

STUDIA MINOICA ET MYCENAEA

Carlo CONSANI

(Pescara, Italy)

„DOUBLE WRITINGS” IN MINOAN LINEAR A

1. Since the dawn of the Mycenaecology, scholars have been fascinated by the fact that in Linear B tablets, ideograms of different animals and objects such as wheels, arms and jars were preceded by phonetic writing which used to describe the same object. In the same context it was discovered that an ideogram which stood for an object was graphically connected to a syllabic grapheme and was to be interpreted as an acro-phonic abbreviation of the name of the object, as if it were some kind of compressed bilingual. An example of the first case is the use of jars with „three handles”, „four handles” or „without handles” found in the tablets of Ta series from Pylos, which played a leading role in the history of the decipherment of the Linear B¹, and in the later case, the use of additional syllables such as *a*, *ka* or *di* to the lay out of various vascular ideograms².

The use of such „double writings”, phonetic and ideographic, was interpreted from the very beginning by Ventris and Chadwick as a demonstration of a need to accompany phonetic signs with ideograms: this device was mainly addressed to more or less educated functionaries of the palatine administration who used to handle the records (Ventris, Chadwick 1973, 49). On the contrary, many researchers who didn't agree with the recent decipherment thought such a repetition useless and incomprehensible, a fact which would weaken the accuracy of Ventris's

¹ See Chadwick 1959, 81–83.

² For a complete survey of these cases see Consani 1983, 19. When the debate regarding the decipherment of Linear B was still open, F. Schachermayer collected all the cases of double writings in the Mycenaean tablets (Schachermayer 1959, 59–60).

interpretation³. G. Neumann then reexamined the question and arrived at conclusions that are both consistent and well-balanced. He has paid special attention to cases of double writing regarding ideograms of jars and has underlined the fact that phonetic together with ideographic writing belong to the Cretan script tradition of Linear A, from which Linear B originated (Neumann 1961, 172–173). Continuing with the comparison between the double writings of the tablet HT 31 and analogous cases of the Mycenaean *corpus*, the researcher has shown that the passage from the Minoan tradition to the Mycenaean records changes substantially the method of writing: in Linear A, the phonetic signs involved in such „double writing” are in a marginal position, above an ideographic sign, while in Linear B, phonetic signs are more important and autonomous. This feature must be related to the major order represented by the Mycenaean records compared to those Minoan (Neumann 1961, 173). Over thirty years after Neumann’s paper, his studies have directed the research to a very fruitful ground: especially the ancient story of Linear B and, in particular, its origin from Linear A. His conclusions were less useful for the formal aspect of two syllabaries than for the problems connected, on the one hand with the relationship between the two graphic systems and the phonetic structure of the above mentioned languages and, on the other hand, with the range of use of the two linear scripts. From this point of view, referring to the later published data, additional information can be added to Neumann’s studies.

First of all, the availability of a revised edition of the Minoan Linear A *corpus*, as the five volumes of GORILA (with further, but non substantial, integrations), permits the addition to the study of the „double writings” of a new piece of information which enriches and completes the comparison between the two linear scripts: the fact that, in Linear A, unlike in Linear B, the use of double writings both phonetic and ideographic is quite sporadic and casual. The Minoan tablets from Chanià and Mallia have added some confirmations and some new examples to those already known from Hagia Triada⁴: 401^{VAS}+RU (KH 12.3.4, 63.2, 83.2, 84.3, 85.2, 91.4), 401^{VAS}+RA (KH 31.2, 91.4; MI 2.3), 404^{VAS}+A (MA 10b.2), 413^{VAS}+SU (MA 10a).

But also keeping in mind these additional data, the use of the double writing in Linear A remains limited, also in reference to the extension of the Minoan *corpus*. Furthermore, there is another aspect which differentiates the way of appearance of this phenomenon in Linear A and B writings.

³ See, for example, Grumach 1957, coll. 314–315; such a theory has been confirmed many times by the author (Grumach 1969–1970, 335–338). Recently J. T. Hooker has faced more balanced the problem (Hooker 1979, 22–32).

⁴ This is the complete series from Hagia Triada, according to the index of GORILA: 401^{VAS}+*304 (HT 33.1, 82.2), 406^{VAS}+KE (HT 26a.1, b.1), 407^{VAS}+A (HT 39.5).

While in Linear B, abbreviations added to different vascular ideograms represent an acrophonic abbreviation of the name of the jar (Consani 1983, 19–20), in Linear A the same certainty does not exist.

The fact that in HT 31 the same kind of jar 402^{VAS} exhibits three different groups of phonetic signs (QA-BA, SU-BA-RA, PA-TA-QE) implies that these words refer to content or function of the jar rather than to its name. Neither can we speak of double writing in a proper manner in the case of various ligatures which in Linear A have as a basic sign ideograms of agricultural products, such as *302/OIL (A 609–A 623), *120/WHEAT (A 573–A 586), *131a/WINE (A 588–A 596) or of personnel *100–102/VIR–MUL (A 567–A 572) or textile (A 535, 536). In fact, in all these and similar cases a syllable jointed to an ideogram specifies a type or a specific character of the basic product.

In Linear B the use of the double writings is very common and every record is made according to this system as opposed to its sporadic and limited use in Linear A. It was discovered some time ago that one of the most important external innovations represented by the Mycenaean tablets, in comparison with the Minoan ones, is a very accurate ‘mise en page’; every line contains a single strict item with clearly distinguished two different parts in every line. The first part describes the object using phonetic signs, the second summarizes ideographically the object of the registration and defines it from the quantitative point of view (Olivier 1979, 50–51). This is commonly acknowledged as a great innovation. On several occasions, I have tried to demonstrate how this choice, rather than just reflecting a simple inadequacy of the Linear B script in the writing of the Greek language, is part of a coherent system which involves also other factors, such as graphic rules thought up by the Mycenaean scribes and the purposes for which the Linear B was created (Consani, 1996a, 1996b). Whatever opinion we may have of this system, whether it is a reflection of a partial inadequacy of Linear B or, rather, a coherent choice regarding the origin and the function of this writing, it is evident that its nature excludes such a way of writing in Linear A. According to the first hypothesis, Linear A should not have such difficulties or inadequacies in the writing of the Minoan language as Linear B, which evolved from Linear A, should have in the writing of the Greek. And, *a fortiori*, according to the second hypothesis, the use of the double writing could not be considered an element connected with the formation of Linear B but, rather, a simple extra phenomenon which occasionally occurs in the Cretan syllabic scripts. In the light of these hypotheses we should consider two Minoan records which could reveal a case of double writing completely analogous to that typical of Linear B.

1.1. Among the supporters who believe that Minoan is a Semitic language, there are scholars who have compared the word KU-NI-SU from Hagia Triada tablets with *kunāšu* in Akkadian and *kunnā tū* in Aramaic, which means '(a kind of) wheat'⁵. If this theory is true, in HT 86a.1–2 there could be a case of double writing which is similar to the analogous system of writing of Linear B, since KU-NI-SU (the name of wheat) is written immediately before the ideogram *120 GRANUM (conjoined with two fractional signs) and the numeral 20. In order to verify the exactness or, at least, the reasonableness of such a hermeneutic theory, we have examined all four occurrences of this word in the Minoan *corpus*.

Before starting the analysis, I would like to specify that the interpretation of the tablets from Hagia Triada and other Minoan documents takes part of a comprehensive study of the transliteration, interpretation and translation of the *corpus* in Linear A. This study has been carried out by scholars from different Italian universities⁶ and should be ready for publication in 1997⁷.

1.2. I will start with the tablet HT 96, which has the word in question on both sides:

HT 95a

1. **da-du-ma-ta**, GRA
2. **da-me** 10 mi-**ṇu-te** 10
3. **sa-ru** 20 ku-ni-**ṣu**
4. 10 **di-de-ru** 10 **qe**
5. -**ra₂-u** 7

HT 95b

1. **a-du**, **sa-ru** 10
2. [**·**] **da-me** 10 mi
3. -**ṇu-te** 10 ku-ni-**su**
4. 10 **di-de-ru** 10 **qe**
5. -**ra₂-u** 10

The structure of side **a** is quite clear and respects the pattern which is often repeated in tablets from Hagia Triada. The first word (anthroponym or toponym) together with the ideogram of WHEAT is the main heading. It is followed by a list of commodities, then by a number which refers to a quantity of wheat granted or delivered. On side **b** we find the same pattern, except for the ideogram of wheat, which is not repeated. The

⁵ See, for example, Gordon 1966, 26, 1981, 770. Further bibliography on the identification with Semitic terms of Minoan words for 'wheat' and similar, in Hiller 1978–1979, 227–229. For more general thoughts about this problem, see Imperato 1991.

⁶ Besides the author of this paper, the following researchers take part into this study: Francesco Aspesi, Vermondo Brugnatelli from the University of Milan, Mario Negri from IULM of Milan, Marina Imperato from IUO of Naples, and Leonardo Maggini and Umberto Pace. Graphical and philological policy regarding Linear A texts is consistent with the rules which conform this work. In particular, syllables written using bold-faced type correspond to phonetic values whose verisimilitude is not due to the formal comparison with the similar signs of Linear B but to a series of positive evidence.

⁷ It appeared two years later (Consani, Negri 1999) [Editorial Note].

comparison with other texts which contain the same objects, allow us to give some further details regarding the nature of the words. First of all, the term **a-du**, which represents the heading of side **b** is always written as the first element of the heading both in Hagia Triada and in Khania. According to this, it is possible to assume that it is a proper name (a toponym or, with less likelihood, an anthroponym). This leads us to propose an analogous interpretation for the *hapax* **da-du-ma-ta**, which represents, like **a-du**, the heading of side **a**. As far as the elements on the list are concerned, leaving out all the elements which have a more uncertain definition, the presence of **di-de-ru** which anthroponymic nature has been confirmed some time ago, also on the basis of the comparison with the anthroponym *Di-de-ro* of Linear B⁸, it is possible that all the other elements which occupy the same contextual position represent anthroponyms. On the basis of these considerations, we propose the following interpretation of the two sides:

HT 95a „At (/from/for ??) Dadumata, WHEAT: for (/from/at ??) Dame 10, for (/from/at ??) Minute 10, for (/from/at ??) Saru 20, for (/from/at ??) Kunisu 10, for (/from/at ??) Dideru 10, for (/from/at ??) Qera₂u 7”;

HT 95b „At (/from/for ??) Adu: for (/from/at ??) Saru 10, for (/from/at ??) Dame 10, for (/from/at ??) Minute 10, for (/from/at ??) Kunisu 10, for (/from/at ??) Dideru 10, for (/from/at ??) Qera₂u 10”.

1.3. Many lexical items of HT 95, including also **ku-ni-su**, reappear in HT 86a. This tablet has been fundamental in the assumption that this term represents a name of wheat:

HT 86a

1. **a-ka-ru**, **ku-ni**
2. **-su** GRA ‘KL²’ 20 **sa-ru** 20
3. **di-de-ru** 20 **qa-ra₂-wa** 10

4. **a-du**, **da-me** GRA ‘B’ 20
5. **mi-nu-te** 20
6. *vacat*

As the line which separates l. 3 from l. 4 clearly shows, the text is divided into two parts. Every part is pertinent to a different quality of wheat (GRA ‘KL²’ compared to GRA ‘B’). In both sections, the two basic elements of the heading (**a-ka-ru** in the first case and **a-du** in the second) which always recur in the initial position or in the heading of the tablet

⁸ See Lejeune 1968, 311–316 (reprinted in 1972, 203–209) and Negri (1998, 36–38) in order to examine complexively such couples of anthroponyms in the two Linear scripts.

can be easily identified and, as already stated, two toponyms can be easily recognized. The two headings are followed by words (from **ku-ni-su** in the first part and from **da-me** in the second part) which recur in lists of elements, indentifiable as anthroponyms basing on the considerations of contextual character⁹. The fact that here **ku-ni-su** is written before the ideogram of wheat is to be considered only incidental and occasional. If we want to draw the same conclusions as the above mentioned scholars did, we must consider **da-me**, which in the second part occupies the same position as **ku-ni-su**, as a designation of a type of wheat; even though, in its four attestations (HT 86a.4, 95a.2,b2, 106.3, 120.1) it has always a contextual position which is coherent with the function of a proper name. In conclusion, the assumption that **ku-ni-su** is a denomination of wheat comparable to a parallel Semitic word is due to a misunderstanding of the textual structure of HT 86a in which the ideogram GRA 'KL²' is not written immediately after the heading (as it occurs in the majority of cases) but is fused with the first element of the list. The same thing occurs to GRA 'B' in the second part of the same tablet, according to an order which is given, however sporadically, also elsewhere (see for example HT 102 and HT 28a). Therefore, one has drawn unjustifiably conclusions from an apparent idiosyncrasy of the author of HT 86a.

1.4. Such a result also causes an exegetic hypotheses as regards the last text, in which the word **ku-ni-su** recurs:

HT 10a

1. **ku-ni-su**, **sa-ma** 4

2a. **u- *325-za** 4

2. **PA**, **da-re** 16J *301

3. 6 **u- *325-za** 10 [[4 []] *305-ru

4. 2J **da-ri-da** 8 **me-za** 3

This tablet represents a very complex textual structure which can not be interpreted very easily. In fact, if **ku-ni-su** is an anthroponym, as it seems to be, referring to the contexts examined above, the subject of the registration can not be identified at first sight. The fact that **u- *325-za** was signed in l. 2a after the first two lines and probably after the whole tablet could offer a clue to this puzzle. It seems that the scribe, once he had completed the ll. 1-2 and written **u- *325-za** on the third line, had realized that it was necessary to insert the

⁹ The attestation of **sa-ru** in HT 94b.2 in a list of terms followed by numeral 1 and summed up at the end seems to be very interesting. **Mi-nu-te** is written, besides in this tablet, also in 95a.2, b.2-3, combined with other anthroponyms and in HT 106.1 as a first element of the registration followed by a list of various products. This makes possible also the identification of **qa-ra₂-wa** as an anthroponym.

da-re — / / / <
which became
da-re — / / /
/ / / <

From the fact that the scribe, who was about to register **u*325-za** in line 3 realized that it was necessary to repeat the word between l. 1 and l. 2, an important conclusion for the meaning of the whole text must be drawn. In fact, to explain such behaviour we need to admit that those 4 units attributed to **u*325-za** in line 2a and those 10 units attributed in line 3 have different meanings. The only element between the two positions in which **u*325-za** is written, which may change the meaning of the following registrations, seems to be *PA*¹⁰, since the other elements of this portion of text (**da-re** and ***301**) are on the same level as **u*325-za**; namely all these are elements of the list followed by a numeral. On the other hand, in the second attestation of **u*325-za** (l. 3) the number originally written near this term was 14. Later from this 14, 4 units were wiped out and 4 units in line 2a were attributed to **u*325-za**. It is reasonable to assume that the same quantity was moved from one position to another. It means that such quantities refer to something homogeneous so that if one part is moved from one place of the text to another not the subject but the heading of the registration will change. Since the subject of this registration is not signed using ideograms, abbreviations or other and since all the elements of the list are anthroponyms¹¹ we might suppose that the commodity registered here is not a merchandise but lending workforce in favour of another people or the palace¹². The only element which seems to be out of place is the sign ***301** followed immediately by the numeral (ll. 2–3). But if we don't want to accept that it is an abbreviation of a proper name it is always possible to assume that it specifies a particular type of work

¹² As regards the existence of such services in Minoan society, see Furumark 1976a, 14-15, 1976b, 19-21. In order to verify the same possibility in the Mycenaean world and to compare it to the Near-Eastern monarchies of the Bronze Age, see Consani 1985.

due to **Da-re**. On the basis of these considerations we could propose the following interpretation: „To (/under the control ??) of Kunisu: Sama 4 (day-labour ?), U-*325-za 4 (day-labour ?). As (?) *PA*: Dare 16J (day-labour ?), of type (??) *301 6 (day-labour ?), U-*325-za 10 (day-labour ?), *305-ru 2J (day-labour ?), Darida 8 (day-labour ?), Meza 3 (day-labour ?)”.

1.5. Referring to a textual analysis we have carried out, I suppose that it is impossible to prove that the term **ku-ni-su** nominates or refers to wheat. On the contrary, every context seems to indicate, even though with a different perspicuity, that this word must be identified with a proper name. It is evident that based on this result we can not identify in HT 86a cases of „double writing” which is similar to those found in Linear B.

2.1. Another case of „double writing”, although very different from that examined above, could be seen also in the first part of HT 88. As it has been accepted for some time, in the first part of HT 88 an abbreviation/ideogram which represents figs AB 30/*NI* is followed by a term **ki-ki-na** written in a phonetic way, in which G. Neumann has recognized the *Reliktwort* *κεικύνη*, glossed by Hesychios as *συκάμινος*, ‘(fruit of the) sycamore’¹³. This tablet is very interesting and is worth examining integrally:

HT 88

1. **a-du** VIR/MUL+**KA** 20 re-za
2. 6 *NI*/FICI, **ki-ki-na** 7
3. *vacat*
4. **ki-ro**, **ku-ba-ba** 1 **ka-ju** 1
5. **ku-ba-nu** 1 **pa-ja-re** 1 **sa-ma**
6. **-ro** 1 **da-ta-re** 1 **ku-ro** 6

The heading of the first side begins with a term **a-du** which, as we have already seen before, probably represents a toponym. It is followed by an ideogram which represents the work force here specified by an abbreviation and the number 20. In order to examine the last term of the first line, considered „ganz unklar” by Neumann, we may form a hypothesis on the basis of the confrontation with HT 13. In fact, here *re-za* occurs in a list of names, probably anthroponyms or toponyms, suppliers or debtors of quantities of wine, as *TE*, in **Ka-u-de-ta** or under **Ka-u-de-ta**’s control. In reference to HT 88, the assumption that the ideogram which is combined

¹³ Neumann proposed in 1960 the identification of Minoan **ki-ki-na** with the Greek word *κεικύνη*, basing on the complete interpretation of this tablet made by Furumark. For the identification of AB 30/*NI* as a acrophonic abbreviation of the first syllable of the word *νικύλεον/νικύλεα*, see Neumann 1958.

with the first entry (see § 1.3 regarding HT 86b) extends its referential value also to the following entry seems to be correct. So the first part of the tablet contains a complete explanation of the work force. The registration indicates then: „In (/from ?) the locality A-du, PERSONNEL of type KA:20; in (from/under the control of ?) Re-za: 6” and it would follow with the assignation of „FIGS called ki-ki-na: 6” to this personnel, excepting, then, to register in ll.4–6 the absence of 6 work force units with respect to the first part of the registration („Deficit: Kubaba 1, Kaju 1, Kubanu 1, Pajare 1, Samaro 1, Datare 1. Total: 6”).

Once the general structure has been cleared up, with special regard to assigning of figs registered in line 2 and to an eventual „double writing” which regards the given commodity, we should take into consideration two aspects. First of all, in HT 88 the ideogram NI/FICI comes before the term ki-ki-na written in a phonetic way while the cases of „double writing” which occur in Linear B texts have always a reverse order: the ideogram is moved to the end of the entry which is often the end of the line¹⁴. Secondly, if the identification of ki-ki-na with *κεκύνη*, as proposed by Neumann, is correct, in this case the word written in a phonetic way doesn’t repeat literally the information which has already been given by the ideogram NI/FICI (as *su-za NI* in Linear B) but limits the semantic sphere designated by the ideogram and circumscribes it to a determinate type of figs, the fruit of the sycamore.

Typologically, a way of writing, such as NI/FICI, ki-ki-na is not different from VIR/MUL+KA and many others which are characterized by a phonetic adjunct which specifies a particular modality of the basic ideographic designation to which it is added. Also in this case we must not consider this a double writing similar to those of the Linear B, but a part of a specific aspect of the Minoan writing system, namely the determination of an ideogram using the adjunct of phonetic elements, abbreviations or words written entirely.

3. The conclusions we may draw from this study, are, above all, of negative character: the limits – both quantitative and qualitative – mentioned in the beginning of the study regarding the possibility to recognize double writings in Linear A, seem to be strengthened by the present investigation. That, in my opinion, clearly excludes the possibility to single out such a manner of writing in the Minoan scribal tradition.

¹⁴ The difference between the two Linear scripts can be identified if we compare the textual order of HT 88 to the registrations of figs of the Knossos tablets: F 841+867.5 (*su-za NI* 75), Gv 864.2 (*su-za ARB* 53) or Gv 863.2 (*su ARB* 104). A similar instance could be found on the Pylos tablet Er 880,6; but the text is damaged just in the passage in which one could look forward to the ideogram for FIG.

Such a conclusion is not meaningless for the history of Cretan script tradition. The fact, that such a form of writing, which assumes in Linear B a well-known importance, is absent in Linear A, reinforces the structural differences which mark the passage from one syllabary to another opposed to the apparent continuity of the graphic inventory. The lack of spelling rules¹⁵ in Linear A together with the lack of double writings should have a relevant position in the overall picture of the innovations introduced by Linear B, as intended by its inventor or inventors and then by its users. But that implies a use of the term 'writing' which involves a composite and complex phenomenon, both cultural and anthropological, and not a simple repetition of symbols corresponding to determined sounds.

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¹⁵ See Consani, Federighi 1986 and Consani 1996b.

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Il est évident, sans s'en douter, que l'écriture linéaire A est une écriture qui a été inventée par les Grecs. Une liste de mots dont l'interprétation semble être claire trop rarement, une liste d'inscriptions dont la signification n'est pas sûre, parallèlement, des chiffres, des nombres, des dates... Est-ce que c'est du grec ou du minoien? Peut-être, mais il est évident que l'écriture linéaire A n'est pas une écriture qui a été inventée par les Grecs. Elle est une écriture qui a été inventée par les Minois. C'est la lecture des textes mycéniens.

Évidemment, il est impossible de ne pas remarquer un progrès énorme qui se produit dans le domaine de la mycénologie, dès son début en 1953, mais en dépit de tout, il se sent toujours l'incertitude qui nous permet d'émettre des hypothèses.

Or, le mot *qa-qa-ro*, en cas d'interprétation auquel fait sujet de ce petit article, se trouve exactement une fois¹ à Pylos, dans une tablette (PY Fa 337) avec le texte suivant²:

1. a-pi-te-ja	HORD [] NI 2
2. po-si-da-i-jo-de	HORD [] NI T 1
3. ka-mi-ke	HORD [] PAR
4. pa-ki-ja-na-de	HORD T 1 [] NI T 2
5. ka-mi-ke	HORD T 1 V 3 NI T 1 V 3
6. da-da-wa-jo-wa	HORD T 1
7. ka-mi-ke-na-ja	HORD T 2 NI T 2
8. u-po-jo-po-ji-ni-ja	HORD T 3 NI T 4
9. a-pi-te-ja	HORD T 3

¹ On a proposé de restituer d... (PY Fa 337.7) comme doublet d... C. Gallavotti, A. Neri, *Inschriften Pylos*, Roma 1961 (non val.) mais cela, bien entendu, est invérifiable.

² Le mot même d'après A. L. Benoit, J. P. Olivier, *The Pylos Tablets Described*, Roma 1973.