

Trade from Assyrian Aššur to Anatolian Kaneš in the 19th Century B.C.E.

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ABSTRACT

Evidence of trade in the Ancient Near East between Aššur in Assyria, now northern Iraq, and Kaneš in Anatolia, now central Turkey, comes from Cuneiform writing on over 23,000 clay tiles unearthed at Kaneš. The tiles tell of 19th century B.C.E. Assyrian traders who established a trading colony at Kaneš. Merchants in Aššur imported tin and textiles from the east and south, packed them into bags, and loaded the bags on donkeys. Transporters led caravans of 10 to 50 donkeys some 1200 kilometers over rough, narrow roads to Kaneš. After the proper taxes were paid traders sold the tin, textiles, and donkeys in the market for silver which they sent back to Aššur to start the process anew. To facilitate buying and selling the merchants drew up contracts and wrote letters concerning purchases, sales, and market conditions. The trade proved quite profitable but ended with the violent destruction of Kaneš.

Keywords: Aššur, Kaneš, Trade in the 19th Century B.C.E., Assyria, Anatolia

INTRODUCTION

Traders bought, sold, and moved goods from one place to another in prehistoric Mesopotamia as early as the eighth millennium. For example, people transported obsidian (7500-3500 B.C.E.) and lapis lazuli (3500 B.C.E.) over long distances. As collections of people coalesced into organized communities their citizens demanded goods that could not be supplied locally. Traders exploited the geographical separation between consumers and producers by moving merchandise from their source to Mesopotamia and shipping locally produced items back (Yoffee, 1981, pp. 14-15, 17, 23).

During the fourth millennium B.C.E. two separate cultures developed in ancient Mesopotamia: Sumer, to the south, and Akkad, immediately north. Their language and cultural traditions differed though they shared a lifestyle based upon farming and animal husbandry (Postgate, 1994, p. 18; Schomp, 2004, pp. 6-7). By the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1600) Akkadian speaking people had migrated into what is now northern Iraq and established Aššur (also Ashur or Assur) on the river Tigris (Larsen, 1976, p. 33; 2015, pp. 83-84). In the 19th century B.C.E. merchants imported tin and textiles into Aššur and then exported them to the ancient Anatolian city of Kaneš (also Kaniš or Kanish) (Leemans, 1960, pp. 98-99; Veenhof, 1972, p. XXI). This paper describes the pattern of trade in the 19th century B.C.E. between the Assyrian city of Aššur and the commercial quarter in lower town Kaneš, called a *kārum* in Old Assyrian. At the *Kārum Kaneš* merchants exchanged the tin and textiles for silver. They sent the silver back to Aššur to buy tin and textiles and start the trading process over again (Larsen, 1976, pp. 235-236, 241; Van De Mierop, 2007, pp. 95-96). An examination of the trade between Aššur and Kaneš offers much to our times because “Trade has often been invoked as one of the central features of the development of complex societies, hierarchy, political and social inequality, urbanism and state formation (Larsen, 2015, p. 11).”

LIMITATIONS

First, the dating of ancient events is problematic. Ancient kings' lists record the succession of kings and the lengths of their reigns but they create only relative chronologies that are difficult to relate to modern dating systems (Van De Mierop, 2007, p. 4). This paper uses those dates provided by the sources. Because all the dates are approximate, circa (ca.) is not used. And because all the dates are Before the Common Era, B.C.E. is also omitted. And to follow common practice, Akkadian words are written in italics (Postgate, 1994, p. xix).

Second, sources do not agree on the dates traders traveled between Aššur and Kaneš. Archeological excavations of the colony at Kaneš established the existence of four occupational levels with Levels 2 and 1b corresponding to the Assyrian's trading activity in Anatolia (Lewy, 1971, pp. 708-715). Larsen states that Level 2 lasted about 80 years from 1920 to 1840. This corresponds to the reigns of the Old Assyrian kings Errēšum I, Ikūnum, Šarrum-kēn I, and Puzur-Aššur II. The vast majority of the texts come from level 2. Between level 2 and level 1b is a destruction layer. Apparently at the end of the period represented by Level 2 the settlement at Kaneš was destroyed. Some 30 to 50 years later the houses of level 1b were rebuilt. Level 1b corresponds to the reign of the Assyrian king Šamši-Adad I (1809-1766) and his son, Išme-Dagan (1967, pp. 2-3). Local Anatolian princes include Anitta, son of Pitkhana (Gurney, 1973, p. 232).

However, note that Van De Mieroop identifies Level 2 at 1910 to 1830 and Level 1b from 1810 to 1740, about 150 years (2007, p. 85) and Podany lists the dates of Assyrian-Anatolian trade as 1950 to 1740, a period of 210 years (2014, p. 64).

Third, for the capital city of Aššur archeological excavations have provided little information describing the commercial and social structure. Lives of the men who lived at Aššur and directed business in Anatolia must be inferred from the tiles found at Kaneš. Located at the modern site of Kültepe, Kaneš is the only colony in Anatolia that has yielded sufficient evidence to enable analysis of the life of the colonial establishment (Larsen, 1976, p. 21; 2015, pp. 84-85).

Fourth, a fortuitous find of clay tablets generally describes the trading of specific goods that occurred at a particular place and time. The Assyrian trade in Anatolia occurred over only two or three generations (Veenhof, 1995, p. 865). Generalizing to longer periods and other places must be done with care.

Fifth, the legal and economic texts, private letters, and notes written on clay tiles reflect those families whose archives have been found and published. As such, it tends to overestimate the importance of the families in the Old Assyrian society and to underestimate the importance of families for the rest of Mesopotamian history (Larsen, 1976, p. 22).

Sixth, the Cuneiform writing on clay tablets has been translated by scholars into several modern languages. But the scholars do not always agree on the translations or on the meanings of the words and phrases translated. Differences that seem material are noted.

THE DATA

The source of information comes from clay tablets containing Cuneiform writing created by 19th century Assyrian merchants, stored in their houses in the commercial settlement at the foot of Kaneš, and subsequently buried in the ruins of these houses. They tell of Old Assyrian traders' business activities between Aššur and Anatolia for a short period during the second millennium. They consist of letters, administrative documents, legal contracts, records of court cases, business correspondence, and collections of notes and memos. They contain trading treaties that stipulate mutual rights and obligations between merchants and establish political and economic relations with local Anatolian rulers. They tell of the network of friendships, partnerships, and family relations that generated market information and facilitated transportation and communication. Indeed, the material from these tablets dealing with the Old Assyrian trade appear as precursors of trading phenomena in more modern times (Orlin, 1970 pp. 191-192; Veenhof, 1997, p. 341).

The tablets consist of pieces of clay, about 2" x 2", usually shaped like miniature pillows that vary in color from red and yellow to grey and black. Scribes inscribed messages on the soft clay and then sun baked them hard. They sprinkled these tablets with powdered clay to prevent sticking, enclosed them in envelopes made of thin sheets of clay, wrote addresses on the envelopes, and sun baked these. Thus a tablet could not be read without breaking the envelope. But the process protected the interior information and prevented unauthorized use (Johns, 1904, p. 199; Orlin, 1970, p. 189).

TRANSPORTATION AND TRADE ROUTES

Mesopotamian merchants engaged in long-distance trade in two ways. In both, traders packed their goods in oxen-drawn wagons or donkey-drawn carts, on pack donkeys, and in boats. But in one they traveled only a short distance and passed the goods on to an intermediary who traveled a short distance and passed them to still another merchant. The products would eventually move a long distance but in short increments. In the other traders traveled with their merchandise all the way over the long distances from one country or city-state to another. This describes trade between Aššur and Kaneš (Leemans, 1977, p. 2).

Water provided the least expensive way of moving large quantities of bulky goods such as barley, wool, and copper. Logs destined for the royal palace at Mari were cut in the forests of Mount Amanus, dragged some 120 miles to the Euphrates, then tied into rafts and floated downstream. Riverboats of varying sizes and shapes traveled one-way: downstream. Euphrates and Tigris' currents were too strong to permit sailing upstream and towing usually proved prohibitively expensive. One type of popular boat consisted of rawhide stretched over a frame of osier wood. At the destination, the boat was dismantled and the skin and wood sold along with the merchandise it carried. The trader then walked home and built another boat (Astour, 1995, pp. 1402-1403).

Roads were few and often difficult to traverse. Road maintenance fell to the nearest local community. The time required and expense involved meant roads were not well maintained. Many allowed foot traffic only. Wagon and donkey caravans required better roads: traversable routes through mountain passes, ferries at river crossings where fording proved impossible, and watering places for the livestock. Thus only a limited number of overland routes from one city to another existed for them. But once established, the principal arteries remained largely unchanged through the centuries (Astour, 1995, pp. 1401-1402).

The documents mention transportation safety in several contexts. The weather could create unsafe situations. In winter roads closed, food and fodder became an issue, and even wolves posed a problem. City states warring against each other caused danger to travelers. Brigands sometimes attacked caravans. And the transporter's safety declined when contraband was detected by officials (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 329-331).

AŠŠUR

Akkadian speaking people established Aššur, the capital city of Assyria, on a high plateau in a semiarid area on the middle Tigris in what is now Northern Iraq. The city of Aššur was on the border between the rainfall zone that allowed farming without irrigation and the western steppe populated by nomadic tribes. The nomads liked the site because it was accessible for the headquarters of tribes in the process of settlement. And it offered the settled populations of the north and south military significance for it could serve as a frontier fortress to gain political control (Oates, 2005, pp. 20-21; Larsen, 1976, p. 27; Bertman, 2003, p. 10).

Lacking tillable farmland but possessing a strategic location, Aššur developed as a mercantile trading center. It lay on a caravan route between Persia and the Levant. It served as a stage on the Tigris river road to Nineveh in the north. As such it controlled the passage of boats and rafts down the river to the cities in Sumer and Akkad. And it formed the starting point of a diagonal route west to the Sinjar and Khabur Valley areas in the Assyrian north (Leemans, 1977, p. 6; Postgate, 1977, p. 115; Astour, 1995, p.

1406). Undoubtedly, Assyrian merchants found the control of important trade routes profitable.

In the late third to early second millennium Aššur's political institutions differed from cities in Southern Mesopotamia. Its merchant class was well developed, politically influential, and rich. Family firms organized trading expeditions but non-family citizens and the temple could invest in them. Although it avoided politics as much as possible, its small, self-contained community of strong merchant houses and a city assembly constrained its rulers and kept tight financial and legal control of its colonies. The governmental entities taxed trade but supported and stimulated private enterprise. Government's role with respect to trade is not clear because few tiles have been found in Aššur. However, the state apparently felt responsible to open and maintain international contacts so that the trading routes could function properly (Yoffee, 1981, p. 12; Postgate, 1994, p. 48; Veenhof, 1997, p. 340).

The Assyrian king Illushuma (1962-1942) viewed trade as a means of creating wealth and prosperity. He compelled the rulers of Ur, Nippur, and Isin to grant Akkadian merchants access to their cities and the right to market their own goods as well as merchandise they purchased in Aššur (Lewy, 1971, p. 708). Anatolia had large quantities of metallic ores, especially copper, so he wanted Assyrian merchants to establish colonies in Anatolia and sell copper to Babylonia. To encourage them he exempted copper importers from custom duties (Bertman, 2003, p. 89).

Erishum I (1941-1902), Illushuma's heir, continued Illushuma's trade policies and established close political and economic ties between Anatolia and Assyria. Copper was used to craft weapons thus in most Near-Eastern countries the state monopolized its trade. A ruler could determine who would make, market, and use weapons. However, Erishum I established the freedom of movement not only of copper but also silver, gold, lead, wheat, wool, and other commodities (Lewy, 1971, pp. 708-709). Bertman lists the reign of Erishum I from 1906 to 1867 (2003, p. 85).

King Ikunum (first half of 19th century), son of Erishum I, ruled for only a few years and was succeeded by Sharrum-Kēn/Sargon I. Like their predecessors they encouraged the founding of trading colonies in Anatolia (Lewy, 1971, pp. 709-710; Bertman, 2003, pp. 88, 101). By the middle of the 19th century Aššur's population grew to about 10,000. Of these, 2,000 worked in trade with one-third living in or regularly traveling to Anatolia. Aššur had developed into a commercial rather than territorial power in the ANE (Veenhof, 1977, p. 109, 115).

KANEŠ

Aššur became the center of trade with Anatolia in tin and textiles. The Old Assyrian merchants took the tin brought in by traders from the east, perhaps Persia, and textiles from Babylonia, exported them to Anatolia, and exchanged them for silver. In the process it became a center of transit trade of huge dimensions. To facilitate the long distance trade Aššur's merchants established relatively permanent trading agencies in Anatolia. They settled alongside a number of Anatolian towns and established colonies (*kārum*) at each. Kaneš developed as the most important of the *kârû*, the first stop in transactions that involved subsequent trips to other parts of Anatolia (Leemans, 1960, p. 135; Larsen, 1967, pp. 154-55). The ruins of Kaneš lie in what is now central-eastern Turkey near the modern city of Kayseri and the ancient mound locals call Kültepe.

Besides Kaneš, sources identify eleven other colonies with *kārum* settlements or trading stations including *Durhumit*- northeast of Kaneš, *Hahhum*-southeast of Kaneš, *Hattuš*-later became a Hittite capital called Hattusas, *Hurama*-located in the mountain valleys southeast of Kaneš, *Nihrija*-east of the Euphrates in southern Turkey, and *Purušhaddum*-south of Tuz Gölü, close to modern Bor (Orlin, 1970, pp. 34-35; Larsen, 1976, pp. 237-239). However, little documentation exists for these other cities whereas more than 23,000 clay tiles dealing with Aššur-Kaneš trading activities have been discovered and excavated at Kaneš (Veenhof, 1997, pp. 337-338; Larsen, 2015, p. 57). Thus the site of *Kārum Kaneš* is comparatively important not only because of its prominence in trade with Anatolia but also because of the large volume of clay tiles found there and translated.

KĀRUM KANEŠ

The translation of *kārum* might be quay, port, harbor, or colony. Although Kaneš did not possess a port or harbor, the first urban areas in Mesopotamia where inter-city trade took place were ports and harbors. The name was subsequently applied to the trading activities at land-locked Kaneš (Orlin, 1970, pp. 25-26; Larsen, 1976, pp. 235-236; Van De Mieroop, 1999, p. 65; 2007, p. 95).

A *kārum* consisted of a dense cluster of small houses along narrow winding streets adjacent to an Anatolian city's walls. Over a period of about 150 years beginning around 1950 merchants built moderately sized private houses clustered below Kaneš. Traders from Aššur, Anatolia, and other city-states lived here side-by-side. The streets were paved with stone and just wide enough for donkey carts. Stone lined drains carried away waste water. The *kārum* also contained buildings which served as administrative meeting places, temples, shrines, warehouses, and stables. The *kārum*-house was located at the foot of the mound on which the residence of the prince was located (Orlin, 1970, pp. 29-31; Larsen, 1976, pp. 235-236; Van De Mieroop, 1999, pp. 66-67).

For their governing body, the Assyrians used the term *kārum* followed by the name of the respective city: *Kārum Kaneš*. The seat of government for the Assyrian traders was the *kārum*-house. In Anatolia, the *kārum* was self-governing with administrative duties rotating among its members. The administrative office of the *kārum* was the *bit kārum* (Larsen, 1967, pp. 4-5; Van De Mieroop, 1999, p. 67).

From the *Kārum Kaneš* merchants administered and directed trading activities. While the traders of the *Kārum Kaneš* managed their own affairs, they were not independent of influence from Aššur. On one occasion the *Kārum Kaneš* received orders from Aššur that it needed money to construct fortifications. The *Kārum Kaneš* was ordered to send ten minas of silver and to levy the traders and the other *kârû* under its control (Lewy, 1971, p. 722).

The *kārum*-house collected tolls and taxes from arriving caravans. Some merchants attempted to avoid paying duties at the customs house at Kaneš by taking danger-roads: routes that branched off from the main road to Kaneš. The *kārum*-house dispatched envoys to danger-roads to seize the traveling merchants and enforce the payment of the import duty. Thus the *Kārum Kaneš* functioned as a court of justice when merchants did not pay the debts they incurred with each other or with the Anatolians. And the *Kārum Kaneš* served as a financial institution, extending credit to and maintaining the accounts of individual merchants and groups of merchants (Lewy, 1971, pp. 721-722).

The *Kārum Kaneš* provided storage facilities for merchandise. Merchants' houses in the *Kārum Kaneš* contained guarded strong rooms where valuables were placed under lock and seal. Besides silver, gold, and other precious objects traders stored records on clay tablets. These records include those kept by merchants from Aššur, from Anatolia, and from other parts of the ANE including Syria and the city of Ebla (Veenhof, 1995, p. 861).

The *Kārum Kaneš* was superior to all the Assyrian settlements in Anatolia. It was at the hub of a system of routes that radiated outward in all directions. From it ran roads to *kârû* in other cities. When it received orders from the government at Aššur, it relayed them to the others (Orlin, 1970, p. 36).

Although secondary to *Kārum Kaneš*, *Kārum Purušhaddum* was important to trade. Copper deposits were discovered nearby early in Anatolian history. *Kārum Purušhaddum* controlled mining operations there. It sold large quantities of raw copper and copper products to the Assyrian merchants. The mining, smelting, working, and trade of copper and copper products made *Purušhaddum* rich. Owing to its wealth, it became the seat of a 'great prince' (*rubā' um rabūm*) (Lewy, 1971, pp. 722-723). Additional evidence awaits discovery.

The term *wabārtum* (sg.) or *wabārātum* (pl.) initially referred to resident aliens or emigrants but then was applied to their settlements. The *wabārātum* of Anatolia had legal and commercial jurisdiction over the Assyrian traders much as a *kārum*. But their jurisdiction and authority were less important and subordinate to a neighboring *kārum* (Larsen, 1976, p. 236).

ASSYRIAN MERCHANTS

The members of the Assyrian business community belonged to the same aristocratic families. The senior member of a family resided in Aššur. He directed the export-import business with Anatolia from there. The younger male family members moved to the various towns in Anatolia and managed the activities of the firm there. Only when the head of the family died or retired from business did a younger man move back to Assyria and take his place.

Enlil-bāni was a prominent Aššur merchant living in Kaneš. Aššur-malik was his father and Tarīš-mātum his mother. Tarīš-mātum was a sister of Pūšu-kēn and Aššur-idī a brother. His grandfather was Luzina and sister was Hattītum. Aššur-rabi was his brother-in-law. As an older man Enlil-bāni moved back to Aššur from Kaneš like his father and grandfather before him. His son, Nāb-Suen, then likely took his place in Kaneš (Larsen, 1967, pp. 15-18; 1976, p. 83).

The younger men's wives remained in Assyria, cared for the houses, raised their children and functioned as heads of households that included responsibility for their husbands' businesses. The women were also responsible for producing some the textiles sent to Anatolia. They had to either weave them or arrange for weaving them. The men often criticized the quality of the textiles received. But the wives complained not only that they lacked the resources needed to produce the textiles but they often went hungry (Van De Mierop, 2007, pp. 97-98). Apparently their husbands did not send them the silver they received from selling the textiles.

The men living in Anatolia often took local women as second wives. But both parties understood that the marriage could be terminated by either of them at any time with the payment of divorce-money. The man could pay off his native wife and, if he

wanted, take their children back to Aššur. When men married Anatolian women their wives in Aššur often felt abandoned. One woman wrote that her husband left her no money or food. Apparently her husband complained of her extravagance but she replied that she had no food. She asked that her husband send her the value of the textiles she sent to him so she could buy barley (Lewy, 1971, pp. 717-718; Veenhof, 1977, p. 113; Van De Mieroop, 2007, pp. 97-98).

Suejja was the head of one trading family. Suejja was the father of Pūšu-kēn who was listed in the documents as “Pūšu-kēn son of Suejja.” Pūšu-kēn traveled to Anatolia as a youth and remained there most of his life, becoming the head of an extensive firm in Kaneš. Pūšu-kēn had four sons: Aššur-muttabbil, Su’ejja II, Buzāzu, and Ikūn-pāša. His daughter, Ahaha, was a priestess. His wife, Lamassī, lived in Aššur away from her husband and took care of the domestic affairs of his house. Pūšu-kēn likely traveled very little in Anatolia. Instead he maintained a large staff of employees and subordinates around him there to deal with the transportation and procedures in other colonies. For example, Buzāzu describes one Puzur-Aššur as an associate of his father’s firm. A clay tablet lists Šu-Kubum, son of Šalim-Aššur, as a transporter who conducted shipments for Pūšu-kēn and his associates. And Šalim-Aššur represented Pūšu-kēn in Aššur. Aššur-malik, son of Luzina, was also listed frequently in these documents. He was married to Tarīš-mātum, a sister of Pūšu-kēn (Larsen, 1967, pp. 60-61; 1976, pp. 82, 95). Note that several people had the same name and the tiles do not always distinguish the difference.

The firm headed by Aššur-idī left 125 letters between various members of the family. Aššur-idī lived in Aššur and directed the family’s business affairs from there. His eldest son, Aššur-nada, arranged the sale in and around Kaneš of merchandise he received from Aššur-idī and sent back the money gained. Aššur-nada usually sold some of the goods that arrived in Kaneš for cash but assigned part of the shipment to associates who traveled around Anatolia. Aššur-nada also acted as a commissioned agent for other merchants. The result often was a number of credit contracts that needed his attention such that he spent much of his time collecting outstanding debts (Larsen, 1977, p. 121). The agents to other parts of Anatolia included his brothers: Aššur-taklāku, Ušur-ša-Aššur, Ennam-Bēlum, Ennam-Aššur, and Ilī-ālum. Aššur-idī sent letters from Aššur to Aššur-nādā, Ilī-ālum, Aššur-taklāku, and Alāhum. Aššur-nādā sent letters to Aššur-idī. Aššur-nādā sent five letters to Aššur-taklāku and received ten back, five letters to Alāhum and received five back, and two letters to Ilī-ālum and received five back (Larsen, 1976, pp. 97-98).

Merchants in Kaneš and their wives in Aššur used their commercial earnings to buy food, clothing, and material for the home woolen industry. The silver and gold earned in Anatolia also paid debts and taxes and merchandise to equip new caravans. But when they could, husbands bought their wives expensive gifts. Pušu-ken, the head of one of the most influential families in Aššur, sent his wife pectorals, golden and silver goblets, and bronze utensils. After all, in times of need these items could serve as reserve capital. However, Aššur merchants apparently did not invest profits in property other than the family home. A nice house served as a successful merchant’s status symbol and testified to a family’s rising fortunes (Veenhof, 1977, p. 116).

The Assyrian traders in Anatolia adopted material aspects of Anatolian society. For example, their houses were indistinguishable from those of the locals. But they apparently did not adopt the local language nor worship Anatolian gods. Indeed, the Assyrians may have imported the technology of writing into Anatolia. And while contacts with Anatolians were largely commercial, local traders did not form partnerships

with *Kaneš* merchants. Instead, they bought merchandise from the Assyrians and sold it to their own people (Veenhof, 1977, pp. 110-111; Van De Mieroop, 2007, pp. 119-120).

The Assyrian merchants who invested in the *kārum* were called *tamkārū*. These were men who had enough wealth to invest from 5 to 30 minas of silver in the funds of the *kārum*. These *tamkārū* held a special status. They apparently could pay the road taxes, the *dātum*, levied by the towns between Aššur and Kaneš to the *kārum* rather than pay duties while in route to Anatolia (Veenhof, 1972, p. 278).

A trader could not be everywhere at all times. Pūšu-kēn and Amur-Ištar entered into a partnership whereby both could act as authorized representatives for each other in connection with legal cases. Both could collect debts owed to one of them from other people. They could use each other's technical facilities both in Assyria and in Anatolia. They would represent each other in connection with the caravan-trade (Larsen, 1967, p. 66).

ANATOLIANS

No single administration ruled over all the local Anatolian governments. Rather each small, city-state principality was ruled by a prince or *rûba um*. An Assyrian *Kārum* was founded in five or six of the dominant major royal seats. Kaneš became the center of the Assyrian *kārum*-system apparently because it was the most conveniently reached political center in Central Anatolia (Orlin, 1970, pp. 73, 241).

Ethnically, the native Anatolian princes were Hittite, Luwian, or Hurrian. Both Hittite and Hurrian personal names are found on trading contracts between Anatolian merchants and Assyrians. The Hurrian Enishru was an influential merchant in Kaneš who controlled much of the trade in cereals and other agricultural products. He bought grain futures from Hittite farmers and loaned them money at high interest rates. His daughter, Khatala, married an Assyrian. And Pūšu-kēn, the wealthy Assyrian merchant living at Kaneš, treated the Hurrian Irwi-sharri like a member of his own family (Lewy, 1971, pp. 716-717).

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIPS

The Old Assyrian Trade began many centuries before the establishment of *kârû* in the major cities. At first Assyrian merchants made isolated trading expeditions into Anatolia. Along the trade routes communities created markets and fairs. To store merchandise traders set up warehouses. Anatolian rulers encouraged Assyrian traders to settle in their towns in special quarters built for them such as the *kārum* at Kaneš. Trade spread from these towns in all directions. Thus rather than being unique, the 19th century trade represented an exploitation and elaboration of existing institutions (Orlin, 1970, pp. 177-180; Larsen, 1974, p. 470).

A set of arrangements guided the relationship between the traders from Aššur and the Anatolian palace. First, upon arrival traders took their shipments of goods to the palace and paid taxes on the merchandise (Orlin, 1970, p. 107). The basic tax paid to the palace of each Anatolian kingdom was the *nishātum*: 1/20 of the textiles and 2/65 of the tin (Larsen, 1976, p. 245). Second, the palace retained the right to buy up to 10% of all shipments consisting of quality textiles. Third, the palace monopolized trade in certain luxury commodities including meteoric iron and precious stones. Assyrian traders were prohibited from buying or selling these. Fourth, the palace wanted tin and encouraged its

import. A tin and copper alloy produced bronze, a metal harder than copper. Fifth, the Assyrians promised not to avoid taxes by smuggling on pain of imprisonment and payment of fines. Anatolians had the right to search and arrest Assyrians suspected of smuggling or dealing in restricted commodities. Moreover, the indigenous rulers felt free to confiscate traders' goods and detain Assyrian personnel when the situation called for such actions.

But the local kings guaranteed to the Assyrians, first, residence rights and protection in the *Kārum* and second, full extraterritorial rights. That is, politically and jurisdictionally the colonies became extensions of the government of Aššur. Third, Assyrian merchants were allowed to use palace warehouses. Fourth, the palace promised protection on the roads and guarantees against losses from robbers and brigands in the territory controlled by the king. And if an Assyrian was murdered in Kaneš the Anatolian king agreed to hand the transgressor over to the *kārum*. The *kārum* could extract blood money and then execute the murderer (Orlin, 1970, pp. 179-180; Veenhof, 1995, p. 866; Podany, 2014, p. 67; Larsen, 2015, pp. 152, 180).

Lewy states that since the princes had submitted to Assyrian supremacy the *Kārum Kaneš* authorities were superior to them (1971, pp. 721-722). However, this conclusion is not found elsewhere. Instead, the relationship between the Anatolian princes who ruled the city-states and the Assyrians was such that the Assyrians did not rule the princes as a military or political overlord. And they did not gain the right to establish residence areas in Anatolian cities as a result of conquest. Rather, the relationship was one of mutual dependency built upon treaties guaranteeing the rights of both parties. Although the Assyrians managed their international trade, neither Assyrians nor Anatolians dominated the other. Relations between the princes and the *kārû* and *wabârâtum* were basically cooperative (Orlin, 1970, pp. 100, 147).

However, the local Anatolian prince occasionally demonstrated his independence and power. The prince of *Zalpa* seized a shipment of goods including over two-thirds of a mina of gold, some silver and bronze, and red-dyed wool in order to collect on a bad debt. He initiated correspondence with the *kārum* informing it what he had done. The owner of the goods was Aššur-imitti of Kaneš. The owner sent his subordinate, Ili-âlum, with a substantial gift to ask the prince to release the goods. The prince waited 20 days before agreeing to see the employee. Then he told Ili-âlum that he would not deal with a subordinate but only with the owner of the goods. To change the prince's mind Ili-âlum informed him that the goods were temple property. The original treaty between the prince of *Zalpa* and the Assyrians at *Kaneš* would have been sanctioned by the Anatolian and Assyrian deities. The gods protected sworn oaths of contracting parties and neither wanted to offend his gods. Everyone would know if the divine prerogatives were violated. The prince doesn't want to be known as a trespasser against holy things so he released the temple goods. But he kept the gold he felt was owned him (Orlin, 1970, pp. 118, 132-139).

A similar situation took place when the palace of *Šamuḥa* detained an Assyrian caravan and seized a number of donkeys and their loads. The *wabârâtum* of *Šamuḥa* sent a letter to the city envoys and to the *Kārum Kaneš*. The *wabârâtum* wrote that its witnesses approached the palace to discuss the matter and swore oaths before the divine symbols of the tribunals. The high ranking Assyrian officials then negotiated with the local prince in an atmosphere of legality where the sovereignty of the ruler is accepted. Note that this disagreement between the local Anatolian prince and *wabârâtum* representatives took place in the same legal atmosphere as that between a ruler and *kārum*

representatives. The palace eventually agreed to release the donkeys and their loads (Orlin, 1970, pp. 152-154).

Conflicts of interest and difficulties between traders and local governments were inevitable. Assyrian businessmen sometimes felt abused or treated unfairly and appealed to the *Kārum Kaneš* for support. In one case three Assyrian traders—Dadaa, Aššur–Nimri, and Aššur–Mutabil—were detained by the Anatolian authority in the town of *Naduhtum*. Apparently they were held as security pledges against a promise between the officials of Kaneš and the prince of *Naduhtum*. They asked the prince of *Naduhtum* ten times for permission to leave but were refused each time. Finally, the issue was settled and the men were allowed to leave (Orlin, 1970, pp. 130-132).

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Commercial exchange requires uniformly accepted weights and measures. Standard weights and measures likely developed in the early days of Mesopotamian society although units of weight and length were approximate and varied from one city-state to another. However, as local rulers grew strong and acquired territory they imposed uniformity over larger and larger geographical areas (Bertman, 2003, p. 257). One text concerned a dispute about the size of an orchard. To settle the argument a copper cubit, a standard measure of the time and likely kept in the temple, was brought out (Veenhof, 1972, p. 61 footnote).

Following are the Akkadian names for weights, their meanings, and approximate values in today's terms. By Neo-Babylonian times the shekel took the place of the *sē* or grain (Johns, 1904, p. 258; Bertman, 2003, p. 257).

- 1 *sē* (grain) = 1/600 oz.
- 1 *shiklu* (shekel) = 180 *sē* = 3/10 oz.
- 1 *manû* (mina) = 60 *shiklu* = 18 oz.
- 1 *biltu* (talent) = 60 *manû* = 67 lb.

Gold was not a means of exchange but was acquired, kept, and bartered as a precious thing; it did not enter into commercial circulation. Rather, it was likely hoarded in Aššur as a thing of value. The archives of the merchant Itti-Sîn-Milki provide accounts of gold brought into Larsa. It traded at rates that varied from one area to another depending upon the demand, supply, and skills of the negotiators. For example, it traded at the rate of 1 shekel of gold to 6½ shekels of silver in one location, 1 to 4 in another, and 1 to 3 in yet another. The idea, of course, was to pay as little silver as necessary in trade for as much gold as possible. In any event silver was the universally accepted means of exchange and payment (Leemans, 1960, pp. 120-121; Veenhof, 1997, pp. 339-340).

Silver served several functions in Mesopotamia. Silver served as a unit of value. This meant that commodities such as grain were priced in silver for the purpose of commercial record keeping. Silver also served as a medium of exchange. When a household needed to buy commodities, silver was used as money. Silver was also bought and sold like any other commodity; such use appears in commercial inventories of goods. Merchants made personal loans in silver. Officials and private citizens carried silver. Businesspeople often had silver on deposit with traders in other cities. Silver was used to purchase real estate and pay rents. Citizens made offerings to the gods with silver. Silver

financed foreign trade. And the state required payments in silver to satisfy obligations owed to the palace (Veenhof, 1972, p. 399; Foster, 1977, pp. 35-36).

MERCHANDISE EXCHANGED

Because it functioned as money, silver served as the starting point of commercial enterprises (Leemans, 1960, p. 130). Assyrian merchants purchased tin and textiles with silver. They sold these goods to Anatolians for silver. The money was converted into merchandise, the merchandise was converted back into money, and the process continued.

Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin harder than copper alone, characterized the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500). Anatolia possessed large quantities of copper but none of tin. Importers carried tin into Aššur then Aššur merchants transported it on to Kaneš. The tin might have come from tin mines in the Karadağ Mountains east of Tabriz (Larsen, 1967, pp. 3-4). However, Larsen later notes that ancient tin mines east of Tabriz were probably not the source (2015, p. 301). More likely tin was imported to Aššur from Afghanistan through Elam. Either source, the tin came in the form of ingots weighing about 10 pounds each (Muhly, 1995, p. 1509).

Although the data supports a trade in tin (Veenhof, 1972, pp. XXII, 79), Lewy states that the metal carried to Kaneš was lead rather than tin. Apparently large quantities of lead were mined near Aššur. And though excavators have unearthed numerous leaden objects such as pots, figurines, and sarcophagi at both Aššur and Kaneš, they have not found tin objects. Moreover, silver can be smelted out of some lead ores. Perhaps when Anatolians discovered deposits of their own lead ores they no longer demanded lead from Aššur and the Assyrian caravan traffic to Anatolia declined (1971, pp. 724-725). Other support for trade in lead rather than tin is not forthcoming.

The Anatolian consumers demanded imported textiles. The textiles were called *šubat kutānu*. They were a piece of cloth sufficient for one garment for one adult (Lewy, 1971, pp. 723-724). However, these were usually not finished garments but large, standardized, pieces. These textiles were either imported into Aššur from Babylonia or manufactured locally. But note that the local Anatolians also produced their own textiles though these were not exported to Aššur. Indeed, the Assyrian authorities prohibited such trade (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 95, 98). Why did Anatolians buy imported textiles when they could purchase locally produced ones, likely at lower prices? Apparently high quality imported textiles symbolized for the local elites a higher status than locally manufactured ones (Larsen, 2015, p. 152).

To provide for the local textile industry Assyrian merchants imported from surrounding areas large quantities of wool. Women of the merchant houses, often wives whose husbands lived in Anatolia, weaved the wool into textiles (Larsen, 1976, p. 89). Letters between Assyrian merchants living in Anatolia and their female relatives living in Aššur specify the types of textiles to produce, their size, and the type of finishing treatment. For example, letters between Buzāzu, at Kaneš, and Waqartum, his sister at Aššur, deal with the trade. Buzāzu sent instructions to Waqartum specifying the kind of weave, the quality of wool to be processed, the finishing treatment, and the size of textile he wanted produced and sent to him at Kaneš. Waqartum and other female members of the household weaved the textiles in their home industry. Subsequently Waqartum informs Buzāzu that she is sending four textiles to the merchant Puzur-Aššur through a transporter. She wants Buzāzu to sell the woolen goods and send the silver back to her.

When the proceeds of the sale were not forthcoming, Waqartum sent a letter to her brother insisting that he convert the textiles into silver and send it to her. She needed the silver to pay off creditors and for household expenses for she complains of living without any means “in an empty house” (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 103, 109-111).

Lamassī, wife of Pūšu-kēn, manufactured textiles in her home industry. To take the woolens to Kaneš she contracted with transporters: Aššur-mālik, Īdī-Suen, Kulumā, Ia-šarand, Ahūqar, and Urani. In return Lamassī expected silver from Pūšu-kēn. When it did not arrive she sent irritable letters. Lamassī received a letter back from her husband complaining that the textiles she sent were too small. She replied that she reduced the size at his request. She also asked him to send wool when he sent the money to her. She needed the wool for her weavers—her daughters and slave-girls—and for sale to others. And although wool was not regularly exported to Aššur from Anatolia, Lamassī asked her husband to send wool because it was cheaper in Anatolia. Lamassī and Waqartum were typical of the merchants’ wives and households. The women served as their male relatives’ agents in commercial and legal transactions working for the profit of their family’s’ businesses (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 103, 111-114, 116-123).

Many of the textiles exported from Aššur to Kaneš came from Akkad. Large workshops in Ur, Larsa, and Mari employed hundreds of women in spinning and weaving textiles from wool produced by the local sheep industry (Veenhof, 1972, p. 102). Babylonian transporters carried the textiles to Aššur and sold them for silver (Larsen, 1967, p. 153). They likely bought tin to take home (Leemans, 1968, p. 214; Larsen, 1976, pp. 87-88; Leemans, 1977, p. 6). Old Assyrian texts also suggest that colonies of Assyrian merchants lived in places where the textiles were made, Babylon for example, much as their colleagues did in Anatolia (Larsen, 1967, p. 154).

Aššur’s citizens used textiles for saddle rugs, blankets, clothing, belts, and to wrap tin for transport. For export the quality, type, and use shipped depended upon the demand for each and the potential for profit. Veenhof lists more than 25 types of textiles of various qualities ranging from *raqqutum*-very fine for the upper classes, royalty, and high dignitaries-to inferior-*eb/pīšum* or *matium* for the common folk. The most frequently mentioned in the documents is *kutānum*, manufactured by Assyrian women. In Anatolia the average sale price of a textile was about 15 shekels (1972, pp. 69-70, 144-179, 201-202).

Assyrian traders who bought Anatolian wool commonly resold it there for a profit. Documents show that Assyrians bought large quantities of wool in Anatolia, stored it in their homes, and then transported it to where they could sell it for the most profit, usually to towns south and southwest of Kaneš. However, the records indicate that merchants rarely traded in wool as individuals. Instead, a well-organized collective of merchants bought and sold large quantities of wool with each individual merchant receiving his share of the proceeds. For example, Pūšu-kēn operated a wool trading company. The shareholders of his enterprise paid for their shares by having their accounts debited with the amounts of silver due. When Pūšu-kēn sold the wool he credited the shareholders’ accounts (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 130-132, 134-135).

The gain on silver was highest when human labor worked up raw materials into articles of value. Weavers turned raw wool into textiles. The textiles were more valuable than the wool that went into them. Craftsmen smelted copper and tin into bronze and then manufactured tools and weapons with the bronze. The manufactured items were worth more than the sum of the tin and copper components. Artisans carved cylinder seals out of bronze, bone, and lapis lazuli stone with impressions that identified the

owner. To secure a storage room or to indicate that the contents of a jar were intact a merchant applied a dollop of wet clay to a door jamb or top of a jar then rolled his seal over it. The finished cylinder seal was worth much more than unworked bronze, bone, or lapis lazuli stone (Pittman, 1995, pp. 1589-1601). The selling price of the finished goods—textiles, bronze items, and cylinder seals—was higher than the combined value of the raw materials that went into them (Leemans, 1960, p. 131).

TRADE MISSIONS

At Aššur a trade mission began with tin imported from mines in the east and textiles from mills in the south. For the trip to Anatolia local merchants either hired a transporter with donkeys and drivers or purchased donkeys and hired drivers. Often several merchants with up to 20 donkeys each joined together to form a convoy. When merchants combined their goods into one caravan they saved money and reduced risks such as robbery and kidnap for ransom (Saggs, 1984, pp. 30-31; Veenhof, 1995, pp. 862-864; Van De Mieroop, 2007, pp. 95-96).

Twice a year a caravan with drivers and accompanying traders set off on the 750 mile (~1200k) six- to seven-week trip from Aššur to Kaneš across the Taurus Mountains, the distance between New York and Chicago. No caravans traveled during the four winter months; the weather prevented passage through the mountains (Veenhof, 1997, p. 347; Van De Mieroop, 2007, p. 96; Podany, 2014, p. 64). The road used by the Assyrian merchants consisted of four segments: from Aššur to the Khabur River—a tributary of the Euphrates, from the Khabur to the town of Ad/tmum near the northern rim of the great Mesopotamian plain, from Ad/tmum to the Euphrates, and from the Euphrates to Kaneš (Goetze, 1953, pp. 51-72; Oates, 2005, pp. 35-36, footnote 3). Towns along the route maintained posting stages often operated by colonies of Assyrians. They provided forage and water for the animals and food for caravaneers. One place, about half way, had fresh donkeys and drivers for hire (Saggs, 1984, p. 31; Larsen, 2015, p. 175).

Upon arrival at Kaneš importers paid taxes to the Anatolian government as they had to the Aššur authorities and would also to the *kāru*, the *kārum* officials (Saggs, 1984, p. 33). The Assyrian importer now had two options. If the family business in Aššur needed money quickly he would sell the goods for cash upon delivery. Otherwise he might transfer the goods to a trusted, safe commissioner: a *tamkārum*. A *tamkārum* was a banker/merchant/commissioned agent who stored the merchandise in his *bīt tamkārim*, his house. The *tamkārum* promised in a deed of loan to pay a fixed sum of silver within a specified period of time for the lot of merchandise. The time period could be immediate for cash, for a short term, or for a long term: the longer the credit term, the higher the price. If for cash the proceeds would be immediate but smaller than had he waited. The importers preferred the longer term credit to avoid market risks. But the commissioner, the *tamkārum*, had to be trustworthy and safe. The principal in Aššur impressed upon his traders to place the goods with a trustworthy *tamkārum*, one whom you can trust like yourselves (Larsen, 1967, pp. 49-51, 94-95, 155; Veenhof, 1972, pp. 408-409).

When merchants in Aššur instructed their representatives in Kaneš to sell the shipment for cash (silver), complications might arise. Copper was mined locally so Anatolian princes preferred to make payments in copper rather than silver. The palace did not want the inconvenience and risks involved with selling copper for silver and then using the silver to pay for tin and textiles. But if a trader took copper for payment he then had to convert the copper into silver himself. This might mean having it refined and then

carrying it to another colony for a cash sale, risky, time consuming activities (Dercksen, 1996, pp. 180-181). At times market forces forced Assyrian traders to trade tin and textiles for wool. They then might need to trade again: wool for copper and the copper for silver. Whether traders sold tin and textiles for silver or copper or wool and the wool for copper and the copper for silver depended upon the market. The goal was profit and the most profitable transactions prevailed (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 137-139).

In Kaneš merchants or agents sold the tin and textiles for more than they paid. Depending on quality, textiles could bring three times their cost. And the silver acquired in Kaneš fetched twice the price in Aššur. The gain could total 100% over the trip to Kaneš and back (Veenhof, 1995, p. 864).

The representative in Kaneš sent silver back to Aššur by trustworthy, speedy messengers rather than by caravan (Lewy, 1971, p. 726). For example, Dadaja entrusted to Kukkulānum 30 minas of silver that belonged to Enlil-bāni for transport back to Aššur. Dadaja was likely an employee of Enlil-bāni. Kukkulānum was a transporter. Enlil-bāni was listed as the warrantor for Kukkulānum in the *bīt tamkārim*. A contract was written specifying the relationships between Enlil-bāni, Dadaja, and Kukkulānum. The contract stated that the silver belongs to Enlil-bāni as will the goods bought in Aššur for transport back to Kaneš. Enlil-bāni sent a message to his representatives in Aššur stating that his silver will arrive, that the transporter, Kukkulānum, will bring it, and stating his wishes concerning the purchases to be made. Kukkulānum traveled to Aššur and used the silver to purchase the requested textiles and tin (Larsen, 1967, pp. 20-27, 36-37).

Sometimes things didn't go as smoothly as they might. Aššur-kāšid lived in Aššur. His men in Kaneš sent him 5 minas 2½ shekels of silver for the sale of textiles and donkeys in Kaneš. But the amount received was not full price for the items shipped. More was due from the buyers. Aššur-kāšid needed the money to buy more tin to ship. He sent a message to his men in Kaneš to collect the rest of the money owed him and to send it quickly (Larsen, 1967, pp. 130-133). We don't know the result but collecting debts from buyers who were late with their payments or who could not or would not pay meant that merchants might need to sue for payment (Veenhof, 1997, p. 348).

When the supply of silver and gold in Anatolia declined, the Assyrians suffered from an unfavorable rate of exchange. During crop harvest the Anatolian people in a city were too busy to trade. A variety of other reasons caused the Anatolians to lose interest in Assyrian goods. And political instability could interrupt the import of tin and textiles into Aššur. When the proceeds dropped and commerce fell, Assyrian traders stored their goods and waited. But eventually they moved on to another city where a better chance of profit existed (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 87-88, 379-381).

Weights and measures caused problems. Tin was purchased with silver in Aššur, weighed, packed for travel, and a letter directed to Kaneš specifying the amount packed and sent. Upon delivery at Kaneš it was unpacked and weighed again. The weights were rarely identical: often less in Kaneš than in Aššur. Theft does not explain the differences because the packs were sealed at Aššur and the seals not broken until they reached their destination in Anatolia. The likely difference was due to the difference in scales at the two sites. In general terms they weighed heavy in Aššur and light in Kaneš (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 17-23, 50-53).

The ancient traders created and kept records. But they lacked a well-developed bookkeeping system. A merchant in Kaneš usually had several business dealings going on at the same time. He could have caravans on the way to Kaneš, men carrying silver back to Aššur, and agents with his merchandise on credit spread out over several towns.

With all of this he might have but a limited idea of the dealings and undertakings of his business and finances (Larsen, 2015, pp. 182-183). However, in spite of the issues approximately 110 tons of tin and 115,000 textiles traveled from Aššur to Kaneš over the few years of trade. These figures represent a minimum because many tiles lie unexcavated and many not yet translated (Larsen, 2015, p. 190; Podany, 2014, pp. 66-67).

EXPENSES

Caravan expenditures included donkeys and their harnesses, pack saddles and fodder. The drivers took good care of the donkeys and didn't spare the fodder. Merchants wanted the donkeys to arrive in Anatolia in good shape so they would sell for a high price (Veenhof, 1972, p. 407). The price in Aššur of one donkey was between 16 and 20 shekels. The traders strived to sell them for more than this in Kaneš. Other expenses were the donkey drivers and their food, amounts given to both Assyrian and Anatolian officials to smooth the way, additional personnel along the way when needed, additional donkeys if one died, guides, military protection, charges by the inns where the caravan stayed overnight, and taxes and tolls (Larsen, 1967, pp. 151-152, 169). Slaves were not paid but required food (Larsen, 2015, p. 186).

One driver could handle two or three donkeys so a large donkey caravan required a good many men. Note that sources use the English words "transporter," "driver," and "freighter" interchangeably at times. In Akkadian a transporter who was hired for a certain period of time was called a *sāridum*. Here *sāridum* refers to a person who travels with the caravan. One with a long-term service contract with a merchant was called a *kaššārūm*. The word *kaššārūm* is more generic and means freighter but not necessarily connected with donkeys. Some of the *kaššārūm* were men of means who engaged in their own trading activities (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 10-11, 258). Much of the day-to-day work relied on *subrum*, slaves kept by merchant families to provide labor wherever needed (Larsen, 2015, p. 216).

Merchant investors provided interest-free loans to the *sāridum*. With his interest-free loan, usually a half-pound of silver called *be'ūlātum* (working capital), the *sāridum* bought tin and textiles for his own private business to carry along in the caravan. By accepting the loan, he became contractually bound to the merchant. The silver kept him in service and guaranteed that he had a vital interest in the success of the trip. In Anatolia the *sāridum* sold his goods for more than he paid. With his profits he repaid the merchant, kept the remainder, and thereby earned his own wages. The contract between the *sāridum* and his investors stipulated a penalty for quitting in the middle of a journey. He was still liable for the loan and, in addition, had to pay the cost of hiring a substitute (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 10-11, 86, 407; 1997, p. 346; Larsen, 2015, pp. 186, 215).

Aššur levied an export tax on a caravan, *wašītum*, based on the silver value of the shipment. At Kaneš importers also paid taxes to the Anatolian palace and made deposits in the administrative offices of the *kārum*, the *bīt kārim*, as well. Traders paid a *nishātu* tax to the palace. A *nishātum* resembled today's excise or import tax. Tablets indicate this was 5% of the textiles and four pounds of tin on every donkey load. Other documents list different *nishātu* tax rates for tin and textiles. The palace also had the right of pre-emption: buying at a discount up to 10% of the textiles. These taxes were usually paid in kind but in some cases in silver. Once he paid his taxes the importer

could sell the goods at market (Larsen, 1967, pp. 155-157; Larsen, 1976, p. 103; Veenhof, 1972, p. 137; Larsen, 2015, p. 157).

The Kaneš palace wasn't the only government to levy taxes. Anatolia consisted of many small states each with its own government that collected its own taxes. The local administrations levied a *nishātu* tax of their own on caravans traveling through (Larsen, 1967, pp. 160-161). And each town also imposed a *dātum* or road-tax. Two types of *dātum* included *dātum ša ḥarrānim* and *dātum ša bīt kārim*. Local Anatolian authorities charged a *dātum ša ḥarrānim* on caravans with the amount based on the value of the merchandise carried. But payment of the *dātum ša ḥarrānim* gave caravans protected and unhindered passage through regions not dominated by Assyria (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 298, 302).

A caravan's *kaššārūm* paid the *dātum ša ḥarrānim* along the way from "loose tin" given him at Aššur. Loose tin was tin not wrapped in sealed packets and was provided specifically for expenses. The tax rate was about 10% of the value of the load. As much as 80% of the loose tin sent along with the caravan was used to pay the *dātum* levied by each town's authorities. If not enough loose tin was sent with the caravan the *kaššārūm* might advance money from his own funds. He did not break a seal of the wrapped tin for that was illegal. Repayment occurred when the caravan arrived (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 228, 244, 258, 262, 289).

The *dātum ša bīt kārim* offered merchants the ability to take part in the collective commercial, and profitable, investments in the *kārum*. Merchants kept accounts at the *kārum* to facilitate *dātum* payments. They deposited textiles in the *bīt kārim*. The value in silver was booked as credit on their accounts. The *bīt kārim* then sold these textiles to pay the *dātum* for the merchant. As a result, the *bīt kārim* itself carried on a large trade in textiles with profits from the trade going to the depositors/investors (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 272-274, 302).

Some transport contracts also listed a *šaddu'utum* tax. But the meaning of *šaddu'utum* is unclear. It was a toll levied by the Assyrian authorities in Anatolia on shipments from Aššur to Anatolia and inside Anatolia. It was paid to the various Assyrian settlements passed on the way to Anatolia. However, merchants who paid a *dātum* could pay a *šaddu'utum* once in Kaneš and be exempted from all other payments in route. A *šaddu'utum* tax also refers to cases where the transportation was from Anatolia to Aššur. The transport contracts and the notifying messages list the *šaddu'utum* rate at 1:60 whenever a shipment left Anatolia for Assyria (Larsen, 1967, pp. 143-144; Veenhof, 1972, p. 284).

SMUGGLING

The documents use *pazzurum* to mean smuggle: to avoid paying *nishātu*, taxes on a caravan's merchandise, by surreptitious methods. The opposite is *ana ekallim erābum*, being cleared by the palace by payment of the *nishātu*. But *pazzurum* also meant trade in forbidden merchandise such as *ašium* or natural iron. The smuggled goods were called *pazzurtum* (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 308-309).

The taxes and fees charged on caravans by towns between Aššur and the Anatolian destination reduced profits. They might be avoided if the caravan followed smugglers' roads or *ḥarrān sūqinnim*. In contrast to the inter-city roads normally used, these out of the way, secondary, difficult-to-traverse narrow tracks bypassed toll stations and towns (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 305-306, 334, 337). City authorities who caught

smugglers engaged in *pazzurum* seized the goods and jailed the individuals responsible. Merchandises destined for Pūšu-kēn attempted to bypass the Luḥusaddia, Hurrama, and Šalahšuwa city authorities. The smuggled goods were seized and probably forfeited. Pūšu-kēn, the individual responsible, was jailed. He likely paid a ransom to get out of jail (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 332-333, 340).

Once in a town traders were not allowed to sell merchandise until they paid the taxes imposed on their caravans. Palace officials met each caravan at the gates of the *Kārum Kaneš* and escorted it to the palace to pay the taxes so the traders were *ana ekallim erābum*. However, some Assyrian merchants attempted to bring the goods into a town or *kārum* without clearing customs. On one occasion Kunīlim writes to the merchant Pūšu-kēn and his transporter, Rabī-Aššur, to engage in *pazzurum*. He instructed them to take some, but not all, of the textiles to the *kārum* and pay the duties. When the textiles came forth from the palace after paying duties, add them to those kept back. This would arouse less suspicion. Apparently Pūšu-kēn followed the merchant's instructions for the palace arrested him and incarcerated him for smuggling. Smuggling was a rather common activity by Pūšu-kēn for several texts deal with his smuggling activities (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 309, 319, 340).

In another example of *pazzurum* a caravan traveling from Timilkia to Šalatuwar southwest of Kaneš had to pass through Hurrama. To dodge the taxes on tin there the merchant instructed his transporter to hire native people to carry the tin through in one talent lots. Native people carrying small amounts might not arouse suspicion than an Assyrian caravan. If this ploy wasn't possible, caravan personnel (donkey drivers, etc.) were instructed to hide small quantities of tin in their loincloths, that is become *mupazzirum*. If one person made it through town without being caught, he should send another until all the tin went through (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 312-313, 316-318). The results are not known.

Secretly carrying and trading prohibited merchandise, *pazzurum*, was also forbidden. For example, the authorities at Aššur prohibited trade in natural iron (*ašium*). To trade in *ašium* meant smuggling it in without the authorities' knowledge (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 305-306).

Textiles were smuggled more often than tin. The taxes and duties on textiles were higher than on tin. And importers had to sell tin at the centers of metallurgy where control was relatively easy. However, they could surreptitiously sell textiles in several markets to a variety of people (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 318-321).

In spite of the risks smuggling was fairly common. And once merchandise had been successfully smuggled into town and sold, no one knew whether or not it had been properly taxed (Veenhof, 1972, p. 340).

DONKEYS

Traders used donkey carts and wagons for short distances and, where roads existed, for long distances. But iron was not yet available for wheels so pack donkey caravans carried most long-distance traffic. Donkeys could negotiate the most primitive paths and the narrowest of mountain trails for treks of 15 to 20 miles a day (Leemans, 1960, p. 134; Astour, 1995, p. 1403). The texts described the donkeys as black asses. Lewy speculates that these were Damascus asses, a dark-haired, especially strong breed (1971, p. 725).

The donkey caravans destined for Anatolia were assembled at Amurru, a town near Aššur (Lewy, 1971, p. 721). To load each donkey *sāridum*, *kaššārūm*, or slaves packed merchandise into *muttātum*, a pair of bags placed onto the pack saddle. Smaller top packs, *ēlītum*, went on top of the *muttātum*-pack saddle (Veenhof, 1972, p. 13).

The word *šuqlum* refers to the weight of a half-pack, one of the pair of bags. However, the weight of one *šuqlum* could vary between 60 and 75 minas (67.5 lbs. to 84.38 lbs.). Thus *muttātum* refers to the shape of the bag and *šuqlum* to a, more or less, standard but flexible weight. A *muttātum/šuqlum*, then, referred to a half pack of about one talent (60 minas more or less). As a short-hand way of reference locals called it a *bilātum* or “one-talent-pack.” Today we refer to a carton of six, 12 ounce or larger or smaller cans of beverage as a six-pack. Assyrians referred to a leather bag used for shipping as a *naruqqum*. But it also meant the bag a merchant used to carry his money (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 13-16, 37).

For tin one donkey might carry two half-packs of one talent each and a top pack of one-half talent. The tin was wrapped in textiles when packed into a *muttātum*: about four textiles for each donkey-load of tin. When the donkey load consisted of textiles only, they were also carried in *muttātum*. One might carry 25 to 35 textiles and a top pack of 4 to 6 textiles. Packers probably rolled and pressed each textile to reduce its volume before packing (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 30, 35, 40, 45).

Overall one donkey carried its harness, 130 minas of tin wrapped in four textiles and packed in a *muttātum*, 10-12 minas of loose tin and 4-6 minas of textiles carried in the top-pack, along with food and some of the freighter’s private property. If the average weight of a textile is 5 minas, a donkey’s load could total 180-190 minas plus a top-pack of loose tin and textiles. One donkey, then, carried about 90 kilos (just under 200 pounds) of merchandise (Larsen, 1967, pp. 148-149; Veenhof, 1972, pp. 23-27, 45, 363).

One donkey load of tin was more valuable than one donkey load of textiles. The texts state that five donkeys could carry a load of 149 linen-cloths which cost 12½ minas ½ shekel (225.3 oz.). Therefore, one donkey load of textiles costs 2½ minas of silver (45 oz.). But for tin, one donkey could carry a load that cost 9 minas 10 shekels (165 oz.). Five donkeys could carry loads of tin that cost 825 oz. To carry a load that cost 825 oz. of textiles would take over 18 donkeys. Thus the capital investment and taxes for textiles was higher than for tin. The gross profit for a shipment of tin was 100%, realized within one year if the transaction went smoothly. And the gross profit for textiles was up to 200%. But the capital investment and expenses for a load of textiles compared to its value was much higher than the investment and expenses for a load of tin compared to the value. Note also that the tin for expenses (hand tin) for textiles was 15 minas but for tin was 10 minas (Larsen, 1967, pp. 147, 149; Veenhof, 1972, pp. 86-87; Larsen, 1976, p. 104).

Merchants in Aššur sealed the packets of tin and textiles in order to protect the contents against theft by the freighters or others. The seals consisted of a clay bulla impressed upon the ropes used to tie the bags up. In addition to the seal the name of the person who packed the merchandise, the name of the merchant who owned it, and the name of the recipient might be written. And the hems of the textiles were sometimes marked with the name of the owner (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 41-44; Saggs, 1984, p. 31).

The unauthorized breaking of a *bulla* to open a sealed pack was a punishable offense. If a transporter ran out of traveling funds, hand-money, he might break open a *šuqlum* to obtain funds to continue the trip. However, since opening a sealed *šuqlum* was illegal he more likely would advance hand-money from his own funds or send a message

back to Aššur for more rather than break a seal. Upon arrival in Anatolia the seals were broken in front of witnesses and the contents weighed (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 31-32).

Were horses used for transport? The documents list donkeys as beasts of burden but not horses. Humans domesticated horses around 4000. By the first half of the second millennium Mesopotamian documents mention horses (Hesse, 1995, pp. 216-217). In Southern Mesopotamia the Kassites (1595-1158) successfully bred horses (Sommerfeld, 1995, pp. 925-926). Qatna supplied horses to Northern Mesopotamia at least during the early part of the second millennium (Lemche, 1995, p. 1201). But horses were not used for long distance transport because donkeys were hardier than horses, needed less food and care, and carried heavier loads. Note that camels were not domesticated until about 1100 (Astour, 1995, p. 1402). Camel caravans became significant transport systems only by the eighth century (Hesse, 1995, p. 217).

MARKETS

Did physical marketplaces exist in Aššur and Kaneš? Although the archeological evidence is not clear, a consensus answers in the positive for both communities. Larsen believes a physical marketplace existed in both. In Kaneš a building was called “The House of the Market.” And documents make similar references to a marketplace in Aššur (2015, p. 273). Veenhof states that the *kārum* likely had a market consisting of a cluster of alleys lined with shops. Local authorities would have monitored its activities and checked the caravans coming in. After all, the palace wanted the Assyrian merchants to pay their taxes and not smuggle in goods tax free. In Aššur the texts record that textiles were bought on the local market and that negotiations were carried out in a traders’ *bītum* (house or firm). Most likely these *bītum* principals imported goods into Aššur, stored them, and in due time sold them for export to Anatolia. For instance, the documents tell of Enlil-bāni who purchased goods in his house in Aššur (1972, pp. 355, 396-399). Thus while physical markets existed in Assyria, they likely played a minor role in purchase transactions when compared to the “houses” of the trading companies (Veenhof, 1972, p. 400).

A *maḥīrim* (or *maḥīrum*) in Old Assyrian texts meant market. A *maḥīrim* was a special place, probably a physical space, in Kaneš a where businessmen met to trade goods and handle legal and commercial affairs. There they traded in gold, silver, copper and native Anatolian textiles. And a *rabī maḥīrim* was a palace official whose function was to manage the market. For example, Wašḥūba was a *rabī maḥīrim* who witnessed a loan of 2 minas of silver by Puzur-Aššur to five Anatolians. The Anatolians probably purchased goods on credit (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 394-395; Larsen, 2015, pp. 181, 273).

At Kaneš buyers and sellers haggled over prices in the market. When transport costs proved high, the Assyrian merchants needed higher prices and bargained harder. When the amount of silver available in the Anatolian economy was plentiful, price levels could rise. Where goods were sold on credit, the length of the term granted affected the price asked. If a particularly large shipment came in, sellers lowered prices to move it all. News about a competing caravan of tin and textiles coming in lowered the prices demanded and accepted. When several caravans arrived in Kaneš close together bringing in large volumes of tin and textiles, buyers in the marketplace bargained prices down. To prevent the necessity of giving price concessions, sellers held merchandise back or carried it to another town for sale (Larsen, 2015, p. 273-276).

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

Although the Sumerians developed the techniques and terminology of book-keeping and accounting during the 3rd Millennium, the Assyrians used little of it. Instead they developed their own. They created a set of legal rules defining the rights and obligations of the investor, money-lender, trader, traveling agent, caravan leader, partner, and others involved and applied them to trade between Aššur and Kaneš (Veenhof, 1972, pp. 345-347). And to facilitate this trade they developed three documents: the transport contract, notifying message, and caravan account.

A merchant in Kaneš wishing to ship silver back to Aššur hired a transporter with donkeys to carry the precious metals. A transport contract written on a tablet stated the amount of silver, the destination, the *šaddu'utum* tax, and other possible conditions. The merchant kept this transport contract in a room in his home. The merchant then alerted his agent at Aššur with a notifying message in the form of a letter written on a tablet specifying the amount shipped, the transporter, and what he wanted purchased with the silver when it arrived. When the transporter reached Aššur and handed the silver over the agent wrote up a caravan account specifying on the tablet that he had received the money, the name of the transporter, the rate of exchange, what he bought with it, the prices paid, and the expenses incurred to equip a new caravan. The expenses included the amount of the *nishātum* and of the *wašītum*. He then sent the tablet back to the merchant at Kaneš (Larsen, 1967, pp. 6-14, 43; 1976, p. 105).

On one occasion Enlil-bāni contracted with Kukkulānum to take 30 minas of silver from Kaneš to his representatives in Aššur and wrote a transport contract for the silver. He then sent a notifying message to his representatives in Aššur: Pilahaja, Irma-Aššur, Mannum-balum-Aššur, and Aššur-lamassī. One or more of these representatives received the silver, bought tin and textiles with it, and sent a caravan account back to Enlil-bāni living in the *Kārum Kaneš* (Larsen, 1967, pp. 15-18).

Financing an Assyrian merchant's trading activities in Anatolia involved yet another contract that covered the capital brought together by wealthy individuals and entrusted to a trader. This money was called a *naruqqum*, or "the sack." A trader carried the money in a leather pouch or sack during a caravan trip. Because the authorities in Aššur apparently wanted to maintain control over their investments, the *naruqqum* contract was always set up in Aššur. But many of the men who administered a *naruqqum* contract were actively engaged in the overland trade. They either traveled with the caravans or lived permanently in an Anatolian city such as Kaneš (Veenhof, 1995, p. 869).

Pušu-ken financed his trading activities with a *naruqqum*. Some of the investors were likely family members. Once he became successful he made substantial investments in the *naruqqum*-capitals of others. For example, the following is a partial list of his investments in *naruqqum*-capital of fellow traders (Larsen, 1977, p. 128).

Adada, son of Amur-Ištar	2 minas of gold
Amur-Ištar	2 minas of gold
Aššuriš-tikal, son of Sukallija	2 minas of gold
Aššur-malik, son of Sukallija	2 minas of gold
Dan-Aššur	2 minas of gold
Ennum-Aššur, son of Enna-Suen	4 minas of gold
Ennum-Belum, son of Šu-Laban	2 minas of gold

Ištar-pilah, son of Anninum

2 minas of gold

At the end of the contract period profits were divided among the investors in the *naruqqum*. If profits were not forthcoming, authorities in Aššur might become involved and send an attorney to straighten matters out. But some of the contracts lasted 30 to 40 years (Larsen, 1977, pp. 137-138, 144).

Shares in a *naruqqum* could be sold and inherited after the death of an investor. Pušu-ken invested four minas of gold in Ennum-Aššur and two minas of gold in Aššur-malik. Pušu-ken died and left his investments in each *naruqqum* to his four sons, Su'ejja, Aššur-muttabbil, Buzāzu, and Ikūn-pāša, and a daughter, Ahaha. Subsequently, Aššur-muttabbil purchased the shares of Su'ejja and Ikūn-pāša (Larsen, 1977, p. 131).

What happened when a trader did not live up to the requirements stipulated in the *naruqqum* contract? Idi-Ištar, a trader in Kaneš, managed his *naruqqum* in a way that did not please his investors. They wanted him to deposit money as required by the terms of his *naruqqum*, which he had not done. To pressure him they threatened to discredit him in the colony of Kaneš. Idi-Ištar did not deposit money nor did he travel to Aššur to answer the charges. His investors went to the city-assembly in Aššur and obtained a document intended to disgrace him. However, his representatives in Aššur persuaded the city-assembly to wait a little longer (Larsen, 1977, p. 142).

The *naruqqum* contract may have functioned like today's commercial company. A group of investors in Aššur could place their money with a trader and receive profits when the trader sold his tin and textiles in Anatolia. And an investor could put money into more than one trader's *naruqqum* to spread his risk of loss. If one trader met misfortune, another might make a large profit (Larsen, 1977, pp. 144-145).

The record between a creditor and debtor usually contained the names of both. However, rather than a named person the record sometimes stated that the silver or merchandise loaned belonged to a *tamkārum*, the title of a trader or merchant of some status. When a money-lender wanted to remain anonymous he used the title rather than his name. He may have loaned money to a traveling merchant to buy tin and textiles and yet also owed money to a third party who would demand it from the traveling merchant if he knew where the funding originated. Also, some merchants who loaned money might want to keep their financial situation from rival traders (Veenhof, 1997, pp. 351-354).

The use of the *tamkārum* by an individual rather than his name made possible the insertion of a "tablet bearer's clause" into a contract. If a person owed money to another, he could give his bond to pay with the creditor listed as *tamkārum*. Bonds with anonymous *tamkārum* as creditor could be ceded to another. That is, the right to collect the claim could be transferred. The person collecting the money could take the tablet and act for the original creditor or become the creditor himself, perhaps because the original creditor owed him money. In this case the title or ownership of the asset was transferred. And the record on the tablet might end with the words "he who holds this tablet is *tamkārum*. The bonds of debt owed to *tamkārum* were first introduced by the Old Assyrian traders as creative answers to practical demands of commerce. The use of *tamkārum* in the contract and the "tablet bearer's clause" makes the tablet a bearer's check of sorts. As such it facilitates trade. And it was an important first step in economic history (Veenhof, 1997, pp. 351-364).

PROFIT AND CULTURE

Trade within and between cities of the ANE flourished during the second half of the third millennium and into the second. Merchants, alone or in partnership, usually working for their own account, engaged in trade. Their purpose was to continuously provide commodities needed and wanted by cities' populations. The goal of the individual businessman, however, was profit. With profit came the good life: a donkey, a garden, and a home (Foster, 1977, p. 42).

But though profit provided the motivation, it also brought different cultures into peaceful contact with one another (Leemans, 1960, p. 137, Footnote 1). The merchants from Aššur who established trading colonies in Anatolia settled alongside Anatolian towns, formed their own communities there, traded with the local merchants, and married local women. As the Assyrian settlers in Kaneš carried on trade with the Anatolians, some of the customs and language, both written and spoken, might have been transmitted from one culture to another in the normal course of buying and selling (Leemans, 1977, pp. 2-3).

However, the Assyrian traders living in Kaneš apparently absorbed little of the Anatolian culture. Contacts with Anatolians were primarily of a commercial nature. Locals bought Assyrian traders' goods for resale in local markets. Anatolians and Assyrians did not form partnerships or joint ventures. Assyrians did not own Anatolian slaves. And no traces of Anatolian influences in the Assyrian language or evidence that Assyrians adopted the worship of Anatolian gods exist. And though they married Anatolian women they generally took care to protect the status of their first wives in Aššur such that the legal status of Anatolian women was inferior to that of the first wives (Veenhof, 1977, pp. 110-111, 113).

THE END OF TRADE

Trade between Aššur and Kaneš declined significantly around 1865-1863. The import of tin and textiles from Aššur into Anatolia diminished, perhaps due to warring countries. Trade within Anatolia in copper and wool became more important to the Assyrian merchants. And a number of the most prominent traders appear to have died within the span of a few years around 1868/67. Their heirs battled each other in extended legal conflicts that took years to resolve. In effect, the death of a merchant ended his business activities (Larsen, 2015, pp. 72-74).

About 1836/1835 a fire destroyed Kaneš. The violent destruction of Kaneš that ended Level 2 was likely a swift and surprise attack. Kaneš was then abandoned for at least a generation. After a few years Assyrians returned to Kaneš and rebuilt the settlement and commercial system. The city recovered and again became an independent center of trade, as seen in Level 1b. But Kaneš was no longer the commercial center for Assyrian trade as other towns in Anatolia became important (Orlin, 1970, p. 242; Podany, 2014, p. 69; Larsen, 2015, pp. 69-72).

By the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the first Assyria changed from a trading country into one of conquerors and rulers over a large empire. The prosperity achieved from trade decreased and was replaced by conquest and domination. Rather than trade, Assyria acquired much of its needed supplies and wealth in the form of booty and tribute (Charpin, 1995, pp. 822-823). Trade as a basis of economic existence dwindled away, the Assyrian empire eventually collapsed, and “. . . Assyria disappeared like a bubble” (Leemans, 1977, p. 6).

CONCLUSION

We tend to think that business as it exists today is a recent creation. But history tells us that business evolved to its present state. Over 4,000 years ago the first recorded multinational enterprises appeared in Assyria. Characteristics of modern multinational enterprises that existed in the Assyrian businesses include hierarchical organization, foreign employees, common-stock ownership, value-adding activities in multiple regions, and market-seeking undertakings (Moore and Lewis, 1999, p. 269). Thus a grasp of the historical roots may change how the present form is understood and help us to analyze the here and now.

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