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ANATOLIA AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Studies in Honor of Tahsin Özgüç

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DRAWINGS, GRAFFITI AND SQUIGGLES ON THE HITTITE TABLETS — ART IN SCRIBAL CIRCLES *—

AHMET ÜNAL

From the Hittite archives at Ғattuša - Boğazköy we know that the Hittite scribes underwent an extensive education. Whether this education took place in a school or during apprenticeship in a scribal guild is a moot point today. As a result of this extraordinary strong education the scribes were versatile and prolific in various fields. First of all as scribes they were able to use at least three languages, namely Hittite, Akkadian and Sumerian. Some scribes, especially the chief scribes, might also have studied Hurrian, Luwian, Hattic, Palaic and Hieroglyphic Luwian — in all the famous eight languages of the Hittite capital. This implies a truly multilingual capacity at Ғattuša.

The capability of the scribes went even beyond this. We can illustrate this by looking at an individual: Mitannamuwa was the chief scribe under three kings: Muwatalli, Urḫi-Tešub and Ғattušili III (1305-1260). Beside being a productive scribe he was a good doctor who healed Ғattušili. He was able to take over the administration of Ғattuša and adjacent regions, as Ғattušili moved to the North to defend the Empire's northern borders against the intruding Kaškaeans and Muwatalli was for unknown reasons residing at his newly established capital of Tarḫuntašša somewhere in the south. Mitannamuwa served also as Ғattušili's political advisor during the civil war between Ғattušili and Urḫi-Tešub. In the entire history of the Hittite Empire we do not know another man who was conversant with so many different fields of knowledge.

In this study we will discuss a less known aspect of the Hittite scribes, namely their artistic capability.

On at least four cuneiform tablets the Hittite scribes used the surplus space at the end of the tablets as a drawing area. These drawings indicate that some of the scribes were first-class artists.

Before we go further we would like to stress our conviction that these drawings could have only been incised by the scribes themselves. An analysis of the finger prints on the tablets would help to understand whether some body else touched the tablets or not.

The drawings, incised on the free spaces of the tablets while they were still wet, are certainly not an innovation of the Hittite scribes. We already encounter the practice of drawing on clay plaques from the chalcolithic levels at Hacilar (Pl. 140, 1. Mellaart, 1970, I 164; II fig. 172). Mellaart (l. c.) assumes that these dark burnished plaques with incised patterns can represent the plan of a Hacilar VI house with doors, oven and partitions. They can be used as wall decorations or something similar. Mesopotamian examples date later than Hittite ones, namely from the Neo-Babylonian period (Güterbock 1957:70 n. 52).

What makes the Hittite drawings interesting is not the idea of drawing on clay tablets, but the elaborate style with which they were able to render human and animal figures as well as some abstract signs in an exact, secure and full fledged style.

* I read a slightly different version of this paper at the 35th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Philadelphia, July 1988.

Representational line drawings were not limited to clay tablets. An Empire Period rock monument from Kızıldağ uses incised lines to depict the king Hartapus sitting on a throne in the monument (Alp. 1974: 17ff. esp. 22f. Abb. 7). There are, however, no drawings among the published material of the relief vases from Boğazköy and elsewhere (Cf. Boehmer. 1983 *passim*).

The practice of drawing probably began as an attempt by the scribes to fill lavishly and generously the extra spaces on the tablets as a means of decoration. In most cases the signs are drawn at the very end of the tablets, i. e. reverse iv or vi. Other tablets show scribal habits of a lower artistic order including oversize doodles, squiggles, signs and designs. Even oversize cuneiform signs have been used to fill these extra spaces, such as KBo 2.5 iii 34; KBo 3,9 rev. 4-5; KBo 3.60 iv; KBo 12.137 rev.; KBo 12. 138 rev. iv.

How is one to combine these signs and doodles with the official character of the tablets? The fact that they are not to be found on letters, legal documents and library exemplars, show that the tablets carrying this kind of drawings were evidently drafts or copies, suitable for such scribbling.

The range of the signs cover the following subjects:

Hieroglyphic signs: KBo 13.62 rev. (probably the name of the scribe, cf. Otten. *Historia* 7 p. 15), KBo 22. 214 rev. vi (Güterbock 1942: 79 nr. 239 and Taf. VIII).

Fingernail prints: KUB 38. 2 rev. iv 2-5

Finger prints: KUB 16.24 rev.

Models of livers on the tablets of omen: KBo 7, 5-7; KBo 8.8; KBo 9.57-67; KUB 4.71-74; KUB 37.216-230 (Jan-Waalke Meyer 1984: 119-130)

Random signs, lines and unidentifiable drawings; KBo 7.19 rev?; KBo 16.99 rev. vi; KBo 21.30 rev. iv; KUB 16.81 ii; KUB 27.67 obv. right edge; KUB 30.19 rev.; KUB 46.34 obv. i, ii (school tablets?); KUB 56.41 (according to collation of S.Košak, *ZA* 88, 1988, 147)

Numerals: KBo 24.39 rev. iv; KBo 24.81; KUB 34.68 rev.; KUB 39.8 rev. iv (Cf. Otten 1955: 34 Abb. 15)

Diagonal lines: KUB 19.6 rev.; KUB 30.39 rev.

Cuneiform doodle; KBo 4.4 rev. iii

We should compare also the seal impressions in KBo 5.7 obv.; KBo 8.26 obv.; KBo 8.27 obv.; KBo 14.45; KUB 25.32 which we do not deal with here.

In the following we will present selected examples of these drawings:

A-Geometric lines, circles, and unidentified signs:

KUB 39.63 is a ritual text: the drawing (Fig. 1, 1) is rev. iv. Can the six diagonal lines have a magical or astral meaning?

KUB 10.32 is a festritual; the drawing (Fig. 2, 1) is rev. vi.

KUB 30.63 is catalogue of tablets; the drawing (Fig. 2, 2) is rev.

KUB 35. 133 is an Iṣtanuwa ritual; the drawing (Fig. 2, 3) is rev. iv. The preserved lines of the drawing render probably the name of the scribe.

KUB 7.25 is again a festritual: the signs (Fig. 3, 1) are located on the left edge. I do not know how to interpret these mysterious signs.

B- Hieroglyphic signs:

VBoT 87 is an inventory. There are two unidentified hieroglyphic signs and another that probably is an animal head on rev. iv. (Fig. 3, 2).

C-Fingernail marks and squiggles:

KBo 26.57; no cuneiform context is preserved; it is probably an exercise tablet (Fig. 4, 1).

D-Description of oraculum. i. e. the field where the augurs observed the flight of the birds, KUB 49.60 rew. iv (Fig. 4,2).

These fields are separated from each other by means of diagonal double lines which represent, according to my interpretation river banks and roads, the two most common terms appearing in the Hittite bird oracles.

E-Finally we will present the best examples of the drawings which have real artistic value. These represent depictions of human beings, a deity and a lion.

1-Depiction of human heads: KUB 38.3 is a description of cult-images from the 14th-13th centuries. It appears certain that there is no relation between the contents of the tablet and the drawings (Pl. 140, 2;). Very similar to these drawings are two human heads which are either unfinished or not correctly rendered by the copyist of the tablet (KBo 13. 256 rev. iv, Fig. 1, 2). The two human heads on KUB 38.3 have been evaluated until now from several points of view. Moortgat compares them with the priest king (Priesterkönig) depicted in the new Hittite Empire reliefs from Alaca Höyük, Yazılıkaya, Malatya and Kargamiş (Moortgat 1932: 88f. and Taf. LXXXVII). He asserts that this motive does not appear east of the Euphrates. He takes the date of the Hittite cuneiform tablets as a criterion for the dating of the large scale sculpture in rock and on stone such as Tuthaliya IV in Yazılıkaya, the libation scene in Alaca Höyük, the king in the procession scene in Yazılıkaya. According to him the schematic drawings render heads of two kings in a priest dress. There are of course no traces of dress since the figures are cut off at the neck. A. Goetze sees them from the point of view of the prevailing ethnic types in Anatolia (Goetze 1957: 11 n. 4). He observes that the left figure (the brachycephalic one) "is certainly not Armenoid".

What do we actually see on these drawings? Two schematic human heads on KUB 38.3 are obviously drawn with the same stylus with which the scribe wrote the tablet. The foreheads are rendered straight up: the hair is very short or it is shaved. It reminds one of the hair depicted on Mari statues after the parts made of bitumen have fallen away: only the traces of "wig" are visible. The noses, unlike those of most of the "Hittite" faces, are not hooked: they are straight. The chins are profiled clearly and depicted as shaved. The eyes, especially of the left figure, are protruding. At least one of the figures has an earring comparable to those of the reliefs from Alaca Höyük. Although the similarity with the Hittite representational art on the rock monuments is clearly visible the heads do not have the round skull caps, typical of Hittite "priest kings", as in Alaca Höyük. The clearly visible lines alongside the forehead and the temples mark the limits of the hair. The left portrait has an extremely wide skull, his head bulging at the rear (brachycephalic). He represents what is so far understood to be a non-Hittite, non Anatolian type. His eye (as expected only the left one is visible in the profile) reminds one of the similar almond eyes. What did the Hittite scribe have in mind? Did he draw somebody from his own ethnic group or did he render an example from his environment in Hattuša? In any event the fact that the two figures are clearly distinguished from each other shows that there can be no doubt that the different types suggest a reality, not fictional figures. Against Moortgat, nothing indicates that they represent the "Priesterkönige". They are taken from the usual environment of the scribes; perhaps the scribe or the artist even envisioned himself in one of these drawings!

2 - The depiction of a deity (Pl. 141, 1; and Fig. 5): This drawing is on KUB 20.76 (Bo 2566) which includes the festival of the city of Arinna (Moortgat-Correns, 1952:38-40). Part of the face, the outstretched left hand and the legs are broken away, but what is preserved makes it clear that the drawing really represents a god in typical Hittite dress with a horned tiara. From the point of the tiara three tassels are hanging. He wears a short kilt with a belt. He holds in his right arm something which is not clearly visible. Because of the destruction of the legs his position remains obscure. Moortgat-Correns (1952:39f.) states that the position of the Hittite deities are either a standing, walking or sitting. Since this figure does not fit any of these positions she assumes that he is kneeling (Knielauf) which is so far not attested. Güterbock (1957: 70 n.55) objects to this, stating that kneeling is an act not befitting a great god and assumes instead that the god is stepping onto his chariot. Nothing, however, is preserved of the supposed chariot. The three vertical lines in front of the legs can hardly be the traces of a wheel. Another possibility is that the god might be sitting



Fig. 5

on a very simple stool. The identity of the deity is also obscure. According to the rock monuments we would expect his name to be written in hieroglyphs at the top of the out-stretched left hand which is destroyed. Nothing indicates (contra Güterbock 1957: 70) that it represents the Storm God of Arinna.

3 - The depiction of a lion (Fig. 2, 4 and Pl. 141, 2): KUB 28,4, which bears this unique lion drawing (Moortgat, 1932:71 and Taf. LXVII; Bossert, 1942 nr. 674), is the Hattic-Hittite bilingual from the Empire period (14th to 13th centuries BC) which describes the Myth of the Moon who Fell From the Heaven. Again there is no evident relationship between the context of the text and the depiction although Güterbock (1. c.) assumes that the lion might be the sacred animal of the moon god. The drawing is important for the dating of the Hittite monumental rock monuments of similar style from Boğazköy, Alaca Höyük, Malatya and elsewhere. It is also an important piece of art even for A. Moortgat (1. c.) who as a Pan-Babylonist used to disdain the high quality of Hittite art. According to him this randomly "dashed off" (hingeworfen) sketch reveals a higher quality than the examples of latter periods from Mitanni, North Syria and North Mesopotamia.

These unique drawings give an approximate idea of the versatility and skills of the Hittite scribes. They could also shed light on the question as to whether the Hittite artists made small-scale designs or "blueprints" of the reliefs before they were executed in such sophisticated projects as Yazılıkaya, the orthostats of Alaca Höyük, or the relief vases from Inandık and Bitik.

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- Fig. 2, 3: Hieroglyphic signs(?) on KUB 35. 133.
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- Pl. 141,2: Drawing of a lion on KUB 28.4 (From A. Moortgat 1932, Taf. 67).

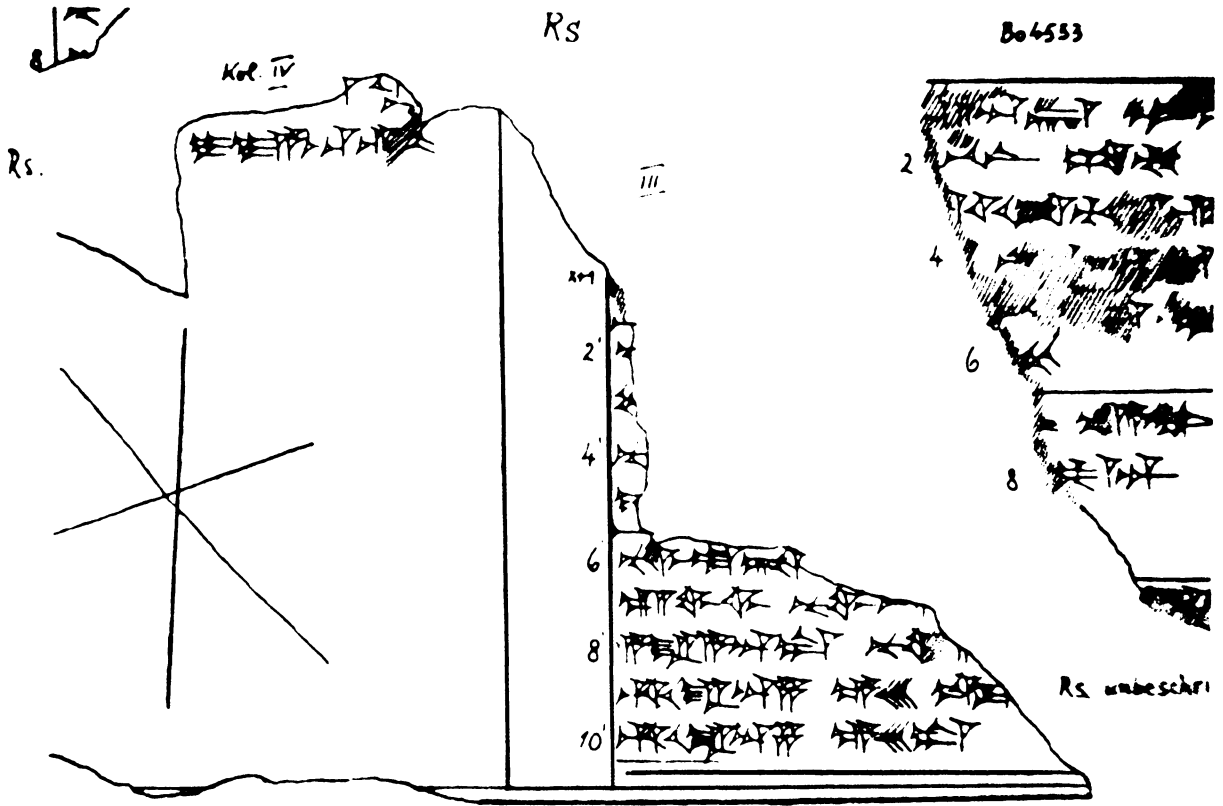


Fig. 1, 1

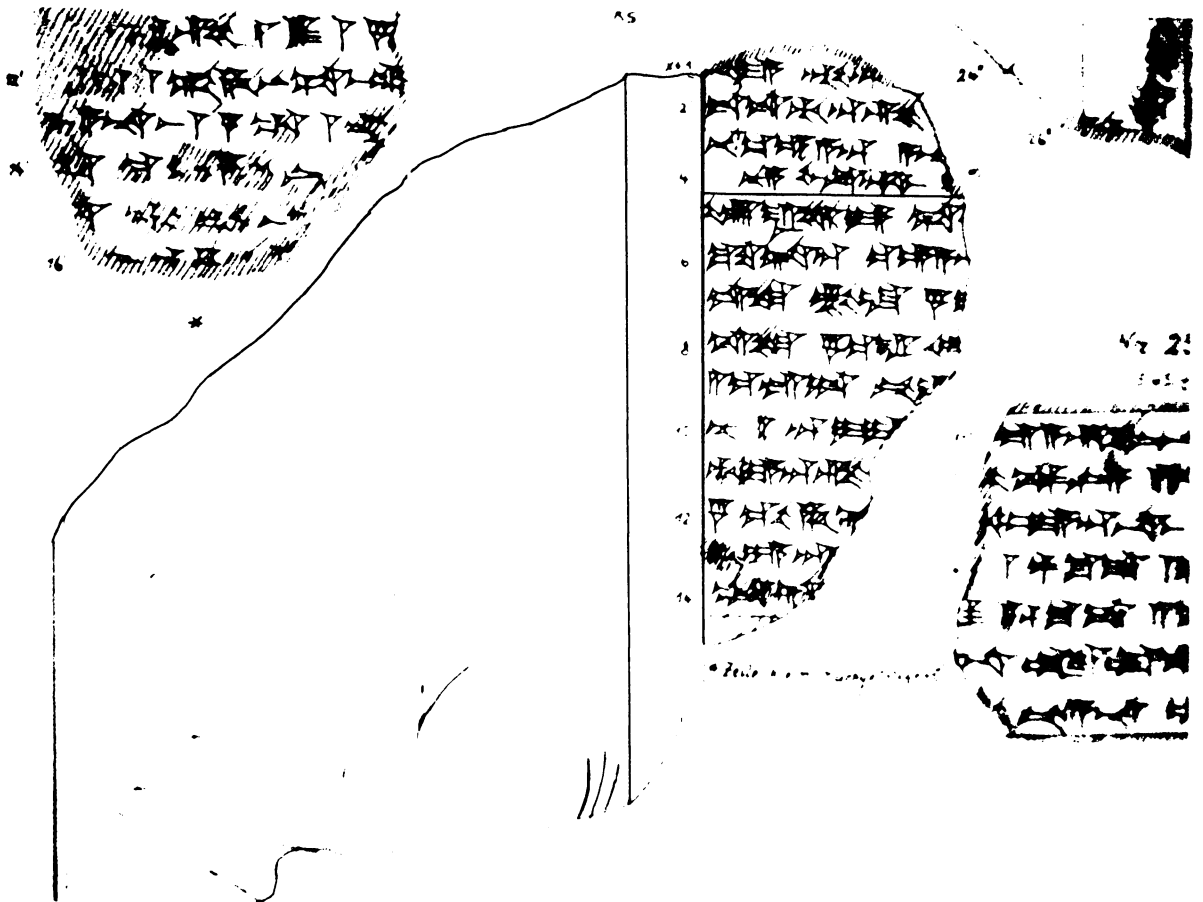


Fig. 1, 2

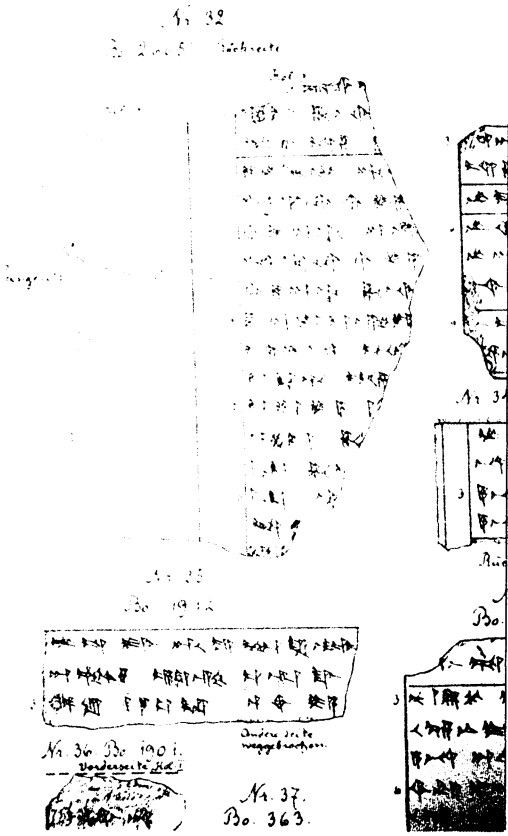


Fig. 2, 1

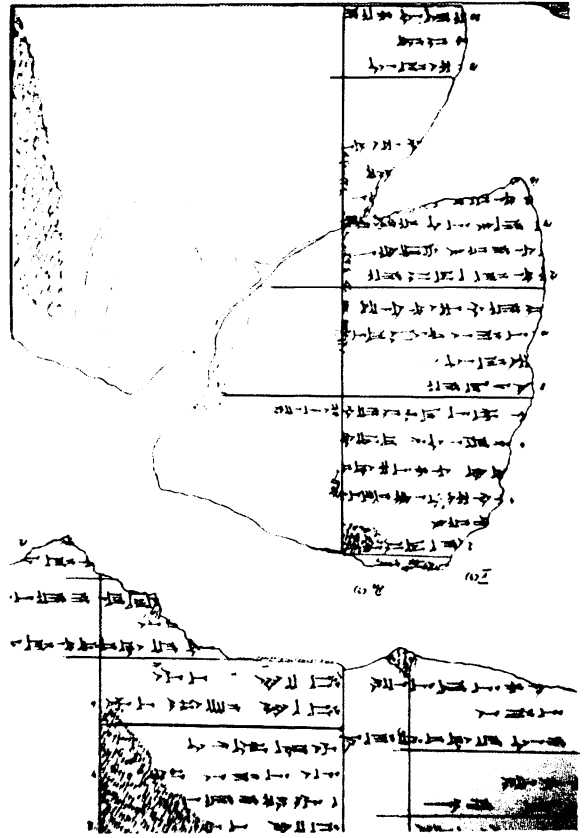


Fig. 2, 2

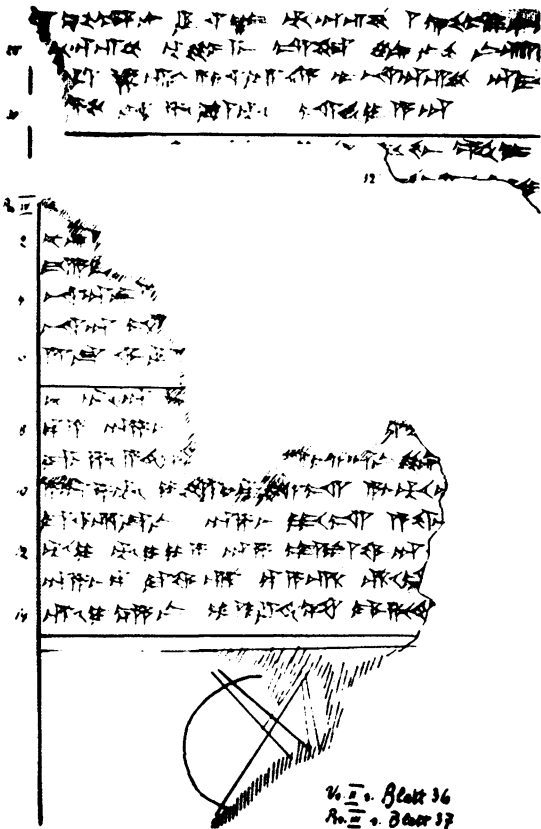


Fig. 2, 3



Fig. 2, 4

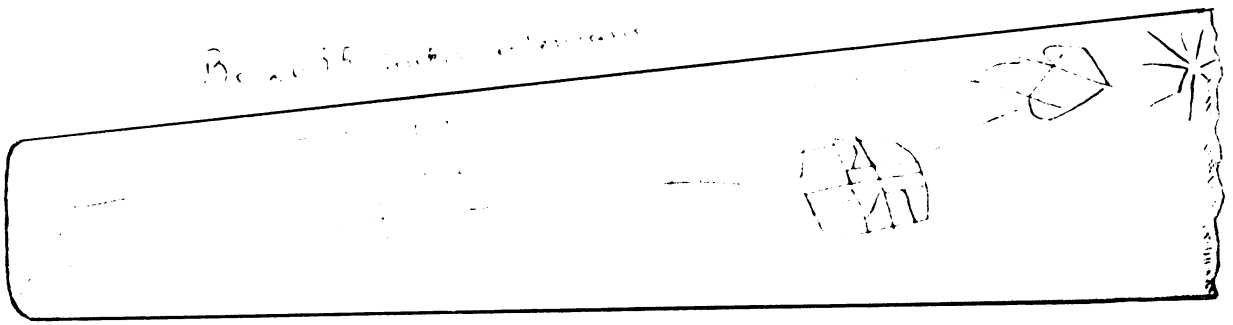
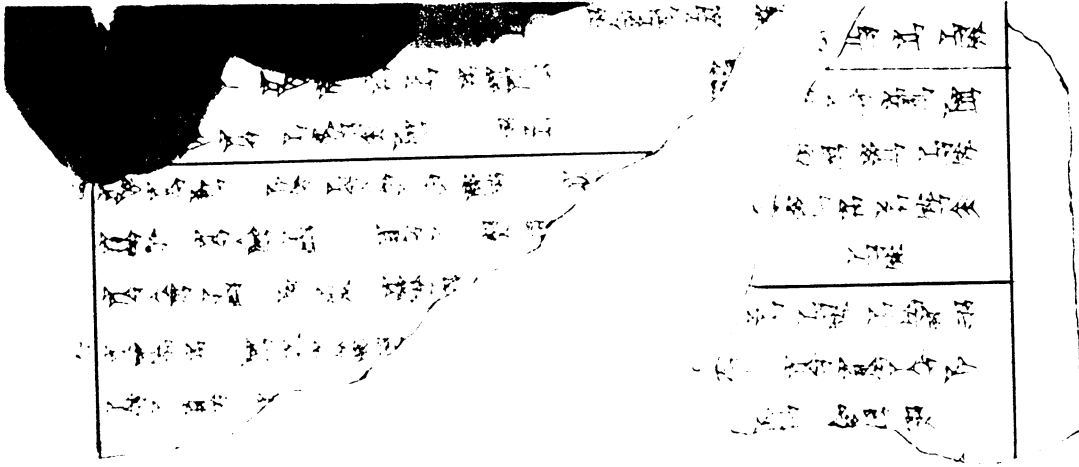


Fig. 3, 1

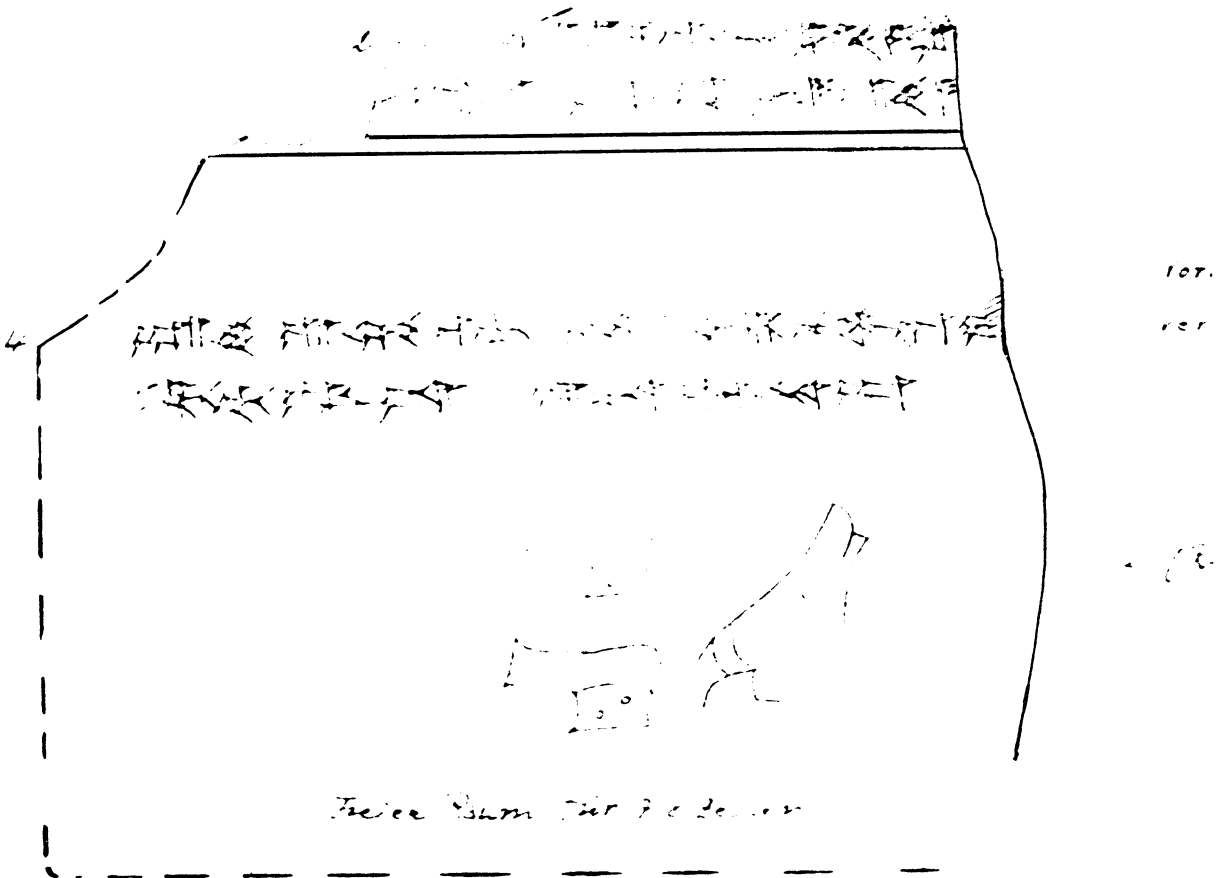


Fig. 3, 2

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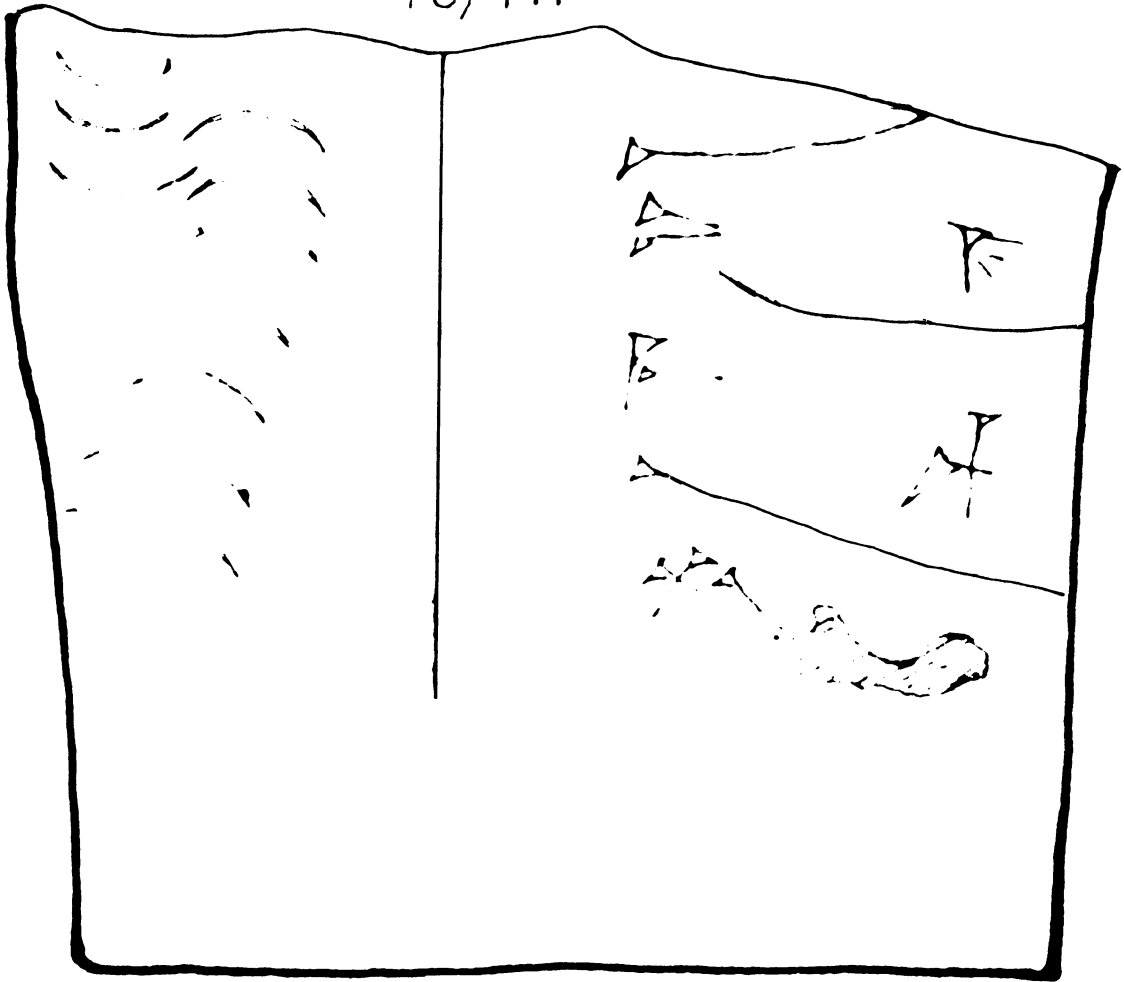


Fig. 4, 1



III

VI 2

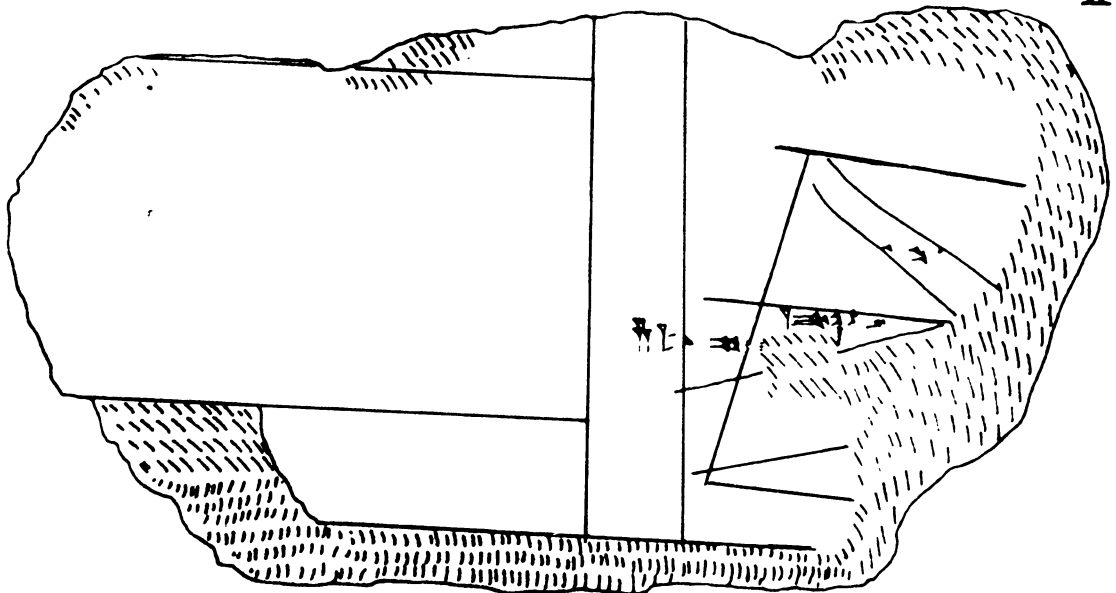


Fig. 4, 2