



KILIZU I. THE SITE

Epigraphic finds prove that the mound of Qasr Shemamok, situated on the fertile plain about halfway between the cities of Erbil and Gwer (Kowayr) on the Greater Zab river in present-day Iraqi Kurdistan, conceals the ruins of the ancient city of Kilizu (the reading of the name as “Kakzu” is now obsolete). The importance of the site was first reported by [Sir Austen Henry Layard](#) (q.v.), who in his survey recorded the presence of an embankment surrounding the mound and of several bricks inscribed with the name of the Assyrian king Sennacherib (r. 704-681 BCE). Deep trenches and tunnels in the mound revealed—below the more recent layers—chambers with mud brick walls, sometimes “panelled round the lower part with slabs of reddish limestone” (Layard, 1853, p. 223). A modern fort was erected on the ruins of the ancient buildings on top of the mound. About three kilometers from the mound of Qasr Shemamok, Layard visited a second large Assyrian site, Gla (Kalah), where he made trenches that revealed traces of Assyrian buildings and bricks of Sennacherib.

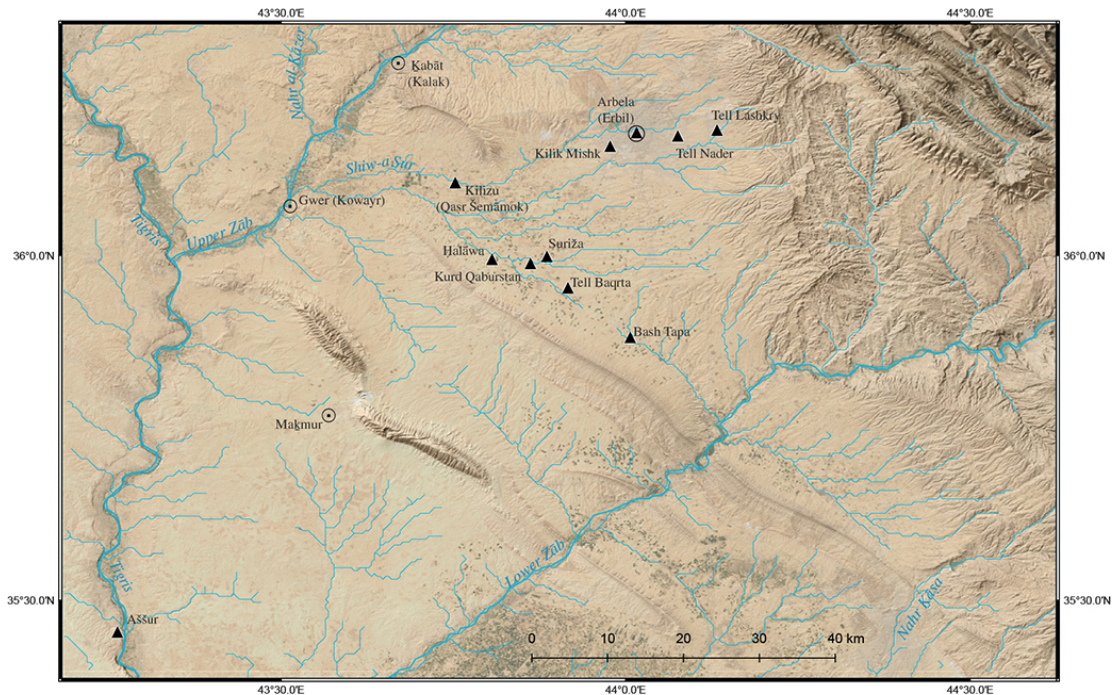


Figure 1. Kilizu (Qaşr Šemāmok) and other archeological sites of the Erbil plain. Locations based on data from Kostas Kopanias, John MacGinnis, and Jason Ur, eds., “Archaeological Projects in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq,” Directorate of Antiquities of Kurdistan, 2015 (<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:14022526>). Map data © Google Earth and Openstreetmap contributors.

Research at Qasr Shemamok did not resume until 1933, when Giuseppe Furlani began excavations on behalf of the University of Florence. However, he too stopped very soon, after a single excavation campaign (Furlani, 1934b). The results of the Italian excavations confirmed the identification of Qasr Shemammok with Kilizu, the capital of the Assyrian province cited in the cuneiform texts, and revealed intense building activity by Sennacherib there. A large number of bricks with Sennacherib’s stamp was found, which documented the construction of the ramparts of the city of Kilizu, while the stamp on other bricks indicates the presence of an Assyrian royal palace on the site.

Trenches were dug in various parts of the archaeological ground. They exposed a part of a large necropolis of the Assyrian and Parthian periods immediately to the west of the mound, which is approximately 20 m high and corresponds to the acropolis of the Assyrian city (Furlani, 1934a). Several



graves were found that contained grave goods including pottery and glass vessels and personal ornaments. Particularly noteworthy are two Parthian ceramic coffins covered with blue-green glaze. They have a rectangular shape with rounded ends and were baked as one piece, although one has a two-piece lid. The long sides of the coffins have relief decorations of grapes alternating with a frontal nude female figure in an arched niche, both being the symbols of fertility that allude to the continuation of life after death.

The trenches at the acropolis proved that its occupation continued well beyond the Parthian period. The finds made here included a Byzantine coin. Several trenches dug along the line of the city walls south of the acropolis confirmed the existence of ramparts made of Sennacherib's baked bricks. However, they had lost most of their bricks owing to the depredations of the local inhabitants, who had used them in modern buildings. A trench on a raised part of the line of ramparts, east of the acropolis, exposed traces of a large, well-built wall and of other smaller walls belonging to buildings connected with the ramparts. Excavations about 1 km southeast of the acropolis, outside the Assyrian walls, exposed areas of baked-brick floors of a building, which had lost much of its brickwork (the "Casa fuori le mura").

The materials discovered include, in addition to those mentioned above, fragments of cuneiform tablets, seals, and metal objects. They range in date from the second millennium BCE to Islamic times, but they prove that the site was already being used in the [Chalcolithic era](#). The finds were shared between the Iraq Museum in Baghdad and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Florence. The materials preserved in Florence are being prepared for publication.

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