

# Foundation Records from the South-West Palace, Nineveh

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Records of Sennacherib's work on the South-West Palace at Nineveh date from about 702 B.C.<sup>1</sup> to about 693 B.C.<sup>2</sup> or possibly later.<sup>3</sup> Plans for the building expanded as the work progressed, and this is partly reflected in the different dimensions given, for the entire palace, in successive texts; its final shape is uncertain,<sup>4</sup> but it is plain that only about half has been excavated.

Record documents were being buried in the foundations by 702 B.C., and that is where one such as the Bellino Cylinder<sup>5</sup> might have been placed. Other cylinders were buried in the walls, and some of these were found in position by Hormuzd Rassam, or his nephew Nimroud Rassam, during systematic clearance of all remains (above floor level) of part of the South-West Palace,<sup>6</sup> in the course of the British Museum excavations of 1878–82. As there has been some confusion about these cylinders,<sup>7</sup> they are listed below in their apparent order of discovery.

BM 22501 (79-7-8, 302). *Senn.*, p. 20, text C3. This cylinder, like those to follow, is a truncated bicone, of pale-brown terracotta, hollow, with a small central perforation at each end. Length 25.6 cm; maximum diameter at middle 13.9, at end 11.1. Since it reached the British Museum in mid-1879, this must be the cylinder found by Hormuzd in December 1878, in 'the solid brick pillar ... between entrances g and h of Chamber IX' (BM Central Archive, Original Papers, 1878 P 782).

BM 22503 (80-7-19, 1). *Senn.*, p. 20, text C1. Length 26.3 cm; maximum diameter at middle 14.1, at end 10.7. This was the first cylinder found by the

nephew, Nimroud. According to an Arabic label attached to it, it was found on 25 October 1879, in the 'first foundations' of Chamber VII. Hormuzd, who will have received details of the find direct from his nephew, says that it was found in the 'small pillar at the entrance', i.e. between doors d and e (BM, Western Asiatic Correspondence, H. Rassam to S. Birch, letter of 4 December 1879, including a rubbing of the text).

BM 22504 (80-7-19, 2). *Senn.*, p. 20, text C2. Length 25.9 cm; maximum diameter at middle 13.9, at end 10.8. This was Nimroud's second cylinder. According to its Arabic label, it was found on 22 November 1879, in the 'second foundations' of Chamber VII. These 'second foundations', contrasted with those in which BM 22503 was found, may be the wall between doors c and d. A rubbing of part of this was apparently made later by Nimroud (BM, Western Asiatic Correspondence, Annie Rassam to S. Birch, letter of 7 April 1880).

Istanbul (formerly BM 80-7-19, 3). Not listed in *Senn.*; a copy of part of this text, from line 65 to the end, is bound into the BM Western Asiatic Departmental copy of G. Smith's *History of Sennacherib*; the cylinder's size is given in the Department's register as 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  by 5 by 4 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches, or about 24.5 by 12.7 by 10.5 cm. This was Nimroud's third cylinder, which was found, according to a note on the envelope in which rubbings of it were sent to London, on 20 January 1880, in the 'foundations', or surely the wall, between Chambers VII and VIII (BM Central Archive, Original Papers, 1880 P 2053).

BM 22500 (81-2-4, 42). *Senn.*, p. 20, text C4. Length 25.9 cm; maximum diameter at middle 14.1, at end 10.1. This was apparently found before December 1880, when it is likely to have been dispatched to England from Baghdad, and we may presume that it too was found in a wall, but I have not located any reference to its excavation.

The four BM cylinders, and probably the Istanbul one, are so like one another that they were clearly produced according to one scheme, but there are slight differences between them. Thus the surface of 22504 is less well smoothed than that of the

<sup>1</sup> *Senn.*, p. 20, text A1.

<sup>2</sup> *Senn.*, p. 21, texts F1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Reade, *JCS* 27 (1975) p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Reade, *RA* 72 (1978) p. 54, Fig. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Senn.*, p. 20, text B1.

<sup>6</sup> H. Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (1897) p. 222: 'I aimed not only to clear out all the chambers of the débris, but actually to break down every wall that seemed likely to contain relics of the past.'

<sup>7</sup> They were published as a group by B.T.A. Evetts, *ZA* 3 (1888) pp. 311–31, with a note about provenance on p. 327. The accounts given by R.D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal* (1976) p. 23, nn. 12, 14, and p. 24, text and n. 10, are inconsistent.

remainder, and more chaff is visible in its clay. The ends of 22501 are very slightly convex, whereas those of the others are very slightly concave. These two were almost certainly written, as Dr Finkel confirms to me, by two different scribes, while a third scribe is likely to have been responsible for 22500, 22503, and (to judge by the rubbings) the Istanbul piece. Obviously many others were manufactured at the same time.

All the cylinders are dated in the month of Ayaru during the eponymy of Mitunu, governor of Isana, the precise day not being specified; this corresponds roughly to May 700 B.C. So we may deduce that some of the mudbrick walls of Chambers VII-IX, in the area on the north and west sides of Court VI of the South-West Palace, were being constructed at or after this date.

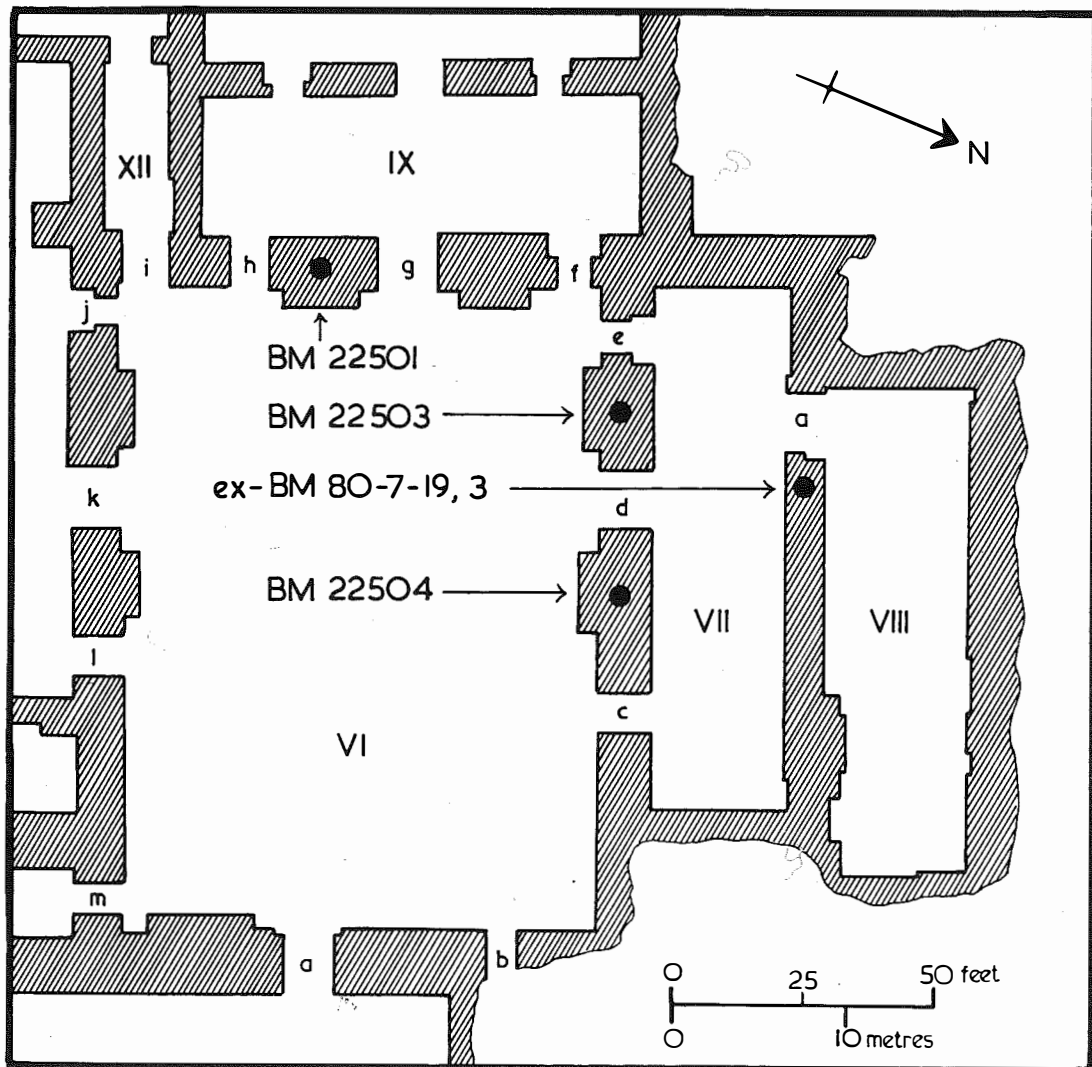


Figure 1  
Part of the South-West Palace, Nineveh,  
with suggested positions of foundation cylinders. Redrawn by Ann Searight.