Creating capitals: The rationale, construction, and function of the imperial capitals of Assyria
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Chapter 3: Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta – Capital Creation in the Middle Assyrian Empire

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Late Bronze Age (LBA, 1550-1200 BCE), the Near East witnessed an unprecedented growth of imperial states. The Mitanni, Middle Assyrian, Hittite, and Egyptian kingdoms all developed into imperial political entities with considerable territorial extent and comprising various politically distinct societies (Mieroop 2007; Barjamovic 2013; Düring 2015, 302-304). One of the main developments in these empires was the creation of an imperial capital as the administrative center of the state. Many of these capitals were new foundations: Dūr-Kurigalzu in Babylon, Tarhuntašša in the Hittite empire, and Amarna in Egypt. In Assyria the first instance of capital creation also belongs to the LBA and consists of the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.

3.1.1 HISTORY OF RESEARCH AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The site was identified as modern Tulūl al-Aqar in 1911 (Sarre *et al*. 1911, 1:212; 4:2), and was first excavated by Bachmann and Andrae in 1913-1914 (Figure 7). Their results were not published, and the only substantial report was produced by Tilman Eickhoff in 1985, based on the original notes and sketches. The focus of the excavation was on the citadel of the city, and it was assumed that the citadel constituted more or less the entire extent of the site.

The main buildings identified in this mission where: i) the north palace (*Nordpalast*); ii) the south palace (*Südpalast*); iii) the Aššur Temple (*Aššurtempel*); and iv) the *Wohnhaus*, a building which was considered residential (Figure 8). In addition, parts of the citadel's walls were excavated, together with one tower (K) and a gate (D). The extent of the wall is visible on the basis of the elevation difference on the plan of Bachmann (Eickhoff 1985, Plan I). The

excavators estimated that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was a single period site of about 62 ha.

The aim of the excavations was to produce mostly architectural plans of the buildings, which were excavated mostly as a sequence of trenches targeting walls. Rooms were rarely excavated, thus leaving us with little information regarding their use. Both of the buildings designated as palaces were placed on top of a large mudbrick terrace of about 8 m in height. They are located on the northwest side of the citadel and there is a distance of about 140 m between them. The south palace comprised a large terrace surrounded by rooms. These rooms contained a large number of small finds, and Bachmann also located colored plaster fragments and frit-rosettes (Nashef 1992, 310-1). The north palace complex contained 18 rooms and also showed indications of mural decorations (see section 2.5.2 for a more detailed discussion).

The only temple discovered during Bachmann's excavations was the temple of Aššur, located directly southeast of the south palace. The temple was constructed on top of a 1 m high platform (Bachmann 2016, 76). The building has entrances on its eastern and northern sides, and contains a central courtyard surrounded by several rooms. Once again, Bachmann focused more on tracing the outline of the building rather than the intention of the rooms, so we know very little about the function of each section of the temple. Some of these rooms, however, probably functioned as shrines. The temple itself resembles the temple of Aššur at Aššur, but measures half the size (Gilibert 2008, 182). At the western side of the temple was a ziggurat, in proportion with the temple in size. Bachmann also located the wall surrounding the citadel, which was thought at the time to mark the extent of the city. Tower K and a Gate D, as well as part of the wall were partially excavated. Finally, another building was identified and designated as a *Wohnhaus*.

A more recent survey was undertaken in a two-season mission (1986 and 1989) by Reinhard Dittmann. The results of these two seasons were published only in the form of brief articles (Dittmann *et al.* 1988; Dittmann 1989; 1997a; Schmidt 1999; Beuger 2011; Dittmann 2011), and a full publication is not yet available (Dittmann forthcoming). Due to time and funding constraints, the survey was conducted using the existing field borders as survey units (Dittmann 2011, 165; see here Figure 8). Given the lack of published data, it is currently unclear what ceramic collection procedures were used, making the evaluation of the results difficult.

Regardless of its shortcomings, Dittmann's work has revealed a new picture of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. It became clear that the extent of the city was not limited to its walled citadel but extended roughly 1300 m to the south from the citadel's wall. The 1986 survey showed a total of 120 ha, and in the 1989 survey it was determined that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta covers at least 240 ha, leading Dittmann to speculate that the city could be as big as 500 ha (Dittmann 1997b, 269). The limits of the city and the finds of the survey will be further discussed in section 3.5. However, it is interesting to note here that for the first time in Assyria, there is a walled citadel, which creates a clear division between elite space and a lower, residential town.

The 1986/1989 campaigns also showed that the north and south palaces were probably connected, based on finds in the survey units 14-15 (Dittmann 1992, 311; numbers indicated here in Figure 8). Excavations in survey unit 7, the area designated A-F to the north of the north palace, showed that the latter extended more to the north, beyond the previously assumed border of the inner wall (Dittmann 1990, 165-167).

About 450 m north of the tentative border of the city (at the *Wohnhaus*), the 1986 survey located an elevation designated as Tell O. The surrounding survey units (10 and 12 on Figure 7) produced pottery data, which according to Dittmann were enough to show that it belonged to the city area. Excavation at Tell O in 1989 uncovered a temple for an unknown deity. Its cella was decorated with frit-rosettes and palm trees (Baster and Dittman 1995, 17-24). To the southeast of the cella along both long sides of the temple were benches of baked bricks with small tables/pedestals in front of them (Dittmann 1989, 168-171).

The most recent archaeological work in the citadel area was conducted by Iraqi archaeologists in 2002

(Sulaiman 2010; Mühl and Sulaiman 2011), with the opening of several trenches in the general area of the city's citadel. At a place Dittmann had identified as Mound A, one of the most interesting finds was a courtyard, 32 m wide and paved with rhombi tiles (Mühl and Sulaiman 2011, 382). The work of the Iraqi archaeologists allowed for a better understanding of the use of the so-called North Palace of the city and it confirmed the idea that the two palatial buildings were actually connected (for details see section 3.5.2).

Despite the limited available archaeological evidence, Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta remains, together with Amarna, one of the best documented newly created capital cities in the Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age. Its Neo Assyrian descendants give us a better idea of what Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta could have looked like: a walled citadel (albeit not elevated), surrounded by an (unfinished) wall, with large canals running through it, temples at various locations inside and outside of the citadel, and several concentrated neighborhoods.

3.2 SETTING THE STAGE – HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MIDDLE ASSYRIA

The 14th century BCE marks a significant change in the history of the Near East with the gradual disintegration of the Mitannian empire. It is beyond the limits of this study to explore the causes and effects of this change. However, the decline of the Mitanni provided Assyria with an opportunity for independence and expansion.

Aššur-Uballit I (ca. 1353-1318) was the first "*LUGAL (šarru)*", or "Great King" of Assyria (Grayson 1987, 114-115; Harrak, 1987, 9-10 *EA* 16; Postgate 1992, 247; Szuchman 2007, 4). After the combined military powers of the Hittites and Kassites crippled the Mitannian state, Aššur-Uballit seized the opportunity to establish an independent Assyrian state and capture some of the bordering territories. He got rid of the tribute he had to pay to the Mitanni (as mentioned in Beckman 1999, 44-45), and set the foundations which made Aššur a major political power. In addition to the honorary titles of the Assyrian kings, the royal inscriptions now present him as a great king, and a brother to the Pharaoh and the Hittite king.

The 13th century BCE is the zenith of the Middle-Assyrian empire. During the reign of three successive kings, Adad-nirari (ca. 1295-1264 BCE),

Figure 7: Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta today (image from Google Earth; produced by the author).

Shalmaneser I (ca. 1263-1234 BCE), and Tukultī-Ninurta I (ca. 1233-1197 BCE), the empire grew to its maximum territorial extent, covering the area from the Baliḫ river to the city of Babylon (Jakob 2017, 122-132).

Adad-nirari led a number of campaigns against the crumbling Mitanni empire and in one of these campaigns the Mitanni king, Šattuara I, was captured and brought to Aššur. He returned to his throne, but as a vassal of the Assyrians. Adad-nirari's royal inscriptions mention eight conquered cities, most of them part of the Mitanni state (Grayson 1987, 136). Adad-nirari's successor was his son Shalmaneser I, who managed to establish control over the region of Hanigalbat (modern Northern Syria) with his victory over a coalition of Hittites, Hanigalbateans and the

Phase #	Middle Assyrian Kings
Phase III: Recession and brief expansion	ca. 1197-935 BCE (Aššur-nādin-apli I, Aššur-dān I, Aššur-rēsa-isi I, Tiglath-Pileser I, Aššur-bēl-kala, Aššur-nāsir-apli I among others)
Phase IIb: From State to Empire	ca. 1233-1197 (Tukultī-Ninurta I)
Phase IIa: From State to Empire: Expansion	ca. 1295-1234 BCE (Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser)
Phase I: Independence	ca. 1353-1296 BCE (Aššur-Uballit, Enlil-Nirari, Adik-dēn-ili)

Table 3: The expansion phase s of the Middle Assyrian empire.

Ahlamu-nomads of the region (Harrak 1987, 169-171). Royal inscriptions mention a number of cities which Shalmaneser conquered or reconquered; the empire expanded across the land of Hanigalbat. The area was not completely stable, but the Assyrians started to exercise control over the Ḫabūr region (Jakob 2015,178). Of importance was the conquest of Dūr-Katlimmu and the expansion of Assyria to the Lower Ḫabūr. Based on textual evidence, Shalmaneser also undertook administrative changes, including massive population deportations, in order to consolidate the conquered territory (Harrak 1987, 190-205).

After the death of Shalmaneser, Tukultī-Ninurta I became king during the most expansive periods of the Middle Assyrian empire. During his 36 years as king, Assyrian power grew to unprecedented levels. Extensive campaigns took place to the west and the south. For the first time, Assyria managed to conquer Babylon and other Kassite cities. In addition, Tukultī-Ninurta imprisoned the Kassite king, deported a large number of Kassites into Assyrian lands, demolished the walls of Babylon, and moved the statue of Marduk to Aššur (Harrak 1987, 256-257).

Those years were also marked with extensive architectural projects both in the city of Aššur and elsewhere. More importantly for this study, however, was the creation of the first newly created Assyrian capital, Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. During the last years of the king's reign, Assyria entered a phase of territorial decline, losing most of its territories. This decline continued over the following centuries, with the exception of some intervals of short-lived expansions, such as during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BCE).

Overall, I suggest that the expansion of the Middle Assyrian empire can be divided into four phases[8] (Table 3). Phase I corresponds with the downfall of the Mitanni empire and the gradual independence of Assyria from the Mitannian yoke. Phase IIa corresponds with the large expansion and consolidation of the state, and Phase IIb comprises its gradual transformation into a major imperial power of the LBA Near East (Düring 2015, 303-304). This continuous military and territorial growth went hand in hand with the development of the imperial core, with associated massive building projects, especially on the citadel of Aššur. The royal inscriptions of both Adad-nirari I and Shalmaneser I inform us about several reconstructions and restorations of important buildings (Grayson 1987). The largest development projects at Aššur, however, were conducted during the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I. Renovation activities can be seen on the city walls, with the incorporation of a moat at the end of the king's reign (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.19), the Old Palace (Pedde and Lundström 2008, 163–165), the Aššur Temple (Schmitt in press), and the Temple of Sîn-Šamaš (Werner 2009). More importantly, however, two *ex novo* projects were undertaken: the construction of the New Palace and the reconstruction of the Temple of Ištar (Schmitt 2012) in a new location.

The first of these new projects had a profound impact on the urban fabric of the city. The palace was probably constructed during the start of the king's reign on top of a massive terrace in the northwestern part of the city, covering an area of approximately 29.000 m² (Andrae 1997, 162-

8   For a complete list of all kings and their dates see Appendix 1.
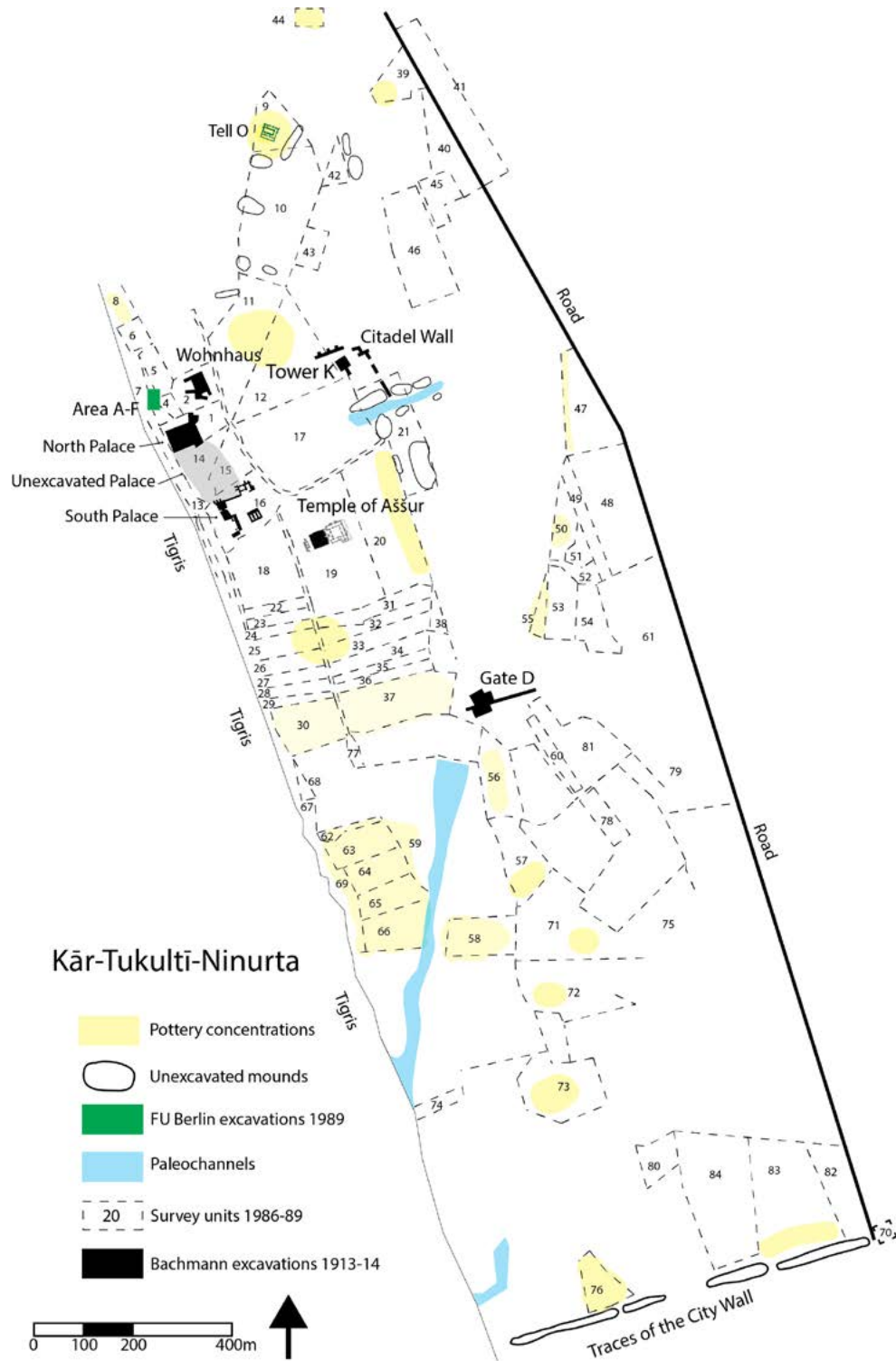
Figure 8: The city of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta showing the excavated buildings, the known extent of the city, and the survey units of the German Archaeological Institute Survey 1986-89 (Dittmann 1990, Abb. 5, produced by the author).

163). In order to create this platform a number of residential buildings had to be destroyed. There are only limited archaeological traces of the palace, since the area was redeveloped an additional time into residential spaces during the Neo Assyrian period (Miglus 1996, 89-93). It is unclear how this palatial project compared with the palace(s) at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, since the plan of the new palace at Aššur is unknown, and since excavations have not revealed the full extent of the palace at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. However, the two palatial buildings at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, including the unexcavated space between them has an area of about 50.000 m^2 (Beuger 2011, 182), thus considerably larger than the new palace at Aššur.

Recently, Carlson has suggested that the new palace at Aššur was created in order to counterbalance the prominence of the temple of Aššur (Carlson 2017, 142-145). By building it on opposite sides of the "citadel" area of Aššur, he argues, the two buildings physically and spatially counterbalance each other, elevating the palace into a sacred space of the gods, and creating a duality with two "shrines" to worship the king and the god Aššur/Enlil. He bases this argument on the fact that the foundation tablets for the palace refer to the building through mountainous imagery (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.3), which the foundation inscriptions for the Aššur temple from Shalmaneser I also use. Finally, Carlson suggested that with the creation of the New Palace, the palace and the temple "*dominated the Aššur skyline, showcased the two national Mesopotamian gods and the king as equal but separate entities, and represented the king's divine and terrestrial natures*". While plausible, this argument remains somewhat speculative, as it is based solely on the use of mountainous imagery in inscriptions for both buildings. I do agree that the new palace probably had a significant visual role in the city's skyline. The lack of knowledge regarding the palace's plan, however, makes it rather difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the symbolic visual effect of the palace and the temple, as they would be seen from the city of Aššur.

This period of dynamic changes to the city, however, peaks with the remodeling projects undertaken during the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta, and they reflect the changing perspective of the state itself into a power of imperial size. It was precisely at this moment when the empire decided to create a new city, close to Aššur, the role of which will be discussed.

3.3 WHY – BUILDING A CAPITAL, BUILDING AN EMPIRE

3.3.1 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS – REGAL-CENTRIC APPROACHES

Researchers who have dealt with the question of "why Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was built", have focused mainly on textual evidence, and more specifically, royal inscriptions. This limited scope of study has resulted in research that attempts to explain capital creation as determined by the personality of the Tukultī-Ninurta I (Dolce 1997). Even when broader perspectives (like Gilibert 2008) include other parameters, they always focus on royal motives rather than historical conditions for the creation of a new capital.

The available textual evidence consists of eight royal inscriptions that extensively refer to the construction of the city (Grayson 1976, 231-99; Deller *et al.* 1994), the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta (Machinist 1976; Machinist 1978; Foster 1996, 211-230), and several administrative texts (Freydank 1974; Harrak 1987, 213-229). Several studies have dealt with the complicated subject of the precise chronological arrangements of the events of Tukultī-Ninurta's reign, and especially his conquest over Babylon (Freydank 2005, 45-56; Röllig 2004 18-51; 2008; Jakob 2003, 104-107; Yamada 2003). Here I am only going to focus on the research that directly bears on the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.

The first, and most common, interpretation on Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta's creation, is to associate its construction with the conquest of Babylon, which should be dated after the 13th year of the king's reign. Researchers have suggested that the new capital was built as a commemorative monument celebrating the king's major achievements. This would mean that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was constructed *after* the fall of Babylon.

Harrak (1987), likewise, proposed that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was realized after the end of Assyria's major war against Babylon. However, more recent research has shown that the struggle between the Assyrians and Kassites lasted much longer, with fighting continuing even after the fall of Babylon (Llop-Raduà 2011, 213-5). Harrak does not explain why the capital was relocated; he suggested that religious factors may have influenced the decision, but he also hesitates to describe the city as a religious capital (Eickhoff 1985, 49; Harrak 1987, 274). He does repeatedly mention that it was built at the king's initiative.
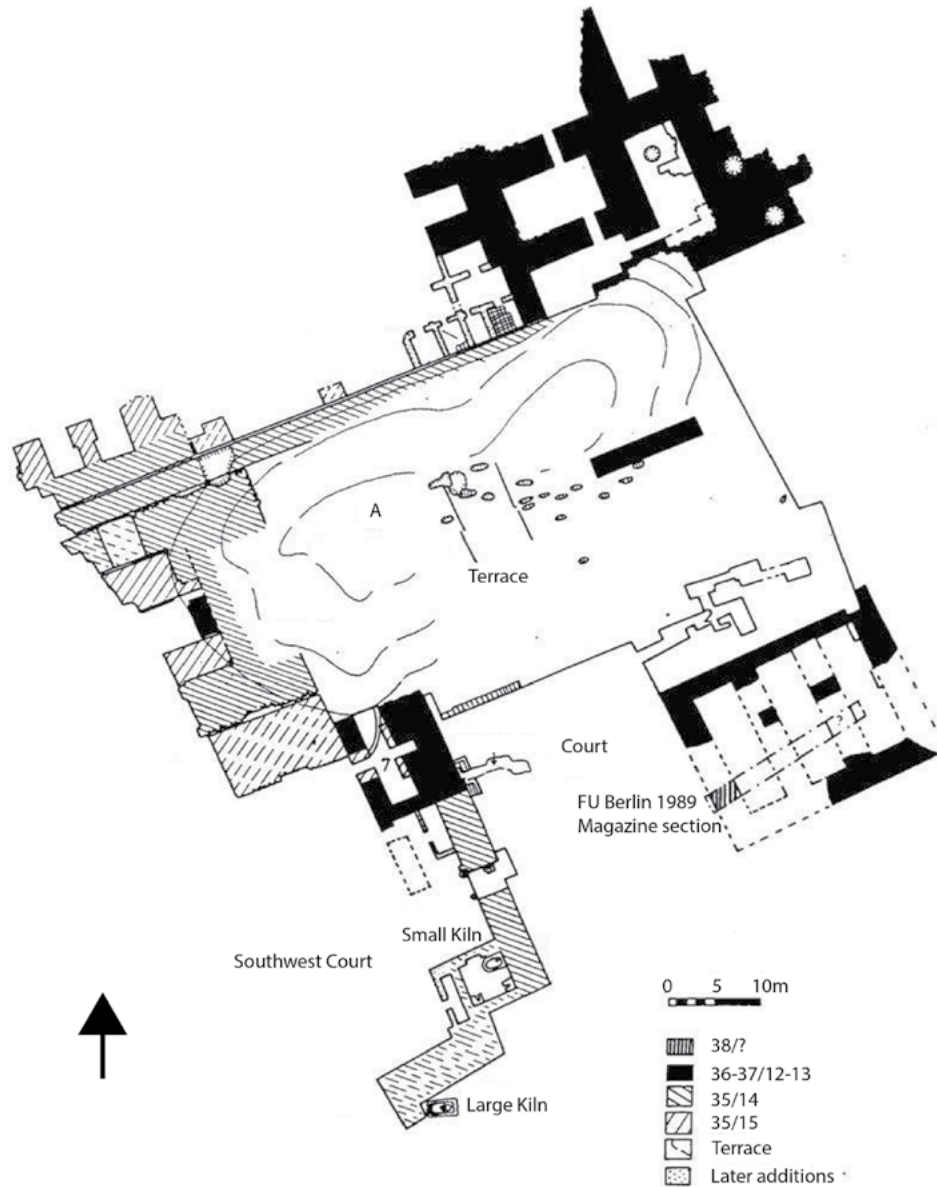
Figure 9: Plan of the South Palace at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta (after Dittmann 1997a, Abb. 6).

Harrak presented the creation of the new capital as a "building project", similar in nature to the construction or reconstruction of palaces and temples. In Harrak's view, Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was created to commemorate the victory of Tukultī-Ninurta over the Kassites (also Carlson 2017, 155).

Cifola (2004) challenged Harrak's sequence and discussed the chronology of the Babylonian campaign based on the titles mentioned in the royal inscriptions. It is important to note that he had access to two

additional royal inscriptions that were unavailable to Harrak (Deller *et al.* 1994). Cifola's restructuring, however, also raises issues about the construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. One of the new texts (IM 57821), which has an identical section of text about the city as one of the royal inscriptions (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.5), should be dated after the victory but before the conquest of Babylon, therefore between ca. 1225-1219 BCE (Cifola 2004, 12). If this dating is correct, then the city might have already existed, or been in

the process of construction before the final conquest of Babylon (see also Yamada 2003).

Both Harrak (1987, 273) and Cifola identified an increasing influence of non-Assyrian aspects in the Assyrian language and titulary at this time. They suggest that Tukultī-Ninurta created this new city as an attempt to imitate Babylonian kings and that he drew inspiration from the Kassites who had also created a new capital, Dūr-Kurigalzu (see section 2.1). Carlson even suggested that Tukultī-Ninurta, having encountered the palace at Dūr-Kurigalzu, realized that the palace at Aššur "*no longer sufficed as a symbol*" (Carlson 2017, 154). Thus, he proposed that the king had to "complete" his imperial narrative by creating a new city. This idea, however, cannot be supported by either historical or archaeological data.

Based on these studies, we should not connect the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta directly with the conquest of Babylon. At a later stage, when Babylon was conquered, it is possible that Assyria used the inauguration of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta as a commemorative event to their victory. This would be, however, a *post hoc* event, and not the driving reason for the creation of a new capital. Indeed, Gilibert (2008) suggested that the construction of the city should be dated to the early years of the king's reign and that it was completed already by the time Babylon was conquered. Furthermore, she suggested that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was built to function complementary to Aššur and not as a new capital city.

The main archaeological evidence for dating the city before the victory over Kaštiliaš derives from Mound A and the Southern Palace (Figure 9; see also section 3.5.2). Gilibert suggested that the palace at Mound A should be identified with the palace mentioned in the inscription A.0.78.22 (48-51), mentioning "E.GAL.ME.SAR.RA" / "*House of the Universe*". Based on the text, the building of the palace should be dated after the conquest of Babylon. She states however, that pre-existing structures found encased in the palace (Eickhoff 1985, 36-37) clearly antedate the terrace. Additionally, differences in the size and patterns of joining of the building's mudbricks, deriving from Bachmann's notes and a sketch (republished by Dittmann 1997a, fig. 6), are interpreted as evidence of earlier building phases, since they involved structural changes in design and orientation.

The data regarding the brick sizes were published by Eickhoff (1985, 36). On the eastern part of the building three different sizes of bricks were observed: 36 x 36 x 12/13 cm, 37 x 37 x 12/13 cm, and 35 x 35 x 15 cm. Eickhoff suggested that the first two types were laid first, while the latter type was laid on top at a later dating. Based on this, the building was interpreted as having multiple building phases.

The interpretation of different mudbrick sizes as representing different phases is not necessarily straightforward; such differences could also indicate different contemporary work groups and not necessarily different building phases or renovations. The Middle Assyrian phase of Tell Sabi Abyad, located in the Baliḫ valley, provides similar data where different mudbricks are attributed to different groups of builders, or batches of bricks, rather than different stages of construction or renovations (Lanjouw forthcoming). The textual description of the wall construction of Dur-Šarrukēn also reveals the use of mudbricks from different locations and sources (see section 5.5). Both examples have mudbricks of different sizes and coloring that belong to the same architectural phase.

In addition, it is important to note that there are no similar finds in the western part of the building. There is no other evidence in the eastern section which would imply multiple building phases. Eickhoff also concludes that, in the end, the dating of these supposed phases is impossible to determine (Eickhoff 1985, 36).

Gilibert (2008, 183) proposed that the creation of the city is connected to the exploitation of the surrounding agricultural land and that the project must be related to the need for intensified agricultural production. This is supported by a number of written sources related to agriculture that were analyzed by Freydank (2009). Gilibert concludes that the new city served as a "complementary" center to Aššur. The main goal, according to her, was the exploitation of the land to support a growing population, and not the creation of a new administrative center. However, Gilibert's interpretation does not explain the need for the creation of a new citadel, with a new palace and temples.

To summarize, scholars have traditionally related the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta to the personal motives of the king and attempted to explain its creation on the basis of chronology. However, as shown above, the argument that the city was created to commemorate the victory of the Assyrians over the Kassites is not supported by the textual and material evidence. I further argue that mono-causal

explanations limit our understanding of the period. In the following section I will connect the creation of the new city with the imperial growth of Assyria during the centuries since its independence from the Mitanni. The relocation of the capital was part of the transition from a territorial state to empire.

3.3.2 FROM A TERRITORIAL STATE TO EMPIRE

Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta does not fit with the model of disembedded capitals (Joffe 1998; chapter 1.3.1). The city was very close (ca. 4 km upstream) to the previous capital and in order for such a project to be undertaken, there had to be co-operation with existing and even competing, power holders.

Gilibert (2008, 180-183) views Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta as the agricultural extension of Aššur, created almost exclusively for the exploitation and development of the land on the eastern bank of the Tigris. However, the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta included the building of several new administrative buildings, including a new palace. Textual information, such as Chronicle P, inform us that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta became the primary residence of the king, and that it had a central administrative role making it more than an agricultural project

Carlson proposed that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta and Aššur were "*dual capitals*" (Carlson 2017, 214), symbolizing the pan-Mesopotamian control of Assyria as well as the "duality" of the Assyrian king, as ruler of Assyria and ruler of the world (Carlson 2017, 216). This argument is based on the proclamations of the king in his royal inscriptions. I argue that it would be more profitable to try and contextualize the construction of the new city in the wider transformation of the Assyrian state into an imperial state. I argue that it is exactly this transformative process that allowed for and led to the construction of the new capital. Related issues are: i) a *perceived* (at the time) inadequacy of the city of Aššur to act as an imperial center for Assyria, and ii) the creation of an economically stable imperial core.

The transformation of a state into an empire is the culmination of longer processes of expansions (either military, economic or cultural) and consolidation (territorial and administrative), through which the expansive state obtains the characteristics of an empire (see section 1.4). The Middle Assyrian empire provides a good example of such a transformational process. The combination of massive territorial expansion, a clear change in administrative policies

(Düring 2015; 2018; Kühne 2015; Pongratz-Leisten 2015), the redevelopment of the Assyrian core (Miglus 2011; Mühl and Sulaiman 2011; Mühl 2015a), and the development of an imperial ideology (Pongratz-Leisten 2011; Caramelo 2012), signify the development of an imperial state.

In this framework, the creation of a new capital is directly connected to and acts as a way of consolidating the imperial development of the Assyrian state. However, it needs to be explained why the capital was created at that specific moment in the history of Assyria and not earlier. Using the model presented above in the introduction, (section 1.3.2) capital creation is linked to three main factors: i) historical conditions; ii) the role of the historical agents; and iii) access to resources. I argue that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was created at a peak point in the development of the Middle Assyrian empire. To demonstrate this, we should look at each factor separately.

Starting with the territorial growth of the empire, during the last years of the reign of Shalmaneser I and the first years of Tukultī-Ninurta, Assyria grew to its maximum extent and stabilized its control over the Jazira region, modern Northern Syria. Historically this is clearly illustrated in the relationship between Assyria and the Hittites (Yamada 2011). The latter's influence in northern Mesopotamia resulted in several revolts against Assyria, such as the one by Šattuara II, the king of what remained of the Mittanian state (Grayson 1987, A.0.77.1). However, after a series of conflicts between the Hittites and Assyria, the most notable of which is the battle of Niḫriya (Dietrich 2004; Yamada 2011, 202-203), and during the first years of the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta, Assyria firmly controlled northern Mesopotamia.

In addition to this, Tukultī-Ninurta judged that Assyria had achieved sufficient military power to control northern Syria, and to start an invasion of Babylonia on its southeastern front. Scholars have viewed the war against Babylonia different ways: as an unprovoked attack (Cancik-Kirschbaum 2003, 51), a preventative war against possible aggression from an enemy of similar strength (Llop 2003, 205), or as a quarrel over control of the eastern Tigris region (Jakob 2017, 123). What is of interest here is the ability of Assyria to sustain two large different military fronts at the same time and to continue expanding its territorial control in an unprecedented way. This is specifically the case in the years before and during the construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.

Furthermore, this expansion yielded increased access to resources for Assyria, both in the form of conquest, but also in the form of tribute received "from the four quarters" (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.24, 16-20).

Important in this regard are the administrative developments during the 13th century in Assyria, which also allowed for a maximization of accumulation and production of resources before the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. In the 13th century there is evidence for the creation of a number of new peripheral centers (or transformations of previously existing settlements) to control the conquered territories, such as Dūr-Katlimmu, Tušan, Kulišhinaš (Szuchman 2007; Tenu 2009; 2015). Significant changes in regional settlements system accompanied these new centers, as did the intensification of agricultural production through large irrigation projects and forced deportations (Wiggerman 2000; Parker 2001; 2003; Kühne 2013; 2015). In border regions the creation of a number of fort settlements, such as the *dunnu* of Tell Sabi Abyad (Akkermans 2006; Akkermans and Wiggermann 2015) further corroborate these developments (Tenu 2015, 80-82).

In regard to ideology, during the 13th century, and most clearly during the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta, there is the development of what Düring described as a "culture of empire" (Düring 2015, 302). He further defined this as "*an ideologically charged distinction between an imperial high culture and vernacular traditions*" (2018, 24-5). In addition, through the creation of a distinct Assyrian imperial identity, vassals or conquered elites now had the potential to opt into Assyrian culture, which would both legitimize their rule through association with the dominant empire and secure the safety of their lands (Düring 2015, 305). Finally, this period witnessed the popularization and development of imperial titles such as "king of the universe" and "king of the four quarters" (Novák 1999, 121-122; Cifola 2004; Caramelo 2012), as well as the creation of propagandistic texts such as the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta (Machinist 1978).

An increase in building activity and development at Aššur also accompanied this transformation of Assyria into an empire (Russell 2017). Starting from the reign of Adad-nirari I onwards the city of Aššur experienced extensive reconstructions and restorations, including: large scale renovations to the city wall, the restoration of the Ištar temple, the rebuilding of the temple of Aššur after a fire, repairs to the city's ziggurat, and the reconstruction of the Old Palace (Miglus 1985; Grayson 1987, 128, 138-159, 162-174, 185-200; Pedde – Lundström 2008, 163-165; Russell 2017, 431-432; Schmitt in press). At the same time, there are a number of new buildings constructed in the city, including: a new temple for Ištar, the construction of the Temple of Sîn-Šamaš, a moat around the city walls, and the extension of the city to the south and the accompanying city wall (Grayson 1987, 253-256; Werner 2009; Schmitt 2012).

Finally, in regard to the agents of that period, Tukultī-Ninurta was certainly one of the key players. It was during his reign that more ambitious campaigns and extensive architectural projects took place in the core of Assyria (Russell 2017). However, I do not agree that his persona was the sole factor behind the creation of the new capital (as suggested by Dolce 1997). It is difficult to identify other key agents related to the construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, as the correspondence related to the construction is limited. However, it is possible to speculate that important figures of the time, such as the Great Vizier Ilī-Padâ, who controlled the western part of the empire (Wiggerman 2000), supported the project by providing the required resources for its realization.

Bringing all these strands together, it can be seen that Assyria reached a peak during the last years of Shalmaneser's reign and the first years of Tukultī-Ninurta's reign that made the realization of such a project possible. Therefore, I argue that the building of this first new capital is a direct result of the contemporary transformation of Assyria into an empire. Figure 10 illustrates the important factors related to the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. These factors present the context within which the new city was created and illustrate why a new capital could be realized. Yet, they require further examination to explain why the creation of a new capital was deemed necessary. This point is discussed on the basis of two factors: i) the perceived inadequacy of Aššur, and ii) the creation of an economically stable core.

The "perceived" inadequacy of Aššur
The first point is connected to the perceived inadequacy of Aššur to transform into a large imperial center, mainly due to its lack of space, but also due to the limited available agricultural hinterland directly to the south-west of the city (Arnold 2004; Mühl 2015a, 45-56). During the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta, the Assyrian court alongside the king repeatedly
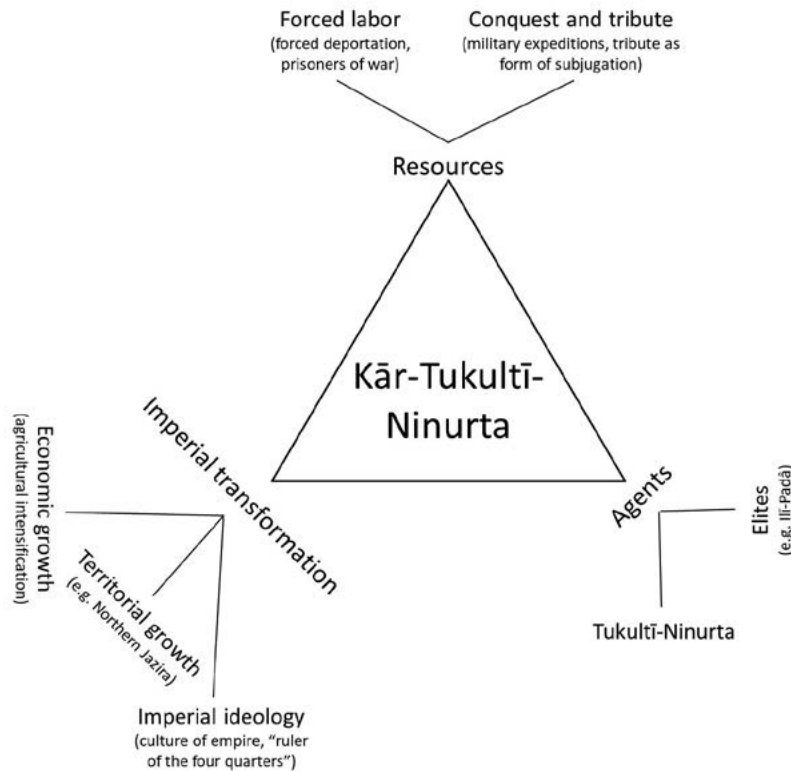
Figure 10: Model for the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, produced by the author.

remodeled the citadel of Aššur. According to the royal inscriptions A.0.78.1-10, the king constructed a new palace, named *é-lugal-umun-kur-kur-ra*, a Sumerian name (Grayson 1987; Lambert 2004, 198), which translates as the 'house of the king of all the lands'. The palace was probably constructed during the beginning of his reign on top of a massive terrace (Andrae 1977, 162-163).[9] In order to create this platform a number of residential areas had to be destroyed (Figure 11).

Other building projects undertaken by Tukultī-Ninurta in the traditional Assyrian capital were the restoration of his father's palace (A.0.78.6), the construction of a new temple for Ištar (A.0.78.11-13), the reconstruction of the Dinitu shrine (A.0.78.14-16), and the completion of the Ninuaittu temple begun by

his father (A.0.78.17). Space, however, specifically on the citadel of Aššur, was limited and seemingly inadequate for large scale projects.

One of the problems Aššur posed is that it did not allow for large scale monumental projects, which seems to have been the intention of the Assyrian court at that point. While the residential part of the city could be expanded towards the south, the citadel area was confined to the north and east by the Tigris river, and in the south by the city itself. This difficulty could be solved with a creation of a new administrative center, which would allow for the creation of a new and larger palace, as well as the housing of new temples without disrupting existing constructions.

The creation of temples was probably an act of some significance, since royal inscriptions inform us about a number of new temples in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. The most commonly mentioned is the new Temple of Aššur, with its accompanying ziggurat (Dittmann

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9   Text A.0.78.3 mentions eighty *mušaru* of space was cleared for the construction of the new palace. The exact dimensions of the area are unclear (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.3).
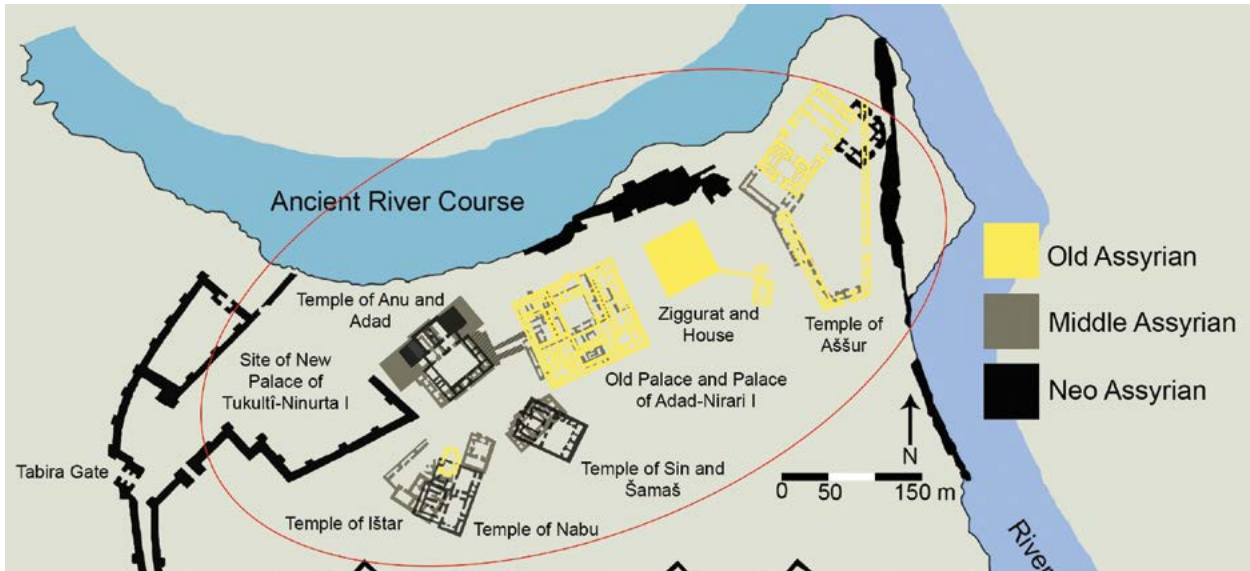
Figure 11: Detail of the citadel of Aššur indicating the limited available building space (detail of Figure 6).

1997a, 106-107; Figure 10).[10] It is the only temple dedicated to Aššur outside of its eponymous city. The royal inscriptions list the existence of at least seven more temples and/or sanctuaries at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.[11] These temples have not yet been identified archaeologically, with the exception of the temple of Aššur and a temple building at Tell O (see section 3.1.1), which is to an unknown deity. Finally, the royal inscriptions often mention the city as a cult center, adding to the importance of the religious aspect and the large number of temples (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.22).

The importance of religion in the new city can also be identified in the large palatial structure of the city. Beyond its monumental size and administrative functions, it had a large space dedicated to religious matters (Palace III; Mühl and Sulaiman 2011). Thus, there is a clear focus on creating religious buildings, both in the citadel with the palace and the temple of Aššur, as well as in the lower town with a large number of temples.

Therefore, the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta offers two new avenues that Assyria pursued, which were not possible previously at Aššur: i) the construction of monumental buildings on its citadel, and ii) the building of a large number of new temples. With the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, the Assyrian administration had a *tabula rasa* to create a new, grander narrative, without having to interfere with the existing spatial or political structures at Aššur.

The creation of an economically stable imperial core
The second point in discussing why the creation of a new capital was deemed necessary concerns the sustainability and intensification of agriculture in the imperial core. During the Middle Assyrian period, the Assyrian empire spent considerable resources developing the region around Aššur. This is demonstrated by the creation of a number of settlements and administrative infrastructure (e.g. Tell Hanas) in the area opposite the city of Aššur, particularly on the north and south parts of the eastern bank of the Tigris (Miglus 2011; Mühl 2013, 40, 175-175; 2015a, 48-51). The continuous growth of a dense rural settlement system allowed Assyria to transform the landscape around Aššur and Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta and increase its agricultural capabilities (Mühl 2015a, 51), thus creating a more politically and economically stable core. As a culmination of the development of this area directly opposite to Aššur, the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta established a center that would allow for a more direct administration of the process.

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10   The implications for the existence of this temple will be discussed in section 3.5**.**
11   The temples mentioned are dedicated to Adad, Šamas, Ninurta, Nusku, Nergal, Sibitti, and Ištar (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.22; Deller *et al*. 1994, 463).

To further add to this, the location of the new city on the eastern bank of the river allowed a more direct and stable access to the region of the Erbil and Makhmur Plains that witnessed a marked increase of Middle Assyrian settlements. The area saw the revitalization and repopulation of existing settlements as well as the creation of new ones, and the growth of urban sites such as Qasr Shemamok and Erbil (Ur et al. 2013; Ur and Osborne 2016).

Reculeau (2011, 205) has argued that regional climatic conditions declined over the decades of Tukultī-Ninurta's reign. At the same time, increased and standardized agricultural production was required to support the continuous military expeditions, growing population, and the extensive territory of the empire (Novák 1999, 122). As mentioned above, Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was located in the most favorable geographical and agricultural area outside of but in close proximity to Aššur. This ensured a sustainable level of agricultural production, because of the large extent of available agricultural land (Bagg 2000a, 309; Arnold 2004; Mühl 2013, 51, pl. 10; 2015a, 45). The royal inscriptions describe the construction of an elaborate system of irrigation canals around the new city to facilitate this agricultural production (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.23, 105-106).

The city' canal system was embedded within the broader irrigation projects already taking place west of the Makhmur Plain (Altaweel 2008, 76). The canal system at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was identified and partly mapped (Eickhoff, 1985, 18, plan 1; Dittmann 1997a, 95-102; see section 3.4 below for the archaeological evidence of this system). The texts refer to two canals: the "Canal of Justice" (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.22, 39-48) and a *miritu* canal. According to Bagg (2000a, 308), the latter came from water sources in the mountains and directed spring water to the city in order to convert terrain into irrigated fields. A later royal inscription (IM 76787) mentions two *miritu* canals that possibly give evidence for later additions to the canal system.

This massive restructuring of the land, as well as the large-scale architectural projects conducted at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta required the mobilization of a large labor force. One of the main imperial practices of the Middle Assyrian empire was the deportation of populations all around their empire and the subsequent exploitation of the deportees for large building projects (Düring 2015, 304). Most of these deportees were housed either within or in the immediate vicinity of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta and

worked both on the construction of the city and the newly created agricultural fields (Freydank 1974; 1975; 1976; 1980; 2001; Harrak 1987, 219-229).

Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta served as a new administrative and economic center for the continuously developing core region of Assyria. The city's considerable extent allowed it to support the large population brought to construct and subsequently populate it.

To conclude this section, I argue that the reasons behind the creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta were twofold: the creation of an imperial center to project an imperial ideology, and the creation of an economically stable core. This city manifested the new imperial status of Assyria. It was an administrative center, a cult center, and had large agricultural capabilities.

3.4 HOW – THE REALIZATION OF A NEW CAPITAL

Here I would like to address a recurring issue with the investigation of the construction of Assyrian capitals. While royal inscriptions and archaeological evidence provide information about the cities and some of the buildings in them (mostly inside the citadels), little is known regarding their construction process. The construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is often praised in the royal inscriptions, but few details are provided. As a result, we have limited knowledge about the number of workers and officials engaged in the funding or managing of the construction, or the exact dimensions of buildings. Only a handful of textual sources dealing with construction and management of the city exist. More importantly, archaeological evidence for crucial parts of the city is lacking. For example, while the full extent of the walls of all other Assyrian capitals is known, this is not the case with Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.

One of the royal inscriptions of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta mentions a two-wall system: one wall surrounding the city, and a second wall surrounding the citadel (Deller *et al.* 1994, 467). The city wall is described as having heaps of earth in front of it and a moat surrounding its circumference. This only partially coincides with the scarce archaeological data of the walls. The only part known of the city wall is along the southern limit of the city (Dittmann 1990) and is visible in the satellite images. Little is known of its exact dimensions. The city wall of Aššur, which may give some indication about the style of construction

and size of the walls of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, was replaced during the Neo Assyrian period, making any comparison problematic. In an attempt to calculate the labor investment required for the city wall's construction, some conservative figures can be produced based on Dittman's assessment of the extent of the city: 240-500 ha (Dittmann 1997b).

To achieve the lower-end estimate of 240 ha, I will use Dittmann's estimated northern limit of the wall, 250 m north of Tell O (see Figure 8), as well as the modern road as the limit of the city to the east, since this was the limit for the survey. The wall would thus be at least 4,3 km long, or ca. 6,7 km long if it extended the riverbank. For the 500 ha estimate we should expect a wall of ca. 6 km long, or 8,4 km with a wall along the riverbank.

I attempted to identify the city wall on the basis of available satellite images.[12] One way to identify the wall would be to look for features similar to the southern wall or to the citadel wall. However, no such remains were detected. Accepting Tukultī-Ninurta's claim that the city wall was surrounded by a moat, finding this moat would indicate the course of the wall. Unfortunately, the only traceable canal-like features consist of the *Canal of Justice*, the main canal of the city's large irrigation system (Menze *et al*. 2007) (Figure 12). The satellite images did not preserve any features along this canal that could be related to the city wall.

From this evidence, it seems that the city's wall was never actually completed. In every other Assyrian capital, the wall features are immediately clear in aerial photography and satellite imagery. Also, all Assyrian capitals are located in areas of intensive modern agriculture or heavy urbanization. Despite these circumstances, their walls remain visible. This is not the case with Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. Is it possible that agricultural activity has been so impactful that it completely erased any trace of the wall? This seems unlikely as it has not been the case anywhere else. With the currently available evidence, I would argue that the wall was never completed, regardless of the claims made in the royal inscriptions. Further investigation on the ground is mandatory if we are to delineate the full extent of the city, and its corresponding city wall.

Labor description	Source	Identified groups
Builder, Building the city wall	VAT18087+ VAT 18002 VAT 17999	Shubrians
Work in the palace of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, Work on the New Palace	VAT 17999 VAT 18007 VAT 18007 VAT 18007	Nairians

Table 4: Different types of work associated with different groups of deportees during the construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta (after Harrak 1987).

Be that as it may, the number of texts concerning deportees (Harrak 1987, 219-229; Freydank 1974; 1975; 1976; 1980; 2001) provide some information on the construction process and labor investment for Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. Unfortunately, most of these texts refer to deportees working on the new capital and do not specify numbers or time spent working. Harrak (1987, 270) estimated the number of deportees, based on the amount of grain supplied to them. According to these calculations, Harrak estimated that there would have been 7320 Kassite prisoners brought here (1987, 271). Harrak's estimations provide a good ballpark figure for the labor required for the construction of the city. They also are useful to create a picture of the administration of the construction as well as the diversity of the deportees.

Some texts mention more precise figures for the deportees working at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. Text VAT 18002 (Harrak 1987, 219-220) divides deportees into small groups of different numbers: 200, 188, 180 and 153 Shubrians, and 99 Nairians.[13] The text discusses the allocation of different amounts of wool to these groups, each of which was entrusted to named Assyrian officials. Although their numbers are unclear, some of these groups are designated as builders (Table 4).

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12   The available CORONA images for Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta can be found at http://corona.cast.uark.edu/ atlas#zoom=16&center=4817623,4230032 [accessed 3-4-2018].

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13   The fact that deportees are organized by ethnic groups is particularly interesting. In the same period, archaeological and textual vidence from inscriptions indicate that working groups at the *dunnu* of Tell Sabi Abyad were also administered on the basis of ethnicity (Wiggerman 2000).

Figure 12: Corona image from December 1967 and Dittmann's sketch of the overlaid with possible canal features related to the Canal of Justice. Produced by the author.

The text VAT 17999 also mentions small groups of people (Freydank 1974; 1976; Harrak 1987, 220-221; Gilibert 2008, 179). It mentions an unclear number of Shubrian people who worked under the command of an Assyrian official on the construction of the city wall. An even smaller group of people from the land of Nairi, again under an Assyrian official, 'executed work in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta'.

Although the two texts relate that deportees worked in the palace of the new capital, it is impossible to know in which part of the palace they worked, or what exactly was the nature of their task (VAT 18007; VAT 18087+). Both texts list Nairians as working in the palace or carrying out other tasks in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, while Shubrian builders are only mentioned as working in the city itself.

Among these texts, only brief mentions are made of deportees working in agricultural production. It appears that the campaigns in Hanigalbat and Babylon supplied the workforce for these building projects. The diverse groups of people occupied in constructing the different buildings might explain some of the differences in construction between buildings and within them as well (e.g. the difference in mudbrick size mentioned above).

It is not possible to reconstruct the construction process of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. What can be said with a certain degree of certainty is that the construction process of the city was tied up with the administrative and territorial growth of the empire. This can be seen in the large number of deportees which were brought here and managed for this project. At the same time, resources were necessary not only to feed the laborers, but also for the imperial army. The amount of resources required to realize such a project could not have been amassed without the growth that Assyria witnessed in its transformation to an empire. The creation of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is directly tied to this transformation and likely would not have been possible otherwise.

3.5 WHAT – THE FUNCTION AND 'DEMISE' OF KĀR-TUKULTĪ-NINURTA

Here I will discuss the function of the new capital through an investigation of historical evidence and archaeological remains. I will start by exploring the urban landscape of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, its known architectural features, and its irrigation system. This will be done mainly on the basis of the available archaeological evidence. Then I will discuss other aspects of the function of the city, and whether it should be considered a new capital or an 'extension' of Aššur.

3.5.1 THE PLAN AND URBAN LANDSCAPE OF KĀR-TUKULTĪ-NINURTA

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, after Bachmann's and Andrae's excavation, the city was initially thought to be about 62 ha in size. The excavations were limited to the official district which was walled and also divided by an inner wall. The identified buildings were: the northern and southern palace, the temple of Aššur, Gate D, Tower K, and a building above the northern palace labeled *Wohnhaus*

(Eickhoff 1985, Plan 1), which was considered as the northern border of the city.

The survey and excavations conducted by Dittmann showed that the site has a size of at least 240 ha, leading the excavator to suggest that the city could even have been 500 ha, (Dittmann 1997b, 269), since the eastern and northern boundaries of the city were not found yet. Dittmann argued that the city probably extended to the north at least as far as Tell O. It is unclear from the current data whether temple at Tell O belonged to the citadel area, or whether it was part of the lower city. Based on the wall of the citadel, it seems most probable that it was outside of the citadel. What can be said is that the temple at Tell O was not unique, as surface data indicated the existence of other small temples in other areas of the city (Dittmann 1992, 312).

Because of the unknown course of the wall, the city plan of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is unclear. It is tempting to reconstruct the city in a roughly rectangular shape, similar to the later capitals of the Neo Assyrian period. This idea seems feasible based on two main factors. Firstly, the remaining part of the wall on the southern side of the city seems to follow a straight line. Furthermore, the landscape of the area is relatively level, with no major natural obstacles requiring the wall to curve. The second argument is that the wall of the citadel seems to have a rectangular construction. If the wall of the city follows that of the citadel, then it is likely that it did have a rectangular construction, similar to Dur-Šarrukēn (see below chapter 5).

It is not possible to reconstruct the daily urban life of the city because of the lack of evidence. We do not know in what type of houses these people lived, what their living conditions were, or what their neighborhoods looked like. Dittmann has argued for the possibility that deportees were settled in specific districts of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta based on their ethnicity (i.e. place of origin), and that an Assyrian official would be put in charge of that district (1997, 110-101). This interpretation is based on of distribution of ceramic concentrations in the fields he surveyed, which particularly focused on the southern side of the city (see section 3.1.1). The methodology used for the estimations of this pottery is unclear, as the work of Dittmann remains unpublished, and as such it is not possible to accurately assess these interpretations. However, the possibility that the living quarters of deportees were organized on the basis of ethnicity may also be supported by a

number of texts dealing with the construction of the city (Freydank 1974; 1976; Harrak 1987, 219-229). Based on his survey findings, Dittmann also suggested that several more prominent buildings existed within these neighborhoods in the lower city which could have had administrative functions (Dittmann 1997a, 101). If this is the case, then Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta would look even more like the Neo Assyrian capitals, where such buildings are also attested (see section 4.5.2), but we should remain critical to such an idea until the data from the survey are fully published.

Summarizing the urban layout of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, it seems that at least a part of the lower city had a residential function. The city was definitely populated by the deportees brought in for its construction, but also by a certain number of Assyrian officials.

3.5.2 THE CITADEL

The citadel of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is the only excavated area of the city. Located on what is probably its northern/north-western side, the citadel is directly on the eastern bank of the Tigris, it is the first walled citadel of a capital in Assyrian history. Only the few buildings mentioned in section 3.1.1 have been identified in the citadel. While the available plan of the citadel is rather incomplete, there are three buildings which are important for our understanding of the function of the city: the two palaces and the Aššur Temple.

It has already been discussed that the two palatial structures were probably connected, forming a monumental palace ca. 5 ha in size. The 2002 excavation trenches conducted by Iraqi archaeologists further supported this position by uncovering a courtyard located between the 'two palaces' (Mühl and Sulaiman 2011, 381-382, Plate XXVIIIb). The fact that the two palaces might be part of the same structure is important for a number of reasons. The existence of two different palatial buildings in the same citadel was puzzling. Although multiple palaces exist in all Assyrian capitals, none of the other capitals had two palaces constructed at the same time in the main citadel.

As discussed, a new palace was constructed in Aššur during the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta (section 3.2). The existence of a larger palace in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta shows the intention to make the city the primary residence for the king.

In terms of its size it significantly exceeds the New Palace at Aššur by approximately 20.000 m². In terms of structure, the palace shows a wide variety of rooms and several courtyards, although the southern part of the palace is poorly preserved. A large central court is surrounded by a series of fragmented rooms. It seems like most of the terrace walls were painted white.

The south palace provided a large number of small finds including lead objects, faience, stone knobbed-plaque fragments, terracotta idols, bronze arrowheads, armor scales, faience animal figurines and tablets (Bachmann 2016, 293-295). Based on the fragmented nature of the rooms and the incomplete plan of the south palace it is not possible to determine the function of this part of the building. Bachmann also identified fragments of blue, red, white, and yellow painted plaster, possibly indicating mural designs (Bachmann 2016, 295). Andrae (1925) published watercolor copies of these decorations, indicating floral and rosette motifs, similar to the frit and faience versions uncovered in Tell O (Bastert and Dittmann 1992). Common shapes in these decorations include rosettes, palmettes, and small dotted circles from which several types of plants sprout (Andrae 1925; Eickhoff 1985, 36f.). Similar decorations of both the rooms and the terrace have been uncovered in the Central Palace of Tell Ḥamīdīya, which dates to the Mitanni period (Wäfler 1990).

The north palace is a complex of 18 rooms with thick walls (ranging from 4 to 9 m in thickness). The area was paved with bitumen-coated and palace-stamped baked bricks placed on top of bitumen and sand (Eickhoff 1985). The walls were also probably decorated, as Bachmann identified traces of red, blue, and white plaster (Bachmann 2016, 301-303).

The north palace was originally interpreted as an entrance leading to the rest of the palace (Eickhoff 1985, 42). However, the recent work done by Iraqi archaeologists to the north of the north palace revealed another part to this structure, which makes Eickhoff's interpretation improbable (Dittmann 1990, 167; Mühl and Sulaiman 2011). Based on the excavations in the western part of this area by Dittmann and Iraqi archaeologists (Sulaiman 2010) Mühl and Sulaiman (2011, 381-382) created a plan which incorporates both results. This research revealed a large courtyard that measures ca. 32 x 28 m with a center paved with green and yellow tiles. The assessment by Mühl and Sulaiman (2011, 382) incorporated this section with the palatial complex based on its plan, layout, decoration, and the bricks inscribed with the king's name (Figure 13). Although it is not possible to reconstruct the palace, it is possible to assess its functions. We are
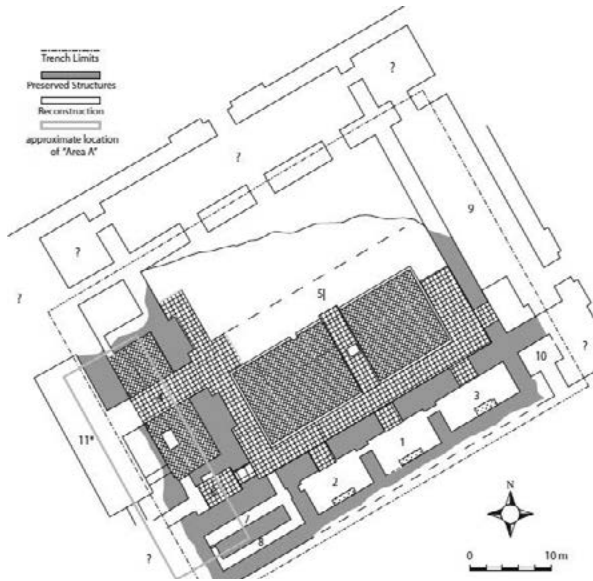
Figure 13: The plan of the so-called north palace after the synthetic work of Mühl and Sulaiman (2011, Fig. 8).

informed by texts that it had residential suites where the king lived. It was organized, similarly to Neo Assyrian palaces, along a series of courtyards with different functions.

An interesting aspect of the architecture in the citadel of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta are its similar manifestations in the palace as well as in other buildings. In the southern palace, Bachmann (Eickhoff 1985, 36f) and later cleaning work (Mühl and Sulaiman, 2011, 382) revealed that the façade was decorated with columned pillars within buttresses and niches. Similar decorations have been uncovered in Tall Hamidiya (Wäfler 2003, 35 fig. 10, Pl. 1), showing the potential influence of older Mitannian architecture. For the northern palace and the rooms uncovered in Area A, Mühl and Sulaiman argued that the spatial organization of this section of the palace followed the temple architecture of the Old Babylonian period (Mühl and Sulaiman 2011, 382). Babylonian influences can be observed more broadly as well, as it has been argued, and discussed earlier here, that part of the reason Tukultī-Ninurta wanted to construct the capital is to imitate Babylonian kings (Cifola 2004). In addition, Babylonian influences can be seen in the royal texts and other textual data of the period (e.g. the Epic of Tukultī-Ninurta: Machinist 1978).

One of the controversial topics for the city of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is the existence of a temple dedicated to the god Aššur (Figure 14). The reason for this is the fact that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is the only Assyrian city, apart from Aššur, which had a temple of Aššur. Gilibert has suggested that the new temple of Aššur in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta should be considered a "branch" temple of its counterpart in Aššur (Gilibert 2008, 182). The reasoning behind this proposal is that the perimeter of the ziggurat in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta measures virtually half of that in Aššur. Additionally, Gilibert's "branch" idea is based on: the "*compact layout of the temple*" with many doorways, cult niches, and rooms, as well as the ability to access the main cult room from multiple entrances (2008, 182; based on Miglus 1993, 199-204). This branch temple would be fitting only for ritualistic purposes and not as the main temple for worshipping the god.

While indeed the temple at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is smaller in terms of size, other data do not necessarily point towards a "branch" interpretation. First, the temple of Aššur is the largest archaeologically attested temple in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta (Dittmann 1997, 106-107). Additionally, there are no textual data which would indicate that the temple of Aššur in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta would be of secondary use. On the contrary, the temple is specifically mentioned in the royal inscriptions, while other temples have only a brief mention. Text A.0.78.23 states:

(109-118): At that time I built in my city, Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, the cult center which I had constructed, a holy temple, an awesome sanctuary for the dwelling of the god Aššur, my lord. I called it Ekurmešara. Inside it I completed a great ziggurat as the cult platform of the god Aššur, my lord, and deposited my monumental inscriptions.

After this comes an injunction compelling any later kings to restore the temple to its previous condition in case it becomes dilapidated. This is more extensive than in other royal inscriptions which refer to the city, and includes not only the god Aššur, but also Enlil and Šamaš. This could indicate that the king paid specific attention to this new temple and that it was by no means something unimportant. Based on this evidence, I would suggest that it is not yet possible to determine the exact function and purpose of the temple of Aššur in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. The uniqueness of the phenomenon makes it, I believe, a special case. On the other hand, the smaller size of the building indicates a possible lower status in comparison to the corresponding temple at Aššur.
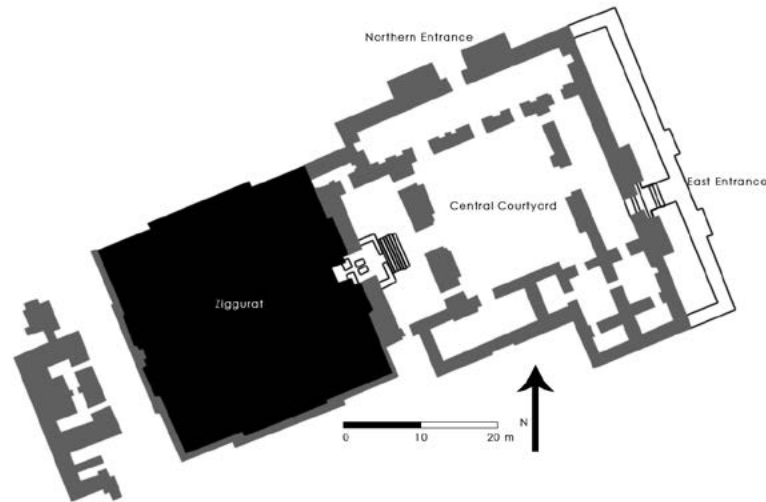
Figure 14: Temple of Aššur and ziggurat in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta (after Nigro in Matthiae 1997, 24, produced by the author).

The citadel of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta incorporated a number of unique features that significantly distinguish it from the one at Aššur. Several of these reoccur in Neo Assyrian capitals. The citadel served as: i) the main residence of the king, ii) an administrative center, and iii) a religious center. The much larger palace, the spatial distinction between citadel and the rest of the city with a wall, and the existence of several temples and shrines are enough to suggest, in my opinion, that the function of the city's citadel was to serve as the new administrative center of the empire.

3.5.3 IRRIGATION SYSTEM AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

In the reasons for the construction of a new capital I included the creation of an economically stable core. The area around Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta provided a large fertile open space which could be remodeled into a landscape of intense agricultural production. This required an extensive and elaborate irrigation system.

The new city is located in an area where the average annual rainfall is close to, or under, 100 isohyets (Bagg 2000a, 209). This is not sufficient for dry-farming agriculture, which requires 250 mm annual rainfall at least. Extensive irrigation systems had to be constructed in order to transform the area into a fertile region that would support its growing population. This might be the reason the area was 'laying waste' before the foundation of the new capital (although there are indications for some small old Assyrian settlements). According to Bagg (2000a), the Tigris river is not ideal for the creation of large irrigation canals because it is deeply incised and has unpredictable and violent floods caused by heavy rainstorms. However, recent research shows that Assyrians did have the technology to overcome such difficulties (Reculeau 2013), especially in an area such as the Makhmur Plain, by tapping into side rivers.

According to the royal inscriptions two canals were constructed, the 'Canal of Justice' (Grayson 1987, A.0.78.22, 39-48) and a *miritu* canal. The latter possibly came from sources in the mountains and directed spring water to the city in order to convert uncultivated land into irrigated fields (Bagg 2000a, 308). Unfortunately, there is only limited archaeological data for these canals since the original courses were reused or obscured by later irrigation programs (Mühl 2015a, 55). However, the large number of Middle Assyrian sites between the new

capital and the Lesser Zab confluence, in conjunction with textual data, argue for intensified agricultural production (Bagg 2000b).

It has been claimed that the main reason for the construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was the restructuring of the land into irrigated fields of high production (Gilibert 2008, 183). This was required, according to Novàk, in order to avert the problems caused by population growth in the center of the empire (Novàk 1999, 122). These arguments are problematic for two reasons. Firstly, if the city's main purpose was agricultural, it does not seem necessary to build an entire urban area with a palace and temples. If this was the intended function, then it would have been better to create smaller agricultural settlements, as occurred in other areas of the empire. The second point regarding population growth also begs the question: if you want to combat population density,[14] why bring in several thousands of deportees to settle in the new city? While the city of Aššur was relatively densely populated, there never is no evidence for issues related to population density. As a matter of fact, we often have Assyrians populating other parts of the empire, where there was more opportunity for economic gain (e.g. Tell Sabi Abyad, Wiggerman 2000). The only spatial problem in the city of Aššur was related to its citadel, where residential areas had to be destroyed to create space for new monumental buildings.

Text MARV IV 115 (Freydank 2009, 21; 73-75) might offer some useful insights on the role of agricultural production in the new city. According to Freydank's interpretation of the text, officers of the new capital provide barley wheat in Aššur in the form of sacrifice at the temple of Aššur, on behalf of the new city. Based on this text, it seems plausible that the newly established agricultural infrastructure provided the old capital with grain as well. Through other texts we know that taxes in the form of tribute were collected in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta (Freydank 2009). This kind of texts, together with the creation of administrative buildings like the palace, indicate that the new capital functioned as an administrative and agricultural center for the empire (Reculeau 2011).

3.5.4 THE END OF A CAPITAL

Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was abandoned as an administrative center after the death of Tukultī-Ninurta. Several theories have been advanced in regard to this abandonment. Scholars who have associated the creation of the city directly with the personality of the king, directly connect its abandonment with his assassination (see for example Dolce 1997). Adding to that line of thought is a Babylonian text ("Chronicle P"), which informs us that the king was killed in his own city by his son (Grayson 1975, 175-176)[15]. Also, it has been argued, albeit without evidence, that the construction of a temple to the god Aššur in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was perceived by the court and the priesthood as a major sacrilege (Eickhoff 1985, 49).

Recent studies have demonstrated that there are no concrete data to support such a thesis (Gilibert 2008; Schmitt in press). On the contrary, the king's name was never undermined in later texts and there does not seem to be a "*damnatio memoriae*" imposed on him (Schmitt in press). Additionally, there is no evidence which would imply that the new temple of Aššur in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta undermined the religious importance of its counterpart in Aššur.

I would suggest that the abandonment of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta should be associated with the recession the Middle Assyrian empire experienced during the last years of the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta and afterwards (Jakob 2017, 132-134). In that period, continuous competition between Assyria and Babylon frequently destabilized the southern border of the empire, and there were internal conflicts among Assyrian pretenders to the throne (Llop and George 2001/2; Yamada 2003, 156-159; Glassner 2005; Jakob 2017, 132). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to investigate the exact reasons behind the decline of the Assyrian empire from the 12th century onwards. I suggest, however, that the abandonment of the city is directly connected with the aforementioned recession and power struggle.

I have argued that the new capital was created as part of the imperial transformation process Assyria experienced. It became a center which could support extensive administrative functions and the increased agricultural production of its surrounding region.

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14   There is an argument to be made that population growth of the center of the empire is actually the goal. With the creation of a large capital like Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, population growth is a definite outcome.

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15   It must be noted that Chronicle P is poorly preserved and its dating is uncertain. As such, information from this text should be treated with caution.

With the decline that followed the death of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, neither of these functions could be fulfilled any longer. Alongside this, the development of the imperial core that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was part of, was no longer tenable. Conflicts came ever closer to the city of Aššur and coincided with significantly lower crop yields (see for example Grayson 1991, A.0.89.1, A.0.89.2, A.0.89.7; Frahm 2009, 41; Jakob 2017, 138-139). This made the further development and maintenance of such a large and demanding project like Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta impossible to sustain, especially without the revenue from taxes and conquest, and as the agricultural production of the center dropped significantly (see for example Freydank 2009, 78).

It is, however, important to note that the site was never completely abandoned. Parts of the agricultural infrastructure associated with it, as well as parts of its residential quarters likely continued to be inhabited until even the post Assyrian times, although mostly as small villages (Dittmann 2011). Yet, the city's temples and its administrative buildings, such as the palace were abandoned.

To conclude, I suggest that Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta functioned as the first example of Assyrian capital creation. It was not constructed to be an extension of Aššur, but rather as a new center for the empire, which would reflect its newly expanded status. This was expressed through the size of the city, the creation of several temples, and the construction of a new palace. These new features suggest an attempt to differentiate, as well as magnify, the situation in Aššur. While the central administration did shift to Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, it did not aim to challenge Aššur's role as a religious center, but to complement it.