

Personalia / Miscellanea

A) Many thanks, Stephan Balmer, OCLEI administrator and System Engineer enabling www.elamicon.org, for your hard and tireless work – and for adding the undeciphered Byblos Writing System to this beautiful tool. Users who like to switch from Linear Elamite to Byblos Script, please click the button in the upper left corner in www.elamicon.org.

B) Dr. Christian Prager (University of Bonn) is, among others, working on the Byblos inscriptions – good luck, Christian, and a yelling "find-the-morphs"!

C) Deadly Joke Contest: Please send your favourite decipherer's joke to the following E-mail address: michael.maeder@isw.unibe.ch.

Research News

D) The list of proposed syllable values has been completed by the newest proposals by Desset 2018, see E) below. Also, we added the literature which mentions the respective proposal first (Thank you to Ricardo for the corrections sent to me). Users find the list under www.elamicon.org, then click "Settings" and scroll down to "Assumed sound values". For implanting the latin letters into the digitalized corpus, go to "Settings", then to "Sign with assumed sound value" and choose "replace with sound value". (And change the writing direction by choosing "everything => from left => to right" it is easier for us simple-minded Europeans :).

E) François Desset (2018:132-133) has isolated the divine names Ebarat (𐎶𐎠𐎥𐎶 *e-ba-ir-at*) and Napiriša (𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎶𐎶 *na-pi-ri-ša*, sometimes written 𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎶𐎶 *na-pi-ir-ri-ša*). Two beautiful proposals, both of which I consider as "preliminary successful". Congratulations, François! And more than that: If the former proposal is correct, my friends and I have to rethink our 𐎶 = *e* 'oh!' and 𐎶 = *ú* 'I am' reading (Mäder et al. 2018:67): It must, following Desset, be the other way round, 𐎶 is the pronoun *ú* 'I am' and 𐎶 is the exclamation *e* 'oh!'. Remember: we also took this latter option into consideration (ibid:66), but then opted for the former one, because in ^{Mah}Z, 𐎶 directly precedes the supposed divine name 𐎶𐎠𐎥𐎶 (with the divine determinative 𐎶 = ^d). This divine name, 𐎶𐎠𐎥𐎶, also occurs in the inscription ^{Mah}Yb (the caption naming the "ruler on his knees"). The caption is 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶-𐎶𐎠𐎥𐎶, and thus has a syntax perfectly expected for ruler's names: ¹𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶-^d𐎠𐎥𐎶 (compare the typical Elamite ruler's names like ¹*Kutir*-^d*Nahhunte*). Our argumentation in simple words: If 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶-𐎶𐎠𐎥𐎶 is the kneeling ruler's name formula, then it is to be read as ¹𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶-^d𐎠𐎥𐎶, then ^d𐎠𐎥𐎶 is a divine name (because divine names are typically second parts of ruler's names), then is 𐎶 = ^d, and

then 𐎧 𐎶 𐎠 𐎡 means \acute{u} 𐎧 𐎡 'I am the God 𐎠 𐎡', what is absolutely strange, because Gods never write inscriptions in 1st person in Elamite. Following this, we concluded for the inscription-initial syllables, that 𐎧 = \acute{u} and 𐎶 = e are impossible; instead, it must be 𐎧 = e and 𐎶 = \acute{u} .

I used to love this chain of applied logic for several months. And now? Comes François Desset, and reads 𐎧 𐎶 (𐎠 𐎡 \acute{u} *e-ba-ir-at* 'I am Ebarat', so 𐎧 = \acute{u} and 𐎶 = e . What is true? I think there are good reasons to believe in Desset's readings. One of them: In ^{Mah}H' I we find [𐎠]𐎶𐎠𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶, which would, following Desset, be understood as ... (oh God) [Na]piriša! I am Ebar[at], (the king) ... and that is exactly to be expected from an inscription on such a silver vessel. Wow, this is a huge step forward, thirty years after the one to the moon :)

F) Desset's (2018) 𐎠(𐎠)𐎠𐎶𐎶𐎶 *Na-pi-(ir)-ri-ša* reading confirms a proposal that I have had in mind for a long time, namely 𐎠𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 *hu-uš-ša-me*. Here, 𐎶 *uš* (the suffix for 1st pers. pl. perf.) and 𐎠 *me* (the suffix for abstract nouns) are secured for a long time, while 𐎶 *ša* derives from Desset's *Napiriša* reading and 𐎠 *hu* is a new proposal (Well, it is not fully out of the néant, because the "atomic" sign 𐎶, which is inscribed in 𐎠, 𐎡 and others, has for long time been suspicious to be somehow linked to the vowel *u* (e.g. Hinz 1969:44). Are all those inscribed signs (see the single dot 𐎠 in 𐎠, 𐎡, 𐎢, 𐎣); the three dots 𐎤 in 𐎥, 𐎦, 𐎧, 𐎨, 𐎩; the grid 𐎪 in 𐎫, 𐎬, 𐎭, 𐎮, 𐎯, 𐎰, 𐎱, 𐎲, 𐎳, 𐎴, 𐎵; the Tetris brick 𐎶 in 𐎷, 𐎸, 𐎹; the cross + in 𐎺, 𐎻, 𐎼, 𐎽; the leave 𐎿 in 𐏀, 𐏁, 𐏂) vowel-indicators? Is the inscribed 𐎶 the vowel-indicator for *u*? Anyways: The Cuneiform Elamite word *hušame*, translated as 'Stab, Stock, (Baum, Hain?)' in *Elamisches Wörterbuch*, occurs, concluded by a word divider |, in inscription ^{Pers}Q. And the goddess depicted on the silver vessel ^{Pers}Q has two fist-sized sticks in her hands. (You can look at them on www.elamicon.org, scroll to ^{Pers}Q and click to enlarge the photograph.) And interestingly, archaeologists have recently found such fist-sized scepters in Gonur Depe. I will show them at the conference "Cultures in Contact Central Asia as Focus of Trade, Cultural Exchange and Knowledge Transmission – 13-15/02/2020, Bern (Switzerland)", with the contribution "*The fist-sized 'command batons' from Elam and Bactria-Margiana*". See you then!

G) This last part of the newsletter consists in the reply to a request sent by John Marshal, Historian from Margao, Goa, India. I believe it could be of a broader interest.

Dear Dr. Marshal,
your letter is very interesting, thank you for writing it.

Yes, it is true, I am preparing an article about the latest finds concerning the Elamo-Drawidian Hypothesis. (One of my first steps many years ago was the translation of D'jakonov 1967, see attachment 1; his chapter 9. "Das Problem der genetischen Verwandtschaft des Elamischen [*problema genealogičeskich svjazej èlamskogo jazyka*]" (p. 107-112, and p. 7-11 in my translation) still to these days forms the major body, if not virtually 100%, of linguistic evidence for this language family, and anything added by McAlpin 1981 stands on a much more shaky ground). I will read the chapter in your book you mentioned and see what the latest news in this topic are. If you have got even later evidence

pro or contra Elamodraavidian language relationship, please tell me. The reason why the Elamodraavidian topic should be reconsidered, lies in the points listed below:

a) We now have a much clearer picture of literacy in the Bactria-Margiana archaeological Complex. For this, see my article "Ein weiteres baktrisches Siegel" (attachment 2, to be published in "Archiv für Orientforschung") about one Bactrian sherd and two Bactrian seals with Linear Elamite inscriptions. Geographically, the BMAC is quite close to the Drawidian "Urheimat" in Beludjistan claimed by Andronov 1971, Krishnamurti 2003 and others. If we consider sites like Mehrgarh and Mundigak as belonging to the BMAC, the areas do even overlap.

b) Sowjet Ethnographers mention Dravidian speakers in Turkmenisan (= Margiana) until 200 years ago.

c) The striking similarity of the seal ^{LigaV} (see "Ein weiteres baktrisches Siegel", Abb. 2) with Harappan / southeast Iranian technique ("Kernbohrung") and material (steatite) and many other pieces of evidence speak, after Winkelmann 1999, for close cultural (and linguistic?) ties between Bactria-Margiana and Harappan / Indus valley cultural complex.

So, the Proto-Elamodraavidian language area (before ca. 2000 B.C, i.e. the period of Indo-Aryan southward invasion) could have comprised, in my view, today's Turkmenistan/Afghanistan (Bactria-Margiana) and Pakistan (Indus valley) from an archaeological point of view - and this fits with Andronov's (1971:4; see his map in my attachment 3 "Tamilverben", page 6) linguistically reconstructed Proto-Drawidian language area.

And now to your question: How could you possibly contribute to LE decipherment? It takes up two kinds of answers, a general one and some specific ones.

Generally, we are interested in long-term contributors to our "Center for Decipherment of Ancient Writing Systems", founded only one year ago. Today, the Center exists just online, but in future we are planning to hold regular conferences. We would like to invite serious, peer-reviewed scholars from around the world to share their Research on the website <https://center-for-decipherment.ch/>. I cannot speak for all the scholars who participate to this day, but in my opinion a collaboration could be interesting.

Specifically, here's what we need:

i) A translation to English of the website <https://center-for-decipherment.ch/>

ii) A statistical research of my proposition for the reading of ^{ChrisG'} ✻ 𐎧 𐎠 𐎡 ^{hal} Ši-maš-ki 'Land Šimaš(ki)' stated in my article "Ein weiteres baktrisches Siegel" (attachment 2, page 6, chapter "Möglichkeit B: 'das Land Šimaški' "). For 𐎧 ši and 𐎠 ir/ri the sound values are already clear from literature (see footnote 40 and 32) and for 𐎡 maš(?) I made an investigation in the chapter mentioned. But for the hypothesis ✻ = *hal* I have not done any thorough investigation. So far – namely since Bork 1905 – we have been believing that ✻ = *hal*, and I only wrote that "Die erste Lautwerthypothese ✻ = *hal* ist zumindest haltbar:

Bisher wird das äusserlich ähnliche Token 𐎶 für *hal* gehalten, und zwar aufgrund der Sequenz 𐎶𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎶 *hal-me-ni-k Šu-še-en-ri/ki* 'Landesfürst von Susa', das auf der Bilingue ^{Susa}A dem akkadischen 'Ensi von Susa' entspricht. Ob nun 𐎶 und 𐎶 Allographe sind oder ob 𐎶 das Lautzeichen *hal* ist, hingegen 𐎶 das Ortsdeterminativ ^{hal}, möchte ich offenlassen.", and I would very much like to have another person, maybe you, to follow all the argumentation and then to formulate his own opinion. How probable is it, that 𐎶 is the syllable (i.e. sound value) for *hal*, while 𐎶 stands for ^{hal} 'Land' as a geographical determinative? How frequent is 𐎶 in Linear Elamite, and how frequent are the geographical determinatives in Cuneiform Elamite? (For investigating the Cuneiform Elamite text corpus, I provide a digital version of all the Texts I know, see attachment 4).

iii) The "EKI digital OHNE Diakritika" is only one of several versions of the digitalized corpus of Cuneiform Elamite. There are versions with or without diacritica, with or without hyphens, with or without divine names, with or without geographical names etc. I imagine you would like to work with it for the sake of pushing forward the Elamo-Drawidian Hypothesis, true. It is an amazing tool and you are so fast in searching for words and morphemes in it. The problem: It is not ready for publication; there are mistakes in it (due to difficulties of scanning the dozens of printed articles), and a bunch of explanations is needed for allowing scholars to use it scientifically. So far, it is only useful for scholars with a firm background in Elamite grammar and with the underlying publications at hand. Help me cleaning and methodologizing it, and you are my Co-author and the Captain Future of computer-based Elamo-Drawidian research.

iv) Any other findings you get by playing around with the elamicon.org webtool. It is funnier than any other computer game, but it needs time to become a pro in it, as computer games do.

Dear Mr. Marshal, for helping us with need ii) or iii), you must plunge deep into the (mainly german) literature, but if you do so, it would really be helpful. Please download the **Elamicon font** by scrolling all the way down on the front page of the elamicon.org webtool. Done so, your results and proposals can be sent to me in an E-mail or in any text document, and I will share it with the others interested.

Thank you very much for your interest, and please ask what you need to know.

kindly and with best wishes,

Michael

(Please send your reply to me only)

H) Literature used in this Newsletter:

Andronov, M. S. (1971): Jazyk Braui. Izdatel'stvo Nauka, Moskva.

D'jakonov, I. M. (1967): Jazyki drevnej perednej azij. Izdatel'stvo Nauka, Moskva.

Desset, François (2018): "Nine Linear Elamite Texts Inscribed on Silver "Gunagi" Vessels (X, Y, Z, F', H', P', J', K' and L'): New Data on Linear Elamite Writing and the History of the Sukkalmah Dynasty." *Iran* 56/2, 105-143.

Hinz, Walther (1969): Eine neugefundene altelamische Silbervase, in: *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* 1, 11-44.

Krishnamurti, Bh. (2003): *The Dravidian Languages*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Mäder, Michael; Balmer, Stephan; Plachtzik, Simon und Rawyler, Nicolai (2018): "Sequenzanalysen zur elamischen Strichschrift", in: B. Mofidi-Nasrabadi, D. Prechel, A. Pruß (Hrsg.): *Elam and its Neighbors. Recent Research and New Perspectives. Proceedings of the international congress held at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, September 21-23, 2016 (Elamica 8)*, 49-104.

McAlpin, David (1981): "Proto-Elamo-Dravidian: The Evidence and its Implications". *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 71.

(For those of you not wishing to receive the NEWSLETTER anymore, please reply with a "no thanks" or some angry Emoticon. If welcome, you will receive a newsletter every 12 - 24 months.)