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Bulls for the Palace and Order in the Empire: The Sculptural Program of Sennacherib's Court VI at Nineveh

John Malcolm Russell

Two walls of the inner court of Sennacherib's throne-room suite were lined with reliefs showing the quarrying and transport of human-headed bull colossi. Although individual slabs from this series have occasionally been reproduced as illustrations of ancient stone transport techniques, the architectural and historical contexts of the series as a whole have never been adequately considered. This study presents a reconstruction of the series and an explanation of its content, a discussion of its innovations in composition and perspective, and an analysis of the meaning of the series in the context of Sennacherib's imperial policy.

At the beginning of his reign, around 704 B.C., Sennacherib moved the capital of the Assyrian empire from the recently completed city of Dur Sharrukin to Nineveh, the ancient cult city of Ishtar. There he constructed a new palace that he called *ekal šānina lā iṣū*, the "Palace without Rival." It was built on the southwest corner of the mound of Kouyunjik, one of the two great mounds encompassed by the walls of ancient Nineveh (Fig. 1). The walls of some seventy rooms in this structure were lined with limestone slabs carved in low relief with scenes commemorating Sennacherib's royal exploits.

When Nineveh fell in 612 B.C. to a coalition of Medes and Babylonians, Sennacherib's palace was pillaged and burned; the upper story collapsed into the lower and the "Palace without Rival" lay buried and forgotten for nearly two and a half millennia. In 1847 the remains of Sennacherib's palace were discovered by the British diplomat and amateur archaeologist Austin Henry Layard, who excavated the "Southwest Palace," as he called it, between 1847 and 1851 (Fig. 2). His finds there generated a wave of excitement among both scholars and the educated public seldom equaled in the annals of archaeology. The main focus of this excitement was a small inner chamber in the palace, Room XXXVI. There Layard uncovered wall reliefs that, according to the cuneiform label, depict Sennacherib's conquest of the Judean walled city of Lachish, an event also recorded in II Kings (18:13-14). Here, then, was the first independent confirmation of an event from the Bible. In addition to this visual account of the victory at Lachish,

the palace yielded written records describing Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem. Layard observed that the Assyrian and biblical accounts agreed not only on the unsuccessful outcome of the siege, but also even on the thirty talents of gold paid as tribute by Hezekiah of Judah to Sennacherib.¹

The Court VI Reliefs

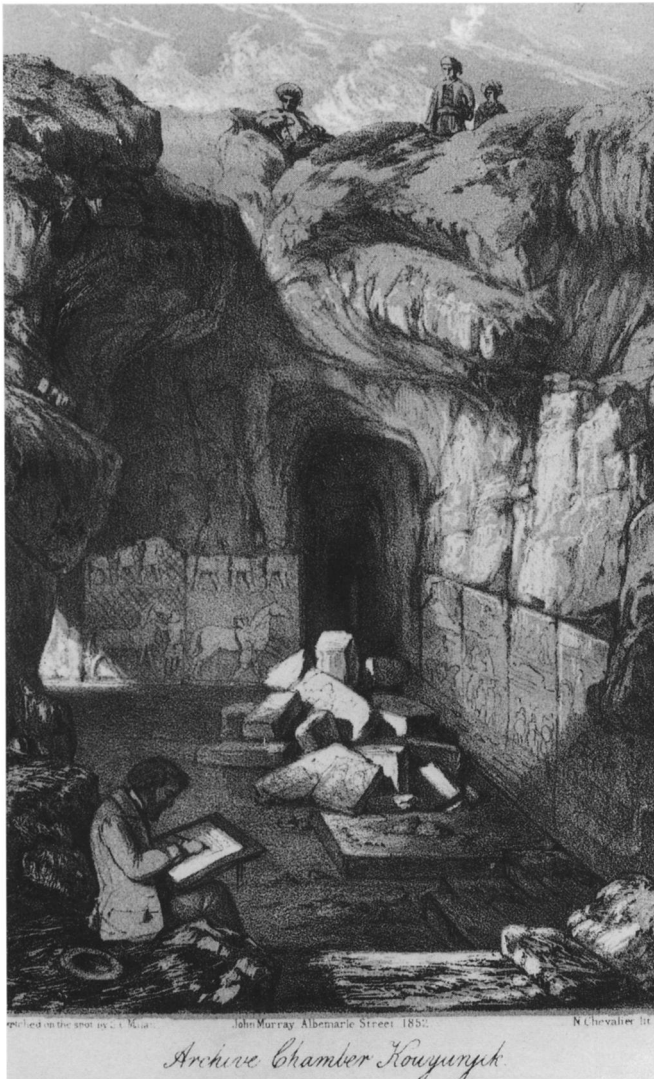
Layard found the written account of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem inscribed on one of the human-headed bull colossi that flanked the major doorways of the palace (Figs. 3, 27). These huge figures — the largest were twenty feet tall and weighed some forty to fifty tons — carried lengthy inscriptions proclaiming the glories of Sennacherib's reign. Even without their inscriptions, these creatures served as proclamations: no visitor could fail to be aware that they represented extraordinary power, and this power lay mainly not in their mythical fusion of man and beast, but rather in their great size. They were concrete proof of the vast human resources at the command of the Assyrian king. Furthermore, Sennacherib reported in his palace inscriptions that some of the colossi were fashioned from rare stones brought from distant provinces, thereby affirming that the king's control of these resources was not merely local, but extended to the edges of the empire.² Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that the colossi were commemorated not only in inscriptions, but also in a series of reliefs depicting their quarrying and transport.

These images were located on the east and north walls of Court VI, the inner court of the throne-room suite of

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¹ Layard, 1853a, 144f.; II Kings 18:14; Luckenbill, 70:31-32 (page 70, lines 31-32).

² Sennacherib says he made colossi of *gisnugallu* (alabaster) from Mt. Ammanana in the Anti-Lebanon range and of *asnan* (fossiliferous limestone) from Mt. Nipur north of Assyria; and stone slabs of *turminabandū* (breccia) from the vicinity of Til Barsip on the upper Euphrates (Luckenbill, 121:43-48, 127:19:2-6).



2 After S.C. Malan, Layard sketching palace reliefs in June, 1850 (from Layard, 1853a, facing p. 345)

the colossi were to be carved (Fig. 5).⁴ In the better preserved relief, on Slab 66, quarrymen are shown crouching and kneeling around the sides of the block (Fig. 6). Those below use fairly large picks to break away the surrounding stone, while those on top and to the left wield smaller ones, apparently to rough out the form of the bull. The scene is completed by files of basketmen who carry off the rubble and dump it atop great piles of waste stone, and two rows

of soldiers who discourage the workers from wandering off. Above the quarrymen is the inscription:

Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria: At the command of the god, white limestone for the construction of my palace was discovered in the district of Balāṭai. I had men from enemy towns and the inhabitants of hidden mountain regions, conquest of my hands, wield iron picks and mason's picks(?), and I had great bull colossi made for the gates of my palace.

From this it is clear that the setting is the quarry at Balāṭai and that the subject is the procurement of stone for human-headed bull colossi.⁵

Comparison with ancient quarries in Egypt and Anatolia aids an understanding of this image. To remove a large block from a surface quarry, trenches wide enough for a man to work in were cut along each of its sides. An example of this was found in Anatolia at Boghazköy, site of the ancient Hittite capital, where a block was abandoned after the trenches were partly dug. On Slab 66, the upper face of the block would become the broad side of the colossus; the desired width of the sculpture (five or six feet for a large example) would determine the depth of the trench. After all four sides were exposed, the block was detached from the stone beneath, either by driving iron wedges into slots cut at its base, or by inserting wooden wedges into slots and wetting them, causing them to expand. While this step is not depicted on the preserved reliefs, a cart carrying four large wedges is shown on the neighboring Slab 62 approaching the quarry (Fig. 11).⁶

The relief decoration of the north and east walls of Sennacherib's Court VI contains, in addition to the quarrying scene, detailed representations of the transport of stone colossi from the quarry at Balāṭai to Nineveh. The wooded, hilly background, file of soliders, and pile of waste stone at the right in Slabs 63 and 64 suggest that the setting is still the quarry (Fig. 7). The bull has been roughed out — though apparently not finished — presumably to reduce weight and to ensure that the stone is free of flaws. Still on its side, the sculpture is now on a sledge being pulled up an incline out of the quarry. Four massive ropes are attached to beam ends protruding from the sledge; a team of men is harnessed with shoulder straps to each rope. Their efforts are coordinated by supervisors in front, while overseers with whips provide encouragement from behind.

⁴ Layard, 1853a, 110, misinterpreted this scene as the raising of the palace foundation platform, but the representation and caption clearly show that the subject is a quarry. Layard's error was perpetuated by A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: Palace of Sinacherib*, The Hague, 1915, 6; C.J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria*, London, 1936, 171; and B. Hrouda, "Der assyrische Palastbau nach zeitgenössischen Darstellungen," *Bonner Jahrbücher*, CLXIV, 1964, 15-26. The true subject was recognized by V. Scheil, "Bas-relief avec inscription de Sennachérib," *Recueil de travaux*, xv, 1893, 148f., and E. Strommenger, "Zu den sogenannten Palastbaureliefs des Sanherib," *Berliner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, vi, 1966, 111-14.

⁵ Transliteration in Luckenbill, 126:a; my translation. Balāṭai was apparently located some twenty kilometers north of Nineveh, in the vicinity

of modern Eski Mosul (Reade, 60). Pamela Gerardi of The University Museum, Philadelphia, informs me that although "in the district of Balāṭai" is the usual translation of the passage *ina eršet Balāṭai* (University of Chicago, *Assyrian Dictionary*, Vol. E, Chicago, 1958, 311f.), the literal meaning of *eršetu* is "earth." "In the earth of Balāṭai" may therefore be preferable, especially since this is a quarry dug into the ground.

⁶ Clarke and Engelbach (as in n. 3), 13-19; K. Bittel and R. Naumann, *Bogazkoy-Hattuša*, 1 (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*, LXIII), Stuttgart, 1952, pl. 54b. Only one Neo-Assyrian quarry is known archaeologically, and there is no published description of evidence for the quarrying technique it may contain (Jacobsen and Lloyd, 13, 44-46).

(Figs. 15 and 18, from subsequent slabs in the series, show the towing procedure and bull in detail.) The passage of the sledge is eased by wooden rollers. Behind, a gang of men provides the initial impetus by means of a long, stout lever (Fig. 8).⁷ Atop the bull, four more supervisors, two of them with megaphones or trumpets, coordinate the traction and the lever. To the right, laborers clear a path out of the quarry, carrying loose stones to the top of the waste heap. On a rise at the upper left, Sennacherib watches from his chariot. At the lower left two men operate water sweeps, which may or may not have anything to do with the business of transport (Fig. 10).⁸ I will return to this question later.

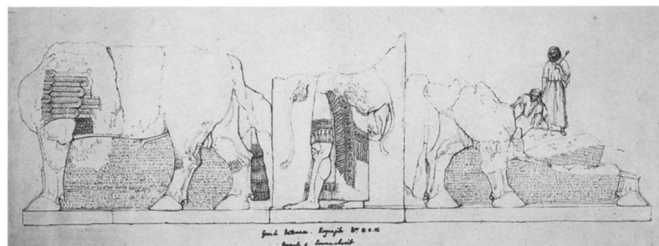
Essentially the same subject is repeated three more times between Slabs 60 and 51, though the background changes, first to a reed marsh, then to the bank of a river, presumably the Tigris (Figs. 12-18). It is not clear whether the artist intended to show several colossi in transit, or a single colossus at several stages of the journey; in either case, the repeated use of the same central motif with varying background detail admirably conveys a sense of progress along the river. The first bull in this cross-country procession, on Slab 53, is accompanied by men carrying crowbars, saws, axes, hoes, and shovels; they must be responsible for preparing the path down which the sledge travels (Fig. 19). All of these bulls are accompanied by two-wheeled carts loaded with stout rope and short poles, and men carrying poles with forked ends (Fig. 20). These items are shown in use at the end of the series, on Slab 47.

The final scene, on Slabs 47 to 43, apparently shows the entrance of the bull into the palace (Fig. 21). Still on a sledge, but now fully carved and upright, the bull is enclosed in a timber framework and steadied by men holding the aforementioned ropes and forked poles. It appears to be supported underneath by stacks of blocks (probably baked bricks) wedged beneath the body. Perhaps these were used in conjunction with levers to raise the bull, and were then left in place to provide additional support.⁹ It is not clear why the figure should have been set up before being dragged into its final location; it may be that since very few of the palace doorways could admit an object twenty feet wide, a large bull could not have passed through unless it were upright.

⁷ Layard used "enormous levers of poplar wood" for precisely the same purpose when moving the Nimrud colossi to the banks of the Tigris (Layard, 1853a, 203; see my Fig. 9).

⁸ Laessøe, who believed that this bull had been brought by raft from the quarry at Tasiate, argued that these devices were part of a drydock system used to facilitate the unloading of the colossi (J. Laessøe, "Reflexions on Modern and Ancient Oriental Water Works," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, vii, 1953, 19-21). This seems inconsistent with the location of this scene at the beginning of the transport sequence, however, and colossi were evidently brought from Balaṭai only by land. Reade notes these objections, and suggests instead that these devices were being used in conjunction with a dam to divert water temporarily from a small stream so that the sledge might cross (Reade, 57-59). This may be, but a crude bridge would be a less complex solution to such a problem.

⁹ For the use of baked bricks to raise and support a colossus, see G. Loud, H. Frankfort, and T. Jacobsen, *Khorsabad, Pt. 1: Excavations in the Palace*



3 Sennacherib's palace, Room I façade, bull colossi. London, British Museum, Western Asiatic Antiquities, Original Drawings, 1, 33 (photo: British Museum)

These slabs show not only the transport of colossi, but also the movement of other items apparently intended for the palace. In the river at the top of Slab 53 are three round-bottomed boats of a type still used in Iraq in Layard's day (Fig. 17).¹⁰ The one on the left carries a stack of what look like stone slabs, perhaps intended for the walls of the palace, while the other two carry oblong objects, rounded and pierced at one end, possibly door fittings. At the top of Slab 54 is a raft, buoyed by inflated animal skins, carrying what appears to be a block of stone (Fig. 16). If these cargoes are stone for the decoration of the palace, then it seems that those small enough to be handled easily were transported by water; only very large stones were transported by land.

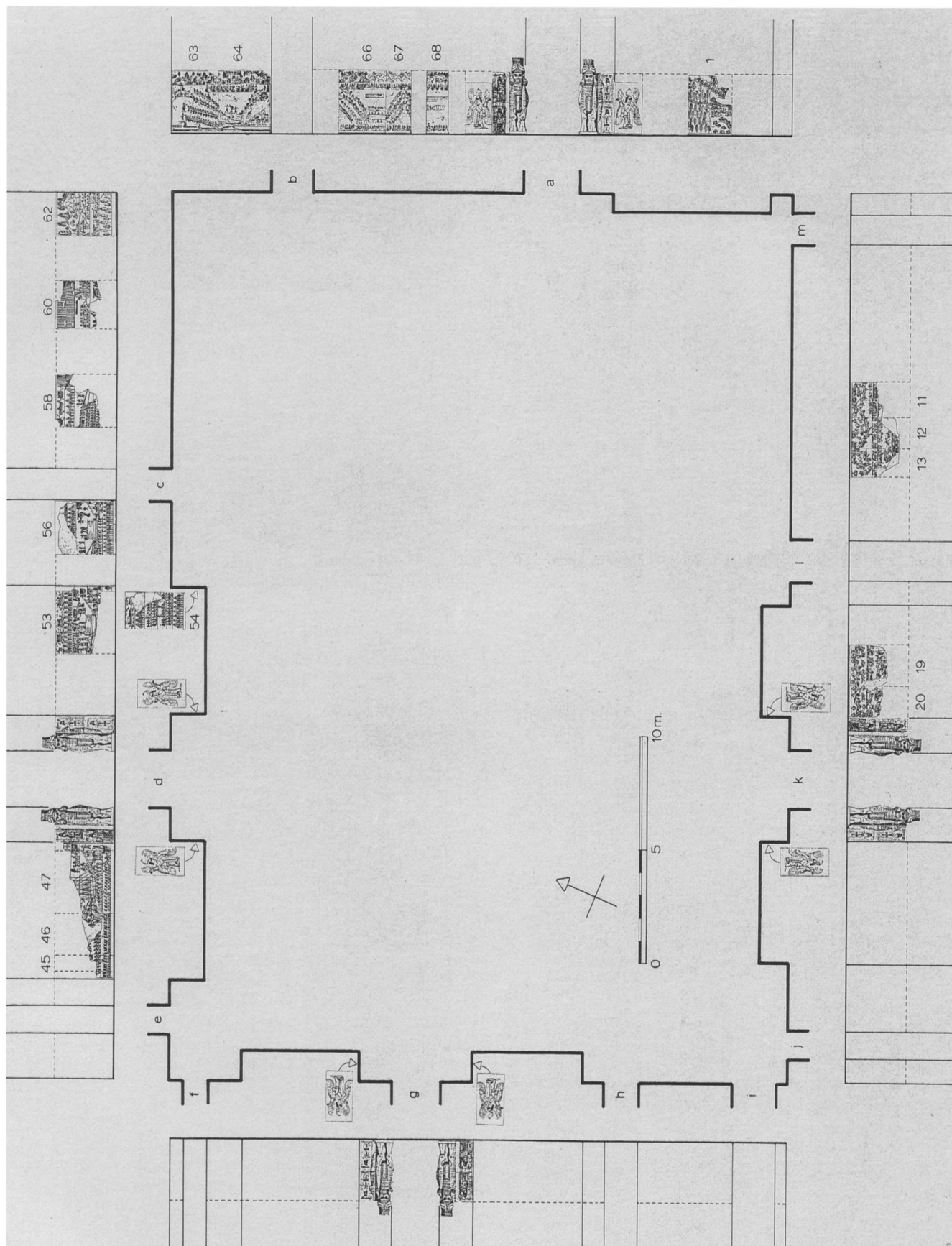
Spatial Representation

One of the most remarkable features of the narrative reliefs in Sennacherib's palace is their perspective. While not rigorously coherent or "scientific," like Renaissance linear perspective, it often manages to provide an effective suggestion of depth. With a single exception, the narrative reliefs of Sennacherib's predecessors all conform to the same format: the wall slabs are divided horizontally into two registers by a raised band of inscription (Fig. 22).¹¹ To indicate spatial relationships in the long, relatively narrow field that resulted from this division, the Assyrian artist employed one of two conventions. The first was by far the more frequently used before Sennacherib. Here, virtually all figures are located on a single ground line — usually the lower border of the register — and depth is indicated by having closer figures overlap more distant ones. Since

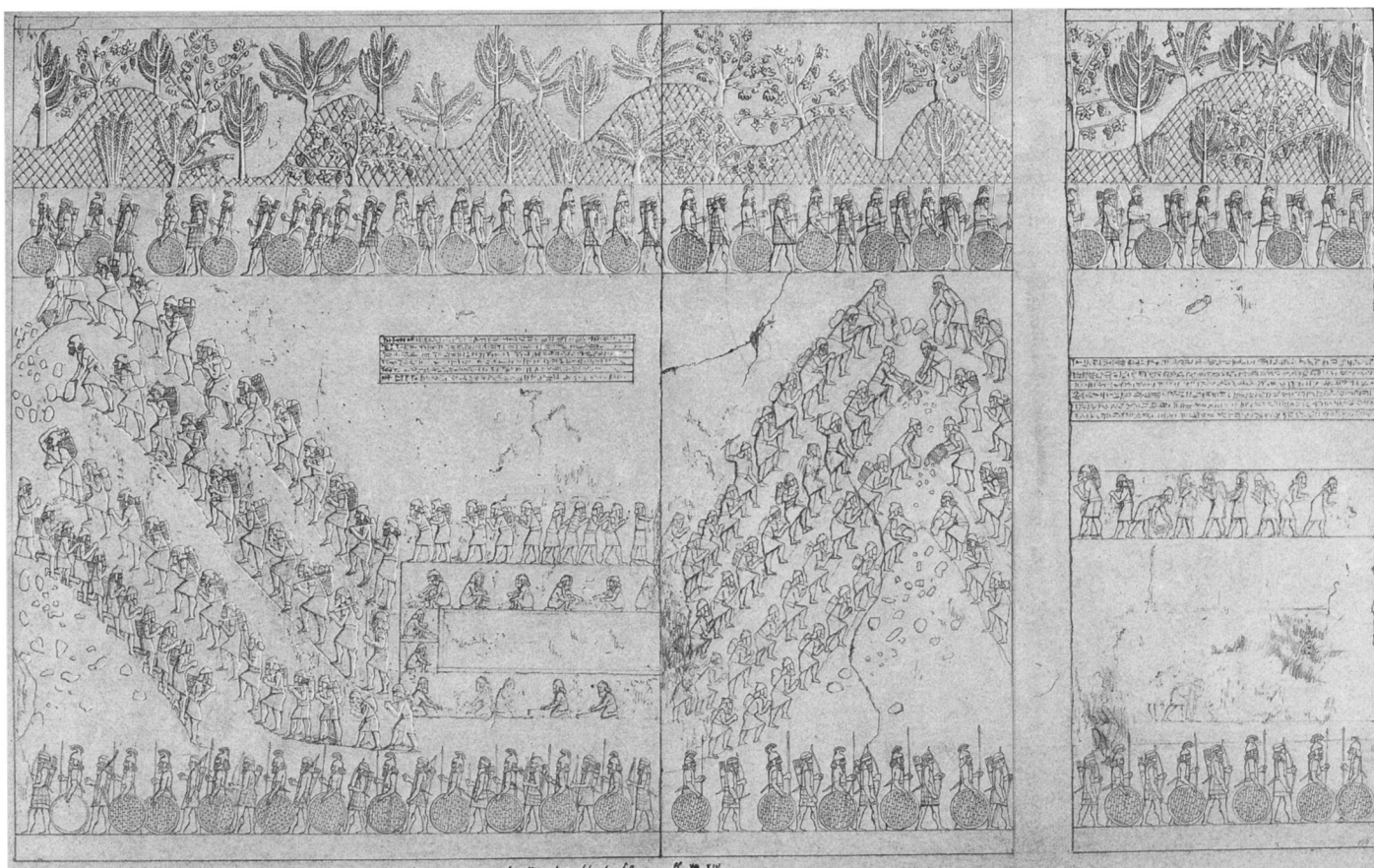
and at a City Gate (*Oriental Institute Publications*, xxxviii), Chicago, 1936, fig. 58. In Fig. 21, these blocks appear to be placed beneath the bull's belly. This would not be possible with the colossi we know, which have solid stone here (Fig. 27). Perhaps the Assyrian or 19th-century artist misunderstood the function of these blocks, or perhaps this is one of Sennacherib's bronze colossi (Luckenbill, 122:26 to 123:30).

¹⁰ Layard, 1853a, 107.

¹¹ The exception is the timber transport scene from Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad (see n. 12 below). For studies of Assyrian spatial conventions, see H.A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East*, London, 1951, 170-81; J.E. Reade, "Space, Scale, and Significance in Assyrian Art," *Baghdader Mitteilungen*, xi, 1980, 71-74; J.M. Russell, "Sennacherib's 'Palace without Rival': A Programmatic Study of Texts and Images in a Late Assyrian Palace," Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1985, 213-40.



4 Sennacherib's palace, Court VI, author's reconstruction



5 Court VI, Slabs 66-68, Slab 66, width 194cm. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., 1, 56 (photo: British Museum)

all feet are on a single line, the implied viewing angle is very low, a "worm's-eye" perspective, and the resulting space is fairly shallow. The artist shows little concern for the relative scale of figures: soldiers as tall as the full height of the register may cross swords with enemies one third their size.

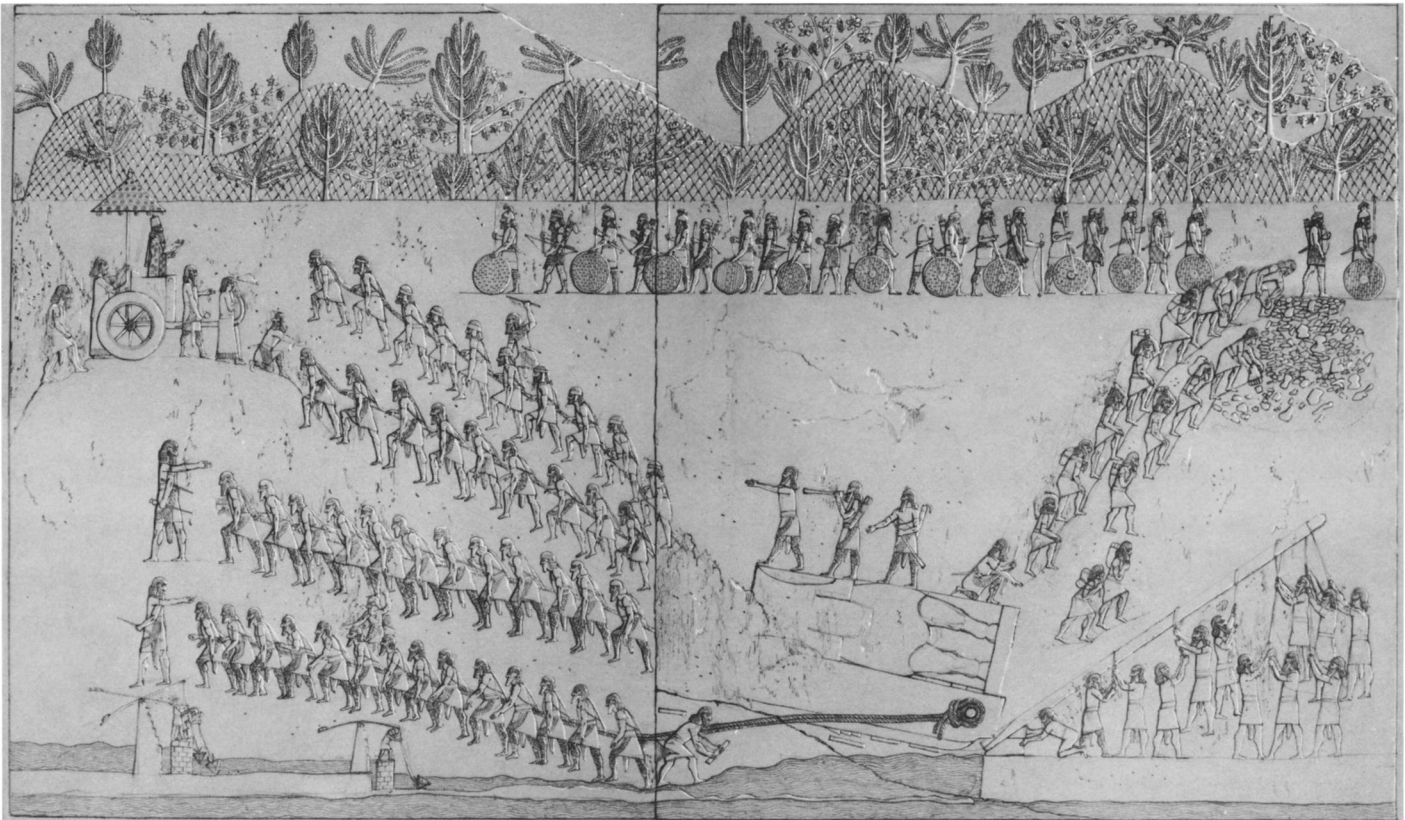
With the second Assyrian spatial convention, depth is indicated by placing distant figures higher than closer ones (Fig. 17). Figures may be located anywhere in the register; often they are anchored to and organized by an overall background pattern, such as mountains or waves. The implied viewing angle is high, giving the effect of a "cavalier" or "bird's-eye" perspective. The primary advantage of this second type of perspective is that it permitted the artist to show complex landscapes and large numbers of figures within a relatively narrow horizontal space.

This convention was used only rarely before Sennacherib. Perhaps this is because the space of the two-register format permits the vertical juxtaposition of only very small-scale figures, which in consequence are difficult to recognize from a distance — a serious shortcoming in the case of the all-important figure of the king. Sennacherib, or his artists, must have been dissatisfied with this limitation, for the central text band has been eliminated from all of his wall reliefs. To this expanded surface his artists applied the second type of perspective, combining a high viewing angle, relatively small-scale figures, and minimal overlapping.¹²



6 Court VI, Slab 66, detail. British Museum, WAA 124821 (photo: author)

¹² The direct source for Sennacherib's system of spatial representation is probably a relief series showing the transport by water of roofing timber, originally located in the outer court (VIII) of the palace of his father, Sargon II, at Khorsabad. This composition has recently been reconstructed and analyzed by P. Albenda, "A Mediterranean Seascape from Khorsabad," *Assur*, 111, 3, 1983, 103-36.

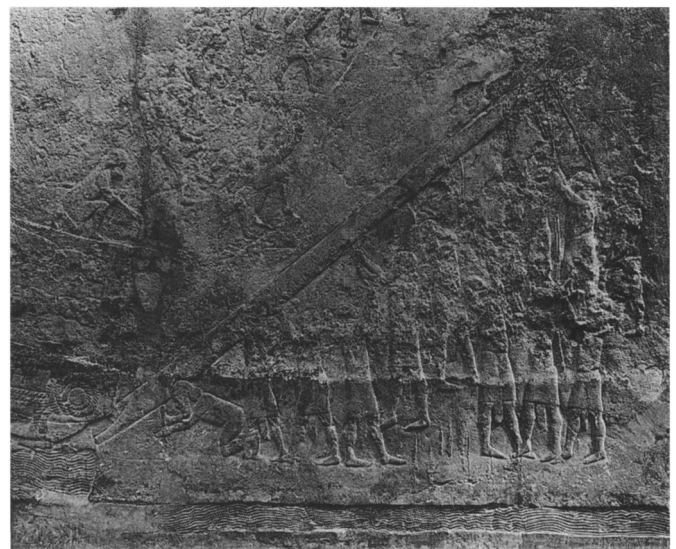


7 Court VI, Slabs 63-64, combined w. 429cm. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., 1, 57 (photo: British Museum)

The Court VI reliefs exemplify this. The changing landscape is seen from a consistently high angle, with figures more or less freely disposed in space. On Slabs 63 and 64, files of figures are arranged in diagonals without the benefit either of ground lines or of an overall background pattern (Fig. 7). Here the artist shows that figures alone, without other conventions, may *define* pictorial space, rather than simply exist in it.¹³

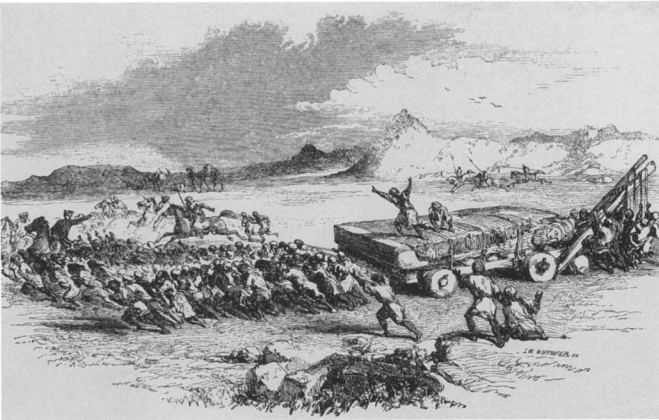
In contrast to the scenes of procurement of colossi on the north and east walls, the reliefs on the south and west walls of Court VI depict a military subject: Sennacherib's second campaign, to the Zagros mountains in the east. Also in contrast to the colossus reliefs, this series is read from left to right. The first scene, on Slab 1, establishes the setting (Fig. 24). Nearly the entire height of the left half of this slab is covered with conifer-studded mountains, represented by the scale pattern traditional in Assyrian art, in the midst of which flows a small river. The right half of the slab opens out into a river valley filled with grapevines and bounded by low hills in the foreground.

Into this broad valley ride the minute figures of the Assyrian king and army, entering the composition from the upper left corner and galloping diagonally down across the mountains. Never before in Assyrian art had the image of



8 Court VI, Slab 64, detail. Brit. Mus., WAA 124820 (photo: author)

¹³ Groenewegen-Frankfort (as in n. 11), 177. An earlier, somewhat tentative, example of this is to be seen in the representation of a flock of sheep in a relief of Tiglath-pileser III (*ibid.*, 175, pl. Lxx:B).



9 Layard Moving a Colossus from Nimrud (from Layard, *Popular Account*, London, 1851, facing p. 297)



10 Court VI, Slab 63, detail. Brit. Mus., WAA 124820 (photo: author)

the king been so thoroughly dominated by his surroundings. And yet visually, the accomplishment of the king has not diminished with his apparent stature, for the point of this image is one that often recurs in the Assyrian annals — that the king with his army mastered the mountains themselves, on the way to further triumphs over the peoples beyond them. Visitors unfamiliar with Assyrian spatial conventions might see little glory in crossing mountains that appear to rise no more than knee-high, which is the effect of the mountain-crossing scenes of Sennacherib's predecessor (Fig. 23). It is only through the use of this deep perspective that Sennacherib's artist is able to present a visual approximation of the verbal boast inscribed on the colossi at the main entrance to the throne room: "In the mountains, I rode on horseback over difficult terrain; in extremely rough areas, I charged through on foot like a wild bull."¹⁴

The immediate continuation of this slab is unfortunately lost, but further along in the series is the same landscape of low hills in the foreground with open river valley above (Fig. 25). Distributed across this space are Assyrian soldiers and their enemies, fighting in the hills and along the river, or forming processions of booty and prisoners. The figures are all roughly the same scale, and once again the consistent use of a high viewing angle, with figures stacked above one another in the composition, results in a visually intelligible representation of deep space.

I can suggest two nonexclusive explanations for Sennacherib's frequent use of this new type of spatial representation. First, the king seems to have been interested in projecting an image of himself as an innovator. In his palace building accounts, Sennacherib boasts that he discovered new quarries, developed a new method of casting bronze, and designed a new type of well structure, and he also claims other innovations in materials or methods.¹⁵ This emphasis on the king's innovative contributions to the building process is itself an innovation and contrasts with the building texts of earlier kings, which are little more than straightforward descriptions of the structure with no reference to the king's role in its construction. Sennacherib's introduction of new spatial effects is consistent with this pattern; for viewers accustomed to traditional Assyrian spatial conventions, this would have been a highly visible innovation.

A second explanation could be that Sennacherib felt that reliefs organized on the new spatial principles would function better than before. This proposal is difficult to investigate, since we do not know the intended function of these reliefs. Narrative reliefs are only specifically mentioned twice in Assyrian texts: once in Sargon II's palace building account, and again in a Sennacherib foundation text that was modeled on the Sargon account.¹⁶ In both cases, the reliefs are only briefly described, with no reference to their purpose.

In order to determine if Sennacherib's reliefs might function more successfully than those of his predecessors, we need to know who their audience was. I will return to this question later, but for the moment two points must be mentioned. First, to our eyes, Sennacherib's perspective seems to be a step toward greater naturalism, toward presenting the world as it actually looks, or might look, to an observer. This more "natural" perspective appears concurrently with another remarkable feature in Sennacherib's sculptures that suggests an interest in greater naturalism. The human-headed bull and lion colossi of Sennacherib's predecessors were furnished with five legs, apparently in order to insure that both the front and side views would be complete (Fig. 26). Though this may be a logical solution

¹⁴ Transliteration in Luckenbill, 67:9-10; my translation. Viewers familiar with the old convention of Fig. 23 would, of course, automatically read these bumps as "mountains," and would therefore have no difficulty following the narrative. For that audience, Sennacherib's new convention would have been no more successful than the old in conveying the nominal idea of "mountains." Sennacherib's convention is superior, I believe, in

its use of relative scale to express the text's adjectival nuances ("difficult, extremely rough").

¹⁵ Luckenbill, 120-24. Also see the claims made in the *bīt akīti* titulary, discussed below.

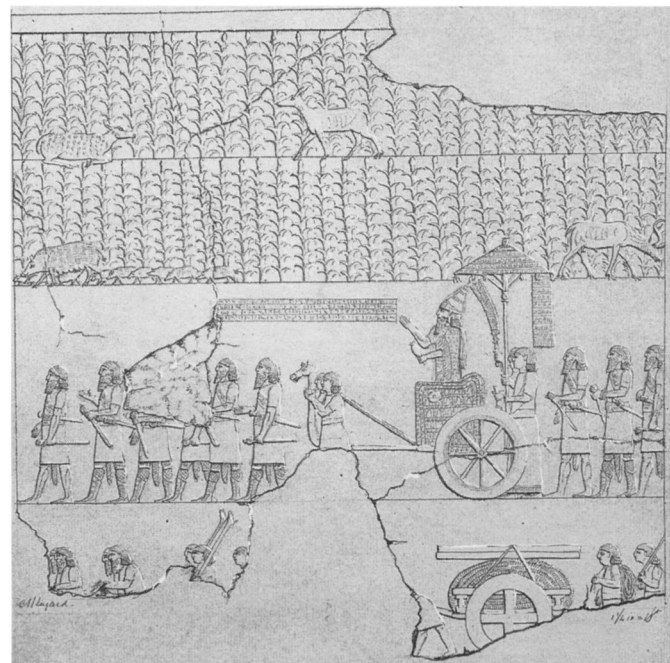
¹⁶ Sargon II: A.G. Lie, *The Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria*. Pt. 1: *The Annals*, Paris, 1929, 78:4-5. Sennacherib: Luckenbill, 97:86.



11 Court VI, Slab 62, signed "A H Layard." Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., iv, 51 (photo: British Museum)

to the requirement of two ideal views, from non-ideal vantages the viewer is confronted with the anomaly of a five-legged bull. Sennacherib deleted the fifth leg, creating a bull that is less perfect conceptually (the side view shows only three legs), but far more convincing perceptually (Fig. 27). One might argue, then, that Sennacherib's new perspective was similarly conceived as an effort toward greater naturalism.

The second point is that what we may see as "greater naturalism" is not necessarily synonymous with "greater legibility," at least not for all audiences. A member of the Assyrian court at the beginning of Sennacherib's reign would have been familiar only with the narrow registers, low viewing angle, and overlapping figures of the narrative reliefs of Assurnasirpal II, Tiglath-pileser III, and Sargon II. To a viewer accustomed to these conventions, the considerably wider register of Sennacherib's reliefs, with figures scattered helter-skelter across its surface, might initially have made very little sense. To communicate his



12 Court VI, Slab 60, signed "A H Layard," w. 200cm. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., iv, 50 (photo: British Museum)

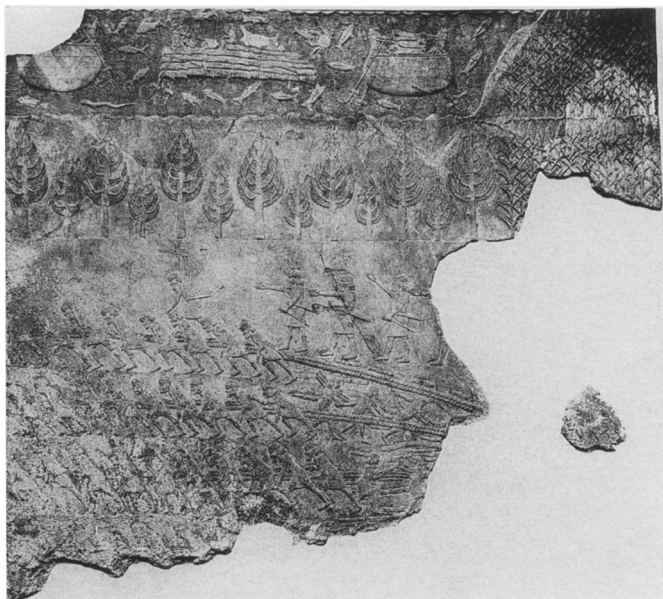


13 Court VI, Slab 60, detail. Brit. Mus., WAA 124824 (photo: author)

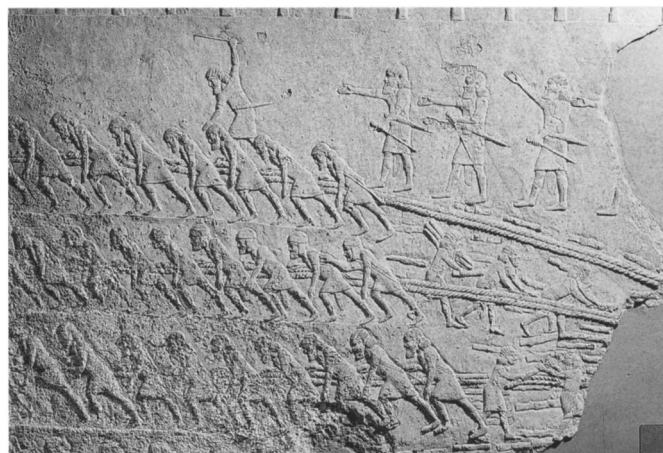
exploits visually to this audience, Sennacherib might better have retained the familiar conventions of spatial representation of his predecessors. Audiences unfamiliar with the earlier Assyrian spatial conventions, by contrast, approaching Sennacherib's narrative reliefs with fewer preconceptions, might well have found them as legible as the earlier reliefs, but we cannot know this for certain since we cannot judge the degree of visual literacy of such audiences.¹⁷

¹⁷ Evidence that Sennacherib's perspective may have been considered successful is to be found in the earlier representation by his grandson Assurbanipal of the Ulai River battle, which also employs Sennacherib's spatial conventions (H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, Harmondsworth, 1970, fig. 208). Assurbanipal's later reliefs,

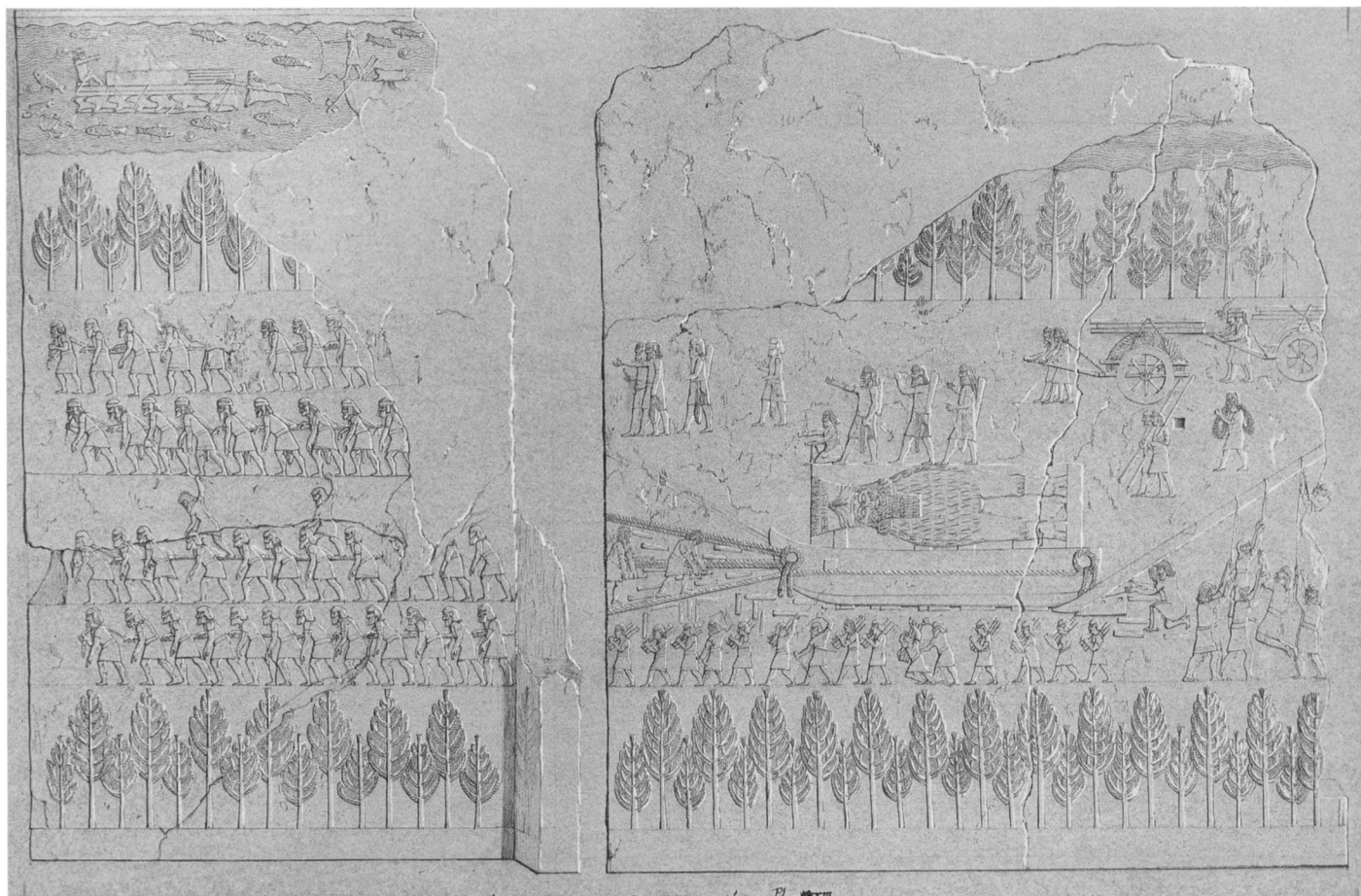
however, return to the format of two or three discrete registers, and overlapping once again becomes the preferred means of indicating depth (*ibid.*, fig. 204). This abandonment of Sennacherib's more dramatic innovations suggests that, for some viewers, Sennacherib's reliefs may have been insufficiently intelligible.



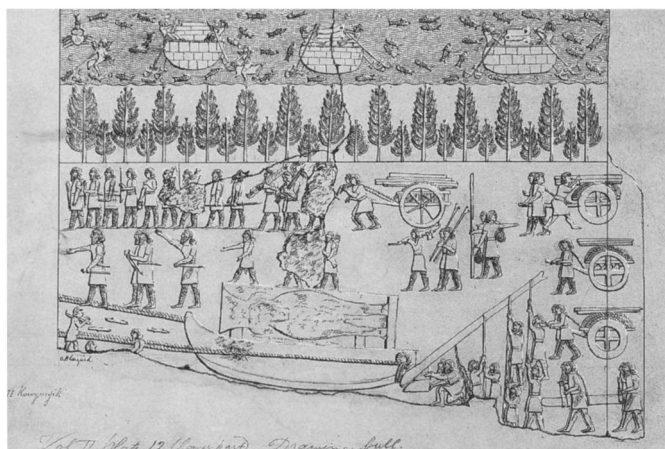
14 Court VI, Slab 58, w. 224cm. Brit. Mus., WAA 124822
(from H. Hall, *Babylonian and Assyrian Sculpture*, Paris, 1928,
pl. 30)



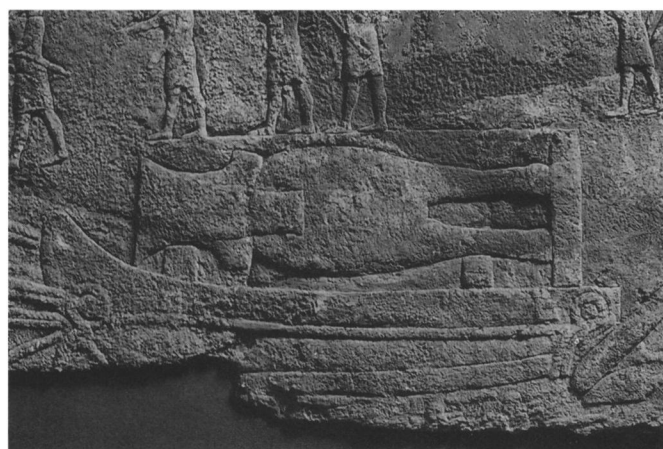
15 Court VI, Slab 58, detail (photo: British Museum)



16 Court VI, Slabs 54 and 56. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., 1, 55 (photo: British Museum)



17 Court VI, Slab 53, signed "A H Layard," w. 284cm. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., iv, 49 (photo: British Museum)



18 Court VI, Slab 53, detail. Brit. Mus., WAA 124823 (photo: author)



19 Court VI, Slab 53, detail. Brit. Mus., WAA 124823 (photo: author)



20 Court VI, Slab 53, detail. Brit. Mus., WAA 124823 (photo: author)

Imperial Priorities and Goals: The Titularies

It remains now to attempt to determine the intended effect of the Court VI decoration, that is, what its purpose and its message were. While we do not know much about Sennacherib the man, his public image is documented in a relatively large corpus of royal inscriptions. The majority of them were buried in, or inscribed on, the palaces, walls, roads, and canals of his capital city, Nineveh. The Nineveh texts record the events of Sennacherib's reign from its beginning, in 705 B.C., until about 690 B.C., and thus cover the full period during which the Southwest Palace was being built.¹⁸

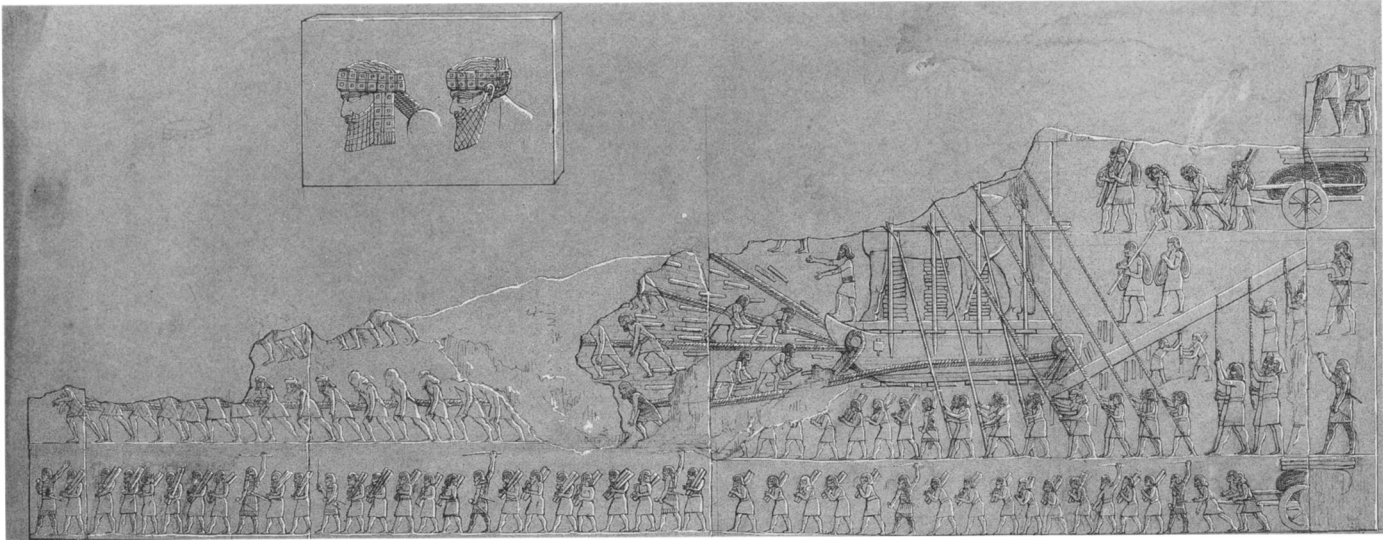
The portion of these texts most useful in reconstructing Sennacherib's public self-image is the titulary. This section at the beginning of each text was the king's official intro-

duction and took the form of an abstract, formulaic summary of Sennacherib's status and accomplishments. Because of its conventional character, it is tempting to view the titulary as little more than a formality, devoid of any real meaning. This would be a mistake, however, for it is certain that Sennacherib took his titulary seriously, and chose each of its component titles and epithets with care.

In an exemplary study of Sennacherib's titles, Liverani has demonstrated that changes in the titulary, far from being arbitrary, often accompanied major accomplishments of Sennacherib's reign. He notes, for example, that in the earliest texts, written after the first and second campaigns, Sennacherib referred to himself simply as "unrivalled king." In texts written after the third campaign, after the force of his arms had been widely felt, he added the

¹⁸ For a summary of the various editions of Sennacherib's texts, see R. Borger, *Babylonisch-Assyrische Lesestücke (Analecta Orientalia, LIV)*, 2nd ed., Rome, 1979, I, 64-68; augmented in part by J.E. Reade, "Sources for

Sennacherib: The Prisms," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, xxvii, 1975, 189-96.



21 Court VI, Slabs 47-43. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., iv, 48 (photo: British Museum)

title "king of the world." In texts written after the fifth campaign, "unrivaled king" is replaced by "king of the four quarters (of the earth)." This last was a popular royal title, and had in fact been used by Sennacherib's father, Sargon II, but Sennacherib added it to his titulary only in 697 B.C., after he had led campaigns to the south, east, west, and north.¹⁹ Similarly, the title that boasted of the submission of princes "from the upper sea of the setting sun, to the lower sea of the rising sun" did not appear until 694 B.C., after Sennacherib had carried his conquests to both the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf.²⁰

Liverani points out a second shift in the titulary as well: from "pious shepherd, fearful of the great gods" in the earlier editions, to "expert shepherd, favorite of the great gods" (my emphasis) in editions after 697 B.C.²¹ As with "king of the four quarters," the title "favorite of the great gods" was also used by Sargon II, and again Liverani argues that the reason Sennacherib did not employ it from the beginning is because its use was not yet justified. Only after several years of successful rule did Sennacherib replace the earlier, more subservient titles with the similar, yet far more confident formulation.

Liverani's observations are of value in that they establish the credibility of the titulary as a personal statement that may be taken seriously in an evaluation of Sennacherib's royal self-image. On the basis of this evidence, it is fruitful to examine the highly visible titularies inscribed on the human-headed bull colossi of two adjacent exterior portals — designated "a" and "c" by Layard — of the Southwest Palace throne room (Room I; Figs. 1, 3). The inscription on the Door "a" colossi records six military campaigns and the building of the palace; the one on the Door "c" colossi is a palace building account only. The proximity of these texts to one another, in neighboring doors, and the use of the same set of palace dimensions in the building accounts of both inscriptions, indicate that they were probably inscribed at about the same time.²² The inclusion of the sixth campaign in the Door "a" inscription suggests a date of 693 B.C. or slightly later, around the time the palace was being completed.²³ Taken together, these two titularies should constitute a fair expression of Sennacherib's public self-image in the late 690s B.C.

The titularies of both the Door "a" and Door "c" inscriptions start with the phrase "Palace of Sennacherib,"

¹⁹ Liverani, 234-36. The actual situation is not quite as straightforward as Liverani indicates. The title "king of the four quarters" first occurs in an edition, omitted by Liverani, that records only the first four campaigns, and thus omits the campaign to the north (British Museum, WAA, K 1674; published in C. Bezold, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Berlin, 1890, II, 80, no. A2). The date of this text, however, is 697 B.C., meaning that it must have been inscribed during or after the fifth campaign, which took place sometime between 699 and 697 (G. Smith, *History of Sennacherib*, London, 1878, 14, "Cylinder C"). Thus the "four quarters" title is already justified, even though the body of the text fails to support the claim.

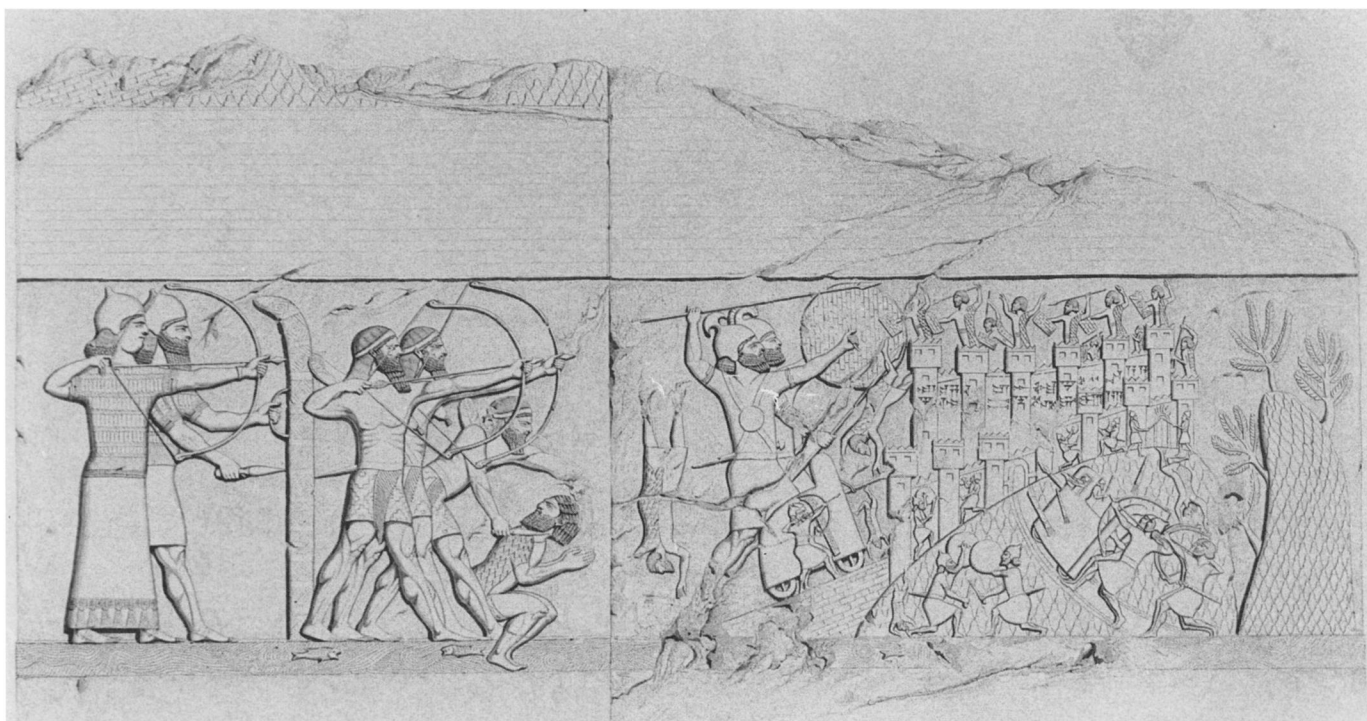
²⁰ Liverani, 240f. This title also first appears in a text written at the time the campaign in question was actually in progress, and which consequently does not record the campaign itself (*ibid.*, 241, n. 20).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 244f.

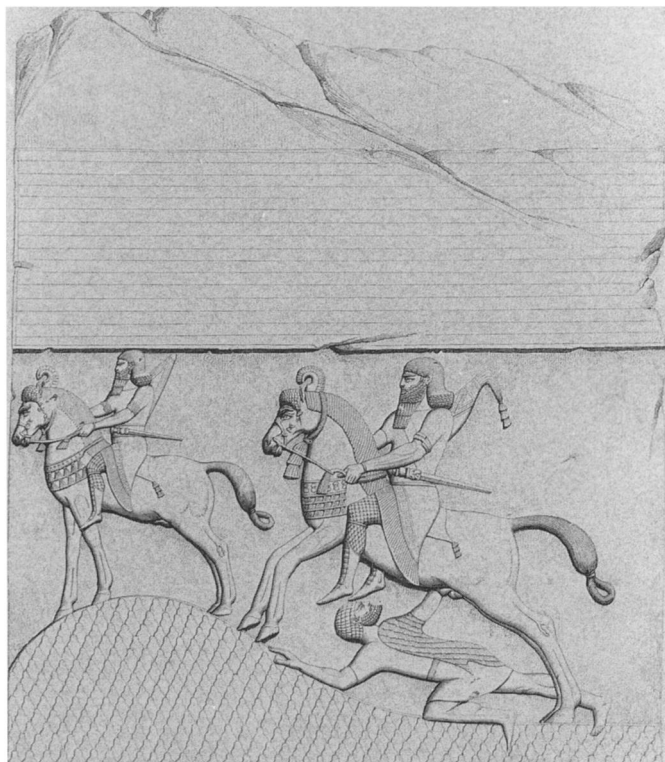
²² Luckenbill, 21, 66-76, 117-25. Luckenbill designates the Door "a" text

"F1," and the Door "c" text "I1." The dimensions given for the palace increase with each successive edition of Sennacherib's building account between 702 and ca. 693 B.C., evidently because the palace was under construction and therefore continually expanding throughout this period (Luckenbill, 100:50, 102:77-79, 106:11-12, 119:19-20).

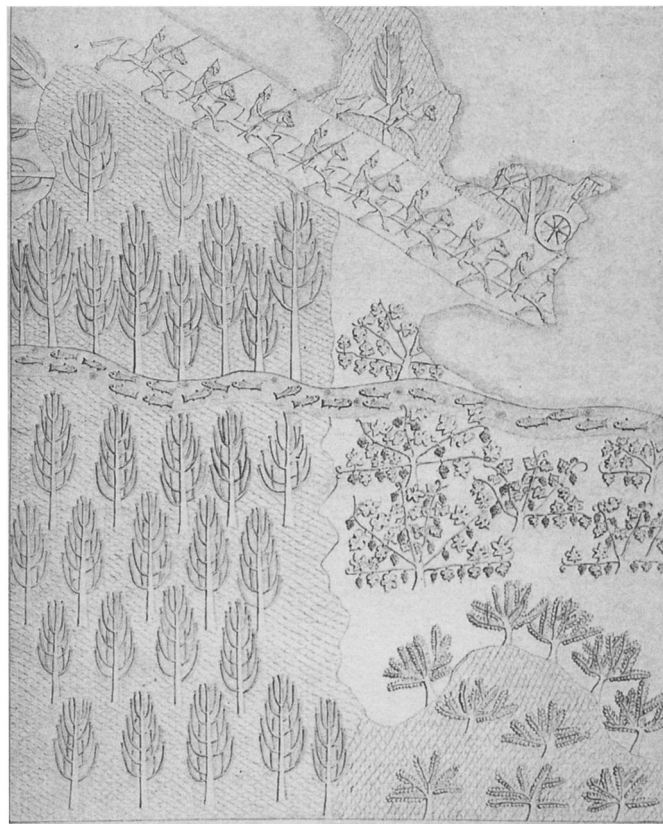
²³ The date of the *composition* of these texts is less certain. L. Levine, "The Second Campaign of Sennacherib," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, xxxii, 1973, 312-17, has demonstrated that the account of the second campaign in the Door "a" text must have been composed before 700 B.C. The titulary, too, contains some elements that suggest it is a transitional formulation, originally composed before 697 B.C. (Liverani, 240f., 244). The titulary of Door "c" is generally reckoned to be of rather late date (Liverani, 240, 247; Luckenbill, 117, n. 1), partly on the basis of similarities with the titulary of an inscription from Nebi Yunus (Luckenbill's "H4") composed between 691 (battle of Halule) and 689 B.C. (destruction of Babylon).



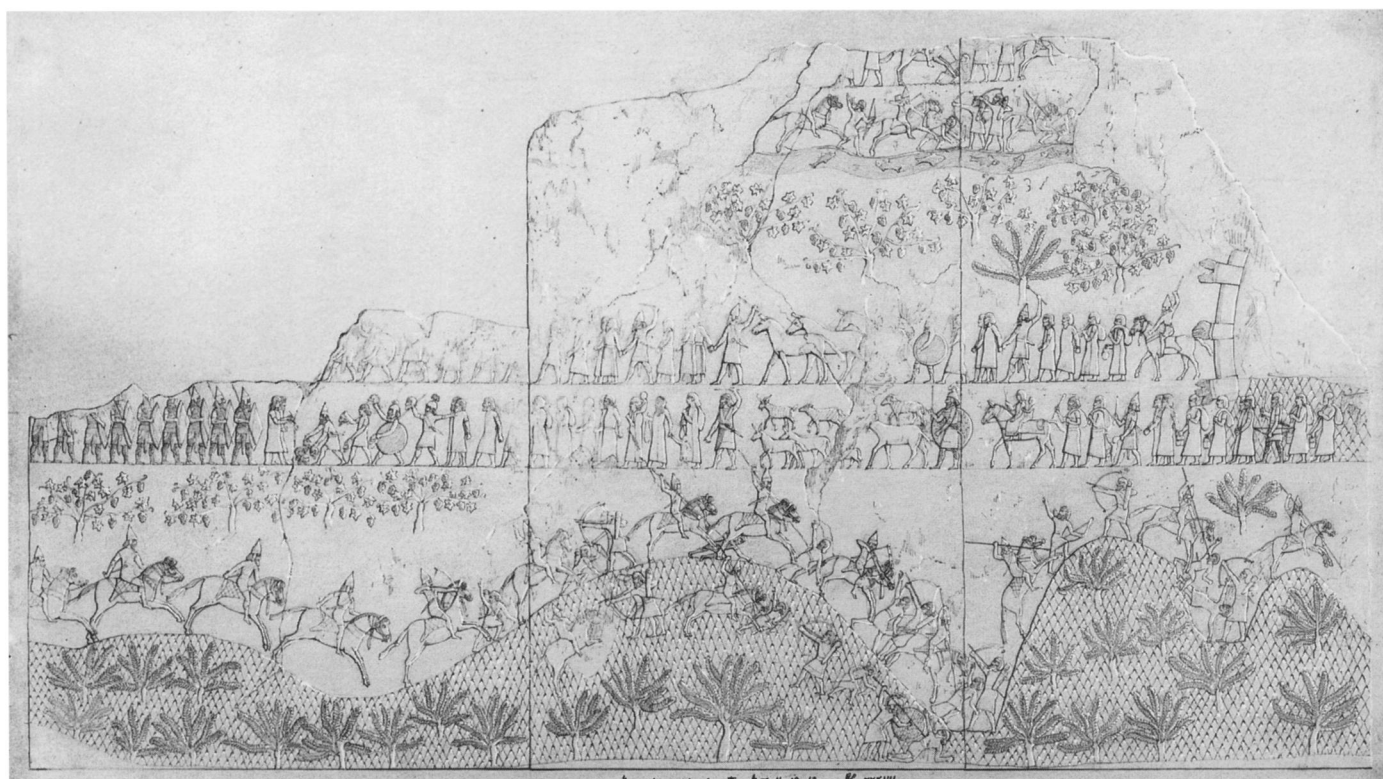
22 Khorsabad, Sargon's palace, Room XIV, Slabs 1-2, siege of Pazaši (from P. Botta, *Monument de Ninive*, Paris, 1849, II, pl. 145)



23 Khorsabad, Sargon's palace, Room XIII, Slab 7, campaign in the mountains (from Botta, II, pl. 143)



24 Court VI, Slab 1, signed "A H Layard." Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., IV, 43 (photo: British Museum)



25 Court VI, Slabs 11-13. Brit. Mus., WAA, Or. Dr., 1, 70 (photo: British Museum)

thereby identifying these texts as intended for display in the palace.²⁴ Both texts continue: ". . . great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters (of the earth), favorite of the great gods."²⁵ These are standard titles that we might take for granted had we not already seen that half of them did not appear in Sennacherib's early texts, indicating that they were *earned* by the king, not automatically bestowed by the gods. As it stands, this final formulation combines titles that are status-oriented (great, mighty, favorite) and territorial (world, Assyria, four quarters). Liverani observes that this aggregate of territorial titles is in no way redundant, nor is their order without significance, for they progress from an unstructured, abstract totality (world), to an organizing center (Assyria), to a concrete totality, dependent upon and structured with reference to the center (four quarters).²⁶

At this point, the titularies of the two texts diverge dramatically. The tone of the inscription carved on the colossi of Door "a" is militaristic:

Sennacherib, . . . wise, expert, heroic warrior, foremost

among all rulers, the bridle that curbs the disobedient, the one who strikes the enemy with lightning. Assur, the great god, gave me a kingship without rival; against all those who sit on daises he made my weapons strong; from the upper sea of the setting sun to the lower sea of the rising sun, he made all the rulers in the world bow down at my feet.

Liverani terms this type of phraseology "competitive-submissive."²⁷ The emphasis here is on how Sennacherib, with the support of the god Assur, subdues all foreign rivals. Sennacherib is presented not as the sole king, but as one king among many, providing in effect a quantitative basis for the assertion that he, by virtue of military control, is the greatest of them.

The titulary of the inscription on the colossi of the adjacent Door "c" continues in quite a different vein:

Sennacherib, . . . wise stag, prudent ruler, shepherd of mankind, leader of widespread peoples, am I. Bēlet-ilī, lady of living creatures, duly looked upon me in the

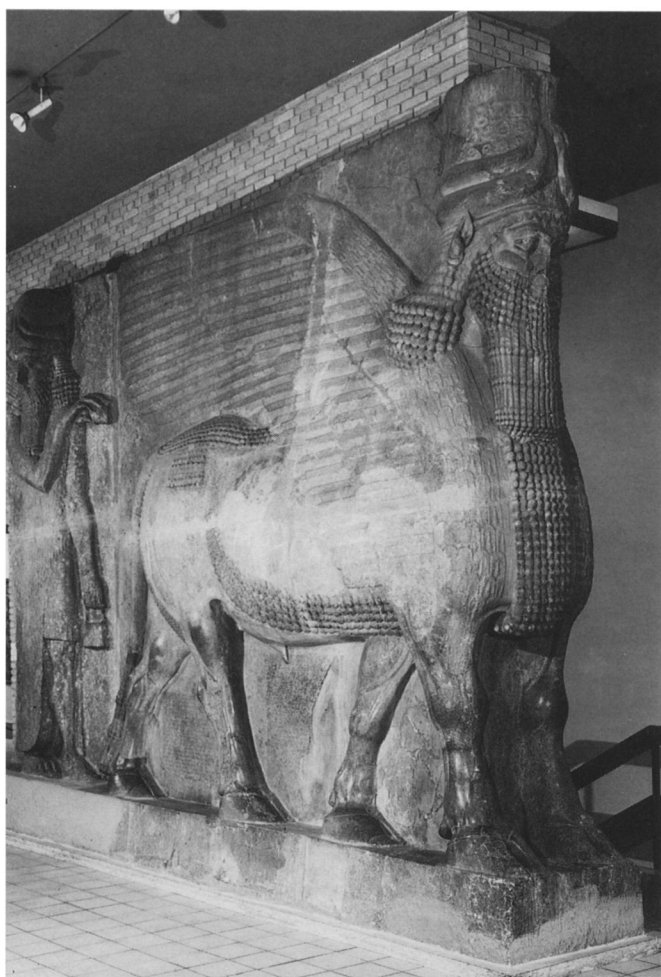
²⁴ In nearly every Assyrian royal titulary the name of the king is followed by a brief genealogy of the form "son of PN₁, who was son of PN₂" stressing the legitimacy of the king. H. Tadmor, "History and Ideology in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis*, ed. F.M. Fales, Rome, 1981, 25f., has observed that such a statement never appears in the titulary of Sennacherib. This omission is surprising since Sennacherib was unquestionably the legitimate heir of Sargon II. Tadmor suggests that Sennacherib omitted his father's name either because of a disagreement with Sargon's policies, or because of the shameful manner of Sargon's death (after his defeat and death on the battlefield, his body was aban-

doned by the retreating Assyrian army). This may be, but it is important to note that Sargon also omitted the genealogy from his own titulary, presumably because contrary to his name (Sargon is the biblical form of Šarru-kēn: "the king is legitimate"), he was evidently not truly the legitimate ruler. Perhaps Sennacherib wished to avoid drawing attention to a flawed genealogy by passing silently over its weak link.

²⁵ Luckenbill, 66:1, 117:1.

²⁶ Liverani, 235.

²⁷ Transliteration in Luckenbill, 66:1-3; my translation. Also see Liverani, 236, 241.



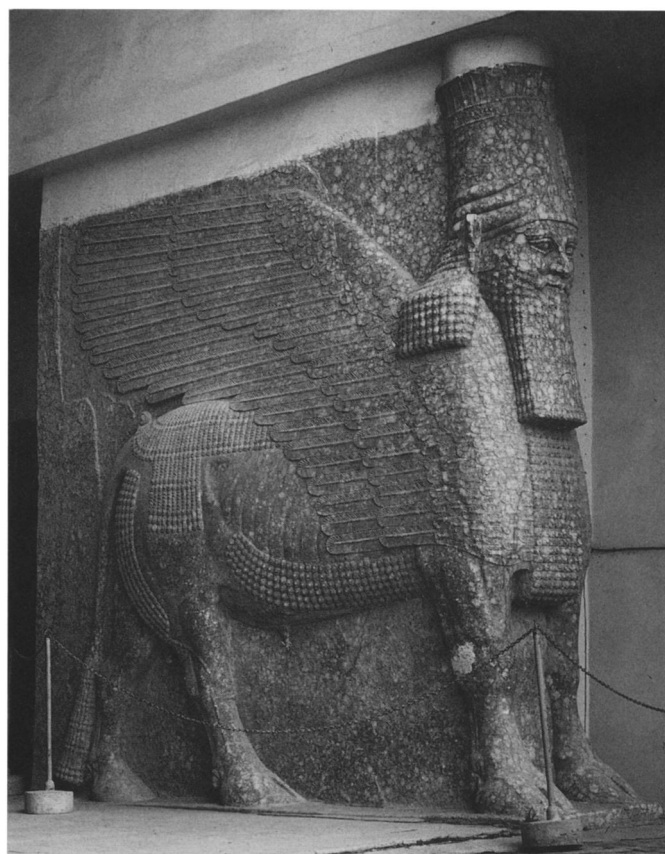
26 Khorsabad, Sargon's palace, bull colossus, h. 442cm. Brit. Mus., WAA 118809 (photo: British Museum)

womb of the mother who bore me and created my features. Ea gave me wide knowledge, equal to that of the sage Adapa, and granted me broad understanding. Asur, father of the gods, made all of mankind bow down at my feet; he elevated me to be shepherd over the land and people. He gave me a just scepter that enlarges the land, and put into my hands an unsparing sword for the overthrow of the enemy.

Liverani terms this a "phraseology of stable and peaceful control."²⁸ It consists of two distinct components. One of these is the claim of divine election, that is, the gods chose Sennacherib as ruler even before his birth.²⁹ The other component is the claim of Sennacherib's universal rule, made possible by the support of the gods who affirm his authority. The competitive ("foremost among all rulers") and

²⁸ Transliteration in Luckenbill, 117:1-6; my translation. Also see Liverani, 240-43.

²⁹ Tadmor (as in n. 24), 25f., observes that this passage seems to be a substitute for the traditional genealogy used in the titulary of other kings, replacing the human (dynastic) formula of legitimacy with a divine one. He notes that, with only three exceptions (Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib), every Assyrian king's texts present *both* a genealogy and



27 Nineveh, city wall, Nergal Gate, bull colossus of Sennacherib, ca. 4.5m high (photo: author)

punitive ("who strikes the enemy with lightning") epithets of Door "a" are replaced by the universal ("leader of widespread peoples") and protective ("shepherd of mankind"). References to other kings are absent from this portion of the Door "c" titulary, in contrast to the equivalent passage in Door "a," and the prosperity and stability that come from Sennacherib's peaceful rule over united mankind are emphasized instead. The only reference to destabilizing forces is abstract ("enemy" vs. "rulers") rather than specific. Thus, in the Door "c" titulary Sennacherib's rule is presented as universal and unchallenged; its purpose is not, as in the Door "a" titulary, to subdue foreign rulers, but rather to govern all peoples.

One may well wonder why the titularies on the colossi of Doors "a" and "c" are so different from each other. It would seem that the explanation is to be found in the content of the succeeding narrative texts. The text of the Door "c" colossus inscription deals solely with public works: the palace, gardens, and irrigation system of Nineveh. Public works are one of the specific benefits of peaceful govern-

a claim of divine election. This dual affirmation of legitimacy is a very old Mesopotamian tradition, dating back at least to the Early Dynastic period. See, for example, the inscription on the "Stele of the Vultures" of Eannatum of Lagash; translated in J. Cooper, *Reconstructing History from Ancient Inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma Border Conflict* (*Sources from the Ancient Near East*, 11, 1), Malibu, 1983, 45:i-v.

ment, and therefore the Door "c" titulary is appropriate for the accompanying text. The text on the colossi of Door "a," by contrast, is an annalistic account of Sennacherib's first six royal campaigns, and only at the end is a palace building account included. Here, too, the militaristic tone of the titulary with its emphasis on the domination of enemy rulers is appropriate for the text, which confirms with specific examples the general claims in the titulary.³⁰

One other Sennacherib titulary deserves consideration here since it serves to highlight certain aspects of the Court VI reliefs. It is from Assur, cult city of the state god, on a stela commemorating the restoration of the *bīt akīti*, the "Temple of the New Year's Festival." Except for the first six titles, which by now are standard ("great king, mighty king," etc.), this is completely different from the Ninevite titularies. Of particular interest is a passage that lists public works:

Sennacherib, . . . who builds Assyria, who completes its cult cities; . . . who digs canals, opens irrigated fields, and makes irrigation ditches murmur (with water); who established prosperity and abundance in the wide croplands of Assyria; who put irrigation water in the fields of Assyria where, from days of old, no one had seen, no one had known, those who preceded me had not made, canals and irrigation in Assyria; the one who builds masonry structures, from works for the living to tombs befitting the dead, out of limestone, which none of the kings who preceded me had done in Assyria.³¹

Three features are of note here. First, this titulary accompanies a building account, and thus contains little of the militaristic phraseology that is familiar from annalistic texts, concentrating instead on praising Sennacherib's public works. Second is the emphasis on two specific types of public works: building of structures and cities, and irrigation.³² Both of these types of construction facilitate, and are symptomatic of, internal prosperity; that is, they in-

dicating a type of expansion that results from good government of the people. It is this type of expansion that is the theme of the *bīt akīti* titulary, as opposed to the other type, territorial expansion achieved through force of arms, which is the theme of the more militaristic titulary of Sennacherib's father, Sargon II.³³ Building and irrigation are also, as will be seen, the subject of half of the reliefs from Court VI. The third feature of interest in the *bīt akīti* titulary is the repeated assertion that Sennacherib has outdone his royal predecessors. This motif, which Liverani terms "heroic priority," also recurs throughout Sennacherib's annalistic and building accounts, and is even implicit in the name of his palace, "Palace without Rival."³⁴

To summarize briefly, then, the titularies of Sennacherib's royal inscriptions present two different aspects of the king's rule. On the one hand, titularies that accompany annalistic accounts emphasize Sennacherib's control over the empire, especially its extremities ("the four quarters"), through military prowess. Titularies that accompany building accounts, on the other hand, emphasize the king's good government, which benefits all mankind. I shall return to this dualism shortly.³⁵

The Message of the Court VI Reliefs

Any attempt to define the principles of organization and articulate the message of Sennacherib's Court VI reliefs must first acknowledge one potentially serious difficulty: though we have some idea who *might* have seen the palace reliefs, we do not know who was *supposed* to see them, that is, their intended audience. The only portion of the palace that may reasonably be termed "public" is the outer throne-room court (H), but the relief decoration here is poorly known (Fig. 1). The throne room (I) as the site of royal audiences would presumably have been accessible to a select, but still wide-ranging group of people, including courtiers, provincial officials, and foreign diplomats. Access to the inner portions of the palace beyond the throne room must have been very restricted, and we may wonder

³⁰ Further evidence that the titulary was tailored to the narrative content of the rest of the text may be seen in an inscription carved on another of Sennacherib's throne-room colossi, this one from Door "d." As with Door "c," its somewhat abridged titulary emphasizes dominance over kings rather than peaceful government: "Assur, father of the gods, among all rulers he duly looked upon me; against all those who sit on daises he made my weapons strong" (Luckenbill, 76:1-6). Again, this is appropriate to the text that follows, which consists of a summary of the first five military campaigns.

³¹ Transliteration in Luckenbill, 135:9 to 136:19; my translation. The inscription refers to the destruction of Babylon, and consequently must date after 689 B.C.

³² As with the dual affirmation of legitimacy in the royal titulary (see n. 29 above), this combination of references to new buildings and irrigation works likewise has a long history in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions, occurring already in the Early Dynastic period in the inscriptions of Urnanshe of Lagash (example translated in Cooper, as in n. 29, 44:i-vi).

³³ Lie (as in n. 16), 3-5.

³⁴ M. Liverani, "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire," in *Power and*

Propaganda (Mesopotamia, vii), ed. M.T. Larsen, Copenhagen, 1979, 308f.

³⁵ Full accounts of Sennacherib's deeds are in the texts whose titularies are discussed here. Though as "historical" accounts they lend themselves to a variety of often widely divergent interpretations, they do seem to confirm in a general way the self-portrait presented in the titularies. Sennacherib's annals (Luckenbill, 23-93) depict the king's reign as a remarkably peaceful and stable period for the Assyrian empire. The greater part of the Assyrian empire was apparently at peace for most of Sennacherib's reign; with the exception of Babylonia, he never campaigned twice in the same region. Sennacherib devoted a considerable part of his energy and resources to erecting civic works. At Nineveh he built the Southwest Palace, the largest known Assyrian palace; the *bīt kutalli*, or armory; a great city wall some twelve kilometers in circuit with eighteen gates; and roads, bridges, canals, and orchards. At Assur he rebuilt several important temples and added the *bīt akīti*, the "Temple of the New Year's Festival" (*ibid.*, 94-155). Among Sennacherib's most remarkable accomplishments were the great irrigation projects for Nineveh, the courses for which are still marked by royal stelae — as at Bavian, Maltai, and Faïda — and by spectacular feats of engineering such as the aqueduct at Jerwan (see Reade, and Jacobsen and Lloyd).

who, if anyone, outside the court circle would have seen the reliefs there. The safest assumption, then, would seem to be that the primary audience for the majority of the preserved reliefs was the king and his court, and at a more abstract level, future kings and perhaps the gods.

In practice, though, a combination of royal vanity and hospitality probably insured that favored visitors to the palace did not leave without being shown at least a sampling of its inner splendors. In this context, we should recall that when Hezekiah, king of Judah during Sennacherib's reign, received envoys from Babylon, he "showed them all his treasury, silver and gold, spices and fragrant oil, his armory and everything to be found among his treasures; there was nothing in his house and in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them."³⁶ Sennacherib on occasion must also have been subject to the urge to show off his palace and treasures. He himself says that, after his palace was finished, he "filled it with splendor for the astonishment of all people."³⁷ This "astonishment" could only occur if the palace and its contents were somehow displayed to at least some of Sennacherib's subjects. Indeed, it is only through such displays that allies, as well as potential troublemakers, could be made fully aware of the wealth and power of the Assyrian king. Thus we may hypothesize that, while the reliefs of the inner part of the palace, including Court VI, were probably intended primarily for the eyes of the king and court, their potential effect on visitors, both Assyrian and foreign, must have been considered as well.

The militaristic tone of the titulary and annalistic text in throne room Door "a" finds parallels in the scenes of military conquest that fill the south and west walls of Court VI, as well as the walls of the throne room and most of the rest of the palace (Fig. 25). Reade has observed that the reliefs of Sennacherib, a king whose reign was relatively peaceful by Assyrian standards, seem "paradoxically full of scenes of military narrative."³⁸ The paradox is only apparent, however, for an ever-popular method of maintaining peace is through the threat of war, and this would be the effect of these scenes of conquest, at least for that component of the audience composed of potentially disruptive foreigners who might recognize their own peoples and lands in these highly specific images.

For members of the court, by contrast, these images would serve as a gratifying record of Assyrian triumphs and simultaneously as a reminder that the king controls the army, the bulwark of power in Assyria. The potential impact of the palace reliefs on Sennacherib's courtiers, who might be exposed to them continually, should not be overlooked. Reade is correct when he observes that in the case of courtiers the reliefs are "preaching to the converted,"

rather than serving as propaganda, but one must keep in mind the importance of *maintaining* the fidelity of this powerful component of the audience.³⁹ For, in this period, the greatest threat to the safety of the king of Assyria was not foreigners on the fringe of the empire, notwithstanding the death on the battlefield of Sennacherib's father, Sargon II. Rather, as Garelli observes, the real threat to the king was at home in his own palace, in the form of jealous courtiers and ambitious kin. There is no better example of this than the fate of Sennacherib himself, who stabilized the borders of the empire only to be assassinated in Nineveh by a disaffected son.⁴⁰

The peaceful phraseology of the titulary and building account in throne-room Door "c" finds its parallel on the north and east walls of Court VI. Here is a series of scenes whose primary subject is the quarrying and transport of colossi for the building of Sennacherib's new palace at Nineveh. A subsidiary subject in the same series is irrigation works, shown by a group of water sweeps raising water into a canal that eventually runs into a swamp populated by deer and a wild pig with her young (Figs. 10-13). Jacobsen was apparently the first to suggest that this is the artificial swamp created by Sennacherib as an outlet for the overflow from his Kisiri canal irrigation system. The building account on the Door "c" colossus states:

To calm the rush of the waters for the orchards, I created a swamp and planted a canebrake in it. Herons, wild pigs, and deer I turned loose therein. . . . The canebrakes flourished luxuriantly, the high-flying heron built his nest there, and the wild pigs and deer multiplied abundantly.⁴¹

The primary purpose of the Kisiri canal was not to water the swamp, however, but to water the fields and orchards of Nineveh. This project apparently benefitted all the residents of the city. In an early building account, Sennacherib says, "For the planting of orchards, I subdivided land from the plain above the city into plots of 2 PI each for the citizens of Nineveh and handed (them) over to them." And in another text describing the swamp, Sennacherib writes that, thanks to the Kisiri canal, "In the summer I watered all of the orchards; in the winter, a thousand fields in the plain above and below the city I watered, yearly."⁴² It is difficult to imagine a clearer or more concrete statement of the value of benevolent and stable government, a government that serves not just the king and court, but *all* of the governed. The images of building and irrigation in the Court VI reliefs, then, are the visual equivalent of the ideals of good government in the Door "c" bull titulary, and are closer still to the specific examples of good government —

³⁶ II Kings 20:12-13; transl. *New English Bible*, New York, 1971. Cited in S. Paley, "Assyrian Palace Reliefs: Finished and Unfinished Business," in *Essays on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson*, ed. P. Harper and H. Pittman, New York, 1983, 53.

³⁷ Luckenbill, 128:38.

³⁸ J.E. Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," in *Power and Propaganda* (as in n. 34), 339.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁴⁰ P. Garelli, "La propagande royale assyrienne," *Akkadica*, xxvii, 1982, 26, and S. Parpola, "The Murderer of Sennacherib," in *Death in Mesopotamia (Mesopotamia, viii)*, ed. B. Alster, Copenhagen, 1980, 171-82.

⁴¹ Jacobsen and Lloyd, 35. Transliteration in Luckenbill, 124:43 to 125:47; my translation.

⁴² Transliterations in Luckenbill, 97:88, 115:43-45; my translations.

building and irrigation — enumerated in the somewhat later titulary from the *bit akiti* in Assur.

One other aspect of the construction scenes from Court VI is worthy of note. By means of costume and inscriptions, Sennacherib identifies the laborers in the quarry and the men hauling the bull colossi as “inhabitants of hidden mountain regions, conquest of my hands.”⁴³ Other reliefs in the same court show battle and deportation of captives in the mountainous country at the eastern border of the empire (Fig. 25). The implication of this opposition is clear: the enemies who once threatened Assyria from the periphery now build the capital at its center.⁴⁴

Conclusions

In the Court VI reliefs, Sennacherib's two major goals, the stabilizing of the borders and the creation of a center, are explicitly linked. The motivating force behind these two processes is revealed in the direction of flow of the two narrative sequences in that court: both originate at the monumental doorway in the east wall of Court VI and proceed outward in opposite directions around the walls (Fig. 4).⁴⁵ This doorway is the entrance that connects Court VI with the throne-room suite, whose occupant, Sennacherib, is thus designated as the single source of these two contrasting policies: conquest at the periphery, construction at the center.

The imperial priorities exemplified by the Court VI reliefs, therefore, harmonize with the priorities expressed in the titularies of the texts on the throne-room colossi, some of which emphasize dominance over foreign rulers while others stress good government; they likewise harmonize with the narrative portion of these same colossus texts, some of which chronicle conquests while others describe the building of the “Palace without Rival” and other public works in Nineveh. In all of these cases, there is a balance between military conquest and domestic construction. This bilateral image of kingship was not idle rhetoric: from the beginning of his reign Sennacherib divided his attentions between military campaigns directed at pacifying the borders of the empire and building campaigns aimed at the creation of an unrivaled capital.

The significance of this new capital was not merely symbolic: like the military campaigns, it, too, played an active role in Sennacherib's imperial scheme. The creation of a new capital is of little help in the process of expanding an empire, and indeed might place an unwanted drain on resources needed for the support of the army. A magnificent capital closely identified with the ruling monarch can, however, be a very useful tool for maintaining an empire. Sub-

ject peoples visiting the capital would have been overawed by the power implied by the sheer bulk and splendor of the monuments of Nineveh, which thus reinforced their inclination to submit rather than rebel.

The reliefs in Sennacherib's palace likewise actively participated in the maintenance of the realm. The contrast in the Court VI reliefs between battle and building, juxtaposing the risks of insurrection with the benefits of good government, would only have been seen by viewers with access to the more private areas of the palace interior, chiefly those inside the palace circle. In the more public outer areas, Sennacherib replaced the tribute processions that were in the equivalent locations in Sargon II's palace with military narratives, serving for visitors as explicit reminders of the consequences of rebellion or nonpayment of tribute. In Sennacherib's palace, then, the reliefs were called upon to play an active role in the keeping of the peace, serving for outsiders as a deterrent to thoughts of revolt, and for insiders as a reminder that the prosperity of Assyria was dependent on its king.

The decoration of Sennacherib's “Palace without Rival” was thus a response to and an expression of a series of linked oppositions. Its audience consisted of insiders and outsiders: Assyrians and foreigners, residents of and visitors to the palace. The media are text and image, each exploited with a clear awareness of its strengths and limitations, each displaying marked innovations when compared with examples by Sennacherib's predecessors. The subjects are Sennacherib's military and civic accomplishments, contrasted and balanced in both the texts and images. And the message — expressed in the reliefs and in the texts displayed on the bull colossi — was that Sennacherib's aims were twofold: the maintenance of the boundaries of empire and the creation of a center. In the decorative program of Court VI, these dual aims were inextricably entwined, as non-submissive peoples from the periphery of the empire served as labor for the construction of the palace at its center, while the palace in its awesome magnificence in turn served to reduce potential troublemakers to submission.

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⁴³ Some of the captives are identifiable on the basis of costume as Westerners (M. Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer neuassyrischer Darstellungen* [*Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, xxvi], Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975, 1, 57-59, 179f.), but the remainder display no identifying characteristics and could be from anywhere.

⁴⁴ For the idea of the capital as the center of the realm, see Liverani, 235;

idem (as in n. 34), 306-09; and in I.J. Winter, “Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,” *Studies in Visual Communication*, vii, 2, 1981, 19f.

⁴⁵ This door, designated “a” in Layard's plan, is to be distinguished from throne-room Door “a,” whose titulary was discussed above (Fig. 1).

Appendix

About the Illustrations

A.H. Layard excavated the Southwest Palace under circumstances that made it difficult to document his discoveries visually. Most of the wall reliefs were buried some twenty to thirty-five feet deep; consequently Layard found it expedient to expose them by tunneling along their surface, without removing the earth above. Photography was apparently not a practical option for Layard before 1851, at the time he was excavating the Southwest Palace.⁴⁶ In any case, the dim light of the tunnels, combined with the relatively flat surface and poor preservation of the reliefs, would have made effective photography very difficult. In order to record his finds, therefore, he was forced to rely on drawings made on the spot.

Two artists assisted Layard at different times during the excavations of Sennacherib's palace. The first, Fredrick C. Cooper, was with Layard from September, 1849, until July, 1850, though toward the end of this period he was too ill to work.⁴⁷ Thomas S. Bell arrived in late February, 1851, and worked with Layard until the latter's final departure from Nineveh in April, 1851.⁴⁸ Layard was without an artist when he first began work on Sennacherib's palace, from May to June, 1847, and again during the period between Cooper's departure and Bell's arrival. He made up for this lack by drawing many of the reliefs himself, displaying remarkable skill for an amateur (Fig. 2). Four of the drawings of Court VI reliefs published here — Figs. 11, 12, 17, and 24 — are signed "A H Layard"; the rest are unsigned and their authorship is uncertain.

The vast majority of the reliefs unearthed by Layard were in condition too poor to be removed to England, and so were left in the ground at Nineveh. This was the case for some twenty of the slabs from Court VI. The drawings of these slabs, therefore, are the only record we have of their appearance. In the case of the eight slabs that were sufficiently intact to be taken to England and Istanbul, the very low relief, minute detail, and poor preservation of the surface make them very difficult to present adequately in small photographs. They, too, are best illustrated by drawings. For these reasons, only Slab 58, for which no drawing exists, is illustrated here by a photograph of the full relief (Fig. 14).

The reconstruction of Court VI published here as Fig. 4 is my own. It is based on Layard's plans, descriptions, and drawings, as well as on my observations and measurements of the surviving Court VI reliefs. The plan is enlarged from Layard's final plan of Sennacherib's palace (Fig. 1), which gives somewhat different proportions for the east wall of Court VI than does his earlier plan published in *Nineveh and Its Remains*.⁴⁹ Only reexcavation can resolve this discrepancy. The numbering of the slabs here called 60 and 58 is not entirely certain (Figs. 12, 14). Layard says Fig. 12 was "found detached from the rest, but was probably No. 61."⁵⁰ The left edge of Fig. 12, however, does not align well with the right edge of Slab 62 (Fig. 11), and the transition from mountainous to marshy terrain is missing. Fig. 12 must therefore be Slab 60. Fig. 14 would then be Slab 58, with the intervening (lost) Slab 59 showing a sledge.⁵¹

The list that follows summarizes the publication history and current location of the Court VI reliefs. *Mon. Nin.* refers to Layard's two folio volumes of engravings entitled *Monuments of Nineveh* (London, 1849, 1853), which were based on a selection from the original drawings. "Or. Dr." refers to the seven folio volumes of original drawings of Assyrian sculptures, now in the collection of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities (abbreviated "WAA") of the British Museum.

- Slab 1: engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, I, 81
- 9-10: unpublished drawing: Or. Dr., IV, 44
- 11-13: engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 37
- 16: unpublished drawing: Or. Dr., I, 71
- 19-20: engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 38
- 21: London, Brit. Mus., WAA 124792 (S. Smith, *Assyrian Sculptures*, London, 1938, pl. 35); engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 6
- 30-31: unpublished drawing: Or. Dr., IV, 45
- 38-39: unpublished drawing: Or. Dr., IV, 46
- 43-44: unpublished drawing: Or. Dr., IV, 47
- 45-47: engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 16
- 53: London, Brit. Mus., WAA 124823 (H. R. Hall, *Babylonian and Assyrian Sculpture*, Paris, 1928, pl. 31); engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 12:b

⁴⁶ The first excavator to use archaeological photography in Iraq was Victor Place, who photographed the monumental portals of Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad in 1852-53 (repr. in M. Pillet, *Un pionnier de l'Assyriologie: Victor Place*, Paris, 1962). William Boutcher attempted to photograph a few of the wall reliefs from Assurbanipal's palace at Nineveh in 1854, but the results were unsatisfactory and the sculptures still had to be drawn (R.D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh*, London, 1976, xi, pls. xx, xxxvi).

⁴⁷ Layard, 1853a, 2, 365, 411.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 214, 582. Bell drowned in the Gomel river three months later.

⁴⁹ A.H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, London, 1849, II, facing p. 124.

⁵⁰ Layard, 1853b, 2.

⁵¹ This identification of Slabs 58 and 60 was apparently first proposed by Reade (Reade, 55).

- 54, 56: engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 13
 58: London, Brit. Mus., WAA 124822 (Hall, as for slab 53 above, pl. 30)
 60: London, Brit. Mus., WAA 124824 (A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures*, The Hague, 1915, pl. 29); engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 12:a
 62: engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 17
 63-64: London, Brit. Mus., WAA 124820 (unpublished); engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 15
 66-67: London, Brit. Mus., WAA 124821 (unpublished); engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 14
 68: Istanbul, Mus. of Ancient East, 2 (Paterson, as for slab 60, pl. 36); engraving: *Mon. Nin.*, II, 14

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