

Bathing Rooms in First-Millennium Assyria

Lodovico Portuese
Università degli Studi di Messina, Italia

Abstract This article presents a review of the archaeological evidence relating to those spaces identified as bathrooms in the main Neo-Assyrian palaces. An examination of the primary elements – fixed features, interior decoration, position within the palace and connectivity, use of water and possible protocol rules – serves to delve into aspects of hygiene, privacy, and protection, and supports concluding that bathrooms were the most ‘hygienic’ locations within a building. The results also aim at paving the way for a better understanding of the extent to which bathrooms contributed to the building of an Assyrian social identity and its preservation.

Keywords Neo-Assyrian Palaces. Bathroom. Hygiene. Water. Privacy.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Terminology, Features and Functions. – 3 Decoration. – 4 Doors and Connectivity. – 5 Water and Bathtubs. – 6 Protocol. – 7 Concluding Remarks.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, the word ‘bathroom’ recalls an intensely private space, where the user locks the door and performs personal functions alone. It also evokes, in tangible form, ideas about sanitation, cleanliness, hygiene, and social status. An interest in bathrooms had by a society can be driven by a variety of factors: medical considerations and personal hygiene; notions of cleanliness and purity; religious factors, where a clean body mirrors a clean soul, for instance; social customs, such as gatherings in bathhouses; and pleasure, such as relaxation or regeneration. An interest in bathrooms may have important repercussions for several social aspects such as clothing, interpersonal behaviour and physical distance, social divisions, identity building and social relationships. All of this implies that research on bathrooms can shed light on multiple aspects of a society.¹

Without aspiring to be comprehensive, this contribution presents a review of the archaeological evidence relating to those spaces identified as bathrooms in the main Neo-Assyrian palaces. This is also a preliminary study, supported by textual sources, which aims at paving the way for a better understanding of the extent to which bathrooms contributed to the building of an Assyrian social identity and its preservation.

The results presented here are part of the project *GALATEO – Good Attitudes for Life in Assyrian Times: Etiquette and Observance of Norms in Male and Female Groups*, which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 101027543. The information contained in this article reflects only the author’s views.

¹ This is well shown by Hoagland 2018, who explores the uneven development of bathrooms through time and its revolutionary effects on European and American societies and lifestyles.



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Peer review

Submitted 2024-07-18
Accepted 2024-10-25
Published 2024-12-19

Open access

© 2024 Portuese | © 4.0



Citation Portuese, L. (2024). “Bathing Rooms in First-Millennium Assyria”. *KASKAL. Rivista di storia, ambienti e culture del Vicino Oriente Antico*, n.s., 1, 169-186.

2 Terminology, Features and Functions

The English term *bathroom* is attested in Europe from the seventeenth century to indicate a room or building provided with communal bathing facilities. Today, the term usually indicates a room for private bathing, especially in a house, containing a bath or shower, and typically also a washbasin and toilet. Other terms can be employed, depending on the elements installed. For instance, *lavatory* refers to a room containing a toilet and a sink. The names of single elements can be used to refer synecdochally to the bathroom. An example is *toilet*, which indicates the fixed receptacle used for defecation and urination. Other terms include ‘powder room’ and ‘restroom’, originally used to describe the spaces for women and for rest respectively, and today more generally for the bathroom.² The choice of term may depend on what they technically describe but also, interestingly, the situational context where the word is used. In the United States, for instance, one would ask for the bathroom if he or she is in someone’s home; but if one is at a formal dinner or event, it could be more appropriate to ask for the powder room or the restroom. Even among friends and family, it seems preferable to avoid the word toilet and opt for ‘more polite’ alternative options.

Such terminological ambiguity is more complex when dealing with antiquity.³ The word which is usually translated as bathroom in Akkadian is *bēt ramāki*, literally the ‘bathhouse’ or ‘bathing room’.⁴ We also have a legal transaction dating to the reign of Sennacherib which describes a house, whose purchase was recorded on a seal: “A built house with its beams and doors, a sleeping room, its yard, its bathroom”.⁵ It is uncertain whether the general term *bēt ramāki* can be applied to all the rooms that have been identified by archaeologists as bathrooms, but it is reasonable to think that it was used to describe rooms where baths were taken. Textual sources attest to the use of the term *bēt musāti*, a more specific term that probably indicates a lavatory.⁶ The known installations seem to warrant the designation *bēt ramāki*, but, since lavatories are included in the same room, it is possible that the word indicated (by synecdoche) a room where a lavatory (*bēt musāti*) was also installed.⁷ For practical reasons, the neutral term *bathing room* is here adopted to refer to rooms where baths were taken, and *lavatory* to refer to rooms apparently used as toilets only. The discerning element is the presence or absence of a bathtub slab. However, such a distinction does not exclude the possibility that lavatories contained washing facilities and could thus be used as bathing rooms.

A first-millennium Assyrian bathing room has been identified through specific elements which essentially have not changed over time [tab. 1] [figs 1-4].⁸ The room measures at approximately twenty square meters.⁹ It is paved with baked bricks with bitumen coating and stone slabs. A drain (with a diameter of between 10 and 15 cm) is usually found within or adjacent to a niche [fig. 1].¹⁰ The drain is connected to the drainage system running underneath the palace [fig. 4] and could be surrounded by four circular depressions [figs 1-2], which may have held a toilet, perhaps made of some perishable material. Diagonal grooves were found cut through the drain slab to ease the dumping of water.¹¹ Sandstone plugs to cover the drain were found in some cases, probably to protect from bad smells and animals; an arch in the niche wall, probably used to clear the drain when necessary, was also found in one instance [figs 1-2].¹² Rectangular niches or loculi can be found cut in the wall, perhaps being used as cupboards to contain tools for the bath, along with ventilation shafts or vent-holes which were probably used as clerestory windows to ventilate otherwise enclosed spaces or allow in a limited amount of nat-

2 Definitions of the terms are based on those offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

3 The analysis carried out by George 2015 is a good example of the complexity of terminology used in texts to refer to lavatories and sewers.

4 CAD R, s.v. “*ramāku*”, 115. This is one of the few terms that provides information, though blurred, regarding the utilitarian function of a room (Tudeau 2019, 147). Assyrian bathing rooms have been sometimes termed ‘ablution rooms’, for it was supposed that ceremonial and ritual washings took place in them (e.g., Mallowan 1950, 163). Another less attested term listed in the CAD (N/1, s.v. “*narmaktu*”, 360-1) is *bēt narmakti* ‘bath house’, which includes the noun *narmaktu* ‘washbowl, washbasin’.

5 SAA 6, 42, 3-5. For a similar purchase of a house in Nineveh, see SAA 14, 149.

6 George 2015, 83-90.

7 The term and its interpretation according to archaeological evidence is debated in Bielefeld in this volume.

8 For building plans, see a selection at the end of the article, and Kertai 2015a.

9 A few examples of measurements taken during excavations: the bathing room in Governor’s Palace measured around 4 × 5 m (Mallowan 1950, 163); Room 12 in the Royal Palace of Dur-Sharrukin measured 6 × 8.50 m (Loud 1936, 20); Room 4 in the Southwest Palace measured 5.80 × 5.80 m (Russell 1991, 50); Room 22 in the Hadattu Palace measured 6.50 × 5.30 m; and Room 5 in the Bâtiment aux ivoires measured 4.50 × 3.10 m and was rather smaller in comparison (Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931, 25, 45).

10 For a review of textual attestations of drain in Assyria and its symbolic value, see Tudeau 2019, 88-9.

11 Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931, 25.

12 Mallowan 1950, 183.

ural light [fig. 3].¹³ One or two stone slabs with a depression and a curved end are embedded on the floor, where a bathtub was probably positioned [figs 3, 5]. Stone slabs placed next to the location of the bathtubs were probably used after having stepped in the bathtub.¹⁴



Figure 1 Brick floor, originally waterproofed with bitumen, drain and blocked “man-hole” from the bathing room of the Governor’s Palace, Kalhu (Mallowan 1966, fig. 7)



Figure 2 Bathing room in the Governor’s Palace, Kalhu (Mallowan 1950, pl. XXXI, fig. 1)



Figure 3 Bathing room (9) in the Palace of Adad-nirari III, Kalhu (Mallowan 1954b, pl. XXXVI, fig. 2)

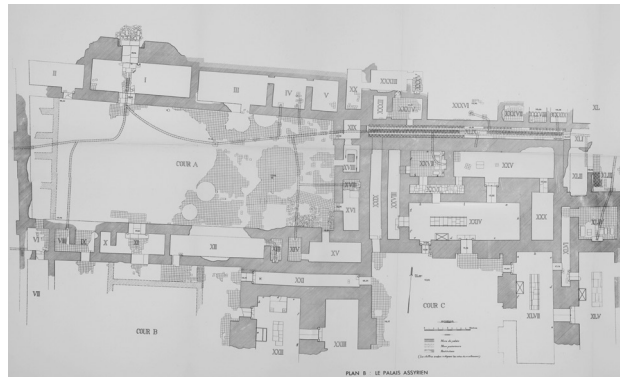


Figure 4 Floorplan of the Til-Barsip Palace (Thureau-Dangin, Dunand 1936, plan B)

Bathing rooms were once furnished, although it is likely that rooms were probably emptied and filled with furniture when necessary. This is not only clear from visual evidence, where we see attendants bringing furniture in the room, but also from textual sources.¹⁵ Therefore, what we see archaeologically are the fixed features on which semi-fixed features were installed when needed.

As for the lack of furniture, it is not easy to identify the activities performed in these spaces. The archaeological evidence is meagre in comparison with the excavated buildings; also, not all palaces were fully excavated, nor did the first excavations pay particular attention to bathing room-like spaces when interesting findings or reliefs were not found. Therefore, the extant excavated remains give little idea of the functions which these spaces may have originally had.

In general, the significant presence of baked bricks with bitumen coating and stone slab-pavements indicates that bathing rooms were exposed to flowing liquids, and as there was no evidence that these rooms were open to the sky, the implication here is that there was intensive use of liquids.¹⁶ The presence of a niche and, very often, a drain suggests that a toilet was probably located there, indicating that these spaces were used as lavatories. Bathtub slabs are not attested everywhere. This might be

¹³ These features are rarely preserved. For comments, see Russell 1998, 671-2 and Kertai 2015a, 189-90.

¹⁴ For a recent brief analysis of the architectural features of Assyrian palace bathing rooms, see Kertai 2015a, 190-4.

¹⁵ Botta, Flandin 1849a, pl. 10; SAA 20, 33.

¹⁶ Oates 1962, 14.

the result of the randomness of archaeological records, but it may also depend on a distinction in the use of bathing rooms: some were used as bathing rooms, others as lavatories only. The presence or absence of bathtub slabs does not seem to signify the importance of a bathing room. Room 4 next to the main throne-room of the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib [fig. 11] and room F in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal [fig. 12], which were clearly of some importance, seem to have lacked bathtub slabs.¹⁷

No bathtubs were found in bathing rooms, but it is likely that the depressions with rounded end were used as the placement of baths [fig. 5].¹⁸ It also seems clear that the known bronze bathtub vessels used as burial containers were originally used for bathing, located on the rounded depressions, and later employed as coffins: bronze coffins and the depressions on the stone slabs are close in size and have the same shape [fig. 6].¹⁹ Furthermore, texts state that bathtubs (*narmaktu*) were listed among the booty and were made of precious materials, such as bronze, copper, or gold.²⁰ The presence of two locations for the bathtub in some bathing rooms may indicate that two people could take a bath or that they were intended as containers of different substances and thus had different functions.²¹ Finally, the orientation of bathtubs – supposing that an individual lay down the head on the rounded side of the bath – is random.



Figure 5 Floor of the bathing room 12 in the Royal Palace of Sargon II, Dur-Sharrukin (Loud 1936, fig. 26)

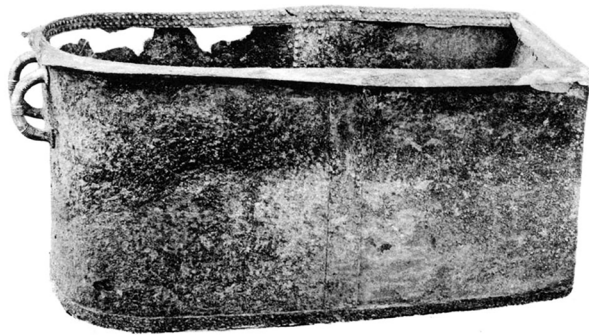


Figure 6 Bronze bathtub from Zincirli (Wicks 2015, fig. 26)

Alternative containers or tubs also seem to have been used. The circular slab found in room S 3 of the Military Palace might be interpreted as the place of a round tub;²² similarly, the small rectangular pit excavated within the pavement and coated with tiles found in room XXV in the Hadattu Palace may have been filled with liquids or used to host a container for liquids.²³ The findings reported during excavations (e.g., pieces of armour, carved ivories, and tablets) do not help us much, since they often belong to later phases of use when the space was turned into a storeroom: a common fate of bathing rooms in view of their position and because they were insulated against fluids.²⁴ Room S 40 in the Military Palace seems even to have been turned into a kitchen in the late seventh century.²⁵

¹⁷ Russell 1991, 50-1 (room 4); Barnett 1976, 30-1; Kertai 2015b, 346 (room F).

¹⁸ Loud 1936, 23.

¹⁹ Wicks 2015, 100-11. See also Brown 2010, 15. It is interesting to observe that a ceramic sarcophagus (183 × 48 cm) was found underneath the floor of bathing room 69 in the Northwest Palace (Hussein et al. 2013, 95).

²⁰ E.g., RIMA 2, A.0.87.1, ii30; RINAP 2, 65, 395; SAA 1, 158, 11; SAA 1, 250, r 3-4.

²¹ Kikuchi (in this volume) mentions that bathing could exceptionally take place in fish oil instead of water.

²² Kertai 2015a, 192. See image in Mallowan 1966, fig. 306.

²³ Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931, 28, fig. 11.

²⁴ Considerable quantities of pieces of armour in iron and copper, stone vases, and an inscribed vase of glass were found in Room I in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Kalhu. The vases were inscribed with the name of Sargon II, who restored the palace and used parts of the bathing room as storage (Russell 1998, 672). Carved ivories were found in rooms V and JJ in the same palace (Mallowan 1966, 327 fn. 14; Russell 1998, 698), in rooms SE 1 and SE 9 of the Military Palace of Shalmaneser III at Kalhu, along with cylinders and tablets (Oates 1959, 108-9; 2001, 164, 212; Mallowan 1966, 558, 584, figs 496, 552), and in room 23 in Residence K at Dur-Sharrukin (Loud, Altman 1938, 67). Terracotta figurines were found in rooms S 20, S 25 and S 29, and a gold earring was found in S 46 of the Military Palace (Oates 1959, 117 fn. 29, 122; Mallowan 1966, 431, 646). Written documents were often found in bathing rooms, such as in room ZT 17 in the Northwest Palace, in rooms NW 3 and SE 1 in the Military Palace (Mallowan 1953, 36; 1966, 420-1; Oates 1962, 20; Oates, Oates 2001, 159).

²⁵ Mallowan 1966, 439.

Other archaeological remains may be perhaps interpreted as tools used in activities related to the bathing room. Two vases, one in alabaster and one in calcite, were found in room ZT 26 in the Northwest Palace, and a water basin made of white marble stone was found in room 65 at the same site.²⁶ A water-jar was found in the niche behind the drain-hole in room SE 17 in the Military Palace.²⁷ Large clay water-jars with pointed bases were found leaning against the north and east walls of room 9 in Adad-nirari III's palace, along with a small tripod, and room 9 in Residence K at Dur-Sharrukin contained a large jar set into the floor.²⁸ Similarly, in room 4 of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, the uncarved areas shaped like the profiles of large water storage jars suggest that similar containers were used in this bathing room.²⁹ Although their actual use remains uncertain, since it is unclear whether any of the objects lay in their original position, jars and vases can be reasonably interpreted as means to carry water or other liquids, which were perhaps used to fill in or empty bathtubs, since these were not connected to a drain.

Tools and activities that might be linked with bathing rooms can be tentatively found referred to in the texts. A razor (*naglabu*) is mentioned in a text dealing with the gate of a bathing room of the *hilānu* palace, and it is found as an object used during a bath in a Sumerian text dated to the fifth or sixth year of the reign of Sennacherib, i.e. 699 BCE: "to give a bath in pure fashion (using) the barber's knife".³⁰ Washing activities and references to anointments, cleanliness linked to rituals and treatment of diseases are also found in texts, where clean water is said to be contained in washbowls (*narmak-tu*); this may refer to the bathtubs that once stood in bathing rooms.³¹ The content of these texts mainly deals with specific rituals and incantations and therefore any possible reference to bathing rooms is framed within a cultic context. It is possible that some bathing rooms could be the location for prescribed cultic activities.³²

3 Decoration

The walls of bathing rooms could be undecorated or decorated with floral and geometric motifs, human figures in processions or individuals involved in warfare or hunting activities. In the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II, the two outstanding rooms I and L were populated by the motif of winged divine figures flanking the stylised tree. In particular, walls of room I were lined with the so-called human and bird-*apkallū*, whereas room L was decorated with human-*apkallū* only.³³ This type of relief decoration is unique among the excavated Assyrian bathing rooms and lavatories. Other ninth- and eight-century bathing rooms could be decorated with floral, animal and geometric motifs in the form of wall paintings.³⁴ Complex images on reliefs begin to appear in the late eight century with Sargon II, including warfare scenes in room 1 and processions of attendants, headed by the crown prince, moving towards the king in rooms 9 and 12 [fig. 7].³⁵ This tendency is continued and expanded under Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal: warfare scenes decorated all the bathing rooms in the Southwest Palace (4, 8e, 17, 47, 40, 32, 59);³⁶ similarly, room F in Ashurbanipal's North Palace was surrounded by war-

²⁶ Mallowan 1953, 37 (ZT 26); Hussein et al. 2013, 96 (room 65).

²⁷ Mallowan 1966, 423.

²⁸ Mallowan 1954b, 158-9 (room 9); Loud, Altman 1938, 66 (room 9, Residence K).

²⁹ Russell 1991, 51.

³⁰ SAA 1, 67; CAD N/1, s.v. "naglabu" B, 120; Borger 1973. See also SAA 10, 193. See also Groß 2020, 380-1 on the figure of the barber (*gallābu*).

³¹ SAA 10, 318, 8-r 10. See also Kikuchi and Häntinen in this volume.

³² Russell (1998, 697) suggests that part of the *bīt rimki* ritual could take place in rooms I and L in the Northwest Palace.

³³ Meuszyński 1981, pls. 14-16; Paley, Sobolewski 1987, pls. 1-2.

³⁴ Black and white concentric circles lined the walls of the Governor's Palace bathing room (Mallowan 1950, 182); floral and geometric motifs surrounded rooms S 3 and T 22 in the Military Palace of Shalmaneser III (Mallowan 1966, 450-1, fig. 306, 433-4; Oates 1963, 26); geometric and floral motifs along with bulls were found in room 9 of Adad-nirari III's Palace (Mallowan 1954b, 155, 158-9); geometric motifs were also attested in rooms XXII and XXV of the Hadattu Palace (Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931, 28-9, pls. XVII and XLVIII). Traces of painting, whose subject is unknown, were found on the floor of room SE 1 of the Military Palace of Shalmaneser III (Oates 1959, 108-9). Painted plaster was also found in room 30 of Residence L at Dur-Sharrukin and apparently in many other suites including bathing rooms (Loud, Altman 1938, 71). In one instance, the walls of room 65 in the Northwest Palace were surrounded by baked clay orthostats inscribed with the Standard Inscription of Ashurnasirpal II (Hussein 1996, figs 30-3).

³⁵ Botta, Flandin 1849a, pl. 48 (room 1); 1849b, pls. 121 (room 9); 138 (room 12; see also Loud 1936, 20-8).

³⁶ Russell 1991, 50-1, 53, 57-8, 63, 64-7, 73; Barnett et al. 1998, 55, 71-2, 78-9, 92-4, 109-10, 116-17, 126.

fare and procession scenes.³⁷ Finally, hunting scenes seem to have been a favourite subject in the bathing rooms XXVII and XLIV in the palace of Til Barsip, the former of which could be dated to the period between Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal.³⁸



Figure 7
Parade of weaponless attendants in bathing room 12 of the Royal Palace of Sargon II, Dur-Sharrukin (Loud 1936, fig. 25)

The choice of subject may have depended on several factors: personal taste, the influence of the intellectual milieu at court, and in-vogue religious perspectives. A correspondence between interior decoration and the activities of the room, however, seems unwarranted, since the subject of bathing rooms was not exclusive to this location but shared with other rooms. In the Northwest Palace there also seems to have been a preference for warfare activities in rooms and spaces that were visited by both palace-residents and outsiders, whereas rooms whose access was more controlled or less direct were decorated with otherworldly motifs.³⁹ Bathing rooms L and I were included in this artistic program, and, because of their remote position, they welcomed an otherworldly decoration. In a similar vein, the bathing rooms dated to the eighth and seventh centuries BCE exhibited the general artistic program of each palace and were surrounded with warfare images like other non-bathing rooms. In only a few instances, one finds a well-thought-out organisation of images which seems designed to attract the viewer's attention to a specific spot within the bathing room, namely the niche. In rooms L and I in the Northwest Palace, the reliefs of the niches were carved with an atypical figure, possibly female because beardless. In room I, this was doubled and flanked the stylised tree on each side in a symmetrical way.⁴⁰ In room 9 in Adad-nirari III's Palace, the central panel of the painted murals was planned to fit into the niche opposite the entrance and the motif consisted of a design of young bulls, their heads turned back, prancing in heraldic fashion on either side of a sun-disc.⁴¹ In room XXVII of Til Barsip palace, the niche seems to have featured the heroic confrontation, in an apparent symmetry, between the king riding a horse and a jumping lion.⁴² These cases do not help us much in understanding the function of bathing rooms, but they do point to the importance of the niche as a visual target. Also, the use of symmetrical images may have been intentional: symmetry attracts the viewer's eye by evoking a sense of order, and may also have been associated with representations of the divine.⁴³

Floral, animal, and geometric motifs may have had meaningful connotations and allusions to the divine (e.g., rampant bulls, rosettes) or notions of fertility (pomegranate).⁴⁴ These notions could also have

³⁷ Barnett 1976, pls. 16-21.

³⁸ Thureau-Dangin, Dunand 1936, pls. LII-LIII. For the dating, see Tomabechi 1983-84, 72.

³⁹ Portuese 2020a, 161-211.

⁴⁰ Meuszyński 1981, pl. 15 (L-20); Paley, Sobolewski 1987, pl. 1 (I-16). See Russell 1998, 696-7 and Brown 2010, 29-30 for a discussion of this figure.

⁴¹ Mallowan 1954b, 158.

⁴² Thureau-Dangin, Dunand 1936, pl. LIII (XXVIIc).

⁴³ On symmetry, its emotional effects, and connection with the divine, see Portuese 2023. A further possible connection between niche and carved reliefs was suggested by Turner (in Barnett et al. 1998, 25) in relation to room 4 in the Southwest Palace at Nineveh. Slab 11 on the northwest wall opposite the shallow recess was carved with a figure interpreted as a priest, who stands before a tripod, identified either as an altar or a balance. Relying on this image, Turner inferred that it suggests that the room was used for ritual rather than everyday ablutions, or both.

⁴⁴ Portuese 2020a, 46-7.

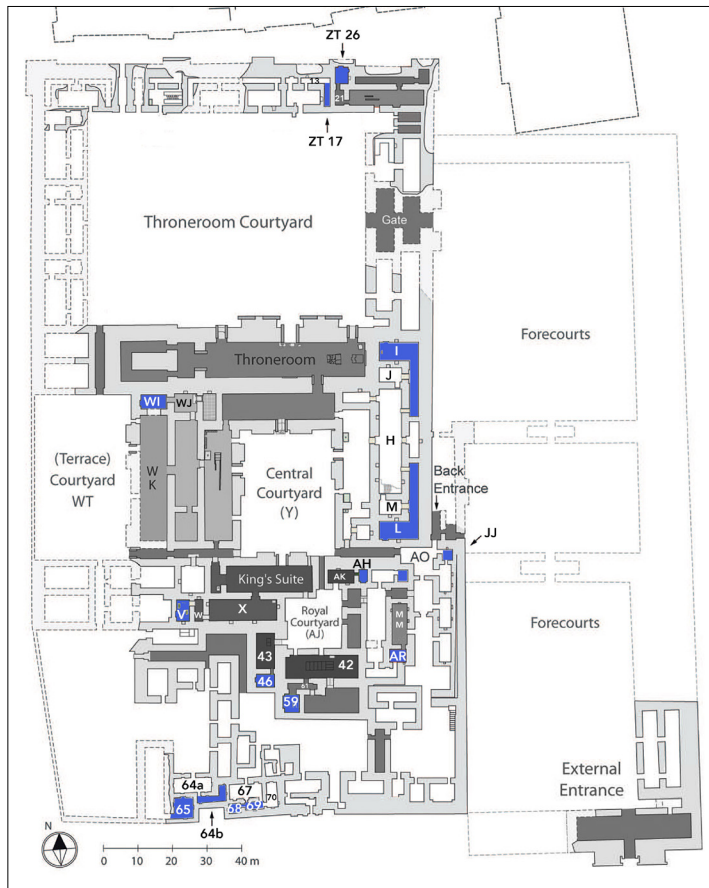


Figure 8
 Floorplan of the Northwest Palace, Kalhu
 (adapted from Groß, Kertai 2019, fig. 3)

been further sparked by using specific colours (such as black and white, cobalt-blue, red, and green).⁴⁵ However, these types of floral, animal, and geometric designs occurred frequently elsewhere and were not exclusive to bathroom decoration.

Although further research could add more clues with respect to bathing rooms and decoration, the general impression one gets is that bathing rooms tended to be decorated and some even more than others. It seems that the most prominent bathing rooms and lavatories, which were those associated or connected with the main reception rooms in a palace, such as the throne-room, were highly decorated and in some instances their interior decoration was aligned with the one of neighboring spaces. This aspect may hint at a functional difference between bathing rooms. The only decoration that might be linked to activities performed in bathing rooms is that of rooms 9 and 12 in the Royal Palace of Sargon II at Dur-Sharrukin. In this case, the parades of attendants are headed by the crown prince and move towards the king. In room 12, the attendants are weaponless, indicating a non-military role and emphasising perhaps their auxiliary responsibilities [fig. 7]. The two parades may reflect movements and actions that took place in these rooms, such as during festivities or rituals.

As for the activities performed in bathing rooms, the decoration of neighboring reception rooms can be more instructive. These were often decorated with scenes of meetings between the king and other individuals. For example, bathing room 46 in the Northwest Palace was connected with room 43, whose western wall was decorated with paintings showing a line of people moving towards the king.⁴⁶ A similar decoration was found in room S 5 in the Military Palace, which was connected with the bathing room S 3, and in rooms 6 and 11 in the Royal Palace at Dur-Sharrukin, which were connected with

⁴⁵ See Mallowan 1954b, 158-9 (room 9); 1966, 434 (room S 3); Loud 1936, fig. 27, pl. 1 (room 12).

⁴⁶ Hussein et al. 2013, 94.

bathing rooms 9 and 12.⁴⁷ From this evidence it is possible that some activities carried out in bathing rooms were somehow intertwined with audiences and personal meetings.

An interesting aspect that is worth being underscored is the presence of protective figures carved on the walls or on the doorjambs of bathing rooms and lavatories. Their position within the interior decoration is intentional and functional. Bird-*apkallū* and human-*apkallū* surrounded rooms I and L, while the niches in the rooms were protected by the above-mentioned beardless figure; wingless protective figures, two of which likely held a ram, were stationed at the doorway of room 9 in the Royal Palace at Dur-Sharrukin. Room 27 in Residence K may have been protected by winged figures, as in the neighboring reception room 28.⁴⁸ At Til Barsip, a fish-*apkallū* was depicted on one side of the niche in room XXVII, looking into the niche, and both the vestibule and corridor (XXVI and XLVI) leading into bathing rooms XXVII and XLIV were protected by human-*apkallū*.⁴⁹ The doorways of almost all the known bathing rooms and lavatories in the palaces of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal at Nineveh were protected by the smiting god *lulal* and the lion-demon *ugallu*, who represent the pair of protective figures chosen to protect these spaces. The same pair could even protect the vestibule of bathing rooms, as in room 32 of Sennacherib's Palace.⁵⁰ This group is expanded with the addition of the lion-centaur *urmaḥlullū* in the North Palace, particularly at the doorway of the vestibule T leading into room V. The *urmaḥlullū* seems to have been closely associated with the protection of the niche and the drain in lavatories. This association is substantiated by its presence in the niche of room F in the North Palace. Here it stood at the side of the niche facing into the room and probably protected the drain – a favoured entrance-point of demons like *Šulak* – within the niche.⁵¹ More generally, some bathing rooms needed to be protected and both drain and niche were probably considered to be particularly vulnerable spots, since they received peculiar protective treatment. Such visual protection in niches should probably be linked to the risk of being attacked by demons provoking strokes and other dangerous diseases. According to Andrew George, these potential diseases were probably caused by a common human anxiety in lavatories, on the assumption that “straining too hard ‘at stool’ is injurious to health and can provoke the onset of stroke and other neurological problems”.⁵²

Most of the above-described apotropaic figures and their roles have been identified through clay and metal statuettes of protective spirits, sometimes accompanied by short inscriptions, which were buried underneath the thresholds in various buildings. Ritual texts of exorcists containing instructions to make these protective figurines also distinguish between figurines made of clay and called *bīnūt ap-sē* ‘creatures of ap-sū’ and figurines made of tamarisk and called *bīnūt šamē* ‘the creatures of heaven’.⁵³ Some of these figurines resemble the types of orthostat figures which have been found in the Assyrian palaces. So far, scholars have focused on the apotropaic function that these figures performed both as figurines and as palace reliefs.⁵⁴ However, it should also be pointed out that most, if not all, the figures which populated bathing rooms and lavatories were *bīnūt ap-sē* ‘creatures of ap-sū’, which connect them with the *Apsū*, a pure place where the secrets of the rites of lustration are kept.⁵⁵ It should come as no surprise, then, that *apkallū* were found in the large bathing rooms L and I of the Northwest Palace and the Til Barsip Palace and that these held the *banduddū*, the ritual bucket that was filled with water.⁵⁶ Similarly, *lulal*, *ugallu*, and *urmaḥlullū*, which populate the bathing rooms and lavatories of the palaces of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal, are all creatures of the *Apsū* and protect these spaces from evil. This implies that their presence was also connected with their power to bring cleanliness and purity to these spaces.

⁴⁷ Mallowan 1966, 379-80, fig. 307 (room S 5); Botta, Flandin 1849b, pls. 103, 137 (rooms 6 and 11).

⁴⁸ This is however hypothetical (Loud, Altman 1938, 67).

⁴⁹ Thureau-Dangin, Dunand 1936, 62, pls. XLIII (1), XLVI, XLVII, LIII (XXVIIb).

⁵⁰ For a discussion of this pair of protective figures, see Kertai 2015b, 341-3.

⁵¹ Wiggermann 1992, 52, 98, 181-2; Kertai 2015b, 346.

⁵² George 2015, 86-90.

⁵³ Wiggerman 1992, 46-52.

⁵⁴ See Portuese 2020b, 254-5, also for further bibliography.

⁵⁵ Guichard, Marti 2013.

⁵⁶ Portuese 2020b, 258-61. The connection between pure water and fish-*apkallū* is straightforward on the elaborately carved stone basin of Sennacherib found at Assur (Matthiae 1998, 41-3; see Kikuchi in this volume for further comments on this stone basin relying on texts).

4 Doors and Connectivity

There is an excellently preserved record of bathing rooms in Assyrian palaces and even the smallest type of suite contained a bathing room or a lavatory. In practical terms, a bathing room could be accessed from a single room, and it serviced one or two rooms. This suggests that each owner or occupant or group of occupants of a suite could enjoy a dedicated space for personal functions. Bathing rooms were thus not communal spaces.⁵⁷ They were located ‘out of public sight’, in remote locations within each suite and without direct access. Bringing bathing room functions indoors and into concealed locations can be interpreted as a first significant symptom of privacy.

The archaeological remains surprisingly show that bathing rooms usually lacked doors and thus they were spatially and functionally connected with the adjacent room, which could be a reception room, a vestibule or a corridor. These were, by contrast, often furnished with doors. This indicates that bathing rooms often formed a single architectural and functional unit with their neighboring spaces. It also implies that doors were conceived as a means to guarantee security rather than to create a sense of privacy.⁵⁸ At the same time, the size of a bathing room indicates that a large concourse of people could be welcomed in. These two aspects are at odds with a contemporary idea of privacy.

Only a few bathing rooms were furnished with doors, but their presence can be linked to their change of position within the palace, which shifts from the usual remote location inside the suite to entrance spaces. The most remarkable, perhaps, example of this is represented by bathing rooms 9 and 1 of the Royal Palace at Dur-Sharrukin, which were accessible from the outside. According to the carved reliefs surrounding the walls of room 9, it seems that many people frequented with the king here. The well-documented adjacent bathing room 12, which is similarly decorated, was around 51 square meters and could accommodate more than one hundred people standing. There are no textual records concerning the specific people who visited the king in the bathing room, but there is a reference to a lackey, a *ša-bēti-šanie*, who was in charge of controlling the container of hand-water during the royal repast; this may hint at the presence of individuals who could assist the king in pouring out water and other substances contained in the vases found in similar spaces (see above).⁵⁹ The function of rooms 9 and 1, as well as 12, remains unclear, although one can speculate that they were used during special events taking place in the courtyards onto which they opened out.

5 Water and Bathtubs

Our archaeological remains further suggest that bathing rooms and lavatories were waterproofed. Containers, pavements, and bathtub slabs indicate that liquids were essential to the functions of these spaces and that water almost certainly played a prominent role. The importance of water supply, accessibility and management for the formation, development and sustenance of Assyrian society and economy has been largely acknowledged by scholars.⁶⁰ Assyrian capitals were built on riverbanks, and water could be extracted from wells, of which there were several within the palaces.⁶¹ Water could be associated with other substances, such as plant, perfumed oils and ointments. However, hygiene in its most simple form can be simply achieved by using only water.⁶²

The textual sources mostly frame the importance of water within cleansing rituals and instructions (e.g., hemerologies),⁶³ but some documents hint at the use of water for hygienic and health concerns, showing that there was considerable awareness of good hygiene practices and their role in reducing the spread of disease. For example, the chief physician Urad-Nanaya gives instructions to Esarhaddon on how to take care of a rash and specifies that the ‘clean water’ must not be hot: “Concerning the rash about which the king, my lord, [wrote to me]: [...] The clean water (*mê zakûte*) with which the king reg-

⁵⁷ A communal bathing room may have been room JJ (interpreted by Mallowan 1966, 120 as a guardroom) in the Northwest Palace at Kalhu, since it could be accessed from a courtyard and a room (Kertai 2015a, 46). So too bathing room XX in the Hadattu Palace seems to have been connected with two adjacent rooms, XVIII and XXI (Thureau-Dangin et al. 1931, 21).

⁵⁸ An example is represented by the Northwest Palace, where bathing rooms I and L lack doors, but the adjacent storage rooms/treasuries M and J were closed off by doors.

⁵⁹ SAA 20, 33, ii 20.

⁶⁰ Morandi Bonacossi 2017; 2018; Morandi Bonacossi, Qasim 2022.

⁶¹ See, for instance, the wells excavated by Mallowan (1954a, 94-111) at Kalhu. See also Oates, Oates 2001, 90-1.

⁶² See Hätinen in this volume.

⁶³ See bibliographical references in Kikuchi’s contribution in this volume.

ularly washes his hands in the washbowl (*narmakte*) should not be hot. The rash will soon be gone”.⁶⁴ This text highlights a peculiar interest of Esarhaddon in his health conditions, as well as the apprehensive personality that led him to adopt certain eccentric forms of behaviour.⁶⁵ However, it also hints at a few important notions: 1) the king washes his hands ‘regularly’ (*kajamānu*), implying some sort of habit; 2) bathtubs (*narmaktu*) could contain clean water; 3) bathing rooms were probably places where clean water (*mê zakûte*) was provided;⁶⁶ and 4) water could be heated, suggesting that braziers or portable objects might have been used in these spaces to heat water. The concern for clean water supply, which also emphasises the correlation between illness and water, is found in a letter sent by Qurdi-Ashur-lamur, governor of the Phoenician city of Simirra, who reports on the deportation of ten Iasubean families via Immiu to Kashpuna. The water in that city is apparently strong or dangerous (*dannu*) for people and they can become ill from it.⁶⁷ Similarly, other deportees are said to be brought into a city where the water is good (*tābūni*), according to a letter from Taklak-ana-Bel, governor of Nasibina, to Sargon II.⁶⁸ These references substantiate the importance of the supply of clean water and further highlight the role of bathing rooms as places where clean water was provided. This aspect seems to be further underscored in a letter sent from a Babylonian official, Nabu-balassu-iqbi, to Ashurbanipal, who complains about his unjust treatment, as his appeal to the king has not been heard and he has been deprived of his property. He thus states: “Since last year nobody gives me food to eat. Hunger and thirst have befallen me. I go and drink water from a well (*būrtu mê*); I wash my feet (there)”.⁶⁹ These expressions may have a metaphorical meaning, but they may also hint at the lack of clean water and the proper means to wash one’s body parts.

In this context, bathtubs seem to have played an important role as containers of clean and sometimes hot water which was poured in when needed [fig. 6]. The material they were made of (bronze, copper, and gold) probably helped to convey the impression of clean and pure water like the one of the *Apsû*. In fact, the natural radiance or shine of these materials must have transmitted a sense of purity and of the divine. In this regard, as has been observed by Yitzhaq Feder, the primary terms for cultic purity in Akkadian (*ellu, ebbu, zakû*) as well as in other languages “can be traced back to an original concrete sense related to the experiential domain of radiance”.⁷⁰ In addition, purity, radiance, and being free of negative qualities or elements are associated with a “well-defined context of extra-linguistic experience, namely that of metallurgy. In the domain of metals, one finds a clear correlation between the brightness or shininess of the substance and its degree of purity. Moreover, the degree of purity was an important determinant of the quality and hence commercial value” of metals.⁷¹ It is this latter aspect which was then transferred to the ritual and cultic spheres. Now, in the context of Assyrian bathing rooms, it seems that the semantic development of purity terms, their religious concepts and their connection to metallurgy seem to have been expressed and vividly perceived in these spaces, and this because of the presence of metal bathtubs which were originally placed in these spaces. The shininess of the metal bathtub could be further sensed and expanded by the darkness of the bathing rooms, whose internal position must have hindered the sunlight to come in. Light could have entered from ventilation shafts, but the discovery of a lamp in the well-preserved bathing room of the Governor’s Palace at Kalhu suggests that other means would have provided an artificial source of light and intensified the play of dark and the brilliance of polished and sparkling metal surfaces.⁷² In addition, the purity of the bathtub and the water poured in was further emphasised by the creatures protecting the bathing room which were always creatures of *Apsû*, and thus pure. The whole must have bestowed on bathing rooms a tangible sense of hygiene, cleanliness, and radiant purity.

⁶⁴ SAA 10, 318: 8-r.e. 13.

⁶⁵ Radner 2003; Ermidoro 2014, 85-6.

⁶⁶ The Akkadian term used here to describe water as ‘clean’ is *zakû*, which is found in ritual but generally not in cultic contexts. Thus, it probably indicates that water is literally clean, not polluted, and free of adulterating elements (see Guichard, Marti 2013, 51; Feder 2014, 97; Kikuchi in this volume).

⁶⁷ SAA 19, 22, r 16-r 22. The adjective *dannu* can have the meaning ‘dangerous’ (CAD D, s.v. “dannu”, 96-7).

⁶⁸ SAA 1, 247.

⁶⁹ SAA 18, 181, 19-22.

⁷⁰ Feder 2014, 99.

⁷¹ Feder 2014, 106.

⁷² Oates, Oates 2001, 132-3. The darkness of bathing rooms may have even affected the finishing of their interior decoration, as suggested by Reade 2022, 31 of room F in the North Palace. On the darkness of bathing rooms, Place 1867a, 92 also noted the little amount of light going in room 94 in the Royal Palace of Dur-Sharrukin.

6 Protocol

A final interesting aspect that may be inferred from archaeological evidence is the strict protocol that some activities, especially cultic ones, seems to have adhered to. As has been observed (by Koubkova in this volume), “the purity of ritual actions goes beyond” a desire to eliminate any kind of pollution and strives for “a perfectly correct performance” that must follow “all the established rules to the letter”.⁷³ It is therefore likely that levels of hygiene and especially those of purity were kept high by adhering to strict rules of a specific protocol. From some letters one may envisage that a protocol existed for cultic acts in palace bathing rooms that was similar to the rituals performed in temples. In all these instances, what is clear is that the king was constantly kept informed about these issues. For instance, in a letter sent to Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal, the astrologer and priest of the Assur temple Akkulanu asks whether he should attend the ablution rituals to be performed in Tarbisu.⁷⁴ In another letter, an exorcist asks: “Concerning the bath, what is it that the king, my lord, commands?”⁷⁵ Hemerologies show that even the visit to the lavatory was controlled by protocol, because of the potential attack of the demon Šulak.⁷⁶ Similar references also suggest that bathing rooms and lavatories were sometimes used with caution and under the keen guidance of the king’s intellectual and religious milieu. If, as suggested by the carved reliefs of rooms 9 and 12 at Dur-Sharrukin [fig. 7], a concourse of people was allowed to enter bathing rooms, one may even speculate that some individuals (e.g., the exorcist, see Koubkova in this volume) were appointed and admitted into the room to give instructions to the king for the correct performance of the prescribed actions, the good result of the cleansing ritual, and the safe success of personal functions.

7 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, archaeological remains show that bathing rooms and lavatories defy the modern definition of private rooms, that is, as spaces in which one locks the door and is not observed or disturbed by other people. Nonetheless, their position within a building evokes a sense of privacy and indicates that bathing rooms and lavatories were not communal spaces but served the occupants of a single suite. Identifying or locating specific activities in these spaces is not simple and requires much interpretation and speculation. The available evidence indicates that bathing rooms and lavatories were ‘hygienic’ locations, where personal functions could be performed, and clean and hot water was provided. The interior decoration does not hint at specific activities, but strongly suggests that these spaces were deemed important, especially the niche where a toilet was located. In some instances, carved reliefs together with the size of bathing rooms and lavatories give the impression that owners were assisted by other individuals. Finally, the divine protection carved or painted substantiates that these were pure and well protected places.

The fact that every suite was furnished with a bathing room or a lavatory further suggests that hygiene, along with its religious and cultic implications, was very important. In particular, the presence of bathing rooms in all locations suggests a general equality of access to clean water and bodily cleanliness and emphasises a common sensitivity toward forms of hygiene or, at least, the impression that bathing rooms contributed to the development of a common sensitivity toward hygiene.⁷⁷ At the same time, since the lack of hygiene could be a threat to the wider social group, common hygienic rules may have contributed to the development of a common behavioural immune system, namely disgust.⁷⁸ These factors may have strengthened group identity and protected it from those individuals and things that may have polluted or defiled its integrity. All of this may have inevitably determined the quality of social relationships.⁷⁹ In this regard, one may be tempting to look at some devices, such as the long throne-rooms, the royal throne dais, the controlled accessibility of some palace rooms, and

⁷³ See Koubková in this volume.

⁷⁴ SAA 10, 93.

⁷⁵ SAA 10, 312.

⁷⁶ George 2015, 87.

⁷⁷ Hygiene could imply access to pricey luxury substances, such as perfumed oils, to which only upper levels of society, ranging from the wealthy citizens to the king, could have access (see Häntinen in this volume).

⁷⁸ Curtis 2013.

⁷⁹ For an examination of the relationships between group identity and health, see Haslam et al. 2009.

even etiquette rules, as a means to keep palace occupants safe from potential invisible threats which could undermine their health and hygiene conditions. Further, the physical distance between king, his officials and attendants, and outsiders that is often represented on palace reliefs and wall paintings may have depended not only on well-established artistic conventions but also on hygiene reasons and as a reaction to disgust, which functioned to orchestrate an unconscious avoidance of pathogens and parasites.⁸⁰ In short, bathing rooms may have been one of the means through which Assyrians defined themselves and contributed to their cultural identity.

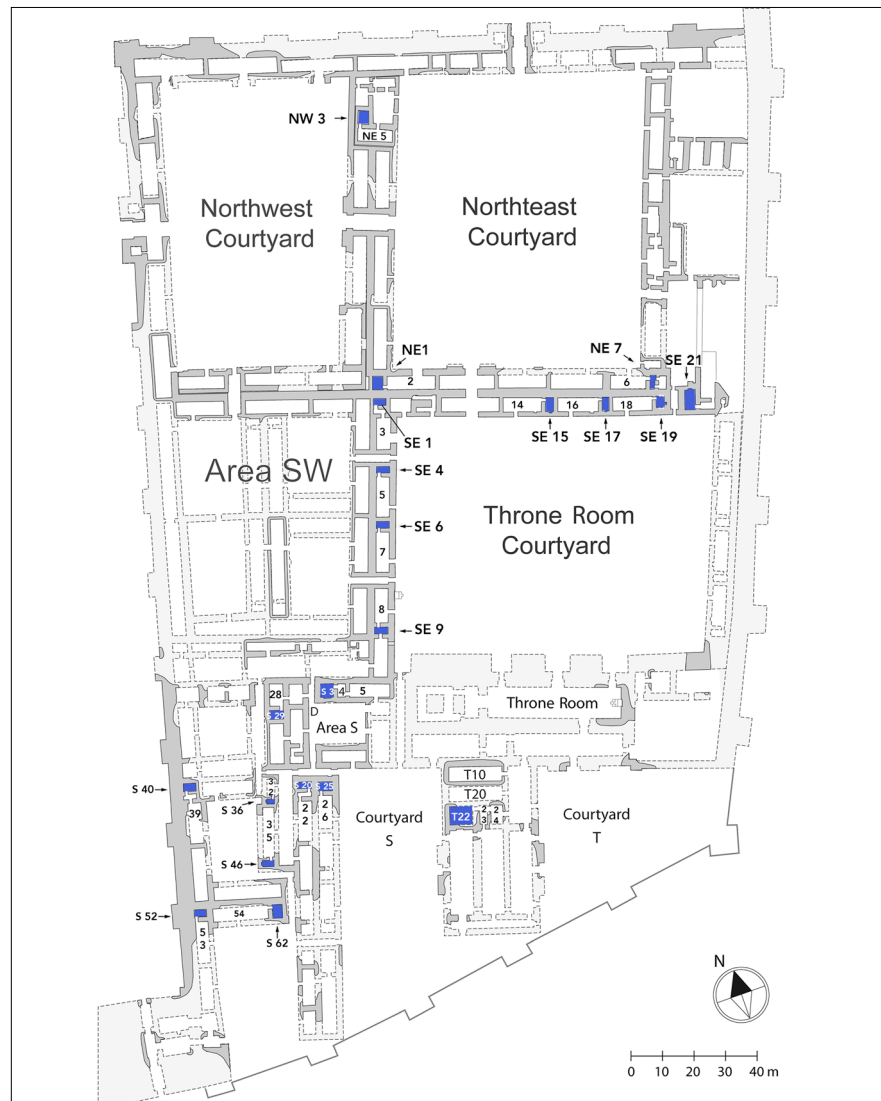


Figure 9
 Floorplan of the Military
 Palace, Kalhu (adapted from
 Kertai 2015c, fig. 2)

⁸⁰ Portuese 2020a, 110-22; Curtis 2013. Exclusionary practices and forms of ostracisms were often related to notions of impurity in ancient Mesopotamia (see Feder in this volume).

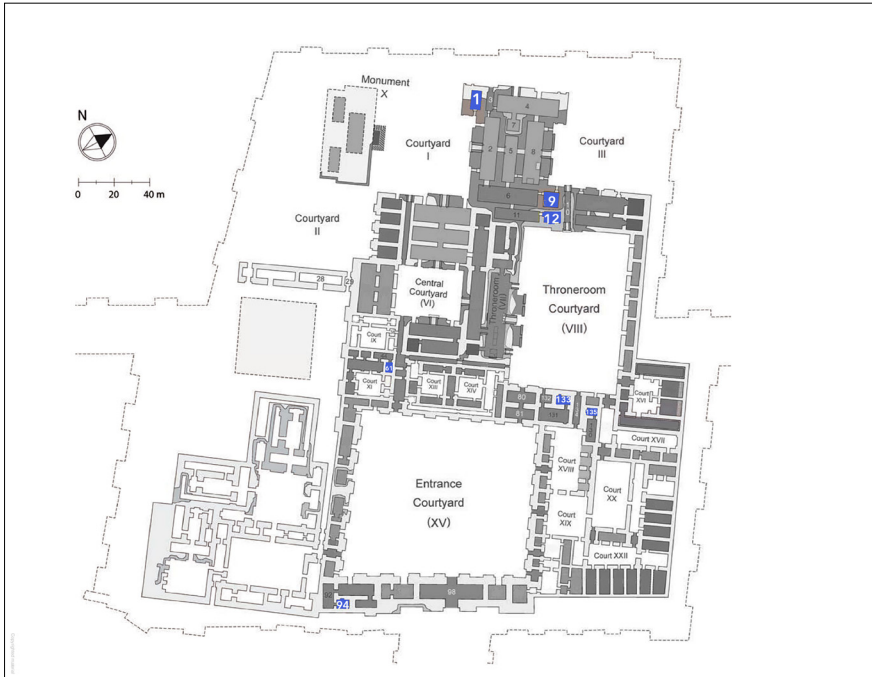


Figure 10
 Floorplan of the Royal Palace, Dur-Sharrukin
 (adapted from Kertai 2015a, pl. 11)

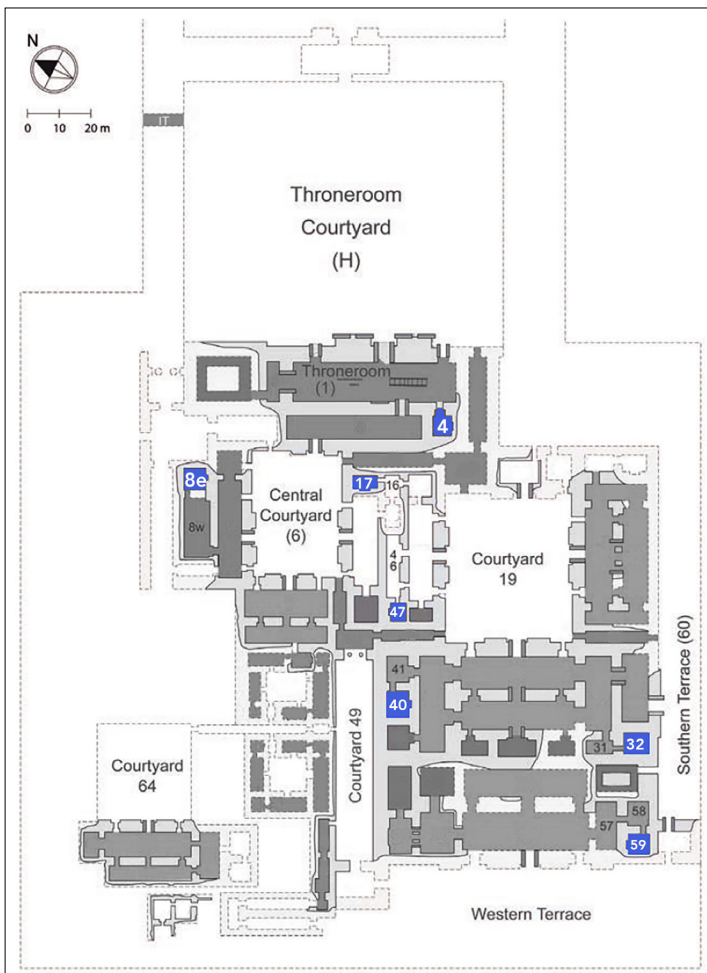


Figure 11
 Floorplan of the Southwest Palace, Nineveh (adapted from
 Kertai 2015a, pl. 17)

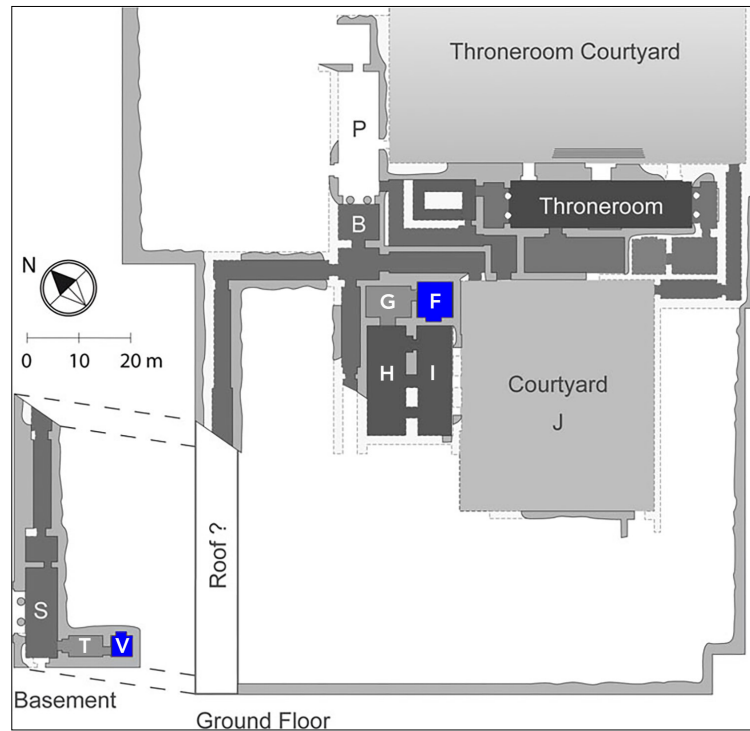


Figure 12
 Floorplan of the North Palace, Nineveh
 (adapted from Kertai 2017, fig. 1)

Table 1 Main features of bathing rooms and lavatories in Assyrian buildings (°=located in the adjacent room; ? = hypothetical). Numeration mainly follows the plans laid out in Kertai 2015a

Palace / Room	Paved with baked bricks / stone slabs	Niche	Drain	Bathtub slab	Ventilation shaft	Doors	Floral and Geometric motifs	Human figures	Protective figures
NW Palace (Kalhu) [fig. 8]									
ZT 17	•		•	•	°	°			
ZT 26	•	•		•	•				
L	•	•		••	•	°			•
I	•	•	•	••	•	°			•
V	•		•	••	•				
WI	•	•		•					
JJ	•				•				
AH	•	•		•	•				
AR	•	•	•		•				
46	•							°	
59	•	•	•	•					
68	•	•	•						
69	•	•	•						
64b	•	•							
65	•	•							
Old Palace (Assur)									
4	•								
Governor's Palace (Kalhu)									
Room	•	•	•	••			•		
Military Palace (Kalhu) [fig. 9]									
NW 3	•			•	•	°			
NE 1					•				
NE 7	•	•	•		•				

Palace / Room	Paved with baked bricks / stone slabs	Niche	Drain	Bathtub slab	Ventilation shaft	Doors	Floral and Geometric motifs	Human figures	Protective figures
SE 1		•(?)		
SE 15	.	.	.						
SE 17	.	.	.			°			
SE 19	.				.				
SE 21					
SE 4	.					°			
SE 6	.		.			°			
SE 9	.								
T 22	.		.	••			.	°	
S 3	.	.	.	••		°	.	°	
S 20				
S 25				
S 29	.	.	.			°			
S 36	.	.	.						
S 40	.								
S 46	.	.	.						
S 52					.				
S 62									
Adad-Nirari III's Palace (PD 5) (Kalhu)									
9	°	.		
Royal Palace (Dur-Sharrukin) [fig. 10]									
1	.			••		.		.	.
9
12
61									
94		.							
133		•(?)							
135		.	.						
136 ⁵⁰		.	.						
Residence L (Dur-Sharrukin)									
30							•(?)		
37		.				°			
50		.							
81		.							
82		.							
90		.							
118		.							
Residence K (Dur-Sharrukin)									
9		.							
13		.							
22									
23									
27		.	.						•°
29					
34			.						
35			.						
43									
45									
47	.	.	.						
SW Palace (Nineveh) [fig. 11]									
4
8e		.						.	.
17		.						.	
32								.	•°
40		.						.	.

Palace / Room	Paved with baked bricks / stone slabs	Niche	Drain	Bathtub slab	Ventilation shaft	Doors	Floral and Geometric motifs	Human figures	Protective figures
47		•						•	•
59		•						•	•
North Palace (Nineveh) [fig. 12]									
F		•			•			•	•
V		•							◦
Til Barsip Palace [fig. 4]									
XIII	•	•	•			◦			
XIV	•	•	•						
XXVII	•	•	•	••	•(?)	◦		•	◦
LXIV	•	•	•	•		◦		•	◦
Hadattu Palace									
IV			•						
II									
XV			•						
XIII									
20	•	•	•	•		◦			
22	•	•	•	•		◦	•		
25	•	•	•	•		◦	•		
48	•	•	•						
49						◦			
Bâtiment aux ivoires (Hadattu)									
5	•		•						
17	•	•	•						

80 Bathing room 136 is described and shown on the plan in Place 1867a, 99; 1867b, pl. 5.

Bibliography

- Barnett, R.D. (1976). *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668-627 B.C.)*. London: The Trustees of the British Museum.
- Barnett, R.D.; Bleibtreu, E.; Turner, G. (1998). *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*. London: The Trustees of the British Museum.
- Borger, R. (1973). "Die Weihe eines Enlil-Priesters". *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 30, 163-76.
- Botta, M.P.E.; Flandin, M.E. (1849a). *Monument de Ninive*. Vol. 1, *Architecture et sculpture*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.
- Botta, M.P.E.; Flandin, M.E. (1849b). *Monument de Ninive*. Vol. 2, *Architecture et sculpture*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.
- Brown, B. (2010). "Kingship and Ancestral Cult in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud". *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 10(1), 1-53.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/156921210x500495>
- Curtis, V. (2013). *Don't Look, Don't Touch, Don't Eat: The Science Behind Revulsion*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.
<https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226089102.001.000>
- Ermidoro, S. (2014). "Food Prohibition and Dietary Regulations in Ancient Mesopotamia". *Aula Orientalis*, 32(1), 79-91.
- Feder, Y. (2014). "The Semantics of Purity in the Ancient Near East: Lexical Meaning as a Projection of Embodied Experience". *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 14, 87-113.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/15692124-12341258>
- Frame, G. (2021). *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721-705 BC)*. University Park (PA): Eisenbrauns. The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 2.
<https://doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv1g8092k>
- George, A.R. (2015). "On Babylonian Lavatories and Sewers". *Iraq*, 77, 75-106.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/irq.2015.9>
- Grayson, A.K. (1991). *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114-859 BC)*. Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods 2.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442671072>
- Groß, M.; Kertai, D. (2019). "Becoming Empire: Neo-Assyrian Palaces and the Creation of Courtly Culture". *Journal of Ancient History*, 7(1), 1-31.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/jah-2018-0026>
- Groß, M. (2020). *At the Heart of an Empire: The Royal Household in the Neo-Assyrian Period*. Leuven; Paris; Bristol: Peeters. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 292.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1q26rp1>
- Guichard, M.; Marti, L. (2013). "Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Paleo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Periods". Frevel, C.; Nihan, C. (eds), *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*. London; Boston: Brill, 47-113. Dynamics in the History of Religion 3.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004232297_003
- Haslam, S.A. et al. (2009). "Social Identity, Health and Well-Being: An Emerging Agenda for Applied Psychology". *Applied Psychology*, 58(1), 1-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2008.00379.x>
- Hoagland, A.K. (2018). *The Bathroom: A Social History of Cleanliness and the Body*. Santa Barbara (CA); Denver (CO): Greenwood.
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400616747>
- Hussein, M.M. (1996). "Excavations in the Western Section of the Western Part of the Palace of King Assur Nasir Pal II". *Sumer*, 48, 6-24.
- Hussein, M.M.; Kertai, D.; Altaweel, M. (2013). "Nimrud and Its Remains in Light of Iraqi Excavations from 1989-2002". Kertai, D.; Miglus, P.A. (eds), *New Research on Late Assyrian Palaces = Conference* (Heidelberg, January 22 2011). Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orienterverlag, 91-124. Heidelberg Studien zum Alten Orient 15.
- Kertai, D. (2015a). *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198723189.001.0001>
- Kertai, D. (2015b). "The Guardians at the Doors: Entering the Southwest Palace in Nineveh". *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 74(2), 325-49.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/682152>
- Kertai, D. (2015c). "After the Court Moved Away: A Reinterpretation of the Ivory Finds within the Royal Palaces of Kalḫu". *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 42(1), 112-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/aof-2015-0005>
- Kertai, D. (2017). "Embellishing the Interior Spaces of Assyria's Royal Palaces: the *bēt ḫilāni* Reconsidered". *Iraq*, 79, 85-104.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/irq.2017.12>
- Kwasman, T.; Parpola, S. (1991). *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh. Part 1, Tiglath-pileser III Through Esarhaddon*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. State Archives of Assyria 6.
- Loud, G. (1936). *Khorsabad. Part 1, Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Oriental Institute Publications XXXVIII.
- Loud, G.; Altman, C.B. (1938). *Khorsabad. Part 1, The Citadel and the Town*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Oriental Institute Publications 40.
- Luukko, M. (2012). *The Correspondence of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. State Archives of Assyria 19.
- Mallowan, M.E.L. (1950). "Excavations at Nimrud. 1949-1959". *Iraq*, 12(2), 147-83.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4241708>

- Mallowan, M.E.L. (1953). "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 1952". *Iraq*, 15(1), 1-42.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4199564>
- Mallowan, M.E.L. (1954a). "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 1953". *Iraq*, 16(1), 59-114.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4199583>
- Mallowan, M.E.L. (1954b). "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 1953 (Continued)". *Iraq*, 16(2), 115-63.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4199587>
- Mallowan, M.E.L. (1966). *Nimrud and Its Remains*. London: Collins.
- Matthiae, P. (1998). *Ninive*. Milano: Electa.
- Mattila, R. (2002). *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh*. Part 2, *Assurbanipal through Sin-šarru-iškun*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. State Archives of Assyria 14.
- Meuszyński, J. (1981). *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalḫu (Nimrūd)*. Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern. Baghdader Forschungen 2.
- Morandi Bonacossi, D. (2017). "Water for Assyria: Irrigation and Water Management in the Assyrian Empire". Morandi Bonacossi, D.; Petit, L.P. (eds), *Nineveh, The Great City. Symbol of Beauty and Power*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 132-6. Papers on Archaeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities 13.
- Morandi Bonacossi, D. (2018). "Twelve Royal Stelas for Twelve Great Gods: New Discoveries at the Khinis Monumental Complex". *Ash-Sharq*, 2(2), 76-97.
- Morandi Bonacossi, D.; Qasim, H.A. (2022). "Irrigation and Landscape Commemoration in Northern Assyria, The Assyrian Canal and Rock Reliefs in Faïda (Kurdistan Region of Iraq): Preliminary Report on the 2019 Field Season". *Iraq*, 84, 43-81.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/irq.2022.10>
- Oates, D. (1959). "Fort Shalmaneser: An Interim Report". *Iraq*, 21(2), 98-129.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4199655>
- Oates, D. (1962). "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 1961". *Iraq*, 24(1), 1-25.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4199709>
- Oates, D. (1963). "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu) (1962)". *Iraq*, 25(1), 6-37.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4199729>
- Oates, J.; Oates, D. (2001). *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed*. London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- Paley, S.M.; Sobolewski, R.P. (1987). *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and Their Positions in the Northwest-Palace at Kalḫu (Nimrūd) II*. Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern. Baghdader Forschungen 10.
- Parpola, S. (1987). *The Correspondence of Sargon II*. Part 1, *Letters from Assyria and the West*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. State Archives of Assyria 1.
- Parpola, S. (1993). *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. State Archives of Assyria 10.
- Parpola, S. (2017). *Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts*. Winona Lake (IN): Eisenbrauns. State Archives of Assyria 20.
- Place, V. (1867a). *Ninive et l'Assyrie 1*. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale.
- Place, V. (1867b). *Ninive et l'Assyrie 3*. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale.
- Portuese, L. (2020a). *Life at Court. Ideology and Audience in the Late Assyrian Palace*. Münster: Zaphon. Marru 11.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.18654724>
- Portuese, L. (2020b). "The Genies of the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II". *Ash-Sharq*, 4, 253-91.
- Portuese, L. (2023). "Images are Forever: Assyrian Readings of the Kalḫu Reliefs". Howard, J.C. (ed.), *Architecture, Iconography, and Text: New Studies on the Northwest Palace Reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II*. Leuven; Paris; Bristol: Peeters, 73-104. *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 301.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.7762586.7>
- Radner, K. (2003). "The Trials of Esarhaddon: The Conspiracy of 670 BC". *Isimu*, 6, 165-84.
<https://doi.org/10.15366/isimu2003.6.009>
- Reade, J.E. (2022). *Design and Destruction: The Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh*. Wien: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien. Archiv für Orientforschung 34.
- Reynolds, F. (2003). *The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon and Letters to Assurbanipal and Sin-šarru-iškun from Northern and Central Babylonia*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. State Archives of Assyria 18.
- Russell, J.M. (1991). *Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival at Nineveh*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Russell, J.M. (1998). "The Program of the Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art". *American Journal of Archaeology*, 102(4), 655-715.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/506096>
- Thureau-Dangin, F.; Dunand, M. (1936). *Til-Barsib*. Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique XXIII.
- Thureau-Dangin, F. et al. (1931). *Arslan-Tash*. Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner. Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique XVI.
- Tomabechi, Y. (1983-84). "Wall Paintings from Til Barsip". *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 29-30, 63-74.
- Tudeau, J. (2019). *Building in Assyria: A Philological Perspective*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag. Schriften zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 14.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1453khg>
- Wicks, Y. (2015). *Bronze 'Bathtub' Coffins In the Context of 8th-6th Century BC Babylonian, Assyrian and Elamite Funerary Practices*. Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr43kwr>
- Wiggermann, F.A.M. (1992). *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts*. Groningen: Styx&PP Publications. Cuneiform Monographs 1.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/605703>