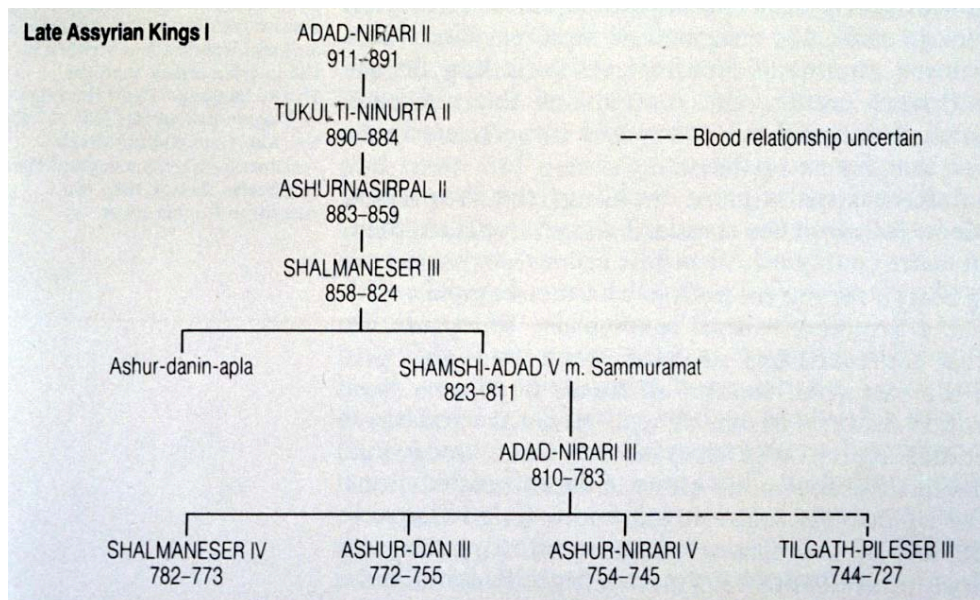


## The Neo-Assyrians, Part 2



In the last lecture we ended by looking at the decades-long lull in Assyrian aggression that spanned the first half of the eighth century BCE. A series of weak kings, the sons of Adad-Nirari III, took and left the throne, one after another in close succession.

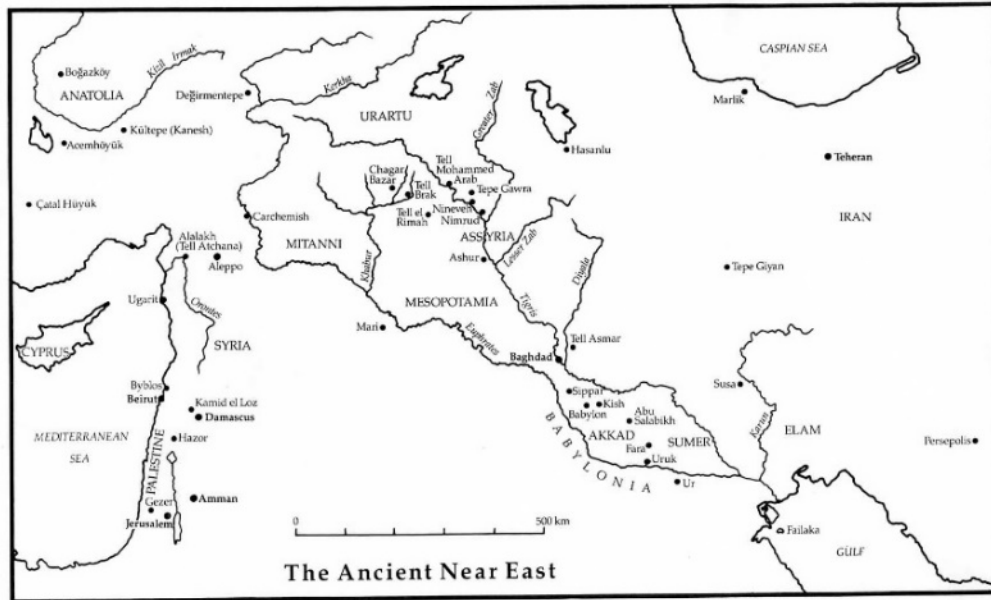
Tiglath-pileser III,  
riding in chariot

Nimrud, ca. 730 BCE

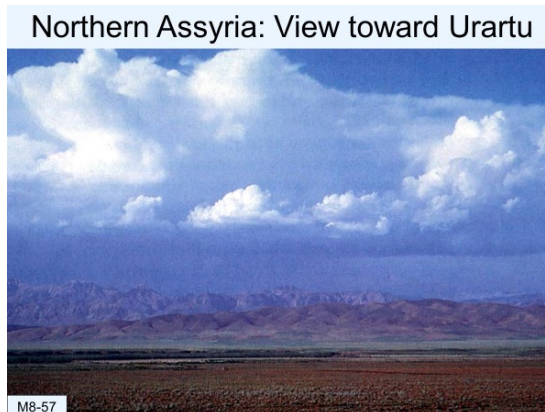


M8-56

This would all change with the ascension of Tiglath-Pileser III who, as we saw last time, claimed toward the end of his life to be the son of the king he succeeded (Ashur-Nirari V), but it's more likely he was a usurper. Whatever his heritage, he was what Assyria needed, a strong, competent leader who recalled Ashurnasirpal II more than the last few generations of rulers. Upon his accession, Tiglath-Pileser III began reorganizing the Assyrian state and reducing the power wielded by local lords who had been asserting their own authority during the years of weak central government. Military expeditions rapidly changed from razzias to real campaigns designed to impose lasting control over foreign nations. They had to. If they hadn't imposed their will on others, the Assyrians could easily have been absorbed into someone else's empire.



One outgrowth of Tiglath-Pileser’s reforms was the creation of a messenger system in which special runners carried the “King’s Word” (*amât sharri*) to local officials. It’s the precursor of the Persian Royal Road in which couriers on horseback conveyed communique back and forth across the whole extent of Mesopotamia. But none of these changes took place overnight. Tiglath-Pileser had inherited a poorly run administration, so the early years of his reign were naturally somewhat chaotic. Fortunately for him, however, that was not a problem unique to Assyria. The other larger traditional states in the area, Babylon in particular, were also struggling to reorganize, and new powers were moving into position. For instance, the city of Damascus in Syria, enriched by trade, had begun to throw its weight around. In Iran to the east of Assyria, immigrant Indo-European groups were beginning to flex their muscles, most notably, the Persians and the Medes.

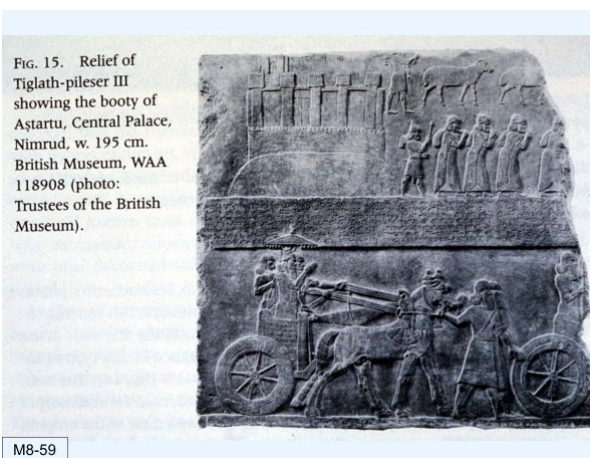


In Armenia to the north, the Urartians were now well-established in the region around Lake Van, and the Mannaeans near Lake Urmia. For all this unrest, the situation in southern Mesopotamia was much less threatening to the Assyrians. Babylon had fallen into such a state of disrepair that by the earlier part of the eighth century they weren’t even able to enthrone a king at all for three

years. But all the same, the city was still able to maintain its independence somehow, even when Tiglath-Pileser attacked and captured it. But as heirs of Mesopotamian culture, the Assyrians had an instinctive respect for Babylon, especially the venerable Sumerian cities to the south, so they did not raze any these sites — not yet at least. The inhabitants, however, they treated with the same cruelty others felt. The places were sacred, the people not so much.



Tiglath-Pileser's reign is a litany of conquest and terror. Beginning in the north where the threat was most immediate, he attacked Urartu and almost took its capital city Tushpa by siege. He then wheeled west and put to death any hopes the Syrians may have cherished of freedom from Assyrian domination. Those cities he had no druthers about razing, and the demands for tribute that followed in the wake of his army were almost as crippling as the vandalism and casualty rate. His professional, standing armed forces swelled as Tiglath-Pileser filled their ranks with new-won foreign conscripts whose loyalties he assured with the threat of brutality back in their homelands, those that still had homes.



Assyrians in this day practiced a form of exile in which massive numbers of people were moved arbitrarily from one part of the empire to another. It was hoped that in a foreign land they would be less likely to band together with other disgruntled subjects and rebel against Assyrian control. How could they when they didn't even know their neighbors or speak the same language? The Romans would later try the same, as would many empires after them.

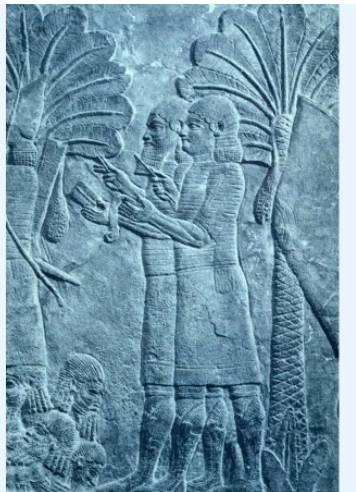
Assyrian  
Relief:  
The  
Siege of  
Astartu



M8-60

Tiglath-Pileser also added much artwork to Nimrud, including a number of reliefs discovered by archaeologists. These pieces show an interesting drop in the quality of their execution, the result, no doubt, of the long period of disorder prior to his reign. Moreover, the king had to focus on building his military and therefore did not have much time for the arts. Note how the figures in the image above are cut in shallow relief. The beards are executed with much less finesse than they were in Shalmaneser's day. In general, the composition is stiff, and the depiction of cityscapes flat. About the only thing that's really well done here is the portrayal of emotions on the captives' faces as they're being deported from their homes. Their sorrow and grief are palpable. It's clear the propaganda value of art as terror made good sense to this king. That was worth investing in.

Assyrian Scribes  
recording booty  
(i.e. counting  
heads),  
SW Palace,  
Nineveh

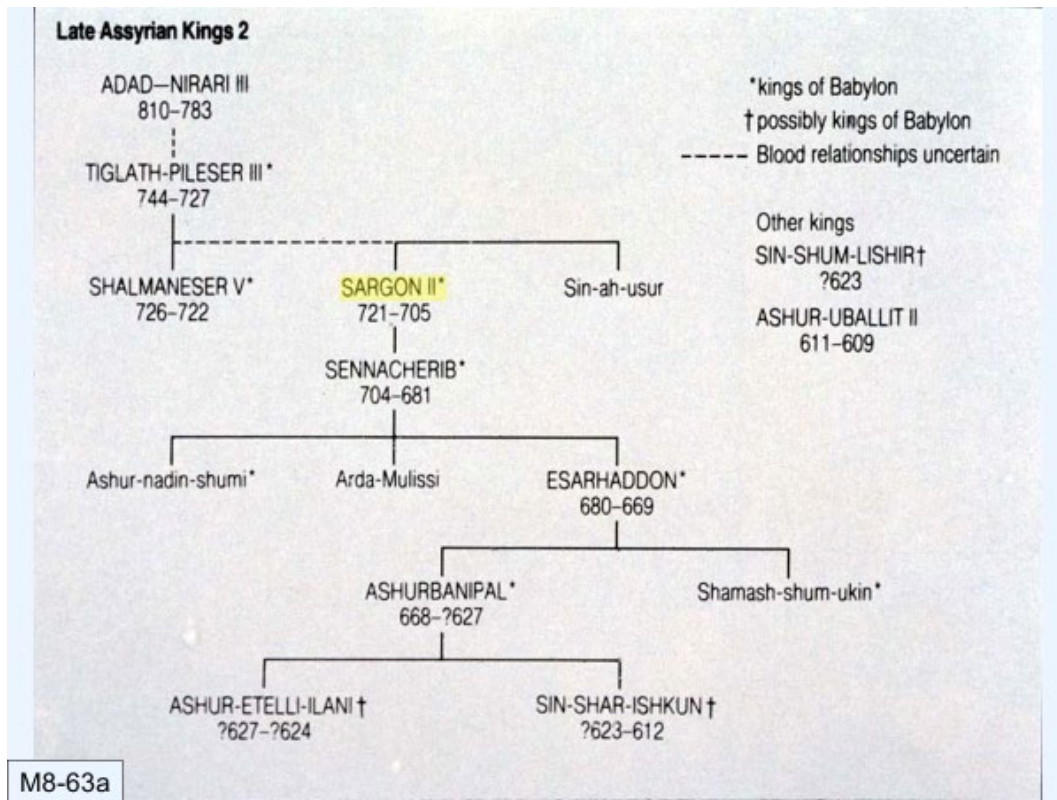


M8-62

Roux says it all:

Such pitiful scenes are occasionally depicted on Assyrian bas-reliefs; carrying little bags on their shoulders and holding their emaciated children by the hand,

long files of men walk with the troops, while their wives follow in carts. Many must have died on the endless, sun-scorched tracks. Those who survived were not badly treated; they found a home in the ruins of burnt-down villages or in fortresses founded by the king, a field to plough and a reason to live; but their spirit of resistance — so their masters liked to believe — was broken forever. . . but [deportation] did not prevent rebellions from breaking out with increasing frequency and, together with the devastations of war, contributed to the dislike of the Assyrians generally in the ancient Near East. As a Babylonian civil servant from Nippur once dared write to King Esarhaddon: “The king knows that all lands hate us on account of Assyria.” (Roux, 284)



Upon his death, Tiglath-Pileser III was succeeded by his son, Shalmaneser V, whose short reign is best known from a revolt led by Hos(h)ea, the Assyrian puppet king of Israel. Shalmaneser V attacked and besieged Samaria, the Israelite stronghold, but it's unclear whether he or his successor Sargon II completed the conquest of this area. Whoever did it, Israel was exterminated as an independent state, putting in motion the flight of many Hebrew to Judea and the creation of the E text as we know it (see Section 7.1). The cause of Shalmaneser V's death is unclear, but assassination is certainly not out of the question. If so, the murderer was mostly likely his successor, and possibly his brother, Sargon II.

Sargon II,  
with a high  
officer  
(Sennacherib?)

Khorsabad, 710 BCE

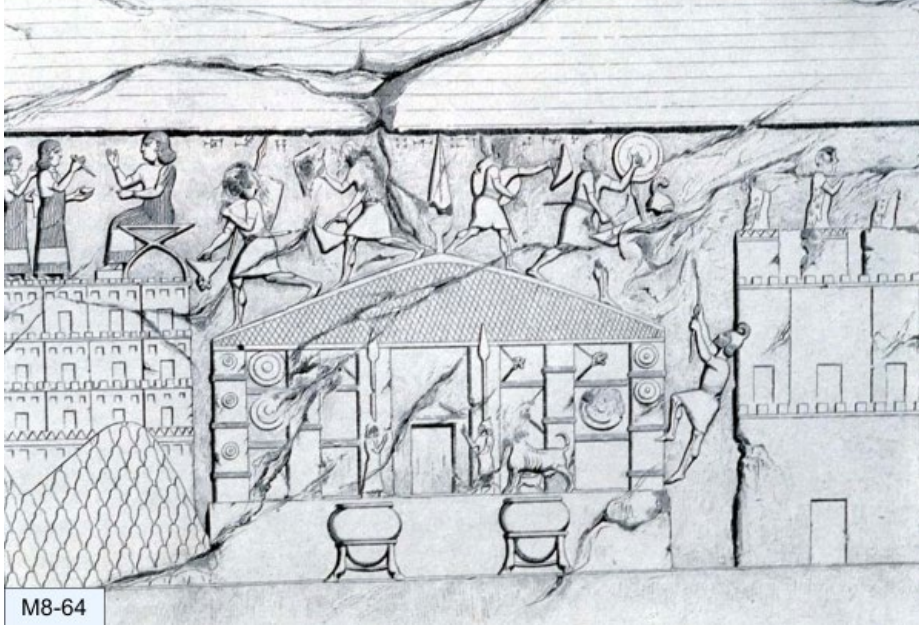


M8-63

There is some indication in the records that the Assyrians back home in Ashur were unhappy with the amount of taxes imposed on them by Tiglath-Pileser's determination to reassert Assyrian military supremacy in the Near East. Some scholars have concluded Sargon pushed his way onto the throne by promising to reduce that burden, essentially leading a popular uprising. His name itself is intriguing. By calling himself Sargon is he intentionally recalling the legendary ruler of Akkad? Was it known even then that the first Sargon had not been born of the current ruling dynasty in his day, that he had seized power through the force of his own personality and charisma? Is this second Assyrian Sargon, this repeat "true king," echoing that narrative? Was this, to put it in Egyptian terms, his throne name, Assyria's "real ruler" even though he had no hereditary claim to the throne other than the dynamism of his ambition? If so, I wonder what his birth name was.

Whatever the path of his ascension to power, Sargon II took command of the empire and deployed it with traditional Assyrian ruthlessness. He spent his reign largely on campaign, with the result that Assyria expanded its domain further than ever. He attacked, ravaged, razed and displaced like never before, or so the Israelites in the day could attest whose state he made disappear from the map. This extreme brutality would set a pattern and turn Assyrian history henceforth into a constant struggle to suppress rebellion in one place or another.

## Assyrian Relief: Urartian Campaign



M8-64



Above A similar tripod with bull's feet and a large cauldron decorated with four bull's heads with birds' wings and tail was found in an Urartian tomb at Altintepe near Erzincan in Turkey. This tripod and cauldron (with only three bulls' heads) have been restored. They are said to have come from eastern Turkey, but their original findspot and even their authenticity are uncertain. Total height 94 cm.

Early in his reign, after bringing disgruntled kingdoms in the Syro-Palestinian area back under the yoke, Sargon turned the might of Assyria on the Urartians to his north. He smashed their army and sacked their important border fortress at Musasir. For the remainder of his reign, the Urartians would knuckle under to Assyrian might and obediently send their annual tribute. To memorialize this triumph, Sargon wrote a letter of sorts home to Ashur, the Assyrians' principal deity, a form of a public proclamation that was almost certainly meant to be read aloud in public to inform those at home about his victories. There he gloats that the king of Urartu "with his own dagger stabbed himself through the heart like a pig and ended his life." Centuries later, Julius Caesar would do much the same in his *Gallic Commentaries* which herald and celebrate his bloody campaigns across what is today France, yet another link between Rome and Assyria. It's notable that immediately upon Sargon's death the Urartians would revolt, his decade-old insults still fresh in their minds, but ultimately to no avail. The smothering force of Sargon's assault on the Urartian kingdom was to be its death knell. The Urartians would soon disappear from history, removing a critical buffer state between Assyria and other rising forces in the region, the most important among them the Medes. And that would not end well for the Assyrians.

## *Kudurru of Merodach- baladan*



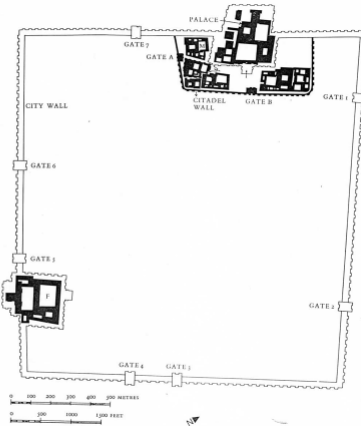
M8-66

But the most significant development that took place during Sargon's reign did not center on the north but Babylon to the south. There, a new king came to power, Marduk-apal-iddina, better known by the name he's called in the Bible, Merodach-baladan. Inaugurating a new dynastic line based on a powerful family on the rise, the Chaldeans from southern Mesopotamia, he came to the Babylonian throne the same year Sargon had taken charge of Assyria. Merodach-baladan and his clan would become the thorn in the side of the Assyrians for generations and later would engineer their collapse and extermination. But that was still some ways off.

As we noted above, in 720 BCE still early in his reign Sargon marched against the Babylonians. A battle took place at Dêr (Badrah) between the Tigris River and the Zagros mountains. Near there, Sargon erected a stele claiming victory, but it was largely propaganda. The real victors were not the Assyrians nor even the Babylonians but the Elamites — yes, the Elamites again! — who had joined forces with their age-old foes in Babylon to stop the spread of the Assyrian empire. The long-term outcome shows the truth. In the wake of this battle, Merodach-baladan remained on the Babylonian throne for more than a decade and worked hard to rebuild his city's reputation and infrastructure. He even posted an inscription in Uruk proclaiming his defeat of Sargon's army. We have this artifact only because the Assyrians would eventually force Merodach-baladan off his throne. When Sargon attacked Babylon a second time in 710 BCE, he took the inscription back to Nineveh as a prize of his conquest, his way of saying "See what they said? And see what I did?" The propaganda war did not stop there, however. While in Babylon, Sargon even went so far as to "take the hand of Bêl," that is, to seize hold of the statue of Marduk in his temple and claim kingship, a bold and aggressive gesture, but at least he left the statue in its place. His successor would not be so generous.



## Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad)



M8-66a

## Gates of Dur-Sharrukin, with *Lamasu* Orthostates *in situ*

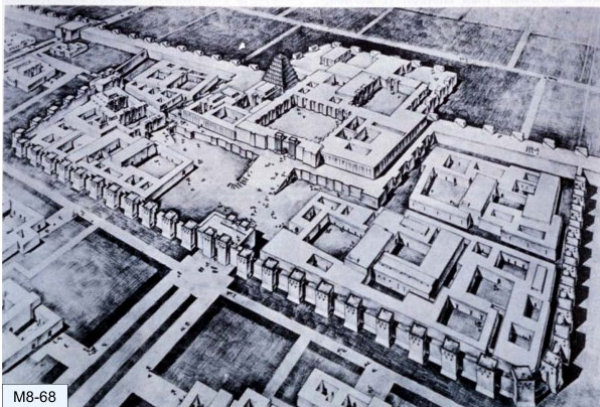


Human-headed winged bulls supporting an arch, as found by Victor Place in Sargon's palace at Khorsabad. Photograph taken in the early 1850s by M. Tranchard.

M8-67

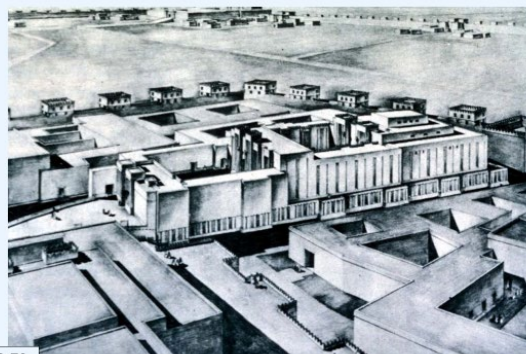
By the end of his reign, Sargon's domain stretched across the breadth of the Fertile Crescent. Only Judea, Iran and some parts of Asia Minor were not explicitly under his control, though they very much feared Assyrian power and paid homage and tribute when asked. This "most brilliant Assyrian king of his age," as one scholar puts it, without doubt, a fearsome conqueror, was also a great builder, his most famous monument being an enormous fortress named after him, Dur-Sharrukin ("Fort Sargon"). It lies just north of Nimrud at the modern site called Khorsabad. Construction began in the fourth year of the king's reign (717 BCE) and was completed only just prior to his early death (705 BCE). After having the king live in it for all of one year, the city was abandoned almost immediately — shades of Akhetaten! — and turned into magnificent future archaeology. The reason for deserting it is unclear. The answer may as simple as it was just too far from the city center of Nimrud.

170. Khorsabad, citadel. Reconstruction by Charles Altman



M8-68

## Drawing: Reconstruction of Palace at Dur-Sharrukin

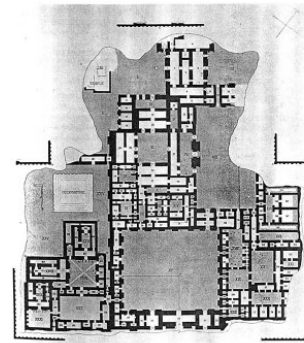


M8-70

Khorsabad was one of the first sites to be excavated in the nineteenth century, even earlier than Nimrud. Paul Emile Botta led a team of French archaeologists who brought back magnificent statues and other artifacts for the opening of a new Assyrian wing of the Louvre Museum. Paris was enthralled and interest in Assyria exploded across Europe. Botta would go on to publish five volumes about his dig at Khorsabad, with extravagant and creative paintings and drawings, often more redolent of his time than antiquity.



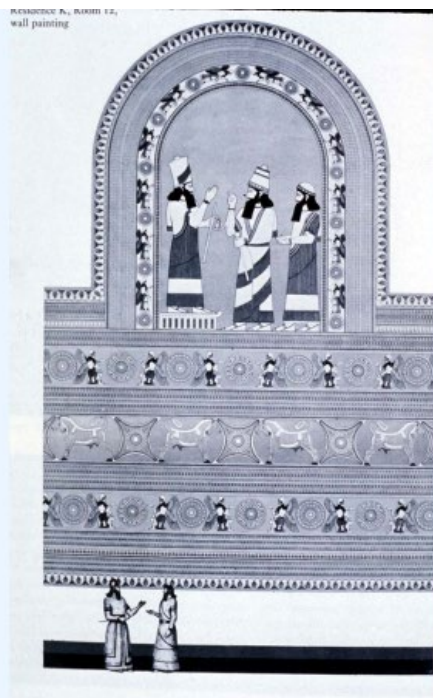
M8-69 9. Khorsabad, citadel, gate A



Plan of Sargon's palace, Khorsabad (from Place and Thomas 1847, vol. 3, pl. 3).

Dur-Sharrukin was less a palace than an opulent army camp, reflective of Sargon's militaristic take on life. It had massive walls, a mile long and twenty feet thick. Two gates on each side were guarded by lamasus orthostates. The king's residence lay in the north corner as part of a large complex of buildings. It had an enormous interior courtyard surrounded by rooms which were offices, at least to judge from the number of broken tablets found in them. They could also have been storage facilities, or both.

## Wall Paintings (reconstruction): Palace at Dur-Sharrukin



M8-71

The height of the walls was staggering, and mounted as it was on a high point in the city, the palace overlooked the rest of the town with the same haughty splendor Assyria gazed upon the rest of Mesopotamia. One archaeologist calls it a "grandiose conception." It was at heart Assyrian foreign policy in architectural form, designed to awe, to stagger, to lower, to terrify, to humiliate.

Assyrian Relief:  
Winged Genie  
(Dur-Sharrukin)



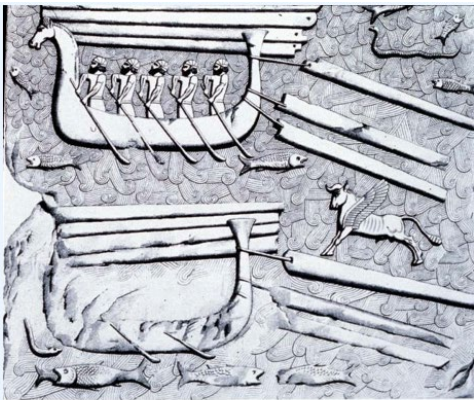
M8-72



Right A painted, sun-dried clay figure found at Dur-Sharrukin. Often wrongly identified as the hero Gilgamesh it is, in fact, the god Lahmu (the hairy one). Figurines like this were buried in the foundations of the building as protection against evil.

M8-73

Some stone reliefs created for Dur-Sharrukin have survived, like the one above depicting a winged genie performing some sort of ritual with a bucket and an instrument that looks like a pine cone. There's notable improvement in the artistry from Tiglath-Pileser's day: deeper incision in the stone and a wider variety of images, including the king confronting lions, though the poses of the figures are still rather stiff and hieratic. A clay statuette, often misinterpreted as Gilgamesh, served as a foundation figurine. It's a protective deity whose image foreign artists had probably been commissioned to make. With the re-enslavement of the Near East, high style had returned to Assyria.



Drawing of a relief of Sargon showing Phoenicians shipping logs for the king's palace (Botta and Flandin 1849-50: t. pl. 33).

M8-74

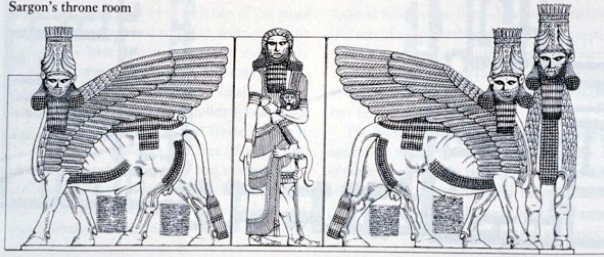
Charred cedar log found amidst the ruins of an Assyrian palace



M8-75

The art also focuses on the very engineering of this architectural triumph, for instance, how the large timbers necessary in erecting the tall walls of the palace had been brought to Khorsabad from Phoenicia. They were loaded on rafts and towed by oared ships up the Orontes river, then hauled across the desert and finally floated down the Euphrates and other rivers until they reached the Assyrian highlands. Amidst the ruins of this palace which was later burned down in the catastrophe at the end of the seventh centuries, archaeologists found the charred remains of these very timbers. The dendrochronology done on them has helped to anchor the dating of this period and others.

168. Khorsabad, Sargon's palace, main entrance to Sargon's throne room



M8-76

### Assyrian Relief: Siege of a City



M8-77

What's almost as interesting as what was found in the artwork of Dur-Sharrukin is what was not. No hunting scenes, no reliefs depicting libations or humans engaged in religious ceremonies. The message seems abundantly clear: "The king is the god here. Pray to him." That's about as Akkadian a message as there is. Sargon could not have been better named.

### Assyrian Relief: the Urartian Campaign

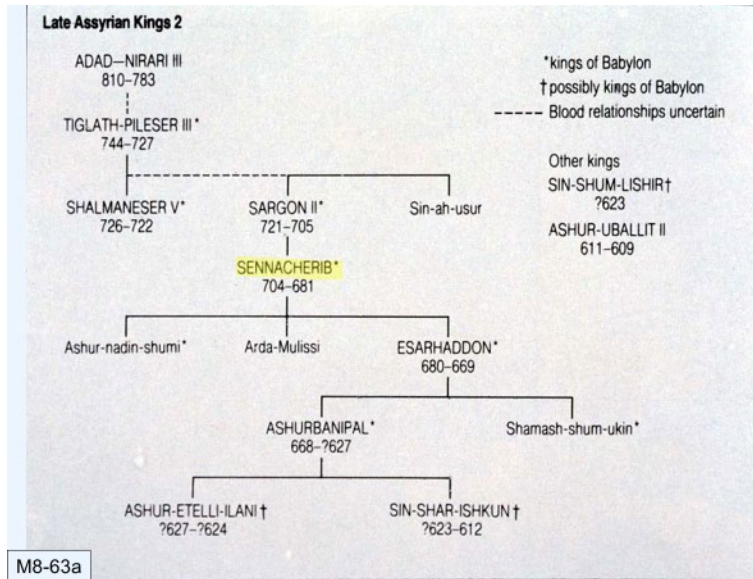


Drawing of a relief from the palace of Sargon showing Assyrians weighing booty from Musasir (Botta and Flandin 1849-50: 11, pl. 140).

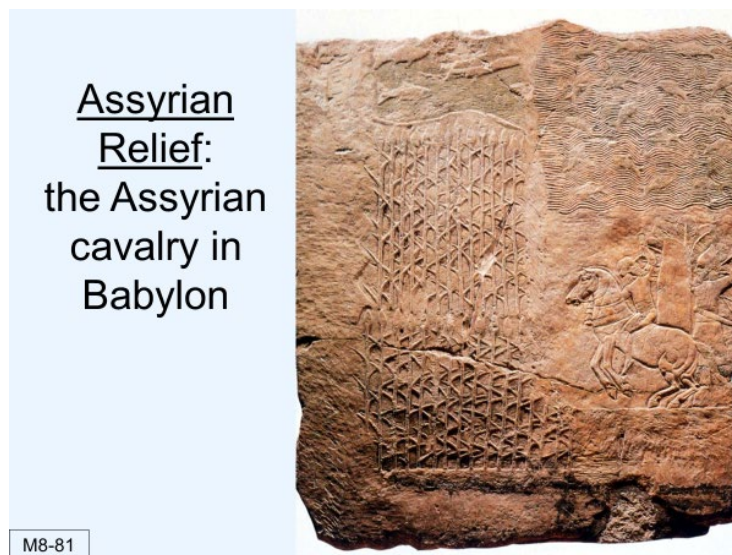
M8-78

What's weirder, there are no scenes of flaying or torturing! This king may have seen himself as a god but he was at heart a practical military man. As far as Assyrians were concerned in this day, war was about ravaging cities and collecting booty. To Sargon, inflicting pain on individuals was done not for its own sake, not something to be trumpeted to the world, but a tool to force the payment of tribute. Of course, there is another possibility here. We haven't found the parts of the palace that displayed scenes of torture or religious ritual. Or perhaps they aren't there to be uncovered at all because they were utterly destroyed in the Babylonian attack on the site. We should be grateful, I guess, to have what we do. Indeed, one important relief depicting the siege of the temple of Haldi in Urartu was being conveyed to Europe in a ship which sank. It's never

been recovered and is known today only from drawings that were made at the time. That's still our best information on Urartian construction techniques.



Sargon died in battle. He was still middle-aged but left behind a son who was old enough to take the throne. His name was Sennacherib, at least that's the name the Bible uses. In Assyrian that was Sin-ahhê-eriba meaning "the god Sin has compensated for <the death of> his brothers." Apparently, then, he was not his father's eldest child, perhaps not the crown prince until very late in Sargon's reign. Sennacherib would certainly not act like a person who had been carefully groomed for high power. He was paranoid, vindictive, irrational and uncompromising.



Much to their later regret, upon Sargon's death the kingdoms all around the region tried to wriggle free from Assyrian control. For instance, led by a resurgent Merodach-baladan, Babylon rebelled. It was so close to home that Sennacherib was forced to deal with it first. He squelched

the uprising, a joint alliance of Babylonians and Elamites, and chased Merodach-baladan back into the swamps of southern Mesopotamia. He then turned west and in the fourth year of his reign invaded Syria and Palestine. There he shattered a revolt among the Aramaeans on the Levantine coast who were being aided by Egypt.

Assyrian Relief:  
Sennacherib on  
his throne,  
at the siege of  
Lachish



M8-79

Assyrian Relief: Sennacherib's  
archers and slingers



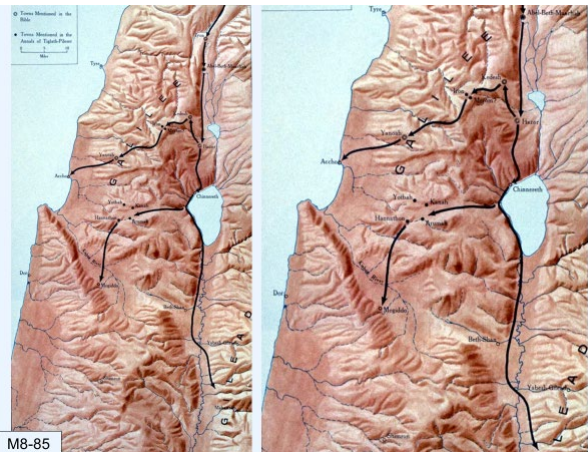
M8-80

The culmination of this assault resulted in the siege of Lachish, a city in Judea second only in importance to Jerusalem. This part of Sennacherib's campaign became the subject of a series of wall reliefs in his palace at Nineveh. They show the king seated on a throne overseeing the battle as his army moves into action. Note that the relief of archers and slingers above had to be re-carved when the floors of the palace were apparently raised at a later date. Or it could also have just been a mistake because somebody sent in the wrong measurements.



10.20 View of the Assyrian siege ramp discovered at Lachish.

M8-82a

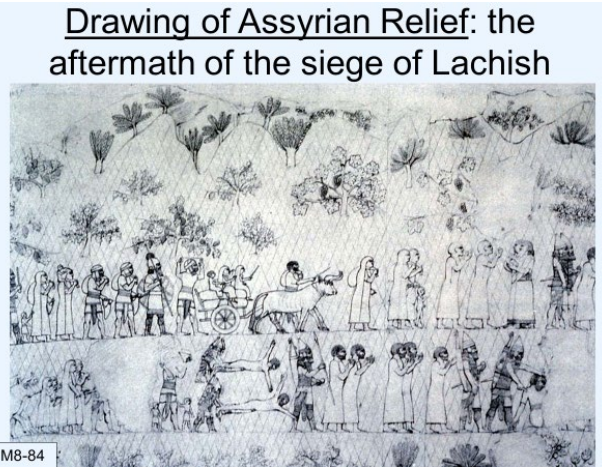


M8-85

The enormous siege mound the Assyrians built as a ramp for their army to go over the high walls of Lachish is still visible in the landscape of the area today. Hundreds of arrowheads have been dug out of it, and more than fifteen hundred skulls were found in nearby caves. It's interesting to note that, when the Bible tells the story of Sennacherib's attack, there is only the vaguest allusion to this siege (2 Kings 18).



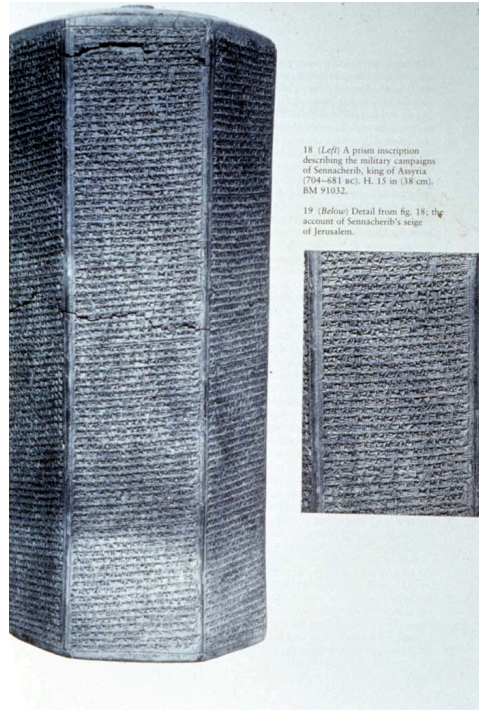
Judaeen Exiles



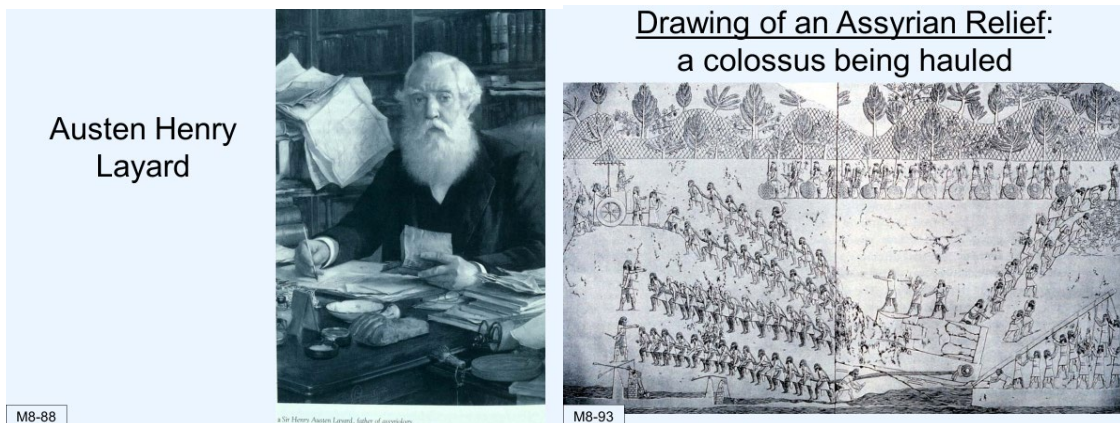
Drawing of Assyrian Relief: the aftermath of the siege of Lachish

To avert a direct assault on Jerusalem, the Judean king Hezekiah eventually gave in to Sennacherib's demands, shelling out a huge ransom of gold and silver. But that was not all. By now it was standing policy in Assyria to deport natives from their homeland, and this campaign was no exception. Thus, the reliefs also include images of long lines of sad exiles, walking past their leaders being tortured and flayed, headed to parts unknown.

Now at last Sennacherib was free to address the situation in Babylon. He invaded a second time and left his son, Ashur-nadin-shumi, as regent. Fleeing yet again, this time to Elam, Merodach-baladan finally died, though his cause did not. The Elamites somehow managed to capture Sennacherib's son and cart him off into exile and death. That was it. The king had had enough. He stormed down to Babylon yet one more time, took the city and the statue of Marduk which was carried off to Ashur, burned the rest to the ground and scraped its smoldering remains into an irrigation ditch and flooded them. End of story, return to primordial chaos, back to Tiamat, or so he hoped.



All this and more Sennacherib carefully documents on a cuneiform prism recording his military exploits and triumphs. But his true legacy is best understood not in words but through art, in particular, the palace he built at Nineveh, before this an important Assyrian city but now the capital of the empire. On royal orders, rivers were diverted, aqueducts built, parks constructed and building after building rose to house the empire's burgeoning administration.



First excavated by Austen Henry Layard whom we've mentioned before, Sennacherib's palace included at least seventy-one rooms and many artworks. Their very construction is documented in the reliefs found there, as in the one above which shows a colossus statue being hauled into place.





Another depicts the site itself and the triple walls that surrounded the city. It featured columns that had solid-cast bronze statues of striding lions at the base. To bear the weight they held, these statues could not have weighed less than twenty tons.



In recent times, the walls of Nineveh have been restored as part of a campaign to promote Iraqi nationalism, but it's mostly guesswork. Inside the palace were found thousands and thousands of tablets, many of them copies of ancient texts dating as far back as Sumer in the third millennium BCE. These form the basis of much of our understanding of early Mesopotamian history. That is, to the antiquarian bent in the Assyrian heart we owe a great deal, so when we deplore their taste for atrocity, it's necessary to recall that it was part and parcel of their love for the past we deeply cherish.

Assyrian  
Relief:  
stone-workers  
carrying tools



M8-94

Because Layard did not keep careful records of where he found any particular relief — he must be forgiven since he worked so early in the evolution of archaeological technology — one of the major questions about Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh is whether the reliefs were grouped by subject matter in “theme rooms.” That is, were similar reliefs housed all in one room: a hunting room, a siege of Lachish room, and so on? And were those reliefs somehow relevant to the room’s purpose? One thing is clear. This artwork was as important to the Assyrians as steles had been to the Akkadians or kudurrus to the Kassites. Indeed, viewed as propaganda, reliefs are in many ways their replacement. We have found only a few Assyrian steles and those are traditional in style, highly unoriginal, nothing like Naram-Sin’s.

Assyrian Relief: Assur as winged sun-disk



M8-95

Also worth noting about these reliefs is the centrality of the king in the iconography. He presides over rituals with the gods depicted only as winged sun-disks floating above the scene. The message is abundantly clear: he is the god worth worshipping.

48 A park, probably at Nineveh, with a royal stela and columned summer-house; water for the trees arrives from the right, across an aqueduct with pointed arches. This slab, carved in the palace of Ashurbanipal about 645 BC, apparently shows a landscape created by his grandfather Sennacherib.



M8-97

Sennacherib is, in fact, all over the place at Nineveh: watching a siege, performing rites, even standing in his garden as part of a particularly fascinating relief. In the image above, a lush parkland is fed by aqueducts. In a temple in a stele-like niche stands the king — it's not clear, though, if it's Sennacherib or his grandson Assurbanipal — or is it only a statue of him? A horned altar takes center stage in a scene of sacred, bucolic tranquility, an Assyrian *'ulam*.

### Drawing of Assyrian Relief: King seated on throne in garden



M8-96

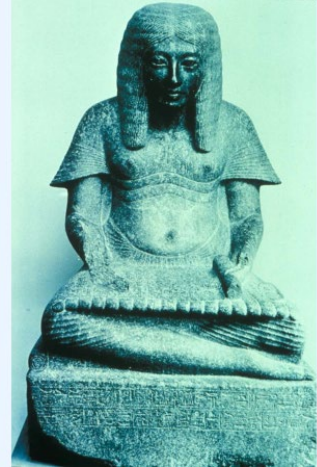
This fascination with and exaltation of nature appears throughout Assyrian reliefs, even in scenes of conquest and carnage as seen in the image above where the king surveys captives as succulent grapevines dangle overhead.

Drawing of the  
Statue of  
Assurnasirpal II



M8-90

Ancient  
Scribe



M8-90a

And on the subject of art and artistry in Sennacherib's day, there are two other things worth noting, first, how Assyrian statues were made. Sculptors working for the Assyrians clearly began with blocks of stone that had been excavated in a cylindrical shape. That's obvious from the rounded form seen in portraits like that of Assurnasirpal II above. Compare this to the blocky appearance of Egyptian statues which began as slabs cut out in rectilinear blocks. The same is true of Greek *kouroi*, pre-classical statues of young men in ancient Greece which also have an angular appearance. In this and so many ways, Assyrian art is unique.

Assyrian  
fresco:  
lion hunt,  
from Til Barsip



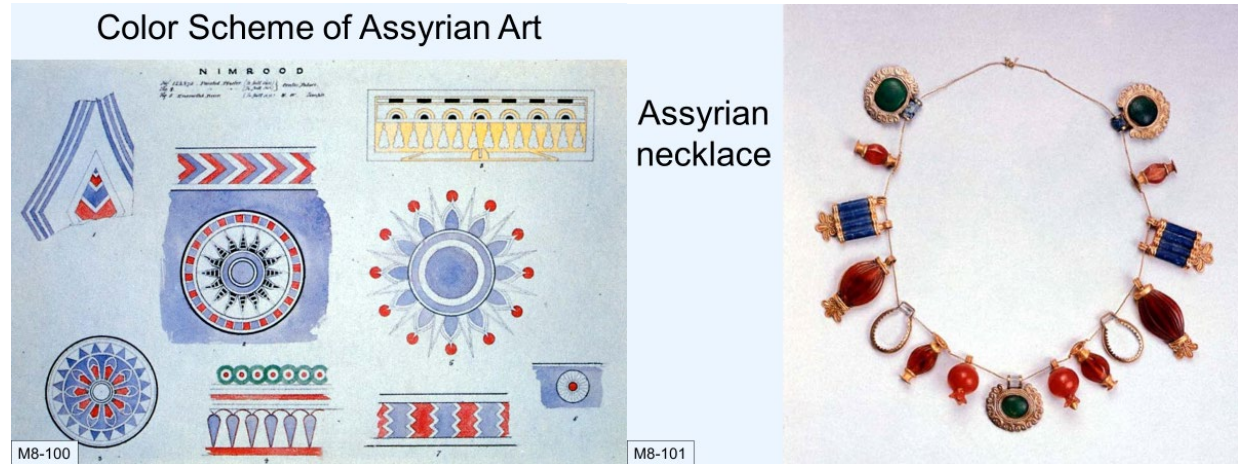
M8-98



M8-99

The second thing worth noting about Assyrian art is something all but lost to us, its color palette. But at Til Barsip in Syria (close to Carchemish), a French archaeologist named Thureau-Dangin working in the 1930's uncovered the residence of an Assyrian provincial governor. The date of the palace is unknown but it probably belongs to the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III, though the decorations may have been added later. What's remarkable here is that some of the painted plaster on the walls has been preserved and gives us a glimpse of the dynamic color schemes favored by Assyrians (above left). Notably, one of the Assyrian stone reliefs found at Nineveh has faint traces of paint too (above right). Note the red on the central figure's head. From these we learn all sorts of important things: how figures were outlined in heavy lines, how dry plaster was used — these are not frescos — and how dramatic, almost surreal hues were employed to

highlight the figures. Archaeological evidence even suggests lamasu statues were painted the same vivid blue as well, a color that was created from crushed cobalt or lapis lazuli.



Some confirmation of this is found in Assyrian jewelry, enough that we are able to construct a sense of their preference in color palette: cerulean blues, rich reds, forest greens. Against the blazing Mesopotamian sky, these artworks would have dazzled the eye.

## Reconstruction of Assyrian throne room (from *Monuments of Nineveh*, A.H. Layard)



Layard sensed this in his early work on Assyria, and though the reconstructions in his book are highly fanciful, his sense of the scope, color and impact of these artworks is likely to be close to the truth.

In the end, it was not only foreigners, or so it seems, who tasted Sennacherib's remorseless wrath, but also his family. Bitter infighting among his sons led to some sort of catastrophe in the very court itself. The Bible gloats that, when his own sons killed him as he was praying one day, the Lord was punishing him for his attack on Judea. Whatever the truth, his death came swiftly and without warning or preparation. Chaos erupted as his children went to war against each other. The final result was Sennacherib's designated heir, a younger son, Esarhaddon succeeded to the throne, smeared in the blood of his family. It was a fitting tribute to his father, but he turned out to be a very different type of ruler. And that's the next part of the story.