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## Three Kültepe Tablets found in 2018

Cécile Michel

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**ARMAĞAN**



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İrfan Albayrak  
L. Gürkan Gökçek  
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Koray Toptaş



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# Three Kültepe tablets found in 2018

Cécile MICHEL\*

## Introduction

Kültepe, the ancient city of Kanesh, is one of the few sites in the ancient Near East that has been continuously excavated for over seventy years. For about sixty years, the excavations concentrated on the Middle Bronze Age levels of the lower city, uncovering the houses of Assyrian merchants who had settled there for the needs of trade during the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries BCE. Since 2006, and for more than fifteen years, research has been focused on the Early Bronze levels of the tepe, in order to improve our knowledge of this major site in Central Anatolia during the third millennium BCE. However, almost every year, efforts are made to clear some areas of the lower town of the overgrown vegetation. During these operations, cuneiform tablets are regularly brought to light.

The three tablets edited here were discovered during the month of July 2018 as I was working in Kültepe as a member of the archaeological team, and I was lucky enough to be able to decipher them on the spot.<sup>1</sup> These texts are not related to each other and it is very difficult to associate them with groups of already known tablets. However, like any newly discovered text, they provide some information about the history of Kültepe, its inhabitants, and their commercial transactions.

It is with pleasure that I offer this modest contribution to my colleague Salih Çeçen, whom I first met in Ankara in 1991. Salih Çeçen has published, alone or with colleagues, Kültepe tablets in some thirty articles on topics as varied as the relationships between Assyrians and Anatolians,<sup>2</sup> blood money,<sup>3</sup> the Assyrian authorities in Anatolia and the letters sent by the king of Ashur,<sup>4</sup> the society and in particular marriage and slaves contracts.<sup>5</sup> He has also worked on groups of tablets found at Kültepe during the second year of excavations (1949, Kt b/k),<sup>6</sup> and on the largest archive unearthed in 1962 (Kt n/k), with some 1600 texts belonging to Uşur-ša-Ištar, an Assyrian merchant in close contact with the king of Aššur, and her sisters Akatiya and Šimat-Suen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my warmest thanks to Prof. Fikri Kulakoğlu who entrusted me with these tablets for publication.

<sup>2</sup> Çeçen 1990a.

<sup>3</sup> Çeçen 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Çeçen 1990b.

<sup>5</sup> Sever & Çeçen 1993, Bayram & Çeçen 1995, 1996.

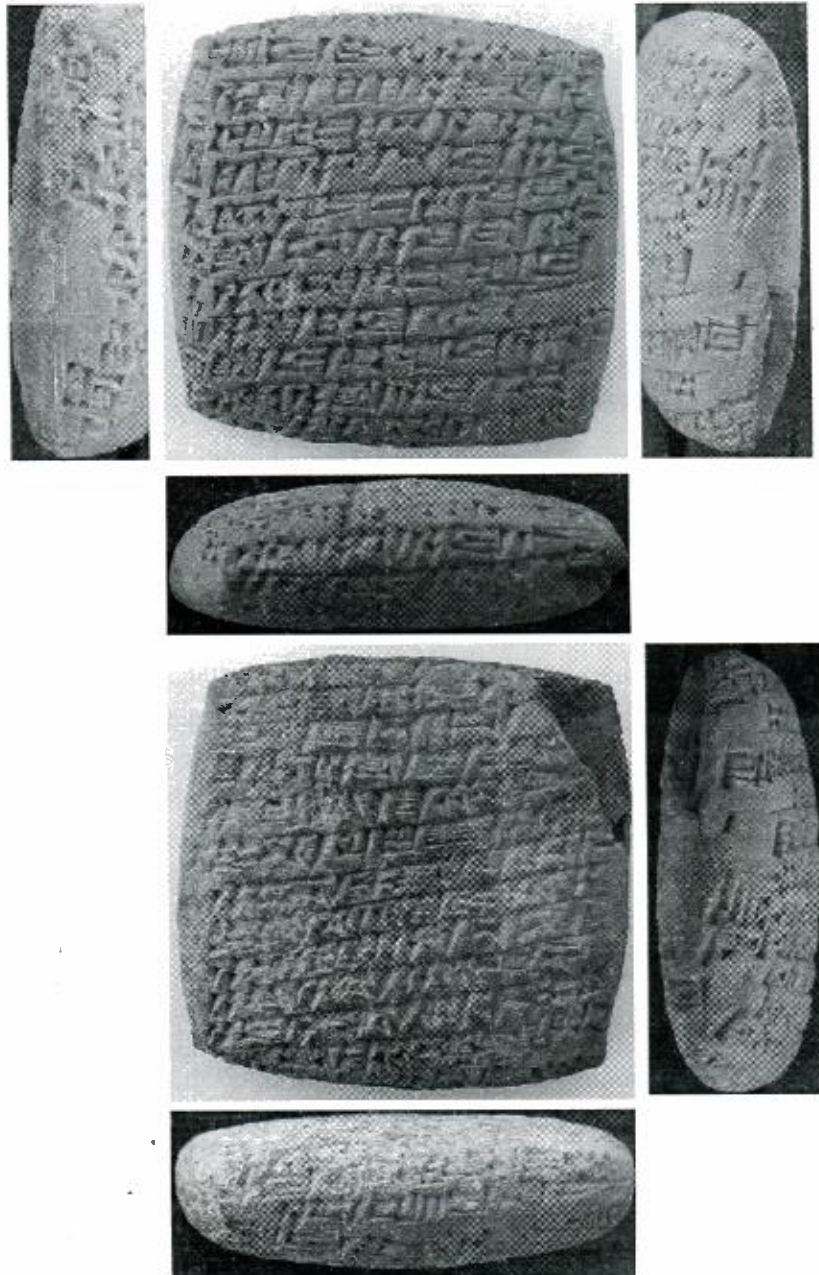
<sup>6</sup> Several houses were excavated in 1949. These houses correspond to nos. 27 (*Adad-şulūlī/Šu-Anum*), 71-72, 74-75, and 84 (*U-ua*), see Hertel 2014, 44-51. Their owners are not clearly identified. For example, the names of the loan contract creditors are often different, see Çeçen & Akyüz 2018 and Çeçen, Gökçek & Toptaş 2021. By contrast, the seven loan contracts published in Çeçen & Toptaş 2019 all involve Karriya as creditor; this suggests that his house is one of those excavated in 1949.

<sup>7</sup> Çeçen 2022, Çeçen & Gökçek 2015, 2016, 2017. These tablets were found in a six room house measuring 112 m<sup>2</sup>, in the squares C-D/11-12, see Hertel 2014, 45, no. 20. Concerning Akatiya and Šimat-Suen, the sisters of Uşur-ša-Ištar, see most

**1. Kt 2018/k 1**

This tablet was found on July 12, 2018, during the cleaning of the lower town surface; height: 5.1 × width: 5.2 × thickness: 1.8 cm; its colour is light brown.

*Photos of the tablet*



*Figure 1: Photos of the different sides of Kt 2018/k 1 by C. Michel.*

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recently Michel 2020, 395-410. For further publications of S. Çeçen, see the Old Assyrian bibliography Michel 2003 and its supplements Michel 2006, 2011, 2015 and 2021.



**Abstract**

Letter sent by Iddin-abum to Kukua, Isaya and Ikuppiya, and more specifically to Kukua.

Iddin-abum entrusted Kukua with an amount of silver to buy barley. Kukua accepted this task. Iddin-abum, in this message, specifies where to store the barley, namely in the house of Šudaya. Kukua is to assist the people who are actually going to buy the barley and store it, and possibly he will have to add a small amount of copper for this operation.

**Transliteration**

Ob.	<i>um-mà I-dí-a-bu-um-ma</i>	rev.	<i>še-am ša-am-ma</i>
2.	<i>a-na Ku-ku-a I-sá-a</i> <i>ù I-ku-pì-a a-na</i>		<i>i-na é<sup>be-et</sup></i>
4.	<i>Ku-ku-a qí-bi<sub>4</sub>-ma 4 ma-na</i> <i>kù-babbar ni-is-ha-sú ú-lá diri</i>	16.	<i>Šu-da-a ša iš-ú-mu</i> <i>áš-r[a-k]am : šu-pu-uk ([x])</i>
6.	<i>ša-du-a-sú ša-bu</i> <i>a-dí-na-kum um-ma</i>	18.	<i>i-na šé-lu-ú še-im</i> <i>a-tù-nu ú Ki-ki-da-n[i]m</i>
8.	<i>a-na-ku-ma še-am</i> <i>ša-ma-am um-ma a-ta-ma</i>	20.	<i>i-ša-ha-tí-šu i-zi-za</i> <i>a-na Ku-ku-a qí-bi<sub>4</sub>-ma</i>
10.	<i>še-am a-ša-a-ma-kum</i> <i>a-a-kà-BA lá-áš-pu-uk-š[u]</i>	22.	<i>a-hi a-ta a-pu-tum</i> <i>a-ma-lá ta-ta-wu i-hi-/id-ma</i>
lo.e.	<i>a-hi a-ta a-ma-lá</i> <i>a-na-kam tù-ta-ki-li-[ni]</i>	24.	<i>še-am šu-pu-uk</i>
		u.e.	<i>šu-ma še-am i-ša-ú-mu-/ni</i>
		26.	<i>a-ta urudu 2 ma-na</i>
		le.e.	<i>ú 3 ma-na wa-at-ra-/am</i>
		28.	<i>ku-bu-ús</i>

**Translation**

<sup>1-4</sup>Thus (says) Iddin-abum: say to Kukua, Isaya and Ikuppiya. Say to Kukua.

<sup>4-7</sup>I gave you 4 minas of silver – its import tax not added, its transport fee paid for – <sup>7-9</sup>(saying) as follows: “Buy me barley.” <sup>9-11</sup>You (answered) as follows: “I will buy barley for you. Shall I as well heap it up somewhere?”

<sup>12-14</sup>You are my brother, with regard to the fact that you have made me confident here, do buy barley, and <sup>15-17</sup>heap it up there in the house of Šudaya, the one he has (recently) bought. <sup>18-20</sup>When bringing up the barley, you and Kikidānim stand at his side.

<sup>21</sup>Say to Kukua: <sup>22</sup>You are my brother, this is urgent! <sup>23-24</sup>Take care (to do things) just as you said you would and heap up barley. <sup>25</sup>If they do buy barley for me, <sup>26-28</sup>you, deduct an additional amount of copper of 2 or 3 minas.

**Comments**

Line 11: The particle *-BA* is well attested in Old Assyrian texts, most of the time in interrogatives, see Kouwenberg 2017, 475-476.

Line 17: There is the space for one sign at the broken end of this line; it could be simply the sign ‘ù’, which would then start the next sentence with ‘And’.

Lines 26-28: The extra amount of copper is presumably intended for those who will buy and heap the barley for Iddin-abum.

*The correspondents and people involved in this letter*

The name of the letter sender, Iddin-abum, is relatively common in the Kültepe texts: about thirty different patronyms are known for it. The same can be said for Ikuppiya, for whom there are more than thirty-five patronyms. By contrast, the names of the two first addressees are less common. Kukua, also written Kukuwa, is known as the son of Iddin-Ištar in witness lists (Chantre 10:9'; KTH 33:12'-13'), and two different persons named Kukua are mentioned in the archive of Šalim-Aššur excavated in 1994. Kukua, son of Mannum-kī-iliya sealed as a witness a loan contract including the date REL 106.<sup>8</sup> Kukua, son of Budātum, appears twice as witness in this archive, once in relation to the date REL 103.<sup>9</sup> A smith named Kukua occurs as well among the tablets unearthed in Šalim-Aššur's house; his father's name is not specified.<sup>10</sup> In addition, many of the attestations of the name Kukua come from this archive.<sup>11</sup> This could perhaps suggest that the letter sender, Iddin-abum, is Šalim-Aššur's brother and the second son of Issu-arik.<sup>12</sup> Note however that, outside of the archive unearthed in 1994, these two names are also attested together: Iddin-abum and Kukuwa brought together tin and copper to Timilkiya (TuM 1, 24e:12-18).

Isaya, the second addressee of the letter, occurs twice in the 1994 archive in connection with a small amount of silver (KT6e, 1015:2, 118:10'), and once as the father of Dagān-malkum (KT6a, 121:24),<sup>13</sup> however, these documents are not connected with Šalim-Aššur and his sons.<sup>14</sup>

*Silver to buy barley*

We do not know where the purchase of barley is to take place, and where the house of Šudaya was located. The silver to be spent for buying grain may have been transported from Kaneš to Aššur since it is indicated that the transport fee has been paid for. In this case, the transaction was planned in Aššur. The import tax, which usually amounts to 4% of the imported silver, would then cost 9 ½ shekels and 18 grains, and had first to be deducted. This would leave more than 3 5/6 minas of silver for the purchase of a large quantity of barley.

Most of the Old Assyrian tablets giving the price of barley concern Kaneš. For example, a list of expenses for a ceremony specifies: 'I paid 7 shekels minus 15 grains for 6 sacks of barley';<sup>15</sup> thus with 1

<sup>8</sup> Text KT 6b, 488:12-13. This family link needs to be restored as follows in KT 6b, 468:19-20: [igi] *Ku-ku-wa*, [dumu *Mā-mu-ki-i-li-a*.

<sup>9</sup> Texts KT 6b, 519:18 and KT 6b, 484:16 (REL 103). Kukua, son of Budātum, occurs also in ICK 2, 147:7', ICK 2, 201:1, Kt 94/k 367:20.

<sup>10</sup> Texts KT 6b, 470:14-15 and KT 6c, 680:7-8. The wife of Kukua is mentioned in a text of the same archive KT 6e, 1001:14.

<sup>11</sup> Note however that Kukua is also attested twice in the archive of Aššur-rē'i excavated in 1988: Kt 7a, 283:1, 293a:27 (witness), and its duplicate 293b:23. In the archive of Elamma unearthed in 1991 and 1992, he occurs as a letter sender together with Ennam-Suen and Ušur-ša-Aššur (KT 8, 215:1). Kikidānum does not occur in the archive of Šalim-Aššur, and Šudaya is only involved as father or eponym.

<sup>12</sup> Larsen 2010, 8. One letter of this archive is addressed to both Iddin-abum and Kukua among other merchants (KT 6b, 384), the topic of the letter deals with family affairs.

<sup>13</sup> Thus his son was named after his grand-father since Isaya, the eponym is the son of Dagān-malkum, see KEL A (Kt 92/k 193), no. 127 (=REL 128), KT 4, 25:7, Kt o/k 113:6-7, TC 1, 124:12-13, etc.

<sup>14</sup> An Isaya, a slave, occurs in kt 94/k 139:6, and a person with this name is indebted in ICK 1, 6:2

<sup>15</sup> Kt 88/k 71 (Albayrak, 2002; Michel 2020, no. 14):15-16.

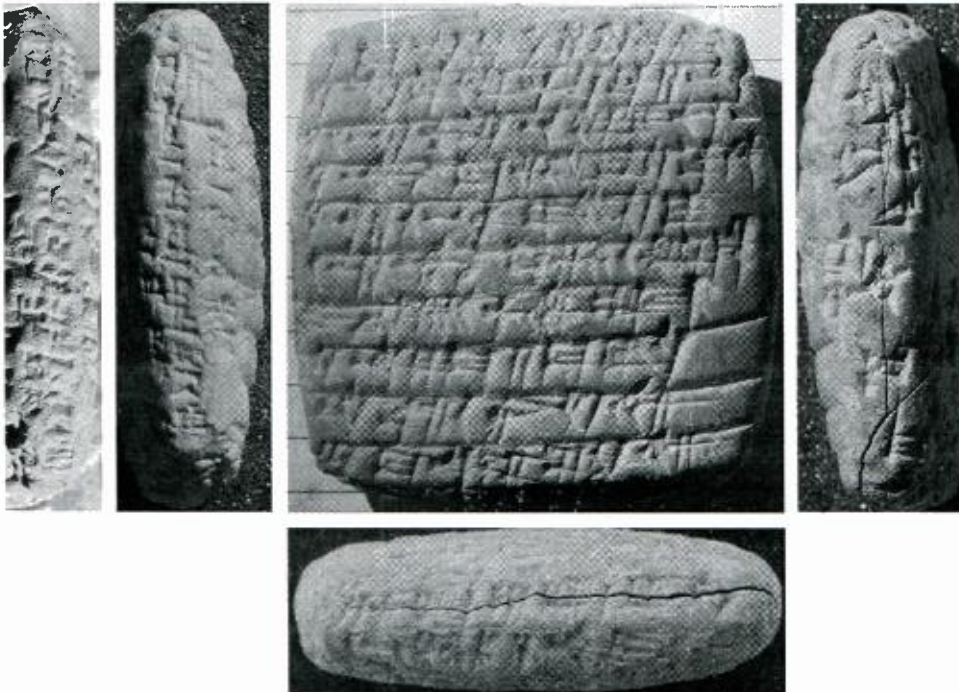
shekel of silver it was possible to buy about a hundred liters of barley. Another text gives the following prices: '13 shekels of silver for 7 sacks of barley (...) 17' ½ shekels of silver for 10 sacks of barley, we paid 1 ¾ shekel each.'<sup>16</sup>

A royal inscription of Šamšī-Adad (xviii<sup>th</sup> century) indicates that for 1 shekel of silver, one could buy in Aššur 2 gur (600 silà) of barley.<sup>17</sup> Of course the price of barley was very volatile, especially after the harvest or during the lean season. Nevertheless, these prices give an idea of the very large quantity of barley it was possible to buy for 3 5/6 minas of silver, between several dozens to more than a hundred kilolitres of barley.

## 2. Kt 2018/k 2

This tablet was discovered on July 21, 2018 on the surface during the cleaning of the lower town from weeds; height: 5.5 × width: 5.4 × thickness: 1.8 cm; its colour is red beige.

### *Photos of the tablet*



<sup>16</sup> TC 3, 170:8-10, 13-15, 13 2/3 g[in], *a-na 7 na-[ru-uq], še-im ni-i[š-qú-ul]* (...) 17' 1/[2 gín], *a-na 10 na-ru-uq še-[im]*, 2 lá 1/4 gín-ta, *ni-iš-qú-ul*.

<sup>17</sup> Grayson 1987, A.0.39.1:59-72. As a matter of comparison, under the reign of Zimrī-Līm in Mari, the price of barley was 3 shekels of silver for 1 ugar (1200 silà), and at Emar it was up to 5 shekels for 1 ugar, see Michel 1996:392.



Figure 2: Photos of the different sides of Kt 2018/k 2 by C. Michel.

### Abstract

Personal accounting recording silver and tin transactions.

The anonymous author sent some silver to Aššur. He owns the silver jointly with Ilšu-rabi. The second part of the tablet concerns the sale of tin for a colleague and the deposit of tin for the author of the text.

### Transliteration

Ob.	1 ½ <i>ma-na</i> kù-babbar <i>ša-ru-pá-/am</i>	rev.	<i>a-na</i> dingir-š <u>u</u> -gal- <i>ma</i> <i>a-dí-in-/ma</i>
2.	<i>a-na-ku</i> ù dingir-š <u>u</u> -gal <i>a-na</i> <i>A-lim<sup>ki</sup> nu-šé-bi<sub>4</sub>-il<sub>5</sub> i-nu-mì</i>	14.	ù igi ší-bé <i>ša</i> dingir-š <u>u</u> -gal <i>iš-ku-nu</i> <i>ša</i> <i>re-eš<sub>15</sub></i> kù-babbar
4.	<i>A-šùr-lá-ma-sí</i> dumu <i>Ša-ba-ha-nim</i> <i>a-na A-lim<sup>ki</sup> i-li-ku</i>	16.	<i>um-ma a-na-ku-ma</i> dam-gàr <sup>ra-am</sup> dingir-š <u>u</u> -gal <i>lu iz-ku-ur</i>
6.	igi <i>A-šùr-lá-ma-sí</i> ù <i>Puzur<sub>4</sub>-/A-šùr</i> dumu <i>En-nam<sup>d</sup>im um-ma</i>	18.	kù-babbar <i>i-a-um</i> (°sign erased) ù <i>šu-a-um</i> <i>ša ba-re-ni</i>
8.	<i>a-na-ku-ma a-ma</i> kù-babbar <i>ša ba-re-ni ší-im</i>	20.	10 <i>ma-na</i> an-na <i>a-na</i> dingir-š <u>u</u> -gal dumu <i>Ku-ta-a</i> <i>ša Ú-šú-ur-ša-A-šùr</i>
10.	6 <i>ma-na</i> urudu <i>ší-kim</i>	u.e.	<i>a-dí-in</i> igi <i>Puzur<sub>4</sub>-A-šùr</i>
lo.e.	5 ½ gín 5 gín kù-babbar		igi <i>A-šùr-lá-ma-sí</i>
12.	igi <i>En-nam-A-šùr</i> dumu <i>Ú-ra-a</i>	le.e.	10 gín-ta <i>i-dí-nam</i> 10 gín an-na <i>mu-tá Puzur<sub>4</sub><sup>!</sup>-Ištar</i>
		26.	<i>iš-ku-nam</i>

**Translation:**

<sup>1-3</sup>Ilšu-rabi and I have sent 1 ½ minas of refined silver to the City (of Aššur) <sup>3-5</sup>when Aššur-lamassī, son of Šabahānum, went to the City (of Aššur), <sup>6-7</sup>in the presence of Aššur-lamassī and Puzur-Aššur, son of Ennam-Adad. <sup>7-8</sup>I (then said) as follows: <sup>8-9</sup>“Look, the silver is our joint property. <sup>9-11</sup>The price of the 6 minas of copper scraps was 5 ½ shekels (of silver), <sup>11-13</sup>I gave 5 shekels of silver, to Ilšu-rabi in the presence of Ennam-Aššur, son of Uraya, <sup>14-15</sup>and it is in the presence of his witnesses that Ilšu-rabi has deposited (it). <sup>15-16</sup>As for the owner of the silver, I (said) as follows: <sup>16-19</sup>“Ilšu-rabi has certainly named the creditor, the silver is mine and his, it is our joint property!”

<sup>20-23</sup>I gave 10 minas of tin to Ilšu-rabi, son of Kutaya, belonging to Ušur-ša-Aššur, in the presence of Puzur-Aššur and Aššur-lamassī. <sup>24</sup>He paid me at a rate of 10 shekels (of tin) per (shekel of silver). <sup>25-26</sup>Puzur-Ištar established for me 10 shekels of tin underweight.

**Comments**

Lines 1-5: The first amount of silver was the joint property of the anonymous author and Ilšu-rabi, and the text suggests that Aššur-lamassī was transporting this silver to Aššur.

Lines 11-19: The second and smaller amount of silver is also their joint property even though Ilšu-rabi was alone to deposit it.

Lines 20-26: These lines concern another transaction, the sale of tin for silver at a rate of 10:1: the declared amount of tin was underweight by 10 shekels.

Line 25: The second half of this line is unclear; it ends with a personal name finishing with the goddess name ‘Ištar’, and preceded with the sign *ša*. Another possibility would be <Ú>-šú-ur'-ša-Ištar.

**People involved in this document**

The main character related to the anonymous author of the document is Ilšu-rabi, perhaps identical to the son of Kutaya mentioned in lines 20-21. It is indeed easier to trace people whose patronyms are specified. Unfortunately, this merchant is not documented elsewhere in the published Kültepe tablets.

Aššur-lamassī, son of Šabahānum, occurs twice as recipient of 1 ½ shekels of silver in two memoranda concerning payments to different individuals,<sup>18</sup> and as a witness in a sworn testimony concerning a dispute between Amur-ilī and Aššur-ennam, son of Ibaya.<sup>19</sup> Puzur-Aššur, son of Ennam-Adad, appears as a witness related to the closure of accounts between two merchants, and to a transaction of copper and gold.<sup>20</sup> He is also mentioned in a letter sent by Šalim-ahum to Puzur-Ištar.<sup>21</sup> Ennam-Aššur, son of Uraya, is the debtor in a memorandum copy of a sealed loan contract.<sup>22</sup> None of these texts mention a common person with the tablet under study.

<sup>18</sup> CCT 5, 48e: 2-4, KT 6e, 1016:9.

<sup>19</sup> TC 3, 265:20-21.

<sup>20</sup> See respectively BIN 4, 192:7-8 and KT 9, 83:20-21.

<sup>21</sup> ICK 1, 54:7-8.

<sup>22</sup> AKT 7a, 97:19.

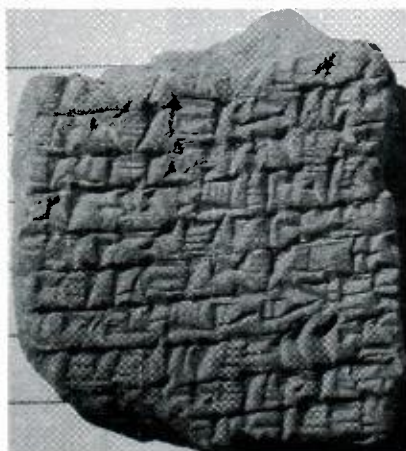
### 3. Kt 2018/k 3

Fragment found during the during the cleaning of the lower town surface; h: 3.8 × w: 3.5 × t: 0.9 cm; light brown. Deciphered on July 22, 2018.

#### *Abstract*

Fragment of a memorandum listing several loans. The document includes the date ix/REL 88.

#### *Photo and transliteration*



Ob. [x m]a-na kù-babbar ku-nu-k[i...]  
 2' [x ?] E-na-ma-nim a-n[a ...]  
 [iš-t]ù sag iti-1-kam Kà-a[n-wa-ar-ta]  
 4' [l]i-mu-um Šu-Hu-bur  
 [dum]u E-lá-lí 1 ½ gín-[ta]  
 6' [a]-na 1 ma-na-<im> ú-ša-á[b]  
 [kiš]ib En-um-i-lí dumu K[u-x-x-(x)]  
 8' [kiš]ib Ku<sup>7</sup>-ša-a dumu Puzur<sub>2</sub>-Išta[r]  
 [kiši]b [A-š]ùr-na-da dumu x[x-x-x]  
 10' [kišib A-šùr-m]a-lik dumu E-[x-x-x]

Figure 3: Photo of the fragment Kt 2018/k 3 by C. Michel.

#### *Translation*

1'[x m]inas of sealed silver [...] 2'[that?] Ennam-Anum t[o...].

3'[Fro]m month Ka[nwarta], 4-5'[e]ponym Šu-Hubur, [so]n of Elālī, 5-6'he will ad[d] (as interest) 1 ½ shekels [p]er mina.

7'[Sealed] by Ennum-ilī, son of K[uz]a, 8'sealed] by Kušaya, son of Puzur-Išta[r], 9'sealed b]y [Ašš]ur-nādā, son of [...], 10'[sealed by Aššur-m]alik, son of E-[...].

#### *Comments*

The full width of this tablet is difficult to establish as only a fragment of the obverse is preserved. The number of signs broken at the end of each line seems to be quite variable. Indeed, if the restitution of the name of the month is correct on line 3', at the end of the following line, no sign seems to be missing since the eponym Šu-Hubur, son of Elālī is well attested (REL no. 88).

Line 3': The month name Kanwarta is often written with the sign *kán*, however, this writing *Kà-an-wa-ar-ta* also occurs several times.<sup>23</sup>

Line 7': Ennum-ilī, son of Kuza, is mentioned in the unpublished text C 36:5.

Line 8': The first sign of the personal name looks like a 'lu', however, Kušaya, son of Puzur-Ištar, is attested as a witness in Kt n/k 1813:1.

<sup>23</sup> For the different writings of this month name see Donbaz 1971, 1984.

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