

# APPENDIX ONE: LINEAR B SOURCES

Thomas G. Palaima

The earliest written evidence we have for Greek language and culture, and for Greek mythology and religion, is found in economic texts on clay tablets written in a writing system known as Linear B. The first tablets were found in 1900 AD by Sir Arthur Evans excavating at Cnossos,<sup>1</sup> the chief center of Minoan and later Mycenaean culture on Crete.<sup>2</sup> Other tablets, too, come exclusively from the environs of Mycenaean palatial sites that flourished for approximately two centuries (1400–1200 BC) near the end of the Aegean Bronze Age.<sup>3</sup>

It took more than fifty years for the Linear B script to be deciphered. The decipherment was achieved without the aid of any bilingual text.<sup>4</sup> The most productive work on decipherment was done beginning in the late 1940s by two American scholars, Alice E. Kober and Emmett L. Bennett, Jr., and British architect Michael Ventris. In June 1952, Ventris offered solid evidence that the language of the texts written in Linear B was Greek. His proposal has since been proved by more than fifty years of careful work interpreting both the texts he had available to him and many more texts discovered in the course of continuing excavations.<sup>5</sup>

The tablets themselves (see photos of Tn 316 front side and Fr 1226) are fragile and are only preserved for us by being accidentally baked, just as moist clay is intentionally fired into hardened pottery, when the rooms or buildings in which they were left were destroyed by fire. Most tablets suffered serious damage in such destructions, so that it is not unusual for tablets to be partially preserved or pieced together from fragments through the process that Mycenaean inscription experts call making “joins.”

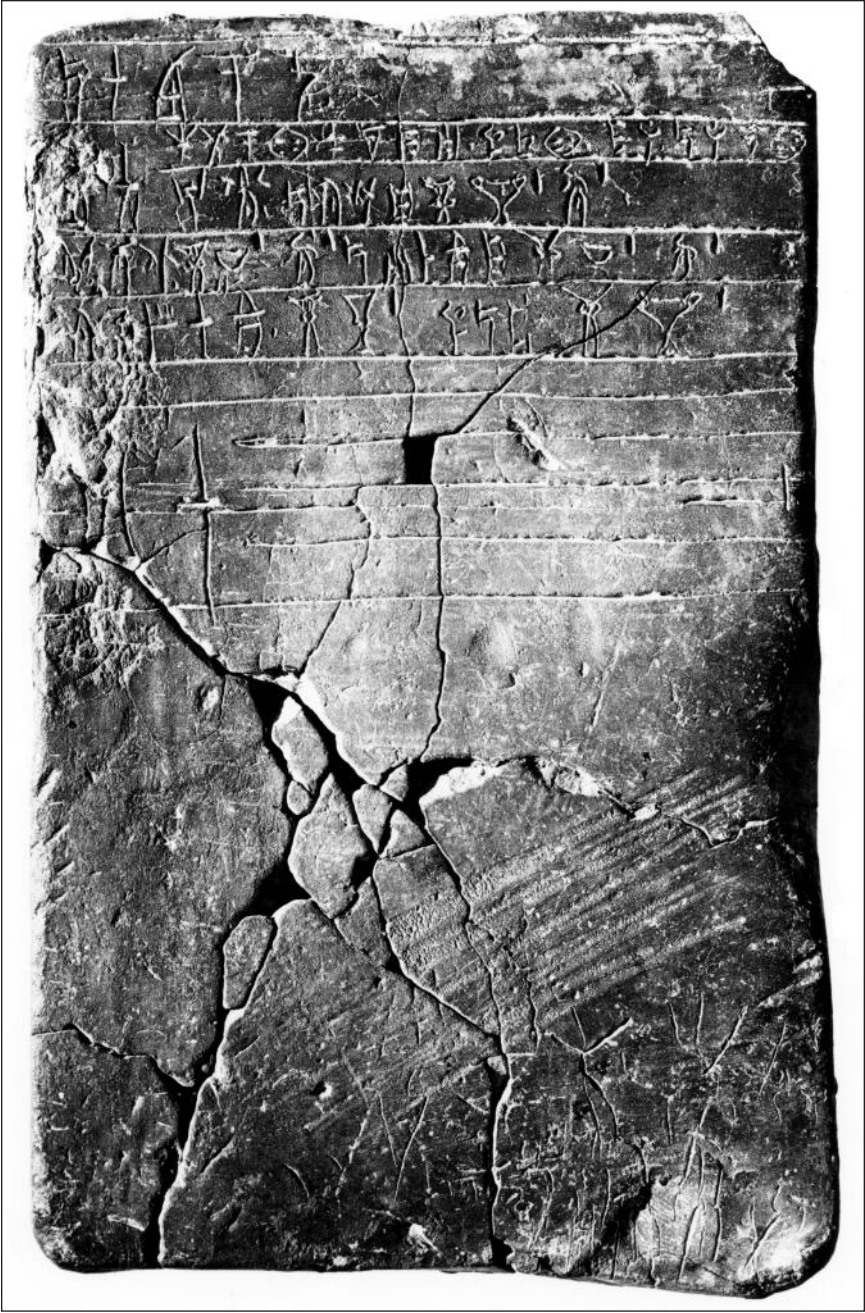
<sup>1</sup> In tablet translations here Cnossos is abbreviated with the prefix KN (= Knossos) in conformity with the conventions of Mycenaean textual editing.

<sup>2</sup> W. A. McDonald and C. G. Thomas, *Progress into the Past: The Rediscovery of Mycenaean Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Ind. 1990), 113–169.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World* (Cambridge 1976).

<sup>4</sup> A. Robinson, *The Man Who Deciphered Linear B: The Story of Michael Ventris* (London and New York 2002).

<sup>5</sup> T. G. Palaima, “Archaeology and Text: Decipherment, Translation and Interpretation,” in *Theory and Practice in Mediterranean Archaeology: Old World and New World Perspectives*, eds. J. K. Papadopoulos and R. M. Leventhal (Los Angeles 2003), 45–73.



*Front side of Pylos tablet Tn 316, recording offerings to gods like Zeus, Hermes, Hera, and Potnia of gold vessels carried by cult officials of the Palace of Nestor to the Mycenaean sanctuary area known as Sphagianes. (Photograph courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati, from the photographic archives of the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, University of Texas at Austin.)*



*Tablet Fr 1226 recording the offering of sage-scented oil “to the gods.” (Photograph courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati, from the photographic archives of the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, University of Texas at Austin.)*

One spectacular join in recent years has yielded a clear reference to a “fire altar” of the god Dionysos, whose historical myths were once thought to identify a deity whose worship entered Greece well after the Bronze Age, perhaps from Anatolia.

The Linear B writing system<sup>6</sup> has a repertory of approximately eighty-seven phonetic signs (phonograms) that stand for open syllables (single consonants or consonant clusters followed by vowels) e.g., *pa*, *do*, *ta*, *nwa*, *dwo*.<sup>7</sup> It also uses about two hundred signs, known as ideograms or logograms, to represent materials and commodities, animate or inanimate, that were important within the regional economic and political systems of the Mycenaean palatial period. The ideograms are represented in our translations here by smaller-sized capital letters, e.g., OIL, HONEY, GOLD CUP, MAN, SHEEP, WHEAT. Some phonograms are used as ideograms. Such phonetic ideograms generally represent the first syllables of the words for the objects they designate, whether the words are derived from Minoan (*NI* = “figs” from the Cretan word *nikuleon*) or Mycenaean Greek (*WI* = *wi-ri-no* “oxhide,” historical Greek *rhinon*). The phonetically written words are here either translated into English or, where appropriate and necessary, transcribed in Latin according to the conventional values for individual signs. Signs within word-units are connected by hyphens. So, for example, *po-ti-ni-ja* = *Potnia* (literally, “The Female God Who Has Power,” conventionally translated here as “Lady”).

We now have roughly five thousand Linear B tablets from the major centers of the Greek Bronze Age. These are the same centers that gave rise to the great mythical story cycles, a fact first observed by the Swedish scholar of ancient Greek religion M. P. Nilsson.<sup>8</sup> Mycenae, Tiryns, Cnossos, Pylos, and Thebes have yielded appreciable to extensive archives. Other key “mythological” sites like Eleusis and Orchomenos have produced inscribed oil-transport vessels known as stirrup jars. The hazards of excava-

<sup>6</sup> M. G. F. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1973), 28–66, 387–395.

<sup>7</sup> A few rarer signs have not had their values determined. These are identified numerically, e.g., \*22.

<sup>8</sup> See his groundbreaking *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley, Calif. 1932).

tion and site settlement patterns explain the absence of Linear B tablets at other centers of early Greek myths like Sparta (Menelaos), Athens (Aigeus and Theseus), and Iolcos (Jason and the Argonauts).

The Linear B texts were written as internal administrative records that would have been consulted by officials and agents within the intensively exploitative economic systems of the period.<sup>9</sup> As such, they have the quality of very condensed accounting, auditing, or inventory notes. Therefore, we do not always grasp the precise nuances or specialized meanings of the vocabulary, effectively a bureaucratic or economic jargon, used by the tablet writers. In interpreting the texts, we are working with a prealphabetic script that is not so precise at representing *for us* the words the scribes are writing. Finally, we are trying to make sense out of Greek at a stage four hundred to five hundred years earlier than the stage represented by our earliest texts of the historical period.

Despite difficulties of interpretation, the Linear B texts offer us a good deal of solid information relevant to Greek myth and religion, and they give us a partial view of elements of myth about half a millennium earlier than historical Greek myths. The earliest alphabetic Greek inscriptions cannot be pushed back further than the second quarter of the 8th century BC; and the poems of Homer and Hesiod, as we have them, were written down in the 8th century BC or later. Ruijgh has established, by applying our knowledge of Mycenaean Greek to the Homeric texts, that oral hexameter verse was already being generated as early as the 15th century BC.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see below in the “Personnel List,” Linear B texts and the iconography of Mycenaean palatial culture confirm that the palatial centers held periodic communal feasts, complete with “Homeric-style” animal sacrifices and bardic performances.<sup>11</sup>

The tablets keep track of raw materials, finished products, agricultural commodities, animals, and human beings, who was responsible for them, where they were or were supposed to be, and what was happening or had happened or would happen to them. Consequently, more than seventy percent of the words on the tablets are personal names (anthroponyms) or place names (toponyms) or gods’ names (theonyms). Important are anthroponyms formed from divine names (theophorics, literally names “bearing the god”), since they reflect the pious feelings that parents, clan groups, and the general culture had for individual deities in this period.

The tablets do not give us the narrative stories, histories, or legends that the Greeks of the early historical period called *muthoi*, the word that gives us our word *myths*. Nor do they explicitly describe religious rituals. In this they differ greatly from our standard written sources for “myth” in historical Greek culture. But studied carefully, the data of the tablets can shed light on the earliest phases of Greek mythology, as the following selection of tablets will show.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. G. Palaima, “‘Archives’ and ‘Scribes’ and Information Hierarchy in Mycenaean Greek Linear B Records,” in *Ancient Archives and Archival Traditions*, ed. Maria Brosius (Oxford 2003), 153–194, figs. 8.1–8.9.

<sup>10</sup> C. J. Ruijgh, “D’Homère aux origines proto-mycéniennes de la tradition épique,” in *Homeric Questions*, ed. J. P. Crielaard (Amsterdam 1995), 1–96.

<sup>11</sup> See most recently I. Mylonas Shear, *Tales of Heroes: The Origins of the Homeric Texts* (New York and Athens 2000); with the sober review by J. Burgess, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2002.10.18. <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2002/2002-10-18.html>; I. Morris and B. Powell, *A New Companion to Homer* (1997); A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings, *A Companion to Homer* (London 1962).



## THE GODS IN LINEAR B TABLETS

The tablet data reveal which deities from later Greek mythology were worshiped by the Mycenaeans, where they were worshiped, and some forms that their worship took. We begin with a full, up-to-date list of gods' names (theonyms) attested in Linear B (parentheses contain explanations of epithets or of Mycenaean transcriptions). An asterisk means that a proposed form or attestation is based on the interpretation, often conjectural, of incomplete evidence. A question mark or question marks mean that identification of a Mycenaean word as a deity is moderately to seriously doubtful.

*Deities Common to Cnossos and Mainland Greece*

| Cnossos                          | Pylos                 | Mycenae              | Thebes             | Khania                |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Poseidon                         | Poseidon              |                      |                    |                       |
| Zeus (Diktaios)                  |                       |                      |                    |                       |
| Zeus (F 51)                      | Zeus                  |                      | Zeus               |                       |
| Ares                             | Ares <sup>a</sup>     |                      |                    |                       |
| <i>di-wi-ja</i>                  | <i>di-wi-ja</i>       |                      |                    |                       |
| Dionysos <sup>b</sup>            | Dionysos <sup>b</sup> |                      |                    | Dionysos <sup>b</sup> |
| <i>ma-ri-ne-u?</i>               |                       | * <i>ma-ri-ne-u?</i> | <i>ma-ri-ne-u?</i> |                       |
| Hermes (D 411?)                  | Hermes                |                      | Hermes             |                       |
| <i>te-o / te-o-i</i> (god, gods) | <i>te-o / te-o-i</i>  |                      |                    |                       |
| <i>ma-ka</i> (F 51)???           |                       |                      | <i>ma-ka</i> ???   |                       |

<sup>a</sup> Attested in an epithet derived from the theonym ("god's name").

<sup>b</sup> Attested mostly in theophoric anthroponyms (human names derived from gods' names) and now at Khania and Pylos as a clear theonym.

<sup>c</sup> Interpreted by some as *Mā Gā* (= "Mother Earth"), but the textual contexts do not support identification of the term as a deity. It is better interpreted as an action noun = \**magā* = "the action of kneading barley into barley cakes." There are other possibilities.<sup>12</sup>

Conspicuously absent from the gods attested in Linear B texts are the later canonical deities Demeter, Aphrodite, Hephaistos (perhaps attested indirectly in a theophoric anthroponym), and Hestia.

The special word the Greeks use for god, *theos*, is attested,<sup>13</sup> mainly in the pious catch-all plural phrase "to all the gods." (It is typical of hymns and prayers in almost all cultures to make sure that no appropriate divine power is "left out" on ritual occasions.) Other elements of interest are the "free-standing" deities (e.g., *Enualios*, *Paia-won*) from the Bronze Age who are later reduced to epithets, e.g., Paieon Apollo or Ares Enyalios; the number of female counterparts to male gods who are still objects

<sup>12</sup> Cf. T. G. Palaima, review of eds. V. L. Aravantinos, L. Godart and A. Sacconi, *Les tablettes en linéaire B de la Odos Pelopidou, Édition et Commentaire*. Thèbes Fouilles de la Cadmée 1. Istituti Editoriali Poligrafici Internazionali (Pisa and Rome 2001), in *American Journal of Archaeology* 107.1 (2003), 113–115; and in *Mimos* 35–36 (2000–2001), 475–486.

<sup>13</sup> W. Burkert, "From Epiphany to Cult Statue: Early Greek *Theos*," in *What Is a God?*, ed. A. B. Lloyd (London 1997), 15–34, links *theos* to the notion of sudden manifestation or apparition of divine power, a key concept in Minoan religious iconography.

*Deities Occurring Either Only at Cnossos or Only on the Mainland*

| Cnossos   | Pylos                         | Mycenae | Thebes   | Khania |
|---|-------------------------------|---------|--|--------|
|   | <i>po-ti-ni-ja</i>            |         | <i>po-ti-ni-ja</i>                               |        |
| <i>a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja</i> (the Lady of Athens)                           |                               |         |  |        |
| <i>da-pu<sub>2</sub>-ri-to-jo po-ti-ni-ja</i> (the Lady of the Labyrinth) |                               |         |  |        |
|   | <i>e-re-ur-jo-po-ti-ni-ja</i> |         |  |        |
|   | <i>ne-wo-pe-o po-ti-ni-ja</i> |         |  |        |
|   | <i>u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja</i>    |         |  |        |
|   |                               |         | <i>si-to-po-ti-ni-ja</i> (the Lady of Grains)    |        |
|   |                               |         | <i>po-ti-ni-ja i-qe-ja</i> (the Lady of Horses)  |        |
|   |                               |         | <i>po-ti-ni-ja a-si-ur-ja</i> (the Lady of Asia) |        |
|   |                               |         | <i>ma-te-re te-i-ja</i> (the divine Mother)      |        |
| <i>pa-de</i>  |                               |         |  |        |
| <i>qe-na-si-ja</i> (the hunter goddess)                                   |                               |         |  |        |
| <i>pi-pi-tu-na</i>  |                               |         |  |        |
| Eleuthia  |                               |         |  |        |
| Erinus  |                               |         |  |        |
| Enualios  |                               |         |  |        |
| Paiawon   |                               |         |  |        |

*Deities Occurring Either Only at Cnossos or Only on the Mainland (continued)*

| Cnossos | Pylos   | Mycenae | Thebes | Khania                  |
|---------|---|---------|--------|-------------------------|
|         | Hera  |         | Hera   |                         |
|         | Artemis   |         |        |                         |
|         | Posidacia   |         |        |                         |
|         | Trisheros   |         |        |                         |
|         | Iphimedeia  |         |        |                         |
|         | <i>ma-na-sa</i>   |         |        |                         |
|         | <i>pe-re-*</i> 82                                       |         |        |                         |
|         | <i>do-po-ta</i> (the "House-Master")                    |         |        |                         |
|         | <i>di-ri-mi-jo</i>                                      |         |        |                         |
|         | <i>qo-wi-ja</i> (the bovid female deity) ?              |         |        |                         |
|         | <i>ko-ma-we-te-ja</i> (the fair-tressed female deity) ? |         |        | <i>ko-ma-we-te-ja</i> ? |
|         | <i>a-ma-tu-na</i> ? (Fn 187.11) <sup>a</sup>            |         |        |                         |

<sup>a</sup> *a-ma-tu-na* has a form similar to *pi-pi-tu-na*. Both are thought to be Minoan deities. Compare the structure of the historical Greek *Diktynna*.

of cult (female Zeus = *Diwia*, female Poseidon = *Posidaeia*); and the associations between deities and specific locales that are preserved in the historical mythological tradition, e.g., Eileithyia and the site of Amnisos on Crete.

The above information has been extracted from texts such as the following. By convention, the signs [ and ] mark the place in lines of text where the tablet is broken away to the right and to the left, respectively. Texts are preceded by abbreviation of site and are identified by contents as belonging to series, designated by capital letter followed by small letter, e.g., Fp is a series of texts dealing with the agricultural commodity olive oil. Another such set at Pylos is designated as Fr. The sets are distinguished conventionally as coming from KN (Cnossos), PY (Pylos), KH (Khania), and TH (Thebes).

### 1 Allocations of Olive Oil to Deities and Sanctuaries

The following text from Cnossos (KN) is part of a fuller set of similar records. It is a good example of the kind of economic record that gives us information about the gods whom the inhabitants of Crete during the Mycenaean palatial period (ca. 1400–1200 BC) worshiped. The record was drawn up to record the disbursement of oil and fulfillment of a ritual obligation to deities, here identified as located in specific sanctuaries. OIL is olive oil, one of the main agricultural products (along with barley, wheat, figs, and wine) produced in large quantities for consumption and trade. We do not know how this oil would have been used within the sacred place where the individual recipient deities are located. But the large quantities and the inclusion of a human priestess among the recipients would seem to argue for some use besides token ritual offering.

Note the references to a sanctuary of Daidalos, to Diktaean Zeus, to a divine being known as Erinys, and to a priestess of the winds in the vicinity of the Cnossian port town of Amnisos.

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#### KN Fp(1) 1 + 31

|     |                                      |                             |
|-----|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| .1  | in the month of Deukios <sup>a</sup> |                             |
| .2  | to Diktaean Zeus                     | OIL 9.6 liters              |
| .3  | to the sanctuary of Daidalos         | OIL 19.2 liters             |
| .4  | to “pa-de” <sup>b</sup>              | OIL 9.6 liters              |
| .5  | to all the gods                      | OIL 28.8 liters             |
| .6  | to Therasia <sup>c</sup>             | OIL 9.6 liters <sup>d</sup> |
| .7  | at Amnisos, to all the gods          | OIL 9.6 liters <sup>d</sup> |
| .8  | to Erinus <sup>e</sup>               | OIL 4.8 liters              |
| .9  | to the site of “*47-da” <sup>f</sup> | OIL 1.6 liters              |
| .10 | to the priestess of the winds        | 6.4 liters                  |
| .11 | <b>blank line</b>                    |                             |
| .12 | so much                              | OIL 108.8 liters            |



<sup>a</sup> One of six or seven month names at Cnossos. Month names only occur on “ritual” texts, where the completion of an action within a particular time period is important. Consequently month names are most often in the grammatical case that specifies “occurring *within*” a given time period.

<sup>b</sup> “pa-de” seems to be a Minoan divinity.

<sup>c</sup> *Therasia* is a goddess of the hunters. Cf. Greek *theratās*, “hunter.”

<sup>d</sup> On one of these lines, another 9.6 liters is to be restored after the tablet break.

<sup>e</sup> The word *Erinus* is the singular of the Greek word for the Furies who in historical Greek myth and religion pursue those who are guilty of kindred murder. They are most notably treated in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus. The Erinyes in Hesiod’s *Theogony* 176–187 are primordial divinities born from the earth and the blood from the castrated sexual organs of Ouranos. They are the powers who avenge kindred murder, and they assist at the birth of “Oath,” who springs from “Strife” (Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, 803–804).

<sup>f</sup> “\*47-da” seems to be a Minoan place name.

## 2 Oil Allocations at Cnossos and Pylos

Besides the larger-sized shipments of olive oil to sanctuaries examined above, the palatial centers also record disbursements of smaller quantities of precious perfumed oils.

KN Fh <390><sup>a</sup> to Erinu[s]

<sup>a</sup> Fh <390> is known only from a drawing, hence the angle brackets. It is also part of a group of texts recording larger disbursements of oil.

PY Fr 1226 .1 The Lousian fields to the gods sage-scented OIL+sage 4.8 liters

.2 **blank line**

(see the photo of Fr 1226, p. 441)

PY Fr 1224 .a sage-scented and treated with henna  
in the Sphagianian<sup>a</sup> month to Poseidon OIL+sage 0.8 liters

PY Fr 1231 .1 for the Lady<sup>b</sup> to the Thirsty Ones<sup>c</sup> [

.2 for guests [ ] OIL 9.6 liters[

.3 **blank line**

PY Fr 1230 to the sanctuary of Zeus OIL+ “anointing” 1.6 liters

<sup>a</sup> The month name derives from the sacred area in the kingdom of Pylos known as *Sphagianes*, or “the place of ritual slaughter.”

<sup>b</sup> *po-ti-ni-ja*, translated here as “Lady,” appears elsewhere with many epithets. See the above tables of attested deities.

<sup>c</sup> The “Thirsty Ones” are some kind of *daimones*, supernatural forces that interact with human lives and affairs.

### 3 Honey Offering Texts from Khania and Cnossos

A relatively recent surprise is the firm evidence that the cult of Dionysos was active in the 13th century BC.<sup>14</sup> From the site of Khania (KH) in western Crete, we have a tablet that records offerings of amphorae (two-handed transport-storage jars) of honey to Zeus and to Dionysos in a sanctuary of Zeus.

This tablet from Khania conforms to the pattern of a fuller series of honey offering texts from Cnossos, of which we provide one example. Given how honey has to be extracted and prepared, it would have been a special treat and a fitting offering to the deity (perhaps to be consumed by his sacred officials or worshipers during rituals). The Linear B texts refer to officials known as “honey masters” and “honey men,” and honey is listed among the ingredients for large-scale ritual banquets.

KH Gq 5

- |    |                         |         |                    |
|----|-------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| .1 | to the precinct of Zeus | to Zeus | AMPHORA of honey 1 |
| .2 | to Dionysos             |         | AMPHORA of honey 2 |

The following two Cnossos “honey-offering” texts are remarkable for the reference to *Eileuthia* (compare historical Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth associated with Artemis) and the *potnia* of the Labyrinth. In Homer, *Odyssey* 19.188, Odysseus is said to have been driven by storms to Amnisos where there is a cave sanctuary of Eileithyia. One Linear B tablet, Cn 1287 from Pylos, has a scribal drawing or “doodle” of a maze or labyrinth on the back.

KN Gg(3) 705

- |    |                   |                |                 |
|----|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| .1 | ] at Amnisos      | / to Eileuthia | HONEY AMPHORA 1 |
| .2 | ] to all the gods |                | HONEY AMPHORA 1 |
| .3 | to Posei? ]don    |                | HONEY AMPHORA 1 |

KN Gg(1) 702

- |    |                              |  |                 |
|----|------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| .1 | to all the gods /            |  | HONEY AMPHORA 1 |
| .2 | to the Lady of the Labyrinth |  | HONEY AMPHORA 1 |

### 4 Landholding Records from Pylos

Dionysos is also found now at Pylos. Mycenaean palatial culture, like the contemporary Hittite civilization in Anatolia, operated on an elaborate system of various grades of obligations and corresponding rewards or entitlements. Chief among the benefits for work service or production or for noble or sacred status was the privilege of “holding” land, part of the produce of which could be used for the personal benefit of the landholder. The palatial centers monitored landholdings, both to ascertain that their own obligations to specialist workers and palatial officials were discharged,

<sup>14</sup> T. G. Palaima, “Linear B and the Origins of Greek Religion: ‘*di-wo-nu-so*,’” in *The History of the Hellenic Language and Writing: From the Second to the First Millennium BC: Break or Continuity?*, eds. N. Dimoudis and A. Kyriatsoulis (Altenburg 1998), 205–222.

and as a way of calculating contributions that would be made from the produce of the land held.

This tablet is part of a set monitoring landholdings, measured in terms of amounts of seed grain. Among these landholders are specialist crafts personnel associated with the presumed “military leader” or *lawagetat* at Pylos (PY). Here a parcel of land containing a fire altar of Dionysos out in the Messenian countryside is recorded.

PY Ea 102

.1 of Dionysos the fire altar BARLEY 249.6 liters of seed grain

## 5 The Room of the Chariot Tablets at Cnossos: Our Earliest References to the Gods

The two tablets here come from our earliest collection of tablets in Linear B, the Room of the Chariot tablets at Cnossos (ca. 1400 BC). The location gets its name because of the concern for military equipment, including chariots and sets of armor, on over 20 percent of the tablets. Records from this location also have a high incidence of Greek names of an aristocratic type.<sup>15</sup> (The context may explain why, remarkably, on this text all preserved theonyms are attested in the historical Greek tradition.)

KN V 52 + 52 bis + 8285

.1 to the Lady of Athens 1 [ ] traces [ ]  
.2 to Enuaios 1 to Paiawon 1 to Poseid[on  
bottom edge {to Erinus<sup>erased</sup>, pe-ro?<sup>erased</sup>}

Note that, as with the reference to the Lady or *potnia* of the Labyrinth, here we get Mycenaean corroboration that the Homeric phrase “Athenian potnia” reflects the origin of this major Greek deity as the “powerful female goddess” of a settlement with the name *Athene*.<sup>16</sup> Most of the Mycenaean remains on the acropolis of Athens have been obliterated by long and continuous habitation of the locale and successive major building programs, but the mythical tradition alone (compare Theseus and the Minotaur) suggests that, like its neighbor Eleusis, the site must have been significant in the late Bronze Age.

KN F 51 reverse side

.1 to? the king WHEAT 14.4 liters for the preliminary meal? 4 liters  
.2 to Zeus WHEAT 9.6 liters WHEAT 38.8 liters for kneading? WHEAT 9.6 liters

<sup>15</sup> J. Gulizio, K. Pluta, and T. G. Palaima, “Religion in the Room of the Chariot Tablets,” in *Potnia, Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age*, eds. R. Hägg and R. Laffineur (Liège and Austin 2001), 453–461; and T. G. Palaima, “Mycenaean Militarism from a Textual Perspective. Onomastics in Context: *lawos*, *damos*, *klewos*,” in *Polemos: Warfare in the Aegean Bronze Age*, ed. R. Laffineur (Liège and Austin 1999), 367–378.

<sup>16</sup> W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, Mass. 1985), 139.

WHEAT (or perhaps BARLEY) is here allotted to the king or *wanaks* and, in a pair of allotments, to Zeus. At the same time smaller allotments are designated for a preliminary banquet and for kneading into cakes, perhaps for ceremonial use.

## 6 Tn 316: The Famous *Sphagianes* “Human Sacrifice” Tablet<sup>17</sup>

Given the Greek mythical traditions for human sacrifice (most notably the sacrifice of Iphigeneia at Aulis and the sacrifice of Trojan youths at the funeral pyre of Patrolos) and the controversial Bronze Age evidence from Crete for the same practice,<sup>18</sup> it is understandable that scholars looked to this tablet for textual corroboration.

Some scholars have argued<sup>19</sup> that the term on tablet Tn 316 from Pylos transliterated as *po-re-na* (*phorenas* meaning either “those brought” or “those bringing”) identifies human sacrificial victims. According to this line of interpretation, the text of Tn 316 was written as one of many extreme emergency measures just before the destruction of the palace. Tn 316 would then reflect a desperate, and abnormal, attempt to placate divine powers through the sacrifice of male victims to male gods and female victims to female gods.

But the term *po-re-na* more likely refers to “human sacristans” who are identified as “bearers.”<sup>20</sup> Thus it is more plausible<sup>21</sup> that tablet Tn 316 records a ritual procession with sacristans carrying gold heirloom vessels from the stores of the palatial center out to sanctuaries located in the district known as *Sphagianes* (“the place of ritual slaughter”). *Sphagianes* is where the Pylian “Lady” (*potnia*) was the primary deity. This goddess and this religious district are closely linked with palatial cult and power.

The divine recipients on this text are recorded in a hierarchy that privileges female deities, beginning with *potnia*. Poseidon himself is absent from his own sanctuary. Notice, too, the female counterparts to Zeus (line v.6) and Poseidon (line .4), and the reference to the concept of hero in the recipient *Thrice-Hero*.<sup>22</sup>

Of further mythological interest here is the pairing of Zeus and Hera in Zeus’ sanctuary, and the isolation of the feminine counterpart of Zeus, *Diwia*, in her own sanctuary. Hermes here is either worshipped in *Diwia*’s shrine (with suggestions that he is her son, in contrast with the later tradition in Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*, which makes him the son of Zeus and Maia) or he is, as god of boundaries, placed outside any defined sanctuary.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. T. G. Palaima, “Kn02–Tn 316,” in *Floerant Studia Mycenaean*, vol. 2, eds. S. Deger-Jalkotzy, S. Hiller and O. Panagl (Vienna 1999), 437–461; and J. C. Wright, “Empty Cups and Empty Jugs: The Social Role of Wine in Minoan and Mycenaean Societies,” in *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine*, eds. P. E. McGovern, S. J. Fleming, and S. H. Katz (Philadelphia 1995), 287–309.

<sup>18</sup> Reviewed in D. D. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (London 1991).

<sup>19</sup> E.g., Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, 91–92.

<sup>20</sup> Compare later Greek *kanephoroi*, “basket-bearers.”

<sup>21</sup> Palaima, “Kn02–Tn 316.”

<sup>22</sup> Wright, “Empty Cups and Empty Jugs: The Social Role of Wine in Minoan and Mycenaean Societies,” links the notion of “hero” in this period to ancestor worship that is so important in legitimizing power and status.

PY Tn 316 (see the photo of Tn 316 frontside, p. 440)

front side

- .1 Within [the month] of Plowistos? (or Phlowistos? or Prowistos?)<sup>a</sup>  
 .2 performs a holy ritual<sup>b</sup> at *Sphagianes*, and brings gifts and leads *po-re-na*  
 .3 PYLOS<sup>c</sup> to *potnia* GOLD CUP 1 WOMAN 1  
 .4 to *Manassa* GOLD BOWL 1 WOMAN 1 to *Posidaeia* GOLD BOWL 1 WOMAN 1  
 .5 to *Thrice-Hero* GOLD CHALICE 1 to *House-Master* GOLD CUP 1  
 .6 narrow/ **blank line**  
 .7 **blank line**  
 .8 **blank line**  
 .9 **blank line**  
 .10 PYLOS **blank line**

*remaining portion of this side of tablet without rule lines*

reverse side

- v.1 **phr** at the *sanctuary of Poseidon* and the town leads  
 v.2 and brings gifts and leads *po-re-na*  
 v.3a PYLOS *a*  
 v.3 GOLD CUP 1 WOMAN 2 to *Bowia* and X of *Komawentei-*  
 v.4 **phr** at *sanctuary of pe-re-\*82* and at *sanc. of Iphemedeia* and at *sanc. of Diwia*  
 v.5 and brings gifts and leads *po-re-na* to *pe-re-\*82* GOLD BOWL 1 WOMAN 1  
 v.6 PYLOS to *Iphemedeia* GOLD BOWL 1 to *Diwia* GOLD BOWL 1 WOMAN 1  
 v.7 to *Hermes Areias* GOLD CHALICE 1 MAN 1  
 v.8 **phr** at the *sanctuary of Zeus* and brings gifts and leads *po-re-na*  
 v.9 to *Zeus* GOLD BOWL 1 MAN 1 to *Hera* GOLD BOWL 1 WOMAN 1  
 v.10 PYLOS to *Drimios*<sup>d</sup> *the son of Zeus* GOLD BOWL 1  
 v.11 **blank line**  
 v.12 narrow/ **blank line**  
 v.13 **blank line**  
 v.14 **blank line**  
 v.15 PYLOS **blank line**  
 v.16 **blank line**

<sup>a</sup> Given other occurrences of this word in the “recipient” slot of oil-offering texts, it is most reasonable to interpret it as the name of a deity, linked alternatively with “sailing” or “flowering” or “knowing.”

<sup>b</sup> Hereafter abbreviated **phr**. The word thus translated may also simply refer to ritual “sending.” It is typical in ritual texts in many cultures to have an unspecified subject of a verb that designates

(continues)

ritual actions. For a complete interpretation of Tn 316 with a full review of scholarly theories, see Palaima, “Kn02–Tn 316.”

<sup>c</sup> PYLOS is everywhere written in extra-large letters. Its syntactical function is ambiguous. It may represent the collective subject of the ritual action expressed in each section, or it may somehow designate location.

<sup>d</sup> Attempts have been made to link this deity with later epithets of Dionysos.

## MYTHICAL NAMES AND OTHER TEXTUAL EVIDENCE RELATED TO MYTHOLOGY

It is significant that approximately seventy human names in the tablets are also found in the Homeric texts,<sup>23</sup> famous names like Hector and Achilles among them. Given that these names were not given by parents to their children in the historical period,<sup>24</sup> the Linear B evidence alone demonstrates that the Homeric tradition was not “coining” these mainly compound names, but was freely drawing from the repertory of names borne by real human beings in the Bronze Age, but not the historical period. Moreover, the tablets and material record give sufficient evidence to prove that a mythological performance tradition, complete with lyre players (now attested on a Thebes tablet) at aristocratic banquets (attested on tablets and sealings and frescoes from many sites<sup>25</sup>), was already under way in the Bronze Age.

### 7 Landholding Tablets from the *Sphagianes* District

These two tablets, from a series dealing with landholdings in the sacred district of *Sphagianes* (see the discussion in section 6), contain two famous mythological names from Homer, here borne by relatively low-ranking individuals who have some form of religious affiliation as “servants of the deity” known as *Potnia*, or “Lady.”

PYLOS En 609

- .1 at *Sphagianes* so many households HOUSEHOLD 40
- .2 so many *telestai*<sup>a</sup> are in (*Sphagianes*) MAN 14
- .3 of *Warnataios* the settled land so much seed grain BARLEY 193.6 liters
- .4 thus the benefited landholders have land from *Warnataios*

Here follows a list of five individuals who hold plots of land from *Warnataios*. I give one example:

- .6 *Inia* the servant of the god(dess) has a beneficial plot of land so much seed grain BARLEY 25.8 liters of seed grain

<sup>23</sup> Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 104–105.

<sup>24</sup> A. Morpurgo Davies, “Greek Personal Names and Linguistic Continuity,” in *Greek Personal Names*, eds. S. Hornblower and E. Mathews (Oxford 2000), 15–39.

<sup>25</sup> T. G. Palaima, “Sacrificial Feasting in the Linear B Tablets,” *Hesperia* 73.2 (2004), 217–246.



<sup>a</sup> The term *telestās* is found in historical Greek inscriptions. Here it seems to mean “agent of the *telos*, man of service,” i.e., a functionary who performs services on behalf of local communities. In the En series, the *telestai*, like *Warnataios*, control land that they in turn sublease.

PYLOS En 74 has the same structure. Here are three entries of benefited landholders.

- .3 *Pekitas*, the dry-cleaner of the *king*, has a beneficial plot of land so much seed grain  
BARLEY 9.6 liters
- .5 *Theseus*, the servant of the god(dess), has a beneficial plot of land so much seed grain  
BARLEY 38.4 liters
- .7 *Hektor*, the servant of the god(dess), has a beneficial plot of land so much seed grain  
BARLEY 4.8? liters

*Theseus* and *Hektor*, then, are names of ordinary Mycenaean in the Linear B texts. These references prove that Homer and the singers of early Greek traditional legend were drawing upon a stock of common names for the heroes they treated.

## 8 Personnel List

Here is a personnel list from the site of Thebes (TH) with significant names and occupational titles, including fullers (otherwise known as “dry cleaners,” see En 74.3 in section 7) and a pair of lyre players. The significant names include *Smintheus*, found as an epithet of Apollo in Homer and also attested twice at Cnossos in the Linear B corpus, and *Nestianor* (“he who causes men to return safely”).<sup>26</sup> *Nestianor* is found twice at Pylos. The *\*nes* root occurs as an element in “speaking” names like Neleus (*ne-e-ra-wo* in a text from Pylos below) and Nestor in the Neleid dynasty at Pylos. Nestor is the archetype among all the Greek heroes of the pious and wise elder statesman who brings himself and his troops back home and rules over them and his children in a harmonious kingdom.

TH Av 106

|    |                     |       |                     |       |
|----|---------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| .1 |                     |       | ] Nestianor         | MAN 1 |
| .2 | ] MAN 1             |       | Omphialos           | MAN 1 |
| .3 | ] <i>ke-re-u-so</i> | MAN 1 | Smintheus           | MAN 1 |
| .4 | ] <i>na-e-si-jo</i> | MAN 1 | <i>te-u-ke-i-jo</i> | MAN 1 |
| .5 | ] <i>ta-me-je-u</i> | MAN 1 | fullers             | MAN 6 |
| .6 | ] <i>sa-nwa-ta</i>  | MAN 1 | <i>a-re-pe-se-u</i> | MAN 1 |
| .7 | ] MAN 1             |       | lyre players        | MAN 2 |
| .8 |                     |       | ] <i>-ra</i>        | MAN 1 |

There are also some other tantalizing mythological names, like the personal name *Tantalos* itself on tablets from Pylos and Cnossos. The word “hero” (in section 6) appears in the name of a minor deity, where it is emphasized by the intensifying prefix *tris-*.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the category of mythic songs, like the *Odyssey*, known as *nostoi* or “songs of return.” It is a normal pattern in Greek for verbal elements to have an *e* vowel and noun elements to have an *o* vowel.

## 9 Mythical Names on Other Tablets

*Achilles* appears on two tablets, one at Pylos and one at Cnossos. At Cnossos, his name is entered on a tablet in the series of tablets from the Room of the Chariot Tablets (see section 5) that record individuals who are already in possession of a chariot, two horses, and two sets of body armor. These individuals are warriors of high status who command military equipment of top palatial quality.

KN Vc 106

] Achilles

At Pylos, Achilles occurs, along with other personal names, including Neleus, and occupational terms, such as “yoke-men” (probably individuals who control teams of worker oxen) and “horse-feeders,” as recipients of WHEAT and OLIVES. Here are excerpts:

PY Fn 79

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| .2 to Achilles                            | WHEAT 48 liters                  |
| .5 to Neleus                              | WHEAT 64 liters OLIVES 96 liters |
| .10 to the “yoke-men” and “horse-feeders” | WHEAT 163.2 liters               |

Finally, we should note the presence of names, scattered throughout the Mycenaean corpus, connected with the legend of Jason and the Argonauts, which is centered on the site of Iolcos in northern Greece and Colchis at the extreme eastern limit of the Black Sea. Notable among these names<sup>27</sup> are Jason (PY Cn 655), Mopsos (seer of the Argonauts, KN Dc 1381) and perhaps even *Kolkhidas* (“the man from Colchis”?, PY Ea 59 and elsewhere).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> S. Hiller, “The Mycenaean and the Black Sea,” in *Thalassa: L’Egée préhistorique et la mer*, eds. R. Laffineur and L. Basch (Liège 1991), 214.

<sup>28</sup> For a full list of Homeric names in Linear B, see Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 103–105.