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## **Primary Source Analysis Cuneiform Tablet NM44.18**

Transcription

Written and Spoken by: Sareeta Zaid

Duration: 2:11 minutes

This ceramic clay tablet is inscribed with cuneiform, the ancient Sumerian writing that is the first known writing system. The text lists one ox, 19 sheep, one lamb and 4 goats received from the temple herds of Abba-Shagga for the Akitu feast in the month of Adar, from the governor of Adab.

Akitu was a spring festival in the ancient Near East, its name derives from the Sumerian word for ‘barley’. The festival took place in the month of Adar in the ancient Babylonian calendar, around March, and marked the sowing of barley. This herd was sent from the governor of Adab, an ancient city located between Tello and Nippur, now known by the modern name of Bismaya in Iraq.

The tablet was found in Iraq, although the exact location is unknown, and is from the reign of Bur-Sin, King of Ur, who ruled from 1831 to 1811 BCE in the First Dynasty of Isin. During his reign power was held in the religious centres of Nippur and Ur. The Isin dynasty is named for the archaeological site of Isin in Iraq, which is just south of Nippur. The dates of the reign of Bur-Sin are known from the Sumerian King List, which reached its final form in this period. The Sumerian King List is an ancient text written in Sumerian cuneiform that lists the kings of Sumer and surrounding dynasties, with their reign lengths and the locations of their rule. The kings are sequentially listed, although evidence suggests there were multiple kings at the same time who had power over different city states in ancient Sumer. The final version of the list was used by rulers of the Isin Dynasty to legitimise their power while they competed with nearby city states for supremacy in the region.