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INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

1. Band

Inhaltsverzeichnis .................................................. V
Vorwort (THOMAS KRISCH für die Herausgeber) ......................... XI
Brief von PETER HANDKE (Faksimile) ................................ XIX
Laudatio von LUTZ HOCHSTAATE ................................ XXI
Schriftenverzeichnis (erstellt von THOMAS KRISCH) .................. XXIII

Aufsätze

I. Indogermanistik

ALFRED BAMMESBERGER: Zur Vorgeschichte von deutsch Bach ................... 17
BERNHARD FORSSMAN: Homer λ 11 ........................................ 25
JOSÉ LUIS GARCÍA RAMÓN: Zum Paradigma von idg. *nex-: homerisch ἄπεινόσσοικο, kausat. ἄπονοσσοῖς αιν als Aoriste von (*ένεγμαι und die Entstehung des Präls. ναίσα) .................................................. 33
JOST GIPPERT: Indo-European Word Order in Main and Subordinate Clauses in a Diachronic Perspective ........................................ 48
ERIC P. HAMP: Latin solidus, solium, cônsul ............................... 69
HEINRICH HETTRICH: Zu Konstruktion und Bedeutung der Wurzel ¹man im Rgveda ................................................................. 75
MICHAEL JANDA: Annäherung an βασιλεὺς ..................................... 84
CHRISTINA KATSIKADELI: Die rächekische Uṣas und die Zeit .................. 95
THOMAS KRISCH: Some aspects of word order and sentence type: From Indo-European to New High German ........................................... 106
ROSEMARIE LÜHR: Sprechaktbegründungen im Altindischen .......... 130
MICHAEL MEIER-BRÜGGER: Zu griechisch ἔρημος .......................... 145
PETER-ARNOLD MUMM: Zur Funktion des homerischen Augments .................. 148
STEFAN NIEDERREITER: Vier Problemwörter im Rg-Veda .................. 159
NORBERT OETTINGER: Griechisch γυνή „Frau“ und der Ursprung des „i“-Kollektivums“ .......................................................... 164

— V —
II. Mykenologie

SIGRID DEGER-JALKOTZY: KE-KE-ME-NA KO-TO-NA ........................................ 221
IVO HAJNAL: e-ke-qe oder e-ke? – Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit in
den mykenischen Palastarchiven ....................................................... 233
STEFAN HILLER: LB-Texte im Kontext. Anmerkungen zur La-Serie .................. 252

III. Die klassischen Sprachen und Kulturen und ihre Fortsetzer


MATDAZ BABIC: Dionysius von Halikarnassos und sein Werk De compositione verborum als eine Quelle für die Wortstellungsforschung .................................................. 281

LUZ CONTI: Überblick über die semantischen und syntaktischen Varianten der Kausalätze im Altgriechischen ............................................... 288
JOACHIM DALFEN: „Ordentlich sein“ und „das Eigene tun“. Platons philosophischer Umgang mit der Alltagssprache ..................................... 296

GABESELL DRACHMAN & ANGELIKI MALIKOUTI-DRACHMAN: The Present stem in Greek (siehe unter V.)

BERNHARD FORSSMAN: Homer λ 11 (siehe unter I.)

ERIC P. HAMP: Latin solidus, solium, consul (siehe unter I.)

SIEGFRIED JÄKEL: Der Dyskolos des Menander als Ausblick auf neue
semantische Strukturen in der hellenistischen Dichtung ........................................ 308

MICHAEL JANDA: Annäherungen an βασιλεύω (siehe unter I.)

BIRGIT JOKESCH: Das Fortleben der mit ad-, in- und ex-präfigierten
lateinischen sco-Verben in der portugiesischen Sprache ........................................ 317

BERNHARD KYTZLER: „WANDERER, KOMMST DU...“ Ein Übersetzungsvergleich .................................................. 324

THOMAS LINDNER: Die Substitution von germanisch /w/ durch proto-
romanisch /g/ aus phonologischer Sicht .................................................. 333

MICHAEL MEIER-BRÜGGER: Zu griechisch άπρωτο (siehe unter I.)

— VI —

PETER-ARNOLD MUMM: Zur Funktion des homerischen Augments (siehe unter I.)

RENATO ONIGA: L'area alpina centro-orientale negli storici romani ........... 353

GERHARD PERNL: Nachlese zu Horaz (carm. 3,30 und 4,7) ......................... 385

MARTIN PETERS: Zur Herkunft des griechischen -iè-Aoristes (siehe unter I.)

GEORG PFLIGERSDORFFER: Mit einem Rechtsgelehrten 1838 in Griechenland ............................................................... 393

INGO REIFFENSTEIN: Romanische Orts- und Flurnamen im Salzburger
Flachgau (siehe unter IV.)

FRANZ RAINER: L'origine dei nomi di strumenti italiani in -tore ................... 399

RÖDGER SCHMITT: Zu einigen Namen auf -menes und zur volksmy-
logischen Umdeutung iranischer Namen in griechischer Überliefe-
run (siehe unter IV.)

WOLFGANG SPEYER: Gotheit und Mensch, die Eltern des Kunstwerkes.
Zu einer abendländischen Offenbarungsvorstellung ....................................... 425

IV. Wortgeschichte und Namenkunde

ALFRED BAMMESBERGER: Zur Vorgeschichte von deutsch *Bach (s. unter I.)

MICHAEL CROMBACH: Aphrodit und Viagra® – Aspekte einer Gelehr-
tenetymologie .................................................................................. 439

FRITZ FRHR. LOCHNER VON HÜTTENBACH: Die Personennamengebung
in der deutschen Spieloper ................................................................... 448

WOLFGANG POCKL: Zur Wortgeschichte von übersehen ................................ 455

HEINZ DIETER POHL: Sprache und Politik, gezeigt am Glottonym Win-
disch (siehe unter VI.)

INGO REIFFENSTEIN: Romanische Orts- und Flurnamen im Salzburger
Flachgau .............................................................................................. 461


RÖDGER SCHMITT: Zu einigen Namen auf -menes und zur volksmy-
logischen Umdeutung iranischer Namen in griechischer Überliefe-
rung ................................................................................................. 478

— VII —
2. Band

Inhaltsverzeichnis.......................................................................... V

Aufsätze

V. Linguistik

WERNER ABRAHAM: Intensität und Diminutivität der Reduktionsmorphologie in Pidgin- und Kreolsprachen: janusgesichtige Ikonizität .... 493
GABRIEL DRACHMAN & ANGELIKI MALIKOUTI-DRACHMAN: The Present stem in Greek .......................................................... 505
WOLFGANG U. DRESSLER: Hypercharacterisation and Productivity in Inflationary Morphology ......................................................... 515
HANS GOEBL: Eine Glosse zu Isoglosse ........................................... 525
HUBERT HAIDER: In Parenthese .................................................... 538
THOMAS KRISCH: Some aspects of word order and sentence type: From Indo-European to New High German (siehe unter I.)
THOMAS KRISCH: Kann Musik sprachliche Inhalte ausdrücken? Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Musik und Sprache (siehe unter VIII.)
HELENA KURZOVÁ: Von der Derivation zur Flexion ........................................... 546
THOMAS LINDNER: Die Substitution von germanisch /w/ durch proto-romanisch /r/ aus phonologischer Sicht (siehe unter III.)
FRITZ SCHWEIGER: Remarks on the reconstruction of pronominal suffixes in Victorian morphology ........................................ 559
MANFRED B. SELNIER: Aspekte der Transliteration von Fremdnamen in die chinesische und japanische Sprache und Schrift: eine Einführung. Oder: Oswald Panagl u.a. auf Chinesisch und Japanisch ..... 569

VI. Sprache und Politik

EWALD EHTREIBER: Zum Zeitbegriff in den Grundsatzprogrammen österreichischer Parteien ................................................... 597
WOLFGANG MANTL: Moralsiche und sprachliche Anstrengung in der Politik ..................................................................................... 611
HEINZ DIETER POHL: Sprache und Politik, gezeigt am Glottonym Windisch .................................................. 625

MANFRIED WELAN: Politik, Recht, Sprache – eine Collage .......................... 637
RUTH WODAK: Sprache und Politik: Einige Grenzen diskursanalytischer Vorgangsweisen .............................................................. 648

VII. Literatur und Kultur

GABRIELE BLAICKNER-HOHENWART: Macbeth – MacBest – make it better? .......................... 661
PETER CSOBÁDI: Imre Madách: Die Tragödie des Menschen. Allegorisches Welttheater mit Dauer-Aktualität ............................................. 674
ERNST HANISCH: Der Liebhaber. Liebe und Sexualität im Fin de Siècle ................... 685
GUARDIN HELD: Mein hochgelahrter, tiefstudierter Herr... oder: Bemerkungen zum Spiel mit der Höflichkeit in Nestroy Bühnenwelt ............ 702
LECH KOLAGO und KATARZYNA GRZYWA: „Jenseits des Wassers aber stand ein schönes, hellerleuchtetes Schloß, woraus eine lustige Musik erschalle von Pauken und Trompeten“. Zu Rolle und Funktion der Musikinstrumente in den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm .......................................................... 720
WOLFGANG MEID: Aus der Lektüre von Ferenc Mohr ........................................ 735
MARTIN PETERS: Auch ein Opernlibrettist: der Poet der Poeten Pierre Delanoë (siehe unter VIII.)
GERHARD SCHMIDT: ALL THE WORLD’S BUT SIGNS. Eine semiotische Studie zum theatrum mundi .................................................. 757
JOSEF THONHAUSER: „Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa“ (und anderswo) – und das heißt Standards ............................................................... 770

VIII. Musik, Dichtung und Kunst

THOMAS KRISCH: Arrangement o-sa-wa-do e-pi a-ma-te ke-ne-il-ri jo (= „A happy birthday...“) für 2 Trp., 2 Pos. und eine Tuba .................. 786
PETER DUSEK: „Mythos Primadonna“ – Anmerkungen zur „kreativen Schöpferkraft“ der singenden OperninterpretInnen am Beispiel von Leonie Rysanek .......................................................... 787
DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU: Wagners Schusterpoet ................................. 799
CHRISTIAN MARTIN FUCHS: LANGE NICHTS GELESEN .................................. 803
WOLFGANG GRATER: Der ewige Augenblick. Zeiterfahrung in Sprachtexten und Sprachmusik Gerhard Rühms ............................................. 804
GERHARD GRUBER: Zum Thema „Musik als Sprache“ .................................. 815
JOACHIM HERZ: Die innovative Werkreue. Über Regietheater und Musiktheater ............................................................... 826
THEO HIRSBRUNNER: Musik als rhythmisierte Zeit und Farbe (Debussy – Dukas – Bartók – Messiaen) ...................................................... 839
GOTTFRIED FRANZ KASPEREK: Wissenschaft mit heißem Herzen. Zum 65. Geburtstag von Prof. Oswald Panagl ........................................ 850
THOMAS KRISCH: Kann Musik sprachliche Inhalte ausdrücken? Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Musik und Sprache ........................................ 855
FRITZ FREIR. LOCHNER VON HÜTENBACH: Die Personennamengebung in der deutschen Spieloper (siehe unter IV)
THOMAS LINDNER: Parodieverfahren sowie musikalische Grammatik, Stilistik und Rhetorik in der Primo-Ottocento-Oper am Beispiel von Rossinis Eduardo e Cristina (Venedig 1819) .................................................. 880
SIEGFRIED MAUSER: Etymologie und Tiefenmusikologie. Ein methodisch-interdisziplinärer Zwischenspruch .................................................. 891
MARTIN PETERS: Auch ein Opernbrettist: der Poet der Poeten Pierre Delanoë .......................................................... 918
ERNST SIGOT: aqua, salubris – HEILWASSER & ein poetisches Postskriptum: fontanallia,fragmente (C. W. Bauer) ........................................ 929
CHRISTOPH WAGNER-TRENKWITZ: „Alle Arten von Mut“. Betrachtungen zur Erotik der Stimme ......................................................... 939

Verzeichnis der Autorinnen und Autoren (Kurzbiographien) ........................................................ ......................... 949
II. Mykenologie
Syntax and Context as Tools for Interpreting Mycenaean Texts and Scribal Processes: Un 718, Ta 709 and K(1) 740

THOMAS G. PALAIMA, Austin, TX

Oswald Panagl’s work with the Linear B tablets has set a high standard for our work at interpreting Mycenaean texts, especially our attempts at understanding the details of how the texts communicated their meaning and how Mycenaean tablet-writers used the tools available in the Linear B script to convey essential information precisely and unambiguously to their target-audiences. His accomplishments are all the more remarkable since there are considerable obstacles to our understanding the pragmatics of any Mycenaean text.

In normal approaches to discourse analysis, one can focus on the education, knowledge and empirically deduced habitual practices of the agent of communication, what can be understood of the actions said agent took on a particular occasion of discourse, and what can be deduced of said agent’s specific and general intentions. Then one can place this information in a larger context by studying the interaction between the agent and the recipient of a message within

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1 I was privileged to be a colleague of Oswald Panagl at the University of Salzburg in 1992–93 and then to see firsthand the keenness and precision of his mind at work. His article on text linguistics and Linear B, “Textual Features in the Linear B Texts,” Chaumont Colloquium, p. 313–321, was an inspiration to me as a graduate student as I began studying and trying to identify the work of individual Mycenaean scribes, whom I prefer here to call ‘tablet-writers’ in order to avoid any preconceptions about their status or functions, either imported from other cultures or from Mycenaological discussions of how to view Linear B ‘scribes’ and the purpose of their surviving texts. Prof. Panagl should not be held responsible in any way for shortcomings in how I have selectively used or missed his methods in this paper.

One of his most recent articles with his long-time archaeological collaborator Stefan Hilger, S. Hilger and O. Panagl, “Ein mykenologisches Denungsproblem aus philologischer und archäologischer Sicht,” Graeco-Latina Brunensia 6–7 (2001–2002), p. 115–120, demonstrates that close attention to word order and ‘scribal’ intention still yields significant results for our understanding of the Mycenaeans and how they lived their daily lives.


DMic: F. Aura Jorro ed., Diccionario Micénico, vols. 1 and 2 (Madrid 1985 and 1993);

Doc2: M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, Documents in Mycenaean Greek, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1973);


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a still larger framework of semiotic systems (linguistic, social and cultural) that come into play during the discourse process.

Most, if not all, of these factors are imperfectly understood or difficult to retrieve when we are interpreting anonymous records written in an over-three-thousand-year-old script. Further difficulties are created by the fact that the Linear B records were intended for use within a closed bureaucratic system of record-keeping, itself devised and operated to keep track of economic information about materials and objects, inanimate and animate (including human beings), involved in the social, political, religious and economic activities of Mycenaean palatial territories.

With that proviso firmly in mind, I would like here to take up several problems raised by three Linear B tablets where Oswald Panagl’s methods help us to arrive at a clearer understanding of what the writers of the Linear tablets intended their texts to mean. In the case of tablet PY Un 718, my discussion will bear upon text linguistic features of the kind treated by Prof. Panagl in his classic article on the subject wherein he discusses the same tablet in regard to other features. With regard to PY Ta 709 and KN K(1) 740 the end result will also further our understanding of the material realta in the manner of Prof. Panagl’s long and fruitful collaboration with his colleague Stefan HilGER.

Part 1: PY Un 718 and Related Matters

Un 718 by Hand 24 is an interesting text from the perspective of its internal syntax. Early in the history of Mycenology per se, the peculiar use of lexical items and ideograms or logograms on Un 718 figured in discussions of Mycenaean ‘double writing’, i.e., the distinctive way in which Mycenaean tablet-writers used those signs that either directly identified objects (ideograms) or the words that denoted objects (logograms) in conjunction with or divorced from phonetically spelled lexical items within the global message of a given tablet.

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3 Supra note 1, p. 316–7.
mo to-so and verb do-se, one or the other of which is omitted from subsequent ‘paragraph headings’ (lines 7, 9, and 11). We can go still further in exploring such ellipses. All four ‘paragraph headings’ understand the probable location specifier (sa-ra-pe-da) and the ultimate divine recipient (po-se-da-o-ni) from the tablet-heading phrase in line 1 which reads: “at sa-ra-pe-da for Poseidon contributions” (do-so-mo is interpreted as a kind of rubric nominative plural here in line 1 in anticipation of the four entries listed below on this papyrus-shaped tablet). It is clear from the use of o-da-a2 in lines 7 and 11 with and only with the subject donors (in line 7 da-mo, in line 11 wo-ro-ki-jo-ne-jo ka-ma) that Hand 24 is here subordinating the da-mo entry to the o-ke-ra-wo entry and the wo-ro-ki-jo-ne-jo ka-ma entry to the ra-wa-ke-ta entry. This explains why in line 9 he feels the need to reinsert, or, as it were, de-omit, the verbal form do-se. This element of meaning is raised in explanatory value by the greater position of line 9 as a section header, parallel to lines 2–3, within the overall structural syntax of Un 718, which schematically looks something like this, accounting for ellipses:

A at sa-ra-pe-da for Poseidon donations
A1 to the sheep-flayers a donation of so much
A14 and thus
A15 the dimos
A2 and so much
A26 the lâwagâ(r)âdis will give
A3 and thus
A33 the wo-ro-ki-jo-ne-jo ka-ma

Hand 24 has already departed, for the sake of emphasis, from the standard word order in Mycenaean Greek accounting tablets: S(subject)O(object)V(erb) “with free postposition of heavy and clause arguments of the verb.” Here the direct objects (do-so-mo in line 7 and to-so-de in line 9) are moved forward into the most prominent position in Greek clauses. This is also most likely the explanation for the emphatic placement of the indirect object o-wi-de-ta-i in line 2. It is moved all the way forward, even in front of the direct object do-so-mo and in parallel with the like positioning of po-se-da-o-ni in front of do-so-mo in line 1.

The alternative explanation of trying to connect o-wi-de-ta-i with the overall tablet header phrase and making it part of the syntactical unit of line 1 would be harsh, even though postenominal is another way of marking emphasis. It should be noted, however, that the size and shape of the tablet and of the Linear B characters written upon it are such that each full line of text completely fills

--- 270 ---
the horizontal space of a tablet line, and on lines .11 and .12 there is crowding at the end of the lines. It is therefore remotely possible, simply in terms of the epigraphical layout of writing on the tablet, that we should shift the information to the sheep-flayers to the end of sense-unit A in our schematic.

Of equal interest, however, is to explore why this tablet-writer felt the need to represent certain of the commodities listed on the tablets both lexically and by means of ideograms or logograms. Such an exploration is relevant both to the pragmatics and syntax of the text and to the question of the degree to which the signs that stand for objects function, at this stage of their use, ideographically or logographically. It will also affect our reading of the text.

In specific, it is remarkable that Hand 24 here feels the need, with items that he seems to consider to be not among the standard and basic repertoire of object signs, first to write phonetically the word-unit that denotes the item and then to give, in all but one of the cases where said items occur for the first time on this tablet, its ideographic or logographic equivalent. When the item recurs, as in the case of the sequence tu-ro₂, TURO₂, which appears for the first time in line .4, the subsequent entries give only the ideogram or logogram, i.e., just TURO₂ in lines .8 and .12.

GRA (three times), VIN (four times), BOSM (one time) and OVISM (two times) are without any preceding lexical designation. Those non-lexically designated items are mostly front-loaded in their sections, as if standard and expected. Thus it would seem that the tablet-writer is not writing the lexical designations corresponding to the other ideograms or logograms because he feels that the items are part of the lexical syntax of the introductory phrases for each paragraph, where they would functionally serve as accusative objects, in line .3 in apposition to do-so-mo to-so in line .2; in lines .10 and .11 in apposition to to-so-de in line .9; and in lines .7, .8 and .12 functionally in object position as left open by o-da-o₂ in lines .7 and .11.

In two cases, the lexical entry precedes an ideogram that might be considered ambiguous. *153 is preceded by ko-wò which is the full lexeme for the surcharged ko that appears in the center of the ideogram and is its acrophonic abbreviation. The word ko-wò meaning "sheepskin or fleece" appears only here. A similar logogram or ideogram without the surcharged ko and therefore treated as a different logogram or ideogram, namely *154, occurs on PY On 300 [*1074 and dubiously on UN 592. Both *153 and *154 are to be contrasted in form and, in the case of *153, in surcharged abbreviation with *152 "oxhide"

8 Panagl (supra n. 1), p. 321, ingeniously explains that in the Pylos Ta series the object position is left open in the heading phrase because the tablet-writer felt that the many items inventoried thereafter functionally occupied this position. Such a sense of connection of the 'logographic' entries to the textual syntax might induce a tablet-writer, like Hand 24, to use the logograms or ideograms lexically or even to devise phonetically based composite ideograms or logograms for the objects being recorded. After all, ideograms or logograms composed of phonetic signs are effectively word-units in another form.

(with its surcharged wi = wi-ri-no vel sim.). There is then some potential ambiguity among these object-signs for 'hides' that the tablet-writer Hand 24 here takes pains to clarify in connection with his first use of sign *153 on the tablet.

However, the same desire for disambiguation can hardly apply to two other ideograms or logograms that are treated in much the same way on UN 718: TURO₂ and AREPA. AREPA occurs only once on UN 718, so we do not know whether Hand 24 would have omitted the lexeme if he had had to list 'aromating oil' again. However, two other scribes (Hand 6 and Hand 2) use the same ideogram or logogram (AREPA) without any lexical identification at all. It is obviously part of the repertory of signs used by the tablet-writers at Pylos and its phonetic elements would be difficult to misinterpret either in reading the sign or reconstructing the word it represents.

Still Hand 24 cannot be accused of being pedanticallyussy, because the master scribe at the site of Pylos, Hand 1, also writes an entry of 'cheese' on PY Un 1185 lexically and ideographically or logographically, i.e., with tu-ro₂ and TURO₂ in tandem. This would seem to rule out any argument that we are dealing here on UN 718 with an original 'coining' of a phonetically composed ideogram or logogram by Hand 24. Nonetheless, someone had to coin such ideograms or logograms for the first time, and this may indicate how tablet-writers would have done it. Again, however, as with sign *153, Hand 24 feels confident that, once the ideogram or logogram is defined lexically once, it can be understood alone in subsequent entries.

The use of a lexical unit preceding the entry FAR in line .10 might be of a different nature. me-re-ru-ro here might designate some modification of the FAR ideogram, rather than define it. When FAR occurs on Pylos texts, and also at Knossos, it is in relatively modest quantities and in contrast to other grains like HORD. On UN 47.4 it might have been erased and replaced by HORD in a large quantity. It is not clear there whether the tablet-writer first mistook one grain for another or some altered condition of that grain for the standard condition. This ambiguity is in fact well symbolized by the Latin transcription of the ideogram or logogram as FAR, whether we now read this as far 'spelt' or as far (ina) 'flour' or 'grain meal.' Both possibilities remain open, especially because on UN 47 an original entry of FAR may have been erased and replaced by HORD.¹⁰

We might, however, be able to use an argument from silence for a slight preference for interpreting FAR as FAR (INA) 'flour' or 'grain meal' by noting that FAR does not occur on the large grain harvest texts of the F(2) series at Knossos, where, of course, an ideogram or logogram with the meaning of 'processed grain' would be out of place. Where FAR occurs at Knossos, as in the F series, it is in smaller quantities than other grains and often in conjunction with

--- 273 ---

--- 272 ---
WIN, making one wonder whether it isn’t ‘grain meal’ meant for consumption with wine. Likewise on Un 47, where FAR may have been erased, the immediately preceding preserved entry is VIN. Thus the confusion may have been connected with sequential order of entries (FAR, as we have said, often being associated with VIN) and not with any true alternation between FAR and HORD.

Most peculiar of all may be the way Hand 24 handles the entries dealing with honey. The Knossos Gg tablets (and the single Gg tablet from Khania) show us how allocations of honey, mainly to deities, were handled by several Cretan tablet-writers. The quantities of honey are indicated by numbers of amphorae *209VAS* or *209VAS+A* in all cases, with only one possible exception: Gg(1) 7369 by Hand 103 which, according to the reading in CoMIK III, contains the following entry in line 2: me-ri Si. The drawing and photo in CoMIK III make the reading of ‘S’ plausible, but not certain. However, given that other texts by the same tablet-writer and by other tablet-writers measure honey by *209VAS*, it is also possible that the remnants of the last hastily and cursorily drawn sign that concludes the bottom line of preserved text is a partial *209VAS* instead of an ‘S’.

In any case, tablet-writers 103, 135, 140 and 220 do one of three things: (1) write out the word ‘honey’ me-ri in front of or raised up alongside *209VAS*; (2) write the composite phonetic logogram ME+RI before or after *209VAS*, even raising it above line; (3) write ME+RI before *209VAS+A*. Note that in all cases the lexical unit or the composite phonetic ideogram or logogram is in the nominative case and the unit of measurement is what we understand, given the phonetic sign a surcharged in most cases, to be the vase logogram or ideogram for ‘amphora’, obviously manufactured in some standard size for such allocations.

In contrast, on Un 718.5, Hand 24 has written the genitive form of the word-unit for ‘honey’, eschewing entirely the use here of an ideogram or logogram, and it is followed by a sign for a unit of measure. It appears that he does something similar on lines .12 and .13. Although the lower right corner of tablet Un 718 is damaged, there appears originally to have been space enough to write me-ri-to on line .12, and there are enough traces in the margin line .13 to read the true text11 there as:

| vacat | me-ri-to, v 1. |

If this is correct, then it would seem that Hand 24 did not find it satisfactory to list the quantity V 1 alone on the bottom margin line, where it could easily be overlooked or even accidentally obliterated in the handling of the tablet. He therefore chose in line .13 to repeat from line .12 the lexical unit denoting ‘honey’ in the genitive, followed, as in all other instances of a lexical unit before an ideogram on this tablet, by the word-divider. The large-scale entry at the end of line .12 is not redundant or even unnecessary, since it clearly alerts the latter reader to the fact that there is an entry of ‘honey’ at the end of the text, and thus prevents the quantity entry on line .13 from being overlooked. Another reason for repeating the full entry on line .13 is the close syntactical connection Hand 24 feels between the ‘V’ unit and the genitive of material here.

The only further clue as to why Hand 24 would choose to use a genitive of material or substance, where Knossian tablet-writers opt for a rubric nominative form, is his use of what has long been viewed as a notoriously odd genitive on Er 312.2, 8: to-so-jo pe-ma GRA. On Er 312 the apparent and long controversial disharmony12 between to-so-jo and pe-MA may now in fact be explained by Hand 24’s propensity to use lexical units to define or qualify following ideograms or logograms. Thus syntactically here he would be conceiving of pe-MA as linked with GRA and not with to-so-jo.

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11 Note the proposed correction of the text from both the version given in E. L. Bennett, Jr. and J.-F. Olivier, The Pylas Tablets Transcribed (Rome 1973) and given in the edition in progress, namely in interpreting what those editions read as the unit-stroke ‘1’ as a word-divider, 1, i.e.: not 1 V 1, but V 1.


14 Cf. Docs², p. 337.

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sical Greek προς, ‘fixed, fastened, well put together’, here in the literal sense of ‘fixed or constructed with rivets’.

In *IDA*, p. 240–241, the vase form with the name *pa-ko-to* and its logogram or ideogram *214*VAS, which occur together only here in the Linear B corpus, are classified as a “forme ouverte de format indéterminé,” and for its name the *Doks*’ identification *phaktô* is given. The sole descriptive term *a-pe-te-me-ne* found with it is considered to have no satisfactory explanation. Nonetheless, *Doks*, p. 499, gives us the still prevailing alternatives, among which *apu-thmenê*, a dual meaning ‘without a base’, which posits a scribal error of *pe* for *pu*, is the most economical explanation and the one preferred in *D.Mic*, s.v.

The only other place an ideogram or logogram of the form of *214*VAS occurs in the Linear B corpus is on Knossos tablet K(1) 740. There it is identified as a *di-pa* and the rendering of *214*VAS is further identified by surcharging sign *di*. A note in *IDA*, p. 240, remarks that *214*VAS+*DI* on K(1) 740 is in fact a *di-pa* (*202*VAS). The text of K(1) 740 reads as follows:

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supra mutila
.1 [vestigia []
.2 di-pa AES *214*VAS+*DI* 30 [
.3 qe-ro, ‘AES’ *255* 16
.4 ku-ru-su-*56* *207*VAS 1
.5 pi-ni-je ZE 1
.6 ] ‘me-no-no [’
infra mutila
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Indeed, if we study the forms of the ideograms or logograms for *202*VAS and *214*VAS, we notice that the shape of the body of the vase of *214*VAS on PY Ta 709.1 is nearly identical with *214*VAS+*DI* on K(1) 740.2 and also nearly identical with the shape of the single version of the ideogram or logogram that survives on K(1) 875, a longish (six-line) and unfortunately fragmentary list of ‘un-eared’, i.e., handleless, *di-pa*. The ideogram/logogram on K(1) 875, however, is written in the last line and along the bottom edge of the tablet and theoretically could be drawn a bit clumsily. Elsewhere at Knossos (K 773.35) and at Pylos (Ta 641.2b) the *di-pa* ideogram or logogram has a more sharply tapering shape. Its shape is less sharply tapered with a flat bottom, represented by a horizontal line on KN K 829 and 875 and, of course, K 740. The same kind of horizontal line is added to all the tapering shapes on PY Ta 641. The degree of care the tablet-writer Hand 2 here took to add the horizontal stroke to the bottom of his drawing of a more or less sharply tapering vase signifies that the ‘base’ of this vessel was a characteristic element of its design. This would then lend support to the interpretation of *a-pe-te-me-ne* as designating the two *pa-ko-to* vases listed on Ta 709.1 as versions lacking bases.

Further support for this line of interpretation is at hand if we view this entry not in isolation, but as Oswald Panagia has taught us, within its proper textual context. In the Ta series the scribe faces a great challenge in deciding how to enter information in making an inventory of a very large and diverse collection of ceremonial vessels, fire and cooking paraphernalia, tripod, sacrificial implements (stunning axes and butchering knives), chairs, tables and footstools (actually stools to be used for sitting). He decided to begin with the vessels and paraphernalia and then turn to the items of furniture.15 The order of the texts then begins from its famous header Ta 711, which announces the inventory inspection and the occasion of its taking place, and then moves to listing the items, noting details that would make each item identifiable and ‘retrievable’, beginning with the vessels and fire implements. The first three texts are either in the order:

A. Ta 711-Ta 709-Ta 641,

or in the order:

B. Ta 711-Ta 641-Ta 709.

If order A is correct, the items would be listed in the order: vessels (qe-ra-na, *pi-je-ra, pa-ko-to*), fire and cooking implements, portable hearths, tripods, qe-to, *di-pa*. This has the advantage of making the intact tripods that end tablet Ta 709 precede the tripods that begin tablet Ta 641. The listing of tripods begins then with whole and undamaged examples and ends with the two damaged tripods (one with one foot, the other specified as ‘burned away’ with regard to its legs). Here the entry of the two *pa-ko-to* would precede the entries of *di-pa* and be separated from them by the fire and cooking implements and hearths and the tripods and qe-to. Given that the inspection is moving from chaos to order and has to start somewhere, and also given that the tripods would have been large and conspicuous, even when damaged, and would more likely be grouped together, A is the order that I prefer.

If order B is correct, the *di-pa* that end Ta 641 would precede the *pa-ko-to* on Ta 709 and would only be separated from them by the single *pi-je-ra* entry. The *pa-ko-to* would then stand to the *di-pa* as the damaged tripods to the whole tripods in the other arrangement, and their designation as ‘lacking’ or ‘missing’ their bases could be seen as the kind of damage that explains the slotting of the entry, just as the damaged tripods were listed after the whole tripods. In order A, the *pa-ko-to* would precede the *di-pa* entry, but again, given that we are at the start of the inventory, the entry position is not difficult to accept.

--- 276 ---

--- 277 ---

Why then does tablet-writer Hand 2 use pa-ko-to and not di-pa to designate the entry of *214 Vas* on Ta 709.1? Especially in the case of order B, but not implausible even in order A, I would argue that the term pa-ko-to here can be taken to define this kind of di-pa as ‘riveted’, perhaps, but not necessarily, even implying ‘riveted in repair’. This in fact is how the bronze archaeological correlates of *202 Vas*, *214 Vas* and *214 Vas+D* are manufactured, being composed of “un certain nombre de plaques de bronze” riveted together.16

Now, if we continue to follow the methods of Prof. Panagl and the implications of our attention to textual context, we may clear up another, to me at least, longstanding puzzle. The entry: ge-ro2 ‘AES’ *255 16 on K(1) 740 has always been interpreted in connection with the known use of ‘plaques’ or ‘platelets’ of bronze in the manufacture of breastplates. This interpretation was suggested and lent force by the occurrence of the logogram or ideogram *162+QE used for breastplates in the Knossian Sc series. *IDA*, p. 21–22, takes the ge-ro2 to be large plates that are used in certain cases front and back to form protective body armor. *Docs*², p. 494–5, 329–30, 380–1, argues from the order in which items are listed on the Knossian armor texts that the ge-ro2 are elements of the armor proper, e.g., ‘shoulder guards’ vel sim., and not mere platelets. But this overlooks the evidence of Sk 6570 (formerly G? 5670 in *Docs*², p. 495). On Sk 6570 ge-ro2 are itemized along with o-pa-wa-ta, o-pa-wa-ta in the Pylos Sh series are clearly ‘platelets’ used to build to-ra-ke and not an identifiable element of armor. Thus the same conclusion should be drawn about ge-ro2.

Why, however, would 16 objects relating to armor, whether protective platelets used in its construction or, to me less likely, compositional parts of armor like shoulder guards, be listed on K(1) 740 in between two kinds of vases: thirty di-pa and one ku-ru-su-²*56 (a kind of ‘tripod amphora’). The anomaly of such a positioning within the text disappears if we see the relationship of these objects to the vase form that immediately precedes them on the tablet. The 16 ge-ro2 then most likely are the kind of bronze ‘platelets’ that are archaeologically attested as riveted together to make bronze vessels like the 30 di-pa (or pa-ko-to) that immediately precede the ‘platelets’ on this tablet.

By following the lead of Oswald Panagl and concentrating on textual context, syntax and text pragmatics, we have been able to suggest ways of clearing up several longstanding textual ambiguities. We have also added to our understanding of how Mycenaean tablet-writers composed several important texts that they never imagined scholars would be reading and interpreting in the 21st century A.D.

16 *IDA*, p. 236–238, figs. 161 and 162, where the bases characteristic of this form of vessel are very conspicuous.