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Assyrian Cuneiform Tablet

Circa 1900 B.C.,

Old Assyrian Period

Terracotta

L: 8.5 cm, W: 6 cm

A clay tablet featuring fifty inscribed lines in Akkadian on the obverse, reverse, and lower edge. The text is a business letter sent by a certain Sabasi'a to three recipients: Puzur-Aššur, Šalim-lštar, and Ikuppi-Aššur. The letter discusses a payment of silver due to be settled by Sabasi'a with the others.

Akkadian is the earliest documented Semitic language. It was spoken in ancient Mesopotamia from the third millennium B.C. until it was gradually replaced by Old Aramaic by the eighth century B.C.. It was written in cuneiform. Cuneiform is the logo-syllabic script used to write several languages between the early Bronze Age and the beginning of the Common Era. It was originally developed to write the Sumerian language of southern Mesopotamia and is the earliest known writing system.

The Old Assyrian period is the first period from which there is evidence of the development of an Assyrian culture separate from that of Mesopotamia, as well as the emergence of the Akkadian language, and a native Assyrian calendar. Much is known about the culture and society of this period from their extensive cuneiform records, with over 22,000 clay tablets found at the trading colony at Kültepe. These tablets record that the Assyrians had their own distinct administrative structures and court at this site, and were thus self-governing to some extent.

Literature:

Burkhart Keinast, Die altassyrische Texte des Orientalischen Seminar der Universität Heidelberg und der Sammlung Erlenmeyer-Basel, part 11, 'Die Texte der Collection Erlenmeyer (Basel)' (1960), pp. 90-92, no. 64.

Ancient Near Eastern Texts from the Erlenmeyer Collection, Christie's, London, 13 December 1988, Lot 109.

[Database of the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative \(CDLI\) no. P358396.](#)