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THE ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS
AT TELL ZURGHUL, ANCIENT NIGIN, IRAQ.
FINAL REPORT OF THE SEASONS 2015-2017

EDITED BY
DAVIDE NADALI AND ANDREA POLCARO

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FOREWORD

The Italian Archaeological Expedition to Nigin of Sapienza University of Rome and University of Perugia started excavations at Tell Zurghul in 2015: a survey and three excavations seasons were carried out in the period between 2016 and 2017. This volume presents the results of the archaeological explorations with the analysis of the stratigraphic and architectural contexts of Area A, B and D as well as the study of the pottery from the contexts so far investigated and the survey in Area C in the western sector of the site.

Tell Zurghul is a site of about 70 ha in the modern province of Dhi Qar in Southern Iraq; it belongs, together with Tello/Girsu and al-Hiba/Lagaš, to the ancient State of Lagaš: starting from the very beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, Tell Zurghul can in fact be identified with the ancient Sumerian city of Nigin. Cuneiform sources dating from the first and second dynasties of Lagaš testify the intensive building activities of the rulers, mainly related to the important temple dedicated to the city goddess Nanše. In fact, Nigin was an important religious centre of the ancient State of Lagaš, and Gudea states that he purposely dug a canal from Girsu to Nigin (the so-called “Canal going to Nigin”) he regularly used to reach the city on the occasion of festivals, ceremonies and visits to the temple. The regulation of water, with the digging of canals and the management of the area of the marshes around the settlement, is an activity that involved, at several times, the rulers of Lagaš: in this respect, it is interesting to point out that Nanše, the patron deity of Nigin, is not only Enki’s daughter, but she is specifically linked to aquatic species, birds and fish, with a clear indication of the importance of the ancient environment and landscape for the development and growth of the city.

The importance of the shape and features of the ancient environment and landscape has been at the centre of the archaeological investigations at Tell Zurghul: next to archaeological operations, the programme of research also encompassed the study of the ancient landscape, pointing to the reconstruction of the waterscape of the ancient State of Lagaš, in particular for what concerns the proximity of the sea and, more importantly, the phenomenon of the sea ingression that occurred in the Early- and Mid-Holocene period (about 6500-6000 yr BP). The reconstruction so far made showed that Tell Zurghul was in fact in the middle of a lagoon system of brackish water, an environment that favoured the life of species, such as the bull sharks, whose vertebrae have been found in the archaeological context of Area B.

The site had already been briefly investigated, in 1887, by Robert Koldewey during his visit to southern Iraq in the region of the ancient State of Lagaš: his works concentrated on the two mounds, with two narrow and deep soundings, and in other areas of the site (along the North-Western side and in the space in between the two mounds). Unfortunately, little information of his works is known: Koldewey published only one report, but he does not properly give any useful archaeological information, his conclusions on the nature and chronology of the site are misleading and untenable.

The explorations so far conducted, for example, on the two mounds (Area B and Area D), definitely showed a different pattern and picture of the occupation and development of the site. On the one hand, excavations of the top and South-Western slope of Mound B revealed the superimposition of at least 5 architectural phases of a sacred building dating

from the Ubaid 4 period, with the recovery of typical Ubaid findings such as clay cones, black painted vessels, clay sickles and both painted and unpainted censers. On the other, excavations on the Southern slope of the main Mound A, to the South of the soundings made by Koldewey, a system of artificial terracing has been identified: terraces and plastered platforms are probably to be ascribed to the work of rehabilitation of the area of the temple of Nanše by Gudea of Lagaš. Investigation in this area also revealed what seems to be the latest occupation of the site at the very beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, as it is also documented by the finding of fragments of 2nd millennium pottery in the lower city, to the South of Mound A (those fragments collapsed, together with the baked bricks and clay cones with Gudea's inscriptions, from the uppermost layers of the mound) and in the survey Area C.

Area C was surveyed in 2015 and 2017 and, even if open area excavations have not already been performed, an extended part of the North-Western sector of the city was largely surveyed, with the collections of several surface materials and the identification of topographical and architectural features. The area seems quite well delimited to the East by a white large strip of what looks like an inner water canal running within the city, and possible changing its course during different chronological phases. Along the white strip on the ground, an elongated relief delimits on the ground this peripheral sector of the city, that, in particularly during the 2nd millennium BC, but also in earlier periods, seems to have been exclusively used as a productive area. This explains the presence of installations and workshops for the production and manufacture of goods, such as pottery and metals (different types of slags have been collected during the survey). In particular the presence of a small mound characterized by heavy deposits of ashy soil on the surface is noteworthy: here, a large kiln for the production of pottery has been discovered during the operation of scraping.

This volume is therefore the result of the combination of several works: in particular, it aims to present a comprehensive study and analysis of pottery types, from the contexts dating from the Ubaid period to the latest phases of occupation in the early centuries of 2nd millennium BC. We are in fact strongly convinced that a new wave of Mesopotamian archaeology must necessarily encompass and be founded on the systematic study of pottery: the identification of recurrent types, the modes of production, chronological issues. This can be precisely done thanks to the exam of material culture from sure and stratified contexts that can then be compared and integrated with textual data, architectural features and, when possible, C14 datings. At the same time, the volume presents the architectural evidence of the buildings so far discovered as well as the geological studies and the analysis of the faunal remains as to reconstruct the ancient landscape and environment of the site within the region of the ancient State of Lagaš through the millennia.

Acknowledgements

We wish to warmly thank the Iraqi cultural authorities of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Baghdad and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Iraq. We wish to specially thank Dr. Ahmad Kamil, former General Director of the SBAH, who granted us with the permission for the excavation at Tell Zurghul in 2014 and constantly supported our work, and Dr. Qais Rasheed, former General Director of the SBAH, who renewed, in 2019, our permission for the continuation of the archaeological excavations and research at Tell Zurghul for the period 2019-2023. A very special thank goes to Dr. Abdulmir al-Hamdani, who has been recently appointed Minister of Culture of the Republic of Iraq, for his friendship, continuous support and suggestions, and to Prof. Abbas al-Hussainy for his friendship, priceless help, for sharing with us his knowledge of Mesopotamian archaeology.

Excavations have been made possible thanks to the financial support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the grant “Grandi Scavi di Ateneo” of Sapienza University of Rome. A financial support was also given by the Italian Ministry of University and Research thanks to the grant “FIRB – Futuro in Ricerca”, a joint research programme of Sapienza University of Rome, University of Perugia and University of Cagliari.

For the support of our research in Iraq, we wish to thank H.E. Ahmad A.H. Bamarni, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq in Italy, and his predecessors, and H.E. Bruno Antonio Pasquino, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy in Iraq, and his predecessors: our work in Iraq has been made possible thanks to their important cooperation and help.

We wish to thank Prof. Lorenzo Nigro who, as scientific editor of *Quaderni di Vicino Oriente*, accepted the publication of our field report in the series and Dr Daria Montanari for her work of editing and her cooperation.

Finally, we wish to thank our Iraqi friends and workers of Zurghul who contributed to make Iraq our second home, with their warm friendship and hospitality: the results we are here presenting have been possible thanks to their cooperation and love for the archaeological heritage of their Country.

Davide Nadali
Andrea Polcaro

INSCRIBED OBJECTS FROM ZURGHUL, ANCIENT NINA/NÎĠIN¹

Lorenzo Verderame - Sapienza University of Rome

This article surveys the inscribed artefacts found in Tell Zurghul (Nina/NîĠin) for which an origin from this site can be advanced. A history of the archaeological excavations, early travellers' visits, and local peoples' frequentation of the site is sketched, and a discussion of the surface findings and the objects appeared in the antiquities market is provided.

Keywords: Mesopotamia; cuneiform; royal inscriptions; Gudea; early travellers

This article surveys the inscriptions found in Tell Zurghul or for which a provenance from Nina/NîĠin can be argued. Accordingly, the objects are distributed between those coming from excavations and those from random surveys of the site or from the antiquity market.

Systematic excavations of Tell Zurghul are limited to the brief campaign of Koldewey in 1887 (§ 1.1.) and the Italian Archaeological Expedition to NîĠin, which began in 2015 (§ 1.3), to which occasional surveys of the area by archaeological missions excavating other tells in the neighborhood can be added (§ 1.2.). All these archaeological activities on the tell have provided mainly Gudea's inscriptions commemorating the building of the Sirara temple for the goddess Nanše (§ 4.2.1.). The frequentation of the site by local people (§ 2.2.)² as well as by early voyagers and excavators (§ 2.1.), produced a series of inscribed objects that were acquired by European and American collections. Without secure provenance, the attribution of such objects to ancient Nina/NîĠin can be argued from the content of the inscription, and also by indirect references in documentary sources (travel notes, museum catalogues, etc.).

1. EXCAVATIONS OR CONTEMPORARY SURVEYS OF TELL ZURGHUL

1.1. *Koldewey's excavation (1887)*

The only excavation prior to the ongoing Italian Archaeological Expedition to NîĠin (§ 1.3.) is that of Robert Koldewey in 1887. The campaign lasted a month and a half, from 4th January to 26th February, and concentrated on the necropolis.³ Besides a brief article of Koldewey on the graves,⁴ the results of this campaign are unpublished.⁵ The surface findings include at least eight clay nails inscribed with the Gudea commemorative inscription for the building of the Sirara (§ 4.2.1.) which have been published in copy by L. Messerschmidt in the first volume of the *Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der*

¹ My gratitude goes to Benjamin Foster, Ulla Kasten, and Agnete Wissti Lassen for their support during my recent stay at Yale and research on the Dougherty archive files; and to Claudia Suter for bring to my attention Reade 2002.

² The site shows no traces of smuggling.

³ Koldewey 1887, 406; Huh 2008, 246.

⁴ Koldewey 1887.

⁵ See Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 16, fn. 3.

Königlichen Museen zu Berlin.⁶ Part of Koldewey's findings is a fragment of a clay nail bearing the inscription of Gudea commemorating the building and restoration of the Eninnu (§ 4.2.2.)⁷, and an alabaster plaque said to have been bought in Zurghul (§ 4.2.4.)⁸

1.2. *Post-World War II fortuitous visits to the site*

The site of Zurghul has been visited since the rediscovery of ancient Mesopotamian civilization and even before (§ 2.). However, these early visitors, explorers, and archaeologists made scanty and vague references to the exact spot or even the place of their findings. Moreover, it is very difficult to divine where the objects picked up in these visits and surveys are currently held. Modern excavators are more careful in recording their findings, although the pieces may have ended up in the Iraq Museum without an accession number.

The site of Zurghul has been occasionally surveyed by excavation teams digging other sites nearby, particularly al-Hiba and Tello.⁹ This is the case for the joint mission of the Metropolitan Museum and New York University to Tell al-Hiba (Lagaš). In two brief visits to Tell Zurghul during the first two campaigns in the early 1970s, 20 inscribed objects were recovered. The objects were turned over the Directorate General of Antiquities and kept in the Iraq Museum, but their accession number is unknown.¹⁰ 18 of the 20 inscribed objects bear the dedicatory inscription of Gudea for the construction of the Sirara for Nanše (§ 4.2.1.); four of these objects are bricks and twelve are cones.¹¹ A clay nail bearing a Gudea building inscription for the god Nindub(a) (§ 4.2.3.) and an Enannatum I building inscription of the Ebgal for Inanna (§ 4.1.1.) was also found.

In 1984, the same mission again visited Tell Zurghul when, fragments of five clay nails and one brick were recovered on the surface of the tell.¹² They all bear Gudea's inscription commemorating the construction of the Sirara for Nanše (§ 4.2.1.).

1.3. *Italian Archaeological Expedition to Niġin (2015-2017)*

In 2015, the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Niġin begun its activity in Tell Zurghul. The epigraphic findings of the first campaign are surface fragments of 13 clay cones and 15 bricks bearing Gudea's inscription commemorating the construction of the

⁶ Messerschmidt - Ungnad 1907, vi, specify that the clay nails VA 2203 and VA 2332-2338 come from Zurghul, while for the other fragments listed (clay nails VA 2597, 3063, 3065, 3066; two bricks fragments, VA 66 and 67) they provide no further details.

⁷ VA 3060 (VS 1, 14); Gudea 48 = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.37 ex. 116; Black 1990, 72 3a. Messerschmidt - Ungnad 1907, vi, report "3060 (Fragment aus Surghul)." In Steible 1991, 307 source Z, the exemplar from Zurghul is wrongly recorded as VA 3062 and in Edzard 1997, 135 the provenance from Zurghul is omitted.

⁸ VA 2339 (VS 1, 13); Gudea 17 = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.14; Black 1990, 72, 4a.

⁹ I hereby mention only modern excavation missions, discussing in the successive section § 2. the discoveries of early excavators which have left no precise record of the findings, besides a generic reference to the site of Zurghul.

¹⁰ In the preface to the edition of the inscriptions, Biggs states that he collated the texts in the Iraq Museum in 1972 (Biggs 1976), proving that the objects are kept in the museum.

¹¹ Gudea 29 = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.26; see tab. 1. See Biggs 1976, 12; Black 1990, 72; Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 18.

¹² Black 1990.

Sirara for Nanše (§ 4.2.1.).¹³ In 2017, a fragment of an inscribed brick bearing an inscription mentioning the *gi-gu₃-na-mah* of Nanše (§ 4.1.2.), possibly from the Early Dynastic period, was unearthed during the cleaning of one of the trenches opened by Koldewey.

2. EARLY EXPLORATIONS

2.1. *Early Western travellers and explorers*

The site of Zurghul was visited during the earliest excavations in Southern Iraq. In 1854, Taylor was the first to draw his “archaeological” interest toward Zurghul, but he never visited the site personally and instead sent one of his agents.¹⁴ According to a report of Taylor’s activities sent by Rawlinson to the “Principal Librarian” of the British Museum, Sir Henry Ellis, Taylor was not able to obtain “specimens of the inscribed bricks and pottery with which the ruins are said to be covered.”¹⁵ However, “an inventory, dated ‘Maagill June 1855’, of objects sent to London on board the *Christiana Cornell*,” refers to one brick and one clay nail from Zurghul collected by Taylor. Sollberger advances that other two clay nails of Gudea that accessed in the British Museum in 1856,¹⁶ may well be part of Taylor’s collection of objects from Zurghul.¹⁷ According to the British Museum internal catalogue, these objects come from Zurghul, but the dealer was W. K. Loftus. During his 1853 exploration, Loftus may well have visited Zurghul and recovered relics on the surface of the tell. However, there was no reference to Zurghul in his narrative of the exploration of Southern Iraq¹⁸, and it could be argued that for some reason these objects were gathered by Taylor but ended up delivered by, or registered under, Loftus at the British Museum¹⁹.

After Taylor, Tell Zurghul was visited by other “archaeologists” or mentioned in their travel reports.²⁰ In *Decouvertes en Chaldée*, E. de Sarzec gives a brief description of the

¹³ For an analysis of this inscription and its witnesses see Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 17-19.

¹⁴ See the discussion below.

¹⁵ Sollberger 1972, 139, § 26.

¹⁶ BM 30064 = 56-9-3, 1478; BM 30067 = 56-9-3, 1481.

¹⁷ Sollberger 1972, 139, fn. 27. Note that Smith 1872, 33, gives the provenance of these clay nails as from “Zerghul.”

¹⁸ Loftus 1857.

¹⁹ See the discussion below (§ 3.4.).

²⁰ For instance, De Liedekerke-Beaufort 1914, 114-115, mentions Zurghul, but he does not specify if he visited the site. Similarly, in the British Museum catalogue, several objects from the Lagaš area are said to be the result of the final mission of George Smith (1876). Sayce 1867, 126, states that “he made his way to Bagdad, where he procured between two and three thousand tablets discovered by some Arabs in an ancient Babylonian library near Hillah;” among these tablets could well have been the artefacts from the Lagaš area. Rassam 1897, 276, refers to hands of a Gudea’s statue from Ġirsu (Tello) that were sold to Smith; see fn. 68. An article called “Babylonian Antiquities” by the London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* 1877, March 17 (republished with the same title in other British and American newspapers), reported: “The main portion of the Babylonian antiquities just received at the British Museum as the result of the last expedition of Mr. George Smith was found near Hillah, a town about three miles north from the site of Babylon. ... Among the antiquities are some early Babylonian bricks, and fragments of statuary of a king hitherto unknown in the city of Zergul, called at this day by the slightly-varied form of Zerghul.” However, it is highly improbable that Smith visited personally Zurghul and these objects may well be acquired by Smith through agents sent on the

ruins and hills dominating the site.²¹ Zurghul was then visited by W.H. Ward in 1885 (31st January) during the Wolfe Expedition led by the same Ward.²²

It is possible that both de Sarzec and Ward picked up relics from the surface of Zurghul.²³ Ward does not state it in his report, but J.P. Peters, who was part of the Wolfe expedition and who possibly visited the site together with Ward,²⁴ published an extract of Ward's diary where more details are given.

I found a few uninscribed cones to the south of the ziggurat, also a few fragments of inscribed cones ... The smaller hill north of the ziggurat has graves, and I found there a piece of an inscribed cone. A great field of graves to the northwest has been explored by Arabs, and there are burial pots also to the west and to the southwest. No flint saws were picked up, and only two small inscribed bricks were found here, badly worn, like the ones found on the platform, and apparently like some found at Tello, probably put in a grave. Afterward another brick was found, complete, with inscriptions in two columns, the left-hand side having seven single lines and one double ... On the hill I bought of an Arab a piece of a monstrous worn marble cylinder, which may have been the top of a staff, engraved in archaic style with bulls, and said to have been found on Zerghul.²⁵

In 1926, R.P. Dougherty surveyed the sites of Southern Iraq and visited Zurghul. "Portions of bricks" and a part of a clay nail with the Gudea dedicatory inscription for the Sirara of Nanše were picked up.²⁶ The clay nail mentioned by Dougherty may be the one kept in the Yale Babylonian collection and published by Ferris as *YOS IX 104* (YBC 2306).²⁷ Dougherty became curator of the Yale Babylonian Collection from 1926 to 1933.

site or probably from antiques dealers. What the origin of these tablets may be, Smith's lot of Neo-Sumerian texts shows that the area of Lagaš was already digged by locals long before the expedition of de Sarzec.

²¹ de Sarzec 1912, 3-4.

²² Ward 1886, 21-22.

²³ In the case of de Sarzec, these objects may well be ended up with the findings of the Tello excavation; see the discussion below (§ 3.4.).

²⁴ Ward 1886, 5.

²⁵ Peters 1897, 341-342.

²⁶ Dougherty 1927, 56-57. In a recent visit to the Yale Babylonian Collection I viewed through Dougherty's belongings kept in the collection, particularly the original notes and negatives of the Mesopotamian survey. However, neither Dougherty's notes nor the Yale Babylonian Collection catalogue have yielded any clue about the objects collected by Dougherty in Mesopotamia. In the Yale Babylonian Collection catalogue, eight objects with Gudea inscriptions bear no information about the acquisition (MLC 267, MLC 2675, NBC 8670, NCBT 2274, YBC 2160, YBC 4654, YBC 4754, YBC 4755) and a provenance from Dougherty's survey for some of them can be hypothesised at least.

²⁷ Steible 1991, 279, Gudea 29 source D; *RIME* 3/1.01.07.026 ex. 40. In Steible 1991, 279, and CDLI the object is erroneously labeled as a brick (Backsteine). According to the Yale Babylonian Collection catalogue, the clay nail YBC 2306 joined the collection on 02.03.35.

No wonder the findings of his survey in Southern Iraq may have taken their way for the collection he was curator.²⁸

2.2. *Frequentation of the site by locals*

It is usually reported that the site of Tell Zurghul was “discovered” by J. G. Taylor,²⁹ during his survey of Southern Iraq sites in 1854. However, as for Tello,³⁰ the vestige of Zurghul were not a discovery of the Western travellers. Local people were accustomed with these ruins and may have recovered objects emerging from the surface and then sold it to antique dealers or to the Western visitors and archaeologists.³¹ On the contrary, early explorers and excavators were led by the information of local people. In his article on Taylor’s activities in Chaldea, Sollberger states that in Southern Iraq he “discovered many other sites, such as Zerghul.”³² However, in the final letters on Taylor’s activity transcribed by Sollberger in his article,³³ Rawlinson writes that

Mr Taylor also obtained information of another ruined city in the desert named “Zerghul” and further sent an Agent to examine it whose report was exceedingly favorable, but the necessity of his own immediate return to Bussorah to prepare for the reception of the new Persian Mission prevented his visiting the place in person or even obtaining specimens of the inscribed bricks and pottery with which the ruins are said to be covered.

In the report about his visit on the region, De Liedekerke-Beaufort writes that “Dans la region de Souq-esh-Shuyukh, ... Le commerce des antiquités y est très actif.”³⁴ Ancient sites were traditionally visited and pilled by local people. Gathering surface objects is a common and diffused practice in Iraq where ancient ruins are quarried for building materials, particularly stone. Occasional findings may occur during agricultural works, but intentional excavations date before the archaeological exploration of the region, when the

²⁸ Note, however, that there is no mention to Dougherty’s findings in the Yale Babylonian Collection catalogue; see fn. 26. As for the objects edited in *YOS IX*, Ferris 1937, vii, refers to pieces that “have been acquired by purchase from antiquity dealers throughout the periods of curatorship of the late Professor Albert T. Clay, the late Dr. Ettalene M. Grice, the late Professor Raymond P. Dougherty, and (since 1933) the writer.” In *YOS IX*, only one brick from the Gudea period is recorded. It is YBC 2334 (= *YOS IX* 107), bearing a copy of Gudea 48 (Steible 1991, 304, source B = RIME 3/1.01.07.037 ex. 2). It accessed the Babylonian collection a month after the clay nail YBC 2306 (see fn. 27). No picture or copy of the object has been published. Ferris 1937, 25, describes the brick as “wedge shaped, with a slightly curved base. It is such a brick as was used for the building of round pillars.” This cannot be the bricks found in Zurghul by Dougherty described as “portions of bricks” bearing the inscription of Gudea commemorating the building of the Sirara for Nanše (Dougherty 1927, 57 and fn. 137).

²⁹ Sollberger 1972, 131.

³⁰ See Verderame 2008, 240.

³¹ See the discussion below about the foundation tablet with “pseudo-arabic” inscription kept in the Schøyen collection (§ 3.4.).

³² Sollberger 1972, 131.

³³ Sollberger 1972, 139, § 26.

³⁴ De Liedekerke-Beaufort 1914, 114.

antiquity market spurred local initiative. Since ancient antiquity, the idea of treasures hidden in ancient mounds was widespread. The big statues emerging from the ground were part of the cultural geography of the region, which became part of local folklore. One of the Gudea statues from Tello was called by locals “the old Tello.”³⁵ Furthermore, big emerging statues were believed to hide treasures – and were used as targets for locals’ gun exercises.

3. “UNPROVENANCED” OBJECTS

Local frequentation of the ancient sites led to finds that were acquired by private collections or public museums via the antiquity markets, as were objects gathered by early travellers. For most of these objects, tracing their origin and subsequent journeys to their ultimate destination is almost impossible. A description of the object in the traveller’s notes, or details in the museum catalogue, may give clues to identify an “ancient” recovered object with a “modern” exemplar or to reconstruct the provenance of the artefacts; beyond this remains a matter of conjecture.

As for ancient Nina/Niġin, I would advance a provenance from Tell Zurghul for at least the four objects discussed below. It should be mentioned here, however, that the Lagaš rulers’ practice of depositing inscriptions elsewhere the commemorated building/site,³⁶ make more difficult fulfil this task based only on textual internal references. Inscriptions commemorating the building and restoration of the temple of Nanše by Gudea have been found in different sites,³⁷ thus the mention of Nina/Niġin or Sirara does not directly imply a provenance from Tell Zurghul.

3.1. *A clay nail from the de Briailles collection*

Two Gudea inscribed objects were kept in the private collection of Count Chandon de Briailles³⁸ and were published by M. Lambert.³⁹ One is a stone tablet bearing the dedication inscription of Gudea for the building of Ninġišzida’s temple in Ġirsu;⁴⁰ the other is a clay nail bearing Gudea’s commemorative inscription for the building of Nanše’s temple (Gudea 32 = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.28). This is the only known example of this inscription.

It is not unequivocal,⁴¹ but can be considered as the most basic or abbreviated form of the Gudea inscriptions commemorating the building of the Sirara (§ 4.2.1.). Both objects in the Chandon de Briailles’ collection are unprovenanced, but an origin from Tell Zurghul for the clay nail with the dedication to Nanše cannot be excluded.

³⁵ de Sarzec 1912, 5; see fn. 68.

³⁶ This is well-known and documented for Gudea, see Braun-Holzinger 1997 and Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 18-19. The clay nail of Enannatum I, commemorating the building of Eanna of Inanna found in Zurghul (§ 4.1.1.), seems to point at an older and radicated tradition.

³⁷ Braun-Holzinger 1997; Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 18-19.

³⁸ The objects are no longer in this collection and went lost or sold; one of them (fn. 40) recently re-emerged on the antiquity market, see Földi 2013, § 4.1.

³⁹ Lambert 1953.

⁴⁰ Gudea 68C = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.64 ex. 3.

⁴¹ The town of Nina/Niġin is not mentioned and the text may well refer to another Nanše’s temple elsewhere in the Lagaš area.

1.	¹⁾	^d n an š e	For Nanše,
2.	²⁾	n in -u r u ₁₆	the powerful lady,
3.	³⁾	n in -a -n i	his mistress,
4.	⁴⁾	g u ₃ -d e ₂ -a	Gudea,
5.	⁵⁾	e n s i ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
6.	⁶⁾	l a g a š ^{k1} -k e ₄	of Lagaš,
7.	⁷⁾	e ₂ -a -n i	her temple
8.	⁸⁾	m u -n a -d u ₃	he (re)built for her.

3.2. The London door socket

The story of the door socket with a dedicatory inscription of Gudea found in a London house's debris is a long, complicated, fascinating, and illuminating one.⁴² In 1890, B.T.A. Evetts wrote:

During the destruction, in the course of the past year, of some old houses in Knightrider Street [London], dating from the seventeenth century, the workmen came upon some fragments of black stone bearing marks that looked to them like ancient inscriptions. These stones have now been acquired by the British Museum, and prove to be Chaldean monuments belonging to the earliest period of which we have any knowledge, namely, the pre-Semitic age of Ur-Nina and Gudea, when the Akkadian language was alone in use, and the characters employed in writing were of the most archaic form.⁴³

Evetts wonders “How did these fragments arrive at the place where they were found?”⁴⁴ and, as in a detective story, Evetts brilliantly solves the question through stratigraphy applied to industrial archaeology or simply good logical reasoning. He argues that the Mesopotamian artefacts have been found under the layer of the house built after the great fire of London (1666), thus their deposition is prior to this event. Dutch tiles were also found in the house. Evetts concludes that the artefacts may have been the property of a Dutch merchant living in London who worked for the Dutch East India Company, which, at the time, had a factory in Basrah. Evetts concludes that

Either by a Dutch or an English ship then, it is conceivable that the mysteriously inscribed stones may have reached the Port of London, and have been landed at Paul's Wharf at some time before 1666. They may have been shipped at Bassorah as ballast, or as objects of curiosity.⁴⁵

⁴² Evetts 1890 and Sollberger 1975, 176.

⁴³ Evetts 1890, 54.

⁴⁴ Evetts 1890, 54.

⁴⁵ Evetts 1890, 55.

The three objects found in the house of Knightrider Street (London) are:⁴⁶

1. a fragment of a boundary stone;⁴⁷
2. the so-called ‘mortar’ of Eannatum;⁴⁸
3. and a door socket with Gudea’s inscription commemorating the construction of the Sirara.⁴⁹

The inscription on the door socket (Gudea 31 = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.27; § 4.2.1.) is an extended version of the one found on cones and bricks (§ 4.2.1.), to which two more lines referring to the wall of the sanctuary or of the town are added (ll. 11-12).⁵⁰

1.	¹⁾	^d nanše	For Nanše,
2.	²⁾	nin-uru ₁₆	the powerful lady,
3.	³⁾	nin-in-dub-ba	lady of the boundary marker,
4.	⁴⁾	nin-a-ni	his mistress,
5.	⁵⁾	gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,
6.	⁶⁾	ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
7.	⁷⁾	lagaš ^{k1} -ke ₄	of Lagaš,
8.	⁸⁾	ni ₃ -du ₇ -e pa mu-na-e ₃	made a fitting thing resplendent for her, (namely)
9.	⁹⁾	niĝin ^{k1} uru-ki-aĝ ₂ -ni	in Niĝin, her beloved city,
10.	¹⁰⁾	e ₂ -sirara ₆	her Sirara temple,
11.	¹¹⁾	kur e ₂ -ta il ₂ -la-ni	a mountain lifted above all (other) houses,
12.	¹²⁾	mu-na-du ₃	for her he (re)built
13.	¹³⁾	ki-be ₂ mu-na-gi ₄	and he restored.
14.	¹⁴⁾	[b]ad ₃ -mah-ni	The lofty wall of her (temple/city)
15.	¹⁵⁾	[ki-b]e ₂ mu-na-‘x’	he <i>restored</i> .

In discussing the door socket, Sollberger clearly states that it “came undoubtedly from Zerg hul.”⁵¹ His main argument is that

*whereas a brick or a clay-nail recording the building of a certain edifice may be found on other sites as well, a gate-socket can obviously only come from the building to which it belonged.*⁵²

⁴⁶ Sollberger 1975, 176, fn. 5-7.

⁴⁷ “Almost certainly BM 90836” according to Sollberger 1975, 176, fn. 7.

⁴⁸ BM 90832 (= 1890-10-4, 3); Ean. 62 = *RIME* 1.9.3.11.

⁴⁹ BM 90849 (= 1890-10-4, 2); Gudea 31 = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.27.

⁵⁰ See tab. 1.

⁵¹ Sollberger 1975, 176. Curiously, the provenance from Zurg hul for the stone tablet (BM 135994) and the copper foundation peg (BM 135993) given by Sollberger 1975, has been taken for granted by Steible 1991, 281, Gudea 30 C-D, followed by Edzard 1997, 126 (*RIME* 3/1.1.7.25 ex. 3-4). For the door socket (BM 90849), instead, an unquestioned provenance from Ġirsu is given by Steible 1991, 282, Gudea 31, followed by Edzard 1997, 128. This is the case of a fragment of a brick (BM 90798) which is one of the four witnesses for Gudea 30 B = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.25 ex. 2, together with the above-mentioned stone tablet and copper peg and an unpublished brick (VA 66 = Gudea 30 A = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.25 ex. 1). BM 90798 was acquired by the British Museum from the antiquities market in 1979 (accession number 1979-12-20, 178). Besides its unknown provenance and the mention of Nanše, Nina/Niĝin, and the Sirara, it is labelled by Walker 1981, 20-21, as coming from “Ġirsu (Tello).”

⁵² Sollberger 1975, 176.

3.3. A copper foundation peg (BM 135993) and a foundation stone tablet (BM 135994)

Based on the same assumption, namely that foundation objects “obviously only come from the building to which it belonged,”⁵³ Sollberger believes in a provenance from Zurghul for two recently acquired artefacts published in his article of the 1975. In 1974, the Trustees of the British Museum, with the aid of the National Art-Collections Fund, acquired a copper figurine and a limestone foundation tablet from the antiquities market,⁵⁴ but “nothing is known of its history, except that it had been in a Continental private collection for a considerable time before it reached the London art market.”⁵⁵

Both objects bear the extended version of the dedicatory inscription of Gudea for the Sirara of Nanše, which is found on bricks.⁵⁶

	A	B		
1.	¹⁾	^{o. 1)}	^d nanše	For Nanše,
2.	²⁾	²⁾	nin-uru ₁₆	the powerful lady,
3.	³⁾	³⁾	nin-in-dub-ba	lady of the boundary marker,
4.	⁴⁾	⁴⁾	nin-a-ni	his mistress,
5.	⁵⁾	⁵⁾	gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,
6.	⁶⁾	⁶⁾	ensi ₂ -	ensi
7.	⁷⁾	⁷⁾	lagaš ^{k1} -ke ₄	of Lagaš,
8.	⁸⁾	⁸⁾	ni ₃ -du ₇ -e pa mu-na-e ₃	made a fitting thing resplendent for her, (namely)
9.	⁹⁾	^{r. 1)}	niĝin ^{k1} uru-ki-aĝ ₂ -ĝa ₂ -ni-a	in Niĝin, her beloved city,
10.	¹⁰⁾	²⁾	e ₂ -sirara ₆	her Sirara temple,
11.	¹¹⁾	³⁾	kur e ₂ -ta il ₂ -la-ni	a mountain lifted above all (other) houses,
12.	¹²⁾	⁴⁾	mu-na-du ₃	for her he (re)built
13.	¹³⁾	⁵⁾	ki-be ₂ mu-na-gi ₄	and he restored.

A = BM 135993; B = BM 135994

3.4. The foundation tablet in the Schøyen collection

In 2011, P. Steinkeller published an inscribed object kept in the Schøyen Collection, Oslo (MS 2400).⁵⁷ The artefact is:

A rectangular piano-convex tablet of black stone. ... At its top the tablet has a hole ..., into which is inserted a copper peg, slightly protruding at both ends. It may be surmised that the peg terminated in a metal loop, now completely broken off, which enabled the tablet to

⁵³ This is stated by Sollberger only for the door socket. In introducing the two recently acquired objects, Sollberger 1975, 177, writes of “foundation deposits of the E-Siraran” and gives for granted their provenance from Zurghul.

⁵⁴ BM 135993 (= 1974-1-19, 1); BM 135994 (= 1974-1-19, 2). Both objects have been published and discussed by Sollberger 1975. The figurine is a peg which “supports a plinth on which a bull-calf is seen passing through (or standing amidst) tall reeds, one of them reaching to its nose” (Sollberger 1975, 178); for the description of the copper figurine see Sollberger 1975, 178-179, and Suter 2000, 291-292.

⁵⁵ Sollberger 1975, 177.

⁵⁶ Gudea 30 = RIME 3/1.1.7.25, § 4.2.1.; see the discussion in Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 17-18 and 20.

⁵⁷ For the inscription see below § 4.2.1. and tab. 1.

⁵⁷ Steinkeller 2011, 19-20 no. 15 pl. XI.

*be suspended on a chain or string, and then to be hung up somewhere or worn on the neck as an amulet.*⁵⁸

This is not the only peculiarity of the object. In fact, it is covered by seven lines of cuneiform writing on the obverse and one line on the reverse, for a total of eight lines reproducing a previously unknown inscription of Gudea. It is a dedicatory inscription for the building of the temple of Ninkar(a)⁵⁹ in Nina/Niĝin.

1.	^{o.1)}	^d nin-kar ₂	To Ninkar(a),
2.	²⁾	diĝir-šuba ₃ -an-na	<i>the god – precious stone of the sky,</i> ⁶⁰
3.	³⁾	lugal-a-ni	his lord,
4.	⁴⁾	gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,
5.	⁵⁾	ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
6.	⁶⁾	lagaš ^{k1}	of Lagaš,
7.	⁷⁾	e ₂ -niĝin ^{7k1} -ka-ni	his temple of Nina/Niĝin
8.	^{r.1)}	mu-na-du ₃	(re)built.

An Arabic inscription is engraved successively on the surface of the object. The Arabic inscription is written on the space left by the cuneiform inscription, namely the left, right, and lower edge and most of the reverse. The upper edge has been left blank. The writing of this inscription is “pseudo-Arabic.” The lines are “strings of letters that make no sense, probably to give it an esoteric appearance.”⁶¹

Steinkeller gives no discussion on the provenance of the object or details about how it ended in the Schøyen collection. The mention of Nina/Niĝin may support an origin from Zurgul, particularly if we follow Sollberger’s postulate on foundation objects.⁶² The presence of secondary use of the artefact, namely as an amulet with the addition of a hole and the “pseudo-Arabic” inscription, means that the object was discovered in the past. This is an evidence for the frequentation of the sites by locals (§ 2.2.) and the collection of objects long before Western interest towards Mesopotamian relics.⁶³

⁵⁸ Steinkeller 2011, 19.

⁵⁹ Steinkeller 2011, 19, and Cavigneaux - Krebernik 2000b.

⁶⁰ Or according to Steinkeller 2011, 20, “the ‘Shining one of Heaven’” (^dšuba₃-an-na); compare Šulgi’s described as “the precious stone of the An/sky’s Irigal” (šuba₃-iri₁₂-gal-an-na-me-en₃; *Šulgi X 55*).

⁶¹ J.A. Bellamy *apud* Steinkeller 2011, 19.

⁶² See above.

⁶³ Little is known about the attention towards Mesopotamian history and antiquities in Aramaic, Arabic, and Byzantine literature. This topic is almost neglected in Near Eastern studies. Going back to the Western tradition, the circulation of Mesopotamian relics outside the Ancient Near East may be documented by the seals found in the Thebes (Greece) “treasure” (see most recently Kopanias 2008) and the one in the Templar treasure in the cathedral of Palermo (Italy), as well as the crescent shaped object with cuneiform inscription found in Malta (Cazzella - Pace - Recchia 2011), until the seventeenth century objects found in a London house discussed above (§ 3.2.).

3.5. *Some conclusions on unprovenanced objects*

In another contribution,⁶⁴ I have raised the question of inscriptions found elsewhere than those commemorated in the text. I propose two possible solutions to this question.

- a) Such inscriptions commemorating a building activity were voluntarily engraved on bricks and cones deposited in different sites for celebratory, ritual, or other unknown reasons.
- b) These objects were deposited in the site of which they commemorate the building and successively displaced from their original location to another one; this could have happened in ancient or modern times.⁶⁵

None of the two solutions can be excluded *a priori*. In the first case (a), if the archaeological context of these findings is correct, we must consider that the deposition of inscribed artefacts in places other than that celebrated in the inscription was a common practice of the Lagaš rulers,⁶⁶ not limited to the Gudea (Lagaš II) period. The inscription of Enannatum I, commemorating the building of Eanna found on the surface of Zurghul (§ 4.1.1.), would date this practice to the Early Dynastic and the foundation of the Lagaš kingship.

In the second case (b), there are a wide range of possibilities that may have caused these objects to be displaced from their original context. Limiting the hypothesis to those who were the most reliable or common, objects from one site may well be abandoned on another one for different reasons, such as being the result of legal or illegal excavations in modern times. An old habit from surveys was that to abandon “unimportant” findings on the site. For heavy objects, we know that unsuccessful attempts to remove them caused the displacement of the object around the site⁶⁷ or even worse, such as the removal of pieces of these objects. Rassam mentions a “largest statue” of Gudea from the site of Tello, whose “hands were cut off and sold to the late George Smith, and the bust ... was broken and carried away by the former gentleman”, that is de Sarzec.⁶⁸ Sydney Smith discussing statues of Gudea that have reached European museums at the beginning of 1930’ states that

these larger statues were buried between 1924 and 1929 owing to the expense and risk involved in moving them. Owing to circumstances which I need not recount it became urgently necessary to be rid of the statues that year, and for quite other reasons a rich man appeared - possibly more than one - who found the money. The details of the smuggling I was able as Director of Antiquities in Iraq to establish in only one case, that of the figure now in Paris; but there is no

⁶⁴ Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 18-19.

⁶⁵ For instance, see the comment of Biggs 1976, 2, fn. 7.

⁶⁶ Braun-Holzinger 1997; Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, 18-19.

⁶⁷ This is the case of the door sockets of the temple of Nanna in Ur, which have been moved time after time by visitors (both archaeologists and smugglers) in an unsuccessful attempt to take the heavy stones away. This made them “itinerant” objects, traveling randomly on the site of Ur (Tell Muqayyar) dragged around by the enthusiast discoverer; see the odd account in Chiodi - Mazzei - Pettinato 2007, 403-412.

⁶⁸ Rassam 1897, 276, see also Verderame 2008, 242 and fn. 81. The statue in the Louvre is AO 1 (Gudea Statue D), see Reade 2002, 274-275, 13.

*reasonable doubt that Mr Burney's figure belongs to the same cache and has turned up about the same time for the same reasons ... The head of the statue now in Paris was obtained by the dealer many months before the body; but the identity of the stone has sufficed to convince experts that the two belong together ...*⁶⁹

In addition, we must consider that even for “legal” excavations, material from other sites may have been included in excavation shipping or in museum cataloguing.⁷⁰

In general, the above discussed objects are unprovenanced because their primary archaeological context is unknown. The original context of early findings is not recorded. Furthermore, note that most of the “modern” findings in Tell Zurghul are from the surface of the tell. Only in few cases is the secondary archaeological context of these objects known.⁷¹ Finally, in Assyriological studies a Ġirsu provenance of Gudea inscribed artefacts is given for granted even when the objects have been acquired from the antiquities market.⁷²

4. INSCRIBED OBJECTS FROM TELL ZURGHUL

Most of the epigraphic findings from Zurghul date to the reign of Gudea (§ 4.2.). On the surface of Zurghul were recovered several bricks and cones bearing the inscription of Gudea commemorating the building and restoration of the Sirara of Nanše (§ 4.2.1.). Others are dedicatory inscriptions to Nindub(a) (§ 4.2.3.) and Hendursaġ(a) (§ 4.2.4.). All these inscriptions refer to Sirara or Nina/Niġin (§ 4.2.1.) or to gods of the Nina/Niġin pantheon (§ 4.2.3., § 4.2.4.). Among the Lagaš II findings recovered on the surface of Zurghul is also a cone bearing the Gudea's inscription commemorating the building of the Eninnu (§ 4.2.2.) or other inscriptions referring to buildings other than Nina/Niġin (§ 4.1.1.).

Less representative are the Early Dynastic inscriptions in Zurghul. Today, only two examples are known. One is a long inscription of the chief-barber Šuni-aldugud for Enannatum I (§ 4.1.1.) recovered on the surface of the site during the al-Hiba mission in early 1970s (§ 1.2.). The second is a fragmentary inscription recovered during the 2017 campaign of the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Niġin (§ 4.1.2.).

4.1. *ED Inscriptions*

4.1.1. En. I 30 = RIME 1.09.04.18

In early 1970s, the joint mission of the Metropolitan Museum and New York University to Tell al-Hiba recovered on the surface of Tell Zurghul a fragment of a clay nail bearing a dedicatory inscription of Šuni-aldugud, chief barber of Enannatum I, commemorating the

⁶⁹ The letter, dated 30 June 1931, has been published by Reade 2002, 281.

⁷⁰ For the Lagaš' findings, we have the well documented case of Rassam's surveys, or better raids, on the area. The cuneiform tablets ended up together with the Sippar (Abu Habbah) findings and thus so catalogued in the British Museum; see Verderame 2008.

⁷¹ For Gudea's objects found in Old Babylonian layers see Biggs 1976, 2, fn. 7.

⁷² See for instance Sollberger 1975, 176, fn. 10.

building of the Ebgal for Inanna by the *ensi* of Lagaš and the fashioning of clay nails by the same Šuni-aldugud.⁷³ The Zurghul witness preserves only the lines 13-16.⁷⁴

1.	I ¹⁾	en-an-na-tum ₂	Enannatum,
2.	2)	ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
3.	3)	lagaš ^{k1}	of Lagaš,
4.	4)	mu-pa ₃ -da-	chosen
5.	5)	^d inanna-ka-ke ₄	by Inanna,
6.	6)	eb-gal	the Great Oval
7.	7)	mu-du ₃	he (re)built.
8.	8)	e ₂ -an-na	When the Eanna
9.	9)	kur-kur-ra mu-na- <i>diri-ga-a</i>	he had made exceed over all the foreign countries,
10.	II ¹⁾	u ₄ -ba	in that day,
11.	2)	arad ₂ -ra-ni	his servant,
12.	3)	šu-ni-al-dugud	Šuni-aldugud,
13.	4)	gal-kinda	the chief barber,
14.	5)	nam-nu-banda ₃ -e ₂ -ša ₃ -ga	when the charge of inspector of the inner house
15.	6)	an-na-dah-ha	has been given to him in addition,
16.	7)	KIB mu-dim ₂ -dim ₂	he fashioned clay nails
17.	8)	e ₂ -an-na-ke ₄	and in the Eanna
18.	9)	mu-na-du ₁₁	he <i>affixed</i> them for her/him.

4.1.2. A recently discovered fragment of an Early Dynastic inscribed brick

In 2017, during the cleaning of one of the trenches opened by Koldewey, an inscribed brick fragment (SG.17.BN.185) was unearthed by the Italian Archaeological Expedition to Niġin. The ductus of the inscription suggests an Early Dynastic date. The inscription is fragmentary and the only relevant element is the reference to the gi-gu₃-na-mah of Nanše.⁷⁵ This is mentioned by Eannatum, who celebrates the provision of regular offerings.⁷⁶ Enmetena commemorates the provision of regular offerings and the rebuilding of the gi-gu₃-na-mah as well.⁷⁷ These are large inscriptions mentioning the gi-gu₃-na-mah together with other temples the *ensis* have rebuilt or provided with regular offerings. SG.17.BN.185 is a broken and worn fragment with only three lines of writing preserved, the readable signs do not parallel any of the formulaic expressions of the known inscription mentioning the gi-gu₃-na-mah.

⁷³ Biggs 1976, 13, no. 64.

⁷⁴ ¹⁾ [gal]-kinda ²⁾ [nam-nu-ban]da₃ e₂-[ša₃]-ga ³⁾ [an-n]a-da[h-ha] ⁴⁾ [KIB] mu-[dim₂]-dim₂.

⁷⁵ The gi-gu₃(-na) of Nanše is mentioned also by Gudea: “(For Nanše) he built her beloved gi-gu₃(-na) with aromatic *erin*-wood” (gi-gu₃-ki-aġ₂-(ġa₂)-ni \ šim-erin-na \ mu-na-ni-du₃; Gudea StU = *RIME* 3/1.1.7.StU ll. ii 2³-4³ and FLP un70 ll. r. 5-8).

⁷⁶ gi-gu₃-na-mah \ ^dnanše \ sa₂ še₃-[na]-du₁₁-[du₁₁] (Ean 62 = *RIME* 1.09.03.11 ll. v 2-4).

⁷⁷ ^dnanše \ gi-gu₃-na-mah-ni \ mu-na-du₃ (Ent 1 / *RIME* 1.09.05.17 ll. iii 1-3); ^dnanše gi-gu₃-na-mah-ni \ mu-na-du₃ (Ent 8 = *RIME* 1.09.05.12 ll. vii 5-6). See also Ent 23 = *RIME* 1.09.05.16 ll. 17-18 (gi-gu₃-na-ni \ mu-na-du₃).

4.2. *Lagaš II*4.2.1. Gudea 29-30 = RIME 3/1.1.7.25-26

The inscription on most of the clay nails and bricks found in Zurghul is that of Gudea commemorating the construction of the Sirara for Nanše. Elsewhere, I have argued that this inscription is found in three variants (Tab. 1). The basic twelve lines inscription (a) is found on cones, while bricks add a further line (b). Another version (c) which adds two further lines referring to the restoration of the wall, for a total of 15 lines, is documented only from a door socket kept in the British Museum.⁷⁸

4.2.2. Gudea 48 = RIME 3/1.1.7.37

Among the findings of Koldewey's 1887 excavation (§ 1.1.) is an exemplar of a clay nail⁷⁹ bearing the inscription of Gudea commemorating the building of the Eninnu. This is one of the most diffused inscriptions of Gudea, found on different objects and from various sites.

1.	^{1D)}	^d nin-ġir ₂ -su	To Ninġirsu,
2.	²⁾	ur-saġ-kalag-ga-	the mighty hero
3.	³⁾	^d en-lil ₂ -la ₂ -ra	of Enlil,
4.	⁴⁾	gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,
5.	⁵⁾	ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
6.	⁶⁾	lagaš ^{k1} -ke ₄	of Lagaš,
7.	⁷⁾	niġ ₂ -du ₇ -e pa mu-na/-e ₃	he made a fitting thing resplendent for him:
8.	⁸⁾	e ₂ -ninnu-anzu ₂ (IM/. DUGUD) ^{musen} - babbar ₂ -ra-ni	his (temple) Eninnu-anzu-babbar
9.	^{11D)}	mu-na-du ₃	he (re)built
10.	²⁾	ki-be ₂ mu-na/-gi ₄	and restored.

4.2.3. Gudea 39 = RIME 3/1.1.7.35

One⁸⁰ inscribed cone bearing an inscription of Gudea commemorating the construction of the temple for Nindub(a), was found on the surface of Zurghul's tell in the early 1970s.⁸¹ The god Nindub(a),⁸² a god of Nanše's entourage, is mentioned by Gudea in the Cylinder A vi 3-5.⁸³

⁷⁸ BM 90849, see discussion above (§ 3.2.).

⁷⁹ VA 3060 (VS 1, 14); see fn. 7.

⁸⁰ Steible 1991, 290-291, misleads Biggs 1976, 12, and lists 12 clay nails and four bricks respectively as source B and F.

⁸¹ Biggs 1976, 12-13, no. 63; see § 1.2.

⁸² See Selz 1995, 217-218; Cavigneaux - Krebernik 2000a.

⁸³ 2-kam-ma ur-saġ-am₃ a₂ mu-gur₈ / le-um za-gin₃ šu bi₂-du₈-a / ^dnin-dub-kam e₂-a ġiš-hur-ba im-mi-si₃-si₃-ge "The second one, who was a warrior and whose arm was bent, holding a lapis lazuli tablet in his hand, was Nindub(a), putting the plan of the house on the tablet."

1.	¹⁾	^d nin-dub	To Nindub(a),
2.	²⁾	lugal-a-ni	his lord,
3.	³⁾	gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,
4.	⁴⁾	ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
5.	⁵⁾	lagaš ^{k1}	of Lagaš,
6.	⁶⁾	e ₂ -a-ni	his temple
7.	⁷⁾	mu-na-du ₃	he (re)built.

4.2.4. Gudea 17 = RIME 3/1.1.7.14

The alabaster plaque VA 2339 (VS 1, 13), was bought in Zurghul, possibly by Koldewey in 1887.⁸⁴ It might have been found by local people on the same site. In fact, it commemorates the building of a temple for Hendursaġa, a god of Nanše's entourage.

1.	¹⁾	^d hendur-saġ	To Hendursaġ(a),
2.	²⁾	lugal-a-ni	his lord,
3.	³⁾	gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,
4.	⁴⁾	ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>
5.	⁵⁾	lagaš ^{k1}	of Lagaš,
6.	⁶⁾	e ₂ -a-ni	his temple
7.	⁷⁾	mu-na-du ₃	he built.

5. A GHOST ENTRY: AN ALLEGEDLY UR-NAMMA INSCRIPTION FROM ZURGHUL

Among the inscriptions translated by Smith in his article published in the first volume of *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* is an “unpublished brick from Zerghul(?)”.⁸⁵ No museum number or any other reference is provided, but the translation of the inscription, which reads:

“To (g.) Šar-ili his king, Uruk king of (c.) Ur, du [in Zir-]gulla built.”

Uruk or Ur-ukh was the old reading of Ur-Namma as Zirgulla was that of the sequence of signs ŠIR.BUR.LA, Lagaš. Thus, the updated reading and an approximate reconstructed transliteration would be:

1. ⁸⁶	^d ZAR.AN/i ₃ -li ₂ [?]	To the god Šar-ili,
2.	lugal-a-ni	his lord,
3.	ur- ^d namma	Ur-Namma,
4.	lugal-uri ₅ ^{k1} -ma	king of Ur,
5.	?
6.	[...]-du ₃ [?]	he built
7.	?
8.	[ŠIR].BUR.LA ^{k1}	[in La]gaš
9.	mu-na-du ₃	he (re)built for her/him.

⁸⁴ See above § 1.1. and fn. 8.

⁸⁵ Smith 1872, 35.

⁸⁶ Line numbering is very uncertain, particularly from line 5 to 9.

As far as I know, this inscription has not been edited and no parallels are known, of course admitting that such inscription exist(ed) and a minimum degree of accuracy by Smith. In this case, the text presents some peculiarities regarding the other known published inscriptions of Ur-Namma: this is the only Ur-Namma's inscription mentioning Lagaš.

1.	¹⁾ ^d nanše	For Nanše,	
2.	²⁾ nin-uru ₁₆	the powerful lady,	
3.	³⁾ nin-in-dub-ba	lady of the boundary marker,	
4.	⁴⁾ nin-a-ni	his mistress,	
5.	⁵⁾ gu ₃ -de ₂ -a	Gudea,	
6.	⁶⁾ ensi ₂ -	<i>ensi</i>	
7.	⁷⁾ lagaš ^{ki} -ke ₄	of Lagaš,	
8.	⁸⁾ niĝ ₂ -du ₇ -e pa mu-na-e ₃	made a fitting thing resplendent for her, (namely)	
9.	^{II} niĝin ^{ki} uru-ki-aĝ ₂ - ¹⁾ ĝa ₂ -ni-a	in Niĝin, her beloved city,	
10.	²⁾ e ₂ -sirara ₆	her Sirara temple,	
11.	³⁾ kur e ₂ -ta il ₂ -la-ni	a mountain lifted above all (other) houses,	
12.	⁴⁾ mu-na-du ₃	he (re)built for her	a (Gudea 29 = RIME 3/1.1.7.26)
13.	⁵⁾ ki-be ₂ mu-na-gi ₄	and restored it,	b (Gudea 30 = RIME 3/1.1.7.25)
14.	⁶⁾ ba ₃ -mah-ni	the lofty wall of her (temple/city)	
15.	⁷⁾ [ki-b]e ₂ mu-na- ^r x ¹	he [restored].	c (Gudea 31 = RIME 3/1.1.7.27)

Tab. 1 - Scheme of Gudea's dedicatory inscriptions (Nadali - Polcaro - Verderame 2016, tab. 3).

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