

Deciphering proto-Elamite

Jacob L. Dahl, Beijing University 10-6-2007

Un-deciphering linear-Elamite

Jacob L. Dahl, Beijing University 10-6-2007

Outline

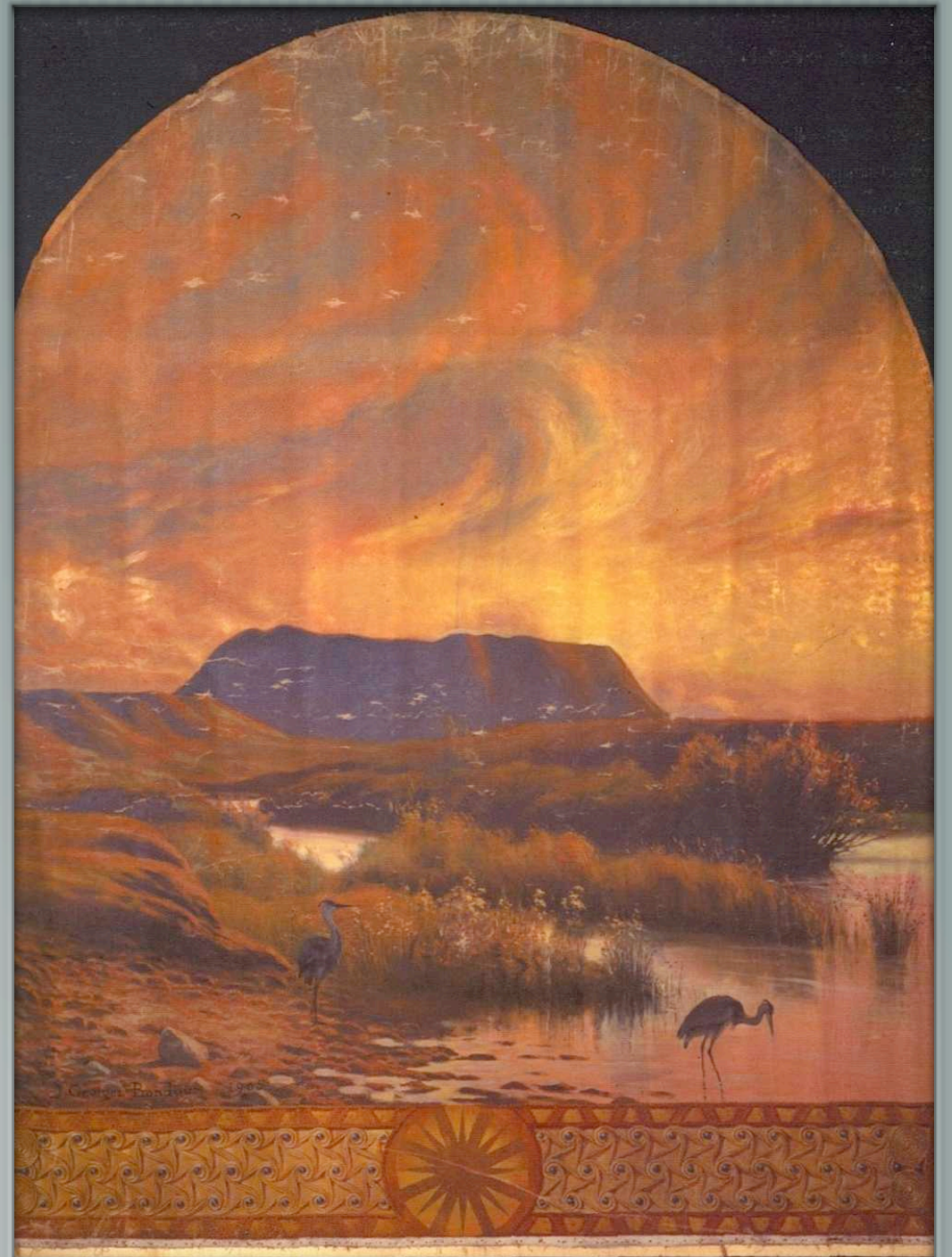
- [Original abstract:
 - (When) can we distinguish early Iranian writing from early Mesopotamian writing?
 - Can we isolate distinct writing phases in proto-Elamite?
 - Can we verify Meriggi's proposal of the existence of restricted „vocabularies“ in proto-Elamite?
 - Can we use what we know about the proto-Elamite writing system to say something about early Iran?

Outline

- [Origin of writing
- [proto-Elamite
 - paleography
 - chronology (internal and absolute)
- [linear-Elamite
 - corpus
 - content (or lack thereof)

Asking Basic Questions

— [Susa before the excavations



Got Answers?



ORINST. AE 128 SUSAN, IRAN. A
COMPLETE VIEW OF THE SITE, LOOKING
APPROXIMATELY NORTH.

A1

ORINST. AE 125 SUSAN, IRAN. VIEW
LOOKING APPROXIMATELY NORTH, TAKEN
FROM AN ALTITUDE OF 534 METERS ON
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OF THE EUPHRATES RIVER.

611

[Susa after the excavations: more questions than answers

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G11
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A2

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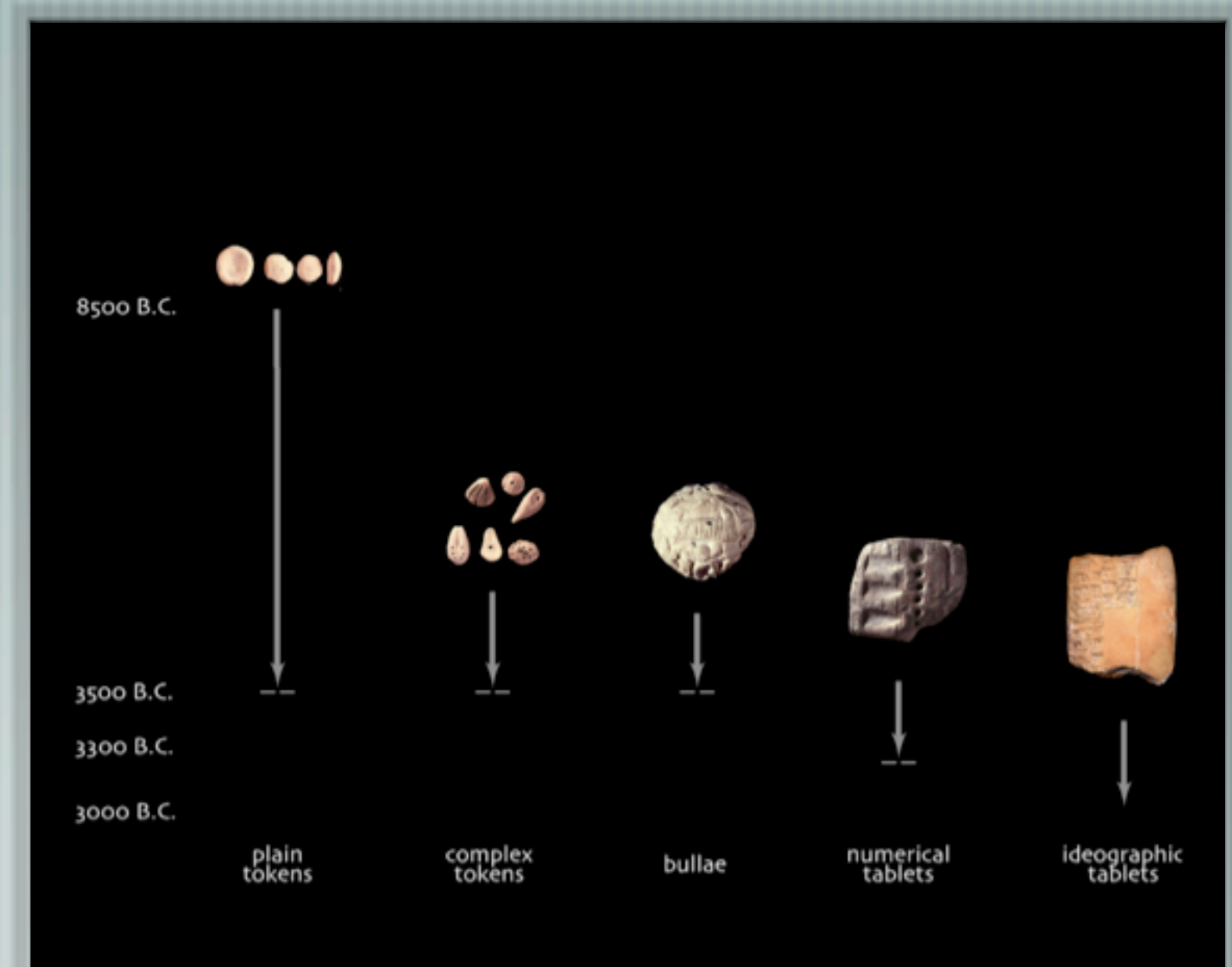
A2

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Origins of Writing Basics

Reconstructing the history of writing without a secure stratigraphy

From tokens to Tablets



Origins of Writing Basics

Reconstructing the history of writing without a secure stratigraphy

From tokens to Tablets

		Period	Writing Phase
Beginning of Proto-Cuneiform	→	3400	Early Uruk
		3300	
Beginning of Hieroglyphics	→	3200	
		3100	Numerical tablets and clay bullae
Beginning of Proto-Elamite	→	3000	Archaic texts from Uruk: Writing Phase Uruk IV, Writing Phase Uruk III
		2900	
		2800	Archaic texts from Ur
		2700	
		2600	
		2500	Texts from Fara
		2400	Old Sumerian texts
		2300	
		2200	
Linear-Elamite	→	2100	Old Akkadian texts
(Standard display texts)		2000	
		1900	Neo-Sumerian texts
		1800	Old Assyrian texts
		1700	Old Babylonian texts

Documenting Early Writing

- [more than 300 texts in the Ashmolean Museum digitized by the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) in 2007
- [the collection will form the basis for future paleographic studies of cuneiform



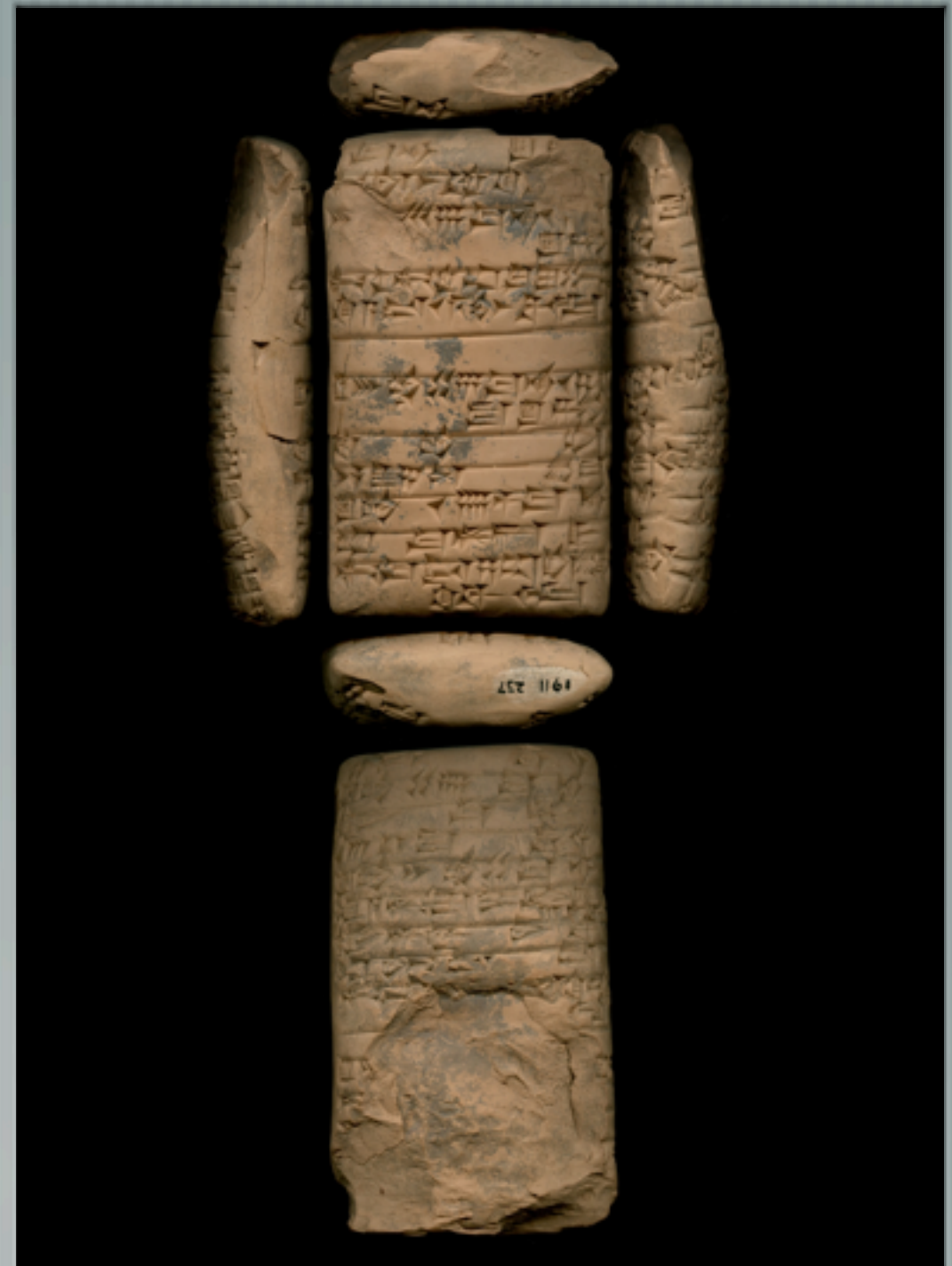
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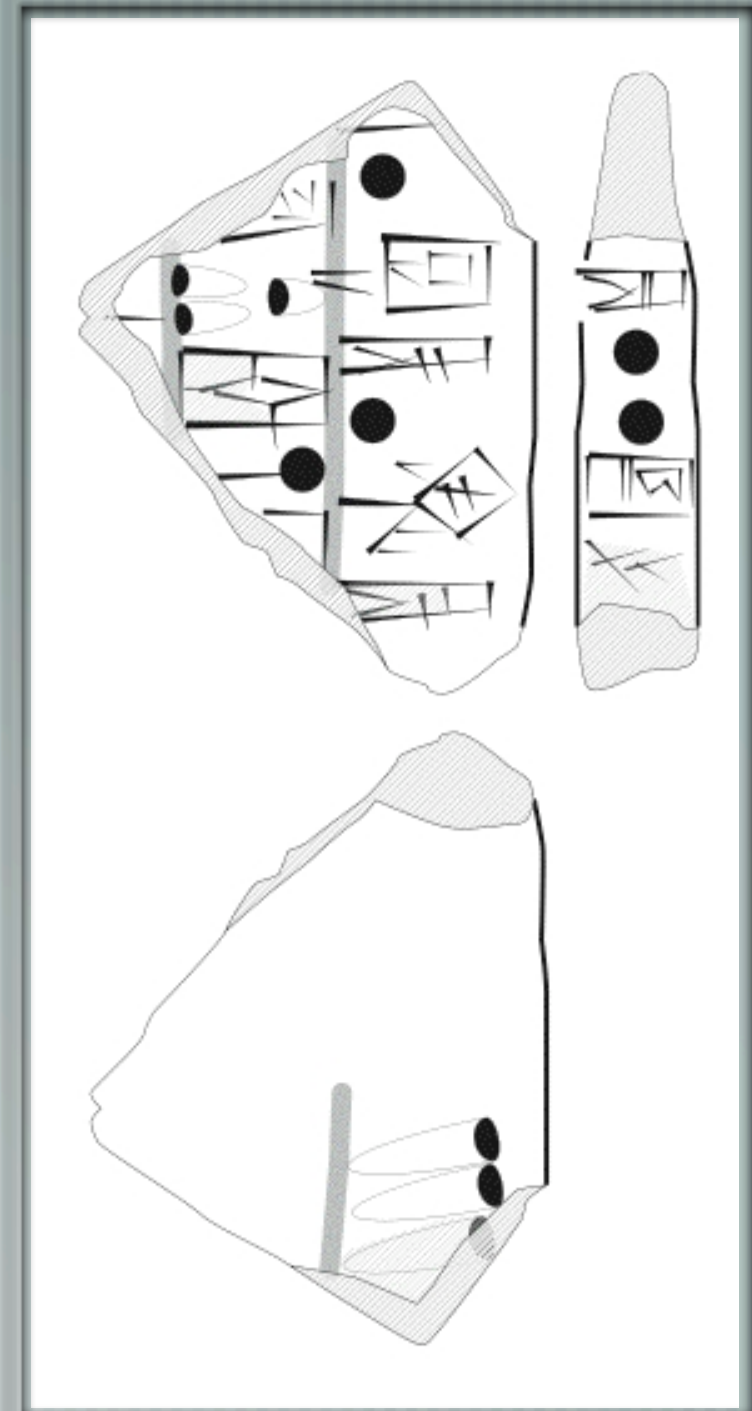
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Proto-Elamite Basics

- [1,600 texts
- [10,000 lines of text
- [partially derived from proto-cuneiform
- [semantic decipherment in progress
- [nested pseudo-syllabary?




Proto-Elamite Paleography

Graphic Development of Sign Repertoire

	M362	M269	M106 _a	M9	M206 _g	M102 _e	M309 _a
Early							
Late							



Semantic Development of Sign Repertoire




Early Animal By-Products Late Animal By-Products

Animal By-Products Non-Object signs

Structural Development of Text Micro Structure

Early	"owner" described with one (complex) sign:	
Late	"owner" described with string of signs:	

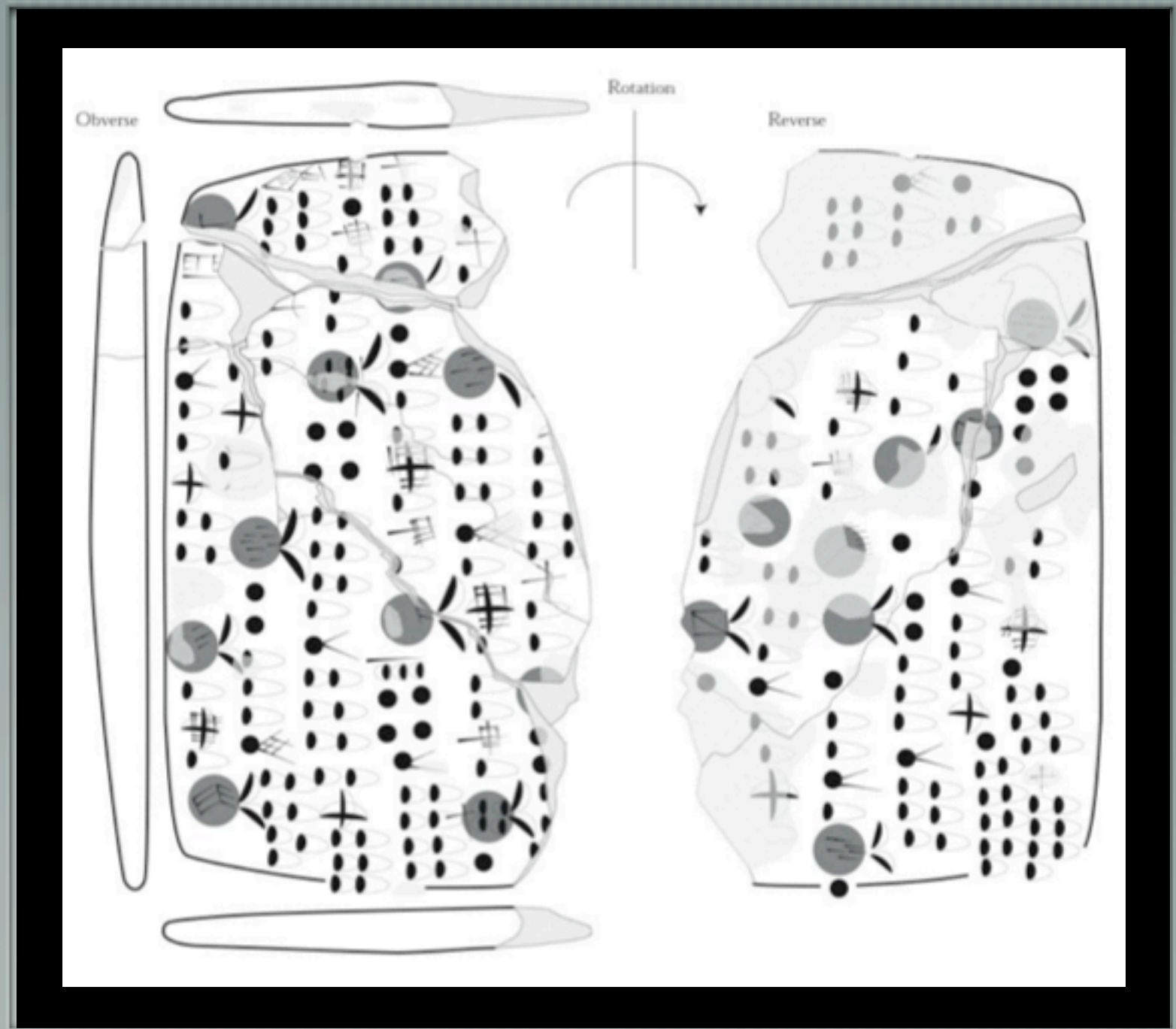
Local Proto-Elamite

— [Tying the relative
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absolute

— [Texts from across Iran

— Susa - Sialk - Ozbaki

— Susa - Malyan



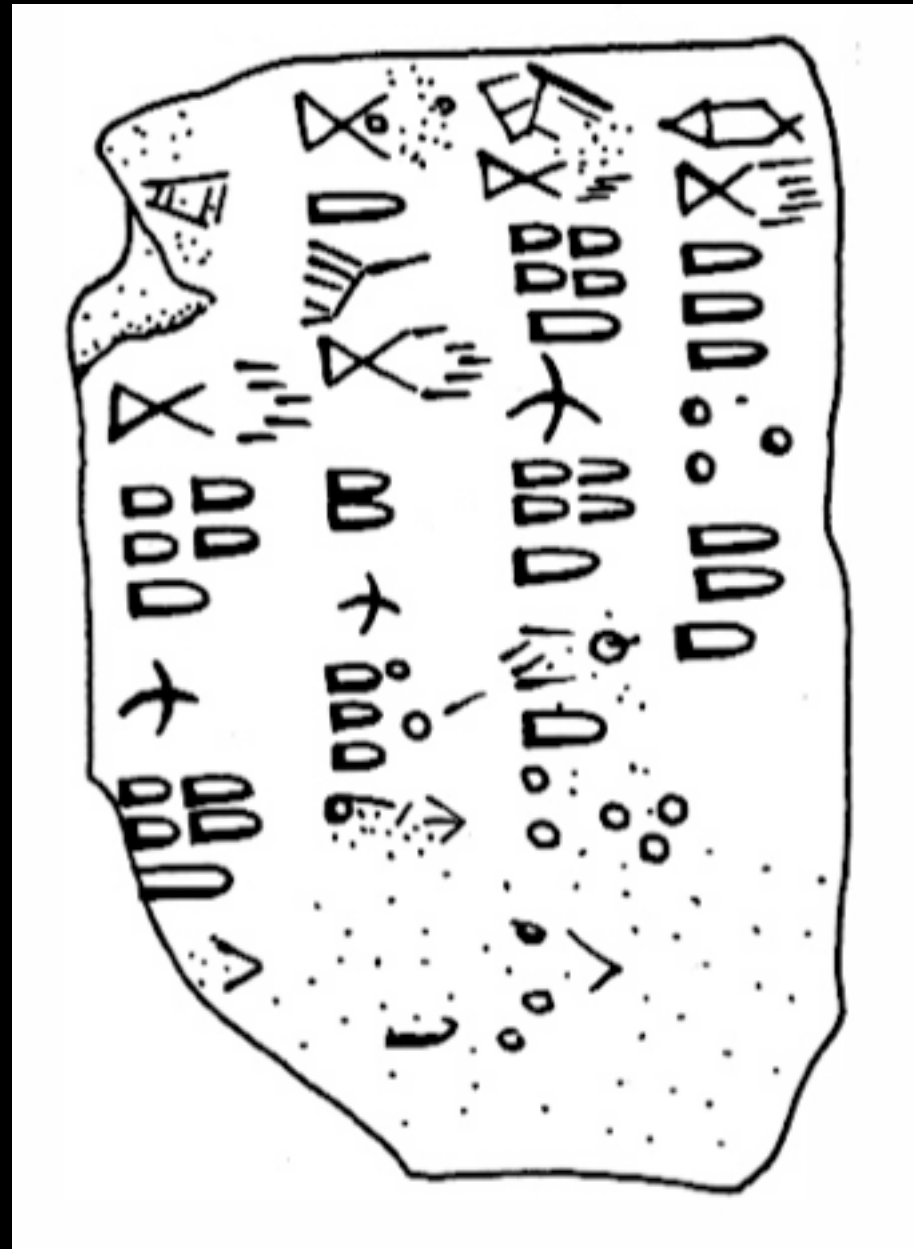
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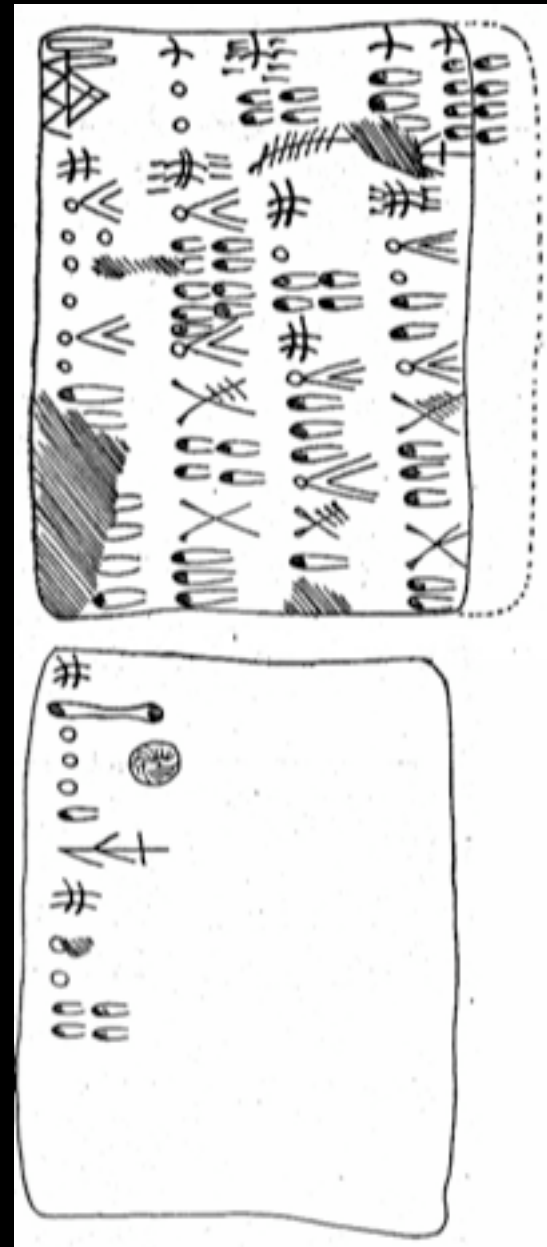
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Proto-Elamite Absolute Chronology

Susa: writing Phase	Susa: Akr. I	Susa: stratified tablets	Susa: Morgan's tablets unstratified	Malyan: stratified tablets	Sialk: stratified tablets	Ozbaki: no published stratigraphy	Absolute chronology
late proto-Elamite	14b 15a 15b	CahDAFI 1, 58 n° 1 CahDAFI 1, 58 n° 6 CahDAFI 1, 58 n° 5	MDP 17, 153 MDP 6, 213 MDP 26S, 5240	TUV II M 1155			2950 BCE
middle proto-Elamite	16a 16b 16c			TUV III M 1469 M 1475	IV.2		3000 BCE
early proto-Elamite	17ax / 17a	CahDAFI 1, 58 n° 14 CahDAFI 1, 43 n° 1-3 (unstratified!)	MDP 17, 96+ MDP 17, 12 MDP 17, 40		S.28 IV.1 S.1624 S.1630 etc.	Ozbaki 1	
Uruk-style (Uruk IV and V)	17b 18	CahDAFI 3, 103 n° 2 CahDAFI 3, 103 n° 6			IV.1 S.539 S.1628 etc.		

[Preliminary Results: Ripe with problems

Linear-Elamite Basics

- [less than 30 texts

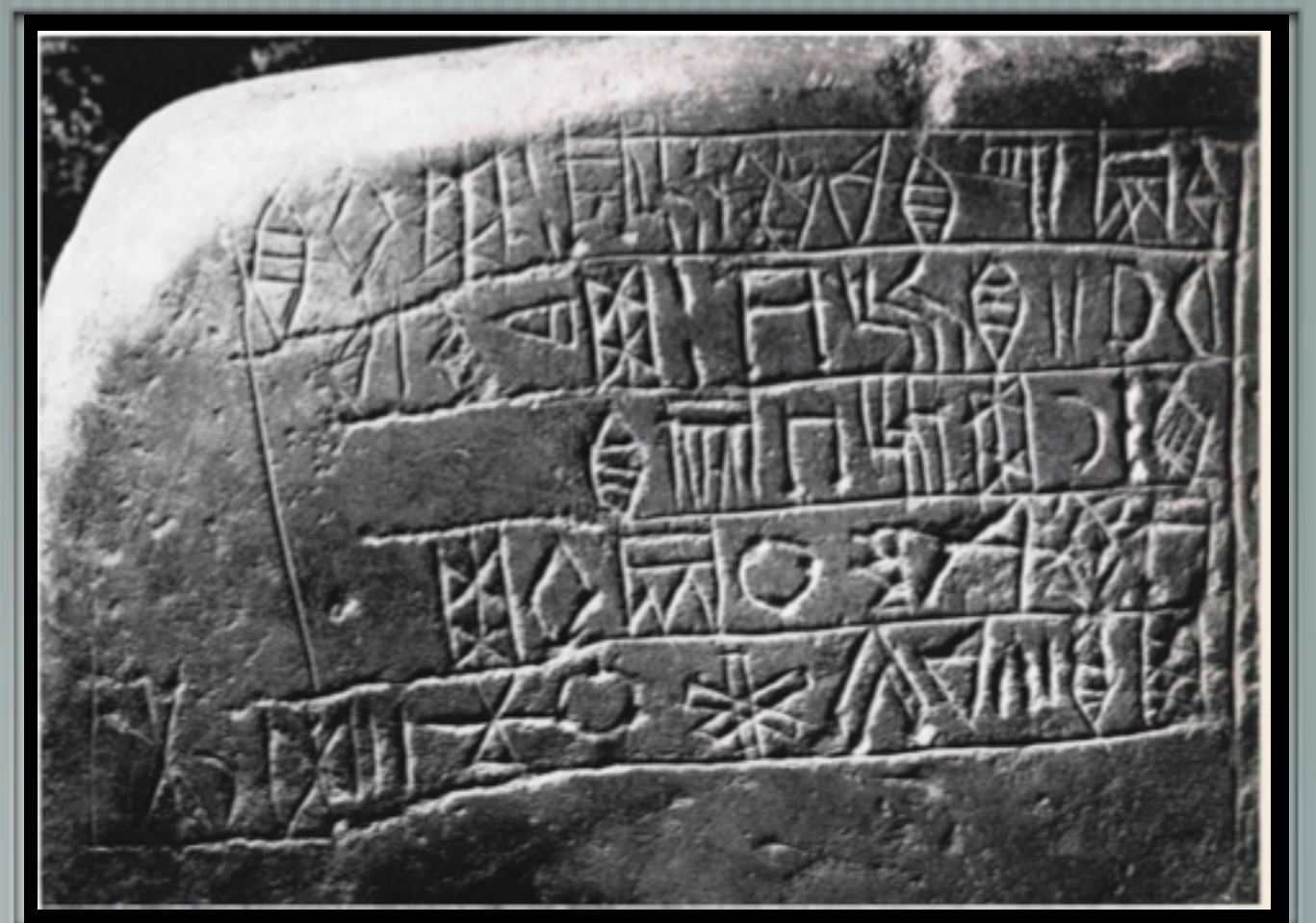
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- display texts

- non-display texts

- metal vases

- [display texts belong to one monument constructed by
Puzur-Inšušinak (ca. 2100 BC)



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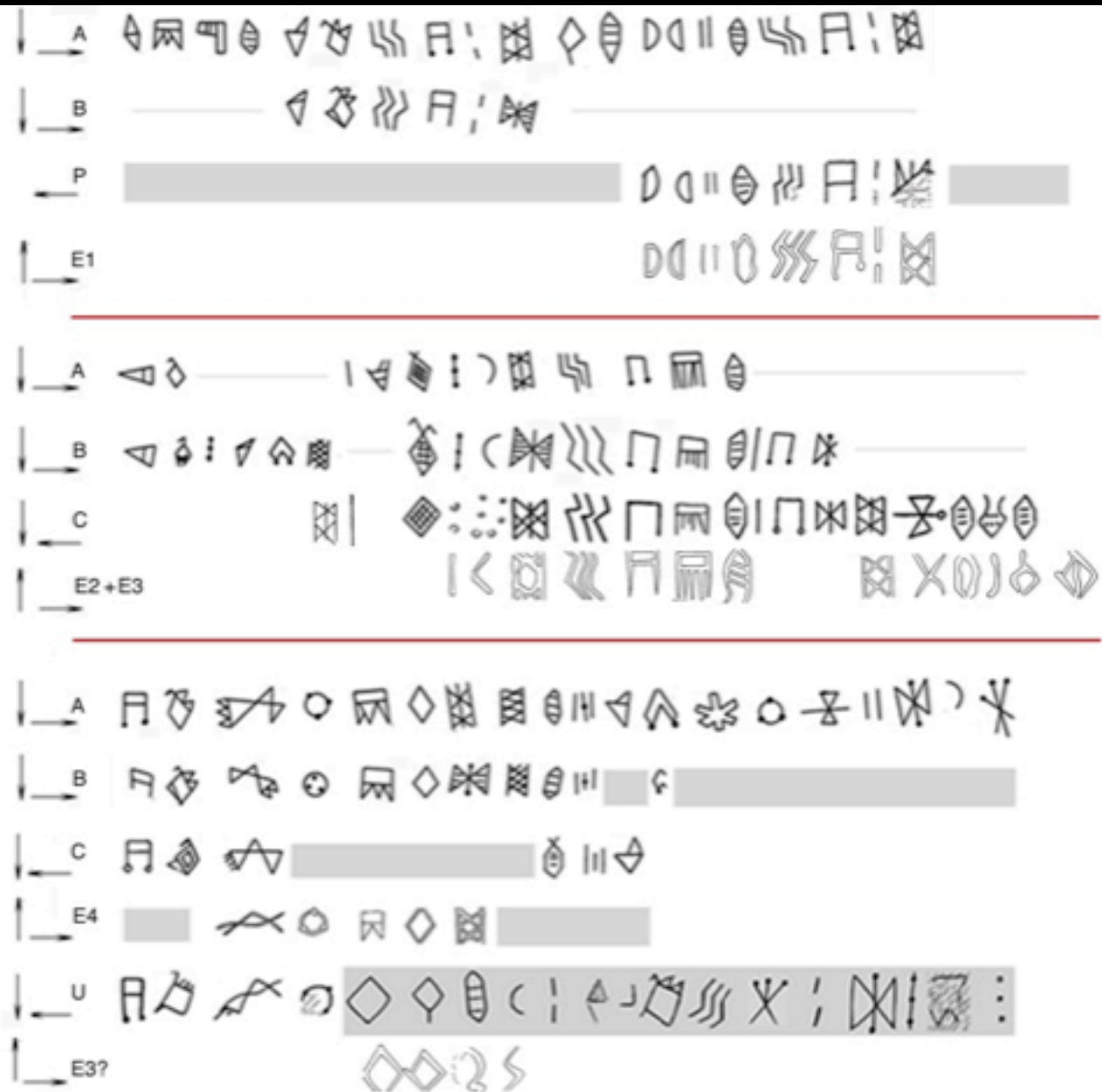
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Got Writing?

Texts A, B, C, E, P, U

Text 0



Got Writing?

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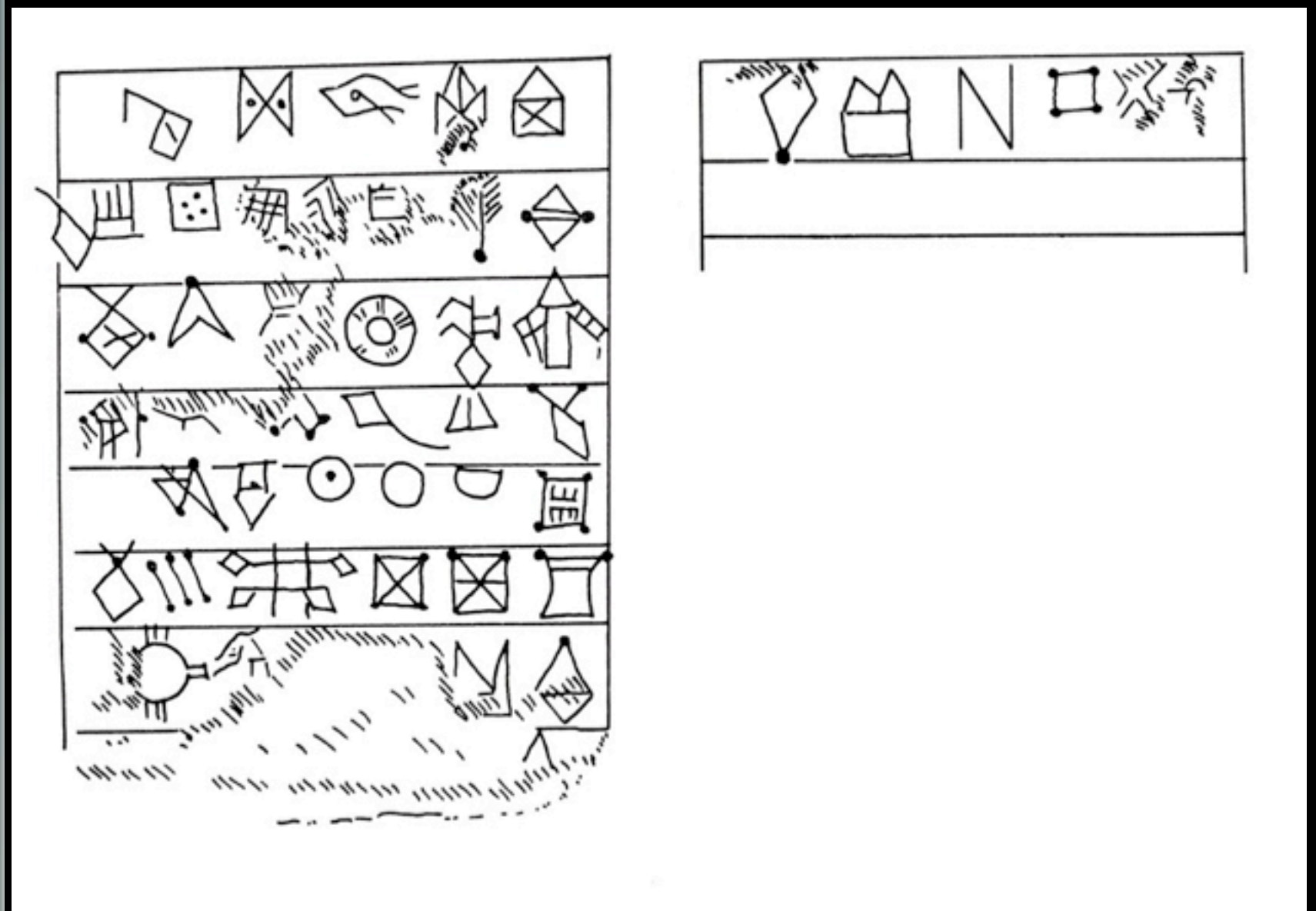
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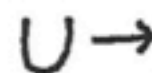
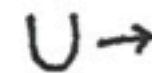
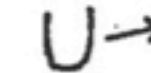









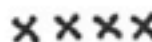


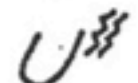
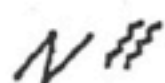
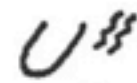




























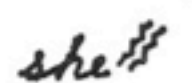




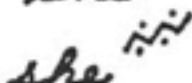
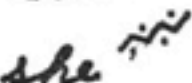
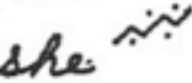
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Modern Parallels

	TEXT 1	TEXT 2	TEXT 3				
				11			
1				12			
2				13			
3				14			
4				15			
5				16			
6				17			
7				18			
8				19			
9				20			
10							

Writing systems of Silas John and Sequoyah

Modern Parallels



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Modern Parallels

[illegible]

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Summary

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