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Integrative approaches to the Archaeology and the History of Kültepe/Kaneš

Cécile Michel*

Scholars gathered at Kültepe for the 3rd Kültepe International Meetings (KIM) from August 4 to August 7, 2017, and presented twenty-four talks integrating Kültepe into its local and regional environment. The wide range of disciplines represented gave an accurate reconstitution of the site in ancient times. What have we learned during these three intense conference days?

New physical and technological methods, as well as extended studies on natural resources have been applied to Kültepe and its area in recent years and allowed a better global view of its geological and environmental history. The open forest that covered the area disappeared probably quite early, during the Neolithic with the establishment of the first agricultural communities. During the Bronze Age, the hills around Kültepe were divided between cultivated land, pastures and trees. According to wood analyses, during the Bronze Age there were seventeen different tree species growing around Kültepe, especially oaks, pines, willows and poplars, as well as various fruit trees. The fact that the population of the upper town used many more pines than that of the lower town might be explained by a different accesses to natural resources and different activities performed in both places.¹ Pine was used in the upper town for the construction of the official and religious buildings but was a bad fuel. By contrast, in the lower town, the metallurgical workshops used a large quantity of firewood. Paleo-vegetation analyses have shown that in the second half of the 1st millennium BCE and first centuries CE there was a decline of pines, and an increase of oaks. There were many walnut trees, but also grapes, and olives.² Archaeobotanical studies indicate that Kültepe's arable land was dominated by grain agriculture during the Bronze and Iron ages. The arrival of the Assyrians during the early 2nd millennium might have provoked an increase of production and facilitated the circulation of spices. During the Iron Age, oil crops were introduced.³

Was the Kültepe environment productive enough to supply food to its entire population, both local and immigrant? Isotope analyses were used for chronological and paleoclimate studies; they also helped at a better understanding of the people's diet, and their mobility.⁴ Indeed, previous analyses show that already in the late 3rd millennium, immigrants from Mesopotamia were settled at Kültepe.⁵

** CNRS, Archéologies et Sciences de l'Antiquité, Nanterre; cecile.michel@cncrs.fr. This text, here slightly revised and completed, was presented as a conclusion to the final round table of the 3rd KIM. All the lectures given during this conference are referred to in footnotes. I wish to express my warmest thanks to Arch Naylor for polishing the English text.

¹Nathan Wright, M. Cemre Ustunkaya, Andrew S. Fairbairn: "Cooking, Lighting, and Heating at Kültepe: Demonstrating the usefulness of wood charcoal analysis."

²Aziz Ören, Çetin Şenkul, Warren John Eastwood, Uğur Doğan, and Fikri Kulakoğlu: "Late Holocene Environmental Changes of Kültepe (Kayseri) and Surroundings."

³Andrew Fairbairn: "Assyrian Trade and Arable Agriculture at Kültepe."

⁴M. Cemre Ustunkaya, Nathan Wright, and Andrew S. Fairbairn: "Stable Isotope Analysis: State of the art and the potential at Kültepe."

⁵Yazıcıoğlu-Santamaria 2017. One of the grave excavated in 2010 on top of the mound, in an open area, was circled with stones and has been dated to the 21th century BC. The body buried in this grave belonged to a male of 40-45 years old who had supported a trephination. According to the isotopic analyses, this man was not a local Anatolian; he was either

During the Middle Bronze Age, the Kültepe lower town population grew with the settlement of Assyrian merchants. In order to estimate the population of Kültepe and its surroundings, we need to know precisely the size of the town. Geophysical investigations allow mapping the subsurface in order to detect the spatial layout of the upper town (tepe) and to evaluate the extent of the lower town, but these techniques cannot always be successful because of deep layers of alluvium and high clay content.⁶ Drone and laser mapping producing photogrammetry images have also been implemented to provide photographic plans of the site including spatial coordinates.⁷

Previous studies suggested that during level II, Kaneš was a large site, measuring between 170 and 230 hectares and its population amounted to 25,000 or 30,000, including some 3,000 inhabitants living in the 9 hectares of the lower town commercial district that has been excavated up to now.⁸ Is it possible to check these estimations by quantifying the capacities of vessels found in houses? This is naturally connected to the nature of the food that was found in these vessels, presumably grain, but in which shape: cleaned or with chaff?⁹ Many of the ceramics used at Kültepe during the Bronze Age show similar shapes and sizes to those found at Boğazköy, but also at Göltepe metallurgical center and Kestel mine;¹⁰ this reflects the diffusion of these ceramic types within Anatolia. The archaeometallurgy of Anatolia is becoming better known, thanks in part to the various projects carried out by Aslihan Yener and Fikri Kulakoğlu. Analyses of metal objects have provided much data about the provenance of metals and the technologies used.¹¹

The chronology and history of Kültepe and its inhabitants was at the heart of several lectures. The chronology of Kültepe area during the Early Bronze Age has been fine-tuned thanks to the KAYAP project which provides a long sequence covering the whole 3rd millennium.¹² And a new cemetery found during salvage excavation promises to augment our data regarding this period.¹³ Archaeomagnetism analyses gave hints about the date of fires which burnt some buildings. According to these, the Waršama palace on the tepe burnt during the years 1750-1740 BCE.¹⁴

For the history of Kültepe, we have the unique opportunity of having the 22,500 tablets, envelopes and fragments found mainly in the lower town; and we also have at our disposal later textual sources coming from Mesopotamia. Assyrians settled in Kültepe produced locally legal texts and personal notices, and received many letters from their colleagues and relatives who stayed in Aššur or were

a first-generation immigrant or a man born at Kaneš to an immigrant woman. Note that most of the objects found with the body were of Mesopotamian manufacture.

⁶Kelsey M. Lowe, Aaron Fogel, Andrew Fairbairn and Fikri Kulakoğlu: “Geophysical Investigations at Kültepe-Kanesh, Turkey: Applications and limitations for understanding a Middle Bronze Age site.”

⁷A. Emin Karkinlı, M. Akif. Günen, Erkan Beşdok, and Fikri Kulakoğlu: “Integration of Drone and Laser Mapping into the Documentation of Archaeological Excavation Areas.”

⁸Barjamovic 2014; Hertel 2014.

⁹This has been explored for Boğazköy, ancient Hattuša by Néhémie Strupler: “Subsistence Economy at the Middle Bronze Age site of Boğazköy/Hattuša.”

¹⁰Abdullah Hacı: “Early Bronze Age Pottery from a Mining Settlement (Göltepe) Southwest of Kültepe.”

¹¹James Ross, Fikri Kulakoglu, Kelly Merigot and Zakaria Quadir: “Was it Simple or Complex Urban Metalworking at Kültepe?” and Tayfun Yıldırım and Gonca Dardeniz: “Questions to Unfold Metal and Frit Production at the Early Bronze Age settlement of Resuloğlu: Local or Regional?”

¹²Ryoichi Kontani: “Pursuing the Earliest Early Bronze Age in Central Anatolia: Archaeological data from KAYAP & North Trench at Kültepe.”

¹³Serdar Okur, Gökhan Yıldız, Dilek Keçe, and Fikri Kulakoğlu: “Kültepe Early Bronze Age Cemetery.”

¹⁴Pinar Ertepinar, Cor Langereis, Andy Biggin and Fikri Kulakoğlu: [“DATING OF FIRE EVENTS IN KÜLTEPE.”](#)

traveling in various Anatolian localities. Legal texts, especially loan contracts, include a date, and a sudden increase of dated text have been observed between REL 70-80,¹⁵ indicating that there is an explosion of Assyrian trading activities during the following years. This suggests that enormous amounts of silver were put into trade, perhaps by the Aššur political power, and this might have followed a period of shortage in the City.¹⁶ Regarding letters, new paleographical methods allow an assessment of who could write in a family.¹⁷ Letters, as well as legal texts, were enclosed in envelopes. The techniques of making envelopes,¹⁸ and the sealing practices were compared to those of the Ur III period.¹⁹ Senders, parties and witnesses sealed these envelopes and it is not easy to identify the owners or users of the seals since most of these seals do not bear inscriptions. This can sometimes be accomplished with the help of those databases that include the depiction of characteristic scenes.²⁰ Scenes could exist also on steles, but such decorated steles are exceptional in Anatolia during the early 2nd millennium BCE. The discovery of a stele in the area of Avanos, with Levantine and Northern Syria motives contemporary to the Assyrian occupation at Kültepe, is thus quite exceptional. A possible interpretation is that it could have been transported as a booty.²¹

What happened at Kültepe after the Assyrians left the site is not really documented. The area is a flood-prone environment, and after 1500 BCE it became unsuitable for good living conditions.²² Much earlier time gaps in the Kültepe chronology can be explained by analysis carried on hummocks at the north eastern flank of Mt. Erciyes, resulting from debris of an avalanche dating back to some 20,000 years ago.²³

During the Iron Age, the area of Kültepe was named Tabal and under this name it is well documented during the second half of the 8th century BCE, as it was visited several times by the Assyrian kings during their campaigns. Was this geographical name already attested in earlier written sources?²⁴

Nowadays, all findings on Anatolian sites go to museums where curators need to arrange collections in the best ways. The restoration of objects is a real work of art, as it was possible to admire on a bone panel decorated with animals found in Kültepe lower town during the 1984 excavations.²⁵ And it is necessary to develop the most efficient preservation methods, especially for metals.²⁶

¹⁵Barjamovic, Hertel and Larsen 2012, 56.

¹⁶Guido Kryszat: "Week Eponyms and Women in Need."

¹⁷Wiebke Beyer: "Clustering Old Assyrian Scribal Hands."

¹⁸Cécile Michel: "Making Clay Envelopes in the Old Assyrian Period."

¹⁹Bonka Nedeltscheva: "Ur III Sealing Practices."

²⁰Melissa Ricetti: "A Different Approach on Seal Impressions: Preliminary results on the sealing from the 1990 season at Kültepe/Kaneš."

²¹Elif Genç-Uğur Yanar: "A Stele Dated to the Middle Bronze Age from Avanos-Akarca."

²²Kulakoğlu 2014.

²³Yuichi S. Hayakawa, Hidetsugu Yoshida, Hiroyuki Obanawa, Ryutaro Naruhashi, Koji Okumura, Masumi Zaiki, Ryoichi Kontani: "Potential Natural Disaster in Kayseri: Sector collapse and debris avalanche on the north-eastern flank of Mt Erciyes."

²⁴Selim Ferruh Adalı: "Iron Age Kültepe and its Region in Light of Tabal's History," and Sanna Aro: "Present State and Prospects of Tabalian studies."

²⁵Latif Özen and Emine Koçak: "Re-restoring a Bone Panel from Kültepe-Kanesh."

²⁶Önder İpek: "Studies Concerning the Protection of Cultural Properties: Case of the Çorum Museum (Çorum-Alacahöyük-Boğazköy)."

It is also fundamental to disseminate our discoveries to the general public, and thus to promote cultural heritage. Besides documentary movies and books for a general public,²⁷ building up educational tools is one of the best ways to proceed; to get children interested, computer games are one of the more attractive means.²⁸

The three days meeting thus involved a great variety of disciplines: archaeology, ceramology, zooarchaeology, paleobotany, palynology, anthracology, dendrochronology, dendroecology, paleoclimatology, isotope analyses, archaeometallurgy, geophysics, geometallurgy, geo and archaeo-magnetism, art history, philology, epigraphy, paleography, history, computer science, and last but not least, videogames design. Indeed, the aim of the Kültepe International Meetings (KIM) is to facilitate the dialogue between these different disciplines. Combining their data will give a more accurate view of Kültepe and its environment. The 3rd KIM has fulfilled this goal. It has once more shown how Kültepe functions as an international experimental laboratory where each discipline and sub-discipline is tested, improved, and developed. Since 2001, publications concerning Kültepe have literally exploded, and forty-one volumes appeared. Those dedicated to the cuneiform sources have made available 2,170 new Kültepe texts (see Table 1 below).²⁹ The cross studies initiated during the KIM meetings will allow us to better understand the lives of the inhabitants of Kültepe and their environment during the 3rd and 2nd millennia B.C.

Text publications			
Author	Volume	Year	Number of texts
İ. Albayrak	(A)KT 4: (<i>Kt o/k</i>)	2006	71
K. R. Veenhof	(A)KT 5: <i>The Archive of Kuliya, son of Ali-abum (Kt 92/k 188-263)</i>	2010	77
M. T. Larsen	(A)KT 6a: <i>The Archive of Šalim-Aššur, Family 1, The First Two Generations (94/k)</i>	2010	295
M. T. Larsen	(A)KT 6b: <i>The Archive of Šalim-Aššur, Family 1, Ennam-Aššur (94/k)</i>	2013	226
M. T. Larsen	(A)KT 6c: <i>The Archive of Šalim-Aššur, Family 3, Ali-ahum (94/k)</i>	2014	205
S. Bayram – R. Kuzuoğlu	(A)KT 7a: <i>Aššur-rēṭ Ailesinin Arşivi (88/k).</i>	2014	308
İ. Albayrak – H. Erol	(A)KT 9a : <i>Buzutaya ve Lipit-İstar Arşivleri 1950 Yılı Tabletlerinden (Kt. c/k) Seçilmiş Metinler</i>	2016	171
C. Günbattı	(A)KT 10a: <i>Anadolu Tüccarlar Şarabunuwa ve Peruwa'nın Arşivleri</i>	2016	64
K. R. Veenhof	(A)KT 8: <i>The Archive of Elama, son of Iddin-Suen, and his Family (Kt. 91/k 285-568 and Kt 92/k 94-187)</i>	2017	372
M. T. Larsen	(A)KT 6d: <i>The Archive of Šalim-Aššur, Family 4, Texts concerning non-family members</i>	2018	145
H. Erol	(A)KT 11a: <i>Šu-İstar'a Ait Belgeler</i>	2018	182
C. Günbattı	<i>The Letter Sent to Hurmeli King of Harsamna and the Kings of Kaniš, Ankara</i>	2014	16

²⁷Several Turkish documentary movies have already been produced. A new documentary is currently being prepared (trilingual: French, English and Turkish) on Kültepe and female textile craft. A collective book, *Daily Life at Kültepe* will be published in four languages (English, Turkish, French and German).

²⁸Ceren İnci, Elif Sürer and Şebnem Düzgün: “A Multifaceted Gaming Platform for Interactive Learning of Archeology and Culture of Kültepe.” All participants could test a beta version of the game and contribute to its improvement.

²⁹Many articles published in journals, as for example in *Archivum Anatolicum*, or in volumes dedicated to colleagues, but including papers on other periods, have not been taken into account in the table. They also make available many more texts excavated since 1948 at Kültepe.

Cécile Michel, Integrative Approaches to the Archaeology and the History of Kültepe/Kaneš, in F. Kulakoğlu, C. Michel & G. Öztürk (eds.), *Integrative Approaches to the Archaeology and History of Kültepe-Kanesh, Kültepe, 4-7 August, 2017*, Kültepe International Meetings 3, SUBARTU XLV, Turnhout: Brepols, p. 1-6

T. Hertel	CUSAS 43: Old Assyrian Tablets, in: A.R. George et al. <i>Assyrian Archival Texts in the Schøyen Collection and Other Documents from North Mesopotamia and Syria</i> , Bethesda	2017	38
Text editions/translations, grammar			
C. Michel	<i>Correspondance des marchands de Kaniš au début du II^e millénaire avant J.-C.</i> (LAP0 19)	2001	400
M. T. Larsen	OAA 1: <i>The Aššur-nādā Archive</i>	2002	176
N. Kouwenberg	<i>A Grammar of Old Assyrian</i> (HdO 118)	2017	
Historical and geographical studies, bibliography			
C. Michel	OAAS 1: <i>Old Assyrian Bibliography of Cuneiform Texts, Bullae, Seals and the Results of the Excavations at Aššur, Kültepe/Kaniš, Acemhöyük, Alişar and Boğazköy</i>	2003	
K. R. Veenhof	<i>The Old Assyrian List of Year Eponyms from Karum Kanish and its Chronological Implications</i> , Ankara	2003	
G. Kryszat	OAAS 2: <i>Zur Chronologie der Kaufmannsarchive aus der Schicht 2 des Kārum Kaneš</i>	2004	
J.G. Dercksen	<i>Old Assyrian Institutions</i> (MOS Studies 4)	2004	
K. R. Veenhof – J. Eidem	OBO 160/5: <i>The Old Assyrian Period</i> , in: M. Wäfler (ed.), <i>Mesopotamia. The Old Assyrian Period. Annäherungen 5. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 160/5</i>	2008	
G. Barjamovic	CNI 38: <i>A Historical Geography of Anatolia in the Old Assyrian Colony Period</i>	2011	
G. Barjamovic – T. Hertel – M. T. Larsen	OAAS 5: <i>Ups and Downs at Kanesh. Chronology, History and Society in the Old Assyrian Period</i> , PIHANS 120	2012	
C. Günbattu	<i>Kültepe – Kaniš. Anadolu’da ilk yazı, ilk belgeler</i> , Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür yayımları	2012	
T. Hertel	OAAS 6: <i>Old Assyrian Legal Practices. Law and Dispute in the Ancient Near East</i> ,	2013	
B. Kienast	<i>Das Altassyrische Eherecht</i> (SANTAG 10)	2013	
E. Öz	<i>Kültepe Metinleri Işığında Eski Anadolu’da Tarım ve Hayvancılık</i> , Ankara	2014	
M. T. Larsen	<i>Ancient Kaneš. A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia</i> , Cambridge	2015	
E. Stratford	<i>A Year of Vengeance</i> vol. 1 (SANER17/1)	2017	
Archaeological and seal studies			
N. Özgüç – Ö. Tunca	<i>Kültepe-Kaniš. Sealed and Inscribed Clay Bullae</i> , Ankara	2001	
T. Özgüç	<i>Kultepe Kaniš/Neša. The earliest international trade center and the oldest capital city of the Hittites</i> , Ankara	2003	
N. Özgüç	<i>Seal Impressions on the Clay Envelopes from the Archives of the Native Perıwa and Assyrian Trader Uşur-ša-Ištar son of Aššur-imiti</i> , Ankara	2006	
F. Kulakoğlu – S. Kangal (eds)	<i>Anatolia’s Prologue, Kültepe Kanesh Karum, Assyrians in Istanbul, Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality Cultural Publication 78</i>	2010	
N. Özgüç	<i>Acemhöyük – Buruḫaddum 1. Cylinder Seals and Bullae with Cylinder Seal Impressions</i>	2015	
Old Assyrian studies dedicated to colleagues			
C. Michel (ed.)	OAAS 4: <i>Old Assyrian Studies in Memory of Paul Garelli</i>	2008	
G. Kryszat (ed.)	<i>AfO 35: Festschrift für Karl Hecker zum 75. Geburtstag am 25. Juli 2008</i>	2008	
İ. Albayrak – H. Erol – M. Çayır (eds)	<i>Cahit Günbattu’ya Armağan / Studies in Honour of Cahit Günbattu</i> , Ankara	2015	
Conference proceedings			
J. G. Dercksen (ed.)	OAAS 3: <i>Anatolia and the Jazira during the Old Assyrian Period</i>	2008	
L. Atici – F. Kulakoğlu – G. Barjamovic – A. Fairbairn (eds)	JCS Suppl. 4: <i>Current Research at Kültepe/Kanesh. An Interdisciplinary and Integrative Approach to Trade Networks, Internationalism, and Identity</i>	2014	
F. Kulakoğlu – C. Michel (eds)	KIM 1: <i>Proceedings of the 1st Kültepe International Meeting, Kültepe, 19-23 September, 2013. Studies Dedicated to Kutlu Emre</i> , Subartu XXXV	2015	

F. Kulakoğlu – G. Barjamovic (eds)	KIM 2: <i>Proceedings of the 2nd Kültepe International Meeting, Kültepe, 26-30 July 2015, Studies dedicated to K. R. Veenhof</i>	2017
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Table 1: Publication volumes dedicated to Kültepe/Kaneš and the Old Assyrian period between 2001 and 2018.



Participants to the 3rd Kültepe International Meeting, at Kültepe lower town.

Several papers presented during the 3rd KIM are not included in this volume, while others have been extensively developed. All the contributions presented here provide a good overview of the ongoing multidisciplinary studies being carried out at Kültepe and Central Anatolia.

Series Abbreviations

(A)KT	(Ankara) Kültepe Tabletleri (Ankara)
CNI	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications (Copenhagen)
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology (Bethesda)
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik (Leiden)
JCS Suppl.	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i> , Supplement Series (New Haven/Boston)
KIM	Kültepe International Meeting (Turnhout).
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient (Paris)
OAA	Old Assyrian Archives (Leiden)
OAAS	Old Assyrian Archives Studies (Leiden)
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (Freiburg)
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records (Berlin)
SANTAG	SANTAG. Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde (Wiesbaden)

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- 2014 “The Size of Kanesh and the Demography of Early Middle Bronze Age Anatolia”, in: L. Atici – F. Kulakoğlu – G. Barjamovic – A. Fairbairn (eds), *Current Research at Kültepe/Kanesh. An Interdisciplinary and Integrative Approach to Trade Networks, Internationalism, and Identity*, JCS Suppl. 4, 55–68.

Cécile Michel, Integrative Approaches to the Archaeology and the History of Kültepe/Kaneš, in F. Kulakoğlu, C. Michel & G. Öztürk (eds.), *Integrative Approaches to the Archaeology and History of Kültepe-Kanesh, Kültepe, 4-7 August, 2017*, Kültepe International Meetings 3, SUBARTU XLV, Turnhout: Brepols, p. 1-6

Barjamovic, G. – Hertel, T. – Larsen, M. T.

2012 *Ups and Downs at Kanesh. Chronology, History and Society in the Old Assyrian Period*, PIHANS 120, Leiden

Hertel, T.

2014 “The Lower Town of Kültepe : Urban Layout and Population”, in: L. Atici – F. Kulakoğlu – G. Barjamovic – A. Fairbairn (eds), *Current Research at Kultepe/Kanesh. An Interdisciplinary and Integrative Approach to Trade Networks, Internationalism, and Identity*, JCS Suppl. 4, 25–54.

Kulakoğlu, F.

2014 “Kanesh after the Assyrian Colony Period: Current Research at Kültepe and the Question fo the End of the Bronze Age Settlement”, in: L. Atici – F. Kulakoğlu – G. Barjamovic – A. Fairbairn (eds.), *Current Research at Kültepe-Kanesh: An Interdisciplinary and Integrative Approach to Trade Networks, Internationalism and Identity*, JCS Suppl. 4, 85-94.

Yazıcıoğlu-Santamaria, G. B.

2017 “Locals, Immigrants, and Marriage Ties at Kültepe: Results of Strontium Isotope Analysis on Human Teeth from Lower Town Graves”, in: F. Kulakoğlu – G. Barjamovic (eds), *Proceedings of the 2nd Kültepe International Meeting, Kültepe, 26-30 July 2015, Studies Dedicated to Klaas Veenhof*, KIM 2, Subartu XXXIX, Turnhout, 63-84.

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