

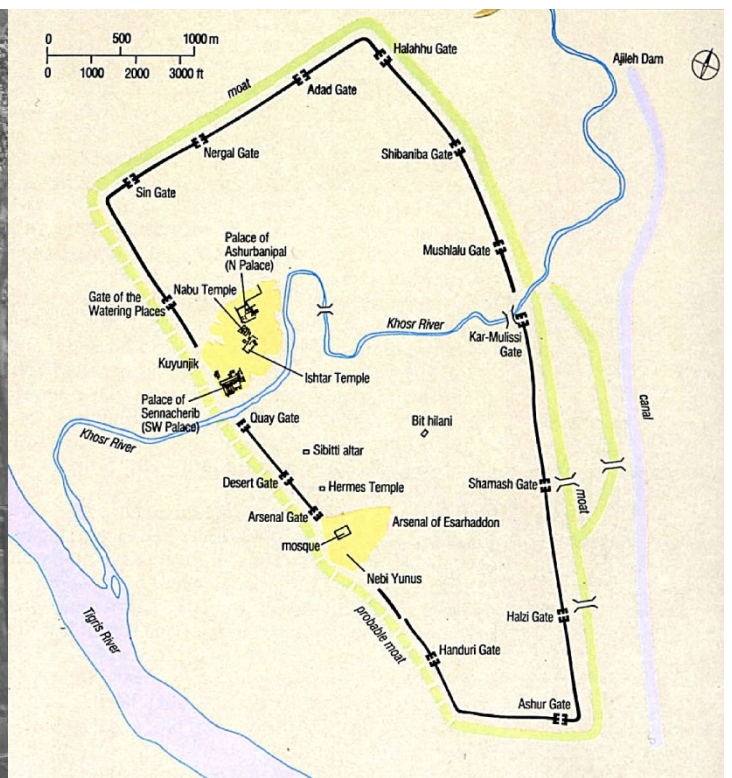
NINEVEN MINECRAFT



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The City of Nineveh

Nineveh has a very long history, with finds dating already back at fifth millennium. As part of the Assyrian empire, the city served as a regional center during the Middle and Early Neo Assyrian periods. In 704 BCE, during the reign of Sennacherib, Nineveh became the capital of Assyria and was transformed into a megacity of ca. 750 hectares.



The City-Wall of Nineveh

When Nineveh became the capital, the planners created a great surrounding wall. The city-wall was constructed during ca. 702-690 BCE and has a total length of ca. 12 km. The royal inscriptions of Sennacherib provide a vivid description of the construction of the wall:

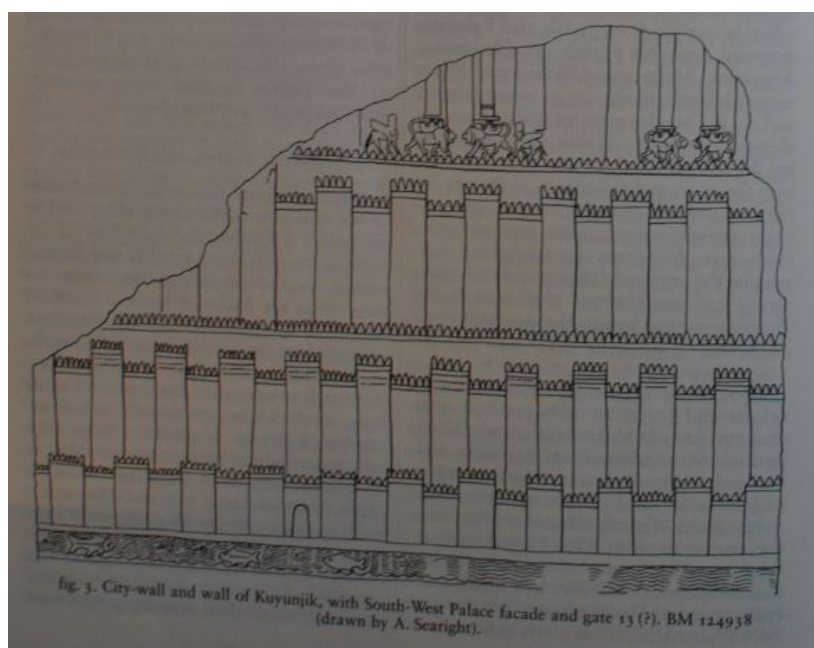
(11') [I laid the foundation of its great wall, Badnigalbilukurašušu, (which means) "Wall Whose Brilliance Overwhelms Enemies," upon limestone and made (it) 40 bricks thick]. I raised its superstructure [180 cou]rses of brick high.

(12') [I opened up a foundation pit for the outer wall, Badnigerimḥuluḥa, (which means) "Terrorizer of Enemies," then I dug down forty-five nindanu and made (it) reach] the water table. [I bound together strong mountain stone in the water below and above] I expertly carried out its construction [with large limestone (blocks) up to its copings]. (RINAP 3 Online Corpus, Sennacherib 8, 11'-13')

Based on archaeological evidence, together with textual evidence as the one mentioned above, we know that the city-wall of Nineveh had two layers, a mudbrick inner layer and a stone outer layer.

The inner wall was constructed from mudbricks measuring 37x37x12 cm. As such, 180 courses of bricks would give us roughly a 22 meters height, and if we account for the mortar that goes between the bricks, then we can safely estimate an impressive 24 meters high inner wall! The height was not consistent however, and varied based on the landscape it had to be built on. The 40 bricks thickness mentioned in the text would give a 15 m. width, which corresponds very well with the available archaeological evidence.

The outer (or curtain) wall was attached to the mudbrick wall but was much smaller, 4-11m. height. It had a stone core and a façade of carved limestone blocks. Rectangular turrets or towers projected from the wall at 15 m. intervals, while the top of the wall, reinforced with crenellations allowed for quick movement and deployment of the army.



The Gates of Nineveh

The city-wall of Nineveh had a large number of gates. Starting with probably 14 gates, eventually by 690 BCE the city had a total of 18 gates! We can find them archaeologically by looking at the mounds along the wall and we can identify them based on textual evidence. They were named after gods and deities (e.g. Nergal gate, Adad gate) or based on their use (e.g. Arsenal gate).

From the few excavated gates, it can be said that there is no single design and gates could include a variety of elements such as: projection from the city wall, lateral chambers, multiple courtyards, defensive towers, multiple arched entrances, different degree of decorations. The size of each gate might be related to their importance, but it is not clear.

The department of antiquities in Iraq has excavated and restored a number of those gates, mostly during the 60s. These gates are the Nergal Gate, the Adad Gate, the Shamash Gate and the Mashqi Gate.

One of the most impressive gates, the Nergal Gate, was also flanked by two winged bull colossi (lamassu) and was probably used for ceremonial purposes.



Learning Sites 3D model of the Nergal Gate

Lamassu

Lamassu (plural lamasi) are Assyrian protective deities portrayed with human head, a lion or bull body and wings. Lamassu are often placed at the entrances of palaces, or important rooms of palaces like the throneroom. Two large lamassu decorated the entrance of the Nergal gate.



Lamassu from the Nergal Gate

The Palace Without Rival

The plan of transforming Nineveh into a large metropolis, capital of Assyria, included large-scale architectural projects both in the lower city as well as the two citadels. The main citadel mound, Kuyunjik, was expanded and a number of new buildings were constructed on top. As the royal inscriptions inform us:

Afterwards, I decided to increase the height of the terrace, then I added 20 courses of brick to the former (terrace) and (thus) I raised (it) to a (total) height of 180 courses of brick. I made the area larger than before, added (it) to the former dimensions of the palace, and (thus) enlarged its structure. (RINAP 3 Online Corpus, Sennacherib 003, 54-55)

The citadel incorporated a large number of temples, old and new, for which only a few have attested archaeological evidence. Among them, on the south-western part of the mound, stood the new palace of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. This palace is known as the Southwest Palace, or as it is described in the royal inscriptions “Palace Without Rival”. It was the largest palace the empire had ever seen and brought a number of new, interesting developments in Assyrian architecture which are of great interest to archaeologists.

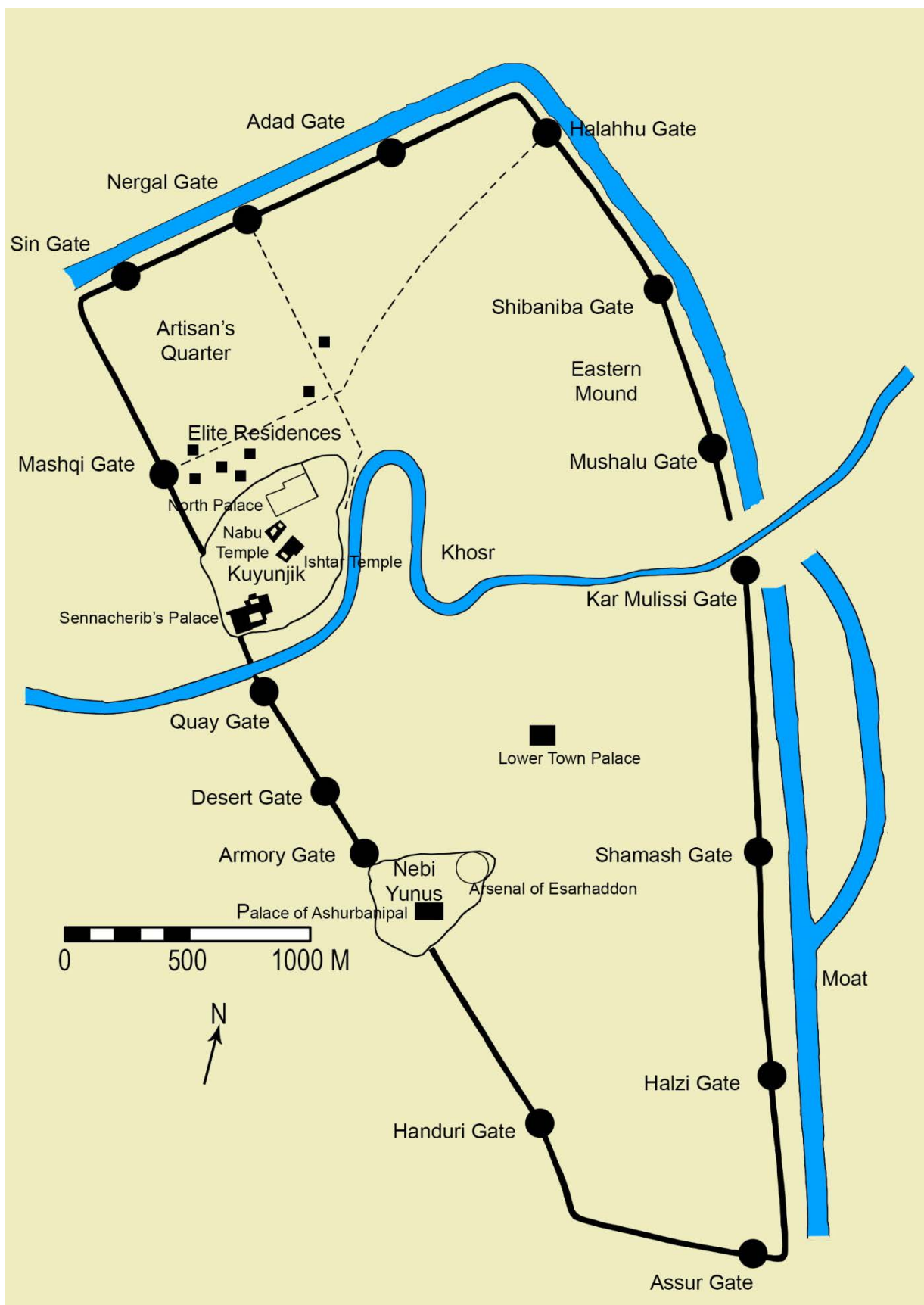
The palace was constructed in a series of interlocking zones emerging from the throneroom courtyard. The sheer size of the building allowed for the incorporation of more and larger suits, more State Apartments, probably with more and diverse functions, and a new approach to administration. Twelve years were needed for the building to be completed, from 703 to 691 BCE.

The palace was decorated with reliefs of various themes, religious motifs, hunting scenes, processions, and military expeditions. The latter has provided us with important information on the type of campaigns the Assyrian undertook, and valuable insights in regards to their military tactics. The most notable reliefs are the Lachish reliefs, presenting the victory of the Assyrian army over the kingdom of Judah during the siege of Lachish in 701 BCE.

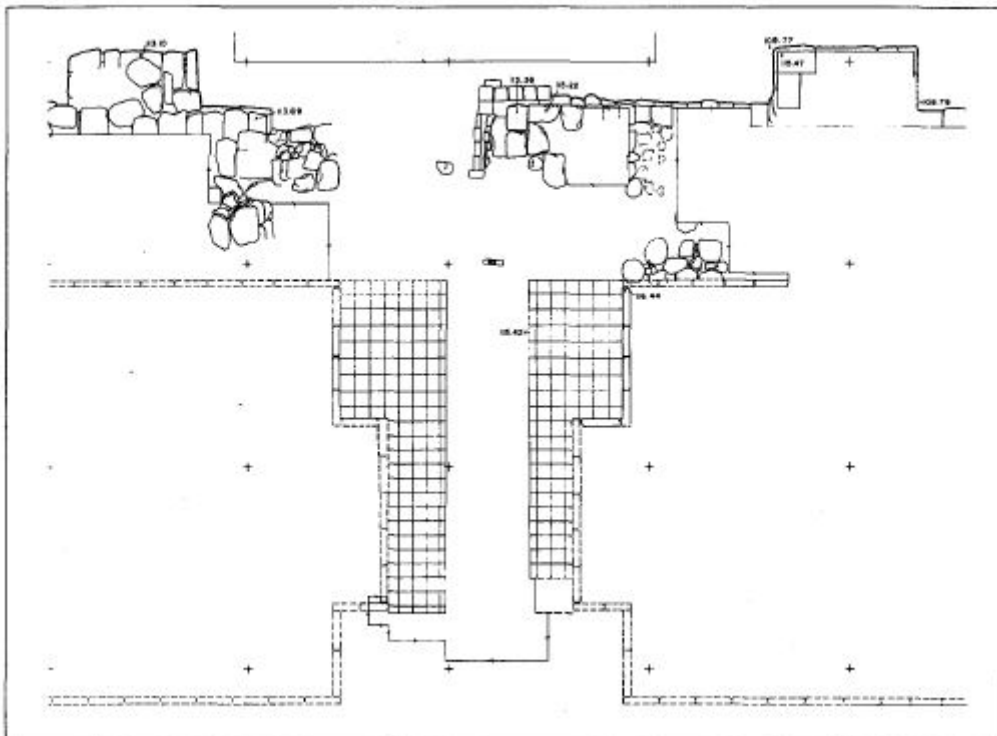
If you would like to know more about Assyrian palaces check out the publication by David Kertai: *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Palaces* (2015)!



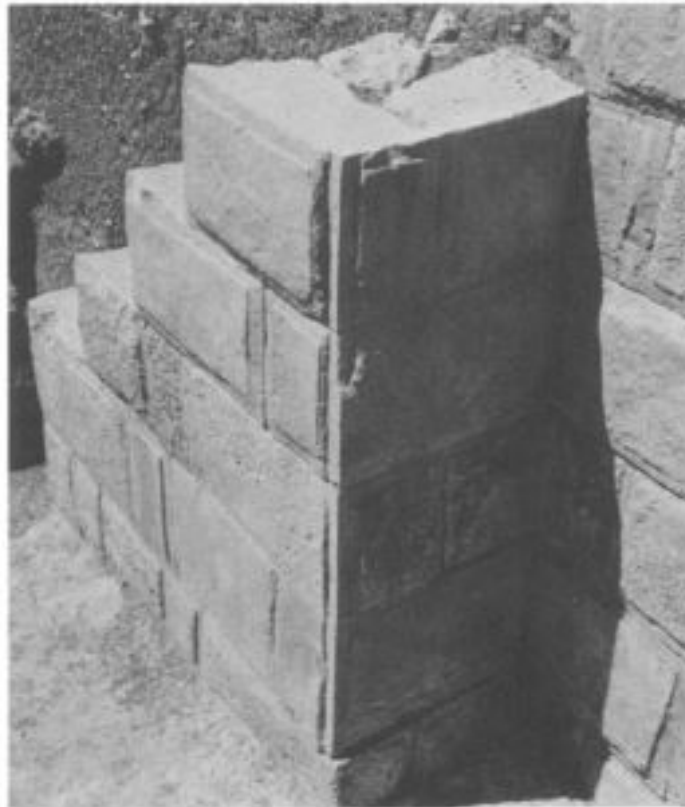
The single inscription which identifies the location in the Lachish reliefs: Sennacherib, the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment, before (or at the entrance of) the city of Lachish. I give permission for its slaughter (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish_reliefs#/media/File:Lachish_inscription.jpeg)







Plan of the outer entrance passage and towers of the Halzi Gate (Stronach 1997)



Tower 3 of the Halzi Gate after excavation. The stone blocks were arranged in courses of equal height with free variations in length within the courses. The longer blocks measure up to 1.5 meters in length. In all, Tower 3 provides a striking example of the often high quality that can be found in Assyrian masonry of circa 700 B.C.E.

Below left: The northeast edge of Tower 3 and part of the 8 meters long recess between Towers 3 and 4. The rough stone masonry that begins to the right of the 2 meters ranging rod appears to mark the edge of a hurried repair. **Below right:** A detail of the rough stone face of Tower 4.

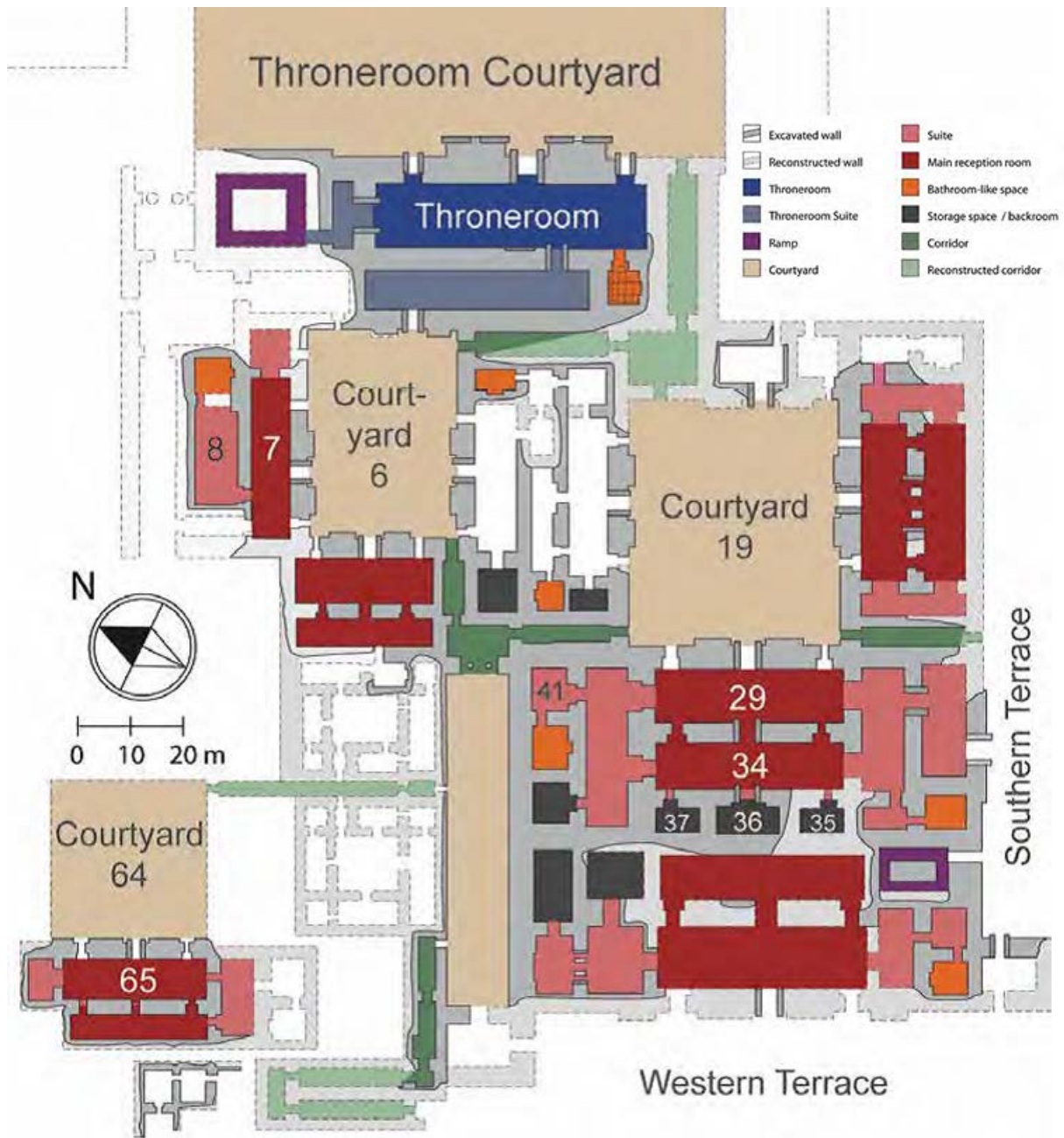




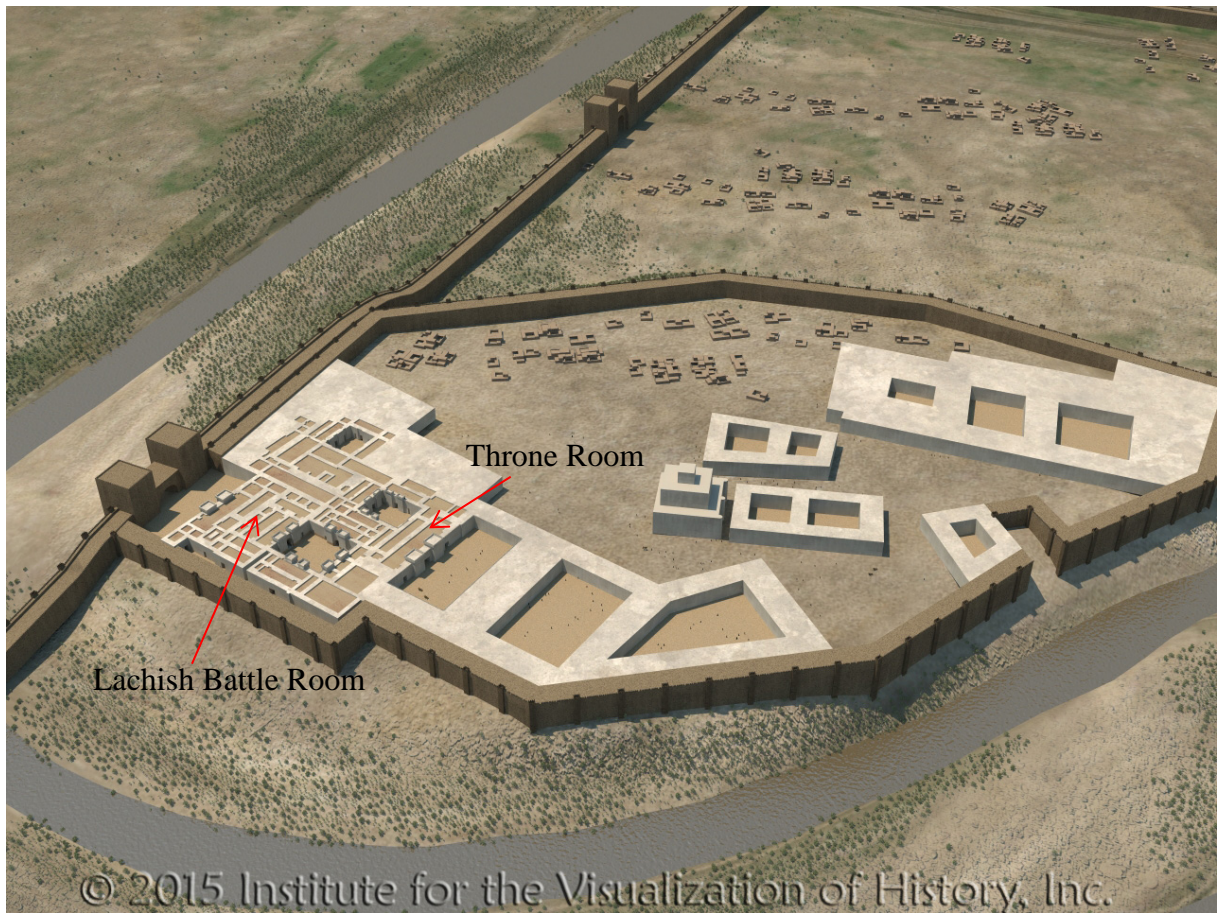
The Nergal Gate before its destruction



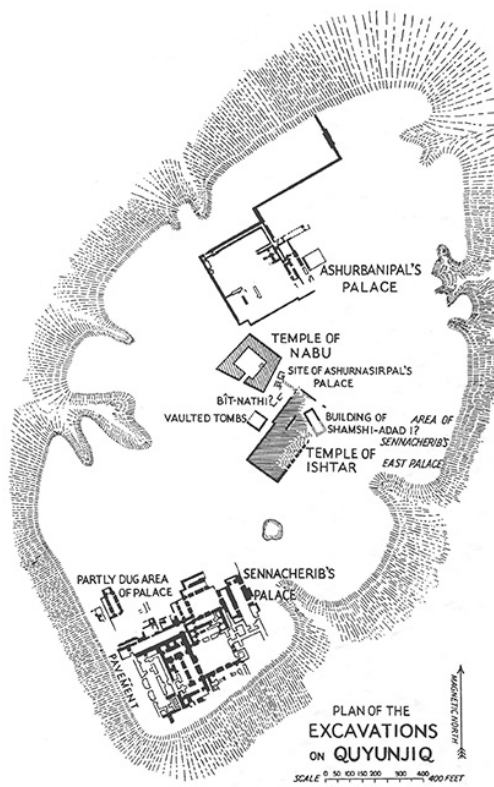
Artistic reconstruction of Nineveh



The Plan of the Palace Without Rival (Kertai 2015)



3D reconstruction of Nineveh's main citadel



Plan of Kuyunjik



Reconstruction of the Throne Room at Kalhu