

Two Unpublished Cuneiform Tablets Among the Texts Preserved in the Hama Museum

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§1. Introduction

§1.1. In Syria, the National Museum of Hama is of exceptional importance in terms of its richness in archaeological material dating back to different periods of time. Nevertheless, it keeps only a few cuneiform documents.

§1.2. During the excavations at Tell Hama (1931-1938), the Danish mission found, on level E2 (the level of the Aramaic era) near the main entrance to Building No. III dated to the beginning of the ninth century BC, a group of 20 clay cuneiform tablets that dealt with several different subjects. Their presence near the entrance prompted the belief that there was an attempt to save these texts from Sargon II's campaign in 720 BC. Their content is: astronomical (No. 6 A 344), economic (6 A 354), magical (7A 626, 6 A 338), medical (6 A 336, 341-42, 345, 350), ritual (6 A 335, 343), political (letter to Rodamo, King of Hama [6 A 334]; letter to Hama [6A 608]). A religious incantation (6 A 343) from Tell Hama¹ is currently preserved in the Danish National Museum.²

§1.3. Recently, T. P. Arbøll provided new data on the cuneiform texts of Tell Hama and he is currently preparing a monograph to publish and edit them some 80 years after their discovery. His article³ presents his initial findings concerning the magical and medical tablets in order to re-

evaluate some alternative routes knowledge may have travelled on the fringe of the Neo-Assyrian empire in the early first millennium BC.

§1.4. Excavations ended at Tell Hama after the conclusion of the Danish excavations (1938). Excavations at other sites in the region of Hama (Tell Qarqour, Tell al-Homsi, Tell al-Ruwda, Tell al-Nasiriya, Tell Massin, etc.), several of which are among the cities and settlements promising to provide us with such documents, did not reveal any additional cuneiform texts until 2010.

§1.5. Half of an obelisk belonging to the Assyrian king Sargon II (722-705 BC) is also preserved in the museum. It was found in 1924 during agricultural work at Tell Acharneh (ancient Tunip?), located on the Orontes River as it enters the Al-Ghab Plain.⁴ Additionally, the museum includes collections of inscriptions in several other languages, such as Hittite,⁵ ancient Aramaic,⁶ Palmyrene, and Latin.

§1.6. A few other documents, without archaeological context, have reached the museum through confiscation and chance discoveries. There is an alabaster vase dating to the Persian king Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC, AD)⁷. The intended destination of this precious gift is not established, although museum records indicate that it was discovered in Apamea. The museum also

¹ Parpola, S. 1987, [SAA 1]; Parpola, S. 1990, pp. 257-265.

² Ingholt, H. 1940, p. 115.

³ Arbøll, T. P. 2022, pp. 1-24.

⁴ Thureau-Dangin F. 1933, p 1. I, and p. 104; Frame, G. 2006, pp. 49-68; Frame, G. 2021, RINAP 2, no. 106.

⁵ Hawkins J.D. 2000, pp. 398-414.

⁶ Otzen B. 1990, pp. 266-318.

⁷ Compare to Legrain 1944.

houses two unpublished clay cuneiform tablets that appear to come from the archives of Umma in southern Iraq and date to the Ur III period (ca.

2112-2004 BC). This paper presents an edition with hand copies of these two Ur III cuneiform texts, now available on the CDLI.

§2. Hama 2604/1 (P532138, with photos)

§2.1. Transliteration

Obverse

1. 7(diš) tug₂ uš-bar
2. gukkal sa₁₀-sa₁₀-[de₃]
3. ki i₃-kal-la-[ta]
4. kišib₃ lu₂-kal-la
5. giri₃ sag-ku₅ dam-gar₃

Reverse

Blank

1. iti[?] [...]
2. mu [...] ri[?] [...]

§2.2. Commentary

§2.2.1. Clothes entrusted by Ikalla to the merchant Sagku to buy big-tailed sheep. Maybe AS7 (Huhunuri). For Ikalla, see Verderame and Spada (2013). The merchant Sagku is well-known in Umma.

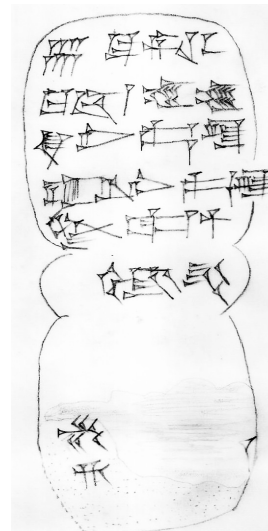


Figure 1: Hand copy of Hama 2604/1 (P532138)

§3. Hama 2604/2 (P532139, with photos)

§3.1. Transliteration

Obverse

1. 3(diš) tug₂ sag uš-bar⁷
2. ki-la₂-bi 1(u) ma⁷-[na]
3. [x-x]-ra mu-ku_x(DU)⁷
4. [n tug₂] sag⁷ uš-bar
5. ki-la₂-bi 3(u) 6(diš) ma-na⁷
6. a-ra₂ 1(diš)-kam
7. [n] tug₂ sag⁷ uš-bar

Reverse

1. ki-la₂-bi 1(u) la₂ 2(diš) 1/3 ma-na⁷
2. a-ra₂ 2(diš)-kam
3. i-din-er₃-ra mu-ku_x(DU)
4. 6(diš) tug₂ sag uš-bar
5. ki-la₂-bi 2(u) 2(diš) 1/2 ma-na
6. amar-^dšuba₃ mu-ku_x(DU)

Blank line

7. mu^d amar-^d suen lugal

§3.2. Commentary

Deliveries of weighed clothes, brought by [...]ra, Iddin-Era (twice), and Amar-Šuba. These individuals are well-known in Umma.



Figure 2: Hand copy of Hama 2604/2 (P532139)

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