

The Perfumes of Seven Tamarisks

Studies in Honour of Wilfred G. E. Watson

Edited by
Gregorio del Olmo Lete,
Jordi Vidal and
Nicolas Wyatt

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mēqītu and *yapaqti* in the Amarna Letter EA 64

Juan-Pablo Vita

1. The sender of EA 64 is ‘Abdi-Ašarti.¹ The name of his kingdom is not mentioned in the letter. ‘Abdi-Ašarti requests the pharaoh’s protection by sending him a “magnate” (^{li}gal), and claims to have heard the message sent to him by the Egyptian king. The letter ends with four lines transcribed by Knudtzon as follows:²

- 20) a-nu-ma
21) 10 amêlati
22) \ mi-ki-tu
23) \ ia-pa-ak-ti

The marker “ \ ” by Knudtzon indicates that the two words of lines 22 and 23 are preceded by a “Glossenkeil” drawn with that particular bend, as can be noted in plate 1. Thus, the scribe of EA 64 seems to have marked the two terms *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-ak-ti* as glosses. The linguistic analysis and historical interpretation and assessment of these possible glosses have continued to be the subject of interest to scholars in the last few decades, as summarised next in sections §§2 and 3.

2. Böhl considered that the two gloss markers indicated that *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-ak-ti* were foreign terms, more specifically, non-Semitic words.³ A considerable step towards more secure positions was taken by the much more recent proposal made by Krahmalkov.⁴ This author analysed the term of line 23 as a verb form *yapaqti* of the Semitic root *ypq*, which could also be attested in Ugaritic with the meaning “to send away, to remove”. The term in line 22 was interpreted as a name *mekkītu*, “a morphological variant of Hebrew *makkā*, ‘attack; plague’”. Consequently, he translated EA 64:20–23 as follows: “Now then, the ten women (10 MÍ^{mes}) from the (scene of) the attack / plague (*mē-ki-tu*) have I removed (*ia-pa-aq-ti*)”.

Krahmalkov’s proposal promptly unleashed reactions. Rainey⁵ accepted Krahmalkov’s proposal regarding his interpretation of *ia-pa-aq-ti* = *yapaqti*, yet pointed

¹ I wish to thank Dr. J. Marzahn (Vorderasiatisches Museum) and the Trustees of the British Museum for their kind permission to publish photographs of tablets kept in their museums which are used to illustrate this article.

² Knudtzon 1907–1915, 354.

³ Böhl 1909, 86.

⁴ Krahmalkov 1971.

⁵ Rainey 1974.

out that the meaning of the root *ypq* should not be “to send away” but simply “to send”. On the other hand, Loretz and Mayer also understand that *ia-pa-aq-ti* belongs to a verb *yapāqu*, although in Ugaritic this verb would have the meaning “erhalten, erwerben”.⁶ As for the term in EA 64:22, it could be, according to these authors, a gloss on the earlier *mī.meš* “women” of line 21 which ought to be read *mi-ke-tu*, plural form *mikêtu* of the singular *mikîtum* formed on the basis of Akkadian *mikûm*.⁷ They conclude that “Im einzelnen dürfte kaum zu entscheiden sein, ob *mikûm* mit attraktiv, Mädchen mit verführerischen Reizen oder sexy girl zu übersetzen ist. Die Glosse in EA 64:22 zeigt, daß es sich bei *mikûm* um ein westsemitisches Wort handeln muß”.⁸ Sivan,⁹ based on Krahmalkov, understands that the basic meaning of the root *ypq* is “send, carry out”, and attributes the meaning “send away” to the verb form *ia-pa-aq-ti*.¹⁰

In a later work and based on a Phoenician passage, Krahmalkov confirmed his proposal to attribute to *ypq* in Phoenician, but also in Ugaritic and in the form *ia-pa-aq-ti* of EA 64:23, the meaning “to send back, to return”.¹¹ Finally, Dietrich and Loretz once more defended the existence in Ugaritic of a verb *ypq* “bekommen”, a meaning which, according to these authors, could also suit the verb form *ia-pa-aq-ti* of EA 64:23.¹²

3. The two terms *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-aq-ti* of EA 64:22 and 23 continue to arouse the interest of researchers. Moran translates lines EA 64:20–23 as “I herewith : *ia-pa-aq-ti* (send on) 10 women ...”,¹³ his translation “send on” is based on the proposals made by Krahmalkov and Rainey,¹⁴ whereas the term *mi-ki-tu* is commented on as explained later in §4. Liverani, in his turn, believes that “le due glosse *mi-ki-tu* e *ia-pa-aq-ti* sono oscure”,¹⁵ and translates EA 64:20–23 as “Ecco dieci donne | (glossa:) ‘attraenti’ (?) | (glossa:) ‘ti ho messo da parte’ (?)”.¹⁶ Izre’el translates *ia-pa-aq-ti* as “I issued”,¹⁷ whereas Rainey, in his reference grammar of Canaanite in the Amarna letters translates this northwest Semitic verb form on one occasion as “I have acquired”,¹⁸ and on another occasion as “I have issued”.¹⁹ More recently Tropper and Vita translate *ia-pa-aq-ti* as “ich gab heraus (?)”.²⁰

⁶ Loretz / Mayer 1974.

⁷ AHw, 652: “etwa ‘verführerischer Reiz (einer Frau)’”.

⁸ This proposal has been partially accepted by CAD M/2, 66: **mikû* adj.(?); (mng. Uncert.); EA*; Wsem. word”.

⁹ Sivan 1984, 291.

¹⁰ Sivan 1984, 138.

¹¹ Krahmalkov 1976, 78.

¹² Dietrich / Loretz 1987.

¹³ Moran 1992, 135.

¹⁴ Cf. above §2 and Moran 1992, 135 n. 2.

¹⁵ Liverani 1998, 87 n. 78.

¹⁶ Liverani 1998, 87.

¹⁷ Izre’el 1998, 425.

¹⁸ Rainey 1996a, 186: “Now I have acquired ten attractive women”. Translation which Liverani (1998, 87 n. 78) rightly calls “immotivato”.

¹⁹ Rainey 1996b, 286.

²⁰ Tropper / Vita 2010, 71.

4. As can be seen from the above, sub §§2 and 3, no author has so far questioned the view that *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-aq-ti*, terms preceded by gloss markers, are actually glosses: *mi-ki-tu* could be the gloss of previous *mí.meš* in line 21, the gloss marker preceding *ia-pa-aq-ti* could indicate that this verbal form is not Akkadian. The only exception appears in the following comment made by Moran on *mi-ki-tu*: “The meaning of *mi-KI-tu* remains obscure. If an adjective, then it should refer to some favourable quality of the women (Loretz and Mayer, *UF* 6 [1974], pp. 493f.), but the gloss marker in front of it may simply be an indication of a runover line (cf. the marker before EN at the end of line 16). Read ^{munus.meš} *mi-KI-tu?*”.²¹ We believe that Moran’s observations point in the right direction.

Moran, as we have seen, indicates the existence of another gloss marker at the end of line 16 in this letter EA 64, a marker which had already been briefly commented on by Knudtzon: “*bêli-ia* mit schrägem Keil davor am Schluß der folgende Zeile”.²² This gloss marker appears within the following context: (14) *ša-ni-tam a-wa-ti* (15) *ša-pa-ar lugal-ri : en-ia* (16) *a-na ia-ši* (EA 64:14–16). Plate 1 of the tablet shows that *en-ia* “my lord” is, indeed, physically at the end of line 16, just after *ia-ši*. However, we can see in the photograph: a) that *en-ia* is not written on the same straight line of writing as *ia-ši*, but going from the left bottom up towards the right, and b) this scribe’s clear tendency to go over the obverse and the right margin of the tablet so that the text continues at length on the reverse (lines 5, 7, 8 and 9 of the obverse). In the case of line 15, given that the phrase *ša-pa-ar lugal-ri en-ia* cannot fit in the available space of the reverse of the tablet, the scribe may have probably opted to write *en-ia* along the right border and part of the obverse of the tablet, as he had just done with *en-ia* at the end of line 8. Nonetheless, the presence of text on the obverse of the tablet level with line 15 prevented the scribe from taking this option; the result was that *en-ia* of line 15 was written at the end of line 16, preceded by a gloss marker whose only function was to mark the fact that *en-ia* was part of the previous line 15. This solution also shows that the scribe considered *lugal-ri en-ia* an inseparable syntagm.

A similar occurrence seems to apply to lines 20–23, where the supposed glosses *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-aq-ti* appear: part of the available space for writing in this final part of the reverse of the tablet had previously been covered by lines 3–8 from the obverse. This affects first the writing of *mi-ki-tu*, as already pointed out by Knudtzon: “Obwohl dieses *tu* [of *mi-ki-tu*] viel höher hinauf steht als *mi-ki*, so kann doch mit ziemlicher Sicherheit davon gesagt werden, erstens daß es keine besondere Zeile bildet (so BB), zweitens daß es zu den genannten Zeichen *mi-ki* gehört; hinter diesem *ki* konnte nämlich nicht geradeaus geschrieben werden, da *ia* von Z. 5 im Wege stand”.²³ Hence, it is highly likely that the two gloss markers preceding *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-aq-ti* were merely intended to show that both terms were part of the phrase starting with 10 *mí.meš* on line 21, that is, to mark the fact that lines 22 and 23 are, in fact, “runover lines” (Moran’s expression, see above).²⁴ The full sentence, in principle, should simply be understood as *a-nu-ma* 10 *mí.meš mi-ki-tu ia-pa-aq-ti*.

²¹ Moran 1992, 135–136 n. 2

²² Knudtzon 1907–1915, 355.

²³ Knudtzon 1907–1915, 355.

²⁴ However, the sign in front of *mí.meš* in line 21, unlike the gloss markers at the beginning of lines 22 and 23, is in all certainty the number “10”.

5. Also, how could we justify the presence of two separating lines between text lines 21 and 22 on the one hand, and 22 and 23 on the other? These separating lines do not graphically split different topics dealt with in the message of the letter, as is the case, conversely, of the separating line on the lower border of the tablet between text lines 13 and 14 (plate 2): it is a line which separates the first topic of the letter (lines 8–13) from the second (lines 14–19), the latter also introduced by the adverb *šanītam*. It is the only case where letter EA 64 uses this type of line. On the other hand, it is also clear that the two separating lines at the end of the text do not have the function either of separating or acting as the support for each of the text lines as is the case, for example, of the letter from Shechem EA 252 (plate 3). Nor is it the type of line which is at times used to act as a guide for the proper horizontal writing of a line, as seems to be the purpose of the lines which appear in text line 2 of the tablet EA 64 itself (plate 4). The purpose of those two final separating lines in EA 64 could simply be to try to arrange a part of the letter which is epigraphically complicated. The final separating line after text line 23 could serve the purpose of marking the end of the letter.

6. The Amarna corpus preserves three other letters written by the same scribe as that of EA 64: letters EA 63, 65 and 335. Indeed, the palaeographic unity of EA 63–65 was already stated by Knudtzon.²⁵ Schroeder, in his turn, established the palaeographic identity of EA 335 and EA 65 (and, by extension, EA 63 and 64).²⁶ The scribe shows his own epigraphic characteristics, such as, for instance the clear tendency to go over the right margin of the tablet and continue on the reverse (the case of tablet EA 65 is particularly remarkable), or the writing of the sign {na} with two final vertical wedges before terms such as *gir* or *ia-ši*.²⁷ In these three letters EA 63, 65 and 335, only once does the scribe again use a gloss marker: before the first word of line 5 of EA 65, *ma-aq-ta-ti*, a Canaanised form²⁸ of the verb *maqātu* “to

²⁵ Knudtzon 1907–1915, 1129: “Demgemäss sind die 3 Briefe kaum voneinander zu trennen”.

²⁶ Schroeder 1915, 293–294. The historical confirmation that EA 335 belongs to this dossier is due to Na’aman 1979, 676–684. See also Moran (1992, 135 n. 1 on EA 63). Moran (1992, 136 n. 1) comments about the sender of EA 65: “Whatever the explanation of the writing [of NP in EA 65:3], the sender of the letter must be the ‘Abdi-Aštarti of EA 63–64”. Regarding the reading of the anthroponym in EA 65:3, see also Goren / Finkelstein / Na’aman 2004, 285.

²⁷ The petrographic analysis of the tablets seems to indicate that EA 63 and 65 were very probably written in Gath (Goren / Finkelstein / Na’aman 2004, 283–284 and 285). EA 64, on the other hand, “was sent from a location in the eastern flank of the Gath territory ... the town of Qiltu (Keila) seems to be the most likely candidate” (Goren / Finkelstein / Na’aman 2004, 285). On these grounds, Goren, Finkelstein and Na’aman (2004, 285) propose, as an alternative hypothesis that “the author of EA 64 can be disassociated from the author of EA 63, 65 and 335”, and in this case the former must have ruled a city-state in the eastern Shephelah. This, however, is a hypothesis that in our opinion must be ruled out in the light of the palaeographic results: all four letters EA 63–65 and 335 were clearly written by the same scribe and it is therefore much more probable that ‘Abdi-Aštarti, the sender of EA 64, should be identified as the sender of the other letters in this group. Consequently, the first of the hypotheses put forward by Goren, Finkelstein and Na’aman (2004, 285) is more plausible: ‘Abdi-Aštarti could have sent letter EA 64 from Qiltu (Keila), which was part of his kingdom.

²⁸ Cf. Rainey 1996b, 349–350.

fall”; the full context is: 4) *a-na gir.meš en-ia 7 ù 7 mi-la* 5) : *ma-aq-ta-ti* “I fall at the feet of my lord 7 times and 7 times, *here and now*”.²⁹

The presence of this “Glossenkeil” in EA 65:5 is quite striking for several reasons: a) the scribe uses the same verb form *ma-aq-ta-ti* in EA 63:6 (*ma-aq-ta-ti*) and EA 64:5 (*ma-aq-ti-ti*), but without using a preceding gloss marker; b) as in EA 65:5, in EA 64:5 the form *ma-aq-ta/i-ti* is also at the beginning of the line, whereas in EA 64 the scribe did not feel the need to mark the verbal form with a gloss marker; c) we can discard the possibility that the gloss marker in EA 65:5 could indicate that *ma-aq-ta-ti* acts as the gloss of the term *mi-la* which appears at the end of previous line 4. *mi-la* is a term whose exact meaning is uncertain,³⁰ but it can be noticed that both in EA 65:4 as in EA 64:6 it directly follows number “7”, as also happens in letters EA 224, 282–284 and 330; consequently, the meaning “times” for the term seems plausible,³¹ quite far, therefore, from the meaning of *maqātu*; d) the scribe makes line 4 of EA 65, *a-na gir.meš en-ia 7 ù 7 mi-la*, end on the reverse of the tablet (plate 5). It can be seen that after *mi-la* there was still plenty of space left in the tablet to add *ma-aq-ta-ti* next. Yet, for unknown reasons and unlike what he did next with lines 6–8, which take up practically all the available space in the reverse, the scribe chose to add *ma-aq-ta-ti* on the obverse, at the beginning of the following line. On this occasion, the scribe perhaps felt the specific need to mark, by means of a “Glossenkeil”, the fact that *ma-aq-ta-ti* on line 5 was very closely linked to the sentence which ended in previous line 4.

In conclusion, we may dismiss the possibility that the “Glossenkeil” of EA 65:5 indicates that *ma-aq-ta-ti* is a gloss of a preceding term, in the same way as we can also discard the idea that *mi-ki-tu* and *ia-pa-aq-ti* of EA 64 are glosses. At least in the preserved letters, the scribe of EA 64 and 65 seems to have used the “Glossenkeil” with the sole purpose of marking the terms which ought to be understood closely linked to the words and sentence of the previous line.

7. As we have pointed out (§4), the analysis of lines 20–23 of EA 64 must consequently be based on the transcription *a-nu-ma 10 mí.meš mi-ki-tu ia-pa-aq-ti*. The syntax of this sentence, with the verb at the end, differs from the usual syntactic

²⁹ Moran 1992, 136. The situation is uncertain in the case of EA 335:8. Knudtzon (1907–1915, 948 n. g) describes the sign preceding the verb form *mi-hi-ša* “they have been killed / slain” of line 8 (it is quite probably a dual form, cf. Rainey 1996b, 306) as follows: “Der schräge Keil, der hier steht, sieht nicht aus wie ein solcher, der Glossen einleitet (so W.)”, and transcribes the line as *ki-ma i[a-nu šáb]ē u mi-hi-ša*. Later authors, however, consider that this sign actually is a gloss marker. Some understand that on the broken part of the line another verb form of similar meaning to *mahāšu* must be restored (Moran 1992, 358: “h[ave been slai]n”; Liverani 1998, 87: “sono stati colpiti (glossa:) ‘sono stati colpiti’”). Others, on the other hand, restored the plural noun *gaz.meš* (Na’aman 1979, 677: G[AZ^{7m}]es : *mi-hi-ša*; *ibid.* p. 678: “Our restoration G[AZ^{7m}]es : *mi-hi-ša* is based on the analogy to EA 288:41,45 GAZ *de₄-ka* and EA 245:14 *da-ku-šu* : *ma-ah-šu-ú*”; Izre’el 1998, 425: g[az.me]š : *mi-hi-ša*). The shape of the possible gloss marker is, indeed, different from the gloss markers in EA 64:22 and 23 (plate 6; the photograph available to us for the gloss marker of EA 65:5 is not quite sharp enough to allow for comparison). A new collation of line EA 335:8 is needed.

³⁰ Regarding the possible meaning of the term *mi-la*, which the scribe also uses in EA 64:6, see Moran’s (1992, 135 n. 1 on EA 64) comment. Liverani (1998, 86 and 87) translates “ancora”, CAD M/2, 66: “times”, classifying the term as a “WSem. word”. For a possible etymology see also AHw, 652.

³¹ Cf. CAD M/2, 66: “times”.

order verb-subject-object (VSO) used in Canaanite-Akkadian,³² which is nonetheless used in the three sentences of lines 8–13 of the letter.³³ It must be noted, however, that from line 14 onwards there is a change in the syntactic order shown in the previous lines and the verbs of the main sentences are placed at the end (lines 17 and 19: *iš-te-mu* “I am heeding / I heed”) with the clear purpose of giving emphasis to the two *a-wa-ti* “words / orders” of lines 14 and 18. Placing *yapaqti* at the end of his sentence unquestionably has the purpose of stressing *mí.meš mi-ki-tu*.

There is now some consensus regarding the root *ypq* of the verb form *yapaqti*, although the meaning attributed to it continues to range between “to send away”, “to acquire”, “to send back”, etc. (cf. §§2 and 3);³⁴ a meaning in the sense of “to send” may possibly be the most appropriate for the context of the message.³⁵ The root *ypq* has also been acknowledged in Ugaritic (cf. §2), so that it is thus only attested to in Canaanite-Akkadian and in Ugaritic.³⁶ Nonetheless, the precise question of what Ugaritic verb forms are likely to derive from the root *ypq* or else from the root *pwq*, of similar meaning, must be the subject of further and more specific investigation.³⁷

The meaning of *mi-ki-tu* seems to pose more difficulties. Na’aman, for instance, talked about “10 maids of an unknown description”,³⁸ whereas Moran pointed out that its “meaning remains obscure” and did not translate it.³⁹ Other scholars chose to consider it an adjective which favourably qualifies the *mí.meš* “women” in front of it, in the sense of “donne attraenti(?)”,⁴⁰ “beautiful? / good-looking? women”,⁴¹ “attractive women”.⁴² These authors do not usually explain the ground for these translations;⁴³ however, the reason underlying this in most cases might be Loretz and Mayer’s⁴⁴ idea of understanding *mi-ke-tu* as the plural form *mikêtu* from Akkadian *mikûm*,⁴⁵ with the general meaning of “attraktiv, Mädchen mit verführerischen Reizen, sexy girl” (cf. §2). Only Moran, as we have seen above (§4), questioned this possibility, pointing out that “the gloss marker in front of it may simply be an indication of a runover line” and suggesting a possible reading ^{munus.meš}*mi-KI-tu*.⁴⁶ Even though the option cannot be dismissed, it is questionable whether the scribe, despite the lack of space in this part of the tablet, would have actually caused the determinatives of *mi-ki-tu* to be left at the end of the previous line. We believe that

³² Izre’el 2005, 63; Tropper / Vita 2010, 121.

³³ Lines 1–7, which constitute the introduction of the message, try to follow the more common syntactic order in Akkadian, as is usually the case in the Amarna Canaanite letters (Izre’el 2005, 63).

³⁴ See also Hoftijzer / Jongeling 1995, 464–465: “to find, to acquire”, Na’aman 1981, 176 (= Na’aman 2005, 220): “sent”, Na’aman 2002, 79: “acquired?”.

³⁵ This is the meaning accepted, for example, by Moran 1992, 135 and Izre’el 2003, 82.

³⁶ In this sense, see also more recently Halayqa 2008, 364.

³⁷ See del Olmo / Sanmartín 2003, 677 and 974, Tropper 2000, 645, Tropper 2008, 97, Halayqa 2008, 262 and 364, Izre’el 2003, 83.

³⁸ Na’aman 1981, 176 = 2005, 220.

³⁹ Moran 1992, 135 n. 2.

⁴⁰ Liverani 1998, 87.

⁴¹ Na’aman 2002, 79.

⁴² Rainey 1996a, 186.

⁴³ Except Na’aman 2002, 79 n. 7: “The translation ‘beautiful / attractive’ for *mik/qîtu* is *ad sensum*”.

⁴⁴ Loretz / Mayer 1974.

⁴⁵ AHW 652: “etwa ‘verführerischer Reiz (einer Frau)’”.

⁴⁶ Moran 1992, 135–136 n. 2.

two more conceivable possibilities exist, both of them equally plausible. We can either consider (as various authors have, see above) that *mi-ki-tu* is an adjective which qualifies either the previous *mí.meš*, or else accept Izre'el's proposal⁴⁷ of considering that the verb *yapaqti* has two direct objects, *mí.meš* and *mi-KI-tu*.⁴⁸ In our opinion, this second option is correct. We believe that Izre'el⁴⁹ found the solution to the problem by translating EA 64:20–23 as “I send herewith 10 women (and) eye paint”, where “eye paint” = *mé-qi-tu*.⁵⁰ The term in EA 64:22 must be understood, indeed, as the noun *mēqītu* “eye paint”, attested to in Boghazköy but also in the Amarnian inventory of Egyptian gifts EA 14.⁵¹ From a syntactic point of view, the incorrect use of the nominative *mēqītu* for a noun acting as a direct object is, in principle, uncertain. But, as Rainey pointed out,⁵² the scribe of EA 64 makes other mistakes in the use of cases, using for instance the genitive where the nominative would be expected.⁵³

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⁴⁷ Izre'el 2003, 82–83.

⁴⁸ Regarding how *yapaqti* illustrates “The normal WS use of *qatal* as transitive”, see Rainey 1996b, 296.

⁴⁹ Izre'el 2003, 82–83.

⁵⁰ And pointing out, implicitly that *mé-qi-tu* is not a gloss of *mí.meš*.

⁵¹ CAD M/2, 20. See EA 14:I:71, II:3.7, and also Moran 1992, 35 n. 18 and 24.

⁵² Rainey 1996a, 163.

⁵³ Although, at least in this last case, Rainey does give this scribe the benefit of the doubt, see comment in Rainey 1996a, 163.

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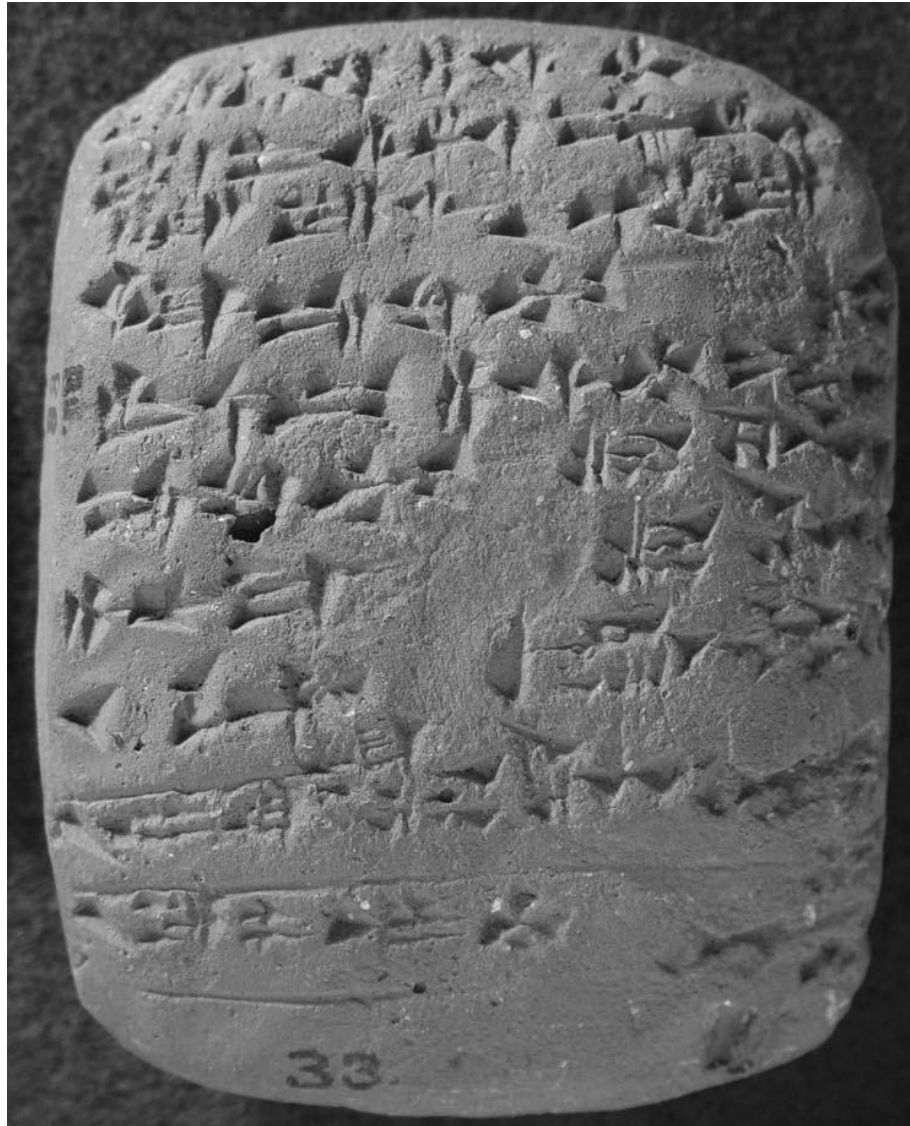


Plate 1. EA 64 reverse



Plate 2. EA 64 lower edge



Plate 3. EA 252 lines 1-5



Plate 4. EA 64 line 2



Plate 5. EA 65 end of line 4



Plate 6. EA 335 part of line 8