

science editor of the New York Times  
 brought it  
 Anan (especially the seal)

The following three ~~pages~~ <sup>letters</sup> are some of my earliest correspondence relating to the Anan seal inscription. Fred found the seal in late May or early June, 2000. He told me about it in late October of the same year. I never did get to see the seal itself because he had returned it to Turkmenistan by the first half of ~~November~~ October, 2000. It is now kept in a vault there.

John Noble Wilford, the same  
 H is front page article about  
 the ancient world

My e-mail of November 9, 2000 to Fred lists all the scripts from which, as of that date, I thought the script of the Anan seal inscription did not derive. More or less, I still stick to that list. I excluded Chinese because of the early date (2300 BCE) of the Anan seal. At that time, China had only isolated pot marks, not a fully developed script with connected writing. Nor did it have stamp seals at that time.

May 5, 2000  
 was present at the conference  
 to the attention of the entire world

As to which script(s) the Anan seal graphs <sup>have</sup> derived from, I am unwilling to say until the publication of my multi-volume monograph on the origins of the Chinese script that I began to write in 1987.

My letter of 5/21/00 yielded no useful responses

Fred approached me in early November (or late October) 2000 with the idea of holding a mini-symposium in Spring, 2000 about the Anan seal. It never happened. He ended up presenting the seal at my conference on "Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World," held at

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VXII/00

Dear Fred,

Your jet signet from Aram is very exciting and potentially of enormous consequences.

You drew the inscription this way for me:



But my recollection is that the bottom right corner is actually broken off like this



This is crucial. ~~carefully~~ carefully to see

Please check again whether I am right  
Best,  
V. \_\_\_\_\_

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5/XI/00

Dear Colleague,

Recently, an archeologist showed me a seal/signet with the following inscription



his way of drawing it



my way of drawing it

broken off

am not. but

exactly where the <sup>met</sup> date. All that  
found nor. Say is that it is from somewhere in  
Central Asia and dates to before  
1000 B.C.E.

think that I

achieved a partial decipherment and have an  
idea of related writing systems. Some things  
puzzle me, however, such as the vertical line  
at the left.

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What do you think of this piece?  
Any meaningful contributions toward a full  
decipherment and identification of linkages  
other known scripts will be acknowledged  
my published findings

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Sincerely yours,  
Victor H. Mair  
Victor H. Mair  
Professor

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**Subject:the inscription**

**Date:** Thu, 9 Nov 2000 19:24:08 -0500 (EST)

**From:** [vmair@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:vmair@sas.upenn.edu) (Victor Mair)

**To:** [hiebert@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:hiebert@sas.upenn.edu) (Fredrik T. Hiebert)

**CC:** [vmair@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:vmair@sas.upenn.edu) (Victor Mair)

Hi Fred,

Either because of the date or the form of the letters, mostly the latter, I have determined that your Anau inscription is not:

- proto-Elamite
- Egyptian
- cuneiform
- Harappan (proto-Indian)
- Sinaitic
- Linear A or B
- South Semitic
- North or Northwest Semitic
- Iberian, Punic
- Chinese
- Phoenician
- Ugaritic
- Cretan
- Old European
- Runic
- Aramaic
- Hittite
- African

As to what script(s) the Anau inscription IS related, by a process of elimination, I have narrowed it down to a particular group that often escapes the attention of researchers. Furthermore, this is a group of scripts that, after working on the evolution of writing for about 20 years, I would have expected to be pertinent for any evidence of writing at Anau. Before proceeding further, however, I need to know how (and when) you plan to make any detailed information I might supply you available to the scholarly world.

In any event, to do a thorough job on this inscription, I'd need to spend at least another month (while I'm doing lots of other things, of course).

Victor

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Cleuziou, Serge, Gherardo Gnoli, Christian Robin, and Maurizio Tosi. "Cachets inscrits de la fin du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. notre ère à Ras' al-Junayz, Sultanat d'Oman." *Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres, Comptes Rendus* (April-June, 1994), 453-468. On pp. 463 ff. may be found a useful survey of the diffusion of writing in the region stretching from Egypt to the Indus Valley circa 2200 BCE

Hebert, Fredrik T. "Bronze Age Central Eurasian Cultures in Their Steppe and Desert Environments." Chapter 5, pp. 51-62 of a work dating to 1999 or later whose title and other bibliographical information are unknown to me. Has an excellent series of <sup>ecological</sup> maps of Central Eurasia from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age. Also includes a very useful bibliography

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"Progress Report: Arvan daps, Turkmenistan, May-June 2000." University of Pennsylvania - IUTAKÉ, Turkmenistan