

The city wall of Babylon – a belt cord – In *N.A.B.U.* 1991/72 W. Farber put forward an alternative explanation of *e-bi-iḫ dan-num* in the Nabopolassar cylinder published by Farouk Al-Rawi. My rendering, « a mighty cincture » (*N.A.B.U.* 1991/19 :3), he finds difficult to accept because « such an endingless form ... is grammatically difficult even in a late text like this, and the semantics are also not fully convincing ».

To take the second point first, I refer simply to the similar images in two literary texts where city walls are also described as cords. In Wilcke's Lugalbanda Epic the wall of Uruk is likened to the draw-string of a bird snare stretched out over the plain (ll. 305, 371 : *bàd unug^{ki}.ga gu mušen.na.gim edin.na hé.ni.lá.lá*). The prologue of the SB Gilgameš Epic enjoins the reader to view the wall of Uruk, « which (is) like a cord of carded wool » (I 11 : *a-mur du-ur-šú šá ki-ma qé-e ni-ip-š[u]*). The metaphor of the wall of Babylon as a great girdle encircling the city seems quite in harmony with such imagery.

With regard to the missing case vowel of *ebīḫu*, such endingless forms as *e-bi-iḫ* are not as common in the seventh century as they are later, I agree, but they do occur. In inscriptions of Nabopolassar, nouns with omitted case endings written with a final CVC sign are not uncommon (e.g. *a-mat, ib-rat, šar-rat*, which all occur in Farouk Al-Rawi's text). Those terminating, like *e-bi-iḫ*, in a VC sign are much rarer, but at least one other such orthography does occur in an inscription of this king (*BE I/1* 84, iii 50 : *a-na u₄-um re-e-qú-tim* for *ana ūmī rēqūti* ; cf. the more typical (but equally unhistorical) rendering *a-na u₄-mi-im re-e-qú-tim* in another cylinder : Winckler, *ZA* 2 (1887), p. 173, ii 22). Nancy Ruth Woodington's study of a very slightly older corpus of Neo-Babylonian reveals that in seventh-century official letters « seventy per cent [of nouns with omitted case endings] ... are written with a final CVC sign » (*A Grammar of the Neo-Babylonian Letters of the Kuyunjik Collection* (University Microfilm International, Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 64). The implication is that just under a third of nouns with omitted case endings end in a VC sign. This is indeed a much higher proportion than that observed in the inscription of Nabopolassar. Unlike the Kuyunjik letters the royal inscriptions of the Chaldean kings tend in their orthography toward self-conscious archaism. The endeavour to reproduce an approximation of the old

inflected endings is a feature of this archaistic tendency, and it accounts for both the low number of nouns with omitted case endings observed in this corpus, and the small proportion of such nouns found to terminate in a VC sign. However, by the time of Nabonidus nouns with omitted case endings written with final VC signs, as well as with final CVC signs, are becoming much more common in royal inscriptions (e.g. in a recently published cylinder from Babylon, *pu-lu-uk da-ru-ú* and *mi-ši-ir šu-úr-šu-du* in consecutive lines : Farouk Al-Rawi, *ARRIM* 9 (1991), p. 8, i 23-ii 1 ; the duplicate, *PBS* XV 80, has *pu-lu-uk-ku*). Since this type of orthography is established as existing both in the corpus itself and in a body of well-written texts dating to the years before Nabopolassar's accession I do not think it unreasonable to expect the occasional example in a newly discovered royal inscription of that king. Thus I do not consider my interpretation of *e-bi-iḫ dan-num* as *ebīḫu dannu* at all « far-fetched ».

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