

KALĦU'S PALACES OF WAR AND PEACE: PALACE ARCHITECTURE AT NIMRUD IN THE NINTH CENTURY BC

By DAVID KERTAI

This article discusses the two main royal palaces constructed in KalĦu during the ninth century: Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace and Shalmaneser III's Military Palace. Through a re-examination of the architecture of both palaces, it will be argued that the two were more alike than has been commonly assumed. The military nature of the Military Palace did not preclude the presence of most types of spaces that were already present in the Northwest Palace. By discussing the differences and similarities between the kinds of spaces, decoration and spatial organisation found in each palace this article tries to offer a new analysis of both, and of the nature of Late Assyrian royal palaces more broadly.

Shalmaneser III came to the throne in 859 BC amidst one of the biggest building operations known to the Assyrian empire (Fig. 1). It was approximately twenty years earlier, during the reign of his father Ashurnasirpal II (883–859), that the construction of the new capital at KalĦu commenced. This project included the complete refurbishment of the citadel with a large platform, walls and gates as well as the construction of a royal palace, known today as the Northwest Palace, and several temples including a ziggurat. A new city wall was built around the outer town, a project not yet finished when Shalmaneser III took the throne. A precise chronology is unavailable, but at least the so-called “centre bulls”¹ and the Eastern Gate of the citadel² can be dated to his reign. The ziggurat and Ninurta Temple³ and part of the Northwest Palace⁴ also show his involvement. Shalmaneser also constructed a large palace on the outskirts of KalĦu. When this was finished, somewhat after 843 BC,⁵ it must have been the largest palace within the Assyrian empire.

The need for such a monumental palace on the outskirts of KalĦu is not self-evident, considering that the Northwest Palace had just been finished on the citadel. The two buildings, however, represented two distinct palace traditions that had existed within the Assyrian empire. The Northwest Palace replaced the royal palace at Ashur as the empire's main palace, while Shalmaneser's palace on the outskirts of KalĦu probably continued a palace tradition that had existed at Nineveh for at least two hundred years. Even though the evidence is somewhat indirect, there seems good reason to believe that Nineveh was the location of the main military establishment of the Assyrian empire, and both Ashurnasirpal and Shalmaneser undertook many of their campaigns from the city.⁶ It is tempting to think that they used the palace known as the *bīt kutalli*, or Rear Palace,⁷ for this purpose. A palace by this name was already repaired by Ashur-resh-ishi I (1132–1115 BC),⁸ suggesting that it had existed in Nineveh for a long time. A first description of this building is only known from a much later period, when Sennacherib (704–681 BC) mentions that it was intended “for the care of the camp, the stabling of the horses and the storing of things in general”.⁹ The *bīt kutalli* was probably the specific name for the Nineveh palace. In this later period, the palace was also known as an *ekal māšarti*.

¹ Sobolewski 1982.

² Mallowan 1966: 38 (fig. 6), 83.

³ Reade 2002: n. 2, 164–65.

⁴ The degree to which the Northwest Palace was finished by the time of Ashurnasirpal's death and the exact chronology of its construction are unclear. We are mostly limited to inscribed bricks for dating building parts. Mallowan (1966: 167) claimed that “many of the rooms” in area ZT, in the north of the palace, contained brick pavements dating to Shalmaneser. His inscribed bricks were found in the three wells (NN, AJ and AB) located in the palace and in the pavement of corridor P (Mallowan 1966: 62). The improvements

and reconstructions of niche EA next to the throne-room can also be dated to Shalmaneser (Mallowan 1966: 116), but cannot be used to date the original construction of this part. Inscribed bricks of Shalmaneser were also found in Tomb III in Room 57 (Al-Rawi 2008: 126), but these seem originally to have belonged to the ziggurat.

⁵ Russell 1999: 70.

⁶ Russell 1999: 222, 231.

⁷ The *bīt kutalli* is normally located at Nebi Yunus, the second mound of Nineveh.

⁸ Grayson 1987: 314 = A.0.86.4: 4.

⁹ Luckenbill 1924: 131–34 (H4) 1.56.

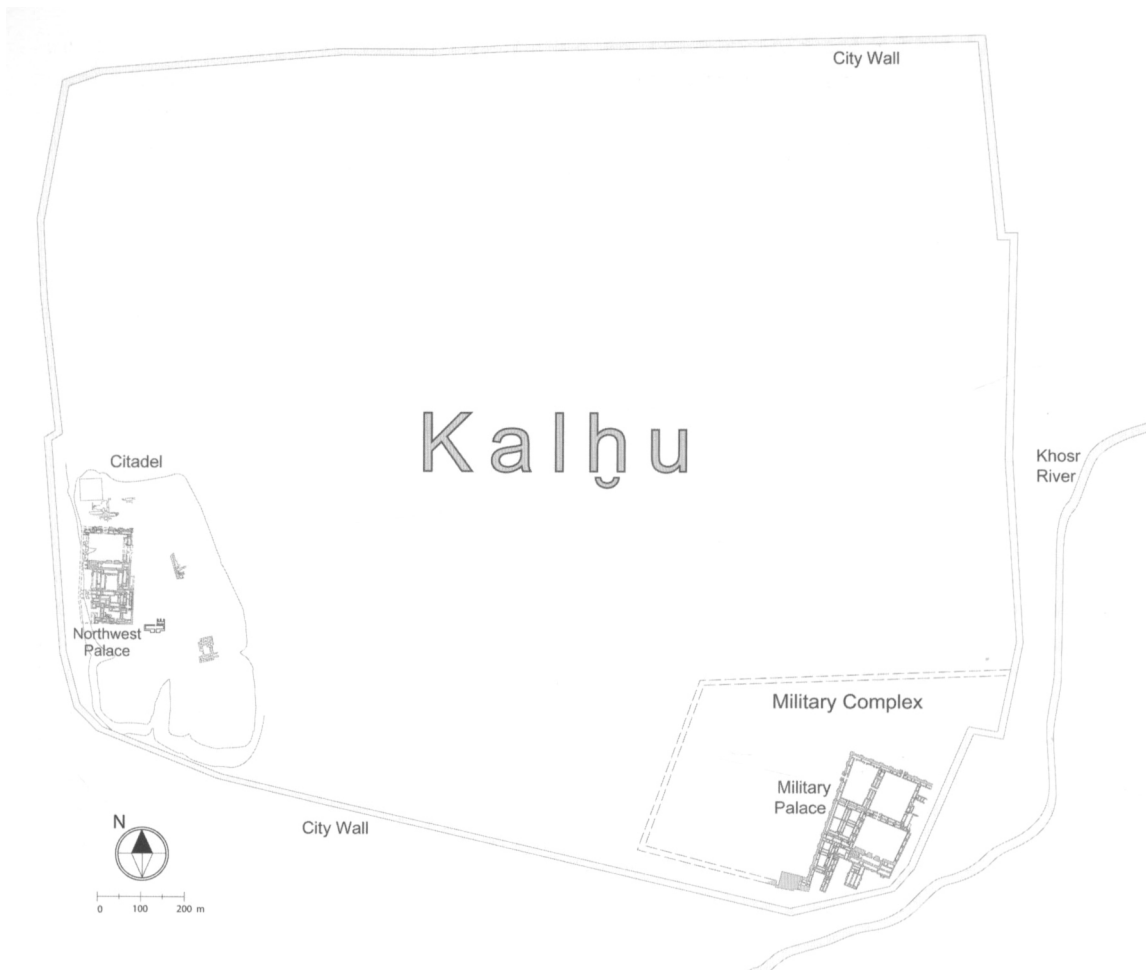


Fig. 1 Schematic city-plan of Kalḫu at the end of the ninth century BC.

From the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669 BC) onwards the designation *ekal māšarti* is also used for Shalmaneser's palace at Kalḫu.¹⁰ This palace did not have a specific name that we know of before Esarhaddon's reign, but its architecture, as discussed below, strongly suggests that it was meant to function as a military establishment from the outset. Later textual evidence supports this hypothesis.¹¹

The *bīt kutalli* and *ekal māšarti* are often translated as Review Palace, which describes what must have been the most important event taking place within their confines at the start of each campaign season. These palaces must, however, have been in use throughout the year, which is not reflected in the name Review Palace. The designation Arsenal, which is also sometimes used, fails to reflect the important palatial aspect of these buildings. A similar argument can be made against the name Fort Shalmaneser, often used to describe the palace built by Shalmaneser in the lower town of Kalḫu. This name puts too much emphasis on the king who built the palace, ignoring more than two centuries of later use. This article will describe an *ekal māšarti* as a Military Palace, emphasising the two main features of these buildings.

With the construction of the Northwest Palace and Military Palace the political and military centres of the empire shifted away from Ashur and Nineveh and were combined in the new capital of Kalḫu. Both Ashur and Nineveh, however, retained their prominence and were the location of major building activity in this period.¹²

¹⁰ Borger 1956: 34, l. 42.

¹¹ Dalley and Postgate 1984.

¹² Russell 1999: 221–31.

With the size of the Assyrian army and the amount of spoil and tribute that was gathered throughout its history it is hard to overestimate the scale of the activities located in a Military Palace. These factors certainly help to explain the size of the Military Palace at KalĦu. The palace itself was only a small part of a much larger complex, and many of its main functions were probably located outside the central palace. The palace itself functioned, in the words of Turner, as “the headquarters and nerve-centre of the whole complex”.¹³

The later history of the palace resulted in a palimpsest of changes, which cannot simply be peeled off to show the original floorplan and the functions of different spaces. Like most of KalĦu, the Military Palace seems to have retained its primacy for almost one hundred and fifty years up to the reign of Sargon II, was partially reconstructed during the reign of Esarhaddon and was in use as a more local facility up to the end of the Late Assyrian empire. The preserved texts are heavily biased towards the years before Sargon moved the capital to Dūr-Šarrukēn and the decades before 612.¹⁴ Textual information from the earliest period is lacking.

The Military Palace was largely excavated by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq under the supervision of Oates (1957–62) and Orchard (1963).¹⁵ Later smaller-scale excavations were undertaken under the direction of Fiorina (1987–89)¹⁶ and Curtis (1989).¹⁷ While large parts of the palace are known, there are considerable parts that have not been preserved or excavated. These parts have been partially reconstructed on the plans of Oates and Mallowan.¹⁸ These plans make a helpful distinction between completely or almost completely excavated rooms (marked in black) and reconstructed ones (marked with dotted lines). A third, intermediate, category (marked in outline), shows those rooms for which, paraphrasing Mallowan, “only the tops of the walls have been traced for the purpose of ascertaining the general layout”.¹⁹ This tracing is described as having largely been done by “surface scraping”.²⁰ It is unclear whether this tracing excludes the possibility of a door. Some caution is warranted as the Italian excavation of Room SW 37²¹ (Fig. 2) shows considerable deviations from the plan of Oates even though its walls were indicated as having been “completely or nearly completely excavated”.

Within the Military Palace, the military functions were mostly organised in the four northern quadrants.²² Some functional differences can be observed between these. The northern courtyards seem to have been mainly filled with workshops,²³ although the Northeast Courtyard also contained some apartments and simpler suites. These simple suites typically consist of a large room with an additional bathroom. They are a common feature in Late Assyrian palaces, but are especially abundant in this Military Palace. They were certainly not regular family houses. Three general usages can be proposed. First, they might have been the residences of people living in the palace but not having their own family. One can think of royal family members and even eunuchs or harem women depending on how one reconstructs the palace community. Second, they could have functioned as the offices for the important officials of the palace or army. Thirdly and most commonly argued, they might have been used as barracks.²⁴ These suites could, depending on how one organises the sleeping places, accommodate up to twenty-five persons.²⁵ If used as barracks, the palace could have provided room for a maximum of a few hundred soldiers. This means that the main part of the army must have resided outside the palace. Soldiers might simply have pitched a tent in the

¹³ Turner 1970: 181.

¹⁴ Dalley and Postgate 1984; Kinnier Wilson 1972.

¹⁵ Mallowan 1966; Oates and Oates 2001.

¹⁶ Chiocchetti 2008: 418–19; Fiorina 2008: 495; Pappalardo 2008: 495.

¹⁷ Curtis 2008; Curtis *et al.* 1993.

¹⁸ Mallowan 1966: plan 7.

¹⁹ Mallowan 1966: 375.

²⁰ Oates and Oates 2001: 165.

²¹ Fiorina 2004: 80, fig. 7.

²² All maps of the Military Palace used in this article reconstruct the possible floorplan of the end of the ninth

century. These maps are based on Mallowan 1966: plan 7.

²³ Rooms defined as workshops, largely by the presence of work-benches, are NE 50, 58 and NW 19–22 (Oates 1962: 14–15). Judging from the plan, rooms NW 5, 11–12 and NE 56 could also have functioned as workshops at one point.

²⁴ Mallowan 1966: 379; Oates 1959: 109–10; Oates and Oates 2001: 162.

²⁵ One could accommodate 9 to 25 people in a standard apartment, depending on how one organised the sleeping places and the amount of space one assigned to each soldier (based upon Neufert 1973: 259, example 1 & 261, example “Pritschenlager”).

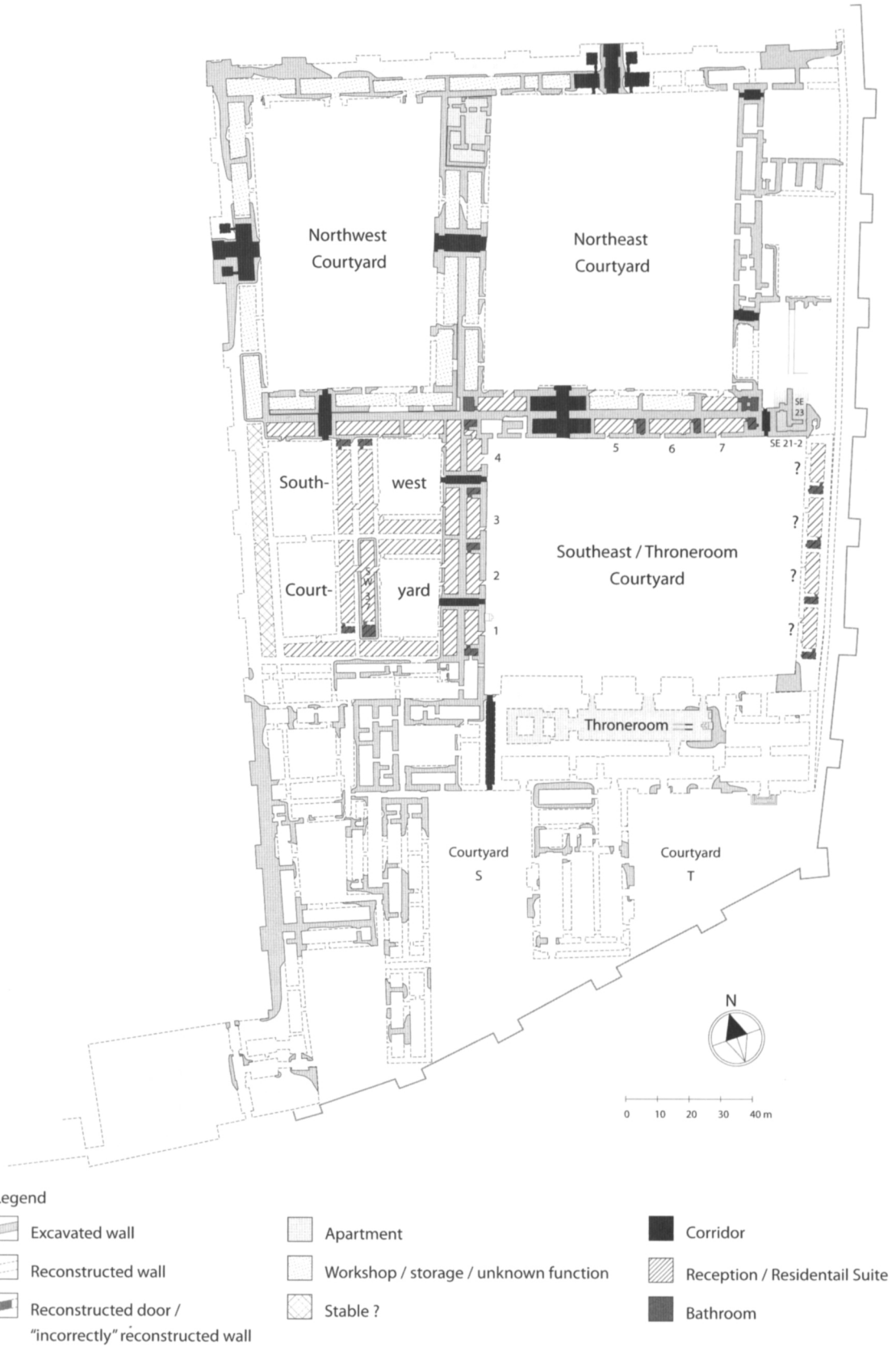


Fig. 2 Military Palace: general distribution of functions.

surrounding fields when the army was mustered. The resulting situation might not have been that different from a normal Assyrian military camp.

Depending on the location and size of these simple suites, each of these three possibilities might be feasible. In the Military Palace they are mostly found around the Throneroom Courtyard, where seven such suites have been excavated. The eastern side could have accommodated three more suites.²⁶ Considering the location of this courtyard, these suites are unlikely to have accommodated members of the royal family. If barracks, they could have housed a maximum of 250 soldiers. They could also have been used as reception suites by the military elite, for instance during the mustering and reviewing of the army. One could think of the commanders of the different army units, for example.

The Southwest Quadrant could have been used for storage as well as residential purposes. In later times this area became an important depository for spoil and tribute.²⁷ The rooms in the middle are among the longest rooms in the palace. The presence of baked brick floors at their ends might suggest that they originally contained bathrooms.²⁸ Their length would be uncommon for apartments but would make sense for barracks, accommodating more soldiers per bathroom.²⁹ The extremely long room along the outer wall seems better suited as storage or a stable.

By far the most astonishing aspect of the Military Palace is found in its southern parts. This area contains the spaces that would normally constitute a royal palace; here however they are integrated into a much larger complex. Creating such a royal palace as part of the Military Palace might seem somewhat redundant since KalĦu already contained the newly finished Northwest Palace. A comparison between the two palaces shows remarkable similarities and some interesting differences.

The Northwest Palace is filled with large state apartments. It contained a throneroom court with a throneroom suite and the standard corridor on its side (Fig. 3).³⁰ The throneroom suite and corridor gave access to two further courtyards (Y and WT) with a large tripartite suite located between them. This suite can probably be described as a royal banquet and/or reception suite. To the southeast of the throneroom lay a second monumental suite (Rooms G–O, R) whose nature is still debated. Other Late Assyrian palaces do not seem to contain such a suite, at least not in this form, although the throneroom bathroom might be, at least partially, a replacement. Its function is most likely related to ablution and other rituals, considering the enormous quantity of bathroom-like spaces and the apotropaic nature of the wall reliefs. To the south lay a suite (Rooms S–X) that is now usually described as the residential suite of the king.³¹ To the south of this was one more large suite (Rooms AF/42, 58–61) that must have belonged to another important person, probably the queen. These were surrounded by courtyards and less monumental rooms that can be described as the residential and service wing of the palace.

The clearest similarity between the two palaces is found in the architecture of the throneroom suites. In neither palace is a bathroom found next to the throne, in contrast to later examples, and both have a large tripartite suite to their southwest (Figs. 3, 5).³² These contain two large reception rooms connected by a long intermediary room with several smaller rooms to their north. Their westernmost rooms seem to have contained a throne along the short northern wall.³³ The area south

²⁶ The original floorplan of this part of the palace is unknown, but the presence of a row of rooms is likely. External walls are normally flanked by rooms in Late Assyrian palaces, except at those locations where a terrace with parapet wall existed. The space between the Southeast Courtyard and the external wall seems to correspond well to the standard room width found in this courtyard.

²⁷ Herrmann 1997: 287.

²⁸ Room SW 37 was completely excavated (Oates 1962: 3). Baked bricks were found only at its southern end. Room SW 21 was, judging from the map, only excavated at its northern end. One cannot, therefore, know how far the baked brick floor originally extended.

²⁹ The Italian excavation of the courtyard east of Room SW 37 uncovered more elaborate architecture than one would expect if this area represented barracks or storerooms. The northern wall of this courtyard showed traces of black

geometric wall paintings (Pappalardo 2008: 495). This would be an unusual feature for a courtyard.

³⁰ All maps of the Northwest Palace used in this article reconstruct the possible floorplan of the end of the ninth century. These maps are based on Oates and Oates 2001: fig. 15/33. The western edge of the Throneroom Courtyard follows Reade (2002: fig. 2), but must be considered hypothetical.

³¹ Reade 1980: 84; Russell 1998: 697–99.

³² These represent Reception Suite Type F according to Turner's categorisation (1970: pl. 39).

³³ For Room WK of the Northwest Palace see Paley and Sobolewski 1987: 72–73, plan 2. Note that the door between Rooms WK and WI must represent a later modification (Reade 1985: 208). For Room T 25 of the Review Palace see: Heinrich 1984: 121; Mallowan 1966: 450.

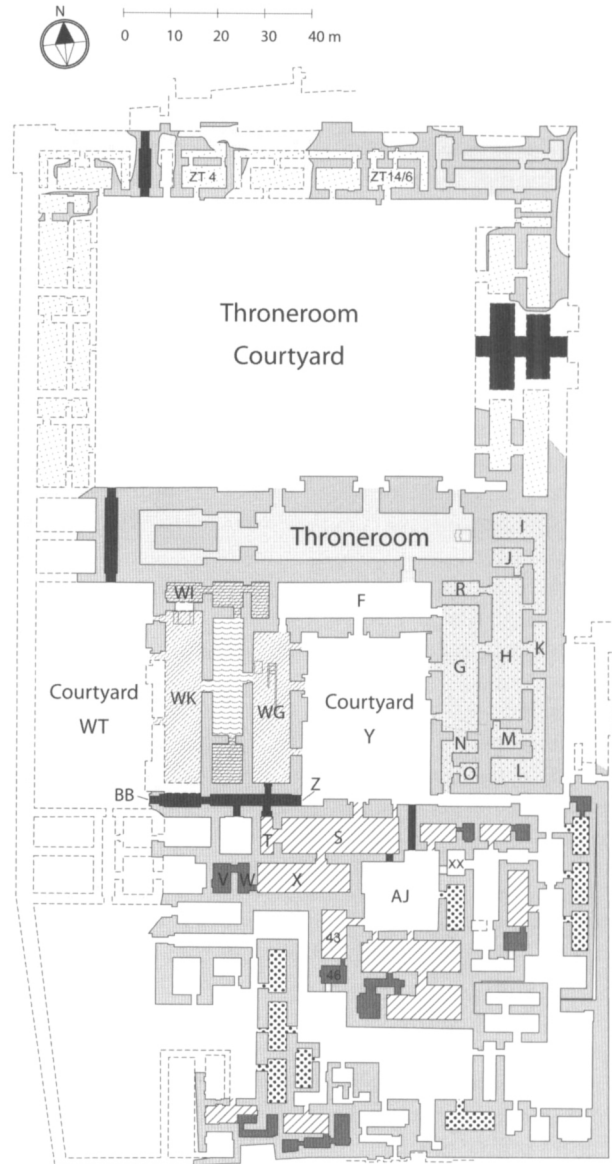


Fig. 3 Northwest Palace: general distribution of functions.

of the reception suite of the Military Palace is only fragmentarily known, but a further room (T 28) seems to have existed at one point.³⁴ Looking at the architecture of the Northwest Palace, where a corridor (Z/BB) runs south of this suite, and in view of the limited space available, one can probably reconstruct a similar corridor running south of the reception suite of the Military Palace.³⁵ Without such a corridor the connection between Courtyards S and T would have been dependent on the reception suite. In Late Assyrian palaces one can expect most suites to be self-contained, able to be closed off without hampering the general circulation, which in this case would necessitate the existence of a corridor or open area south of the reception suite. One must note, however, that with

³⁴ Other suggestions were offered by Turner, who argued that Room T 28 might have functioned as an ante-room to Room T 25 not extending along the entire southern length of rooms T 25–27 or, if running along the entire length, then perhaps added by Esarhaddon after he had widened the

platform (Turner 1970: 205).

³⁵ A corridor can also be seen on Oates' map where it provides internal connections between the three rooms T 25–27, based upon the example of the palace of Dūr-Šarrukēn (Oates 1963: 25–26).

the closeness of the parapet and its different angle any such corridor would probably have created a strange dead-end corner between it and the parapet.

Such morphological features are only one aspect, and not necessarily the most important, of what defined these palaces. As carriers of meaning decoration and ornament were certainly as important. Late Assyrian palaces should be considered as *Gesamtkunstwerken* with, besides the well-known wall reliefs, painted walls and roofs, glazed-brick panels, doors with bronze decorations, inlaid furniture, objects and sometimes even textiles contributing to their rich visual culture. Decorative corbels and *sikkatus* were also popular during this period. While all these devices were probably used in the Northwest Palace (Fig. 8),³⁶ the Military Palace was decorated with a more limited range (Fig. 7).³⁷ This can only have been a deliberate choice by Shalmaneser, who not only had the means to install other types of decoration but actually did so in other buildings.

Similarities in decoration between the palaces are somewhat hypothetical, as only a small part of the state apartments of the Military Palace has so far been excavated. It is nonetheless clear that these were once elaborately decorated with wall paintings, glazed-brick panels, furniture and probably bronze bands. In the throneroom a fragment of wall painting was found behind the finely sculpted throne platform. It probably represents the king with an attendant (Fig. 9).³⁸ Its subject matter and location suggest a similarity with the decoration of the throneroom in the Northwest Palace. All that is known from the decoration of the southern reception suite are a few fragments of wall painting found in Room T 27. These show apotropaic trees and genies in the northern and northeastern doorways as well as in the northeast corner of the room.³⁹ Such subjects were also represented in the similarly located Room WG of the Northwest Palace, probably even in similar locations. In Room WG most emphasis was, however, placed on military narratives and hunting scenes. Whether these topics were present in the Military Palace is as yet unknown.

Wall paintings have also been found in Room S 5, but these are probably of a later date, as are the glazed bricks found by Layard showing Esarhaddon's campaigns in Egypt.⁴⁰ Oates suggested that these bricks came from the area outside S 5,⁴¹ but this seems unlikely. Layard only collected the best fragments, leaving the rest *in situ*.⁴² Since no further collection has been reported for this, or any other, location, these bricks should still be buried in their original location today.

Russell believed that the throneroom suite and the reception suite to its south provided the only similarities between the two palaces, which led to the conclusion that these two suites were apparently all that was needed for a palace to have functioned as a royal establishment.⁴³ There are, however, more comparisons to be made between the two palaces. Most of these can be found in the residential and service wings of both palaces (Figs. 4 and 6). In the centre of each was a courtyard, AJ in the Northwest Palace and S 6 in the Military Palace, surrounded by several suites. These form the centres of the less monumental areas within each palace, but seem primarily directed toward the state apartments. This is especially clear for the Northwest Palace, where the main, and perhaps only,⁴⁴ entrances into area AJ are through Suite S—the king's suite—and Courtyard Y. This creates a close connection to the state apartments but provides few other means of access, e.g. to the surrounding residential and service part of the palace. Establishing an ideal relationship between the

³⁶ For wall paintings see: Layard 1849: I, 121, II, 16–17; Al-Soof 1963: 67; Postgate 1973: 193; Salman 1969: h, 1973: d; Tomabechi 1986: 54 and field notebooks 1, 2 and 7 of the Nimrud expedition. For glazed bricks see: Postgate 1973: 193; Salman 1973: f and field notebooks 3, 7 and 8 of the Nimrud expedition. For decorative corbels see Frame 1991. For *sikkatus* see Oates and Oates 2001: 65. The field notebooks of the Nimrud expedition are stored at the British Museum. Additional locations of wall paintings are based on the work of Muzahim Hussein as translated by Mark Altaweel. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the British Museum and to Hussein and Altaweel for their help.

³⁷ For wall paintings see: Fiorina 2008: 55; Oates 1959: 117–19, 1962: 18, 1963: 28–30. For glazed bricks see: Curtis, *et al.* 1993, Oates 1959: 111, 1963: 26; Reade 1995: 230 and field notebook 4 of the Nimrud expedition.

³⁸ Oates 1963: 28–29; image in Reade 1979: Tf. 11b.

³⁹ Oates 1963: 29–30; image in Reade 1982: pl. 7b-c.

⁴⁰ Nadali 2006.

⁴¹ Oates 1959: 99 n.1.

⁴² Layard 1853: 165.

⁴³ Russell 1998: 665.

⁴⁴ Courtyard AJ was, at one point, connected to the residential and service area of the palace through Rooms 43 and 46. This must represent a secondary usage. Rooms 43 and 46 form a standard simple suite and it seems unlikely that Room 46, a bathroom, was originally intended as corridor. Perhaps this suite itself was a later addition, in which case a direct connection between courtyard AJ and the surrounding areas could have existed, but this remains hypothetical. A connection did apparently exist through Room XX, but this is clearly a less monumental route.

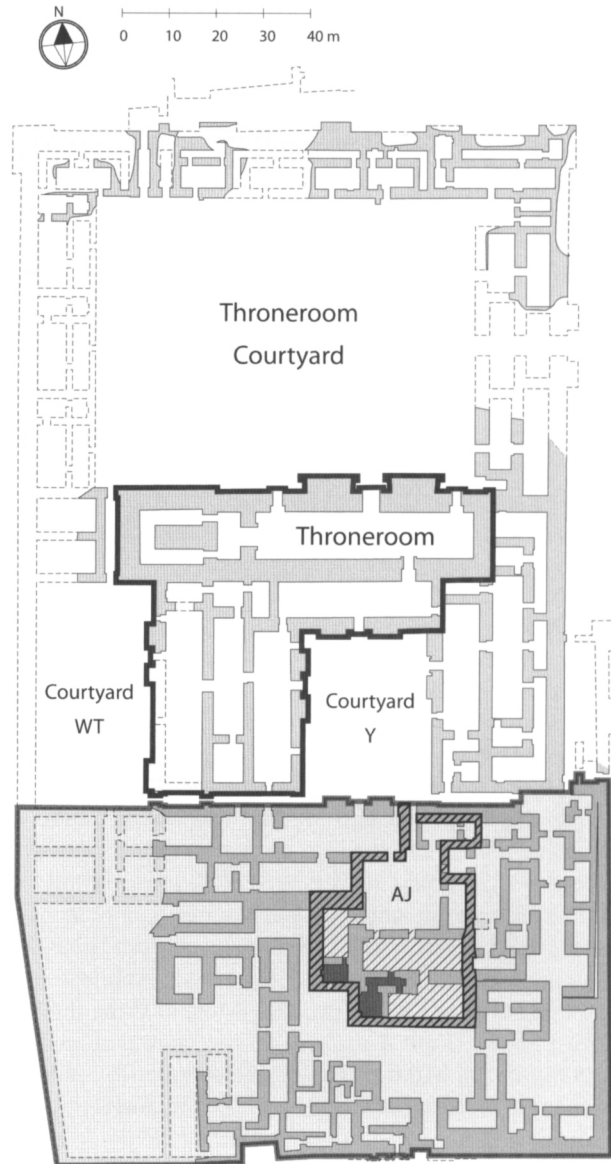


Fig. 4 Northwest Palace: relationship between the throneroom suite and the service/residential wing of the palace.

state apartments and the residential and service wing was probably complicated. While Late Assyrian palaces do show continuity in the placement of different suites in relation to one another, changes occur frequently. Most continuity is to be found in the layout of the suites themselves. The architecture of some suites, such as the throneroom suite, is remarkably consistent throughout the Late Assyrian period. Changes often point to the difficulty of combining the requirements of pomp and circumstance, security, tradition, seclusion and practicality. Judging from the position of this secondary main residential apartment within the different palaces it seems to have required a close proximity to, but a detached placement from, the state apartments and closeness to a secondary external entrance. These requirements are only partially fulfilled in the Northwest Palace.

Many of these problems are solved in the Military Palace where the entire residential and service wing is moved to the west of the throneroom suite (Figs. 5 and 6). The tripartite suite becomes a freestanding unit and the residential and service wing is reorganised into a scheme that must have been much more flexible than its precursor. In comparison to the Northwest Palace, the suites of

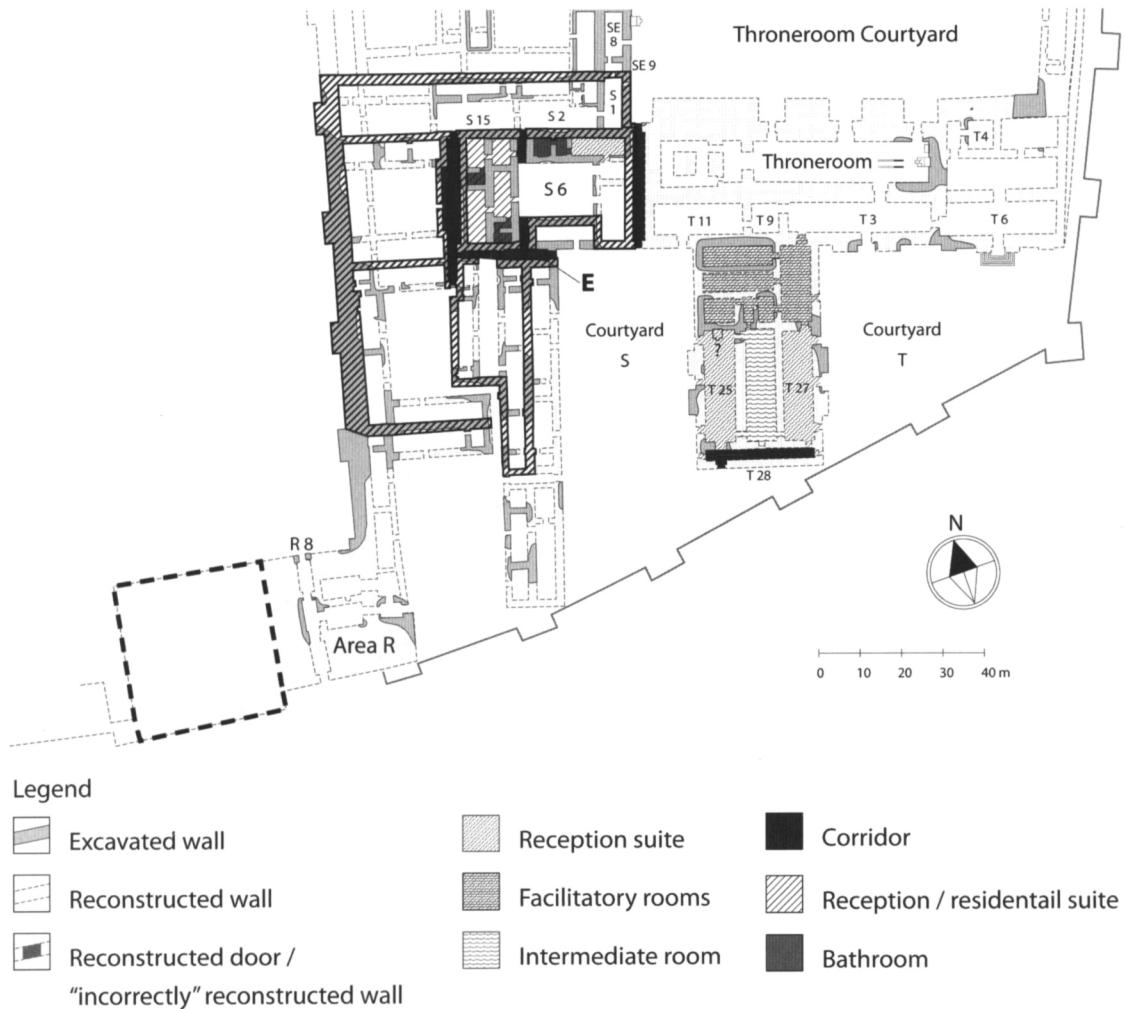


Fig. 5 Military Palace: the state apartments and the service/residential wing of the palace.

Courtyard S 6 are further removed from the state apartments, but Corridor E provides a direct connection between the two areas. This is a well-constructed and monumental corridor, which must have been the most important entrance into Area S. What is missing in the plan by Oates is a connection between this area and the throneroom suite. Such a passage could well have existed through a hypothetical door between Rooms T 9 and 11.

The flexibility of the residential and service wing of the Military Palace is achieved by the compartmentalisation of Area S and the presence of a series of corridors surrounding the central suite. These corridors formed the spine of this area and controlled the access to the different sections within Area S. The central suite itself was easily accessible from the north and south, but could also be closed off without hampering the access to the other parts of Area S. The same is true for the other parts of Area S, each of which could be taken out of circulation without any consequence for the general accessibility of the other units. This reconstruction presupposes a connection to have existed between Courts S 2 and 15. Courtyard S 2 also provided a connection to the Southeast Courtyard. This connection, through Room S 1, seems a later addition. Room S 1 resembles a normal room rather than a corridor but it was nonetheless turned into a corridor at one point. This connection was later enhanced and secured through the addition of Rooms SE 8 and 9.

The differences between the two palaces are as interesting as their similarities. First, the nature of the throneroom courtyards. While we cannot reconstruct the specific functions contained within these two courts, their architecture does indicate divergent usages. The Throneroom Courtyard of

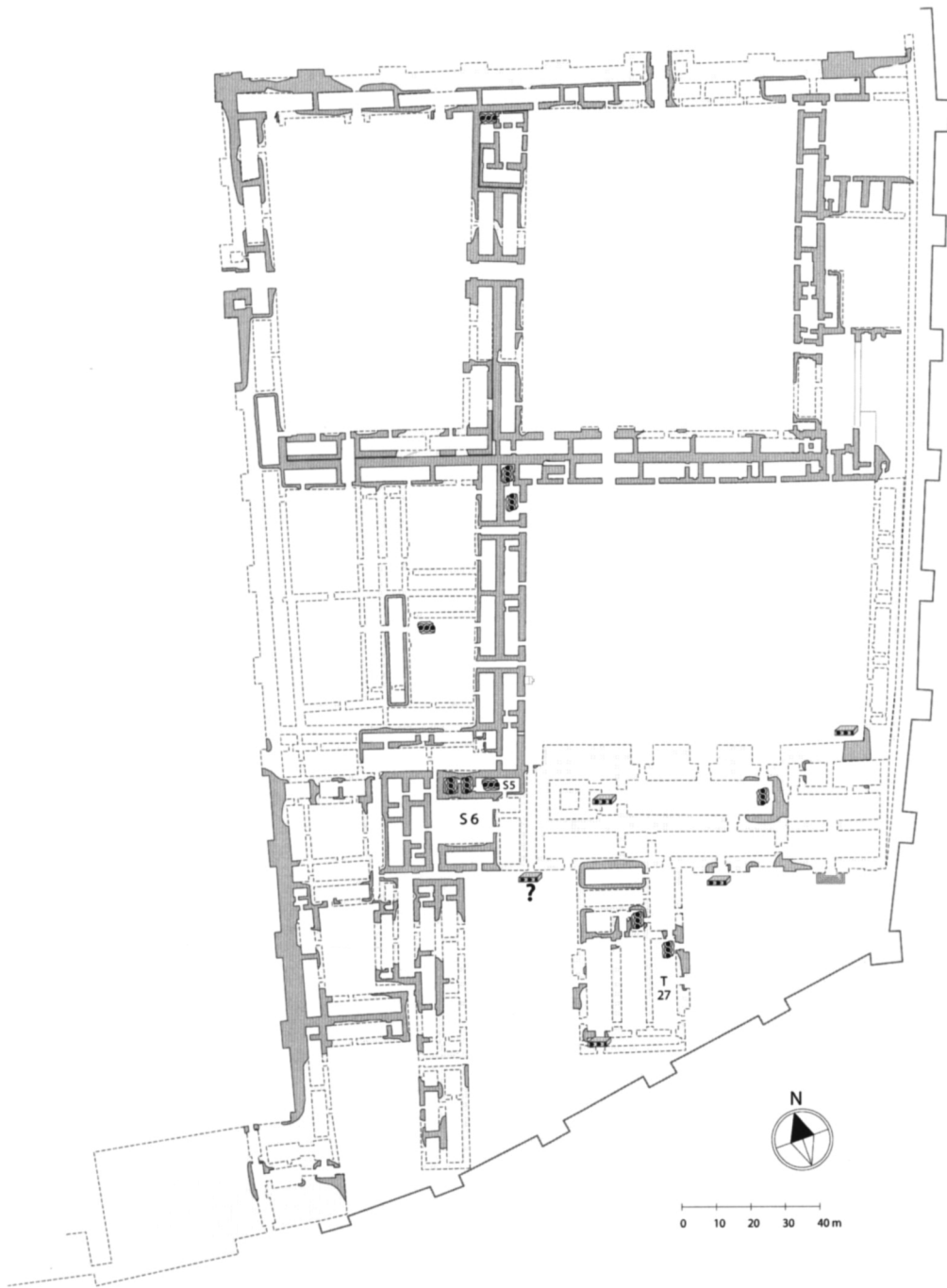


Fig. 6 Military Palace: relationship between the throneroom suite and the service/residential wing of the palace.

the Northwest Palace contained a few reception suites as well as several suites of unknown usage. The latter consisted of a main room surrounded by small corridors. The textual evidence suggests that some of these contained the administrative offices of the palace.⁴⁵ The Throneroom Courtyard of the Military Palace is to an extent similar, for instance in its comparable size. It also contained a large suite in its northeast corner (Rooms SE 21–23) whose exact organisation is unclear, but the rest of the courtyard was surrounded with standard small suites.

Two suites found in the Northwest Palace are apparently absent in the Military Palace (Figs. 3 and 5). These are the eastern suite (Rooms G–O, R) and the residential suite of the king (Rooms S–X). These suites might have existed in the unexcavated or eroded parts of the Military Palace. A primary residential suite could have been located in the fragmentarily known area surrounding Courtyard S. This would be comparable to its location in the Northwest Palace, but the preserved rooms seem too small for such a purpose. The most likely location for any missing suite is the area east of the throneroom. No large suite is located at this position in the Northwest Palace. The location of the southeast suite comes closest, but this was directly connected to the throneroom suite through Room F. In the Military Palace such a connection could have existed between Rooms T 3

⁴⁵ Rooms ZT 4 and 5 contained an archive dating to the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727) and Sargon II (722–705). Room ZT 14/16 contained an archive that mostly dated to the end of the Assyrian empire.



Legend









- | | | |
|--|---|--|
|  Excavated wall |  Wall painting |  (Wall) <i>sikkatu</i> |
|  Reconstructed wall |  Glazed brick |  Wall reliefs |
|  Reconstructed door /
"incorrectly" reconstructed wall |  Decorative corbel |  Wall reliefs reconstructed |

Fig. 7 Military Palace: overview of known decoration.

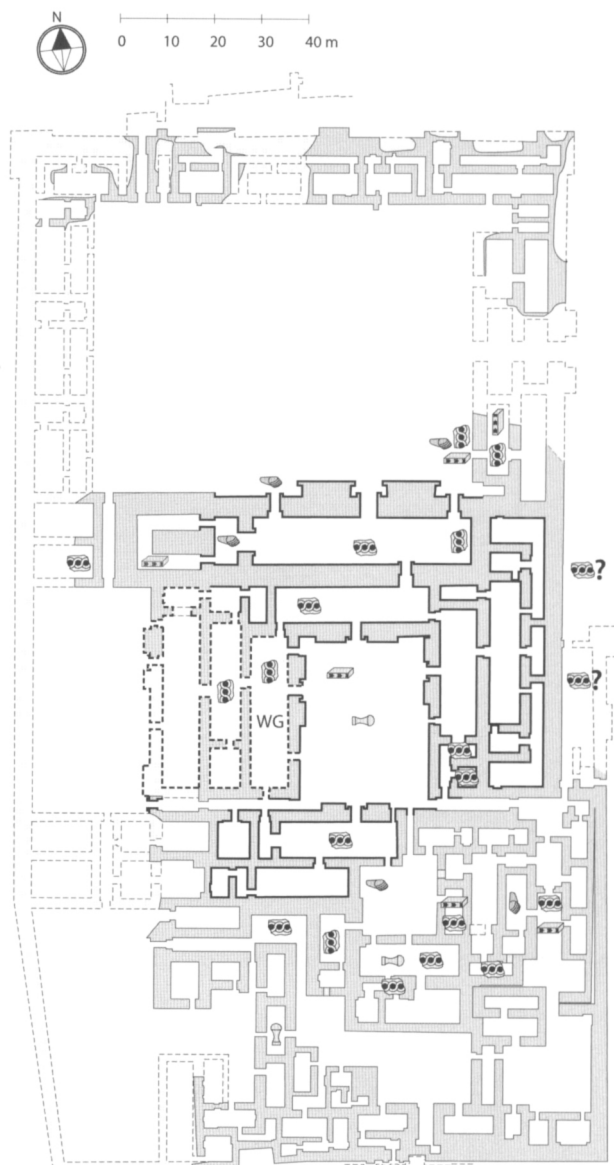


Fig. 8 Northwest Palace: overview of known decoration.

and T 6. The niche in the southwest corner of T 6 does seem to suggest the presence of a door at this location. The problem with such a door and the reconstruction of the eastern area in general is the height difference between it and the surrounding areas. T 6 was said to be 1.5 m above Courtyard T, with Room T 4 being 35 or 55 cm, depending on publication,⁴⁶ below T 6. Such height differences are rare in Late Assyrian palatial architecture, although they are found in Sennacherib's palace in Tarbišu,⁴⁷ Sargon II's so-called Monument X in his palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn, in front of Ashurbanipal's throneroom in his North Palace in Nineveh and in the *Ost Palast* in Ashur.⁴⁸ Except for the *Ost Palast*, these examples represent an architecture that is typical for the later Late Assyrian period and cannot, therefore, easily be used to interpret the Military Palace. It is nonetheless noteworthy that a tripartite suite such as that found at Tarbišu would fit quite well in the space available and seems to form the most logical reconstruction for this area. Such a reconstruction is nonetheless hypothetical,

⁴⁶ Mallowan (1966: 455) gives 35 cm as the height difference whereas Oates (1963: 23) gives 55 cm.

⁴⁷ Miglus forthcoming.

⁴⁸ Duri 2002.

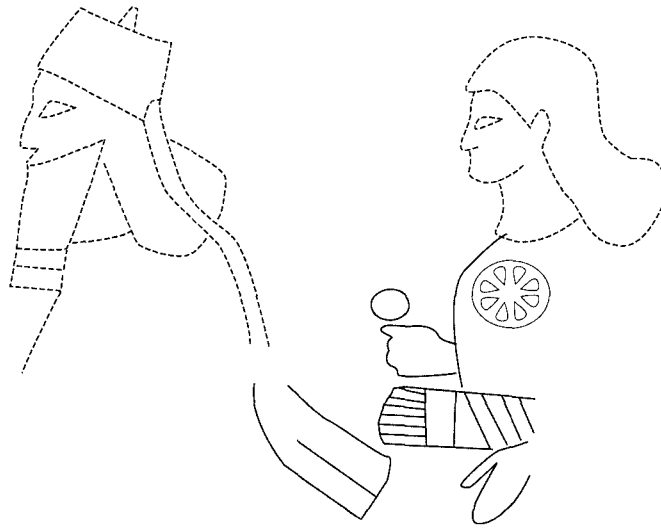


Fig. 9 Military Palace: reconstruction of wall painting behind throne base in throneroom.

however, and the area's original use remains unclear. The tripartite organisation and its elevation might all represent later changes. Based on its placement within the palace, the only certainty about its original layout, a comparison with the southeast suite of the Northwest Palace may be appropriate. If a similar suite had existed in the Military Palace, this would have been the most comparable location.

A final difference between the two palaces is the architecture of the southwestern corner of the Military Palace, an area whose original appearance is mostly unknown. The excavated architecture seems mostly to date to the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669 BC) and consists of two external entrances, one of which was reached through an ascending passage.⁴⁹ Such a passage forms a typical feature of Late Assyrian palaces but has only been found in later palaces. The presence of a door of Shalmaneser in the original outer wall does, however, suggest that an outside connection existed from the outset. The second entrance (Room R 8) seems to have connected the palace with the fields surrounding it. An aerial photograph,⁵⁰ however, shows this entrance to have been far above ground level, and it is therefore unclear how the surrounding plain would have been reached. Perhaps it was only used as a balcony. This area was bordered by a mound whose nature remains obscure. It probably formed the southwestern corner of the palace, but might represent an addition from Esarhaddon's time. On first appearance it seems to resemble a ziggurat, a similarity that must have been noticed by the earliest excavators. It therefore seems a tempting place for an excavator such as Layard to have tunnelled. His glazed bricks could well have originated here.

The Late Assyrian empire seems to have been organised through these two palaces for almost one hundred and fifty years. Both palaces must have been splendidly decorated, even though the main pomp and circumstance occurred at the Northwest Palace. The Northwest Palace must have focused on the state administration while the Military Palace focused on its military organisation. Its military functions, such as the yearly mustering and reviewing of the troops, apparently required the presence not only of a complete throneroom suite with reception suite to its south and another monumental suite to its east, but also of a complete residential and service wing. Together they seem to duplicate most of the spaces found in the Northwest Palace. This would imply that all these elements were required for a building to function as a royal palace. The duplication of so many suites is even more remarkable considering the close proximity of the two palaces.

The absence of the king's residential suite, or at least of what in the Northwest Palace is regarded as such, might suggest that the king travelled back and forth from his palace on the citadel on those

⁴⁹ Mallowan 1966: 466–8, n. 124.

⁵⁰ Matthiae 1999: 13.

days that he was required at the Military Palace. Unfortunately, such a hypothesis only points to our lack of knowledge on the daily activity of Assyrian kings and the spaces this required. What we do know is that the concept of twin palaces remained part of how the Assyrian empire was organised. They were constructed by Sargon II in his city Dūr-Šarrukēn, in the Nineveh of his son Sennacherib, and seem to have been planned by Esarhaddon when he tried to re-establish Kalhu as an important royal city.

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David Kertai
 Zentrum für Altertumswissenschaften
 Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
 Marstallhof 4
 69117 Heidelberg
 Germany
 dkertai@yahoo.com