

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi in Ashurbanipal's Library

Aino Hättinen

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Deutschland

Abstract This paper investigates the manuscripts of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* from Ashurbanipal's Library. It concludes that five types of tablets were included in the royal tablet collections, with at least three tablet sets marked with Ashurbanipal colophons. Moreover, the inventory tablets mentioning the poem are discussed to elucidate the possible original classification of the poem among other compositions about Marduk.

Keywords Babylonian literature. Kuyunjik. Ashurbanipal's Library. Colophons. Marduk.

Summary 1 The Kuyunjik Manuscripts of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*. – 1.1 Colophons, 'Firing Holes', and 10-Marks. – 2 The Commentary. – 3 The Inventory Fragment SEM 1092.

The royal tablet collection of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh offers the best single source of manuscripts for *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*,¹ one of the most prominent pieces of Babylonian literature in the first millennium BCE. All in all, twelve manuscripts of the poem's chapters I, II and IV come from Kuyunjik. In addition, the only preserved commentary on *Ludlul* stems from Nineveh, most likely from Ashurbanipal's Library. The poem is also mentioned in two lists that are related to the royal tablet collections. In this paper, I am investigating if we can establish sets of tablets within the extant Nineveh manuscripts of *Ludlul*.² Moreover, I will discuss the possible classification of *Ludlul* in the royal tablet collection.

1 The Kuyunjik Manuscripts of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*

There are twelve manuscripts of *Ludlul*, all made up of one or more tablet fragments,³ known from Nineveh.⁴ Only four of them preserve a colophon. The fragments are unevenly distributed, with several

¹ This article is a revised version of the paper "*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* in the Electronic Babylonian Library", presented at the *LIB-ER Workshop*, and it stems from my work on *Ludlul* in the *Electronic Babylonian Literature project* (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München). I thank the organisers, Paola Corò and Stefania Ermidoro, for the invitation to present my work there and the other participants for enlightening discussions at the workshop. I also thank Jon Taylor for his helpful comments on this article.

² A similar attempt to establish tablet sets for the series *Maqlû* is presented in Schwemer 2017, 43-50.

³ As established by Lenzi 2020, K.8576 is not a manuscript of *Ludlul* (included as a manuscript for *Ludlul V* in Oshima 2014, 379). Likewise, the fragment Sm.89, included T. Oshima's *Ludlul*-editions as manuscript I.M (Oshima 2014, 377; Oshima, Anthonioz 2023, 62) is not a manuscript of *Ludlul I*.

⁴ For the excavations at Nineveh and the locations in which literary texts were found, see Reade 1986; 2000, 421-7; Fincke 2003-04, 113-15; and Robson 2019, 12-23. It is not possible to reconstruct the provenance of the *Ludlul* manuscripts in Nineveh, but



Peer review

Submitted 2024-09-02

Accepted 2024-09-15

Published 2024-12-19

Open access

© 2024 Hättinen | © 4.0



Citation Hättinen, A. (2024). "*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* in Ashurbanipal's Library". *KASKAL. Rivista di storia, ambienti e culture del Vicino Oriente Antico*, n.s., 1, 311-322.

manuscripts of *Ludlul* I and II but only two of *Ludlul* IV. No fragments of *Ludlul* III and V have yet been identified.⁵ This raises the question about whether manuscripts of *Ludlul* III and V existed at all in the royal library. The assumption here is that the royal tablet collections at Nineveh contained full sets of literary works, not just individual tablets. This would mean that the materials for *Ludlul* III and V are either so badly destroyed that they cannot be identified in the Kuyunjik Collection of the British Museum or that they are not present among the excavated materials.

The manuscripts for *Ludlul* I and II luckily offer enough information for an attempt to reconstruct possible sets of *Ludlul*-tablets in Ashurbanipal's Library. The main feature here is the use of different colophon types among the extant manuscripts. This information is complemented by physical attributes of the different manuscripts, such as the size of the tablets/fragments, the appearance of the script, the use of so-called 'firing holes' in the tablets, and the marginal notations that mark every tenth line in the composition.

1.1 Colophons, 'Firing Holes', and 10-Marks

Three different colophon types are preserved in the extant manuscripts of *Ludlul* I and II: Ashurbanipal types a, b, and d.⁶ Neither of the two fragmentary manuscripts of *Ludlul* IV preserves a colophon. The only colophon type that is assuredly preserved for both *Ludlul* I and II is Asb b, extant in K.9392+ (*Ludlul* I) and K.2518+ (*Ludlul* II). The comparison of these two pieces shows that their appearance is remarkably similar to each other despite the fragmentary state of K.9392+. This is most obvious in the colophon, which in both tablets is written after a single ruling and without double spacing between the lines (as opposed to Asb a and Asb d, which use double spacing in the colophon).⁷

Colophon type Asb a⁸

Ludlul II: K.3323+⁹
 (single ruling)
 (catchline)

r 17'. [*kab-ta-at qās(ŠU)-su u*] *e-le-e na-šá-šú*¹
 (blank line)
 (colophon)

r 18'. [DUB.2.KÁ]M.¹MA¹ *lud¹-lul be-lu₄ n^é-me-qí* (x x x x)
 (blank line)

r 19'. *ēkal*[(*KU*)R*]¹m¹*aššur*(AN.ŠÁR)-*bāni*(DÙ)-*apli*(¹A) [*šar*(MAN) *kiššati*(ŠÚ)]
 (blank line)

r 20'. *šar*[(*MA*)N*]¹ *māt*(KUR) *aššur*(A[N.ŠÁR^{ki}])¹⁰
 (end of reverse)

Translation
 (single ruling)
 (catchline)

[Heavy was his hand upon me], I could [n]ot bear it!
 (colophon)

it seems likely that they come from the South-West Palace and the North Palace. Most of the tablets with K. and Sm. numbers come from the South-West Palace, whereas the DT group mostly derives from the North Palace (see Reade 1986, 214; 2000, 422).

⁵ In the case of *Ludlul* III, the Nineveh material is restricted to the quotations of the catchline in three manuscripts of *Ludlul* II (K.2518+, K.3323+ and K.3972; NinQuo1, NinQuo2 and NinQuo3 in Häntinen 2022, respectively) and the lines quoted in the commentary tablet K.3291. No Nineveh fragments apart from the commentary tablet K.3291 attest to *Ludlul* V.

⁶ See Hunger 1968, nos 317-19; this typology of based on Streck 1916, LXXI-LXXXII. A recent overview of the *Ludlul* colophons is also offered in Lenzi 2023, 211-14.

⁷ Digital photos of both pieces can be found in *eBL* Fragmentarium (<https://www.ebl.lmu.de/fragmentarium>).

⁸ Hunger 1968, no. 317.

⁹ See Lambert 1960, pl. 6 and Oshima 2014, pl. XL.

¹⁰ Note that the proprietary note in this tablet (r 19'-20') is written in a lapidary script, indicating that it was added to the tablet after it had dried (as observed in Lenzi 2023, 213).

Second tablet of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*. [(...)].

[Palac]e of Ashurbanipal, [king of the world], [kin]g of A[ssyria].
(end of reverse)

Colophon type Asb b¹¹

Ludlul I: K.9392+¹²
(single ruling)
(catchline)

r 2'. [šat-tam-ma a-na b]a-laṭ^r a¹-[dan-na i-ti-iq]
(colophon)

r 3'. [DUB.1.KAM lud-lul bēl(E)N né-me-qi^m aš-šur¹-bāni(D)ù)-apli(İBILA) šarru(LUGAL) rabû(GAL-ú) šarru(LUGAL) dan-nu šarru(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki}]

r 4'. [mār(DUMU) ^maš-šur-aḥa(ŠEŠ)-iddina(SU)M-na) šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) [šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki}]

r 5'. [mār(DUMU) ^{md}sîn(30)-aḥḥē(PAB^{meš})-erība(S)U) šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) [šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki}(-ma)]

r 6'. [ki-i pi-i tuppī(DUB^{meš}) lē'ī(ĜISL)E.U₅.UM^{meš}] gabari(GABA.RI) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki} māt(KUR) šumeri(EME.GI₇) u akkadī(URI^{ki})]

r 7'. [tup-pu šu-a-tu ina tap-ḥu]r-^rti¹ um-ma-^ra¹-[ni aš-šur as-niq abrē(IGI.KÁR)-ma]

r 8'. [a-na ta-mar-ti šarrūti(LUGAL-ti)]-^ria¹ qé-r[eb ēkallī(Ē.GAL)-ia ú-kin]
(rest of side broken)

Translation
(single ruling)
(catchline)

[One year to the n]ext, the pre[dictable time passed by].
(colophon)

[First tablet of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*].

Ashurb[anipal, great king, strong king, king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Esarhad]don, king of the world, [king of Assyria, (grand)son of Sennacher]ib, king of the world, [king of Assyria. I wrote this tablet according to clay tablets (and) wr]iting-board[s from Assyria, Sumer and Akkad in the assem]bly of scholar[s, checked (it) and collated (it). I then deposited (it) i[n my palace for m]y [royal inspection].
(rest of side broken)

Ludlul II: K.2518+¹³
(single ruling)
(catchline)

r 26'. kab-ta-a[t qās(ŠU)-su ul a-le-'i-i na-šá-šá]
(colophon)

r 27'. DUB.2.KAM^v [lud-lul bēl(EN) né-me-qi]

r 28'. ^maš-šur-bāni(D)ù)-apli(İBIL[A) šarru(LUGAL) rabû(GAL-ú) šarru(LUGAL) dan-nu šarru(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki}]

r 29'. mār(DUMU) ^maš-šur-aḥa(ŠEŠ)-[iddina(SUM-na) šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki}]

r 30'. mār(DUMU) ^{md}sîn(30)-aḥḥē(PAB^{meš})-erība(SU) šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki}]-^rki¹-ma

¹¹ Hunger 1968, no. 318.

¹² See Lambert 1960, pl. 74 and Horowitz, Lambert 2002, 240.

¹³ See Lambert 1960, pl. 4.

r 31'. *ki-i pi tuppī(DUB^{mes}) lēṭī(ḪE.L[E.U₅.UM^{mes}]) gabarī(GABA.RI) māt(KUR) aš-šur^{ki} māt(KUR) šumeri(EME).^rG₁₇ u akkadī(^rURI^{ki})*

r 32'. *tup-pu šu-a-tu ina tap-ḫur-t[i] um-ma-a-ni áš-ṭur as-n]iq abrē(IGI.KÁR)-ma*

r 33'. *^ra¹-[n]a ta-mar-ti šarrūtī(LUGAL-ti)-i[a ina qé-reb ēkallī(É.GA)L]-ia ú-kin*

r 34'. *[šá š]u-mi šaṭ-ru i-pa-áš-ši-ṭu šum(MU)-šú i-šaṭ-ṭa-ru*

r 35'. *[^dnabû(A)G] tupšar(DUB.SAR) gim-ri šum(MU)-šú lip-ši-iṭ*
(end of reverse)

Translation
(single ruling)
(catchline)

Heavy wa[s his hand upon me, I could not bear it!]
(colophon)

Second tablet of [Ludlul bēl nēmeqi].

Ashurbanip[al, great king, strong king, king of the world, king of Assyria], son of Esarha[ddon, king of the world, king of Assyria], (grand)son of Sennach[erib, king of the world, king of Assyria. I wrote] this tablet according to clay tablets (and) wr[iting-boards from Assyria, Sum]er and Akkad in the assemb[ly of scholars, check]ed (it) and collated (it). I then deposited (it) [in] my [pala]ce f[or] m[yl] royal inspection.

[The one who] erases my written [n]ame (and) writes down his own name – may [Na]bû, the scribe of everything, erase his name!
(end of reverse)

Colophon type Asb d¹⁴

Ludlul II: K.3972+¹⁵
(single ruling)
(catchline)

r 24'. *[kab-ta-at qās(š)U¹¹¹]-su ul a-le-'i-'i¹ na-šá-šá*
(blank line)
(colophon)

r 25'. *^rDUB.2.KAM^{v1}.M[A]ud-lul bēl(EN) né-me-^rq¹*
(blank line)

r 26'. *ēkal(É.GAL) ^maššur(^rAN.ŠÁR¹)-bāni(DÙ)-apli(İBILA) šar(L[U]GAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) aš-^ršur^{ki}*
(blank line)

r 27'. *ša ^{1d1}nabû(AG) u ^dr^rtaš¹-me-tu₄ uzna(GEŠ[TUG]) ra-pa-áš-tu₄ iš-ru-ku-uš]*
(blank line)

r 28'. *[i-ḫ]u-uz-zu ina(IGI) na-mir-tu ni-siq tup-šar-ru-ti]*
(blank line)

r 29'. *š[a ina šarrī(L)UGAL^{mes}] ^ra¹-[lik maḫ-ri-ia mam-ma šip-ru šu-a-tu la i-ḫu-uz-zu]*
(blank line)

r 30'. *né-me-eq ^dnabû(AG) [ti-kip sa-an-tak-ki ma-la ba-áš-mu]*
(blank line)

r 31'. *ina tuppī(DUB^{mes}) áš-ṭ[ur as-niq ab-re-e-ma]*
(blank line)

r 32'. *a-na ta-mar-[ti ši-ta-as-si-ia]*
(blank line)

r 33'. *qé-reb ēkallī(É.GA)L]-ia ú-kin*
(end of reverse)

14 Hunger 1968, no. 319.

15 See Hättinen 2020, 251.

Translation
(catchline)

[Heavy was] his [ha]nd upon me, I could not bear it!
(colophon)

Second tablet of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*.

Palace of Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of As[syria], whom Nabû and Tašmētu [have given a wide understand]ing, who ha[s a sharp e]ye. [The choice scholarship, the art that no one among the k]ings, [my predecessors, had learned]; the wisdom of Nabû, [all the cuneiform signs that there is] – I wro[te (it)] on tablets, [I checked and collated (them)]. I deposited (them)] in my palace for inspect[ion and for my reading].
(end of reverse)

The available information about colophon types, ‘firing holes’, 10-marks in the margin, and the size of the pieces is presented here in table 1.

Table 1 Overview of the Ludlul manuscripts from Kuyunjik

	Museum number	Siglum in Häätinen 2022 ⁱ	Colophon type	‘Firing holes’	10-marks in the margin	Width of the tablet × max. thickness
<i>Ludlul I</i>	K.1757+K.18983 (+)K.18929 ⁱⁱ	NinNA1 (K.1757+)	—	no	—	? × >16 mm
	K.9237	NinNA2	[Asb a]	no	yes	79 × 27 mm
	K.9392+K.9810	NinNA3	Asb b	no	[yes]	? × 27 mm
	K.10503+K.22794+ ⁱⁱⁱ Sm.2139	NinNA4 (K.10503+Sm.2139)	[Asb d]	yes	[no]	? × 26 mm
	79-7-8, 225	NinNA5	—	—	—	? × 31 mm
	K.17700	NinNA6	—	—	—	? × >19 mm
<i>Ludlul II</i>	K.3323+K.18186+Rm.444+ Rm.941+Sm.1745 ^{iv} (+)K.8396	NinNA2a (K.3323+) NinNA2b (K.8396) NinNA5 (Sm.1745)	Asb a	no	yes	74 × 25 mm
	K.2518+DT.358	NinNA1	Asb b	no	yes	n/a ^v
	K.3972+K.9973+DT.151	NinNA3	Asb d	yes	no	78 × 26 mm
	K.6935	NinNA4	—	—	—	flake
<i>Ludlul IV</i>	K.9724	NinNA1	—	—	—	? × 25 mm
	BM 123392	NinNA2	—	—	—	? × 31 mm

ⁱ See there for information on publications of hand-copies, photos, and editions.

ⁱⁱ Join K.1757+ (+)K.18929 by T. Mitto; an edition of the new fragment K.18929 is forthcoming.

ⁱⁱⁱ Join K.10503+K.22794 by A. Häätinen; an edition of the new fragment K.22794 is forthcoming.

^{iv} The join K.3323+Sm.1745, suggested by the content and the physical appearance of the pieces, was checked at the British Museum in March 2024.

^v The tablet K.2518+DT.358 is on a long-term loan at the Louvre (see Thomas 2017, 292).

The overview of these features in *Ludlul* manuscripts allows the following observations:

1. For each preserved chapter of the poem, there is only one manuscript that has so-called ‘firing holes’. Moreover, the combination of ‘firing holes’ and the colophon of the type Asb d in K.3972+ suggests that we should expect the same colophon type also in K.10503+ (*Ludlul I*).¹⁶ A collation of both pieces shows that their ‘firing holes’ are of identical size.
2. There is a clear connection between the colophon types Asb a and b and the 10-marks on the left edge of the tablet, indicated by the two well-preserved manuscripts of *Ludlul II*, K.3323+ and K.2518+.¹⁷ In addition, no 10-marks are attested in K.3972+, the manuscripts with ‘firing holes’. If we can assume that the same format was used in the manuscripts of *Ludlul I*, it is possible to reconstruct the missing features of the tablets. Thus, K.9237 should belong to a tablet with a col-

¹⁶ Compare the combination of the colophon type Asb d and ‘firing holes’ in DT.135+, a composition with benedictions (Häätinen 2021, 227 and 233).

¹⁷ For the practice of marking every tenth line with a small *Winkelhaken*, see Bezold 1899, xvii and Hunger 1968, 2.

- ophon of the type Asb a (10-marks on the left edge, no 'firing holes') and K.9392+ should belong to a tablet with 10-marks on it (colophon Asb b, no 'firing holes').
- The (complete) width and thickness of the manuscripts, as far as it can be assessed, varies from 74 × 25 mm (K.3323+ and K.8396, colophon type Asb a, *Ludlul* II) to 78 × 26 mm (K.3972+, colophon type Asb d) and 79 × 27 mm (K.9237, colophon type [Asb a], *Ludlul* I). This shows that although they have the same format and approximately the same size, tablets bearing the same colophon type are not identical: there is a difference of 5 mm in width and 2 mm in thickness between K.3323+ (+) K.8396 and K.9237. I do not think that this variation precludes the possibility that these tablets formed a single set.¹⁸ In the case of the smaller manuscript fragments, no tablet width can be established. Still, in these cases, the thickness of the pieces offers important information, showing that the fragments 79-7-8, 225 (*Ludlul* I) and BM 123392 (*Ludlul* IV) both must belong to tablets that are clearly thicker (≥ 31 mm) than other manuscripts (≥ 25-27 mm). Moreover, 79-7-8, 225 is written in 'type 2' script, with four (instead of three) *Winkelhakens* in the upper row of the 𐎶I-group, making it comparable with the commentary tablet K.3291 (see discussion below). BM 123392 uses the 'type 1' script, which suggests that these two fragments, although of similar size, do not constitute a single set.

In addition to the tablets with Ashurbanipal colophons, there is also at least one diverging specimen of *Ludlul* I, K.1757+(+)K.18929.¹⁹ This tablet is clearly written in script that differs from the standard Kuyunjik script, as is shown by the comparison of three diagnostic signs in K.1757+ to the sign forms in the Kuyunjik tablet K.3323+ (*Ludlul* II, colophon type Asb a).²⁰ Notably, compared to K.3323+, the sign LI in K.1757+ is written with one extra horizontal wedge. Moreover, the comparison to the sign forms in K.1757+ shows some similarities with the Kalḫu manuscript of *Ludlul* I, IM 67628+ (CTN 4 201): in both tablets, some of the horizontal wedges slant slightly downwards.

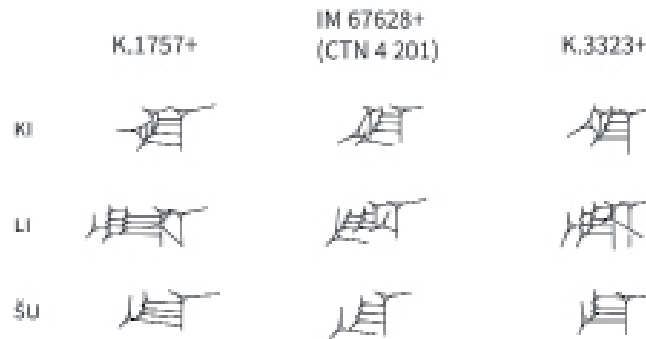


Figure 1 Overview and comparison of diagnostic signs in K.1757+

In addition to the diverging sign forms, the tablet K.1757+ seems to have been physically different from the tablets that included an Ashurbanipal colophon: its thickness is only >16 mm, with the lower edge of the tablet being only 14 mm thick. Thus, it is considerably thinner than the standard Kuyunjik tablets of *Ludlul*.²¹ This suggests that K.1757+ (and the possible indirect join K.17700), having a different shape and not written in the standard Kuyunjik script, may have been brought to Nineveh from elsewhere in Assyria (possibly from Kalḫu), or that they were written in Nineveh for purposes other than their inclusion in the royal tablet collections. Unfortunately, since no colophon is preserved, there are no explicit indications about the origin or the purpose of this tablet.

Resulting from this analysis, I propose that we identify at least five different types of manuscripts among the *Ludlul* tablets from Nineveh, with at least three sets of tablets with Ashurbanipal colophons. The first set is formed by tablets that had a colophon of the type Asb a and a *Winkelhaken* marking eve-

¹⁸ Compare here one of the proposed sets of *Maqlû* tablets at Kuyunjik, SetAss1, that includes tablets with the colophon Asb c and a width ranging from 102 mm to 133 mm (Schwemer 2017, 45).

¹⁹ Despite collation of the fragments, it remains unclear if K.17700 belongs to the same tablet as K.1757+ and K.18929. Their general appearance is alike, but K.17700 is thicker (>19 mm) than K.1757+ (>16 mm). Moreover, the script in K.17700 seems to be smaller than in K.1757+, but this may be an illusion caused by the badly eroded surface of K.17700.

²⁰ Unfortunately, due to their small size, K.1757+ and K.18929 offer a very limited number of diagnostic signs.

²¹ Compare the minimum thickness of 20 mm (the upper edge) of K.3323+ (colophon type Asb a) and K.3972 (colophon type Asb d).

ry tenth line of the composition. The second set was formed by tablets that had a colophon of the type Asb b, also with every tenth line of the composition marked with a *Winkelhaken*. The third set has the most elaborate colophon (type Asb d), and it is decorated with so-called 'firing holes'. Importantly, the 10-line markings are not used in the tablets of this set, supporting the idea of this set being the 'best' (that is, most carefully prepared) one among the extant *Ludlul* manuscripts. In addition, the collections at Nineveh seem to have included further manuscripts of the poem, now preserved only as small fragments. K.1757+ attests to a tablet that is smaller than library tablets with a colophon, and it also is written in a script that differs from the standard script used to write the library tablets. K.17700 may belong to the same tablet as K.1757+ or be a separate manuscript. 79-7-8, 225, which is thicker than other manuscripts of *Ludlul* I, should belong to a distinct manuscript that possibly had an Ashurbanipal colophon. Since especially K.1757+ diverges from the tablets with colophons in respect to script and size, it seems likely that it, if not a complete set of *Ludlul* tablets, may have been brought to Nineveh from elsewhere or written there for some other purpose than including them to the royal library.

Table 2 Proposed sets of *Ludlul* in Ashurbanipal's Library

	<i>Ludlul</i> I	<i>Ludlul</i> II
Set 1: Colophon type Asb a (with 10-marks)	K.9237	K.3323+K.18186+Rm.444+Rm.941+Sm.1745(+)+K.8396
Set 2: Colophon type Asb b (with 10-marks)	K.9392+K.9810	K.2518+DT.358
Set 3: Colophon type Asb d (with 'firing holes')	K.10503+Sm.2139	K.3972+K.9973+DT.151
Set 4(?): Thick library tablets, perhaps with a colophon(?)	79-7-8, 225	-
A copy with non-standard script	K.1757+K.18983(+)+K.18929	-
Further fragments	K.17700 (possibly to K.1757+)	K.6935 (possibly to Set 2) ⁱ

ⁱ Judging by the general appearance of the fragment and the script, this flake possibly joins K.2518+DT.358 (Set 2). However, since K.2518+ is kept in the Louvre in Paris (see Thomas 2017, 292), it is not possible to verify the join.

2 The Commentary

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi belongs to the few works of Babylonian literature for which there were commentaries.²² The commentary tablet's (K.3291) existence was recognised soon after the discovery of the first *Ludlul* fragment from Kuyunjik (K.3972), and it has been used in the following editions of the poem to understand it better and to establish the correct line sequence in the parts of the poem that remain incomplete.²³ The tablet K.3291 from Kuyunjik is the only known manuscript of the *Ludlul*-commentary, which raises the question if it was written specifically for that tablet collection's purposes. Unfortunately, the tablet is broken where the colophon would have existed, and therefore, explicit information about its origin eludes us. Looking at the script, the commentary tablet stands out from most of *Ludlul* manuscripts by its use of 'type 2' script, i.e. sign forms with, for example, an additional *Winkelhaken* in the 𐎠I-group; this feature is present only in one *Ludlul* manuscript, the fragment 79-7-8, 225. Even if the commentary tablet does not preserve a colophon, it is possible that the commentary was of Assyrian origin, as noted by Enrique Jiménez.²⁴ This is suggested by the fact that in this commentary, the Babylonian word *aspu* is explained by using its Assyrian form *uspu*.

²² In addition to *Ludlul*, also *Enūma eliš*, *Lugal-e*, *Theodicy*, and the literary prayer Marduk 2 are attested to have had commentaries (see Frahm 2011, 111-21; Jiménez 2017b).

²³ The commentary is brought up already by Pinches 1885, 69, who characterised K.3972 (*Ludlul* II) to have been "considered by the Assyrians and Babylonian important enough to have a kind of running glossary, in which all the difficult and unusual words are explained by others better known". The latest full edition of the commentary tablet only is provided by Lenzi 2015; in the *eBL* edition of *Ludlul* (Hättinen 2022) this tablet appears with the siglum NinNACom.

²⁴ See Jiménez *apud* Lenzi 2015 (fn. 7 on K.3291, rev. 42) and Jiménez 2020, 98-9.

K.3291, rev. 41-42 (*Ludlul* V 16-17)

marduk(^damar.utu) šá mu-kaš-ši-di-ia i-kim as-^rpa¹-šú as-suk-ka-šú ú-saḥ-ḥar
[^ras-suk-ku¹ [:] [^ra-bat-tu¹: á-s-pu ú-s-pu

Marduk took away the sling from my stalker, he deflected his sling-stone. ‘Sling-stone’ (*assukku*) means ‘gravel’ (*abattu*). *aspu* is the same as *uspu*.

One can also argue that since *Ludlul* was an integral part of the school curriculum in northern Babylonia – attested in numerous school tablets from Babylon/Babylonia, Sippar, and Kiš –,²⁵ there was no need for a written Babylonian commentary on the poem: the pupils learning it would have received oral instruction about its content from their teacher. Some Babylonian commentaries even quote lines from *Ludlul* as the explanation of a difficult word, showing that the poem was well-known in the scholarly context. BM 41286, which is a commentary on Aa III/1, quotes *Ludlul* I 86 (in bold typeface in the quotation below) as an explanation for the words *labābu* ‘to rage’ and *nalbubu* ‘to become furious’.

BM 41286, obv. 6'b-7'²⁶

[^rla¹-ba-bu : na-a[^r-bu-bu : (x x x)] | **na-al-bu-bu tap-pa-a ú-nag-gar-an-^rni¹** : nu-ug-gu-ru : a-k[al kar-ši]

‘To rage’ (*labābu*), ‘to become fu[r]ious’ (*nalbubu*) (mean ...), (as in) **“My comrade would denounce me savagely”**. ‘To denounce’ (*nugguru*) (means) ‘to sla[nder]’ (*akāl karši*).

Similarly, a commentary on *Šumma izbu* deriving from Uruk quotes both *Ludlul* I 76-7 and *Ludlul* V 17.²⁷

Since no other commentaries on *Ludlul* than K.3291 are known from Nineveh, it is tempting to assume that this particular tablet is the *mukallimtu ša ludlul bēl nēmeqi* that is listed in a small tablet containing a list of literary works, Rm.618.²⁸

Rm.618, 17-19²⁹

^dnin-ì-si-in-na dumu-saḡ an-na-ra “To Nin-isina, first-born of Anu”.
mukallimtu ša ludlul bēl nēmeqi *Mukallimtu*-commentary on *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*.
iškār etana The series “Etana”.

The list in Rm.618 differs from the so-called ‘library catalogues’ from Nineveh in that it only gives the titles of the compositions, not information about the number of tablets or writing-boards. Moreover, the compositions do not relate to each other in any obvious way. Due the ephemeral nature of this small clay note and the nature of the listed literary works, it has been suggested that it represents a group of tablets that were sent to Ashurbanipal’s tablet collection, perhaps from another place in Assyria or even from within the city of Nineveh.³⁰

²⁵ See the overview of manuscript in Hättinen 2022.

²⁶ See the edition in Civil et al. 1979, 322-3.

²⁷ See the edition in Finkel 2006, 140 (ll. 10 and 17-19). This tablet is in a private collection but it can be associated with the well-known Urukian scholar Iqīšā (see Finkel 2006, 139).

²⁸ Rm.618 is edited and discussed in Jiménez 2017a, 117-21; see also Jiménez 2020, 95-101. On the term *mukallimtu* as a designation of commentaries, see Frahm 2011, 42-7.

²⁹ After Jiménez 2017a, 117-18.

³⁰ See Lambert 1954, 320 fn. 10; Jiménez 2017a, 119; 2020, 98-9.

3 The Inventory Fragment SEM 1092

Ludlul bēl nēmeqi does not appear in the so-called ‘Assyrian Library Records’ that, according to Simo Parpola’s interpretation, deal with accessions to the royal tablet collections, mostly coming from private individuals.³¹ It does, however, appear in a fragment of an inventory list from Nineveh, SEM 1092.³² Unfortunately, it remains unclear what this list should represent: the fragment only preserves numbers followed by a name of a composition. The preserved section in col. i’ on the reverse clearly is a list of compositions that deal with Marduk.³³

SEM 1092, rev. i’ 1’-7’ⁱ

[n enūma] ‘eliš ¹	[n of <i>Enūma</i>] eliš
[n] m[uka]llimtu	[n of (its?)] commentary.
4 bēl apkal igigī	4 of “Lord, Sage of the Igigi” (= “Marduk 2”)
1 eriš šummi	1 of “He of Insightful Thinking”
4 ludlul bēl nēmeqi	4 of <i>Ludlul bēl nēmeqi</i>
1 mukallimtu	1 of (its?) commentary
[n] ē tatkal	[n of] “Do not trust!”

ⁱ After Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 230.

Assuming that the numbers represent clay tablets instead of writing boards, it is tempting to interpret this list as an inventory of the compositions kept in the royal tablet collections. The line “4 of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*” corresponds to the reconstruction of the possible tablet sets (see the discussion above). Moreover, as we have seen, only one commentary tablet of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is attested at Nineveh. The hypothesis that SEM 1092 is an inventory of the royal library finds support in the fact that four distinct manuscripts of Marduk 2 and only one manuscript of *Eriš šummi* are attested at Nineveh.³⁴

An aspect of this list that is more tangible than its nature as an inventory is the fact that *Ludlul* is included in a group of literary works about Marduk.³⁵ Starting with the Babylonian creation epic *Enūma eliš* and its commentary,³⁶ the preserved text moves on to the prayer Marduk 2³⁷ and *Eriš šummi*, a syncretistic hymn to Marduk. After *Ludlul*, a further piece of Marduk literature, the hymn *Ē tatkal*, is mentioned.³⁸ Apart from *Eriš šummi*, all these texts were regularly copied in scribal schools of northern Babylonia,³⁹ and they clearly are about Marduk and his abilities. Thus, it seems, at least the compiler of this list perceived *Ludlul* as a text about Marduk – or perhaps, to be more precise, as a piece of Babylonian Marduk theology among others –, not so much as a piece of “wisdom literature”.⁴⁰ It remains unclear if Ashurbanipal personally engaged with *Ludlul* or the other texts named in this list,⁴¹ but if he chose to do so, he would have had several editions to choose from.

³¹ See Parpola 1983; Fales, Postgate 1992, nos 49-56.

³² Published in Groß 2012; see also the new edition of the relevant section (with collations) in Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 230. This fragment was acquired by Dr. Joseph Troll during his travels in Near East in 1886 and it most likely stems from Nineveh (see Groß 2012, 33-4).

³³ See Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 230-1.

³⁴ See Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 231. Also note that the *Eriš šummi* manuscript from Nineveh, BM 141782, preserves a colophon of the type Asb d (Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 242).

³⁵ See Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 231.

³⁶ For the latest edition, see Heinrich 2021.

³⁷ See the latest edition in Oshima 2011, 216-69. A new edition is being prepared by Enrique Jiménez.

³⁸ An edition of this hymn is being prepared by Enrique Jiménez.

³⁹ See Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 231.

⁴⁰ Note that the Sippar manuscript of *Eriš šummi* was found in the same shelf as the Sippar manuscript of *Ludlul* I (see Fadhil, Jiménez 2022, 231).

⁴¹ For the interpretation that the phrases *ana tāmarti šarrūtiya* and *ana tāmarti šitassīya* (present in the colophon types Asb b and d) indicate that the tablets belonged to a collection meant for Ashurbanipal’s personal study, see Lieberman 1990, 318-19. For a recent overview of this assertion, see Robson 2019, 124-5. See also Lenzi 2023, 212: “The colophons also confirm something quite specific about the poem: *Ludlul* was not simply another text at Nineveh; *Ludlul* was certainly a part of Aššurbanipal’s specific intellectual scribal activity.”

Bibliography

- Bezold, C. (1899). *Catalogue of the Cuneiform Tablets in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum*, vol. 5. London: Harrison and Sons.
- Civil, M. et al. (1979). *Ea A = naqû, Aa A = naqû, with their Forerunners and Related Texts*. Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum. Materials for the Sumerian Lexikon 14.
- Fadhil, A.A.; Jiménez, E. (2022). "Literary Texts from the Sippar Library III: *Eriš šummi*, A Syncretistic Hymn to Marduk". *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*, 112, 229-74.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/za-2022-0004>
- Fales, F.M.; Postgate, J.N. (1992). *Imperial Administrative Records. Part 1, Palace and Temple Administration*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. State Archives of Assyria 7.
- Fincke, J.C. (2003-04). "The Babylonian Texts of Nineveh. Report on the British Museum's *Ashurbanipal Library Project*". *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 50, 111-49.
- Finkel, I.L. (2006). "On an Izbu VII Commentary". Guinan, A.K. et al. (eds), *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 139-48. Cuneiform Monographs 31.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047408239_014
- Frahm, E. (2011). *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries. Origins of Interpretation*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag. Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record 5.
- Groß, M. (2012). "Keilschrifttexte im Kunsthistorischen Museum Wien, Teil II.: Eine neuassyrische Inventarliste aus der Bibliothek des Assurbanipal". *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 102, 33-41.
- Heinrich, A.C. (2021). "Poem of Creation (*Enūma eliš*)". With contributions by Zs. J. Földi, A. Hättinen, E. Jiménez and T.D.N. Mitto. Translated by B.R. Foster. *electronic Babylonian Library*.
<https://doi.org/10.5282/eb1/l/1/2>
- Horowitz, W.; Lambert, W.G. (2002). "A New Exemplar of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* Tablet I from Birmingham". *Iraq*, 64, 237-45.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4200525>
- Hunger, H. (1968). *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone*. Kevelaer; Neukirchen; Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchener Verlag. Alter Orient und Altes Testament 2.
- Hättinen, A. (2020). "Two New Fragments of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* II". *KASKAL. Rivista di storia, ambienti e culture del Vicino Oriente Antico*, 17, 246-52.
- Hättinen, A. (2021). "Benedictions for a Gentleman: DT.135+ Rm.436(+) K.2279+". *KASKAL. Rivista di storia, ambienti e culture del Vicino Oriente Antico*, 18, 222-33.
- Hättinen, A. (2022). "Righteous Sufferer (*Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*)". With contributions by Zs.J. Földi, A.C. Heinrich, E. Jiménez and T.D.N. Mitto. Transl. by B.R. Foster. *electronic Babylonian Library*.
<https://doi.org/10.5282/eb1/l/2/2>
- Jiménez, E. (2017a). *The Babylonian Disputation Poems: With Editions of the Series of the Poplar, Palm and Vine, the Series of the Spider, and the Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren*. Leiden; Boston: Brill. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 87.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004336261>
- Jiménez, E. (2017b). "Commentary on Literary Prayer to Marduk 2 (CCP 1.5)". *Cuneiform Commentaries Project*.
<https://doi.org/10079/d51c5pv>
- Jiménez, E. (2020). "Antiques in the King's Libraries. Akkadian Disputation Poems at Nineveh". Jiménez, E.; Mittermayer, C. (eds), *Disputation Literature in the Near East and Beyond*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 91-103. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 25.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510274-006>
- Lambert, W.G. (1954). "An Address of Marduk to the Demons". *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 17, 310-21.
- Lambert, W.G. (1960). *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lenzi, A. (2015). "Commentary on *Ludlul* (CCP 1.3)". *Cuneiform Commentaries Project*.
<https://doi.org/10079/cc2f8b2>
- Lenzi, A. (2020). "K.8576: Not a Witness to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*". *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires*, 2020(2), 157-60.
- Lenzi, A. (2023). *Suffering in Babylon: Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Scholars, Ancient and Modern*. Leuven; Paris; Bristol (CT): Peeters. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 300.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.3919381>
- Lieberman, S.J. (1990). "Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Assurbanipal's Personal Tablet Collection". Abusch, T. (ed.), *Lingering over Words. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 305-36. Harvard Semitic Studies 37.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004369559_020
- Oshima, T. (2011). *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 7.
<https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-160596-3>
- Oshima, T. (2014). *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers. Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Babylonian Theodicy*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 14.
<https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-160603-8>
- Oshima, T.; Anthonioz, S. (2023). *Affronter le mal en Babylonie. Théodicées akkadiennes*. Paris: Les éditions du cerf. Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient 23.
- Parpola, S. (1983). "Assyrian Library Records". *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 42, 1-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/372983>
- Pinches, T.G. (1885). "The Early Babylonian King-Lists". *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 7, 65-71.

- Reade, J. (1986). "Archeology and the Kuyunjik Archives". Veenhof, K.R. (ed.), *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries. Papers read at the 30^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Leiden, 4-8 July 1983). Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 213-22. Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 57.
- Reade, J.E. (2000). "Ninive (Nineveh)". Edzard, D.O. et al. (Hrsgg.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 9(5-6). Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 388-433.
- Robson, E. (2019). *Ancient Knowledge Networks. A Social Geography of Cuneiform Scholarship in First-Millennium Assyria and Babylonia*. London: UCL Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvhn0csn>
- Schwemer, D. (2017). *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû. The Cuneiform Sources of a Magic Ceremony from Ancient Mesopotamia*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvckq3w2>
- Streck, M. (1916). *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's*, T. 1-3. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs. Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783112540923>
- Thomas, A. (2017). "The Material Culture of Nineveh in France". Petit, L.P.; Morandi Bonacossi, D. (eds), *Nineveh, the Great City. Symbol of Beauty and Power*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 287-92. Papers on Archeology of the Leiden Museum of Antiquities 13.

