

**35) Collations to the Antiochus Cylinder (BM 36277)** – The clay foundation cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa (BM 36277), which records the king’s rebuilding of the Ezida temple in 268 BC, is the latest surviving royal building inscription in cuneiform, and the only one attested for a Seleucid ruler. It was copied by Strassmaier (1882: 139-142) and Pinches (Rawlinson and Pinches 1884), and has been edited by Weissbach (1911: 132-5), Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1991), and most recently by Stol and van der Spek in a preliminary new online edition at *Livius.org*.<sup>1</sup>

Collation of the cylinder results in a few altered readings, with one of particular significance for the portrayal of the god Nabû and the process of composition of the cylinder. I am grateful to Irving Finkel for discussing the inscription with me and confirming the collation of Col. ii.14, and to Jonathan Taylor for facilitating my examination of the cylinder.

**Col. ii.14:** <sup>giš</sup>da-ka instead of *ḥaṭ-ṭa-ka*.

Close comparison with the writings of GIŠ and PA elsewhere in the inscription reveals that the first sign of the word is GIŠ, not PA (the vertical is consistently further to the right with GIŠ; the two signs are correctly distinguished in Strassmaier’s original copy of 1882). We must therefore read <sup>giš</sup>da, *lē’u*, ‘writing board’, which is of course a more traditional attribute of Nabû. Col. ii.14-15 will then read *i-na* <sup>giš</sup>da-ka *ṣi-i-ri / mu-kin pùl-lu-uk-ku*<sup>2</sup> *an-e u ki-ti* (see below for collation of ii.15), ‘on your exalted writing board, which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth.’ The presence of a specific allusion to Nabû’s role as god of writing and scholarship is a significant addition to the inscription. Although the otherwise generic epithets and repetitive genealogical statements applied to him in the Antiochus cylinder would support Pomponio’s contention that the god’s personality was by this time fading,<sup>2</sup> the mention of Nabû’s writing board suggests that at least some knowledge of his particular qualities and attributes was still alive in Hellenistic Borsippa.

The updated reading also strengthens the parallel between Col. ii.14-15 and two Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions. Several scholars have already noted the similarity of these two lines to a phrase from Nebuchadnezzar’s cylinder inscriptions describing work

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/antiochus\\_cylinder/antiochus\\_cylinder1.html](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/antiochus_cylinder/antiochus_cylinder1.html). (Accessed 28 April 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Pomponio 1978: 106.

on the Borsippa ziggurat: *i-na* <sup>815</sup>le-u<sub>5</sub>-um *ki-i-ni*<sub>7</sub> *mu-ki-in pu-lu-uk ša-mé-e ù er-še-tì*.<sup>3</sup> The revised reading of the Antiochus cylinder shows that the correspondence between the two passages is almost verbatim. Another Neo-Babylonian parallel can be adduced from Nabonidus' Ezida cylinder, where Nabû's cosmic writing board appears at ii.23-4: *i-na* <sup>815</sup>le-é-um-ka *ki-i-ni*<sub>7</sub> *ša-mé-e ù er-še-tì*.<sup>4</sup> The extremely close verbal correspondences between the cylinder of Antiochus and those of Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus, combined with the rarity of the evocative description of Nabû's writing board in surviving texts, suggest that this is a case of direct borrowing. The fact that the relevant Nebuchadnezzar cylinders were found at Borsippa and Nabonidus' Ezida cylinder is also very likely to have come from there further supports the possibility that the composer of the Antiochus cylinder may have taken the phrase from an earlier inscription that was available locally. I hope to discuss this issue further elsewhere.

**Col. ii.15:** *pùl-lu-uk-ku*<sup>17</sup> instead of *pùl-lu'(ku)-uk-ku'(lu)*. There is considerable variation in the writings of KU and LU throughout the cylinder, and sometimes the two signs are written very similarly. The sign after PAL can be read as LU, as there are parallel writings of LU elsewhere in the text (including in *pa-lu-ú-a* in the previous line). The final sign of the word is more difficult; it does look more like LU, and no writing of KU in the inscription provides a clear parallel. However, the extra vertical in the centre of the sign is also larger and more lightly incised than in any of the other writings of LU, and if one looks closely there seem to be some traces of extra strokes. Given the variety of writings for both signs it is difficult to reach a certain conclusion.

**Col. ii.18:** *lik-šu-du* instead of *lik-šu-da*. Although *-da* is expected grammatically, the sign is DU (following Weissbach and Kuhrt and Sherwin-White), not the combination of KU+DU used to write DA in this text.

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<sup>3</sup> See Stol and van der Spek's commentary on ii.15; Kosmin forthcoming: 32 n.69. The relevant phrase from the Nebuchadnezzar inscriptions is Langdon 1912: Nebukadnezar Nr. 11 ii 23. Langdon read <sup>815</sup>li-*h*u-*š*i-um but the copy in IR, 51 No.1 suggests <sup>815</sup>le-u<sub>5</sub>-um, a logographic spelling attested elsewhere (CAD L: 156 s.v. lē'u).

<sup>4</sup> Most recently edited in Schaudig 2001: 395-7.

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