

## Meeting of the Scripts Institute

### Minutes for

Monday, December 1, 2014

**Attendants:** Tom Palaima, Kevin Pluta, Joann Gulizio, JoAnn Hackett, Paula Perlman, Jamie Aprile, Will Bibee, Aren Wilson-Wright, Tiffany Montgomery, Sarah Buchanan, and Geoffrey McElroy

The meeting commenced at 4:00 pm.

The meeting began with a few general announcements. First, Jackie Dibiasie will be presenting her research the following week on the results of her RTI work at the site of Pompeii. Also, the participants were informed that the Scripts Institute will be requesting brief biographies of its members to be published on our website.

Tom Palaima presented his current research related to kingship terms used in the Linear B tablets. He started from the late Ellen Davis's observations in the 1980's about the 'missing ruler' in Minoan and Mycenaean art, i.e., that Minoan and Mycenaean cultures seem to be almost completely lacking in ruler iconography, while ruler iconography is common in Egyptian, Anatolian and Mesopotamian cultures. He noted that even in the Mycenaean Greek Linear B texts, references to the 'king' and to the term 'royal' or 'of the king' (*wa-na-ka-te-ro* and variants) are relatively rare. In 2003 at a conference in Edinburgh, Palaima revisited this idea and most recently he attended a colloquium in honor of Davis (September 2014) where he focused on ruler iconography and offered some speculation on Mycenaean kingship terminology. Two terms for "king" are used in the Linear B corpus – *wanax* and *basileus* – both of which are non-Indo-European in origin. The questions then arise: Where do these terms originate, how did their meanings eventually merge and what do we know about the origins of the ideologies and paraphernalia of power connected with these terms?

Referencing the work of Colin Renfrew in *The Archaeology of Language*, Palaima explained how cultures often borrow terms from each other, including power terminology. In the case of the Aegean, it can be expected that Mycenaeans borrowed terms from the language of the mainland substrate populations and from the Minoan language(s) on Crete. The Mycenaean period was one of long-established cultural and economic and political exchange and during the early phases and even at their apex, the Mycenaeans were not as prominent and prestigious as competing high cultures in Egypt, Anatolia and the Near and Middle East. It follows then that they would want to borrow prestige/power terminology from contemporary cultures.

For example, the term *megaron* refers to an architectural form that began in the Early Helladic period which seems to be derived or borrowed from the substrate population (similar to *labyrinthos* attested in the tablets from Knossos and *asaminthos* ("bathtub") found in the Pylos tablets). It is arguable that this term is non-Indo-European, as suggested by the recent lexicon by Beekes (2010) who studied pre-Greek elements in the Greek language and is skeptical of hypothesized Indo-European origins for many terms in Greek. The Greeks, if they adopted the term along with the form, would naturally have associated with their common adjective for 'big' *me-gas*. See English *woodchuck* from Cree (Algonquian) *otchek* or Ojibwa *otchig*.

Another such term is *skēptron* (translated as "scepter" but literally means "the leaning-on thing"). This is the only term used in Linear B or in later Greek, for that matter, for a staff of power, whereas other cultures often have several terms for such an item, each specialized to a specific aspect of wielding power (e.g., scepter instruments for shepherding, judging, speaking, ensuring fertility, protecting and attacking). This is the one term here that has a clear Indo-European etymology.

Turning to the terms for king, *wanax* has a sufficient number of occurrences in the Linear B corpus (ten times at Pylos, three at Knossos, three at Thebes and several on inscribed stirrup jars in the abbreviated form *wa*). However, the number of attestations is actually quite few in comparison to the term *pharaoh* found in Egyptian documents. Interestingly, *pharaoh* is not used commonly in Egyptian administrative texts, but rather in ceremonial and/or ritual documents. This is similar to the use of *wanax* in Linear B. Susan Lupack in her recent article in the Festschrift to Cynthia Shelmerdine suggests that *wanax* is the title used for the ancestral king, a proposal supported by archaeological evidence demonstrating the importance of ancestors. At Pylos, the king appears in such ceremonial and ritual references. Therefore, arguments that the etymology of *wanax* is military in origin are not supported by the Linear B tablet evidence.

Later Greek use of the term *wanax* is attested partly by its survival on Cyprus where it seems to identify a figure who is a kin to whoever is a *basileus*. This may be the result of the Mycenaeanization of the island of Cyprus, since on the mainland after the collapse of the Late Bronze Age palatial culture the term *basileus* is used to refer to “Big Men,” who rose to power at this time. In contrast, the post-Bronze Age use of the term *wanax*, is used exclusively to refer to Zeus, Agamemnon (the king of kings), and kinsmen or brothers of a king.

The Versailles effect could account for the introduction of these non-Indo-European terms into Mycenaean Greek. In this case, the Mycenaean were influenced either by Crete or another contemporary high culture.

The terms Caesar/tzar/czar can serve as an example. The etymology of the term Caesar is lost in later usage of the terms *tzar* and *czar*, the latter of which was used to link the Third Reich to the Holy Roman Empire.

To cite a Hittite parallel, the term *labarna / tabarna* means “king,” but it is uncertain if this is a personal name or is derived from non-Indo-European Hattic. The Hittite verb *tapar* - “to rule” may be related, so that in later Hittite usage the words were associated much like *megas* and *megaron* in Greek. In the Linear B tablets, the sign *pu<sub>2</sub>* represents a non-Mycenaean phoneme similar to the –b– sound found in *labarna / tabarna*. If this is the case, perhaps, as suggested by Yakubovich, the Hittite *labarna / tabarna* means “ruler” and Mycenaean *da-pu<sub>2</sub>-ri-to* means ‘place of the ruler’. (See the Anatolian place name Labraunda.)

Also in Hittite documents, there is a link between the king, the throne goddess and the weather god. Tischler (1988) states that attempts at determining the etymology of *wanax* are incomprehensible and no decisive conclusions can be found. In Hittite, the term *ḫaššuš* means “king” and is related to *ḫaš* meaning “to beget.” Similarly, *Iphigeneia/Iphiwanassa* as names for the daughters of Agamemnon might be a pre-Greek form and a Greek gloss substitute. This suggests, as with the Hittite, that the king is a source of fertility.

Interestingly, ancient Greek does not use the standard Indo-European term for king *rex/rix* from *\*h<sub>2</sub>reǵ* meaning “to stretch.” Hajnal (1998) proposed a linguistic connection between *wanax* and *lāwāgetās* as a conceptual pair that make up what power is for a Mycenaean king. He offers a new formulation of *lāwāgetās* as a compound developing from *lāwax* (presuming a parallel with *wanax*) by adding the agent suffix *-tās* suffix, which would change *lāwax* to *lāwāg* + *-etās* (‘leader of the male fighting force). *wanax* ( *\*ḷun – h<sub>2</sub>ag – s*) through this parallel would mean “he who brings gain or profit” where the I-E root *ḷen* is interpreted here now as “profit.” Older etymological proposals explained *\*wen – ag – t* as comprised of the Indo-European *wen<sup>x</sup>* meaning “kin, tribe” + *ag* meaning “to lead.”

Beekes, however, proposes that *ak* is pre-Greek suffix. Palaima gave examples that Greek words ending in *-αξ* do not have convincing Indo-European etymologies.

Turning to other power/prestige terms, *megaron* is attested on a Linear B tablet from Midea. It is uncertain if this term is Indo-European in origin or is derived from a substrate term. Linguistically, it can be understood as *\*meg – h<sub>2</sub>r – on*, but it seems that the *ara/aron* suffix may also be non-Indo-European. Similarly, *thronos*, also attested in the Linear B tablets, seems to be a compound of the Indo-European root *\*d<sup>h</sup>er* meaning “to hold, support” with a non-Indo-European ending *–ono*. If this is the case, then the meaning of *thronos* is similar to *skeptron*, an item used to support the power of the king.

Following Palaima’s discussion of these terms, Joann Gulizio noted that the ancestral nature of the king is certainly something supported by archaeological evidence at Pylos, but does not seem to be as strongly supported in textual and archaeological evidence at Knossos and Mycenae. At Knossos, archaeological, iconographical and textual evidence for the ruler at Knossos seems to emphasize more his religious/ritual role, whereas at Mycenae the military power of the king seems more prominent iconographically. However, these differences make sense given the different situations at these sites. Mycenae is located in close proximity to a number of other competing Mycenaean states, so military strength would be something the *wanax* would want to portray. At Knossos, the Greek-speaking elites assumed power over a foreign culture and therefore the *wanax* would want to impress upon the Knossians his divinely-sanctioned right to rule.

Paula Perlman was interested in the idea that *wanax* in later Greek is used for a brother or kinsmen of the *wanax*, especially since a brother can be considered a safeguard for king and often marries the queen following the death of the king. Palaima noted that even the Greek word for brother *ἀδελφός* means “from the same womb.” Perlman also wondered if the notion of the clan was also relevant here, in that two brothers would comprise the kernel of a clan, and perhaps this was connected to the idea of the *βασιλεύς*. Palaima replied that following the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial culture, there would have been a number of competing *βασιλεῖς*, and at this point in time it would be inappropriate to use the term *wanax*. According to a gloss in Harpocration the terms *wanaks* and *wanassa* are used in historical Cyprus to designate the brothers or sons (sisters and daughters?) of the king.

Geoffrey McElroy noted that Ugarit in the 14<sup>th</sup> c. depicts their kings in an Egyptian style. This may be similar to what is happening with the Mycenaeans, where small city-states, like Ugarit, is patterning their notions of kings and kingship after larger, more prestigious kingdoms.

Jamie Aprile mentioned that rulers at this time demonstrated their power by traveling abroad, witnessing other powerful and prestigious culture, and displaying their power to do so by bringing back and displaying luxury goods from foreign places.

Following the discussion, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Scripts Institute would take place in January. Joann Gulizio will be presenting her research on the Linear B terms *di-u/wi-ja* and *po-si-da-e-ja*, as examples of Indo-European female consorts.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Minutes were taken by Joann Gulizio.