§0. The Museum of Ancient Cultures at Macquarie University, Sydney, houses five royal inscriptions, which date to the reigns of Gudea of Lagash, Ur-Ningeşzida of Ešnunna, Shalmaneser III of Assyria, and Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia. Two of the brick inscriptions, MU 2148 and MU 2145, were purchased for the Museum by Professor Edwin Judge from Charles Ede Ltd. in London during September 1983. The other brick inscription (MU 4704), is the most recent addition to the collection and was purchased by the Museum from Bonhams auction house, London, in May 2012. One of the cones (MU 4128) was purchased by the Museum from Collector Antiquities, London, in March 2008. Finally, the other cone (MU 4028) is on permanent loan to the Museum from a private collection.

§1. MU 4028 (cone)
RIME 3/1.1.7.63
Reign of Gudea, ca. 2100 BC
Girsu
92mm

Transliteration | Translation
---|---
1. d₄nin-gēl-zi-da | For Ningirsu,
2. dingir-ra-ni | mighty warrior
3. gu₁₂-de₂-a | of Enlil,
4. ensi₂ | governor
5. lagākī | of Lagai,
6. tē₂₂ga₂₃tum₂₂-du₁₁₀-ke₄ | together with Gatumdu,
7. e₂₂gir₂₃suʰ₃-ka³-ni | his house of Girsu
8. mu-na-du₃ | build.

§1.1. Commentary
The Macquarie artifact is the 99th known exemplar of this inscription on either clay cones or bricks.¹ The pointed end of the cone is broken off just after the end of the inscription. The inscription itself is, however, in excellent condition and with the exception of the middle of line six the whole inscription is perfectly preserved. The inscription commemorates Gudea’s construction work on a temple in Girsu for Ningeşzida, which suggests that Girsu (modern Tello) is the provenience of this cone.

§2. MU 4128 (Cone)
RIME 3/1.1.7.37
Reign of Gudea, ca. 2100 BC
Probably Girsu
122mm

Transliteration | Translation
---|---
1. d₄nin-gir₂-su | For Ningirsu,
2. ur-sag kal-ga | mighty warrior
3. d₄en-lil₂-la₂-ra | of Enlil,
4. gu₁₂-de₂-a | did Gudea,
5. ensi₂ | governor
6. lagākī | of Lagai,
7. nï₈₂-ul-e pa mu-na-e₃ | make primordial things shine, (and)
8. e₂₂ninmu anzu₂₂ muen₃-babbar₃-ra-ni | the E-ninnu-anzā-babbar
9. mu-na-du₃ | build
10. ki-be₂ mu-na-gi₄ | and restore.

¹ See the table in Edzard 1997: no. 3/1.7.63; Steible 1991: 331-332; de Genouillac 1936: 129, pl. 46.
§2.1. Commentary
This is the most common inscription from Gudea’s reign and is found on bricks, blocks, tablets, door sockets and, as is the case here, cones. Copies of the inscription have been recovered from Girsu, Adab, and modern Madain. The inscription commemorates Gudea’s rebuilding and refurbishment of the E-ninnan-zu-babbar, “The House of Fifty White Anzû-birds.”

§3. MU 4704 (Brick)
RIME 4.5.8.1
Reign of Ur-Ningešzida, ca. 1800 BC
Ešnunna, 327×330mm

Transliteration
1. ur-dnin-geš-zi-da
2. na-ra-am
3. dišpak
4. ensi
5. aš-nun-naki

Translation
1. Ur-Ningešzida,
2. beloved
3. of Tišpak,
4. governor
5. of Ešnunna.

§3.1. Commentary
MU 4704 is another exemplar of Ur-Ningešzida’s standard brick inscription recovered from Ešnunna, and should be added to those listed in RIME 4.5.8.1. While the brick is complete, there is some superficial damage to the inscription. This damage has affected signs in the center and right of the inscription. The inscription comprises Ur-Ningešzida’s basic title and epithet.

§4. MU 2148 (Brick)
Reign of Shalmaneser III, ca. 800 BC
Kalhu/Nimrud 254×153mm

Transliteration
1. [1] dšilim-št-ša man gal-[u₂ man dan-nu]
2. Šar bili
3. z nin e-sagila
4. šu zida
5. ša dna ša-re-du
6. ša ziqqurrati ša kalhu

Translation
1. Shalmaneser, great king, strong king, king of the totality, king of Assyria, son of Assurnasirpal, great king, strong king, king of the totality, king of Assyria, (who built) the construction of the ziqqurat of Kalhu.

§4.1. Commentary
MU 2148 can confidently be identified as another exemplar of Walker’s CBI no. 159, and should be added to those listed in RIMA 3.0.102.111. The brick is heavily damaged. The top-left corner is broken off, and the damage to the right side and bottom edge of the brick has affected the inscription. It appears that up to three or four signs are missing on the right side of the brick. Much of the face of the brick has been worn away, more so on the right side than the left. Despite this, much of the inscription can still be read. The inscription commemorates Shalmaneser’s construction of the ziqqurat, which was likely to have been initiated by his father, Assurnasirpal II.

§5. MU 2145 (Brick)
Reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, ca. 550 BC
Borsippa 215×162mm

Transliteration
1. dna₃ ku-du-ur₂-riₙ-urₙ
2. lugal babila₂
3. za-ni-in e₂-sag-il₂
4. u₂ e₂-zi-da
5. ša dna₃ ša-re-du
6. ša ša dna₃-ša-re-du
7. lugal babila₂

Translation
1. nabû-kudurri-uṣur
2. šar babil
3. zānin e-sagila
4. u e-zi-da

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2 Edzard 1997: 135. However, the reading of the temple name follows that of George 1993: 134.
4 On the history of the patronage of this temple see George 1993: nos. 897-898.
§5.1. Commentary
The edges of MU 2145 are damaged on all sides; fortunately, the inscription is complete. However, the right hand side of the inscription is quite faint. This is the standard brick inscription from Nebuchadnezzar’s reign with numerous examples in collections throughout the world, though some with different arrangement of lines. The brick’s provenience would, based on its mention of the Ezida and the fact that no neo-Babylonian finds have been made at Kalhu/Nimrud, appear to be Borsippa (Birs Nimrud), although we cannot with certainty rule out one of the Babylonian cities of Babylon, Kutha, Isin, Sippar, Seleucia, Susa and Tell ed-Der.

§6. Photographs of the royal inscriptions

§6.1. MU 4028

§6.2. MU 4128

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§6.3. MU 4704

§6.4. MU 2148
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§6.5. MU 2145