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- b. Greek and Roman literature

- - -

- 3.a. Iconographical interpretation Vol. 2
- b,c. Recent discoveries in classical archaeology
- d. Contacts between classical antiquity and the barbaricum
4. The linguistic characterization of Greek and Latin

- - -

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III. BYZANTINOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM

From late antiquity to early Byzantium

IV. MYCENAEOLICAL COLLOQUIUM

V. COLLOQUIUM ON TEACHING LATIN

EVIDENCE FOR THE INFLUENCE OF THE KNOSSIAN GRAPHIC TRADITION AT PYLOS
Plates I-II

A central question in Aegean archaeology is the relative chronology of the destruction of the Palace of Minos at Knossos in Crete and of the mainland Greek centers at Mycenae, Thebes, Tiryns and Pylos. The traditional view (Evans, PofM, 1920-35; Boardman, OKT, 1963; Olivier, Les Scribes, 1967; Popham, The Destruction of the Palace of Knossos: Pottery of the Late Minoan III A Period, 1970) places the final destruction of the palace at Knossos in the period LM II to LM III A1/2 (ca. 1400-1375 B.C.). This interpretation leaves a gap of roughly two hundred years between the Linear B tablets from Knossos and those from the mainland, which are dated near the end of LH III B (ca. 1230-1190 B.C.). On archaeological grounds Palmer (OKT; The Penultimate Palace of Knossos, 1969; Kadmos, 1971, -72, -73, -78, -81; Minos, 1974) and others (e.g., Hallager, The Mycenaean Palace at Knossos: Evidence for Final Destruction in the III B Period, 1977) have tried to close the gap by redating the destruction of the palace of Knossos to LM III B.

Although the intricate archaeological arguments used in this controversy have been aptly characterized as "far too Byzantine," the question is of obvious importance for students of Minoan-Mycenaean writing, especially in light of the recent revived interest, primarily due to advances in work on Linear A, in the origin and development of the linear scripts (Godart and Olivier, SMEA, 1979; Hooker, The Origin of the Linear B Script, 1979; Palaima, TUAS, 1982). The long period between the Knossian and mainland tablets is problematical. The overall writing system exhibits no significant changes. Yet the tablets from the four mainland sites share a distinctive graphic uniformity (Olivier-Godart, Tiryns VIII, 1975), and the handwriting styles from Knossos have a decidedly more archaic appearance. Attempts to approach the problem palaeographically (e.g., Bennett, Hesperia, 1966) have proved inconclusive for deciding how long a period of development, if any, existed between the Cretan and mainland tablets.

The major difficulty is that we have no way of determining how quickly and in what ways the script would develop over time at a given site. So arguments concerning chronology based on palaeographical considerations alone have of necessity been subjective and frustratingly

circular. How is one to decide whether perceived differences in the forms of Linear B characters are actually chronological and not, let us say, regional, sociological, etc.? Four tablets from Pylos (Ae 995, Xa 1419, Xn 1449, Ua 994) may help to solve this problem. These tablets display graphic, linguistic and formulaic features that set them apart from the rest of the tablets from Pylos and the mainland. Moreover, recent work with microfilms of the original University of Cincinnati Pylos Excavation notebooks offers some evidence that these tablets may date to an earlier period than the other mainland tablets.

In this paper I shall treat in considerable--not to say Byzantine--detail the special features that associate these tablets with a Cretan-Knossian rather than a mainland tradition of writing.

TABLETS

Tablet Number	Dimensions in cm. (H,L,TH)	Color (Munsell)	Text
Ae 995	1.7 (3.4)/ 0.5	2.5YR N4/ dark gray	ko-to-ne-we VIR[
Xa 1419	2.1 (3.2)/ 0.8	2.5YR 6/6 light red core: 5YR 6/4 light reddish brown	.1 di-wo-nu-so[.2 tu-ni-jo[verso .1 i-pe-ne-o[.2 wo-no-wa-ti-si[
Xn 1449	/(1.0)/ /(1.1)/ (0.2)/	10YR 5/1 gray	.0 <u>supra mutila</u> .1]so-ne[.2 <u>infra mutila</u>
Ua 994	/(1.5) /(3.0)/ 0.8	2.5YR 6/6 light red	<u>supra mutila</u>]*252 [

Note: A slash "/" means that the tablet is broken in a particular dimension. /(H lat. sup.; H)/ lat. inf.; /(L lat. sin.; L)/ lat. dex.; /(TH recto; TH)/ verso.

PALAEOGRAPHY

The handwriting of the two fuller tablets Ae 995 and Xa 1419 is unlike that of any other tablets from the mainland. The elaborate form of ne with its central circular element and two-stroke left arm (cf. Xn 1449) is duplicated only at Knossos (Hand 114; for central circle see also Theban vases Z 849, Z 851, Z 852, Z 882). Note also ni with its non-intersecting oblique hastae of equal length (KN Hands

103, 121, 135), i with the embellishing marks to the right of the horizontal (KN Hand 104 who also embellishes me and pu₂; for embellishing at Knossos see particularly Hands 117 and 124; for similar embellishment of i see TH Z 866), and di with its extraordinary lower horizontal (unparalleled at Knossos but see TH Z 857). Most remarkable, however, is the ideogram partially preserved at the broken lat. dex. of Ae 995. Autopsy of this tablet confirms that it is indeed an example of *101 VIR SEDENS, an ideographic variant of *100 used frequently and exclusively at Knossos (Bennett, Cambr. Coll., 1966). The form on Ae 995 resembles that of KN Hand 104 (cf. especially B 806) although the Pylian scribe has added a distinctive central horizontal waistband.

Besides the Knossian form of ne mentioned above, Xn 1449 contains so in a very unorthodox shape. Ua 994 preserves only the hapax graphomenon *252.

These palaeographic characteristics are remarkable. I am now of the opinion that Ae 995, Xa 1419 and probably also Xn 1449 should be assigned to an entirely new and separate class at Pylos, Class iv. Their writing styles relate directly to a non-mainland graphic tradition. But the similarities noted above to the painted vase inscriptions, which, though also from a Cretan graphic tradition (Archaeometry, 1977), are most likely contemporary LH III B, caution against making any chronological hypotheses based on palaeographical factors alone.

LINGUISTICS AND FORMULAE

Of chief concern here is the form used on Ae 995 to designate the group of VIR denoted by ideogram *101: ko-to-ne-we. In the E-series at Pylos Hands 1 and 41 refer to landholders repeatedly with the related forms ko-to-ne-ta and ko-to-no-o-ko. Lejeune (REG, 1965) suggests that these terms and ka-ma-e-u as well have specific, distinct meanings. Yet his argument against accepting ko-to-ne-we as a mere scribal alternative to one of the more common Pylian terms is based on a questionable assumption about the meaning of *101.

Palmer also tries to dismiss any possible synonymy of these terms by reasoning that ko-to-ne-we is not related at all to ko-to-na since he would expect a form *ko-to-na-e-we on the model of ka-ma-e-we from ka-ma. Yet Perpillou (Les substantifs grecs en εός, 1973) and others have properly explained that forms such as ka-ma-e-we and e-da-e-u derive, unlike ko-to-ne-we, from forms with a sigmatic base.

We are left then with the strong likelihood that the scribe of Ae 995, who possesses so singular a graphic style, has also used a noun form that is at variance with the normal formulaic usage at Pylos.

PROVENIENCE

Having noted the elements of writing style and formulae that mark out these four tablets within the Pylos corpus and associate them with a Knossian graphic tradition, it now remains to consider their provenience.

Nearly 79% of the fuller tablets from Pylos (739 of 936 tablets) come from the two-room Archives Complex. Recent work with the original excavation notebooks confirms that these tablets and almost all other tablets come from the same destruction horizon. This includes tablets from workshops and storerooms within the palace (Tn 996 from Room 20; Fr tablets from Rooms 23, 32 and 38; La tablets from Room 5 fallen from above in reddish destruction stratum) and, significantly, tablets in unusual locations (for example, Fr 1338 and 1355 found near the larnax west of Room 103 but in the same reddish destruction stratum; and the tablets of various series found Below the SW Hill to the E, which probably come from the Archives Complex (Blegen, PofN I, 283-84)). This corroborates the palaeographical assignment of the tablets to three contemporary classes of writing style.

Let us then consider the four tablets that we have suggested do not fit into the Pylian graphic classes. Xa 1419 comes from the area to the west
of Rooms
81-82 that is designated by Blegen (PofN I, 283) "outside southwestern wall, sections 1-5" (see PofN III, fig. 306 for these sections). This is an area of mixed stratigraphy with "wares of Mycenaean III B and earlier periods in associated confusion." (italics mine) Blegen suggests that the tablets in this area may have come from an archives room for the Southwestern Building.

Ae 995 comes from Rooms 55-57. This complex of rooms preserves at least three successive and complicated phases of occupation together with "wares of Mycenaean III A." (PofN III, 35-37) Unfortunately the notebook of Theodoridis, who excavated this area in 1953, is missing; so we cannot get a precise fix on the find-spot of Ae 995.

The tiny surface flake Xn 1449 is of unknown provenience.

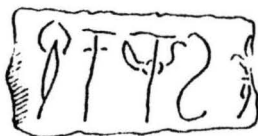
This leaves perhaps the greatest puzzle, Ua 994. PTT identifies Ua 994 as Component 1952 M/4 from Rooms 5 or 6. And indeed the tablet itself bears resemblance in color and shape to certain La tablets of Hand 13 and S632 found in Room 6. But Component 1952 M/4 is actually

La 625 (GEMylonas June 7 1952, p.41) found in the neighborhood of La 622-624 in Room 6. Now Tn 996 is properly identified as Component 1953/3 coming from storeroom 20 (MRawson June 10 1953, p.73) and Ae 995 as 1953/2 from Rooms 55-57 (CWBlegen June 2 1953, p. 29). CWBlegen May 30 1953, p.25 lists another tablet fragment as coming from the area excavated by Theocharis, i.e. Rooms 55-57. Since this directly precedes the reference to Ae 995, it should be Ua 994. However, confusion is created by a reference in RHOpe May 26 1953, p.11 to a small fragment in her area to the west of the main palace from a pottery basket and bearing a possible letter. We should note here that Ua 994 bears only the single ideogram! Yet this is nowhere referred to as a tablet fragment even in Hope's eventual notebook index. Nor does Blegen mention it in his 1953 site notebook or in his full excavation report for the season (AJA, 1954). Yet he does refer in the excavation report (AJA, 1954, p.30) to "one or two fragments of inscribed tablets" from Theocharis's area. This makes it most likely that Ua 994 was found in the same rooms as Ae 995 which it numerically precedes. There cannot be complete assurance because in PofN I, 220-227, Blegen makes no reference to any tablets at all having been found in Rooms 55-57.

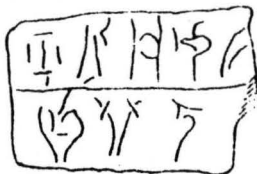
CONCLUSIONS

Four tablets from Pylos written in a distinctively Knossian-Cretan graphic style and containing at least one formulaic oddity come from areas disassociated from the mainstream of scribal activity at Pylos. These areas are marked by disturbed stratigraphy and a complex sequence of building phases linked with material of LH III A. It is, therefore, quite possible that these tablets provide examples of mainland writing at an earlier stage of development than the other tablets from Pylos, Thebes, Tiryns, and Mycenae. This would seem to support the orthodox view that Linear B was created at Knossos and then disseminated to the mainland. Other questions such as how then the uniform mainland style developed and why the Cretan style remained static on the inscribed stirrup jars of LH III B must be addressed. Such questions are, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

Plate I /T. G. Falsima/



Ae 995



Xa 1419 recto



Xn 1449



Xa 1419 verso



Ua 994

Plate II /T. G. Palaima/

PY

KN

VASES

ne



ni



i



di



VIR

