Finding Aid for the Cumberland Clark Cuneiform Tablet collection, Old Babylonian Period (ca. 2000-1600 BCE)

Processed by Sara Brumfield in the Center for Primary Research and Training (CFPRT), with assistance from Kelley Wolfe Bachil, 2008; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Cumberland Clark Cuneiform Tablet collection

Date (inclusive): Old Babylonian Period (ca. 2000-1600 BCE)

Collection number: 1826

Creator: Anonymous.

Extent: 4 oversize boxes.

Abstract: Twenty-five cuneiform tablets from the ancient Mesopotamian school environment called eduba (literally, "house of tablets") and includes examples ranging from simple sign exercises to advanced Sumerian literary exercises. The majority of the texts come from the Old Babylonian period, which began after the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2000 BCE) and continued until the Hittites conquered Babylon in 1595 BCE.

Language: Finding aid is written in English.

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles, Library Special Collections.

Los Angeles, California 90095-1575

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

Restrictions on Access

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Provenance/Source of Acquisition


Processing Note

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Cumberland Clark Cuneiform Tablet collection (Collection 1826). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

UCLA Catalog Record ID: 6684137

Biography

The collection of 25 cuneiform tablets were donated in 2007 by an anonymous donor who wished to name the collection after Cumberland Clark.

While the exact provenience of this collection is unknown, it has been established that the corpus of texts came from an ancient Mesopotamian school environment called an eduba (literally, "house of tablets"). It was at the eduba that scribes received their training in the scribal arts. A student would train from early childhood to adulthood to become a dubsar (literally, "tablet writer"). Their curriculum, as represented in this collection, was comprised of learning sign formations, copying lexical lists, learning mathematics, and popular epics of the Mesopotamian culture.

The majority of the texts come from the Old Babylonian period, which began after the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2000 BCE) and continued until the Hittites conquered Babylon in 1595 BCE. Most of the Old Babylonian period was spent in political fragmentation, which created smaller independent scribal traditions at different cities. Only under the reign of King Hammurabi (c. 1795-1750 BCE) was there a degree of centralization. This political environment had a direct impact on the scribal curriculum as a uniform course of instruction would indicate a state-run school, whereas a variegated curriculum would seem to refer to privately run schools.

It is within this context that the Cumberland Clark Cuneiform Tablet Collection exists. The content of the texts suggests significant editing of previously standardized lexical lists and literary passages. However, the general pattern and progression of instruction remain constant as the collection exhibits examples from the simplest sign exercises to advanced Sumerian literary exercises.

Scope and Content
Twenty-five cuneiform tablets from the ancient Mesopotamian school environment called *eduba* (literally, "house of tablets") and includes examples ranging from simple sign exercises to advanced Sumerian literary exercises. The majority of the texts come from the Old Babylonian period, which began after the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2000 BCE) and continued until the Hittites conquered Babylon in 1595 BCE.

**Organization and Arrangement**

Tablets are described at the item level.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Genres and Forms of Material**

Cuneiform tablets.

**Related Material**

Edward A. Dickson Cuneiform Tablet collection (Collection 1813). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

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Box 1  
Item no. 1  **School text, unknown content - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 6.3x6.4x2.2cm, square tablet with rounded edges, complete

Scope and Content Note

Obverse only inscribed. The preserved portions of the text mention silver. The last line of the obverse also speaks of a man named Lu-tar raising his hand in violence. Without the left portion of the tablet preserved a better understanding and translation is not possible.

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Box 1  
Item no. 2  **School text, lexical exercise of personal names - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 6.5x7.2x2.8cm, square tablet, fragment

Scope and Content Note

A small fragment of a larger lexical exercise of listing personal names inscribed on obverse. Three of the four identified names from this tablet correspond to UMBS (Univ. of Penn. The Museum. Publications of the Babylonian Section), Vol. XI, Nos. 702, 704, 776.

This tablet plays on the multiple meanings of one cuneiform sing. The first three names use the same sign "pu2" but draw on a variety of its meanings: orchard, well, pit. This is a common practice in school texts because it teaches students the different ways to use each sign in context.

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Box 1  
Item no. 3  **School text, sign exercise - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 14.8x11.8x3.9cm, large rectangular tablet, complete w/ two holes on the reverse

Scope and Content Note

A two-column exercise where the teacher has written a simple sign on the left-hand side and the student practices replicating the sign on the right side of the tablet. The signs are large and crude, typical of a young scribe just beginning instruction.

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Box 1  
Item no. 4  **School text, literary exercise of "Inanna and Mt. Ebih" - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 11.6x13.2x2.8cm, square tablet, complete w/ damage to the right edge

Scope and Content Note

On this tablet are lines 55-73 of the Sumerian epic "Inanna and Mt. Ebih".
| Box 2 | Item no. 1  **School text, lexical exercise of deity names - Old Babylonian**  
|       | Physical Description: 11.5x6.1x3.5cm, rectangular tablet, complete, obverse has heavy surface damage, reverse is effaced  
|       | **Scope and Content Note**  
|       | Obverse only inscribed. This text is a list of deity names, a common lexical exercise in Old Babylonian school curricula. The severe surface damage makes translation impossible. |
| Box 2 | Item no. 2  **School text, lexical exercise of nouns and gold jewelry - Old Babylonian**  
|       | Physical Description: 8.0x8.3x2.8cm, lentil, complete w/ fracture lines  
|       | **Scope and Content Note**  
|       | The obverse is five line list of Sumerian nouns. The reverse is a three line excerpt naming various items of gold jewelry. This text follows the Old Babylonian Nippur lexical list: Ura 2 (lines 599, 633) and Ura 3. |
| Box 2 | Item no. 3  **School text, unknown content - Old Babylonian**  
|       | Physical Description: 9.5x10.1x2.8cm, lentil, complete w/ lower edge broken off  
|       | **Scope and Content Note**  
|       | This practice lentil is a three-line teacher-student copying exercise with significant damage. The full content of the text is not recoverable due to the breaks in the tablet. |
| Box 2 | Item no. 4  **Administrative text, contract with witnesses - Old Babylonian**  
|       | Physical Description: 11.0x6.3x2.6cm, rectangular tablet, complete w/ bottom edge broken, obverse has heavy surface damage  
|       | **Scope and Content Note**  
|       | A significant portion of this tablet is effaced. Only fragments of information are recoverable. The last line of this text gives the year name as "the year after Elam was destroyed", which is known to be the 30th year of Hammurabi's reign in Babylon. This dates to approximately 1762 BCE. The list of witnesses at the end of the tablet indicate that this was a contract, however the exact terms and involved parties of this contract remain unknown. |
| Box 2 | Item no. 5  **School text, sign and lexical exercises - Old Babylonian**  
|       | Physical Description: 7.7x7.9x2.5cm, lentil, complete w/ slight damage to the edges  
|       | **Scope and Content Note**  
|       | The reverse contains rudimentary sign exercise done by a young student just beginning instruction. The sign list involves economic-oriented terms, such as basic commodities a professional scribe would be expected to keep track of in business accounts and write receipts for. The obverse contains a lexical list, which was probably not done by the same student given the increased difficulty of the text on the reverse. However, it still appears to be centered on economic goods. Most likely this exercise was for practicing administrative vocabulary. |
| Box 2 | Item no. 6  **School text, grammatical exercise - Old Babylonian**  
|       | Physical Description: 8.1x7.7x2.8cm, lentil, fragment w/ right edge broken off  
|       | **Scope and Content Note**  
|       | A three-line school exercise written on a lentil-shaped tablet. The obverse is the teacher's example of three simple sentences. The reverse contains the students copy of the teacher's exercise. The only preserved information is the direct object of the sentence. The verbs are unknown. The direct object could be three different words, and the right reading could only be determined by the verb. Therefore, the exact translation is unknown. |
Box 2
Item no. 7 **School text, lexical exercise of abstract nouns - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 8.0x8.1x2.4cm, lentil, complete w/ lower left edge broken

Scope and Content Note
A teacher-student three-line copy exercise listing abstract nouns written by the teacher on the obverse which were then copied by the student on the reverse of the tablet plus a short colophon. Based on OB Izi, II, 234, 240. The author of this school exercise is identified as "Awilutum".

Box 2
Item no. 8 **School text, lexical exercise of the deity Nanna - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 6.6x4.2x2.1cm, small oval tablet, fragment

Scope and Content Note
The tablet is a list of deity names. Only the first one or two signs are identifiable making a translation impossible.

Box 2
Item no. 9 **School text, mathematical exercise - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 7.5x7.3x2.2cm, lentil, complete w/ heavy surface damage

Scope and Content Note
This lentil is a mathematical exercise written by a student. Due to the heavy damage the exact nature of the math problem is unknown. The text appears to be an exercise in adding amounts of grain. This task was a common scribal assignment since scribes knew mathematics as well as writing.

Box 3
Item no. 1 **School text, lexical exercise of boat vocabulary - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 5.4x4.2x1.8cm, rectangular tablet, fragment

Scope and Content Note
A five-line list of types of ships and ship related vocabulary modeled after OB Nippur Ura 1, 278-288. The reverse is effaced where only the determinative for wood or wooden objects is detectable.

Box 3
Item no. 2 **School text, lexical exercise of wooden objects - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 4.5x5.0x2.2cm, square, fragment, heavily effaced

Scope and Content Note
This small tablet contains only four readable signs and appears to be a lexical list of wood or wooden objects as denoted by its initial determinative. The entire reverse and most of the obverse are damaged.

Box 3
Item no. 3 **Administrative text, unknown content - Old Babylonian**

Physical Description: 9.0x5.3x3.3cm, rectangular tablet, complete w/ indentations on the right edge

Scope and Content Note
The damage to the surface of this text leaves only small fragments of readable text. The content of this tablet is administrative in nature but the only understandable commodity is silver. Information regarding the involved parties and goods exchanged is lost.

Box 3
Item no. 4 **Cuneiform tablet, effaced - Old Babylonian?**

Physical Description: 7.7x5.2x2.8cm rectangular tablet, complete, obverse complete effaced, reverse surface worn

Scope and Content Note
This tablet is completed effaced on the obverse and mostly effaced on the reverse. Only a few non-sequitor signs are discernible on the reverse. There is no recoverable information from this tablet.
Item no. 5 **Administrative text, farm contract in Akkadian - Old Babylonian**
- Physical Description: 8.1x4.6x2.7cm, rectangular tablet, complete w/ broken edges on upper-left and lower-right edges
- Scope and Content Note
  Most of this text is damaged leaving only the reverse moderately intact. This tablet is written in Akkadian and appears to be an administrative contract recording the exchange of farm items.

Item no. 6 **Unknown - Old Babylonian**
- Physical Description: 10.0x6.3x2.7cm, rectangular table, complete w/ damage to left edge
- Scope and Content Note
  Only the reverse is inscribed, the obverse is effaced. The damage to the reverse is significant preventing a complete transliteration or translation. The last six lines appear to be a list of types of trees. The purpose of this text is not understood.

Item no. 7 **Administrative text, grain contract - Old Babylonian**
- Physical Description: 8.9x4.8x2.7cm, rectangular tablet, complete w/ lower section of obverse effaced
- Scope and Content Note
  This tablet is an administrative text most likely from Nippur. The month name given on the tenth line of the obverse is only attested in Nippur. The content of the text discusses the payment and receipt of grain with a list of three witness at the end of the text. The bottom of the reverse is damaged so no year name is given.

Item no. 8 **School text, drawing of a bovine - Old Babylonian**
- Physical Description: 7.6x8.4x2.9cm, lentil, fragment in 2 pieces
- Scope and Content Note
  Obverse only inscribed. Shows a hand drawing of a zebu (with a hump on the back) cattle most likely a domesticated animal. These bovine figures were seen as symbols of controlled strength in contrast to wild cattle, which were perceived as reckless. Drawings in general are a rare find in cuneiform texts, but they were essential to training the steady and refined hand of a professional scribe.

Item no. 9 **Unknown [illegible] - Early Old Babylonian**
- Physical Description: 10.5x6.9x2.9cm, rectangular tablet, join of 2 fragments
- Scope and Content Note
  This four column text is too fragmentary to recreate a translation. This tablet is a join from the upper and lower half of the tablet. This leaves a small gap in the middle of the text.

Item no. 1 **School text, lexical exercise of personal names on a prism - Old Babylonian**
- Physical Description: 10.2x7.9x4.6cm, prism, fragment
- Scope and Content Note
  This 4-column prism is a student copy of an elementary lexical exercise in writing personal names. The entire exercise is organized thematically where each name begins with the same sign and names of similar meaning or using the same sign are grouped together. The prism is heavily damaged and intact personal names are only recoverable from the second and third columns.
Box 4  
Item no. 2  School text, lexical exercise of personal names on a prism - Old Babylonian

Physical Description: 11.0x6.9x7.5cm, prism, fragment
Scope and Content Note
This 6-column prism is a student copy of an elementary lexical exercise in writing personal names. The entire exercise is organized thematically where each name begins with the same sign and names of similar meaning or using the same sign are grouped together.

Box 4  
Item no. 3  School text, lexical exercise of personal names on a prism - Old Babylonian

Physical Description: 11.7x8.2x7.0cm, prism, fragment
Scope and Content Note
This 5-column prism is a student copy of an elementary lexical exercise in writing personal names. The entire exercise is organized thematically where each name begins with the same sign and names of similar meaning or using the same sign are grouped together. The prism is heavily damaged so only a few names are recoverable from the text.