

A Probable Join to the “Kırşehir Letter”

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The fragment of a lead strip YH100004 (*Fig. 1 and 2*) was excavated in topsoil during the 2010 season at Yassıhöyük. It measures 3 cm in height, by 1.8/1.5 cm in width and 0.1 cm in thickness. It weighs 3.8 gm. It is inscribed with hieroglyphs over two horizontal registers on each side, with the direction of writing on each register being opposed to that of the other one on the same side and the orientation of the writing being reversed on each side. The fragment is badly damaged, but most of it is readable. Despite the damage it is clear that it preserves one rectangular side edge of a lead strip, which would most likely have been used as a letter.

The find is of particular interest as it must confirm the previous discovery at the site, before excavations by the JIAA began, of a much longer piece of lead strip which is now in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara (museum inventory no. 13-1-06) and was published by R. Akdoğan and J.D. Hawkins under the title of “The Kırşehir Letter” (Akdoğan and Hawkins 2008, 2010; Giusfredi 2010: 236-239; Taş and Weeden 2011: 59). This is a letter from someone called Muwatali, who calls himself “your servant”, addressed to “my lord Tuwati”. The name Tuwati is attested in the eighth century BC as the father of king Wasusarma, one of the kings of

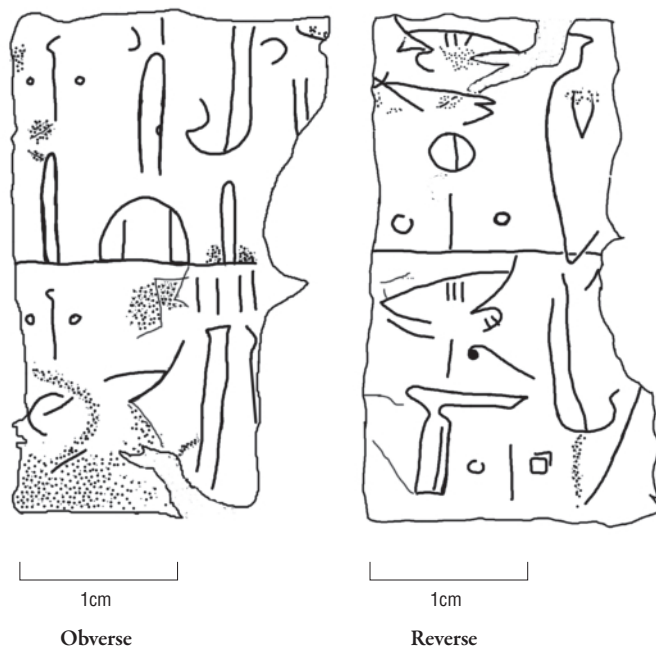


Fig. 1 Copy of YH100004, obverse and reverse



Fig. 2 Photograph of YH100004, obverse and reverse

Tabal, who appears as Uassurme in tribute lists from the annals of Neo-Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (see generally Weeden 2010). Tuwati is also attested in a Neo-Assyrian document registering tribute from Tabal (Hawkins and Postgate 1988). Of course, this does not have to be the same person as the addressee of the “Kırşehir Letter”, but it is a possible hypothesis that he is.

The height of the Ankara piece is given as 2.8 cm at Akdoğan and Hawkins 2008: 8, while the new fragment from Yassihöyük has a height of 3 cm. The slight difference might be accounted for in the unevenness of the top and bottom edges. The right edge of the Ankara piece is rounded, which does not fit with the rectangular edge of YH100004. The left edge of the Ankara piece is broken off. Usually the lead strips have identical edges (Hawkins 2000 Plates 306-313). A possible comparison may be made with Kululu Lead Strip 1, which also may have one rounded edge and one rectangular, although its right and left edges are so badly damaged that it is hard to say for sure (Hawkins 2000 Plate 286). However, a shape with one rectangular edge and one rounded edge on the right and left may even be thought practical for a lead strip, given that the rectangular edge would make it easier to start rolling the strip up, and the rounded edge would provide a lip with which to start unrolling it.

When one considers the preserved text of the new fragment, on the other hand, it becomes clear that it ought to belong to the same lead strip as the Ankara piece. In three out of four cases it is possible to show that the grammar, even if the meaning is not understood, continues from the Ankara strip to the new fragment and vice-versa, namely from §§5-6 on the obverse and §§18-19 on the reverse. There is no direct join, and there must be some text missing in the break. In the following presentation the lines from the original “Kırşehir Letter” are marked with the letter (a) and lines from the new fragment, YH100004, are marked with the letter (b):

Obverse:

- (1.a) §5 *ha-IUDEX+ra/i-ti-²-wa/i-mu-u*
 SCUTUM-*wa/i* [... (1.b) *īa-[x]-na-i i-sa-wi-i*
 (2.b) §6 *wa/i-īmu-u-ī-mi-i x* [...]
 (2.a) (*69)-*lu/i/a-wa/i-wa/i*

Due to (a concern for my?) life I will buy (a?) ...
 shield(s?) for myself
 and I ... will x myself (with?) an x for myself

Reverse:

- (3.a) §18 | *wa/i-tu-u FEMINA-ti-ia+ra/i(-)*
na-na (INFANS)ni-m[u]-w[a/i-za ...]
 (3.b) §19 *á-mu-u-ha-wa/i-(|| 4.b)-mu¹³pu-wa/i-*
na x [... (4.a)](-)pa-ti-sa-ha

For you (there are?) together with women's/
 mother's *brothers*(?) ... so[n]
 and I myself have x-ed Puwa ... for myself

In line 1.a §5 we have a first person dative enclitic pronoun, used as a reflexive (=mu), while 1.b has a first person present tense verb (*isawi*). 2.b again has a first person dative enclitic (=mu), and 2.a has a first person present tense verb: (*69)-*lu/i/a-wa/i-wa/i*. 3.b §19 has a first person independent pronoun (*amu*) with a first person dative enclitic (=mu), while 4.a continues the grammar with a first person preterite tense verb: [...]-*patisaha*. It is difficult to imagine that this grammatical correspondence could be due to chance, however formulaic these letters might have been. On the other hand, the join cannot be considered absolutely certain if we do not have a single word continuing from one piece to the other at any of its four connecting points.

FURTHER COMMENTS

1.a: SCUTUM-*wa/i(-)* the translation assumes that this is a noun meaning “shield” written as a logogram with phonetic complement. However, it cannot be the word for “shield” that corresponds to this logogram otherwise: (“SCUTUM”) *hara/i-li-* = Phoenician *mgn* “shield” (KARATEPE §IX, Hawkins 2000: 49). Either it is a different word and a noun, in which case it is part of the same sentence as the verb *isawi*, or *-wa/i* is the S1 present tense verbal ending, for an unattested derived verb (suggestion courtesy A. Payne). This latter suggestion would of course require that a series of connective and enclitics be restored in the gap to resume the sentence ending with *isawi*. In

this case the gap between the fragments could be considerably larger than I had envisaged.

- 2.b: *wa=mu=mi* quotative particle *wa* + *=mu* acc. sg. S1 enclitic pronoun + *=mi* S1 reflexive pronoun. This is interesting, as *=mu* is increasingly used for the reflexive pronoun in the late period (Assur Letters). Here the traditional reflexive, *=mi*, is perhaps used to distinguish the meaning from *=mu* used as an accusative pronoun. Or this is *=mu* dat. sg. in reflexive function and the double marking of the reflexive is meant for emphasis.
- 3.b: the profile *19, phonetic value *á*, appears to have a strange protuberance under its chin, which may be part of a previous sign or damage.
- 4.b: the personal determinative on ¹*pu-wa/i-* is not secure. One has to assume that the diagonal stroke to the right of the vertical one is not purposeful.

It is thus very likely that YH100004 is an indirect join to the "Kırşehir Letter". There should not have been too much text missing in the gap. The curious absence thus far of Middle Iron Age structures at Yassihöyük that may be associated with the letter, or alternatively an explanation of how it came to be there otherwise, are subjects beyond the scope of this note and will hopefully be illuminated by further excavation.

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