Clay bars


CB1, ME 96/0279, PE Hh 016, Square P, Pass $1 / 37.68$
Four-sided clay bar without suspension hole. Clay: fine, very light reddishbrown. No fingerprints. Well-smoothed on all four sides. A bit of the surface is chipped at sides $b$ and $c$. The bar is inscribed on all four sides, but not at the ends. Stylus medium, rather rounded end. Incisions medium, dots very deep. $\varnothing 9.03 \times$ $2.2 \times 2.3$.

## The inscription

$\begin{array}{ll}\mathrm{a} & \mathrm{X} 056-00510|062-013-057-04120| 042-023-04160 \\ \mathrm{~b} & \mathrm{X} 039-070-08650 \mid[\bullet]-029-04940 \text { vacat } \\ \mathrm{c} & \mathrm{X} 011-006-092-03364 \mid .1 \text { vacat } \\ & .2040-029-078-\left[^{\bullet}\right] \\ \mathrm{d} & 025-056-00520 \mid \text { vest vacat }\end{array}$
a. On side a all signs are clearly readable and more or less canonically rendered. On 042 one should however note (1) the slightly curved strokes which are practically non-existent in the previously known incised examples of this sign (CHIC, 401-402) and (2) the fact that the strokes of the "axe" do not cross each other. The only existing parallel of this execution of 042 is found in Petras inscriptions. b. The first two signs 039 and 070 are rendered in a canonic way. For the next sign the reading 086 has been suggested. The sign 068 has been excluded since in the known incised versions it is never closed at top and bottom (CHIC, 415), whereas the only known example of 086 (on \#035.b) is closed at both ends. The sign on Hh 016 has, in addition to the known 086, two double strokes at the lower exterior part and four small strokes extending down from the upper horizontal line. If this is enough to suggest a new sign or just a more elaborate version of the 068/086 family, remains for others to decide. The [ ${ }^{\circ}$ ] is enigmatic although it would be possible to restore the sign 046. The sign 029 is rendered canonically with one long stroke and the addition of a shorter oblique stroke (cf. e.g. \#042.a and \#066.b); 049 is also canonic although the "arrowhead" does not sit on top of the vertical stroke (cf. e.g. \#101.a, \#106.a et al.).
c. Sign 011 has all the essential features for this sign and has been provided with a double line above the head like \#013.g, \#015.g, \#024.g, \#026.g and \#041.b. Sign 006 is also unmistakable although the lower horizontal line is unusual. Sign 092 (though not 047) seems certain since a deep dot at the end of the curved stroke can be clearly seen in the lower, mutilated part of the sign. Sign 033 is not common but has the characteristic five bent strokes meeting at a centre point (cf. also $\mathbf{P e} \mathbf{H e ~ 0 0 1 ) . ~ T h e ~ s h i p ~ s i g n ~} 040$ is unmistakable and well-executed. Sign 029 is missing the lower part and we do not know whether or not it was executed in the same way as on side a. The third sign is comprised of slightly bent long strokes with an "eye" and a small stroke at the top, which makes 078 the most likely reading. The marking [ ${ }^{\bullet}$ ], found in the mutilated part of the surface, consists of three deep dots in a row. Considering the fracture of the surface, they may very well represent the sign 031, while numerals are a less likely interpretation.
d. Although incompletely preserved, the suggested reading 025-056-005 seems reasonable. After the word-divider there are the remains of a sign, but after that the tablet is empty.

Comments: See further comments under inscriptions


CB2, ME 96/0359, PE Hh 017, Square $\Lambda$, Pass 1
Four-sided clay bar, almost completely preserved. No suspension hole. Clay: fine, soft yellow. No fingerprints. Smoothed on all four sides. Surface of all four sides partly damaged, while a large hole has been pierced obliquely through sides b and d of the clay bar. The bar is inscribed on three of the four sides. Stylus very fine pointed end. Incisions deep, and in places very deep; dots very deep. $\varnothing 6.48$ $\times 2.0 \times 1.8$.

The inscription

| a | [•]-080-057-070 740 |
| :---: | :---: |
| b | X 042-[॰] 3500 |
| c | X vest.-[0]-vest. |
| d | vacat |


a. Too little of the first sign is preserved to suggest any reading. The second sign is not immediately recognisable, but its main characteristics seem to be an oblique "baseline" with something above - hence the suggestion that it is an elaborate 080 . Sign 057 seems a bit unusual with the bent lower stroke - perhaps accidental?
b. In front of the numerals there are traces of two signs. The first is 042 executed in the particular style of the Petras tradition, while based on the preserved strokes, and mutilated by the oblique hole; no reading shall be suggested for the second sign.
c. On side c there are some light incisions remaining from signs, the central one of which seems to have a long slightly bent stroke with something attached at one end (078?).
d. Side d, which is relatively well-preserved, is uninscribed.

Comments: See further comments under inscriptions
CB3, ME 97/0030A, PE Hx 018, Square П, Pass 2
Clay bar or label?, tiny fragment. Fine, light reddish-brown clay. No fingerprints. Moderately smoothed surface. Rectangular section. Part of two surfaces preserved. The larger surface is inscribed. Stylus medium to rough, rather rounded end. Incision medium, dot deep. No certainty about how the fragment should be turned. $\varnothing[1.40 \times 0.9]$. Th. [0.45].

The inscription
a $\quad[\bullet] 10 \mid$
The suggested reading is in no way certain, but there are two strokes extending all the way out to the edge of the fragment with a very deep dot in between. A reasonable interpretation would - with reference to the other four-sided clay bars - be sign, numeral, word-divider. The only unusual aspect in this case would be that one sign extends all the way out to the edge.
Comments: The dot (10) is very deep as also seen on the other clay bars.
CB4, ME 97/0042A, Square П, Pass 3
Clay bar? Fragment with three surfaces preserved. Corner piece. Clay: very light yellow-reddish. No fingerprints. Polished? Rectangular shape and profile. Inside fracture, no impressions. All sides smoothed flat and vacat. $\varnothing[0.73 \times 0.65]$. Th. [0.65].
Comments: Probably corner from clay bar - does not join complete ones.


CB5, ME 97/0043A, Square П, Pass 3
Clay bar? Fragment with three surfaces preserved. Corner piece. Clay: light, reddish-brown, soft. No fingerprints. Some polish. Rectangular shape and profile. Inside fracture, no impressions. All sides smoothed flat and vacat. $\varnothing[1.23 \times$ 1.08]. Th. 0.9 .

Comments: Probably corner from clay bar - does not join complete ones.

