



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

How high were the walls of Mesopotamia?

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Abstract

While archaeological explorations regularly expose the fortification walls of ancient cities, recording their width and perhaps the length of their circuit, establishing the height to which these walls were built is a much more problematic issue. The essential problem is that knowing the width of a wall is not in itself enough to determine its height. In order to address this question, this paper marshals a range of evidence drawn from excavations, iconography, cuneiform texts and classical sources, evaluating data from the third to the first millennia BC and from sites across the near east including Nineveh, Nimrud, Babylon, Armanum, Qabra and the western Zagros; a comparison is also made with the corresponding evidence from Egypt. The conclusion is that, while we are seldom able to reconstruct the exact height to which a major fortification system was built, these different lines of evidence do converge in establishing the parameters governing the range in which the figures lie.

Keywords

fortifications, walls, military architecture, Assyria, Babylonia

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