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2020.08.07 | By Rachele Pierini and Tom Palaima

Summaries of Presentations and Discussion by Elizabeth Barber, Thomas Palaima, Rachele Pierini, and Brent Vine

§0. Rachele Pierini began the June seminar meeting of MAST @ CHS (the fifth in the series, begun November 8, 2019 and continued December 12, January 24, and April 27) by welcoming participants to the talk. As an example of the kinds of topics we have discussed in prior meetings, on December 12 our brief minutes list:

- *to-pe-za* (Paolo Sabattini) with discussion of the etymology of the Tarpeian Rock
- discussion of the etymology of Hermes (Laura Massetti)
- discussion of *di-u-ja-wo* (Roger Woodard)
- discussion of PY Ta 716 with a particular focus on *a-mo-te-wi-ja* (Tom Palaima).

§1. On June 26, besides many of the ‘historical family members’ of MAST (Gregory Nagy, Leonard Muellner, Sarah Morris, Roger Woodard, Brent Vine, Doug Frame, Georgia Flouda, Vassilis Petrakis), we were delighted to have joining us also Elizabeth Barber, Gloria Ferrari Pinney, Richard Firth, Hedvig Landenius Enegren, Christina Skelton, Nicholas Blackwell, Cassandra Donnelly, Alex Roy and Anthony Snodgrass. Regrets included Eric Cline and Marie Louise Nosch. Our thanks to Garrett Bruner, PASP INSTAP archivist, Jill Curry Robbins, and Keith DeStone for their patient help in producing this complicated piece of scholarship, collaborative in the best sense. Lana Koelle, CHS program manager and librarian, literally has made all of our meetings happen transglobally.

§2. Tom Palaima presented the etymological controversy concerning the Mycenaean word *pe-re-ke-u* and some broader epistemological implications of this specific issue and other word-units in the Linear B lexicon likewise related to cloth. Elizabeth Barber provided an authoritative reconstruction of the stages, techniques and processes for cloth working (weaving, plaiting, felting, etc.) in both prehistoric and historic textile production (with an emphasis on Mycenaean and later Greek terminology). In addition, she explained the methodology behind her pioneering masterpiece *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages with Special Reference to the Aegean*. Finally, Rachele Pierini delivered a presentation on problems associated with interpreting the linguistic idiosyncrasies attested on tablets from the *Room of the Chariot Tablets* (RCT) at Knossos and their significance. She highlighted and stressed that the relative chronology we can reconstruct from these features fits better with a higher chronology for the Bronze Age Aegean. Brent Vine offered substantial comments and so was invited to write them up in full detail.

Topic 1: The Etymology of Mycenaean *pe-re-ke-u* and *a-ke-te-ri-ja* and Related Forms.

Presenter: Tom Palaima.

§3. Palaima addressed sample cases relating to his concerns with contextual controls over proposed etymologies for terms in what we call Mycenaean Greek in the Linear B texts. Many such terms have no clear IE etymology and have as possible sources the many non-Greek languages that must have existed in Crete and the Greek mainland preceding and during the period 1600–1100 BCE.

§4. He now adds that his late-life concerns have been with him ever since the days when he was studying mathematics before turning to Classics, ancient Greek and Linear B. They can be summed up nicely in this remark by Alice Kober from her Earle lecture at Hunter College April 9, 1948 (Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory = PASP, Box 55.2) (Dürig 2020:44):

There is a definition of scholarship which states that a scholar is a person who learns more and more about less and less until finally he knows everything about nothing. It is supposed to be funny, but as a matter of fact, it comes very close to stating a deep philosophical truth. The more one knows, the more one becomes aware of how much more there is to learn. Only the ignorant know everything about anything, or, to put it more accurately, they think they know.

§5. He boiled things down to three main questions:

1. When do we need a new etymology for a word that occurs in the Linear B texts?
2. If a proposed etymology is technically sound, what criteria do we have for determining whether it is to be preferred over other technically sound etymologies?
3. To what extent does a Mycenaean term have a set identification (given spelling ambiguities, which from our vantage point are more ambiguous than they would have been to the tablet-writers) and a single fixed meaning in all contexts?

§6. With regard to the third question, he alluded to his discussion (Palaima 2020:127–128) of the term *ka-zo-de* as **kalk^h-yondeon* Thebes tablet Av 104 (*TFC* 4:6), which he has related to the root of the loan word attested in historical Greek **kalk^hā* (κάλχη) used both for the murex, i.e., the marine mollusk, and for the purple dye which is extracted from it; and not as **k^halk-yonde* ‘to the bronze place’, i.e., bronze workshop (cf. historical Greek χαλκός and Mycenaean *ka-ko*, *ka-ke-u*, *ka-ki-jo*, *ka-ke-ja-pi* and *ka-ko-de-ta* *DMic* 1:307–309). Brent Vine adds that we should add to the basic */khalk-/* words here *ka-zaon* KN Sp 4452, which in context is clearly an adjectival form in the nominative singular feminine showing the same kind of palatalization (representing **χαλκῆα* cf. Aeolic χάλκιος *DMic* 1:334 s. *ka-za*).

§7. In specific then we looked at:

pe-re-ke-u pe-re-ke-we pe-re-ke pe-re-ko and the possible connection of *pe-re-ku-ta*

and

pe-re-ku-wa-na-ka with */pelekus/*

and very quickly at:

a-ke-te-ri-ja a-ze-te-ri-ja ἀσκέω ἀκέστρια (5th c BCE) *ja-ke-te-re a₂-ke-te-re*

and the contexts in which these terms occur and the related terms with which they occur. We spent much more time on the first group of words.

§8. A recent article by Michael Lane (Lane 2011) raises anew the debate about the linguistic interpretation of the Mycenaean word *pe-re-ke-u* and related forms. (Readers may consult Killen 1996–1997:123–127 for a succinct discussion of some of the primary evidence for the interpretation of terms related to Mycenaean word units with the root represented as *pe-re-k-* as either ‘weave’ or ‘plait’ and, if ‘plait’, what kind of material is being worked on.) The widely accepted interpretation before Lane’s paper for the words *pe-re-ke-u* (and dative singular or nominative plural *pe-re-ke-we*), *pe-re-ke*, and *pe-re-ko*[was that they reflect the same root found in the alphabetic Greek πλέκω, commonly translated as ‘to weave’, and that *pe-re-ke-u* corresponds to an occupational noun commonly translated generically as ‘weaver’. (NOTE: the translation ‘weave’ is problematical. It should be ‘plait’. And ‘weaver’ should be ‘plaiter’.) However, Lane (2011:83) views the interpretation of *pe-re-ke-u* (and related terms like *pe-re-ke*) in the Linear B texts as being derived from πλέκω (whether ‘to weave’ or ‘to plait’ and whatever materials are being plaited) as unacceptable based on two main arguments:

1. in Mycenaean Greek there is already a word for ‘weaver’, i.e. *i-te-u*, /*histēus*/;
2. nouns in *-ēus* seem to require, in Greek, the *o*-grade of the verbal root from which they derive, but in *pe-re-ke-u*, /*plekēus*/ an *e*-grade would be present. Alternatively, the form *pe-re-ke-u* could derive from an *s*-stem, like *o-pi-te-u-ke-e-u*/*opiteukhehēus*/ from /*teukhes-*/, which would explain the vocalism *e* in the form. Except when the aspiration precedes the vowel /a/, Linear B does not have a special sign that would represent specifically in spelling the aspiration arising from the disappearance of intervocalic *-s-*.

§9. If Lane’s arguments are sound, the *-ēus* noun form of the verb πλέκω would require, as Palaima explained, that the form should appear in LB texts either as **po-ro-ke-u* or **pe-re-ke-e-u*. One point seemingly in favor of Lane’s proposal is his observation that in historical Greek nouns in *-ēus* generally are formed from the *o*-grade noun, not from the corresponding verb in *e*-grade. So, as Palaima pointed out, we get in Buck and Petersen’s *Reverse Index* (Buck and Petersen 1944: 28–31):

ἀμοιβεύς NOT *ἀμειβεύς
ὄλκεύς NOT *έλκεύς
τοκεύς NOT *τεκεύς
and even: πλοκεύς Epicharmus 5th c. BCE

and in compounds:

-τομεύς NOT *-τεμεύς
-στολεύς NOT *-στελεύς
-νομεύς NOT *-νεμεύς

-φορεύς NOT *-φερεύς
-δοχεύς NOT *-δεχεύς etc.

The potential historical-period exceptions in Buck and Petersen's *Reverse Index* are: -αγγελεύς and ἀλειφεύς. Lane thus proposes to derive *pe-re-ke-u* from an unattested verb **plēkō*, 'to shear, strip of (wool)'.
§10. Palaima led us in exploring Lane's assumption on the basis of Linear B data. He also set the stage for Elizabeth Barber to explain the practical *realia* of cloth-making technology and the vocabulary in Late Bronze Age Greek, Homeric and historical Greek that relates to it.

§11. It became clear that key parts of Lane's argument are untenable.

§12. Regarding Lane argument 2, a group of Mycenaean words in *-ēus*, although personal names, show a possible formation from an *e*-grade of the root: *e-te-re-u*, *o-pe-te-re-u*, *ne-qe-u*, *pe-qe-u*. In Mycenaean possible *e*-grade forms are:

e-te-re-u

o-pe-te-re-u *Οφελτρεύς ???

ne-qe-u taken as from < *νείχ^wω νείφω

pe-qe-u perhap *Πεκ^wεύς < πεκ^w- cf. πέσσω cf. *a-to-ro-qo* *άρτοποκ^wος > άρτοκόπος

e-re-e-u PY Nn 831.4 (S106-H 1)

e-re-e-we PY An 723.1 (S172-H 1); Cn 1197.5 (S131-H 1); Jn 881.1 (S310-H 2)

e-re-e-wo PY Cr 591.2: e-|ṛe-ḡ-wo (|e-[]) (Cii) (cf. |ḡ-wo); Na 262.B (S106-H 1).

The various case forms of *e-re-e-u* may be explained either as derived from an ethnic related to ἔλος 'swamp' or 'marshy land' used as a toponym (PY Jn 829 dat. loc. *e-re-i* nom. Ἔλος II. 2.594) in Messenia /*hEleheus*/ or, connected with our discussion here, as related to the infinitive *e-re-e* 'to row' (IE **h₁erh₁-*, **h₁reh₁-*) and the agent noun *e-re-ta* as 'rowers' and here ἑρπελεύς. Cf. later Greek ἑρετμόν 'oar', ἑρέτης 'rower', ἑρέσσω 'row' (with the agent noun generating the verb 'to row' and the instrument 'oar'). But does historical τρι-ήρης justify our thinking of an *s*-stem noun in Mycenaean times **eros*, **erehos* that would generate *e-re-e-u* in the manner of *o-pi-te-u-ke-e-u* from **teukhos*, **teukhehos*? Brent Vine draws our attention to the recent analysis of compound stems in -ήρης by Alain Blanc (2018). Blanc (2018:448ff.) concludes that they are not based on an old simplex *s*-stem, but rather directly on the verbal root.

§13. We discussed whether Mycenaean had any other potential instances of *-eus* nouns from verbal stems or their corresponding *e*-grade noun stems. Brent Vine offered a clear example of a noun in *-eus* from an *s*-stem showing a graphic rendering comparable to that in *pe-re-ke-u*, i.e., *ze-u-ke-u-si* /*zeugeusi*/ (*DMic* 2:458 s.v.) on PY Fn 50.9, dative plural of **ze-u-ke-u* (NOTE not **ze-u-ke-e-u*) derived from **ze-u-ko*, alph. Gk. ζεύγος, an *s*-stem noun also attested in Linear B on PY Ub 1318 (*ze-u-ke-si* dative plural, *DMic* 2:458 s.v.). Vine explained that this shows that it is possible to form a noun in *-eus* from an *s*-stem noun, directly from the root and not from the root plus *-es-*. Thus, it is likely that in Mycenaean Greek an unattested **pe-re-ko*, /*plekos*/ was the actual *s*-stem word from which *pe-re-ke-u* derived in Mycenaean times, with no need of an

alternative etymology. A neuter s-stem πλέκος actually is attested in alphabetic Greek, and not too late (Aristoph.+).

§14. We should add that the word unit *po-ro-ko* (perhaps, but not surely /*plokos*/) is found fully or partially preserved at Pylos only in two contexts where it is clearly a personal name of a *ka-ke-u* ‘worker of copper or bronze’ (PY Jn 658.6 and Jn 725.5). It also occurs at Knossos as a shepherd’s name. We now know it appears only a single time in the Knossos tablets, owing to Melena’s recent painstaking work on the tablets and their relationship with Evans’ handlists (KT6:123; Dv 5049 = former Dv <1416>). Brent Vine subsequently added that “the same morphological pattern is also attested in alph. Gk., as in (e.g.) neut. s-stem σκῦτος (Hom.+) ἄ σκυτεύς (Aristoph.+).”

§15. Regarding 1., Palaima made two points. First, the term *pe-re-ke-u* was at the start (*Evidence*, 97) reasonably correctly translated as ‘plaiter’, but subsequently has been widely mistranslated—or we might say unknowingly loosely translated—as ‘weaver’. If, as Barber believes (see below), it does refer to ‘plaiting’ or ‘braiding’ rather than ‘weaving’, the artificial problem of ‘synonymity’ raised by Lane disappears. /*plekēus*/ would not be ‘synonymous’ with /*histēus*/. Lane (2011:81–82) himself also argues, along with Beekes (2010 2:1540 s.v. ὑφαίνω), that yet another later Greek word for ‘weave’ is attested in the Mycenaean word-unit *e-we-pe-se-so-me-na*.

§16. Moreover, if ‘synonymity’ were truly a problem, then by proposing that *pe-re-ke-u* comes from **plēkō*, ‘to shear, strip of (wool)’, but ultimately “from a stem **pleH₁-k-* connoting ‘flaying, stripping, tearing’”—our English word ‘flaying’ being cognate, Lane might be hoisting himself on his own petard. **plēkō* would be ‘synonymous’ with later Greek δέρω IE **der-* ‘flay’ and therefore ‘unnecessarily redundant’. The root of δέρω is attested, although not indubitably, in Mycenaean Greek on PY Un 718 *o-wi-de-ta-i* (read, in Palaima’s view most suitably for its tablet context, as ὀφι-δέρτᾱhi ‘sheep-flayers’; *DMic* 2:58 s.v. and Duhoux 2008:345 with alternative reconstructions) and on KN Fh 353 and Fh 5432 *de-ma-si* (δέρμασι) ‘leather hides’ (*DMic* 1:165-166 s.v.) in an oil context where oil to be used ‘for leather hides’ would be a suitable entry, given that on two other tablets by the same tablet-writer (H 141 tablets Fh 5428 and Fh 5435) reference is made to a *wi-ri-ne-we* (*DMic* 1:434 s.v.). This is most likely dative singular of **ῥινεύς* = ‘tanner’, literally ‘someone who has to do with a human or animal skin, especially a cowhide’. In one case (Fh 5428) a **wi-ri-ne-u* is recorded with an allocation of 355 liters of oil. The large quantity would suit industrial purposes.

§17. Second, the issue of ‘synonymity’ has epistemological implications. In Palaima’s opinion, apparent or real ‘synonymity’, i.e., words having the same meaning within a specific cultural sphere, especially in the Mycenaean Greek lexicon where ‘loan words’ from a pre-Greek Aegean substrate language or from pre-Greek Cretan language(s) or from the languages of surrounding ‘high cultures’, is well attested. Palaima cited Barber’s table (1991:278, table 12.1) in *Prehistoric Textiles*. In it Barber analyzes cloth-making terminology. The results indicate that the historical Greek lexicon has many cases where there are two or three words for the same item. Most conspicuous are the three words used for the word ‘wool’ itself (Barber 1991:260):

1. λῆνος (*lēnos*) Latin *lāna*, Hittite *hulana*, etc.;

2. ἔριον (*erion*), Hom εἶρος (*eiros*), Attic (pl.) ἔρεᾶ (*erea*), Myc. *we-we-e-a* = *werwe(h)e(h)a* (*DMic* 2:425 s.v.) ‘woolen’, an inherited IE word with Latin cognate, i.e. *vernēx* ‘wether’ (Vaan 2008:668–669 s.v.);
3. μαλλός (*mallos*), and related terms in later Greek and Hesychius, which, according to Barber (1991:259), “have no accepted etymology, but ... should have something to do with the Linear B ‘monogram’ for wool, MA+RU” and “may well be from a local Aegean word.” We should note that Beekes (2010 2:899 s.v. μαλλός) points out weaknesses with both proposed IE and Arabic etymologies for μαλλός and opts for a pre-Greek origin citing the geminate -λλ- as a pre-Greek feature. See the prominent Cretan collector’s name *ma-ri-ne-u* (Duhoux 2008:261–262) reconstructed as */Mallineus/*: “its radical comes perhaps from the word for ‘flock of wool’.”

§18. Also we might consider that absolute synonymity does not exist in and of itself, except rather artificially, as we all generally agreed, within scientific spheres. When interpreting Linear B texts, the different semantic and functional features of every single term should be investigated, even though they may seem redundant within the *corpus*. Furthermore why should we assume, when there is no guarantee, that individual scribes during the Mycenaean palatial period used terminology consistently and precisely? The nature of the Linear B tablets would call for professions or obligatory work roles of individuals to be recorded fairly accurately. However, in many cases the tablet records are self-mnemonic, essentially notes that scribes made for themselves and their close associates to refer to later.

§19. Palaima also stressed that in the history of Mycenology, the tendency has been to universalize solutions to word meaning. However, given the peculiar perceptions of language(s) in the Late Bronze Age Aegean and, insofar as we know, the absence of standardized rules of ‘spelling’ in Linear B writing, individual contexts should be examined carefully.

§20. Concluding this part of his talk, Palaima took up other occurrences of the sign sequence *pe-re-k-*.

§21. *pe-re-ku-wa-na-ka* and *pe-re-ku-ta* are no longer taken as related to */pelekus/* = in historical Greek a ‘two-edged axe’, used both for tree-felling and in combat. The sequence *pe-re-ku-* is now explained as derived from **g^weh₂-* ‘to go’ in zero-grade forms (**g^wh₂-u-*) prefixed with **pres^o* or **prei^o*. So *pe-re-ku-ta* PY An 172.2 (Hand 1) */presgu-/* or */prei(s)gu-/* = **πρεσγύτᾱς*; and *pe-re-ku-wa-na-ka* PY Va 15.2 */presgu-wanaks/* ‘elder *wanaks*’. Ruijgh 1967:321 n. 138 compares historically attested names Πρεσβυχάρης and Εὐρύναξ (*HP*:46, 465).

§22. Regarding *pe-re-ke* on KN L 520.1 Lane claims that it is “widely understood to be a finite verbal form having a stem in common with *pe-re-ke-u*.” Yet his note cites no example of such wide understanding and *DMic* (2:104 s. *pe-re-ke*) states just the opposite: “Probablemente Nom. pl. referido al tipo de tejido simbolizado con el ideograma *164, aunque sin interpr. gr. satisfactoria.”

§23. It is, however, virtually unparalleled for a verb to be placed in this unusual position, although both Leonard Palmer (1963:297, 444) and John Killen (1996–1997:126) have argued for an interpretation of *pe-re-ke* as a verb. Nonetheless, Killen’s careful use of rhetorical phrases

such as “it does not seem entirely inconceivable” indicates the tenuous nature of various underpinnings of the argument for a verbal form on tablet L 520.

Here is the text of KN L 520:

KN L 520.1

.1 do-ti-ja ,	LANA 18	pe-re-ke	*164 3
.2 ka-ma	LANA 12		*164 2
.3 sa-mu-ta-jo	LANA 24		*164 4

do-ti-ja is a toponym or feminine ethnicon. *ka-ma* is a toponym or less likely a personal name.

sa-mu-ta-jo is a personal name (a ‘collector’) found at Pylos, Knossos and Mycenae. If *pe-re-ke* were to be a verb, the word units in column 1 are then assumed to act somehow as the subject in each line:

.1 The site of *do-ti-ja* does the verbal action indicated by *pe-re-ke* on the quantity of wool indicated by LANA (here 54 kg.; LANA as a metrogram = ca. 3kg., Melena 2014:155) with the end result being 3 cloth items represented by ideogram *164.

.2 And the minor site or responsible individual *ka-ma* does the action *pe-re-ke* on 36 kg. of wool producing 2 cloth items *164.

.3 And finally the collector *sa-mu-ta-jo* does *pe-re-ke* work on 72 kg. of wool and the end result is 4 cloth items *164.

The basic idea here is that since the proportions between amounts of wool and units of the ideogram *164 are in all three lines 6:1, the wool is the raw material allotment and the ideogram *164 is the finished product. *164 iconographically resembles an “unnamed spotted garment” (Melena 2014:144). Reading the text this way comes very close to a mixed logographic-phonetic syntax that is not found anywhere else in the Linear B texts. Hence the hyper-cautious phrasing by Killen cited above.

§24. This is why the interpretation by Duhoux (1976:94 and n.248) that makes *pe-re-ke* a nominative plural adjective has been preferred. He proposes that *pe-re-ke* is descriptive and adjectivally reinforces the ‘spotted’ nature of the ideogram *164 (an image of a ‘spotted’ garment). Duhoux refers to the lexicographical tradition *πρήκες = tchetés = ‘spotted, dappled’; cf. πράκες = πρόκες πράκνον· μέλανα cf. περκνός. See Beekes (2010 2:1178 s.v. περκνός) for the posited adjective *περκός = Linear B *pe-ko* (*DMic* 2:96–97 s.v.) used to describe livestock as ‘dark’ on the underbelly; ‘de color negro’. Alternatively, Luján (1996–1997:362) has proposed two other possibilities:

(1) πλήξ nom. plur. πλήκες ‘un tipo de vendaje’ as found in the fragments of the Greek medical doctor Soranus (2nd c. CE) in his treatise on bandages *Fasc.* 22 and 24 (LSJ s.v.);

(2) *πλέκες connected with the root of πλέκω ‘doblar’ ‘to fold or bend’ and in view of the many types of garments whose Greek names are formed on the root πλ-, citing πέπλος, διπλοῖς.

The first suggestion Luján himself questions because of the *hapax* nature and because the one preserved reference is chronologically late. To the second suggestion Beekes (2010 2:1174 s.v. πέπλος) adds the possibility of the root being *pl- ‘skin, hide’, citing πέλμα (2010 2:1168 s.v. πέλμα) < PIE *pel-mn ‘skin, hide’. However, Luján adds that “[n]either solution is compelling.”

§25. One group of key texts for seeing how wool is allotted and who is working on the wool is the Mycenae texts Oe 121 129 130 (Hand 56). In them wool is given out in quantities in the following ways:

—6 kg. to *ka-ke-wi* Oe 121. *ka-ke-wi* is now interpreted by Palaima in this context as *kalk^hēwi* = ‘to the murex-dye-man’, which makes much better sense than to the *k^halkēwi* ‘to the bronze-worker’.

—15 kg. to *i-te-we-ri-di* a dative of **histēwris* Oe 121 (Duhoux 2008: 285 ‘to the feminine worker at the upright loom’).

—12 kg. to *di-du-mo ne-wo*, *ka-na-pe-we* = dative of *knapheus* Oe 129 ‘to *di-du-mo* the felter’

—12 kg. to *qa-da-wa-so pe-re-ke-we* = dative of *plekeus* Oe 130 ‘to *qa-da-wa-so* the plaiter’

§26. In private discussions, Elizabeth Barber (pers. comm. August 30, 2019) commented that these references fit how the actual practitioners of making cloths would have worked:

—the small quantity of 6 kg. to the ‘dyer’, because he does not dye everything, and murex dye is rare and precious; so he only gets a smaller targeted WOOL allocation;

—15 kg. to the female ‘weaver’; and

—12 kg. each to the *knapheus* = a ‘felt-maker’, because a mere ‘fuller’ of already-woven cloth would not need raw wool, but the man making cloth/rugs *from scratch* by the felting process would; and to the ‘plaiter’.

§27. By way of introducing Barber’s fuller discussion of textile matters, Palaima concluded with a quick survey of textile-related texts and of problems:

(1) in interpreting the terms *a-ke-ti-ri-ja* and *a-ze-ti-ri-ja* (and *a₂-ke-te-re*, on which see Palaima’s discussion as cited by Pierini in note 4 below) and their possible relationship to the Greek historical terms ἄκος and ἀσκέω;

(2) inherent in interpreting *a-ke-ti-ri-ja* and *a-ze-ti-ri-ja* everywhere as ‘finishers’ or ‘decorators’ and

(3) with regard to the relationship of these terms to later uses of the words ἀκεστής ἄκος ἀκέομαι ἀκέστρια ἀσκητής and ἀσκέω.

§28. Palaima here made one general but important point. In a brilliant comparative study of terms for work and power that are found in the Linear B texts and in the historical Greek lexicon, Morpurgo Davies (1979:103) proposes:

“If Killen (1979:165–166, 180) is right in giving to *a-ke-ti-ri-ja* the value *askētriai* ‘decorating women in the textile industry’, the later Greek equivalent ἄσκητής has a very different meaning ‘one who practices all arts and trades’....”

The *a-ke-ti-ri-ja* are also known in the Mycenaean literature now as ‘finishers’. Morpurgo Davies (1979:105) connects these “terminological losses” to “a change in the pattern of craft specialization.”

§29. The way this has been rephrased by Morpurgo Davies is misleading. It makes it seem that the ἄσκητής in historical times is a kind of ‘jack of all trades’, i.e., ‘one who practices all arts and trades’ as the occasion demands, with the implication that he is a specialist in none, whereas in Mycenaean palatial times the feminine form identifies a very particular specialist: ‘a final decorating finisher’. The idea then is that the arts and crafts intimately associated with the Mycenaean palatial centers aimed at producing particular luxury products that required hyper-specialists. Once the palatial centers disappeared with the destructions at the end of LH III B into the beginning of III C (roughly ca. 1230–1170 BCE), such specialty production ceased and crafts personnel over time became generalists or ‘jacks of all trades’ who manufactured commonplace objects.

§30. In fact, however, what the LSJ says is that an ἄσκητής is a specialist, but can be so in any specific art or trade. That is, the term can be applied to a person with highly developed technical skills and meticulous competence in any particular area, such as bronze-working, ship-building, wall-building, armor-making and so on. Chantraine (2009 s. ἀσκέω) says that in Homer the term is used for working with wool, metal, bow-making, building.

§31. The point here is that Killen may not be right in claiming the *a-ke-te-ri-ja* are ‘decorators’ and Morpurgo Davies in rephrasing is misleading. The LSJ says this complex of words applies to *any* art or trade. So the proposed change from Bronze Age to the historical (through Homer) period here *may* be exaggerated and misrepresented.

§32. Palaima Bibliography

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