



Collecting art, artifacts, and antiquities — including cuneiform tablets —, is a passion for me with the hope of preserving and understanding the cultural heritage of the Levant and its Mesopotamian neighbor. The arts have the power to heal us, bring us together, and help us bridge cultural divides. A friend once pointed out to me the difference between hoarding and collecting, so I trust that by opening my collection to the public and to the scholarly community, particularly in this volatile and unstable region, will encourage others to share their collections while working to preserve and to protect our common cultural heritage.

The historian Kamal Salibi discoursing on divided societies and the distinctions between myths and facts when recording and attempting to understand history, explains that, “historical self-deception is a luxury which only societies confident of their unity and solidarity can afford,” while divided societies, in order “to gain solidarity that is needed to maintain viability,” need to first have the courage to know the truth.

Cuneiform tablets are important archival records of our ancient past. They recount epic tales, economic systems, different ethnic groups and even maps of ancient cities. Moreover, they remind and further inform us of the rich civilizations that flourished in the Middle East. One can only hope that this small step to publish the archives in my collection will contribute to the preservation of some of their antiquities and artifacts while helping to provide a more accurate record of our histories and cultures.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those scholars who have contributed to this publication. My deepest gratitude goes to professors Bertand Lafont (CNRS Nanterre, France) and David I. Owen (Cornell University, USA) who initiated this important publication project and who brought it to its successful completion. Their valuable contributions, a wonderful reflection of international collaboration and cooperation, transcends this publication, as the challenges posed by globalization, regional entanglements, nationalism, identity and cultural clashes, become more urgent than ever. The Lebanese and their ancestors including the Phoenicians have always reflected an international orientation and openness. This collector, this publication, and these contributors are all in keeping with this tradition.

I recall fondly the many occasions shared with Bertrand, David and his wife Susan, when they visited Lebanon often to study and record my cuneiform collection. I will always admire their commitment, enthusiasm, and vision. Without them, not only would this publication not have been possible, but I would not have been able to understand fully the importance of the very tablets I have been collecting carefully for these many years.

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