

THE FRAGMENT OF AN ASSYRIAN TABLET FOUND AT GEZER.

By THEOPHILUS G. PINCHES, Esq., LL.D.

THIS is shown by the cast to be the upper part¹ of a contract-tablet, similar to numerous others, preserved in the British Museum, which were found by Layard, Rassam, and the explorers who have succeeded them. It is especially the left-hand portion of the fragment which is preserved, so that the ends of the lines are in most cases wanting. At the beginning are four lines of writing, giving the names of the sellers, and the nature of the property sold, and after this, between two ruled lines, is a blank space in which the seals of the sellers are impressed. Each seal is given twice, the first, which is small, showing a roughly engraved tree, whilst the other has two men, face to face, with the hands extended above what is evidently the Egyptian emblem for "life," *ankh*. Over their heads is an eight-rayed star with wings extending right and left—a variant of the winged disc. This design is probably due to Egyptian influence.²

Beneath the seals is one complete line of wedge-writing, followed by the remains of four others, the ends only, on the side of the fragment, being preserved in two cases. After this comes the broken edge of the tablet, interrupting the text, of which no traces appear until about the middle of the reverse, where we have 14 lines of writing, of which the fourth, fifth, and sixth only are complete, the remainder containing traces only, as in the case of the first two, or fairly perfect, but broken away at the ends, as in the case of lines 3 and 7-13. A straight line is ruled after line 6 to divide the text from the list of witnesses, which begins with line 7.

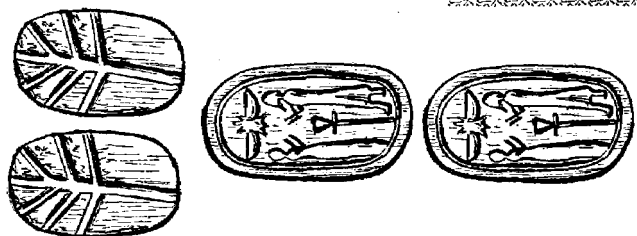
¹ It is the upper part of the obverse and the lower part of the reverse. For the dimensions, see Mr. Macalister's report, p. 207.

² Compare Mr. Macalister's report, *ibid.* In making the middle impression the seal slid along the surface of the clay, rendering the design less distinct and elongating the oval.

TABLET FOUND AT GEZER.

Obverse.


1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

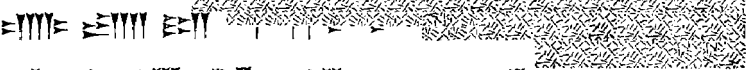


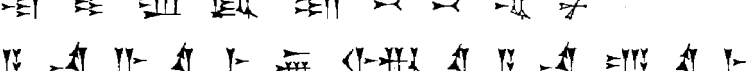
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 

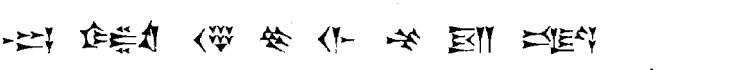
TABLET FOUND AT GEZER.

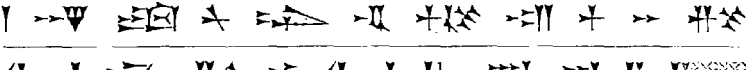
Reverse.

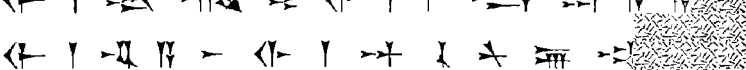
1. 

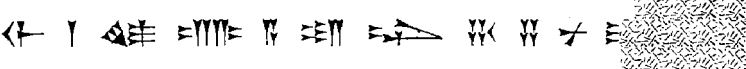
2. 


3. 

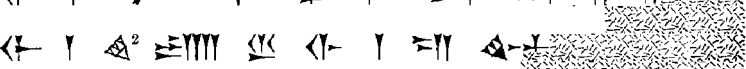
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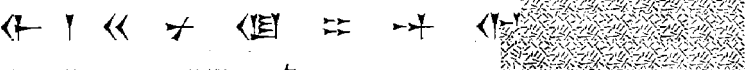
5. 


6. 

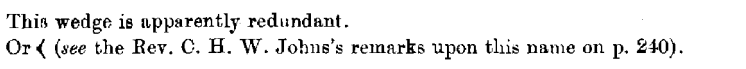
7. 


8. 


9. 

10. 

11. 

12. 

13. 

14. 

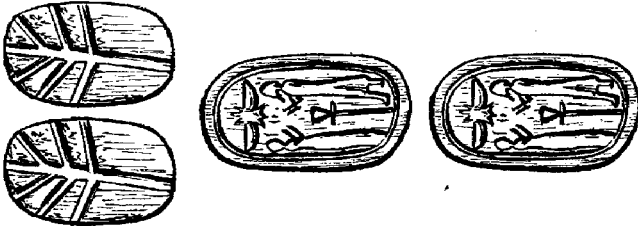
¹ This wedge is apparently redundant.

² Or < (see the Rev. C. H. W. Johns's remarks upon this name on p. 240).

TRANSCRIPTION.

Obverse.

1. Kunuk D.PP. Maruduk-êriba apil
2. kunuk D.P. Âbi-êriba apil
3. gamru šina awelute bêlê bîtê êkli
4. bît D.P. Lu-âhê a-di gi-



5. D.P. nîšê D.P. ʾTu-ri-D.P. A-a šina sinništî-šu, mâri-šu
6. šalset D.P. (pl.)
7. šina -ga
8. -a-a
9. ia-kar.

[Here the text breaks off.]

Reverse.

1.
 2. u-ta-ra (?)
 3. la i-lak-ki ši-bit be-e[n-n]u
 4. a-na išten meat û-me sa-ar-tu a-na kal û-me
 5. Araḥ Siwanni, ûmu sibâšêru, lim-mu ša arki
 6. D.P. Aššur-dûra-ušur D.P. bêl piḫati¹âl Maš-ḫal-zi¹
-
7. Pân D.P. Zag-gi-i ; pân D.PP. ʾTebet-a-[a] ;
 8. pân Bêl-âpla-iddina ; pân D.PP. Maruduk-našir ;
 9. pân D.P. Ḥur-u-a-ši D.P. ḫa-za-nu ;
 10. pân D.P. Bur-ra-pi-i D.P. dam-² ;
 11. pân D.P. Zêr-ukîn âpil D.PP. ʾTebet-[a-a] ;
 12. pân D.P. Ḥi(?)-ta-din ;³ pân D.P. Si-¹ ;
 13. pân Man-nu-ki-Arba-ûlu ; pân D.P. ;
 14. pân D.P. Zêr-û-tu.

¹ Or Bar-ḫal-zi.

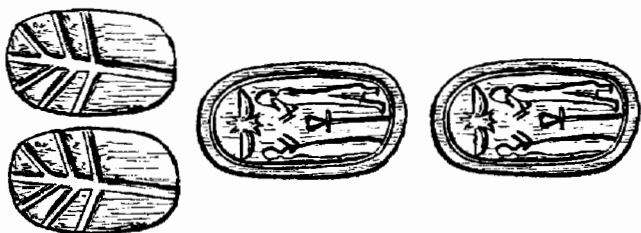
² Probable completion: *dam-kar*.

³ Or Addu-tadin, Adadi-tadin (*see* p. 240).

TRANSLATION.

Obverse.

1. Seal of Maruduk-êriba, son of
2. seal of Âbi-êriba, son of
3. total, 2 men, owners of the houses, field (?) [&c., sold] . . .
4. the house of Lu-âhê, to



5. The people¹ Turi-Aa, his two wives, his son
6. 3 men s
7. 2 ga
8. aa
9. -iaḡar.

[A considerable number of lines are lost here, giving further details and the beginning of the conditions of the contract. In all, more than half the obverse and probably a corresponding amount of the reverse, are wanting.]

Reverse.

1.
 2. he shall return
 3. he shall not receive. Guarantee (?) (against) sickness (?)
 4. for a hundred days, physical defect (?) for all time.
 5. Month Sivan, day 17th, eponymy which is after
 6. Aššur-dûra-usur, prefect of Mašḡalzu.²
-
7. Before Zaggî: before Tebetâ[a];
 8. before Bêl-âpla-iddina: before Maruduk-nasir . . . ;
 9. before Huruaši, the governor . . . ;
 10. before Burrapi'u, the commis[sion-agent];
 11. before Zêra-ukîn, son of Tebet[âa];
 12. before Hitadin (?);³ before Si² ;
 13. before Mannu-kî-Arba-ilu; before ;
 14. before Zêrâtu.

¹ Probably = slaves.

² Or Barḡalzu.

³ Addu (Adadi)-tadin (see Mr. Johns's remarks on p. 240)

Though the casts and photographs are fairly clear, certain characters are somewhat defective; nevertheless, the text is fairly well preserved on the whole. The arrival of the photographs (which took place after these notes had gone to press) confirmed and justified several readings regarded as uncertain, and set aside all doubt that the document referred to the sale of an estate with houses and the slaves by whose aid the work necessarily connected therewith was carried on. That it was a large establishment is implied by the remains of words in lines 6 to 9 of the obverse, the three men mentioned in line 6 being almost certainly servants holding offices in the management, and to this it may be added that the traces of characters imply that (? three) servants of another class were probably mentioned in the middle of the line.¹ Whether the character for "two" at the beginning of line 7 refer to persons or to things is uncertain, but the latter would seem to be more probable.² The syllable *ga* at the end of this line is possibly the last character of a name or of an ideograph expressing an ordinary noun, *au* at the end of line 8 is probably the end of some such name as Tebetâa (see lines 7 and 11 of the reverse), and *yaḡar* at the end of line 9 is possibly part of a name like Aḡi-yaḡar, quoted by the Rev. C. H. W. Johns in *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*, vol. iii, p. 114.

The missing portion in all probability went on to describe the remainder of the property: the price, conditions of sale, the usual prohibition against withdrawing from the bargain and making a law-suit to have it declared null and void, and the penalty should the principal sellers, or their descendants or heirs, seek to have it set aside. The line on the break of the reverse, with the two following (lines 1-3), are probably to be completed as follows:—

*Kaspu ana eṣrate ana bêlê-šunu
utara, ina dîni-šunu idabbubu-ma
la ilukki, &c.*



































"The money sevenfold to their owners
they shall return, in their law-suit they shall plead and
shall not receive," &c.

¹ The plural sign at the end may apply to these, or to yet another section of the household staff.

² The character after the numeral "2" may be either 𒌶, the determinative prefix for wooden objects, or part of 𒌶𒌶, in which case we have to read 𒌶 𒌶𒌶 𒌶𒌶, *šina bêlê*, "2 houses."

Concerning the words which follow, *šibit bennu ana išten meut úme, sartu ana kal úme*, there is much uncertainty, and Mr. Johns, whose excellent book upon these documents has been quoted above, will probably have something to say upon this point. The translation which I have suggested above must be considered merely provisional, and I should be glad to see a better one substituted.

The principal point in this document is naturally the date. Concerning this there is one important fact to be noted, namely, that it is not the eponym for the actual date who is mentioned, but the one of the preceding year, Aššur-dûra-ušur, whose date is estimated as being 650 B.C., so that the present text was inscribed in 649 B.C., the year the Assyrian king Aššur-bani-apli, or Assurbanipal, was directing his campaign in Babylonia against his brother Saosduchinos. How it is that Sagabbu, the eponym for the actual year, is not mentioned is not clear, unless it be that his election had taken place late and the news had not had time to reach Gezer, where the tablet was found. There is an important thing which may be argued from this, however, and that is, that the ignorance of the scribe as to who had been elected eponym for the year tells against any theory that the tablet had been written elsewhere and carried, either in ancient or in modern times, to the spot where it was found. It seems to show that it could not have been written at Nineveh, or anywhere in Assyria, for in that case the name of the eponym would almost certainly have been known to the scribe, or easily ascertainable should he have been unaware of it.

The list of the names of contracting parties and witnesses resembles closely those which we meet with in the numerous tablets of the same kind found at Nineveh. These names are divided into two classes, namely, Assyrian and west Asiatic. Among Assyrian names are the following:—Tebetâa, Bêl-âplaidina, Maruduk-našir, Zêr-ukin, Mannu-ki-Arba-îlu, and Zêrûtu. The others are mostly, if not wholly, west Asian. Of more than ordinary interest is that of the fifth witness, which I have transcribed Huruasi.¹ This word, which is spelled with the vocalic *u* (I                                  ), is apparently the same as that occurring twice in the tablet published by Mr. Johns in his *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*, vol. i, No. 324 (K. 294), where, however, it is given

¹ In accordance with Prof. Petrie's suggestion (p. 243).

with the consonantal *w* (𐎠 𐎡 𐎢 𐎣 𐎤, *Hur-wa-ša*), the first personage bearing it being called 𐎠 𐎡 𐎢 𐎣 𐎤, *awēlu šalsū*, and the second the *maduūu*, or "sailor." *Huruāši*, however, was a much higher-placed official, namely, a *ḫazānu*, or "governor," and therefore quite distinct from either of these, who, moreover, were not his contemporaries. The vocalic change at the end is probably due to the scribe who wrote *Murwaša* regarding it as an indeclinable noun, whilst he of the Gezer tablet gives it as in the genitive after *pān*, "before." The tablet K. 294 (Mr. Johns's No. 324) refers to house property within Nineveh, so that the presence of western names would seem to be of no value for fixing the locality of the Palestine Exploration Fund's new find—which, however, is sufficiently attested by Mr. Macalister, the discoverer, and the indication of the date.

In compliance with the request made to me, I have written such a description of the tablet found by Mr. Macalister at Gezer as is possible in the short time (filled, as it has been, with many occupations) at my disposal. Others, however, have been invited to write upon it, and there is no doubt that much more of importance will come to light in consequence of their studies. Professor Sayce, the head of Assyriology in England, always has excellent and suggestive things to say, and all will look eagerly for his remarks. As for the Rev. C. H. W. Johns, the author of *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*—a most important work, dealing exclusively with inscriptions of this class, of which he has made a special study—he will be able to correct (as I hope) my rendering, and also add much useful information to my notes thereon.

It remains only to be said that Mr. Macalister is worthy of our warmest thanks for the extremely interesting document which he has discovered, and it is to be hoped that this forecast of good things to come will be fulfilled to the uttermost.

NOTE ON THE ASSYRIAN TABLET.

By the Rev. A. H. SAYCE, LL.D., *Professor of Assyriology, Oxford.*

MY copy of the cast, which is not very clear in places, agrees with that of Dr. Pinches, except at the beginning of line 9 of the Reverse, where I have read *šu* instead of *mur*. Dr. Pinches' skill and experience, however, have given him an authority in questions