THE DUCTUS OF THE ALALAḪ VII TEXTS AND THE ORIGIN OF HITTITE CUNEIFORM

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1. INTRODUCTION

Until 1952 it was widely held that the preserved Hittite text corpus was the product of about one century of scribal activity: the cuneiform, so it was thought, showed no obvious diachronic development, the scribal names mentioned in the texts seemed to be concentrated in the later 13th century, and the corpus at large was found in an archaeological stratum that had come to an end around 1200 BC. Then, in 1952, a fragment was found in a clear pre-13th century level for the first time. Known as the Zukraši-text, so-called after an army commander in the service of the king of Yamḫad and known from the Alalaḫ-Level VII records, it tells of events that fit well into the Syrian campaigns of the Hittite king Ḫattušili I, who ruled ca. 1650 BC.[2] It was therefore declared an "original" from the days of Ḫattušili "da geschichtliches Ereignis und Niederschrift nicht zu weit auseinander liegen dürften".[3] The general look of the fragment showed dense writing with few word spaces, a slightly right slant, especially in the heads of the vertical wedges, and narrow intercolumnia. Fragments with those same characteristics were then identified in the corpus of texts that had all previously been thought to date from the 13th century. As a consequence, the time depth of the Hittite corpus suddenly went from a single century, the 13th, to three or four ranging from around 1650 to about 1200 BC: apparently the Hittites had been writing for many more centuries and had also stored tablets for a much longer time than previously thought.

In spite of the characteristic traits in the aspect of the old fragments, that is, the density, the slant, and the narrow intercolumnia, it was still thought that the sign shapes did not deviate in any essential way from those of the 13th-century documents and that no significant development could be traced. This began to change in 1969. During the 1970's and early 1980's a detailed paleographic dating model was developed by which almost any fragment that contained a reasonable number of signs could be dated in absolute terms. That is, the date a particular fragment had been inscribed could be determined in periods of about 50 years. Needless to say, the composition contained in the fragment could be much older. Compare, for instance, the model as given by Frank Starke in his book *Die keilschrift-luwischen Texte im Umschrift*:[4]

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[2] See the edition by de Martino 2003: 91-125.

[3] Otten – Souček 1969: 42.

[4] Starke 1985: 27. The CHD sigla (OS = Old Script, MS = Middle Script, NS = New Script) were added by me.

heth. Sprachstufen	Jahrhundertzählung	Duktustypen	(CHD sigla)
Altheth.	16. Jh.	Ia	OS
	E. 16. Jh.	Ib	OS
Mittelheth.	A. 15. Jh.	IIa	MS
	E. 15. Jh.	IIb	MS
	A. 14. Jh.	IIc	MS
Jungheth.	E. 14. Jh.	IIIa	NS
	13. Jh.	IIIb	NS

Table 1. The traditional dating model after Starke 1985: 27.

This dating method uses a range of diagnostic sign shapes that show a distinct development over the centuries. Compare the following table with examples of some of the relevant signs:

Cuneiform sign	***Old Script***	***Middle Script***	***New Script***
AK			
AZ/UK		/	/
DA			
E			
Ḫ A			
IK			
IT			
LI			

Table 2. Some diagnostic signs for dating Hittite texts.

Whereas most sign shapes remained stable throughout the history of Hittite writing, the above signs and others were subject to certain changes. As the table shows, not all changes appeared at the same moment: some started diverging from their Old Script (OS) forerunner already in the Middle Script (MS) days (compare AZ/UK, DA, E, IT), others only later (compare AK, Ḫ A, IK, LI). Some changes are subtle, others are more substantial.

This dating method was to be applied quite mechanically. Whereas the older sign shapes continued to be used, albeit with decreasing frequency, it is the latest form that determines the date a fragment was written. As Starke put it already in 1977: “Ein einziges negatives Indiz reicht aus, um dem zu untersuchenden Text das Prädikat “Althethitisch” abzusprechen; die Summe der positiven Indizien (ohne Ausnahme!)

erweist den betreffenden Text als original althethitisch".[5] He repeated this in 1985: "Die Häufigkeit ihres Vorkommens spielt in diesem Zusammenhang keine Rolle, vielmehr kann, wenn die Zeichenform charakteristisch genug ist, ein einziger Beleg ausreichen, was vor allem für die Datierung kleinerer Fragmente von Bedeutung ist".[6] This principle has gone largely uncontested and OS was supposed to be a clean and pure phase, free of any "later" intrusions. It means that a fragment containing almost exclusively older sign shapes, but, for example, a single late LI or IK, immediately betrays itself as having been written much later than all other signs at first suggested. Although, as Starke says, this gives us the possibility to date even the smallest fragment, as long as it contains one of the characteristic late sign shapes, it also lays bare an essential flaw: only with fully preserved tablets in pristine condition can one ever achieve absolute certainty. But this, as we all know, is an extremely rare situation. When working with a well preserved text with only few parts missing or damaged and containing only older signs, we are already faced with the inevitable question: how can we be certain that there was not in its lost parts a single late sign, completely overturning the older date that we now assign it on the basis of all the preserved older signs?

But there are two more problems with this approach. First of all, how realistic is this principle from a scribal point of view? Handwriting changes across generations, and writing itself is a largely unconscious action, unless we are talking about deliberate copying, be it calligraphy or plain forgery, but this is not something we expect Hittite scribes to have particularly valued. The goal was to copy content, not sign shapes, and the very fact of a diachronic development as the basis of our dating method presupposes a natural development.[7] So, is it realistic to assume that a 13th century scribe, when copying an OS text, would meticulously copy all the older sign shapes, even down to things like lack of word space, and then, having gotten tired perhaps towards column iv, would commit a *lapsus calami* by inadvertently writing a shape that otherwise he would use on a daily basis when writing contemporary texts?

The second problem is that we have not been consistent in applying this principle. In the introduction to his edition of all OS ritual texts, Erich Neu described two types of OS script, the so-called Typ I, the oldest one, and Typ II, that already foreshadowed the later MS. For each of the two he included a photo in the back of his book and handcopies were published in KBo 25. His example for the oldest variant, Typ I, was KBo 25.112, but the handcopy by Heinrich Otten shows a clear late IK (i 5). Collation of the original in Ankara confirms the correctness of the copy. Yet the fragment is still listed in the *Konkordanz* as "ah." (OS). In 1990 Jörg Klinger and Erich Neu acknowledged the appearance of a late IK in another fragment (KUB 36.127 rev. 16), without letting it

[5] Starke 1977: 9.
[6] Starke 1985: 21.
[7] This not to claim that there may not have been occasional archaizing. This might well be the case with occurrences of the older variants of signs like HA, KÙ, and LI in certain manuscripts from the second half of the 13th century, when they are used in writing the royal names Ḫattušili (III), Tudḫaliya (IV), and Šuppiluliuma (II, Šuppiluliyama/KÙ.GA.PÚ), while the later shapes are attested elsewhere in the same text.

overturn their overall characterization of the manuscript as MS.[8] Similarly, compare the following later shapes in texts that are listed as written in OS: AL in KBo 17.1 ii 19 and 36,[9] SAR ibid. ii 7, AZ in KBo 3.22, 61,[10] URU in KBo 22.2 obv. 7 and 12, EN in KBo 22.1: 5, 24, UN in KBo 20.10 i 16[11] (vs. the older form in ii 13). Most of these same forms are already attested in MS manuscripts.[12]

In all these cases we are dealing with a single or just a few "later" forms among otherwise "older" shapes. Yet these fragments are generally considered old. Personally, I too would be loath to date these texts down to the 13th century, just on account of a single or a few signs, but if we continue to accept these fragments as OS, we have to accept that these later forms apparently were already known but were somehow generally suppressed. How are we to explain this?

2. THE ALALAḪ VII CUNEIFORM FROM A HITTITOLOGIST'S POINT OF VIEW

The answer, I believe, may be in the origin of the Hittite cuneiform. As I have laid out in more detail recently,[13] the possibility of a Syrian origin of the typically Hittite cuneiform variant had been considered a theoretical possibility since 1922, but it did not become a realistic option until Wiseman published the Alalaḫ tablets in 1953. It was Hans Güterbock who revived this hypothesis in 1954, pointing at the resemblance between the Alalaḫ and Ḫattusa *ductūs*. However, assuming that the cuneiform practiced at Alalaḫ was probably representative of a larger area, he did not insist that its origin should have been specifically that city.[14] This possibility of a Syrian origin has been quoted a few times since then. Christel Rüster and Erich Neu in their *Hethitisches Zeichenlexikon* described Hittite cuneiform as an "altbabylonische Kursive, wie sie im nordsyrischen Raum z.B. von frühen Texten aus Alalaḫ (= Tel Açana; Schicht VII) bekannt ist".[15] Jörg Klinger likewise noted the similarities but at the same time observed a clear gap between Hittite OS and the script of the Alalaḫ VII texts.[16] By this he probably referred to the appearance of several sign shapes that from a Hittite perspective we would call "late" or "later" forms. This led him to believe that the Hittite cuneiform went back to an Old Babylonian cursive that was older than the one used in northern Syria in the days of

[8] Klinger – Neu 1990: 139, 155 n. 24.
[9] Thus already Heinhold-Krahmer et al. 1979: 99; see the autography and photo in the *Konkordanz*.
[10] Thus already Heinhold-Krahmer et al. 1979: 99.
[11] The *Konkordanz* lists this text as "ah.?/mh.?".
[12] For AL, AZ/UK, SAR, TAR, URU see Heinhold-Krahmer et al. 1979: 100f.; late ḪA can be seen in IBoT 1.29 rev. 55, 57, see also the same late ḪA on seals of Šuppiluliuma I (RS 17.227, see Schaeffer 1956: 3 fig. 2-3, Otten 1995: 24, 40 Abb. 37) and Muršili II (Bo 90/1135, see Otten 1995: 41 Abb. 39). Compare also the sign list in Alp 1991: 113-118, for the tablet collection found at Maṣat Höyük; for the date of these texts around 1375 BC see van den Hout 2007, for a different viewpoint see de Martino 2010.
[13] van den Hout 2009a: 11-35.
[14] Güterbock 1956: 516.
[15] Rüster – Neu 1989: 15.
[16] Klinger 1998: 371.

Ḫattušili I,[17] because Hittite OS is supposed to be free of any "later" shapes, as we saw. Most recently, Daniel Schwemer concluded: "Der genaue Zeitpunkt und die Umstände der Schrift-Adaption liegen nach wie vor im Dunkeln".[18]

The Alalaḫ cuneiform has never been the object of systematic paleographic study, it seems, neither by Assyriologists nor by Hittitologists. Therefore, in order to investigate the original claim by Güterbock, I offer here a paleographic analysis of the Alalaḫ VII texts. The following remarks present a Hittitologist's view of its script, that is, I have looked at a selection of signs that are diagnostic for Hittite texts. For an Assyriologist they may be wholly uninteresting and their co-existence within a single corpus self-evident, but for the alleged relation between the cuneiform of Alalaḫ VII and Old-Hittite Ḫattuša they are essential. To this end I have looked at ~~the~~ 278 handcopies of Alalaḫ VII texts, made available by Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Hanspeter Schaudig in three recent issues of the journal *Ugarit-Forschungen* and in the dissertation by Frank Zeeb.[19] Although I have seen some photos of Alalaḫ VII tablets, my observations are based on these handcopies only and therefore have to remain provisional.[20] Some of the variants noted may be or are sometimes even likely to be due to mere scribal inaccuracy and/or natural variation — even within the hand of a single scribe[21] — and they may not always be relevant or distinctive, but a paleography that pretends some degree of completeness does need to include them. The signs selected are: AK, AL, AZ, EN, IK, KÙ, LI, QA, SAR, TAR, UK, UN, and URU. Besides these I kept an eye on signs like DA, E, ḪA, ḪAR, IT, NI, ŠA, and TA.

In order to explore the possibility of the Alalaḫ cuneiform as a forerunner of the Boğazköy script, I have not only compared the Alalaḫ VII signs with the selection of signs relevant for Hittitologists just mentioned, but also with two documents from the 17th century Hittite kingdom written in Akkadian in a not-yet-Hittite cuneiform. The first of these is the letter written by a certain Labarna addressed to Tunip-Teššub, ruler of Tikunani, located in the northern Euphrates area.[22] The Labarna is generally accepted as having been Ḫattušili I. Although the document is without exact provenance, it is likely that it originated from the northern Euphrates area and its status as a true and legally authentic original makes it very important for the questions addressed here: it must be a document issued by Ḫattušili I during his reign. The other is the so-called Uršu-Text, KBo 1.11. Although its absolute date cannot be verified at the moment, all Hittitologists agree that its contents place the text in the period of the first two Hittite kings, Ḫattušili I and Muršili I. There seems to be fairly wide consensus, moreover, that the tablet itself is

[17] Klinger 1998: 374.
[18] Schwemer 2005-2006: 220.
[19] Dietrich – Loretz 2004, Dietrich – Loretz 2005, Dietrich – Loretz 2006, and Zeeb 2001. All texts published by Dietrich – Loretz are quoted by the number given there; the text numbers as assigned in Zeeb 2001 are preceded by "Z".
[20] The copies of Wiseman 1953 in general seem to reflect the basic (that is, "older" or "later") shape or structure of the signs correctly, but the copies published in Dietrich – Loretz 2004, 2005, 2006 provide a more realistic impression of the originals.
[21] For the variation of signs within a single hand see the study by Pardee 2007.
[22] Cf. Salvini 1994.

likely to be (more or less) contemporaneous. Together, the texts form a bridge between Alalaḫ and Ḫattuša: the Alalaḫ corpus has nothing to do with the early Hittite kings, the Labarna-Letter was written at the behest of the Hittite king but written in Akkadian and in a Syrian script and was likely found in the general north-Syrian area where Alalaḫ was, and the Uršu-Text is a Hittite product, written in Akkadian and in a Syrian cuneiform but found at Ḫattuša.

Finally, I also briefly looked at the use of personal determinatives, certain ligatures, sound values, the inventory of Sumerograms, and the use of what in Hittitology we call paragraph lines. However, a fuller study of these phenomena in the Alalaḫ VII texts vis-à-vis the Hittite cuneiform remains a desideratum.

3. A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Before we proceed to the results, it is important to briefly insert a note on the terminology used here. There is in ancient Near Eastern studies sometimes a regrettable tendency "to go it alone". The usage of the term "archive", for instance, has very little to do with the definition of that term as used in general archival science. During the 1950's some attempts were made to establish a dialogue, but nothing came of it, and nowadays some Assyriologists even claim that general archival theory and its apparatus are not really applicable to cuneiform studies.[23] This is to be deplored, because the lack of a unified terminology stands in the way of what could be a fruitful dialogue and prevents us from asking relevant questions of our material as well as from seeing possible solutions to certain problems that are obvious to archivists but not to us. Something similar seems to have happened in Hittitology regarding paleography. We generally distinguish ductus (*Duktus*) and sign shapes (*Zeichenformen*).[24] Ductus, we are told, refers to such general features as the density of the writing due to a lack or minimum of word spaces, the width of intercolumnia, the lack or absence of margins on the left, a slight slant of the heads of vertical wedges: in short, the general "look" of a tablet. Sign shapes, on the other hand, concern the way an individual sign was made, that is, the order, number, and kind of strokes that make up a sign. General works on paleography, however, normally define ductus (in accordance with its Latin origins) as "the act of tracing strokes on the writing surface. A basic ductus determined the order and direction of the traces in the configurations required for the basic shapes of the letters in a particular script".[25] The

[23] Cf. Jursa 2005: 57 with n. 350.
[24] Cf. Starke 1977: 9; Neu 1980: xiv; Klinger 1998: 372 n. 19.
[25] Parkes 2008: 151; thus also others, cf. e.g., Beal 2008: 130 ("In palaeography, 'duct' or *ductus* … are terms used to denote the distinctive features of the strokes in a particular hand. These include the way in which the letters are formed, the sequence of the strokes creating a letter [such as whether the bowl or the ascender is written first in a *d*], how the pen was cut and held, how much pressure was applied to it, how quickly or in what direction the hand moves, how carefully or carelessly the penmanship is executed, and any other characteristic or distinguishing aspects of the writing.") or Núñez Contreras 1994: 40 ("Ductus: Es el orden de sucesión y el sentido [de izquierda a derecha, de arriba hacia abajo, etc.] en que el escriba ejecuta los trazos que componen cada una de las letras"). Some prefer the term "structure": cf. Bischoff 1979: 67f. ("Bei der Ausführung ist auf die … Reihenfolge der Striche, die "Struktur" der Buchstaben zu achten" with

general look of a manuscript, on the other hand, is covered by the obvious term *aspect*: "the general impression on the page made by a specimen of handwriting at first sight".[26] There is a lot we can learn from existing knowledge of scribal practices in, for instance, medieval scriptoria, where monks labored over copies of Classical authors, much in the same way ancient Near Eastern scribes did. In the following I will use the terms *ductus* and *aspect* according to the definitions as used in general works on paleography and manuscript terminology.

4. THE ALALAḪ VII DUCTUS

In general, we see in Alalaḫ the same pattern that we observe at Boğazköy: most signs are stable in their shape, while others — especially the more elaborate ones[27] — exist in a sometimes bewildering variety of shapes: I counted 22 different varieties for the sign AK, 13 for LI, 10 for IK and KÙ, 9 for URU, and 8 for SAR. The signs ŠA and TA are attested with no verticals inscribed or with one, ŠA with two, three or four horizontal wedges, all these forms sometimes coexisting within a single text, and sometimes the same shape is to be read ŠA in one line, TA in another (cf. e.g. 20.02:6, 9). Likewise, NI comes with no, with one or with two inscribed verticals. The sign ŠE can be written with four or six Winkelhaken. It might be an interesting task for the future to see how internal textual diachrony and/or genre[28] maps onto these paleographical findings. The overall very practical bookkeeping character of the collection, at any rate, points at a group of scribes for whom writing was, first of all, a means to an end, rather than a craft to be cultivated for its own sake.

Among the varieties just mentioned, what Hittitologists call "older" and "later" variants of a sign exist side by side within the Alalaḫ corpus, sometimes even within the same text (for the shapes see below). Although this variation within a single text is relatively rare, it does make clear that the variants of a single sign shape could be used by and were known to the same scribe. Compare, for instance, the different shapes of:[29]

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n. 4 "Ich ziehe diesen Terminus dem in der Literatur häufig gebrauchten Ausdruck "Duktus" vor, den ich Eigenschaften des individuellen Schreibstils vorbehalten möchte"; for the latter see also the remarks in Núñez Contreras 1994: 40f. about the "escuela italiana" that uses the term "trazado" for this and reserves ductus for the degree of cursiveness of a hand).

[26] Parkes 2008: 149; cf. again Beal 2008: 24 ("In palaeography, the term 'aspect' denotes the general appearance of a handwriting or script and its salient tendencies, such as its predominant uprightness or slope, its angularity or roundness, the tightness or spaciousness of the lettering, etc.").

[27] This may be a general paleographic principle: the more opportunities there are to vary (that is, the more elaborate the structure of a sign is), the more variation there will be; cf. the converse observation by Biggs 1973: 42, that "for many signs the potential for variation is limited (…) or else the shape of the sign does not permit much variation in angles or orientation".

[28] Cf. the remarks by Biggs 1973: 41, concerning "literary" (i.e., official and longer-term) and "documentary" (i.e., ephemeral) hands. In the case of Alalaḫ one could, for instance, point to AlT 1, an official deed, using a clearly more archaic and monumental script than most others.

[29] In the following footnotes references to Alalaḫ texts will be given to the individual fragments (not lines in the texts!) in which the variants occur. Plain numbers refer to the editions in Dietrich – Loretz 2004, 2005, and 2006; "Z" refers to the texts in Zeeb 2001.

AK	10.03:10, 23 and ibid. 8, 16
AZ/UK	10.03:17, 22 and ibid. 24
EN	Z 7:12 and ibid. 3
IK	21.02:10 and ibid. 7; 22.01:13 and ibid. 27; 40.01:16 and ibid. 23, 27
QA	20.05:14? and ibid. 20; 22.06:25 and ibid. 8
SAR	20.08:7 and ibid. 8; 23.03:22, 28 and ibid. 20, 25
TAR	Z 35:51 and ibid. 55, 57.

In general, the ratio between the "older" and "later" sign shapes — from a Hittite perspective (cf. Table 2) — in the corpus at large shows an unmistakable predilection for the "older" shapes. Compare the following table:

value	*"older"*	*"later"*	*total*	*"older" %*	*"later" %*
AL	36	16	52	69.2	30.8
AZ/UK	21	3	24	87.5	12.5
EN	10	30	40	25	75
IK	64	29	93	68.8	31.2
LI	110	7	117	94	6
QA	33	18	51	64.7	35.3
SAR	24	24	48	50	50
TAR	14	3	17	82.3	17.7
UN	40	10	50	80	20

Table 3. Frequency of older and later sign shapes in the Alalaḫ VII texts.

The absolute numbers in the above table refer to texts in which the signs occur,[30] not to the total attestations of each individual sign. As mentioned above, variation of distinct shapes of a single sign within the same tablet is relatively restricted in the corpus, and in most cases a text is internally consistent in the sign shapes it uses.

5. REMARKS ON INDIVIDUAL SIGNS[31]

AL: the two variants are the same ones we find in Hittite tablets (). Both the Uršu-Text and Labarna-Letter have the "older" shape () only.[32]

[30] The attestations can be found in the footnotes below.

[31] If a text contains two or more variants its number is printed in **bold**. For the signs KÙ and URU only a selection of references is given. If there are just two main variants (see, for instance, AL) they are each given a "line"; in case of more subtle variations of a main variant, they follow in the same line. All variants are consecutively numbered.
"Uršu" refers to the Uršu text KBo 1.11, "Lab." to the Labarna letter as published in Salvini 1994.

[32] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 11.01, 20.01, 20.07, 20.18, 21.04, 21.07, 22.04, 22.06, 22.11, 22.13, 23.01, 23.03, 30.05, 30.07, 31.01, 31.02, 31.05, 31.08, 31.09, 31.10, 31.14, 31.15, 32.01, 40.01, 42.01, 42.02, 43.04, 44.01, 44.05, Z 1, 3, 5, 24, 34, 46, 55; (2) 10.01, 10.03, 22.02, 22.09, 22.10, 30.04, 30.08, 30.10, 30.15, 31.03, 31.04, 31.13, 40.05, 40.09, 51.02, Z 17.

AL 

Uršu 

Lab. 

AZ/UK: the Uršu-Text likewise shows both variants ( vs. ), with and without subscript ZA and UD respectively, although the non-subscripted form () is attested only once.[33] The Labarna-Letter has the variant without subscript only.[34]

AZ/UK 

Uršu 

Lab. 

EN: is the only sign that shows a surprising deviation from the general Hittite tendency. The "later" shape () is clearly more frequent. The Uršu-Text also shows both variants, the "older" one appearing more often. The Labarna-Letter has no EN.[35]

EN 

Uršu 

[33] Cf. with subscript (AZ not indicated) obv.! 5, 6, 15 (UK), 38, rev.! 11 (2x), 16, 26, without obv.! 20.

[34] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 21.07, 30.06, 30.10, 30.11, 31.01, 31.06, 31.10, 60.02; (2) Z 2, 9, 11, 35, 48; (3) 20.13, 42.14, 51.01, Z 13; (4) **10.03**; (5) 20.12; (6) Z 17; (7) Z 28; (8) **10.03**, 20.09; (9) 21.03; (10) 22.05.

[35] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 20.08, 22.04, 22.08, 22.11, 22.12, 22.13, 22.17, 30.04, 30.05, 31.09, 31.12, 31.13, 31.17, 32.01, 32.03, 40.01, 40.05, 42.01, 42.06, 42.12, 44.04, 60.01, Z **7**, 10, 14, 21, 24, 28, 64, 67; (2) 30.15, 31.01, 40.08, 42.02, 42.03, 50.03, 50.04, 50.05, Z **7**, 9.

IK: the "older" variant from a Hittite point of view is the one with a single vertical (). In most of the "later" shapes the horizontals, except for the bottom one, have been supplanted by a vertical (). The Uršu-Text shows the "older" variant only. The Labarna-Letter has no IK.[36]

IK 

Uršu 

KÙ: in spite of its many varieties, it is clear that the "older" shape (), characterized by a range of either horizontals or slanted wedges on the left, is the most common one. The Uršu-Text and Labarna-Letter have the "older" variant only.[37]

KÙ 

Uršu 

Lab. 

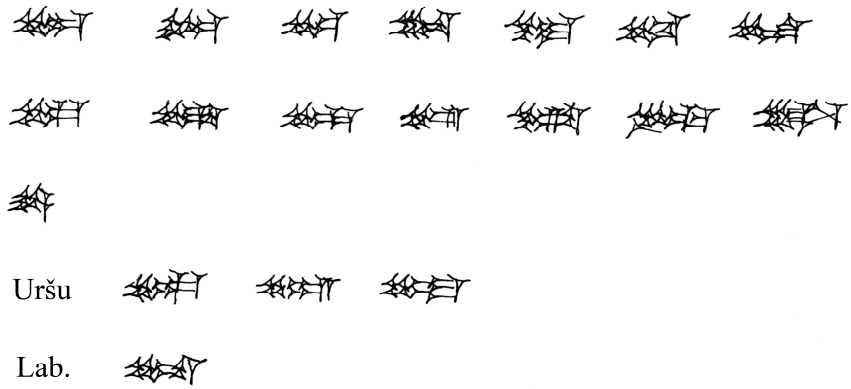
LI: for the "later" shape only those forms were counted that show two verticals, but the actual "later" Hittite shape, characteristic for the 13th century and consisting of four Winkelhaken on the left followed by a fifth and two verticals (), does not seem to be attested as such. In fact, the variants with two verticals mostly look like the "older" shape with an extra vertical.[38] In the LI-variant of the Labarna-Letter the last two horizontals are

[36] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 10.03, 20.01, 20.02, 20.03, 20.04, **20.07**, **20.08**, 20.09, 20.09A, 21.03, 22.02, 22.06, 22.13, 22.18, 31.08, 31.13, 40.13, 42.04, **42.12**, 42.14, 43.10, 44.01, 44.04, **44.05**, 51.04, 51.05, 60.01, Z 5, 6, 11, 15, 21, 46, 54, 58, 60, 69, 78; (2) 10.03, 21.01, 21.04, 22.06, 22.11, 23.03, 23.05, **30.05**, 30.06, 30.15, 31.10, **40.01**, 43.04, **44.05**, Z 4, 12, 17, 19, 34, 57; (3) **30.05**, **42.12**, Z 61; (4) **21.02**, **22.01**, 22.03, 22.04, Z 24; (5) **20.08**, 32.01; (6) **20.07**; (7) 31.12; (8) **21.02**; (9) 10.02, 20.11, **21.02**, **22.01**, 22.02A, 22.05, 22.08, 23.04, 30.12, 31.07, **40.01**, 40.04, 43.12, 51.01, 51.03, 51.10, Z 10, 34, 77, 93.

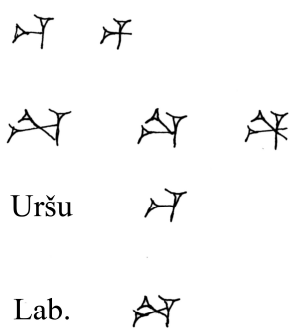
[37] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants (selection only): (1) 22.13, 32.01; (2) **20.02**; (3) **20.02**; (4) **20.02**, 23.03; (5) 50.01; (6) 20.05, 20.06; (7) **21.04**; (8) **21.04**; (9) 22.02, 50.02; (10) 10.02, 22.01, 22.10, 22.23, 22.24, 30.03, 30.14, 31.01, 32.03, 43.07, 43.08, 50.04, 51.07.

[38] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 10.02, 11.01, **20.01**, 20.02A, 20.03, 20.04, 20.05, 20.07, 20.08, 21.01, 21.02, 21.03, 21.04, 21.07, 22.01, 22.03, 22.04, 22.06, 22.08, 22.09(A), 22.13, 22.22, 22.24, 22.27, 22.28, 23.02, 23.03, 23.04, 23.05, 23.06A, **30.04**, 30.08, 30.12, 30.13, 30.15, 30.18,

written at a slight slant, a variant that is also known at Alalaḫ.[39] The variant most frequently seen in the Uršu-Text has the two verticals, just as in the Alalaḫ VII texts; interesting is one variant with five horizontals that has Alalaḫ VII parallels as well.[40]

LI 

QA: the Uršu-Text shows the "older" form only (𒀀), whereas the Labarna-Letter has the "later" shape (𒀀).[41]

QA 

SAR: the Uršu-Text has only the "later" shape (𒊹) with the two verticals instead of just one. The Labarna-Letter has no SAR.[42]

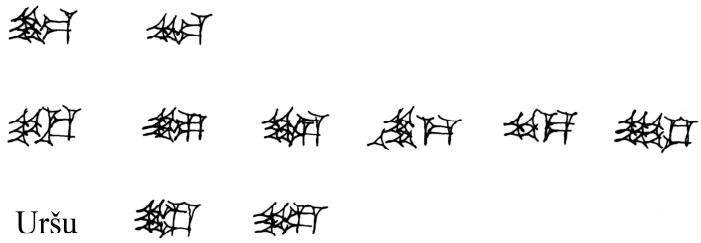
31.01, 31.02, 31.03, 31.04, 31.07, 31.08, 31.09, 31.12, 31.13, 32.02, 32.03, 32.04, 40.01, 40.02, 40.05, 40.06, 40.13, 42.03, 42.04, 42.05, 42.07, 42.14, 43.06, 43.09, 43.12, 44.02, 44.03, 44.04, 44.05, 50.04, 50.08, 50.09, 51.02, 51.03, 51.09, 60.01, 60.02, **Z 2**, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 19, 20, 21, **23**, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44, 45, 46, 54, 56, 57, 58, 62, 75, 77, 94; (2) **Z 2**; (3) 22.18; (4) 30.14, 43.08; (5) Z 4; (6) 40.04; (7) **Z 23**; (8) 10.03; (9) **20.01**; (10) 20.06, **30.04**(A); (11) Z 16; (12) 22.02, 22.05, 43.13; (13) 22.26; (14) 10.01; (15) Z 3?

[39] Cf. Z 2.

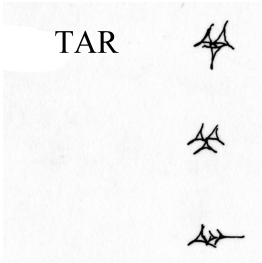
[40] Cf. Z 4:31.

[41] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) **20.05**, 21.07, 22.02, **22.06**, 22.10, 30.05, 30.18, 31.02, 31.13, 42.03, 42.05, 42.06, 42.08, 42.09, 42.10, 43.01, 43.07, 43.09, 44.01, 51.04, 51.09, 60.01, Z 4, 6, 9, 16, 21, 35, 45, 46, 68, 73; (2) 40.09, 51.03; (3) 10.01, 10.02, **20.05**, **22.06**; (4) 22.01, 22.14, 22.21, 32.03, 43.08, Z 12; (5) 22.08, 30.12, 31.03, 31.04, 40.08, 51.01, Z 2, 7.

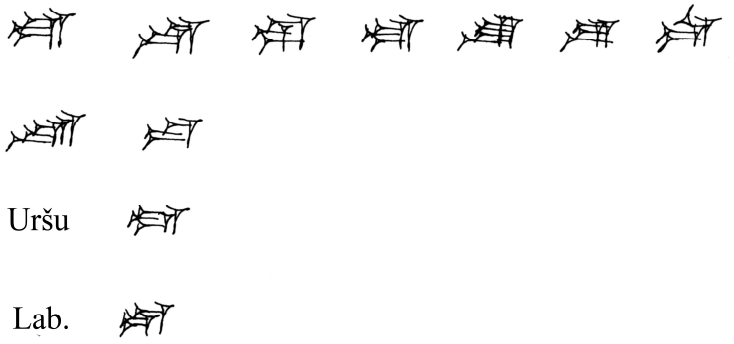
[42] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) **20.01**, 22.03, 22.04, 22.08, 22.12, **23.03**, 30.08, 30.15, 40.01, 42.01, 42.02, 42.06, 42.12, 50.07, 51.04, Z 12, 16, 53, 55, 92; (2) **20.01**, **20.08**, 22.23,

SAR 

TAR: is a relatively infrequent sign at Alalaḫ that is not attested in either the Uršu-Text or Labarna-Letter.[43]

TAR 

URU: is a very stable sign with few deviations, the most important of which is the variant with a single vertical instead of the regular two. In general the head of the first vertical is at the same level as the upper horizontal or just beneath it, as we see it also in the classic OS form. That same upper horizontal is at Alalaḫ VII very often somewhat indented vis-à-vis the lower two, which are usually more or less equally long. Sometimes, however, the middle one clearly protrudes. That same shape can be observed in the Hittite manuscript KBo 22.2 of the Zalpa-Tale (see already above).[44]

URU 

32.03; (3) **20.08**, 20.12, 23.04; (4) 21.01, 21.02, 21.04, 21.07, 22.01, 22.06, **23.03**, 30.06, 30.07, 31.16, 31.19, 40.05, Z 3, 46; (5) 31.06, 31.13, Z 17, 78; (6) 51.05; (7) 31.02; (8) 40.05.

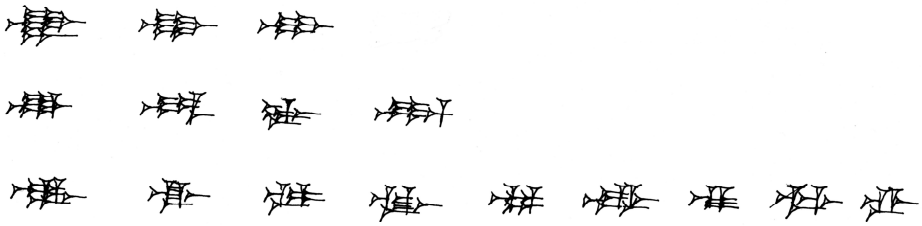
[43] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 20.05, 21.12, 22.03, 22.04, 30.05, 42.16, 44.05, 60.01, Z 24, **35**, 60, 66, 75, 79; (2) 22.08, Z 2; (3) **Z 35**.

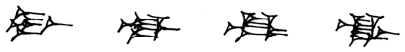
[44] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants (selection only): (5) 51.01; (6) 51.01; (7) 43.02, Z 44 (next to [1]), (8) 22.28; (9) 22.04, 22.24, 23.01, 23.04, 23.05, 30.12, 51.06, 60.03, 61.04.

6. REMARKS ON SOME OTHER SIGNS

AK: The "older" Hittite shape used as a point of comparison is HZL no. 81/6 and the one found in KBo 25.184 ii 72.[45] They are closer to the Alalaḫ VII signs in that they end in a single horizontal, whereas most Hittite AK-signs end with two. The essential difference between the "older" and "later" shapes, however, is the many horizontals that are significantly reduced and partially replaced by vertical wedges in the "later" form. Seen from that perspective, the Alalaḫ VII signs mostly show the variant with the many horizontals, although the very reduced and simplified "later" shape is attested as well in at least six texts. Many other forms can be considered as transient between the two. Because of the enormous variety of shapes and the difficulty of finding exact matches for most of them with Hittite variants, AK is not included in the above list.[46] Note that with Klinger[47] the "later" AK already occurs in a text that Starke[48] dates to the end of the 14th century and which otherwise does not contain significant "later" shapes.[49]

The Uršu-Text shows four variants that are all attested at Alalaḫ VII as well; however, it does not show the "later" Hittite shape. The Labarna Letter has the variant with horizontals only which seems to be among the most frequent ones at Alalaḫ VII.

AK 

Uršu 

Lab. 

ANŠE: can have the shape regularly encountered at Boğazköy ("GÌRxTAB"), but very often has the shape defined as "GÌRxPA".

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[45] Compare also the more regular shape ibid. ii 5.

[46] Attestations for Alalaḫ variants: (1) 10.02, **10.03**, 20.06, Z 75; (2) 22.28, 42.07, 43.07, Z 77; (3) 22.02, 22.05, 22.28, 30.07, 30.08, 42.06, 60.03, Z 35, **53**, 73; (4) 11.01, 40.03; (5) 22.04, Z 35; (6) 42.08; (7) Z 53; (8) 20.01, 20.02, 21.04; (9) **10.03**, 20.03, 20.04, 20.18, 22.01, 22.09; (10) **22.03**, 22.11, 22.13, **30.05**; (11) **22.03**, **30.05**; (12) 22.06, 30.11, 42.14, Z 4, 36, 46; (13) 22.15; (14) 42.19; (15) 23.04, 31.06, 42.01; (16) 21.07, 32.03; (17) 42.04; (18) **Z 53**; (19) 44.04; (20) 43.09; (21) 10.01.

[47] Klinger 1996: 35 n. 15; the text in question is KUB 25.37+ and the AK signs are attested in i 38 and iv 8.

[48] Starke 1985: 302.

[49] This is KUB 25.37+KUB 35.131+132+KUB 51.9, showing some older-looking sign shapes (AL, E, TAR, URU) along with younger AK. Starke's table (1985: 302) also has a "late" EN, but the hand copy displays an "old" EN only (i 14).

E: generally has the head of its first vertical wedge hovering around the upper horizontal, sometimes clearly below it as we find it in OS and MS texts ( , cf. e.g. 20.02, 20.07 etc.). A rarer variant has the sign starting with four instead of two horizontals (cf. 20.07, occurring next to the more regular shape).

DUMU: often shows the variant with an inscribed vertical ( , e.g., 32.02:6).

Ḫa: almost always has its usual shape of ZA with two Winkelhaken, but there are a few instances of the variant with a single Winkelhaken (21.07:16, 31.03:19 [but with two ibid. 21, 22], Z 2:25).

ID/DA: comes both with and without the broken or double-headed middle horizontal ().[50] Regularly, the bottom horizontal is protruding vis-à-vis the upper ones (cf. for ID 21.02:6, 16, 30.11:7, 31.01:13, 32.03:4, 32.04:9, 42.05:4, 42.14:7, Z 74:2; for DA cf. 22.03:18, 22.28:3, 11).

NI: comes with no verticals inscribed (e.g. 20.09:6), with one (e.g. 21.01), or two (e.g. 20.12:13, 22.18).

ŠA/TA: as already indicated above, TA can have no inscribed vertical (e.g. 20.07:1), one (e.g. 20.17:14, 30.04:8) or two (e.g. 20.09, 20.12:17). ŠA can also come with no vertical (e.g. 20.15 passim), or only a single one (20.02:6 [next to TA in the same shape], 20.05, 30.04:9 [next to TA in the same shape]; in 21.04 several different shapes of ŠA can be found next to one another).

7. OTHER OS FEATURES AS FOUND IN THE ALALAḪ VII TEXTS

One feature said to be typical of OS is the ligature-like (*ligaturartig*[51]) writing of combinations like *A-NA*, not just in the Akkadian preposition, but also in Hittite combinations. Of course, the preposition is present in practically every Alalaḫ VII text and overwhelmingly shows the same ligature-like shape that is characteristic of OS texts.

Likewise characteristic of OS is the occasional lack of a personal determinative. In fragments considered OS, we find it in KBo 8.42 rev.? 12, as well as in what seem to be late copies of original OH compositions (KBo 3.34 i 22, ii 30, KUB 43.75 rev. 4 (*f*), KUB 31.4 obv. 1 (2x)). In the Alalaḫ VII texts this is very common, and we see it also in the Uršu-Text (KBo 1.11 obv.! 3, rev.! 14).[52]

The Alalah VII corpus shows close proximity to the Hittite texts in sound values as well.[53] Polyphony is limited and we encounter the same range of values that we see in Hittite, including the use of the PI-sign for WA. Readings that are rare in Hittite and/or restricted to often very specific uses (e.g., LÍ,[54] LIK, MIL[55]), are mostly likewise infrequent and/or restricted to specific contexts at Alalaḫ. Interesting is the rare use of ḪI as ṬÀ (e.g., 22.03:2), which also occurs in the Uršu-Text (KBo 1.11 obv.! 23, 30). This value is not

[50] However, according to my experience with Hittite fragments it is at times extremely hard to see whether the middle horizontal is broken or not.
[51] Cf. Neu 1980: xivf., Starke 1985: 22f.; for examples of *A-NA* see HZL no. 364.
[52] For the use of personal determinatives in general see Edzard 2003-2005.
[53] For more on this see Kloekhorst forthcoming.
[54] Cf. Catsanicos 1994: 310.
[55] Cf. Catsanicos 1994: 311f.

listed under HZL 335 and might be an important argument to date the Uršu-Text in the immediate chronological vicinity of the Alalaḫ corpus.

As far as Sumerograms or Sumerographic combinations are concerned, there is about an 80% overlap between those attested in Hittite texts and those in the Alalaḫ VII texts. It is more telling, though, if the overlap concerns a Sumerogram or Sumerographic combination that is characteristic for the Alalaḫ corpus. This may be the case for the LÚ.AZU/ÚZU "diviner, divination priest", or Akkadian *bārû*, although definitive proof is still lacking. Whereas *bārû* is Sumerographically rendered elsewhere in Mesopotamian texts as (LÚ.)MÁŠ.ŠU.GÍD.GÍD and LÚ.ḪAL (from MB onwards), the writing LÚ.AZU/ÚZU seems specific to Alalaḫ.[56] That same Sumerogram is very well attested from at least the late 15th century at Boğazköy, especially in Hurrian texts and is a normal term for "diviner".[57] The ^{LÚ}AZU is also attested in compositions that seem to go back to the Old Kingdom, but all relevant manuscripts date to the 13th century,[58] so the date of introduction of this Sumerogram must remain uncertain.

Another link with Alalaḫ VII is the inspiration it might have provided for the later formulae (LUGAL.GAL *iššima ana* PN *ana* NÍG.BA-*šu iddin* and the vindication clause *urram šēram … lā iraggum*) in the *Landschenkungsurkunden*, as already observed by Kaspar Riemschneider back in 1958.[59]

Finally, the so-called paragraph lines are a feature very typical of Hittite texts. There is practically no Hittite text that does not have them.[60] Scribes at Ḫattuša and elsewhere in the Hittite empire structured their texts into meaningful sections by way of horizontal lines. Transitioning to a completely different topic or composition (e.g., in *Sammeltafeln*), could be indicated by double paragraph lines. Of course, the corpora of Alalaḫ VII and the Hittite ones from Boğazköy and elsewhere are very different in character: the Alalaḫ texts are almost exclusively and narrowly administrative, that is, predominantly bookkeeping in nature, whereas the Hittite texts are mostly narrative, be it historical prose, mythological, liturgical or otherwise. Yet horizontal lines are customarily used at Alalaḫ to separate a list of witnesses or a dating formula from the body of the record,[61] or to set off a total sum of an entire text or part of a text.[62]

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[56] Cf. CAD B s.v. *bārû* 121a.

[57] For a listing (up to 1982) of attestations see Pecchioli Daddi 1982: 290-297; the (LÚ.)MÁŠ.ŠU.GÍD.GÍD is attested only in a single text, it seems, KBo 34.107(+ KBo 39.293) rev. 9 (omen, NS). The (LÚ.)MÁŠ.ŠU.GÍD.GÍD was not yet in HZL, but is mentioned in Rüster – Neu 1991: 54.

[58] Cf. Görke 2010: 244-256.

[59] Cf. Riemschneider 1958: 331 with n. 38, referring to AlT 41 = 20.06; the same text also has the vindication clause with *urram šēram … lā iraggum*, cf. Riemschneider 1958: 330-334.

[60] For paragraph lines and *Randleisten* see Waal 2010: 95-105.

[61] Cf. e.g. 20.01, 20.02, 20.07, 20.08, 20.13, 20.16, 20.18, 21.01, 21.03, 21.04, 21.07, 22.01, 22.03, 22.04, 22.06, 22.10, 22.11, 22.12, 22.13, 22.27, 23.02, 23.05 (double §§!), 30.07, 30.15, 31.01A, 31.08, 31.10, 31.11, 31.14, 44.02, 44.03, Z 6, 9, 20, 26, 53, 54, 59, 73, 77.

[62] Cf. e.g. 40.05, 40.06, 42.01, 42.02, 42.04, 42.05, 42.06, 42.07, 42.08, 42.09, 42.12, 42.12, 42.19, 43.04, 43.07, 43.13, 44.01, 44.04, 44.05, Z 1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 45, 47, 51, 54, 56, 57, 60, 67, 69.

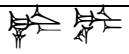
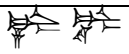
Apart from the paragraph lines that mark coherent entities within a composition, Hittite scribes also employed the so-called *Randleisten* (fig. 1).

Similarly, at Alalaḫ there are quite a few cases where the end of the text is marked by such a horizontal line, just like the later *Randleiste* of a Hittite tablet.[63] Sometimes, albeit rarely, there is a line marking the bottom of the obverse, but it cannot be ruled out that sometimes a natural break in the administrative text happens to coincide with the bottom of the obverse.[64] Although the Alalaḫ VII practice does not come close to the Hittite one — probably largely due to the difference in attested genres — it does show that the roots of what became standard in Anatolia were present at Alalaḫ. The Uršu-Text has clear paragraph divisions; for the Labarna-Letter this is difficult to say, since it is a ruled tablet.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the Alalaḫ material itself, it is clear that, with the exception of the sign EN, and to a certain extent SAR, the scale clearly tips in favor of the "older" shapes. This means that in a situation of borrowing, these shapes are the ones most likely to be adopted. This brings the Alalaḫ-corpus and Hittite OS closer together: both show a combination of "older" and "later" sign shapes, the former being the most frequent. The only difference is that the "later" ones are used more often at Alalaḫ than in Ḫattuša. The combination of "older" and "later" makes it possible to see the Alalaḫ VII ductus as a serious candidate for the source of the Hittite cuneiform, and to explain the occasional early appearance of some of the "later" sign forms in Ḫattuša. If so, we do have to assume a selection or reduction in the "later" variants, because, as we saw, the "later" variants occur in Alalaḫ VII more often than they seem to do in OS manuscripts. Two scenarios are conceivable: either this selection was already implemented by the Syrian scribes, or it was an innovation of the first generation of Hittite scribes learning the foreign script. The first can only be true if in Alalaḫ VII one scribal hand favored the "older" shapes, while another exclusively showed "later" sign forms. If that had been the case, it would suffice to assume that one or more scribes with a preference for the "older" forms were the ones that got carried off and that, as a consequence, what we call OS is the result of historical coincidence. In reality, what we see is that the same Alalaḫ VII text that, for instance, has "older" LI also shows "later" IK or AK, or "older" SAR occurs next to "later" QA, etc. There is no systematic pattern here, nor can there really be: the shapes that we Hittitologists call "older" and "later" forms often have an inverse relationship from the point of view of the history of cuneiform writing in general. What we call "older" SAR, for instance, is in the evolution of the sign actually the more recent shape. The same goes for the signs AL, AZ/UK, IK, LI, and QA:

[63] Cf. e.g. 10.01, 21.02, 21.03, 22.12, 23.01, 30.14, 30.15, 31.01, 31.05, 31.06, 31.07, 31.08, 32.03, 40.03, 40.06, 42.02, 42.04, 42.08, 42.09, 42.10, 42.11, 42.12, 42.15, 43.02, 43.11, 43.13, 50.01, 50.04, 51.04, 51.05, 51.06, Z 14, 15, 22, 29, 38, 39, 48, 52, 56, 73, 74.
[64] Cf. 42.04, 43.14 (3x §!), 51.07, Z 15, 28.

Sign value	*~~Babylonian~~ standard*	*Alalaḫ less frequent (ca. 25%)*	*Alalaḫ most frequent (ca. 75%)*
AL			
AZ/UK			
IK			
LI			
QA			
SAR			

~~Table 4. …~~

This deviation from the Babylonian norm characterizes Alalaḫ as peripheral, as a backwater from a Babylonian point of view, and is a strong argument against considering the older Hittite cuneiform to be a direct borrowing from Babylonia. We therefore have to assume that the Alalaḫ VII ductus must have been adopted wholesale along with its varieties of sign shapes in the ratios given above. This implies that if it was indeed in the course and as a result of Ḫattušili I's (and Muršili I's) campaigns to Northern Syria that cuneiform writing finally found its way into Hittite society, a selection and reduction of the imported shapes must have taken place between the moment of introduction and the moment where we can say that the typical Hittite cuneiform had finally established itself.

This is not a problem: it seems quite a natural process for a society that formerly had no script to reduce the number of variants that are seen as needless when it starts learning and using a newly acquired writing system. The incoming foreign scribes teach a first local generation and probably instruct them in the full inventory of signs as they themselves have developed and have always used them. They are not the ones likely to simplify the system. It is the first local generations that will try to weed out variants they consider redundant among the hundreds they need to learn already. This selection was, as a consequence, not dictated from above — or at least not at first — but the choices were made individually and for convenience's sake. In general, the most frequently used forms will have won out over the less frequently used. However, in such a scenario the latter ones may still pop up here and there: different students may remember different variants.[65]

As just mentioned, this selection and reduction of shapes is likely to have taken place between the moment of introduction and the moment where we can say that the typical Hittite cuneiform had established itself. Recently, I have suggested the middle of the 16th century as the *terminus ad* or *ante quem* for the latter moment: this on account of the oldest datable attestation of the Hittite cuneiform, the ax of Ammuna, who must have

[65] Depending on how centralized one wants to imagine the emergence of a Hittite chancery, it is not inconceivable that at a certain moment a standardization of sign shapes became decreed from above. But the final rise to prominence of the "later" shapes in the 13th century may be more easily explained by assuming these sign forms never disappeared completely.

reigned around that time.[66] The fact that thus far we know of no true and legally authentic originals in the Hittite cuneiform from before the ax of Ammuna points to a low volume in writing for internal purposes in the period of the introduction of the cuneiform script and its first appearance around 1550. Historically speaking, this is not surprising. Assuming we date the introduction of the script to the reigns of Ḫattušili I and Muršili I, we see it really taking off under Telipinu at the end of the 16th century. In between, the early kingdom fell victim, it seems, to internal strife and lost most of what Ḫattušili and Muršili had ever gained. On the international diplomatic front there was little incentive for writing and the domestic situation we can only guess at, because of an almost complete lack of documents. Yet we may assume, and there is evidence to support this, that there was indeed some activity.

As Güterbock already wrote, it must not necessarily and specifically have been the settlement of Alalaḫ that provided the unique inspiration for the Hittite ductus. We have to realize that many of the Alalaḫ VII records did not originate there. Quite a few ~~must~~ have been sent there from Ḫalab/Aleppo. The fact that these do not stand out in their ductus already shows that there was something like a more general northern Syrian cuneiform variant. Neither do we have to assume that the introduction of cuneiform in Hittite society was a one-time event. Both Ḫattušili and Muršili campaigned extensively in Syria: while Ḫattušili brought down Alalaḫ, they were both responsible for capturing Aleppo and for the subsequent fall of the kingdom of Yamḫad. The Labarna-Letter and the Annals of Ḫattušili attest to contacts with towns other than just those two. They may also evince a finally perceived need of a script for both external and, more importantly, internal purposes. During their reigns, the Hittite ruling class seems to at last have been ready for writing, and repeated exposure to written documents may well have made them realize this. The script that offered itself came from northern Syria, and Alalaḫ VII is our only real substantial example of the type of cuneiform used there. The time gap between Ḫattušili/Muršili and Ammuna amounts to little over 50 years, a century at best, which seems more than enough to bridge the altogether not very large gap between the ductus as exemplified by the Alalaḫ VII texts on the one hand, and the ax of Ammuna and the somewhat later *Landschenkungsurkunden* of Telipinu on the other. It is interesting to see that thus far the very first document that can be said to have been written in the typical Hittite cuneiform variant, the ax of Ammuna, still has the ŠA without any inscribed verticals.[67]

9. A FINAL NOTE ON PALEOGRAPHY

A comparison of the 278 Alalaḫ records on the one hand, and the Uršu-Text and Labarna-Letter on the other, makes it abundantly clear how important it is to have a large sample when trying to describe the characteristics of a certain ductus. The cumulative picture resulting from the Alalaḫ-texts shows unity in diversity: although there are sometimes many variants, there also is an unmistakable overall tendency. Were we to

[66] Cf. van den Hout 2009a and 2009b.
[67] I see no compelling reason to doubt (cf. Klengel et al. 1999: 73 n. 188) the authenticity of the ax.

have had a single text only, just as we do in the case of the Uršu-Text and the Labarna-Letter, we would inevitably have extrapolated from there. One easily assumes an entire corpus, if there ever was one, to have behaved as one's only exemplar. The Alalaḫ VII corpus shows how dangerous such an assumption is. To what extent the diversity is linked to the provenance of certain documents within the corpus (e.g., those sent from the capital Aleppo) remains a task for the future. But the unity of the Hittite texts found at half a dozen locations across the empire does not immediately favor such a hypothesis: a centrally organized power is likely to have worked through a centrally controlled bureaucracy.[68]

10. OUTLOOK

The observations described here give rise to some further considerations that can currently only be hinted at. First of all, the appearance of certain sign forms in Hittite texts that are closer to the Alalaḫ VII ductus than to the Hittite OS can have interesting implications. For instance, the sign forms of KBo 18.151, that enigmatic oracle report that some have described as OS and others as MS,[69] are strikingly similar to what we have seen above as typical for Alalaḫ VII:[70] compare the signs AK (obv.? 3, 6, 8, rev.? 5), ŠA (obv.? 11), TA (obv.? 8, 9 et passim), and URU (obv.? 11, rev.? 2, 13). Combined with the strange spellings in that text, KBo 18.151 is not only likely to be Old Hittite but also becomes a good candidate to be one of the earliest texts completely written in Hittite, when there was not yet a standardization of spelling.[71] To a lesser extent KBo 22.1, the "old Hittite" instruction, shows similar features, both in sign forms and spellings. I already noted the "later" EN, while the AK sign (11, 17) is the same one as used in KBo 18.151 and fits the Alalaḫ VII shapes much more than the classic OS ones, as already observed by Oğuz Soysal.[72] An examination of the photo of KBo 22.1 further suggests that the ŠA signs may not show any inscribed verticals.[73] Future research may identify other tablets that belong to this group.[74]

Secondly, the appearance of several "later" shapes in OS and their gradual increase in MS — as opposed to the traditionally advocated quite abrupt change around 1250 BC[75]

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[68] Cf. van den Hout forthcoming.
[69] Cf. the overview of opinions in Soysal 2000: 108 with n. 45 and 46.
[70] As already observed by Schwemer 2004: 79; note that Soysal 2000: 109 had already drawn attention to the non-Boğazköy shapes of the signs AK, ŠA and TA.
[71] See Soysal 2000: 92-94 for possible Alalaḫ VII or at least north Syrian connections for the PN Zikiltu attested in KBo 18.151 obv.? 2 and 7. For another possibly very early attempt to write Hittite in KBo 1.11, see van den Hout 2009b: 91f., repeating an older suggestion by Kempinski 1983: 33 n. 20.
[72] Soysal 2000: 109.
[73] Cf. Bittel et al. 1975: 45 Abb. 35. I am also grateful to Willemijn Waal for allowing me to use her photos of this tablet; for some of the aberrant spellings see Kloekhorst forthcoming.
[74] Willemijn Waal (pers. comm.) draws my attention to the interesting observation that both tablets KBo 18.151 and KBo 22.1 share the same "cushion" shape that she also sees in the OS Zalpa text KBo 22.2, the OS Anitta text KBo 3.22, and the OS ritual KBo 20.33. For more on this see Waal 2010: 20-36, esp. 24.
[75] Cf. Klinger 1998: 368.

— may throw a new light on the origins of the signs that have always been considered characteristic of what we call New Script (NS). As we saw, we have tacitly accepted the appearance of "later" shapes in manuscripts that are classified as OS, where one finds examples of "later" AL, AZ/UK, EN, IK, SAR, UN, and URU. MS manuscripts routinely contain "later" AZ/UK and SAR (next to the "older" shapes), as well as AL, EN, IK, and URU. Since none of these shapes were independently developed, but are the familiar Mesopotamian ones, they were assumed to be due to external influence, although it was not quite clear exactly when and how. The evidence suggests that they were always there, albeit initially very infrequent. Having been weeded out mostly perhaps by the earliest generations of native Hittite scribes, they put in an appearance only occasionally. These shapes signal a return to the more standard Old Babylonian forms. Was it the combination of their existence, albeit largely dormant in the Old Hittite kingdom, with the necessary feedback from Babylonia through increasing and ongoing diplomatic contacts over the course of Hittite history and a desire among the Hittite ruling class to be part of that world culturally that triggered these changes? Just as any script allows for more variants over time, just so the "later" shapes that were less favored initially gradually took on a second life: they even became the predominant variants in the 13th century. Clearly, this last consideration needs more research, but giving up the principle of paleographic purity of OS makes this a viable option.

Returning to the topic of this paper, we may no longer want to see the "later" shapes in OS manuscripts as betraying a 13th century hand. Given the clear propensity of Alalaḫ VII scribes towards the "older" shapes (that, from a Babylonian point of view, present a Syrian innovation), it seems no longer realistic to disqualify the ductus they used as a forerunner of the Hittite ductus because of the presence of "later" sign shapes. If we were to adopt the principle that a single "later" shape of a diagnostic sign automatically betrays a manuscript as having been written in, say, the 13th century, and if we were to describe OS as a pure, unadulterated script phase, solely consisting of a single set of shapes, then we have to accept a lowering of dates by several centuries of some cherished manuscripts. Also, the number of possible forerunners of the typical Hittite cuneiform would be severely limited. Any type of cuneiform that used "later" shapes would be immediately disqualified. Instead, I suggest, these "later" shapes might lay bare the origins of the Hittite cuneiform from a forerunner that showed a similar mix but with specific preferences for one or the other variant. The cuneiform of the Alalah VII texts seems to be exactly the kind of script we should be looking for.

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FIGURES

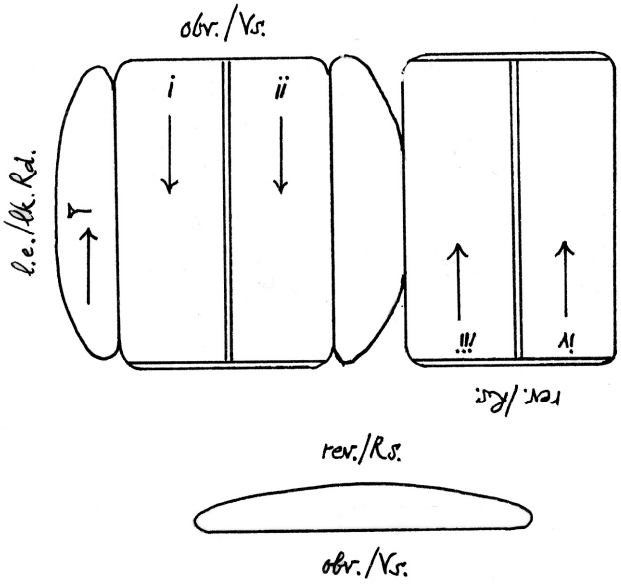

Fig. 1. Drawing of a Hittite tablet showing the so-called Randleisten