



How to Write Cuneiform



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An introductory guide to making clay tablets, various cuneiform scripts, the decipherment of cuneiform, and writing *Ugaritic* cuneiform. Includes transliterations of simple Ugaritic texts actually excavated at Ras Shamra. Students can try their hand at copying these and writing their own texts in *Ugaritic*!

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Damaged relief depicting an Assyrian scribe of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.) writing in cuneiform on a clay tablet (Til-Barsip, Northern Syria).

Replica of Ugaritic cuneiform tablet #63 (Syria, vol.15, p. 243): a list of personnel and donkeys assigned to certain priests. This tablet along with several others produced by using the information in this booklet

THE ORIGINS OF WRITING

Writing began in ancient Mesopotamia, Iraq, the land "between the rivers" Tigris and Euphrates before 3400 BC. While it used to be thought that writing developed first in southern Iraq, latest excavations point rather to a spontaneous appearance of writing in numerous places in Iraq. The need to keep records of agricultural produce such as grain, the numbers of animals in herds, and supplies of rations issued from temples to workers produced the *token* system. These tokens were small cones, cylinders, and spheres, (later tokens resembled the *object* the token represented). They were stored in a clay or small bowl or *bulla*, or strung on string to which a *bulla* (here a lump of clay) was attached. The *bulla* was impressed with the stamp of the owner.

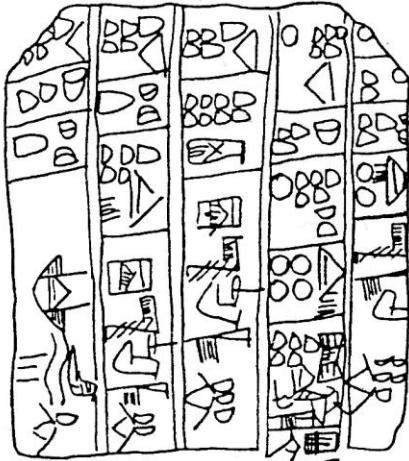


Fig. 1

Jemdet Nasr period tablet (3300-2900 BC)

Records commodities issued (?) to a temple (?) on days 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. BM 116730

(After Walker, *Reading the Past - Cuneiform*, p. 53)

The next step in the creation of writing was to **scratch** a picture (*pictogram*) of the object being recorded onto stone or clay tablets with circles and wedges to represent numbers. Such **pictographic tablets** form the earliest known written texts. They date as early as c. 3300 BC and have been found at sites such as Uruk, Jemdet Nasr, and Susa, and are mostly economic texts recording items of agricultural produce. At this time first appeared the practice of creating the pictographs as a group of wedges by means of pressing a piece of cut reed into the clay. These earliest *cuneiform*, or "wedge-shaped" characters (*logograms* - standing for a physical object or idea) resembled the earlier *pictographs*. The tablets consist of a series of rectangles within which the signs appear in random arrangements. These tablets are turned over left-to-right. The boxes on each side are read right-to-left. In much later times the scribes of **Hammurabi** King of Babylon (1792-1750 BC) wrote the king's laws on his stela mimicking the early practice of writing down columns which progressed right-to-left.

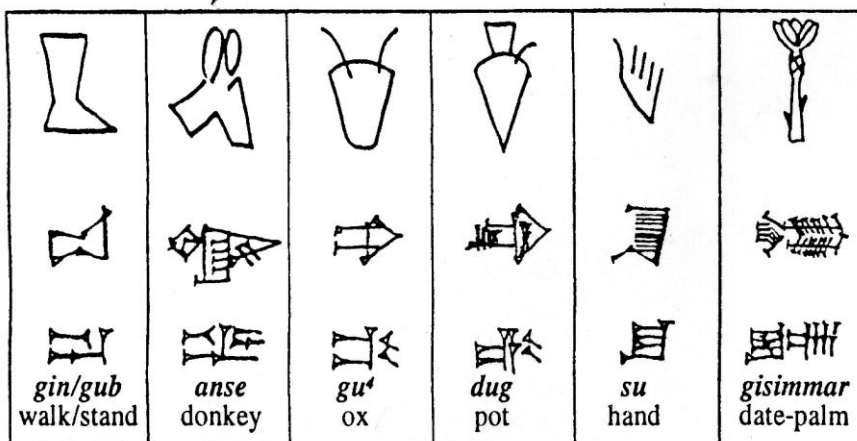


Fig. 2

Cuneiform signs: 3000 BC, c.2400BC, c.650 BC

Note: Signs "turn" 90 degrees anticlockwise (bottom line)

(After Walker, p 10.)

By about 2500 BC the **direction** of writing cuneiform changed. Instead of writing down the columns and progressing from right-to-left (fig. 2), the tablets were now written from left-to-right, progressing down the tablet top-to-bottom. This possibly avoided the scribe's hand obscuring his work as was the case in fig. 4. Consequently the cuneiform signs now appeared "on their backs" ie. apparently rotated ninety degrees anti-clockwise (see figs. 4, 5), and the tablets now turn over top-to-bottom (fig. 3). **Several hundred signs** (logograms) were used by Sumerian scribes (3300-2334 BC).

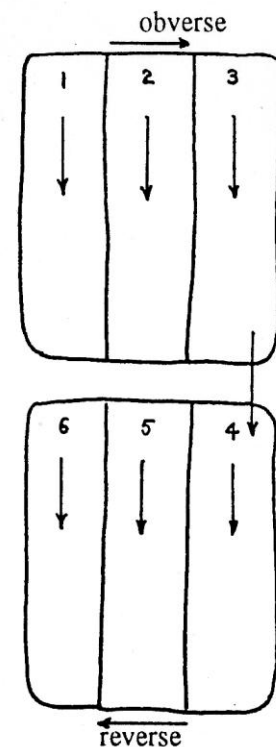
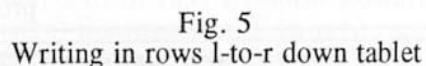
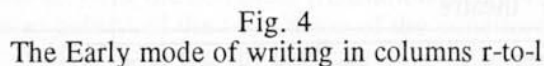


Fig. 3

"Turning the page" after 2000 BC.
(After Driver, *Semitic Writing*, p. 45)








SYLLABIC WRITING - AKKADIAN, ASSYRIAN, BABYLONIAN, PERSIAN






The next step in writing was to use cuneiform signs to express *syllables* (such as sounds "su", "da", "ru" etc.) used in *speech*. Thus cuneiform signs could be pronounced, linking speech to writing. The earliest syllabic texts have been excavated at Ur (UR I-II) dating to c. 2800 BC. During the Akkadian period (2334-2154 BC) Sumerian script was used with modifications to write the Akkadian language by using Sumerian signs for syllables. Some *logograms* persisted however, as a kind of "shorthand" for some concepts. An example is the Sumerian sign LUGAL ("king") which occurs even on the (Neo)Babylonian bricks of King Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BC) (see fig. 7). These inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar confirm Daniel's claim that the king rebuilt Babylon (Daniel 4:30). Other types of cuneiform were used to write Assyrian (fig. 6), Babylonian (fig. 7) and Old Persian (see fig. 8).

Fig. 6 ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF WRITING THE NAMES OF ASSYRIAN KINGS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE (After Walker, p. 57) Assyrian uses about 600 signs. Note that **CAPITALS** indicate earlier Sumerian signs used for a *syllable* in Assyrian.





NB: The King Sargon of Isaiah 20:1 was presumed by Bible critics to be a mythological figure until his palace was excavated at Khorsabad. The Bible writers are always accurate when referring to Assyrian kings.





 1 d *šul-ma-nu-MAŠ*






1 sarru-GIN.

1 d sin-PAP.MES-eri₄-ba
1 d EN.ZU-ŠEŠ.MEŠ-SU

1 Aš-PAP-A

1 *as-sur*-PAP-A









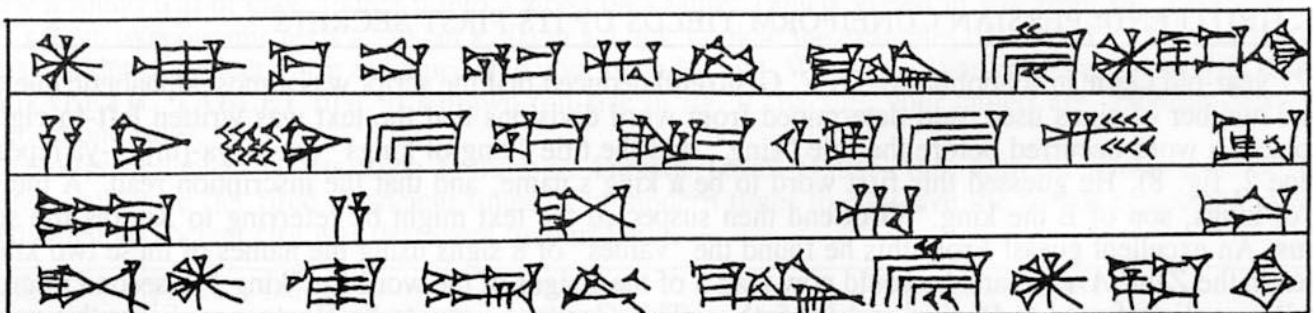


1 as-sur-DU₃-A 1 AN.SAR-BA-AN-AB-U₅

Note: 1 is punctuation
d means "god" (a determinant)

Fig. 7 NEO-BABYLONIAN STAMPED BRICK INSCRIPTION OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR II

NB: Sumerian signs are in CAPITALS (more than 600 signs in total)
Here the "star" sign is for "god" and precedes the name of the King.



1. ^anabu-ku-du-ur-ri-usur LUGAL KA.DINGIR.RA^{si}
Nabu-kudurri-usur sar Babili
2. za-ni-in e-sag-il u e-zi-da
zanin Esagila u Ezida
3. IBILA a-sa-re-du
aplu asaredu
4. sa ^anabu-IBLA-URU LUGAL KA.DINGIR.RA^{si}
sa Nabu-apla-usur sar Babili

1. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon
2. patron of Esagila and Ezida
3. eldest son
4. of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon

Fig. 8 OLD PERSIAN INSCRIPTION OF KING XERXES I (486-465 BC) OF PERSIA CUT ABOVE THE DOORS OF HIS PERSEPOLIS PALACE [Persian used 36 almost alphabetic characters, 4 ideograms, and a word divider]

NB: ":" is a word divider; [th] is a *single* sign pronounced as "th" in "theatre"



1. xa-sa-ya-a-ra-sa-a : xa-sa-a-ya-[th]a-i-ya : va-za-ra-

3. na-a-ma : da-a-ra-ya-va-ha-u-sa : xa-sa-a-ya-[th]a-

2. ka : xa-sa-a-ya-[th]a-i-ya : xa-sa-a-ya-[th]a-i-ya-a-

4. i-ya-ha-ya-a : pa-u-sa : ha-xa-a-ma-na-i-sa-i-ya

"Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the son of Darius the king, an Achaemenian."

ALPHABETIC CUNEIFORM WRITING - UGARITIC

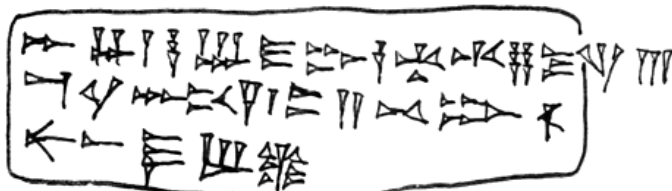


Fig. 9 Schoolboy's tablet listing the 30 Ugaritic characters

In the 14th century BC an **alphabetic** cuneiform script appeared at ancient Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra) on the Syrian coast. Here some 1000 tablets have been excavated, written in a cuneiform alphabet of **thirty characters and a word-divider** (fig. 9). This booklet gives the rudiments of writing in Ugaritic as this is probably the simplest type of cuneiform.

CRACKING THE CUNEIFORM CODE

The story of the decipherment of cuneiform is a complicated one. Early visitors to the ancient royal Persian city of Persepolis in Iran copied various inscriptions from above the doors of the palaces there (fig. 8 above). This script at Persepolis was named *cuneiform* by the German traveller Englebert Kampfer. Other scholars had published a more modern Persian book of the Zoroastrians, the *Zend-Avesta* and the Avestan language of these texts was to give clues to the signs used for "king" in the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions of Persepolis.

G. F. GROTEFEND: PERSIAN CUNEIFORM GIVES UP ITS FIRST SECRETS

By 1802 twenty-seven year-old German schoolmaster Georg Friedrich Grotefend had deduced that the script was *almost* alphabetic due to the limited number of signs used, and determined from word divisions that the text was written left-to-right. In two places a word occurred before the title "king" and the title "king of kings" (xa-sa-ya-[th]a-i-ya repeated see line 2, fig. 8). He guessed this first word to be a king's name, and that the inscription read "A the king, king of kings, son of B the king." Grotefend then suspected the text might be referring to Xerxes the son of Darius. An excellent guess! From this he found the phonetic "values" of eight signs using the names of these two kings as written in the *Zend-Avesta*, and he could now read five of the seven signs of the word for "king." A *second inscription* from Persepolis referred to Darius and *his* father. Grotefend knew Darius' father to be Hystaspes (not a king). From this name he obtained four more signs giving him a total of thirteen (four of these were later discovered to be errors). Another

inscription from Murghab referring to **Cyrus** (see Isaiah 45; Daniel 6:28; Ezra 1:1 etc.) allowed Grotefend to correct 3 of these errors. By 1815 he had correctly identified 12 Persian cuneiform signs. More were added by other scholars and the Danish scholar **Rasmus Christian Rask** found that the language of the Persian reliefs, although related to Avestan, was *not* identical to it after all. In 1823 **J. S. St. Martin** identified two more signs; **Christian Lassen** identified 8 more in 1836.

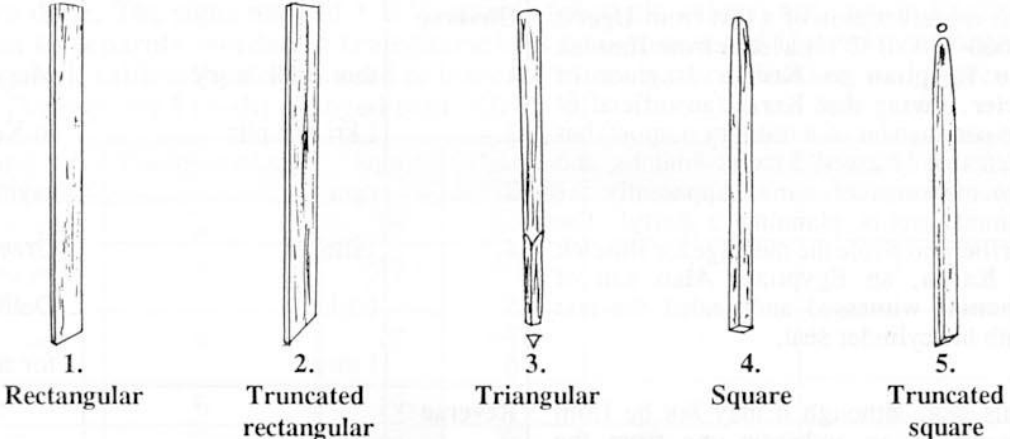
HENRY RAWLINSON & OTHERS: THE BEHISTUN INSCRIPTION

In 1835 the British army officer **Henry Rawlinson** (later Sir Henry) commenced the task of copying the cuneiform inscriptions of **Darius I** carved into a rock face 106 metres above the spring at Behistun near modern Teheran. Rawlinson's patient labours in copying the texts here were undertaken at great physical risk and made exciting reading. At times he balanced on a step ladder on the narrow 62cm wide rock ledge below the inscription using both hands to write. Ten years' work was to yield the complete translation of the 414 lines of *Old Persian* text. In 1851 Irishman **Edward Hincks** and Rawlinson published the translation of the cuneiform *Babylonian* (600 sign) Behistun text. Edwin Norris published the *Elamite* text in 1855. But the major credit for the complete decipherment of Persian cuneiform must go to Rawlinson.

ANCIENT STYLUSES

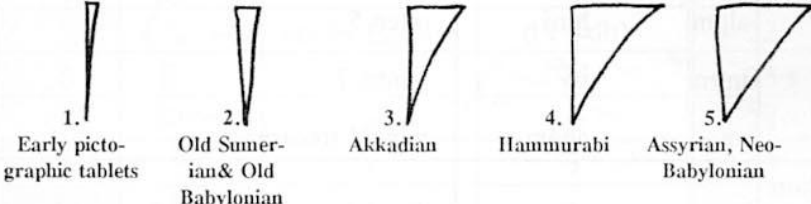
Fig. 10 Various forms of the stylus (after Driver, *Semitic Writing*, fig. 5, p. 24)

The appearance of ancient styluses is somewhat of an enigma. In addition the shapes of wedges in cuneiform script vary from the earliest Sumerian texts to those of the Persians. Shapes of wedges also varied between cultures and nations, and whether the inscription is pressed into clay or cut into stone.



1. Rectangular 2. Truncated rectangular 3. Triangular 4. Square 5. Truncated square

Fig. 11 Shapes of Wedges in Cuneiform Script (after Driver, *Semitic Writing*, fig. 7, p. 25)



1. Early pictographic tablets 2. Old Sumerian & Old Babylonian 3. Akkadian 4. Hammurabi 5. Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian

However, various attempts have been made to reconstruct ancient styluses on the basis of the shapes of the characters (left). Five different styluses are drawn in fig. 10. The tablets illustrated in this booklet were written using a # 5 stylus.

MAKING A CLAY TABLET

Clay used for making tablets should be of **plasticine consistency** when shaped but left to harden before being inscribed. Ancient tablets almost never show fingerprints or evidence signs of being sticky when used. Create a round ball of clay; flatten it into a tablet on a table. Tablets varied in size from small dockets 3 cm x 2 cm x 2 cm to economic texts c. 30 cm x 30 cm x 4 cm. Look at the examples of actual **Ugaritic tablets** drawn in this booklet and select a size appropriate to your intended text. We suggest you recreate the **SCHOOLBOY'S ALPHABETIC TABLET** first. It's drawn full size in fig. 9. Be sure your tablets are smoothly-rounded (or flatter on one side). The **colours** of ancient tablets, such as those in **Ancient Times House**, vary with the temperature of firing - whether deliberate (ie. fired in ancient times or in modern times to conserve the tablet) or accidental (tablets baked when an ancient city was destroyed by burning).

Colour	Black & Dark Grey	Whitish	Orange-brown
Reason	Burned in ancient city	Excessive baking	Baked in modern laboratory



Rolling the clay & Making a Tablet

Using the **drawings of tablets** in this booklet and the sizes given as a guide roll a piece of clay into a **ball or cylinder** with rounded ends (our experiments show that a **rounded disk** works even better). Flatten into a **rectangular slab** with rounded ends. Ancient tablets were *flatter* on the **obverse** (first side) and usually *more rounded* on the **reverse**.

Writing on the Tablet

Experiment writing Ugaritic characters on a piece of clay. Your clay should be hard enough that your fingerprints do not appear. After writing the **Schoolboy's Alphabetic tablet** try your hand at copying tablets #63, #143. Make sure you use the **correct forms** of the letters s (s, š, š, š) and h (h, ḥ, ḥ) etc! **Remember** the *word-dividing wedges* ' replace the 'full-stops' of the transliterations!



Our representation of a text from Ugarit (1600-1200 B.C.) is a letter from **Ilmelek the Egyptian** to **Kerrie** daughter of **Peter**, saying that **Keret** (an official of the commander of a military outpost) has been sent 12 asses, 5 oxen, 7 lambs, and two measures of wine. Apparently the commander is planning a party! The scribe who wrote the message for **Ilmelek** is **Karen**, an Egyptian. **Alan** son of **Thomas** witnessed and sealed the text with his cylinder seal.

Although this seal is not from Ugarit it is an authentic one from the ancient middle east from **about 1500 B.C.** It shows two figures. The leading one holds a bow (?) and the following figure wears a short horizontally-striped tunic. The two objects to the right of the last figure may be spears.

The seal is similar to others found on **Cyprus** and the coastal islands of the **eastern Mediterranean** (Parvine Merriilees, Cylinder and Stamp Seals in Australian Collections, Victoria College Archaeology Research Unit, Occasional Paper No. 3, 1990, #48).

Obverse		
1.	thm.ilmlk.mšry	Message (from) Ilmlk the Egyptian to Kerrie daughter of Peter saying: Greetings to you. Delivered to Keret for the commander(:)
2.	l.kri.bnt.pitr	
3.	rgm	
4.	yšlm.lk	
5.	bd.krt	
6.	l.mru	
Reverse		
7.	ḥmrn ṭn šr	asses 12
8.	alpm ḥmš	oxen 5
9.	imrm šb ^c	lambs 7
10.	yn aḥdm	wine 2 (measures)
Colophon		
11.	spr.krn.mšry	Scribe Karen the Egyptian
12.	yapihu.alan	Witness: Alan
13.	bn.tmas	son of Thomas



Sealing the Tablet



Make a **cylinder seal** as described below (section 5). Your seal could be abstract in design, with or without a decorated border, and could show various people standing before a seated god or king. Roll the seal *firmly and evenly* across a blank area of your tablet (top, bottom or even tablet sides could be sealed). Avoid 'bogging' the seal in the clay. You may use some **talcum powder** brushed onto your seal to avoid clay sticking to its surface. If the clay is **sufficiently dry** this should *not* be a problem.































MAKING AND USING A STYLUS

1. The Babylonians referred to the stylus as a *qan-tuppi* or "tablet-reed."
2. For writing **Ugaritic** cuneiform we suggest a **truncated square stylus** (#5, fig. 10) or a **truncated rectangular stylus** (#2, fig.) above. A **pop stick** can be used to make stylus #2. Experiment with different shapes to reproduce the various types of cuneiform. A stylus with a **flat cylindrical end** can be used to write **Sumerian** numbers (fig. 1).
- Press the stylus firmly into the clay (fig. 5). Do NOT *dig* the stylus into the clay or go deeper than the stylus thickness. Keep your stylus clean. Be patient with yourself. Practise. Remember an ancient saying of scribes: *"a scribe who can write as fast as he can speak - now that's a scribe!"*
3. Copy tablet #63 next. Note how scribes sometimes ran text "over the edge" of tablets.
4. "Rule" the line across the middle of the tablet by pressing the stylus into the clay at the beginning of the line and laying it down across the clay. Note the wedge at the line commencement. Scribes **NEVER** scratched lines!

WRITING IN UGARITIC CUNEIFORM

1. THE UGARITIC ALPHABET

Note: the purpose of the chart (fig. 11) is to enable you to write some Ugaritic words **NOT** to be able to *pronounce* them as the scribes would have done. The signs marked * have sounds (phonetic values) not used in English. The small wedge ' was used to separate words. In transliterations (conversions of Ugaritic characters into English characters) of Ugaritic tablets the *dot .* is used to indicate where a word-dividing wedge occurs on the original tablet. Note: The sign for š (=sh) changed from  to  when t ceased being used.

Sign #	Ugaritic Character	Sound	Transliteration	Sign #	Ugaritic Character	Sound	Transliteration
1		"a" in hat, care	a *	16		k	k *
2		"i" in pin, pine, teen	i *	17		l	l *
3		"u" hut, rude, toot	u *	18		m	m *
4		b	b *	19		n	n *
5		g	g *	20		s	s *
6		d	d *	21		not in English	š
7		not in English	ḏ	22		not in English	ḥ
8		h	h *	23		not in English	ḡ
9		w	w *	24		p	p *
10		z	z *	25		not in English	ṣ (=ts)
11		not in English	ḫ	26		q	q *
12		as in "loch"	ḥ	27		r	r *
13		t	t (dull t)	28		early times	š (=sh) *
14		not in English	z	29		later times	ś
15		y	y *	30		t	t *
						early times	t̄ (=th) *
						later times	š (=sh)

2. WRITING IN UGARITIC

The tablets from Ugarit are written in **cuneiform script** using the **Ugaritic language**. Since the study of that language and its **grammar** is beyond the scope of this booklet we present various tables of words used in Ugaritic and examples of **simple sentences**, as well as phrases from Ugaritic stories (or epics) which you can use to write similar sentences by replacing various nouns, verbs etc. Texts similar to those drawn here can also be modified in this way to produce your own tablets. Of course if you attempt to use the **Ugaritic** alphabet to write **English** words you will find that not only are many of the English letters missing, but Ugaritic has some that we don't use, so you will need to make compromises. *I suggest you use the signs marked * and p+h for F*

FOODS/AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	hlb	milk
	hmr	wine
	nbt	honey
	hūt	wheat
	qmḥ	flour
	š̄r	barley
	š̄rt	wool
	asm	granary
	mlḥt	salt
	tpḥ	apple
	ḡnb	grape
	dblt	dried figs
	zt	olives
	hmr	grain measure
	lg	liquid measure
	yn	wine

ACTIVITIES (verbs)		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	ʿpy	to bake
	šwr	to attack
	pr̄r	to break
	ybl	to bring
	bny	to build
	ṭbḥ	to cook
	mwt	to die
	pwq	to drink
	ʿkl	to eat
	hlk	to go to
	šwd	to hunt
	nṯ	to plant
	yšq	to pour
	hlk	to walk
	ktb	to write
	ḥrt or ṭlt	to plow

PEOPLE Note 't' is feminine ending		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	hrš	craftsman
	ib	enemy
	gr	foreigner
	bnš	man
	skn	mayor
	asr	prisoner
	lmd	pupil
	mlk	king
	mlkt	queen
	khn	priest
	zbl	prince
	spr	scribe
	nqd	shepherd
	ab	father
	um	mother
	aḥ	brother
	mru	commander
	aḥt	sister
	nsk	smith
	mlak	messenger

ANIMALS Note 't' is feminine ending		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	il	ram
	imr	lamb
	inr or klb	dog
	alp	ox
	arḥ	cow
	hmr	ass
	ssw	horse
	dg	fish
	rum	buffalo
	lbi	lion
	lbit	lioness
	irby	locust
	ṭr	bull
	ḍbb	fly

COLOURS		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	argmn	purple
	lbn	white
	ṭn	scarlet

GODS		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	<i>baʿl</i>	Baal
	<i>hd</i>	Hadad
	<i>il</i>	El
	<i>ym</i>	Yamm

METALS		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	<i>yrq</i>	gold
	<i>ḥtt</i>	silver
	<i>brdl</i>	iron
	<i>brr</i>	tin?

PERSONAL NAMES		
bn + x = "son of" x bnt + x = "daughter of x" ab + x = "is father" ʿbd + x = "slave of" x		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	<i>bn.il</i>	son of El
	<i>bn.ḥnʾzr</i>	son of the swine (nasty!)
	<i>bn.gʾlʾd</i>	son of Gilead (a country)
	<i>abršp</i>	rsp (a god) is father
	<i>abmlk</i>	the king is father
	<i>krt.ʿbdḥmn</i>	Keret, slave of Hamman
	<i>lmlk.ʿlbn</i>	lmlk, slave of Laban
	<i>bnt.atn</i>	daughter of Atn

WEAPONS		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	<i>ṯryn</i>	armour
	<i>mrkbt</i>	chariot
	<i>mgn</i>	shield
	<i>qšt</i>	bow
	<i>ḥrb</i>	sword
	<i>qlʿ</i>	sling
	<i>mrḥ</i>	spear
	<i>ḥz</i>	arrow

VESSELS		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>dd</i>	pot
	<i>dn</i>	jar
	<i>ks</i>	cup
	<i>ḥm</i>	bottle

MUSIC		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>ṯlb</i>	?
	<i>mṣltm</i>	cymbals
	<i>tp</i>	drum
	<i>knr</i>	lyre

OBJECTS		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>lḥt</i>	tablet
	<i>ksat</i>	thrones
	<i>lpš</i>	garment
	<i>ksu</i>	chair
	<i>ṯlḥn</i>	table
	<i>anyt</i>	ship
	<i>šd</i>	field
	<i>bt</i>	house
	<i>mīt</i>	bed
	<i>gl</i>	cup
	<i>nr</i>	lamp
	<i>spr</i>	letter

BODY PARTS		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>riš</i>	head
	<i>p</i>	mouth
	<i>yd</i>	hand

NATIONS		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>aṯr</i>	Assyria
	<i>mṣr</i>	Egypt
	<i>lbnn</i>	Lebanon
	<i>ḥt</i>	Hatti
	<i>Ugrt</i>	Ugarit
	<i>alt</i>	Cyprus

TOOLS		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>ult</i>	trowel
	<i>hrmt</i>	sickle
	<i>krk</i>	shovel
	<i>mšbṯm</i>	tongs

TREES		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>arz</i>	cedar
	<i>zt</i>	olive
	<i>tqd</i>	almond

NUMBERS		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	<i>aḥd</i> but <i>št</i> used for 11, 21 etc	one, 1
	<i>aḥdm</i> but <i>ṯn</i> used for 12, 92, 32 etc.	pair, 2
	<i>tlt</i>	3
	<i>arb</i>	4
	<i>hms</i>	5
	<i>tt</i>	6
	<i>šb</i>	7
	<i>tmn</i>	8
	<i>tš</i>	9
	<i>šr</i>	10
	<i>št šr</i>	11
	<i>šrm</i>	20
	<i>tltm</i>	30
	<i>arbṁ</i>	40
	<i>hmsm</i>	50

WEIGHTS		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>kkr</i>	talent
	<i>mn</i>	mina
	<i>tkl</i>	shekel

TIME		
sign	transliteration	translation
	<i>šhr</i>	dawn
	<i>ym</i>	day
	<i>šlm</i>	dusk
	<i>pam</i>	time

NUMBERS		
sign	transliteration	meaning
	<i>ttm</i>	60
	<i>šbṁ</i>	70
	<i>tnmym</i>	80
	<i>tšṁ</i>	90
	<i>mit</i> or <i>mat</i>	100
	<i>alp</i>	1000

EXAMPLES		
	<i>šrm.arb</i>	24
	<i>šbṁ.alp</i>	7000
	<i>arbṁ.l.mit.ṯn</i>	40 + 100 + 2 = 142
	<i>mit.šr.kbd</i>	110 heavy (kbd)
	<i>.ym.ṯb</i>	(measures) of good (ṯb)
	<i>alp.m.ssw</i> or <i>alp.alp.sswm</i>	2000 horses

3. USEFUL UGARITIC PHRASES

These phrases may be used to build up a text of your own. By replacing **words** and **numbers** (of some of the economic texts or letters below) of your own noun for noun etc. you can be reasonably sure of creating an intelligible text of your own. To write more advanced texts in Ugaritic of course requires a thorough knowledge of the language and its structure, beyond the scope of this booklet.

i. GREETINGS These are useful for commencing letters that you may compose.

Tablet #	Transliteration	Translation
i. Text #54 (above)	<i>thm.iwrsr</i> ←you could change the name <i>iwrsr</i> <i>l.plsy</i> ←you could change the name <i>plsy</i> <i>rgm</i> <i>yšlm.lk</i>	message (from) Ur-Shar to Plsy saying Greetings to you


ii. Text # 18	<i>l.rb.khnm.rgm</i> <i>rb</i> = high (great) <i>khnm</i> = priests <i>rgm</i> = to speak	"to the high-priest, speak!" you could insert another name after "high priest"
iii. Text # 89	<i>l.mlkt.adty.rgm.t̃hm.tlmyn</i> <i>l</i> = to <i>mlkt</i> = queen <i>adty</i> = adt (lady) + y (my) <i>t̃hm</i> = message	"to the queen, my lady, speak the message of Tlmyn" you could change the name <i>Tlmyn</i> to another name
iv. Text #117	<i>ilm.t̃grk.t̃šlmk</i> <i>ilm</i> = gods <i>t̃šlmk</i> = give you peace	"may the gods guard you and give you peace"

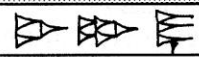
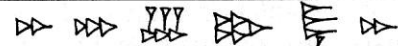
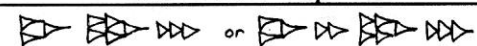
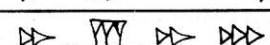
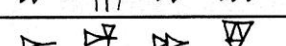
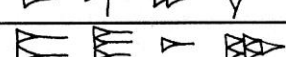
ii. WRITING YOUR NAME

Ugaritic may not have the consonants your name may have, so at best you will have to approximate and settle for a name similar in sound to your own.

Step 1: Write your name without "e" (as in "pet") or "o" (as in "Tom") eg. **Henry** becomes **Hnree**

Step 2: Find the Ugaritic signs that match or approximate to the consonants and vowels

Hnree becomes signs: #8,#19,#27,#2 (#2 is the "ee" sound) =  in Ugaritic.

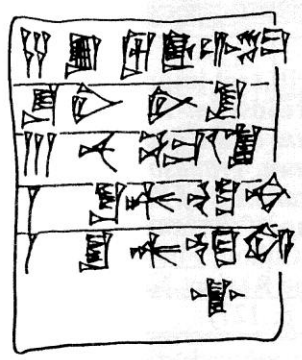
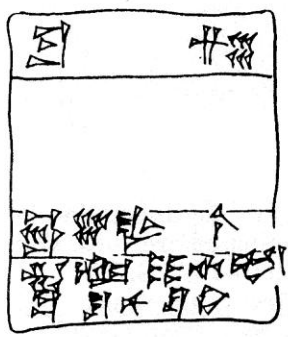
NAME	SIGNS	UGARITIC
Kerrie	#16 #27 #2	
Andrea	#1 #19 #6 #27 #2 #1	
Karen	#16 #27 #19	
Alan	#1 #17 #1 #19	
Thomas	#29 #18 #1 #20	
Peter	#24 #2 #29 #27	

4. THE COLOPHON

Sometimes ancient scribes inscribed a note at the bottom of the text, on the bottom edge, or even on the side of a clay tablet. This is known as a **colophon**. Colophons may give the **name of the scribe**, the **date** in some sort of form such as "the xth year of King A" etc., or the **price** the scribe charged for writing the tablet. For tablets that formed part of a **series** of tablets (such as **Enuma Elish** - the series of 7 tablets recording the Babylonian story of Creation, where one tablet was insufficient to record the full text, the colophon gave the first line of the next tablet in the series. This enabled scribes to read from one tablet in the series to the next and to file the tablets in the correct order in the archive or library.

Professor **Donald J. Wiseman** believes that the book of **Genesis** in the Bible contains evidence of the colophons of seven clay tablets he believes that Genesis was originally written upon (D. J. Wiseman, Creation Revealed in Six Days).

Fig. 12 OLD BABYLONIAN TABLET WITH COLOPHON IN THE INSTITUTE'S COLLECTION
Early Isin Period (c. 2000-1700 B.C.)
(After Foster, "Early Isin Texts in the Australian Institute of Archaeology", *ACTA Sumerologica*, vol. 5, July 1983, pp. 47, 55)

	obverse 5 leather bags (for) Su-ilisu, 3 (for) Nur-Estar, 1 (for) Su-Ninmug, 1 (for) Su-Ninkarak:		reverse Issued (colophon) Month XII Isbi-Erra 9
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

SOME ANCIENT COLOPHONS

Tablet #	Transliteration	Translation
i. Text # 127 The Legend of Keret Written on the tablet edge	<i>spr. 'lmlk₂y</i> scribe. 'Elmlk. T ₂ y	"(The) scribe 'Elmlk (the) T ₂ -ite" (a nationality) →
ii. Text # 1005 (lines 8-9 not actually a colophon here)	<i>nqmd. mlk. ugrt. ktb. spr. hnd</i> Niqmad. king. Ugarit. to write. document. this	"Niqmad, king of Ugarit, has written this document"
iii. RS 1957.702 List of Witnesses (at the end of legal texts)	<i>yph. i₂-rašpu</i> <i>bn. 'u₂drnn</i> <i>w. 'bdn</i> <i>bn. sgld</i>	"Witness: 'Ihiraspu son of 'Udrnn and 'Abdinu son of Sigilda"
iv. Text # 1005 "Keret" used here in place of name given	<i>spr. mlk. hnd. byd. krt. 'd₂lm</i>	"this document of the king is in the hand of Keret forever"

5. SEALING YOUR TABLET

Ancient scribes sometimes sealed important documents by rolling their cylinder seals across the document; at the top of the tablet or in the centre, or even at the end. The cylinder seals of witnesses to legal transactions such as marriages, divorces, and property sales were rolled across uninscribed portions of tablets to seal them legally.

Sometimes important letters or contracts (when dry) had soft clay squashed around them to form an envelope. This was inscribed with a summary of the contents of the text inside and sealed with the cylinder seals of witnesses around its edges and ends. This ensured that if the envelope was opened the seal impressions would be damaged alerting one to possible tampering with the text contained inside. To make your own envelope be sure to dry your text well before squashing soft (but not wet) clay around the tablet.

Various cylinder seals are on display at Ancient Times House. Cylinder seals were worn around the neck on a piece of string, hung at the side of the cloak on thread, or perhaps worn as jewellery. You can inscribe a cylinder seal of your own and "seal" your tablet by rolling it across the top or bottom. Pour some plaster into a small plastic container (1-2 cm diameter). Engrave your own design into the plaster cylinder.

Fig. 13 CYLINDER SEAL AND IMPRESSIONS

* *Hatti* = Turkey (Land of the Hittites - a people Bible critics attacked as mythical until excavations confirmed their existence)



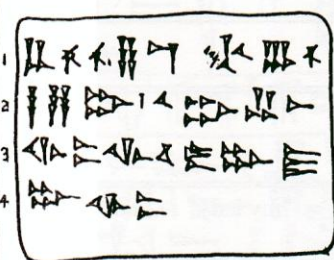
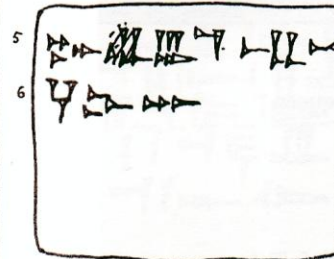
Cylinder seal (right) and impression (left)
King dressed in a kilt standing before gods. Old Babylonian
Period (2004-1595 B.C.)
(After Dominique Collon, *First Impressions - Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*, cover)

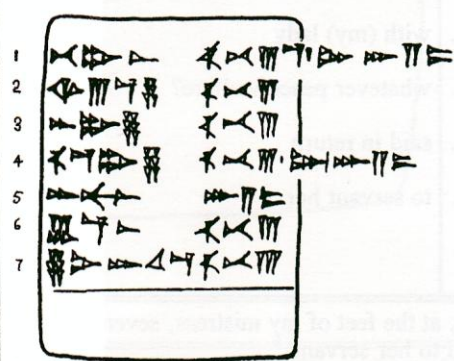


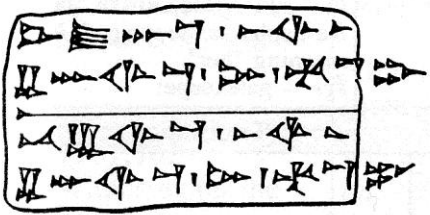
Ras Shamra (Ugarit) seal impression. Cuneiform inscription reads: *Ini-Teshub, king of Carchemish, servant of the goddess Kubaba, son of Sahurunawa, grandson of Sharri-Keshuh, great-grandson of Suppiluliuma, great king, king of the land of Hatti**
(After Dominique Collon, *First Impressions - Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*, #552, p. 127)

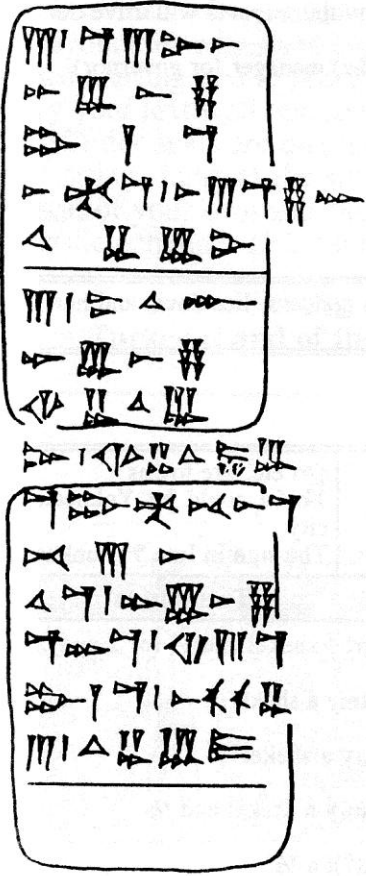
UGARITIC TEXTS

A special *thankyou* to the Director of the Australian Institute of Archaeology, Piers Crocker for his able linguistic skills in assisting me in this section of this booklet.

Tablet #143 (Syria, vol. 28, p. 25) An astrological report: An omen of evil for the manager or governor!		Notes: Here Resheph is a god subservient to the sun goddess. In later times Resheph was the sun god. <i>h</i> is a suffix meaning "her" <i>šgr</i> = gatekeeper
Drawing	Transliteration	Translation
	obverse	
	1. <i>b šš ym ḥdš</i>	1. In 6 days of new moon
	2. <i>ḥyr. ṛbt</i>	2. Hiyar sets
	3. <i>špš šgrh</i>	3. Sapas her gatekeeper
	reverse	
	5. <i>w^c(?)bdm tbqr(?)n</i>	5. and the servants will drive out (or kill)
	6. <i>skn</i>	6. (the) manager (or governor)
"During 6 days of the new moon (ie. first quarter) of the month of Hiyar, Sapas, the sun goddess, lies down and her gatekeeper is the god Resheph, the servants will drive out (or kill) the manager (or the governor)." 		

Tablet #111 (Syria, vol. 21, p. 133) RS 10066 A list of 7 towns and taxes levied in shekels (possibly of silver?) RS: Ras Shamra		Notes: <i>Qrt</i> etc. are towns <i>Ykn'm</i> could be Yokneam, a Bible city The sign in line 5 is unknown
Drawing	Transliteration	Translation
	1. <i>Qrt</i> <i>sqlm.w.nsp</i> ¹ missing on tablet	1. Qrt 1 shekel and ½ (or 2 and ½)
	2. <i>Šlmy</i> <i>šql</i>	2. Slmy a shekel
	3. <i>Ary</i> <i>šql</i>	3. Ary a shekel
	4. <i>Šmry</i> <i>šql.w.nsp</i>	4. Smry a shekel and ½
	5. <i>A(?)t</i> <i>nsp</i>	5. A(?)t a ½
	6. <i>Dmt</i> <i>šql</i>	6. Dmt a shekel
	7. <i>Ykn'm</i> <i>šql</i>	7. Ykn'm a shekel
"The town of Qrt (should pay?) 1½ shekels of silver(?) the town of Slmy (should pay?) a shekel of silver(?). . ." etc.		

Tablet #63 (Syria, vol. 15, p. 243) 4 cm long A list of personnel and donkeys assigned to priests, but the meaning is rather confusing (see cover photo) Dots: = word-dividing wedges on tablet Line numbers: not on original tablet		Notes: <i>bnś</i> = man <i>bnśm</i> = men (<i>m</i> is plural suffix) <i>Qdśm</i> = a class of priests
Drawing	Transliteration	Translation
	1. <i>Khnm.tśt</i>	1. Priests place
	2. <i>bnśm.w.ħmr</i>	2. men and ass (donkey)
	3. <i>Qdśm.tśt</i>	3. Holy ones place
	4. <i>bnśm.w.ħmr</i>	4. men and ass (donkey)
" Oh priests place (something on?) men and donkey Oh holy ones place (something on?) men and donkey "		

Tablet #89 (Syria, vol. 19, p. 127) RS 9479 A letter from Tlmyn to the Queen of Ugarit Height: 4.8 cm Width: 3.9 cm		Notes: <i>adty</i> = "my lady" ie. <i>adt</i> "lady" + <i>y</i> "my" <i>l'bdh</i> = "said-in-return" or replied
Drawing	Transliteration	Translation
	obverse	
	1. <i>l.mlkt</i>	1. To (the) queen
	2. <i>adty</i>	2. lady my
	3. <i>rgm</i>	3. say
	4. <i>tħm.Tlmyn</i>	4. message (of) Talmayan
	5. <i>ˁbdk</i>	5. servant your
	6. <i>l.pˁn</i>	6. to foot (of)
	7. <i>adty</i>	7. lady (my)
	8. <i>śbˁd</i>	8. seven
	9. <i>w.sbˁēd</i> ^{long "ee"}	9. and seven
	reverse	
	10. <i>mrħqtm</i>	10. stretching out (?)
	11. <i>qlt</i>	11. bowing down . . .
	12. <i>ˁm.adty</i>	12. with (my) lady
	13. <i>mnm.ślm</i>	13. whatever peace/welfare?
	14. <i>rgm.tśšb</i>	14. said in return
	15. <i>l'bdh</i>	15. to servant her
" To the Queen my mistress, say, the following message from Talmayan, your servant, at the feet of my mistress, seven times and seven times... I prostrate myself with my mistress. Is there all prosperity? She replied to her servant. "		

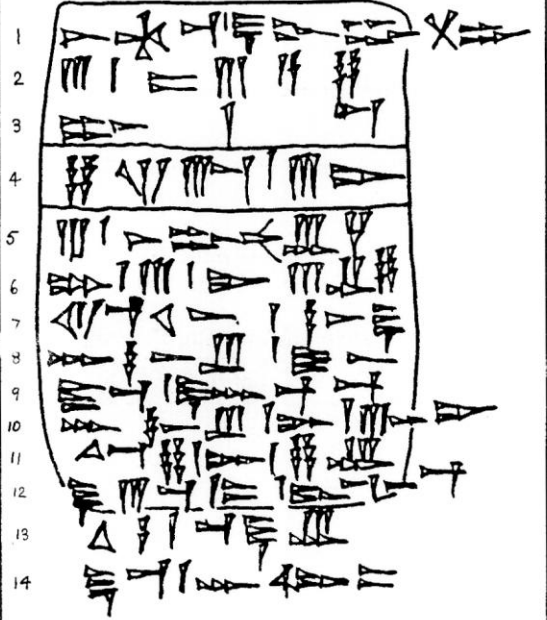
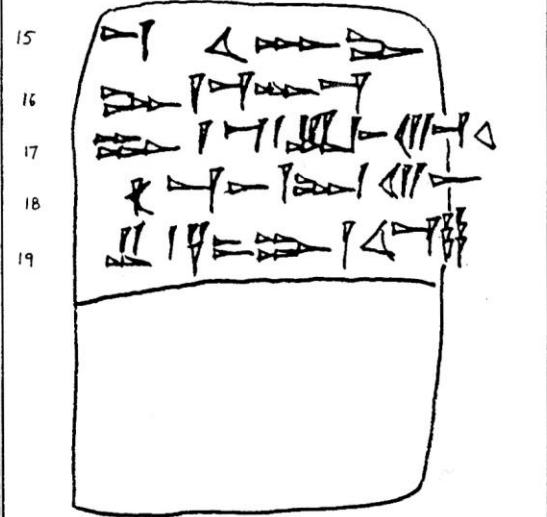
Tablet #54 (Syria, vol. 14, plate 25) RS 1932.4475

Letter from Iwrdr to Plsy requesting the return of two innocent men who have been taken away for a crime they did not commit.

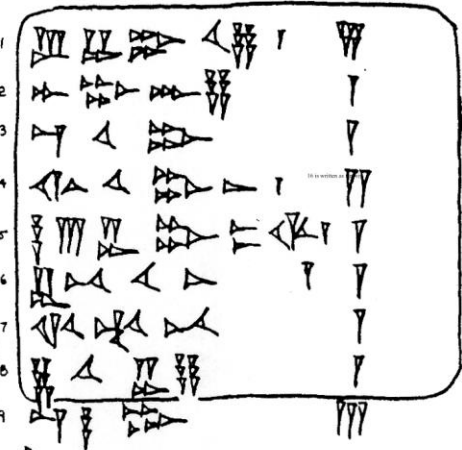

Height: 6.2 cm Width: 4.5 cm

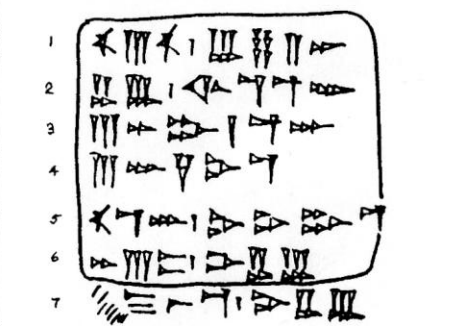
Notes:

yslm cf. *šhlm* (Hebrew *shalom* - 'peace') "may you be in good health"
l = concerning
tšm^c = *šm^c* (=hear) + *t* (=you)
spr = in writing
'lm = plural of *'l* ie the god el
m = them/their suffix
eg. *mnm* = *mn* (concerning) + *m* (them); *kntm* = *knt* (family) + *m* (their)

Drawing	Transliteration	Translation
	<p>obverse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>thm.iwršr</i> 2. <i>l.plsy</i> 3. <i>rgm</i> 4. <i>yšlm.lk</i> 5. <i>l.trds</i> 6. <i>w.l.klby</i> 7. <i>šm^ct.ht</i> 8. <i>nht^c.ht</i> 9. <i>hm.inmm</i> <small>short "a"</small> 10. <i>nht^c.w.l'k</i> 11. <i>my.w.yd</i> 12. <i>lm.p.kntm</i> 13. <i>z.mld</i> 14. <i>zm.nškp</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. message (from) Ur-Shar 2. to Plsy 3. saying 4. Greetings to you 5. concerning Trds 6. and concerning Kalbi 7. (I have) heard (that) (truly) 8. (they) have been taken away. In 9. them not guilt/blame 10. (they) have been taken away. And 11. send (them) back to me. (The) hand 12. (of the) gods in family + their 13. is strong very 14. Shall we + be ruined
	<p>reverse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. <i>m^cnk</i> 16. <i>w.mnm</i> 17. <i>rgm.d.tšm^c</i> 18. <i>šmt.w.št</i> 19. <i>b.spr.my</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. because of you? 16. And concerning them 17. saying to hear + you 18. there and send 19. by/with in writing to me

"Message from Ur-Shar to Plsy, saying: Greetings to you. Concerning Trds and concerning Kalbi I have heard that truly they have been taken away. In them, there is no guilt (nevertheless) they have been taken away, so, send them back to me. The hand of the gods, in their family is very strong. Shall we be ruined because of you? And on that matter tell (me) what you hear down there and send (it) in a letter to me."

Tablet #108 (Syria, vol. 21, p. 130) RS 11850 A list of 9 cities (left) and number of days of service given (right).			Notes: Only one line of text on reverse. The last line, 10, is written in Akkadian <i>not</i> Ugaritic. 16 = 10 + 6
Drawing	Transliteration		Translation
	obverse		
	1. <i>Ubr-y</i> .	5	1. Urbr'y 5 (days)
	2. <i>Arny</i>	1	2. Army 1 (day)
	3. <i>M'r</i>	1	3. M'r 1 (day)
	4. <i>Š'rt</i> .	2	4. S'rt 2 (days)
	5. <i>Hlb rps</i> .	1	5. Hlb rps 1 (day)
	6. <i>Bqt</i> .	1	6. Bqt 1 (day)
	7. <i>Šhq</i>	1	7. Shq 1 (day)
	8. <i>Y'by</i>	1	8. Y'by 1 (day)
	9. <i>Mhr</i>	3	9. Mhr 3 (days)
	reverse		
	10. <i>naphar ûmê</i>	16	10. total days 16

Tablet #90 (Syria, vol. 19, p. 131) RS 9011 A document relating to the trading of purple fabric for princes(?). 5.5 cm long. 4 cm wide			Notes: <i>šlš</i> = <i>ilš</i> = 3 <i>šmn</i> = <i>imn</i> = 8 <i>metm</i> = plural of mit (100) <i>šmmn</i> = name of merchant (similar to Assyrian name Šum-ma-nu)
Drawing	Transliteration		Translation
	1. <i>šlš.d yša</i>		1. 3 (loads of wool) to go out
	2. <i>bd.šmmn</i>		2. delivered (to) Smmn
	3. <i>l argmn</i>		3. for purple fabric
	4. <i>l nskm</i>		4. (intended) for princes (?)
	5. <i>šmn.kkrm</i>		5. (weighing) 8 talents
	6. <i>alp.kbd</i>		6. 1000 shekels(?)
	7. <i>[m]jētm.kbd</i> <small>long i ie. "ee"</small>		7. (and) (2) hundred shekels(?)
"The three loads of wool which has been delivered to Smmn for purple fabric (intended) for princes(?) or weavers) (weighing) 8 talents 1000 kbd (and) (2) hundred kbd"			

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