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NEO-BABYLONIAN LETTERS FROM ERECH

BY

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To

PROFESSOR MORRIS JASTROW, JR.

My Esteemed Colleague and Friend

NEO-BABYLONIAN LETTERS FROM ERECH

INTRODUCTION

The letters contained in this volume of texts were found at Warka, the ruins of which represent all that remains of the ancient city of Erech, one of the four cities of Nimrod's kingdom (Genesis X: 10), and one of the earliest cities known in history. The discoverer of the archive gave Warka as the provenance of the tablets. This is corroborated by internal evidence; besides, the letters were found intermingled with contracts and administrative documents, practically all of which were dated in that city. Judging from the number of tablets that reached America, the archive must have been very large.

The general appearance of the letters as regards their form and the character of the script is the same as other known letters of the Neo-Babylonian period (see the halftone reproduction, Plate LXXVI). While a few are baked and others partially so, most of the letters are simply sun dried. Some are written so closely, and in such a minute and crowded hand, that the aid of a lens is frequently necessary in reading them. In a few instances there are evidences of the letters having been encased. A portion of the envelope of one, bearing the seal impression of the sender, has been preserved, while others show traces of having been enveloped by the small pieces of cases which adhered to them. Several of the letters also bear seal impressions.

The letters were written in the era during the period from Kandalanu, a contemporary of Ashurbanipal, to Darius I (522-486 B. C.). This is determined from a study of the names contained in the letters in connection with the names of many temple officials which occur in the dated documents. Texts Nos. 175 and 176 are dated in the reign of Darius. They are, however, really orders of officials, who have not mentioned their names, but whose identification apparently was known by their seal impressions which appear on the tablets. No. 175 reads: "To Taddanu, our brother; may Bêl and Nabû pronounce thy peace. Give 10 kors of dates to Qîshti-Marduk, for his stipend (*maššarti*). 19th of Shebet, of the 11th year of Darius, king of countries."

In many instances it will be impossible to identify the individual who sent the letter, or who is addressed, owing to the fact that messengers carried and

delivered the letters as directed, which made it unnecessary to mention the man's family name. It is also impossible to determine the exact date and in many instances even the reign in which the letter was written, as is possible in connection with the contract literature. The study, however, of the legal and commercial contracts with which the tablets were found, many of which are in the Yale Collection, and are being copied for publication, as well as the texts which have already appeared,[1] will make it possible to determine the approximate reign of many, and the exact reign during which others were written. The names of officials, besides data of one kind or another referred to in the contracts as well as in the letters, make it possible to determine the reign in which they were written.

A number of royal letters found in the archive are of special interest. The salutation and other data in Letter No. 1 make the identification of the writer with King Nebuchadnezzar reasonably certain. Two of the addresses of Letter No. 3, perhaps even the third whose name appears in an abbreviated form, are the same as in No. 1, making it entirely reasonable to infer that the writer of this letter was also Nebuchadnezzar. No. 5 was also apparently written by Nebuchadnezzar, as it is addressed to Enurta-shar-uṣur, who figures in Nos. 1 and 3. The Royal Letter No. 2, addressed to Kurbanni-Marduk, who was a director (*šatammu*) of the storehouse in the reign of Nabonidus, makes it highly probable that the writer was that king. This is further confirmed by No. 115, also a royal letter to Kurbanni-Marduk, which refers to an intercalary month Ve Adar to be introduced in the fifteenth year. That this points to the reign of Nabonidus is shown by the fact there was a Ve Adar in his fifteenth year. Letter No. 196 apparently also belongs to this reign, since the tenth year is the only occasion known in the Neo-Babylonian period when the intercalary month Second Elul was inserted in the middle of the year, a custom practiced frequently in an earlier period. No. 4 was likewise apparently written by Nabonidus, as the addressee is Kurbanni-Marduk, mentioned above. No. 6 does not mention any names, being addressed to the Erechians, the elders and the people, and cannot therefore be determined. It will be possible to determine later who was "the king of lands," addressed in No. 7, by the help of the names of the addressors, Amurru-dân, Kudurru, and Marduk-shâkin-shum.

The royal letters as well as those purporting to convey "the word of the king," and the fact that in the salutation of so many, Bêl and Nabû, or Nabû

[1] Keiser *Letters and Contracts from Erech*, Part 1, *Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies.*

and Marduk, the gods of Babylon and Borsippa, figure so frequently, point to close connection with the capital city, and its jurisdiction over Erech. This is also shown by the documents with which the letters were found. No. 15 is written by the *qîpâni* of the temple Esagil in Babylon to the storehouse director and Nabû-aḫ-iddin, the *bêl piqitti.* Now the word qîpâni "keepers" is a general term for the high officials of the temple, such as the *shaqû, rêš šarri ša muḫḫi qubbu,* etc. In this particular tablet, it might be added, the high officials of the government call attention to the fact that the month is intercalary. Following the greeting they simply write: "Verily dost thou know, behold we write you, the month is intercalary (*di-ir*)." No. 115 is a similar document, as is also No. 196, except that in the latter the intercalary month is Second Elul, as mentioned above.

The letters not only belonged to the administrative archives of the temple, but the contents show that they generally deal with business matters in connection with the management of the property or the income of the temple. There are references to military affairs; to provisions for the celebration of festivals; to the inspection and repairing of canals; but, as stated, they refer chiefly to all sorts of business affairs in connection with the management of the property of Eanna, the Temple of Erech. A few may be said to deal with social affairs.

The transliteration and translation of all the letters, which is nearly ready for the press, will appear in the *Yale Oriental Series, Researches,* as Volume VI, Part 1.

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90	*Sin-ilu.*	*qîpi.*	3566
91	*Dajân-aḫ-. . . .* and *Labâši-Marduk.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-. . . .*	8920
92	*Nâdinu* and *Zêria.*	*Guzânu* and *Arrab.*	3572
93	*Balâṭsu.*	*Nidinittu-Šamaš.*	3567
94	*Balâṭsu* and *Nidintum-Šamaš.*	*Balâṭu.*	3573
95	. . . .	*Nabû-aḫ-. . . .*	8887
96	*dajanê.*	*Nabû-mukîn-aplu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8849
97	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	*Šamaš-dân.*	8845
98	*Šamaš-uballiṭ* and *Marduk-šum-lîšir.*	*Nâdin, Muranu* and *Balâṭu.*	8846
99	*Šum-uṣur.*	*Nâdin.*	8848
100	*Šum-uṣur.*	*Nâdin.*	8847
101	*Šum-uṣur.*	*šatammu.*	8927
102	*Sin-iddin.*	*Šum-ukîna.*	3569
103	*Anum-šar-uṣur.*	*Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8922
104	*Nabû-apal-iddin.*	*Nâdinu.*	3568
105	*Aḫu-lûmur.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	3574
106	*Innina-aḫê-iddin.*	. . . .*-ia.*	8919
107	*Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	*šatammu.*	3570
108	*Nergal-êpuš.*	*Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	3571
109	*Šumâ.*	*Bêl-aḫ-ušabši.*	8844

Text No.	Letter from	Addressed to	Catalog YBC
110	*Šum-ukîn.*	*šatammu.*	8926
111	*Balâṭu.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8923
112	*Nabû-êṭir-napšâti.*	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	8913
113	*Kalbâ* and *Eanna-lipi-uṣur.*	*Innin-zêr-ušabši, Eanna-šum-ibni* and *Nûrea.*	8914
114	*Iddinû.*	*Nâdin.*	8915
115	*amat šarri.*	*Kurbanni-Marduk.*	9086
116	*Innin-aḫê-iddin.*	*Nâdinu.*	8924
117	*Anum-. . . .*	*Nabû-mukîn-aplu* and *Nabû-. . . .*	8921
118	*Nabû-kitri.*	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	8918
119	. . . .	*Muranu.*	8917
120	*Ilu-uṣur.*	*Ištar-šum-êreš.*	8842
121	*Eṭir-Marduk.*	*Nâdin.*	8843
122	*Bêl-ušallim.*	*Enurta-šar-uṣur.*	8925
123	*Marduk-zâkir-*[*šum*].	*Anum-. . . .* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8916
124	*Nergal-iddin.*	*Bânia.*	8841
125	*Enurta-šar-uṣur.*	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	8865
126	*Imbia.*	*Nabû-mukîn-aplu* and *Sin-šar-uṣur.*	3538
127	*Anum-šar-uṣur.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8880
128	*Šûzubu.*	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	8870
129	*Bêl-êṭir.*	*Kurbanni-Marduk.*	8878
130	*Kisik-Nabû.*	*šatammu.*	8871
131	*Marduk-šâpik-zêr.*	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	8868
132	*Nabû-iqîša.*	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	8872
133	*Innina-âlik-pâni.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	3539
134	*Balâṭsu* and *Êṭir-Bêl.*	*Ibni-Ištar.*	8912
135	*Nabû-rêmu-šukun.*	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	8840
136	*Bunene-šar-uṣur.*	*Nâdin* and *Mukîn-aplu.*	8866
137	*Ile'-Marduk.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8910
138	*Zêria, Marduk-zêr-ibni* and *Nabû-nâṣir.*	*Nidintum-Bêl* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8911
139	*Bêl-zêr-ibni.*	*Nabû-mukîn-zêr.*	8899
140	*Innina-šum-ibni.*	*Nâdin, Kinâ, Muranu* and *Balâṭu.*	8898
141	*Innina-zêr-ušabši.*	*Nabû-ušabši.*	8867
142	*Nabû-bâni-aḫu.*	*Nabû-aḫê-šullim.*	8873
143	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	*Nabû-bâni-aḫu.*	8874
144	*Nabû-mukîn-aplu.*	*Nabû-bâni-aḫu.*	8876
145	*Rî*[*mût*].	*Nabû-. . . .* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8863
146	*Kalbâ.*	*Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8864
147	*Ibni-Innina*(or *Ištar*).	*Nabû-bâni-aḫi.*	8861
148	*Nabû-šum-uṣur.*	*Nabû-aḫê-šullim.*	8909
149	*Kurbanni-Marduk.*	*Samas-uballiṭ* and *Marduk-zêr-lîšir.*	8862
150	*Kalbâ.*	*Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8869
151	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	*Šum-ukîn.*	8877

Text No.	Letter from	Addressed to	Catalog YBC
152	*Marduk-ēṭir, Mušēzib-Marduk, Kinâ, Nabû-šum-ibni, Mušēzib-Marduk* and *Nabû-uballiṭ.*	*šatammu.*	8879
153	*Šum-iddin.*	*Ilâni-rîmanni.*	8875
154	*amêl šalattu.*	*Nabû-nâdin-. . . .* and *Marduk-ēṭir-napšâti.*	8888
155	*Mušēzib-Marduk.*	*Šum-ukîn.*	8905
156	*Nabû-mukîn-aplu.*	*Ardi-Marduk* and *Iddinâ.*	3590
157	*Nabû-šum-ukîn.*	*šatammu.*	8896
158	*Nergal-zêr-ibni.*	*Nabû-nâdin-šum.*	8895
159	*Anum-aḫ-iddin.*	*šatammu.*	8894
160	*Bêl-iddin.*	*Sin-êreš.*	8892
161	. . . .	. . . .	8891
162	*Nabû-ēṭir.*	*Šum-ukîn.*	8889
163	*Šamaš-ilê'.*	*šatammu* and *Nâdin.*	8890
164	*Nabû-mukîn-aplu.*	*Nâdin.*	8893
165	*Nâdin, Rîmut, Šulâ, Imbia* and *Zêria.*	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	8897
166	*Enurta-šar-uṣur.*	*Balâṭsu.*	8902
167	*Šumâ.*	*Marduk-ēṭir.*	3591
168	. . . .	. . . .	8856
169	*Nabû-šar-uṣur* and *Zêria.*	*Kalbâ.*	8900
170	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	*Nabû-ušabši* and *Ibni-Innina.*	8852
171	*Nâdin.*	*Nabû-mukîn-zêr.*	8904
172	. . . .	. . . .	8903
173	. . . .-*Nanâ.*	. . . . and *Bariqqu.*	8901
174	. . . .	. . . .	8853
175	(A dated order.)	*Taddannu.*	3593
176	(A dated order.)	*Taddannu.*	3575
177	*Nabû-šēpišu-ušabši.*	*Mukînnu.*	3576
178	. . . .-*aḫê-iddin.*	. . . .-*Šamaš* and *Gimil-Šamaš.*	3577
179	*Enurta-šar-uṣur.*	*Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	3540
180	*Zêria.*	*Nabû-aḫê-. . . .*	8855
181	*Nergal-nâṣir.*	*Mušēzib-Marduk.*	3594
182	*Sin-. . . .*	*Gimillu, Šamaš-dân, Anu-. . . .* and *Nabû-mušêtiq-urra.*	8854
183	. . . .	*Innina-šum-ušabši, Marduk-zêr-ibni, Innina-šum-uṣur,* etc.	8850
184	. . . .	. . . .	3592
185	. . . .-*Nabû.*	. . . .	8851
186	*Zidqi.*	*šatammu* and *dupsar bîti.*	8883
187	*Balâṭsu.*	*dupsar bîti.*	8906
188	*Nabû-šakip.*	*Amurru-udammiq, Nabû-nâdin-šum* and *Marduk-ēṭir.*	8907

Text No.	Letter from	Addressed to	Catalog YBC
189	*Ḫaḫḫuru.*	*Šum-ukîn.*	8884
190	*Šum-iddin.*	*Ilâni-rîmanni.*	8908
191	*Nanâ-êreš.*	*šatammu* and *Nabû-aḫ-iddin.*	8885
192	. . . .	. . . .	8881
193	*Sin-ab-uṣur.*	*Mušallim-Marduk.*	8886
194	*Ardi-Nanâ.*	*Nabû-šar-uṣur.*	8882
195	*Nabû-bâni-aḫu.*	*Ibni-Ištar.*	9087
196	*Zêria.*	*Kinâ.*	9084
197	*Nâ'id-Ištar.*	*Šum-ukîn.*	9083
198	*Eanna-šum-ibni.*	*Gimillu.*	9082
199	*Gimillu-Sin.*	*Nabû-mukîn-zêr.*	9081
200	*Balâṭsu* and *Marduk-*. . . .	*Nabû-aḫê-iddin.*	9085

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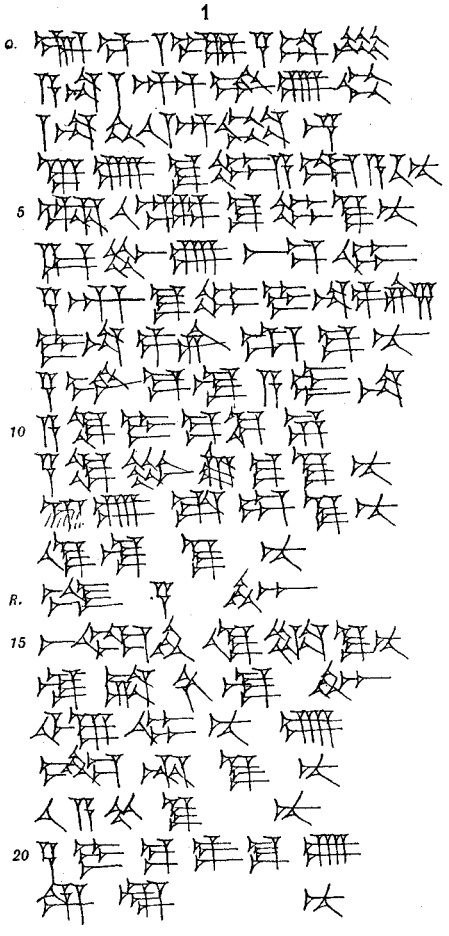

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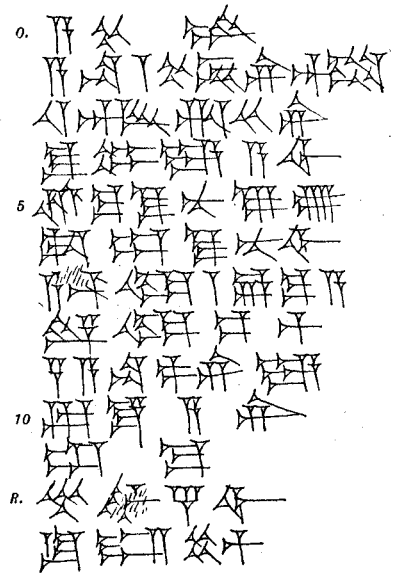

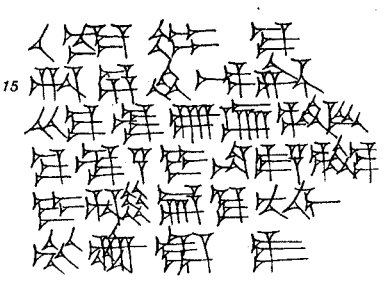

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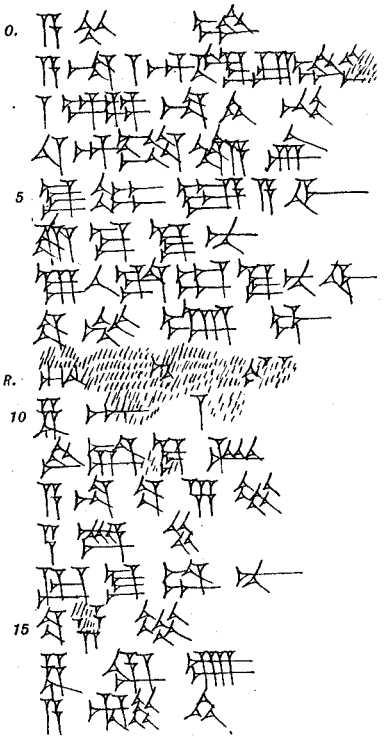

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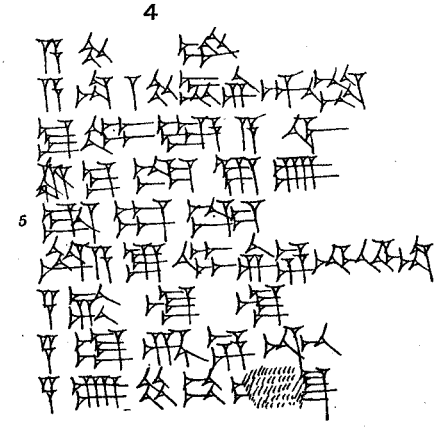

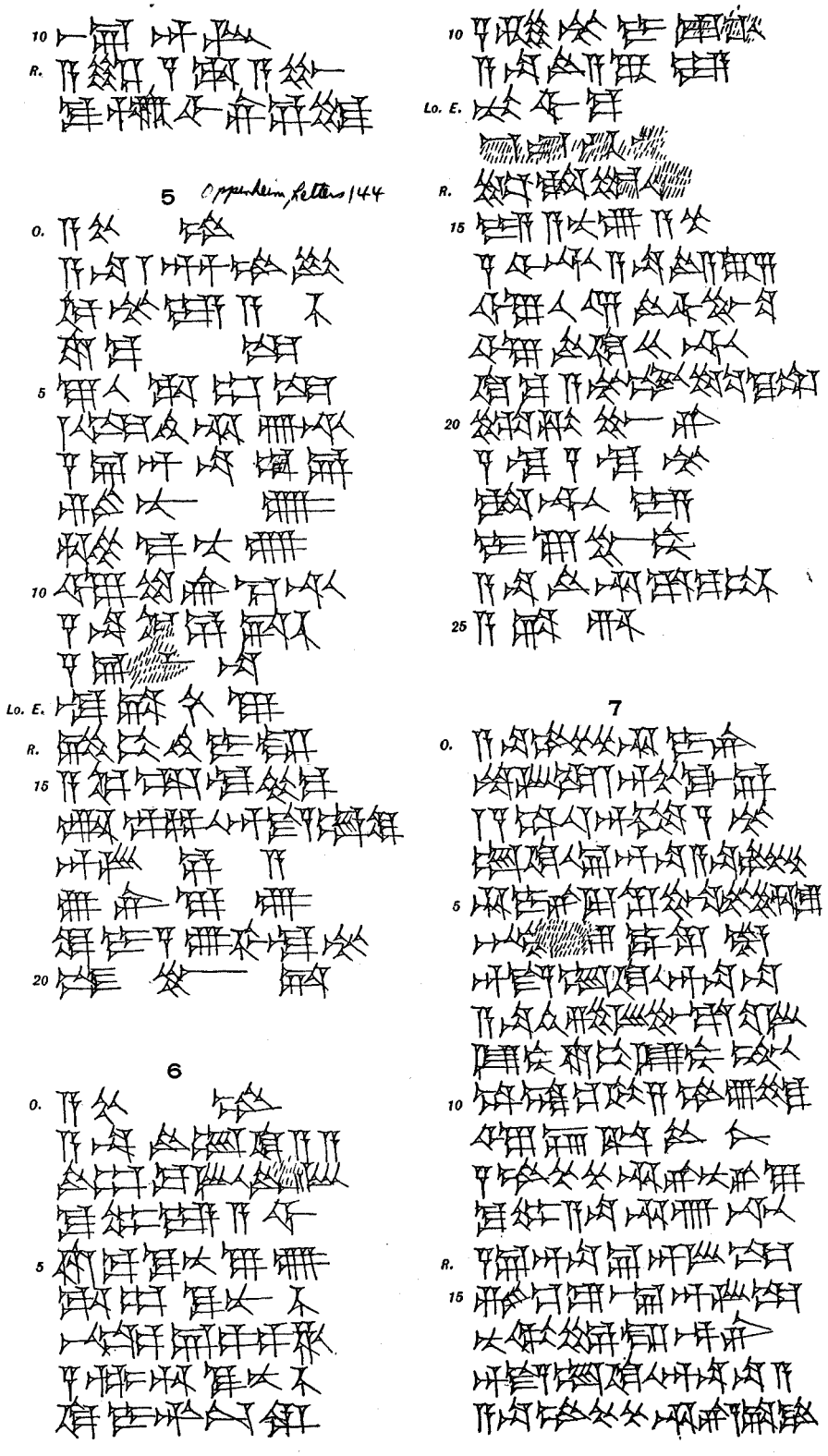
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Oppenheim, Letters 144
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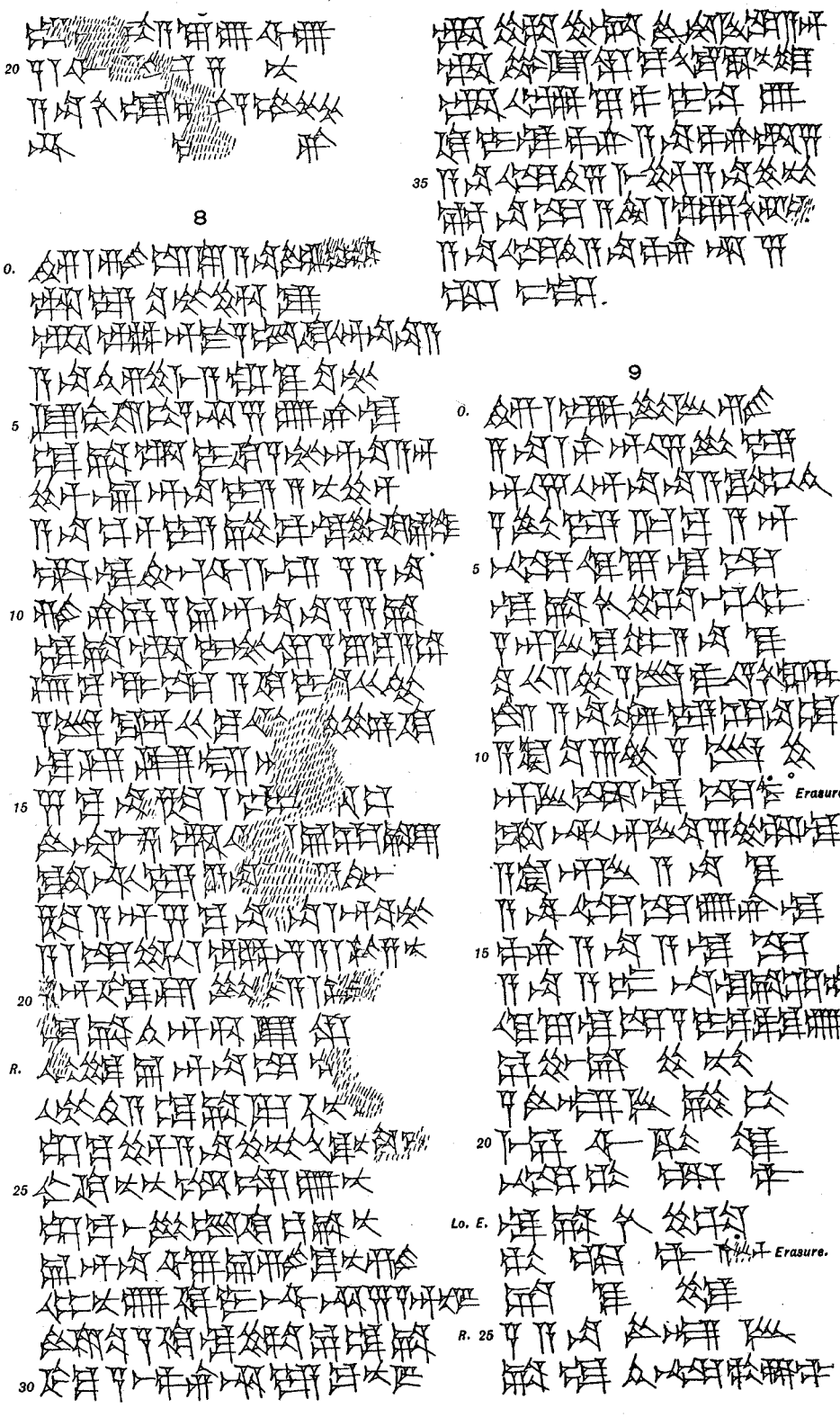
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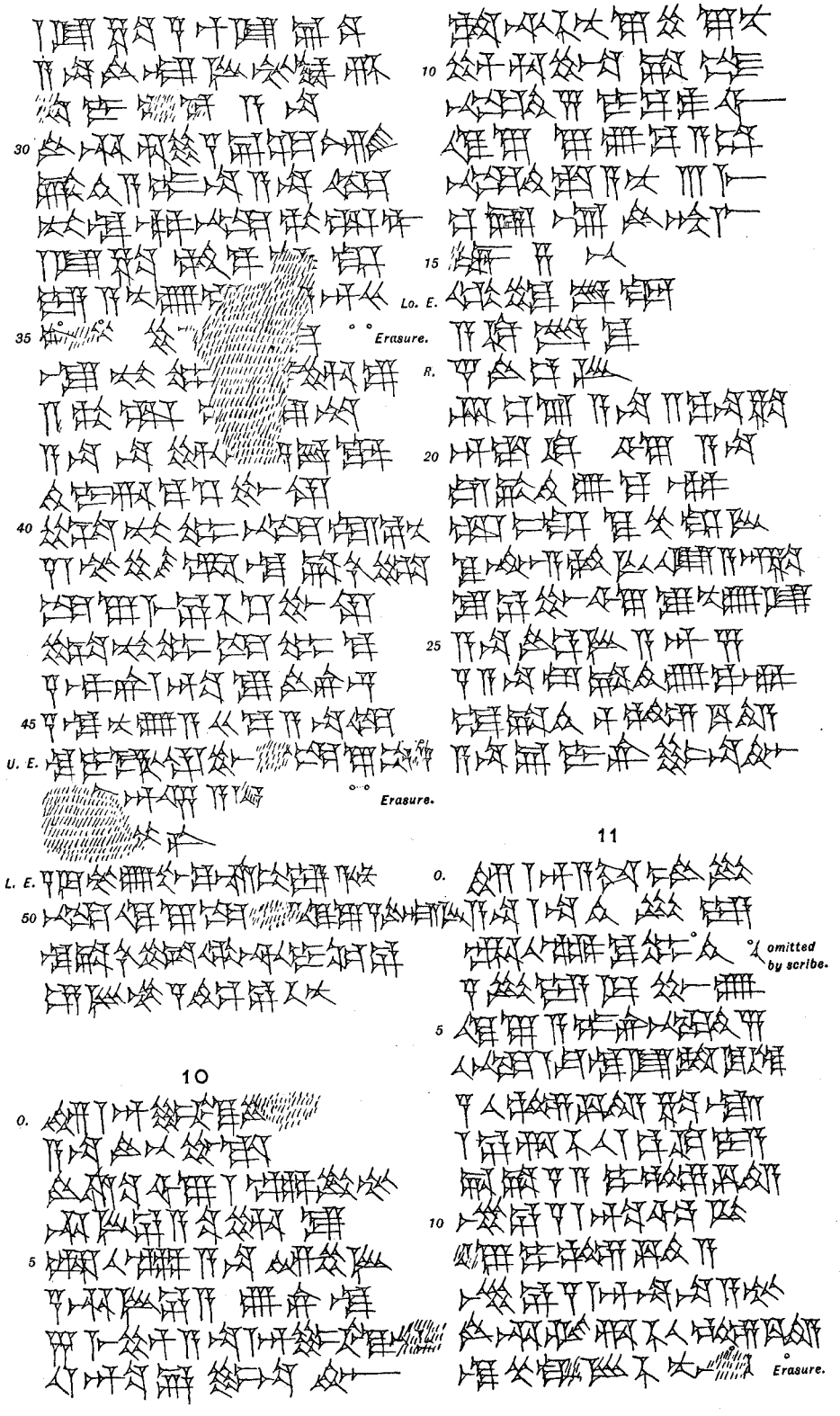
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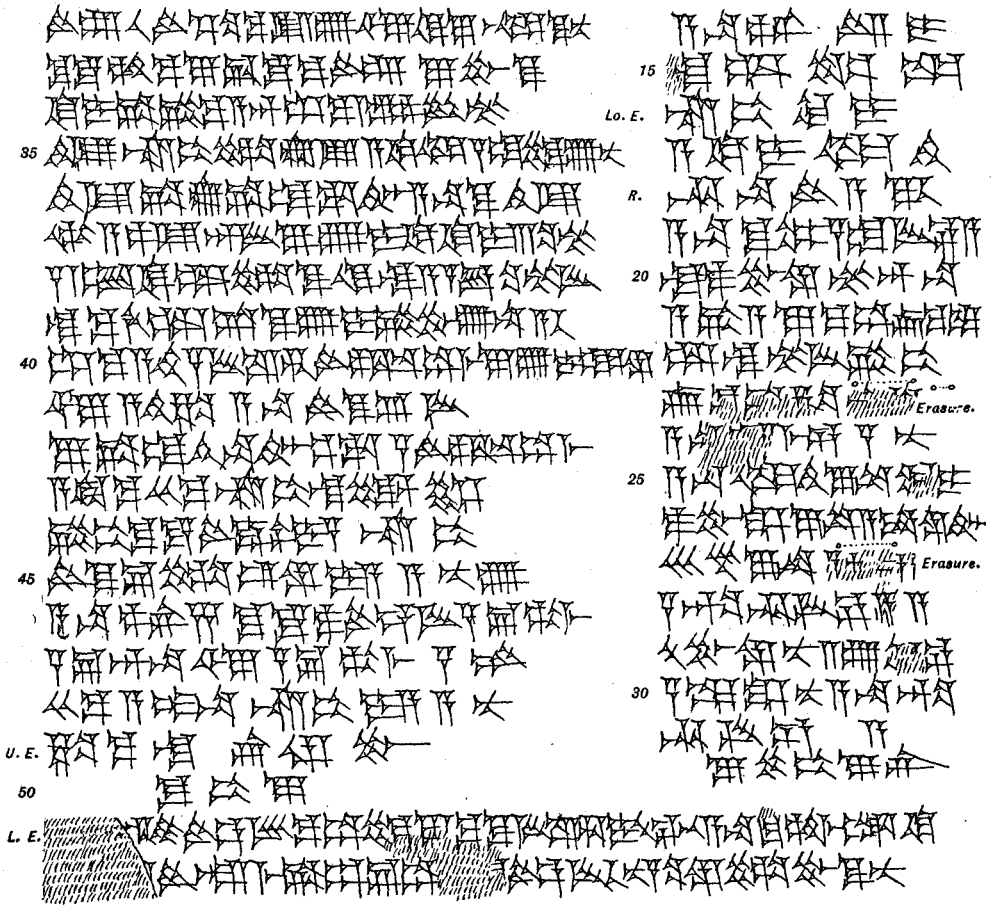

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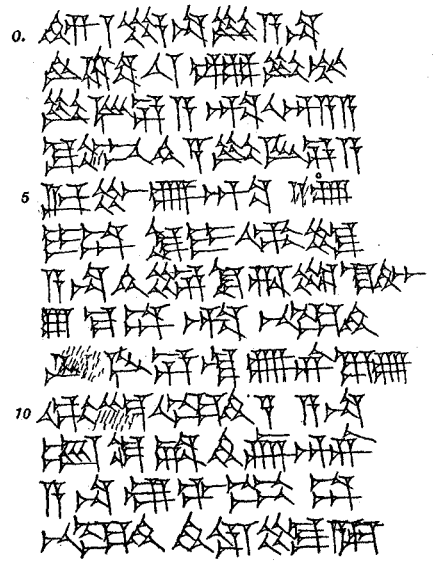

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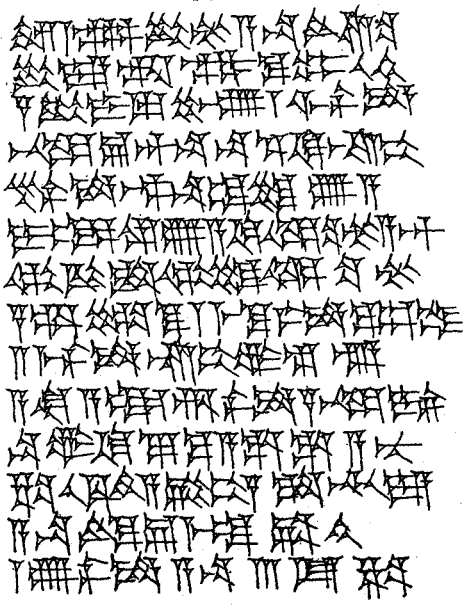

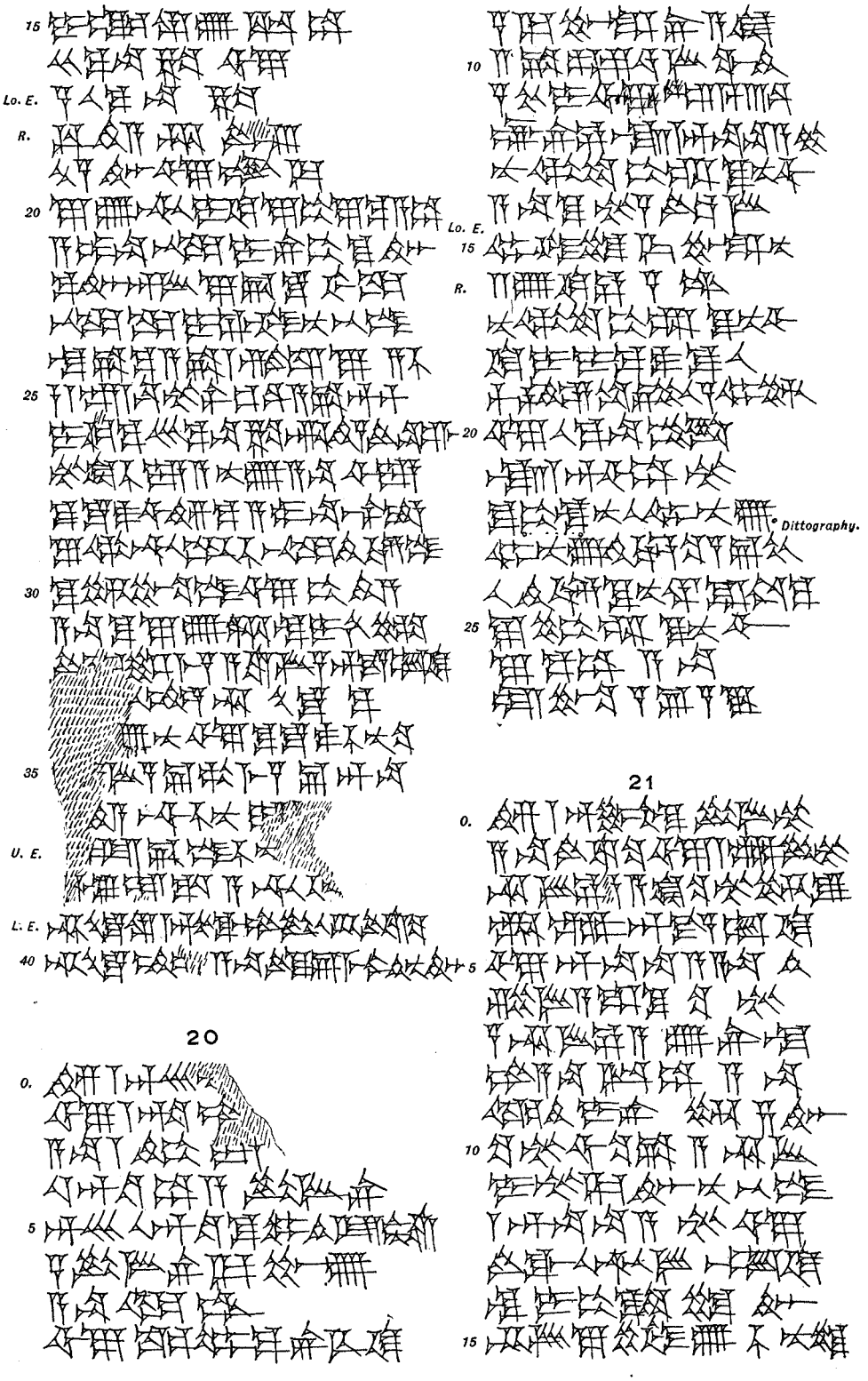

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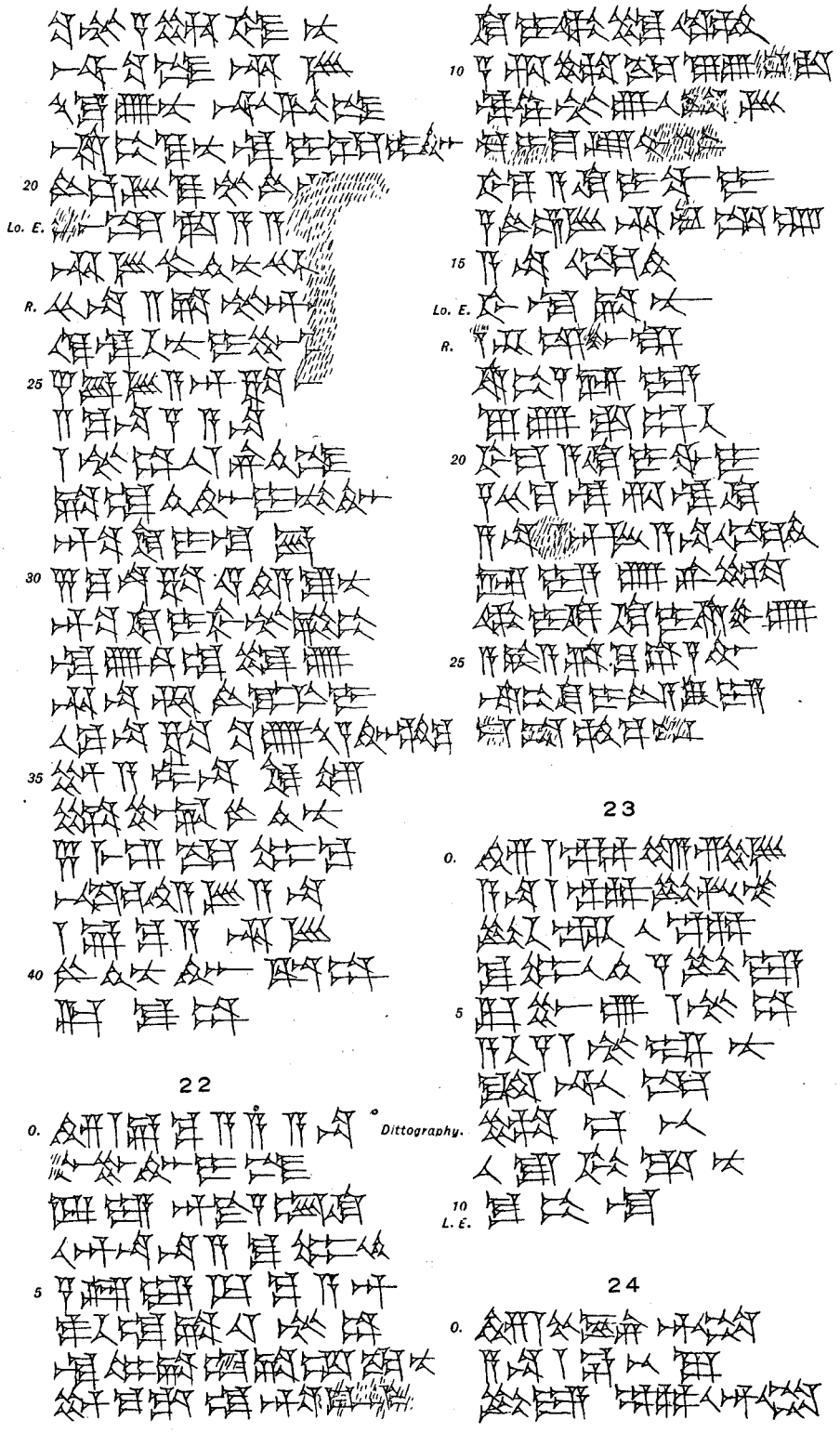
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Dittography.

25 Oppenheim, Letters 140

O.

Mistake of scribe for

26

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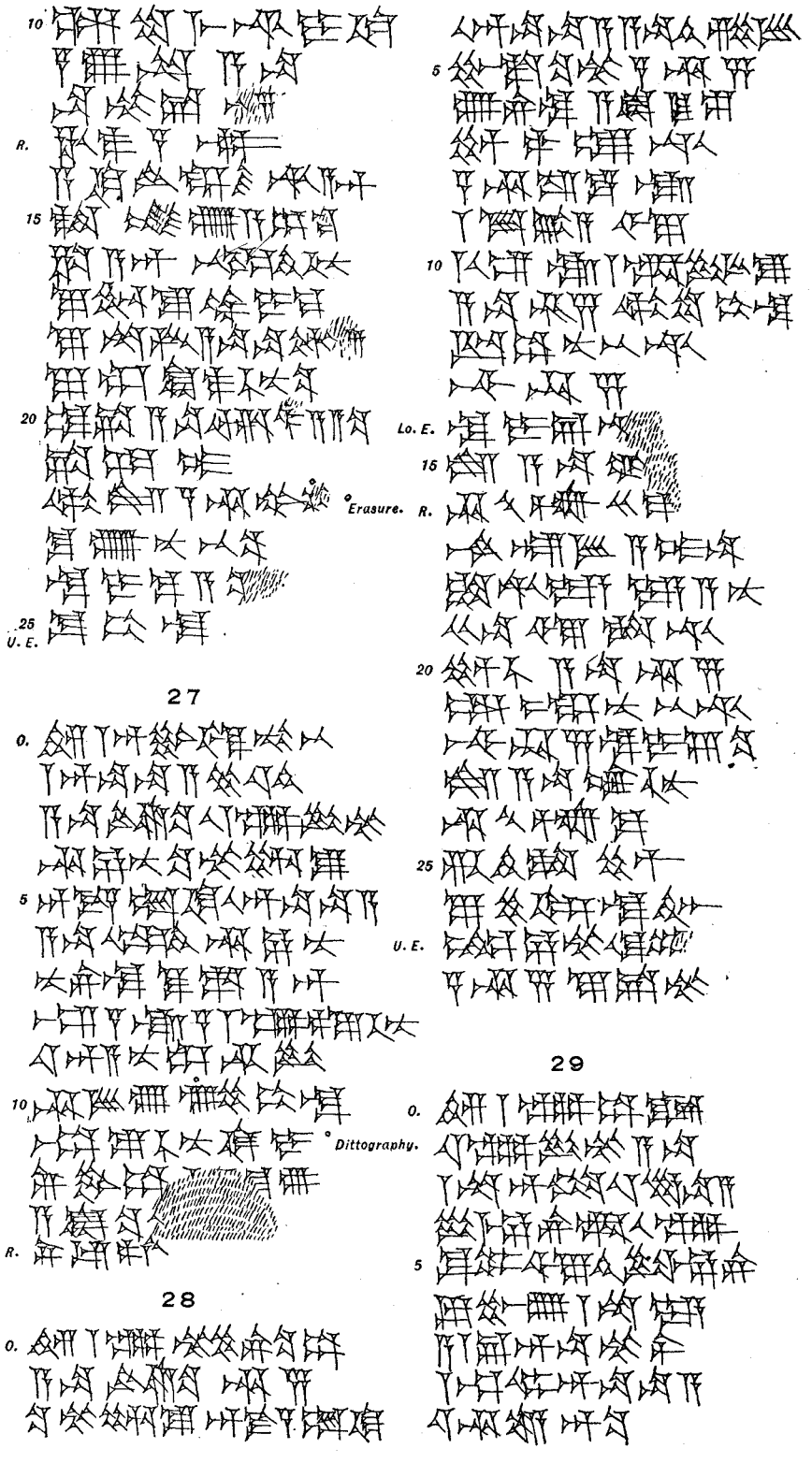

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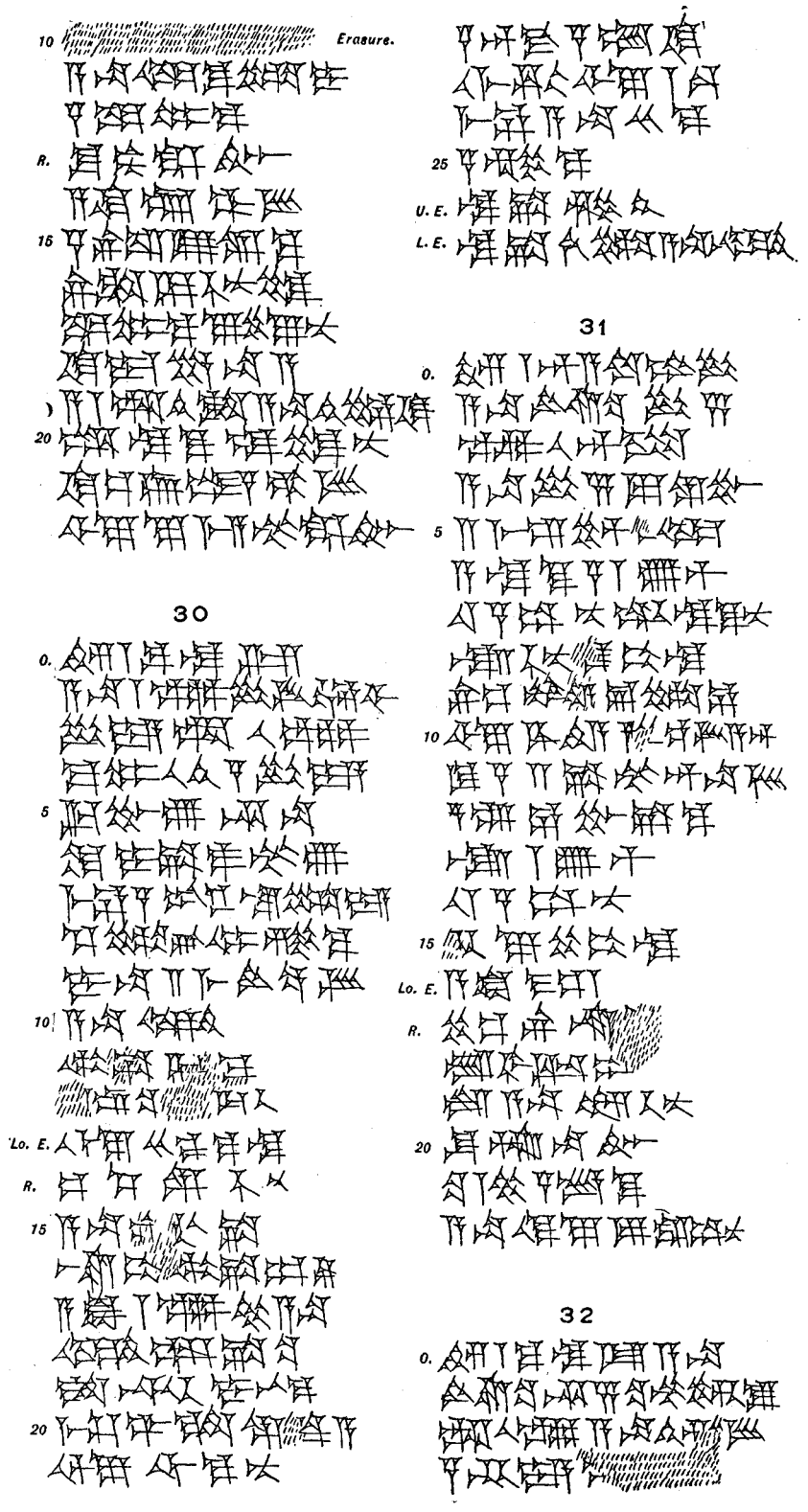
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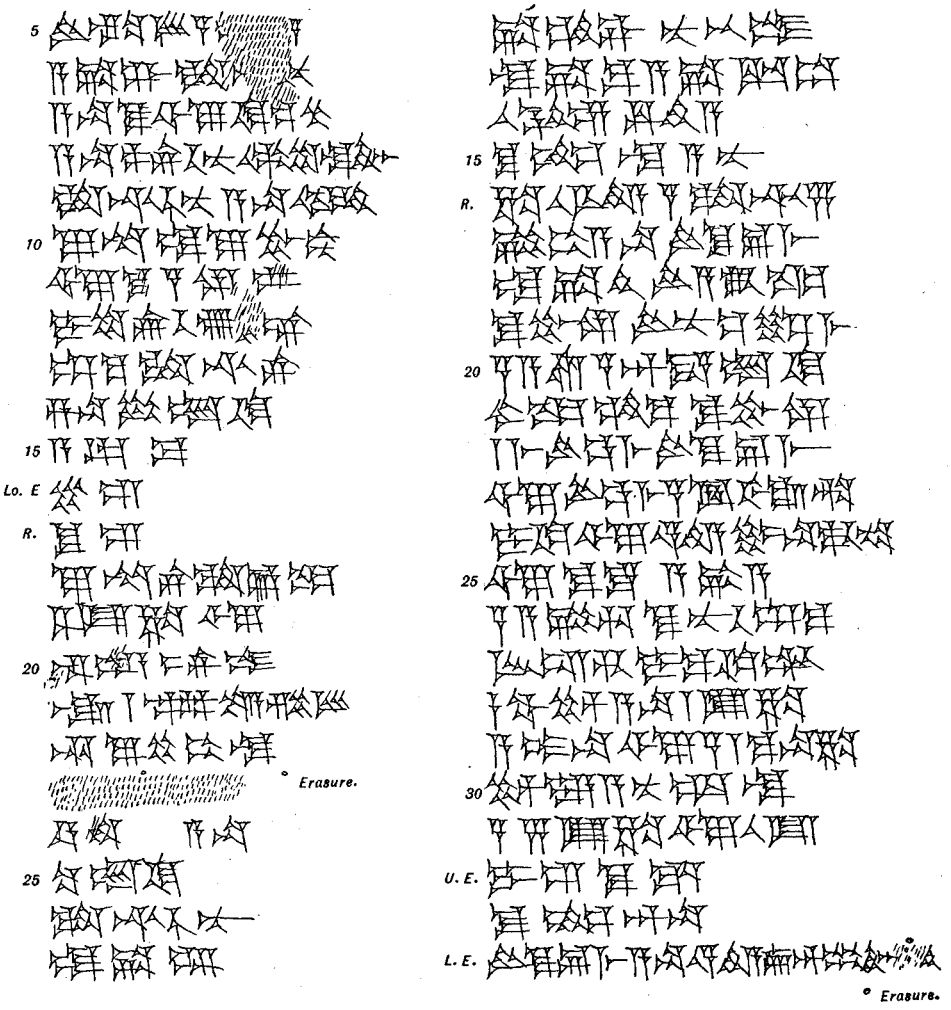

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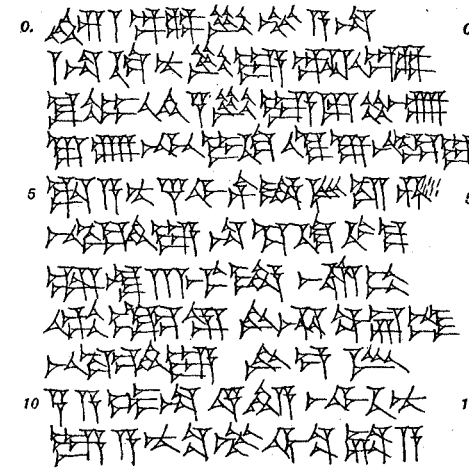

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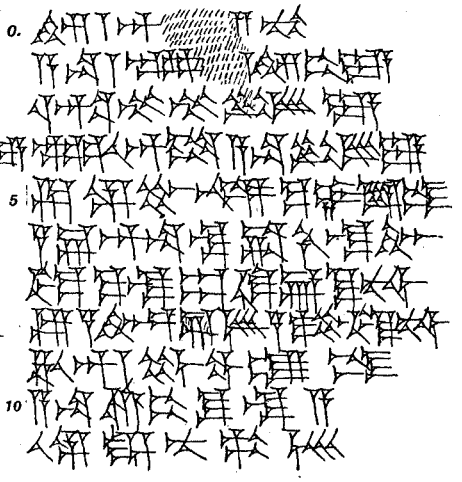

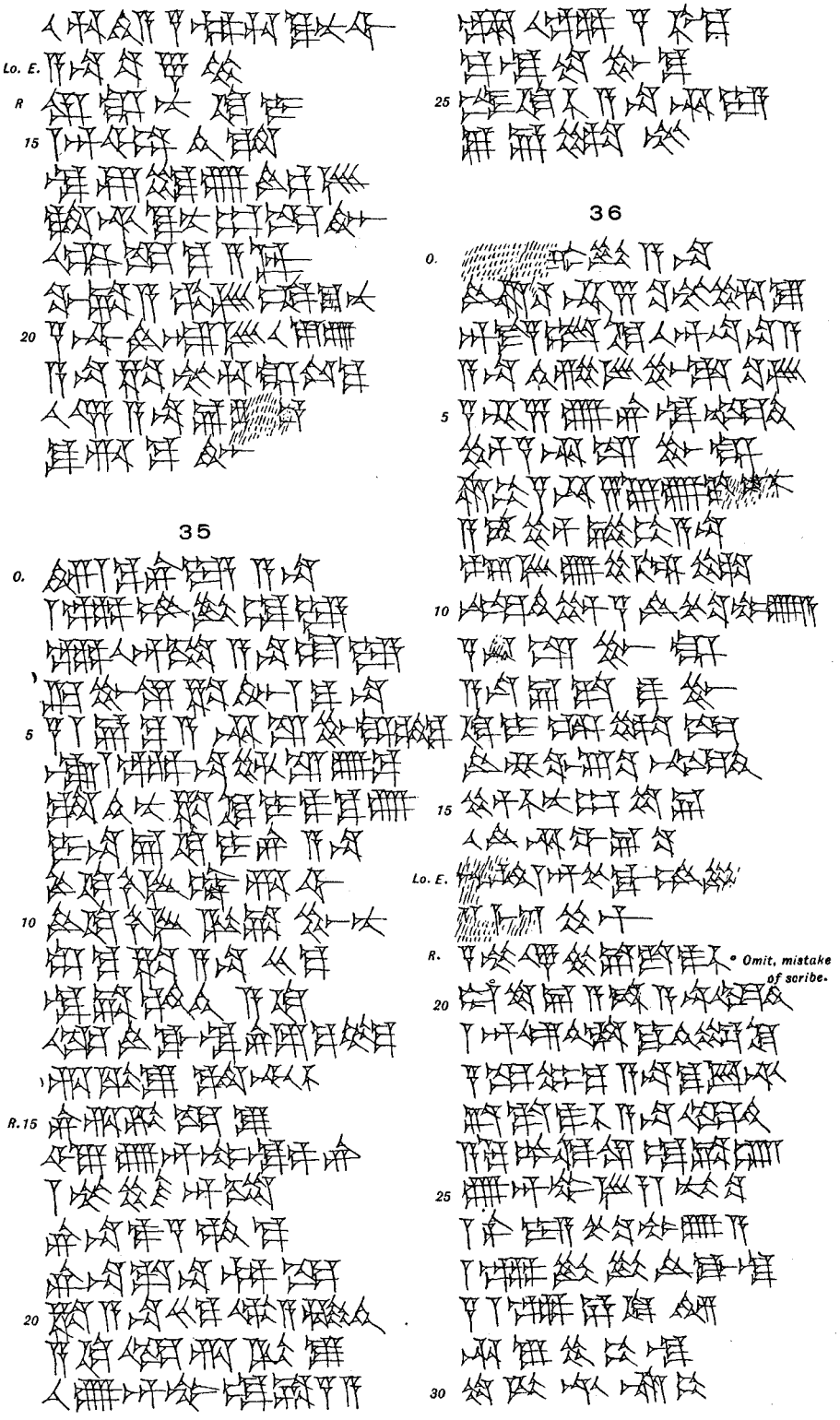
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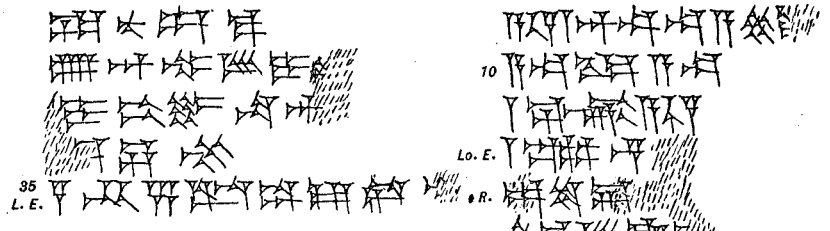

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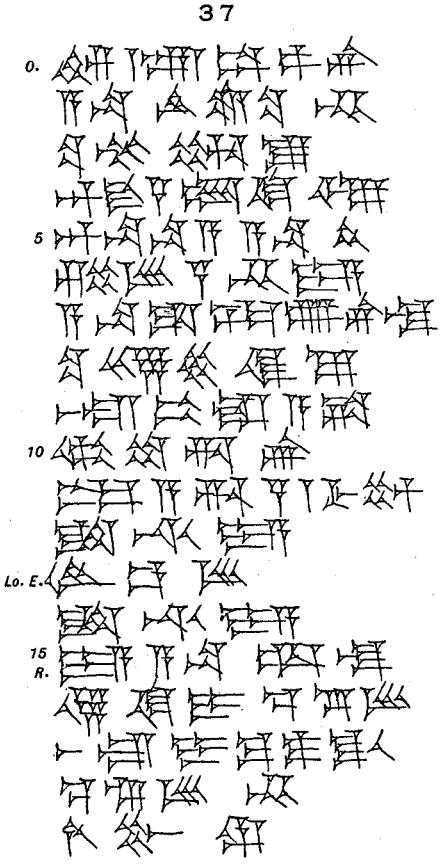

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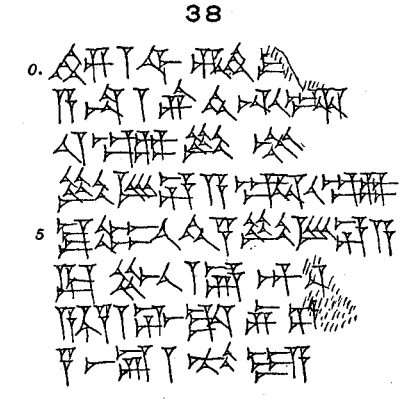

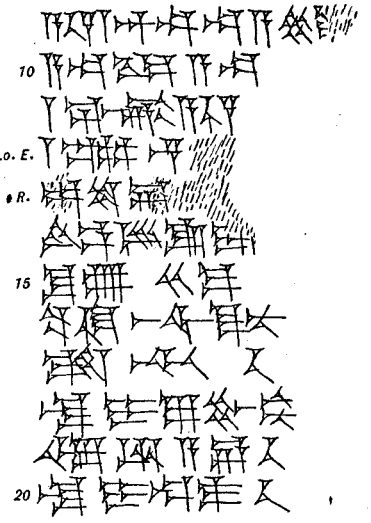

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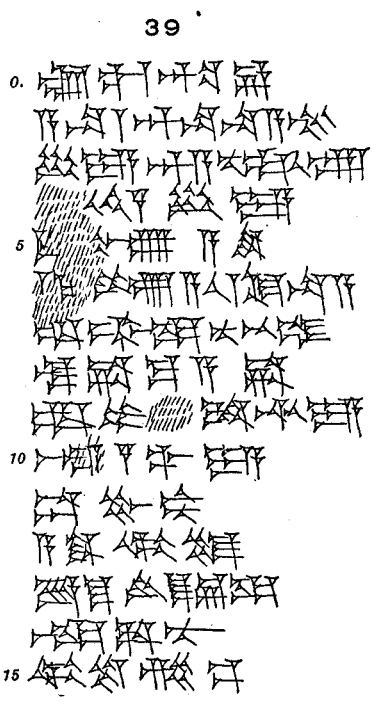

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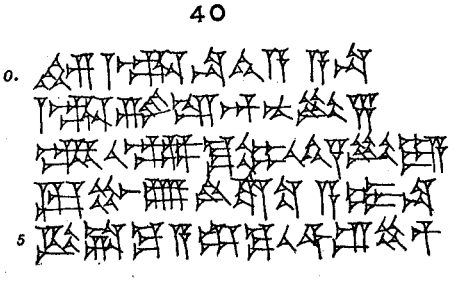

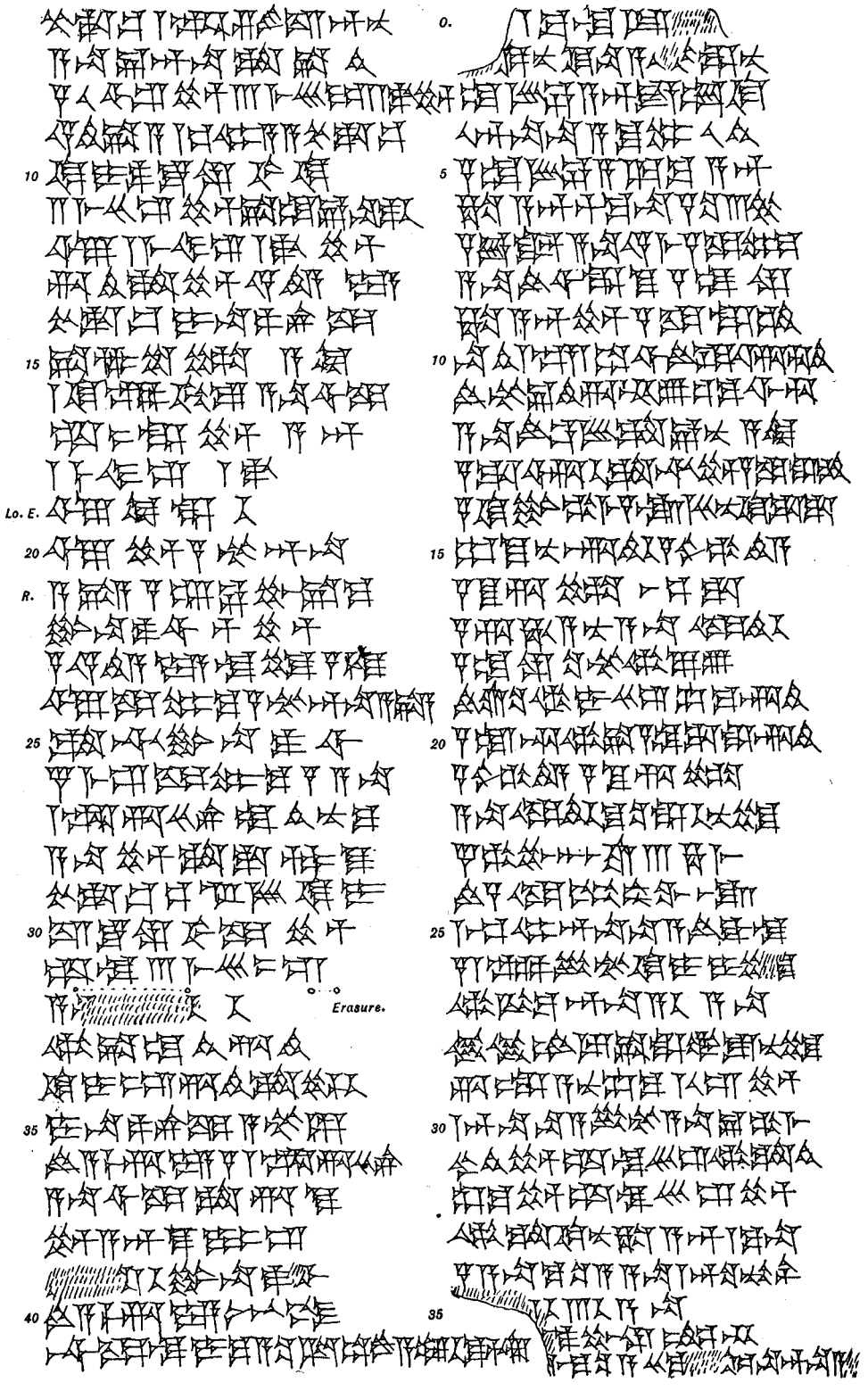
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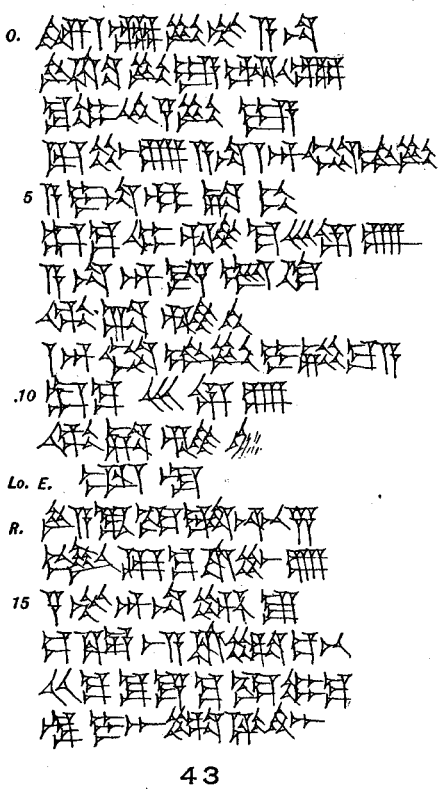

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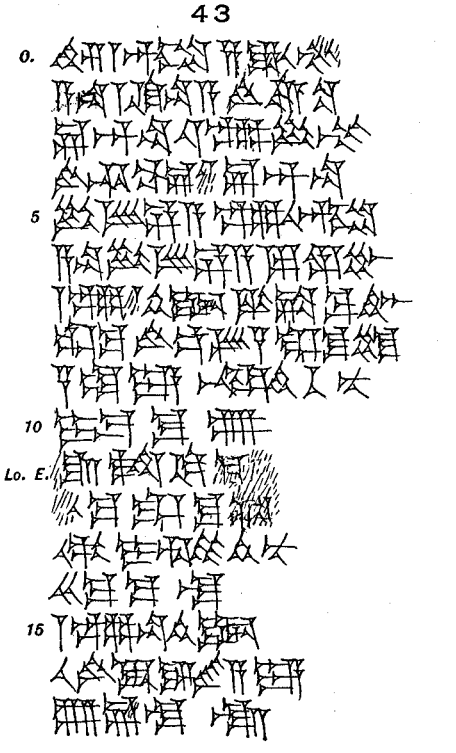
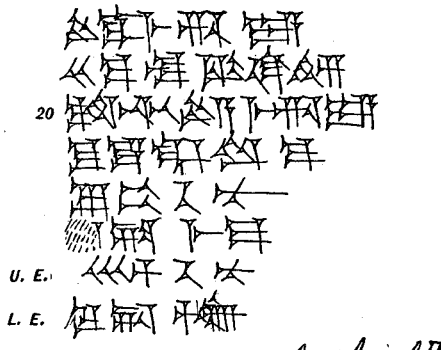
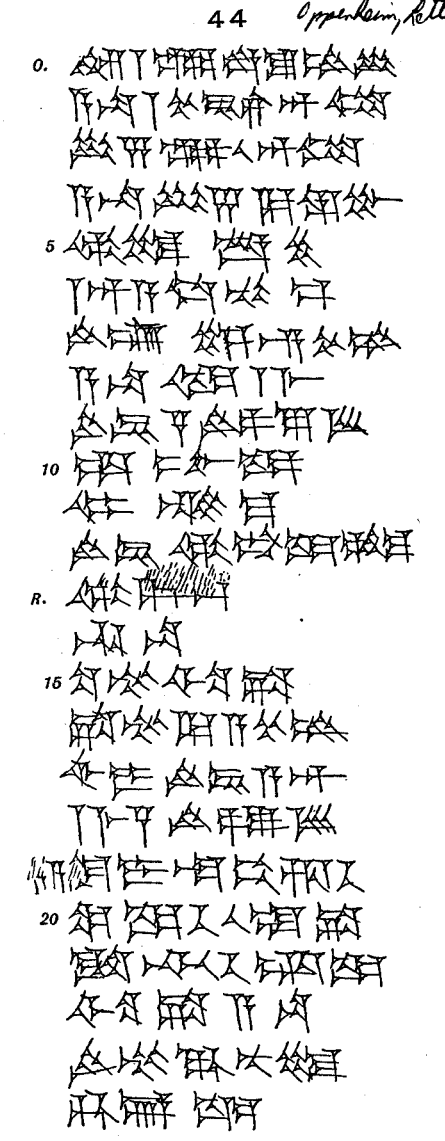




44 Oppenheim, Letters 142



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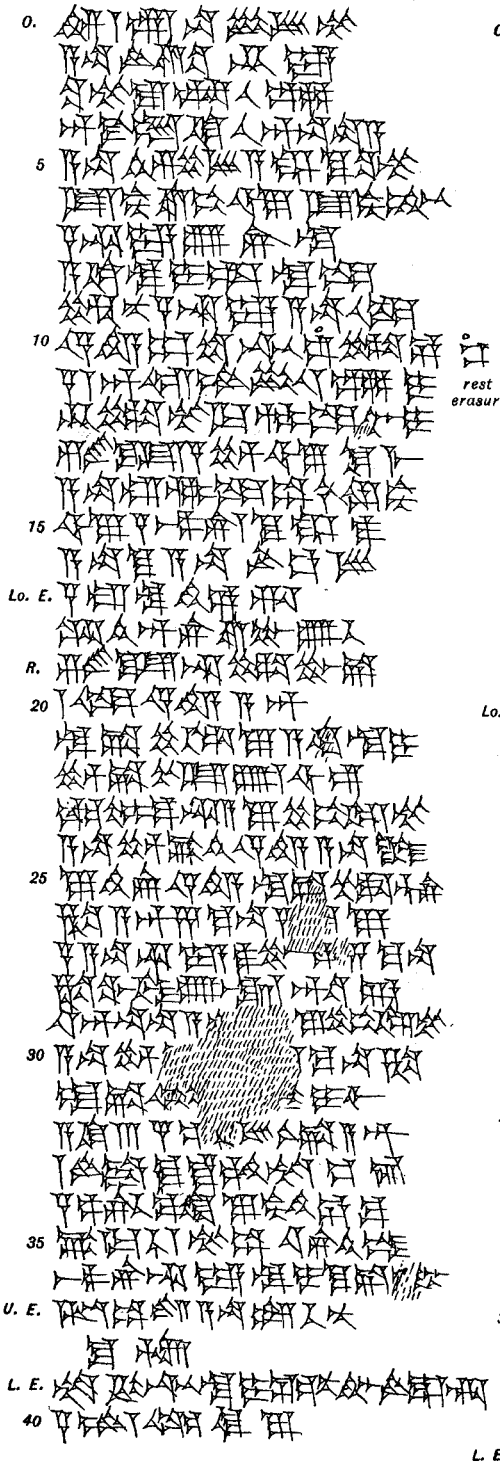
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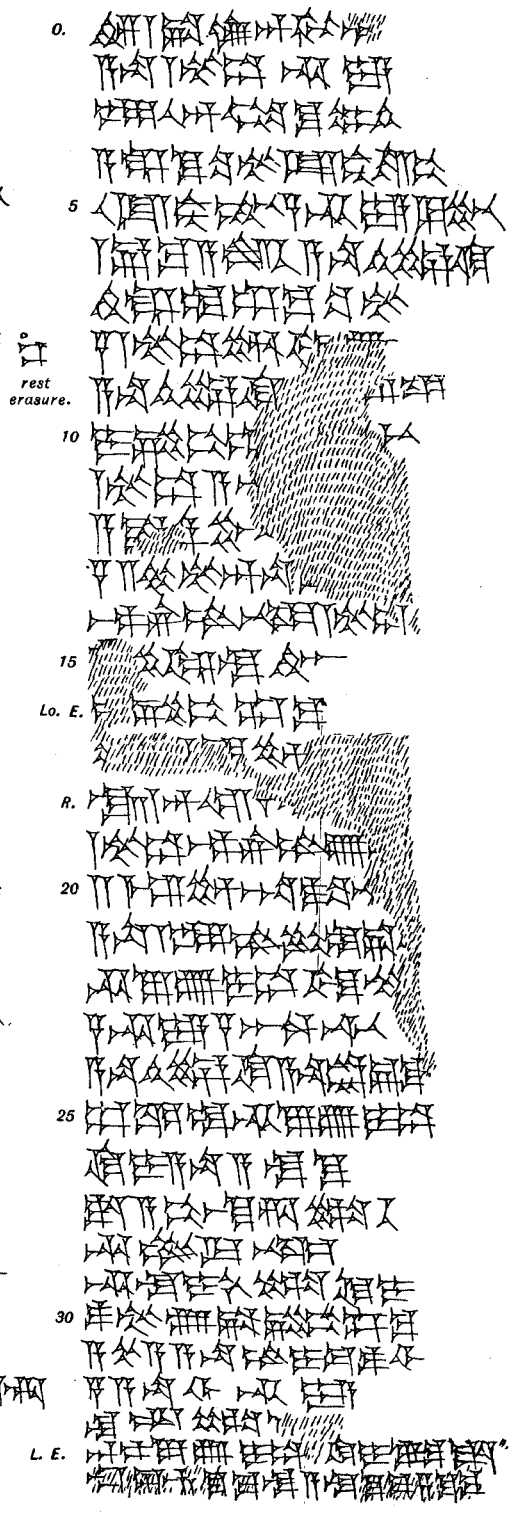
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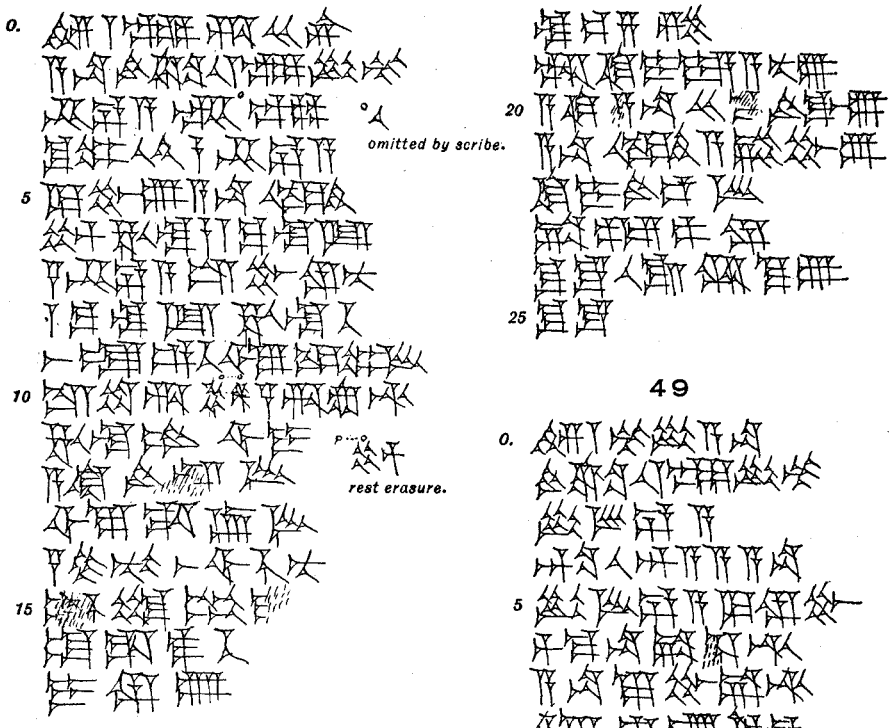
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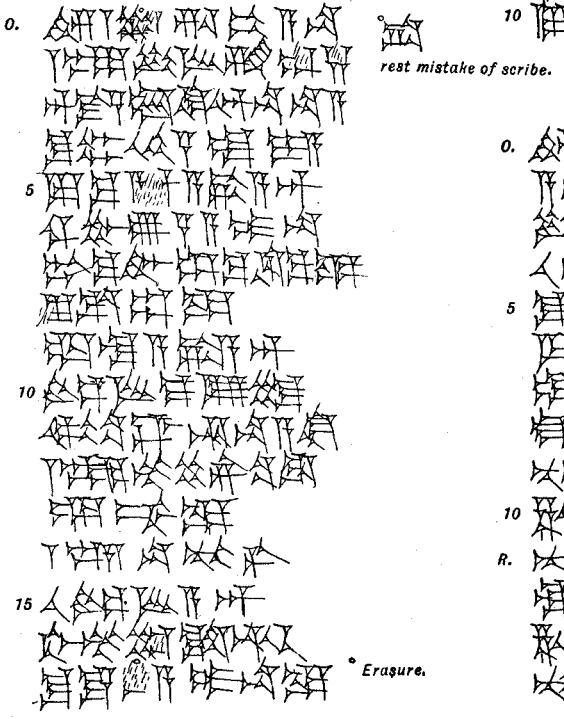
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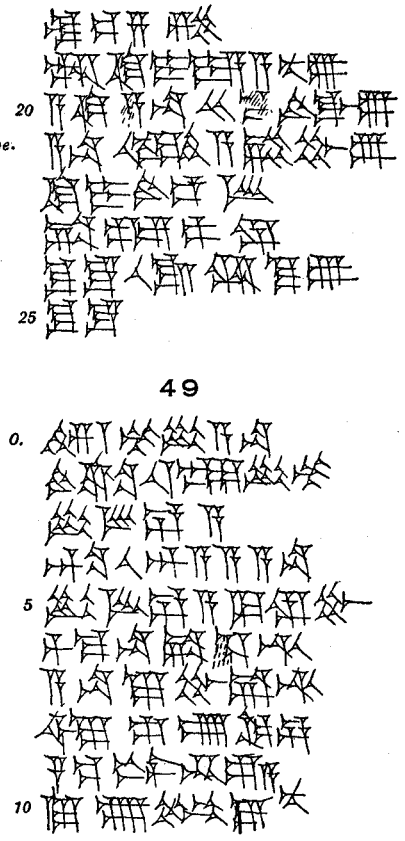

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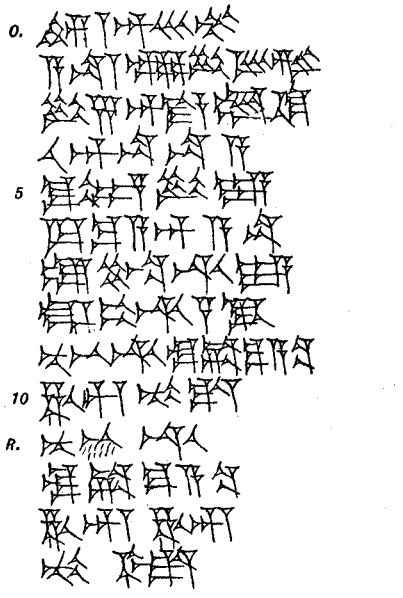

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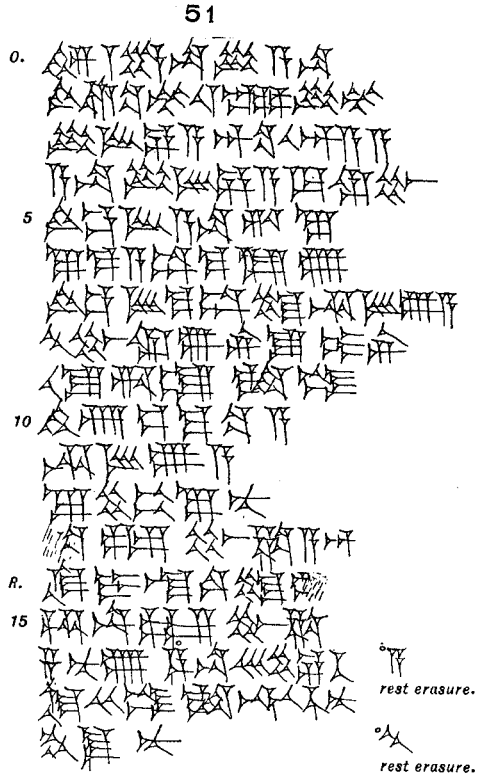
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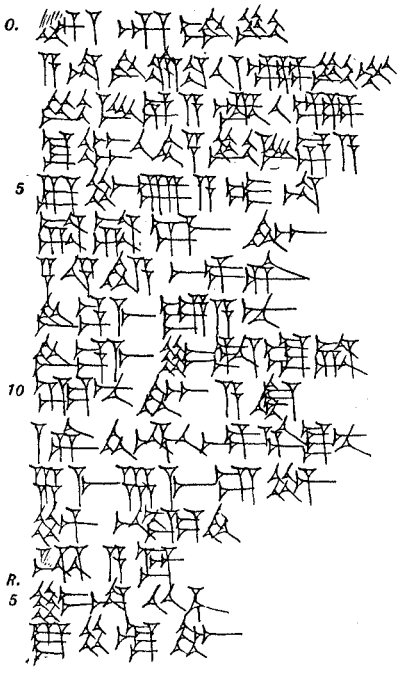
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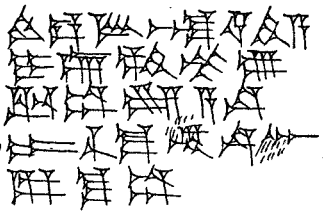
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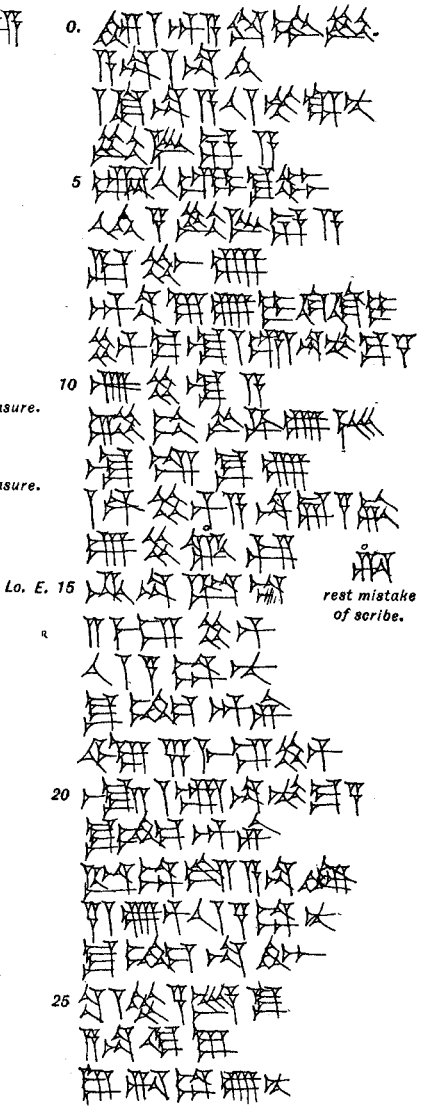
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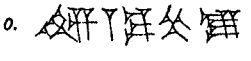
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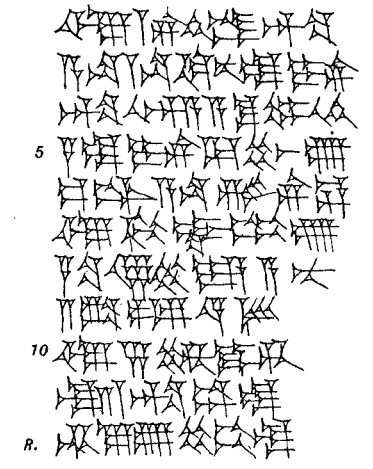

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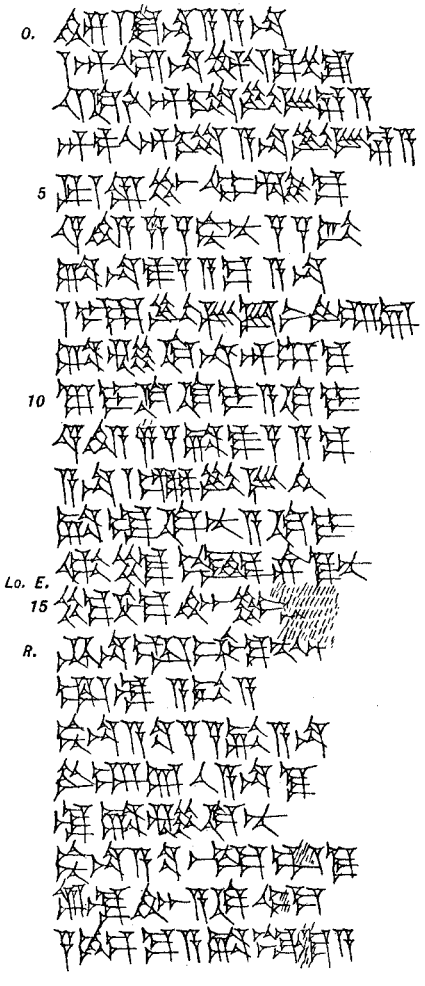

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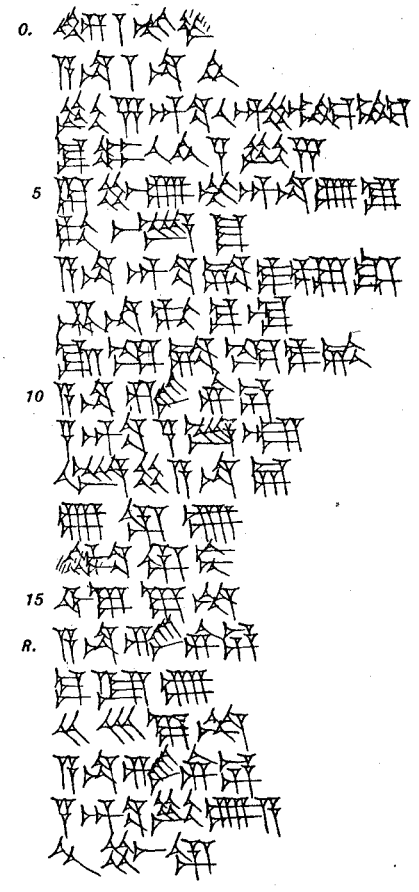

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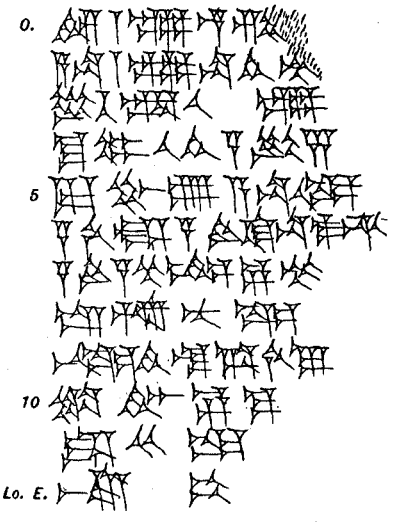

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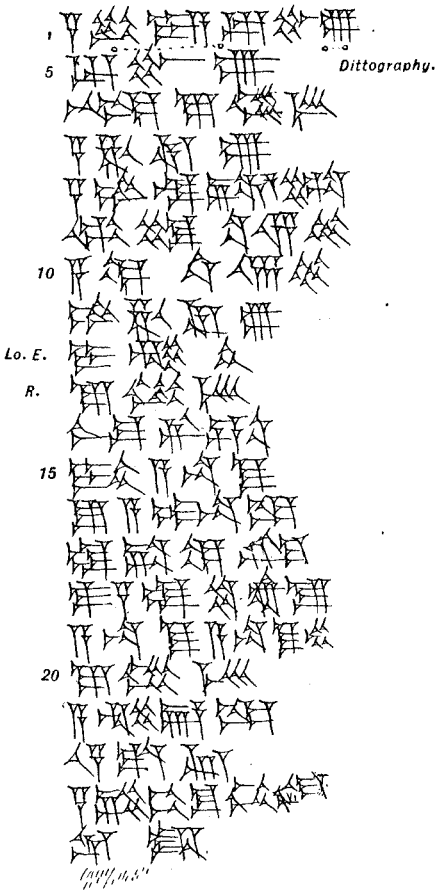
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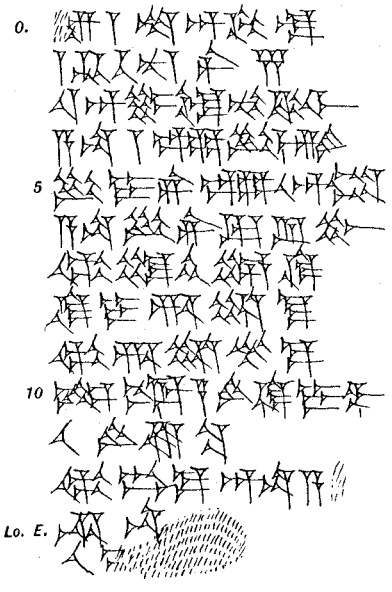
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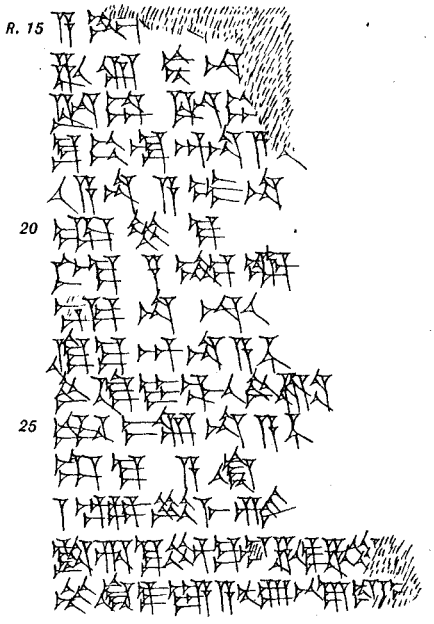
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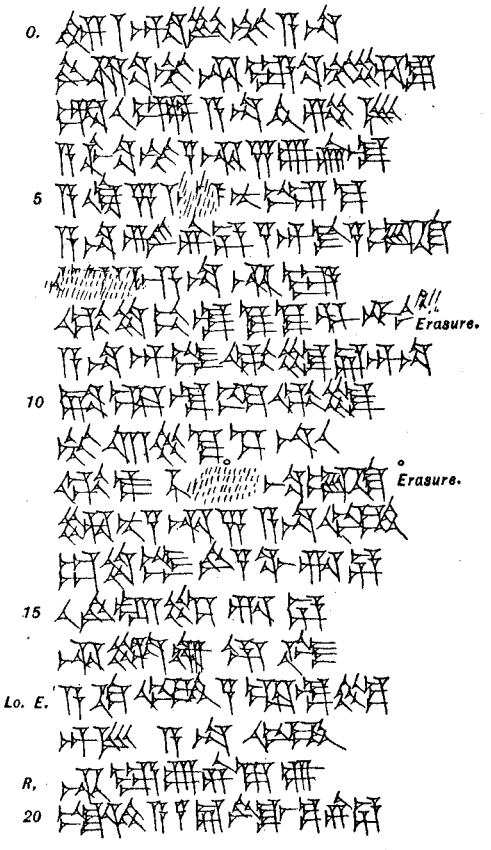
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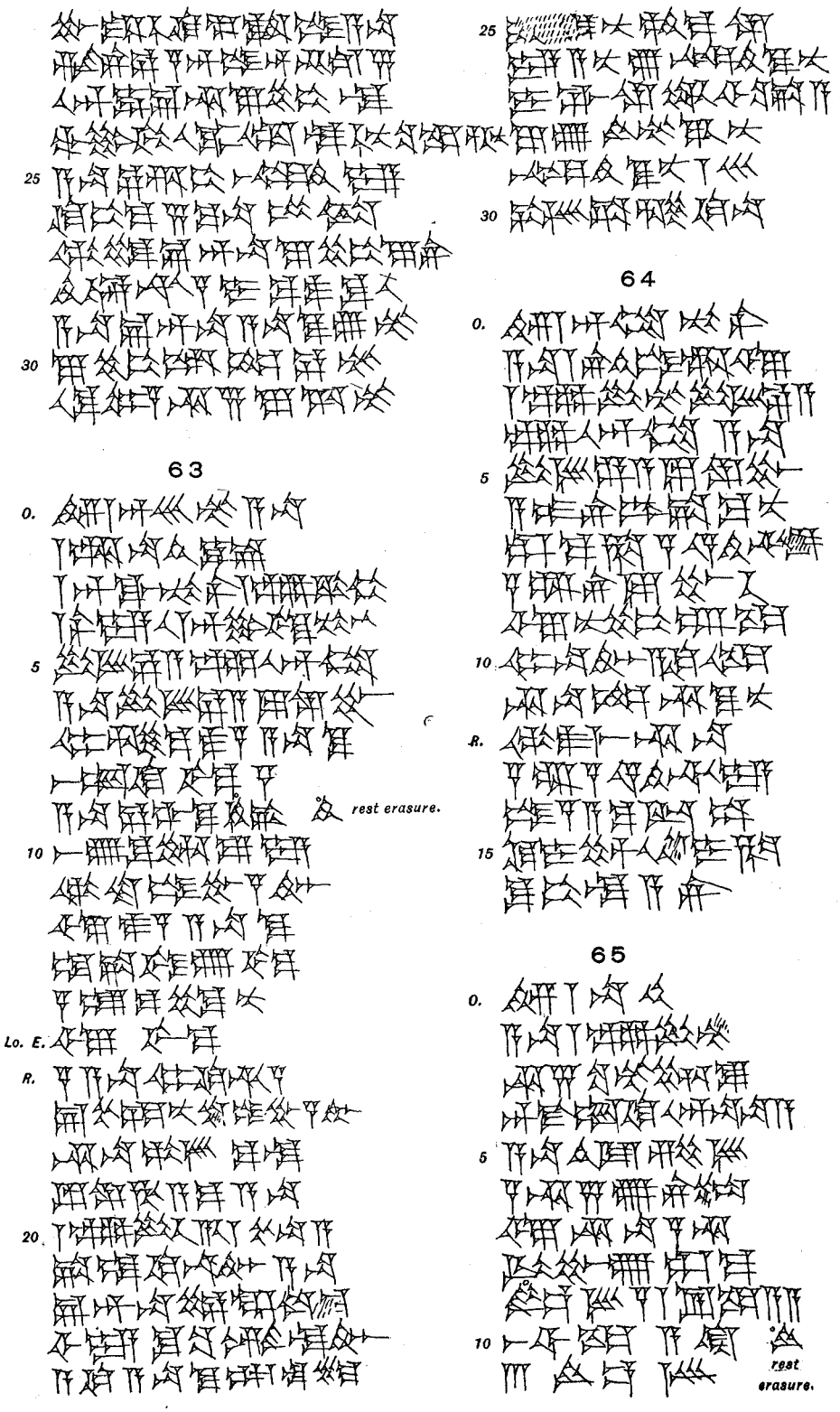
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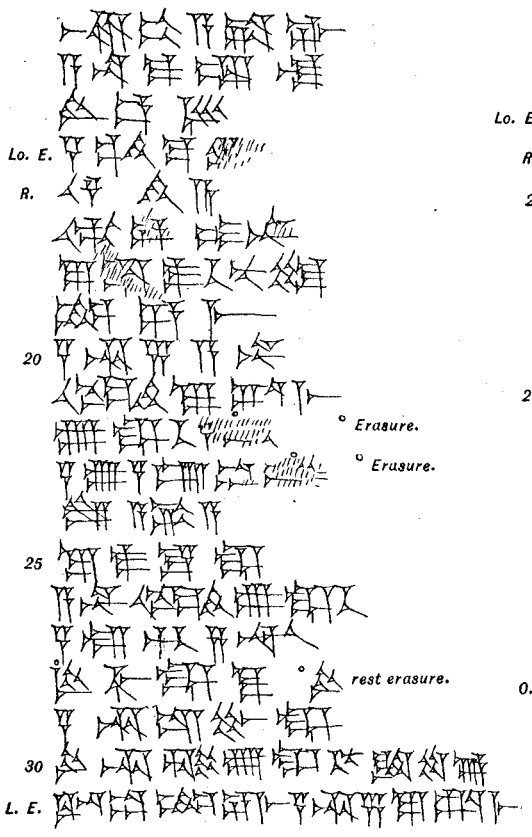
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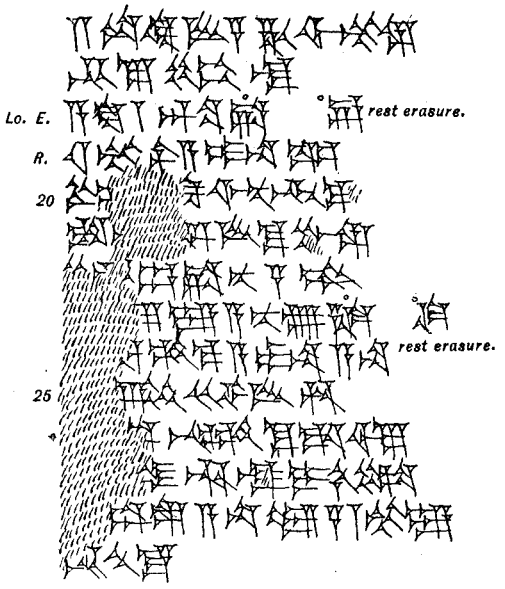
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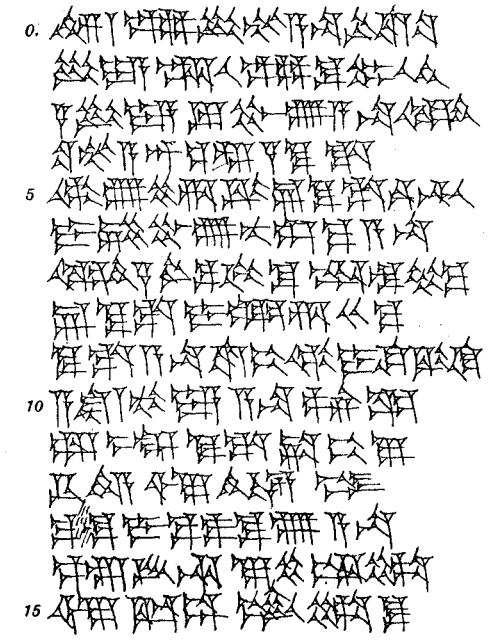
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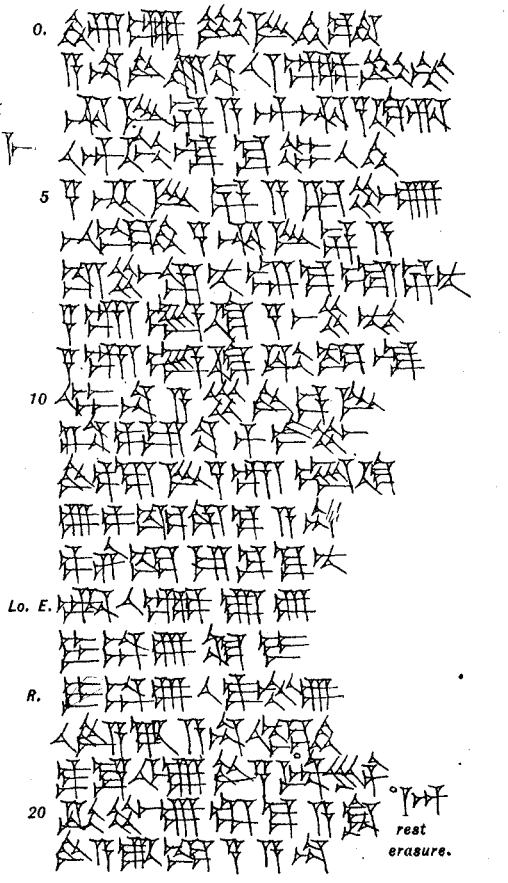
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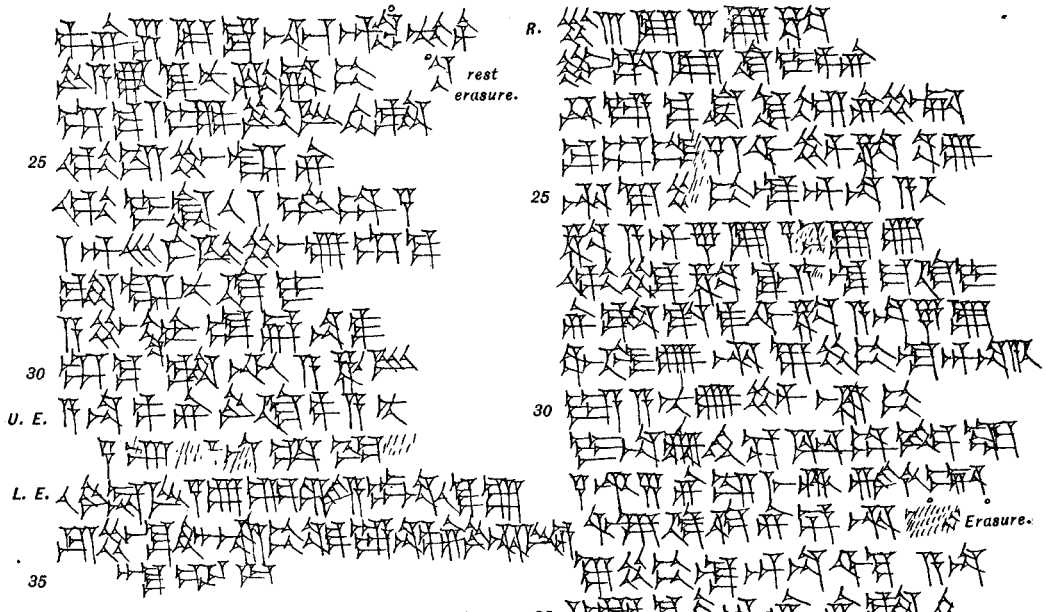

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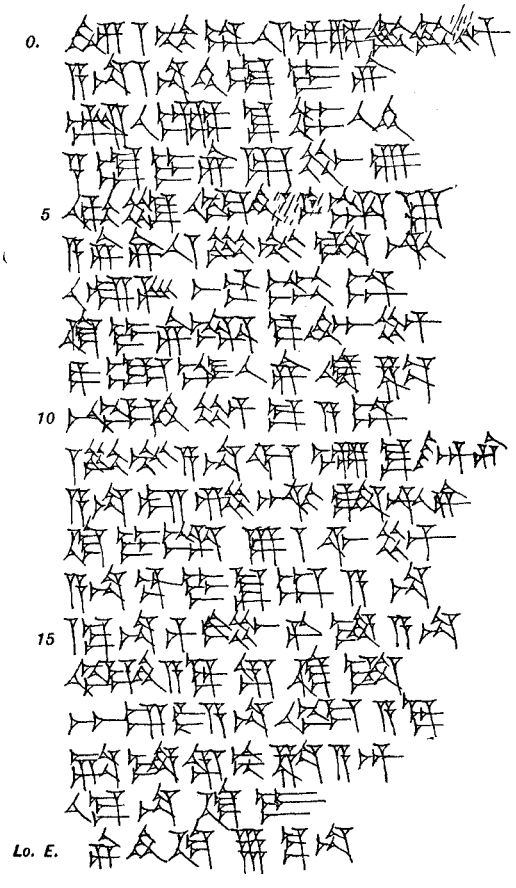

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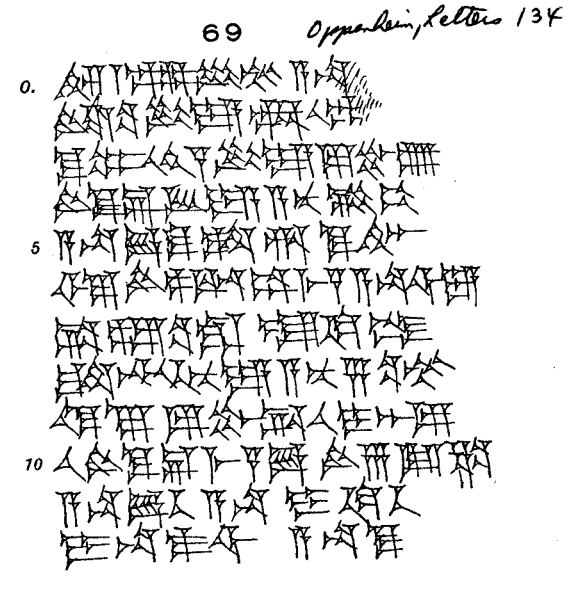

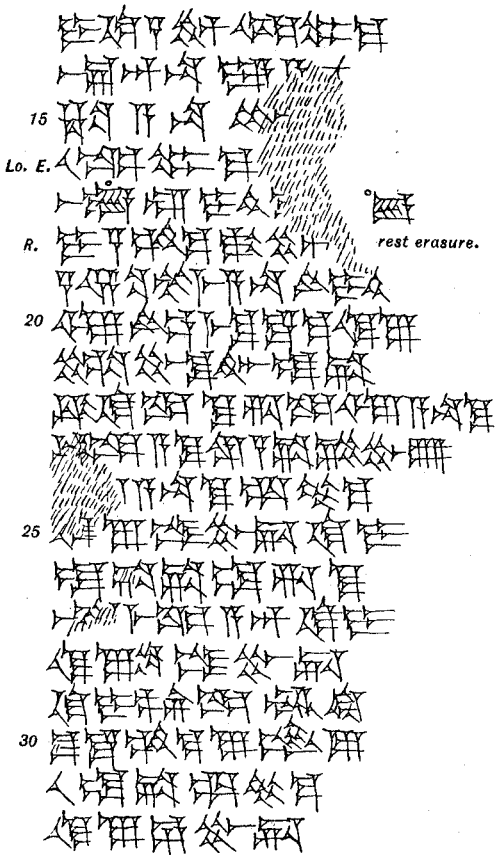
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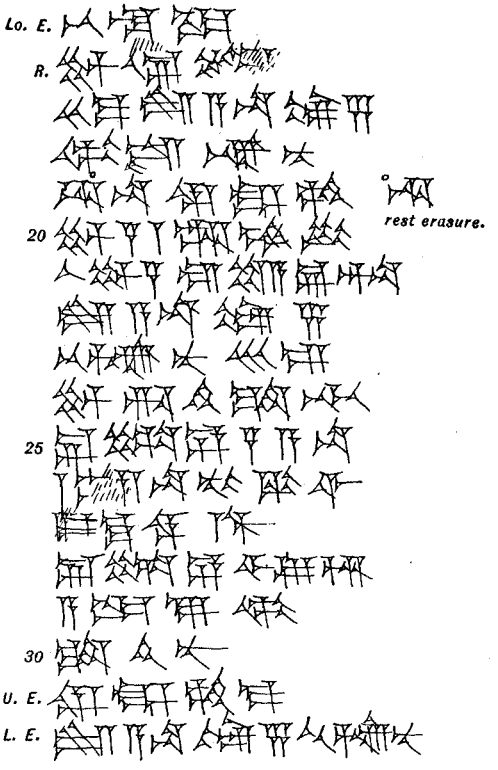
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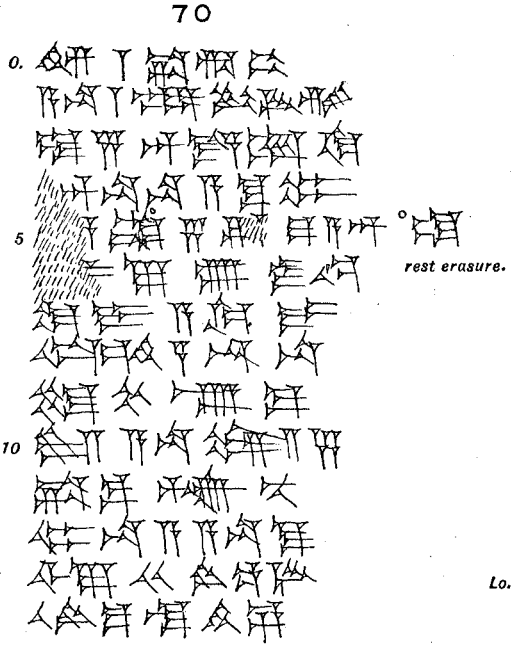
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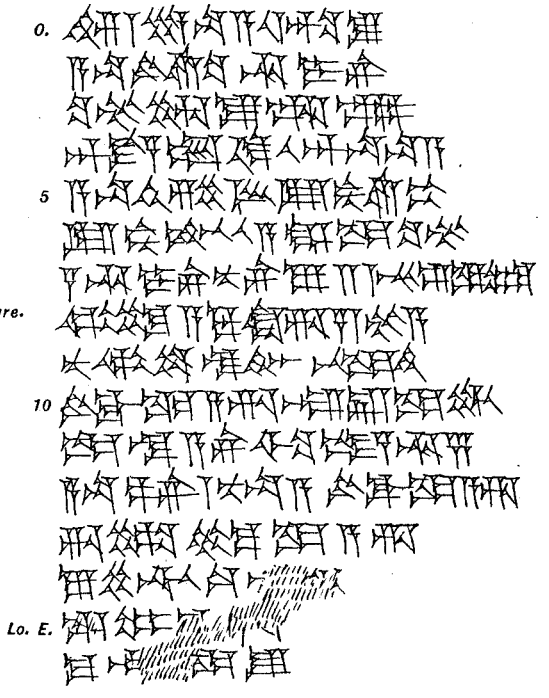
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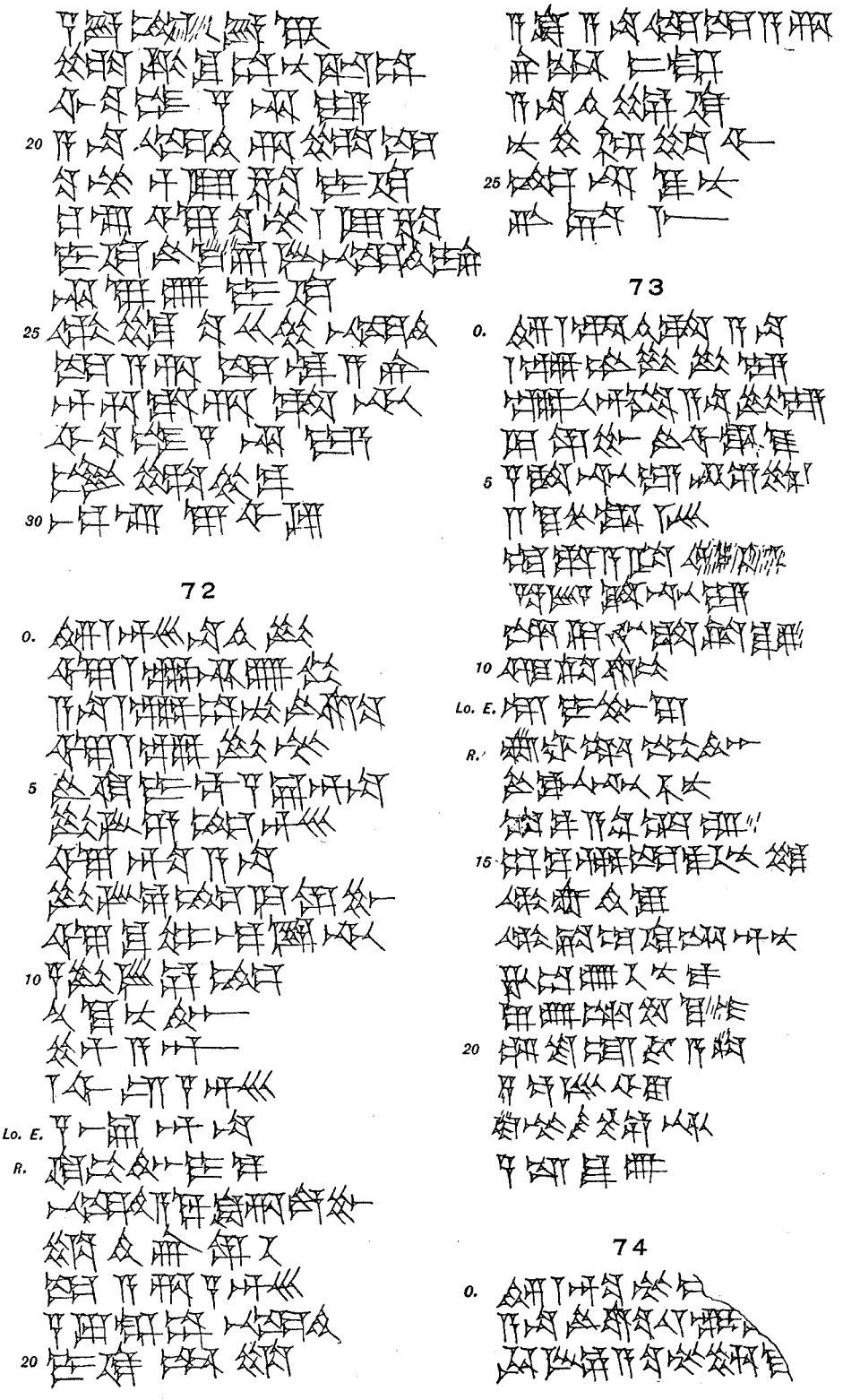
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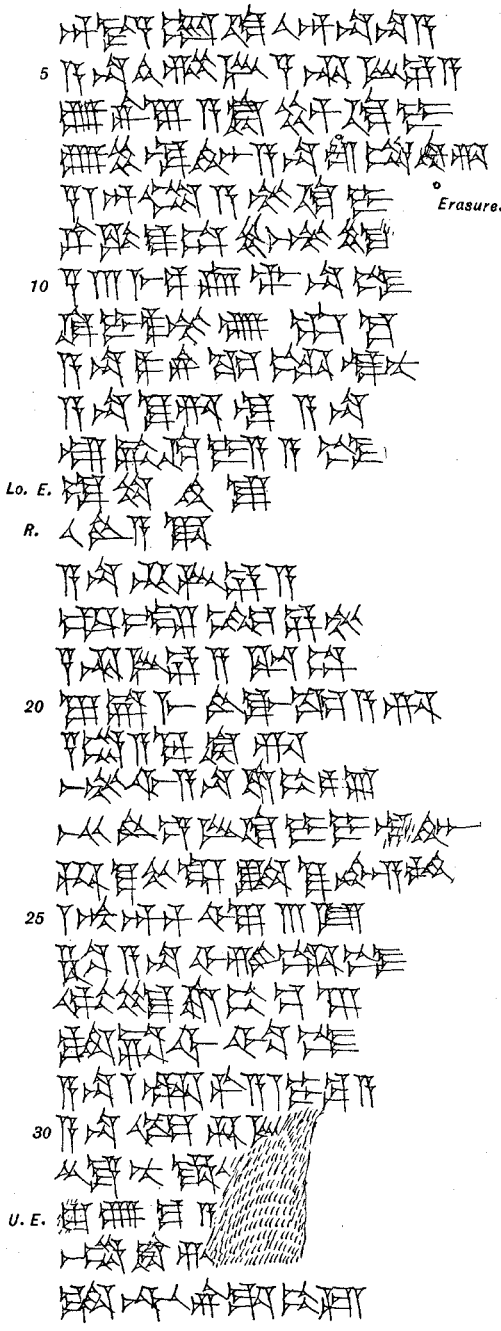

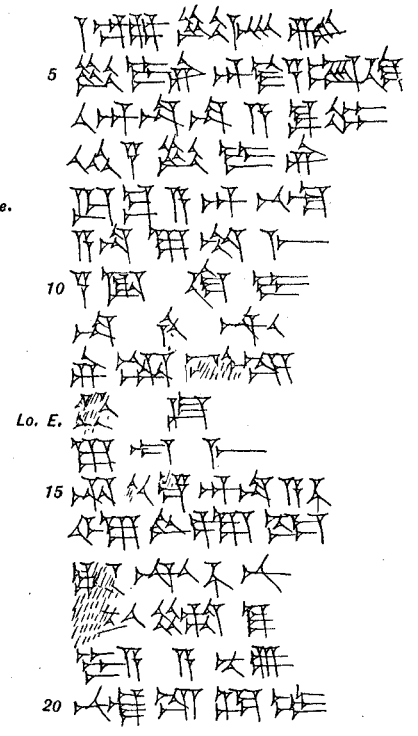

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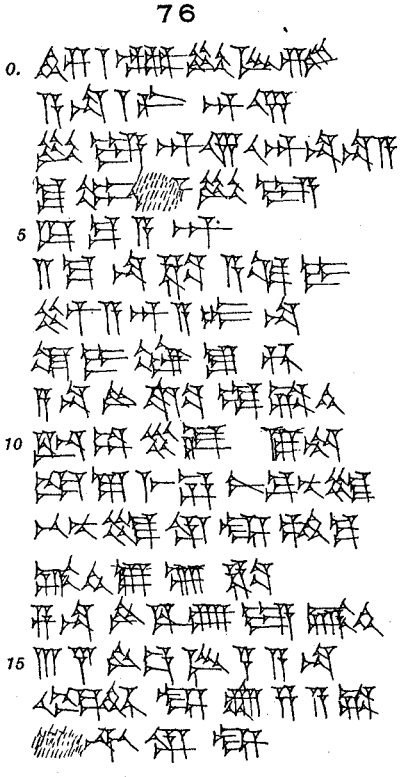

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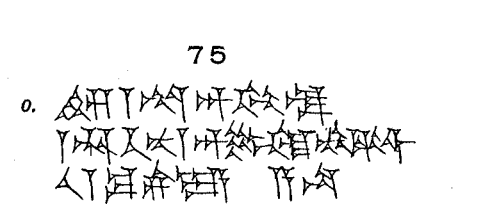

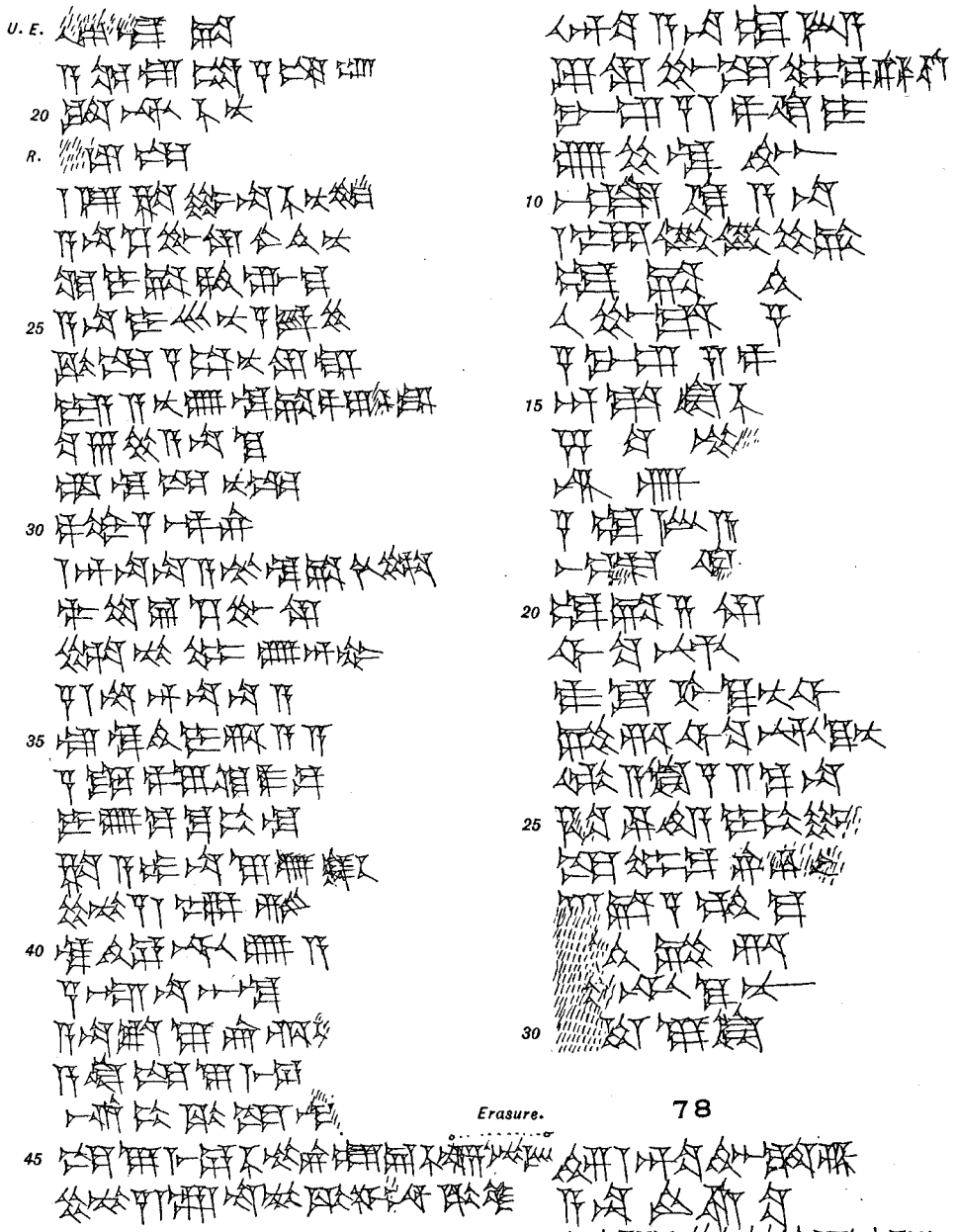

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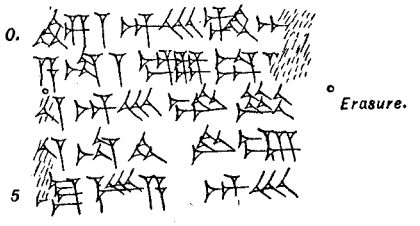

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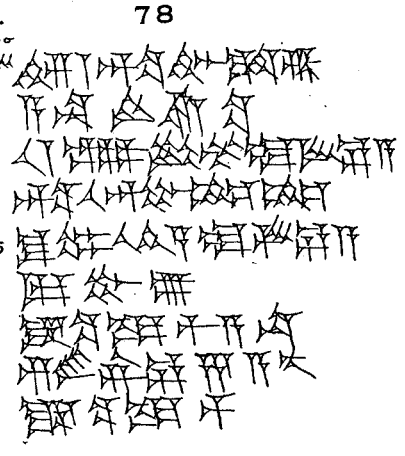

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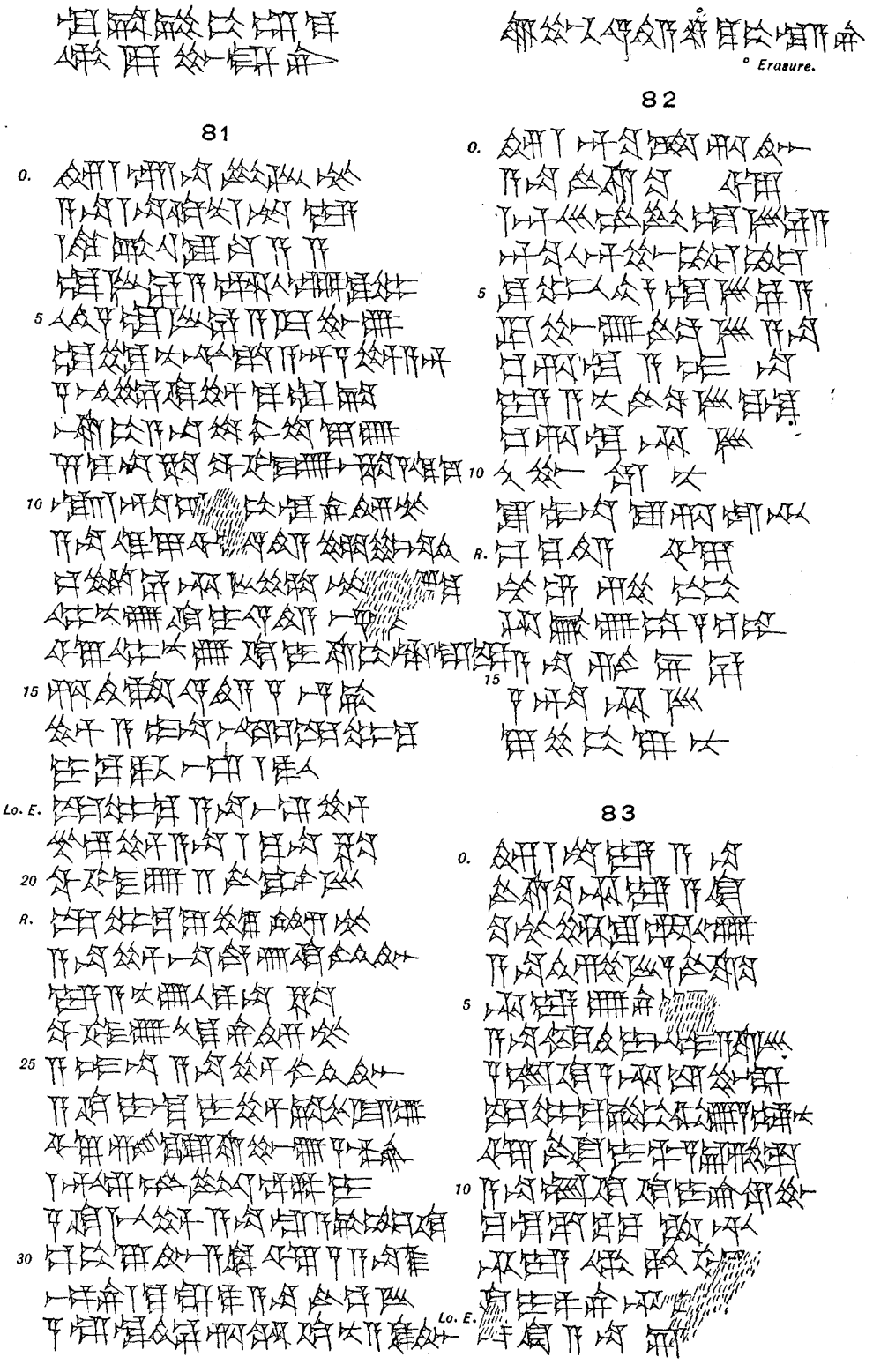

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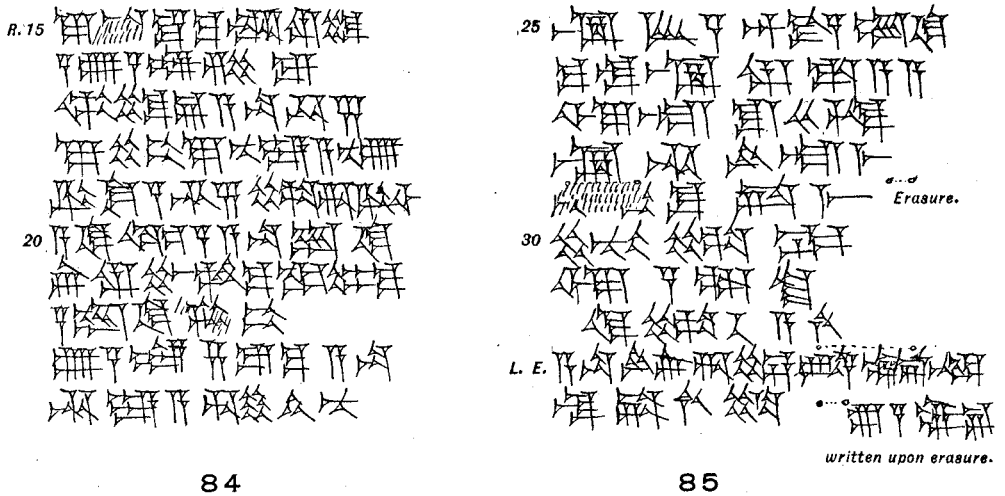
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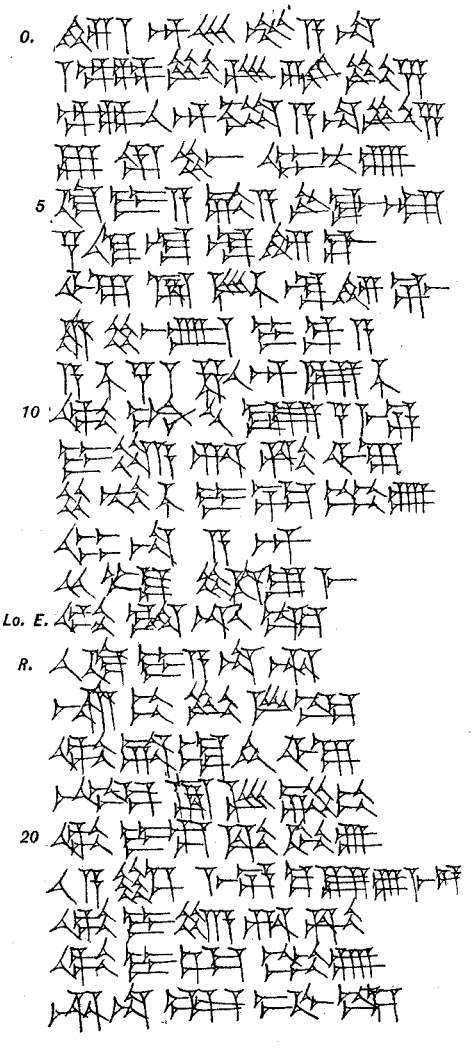
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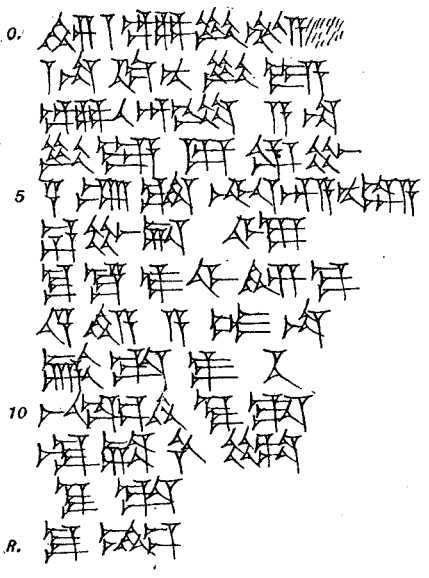
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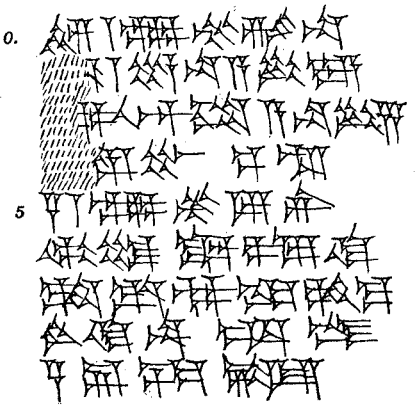
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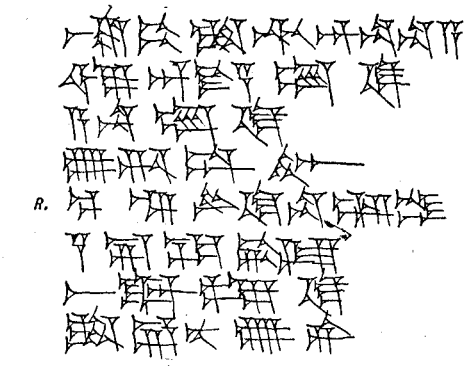

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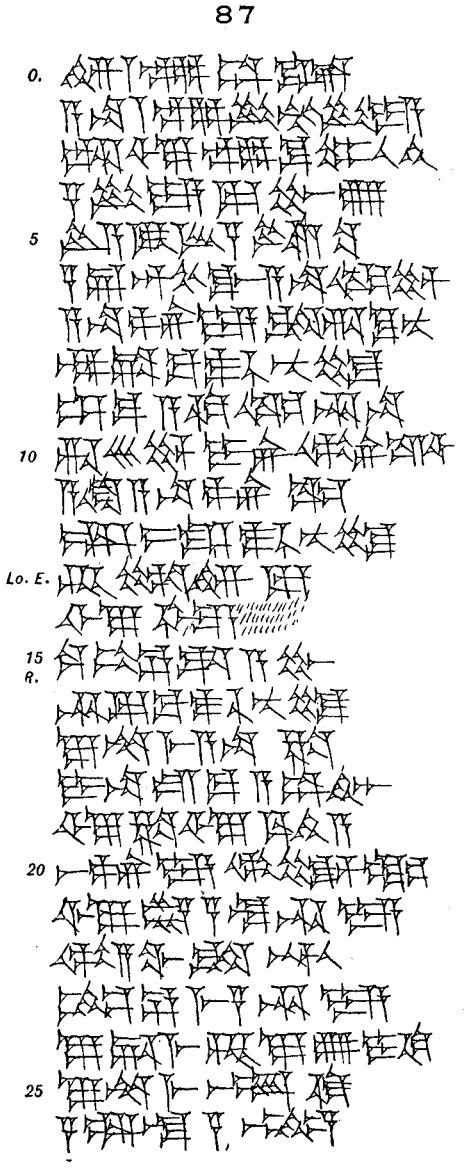

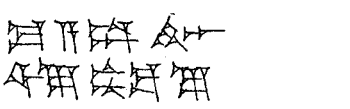

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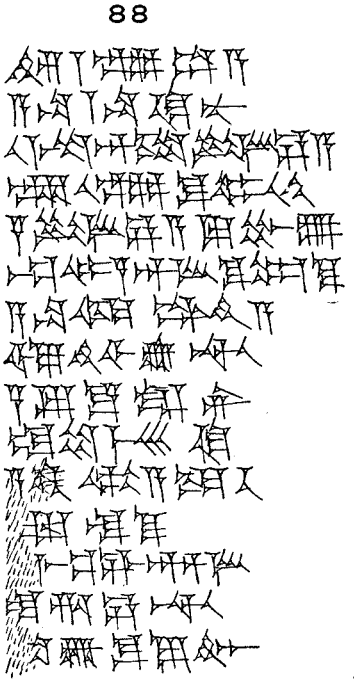

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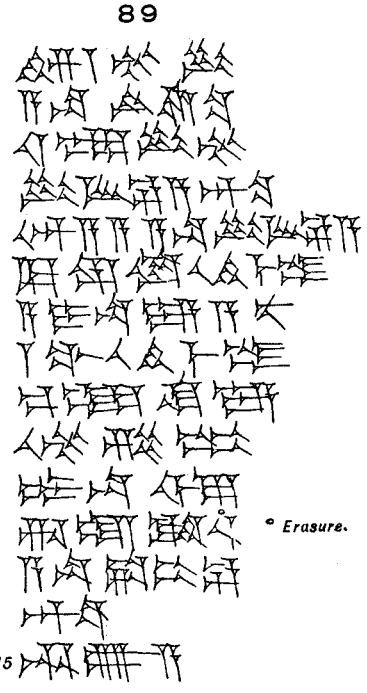

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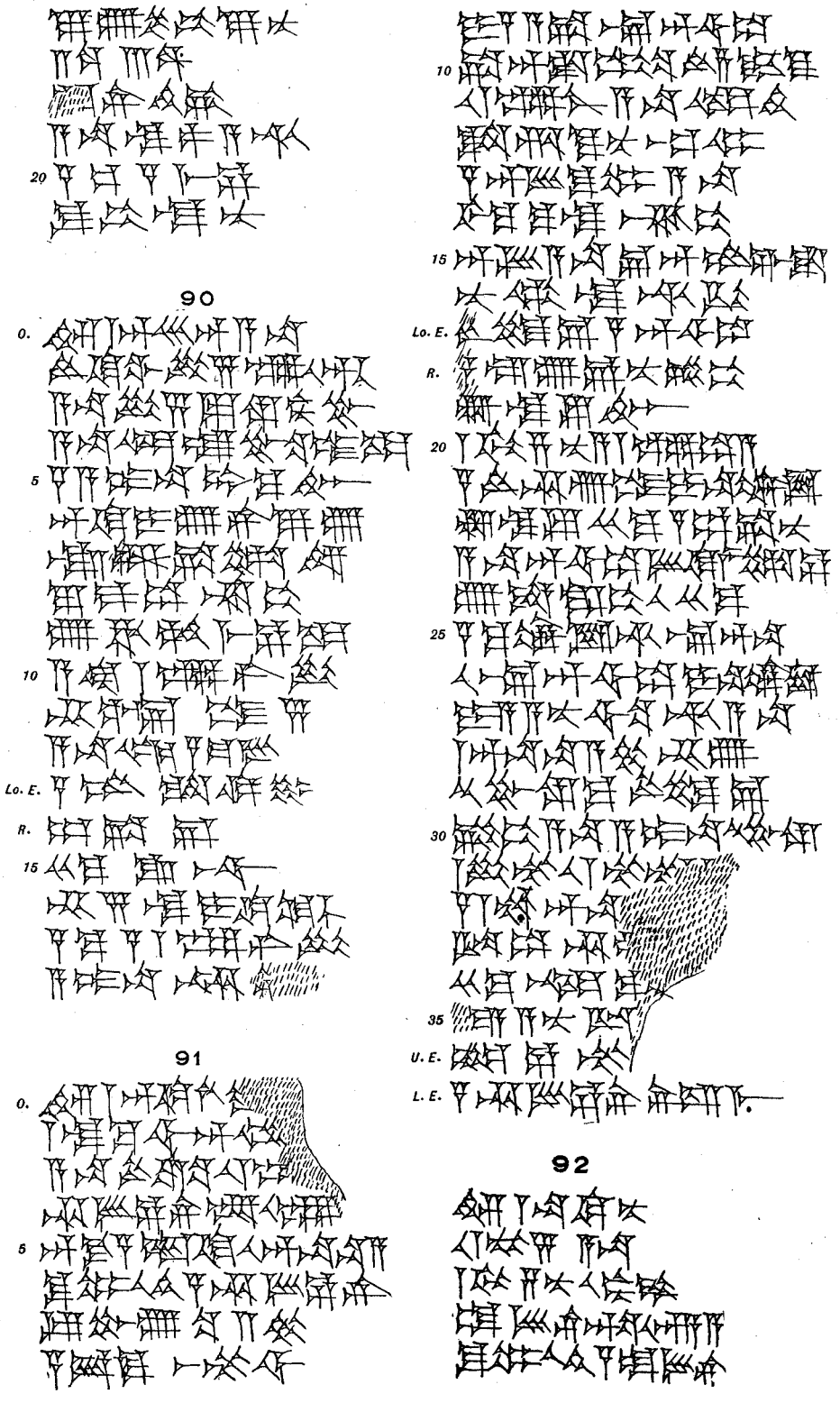
90
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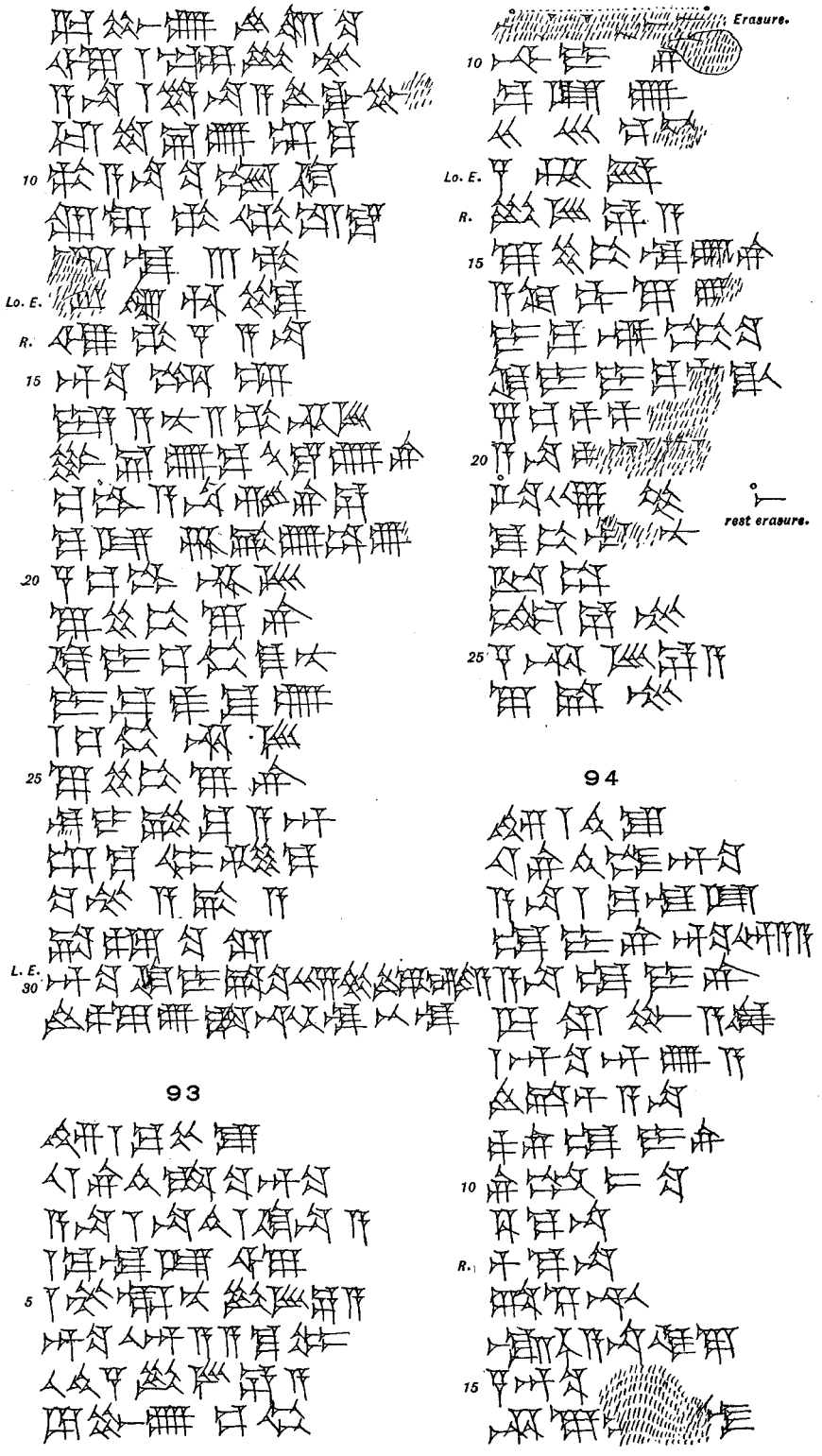

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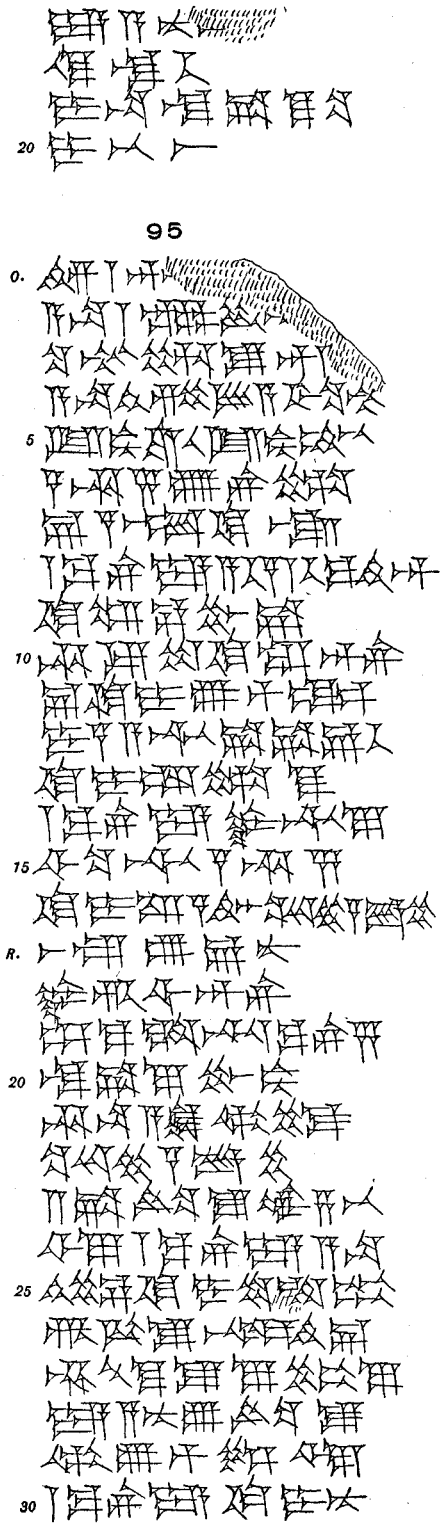

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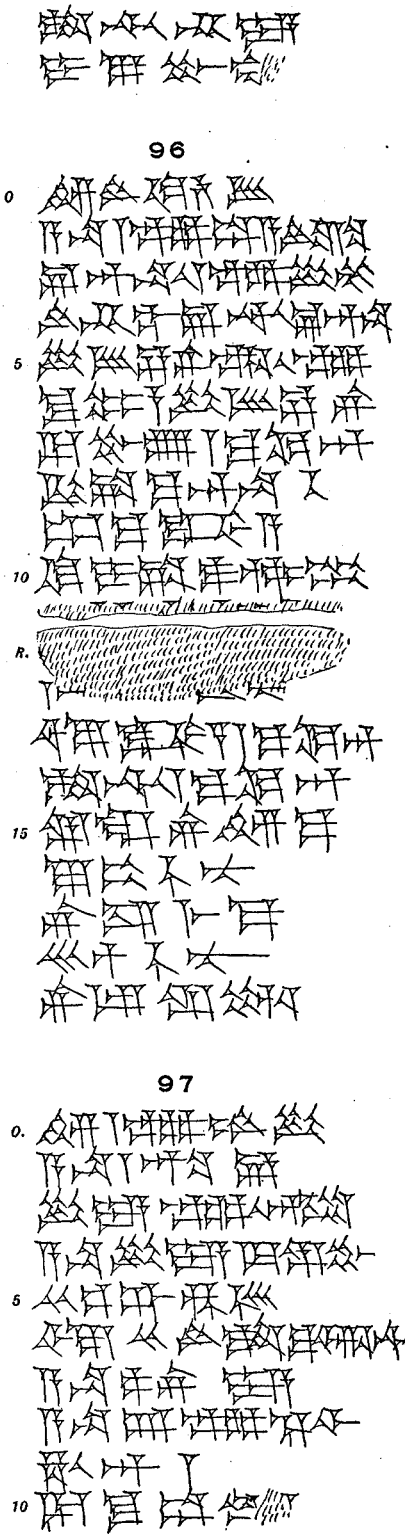

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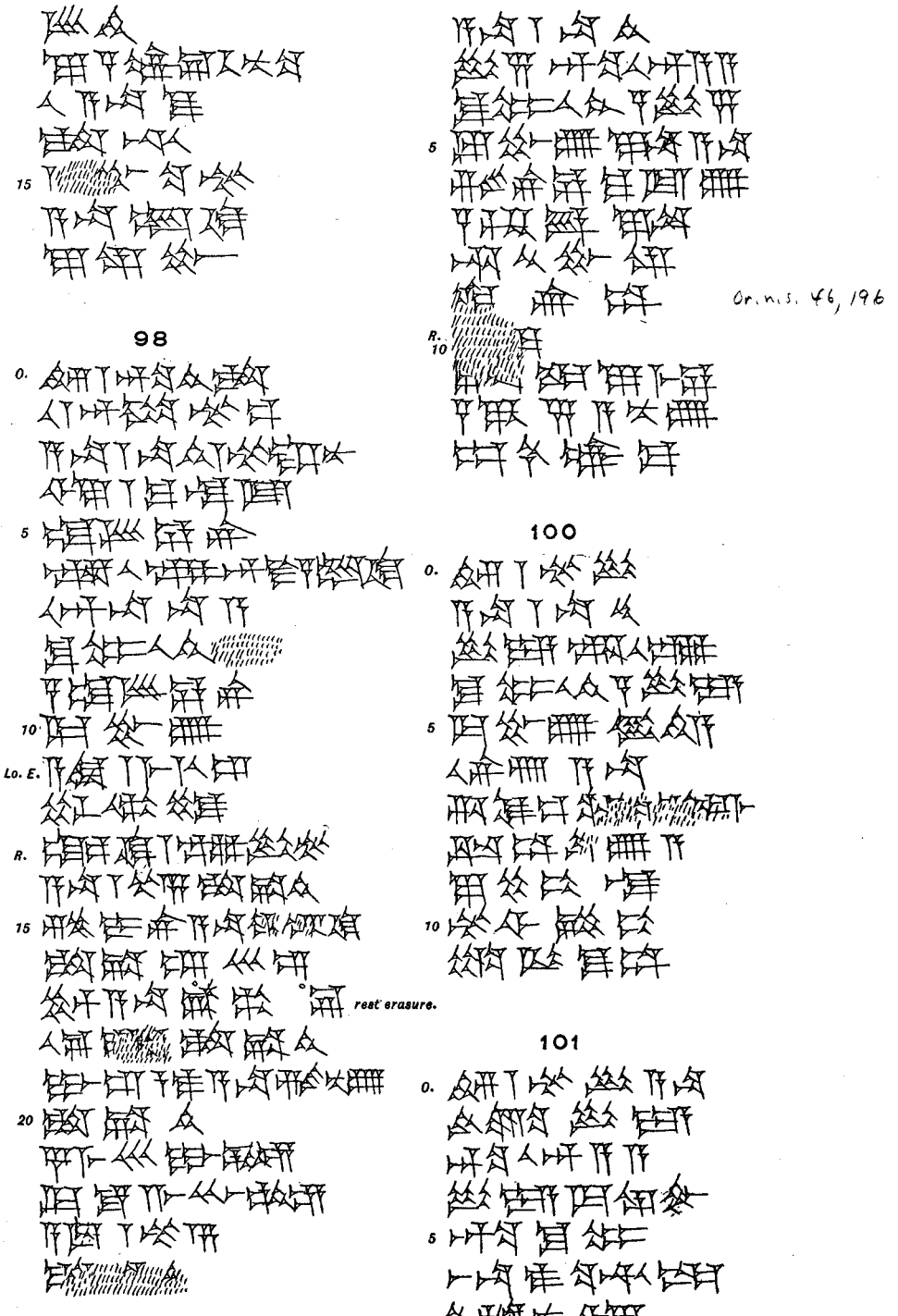
98
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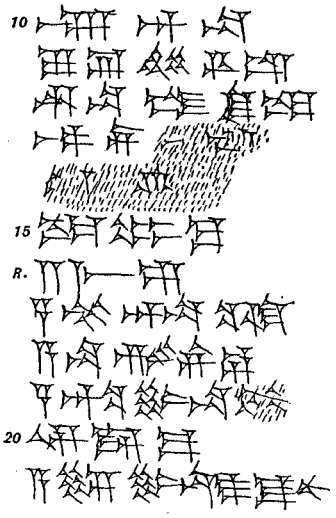

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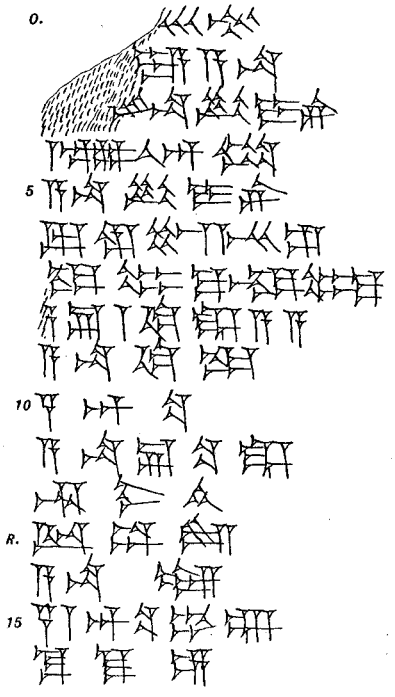

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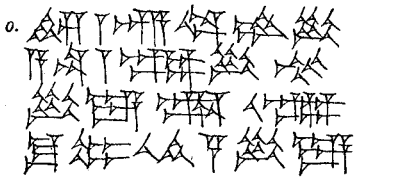

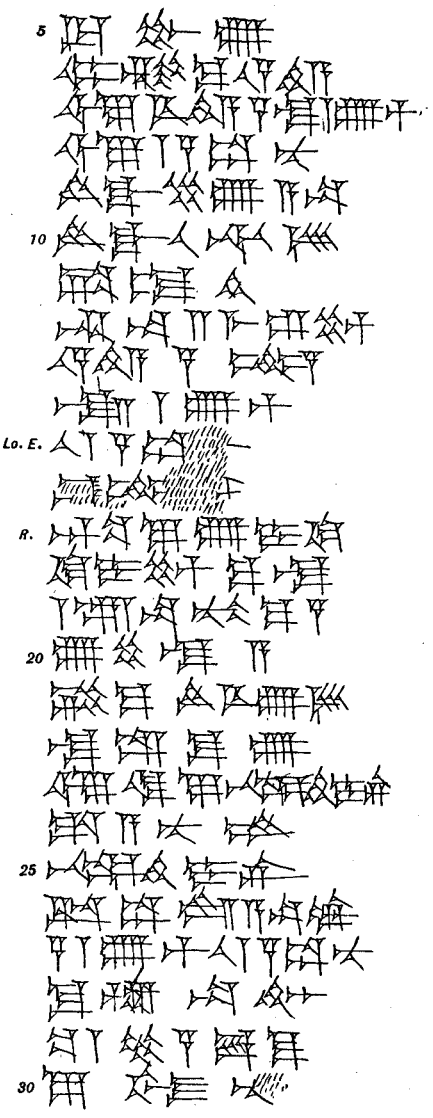

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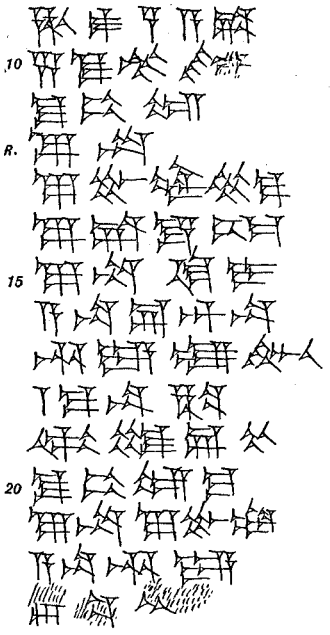

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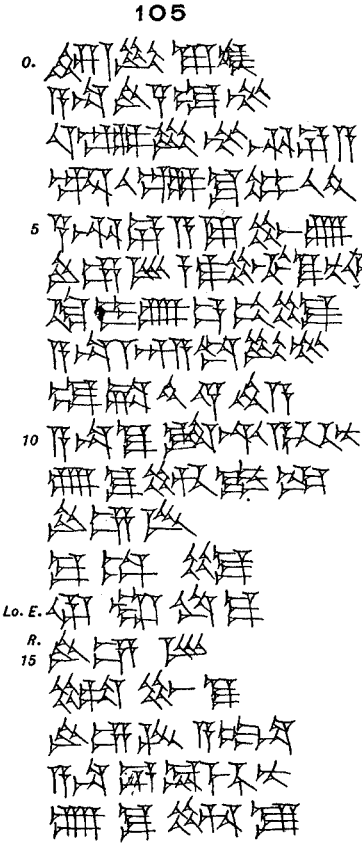

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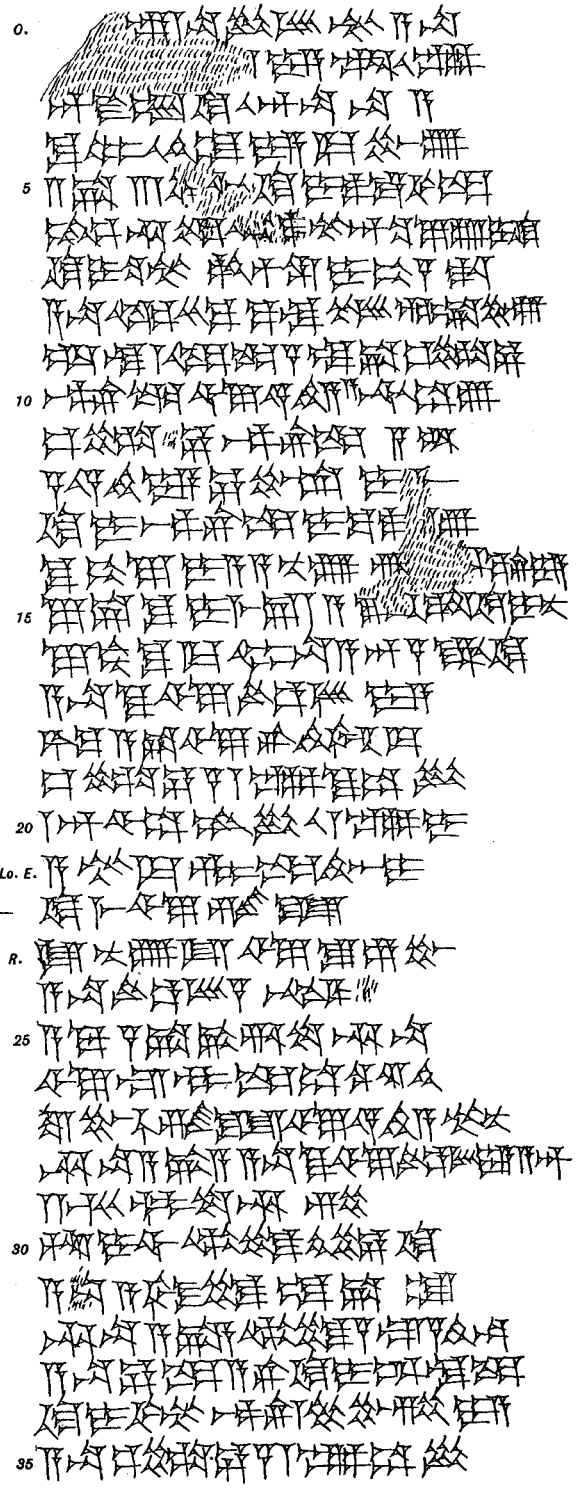

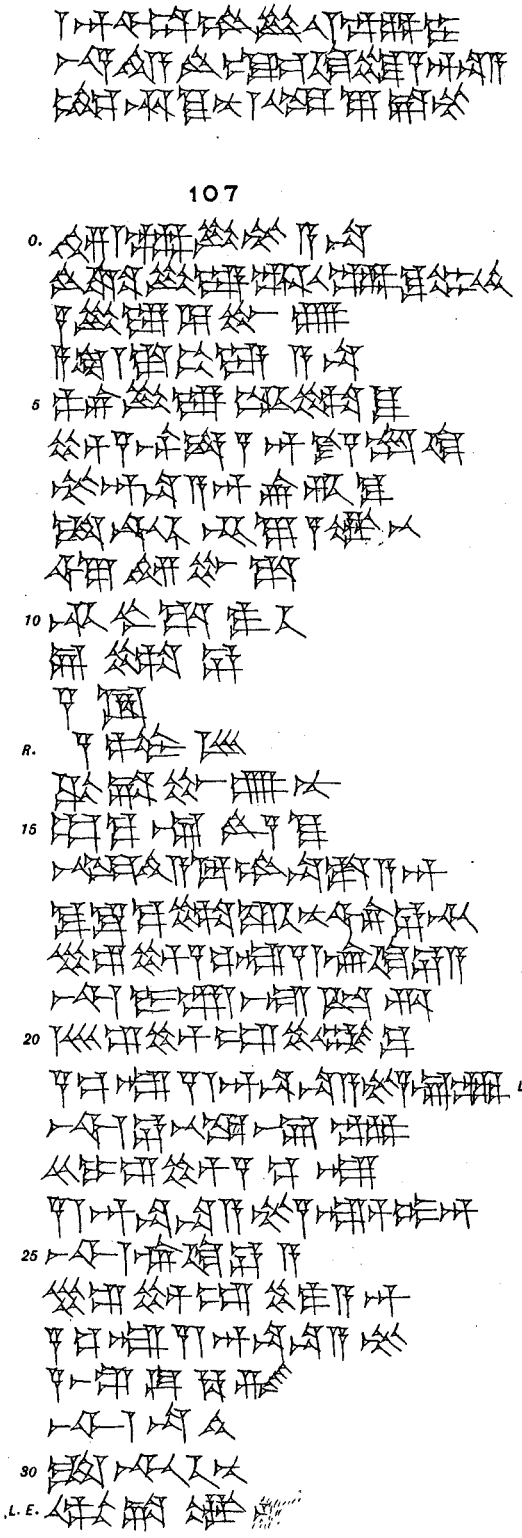
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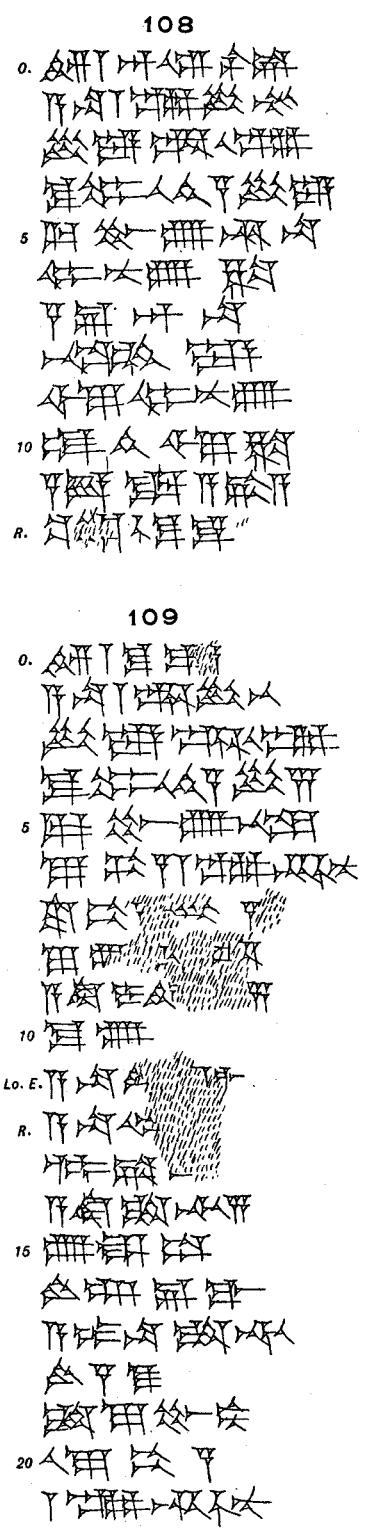
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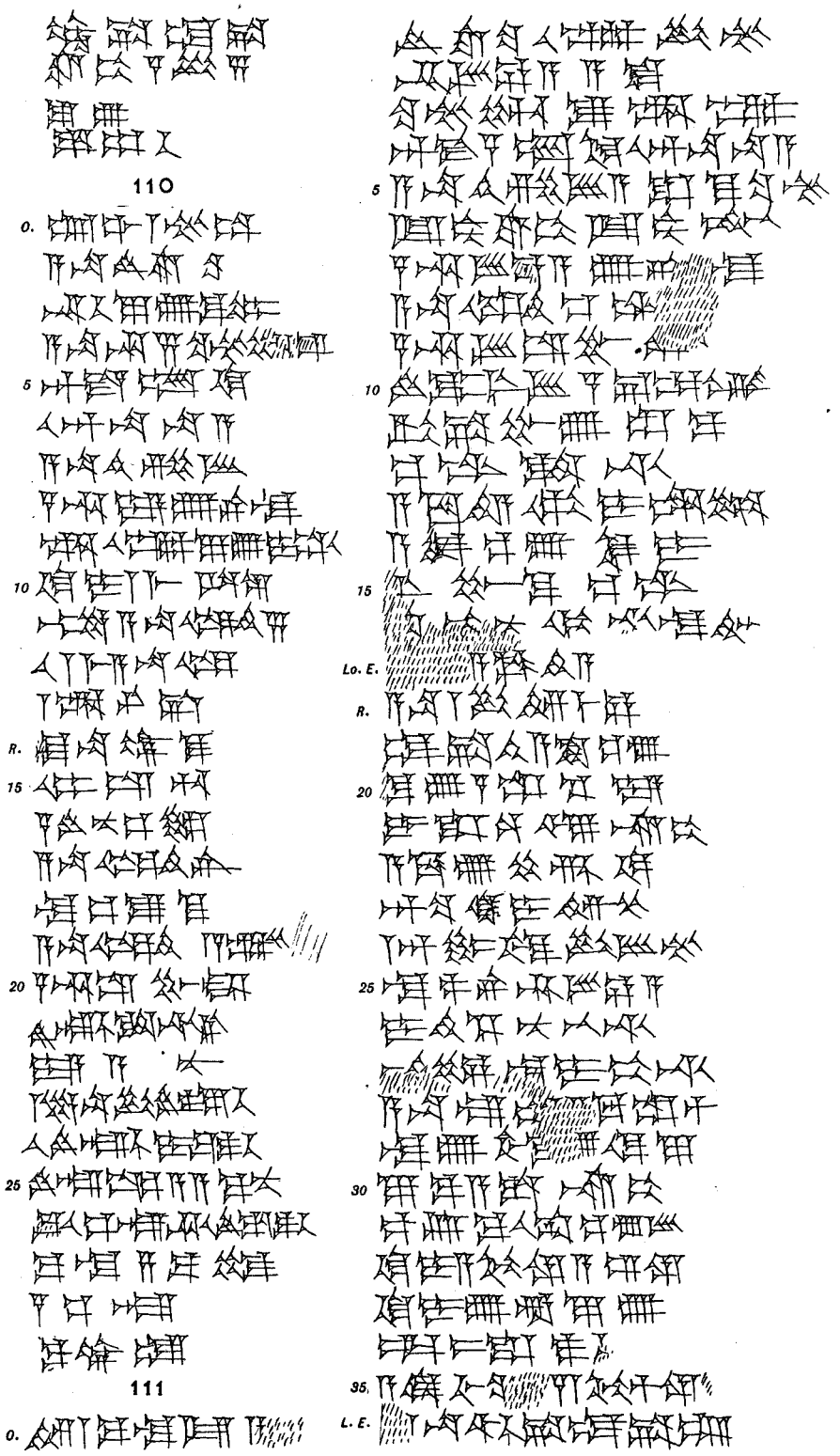
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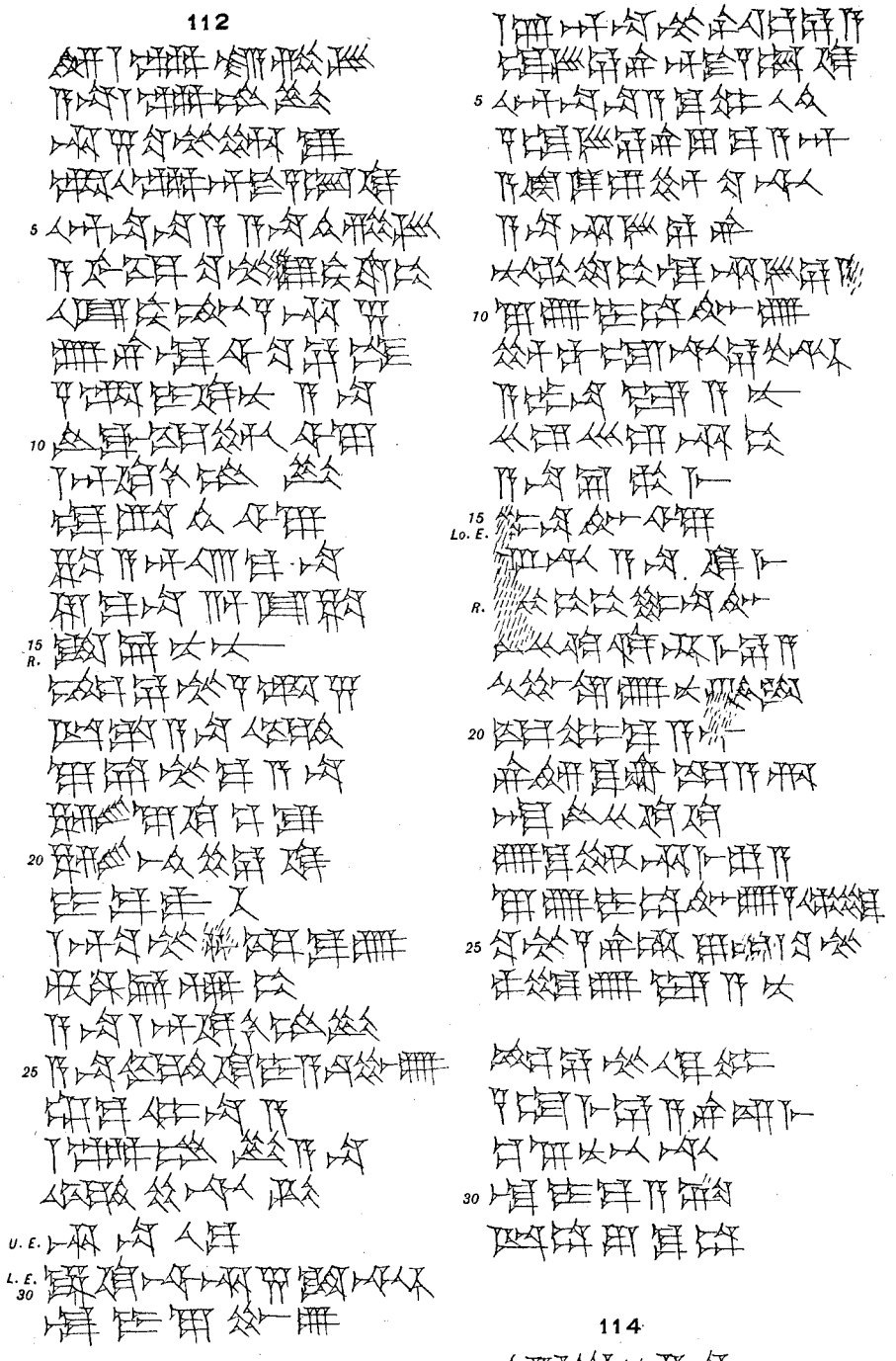
112



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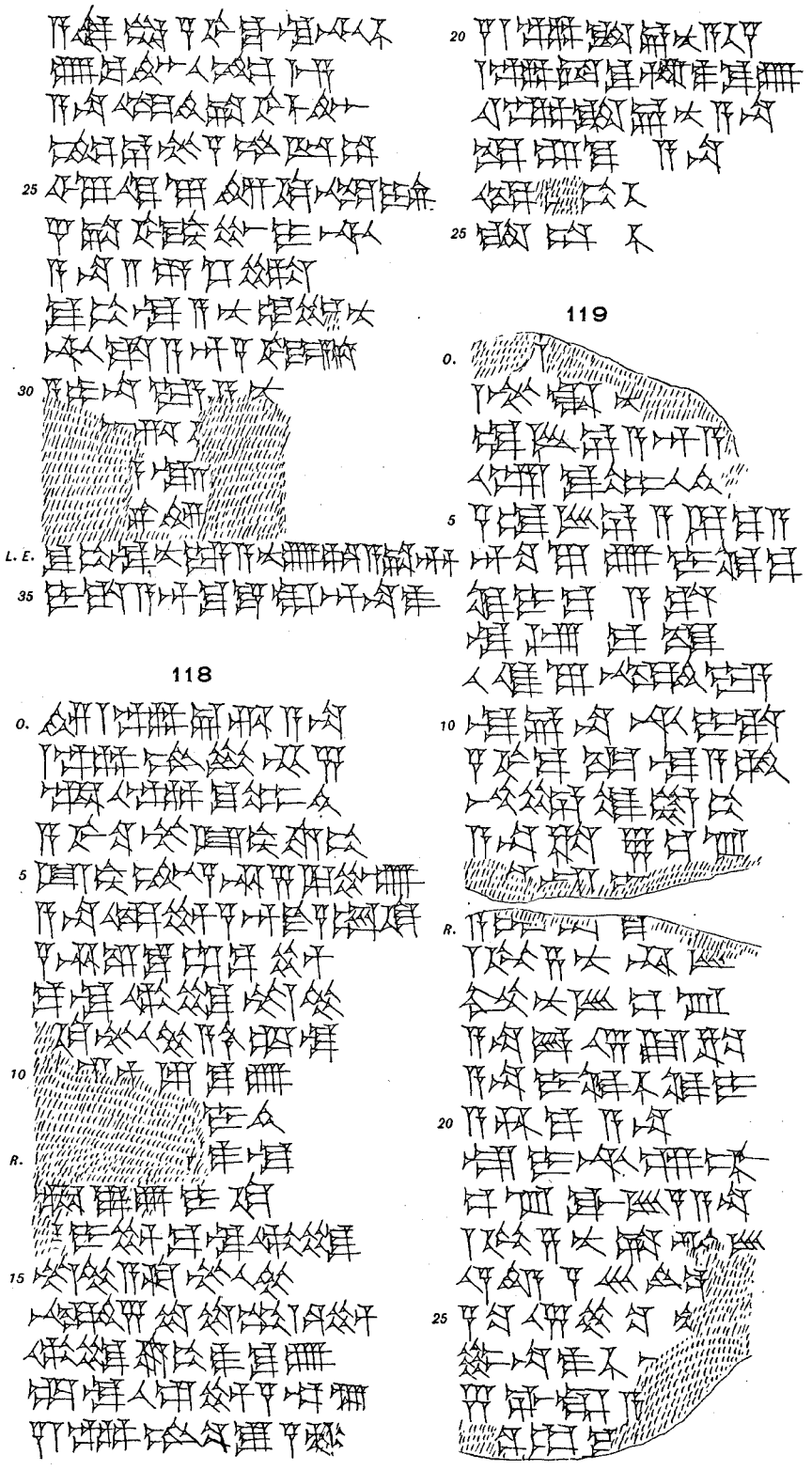
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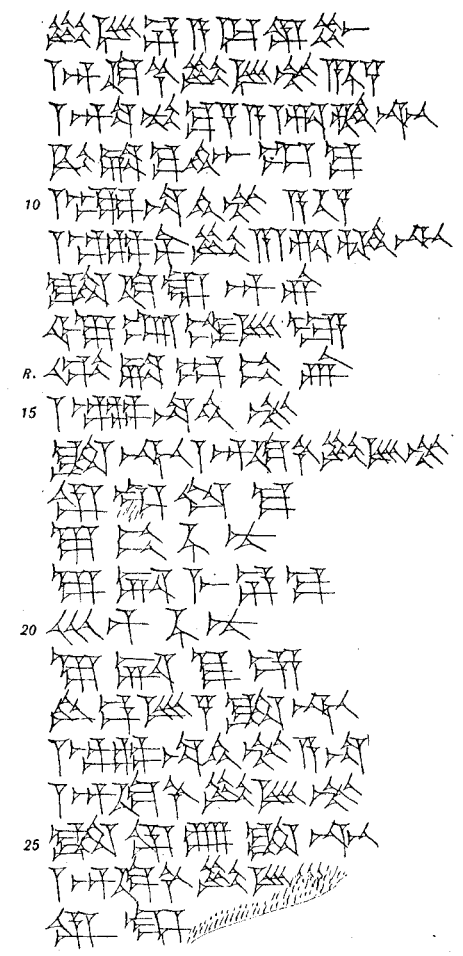

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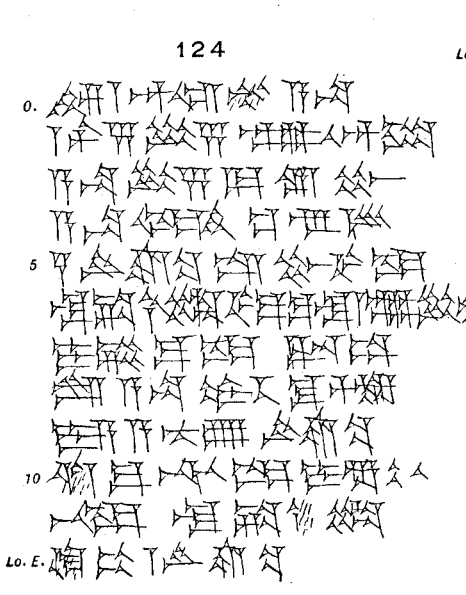

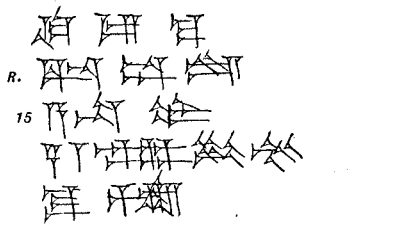

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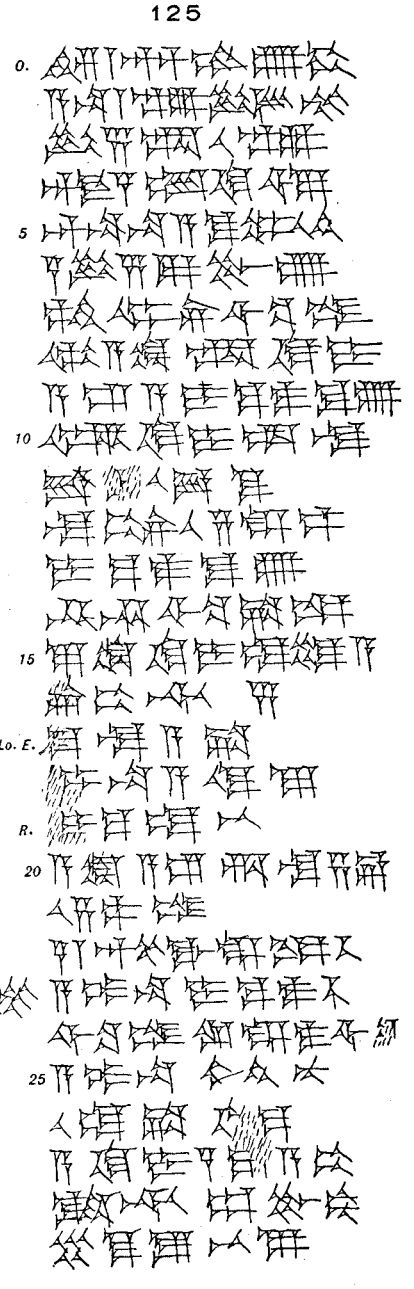

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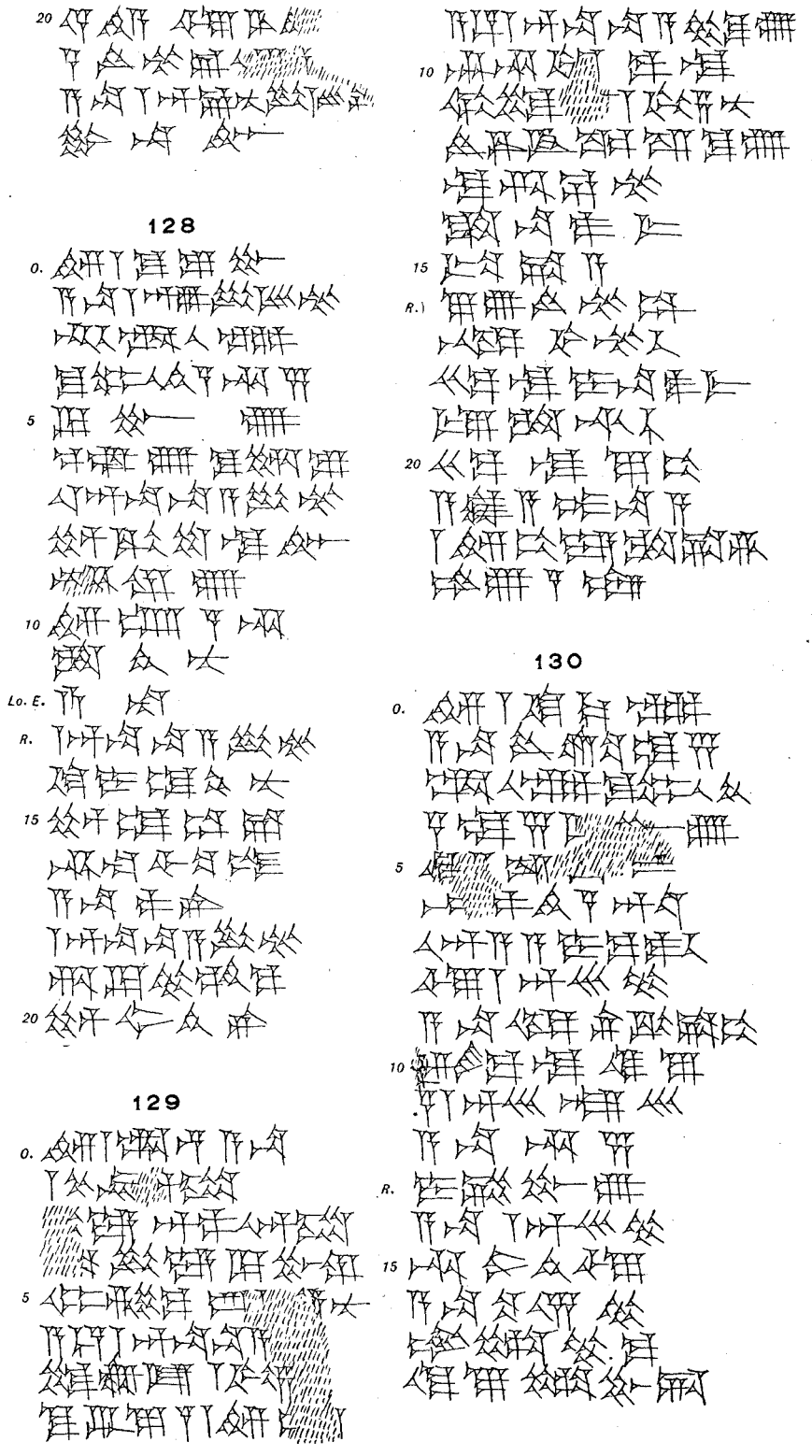
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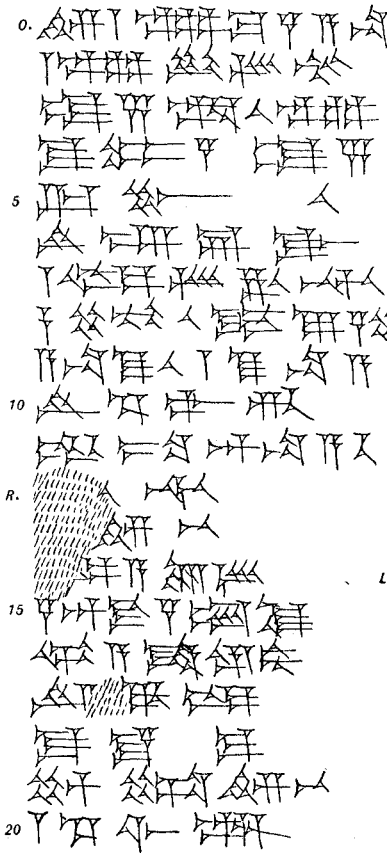

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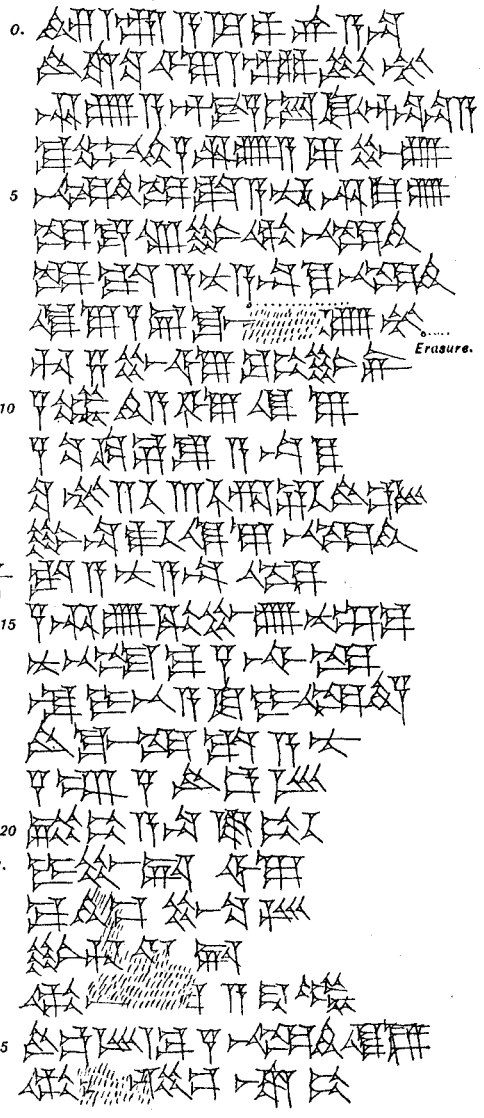

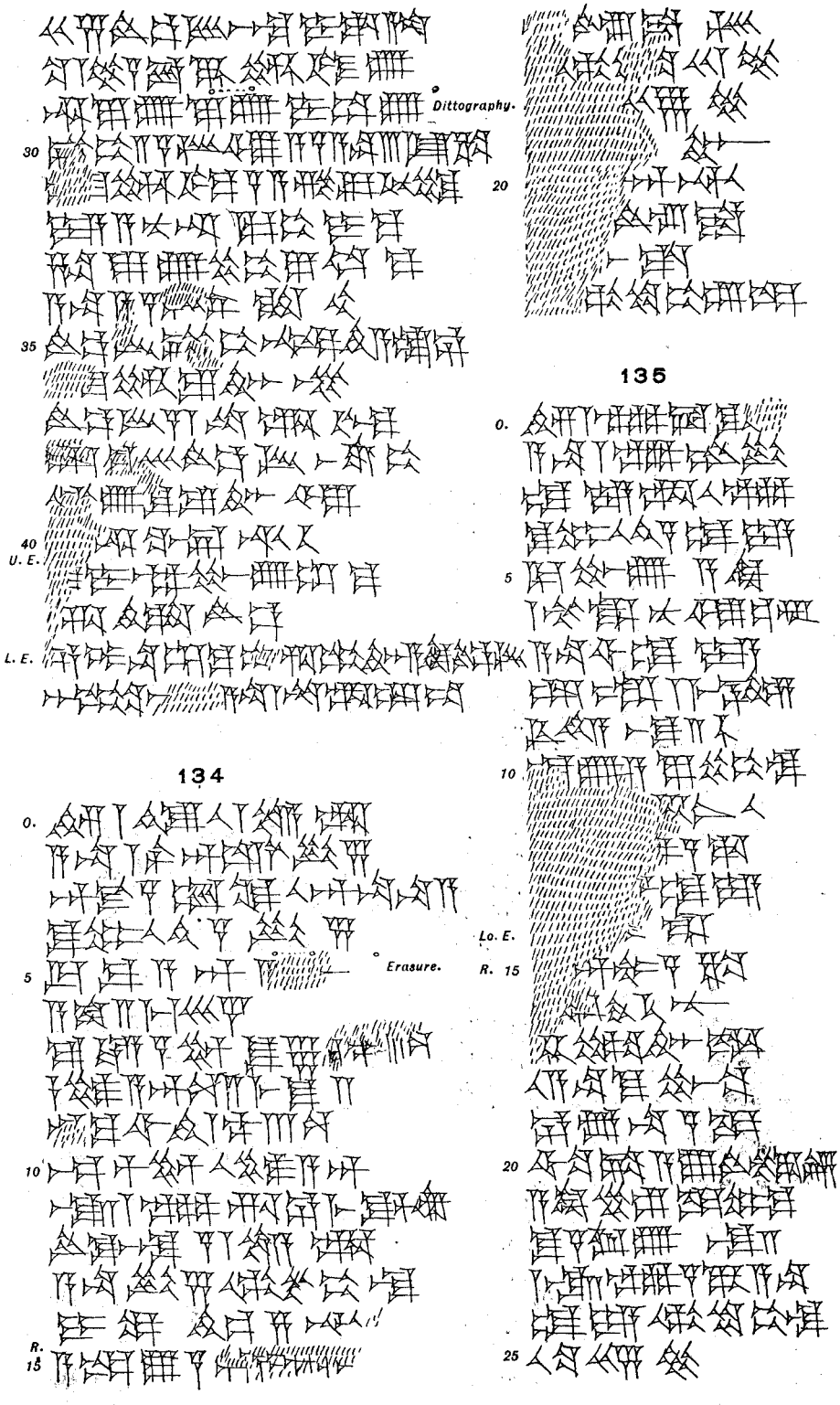
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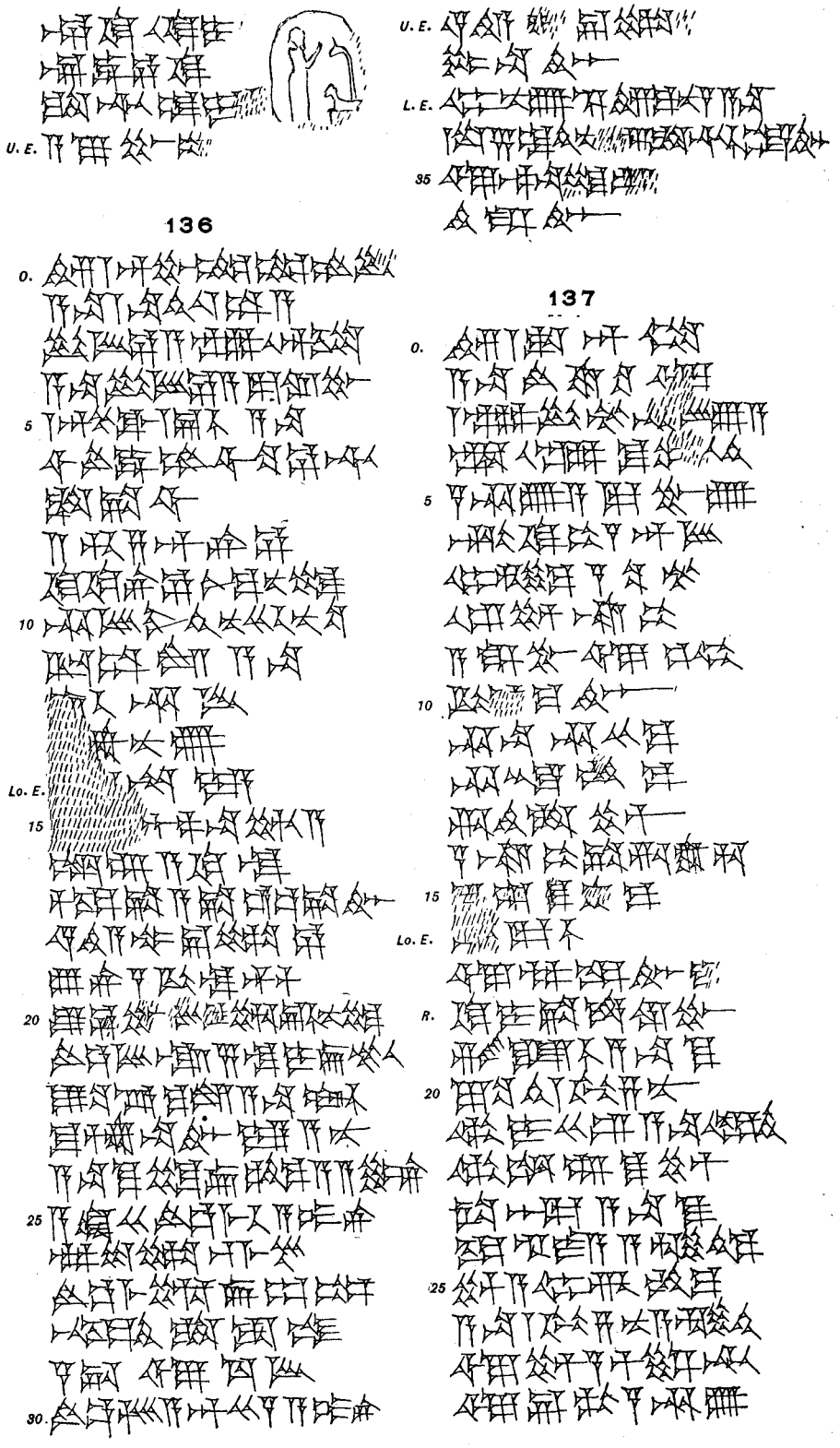
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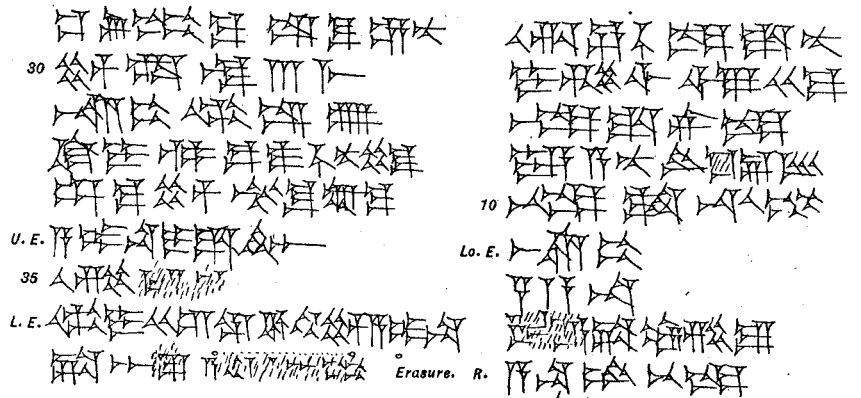

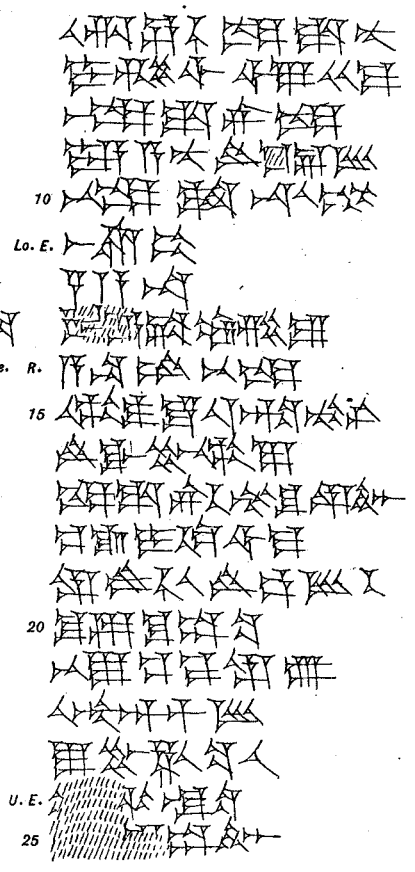

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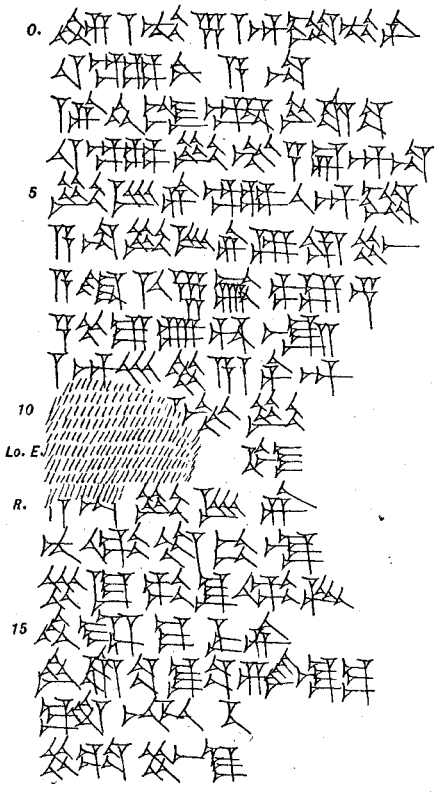

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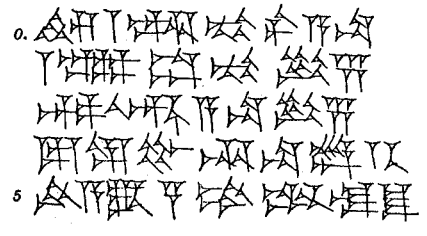

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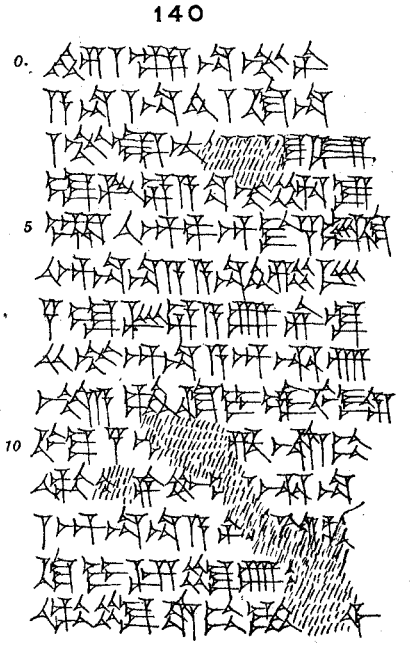

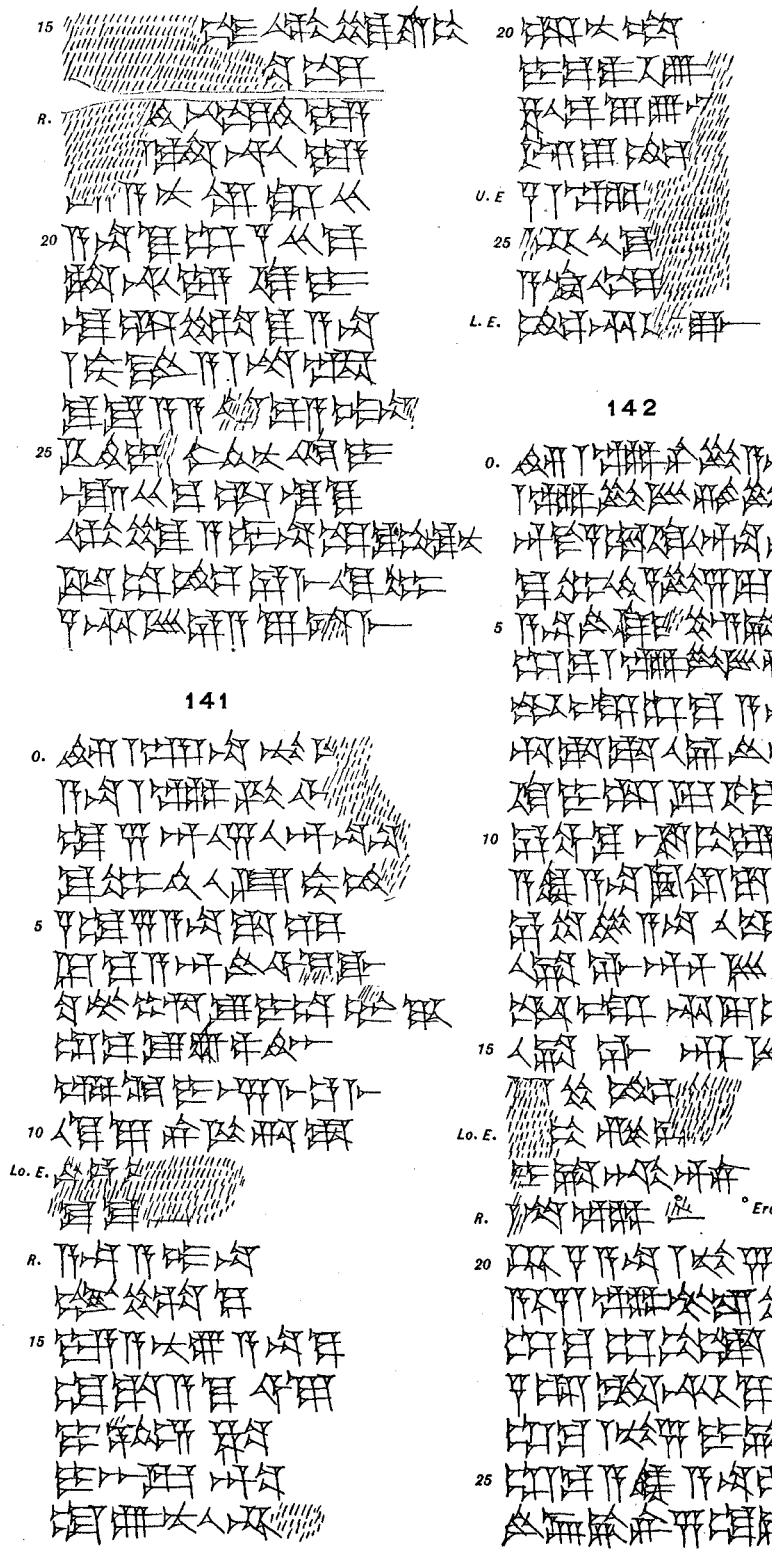
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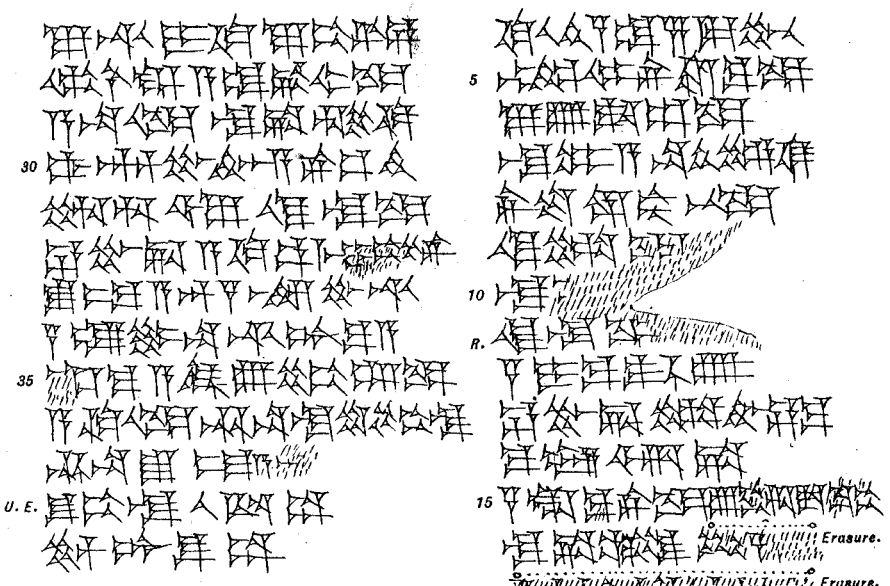
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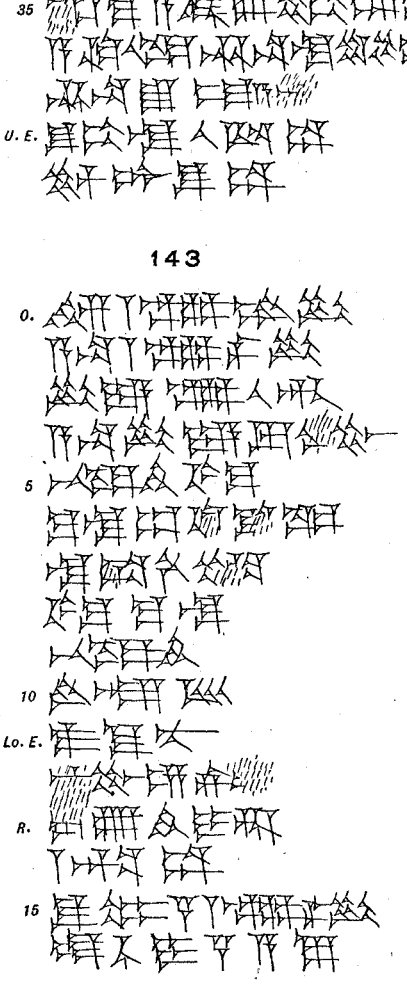
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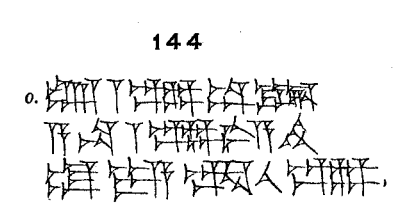
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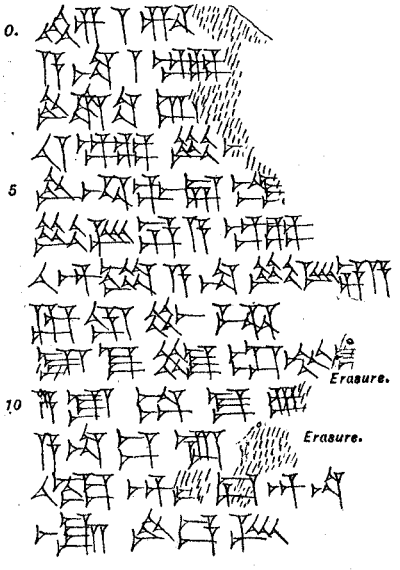
145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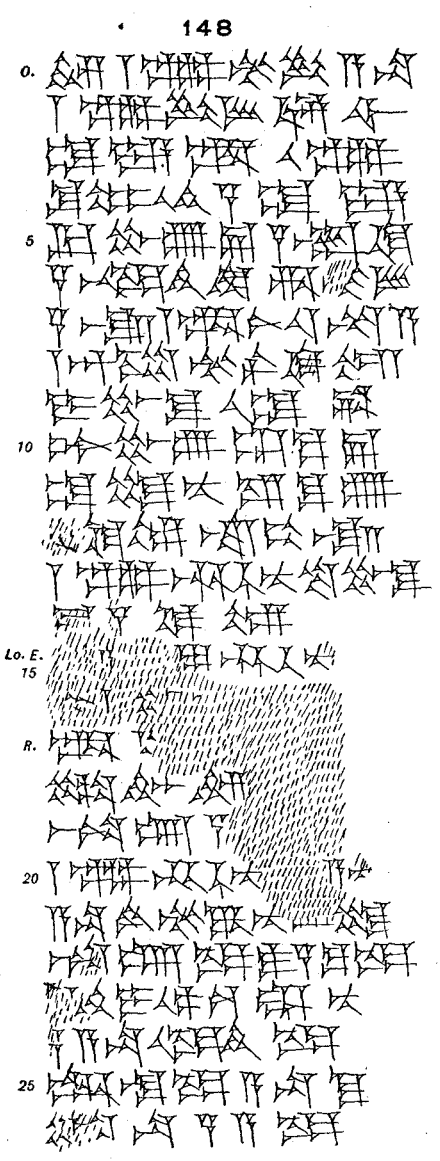
148



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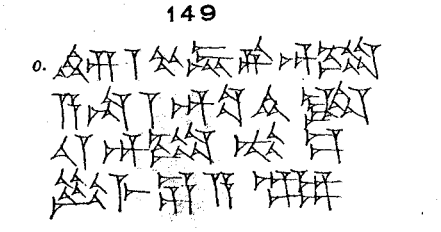

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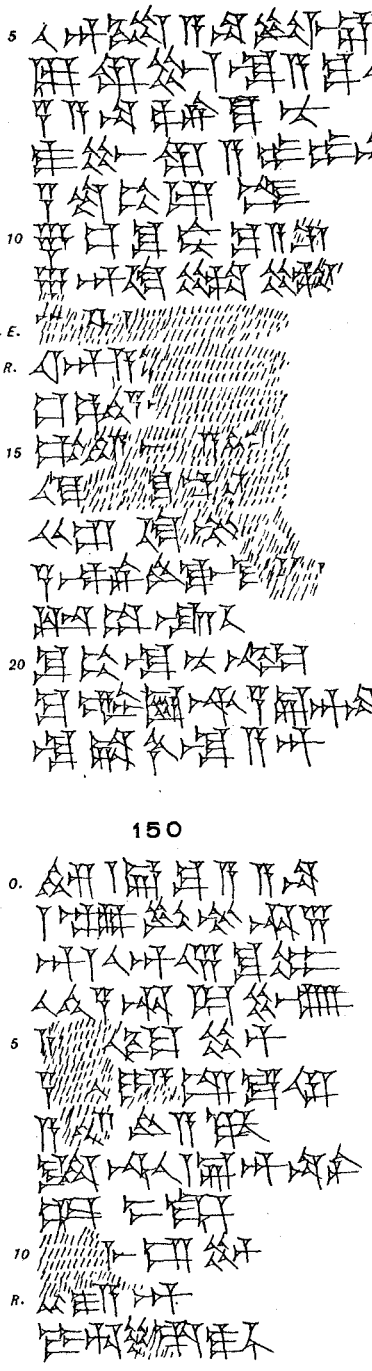

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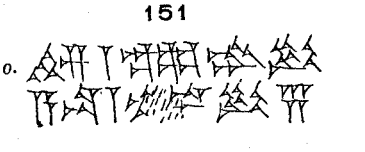

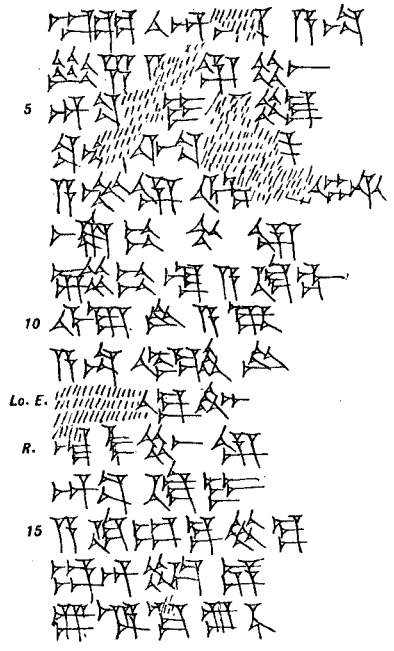

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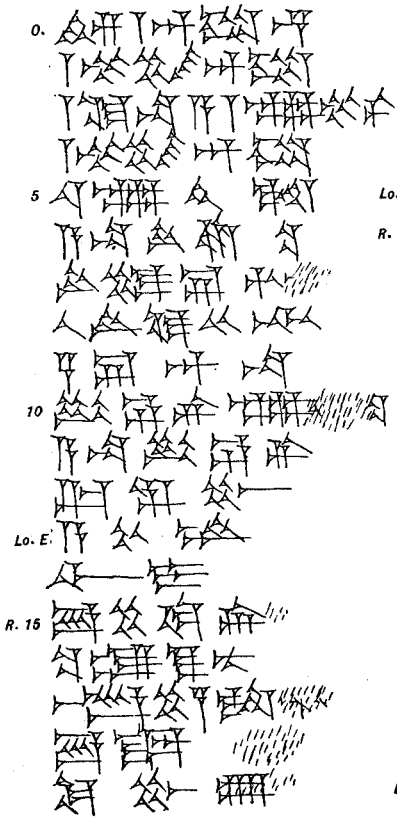

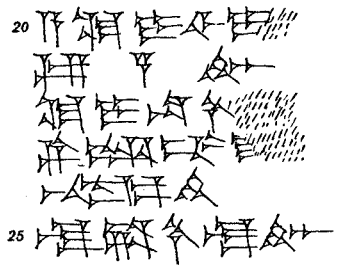

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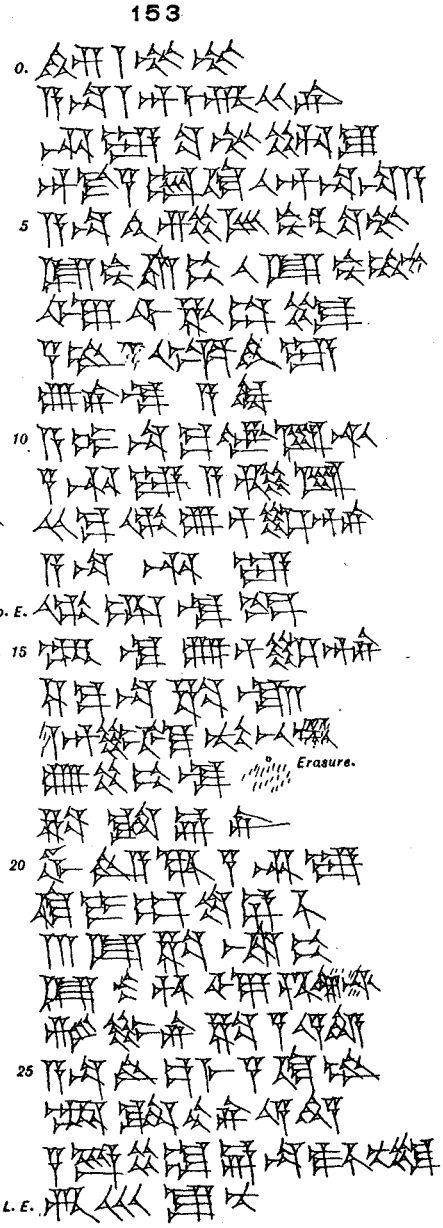

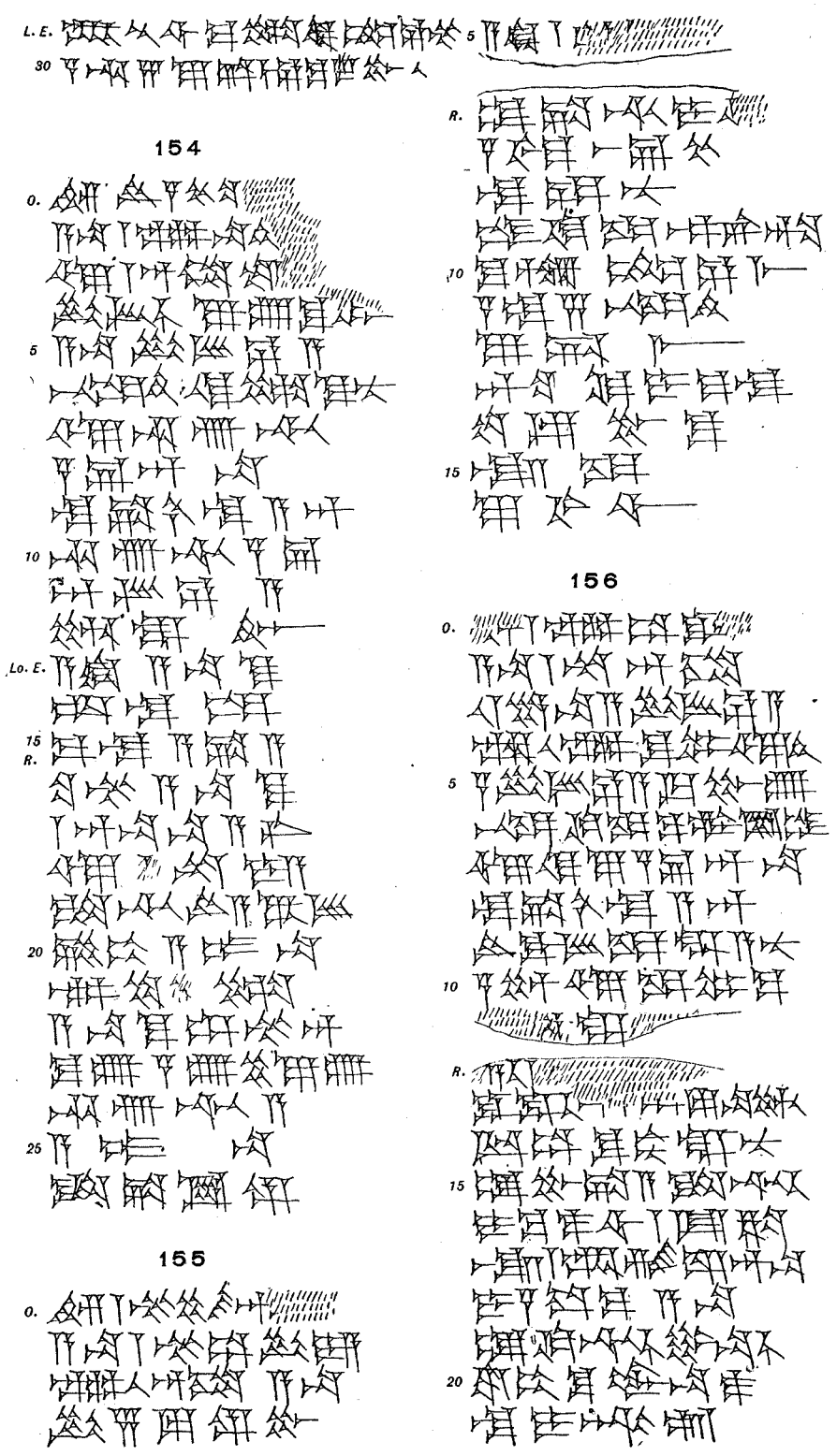
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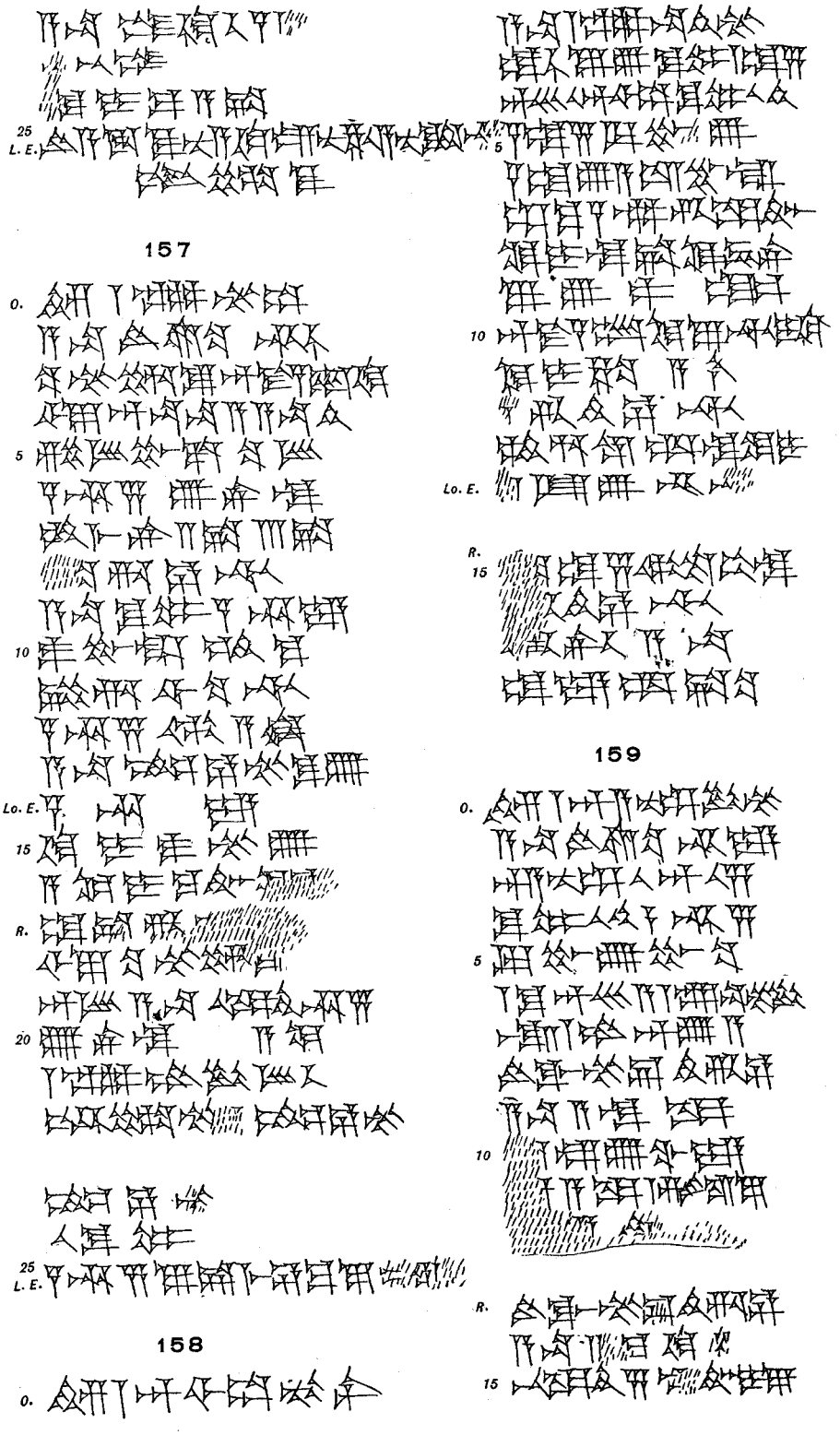
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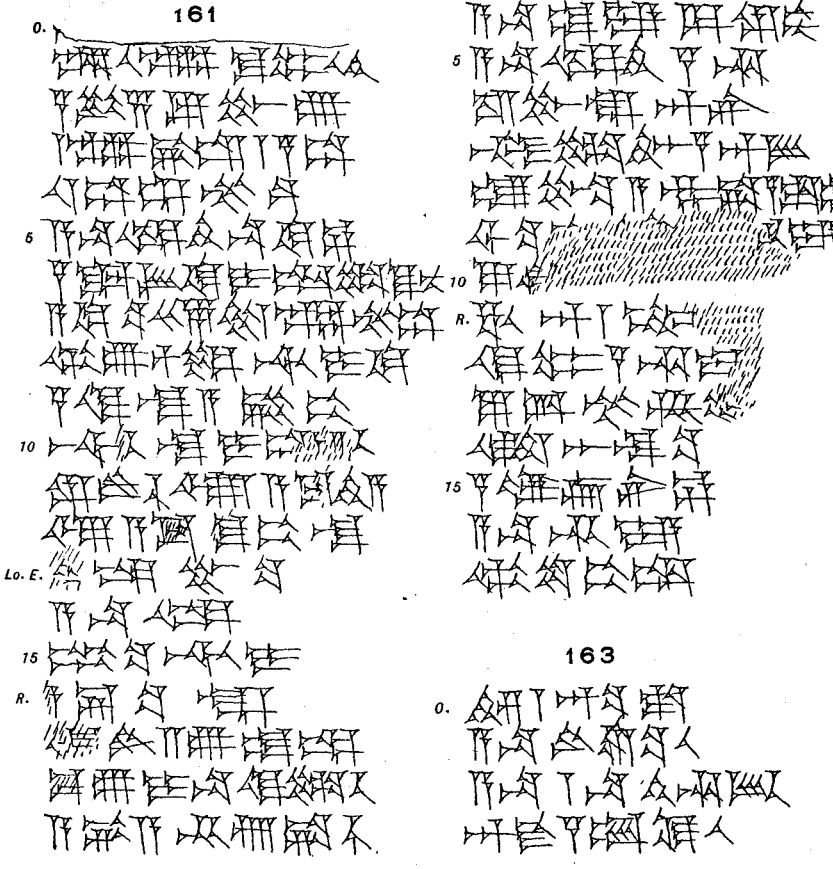

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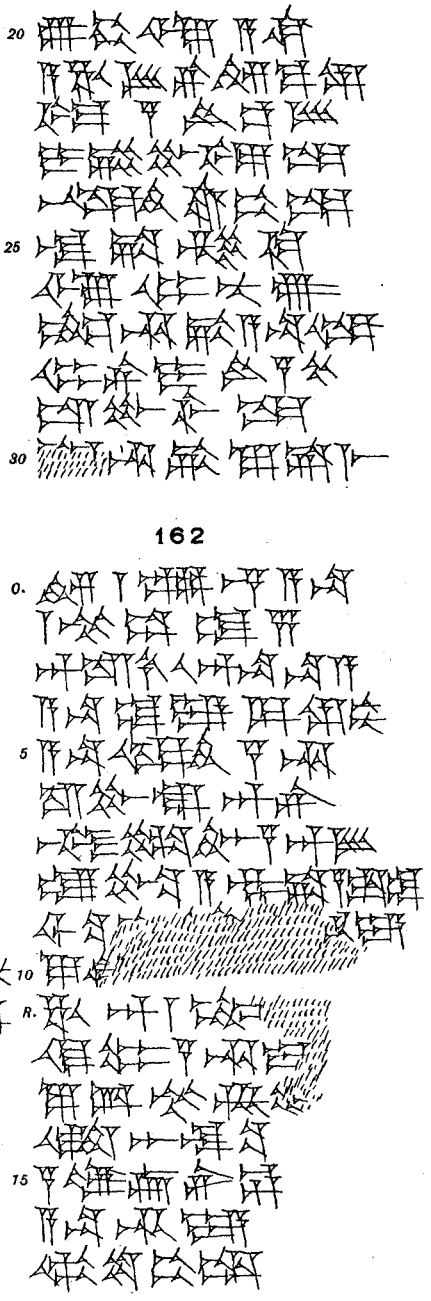

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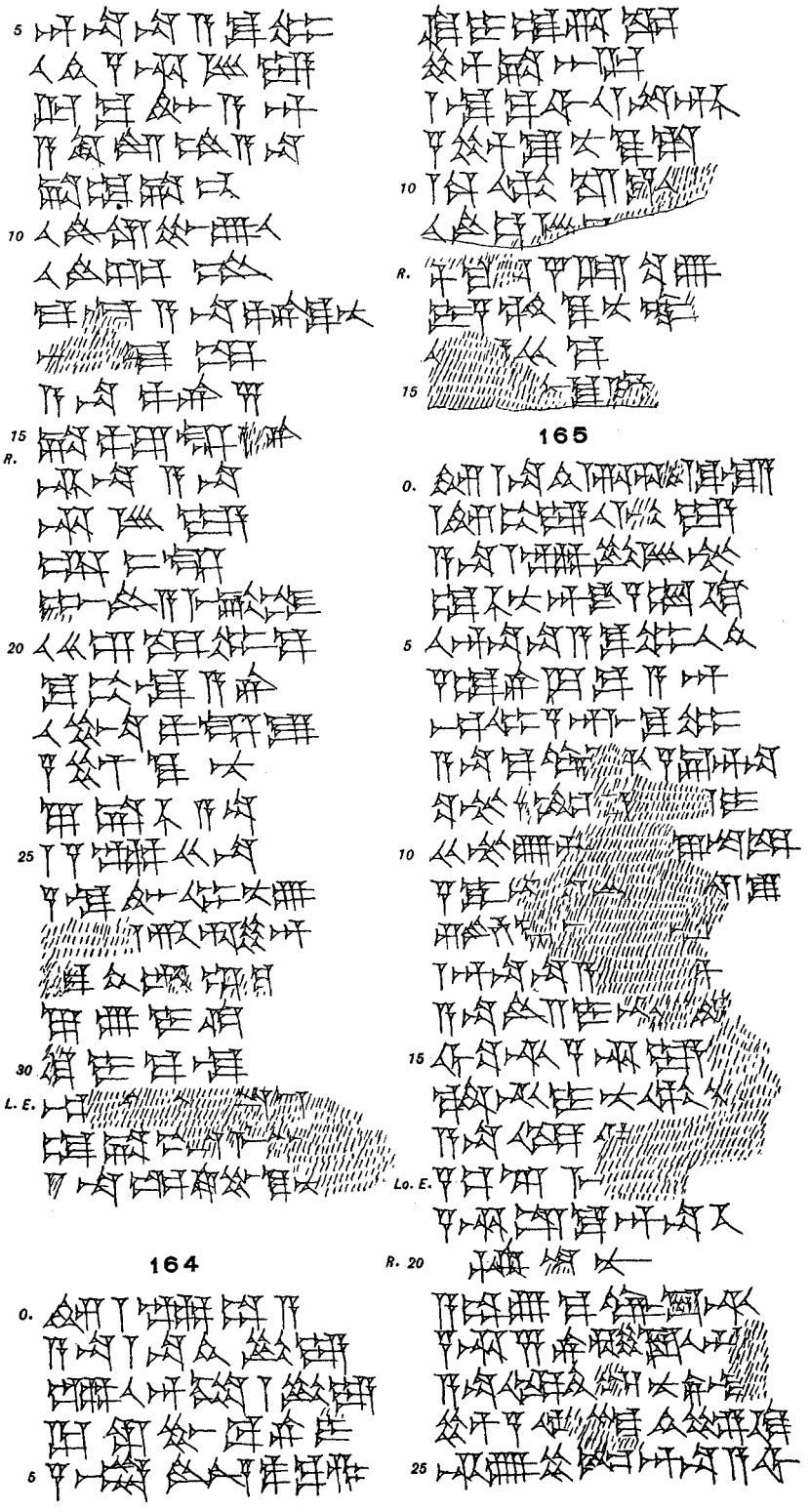

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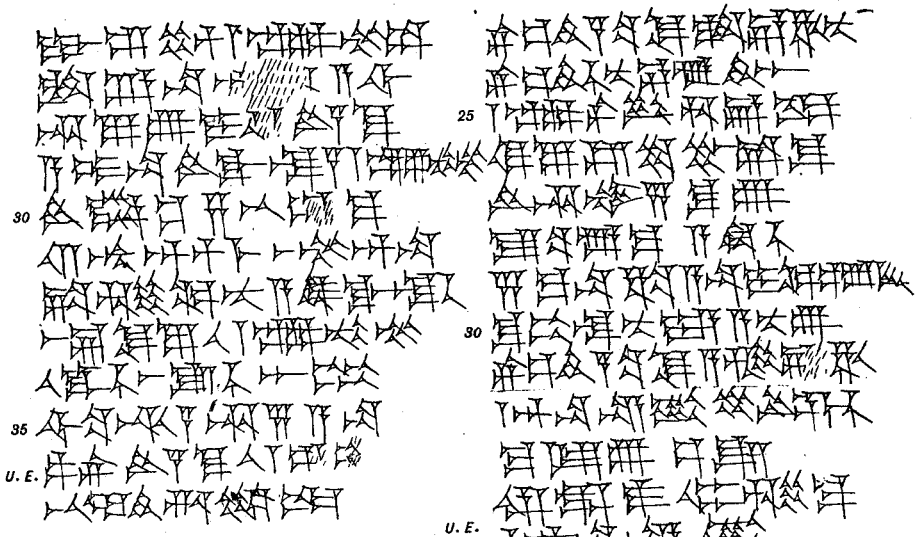

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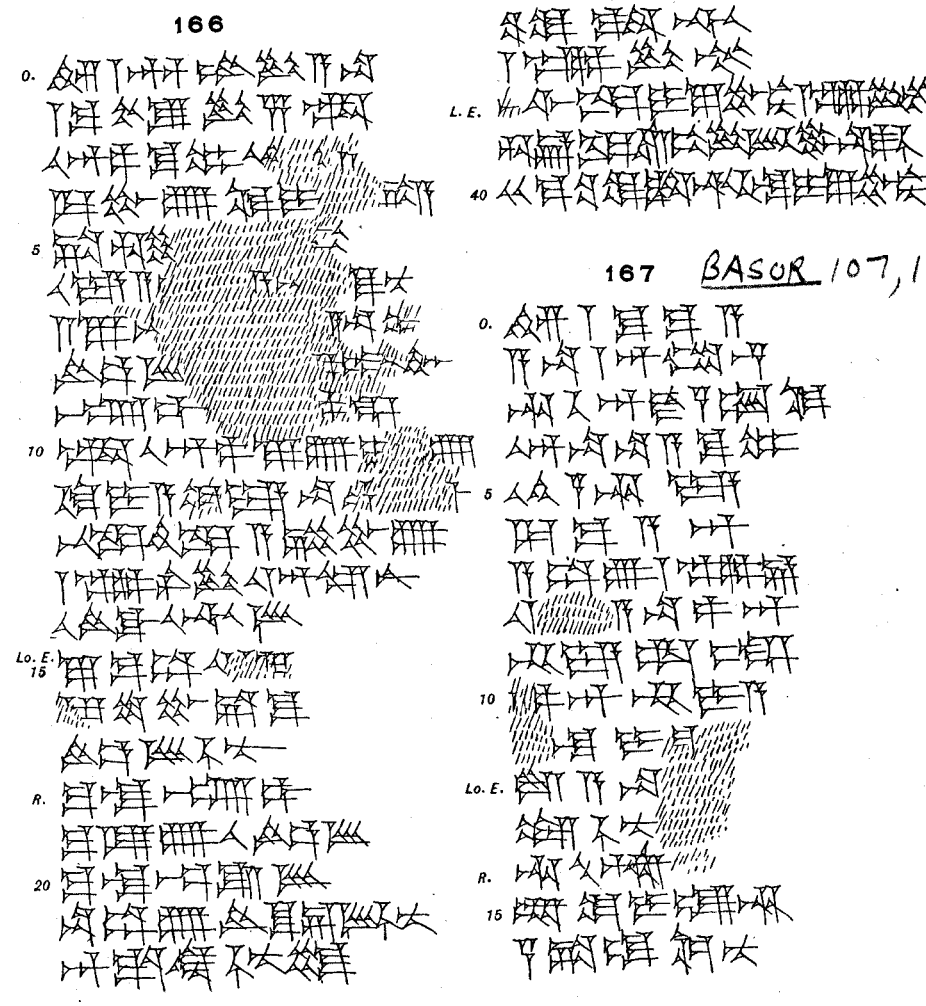

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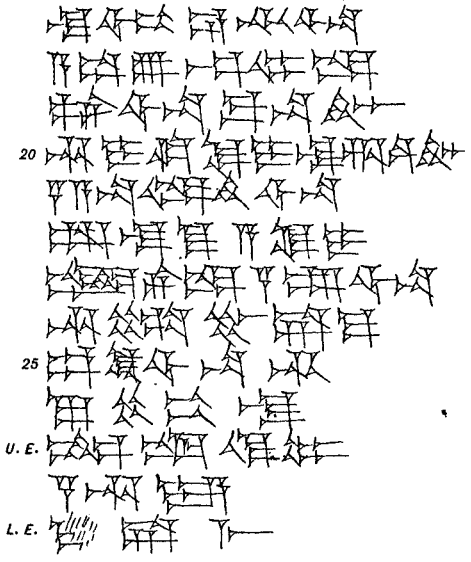

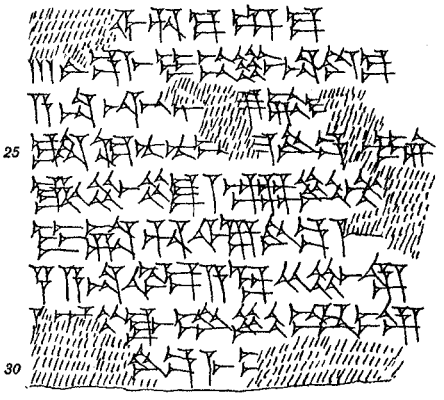

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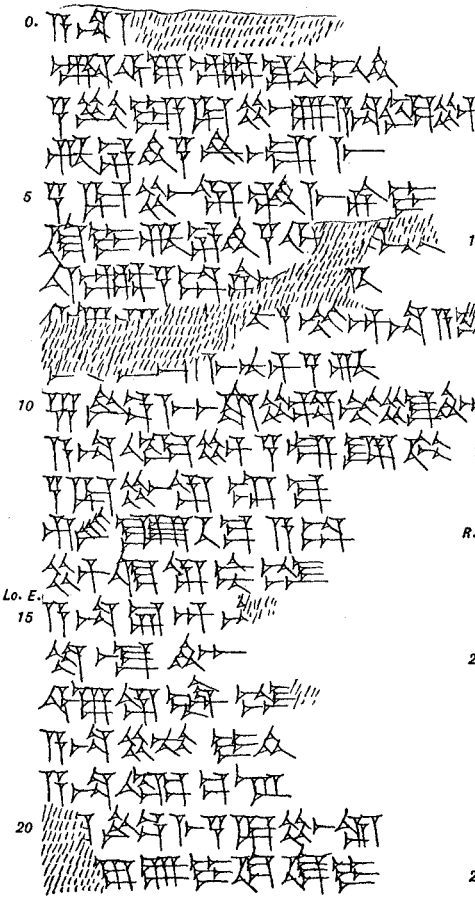

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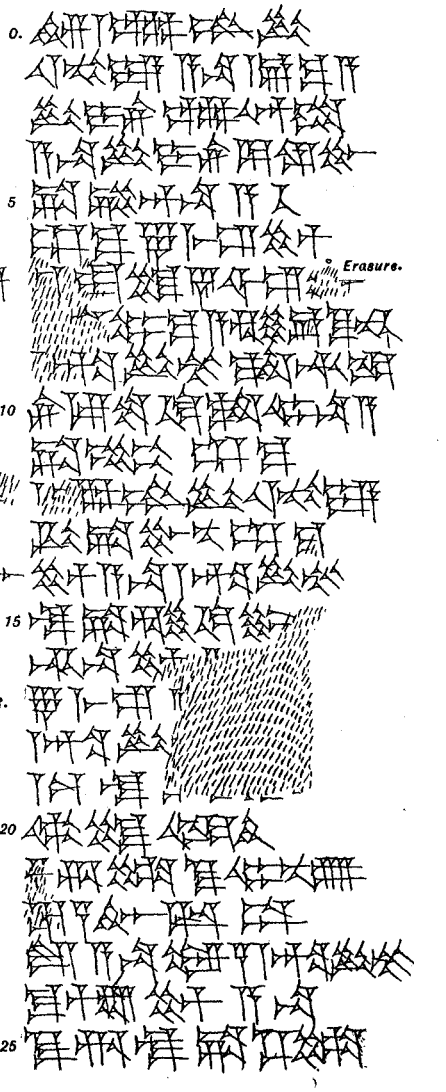

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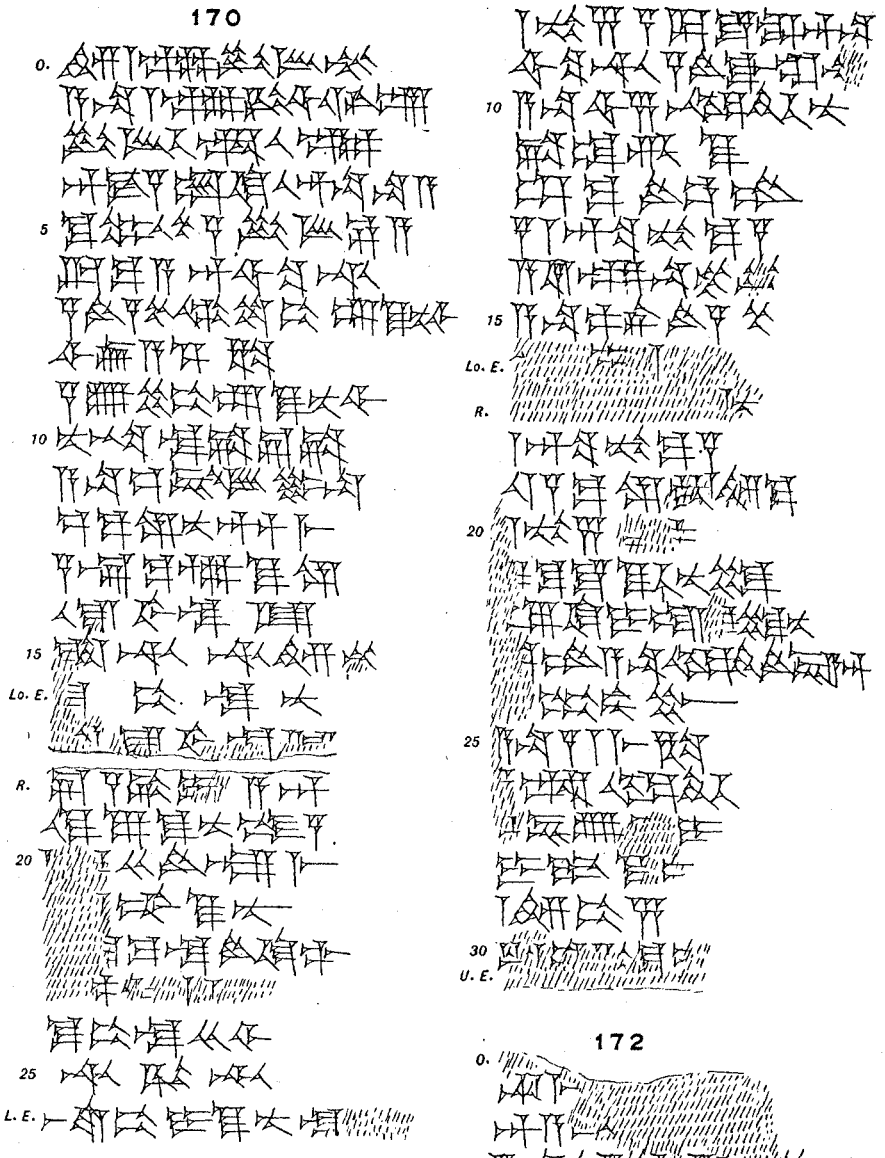

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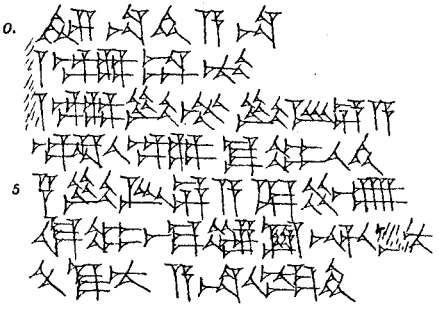

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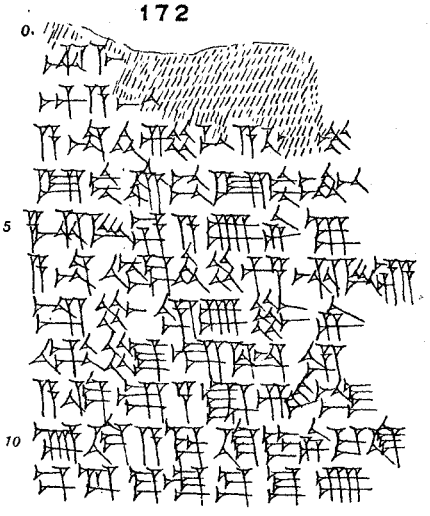

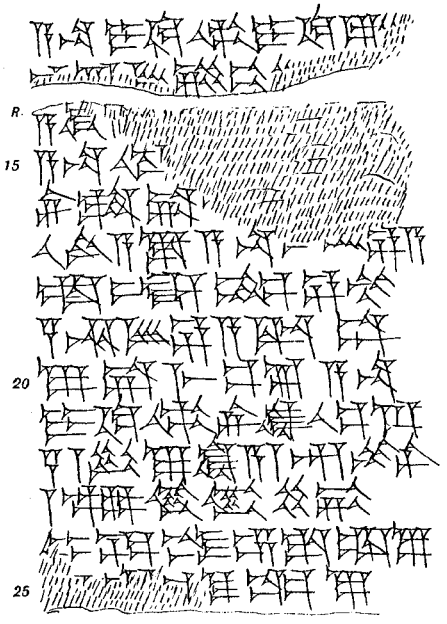

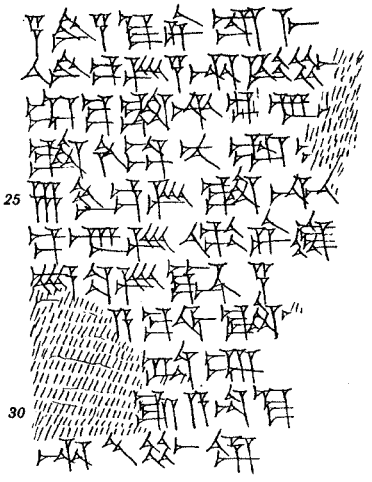

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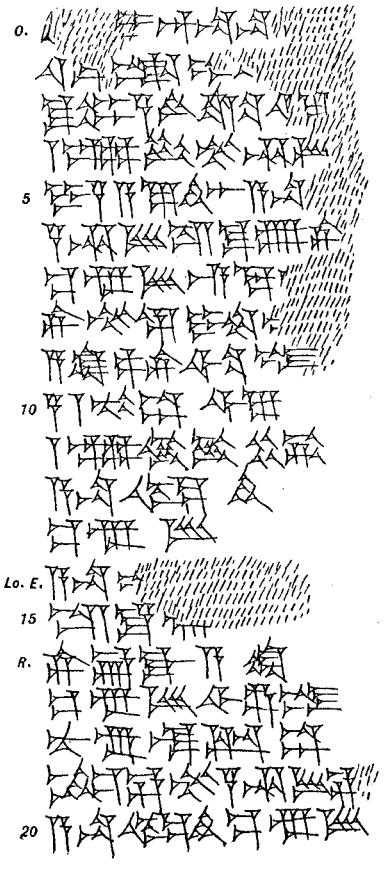

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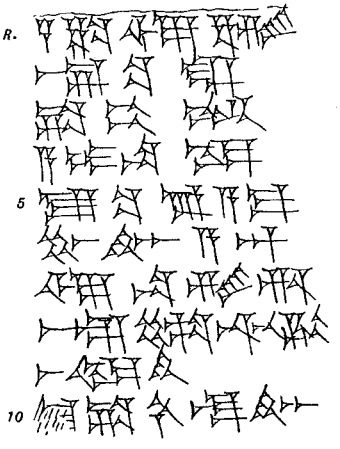

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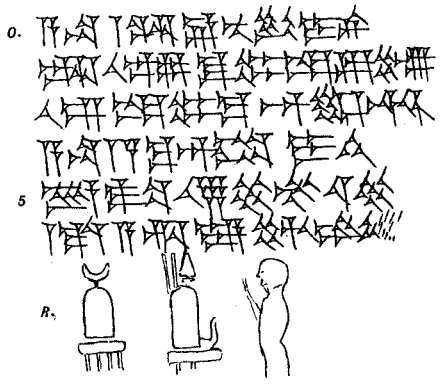

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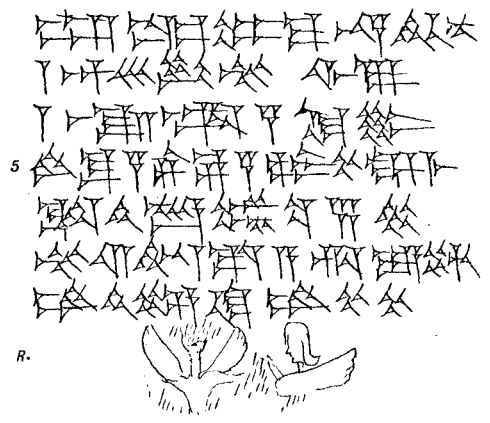

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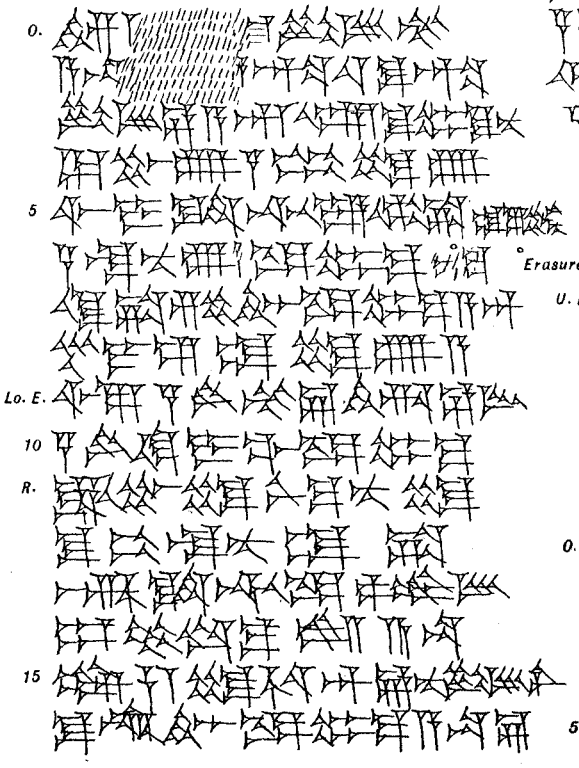

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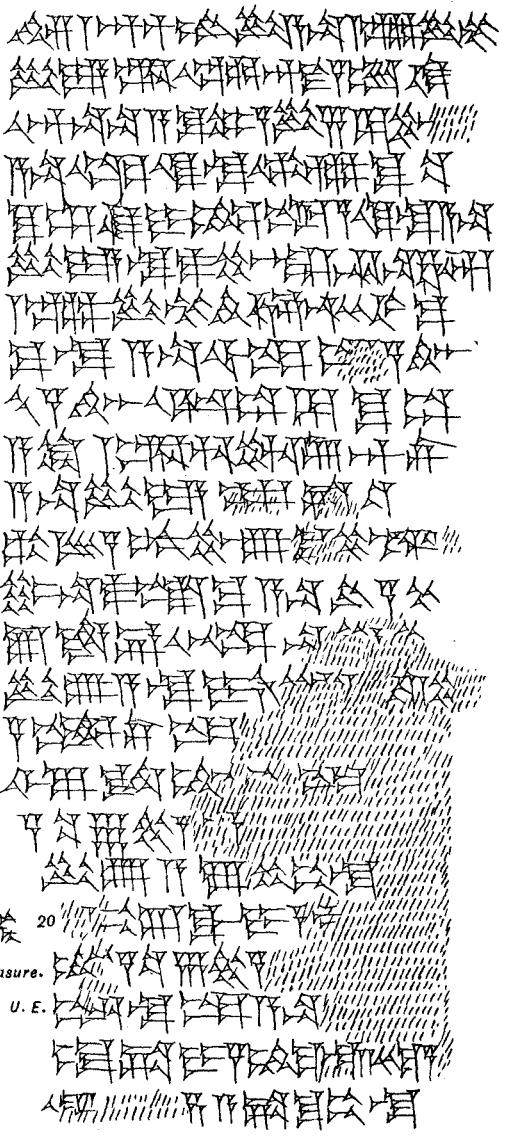

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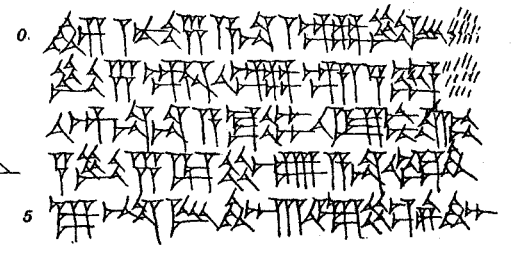

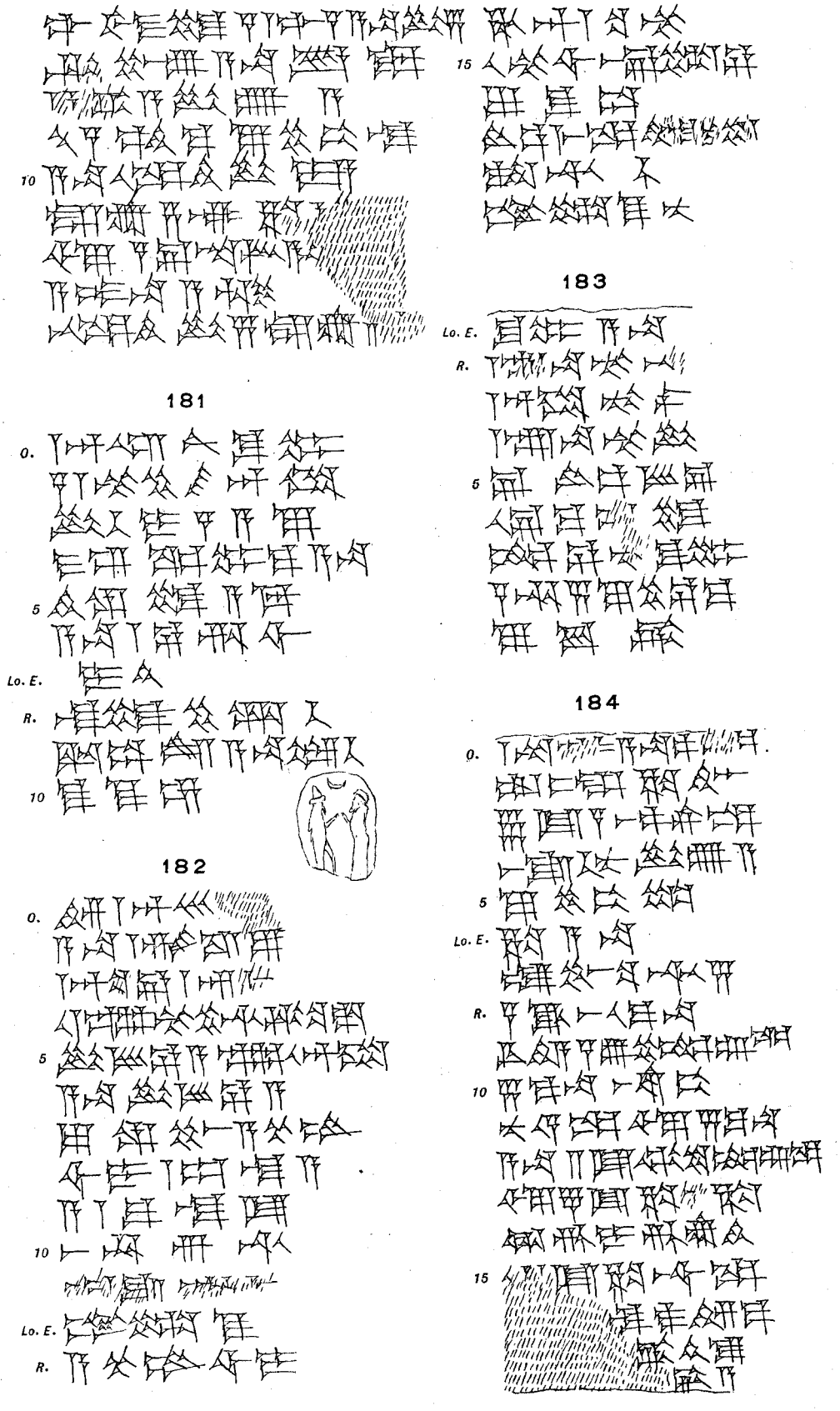
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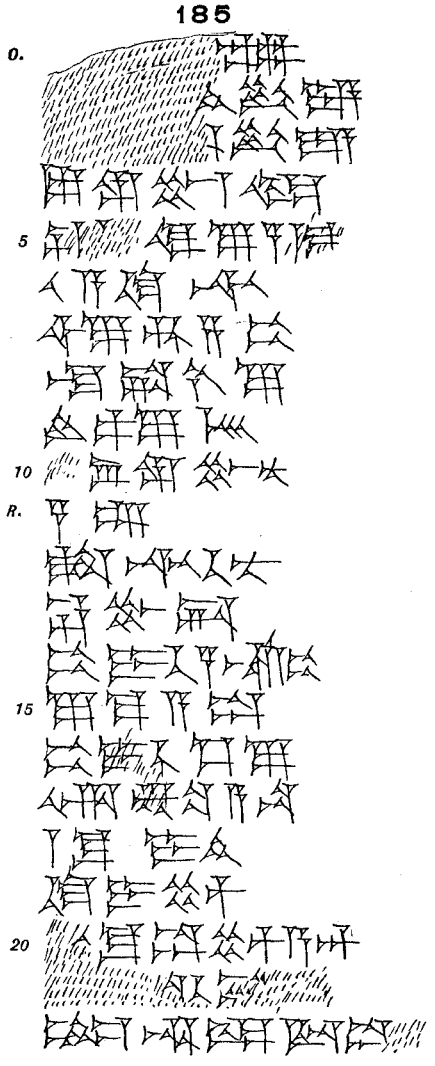

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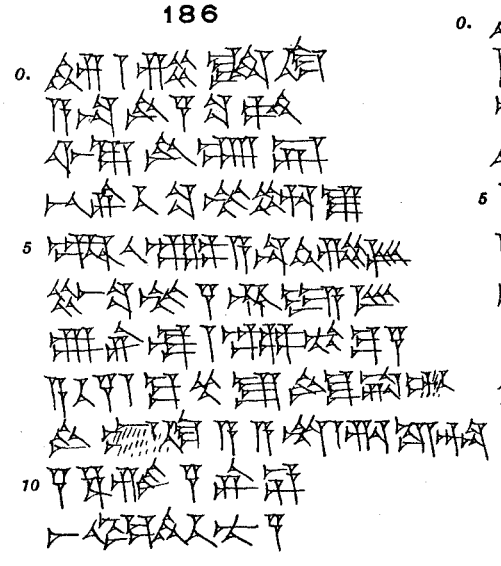

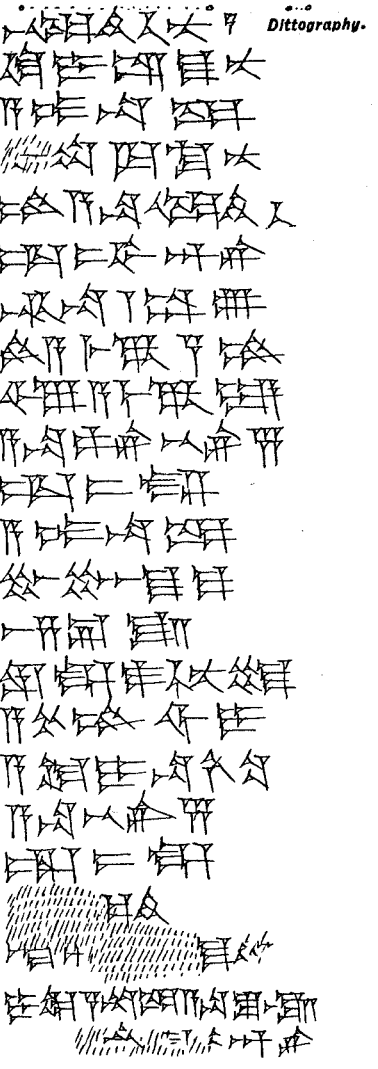

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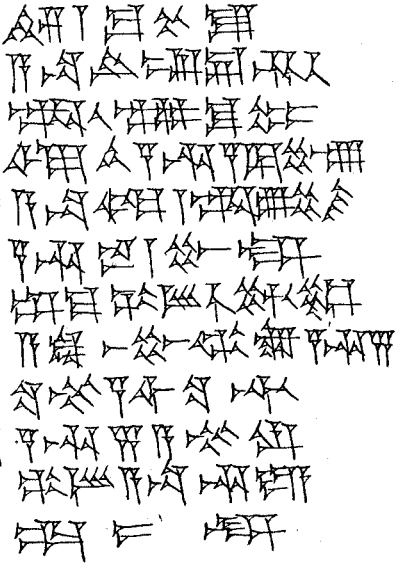

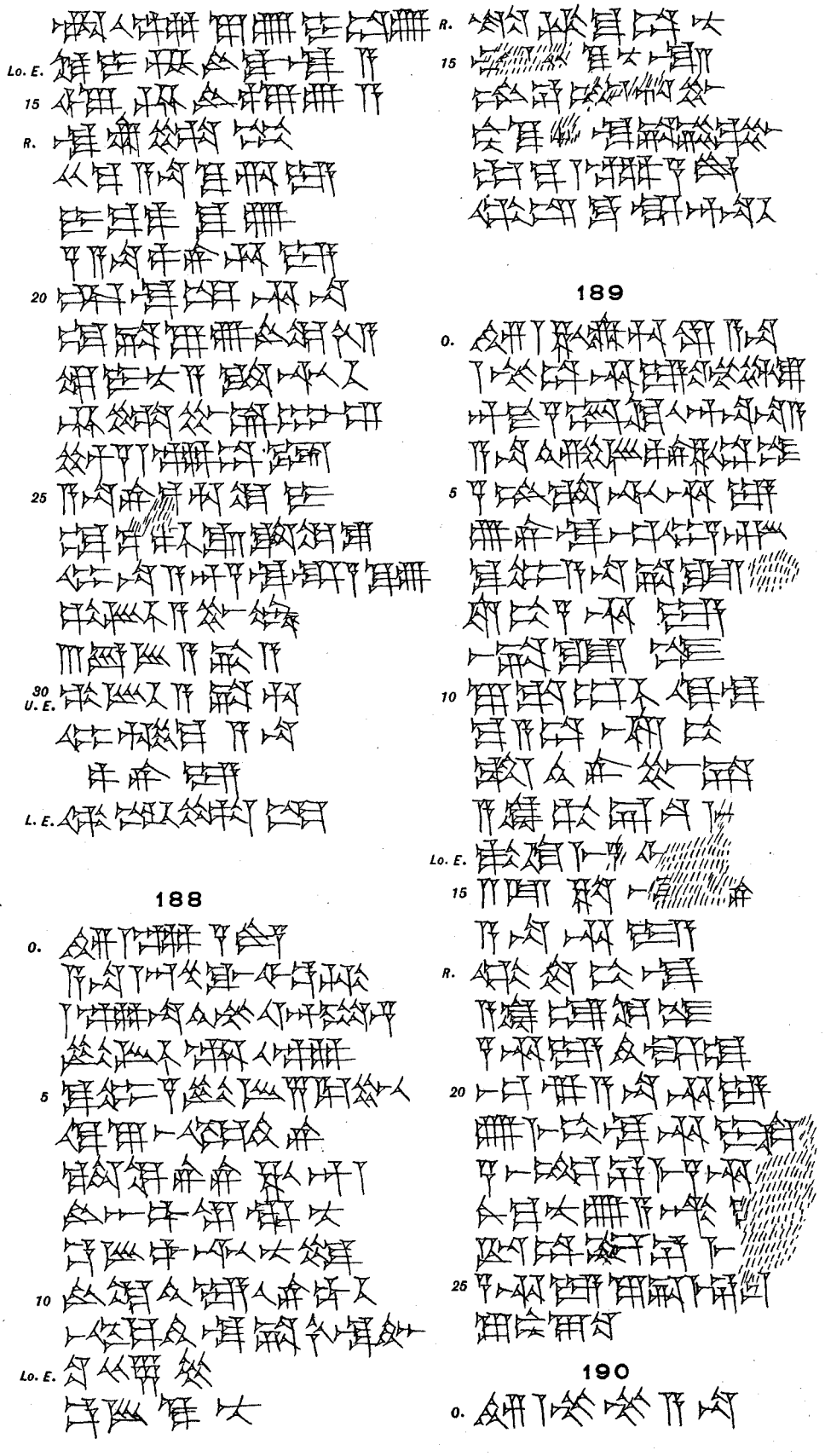

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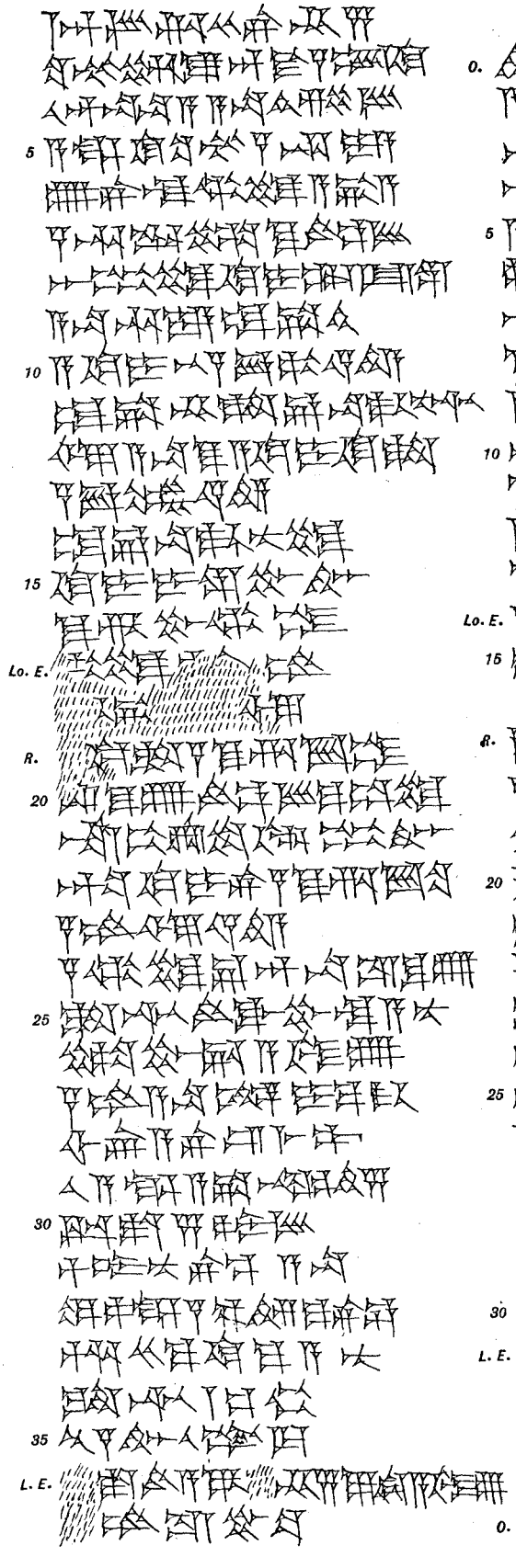

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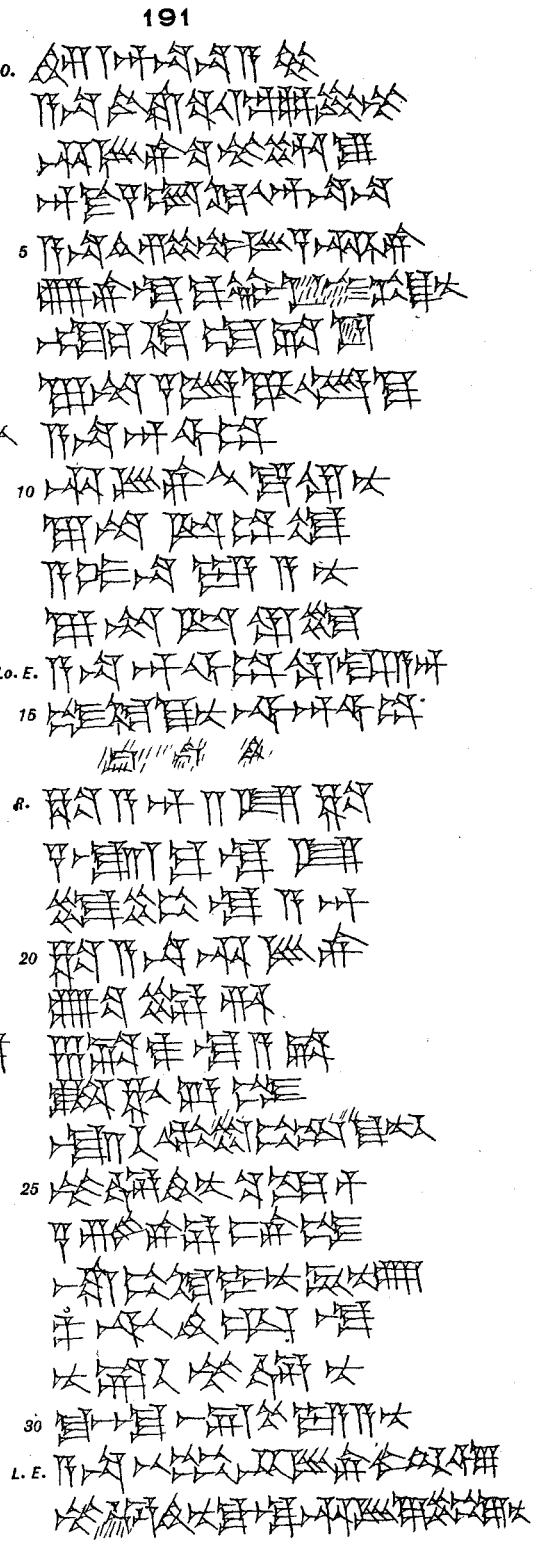

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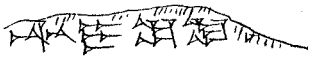

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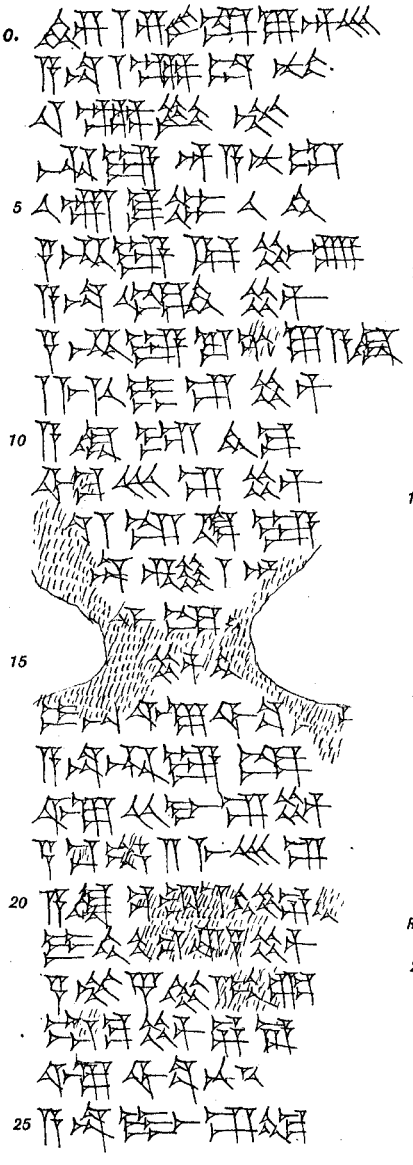

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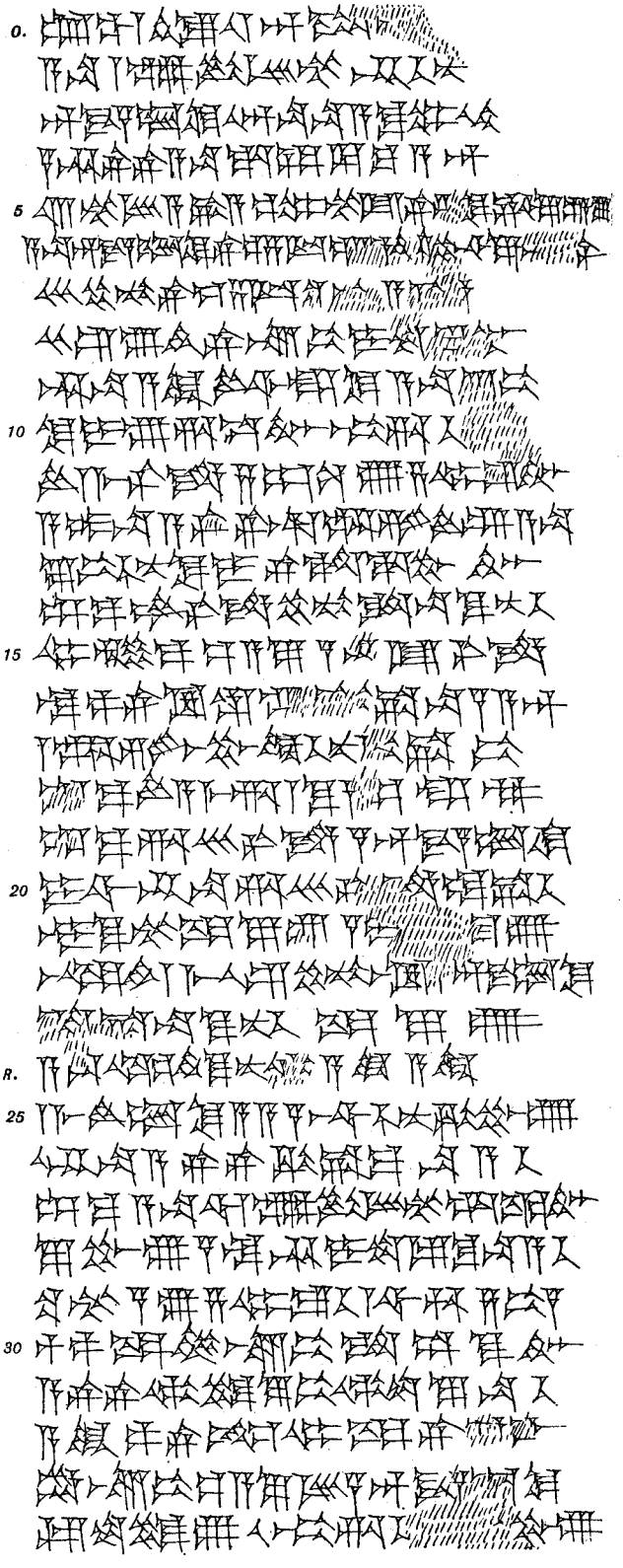

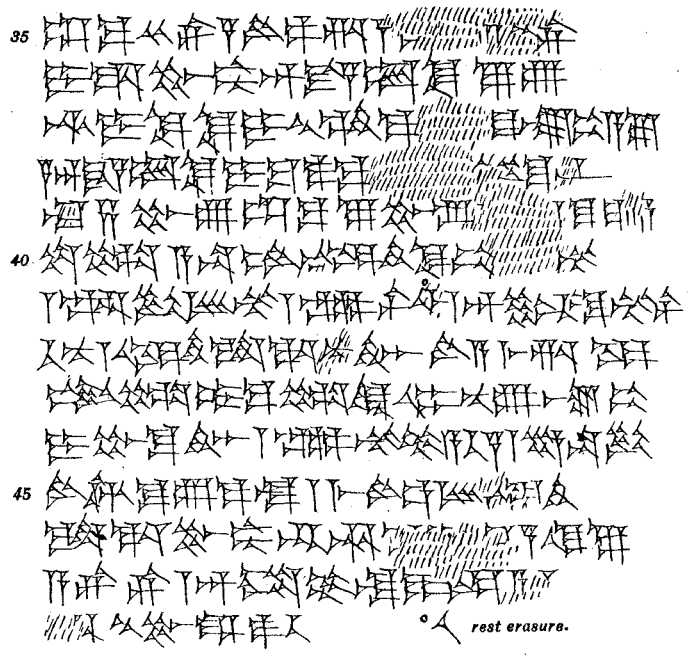
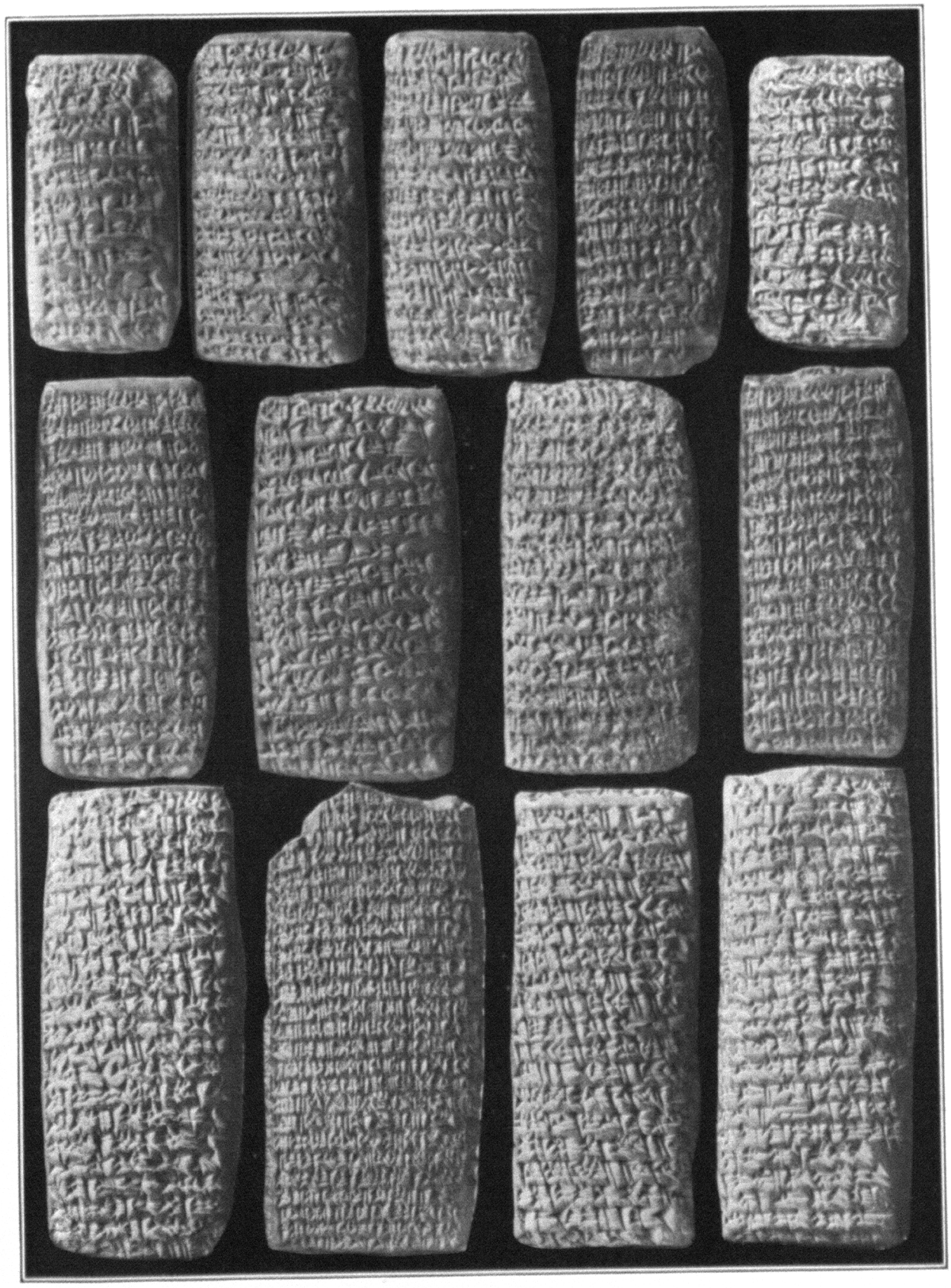
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