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ONE

INTRODUCTION

> Towns and cities with their monuments, vast constructions, and large buildings are set up for the masses and not for the few. . . . If there are no cities, the dynasty will have to build a new city, firstly, in order to complete the civilization of its realm.
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> Ibn Khaldûn (1332–1406 AD) *Muqaddimah* (IV.1–2)

> Many scholars writing about the politics of urban design discuss how planned capitals such as Ankara, Brasilia, and Islamabad are conceived, before everything else, as expressions of the pride and hard work of nation building and thus cannot possibly derive their image and character from an existing city. The less there is on site, the greater the pride and glory in making the capital "out of nothing" as a popular school song about Ankara goes in Turkey.
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> Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building* (2001: 68)

Cities, Imagination, and Memory in the Ancient Near East

This book investigates the practice of building cities in the ancient Near East as an architectural practice, a form of public celebration, and a source of political discourse. The idea of building a city is frequently found in the Near Eastern historical record as a political intervention of the ruling elite into structures of settlement and built landscapes. Sargon II, the Assyrian king of the late eighth century BCE, is famed for his foundation and construction of Dūr-Šarrukēn ("Fortress of Sargon") at the site of modern Khorsabad, perhaps in emulation of his Akkadian namesake who founded Agade^KI in the late third millennium BCE. Equally famous is his impressive organization of the participation of several Assyrian provinces in the construction project, each with its own workmen and craftspeople (Parpola 1995). Likewise, Babylonian rulers Nabopolassar

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and Nebuchadnezzar II refounded and constructed Babylon's impressive urban landscape in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, respectively, incorporating many innovations in architectural technologies (Van de Mieroop 2003). Similarly ambitious but perhaps less well known is the energetic Urartian king Rusa II's foundation of several new imperial fortresses across the empire in the first half of the seventh century BCE using a distinctive style of stonemasonry that linked them together and functioned as some sort of royal insignia (Harmanşah 2009). The Cilician Syro-Hittite king Azatiwatas of Adanawa founded a fortress at today's Karatepe-Arslantaş; like Sargon II and Rusa II, he named it after his own royal name, Azatiwataya, as known from the hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions of the site (Hawkins 2000, I: I.1). Last but not least, the series of ceremonial capitals built by the Achaemenid kings at Pasargadae and Persepolis are perhaps among the most spectacular of such projects.

These randomly selected examples give us a taste of the geographical spread and cultural diversity of city-building practices in the Near Eastern Iron Ages from Babylonia to Anatolia and Iran. They not only help understand how new cities, imperial capitals, and regional centers were built, but also show how building cities was envisioned as a social event that then became part and parcel of the politics of kingship and the shaping of social memory at the time. Thinking more broadly, how did such a building practice and urban policy transform Near Eastern urban landscapes during the Iron Ages? What was the nature of these building programs, and how did they come to be associated with the political discourse and collective identity in such a direct way? Was the decision to build a city always a prerogative of the ruling elites as social utopias, or were these elites in fact conforming to ongoing settlement trends, tangible economic conjunctures, and other social processes that are less accessible, less visible to us in the historical record? As large-scale architectural projects, how were they organized in terms of labor force, material resources, and building craftsmanship? And how did these projects relate to the circulation of architectural knowledge and innovative building technologies?

In attempting to answer these questions in a regionally specific and historically nuanced way, this monograph is about the making of cities in a particular geographical region, the upper Syro-Mesopotamia during the Early Iron Age (c. 1200–850 BCE). The Early Iron Age can be envisioned as a prelude to the spectacular stories of urban development sampled earlier from the Middle and Late Iron Ages (850–330 BCE). The Early Iron Age is the period when one sees several strands of settlement foundations materialize contemporaneously in the context of a newly emergent urbanism and geopolitical configuration following the collapse of the great powers of the Late Bronze Age around 1200 BCE. Upper Syro-Mesopotamia, which is now constituted by modern-day northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and northern Syria, was a region of thriving ancient cities during the Iron Age (Figure 1). In the east lay the core territories of the Assyrian

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1 Map of Upper Mesopotamia during the Iron Age, with cities, settlements, and sites mentioned in the text. (Base map by Peri Johnson, using ESRI Topographic Data [Creative Commons]: World Shaded Relief, World Linear Water)

Empire, and in the west and northwest a constellation of Syro-Hittite regional polities. Assyria was a major territorial state at this time, with a gradually urbanizing core in the Middle Tigris region and eventual expansion to lands in the west and south until its collapse in the late seventh century BCE. North Syria and southeast and south-central Turkey were home to many regional principalities that were based on one or two main urban centers and their hinterland. These polities are collectively known in the scholarly literature as Syro-Hittite states for their self-proclaimed cultural heritage of the Hittite Empire, which disintegrated around 1175 BCE (Hawkins 1982). Among the Assyrian Empire and the Syro-Hittite polities of the Early Iron Age, founding cities was a shared building practice, a source of official discourse and cultural identity, as has been abundantly demonstrated by both the archaeological evidence and the textual record (Mazzoni 1994). *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East* is the first comprehensive account of this multivalent historical phenomenon from a comparative perspective. It presents a cultural history of the practice of founding cities by reviewing both ancient texts and archaeological excavations and surveys, along with environmental research and spatial analysis.

Building the City

The foundation of Assyrian and Syro-Hittite cities involved major construction projects and the making of commemorative monuments in the urban center while the surrounding countryside was cultivated with plantations and irrigation programs. These important social events were celebrated in the written and pictorial narratives of the state and became an important component of the official ideology, a practice shared by Upper Syro-Mesopotamian states.

Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East

Palaces, temples, gates, and the public spaces of the Assyrian and Syro-Hittite cities were famously surrounded by carved stone orthostats (finely cut upright stones lining walls) and a variety of monuments featuring pictorial narratives and commemorative inscriptions. This book brings these architectural technologies, monument-making practices, and urban visual culture of the Iron Age cities into a common focus and argues that the symbolically charged, regionally shared language of urban spaces was part and parcel of the processes by which collectively shared memories and cultural identities were made.

City foundations have long been discussed as short-term historical events and were associated with the agency of political elites or imperial power. Particularly the foundation of imperial cities and the movement of the political capitals to new locations are frequently discussed within the context of political history as if they were utopias of narcissistic rulers. The urban anthropological debate on the so-called disembedded capitals, which has been taking place since the early 1970s, is a good example of this approach. *Disembedded capitals* are newly built capital cities purposefully "disembedded" from existing patterns of political structure and settlement hierarchy within a territorial state in order to create a new power base (both political and military) for the benefit of a group of elites (Blanton 1976; Willey 1979). This culturally comparative notion is applied to ancient Near Eastern examples in both earlier (Joffe 1998a) and more recent (Yoffee 2005: 189) works. As a universalist model based on central place theory, it focuses only on imperial cities that are represented well in the historical record, such as Khorsabad and Nineveh, and offers causal explanations for historically specific political decisions to relocate and rebuild state capitals. However, in my opinion, the disembedded capitals thesis also literally disembeds the foundation of capital cities from the broader historical processes of landscape change, while divorcing urban economies from state ideologies and policy making. Additionally, the complexity of the production of urban space and its material, cultural, and technological aspects can find no place for itself in this debate.

In contrast, *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East* contextualizes urban foundations within longer-term settlement trends, landscape processes, and broader environmental histories that are not easily grasped through short-term perspectives. Adopting a long-term perspective allows understanding the dynamics of settlement and human mobility in landscapes. On a detailed level, the monograph is also concerned with the micro-history and the material culture of newly created urban landscapes: their innovative architectural technologies, newly established cult festivals, eloquent configurations of public spaces, and urban textures. Furthermore, it considers this historical phenomenon as a laboratory to test theories of space, landscape, narrative, and representation.

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Introduction

The idea of building a new city on fresh ground is often considered a generative force of civilized life for societies. The new city is assumed to feature a spatial realm that cultivates "a distinctive manner of life characterized as urban" (Wheatley 2001: 228). This manner of urbanity is brought out in the etymological relationship between *city* (Latin *civitas*) and *civilization* among the descendants of the Roman Empire, whereas such association is rendered in Arabic in a very similar way: *madīna* and *madaniyya*.[1] Speaking from a cross-cultural point of view, then, urban life holds a symbolic image imbued with the ideals of economic prosperity, political stability, acculturation, and emerging social complexity. Ibn Khaldûn, as in the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, saw the foundation of cities as indispensable for the establishment of civilized life and the exercise of power.

In early Mesopotamian epic poetry, cities play a prominent role in social imagination and political narratives. In the epigraph to this book, in a few lines of the Sumerian literary composition "Ninurta's Return to Nibru," the city Nibru (Nippur) is personified as a monument of divine power acting in the political sphere (Black et al. 2006: 181–186). Situated monumentally in a horizontal, earthly human domain ("*as if it were the horns of a wild bull*"), the city and its temples constitute the civilized social space where people congregate for benevolent festivals and take refuge in times of disorder (Harmanşah, forthcoming).

The foundation of a new city was meant to materialize those ideals of power, prosperity, and civilization in physical form in the eyes of the political elite. As an act initiated by a dominant class, a city foundation carried signatures of power. Yet, following their creation, cities assumed their own path of development, their own cultural biography, and transformed by means of the material practices of those who inhabited them. This transformation could often mean a departure from the initial architectural desires of their founders. The project of *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East* is to address the making of cities as a negotiated, dialectic process. On the one hand are the representations of urban ideals, politics of urbanization, and monumental construction – in other words, the work of the political elite. On the other hand are the traces and residues of the material practices that served as a different form of spatial production. Understanding the negotiation of, and the dialectic between, these two processes in the long term is essential to the study of urban form. The problem of the urban ideals surfaces heavily in the textual and historical record, whereas the traces and residues in everyday spaces are largely accessible through the archaeological record (Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins 1999: xiv–xv). For these reasons, this book aims to establish a balance between macro- and micro-perspectives, the historical and the archaeological, even though sometimes they may seem to be at odds with one another. The reconciliation between

the two, however, is possible through a critical reading of our sources and discussing openly the problem of historical representation.

Widely found in a variety of geographies throughout the history of human settlement, the founding of cities was an important place- and space-generating social activity and settlement strategy. In the ancient world, from Phoenician and Greek colonies in the Mediterranean world to Akhenaten's city at Tell el Amarna, from Alexander the Great's new cities and military colonies to Augustan foundations in Rome's provinces, the practice is well known in the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world. During periods of takeover of territories, the worlds of early Islam and medieval Europe became peppered with newly constructed towns (Kostof 1991, 1992; Wheatley 2001). City foundations were often set in previously desolate, uncultivated, or abandoned landscapes ("out of nothing"), and usually involved a monumental social undertaking. Large-scale building programs aimed at the planning and initiation of the rapid construction of an architectural urban core. Perhaps more significantly, these programs also involved the transformation of entire landscapes in the periphery of new cities, when the countryside was cultivated and structured to serve as an urban hinterland. Even though these city foundations appear in the historical record as short-term events at chosen locations, it is my contention that they were also always part of long-term settlement processes. Whereas the political decisions of the ruling elite find voice in the historical record that is preserved in monumental inscriptions and other written documents, the long-term processes of landscape change are harder to pin down. Archaeological research with its diachronic perspective on the deep history of landscapes is better suited to explore these processes and their possible connections to the city foundation events.

Cities, Landscape, and the Long Term

In the Near Eastern historical record, urban foundations were usually accompanied by political rhetoric describing elite patronage and displayed in public monuments. This political rhetoric is a discourse that linked the military and economic accomplishments of imperial power to building operations and similar public benefactions in a causal relationship. Public benefactions involved in urban foundations were the erection of monuments and dedicatory statues, hosting public feasts, and establishing new festivals. This narrativizing discourse that connects military campaigns to building projects extends back to the early historical inscriptions from the Akkadian kingdom of the late third millennium BCE (Studevent-Hickman and Morgan 2006). The narrative connection of this political discourse is emphasized, especially, if the new city was to become a governmental or ceremonial center, such as the city of Agade founded by the Akkadian king Sargon, according to literary and historical texts

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(Van de Mieroop 1999a). The foundation of the capital city Agade, the location of which remains unknown, marked Sargon's establishment of his power in the southern Mesopotamian plains and was directly linked to the success of Akkadian military apparatus (Wall-Romana 1990: 208). In an Akkadian inscription of Yahdun-Lim, king of Mari (1810–1794 BCE) – inscribed on bricks of the foundation of Šamaš Temple at Mari – the king's destruction of enemy fortresses and lands and his cutting of trees from "the mountains of cedar and boxwood" are juxtaposed with the king's raising of monuments and building of temples (van Koppen 2006: 96–98). The commemorative monuments of the Neo-Assyrian and Syro-Hittite cities that are discussed in this book represent perhaps one of the most complex examples of such narrativization in Near Eastern history.

Founding royal cities therefore emerged as a political strategy of the imperial power and a stage for the spectacles of the state. The geographical displacement of the political urban center was a transformative moment in the history of any regional polity, signaling an innovative shift in settlement structure. This was accompanied by the building of new provincial centers and frontier fortresses that restructured the frontier zones and adjacent territories contested by territorial states and regional polities.[2] New cities helped structure the organization of land for agricultural production with intensified cultivation through, for example, the introduction of irrigation systems. New ports of trade challenged the existing networks of interregional connectivity.[3] Urban construction projects hosted innovative and symbolically charged architectural and artisanal technologies. Successful or unsuccessful in the long run, short-lived or long-term, the new settlements "assemble[d] a world" around them;[4] they re-presented a new world order to their makers and subjects, substantially transformed their immediate human environment, and altered the hierarchy of relationships in the world into which they were incorporated.

The textual accounts of city foundations in commemorative inscriptions and annalistic texts describe building projects as accomplishments of the ruling elite and fashion a narrative discourse referred to earlier as royal rhetoric. Pictorial narratives displayed on commemorative monuments in urban or rural contexts contribute to the communication of this rhetoric in all its permutations (Winter 1981a). The archaeological evidence for the construction of cities is not always commensurate with this visual and textual rhetoric of city foundations; therefore, it is important to illustrate both the overlap and the discrepancies between the processes of urban formation and their political representation. The second objective of this book is to compare just how the foundation of cities was represented in the textual, visual, and material records. The present approach pays attention to both physical and representational aspects of the practice of founding cities, both the practice on the ground and its political imagination. Consequently the book treats how cities were architecturally constructed, and

it is equally occupied with the political and social processes of constructing meaning that are associated with those architectural practices.

Urban foundations are attested during various periods of Near Eastern history from the first cities of southern Mesopotamia onward, but *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East* focuses on the Upper Syro-Mesopotamian polities of the Early Iron Age (c. 1200–850 BCE), for which there is a wealth of textual and archaeological evidence on the processes of urbanization. The approach is regional and compares the early Neo-Assyrian Empire in the Middle and Upper Tigris basins with the Syro-Hittite regional polities of northern Syria and southern and southeastern Turkey (Figure 1). This broad geographical region had a shared material culture that linked the contemporaneous Assyrian and Urartian territorial states, as well as the Luwian-, Aramaean-, and Phoenician-speaking Syro-Hittite regional polities. The Urartian state is not included in this book for the simple reason that it focuses on the Early Iron Age, whereas the main florescence of the Urartian state only takes place after the ninth century BCE, even though Urartian architectural practices and urban foundations were very much part and parcel of this shared world. This world was founded on the long-term structures inherited from the Hittite and Assyrian empires of the Late Bronze Age, and developed throughout the Iron Age. The transition from the world of the Late Bronze Age empires to the fragmented polities of the Early Iron Age is a principal focus of Chapters 3 and 4. In those two chapters, the circulation of architectural knowledge and city-building practices are argued to participate in the processes of regional cultural change. Rather than presenting a comprehensive survey of Near Eastern cities built during the Iron Ages, this book inquires about the common and wide-ranging underpinnings of the practice of establishing cities through the analysis of case studies.

What initially motivated this project was the striking similarity among the statements about urban construction and the cultivation of landscapes in Assyrian, Urartian, and Syro-Hittite commemorative monuments. Equally striking was that such parallels had never been thoroughly investigated in the scholarly literature. My synthesis of archaeological and textual evidence suggests that urban construction projects were not only a pervasive architectural practice in the Early Iron Age, but were also dominant in the royal rhetoric, perhaps only second to the report of military accomplishments. This synthesis fostered an understanding of how building cities, writing inscriptions, raising public monuments, and planting orchards all emerged contemporaneously.

It is necessary in this synthesis to be sensitive to the nature of the evidence from macro to micro scales, and approaching city foundations required me to work in three different spatial and temporal scales:

- long-term processes of landscape change and settlement history;
- production of urban space through large-scale building projects;
- the development of symbolically charged architectural technologies.

These three scales of analysis make it possible to draw on a variety of evidence without necessarily assuming their correspondence. Long-term processes are revealed by survey archaeology and environmental research, whereas investigating urban histories makes use of published excavations, historical texts, and the monuments of the city. Especially those two bodies of evidence drawn from historical and archaeological records tend to balance each other between political representations and cultural practices, between ideologies and realities of the material world. Finally, fine-tuned fieldwork on architectural technologies such as quarrying and stone-carving techniques allows one to reconsider the cityscapes through their fabric of materials and technologies, surfaces and textures. This brings the discussion down to a very concrete aspect of city-building practices, its nuts and bolts within the building scale, while connecting the discussion to building craftsmen, technological knowledge, and the spaces of the everyday.

The multi-scaled approach also demands theoretical and methodological grounding in multiple fields. Through the incorporation of contemporary critical approaches to landscape, urbanization, architectural space, and material culture, *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East* develops an understanding of the nature of space-producing activities in and around cities. Official texts from the Iron Age capital cities present a particularly urban-centered perspective with emphasis on the large-scale projects and their politically charged context. However, after considering long-term settlement history, city foundations emerge not completely confined to the construction of imperial capitals. They are connected to much broader settlement trends, and equally attested on the scale of villages, farmsteads, frontier fortresses, and regional centers. Additionally, my analysis of architectural technologies supports this view by demonstrating that the ubiquitous carved orthostat programs of the Iron Age cities should be understood in a diachronic perspective rather than purely as a short-term innovation, as has long been assumed.

City foundations were festive events where performative spectacles of the state took place in the form of commemorations and feasting. These festive occasions acted as the stage for redefining the society's relationship with the past. Construction projects involved the making of urban spaces that presented visual and textual narratives of the state through the erection of a constellation of commemorative monuments in the urban center. This was partly accomplished through the technique of raising stone orthostats, "obelisks," and stelae with narrative relief programs in public places. The orthostat technique became a common practice among the Early Iron Age cities. As a technological style and architectural aesthetic in the urban landscape, the orthostats themselves acted as material manifestations of elite ideology. In conclusion, the three scales of analysis from the study of long-term landscape processes to the discussion of city foundations as short-term events and finally the documentation of specific

innovative architectural technologies, each contribute to understanding the practice of founding cities as a historically distinct phenomenon during the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age in upper Syro-Mesopotamia.

The Structure of the Book

The historical problem of city foundations in this region lies at the heart of the present work. The next two chapters investigate landscape processes associated with the foundation of new urban settlements and regional landscape transformations in the territory of new cities during the Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age transition. The city foundation projects of Assyrian and Syro-Hittite rulers during this transition were much more ambitious than the physical construction of a city. The royal rhetoric expressed in monumental inscriptions and visual representations included a program of landscape cultivation with large-scale irrigation networks, plantations, and the settlement of populations. This rhetoric was put on public display through the construction of commemorative monuments that perpetually reimagined urban spaces and imperial landscapes. Commemorative monuments such as the Hittite, Late Hittite, and Assyrian rock reliefs and stelae demarcated contested territories and created an imagined map of imperial landscapes. My focus on broad landscape processes leads me to suggest that the construction of cities, erection of commemorative monuments, resettlement of the abandoned countryside, and cultivation of landscapes were components of what I call *spatialized narratives* of the state. The political landscapes became *cultural artifacts* that represented the utopian ideals of the governing elites on the one hand and attempted to construct an image of ecological prosperity in the collective imagination on the other.

Both Chapters 2 and 3 rely extensively on archaeological evidence from upper Mesopotamian regional surveys. This evidence is then juxtaposed with the well-known cases of urban foundations in specific regional contexts. In Chapter 2, the gradual southward shift of the geopolitical center of the Hittite Empire and its eventual collapse at the end of the Late Bronze Age are discussed. As a case study to illustrate the emergent urbanism of Syro-Hittite states following this collapse, a detailed analysis of the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the formation of the regional state Malizi/Melid is presented. This kingdom established itself in the Malatya-Elbistan Plains in eastern Turkey during the first centuries of the Early Iron Age as one of the earliest political entities to emerge from the ashes of the Hittite Empire. Monuments raised by Malizean "country lords" in rural and urban contexts suggest a picture of a fluid landscape in transition, one that was configured through the construction of cities and other practices of place-making.