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Title	Neo-Assyrian relief in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities, Trinity College Dublin; a case study in artefact acquisition.
Author(s)	Kelly, Amanda
Publication Date	2012
Publication Information	Kelly, A.M. (2012) 'Neo-Assyrian relief in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities, Trinity College Dublin; a case study in artefact acquisition'. Proceedings Of The Royal Irish Academy (In Press), 112C (C):61-93.
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# A neo-Assyrian relief in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities, Trinity College Dublin—a case study in artefact acquisition

AMANDA KELLY\*

Classics Department, National University of Ireland, Galway

[Accepted 7 September 2010. Published 14 October 2011.]

## Abstract

The focus of this paper is a neo-Assyrian relief discovered in the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities at Trinity College Dublin (hereafter the Weingreen Museum). The shallow relief depicts a pictorial vignette of a kneeling genie, rendered in profile, facing a tree of life, on a horizon formed by a cuneiform border (WM 1189). Details surrounding the relief's acquisition were completely unknown to Trinity College Dublin staff during 2008–9. This investigation follows a paper trail which illuminates the circumstances behind its procurement and subsequent journey from Iraq to Dublin in the Victorian period. The results establish the relief as the uncontested prize piece of the Weingreen Museum.

## Introduction

This appraisal is essentially an object biography within the social context of Trinity College Dublin and the Royal Irish Academy during the Victorian period.<sup>1</sup> Having been removed from its original archaeological context, where it had served as a static, monumental, decorative element, the object was transformed into a portable artefact of exchange whereupon its meaning

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\* Author's e-mail: amanda.kelly@nuigalway.ie

doi: 10.3318/PRIAC.2011.112.XX

<sup>1</sup> The findings presented here are the result of research undertaken while I was Trinity Long Room Hub Postdoctoral Fellow in Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies at Trinity College Dublin during 2008–9. The appointment was specifically designed as a fund-raising project for the future digitisation of the holdings of the Weingreen Museum. It was understood at an early stage of the assignment that the compilation of a fund-raising proposal would necessitate a thorough study of the collection—an analysis which would serve as a prerequisite to the collection's ultimate presentation to a global market. This process prompted an exploration into the provenance of several items attained by the university in the Victorian period, among which the transmission there of the neo-Assyrian relief, both physically and conceptually, will be addressed here.

was radically redefined (Joy 2009, 541; Hamilakis 1999).<sup>2</sup> Standing monuments, as static objects, are subject to undulating registers of appreciation by virtue of their longevity, whereby variations in social memory inform cultural receptions.<sup>3</sup> Portable objects, however, develop intricate significance through social exchange, wide-scale circulation and intercultural receptivity. Biographies of objects (static or portable) which outlive, or are divorced from, the cultural circumstances behind their conception are susceptible to a series of radical ‘reincarnations’, as they are appropriated by transient audiences (Joy 2009, 541; Bohrer 2003, 3–5).

The empirical case-study presented here does not address the original context of the Weingreen relief (Weingreen Museum 1189) in the Northwest Palace of Nimrud, Iraq, where it was a permanent fixture, but rather focuses on its later historical circumstances as a portable object of exchange, following its journey to Ireland and leading to its present resting place in Trinity College Dublin (Pl. I). The object’s biography evokes reception theories espoused by Hans-Robert Jauss (of the Constance School) and Walter Benjamin (of the Frankfurt School), in being inextricably linked to politics and tradition (Benjamin 1999, 188–9 G8a.2; Benjamin 1968, section IV; Gilloch 2002, 130–1, 268, fn. 55). Like Bohrer’s studies of nineteenth-century Assyrian exoticism, this appraisal centres on the Victorian acquisition and handling of the artefact, as informed by specific institutional, ideological and national agendas (Bohrer 1998, 336; 2003). Overlying Braudel’s *moyenne durée* (1969) on this approach serves to highlight the position of Trinity College, both academically and economically, as a beneficiary of the United Kingdom’s broader imperial interests in the east throughout the nineteenth century.

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<sup>2</sup> At some stage in its relatively recent history the relief was coated with a dark lacquer, presumably a protective measure, which perhaps has obscured its significance and authenticity in recent years. Similarly, at Canford School in Dorset the final relief was recognized as genuine, despite also being covered by layers of paint ‘including a top coat of white vinyl emulsion’ (Larsen 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Parallels and contrasts drawn between the reception of the Elgin Marbles and that of the Assyrian artefacts in Victorian Britain expose a degree of political influence in their aesthetic appreciation (Bohrer 1998, 337 and 346). In the nineteenth century Mesopotamia lay beyond the reach of Grand Tour itineraries and was considered a remote and treacherous realm. The artistic lure of Classical Greece (and Egypt) overshadowed the more remote east and so it was against a backdrop of Classical Greek aesthetics that these Mesopotamian works of art were first evaluated by Europeans (Luce *et al.* 2007).



Pl. I—the Weingreen relief WM 1889. (Photo: Brendan Dempsey, Trinity College Dublin, © Board of Trinity College Dublin).

### The Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities—a brief history

The Weingreen Museum at Trinity College Dublin is the only substantial university collection of Middle Eastern material in Ireland, and the final destination of the relief which forms the focus of this paper.<sup>4</sup> The museum, although now a little-known collection, has international weight and bearing since it relates directly to the Middle East and Egypt, and indirectly to Europe and America. It holds over 2,000 objects which encompass the Eastern Mediterranean world and whose provenance extends eastwards as far as the Tigris and Mesopotamia. The museum's chronological expanse ranges from ninth-millennium BCE Jericho to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century CE Torah scrolls. It is largely composed of excavated material from the stratified contexts of three biblical cities in Palestine: Kathleen Kenyon gifted material from her excavations at Jericho and Jerusalem; Crystal Bennett contributed material from her excavations at Buseirah (and the settlement of Tawilan), while the museum was among 20 international institutions chosen to receive material

<sup>4</sup> The Chester Beatty Library, a far larger collection in Dublin, is a 'public charitable trust established under the will of the late Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, which was granted probate in 1969'. See: [www.cbl.ie/About-Us/The-Chester-Beatty-Library.aspx](http://www.cbl.ie/About-Us/The-Chester-Beatty-Library.aspx) (accessed on 30 June 2010).

from James Leslie Starkey's excavations at Lachish following his murder in 1938 in Jerusalem (MaGrill 2006, ix).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to these stratified finds, approximately one-third of the holdings constitute an eclectic array of decontextualised artefacts gifted by a host of private individuals; among them Arthur Evans, famed for discovering the Bronze Age palace at Knossos (Gere 2009); Henry Frederick Comfort Crookshank, better known as Harry Crookshank, the British Conservative Party politician who served as minister for health under Winston Churchill (Wrigley 2002, 145–6); and D.B. Harden, who gifted material on behalf of his father, John Mason Harden, bishop of Tuam. John Mason Harden had a distinguished career at Trinity College and introduced the Christian literature of Ethiopia to the west in his famous works: the translation of *The Ethiopic Didascalia* (1920) and *An introduction to Ethiopic Christian literature* (1926).

The Weingreen Museum was largely compiled in the twentieth century, and the collection was near complete by the time of its official opening in 1957, although there have been some notable additions since then.<sup>6</sup> The nascency of the collection, however, can be traced back to the nineteenth century (the Victorian and pre-Victorian periods). An emphasis on inscribed artefacts is apparent in the collection, a theme which is both a by-product of the linguistomania of the Victorian era and the result of Jacob Weingreen's personal academic interest in languages. Weingreen, as Erasmus Smith Professor of Hebrew and author of the associated grammar book (first published in 1939, over a century after Edward Hincks's publication in 1832), had a keen interest in inscribed archaeological material.

The inscribed material held in the museum includes 72 objects carrying hieroglyphic script, seven with Arabic, 28 with Hebrew, seven with Greek and nine with cuneiform. The Arabic script has been moulded in glass, impressed on clay and carved in wood, while the Hebrew script has been inked on

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<sup>5</sup> The Weingreen Museum received the Lachish material through the Wellcome Trust in 1952 and 1956 (MaGrill 2006, x).

<sup>6</sup> The Weingreen Museum (then known as the Museum of Biblical Studies) was formally opened by Robert Malcolm Gwynn and the Haddick Library, as represented by H.G.K. Haddick, in East Chapel on 11 June 1957. Guests included Sir Chester Beatty; Dr R.R. Hargford; Monsignor Edward Kissane, then president of Maynooth College; and the Chief Rabbi, Dr I. Jacobowitz. A set of casts from manuscripts had been acquired by Robert Malcolm Gwynn, the former charitable fellow, Professor of Biblical Greek (1916) and Professor of Hebrew (1920–37); a feat perhaps only possible for such a well-connected figure in the college. Robert Gwynn's brother, Edward, was an authority on Celtic language and later provost of Trinity College Dublin (1927–37) while another brother, Stephen, was Professor of Divinity; at the time the college was nicknamed 'Gwynnity College'. It was from Gwynn that Professor Weingreen received the casts that now rest in the Weingreen Museum.





Pl. II—the British Museum relief BM WA 98062 (image no. WCO85962) (after Curtis and Reade 2008, 57, © Trustees of the British Museum).

vellum. Hieroglyphs survive painted on plastered wood and on faience while Greek script has been inked on ceramic sherds as *ostraca*. Cuneiform script was impressed on clay tablets, clay nails (Pl. III), mud-bricks (Pl. IV) and carved in stone (Pl. I) while serieses of pictorial symbols were carved on stone seals (Pls V–VIII, IX–X and XI–XII).

All the inscribed texts have been translated (and transliterated) and these translations feature in the digital database compiled by John Bartlett (curator of the museum during 1979–92), greatly assisted by Pamela MaGrill and continued by Jonathan Dyck. The Arabic was translated by Estelle Whelan (Kress Foundation Fellow at Trinity College Dublin, 1983–6) and the hieroglyphic texts by Jacobus van Dijk of the University of Groningen, while the cuneiform transliteration was undertaken by Wilfred G. Lambert (Professor of Assyriology at the University of Birmingham 1970–93). Readings from the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, however, reveal that some of the Victorian acquisitions had already been translated in the nineteenth century; the cuneiform by Denis Crofton (Crofton 1870–9a and b), and the hieroglyphic texts by Alexander Macalister (Macalister 1879–86a and b). None of these earlier translations had been noted or contained in the Weingreen Museum’s records as compiled in the twentieth century.



Pl. III—clay nail WM 1178 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).

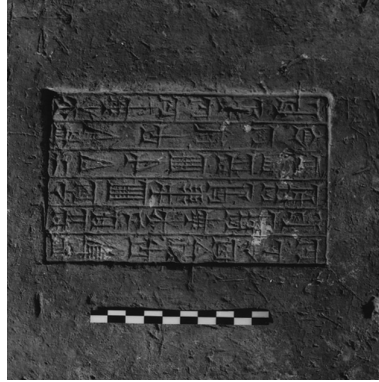
### The Weingreen relief (WM 1189)—an introduction

The Weingreen relief is a large decorative slab carved in shallow relief, depicting a kneeling genie facing a tree of life (WM 1189) (Pl. I). The slab measures 106.5cm × 78.6cm × 11cm and the gypsum-alabaster stone was sourced and quarried in the hinterland of Mosul in Iraq. The horizon for the pictorial vignette is formed by a cuneiform inscription which runs along the base of the slab.

The crude break along the left side of the Weingreen relief slab facilitates a secure join with another relief fragment which is now in the British Museum (BM WA 98062) (Paley and Sobolewski 1987, 10, Plate I)<sup>7</sup> (Pl. II). The

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<sup>7</sup> The mirroring relief from the British Museum (BM 98062), formed part of the exhibit ‘Treasures from Assyria’ which I viewed in October 2008 in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The exhibit received global acclaim, travelling to the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, while in 2006 it received an average of 4,000 visitors daily at the Shanghai Museum.



Pl. IV—mud brick WM 1185 (photo by Brendan Dempsey, photo archivist, © Board of Trinity College Dublin).

join confirms that the Weingreen relief constitutes one half of a panel completed by its mirror image, as carved on the relief in the British Museum (BM WA 98062; Curtis and Reade 2008, 57). The two halves form a symmetrical arrangement comprised of two kneeling genii flanking the tree of life; a reoccurring motif throughout the room.<sup>8</sup> It is fortunate that the cuneiform inscription is still attached at the base of these panels, as, once it was established that these inscriptions were repetitive in nature (see Ross 1976, 9), they were frequently sawn off to alleviate problems in haulage (pers. comm. Paul Collins; Layard 1849, 128; see also Reade 2010, 97; Cohen and Kangas 2010, 5).<sup>9</sup>

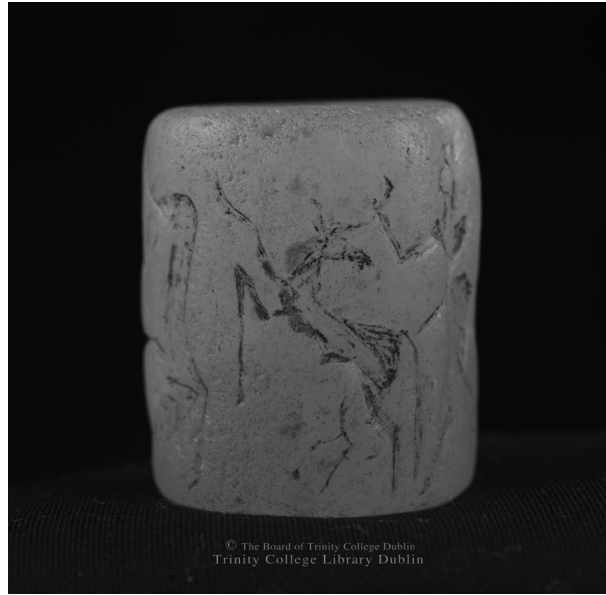
The Assyrian-Akkadian inscription on the Weingreen relief was translated in the 1980s by Wilfred G. Lambert as follows: ‘Palace of Ashurnasirpal, priest of Ashur, chosen by Enlil and [Ninarta], beloved of Anu and Dagan, the [power (?) of the great gods...].’<sup>10</sup> A nineteenth-century translation by Denis Crofton was, however, published in the *Proceedings of*

<sup>8</sup> Another exact twin of the Weingreen relief is listed as housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Grace 1940, 24–5, Fig. 2). Hollis notes that ‘not long ago the Museum [The Cleveland Museum of Art] purchased, from the J.H. Wade Fund, one of these reliefs from a dealer who had obtained it from Amherst’ (Hollis 1943, 109). He quotes an entry in the *Amherst Graduates’ Quarterly* for May 1934, which states that ‘The ancient slabs in question came into the possession of Amherst College in 1855. They were procured from the ruins of Nimroud, with the consent of its excavator, A.H. Layard, by Rev. Henry Lobdell, M.D., ’49. This active missionary, who died shortly afterward at his post in Mosul, superintended the sawing of the six slabs into blocks weighing about 200 pounds each. He had them transported by camel across Asia Minor and shipped to Amherst’.

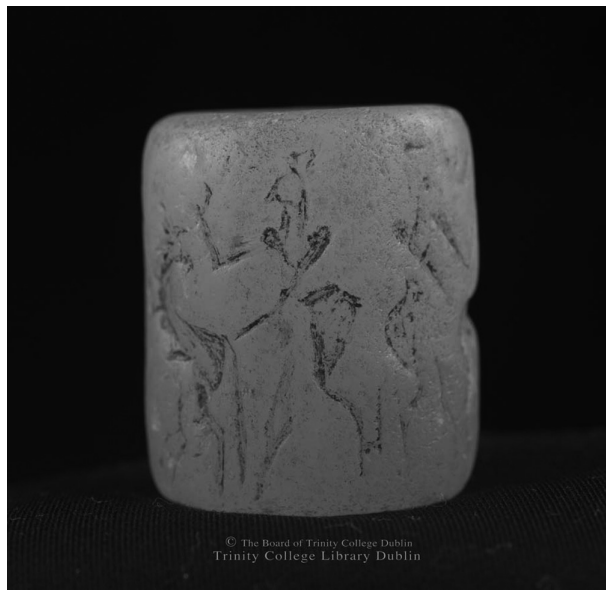
<sup>9</sup> There is some irony in the omission of the cuneiform border from the photographic postcard series commissioned for the Weingreen Museum in the 1980s (see Pl. I), raising concerns over directives for the future image capture of the collection.

<sup>10</sup> Wilfred G. Lambert’s transliteration and translation of the inscription was recorded in the catalogue of the Weingreen Museum on 22 February 1984.



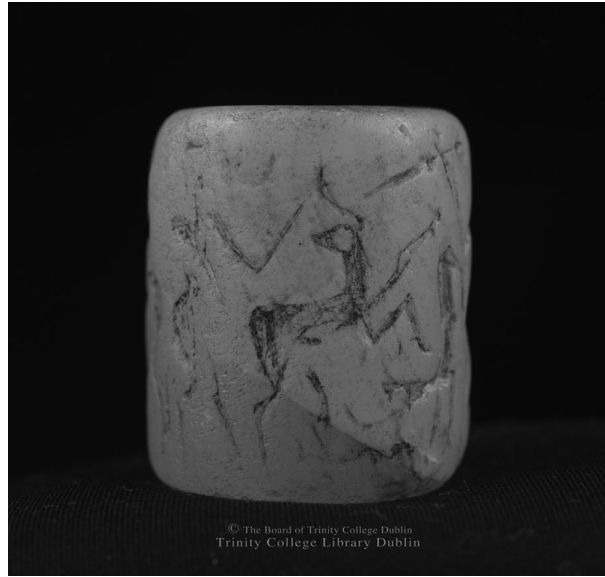


Pl. V—quartz cylinder seal WM 1186 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).



Pl. VI—quartz cylinder seal WM 1186 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).

*the Royal Irish Academy* (1870–9b, 387), but was not included in the records of the Weingreen Museum and its associated relevance remained obscure and disconnected throughout the twentieth century. Crofton's reading was published as follows: '[This is] the Palace of Assur-nazir-pal, the worshipper of Assur; [it is] the dwelling of the humble worshipper of Ninip, the exalter of Anu and Dagan,

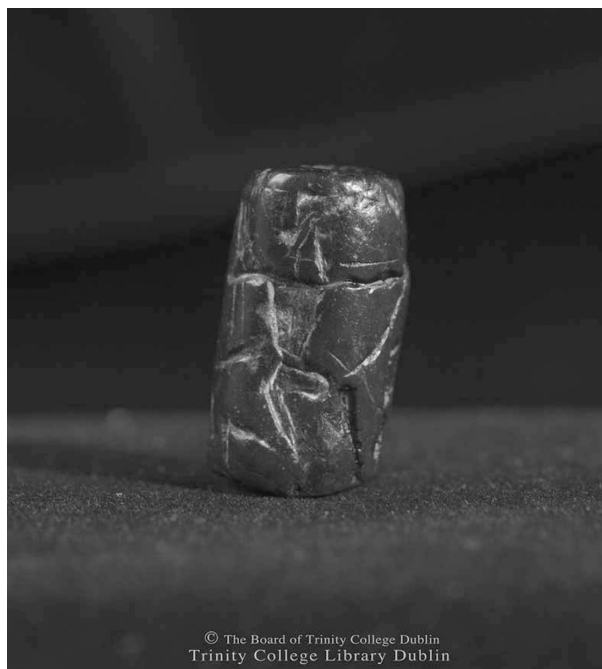


Pl. VII—quartz cylinder seal WM 1186 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).



Pl. VIII—quartz cylinder seal WM 1186 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).

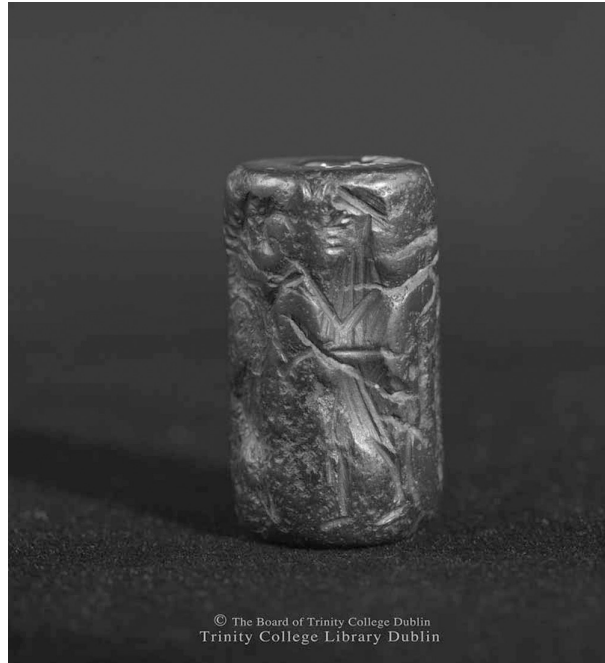
the seeker of the great gods' (1870–9b, 387). As both readings of the inscription indicate, the relief comes from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (c. 884–860 BCE), one of the founders of the neo-Assyrian Empire which eventually brought about the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, an event traditionally dated to 722 BCE. The palace in question is the Northwest Palace of Nimrud (Kalhu/Calah), on



Pl. IX—cylinder seal WM 1187 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).



Pl. X—cylinder seal WM 1187 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).



Pl. XI—cylinder seal WM 1188 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).

the banks of the confluence of the River Tigris and its tributary Upper Zab, lying roughly 30km south-east of Mosul in modern Iraq.

In the 1980s Paley and Sobolewski identified the Weingreen relief as belonging to Room I of the Northwest Palace of Nimrud, slab nos 1–3, in the upper register (BM WA 98062) (1987, 10, Plate I). The fragment formed one-half of a panel within a programme of elaborate palatial decor incorporating carved wall panels, luxurious textiles and monumental sculpture. Narrative reliefs were not solely records of events and ritual procedures, but, as expressions of artistic ability, they signal the importance of their architectural context and, by inference, the personage who ruled therein (Bahrani 1998, 169). Monumental construction (ranging from palatial residences to entire cities) reified royal hierarchy and played a pivotal role in securing Mesopotamian cultural longevity (Abusch 2001, 614–22); city-building is central to the epic narrative of *Gilgamesh* (Standard Babylonian Tablet I, 1–28; Tablet XI, 322–7). This theme became physically manifest in Ashurnasirpal’s unprecedented scale of carved stone decoration and, subsequently, highlighted by Sennacherib’s narrative reliefs which graphically portray the processes of quarrying and transporting the monumental decorative sculpture embellishing his palace (Curtis and Reade 2008, 39–40; Layard 1853b, Plate 15).



Pl. XII—cylinder seal WM 1188 (photo by Gillian Whelan, Digital Resources and Imaging Services, DRIS).

### Trinity College Dublin's acquisition of the relief

While the archaeological origin of the relief has been well documented, the details regarding the acquisition of the relief by Trinity College are not contained in the Weingreen Museum's catalogues nor were they present in Trinity College's muniments records. They were not known to any member of staff in Trinity College during 2008–9, nor were details of the relief's acquisition known to John Bartlett, curator of the Weingreen Museum from 1979–92, nor to Paul Collins, then assistant keeper in the Department of the Middle East in the British Museum, who was charged with the care of the adjoining relief fragment.<sup>11</sup>

In light of Paley and Sobolewski's attribution of the Weingreen relief to Room I of the Northwest Palace of Nimrud (1987, 10, Plate I), the excavations

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<sup>11</sup> I am particularly grateful to both Paul Collins and John Bartlett for encouraging my pursuit of these acquisitional details, and for generously providing further relevant information once I had identified the benefactress.



of Nimrud directed by Austen Henry Layard between 1845 and 1851 provided a starting point for this investigation (Layard 1849; 1853a). Layard excavated copious reams of reliefs from Nimrud and sent the most interesting to the British Museum, under whose aegis the excavations were conducted from 1846.<sup>12</sup> The first season of excavations in 1845, however, was financed by Stratford Canning, the British ambassador at Constantinople; a patronage which effectively cast Layard as an indirect employee of the Foreign and Diplomatic Office (Bohrer 1998, 342; Malley 2008, 635, fns 58–60). The British Museum only acquiesced to sponsor Layard's excavation following overtures from Stratford Canning and Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (then based in Baghdad as a political agent in Ottoman Arabia; a position secured through his involvement in the First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839–42) (Bohrer 1998, 342).

In the mid-nineteenth century the Mosul Province, today's region of Ninawa in Iraq, formed an eastern *muhafazah*, or governorate, within the Ottoman Empire. Local administration was mediated by semi-autonomous pashas on behalf of the Sultan in Istanbul, Abdülmecid I, who effectively controlled the broader region (Bohrer 1998, 337). Layard's excavations, like those of the French at Khorsabad directed by Paul-Émile Botta, were not recognised, and therefore not legally authorised, by the Ottoman regime and it seems that sanction was only retrospectively secured from the offices of the sultanate through Canning's intervention (Bohrer 1998, 342).<sup>13</sup> In November 1845 excavations began rather furtively with Layard posing as a traveller on the journey from Constantinople to Mosul, following Canning's instruction not to attract any attention from onlookers (Bohrer 1998, 342).

Following the excavations, and having launched his political career in 1852, Layard persuaded the British Museum to employ an Irishman, Edward Hincks, to transcribe and translate the cuneiform texts from Nimrud. In 1855 Hincks spent a year in London studying the material—a year that stands out as the only year that Hincks did not publish prolifically (Cathcart and Donlon 1983, 336–9). I had originally assumed that it was to Edward Hincks's papers that I should look in investigating any acquisitional details related to the Weingreen relief, as Layard relied on Hincks for translations of the cuneiform inscriptions yielded by his excavations (Layard 1867, xlvi–xlvii; Layard 1853a, 139, see footnote; *Literary Gazette*, June 27 1846). The presence of the

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<sup>12</sup> Hormuzd Rassam, who initially assisted Layard at Nimrud, continued the excavations on behalf of the British Museum from 1852–4 (and briefly in 1878). In 1854 William Kenneth Loftus was sent to Nimrud by the British Museum with the support of the Assyrian Exploration Fund. In 1949 excavations at Nimrud were reopened by Max E.L. Mallowan (famed also as Agatha Christie's second husband) under the auspices of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was a major supporter of this expedition from 1951–63. Muzahim Mahmud and the Department of Antiquities, Iraq, excavated at Nimrud from 1988 to 1990.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted here that Reade refutes the idea that Layard was engaged in any unlawful activity, on the basis that the first Ottoman antiquities laws only came into effect from 1869–74 (2010, 96).

Weingreen relief in Trinity College could perhaps have constituted a fitting tribute to this eminent Irish Assyriologist.

Trinity College's prominent profile in philology in the nineteenth century was largely due to Hincks, who was a student at the college from 1807–20, as well as Trinity Gold Medallist (in 1812) and a Junior Fellow (in 1813). In 1863, following Hincks's many academic breakthroughs, the Prussian King Wilhelm I conferred on him the *Order Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste*.<sup>14</sup>

While it was in cuneiform that Hincks made his most significant contributions, Cathcart regards him as 'unique in the history of progress in the study of the ancient Near East in that he made major discoveries in both the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs and in Mesopotamian cuneiform' (Cathcart 1990–1, 6; 2008; 2009). Hincks was a major contributor to the decipherment of the demotic language of Egypt prior to Champollion's decipherment of the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone in the early 1820s and his statue still adorns the main court of the Cairo Museum. The consequent ability to read this ancient script caused the international spotlight to focus on Egypt, prompting a widescale Egyptomania that spread across Europe, reaching Irish shores.<sup>15</sup> In 1835 Hincks was present at the unrolling of the

<sup>14</sup> Near-contemporary recipients included Theodor Mommsen (1868), Charles Darwin (1868), Johannes Brahms (1887) and Giuseppe Verdi (1887), among a stellar host. The only other Irishman to receive this acclamation (in 1872) was Thomas Romney Robinson, a celebrated astronomer and physicist who was a Trinity Fellow in 1814 following Hincks, and after whom a moon crater was named. A portrait of Hincks hangs in the Manuscript Reading Room in Trinity College Dublin; an image worthy of a more public spotlight.

<sup>15</sup> Trinity College's accrual of Egyptiana dates to the late-seventeenth century, if not earlier, when Robert Huntingdon, a renowned Oriental scholar (and Trinity College provost from 1683–92) introduced, with another noted orientalist, Dudley Loftus, a mass of Egyptian and Oriental documents and hieroglyphic texts into the college (Murphy 1951, 192, note 1). Just prior to his arrival at Trinity College Huntingdon was posted as chaplain at Aleppo where he lived from 1671 to 1681 (Wood 1964, 226, fn. 5), while Smith informs us that he devoted time to collecting hieroglyphic texts in Egypt (Smith 1704). Huntingdon bestowed a large collection of eastern antiquities to the Ashmolean Museum (Murphy 1951, 191), while a sizeable collection of his manuscripts were gifted to the Bodleian Library (Toomer 1996, 285–6). These earlier reports conflict with Macalister's statement in the late nineteenth century that Huntingdon's discovery of a red clay cone of User-Ha featured 'among the very few genuine Egyptian remains in the Museum of Trinity College' (1879–86a). He also laments that 'as to the circumstances under which it came into the Museum, I know nothing, as there is no record of its source or presentation, and it has been in the collection for over forty years' (Macalister 1879–86a, 24). Moreover, in a later article describing a further cone, of Tirhakah, Macalister notes that 'I can only find that both specimens were in the Museum more than forty years ago; and as the dates of the presentation of Egyptian objects to the museum which are recorded are 1785, 1820, and 1835, I suppose that both these cones were among the unspecified Egyptian relics presented at one or other of the earlier dates' (1879–1886b, 26). The published cones are not present in the Weingreen Museum today but are very similar to another cone therein (WM 1792).

Ulster Museum's mummy, Takabuti, when he interpreted the hieroglyphs on her coffin before an assembly of elite guests. In 1850 he translated the hieroglyphs on the coffins of two other mummies brought back to Ireland by Sir James Emerson Tennent (another former student at Trinity College).<sup>16</sup> It is possible that Hincks made a study of a cast of the Rosetta Stone (one of the four earliest full-scale casts made of the stone in 1802, and a rare complete cast), also held in the Weingreen Museum (WM 1954), for his 1842 paper 'On the true date of the Rosetta Stone' (Hincks 1843, 72–7). As Hincks did not often travel far from his parish in Killyleagh, Co. Down, let alone to the east, the east occasionally arrived on his doorstep. Pooler informs us that:

one morning in winter two ladies came to consult him on some domestic matter. He [Hincks] was in the coach-house, which he had fitted up for the reception of the tablets which he received from the East for decipherment, and was inspecting with delight a new and somewhat bulky consignment. But the place was cold, and he was considering how he could have them removed to his study, when he was summoned to interview his two parishioners. We can imagine the tall, bent figure seated in his chair while the first lady told her story at length. The second followed with equal eloquence, and then there was silence in the room. At length one of them said: "But, Dr. Hincks, what would you advise us to do?" To their surprise Hincks, who had not been listening to them at all, answered: "I think, madam, I would have them brought in by the back door!" (1908, 50).

Regarding the study of cuneiform John Pentland Mahaffy wrote: 'Of many different men each made his partial discovery, but recoiled, baffled by the intricacy of the problem. There is, in fact, hardly any one who can be said to have kept in the van of the inquiry, and to have distinguished himself by several distinct contributions made at long intervals, except our fellow-countryman, Dr. Hincks, sometime fellow of Trinity College, Dublin' (1871, 167–8). Zimansky, in his review of the *Conquest of Assyria*, notes that 'Edward Hincks appears to have laboured more brilliantly in the academic backwater of a minor clerical post in Ireland, goading a jealous Rawlinson toward his eventual triumph' (1999, 93). Hincks was the first to detect the name of Sennacherib in the cuneiform inscriptions from Khorsabad in a paper read in 1849 to the Royal Irish Academy (published 1850). Several brilliant papers were read by him before the Royal Irish Academy (and subsequently appeared in its publications) on the decipherment of Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian and Sumerian and on his contributions to the study of hieroglyphic script (Cathcart 1990–1, 6).

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<sup>16</sup> The Takabuti Mummy and her case were brought from Thebes in 1834 by Mr Thomas Greg of Ballymenoch House, Hollywood, Co. Down, while Lord James Butler was also in possession of another coffin whose inscriptions were translated by Macalister in 1883 (Macalister 1879–86c, 253–62).

In 1857 in order to substantiate the decipherment of cuneiform, the Royal Asiatic Society commissioned Rawlinson, Hincks, Oppert and Fox Talbot to conduct independent translations of the inscription of Tiglath Pileser I, discovered at Qal'at Sharqat (then housed at the British Museum) (Cathcart 1990–1, 7). The similarity in Rawlinson's and Hincks's readings, bolstered by the commonalities inherent in the readings of Oppert and Fox Talbot, confirmed the decipherment of the script and established Rawlinson and Hincks as the authorities in the field.

Thinking that an investigation of the writings of Edward Hincks might elucidate the circumstances leading to the presence of the Weingreen relief in Trinity College, and having exhaustively searched through the conventional muniments records in Trinity College, I began examining the published journals and reports relating to the nineteenth century, with my focus on the late 1840s and 1850s, for acquisition details. Despite the fact that the period coincides with Layard's excavations and Hincks's breakthroughs in the decipherment of Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform, my search came to nothing. Hincks, in his hundreds of published articles, never mentioned the Weingreen relief, which would suggest that its acquisition may have post-dated his association with Trinity College. Hincks is rumoured to have had a tumultuous relationship with the provost (which provost remains uncertain, although there are many contenders such as Elrington, Kyle, Lloyd, Sadleir and McDonnell), explaining perhaps the breach which was to come in his association with the university. He resigned his fellowship in 1820, as is recorded in the Board Registrar for Trinity College, and was (rather tragically) never invited back to the college to pursue any studies thereafter.

Extending the chronological parameters of my initial search, I eventually found a reference in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, read in 1877, which stated that the relief was gifted to Trinity College in 1853 by a Mrs Rolland (Crofton 1870–9b, 385). This brief citation enabled me to look up the Board Registrar for Trinity College for the year 1853, where it was noted that 'the registrar was directed to return the thanks of the Provost and Senior Fellows to Dr and Mrs Rolland, for the valuable present of a sculptured slab from Nineveh made by them to the Museum of Trinity College' (signed MacDonnell, provost) (MUN/V/5/10 Board Register for 6 May 1851–2 Feb 1856, see Under 'R'; Rolland Dr and Mrs presentation to museum, 199). The fact that Hincks seems never to have been invited to view the stone despite having been employed by the British Museum for a full year to work on the inscriptions in 1855, just two years after its instalment in Trinity College, is testimony to his complete severance with the institution.

Mrs Charlotte  
Rolland

Charlotte Rolland and her husband, Captain Stewart Erskine Rolland, accompanied Austen Henry Layard during his second period of excavation at

Nimrud (1849–51). Much of their story is engagingly retold in Larsen's romanticised account, *The conquest of Assyria: excavations in an antique land, 1840–1860* (1996). In this, drawing from Layard's own published works and a series of unpublished letters in the British Library, Captain Rolland is portrayed as clearly more interested in hunting than archaeology and Layard describes him in his diary as 'one of the most selfish, ill-bred, unfeeling and conceited men I ever met' (cited in Larsen 1996, 253).

In contrast, Layard in his diaries speaks of Charlotte as a most valuable asset to the excavation team: 'she is the only person who has given me the slightest assistance—copying inscriptions, notes MS. etc., and taking bearings—in fact always making herself most useful' (cited in Larsen 1996, 254). Charlotte certainly had skills in illustrating and recording and Crofton informs us that many of the sketches in Layard's first book were executed by her (1870–9b, 385; the importance of these illustrations is emphasised by Holloway 2004, 249). Her favoured status is conveyed through a vignette of her seated on top of one of the winged lion figures (now in the British Museum) to ensure its safe passage as it was hauled from Nimrud to the river (Larsen 1996, 232).

It appears that Charlotte Rolland was a genuine beauty; a quality which was not lost on Layard, who frequently comments on women's appearances, apportioning hyperbolic praise and abject insult in equal measure (Larsen 1996, 248). The exact nature of Charlotte Rolland and Layard's relationship is unclear but it was viewed with strong disapproval from the missionary community (1996, 240 and 248). The frisson did not go unnoticed by her husband, who is portrayed by both Larsen and Layard as 'the volatile Captain'. On the journey back to Mosul from Nimrud, the captain's behaviour became increasingly unstable to the detriment of Charlotte. Layard intervened and offered her a room in his own house—perhaps not the most prudent measure given the circumstances (Larsen 1996, 253). Finally, tension erupted and the Captain verbally attacked Layard, and forcibly removed his wife to their tent.

In his diary Layard writes:

A few moments afterwards I heard violent screams proceeding from his tent, which was left completely open on two sides. One of my servants running in at the same time cried out that Mr. Rolland had thrown his wife to the ground and was attempting to murder her. I had only one course to pursue and calling some people we separated them and secured him. He was in a most violent state—uttering abuse which I need not repeat and calling for his arms—because I had dared to interfere between him and his wife (cited in Larsen 1996, 254).

The matter was eventually resolved and the Captain issued a formal letter of apology absolving Layard of any improper conduct. The Rollands were,



perhaps understandably, requested to leave. They returned to England whereupon Mrs Rolland almost immediately gifted the piece to Trinity College.<sup>17</sup>

### Reliefs from Iraq as objects of Victorian exchange

Charlotte Rolland gave the relief to Trinity College in 1853, not long after the close of the second season of excavation at Nimrud (in 1851) on which Charlotte Rolland had worked. The Weingreen relief seems to have been transported and reached its destination shortly after it was excavated. The gift considerably precedes the presentation of its sister relief (and its other remaining half, BM WA 98062) to the British Museum by Edward VII in the early years of the twentieth century (Curtis and Reade 2008, 56).

While the adjoining fragment only arrived at the British Museum following a delay of half a century, it may have reached the shores of Britain considerably earlier. This adjoining fragment (BM WA 98062) may be grouped with a collection formally held in Osborne House on the Isle of Wight as yet another identical relief (BM WA 98061; Reg. no: 1903,1010.2), albeit not an adjoining piece, was also gifted to the British Museum by Edward VII in 1903 when Queen Victoria's Assyrian collection needed to be relocated from the manor.<sup>18</sup> Osborne House was built as a summer retreat for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert between 1845 and 1851, thereby providing a *terminus post quem* for their instalment and allowing for the suggestion that the group of reliefs therein formed part of the same shipment in the mid-nineteenth century.

The speed of transporting Layard's finds to Britain was fuelled by direct competition with the French excavations at Khorsabad under the direction of Paul-Émile Botta. In his discourse on Victorian exoticism Bohrer parallels the competitive spirit between France and England with their zeal in amassing Assyrian antiquities (1998, 336).

In their treatment of the actual Mesopotamia (and Mesopotamians) France and England asserted both unique identities and common assumptions...the archaeological rediscovery of the ancient Neo-Assyrian kingdom owes much to the projects for geopolitical dominance of the two countries. The rivalry of France and England was played out, in part, through the amassing of remains (Bohrer 1998, 341).

Despite Layard's and Rawlinson's best efforts, the Louvre opened its Nineveh Salon in 1847, just as Layard's first shipment arrived at the London docks

<sup>17</sup> Crofton attributes the gift solely to Charlotte Rolland, while the registrar records 'Rolland Dr and Mrs' (Crofton 1870–9b, 385; see MUN/V/5/10 in the Board Register for 6 May 1851–2 Feb 1856, under 'R'—Rolland Dr and Mrs presentation to museum, 199). The Weingreen relief was registered in Trinity College Dublin in 1853 and, by 1877, Crofton notes that it was 'preserved upstairs in the College Library, to the left of the visitors' entrance' (1870–9b, 385).

<sup>18</sup> See: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectid=468173&partid=1&searchText=sacred+tree+protective+spirit&fromADBC=adandtoADBC=adandnumpages=10&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch\\_the\\_collection\\_database.aspx&currentPage=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=468173&partid=1&searchText=sacred+tree+protective+spirit&fromADBC=adandtoADBC=adandnumpages=10&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx&currentPage=1) (24 August 2010).

(Bohrer 1998, 336–42; Jenkins 1992, 156–8). The opening of the Louvre's Assyrian display (on 1 May 1847) marked the first large-scale presentation of Assyrian artefacts to a European audience. The occasion was ceremonially elevated through the attendance of King Louis-Philippe to mark 'the historical moment of Assyria's entry into the French milieu' (Bohrer 1998, 344). Grandiose proclamations in *L'illustration*, a then new and much fêted magazine in France, heralded that 'the Assyrian monarch now sets foot on the banks of the Seine. A new, more worthy, home has been destined for him, the palace of our kings' (*L'illustration* 1847, 168; cited in Bohrer 1998, 344). The king's presence made Assyrian romanticism subject to the propaganda of the French court which itself drew upon the kingships of Nebuchadnezzar, Sardanapalus and Ninus—figureheads previously introduced to French audiences through their mythic portrayals by Martin and Delacroix (Bohrer 1998, 344; Ziter 2003, 138).

It was amid this atmosphere of European competitiveness that Trinity College received the Weingreen relief in 1853. The exact circumstances motivating this specific endowment to Trinity College still remain unclear, yet it seems that a personal connection often sealed the receipt of such muniments (Reade 2010, 103; Cohen and Kangas 2010, 4). Cheng furnishes us with the details concerning an episode in 1992 when an elderly lady contacted John Curtis, Keeper of the Middle East collections in the British Museum, inviting him to view a piece of art which she had inherited (2008, 237). The woman in question was the granddaughter of one of Layard's architects and, consequently, the relief of 'The dying lion' came into her possession; she generously gifted it to the British Museum in as recently as the 1990s (2008, 237). Evidently not all of the reliefs from Nimrud and Nineveh ended up in the British Museum nor, indeed, in Britain.

In 1992 an Assyrian relief (depicting a similar, but not identical, genie to the Weingreen relief) was rediscovered on the wall of the tuck shop of Canford School in Dorset (Cohen and Kangas 2010, 2). The history of the school illuminates the circumstances behind the relief's arrival to this premises, as, originally, Canford School had been a country house (known as Canford Manor). The manor, designed by Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the Houses of Parliament, was the residence of Layard's cousin and mother-in-law, Lady Charlotte Guest and her husband, Sir John Josiah Guest. At that time the structure, now known as 'the Grubber', was originally 'the Nineveh Porch', an architectural expression of Assyrian reception in mid-nineteenth-century England, whereby the structure was designed to complement the display of Assyrian antiquities it housed (McKenzie 1997, 173–89). A collection of 26 Assyrian sculptures lined the walls of the porch; an assemblage only trumped at the time by the Assyrian relief collection in the British Museum. In 1919, eighteen of the sculptures were sold, to eventually resurface (via an antiquities dealer, Dikran G. Kelekian) in the collection of John D. Rockefeller Jr, who

donated them to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1932 (Larsen 1997).<sup>19</sup> The last remaining relief at Canford, then known as the Canford relief, was sold by Christie's at an auction in 1994 for 7.7 million GBP (11.9 million dollars), and is now part of the collection of the Miho Museum in Japan, and renamed the Canford-Miho Assyrian relief (Paley 1999, 17–29, Plate 1; Russell 1997).

### Other objects from Iraq in the Weingreen Museum

The Weingreen relief can be grouped with thirteen other objects from Iraq, acquired by Trinity College during the nineteenth century and now held in the Weingreen Museum (as listed in the catalogue below). Talks delivered in 1877 in the Royal Irish Academy, however, reveal the presence of further Iraqi artefacts in Trinity College; including stamped mud-bricks, clay tablets and cylinder seals (Crofton 1870–9a and b). On face value these artefacts, carrying both script and pictorial symbols, are arguably relics of the former prowess of Trinity College in Oriental Studies and in Ancient Philology.<sup>20</sup>

Crofton's nineteenth-century account of a stamped mud-brick of Nebuchadnezzar in the museum of Trinity College reveals that he was 'unable to find out who was the donor [*sic*], or how it came into the Museum' (Crofton 1870–9a, 382). Moreover, Crofton distinguishes between Trinity College's then museum (where the published mud-brick was held) and the library (where the

<sup>19</sup> Other pieces were transported to the seminaries and museums of America (over 70 reliefs in all), albeit that this market was fuelled by a separate agenda, as often these accruals were driven by biblical interests (Cohen and Kangas 2010; Holloway 2004, 255–6; Herbert 1964, 11). Three Assyrian reliefs which reached America in 1859 are on display in the school library at Virginia Theological Seminary. Packard, citing Rev. J. S. Lindsay, writes that the three slabs, 'secured by Dr. Packard through the liberality of a friend', were so valuable that the Smithsonian Institution, on failing to purchase them, had plaster casts made of them (Packard, citing Rev. J.S. Lindsay, 1902, 305). These reliefs were originally acquired by Dr Henri Byron Haskell, a medical missionary in Mosul, along with a group of five slabs destined for Bowdoin College in Maine and another for Haskell's brother-in-law (Ross 1976, 4). Haskell was a friend of Dr Joseph Packard (then professor at Virginia Theological Seminary and later dean) and both were graduates of Bowdoin and Andover Theological Seminary (Ross 1976, 4). Ross also cites a further six pieces at Dartmouth College and in the Boston Museum of Fine Art (1976, 4 and 8; Cohen and Kangas 2010), while, as previously noted, an exact twin of the Weingreen Relief is listed as housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Grace 1940, 24–5, Fig. 2).

<sup>20</sup> The artefacts invite an active reading experience. Cylinder seals and hand-held tablets, written on all sides, instruct the reader to rotate the object manually. They were originally designed as hand-held reading experiences or as rolling stamps, purposes which are fundamental to their academic appreciation and exhibition. The inherent manipulation of the reading process should be captured in the objects' future photographic representation and physical display. The detailed depictions rendered on the smaller objects represent a challenge to any photographer and certainly to the naked eye. They are arguably best exhibited in a dual display—both physically and either through a lens or magnified on screen, as their artistic accomplishment can be diminished in physical display alone.

Weingreen relief was initially on display) (Crofton 1870–9a, 382; 1870–9b, 385), thereby indicating that the Iraqi material was divided between these two exhibition areas.

Crofton translates the cuneiform mud-brick stamp as follows:

I (am) Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, restorer of the pyramid, and tower, eldest son of Nabopallassar, King of Babylon (Crofton 1870–9a, 384).

Five other stamped mud-bricks, four of which refer to Nebuchadnezzar (although following a different epigraphic format) are held in the Weingreen Museum (as listed in the catalogue below). Crofton's published example, however, could not be identified within the Weingreen Museum's holdings, although the report suggests a *terminus ante quem* for the acquisition of similar mud-bricks and their arrival at Trinity College. Later acquisitions are on record as held in the Manuscripts and Archives Research Library in Trinity College; Geller reports on three Sumerian tablets, from Larsa, in southern Mesopotamia, acquired by Stephen Langdon on behalf of the college in as late as 1914 (2001, 225, fn. 2).<sup>21</sup> This sample of cuneiform tablets, dated by Langdon to 2200 BCE, constitutes the earliest texts in that archive (Geller 2001, 225, fn. 2; TCD Ms. 4687a/2 and TCD Ms. 4687/9).

### The spoils of Victorian commerce and Trinity College Dublin

The Weingreen Museum is the legacy of a lineage of powerful provosts and influential professors who were closely involved in its formation and, as such, its contents reflect the political dynamics of the college in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Trinity College acquired the Weingreen relief (and, perhaps, the other objects from Iraq) in the years when Richard McDonnell was provost (1852–67). McDonnell, despite some bad press, instigated lasting changes to the college system by introducing radical reforms to the university administration, and these alterations had exponential repercussions for its collections (Dixon 1902, 196; Luce 1992, 99). The provost had already demonstrated his administrative and financial efficiency while a Fellow, when in 1828 he published an in-depth review of the curriculum and examination process—a work which greatly informed Bartholomew Lloyd's institutional reforms (Lloyd was Trinity College provost from 1831 to 1837 and President of the *Royal Irish Academy* from 1835 to 1837).

In 1855 appointments to the Civil Service of India and to the Army and Navy Medical Service were offered on a competitive basis to the public, thereby instantly providing a range of career opportunities for graduates (Dixon 1902, 196; Neild 2002, 69). McDonnell sensibly ensured that any further improvements to the university system were tailored to meet the prerequisites for securing these government posts. The system of university teaching was purposefully transformed to furnish graduates with the skillsets these positions required. The fields of Hindustani, Arabic, and, subsequently, Sanskrit, were provisioned with

<sup>21</sup> The associated correspondence between Stephen Langdon and Professor Gwynn is also held in the Manuscripts and Archives Research Library (Geller, 2001, 225, fn. 2).

professorial positions while the Chair of Oratory was associated with the teaching of English literature (Dixon 1902, 196; Lennon 2004, 175). Professors of Greek, geology and experimental physics were reorganised while modern languages, literature and modern history also gained academic weight.

Mesopotamia, or more appropriately Iraq, constituted a specific strategic and political intermedial position in terms of mapping British interests (Bohrer 1998, 341). Establishing a connecting corridor between the industrial factories and markets of England and India's raw materials and produce was already a major commercial concern in the 1830s.<sup>22</sup> In an effort to link these industrial hubs, Colonel Francis Chesney (born in Co. Down) led an expedition involving the shipment of two dissembled paddle-steamers to a port on the eastern Mediterranean from where they were hauled overland to the Euphrates to be reassembled and used in an exploration of the river's navigability (Chesney 1868; Reade 2010, 92).

In 1856 Rawlinson, who is better remembered as an orientalist, became the director of the East India Company. Rawlinson enjoyed an illustrious and diverse career in the east as an orientalist, political agent and military officer, serving in Iran as a British officer, training the Persian army, and later active in the first Anglo-Afghan War (Reade 2010, 94). It has been similarly mooted that Layard was primarily concerned with gathering intelligence for economic and territorial opportunities during his earliest presence in the region, as directly instructed by the ambassador Stratford Canning (Bohrer 1998, 342; Malley 2008, 632). Malley views Layard's 'Memorandum on the Government of the Arab Tribes of the Desert', composed for the Foreign Office in 1848, as corroborating 'archaeology's hidden imperialist objectives of mapping, cataloguing, claiming and policing territory' (2008, 639).

Malley surmises that Layard and Rawlinson considered the material from Nimrud as a political metonym for informal imperialism: 'In situ, the material culture of Assyria appears unfixed and even meaningless; displaced to the British Museum, it becomes a solid, lasting material signifier of Britain's diplomatic mission in the East' (2008, 635). In terms of personal ambition, Malley and Arentzen regard the excavations at Nimrud as a means for Layard to attain a longer-term career in politics and a secure position in the Foreign Office (Malley 2008, 633; Arentzen 2001, 181). Certainly, with the publication of his best-seller *Nineveh and its Remains* in 1849 (subtitled: *with an account of a visit to the Chaldaean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil-Worshippers; and an inquiry into the manners and arts of the ancient Assyrians*), he entered the courts of diplomatic aristocracy and was offered the position in the Foreign Office which he so assiduously sought and, perhaps significantly, after 1851 he never returned to

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<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Bohrer views Claudius James Rich's earlier excursions in Mesopotamia as endeavours to secure British investment, specifically aimed at exploring potential overland and river routes to India (Bohrer 1998, 341). Such pursuits also acted as a safeguard against French interests in the region following Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt and Britain's failure to occupy Alexandria in 1807 (1998, 341). Rich was appointed the British East India Company's first resident in Baghdad in 1808 (Rich 1836).



Iraq to pursue further excavations (Malley 2008, 637; for the extent of the publishing run see Holloway 2004, 249–50). His rising career in the Foreign Office ultimately led to his position as the First Commissioner of Works and culminated in his elevation to the Privy Council (*The London Gazette* 1868, 6581). Yet, while Layard clearly capitalised on his archaeological fame in the political arena, it might also be noted that he actively pursued art historical projects for the duration of his diplomatic service and well into his retirement (Levi 2005, 41–2). Despite his overarching political ambition, his interest in antiquity, albeit appraised from an art historical perspective and informed by Winckelmann's school, was enduring.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

The Victorian recontextualisation and historiography of the Weingreen relief demonstrates how the essence of an object can be eclipsed and reconfigured. Its reading can be tailored to suit the anticipations of an adoptive audience, while its narrative can be reinvented to conform to Victorian ideologies, interests and aesthetic preferences. Tracing the Victorian reincarnation of the Weingreen relief here involved a broad review ranging in theme from the historic development of the object's associated academic institution to the geographical magnitude of Victorian enterprise, operating as it did from Ireland to India.

Artistically, the relief can be viewed as a material expression of the reception of an exotic aesthetic which infused European sensitivities already fuelled by the excavations at Nimrud and Khorsabad. The installation of related artefacts in the British Museum had an arresting effect on the public psyche of 1850s London, influencing contemporary viewers such as Sigmund Freud (Burke 2006; Flem 2003, 31) and inspiring the poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Zimmerman 2008, 20–2). But if this small collection from modern Iraq held in the Weingreen Museum can be romantically interpreted as reflective of the magnificence of Mesopotamian culture and its far-reaching legacy on the fringes of a later empire, the political and imperial factors behind the procurement of such antiquities in the mid-nineteenth century, when the British Foreign Office had vested interests in the region, cannot be overlooked (for the integral interplay of politics and representation see Bahrani 1998, 159–74). Politically, the arrival of the Weingreen relief to Dublin can be viewed against a backdrop of British imperialism in the east, driven by commercial motives and a competitive spirit.

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<sup>23</sup> Layard was clearly hunting at Nimrud for monumental *objets d'art* for large-scale exhibit in Britain. He notes during his excavations that 'In the rubbish near the bottom of the chamber, I found several ivory ornaments, upon which there were traces of gilding; among them was the figure of a man in long robes, carrying in one hand the Egyptian crux ansata, part of a crouching sphinx, and flowers designed with great taste and elegance. Awad. . .carefully collected all the scattered fragments of gold leaf he could find in the rubbish [and handed them to me]. . .The Sheikh was much surprised, and equally disappointed, when I generously presented him with the treasures he had collected, and all such as he might hereafter discover' (Layard 1849, 47). Ultimately, it was these small, Egyptian-like objects that allowed Samuel Birch to cross-date material, thereby applying a more systematic approach to dating Layard's discoveries.

On an institutional level, the relief symbolises an area of strategic concern for the college administrators in the mid-nineteenth century, a preoccupation which informed the development of academic pursuits and shaped future departmental structures. If the collection can be looked upon as the last vestige of Trinity College's 'golden age' of Eastern Studies, we must also appreciate that in the mid-nineteenth century the study of obsolete scripts, ancient cultures and far-flung geographic regions were all valued as economically viable and commercially enabling pursuits. Exotic artefacts were central to the university's then 'mission statement' and, as such, can be historically linked with a host of renowned Trinity College *alumni* and *emeriti*.

This eclectic collection can be associated beyond the gates of the university with the robust political figures of Henry Crookshank and Austen Henry Layard and other pioneering archaeological giants such as Kathleen Kenyon, Crystal Bennett, James Leslie Starkey and Arthur Evans. It is perhaps fitting to reinterpret the Weingreen Museum as a tribute to the former tradition of Oriental Studies at Trinity College, wherein the relief would serve as a memorial, albeit serendipitously, to an often overlooked academic giant, Edward Hincks, who played a significant role in the decipherment of both hieroglyphic and cuneiform script, despite the fact that the arrival of the relief in Trinity College seems to post-date Hincks's association with the university.

The arrival of the relief also predated the completion of the university's museum building, but even by 1877, following that building's completion, it was mounted in a prominent location, 'upstairs in the College Library, to the left of the visitors' entrance' (Crofton 1870–9b, 385).<sup>24</sup> In being exhibited in such a pre-eminent space in the Long Room of the Old Library (the roof of which was raised to facilitate the construction of the present barrel-vaulted ceiling and upper-gallery bookcases in 1860), the Assyrian relief was granted a home redolent of the Victorian grandeur of the Nineveh porches at both Canford Manor and London's Crystal Palace (Layard 1854).

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<sup>24</sup> The centre of the earliest library at Trinity College seems to have been used originally as a museum (Murphy 1951, 191). John Dunton, a London bookseller, described a visit to the 'College Library' in 1698 in his book *The Dublin scuffle* where he lists an assortment of books, folios, manuscripts, medals, the thigh-bone of a giant, anatomical skeletons and the superimposed face of one executed victim over the remains of another, together with other curiosities (cited in Dunton 1818, 623–5). This arrangement predates the Old Library which was designed with a flat roof in the eighteenth century. The museum building and the Campanile (constructed in 1854) were completed during the early years of Richard McDonnell's provostship (Wyse Jackson 1992, 265; Luce 1992, 99). Trinity College's museum building was designed to house geological specimens and also to provide permanent accommodation for the engineering school. This is perhaps of relevance as in Victorian anthropology, museums became centres for professional research, as the central theoretic and disciplinary role of collections was tied to evolutionary theory; it is relevant that both professors who published articles in the nineteenth century on the artefacts from Iraq held in Trinity College, Alexander Macalister and Denis Crofton, were professors of Anatomy.

**Acknowledgements** I must first thank both Professor Brian McGing of the Department of Classics and Dr Zuleika Rodgers of the School of Religions and Theology and present Curator of the Weingreen Museum of Biblical Antiquities, both of Trinity College Dublin, for their support and encouragement while I was a Postdoctoral Fellow of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies there. I am also very grateful to the Heritage Council of Ireland who generously facilitated my invitation to work with Lisa Usman, Head of Conservation at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar, to conduct a preliminary conservation assessment of the Weingreen Museum, through the Museum and Archives Grant. I am most indebted to Lisa for her professionalism, long hours of hard work and, as always, her lively company. I extend my gratitude to Dr Paul Collins, then Assistant Keeper, Department of the Middle East, British Museum and, currently, Head Curator for the Zayed National Museum Project, who entertained my impromptu visit to his department, expertly dealt with a wide range of inquiries and was vastly informative in my follow-up pursuit of Charlotte Rolland. In terms of photographic permission, I thank Gillian Whelan who photographed the complete cuneiform collection held in the Weingreen Museum as a trial exercise, and Tim Keefe of Digital Resources and Imaging Services (DRIS), Trinity College Dublin—all photographs are the copyright of the Board of Trinity College Dublin. I extend this gratitude to Brendan Dempsey of the Photographic Unit of Trinity College Dublin—again all photographs are the copyright of the Board of Trinity College Dublin. I am indebted to the Trustees of the British Museum (who hold the copyright) and to John Curtis for granting me kind permission to reproduce WA 98062; after Curtis and Reade (2008, 57, Plate 8). I am also most grateful to Robin Brown and Dr Joseph Greene of the Harvard Semitic Museum for their encouragement and friendship (and the prominent space they reserved for my Weingreen posters at the reception in honour of Professor Lawrence Stager during the ASOR Annual Meeting in 2008). I extend this gratitude to Reverend Dr John Bartlett for his devotion to the collection and to Ms Natalie Aquino who assisted me in the museum every Tuesday afternoon during the academic year 2008–9.

**Abbreviations** TCD Ms (Ms 4687a/2 and MS 4687/9)—Trinity College Dublin. Manuscripts and Archives Research Library. Asian, Middle Eastern and Ethiopic Manuscripts. Available at: <http://www.tcd.ie/Library/manuscripts/collections/asian.php> (25 August 2010).

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## APPENDIX

### Catalogue of items from Iraq held in the Weingreen Museum; excerpts from the Weingreen Museum database

#### (1) Artefact number: WM 1177

Artefact type: foundation nail or cone with cuneiform script

Function: foundation nails or cones were buried in foundations, not ordinarily visible as decoration, and were a feature of the Sumerian Early Dynastic period

Material: clay

Measurements: height 11.6cm

Script: cuneiform/Sumerian

Translation: 'For Ningirsu, the night warrior of Enlil, Gudea, ruler of Lagash, made everything resplendent, (re)built Erinnu, his (Ningirsu's) shining Imdugud-bird and restored it'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 March 1984

Date: 2141–22 BCE

Provenance: Iraq, possibly Lagash

#### (2) Artefact number: WM 1178

Artefact type: foundation nail or cone with cuneiform script

Function: foundation nails or cones were buried in foundations, not ordinarily visible as decoration, and were a feature of the Sumerian Early Dynastic period

Material: clay

Measurements: height 11.2cm

Script: cuneiform/Sumerian

Translation: 'For Enlil, king of the lands, his king, Ur-Nammu, king of Ur, king of Sumer and Akkad, built his temple and dug the Enerinnun canal, the canal of his food offerings'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 March 1984

Date: Third Dynasty of Ur, Ur-Nammu *c.* 2112–2095 BCE. UR III

Provenance: Iraq, Ur

Plate: Pl. III

#### (3) Artefact number: WM 1179

Artefact type: foundation nail or cone with cuneiform script

Function: foundation nails or cones were buried in foundations and not ordinarily visible as decoration and were a feature of the Sumerian Early Dynastic period

Material: clay

Measurements: height 9cm

Script: cuneiform/Sumerian

Translation: 'For Nanna, the fierce bull-calf of An, the prime son of Enlil, his lord Ur Nammu, the mighty man, king of Ur, built his (house) Etemenniguru'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 March 1984

Date: Third Dynasty of Ur, Ur-Nammu *c.* 2112–2095 BCE. UR III

Provenance: Iraq, Ur

(4) Artefact number: WM 1180

Artefact type: foundation nail or cone with cuneiform script.

Function: foundation nails or cones were buried in foundations and not ordinarily visible as decoration and were a feature of the Sumerian Early Dynastic period

Material: clay

Measurements: height 7cm

Script: cuneiform/Sumerian

Translation: 'For Nanna, the fierce bull-calf of An, the prime son of Enlil, his lord Ur-Nammu, the mighty man, king of Ur, built his (house) Etemenniguru'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 March 1984

Date: Third Dynasty of Ur, Ur-Nammu *c.* 2112–2095 BCE UR III

Provenance: Iraq, Ur

(5) Artefact number: WM 1181

Artefact type: clay tablet impressed with cuneiform

Material: clay

Script: Cuneiform

Translation: 'Sin-Kashid, the mighty man, king of Uruk, king of the Amnanum (tribe) provisioner of Eanna, built his royal palace'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 February 1984

Date: *c.* 1800 BCE, possibly Old Babylonian period (for identical tablet see Jursa and Payne 2005, 119, no. 7)

Provenance: Iraq, possibly Ur

(6) Artefact number: WM 1182

Artefact type: stamped mudbrick of Amar-Sin of Ur

Material: clay

Function: building material

Measurements: height 9.5cm

Script: Sumerian cuneiform inscription, incomplete

Translation: 'Amar-Su'ena chosen by Enlil in Nippur, who toils unceasingly in the temple of Enlil, the mighty king of Ur, king of the four world-quarters'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert 22 February 1984

Date: Third Dynasty of Ur, Amar-Sin 2046–38 BCE UR III

Provenance: Iraq, possibly Ur

(7) Artefact number: WM 1183

Artefact type: stamped brick of Nebuchadnezzar II 605–562 BCE

Function: building material

Material: clay

Measurements: height approx. 9.8cm

Script: Babylonian cuneiform

Translation: 'Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, provisioner of Esagil and Ezida, prime son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, am I'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert 22 February 1984, same inscription as WM 1183 and WM 1184

Date: Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE)

Provenance: Iraq

(8) Artefact number: WM 1184

Artefact type: stamped brick of Nebuchadnezzar II 605–562 BCE

Function: building material

Material: clay

Measurements: height approx. 14.2cm

Script: Babylonian cuneiform, rectangular stamp, six lines long

Translation: 'Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, provisioner of Esagil and Ezida, prime son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, am I'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 February 1984, same inscription as WM 1183 and WM 1184

Date: Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE)

Provenance: Iraq

(9) Artefact number: WM 1185

Artefact type: stamped brick of Nebuchadnezzar II 605–562 BCE

Function: building material

Material: clay

Measurements: 31.7 × 31.4cm

Script: Babylonian cuneiform

Translation: 'Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, provisioner of Esagil and Ezida, prime son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, am I'

Transliteration and translation: W.G. Lambert, 22 February 1984, same inscription as WM 1183 and WM 1184

Date: Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE)

Provenance: Babylon, southern Iraq (for identical mudbrick see BM ME 90081)

Plate: Pl. IV

(10) Artefact number: WM 1186

Artefact type: cylinder seal

Material: quartz

Measurements: height 3.2cm  
Inscription: pictorial, contest scene of three heroes and four horned animals (hunting scene) Identification: W.G. Lambert, 22 February 1984  
Date: Early Dynastic II *c.* 2600 BCE  
Provenance: southern Iraq  
Plates: Pls V–VIII

(11) Artefact number: WM 1187

Artefact type: cylinder seal  
Function: possibly administrative  
Material: black stone  
Measurement: height 2cm  
Inscription: pictorial, neo-Assyrian linear style, archer shooting at quadruped; branch star Identification: W.G. Lambert 22 February 1984  
Date: *c.* 900–800 BCE neo-Assyrian  
Provenance: northern Iraq  
Plates: Pls IX–X

(12) Artefact number: WM 1188

Artefact type: cylinder seal  
Function: possibly administrative  
Material: black stone  
Measurements: height 2.1cm  
Inscription: pictorial, contest scene/hunting scene of two heroes and two lions, Old Babylonian, some recutting  
Identification: W.G. Lambert, 22 February 1984  
Date: Old Babylonian *c.* 1900–1700 BCE  
Provenance: Iraq  
Pls: XI–XII

(13) Artefact number: WM 1819

Artefact type: oval stone seal  
Function: possibly originally set in a seal ring  
Material: cornelian stone  
Description: edges slightly chipped, running lion carved into upper surface, whitish vein in lower surface of stone.  
Measurements 1.35cm × 1cm × 0.05cm