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THREE NEW LINEAR A LIBATION VESSEL FRAGMENTS FROM PETSOPHAS

A few years ago I published some fragmentary libation vessels inscribed with Linear A¹, found in the new excavation of the peak sanctuary of Petsophas, above Palaikastro². As this search had not totally exhausted the area where the votive offerings had been deposited inside rock holes and fissures, I undertook a second and last campaign at this lofty site in the summer of 1976³. This excavation again brought to light lots of pieces of human and animal figurines which extend the extraordinarily rich series found here. The head of a figurine with clearly distinguished features is remarkable. Another figurine, made deliberately from the waist up, wears a beautiful hair-dressing. Among the bronze pieces a miniature knife may be mentioned. Some of the figurines have been found beneath the wall of the NW edge of the small MM III-LM I sanctuary, as it was now possible to explore here, just below the original position of some foundation stones upturned and pushed aside between our two campaigns (1971-1976) by illegal diggers, who through their activities brought about considerable damage to the site.

During this last excavation we took special care to scrutinize every stone found during the digging, or just lying on the surface, for small fragmented pieces of libation tables which, being irregularly broken, are very difficult to distinguish from the rough field stones which are scattered all over the area in large numbers. Of course it is possible that some frag-

¹ C. Davaras, *Two New Linear A Inscriptions on Libation Vessels from Petsophas*, *Kadmos* XI, 1972, 101-12, figs. 1-2, pls. I-II.

² *Amaltheia* 3, 1972, 48-50; *ADelt* 27 B, 1972, 652-53 and n. 31-37. Cf. *Archaeol. Reports* for 1977-78, 66. For a group of two pairs of sacral horns of plaster, the one inside the other, cf. *Proceedings of the Fourth International Cretological Congress, Herakleion 1976*, A (in print). For the old test excavation of the British School of Archaeology cf. J. L. Myres, *The Sanctuary-Site of Petsofà*, *BSA* 9, 1902-3, 356-87. Cf. Nilsson, *MMR*² 68f. This peak sanctuary covered an unusually long time-span: MM I-LM I.

³ Cf. *ADelt* 32 B, 1977 (in print).

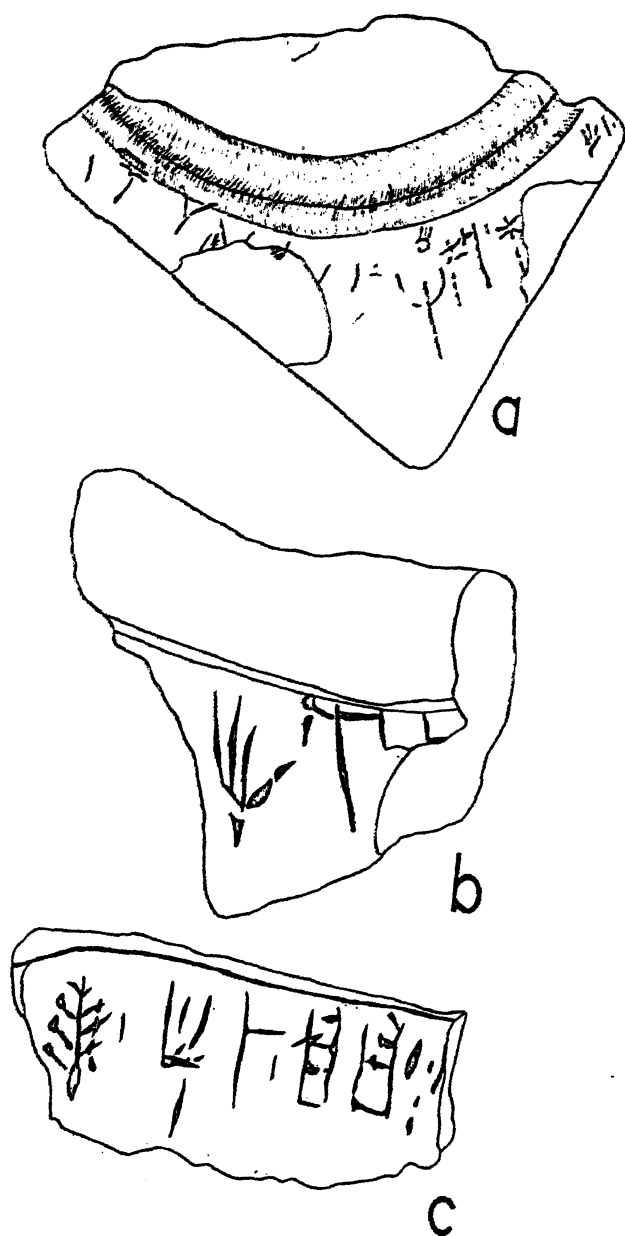
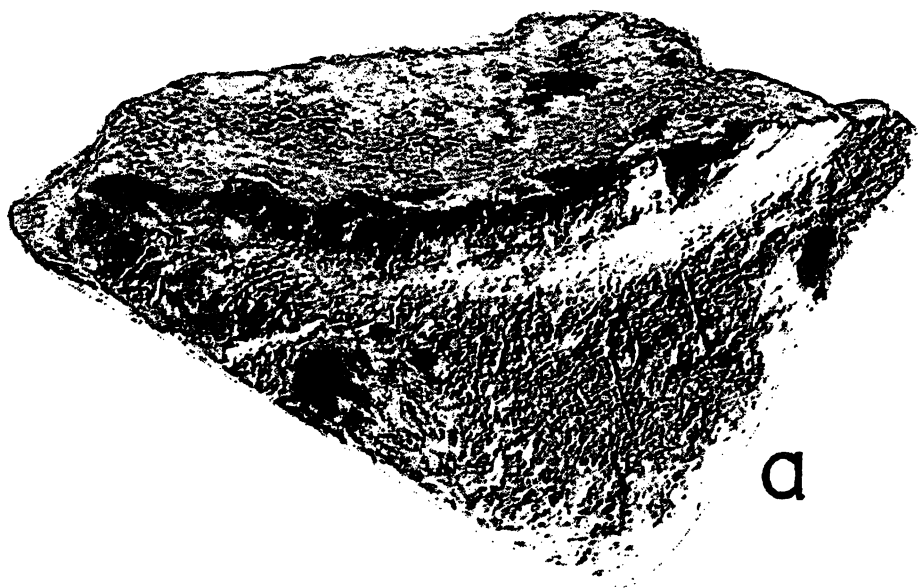


Fig. 1. The inscribed signs



a



b



c

Plate I

The three fragments of inscribed stone libation vessels from Petsophas

ments have been overlooked and are still there, although many uninscribed pieces have been recovered. I reached the conclusion that we can no longer doubt that not only the clay votive offerings, but also these libation tables of stone, were intentionally broken for ritual reasons during their deposition at the sanctuary.

Among the fragments found are three pieces of serpentine with traces of Linear A inscriptions, rather badly preserved. Their reading is not always secure and may need revision, but it seemed right to publish them promptly, as any new document may add something to our understanding of this group. Concerning their findplace, we emphasise that the peak sanctuary of Petsophas and the Palaikastro area, which besides the two pieces published by us has already yielded several libation tables with Linear A inscriptions⁴, is undoubtedly by far the main source of such vessels in Crete.

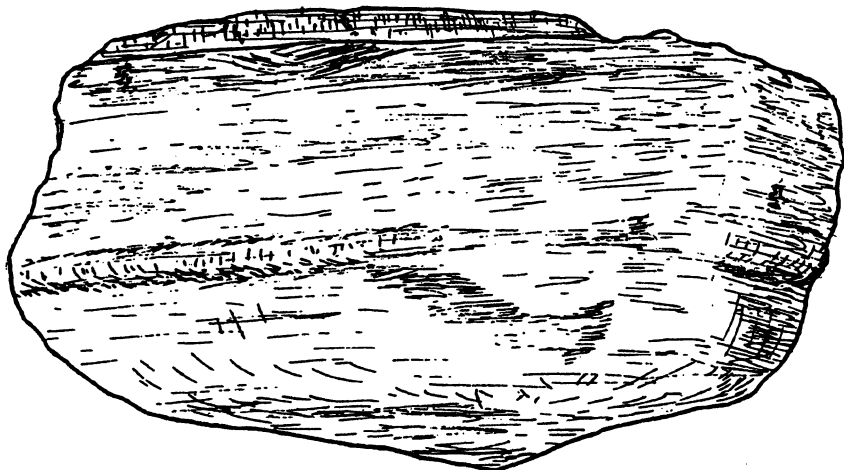


Fig. 2. Side-view of Fragment a

a. Hagios Nikolaos Museum Inv. No 7231. Fig. 1, pl. I, a. Corner fragment of a small square libation table with raised narrow rim or collar. The underside carries inverted stepped moulding but is much eroded (Fig. 2). The vessel belongs to Warren's Type 26⁵. Pale bluish gray-black serpentine, irregularly mottled. Preserved total height 0.052 m., preserved length of side 0.082 m., calculated length of side about 0.16 m.;

⁴ Cf. Davaras, *op. cit.* 102 and n. 8–10 with references.

⁵ P. Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, 1969, 63f. The new vessel could be classified as the fourth number of Group G, form I, the third number being the fragment published already: cf. Davaras, *op. cit.* 102ff., No A, pl. I (Inv. No 2470).

calculated diameter of bowl about 0.13 m. Height of rim 0.008 m. On the projecting border beyond the rim⁶ five (?) legible characters of the Linear Script A and some more totally obliterated.

b. Hagios Nikolaos Museum Inv. No 7232. Fig. 1, pl. I, b. Corner fragment of a small square libation table with broad raised rim. The point of the corner is missing. The whole underside has been broken away. The vessel seems to belong to the same type and to be cut from the same serpentine as specimen a. Preserved total height 0.024 m., preserved length 0.049 m., height of rim 0.005 m. On the projecting border beyond the rim⁷ are three characters of the Linear Script A.

c. Hagios Nikolaos Museum Inv. No 7233. Fig. 1, pl. I, c. Evidently a border fragment of a small square libation table of the same type as the preceding. It includes the edge of the border but there is no trace of the raised rim — which can not be very far away — or of the corner. It is made of the same serpentine as a and b. Preserved length 0.047 m., preserved breadth 0.021 m., preserved height 0.009 m. On the border are six characters of the Linear Script A. It is unusual and remarkable that the inscription faces inwards.

The inscriptions

a. The characters are superficially incised; as usual where the available space expands near a corner, the characters are of unequal size. The surface is pitted with scars. The inscription contains the following five (?) legible and some illegible signs, from left to right:

1. L? Part only of a vertical bar is preserved, which could be attributed to a number of signs.

2. L 26? It seems that we have here L 26, with a single vertical line instead of a sequence of dots and a double horizontal line as is sometimes the case; the upper line is on the foot of the rim. An alternative reading, L 52, although appealing — as in that case it would introduce the first libation formula⁸, being followed as it is by L 31 and probably again by L 31 — cannot be accepted, as there is no trace of the vertical bars on either side which would form the edges of the double axe.

3. L 31. The tops of the Y are on the foot of the rim. After this sign and the next one a dot and a line just above a large scar are probably mere scratches.

⁶ Breadth of border: maximum 0.033 m., minimum preserved 0.005 m.

⁷ Breadth of border: maximum 0.019 m.

⁸ Cf. Davaras, *op. cit.* 105ff.

4. L 31? The same large scar has broken away most of this sign. The remaining small section could be the upper left part of some other sign, although this is not very likely. Besides, the sequence 31-31 is testified no less than eleven times in the Linear Script A⁹.

This same large scar has mutilated almost all of the next two signs, and no guess seems worth while. Following them a small vertical line seems to be a punctuation; and we note that the space between this punctuation and the next sign is just above the corner of the vessel and would seem therefore to separate the end of the whole inscription from its beginning.

5. L 54. This sign is very superficially cut and its left line is much shorter than its right.

6. L 71? Over the right part of Sign 5 and therefore above the regular sequence appears in diminutive form what seems to be L 71.

7. L 52? The median vertical line is clear, the small left line much less so; the right line and the horizontal bar are very doubtful.

There follows a large space which could contain three signs. Unfortunately nothing sure has been left.

We then have the following sequence:

·]-26?-31-31?-[· ·]-,-54,71?-52?-[· · ·

If we apply here the conventional phonetic values of the Linear Script B¹⁰ we get the following transposition:

·]-na?-sa-sa?-[· ·]-,-re-L 71?-a?-[·

b. The characters, deeply incised, are unequal in size as in the case of Inscription a. The surface is also broken by scars. The inscription contains the following three signs, from left to right:

1. L 100? Although the break here has greatly damaged the sign, it seems quite probable that we have the variant 100b¹¹. The alternative reading, L 71, seems not likely, and still less L 77 or L 92¹².

⁹ Cf. Raison-Pope, *Index transnuméré du linéaire A*, 1977, 104.

¹⁰ Cf. Pugliese Carratelli, *Annuario* 30-32, N.S. 14-16, 1952-54, 21, pl. III; P. Meriggi, Minoicà, *Festschrift J. Sundwall*, 1958, 242 (*Lautzeichentabelle*); Raison-Pope, *Index du linéaire A (Incunabula Graeca XLI)* 1971, XVff. with n. 44 (with references); about this procedure cf. the remarks in Davaras, *op. cit.* 104, n. 21. Now cf. mainly M. Pope-J. Raison, *Linear A: Changing Perspectives*, *BCILL* 14, *Etudes Minoennes* I, 1978, 37f.

¹¹ As distinguished by Raison-Pope, *op. cit.* (n. 9 above) 52: cf. *idem*, *Les variantes du signe L 100 du linéaire A*, *Kadmos* 16, 1977, 16-23.

¹² Confusion between L 100 and L 77 is easy, as has been remarked.

2. L 52. This sign is clear, although its horizontal bar is obscured in the shadow below the edge of the rim.

3. L 57? Caution is again necessary as most of the character has been broken away; nevertheless this is the most probable reading. Besides, the sequence 52-57 is fairly common, and occurs no less than five times.

Thus we have the following sequence:

]-100?-52-57?-[

The transposition into conventional Linear B phonetic values would be the following:

]-no?-a-ne?-[

c. The characters are somewhat superficially incised and are not equal in size. The inscription contains the following six signs, from left to right:

1. L 92. The ends of the V-like branches are more deeply cut and look like dots, while the branches themselves are superficial and almost invisible.

Then comes a point of punctuation (?).

2. L 100. A scar here has obliterated the character so that it is impossible to say whether it is variant 100a or 100b.

3. L 30. A superficially but clearly cut sign.

4. L 32. It seems almost certain that we have here L 32, although its horizontal bars are extremely superficial and not long enough to connect with the vertical bars.

5. L 32. The same remarks apply here too.

6. L 52. The right part of the character is missing.

We have thus the following sequence:

]-92-,-100-30-32-32-52-[

The transposition into conventional Linear B phonetic values is:

]-te-,-no-da-ja-ja-a-[

The sequence 100-30 is again fairly common, being found in seven contexts, but no other combinations are extant.