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MINOAN VESSEL NAMES

One of the keys to the interpretation of Minoan by Cyrus H. Gordon was provided by the "virtual bilingual" text from Haghia Triadha (HT 31)¹. In this text, the scribe supplied the Minoan name of vessel, written over the pictogram for the various vessel types. The name of the vessel is supplied in full spelling, or only designated by its first syllable, in a manner familiar from the practices of Egyptian writing. This practice of the Minoans continued into Mycenaean writing, as did many other practices of the Minoan scribes.

1. *ka-ro-pa*₃ (HT 31:3)

Gordon identified this vessel name with Akkadian *karpu* and Ugaritic *krpn*². See also Akkadian *karpātu*.

2. *su-pu* (HT 31:3)

In his Ugaritic Textbook (= UT), Rome 1965, Gordon compared this name to Ugaritic *sp*, Hebrew שֵׁן (*sipp-*) and Akkadian *šappu*. Cf. also Akkadian *šappatu* (*šapp-* + *ātu*).

¹ See C. H. Gordon, *Antiquity* 31, 1957, 124ff. Further details are presented in his *Evidence for the Minoan Language* (= EML), Ventnor, N. J., 1966, 26ff. The Linear A text numbers are according to W. C. Brice, *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, Oxford 1961. Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge 1956, 323, have stressed the significance of HT 31. They have noted that when Mycenaean vessel names are compared to the Minoan names "the difference in language is obvious." S. Davis, who interprets Minoan as Hittite in his *The Decipherment of the Minoan Linear A and Pictographic Scripts*, Johannesburg 1967, conceded that the vessel names in HT 31 may be borrowed from Semitic.

² EML 26. On the affirmative *-n* in Ugaritic see M. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology*, Rome 1965, 16f., who notes Ugaritic *mmskn* and Hebrew *mimsāk* 'amphora, crater.' The Minoan vessel names appear to be masculine in form, except for No. 7, below, which ends in *-ote* and seems to correspond to either the Semitic feminine singular ending *-(a)tu*, or to the feminine plural ending *-ātu*.

Minoan case endings and their Semitic equivalents cannot be discussed here in detail, but we may note that the Minoan endings *-u* (*supu*, *akanu*), *-a*₃ (*karopa*, *supara*, *qapa*) and *-e* (*patage*) can be compared to Semitic *-u* (sg. nominative ending), *-a* (ending of indeclinable nouns) and *-ey* (an archaic plural ending attested in Biblical Hebrew as *-ēy*; this ending also serves as the plural construct in Hebrew and as the dual construct (*-ē*) in Ugaritic).

3. *su-pa₃-ra* (HT 31:5)

Gordon compares this vessel name to Ugaritic *spl*, Hebrew ספל (*sípl-*) and Akkadian *sa₃-ap-lu* in UT § 19. 1791.

4. *qa-pa₃* (HT 31:2)

In EML § 115 (p. 26), Gordon compared this Minoan name to Akkadian *kaḫpu* and Hebrew כף (*kaḫp-*). More recently, however, he has been inclined to omit this identification³.

We suggest a comparison with Akkadian ^{duk}*qaḫú*, *qaḫūtu*, Ugaritic *qpt(!)*⁴ and Hebrew קפה (*qūpāh*).

5. *pa-ta-qe* (HT 31:6)

M. Astour suggested to connect this term with Akkadian *patāqu* "to cast metal," and suggested translating this word as "metal vessel."⁵

A better comparison yet is seen in Aramaic פיתקא (*pitqa*) "winecup,"⁶ and Akkadian *naptaqu* "smelting-jar."⁷

6. *a-ka-nu* (Text II 2; HT 39:4)

Gordon first identified this word with Hebrew אגן (*'aggan*) and Aramaic *ag-gan-nu*⁸. The meaning of Ugaritic *agn* is not certain, but if it designates a type of bowl — as is most likely — it is cognate to this Minoan term.

In HT 39:4 we find the entry:

ku-ro a + BOWL 100[

total of *a-[ga-nu]*-bowls 100 + XXX

The pictogram Lc 43 designates a deep bowl with two large handles. We believe that this is the *a-ka-nu* (*a-ga-nu*) vessel, which Gordon first discovered as the opening word of an inscribed magic bowl from Knossos.

The practice of designating a vessel by its first syllable only, continued in the administrative documents of Linear B. There we find, for example, that *u* + VESSEL (no. 212) may stand for *u-[do-ru]* 'water jug?'.⁹ Similarly, Minoan *a* + BOWL stands for *a-[ga-nu]*.

³ Cf. Gordon, "Minoan," *Athenaeum* 47, 1969 (Studi in Onore di Piero Meriggi, Pavia), 128

⁴ UT 145:21

⁵ M. C. Astour, *JAOS* 87, 1967, 292 n. 13

⁶ Cf. J. Lewy, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim*, Leipzig 1867, s. v.

⁷ W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 1967, s. v.

⁸ Gordon, EML § 119

⁹ M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge 1956, 324ff.

In the Akkadian texts from Ugarit we find that *a-ga-an-nu* may designate large metal bowls (cf. Ugaritica V, 1968, 118).

7. *sa-ro-te* (HT 38:1)

This vessel name may be connected with Minoan *sa-ra*₂ which in HT 33:1 and in several other texts refers to a type of vessel. G. Nagy¹⁰ discussed Minoan *sa-ra*₂ in some detail, and offered two possible cognates: Greek σήλῖα and Hittite *šarra*¹¹.

In view of the fact that the Minoan vessel names which we have already discussed all have good Semitic etymologies, it would not be unreasonable to seek a Semitic etymology for this vessel type as well. Perhaps Akkadian *sallu*, *salu* and Hebrew סל (*sall-*) provide the best comparison¹². If so, then Minoan *sa-ro-te* could represent a feminine plural (?) formation.

8. *ye- + TRIPOD* (HT 31:1)

Only the first syllable of the Minoan word for TRIPOD is known, since the scribe wrote it in abbreviated form here, just as in HT 39:4.

The Minoan pictogram Lc 45 corresponds closely to its Mycenaean counterpart (no. 201) which stands for *ti-ri-po*, *ti-ri-po-de* 'tripod, cauldron.'¹³

It is difficult at present to propose an etymology for this Minoan vessel name. In the Semitic sphere alone there are several vessel names beginning with this syllable.

¹⁰ AJA 69, 1965, 304ff.

¹¹ Ibid. 305

¹² Cf. also Hebrew סִיר (*sir*), סִירֹת (*sirót*) 'vessels'

¹³ Ventris and Chadwick, op. cit. 324f.