Creating capitals: The rationale, construction, and function of the imperial capitals of Assyria

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Chapter 4: Kalḫu – The First New Neo Assyrian

4.1 INTRODUCTION

After a decline in power during the so-called dark ages, the Assyrian state entered its second period of imperial expansion, which lasted for more than three centuries (934-609 BCE; see Appendix 1). This period is referred to as the as Neo Assyrian and marks another transformation of Assyria into the largest empire the world had ever seen. The Neo Assyrian empire shares several aspects and characteristics in administrative, ruling, and military practices with those of the Middle Assyrian empire. For the purpose of this study, the most important shared practice is the creation of new capitals. Kalḫu is the first newly created capital in this period.

Kalḫu, also known as Nimrud, or Calah, is located in the modern Nineveh Governorate of Iraq, some 30 km south of Mosul (Figure 15). The city lies on the eastern bank of Tigris, like all other Assyrian capitals except Aššur. The previous capital, Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, ceased to function as a capital city with the death of its eponymous king. In contrast to this, Kalḫu was constructed during the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal II (883–859 BCE) and retained its status for some 175 years, until the reign of Sargon II (721-705 BCE), when the capital was moved to Dur-Šarrukēn (705 BCE). Kalḫu's longer period of existence offers more material to assess the historical contextualization of this specific instance of capital creation, especially in regard to urban development and function.

In this chapter I will argue that, similarly to Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, the creation of Kalḫu occurred during a change in the *status quo* of Assyria, and its transformation, once again, to an imperial state. Rather than trying to explain the change exclusively through king or elite motivations, I will try to contextualize the change in the historical processes of the time and in those conditions that *enabled* or *facilitated* the creation of a new capital.

4.1.1 HISTORY OF RESEARCH AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Kalḫu has been the focus of several archaeological campaigns throughout the 19th and 20th century. The site was first mentioned by a British traveler, Claudius James Rich, in 1820. The first excavations at the site were conducted by Layard in 1845-1847 and 1849-1851, when the site was still thought to be Nineveh (Layard 1849). His excavations were continued by Hormuzd Rassam in multiple campaigns until 1879 (Rassam and Rogers 1897).

Max Mallowan resumed archaeological work at the site resumed in 1949, and his work really laid the basis of our understanding of the city (Mallowan 1966; McCall 2008). His work focused on the citadel mound, located on the southwestern corner of Kalḫu. The 1950s campaigns of Mallowan and his team uncovered a large number of buildings, including the Ninurta Temple, the Ištar Temple, the North-West Palace (N.W. Palace), the Central Palace, the 1950 Building, the Burnt Palace, the Nabu Temple, and traces of the South-West Palace (S. W. Palace); he also identified a number of houses and part of the wall on the northeastern part of the citadel (Figure 16). Excavations were also conducted on Fort Shalmaneser, the secondary citadel of Kalḫu (Mallowan 1966, vol. 2).

Mallowan's work on the citadel was continued by David Oates after 1958, focusing mostly in Fort Shalmaneser (Oates 1961; 1962; 1963), and Julian Orchard in 1963, the last year of excavations of the British School in Iraq. Restorations and further work, especially on the N.W. Palace was done by archaeologists from the Directorate of Antiquities of the Republic of Iraq (Postgate and Reade 1980, 306).

Janusz Meuszyński from the Polish Center for Mediterranean Archaeology conducted research that re-investigated the Central Palace. Some work

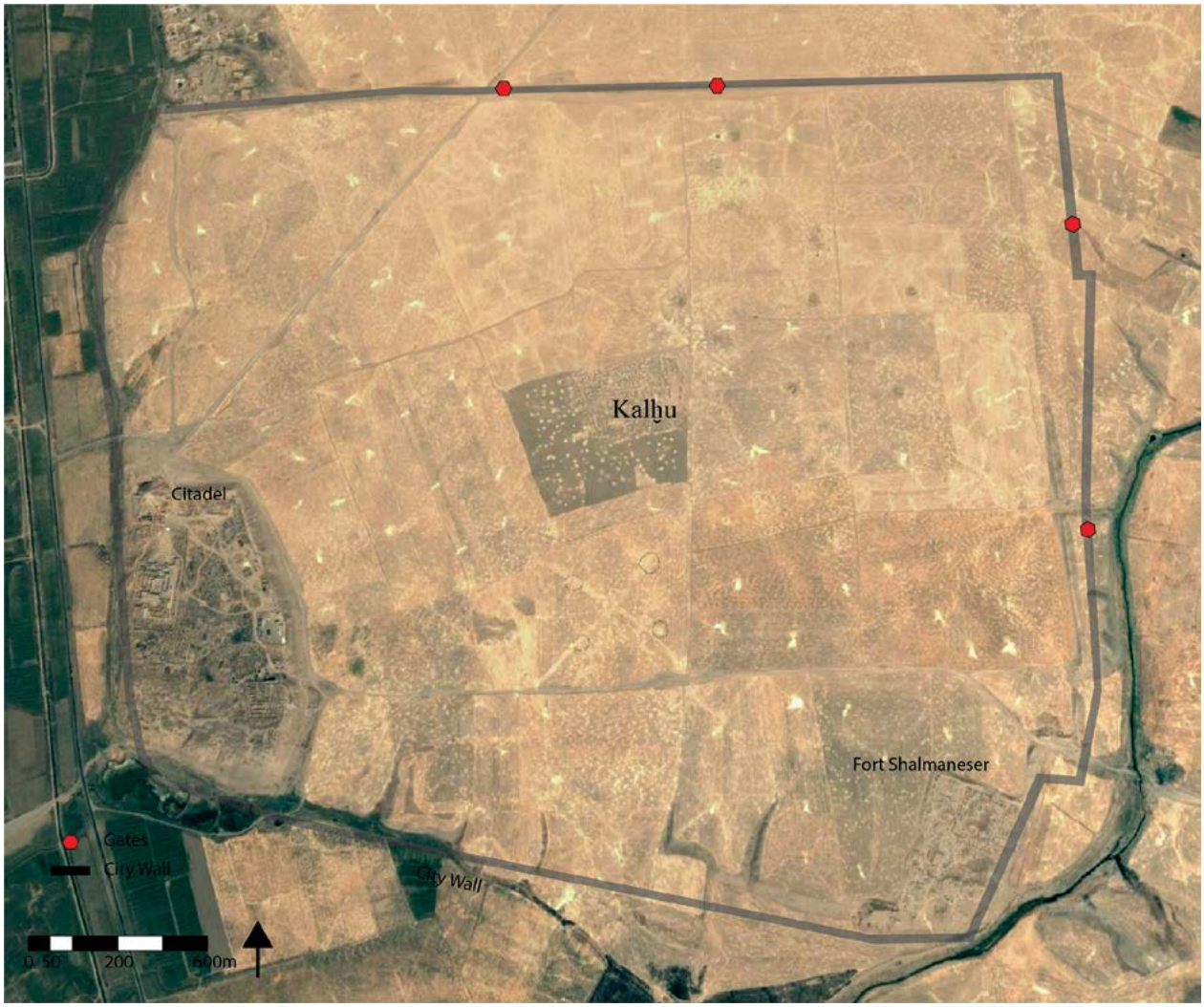

Figure 15: The city of Kalḫu as seen today, with traces of the wall still visible (image from Google Earth).

was also done around Courtyard Y of the N.W. Palace (Meuszyński, 1971-1978; 1981).

An extensive survey of the lower city of Kalḫu took place between 1987 and 1989, under the supervision of Paolo Fiorina (Fiorina 2008; 2011). Roughly 160 of the total 360 ha of the city were surveyed. In addition, Fiorina undertook some excavations at Fort Shalmaneser. Further work on the citadel and the residential quarters of the N.W. Palace were conducted by Muzahim Mahmoud Hussein (Hussein 2002).

The citadel of Kalḫu, located in the southwestern corner of the city wall, is the most well-documented part of the city. It is comprised of a number of buildings, including palaces, residential buildings, and temples. In this section I will briefly present the buildings of the city and summarize the archaeological work conducted on each building, while detailed archaeological discussion of relevant buildings will be explored further in this chapter.

The N.W. Palace is probably the most prominent building of the citadel, measuring 200 m by 130 m (Figure 16 and 24). As one of the first major constructions of the city and the primary residence of the Assyrian king it is also one of the best studied buildings of the capital (Mallowan 1952; 1966, 93-

183; Hussein *et al*. 2013; Kertai 2013a; 2014; 2015). It is located on the westernmost part of the citadel overlooking the Tigris and was probably not visible from the lower city.

To the south of the N.W. Palace is another complex, the palace of Adad-nirari III, also referred to as the Upper Chambers. The Upper Chambers is a number of rooms organized around a courtyard, and it was originally interpreted as a separate building, possibly a new palace (Oates and Oates 2001, 70). It is more plausible however, that these rooms were additions to the N.W. Palace (Kertai 2015, 77-79).

Another building designated as palace is the Central Palace. It is located to the south-east of the N.W. Palace, in a very central position on the citadel. It dates to the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal and is one of the oldest buildings on the citadel. We know little concerning its architecture and use compared to other buildings of the area; its identification as a palace is still debated (Meuszyński 1971-1978; Oates and Oates 2001, 71-74; Hussein *et al*. 2013, 96-98; Kertai 2013a, 11-13). The current state of the building is such that it is impossible to reconstruct a plan of it or describe its architectural composition.

On the southwestern corner of the citadel there is a building designated as the S.W. Palace (Mallowan 1952, 5; Kertai 2015, 156-158). Its dating is unknown, but its surviving parts can be dated to the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE). Little is known of its plan and the building seems to have remained unfinished. However, the remains of the palace seem quite similar to some parts of the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh (see section 6.8.1). This is especially the case given the oblong north-south chambers on either side of the complex, and the south reception suite with its two long east-west antechambers. Such similarities further support a later date for the construction of the S.W. Palace. Two human-headed winged lions made of limestone were also uncovered here, which have the particularity that they have four legs; this number of legs is characteristic of a later date than the time when Kalḫu was constructed. The role and purpose of this building is unclear, but it is possible that it was constructed much later than the creation of Kalḫu, and that some parts even date to after Kalḫu was abandoned as a capital.

On the southeastern corner of the citadel there are a series of buildings, as well as one of the entrances to the citadel, the Shalmaneser Gate. The buildings located there are the Nabu Temple complex, the Burnt Palace, and the Governor's Palace. The Nabu Temple complex, also known as Ezida, is one of the temples constructed during the construction of the city and has been restored by the Directorate-General of Antiquities in Iraq. It contains two large courtyards, a throneroom, and the Nabu Sanctuary. To the west of the temple complex is the Burnt Palace, one of the buildings with the longest stratigraphic sequence, as part of it possibly dates to the Middle Assyrian period (see section 4.3 for details). Finally, the Governor's Palace, located to the north of the Burnt Palace, is a large administrative and residential building. Large quantities of tablets have been found there and several of them refer to the affairs of governors (Oates and Oates 2001, 134). However, there is no evidence to prove that the building was actually the residence of the governor of the province of Kalḫu.

Directly north of the Central Palace there is a large residential building designated as the so-called "1950 building" (Mallowan 1950). Unfortunately, little can be discerned of its plan, although it bears some resemblance to the Governor's Palace, especially in terms of its decoration. The building is crucial, however, for its long stratigraphic sequence (see below section 4.3.2), which preserves multiple occupation layers of the citadel area.

A large ziggurat and temple complex are located in the northwestern corner of the citadel. The ziggurat was one of the most prominent features of the cityscape and could be seen from a considerable distance. A temple complex located at the foot of the ziggurat contained the Ninurta Temple and a temple dedicated to Ištar. Finally, in the northeastern corner there is a series of smaller residences which will be further discussed in section 4.5.2.

Besides the citadel, the only other excavated area of the city is Fort Shalmaneser, designated as the military palace of Kalḫu. The palace was constructed during the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), son of Aššurnaṣirpal. A building designated as the Lower Town Palace is the only building excavated in the lower town of Kalḫu. The architectural designs and archaeological evidence for these buildings will be explored below in this chapter.

In recent years, Kalḫu has suffered significant damage from the destructive forces of the Islamic State. On March 5th, 2015, it was reported that forces of ISIS bulldozed the area of the N.W. Palace and destroyed the lamassu statues of the gates of the palace.[16] In

16 A detailed analysis of the destruction was presented by Mühl 2015b.

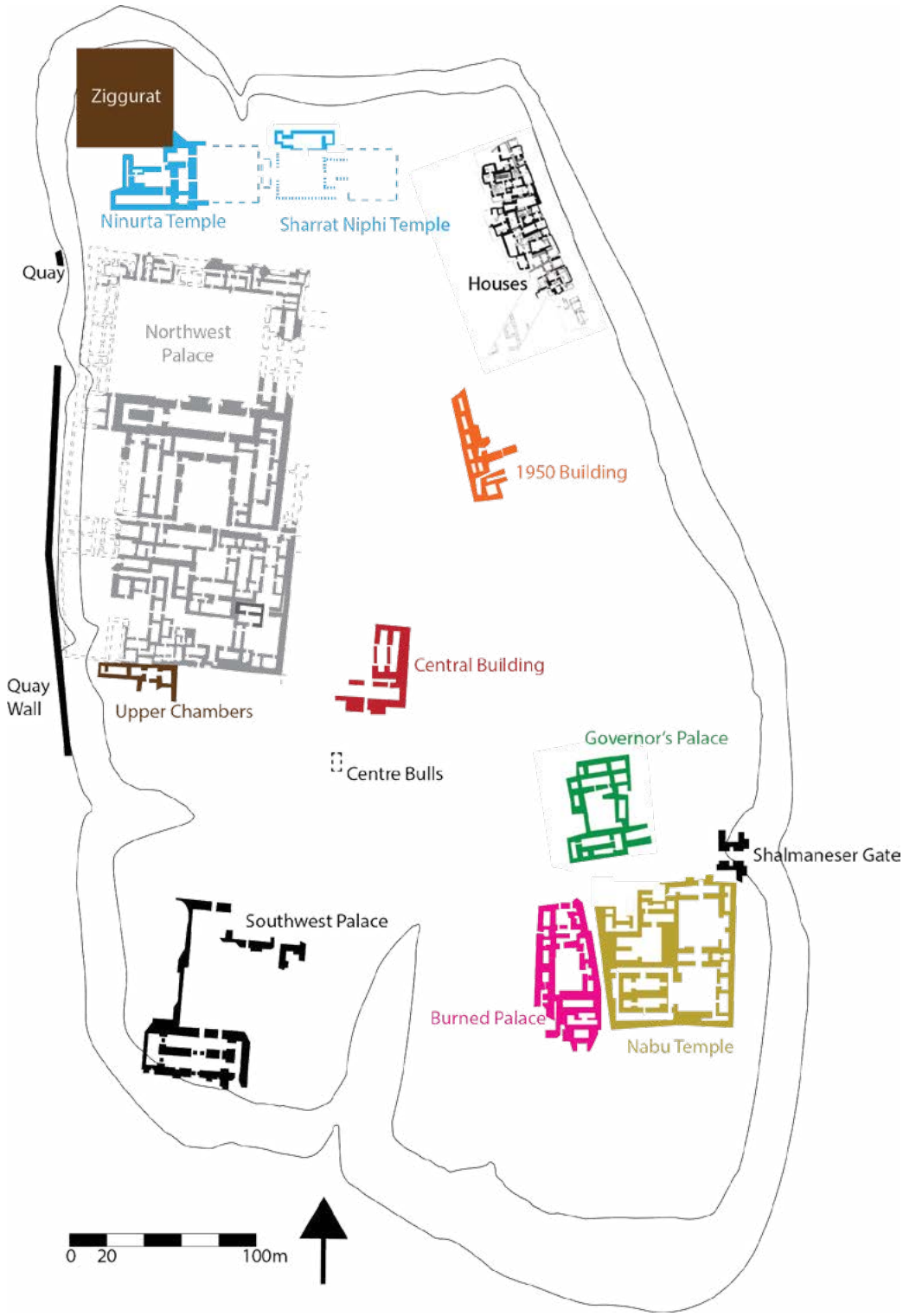

Figure 16: Plan of the citadel mound of Kalḫu (after Oates and Oates 2001 and Kertai 2015, produced by the author).

2016, it was reported that the ziggurat of the city had been leveled, and that the Nabu temple had suffered significant damage, while parts of the reconstructed temple of Ištar were destroyed (Danti 2016). The area of Kalḫu has since been liberated from IS, but the continuous instability in the area hamstrings the efforts of the Iraqis for reconstruction works.

4.2 FROM DECLINE TO EMPIRE - POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE EARLY NEO ASSYRIAN STATE

In order to examine the historical context in which Kalḫu became the capital of Assyria, it is necessary to explore Assyria's history during the early stages of the Neo Assyrian empire, starting from the decline of the Middle Assyrian empire up to the construction of Kalḫu.

The previous chapter discussed the creation of Kār-Tukultî-Ninurta as an expression of the wider transformation of the Middle Assyrian state into an empire. The abandonment of Kār-Tukultî-Ninurta and the death of its eponymous king (in 1197 BCE) was followed by a period of political turbulence and territorial recession, such as the loss of Babylon. However, the military expeditions undertaken during the periods of Aššur-reša-iši I (1132-1115 BCE),[17] and more importantly those of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BCE),[18] brought a period of resurgence to the state. Successful campaigns were waged against the Arameans and the Mušku to the west and Babylon to the south (Oates and Oates 2001, 15). While this resurgence was brief, it was not until the end of the 10th century BCE that Assyria started to regain its imperial status, which helped the state to sustain an imperial identity.

The first king under whom the Assyrian restoration begins was Aššur-dan II (934-912 BCE) (Frahm 2017, 167-73). Aššur-dan's campaigns focused mainly on the north, north-east and north-west against the Arameans (Grayson 1982, 248-9; Parker 2001, 44). During the reign of Adad-nirari II (911-891 BCE), a large number of expeditions occurred on every frontier of the empire (Grayson 1982, 249-251; Grayson 1991, 142). Major campaigns were launched against the Arameans and Babylonia. In addition, we have the first military action in the north against Katmuhu and Nairi. Additional campaigns targeted the Cizre plain to assist the king of Kumme (Parker 2001, 45).

According to the annalistic inscriptions of Adad-nirari, his campaigns were so successful that in one of them (894 BCE) there was hardly any resistance to the collection of tribute during the Assyrian march (Grayson 1991, A.0.99.2, 105-119). According the "Synchronistic History", during the reign of Adad-nirari, new borders were drawn between Assyria and Babylon at this time (Glassner 2005, 180-181). Building projects took place in the citadels of Aššur (Grayson 1991, A.0.99.1-4 and 6) and Nineveh (Grayson 1991, A.0.99.4-5 and 7).

During the kingship of Tukultī-Ninurta II (890-884 BCE) there was a pause in the territorial expansion of the state and a brief period of consolidation. There is only one surviving version of his annals (Grayson 1991, A.0.100.5), which show that his primary military focus was the northern frontier and more specifically the land of Nairi, modern Turkey's Van and Hakkâri provinces, against which he launched three military operations. In a wider "sweep campaign" to the south and the west in 885 he met little opposition. However, he did not progress much further beyond the territory conquered by his father (Grayson 1982, 252; Frahm 2017, 168).

This notion that this was a period of consolidation is supported further by the building projects undertaken during that short period (Russell 2017, 435). Extensive construction occurred in the city of Aššur, such as the wall of Baltil (Grayson 1991, A.0.100.2), the palace terrace (Grayson 1991, A.0.100.3 and 5), the Anu-Adad temple (Grayson 1991, A.0.100.15). Nineveh also witnessed large building projects (Grayson 1991, A.0.100.12-13 and 17) although there is no detailed account for that activity. Additionally, projects were undertaken in the cities of Kaḫat and Terqa (Grayson 1991, A.0.100.1004). It is possible that the king spent extensive periods of time in Nineveh (Grayson 1982, 252) which, one could argue, was connected with the campaigns to the north.

This was followed by the large territorial growth, military activities, and large-scale irrigation and building projects, that the Assyrian state underwent during the period of Aššurnaṣirpal II's kingship (883-859 BCE). As stated above, scholars have traditionally credited rulers as the sole reason for the growth (or fall) of empires/states/kingdoms.

17 For the royal inscriptions of the king regarding his campaign, see Grayson 1987, 309-327.

18 For the royal inscriptions of the king regarding his campaign, see Grayson 1991, 5-84.

Likewise, Aššurnaṣirpal has been credited with the establishment of imperial Assyria (Oates and Oates 2001, 16), with Kalḫu as the natural result of his actions. However, the process of constructing Kalḫu is perhaps better described as an imperial strategy, rather than the personal initiative of a king. There are two key issues in the creation of Kalḫu that need to be addressed: 1) whether Kalḫu was a new foundation or an already established provincial center, and 2) the geographical advantages of Kalḫu.

4.3 WHY – THE CASE OF A NEW(?) FOUNDATION

In order to understand the phenomenon of capital creation, one of the key issues is to clarify whether the capital was an *ex novo* foundation. Above, I defined capital creation as the construction of capital cities at *a new location or through a profound transformation of a preexisting settlement*. It is therefore crucial to review the available data for Kalḫu to assess the status of the city before its elevation to the capital of Assyria. Aššurnaṣirpal's royal inscriptions claim that Shalmaneser (probably referring to Shalmaneser I, 1263-1234 BCE) had founded the city four centuries earlier, and that the city was in ruins at the moment of Aššurnaṣirpal's reign.[19] Various texts replicate this statement with only minor variations: "*the ancient city of Kalḫu which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me, had built – this city had become dilapidated; it lay dormant (and) turned into a ruin hill. I rebuilt this city.*" (Grayson 1991, A.0.101.1). This information about the "original" founder of the city possibly derived from surviving stamped bricks that workers might have encountered during the construction of the new capital (Reade 2002a, 138).

A number of cuneiform texts from Mari that date to the 18th century (earlier than the Middle Assyrian period), mention the city as Kamilhu, Kawalhu, and even once as Kalḫu (Postgate 1985, 96; Ziegler 2002a, 270f.; Ziegler 2004, 20 n. 10). It is unclear whether the name Kamilhu was associated directly with the city of Kalḫu or with a smaller city in this region that was incorporated within the boundaries of the new capital (Hallo 1968, 773).

19 These texts can be found in Grayson 1991: A.0.101.1 iii 132-36; A.0.101.2 52-62; A.0.101.17 v 1-24a; A.0.101.23 14b-22; A.0.101.26 46b-58a; A.0.101.28 v 1-7a; A.0.101.29 lines 9-17; A.0.101.32 7b-11a.

The archaeological data from Mallowan's excavations (1966) show a lengthy occupation of the site, but it is hard to assess the size or the role of the city based on the admittedly scarce evidence. Most of the evidence comes from the south-eastern part of the citadel where the Burnt palace, the Nabu Temple, Ezida, and the Governor's palace are located (Figure 16). This area contained Ninevite V (late 4th – mid 3rd millennium BCE) painted pottery, together with flint arrow heads from the same period (Mallowan 1966,74; Oates and Oates 2001, 15). A deep trench also identified a later burial, dating roughly to 1750 BCE, which contained a prolonged socketed copper axe (Gadd 1936, Appendix 9-10).

During the Middle Assyrian period there were clear indications of occupation, although it is hard to prove continuous occupation, or periods of hiatus or abandonment. Mallowan speaks of deep soundings made on the eastern side of the acropolis, the so-called '1950 Building', which exposed mudbrick walls. Based on surrounding finds and a clay seal impression found in association with these walls, they were possibly dated to the period of Shalmaneser I (Mallowan 1950, 175). Another sounding made on the western part of the '1950 Building', produced a number of faience rosettes. Originally, they were attributed to an earlier phase of the building, but of an uncertain date (Mallowan 1950, 174). Comparative evidence, however, later demonstrated that they are certainly Middle Assyrian in date and could possibly be related to the other deep soundings (ca. 6 m) in the area (Trucker 1992).

The southeast area of the citadel, where the Burnt Palace is located, has the longest historical sequence of the site with nine distinct phases, labelled A-I (Mallowan 1966, 223, 286; Oates and Oates 2001, 125). Phases A-C are roughly dated between the 13th and the 9th century, although without specific dates known (or given?) for each phase. These phases were found only in isolated spots. The combined evidence from these earliest levels came from a number of platforms and pavements (Figure 17), streets associated with these earlier phases of the buildings, Nuzi potsherds, and Kassite and Middle Assyrian seals. It is worth noting that the pavement seems to be warped in phase B of the Burnt Palace, indicating considerable damage from an earthquake, definitely before the 9th century (Oates and Oates 2001, 125). Finally, the following phases D-F comprise the Neo Assyrian palace, when the city became a capital, and indicate a "radical change in

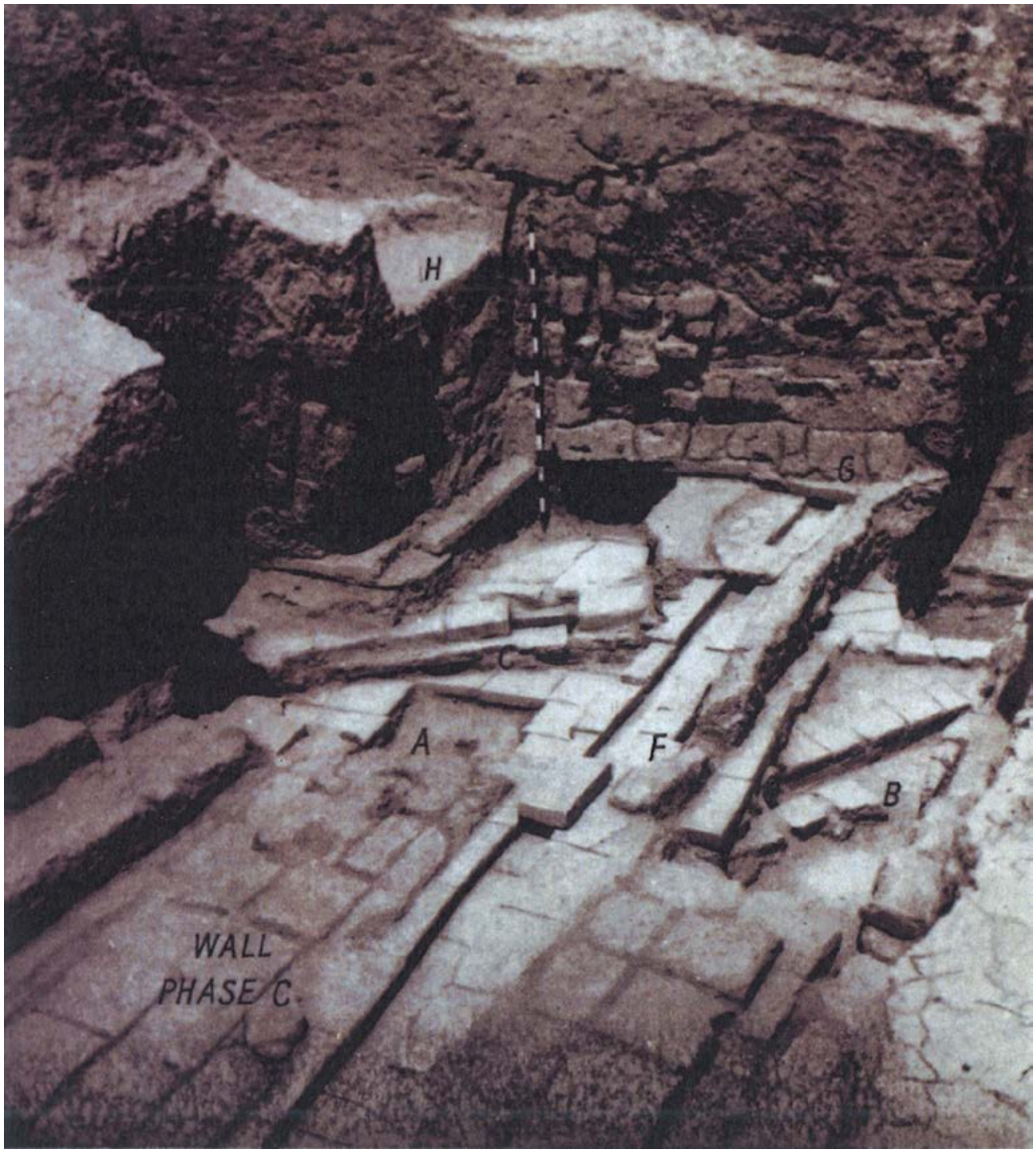

Figure 17: Successive levels in the courtyard of the Burnt Palace. A-B-C date to 1300-900 BCE. F dates to the reign of Sargon. G dates after 614 BCE, and level H is post-Assyrian (Mallowan 1966, fig. 184).

the alignment and purpose of the building, and in methods of construction" (Oates and Reid 1956, 37). This drastic change occurred across the citadel, but evidence from this part proves the major restructuring and repurposing of the tell. The subsequent phases are post-Assyrian and fall beyond the limit of this study.

A number of trenches were dug parallel to the citadel wall on the northeastern part of the tell. Those trenches produced evidence of non-palatial residential buildings. The area provides one of the best-preserved chronological sequences with eight levels spanning the Middle Assyrian to the Hellenistic period. Together with the evidence from under the Burnt Palace, this material confirms the existence of a settlement at this site in the Middle Assyrian period (Oates and Oates 2001, 135).

Despite this evidence, it is not easy to definitively characterize the role of the city in earlier periods, especially. The 9th century royal inscriptions speak of

an existing city (Postgate 1985), which is confirmed by archaeological evidence of Middle Assyrian finds from different parts of the tell, mainly in the eastern part. The Ninevite V surface pottery suggests a possibly longer occupation, although the thinness of these earlier layers combined with the continuous occupation have left little to no evidence for these early phases.

It is hard to determine the role and size of the Middle Assyrian settlement, and whether it was a provincial center as Postgate (1985) argued and, if so, for how long. If the royal inscriptions are to be believed, then the "city lay in ruins" when Aššurnaṣirpal II came to power (Grayson 1991, A.0.101.1). Indeed, there seems to be a gap of occupation in the early Neo Assyrian period. The aforementioned phase C of the Burnt Palace shows damage from an earthquake to the structures dating before the 9th century BCE. The subsequent phase, which corresponds with the construction of the city in the early 9th century, shows a completely different alignment and plan of the new buildings. It must be noted however, that the incompleteness of the currently available dataset strongly cautions against interpreting the absence of material as absence of occupation. It is also interesting to highlight here that the city was not given Aššurnaṣirpal's name. This might further point to an already established settlement.

4.3.1 LANDSCAPE RESTRUCTURING

Kalḫu is located ca. 70 km north of Aššur and lies at a very central position in what we could call the *Land of Aššur* (see section 2.1.1). The city sits on the east bank of the Tigris river roughly 8 km north of its confluence with the Greater Zab. In relation to the other two major Assyrian cities of the region, Kalḫu is 60 km from Arbela and 35 km from Nineveh. As such, the city occupied a central position between the main cities of the empire (Altaweel 2008, 66-68; Radner 2011, 323-324).

The city is located in a rather favorable location for dry farming, as well as irrigated cultivation, and the natural water sources from Tigris and perennial tributaries support high agricultural yields. The area witnessed agricultural intensification in the Middle Assyrian period, which continued and expanded in the 9th century (Kühne 1995, 69-72). However, the creation of a large city in the area must have had a significant impact in reducing the available agricultural land of the region as the city of Kalḫu was built on older agricultural fields. Agricultural land in its hinterland would have needed to expand (Wilkinson *et al*. 2005, 26).

According to Jason Ur, the current evidence for the surrounding hinterland of Kalḫu, based on the satellite image visibility, suggests that at least 30 additional ha of settlements on the northwest and 15 ha on the east, which were agricultural settlements (Ur 2013). Additionally, the water sources in the hinterlands of Assyrian capitals often were highly improved with extensive canal systems (Altaweel 2008).

One major program for supplying Kalḫu with water was built during the foundation of the capital. The royal inscriptions of Aššurnaṣirpal II mention a major canal by various terms: *Babelat Ḫegalli* – 'Bearer of Abundance' (Grayson 1991, A.0.101.17 v 1-23), *Patti Ḫegalli*, or *Patti Nuḫši* – 'Canal of Abundance' (i.e. A.0.101.1; A.0.101.26; A.0.101.30). Grayson suggested that this overlap in the name means that the canal did not have a specific name (1991, 222-223). After the city was no longer a capital, the royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon mention restoring a canal built by Aššurnaṣirpal II (Leichty 2011, 170; Radner 2017b).

The *Patti Ḫegalli* could be identified with the large Khazir-Upper Zab canal system (Figure 18) (see the reconstruction by Oates-Reade and that of Ur in Ur and Reade 2015, 43-44; see also Bagg 2000a; 2000b). It was probably primarily used for irrigation to increase the agricultural production of the area. The hinterland had to be able to sustain, at least to a certain extent, the population of the new city. Additionally, we are informed by the royal texts that the canal was used to water the large gardens of Aššurnaṣirpal. Its complex design testifies to the uniqueness and ingenuity of this canal system, which combines several elements of Assyrian canal construction (tunneling through stone, deep cuts through watersheds, subterranean segments, etc.). This system also was the longest-lived Assyrian canal in the Assyrian core (Ur and Reade 2015, 47).

Recent finds showcase the possible existence of a network of river navigation on the Gomel and Khazir rivers that cross the Navkur Plain (Morandi Bonacossi 2014). This interpretation still requires a more detailed chronology in order to securely identify the contemporary spread of these networks (see criticism in Ur and Reade 2015, 47). However, there is clear evidence for connectivity through rivers in relation to the city (Reade and Anderson 2013,

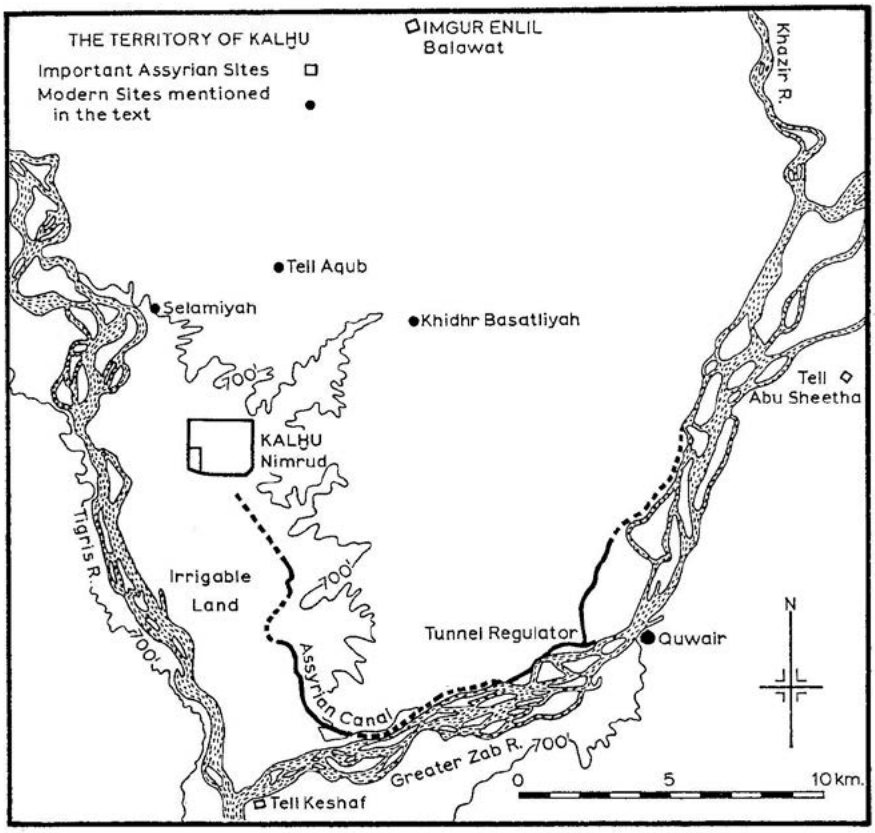

Figure 18: The irrigation system of Kalḫu (Oates 1968, fig. 3).

47). These finds suggest that the creation and control of large canal systems were important to increase riverine connectivity both around the city and to the rest of the empire.

Finally, in terms of the landscape and the potential for sustainable agricultural production, the land around Kalḫu is rather favorable (Bagg 2000a; 2000b). The restructuring of the landscape, although difficult to date, was a process that extended throughout Neo Assyrian history even when the city was no longer the capital. This speaks in favor of the centrality and agricultural productivity of the region and, as such, the choice of location for the construction of a capital city. The proximity to the northern regions of the empire, examined in the following section, is an additional determining factor of the location of Kalḫu.

4.3.2 NEO ASSYRIAN IMPERIAL TRANSFORMATION

What were the potential motives behind the creation of Kalḫu? Oates and Oates point out that Aššurnaṣirpal gave no clear reason for the move, although they suggested that the central location of the new capital would have been strategically and economically advantageous (Oates and Oates 2001, 16).

The royal inscriptions state that Kalḫu's function as a capital begun in the fourth year of Aššurnaṣirpal's reign, in 879 BCE. Even though there is no direct textual evidence for its construction, it would be safe to assume that this took place earlier in order to have a functional, if incomplete, capital by the date of its inauguration. The continuous architectural work in the city during the kingship of Aššurnaṣirpal, as well as that of his son Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE)

indicates careful and long-term urban planning by those involved in the construction of the new capital. One of the few discussions dealing explicitly with this question was formulated by Joffe (1998, 558), who included the move to Kalḫu in his case studies of "disembedded capitals". According to Joffe, the Assyrian "disembedded" capitals served a number of functions, with one of the most important being the separation of the king from existing power structures. Following that line of argument, he suggested that the lengthy construction period and the massive building project created a new structure of allegiance. Further, he argues that "*in the end, disembedded capitals were successful adaptations to highly fluid internal and external conditions which helped sustain Assyrian hegemony […]. But despite their success […] disembedded capitals helped propel Assyria into instability and irreversible collapse*" (Joffe 1998, 562). While Kalḫu was created many centuries before the collapse of Assyria, a period of instability did follow the construction of Kalḫu (823-745 BCE, see Table 2 and Appendix 1).

Radner (2011) criticized Joffe's inclusion of Kalḫu in the list of disembedded capitals. She argued that it was not previously a small, unimportant settlement (as per Joffe's requirement of a site to be founded *ex novo*), but rather was an integral part of the regional trade and road network of the Assyrian state (Radner 2011, 323). As shown in this chapter, the settlement did indeed exist before its elevation to capital, possibly even as a regional capital during the Middle Assyrian period. However, the lack of textual and archaeological evidence makes it impossible to determine the size and position of Kalḫu in the regional power structure before its elevation to a capital city.

Radner's argument in fact, is quite similar to Joffe's definition of disembedded capitals. She suggested that the foundation of Kalḫu was "*part of an intentional strategy designed to strengthen the position of the king at the expense of the old urban elites*" (Radner 2011, 324). Additionally, it is proposed that the elevation of Kalḫu to a capital happened in order to undermine the political power, cultural significance and regional dominance of other important centers, such as Aššur, Nineveh, and Arbela. Radner continues the regal-centric approach, and considers Aššurnaṣirpal as the main, if not the only, proponent of the move so as to secure his pre-eminence over other power centers and agents (Radner 2011, 323-4; 2017, 213).

Instead, I argue that the creation of Kalḫu, like that of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, was primarily related to an imperial transformation. This transformation took place during the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal, after almost 50 years of continuous territorial expansion and consolidation. The growth of Assyria into an imperial state has been broken down into two phases: i) the first fifty years of expansions from the reign of Aššur-dan II (934-912 BCE) to that of Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884 BCE), and ii) the creation of Kalḫu and the elevation of Assyria to an empire during the reigns of Aššurnaṣirpal II (883-859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE) (Frahm 2017b, 167). An investigation of these two phases is of great importance to create a context for the creation of Kalḫu.

Starting with territorial expansion, Aššur-dan II focused on reconquering areas to the northeast and northwest of the core Assyrian territory (Frahm 2017b, 167). Of particular importance to these first years of expansion was the conquest of Katmuḫu, a city located to the east of the Ḫabur triangle, because it would act as a blueprint for future conquests in the following century. While Katmuḫu was completely destroyed, the Assyrians did not turn it into a province, but rather into a vassal state that had to pay tribute and provide troops (Grayson 1991, 133-134). This meant that Assyria was able to extract economic gains while not investing significantly in the military protection of the area. In addition to this, Assyria implemented a project of re-establishing Assyrian populations in some of the conquered area by creating new settlement systems and providing land to increase the agricultural and production capabilities of the conquered areas. Overall, these policies created a sustainable and profitable strategy of expansion that provided significant economic gains to Assyria (Frahm 2017b, 167-168).

Adad-nirari II (910-891 BCE) further continued conquests to the west, reaching the Ḫabur, but more important were the campaigns in the east. The latter resulted in the taking the city of Arrapḫa (in modern Kirkuk), which would act as an important military center in the following decades (Fuchs 2011, 262-4). He also expanded the southern borders with a peace treaty with the king of Babylon (Glassner 2004, 180-1). Tukultī-Ninurta II, while not adding much territory to Assyria, implemented a strategy of economic growth and imperial consolidation. He consolidated a number of already conquered territories, extracted significant amounts of tribute, and cemented power over various vassal kingdoms (Grayson 1991, 163-188).

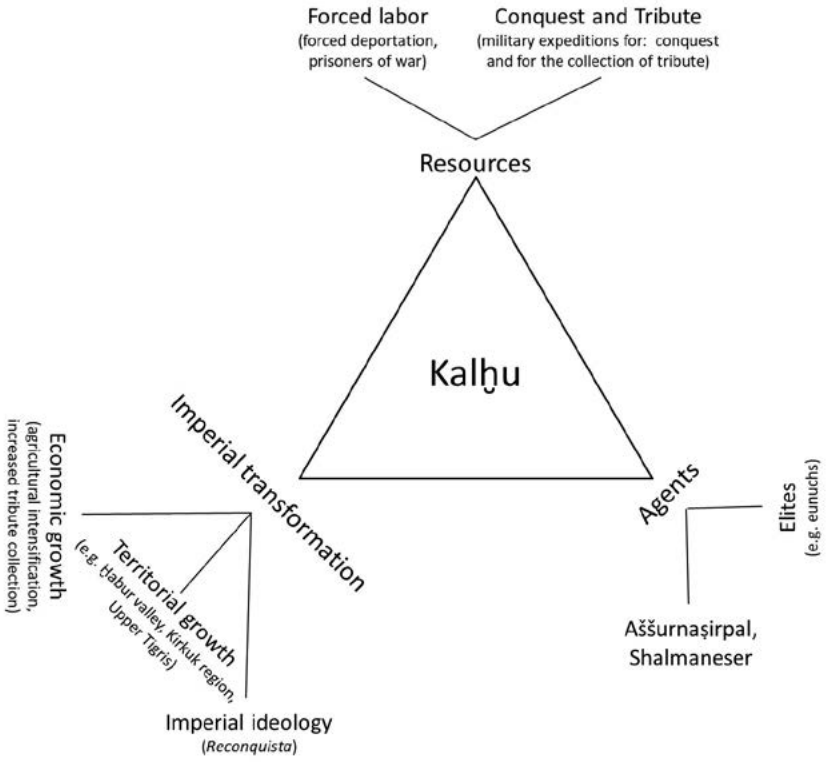

Figure 19: Model for the creation of Kalḫu, produced by the author.

Aššurnaṣirpal's reign does not mark a switch in the policies of previous rulers but rather continues the consolidation and expansion laid out by previous historical events and actors. There do not seem to have been any internal turbulences, revolts or explicit opposition to the actions of this king, or any questions of his legitimacy to the throne. On the contrary, during the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal we see a "boom" in military campaigns, in architectural projects (e.g. at Nineveh, Aššur, and elsewhere), and in administrative changes, such as the use of eunuchs in the administration (see for example Oates and Oates 2001, 15-6; Bagg 2011, 192-4; Fales 2011; Frahm 2017b, 169-70).

Particular focus was given by Aššurnaṣirpal to the relatively unstable Upper Tigris region, which became very important for the Assyrian economy from that point onwards. This is due to the type and amount of materials imported from there; this was an area that required the continuous attention of the center and was a place of innovative administration and imperial strategies (Parker 2001; 2003; 2015; Fuchs 2010; 2017)

Kalḫu became the new capital very early in the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal. There are two important points to note here. The first is the fact that the new city retained its previous name, unlike other new capitals. The second point is that this shift happened early in the king's reign, and therefore cannot be associated with any specific military or political achievements of the king.

In terms of geographic and strategic location, a new focus on the region of Kalḫu makes sense at this time. The new city was closer to important centers of the north such as Nineveh and Arbela. Nineveh was the only city with a dedicated military palace until the end of the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal (see chapter 6. The creation of a new capital allowed both political and military administration to be concentrated in one place. After the construction of Kalḫu, Aššurnaṣirpal's royal inscriptions mention that all military expeditions started from here. The construction of Kalḫu seems to be an economic and strategic choice and was embedded in the continuous growth and nature of the Assyrian state at that moment and can be associated with the

large economic and territorial expansion during the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal (Figure 19). Its location in the central part of the imperial core provided: i) increased agricultural production at the core of the empire, and ii) better control over contemporary military expeditions. At the same time, the imperial expansion brought increased economic gains and a large labor force into the center, both of which were required for the construction of the new capital. The creation of the new capital is also associated with the shift in the *status quo*, since Assyria regained its imperial status.

At this point it is important to investigate the construction and urban development of the city. So far, I have argued that the reasons of the relocation of the capital were primarily economic and strategic rather than to help the king dominate his political enemies. This will become increasingly apparent as we investigate the continuous construction and development process of the city over the centuries.

4.4 HOW – THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPENING FESTIVAL OF KALḪU

It seems that the decision to construct the capital was one taken with the cooperation of the imperial administration system and was a widely accepted decision. The building projects in the city were a continuous effort which went well past the original structures of the city. This section assesses the textual and archaeological information available for the construction process. Unfortunately, relatively little data is available about the construction of Kalḫu.

4.4.1 TEXTUAL SOURCES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY AND THE BANQUET STELE

The textual evidence regarding the construction process of the city derive mainly from the royal inscriptions of Aššurnaṣirpal. There is almost no information regarding specific numbers of workers, material quantities, or related information. As expected in such texts, the king enumerates the building projects under his reign and, in the case of the construction of a new capital, offers a detailed account of the buildings constructed in the city.

The last section of one of the largest inscriptions coming from the Ninurta Temple at Kalḫu is dedicated to the construction of the city (Grayson 1991, A.0.101.1 iii 132b-136). It refers to a number of deportees coming "*from the land Suḫu, (from) the entire land Laqû, (from) the city Sirqu […], from the entire land of Zamua, from Bīt-Adini and the Ḫatti, and from Lubarna, the Patinu. I settled (them) therein*." That section of the text lists deportees that were settled in the city and also, probably, used as a labor force for its major constructions. However, it remains unclear what exactly those people were expected to do in terms of building in the new capital. Duplicates or parallels of this passage listing deportees, with no changes in the origins of those people, can be found in at least five more royal inscriptions.[20]

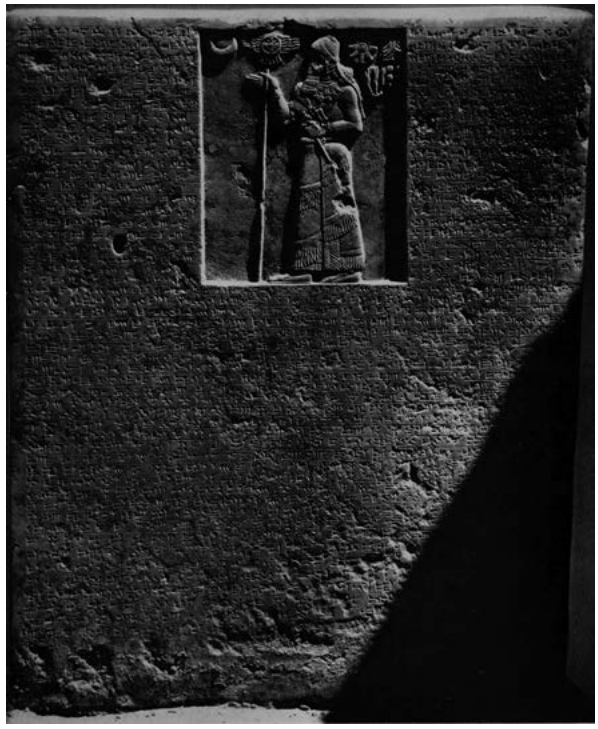

Figure 20: Banquet Stele (Mallowan 1966, Fig. 27).

The Banquet Stele (Grayson 1991, A.0.101.30; Oates and Oates 2001, 40-42; Harmanşah 2013, 115-119) is the most detailed account regarding not only the construction but also a vivid description of the ten-day-long celebration for the inauguration of the new city (Figure 20). It is crucial to mention here

20 Grayson 1991, A.0.101.23; A.0.101.26; A.0.101.28; A.0.101.29; A.0.101.30.

some of the important building projects mentioned in this text, together with the propagandistic nature in which these were presented.

The stele was originally located in room EA, next to the throneroom of the N.W. Palace (Oates and Oates 2001, 40). It has been argued that the location of the object was related to ceremonial practices (Mallowan 1952, 8). The upper part has an inset panel which depicts Aššurnaṣirpal together with a number of divine symbols: the moon god Sin, the sun god Šamaš (the winged disc), the horned helmet of Aššur, the storm god Adad, and the Sibitti. The stele has a height of roughly 127 cm with 150 lines of text.

The inscription of the stele begins with an abbreviated version of the campaigns and achievements of the king (lines 1-19). The rest of the inscription is concerned with building activities at the new capital, the creation and plantation of gardens, the reconstruction of the hinterland and hunting activities. The last part of the text (lines 102-154) presents the great festival that took place on the opening day of the new city, including the number of guests and the amount of food and drink consumed.

The inscription mentions the creation of a large terrace with 120 courses of bricks as a foundation (lines 23-24), with the N.W. Palace constructed on top of it. The text lists a large number of materials used in the building (lines 25-36), including boxwood, cedar, cypress, terebinth, tamarisk, bronze, lapis lazuli and more. The palace is stated to have several areas heavily decorated with reliefs that depict the king's campaigns and victories. Interestingly, this section concludes by mentioning that deportees from conquered lands were settled in the city. This is very similar to the textual and archaeological evidence of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, which again involved the relocation of deportees in the new capital (see sections 3.4).

Following that is a mention of the *Patti Ḫegalli* canal discussed above, and its use to water the gardens of the king (lines 36-52). The text then specifies the varieties of trees (lines 41-47), which come from all the lands conquered by the Assyrians. The main canal is described as cascading from above into the gardens, creating several smaller streams. There is also a description of a ritual by which the city is dedicated to the god Aššur.

The text mentions a number of temples and the materials used to build them. Temples included in this section are: the temples dedicated to Enlil and Ninurta, the temple of Ea-šarru and Damkina, the temple of Adad and Sala, the temple of Gula, the temple of Sin, the temple of Nabû, the temple of Šarrat-nipḫi, the temple of Sibitti, and the temple of Kidmuru. These temples are said to be decorated with cedar beams, bronze bands, images of the gods, and many more precious goods (lines 53-78). The most vividly described temple is the one dedicated to the god Ninurta (lines 68-72), to whom two festivals in two different months were dedicated. Among these temples, only the temples dedicated to Ninurta, Nabû, and Ištar are known archaeologically.

The following section (lines 84-101) of the stele discusses the reconstruction of other cities and palaces during the king's reign. Although these places are not mentioned by name, the text specifies that new people were brought to settle in the reconstructed cities, much like at the new capital. In the next section, a number of animals, brought in from all over the empire, are named as prey for hunting sessions of the king and attractions to the royal 'zoo'.

This account of building activities at Kalḫu is equally useful and problematic. The inscription only discusses the elite spaces of the city, the palace, the temples, the main citadel, the gardens, and the zoo. Although these do constitute part of the city, they definitely do not constitute the entire city. Nothing is told about the city's walls, gates, or any of the buildings in the lower city. Neither is anything mentioned regarding the construction process of the new capital.

The conjunction of building projects and activities such as hunts, cult festivals, and ceremonies has led Harmanşah to describe the construction of Kalḫu as a "program of cultural renewal" (Harmanşah 2013, 118). Specifically, he mentions that "*precisely by way of these social events, the monumental complexes of Kalḫu were fashioned, socialized, allotted places in the collective consciousness*" (Harmanşah 2013, 118).

I find it problematic to have the spaces described in the inscription, such as temples and palaces, represent the social sphere of the city as a whole. Palaces and temples must have had restricted access, and the vast majority of the population probably never experienced these spaces. They lived in the lower city, of which we know nothing. The "collective consciousness" that Harmanşah describes is one only accessible to elites.

The final part of the stele is also unique as it presents the 'opening ceremony' of Kalḫu (A.0.101.30 lines 102-154), describing the copious amounts of food offered in the festival as well as the amount of people invited:

When I consecrated the palace of Kalḫu 47,074 men (and) *women who were invited from every part of my land, 5,000 dignitaries* (and) *envoys of the people of the lands of Suḫu, Ḫindānu, Patinu, Ḫatti, Tyre, Sidon, Gurgumu, Malidu, Ḫubušku, Gilzānu. Kummu* (and) *Muşaşiru, 16,000 people of Kalḫu, (and) 1500 zarīqū* (officials) *of my palace, all of them – altogether 69,574* (including) *those summoned from all lands and the people of Kalḫu – for ten days I gave them food, I gave them drink, I had them bathed, I had them anointed.*

There is a very long list of all the foods and drinks provided to the guests for the 10 days in which they ate, drunk, and bathed. Once again, we see an imperial historical narrative proclaiming a cohesive and consolidated state which embraces the new capital in unity.

4.4.2 LABOR INVESTMENT

There is currently no available textual evidence discussing the actual construction process of Kalḫu. However, based on texts like the Banquet Stele, it is safe to assume that the construction involved the exploitation of large numbers of people, similar to the construction of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. The only available figure of just how many people might have been involved is the one from the Banquet Stele: 47,074 people. This figure refers to "men and women who were invited from every part of my land" without providing any specific information about them, while for other groups it does (i.e. 16,000 inhabitants, 1,500 officials and 5,000 envoys). Therefore, it is possible that the 47,047 people comprised the labor force that worked for the construction of the city or at the extensive surrounding hinterland.

In section 3.4, I discussed the labor investment required for Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. It was suggested that several thousand if not tens of thousands of people would have been required for the realization of that city. These people worked, as described by contemporary textual evidence, in small groups, and divided on the basis of their place of origin. While the size of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta is debated, the current low estimates put it at 240 ha, which is 120 ha smaller than Kalḫu. This significant difference in size suggests that Kalḫu would require a larger workforce than Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, if it was built in the same amount of time.

From the known building projects in Kalḫu, we can also conclude that it probably required a larger labor force, namely for the construction of its city wall. While of the estimate length of the wall at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta was 4.3 km in length, Kalḫu had ca. 8 km, thus almost double. Based on Mallowan's estimations, which will be discussed later in this chapter, Kalḫu's wall was ca. 17 m high and 14 m wide, which is significantly larger than the known wall segment at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. Therefore, the labor force required for Kalḫu would have been larger just for the city wall.

However, the citadel of Kalḫu is smaller than that of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta (ca. 32 ha at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta to ca. 21 ha at Kalḫu). On the other hand, the citadel of Kalḫu was more densely built up. We are also informed by the Banquet Stele that significant work was required to repair and straighten the citadel's terrace. Therefore, it is likely that at least the same, if not more labor had to be invested for the construction of the citadel of Kalḫu.

For Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, I argued that the number of workers easily would have exceeded 10,000 people. The available figure of 47,047 for Kalḫu is more than four times higher, but this does not seem unrealistic. In addition, the above figure specifies that the number includes both men and women. This might imply that some of those people worked in tasks that might not have been directly related to the construction.

4.5 WHAT – CITY DESIGN AND FUNCTION OF KALḪU

I will now discuss the function of Kalḫu both as an administrative center as well as an urban and residential center. This will be done through the study of currently available archaeological data regarding the plan of the city, the palaces of Kalḫu, Fort Shalmaneser, the gardens, the temples, the residential buildings, and the proposed urban fabric. Through this assessment I hope to reveal the degree of planning implemented in the city's creation, the later continuity of the city, as well as its function first as a capital and then as a local administrative center. I will argue that the city was not the manifestation of

a single king to distance himself from existing power centers. Instead it was related to the transformation of Assyria into an imperial state.

4.5.1 CITY DESIGN, WALLS AND GATES

The city of Kalḫu follows a relatively regular shape (Figure 21). Its wall extends nearly for 8 km in length, with straight lines on the north and eastern sides. Its western side follows the course of the river and connects the citadel mound and Fort Shalmaneser on the south.

The wall was constructed from mudbrick and stone foundations and was reinforced by a large number of towers (Mallowan 1966, 76-83). Layard observed 58 high mounds alongside the north section of the wall at a distance of 2.1 km from each other, and some 50 mounds on the east side. These mounds were interpreted as towers (Layard 1853, 656-657). The southeastern wall comprises the external defense of Fort Shalmaneser and was reconstructed with a different plan in the 7th century by Esarhaddon. On the southern side there are almost no visible parts of the wall, although it is likely that it was fortified.

Access to the city was possible via a number of gates. Archaeological evidence indicates two gates on the northern side and possibly two gates in the eastern part of the wall, thus a total of four known gates. The largest gate seems to be the southernmost one on the eastern side (Fiorina 2011). However, an Italian survey project was not able to identify archaeological evidence of this gate in the large artificial gap where the gate is supposedly located (Fiorina 2011, 130).

Access to the main citadel from outside of the city wall was probably achieved through a quay wall (Mallowan 1966, figs. 33-34; Tadmor 1994, 173; Oates and Oates, 31, Fig 12). The entrance to Fort Shalmaneser was placed in the southern side of the southeastern corner of the city and was later reconstructed and reinforced by Esarhaddon. As such, the exact planning of the original gate from the reign of Shalmaneser remains unclear (Oates and Oates 2001, 153).

Kalḫu can be divided into three main elements, the two ‘monumental’ mounds, the citadel mound and Fort Shalmaneser, and the lower town. These features will now be examined on the basis of the currently available archaeological data to showcase the stability and continuation of the construction of the city.

4.5.2 URBAN FABRIC AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS

In this particular case of capital creation, it is important to ask whether Kalḫu was a city only for the elite or whether it was an actual residential city. In the latter case, it would house people from every class or ethnicity from the broader imperial landscape and contain workshops and other urban features.

A relevant point for this discussion is Radner’s position, that the population of the city was handpicked by the king’s official (2011; 2017a, 213). This, she argues, was done in order to create a city that would be loyal to the king, away from other competing power holders in Aššur. This paints the picture of a city which is exclusively political. It suggests that Kalḫu was a center only for the residence of the king, and not a large residential capital. In the following analysis I argue that this is not the case.

The only excavated building in the lower town was found in 1956 along a stretch of mudbrick wall between the citadel and Fort Shalmaneser (Oates and Oates 2001, 141). Excavations revealed a structure which was named the “town wall palace” by the excavators; it is the latest in a sequence of large buildings at this location. An inscribed bird’s head with the name of Assurbanipal (668-631 BCE) was found under the floor of a building that was cut by the “town wall palace” (Mallowan 1957, pl. 11). This find suggests a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the building during or after the reign of Assurbanipal, revealing the occupation of the city and its outer town even after it ceased to function as a capital (Oates and Oates 143). The role of this building is unclear but could possibly have an administrative function.

Little is known about the urban fabric of Kalḫu and its lower town. Most of the past excavations focused on the citadel and Fort Shalmaneser and only recent projects have started to investigate the lower town. Fiorina (2008; 2011) carried out a topographical survey, and Ur (2013) used satellite imagery to investigate the spatial configuration of the lower town. In both studies there is an attempt to reconstruct major road networks, for example the existence of a road leading from the eastern wall (just north of Fort Shalmaneser) to the Shalmaneser Gate in the Citadel (Fiorina 2011, 131). Both studies reveal roads that were rather wide and there seems to be a substantial amount of open spaces of different

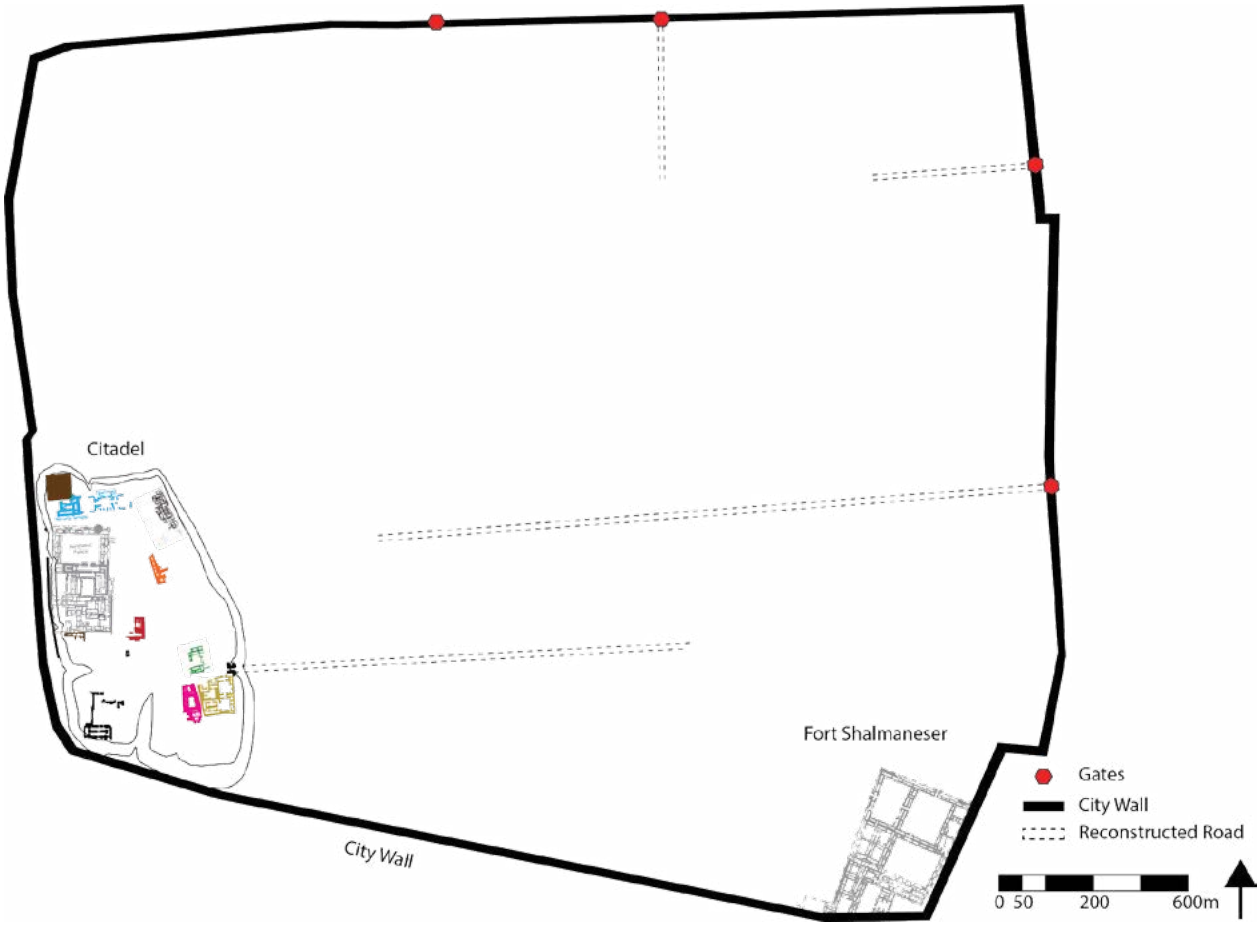

Figure 21: Plan of Kalḫu, produced by the author.

sizes (Ur 2013, 15-16) (Figure 22). An open space on the eastern side of the citadel has been interpreted as a large garden (see section 4.5.5).

Ur, who assessed the CORONA satellite images of the city, suggested that about 54% of the lower city was built up, which is 185.4 ha of the 340 ha of the lower city (Ur 2013, 17; here Figure 22). This assessment was done on the basis of soil coloring differentiation analysis. Various archaeological features become visible in wet and dry periods. Thus, by comparing CORONA satellite images from wet and dry seasons, Ur could assess the built area up of Kalḫu. While the distribution of the houses in the lower city of Kalḫu is unknown, examples from other excavated lower towns may be informative in this regard.

A possible comparative case study is the Lower Town II from Dūr-Katlimmu (Kühne 2011; 2015, 66-67). Its urban layout, however, mostly consists of large residential buildings for high ranking officials, while the rest of the population probably lived outside of the walled area.[21] The Lower Town II at Dūr-Katlimmu includes open spaces, gardens, streets, residences, and workshops. Its size of roughly 60 ha is slightly less than 1/6 of the size of the lower city of Kalḫu. While it does not include lower-status residences, it is possible that the Lower Town of Dūr-Katlimmu can act as a proxy for a "high-class" neighborhood of Kalḫu.[22]

Residential buildings at Dūr-Katlimmu range between 3,500 and 5,400 m^2 (0.38 to 0.54 ha).

21 For more about the social conditions of the upper class living at Dūr-Katlimmu, see Radner 2002; Kühne2006-8; 2011, 146.

22 Such neighborhoods existed at other major Assyrian cities as well, see Nineveh, section 6.6.3

This is comparable to Kalḫu's so-called "town wall palace", which measures more than 4,800 m^2. One would expect such buildings to be for an official with his family and their personnel, or other kinds of elite individuals (Radner 2002, 9-14). The "town wall palace" is located some 400 m to the east of the citadel wall (Mallowan 1957, 4), which would place it between two squares where Ur identified about 57% and 81% built space respectively (Figure 22 area marked with red).

A building that appears to be similar to the "town wall palace", also was identified as a palace by Mallowan, and was located in the northwestern corner of the city (Mallowan 1954, 70-71). Its designation as a "palace" is probably a concession to its size rather than an accurate description of its actual function. Due to the limited amount of excavation in the area, the building's full plan remains unknown. An inscribed brick with the name of the king Adad-nirari III (810-783 BCE) was found at the location. Based on the its excavated size, it could be comparable to the "lower town palace". On Ur's map, the building is located in a square, of which 28% is built area (Figure 22 area marked with yellow).

Although the exact layout of the lower city is unknown, its composition can be estimated by calculating how many houses would fit into the 185.4 ha of urban area proposed by Ur (2013). In that way, we can assess whether the 16,000 people listed as inhabitants in the Banquet Stele is too many or too few for the size of the city. For this exercise I will use as a proxy the large houses found at Dūr-Katlimmu and the two buildings found at Kalḫu. The average size of these buildings is roughly 4,600 m^2, or 0.46 ha. Given the intramural area of Kalḫu, this would mean that 403 buildings of this size would fit in the city's built space. This is far too low of a number considering that the Banquet Stele suggests a population of 16,000 people plus 1,500 officials from the palace; it also implies that each building would need to house about 40 residents. However, the lower city of Kalḫu likely was not constructed only to house a small number of high-ranking officials. Therefore, it is plausible that the city had smaller types of residential buildings.

A number of houses were excavated along the inner face of the northeastern part of the citadel wall (Mallowan 1966, 184-199; Oates and Oates 2001, 135-139). These houses preserve a wide chronological sequence from the Middle Assyrian to Achaemenid, and even to the Hellenistic periods. They are the only domestic buildings available from within Kalḫu, even though they are not in the lower city. These houses consisted of irregular groups of rooms around paved courtyards. It is possible that one of these houses, House III, belonged to a eunuch named Šamaš-šarru-uṣur (Oates and Oates 2001, 137). The largest of these houses (House II) measures about 3,000 m^2 (Mallowan 1966, 186), which is already much smaller than the average used before. Not all the houses in this area have been excavated completely, but their size seems to fluctuate between 1,300 and 3,000 m^2 based on the published plans and excavation data, which is still a substantial size (Figure 23).

Considering that these were also residences for officials and member of the elite, the average size of an elite residential building is much lower than the 4,600 m^2 calculated above. Being a little more conservative, we can argue that an elite residence in the lower town would be slightly smaller than the ones on the citadel, with some exceptions of large official or administrative buildings like the "lower town palace". This would give us an estimated range of 1,000 to 3,000 m^2. If we propose that the average size of a house at 2,000 m^2, then the lower town of Kalḫu could fit about 927 such buildings. This assumes the city consisted only of elite residences of medium to large size.

However, we know that other Assyrian capitals like Nineveh and Aššur, and at Fort Shalmaneser did contain neighborhoods of workshops and of smaller residences, which would cover significantly less than 1,000 m^2 (Miglus 2000; 2002). It is not possible to create an estimated average size for these types of buildings because they would likely vary considerably depending on the location within the city. Their existence, however, can also be argued on the basis of building density in the squares calculated by Ur. If we refer to the layout of houses at Dūr-Katlimmu, then the location of large buildings would be in squares with large open areas. Areas that are much more densely constructed could potentially indicate workshops and smaller residential buildings. The number of buildings in the lower city could therefore have even exceeded 927.

Returning to the estimated population of the city, the available figure is that of 16,000. It must be emphasized that it is unclear whether this number includes all residents, officials and non-officials, workers, servants, women, children, or other groups. Yet, taking the number as it is, this would imply 86

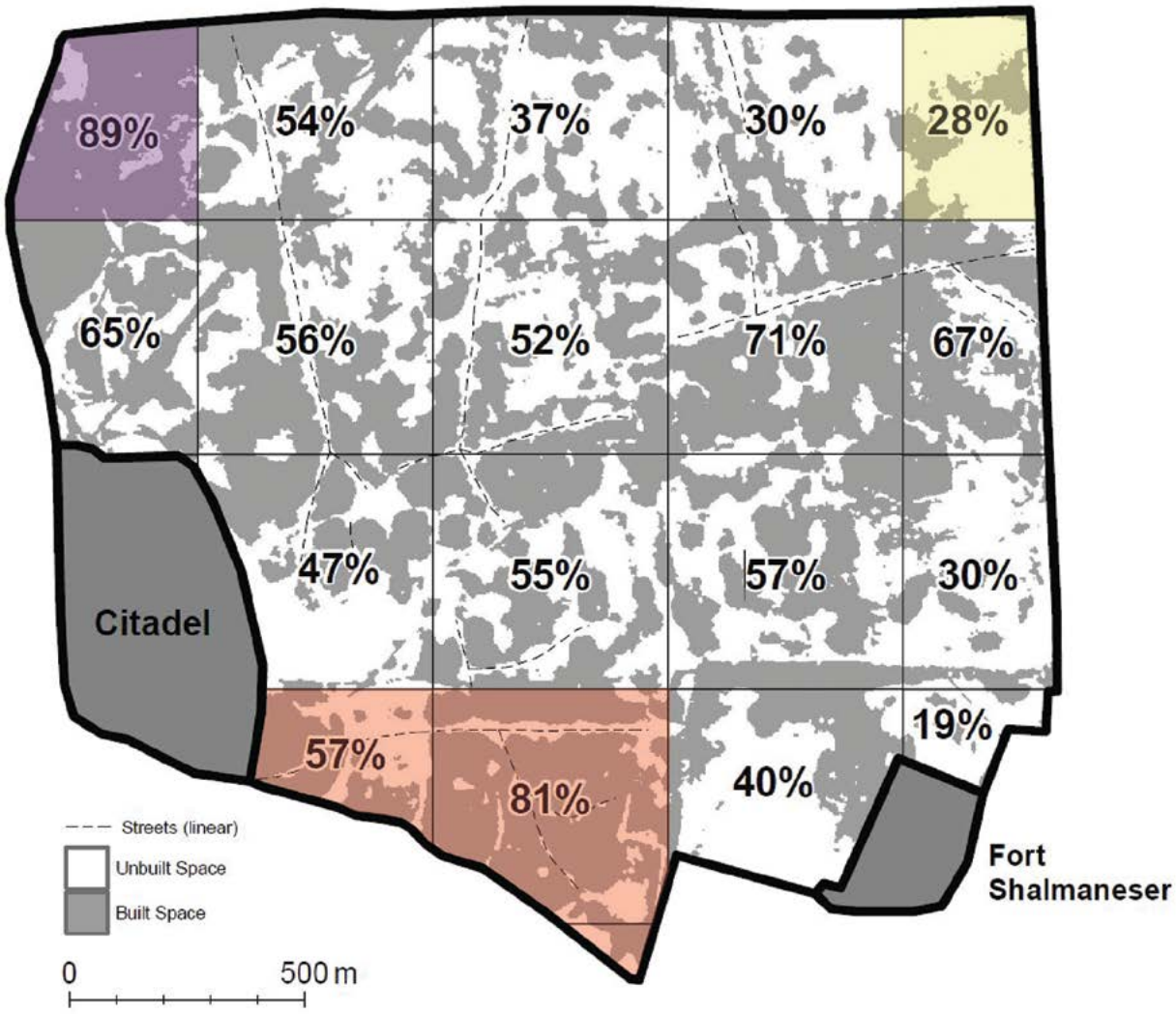

Figure 22: Distribution of built area and open space at Kalḫu after Ur (2013, Figure 5; annotated by the author and referenced in the text).

persons living in each hectare in the 185.4 ha of built space. This number is exceptionally low, especially when compared with estimates from earlier Mesopotamian cities (see for example Kramer 1980, 322-7; Adams 1981, 349-5; Zettler 1987; and more crucially Postgate 1994). An argument can be made that the city was not populated fully when the city opened its gates at the opening ceremony. At that time, the population of the city might have been as low as 16,000 people. During the city's lifespan, however, I suggest that this number likely increased considerably as more buildings were constructed, like the "town wall palace" and across the lower town.

The quantified analysis suggested above is by no means conclusive. The main issue with estimating the population density of Kalḫu is the complete lack of knowledge of the type and distribution of buildings in the city. As stated, an assumption can be made that locations detected by satellite imagery with high building density had smaller buildings, but a higher population density. In addition, these densely built areas make it difficult to distinguish the amount of space taken by roads. It is probably

Figure 23: Plan of the Town Wall Houses excavated in 1953 (after Mallowan 1966, 185).

safe to assume that large elite residential buildings, with several large open spaces would not be situated next to densely built, lower class residences and/or production areas. An example of the latter can be seen in the northwestern corner of the city, where Ur estimated 89% of the square was built space (see Figure 22 marked with purple). This area is approximately 20 ha, meaning that 17.8 ha of it was built space. Even accepting the very low estimations of 86 persons per ha, we are looking at approximately 1,531 people cluttered in that small corner of the city. It remains unclear how such an area would have looked like, and why it was thought necessary to put so many people in such an area if the city still had plenty of open spaces.

It is evident, therefore, that the cityscape of Kalḫu was quite variable. The figures presented above suggest a city which would not be exclusively for the elite, but rather a residential city, populated by people of different class and status. These figures provide a starting point from which the living space of Kalḫu can be reconsidered.

Research on the lower city of Kalḫu could indeed bring very useful results for the daily life in the capital as well as the use of open spaces. One of the latest studies (Harmanşah, 2013) regarding cities and the use of space within them focuses more on the open spaces of citadels and the use of festivals. I would argue however, that the actual public spaces would be the plazas and open roads and markets within the city itself, from which we know next to nothing. Other large cities of that period, like Nineveh (see section 6.3) or Aššur for example, even though smaller, contained workshops, smaller residences and other urban features. Whether that's the case with Kalḫu we don't know, as no workshops have been identified in its lower city. They do exist however within For-Shalmaneser, which might give an indication of the type of workshops that could exist in the lower city. Based on the massive population of the city, I suggest that Kalḫu qualifies as a residential city.

4.5.3 THE CITADEL

The citadel mound is located in the southwestern part of the city and is founded on top of an earlier mound (see Figure 16 and 21). It contains the major administrative and religious structures of the city. The review of its archaeological evidence begins with the North-West Palace (N.W. Palace), the largest and most prominent building of the citadel (Figure 24).

The palace is divided in three main courtyards. It has been suggested that each courtyard was divided in two different spaces: the 'public' (*babānu*), and the 'private'-internal (*bītānu*) (Oates and Oates 2001, 36-38; Margueron 2005). The throneroom courtyard is associated with the term *babānu*, and the two internal

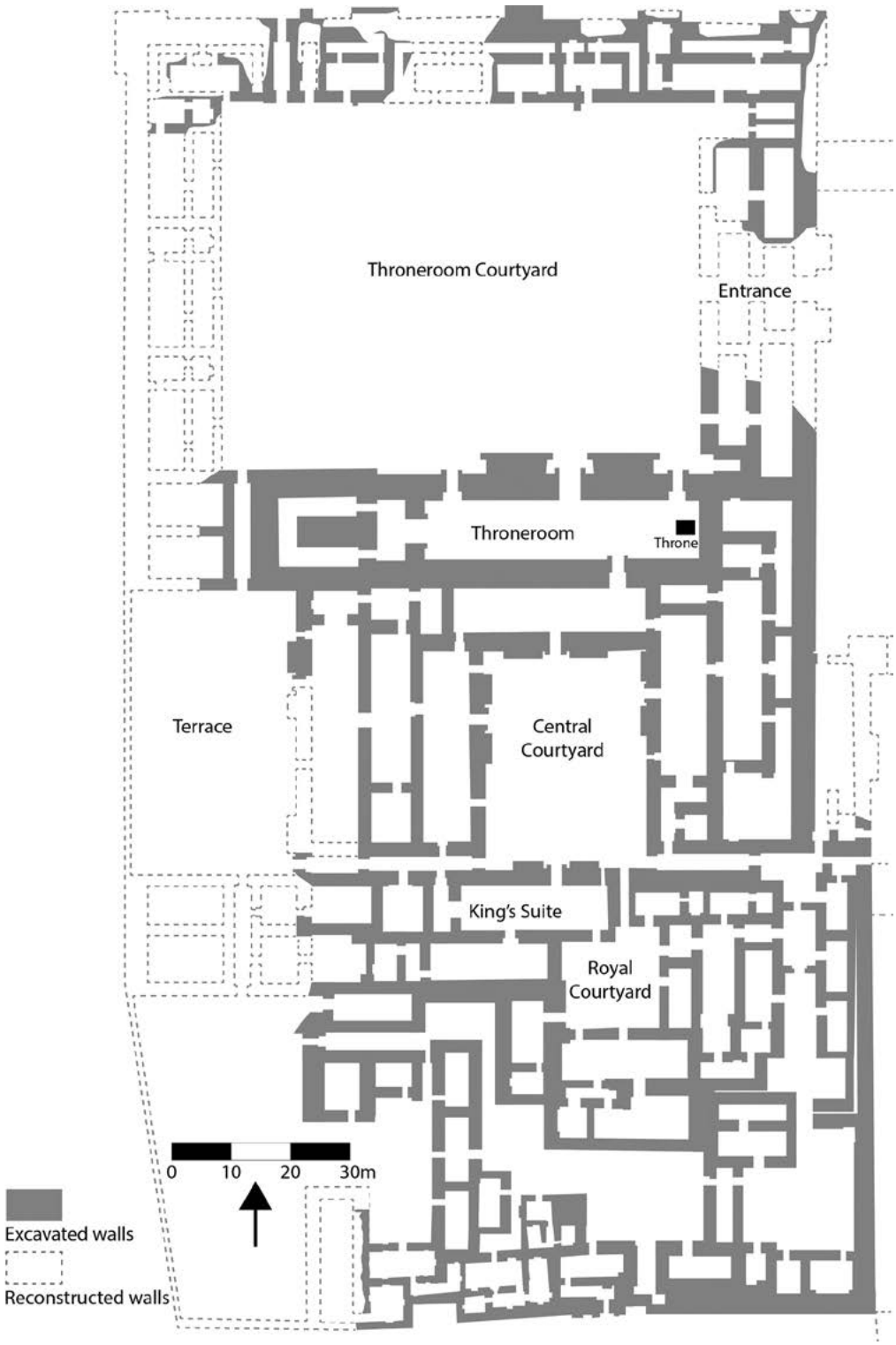

Figure 24: The North-West Palace of Kalḫu (after Mallowan 1966; Paley and Sobolewski 1987; and Kertai 2015, produced by the author).

courtyards are associated with *bītānu*. Rooms of a likely domestic function surround these latter two courtyards. The idea of public spaces in Assyrian capitals is discussed in greater detail below (chapter 7.4.1), but already in the case of the N.W. Palace several observations can be made.

Firstly, a simple distinction between public and private spaces is too simplistic. The citadel itself is already distinguished geographically and spatially from the rest of the city and as such, it is not public. The palace itself was probably not visible from the lower city, based on its location in the innermost part of the citadel and the fact that it was blocked partly by the citadel wall. In addition, access to the palace was only possible through a sequence of gates and spaces of controlled access, and as such it is extremely hard to describe any space as truly public.

The spatial organization of the N.W. Palace suggests very careful planning, with the building best described as a "*combination of independent suites, integrated into a single palace structure*" (Kertai 2014, 340). The main entrance to the palace was located on the northeastern side, which led to the throneroom Courtyard (indicate on figure 24). This courtyard was surrounded by a number of storage and administrative rooms and provided view and access to the throneroom on the south. The throneroom courtyard was also the only one decorated with reliefs (Paley and Sobolewski 1987; Russell 2008, 181-183; Kertai 2014, 341). Most of these reliefs were inscribed with the so-called Standard Inscription (Russel 1999, 9-63), and were decorated with hunting or military scenes or apotropaic figures. The N.W. Palace remained the primary royal residence for more than 100 years, with small changes, and was possibly used by Sargon II before the relocation of the capital to Dur-Šarrukēn (Kertai 2013a, 18). The building itself was probably not completed until the reign of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE), who implemented a number of additions (Oates and Oates 2001, 69; Kertai 2015, 47). Significant additions to the palace were implemented by Adad-nerari III (810-783 BCE) with the so-called Upper Chambers to the south of the N.W. Palace; these consist of an added residential suite for the king's mother, Šammuramat (Layard 1853, 14; Reade 1968, 69-70; Oates and Oates 2001, 70; Kertai 2015, 77-79).

The citadel contains a number of other buildings designated as palaces by the excavators, although this definition characterization is not always correct. The Central Palace is located southwest of the N.W. Palace, roughly in the center of the acropolis. Excavations in 1993 showed that the Central Palace is a small complex surrounding a single courtyard. Wall decorations and the presence of lion and bull colossi, of which only the bases remain, have made the interpretation of the building difficult (Meuszyński 1976). The only similarly decorated buttresses in the city can be found in the façade of the N.W. Palace's throneroom and in front of the entrance to the Nabû Temple (Meuszyński 1981, 31-35; Kertai 2013a, 12). As such, the building has been interpreted as both a temple (Oates and Oates 2001, 71-71) and as a forecourt or part of the N.W. Palace (Postgate and Reade 1976-1980, 311; Reade 2002a, 19; Kertai 2013a, 12-13). Based on the currently available data, this latter interpretation seems more plausible.

According to the royal inscriptions, nine temples were constructed (or reconstructed) during the reign of Aššurnaṣirpal. A number of these temples stand in the general vicinity of the ziggurat, like the Ninurta Temple and the sanctuaries of Šarrat-Nipḫi and Ištar-Kidmuru (Mallowan 1966, 85-92; Oates and Oates 2001 107-109; Reade 2002a, 167-181; Harmanşah 2013, 124). The Ninurta Temple was associated with the citadel's ziggurat and it has been suggested that the latter also might have been dedicated to Ninurta (Oates and Oates 2001, 107; Reade 2002a, 191).

Reade suggested that these temples (i.e. the Temple of Ninurta and the Temple of Ištar-Šarrat-Nipḫi), form a single temple complex because of their proximity to each other (2002, 191-192). Based on that reconstruction, the complex would contain temples and shrines for the gods Ninurta, Sîn, Adad, Ea, Šarrat-Nipḫi, and Gula. Such a reconstruction, however, cannot be definitive, as a significant part of these temples remains unexcavated.

Regardless of whether they form a single temple complex or not, the choice of gods represented indicates an evolving but stable religious framework. The court of the king probably chose forms of gods already established in major cities such as Aššur and Nineveh, maintaining an existing ideological perception of the world order (Reade 2002a, 199). At the same time, the evolution of the god Ninurta and his association with the god Enlil, a supreme deity in the Mesopotamian pantheon, might indicate an attempt to establish theological supremacy in the new capital over the conquered lands (Reade 2002a, 199).

Lastly, it is important to note that the god Aššur, unlike at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, did not have a

dedicated temple in Kalḫu. The royal inscriptions do state that the city is dedicated to Aššur, but there was no attempt to move the cultic center of the god to the new capital: Aššur remained the most important religious center of the empire. Several architectural projects occurred at Aššur simultaneously with the construction of Kalḫu. Some examples are the rebuilding of the Sin-Šamaš temple and the reconstruction of the old palace into a smaller Neo Assyrian palace (Pedde and Lundström 2008, 37-58; Lundström 2013).

The fact that the city of Aššur was not neglected or abandoned could suggest that the court had no desire to create a divide between the old center and the new. Aššur was too important to the Assyrian identity to supplant. Assyrian kings were still anointed and, in some cases, buried there. Such a suggestion is in line with Reade's suggestion that the new city maintained, rather than supplanted, the existing religious order. This further proves that Kalḫu was not constructed as a disembedded capital. Kalḫu's religious landscape is clearly not in opposition to the religious world order of Assyria, but in line with it.

Considering the different buildings on the citadel, the citadel itself had three primary purposes: i) the main residence of the court; ii) the location of the main administration of the empire; iii) a religious center of the empire, complementary to Aššur.

The function of the citadel never really changed for as long as the city functioned as a capital. The only attempt to construct a new primary palace in the citadel, took place during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (744-724 BCE) with the construction of the Southwest Palace (S.W. Palace). Although it was probably meant to replace the N.W. palace, the building was never completed. Polish excavators managed to locate this palace within the citadel directly south of the N.W. Palace, but its surviving architectural evidence is extremely limited (Meuszyński 1976). Esarhaddon later built another palace almost in the same location, obscuring the earlier palatial plan.

To summarize, the data from the citadel seem to indicate a well-organized and carefully executed plan. There were no major later changes in the function of the buildings besides some additions. The later building projects of Shalmaneser seem to follow exactly the intentions of the original planning of the city. The city's citadel remained in use even after the relocation of the capital, although its role did indeed diminish.

4.5.4 FORT SHALMANESER

Fort Shalmaneser, also known as the Military Palace or *ekal mašarti*, lies on the southeastern corner of the city (Figure 25) (Oates and Oates 2001, 144-198). A military palace is an administrative building dedicated to the encampment, maintenance, and administration of the Assyrian army (Kertai 2011, 71-72). It was one of the most important additions to the city during the reign of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE). Shalmaneser's annals are ample and carefully written, providing a secure chronological sequence in terms of events (Grayson 1996, 5). The fort itself was finished probably around 844 or 843 BCE (Russel 1999, 70).

Kalḫu was the first capital city of Assyria to include a dedicated military palace. It is likely, however, that Nineveh also contained a palace with a similar purpose also known as *bīt kutalli*, and this can be attested to royal inscriptions as early as the reign of Aššur-rēsa-isi I (1132-1115 BCE) (Grayson 1984, A.0.86.4). It has been be argued that the designers of Kalḫu used Nineveh as a 'blueprint' for its planning (Kertai 2015). It is clear that with the construction of a Military Palace, one of the main purposes of the new capital was to concentrate all administrative functions of the empire.

The fort was walled on all sides in a way that represented its military function. The wall probably had towers on every side and on the west side it reproduces the arrangement of the east wall of the N.W. Palace (Mallowan 1966, 377-378; Oates and Oates 2001, 149). The Fort was accessible from the inner city through one gate in the north and one in the west. From these, the western gates have the best preservation, with an opening of 4 m opening and a height of about 4 m.

The northern part of the palace, where most military functions were taking place, was organized in four quadrants: north-west, north-east, south-west and south-east. These quadrants seem to have had various functions with several workshops, especially in the north-west and north-east quadrants, and others including residential areas, storage rooms and offices (Oates 1962). The most commonly accepted function of the quadrant complex is as barracks (Mallowan 1966, 379; Oates and Oates 2001, 162), although if that is indeed the case, then only a small fraction of the army could have resided within the arsenal. The residential rooms could host only a few hundred people and the bulk of the army would have needed to camp outside of the palace (Kertai 2011, 73).

The only distinct quadrant is on the south-western side, which is not organized around a main courtyard but is subdivided in four smaller courtyards. Large storage magazines arranged around these smaller courtyards contained great quantities of treasures, such as carved ivories, as well as several unusual objects such as a bronze and iron brazier with wheels (Brill 1978; Herrmann 1986; 1989; 1992; Fiorina 1998). Most of these objects date to later periods, from the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, and come from various places of the empire mostly as tribute (Oates and Oates 2001, 226). Limited excavation of the area allows only for a simple reconstruction of the magazines, and the function of certain rooms, such as the ones with large quantities of ivories, cannot be determined with certainty.

An interesting feature of Fort Shalmaneser is its throneroom and a number of state apartments on its southeast section. The throneroom is probably the largest and the highest room in the building and mimicked closely the one from the N.W. Palace. The residential suites of this section, however, do not reflect the ones from the N.W. Palace and it is unlikely that the king actually resided in the building (Kertai 2011, 75). It could be argued that those rooms were for officials or commanders of the army, or for the hosting receptions, although it is possible that the king might have used them on occasion.

The construction of a palace with dedicated military functions in the new capital is particularly interesting when discussing the function of the new city. It suggests a further centralization of power, which started with the increased functions of the main citadel. Since the fort was constructed during the reign of Shalmaneser, it is unclear if its construction was something anticipated in the first conception of the city.

The lack of evidence of pre-existing buildings at the area might suggest that the fort was constructed in an uninhabited part of the city. It is also possible that the construction of the city had not been fully completed by the time of Shalmaneser's reign. I find, however, such a suggestion unlikely. The irregular shape of the wall at this location does not seem to serve any functional purpose to the fort. If there was no pre-existing wall at this location, why not construct the fort in a more regular shape, much like the other corners of the city? Therefore, I suggest that the city-wall was already completed, and the fort was constructed against the wall and in an empty area of the city.

The function of the fort seems to be primarily military, serving both as headquarters of the army, and as a location for maintaining equipment. However, it also carried out other functions, such as the storage of treasures were present, and it might be the case that the fort served more functions than purely military ones. After its construction, all of Shalmaneser's campaigns start from Kalḫu, making the city also the primary center of military administration.

4.5.5 GARDENS

Kalḫu was the first Assyrian capital city with a 'universal' garden. Although the idea was not new, Tiglath-Pileser I's royal inscriptions mentions such a garden (Novák 2002, 445). The exact location of this garden is unknown, but several propositions have been made on the basis of written and topographical evidence. An empty large platform is considered to be the necessary archaeological evidence of the city's garden. Such a platform was observed through satellite imagery (Ur 2013) and topographical investigation (Fiorina 2011), along the eastern edge of the citadel. That location has a similar elevation to Fort Shalmaneser, and although it would have been possible to bring water for the gardens from the canal flowing south of the city, this would have required a supply channel, the evidence for which is lacking (Ur and Reade 2015, 45). For similar reasons, the possibility that the gardens were located in the southern part of Fort Shalmaneser should probably be excluded (Novák 2002, 446). The most recent proposition locates the gardens close to Fort Shalmaneser but outside of the city walls to the south (Ur and Reade 2015, 45).

The Banquet Stele (mentioned above), gives a detailed account of all the plants collected in the royal gardens, including more than 40 different plant species. It is possible to interpret the political inferences for the use of such gardens (see for example Foster 2004; Dalley 2013). The large collection of plants from different parts of the empire could have been used to represent the vast lands Assyrians have conquered. It is likely that only a limited amount of people had access, and as such the gardens should not be interpreted as public spaces. However, they were probably visible to people entering the city from the eastern side and created a charming view.

Ascribing an exact function to the gardens of Kalḫu is problematic. Possibly, the gardens were a place of leisure for the kings and members of the elite.

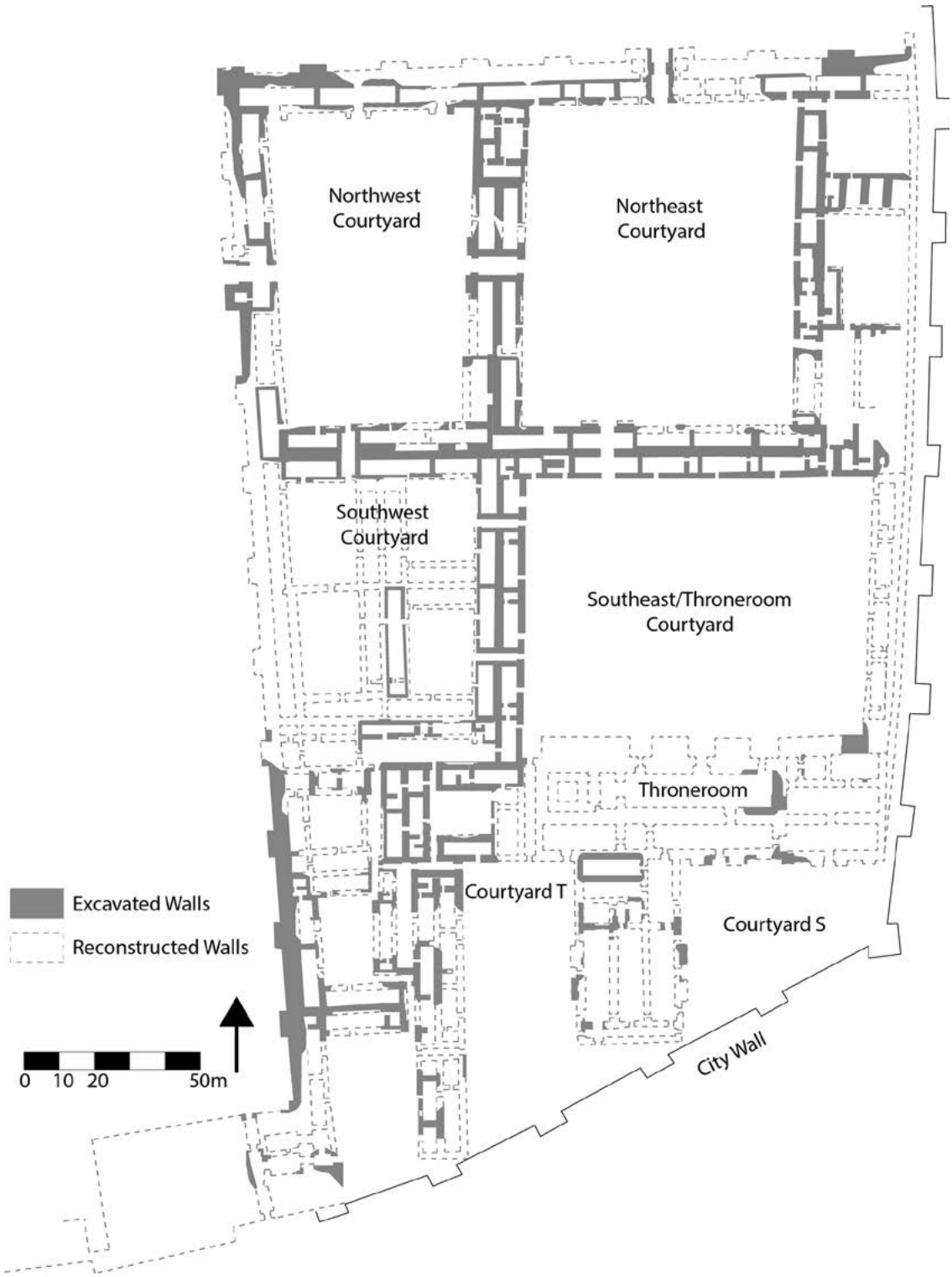

Figure 25: Fort Shalmaneser (after Oates and Oates 2001 and Kertai 2015, produced by the author).

The fact that they left limited archaeological traces makes it difficult to assess their size or layout. At the same time, however, the royal inscriptions do offer information on the gardens, focusing heavily on the collection of plants and animals from all around the empire for this garden.

It is possible that gardens were used as a symbol to express imperial ideology, and to depict the power of the empire and the extent of its rule. Envoys, guests and other high-status visitors entering the gardens would probably have been awed by the exotic plants and strange animals present there. In a way, it can be argued that the gardens had a similar function to the city's religious buildings. The palaces and temples in the empire's capital clearly proclaimed the power of the empire, and the captured flora and fauna of the gardens gave a living example of that.

4.5.6 CONCLUSIONS ON THE FUNCTION OF KALḪU

To conclude this section, Kalḫu functioned as the main administrative and military center of the empire in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE. It was expanded significantly in terms of size in relation to its predecessor, Aššur, and was the first Assyrian capital to incorporate a secondary military palace.

It is important to clarify that Kalḫu was not an elite city, nor can it be characterized as a disembedded capital. Kalḫu was a residential city, with a population composed of different cultural backgrounds and classes. The people living in the lower city created and interacted with a large and diverse urban space, which has yet to be studied by archaeologists. The hinterland of Kalḫu was also populated with smaller agricultural settlements, involved in the intensified agricultural production of the area (Ur 2013; Ur and Reade 2015). Once the lower city of Kalḫu is archaeologically investigated, our image of the city will no doubt change significantly.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE CREATION OF KALḪU

Kalḫu is the most long-lasting of the newly created capital cities. I suggested that the imperial transformation of Assyria led to the creation of this new capital. The new capital was the product of the contemporary territorial and economic growth of the empire and the shift of focus towards the northern provinces. The careful planning and the adoption of the new city by subsequent kings shows that there was some level of support by the Assyrian elites for this major undertaking. Attributing the relocation of the capital to Aššurnaṣirpal II's personality discounts the importance of the process itself for the broader empire.

The size of the construction, the large labor force required, and the very complex process of construction reinforce the argument that a functioning empire was key in capital creation. However, the fact that the city was constructed during Aššurnaṣirpal's and Shalmaneser's reign is not arbitrary. As was shown, the city's creation came only when Assyria reached the status and economic growth to realize such a project, building upon the administrative and economic changes already set in motion.

The concentration of imperial power in a new, more central location, was important for the consolidation of the empire and the continued control of the newly conquered territories. This concentration is reflected in the major administrative infrastructure of Kalḫu and the continuity of its institutions. Additionally, proclamations of the imperial ideology are reflected in many aspects of the city, including palaces, temples, gardens, and the transformation of the hinterland. The inclusion of a multitude of deities and the gardens collecting plants and animals from all the regions of the empire really showed the 'global' scale the Assyrians wanted to present.