

## An Attempt to Give Meaning to the Two Tablets Discovered in Konar Sandal Archaeological Site of Jiroft.


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### Abstract:

The four tablets found in Konar Sandal have led to various theories about the history of writing, its origins, or the definition of a writing system separate from what was previously known as Mesopotamian and Egyptian. However, due to the inability to read the concepts contained in these tablets, they have not been significantly read so far. In the leading research, an attempt has been made to make a check on the content of the two inscriptions among the mentioned cases, using the common writing patterns of the third to the first millennium BC in the Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau. In this study, it was seen that at the beginning of one of the tablets and also at the end part of the other one, a significant relationship can be established with the introduction pattern of royal genealogies.

**Keywords:** Jiroft, Konar Sandal, geometric tablets, genealogy



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### Introduction

Konar Sandal (fig. 1) is located 30 km south of Jiroft city and includes two hills called "Konar Sandal A" and "Konar Sandal B". Findings from several seasons of site excavation, which are described in the three-volume collection of the excavator (Majidzadeh, 2003), have introduced data related to the third millennium BC and the Bronze Age culture. From hill B, a fortified structure as well as tablets were found (Jiroft iii, in: Iranica) which were related to a different system and writing style or somewhat similar to Elamite script. These writings are estimated to date back to the second half of the third millennium BC (Desset, 2014). Whether this set of signs is, firstly, written and merely a symbol of the sign, secondly, if they are inscriptions, in which direction they begin, and thirdly, whether they have a similar pattern with Mesopotamian and Elamite linear inscriptions, are questions that have not been answered well so far.



Fig. 1: Aerial photo of two hills related to the area next to Konar Sandal Jiroft (google map)

The Tablets (fig. 2) can be divided into two categories in terms of content:

- A) one line Tablets which are Similar with short identical inscriptions
- B) Multi-line inscriptions

In the group A items consist of two tablets, the type of signs of the first tablet (fig. 3) is different rather the second tablet (Fig. 4). The second tablet is very similar to the Elamite linear inscriptions and its era is probably newer than the previous tablet.

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Fig. 2: Cases of inscriptions and ostensibly inscriptions findings in the Konar Sandal site (Basello, 2016; IRNA, 2018; YJC, 2014; Desset, 2014: 96)

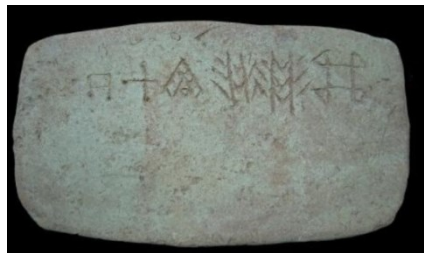


Fig. 3: A short inscription

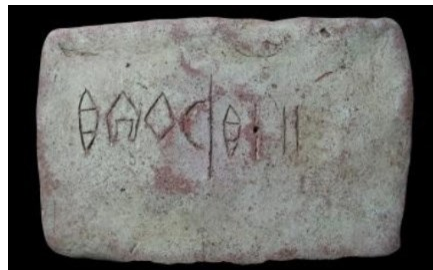



Fig. 4: A short text with an inscription similar to Elamite linear tablets



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The second category of seemingly inscription items contain multi-lines contents (Fig. 5), and it seems that their obvious difference with two short inscriptions is the description of a subject rather than the expression of an identity (such as someone's name or place).




Fig. 5: Multi-lines Tablets of konar Sandal. in back of two cases, it is written the short inscriptions.

As can be seen, the type of signs used in multi-lines cases is quite different from that in the two short inscriptions. Although they sometimes have signs similar to Elamite linear symbols (such as rhombus), but the writing style, the frequent repetition of the use of signs in lines and apparently the existence of a vertical line distinguishing between two concepts or words, are special features of these three tablets. The bottom row of the table in figure 5 has been studied at the University of Bologna, but the author has not reached a comprehensive conclusion and has only discussed the recurrence of symptoms (Basello, 2006). Also, François Desset has conducted studies on possible rules in geometric writing and recognizing its signs (Desset, 2014; Desset, 2018).

### Discussion

In general, what has led to the discovery of cuneiform in Western Asia, as well as the three Egyptian calligraphies, has been the existence of multilingual inscriptions. For hieroglyphic and demotic writings, the Greek script in the "Rosetta stone" was used (Ray, 2007). Since the Greek script and language were known to researchers, the only thing left to do in deciphering the code was to identify and match word for word the equivalents in the two unknown Egyptian scripts that were eventually made.

But in the case of cuneiform, this did not happen so easily, because all three versions of the inscription of Darius I in Behistun were with unknown writings. Therefore, there was a need to model a well-known literary line and style related to one of the Persian-Iranian and Mesopotamian cultures. Grotefend, based on the literature used in the Sassanid Pahlavi royal inscriptions, found that a pattern in the royal literature of the first millennium AD was common among the Persian court, which was written as "Shah's name", "Son" and "Father's name". Knowing this pattern, he examined the initial words from the left and right of the inscriptions, which later became known as the Old Persian version of Behistun, and found that in the first lines to the left of the first column of this version, duplicate words were seen between other words.




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He recognized them as the word "king" and before that he knew the name of the king. He then identified the word "Son" among them (Grotefend, in: Britannica). This pattern of reading eventually led to the opening of a gateway to science, and Old Persian, New Babylonian (Akkadian), and Elamite texts were deciphered.

Here, too, the author uses the same pattern. In the inscriptions from figure 5 (top right), if we consider the writing side as the common Sumerian-Akkadian pattern of the Bronze Age, from left to right, and also consider those single vertical lines as word-separating signs, such a pattern of reading concepts can be seen (Fig. 6):

Name of the first person + Governmental title of the first person (likely king) + Lineage of the first person (Son) + name of the second person (father of the first person) + Governmental title of the second person (likely king)

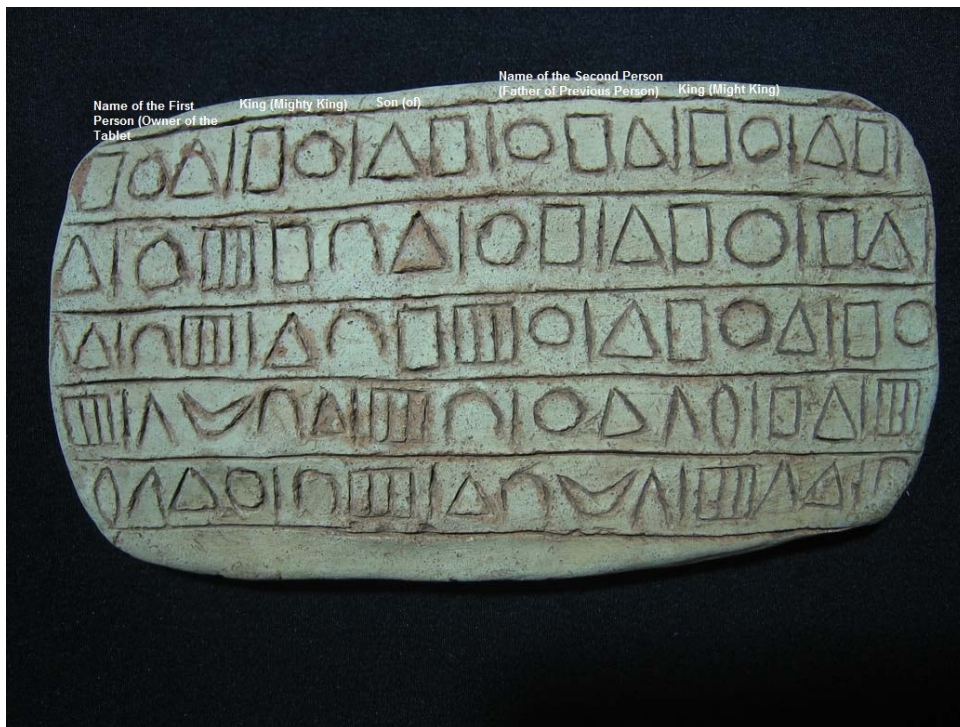


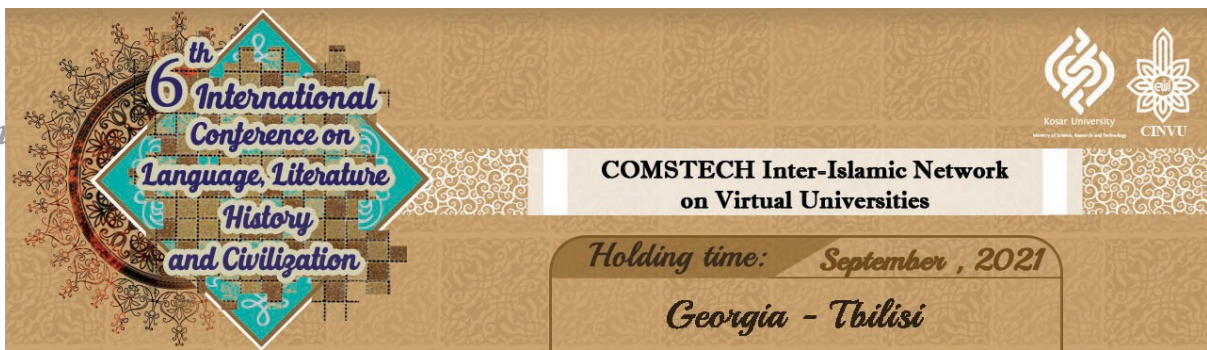
Fig. 6: Suggest the concepts of the first line except the last word from the right.

The model used in presenting this proposal is the royal inscriptions of the Achaemenid Empire in the second half of the first millennium BC on the Iranian plateau, where the pattern of writing the inscriptions was as follows:


Name of Shah + titles of Shah + lineage of Shah (Son) name of Shah's father + Governmental title of Shah's father


The points in this modeling are as follows:





1- Since it is unlikely that the name of a person associated with the Bronze and Iron Ages of the region was three letters, it seems that each of these forms used between the vertical hypothetical line and the distinguishing feature of the hypothetical words is not a symbol of a letter, Rather, they represent a Syllable, just like the common style in cuneiforms.

2- The combination of the two forms  in this pattern, it means the "king" or the "great king". If these two symbols give the meaning of king, the issue would be clear, but if the symbol of the vertical rectangle is the meaning of king or mighty and the sign of the circle, its complement (mighty or king) means, then these concepts are independent of each other and then, the analytical continuation of the inscription will be more effective.

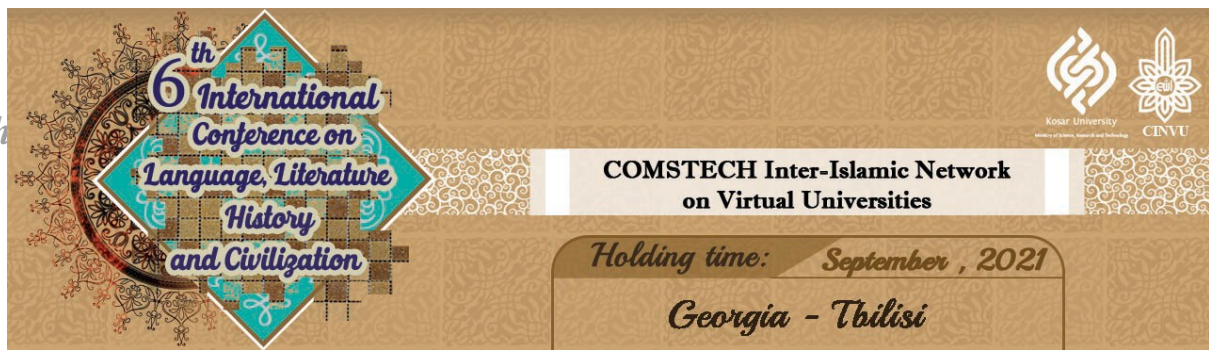
3- Combination of two shapes  from left to right in this hypothetical model, is considered as "Son" or "Mighty Son". Here again, if these two symbols have two separate meanings, then compared to The previous combination, it can be concluded that the sign of the vertical rectangle can be in a meaning of "Mighty" or "Great" or "Elder" and therefore the symbol of the circle in this combination is in the meaning of the "king" and the sign of the triangle in this combination is in the sense of "Child" or "Son". Here I remind once again that this is the latter assumption if compound signs make sense separately.

4- A very important point in the analysis of this tablet and the other multi-lines tablet (Fig. 5, top left) is that if we read the order of reading from left to right in line two and as same as for the line one, some of the words appear exactly upside down and therefore are repeated which this makes the process of checking the concept meaningless. for example, the right half of the first line is mirrored in the same half of the second line, and this is also seen for other lines relative to each other (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: Duplicates are shown with the same colors

It is clear that such issues in the process of conceptualizing the content that are assumed to be an inscription would be meaningless. On the other hand, due to the fact that in all three multi-lines tablets, one of the longitudinal side of the them is more framed than the other one, therefore, they can be assumed as the beginning of engraving (in the same direction as shown in Fig. 8).



To solve the problem of repeating the mirrors of some word expressions, the author suggests that if we consider the principles of writing in the royal tradition as and in a spiral mode, the tablets will have content follows:

The first line : from left to right  
 from right to left : The second line  
 The third line : from left to right  
 from right to left : The forth line  
 The fifth line: from left to right

The important point is that in this style of writing, the penultimate line is written in any direction, the final line, like the first line, will be written from left to right. François Desset does not believe in this rule (Desset, 2014: 103), But in my opinion, it is based on the same conditions that in one of the multi-lines tablets (Fig. 5, top, left), despite being left-to-right in the direction suggested for the penultimate line, the final line also starts from the left and ends in the middle, but it should not be mistaken that all lines also read from left to right.

Here, in the process of analysis, we encounter problems, and it is a series of repetitions of the combined signs of the individual relationship that is seen between the hypothetical symbol for the second person governmental title and the third person name. Whether this repetition of the two signs together means "grandson" and therefore related to the first person mentioned in the tablet, or whether the same combination reflects the lineage of the second governmental person to the third person (a king who is the grandson of the previous king is the point. What can be seen is that the hypothetical names for the second and third characters are the same, in other words, they both had the same name, for this reason, perhaps the relationship between grandfather and grandson was established between them. One of the interesting points is the common term in Mesopotamian literature to express the relationship of "grandson" kinship. In this case, the Mesopotamian literature uses not a specific word for this kinship, but the compound term "Son of Son", which we see in the cylinder of Cyrus II as "*mar mari*" (Rogers, 1912: 380-384). It should be noted that in the inscription of *Naram-Sin*, the king of Akkad, whose era was close to the antiquity of the tablets of Jiroft, the same combination can be found to express the kinship of "being a grandson"<sup>1</sup> (Alkhafaji, 2020: 4). Therefore, it seems that the same type of writing literature has been used in the tablet in question in Jiroft, which is in line with the pattern proposed in this article to give meaning to the signs of this tablet.

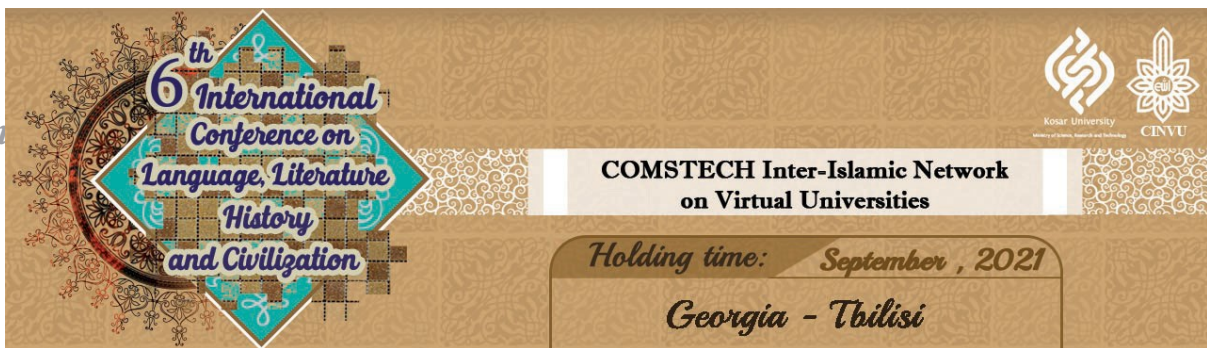
Now we can analyze the continuation of the inscription. It seems that similar to the patterns used in Babylonian literature in the cylinder of Cyrus II, the inscription of Darius in Behiston and also the inscription of Ardashir III in Persepolis with the code "A<sup>3</sup> Pa", the first person, has recorded the continuation of the genealogy (Fig. 8):

Continuation of the first line; From left:

+ Second person lineage + Governmental title (king or mighty king) + [Name of the first person's father in the previous proposal]

<sup>1</sup> -5'. [DUMU] DUMU





Second line; from right to left:

The lineage of the first person (Son of Son = Grandson) + name of the third person (which is the same as the name of the second person) + governmental title

In the following, we will deal with a number of hypothetical repetitive words. The hypothetical words with orange, pink, blue, and green underscores are each redrawn in their positions in the same order. These cases cannot be assessed in the current situation. But at the end of the third line on the right, there are signs that remind us of our initial assumption for the title of government in previous arguments. This problem is reinforced when we expect a name in front of that sign and a symbol representing the supposed lineage behind it, which is also seen as figure 8. So it seems that after a few phrases unknown to us, the content of the tablet again refers to a person with a governmental title and his father's lineage.



Fig. 8: Fig. 8: Suggested Direction of considering the tablet to give meaning to the content of one of the them

If we mark these expressions with Latin letters (Fig. 9), we can get a better understanding of the subject analysis, which results in the following:

- Expression x: 1- Between the phrase assumed for the governmental title (before) and the phrase y (after) 2- Between the phrase z (before) and the phrase assumed for the name of a person (after).
- Expression z: 1 - Between the phrase y (before) and the phrase x 2 - Between the hypothetical phrase for a person's name (before) and the phrase x " 3 - Between the hypothetical phrase for a person's name and the phrase x.
- Expression y: Between x (before) and z (after).
- Expression x": - Between the expression x (before) and the expression y (after) 2 - Between the expression z (before) and an unknown expression at the end.



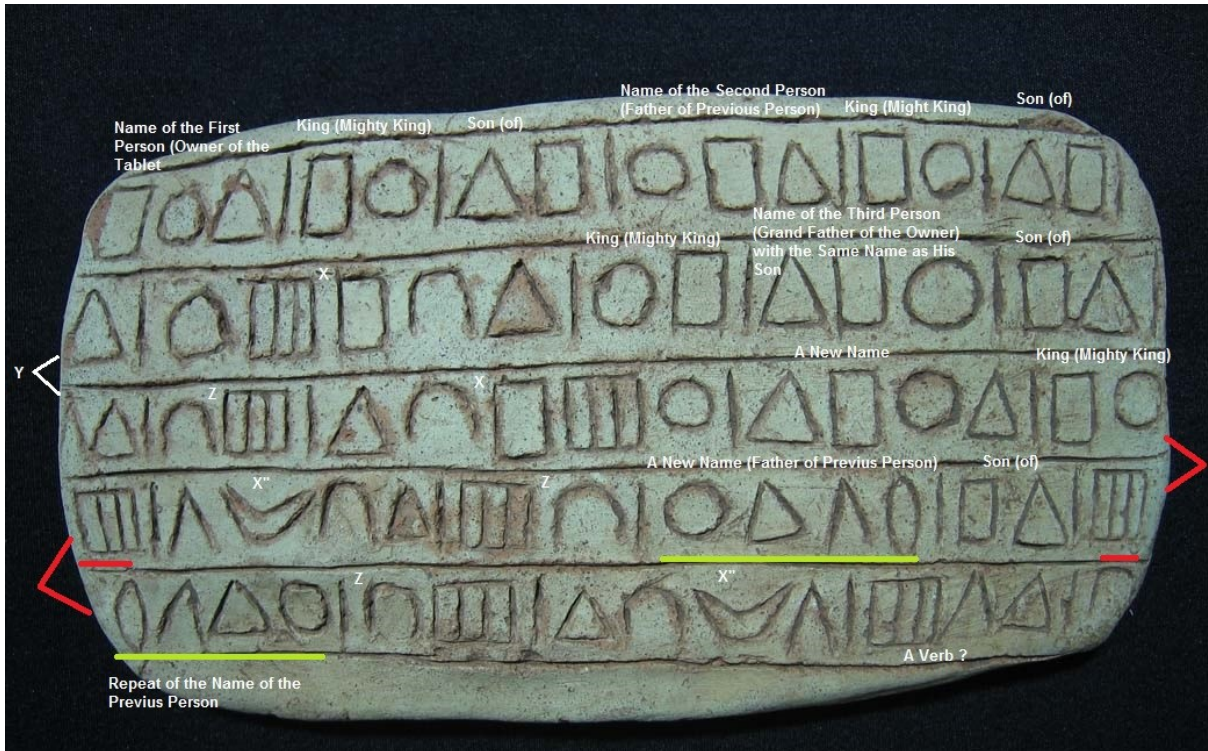
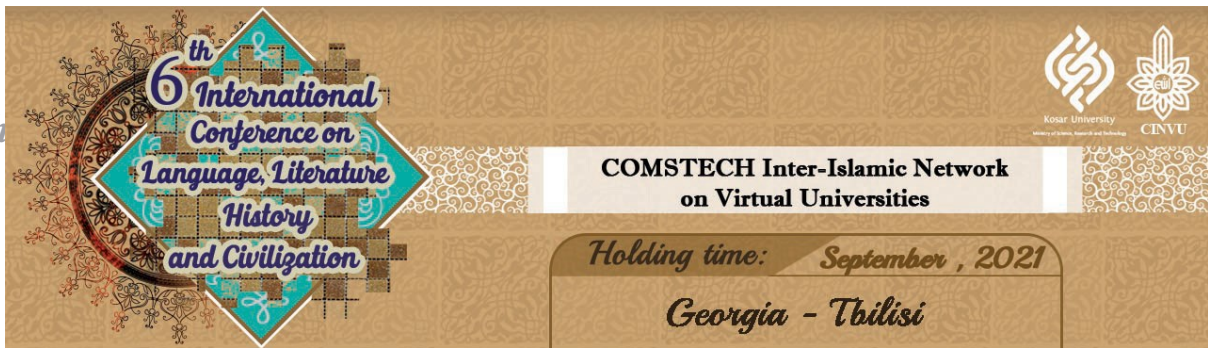
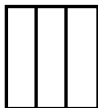


Fig. 9: The status of the variety of hypothetical words and their position relative to each other.

Since the conditions for the use of signs have changed from the middle of the second line onwards, it does not appear that this inscription was merely a genealogy, but its content is a description of an event or work related to one's era and in connection with another character. Therefore, such a report will require some verbs and even preposition words or pronouns. Also, because before the phrase z, a name is assumed in two places, and also because one side of x is attached to a governmental title associated with a name, so from the author's point of view, this is the phrase y, which must contain a "name" or be an "adjective" to be related to the expression z after itself. In other words, the symbol comes from three shapes

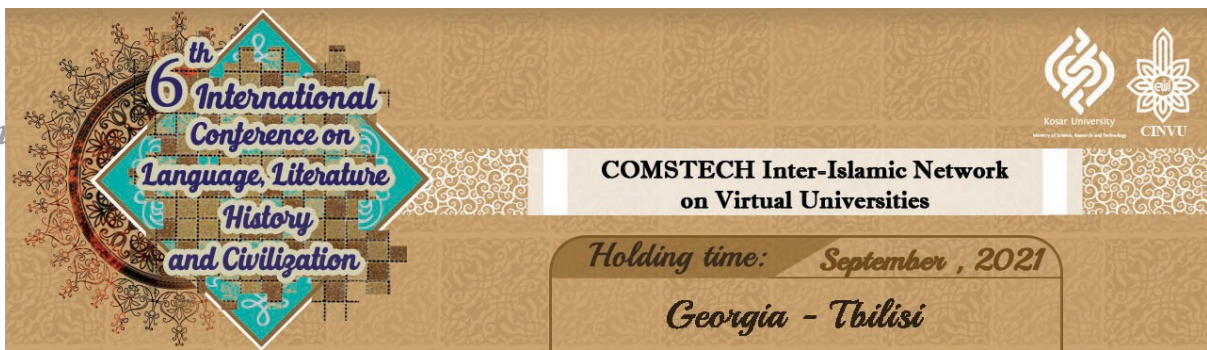


probably a name or adjective for a person in the text. The two expressions x and x'' also differ in their final two forms, and are therefore probably similar but different verbs in many morphology (tense Conjugation or grammar pronouns). The z-shaped expression can also be assumed to be a "preposition" or a "Conjunction" between a verb and a noun.

Finally, the sign 

shown with a red line in figure 9 will be the final topic of discussion. The fact that this sign is once engraved at the end of the hypothetical symbol for the title of government and appears elsewhere at the beginning of the repetition for the hypothetical last name indicates that it can represent an "adjective" or a "possessive pronoun" for these two words.





## Result

In the end and according to this proposed reading pattern, in relation to the other two multi-lines inscriptions obtained from the Konar Sandal Jiroft, it should be said that they are not a genealogy consisting of a few limited names and signs, but seem to have a more complex content. That's why the appearance of their signage is not simple. For the tablet which was discussed here, it seems that the content is on a short report of an Event between two kings according to the account of one which has begun the report by introducing his genealogy (Fig. 10).

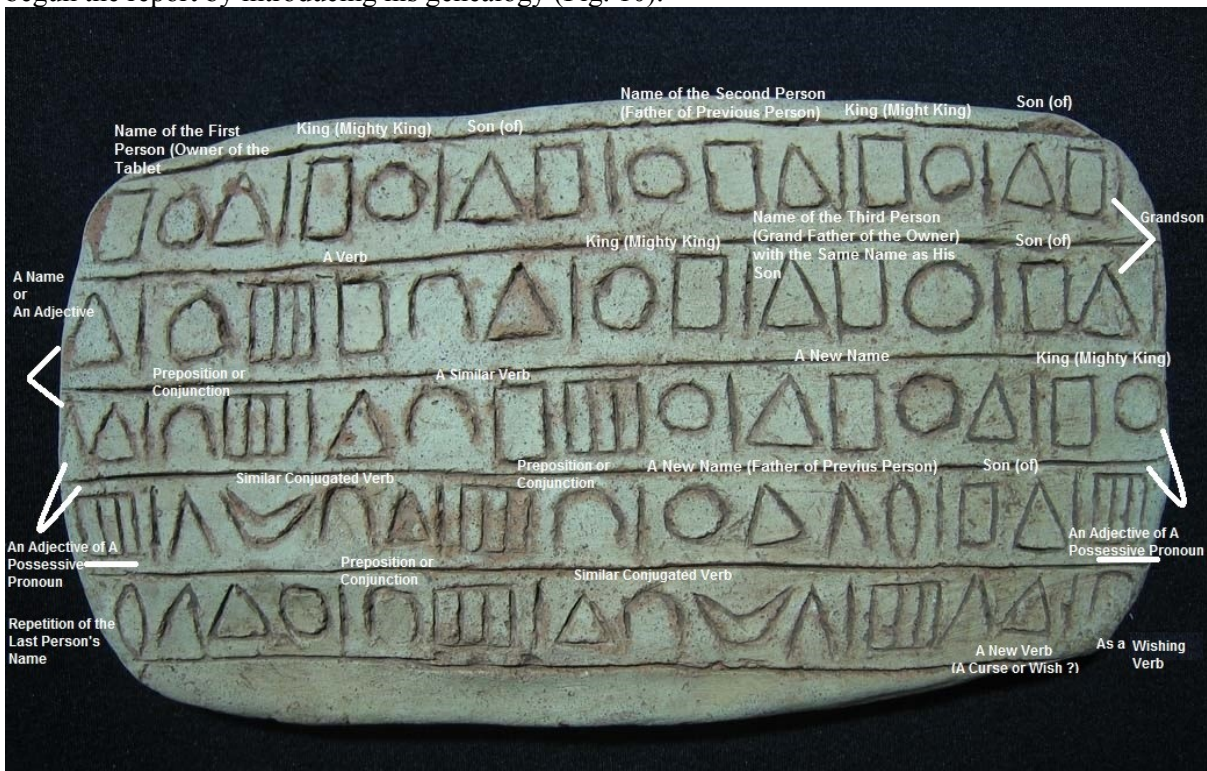



Fig. 10: The final form of the tablet reading proposal

Therefore, the author's suggestion is to know the nature of the two tablets as some royal commands or reports. The most important reason on which the author makes such an assumption is that at the end of the contents of the tablet shown in Figure 5 (top left), it can be seen the same compound sign 

which assumed as "king" or "mighty king". Following and based on this model of conceptualization, the name of the person or the year of his rule is probably mentioned via an unknown numerical system.

Hence, and from the sum of the analysis of the two tablets, it can be deduced that the latter tablet was a royal, court, or even administrative decree or report have given describing an event related to the time of the king mentioned at the end of the inscription; like Similar administrative reports which have been obtained abundantly from Mesopotamian region as well as Persepolis tablets.





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