

ERIK HALLAGER—MARIA VLASAKIS—STAUROULA MARKOULAKIS

NEW AND HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED LINEAR A
DOCUMENTS FROM KASTELLI, KHANIA*

During the Greek-Swedish Excavation in Parodos Kanevaro 1990 were found two more fragments of Linear A tablets — both probably in undisturbed contexts — while a third fragment of a Linear A tablet was discovered among the pottery from the 1973 excavations. Furthermore, a complete roundel inscribed with Linear A was found during the excavation of the ephoreia in the Khatzidakis—Kalamaridou Plot in Katre street, opposite the plot where the majority of the Linear A documents from Khania were discovered in 1973 and 1974.¹ These new and hitherto unpublished documents are presented below.

The Roundel
KH Wc 2122 (Mus. no. 2122) (Pl. I)

Description

Completely preserved roundel of disk shape. Clay-brick red, relatively fine, many white inclusions and a single big one. Poorly polished. Worn. Very faint finger-prints on both sides. Obverse inscribed with one sign in Linear A. Incisions medium deep, stylus medium rough. No strokes mutilated by pressure from fingers, so evidently the roundel was inscribed *after* the seal-impressions had been made along the edge.

* The authors would like to thank Dr Yannis Tzedakis, director of the Greek-Swedish Excavations and excavator of the Khatzidakis—Kalamaridou plot, for his generous permission to present here these inscriptions in advance of the final publication. In 1973 the field work of the GSE was directed by Dr Y. Tzedakis and Dr E. Hallager, while in 1990 Mrs Maria Vlasakis and Dr E. Hallager were responsible. The field-work in the Khatzidakis—Kalamaridou plot was directed by Mrs Stauroula Markoulakis.

Drawings and photographs in this paper are by E. Hallager.

¹ Papapostolou, Y., L. Godart & J.-P. Olivier, *Grammiki A ton Khanion* (Incunabula Graeca, 62), Rome 1976 and Papapostolou, Y., *Ta Sphragismata ton Khanion*, Athens 1977.

Along the edge six impressions from seal KH 13. The roundel is read vertically and the inscription is on the right side. Diam: 3.5–3.8 cms; Th. 1.2 cms.

Inscription

This causes no problem. The roundel is inscribed on the obverse only, with one sign: A 408^{VAS}. No scribe has been identified.

Comments

The roundel is of the usual well-known type from Minoan Crete², and the seal used six times on this roundel is the second most frequently stamped on the Khania roundels³: KH 13, which is from an amygdaloid, with the device of two recumbent lions, the one behind the other (Fig. 1).⁴ The inscription A 408^{VAS} is interesting. It has previously been



Fig. 1

found complete on KH Wc 2103⁵ where the sign in principle was drawn in the same way as on 2122, in that one of the three 'legs' is the continuation of the side of the 'tripod'. On the two roundels, however, this feature is reversed, and, in view of this and other differences of detail, it seems that the two roundels were inscribed by different scribes. The sign A 408^{VAS} is probably to be understood as an ideogram, representing some kind of a tripod, but exactly which kind "reste

² On roundels in general: Hallager, E., "Roundels among Sealings in Minoan Administration: A comprehensive Analysis of Function," in *Aegean Seals, Sealings and Administration*, ed. Thomas G. Palaima (*Aegaeum* 5 [1990]), Bruxelles 1990, 121–147.

³ Previously found on 20 roundels, where together 142 impressions are preserved. The seal most frequently used is KH 22.

⁴ For a more detailed description and further comments: CMS V, nr. 236; Papapostolou (supra n. 1), 56–57 and Hallager, E. & M. Vlasakis, "Two New Roundels with Linear A from Khania," *Kadmos* 23, 1984, 9–10.

⁵ GORILA 3, 143. GORILA 5, 313 suggests that the fragmentary signs on KH Wc 2084 and KH Wc 2114 may also represent A 408.

obscure”⁶; but certainly the user of seal 13 has on this roundel acknowledged the receipt of a further six specimens of A 408^{VAS}.

Context

The excavation in the Khatzidakis—Kalamaridou plot revealed, during the years 1979—1980, part of a LM I house with a corridor (Room 1) and two rooms (Rooms 2 and 3) which were partly excavated.⁷ The roundel KH Wc 2122 was found on top of the LM IB destruction level of Room 2 after the removal of a small wall (Wall 9), and the deposit in which the roundel was found may thus perhaps be connected to the deposit with the Linear A documents from Papapostolou’s excavations 1973—74. The pottery associated with the roundel was mainly LM I, including LM IB, but contained also a few pieces of MM date.

The Tablets

KH 94 (Excavation no: GSE 73-TC 56; mus. no: KH 94) (Pl. IIa)

Description

Fragment from the central part of a Linear A tablet, with remains of three lines preserved. The clay is brick-red to brown, hard fired, very finely gritted except for a few inclusions of sand grains. Relatively lightly incised — at least compared to the majority of the larger Katre tablets. Incision seems to be much like that of KH 92⁸. H: [3.2] cms; W: [2.2] cms; Th: 0.8 (top)-1.0 (bt) cms;

Inscription

The only complete part of the inscription is the number 7 in line 2. The remaining signs are very fragmentary, but may perhaps be restored. Line 1: Remains of three almost parallel bent strokes running from left to right; extremely unusual in Linear A, though it might perhaps be restored as A 510 [L 73], as seen on, for example, KH 8.4.⁹ Line 2: In

⁶ Vandenabeele, F., “Les représentations de vases à l’époque du bronze,” in *Pepragmenatou D’ diethnous kritologikou synedriou*, Athens 1981, 623 (and with further comments p. 622). See also *ibid.*, “Nouvelles découvertes concernant les idéogrammes archéologiques du linéaire A et du linéaire B,” in *Rayonnement Grec. Hommages à Charles Delvoye*, Bruxelles 1982, 28—29.

⁷ Deltion 35 (1980), chron., 502—504, Fig. 1, Pl. 310b.

⁸ Hallager, E. & M. Vlasakis, “New Evidence of Linear A Archives from Khania,” *Kadmos* 25, 1986, 108—113.

⁹ GORILA 3, 32. It should be noted, however, if the interpretation is correct, that the compound sign (AB 50, PU) is elsewhere in the corpus of Linear A written with small horizontal strokes at the lower part of the vertical ones.

front of the number 7 there are remains of a horizontal stroke, here interpreted as the number 10. Behind the number, remains of a sign with three more or less vertical strokes at the upper part, and with traces of a horizontal stroke below. This sign may perhaps be identified with AB 28 [L 100], although there are no exact parallels with the preserved remains. Line 3: only an almost circular incision as the upper part of the sign, and perhaps remains of a small vertical stroke to the left where the tablet is broken. This makes the reading AB 17 [L 23] the most likely.

The inscription might thus read:

	<i>sup. mut.</i>		<i>sup. mut.</i>
.1	] L 73 [	.1	]A 510 [
.2	] 17 L 100[	.2	]17 AB 28[
.3	] L 23 [	.3	] AB 17[
	<i>inf. mut.</i>		<i>inf. mut.</i>

Comments

Too little preserved to suggest any parallels for any of the signs. The only observation which may be noted is that the down-strokes in the numerals are stressed at the bottom, as is the case on several other Linear A tablets from Khania.

It was not possible to join this fragment to any of those previously excavated — from neither Katre nor GSE.

The thickness of the tablet indicates that it is not of the largest type nor of the smallest, though the size of the signs indicates that it belongs in the larger range. The taper of the section indicates that it belongs to the upper part of the tablet.

Context

KH 94 was found out of context in a disturbed LM IIIC deposit related to Space P at a position very roughly around 524.8/711.4.¹⁰ The majority of the pottery in the entire deposit associated with the tablet fragment was LM IIIB, and included some LM IIIC. Furthermore, a few pieces ranging from MM to LM IIIA were noted.

KH 95 (Excavation no: GSE 90-TC 34; mus. no: KH 95) (Pl. Iib)

Description

Lower left corner of a Linear A tablet. Burnt black all over — also at fractures; finely gritted with only a few visible inclusions. Polish

¹⁰ See forthcoming publication on the GSE.

preserved on reverse, edges and obverse worn. Inscribed with signs in Linear A on obverse only. In the space below the inscription there is a small almost rectangular imprint, a few mm. deep. L: [4.3] cm; H: [3.3] cm; Th: 1.02–1.08

Inscription

Only the first sign, AB 09 [L 77], and the number 2 are clear. These seem to be followed either by more numerals and a new sign, or by a 'word-divider' and a new inscription, of which the first sign may possibly be AB 08 [L 52], but this is far from certain. The first suggested reading of the tablet is perhaps the more likely:

sup. mut.
.1 AB 09 7 vest[

sup. mut.
.1 L 77 7 vest[

Comments

Linear A sign-groups ending in AB 09 followed by numerals and a new inscription followed by numerals are not uncommon among the Linear A inscriptions, as noted for example at ZA 5a.2–3, 14.3–4, 8.4, 20.3 and 15 a.4,¹¹ HT 85 b.4, 6 b.2, and 87.3.¹² But, realistically, too little of the actual inscription is preserved to suggest any possible 'classification'. The small rectangular impression at the bottom of the tablet has not been noted on any of those previously found at Khania, and its meaning remains doubtful.

Palaeographically there is not much to go upon. AB 09 is written in the more simple way which recalls the Linear B equivalent: a *da* with two additional strokes added.¹³ Among the Khania tablets the same phenomenon appears on KH 7 (Scribe 2¹⁴), but this is not sufficient evidence to ascribe the new fragment firmly to the same scribe.

Context

The Greek-Swedish Excavations in 1990 were a rescue undertaking in advance of the municipality's new drainage. A ditch 49 × 1 × 1.5 ms was laid out north-south in Parodos Kanevaro.¹⁵ The southern 19 meters ran, with an intervening space of 2 meters, parallel with the old

¹¹ GORILA 3, 148–193.

¹² GORILA 5, 166 and GORILA 1.

¹³ It is not found very often. Outside Khania it is found on, for example, HT 27 b and HT Zb 159 and ZA 14.

¹⁴ For scribe "2 KH" see GORILA 5, 405–406.

¹⁵ The position of Parodos Kanevaro compared to the older GSE excavations may be seen on the map given in Hallager, E., M. Vlasakis and B. P. Hallager, "The First Linear B Tablet(s) from Khania," Kadmos 29, 1990, 25.

excavations, while the northern 30 meters were in 'new surroundings'. KH 95 was found in the very southern part of the ditch in exactly the same general context as KH 92 and KH 93.¹⁶ It was found in the undisturbed ruins of the LM I buildings of the Minoan Square outside Houses I and II. We consider House II as the most probable origin of the tablet(s). In the actual excavated deposit, as in the case of the previous tablets, the accompanying pottery was mainly LM IB, along with a few earlier pieces. LM IB seems thus the most likely date for the tablet.¹⁷

KH 96 (Excavation no: GSE 90-TC 79; mus. no: KH 96) (Pl. IIc)

Description

Lower right corner of a Linear A tablet, flaked, i.e. the reverse is missing. Clay burnt black all over, very finely gritted with only a few small sand grains visible. Surface and edges polished and very smooth. On the lower edge we have a light stroke. On the surface there are remains from three signs in Linear A in two lines. The incisions are fairly deep, and done with a relatively fine stylus. H: [2.4] cms; W: [3.9] cms; Th: [0.7] cms.

Inscription

There are remains from two lines. From the upper line is seen only a tiny trace of the lower part of a vertical stroke, so naturally no reading can be suggested. In the bottom line there are remains from two signs, of which only the second can be read with certainty, as the fractional sign A 702 (*B B*) [*LM 19+19*], consisting of two small crosses, the one above the other. Such a combination is only found once before in the entire corpus of Linear A, on KH 86.2¹⁸, where it is found behind another fractional sign (A 701). It would thus be tempting to see the sign in front (which consists of a slightly bent vertical stroke with the beginning of an oblique stroke attached at the upper part) as another fractional sign; and here only A 709 (*L*) [*Lm 26*] fits with the epigraphical remains. The inscription might thus read:

¹⁶ Hallager & Vlasakis (supra n.8), 108–109 and Hallager, E. & Y. Tzedakis, "The Greek-Swedish Excavations at Kastelli, Khania 1984," AAA 18, 1985, 17–19.

¹⁷ For further details of the excavation of the Square outside House II we refer to the forthcoming preliminary reports on the GSE excavations in 1989 and 1990, to be published in AAA by Hallager and Tzedakis.

¹⁸ GORILA 5, 316; the tablet in Papapostolou, Godart & Olivier (supra n.1), 238.

<i>sup. mut.</i>		<i>sup. mut.</i>
.1] <i>vest</i> [		.1] <i>vest</i> [
.2 [A 709-701-701 (L B B)		.2] <i>Lm</i> 26+19+19

Comments

Taking into consideration the size of the preserved signs, this fragment may be supposed to have belonged to one of the larger Linear A tablets. Further than this, there is not very much to comment upon. It seems to be of the 'ordinary' type found previously in Khania, and tablets ending with an ideogram plus numeral, with or without fractional signs, belong to the more frequent type.

Context

KH 96 was found in the very northernmost meter of the ditch of the 1990 excavation, within the area 537.5—539/744.5—745.5, more than 30 meters away from the nearest excavated area, which means that the general context of this fragment is unknown. On the other hand, the excavated deposit appears to belong to a pure LM IB destruction level, characterized by burnt soil, some bits of charcoal, and twelve complete conical cups (and fragments of many more), all found above a sloping stone pavement, reminiscent of a street or square. The pottery in the entire deposit (which contained a great amount) was, with the exception of six intrusive fragments from later periods (LM IIIB — Geometric)¹⁹, all of the typical MM/LM I type, including several pieces characteristic of LM IB. This context, if rightly interpreted, is interesting from three points of view: 1. The LM IB destruction-level continues up the slope of the Kastelli Hill (this was not previously known); 2. the tablet is most likely to be dated to LM IB; and 3. *if* the original context was close by (as supposed with, for example, KH 92, 93, and 95), there is confirmation of the use of Linear A tablets in different buildings within a LM I settlement.²⁰

¹⁹ The actual deposit was situated below the still-functioning Turkish drainage, the sieved water from which made all soils down to the stone floor look very similar (both in color and texture), so that the distinction between levels became extremely difficult. This is probably the explanation for the few 'intrusive' sherds.

²⁰ Hallager & Vlasakis (*supra* n. 8), 118.

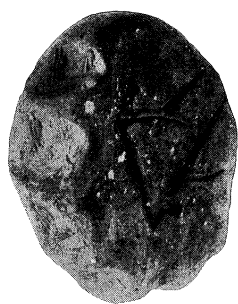
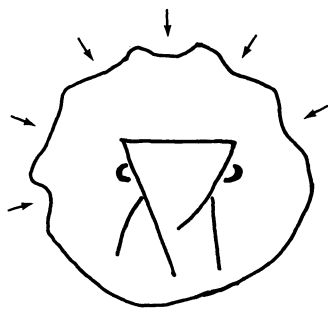


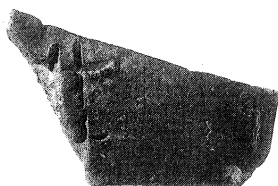
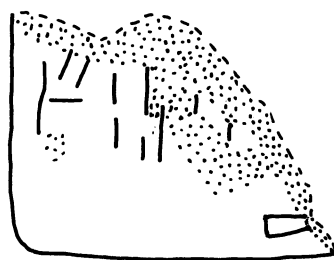
Plate I. The roundel
KH Wc 2122



a



b



c



Plate II. The tablets
a. KH 94; b. KH 95; c. KH 96

Summary

Three of the four Linear A inscriptions here presented were found in reasonably clear LM IB contexts, which further confirm the date of the use of Linear A. KH 95 and KH 96 especially, which seem to have been found in undisturbed layers, give hope for more inscriptions in future excavations. Particularly interesting is KH 96, since it may imply yet another assemblage of tablets in a hitherto unexpected area. Palaeographically, none of the tablets was sufficiently well preserved to reveal much new information, while the roundel indicated yet another scribe at work with seal-user KH 13 in connection with the sign AB 408^{VAS}.

The new inscriptions once more emphasize the importance of Khania as a true Minoan administrative center in the LM IB period.