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978-1-107-11956-7 - Ancient Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia

Mogens Trolle Larsen

Frontmatter

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ANCIENT KANESH

The ancient Anatolian city of Kanesh (present-day Kültepe, Turkey) was a continuously inhabited site from the early Bronze Age through Roman times. The city flourished ca. 2000–1750 BC as an Old Assyrian trade outpost and the earliest attested commercial society in world history. More than 23,000 elaborate clay tablets from private merchant houses provide a detailed description of a system of long-distance trade that reached from central Asia to the Black Sea region and the Aegean. The texts record common activities such as trade between Kanesh and the city-state of Assur and between Assyrian merchants and local people. The tablets tell us about the economy as well as culture, language, religion and private lives of individuals we can identify by name, occupation and sometimes even personality. This book presents an in-depth account of this vibrant Bronze Age Anatolian society, revealing the daily lives of its inhabitants.

Mogens Trolle Larsen is Emeritus Professor of Assyriology at the University of Copenhagen. He has written books and articles on Assyriology and archaeology and has edited a number of volumes. His book *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land* was published in 1996. He is a member of the American Philosophical Society, Academia Europea, and the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.

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[More information](#)

Living as we do upon the uppermost layer of a profound
compilation – one, that is, of wind, shadow, of voices buffeted
by other voices – we need to feel that this residency has been
“underwritten” by antecedents: that we, the living, are continuously
accompanied by the presence, no matter how remote, of
predecessors. That we’re not, finally, alone.

Gustaf Sobin, *Luminous Debris*

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	<i>page</i> vii
Preface	ix
Chronology	xi
1 Introduction	1
PART I BEGINNINGS	
2 The Discovery	17
3 The Mound at Kültepe	29
4 The Lower Town	39
5 Understanding the Texts	54
6 Chronology and Change	65
PART II THE HOME TOWN	
7 Assur	83
8 The King in Assur	101
9 The Government of a City	112
10 The Year Eponym	122
PART III ANATOLIA	
11 The Anatolians and Their Land	133
12 The Colonial System	146
13 The Government of a Colony	159
PART IV ECONOMY AND SOCIETY	
14 The Caravan Trade	171
15 Quantities and Origins	189

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-11956-7 - Ancient Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia

Mogens Trolle Larsen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

CONTENTS

16	Families and Money	202
17	Where Did the Money Come from?	217
18	Law and Death	228

PART V CULTURES

19	Cultural Interaction	243
20	Religion	260

PART VI INTERPRETATIONS

21	Economic Theory and Evidence	271
	Appendix: Families and Names	281
	Notes	291
	Bibliography	307
	Index of Old Assyrian Names	317
	Index of Old Assyrian Texts	321
	General Index	323

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-11956-7 - Ancient Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia

Mogens Trolle Larsen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

1	The obverse of Assur-idi's letter in the Louvre, 7.4 cm tall; published by Julius Lewy in cuneiform copy in 1936	page 2
2	Map of the region touched by the Old Assyrian trade	18
3	Kültepe from the air. The excavated area at upper right, the modern village at top	26
4	The excavated buildings on the mound: the two superimposed palaces at top, the temples in the middle and the "customs building" at the bottom	33
5	The paved road or corridor from the "customs building". One of the later temples can be seen in the background	35
6	Map of the lower town showing the excavated areas and the published houses	42
7	Block of houses around house 20, the building belonging to Usur-sha-Ishtar	44
8	Blocks of houses traversed by roads	45
9	Reconstruction of houses in the lower town made by the first architect, Akok	47
10	Street in front of Shalim-Assur's house with the current excavator, Professor Fikri Kulakoğlu	48
11	The grinding girls left a moment ago ...	48
12	The house belonging to the Anatolian royal official Peruwa	51
13	The excavator Tahsin Özgüç and the author studying an unpublished plan of the lower town	52
14	Old Assyrian sign forms that show the typical simplification, using fewer wedges and preferring identical elements	56
15	<i>Waklum</i> letter from the royal chancery	58
16	Poorly written letter with cramped writing and crude signs	59
17	Graph of the dated texts plotted on a grid showing the number of texts and the sequence of eponymies	69

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-11956-7 - Ancient Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia

Mogens Trolle Larsen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

ILLUSTRATIONS

18	Skull from Kültepe with the characteristic gold covers also known from the Old Assyrian grave at Assur	86
19	The Ottoman building sitting on top of the ruins of the Assur temple, seen from the summit of the ziggurat	90
20	The ravaged face of the Stepgate seen from the riverbank. The ziggurat is on top	91
21	The central Anatolian plateau looking towards Alishar from Kerkenes	134
22	Landscape at Boghazköy, ancient Hattush	135
23	Büklükale on the Kızıl Irmak River	136
24	The treaty with the rulers of Hahhum	155
25	One of the roads through the Taurus Mountains, the Hurmen Su valley	178
26	The large fertile Elbistan plain	178
27	Bronze axe from Kültepe	191
28	A face from Kanesh	209
29	A shrewd businessman?	212
30	An elegant example of the potter's art from Kültepe	245
31	A typical pitcher from Kültepe	246
32	"Feed us, please!"	247
33	One of many rhyta found at Kültepe	248
34	Unopened envelope with sealings; it carries an address which tells us that it is a letter from Shu-Belum to a certain Ali-ahum	253
35	A cylinder seal and a modern impression	254
36	The seal of Iddin-abum son of Issu-arik, an older brother of Shalim-Assur	255
37	The seal of an Assyrian called Adad-ellat	257
38	A seal in the late Anatolian style showing a frieze of animals and people	258
39	An amulet-shaped tablet with an incantation against the demon Lamashtum, discovered in Shalim-Assur's house	261
40	A ritual object found in Elamma's house, a boat with gods on board	267
41	The family of Assur-nada	283
42	The family of Imdi-ilum	285
43	The family of Pushu-ken	287
44	The family of Shalim-Assur	288

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-11956-7 - Ancient Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia

Mogens Trolle Larsen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

In dedicating this book to my old friend and colleague Klaas Veenhof, I wish to honour a scholar who has contributed more than anyone else to our understanding of the Old Assyrian period. His books and many articles constitute the essential foundation for anyone who wishes to tackle this sub-field of Assyriology, and his brilliant scholarly competence, his energy, kindness and unfailing generosity have benefitted many young and older scholars. It is a great pleasure for me personally to express my gratitude for his friendship.

Anyone who might be interested in proceeding from this book to a deeper study and understanding of the period and especially the texts will have to turn to his monograph of 2008 (Veenhof and Eidem 2008), in which he has set out a coherent scholarly interpretation of the Old Assyrian period.

The Old Assyrian Text Project has united many specialists in a collaborative effort to reach a deeper understanding of the period (Veenhof, Dercksen, Michel, Kryszat, Stratford). Our regular meetings and the openness and willingness to share ideas and texts have been a constant source of inspiration. The Old Assyrian “team” in Copenhagen, where no less than five PhDs have been written concentrating on Old Assyrian topics, has benefited from the constant support of the Carlsberg Foundation. Karen Jensen, Gojko Barjamovic, Thomas Hertel, Agnete Wisti Lassen, Xiaowen Shi and Edward Stratford all deserve my rich gratitude for their ideas, their enthusiasm and their striving for the highest academic standard in their work. Stephen Lumsden and Thomas Hertel provided crucial help in the preparation of the manuscript.

I must also acknowledge the kind support I have received from Turkish colleagues; when Tahsin Özgüç was still alive, I enjoyed his hospitality at Kültepe and in Ankara and had many fruitful conversations with him. His successor at the excavation, Professor Fikri Kulakoğlu, has given me all the support I could hope for, and I have enjoyed many enlightening discussions

Cambridge University Press

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Mogens Trolle Larsen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

with him. I am grateful also for the friendly reception I have received at Ankara University by my colleagues there, especially Professors Cahit Günbattı, İrfan Albayrak and Hakan Erol.

The two readers of the manuscript helped improve my text in several ways.

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Cambridge University Press

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Date	Assur	Anatolia	Babylonia
2300	Assur temple – Ishtar temple		Akkadian dynasty
...		City-state culture	
2250		Old Palace built at Kanesh	
...			
2200			
...			
2150			
...			
2100	Ur III control		Ur III dynasty
2050			
2000	Old Assyrian period Şilulu		Isin-Larsa period
	Erishum I Year eponymy (year 1)		
1950	Ikunum Sargon I	Texts at Kanesh	
1900	Puzur-Assur II Naram-Suen		
1850	Erishum II	End of level 2 (ca. year 140) Warshama palace built	
1800	Shamshi-Adad I		Hammurabi of Babylon

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

CHRONOLOGY

Eponym	Year	King in Assur	Events
1	1972	Erishum I (1972–1933)	Year eponymy starts
...			
25			
30			
35			
40	1932	Ikūnum (1932–1918)	
45			
50			First dated text
55	1917	Sargon (1917–1878)	
60			
65			
70			
75			Beginning of extensive documentation
80			
85			
90			
95	1877	Puzur-Assur II (1877–1870)	
100			
105	1869	Naram-Suen (1869–1836 + <i>x</i>)	Death of several important merchants
110			Drop in number of texts
115			
120			Week eponymy abolished
125			
130			
135			End of level 2
140	1835	Naram-Suen/Erishum II	Level 1b – Warshama palace built
145			
150			
155			
160	1815	Erishum II (–1809)	
165	1808	Shamshi-Adad I (1808–1776)	Amorite dynasty controls Assur
170			
175			
180			
185	1790		Inar king at Kanesh
190			
195			
200	1776	Shamshi-Adad dies	Warshama king
...			
255+	1718+	End of eponym list	Last datable texts