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## SOME NOTES ON READINGS IN THE PYLIAN Ta TABLETS

[Linear B sign-groups are quoted in the Ventris transcription. This is done for ease of reference only. Individual signs are referred to by serial number and the Ventris phonetic value or by serial number alone.

The readings quoted are taken from Emmett L. Bennett, *The Pylos Tablets* (Princeton, 1955). Reference is also made occasionally to M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge, 1956). I have also consulted photographs of tablets supplied to me by the National Museum of Archaeology in Athens and am obliged to the authorities of the Museum for permission to publish a photograph of tablet 722.]

### (1) 641. 2, 3: \*203, \*202

So much has been said about the 'handles' of the vessels represented in these ideograms that they deserve a more detailed description than they have yet had.

The vessel \*203, which follows the sign-group *qe-to*, is normally said to be 'two-handled'. No doubt it is in fact so; but, while the 'handle' on the left is an elongated loop that rises almost vertically from the shoulder of the vase, the other projects at an angle of about 50° from the horizontal on the right-hand shoulder. This second 'handle' is not unlike a spout.

The next vessel is a variety of \*202 with four 'handles'. The first three, counting from the left, are elongated loops standing up vertically from the rim. On the extreme right there is a smaller and less shapely loop that projects from the rim at about 40° from the horizontal. This fourth 'handle' might be mistaken for a short spout.

Then comes a similar vessel with three 'handles', one at each extremity and one in the middle of the rim. The middle and right-hand 'handles' are again elongated and stand up well. That on the left appears to be rounded and less elegant, however, and to lie alongside the rim rather than to stand up from it.

Last in l. 2 is another 'four-handled' \*202. This is much smaller than those already described, owing to lack of space between the guidelines. The writer apparently had difficulty in fitting four 'handles' into the length of the rim. That on the left is almost a plain circle and lies clear of the rim. Next to it is a loop which is badly drawn, as compared with those of the other vessels already

described, and has a pointed apex. The remaining two 'handles' are closer in style to those of the other ideograms. They stand upright but are perhaps not so shapely as might be expected even on this scale.

The first ideogram in l. 3 has three 'handles'. These rise up from the rim and are in general well executed, like those of the similar vessel in l. 2. The right-hand 'handle' tends to slope away to the right, but not to the extent seen in \*203 and the first \*202 of l. 2.

Finally there is a form of \*202 without 'handles'.

To sum up, the vessels with three 'handles' or none seem not to excite comment, but the 'two-handled' and 'four-handled' vessels have odd features. In some cases the loops attached to the right-hand edge of the lip seem to droop; and this may be a peculiarity of the writer's style. Further study of these ideograms may be worthwhile.

(2) 707. 2: *se-re-mo-ka-ra-o-i*

714. 2: *se-re-mo-ka-ra-o-i-ge*

These groups appear in Bennett's edition with final *-i* and *-i-ge*, respectively; *-i* also in Documents, pp. 342, 344. At 714. 2 the penultimate sign looks rather like \*28 *i*, because there is a mark on the clay below and to the right of the intersection of upright and side-strokes. This mark is not, however, the short horizontal cross-stroke of \*28. Although the side-strokes are fairly straight, they quite clearly belong to the crescent-shaped cross-stroke of \*27 *re*. At 707. 2 the final sign is \*27, and in this case there is no question of a horizontal cross-stroke.

For final \*61—27 cf. 1038;

*]no-ka-ra-o-re sa 20*

The correct readings were put forward as long ago as 1962 by C. Gallavotti (*Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*, N. S., xl, pp. 135—149, and especially pp. 140—141). They are reported by A. Morpurgo, *Mycenaeae Graecitatis Lexicon* (Rome, 1963), s. v. *se-re-mo-ka-ra-o-i*, but seem not to have attracted much attention — perhaps because they are less easily explained than Bennett's in terms of Greek.

The deleted group at 714. 2. read by Bennett as *[qo]-u-ka-ra-o-i*, cannot help in this discussion. It is impossible to distinguish with certainty the form of the last sign.

(3) 721. 2: *ta-ra-nu-we*

The final sign of this group is different from every other instance of \*75 *we* known to me. The top curve is very shallow, and the line

is continued almost vertically downwards. Thereafter it turns sharply towards the left and goes into a small but very full lower curve. The sign is quite well represented in The Pylos Tablets, p. 84. The normal form of \*75 consists of two small but well-formed loops joined by a curving line that descends evenly and smoothly from right to left. Although in hand-written texts there are inevitably many variant shapes, there seems to be no other case at Pylos of an angled \*75 such as we find in 721. 2.

In KN 411 the 'sheep' ideogram \*106 f is followed by a sign which must be a form of the ideographic \*75 that follows \*106 elsewhere, e. g. PY 418. This sign in KN 411 has a full upper curve, like the letter ypsilon laid on its left side. The lower curve starts from the upper one at a sharp angle and is roughly L-shaped. The angle in this case, however, occurs on the left-hand side of the sign; and so the sign is not, after all, very like the \*75 of 721. 2.

It may be worth noting that in HT 93a. 2 there is a form of *L* 72 which bears a general resemblance to the \*75 of KN 411 and which is apparently distinct from *L* 72 in another sign-group at HT 93a. 7. In HT 102. 3 there is another occurrence of the group found in 93a. 2, and again *L* 72 seems to have the same unusual form; but unfortunately the surface of the tablet is damaged at this point.

The examples from Knossos and Hagia Triada do not explain the strange form of \*75 in 721. 2. Nevertheless they remind us that striking differences can occur; and HT 93a, at least, suggests that on occasion they may be meaningful. It may be conjectured that in 721. 2, the unusual shape of final \*75 is intended to stress the importance of the sign in its group or in the formula as a whole. The sign in fact seems to be drawn more boldly than any other in the line. Additional stress I take to be the most likely explanation. The only other that occurs to me is that the writer may have begun by scratching *ta-ra-nu* and a word-divider on the clay and may then, on discovering that final \*75 had been left out, have added this sign, incorporating the original word-divider in it and so distorting the sign. But why, in this carefully written text, should he not have erased the word-divider before inserting \*75?

#### (4) 722. 1: \*220

The ideogram in this line differs from others in this text by having two clearly marked short legs, one extending from each lower corner of a rectangular figure. The two examples in l. 3 are obviously legless and flat-bottomed. It might be imagined that in

l. 2 the ideogram had very stumpy legs or bosses: but this is probably an accident of rough drawing. The 'footstools' in 710 and 721 are legless (See photograph, Fig. 1).

The formula in 722. 1 is longer than those in ll. 2 and 3; but no part of it can readily be associated with the fact that the object depicted seems to be superior (in size or quality, or both?) to the other objects.

We must ask whether the legs of the ideograms in 722. 1 confirm the idea that it represents a footstool or not. Certainly the foot-rest shown on the Tirynthian gold ring (illustrated in Documents, p. 333) is not of the same kind. It is a flat cushion-like object, seemingly only a few inches high, with a loop at each end to lift it by. On the Pylian tablet, at 722. 1, the so-called 'footstool' seems to be raised clear of the ground (the dimensions are of course unknown). The 'handles' are fitted to the top right- and left-hand corners and are thus distinguishable from the sides of the object. Clearly this sign could represent a footstool; but, if so, it would be of a sort hitherto unknown in the Mycenaean world—unless remains of a silver-covered wooden footstool, recently found by Karageorghis in an archaic grave at Salamis in Cyprus, have a bearing on this matter. This stool, described in Kadmos, 1967, p. 98, is 24 cm. long, 19 cm. wide and 21 cm. high. The sides of the stool are 11 cm. high, so that the height of the legs to the bottom of the stool must be 10 cm. The ideogram in 722. 1 seems to be proportionately lower in relation to its height: but it might represent an object of the same kind as Karageorghis' footstool.

It is impossible to say with certainty whether the thing represented by Pylian \*220 is rectangular or circular. Since two legs are shown, we must presume that there were four in all. Consequently, a four-cornered shape may seem likely in l. 1. A round basin on four short legs might conceivably have been drawn in the same way; but the only basins on short legs known to exist seem to be three-legged and not four-legged. We may presume that the legless objects in ll. 2—3 are meant to be rectangular too.

It is a handicap that we do not know what the objects represented were made of — whether wood (as is commonly assumed by decipherers at the present time) or metal or earthenware. To me the handles suggest a rectangular box or chest rather than a footstool, and I would regard 710, 721 and 722 as 'vessel' tablets, in the same sense as 641, 709 + 712 and 711 or as 316 and 996.