Royal Gardens, Parks, and the Architecture Within: Assyrian Views

Pauline Albenda
New York City

Inscriptions of Assyrian kings disclose that these rulers maintained and improved the land near the palace. This paper brings together the pictorial versions of what may be described as the "Assyrian royal landscape," that is, outdoor scenery designed for royal purposes and represented on the stone panels that lined the walls of the palaces at Nimrud, Nineveh, and Dur-Sharrukin. The royal landscapes differ from reign to reign, since they each reflect some aspect of the particular king's rule. The description and discussion of the individual scenes also take into account the rationale behind their creation. Textual and archaeological data are supportive additions, and the previous studies of other scholars are also considered. The discussion of scenes carved on the stone panels follows in chronological sequence the reigns of four Assyrian kings: Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE), Sargon II (721–705 BCE), Sennacherib (704–669 BCE), and Ashurbanipal (668–627 BCE). The chronological presentation demonstrates that royal landscape imagery in the sculptural arts progressed as a method of documentation by the Assyrian kings.

Inscriptions of Assyrian kings disclose that these rulers maintained and improved the land nearby to the palace. Terrain was sometimes set aside for one or more of the following royal purposes: garden, grove of trees, or animal preserve. Occasionally there is mention of the addition of a building within a given landscape. This paper brings together the pictorial versions of what may be described as the "Assyrian royal landscape"; that is, outdoor scenery designed for royal purposes and represented on the stone panels that lined the walls of the palaces at the modem sites of Nimrud (Kalhu), Nineveh (Kuyunjik), and Khorsabad (Dur-Sharrukin). These select depictions occur infrequently relative to the many military narratives and views of foreign territories of the bas-reliefs. Over time greater attention was given to details of the respective landscape scene, which include architectural features that can be compared with the archaeological evidence. When available, this last evidence is useful as a source of information regarding the importance of an image or item in a select scene.

It must be stated that the royal landscapes recorded on the bas-reliefs differ from reign to reign, since they reflect some aspect of the king's rule. Thus, the description and discussion of the individual scenes also consider the rationale behind their creation. Here, text and archaeological data are supportive additions, and the previous studies and views of other scholars are likewise considered. Among the selection of art works discussed below, several were found damaged or are now lost but are preserved in drawings made at the time of their discovery. The scenes carved on the stone panels follow in chronological sequence those of four Assyrian kings: Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE), Sargon II (721–705 BCE), Sennacherib (704–689 BCE), and Ashurbanipal (668–627 BCE). The use of chronology is a means to demonstrate that royal landscape imagery in the sculptural arts progressed as a method of documentation by the Assyrian kings, over the course of the Neo-Assyrian period.

EARLY ASSYRIAN GARDENS

As noted in royal inscriptions, Assyrian kings were attentive to the planting of gardens. An early king, Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BCE), imported a variety of trees and rare orchard fruits, numbers of which were likely planted in the king's garden at Nineveh (Grayson 1976: 17, no. 47). Within that garden he built a "pleasure-palace." A later king, Ashur-bel-kala (1073–1056 BCE), records that after the clearing of the canal at the city Ashur, he planted gardens, but he does not elaborate further (Grayson 1976: 56, no. 251). In his text inscribed on the Banquet Stele, Ashurnasirpal II itemizes the many kinds of imported trees and fruits that were planted in the gardens and orchards in the environs of Nimrud (Wiseman 1952: 29–30; M. E. L. Mallowan 1966: 65–71, pl. 27). He adds that the canal from above crashes into the gardens, and that "streams of water" flow in the pleasure garden (Grayson 1976: 173–74, no. 678). This vivid description indicates that at some juncture the canal was constructed at a level above the pleasure garden. Presumably the garden was one of the places watered by Ashurnasirpal's large irrigation system, which the king named the Patti-hegalli; the canal was dug out from the Upper Zab, cut through a mountain, and irrigated the meadows and orchards (Harmanşah 2012: 68, fig. 4).

Illustrative references to a garden are largely lacking in the Middle Assyrian and early part of the Neo-Assyrian periods. Exceptions are the ivory pyxis and ivory comb discovered in a late fourteenth- or early thirteenth-century grave at the city Ashur (Feldman 2006: 24–28, figs. 3–8). The incised scene encircling the side of the pyxis is a garden setting indicated by four alternating date palm and conifer trees, a gazelle on either side of a conifer tree, and clusters of flowers. Pairs of roosters and doves rest among the respective pine and palm trees. The comb from the same grave is incised on both sides, showing women with elaborate headdress in a garden of date palm trees. Feldman points out that these two objects were made at the time Assyria emerged as an independent state, and that they are examples of a new Assyrian art identity. Another example of alternating palm tree and conifer is painted on a potsherd from Ashur, dated to the thirteenth century (Feldman 2006: fig.14). The palm tree on this object is especially interesting, since it is surrounded by a continuous arcaded garland with petal flowers. This tree-and-garland motif may have developed into the so-called sacred tree found in the art of much later date, particularly on the Assyrian bas-reliefs of the ninth century.

Turning to the narratives on the bas-reliefs of Ashurnasirpal's Northwest Palace at Nimrud, the absence of a natural garden is notable, although branches with daisy-like flowers are sometimes held by winged genii (B. P. Mallowan 1983: figs. 8–10, 12). Representations of living trees occur infrequently among the stone sculptures depicting military campaigns and, except for the palm tree, are difficult to identify. On the other hand, sacred/stylized trees do occur in various chambers and doorways of the palace. ln two contiguous chambers of the royal residence, Rooms S and T, single-register bas-reliefs displayed a continuous line of alternating sacred/stylized trees and winged genii, thereby fashioning extraordinary imagery, that is, magical figures standing within a mystical grove (Russell 1998: figs. 21–23). The two long walls of Room S framed the narrow wall whose bas-reliefs (slabs l –5) showed the king flanked by attendants and trees. Room L had similar magical subjects on the bas-reliefs. In Room I the subject matter was arranged in two registers. Half-kneeling genii flanking a sacred/stylized tree were arranged in the upper register, and standing bird-headed genii flanking the tree were in the lower register (Fig. 1). This room showed ninety-six trees of the same type that alternated with genii, suggestive of a sacred forest (Russell 1998: fig. 17, table 1).

The sacred/stylized tree motif has been subjected to various interpretations. Russell questions those of Parpola, Foster, and Albenda (pp. 687–90). He follows the suggestion of Parker Mallowan that the tree and purifiers (genii) could function independently and be seen as a powerful apotropaic agency. Thus the rooms entirely lined with apotropaic figures

Fig. 1. Stone relief panel from Room I. Metropolitan Museum of Art 32.143.3. Reproduced from web. www.metmuseum.org.

insure "immunity to evil influences" (pp. 691, 697). The abundant depictions of sacred trees in the Northwest Palace—and the general absence of living trees—are telling with regard to Ashurnasirpal's religious and cultic tendencies.

SARGON II: PLANTS AND A ROYAL FOREST

Several letters to the king mention the collecting of cedar and cypress saplings and fruit trees that were destined for Sargon's new palace (Parpola 1987: nos. 226, 227). Numbers of these trees may have been placed in the royal garden, although archaeological evidence is lacking in this regard. A clue that points to flora in the garden is the lotus-and-bud sprig held in the lowered hand of Sargon II and also by a wingless genie (Albenda 1986: pls. 59, 70, 89, figs. 24, 25, 84; Bleibtreu 1980: 116–20). A variant is the lotus-and-poppy sprig (or pomegranate?) held by the king (Albenda 1986: pl. 93). Three-stemmed poppy sprigs are held by genii only (Albenda 1986: pls. 53, 54, figs. 16–19, 22–24; Albenda and Guralnick 1986: 235–36, fig. 4). Similar sprigs first appear on the reliefs of Tiglath-pileser III (744–27 BCE) (Bleibtreu 1980: 94–95, pl. 8). This king, too, holds the poppy and other flowers (Barnett and Falkner 1962: pls. XIX, LXIII, LXXI). An interesting occurrence of genii with poppy sprigs standing on either side of a "sacred" tree comes from a fragmentary bas-relief discovered in the isolated building at Khorsabad (Albenda 1986: 133,159, pl. 62, fig. 20). Bleibtreu (1980: 115–16) observes that the style of the sacred tree is unusual, and to some extent it has a

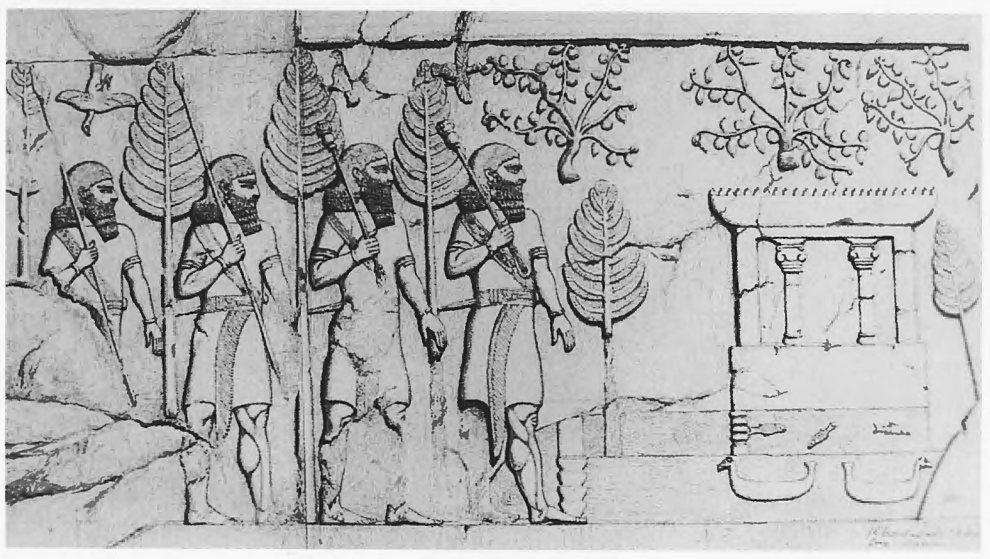

Fig. 2. (detail) original drawing by Eugene Flandin. Reproduced from Albenda 1986, pl. 89.

similarity with the stylized tree carved on an Urartian basalt relief from Adilcevas in Van. The latter tree is thought to derive from a highly stylized form, in metal, of the tree of life (Burney and Lawson 1958: 215).

As for the two flower species, the lotus (Nymphaea) and the poppy (Papaver somniferum), they were likely grown in the king's garden. Moreover the lotus is an aquatic plant, so it seems probable that within the same garden was a shallow pool or small pond. We can only conjecture whether the garden was set up in an open area adjacent to the palace complex or, as part of a larger landscape, situated on a lower terrace (Foster 2004: 213–15). According to Oppenheim (1965: 331–32), the garden connected with the palace was a new architectural element of royal living, shifting from utilitarian to display purposes and personal pleasure.

Room VII in the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad was lined with bas-reliefs arranged in two registers, of which several sections are extant. As recorded in Eugene Flandin's drawings made in 1844 (Albenda 1986: 138–39, pls. 86–90), the upper register shows banqueting and the lower register (Fig. 2) illustrates a forest that extends across the four sides of the chamber (Loud 1936: figs. 83, 84, 89; Guralnick 1976: pls. 1–7). It is peopled with Assyrian soldiers hunting small game amidst a row of pine trees that were probably originally painted green and black (Albenda and Guralnick 1986: 240, fig. 9). The Assyrian king stands in his chariot and, accompanied by military personnel, advances through the wooded terrain, towards a small isolated building situated at the edge of a lake that seems to be watered by a nearby river, possibly the Kosr, which flowed past Khorsabad (Fig. 2). Above the structure are three apple trees, one of the several varieties of fruit trees planted in the king's garden. Further on, a low forested hill is surmounted by a monument that has been identified as a stele, but also as an altar (Parpola 1987: 64, fig. 23; Albenda 2010: no.13).

The broad wooded vista of the lower register recalls the above-mentioned mystical scenes that decorated the walls of several rooms in the Northwest Palace. But now living trees and soldiers substitute for the sacred/stylized trees and genii. In the absence of obvious religious

significance, one may surmise that Sargon's presence as both military leader and Assyrian ruler has some other importance behind the creation of the wooded landscape. It may reference his successful battles, in this instance a connection with his eighth campaign in 714 BCE, which penetrated Mannean and Urartian territories in the Zagros region east and northeast of Assyria. Sargon's Letter to Ashur gives a detailed account of this campaign, and once he describes the terrain between two high mountains covered with all kinds of trees, like a dense forest. Some attention in the text is directed to the city Ulhu with its abundant water supply, agricultural riches, and tall plane trees (Salvini 1995: 139–41). Also mentioned are the gardens and the pleasure palace that the Urartian king Rusa (Ursa) had built by the river. Upon the Assyrian destruction of the palace, as well as the city with its gardens and trees, the cypress beams from its roof were carried off to Assyria. This last action seems to have been part of the larger effort to obtain beams and timber from Urartian territory (Lanfranchi and Parpola 1990: nos. 24, 33, 34, 111).

The location of the palace at Ulhu corresponds to the waterfront setting of the isolated building represented on Sargon's relief in Room VII. This building's design is unusual for its high podium, columned facade, flat roof with curved sides, and a crenellated battlement composed of step-shaped merlons. These stepped merlons contrast with those shown in two drawings of foreign cities on the bas-reliefs in Rooms III and XIII, respectively (Albenda 1986: 142–43, 149, pls. 105, 133), one city already defeated, as indicated by the presence of an Assyrian soldier, and the other under Assyrian attack.

In the drawing of the bas-relief discovered in Room III is a walled city. Rectangular merlons occur on a watchtower that is situated upon a high mountain top opposite a walled city. As drawn, the walled city is deserted and built upon a low mountain. Its relevant features include a row of trees halfway up the mountain and plain houses at the base. A river extends upward and terminates in a curl just below the watchtower, perhaps pointing towards its water source on the mountain. Reviewing the textual and pictorial evidence, it seems plausible that the drawing is intended to represent the city Ulhu before its destruction. The archaeological sites proposed for the location of this city include Haftavan Tepe and Qalatgah, the latter located in the Ushnu Valley, southeast of Lake Urmia (Burney 1972: 182; Muscarella 1986: 468–71).

The second example of the use of rectangular merlons comes from the drawing of a bas-relief in Room XIII. This time the crenellations occur on buildings set in rows on both sides of a large, centrally placed pillared edifice. An inscription identifies the city: "The city of Musasir I besieged and captured" (Walker 1986: 111). The edifice is the temple of the Urartian god Haldi. The plunder of its rich treasures is depicted on the same and adjacent reliefs, after which the Assyrian king in his chariot continues on over a high mountain range. The location of the city Musasir is probably near the Upper Great Zab River.

The use of rectangular merlons applied to architectural structures and illustrated in both drawings argues for a similar defense method. Therefore, the assumption that the city depicted on the bas-relief from Room III is Ulhu provides an additional pictorial example of Sargon's military movements into the territory of Urartu and finally to its main cultic center. Unfortunately, the remainder of the bas-reliefs in Rooms III and XIII had been destroyed before the time of the French excavations in the nineteenth century, leaving a gap in the pictorial record of Sargon's eighth campaign, which advanced through a number of Urartian fortified settlements situated between Ulhu and Musasir (Zimansky 1990: 17–20). The sketch and drawing of a fragmentary bas-relief from Room I, which depicts an Assyrian attack against a city with crenellated parapet wall, may illustrate one of these settlements (Albenda 1986: 116, 143, pls. 2, 107). However, the walled city is unnamed, and furthermore various

scholars differ on the proposed route of Sargon's march through Urartu (Zimansky 1990: 2–7, fig. 1; Medvedskaya 1997: 197–200; Kroll 2012: 11–17; Muscarella 2012: 6–10).

In summation, Sargon's eighth campaign led into the forested and mountainous regions near and in Urartu where, according to Assyrian correspondence, timber and logs were obtained for the king's building activities. Saplings for planting trees may have also been brought from the same area. Among the king's personal observations during his travels through Urartu and nearby territories was probably the irrigation system at Ulhu. Sargon adds that its gardens overflowed with "fruit and wine," certainly references to orchards and vineyards. The dense forests of the region may have inspired Sargon to set aside for royal use woodland whose trees consisted mainly of conifers (Rowton 1967: 272–73; Postgate 1992: 179–80) and in which was a game preserve. The inclusion of an isolated building by a lake and a nearby grove of fruit trees may have its origin in the Urartian pleasure-palace at Ulhu. Therefore, the wooded scene represented on the bas-reliefs in Room VII was probably intended to replicate the pine forests of the Zagros region through which Sargon and his army marched.

THE COLUMNED BUILDING

As an Assyrian architectural style, the building represented in the Room VII woodland scene is atypical. Seemingly square in plan, its elevated view is reduced to three main sections: podium, columned facade, and curve-sided flat roof. The high podium is plain and projects beyond the structure at the corners. The facade shows a porch consisting of two columns spaced between the pillared outer walls that join the lintel or architrave. Each column rests on a cushion-shaped base. The thick shaft is plain and has three necking bands at the top. The capital is decorated with simple volutes, and immediately above is an abacus that connects to the architrave. From the last element, the upper part of the building—the entablature—extends beyond the sides of the building, its outer ends curving upward to the roof-top. A battlement consisting of stepped merlons surmounts the structure. The latter element is a standard feature of Assyrian architecture and thus provides evidence that the edifice was constructed in Assyria, presumably within the vicinity of Khorsabad.

The building depicted on the Room VII bas-relief is the earliest known illustrated example of an Assyrian edifice with columns. There is the question of whether the columns are of wood or stone. Wooden columns were used for temporary Assyrian structures early on, as illustrated on the upper register of slab 7 that originated from the throne room of the Northwest Palace at Nimrud (Russell 1998: pl. IV; Micale and Nadali 2004: fig. 10). There, three tall slender columns prop up the fabric-covered royal pavilion. Each is topped with an elaborate emblem, two in the shape of a wild goat, but the third is now destroyed. The columns show continuous chevrons and recall the similar pattern found on the sacred tree-type of the same period. Small-scale versions of the royal pavilion occur on the bronze bands that once decorated the wooden doors of the Temple of Mamu at Balawat (King 1915: pls. XX, XXXV, XLI, LII), and within one illustrated pavilion is the seated figure of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III (858–823 BCE).

Fragments of wooden shafts ('"flagstaffs") made of cedar were uncovered at Khorsabad (Loud and Altman 1938: 44–45, pls. 21E, 22A) and, restored as columns, were originally positioned at temple portals. Wooden columns were likely intended for the three small ornamented basalt bases discovered in residence K (Loud and Altman 1938: 66, pls. 32B, 48), and a fourth column base with similar design was unearthed by the French consul, Victor Place, during his explorations at the site (Place 1867: pl. 35). Among the numerous stone fragments excavated at Khorsabad are the fragment of a fluted drum and an upright shaft of

a fluted stone column, but these finds are considered to belong to a later period of occupation (Loud and Altman 1938: pls. 8C, 16D). To this short list of objects may be added the tall stele with fluting on its four sides that was drawn but not preserved (Place 1867: pl. 34). It should be mentioned, however, that the monument depicted on the hill in Room VII is drawn with fluting on its long side, indicating contemporary knowledge of this style of stone embellishment. Nonetheless, there is no archaeological evidence that stone columns were used at Khorsabad.

The columns illustrated on the isolated building identify the structure as a portico style of architecture that was known in northern Syria. A columned square building. perhaps similar to the Room VII example, was excavated at Carchemish (Woolley and Barnett 1952: 179–81, pls. 38–41a, b). Excavated structures having a long, narrow room parallel to the columned portico and a staircase leading to a second floor occur at several sites, including Zincirli, Tell Halaf, and Tell Tayinat (Frankfort 1952: figs. 1–3). In northwestern Iran, similar portico-style buildings were excavated at Hasanlu, a site located southeast of Lake Urmia (Dyson 1989: 115–16, figs. 10–14). The columned architectural style with the ground plan just noted has been described as a *bit hilani.* It is mentioned in the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser III (Tadmor 1994: 172–73) and Sargon II, each of whom had one built for his pleasure. Sargon states in one text that the *hilani* had a portico on which were four paired lion bases of bronze, and on top of the bases were four exceedingly high cedar columns. The production of the lion-bases is described in a letter addressed to the king: "We are going to cast four column bases of bronze for two *hilanu*-palaces in the month of Marchesvan (VIII); the small lions of the *hilanu*(s) will be cast together with the big lions in the spring" (Parpola 1987: no. 66). There is archaeological evidence that a *hilani* (labeled Monument X) was constructed at the side of Sargon's palace at Khorsabad, and several reconstructions have been proposed with regard to its ground plan and elevation (Reade 2008: 13–30, figs. 9, 11, 12, 14; Gillmann 2008: 45–47, fig. 2). Its interior contained large stone bas-reliefs, and several surviving examples are carved with animal hunts in a forest (Albenda 1986: figs. 76–78), a theme comparable to that represented on the reliefs in Room VII. Perhaps the bas-reliefs on all four walls of a chamber in the *hilani* showed a continuous line of conifer trees, thus creating a wooded setting.

The entablature on the columned building depicted in Room VII seems an unlikely architectural feature and is therefore difficult to explain. Interestingly, its curved profile recurs on a building located on an island city that is represented on a bas-relief of Sargon II (Albenda 1986: pl. 22), and again on a now-lost bas-relief discovered in the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh (Barnett et al. 1998: pl. 38). In both art works a Phoenician coastal region is depicted. Although the entablature is plain in its present appearance one may suppose that, originally, it was constructed with projecting horizontal wooden beams whose outer ends were shaped into a curved contour. Horizontal bands are indicated on the entablature of a fragmentary columned edifice in the drawing of a now-lost bas-relief from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib, and decorated bands appear on the columned building depicted on a bas-relief from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal (see below).

Overall, the Room VII columned building combines features of architecture known in various regions: high podium (east), columned portico (west), entablature with curved ends (eastern Mediterranean), and Assyrian-style crenellation on the parapet. This combination explains the perhaps unique appearance of the building, leading one to wonder whether a subtle political message was intended by adopting aspects of architecture from territories over which Sargon II had gained control. In any event, what is illustrated on the bas-relief is the simplification of an otherwise complex structure.

SENNACHERIB: GARDENS AND PARKLAND

The inscriptions of Sennacherib include descriptions of the king's achievements that enhanced the landscape in and near the city Nineveh. According to the texts, a botanical garden consisting of aromatic plants, fruit trees, and cotton trees was planted alongside the palace. Vineyards and olive trees were cultivated on newly tilled soil located near the king's game preserve. Sennacherib gathered trees from distant lands and he also created a marsh and planted a canebrake in its midst to control the water flow (Grayson and Novotny 2012: text 016, vii 17–21).

Turning to the bas-reliefs of the Southwest Palace, an interest in illustrating sprawling views of terrain is evident in many narrative scenes that oftentimes extended across many panels. This objective was accomplished by utilizing the high view ("bird's eye view"). One good example occurs in the drawing of a now-lost bas-relief from Court VI of the palace. (Barnett et al. 1998: pl. 80). Three tree zones are depicted—a mountainous dense pine forest, hilly woodland of deciduous trees, and an open plain covered with grapevines. Through this changing landscape the king and his army, all drawn on a small scale, advance along a narrow river that presumably continued on the adjacent panel, unfortunately destroyed at the time of discovery. Court VI had several lengthy and independent narratives carved on the panels that originally lined the chamber, and one subject illustrates the arduous manpower methods of transporting huge stone human-headed winged bulls (*lamassu*) destined for the king's palace (Barnett et al. 1998: pls. 98–125).

Of related interest in this narrative is the local countryside that frames the various human activities. The upper section shows low rolling hills covered with a display of vegetation, including two varieties of conifer trees, deciduous trees, pomegranate trees, grapevines and shrubs. Further on, this scene changes to views of a river filled with fish. One sees men on a raft made of tree trunks, others on round-bottom boats (keleks), and once a man astride an inflated animal skin. Bordering the river is a row of conifer trees, which is replaced, further on, by a large marsh inhabited by deer and wild swine. The bottom section of several panels contains a continuous row of conifer trees.

The topographical features depicted on the bas-reliefs indicate that an assortment of crops and trees were grown in the same orchards. In addition, the long borders of conifer trees that line the open terrain seem to have been intentionally planted, rather than representing part of a natural forest. Together with the marshes, the topography does display a pictorial version of Sennacherib's enhancement of the terrain near Nineveh, as is stated in the royal inscriptions.

In Room XXII, three drawings of now-lost wall reliefs (panels 2, 3, 4) record an interesting landscape, but, unfortunately, considerable areas of the carved surface were found to be severely damaged and sections of the respective panels destroyed (Barnett et al. 1998: 84–85, pls. 224–25) (Fig. 3). The scenery consists of a broad river that terminates at the base of a sloping hill covered with a variety of plants and trees. Canals and a walkway are also visible. At the top of the hill is a partially preserved view of a columned structure. Initially, one might suppose that the hillside scene represents Sennacherib's "botanical garden" planted at the side of his palace at Nineveh. Yet the landscape bas-reliefs are attributed to the later reign of Ashurbanipal, as are most of the other bas-reliefs discovered in the same chamber.

Evidence for the later date relies upon the appearance of the wicker round-top shields that the three soldiers carry on their back, visible in the lower left corner of panel 2. However, a plain version of this shield type does occur on panel 9 (pl. 227), dated to the reign of Sennacherib. One could argue that the three soldiers were added much later, and details of the landscape do point to a Sennacherib date. This includes the nude men swimming outstretched on inflated skins, as well as one man astride an inflated skin. These human figures are comparable to those represented on the bas-reliefs in Court VI showing the transport of

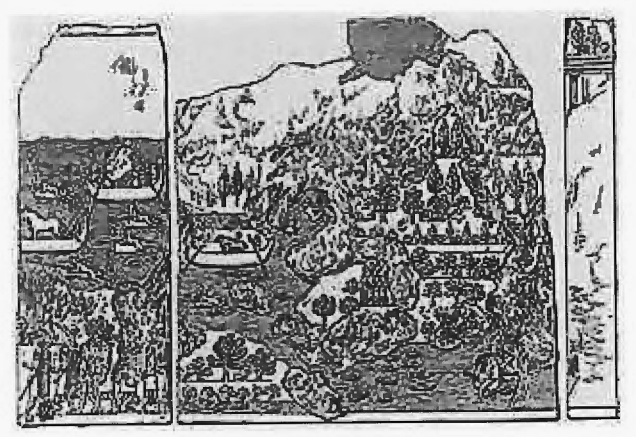

Fig. 3. Drawing of relief panels from Room XXII. Reproduced from Layard 1853, facing p. 233.

bull-colossi sculpture. Another detail of note is the horizontal position of the fishes in the water (panel 3), which is consistent with those represented on other bas-reliefs of Sennacherib, in contrast to the more varied and oblique positions found in the art works of Ashurbanipal. Although the scenery on panels 2–3 was discovered in fragmentary condition, its composition does combine what has been described in connection with Sennacherib's art as a high viewpoint, relatively small-scale figures, and minimal overlapping.

The columned structure and the distant trees above it are all that remained on panel 4. As drawn, the structure shows evidence of three columns: one intact, another with destroyed upper section, and an ornamental capital. The entablature is composed of alternating plain and decorated horizontal bands that extend past the row of columns at the left side. These columns are of interest. The ornamental capital of the whole column includes shallow volutes, and its plain shaft rests upon a base with roundels. The base of the second column is cushion-shaped, and the decorated capital of the third column repeats that of the first. The cushion-shaped base is similar to the type found in the reign of Sargon II; however, the base with roundels has no known parallel in Assyrian architecture. One inscription of Sennacherib states that on large lion colossi he placed two identical columns cast from bronze and, together with four large cedar columns, cross-beams were positioned upon them as a cornice for their gates (Grayson and Novotny 2012: text 016, vi 69–82). This inscription is a reference to a portico perhaps built as part of the king's palace or pleasure-house. However, the inscription does not correspond with the illustration on panel 4. Perhaps then, the illustrated entablature with its ornamental columns does represent the central section of the portico of a *hilani*, with the larger columns positioned on the porch and the column with cushion-shaped base positioned at the side of a doorway. Nonetheless, the little remaining structure that appears in the drawing of panel 4 does represent a columned facade.

Esarhaddon (680–669) rebuilt the *Ekal Mašarti* (arsenal) and the palace located on the mound of Nebi Yunus at Nineveh. He writes that *lamassu* and *shedu* were placed to the right and left of the gates, and along the palace he set up a botanical garden with all kinds of aromatic plants and fruit trees (Leichty 2011: text 002, v 40–54). Excavations have uncovered in fragmentary condition a huge human hero-type figure standing between winged human-headed bulls (Layard 1853: 598; Scott and McGinnis 1990: 71, pl. XIII; see site photos on internet). These stone sculptures were originally set up at the entrance to the palace. No bas-reliefs with narrative compositions were discovered at the site.

Fig. 4. Stone relief panel from Room H. British Museum 124939. Reproduced from web. ©Trustees of the British Museum. www.britishmuseum.org/collection.

ASHURBANIPAL: ROOMS E, H, AND C LANDSCAPES

A floral garden is represented on an extant bas-relief that originated in Room E in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal (Barnett 1976: 39, pl. XV). Between alternating date palm and pine trees is a variety of flora. The individual flowers are identified as lily, mandrake, and sunflower. Grapevines twist around the pine trees. Their presumed respective colors of white, red, yellow, and blue for the grapes are typical of the standard palette in the Assyrian decorative arts. It seems that the planting of a mixture of flowers with their varied hues was favored in the garden. Included in this garden on the bas-relief are a lion and lioness posed at rest. Other extant panels from the same chamber depict musicians and dog handlers against a backdrop of similar alternating trees (Barnett 1976: pls. XIV–XV), and together the bas-reliefs likely formed part of a longer narrative that takes place in the royal park. Flowers do occur elsewhere on the North Palace bas-reliefs, in Room S, upper chamber: lilies on a tray carried by a female attendant and a lotus held in the raised hand of Ashurbanipal reclining on a couch in the queen's garden (Barnett 1976: 56–57, pls. LXIII–LXV). As mentioned above, Sargon II is the first Assyrian king who is represented holding the lotus-and-bud.

Room H

This chamber contained a series of wall reliefs, and in the upper part of two connecting panels, labeled 8 and 9, is a landscaped high hill topped with a columned building (Barnett 1976: 41, pl. XXIII) (Fig. 4). Overall, the scenery is similar to that illustrated on panel 3 in Room XXII of the Southwest Palace, and the same location is likely represented. Both scenes display a variety of trees and shrubs that are sectioned off by irrigated canals. Differences

between the two depictions are observable. There is the absence of the broad river situated beyond the base of the hill, although originally it could have been illustrated on the missing section of the adjacent panel 7. On the Ashurbanipal version of the landscaped hill is a wide road having an altar and leading upwards, directly to a royal stele fronting one side of the columned building. The road is drawn straight-on and narrows slightly from bottom to top, perhaps to indicate spatial distance. Moreover, the irrigated canals are watered directly from a large aqueduct built behind the hill. The appearance of the aqueduct has import since it likely identifies Nineveh as the scene's location. As drawn, the aqueduct consists of a stone bridge constructed with four pointed arches—probably more originally.

It seems odd that the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal make no reference to the construction of an aqueduct. His father, Esarhaddon, does provide a brief statement that he extended a canal into the park at Nebi Yunus, as a watering place for his horses (Leichty 2011: text 001, vi 30–34). It is Sennacherib, however, who records that he supplied water to Nineveh, and he also had his inscriptions and bas-reliefs carved among the rocks at the source of several canals. These canal systems, as well as the one that brought water to the city Erbil, have been traced through the application of aerial and satellite photography (Ur 2005: 318–19). One aqueduct has been located at Jerwan, a site which formed part of the Khinis-Khosr canal system (Ur 2005: 335–39; Jacobsen and Lloyd 1935). Sennachenb's inscriptions at Jerwan confirm his construction of this canal, adding that "over deep-cut ravines I spanned a bridge of white stone blocks. These waters I caused to pass over upon it" (Jacobsen and Lloyd 1935: 20–21). The masonry of the canal at Jerwan consists mainly of stone blocks, and the aqueduct was constructed with five corbelled archways.

The similarity between the Jerwan aqueduct and the one depicted on Ashurbanipal's bas-relief leads to the supposition that the latter represents the former. This conclusion assumes that the actual distance between Jerwan and Nineveh is ignored, and instead the bas-relief illustrates that the canal system was destined for the city. It may be, however, that another aqueduct closer to the mound of Nineveh is represented, although archaeological evidence is lacking. Indeed, the bas-relief shows the aqueduct terminating at the upper edge of the hill, from which point the water flows into the various narrow canals cut into the hillside. It is reasonable to conclude that this aqueduct is the final section of Sennacherib's water system, which continued to function during the reign of Ashurbanipal.

The columned building upon the hill is entirely preserved, nicely detailed, and constructed upon two ground levels (Barnett and Lorenzini 1975: pl. 136). Its two columns on ornamented cushion-shaped bases are set between pilasters and, following Greek terms, can be described as *in antis.* The ornamental design on these bases seems related to those carved on the double line of four column bases resting upon a pavement of limestone slabs that were discovered in the nineteenth century in the vicinity of the North Palace. The two pairs were separated from each other by 34 feet, and each pair was separated from the other by a little over 9 feet. One column base is recorded in a line drawing (Layard 1853: 589–90). The ornamental design in the published drawing recurs on several preserved objects that include two small stone column bases found at a ruined entrance to the North Palace and a column base set upon a female sphinx figurine (Barnett l976: 35–36, pl. 1). These objects are dated to the period of Ashurbanipal.

The capitals on the columns and pilasters of the Room H building show double volutes above the necking bands, and they are an elaborate version of the style depicted on the bas-relief from Khorsabad. Behind the columns of the Ashurbanipal relief is a series of horizontal lines that indicate the building's solid wall which, however, lacks a door. The high battlemented roofing or entablature above the columned facade is divided into two main sections

or bands, the upper one projecting a little beyond the one below. Perhaps glazed brick ornamentation was added to the individual bands, since similar decoration was applied to exterior walls at Khorsabad, and mentioned in an inscription of Sennacherib (Grayson and Novotny 2012: text 015, vi 46–57). On the Assurbanipal bas-relief, the applied decoration remains conjectural, based upon what is visible on the bas-relief.

A secondary roofed structure attached to the side of the columned building and ending at the upper incline of the hill may have contained an enclosed stepped entrance. This interpretation of the building's general ground plan places the entrance at the broad side. Certainly, the wide road depicted on the relief was the means of reaching the entranceway from below. An additional assumption concerning the architectural layout is that a second columned porch was placed on the opposite side of the building. Such an arrangement would satisfy the Assyrian predilection for bilateral symmetry, and could explain the location of the finding of the two pairs of column bases mentioned above, which could have been separated by one or more chambers (cf. the palace of Esarhaddon at Nimrud; Layard 1849: plan II; Layard 1853: plan 3). The inclusion of the stele depicting the standard image of the Assyrian king identifies the building as a royal edifice, perhaps a *hilani*.

Room C

On the walls of this chamber, the extant stone panels show a masterfully crafted narrative of the Assyrian king in his chariot attacking and killing lions and lionesses with bow, spear, and dagger, respectively. Landscape features are absent, except for a rounded bill covered with mostly pine trees through which Assyrian men and women move quickly in anticipation of viewing the king's actions (Barnett 1976: 37, pl. VI). A large isolated monument is set upon the hill. The structure has a rectangular shape, and just below its upper edge is a line of stepped merlons. The facade is decorated with a wide archway whose upper section shows a small image of the king in his chariot attacking a leaping lion with bow and arrow, while a second animal lies beneath the wheel. This motif shows a similarity to another carved among the lion hunt episodes in the same chamber, except that here the king turns forward. The imagery on the monument directs attention to the base of the hill, that is, the open arena in which Ashurbanipal ceremoniously kills eighteen lions (Barnett 1976: pls. XI–XIII; Weissert 1997: 349–56).

One generally views the small illustration of the king in his chariot as carved on the solid surface of the monument. Another approach to viewing the monument and its figural design is suggested here. The broad span of the arch on the monument may define open space. This recalls the arched gateways uncovered at Khorsabad, and the arched entrances that appear on bas-reliefs depicting city walls. The notion of an open arch on the isolated monument would transform the structure from a solid wall to an "open" wall—an entranceway. Thus, the motif of the Assyrian king's battle over lions would have been placed on an interior side wall, or on a stone stele set up within the opening. This interpretation of the monument fits the description of a three-dimensional "triumphal arch." Taken as a public monument, its placement on the hilltop makes known the location where the king displays his ability to overcome the fiercest of lions. Additionally, the monument introduces a novel version of the typical Assyrian royal stele.

CONCLUSION

From the royal inscriptions and correspondence, we learn that Assyrian kings maintained the surrounding areas of the palace, and that they also created gardens for personal pleasure.

Over time, varieties of plants and trees were imported from distant places and planted to enrich the royal gardens, orchards, and parklands. The need for an increased water supply led ultimately to the construction and extension of canals originating from water sources in the mountainous regions north and east of Assyria. A pleasure palace was sometimes added to the royal garden. The columned edifice represented on several bas-reliefs and identified as the king's pleasure palace has also been described as a *bit hilani*. Indications are that columns were made of wood and that the cushion-shaped bases were an Assyrian style. Columns set upon carved animal bases were sometimes placed at the entrances of royal structures, as evidenced by the inscriptions and art (Barnett and Lorenzini 1975: pl. 134).

Pictorial views of the king's landscape works do occur on the palace bas-reliefs, but they are rare when compared with the military narratives that dominated the subject matter. Flowers were planted in the royal gardens alongside trees and other vegetation, as illustrated on the Ashurbanipal bas-reliefs. There is no indication from the bas-reliefs, however, that orderly flower arrangements were designed for the gardens. Several floral varieties were probably imported, for example the lotus and the poppy. Trees were essential for the creation of gardens and parklands, and in their inscriptions Assyrian kings sometimes list the specific types that were obtained from distant regions. Among the tree types depicted on the bas-reliefs, conifers seem to have been favored (for two varieties, see Barnett and Lorenzini 1975: pl. 173). As shown on the bas-relief of Ashurbanipal, one or more alternating rows of date-palm and conifer were grown in the royal garden, while groupings of different trees and shrubs, watered by canals, covered the hillside at Nineveh. Finally, the pictorial descriptions do give examples of landscaped terrain that were intended to bring the cultic and, later, the natural world closer to the palace. Especially applicable in this respect was the repetitive tree decoration of the bas-reliefs that lined the walls in select chambers of the palaces at Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Nineveh.

REFERENCES

Albenda, P. 1986. *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria.* Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations.

_____. 2010. Monument on the Hill. *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Breves et Utilitaires,* no. 13.

_____, and E. Guralnick. 1986. Some Fragments of Stone Reliefs from Khorsabad. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45: 231–42.

Barnett. R. D. 1976. *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668–627 B.C.).* London: British Museum Publications.

_____, E. Bleibtreu, and G. Turner. 1998. *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh.* London: British Museum Publications.

_____, and M. Falkner. 1962. *The Sculptures of Assur-nasir-apli II (883–859 B.C.) Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.) Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud.* London: British Museum Publications.

_____, and A. Lorenzini. 1975. *Assyrian Sculpture in the British Museum.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Bleibtreu, E. I980. *Die Flora der neuassyrischen Reliefs.* Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität.

Burney, C. 1972. Urartian Irrigation Works. *Anatolian Studies* 22: 179–86.

_____, and G. R. J. Lawson. 1958. Urartian Reliefs at Adilcevaz on Lake Van, and a Rock Relief from the Karasu, near Birecik. *Anatolian Studies* 8: 211–18.

Dyson, R. A., Jr. 1989. The Iron Age Architecture at Hasanlu: An Essay. *Expedition* 31, nos. 2–3: 107–27.

Feldman, M. H. 2006. Assur Tomb 45 and the Birth of the Assyrian Empire. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 343: 21–43.

Foster, K. P. 2004. The Hanging Gardens of Nineveh. *Iraq* 66: 207–20.

Frankfort, H. 1952. The Origin of the Bît Hilani. *Iraq* 14: 120–31.

Gillmann, N. 2008. Le Bâtiment isolé de Khorsabad: Une nouvelle tentative de reconstruction. *Iraq* 70: 41–50.

Grayson, A. K. 1976. *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, part 2: *From Tiglath-pileser I to Ashur-naṣir-pal II.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

_____, and J. Novotny. 2012. *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC).* Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3, parts 1 and 2. Open access on line: http://oracc.museum. upenn.edu/rinap/rinap3/.

Guralnick, E. 1976. Composition of Some Narrative Reliefs from Khorsabad. *Assur* 1/5: 1–23.

Harmanşah, O. 2012. Beyond Aššur: New Cities and the Assyrian Politics of Landscape. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 365: 53–77.

Jacobsen, T., and S. Lloyd. 1935. *Sennacherib's Aqueduct at Jerwan.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

King, L. W. 1915. *Bronze Reliefs from the Gates of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria BC 860–825.* London: British Museum.

Kroll, S. 2012. Sargon II's 8th Campaign: A New View on Old Constructs. In *The Eighth Campaign of Sargon II: Historical, Geographical, Literary, and Ideological Aspects*, ed. O. W. Muscarella and S. Elliyoun. Pp. 11–17. Philadelphia: The Hasanlu Translation Project, 2006.

Lanfranchi, G. B., and S. Parpola, eds. 1990. *The Correspondence of Sargon II*, part II: *Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces.* Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press.

Layard, A. H. 1849. *Nineveh and Its Remains.* New York: Putnam.

_____. 1853. *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon; with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan, and the Desert.* London: Murray.

Leichty, E. 2011. *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, *King of Assyria (680–669 BC).* Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 4. Open access on line: http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap4/.

Loud, G. 1936. *Khorsabad*, part I: *Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

_____, and C. B. Altman. 1938. *Khorsabad*, part II: *The Citadel and the Town.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Mallowan, B. P. 1983. Magic and Ritual in the Northwest Palace Reliefs. In *Essays on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson,* ed. P. O. Harper and H. Pittman. Pp. 33–39. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Mallowan, M. E. L. 1966. *Nimrud and Its Remains.* London: Collins.

Medvedskaya, I. 1997. The Localization of Hubuškia. In *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting. Pp. 197–206. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

Micale. M. G., and O. Nadali. 2004. The Shape of Sennacherib's Camps: Strategic Functions and Ideological Space. *lraq* 66: 163–75.

Muscarella, O. W. 1986. The Location of Ulhu and Uiše in Sargon II's Eighth Campaign, 714 B.C. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 13: 465–75.

_____. 2012. Sargon II's Eighth Campaign: An Introduction and Overview. In *The Eighth Campaign of Sargon II: Historical, Geographical, Literary. and Ideological Aspects*, ed. O. W. Muscarella and S. Elliyoun. Pp. 5–9. Philadelphia: The Hasanlu Translation Project.

Oppenheim, A. L. 1965. On Royal Gardens in Mesopotamia. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24: 328–33.

Parpola, S. 1987. *The Correspondence of Sargon II*, part I: *Letters from Assyria and the West.* Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press.

Place, V. 1867–1870. *Nineve et l'Assyrie.* Paris: Imprimerie impériale.

Postgate, J. N. 1992. Trees and Timber in the Assyrian Texts. *Bulletin on Sumerian Agriculture* 6: 177–86.

Reade, J. 2008. Real and Imagined "Hittite Palaces" at Khorsabad and Elsewhere. *Iraq* 70: 13–40.

Rowton, M. B. 1967. The Woodlands of Ancient Western Asia. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26: 261–77.

Russell, J. M. 1998. The Program of the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues on the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art. *American Journal of Archaeology* 102: 655–715.

Salvini, M. 1995. Sargon et l'Urartu. In *Khorsabad, le palais de Sargon II, roi d'Assyrie: Actes du colloque organis au musée du Louvre par le Service Culturel les 21 et 22 janvier* 1994, ed. A. Caubet. Pp. 135–57. Paris: La Documentation française.

Scott, M. L., and J. MacGinnis. 1990. Notes on Nineveh. *Iraq* 52: 63–73.

Tadmor, H. 1994. *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria.* Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Ur, J. 2005. Sennacherib's Northern Assyrian Canals: New Insights from Satellite Imagery and Aerial Photography. *Iraq* 67: 317–45.

Walker, C. B. F. 1986. The Epigraphs. In *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria*, ed. P. Albenda. Pp. 107–14. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations.

Weissert, E. 1997. Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82–5-22.2). In *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting. Pp. 339–58. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

Wiseman, D. J. 1952. A New Stela of Aššurnasirpal II. *Iraq* 14: 24–44.

Woolley, L., and R. D. Barnett. 1952. *Carchemish: Report on the Excavations at Jerablus on Behalf of the British Museum*, part III: *The Excavations in the Inner Town and the Hittite Inscriptions.* London: British Museum Publications.

Zimansky, P. 1990. Urartian Geography and Sargon's Eighth Campaign. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41: 1–21.