

Assyrian Armory Palaces

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Abstract

The ancient Assyrians were renowned as fearless warriors and capable conquerors. Their achievements stemmed from the large and well-armed troops, but also from the sophisticatedly organized backgrounds that provided the necessary support to the army. Both archaeological and written sources from the northern Mesopotamia provide the evidence not only about the campaigns into the foreign lands but also about the military organization within the proper Assyrian territory. The significant part of the home warfare system was the institution called ekal māšarti. The present study aims to explore this Assyrian military structure.

1 Introduction¹

“Military Palace,” “Review Palace,” “Arsenal,”² “Armory,”³ “Inventory Palace,”⁴ “Rear Palace,”⁵ “arsenal royal,”⁶ “Hinterhaus,”⁷ “Hinterer Palast,”⁸ “Reserve Palace,”⁹ “Palast der (militärischen) Reserve (truppen),”¹⁰ “Zeug-

¹The numbering of Assyrian texts follows the online editions RIAo, RINAP, SAA, and ATAE (without zeros at the beginning of numbers).

²E.g., Kertai, 2013: 19.

³E.g., the translation of the inscription Sennacherib 15: vii 21’.

⁴E.g., Parpola, 1976: 165.

⁵E.g., the translation of the inscription Sennacherib 22: vi 39.

⁶E.g., Matthiae, 2010: 197.

⁷Or ‘hinter house’ (Grayson, 1987: 314).

⁸E.g., Radner, 1997: 266.

⁹See RIA 10: 218.

¹⁰Frahm, 1997: 275.

haus,¹¹ or “Zeughauspalast.”¹² These all are terms attempting to describe the nature of building complexes which, according to written and material sources, were found in Neo-Assyrian capitals Kalḫu, Nineveh, and perhaps Dūr-Šarrukīn. Although such a type of building is considered a typically Assyrian feature, the evidence offers only three structures explicitly named *ekal māšarti* or *ekal kutalli*, and there are some doubts about one of them.

2 Kalḫu

Compared to the two others, the armory palace at Kalḫu is thoroughly explored (although not in its entirety) and well documented by various written sources, even the hundreds of texts found directly in it. Many studies have already appeared about its history, architecture, texts uncovered in it, and other finds;¹³ therefore, I will focus only briefly on its characteristics and several aspects relevant to the present paper.

The builder of the armory palace at Kalḫu was Shalmaneser III. Although he did not leave any building inscription in this regard, several of his texts calling the structure “Palace of Shalmaneser”¹⁴ were found directly inside the building, and the later king Esarhaddon refers to Shalmaneser as the builder of this palace as well.¹⁵ Adad-nērārī III, Shalmaneser’s grandson, carried out some repair works,¹⁶ and the armory palace at Kalḫu was undoubtedly in use during the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, and Sennacherib.¹⁷ The final appearance of the complex is a work of Esarhaddon, who accomplished an extensive reconstruction.¹⁸

¹¹E.g., Bär, 2007: 247.

¹²E.g., RIA 10: 474; Frahm, 1997: 274.

¹³Archaeological surveys and architecture: D. Oates, 1959; Mallowan, 1950; Mallowan, 1966: 369–470; Kertai, 2015: 58–73, 159–160; Oates / Oates, 2004: 144–194. Royal inscriptions and other texts: Kinnier Wilson, 1972 (CTN 1); Dalley / Postgate, 1984 (CTN 3); Grayson, 1996 (RIMA 3; see also RIAo). Ivories: IN (Ivories from Nimrud); Mallowan, 1966: 471–599; Herrmann / Coffey / Laidlaw, 2004. Glass objects: Orchard, 1978; Brill, 1978. Metal objects: Curtis / Ponting, 2013.

¹⁴E.g., Shalmaneser III 28: 1. See also footnote 65 (p. 141).

¹⁵Esarhaddon 77: 42–43; Esarhaddon 81: 3–5; Esarhaddon 82: 2–3.

¹⁶His brick inscriptions are numbered Adad-nerari III 17 and Adad-nerari III 18 at RIAo, but these texts have not yet been published (Grayson, 1996: 222; Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 265).

¹⁷The building appears in a letter from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (SAA 19 12: 8), in another letter from the era of Sargon II (SAA 5 206; see below), and in a legal transaction dated to the year 709 BCE (SAA 6 31: r. 26). Some other texts – not mentioning the armory palace but excavated directly in it – are considered to come from the reign of Sargon II (e.g., CTN 3 86, CTN 3 99, CTN 3 110, CTN 3 116, CTN 3 118). An administrative record CTN 3 76 dated to the reign of Sennacherib (683 BCE) lists 784 bows from Arpadia.

¹⁸He constructed a new terrace with larger palatial halls and *bīt ḫilāni* (Esarhaddon 77: 42–55; Esarhaddon 80: 5’–11’; Esarhaddon 81: 3–7; Esarhaddon 82: 2–5).



Figure 1. Plan of Kalhu.¹⁹

The palace complex occupied the southeastern city corner and was adjacent to a large open area surrounded by the wall. It is probable that stables, granaries, and storages for less rare commodities, for which there was not enough space inside the palace-fortress, adjoined the northern and western sections of the wall.²⁰ The palace consisted of three large courtyards surrounded by rooms and smaller courts. Some rooms around the northwest courtyard served as workshops for repairing military equipment, including chariots, and the others were storerooms for military implements and supplies. Similarly, the rooms around the northeast courtyard were originally storages and workshops, but several of these spaces later became residences. The place of most importance is the northern corner, from where about

¹⁹The plan draws on the following sources: Dalley / Postgate, 1984: xii; Kertai, 2013: Pl. V; Kertai, 2015: Pl. 1; Google Earth; CORONA Atlas. Background map: Google Earth.

²⁰Oates / Oates, 2004: 145–148.

80 administrative texts come.²¹ This sector probably served as an abode of a high-ranking official.²² The rooms in the west corner formed another apartment, perhaps that of *rab ekalli*, the official in charge of the armory palace.²³



Figure 2. Plan of *ekal māšarti* of Kalḫu.²⁴

The long rooms with attached bathrooms along the north and west sides of the southeast courtyard were presumably barracks for the king's troops. The east corner constituted a residential suite of some higher official, and the other rooms served as storerooms.²⁵ Unlike other quadrants of the complex, the southwest quadrant doesn't have a large central courtyard. It consisted of four courts surrounded by large storages where the excavators found plenty of ivories, bulky storage jars, and – among others – a mass of bronze and iron scale armor.²⁶

²¹Including 22 horse lists relating to musters of cavalry and chariotry and 48 wine lists documenting the rations for persons of various statuses.

²²Oates / Oates, 2004: 155–159; Pedersén, 1998: 145.

²³Oates / Oates, 2004: 161, 162, 164; Pedersén, 1998: 145.

²⁴The plan draws on the following sources: Dalley / Postgate, 1984: xii; Kertai, 2015: Pl. 1; Google Earth; CORONA Atlas. Background map: Google Earth.

²⁵Oates / Oates, 2004: 162–163.

²⁶Oates / Oates, 2004: 165–170.

The southern part of the complex was composed of representation rooms – including the throne room – and a private suite. This suite is conventionally called the queen’s household because of the discovery of the archive of *ša-kintu*, the queen’s manageress, in one of its rooms.²⁷ It is, however, probable that this area was also the location of the king’s private rooms. Some other rooms presumably served as residences or offices of eunuch officers.²⁸

3 Nineveh

Archaeologists could explore only a few peripheral parts of the armory palace at Tell Nebi Yunus in Nineveh²⁹ until recently because a church and later a mosque occupied the *tell* since the Middle Ages. In July 2014, during the dramatic events in Iraq, this mosque was destroyed by ISIL, who then dug tunnels in the hill to find antiquities to be a sale on the black market. Only in early 2017, after the expulsion of ISIL from Mosul, an archaeological survey of the Assyrian palace under the mosque ruins could begin.³⁰

The most prominent builder of the armory palace in Nineveh was Sennacherib, who chose this city as his new seat. However, a military building probably stood in this city long before his reign,³¹ presumably already in the Middle Assyrian period. In most cases, Sennacherib refers to his palace as *ekal kutalli*.³² A similar name – *bīt kutalli* – was used by Aššur-rēša-iši I, who informs on the reconstruction of the “*bīt’ šaḫūri* of the *bīt ku’tal’[li]*”³³ in Nineveh. Sennacherib also confirms an older structure on which several

²⁷Pedersén, 1998: 145–167.

²⁸See Oates / Oates, 2004: 180–190; cf. Kertai, 2015: Pl. 9.

²⁹See Turner, 1970: 68–75; MacGinnis, 1989: 187–192; Scott / MacGinnis, 1990: 63–73; Kertai, 2015: 147–153; MacGinnis, 1992: 3–19; Miglus / Maul, 2020: 128–213 (unfortunately, the author did not have access to the study during the writing this paper).

³⁰See, e.g., Danti / Ali / Paulette et al., 2015: 48–54. For contemporary news see, e.g., Ensor, 2017b; Ensor, 2017a; Khoshnaw / Adeane / El Gibaly, 2018; Majeed, 2017; Staff / AFP, 2017; McKirdy / Wedeman / Khadder, 2017.

³¹D. Kertai supposes that until the 9th century BCE, the main Assyrian “palace of war” was in Nineveh, while the “palace of peace” stood in Aššur (Kertai, 2011: 71–72).

³²See below.

³³Aššur-reša-iši I 4: 4–6. Grayson’s RIMA 1 doesn’t give the exact place from where two fragments of clay cones bearing this inscription come (Grayson, 1987: 314), but CDLI (nos. P467280, P467281) and the website of the British Museum (nos. 1856,0909.173, 1856,0909.177) name Kuyunjik. Two other texts of Aššur-rēša-iši inscribed on bricks may refer to the same building (Aššur-reša-iši I 5 (BM 137484, BM 137487, BM 137491); Aššur-reša-iši I 6 (BM 137494)), but these texts were also apparently discovered at Kuyunjik (see Grayson, 1987: 315 and 316, CDLI, and the British Museum website, but cf. Matthiae, 2010: 198). Nebi Yunus is a findspot of a brick inscription of Adad-nērārī III, but most exemplars of this text originate from Kuyunjik (Adad-nerari III 15; Grayson, 1996: 220).

of his predecessors, whose names are unfortunately unknown, worked.³⁴ He removed the old building and built a massive terrace on which he constructed a monumental palace complex.³⁵

Nevertheless, Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon claims that his father's palace is small for him, and he started further reconstruction,³⁶ mainly in the residential suite.³⁷ The renovated structure was named Ešgalšiddudua, 'The palace that administers everything.'³⁸ Esarhaddon's successor Ashurbanipal left a brief report on repairing a collapsed part of the building.³⁹

According to the building inscriptions⁴⁰ of these three rulers, the armory palace at Nineveh stood on a mudbrick terrace high of 200 courses (*tibku*). The complex contained a large outer courtyard (*kisallu bābānū*)⁴¹ for military parades and horse training and the great courtyard adjacent to the luxuriously furnished and richly decorated limestone palace (*kisallu rabū šaplānu ekal pīli*),⁴² which included, among other things, spaces serving as a treasury (*nakkamtu*).⁴³

Regarding the armory at Nineveh, certain ambiguities arose due to several texts found in the citadel that mention more palaces associated with military affairs located in the city – *ekal māšarti* of Nineveh, *ekal māšarti* of the New Contingent, and *bīt kutalli*:

³⁴"The *ekal kutalli* that earlier kings, my ancestors, had had built (...) – its terrace did not exist, its site had become too small, and its construction was inexpert. With the passage of time, its base had fallen into disrepair, then its foundations had become loose (and) its superstructure had collapsed." (Sennacherib 22: vi 39–44). See also Sennacherib 23: vi 31–37; Sennacherib 34: 55–59 (more detailed).

³⁵The most detailed description regarding the work on the palace is given by Sennacherib 34: 59–90. Following texts offer shorter reports: Sennacherib 22: vi 45–73; Sennacherib 25: ii' 1'–12'; Sennacherib 35: r. 11''–14'' (severely broken); and perhaps Sennacherib 152: 10–16 (partially broken).

³⁶Esarhaddon 1: v 40 – vi 43; Esarhaddon 2: iv 32 – vi 9; Esarhaddon 3: iv 30' – v 39'; Esarhaddon 5: viii 2'–16'.

³⁷Esarhaddon 1: vi 5–6; Esarhaddon 2: v 18–21; Esarhaddon 3: v 8'–11'.

³⁸Esarhaddon 1: vi 42–43; Esarhaddon 2: vi 8–9.

³⁹Ashurbanipal 3: viii 56–64; Ashurbanipal 6: x 19''–1'''.

⁴⁰For a more detailed analysis of the building inscriptions, see Turner, 1970: 69ff.

⁴¹Sennacherib 22: vi 70–71; Sennacherib 34: 58, 67.

⁴²Sennacherib 34: 82.

⁴³Sennacherib 34: 90.

SAA 7 23 ⁴⁴ (ADD 950)	SAA 7 115 ⁴⁵ (ADD 953)	SAA 7 148 ⁴⁶ (ADD 1083)
Review Palace of Nineveh (KUR <i>ma-šar-te</i> NINA.KI)	Review Palace of Nineveh (KUR <i>ma-šar-te</i> URU.ni-nu-a)	Review Palace (of Nineveh) (É.GAL <i>ma-šar-te</i>)
Review Palace of the New Contingent (KUR <i>ma-šar-te ki-šir</i> GIBIL)	Review Palace of the New Contingent (KUR <i>ma-šar-te ki-šir</i> GIBIL)	Review Palace of the New Contingent (É.GAL <i>ma-šar-te ki-šir</i> GIBIL)
		New Palace (É GIBIL)
		New Palace of the Central City (É GIBIL MURUB ₄ -URU)
		Rear Palace (É <i>ku-tal</i>)

Interpretations of these texts differ. Some researchers assume that these palaces were parts of the palace complex at Nebi Yunus,⁴⁷ while others suppose they were separate buildings.⁴⁸ As for *ekal māšarti* of the New Contingent, two lists of high-ranking officers from the reign of Esarhaddon mention the “governor of the new contingent of Sennacherib” after the governor of Nineveh.⁴⁹ It indicates that *ekal māšarti* of the New Contingent was a separate unit with its governor. In addition to these three buildings, the New Palaces could also relate to military matters.⁵⁰ Thus, there may have been five military-related *ekallus* or *bītus* in Nineveh. But this does not

⁴⁴Lines 3–4.

⁴⁵Lines i 3–4. This text also mentions New Palace and *ekal māšarti* of Kalḫu in lines i 6 and 7.

⁴⁶Lines ii 14’–16’ and 18’–19’.

⁴⁷Frahm, 1997: 275 (regarding *ekal māšarti* and *bīt kutalli* in SAA 7 148).

⁴⁸Matthiae, 2010: 197 (concerning *ekal māšarti* and *bīt kutalli* in SAA 7 148), Postgate, 2007: 348 (regarding *ekal māšarti* and *ekal māšarti* of the New Contingent in SAA 7 23, SAA 7 115, and SAA 7 148).

⁴⁹SAA 7 3: i 5–6; SAA 7 4: i 7’–8’. It is also noteworthy that Šumāia, the author of the astrological report SAA 8 499, entitles himself as the “astrologer of the new contingent” (SAA 8 499: r. 4–6; LÚ.DUB.SAR UD-AN-^dEN.LÍL *šá ki-iš-ri eš-šú*).

⁵⁰Parpola, 1983: 128–129; Kertai, 2013: 22. S. Parpola bases his assumption primarily on a document from Nineveh, in which certain Mušēzib-Marduk, the prefect of the horses of the New Palace, appears (SAA 6 301: 2–3; LÚ.GAR-*nu šá* ANŠE.KUR.MEŠ *šá* É GIBIL). D. Kertai also includes the “New Palace of the Central City” among the military buildings (SAA 7 148:

necessarily mean four completely separate palace districts. Both Akkadian terms have broader use, so it is better to understand them as administrative “units” or “households,” especially in administrative texts.⁵¹ Therefore, the “palaces” could be separate administrative entities of the military district at Nebi Yunus. In some texts, the name of one part – most frequently *bīt/ekal kutalli* or *ekal māšarti* – may refer to the whole complex, which is not unusual in Assyrian texts.



Figure 3. Plan of Nineveh.⁵²

ii 18': É GIBIL MURUB₄-URU; Kertai, 2013: 22). However, Parpola translates the concerned line in SAA 7 148 as “New Palace of the Citadel” (Parpola, 1983: 129).

⁵¹Kertai, 2013: 22; Parpola, 1983: 129.

⁵²The plan draws on the following sources: Otto, 2015: 483; Kertai, 2015: Pl. 16; Scott / MacGinnis, 1990: 65, 73; Google Earth. Background map: Google Earth.

4 Dūr-Šarrukīn

The Palace F in Dūr-Šarrukīn,⁵³ resembling the armory at Kalḫu in its dispositions and position within the city, is also considered to be an armory palace.⁵⁴ The building stood on a terrace partially protruding from the city walls, but the reconstruction of its plan is possible only roughly. It is especially true of the section within the city,⁵⁵ where the activities more closely related to military affairs were possibly taking place. No text from the building confirms its purpose as an armory,⁵⁶ and the textual evidence of other provenance is not much better. Sargon himself does not name the armory palace at Dūr-Šarrukīn in his inscriptions, and scanty references in other texts its existence only suggest rather than confirm.

Probably the most important of these texts is a partially damaged letter found in Nineveh, in which the crown prince Sennacherib informs the king about certain Gidgiddānu and his brothers. In the beginning, Sennacherib writes that the persons in question are in Dūr-Šarrukīn. After matters concerning the city of Aššur and the gap of broken text, he probably returns to these persons and states that they have received new orders and are working on *ekal māšarti*.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the lists of horses and military personnel from the armory palace at Kalḫu and probably also similar texts found in the citadel

⁵³For more information, see Frankfort, 1933: 87–90; Loud / Altman, 1938: 75–78; Matthiae, 2010: 197–203, Kertai, 2015: 117–120.

⁵⁴Matthiae, 2010: 199, 201; Reade, 2011: 118; Oates / Oates, 2004: 180. However, some scholars suppose that Palace F may have been the seat of the crown prince Sennacherib, or it could fulfill both functions – the armory palace as well as the residence of the crown prince (see Matthiae, 2010: 199, note 8; Loud / Altman, 1938: 9).

⁵⁵Loud / Altman, 1938: 9, 75–76, Pl. 69 and 75.

⁵⁶Sargon II 10, (pavement slab); Sargon II 11 (pavement slab); Sargon II 43 (cylinders; DŠ 1288–1295; exs. 13–20); Sargon II 57 (L, M; two fragments of glazed brick frieze). See Loud / Altman, 1938: 77, 98, 105; Frame, 2021.

⁵⁷SAA 1 39. The connection of Gidgiddānu and his brothers with Dūr-Šarrukīn is also confirmed by the letter SAA 1 152, whose author assures the king that these men have not left the city. Another proof of the existence of *ekal māšarti* in Dūr-Šarrukīn may be the letter SAA 5 206 (see RIA 10: 218) written by Šarru-ēmuranni, governor of Māzama (PNA Š–Z: 1234–1235). He writes to the king that they opened the treasury of metal scraps at the entrance to the unspecified “house in the palace upon the terrace,” “weighed 420 talents of bronze scraps and plac[ed] it in the storehouse [of] the cupbearer.” After the broken passage, the text continues: “Alternatively, we can do the (inventory) of the *ekal māšarti* on the 29th and go in the remaining days to Dūr-Šarrukīn, to seal those tunics.” Despite the bad condition of the text, it is clear that the *ekal māšarti* mentioned in the letter stood in another city since they intend to go to Dūr-Šarrukīn till after the inventory of this *ekal māšarti*. A badly damaged administrative record SAA 11 21 related probably to the construction of Dūr-Šarrukīn also mentions *ekal māšarti*, but the context is unclear: “[...] in the *sūtu*-measures of the *ekal māšarti*” (l. 9).

at Nineveh dated to the reign of Sargon⁵⁸ show that this ruler used the armories in these cities during his reign.⁵⁹ Their significance is also evident because although Sargon II does not mention the start point of his military campaigns very often, it was Kalḫu from which his army set out on a military campaign against Urarṭu in 714 BCE.⁶⁰



Figure 4. Plan of Dūr-Šarrukīn.⁶¹

⁵⁸Fales / Postgate, 1995: xxvi-xxviii; Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 27–31.

⁵⁹However, some of the horses delivered to Nineveh may have been destined for nearby Dūr-Šarrukīn, where some military officers also operated (SAA 11 133: ii 18 (officers from Dūr-Šarrukīn); SAA 11 138: 4 (Dūr-Šarrukīn in broken context)). The presence of officers connected to military affairs is also confirmed by the letter from Kišir-Aššur, governor of Dūr-Šarrukīn (PNA H–K: 621), who informs the king about the construction of houses for the recruitment officers *mušarkisu* (SAA 1 124; concerning *mušarkisu* officers, see, e.g., Dezső, 2012: 43–44 and 120–128).

⁶⁰“I set out from my royal city Kalḫu (...)” (Sargon II 65: 8).

⁶¹The plan draws on the following sources: Loud / Altman, 1938: Pl. 69 and 75; Kertai, 2015: Pl. 10; Google Earth. Background map: Google Earth.

As for the poor evidence concerning the armory at Dūr-Šarrukīn, the fact that the construction of the city terminated just before Sargon's death seems to play an important role. The armory palace could not provide sufficient background for military activities for a substantial part of his reign as its construction was still in process. It is also the reason for the intensive use of the armory palace at Kalḫu and probably also at Nineveh. After Sargon's death, *ekal māšarti* at Dūr-Šarrukīn perhaps lost its importance when his successor Sennacherib turned his attention to nearby Nineveh, where he renovated its armory.⁶² Dūr-Šarrukīn remained the capital of the province of the same name, and according to the letter written by Nabû-šumu-iddina,⁶³ this city was – together with Kalḫu and Nineveh – a significant tax-collection center (*nakkante ša pirrāni*).⁶⁴

5 Characteristics of documented armory palaces

Written and archaeological evidence relating to armory palaces allows some conclusions regarding the characteristics of these building complexes. But we should remember that these are only conclusions based on three cases.

5.1 Names of the building

Although military buildings must have existed in Assyria much earlier, at least since the Middle Assyrian period, the term *ekal māšarti* appears in Assyrian sources relatively late. Shalmaneser III called his new structure at Kalḫu simply *ekallu*, the palace.⁶⁵ The name *ekal māšarti* (É.GAL-*ma-šar-ti*)⁶⁶

⁶²Apparently, Sennacherib even transported building material from Dūr-Šarrukīn and used it for his armory at Nineveh (Scott / MacGinnis, 1990: 65–66).

⁶³Nabû-šumu-iddina (or Nādinu in abbreviated form) was the inspector of the Nabû temple in Kalḫu. He was responsible for receiving and reviewing horses delivered from various provinces and officials to Kalḫu (SAA 13 82–123; see also PNA L–N: 885–886).

⁶⁴SAA 13 95: 8–12. Indeed, other Nabû-šumu-iddina's reports mention Dūr-Šarrukīn as one of the places from which horses were delivered to Kalḫu (SAA 13 92: r. 2–3; SAA 13 99: r. 1–2; SAA 13 105: 8–9; SAA 13 114: 15).

⁶⁵Shalmaneser III 28 and Shalmaneser III 57 (throne bases); Shalmaneser III 29 (slab); Shalmaneser III 30–37 (door sills and door bolt sockets; the beginning of Shalmaneser III 30 is reconstructed); Shalmaneser III 113 (stone spoon); Shalmaneser III 114 (glazed brick panel; the beginning is reconstructed); Shalmaneser III 115 (lion weight). According to P. Matthiae, Shalmaneser built this structure as a conventional palace and only altered some elements known from the North-West Palace of his father Ashurnasirpal II to better suit his needs as an intense warrior and recipient of abundant booty and tribute (Matthiae, 2010: 200).

⁶⁶For the meaning of the Akkadian term *māšartu*, see CAD M/1: 358–359 and A/2: 420–422 (*ašāru*).

first appears in connection with the same building in a wine list dated to the year 784 BCE,⁶⁷ to the reign of Shalmaneser's grandson Adad-nērārī III.

The term also figures in a letter in which Šarru-dūrī, governor of Kalḫu,⁶⁸ writes to the king Tiglath-pileser III as follows: "I have [persona]lly brought [the people] of Sîn-šabši [in] to the king, my lord's presence: once to the *ekal māšarti* and once to Nineveh."⁶⁹ The designation *ekal māšarti* undoubtedly means the armory palace at Kalḫu. In the case of Nineveh, it perhaps could also be an armory palace, although the text does not state the exact place in the city, nor does it specify "the people of Sîn-šabši" and the reason for bringing them. If so, it would mean that during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, the term *ekal māšarti* was used exclusively in connection with the building in Kalḫu. The same also indicates the fact that Šarru-dūrī does not bother to specify the city, although the fact that the writer was the governor Kalḫu may also play a role.

Texts relating to the military building in Dūr-Šarrukīn are somewhat uncertain, but in Sargon's time, the armory bore the name *ekal māšarti*.⁷⁰ However, whether the designation refers to Kalḫu or Dūr-Šarrukīn, it is conceivable that just as the architectural dispositions of Fort Shalmaneser influenced the appearance of Palace F in Dūr-Šarrukīn, it could be similar in the case of its name. But on the other hand, Sargon himself does not mention an armory palace in his inscriptions, and this designation is relatively rare even in other texts dated back to his reign.

Sennacherib used the term *ekal māšarti* for his armory palace at Nineveh in its entirety only once,⁷¹ and two other occurrences are related to gate names: *abul ekal māšarti*⁷² and *mušlālum ekal māšarti*.⁷³ In the vast majority of his inscriptions, he uses the name *ekal kutalli*,⁷⁴ a term similar to what the Middle Assyrian ruler Aššur-reša-iši I called his construction at Nineveh (*bīt kutalli*).⁷⁵ The same building is probably in question when some letters

⁶⁷CTN 13: i 11. Dating formula: "Addaru dīri, day 22nd, eponym year of Marduk-šarru-ušur" (l. i 2; concerning the eponym, see PNA L-N: 727).

⁶⁸See Luukko, 2013: xxii, but cf. PNA Š-Z: 1233–1234, and especially PNA P-Š: 1142.

⁶⁹SAA 19 12: 4–9.

⁷⁰See above.

⁷¹Frahm, 1997: 275; Sennacherib 34: 85. However, the previous passage of this text employs the term *ekal kutalli* (l. 55).

⁷²Sennacherib 15: vii 21'; Sennacherib 16: vii 67; Sennacherib 17: viii 2.

⁷³Step gate of *ekal māšarti* (Sennacherib 18: vii 35').

⁷⁴The conventional translation of this term is "Rear Palace," but E. Frahm suggests "Palast der (militärischen) Reserve(truppen)" as a more probable meaning (Frahm, 1997: 275).

⁷⁵Aššur-reša-iši I 4: 4. The term *bītu* does not necessarily refer to a small house or a particular part of a large structure since it may also designate the entire palace or temple building. See, e.g., the use of the term *bītu* (log. É) in the following texts: SAA 20 49 (Götteradressbuch),

addressed to Esarhaddon mention the child, presumably from the royal family, called *piqittu ša bīt kutalli*.⁷⁶ Regarding the probable identification of *bīt kutalli* with the armory of Nineveh, the royal correspondence offers another letter of great importance. The author of the letter SAA 16 143 writes to Esarhaddon that when he was still crown prince, the official Nabû-šarrāni brought some people to his father's presence in *bīt kutalli*.⁷⁷ This text links *bīt kutalli* (not *ekal kutalli*) directly to Sennacherib and, at the same time, proves that this ruler resided in it for some time. Since Esarhaddon's reign, the writing of the term *ekal māšarti* began to vary when the sign KUR sometimes substituted the traditional É.GAL in the expression of the word *ekallu*.⁷⁸ Another name for the armory was possibly the New Palace (*ekallu eššu* or *bītu eššu*⁷⁹) discussed above.

David Kertai assumes that *bīt kutalli* was probably a specific name used for the armory in Nineveh.⁸⁰ I think it could have been similar in the case of the name *ekal māšarti*, which may have initially been a unique designation for the structure in Kalḫu. Only later, the name could be taken first for Sargon's building in Dūr-Šarrukīn and then for the armory palace in Nineveh, for which, however, the original name was still occasionally used, although the name *ekal māšarti* prevailed during Esarhaddon's reign.

5.2 Functions of the building

In addition to the statements of the builders of the armory palaces expressed in their royal inscriptions, other written sources and the results of archaeo-

RIAo Shalmaneser I 3: 5–38; Shalmaneser III 53: 7; Tiglath-pileser III 58: 3; Esarhaddon 85: 4. And similarly, the term *ekallu* may represent both the whole building as well as its separate part (Turner, 1970: 73–74).

⁷⁶SAA 10 214: 7–8; SAA 10 217: 6–7; SAA 10 218: 6; SAA 10 219: 5–6. *Bīt kutalli* also figures in a letter SAA 16 217 (r. 7'); however, the context is unknown because of the damage of the text. This term also occurs in a wine list CTN 1 16 from Kalḫu, but together with *bītu šanû* and *bīt kudinni*. In this case, therefore, it was probably part of a palace complex (CTN 1 16: 8–10; but cf. CTN 1 16: 4' (É [*qi-qi-i*]) at the ATAE corpus).

⁷⁷SAA 16 143: r. 4'–7'. For dating, see Luukko / Buylaere, 2002: xx; but cf. PNA L–N: 873 (Nabû-šarrāni 4).

⁷⁸Esarhaddon 82: 2 (KUR *ma-šar-te šá qé-reb URU.kâl-ḫa*); SAA 16 21: r. 15–16 (KUR *ma-šar-ti URU.ni-nu-u*); SAA 7 23: 3–4 (KUR *ma-šar-te NINA.KI, KUR ma-šar-te ki-šir GIBIL*); SAA 7 115: i 2–3 and 6–7 (KUR *ma-šar-te (URU.ni-nu-a), KUR ma-šar-te (URU.kâl-ḫa)*, but see É.GAL *ma-šar-te* in the line i 17); SAA 14 451: r. 2'; CTN 3 13 (l. 5; KUR *ma-šar-te*; dated to 642 BCE); CTN 3 12 (l. 2–3; KUR *ma-šar-ti šá URU.kâl-ḫa*; dated to 623 BCE). The last two texts originated from the armory palace in Kalḫu.

⁷⁹See, e.g., SAA 14 169: 8 (É.GAL GIBIL); SAA 14 60: b. e. 7 (É GIBIL).

⁸⁰Kertai, 2011: 71. However, see also the note made by P. Matthiae on the bases of the list of palaces of Nineveh SAA 7 148 (ii 14' and 19'), in which *ekal māšarti* as well as *bīt kutalli* figure (Matthiae, 2010: 197, note 2).

logical surveys give further valuable information on the purposes of these buildings. In principle, the functions are military, residential, administrative, and economic.⁸¹ From the point of view of our topic, the first two are especially important.

Concerning the functions of the structure, Sennacherib writes: “Earlier kings had had built (the palace) for the proper running of the military camp (*ana šutēšur karāši*), the care of horses (*paqādi sisê*), (and) the overseeing of everything (*sanāqi mimma šumšu*).”⁸² Sennacherib himself then “enlarged its outer courtyard for the proper administration of the black-headed (*ana šutēšur šalmāt qaqqadi*), the inspection of thoroughbred horses, mules, *agālu*-donkeys ((*ana*) *paqādi mūrnisqī parê agālī*), military equipment, chariots, carts, wagons, quivers, bows, and *uṣṣu*-arrows, every type of implement of war ((*ana*) *paqādi*) *tillī narkabāti attarāte ereqqī išpāte tilpānāte u uṣṣī mimma šumšu unūt tāhāzi*), (and) the submission of teams of horses (and) mules, which have great strength, to the yoke (*našmandī sisê parê ša emūqī rabāte išū šuknuše ana nīri*).”⁸³ His reason for the enlargement was that the “outer courtyard was not wide enough to have horses show (their) mettle (*šuḥḥurat šubatsa ana šušmur sisê ul šumdula bābānū kisallu*).”⁸⁴ And finally, he adds: “I filled it with luxuriousness to be an object of wonder for all of the people. The surplus payment (*mandattu*) of all of the lands, (...) together with the wagons, chariots, vehicles (...) that I had captured, along with the countless equipment that I had accumulated: I had (all of these things) carried to the treasury of that palace and brought inside it.”⁸⁵

Esarhaddon, his son, describes the purposes of the building almost in identical words.⁸⁶ He only summarizes the last point of Sennacherib’s previous text as “the plunder of enemies” (*šallat nakiri*)⁸⁷ and adds to the reasons for reconstruction the increasing the area “to train with chariots” ((*ana*) *šitamduḥ narkabāti*).⁸⁸

⁸¹ Compared to the citadel areas, there is no evidence of the presence of a temple building inside the armory complexes at Kalḫu, Nineveh, and Dūr-Šarrukīn. On special occasions, however, religious ceremonies took also place in these buildings. Esarhaddon, for example, celebrated the completion of the reconstruction of the armory in Nineveh this way: „I invited the gods Aššur, Bēl, Nabū, Ištar of Nineveh, (and) Ištar of Arbela, the gods of Assyria, all of them, into it. I made sumptuous pure offerings before them and presented (them) with my gifts.” (Esarhaddon 1: vi 44–47; Esarhaddon 2: vi 10–15).

⁸² Sennacherib 22: vi 39–41; Sennacherib 23: vi 32–33; Sennacherib 34: 55–56.

⁸³ Sennacherib 22: vi 65–70; Sennacherib 25: ii’ 6’–12’.

⁸⁴ Sennacherib 34: 57–58.

⁸⁵ Sennacherib 34: 86–90.

⁸⁶ Esarhaddon 1: v 42–44; Esarhaddon 2: iv 35–38; Esarhaddon 3: iv 33’–35’.

⁸⁷ Esarhaddon 1: v 44; Esarhaddon 2: iv 38; Esarhaddon 3: iv 35’.

⁸⁸ Esarhaddon 1: v 46; Esarhaddon 2: iv 41; Esarhaddon 3: iv 37’.

5.2.1 Arsenal

Both written sources and archaeological finds document the use of the armory palace as a storage of war equipment. At Kalḫu, the excavators found various weapons in many rooms – arrowheads, daggers, a sword, and pieces of scale armor.⁸⁹ Dispositions and findings from other rooms indicate that these spaces served as workshops for making and repairing war equipment, including chariots.⁹⁰ Likewise, several texts excavated in the same building describe inspections, storing, and repairs of military equipment.⁹¹ For example, an administrative document CTN 3 117 records the inspection of 36,242 bows.⁹²

5.2.2 Care and training of horses

Many finds from Kalḫu – horse blinkers and frontlets of ivory,⁹³ stone,⁹⁴ and bronze,⁹⁵ as well as an iron horse bit,⁹⁶ trappings, and other harness equipment and chariot fittings⁹⁷ – prove the Sennacherib's and Esarhaddon's statements concerning horse breeding and training in the armory palace area. Horses came to Assyria as spoils of war⁹⁸ and tributes from vassal rulers, and they were also part of the *iškāru* conscription.⁹⁹ Both rulers state that the outer courtyard, the open space outside the palace, was used as a training ground for riding horses and driving chariots. It perfectly agrees with the finding of Sennacherib's horse troughs to the north of the Armory Gate at Nineveh¹⁰⁰ and also with the claim of Esarhaddon that he planted a park alongside the armory palace and "led a canal into it as a watering place for horses."¹⁰¹ From the armory at Kalḫu originate 22

⁸⁹See, e.g., Curtis / Ponting, 2013: 31–47, 153–163; Stronach, 1958: 169–181; Muscarella, 1988: 317–321.

⁹⁰Oates / Oates, 2004: 155–156.

⁹¹CTN 3 74 (6 shields, parts of trappings, 500 arrows, 200 bow-strings); CTN 3 75 (iron coat of mail); CTN 3 76 (784 bows); CTN 3 84 (iron, mention on the wheel for cart); CTN 3 96 (chariots and their equipment); CTN 3 97 (chariots and their equipment); CTN 3 117 (36,242 bows).

⁹²In addition to ordinary usage, storing a large amount of military equipment was necessary because most conscripts came unequipped (see, e.g., SAA 11 122).

⁹³Orchard, 1967; Curtis / Reade, 1995: 161–170.

⁹⁴See, e.g., BM 140416 at the British Museum website.

⁹⁵Curtis / Ponting, 2013: 183.

⁹⁶Stronach, 1958: 175, Pl. xxxv, no. 1; Curtis / Ponting, 2013: 182.

⁹⁷Curtis / Ponting, 2013: 182–188.

⁹⁸E.g., Esarhaddon 1: v 42–45.

⁹⁹See, e.g., SAA 19 35 and SAA 19 168.

¹⁰⁰Sennacherib 132; MacGinnis, 1989: 187–192.

¹⁰¹Esarhaddon 1: vi 33–34.

horse lists, the registers of cavalrymen and charioteers.¹⁰² Similar texts are also known from Aššur¹⁰³ and Nineveh,¹⁰⁴ but they come from the palaces at the citadel, with one exception from Nineveh.¹⁰⁵ The fact that the cities of Nineveh, Kalḫu, and Dūr-Šarrukīn were the major centers for the collection of horse taxes is also eloquent.¹⁰⁶

5.2.3 Treasury for storing plunder and tributes

The statements that armory palaces served as treasuries for storing rare items from tributes (*mandattu*) and booty (*šallatu*) have also been proved. Many rooms in the southwest area of the armory in Kalḫu contained a large number of valuable items, including beautifully carved pieces of ivory, frequently the furniture inlays,¹⁰⁷ but also several ivory labels bearing inscriptions indicating the origin of the objects¹⁰⁸ and shell fragments with the name of Irḫulēnu of Ḥamāt.¹⁰⁹ The motif of bringing the tribute also occurs on the throne base discovered in the throne room.¹¹⁰

Several objects of a similar nature also come from Nebi Yunus – three statues of Taharqa and a statue of Anuket discovered by Iraqi archaeologists,¹¹¹ and an Egyptian headrest found by Claudius James Rich.¹¹²

5.2.4 Reviews/inspections of the army

The function highly emphasized by Assyrian rulers and even reflected in the name *ekal māšarti* is the organization of parades and inspections of the armed forces and military equipment. These reviews were also the probable reason for making the lists of military personnel found at Kalḫu¹¹³ and

¹⁰²CTN 3 85, CTN 3 98–118. See Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 17–22.

¹⁰³Pedersén, 1985: 30, note 7.

¹⁰⁴E.g., SAA 11 123. See also Fales / Postgate, 1995: xxvi–xxviii; Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 27–31.

¹⁰⁵SAA 11 121. The text is fragmentary; it dates to 625 BCE.

¹⁰⁶SAA 13 95: 8–12.

¹⁰⁷See, e.g., Oates, 1959: 124–125.

¹⁰⁸ND 10150 (king of *gdʾ*); ND 10151 (Ḥamāt); ND 10304 (inscribed with Phoenician letters); ND 12031 (Phoenician or Aramaic inscription); ND 12049 (Phoenician or Aramaic inscription); ND 11310 (Hazael), ND 7624 (Taharqa). Mallowan, 1966: 596–599; Oates / Oates, 2004: 181.

¹⁰⁹Oates / Oates, 2004: 181; Mallowan, 1966: 451, no. 372.

¹¹⁰See Mallowan, 1966: 446–449, no. 371.

¹¹¹Scott / MacGinnis, 1990: 64, 65, 67.

¹¹²EA48030 (the British Museum website).

¹¹³Oates / Oates, 2004: 159, 215–216.

Nineveh.¹¹⁴ At the end of his building inscriptions concerning the armory palace in Nineveh, Esarhaddon states: “At the new year, in the first month,¹¹⁵ yearly, without ceasing, let me inspect in it all of the thoroughbreds, mules, camels, military equipment, implements of war, (and) all of the captured enemy soldiers.”¹¹⁶ These annual ceremonial reviews in Nineveh may relate to the formal submission of the tribute, which probably also took place at the beginning of the year.¹¹⁷ If so, acquired valuables could be immediately deposited into the palace treasury.

Other reviews could take place in a different period, not only in Nisannu, as a part of celebrations of the victorious return from the war, and some of them could also be associated with the festivals of the war goddess Ištar/Mullissu. Ashurbanipal claims he rode in a chariot pulled by captured rulers during the *akītu* festival of Ištar of Nineveh. He also says that this spectacle was observed not only by deities but also by the Assyrian army.¹¹⁸ On this occasion, people could see the booty – subsequently probably stored in the treasury of the armory – and prisoners, some of whom were then exemplarily punished in the throat.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴E.g., SAA 13 107. The count of all men in SAA 11 126 is 33,700, but the text is partially broken.

¹¹⁵The first month of the Assyrian year was Nisannu (Sennacherib 167: 13; Esarhaddon 34: 11'; SAA 10 48: r. 8, SAA 12 86: 2), but cf. SAA 8 165: 5 – r. 1: “Addaru and Ulūlu are beginning of the year, as Nisannu and Tašritu are at the beginning of the year.”

¹¹⁶Esarhaddon 1: vi 58–61; Esarhaddon 2: vi 31–37; Esarhaddon 3: vi 11'–16'.

¹¹⁷Postgate, 1974: 121.

¹¹⁸Ashurbanipal 11: x 24–39. Ashurbanipal does not mention the exact month in this inscription, but according to other texts, the *akītu* festival of Ištar of Nineveh/Mullissu took place in the month of Tebētu (SAA 3 7: 10–16; see also Cohen, 1993: 335–336, 424; Pongratz-Leisten, 1997: 249). However, some Mesopotamian gods celebrated the *akītu* festival twice a year, and Nineveh probably had two *bit akītis* used not only by the goddess Ištar/Mullissu but perhaps also by the god Aššur – one inside the city (Ashurbanipal 10: v 33 – vi 11) and another presumably behind the city wall (Sennacherib 37: 14 – r. 7'; Frahm, 2000: 76–77; Frahm, 2008: 17). Sennacherib, the builder of the second *bit akīti*, named the building “Ešaḥulezenzagmukam, ‘House of Joy and Gladness for the Festival of the Beginning of the Year.’” (r. 4'–6'). Thus, another *akītu* festival may have been celebrated in the month of Nisannu in Nineveh (see Frahm, 2000: 76).

¹¹⁹Ashurnasirpal II flayed Aḥi-iababa in Nineveh and draped his skin over the wall (RIAo Ashurnasirpal II 1: i 93). Sennacherib did the same with Kirūa (Sennacherib 17: iv 82–86) and Ashurbanipal with Aia-ammu (Ashurbanipal 11: x 1–5). Ashurbanipal also executed Dunānu in Nineveh (Ashurbanipal 4: vi 81–83; Ashurbanipal 7: vii 25–27), and Nabū-na'id and Bēl-ēfir had to crush the bones of their father Nabū-šuma-ēreš opposite the Citadel Gate of Nineveh (Ashurbanipal 4: vi 87–95; Ashurbanipal 7: vii 31–35). Similar exemplary executions took place in Aššur and Arbela as well.

In addition to ceremonial matters, the reviews were suitable opportunities for the king to meet with dignitaries operating in various parts of the empire.¹²⁰

However, the reviews were not only the domain of Kalḫu and Nineveh. They are documented in other cities or provinces¹²¹ and even during a military campaign.¹²² In these cases, the reviews were presumably not festive events but a purely practical administrative necessity.

5.2.5 Start points of military campaigns

Armory palaces probably served for mustering the main military forces before the campaigns, which seems to be the primary purpose of some reviews. It would make sense that the main body of the Assyrian army would summon in an armory palace and its vicinity before a military campaign, given the facilities it provided for the troops. The rulers did not always state the place from where their army set forth for the campaign; however, the following table with known data shows that start points varied and were not limited to the cities with known armories:

Ruler	Year, date	City	Inscription
Aššur-bēl-kala	Šabāṭu	Aššur	Aššur-bel-kala 7: iii 4–5
Tukulti-Ninurta II	886, Simānu 1 st	Nineveh	Tukulti-Ninurta II 5: 13
Tukulti-Ninurta II	886, Tašritu 17 th	Aššur	Tukulti-Ninurta II 5: 30
Tukulti-Ninurta II	885, Nisannu 26 th	Aššur	Tukulti-Ninurta II 5: 41
Ashurnasirpal II	882, Abu 24 th	Nineveh	Ashurnasirpal II 1: i 69–70
Ashurnasirpal II		Nineveh	Ashurnasirpal II 22: 10'

¹²⁰E.g., “I (Tāb-šil-Ešarra, governor of Aššur; PNA Š–Z: 1342) and Zēru-ibni (governor of Rašappa; PNA Š–Z: 1443) will speak with them; when we come to the [revi]ew, [the king my lord can speak] with us.” (SAA 1 92: r. 6–10); “Perhaps the king, my lord, will say: ‘Why did his brother and his deputy, who at the review said they would come, not come?’” (SAA 5 52: 10–13); “Now the king, my lord, should write to Il-iada’ that he come [t]o the review. I shall come too and bring my witnesses with me. Našir-Bēl should come and arbitrate between us. Let us litigate with each other, and let the king decide between us.” (SAA 15 24: r. 13–20).

¹²¹E.g., SAA 19 84 (the writer is Aššur-šallimanni, the governor of Arrapha; PNA A: 217); SAA 1 49 (chariotry of magnates; unknown place); SAA 5 215 (review of the troops of Māzama, altogether 1,430 men); SAA 5 251 (review of cavalry and chariotry; unknown place); SAA 1 11 (the ruler accuses a dignitary, perhaps a governor (PNA L–N: 681), of building a personal army of 5,000 men, and he sends his eunuch to make a review of these soldiers).

¹²²“In the district of the land Sumbi, I held a review of my army and checked the number of horses and chariotry (*piqitti ummānīa aškunma ša sisē u narkabāti āmura mīnašun*).” (Sargon II 65: 12).

Ashurnasirpal II	881, Tašrītu 15 th	Kilīzu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: ii 33; Ashurnasirpal II 17: ii 107–108
Ashurnasirpal II	880, Simānu 1 st	Kilīzu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: ii 49–51
Ashurnasirpal II	878, Simānu 22 nd	Kalḫu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: iii 1
Ashurnasirpal II	877–867, Simānu 18 th	Kalḫu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: iii 28
Ashurnasirpal II	877–867, Simānu 20 th	Kalḫu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: iii 50
Ashurnasirpal II	877–867, Aiāru 8 th	Kalḫu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: iii 56; Ashurnasirpal II 2: 43
Ashurnasirpal II	866, Aiāru 13 th	Kalḫu	Ashurnasirpal II 1: iii 92–93
Shalmaneser III	857, Aiāru 13 th	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 2: i 29
Shalmaneser III	857, Aiāru 13 th	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 2: ii 13
Shalmaneser III	856, Aiāru 13 th	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 2: ii 30
Shalmaneser III	855, Aiāru 13 th	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 6: ii 3; Shalmaneser III 8: 6'
Shalmaneser III	855	Aššur	Shalmaneser III 8: 8'
Shalmaneser III	854	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 8: 11'
Shalmaneser III	853, Aiāru 14 th	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 2: ii 78; Shalmaneser III 8: 12'
Shalmaneser III	850, Nisannu 20 th	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 5: iv 5
Shalmaneser III	848	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 8: 35'
Shalmaneser III	847	Nineveh	Shalmaneser III 8: 41'
Shalmaneser III	843	Arbela	Shalmaneser III 6: iii 58
Sargon II	714, Du'ūzu 3 rd	Kalḫu	Sargon II 65: 6–8
Sennacherib	704?, Šabāṭu 20 th	Aššur	Sennacherib 1: 19; Sennacherib 213: 19
Esarhaddon	671, Nisannu	Aššur	Esarhaddon 34: 11'
Ashurbanipal		Arbela?	Ashurbanipal 7: iv 7'–15'

The table shows that Nineveh was the frequent base for military campaigns long before Sennacherib reconstructed the armory. Similarly, Ashurnasirpal II undertook several campaigns from Kalḫu before his son built a large military complex in the southeastern city corner. Dūr-Šarrukīn is absent from the list, but, on the contrary, Arbela, Kilīzu (as start points to the east), and the ancient capital Aššur occur.

5.2.6 Residence of the ruler and his family

Armory palaces also served as royal residences, as the word *ekallu* in the name indicates. Sennacherib and Esarhaddon state that they built armory

palaces at Nineveh and Kalḫu as their royal residence and for their pleasure.¹²³ But the question is whether any armory palace was a primary seat for at least one Neo-Assyrian ruler.¹²⁴ At any rate, the rulers dwelt inside their walls from time to time,¹²⁵ at least during military parades, and the inner rooms of the building were adapted to fit the king's representative and personal needs.¹²⁶

Administrative records¹²⁷ partly document the queen's household in the armory palace at Kalḫu managed by the female officer *šakintu*. A list of the *šakintus* SAA 7 23 shows that the queen's household existed in *ekal māšarti* of Nineveh, *ekal māšarti* of the New Contingent, and other palaces in Assyria.¹²⁸ The evidence indicates that during the reign of Esarhaddon, other members of the royal family occupied the armory palace at Nineveh. The king's exorcist Adad-šumu-ušur several times informs the ruler about the sick *piqittu ša bīt kutalli*, perhaps the crown prince's baby,¹²⁹ and he also mentions two patients of the New Palace.¹³⁰

Assyrian kings owned palaces throughout central Assyria. Other royal palaces stood in provinces, as evidenced by royal inscriptions and letters recording their constructions, reconstructions, or the stay of the ruler. Although armory palaces were not primary abodes of the king, they served – together with other palaces – as secondary residences of the Assyrian ruler.

¹²³Sennacherib 23: vi 45; Esarhaddon 1: vi 11 (Nineveh); Esarhaddon 77: 51 (Kalḫu); Esarhaddon 81: 3–7 (Kalḫu). Sennacherib built a roofed decorated pedestal of valuable materials in the inner courtyard (Sennacherib 34: 82–85) that resembles the throne base of Shalmaneser III in the southeast courtyard of the armory at Kalḫu (see Oates / Oates, 2004: 162). Both rulers also used precious materials with magical functions such as “making storms pass by,” “keeping illness away from a man,” and “whose appearance repels evil” (Sennacherib 34: 72–73; Esarhaddon 1: vi 15–16). It indicates that they wanted to inhabit these spaces at least occasionally. Esarhaddon, for example, held a feast for the gods, officials, and people of his country after completing the structure at Nineveh (Esarhaddon 1: vi 44–53; cf., e.g., Ashurnasirpal II 30: 102–154; and Sargon II 7: 167–186).

¹²⁴Shalmaneser III probably resided in his new palace at Kalḫu (Matthiae, 2010: 200–201; but cf. Russell, 1991: 290), and Esarhaddon, when he dwelt at Nineveh, possibly lived in the armory palace there (Melville, 1999: 42; but cf. Matthiae, 2010: 201–202). After all, the fact that the building was not the ruler's primary residence does not mean it was not a palace as such.

¹²⁵E.g., SAA 19 12: 4–9; SAA 16 163: r. 6'.

¹²⁶The armory at Kalḫu (and probably also at Dūr-Šarrukīn) included a throne room and a private suite equipped with, among other things, a kitchen (see Grayson, 1996: 169). An object considered a spoon bearing the inscription of Shalmaneser originates in the same structure (Shalmaneser III 113 = CTN 3 151; see Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 259; Grayson, 1996: 168).

¹²⁷CTN 3 30–45 (*šakintu*'s archive of the Room S 10) and CTN 3 29.

¹²⁸SAA 7 23: 1–14.

¹²⁹SAA 10 14: 7–8; SAA 10 17: 6–7; SAA 10 18: 6; SAA 10 19: 5–6. See Parpola, 1983: 139–140, but cf. Parpola, 1983: 113 regarding the location of *bīt kutalli*.

¹³⁰SAA 10 222: 6. See Parpola, 1983: 128–129.

5.2.7 Barracks

Armories also provided accommodation for soldiers, but certainly not for all soldiers permanently or temporarily stationed in the city. There was not so much space in the palace complex because workshops, storages, representative and private suites of the ruler, and apartments of high officials occupied most of the rooms. At Kalḫu, only the long chambers in the north and west of the southeast courtyard of the armory possibly were the barracks.¹³¹ Their inhabitants were presumably members of the royal cohort (*kišir šarrūti*) or at least its officers,¹³² while the other men had abodes in the city. It is indicated, for example, by a letter whose author, a Ninevite servant of the crown prince, complains: “The Sidonites and the(ir) heads did not go to Kalḫu with the crown prince, my lord, nor are they serving in the garrison of Nineveh. They loiter in the center of the town, each in his lodging place.”¹³³ Another complaint, written by an unknown author, concerns the troubles caused by the soldiers who arrived in Kalḫu: “The [troops] who a[rrived ...] and have been resid[ent] in [...] are loitering in the center of Kalḫu with their riding horses like [...] common criminals and drunkards. What does my lord say?”¹³⁴ Many soldiers had families – some married explicitly at the king’s request¹³⁵ – so the accommodation in a city providing more privacy would be more appropriate than barracks in the armory palace. Other soldiers lived in the countryside, and the king or magnates summoned them when needed.¹³⁶

6 Other armory palaces?

The sources give evidence of only three armory complexes, and only two of them bore the name *ekal māšarti* without any doubt. Is it possible that buildings of similar functions – although of a lesser extent and without the explicit name *ekal māšarti* – existed in other Assyrian cities? In this regard,

¹³¹Oates / Oates, 2004: 162.

¹³²See Postgate, 2007: 348–349; Oates / Oates, 2004: 162 (“barracks for the king’s household troops”); and Frahm, 1997: 275 (“the building was intended for the standing army, especially for the cavalry”). Administrative records SAA 7 8–12 provide some clues to the practice of temporary accommodation of the officials – for example, during a review – but these texts do not name a specific building and refer to an extraordinary (non-military) event (see Fales / Postgate, 1992: xvii–xix).

¹³³SAA 1 153: 6 – r. 6.

¹³⁴SAA 1 154: 2’ – r. 6.

¹³⁵See, e.g., SAA 13 82 (report on livestock and household equipment for cavalymen and their households); and SAA 19 18 (the king wants the Aramean soldiers to get married).

¹³⁶See, e.g., SAA 7 30, especially r. ii 3’–22’, r. iii 6’.

I suppose there are at least two places to consider: Aššur and Arbela. Both were significant Assyrian cities and seats of the prominent warlike gods, some of whose festivals related to warfare. Moreover, they show several other similarities to Nineveh and Kalḫu.

6.1 Aššur

The excavations in Aššur, the oldest Assyrian capital and seat of the two most significant war deities, Aššur and Ištar, did not prove any specialized armory palace. But it is possible that, at least before the move of the administrative center to Kalḫu, Aššur had a building or part of it that fulfilled similar functions as later armory palaces¹³⁷ since the city was the seat of the ruler and undoubtedly housed a reasonably large number of soldiers requiring the necessary facilities.



Figure 5. Plan of Aššur.¹³⁸

¹³⁷Reade, 2011: 110; cf. Kertai, 2011: 72.

Aššur also shares some other similarities with Kalḫu and Nineveh. It was the starting point of campaigns led by several Middle and Neo-Assyrian kings.¹³⁹ Some rulers received tribute in this city¹⁴⁰ and brought captives and booty there.¹⁴¹ The city also witnessed an exemplary execution of Iaū-bi'di from Ḥamāt when Sargon II brought him together with his family and his soldiers to Aššur and flayed him in front of the city gate.¹⁴² A considerable number of Middle Assyrian texts dealing with horses originate from the city,¹⁴³ and a group of Neo-Assyrian documents resembling the horse lists from Kalḫu comes from the Old Palace at Aššur.¹⁴⁴

If any palace with a military function existed in Aššur, it probably stood in the palatial-temple area, perhaps in the northwest corner of the city, because any secondary citadel with a large courtyard so typical for later armories does not occur in Aššur.

6.2 Arbela

Another possible candidate is Arbela. Although modern Irbil covers the ancient city, the primary citadel and several *tells* are apparent at first glance. Archaeological research has shown the remains of the city wall in some places, while other sections are visible on aerial or satellite images.¹⁴⁵ For the position of the secondary citadel, if it was there, the *tell* adjacent to the northeast part of the city wall seems to be the most suitable location. Although the written and material evidence does not document the armory palace at Arbela, certain clues in Neo-Assyrian texts may indicate its existence.

Arbela was the capital of the province bearing the same name and belonged to the most prominent Assyrian cities. Some rulers dwelt in Arbela for some

¹³⁸The plan draws on the following sources: Marzahn / Salje, 2003: end-leaf; Andrae, 1941: Tafel IV; Google Earth. Background map: Google Earth.

¹³⁹See above.

¹⁴⁰E.g., "They annually brought their valuable tribute and I received (it) in my city Aššur." (Ashurnasirpal II 67: 9–10). Similarly, Shalmaneser III 2: ii 24, 26–27.

¹⁴¹E.g., Shalmaneser III 2: ii 64–65, 74–75, 80; Sargon II 109: 5'; Sargon II 117: ii 20–21; Ashurbanipal 4: vi 70–76.

¹⁴²Sargon II 117: ii 4–11; Sargon II 35: 1–2.

¹⁴³Pedersén, 1985: 37.

¹⁴⁴KAV 31–38, 131–132 (Pedersén, 1985: 29; Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 41–43). This indicates that Aššur may have been one of the centers of cavalry organization (Dalley / Postgate, 1984: 43).

¹⁴⁵Nováček / Amin / Melčák, 2013: 27, Fig. 13; Nováček, 2020: 51–56.

time,¹⁴⁶ and especially Ashurbanipal had a very positive attitude towards the city and its chief divine inhabitant, the war goddess Ištar.¹⁴⁷ We can, therefore, assume that there was at least one royal palace in Arbela.



Figure 6. Plan of Arbela.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶“(…) when I was in the king my lord’s (Sargon’s) presence in Arbela (…)” (SAA 19 166: r. 3–6). “When the king (Esarhaddon), my lord, was seated on the *šaddattunu* in Arbela” (SAA 16 121: 6–8). “During the month Abu (…), I resided in the city Arbela, the city that her (Ištar’s) heart loves (…)” (Ashurbanipal 3: v 16–19; Ashurbanipal 7: v 83–87). “Rusâ (…) sent his envoys to me in Arbela, to inquire about my well-being. I made Nabû-damiq (and) Umbadarâ, envoys of the land Elam, stand before them with writing boards (inscribed with) insolent messages.” (Ashurbanipal 35: 3–8).

¹⁴⁷Ashurbanipal 4: v 5’–28”. Ashurbanipal reconstructed the inner and the outer wall of the city, adorned the temple of the goddess Ištar, and renovated the city of Milqia, where the *bīt akīti* of this goddess stood (Ashurbanipal 185: 1–8). He is also considered the author of the Hymn to the city of Arbela (SAA 3 8). It is likely that Ashurbanipal’s father, Esarhaddon, also had a very close relationship with Arbela, given the favorable prophecies of the local prophets for him (see SAA 9 1–6).

¹⁴⁸The plan draws on the following sources: Nováček, 2020: 53; Nováček / Amin / Melčák, 2013: 23, 27, 35; Google Earth; CORONA Atlas. Background map: Google Earth.

Administrative records and letters mention the presence of individual soldiers, military units,¹⁴⁹ and the army¹⁵⁰ in the city or its vicinity. Arbela was a starting point of military campaigns led by Shalmaneser and possibly Ashurbanipal to the east, but above all, some campaigns ended in it.¹⁵¹ Several celebrations of the return from the war became a part of the *akītu* festival of the goddess Ištar,¹⁵² during which the display of captives and the exemplary execution of rebels took place.¹⁵³

7 Conclusion

So far as we know, only three palaces called *ekal māšarti* (or *ekal/bīt kutalli*) appear in Assyrian written sources. The term *ekal māšarti* occurred relatively late, and it was perhaps a special designation for the armory at Kalḫu. Even later, this name passed to structures in Dūr-Šarrukīn and Nineveh, but the building at Nineveh was sometimes still called *bīt/ekal kutalli*. Most of all, *ekal māšartis* differed from other palatial structures by their position outside the primary citadel and a large outer courtyard, an open space used as a training ground for riding horses and driving chariots. And, as far as I know, the temple building is not documented in them. However, many of their functions were analogous to other Assyrian palaces, and, on the contrary, some military activities known from Nineveh and Kalḫu also appear in connection with other cities without documented armory palaces, especially Aššur and Arbela, but not with Dūr-Šarrukīn where this structure very probably stood.

¹⁴⁹CTN 3 102: iii 13'–21'; SAA 1 149; SAA 1 155: 4–10; SAA 16 120: 6–10.

¹⁵⁰"I shall assign my king's men, chariotry and cavalry as the king wrote me, and I shall be in the king my lord's presence in Arbela with my king's men and army by the deadline set by the king, my lord." (SAA 5 152: 22–27).

¹⁵¹Shalmaneser III 2: ii 65–66; Shalmaneser III 6: ii 2; Shalmaneser III 8: 5'; Shalmaneser III 28: 42. See also the following notes.

¹⁵²Shalmaneser III 17: 59–60 (= SAA 3 17); SAA 10 254: 4'–5' (Esarhaddon; see also SAA 13 149; Cole / Machinist, 1998: xv; Pongratz-Leisten, 1997: 249–250); Ashurbanipal 167: 7'–13'; possibly also Ashurbanipal 14: i' 11'–22'.

¹⁵³"I, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, after I made offerings (to) the goddess Šadru, performed the *akītu*-festival, (and) seized the reigns (of the chariot) of the goddess Ištar, paraded into Arbela in (the midst of) celebration with Dunānu, Šama'gunu (Samgunu), Aplāia, and the decapitated head of Teumman, the king of the land Elam, (which) the goddess Ištar, the Lady, placed into my hands." (Ashurbanipal 161: iii 18'–23'; Ashurbanipal 167: 7'–13'). See also Ashurbanipal 3: vi 66–74; Ashurbanipal 4: vi 70–81; Ashurbanipal 7: vii 3–10; Ashurbanipal 162: 3'–4'. Concerning other executions of enemies performed in Arbela, see the following texts: Aššur-dan II 1: 39–41; Ashurnasirpal II 1: i 67–68; Ashurnasirpal II 17: i 89.

Abbreviations

- ATAE Novotny, J. R. et al., 2017: *Archival Texts of the Assyrian Empire (ATAE)*. München / Philadelphia: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München / The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus. <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/atae/>.
- CAD Oppenheim, A. L. et al., 1956–2010: *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- CDLI Englund, R. K. et al., 2019: *Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*. Los Angeles / Oxford / Berlin: University of California / University of Oxford / Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. <http://cdli.ucla.edu/>.
- CTN 1 Kinnier Wilson, J. V., 1972: *The Nimrud Wine Lists*. Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud 1. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- CTN 3 Dalley, S. / Postgate, J. N., 1984: *The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser*. Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud 3. London / Oxford: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- IN Orchard, J. J. / Mallowan, M. / Hermann, G. et al., 1967–: *Ivories from Nimrud*. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- PNA Baker, H. D. / Radner, K. (eds.), 1998–2011: *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- RIAo Frame, G. / Grayson, A. K. / Novotny, J. et al., 2015–: *The Royal Inscriptions of Assyria Online (RIAo) Project*. Official Inscriptions of the Middle East in Antiquity (OIMEA) Project. München / Philadelphia: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München / The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus. <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/riao/corpus/>.
- RIMA 1 Grayson, A. K., 1987: *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia B. C. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods 1*. Toronto / Buffalo / London: University of Toronto Press.
- RIMA 3 Grayson, A. K., 1996: *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium B. C., Part II*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia:

- Assyrian Periods 3. Toronto / Buffalo / London: University of Toronto Press.
- RINAP Novotny, J. / Grayson, A. K. / Leichty, E. / Tadmor, H. / Yamada, S. / Jeffers, J., 2011–: *The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
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- RIA Ebeling, E. et al, 1932–: *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*. Berlin / Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter.
- SAA Parpola, S. et al., 1987–: *State Archives of Assyria*. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- Radner, K. et al., 2014–: *State Archives of Assyria Online*. Philadelphia: The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus. <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus>.

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