

The Protection of Goods in the Old Assyrian Period

Cécile Michel¹

‘Place (the tablets) in a safe space wherever you sleep, and so guard them!’ wrote an Assyrian merchant to his Anatolian wife.² The Old Assyrian tablets unearthed at Kültepe, ancient Kaneš, focus on the long-distance trade established by the Assyrians in Anatolia during the 19th and the 18th centuries BCE. The donkey caravans traveling from Aššur to Anatolia were mainly transporting tin and textiles, but sometimes also precious stones such as lapis lazuli and carnelian. On the way back, a few donkeys were transporting gold and silver back to Aššur. These commodities were stored in the merchants’ houses in Aššur and Kaneš before being sold.

The letters discovered at Kültepe pay particular attention to the protection of goods: personal property, merchandise, or records including loan contracts and property deeds kept in these houses. When a woman by the name of Lamassī died in Aššur, her husband, who was doing business in Kaneš, wrote to his representatives remembering what was stored in the house: large quantities of barley, gold and silver jewels, and various quantities of precious metals that had been brought to Lamassī by different colleagues.³

Inventories and testaments provide information concerning the precious goods that were kept in these houses; besides slaves these texts list gold and

¹* CNRS, Archéologies et Sciences de l’Antiquité (HAROC), Nanterre & Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Universität Hamburg; {cecile.michel@cnrs.fr}. I am grateful to Piotr Michalowski who kindly polished the English of this contribution.

²BIN 6 1: 7–9, Michel, 2020: no. 305.

³TC 1 30: 3–4, copy of a letter addressed by Pūšu-kēn to representatives in Aššur: “Alas! My wife is dead!”, *la li-bi, dingir-ma a-ši-ti me-ta-at*.

silver, vessels and toiletry items in bronze and precious metals, jewellery, cylinder seals made of semi-precious stones, stocks of commodities and cuneiform tablets.⁴ In fact, the archives preserve still valid claims on capital in the form of silver and gold, goods entrusted on credit, as well as house deeds. In some houses, there were also large quantities of tin and stocks of textiles waiting to be sold. According to Aššur-taklāku's letters, several bags of such textiles were kept in his house, but as he was in jail, they were damaged by moths.⁵ In the house of Puzur-Ištar and Ištar-lamassī, also in Kaneš, there was more than one storeroom with large quantities of tin and textiles.⁶

All these goods were preserved in various sealed containers, safes, and strong rooms. When archaeologists excavated the lower town of Kaneš between 1948 and 2005, precious goods, jewellery, and vessels could still be recovered, especially from the graves dug under the floors of some rooms, but many of the houses had been emptied by their inhabitants before a perhaps hasty departure. Perishable goods and containers made of organic materials had decomposed due to climatic conditions unfavourable to their conservation, but the sealed lumps of clay that were once used to cap and identify these containers as well as some doors were preserved. As well, the archaeologists were able to unearth large parts of the merchant's archives, including claims and deeds.

This contribution focuses on the different modes of protection undertaken by Assyrian merchants to protect tablets and goods. It is mainly based on the 19th century Old Assyrian textual documentation, and secondarily on archaeological data from Kültepe. The Assyrians were often on the road and had to take precautions to protect their goods and tablets against thieves who might threaten their houses. When a merchant died, his assets were in danger, and measures had to be put in place to ensure that they did not disappear before the succession arrangements were clarified. The Assyrian vocabulary concerning safes, strong rooms, and sealing practices was well-developed and suggests, in some instances, forms of double protection. The spatial distribution of the tablets in the houses, when recoverable, confirms the multiplication of the protections set up by the merchants to secure their most precious goods.

⁴For some examples of testaments, see Michel, 2020: 113–145.

⁵Michel, 1998, and 2008a. This archive was excavated in Kültepe lower town in 1993; I thank Profs. Tahsin Özgüç and Fikri Kulakoğlu for entrusting it to me its study and publication.

⁶Michel, 2020: no. 155.

1 Goods in the merchants' houses and their protection against robbery

The Assyrians involved into the long-distance trade with Anatolia representing their family enterprise in Kaneš often had a house there, located in the lower town. They also sometimes owned another house in Aššur where their wife and younger children remained. Some of these merchants could also possess another building in one of the other Assyrian settlements in Anatolia. For example, Šalim-Aššur, whose archives have been unearthed in 1994 at Kültepe, had also a house in Durhumit where he may have left archives.⁷ Ali-ahum, owner of the archives excavated in 1993 at Kültepe, owned houses in Aššur, Kaneš and Burušhattum, and had goods and tablets preserved in all three.⁸ These houses were inhabited by members of the family or close colleagues, but it is possible that at some times might have remained uninhabited, leaving the goods kept in these houses at the mercy of burglars.

Thieves also threatened the caravans travelling between Aššur and Anatolia or within Anatolia. Letters mention merchandise robbed on the way and sometimes even speak of the murder of merchants. The protection of roads, goods, and people lay at the heart of the commercial treaties signed between the Assyrians and the Anatolians,⁹ but this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on the protection of goods inside the merchant's houses.

1.1 Theft and accusations of theft of property

Because of their value, the commodities, claims, deeds, and other merchant's properties were most desirable. Some texts mention thefts break-ins of buildings, houses, or temples. Šāt-Tašmētim, an otherwise unknown woman, wrote a letter to two men beginning as follows:¹⁰

'The house has been robbed and I wander around outside. If you are my brothers, come here so that nobody will harm your paternal house.'

⁷Larsen, 2010: 9.

⁸Michel, 2008a: 58.

⁹Veenhof, 2008: 183–218, and 2013.

¹⁰KT 8 263: 3–7, *be-tum ha-bi₄-it-ma, ki-da-tím(TUM) ar-ta-na-pu-ud, šu-ma a-hu-ú-a : a-tù-nu, al-kà-nim-ma ša-li-ú-um, i-šé-er é a-bi₄-ku-nu lá i-ša-/lá.*

In some extreme cases, theft could be aggravated by the murder of people in the robbed house. Two witness depositions document such a dramatic event. The house of Iddin-Aššur in Burušhattum, the most-western Assyrian settlement in Anatolia, was broken into by thieves and large quantities of silver, copper, tin, and textiles were robbed, and three people were killed:¹¹

You live in our father's house in Burušhattum. But thieves entered my father's house, and cut slit the throats of Al-bēlī and two other men who were there with him, and silver, copper, tin and textiles of great value were taken away. You remained safe in my father's house, and you also brought back many goods safely.

However, Aššur-idī, who was in the house, managed to save his life and his own goods. He explained to Iddin-Aššur:¹²

The gods of your father and the gods of my father stood (by me), so I and the goods came out safely of your father's house.

Not even divine possessions preserved in temples and chapels were safe from thieves. A letter addressed to the Assyrian authorities of Kaneš reports the theft of the jewels adorning the statue of god Aššur in his chapel or temple in Uršu, a town located somewhere west of the bend in the Euphrates:¹³

What had never happened before (has happened)! Thieves entered the temple of Aššur and stole the golden sun disk on the chest of the god Aššur and the dagger of the god Aššur. And (the gold of his) emblem was peeled off, and the nails and the maces were taken away. The temple was emptied, they left nothing! We are looking for the thieves but cannot find them!

¹¹Kt k/k 108: 5–15 (Hecker, 1996: 151–155), *i-na, Bu-ru-uš-ha-tim i-na, é a-bi₄-ni wa-áš-ba-ti, ša-ru-qú : a-na é a-bi₄-a, e-ru-bu-ma Al-be-lí, ú 2^{šé-na} iš-tí-šu, ki-ša-du-šu-nu na-ku-sú, ú kù-babbar urudu an-na ú tug^{hi-[a]}, ša kù-babbar ma-du-ma šé-šú-ú, a-ta i-na é a-bi₄-a, šál-ma-tí ú lu-qú-ut-kà ma-du-ma, ša-lim-ma tú-šé-ší*. The text Kt b/k 471 published by Balkan, 1974: 31, n. 16 deals with the same affair.

¹²Kt k/k 108: 27–29, *i-lu a-bi₄-kà ú i-lu a-bi₄-a, i-zi-zu-ma a-na-ku ú lu-qú-t[um], i-na é^{ti}-kà šál-ma-k[u a-ti-ší]*.

¹³Babyloniaca 6 7: 4–19, *ša iš-tù du-ri-[im], lá ib-ší-ú-ni, ša-ru-qú a-na é^{ti} dA-/šur, e-ru-bu-ma : ša-am-ša-/am, ša kù-gi¹, ša i-ir-tí dA-šur, ú pá-at-ra-am, [š]a dA-šur, [iš-r]i-qú : ú mi-šu-ru-um, qá-lu-pu ú, sà-am-ru-a-tum, ú kà-ta-pu, ta-áb-lu : é^{um}, lá-qú-ut : mi-ma lá e-zi-[bu], ša-ri-qi ni-šé-em[a], lá né-mar*. The text is translated by Larsen, 1976: 261–262 and Michel, 2001: no. 51. On the robbery of jewellery belonging to a goddess see also Dercksen, 2015.

In documents from the merchants' houses, the theft of tablets, often claims, is regularly reported by their owners. An attorney was accused by a group of merchants of having stolen tablets from a colleague's archive. The attorney, in his witnessed deposition, explained that the thief had already been seized and transferred to Aššur, and that the City assembly and the king would render judgment.¹⁴

The best-known case concerning the theft of tablets is reported in an extremely long witnessed deposition preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Suen-nādā accused Ennum-Aššur of stealing two sealed containers (*tamalakkum*) from his house in Durhumit:¹⁵

While my wife and I stayed at Kaneš, you, you went off to Durhumit, and although I owe you nothing, you acted high-handedly, entered my guest house and took out 2 (tablet) containers (sealed) with my seal and household goods.

He then gives in great detail the content of these two boxes: 19 tablets, mainly claims on silver and copper, witnessed tablets, *išurtum*-contracts with Anatolian palaces, memoranda, tablets belonging to others and left for safekeeping, as well as cylinder seals. In his answer Ennum-Aššur in turn accuses Suen-nādā of having previously stolen these two containers of tablets from the house of his agent Iddin-Ištar:¹⁶

When Iddin-Ištar, my agent, died 3 years ago, (even though) you had no claim on me or on my agent Iddin-Ištar, in the *kārum* Durhumit, without (the authorization) of the *kārum* or the merchants, you high-handedly entered the house of Iddin-Ištar, my agent, who owed 5 talents of silver or more to me, and you robbed the (content of the) safe (*maknakum*) of my agent!

These containers and their content would thus have been stolen twice, despite the precautions taken by the merchants to protect their goods.

1.2 Protecting property in the house, a woman's business?

This protection of merchants' possessions and archives is at the heart of several letters exchanged with women of their family. In fact, unlike their

¹⁴TPAK 1 191: 7, 15, Michel, 2023: no. 90. See also below the section concerning the word *maknakum*.

¹⁵CTMMA 1 84: 4–9, Michel, 2023: no. 89.

¹⁶CTMMA 1 84: 74–82.

fathers, husbands or brothers, these women travelled little.¹⁷ In the absence of the men, they found themselves at the head of the household and became guardians of the house and its contents. In Aššur, they waited for many months for the return of their husbands, some of whom had a pied-à-terre in Kaneš or in another Anatolian town. In Kaneš, they could also find themselves alone while their husbands travelled around Anatolia or to Aššur.¹⁸

Ištar-baštī, the wife of Imdī-ilum, was first living in Aššur, from where she sent several letters to her husband and to her son Puzur-Ištar. In one of them addressed to the latter, she asked him first to look after his father's archives, and then, perhaps believing his son to be incapable of taking care of the house in Kaneš, announced her intention to come and take on this role.¹⁹

Be a gentleman, pay heed to the instructions of your father, keep the tablets of your father safe (...) Come quickly so that I can depart with you and watch over yours and your father's house in Kaneš, and thus no one will make trouble for your father's house.

Later on, when she was in Kaneš, she received recommendations from her husband concerning business and he asked her to archive safely several important documents:²⁰

Please, put all my tablets in safekeeping, both those concerning the son of Ilī-iddinaššu and those concerning Bušiya.

Women were regularly asked to stay in the house and watch over it. Aššur-rabi wrote to his daughter Maganika, furious to learn that she had gone away and left the family house to strangers as she was supposed to watch over the house and the her father's goods:²¹

Why did you let tenants live in the house while you went (to live) with a husband? If you are my daughter, keep watch on the house until we arrive in 10 days!

¹⁷This concerns women belonging to the first generations of Assyrians in Anatolia, Michel, 2008b.

¹⁸Michel, 2020: 27–29, 68–72.

¹⁹KTS 1 1b: 11–14, 25–31, Michel, 2020: no. 229.

²⁰TC 3 56: 19–22, Michel, 2020: no. 217.

²¹BIN 6 20: 4, Michel, 2020: no. 199: 22–27.

Women were supposed to watch over the house and its content day and night, and to sleep nearby the most precious possessions – often the tablets – as Aššur-mūtappil wrote to his Anatolian wife Kunnaniya:²²

The tablets that Nazi and Ilī-bāni will bring you and entrust to your care, place them in a safe place wherever you sleep, and so guard them!

A similar admonition was given by a certain Ennum-Aššur to Kunnaniya:²³

We have no one but you! Watch over the house and the tablets; do not be afraid.

Thus, the women of the family were often the guardians of the house and its contents. The houses in Kaneš were often two-story, the inhabitants sleeping on the first floor while merchandise and archives were kept in a special room on the ground floor. We thus understand these admonitions as instructions to women to sleep either on the ground floor or to take the tablets to the first floor where they were sleeping.

1.3 The fate of a deceased merchant's property

Problems could arise when someone died. Thieves could take advantage of the confusion that sometimes followed the death of an Assyrian merchant in Kaneš to steal his goods:²⁴

My dear fathers and lords, do you not know that because a robbery occurred when my father died, much silver and my father's tablets were stolen?

The family members were also eager to get hold of the deceased person's property as suggested by this letter sent by a woman to a relative after the death of his aunt who was living in his father's house:²⁵

²²BIN 6 1: 3–9, Michel, 2020: no. 305; the text is cited at the opening of this paper. In another letter, he asked her to join him, leaving their daughter to the care of a servant and adds KTH 6: 26–28: "Get ready and come here. Let Šamaš-taklāku sleep near the door!", Michel, 2020: no. 303.

²³KT 4 62: 10–15, Michel, 2020: no. 304.

²⁴Kt 88/k 507b: 37–40 (Hecker, 2007: 94–96), *a-ba-ú-a be-lu-ú-a a-tù-nu* «*a-tù-nu*», *lá tí-de₈-a ki-ma i-nu-mì a-bi₄ me-tù-ni, mì-iš-hu-um i-ší-ik-nu-ma kù-babbar, ma-dām ú ṭup-pi ša a-bi₄-a im-ta-áš-hu'-ni*.

²⁵KT 6d 765: 4–16, *a-ha-at a-bi-kà, me-ta-at, um-ma a-hu-ni-ma, ap-lúm la-šu, é^{bé-tám}, né-nu : ni-tá-ru, ki-ma ṭup-pá-am, ta-áš-me-ú, tí-ib-a-ma, a-ta-al-kam, é a-bi-kà, a-na kà-nu-nim, ba-li-im, iš-ta-ak-/nu*.

Your father's sister is dead. Our brothers (said) as follows: "There is no heir. Let us take away the (the content of the) house ourselves." As soon as you have heard (this) letter, set out and come here. They have turned your father's house into an empty fireplace.

Many disputes arose in such situations. For example, a group of texts documents a dispute between two brothers after their father's death. One son, Amur-Šamaš, was at the side of his father during the last months of his life in Anatolia and his brother Ikūnum, who refused to contribute to the funeral, pretended that Amur-Šamaš kept for himself all his father's possessions, including precious objects made of gold and silver, votive offerings, bronze tools, weapons, vessels and kitchen utensils, various containers, tables, antimony, deeds of slave purchases and loan contracts, and the father's seal that was intended for their sister. Amur-Šamaš replied to his brother that the house was empty of goods when their father died, and that Ikūnum was closer to their father than he. As the affair had been going on for three years he added:²⁶

Come to the city (of Aššur), our sister the consecrated woman and our brothers are in the city (of Aššur). Let us act according to the will of our father. The will of our father (is) in the city (of Aššur).

The problems could get much worse when the deceased had not left a written will. To avoid such a situation, especially when it concerned the death of an Assyrian merchant in Anatolia, the family and collaborators of the deceased had to assess his credit and debits, bring together all his assets and then seal the house and its storerooms so that nobody would get in. When an executor would then ask for their release, the assets were turned into silver and assembled in Aššur. The creditors could then ask first to be repaid according to claim documents they submitted, as detailed in the following letter addressed to the investors and representatives of the deceased:²⁷

The moment Hurāṣānum died, his creditors entered (his house) and sealed (his) *maṣṣartum*-safe. This is the reason why we did

²⁶Michel, 2020: no. 65: 76–82. For this dossier see Hecker, 2004. A similar difficult situation arose for the succession of Šalim-Aššur: the dispute between his two sons for the inheritance is reported in almost a hundred of documents, Larsen, 2010.

²⁷Text published by Michel, 1994, lines 6–22; the translation given here follows Dercksen, 1999. See also for these procedures Larsen, 1977: 95; Michel, 2000: 121–124; Hertel, 2013: 337–346, and Veenhof, 2018, among others.

not write to you when he died. We said to ourselves: “Let his creditors settle the accounts, then we shall write them our detailed report.” His creditors have remitted the (default) interest and have been fully paid with the silver due to them. They consulted both tablets and debtors and have been fully satisfied. The silver, whether out of reach, disputed or lost by fraud amounts to about one talent.

To protect the goods of the deceased before the execution of his will, no one had access to his goods and tablets kept in containers, that were placed in sealed safes and strong rooms, and the house itself was sealed. After the death of his wife in Aššur, Pūšu-kēn asked his correspondents to “place sealings on the doors and windows”.²⁸

2 Safes and strong rooms within the houses

Tablets, assets, and merchandise were usually placed in specific containers, boxes, baskets, bags and jars that were then sealed.²⁹

Concerning the tablet of the house sale on which my father’s name is written, as you are my mother, that very tablet, you yourself and Šumī-abiya open the tablet (container) and place (it) with my tablets and have Šumī-abiya seal (the container). If you have not put the tablet with my tablets, you are no longer my mother!

These boxes, baskets, bags, and jars were then placed in larger containers, niches, corners or rooms in the merchants’ houses – usually all in the same area –, again under seal.³⁰ The main words which refer to these are *maknakum*, *maššartum* and *huršum*. There is a great deal of textual documentation on such technical spaces or rooms, yet it is not always easy to highlight translation the subtle differences between of these terms.

2.1 The *maknakum*

The word *maknakum* (or *maknākum*) refers to a ‘large container’ or a ‘place’ that was sealed. However, its size and material are unknown. Yet, this

²⁸TC 1 30: 9–10, *i-na ba-a-bi ù* a-pá-tim, ší-pá-sú* id-a*, Larsen, 1977: 95.

²⁹TPAK 1 32: 20–31, Michel, 2020: no. 219.

³⁰Michel, 1997, 29.

has usually been translated as a ‘strong room’, a ‘safe’ or a ‘sealed container’.³¹ There was a *maknakum* in most of the merchants’ houses, and in the Anatolian palaces there could be more than one.³²

I will tell the *kārum* (authorities) that we went to explore the *maknakum* of the palace, and that in the middle *maknakum* are my father’s goods.

The *maknakum* was usually sealed as explained in the following examples:³³

And did he not break (the seals) of the *maknakum*, which (had been sealed) a second time with the seal of Aššur-mūtappil and myself?

In accordance with the verdict of the plenary assembly of *kārum* Kaneš, Ennam-ilī, the scribe, seized us, and we entered Elamma’s house and broke the seals of the *maknakum*, we left (them, i.e., the broken sealings) in the *maknakum*. Akūa, son of Baziya, took two of his *tamalakkum*-boxes with tablets.

After the death of her husband, a woman was instructed to not open his *maknakum*, and thus not to give access to its content:³⁴

No one should give you orders there, and you must not open your husband’s *maknakum*.

After removing the seals on the *maknakum*, it was then possible to access the archive:³⁵

And as for the *maknakum*, you removed the sealings of the representatives and my sealings, and you *put* the tablets *in disorder*.

³¹AHw 2: 590b, “versiegelter Behälter”; CAD M/1: 138a, “sealed container or room”. See also Michel, 1997: 288–289 and Kuzuoğlu, 2013, and for the latest translations Kouwenberg, 2019, 156, “sealed container, sealed room”.

³²Prag I 626: 1–7, *ki-ma ma-ak-na-kam, ša «é-gal» é-gal^{lim} «ni», a-sá-lá-im ni-zi-zu-ni, ú du-mu-uq* (°erasure) *a-bi₄-a, i-na ma-ak-na-ki-im, qá-áb-li-im, i-ba-šī-ú a-mi-a-tim, a-ká-ri¹-im a-ta-wu*. For the *maknakum* of the palace, see also CCT 4 7c quoted below note 39.

³³TPAK 1 35: 14–18, *ú ma-ak-na-kam, ša ša-ni-ti-im, ku-nu-ki ša A-šur-mu-ta-pi-il₅, ú i-a-ti, ú-up-ta-ri-ih-ma*, and Kt m/k 145: 7, transliteration by K. Hecker, text published in KT 8: appendix no. 7. For this last text, see also Hertel, 2013: 129.

³⁴BIN 6 17: 7–10, Michel, 2020: no. 308.

³⁵Kt 88/k 970: 86–91, *ú ma-ak-na-kam : ku-nu-ki, ša ša-zu-za-/tim, ú ku-nu-ki-a ta-áp-ṭù-ra-ma* (u.e. 91) *ú ṭup-pè-e : tù-ba-li-ha*. Text published by Donbaz, 2008: 211–213 and Dercksen, 2015: 54–56 after collations.

Several texts indicate that tablets, often claims, were kept in the *maknakum*:³⁶

It is in the *maknakum* of Husārum: a tablet concerning 8 minas of silver belonging to Elālī, the great priest that I took and on which the name of Kurub-Ištar is written, I gave you the tablet.

Twice you questioned me in court, and I answered you. For opening the *maknakum* and taking out the tablets that Aššur-taklāku had stolen, the City (assembly) transferred him.

Sometimes, tablets are mentioned together with their own containers, often *tamalakkum*-boxes, and kept in the *maknakum*, which was necessarily bigger. This was, for example, the case in the legal text preserved in Metropolitan Museum of Art quoted above. In the following text, we learn that a merchant had two of his tablet containers in the *maknakum* of his father's house:³⁷

I opened the *maknakum* with your seals and I took out 2 *tamalakkum*-boxes with certified tablets ... and I will place them where they must be placed. The remaining of your tablets are with their *tamalakkum*-boxes in the *maknakum* of your father's house.

Besides tablets arranged in containers, other types of precious goods were stored in the *maknakum*, as for example silver:³⁸

22 minas of silver belonging to Luzina which I left you, opening the *maknakum* of Mannum-balum-Aššur, you have taken the bundles piece by piece.

13 minas of silver under seal as a package that Šalim-Aššur left for me, my brother left in my *maknakum*. Let Inna-Suen,

³⁶ BIN 6 241: 6–13, i-[na] ma-ak-ni-ki-im, [ša] Hu-sà-ri-im-ma, tu[p-p]á-am ša 8 ma-na, kù-babbar ša «ra» E-lá-lí sà-an-gi₅-im, ša ál-qé-ú-[m]a šu-mi, Kur-ub-Ištar ú-du-ú, [tup]-pá-am, [a]-dī-na-kum, and TPAK 1, 191: 5–13, a-dī 2^{šé}-mī-šu i-na, dī-tim tū-ša-i-lá-ni-[m]a, a-pu-ul-ku-nu a-na ma-a[k]-ni-ki-im, pá-té-e-em ú tup-pé-e, šé-šú-ú-tim, ša A-šur-ták-lá-ku, iš-ri-qú-ma, a-lu-um, i-sú-hu-šu; see also lines 15–17, a-na ma-ak-ni-ki-im, pá-té-e-em ú tup-pé-e, šé-šú-ú-tim, for this text, see Michel, 2023: no. 90.

³⁷ Kt 88/k 455: 10–16, m[a*-ak-n]a-kam ku-nu-ki-kà, áp-té-ma 2* [t]a*-ma-lá-k[e]* ša tup-pé-e, ha-ru-mu-[ti]m : na-BU-tim, ú-šé-ší-ma [a]-šar ša-kà-nim áš-ku-un, re-eh-tí tup-pí-kà ta-ma-lá-ku é a-bi-kà-ma, i-na ma-ak-ni-ki-im, i-ba-ší-ti, tablet published in Bayram, 2018: 35–36; collated after the photo.

³⁸ CCT 3 29: 9–13, 22 ma-na, kù-babbar Lu-zi-na ša e-zi-ba-ku-ni, lu ri-ik-<sf> : ša a-ha : a-ha : i-ma-ik-ni-ki-im, ša Ma-nu-ba-lúm-A-šur : ta-ap-té-a-ma, tal-qé-a-ni. Sadberk 11: 11–17, 13 ma-na kù-babbar, ku-nu-ki né-pí-ša-am, ša Šál-ma-A-šur, e-zi-ba-ni i-na, ma-ak-ni-ki-a a-hi, e-zi-ib (°erasure), ma-ak-ni-ki I-na-Sú-en₆, dumu Šu-A-nim ú Ni-mar-Ištar, dumu Puzur₂-Sú-en₆ li-ip-té-ú-ma, né-pí-ša-am ku-nu-ki, ša Šál-ma-A-šur, li-ip-qí-du-ni-ku-nu-tí-ma, kù-babbar li-ip-ṭur-ma.

son of Šu-Anum, and Nimar-Ištar, son of Puzur-Suen, open my *maknakum* and let them entrust you the package under seal from Šalim-Aššur and thus open the silver.

Silver, gold, as well as goods such as textiles and antimony were also preserved in the *maknakum*:³⁹

Do you not know that Aššur-imittī opened the *maknakum* of our father and that I will consider him responsible concerning the *maknakum*? Heaven forbid he makes demands to the palace concerning the *maknakum* of the palace! When they imposed a fine on our father and the messengers of the City (of Aššur) came and opened this *maknakum* and they saw the antimony and the textiles in his possession, he was forbidden to do anything concerning this *maknakum*. For the interior of the *maknakum* from where the sons of Šu-Suen have taken out silver and gold, (and) where the tablets and *top quality goods* of our father are, as for this, I took him (Aššur-imittī) to court.

It is clear from this text that sealings protecting the *maknakum* could only be opened by its owner, members of his family, or by persons mandated by the authorities in the context of a process.

Less valuable goods could also be stored in the *maknakum*, as for example beer preparation ingredients:⁴⁰

Why have you written me as follows: ‘I will open the *maknakum* and sell the beer bread’? Are the lower as well as the upper floors not sealed with my seal? Urgent! Until my arrival, do not open any of my seals in the house, and keep my sealings intact!

From all these examples it seems clear that the *maknakum* was big enough to house various goods including tablets arranged in their containers. It was a sealed space/safe in the house.

³⁹CCT 4 7c: 1–21, *lá tí-de₈-a ki-ma ma-ak-na-kam, ša a-bi₄-ni A-šur-i-mi-ti, ip-té-ú-ma a-na ma-ak-na-ki-im, a-še-ú-šu-ni a-sú-re-e, a-na ma-ak-na-ki-im ša é-gal, é-gal^{lám} e i-té-ri-iš¹ i-nu-mi, a-bu-ni a-na ar-nim, i-dí-nu-ni-ma ši-ip-ru, ša A-lim^{ki} i-li-ku-ni-ni-ma, ma-ak-na-kà-am šu-a-ti, ip-té-ú-ni-ma lu-lá-am, ú túg^{hi-a} ša qá-ti-šu, e-mu-ru²-ni a-ma-ak-na-ki-im, šu-a-ti e i-pu-uš, a-na ma-ak-na-ki-im, qá-áb-lim a-šar kù-babbar ù, kù-gi me-er-ú Šu-Sú-en₆, ú-še-ši-ú-ni řup-pi-šu, ù mu-hu-um ša a-bi₄-ni, i-ba-ši-ú-ni a-ši-a-ti, a-še-e-šu.*

⁴⁰BIN 6 20: 3–12, Michel, 2020: no. 199.

2.2 The *maššartum*

More frequently used (some 30 or more attestations), was the word *maššartum*, which designated a safe and guarded space.⁴¹ The same word is also used to refer to posts and guards who, among other duties, protected the roads taken by the commercial caravans. The word *rabi maššartim* is to be translated by ‘head of the troops’.⁴² The translation of *maššartum* as either “a safe and guarded place to keep goods” or as “guards” then depends on the context.⁴³

The *maššartum* was sealed as indicated in the following texts:⁴⁴

Why do my mother and my brother prevent your opening the house? The *maššartum* is sealed with your and Aššur-taklāku’s seal.

(All the) silver, gold and copper were sealed in our father’s *maššartum*.

The *maššartum* is sealed by the seals of your representatives.

When a merchant died, his creditors paid special attention to his *maššartum* by sealing it with their own seals pending the settlement of the deceased’s affairs.⁴⁵ Then, the people involved had to break the seals to access the contents of the *maššartum*, which they could even enter.⁴⁶

⁴¹AHw 2: 621a, “Verwahrung, Depot”; CAD M/1: 338–339, “goods kept in safekeeping, deposit”. See also Veenhof, 1972: 392, n. 517, “archive room, strong room”; Larsen, 1976: 175, “strong room”; Bayram, 2001: 6, “the strong room in which merchants deposit their silver and/or gold”; Michel, 1997: 288–289 and Kuzuoğlu, 2013, and for the latest translations Kouwenberg, 2019: 156, “strong room, safe”. Note that the restoration proposed in CUSAS 34 38: 5–6, [*i-ma-ša*]-*ar-tim*, *ša kà-ri-im* remains uncertain.

⁴²Veenhof, 2008: 222; Günbatt, 2012: 132–133.

⁴³*Maššartum*-guards are attested for example in the following texts ATHE 62; BIN 6 267; CCT 4 18; KTS 1 37a; TC 3 28; TC 3 165; TC 3 162, etc. I will not discuss here the “great treasury of divine Aššur” (*maššartum ša Aššur rabitum*) which was commented on by Bayram, 2000: 46–47, nos. 5: 19; 6: 19, and Dercksen, 2004: 79–80, but I will analyse references to the *maššartum* as a guarded space located in the houses of the merchants.

⁴⁴CCT 3 30: 35–40, *mi-šu, ša a-na é^{bé-tim} : pá-ta-e-em, um-mi : ù a-hi : i-kà-lu-ù-kà-ni, ma-ša-ar-tum : i-na ku-nu-ki-kà, ù ku-nu-uk : A-šùr-ták-lá-ku, kán-kà-at*. BIN 6 220: 10–1; Michel, 2023: no. 76. BIN 4 5: 23–25, *ma-šar_x(ŠEŠ)-tum : i-na, ku-nu-ke-e : ša ki-ma, ku-a-ti : kà-an-kà-at*, Michel, 2001: no. 178.

⁴⁵Michel, 1994: 6–22, cited above note 27, “The moment Hurāšānum died, his creditors entered (his house) and sealed (his) *maššartum*.”

⁴⁶CCT 5 3a: 28–33; Larsen, 2002, no. 186–187. See also KT 8 108: 1–13, 17–20; KT 8: annex, no. 1; Hertel, 2013: 276–277.

When they opened the *maṣṣartum*, they let five outsiders enter (it) and had them re-seal; and they themselves sealed together with them.

4 1/2 talents of refined copper, 1 talent and 20 minas of poor copper Aššur-nādā, Elamma and Aššur-rē'ī brought out of the *maṣṣartum* of Amur-Aššur. Aššur-nādā entered on account of his own (claim on) silver, Elamma and Aššur-rē'ī entered in the name of the investors, Aššur-nišū entered representing Kura (...) They inspected his tablets and they were also the ones who sealed them (again) and brought them (again) into the *maṣṣartum*.

If, in this case, the verb 'to enter' concerns the *maṣṣartum* and not the house itself, this implies that the *maṣṣartum* was a space or a room in the house where several people could enter at the same time, thus a translation by strong room seems to be correct.

There could be more than one *maṣṣartum* in a house as suggested by the following letter addressed by a man to his wife that specifies the localization of the strong room within the house:⁴⁷

There, watch over the house. There are 8 talents, 50 minas of sealed tin in the *huršum*, in the foremost *maṣṣartum*, 2 hundred 30 ordinary textiles, 1 hundred 20 good quality textiles, 13 black donkeys; all the (merchandise) I left you in the house under seal.

If the house, and especially the *maṣṣartum* of a deceased was not rapidly sealed, there was always the risk that dishonest people, heirs for example, would help themselves to the deceased's property before the official succession procedure was put in place:⁴⁸

Here, I have turned to the representatives of my father, and I (said) as follows: "Enter and show me what remains of my father's household!" They entered and (said) as follows: "Apart from the 70 *pirikannum*-textiles, we took nothing! We also opened the *maṣṣartum*, and there was nothing in the *maṣṣartum*!"

Before I came, Ali-ahum had opened the *maṣṣartum* (of our deceased father) and had taken out the assets.

⁴⁷VS 26 53: 3–18, Michel, 2020: no. 155 (l. 8–9: *i-na ma-ša-ar-tim, ma-hi-ri-im*).

⁴⁸CCT 5 8b: 3–12, Michel, 2020: no. 70. KT 6a 225: 30–32, Michel, 2020: no. 328.

Goods were deposited (*nadā'um*) in the *maṣṣartum*.⁴⁹

10 minas of silver – its import tax added – under his seal, Aššuriš-tikal, our trading agent, had sent from Buruṣhattum to Kaneš to Ili-ālim's house in order to deposit it in his *maṣṣartum*.

In their *maṣṣartum*, merchants were keeping safe their tablets within their own containers, as well as their valuable goods. Many texts mention tablets and *tamalakkum*-boxes full of tablets kept in a *maṣṣartum*.⁵⁰

You should not give to Iliš-takil the *tamalakkum*-boxes that are in the *maṣṣartum*.

In the very long sworn testimony and interrogation quoted above concerning the double robbery of two *tamalakkum*-boxes of tablets, one of the parties explains that these boxes were kept in his agent's *maṣṣartum*.⁵¹

Tablets could be considered as valuables when they had a legal value, being enclosed in a sealed envelope, and thus certified.⁵²

Abuwa, the attorney, and the creditors of Uṣur-ša-Aššur, son of Aššur-malik, seized us and led us into Uṣur-ša-Aššur's house, and his creditors opened Uṣur-ša-Aššur's *maṣṣartum* with us as witnesses, took out his certified tablets, and (selected) from his tablets one certified tablet.

Together with their tablets, merchants kept precious trade goods in their *maṣṣartum*.⁵³

⁴⁹ATHE 48: 6–11, 10 *ma-na* kù-babbar *ni-is-ha-sú* diri *ku-nu-ki-šu*, *A-šùr-iš-tí-kál* ša-*ma-lá-i-ni*, *iš-tù* Bu-ru-uš-ha-tim, *a-na* *Kâ-ni-iš a-na é Ī-lí-a-lim*, *a-na* *ma-ša-a[r-t]im a-na na-an-du/im*, *ú-šê-bi₄-lá-m[a]*.

⁵⁰BIN 6 14: 25–28, Michel, 2020: no. 232. See also BIN 4 42a: 3–4, *ma-ša-ar-tám*, *pé-té-a-ma ṭup-pí bi-ri-a-ma*.

⁵¹CTMMA 1 84: 75–82, see above notes 15–16.

⁵²KT 6a 120: 1–10.

⁵³KT 6a 255: 1–15. For other references to goods stored in the *maṣṣartum*, see AKT 1 73: 3–15 (gold and silver); KT 6b 404: 8, 14 (copper); Kt c/k 1087: 17–19 (Balkan, 1967: 406–407), *ma-ša-<ar>-tám pé-té-a-ma*, urudu *ki-ma* urudu, *dí-na-šu-um*, “open the *maṣṣartum* and give him copper for copper”; KT 11a 43: 7 (textiles); KT 11a 100: 5–7 (textiles); CCT 3 3b: 26–30 (tin). Some goods were also kept outside of the *maṣṣartum*; KT 6a 218: 29, “This is apart from that in the *maṣṣartum*.”

In Durhumit, when our father died, Ali-ahum opened the *maṣṣartum* sealed by our father, and witnessed by 3 affiliated traders he took out both silver, good copper, poor copper, lapis lazuli, textiles, and certified tablets concerning creditors, and he gave it to Annina son of Aššur-bēl-awātum, and later the tablets (were) in Annina's house.

Several texts report an affair that involved the sons of Pūšu-kēn after the death of Puzur-Aššur, their father's former associate. His *maṣṣartum* contained precious metals and tablets arranged in containers:⁵⁴

Alas, Puzur-Aššur, the (business) partner of our father's house has died! And while I was in Wahšušana Puzur-Aššur's investors and creditors entered Puzur-Aššur's house; they opened Puzur-Aššur's *maṣṣartum*, and silver, gold, tablets in boxes, all this they entrusted to Enna-Suen, son of Ili-ālum (...). Later on, Puzur-Aššur's attorney and sons came here, and (said) as follows: 'The silver came out from the *maṣṣartum* of our father!'

It was not unusual that a merchant entrusted his goods to be deposited in a colleague's *maṣṣartum*: "your tin is in his *maṣṣartum*."⁵⁵

Thus, the *maṣṣartum* was a room in the house where merchants kept their goods and archives. Several people could enter it at the same time, and so a translation by strong room seems to be correct. By contrast, the smaller *maknakum* could then represent a safe.

2.3 *huršum*

The word *huršum* seems to correspond to various concepts in Old Assyrian; it has been translated as 'kitchen', 'larder', 'shed' and by extension 'store-room'.⁵⁶ According to M. T. Larsen (1967: 70), it could even denote a section of a house. The *huršum* could be divided into several smaller strong rooms:

⁵⁴TC 3 270: 14–24 and 35–39, Michel, 2023: no. 77, see also no. 76 and 78. ATHE 48: 6–11, 10 *ma-na kù-babbar ni-is-ha-sú diri ku-nu-ki-šu, A-šūr-iš-tí-kál ša-ma-lá-i-ni, iš-tù Bu-ru-uš-ha-tim, a-na Ká-ni-iš a-na é l-lí-a-lim, a-na ma-ša-a[r-t]im a-na na-an-du-/im, ú-šé-bi₄-lá-m[a]*.

⁵⁵VS 26 4: 13–14, *an-na-kà i-ma-ša-ar-tí-šu, i-ba-ší*.

⁵⁶AHW 1: 360a, '(Küche mit) Vorratskammer'; CAD H: 254a, (1) 'larder', (2) 'storehouse'. See also Veenhof, 1972: 392, n. 517, 'archive room, strong room'; Michel, 1997: 288–289, 'kitchen'. Note that *huršum* has to be distinguished from *huršīānum*, 'box', 'bundle'. Kuzuoğlu, 2013: 15.

“There are 8 talents, 50 minas of sealed tin in the *huršum*, in the foremost *maššartum*.”⁵⁷ There was a “head of the *huršātim*” in the Anatolian palace.⁵⁸

Several references to *huršum* are linked to food products and utensils, clearly indicating that it was a place where it was possible to store these products and to prepare food, thus in some instances a space that we would consider as a ‘kitchen’:⁵⁹

Send for your *huršum* enough food for your children and your wife so that we can give them their rations.

When I arrived in Kaneš, your beer bread had been deposited in the *huršum*, and I had also entrusted you some furniture with the words: “When you have taken out your beer bread, seal the *huršum*.”

Take 10 shekels of silver (and) 1 litre of oil (in) an *emazum*-container in the *huršum*.

3 cauldrons of 30 minas each (from) the stock of cauldrons in my *huršum*.

The *huršum* was regularly under the supervision of a woman or even belonged to her.⁶⁰

Besides food and cauldrons, a great variety of goods were stored in the *huršum*, including textiles that needed to be aired from time to time,⁶¹ copper,⁶² wool,⁶³ bronze,⁶⁴ saddle of a donkey,⁶⁵ wood,⁶⁶ etc.

Tablets with their containers were also regularly kept in the *huršum*:⁶⁷

⁵⁷VS 26 53 cited above note 47.

⁵⁸Kt 91/k 108: 2, Dercksen, 1996: n. 224; VS 26 146: 7; Kt g/t 36: 5–7, Bilgiç, 1964: 148; CCT 3 28b: 12.

⁵⁹KTH 9: 33–36, Michel, 2020: 206, n. 27; TTC 26: 5–11, Michel, 2020: no. 311; KT 6c 551: 24–26; Kt h/k 87: 26–28, Michel 2020: no. 135. See also “I handed over to her before your representatives her belongings and bronze objects weighing 40 minas from your *huršum* and she took them out (of the house),” Kt n/k 212: 11–14 cited by Dercksen, 1996:78.

⁶⁰KT 11a 48: 8–9 (*amtum*); KT 11a 127: 21–23 (*šuhartum*).

⁶¹KT 6b 329: 39–41; KT 6b 330: 7; KT 6c 550 94/k 843: 35; KT 6c 551 94/k 1243: 4.

⁶²Kt a/k 339: 18 and Kt e/k 67: 6 (Veenhof, 1999: 66, note 43).

⁶³KT 6c 662: 10–14, KT 11a 128: 4–5.

⁶⁴Kt n/k 720, Erol, 2010: 37–38.

⁶⁵KT 11a 127: 21–23.

⁶⁶Ka 367 (l. 8–11) 6 *e-ri-qā-tim ša ki-is-na-tim* 6 *e-ri-qā-tim ša e-ši ša-ma-ma-ni i-na hu-ur-ši-im pi-ih-a-ma*, “Buy 6 wagonloads of tree roots and 6 wagonloads of wood for me. Close it up in the *huršum*”, Barjamovic, 2011: 47.

⁶⁷KT 5 23: 12–15; KT 6b 374: 4–6; KT 6c 667: 12–18.

Since we became afraid, Ennānātum and I myself, we opened the *huršum* and took out of your (tablet) boxes the tablet with his seal, which we gave him.

Following your instructions Pīlah-Ištar gave me (access to) your *huršum* with the tablets.

Also, let your report come to me about how much silver you have given him. You, seal my tablets and the *huršum*. Instruct Ennānātum that no one must open my tablet (containers) without your permission.

The *huršum* was clearly a room or section in a house where people could enter and that could be sealed.⁶⁸

Enter in my father's house, the old house, and open Aššur-mūtappil's *huršum*, break the seals of his representatives, and let the group-of-three seal it afterwards.

The wife of Hali-abum is dead. Collect everything she left behind and bring it into one single *huršum* and seal it in my name.

The *huršum* could even be a unit that could be purchased separately.⁶⁹ Poor and vagrant people could live in it:⁷⁰

I am living in an empty *huršum*.

Aššur-taklāku and Šu-Suen are living in my *huršum*.

Instruct her there so that there will be no wrongdoing in my *huršum*.

A woman could have a slave working in her *huršum*, presumably to prepare food:⁷¹

⁶⁸TC 3 99: 5–12, Michel, 2001: no. 248; Hertel, 2013: 130; KT 8 260: 9–12; see also TTC 26: 5–11, Michel, 2020: no. 311 cited above. Note however that the *huršum* might not always be a safe place to keep goods: "If the *huršum* is not guarded, then place the textiles where they will be under guard," KT 6 551: 9–12.

⁶⁹Ennum-Aššur bought to Alua a *huršum* (Kt v/k 150: 5–13).

⁷⁰Kt n/k 720: 41–42, Erol, 2010: 276; KTS 2 32: 1–3; KT 6a 225: 22–24.

⁷¹KTH 23: 1–16, 10 gín kù-babbar ki-ma A-na-ah-Ištar, Lá-ma-sà-tum, a-na Ša-té-e-a, a-na hu-ur-šī-im, ku-ta-ú-li-im, ta-dí-in, i-ma-tí : Lá-ma-[sà-tu]m, kù-babbar⁴P-ša, Ša-té-a : té-ri-šu, kù-babbar a-na, Lá-ma-sà-tim, Ša-té-e-a, tù-ta-ar-ma, ù i-na hu-ur-šī-im, A-na-ah-Ištar, tù-šī-i.

Lamassutum gave to Šāt-Ea 10 shekels of silver in place of Anah-Ištar to detain him to the *huršum*. Whenever Lamassutum demands her silver back from Šāt-Ea, Šāt-Ea shall give the silver back to Lamassutum and Anah-Ištar will leave the *huršum*.

From all these examples it appears that the *huršum* was either a kitchen, or a part of the house used as storeroom(s). Its size may have been quite varied, and the door opening onto the *huršum* could be sealed.

3 Archaeological identification of the storage areas in the house

The precious goods and archives of Assyrian merchants were kept in different spaces within their house: the *maknakum* corresponded to a safe, the *maššartum* was a strong room, and the *huršum* was the kitchen and its larder or more generally storeroom(s). Is it possible to identify these different spaces on the plans of the houses excavated in Kültepe lower town level II (19th century BCE)?

Many of the goods that were stored in these rooms did not survive time. Food products would mostly been consumed or disappeared, if preserved to some degree, were not fully recognized and systematically recorded with precision during excavations in the lower town. However, in the reports of T. Özgüç covering the first thirty years of excavations, as well as in a few of his later articles, there are some clues concerning the rooms in which cuneiform tablets were discovered.⁷²

The textual analysis of the different spaces in which merchants' goods were preserved has shown that tablets within their containers were kept together with merchandise, mainly metals and textiles. It is thus possible to suggest that, in the following examples, the places where the tablets were found possibly corresponded to a *maknakum*, *maššartum*, or *huršum*.

The house of Kuliya (Kt 92/k, fig. 1) is located on squares LV–LVI/126–127. It had six rooms and measured 126 m². The archive of the merchant was found in the cupboard recess linked to room no. 4. The entrance door was on the north-east and people entering the house had to cross three rooms before reaching the cupboard which could correspond to a safe (*maknakum*).

⁷²This section is mainly based on Özgüç, 1959, as well as on Özgüç, 1994 and Özgüç, 2001. For the identification of the house owners see Hertel, 2014. And for the discoveries of level Ib (18th century) archives within the houses see Özgüç, 2004.

As noted by T Özgüç: “It would be easy to keep this small space safely under lock and key.”

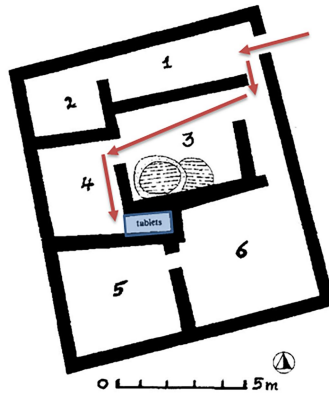


Figure 1. The house of Kuliya (Kt 92/k). From Veenhof, 2010:13 (data provided by T. Özgüç).

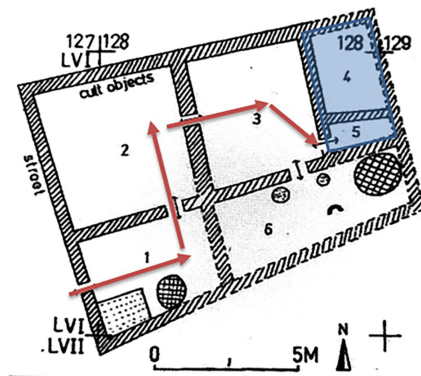


Figure 2. The house of Elamma (Kt 91/k and 92/k). From Özgüç, 1994: 371.

The house of Elamma (Kt 91/k and 92/k, fig. 2) is located on squares LVI–LVII/128–129 and measured 130 m². The entrance door is on the southwest, and one had to cross most of the rooms of the house to reach the

ones in which the archive was kept. The tablets were originally packed in organic materials which had disappeared. Some tablets were also lying along the east wall of room no. 3. The kitchen was located in room no. 6. We suggest that rooms nos. 4 and 5 formed the storerooms area (*huršum*); room no. 5 could have been a safe (*maknakum*) and room no. 4 a strong room (*maššartum*). However, the latter might have been accessible only from room no. 5, which could then have been another smaller strong room (*maššartum*).

The house of Ali-ahum (Kt c/k, fig. 3) is located on squares N-O-P/20 and measured 119 m² (16 × 5.50 m). It had two entrance doors, one on the west and the other one on the east of the house; another possible entrance was located to the north. The kitchen was in room no. 1, while tablets were found in room 2, lying at the base of the south and north walls, originally placed on shelves. This room, which was reached after crossing two rooms, could have been a strong room (*maššartum*) or simply a storeroom (*huršum*).

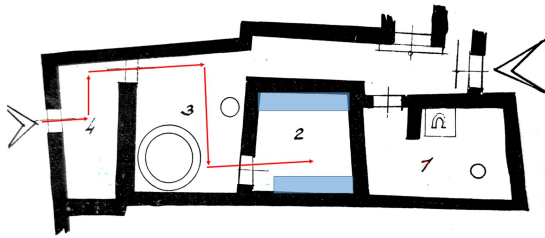


Figure 3. The house of Ali-ahum (Kt c/k). From Özgüç, 1959: 90, fig. 38.

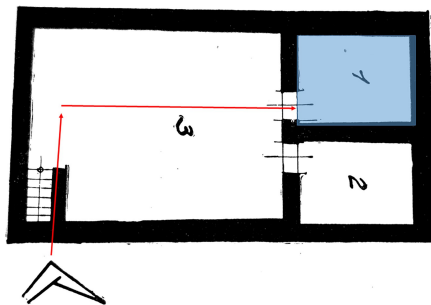


Figure 4. The house of Adad-šulūli (Kt a/k and b/k). From Özgüç, 1959: 89, fig. 33.

The house of Adad-šulūlī (Kt a/k and b/k, fig. 4) is located on squares F–G/9–10; it had two stories and its ground floor measured 66 m² (10 × 5 m). His archive and goods were preserved in the basement room no. 1. The entrance door was on the south-west and people entering the house had to cross room no. 3 before reaching the storeroom, a strong room (*maššartum*), or a simple storeroom (*huršum*).

The house of Šalim-Aššur and his sons (Kt 94/k, fig. 5) is located on squares LXIV–LXVI/130–131. It had 9 rooms and measured 115,5 m² (10.5 × 11 m). There were three entrances to the building to the south-east. The kitchen was room no. 8. The archive of 947 tablets and unopened envelopes was found in rooms nos. 5 and 6 that were separated by a thin partition. Parts of the tablets were kept on shelves along the walls, from which they had fallen down, others were kept in pots on the ground. People entering the building had to cross two rooms before reaching this storage area (*huršum*), perhaps made up of two strong rooms (*maššartum*).

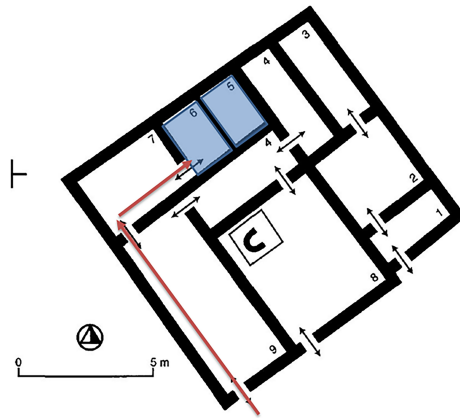


Figure 5. The house of Šalim-Aššur and his sons (Kt 94/k). From Özgüç, 2001: 369–370.

The house of Uzua (Kt a/k and b/k, fig. 6) is located on squares R–S–T/21–22 and measured 154 m². The tablets were found in groups in rooms nos. 3 and 4, and in room no. 3 archaeologists found jars filled with wheat. Room no. 2 contained the kitchen, and room no. 7 served as storeroom. The entrance door was to the south-west. People entering the house had to move through four doors before reaching room no. 4. Rooms nos. 3 and 4 formed a storage area (*huršum*), perhaps incorporating two strong rooms (*maššartum*).

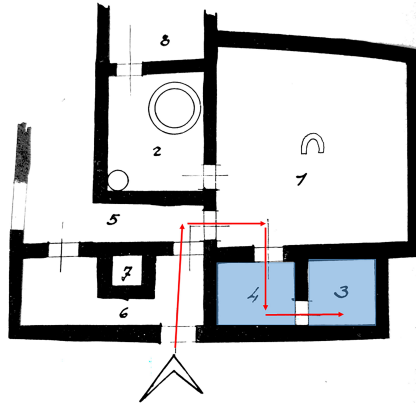


Figure 6. The house of Uzua (Kt a/k and b/k). From Özgüç, 1959: 94, fig. 53.

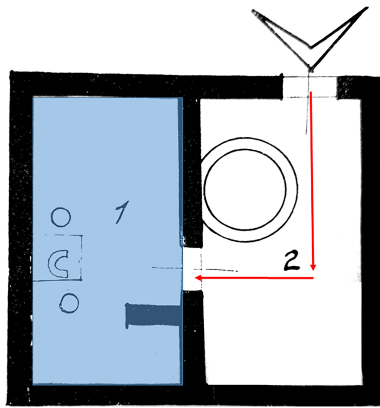


Figure 7. The house of Ṭāb-ahum (Kt c/k). From Özgüç, 1959: 86, fig. 24.

The house of Ṭāb-ahum (Kt c/k, fig. 7) is located on squares O–P/21–22 and measures 56 m² (7.50 × 6.50 m). The entrance door was on the north side, and the tablets were found scattered in the kitchen (*huršum*) in room no. 1. People entering the house had to cross room no. 2 before entering the kitchen.

In all these examples, the rooms used as storerooms or strong rooms in which merchants kept their most precious goods were located at the furthest point of the house from the entrance; this means that to get there, one had

to go through several rooms. Such a location provided additional security to the sealed doors. Other houses in Kaneš were built with layouts similar to those presented above, including some inhabited by Anatolians.

4 Conclusions

The Assyrians traded in metals and luxury textiles, as well as in semi-precious stones. These trade objects constituted their most valuable assets, together with the certified documents that recorded the often-considerable capital, that they had lent out or invested in various financial transactions. Such goods, kept in their houses, were coveted by thieves. To ensure their protection, merchants placed them in safes (*maknakum*), strong rooms (*maššartum*), or storerooms (*huršum*) whose doors they could seal; these places were located in the most inaccessible parts of the house, as far as possible from the front door.

Inside these sealed and guarded rooms, merchandise and tablets were kept in containers (bundles, bags, baskets, boxes, jars) sealed with a *bullā* – a lump of clay with seal imprints and sometimes a few words – bearing the seals of the owner(s) of the goods or of family members. The words written on some *bullā* specified the contents of a container be it tablets or merchandise, providing another level of protection. Women, who were the guardians of the house were even instructed, in some instances, to sleep near the most important goods, i.e., the tablets.

The tablet containers, big and small *tamalakkum* (wooden boxes or reed baskets) or *šiliānum* (clay jar or rush container), were always sealed and many texts mention the breaking of seals to open tablet containers and extract specific tablets. The claims, deeds and legal texts kept in these containers, were each in turn protected by clay envelopes on which the seals of the parties and witnesses had been imprinted. Thus, these tablets had triple protection.

Thousands of *bullā* have been found at Kültepe, both in the lower town and on the city mound.⁷³ A detailed investigation of the location of the *bullā* found in each house could make it possible to define more precisely the function of different rooms.

⁷³Özgüç / Tunca, 2001.

Abbreviations

- AHw von Soden, W., 1965–1981: *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 3 vols. Wiesbaden.
- ATHE Kienast, B., 1960: *Die altassyrischen Texte des orientalischen Seminars der Universität Heidelberg und der Sammlung Erlenmeyer*. Berlin.
- Babyloniaca* 6 Sayce, A. H., 1912: "The Cappadocian Cuneiform Tablets of the University of Pennsylvania". *Babyloniaca* 6, 182–192.
- BIN 4 Clay, A.T., 1927: *Letters and Transactions from Cappadocia*. Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies 4. New Haven.
- BIN 6 Stephens, S., 1944: *Old Assyrian Letters and Business Documents*. Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies 6. New Haven.
- CAD Oppenheim, A. L. / Reiner, E. / Roth, M. (eds.), 1956–2010: *The Assyrian Dictionary*, 26 vols. Chicago.
- CCT 3 Smith, S., 1925: *Cuneiform Texts from Cappadocian Tablets in the British Museum* 3. London.
- CCT 4 Smith, S., 1927: *Cuneiform Texts from Cappadocian Tablets in the British Museum* 4. London.
- CCT 5 Smith, S. / Wiseman, D. J., 1956: *Cuneiform Texts from Cappadocian Tablets in the British Museum* 5. London.
- CTMMA 1 Larsen, M. T., 1988: "Old Assyrian Texts". In I. Spar (ed.): *Tablets, Cones and Bricks of the Third and Second Millennia B.C.* Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1. New York. Pp. 92–143, 177–192, pls. 66–109, 129–156.
- CUSAS 34 George, A. R. / Hertel, T. / Llop-Raduà, J. / Radner, K. / van Soldt, W. H., 2017: *Assyrian Archival Texts in the Schøyen Collection and Other Documents from North Mesopotamia and Syria*. Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 34. Bethesda.
- KT 4 Albayrak, İ., 2006: *Kültepe Tabletleri 4 (Kt o/k)*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33b. Ankara.
- KT 5 Veenhof, K. R., 2010: *Kültepe Tabletleri 5 (Kt 92/k 188–263)*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33c. Ankara.

- KT 6a Larsen, M. T. 2010: *Kültepe Tabletleri 6a. The Archive of the Šalim-Aššur Family 1: The First Two Generations*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33d–a. Ankara.
- KT 6b Larsen, M. T., 2013: *Kültepe Tabletleri 6b. The Archive of the Šalim-Aššur Family 2: Ennam-Aššur*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33d–b. Ankara.
- KT 6c Larsen, M. T., 2014: *Kültepe Tabletleri 6c. The Archive of the Šalim-Aššur Family 3: Ali-ahum*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33d–c. Ankara.
- KT 6d Larsen, M. T., 2018: *Kültepe Tabletleri 6d. The Archive of the Šalim-Aššur Family 4: Texts concerning non-family members*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33d–d. Ankara.
- KT 8 Veenhof, K. R., 2017: *Kültepe Tabletleri 8. The Archive of Elamma, son of Iddin-Suen, and his Family (Kt 91/k 285–568 and Kt 92/k 94–187)*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33f. Ankara.
- KT 11a Erol, H., 2018: *Kültepe Tabletleri 11a. Šu-İštar'a Ait Belgeler*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 6/33i–a, Ankara.
- Kt ?/k Tablet found during the 1948- Turkish excavations at Kültepe, in the lower town, and preserved in the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Ankara).
- Kt ?/t Tablet found during the 1948- Turkish excavations at Kültepe, on the tepe, and preserved in the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Ankara).
- KTH Lewy, J., 1930: *Die Kültepe-Texte aus der Sammlung Frida Hahn*. Berlin.
- KTS 1 Lewy, J., 1926: *Die altassyrischen Texte vom Kültepe bei Kaisar-ije*. Keilschrifttexte in den Antiken-Museen zu Stambul (1). Konstantinopel.
- Prag I Hecker, K. / Kryszat, G. / Matouš, L., 1998: *Kappadokische Keilschrifttafeln aus den Sammlungen der Karlsuniversität Prag*. Prague.
- Sadberk Donbaz, V., 1999: *Cuneiform Texts in the Sadberk Hanım Museum, Çiviyazılı Belgeler*. Istanbul.
- TC 1 Contenau, G., 1920: *Tablettes cappadociennes du Louvre*. Textes cunéiformes du Louvre 4. Paris.

- TC 3 Lewy, J., 1935–1937: *Tablettes cappadociennes du Louvre*. Textes cunéiformes du Louvre 19–21. Paris.
- TPAK 1 Michel, C. / Garelli, P., 1994: *Tablettes paléo-assyriennes de Kültepe 1 (Kt 90/k)*. Istanbul.
- TTC Contenau, G., 1919: *Trente tablettes cappadociennes*. Paris.
- VS 26 Veenhof, K. R. / Klengel-Brandt, E., 1992: *Altassyrische Tontafeln aus Kültepe. Texte und Siegelabrollungen*. Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Museen zu Berlin 26. Berlin.

Bibliography

- Balkan, K., 1967: “Contributions to the Understanding of the Idiom of the Old Assyrian Merchants”. *Orientalia* 36, 393–415.
- 1974: “Cancellation of Debts in Cappadocian Tablets from Kültepe”. In *Anatolian Studies Presented to Hans Gustav Güterbock on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 35. Istanbul. Pp. 29–42.
- Barjamovic, G., 2011: *A Historical Geography of Anatolia in the Old Assyrian Colony Period*. Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications 38. Copenhagen.
- Bayram, S., 2000: “İna nadītim ša naruā’im”. *Archivum Anatolicum* 4, 29–48.
- 2001: “The nadītim of the Stele”. In W. H. van Soldt (ed.): *K. R. Veenhof Anniversary Volume. Studies Presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*. Publications de l’Institut historique et archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 89. Leiden. Pp. 1–8.
- 2018: “Asur Ticaret Kolonileri Dönemi’nde Nafaka Ödeniyor Muydu?” *Archivum Anatolicum* 12, 31–52.
- Bilgiç, E., 1964: “Three Tablets from the City Mound of Kültepe”. *Anatolia* 8, 145–163.
- Dercksen, J. G., 1996: *The Old Assyrian Copper Trade in Anatolia*. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 75. Leiden.
- 1999: “On the Financing of Old Assyrian Merchants”. In J. G. Dercksen (ed.): *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*. MOS Studies 1. Leiden. Pp. 85–99.
- 2004: *The Old Assyrian Institutions*. MOS Studies 4. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 98. Leiden.

- 2015: “The Goddess Who was Robbed of her Jewellery. Ishtar and her Priest in an Assyrian Colony”. *Anatolica* 41, 37–60.
- Donbaz, V., 2008: “Three Court Proceedings concerning Walaliašu’e an Anatolian Woman”. In T. Tarhan / A. Tibet / E. Konyar (eds.): *Muhibbe Darga Armağanı*. Istanbul. Pp. 209–220.
- Erol, H., 2010: “Uşur-ša-Ištar Arşivinden (Kt n/k) Šimat-Su’en’in Bir Mektubu”. In Y. Hazırlayan / A. Süel (eds.): *VII. Uluslararası Hititoloji Kongresi Bildirileri Çorum 25–31 Ağustos 2008*. Ankara. Pp. 273–284.
- Günbattı, C., 2012: *Kültepe – Kaniş. Anadolu’da ilk yazı, ilk belgeler*. Kayseri.
- Hecker, K., 1996: “Gurbette Yasal Haklardan Yoksunluktan MU? [Rechtlos in der Fremde?]”. *Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi Yıllığı* 1995, 137–159.
- 2004: “Beim Tode unseres Vaters... Der leidige Streit ums Erbe”. In J. G. Dercksen (ed.): *Assyria and Beyond. Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 100. Leiden. Pp. 281–298.
- 2007: “Altassyrische Briefe”. In G. Wilhelm (ed.): *Briefe. Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge* 3. Gütersloh. Pp. 77–100.
- Hertel, T., 2013: *Old Assyrian Legal Practices. Law and Dispute in the Ancient Near East*. Old Assyrian Archives Studies 6. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 123. Leiden.
- 2014: “The Lower Town of Kültepe: Urban Layout and Population”. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* Suppl. 4, 25–54.
- Kouwenberg, N. J. C., 2019: *Introduction to Old Assyrian*. Münster.
- Kuzuoğlu, R., 2013: “Eski Asurca Metinlerde Tablet Kapları ve Kültepe’den Arkeolojik Örnekler”. *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 53, 2, 13–42.
- Larsen, M. T., 1967: *Old Assyrian Caravan Procedures*. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 22. Istanbul.
- 1976: *Old Assyrian City-State and its Colonies*. Mesopotamia 4. Copenhagen.
- 1977: “Seal Use in the Old Assyrian Period”. In McG. Gibson / R. D. Biggs (eds.): *Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East*. Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 6. Malibu. Pp. 89–105.
- 2002: *The Aššur-nādā Archive*. Old Assyrian Archives 1. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 96. Leiden.

— 2010: see KT 6a.

Michel, C., 1994: “Règlement des comptes du défunt Hurašānum”. *Revue d'Assyriologie* 88, 121–128.

— 1997: “Propriétés immobilières dans les tablettes paléo-assyriennes”. In K. R. Veenhof (ed.): *Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 78. Istanbul. Pp. 285–300.

— 1998: “‘Les mites d'Assyrie’ Moths in the Assyrian Texts of the IInd millenium B.C.”. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118, 325–331.

— 2000: “Les litiges commerciaux paleo-assyriens”. In F. Joannès (dir.): *Rendre la justice en Mésopotamie. Archives judiciaires du Proche-Orient ancien*. Saint-Denis. Pp. 113–139.

— 2001: *Correspondance des marchands de Kaniš au début du II^e millénaire av. J.-C.* Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient 19. Paris.

— 2008a: “The Alāhum and Aššur-taklāku archives found in 1993 at Kültepe Kaniš”. *Altorientalische Forschungen* 35, 53–67.

— 2008b: “Femmes au foyer et femmes en voyage: le cas des épouses des marchands assyriens au début du II^e millénaire av. J.-C.”. *Clio, Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 28, 17–38.

— 2020: *Women of Aššur and Kaneš: Texts from the Archives of Assyrian Merchants*. Writings from the Ancient World 42. Atlanta.

— 2023: “Old Assyrian Legal Cases”. In S. Démare-Lafont et al.: *Judicial Decisions in Mesopotamia*. Writings from the Ancient World 43. Atlanta. In press.

Özgüç, T., 1959: *Kültepe-Kaniš. New Researches at the Center of the Assyrian Trade Colonies*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları 5/19. Ankara.

— 1994: “A Boat-shaped Cult-vessel from the Karum of Kanish”. In H. Gasse / M. Tanret / C. Janssen / A. Degraeve (eds.): *Cinquante-deux réflexions sur le Proche-Orient ancien offertes en hommage à Léon de Meyer*. Leuven. Pp. 369–375

— 2001: “Observations on the Architectural Peculiarities of the Archive of an Assyrian Trader of Kārum Kanesh”. In W. H. van Soldt (ed.): *K. R. Veenhof Anniversary Volume. Studies Presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*. Publications de l'Institut historique et archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 89. Leiden. Pp. 367–371.

- 2004: “Archives of the Karum at Kaniš, Level Ib”. In J. G. Dercksen (ed.): *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*. Publications de l’Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 100. Leiden. Pp. 445–450.
- Özgüç, N. / Tunca, Ö., 2001: *Kültepe-Kaniš Mühürlü ve Yazıtlı Kil Bullalar [Sealed and Inscribed Clay Bullae]*. Ankara.
- Veenhof, K. R., 1972: *Aspects of the Old Assyrian Trade and its Terminology*. *Studia et Documenta ad Iura Orientis Antiqui Pertinentia* 10. Leiden.
- 1999: “Silver and Credit in Old Assyrian Trade”. In J. G. Dercksen (ed.): *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*. MOS Studies 1. Leiden. Pp. 55–83.
- 2008: “The Old Assyrian Period”. In K. R. Veenhof / J. Eidem: *Mesopotamia. The Old Assyrian Period*. *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 160/5. Fribourg. Pp. 13–263.
- 2010: see KT 5.
- 2013: “New Mesopotamian Treaties from the Early Second Millennium BC from *kārum* Kaneš and Tell Leilan (Šehna)”. *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 19, 23–57.
- 2018: “The Struggle for the House of Dalaš in Kanesh”. In K. Kleber / G. Neumann / S. Paulus (eds.): *Grenzüberschreitungen. Studien zur Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orient. Festschrift für Hans Neumann zum 65. Geburtstag am 9. Mai 2018*. *Dubsar* 5. Münster. Pp. 757–771.