

Cuneiform Tablets from Canaan in the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri

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Until the fall of The Ottoman Empire, the land once known as Canaan was ruled from Istanbul. Thus, archaeological finds from some of the earliest excavations in what is now The State of Israel and the territory of the Palestinian Authority came to be deposited in the former Ottoman capital. Hence, in the course of our 'Cuneiform in Canaan' project, whose ultimate goal is to produce a book of the same name (see Horowitz – Oshima – Sanders 2002, henceforth abbreviated HOS), we traveled to the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri in April 2004 where we studied cuneiform tablets from Taanach, Tell Hesi, Samaria, and Gezer in the museum's Filistin Collection (Fi.):

Registration Number	HOS Item ²
Fi. 1, EŞ 2788	Taanach 1
Fi. 2, EŞ 2789	Taanach 2
Fi. 3, EŞ 2790	Taanach 3
Fi. 4, EŞ 2787	Taanach 4
Fi. 5, EŞ 2798	Taanach 5
Fi. 6, EŞ 2799	Taanach 6
Fi. 7, EŞ 2800	Taanach 7
Fi. 8, EŞ 2805	Taanach 9

¹ The authors wish to express their gratitude to the directors of the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri for permission to study and publish tablets in their collections, and particularly to the curator Professor V. Donbaz for his courtesies great and small during our visit to the museum. We also thank A. Rainey for permission to use his copies of A. Glock's and E. Gordon's notebooks, and Shlomo Izreel.

² During our visit to the museum we were able to study most of these objects. Unfortunately Fi. 2, Fi. 4, and Fi. 12, formerly on display and so not in the archives, were not available due to renovation work.

Fi. 9, EŞ 2802	Taanach 10
Fi. 10, EŞ 2804	Taanach 11
Fi. 11 (no EŞ number)	Hesi 1
Fi. 12, EŞ 2815 ³ , DIV 216	Gezer 3
Fi. 13, EŞ 2811, DIV 217	Tablet with Drawings and Erased Signs ⁴
Fi. 14, EŞ 2801	Taanach 8
Fi. 15, EŞ 2803	Taanach 8a
Fi. 16, Sebastiyeh-Samaria 1825, DIV 218	Samaria 2
Fi. 17, EŞ 2829	Gezer 2

The great majority of these tablets are from the site of Taanach in the southern Jezreel Valley located between modern Afula and Jenin. They were first published by Friedrich Hrozný in 1904-1905 with full editions, photographs, and handcopies⁵. These editions remained the only true witness to the Taanach tablets until the 1960's when Albert E. Glock and Edmund I. Gordon visited the museum and collated the tablets from Taanach anew. These collations formed the basis of an article in which Glock offered new editions with some corrections for parts of the Taanach Letters 1-2 and 5-6 with discussion (Glock 1983). Anson F. Rainey collated the letters a second time in the 1970's and offered his new readings with full editions in (Rainey 1999). Neither Glock nor Rainey offered new photographs nor handcopies. New readings for some of the personal names, again based on the collations of Glock and Gordon, were offered in Zadok 1996: 106-110. Other tablets in the Fi. collection are from Samaria, Gezer, and Tel Hesi. Full bibliographies are offered in HOS and full editions will appear in our forthcoming *Cuneiform in Canaan* book.

A number of other tablets from *Filistin*, that were also apparently at one time in the collections of the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, have been lost or

³ The question mark appears on the tablets identification materials at the museum.

⁴ Logic would dictate that this tablet should be HOS Gezer 4. However, a completely different tablet is now in the box with these registration numbers and HOS Gezer 4 is missing.

⁵ (Hrozný 1904, 1905). In addition, Hrozný established the system of numbering the Taanach tablets 1-4a, 5-8a, 9-12 still used to this day. Hence we number the three additional cuneiform finds from Taanach as HOS Taanach 13, 14, 15 with HOS Taanach 15 being in fact the 17th cuneiform find from the site.

misplaced over the decades and are now not included in the Fi. collection. These are the two Taanach fragments Taanach 4a and 12, Samariah 1, and Gezer 4.

Below we give a catalogue of the tablets in The Filistin Collection which includes former museum numbers in Istanbul⁶, their HOS number, the latest published main study of the tablet, and where appropriate new or corrected readings we discovered during the course of our research.

The Catalogue of The Fi. Collection

Fi. 1, EŞ 2788 = HOS Taanach 1 (Rainey 1999: 56*-57*)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: A letter from Ehli-Tešub to Talwašur⁷ on the subject of a payment of 50 shekels of silver with a request for Talwašur to send Eli-Tešub *zarinnu*-wood and myrrh. In line 9 we are now able to read *aš-šum 50 KÙ.BABBAR.ĤÁ*, “concerning the 50 (shekels) of silver.” Towards the end of the letter the sender proposes to send a young woman in lieu of the 50 shekels of silver, which is made clear by our new reading of the final lines of the letter on the left edge:

28. ū šum-ma i-ra-am
 29. [[i]-id-din-ši a-na KÙ.BABBAR ip-ṭe₄-re
 30. ū lu-ū a-[n]a be-lim
 28. and if he likes
 29. let him give her over for the silver he has pledged
 30. so as to take possession (of her).

⁶ The documentation for most tablets also gives their earlier EŞ (Eski Şark) numbers, and in a few cases DIV (Diversz) numbers as well. The EŞ numbers are noted in Glock and Gordon’s notebook, but this older sigla as well as DIV are not written onto the tablets themselves. All tablets bearing EŞ numbers identified by the Museum Staff as being from Filistin have been included in the Fi. collection. We suspect that the tablets from Canaan now not in the Fi. collection (see above) are probably among tablets bearing EŞ numbers in the range of those of the current Fi. tablets. We requested permission to view such tablets in our visa applications but this did not turn out to be possible.

⁷ This Hurrian name appears four times in the Taanach letters (Taanach 1: 1, 2: 1, 5: 1, 6: 1); always with the same writing ^mRI.PLSUR. Rainey 1999: 157* *passim* reads ^mTalwašur on the basis of Egyptian evidence (*Tulušr* = *Tu-lu-wá-šá-r*). However, we cannot concur. The last sign is clearly SUR/ŠUR, does not have the reading *ŠAR anywhere, and is read šur at Amarna (see Izreel 1991: 115). The cuneiform version of the name is best rendered Talwašur although we admit that the name might have been actualized differently in ancient Taanach. Cf. alternative Akkadian and West Semitic renderings of names such as Ibni-Adad and Yabni-Addu. The name is not preserved in Taanach 9: 1 (see below).

Fi. 2, EŞ 2789 = HOS Taanach 2 (Rainey 1999: 157*-159*)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: A letter from Ahiami to Talwašur with reference to military items including wheels for a chariot, bow, and copper arrows. We were not able to inspect this tablet in the museum due to renovation work.

Fi. 3, EŞ 2790 = HOS Taanach 3 (Hrozný 1904: 117-119)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Administrative Fragment, List of Persons Called for Service (*dekú*). There is one significant new reading: rev. 12', [^mla-d]i-in-nu. The lower left corner of the reverse has broken away since Hrozný's time so the beginnings of a number of lines towards the end of the reverse are now lost.

Fi. 4, EŞ 2787 = HOS Taanach 4 (Hrozný 1904: 119-121)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Administrative Tablet with Personal Names. New readings: obv. 3' ^mI-lu-lu DUMU Su-bi-ir-ri; 9' ^mE-lu-ra-am'-ma; 11' ^mNa-[g] u-na-zu; rev. 1'-2' there are traces of a line above Hrozný's line 1'. Hence Hrozný line 1' now = line 2' etc.; rev. 5' ^mQa-ti-na-x. Taanach 4 rev. 7', ^mIR-ša-ru-na (Abdi-Šarruna) son of Zi-ib'-. . ., may be the same person as Taanach 7 ii 3 [^m]IR-ša-ru-na'. Likewise, Taanach 4: 9' ^mE-lu-ra-am'-ma may be the same person as Taanach 7 rev. i 3' ^mE-lu-ra-ma; Taanach 12: 3' ^mE-lu-ra-m[a/a[m-ma . . .; and Taanach 14: 10 ^mDINGIR-ra-ma.

Fi. 5, EŞ 2798 = HOS Taanach 5 (Rainey 1999: 160*)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: A Letter from Amenhatpa to Talwašur with a request for horses, chariots, and captives to be send to Megiddo (URU Ma-gi-id/da). The Amenhatpa of this letter and Taanach 6 is not one of the Egyptian kings of the same name. We were not able to inspect this tablet in the museum due to renovation work.

Fi. 6, EŞ 2799 = HOS Taanach 6 (Rainey 1999: 159*-160*)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Another Letter from Amenhatpa to Talwašur with complaints about Talwašur's behavior, and a request for transfer of captives. Hrozný took the letter to be 29 lines long but Rainey 1999: 159*, following Glock, saw some traces from a line 30 on the left edge. We were not able to confirm the existence of this line 30 and suspect that

what Glock and Rainey saw was signs intruding from the far side of the obverse.

Fi. 7, EŞ 2800 = HOS Taanach 7 (Hrozný 1905: 38-39)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Administrative Tablet with Personal Names. The shape of the tablet indicates that the original consisted of two columns per side with the present fragment representing obv. ii and rev. i. New readings are rev. i 2': ^mZa-wa-ia; rev. i 6' ^mBE.LUM-ia₅, here an *Akkadogram* with phonetic element for the name *Ba^c alia*. Cf. HOS Hazor 1: 2: ^mBa'-li-ia₅; rev. i 11' ^mZi-q[u]-un-bu. The names in ii 3 and rev. i 3' also occur in Fi. 4 = Taanach 4. See above.

Fi. 8, EŞ 2805 = HOS Taanach 9 (Hrozný: 1905: 40)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Letter Fragment. Hrozný thought the obverse came from the upper edge and so restored lines 1-2 as the address formula with the recipient being our Talwašur of Taanach 1-2 and 5-6. This proposal is not borne out by our copy.

Fi. 9, EŞ 2802 = HOS Taanach 10 (Hrozný: 1905: 41)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: This small fragment, most likely a letter fragment, preserves only six complete signs.

Fi. 10, EŞ 2804 = HOS Taanach 11 (Hrozný: 1905: 41)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Letter fragment. It seems certain to us that Hrozný's obv.⁷ is in fact the reverse and vice versa. We have two improved readings: obv. 1' . . . šá] *ad-bu-bu*, "which I spoke out about;" rev. 2' *i-nu-te*^{m[es]}, "equipmen[t]," see AHW 1422 (*unūtu*).

Fi. 11 = HOS Hesi 1, See Moran 1992: 356-357

Late Bronze Age, 14th century. Letter. This letter, found in 1892, was the first cuneiform document recovered from Ottoman Palestine. It has long been treated as if it were an El Amarna letter and bears the sigla EA (= El Amarna) 333. The fact that we can offer no new or improved readings is a tribute to the accuracy of the copy by H. Hilprecht in Hilprecht (1896) pl. 64 no. 147. The current tablet is still well preserved and only a few of the strokes that Hilprecht saw a century ago have disappeared.

Fi. 12, EŞ 2815⁷, DIV 216 = HOS Gezer 3 (Becking 1981-82: 80-86)⁸

Neo-Assyrian, 651 (Reign of Assurbanipal): Administrative document, sale of an estate with slaves. We were not able to inspect Fi. 12 in the museum due to renovation work, but were able to identify it positively as HOS Gezer 3 on the basis of documentary material in the tablet's empty box in the collection. Fi. 12 = HOS Gezer 3 is one of two Neo-Assyrian administrative documents from Gezer (the second being our HOS Gezer 4) which have long been studied as a matched pair (see e.g. Becking 1981-82: 86-88). The fact that HOS Gezer 4 is missing from the collections, and that Fi. 13 (see below) bears the next number in sequence in both the older E' and DIV systems leads us to believe that the current Fi. 13 is an intrusion, and has somehow been switched with the original HOS Gezer 4. Thus, we cannot be certain that the current tablet in the Fi. 13 box is indeed from Gezer.

Fi. 13, EŞ 2811, DIV 217 = Tablet with Scribal Drawings and Erased Signs

Logic would dictate that Fi. 13 should be HOS Gezer 4 (see above) and not the current tablet which is rectangular and includes what appears to be scribal drawings, doodles, and erasures of actual cuneiform signs. Most prominent is the drawing of an arrow, perhaps even "The Arrow" constellation ^{mul}KAK.SI.SÁ = *šūkudu* (Sirius) on the reverse. A nearly identical drawing of the constellation is preserved on the Neo-Assyrian planisphere K. 8538⁹. We enclose a copy of the current Fi. 13 as fig. 1.

Fi. 14, EŞ 2801⁷ = HOS Taanach 8 (Hrozný 1905: 39-40)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Letter Fragment mentioning a certain Rabaya and a sum of money. No physical join between Taanach 8 and 8a is possible and visual inspection indicates that the fragments are so dissimilar that it is highly unlikely they come from the same original.

Fi. 15, EŞ 2803 = HOS Taanach 8a (Hrozný 1905: 40)

Late Bronze Age, 15th century: Letter Fragment. Almost certainly not from the same original as Taanach 8. See above.

⁸ A shorter but later discussion is available in Becking 1992: 114-117.

⁹ See most recently Koch 1989: 56 and previously CT 33 9. Also compare the triangular type figure across from the arrow on Fi. 13 with the triangles that form parts of ^{mul}IKU = *ikū*, "The Field," (Pegasus) in K. 8538.

Fi. 16, Sebastiyeh-Samaria 1825, DIV 218 = HOS Samaria 2 (Donbaz 1998: 24-26)

Neo-Assyrian, most likely 7th century: Administrative Fragment from the lower edge of the original. Our inspection of the tablet confirms the readings of the broken end of the last line given in Donbaz (1998). The document also bears a Hebrew stamp seal impression.

Fi. 17, EŞ 2829 = HOS Gezer 2, (Dhorme and Harper 1912: 29-31)

Late Bronze Age, 14th century⁷: Letter Fragment. The dating of the text is complicated. The fragment was a surface find so there is no archaeological context for dating purposes; cuneiform finds are available from both second millennium Gezer (HOS Gezer 1) and Neo-Assyrian period Gezer (HOS Gezer 3-4); and the script of the tablet is neither Neo-Assyrian/Neo-Babylonian, nor the local script of the Late Bronze Age best known from the Amarna Letters and Taanach tablets. In fact, the tablet seems to be written in a hand that is closest to that of Kassite period Babylonia. We suppose therefore that the text was written in the Late Bronze age by a Babylonian scribe, or a local scribe in Canaan well trained in the Babylonian scribal tradition.

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- For Assyriological Abbreviations (e.g. CT, AHw, K.) see *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

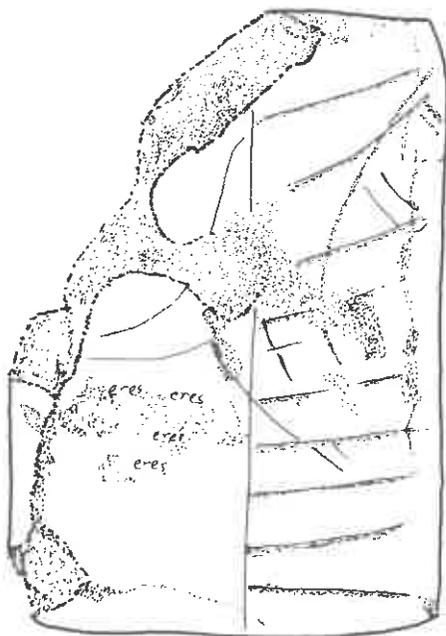


Fig 1a Obverse.

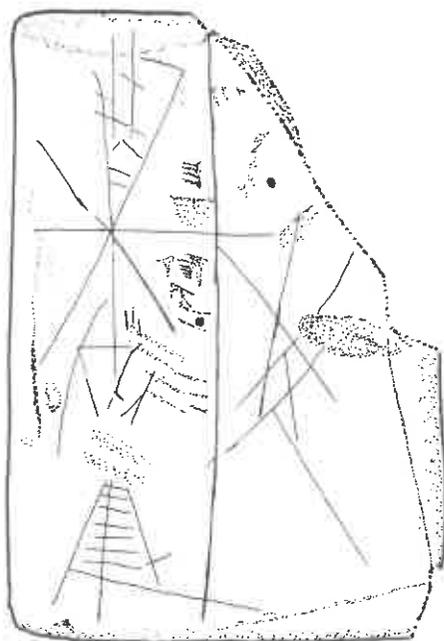


Fig 1b Reverse.

