

## VII A Stele of Nebuchadnezzar II

A. R. GEORGE

No. 76

MS 2063

Pls. LVIII–LXVII

This extraordinary monument, popularly known as the Tower of Babel stele, has already been brought to the attention of scholarship and the wider public. As one of the Schøyen Collection's most notable objects, a photograph of its face was early placed in the collection's online checklist of manuscripts ([www.schoyencollection.com/babylonianhist.htm](http://www.schoyencollection.com/babylonianhist.htm)), where it soon attracted comment (e.g. Van De Mieroop 2003: 264). The photograph has been reproduced several times in print, in both academic and popular publications (Schwemer 2005: 16, Montero 2005: 216, André-Salvini 2008: 229), and my drawing of it has already appeared in a popular book on early cities (Levy 2008: 31). The stele is presented here as an Assyriological subject, but in the knowledge that this will only be the start of its appraisal by scholarship. In due course experts from other fields, particularly art history, will supply more detailed appreciations of it as a Babylonian cultural artefact and refine the opinions set forth below.

The stele comprises two broken fragments of beautifully polished, dense black stone, said to be basalt; the join between them is secure (Pl. LVIII). There have been reports of a third fragment that belongs to the stele but its whereabouts are unknown and its existence awaits confirmation. If a third part of the stele exists, it must be very small, for little is missing. The extant monument measures 47 cm high and 25 cm across. The back is badly damaged, exhibiting a depth of 11 cm at its fullest point, but it seems to have been entirely blank (Pl. LXVI). The bottom left-hand corner is missing, and parts of the right-hand edge and top are badly

damaged, but parts of the smoothed edges of the stele are preserved along most of the left-hand side, across much of the top, down the upper right-hand side, and, invisible on the previously available photograph, for a short section of the base (Pls. LXVI–LXVII). These preserved sections of edge enable a secure reconstruction of the monument's original shape (Pl. LIX). The stele is of conventional form. When stood on its base it resembles in outline a gravestone with a rounded top. However, while the face is flat the verso is lightly convex; the edges, too, are rounded where they meet the face and the back.

The face of the stele is worn and in places the surface has been lost entirely. About the top two-fifths of the face are taken up by a pictorial scene carved in bas-relief (Pls. LX, LXII–LXIV). The relief depicts a standing figure (right) facing a ziqqurat or stepped temple-tower (left). Both ziqqurat and man are shown in profile. The tower is identified by an epigraph as E-temen-anki, the well-known ziqqurat of the god Marduk at Babylon and the inspiration for the biblical Tower of Babel. For this reason the monument has come by its popular designation, the Tower of Babel stele. Above the ziqqurat is the ground-plan of a building. A nearly identical ground-plan is carved on the stele's left shoulder (Pl. LXIV). The lower part of the stele is occupied by an inscription in monumental cuneiform script (Pls. LXI, LXV). The text as a whole is not known from any other source but is a standard piece of work typical of the output of the sixth-century Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean dynasty.

The stele's pictorial elements are less routine. For this reason the components of the relief are described first, in the order (a) man, (b) ziqqur-rat, and (c) ground-plans.

### *The Standing Figure*

The figure depicted on the right side of the relief is a bearded male dressed in a long robe and shod in sandals (Pls. LXIII–LXIV). The fine details of his beard, hair, and robe have largely disappeared but enough traces remain to give an impression of delicate rendering of very elaborate decoration. His right wrist is embellished with a bracelet or bangle. He wears the late form of the Babylonian royal crown, conical with a long tassel hanging from the back, and holds in his left hand a long staff that matches him in height. In his right hand he holds a curved conical object directed at his face. In these last three particulars the figure very much resembles representations of Babylonian kings on other Neo-Babylonian stone monuments from the mid-ninth century on. In chronological order these are the *kudurru*-stones of:

- (a) an unidentified ninth-century king (drawing Seidl 1989: 56 fig. 20)
- (b) Marduk-zākir-šumi I (ca 853 BC; photograph Thureau-Dangin 1919: 132 f. pl. 1)
- (c) Merodach-baladan II (715 BC; photograph Meyer 1965 fig. 142)
- (d) Aššur-nādin-šumi (699–694; photograph Brinkman and Dalley 1988: 80 f.)
- (e) Šamaš-šuma-ukīn (668–648; drawing Seidl 1989: 62 fig. 24)

The conical crown worn by all these kings is the Babylonian *aqū*, and the long staff held in their left hands is Bab. *ḥaṭṭu* (conventionally, but misleadingly, translated “sceptre”). The same crown and staff distinguish the figure of the king on a *kudurru*-type stone tablet, but there his left hand is empty and the staff is consequently in the right hand:

- (f) Nabû-apla-iddina (ninth century; photograph King 1912 pl. 103 no. 28)

Both crown and staff appear also in a relief of Ashurbanipal from the North Palace at Nin-

evah that shows officials presenting the Assyrian king with the regalia of his defeated brother, Šamaš-šuma-ukīn king of Babylon (Novotny and Watanabe 2008: 107 fig. 4). There the crown and staff are accompanied by a third item, which Novotny and Watanabe have succeeded in identifying as the Babylonian royal seal. The curved object held in the right hand of the figure depicted in the present relief, and in the right hand of kings (a)–(e) above, is not a seal, however, and its identity and function remain uncertain (see Brinkman and Dalley 1988: 95–97, where “left hand” is a typographical error).

As the bearer of these three regalia—crown, staff, and curved object—the standing figure depicted on the present monument is unquestionably also a king. Given the certain attribution of the stele's inscription to Nebuchadnezzar II (see below), there can be no doubt that he is none other than this great Babylonian monarch (reigned 604–562). The relief thus yields only the fourth certain representation of Nebuchadnezzar to be discovered; the others are carved on cliff-faces in Lebanon, at Wadi Brisa (two reliefs, Weissbach 1906: 2–3 figs. 2 and 3; 8; Börker-Klähn 1982: I 228, II nos. 259–60; Da Riva 2010: 173–74 and figs. 3–4) and at Shir es-Sanam (one relief, Da Riva 2010: 175–76 and fig. 5). Other Neo-Babylonian reliefs at nearby Wadi es-Saba' are not accompanied by legible inscriptions and may or may not represent Nebuchadnezzar II (Da Riva 2010: 176–77 and figs. 6–7). All these outdoor monuments are in very poor condition and their depictions of the king are much less impressive than that on the stele.

### *The Ziqqur-rat*

The stepped tower depicted on the left side of the relief, opposite Nebuchadnezzar, is accompanied by the following epigraph (Pl. LXV):

1. [é]-tem[en]-an-ʿkiʿ E-temen-anki,
2. [z]i-*qú-ra-at* the ziqqur-rat of
3. [k]á.dingir.ra<sup>ki</sup> Babylon.

E-temen-anki is a Sumerian ceremonial name that means “House Foundation Platform of Heaven and Underworld,” an indication of the

structure’s symbolic place in Babylonian cosmology (George 1992: 298–300). Its early history is unrecorded but more is known of the tower in the first millennium (for more detail see George 2005–6). It was destroyed by Sennacherib of Assyria when he laid Babylon waste in 689, and partially rebuilt by Sennacherib’s successors, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. The project was restarted by Nabopolassar after Babylon won its independence from Assyria, and completed by his son, Nebuchadnezzar II, in about 590. Archaeological evidence reveals that the building was damaged beyond repair in the Persian period. It was levelled in the late fourth century by Alexander of Macedon and his successors in preparation for a rebuilding that was never started. The site was later built over and lost to sight; its foundations were exposed in the 1880s by local villagers digging out baked bricks for reuse as building material, and explored archaeologically by successive German expeditions, led by Robert Koldewey and Friedrich Wetzel in 1913 (Wetzel and Weissbach 1938), and by Hansjörg Schmid, H. J. Lenzen and Jürgen Schmidt in the 1960s (Schmid 1981, 1995: 47–78, Schmidt 1973, 2002: 283–90).

The building is not depicted on the same scale as its royal builder (Pls. LX, LXIV). The dimensions of the tower are known from cuneiform sources, chiefly the E-sangil Tablet, a

metrological cuneiform text that sets out areas of the cult-centre of Marduk at Babylon in the language of mathematical problems and gives the dimensions of his ziqqurrat in three different units (George 1992: 109–19 no. 13). According to this and other texts the ziqqurrat had a base of 180 cubits square. One hundred and eighty cubits is the equivalent of about 90 m. The base dimensions have been corroborated by archaeological survey and excavation, which found three of the base’s sides to measure just over 91 m each (now Schmid 1995: 49–50). The E-sangil Tablet also records the ziqqurrat’s height as 180 cubits. The tradition that the tower was as high as it was wide was very strong, being reported by the Greek geographer Strabo more than three hundred years after the building had been dismantled. It is interesting to observe that the structure depicted on the relief is also as high as it is wide. How far this is to be taken as an accurate plan of the tower’s profile, as opposed to a depiction of an ideal, is open to question.

The E-sangil Tablet gives very precise measurements for the dimensions of each stage of the ziqqurrat. These are given in *nindan* “rods” (a twelve-cubit measure) but can be converted into cubits and (approximately) metres and tabulated as follows:

Stage	length	breadth (in cubits)	height	length	breadth (in metres)	height
Bottom platform	180	180	66	90	90	33
Second storey	156	156	36	78	78	18
Third storey	120	120	12	60	60	6
Fourth storey	102	102	12	51	51	6
Fifth storey	84	84	12	42	42	6
Sixth storey	[data omitted from tablet by mistake]					
Upper sanctum	} 48	} 45	} 30	} 24	} 22.5	} 15
Seventh storey						
Roof-top structure						

It should be stated at the outset that the E-sangil Tablet is not an eyewitness's description of a standing building, nor is it an architect's blueprint for an eventual construction. It is a compilation of mathematical exercises and very probably draws its figures from an ideal, not from reality. Even if the base dimensions it gives have been verified on the ground, they are symbolic (enclosing a square of exactly one *ikû* in area) and do not compel us to accept as unquestionable the other figures recorded.

Whether the figures given in the text for the heights of the stages are ideals or accord with the real building completed by Nebuchadnezzar, they do not match the relief in every particular. In the E-sangil Tablet the first two stages are notably taller than the higher stages, which, with the exception of the ziqqurrat-temple, are all twelve cubits high (approx. 6 m). In the relief only the lowest stage is notably taller than the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth stages, which all exhibit the same height. Similarly, the proportions between the widths and heights of the various stages are different, as can best be seen by comparing a restored sketch of the ziqqurrat shown on the relief with a schematic diagram based on the data given in the E-sangil Tablet (Fig. 1). It cannot be excluded that both the relief and the

E-sangil Tablet present the ziqqurrat in idealized form and, therefore, cannot be slavishly followed by those who wish to make scale models of how the tower really looked.

The ziqqurrat of Babylon has fascinated many generations of antiquarians, from those romantically attracted to the notion that it was the Tower of Babel to those concerned with the detailed reconstruction of the cultic topography of Marduk's sanctuary. Combining evidence from archaeological excavation, the account of the temple-tower by Herodotus, and cuneiform sources as they became available, a succession of scholars have put forward proposals for the building's reconstruction and built models to illustrate their ideas (Schmid 1995: 25–46). No firm consensus has emerged over the number of stages (seven or eight), nor over the exact arrangement of the stairways that led from the surrounding courtyard onto the superstructure. Even if it is partly an ideal portrait, the relief is probably accurate enough in general terms to help with both these issues.

The ziqqurrat depicted on the relief is a tower in seven stages. The bottom stage, or base, is noticeably taller than the others, as is also the top stage. An oblique line running across the face of the ziqqurrat from the bottom right-hand corner of the base to the mid-point

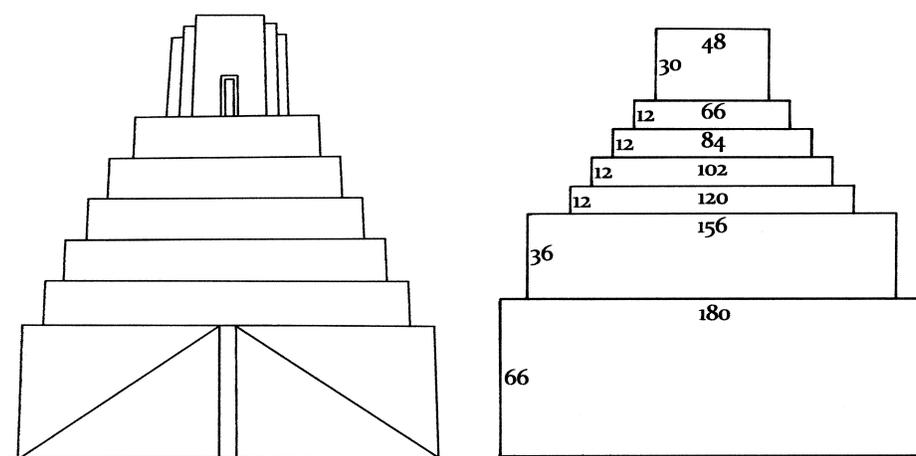


Fig. 1

The ziqqurrat of Babylon  
 (left) as shown on MS 2063 (restored) and  
 (right) as described by the Esangil Tablet (dimensions in cubits, sixth stage restored).

of the first terrace denotes an attached stairway. This detail indicates that the relief exhibits the south face of the ziqqurrat, for excavations found traces of the bottom of such a stairway at the structure's southeast corner. Two other stairways were found, a matching flight at the southwest corner and a central flight perpendicular to the southern façade. Damage to the relief and the rubbed state of what surface is extant does not allow traces of these other stairways to be observed on the monument. However, what can be seen of the middle part of the first terrace does not appear to allow that the central stairway could have risen above this level to the second terrace, as some have proposed.

The lower six stages are embellished with a pattern that represents the “niche-and projection” articulation typical of Babylonian religious buildings, in which recessed stretches of wall alternate with more prominent members that are effectively attached pilasters (“pilaster masses”). The Babylonians called the pair of architectural elements that made up “niche-and-projection” walls *hipšu* (the recessed part of the wall) and *dublu* (the projecting part) (George 1995a: 181–83). The base of the tower is known from the archaeological survey of the foundations to have been such a wall. On the stele the pattern is achieved by low relief, except on the staircase, where the pattern is conveyed by incision only.

The tower's top stage is a temple, the E-temen-anki proper, known in Akkadian as *bīt ziqrati* “the ziqqurrat temple.” This was the high sanctuary of Marduk, more prominent as a landmark than his sanctuary at ground-level, the massive E-sangil, but necessarily smaller. There is some evidence that the ziqqurrat-temple was a two-storey building, though both storeys may well have been the same length and breadth (George 1992: 433). The relief shows no roof-top structure protruding above the seventh stage, but the temple is clearly shown tall enough to accommodate two floors. The temple is depicted with a central doorway flanked by stepped projections that rise above roof-level. These tower-like structures are conventional in Babylonian temple gateways and known in Akkadian by the term *dublu ašû*

“projecting pilaster” (George 1995a: 187). The central gateway matches the gateway midway along the bottom façade of the ground-plan engraved immediately above the ziqqurrat, and it is to this plan (and the plan on the stele's shoulder) that we must now turn.

### *The Ground-plans*

The ground-plan that surmounts the ziqqurrat on the stele's face is clearly of a religious building (Pl. LXIV top). First, the outer façades are articulated with “niche-and-projection” walls. The surviving gateway, though no longer completely traceable, exhibits the classic characteristics of a Babylonian temple gateway, with the doorway flanked by projecting pilasters and set deep in a rebate in the façade with stepped jambs on either side (known as *sippu*, George 1995a: 182). In addition, some of the doorways from the central space, obviously a courtyard, are also “rabbeted” in this way, as is known to have been the case, for example, in E-sangil itself, where the north façade of the courtyard was pierced by three doorways rebated into the wall with stepped jambs (George 1995a: 179–80). Finally, a long chamber on the left side is equipped with a recess stepped back into the long back wall, in the manner of the niches commonly found in the cult-rooms of Neo-Babylonian temples. Can this ground-plan be identified? It certainly does not match what we know of the layout of E-sangil, which was an altogether more complex building and is not, in any case, the subject of the inscription. Surmounting the ziqqurrat as it does, though engraved to a different scale, it seems incontestable that the ground-plan is intended to be that of the ziqqurrat-temple.

The second ground-plan, engraved on the stele's shoulder, is much less well preserved than the plan on the face (Pl. LXIV bottom). The left and upper parts of the plan are preserved, with the left façade completely visible and much of the top façade also present. The top façade is pierced by a monumental gateway located centrally. On the face the equivalent wall is lost entirely. A cult-room, with niche along its back wall, is positioned between a central area, no doubt a courtyard, and the left-

hand façade. As far as each is preserved, the two plans tally exactly apart from one very visible particular. That particular is the depiction of the sequence of niches and projections on the façade behind the cult-room. Though not completely preserved on the plan on the stele's face, that façade was clearly articulated with five pilasters and four recesses. The corresponding wall on the edge has only four pilasters and three recesses.

The gateway on the ground-plan engraved on the stele's face is very carefully aligned with the gate of the top stage of the tower below. Consequently it seems likely they signify one and the same gateway and that one of the ziqqurrat-temple's gates faced south. Because a gate facing in this direction would align with the central stairway and give a view across to the great sanctuary of E-sangil, probably this was the principal gate. If the plan on the face is orientated with south at the bottom, the long cult-room with a niche on its back wall falls in the west. This matches the ideal (but not exclusive) architectural scheme of grand north Babylonian temples, as utilized in E-sangil, for example (George 1999: 74–76). The ziqqurrat-temple could then be seen as notionally a replica of E-sangil in miniature.

The component parts of the ziqqurrat-temple are reported in the E-sangil Tablet, along with their dimensions (the text's interest is resolutely mathematical). The temple comprised a courtyard, roofed over (perhaps to act as the floor of an upper storey), a cult-room of Marduk in the *bīt šadī* “east chamber,” probably flanked by cult-rooms of Nabû and Tašmētum (Marduk's son and daughter-in-law), chapels of Ea and Nuska that comprise the *bītāti ša iltāni* “north chambers,” a chapel of Anu and Enlil described as the *bītu ša šūti* “south chamber,” and a complex of rooms that included Marduk's bed-chamber and a staircase, called the *bītu ša amurri* “west chamber” (George 1992: 116–17 ll. 25–33). As conventionally understood this layout is not a match for the ground-plans engraved on the stele, where the principal cult-room, surely Marduk's, is seen to be situated in the left, western part of the building. A solution appears to be

forthcoming from Neo-Babylonian house-deeds, in which Heather Baker proposes that the compass points are used to describe the direction in which rooms or suites of rooms face in relation to a central courtyard (Baker 2008, 2009). As she points out, this would mean that the E-sangil Tablet's “east chamber,” where Marduk's cult-room was located, faced east onto the courtyard and is thus to be sought west of that courtyard. Such an orientation would tally with the stele's ground-plans.

According to the E-sangil Tablet (l. 35), the ziqqurrat-temple was equipped with four gates, named after the four points of the compass, so that reconstructions and models often show a gateway in each of the four exterior façades of the ziqqurrat-temple (e.g., Schmid 1995 pls. 40–42). At such an elevation, this arrangement would have made for a very draughty building. Such reconstructions can be shown to be misguided, for other cuneiform texts that list the ziqqurrat's gates know of four gates with other names, two of them described as belonging to the ziqqurrat-temple and two, by default, located elsewhere on the tower (George 1992: 89–90). The two gates of the ziqqurrat-temple are Ka-unir “Gate of the Ziqqurrat” and Ka-E-temen-anki “Gate of E.,” and their very names indicate that they are the gates that led into the high temple from the sixth terrace. They are explicitly identified as opening to the south and west respectively (ibid. 92–93 ll. 11–12). If there were thus only two exterior gates in the exterior façade of the ziqqurrat-temple, those that looked south and west, the four gates of the E-sangil Tablet named after compass points must be gates elsewhere in the building, probably those that led from the interior courtyard into the various cult-rooms.

The stele, however, throws doubt onto this understanding of the different gates and their location. As noted above, the plan on the stele's shoulder is preserved where its counterpart is not, showing a section of façade at the top of the plan. If this plan is orientated in the same direction as the plan on the face, this façade and the gateway that pierces it will face north. I am

unable to explain this discrepancy, except by suggesting that the plan on the stele's shoulder may represent some building other than the ziqqurrat-temple of E-temen-anki. The most likely candidate would be the comparable shrine on top of the ziqqurrat of Borsippa, E-ur-me-imin-anki, whose construction is also a topic of the stele's inscription.

### The Inscription

The inscription that occupies the lower part of the stele is arranged in three columns of text (Pls. LXI, LXV). Each column held about twenty-seven lines of text, making eighty-one lines in all. The text is not complete, both because the very bottom of each column is broken away and because the surface of the stele is so worn that in places no decipherment can be offered of the traces that remain. This is especially the case in col. ii, where there is a noticeable contrast in the legibility of lines in the upper and middle parts of the column and the last six surviving lines. It seems as if at least ten lines of the middle part of this column have been deliberately effaced, a job done carefully enough to leave intact and legible the lines below and on either side. The erasure of what is the central part of the inscription reminds one of the similar damage sustained by the stele that holds the law-code of Hammurapi. Personal inspection of Hammurapi's stele in the Louvre allowed me to note that on that monument, too, the erasure was not prosecuted so thoroughly as to remove all traces of the

engraved signs. On both stele, the deepest parts of many wedges can still be observed in the effaced areas.

What can be read, however, shows that the inscription relates to the completion of the ziqqurrats of Babylon and Borsippa, respectively E-temen-anki "House, Foundation Platform of Heaven and Underworld" and E-ur-me-imin-anki "House that Controls the Seven Me's of Heaven and Underworld." The text is a close parallel of the cylinder inscriptions that were embedded in the fabric of E-temen-anki by Nebuchadnezzar II and recorded how he completed it (see below, passage A of the appendix). This king also carried out extensive repairs to E-ur-me-imin-anki, as witnessed by many of his inscriptions but first and foremost by the several inscribed cylinders he deposited in the mantle of the third stage of Borsippa's ziqqurrat (see below, passage F of the appendix). No other ruler of the era worked extensively on both towers. Nabonidus left inscriptions that report work on the precinct walls of E-ur-me-imin-anki, certainly (Schaudig 1995), and E-temen-anki, probably (*CT* 51 75, on which see George 2005-6: 88), but no mention is made of large-scale repairs on the ziqqurrats themselves. That being so, there can be little doubt that the stele published here is also the work of Nebuchadnezzar II. All doubt is removed by the text itself, especially by the passage reporting the builder's royal parentage (i 14-16), which though fragmentary fits Nebuchadnezzar but not Nabonidus.

### TRANSLITERATION

Duplicate lines from two other cylinder inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar (Langdon 1912: nos. 17 and 14) are noted at the right margin.

For these cylinders see further below, passages A and C of the appendix to this chapter.

col. i

1	[ <i>Nabû-kudurri-ušur</i> ]	// 17: 1	5	[ <i>ša a-n</i> ] <sup>a</sup> <i>na-<sup>d</sup>bi-um<sup>1</sup></i>	
2	[ <i>šar bābil<sup>ki</sup></i> ]	// 17: 2	6	[ <i>be-lí-šu ba</i> ]- <sup>r</sup> <i>ša<sup>1</sup>-a<sup>r</sup>uz<sup>1</sup></i> -[ <i>na-šu</i> ]	
3	[ . . . . . ]		7	[ <i>mu-uš-te-<sup>2</sup></i> ]- <sup>ù</sup> <i>b[a-la-ṭam]</i>	// 17: 8
4	x x [ . . . ] x x		8	[ <i>na-<sup>2</sup>-dam la m</i> ] <sup>u-up-pa-<sup>r</sup>ar<sup>1</sup>-[<i>ku-ú</i>]</sup>	// 17: 9
			9	[ <i>ba-bi-il i</i> ]- <i>gi-[se-e rabûti]</i>	// 17: 10

10	[a-na] ʿé-sag <sup>1</sup> -í[1]	// 17: 11
11	[emqu mutnennú]	// 17: 12
12	[zānin é-sag-í]	// 17: 13
13	ʿù <sup>1</sup> [é-zi-da]	// 17: 13
14	ʿaplu(íbila) <sup>1</sup> [ašarēdu]	// 17: 14
15	[ša Nabû-apla-ušur]	// 17: 14
16	[šà]r ʿbābili(ká.dingir.ra) <sup>1</sup> [ <sup>ki</sup> a-na-ku]	// 17: 15
17	[i]-nu-u[m <sup>d</sup> marduk(a)m[ar.utu]]	// 17: 16
18	[be-lí] ʿra-bí <sup>1</sup> -[ù]	// 17: 17
19	[re-e-ši-ia ú]-ul-ʿlu <sup>1</sup> -[u]	// 17: 18
20–27 <sup>2</sup>	lost	
col. ii		
1–8	lost	
9–15	illegible traces	
16	[ku-ul-la-a]t ma-ʿti-ta <sup>1</sup> -an	// 17: 66
17	[gi-mi-ir <sup>2</sup> ] ʿka <sup>2</sup> ma <sup>2</sup> -al <sup>2</sup> -ki <sup>1</sup>	
18	[ša a-na na-r]a-ʿam <sup>d</sup> marduk(amar.utu) <sup>1</sup>	
19	i-na [nap]-h̄a-ar ni-š̄i da-ad-mi	
20	ʿre <sup>1</sup> -e-ša-a-š̄u-nu ú-ul-ʿla <sup>1</sup> -[a]	
21	ʿiš-tu ti-a-am-ti <sup>1</sup> e-li-ʿti <sup>1</sup>	// 17: 68–69
22	[a-di ti-a-am-ti š̄a]p-li-ti	// 17: 70–71
23	[mātāti ru-qá]-ʿa <sup>1</sup> -ti	// 17: 72
24	[niš̄i da-ad]-mi	// 17: 73
25	[rapš̄ati š̄arri š̄adī]	// 17: 73–74
26	[nesūti u nagī b̄erūti]	// 17: 74–75
27	[ša qereb tām̄ti]	// 17: 76

col. iii		
1	[e-]i-ti[m] ʿù <sup>1</sup> š̄a-ap-l[i-tim]	// 17: 77–78
2	[š̄]a <sup>d</sup> marduk(amar.utu) b[e-lí]	// 17: 79
3	ʿa <sup>2</sup> -[na š̄a-d]a-ʿad <sup>1</sup> sí-ir-d[i-š̄u]	// 17: 80
4	[š̄]é-[er-r]a <sup>2</sup> -ʿet <sup>1</sup> -[si-na]	// 17: 81
5	[ú-ma]-ʿal <sup>1</sup> -[lu-u]	// 17: 82
6	[qá]-ʿtu-ú <sup>1</sup> -[a]	// 17: 82
7	ʿad-ka-am <sup>1</sup> -[ma]	// 17: 83
8	ʿum-ma <sup>1</sup> -na-ʿa <sup>1</sup> -[at]	// 17: 83
9	<sup>d</sup> š̄amaš(utu) ʿù <sup>1</sup> <sup>d</sup> [marduk(amar.utu)]	// 17: 84
10	ʿa-na e-pé-š̄u é <sup>1</sup> -teme[n-an-ki]	// 17: 85
11	ʿù é-ur <sub>4</sub> -me <sup>1</sup> -imin-a[n-ki]	
12	e-mi-id-š̄i-na-ʿa <sup>1</sup> -[ti]	// 17: 86 // 132
13	tu-up-š̄i-[ku]	// 17: 86 // 132
14	i[š̄]-di é-temen-an-ki [ù]	
15	[iš̄]-ʿdi é-ur <sub>4</sub> -me-imin-an-k[i]	
16	ta-[a]m-la-a za-a[k-ra]	// 17: 134
17	ʿú-ma <sup>1</sup> -al-[lí]	// 17: 134
18	[é]-temen-ʿan <sup>1</sup> -[ki]	cf. 14 i 38
19	ʿù é-ur <sub>4</sub> -me <sup>1</sup> -im[in-an-ki]	cf. 14 i 39
20	[pí]-ti-iq-š̄i-na k[a-la-ma]	// 14 i 40
21	i-na ku-up-ru ù [a-gur-rí]	// 14 i 40
22	ʿe <sup>1</sup> -[pú]-uš̄ ʿú-š̄a <sup>1</sup> -ak-[[i-il-ma]	// 14 i 41
23	ú-[nam]-m[a-a]r š̄[a-aš̄-š̄i-iš̄] <sup>2</sup>	
24–27 <sup>2</sup>	lost	

## TRANSLATION

<sup>i 1</sup> [Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, . . . whose attention is] fixed <sup>5</sup> [on] Nabû [his lord, who seeks] after [good health, pious and] diligent, [who brings great] offering [gifts <sup>10</sup> into] E-sangil, [wise and prayerful, who provisions E-sangil] and [E-zida, foremost] heir <sup>15</sup> [of Nabopolassar, king] of Babylon, [am I.] When the great [lord Marduk] raised [me to prominence, . . .

*gap of 23 ± 1 lines*

<sup>ii</sup> . . . In order to complete E-temenanki and E-ur-me-imin-anki to the top . . . ] I mobilized [all] countries everywhere, [each and] every ruler [who] <sup>20</sup> had been raised to prominence over all the people of the world [as one] loved by Marduk, from the upper sea [to the] lower

[sea,] the [distant nations, the <sup>25</sup> teeming people of] the [world, kings of remote mountains and far-flung islands in the midst of the] <sup>iii</sup> upper and lower [seas,] whose lead-ropes [my] lord Marduk <sup>5</sup> placed in [my] hand so [that they should] draw [his] chariot (*lit.* pull his chariot-pole), and I imposed corvée-duty on the workforces of the gods Šamaš and [Marduk] <sup>10</sup> in order to build E-temen-[anki] and E-ur-me-imin-anki. The base of E-temen-anki [and] <sup>15</sup> the base of E-ur-me-imin-[anki] I filled in to make a high terrace. [E]-temen-anki and E-ur-me-imin-anki—I built <sup>20</sup> their structures with bitumen and [baked brick throughout.] I completed them, making [them gleam] bright as the [sun . . .

## NOTES

- i 5–6. This exact form of words is not previously attested as an epithet of Nebuchadnezzar II, but four other relative clauses ending in *bašā uznāšu* are (Da Riva 2008: 102). Alternatively, one might consider [*na-ra-a*]<sup>m</sup> <sup>d</sup>*na-<sup>r</sup>bi-um* / [*mu-uš-ta-la*]<sup>m</sup> *a-<sup>h</sup>i-<sup>r</sup>iz*<sup>1</sup> [*ne-me-qi*] “beloved of Nabû, judicious one skilled in wisdom.” This would be an exact match for the text of Nebuchadnezzar’s foundation cylinder of E-temen-anki (Langdon 1905–6: 144 i 6–7: *na-ra-am* <sup>d</sup>*na-bi-um mu-uš-ta-lam a-<sup>h</sup>i-iz ne-me-qi* // Al-Rawi n.d. 24 i 6–7: [*n*]*a-ra-am* <sup>d</sup>*na-bi-um [mu-u]š-ta-lum a-<sup>h</sup>i-iz ne-me-qi*), but if I have read the traces correctly there are no fewer than three obstacles of epigraphy.
- ii 16–20. These lines correspond to *kullat mātītān gimir kala dadmī* “all countries everywhere, each and every population” in the

foundation cylinder Nbk no. 17: 66–67 (see below, passage A of the appendix to this chapter), and are accordingly an approximate paraphrase of those phrases. Because ll. 16–18 fall in the effaced section of col. ii, they are difficult to decipher and the present transliteration is provisional.

- iii 4. The line ought to contain a spelling of *šerrassina* (BE I 84 ii 28<sup>1</sup>: *šé-ra-at-si-na* // Meissner 1905: 82 I 2<sup>1</sup>: ]*ra-si-na*).
- iii 14–15. These lines correspond to *išissu šalāšā ammat* in Nbk no. 17: 133 (see below, passage A).
- iii 23. Certainly not *kišši ellu maštaku taknê*, though that is what follows *ēpuš ušaklilma* in the parallel inscription, Nbk no. 14 i 42 (passage C below).

*The Content and Structure of the Inscription*

As can be seen from the parallels noted in the transliteration, the text of the stele is in places identical to inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II that commemorate his construction of the ziqqurrat of Babylon (Nbk no. 17) and the north palace in the same city (Nbk no. 14). The royal epithets with which the text opens are those of the same Nebuchadnezzar, and confirm that he is the agent responsible for the building work reported in the inscription and the king depicted in the accompanying relief.

The primary source for Nebuchadnezzar’s construction of the ziqqurrat of Babylon is Nbk no. 17, his four-column foundation cylinder. The text of this inscription has been edited twice from the fragments then known, which did not permit the reconstruction of a connected text (Langdon 1912: 144–49 Nbk no. 17, Weissbach 1938: 44–47). A slow accretion of sources, not all of them published but conveniently listed by Rocío Da Riva (2008: 121 C41), has added to our knowledge of the text but the badly needed new edition has not yet appeared. Nevertheless, with the help of Da Riva’s catalogue and her transliteration of a

substantial portion of the text (2008: 19–22), it is now possible to gain a clear understanding of the cylinder inscription’s content and structure. The content of the new stele’s inscription is summarized in relation to the cylinder inscription in Table 1.

It has already been noted that the stele and the cylinder share many lines but also diverge in some places. Some further points emerge from a structural comparison. The stele’s inscription is much shorter, being only about eighty lines long against the cylinder’s approximately 169 lines. Damage prevents knowledge of the details but the stele evidently held a much shorter passage describing the ideological preliminaries to the construction work (i 17–ii 15), to which the cylinder devotes forty-six lines (16–61). The account of the labour force’s mobilization occupies seventy-one lines of the cylinder (62–132). The corresponding part of the stele’s inscription is much less wordy, at twenty-five lines (ii 16–iii 13). The difference lies essentially in the absence of the cylinder’s ll. 87–131. It is noteworthy that ll. 86 and 132 on the cylinder both read *ēmissunūti tupšikku*, so

that the intervening passage is an obvious candidate for deletion or insertion. The completion of work occupies a passage of similar length in both texts, but the stele's phrasing diverges from the cylinder at this point. There is no room on the stele for a passage of prayer of the length and complexity of the cylinder's prayer, but, whatever shorter form of words occurred, the genre dictates that the stele's last few lines held a prayer also.

In the matter of detail of phraseology, it can be observed that the stele's text deviates from the cylinder's wording in several passages. The first is in the middle of col. ii, where ll. 17–20 do not match the short phrase of three words on the cylinder but give a more elaborately worded variation in which all three words are present, but with partly different functions (cylinder: *gimir kal dadmī* v. stele: [*gimir*] *kal*(?) *malki*(?) [*ša ana nar*]ām *Marduk ina [nap]har niši dadmī rešāšunu ullā*). In col. iii, the mention of E-ur-me-imin-anki (l. 11), the ziqqurat of Borsippa, alongside E-temen-anki (iii 10 // 17: 85) represents an addition in comparison to the cylinder. The cylinder inscription was written exclusively for the ziqqurat of Babylon, and the absence of its counterpart in Borsippa is unproblematic. The stele deviates again in this matter a few lines later, in reading *išdī E-temen-*

*anki u išdī E-ur-me-imin-anki* “the base of E. and E.” (iii 14–15), where the cylinder has a singular pronominal referent and a statement of dimension, *išissu šalāšā ammat* “its base, thirty cubits” (17: 133). Finally, the stele diverges from the cylinder midway through the report of the construction of the terrace: where the cylinder gives details of the timber beams used in the structure of E-temen-anki (17: 135–38), the stele moves on to a statement of the two buildings' completion (iii 18–22), which is an abbreviation of the comparable passage in the foundation cylinder of the north palace (14: 38–41).

The probable origin of the text on the stele is as an abridgement of the text on the four-column foundation cylinder of E-temen-anki that was destined for interment in the structure of Babylon's ziqqurat. The interpolation of the name of Borsippa's ziqqurat into this shorter version of the text suggests that the stele was created to serve a twin purpose, commemorating the construction of both buildings. This is entirely reasonable, for ziqqurat building is no short-term project and Nebuchadnezzar no doubt conducted building work on both ziqqurats simultaneously. The question then arises, where does the stele come from: Babylon, Borsippa—or elsewhere?

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF CONTENTS OF MS 2063 AND LANGDON 1912: NBK NO. 17

<i>Contents</i>	<i>MS 2063</i>	<i>Nbk no. 17</i>
Self-presentation of royal subject with standard epithets	i 1–16	1–15
Temporal clause referring to the king's selection by Marduk, the god of Babylon and divine ruler of the cosmos	17 ff.	16–21
King's pious behaviour in response	[i–ii]	22–29
King's undertaking to complete work on ziqqurat(s) begun by Nabopolassar	[ii]	30–61
Mobilization of whole world as source of materials and labour force	ii 16–iii 13	62–132
Completion of work	iii 14–23	133–45'
Prayers requesting blessings	[iii 24–27]	146'–69'

*The Stele's Function and Provenance*

In all probability the original location of the stele was a cavity within the structure of one of the two ziqqurrats whose construction its text commemorates, as part of a foundation deposit placed there by its royal builder. Comparable monuments have been discovered embedded in other important Babylonian sacred buildings. At least one of the canephorous stele that record Ashurbanipal's work on the great cult-centres of Babylonia seems to have been partly embedded in the brickwork of Nabû's temple at Borsippa (Reade 1986b: 109). An elaborate foundation deposit discovered in cavities under the floor in the temple of Šamaš at Sippar contained two foundation cylinders of Nabonidus and two older inscribed stone monuments, the Cruciform Monument and the Sun God tablet, the latter in a lidded clay box (Woods 2004: 34–35). So inscribed stele were habitually interred as foundation deposits in important sanctuaries, and such a context and function can be envisaged, even expected, for the present stele.

As to whether the stele was interred in E-temen-anki of Babylon, or E-ur-me-imin-anki of Borsippa, here the epigraph must guide us. It specifically identifies the building as the ziqqurrat of Babylon. Since the stele's text is dual-purpose, commemorating the construction of both ziqqurrats, one wonders whether, deep inside the remains of E-ur-me-imin-anki at Birs Nimrud in Borsippa, is buried a twin of MS 2063, different only in the name of the ziqqurrat stated in its epigraph. However that may be, in considering the subsequent history of the stele whose epigraph identifies the ziqqurrat as E-temen-anki, one must consider how and when foundation deposits embedded in Babylon's ziqqurrat could have been exposed.

The archaeology of architectural remains is necessarily a form of demolition, so it is appropriate to begin with the modern history of the ziqqurrat. Its exploration began in the 1880s, when local people dug out the subterranean remains of its baked-brick mantle for use as building material, leaving the levelled stump of

the mud-brick core marooned in a pit that filled with groundwater. This episode presented an opportunity for the discovery of foundation deposits, and indeed the villagers found several foundation cylinders of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar (George 2005–6: 82–83; 2010b: 474–75).

By the late nineteenth century the market in cuneiform inscriptions was fully developed in Baghdad, stimulated by the interest of the British Museum in the years following George Smith's first purchase of tablets in 1876. The people of the villages around Babylon were well aware of the value of cuneiform inscriptions. Had they found the stele as well as the foundation cylinders, they would have lost no time getting it to market, along with the many thousands of cuneiform tablets and other antiquities that they uncovered and that were subsequently bought by European and North American museums. It is inconceivable that the stele could have escaped the attention of antiquaries and archaeologists at such a time.

Much of Babylon was scientifically excavated on behalf of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft by Robert Koldewey's archaeological expedition, 1899–1917. Koldewey's team explored the site of the ziqqurrat only in the first part of 1913, when the groundwater dropped low enough to allow good access. The exploration, directed by Friedrich Wetzel, lasted from 11 January to 7 June of that year (Wetzel 1913, 1914, 1938: 31). Wetzel's work of 1913 was at the time regarded as preliminary, but there is no evidence for any subsequent exploration of the ziqqurrat before the expedition closed on 7 March 1917 (Anon. 1918). Had Koldewey's expedition found the stele, either in 1913 or at any other time, it is certain that he would have made mention of it, either (a) in his reports to the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, published in the society's *Communications (Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft)*; (b) in his popular book on his excavations, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, where a description of the ziqqurrat's remains occupies chapter 30 (5th edn Koldewey 1990:

182–95); or (c) in the scientific publication of the archaeological results by Friedrich Wetzel (1938: 31–36). Wetzel’s excavation report is accompanied by a full publication by F. H. Weissbach of every piece of cuneiform inscription then known as evidence for the building’s history, and no mention is made of any stele (Weissbach 1938). In addition, Koldewey took a close interest in how the building originally looked, a question that occupied him while he was at Babylon and that led to the publication in the following year of a monographic study of the building (Koldewey 1918). Through a misunderstanding of the metrological units used in the E-sangil Tablet, this study proposed a bizarre, almost cube-shaped superstructure, whose shortcomings have been clearly exposed by Hansjörg Schmid (1995: 30–31). The important point here is that Koldewey would hardly have reconstructed the ziqqurrat as a cube if he had prior knowledge of its depiction on the stele as a stepped pyramid.

Subsequent detailed examinations of the remaining parts of the building’s infrastructure were made in 1962 by Hansjörg Schmid and in 1968 by Jürgen Schmidt (Schmid 1981, 1995, Schmidt 1973, 2002). Neither mentions finding the stele, or any other foundation deposit. Indeed, we now know that those parts of the building which would have contained foundation deposits were dismantled long before even Koldewey arrived at Babylon: much of the foundations in the 1880s, as already mentioned, and the superstructure in antiquity, so that one of Nebuchadnezzar II’s foundation cylinders ended up in Susa (George 2010b: 472–74). This fact, alongside the complete silence of nineteenth and twentieth-century archaeological records in regard to the stele, strongly suggests that the stele cannot have been found at Babylon in modern times, and leads me to suspect that it was removed from the ruins of the ziqqurrat in antiquity. It is to the history of this building’s demolition that we now turn.

In antiquity two episodes in the tower’s history after its completion by Nebuchadnezzar II gave opportunities for the exposure of its foundation deposits. The first was in the Persian period when archaeological evidence

shows that the ziqqurrat’s tripartite staircase was demolished (Schmid 1995: 93, George 2005–6: 89–90, 2010b: 475–77). There is good reason to date this damage to 484 BC when two Babylonian revolts were suppressed in quick succession (Waerzeggers 2003–4: 155–56). Xerxes would have made an astute move if, as part of the reprisals that followed, he rendered the ziqqurrat useless as a military vantage-point. The second episode was the final dismantling of the ruined structure by Alexander of Macedon and his successors in the late fourth century BC (George 2005–6: 91–92).

In the latter case one may speculate that the stele could have been removed to a location where it remained unseen and forgotten until its discovery some time in the twentieth century AD. The brickwork of the ziqqurrat was mostly dumped in the north-eastern sector of Babylon, where it formed a vast mound of rubble later called Homera. But a stone stele may not have met the same fate as the bricks did.

The Persian episode allows the construction of a more detailed hypothesis. There is a story, already known to Ctesias (fl. 400 BC), that Xerxes visited the “tomb of Belitanas” and tried without success to refill his “coffin” with oil. The story is given in more elaborate form much later by Aelian, who reports the presence in the “tomb of Belos,” as he called it, of a corpse in a sarcophagus and a stele enjoining future readers of its inscription to anoint the tomb’s contents with oil. Such stories are not reliable historical evidence as such, for, as Amélie Kuhrt and others have shown, much of what Greek historians have to say about the Persian east is partisan (e.g. Kuhrt 1997). However, it is not excluded that accounts in Greek may yet preserve historical facts in some form or other. This particular story is confused in some respects, such as in perpetuating the misconception, common among the Greeks, that the pyramid-like ziqqurrat of Bēl (Marduk) was a tomb, but otherwise it reports strikingly genuine details of Babylonian rituals that prescribe the anointment of foundation stele (George 2005–6: 90; 2010b: 478). The presence of such details indicates that the story is not a complete fantasy but based in some part

on accurate memory. Neo-Babylonian stele could carry images of men and could be buried in clay boxes beneath the floors of temples, as we know from the Sun God tablet excavated at Sippar. That being so, it is not too much to suggest that the Greek story is a garbled account of the discovery by Xerxes' men of an elaborate foundation deposit that included a stele bearing a human figure and lying in a clay box. At a time of reprisal, such a stele could have been removed as a spoil of war, perhaps taken back to Susa along with Nebuchadnezzar's foundation cylinder from the same building.

A detail of the monument's appearance offers support for this hypothesis. It has been noted above that the middle part of the inscription has been carefully erased, like the stele of Hammurapi. Hammurapi's stele was found in the citadel at Susa, where it formed part of the booty seized from Babylonia by the Elamite king Šutruk-Nahhunte in the twelfth century BC (Scheil 1902: 11–162). We know of the historical circumstances of the stele's removal to Susa because another famous Mesopotamian monument found there, the stele of Narām-Sîn, was engraved with an epigraph in Elamite that explicitly recorded the looting (Scheil 1900: 53–55). It has always been presumed, no doubt correctly, that the erasure of part of Hammurapi's inscription was effected in order to prepare the stele for Šutruk-Nahhunte's epigraph, an embellishment which was never actually achieved.

Babylonian monumental inscriptions often call down terrible curses on those who damage, alter or destroy their inscriptions. The erasure of any part of the inscription on the Tower of Babel stele would not have been done by any

king of Babylon. Only a hostile agent could have done such a thing. The care with which it was done suggests that the hostile agent was minded to write upon the stele his own words but never completed the task, just as happened with Hammurapi's stele. The parallel leads me to believe that the Tower of Babel stele was also taken from Babylon as booty. This is important for the stele's provenance, for it is not a notion consistent with any discovery of the stele under Alexander and his successors. The Macedonian and early Seleucid rulers respected Babylonian royal traditions and for a while Babylon was the seat of their empire. The removal of the stele as booty is more likely to have happened under Xerxes, who put down two revolts in Babylonia by force of arms and, like the Elamites before him, kept a treasure-house of spoils of war at Susa (George 2010b: 479).

Two questions then arise: could the Tower of Babel stele be the very monument whose discovery gave rise the story retailed by Aelian? And was it then rediscovered in modern times not at Babylon at all, but at Susa or some other place where Achaemenid kings kept such treasures? There can be no firm answers to these questions. The foundation cylinder of Etemen-anki found at Susa was excavated by de Morgan at the end of the nineteenth century. The stele, if it was also taken to Susa, clearly evaded discovery by de Morgan and subsequent excavators, but could have been found by local people in an interval between expeditions or after scientific exploration of the site ceased. Or it could have come from some other site where Babylonian antiquities were hoarded.

## APPENDIX.

*Other reports of the construction of the ziqurrats E-temen-anki and E-ur-me-imin-anki  
in Nebuchadnezzar II's building inscriptions*

Reports of the construction of the ziqurrats of Babylon and Borsippa occur in several Neo-Babylonian building inscriptions. Nabopolassar's foundation cylinder of E-temen-anki is adequately published by F. H. Weissbach (1938: 41–43); the passage that reports the construction of the ziqurrat (i 30–iii 37) is presented in an updated transliteration and translation in my study of the building's history (George 2005–6:

83–84, 92–93). Nebuchadnezzar II's foundation cylinders of the ziqurrats have been less well served. They and several other of his building inscriptions hold passages similar to the text of the stele published above. In the absence of any modern edition of Nebuchadnezzar II's building inscriptions, I reproduce here the most informative of these passages.

*A. Four-column Foundation Cylinders of E-temen-anki*

Sources catalogued by Berger 1973: 295–97 Nbk Zyl. IV, 1 (eight exemplars); Da Riva 2008: 121 C41 (twelve exemplars).<sup>1</sup> Provenance: various secondary contexts in Babylon and Susa. Text edited by Langdon 1912: 144–49 Nbk no. 17, Weissbach 1938: 44–47, Da Riva 2008: 19–22 (ll. 85–132 only). The building narrative occupies ll. 43–145'. The ends of ll. 88–108 are restored from the four-column foundation cylinder of E-ur-me-imin-anki (Da Riva 2008: 22–23 and below, passage F). Signs marked with a single asterisk are read from the photograph of the exemplar from Susa (George 2010b: 472 Fig. 44.1). Signs marked with a double asterisk are read from the unpublished second column of CBS 1125 (kindly collated by Grant Frame, who also provided photographs).

<sup>43</sup> é-temen-an-ki *zi-qú-úr-ra-at bābili(ká.din-gir.ra)*<sup>ki</sup> <sup>44</sup> ša <sup>d</sup>na-bi-um-apla(ibila)-ú-šu-úr <sup>45</sup> šar bābili(ká.dingir.ra)<sup>ki</sup> a-bi ba-nu-ú-a <sup>46</sup> i-na ši-pí-ir ka.kù.gál-ú-tim <sup>47</sup> ne-me-qí <sup>d</sup>é-a ù <sup>d</sup>marduk(amar.utu) <sup>48</sup> wa-ša-ar-ša ul-li-lu-ma <sup>49</sup> in i-ra-at ki-gal-lim <sup>50</sup> ú-ki-in-nu te-me-en-ša <sup>51</sup> i-ga-ru-ša er-bé-et-tim <sup>52</sup> a-na ki-da-nim <sup>53</sup> i-na kupri(esir.è.a) <sup>54</sup> ù

agurri(sig<sub>4</sub>.al.ùr.ra) <sup>55</sup> 30 ammat(kùš) *ú-za-aq-qí-ru-ma* <sup>56</sup> la *ú-ul-lu-ù re-e-ši-ša* <sup>57</sup> é-temen-an-ki a-na *ú-ul-li-im* <sup>58</sup> re-e-ši-ša a-na *ša-ma-mi* <sup>59</sup> a-na ši-it-nu-nim <sup>60</sup> qá-tam aš-ku-un-ma <sup>61</sup> ni-ši ra-ap-ša-a-tim <sup>62</sup> ša <sup>d</sup>marduk(amar.utu) be-lí <sup>63</sup> ia-ti i-qí-pa-an-ni <sup>64</sup> re-é-ú-si-na id-di-nam <sup>65</sup> qú-ra-dam <sup>d</sup>šamšum(utu)<sup>šum</sup> <sup>66</sup> ku-ul-la-at ma-ti-ta-an <sup>67</sup> gi-mi-ir ka-la da-ad-mi <sup>68</sup> ul-tu ti-a-am-tim <sup>69</sup> e-li-tim <sup>70</sup> a-di ti-a-am-tim <sup>71</sup> ša-ap-li-tim <sup>72</sup> mātāti(ma.da.ma.da) ru-qá-a-tim <sup>73</sup> ni-ši da-ad-mi ra-ap-ša-a-tim <sup>74</sup> šarri(lugal)<sup>mes</sup> *ša-di-i ne-su-tim* <sup>75</sup> ù na-gi-i bé-e-ru-tim <sup>76</sup> ša qé-re-eb ti-a-am-tim <sup>77</sup> e-li-tim <sup>78</sup> ù ša-ap-li-tim <sup>79</sup> ša <sup>d</sup>marduk(amar.utu) be-lí <sup>80</sup> a-na ša-da-ad si-ir-di-šu <sup>81</sup> šé-ra-at-si-na <sup>82</sup> ú-ma-al-lu-ù qá-tu-ú-a <sup>83</sup> ad-ka-am-ma um-ma-na-at <sup>84</sup> <sup>d</sup>šamaš(utu) ù <sup>d</sup>marduk(amar.utu) <sup>85</sup> i-na e-pé-šu é-temen-an-ki <sup>86</sup> e-mi-id-su-nu-ti tu-up-ši-ik-ku <sup>87</sup> úri<sup>ki</sup> uruk(unug)<sup>ki</sup> larsa<sup>ki</sup> <sup>88</sup> eridu<sup>ki</sup> kul-a[ba<sub>4</sub><sup>ki</sup>] <sup>89</sup> <sup>uru</sup>né-me-ed<sup>d</sup>[la-gu-da] <sup>90</sup> kur<sup>ur</sup>ú-ga-ar-<sup>d</sup>[sín(suen)] <sup>91</sup> na-ap-ḥa-a[r māt(kur) ti-a-am-tim] *ša-r ap<sup>1</sup>-li-tim* <sup>92</sup> iš-tu re-e-ši-ša <sup>93</sup> a-di iš-di-ša <sup>94</sup> nippuru(nibru)<sup>ki</sup> i-si-in<sup>ki</sup> <sup>95</sup> la-ra-ak<sup>[ki]</sup> dil-bar<sup>ki</sup> mar-da<sup>ki</sup> <sup>96</sup> kur<sup>ur</sup>pu-qu-du <sup>kur</sup>bīt(é)-[da-ku-ru] <sup>97</sup> kur<sup>ur</sup>bīt(é)-a-mu-ka-a-nim <sup>kur</sup>bīt(é)-[si-la-a-nim] <sup>98</sup> kur<sup>ur</sup>bi-ra-a-[tim] <sup>99</sup> bād<sup>ki2</sup> a-kà-dè<sup>[ki]</sup> *dūr(bād)-šarru(20)-kīn(gin)*<sup>ki</sup> <sup>100</sup> kur<sup>ur</sup>ar-ra-ap-ḥa <sup>kur</sup>la-ḥi-[ri <sup>kur</sup>x x] <sup>101</sup> na-ap-ḥa-ar māt(kur)

1. Note that the Louvre's exemplar is now Sb 1700, not AO 323 (Béatrice André-Salvini, private communication), and "IM 105 A" is more correctly Babylon 105a (IM number not assigned or unknown).

2. Thus Langdon's copy, in agreement with his transliteration (1912: 146 ii 5': dūr-ki) and translation (Dûr). Weissbach differed, taking the toponym as Dēr (1938: 40 l. 4.5: *dēr<sup>ki</sup>*). Da Riva follows him, but opts for the conventional spelling,

ak-[ka-di-im]<sup>102</sup> ù māt(ᵀma★.da★<sup>1</sup>)<sup>d</sup>[aš-šur<sup>ki</sup>]<sup>103</sup>  
 šarri(lugal)<sup>mes</sup> ša e-be-er na-[a-ri]<sup>3</sup><sup>104</sup> lí<sup>104</sup> pí-ḥa-ta-  
 [tim]<sup>105</sup> ša māt(ma.[da]) ḥa-a[t-ti]<sup>106</sup> iš-tu ti-a-am-  
 tim e-l[i-tim]<sup>107</sup> a-di ti-a-am-tim šap-li-t[im]<sup>108</sup>  
 māt(ma.da) šu-me-ri ù ak-ka-di-im<sup>109</sup> māt(ma.da)  
 šubarti(su.bir<sub>4</sub>)<sup>ki</sup> kà★★-la-šu★★<sup>110</sup> šar na-gi-i ne-su-  
 tim<sup>111</sup> ša qé-re-eb ti-a-am-tim<sup>112</sup> e-li-tim<sup>113</sup> šar na-  
 gi-i ne-su-tim<sup>114</sup> ša qé-re-eb ti-a-am-tim<sup>115</sup> ša-ap-li-  
 tim<sup>116</sup> šakkanakē(GÌR.NÍTA.GÌR.NÍTA)<sup>117</sup> māt  
 (ma.da) ḥa-at-tim<sup>118</sup> né-bé-er-ti<sup>id</sup> puratti(buranun)<sup>ki</sup>  
<sup>119</sup> a-na e-re-eb<sup>d</sup> šamšī(utu)<sup>š</sup><sup>120</sup> ša i-na a-ma-at<sup>121</sup>  
<sup>d</sup>marduk(amar.utu) be-lí-ia<sup>122</sup> be-lu-ut-su-nu a-bé-  
 lu-ma<sup>123</sup> gīš<sup>123</sup> erēnī(eren)<sup>mes</sup> da-nu<sub>4</sub>-tim<sup>124</sup> ul-tu<sup>kur</sup> la-  
 ab-na-nim<sup>125</sup> a-na āli(uru)-ia bābili(ká.dingir.ra)<sup>ki</sup>  
<sup>126</sup> i-ba-ab-ba-lu-nim<sup>127</sup> na-ap-ḥa-ar ni-ši da-ad-mi  
<sup>128</sup> ra-ap-ša-a-tim<sup>129</sup> ša<sup>d</sup> marduk(amar.utu) be-lí  
 ia-ti iš-ru-kam<sup>130</sup> i-na e-pé-šu é-temen-an-ki<sup>131</sup>  
 du-ul-lum ú-ša-aš-bi-it-su-nu-ti-ma<sup>132</sup> e-mi-id-su-  
 nu-ti tu-up-ši-ik-ku<sup>133</sup> i-ši-id-su 30 ammat(kūš)<sup>134</sup>  
 ta-am-la-a za-ak-ri-im ú-ma-al-li<sup>135</sup> gīš<sup>135</sup> erēnī  
 (eren)<sup>mes</sup> pa-aq-lu-tim<sup>136</sup> gīš<sup>136</sup> musukkanni(mes.má.  
 gan.na) ra-bí-ù-tim<sup>137</sup> siparra(zabar) ú-ḥa-al-li-ip-  
 ma<sup>138</sup> ma-diš áš-ta-ak-ka-an<sup>139</sup> ff. [gap of one or  
 two lines only?]<sup>140'</sup> ki-iš-š[i el-lu]<sup>141'</sup> ma-aš-ta-a[k  
 ta-ak-né-e]<sup>142'</sup> ki-ma<sup>r</sup> ša u<sub>4</sub><sup>1</sup>-mi ul-lu-[tim]<sup>143'</sup> a-na  
<sup>d</sup>marduk(amar.utu) be-lí-l[a]<sup>144'</sup> i-na re-e-ši-šu<sup>145'</sup>  
 na-ak-li-iš e-pu-uš

BE I 85 ii-iv 4' // PBS XV 76 // 78 // Sb 1700,  
 copy Langdon 1905-6: 144-46 // BE 368 (+)  
 44I, copy Meissner 1905: 82 // Babylon 105a,  
 copy Al-Rawi n.d. 24

### Translation

E-temen-anki, the ziqqurat of Babylon, whose site Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, the father who begot me, made pure through the craft of exorcism, the skill of Ea and Marduk, whose foundation platform he fixed on the breast of the underworld, whose four walls he raised in bitumen and baked brick to a height of thirty cubits on the outside, but which he did not finish (to) the top—I set to work on finishing E-temen-anki (to) the top so that it vied

with the heavens. So I mobilized the teeming people whom my lord Marduk had entrusted to me and whose pastoral care the sun god had handed over to me, all countries everywhere, each and every population from the upper sea to the lower sea, the distant nations, teeming people of the world, kings of remote mountains and far-flung islands in the midst of the upper sea and lower (sea), whose lead-rope my lord Marduk placed in my hand so that they should draw his chariot (*lit.* pull his chariot-pole), and I imposed corvée-duty on the workforces of the gods Šamaš and Marduk<sup>10</sup> in order to build E-temen-anki.

Ur, Uruk, Larsa, Eridu, Kullab, Nēmed-[Laguda,] Ugar-[Šin,] the entire [land] of the lower [sea,] from its top to its bottom, Nippur, Isin, Larak, [Dilbat, Marad,] Puqudu, Bīt-[Dakuri,] Bīt-Amukani, Bīt-[Silani,] Birātu, Dēr(?), Akkade, Dūr-Šarrukīn, Arrapha, Laḥīru, [. . .] the entire lands of Babylonia and [Assyria], kings from across the [river (Euphrates),] provincial governors of the land of Hatti (i.e. Syria), from the [upper] sea to the lower sea, the land of Sumer and Akkad and all the land of Subartu (i.e. Assyria), kings of remote islands in the midst of the upper sea, kings of remote islands in the midst of the lower sea, city governors of the land of Hatti (i.e., Syria) across the Euphrates to the west, whom I rule by command of my lord Marduk and who bring mighty cedars from Mt Lebanon to my city Babylon—all the teeming people of the world, whom my lord Marduk had consigned into my possession, I conscripted for labour in the building of E-temen-anki and imposed corvée-duty on them.

Its base I filled out to make a high terrace of thirty cubits. I coated sturdy cedars and great beams of *musukkannu*-wood with bronze and set them copiously in rows . . . On top of it I built [for] my lord Marduk a holy sanctum, a chamber of repose as in bygone times.

without collation (2008: 20 l. 99: bād.dingir<sup>ki</sup>); this is a tacit proposal that the barrel is corrupt, or Langdon's copy inaccurate. The parallel passage of the Borsippa cylinder is broken at this point. Dēr fits the geographical context, for Akkade and Dūr-Šarrukīn are also towns of north Babylonia,

but on this evidence one cannot exclude Dūru near Larsa, which was written bād<sup>ki</sup> in the first millennium (Zadok 1985: 125).

3. Restored from the unpublished cylinder fragment HSM 890.3.1, as cited by Vanderhooff 2003: 241.

## B. Wadi Brisa Inscription

Two duplicate inscriptions accompany Nebuchadnezzar II's rock relief at Wadi Brisa in northern Lebanon. Catalogued by Berger 1973: 316–18 Wadi Brisa-Inschrift, Da Riva 2008: 122 WBA, WBC. Text edited by Weissbach 1906, Langdon 1912: 150–77 Nbk no. 19. The passage about the ziqqurrat is duplicated (and enlarged) by BM 45619, a draft inscription on a large multi-column clay tablet probably from Babylon, catalogued by Berger 1973: 322 Tontafelfragment VI, 1, text edited by George 1988: 139–51.

é-temen (BM: te-me-en)-an-ki *zi-qú-ra-at* *bābili*(ká.dingir.ra)<sup>ki</sup> *ša*<sup>md</sup> *nabú* (BM: *na-bi-um*)-*apla*(ibila)-*ú-šu-ur šār bābili*(ká.dingir.ra)<sup>ki</sup> *a-bi ba-nu-ú-a te-me-en-šu ú-ki-in-nu-ma* 30 *ammāt* (kùš) (BM: *ša-la-ša-a a[m-ma-at]*) *ú-za-aq-qí-ru-(ú)-ma la (ú)-ul-lu-um* (BM: *ú-ul-lu-ù*) *re-e-ša-a-[šú] ia-a-ti a-na e-pe-ši-šu qātī*(šú)<sup>min</sup> (B: *qá-ta*, BM: *qá-tí*) *aš-ku-um-ma* (B: *aš-ku-un-ma*) *erēnī* (<sup>gis</sup>eren.<sup>gis</sup>eren) *da-(an)-nu-tim ša i-na*<sup>kur</sup> *la-ab-na-na qí-iš-ti-šu-nu i-na qātī*(šú)<sup>min</sup> (B, BM: *qá-tí*)-*ia el/e-le-(e)-tim ak-ki-sa a-na ši-pi* (BM: *ši-i-p[í]*)-*šu aš-ta-ak-[ka-an]* *ká-nun-abzu k[á-é-temen-an-ki] ká-nun-ḥé-gál ká-<sup>r</sup>u<sub>6</sub>-[nir] bābāti*(ká.ká)-*šu ša-ad-[la-a-ti] i-ta-at é.temen.[an.ki]*

Weissbach 1906 pl. 10 A iv 1–13 //  
pls. 24–25 B ii a 13–24 //  
George 1988: 140 ii 23'–39'

*dal-ba-an* [ . . . . . ] *é-te-me-e[n-an-ki . . . ] ù*  
*ká-x*[ . . . . . ]

George 1988: 140 ii 40'–42'

*ki-ma ša u<sub>4</sub>-u[m ullúti] ú-ra-ki-[is-ma]*<sup>gis</sup> *erēnī*  
(eren)<sup>mes</sup> *d[an-nu-ti] a-na [š]ú-l[u-li-ši-na] ú-ša-*  
*[at-ri-iš]*<sup>gis</sup> *talla*(da[ll])<sup>gis</sup> *ḥitta*(ḥé.[du<sub>7</sub>]) *giš-ka-[na-*  
*ku]*<sup>gis</sup> *[dalā]ti*(ig)<sup>mes</sup> *el-l[e-t]i ša*<sup>gis</sup> *er[ēni(eren) a]š-*  
*ták-kan-[ši-na]-ti*

Weissbach 1906 pl. 11 A iv 14–22

## Translation

E-temen-anki, the ziqqurrat of Babylon, whose foundation platform Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, my father who begot me, made firm, and which he raised by a height of thirty cubits but did not finish (to) the top—I myself set to work on it. Mighty cedars, which in Lebanon, their forest (home), I had cut down with my own pure hands, I set in rows for its joists. I constructed Ka-nun-abzu, Ka-[E-temen-anki,] Ka-nun-ḥegal and Ka-[unir,] its huge gates, around [E-temen-anki,] (BM inserts: the passage of [. . . of] E-temen-[anki, the . . .] and the gate Ka-. . .) as in [bygone] times [and] had mighty cedars stretched [across] for [their] roofs. I equipped them all with a cross-beam, lintel, gate-beam and pure door-leaves of cedar.

## C. Three-column Foundation Cylinders

An inscription made to record Nebuchadnezzar's construction of the north palace in Babylon reports his work also on the ziqqurrats of Babylon and Borsippa. Sources catalogued by Berger 1973: 289–90 Zyl. III, 5, Da Riva 2008: 121 C35. Provenance: no doubt Babylon (BM exemplar bought from Shemtob). Text edited by Langdon 1912: 112–21 Nbk no. 14.

é-temen-an-ki *zi-qú-ra-at* *ká.dingir.ra*<sup>ki</sup> *é-ur<sub>4</sub>-me-imin-an-ki zi-qú-ra-at bār-sipa*<sup>ki</sup> *pí-ti-iq-ši-na ka-la-mu i-na ku-up-ri ù a-gur-ri e-pú-uš ú-ša-ak-li-il-ma ki-iš-ši el-lu ma-aš-ta-ku ta-ak-né-e i-na a-*

*gur-ri*<sup>na</sup> *uqní*(za.gìn) *el-le-tim i-na re-e-ša-a-ši-na na-am-ri-iš e-pú-uš*

Ball 1889: 160 ff. pl. 3 i 38–43 //  
VAS I 38 i 44–50

## Translation

E-temen-anki, the ziqqurrat of Babylon, (and) E-ur-me-imin-anki, the ziqqurrat of Borsippa—I built their entire structure of bitumen and baked brick (and) brought them to completion, and on top of (each of) them I built a holy sanctum, a chamber of repose, resplendently of pure tiles (glazed with) lapis lazuli.

## D. Two-column Foundation Cylinders of E-ur-me-imin-anki

Sources catalogued by Berger 1973: 270–72 Zyl. II, 12, Da Riva 2008: 120 C212. Provenance: Birs Nimrud, the ziqqurrat of Borsippa. Text edited by Langdon 1912: 98–101 Nbk no. 11.

é-temen-an-ki *zi-qú-ra-at* ká.dingir.ra<sup>ki</sup> e-pú-uš  
 ú-ša-ak-li-il-ma i-na a-gur-ri<sup>na</sup> uqní(za.gìn) e-el-le-  
 tim ú-ul-la-a re-e-ši-ša ì-nu-mi-šu é-ur<sub>4</sub>-imin-an-  
 ki *zi-qú-ra-at* bár-sipa<sup>ki</sup> ša šàr ma-aḫ-ri i-pú-šu-ma  
 42 ammat(kùš) ú-za-aq-qí-ru-ma la ú-ul-la-a re-e-  
 ša-a-ša ul-tu u<sub>4</sub>-um re-e-qú-tim in-na-mu-ú-ma la  
 šu-te-šu-ru mu-še-e mé-e-ša zu-un-num ù ra-a-du  
 ú-na-as-su-ú li-bi-it-tu-ša a-gu-úr-ri ta-aḫ-lu-up-  
 ti-ša up-ta-aṭ-ṭi-ir-ma li-bi-it-ti ku-um-mi-ša iš-ša-  
 pi-ik ti-la-ni-iš a-na e-pé-ši-ša be-lí ra-bí-ù<sup>d</sup> mar-  
 duk(amar.utu) ú-ša-ad-ka-an-ni li-ib-ba a-ša-ar-ša  
 la e-ni-ma la ú-na-ak-ki-ir te-me-en-ša i-na  
 arḫi(iti) ša-al-mu i-na ūmi(ud) šemé(še.ga) li-bi-it-  
 ti ku-um-mi-ša ù a-gur-ri ta-aḫ-lu-up-ti-ša ab-ta-a-  
 ti e-ek-ši-ir-ma mi-qí-it-ta-ša ú-uš-zi-iz-ma ši-ṭi-ir  
 šu-mi-ia i-na ke-Ḫ-ri (i.e. ke-še-e<sup>1</sup>-ri) ab-ta-a-ti-ša  
 aš-ku-un a-na e-pé-ši-ša ù ú-ul-lu-ú re-e-ši-ša qá-ta  
 aš-ku-un ki-ma la-bi-ri-im-ma e-eš-ši-iš ab-ni-šu-  
 ma ki-ma ša u<sub>4</sub>-um ul-lu-ti ú-ul-la-a re-e-ša-a-ša

I R 51 no. 1 i 23–ii 15e

## Translation

I built E-temen-anki, the ziqqurrat of Babylon (and) brought it to completion, and raised high its top with pure tiles (glazed with) lapis lazuli. At that time E-ur-(me)-imin-anki, the ziqqurrat of Borsippa, which a former king had built and raised by a height of forty-two cubits but had not finished (to) the top, had long since become derelict and its water drains were in disorder. Rains and downpours had eroded its brickwork. The baked brick of its mantle had come loose and the brickwork of its sanctum had turned into a heap of ruins. My great lord Marduk stirred my heart to rebuild it. I did not alter its location and I did not move its foundation platform. In a favourable month, on a propitious day, I repaired the brickwork of its sanctum and the baked brick of its mantle, I re-erected what of it had collapsed and placed my inscriptions in the (places where I had) repaired its ruins. I set my hand to rebuilding it and finishing it (to) the top. I made it anew as it had been of old and finished it (to) the top as in bygone times.

## E. Baked Brick

Catalogued by Berger 1973: 220 Backstein B I, 14, Da Riva 2008: 117 B 22. Provenance: disturbed contexts by the ziqqurrat's peribolos ("Sachn-Mauer"). Text edited by Weissbach 1938: 48–49 b.

é-temen-an-ki *zi-qú-ra-at* [Bābili] i-na kupri  
 (esir.é.[a]) ù agurri(sig<sub>4</sub>.al.ùr.ra) el-le-tim ú-ša-an-  
 na-bi-iṭ ki-ma u<sub>4</sub>-um a-na ši-i-pí-š[a] e-re-nim da-  
 nu<sub>4</sub>-tim aš-ta-ka-an m[a-diš<sup>3</sup>]

Koldewey 1990: 187 fig. 118 =

Bab. 41364: 11–16

## Translation

E-temen-anki, the ziqqurrat of [Babylon], I made gleam bright as day with bitumen and pure baked brick. Mighty cedar beams I set [severally(?)] in rows for its joists.

## F. Four-column Foundation Cylinders of E-ur-me-imin-anki

Sources catalogued by Berger 1973: 308–9 Nbk Zyl.-Frag. IV, 1; Da Riva 2008: Co41. Not yet

edited; partial transliteration by Da Riva 2008: 22–23 (BM 42667 col. ii only).

