

The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 2022–2023
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Abstract:

This article presents the results of the fieldwork carried out in 2022 and 2023 at the site of Nimrud, ancient Kalhu, under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania's Nimrud Project, a part of the Iraq Heritage Stabilization Program. The operations to date have concentrated on the Citadel, focusing on the Ishtar and Ninurta temple complex in the north, and the "Upper Chambers" / Palace of Adad-nerari III on the western side of the mound. The guiding principle has been to rehabilitate Nimrud as a cultural asset of international importance following the damage inflicted on the site in 2015–16.

Keywords: Ishtar Temple, Nimrud, Ninurta Temple, Upper Chambers, Excavation.

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التنقيبات الأثرية في نمرود (كلخو) ٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٣

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الملخص:

تعرض هذه المقالة نتائج العمل الميداني الذي تم في عامي ٢٠٢٢ و ٢٠٢٣ في موقع مدينة نمرود (كلخو)، القديم، تحت رعاية مشروع Nimrud بجامعة بنسلفانيا، وهو جزء من برنامج التراث العراقي. ركزت العمليات حتى الآن على القلعة، مع التركيز على معبدي عشتار و ننورتا في الشمال، و "الغرف العلوية" لقصر أدد - نراري الثالث، على الجانب الغربي من التل. كان المبدأ التوجيهي هو العمل من أجل إعادة تأهيل نمرود كأصل ثقافي ذو أهمية دولية بعد الأضرار التي لحقت بالموقع في ٢٠١٥-٢٠١٦. الكلمات المفتاحية: معبد عشتار، نمرود، معبد ننورتا، الغرف العلوية، تنقيبات أثرية.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2022 and 2023⁽¹⁾, the University of Pennsylvania completed its first and second seasons of excavation at Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) in northern Iraq (Figure 1). Work focused on the citadel mound in the Sharrat Niphi Temple⁽²⁾ (hereafter Ishtar Temple), Ninurta Temple, Palace of Adad-nerari III / “Upper Chambers,” and the Shalmaneser III Building (Figures 2–3). This fieldwork formed the initial stages of a multi-year project to address longstanding questions regarding the monumental architecture, thereby shedding new light on the foundation and evolution of the Neo-Assyrian administrative capital and heritage preservation issues tied to recent armed conflict, looting, and the deliberate targeting of built heritage. Most of these monumental buildings were discovered by teams led by Austen Henry Layard during his two expeditions to Nimrud in 1845–47 and 1849–51⁽³⁾, followed by poorly recorded work by Hormuzd Rassam⁽⁴⁾, William Kennett Loftus⁽⁵⁾, Henry Creswicke Rawlinson⁽⁶⁾, and George Smith.⁽⁷⁾ Layard’s excavations in these buildings were conducted throughout his second expedition, mainly during his absence, and in light of the significant errors in recording (see below), it is clear that he had insufficient time and resources to document the results adequately. The little we know of Loftus’ work is confined to the plan of Nimrud produced by Boutcher⁽⁸⁾ and the cursory account contained in the Second Report of the Assyrian Excavation Fund of February 20, 1855⁽⁹⁾ due to the excavator’s untimely death in November 1858 and the apparent loss of his expedition records. Loftus expanded on Layard’s results in the Upper Chambers but often only cleared away the surface to trace the tops of walls to the south of Layard’s trench and the east in the area of the Shalmaneser Building⁽¹⁰⁾ in an apparent and largely unsuccessful search for reliefs, colossi, and especially doorways where he sought inscribed thresholds. Layard had previously found two well-preserved thresholds of Adad-nerari III in the Upper Chambers that provided important genealogical information on the line of early Neo-Assyrian rulers, piquing interest to explore this area further. Loftus also cleared rooms, presumably the houses of deities closely linked to Ninurta, at the south end of the Ninurta Temple Court. Little is known of this work.

An extended and more systematic series of excavations directed by Max Mallowan was undertaken from 1949–53 and 1955–58 under the auspices of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq.⁽¹¹⁾ In the areas concerned, this yielded a substantial new exposure of the southern part of the Ninurta Temple and the re-excavation of some of the trenches of Layard and Loftus.⁽¹²⁾ Modest additions, albeit sparsely published, were also made to

the plan of the northeast corner of the Ishtar Temple.⁽¹³⁾ Excavations by the Iraqi Antiquities Service began on the high mound from 1956 to 1960 and from 1969 to 1993, with two additional seasons in 2001 and 2002. These campaigns also included the restoration of the Northwest Palace, along with the Nabu and Ishtar Temples. Most notably for this report, excavations were conducted in the Ninurta and Ishtar Temples in 1973 under the direction of Hazim Abdul-Hamid.⁽¹⁴⁾ The main entrances to the primary sanctuaries of both temples, first excavated by Layard, were reopened. A lion colossus from the Ishtar Temple and two winged, human-headed lions from the Ninurta Temple were transferred to the Mosul Museum.

Muzahim Hussein investigated the “Upper Chambers” for four weeks in 1993⁽¹⁵⁾, clarifying many points concerning Layard and Loftus’ findings in the northern ancillary rooms of the palatial reception suite, and he carried out substantial work in the Ishtar Temple in 2001–02.⁽¹⁶⁾ This research significantly expanded the known plan of the southern and western portions of the temple. However, the excavated exposures of the Ishtar and Ninurta temples were not joined, leading to varying reconstructions of the temple precinct.⁽¹⁷⁾ Similarly, many questions remained unanswered regarding the Adad-nerari III Palace and the Shalmaneser III Building.

Following the close of the Iraqi excavations in the run-up to the Iraq War of 2003, no excavations were conducted at Nimrud. In 2015, the site was the scene of multiple performative destructions of reconstructed monuments on the citadel by the so-called Islamic State, and the ziggurat was partially leveled. These attacks impacted both the modern reconstructions and the underlying archaeological remains. In the affected areas, the eastern monumental entrance of the Ishtar Temple was toppled using a front-end loader. A previously unexplored chamber situated between the courtyards of the Ninurta and Ishtar Temples, later recognized as the Ninurta Temple Gate, was found just beyond the western limits of Muzahim Hussein's excavations and was partially looted and damaged after April 2015 and before February 2016. This illegal excavation was conducted with a front-end loader, exposing a significant area of stratified archaeological deposits to the elements. Rain ultimately eroded out a heat-reddened limestone stela (NR 218) at the northern edge of the ISIS cut, roughly aligning with the north wall of the Ninurta Temple Gate. To date, we have cleared most of the debris from the ISIS destruction of the Ninurta and Ishtar Temples, and the area impacted by ISIS looting has been documented and developed into a normalized excavation unit, connecting the Ishtar Temple to the eastern Ninurta Temple. We have established a profile of the types of artifacts

that ISIS looters might have stolen, which we hope will aid future recovery efforts. In the Adad-nerari III Palace, excavating a significant new area of the reception suite and re-excavating some of the previous trenches from Layard, Loftus, and Hussein have allowed us to correct the building's plan and enhance our understanding of this innovative structure.

Overview of the Ninurta and Ishtar Temples

The Ninurta and Ishtar Temples and other buildings of the northern temple precinct were built or rebuilt by Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC) during his transformation of the by-then ancient town of Kalḫu into his administrative capital. Substantial work continued during the reign of his son Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC).⁽¹⁸⁾ The construction of a monumental mudbrick platform in about 879 BC across much of the northern citadel as a base for new monumental construction represents the most ubiquitous stratigraphic marker of this urban transformation.⁽¹⁹⁾ The completion of construction work on the various temples of the northern temple precinct appears to date between 865 and 860 BC.⁽²⁰⁾ The Ziggurat largely dates to the reign of Shalmaneser III.⁽²¹⁾ The Ninurta and Ishtar Temples occupied a preeminent position at the far north end of the citadel to the south and east of the Ziggurat at what would eventually become the northern periphery of Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace. Reade has convincingly argued that these two temples are so closely located that they should be considered a single religious complex⁽²²⁾, and subsequent research has strengthened this interpretation. These two buildings remain the best-known of Ashurnasirpal II's temples, and the objectives of our project include completing their plans to understand how the temples were interconnected and linked to the Northwest Palace. In particular, we seek to determine how the temple precinct's layout, flow, and permeability aligned with its purpose, context, and the needs of its users in the formative and latter stages of the Neo-Assyrian empire.

The partial demolition of the Ziggurat by ISIS has complicated our work in exploring the connections between these buildings. When the extremists leveled the ziggurat, large quantities of earth and masonry were pushed down onto the adjacent Ninurta Temple. Substantial back dirt piles were also created over the eastern Ninurta Temple and the western Ninurta Court when ISIS looted the Ninurta Gate. We are also occasionally hindered by the destruction wrought by previous excavations, particularly large-scale digging conducted in the 19th century that involved poorly documented tunnels and large and rather indiscriminate clearing works that appear to extend significantly beyond the limits of excavation shown on the rudimentary maps and plans. Due

to emergency preservation priorities, in 2022, we began excavation at the Ninurta Temple Gate. Multiple seasons of excavation will allow us to connect the plans of the two temples and investigate the rooms adjacent to the Ninurta Court on its north, east, and south sides. Similarly, due to the inadequate recording of past excavations, we currently rely on a distinctly oversimplified, synchronic view of these buildings, which were used for approximately 250 years and undeniably underwent numerous modifications. In this context, we are particularly interested in better defining the role of Shalmaneser III in fulfilling and altering his father's vision for the new capital.⁽²³⁾

In 2022 and 2023, our efforts within the Ishtar Temple were primarily confined to clearing debris from the ISIS destruction of the reconstructed portions of the building and the completion of an emergency conservation assessment. Hussein's temple reconstruction was still largely open to a level near the Ashurnasirpal II floor levels when ISIS seized the area. The looters who illegally excavated the Ninurta Temple Gate drove their front-end loader westward through the Ishtar Court to reach the unexplored deposits west of the limits of Hussein's excavations (just west of the pair of small lamassu). Since Hussein had not removed a large area of stratified archaeological deposits at the west end of the courtyard, the looters used the front-end loader to cut a ramped passage through this stratified fill to reach the gate chamber, dividing the unexcavated area in half (Figure 4). These actions demonstrate that the thieves knew that few artifacts would be found in the courtyard and that much richer deposits lay within the gate chamber. The looters did not dig to the pavement level in the courtyard and left a substantial undisturbed deposit in the ramp area.

THE ISHTAR TEMPLE

In the fall of 2022, the team removed the debris resulting from ISIS's deliberate destruction of the reconstructed monumental eastern entrance of the temple and the courtyard to implement assessment and emergency conservation measures and prepare for a future reconstruction project. The ISIS destruction focused on the Ishtar Temple Gate. We found the rest of the building largely intact but filled with modern debris. In the spring of 2023, we continued clearing debris in the western portion of the temple to reveal the narrow trenches dug in 2002 to trace the walls of the western Ishtar Court. We began excavating the sizable, intact area of ancient fill in the western court that ISIS had cut along an east-west line to create the aforementioned ramp. In the fall of 2023, we excavated two trenches within this intact "block" of courtyard deposit on either side of the ISIS ramp down to the level of the baked brick paving of

Ashurnasirpal II, revealing a pronounced linear area of subsidence in the southern unit running along a north-south line. The subsided area of brick paving did not extend into the northern unit, and we are still investigating the causes of this feature.

We began our excavation of primary deposits in the western court in the fall of 2023 in two east-west trenches on either side of the ramp cut by looters through the intact deposit. The southern trench contained an average of 3.0m of stratified deposits consisting of fallen mudbrick walls with interspersed lenses of ash, charcoal, and occasional fallen baked bricks, some of which were glazed or inscribed. These strata contained few artifacts or ecofacts. Excavations halted on the baked brick paving. At the western end of the trench, we found an area of subsidence running with the masonry joints on a north-south line. The pavement had sunk 82cm along this line in the west over the distance of only two paving bricks, and the area of subsidence sloped gently upward to the south, back to the level of the undamaged pavement over a distance of 5.14m. The line of subsidence was pronounced in the west and marked by a line of bricks shorn into pieces, apparently by a considerable force. In the northern trench, we encountered a similar stratigraphic sequence, albeit with thicker layers of ash and charcoal. In both areas, the baked brick paving had been considerably damaged by fire and the catastrophic collapse of the massive mudbrick walls of the surrounding wings of the temples. Small finds from the collapse layers above the floor include a terracotta miniature corbel in the form of a “hand of Ishtar” (NR401) bearing a short inscription naming the Temple of Ninurta⁽²⁴⁾, a fragmentary limestone foundation tablet (NR400), and Egyptian blue portions of composite sculptures (NR 406).

THE NINURTA TEMPLE

In the spring of 2023, our excavations in the Ninurta Temple began in the ISIS looter trench that was dug in 2015–16. We organized our operation to roughly align with and square up to the looted area, progressively expanding the excavated exposure as we defined the surrounding mudbrick architecture. During our first season, we documented most of an L-shaped gate chamber linking the courtyards of the two temples (Figure 5). From the western end of the Ishtar Court, the gate entrance, measuring 5.60m wide, extends a total of 4.50m west to the first set of gate doors. 1.75m to the west, the passageway narrows to a width of 3.40m, where two buttresses with reveals on their east faces create the door jambs. The looting activity nearly removed the remains of the northern jamb. The position of the gate doors is indicated by an intact gypsum pivot slab at the northwest corner of the southern door jamb. No

evidence of an opposing pivot box has been found along the north wall, but the looting severely disturbed this area, resulting in the limestone block pavers being torn up and removed. The entry chamber contained the lamassu found and removed by Hussein and a sculpted paving stone, and it was paved with large limestone slabs. Beyond this corridor was the gate chamber measuring 5.30m east-west and at least 9.20m north-south — we did not excavate its southern end in 2023. A second set of gates at the southern end of the west wall provided access to the Ninurta Court.

The aforementioned round-topped stela NR 218 (max. h. 139 cm, w. 72 cm, th. 24 cm) stands near the northern mudbrick wall of the gate chamber (Figure 6). The upper portions of the stela were hewn away in antiquity, most probably during the sack of Nimrud in 614/12 BC, and the stone suffered from the intense heat of the fire that destroyed the temple as well as the collapse of masses of masonry on it. Presumably, due to the impact of the building's collapse, the stela leans slightly back (to the north) against the north wall. The ancient vandals hacked away the upper portions of the two primary figures of a scene of worship depicting an unidentified Assyrian king, probably shown on a low pedestal on the right, before a deity on the left. The positions and identities of the figures are reconstructed based on a similar composition on a gypsum tile found at Assur in a domestic shrine (BM 115694), and the main deity of the Ninurta Temple would most probably have faced those approaching the stela and temple from the east. The Assur tile shows a courtier in typical attire on a platform before a god holding a bow, probably to be identified as Ninurta. The background of the Ninurta Gate Stela above the principal figures contained emblems of Ishtar, Shamash, and Sin — the astral triad. Depictions of these deities were found among the loose fragments of the Ninurta Gate Stela on the floor and in the room fill (see below). The king and the deity are shown in profile, and both are barefoot and depicted in a striding pose. An undecorated raised listel (band) bounds the scene. The king's elaborate ankle-length robe has diagonal draping, fringes, and tassels at the hem. The garment is virtually identical to the garment depicted on the statue of Ashurnasirpal II found by Layard in the Ishtar Temple Shrine (BM 118871). The deity wears a simpler ankle-length robe with diagonal draping and fringes. The king holds a weapon or rod in his left hand, but if this is a mace, unlike statue BM 118871, the handle lacks a counterweight and tassel at its terminus. There can be little question that an Assyrian king is depicted on the stela since fragments from the room's floor show the typical royal hat with a conical top decorated with bands of rosettes (NR 323, Figure 7).

Such Assyrian scenes of royal devotion seldom show deities anthropomorphically, usually substituting their symbols, particularly round-topped royal stelae that typically portray the king before divine emblems. We might assume the most relevant attestation of this scene type for understanding the Ninurta Temple Gate Stela would be the famous round-topped stela of Ashurnasirpal II found by Layard only a short distance from the gate at the western side of the Ninurta Court at the north side of the entrance to the northern sanctuary (BM 118805)⁽²⁵⁾; however, it is essential to bear in mind this stela was probably moved to the temple at a later date since its inscription indicates it once stood in a palace of Ashurnasirpal II.⁽²⁶⁾ Conversely, the Ninurta Temple Gate Stela was almost certainly intended for the temple's main entrance.

Given the context, style, and the building's history, we would expect the Ninurta Temple Gate Stela king to be either Ashurnasirpal II or Shalmaneser III, paying homage to Ninurta. The most likely candidate for a deity other than Ninurta would be Ishtar (Sharrat Niphi), but she is commonly shown with one bare leg toward the devotee, often with one foot on a lion. Further, we may exclude her as a possibility since the goddess was depicted in the field of the stela. Many fragments of the upper portion of the stela, most without relief carving, were found lying on the pavement at its base, in the collapsed debris around it, and scattered about the chamber. The stratigraphy shows that much of the damage to the sculpture occurred before the fire that destroyed the building. One fragment (NR 218a) preserves an exquisite representation of the celestial aspect of the goddess Ishtar — Sharrat Niphi (Figure 8). She is not reduced to her standardized symbol, the eight-pointed star, but rather is presented in anthropomorphic form inside a nimbus that, when reconstructed, would be composed of at least 12 rays. There is space for two or three more rays, which were omitted to accommodate the goddess's head and crown. Each ray terminates in a disk containing the typical eight-pointed star of Ishtar.

The goddess's Assyrian hairstyle runs down the nape, forming a thick mass of curls at the shoulder. A distinctive hair braid runs down her back and is curled upward at its end. The goddess faces right and presents the ring of kinship in her extended left hand. She raises her right hand in a gesture of greeting. We may safely conclude that the goddess faces the king, significantly strengthening a reconstruction that places him on the right side of the stela on the low platform. The goddess's tall crown or headdress is too damaged to reconstruct. At her back are fragments of other relief carving, poorly preserved, that probably represent the remains of weapons. At her waist are traces of carving that likely represent a

sword and possibly a bow case or quiver. Another stela fragment (NR 218b) shows part of a god within a winged solar disk, as is typical of Shamash and Ashur. As with the inner circle of the nimbus of Sharrat Niphi, the circle of the winged disk has a coil design. The diameters of the two disks are nearly identical.

A third limestone relief fragment from the gateway (NR 270) in a different color, probably due to a dissimilar burning atmosphere and depositional process rather than a different stone/stela, shows a male deity in Assyrian dress at the same scale as the previous deities (Figure 9). His clothing style and garment pattern are identical to Ishtar's, as is his curled hair braid. He is armed with a sword, which he carries at his waist. Like Ishtar, he faces right and holds an object in his left hand. The object's handle is all that remains, and the missing upper portion is possibly a crescent symbol. His raised right elbow is extant and indicates he probably raises his right hand in greeting. The figure appears to be within or on a crescent symbol of a similar reconstructed diameter to the nimbus of Ishtar, but perhaps unsurprisingly, without the coil design. This figure, probably an anthropomorphic representation of the god Sin, closely resembles a depiction of the moon god on a limestone stela from Tell Ahmar of the 8th century, albeit minus the crescent.⁽²⁷⁾ The attribution of this fragment to the Ninurta Temple Gate Stela is relatively secure since we are unaware of other relief-carved sculptures from the chamber to which this fragment might belong, and the similarities to the representation of Ishtar are undeniable. Further, we would expect the presence of the complete astral triad of Ishtar, Shamash, and Sin on the stela above the two central figures in typical Assyrian fashion.

Immediately west of the stela stood a cuboid socle for a statue (NR 233, Figure 6) fashioned from an unidentified grey stone (56 x 56 cm, th. 32.5 cm). A low circular bowl-shaped divot (dia. ca. 26.5 cm, d. 9 cm) was carved from the center of its top surface. It contained inscribed fragments of a white limestone statue of Shalmaneser III (NR 236) fixed in the divot with bitumen. The extant cuneiform text belongs to the account of his 23rd campaign.⁽²⁸⁾ In light of the stela's position within the main gate of the Ninurta Temple beside a statue of Shalmaneser III, we would provisionally reconstruct the stela as showing the temple's founder, Ashurnasirpal II, or perhaps Shalmaneser III, approaching the main temple entrance and receiving the blessings of Ninurta and the astral triad — all major deities of the temple precinct — who occupied the upper field of the sculpture in their anthropomorphic-cosmic aspects.

The gate chamber was connected to the Ninurta Court by another portal with monumental gate doors in the west wall offset southward from the line of the eastern entry and gate; this double gateway thus formed a dog-leg passage between the two courts. The gateway was filled with burned debris mixed with wall collapse of heat-reddened mudbrick and baked brick. The gate chamber floor was surfaced in cut limestone pavers of varying dimensions; the ISIS looting damaged many in the room's northeast corner. Some pavers, apparently reused from other buildings, bore partial cuneiform inscriptions — thus far, all appear to be inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II. The passageway of the western gate accessing the Ninurta Court was formed from large limestone slabs. The two slabs forming the threshold (NR 314 a, b) bear the Standard Inscription of Ashurnasirpal II, giving the king's titles, genealogy, and conquests, and finishing with his refounding of Kalhu using manpower deported from the lands which he had conquered, and his construction of a new palace.⁽²⁹⁾ Two pivot boxes for gatepost pivots with gypsum cover slabs were set into the floor at the southern and northern door jambs. Another slab inside the gateway has a square bolt slot for securing the gate doors. In several areas, the limestone slabs of the western gate were coated with bronze/copper residue, melted during the fire, or had fragments of bronze sheeting and nails adhering to them from the bronze gate bands and other gate fittings that perished in the conflagration that destroyed the temple (see below).

In the time available, we excavated the northern jamb and a small area of the Ninurta Temple Court. The court was paved with yellowish-baked bricks measuring 45 by 45cm. However, we have yet to define the gate's southern jamb and reach the gate chamber's southern limit. On the southern limestone-paved floor of the gate chamber, we found the carbonized remains of at least one cedar gate leaf and its bronze, iron, and stone fittings, including many bronze nails. The gatepost was decorated with a white stone finial (NR 289), and the door leaf had bronze bands with narrative scenes depicted by embossing and chasing (Figure 10, NR 301, 304). So far, we have identified scenes of grooms leading horses and possibly deportees. Other scenes are obscured by the bands having folded in on themselves when the gate collapsed and will only be visible following conservation. The borders of the bands, formed by embossed ribs that form registers surrounded by embossed frills and dome-headed bronze nails (rosettes), bear a design that strongly resembles bronze gate bands previously recovered by Layard at Nimrud.⁽³⁰⁾ Our finds in the Ninurta Gate may indicate that these were originally recovered in Layard's excavations in the temple precinct rather than in the Northwest Palace.

We could not clear, lift, and conserve the bronze bands in the time available, and the conservation of these finds will be the focus of upcoming seasons. Other finds from the gate area include Egyptian blue elements from composite statues, a small cuneiform administrative tablet (NR 231), and a portion of a plaque (NR 267) showing a nude winged goddess that resembles plaques found by Hussein in the Ishtar Temple and Layard in the Ninurta Temple.⁽³¹⁾

THE ADAD-NERARI III PALACE / “UPPER CHAMBERS

We began excavations in the Palace of Adad-nerari III in the fall of 2022 and continued in the spring of 2023, re-excavating the trenches of Layard (Figure 11), Loftus, Hussein, and likely the ephemeral soundings of other unrecorded 19th and 20th-century excavators.⁽³²⁾ We considerably expanded the known plan of the building by excavating new areas to the south and west of the earlier work. As we began in 2022, we identified the outlines of the slumped 1993 trenches and other excavation areas attributable to Layard and Loftus. The western end of the palace, the area over the Room 8 courtyard, was partly covered by the dumps of the earlier excavators, which we have now removed. The previous excavations generally stopped at the uppermost floor level of the building (or even higher in the case of Loftus), and we have usually found lower intact floor levels and occupational deposits in the previously excavated rooms. In the areas thought to have been excavated by Loftus, we have been able to identify readily the undisturbed mound surface from which he was excavating, which now lies 10–15 cm below the modern surface and yields some 19th-century finds, and to follow the shallow, irregular trenches his workman dug to search out and trace the tops of the walls.

Despite the haphazard excavations of the 19th century, the previously excavated floors, wall bases, and architectural features are surprisingly intact. We believe the preservation is most likely due to the collapse of the standing mudbrick architecture exposed by Layard, which he noted was preserved to a great height, into the open trenches following his work and that of Loftus. Already by 1873, Smith could not delineate the exposed architecture of the Upper Chambers and “Center Palace”.⁽³³⁾ This is not surprising concerning Loftus’s ephemeral work, but it indicates significant wall collapses had occurred in the much deeper trenches of Layard. We excavated large amounts of this fallen masonry to reach the floor levels in previously dug areas. In essence, in the northern portion of the building, where we re-excavated areas explored by Layard but not re-excavated by Hussein, the first stratigraphic level represented an archaeological mound created post-1855 CE, and we found evidence,

stratigraphic and artifactual, of Layard’s activities. Hussein encountered similar degrees of preservation of the lower levels of the Assyrian remains in his re-excavation of Layard’s Rooms A–C.

It is clear that when Layard first started work, the north end of the Adad-nerari III Palace (Layard’s “Upper Chambers”) was preserved much higher than the south end of the same building: the mounded area sloped down precipitously from north to south, that is, from a highpoint at the abutment of the Northwest Palace and Adad-nerari III Palace (the actual “Upper Chambers area) downward towards/into the east-west running gully at the south end of the palace area. While Layard’s workmen removed 3.0 to 4.5 meters of collapse deposit to reach the terminal floor of his Upper Chambers, Loftus’s team started a mere 50–100 cm above this same floor at the southern end of the building. This probably influenced the latter excavator to limit his exploration to tracing the tops of the walls in most areas. Our initial site mapping shows the initial floor level of the Adad-nerari III Palace lies ca. 1.50 meters above the average main floor level of the Northwest Palace and on the same approximate level as the main floor of the Ishtar Temple. Thus far, we have not located earlier architectural levels under the building in our limited soundings below its earliest floor. Instead, we found that the palace was built on a mudbrick platform like the other edifices of the citadel, which must have been somewhat higher than the mudbrick platform on which the earlier Northwest Palace was founded.

Room 2 (Retiring Room)

The excavations of Layard did not extend south into Room 2, which served as the “retiring room” of the reception suite (Figure 12). This sizeable rectangular chamber measures 18.66m north-south by 6.05m east-west. The Boucher plan would lead one to believe that Loftus excavated the entire room, but we have determined he merely cleared the tops of the walls across most of it and only excavated to the latest floor level at the northern end, where he found the inscribed Mosul Marble threshold of the doorway to Room 6 with a 24-line text providing Adad-nerari III’s titles and military accomplishments. This is the famous Kalhu Slab, later published by Rawlinson and Norris from a squeeze.⁽³⁴⁾ The Iraqi excavations of 1993 re-cleared the northern portion of the room to its latest floor level.⁽³⁵⁾ This area probably corresponds to Loftus’s floor clearance, but little is reported. Hussein rediscovered the door sill to Room 6, which was still intact, and Ahmad copied and published the inscription.⁽³⁶⁾ Loftus also dug down in the doorway in the room’s southeast corner and may also have cleared small areas to the terminal

floor level in the niches of the room's east wall, possibly misidentifying these as doorways.

Our excavations in 2022 and 2023 recovered the entirety of this room, and in most areas, we excavated to the earliest floor level. We found three main floor surfaces. The latest floor level, consisting of a layer of grayish plaster, was covered in fallen baked bricks, fragments of ostrich eggshell, decorated and undecorated ivory fragments, blocks of fallen mudbrick, and a significant amount of so-called palace ware, primarily carinated bowls. We recovered many fragmentary wall paintings adhering to fallen brick in the previously unexcavated southern half of the room. In several instances, we noted at least two layers of painting, which accords with Layard's finding for wall paintings in Rooms 1, 3, and possibly 4 (Layard 1849a: II, 15–16, 1849b: Pls. 86 no.1, 87 nos. 1, 3, 5).⁽³⁷⁾ The colors included yellow, blue, green, red, and black on a white, blue, or unpainted ground.

The room's eastern wall was the highest preserved (up to 2.6m), probably owing to the wall thickness related to the abutting western wall of the so-called Shalmaneser Building. As shown on the corrected Boutcher plan, the east wall of the palace had several gaps or ill-defined areas that corresponded to zones of erosion and niches, which were probably for ventilation in the retiring chamber. We determined that after the building's destruction, these niches developed into sinkholes caused by small gullies running downslope from northeast to southwest: a large gully is located just south of the palace⁽³⁸⁾, which was almost certainly a citadel gate, and these smaller watercourses damaging the palace form part of it. The sinkholes in the eastern wall of the palace appear to have been exacerbated by the scraping operations of Loftus' workmen following the tops of walls and, in at least one case, his excavation of a sounding over a gap in the east wall at roughly its north-south midpoint. Loftus likely was seeking a door sill here. Rather than a doorway, our excavations show this to be a niche, and Boutcher's plan indicates a second niche in the wall further to the north of the same size.

The area inside the southern niche had not been excavated to the floor levels, and the surrounding walls retained their original plaster. The floor deposits yielded many fragments of ostrich eggshell, as in other areas of Room 2, undecorated ivory fragments, and a large amount of fragmentary palace ware, primarily carinated bowls. A few pieces of an inscribed Mosul Marble threshold lay just above the latest floor. In areas of the palace where there have been earlier excavations, it is unclear if the presence of such fragments of architectural sculptures represents the

remains of vandalism following the work of Victorian-era excavators, who left open trenches and exposed architecture, or whether these disturbances occurred in the late Assyrian or post-Assyrian/post-Imperial periods following the disuse of the building. In the room's southeast corner, we found the eastern jamb of a doorway, as shown on the Boutcher plan (Figure 12). We did not identify a door pivot here, and much of the doorway to the south and west was disturbed by a late pit. This cut probably represents Loftus's excavation of the doorway to search for an inscribed threshold — one door sill, published by Rawlinson with a genealogical inscription, remains to be located.⁽³⁹⁾ In the pit fill, we found small fragments of an inscribed Mosul marble sill as well as an intact Mosul marble slab removed from its original position and seemingly propped against the side of the pit (NR 162, W. 146 cm, L. 115 cm, Th. 22 cm). This large slab is likely the uninscribed sill of this door and was disturbed by Loftus's digging or shortly thereafter.

Perhaps the most interesting discovery in Room 2 was an in situ Mosul marble column base of a unique type situated roughly at the center of the southern end of the chamber (Figure 13). The column base (NR 079) consisted of a single piece with a round plinth measuring 104 cm in diameter. The base tapers to a top diameter of 63.5 cm and stands 21 cm high. The base is divided into 16 sections by sculpted raised vertical bands. Corroded iron set in a trefoil hole at the center of the base (d. 10–12 cm) likely served to attach a wooden column shaft. The column base was associated with all the floors of the room, and its base rested below the earliest floor level at an undetermined depth. In the upper collapse deposit of the room, we found a limestone (or heavily weathered gypsum) capital near the column base.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Artifacts discovered in Room 2 include a large calcite jar with 12 dots inscribed just below the shoulder, fragments of incised and plain gypsum pivot slabs and other stone architectural components, fragments of ostrich eggshell, plain and decorated ivories, and numerous sherds of palace ware.

Room 3 (Vestibule)

This small room was a vestibule leading to Rooms 1 and 4 from Room 6 (Figure 12). It was first excavated by Layard (his Room a), and Hussein re-excavated the area. We cleared the debris from this room to document an inscribed threshold of Adad-nerari III in the doorway to Room 4.⁽⁴¹⁾ The inscription provides the genealogy of Adad-nerari III, and the slab is remarkably well preserved (Figure 14), which strongly suggests that this doorway had been blocked early in the use-life of the building, given the poor state of preservation of its other stone thresholds. We excavated one other doorway that had been blocked in the later use phases of the palace

between Rooms 6 and 7 (see below). We did not re-excavate the doorway to Room 6, first found by Layard. He removed an inscribed threshold from this doorway with a 22-line genealogical inscription of Adad-nerari III, which now resides in the British Museum (BM 118925).⁽⁴²⁾ The slab measured at least 195.58 by 144.78 by 15.24 cm, but was certainly thicker and possibly larger when first discovered. In Rooms 3 and 6 and beneath the fill inside the connecting doorway, we found layers of Mosul marble stone chips left by Layard's reduction of this slab for shipment.⁽⁴³⁾

Room 4 (Layard Room B)

This small room was previously excavated by Layard (Room b) and Hussein in 1993. It measures 5.13m north-south by 5.76 east-west. Only the lower courses of the mudbrick walls were preserved, except for the north wall, as previously mentioned.⁽⁴⁴⁾ We found no trace of a niche in the chamber, but Layard referenced one in one of his sketches of wall paintings from the Upper Chambers.⁽⁴⁵⁾ No such feature is shown on his plan.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The lower portions of the mudbrick walls retained their grey plaster in many places (1–2cm thick). The room was paved with baked bricks measuring 45 by 45 by 6cm. The pavement consisted of 11 rows of whole bricks north-south and 12 rows of whole bricks east-west, with rows of partial (edging) bricks along the north, east, and south sides measuring 45 by 18 cm. Previously unreported, 13 bricks bore a stamped inscription of Adad-nerari III (Appendix I).

The pavement slumps markedly in the middle of the room in a circular area. At the center of this depression, one paving brick had been broken up, presumably during the excavation of Hussein. The brick fragments appeared to have been set back in place, and we found pieces of a plastic plate below the fragments. In the spring of 2023, we excavated a sounding below this pavement in the area of the broken brick. Here, we documented an ancient pit containing at least 60cm of occupational deposits (ash, charcoal, and fragments of mudbrick) rather than the mudbrick platform that we explored through soundings in the north end of Room 2 (see above). Within this pit, we found a Mosul marble column base (NR 156) similar to that from Room 2 (Figure 15); however, unlike the column base in Room 2, the plinth is square, and the base lacks vertical raised bands. The column base appears to have been finished and installed in the palace since it has distinct, horizontal applications of bitumen on three sides of the upper plinth corresponding to the waterproofing of the surrounding floor or subfloor, presumably of baked brick, during construction.

We detected no defects in the stone or carving that might account for the disposal of what was presumably a valuable and reusable block of Mosul marble. With regard to dating, the column base was disposed of by excavating a pit into the brick platform in the early history of the palace (presumably in the early 8th century BCE). It rested upright on the cut mudbrick platform but was oriented at an angle different from the palace architecture. Stratigraphically, the column base lay under the south wall of Room 4, a later addition to the building, which was, in turn, founded on the baked-brick paving of Room 7 (the Forecourt). The Forecourt paving did not extend into the area of Room 4's interior. The evidence thus far points to Room 4 being a later addition to the palace, but still probably dating to the reign of Adad-nerari III given the use of his stamped bricks in the floor paving. This room's purpose remains undetermined since it lacks internal features or artifactual assemblages. Still, it was obviously an important space despite its modest size, given the baked-brick paving and inscribed door sill. As previously mentioned, the pristine state of the door sill strongly suggests the doorway was blocked off early in the use-life of the room. This conclusion is further strengthened by the preservation of the floor paving, which, unlike the Forecourt (Room 7), lacks evidence of brick robbing (see below).

Room 5

Hussein excavated the northeastern corner of this room, which marks the western extent of his excavations. The floor was partly paved in baked bricks. A partially disturbed stone tramrail ran roughly from southwest to northeast to a lustration basin in the northeastern corner of the room, made from baked bricks rather than the typical carved gypsum slab.⁽⁴⁷⁾ We could only clear the slump from the earlier excavations in the time available.

Room 6 (Reception Room)

Layard first excavated the north end of this room, which caused some damage to the northern wall and the western wall at its north end. Our excavations showed that Layard's trench was irregular and that the excavation depth varied considerably, given the presence of intact stratigraphy and floor deposits in a significant portion of the room's north end. Layard states, In front of the entrance a, was a large square slab with slightly-raised edges, similar to those frequently found in the north-west palace. Parallel with it were two narrow pieces of alabaster, with a groove running down the centre, carefully cut and fitted together, which I can only compare to the rails of a railroad.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The atypical location of this lustration slab (NR 157) in front of a door and the presence of two flanking sets of tramrails on Layard's plan, rather than a single set mentioned in the text, have been frequently cited as errors in field recording and during publication.

Our excavations show that Layard's positioning of this slab in Room 6 was highly inaccurate: it is actually 3.14 meters south of where he shows it or 4.60 meters south of the doorway to Room 3/a (Figures 12, 16). The slab dimensions, provided only on Layard's Plan 4, are relatively accurate for the north-south dimension (2.58m as opposed to an actual 2.36m), but he was off by a factor of 50% too large for the east-west dimension — Layard provides 2.56m as opposed to an actual 1.70m. Layard seems to have simply recorded the slab as roughly square rather than rectangular. At the center of the slab is a finely carved bowl-shaped divot measuring 23cm in diameter and 7cm deep, which Layard did not mention. This divot is not pierced to allow liquids to be drained, and it seems to have served to hold the base of a large jar. We also found only one set of tramlines situated to the east of the lustration slab, and where Layard's plan erroneously shows a second set, we located the room's western wall, which was in poor condition here, presumably from Layard's excavation. Artifacts found in Room 6 include many fragments of ivories with geometric and floral decoration, wall painting fragments, glazed pottery, and fragments of ostrich eggshell. We could not excavate the southern end of this room in the time available.

Room 7 (Forecourt)

The upper portions of the northern wall and the north end of the eastern wall of Room 7, defining the Forecourt of the reception suite, appear to have been partially cut away in antiquity and possibly also by Layard's team. The line of the northern wall was preserved in some places, but the bricks were heavily deteriorated due to previous excavations. The details of the eastern wall have yet to be fully established. The courtyard is at least 5.70m wide (east-west) and certainly much larger. However, the west end of the courtyard has likely been eroded away, given the proximity of the western edge of the citadel mound. Our excavations extended southward 3.60m in the time available. The upper portions of the east wall were heavily damaged, but we could follow the wall line along its lower portions just above the floor. The floor was paved in baked bricks measuring 45 x 45 x 7cm and laid in two courses separated by clay, bitumen, and sand layers. The subfloor rested on the mudbrick platform. The pavement was cut in some places, possibly from ancient brick removal. We detected hard (trampled) surfaces in the areas of brick removal.

The eastern façade of the court contains at least two doors, and a third door almost certainly lies to the south of our excavated area based on parallels with similar forecourts of reception suites in the Northwest Palace and other sites with triple-door entrances. The northern door had been blocked in antiquity. Its threshold bears a much-worn genealogical inscription of Adad-nerari III (NR 168). The wider central door sill (NR 599) was also inscribed, but the stone is heavily eroded, with partial cuneiform sign forms only appearing at its northern edge, where they were somewhat protected from the elements by the eroding mudbrick door jambs. The evidence indicates this slab must have been exposed to the elements for a prolonged period before the building collapsed. This lack of maintenance and the apparent robbing of bricks from the courtyard pavement and demolition of the eastern courtyard façade strongly suggest the palace was abandoned as living quarters and used as a source of construction materials, we believe in the late Neo-Assyrian period.

APPENDIX I. INSCRIPTIONS

NR 230: Ninurta Gate, Fragmentary Foundation Inscription
IT-024 (collapse in Ishtar Temple)

Two fragments of a white limestone foundation tablet may be part of the same stone tablet as NR-300.

(1) right-hand side of the foundation tablet
width 2.5 cm, height 10.0 cm, thickness 3.8 cm

Side A

1' ...] ni šú
2' ...] àm
3' ... n]a na
4' ...]-a a-na

Side B

1' z]a-bíl
2'] x
3'] di
4'] meš
5'] x

(2) piece from the middle of the tablet
width 3.6 cm, height 3.8 cm, thickness 4.1 cm

Side A

1'] 6' d[i' ...

2'] a-na [...

Side B

illegible

NR 231: Ninurta Gate, Small Administrative Tablet

IT-024 (collapse in Ishtar Temple)

length: 3.8 cm, width: 2.1 cm, thickness: 1.0 cm

1 4 1/2 ma-na 3-su

2 KÙ.GI ina ma-ni-e

3 ša ^{uru}Gar-ga-mes

4 a-na du-lu šá ^{giš}GIGIR

5 ina IGI ^mAš-šur-bal-liṭ

6 ^{iti}KIN ^{md}PA-MAN-PAP

7 A.BA KUR

"4 1/2 minas and a third of gold (measured) by the mina of Carchemish at the disposal of Aššur-balliṭ for work on the chariot. Month of Ululu, limmu of Nabû-šar-ušur, Palace Scribe"

While a mina weighed around 500 g, there are regional and chronological variations (whose exact values are generally not known), and this uncertainty extends to the mina of Carchemish; nevertheless, very broadly, we can say that 4 5/6 minas was in the region of 2 kg, plus or minus. The text is dated to the limmu Nabû-šar-ušur. While there are three eponyms with this name — for 786 BCE, 682 BCE, and post-canonical (Millard 1994: 107-109) — the qualification as Palace Scribe means that we are dealing with the last; according to PNA, his limmu-ship is tentatively ascribed to 629 BC (Baker 2001: 878).

NR 232: Ninurta Gate, Fragmentary Foundation Inscription

IT-024 (collapse in Ishtar Temple)

Three small fragments of inscribed white limestone; the pieces may be part of the same stone tablet as NR-297.

(1) piece from the bottom edge (actually, the top edge of the reverse)

width 9.2 cm, height 5.4 cm, thickness 3.3+ cm

parts of three ruled sections preserved

2' ...] ku ni [...

3' ...] ši še [...
4' ...] meš x [...

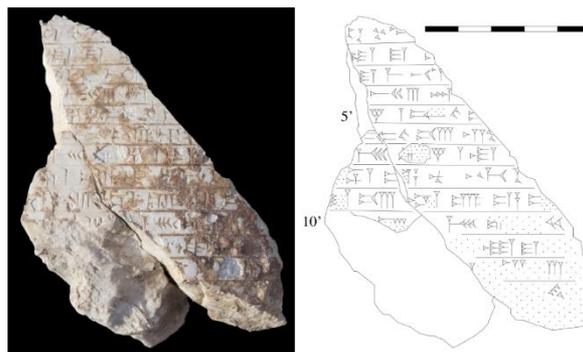
(2) piece from center
width 4.8 cm, height 5.2 cm, thickness 4.4 cm
parts of three ruled sections preserved

1' ...] ʿ x ʿ [...
2' ...] ni šú [...
3' ...] ʿ x ʿ š[u ...

(3) right hand corner
width 3.0 cm, height 3.2 cm, thickness 3.4+ cm
the ends of two ruled sections preserved - line 2' reads ...] x hi meš

NR 288: Limestone Statue Fragments from the Ninurta Gate Socle
Context: IT-031 (fill above floor inside gate room)
Fragment of a statue made of good quality white limestone and inscribed.
The piece is inscribed in a fine script between ruled lines 6-7 mm high.
Length 7.7 cm, width 2.7 cm, thickness 2.0 cm.

1' ... a-n]a^{1?} KUR ʿ x ʿ [...
2' ... BAL]-ʿ at ʿ ma-d[a-tu ...
3' ...] ma me na [...
4' ...] ina 23 BA[L^{meš}-ia ...
5' ...] šá ^mQu-x-[...
6' ...] qu ta z[i ...
7' ... URU]^{meš}-ʿ ni ʿ šá ^mLa-[al-la ...
8' ... ^uru]dan-nu-ti-šú [...
9' ...]-ma TA ^{uru}Ú-e-t[a-áš ...
10' ...] ʿ x ʿ [x] meš-ʿ ni ʿ-[šu] 20+[x ...
11' ...] tu ma [...
12' ...] ʿ x x ʿ [...
13' ...] hi [...



1.2 For this sequence cf. Grayson 1996: 79 line 164.

The text mentions a twenty-third campaign (4'), villages belonging to La[lla] (7'), and the city of Uetaš (9'). The references to both the campaign of the twenty-third year and the city of Uetaš, the fortified city of Lalla (of Melid) — which is mentioned in the Black Obelisk⁽⁴⁹⁾ as well as another fragment from Nimrud (see below) — identify this as an inscription of Shalmaneser III. The formal characteristics support this: the manufacturing from polished white limestone with the text inscribed in very small signs written between closely ruled lines are strongly reminiscent of the "Kurbail Statue" of Shalmaneser III, likewise found at Nimrud.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The size of the recess in the socle NR-233 where NR-288 was found, 28 cm in diameter, also corresponds with a statue of exactly this size. This piece, as well as the fragment NR-246, are also identical in style to the pieces of a statue that were found at Nimrud in 1956, both in the Ninurta Temple and in the fields below, a circumstance which led Læssøe to suggest that the statue(s) from which they originated had been set up in the Ninurta Temple.⁽⁵¹⁾ It is difficult to establish definitively whether NR-288 (and NR-246) come from the same statue as the pieces recovered in 1956; however, the fact that one of the 1956 fragments also mentions Uetaš⁽⁵²⁾ may be taken to argue against this since the compressed style of the narrative tends not to repeat place names.

NR 300: Ninurta Gate, Fragmentary Foundation Inscription

A large piece of foundation slab for the temple of Ninurta

IT-031 (fill above floor inside gate room)

width 19.5+ cm, height 21.5+ cm, thickness 5.0 cm

obverse

1' šá mU-ER[IN'.TÁH MAN GAL-ú MAN dan-nu MAN ŠÚ MAN
KUR Aš-šur eṭ-lu qar-du]

2' šá ina giš[KU Aš-šur EN-šú DU.DU-ku-ma ina mal-ki^{meš} šá kib-rat 4-
ta šá-nin- šú]

3' ṛ ma'-hi-[ra la i-šu-ú ...

reverse

1' [lú-u] am-nu-šu ṛ i'-[si-na-te-šú šá ^{iti}ZÍZ]

2' ù ^{iti}KIN lu-ú ṛ aš-kun'

3' a-na na-al-ban lu ak-[šur BARA₂ ^dMAŠ]

4' E[N-i]a ina qé-reb-šá lu-ú a[d-di]

5' ^dMAŠ EN ina BARA₂-šu el-[li ina at-ma-ni-šu]

6' [šá] ru-'a-me ina hu-ṛ ud' [lìb-bi-šú a-na]

7' da-ra-<te> ú-šá-bu k[i-ni-iš li-pár-da-a]

8' GÍD UD.MEŠ-a liq-b[i šúm-ud MU.MEŠ]

- 9' li-tas-qar SANGA-[ti li-ra-am e-ma]
10' ʾ MURUB₄ ʾ ù MÈ⁽¹⁾.M[EŠ a-šar ú-ša-ma-ru šu-um-rat]
11' ŠÀ-[b]i-ʾ ia ʾ lu ʾ ú ʾ-[šak-ši-da-a-ni]
12' ʾ NA₄ ʾ na-ʾ rú ʾ-a a[l-tu-ur]
13' ina qé-reb [aš-kun NUN]
14' EGIR-ú [an-hu-su lu-diš]

15' [x] ʾ x ʾ [

The text is Ashurnasirpal's dedication of the Ninurta Temple (Grayson 1996: 295 A.0.101.31).

NR 314: Ninurta Gate Threshold Slab

Portion of the Standard inscription of Ashurnasirpal II giving the king's titles, genealogy and conquests. It finishes with his refounding of Kalhu using manpower deported from the lands he had conquered and his construction of a new palace (Grayson 1996: 275–6).

NR 400: Foundation Tablet Fragment

- 1 ...]ʾ u ni ʾ
2 ...] x i/ia
3 ...M]EŠ-ia ʾ u ni ʾ [(x)]
4 ...^{ur}ʾKÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki}
5 ...] ^{ur}KÁ.DINGIR.R[A^{ki}]
6 ...] ʾ a x x ʾ [(x)]

The text may perhaps be attributed to Shalmaneser III — compare the stepped dais from Fort Shalmaneser, which mentions the king's marching to Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha and receiving tribute from Babylon (Grayson 1996: 105-6, A.0.102.29).

NR 401: Hand of Ishtar

- 1 [AŠ]-PAP A MAN KUR AŠ
2 A KU-MAŠ MAN KUR AŠ
3 A 10-ERIN.TAH
4 MAN KUR AŠ-ma
5 NÍG.GA É-^dMAŠ

Duplicate of Grayson 1991: 372 (A.0.101.121).

Adad-nerari III Baked Brick Paving (Adad-nerari Palace III Room 4)

- 1 É.GAL ^m10-ERIN₂.TÁH
2 MAN KIŠ MAN KUR Aš-šur
3 A ^mUTU-ši-10 MAN KIŠ MAN KUR AŠ
4 A ^{md}Šùl-ma-nu-MAŠ MAN kib-rat-4

"Palace of Adad-nerari (III), king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Shamshi-Adad (V), king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Shalmaneser (III), king of the four quarters."

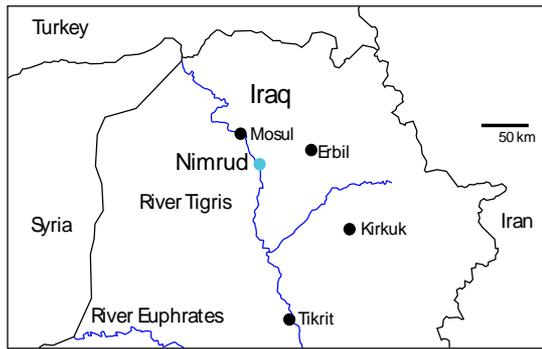


Figure 1. Map of northern Iraq showing the location of Nimrud (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 2. Digital Globe satellite image of Nimrud showing the citadel mound and the fortified areas of the lower city and arsenal (Fort Shalmaneser) (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 10. Fragments of bronze gate bands (NR 301) decorated with embossed and chased designs (reverse side up) showing grooves leading horses (Penn Nimrud Project).

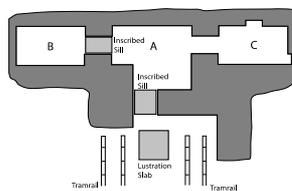


Figure 11. The so-called Upper Chambers as excavated by Layard. His plan contains many inaccuracies that have now been corrected (Penn Nimrud Project).

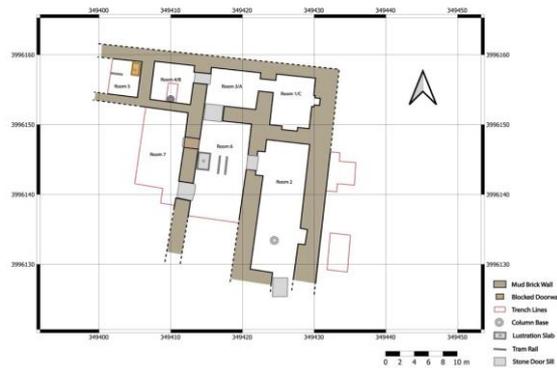


Figure 12. The Penn excavations in the palace of King Adad-nerari III as of 2023 (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 3. Satellite image of the northern citadel of Nimrud showing the locations of the University of Pennsylvania excavations in the Ishtar Temple and Ninurta Temple of the Northern Temple Precinct, as well as the Adad-nerari III Palace south of the Northwest Palace of King Ashurnasirpal II. A = the area of ISIS looting in the Ninurta Temple Gate. B = the Ishtar Temple Gate reconstruction that was deliberately destroyed by ISIS (Penn Nimrud Project).

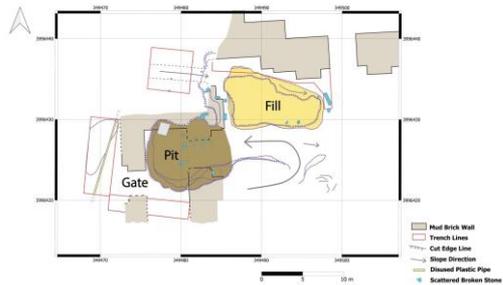


Figure 4. The Ninurta Temple Gate and surrounding excavation areas in 2022-23 with UTM grid (Penn Nimrud Project).

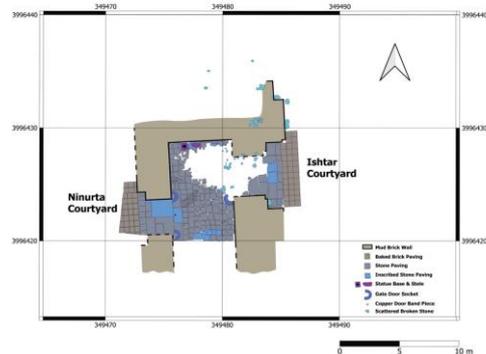


Figure 5. Plan of the Ninurta Temple Gate after the Penn excavations in 2023. The southern portion of the chamber has not yet been excavated (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 6. The limestone stela (NR 219) and socle (NR 233) in the Ninurta Temple Gate (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 7. Stela fragments (NR 323) from the top portion of a royal hat with a conical top and rosettes (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 13. Column base (NR 709) in Room 2 looking south (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 14. Inscribed threshold of Adad-nerari III in the doorway of Rooms 3 and 4 looking east (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 15. Gypsum column base found below the floor of Room 4 looking south (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 16. The lustration slab (NR 157) and tramlines in Room 6 looking south (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 8. Stela fragments such as NR 218a were found scattered about the floor and collapse level of the Ninurta Temple Gate. This fragment shows the goddess Sharrat Niphi (Ishtar), whose temple was immediately adjacent to that of Ninurta and linked to it by the gateway (Penn Nimrud Project).



Figure 9. Stela fragment (NR 270), probably showing the mood god Sin atop a crescent moon. The deity's garments and hairstyle are nearly identical to the depiction of Sharrat Niphi (Penn Nimrud Project).

(1) The project was funded by the University of Pennsylvania's University Research Foundation, Penn Museum, Nimrud Archaeological Trust, and private sources. The expedition was in the field in October–November 2022, March–April 2023, and November–December 2023. Michael Danti directs the project, and Richard Zettler is the Associate Director. The excavations were supervised by Fadhel Mohammed Khidr Ali, John MacGinnis, Darren Ashby, and William Hafford. The lead government representatives for Nineveh SBAH were Ali Karim Abbas, Fadhel Mohammed Khidr Ali, and Abdulghani Radhi Ahmed, assisted by Ali Abdulmir Abbas Jumah and Abdullah Mahmoud Ahmed. Dr. Ali Jabuuri (Ali Ahmed Yassin al-Hamada) and Dr. John Curtis act as Senior Consultants. We wish to express our gratitude to the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, particularly Dr. Laith Majid Hussein, Ali Obeid Shalgham, Khairi al-Din Ahmed Nasir Deyab, and Ruweid Muwafaq Mohammed Layla for providing us with this unique opportunity and for their continued support. Special thanks also go to Dr. Julian Reade for his insights and guidance drawn from an incredibly detailed knowledge of the site and its history. We dedicate this work to the memory of our cherished friend and colleague, Ali Hazim al-Dhanoon, former Director of the Nineveh Department of the Iraqi SBAH.

(2) We have adopted Reade's terminology for religious architecture (2002: 135).

(3) See esp. Layard 1849a: II, 14–17, Plan 4 (Upper Chambers); 1853a: 348–58, Plan 2 (Ninurta Temple); 358–62, Plan 2 (Ishtar Temple).

- (4) Rassam's teams excavated from late 1852 to 1854 and in 1879. In the areas concerned here, Reade argues, based on aerial photographs, that most of Rassam's work was in the ZT area of the Northwest Palace (Reade 2002: 202). The possibility remains that in his early campaign, Rassam's workers opened tunnels that went undocumented.
- (5) June 1854 to February 1855. On Loftus' potential finds in the rooms at the south end of the Ninurta Court, Reade notes, "small finds from these seasons should be among the 1855-5-12 and 1856-9-3 collections in the British Museum, but nothing that is certainly from the temple quarter has been identified." (*Ibid.*).
- (6) Rawlinson worked at Nimrud from March to April 1852. He excavated in a chamber where Layard had found bronzes and an adjoining room with a "complete alabaster case, and a few ivory ornaments, much damaged, with a small square inscribed tablet" (Gadd 1936: 82).
- (7) Smith conducted one month of excavation in April and May 1873 (Smith 1875). He worked on the ziggurat but not in the temples to any significant degree, given his short stay at the site.
- (8) Gadd 1936: Plan I; Barnett and Falkner 1962: Pl. CXXX.
- (9) Gadd 1936: App. 2, pp. 1–14.
- (10) We have re-excavated significant parts of Layard and Loftus's trenches and have developed some understanding of their methods and the extent of their digging.
- (11) Work continued at Nimrud in Fort Shalmaneser under David Oates from 1960 to 1962 and Jeffrey Orchard in 1963.
- (12) Mallowan 1957: 19–21, Pls. VII–IX; 1966: I, 84–92.
- (13) Mallowan 1966: I, 92.
- (14) Salman 1973: d–e, Pl. 4.
- (15) Hussein et al. 2013: 98–104, Pls. XLIII–XLIV.
- (16) Hussein et al. 2013: 104–108, Pls. XLIV–XLIX; Hussein and al-Gailani Werr 2008: 91–98, Figs. 12n–x.
- (17) Compare, for example, the reconstructed plans of the temple precinct produced by Reade (2002: Fig. 2), completed before the work of Hussein, and that of Kertai (2013: Pl. V), particularly the dimensions of the Ninurta Court and the alignment of the two temples.
- (18) Reade 2002: 141
- (19) Reade 2002: 138. To date, we have excavated small soundings to a depth of one meter into this platform, three in the rooms of the Adad-nerari III Palace and one in the Ishtar Temple Court, finding only courses of mudbrick.
- (20) Reade 2002: 143.
- (21) Reade 2002: 144.
- (22) Reade 2002: 193.
- (23) Mallowan (1966: 86) raises this point with regard to the completion of the Ninurta Temple under Shalmaneser.
- (24) It is virtually identical to a corbel from Mallowan's excavations in the Ninurta Temple (ND 634 = BM 130430).
- (25) Layard 1853: pl. facing p. 351.
- (26) Reade 2002: M31, 142–143, 169, Fig. 6.
- (27) Bunnens 2021: 104–105, Fig. 4; Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936: I, 159 no. 9; II pl. XIV no. 5.
- (28) For other presumably similar statues of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud, see Mallowan 1966: 86, fn.3, Fig. 38 = ND 5500 (B), which a plowman found as

- fragments on the low mound near the southeast corner of the citadel mound. Mallowan attributes this sculpture to the Ninurta Temple (*Ibid.*), and its ca. 200-line inscription references Shalmaneser's 31st campaign of 827–826 BC. Mallowan also found a fragmentary and burnt limestone statue of Shalmaneser in the Ninurta Temple, reportedly on the floor of Room 1 (1966: 86, fn. 2 = ND 5571), which Reade corrects to Room a/4 (Reade 2002: 181 = M23). This statue mentions the king's campaign against Ellipi in his 16th regnal year. Finally, the well-known calcite Kurba'il Statue from Room NE50 of Fort Shalmaneser dates to around the king's 20th year (ca. 839 BC) (Mallowan 1966: 401, fn. 48–49, Fig. 310 = ND 10000).
- (29) For important inscriptions found during the 2022–23 excavations, see Appendix I.
- (30) Curtis et al. 2008: 75–78, Figs. 95–97. These are N.2063 (NIM 2), N.2064 (NIM 1), and N.2065 (NIM3).
- (31) Hussein et al. 2013: Pl. XLVIII a, b; Layard 1853a: 357–358, BM 118785.
- (32) Paley (1985: 19) mentions some undocumented soundings made in this area in 1977–78.
- (33) Smith 1875: 71.
- (34) Rawlinson and Norris 1861: Pl. 35 no. 1. See also Tadmor 1973: 148–150; Schramm 1973: 115–116; Ehrlich 1996: 168–171.
- (35) Hussein et al. 2013: 101–102.
- (36) Ahmad 2002.
- (37) See Albenda 1994: 3 for a detailed analysis of Layard's field drawings of the wall paintings and a proposed correction to the room numbering for one.
- (38) We identified large, yellowish limestone blocks eroded out of the west slope of the citadel mound in this area that typify the known Nimrud gateways.
- (39) Rawlinson and Norris 1861: Pl. 35 no. 3.
- (40) We have noted similar capitals stored in the Nabu Temple, presumably excavated by Mallowan. It is noteworthy that, in its extant form, this building is also primarily the work of Adad-nerari III.
- (41) The threshold that is shown by Hussein et al. 2013: 100, pl. XLIVc is not the threshold of Room 3 and 4 but rather the sill that was located in the doorway between Rooms 2 and 6.
- (42) *RIMA* 3 A.0.104.1. First published by Layard (1851: 70).
- (43) The building plan from the 1993 Iraqi excavations (Hussein et al. 2013: Fig. 5) shows a wall at this location rather than the doorway indicated by Layard. Following Layard's excavations, a layer of dense mudbrick collapse accumulated on the layer of stone chips left from the reduction of the door sill.
- (44) See also Hussein et al. 2013: 100.
- (45) Albenda 2005: 15.
- (46) Layard 1849a: II, Plan 4. Albenda posits that no niche existed in this room and that Layard was confusing Rooms 1 and 4 (2005: 15).
- (47) Hussein et al. 2013: 102, Pl. XLIVb.
- (48) Layard 1849a II: 15, Plan 4.
- (49) Grayson 1996: 67 A.0.102.14.108 lines 108–109.
- (50) Kinnier Wilson 1962, Oates 1962: 16–17; interestingly, the inscription on the Kurbail statue only summarizes the campaigns of the eighteenth and nineteenth years.
- (51) Læssøe 1959; cf. Mallowan 1966: I, 86–89, 323. According to Hulin (1966: 84), the fragments found by a plowman at the foot of the citadel in 1956 belong to at least two statues.

vv(52) Læssøe 1959: 156 Fragment F line 3' (Grayson 1996: 80 A.0.102.16 line 182'–185').

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