

## NEW INFORMATION ABOUT THE RULERS OF ṬĀBĒTU

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German excavations at Tall Bdēri, which is situated at Ḥabūr — approx. 25 km south of the Syrian province capital Ḥasaka — supplied new information about a dynasty of princes, who in the late Middle-Assyrian time had ruled over the town Ṭābētu and its immediate surroundings<sup>1)</sup>. Inscriptions found in Tall Bdēri indicated that a prince named Aššur-kettī-lēšer had initiated raids from Ṭābētu during the reign of the Assyrian king Tiglatpileсар I. (1114–1076 B.C.), and that on these raids, smaller towns and abandoned land settlements in the immediate neighbourhood of his residence were conquered and extended into fortresses. Although Aššur-kettī-lēšer like his predecessors proudly called himself 'King of Māri', he actually was under the supremacy of the kings of Assur.

In 1921, E. Forrer already suspected that the ruins of the old Ṭābētu were to be found under the rubble of the gigantic Tall Ṭābān<sup>2)</sup>. This identification was substantiated by discovered ceramic objects from the Middle- and New Assyrian time period<sup>3)</sup>. Aššur-kettī-lēšer's inscriptions from Tall Bdēri also constituted substantial evidence. The information that Tall Bdēri, at that time Dūr-Aššur-kettī-lēšer, was situated 'above Ṭābētu'<sup>4)</sup>, coincided with Forrer's identification. Tall Bdēri is actually located approx. 6 km northerly air distance, i.e. upstream and 'above' Tall Ṭābān and like Tall Ṭābān on the left riverbank.

The most recent Japanese excavations in Tall Ṭābān provided the final evidence for Forrer's identification. Inscriptions of Aššur-kettī-lēšer, which are going to be presented in the following, were also found in Tall Ṭābān.

The same as in Tall Bdēri, fragments of cylinder inscriptions of Aššur-kettī-lēšer were also discovered in Tall Ṭābān. In appearance, size and shape, the cylinders from Tall Ṭābān showed no differences to the already known cylinders of Aššur-kettī-lēšer<sup>5)</sup>. The same as these cylinders, they must have been written in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. during the reign of Tiglatpileсар I<sup>6)</sup>. The new fragments from Ṭābētu/Tall Ṭābān belong to two different cylinders. Due to the poor preservation of the existing fragments, it is unfortunately impossible to tell as to whether they represent the same or slightly differing inscriptions. It is likely, however, that with the discovery of additional cylinder fragments in subsequent excavation campaigns, we will gain new knowledge of the capital of the land of Māri as well as its king Aššur-kettī-lēšer and his activities.

One fragment, where the initial lines of the inscription of Aššur-kettī-lēšer were preserved (here fragment A: Fig. 1–1), was found in the relics of a Middle-Assyrian house in a stratigraphically unfortunately not fully cleared context. It is not guaranteed as to whether this fragment is part of the foundation document of the discovered house. If this is confirmed, then the relics of the house could have belonged to the palace of the 'Kings of the land of Māri'.

Two fragments of another cylinder (here fragment B: Fig. 1–2) were discovered in connection with a thick Middle-Assyrian wall, which the excavators interpreted as town wall. These cylinder fragments

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1) Rf. S.M. Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bdēri*. Die Ausgrabungen von Tall Bdēri Band 1. BBVO Texte Band 2, Berlin 1992.

2) E. Forrer, *Die Provinzeinteilung des assyrischen Reiches*. Leipzig 1921, p. 144.

3) Rf. to H. Kühne, *AfO* 26 (1978/79), p. 253f.

4) Rf. to S.M. Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bdēri*, p. 22, line 2.

5) For more details, *ibid.* p. 15 and p. 36f.

6) Rf. to *ibid.* p. 34f.

belong probably to one of the foundation documents in remembrance of the building owner of the town wall.

Two fragments of inscribed bricks (Fig. 2) probably belong to a younger, but also Middle-Assyrian stratum. They possibly belong to a wall, which the grandchild of Aššur-kettī-lēšer had set up. If this assumption is confirmed, then the appertaining settlement stratum dates back to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

## I. The cylinder inscription(s) of Aššur-kettī-lēšer

### 1. Transcription:

- 1 [ekal Aššur-ke]tī-lēšer šar māt Māri mār Adad-bēl-g[abbe šar māt Māri mār Adad-bēl-apli šar māt Māri(m)ma]
- 2 [enūma(?) ina] abbā'ija šarrān[ī maḥerûte ... mamma lā ... ]
- 3 [ ] ..... [ ]
- 4 [ekalla(?) lā īp]uš dalāti ina b[ābātīša lā urette/ukīn'] ]
- 5 [u Aššur-kettī]-lēšer šar māt Māri mār Adad-bēl-gab[be šar māt Māri mār Adad-bēl-apli šar māt Māri(m)ma]
- 6 [ itte] milik tē[mīja amdalikma ina nigūt libbēja ]
- 7 [ekalla(?) lū ēpuš dālāti ina bābātīša ]

(gap)

- 1' [enūma ālu u ekallī šuātu ana urkāt ūmē] ennaḥ[ūma ušalbarrū igāršu miqta irāššū(?)]
- 2' [r]jubā' u urkū ša ellā [anḥūssu] lēmurma luddi[š šumī šaṭra itte šumēšu]
- 3' [a]na ašrēšu lutēr ša šumī šaṭra it[te] šumēšu ana ašrē[šu utarru ilānū, rabātu]
- 4' [ša] Tābēte ikribēšu lu i[šammūšu(?)] ša šumī šaṭra unakkarūma šumšu]
- 5' [kīmū šu]mēja išaṭtaru Sīn u [Šamaš(?)] ilānū rabātu ša šamē u erṣeti]
- 6' [zēr]ēšu u šumēšu ina māt Māri [luḥalliḳū]
- 7' ina <sup>iii</sup>[... UD.x.]KÁM līmi Mudammeq-[Bēl Aššur-kettī-lēšer šar māt Māri]
- 8' [ É].GAL an-ni-[i

### 2. Transliteration:

- 1 A, 4' [É.GAL 'Aš-šur-Z]I-SI.SÁ šar<sub>4</sub> KUR 'A' A X-EN-g[ab-be šar<sub>4</sub> KUR A A X-EN-A šar<sub>4</sub> KUR A-ma]
- 2 A, 5' [e-nu-ma(?) i+na] a-ba-i-ia<sup>mes</sup> XX.MEŠ[maḥerûte ... mamma lā ...]
- 3 A, 6' [ G]I' NÍG TAR x x (x) x š[u? ]
- 4 A, 7' [É.GAL la(-a) i-p]u-uš <sup>gis</sup>IG.MEŠ i+na K[Á.MEŠ-ša la(-a) ]
- 5 A, 8' [ù 'Aš-šur-ZI]-SI.SÁ šar<sub>4</sub> KUR A A X-EN-ga[b-be šar<sub>4</sub> KUR A A X-EN-A
- 6 A, 9' [šar<sub>4</sub> KUR A-ma K]I mi-lik tē-[mi-ia am-da-lik-ma i+na ni-gu-ut lib-be-ia .....]
- 7 [É.GAL lu e-pu-uš <sup>gis</sup>IG.MEŠ i+na KÁ.MEŠ-ša ]

(gap)

- 1' B, 1' [e-nu-ma ] (traces) e-<sup>fr</sup>nā<sup>fr</sup>-h[<sup>fr</sup>u-ma ušalbarru ]
- 2' B, 2' [NU]N EGIR-ku šá el-la a[n-ḥu-su I]GI-ma lu-ud-d[i-iš MU šaṭ-ra KI-te MU-šú]
- 3' B, 3' 'a' -na KI-šú lu<sup>ni</sup>-GUR-er<sup>ni</sup> šá MU šaṭ-<sup>fr</sup>ra KI-te MU-šú a-na KI<sup>fr</sup>-[šú utarru ilānū rabātu]
- 4' B, 4' [š]á <sup>uru</sup>DÜG.GÁ-be-te BAL.MEŠ-šú lu 'i<sup>fr</sup>?-[šam-mu-šu(?)] šá MU šaṭ-ra KÚR-ru-ma MU-šú ki-mu]
- 5' B, 5' [M]U-ia IN.SAR <sup>d</sup>XXX 'u' [UTU ]

- 6' A 1' [NUMUN.MEŠ-šú u M]U.MEŠ- $\square$  šú $\square$  ina KUR A [luḥalliḫū]  
 B, 6' [NUM]UN.MEŠ-šú u MU.MEŠ-š[ú ina māt Māri luḥalliḫū]

## The colophon

- 7' A, 2' [(vacant) ina <sup>iii</sup>x UD.x].KÁM li-mi <sup>1</sup>Mu-SIG<sub>5</sub>-[<sup>d</sup>+EN <sup>1</sup>Aš-šur-ZI-SI.SÁ šar<sub>4</sub>  
 KUR A]  
 B, 7' (vacant) ina <sup>iii</sup>AP[IN ]  
 8' A 3' [(vacant) É].GAL an-ni-[ ]

## 3. Translation

- 1 [(Property of) the palace of Aššur-ke]ttī-lēšer, the king of the land of Māri, the son of Adad-bēl-g[abbe, king of the land of Māri, son of Adad-bēl-apli, also king of the land of Māri.]  
 2 [When (?)] none [of] my fathers, my royal [predecessors ]  
 3 [ ] ..... [ ]  
 4 [— none (of them) had bui]lt [a palace, none (of them) had hung/fixed doo]rs in [its] gate [ways ]].  
 5 [But then Aššur-kettī]-lēšer, the king of the land of Māri, the son of Adad-bēl-gabb[e, king of the land of Māri, son of Adad-bēl-apli, also king of the land of Māri] —  
 6 [ I thou]ght by myself [and with joy in my heart ]].  
 7 [I built a palace, I hung/fixed doors in its gateways, ]].

(gap)

- 1' [When this city and my palace in future days] becomes weak [and old and its wall starts to break down],  
 2' the future prince who will come up shall see [its bad condition] and he may restore it. [My written name (i.e. my inscription)]  
 3' may he put back to its place [together with his name (i.e. his inscription)]. The one who will [put back] to its place my written name together with his name, [the great gods]  
 4' of (the city of) Ṭābētu will [hear] his prayers. [The one who will take away my written name]  
 5' and writes down [his own name instead] of my name, the gods Sîn and [Šamaš, the great gods of heaven and earth],  
 6' shall [destroy] his semen and his name in the land of Māri.  
 7' In the month Araḫ[samna<sup>7)</sup>....., the x]<sup>th</sup> [day], when Mudammeq-[Bēl] was eponym. [Aššur-kettī-lēšer, the king of the land of Māri], [has founded<sup>7)</sup> th]is pala[ce (...)].

## 4. Comment

2 Rf. to the parallel passages in: S. M. Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bdēri*, p. 20 line 3 and p. 37 line 3.

3 Cuneiform characters included in this line are heavily damaged. The photographs at my disposal are not good enough for reliable reading.

4 The addition *urette* (or possibly *uretti* or *uratte*) is based on a contemporary inscription of the Assyrian king Tiglatpileсар I. (1114–1076 B.C.), in which the production and setting up of doors of the king's palace in Assur is reported in a very similar context: <sup>gis</sup>dalār(IG.MEŠ) <sup>gis</sup>a-š[u-ḫ]i ši-ra-te ēpuš(DÜ-uš) i-na mé-ser siparri(ZABAR) / ú-re-ki-is i-na bābātī(K[Á.M]EŠ)-ša ú-re-et-te, 'I made high doors of fir, I reinforced (them) with bronze bands (and) hung (them) in its gateways'. (rf. to A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)*, RIMA 2, Toronto 1991, p. 55, lines

7) Acc. to text B.

69–70; apart from that cf. A.K. Grayson, *ibid.* p. 135, lines 79f. [Aššur-dān II.] and p. 202, line 4; p. 228, line 60; p. 276, lines 20f.; p. 282, lines 63f.; p. 289, lines 27–29; p. 323, line 30 [Assurnaširpal II.]. The addition *ukīn*, which is less applicable, is based on a building inscription of Adad-nīrārī I. (1307–1275 B.C.) from Assur (relating to the Anu-Adad temple; cf. A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennium BC (to 1115 BC)*, RIMA 1, Toronto 1987, p. 154, lines 8–12).

6 Rf. to parallel passages in: S. M. Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bdēri*, p. 20 line 7.

7 The restoration of line 7 results from line 4.

1' Rf. to S. M. Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bdēri*, p. 37 line 8 with respect to the suggested restoration of the line.

7' For the eponym Mudammeq-Bēl rf. to H. Freydank, *Beiträge zur mittelassyrischen Chronologie und Geschichte*, Berlin 1991, p. 151ff. H. Freydank's assumption that Mudammeq-Bēl was 'sehr wahrscheinlich Eponym zur Zeit Tiglatpilegars I.', is confirmed by the existing new text. We know from the inscriptions of Aššur-kettī-lēšer, which were found in Tall Bdēri, that Aššur-kettī-lēšer was a contemporary of Tiglatpilegar I<sup>8)</sup>. The same as the already known inscriptions of Aššur-kettī-lēšer, the new cylinder inscription from Tall Ṭābān/Ṭābētu is not only inscribed with an Assyrian date (*līmu*) but also with a yearname, which is probably only valid in the area of the Ṭābētu principality. This form of dating is based on Babylonian traditions. The short summary of the inscription after the Assyrian date can probably be interpreted as the name of the year assigned by Aššur-kettī-lēšer.

## II. Brick fragments: A building inscription of a grandchild of Aššur-kettī-lēšer?

Fragments of inscribed bricks were found in Tall Bdēri as well as in Tall Ṭābān. Whereas the brick fragments from Tall Bdēri were only saved from the building rubble, with which a pit had already been filled in the Old Ages<sup>9)</sup>, the two inscribed brick fragments from Tall Ṭābān can be allocated to a wall complex from the Middle-Assyrian period (building level 2).

Originally, the inscribed bricks were square, the same as the non-inscribed bricks of the wall complex, which have a side length of 36 cm. The external appearance of the bricks discussed in this paper hardly differs from the inscribed bricks from Tall Bdēri<sup>10)</sup>. They are only poorly baked and manually inscribed, the same as the bricks from Tall Bdēri. In the case of the two fragments, the line height is approx. 7 cm.

A direct join of the two fragments is not possible and it will not be possible to find out as to whether they are actually parts of the same brick. It cannot be excluded, however, that the two fragments belong to different inscriptions but the circumstances of the discovery speak against this. It is very likely that the two fragments belong to the same inscription of the same king.

Due to the exceptionally bad preservation of the brick inscriptions, the reading presented in the following should be rated as an interpretation proposal. New discoveries of inscriptions will finally clear this issue.

Different from initial expectations, the building owner of the building, which was rediscovered in relics, was not Aššur-kettī-lēšer. In all probability, this king is still mentioned in the last line of the brick inscription, which altogether probably did not have more than three lines. It is difficult to complete the traces *A-šur(-)* [ in line 2' of the 1st brick fragment (Fig. 2–1) in any other way than to the name Aššur-kettī-lēšer. In all probability, a rest of this royal name is also preserved in the second brick fragment (Fig. 2–2). The two lying wedges, which can be seen in front of the title 'King of the land of Māri' in the second preserved line, can be easily interpreted as the last third of the sign DI(= SÁ). Accordingly, the last line of the brick inscription would read: *A-šur-[ZI-SI.S]Á šar<sub>4</sub> KUR* [A]-[ma]<sup>11)</sup>. As the paral-

8) Rf. to S.M. Maul, *Die Inschriften von Tall Bdēri*, p. 34 to the lines 19–21.

9) Rf. to S.M. Maul, *ibid.* p. 41.

10) Rf. to *ibid.* p. 41–46. In all probability, at least one of the inscribed bricks found in Tall Bdēri originally came from Ṭābētu/Tall Ṭābān (rf. to *ibid.* p. 45).

11) The spelling *A-šur-ke-ti-SI.SÁ* (rf. to *ibid.* p. 23, line 6, text E) is a possible alternative.

lel inscriptions from Tall Bdēri clearly show, the first, unpreserved line of the inscription contained the name of the royal building owner after the mention of É.GAL. In line 2 after the name of the building owner, the title *šarru* ‘king’ followed (preserved in fragment 1, line 1)<sup>12)</sup> or even more likely the title *šar māt Māri*<sup>13)</sup>. The traces in line 1 of the second brick fragment can probably also be restored to the title ‘King of Māri’, in front of which another royal name must have been stated at the time. On the existing building inscription, the building owner is named in the 1st line, his father in the 2nd line and in the 3rd line his grandfather, namely Aššur-kettī-lēšer. Unfortunately, we do not know the name of the royal building owner, the grandson of Aššur-kettī-lēšer, nor the name of his son.

The brickwork laid open in ‘building level 2’ probably belongs to a building, which was set up as a palace in the name of the grandson of Aššur-kettī-lēšer, who held the title ‘king of the land of Māri’, as did his father and his grandfather.

#### Brick fragment 1

- 1' *šar*<sub>4</sub> [  
2' A-šur(-)[

#### Brick fragment 2

- 1' ] ʿ*šar*<sub>4</sub>ʿ K[UR  
2' ] x *šar*<sub>4</sub> KUR ʿAʿ [

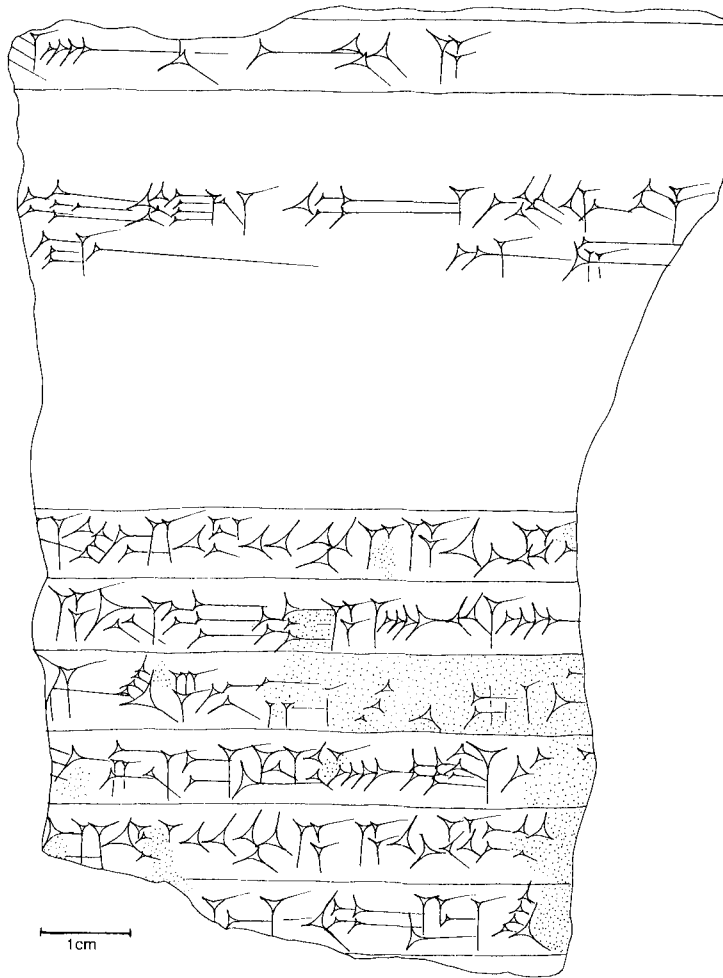
#### Reconstruction of the brick inscription

- 1 [ekal(É.GAL) ROYAL NAME]  
2 *šar*<sub>4</sub> [*māt*(KUR) *Māri*(A) *mār*(A) ROYAL NAME] ʿ*šar*<sub>4</sub>ʿ *māt*(K[UR) *Māri*(A) *mār*(A)]  
3 A-šur-[*kettī*(ZI)-*lēšir*(SI.S)]Á *šar*<sub>4</sub> *māt*(KUR) *Māri*(m) (ʿAʿ)-[ma]

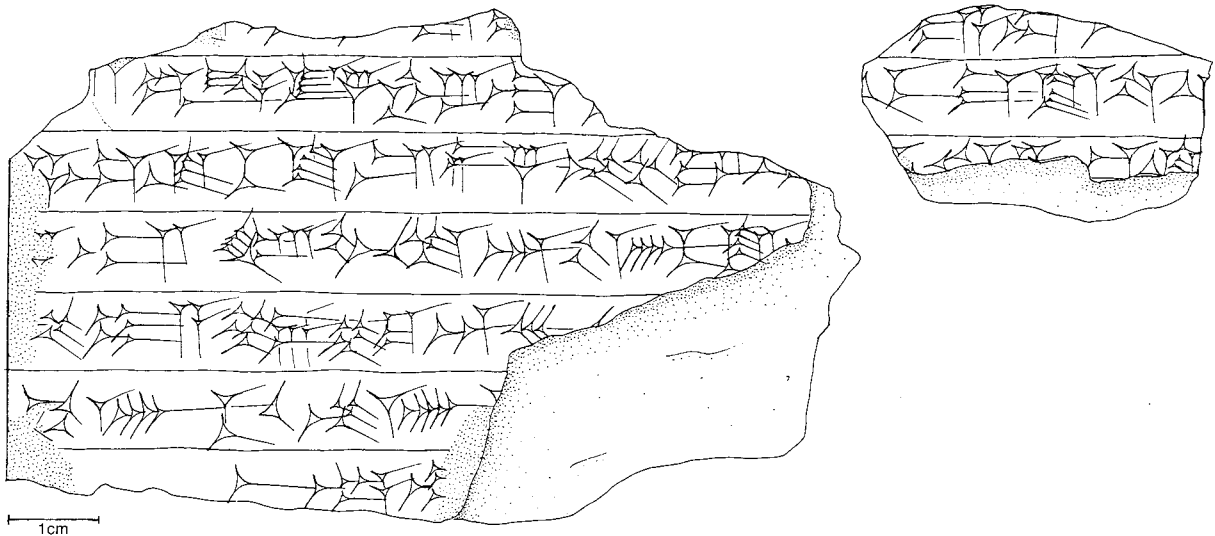
- 1 [Palace of ROYAL NAME],  
2 of the king [of the land of Māri, of the son of ROYAL NAME], the king of the lan[d of Māri, the son of]  
3 Aššur-[kettī-lēš]er, [also] king of the land of Māri.

12) As in the Bdēri bricks 1, 2 and 3 (rf. to *ibid.* p. 42–44).

13) As in the Bdēri bricks 4 and 5 (rf. to *ibid.* p. 44).

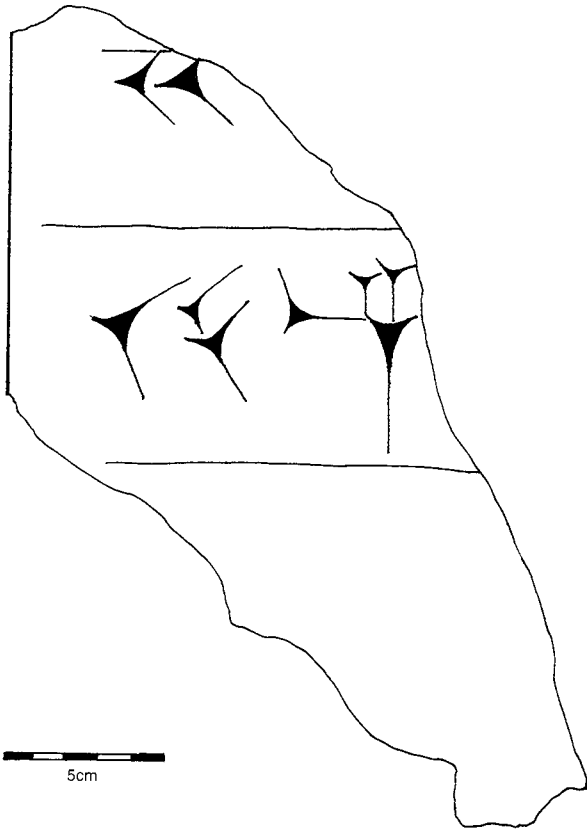


1. Cylinder fragment A

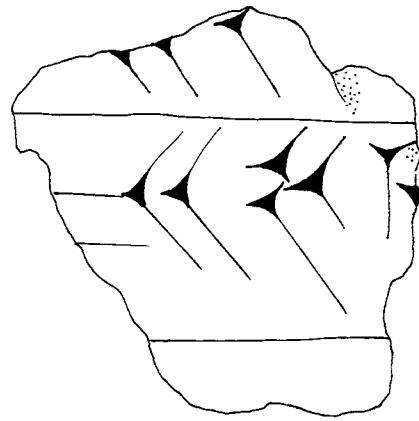


2. Cylinder fragment B

**Fig. 1** Fragments of cylinder inscriptions from Ṭābētu/Tall Ṭābān



1. Brick fragment 1



2. Brick fragment 2

**Fig. 2** Brick fragments from Ṭābētu/Tall Ṭābān