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DISTANT IMPRESSIONS

The Senses in the Ancient Near East

Edited by Ainsley Hawthorn and
Anne-Caroline Rendu Loisel

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Abbreviations

The abbreviations and the references to ancient sources used in the present volume follow the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD) system. Here are other abbreviations employed by the contributors:

AAA	Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology
AbB	Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung
ACH Adad	Virolleaud, Charles. <i>Textes cunéiformes: Adad</i> . Astrologie Chaldéenne 4. Paris, Geuthner, 1907.
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung: Beiheft
AH	Achaemenid History
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AHw	<i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . Wolfram von Soden. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981.
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen
AOS	American Oriental Series
ARA	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
ARM	Archives Royales de Mari
ATHE	Kienast, Burkhard. <i>Die altassyrischen Texte des orientalischen Seminars der Universität Heidelberg und der Sammlung Erlenmeyer-Basel</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960.
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
BaghM	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>



BARIS	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BCBO	Bibliotheca de Ciencias Bíblicas y Orientales
BCSMS	<i>Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies</i>
BEHER	Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études: Sciences religieuses
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
BM	British Museum
BMECCJ	Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan
Bo	Tablet excavated at Boğazköy
BSA	<i>Bulletin of Sumerian Agriculture</i>
CA	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Edited by A. Leo Oppenheim et al. 26 vols. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CANE	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . Edited by Jack M. Sasson. 4 vols. New York: Scribner, 1995.
CDOG	Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CHD	<i>The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Edited by Hans G. Güterbock, Harry A. Hoffner Jr., and Theo P. J. van den Hout. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1980–.
ChS	Corpus der hurritischen Sprachdenkmäler
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CMAO	Contributi e Materiali di Archeologia Orientale
CSL	Cambridge Studies in Linguistics
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
CTH	<i>Catalogue des Textes Hittites</i> . Emmanuel Laroche. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.
DBH	Dresdner Beiträge zur Hethitologie
EAE	Enūma Anu Enlil
FAOS	Freiburger altorientalische Studien
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FHG	Laroche, Emmanuel. "Fragments hittites de Genève." <i>RA</i> 45 (1951): 131–38, 184–94; <i>RA</i> 46 (1952): 42–50.
HANE/S	History of the Ancient Near East/Studies
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
hethiter.net	Textzeugnisse der Hethiter, http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/HPM/txthetlink.php .
HKM	<i>Hethitische Keilschrifttafeln aus Maşat</i> . Sedat Alp. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/34. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991.

HSAO	Heidelberg Studium zum Alten Orient
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HT	<i>Hittite Texts in the Cuneiform Character from the Tablets in the British Museum</i> . Leonard William. King. London: British Museum, 1920.
HW ²	<i>Hethitisches Wörterbuch</i> . Edited by Johannes Friedrich, Annelies Kammenhuber, et al. 2nd ed. Heidelberg: Winter, 1975–.
IBoT	Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzelerinde Bulunan Boğazköy Tabletleri
IEED	Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary
IM	Iraq Museum in Baghdad
<i>IrAnt</i>	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i>
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Gezelschap (Genootschap) Ex oriente lux</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
KAL	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts
KAR	E. Ebeling, <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> , 2 vols. Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 28, 34. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915–23
KBo	Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi
Konkordanz	Košak, Silvin. <i>Konkordanz der hethitischen Keilschrifttafeln</i> v. 1.94, http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/ .
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi
LAPO	Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
lit.	literally
MARI	<i>Mari: Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires</i>
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MDOG	Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
MSL	<i>Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon/Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon</i> . 17 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1937–2004.
MVAG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft
ND	Nimrud tablets
NIN	<i>NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity</i>
OBC	Orientalia Biblica et Christiana
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIMP	Oriental Institute Museum Publications
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications

OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OPSNKF	Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> (NS)
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
pl.	plural
PPN	Pre-Pottery Neolithic
RA	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RHA	<i>Revue Hittite et Asianique</i>
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscription of Neo-Assyrian Periods
RIME	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RIMB	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Babylonian Periods
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–.
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
Sb	From the Jacques de Morgan excavations at Susa, held at the Louvre
SBA	Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde
SCCNH	Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians
SSN	<i>Studia Semitica Neerlandica</i>
StBoT	Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten
StMed	<i>Studia Mediterranea</i>
StPohl	<i>Studia Pohl</i>
StPohlSM	<i>Studia Pohl Series Maior</i>
TCL	Textes cunéiformes du Louvre
THeth	Texte der Hethiter
VAT	Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
VBoT	<i>Verstreute Boghazköi-Texte</i> . Albrecht Götze. Marburg: Götze, 1930.
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WOO	Wiener Offene Orientalistik
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
YNER	Yale Near Eastern Researches
YUAG	Yale University Art Gallery
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
ZABR	<i>Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>



The Throne Room of Aššurnāṣirpal II: A Multisensory Experience

LUDOVICO PORTUESE

The Throne Room (B) of the Northwest Palace of Aššurnāṣirpal II has been described, since its excavation, as “the largest and the most elaborate in the building” and “planned to hold a large concourse of persons in the presence of the king” (Mallowan 1966, 96). Indeed, its size and the presence of a large throne base at its east end confirm that this was the principal Throne Room of the palace (figs. 2.1 and 2.2). Two further features of the room not only verify this function, but also reveal some hidden ideological meanings: the room’s position in the palace and its interior decorative program.

First, the room’s position lends it a prominent status. Situated between the two main courts of the palace, it served as reception suite and, especially in a political sense, as a means of both connecting and separating the more public area (*bābānu*) and the more private wing of the palace (*bītānu*) (Winter 1983, 15; Russell 1998, 714; cf. Kertai 2015, 5–6). In this respect, it played a strategic role linking the open space to the enclosed space, the inside to the outside, and the seen to the unseen. But, inasmuch as this room was the main audience hall of the palace, it also represented a space for exclusion or inclusion and acted as a “bridge-context” to link two different realities: the “vice-regent of Aššur, chosen of the gods Enlil and Ninurta, beloved of the gods Anu and Dagan” on one side, and “those insubordinate to him” on the other side (RIMA 2.A.o.101.23, lines 1, 3). Therefore, the Throne Room can also be conceived as the metaphoric transitional or borderline context, where two opposite worlds—the Assyrian and the outsider, the divine and the temporal, the defined and the undefined—met and maybe clashed together in mutual contact.

Second, the room’s importance is enhanced by its internal decorative program, which links and blends, through texts and images, two aspects of kingship: divine qualities and temporal achievements. Here the king exhibited himself as the maintainer of the divine

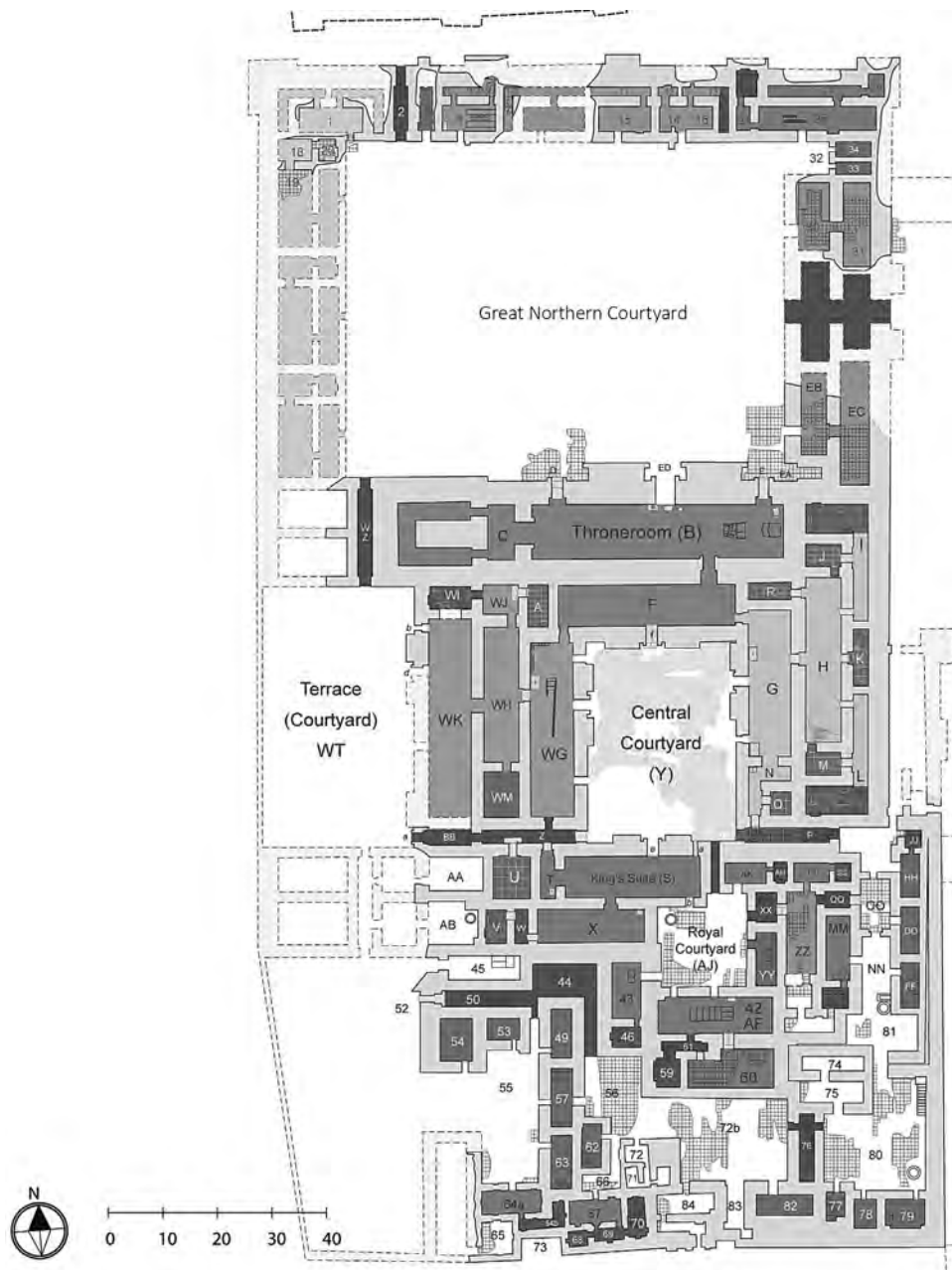


FIGURE 2.1 Kalhu, plan of the Northwest Palace (adapted from Kertai 2014, fig. 3).



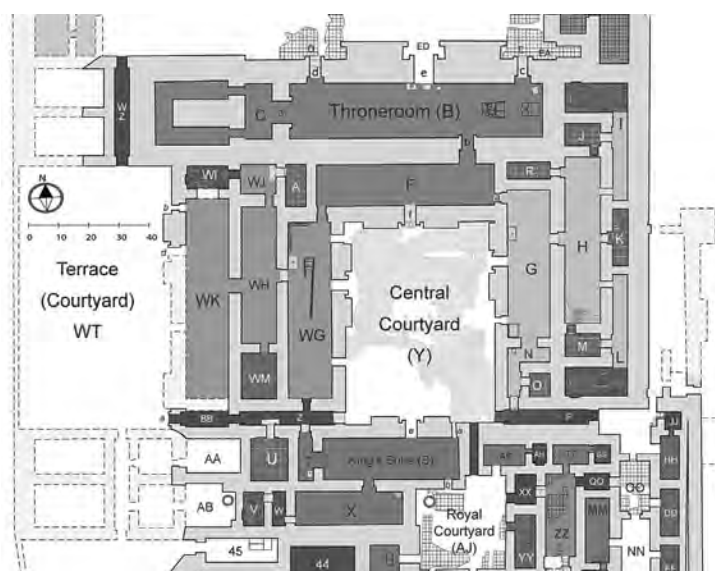


FIGURE 2.2 Kalḫu, plan of the Northwest Palace, central part (Kertai 2014, fig. 3).

order, through the care of the stylized tree, and as warrior, through military conquest and tribute, by visually showing the extent of the empire (fig. 2.3). In this sense, the Throne Room represented, as Irene J. Winter states, the symbolic “true center,” a microcosm of the state, in which the king could manifest the multidimensional definition of kingship (Winter 1981, 20; 1983, 24).¹

In light of these two peculiar characteristics, it appears clear that this room was marked as something “other,” an unusual space within the palace’s plan loaded with ideological and metaphoric meanings. These meanings allow us insight into how the Assyrians and, in particular, the Assyrian royal entourage, perceived the Throne Room and its purpose. Given that non-Assyrians also visited this room, the room’s ideological significance had to be communicated to these outsiders as well. The potential visitor had to acknowledge what being included or admitted in this room meant, what importance it had, and, especially, what such contact with the Assyrian reality entailed. In other words, such a room demanded to be fully experienced by the visitor.

A number of authors have studied aspects of the Throne Room of Aššurnāṣirpal II, providing insightful interpretations on its ideological role and its decorative program;

1. Winter argues that the reliefs illustrated the king’s qualities and achievements, summarized in the “Standard Inscription” engraved on each slab. The selection of scenes depicted on the reliefs, reflecting actual campaigns, show the Assyrians’ invincibility in a curated presentation of the real world. Therefore, the reliefs mediate between the history and the king’s “assertion-of-history.” Furthermore, Winter cleverly suggests that the Throne Room walls echo the limits and boundaries of the empire, and what those boundaries enclose.





FIGURE 2.3 Throne Room (B), slabs B-23 and B-17b (Budge 1914, pls. 11, 20b).

however, there are few works that consider this room as a whole, with special regard to its audience.² This paper fills part of this gap by reconsidering the audience perspective through unsolved and neglected questions, such as: What were the sensations associated with being in this room? How did the audience perceive such an important room? Can we really imagine that the meeting with the Assyrian king consisted only of seeing the

2. Studies on the Throne Room: Layard 1848; Budge 1914; Gadd 1936; Mallowan 1966; Meuszyński 1974, 51–73; 1979, 5–13; Reade 1979a, 57–64; Meuszyński 1981, 17–25; Reade 1985, 203–14; Paley and Sobolewski 1992, 26–31; Russell 1998, 705–12. Studies on its ideological role and decorative program: Winter 1981, 2–38; 1983, 15–31; Matthiae 1988, 347–76; 1996, 37–74; Dolce 1997, 141–62; Lumsden 2004, 359–85; Roaf 2008, 209–13; Nadali 2010, 179–98. The issue of its audience has been vaguely touched on by Reade (1979b, 335–39) and Russell (1998, 705–14) and more extensively examined by Porter (2000, 7–18; 2003a, 180*–91*) and Di Paolo (2003, 517–44), but with only partial results.



FIGURE 2.4 Rendering from the Learning Sites virtual reality reconstruction of the Northwest Palace of Aššurnāširpal II, Kalḫu, showing the Throne Room (B) facade in the Great Northern Courtyard; image © 2015 Learning Sites, Inc.

images on the walls and of listening to readings of the inscriptions, as though one were in a museum? With this contribution, by putting the reader into the shoes of the visitor and carrying out a close analysis of the Throne Room's images with reference to text sources, I will outline the strategies that I believe were used to make the experience of visiting the room linger in the memory of the audience.

Throne Room Facade: Monumentality and Psychological Impact

Let us begin by following the hypothetical visitor approaching the Throne Room. After entering the palace and crossing the Great Northern Courtyard, the visitor would have stood before the monumental Throne Room facade (fig. 2.4). The Throne Room was the largest room in the palace and measured 45.5 by 10.5 m. Although the room's height is unknown, given that the other ceilings in the palace could reach up to 14 m, it is supposed that the room would have been the same height or greater, to give it a monumental scale (Paley 2008, 198–99; Kertai 2014, 340).

Monumental architecture is sometimes interpreted as a costly symbol that evolved to deter rival elites. Indeed, conspicuous concentration of material into one massive structure

would allow the observer to easily estimate the effort that has been used in building the structure. Following some recent psychological studies (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 53–68), however, it seems likely that monumental architecture is more than just symbolic: the costly building might be read through another theoretical perspective, namely *sensory exploitation theory*. The primary sensorial sensitivity being exploited in monumental architecture is an adaptive *sensitivity to bigness*. Such sensitivity to bigness seems to originate from parent-child interactions, where the correlation between the parent's size and its influence over the child becomes a benchmark for estimates about social power later in life (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 56). Inasmuch as exaggerated size and height feature in the Assyrian palaces, these edifices could exploit a spectator's sensitivity to bigness, that is, the tendency to perceive power/dominance in objects and features that are big, or at least suggest bigness. In this specific example, the Throne Room could of course have elicited a wide range of emotions, such as admiration, beauty, delight, aesthetic frisson, and even fear. But the psychological studies have, in general, pinpointed that a common and frequent emotional response to the monumental architecture is *awe* (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 54–57), and the Aššurnāširpal Throne Room, which must have been splendid and grandiose, was surely also able to spark feelings of awe, an emotion that is expressed by the Akkadian word *tabritu* (CAD T, s.v. “*tabritu*” mng. 2).³ Moreover, I would suppose that this emotion was embodied in the procession of tributaries who would have been induced to behave more obediently and submissively when faced with such a grand edifice (Porter 2003a, 184*), boosting a vertical social stratification (fig. 2.5).⁴ In this way, the Throne Room facade would have functioned as a device for *oppressing* and *intimidating* people, and individuals with a propensity to experience awe would be more willing to admit their *inadequacy* (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 59; see also Di Paolo 2003, 523).

Even if the physical bigness or vastness of the room can be considered as the primary cause of awe, certain immaterial characteristics can also be considered as “big” or “vast,” such as the personality of the Assyrian king and his extraordinary physical accomplishments, or the room's extraordinary craftsmanship—for instance, the use of materials that are notoriously difficult to collect or that are very labor-intensive to work or process (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 57–58). The latter are praised in the Standard Inscription: “I founded therein a palace of cedar, cypress, *daprānu*-juniper, boxwood, *meskannu*-wood, terebinth, and tamarisk. . . . I made (replicas of) beasts of mountains and seas in white limestone . . . ; I surrounded it with knobbed nails of bronze. . . . I took in great quantities and put therein silver, gold, tin, bronze, iron” (Grayson 1991, 276, lines 18–22).

3. On the Throne Room's splendidness and grandiosity, see, e.g., Reade 1979c, 43–45; Curtis and Reade 1995, 39; Winter 2003, 254*–61*; and Paley 2008, 199–207. *Tabritu* literally means admiration, amazement. See the interesting discussion carried out by Porter (2000, 18, 23; 2003b, xii, 2). See also Winter 2000, 22–44.

4. The tributary figures have been identified as originating from the West (Winter 1983, 26; Reade 1994, 274).



At the same time, the Throne Room was highly aestheticized (Winter 2003, 254*–61*), so it could also deeply *impress* the spectators, an emotion that *attracts* rather than intimidates or oppresses.⁵ The incorporation of shiny and glistening surfaces, brightly colored architectural features, or nonthreatening ornamentation might make a monumental structure attractive rather than intimidating (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 60).⁶

Besides introducing and establishing a vertical social stratification, the monumentality of the edifice also contributed to generating a horizontal attachment. Monumental buildings, by virtue of their massive scale, can receive a large number of people, providing moments for social interaction and social sharing. Furthermore, by triggering *awe*, the structure's monumentality could psychologically intensify a social gathering. In fact, some investigations have demonstrated that awe has community-building potential by making people feel connected and that it leads to sentiments of oneness. In this sense, the awe engendered by monumentality creates a binding feeling, increasing the community identification among visitors and enhancing horizontal attachment (Joye and Verpooten 2013, 60).

Such emotional effects would have been particularly evident in the Throne Room of Kalḫu: the monumentality of the structure, which juts out into a large courtyard, together with the rows of tributaries carved on the facade, would have considerably incentivized a horizontal attachment and the identification among tributaries. The rows of tributaries, in particular, would have increased such effects: they fulfil a perfect coincidence between *in fieri* action and depicted action by overlapping two contemporary realities, one real and one virtual (Dolce 1997, 148). Such images are, in other words, without time and, hence, open to infinite metempsychosis. These scenes, therefore, performed the roles of, on the one hand, bonding the collective by associating individuals through shared feelings and shared political status, and, on the other hand, directing the guests toward the Throne Room by representing the appropriate actions for the visitors to undertake in the real environment (fig. 2.5).

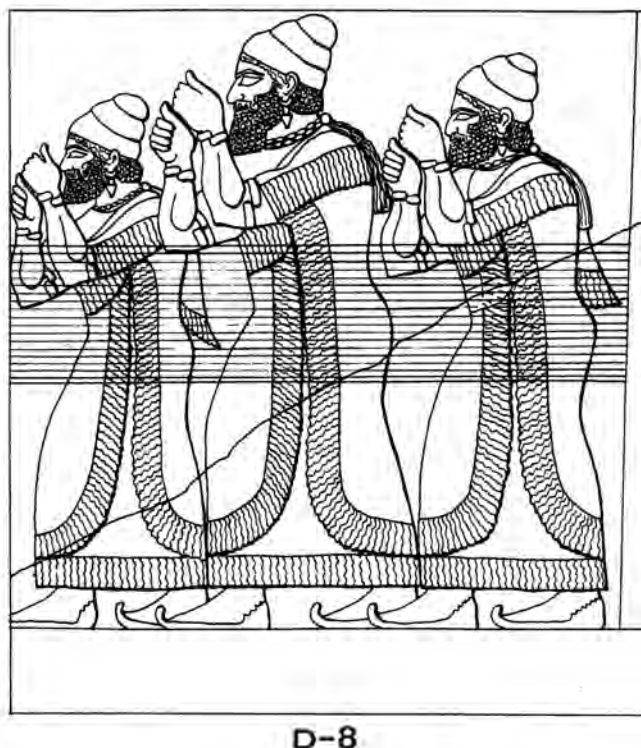
Entrances: Olfactory and Tactile Experience

The blend of sensations and emotions described above accompanied the visitors as they entered the room, which could be accessed through three possible entrances (doors

5. See also, as a comparison, the details of the later throne room of Sargon II at Dur-Šarrukīn, whose features testify to the high aesthetic level of this type of room (“the beamed ceiling was likewise plastered and decorated with brilliantly colored patterns” [Loud 1936, 57, 67]).

6. For the use of color, see Thavapalan, Stenger, and Snow 2016, 198–214. In particular, the results of multispectral-imaging analysis have demonstrated how Egyptian blue pigment was used to highlight the written word in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, boosting the visual sensorial experience of the palace context.

FIGURE 2.5 Throne Room (B)
facade, slab D-8 (CDLI;
<http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

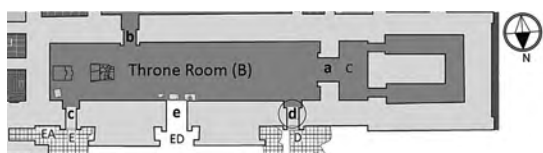


d, e, and c; figs. 2.2 and 2.4).⁷ Door d was in all likelihood earmarked for foreigners or outsiders, not only because of its distance from the throne but also for other reasons, so far neglected in academic studies.⁸ This door was surrounded by a pair of winged lion-creatures (fig. 2.6) and a pair of winged figures (fig. 2.7), each of whom carries an animal and a plant (Meuszyński 1981, 24, 32–34, pls. 3, 5).⁹

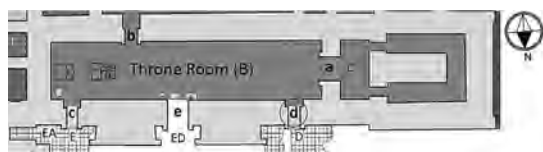
7. See Mallowan 1966, 95; Meuszyński 1981, plans 2–3; Paley and Sobolewski 1992, 26–29.

8. Mallowan (1966, 103) was the first scholar to suggest that doors d and c were the entrance and the exit of the Throne Room, followed by Paley and Sobolewski (1992, 25, 67). Russell (1998, 705–7, 713) concludes that the west doorway (d), with its apotropaic figures holding scapegoats to intercept evil forces, may well have been the entrance for visitors, while the east doorway (c), with its more powerful figures giving the impression of vigilance, was unlikely to have been used as an entrance (see also Porter [2003a, 184*] and Kertai [2014, 342]). Di Paolo (2003, 523–36) suggests that the furthest entrance was earmarked for subordinates, while the closest one to the throne was intended for the highest authorities; *e contrario*, Winter (1981, 10; 1983, 17) assumes that visitors entered through the monumental central portal of the Throne Room. With this contribution, I combine all previous interpretations with new observations.

9. The plant carried by the winged lions is partially visible and has been described as a “rosette flower branch” (Paley and Sobolewski 1992, 15–16, figs. 1–2, pl. 1) or “three tufted rosettes” (Russell 1998, 705–6). See also Ataç 2010, 3–38 for an interesting analysis of the interactions between the human body and animals in the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs.



d



B-30

d



B-29

FIGURE 2.6 (top) Throne Room (B), entrance d, winged lion creatures (Russell 1999, figs. 85a, 86a).

FIGURE 2.7 (bottom) Throne Room (B), entrance d, winged genii (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).



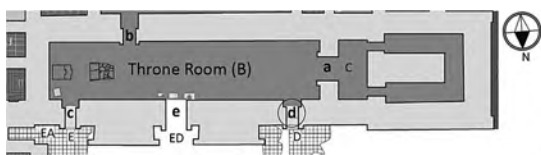


FIGURE 2.8 Throne Room (B), entrance d, winged lion creature (to the left) (Russell 1999, fig. 85a); room T, doorway a, winged genie (to the right) (Budge 1914, pl. 27).

The animal held by the winged lions is fragmentary. Indeed, most of the animal's head has broken away. It is therefore unidentifiable and has been so since Layard's time. Layard tried to identify it with a stag, a lamb, or a ram (Layard 1848, 311 quoted in Paley and Sobolewski 1992, 7, 15–16), and no new interpretation has been proposed so far. A comparison with the other animals depicted in the palace, however, leads me to suppose that this animal was a goat of the type carried by the winged human-headed genii, flanking doorway a of room T: the still visible hoofs are indeed very similar (fig. 2.8).¹⁰

The goat has already been identified with the *mašhultuppû*, or scapegoat (Parker Mallowan 1983, 37–38), and is largely attested in apotropaic rituals to avert evil, where,

10. Such comparative analysis might allow Layard's interpretations to be discarded. When compared with the stag held by the winged genii flanking door d, there would not have been space enough for the horn, given the presence of the colossi's beards. When compared with the lamb held by the winged genie decorating the central entrance (Barnett and Falkner 1962, pls. 126–27; Russell 1998, 706), the fragmentary animal has longer legs. The fragmentary animal looks more similar to a ram or, most likely, to the goat carried by the winged human-headed genii flanking doorway a of room T (facing room Z, Z-a-1, Z-a-2 [Paley and Sobolewski 1987, 64, pl. 4]).





FIGURE 2.9 Throne Room (B), entrance d, winged genie (Budge 1914, pl. 26), and actual fallow deer (*dama dama*) for comparison (<http://www.deer-pictures.com/>).

in particular, its hide was used to bind the man's head (CAD M/1, s. v. "*mašhultuppû*"; Scurlock 2002, 379–80; 2014, 341): "by means of a *mašhultuppû* you purify the palace" (from the *bīt rimki* ritual; see Zimmern 1901, 123–25, lines i.20, ii.4) and "Make the healthy goat into a 'scapegoat' . . . Sacrifice the healthy goat as a scapegoat, recite an incantation (over) the scapegoat's hide . . . bind the sash of the scapegoat on his head; carry off the hide of the scapegoat from the distraught man's body" (from the *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, against the Sibitti, the demonic Seven; see Geller 2007, xv, 161–62, 239, lines 77–98).¹¹

As for the deer carried by the winged figures or genii, Elizabeth Douglas Van Buren (1939, 40–42) identified it with the fallow deer (*Dama dama*), the only species that retains a spotted coat and mature antlers (rather than shedding them annually) into adulthood. These attributes characterize only the adult male (fig. 2.9; see Kawami 2005, 108). Therefore, this figure is most likely a stag (adult male deer), and I would cautiously posit that the "fallow deer" is described by the Akkadian word *lulīmu* for three reasons: (1) because this word indicates the stag rather than the general deer; (2) it is mentioned in the *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, which explains that the antlers' powder was used for fumigation to purify the patient (*fuga daemonum*), and (3) because it is listed together with the plant held by the

11. Parker Mallowan was the first scholar to posit the identification of the *mašhultuppû* with the animal held by the genii of room T. Her identification is here extended to these fragmentary animals.



genii (the *libbi gišimmari*/GIŠ.PEŠ.GIŠIMMAR) among the essential materials to purify a man (CAD L, s.v. “*lulīmu*”).¹²

The perfect agreement between the animals depicted and the incantation textual references leads me to suppose that some rituals actually took place at this entrance. Indeed, the figures follow exactly the procedures described in the inscriptions: (1) the goat would have been used as a scapegoat and its hide used to bind the head of the man being purified; (2) the antlers’ powder was used for fumigations (in the main, used together with foul-smelling fumigants), and (3) the palm offshoot was placed upon the head of the person.¹³ The last point could explain the raised hand of the genii carrying the stalk (fig. 2.10). Therefore, the visitor would have been touched by the sacrificial animals and received by the pungent and unpleasant smells of the fumigations.

12. See, in particular, the analysis carried out by Albenda (2008, 63), who suggests that the word *lulīmu* describes mainly the red deer species. For the above-mentioned reasons, this word is here tentatively also associated with the fallow deer. “The fact that fumigations . . . seem never to have been used to rid a patient of apparitions, would seem to suggest that the principle behind them was something more than a simple *fuga daemonorum* [sic]” (Scurlock 2006, 63). In Akkadian, the stag can be described by the word *ajalu*, which indicates both the deer (undefined) and the stag (adult male), and *lulīmu*, which is used to indicate a stag and the red deer. The *ajalu* is mainly mentioned in some Assyrian medical texts: “you grind stag’s horn, mix it in oil, smear (it) on, spread it, and he (the patient) will get well” or “you fumigate him with stag’s horn” (CAD A/1, s.v. “*ajalu*,” 1c). The *lulīmu*, instead, is listed in the *Utukkū Lemnūtu* among the ritual materials that cleanse the patient of the Sibitti, the evil: “powder of the horn of the stag”; and mixed with other plants, “powder of horn of stag . . . and fumigate the patient” (Geller 2007, 175–76, 249–50, lines 214, 242–245). The plant held by the genii has been identified with a palm offshoot GIŠ.PEŠ.GIŠIMMAR (*libbi gišimmari*; see Parker Mallowan 1983, 38; Landsberger 1967, 13–16) and was used in exorcism to purify the patient: “it is the incantation for binding the young date-palm on the patient”; “and put . . . a date-palm heart at his head” (Geller 2007, 172, 247, lines 144, 159); “(and) a palm shoot you hold to his head” (Farber 2014, 193, line 104). In the main, as was already observed (Parker Mallowan 1983, 38; Russell 1998, 687–96), the apotropaic value of the date-palm (palm offshoot or palm frond) is confirmed by several occurrences in the inscriptions: “In an effective incantation he placed [the frond] upon the head of the patient” (to release him from the evil; Geller 1980, 29, 35, lines 65’–75’). It is also mentioned in the *Maqlū* series, “May the date-palm that catches every wind release me” (Parker Mallowan 1983, 38). Now, turning back to the stag, it is interesting to observe that, in a ritual of the *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, both the *lulīmu*-stag powder horn and the date-palm are mentioned together as essential materials to release the evil from the patient, “mix together sulphur and the powder of horn of stag . . . fumigate the patient . . . you approach the patient’s bed . . . and you hold the date-palm on your right side” (Geller 2007, 176, 250, lines 242–51). Therefore, I would cautiously identify the stag with the *lulīmu*.

13. The *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, besides the horn of the stag, lists cleansing ritual materials that are, in the main, foul-smelling fumigants (Ogden 2013, 231). The ritual lists *sahlū*-plant (identified with the cress plant and characterized by a pungent odor [CAD S, s.v. “*sahlū*”; see also Potts 1997, 66]), sulphur, horned alkali, pure salt, *ninū* (unidentified plant; tentatively identified with the *Ammi*/Bishop’s weed or with mint [Campbell Thompson 1949, 67–69; Kinnier Wilson 2005, 50–51; Abusch and Schwemer 2011, 471]), *azupīru*-plant (iodoform or hay-like fragrance [Campbell Thompson 1949, 161; Srivastava et al. 2010, 200–201]). Their strong smell was intended to loosen the grip of tough, intractable illnesses, ghosts, or demons. The use of stag horn, together with other foul-smelling fumigants, is confirmed by further examples, such as wolf dung, pig dung, and fox dung (e.g., Scurlock 2006, 573, 603).



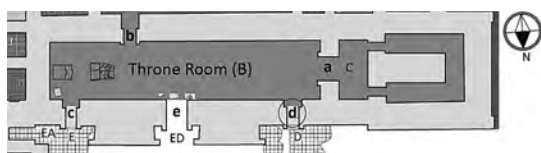


FIGURE 2.10 Throne Room (B), entrance d, winged lion creature (to the left) (Russell 1999, fig. 85a) and winged genie (to the right) (Budge 1914, pl. 26). The numbers indicate: 1. Goat/scapegoat (*mašhultuppû*); 2. Stag (*lulimu*); 3. Palm offshoot (*libbi gišimmarî*).

Visual and Auditory Experience

Crossing door d, the visitor would have been positioned in front of the slabs, whose visual impact increases arousal.¹⁴ Indeed, recent psychological studies reveal that intensity and temporal proximity are more important than the duration of the stimulus in the creation of lasting memories. In fact, when evaluating past experiences, people tend to focus on the most proximal moment of the experience, whether that be the beginning of a future experience or the end of an experience in the past, without anticipating how they will feel once the new state is routine. Therefore, people remember the beginning of the experience better than the middle and best remember the ending of the experience (Morewedge 2015, 315). This is exactly what the reliefs opposite door d display: siege of cities (beginning) and

14. Where “arousal” refers to a physiological and psychological state of being awake or reactive to stimuli (Du Plessis 2011, 82).

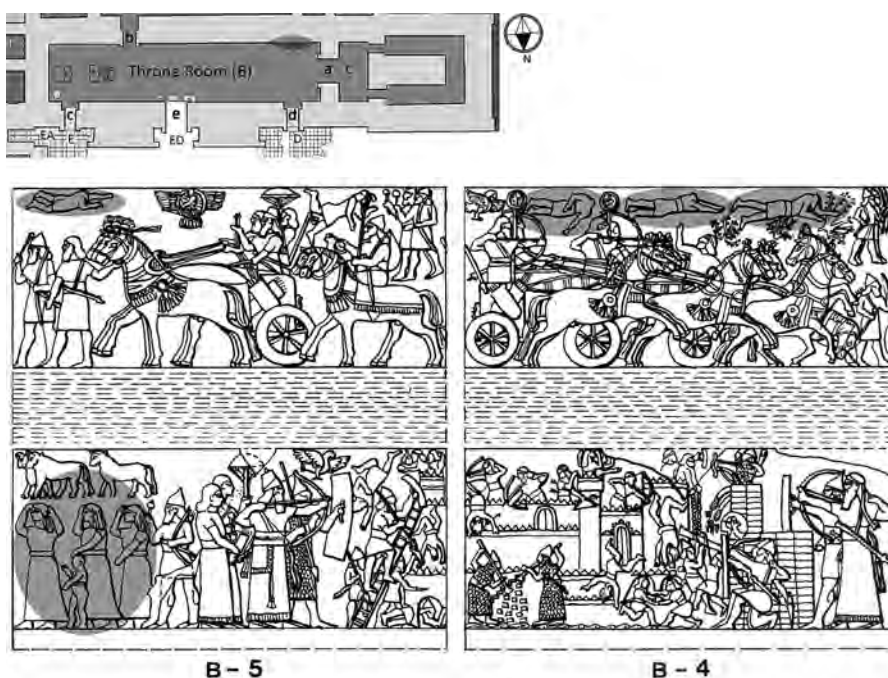


FIGURE 2.11 Throne Room (B), south wall, opposite entrance d, slabs B-5 and B-4 (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

deportations (ending).¹⁵ In addition, our emotional memory records only the strongest and the most intense emotions, and, for this reason, it is mainly negative images that catch our attention and stay with us (Lugli 2014, 91–94). The slabs opposite door d show images that trigger specific primary emotions, such as fear: beheaded bodies, falling people, crying women.¹⁶ Furthermore, in several cases these images transmit multisensorial perceptions (Pignotti 1993, 20). These scenes are examples of synesthesia: the dead bodies stimulate the sense of smell of blood and decay, while the crying women induce auditory memory (fig. 2.11). The emotions of fear, insecurity, and vivid frightful memories would have been compounded by the sight of the slabs of the south wall, which in my opinion represent the emotional chaos produced by war by evoking feelings such as fear, anxiety, disgust, hate, and anger (fig. 2.12).

This sense of excitement was also enhanced as the visitor came in from the bright sunlight of the courtyard to the dark interior of the Throne Room (Roaf 2008, 211). We are still

15. Fredrickson and Kahneman (1993, 45–55) reveal that the representation of emotional episodes in memory can be likened more to a collection of snapshots than to a continuous film. Thus, when evaluating an affective episode, people appear to ignore the duration of the episode, and their evaluative judgments instead are based on salient features of the episode, such as whether it ends with a good or bad outcome.

16. Russell (1998, 713) and Di Paolo (2003, 532–34) also highlighted the visual impact of these scenes.



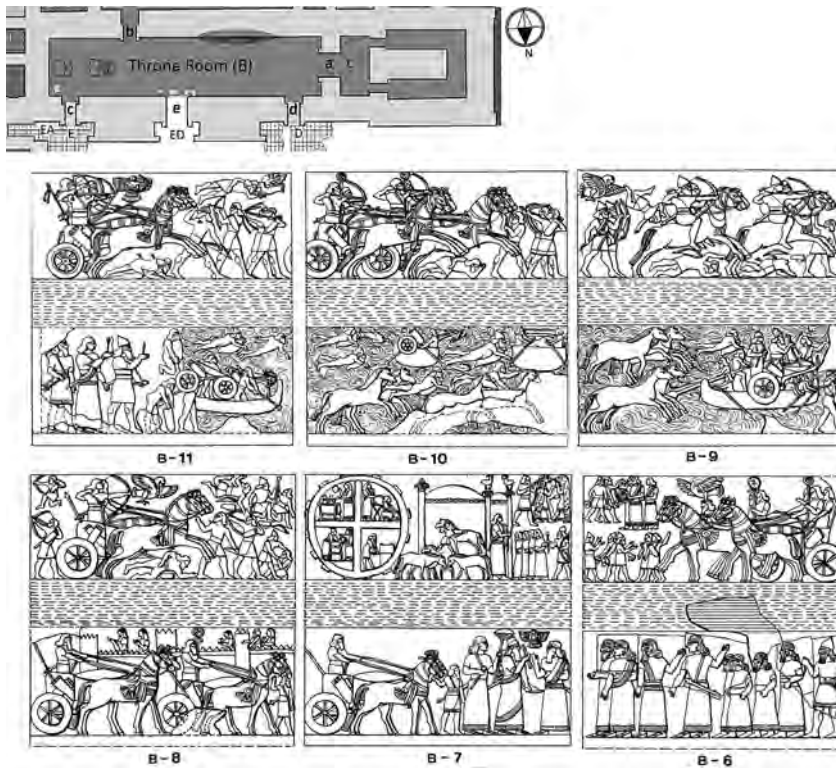


FIGURE 2.12 Throne Room (B), south wall, west side decoration, slabs B-6–B-11 (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

quite far away from understanding exactly how the room was lit.¹⁷ We can look at the huge doorways as the only lighting sources, though the northern orientation of the room did not allow a real exploitation of natural light (Kertai 2014, 343; 2015, 189–90). Despite this, the sunlight would have highlighted, though dimly, the three strategic focal points of the room: door d—the power of the Assyrian army, the annihilation of its enemies, the divine presence (Aššur); door c—the king himself; door e—the king in a religious perspective (fig. 2.13). Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to imagine that the guided movement of visitors through the space, in combination with the management of light within the Throne Room, brought to life the metaphorical description of the Assyrian army as “the splendour of his (the king’s) weapons (and) the radiance of his dominion” (RIMA 2.A.o.101.17, col. i line 25).

But the most interesting point—if we assume that the central and most monumental door was usually kept closed—is that the visitors coming from door d would have

17. Layard (1849, 205–6) and Mallowan (1966, 106)—quoted in Paley and Sobolewski (1992, 5, 9–10, 10)—posited the use of clerestory lighting beneath the roof. In particular, Mallowan proposes that the doors had been too narrow to let in much light (see also Porter 2003a, 185*; Roaf 2008, 211).

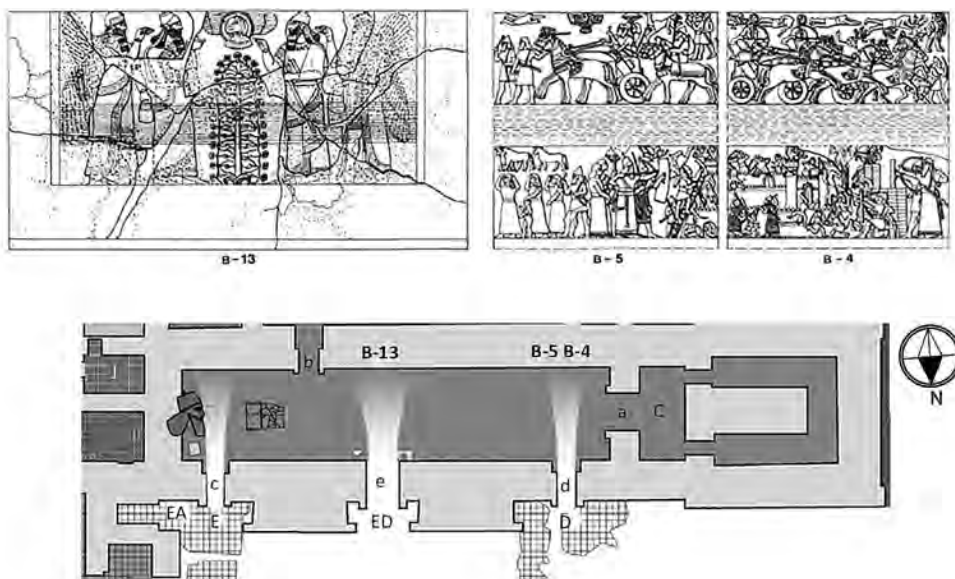


FIGURE 2.13 Throne Room (B), slabs B-13 and B-5/4 (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>); Throne Room (B) plan (adapted from Kertai 2014, fig. 3, with simulated management of sunlight within the room by the author).

proceeded from the sunlight, to the gloom, and back to the light again.¹⁸ At door c the king would have been lit by the sun, a light already visible from the opposite end of the room, so that the king himself becomes the focal point of the visitor's movement (figs. 2.14 and 2.15).

Movement within the room was probably accompanied by reading aloud the Standard Inscription, perhaps selecting specific parts of the text (Russell 1991, 233; Porter 2000, 15–16; 2003a, 185*). Quoting Yannis Hamilakis (2013, 27), in some contexts “sound, and especially the sound of speech, was seen as a bodily faculty imbued with materiality: it transmitted moral qualities, and it had a direct material impact on the bodies of the receivers, especially in prayers, oaths, and excommunications.” Exactly how many senses there are, and the precise definition of what constitutes a sense, is still debated among neurologists. The commonly accepted senses, aside from the Aristotelian, are thermoception (the experience of heat and cold), nociception (the perception of physical pain), equilibrioception (the awareness of the body's position and acceleration), proprioception (the perception of the physical body), and interoception (the awareness of the body's inner physiology).

18. For the door being closed, see Paley and Sobolewski 1997, 334; Russell 1998, 713; Di Paolo 2003, 531. Russell, in particular, pointing out that opposite this door was a duplicate image (B-13) of the image behind the throne base (B-23), suggests that on occasion the king could sit here as well, as was the case in the throne rooms of the earlier palace at Mari and the later palace at Babylon. He therefore suspects that this door was not used as an entrance when the king was enthroned at the end of the room, but rather only when the king positioned himself opposite it. See also Winter 1983, 17; Dolce 1997, 147.

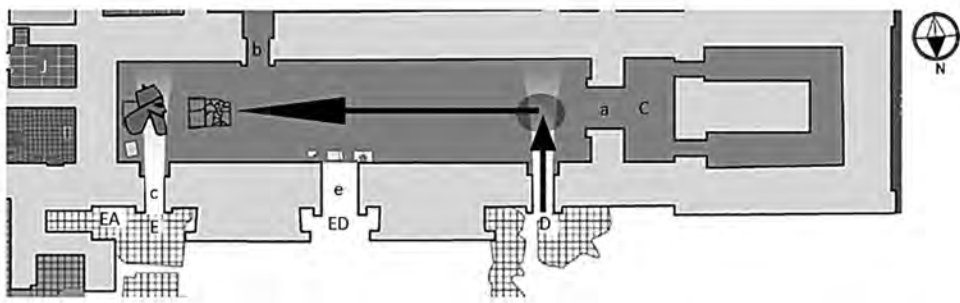


FIGURE 2.14 (top) Throne Room (B) plan (Kertai 2014, fig. 3, with simulated management of sunlight within the room).

FIGURE 2.15 (bottom) Rendering from the Learning Sites virtual reality reconstruction of the Northwest Palace of Aššurnasirpal II, Kalḫu, showing the Throne Room (B) from the point of view of a visitor seeking audience with the king; image © 2015 Learning Sites, Inc. (I am grateful to the Learning Sites for realizing such a reconstruction, which shows the central door closed, highlighting the management of natural light.)

To these accepted senses the “non-sense” or “sixth sense” can be also added, a sense that cannot be measured or substantiated and is reported by some as the supernatural presence of ghosts, the undead, and other immaterial entities. It is not a sense per se, and, although the lack of a sense is difficult to identify in archaeology, it would surely have had social consequences (Fahlander and Kjellström 2010, 3–4).

Bearing in mind these theoretical limitations, I would propose that such a “non-sense” might be detected by looking at the first words of the Standard Inscription, which highlight the relationship between the king and the gods, as well as the king’s genealogy:

Palace of Aššurnāširpal,
 Vice-regent of Aššur, chosen of the gods Enlil and Ninurta, beloved of the gods
 Anu and Dagan
 Son of Tukulti-Ninurta, great king, strong king, king of the universe, king of
 Assyria, son of Adad-nārārī, great king, strong king, king of the universe, king of
 Assyria. (RIMA 2.A.o.101.23, lines 1–2)

These words explain to the audience that they are in the presence of supernatural entities, such as the king himself and even the royal ancestor. This aspect, in association with the visual impact of supernatural images, precious and sparkling building materials, the management and restriction of natural light, the smell of fumigations, and the sound of voices, could activate, in my opinion, the so-called “non-sense” or “sixth sense” by expanding the multisensory atmosphere and framing the encounter with the king as supernatural.¹⁹ It does not matter if such entities actually exist: they could have a social, political, and ideological impact. Even though existence of the supernatural cannot be proven, the actions undertaken in the Throne Room—such as the purifying and cleansing rituals performed at entrance d—are based upon such experiences or beliefs. In this light, the Standard Inscription, jointly with the room’s images and sculptures and the involvement of additional senses, manifested the supernatural and almost divine background of the king and explained the “why” of being purified.

Throne Room as Bipolar Space

Within the room, the sequence of the images would have maintained the high level of arousal up to slab 13, which inevitably directs the viewer’s attention to slab 23: the doubled king and genii flanking a tree (fig. 2.16). Its mirror, or axial, symmetry would have reordered and interrupted the chaos induced by the reliefs of the south wall, acting at the physiological and psychological levels to produce an effect of stability through the central axis and balance through the flanking figures (Winter 1981, 10; 1983, 17).²⁰

Before reaching and being introduced into the presence of the king, the visitor would have been aware of door b, which was heavily guarded by a pair of winged figures, each of

19. In this regard, see the contribution in this book of Kiersten A. Neumann (ch. 1), concerning the multisensorial phenomena of the divine meal within the Neo-Assyrian temple. Similarly, she argues that the use of sparkling building materials and the arrangement of objects for the divine meal, the smell of aromatics, oils and food, the recitation of lamentations, prayers, and songs would have expanded the sensory experience of the divine meal.

20. Winter has argued that both B-13 and B-23 in room B can be considered as the organizing pivot-points of the Throne Room. Visitors would have first faced B-13, then turned ninety degrees to face the king. The king himself, when seated on his throne, became part of the scene depicted on B-23, which was set behind the throne base.



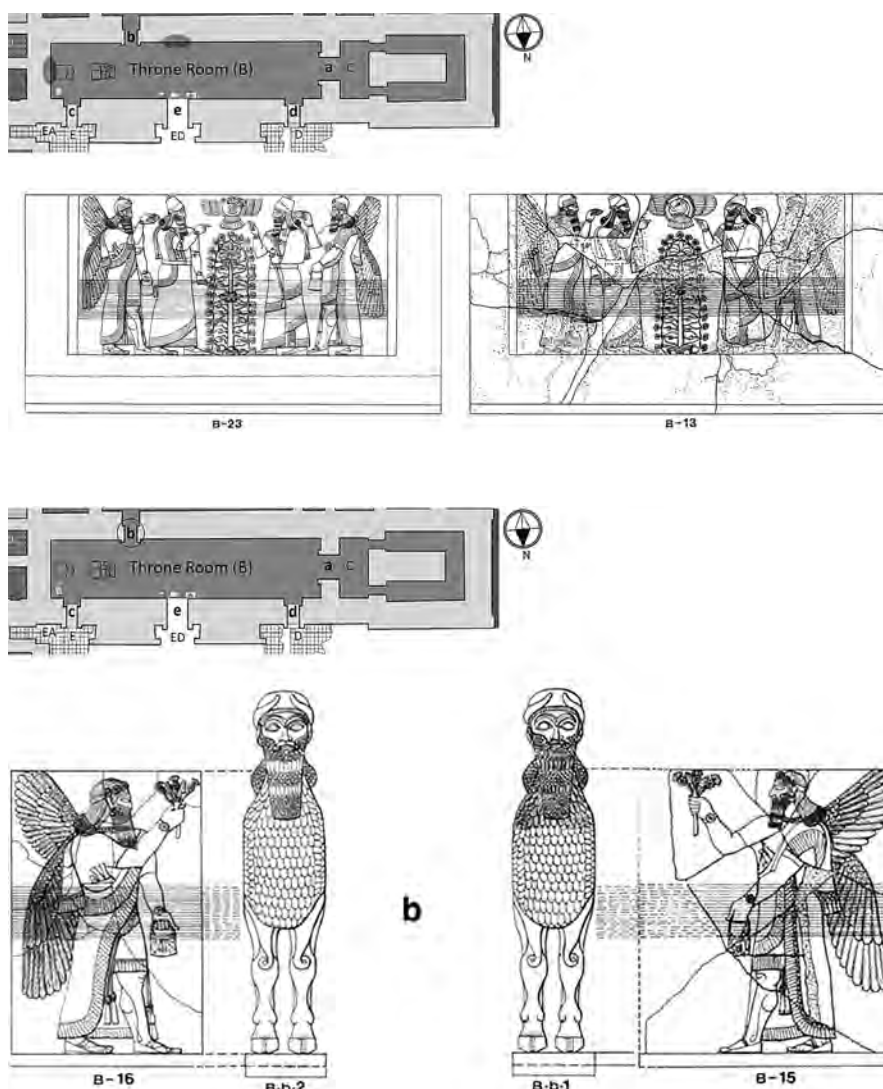


FIGURE 2.16 (top) Throne Room (B), slabs B-23 (east wall) and B-13 (south wall) (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

FIGURE 2.17 (bottom) Throne Room (B), doorway b, winged genii (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

whom holds a bucket and a plant (fig. 2.17; see Meuszyński 1981, 22, pls. 1–2; Russell 1998, 707). Along the same lines as the cleansing materials depicted at entrance d, the plants suggest the performance of rituals in proximity to this doorway. This door led to the retiring room F and to the East Suite, an area where, according to some interpretations, the rituals described in the *bīt rimki* series (“house of the ritual bath”) most likely took place.

According to Russell, room F could represent a secure retiring room for the king close to the more vulnerable outer space of the Throne Room, a location for purifying him of any unwanted pollution that he had accidentally picked up. As for the East Suite,



it contains ten rooms. The presence of paved rooms, one or two of which were equipped with drains, and the peculiar features of the complex suggest that there was intensive use of liquids in this suite or that specific rituals were performed; however, scholars have reached no consensus on its exact function(s). Among the interpretations, three proposals appear to be closest to determining the exact nature of the rituals carried out in the East Suite. (1) Russell (1998, 671–74, 697, 712) highlights how this suite was in a similar position to the ablution room in the throne-room suites of later Assyrian palaces and posits that room G and the middle rooms may have been used by the king to make offerings to the gods and to receive divine purification of his person and his weapons, while the innermost rooms, I and L, might have been used for bathing, ritual, or personal purposes described in the *bīt rimki* series (see also Turner 1970, 193). (2) Richardson (1999–2001, 145–216) concludes that specifically room I was the performance site of ceremonies for the ritual care and feeding of Aššurnāširpal's royal ancestor. (3) Brown (2010, 1–53) states that both architectural and visual features of the East Suite may be related to mortuary activities; he concludes that in the East Suite the ritual care of ancestors, known as *kispu*, might have been performed and interprets the figures of room H as the ten kings of Aššurnāširpal's dynasty. I am inclined to agree with Russell's theory: the general examination carried out here shows how important it was for visitors to be purified before meeting the king—and vice versa—to protect the royal person. The need for protection or purification is also demonstrated by the rituals that were likely performed on the visitors at the furthest entrance d; conversely, the king had to be purified before or after receiving his audience through rituals such as the *bīt rimki*.

These rituals foresee the king being bathed with water and anointed with oil. They also describe extensive use of plants, among which are tamarisk and *maštakal*—that is, scented plants.²¹ Although most of the rituals are intended for open country, the texts also reference ablutions that take place in the palace. Specifically, ritual 26 (cols. i–iii up to line iii.21) describes the king being purified while he is still inside the palace, although there is no explicit use of plants in these sections. The text does, however, supply details on the ritual purification of the king and his garments and describes the use of scented and fine oils and unguents (Zimmern 1901, 123–27; Mullo Weir 1936, 584; Laessøe 1955, 17, 83–89). According to some medical and ritual texts, the oil could be extracted from a number of plants chosen for their intense perfume (Campbell Thompson 1949, 39–46).

The agreement between the contents of the texts and the iconography appears evident: both the genii of door b and a, which led to the East Suite, carry flowers, strongly suggesting that plants may actually have been used here (fig. 2.18). These representations might highlight the use of plants as sprinklers to purify the king—given the presence of buckets held by the genii (door b)—or might symbolically anticipate their use in the

21. A soapwort, probably to be identified with *Struthium*, *Saponaria* (Campbell Thompson 1949, 39).



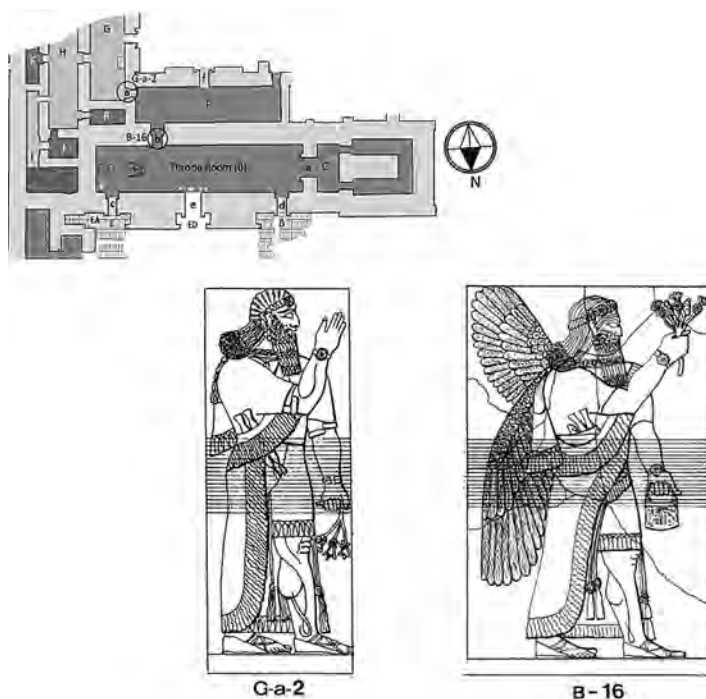


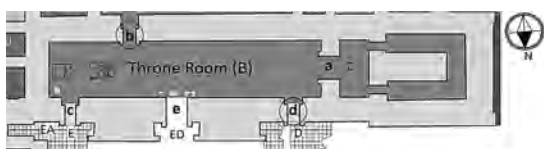
FIGURE 2.18 Room G, doorway a, winged genie (to the left); Throne Room (B), doorway b, winged genie (to the right) (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

East Suite as sources for fine oils and unguents, as described in ritual 26.²² In any case, it is not too far-fetched to imagine that the king used to be anointed with scented plants or unguents before or after meeting his audience: the complex East Suite/room F seems, indeed, to be the ideal site to perform such purifying and cleansing rituals.

Now, turning back to room B (Throne Room), the direct internal access between the Throne Room and the East Suite suggests that the activities in the East Suite may have been closely connected to those of the Throne Room (Russell 1998, 672–73). I would hypothesize that the fresh and pleasant smells coming from the East Suite could easily reach the Throne Room, in proximity to the throne. Under the framework of sensorial exploitation, these substances, such as oil and flowers, would have evoked a spatial realm that is no longer of this world but rather of a supernatural one. The fragrances would have infused the bodies of the guests, neutralizing individual bodily odor and thus creating collectivity among the visitors (Hamilakis 2013, 77). Furthermore, door b was the only door leading to the rest of the palace, intentionally producing an interplay of seen and unseen, of curiosity and surprise, even of mystery and insecurity. In addition, it is interesting to observe that

22. I have not been able to find a botanical identification of the plants, but one can speculate that specific plants were logically chosen for their properties as soapworts—that is, for their fragrance—as attested in many ritual texts (Magen 1986, 76–77).

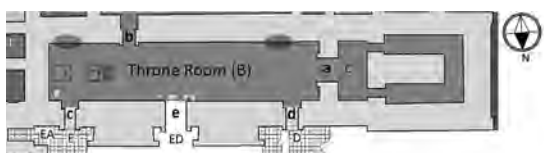




B-15



B-29



B-20



B-5

FIGURE 2.19 Throne Room (B), doorway b, winged genie (to the left); entrance d, winged genie (to the right) (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

FIGURE 2.20 Throne Room (B), east side, opposite entrance c, slab B-20; west side, opposite entrance d, slab B-5 (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

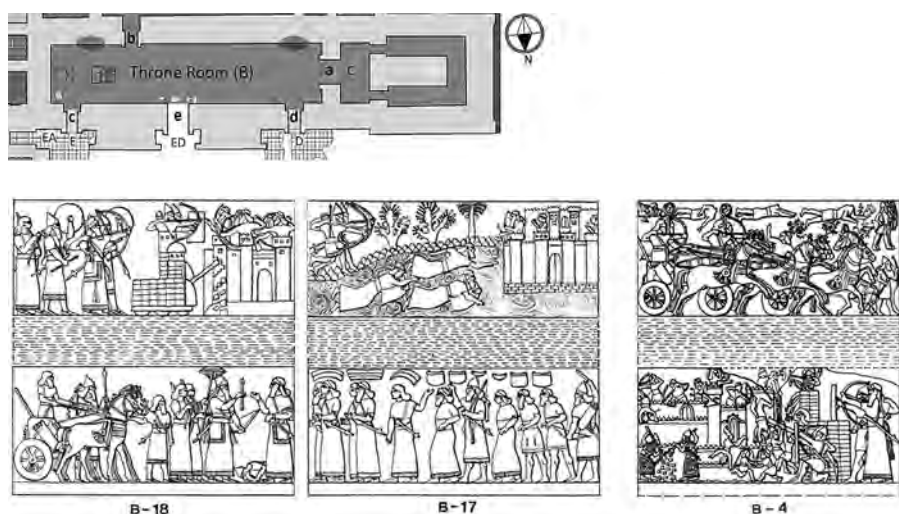


FIGURE 2.21 Throne Room (B), east side, slabs B-18/17; west side, slab B-4 (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

the absence of animals in the reliefs in the East Suite and on the doorways leading to this complex suggests an opposite olfactory experience highlighted by the antithetical character of the doors: pleasant and fresh smells approaching door b, close to the king, unpleasant smells approaching door d (fig. 2.19). The antitheses in the room can also be extended to the reliefs placed in proximity of the king, which show peaceful scenes: hunting and associated rituals (Meuszyński 1981, 22–23, pl. 1; Portuese 2016, 179–85). Even the synesthetic experience is completely opposed: crying women are contrasted with musical instruments (fig. 2.20), while the violence on slabs B-18/17, is not even touched on (fig. 2.21). The emotional response of the visitor was of course not fear or insecurity, but rather calmness and security.

Taking into account the insightful interpretations proposed by Barbara N. Porter (2003a, 184*–88*) on the impact on visitors of the room's texts and images, these characteristics lead me to divide the Throne Room into two antithetical halves, which correspond to antithetical emotions:

From door d up to slab 13:

- Facade vastness and aestheticized room → insignificance and inadequacy, surprise and curiosity
- Dark and shadowy interior → insecurity
- Fumigations, unpleasant smells → sense of impurity and inferiority
- Warfare images → fear, anxiety, disgust, hate, and anger

From slab 13 up to the throne:

- Symmetrical images → equilibrium

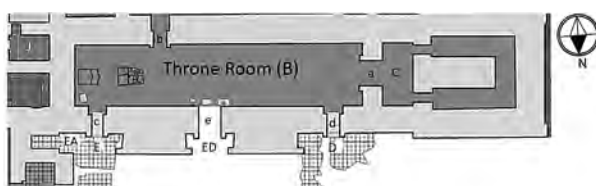
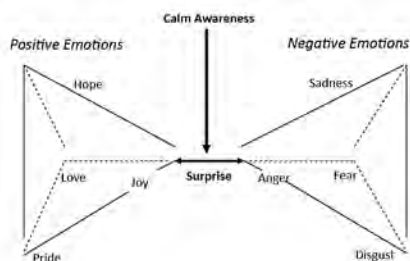


FIGURE 2.22 Plan of the Throne Room (B) (Kertai 2014: fig. 3) and a paired tetrahedral representation of generation of bipolar emotions (Hoffman 2012, 16, fig. 1).



- Door b (pleasant smells, seen/unseen) → calmness, curiosity
- Light → delight
- Nonviolent images → calmness and security

These antithetical sensorial experiences clearly reflect the bipolar nature of emotions (Hoffman 2012, 16), separating emotions into two major groups: the negative ones far away from the throne and the positive ones in proximity to the king (fig. 2.22).

The Role of Senses and Emotions in Guiding Movement

The examination proposed so far is based on the hypothesis that the typical path toward the king began at door d and ended with an exit through door c (fig. 2.14). Confirmation that this is the correct path can be found in the gestures performed by the figures guarding door c, which do not carry sacrificial animals (Meuszyński 1981, 30–34, pls. 4, 6; Paley and Sobolewski 1992, 23–24, pl. 1, figs. 3–4–5): a pair of winged lion-centaurs with folded hands, which might represent a gesture of obeisance to the king (Magen 1986, 40–45, pls. 6, 2–8; Cifarelli 1998, 216) and a pair of four-winged deities performing the so-called *karābu*, which means “to greet, pray, bless, praise,” done with the right hand, and holding a mace identified with the *e’ru* “cornel(-stick) mace” used in the rituals to drive away evil (fig. 2.23; Wiggermann 1992, 60, 67–69, 78–85; Russell 1998, 675).

I do not rule out, however, that door c might also have been used as an entrance for the royal entourage and an exit for the guests. Indeed, further confirmation for this interpretation may be found in the Banquet Stele installed in recess EA, at the eastern end of the Throne Room facade. In a recent paper, I hypothesized first that the long staff marks the king as marvelous shepherd and highlights his paternalism and second that the king faces



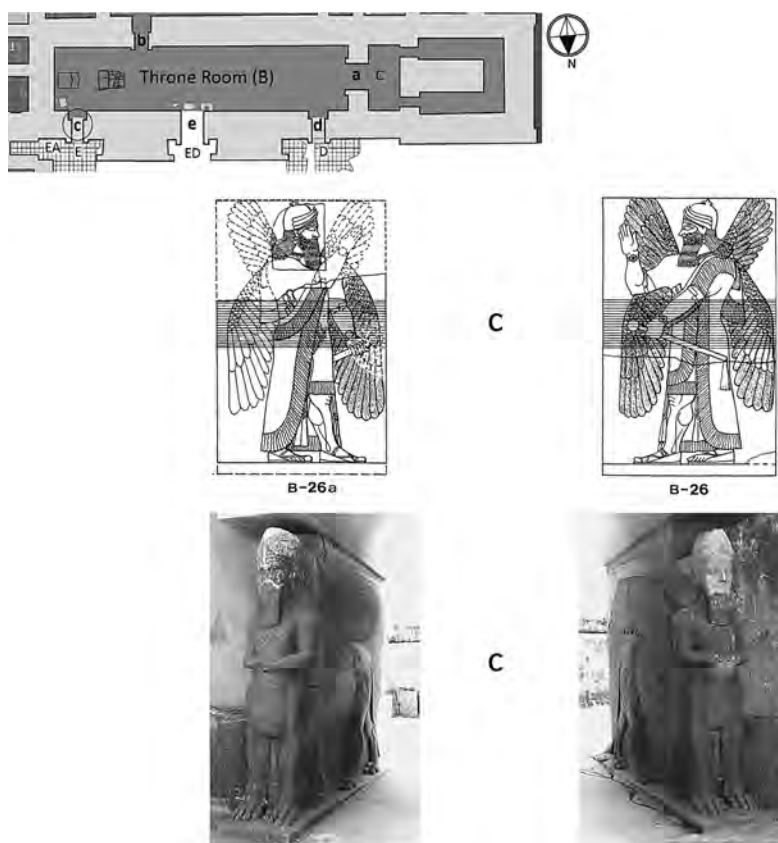


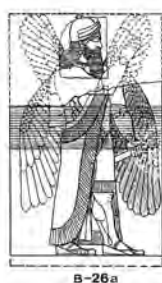
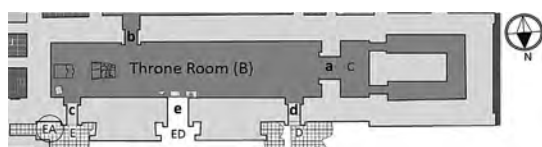
FIGURE 2.23 Throne Room (B), entrance c, winged genii (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>) and winged lion creatures (Russell 1999, figs. 83a, 84a).

two symbols (Šamaš and Sin) that represent justice and wisdom but turns his back on four (Ištar, Aššur, Adad, Sebittu) that mainly represent war and conquest. Of course, I cannot state that the “turning your back” had the same meaning in the Neo-Assyrian Period that it has currently; however, it does not seem by chance that the king looks at peaceful gods rather than the bellicose ones. Further, the king is not performing either *ubāna tarāšu* or the *appa labānu* and does not completely grasp the staff but holds it with opened hand (Portuese 2014, 9–20). Therefore, I would prefer to read the gesture as a *variatio* of the *karābu* gesture, so that at this door, both genii and king greet the guests by raising the right hand (fig. 2.24).

As was suggested to me by Davide Nadali in a scholarly conversation, this gesture is also performed by Tiglath-pileser III, both in a fragment and in a drawing that shows the king seated on his throne receiving the crown prince and other attendants and indicating with the hand three symbols depicting Šamaš, Ištar, and Sin (Barnett and Falkner 1962, 10, 17–18, pls. 8, 98).²³ In this case, such a gesture could represent a greeting signal addressed to the gods

23. I am deeply grateful to Nadali for suggesting such an intriguing observation.





c



B-26



B-30

d



B-29

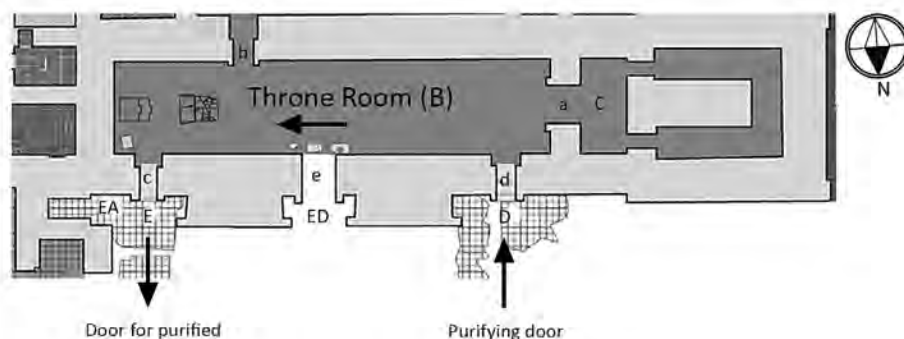


FIGURE 2.24 (top) Throne Room (B), recess EA, Banquet Stele (Wiseman 1952, pl. 2).

FIGURE 2.25 (bottom) Throne Room (B), entrances d and c, winged genii (CDLI; <http://cdli.ucla.edu>); Throne Room (B) plan (adapted from Kertai 2014, fig. 3), and internal movement.



and the Assyrian entourage, strongly suggesting that door c might have been used by those closest to the king. In particular, it is interesting to observe that the verb *karābu* indicates that the one has recognized the status of the other and connotes a reciprocal relationship favorable to both parties, a relationship governed by mutual obligations and benefits (Frechette 2012, 33–34). In this sense, the Banquet Stele—which shows the king performing a friendly gesture and looking at peaceful gods—together with the winged deities, would fall within the idea of the general peaceful aura pervading the east side of the room.

In conclusion, if I am correct in saying that some rituals took place in this room to purify the visitor before being led into the presence of the king, the whole path would find a general correspondence in the Banquet Stele inscription, which says: “men (and) women who were invited from every part of my land . . . for ten days . . . I had them bathed, I had them anointed” (RIMA 2.A.o.101.30, lines 151–52). This sentence clearly confirms the importance of putting visitors through a process of purification before the meeting with the king. Only then does the king, both in the text and in reality, dismiss his guests in peace and joy: “(Thus) did I honour them (and) send them back to their lands in peace and joy” (RIMA 2.A.o.101.30, lines 153–54; Portuese 2014, 17). Therefore, door d was used to purify the guests and door c to greet and dismiss the purified guests and to receive and greet the “equal” Assyrian attendants (fig. 2.25).

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