustrates the fine carving of a horse head held by a lead by a partially preserved man on the right wearing a furry cloak (fig. 7). A composition from the northeast wall, LR, slab 11, is composed of several closely fitting fragments (fig. 8). It offers a sense of what can be reconstructed for exhibit with a minimum of infilling, providing an example of excellently preserved, high-quality carving. On the whole, the fragments from the lower register are better preserved than those of the upper register. The latter are often damaged by fire and water. The lower register fragments are mainly broken with some weathering and water damage. The upper registers fell to the ground partially protecting the in situ sculptures.

Informal agreements have been reached with the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Iraq Museum in Baghdad for the exchange of photographs of all Khorsabad sculptures so that the publication will, in principle, address all the surviving sculptures in museums from that site. The situation in Iraq may limit the ability of the Baghdad Museum to cooperate. A list of all sculptures in the British Museum indicates that nearly all the inscribed display inscription from room 10 is in that museum. Many of the inscribed fragments have attached heads, horses' heads from the lower register, and feet, legs, and horse hoofs and legs from the upper register. This suggests that at least some of the missing pieces in the Oriental Institute compositions will be filled in by the fragments from the



Figure 6. Detail with horse trappings with red and blue pigments. From room 10, southwest wall, lower register, slab 1. From OIM A150591



Figure 7. Horse head and groom. Room 10, southwest wall, lower register, slab 7. OIM A150506

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Figure 8. Horses and accompanying foreigners. Room 10, northeast wall, lower register, slab 12. OIM A150501A-F

British Museum. The Louvre has about one and a third slabs from the lower register of the southwest wall, room 10, on display. This will help complete that wall. Both these museums also have a number of individual heads, several of which should find places in the room 10 compositions.

At this point it appears that by the end of the current season we will have uncrated, cleaned, conserved, photographed, registered, and cataloged the remaining Khorsabad sculptures. The process of analyzing pigments and initiating the publication phase of the project will begin.

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