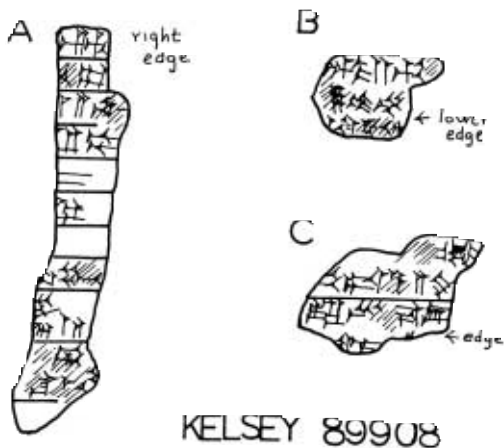


Tablet Fragments from Sepphoris – From July through September 1931 an expedition from the University of Michigan under the direction of Leroy Waterman excavated at the site of Sepphoris (Zippori near Nazareth in present-day Israel).¹ Among the material from the dig preserved in the University's Kelsey Museum of Archaeology are three tiny and very worn fragments of cuneiform tablets (Kelsey Museum 89908), which I reconstructed from about a dozen smaller pieces. These crumbs had been characterized as «pottery fragments» until recognized as epigraphic by Robin Meador-Woodruff, Curator the Kelsey's Collection of Photographs in 1996. Unfortunately no information is available concerning the locus or archaeological context of this chance find.

Although not much can be drawn from the text of any of these tiny pieces, I present them here² as an addition to the growing body of cuneiform material from the western periphery.³ Note that while little documentation is available for the pre-Hellenistic history of Sepphoris,⁴ the Michigan expedition also found a quadrilingual inscription ([Old Persian], Elamite, Babylonian, and [Egyptian]) of a Xerxes on the site.⁵



Fragment A (59 × 09 × 04 mm.). Line 9': [... lu]gal[?]. Since the use of line dividers is unusual in late archival texts, perhaps this piece is Middle Babylonian. No signs can be read with certainty.

Fragment B (09 × 17 × 08 mm.). Neo-Babylonian archival text, of which little beyond the date has survived: [URU^x IT^x u₄]-8-kam mu-[N-kam PN] / [lugal tin-ti]r^{?ki} x x [...].

Fragment C (12 × 28 × 05 mm.). Old Babylonian[?] archival tablet: m[u-ú]s-sa [...] seems to begin the date, although the preceding [...]-RA is puzzling, since no standard month name ends in this sign.

1. No final report was ever published. See only L. Waterman et al., *Preliminary Report of the University of Michigan Excavations at Sepphoris/Diocaesarea, Palestine* in 1931. (Ann Arbor, 1937).
2. Thanks are due to Professor Elaine Gazda, Director of the Kelsey Museum, for permission to publish this material, and to Paul-Alain Beaulieu, who shared with me his expertise on things Neo-Babylonian. I must stress, however, that Beaulieu saw only my copies and not the original pieces.
3. For the most recent additions, see J. Huehnergard, « A Byblos Letter, Probably from Kāmid el-Lōz, » *ZA* 86 (1996): 97-113; W. Horowitz, « An Inscribed Clay Cylinder from Amarna Age Beth Shean, » *IEJ* 46 (1996): 208-18; and Horowitz' summary discussion of two Old Babylonian pieces and two Late Babylonian letters from Hazor on pp. 268-69 of the same journal. Finally, on the ANEList of June 14, 1997, E. Greenstein called attention to a story in *Ha₄aretz* of May 30, 1997, reporting the discovery of a Neo-Assyrian loan tablet at Tel Hadir, northeast of Lod.
4. J. F. Strange, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. v, 1090-91.
5. Fragment of a stone vase (Kelsey Museum 90109), published by M. W. Stolper, *AJO* 27 (1980): 176, and included in R. M. Nagy et al., eds., *Sepphoris in Galilee. Crosscurrents of Culture* (Winona Lake, 1996), pp. 186-87.
6. Note the shape of DU in line 1'.

Gary Beckman (24-06-97)