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Black Cuneiform Tablet

Circa 1865-1833 B.C., Reign of King Sin-Kashid of Uruk

Steatite

Babylonia, Mesopotamia

H: 9.3cm

A rectangular steatite tablet, with one flat side and one convex, inscribed with twenty-three lines of Sumerian cuneiform. The text commemorates the restoration of the Temple of Lugalbanda and Ninsun, and records the prices of commodities reading: 'For Lugalbanda, his god, and for Ninsun his mother, Sin-kashid, king of Uruk, king of Amnanum, and the provider of the Eanna temple, when he had built the Eanna Temple, he built for them the Ekankal, their dwelling house which makes the heart happy. For the period of his kingship, 1 shekel of silver could buy, at the market rate of his land: 3 kor of barley, 12 minas of wool, 10 minas of copper, or 3 ban of vegetable oil. May his years be years of abundance.'

King Sin-Kashid was ruler of the southern Babylonian city of Uruk, which he captured from the control of the city of Larsa, during the first half of the eighteenth century B.C.. His inscriptions record the construction of many buildings, including a large palace and several temples for various gods. This black stone tablet records the construction of a temple for the king's personal god Lugalbanda and the god's wife Ninsun. The text also announces that the economy was strong, with low prices for the basic commodities, reflecting the favour of the god's during Sin-Kashid's reign.

The standard designation of this inscription is RIME 4.04.01.08, and this is the twenty-eighth known

example of this text. All the others are written on clay cones, except for one late Neo-Babylonian copy on which the colophon states, 'Copy of a royal inscription on diorite stone, property of Ezida. Nabu-balassu-iqbi, son of Misiraia, wrote it' (British Museum, London, 91081). The present example is the only case of this inscription carved in stone, and may well be the very one copied by scribe Nabu-balassu-iqbi in the Ezida temple.

Literature:

Antiquities, Christie's, New York, 4 June 2015, Lot 112.

Database of Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) no. P480737, artifact entry 2015

Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts (BDTNS) no. 020952.