

PH Up 1996

As I lay awake late on the night of Saturday, April 20, 1996 in my spacious room in the Abigail Adams Bed and Breakfast on 1208 Walnut Street in the City of Brotherly Love, USA, I was turning over again and again in my Mycenological mind the riotous variety of Mycenaean pottery motifs from the island of Naxos and wondering how individual artisans might have produced them according to the strict harmonic principles of geometry. How did they know enough to paint those motifs, before Furumark completed his catalogue? How? I decided to take a walk.

In my distracted state I wandered in the direction of Temple University, the host institution for the 6th International Aegean Conference, trying to clear my mind of bull horns, bee hives, bare-breasted but bogus chryselephantine snake-goddess statuettes, and radical proposals to resequence the phases of the Mycenaean Shaft Graves. Coming out of my near-delirious reverie, I found myself in an area where new houses were being built as part of an urban renewal project. I paused and gave my natural curiosity free rein.

They work at night in the big city, so I said to one of the modern practitioners of *tekhne*, an obviously skilled and experienced carpenter, "You know, the Mycenaeans would surely have used half-timbering technique." He answered without missing a hammer blow, "Say, you must be a friend of Phil's over at Temple. I did a Ph.D. with him in that Penn/Bryn Mawr/Temple Aegean prehistory consortium about ten years ago. Learned a lot from Jim at Bryn Mawr, too, about the old sure-fire Hittite ways of building. All that still comes in handy. And to this day I lay out driveway gates in these neighborhoods with the same eye for security the builders of Gla had. Learned that in Spyros' seminar! Who says a Ph.D. in Aegean prehistory isn't practical? Come here and see how we have placed our sunken posts, laid out a porch and apse, and included a spacious 3 m² kitchen area, all in Sitagrian style. And, of course, we spruce up the fancier houses according to the Versailles effect."

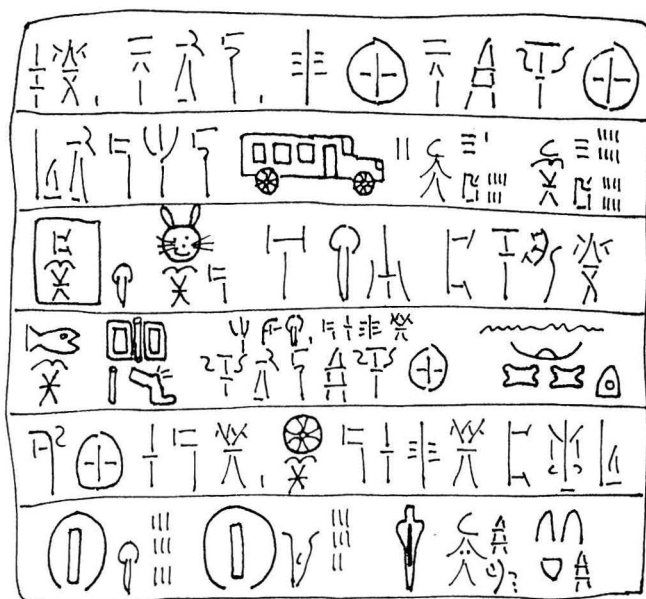
As I stepped forward, imagine my surprise when I saw, lying imbedded in the heap of earth formed from digging the post holes, a rectangular piece of what looked to my trained eyesight like accidentally fired clay. I picked it up and brushed it off with a hand wearied by taking pages and pages of notes on Minoan lamps, one of which I could have used at that moment in the nocturnal gloom of Philadelphia. My bleary eyes tried in vain to open wide with astonishment. I immediately noted the exact time (2:13 AM EST) and circumstances, since I did not want to set off any controversy about the genuineness of this discovery such as surrounds objects like the Phaistos disk and the notorious Heidelberg and Corsica tablets.¹ Having had the misfortune once of losing a clay tablet that slipped from my hands in the rainstorms of Heidelberg, I took no chances. I immediately put the tablet securely in the pocket of my overcoat, right alongside my concealed handgun, and retraced my steps to the Abigail Adams as alert as Odysseus returning from the night raid on Troy.

Once back in my spacious room, I began the exciting process of transcribing and then interpreting the text. It lately has taken years and years to publish new Mycenaean texts—unless three or four people publish their versions in different languages in different journals

1 Cf. T.G. PALAIMA, "A Linear B Tablet from Heidelberg," in R. LAFFINEUR and W.-D. NIEMEIER eds., *Politeia. Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 5th International Aegean Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994*, *Aegaeum* 12 (1995) 669-670; and in R. LAFFINEUR and L. BASCH eds., *Thalassa. L'Égée préhistorique et la mer. Actes de la troisième Rencontre égéenne internationale de l'Université de Liège, Station de recherches sous-marines et océanographiques (StaReSO), Calvi, Corse (23-25 avril 1990)*, *Aegaeum* 7 (1991) 4.

all at once—but this tablet all but spoke to me. Fortunately I had forgotten my Walkman and blues tapes back in Austin, so I could hear immediately and clearly what it was saying. Here follows a transcription, commentary and translation of this remarkable discovery, which will surely take its place among equally startling finds in such far-flung outposts of Aegean studies as Heidelberg, Corsica, and Naples.²

In order to deal scientifically with this discovery, I handed it over later in the morning to Peter Day for analysis that might help us determine where the clay for the tablet came from. I asked Peter to perform a thin-section and he did so quickly and enthusiastically with two plastic knives in the breakfast room of the Abigail Adams. However, just as when dealing with Greek gods and goddesses—just ask Tithonus!—so too must we mere mortal prehistorians be very specific in making requests of our scientifically-oriented colleagues. Peter took the thin section from the *recto* surface, thus destroying forever the inscription. My drawing alone remains.



PH Up 1996³

Physical description: Tablet broken at bottom edge along original lower rule-line for line .6. Upper left and right corners curved. Space between rule-lines of uniform width. Outer clay surface fine and colored nondescript dreary urban gray. Text evenly fired with no surface cracking or peeling. No trace of niello inlay or any impressions from seal rings. No reason to suspect this is refashioned from an Egyptian prototype. Some papillary line prints on the *verso* surface. They seem to be one set from a very young tablet-handler and one set from an older tablet-handler.⁴ Modularly Irregular Dimensions: upper left back to lower right front: 15.28 cm.; middle right edge back to lower mid edge front: 9.82 cm.; center to all points 4.5 cm. away: 4.5 cm.

Palaeography: The style of the handwriting suggests that the scribe was familiar with, without being a slavish adherent to, the Messenian palaeographical tradition and by extension the Kafkania *galet*. No connection at all with KN 115.

2 And it might even be published before the Naples text appears in the Acts of the *II Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia* held in Rome and Naples in 1991 (but it hasn't [the editors]).

3 PH = Philadelphia. Series Up because the tablet deals with mixed commodities and is something of a 'sendUp'.

4 Cf. K.-E. SJÖQUIST & P. ÅSTRÖM, *Knossos: Keepers and Kneaders* with an appendix by J.-P. OLIVIER (SIMA Pocket-Book 82 1991).

Transcription:

- .1 pa-de , na-wo-jo , te-ka-na-e-ne-ka
- .2a 31 38
 .2b ra-wo-po-re-jo *271 2 MUL o 7 VIR o 8
- .3 TA+VIR ko .+VIR po a-ko-si ta-to-mo-de
- .4a re-u-ko , po-ro-te-ke
 .4b .+VIR *272 ne-wo-jo-e-ne-ka *273
- .5 me-ka-ro-po-de , ROTA+VIR po-ro-te-ke ta-ma-ra
- .6a e *275
 .6b *274 ko 9 *274 mi 8 *233 MUL ku *229 e

Commentary:

.1 *pa-de*: There are alternative interpretations possible here.⁵ This might be the Minoan theonym *pa-de* as found on tablets KN Fp(1) 1+31 and Fp(1) 48. This would be consistent with the interests of the BIG MAN of Aegean Studies in the vicinity of the discovery, Phil Betancourt, whose work has a decidedly Cretocentric thrust. However, in view of the scribe's frequent use of adjunct phonetic abbreviations throughout the text,⁶ I propose that we should interpret by analogy and view *pa-de* as a phonetic abbreviation (*pa*) with the allative suffix -δε appended. This yields the contextually preferable (*pa* = *pa-ne-pi-ta-mi-jo*) πανεπιστήμιον-δε 'to the university'. This is followed immediately by the genitive singular *na-wo-jo* = νάφοιο (trans. 'of the temple'), and then by the continuous phrase *te-ka-na-e-ne-ka* = τέχνης ἕνεκα ('for the sake of TEXNH').

.2 Line .2 introduces the first of many neologogramisms that our inventive scribe used on this tablet. In this case, the scribe identifies the logogram lexically.⁷ Here preceding the image of a traditional American primary or secondary school bus, we find the dual form *ra-wo-po-re-jo* = λαφοφορείω = 'people carrier' or 'bus' with the Mycenaean spelling (cf. Mod. Gk. λεωφορείον) of the word for 'people' (cf. *ra-wa-ke-ta*). This is followed by a listing of 31 WOMEN 7 missing, and 38 MEN 8 missing. Judging from how the tablet was disposed in its find-spot, the bus was clearly traveling in the direction of the airport hotel when the text was first written and archived.

.3 In line .3, the experience of the Philadelphia scribe is clearly seen in several more and equally clever logographic coinings. The first complex of signs is distinguished by a unique form of framing device, as if the logogram were somehow confined or penned in within this frame. The logogram is a combination of the standard MAN logogram surmounted by the phonetic sign *TA* in place of a human head. At first I thought that *TA* here might be an abbreviation for *ta-to-mo* = a 'herding pen'. But this did not make sense, given that none of the scholars at this colloquium exhibited any noticeably bestial behavior, at least not during the formal conference sessions. The second logogram likewise is puzzling. Here the body of the MAN logogram has a kind of rabbit's head—undoubtedly the scribe (the older papillary lines)

5 As always in Aegean and Mycenaean studies—otherwise how could we keep having such delightful conferences?

6 The scribe uses these abbreviations undoubtedly to save on clay. This sense of frugality, which is typical of the Quaker religious community that settled in the Philadelphia area, undoubtedly constitutes an instance of cultural continuity. Cf. Ben Franklin: "A penny saved is a penny earned."

7 Cf. the parallels: *TURO*₂ (= cheese) on PY Un 718 and *re-wo-te-re-jo* = λεφοτρείω (2 'bathtub's) on PY Tn 996.

had recently been reading children's books to his son (the younger papillary lines). By this time it was 4:30 AM.

With Porada-like instincts, I did not hesitate to call the airport hotel at such an hour and wake up my friend Robert Laffineur for his keen iconographical insights. Hearing my description of the first logogram, Robert made a bold suggestion: "My dear Tom, you know that America is a polyglot melting pot. And remember how Frenchmen like Lafayette helped out in the struggle for American liberty, so well commemorated in the Philadelphia area. I would not be surprised if your scribe had picked up more than the normal American French phrases like *film noir*, *bonjour*, *au revoir*, *café au lait*, and *le hot dog*. What you may have here is a kind of 'beast in a courtyard', or, as we say in French, a 'bête en cour' (TA standing for τᾱρος). Either this bull-man was kept penned up for breeding activities connected with the temple referred to at the outset or perhaps the beast was kept in the central courtyard of the House of the Double Axes (Labyrinth), in which case I think we must take seriously suggestions that the Minoan palace at Knossos was really itself a temple."

Having learned that our scribe knew more than a smattering of French made it possible to interpret the next combined logogram as *lapineus* or RABBIT MAN (represented lexically in other odd texts as the celebrated intellectual champion *ra-pi-ne-u*). The phonetic adjuncts marked out Betancourt (bête en cour) and Laffineur (*lapineus*) as *ko-re-te* and *po-ro-ko-re-te*, the two head officials of the colloquium on TEXNH. But then this was followed by the puzzling phrase: ἄγουσι σταθμόνδε 'they lead to the pen'. I could hear Robert snoring on the line, and so I hung up and rang up Marie-Louise Gregersen for fresh Danish insights—she had also recently been in Paris in case the French perspective was still needed. She reminded me to remember Leonard Palmer's emphasis on textual context in interpretation. Looking backward and forward made it plain at last that 'temple' and 'pen' were proper nouns read homonymously as Temple and Penn.

.4 Having gotten, as we say in American, the hang of this scribe's peculiar techniques, the rest of the tablet was easier to interpret, though no less brilliant in its inventiveness. This is following the old law that I once heard the late Eugene Vanderpool enunciate about Greek inscriptions: "They are easy to read if you know what they say." FISH-MAN (= BASS, a kind of fish) preceding a composite logogram of an Ulu-Burun-style diptych (standing here for the act of reading or lecturing) and surmounting a REBUS of ROD + KNEE (the influence of children's books once again). This was followed in .4b by the lexical phrase 'for the sake of YOUNG'. Line .4a contained the annotation Λευκὸς προθήκε or 'WHITE introduced'. The main line ended with a stunning composite of what I take to be a ship sunken under the surface of wavy water with ingots and anchors scattered about.

.5 As in line .1, we begin here with an allative locational designation: *me-ka-ro-po-de* = Μεγαλοφόνδε. This stumped me until I learned on one of our many bus trips about the strong Welsh presence out along the posh Main Line of Philadelphia. In Welsh, the site of BIG HILL is known as Bryn Mawr. And once we traveled there, ROTA + VIR or WHEELWRIGHT treated hypocoristically as WRIGHT made sense, as the scholar by that name 'introduced' a lecture by Tamara Stech.

.6 In the final preserved line, the scribe seems to be tallying the results of the kind of international competition in which field archaeologists often engage: a contest to see who can find the earliest, or the biggest, or the most unusual example, or simply the greatest number, of some cultural artifact. The meanings of the first two entries would have been totally opaque to me, but for the help of Despina Vallianou, who pointed out to me the similarity between the neologogramism *274 and the kinds of kilns she had discussed at the Minoan site of Gouves. It was then routine to be able to read the second phonetic adjunct as *mi* = *mi-ra-ti-ja*, the neuter plural of the ethnic applied to working women at the site of Pylos. The entry expressed proudly that the Cretan site still held a 9 to 8 lead over the site of Miletus in number of kilns excavated. Wolf Niemeier vowed later that he would find more! Then follows the logogram for a dagger with a marking for niello inlay. After the dagger comes the logogram

for WOMAN, rendered with distinctive breast markings,⁸ with two phonetic adjuncts *e* and *ku*. Having laid awake the previous night with images from Kenneth Lapatin's lecture dancing past my mind's eyes, I had no trouble in reconstructing this complex as (*e* = ἐλέφας and *ku* = χρυσός) a reference to chryselephantine bare-breasted statuettes. None were recorded, perhaps suggesting some hesitation on the scribe's part about the authenticity of such objects. The preserved portion of the tablet concludes with a logographic rendering of 'horns of consecration'—or are they grain bins?—and a conical cup modified by an adjunct *e*. Recalling that the Heidelberg tablet proved definitively that a phonetic adjunct could be used to specify the contents of a container,⁹ I discarded the idea that these cups, too, were ivory—a view that did not meet with a positive response or even a favorable look from Malcolm Wiener or Carole Gillis at lunch—and I now prefer the interpretation of *e* = *e-ru-ta-ra* as a reference to the unidentifiable sweet reddish refreshment we were served at coffee breaks. The bottom of the tablet is broken away, I believe because the scribe had to leave this highly successful 6th Aegean Conference early in order to catch a plane at the airport. Since no bus is inscribed here on the tablet, I assume he took a taxi.

Translation:

- .1 To the University of Temple for the sake of TEXNH
<come and go and come and go and come and go>
- .2 on two school buses 31 women and 38 men, but 7 women and 8 men are absent.
- .3 Betancourt as president and Laffineur as vice-president lead <them> to Penn.
<There>
- .4 Bass <gives> the Rodney Young lecture on Bronze Age shipwrecks—White introduced him.
- .5 To Bryn Mawr <they go>. Wright introduced Tamara.
- .6 9 kilns at Gouves <are still better than> 8 kilns at Miletus. <Participants also partook of>
niello daggers, chryselephantine female statuettes, and icky pink beverage in conical cups.

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8 Cf. the Naples tablet for a more recent example of this typically Knossian trait.

9 There the instance is CUP *ka* = CUP of COFFEE.