

JOHN MACGINNIS

Contracting out Duck Supply to the Ebabbara

BM 64039 comes from Sippar and is dated to the first year of Cambyses.¹ It concerns the terms, not fully understood, according to which a certain Rēmūt-ili son of Bēl-ah-iddin will raise and supply ducks for the Ebabbara, and as such belongs to a recognised class of texts in which the senior management of the Ebabbara lease out to private individuals various services pertaining to the running of the temple. Other such contracts regulate the farming of temple land, collection of tithes, administration of canals and the supply of baked bricks.² The ducks in the present contract are put at the disposal of Rēmūt-ili but remain the property of Šamaš. The accompanying seal impressions are well preserved and of particular interest due to the preservation of the tags labelling them. I am very grateful to Prof. Stefan Zawadzki for bringing this text to my attention and for his encouragement in publishing it. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Jursa and Dr. Herman Bongenaar for their comments.

BM 64039

(Sippar)

Cam 9/10/1

8.2 × 6.5 cm

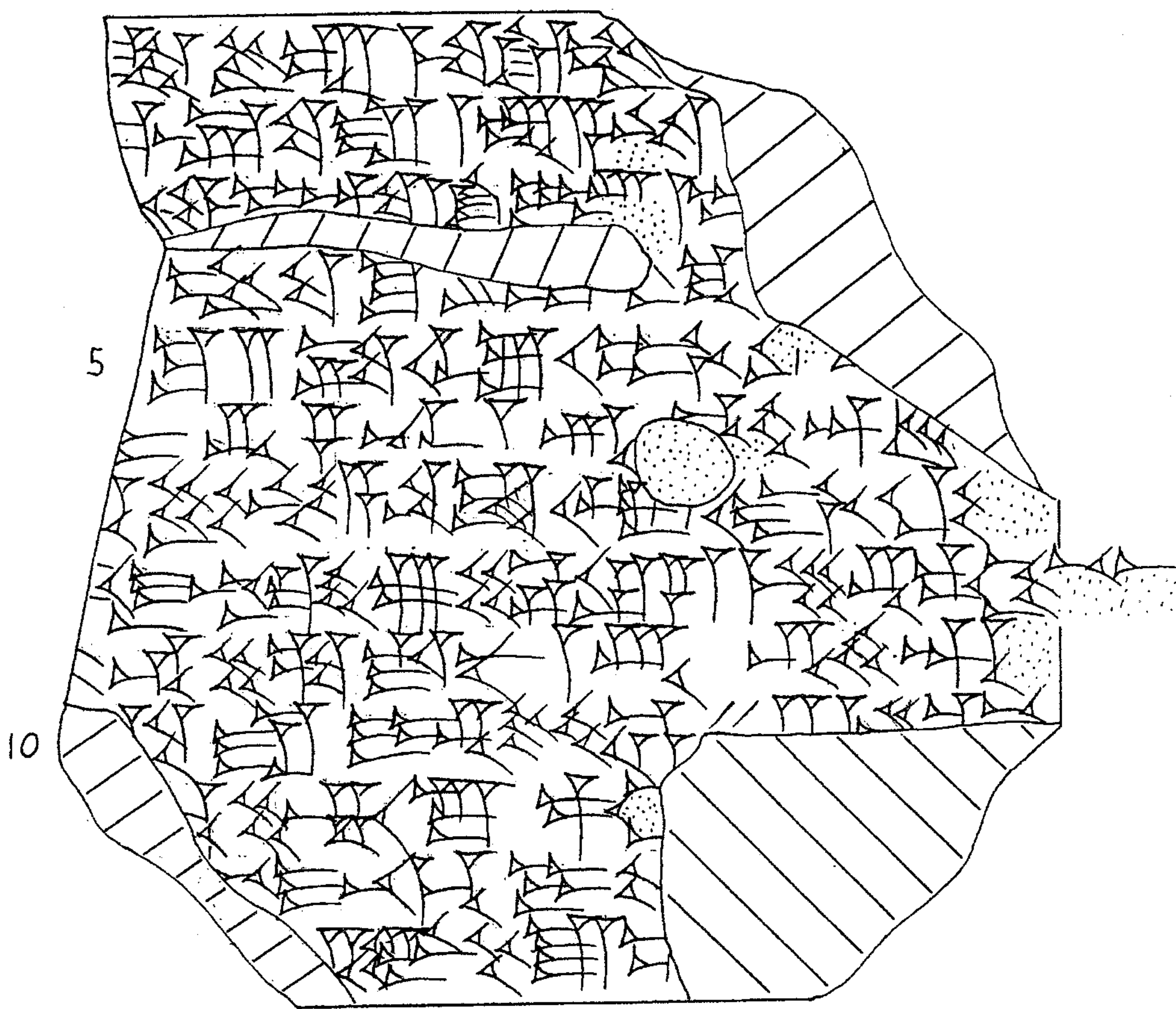
5 seals preserved

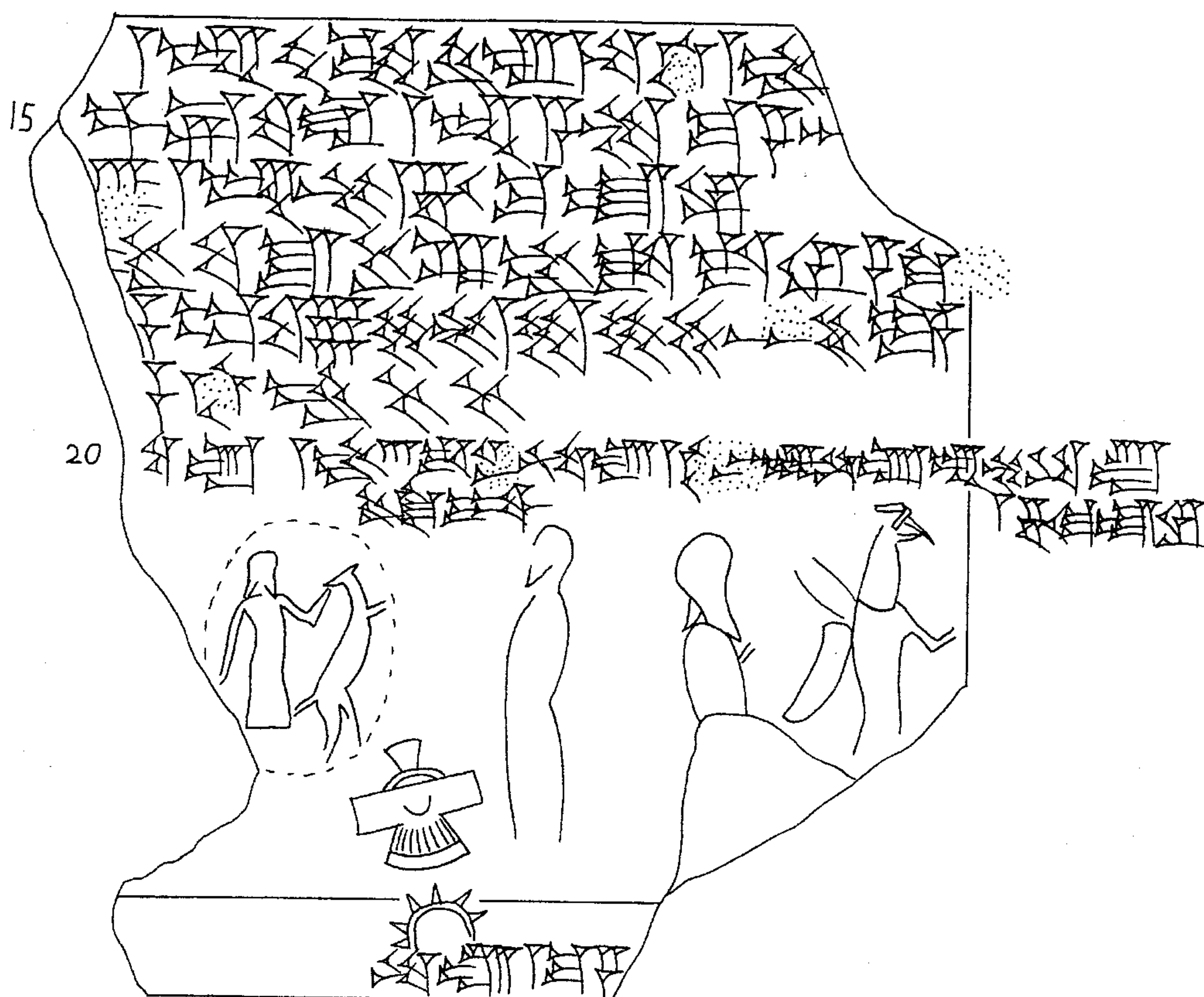
- 1 [^{md}EN-TIN]-it ^{lu}SANGA Sip-par^{ki} ^mLUGAL-[lu-da-ru]
- 2 [^{lu}qí-i]-pi É.BABBAR.RA ^{md}EN-A-MU ^m[Ba-šá-^dAMAR.UTU A-šú šá]
- 3 [^mE-te]l-pi-i-^dUTU ^mKi-i-^dAG ^{md}[EN-MU]
- 4 [u ^mTe-riq]-LUGAL-ut-su ^{lu}SAG LUGAL id-[bu-bu-ma]
- 5 [iq-bu-ú um]-ma 2-ta ù mi-šil qa-b[u-ú]
- 6 [šá UZ.TU]R.MUŠEN šá ina IGI ^mRe-[m]ut-DINGIR.M[EŠ]
- 7 [DUMU-šú šá ^{md}E]N-ŠEŠ-MU a-na 1-et ù mi-šil qa-b[u-ú]
- 8 [x a-lit-t]um ina UGU-hi ú-tir-ru šá 1 ME 50 ^{mušen}iṣ-ṣur-^ltum^l

¹ Abbreviations: LBLS = J. MacGinnis, *Letter-Orders from Sippar and the Administration of the Ebabbara in the Late Babylonian Period*, Poznań 1995.

² See LBLS, pp. 19–20 and my forthcoming article *Ordering the House of Šamaš: parametric texts from the Neo-Babylonian Ebabbara*.

- 9 [4 ME 5]O ^{mu}šen li-da-nu ^mRe-mut-DINGIR.M[EŠ]
 10 [a-na] E₂.BABBAR.RA i-nam-din e-^{lat} 2 ME 20+ iṣ-ṣur^l
 11 [x xx^{mu}]^{šen} pu-ha-lu iṣ-ṣ[ur x x x x]
 12 [X a?-lit?]-tum ina IGI-šú i-n[a u₄-mu (Q) ŠE.BAR]
 13 [a-na x M]UŠEN kis-sat-su ú?-[šák-kal?]
 14 [IGI] ^{md}EN-TIN-it^{lú} SANGA Sip-par^{ki} ^mLUGAL-[lu-da-ru]
 15 [^{lú}qí-i]-pi E₂.BABBAR.RA ^{md}EN-A-MU ^mBA-šá-^dA[MAR.UTU]
 16 [^mKi-i]-^dAG ^{md}EN-MU ^mHa-ba-ṣi-ru [u]
 17 [^mTe-riq]-LUGAL-ut-su ^{lú}SAG.LUGAL ša-ṭa-ru šá-ṭi-[ir]
 18 [Sip-par.KI IT]LAB UD 9 KÁM MU I KÁM ^mKám-bu-zi-ia
 19 [LUGAL TIN.TI]R^{ki} LUGAL KUR.KUR
 20–21 (from left to right, in smaller script):
 [NA₄.KIŠIB ^{md}EN-TIN-it] [N]A₄.KIŠIB ^mLUGAL-lu!-da-ru
 ^{lú}SANGA ^{lú}qí-i-pi





NA₄.KIŠIB ^mKi-i-d_A G NA₄.KIŠIB ^{md}EN-MU NA₄.KIŠIB
^mHa-ba-ši-ru

(actual seals)

22 NA₄.KIŠIB ^mBa-ša-[^dMAR.UTU]

Notes

A copy of this text by Bertin also exists (no. 1892)

1.1.14 Restoring -lu-da-ru rather than the more normal -lu-da-ri on the basis of the spelling in 1.20.

1.2–3 That the restoration A-šú šá between Iqīša-Marduk and Etel-pī-Šamaš is correct is supported by Cam 407:10–11, as well as by the fact that Etel-pī-Šamaš does not appear in the list of witnesses. Note also that no seal of Etel-pī-Šamaš is present, though this point on its own would be inconclusive due to the limitations of space on the tablet and the possibility that the sealing was lost in the damaged section.

1.4 The restoration id-[bu-bu-ma] is not certain.

1.5.7 If there were any doubts, the restoration qa-b[u-ú] is made certain by a comparison with Cam 194:2 and 421:2.

1.9 The restoration of 450 is based on the ratio of three ducklings to one mother-duck found in Cam 194. If the 150 mother ducks of 1.8 correspond to the 1 1/2 pens (qabû) of 1.7, it obviously means that a pen consisted of 50 female ducks, presumably with a quota of male ducks in each.

1.11 iṣ-ṣ[ur] is probably right though the IṢ is really written as a PA.

1.12–13 The restorations are only tentative. Presumably the singular suffix on kis-sat-su refers to Rē mū t-ili.

1.17 The use of ša rather than šá in ša-ṭa-ru is probably a kind of visual pun with the ṭa.

Translation

[Bēl-uballit] the šangû of Sippar, Šarru-[ludari the qī]pu of the Ebabbara, Bēl-apal-iddin, [Iqīša-Marduk son of Et]el-pī-Šamaš, Kī-Nabû, [Bēl-iddin and Terīq]-Šarrussu the rēš šarri *consulted* [and said]: “(As regards) the 2 1/2 pens of ducks which are at the disposal of Rēmūt-ili [son of] Bēl-ah-iddin: [...] offspring will return as the profit on 1 1/2 pens. From 150 mother-ducks Rēmūt-ili will give [450] offspring [to] the Ebabbara. This is apart from the 220(+) birds, [x] male ducklings, [...] (and) female ducklings] at his disposal. Per [day he will feed *x. l.* of barley to *x*] bird(s) as their fodder. (This) document was written [in the presence of] Bēl-uballit the šangû of Sippar, Šarru-[ludari the qī]pu of the Ebabbara, Bēl-apal-iddin, Iqīša-Madruk, [Kī]-Nabû, Bēl-iddin, Habašīru (and) [Terīq]-Šarrussu the rēš šarri. [Sippar], Tebētu, day 9, year 1 of Cambyses [king of Babylon], king of countries.

[Seal of Bēl-uballit the šangû]; seal of Šarru-ludari the qīpu of the Ebabbar; seal of Kī-Nabû; seal of Bēl-iddin; seal of Habašīru; seal of Iqīša-[Madruk].

Commentary

The tenor of this text is not wholly understood, but it clearly revolves around Rēmūt-ili son of Bēl-ah-iddin's leasing of ducks belonging to the Ebabbara in return for supplying a fixed quota to the temple. That this is not the original agreement is made clear below. The same Rēmūt-ili son of Bēl-ah-iddin is found appearing as a witness in Dar 111, and the Rēmūt-ili who receives barley for his birds in Cam 266, 359, 421 and CT 56 194 must also be the same person. These last texts indicate that the temple supplied the fodder, and Rēmūt-ili's profit will have come from the difference between the increase in the flocks and

the delivery quotas. It is not clear to me why two and a half pens (qabû) of ducks are mentioned in line 5 but only one and a half in line 7.

A number of other texts bear very closely on the operations of Rēmūt-ili. In Cam.194 (Cambyses year 3), 150 male and female ducklings, property of Šamaš, are transferred from the pens of Rēmūt-ili to Ubar son of Naniya: Ubar will deliver 150 (full grown) ducks, offspring of 50 mother ducks, in year 4 as the iškāru of year 3: evidently it was Ubar's job to rear the ducklings and hand them over to the temple.³

Cam 421, dating to Cyrus year 9 (= the accession year of Cambyses), is a record of barley issued for fodder to Rēmūt-ili and mentions the same two and a half pens of ducks, in addition to one (pen of) "mother birds" and 750 ducklings (lit. litā nu, "offspring"). Furthermore, l.6 mentions "Rēmūt-ili and his men" indicating that Rē mū t-ili was the manager of this enterprise with others in his employ who did the actual work.

The earlier dating of Cam 421 also proves that the present text was not the original agreement, something which we might in any case have suspected from the fact that it does not quite take the standard dialogue format of an individual stating his terms to the governing board of the temple and their listening and replying. As it happens just such a contract for the farming of ducks is preserved in CT 55 72. From none of these texts can we deduce the feeding rates involved, but ducks in Eanna could be fed half a litre of barley per day⁴ and those in Sippar 0.6.1.⁵

The reason why only Iqîša-Marduk is given with his father's name (Etel-pī-Šamaš; they belonged to the Šangû of Šamaš family) is very likely that the others were scribes of the temple whereas he was not.⁶ He must nevertheless have been a person of some importance, in all probability a professional businessman, and is found as a witness in a number of texts from the time of Cyrus and Cambyses. Whether it is significant that one of these (Cam 407/408) also concerns a delivery of ducks is not clear. He had a field in the area of the village of Til-gubbu (CT 56 519) and perhaps it was the same Iqîša-Marduk who enjoyed a share in the large morning meal of Šamaš.⁷

Sealings

Note the discrepancies between the individuals mustered in the opening of the text, the recasting of this list in the detailing of the witnesses and the individuals whose seals are present:

³ This Ubar son of Naniya is also found handling ducks in Nbn 239:6.

⁴ MacGinnis JSS 38 (1992) p. 137 ad No. 69.

⁵ CT 55 186 where the 60 of them received 1 PI a day.

⁶ LBLs pp. 120–121.

⁷ MacGinnis, *A royal share in the meals of Šamaš*; NABU 1994/4 no 90:12.

	opening	witnesses	sealings
Bēl-uballiṭ, šangû	x	x	[x]
Šarru-ludari, qīpu	x	x	x
Bēl-apal-iddin, scribe	x	x	—
Iqīša-Marduk/Etel-pī-Šamaš	[x]	x	x
Kī-Nabû, scribe	x	x	x
Bēl-iddin, scribe	[x]	x	x
Habašīru, scribe	—	x	x
Terīq-Šarrussu, rēš šarri	x	x	—

Probably Habašīru's omission in the opening list was a simple oversight. Otherwise, the correspondence of seals to officials presents as much as we would expect: shortage of space dictated that not all the scribes could fix their seal, though the fact that it was Bēl-apal-iddin's whose seal is missing is unexpected (if not unprecedented)⁸ given that the ranking shows him to have been the senior scribe present. It is unlikely that his seal was in the missing lower right hand corner (of the reverse) as precedence should have dictated its coming after (i.e. to the right of) that of Šarru-ludari.

The following LBLs correlations refer to the analysis of the sealings in chapter 5 of that work (pp. 164–181); taking the seals individually, from left to right:

- (1) seal of Bēl-uballiṭ remains unknown;
- (2) seal of Šarru-ludari = LBLs C.4 (contest scene);
- (3) seal of Kī-Nabû = LBLs B.2 (workshopper facing left);
- (4) seal of Bēl-iddin = LBLs A.11 (workshopper facing right);
- (5) seal of Habašīru: the image preserved (winged monster) is not previously known to be one of Habašīru's but could be from another side of the same cylinder seal as Habašīru's A.7 (a workshopper); such combinations of a workshopper and a contest scene are unusual but not unattested, cf. LBLs p. 168.

(6) seal of Iqīša-Marduk (winged disc over a sacred tree⁹): this is also new but seems less likely to be another part of the same seal as the A.18 also belonging to Iqīša-Marduk. Not only is there no reason to believe that these two Iqīša-Marduk's are the same, but the seal of the Iqīša-Marduk of the present text is extraordinary, at least in the context of the Sippar administrative material, and there is no convincing reason to assume it being part of the same composition as A.18.

It is not too surprising that the rēš šarri did not apply his seal since, although he was an important official, he was not part of the integral command structure of the Ebabbara. It is interesting to speculate what legal implications this might have had if he were ever called upon to verify his attendance as a witness. The

⁸ See LBLs p. 167.

⁹ I am grateful to Dr. Dominique Collon for identifying this part of the impression.

ranking of the *rēš šarri* seems to have been a matter of some fluidity as he is found coming after the *šangû* and *qīpu* but before the scribes, in the midst of the scribes, and at the end of the list.¹⁰ Clearly this again reflects the fact that he was not part of the integral administrative apparatus.

Note the position of Iqīša-Marduk's seal, certainly unorthodox, fitting in with the fact that he too was not part of the temple staff. The reason for his presence in the sigillography while the *rēš šarri* was absent — indeed the reason for Iqīša-Marduk's presence in the text at all — may be that he was in some way involved in the enterprise (perhaps in financing *Rēmūt-ili*). Such an involvement is not detailed in this text but could of course have been recorded elsewhere.

¹⁰ For references see LBLS, p. 118 & n. 81.