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## Women of Aššur and Kaniš

Cécile Michel

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ANATOLIA'S PROLOGUE  
KULTEPE KANESH KARUM

ASSYRIANS  
IN ISTANBUL



To the memory of our teacher Prof. Dr. *h.c. multi* Tahsin Özgüç



This catalogue, a cultural publication of the Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality is published on the occasion of the exhibition

### **Anatolia's Prologue, Kültepe Kanesh Karum, Assyrians in Istanbul**

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## WOMEN OF ASSUR AND KANESH

The position of women within Mesopotamian society, usually considered as secondary, has been revised these last decades. The family of the father established the individual status, and handed on heritage and family cult. However, the woman had a strong influence inside the family, because she gave birth to the next generation. Each woman becoming a mother was honoured. A child, and moreover a son, assured the parents the transmission of the family inheritance, someone taking care of them during their old age and performing ancestral worship. According to the period and to the social background, some women seem to have benefited from a greater independence inside their family. Among these, the Assyrian women, from the beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, enjoyed equal rights with their husbands in marriage. Wives of merchants who were often abroad had to take decisions concerning their household on their own. Their activities were slightly different from those of the Anatolian women of Kanesh who married their husbands as second wives.

The thousands of tablets forming the private archives discovered in the houses of the Assyrian merchants in Kanesh document with precision the international trade between Assur and Central Anatolia. The long distance separating these two main activity trade centres, explains the abundance of the letters discovered in Kanesh, which are dedicated to ongoing affairs, purchases and sales of merchandise, organisation of caravans, partnerships, etc. Other letters had a more personal character, among which hundreds of letters written or received by women. These concerned domestic affairs.

This private feminine correspondence is exceptional in Mesopotamian history.<sup>1</sup> Among the legal documents, family contracts such as marriages, divorces, adoptions or last wills complete our data about the Assyrian and Anatolian societies, the status of women within their families and their daily occupations.

### THE ASSYRIAN WOMAN IN HER FAMILY

The normal condition for the adult woman was to be a spouse. The women who were consecrated devoted themselves to celibacy and were considered as being married to a divinity.

#### Marriage contracts

There are quite few marriage contracts among the Old Assyrian archives from Kanesh.<sup>2</sup> The marriage agreements were only written down in case of atypical clauses, and most of the marriages between Assyrians took place in Assur where the documents, if any, were preserved. Contracts and other legal documents related to marriage or divorce concern not only Assyrians, but also Anatolians and reflect different traditions. Some letters state precisely several points linked to marriage ceremony or to the conditions of the wives.

In Mesopotamia, the written agreement between the parents of the bride and the young man or his family, concerned mainly gifts exchanges. Strangely enough, the wedding gifts are rarely mentioned in the Old Assyrian marriage contracts, but some letters show that the marriage could not take place if there were no gift exchanges. In a letter sent to the brother of his ex-bride, a merchant writes: *“For sure, I gave my word to your father, but as my (future) in-laws, you did not give me even a belt for my waist... Days passed and I got older, so I married another girl from Assur. I will not marry your sister.”*<sup>3</sup>

The dowry given to the girl when she left her parents' home to live with her husband remained her property and was transmitted to her children.<sup>4</sup> The bride-price paid by the man to his family in-law, called “price (*šimūm*)” was given during the marriage celebration. In the





fig. 1 Obverse of the tablet. Kt 88/k 625. Photo C. Michel



fig. 2 Obverse, reverse and edges of the tablet Kt h/k 73. Photo C. Michel

Akkadian terminology, the man “takes” the girl as spouse (*ahāzum*). During the ceremony, a banquet was given and the girl received a veil. “Placing the veil over the head of the bride” symbolised the wedding but did not imply that all the married women were required to wear a veil.<sup>5</sup> After the ceremony, the new wife moved to her husband’s house.

The Assyrian marriage was monogamous. The man, as he was getting married, had to promise not to take another wife. If he did, he had to pay a heavy fine and his marriage contract was broken: “*Adad-damiq married the girl, daughter of Ištar-nada as wife. He shall not marry another woman. If he marries another woman, he shall pay 1 mina of silver. If he does not come within 2 months and does not care about his wife, they shall give the girl to another man. He (Adad-damiq) shall not raise claims against the one who married her.*”<sup>16</sup>

### Bigamy or monogamy?

However, the man was allowed to go to a second woman in some circumstances. When the couple had no children, the husband could take another woman in order to have descendants, since only the female sterility was considered to be responsible for having no children. The contracts specified the time limit for the wife to give birth. After this date, the man could turn to another woman: “*If, within 3 years, Ištar-lamassi does not behold a baby, he may buy a slave girl and take her. Assur-nemedi, Anina and her mother gave her (as wife).*”<sup>17</sup> The second woman, chosen only for bearing the children of the couple, was a slave. She did not gain the status that of a wife: so the man was not bigamous.

The only case where the man was really married to two women at the same time is specific to the Assyrian merchant society. It took into account the special situation of the family. In fact, the Assyrian merchants were, most of the time, on the roads or abroad. They were far from their homeland for very long periods. Settled in a trading post in Anatolia, they were allowed to marry a second wife there: “*Assur-malik married Suhkana, daughter of Irma-Assur. Wherever Assur-malik goes, he shall take her with him. He shall not marry another (woman) in Kanesh, and shall not install (another one) at her side. He shall not marry a girl from Assur or a girl from the (Anatolian) country. If he marries one, then Assur-malik shall pay 5 minas of silver to Suhkana. In the City of Assur, he will marry the daughter of Dada (with whom he was engaged).*”<sup>18</sup> The contract stipulates that each of the two spouses is unique in her area so that a man could not have two wives in the same place: Suhkana was the only wife of Assur-malik in Anatolia and Dada’s daughter was the unique wife of Assur-malik in Assur. Other contracts show that the second marriage had to respect another rule: a merchant could not have two wives with the same status.<sup>9</sup> In fact,

the two wives were usually defined by the words *aššatum* or “main wife” and *amtum* or “secondary wife”. The first one that the Assyrian merchant married was the main wife, wherever she lived. A merchant was not allowed to live together with his two wives. If he was theoretically bigamous, he only lived with one wife at the same time.

Concerning the second marriage, the contract sometimes added that the new wife, mainly when she was Assyrian, had to follow her husband during all his travels within Anatolia and that he was not allowed to get married to another woman there. This restriction to two wives, one in the mother country and the second one in the adopted country, was intended to protect the status of women and prohibited polygamy.

Following her husband was a way for the Assyrian woman to be sure of his fidelity and also to be insured of a roof and sustenance. But it could be quite difficult, as we hear it from Ištar-nada who failed to meet up her husband Ina-Sin: “*You left me in Purušaddum and really I got out of my husband's mind, and you do not take care of me! I came here and in Kanesh, you denigrated me and during one (full) year you did not let me come to your bed. You wrote to me from Timelkiya as follows: 'If you do not come here, you are not anymore my amtum wife!' (...) From Timelkiya, you went to Kanesh saying: 'I will leave again within 15 days.'* (But) instead of 15 days, you did stay there one year! From Kanesh you wrote to me as follows: ‘Come up to Hahhum!’ Today, I am living in Hahhum since one year and in your consignments, you even do not mention my name!’”<sup>10</sup>

The man, as he got married, had to take care of his wife, to give her food, clothes and wood for heating, even if he was far away for a long time. So we can easily imagine that only the wealthy merchants were able to afford two households. Such a situation left married women alone at the head of their households during long periods of their lives: the Assyrian spouse stayed in Assur, alone with her younger children during the career of her husband in Anatolia, while the Anatolian wife lived with him in Asia Minor during his trade activities there, and was herself alone as he went back to Assur.

### Divorce and widowhood

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A possible divorce could be mentioned at the end of Old Assyrian marriage contracts and the penalties were much less severe than in the Old Babylonian sources: “*Iddin-Adad married Anana. He shall not marry another aššatum wife in the country. If he marries (another wife) and divorces her, Iddin-Adad will pay 5 minas of silver.*”<sup>11</sup> The fine imposed to the husband if he married another woman or divorced from his wife was the same. Man and woman could both start a divorce procedure, and fines, equal for both, were high and dissuasive: “*If Laqepum divorces her, he will pay 5 minas of silver and if Hatala divorces him, she will pay 5 minas of silver.*”<sup>12</sup> Such an egalitarian system might have been influenced by the Anatolian tradition where man and woman shared common property: “*Zabarašna married Kulsia. The house is their common property. They will share poverty and wealth. If Zabarašna divorces Kulsia, they will divide the house between them.*”<sup>13</sup> The majority of the divorces were consensual. It consisted of a private arrangement in the presence of witnesses, and the payment of the divorce money.

Divorced women and widows were allowed to marry again. As one of the parents died, the children inherited his or her goods. When it was the mother, they shared her dowry; when it was the father, they received his inheritance but had to take care of their mother.<sup>14</sup> The widow was protected by law and she had a strong authority within the family. She had her widow's dowry, contributed to the inheritance or was supported by her children.

### Consecrated girls

Before getting married, some girls were consecrated to a divinity. Such a religious act happened quite often in the Old Assyrian society: merchants liked to consecrate their older daughter, as a sign of gratitude for the prosperity of their trade, and also to confirm their social status. Some consecrated girls (*gubabtum*, *NIN.DINGIR*) came from the richest families of Assur. A nice metaphor was used to symbolise the consecration act: “to place in the lap (of the god)” which means “to place under the protection (of the god).”<sup>15</sup>

The consecration, decided by the parents, took place before the girl reached the age of getting married. Thus, Lamassi, from Assur, wrote to her husband in Kanesh: “*You know that people have become bad, one tries to swallow up the other! Make an effort and break your obli-*



fig. 3 Ivory statuette of the Nude Goddess.  
Ankara Museum of Anatolian Civilizations



fig. 4 A house in the karum

*gations. Put our young (daughter) under the protection of the god Assur!*<sup>16</sup> Or *“(Our) young (daughter) has grown up very much, come and put her under the protection of the god Assur, and seize the foot of your god!”*<sup>17</sup> Lamassi was satisfied since we learn that Ahaha became a gubabtum. We know nothing about the ceremony, but only that the father of the girl had to be present.

Lamassi wished to consecrate her daughter to the main divinity of her city, Assur. Once consecrated to the god Assur, Ahaha became independent and stayed single, owning the house in which she lived. She wrote letters to her brothers and managed her own affairs investing silver in several commercial societies. When her father died, she was involved in the settlement of his inheritance and informed her brothers about the bad situation of the family affairs. Her status as a consecrated woman insured her respect and attention from the other members of the family. She seemed to take part in all important family decisions.

### Women in successions

Most of the texts mentioning the consecrated women deal with an inheritance. In the absence of written rules for succession, the merchant used to draw up his last will. Such a document witnessed his willingness to preserve the economic interest of the feminine members of his family. Spouse and unmarried daughters were mentioned first in last wills. The married daughters received their inheritance share in their dowry. Ili-bani gave his house at Kanesh to his wife. To his daughter and his two sons, he gave in equal parts, tablets recording loans in copper, tin and silver. The boys had to give to their sister an annual allocation of 6 minas of copper and meat as offerings.<sup>18</sup> In another example, the widow and oldest son shared most of the inheritance: *“The house in Assur (will) belong to my wife. Over the money, she will share with my children. Over the silver, her inheritance share, she is ‘mother and father’. House and silver – her inheritance share –, as well as everything that she possesses, (will be later on) the property of Shu-Belum (the oldest son). The house in Kanesh (will be) the property of Shu-Belum.”*<sup>19</sup>

Widows could also write down their last wills, paying special attention to their consecrated daughters. Lamassatum made a list of her belongings that had to be divided, after her death, between her consecrated daughter and her two sons. This inventory included precious pots, jewels, votive offerings, loan contracts and slaves. Ištar-lamassi, widow first of the Assyrian Kunilum, with whom she had three children, and a second time of the Anatolian Lulu, mentioned the shares she left to each of her children: *“(Of) the 57 šekels of silver that are*



fig. 5 Incantation to help a woman in labour. Kt 90/k 178. Photo C. Michel



fig. 6 A ring found in the k̄arum grave (cat. 330)

available, Iliā will receive 37 šekels, Ilabrat-bani will receive 20 šekels, (and) they will send to my daughter, the gubabtum, 2 1/4 šekels of gold and 7 1/2 šekels of silver and a seal.”<sup>20</sup> But the situation evolved: part of the inheritance was used to pay the debts of the deceased husband, the burial expenses of the mother and of the two sons who died a short time after her. Shimat-l̄štar, her consecrated daughter, remained the only heiress, and she sent representatives from Assur to settle the whole business.

The consecrated girls usually lived in Assur, thus we do not have their archives, and we do not know what was happening to their belongings after their death. Since they had no heirs, we can imagine that the family of their father recovered all their goods.

## 128 ACTIVITIES OF ASSYRIAN WOMEN

In a letter sent to his fiancée, a man recalls the domestic tasks of wives: “Your father wrote to me about you with the intention that I marry you. And then, I sent my servants and my letter concerning you to your father so that he lets you go. Please, the day you hear my tablet, there, turn to your father (so that he agrees), set out and come here with my servants. I am alone. There is none who serves me or sets the table for me!”<sup>21</sup> But, according to their letters, the Assyrian women’s activities seemed to be much more varied.

### Assyrian women at home

In Assur, the Assyrian woman was often alone to manage her household while her husband was trading in Anatolia. She had to maintain the building in which she lived. The walls, made of clay bricks, needed regular repairs, as well as the roof, lying on wooden beams, as explains Tariš-matum: “Concerning the house in which we live, I was afraid that the house has become weakened so, during spring, I had bricks made and I stacked (them) in piles. Concerning the beams about which you wrote me, send me the necessary amount of silver so that here they [will buy] beams [for you...]”<sup>22</sup>

In her home, she was bringing up her children.<sup>23</sup> The private archives give very few data about maternity. We do not know at which age boys and girls were getting married; the number of children per couple is rarely mentioned. However, the reconstruction of some family trees allows us to estimate that there might have been three to six children per woman reaching the adult age. It seems that the prosperous families had more children than the poor ones: parents could pay for the sustenance of their children and left to their heirs some property.



fig. 7 Collection of vessels found during the excavations

Maternity is evoked in medical and magical literature which is very rare in the Kanesh sources. Three incantations deal with pregnant women and babies. The first one intended to help a woman in labour who was compared to the Cow of the Moon god giving birth. It was followed by an incantation against jaundice, a disease which newborn babies often caught.<sup>24</sup> The last one was directed against Lamaštum, a female demon attacking pregnant women and babies.<sup>25</sup>

The father retained the legal authority over the children and took important decisions for his daughters. He got them married at his convenience or presided over the ceremony during which one of them was consecrated. Boys were following their father in order to learn business. According to their letters, the Assur ladies were bringing up their younger children, preparing food and weaving clothes for them. Some rich families paid for a nurse to take care of the younger children. The children were growing up in a very feminine world since the father and the elder brothers were often abroad.

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Women had to prepare food for their children, and lack of silver to buy barley was one of their main concerns. They bought cereals after the harvest with the silver sent from Anatolia by their husband as payment in turn for the textiles they sent. They needed to evaluate the necessary quantities of cereals to feed all the inhabitants of their household, children and servants. Taram-Kubi wrote to her husband Innaya: "You wrote me as follows: 'Keep the bracelets and rings which are available (there). Let them serve for your sustenance.' Certainly, you had Ili-bani bring me 1/2 mina of gold, but which are the bracelets that you left me? When you left, you did not leave me silver, not even a single šekel! You emptied the house and took (everything) out! After you had gone, there was a severe famine in the City (of Assur and) you did not leave me barley, not even a single litre! (...) What are the complaints you keep writing me about? There is nothing for our sustenance and (for sure) we keep making complaints! I have collected what I had at my disposal and sent it to you. Today, I am living in an empty house. Now is the season, take good care to send me, in exchange for my textiles, silver from what you have at hand, so that I can buy barley, about 10 šimdu measures (ca. 300 l)."<sup>26</sup>

Kanesh houses produced many objects such as kitchen utensils, mainly various vessels.<sup>27</sup> Even if these are typically Anatolian, we may suppose that, in Assur, we could find the same type of domestic utensils. Barley was used to prepare many types of bread and was the main ingredient for beer. Beer made of malt and beer bread was prepared daily by housewives.

### Women, gods and ancestors

Moral and religious education of the children was left to women. As the boys were growing up, they received advice in order to preserve family harmony. Wives often used the religious sensibility of their husbands to the god Assur to ask for their return home. Even if it is not possible to speak of love letters, letters of women sometimes show their feelings: *"Please, as soon as you have heard my tablet, come, look to your god Assur and your domain, and while I am alive, let me see your eyes!"*<sup>28</sup>

The religious concerns of these ladies were offerings to temples, the piety of their men and the consecration of their older daughters. Illness or misfortune was the result of divine punishment because of dishonest affairs or carelessness to gods and ancestors. To know what to do in such cases, they visited women diviners and consulted dead spirits: *"Here (in Assur) we consulted the women who interpret dreams, the women diviner, and the spirits of the dead, and (divine) Assur keeps on warning you: You love (too much) money; you hate your life! Can't you satisfy (divine) Assur (here) in the City (of Assur)? Please, when you have heard the letter (then) come here, see (divine) Assur's eye and save your life!"*<sup>29</sup>

Many Assyrian women in Assur were living alone, in the houses inherited by their brothers or husband. Under the floor of their house were buried the ancestors of their family or their in-laws. After their death, the family ancestors were honoured with prayers and offerings. Their spirits were enjoying a second life in the Hereafter. In order to benefit from the kindness of the dead members of the family, the living members had to accomplish several rituals during the burial and after. They were persuaded that the dead could intervene in positive or negative actions in their lives, they could manifest their presence as ghosts or in dreams. The women in Assur were afraid of the ancestors of their in-laws who were neglected by their progeny: *"We are ill-treated by demons and spirits of the dead!"* The lady, who lived in a house that had been inherited by her husband, could not make the rituals for the dead since she had not been vested with this task. She had to fight the ghosts and begged her husband to come back home as soon as possible.<sup>30</sup>

### Business women

Beside the housewives tasks, the women living in Assur contributed actively to the family enterprise which ensured the smooth running of the Assyrian international trade in Anatolia. The merchant wives and the other women of the household, girls and servants, wove the textiles to make clothes and furniture for the household, but most of their products were exported to Central Anatolia. Their weaving know-how was usually much appreciated. However, their textiles were sometimes criticized by the men of the family who knew perfectly well which kind of textile could be sold at a profit: *"As for the Abarnian textile you sent me, such a one you must not send me again. If you make (one), make (it) like the one I dressed myself in there. If you do not manage (to make) thin textiles, I hear that there are plenty for sale over there, buy (them) and send them to me. A finished textile that you make must be nine cubits long and eight cubits wide."*<sup>31</sup>

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According to their husbands, the Assyrian ladies did not produce enough textiles. But, when they increased their production, the quality could not be as good. Lamassi justifies herself as follows: *"You should not get angry about the fact that I did not send you the textiles about which you wrote. As the little girl has grown up, I had to make a pair of heavy textiles for the wagon. Moreover I made (some) for the members of the household and the children. This is why I did not manage to send you textiles. Whatever textiles I can make, I will send you with later caravans."*<sup>32</sup> She also protests the supposedly bad quality of her textiles: *"As to the textiles about which you wrote to me in the following terms: 'they are (too) small, they are not good'; was it not on your own request that I reduced the size? And now you write (again), saying: 'process half a mina (of wool) more in your textiles'. Well, I have done it."*<sup>33</sup>

In exchange for their textiles, Assyrian women received precious metals, silver and gold, that they used to manage their household and to invest in commercial operations. The more textiles they sent, and the better their quality was, the better they could be paid. The Assyrian woman earned her own money. She played an important role in various transactions and could even lend money at an interest. She was a real business woman, counting up her money, justifying each of her expenses and knowing perfectly what she owned.

### ANATOLIAN WOMEN

All the information that we gather from Kültepe tablets about Anatolian ladies should be used keeping in mind that we deal mostly with Assyrian documentation, and thus we have a one-sided image of the situation.<sup>34</sup>

### Mixed couples

When the Assyrian merchants settled in Asia Minor, they left their families in Assur and arrived alone in Kanesh. There, they sometimes married Anatolian women as secondary wives. Later on, some merchants founded first their family in Kanesh and chose local ladies as main wives. All these mixed couples are documented by letters and contracts, while Anatolian couples are mainly attested as being concerned with loans, sales and family contracts.

The Anatolian women of Assyrian merchants, since they had a home in Kanesh, were not obliged to follow them wherever their journeys led them, contrary to the Assyrian secondary wives. In fact, the letters exchanged between the Anatolian ladies and their Assyrian husbands show that they did not travel a great deal. In their houses lived, beside their children, and some servants, sometimes other members of the family, or, occasionally associates of their husbands.

### Anatolian women at home

The main concerns of the Kanesh Anatolian women were domestic or commercial. However, contrary to the ladies of Assur, the Anatolian women never mentioned a possible textile production. Among their daily tasks were agricultural works, an aspect which is not documented for the Assur women. We learn from the letters sent by Assur-nada to his wife Shišahšušar that she had to buy oxen of good quality and to gather enough fodder for them; then she had to prepare them for the yoke.<sup>35</sup> She was also in contact with peasants who delivered large quantities of barley to her house. She bought straw, wood, reeds and many tools for the house and the field work. Kunnaniya was breeding pigs: *“If the pigs do not get fat, sell them, if they are fat, let them be available.”*<sup>36</sup> The involvement of these women into agriculture and animal breeding might explain that they did not move much.

They prepared beer daily for the consumption of the family and received many food products from their husbands: lard, meat, nuts, oil or spices. In their daily activities, they were helped by servants. Merchandise and archives of the family firm were stored inside their houses in Kanesh, and they had to guard and protect carefully their homes from robbers. They raised their children. The family mother is represented in an Anatolian divine family scene. A steatite mould dating from Kanesh kārūm Ib (18th century BC) shows a couple with two children: one is standing, wearing the same clothes as his parents, the second, a big baby, in the arms of his mother, is completely wrapped up.

The Anatolian women helped their husbands in their business, recovering money from their husband's debtors. As associates of their husbands, they reported for them every transaction made in their absence.

### When the Assyrians left their Anatolian wives

When an Assyrian merchant took a second wife in Anatolia, he started a new family in a new home. There was no contact between the family he built in Assur and the one he created in Minor Asia, even though the Anatolian woman knew perfectly well the existence of the other wife of her husband in Assur. She also knew that her man might be willing to go back some day to Assur. In fact, some merchants belonging to the first generation of Assyrians settled in Minor Asia chose to return to Assur during their old age. Several divorce contracts mention the compen-



fig. 8 An anthropomorphic clay box (cat. 146)



fig. 9 Pig head made of carnelian with lapis lazuli eyes (cat. 203)



fig. 10 Stone mould showing an Anatolian divine family (cat. 240)

sation to be given then to the Anatolian wife and settle the children's situation. Young children were left to one or the other parent under special conditions. A judgement dated from k̄arum Ib, allows the father to take his three sons with him after having paid a compensation to his wife. In the divorce concerning Pīlah-l̄štar and his Anatolian wife, Pīlah-l̄štar may take his daughter Lamassi with him, but first, he must pay to his wife and her family education and food expenses for his daughter: "*Pīlah-l̄štar divorced] his amtum wife [Wal]awala and she has been satisfied with h[er] divorce money: [x minas] of silver. (...) As to his daughter Lamassi, Pīlah-l̄štar may take her along when he goes to the City (of Assur). Concerning her upbringing and her food, they have been satisfied, they shall not ask for anything else.*"<sup>137</sup>

The children could also be shared between both parents. In a contract, the mother kept her daughter and was allowed to marry her to a man of her choice while the father took with him his little boy after having paid his wife some money. Once divorced, the Anatolian woman could marry again. These various contracts show that the Anatolian wives, when they married an Assyrian merchant, already foresaw that they might be left alone when their husbands decided to go back to Assur. With such a perspective, one has to imagine that the marriage with an Assyrian might have had advantages, perhaps an easier life, with financial facilities and a better future perhaps for the children who would follow their father.

A merchant, who possessed two homes, one in Assur and a second one in Kanesh, had no difficulties to divide his possessions between his two wives. However, when the Assyrian husband suddenly died, before having written his last will, the Anatolian family was not in the best position to obtain something from the inheritance. In fact, at the time of the death of an Assyrian merchant in Asia Minor, his goods and all his tablets were usually sent to Assur. There, the heirs would pay back the creditors, then share the property of their father. In the best situations, these ladies had only the usufruct of their home, the destiny of which was not always decided in Assur. Several house sale contracts recovered in Kanesh mentioned the existence of women, mostly widows, who were allowed to stay there until their death.

The Old Assyrian letters found in Kanesh, beside its commercial character, give many data about the daily life and the social conditions of women. These lively letters reflect the strong personalities of their female authors who treat men as their equals.<sup>38</sup> At the head of her household, the Assyrian woman participated in the activities of the family enterprise with her textile production. She had a strong influence inside her family. Some letters show the aspirations of these women for a harmonious and prosperous life. They liked to show off to their neighbours the social successes of their families by building larger houses. However, the lives of these women were quite atypical: the Old Assyrian letters belonged to a specific group, the merchants, who were regularly separated from their wives.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>\*</sup> *ArScAn-HAROC*, CNRS, Nanterre, France

<sup>1</sup> Michel 2001, n° 299-400.

<sup>2</sup> Eisser-Lewy 1930, n° 1-6; Matouš 1973; Balkan 1983; Sever 1992a; Sever 1992b; Bayram-Çeçen 1995; Michel-Garelli 1996; Rems 1996; Veenhof 1997; Michel 2006a.

<sup>3</sup> Kt 88/k 625, see Sever 1992a, 670.

<sup>4</sup> Veenhof 2003, 450-455.

<sup>5</sup> Dercksen 1991; Michel 1997c.

<sup>6</sup> TC 1, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Prag I 490.

<sup>8</sup> Kt 94/k 149.

<sup>9</sup> Michel 2006a.

<sup>10</sup> Kt h/k 73, see Michel 2008b.

<sup>11</sup> AKT 1 76.

<sup>12</sup> ICK 1 3. For a similar text see "Presentation of an Old Assyrian Document" in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> KTS 2 6.

<sup>14</sup> Veenhof 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Michel 2009a.

<sup>16</sup> Michel 2001, n° 306.

<sup>17</sup> Michel 2001, n° 307.

<sup>18</sup> ICK 1 12.

<sup>19</sup> Kt o/k. 196c, see Albayrak 2000; Michel 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Texte A. Kt 91/k. 453, Veenhof 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Michel 2001, n° 397.

<sup>22</sup> Michel 2001, n° 320.

<sup>23</sup> Michel 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Michel 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Michel 1997a.

<sup>26</sup> Michel 2001, n° 348.

<sup>27</sup> Özgüç 2003, 142-229.

<sup>28</sup> Michel 2001, n° 345.

<sup>29</sup> Michel 2001, n° 348.

<sup>30</sup> Michel 2009b.

<sup>31</sup> Veenhof 1972: 103-109; Michel 2001, n° 318; Michel 2006b.

<sup>32</sup> Michel 2001, n° 307.

<sup>33</sup> Michel 2001, n° 303.

<sup>34</sup> Michel 2008a.

<sup>35</sup> Larsen 2002, n° 50-58.

<sup>36</sup> Michel 1998, Michel 2001, 493-499.

<sup>37</sup> ICK 1 32.

<sup>38</sup> Larsen 2001; See Michel in this volume "Writing, Counting and Scribal Education in Assur and Kanesh."



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