DOCUMENTS IN MYCENAEAN GREEK - 40 YEARS ON
A STUDY OF MYCENAEAN AND MINOAN INSCRIPTIONS
NOW IN ENGLISH COLLECTIONS

GARETH OWENS / HERAKLION

i) NINE LINEAR B TABLETS FROM KNOSSOS NOW IN ENGLISH COLLECTIONS

AN INTRODUCTION TO LINEAR B*

In 1894 Arthur Evans visited Crete for the first time in his search for inscriptions of the Bronze Age civilization of the Aegean. In 1900 he commenced excavations at Knossos, discovering, among many important finds, the Linear B archive, which in 1952 Michael Ventris deciphered as recording Mycenaen Greek. The last four decades have seen much work dedicated to studying the c.3000 Linear B documents of Mycenaen Knossos and in 1984 some c.3000 fragments of Linear B tablets were re-discovered in Heraklion Archaeological Museum and a JOINS research programme commenced. In 1989 the 5th Edition of the Knossos Tablets in

* I would like to express my gratitude to the British School at Athens, the Hellenic Society and the Institute of Classical Studies for their assistance in carrying out a study of Minoan and Mycenaen inscriptions in English Collections during 1991-92 while I held a post as Lecturer in Linear B at the ICS. This article is intended as an introduction to Linear B for the interested student of the Ancient World who wishes to avail themselves of the opportunity to visit the Museums concerned and for that reason a general bibliography is given. I would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance in the UK — Dra. J. Chadwick and J.T. Killen (Cambridge), Dr. C. Mee (Liverpool), Prof. J.N. Coldstream (London), Dr. J. Prag (Manchester), Ann Brown (Oxford), and Kalliope Nikolidaki-Owens for her constant support while travelling the UK looking for Linear B tablets! This work is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Arthur Evans, Michael Ventris and James Hooker.
Transliteration was published and in 1990 the second volume of the COMIK corpus was also published. The Knossos Linear B archive can now be studied more satisfactorily than hitherto possible.

Here are presented 9 Linear B tablets from Knossos now in English Collections. There are approximately 40 Linear B tablets in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford, which were given to Evans by the Cretan State prior to union with Greece in 1913 and the antiquity laws which came into effect, in an attempt to protect the heritage of the country. The 9 Linear B tablets presented and discussed here are the only Linear B tablets from Knossos not in either Heraklion Museum or the Ashmolean Museum. They have been re-studied as part of the ongoing JOINS programme and are here presented as examples of Mycenaean administrative documents from the Palace of Knossos.

The 9 tablets to be discussed are:

Fp 13 — BRITISH MUSEUM LONDON
Dl 1171 — BRITISH MUSEUM LONDON
Dl 8216 — BRITISH MUSEUM LONDON
Dl 8217 — BRITISH MUSEUM LONDON
Ga 676 — FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM CAMBRIDGE
Xf 8835 — PRIVATE COLLECTION CAMBRIDGE

1 See the general bibliography for details, particularly J.T. Hooker "Linear B: An Introduction" (1980). In addition see G. Owens "A Linear B Tablet at University College London" BICS 37 (1990) p.95-98 and J.L. Melena, G. Owens and M. Serrano "55 Raccords de Fragments dans les Tablettes de Cnossos" Minos 25-26 (1990-91) p.413-417 for the latest report on the JOINS programme. So far over 1500 joins have been achieved between the tablets and fragments of the Knossos archive and research continues. KTS is the latest transliteration of the Knossos Linear B archive, 33 years after E.L. Bennett, M. Ventris and J. Chadwick "The Knossos Tablets" KTI BICS Supplement 2 (1956). I am grateful to Dr. J. Chadwick of the Cambridge Mycenaean Epigraphy Group, Professor J.L. Melena of the University of the Basque Country and Secretary-General of the "Comite International Permanent des Etudes Myceniennes", and "Comite International Permanent des Etudes Myceniennes", and Drs. Ch. Kritzas and A. Karetso, previous and present, Directors of Heraklion Museum, for permission to work on the JOINS programme.
Dv 8836 — LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
D 8333 — MANCHESTER MUSEUM
Dv 8151 — UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

Each tablet will be presented along with bibliographical references, a 1:1 drawing, a transliteration, translation and discussion of the text. The reader is referred to the bibliography for abbreviations used.

KNOSSOS Fp 13 (BM.GR.1910.4-23.1) FIG. 1


.1 ra-pa-to ‘me-no’, *47-ku-to-de OLE v 1 pi-pi-tu-na v 1
.2 au-ri-mo-de OLE v 4 pa-si-te-o-i s 1 qe-ra-si-ja s 1
.3 a-ne-mo-i-je-re OLE 1 u-ta-no, ‘a-ne-mo-i-je-re-ja’ s 1 v 3
   .1 ra- over erasure
   .2 pa- over erasure
   .3 OLE 1 to end over erasure

"In the month of Lapathos, to 47-ku-to 2 litres of olive -oil, to Pipituna 2 litres, to Aurimos 8 litres of olive-oil, to all the gods 12 litres, to qe-ra-si-ja 12 litres, to the priestess of the winds 36 litres of oil, to the priestess of the winds at u-ta-no 16 litres."

There are a number of points of interest on this complete tablet which was omitted from KT5. The month ra-pa-to Lapathos is
attested on an inscription from Arcadia. The sign *47 can now be identified as dwi, thus identifying the destination of the olive-oil as dwi-ku-to-de2. It is of note that the ideogram denoting olive-oil is repeated only at the start of each line but is understood before each entry. Pipituna would appear to be a divinity with a name similar in formation to Diktunna, suggesting a Minoan origin. The reference to pa-si-te-o-i is to all the gods, whatever that may have meant in the 14th Century B.C. qe-ra-si-ja has been identified by Ventris and Chadwick as augur but by Hooker possibly as Huntress. The reference to priestess of the winds calls to mind the religious area of Anemospelia on the slopes of Mount Iouktas above the Palace of Knossos. This phrase implies the existence of a cult centred on the forces of wild nature. A plaster-cast copy of this tablet was made and is now in the scientific study collection of Heraklion Archaeological Museum.

KNOSOS Dd 1171 (BM.GR.1910.4-23.2) FIG.2

KT5 p.87 and COMIK II p.49.

A we-we-si-jo-jo OVISm 56 OVISf 42
B a-wo-to-jo / pa-i-to, pa OVISm 2

“Awotios of Werewesios at Phaistos: 56 Rams, 42 Ewes and 2 ‘old’ Rams”

This complete inscription describes the sheep recorded under the name of Awotios of Werewesios at Phaistos. The genitive we-we-si-jo-jo frequently occurs on tablets dealing with Phaistos and is probably the name of a land-owner who had shepherds working for

---

him. The sheep recorded add up to the round figure of 100 which probably designates the sheep sent to the Palace of Knossos rather than the composition of a real flock. The reference to ‘old’ Rams is probably to animals not born this year, i.e., not ‘new’. This terminology is still in use today among shepherds of the Mediterranean.

The place-name Phaistos is also attested in Linear A (AB 03-28-05) on two tablets from Hagia Triada c.1450 B.C. HT 97a.3 and HT 120.6. Thus this toponym is Minoan in origin and pre-Greek. If there is any connection with Hephaistos then this has important consequences for the roots of Classical religion. A plaster-cast copy of this tablet was made and is now in the scientific study collection of Heraklion Archaeological Museum.

KT5 p.116 and COMIK IV forthcoming.

A] LANA 3  M [B]18  ki OVISm 25 [“Wool 3+ Units ... 18 and 25 ki Rams”

Little can be said about this fragment which has not yet been found to join with other sheep tablets. It records quantities of wool and references to ‘ki’ sheep, a scribal abbreviation whose meaning unfortunately eludes comprehension at present. The numerals employed in Linear B were a short vertical stroke for units, a short horizontal stroke for tens and circles for hundreds in a decimal accounting system.

---

3 For a detailed discussion of sheep and their products see J.T. Killen (1964).
AN INTRODUCTION TO LINEAR B

KNOSSOS DI 8217 (BM.GR.1947.9-26.52) FIG.4

KT5 p.116 and COMIK IV forthcoming.

A ]6 [ B ]1 M 1 [ A Trace of sign at left, possibly }LANA
"... 6 ... 1 ... 1 Unit ...

This fragment too records little more than numerals and a unit of measure. It presumably refers to records of sheep and their products which played an important role in the economy of Mycenaean Crete. It has not been possible to acquire plaster-cast copies of these two fragments of tablets in the British Museum.

KNOSSOS Ga 676 (FITZ) FIG.5

KT5 p.206 and COMIK I p.255

.a ko-ri-ja-do-no
.b tu-wi-no-no / ku-pi-ri-jo AROM 6
"Twinon: Cypriot Coriander 6 Units"

This complete table begins with a man's name in the genitive, indicating that the spices are registered under his name, which may be an early form of Sinon. The commodity in question is coriander
which is additionally recorded as Cypriot in origin. A plaster-cast copy of this tablet was made and is now in the scientific study collection of Heraklion Archaeological Museum.

\[ \text{KNOSSOS XI 8835 (PRIV) FIG.6} \]


\[ \text{\*22-je-mi[}\]

\[ \text{inf.mt.} \]

\[ \text{\*22-je-mi..."} \]

This tablet is held in the study room of the Mycenaean Epigraphy Group of Cambridge\(^4\). There is no secure interpretation of the sign-group but the position of the fragment from a tablet and the size of the signs may suggest that a personal name is likely. A sound value of \( \text{pi2} \) for sign \(*22\), which only occurs on Crete but in both Linear A and B, has now been suggested\(^5\). Unfortunately it has not been possible to acquire a plaster-cast copy of this fragment of a Linear B tablet in Cambridge.

\(^4\) I am grateful to both members of the Mycenaean Epigraphy Group for their support during the teaching and studying of Linear B at the Institute of Classical Studies 1991-92.

\(^5\) The syllabic value \( \text{pi2} \), i.e. \( \text{phi or bi} \) for \(*22\) was put forward by J.L. Melena in “On Untransliterated Syllabograms *56 and *22”. Tractata Mycenaea (1987), 203-232.
This tablet in the Liverpool University Archaeological Museum was bequeathed by R.W. Hutchinson who had been lecturer in Classical Archaeology at Liverpool University from 1948-49 and Knossos Curator from 1934-47. The tablet was written by scribe 117 who seems to have been the most industrious at Knossos. It records 78 Rams and 20[] Ewes. This entry for the Ewes is incomplete and was probably 22 when written, giving a total of 100 as customarily found on these sheep tablets at Knossos. In all probability jno-to can be restored as qa-na-no-to a place name known from other sheep tablets. There does not appear to be the name of a shepherd to go with these sheep which may imply proximity to Knossos. A plaster-cast copy of this tablet was made and has now been placed in the scientific study collection of Heraklion Archaeological Museum by the author.6

6 I am grateful to Mr. Justin Lee, archaeological conservator, and to colleagues at Liverpool, London and Manchester for their assistance in making copies of Linear B tablets held in English collections. These are now in Heraklion Museum, along with those supplied by the Ashmolean, British and Fitzwilliam Museums, and are in the scientific study collection to assist the JOINS research programme. The only one of the 9 tablets in English Collections of which there is unfortunately not a plaster-cast copy in Heraklion Museum is XI 8835 which is currently held in the study-room of the Mycenaean Epigraphy Group at Cambridge.
This incomplete tablet records the toponym da-wo which has been convincingly identified with Haghia Triada near Phaistos. The tablet was bought by Professor Desborough in Athens and given to the Museum on permanent loan by his widow. A plaster-cast copy of this tablet was made and has now been placed in the scientific study collection of Heraklion Archaeological Museum by the author.

7 The identification of da-wo was put forward by J. Bennet, “The Structure of the Linear B Administration at Knossos”, American Journal of Archaeology 89 (1985), 247.
HM Dd 1374 + UCL Dv 8151
.A OVISm 72 OVISf 24
.B ma-ta-u-ro / ri-jo-no pa OVISm 4
“Matauros at Rion: 72 Rams, 24 Ewes and 4 ‘old’ Rams”

This joined and now complete tablet has been discussed at length by the author and only a few observations will be discussed here. The name of the shepherd including the term tauros is of interest on Crete where the bull was so highly regarded. The place name ri-jo-no is a Mycenaean spelling of Rion which has now been identified with the bay of Bali, midway between Knossos and Rethymno, which was the harbour of Ancient Eleftherna in Hellenistic times. The total number of sheep recorded is again 100, as seen on other tablets, including 4 ‘old’ Rams. If the record is of sheep sent to Knossos from Rion, rather than the composition of Matauros’ flock at Rion, then the higher number of Rams to Ewes would make good husbandry sense, as in a real flock 1 Ram is needed to service approximately 50 Ewes, thus allowing excess Rams to be consumed without jeopardizing the regenerative capacity of the flock. A plaster-cast copy of this tablet was made and has now been placed in the scientific study collection of Heraklion Archaeological Museum by the author. Matauros has at long last been re-united with his flock on Crete.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


J. Chadwick — The Decipherment of Linear B (1960).

G. Owens — A Linear B Tablet at University College London, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 37 (1990), 95-98.
