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Presentation of an Old Assyrian Document

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► **To cite this version:**

Cécile Michel. Presentation of an Old Assyrian Document. F. Kulakoğlu et S. Kangal. Anadolu'nun Önsözü Kültepe Kaniş-Karumu. Asurlular İstanbul'da, Avrupa Kültür Baskent, pp.98-99, 2010. halshs-00781413

HAL Id: halshs-00781413

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00781413>

Submitted on 26 Jan 2013

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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

organized with the support of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture and the Directorate of Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality at the Hagia Irene Museum between December 29, 2010 and March 28, 2011 with the cooperation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Turkish Republic and the Directorate of the Kültepe Excavations.

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Printing and Binding

Seçil Ofset

100. Yıl Mah. Matbaacılar Sitesi 4. Cad. No: 77, Bağcılar İstanbul

CERTIFICATE NO: 12068

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

ISBN 978-975-8046-79-9

Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality Cultural Publication No: 78

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Acknowledgements of the Directorate of Kültepe-Kanesh Excavations

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Yasemin Çuhadar
Nuray Demirtaş
Ahmet Remzi Erdoğan
Canan Geleri
Leyla Tunç Kılıçtaş
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Aynur Talaakar
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Mehtap Türkmen
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Dr. Kadir Topbaş, Mayor
Kortan Çelikkbilek, Consultant to Mayor

Special thanks

BBC

Yeliz Kuşan
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PRESENTATION OF AN OLD ASSYRIAN DOCUMENT

The cuneiform writing used by the Old Assyrian merchants was written with a stylus on clay. The documents were usually square or rectangular, in the form of tablets with sizes varying from 2x3 cm to 20x10 cm for the biggest ones.

The scribe had to prepare his tablet, choosing its size according to the length of the text he wanted to write. He had to write his text in one go because the clay progressively dried. The text was written in lines from left to right, parallel to the smallest size, and usually in one column. Lines were regularly ruled, and the signs were hanging on the lines. The tablet was filled up with signs and the writer followed this order: obverse, lower edge, reverse, upper edge, and even sometimes left edge. The right edge was occupied by the last of long lines, continued on the edge. Then the tablet was dried in the sun; it was not baked. However, the fire which destroyed many houses of the *kārum* at Kanesh, baked some tablets. This is why they are usually very well preserved.

Among the many cuneiform documents found at Kültepe, letters and contracts were originally enclosed inside a clay envelope. The sender rolled his personal cylinder seal on the envelope of his letter, wrote his name and the name of the recipient of the message. When the letter reached its destination, the recipient broke the envelope. On the envelope of a contract, a long abstract of the transaction was written down. Parties and witnesses left their seal imprints over it. The envelope was the guarantee of the contract's legal value. Many contracts were preserved inside their envelopes in the merchant archives.

One of the first tasks of the historian, today, is to decipher and publish the documents forgotten during several millennia. The Assyriologist draws a cuneiform copy of each side of the tablet, and takes at least six digital photographs in order to cover all the sides. The transliteration of the text provides the equivalent of each sign in the Latin alphabet.¹ Then the text is translated and commented on, both linguistically and historically. Each document is a unique piece. Even when small or broken, it contributes to our knowledge of the ancient Near East.

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The document Kt v/k 147 was discovered in a house of the *kārum* Kanesh during the excavations conducted by T. Özgüç in 1970.² It is a marriage contract and was still preserved in its envelope.³

Transliteration

Translation

Obverse

1 <i>Ga-lu-a dumu A-kà-áb-ši</i>	Galua, son of A-kà-áb-ši,
2 <i>Ta-am-na-ni-kà dumu-munus</i>	married Tamnanika, daughter of
3 <i>Šu-be-lim: e-hu-uz</i>	Šū-Bēlum.
4 <i>Šu-ma:Ga-lu-a: e-zi-ib-ši</i>	If Galua divorces her,
5 2 <i>ma-na ku-babbar</i>	2 minas of silver
6 <i>i-ša-qal: ù šu-ma</i>	he shall pay. And if
7 <i>Ta-am-na-ni-kà</i>	Tamnanika
8 <i>te-zi-ib- šu¹ (Ši)</i>	divorces him,
9 2 <i>ma-na ku-babbar</i>	2 minas of silver

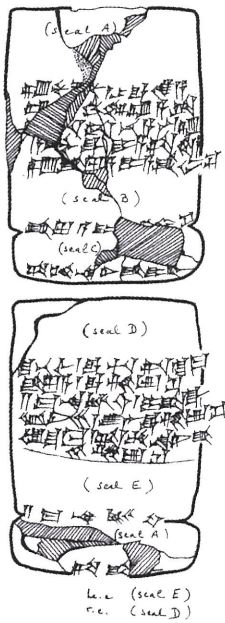
Reverse

11 IGI <i>Nu-ú-nu: igi</i>	In the presence of Nunu, of
12 <i>A-ta: igi A-šur-gal</i>	Ata of Ašur-rabi,
13 <i>igi A-la-hi-im lam-ni-iš</i>	of Alāhum.
14 <i>ú-lá e-pá-ši</i>	He shall not maltreat her.

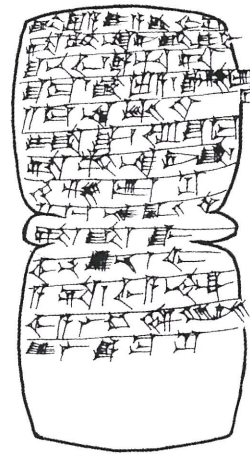
(the rest of the reverse is not inscribed)

Lower edge

10 <i>ta-ša-qal</i>	she shall pay.
---------------------	----------------



Tablet Kt v/k 147b; 4.3x4.1x1.5 cm



Tablet Kt v/k 147a:
Envelope; 5.5x5x2.6 cm.

This marriage contract contains a reciprocal clause in case of divorce, with the same penalty for both parties: 2 minas of silver (1 kg). But there is a stipulation which intends to protect the wife: the husband must not treat her badly. On line 8 of the tablet and 17 of the envelope, the scribe made a mistake typical for Anatolian writers,⁴ using the feminine pronoun suffix instead of the masculine, to refer to the husband.

Transliteration

Obverse

- 1 (seal A)
- 2 KIŠIB Nu- ú-nu D'UM'U E-ki-a
- 3 KIŠIB [A-lá]-hi-im KIŠIB A-ta
- 4 DU[MU T]ù-tù-pi-a-lá: KIŠIB
- 5 A-šur-GAL DUMU A-ta-ti-a
- 6 KIŠIB Ga-lu-a DUMU A-kà-áb-ši
- 7 (seal B)
- 8 Ga-lu-a DUMU [A-k] à-[á]b- ši

Lower edge

- 9 (seal C)
- 10 Ta-am-na-ni-kà dumu-munus

Reverse

- 11 (seal D)
- 12 Šu-be-lim : e-hu-uz : šu-ma
- 13 Ga-lu-a : e-zi-ib-ši
- 14 2 ma-na KÙ-BABABAR: i-ša-qa!
- 15 lam-ni-iš : ú-lá e-zi-ib- ši
- 16 ù šu-ma : Ta-am-na-ni-kà
- 17 te-zi-ib-šu¹ (Ši)
- 18 (seal E)
- 19 2 ma-na KÙ-BABABAR

Translation

- Seal of Nūnu, son of Ekia
Seal of Alahum. Seal of Ata,
son of Tutupiala. Seal of
Seal of Aššur'rabi, son of Atatia
Seal of Galua, son of Akabši.

Galua, son of Akabši.

married Tamnanika, daughter

- of Šū-Bēlum. If
Galua divorces her,
he shall pay 2 minas of silver.
He shall not leave her badly.
And if Tamnanika
divorces him (!),

2 minas of silver

Upper edge

- 20 (seal A)
- 21 ta-ša-[qa!] she shall pay.

Left edge

- 22 (seal E)

Right edge

- 23 (seal D)

The envelope was sealed by five persons: the four witnesses and the groom, thus, it must have been preserved in the archives of the family of the bride. Unfortunately, none of the seals being inscribed, it is almost impossible to identify the owner of each seal.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Dr., ArScAn-HAROC, CNRS, Nanterre, France.

² In the transliteration:

DUMU: Sumerian

šu-ma: Akkadian (Old Assyrian dialect)

[] broken passage

┌ ┘ half broken passage

: word divider.

² The text was published by Donbaz, V., 2003, *Lamniš ulā ezebši*. "He shall not leave her in a bad situation (wickedly)", *Festschrift für Burkhard Kienast zu seinem 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen*, G. J. SELZ (ed.), AOAT 274, p. 47-50. Münster. It was collated in 2005.

³ For this topic, see C. Michel, "Women of Assur and Kanesh" in this volume.

⁴ See C. Michel's article entitled "Writing, Counting and Scribal Education at Assur and Kanesh", in this volume.