

# Marduk-zākir-šumi I and the 'Exemption' of Borsippa<sup>1</sup>

G. FRAME  
A. KIRK GRAYSON  
*University of Toronto*

Marduk-zākir-šumi I reigned over Babylonia during the third quarter of the ninth century BC, succeeding his father Nabû-apla-iddina and being succeeded in turn by his son Marduk-balāssu-iqbi. Although no kinglist records the length of his reign and although the highest regnal year attested for it is his eleventh year, on the basis of synchronisms with Assyrian kings it seems clear that he ruled for at least twenty-seven years.<sup>2</sup> Not long after Marduk-zākir-šumi ascended the throne, his younger brother Marduk-bēl-usāti led a rebellion against him. Unable to crush the rebellion by himself, Marduk-zākir-šumi turned to the king of Assyria, Shalmaneser III, for aid. Shalmaneser led his forces to the south and after two campaigns (in 851 and 850 BC) put down the revolt. Following upon the final defeat of the rebel forces at Arman (Ḫalman), Shalmaneser visited Cutha, Babylon and Borsippa, gave gifts to the gods of these three important cult centres, and feted the free citizens of Babylon and Borsippa, whom he described as 'the people who are entitled by the great gods to protection and freedom from seizure' (*šābē kidinni šubarē ša ilāni rabūti*). In return for this help, when rebellion broke out in Assyria towards the end of Shalmaneser's reign, Marduk-zākir-šumi aided Šamši-Adad V to defeat his brother Aššur-dannin-apla. However, after helping Šamši-Adad, the Babylonian king imposed upon him a humiliating

treaty in which Marduk-zākir-šumi and Babylonia were clearly the dominant parties.<sup>3</sup>

Little is known about Marduk-zākir-šumi's actions within Babylonia itself. A *kudurru* dated at Babylon in the second year of the king's reign records that he had granted land, a house, and a regular supply of food to a high temple official in Uruk,<sup>4</sup> and an inscription on a lapis-lazuli seal indicates that this object had been presented to the cult statue of the god Marduk by the king.<sup>5</sup> In view of this paucity of information, the document presented below is of particular importance even though it is poorly preserved and at times difficult to understand.

BM 62908 (82-9-18,2877) is a fragmentary tablet measuring c. 10 × 7.5 cm in size. Judging from the thickness of the piece, more than half of the tablet is now missing and what is preserved comes from the middle of the bottom half of the tablet. Holes pierce both surfaces at various points. The tablet was neatly and carefully made and written, with line rulings between each line of text. Most of the objects in the 82-9-18 and 82-9-18A collections come from Sippar, although a number are from other sites, such as Babylon, Dilbat, and reportedly Borsippa.<sup>6</sup> It is thus uncertain exactly where this text was found, but from the context one suspects Borsippa.

Although it is difficult to be certain about much of the text because of damage to the tablet, it appears to record the granting of certain privileges to the citizens of the city of Borsippa by Marduk-zākir-šumi I. It was a practice of various Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian monarchs to grant privileges and special status to the citizens of the important religious centres in Babylonia, in particular to the citizens of Babylon, Borsippa, Nippur and Sippar.

<sup>1</sup>The tablet BM 62908 is published courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum. We are grateful to the staff of the museum's department of Western Asiatic Antiquities for their co-operation and assistance, particularly Dr E. Sollberger and Messrs T. Mitchell and C. B. F. Walker. Our thanks must also be expressed to Professor J. A. Brinkman for a number of suggestions with regard to the reading of the text. A. K. Grayson identified the text when cataloguing part of the 'Sippar' collection and copied and prepared a preliminary transliteration of it. G. Frame prepared the edition and wrote the article.

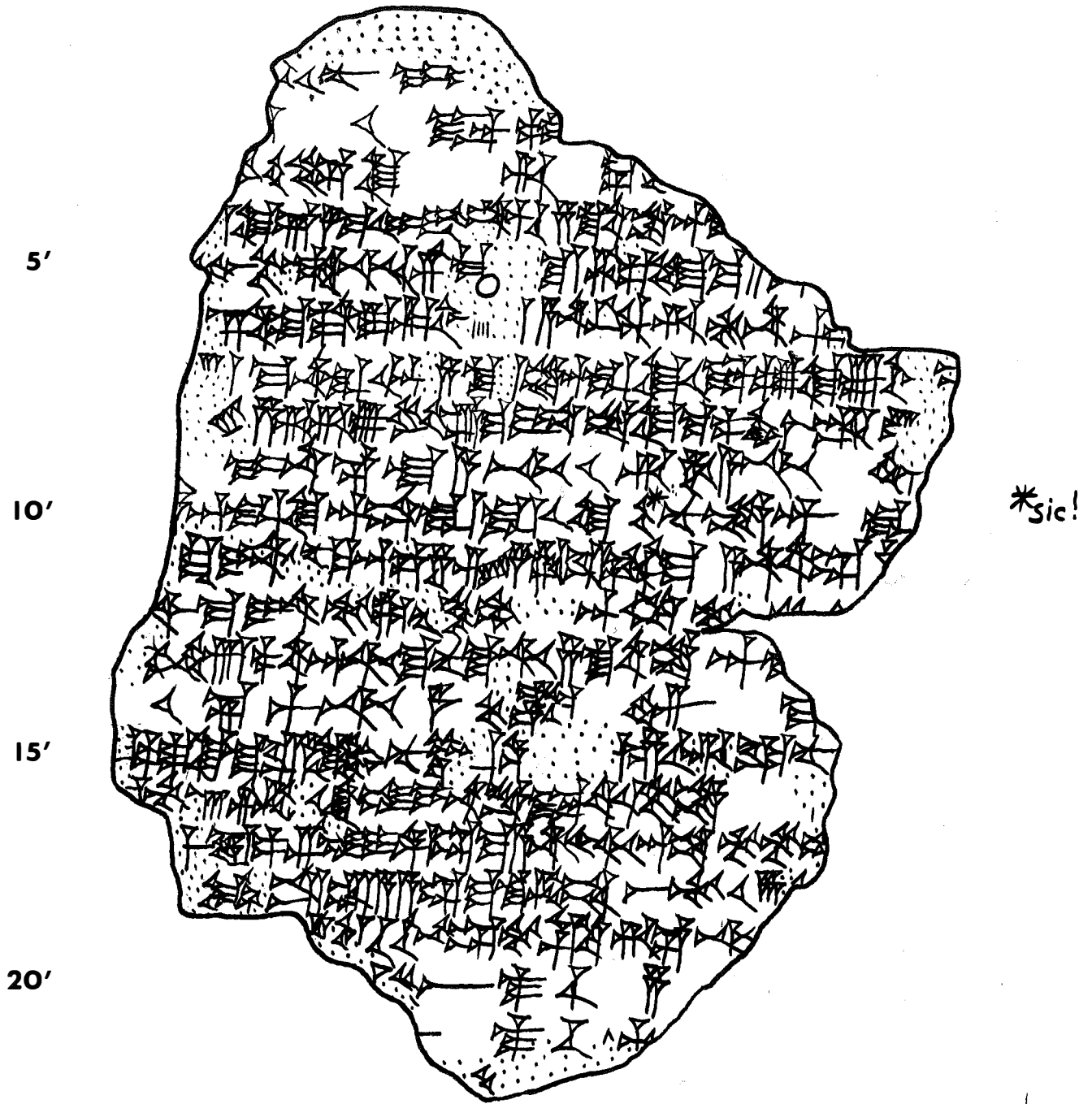
<sup>2</sup>See Brinkman, *PKB*, especially pp. 50-51, 70-72, and pl. II. According to Brinkman (*ibid.*, p. 193 n. 1181), the latest possible date for his accession year is 851 and the earliest possible date for his death is 824. The text published below appears to refer to the sixteenth year of Marduk-zākir-šumi (obv. 18').

<sup>3</sup>The reign of Marduk-zākir-šumi is discussed in detail by Brinkman in *PKB*, pp. 192-205 and 349-51. Brinkman mentions the text published here in *CAH* 3/1 (2nd ed.), p. 307.

<sup>4</sup>*RA* 16 (1919): 117-41. A second *kudurru*, dated to the king's eleventh year, records the private sale of some land located near Dilbat (*VAS* 1 no. 35).

<sup>5</sup>Weissbach, *Babylonische Miscellen*, pp. 16-17 and pl. 6 no. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Reade in Leichty, *Tablets from Sippar*, vol. 1, p. xxxiii.



BM 62908 (82-9-18,2877)

Obverse

These privileges could include exemption from taxes, corvée duty, and military service, and freedom from imprisonment. Their land could not be appropriated by the king and they could appeal directly to him in legal matters. The terms normally used to describe this privileged status are *andurāru*, *kidinnūtu*, *šubarrū*, and *zakūtu*.<sup>7</sup> In this text, reference is made particularly to *zakūtu*, 'exemption' (obv. 4', 7', 13', and 20'?) and its related verb *zakū* is employed on two occasions (rev. 4' and 5'); however, *andurāru*, 'freedom' and *kidinnu*, 'divine protection' are also mentioned (obv. 10' and 21'?).

In addition to Marduk-zākir-šumi, seven other rulers or officials are known who claim to have granted 'exemption', *zakūtu*. These are Meli-Šipak (*MDP* 2, pp. 99–111 and pls. 21–24, and 10 pp. 89–94 and pls. 11–13), Nebuchadnezzar I (*BBS* 6), Marduk-nādin-aḥḥē (*BBS* 25), Bēl-ḥarrān-bēla-ušur (*RT* 16 [1894]: 176–82), Sargon II (e.g. Lyon, *Sar.* 1:6), and Esarhaddon (e.g. Borger, *Asarh.* p. 25 episode 37:37). In addition, in this text, Marduk-zākir-šumi appears to refer to a king preceding him who had first established the exemption at Babylon and Borsippa and to another, likely his father, who had granted Babylon 'freedom and divine protection.'

The following is an outline of the text as interpreted from what is preserved:

- 1) The first few lines of the text are very poorly preserved, but appear to indicate that at some point in the past a Babylonian king had established the 'exemption' (*zakūtu*) of Babylon and Borsippa and recorded his action upon a gold object which he set up in the cella of the god Bēl (obv. 1'–8').
- 2) After a period of disorder in the land (*ina ešāti! u dalḥāti*, obv. 9'), another(?) king re-established the 'freedom' and 'divine protection' (*andurāra u kidinnu*) of Babylon and recorded this act upon the gold canopy of the god Bēl (obv. 10'–11').<sup>8</sup> It seems likely that the king in question was Nabû-apla-iddina, the father of Marduk-zākir-šumi. In the kudurru *BBS* 36, that king claimed to have restored matters in the temple of the sun-god Šamaš at Sippar which had deteriorated during a period of disorder and trouble (*ina ešāti u dalḥāti ša māt akkadī*) caused by the enemy Sutū.

<sup>7</sup>On these privileges, see in particular Brinkman in *CRAI* 19 p. 415 and *CAH* 3/1 (2nd ed.), pp. 290–91.

<sup>8</sup>Borsippa is not mentioned in what is preserved as having had its privileged position confirmed; however, it is not impossible that this city is to be restored at the end of line 10'.

- 3) Obv. 12'–15' seem to indicate that in the accession year of Marduk-zākir-šumi the exemption of Babylon was established. It appears, however, that because of unrest in the land of Akkad (*saḥmašti ša māt akkadīm*) the exemption of Borsippa was not established. This may well refer to the rebellion led by his brother Marduk-bēl-usāti. Mention is also made of the *akītu* festival and actions by [Nabû?] and Zarpanītum (obv. 16'–17').
- 4) Although they are extremely damaged, obv. 18'–22' may record that in the sixteenth year of his reign the king granted the 'exemption' and 'freedom' of Borsippa because of certain omens.<sup>9</sup>
- 5) Various temple workers were released from their feudal obligations and duties, and protection(?) was granted to runaways and fugitives. Other privileges and guarantees were granted to Borsippa and its citizens (rev. 2'–24').
- 6) Curse formulae (rev. 25'ff).

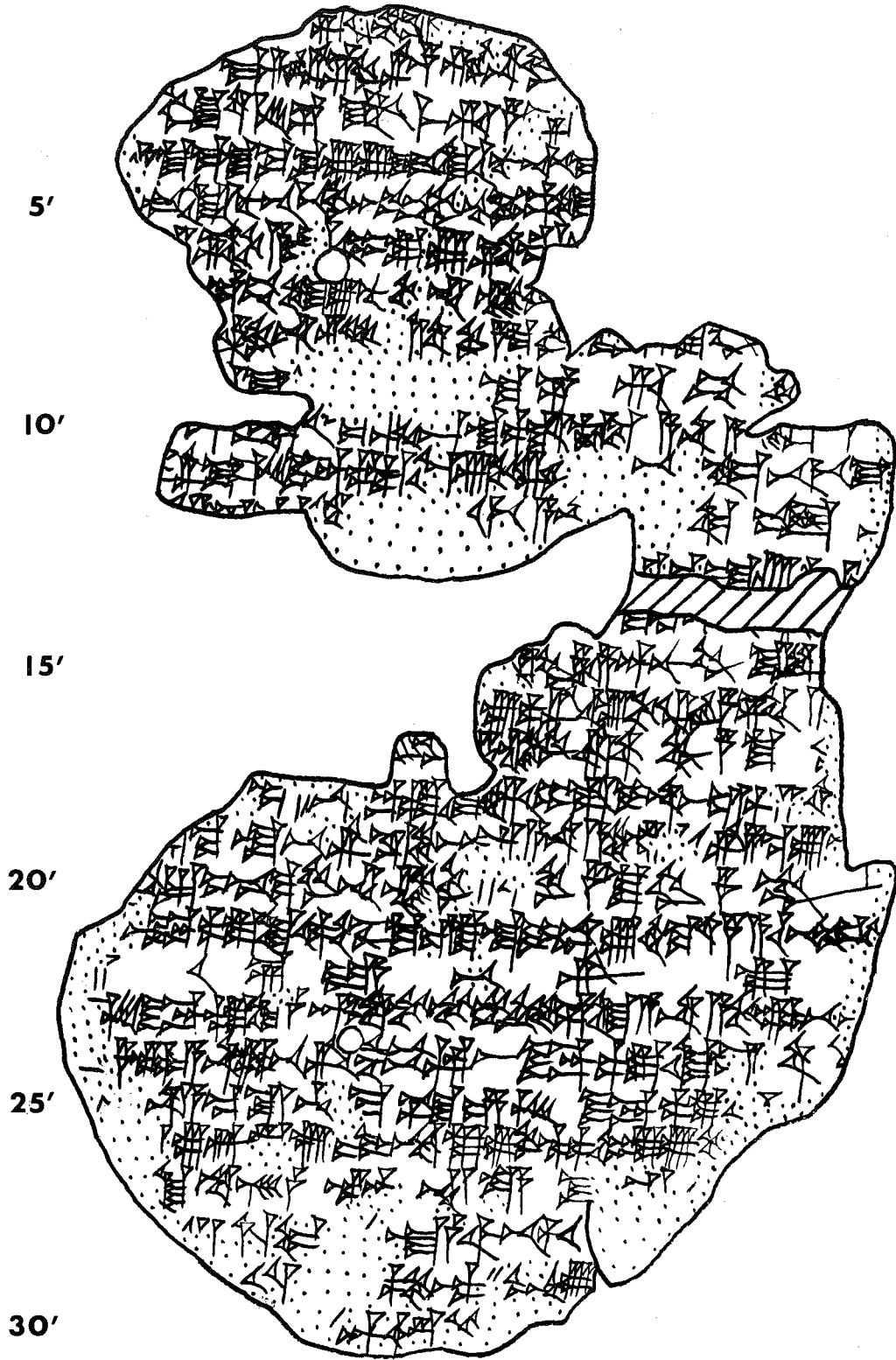
#### TRANSLITERATION

##### Obverse

##### Lacuna

- 1') [...] x-Γšú?Γ-nu i-x [...]
- 2') [... KÁ.DINGIR.RA.KI]I u bār-sip[a.KI ...]
- 3') [... LUG]AL TIN.TIR.KI ri-x x [...]
- 4') [...] x qé-reb šá-ma-mi-i le-u, za-ku-ut  
KÁ.DINGIR.R[A.KI ...]
- 5') [... id?-b]u-bu it-ti-šú ì SA[G.DU]-su šÉŠ  
tu ma Γa?Γ x [...]
- 6') [... it]-ta-aṭ-ta-lu ur-d[am?-m]a? a-na  
qaq-qa-ri mu na x [...]
- 7') [...] ΓNUN?Γ-mā na-ra-a[r] za-ku-[u]t KÁ.DINGIR.  
RA.KI u bār-sipa.KI ú-rak?-k[is? ...]
- 8') [... KÛ.G]I? ša-ri-ri ú-šeš-ṭir-ma i-na KÁ  
SILIM.MA pa-paḥ<sup>d</sup>EN ΓúΓ[...]
- 9') [...] x i-na e-ša!(text: LA)-a-ti u  
dal-ḥa-a-ti i[m-qu?-tu? ...]
- 10') [... K]Á.DINGIR.RA.KI an-du-ra-ra u ki-din!-nu  
KÁ.DINGIR.R[A.KI ...]
- 11') [... ú?]-kin? i-na ΓUGUΓ AN-e KÛ.GI šá<sup>d</sup>EN  
iš-ṭur-ma a-na u<sub>4</sub>-um ṣ[a-a-ti ...]
- 12') [...]-pi?-ma i-na MU.SAG.ΓNAMΓ.LUGAL.[LA]  
<sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU-MU-ΓMUΓ L[UGAL TIN.TIR.KI (...)]
- 13') [... LU]GAL ŠAR NUN pa-liḥ DINGIR-ti-šu-nu  
GAL-ti za-ku-ut KÁ.DINGIR.R[A.KI ...]
- 14') [...] u saḥ-maš-ti šá KUR.URI.ΓKIΓ(-)im-m[a? ...]
- 15') [... bā]r-sipa.KI la iš-šá-ki-in nu-uk-[k]u?-r[u  
x] x-un ar-ka-nu [...]

<sup>9</sup>Borsippa is not actually mentioned in what is preserved.



BM 62908 (82-9-18,2877)

Reverse

- 16') [... D]I.KUD!(text: NUMUN) ḡsa<sup>1</sup>-ni-iq mit-  
hur-tum i-na ITI.BÁR U<sub>4</sub>.11.KÁM KÁ X [...]
- 17') [...] ḡ<sup>d</sup>zar-pa-ni-tum i-ru-um-ma a-na MAN-ti<sup>d</sup>  
AMAR.UTU-MU-MU LU[GAL ...]
- 18') [...] ki-ḡam<sup>1</sup>? iš-al a-a-um-ma la iq-bi-šú ina  
MU.16.K[ÁM ...]
- 19') [...] x-ḡdi<sup>1</sup>?-šú gu-um-mu-ru te-re-e-ti [...]
- 20') [...] x ḡbu<sup>1</sup> áš-šú za-[ku?-ut? ...]
- 21') [...] x áš-šú ḡan<sup>1</sup>-d[u?-ra?-ar? ...]
- 22') [...] x [...]
- Lacuna
- Reverse
- Lacuna
- 1') [...] ḡÉ<sup>1</sup>? x mu? ḡiš<sup>1</sup>? x [...]
- 2') [...] -ma gi-né-e LÚ.Ī.SUR.GI.NA L[Ú ...]
- 3') [...] LÚ.AZLAG.MEŠ e-piš šip-ri šá ḡÉ<sup>1</sup>? [...]
- 4') [...] i-na il-ki tup]-ḡšik<sup>1</sup>-ku ma-la ba-šu-ú  
ú-zak-ki-šú-nu-ti-m[a ...]
- 5') [...] ú-z]ak-ki-šú-nu-ti LÚ ḡal-qu LÚ mun-nab-t[  
...]
- 6') [ša? ...lu?]-ḡú<sup>1</sup>? TA KUR a-ḡra<sup>1</sup>?-mi lu-ú TA  
ḡURU<sup>1</sup> x [...]
- 7') [...] in-n]ab-bi-tu-ú-nu ḡLÚ<sup>1</sup>.EN.NAM L[Ú.ŠÁ.  
TAM LÚ.GAR.UŠ, LÚ.GAR.LUGAL ...]
- 8') [...] L]Ú.GAR LÚ.EN.ḡNAM<sup>1</sup> L[Ú.Š]À.TAM  
LÚ.GAR.UŠ, LÚ.[GAR].ḡLUGAL ù<sup>1</sup>? L[Ú? ...]
- 9') [...] x ḡDUMU<sup>1</sup> x [x x x] la e-re-bi  
L[Ú? ...]
- 10') [...] x x u ḡla šÉS<sup>1</sup> la pa-<sup>1a</sup>ḡár? a-na a-ḡšar  
šá<sup>1</sup>?-[nim?-ma? ...]
- 11') [...] p]a-ni DUMU.MEŠ bár-sipa.ḡKI ḡi ḡšad-  
gi[l x] x bil-ti DUM[U.MEŠ ...]
- 12') [...] x x x x [x x t]i a-n[a x x] di ram x [...]
- 13') [...] x x ad ḡú<sup>1</sup>? x x [...]
- 14') [...] x x x x x [...]
- 15') [...] r]u? LÚ ḡa-za-an-nu LÚ.NÍMGIR [...]
- 16') [...] -ú pa-ni-šú ú-šad-gil NÍG.GA-ŠÚ x [...]
- 17') [...] x L[Ú.E]N.NAM LÚ.ŠÁ.TAM LÚ.GAR.UŠ,  
L[Ú.GAR.LUGAL ...]
- 18') [...] x ḡa-na<sup>1</sup> [b]ár-sipa.ḡKI<sup>1</sup> im-mi-da i-na  
1 GUR 1 (BÁN) ḡA<sup>1</sup>?[.Š]À? ...]
- 19') [...] x x la be-lí iš-pu-ḡra<sup>1</sup> a-na a-ḡbu<sup>1</sup>  
x (x) ni 4 GADA ú x [...]
- 20') [...] ub?-b]i?<sup>1</sup>-ḡib<sup>1</sup> šum-ma LÚ.EN.NAM LÚ.ḡŠÁ.  
TAM<sup>1</sup> LÚ.GAR.UŠ, LÚ.GAR.LUGAL [...]
- 21') [...] x bár-sipa.KI ul ka? x ku la i-du-ú  
ḡi-ḡa šá-a-šú ina muḡ-ḡ[i ...]
- 22') [...] x u É-ia be-lí lu [...]
- 23') [...] DUM]U.MEŠ bár-sipa.KI šá<sup>d</sup> AMAR.UTU-MU-  
MU LUGAL TIN.TIR.KI a-na a-mat<sup>d</sup> AG be-l[í-šú ...]
- 24') [...] x šá<sup>d</sup> AG a-na<sup>d</sup> AG be-lí-ḡšú<sup>1</sup> ub-bi-ib  
ina bár-sipa.KI ḡURU<sup>1</sup>? ud x [...]
- 25') [...] a[n?] -na-a is-su-ḡ[u]-ma SUḡUŠ UN.MEŠ  
bár-sipa.ḡKI<sup>1</sup> [...]

- 26') [...] ḡu-ú NUN ḡlu<sup>1</sup>-ú GÍR.NÍTA lu-ú LÚ ak-lu,  
lu-ú L[Ú.NU.BÁNDA? ...]
- 27') [...] -ki ĩR.ḡMEŠ<sup>1</sup> šá<sup>d</sup> ḡAG<sup>1</sup> EN-ia š[u]-x x [...]
- 28') [...] x x ḡdi<sup>1</sup>? x la šá ši ti [...]
- 29') [...] x [x] x bu pa x x ú [...]
- 30') [...] x an x x [...]
- Lacuna

## TRANSLATION

## Obverse

## Lacuna

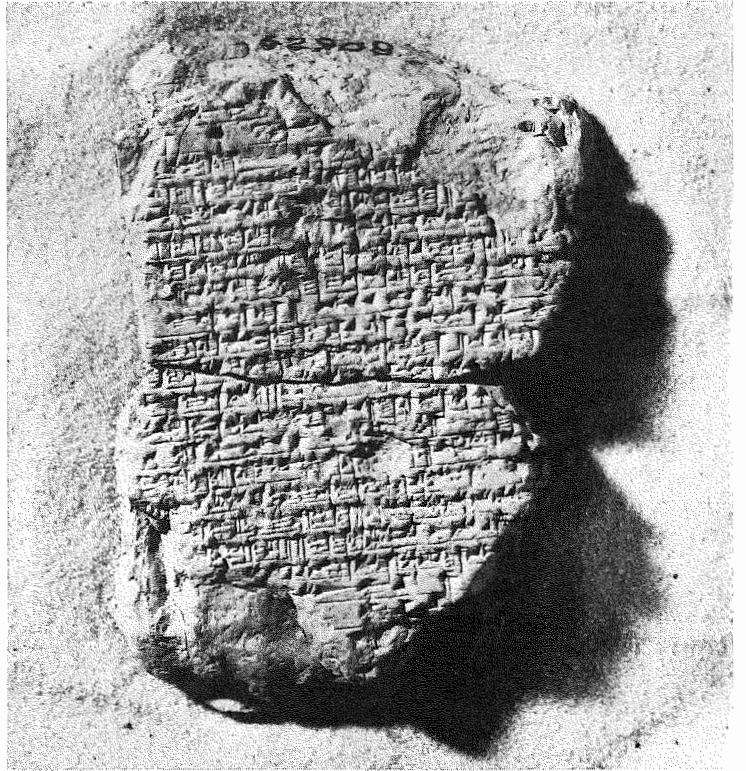
- 1') [...] their [...] ... [...]
- 2') [... Babylon] and Borsippa [...]
- 3') [... ki]ng of Babylon ... [...]
- 4') [...] within the heavens *the writing board*  
(recording) the exemption of Babylon [...]
- 5') [...] *they sp*peak with him; *they* annoint his  
head with oil ... [...]
- 6') [...] while] they watched, he *desc*[ended] to  
the earth ... [...]
- 7') [...] *the prince commissioned auxiliary troops*  
(*to protect*) the exemption of Babylon and  
Borsippa [...]
- 8') [...] he had (it) inscribed [upon a *canopy*] of  
*šāriru*-gold and [*set it up*] in the 'Gate-of-  
Well-being', the cella of the god Bēl [...]
- 9') [...] *which*] in the disorder and trouble [*had*  
*befallen* ...]
- 10') [...] Babylon, the freedom and divine protection  
of Babylon [...]
- 11') [...] *he*] *established*. He inscribed (it) upon the  
gold canopy of the god Bēl and for the fut[ure  
...]
- 12') [...] and in the accession year of Marduk-zākir-  
šumi, k[ing of Babylon ...]
- 13') [...] ki]ng of the world, prince who reveres their  
great divinity, [...] the exemption of Babylon [...]
- 14') [...] *rebellion*] and unrest of the land of Akkad  
[...]
- 15') [...] *the exemption of*] Borsippa was not established;  
to change ... afterwards [...]
- 16') [the god Nabû ...], the *judge* who makes oppos-  
ing sides comply, in the month of Nisan, on the  
eleventh day, the gate [...]
- 17') [...] the goddess Zarpanītum entered and for  
the kingship of Marduk-zākir-šumi, ki[ng...]
- 18') [...] *thus he asked* but no one answered him.  
In the sixteenth year [...]
- 19') [...] ... to *complete* the omens [...]
- 20') [...] ... because of the *exe*[mption ...]
- 21') [...] ... because of the *fre*[edom ...]
- 22') [...] ... [...]

## Lacuna

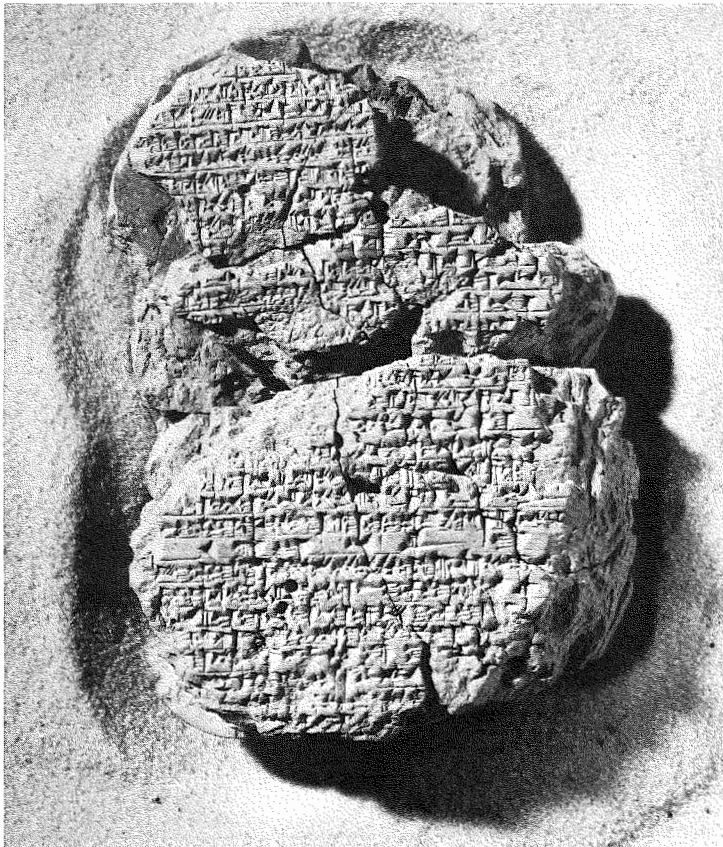
British Museum photographs

BM 62908 (82-9-19,2887)

Obverse



Reverse



## Reverse

## Lacuna

- 1') [...] ... [...]
- 2') [...] regular offerings, the oil presser of the regular offerings, [...]
- 3') [...] the fuller, those who work in the *temple* [...]
- 4') [...] he released them [from feudal obligations and forced] labour of every kind and [...]
- 5') [...] he released them. The runaway, the fugitive [...]
- 6') [who ... *whether*] from the land of *Aramu* or from the city of [...]
- 7') [...] fled, a provincial governor, a [temple administrator, a governor, a royal official ...]
- 8') [...] an *official*, a provincial governor, a temple administrator, a governor, a royal [official] and a [...]
- 9') [...] the citizen[s ...] is not to enter [...]
- 10') [...] ... is not to anoint, not to *release*, to *an[other]* place [...]
- 11') [...] he entrusted to the citizens of Borsippa; ... tax of the citizen[s ...]
- 12') [...] ... [...]
- 13') [...] ... [...]
- 14') [...] ... [...]
- 15') [...] the mayor, the herald [...]
- 16') [...] he entrusted to him; his property [...]
- 17') [...] a provincial governor, a temple administrator, a governor, a [royal official ...]
- 18') [...] he imposes [...] *for* Borsippa. In one kur, two ban *of field* [...]
- 19') [...] ... my lord wrote ... [...]
- 20') [...] he *purified*. If a provincial governor, a temple administrator, a governor, a royal official [...]
- 21') [...] Borsippa ... unknowingly a sin to him against [...]
- 22') [...] ... and of my house, my lord ... [...]
- 23') [...] the citizens of Borsippa whom Marduk-zākir-šumi, the king of Babylon, at the command of the god Nabû, [his] lord [...]
- 24') [...] he purified [...] ... of the god Nabû for the god Nabû, his lord, (and) in Borsippa, the *city* ... [...]

- 25') [Anyone who ...] removes this [...] and [...] the foundation of the people of Borsippa [...]
- 26') [...] whether prince, or viceroy, or overseer, or [*lieutenant* ...]
- 27') [...] the servants of the god Nabû, my lord, ... [...]
- 28') [...] ... [...]
- 29') [...] ... [...]
- 30') [...] ... [...]
- Lacuna

## COMMENTARY

## Obverse

- 4') The reading *le-u*, 'the writing board' is tentative.
- 5') Possibly ŠEŠ TU-*ma* or ŠEŠ-tu *ma*?
- 7') The verb *rakāsu* is not otherwise attested with *zakātu*.
- 8') For the possible restoration of the word 'canopy' at the beginning of the line, see line 11'. The 'Gate-of-Well-being' (*bāb šulmi*) was one of the gates of the Esagila temple; here was located the cella of the god Marduk. See Unger, *Babylon* p. 184.
- 9') Compare *BBS* 36 i 4-5 and *JAOS* 88 (1968): 126 Ib 16-17. Or possibly *i[m-lu-ú ...]*.
- 14') 'Unrest in the land of Akkad'. Similar statements are common in omen apodoses (e.g., Virolleaud, *ACh* Suppl. 2 38:9).
- 16') 'Who makes opposing forces comply' is an epithet usually employed for the god Nabû, though occasionally also for Nergal and Ninurta (see Tallqvist, *Götterepitheta* p. 149 and *CAD* 10/II [M] pp. 137-38). Perhaps '... Bab[ylon ...]' instead of '... the gate [...]'

## Reverse

- 4') Compare *BBS* 24:38-39 and 25:21-24.
- 8'-10') Compare *BBS* 6 i 51-ii 5 and 8 top 1-26.
- 18') Brinkman suggests *i-na* UKKIN, 'in the assembly'.
- 24') Possibly an epithet for Borsippa at the end of the line. Brinkman tentatively suggests instead UD.K[IB.NUN.KI].
- 26') For similar listings of officials, see *CAD* 1/I (A) p. 278.
- 28') Brinkman suggests *ina e-ši-ti*.