

DONIERT EVELY – JOHN T. KILLEN – CHRISTOPHER MEE  
ALAN PEATFIELD – MERVYN POPHAM

## NEW FRAGMENTS OF LINEAR B TABLETS FROM KNOSSOS

### 1. A Linear B Tablet from the ‘Unexplored Mansion’, Knossos

In excavations in 1968 to 1972 in the ‘Unexplored Mansion’ at Knossos, M. R. Popham discovered a fragment of Linear B tablet: the only tablet so far known from this location.<sup>1</sup> A preliminary account of the tablet and its discovery was given (by Evely) in M. R. Popham, *The Minoan Unexplored Mansion of Knossos* (London 1984)<sup>2</sup>; here we present a fuller account, including (a) details of the archaeological context in which the tablet was found; (b) a description, photograph and drawing of the fragment; (c) a transcription of the text; (d) a commentary on the text; and (e) some general observations.

#### Archaeological Context

The fragmentary tablet was found (over a period of four years) as two joining pieces. The first piece to be discovered (UM/68/56 on the original recording system) was found coming down into a pit within Room D,<sup>3</sup> whilst the second (MUM/72/1) came at the edge of another pit above the partly robbed wall between Rooms F and G

---

<sup>1</sup> On the only other evidence for Linear B in the ‘Unexplored Mansion’, a fragment of a stirrup jar bearing the man’s name *wi-na-jo*, see M. Popham, *Kadmos* 8 (1969) pp. 43–45.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter UM. On the tablet, see pp. 252–253; Pls. 223(b), 232(28). On the archaeological context, see p. 16.

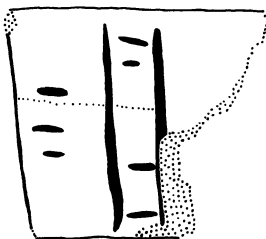
<sup>3</sup> The position of the rooms referred to can be seen in UM Pl. 1b. The Pillar Crypt is easily identified by its four square pillars set centrally (mid, western side of the Mansion). Room G lies immediately alongside at the east, with Room F to its east again. Room D lies directly opposite these to the north, across corridor E. South of the Pillar Crypt and Rooms G and F runs corridor L, with three rooms and a staircase O to its south. Room N is a cupboard beneath the stairs.

(stairway): a matter of a few feet at most to the south of the first piece. The dates of both contexts are less than satisfactory, owing to later disturbances: with the first fragment were associated SubMinoan and ?Classical Black Glaze sherds, with the other a mixture of Late and SubMinoan. Thus neither piece can be assumed to be in its original position, and this point in turn makes impossible any categorical assertion that the tablet was an integral part of the Unexplored Mansion material.

#### Description of Fragment

Portion of 'palm-leaf' tablet, towards left-hand end. Reddish clay in interior of fragment; blackened surface. Maximum length 3.3 cms.; height 2.7 cms.; maximum thickness 1.3 cms.

Drawing (for the photograph see Pl. 1)



Scale 1 : 1

#### Text

X      8833      ( — )  
        ]te-ja[

#### Commentary on Text

]te-ja[ (in majuscule) may be complete at the right: although *ja* could have been followed by a sign at low level (*ka* or *qe*), the size of the gap at the top of the fragment between *ja* and the break at the right seems to exclude the possibility that a sign of normal size followed. Even if ]te-ja[ be complete at the right, however, there is no certain restoration of the term. The extent to which the fragment has already tapered at its left-hand end makes it reasonable to suspect

that ]*te-ja*[ is part of the first word on the tablet; and the only terms in ]*te-ja* which are found in initial position on records in the main archive at Knossos are feminine plurals describing groups of women textile workers: *a-ra-ka-te-ja*, *lālakateiail*, 'distaff women, spinners', initially (and in majuscule) on Ak 5009, Lc 531, and *to-te-ja* initially on Ak 611. Another term known from the same context (though it does not happen to occur initially on any of the existing tablets) is *we-ra-te-ja*, 'workers of the owner *we-ra-to*', on Ap 618.<sup>4</sup> Despite the evidence for textile production in the 'Unexplored Mansion',<sup>5</sup> however, it would be dangerous to assume that the term here was a similar description (even if we could be certain that it was complete at the right). It is not clear how far the analogy of tablets in the main archive at Knossos is valid in this case; and since terms in ]*te-ja* known from other sites include feminine personal names (see (probably) *a-da-ra-te-ja*, initially on PY Aa 785; also on Ab 388), place-names (see *po-wi-te-ja*, initially on PY Jn 601, Na 923), and adjectives of material (see *e-re-pa-te-ja*, PY Ta 713+), we clearly cannot exclude

<sup>4</sup> On the 'owners' or 'collectors', see J. T. Killen, in: *Studies in Greek, Italic and Indo-European Linguistics* offered to Leonard R. Palmer (Innsbruck 1976) pp. 117–125. On Mycenaean possessive adjectives in *-e-jo*, including *we-ra-te-ja* (< *we-ra-to*), see J. T. Killen, *TPhS* 1983 pp. 66–99.

<sup>5</sup> The evidence for textile production in the 'Unexplored Mansion' rests on clay loomweights. Over 150 from all the relevant deposits are recorded (some 130 of LM II date, a further 25 or so from later contexts). In the LM II occupation, Room N (basement storage cupboard under stairway) held 91+ (including 3 of stone), placed there for safekeeping, and was the only significant collection, though Room H (Pillar Crypt) yielded well over a score, and Room L (E/W corridor) another dozen or so. Unlike those in Room N, however, these last had fallen from an upper storey – the logical place for the looms in fact. Later examples were thinly scattered throughout the northern areas of the Mansion, the southern portion being in ruins at that date. Throughout, the spherical loomweight is the most likely to be encountered, though later one finds a few reels/cylinders and flat ovoid specimens too: all are pretty typically Minoan. Cf. for illustration and comparison, Warren, *Myrtos* p. 54 and 221 (EM II); Popham, *AR* 1972–73 p. 51; fig. 4 – the store in Room N of the Mansion; Catling, *BSA* 74 (1979) p. 61, figs. 43–44 (LM Ia); and Warren, *AR* 1980–81 p. 85, figs. 42–43 (LM Ib). For the reels, cf. Popham, *BSA* 60 (1965) p. 305, 45–50, fig. 19 (LM IIIc, at Palaikastro). It should be stressed, however, that there is no need to postulate a connection between this indisputable evidence for textile production and the tablet fragment: weaving was a craft carried out in virtually every establishment in the Minoan world. See further Evelyn in *UM* pp. 247–49.

the possibility that the word was a term in one of these other categories.<sup>6</sup>

### General Observations

The record is of considerable interest in being the only fragment of Linear B tablet known from the 'Unexplored Mansion'. Unfortunately, however, not only is it not possible to date the fragment securely (see the archaeological comment above): it is also impossible to say anything for certain on internal grounds about its affinities to the main archive at Knossos. Neither of the two signs it shows, *te* and *ja*, are particularly complicated, and hence are not among the more useful signs for identifying scribal hands. We can say for certain that the hand of the fragment is not that of the tablets in the main archive on which *a-ra-ka-te-ja*, *to-te-ja* and *we-ra-te-ja* occur (h. 103); further than that, however, it is impossible to go. Though it is not possible to identify the hand, we still cannot be certain that it is not one represented in the main archive. Certainly, the character of the writing is not such as to suggest that this could not be a record from the main palace (which has perhaps been carried to the 'Unexplored Mansion' in clay or rubble used for building purposes) or from the Little Palace, where tablets have been found, and which adjoins the 'Unexplored Mansion'.<sup>7</sup> The hand is perhaps cruder than

---

<sup>6</sup> It is true (a) that there is no known place-name in *te-ja* at Knossos; (b) that many of the feminine personal names found in initial position elsewhere on the records appear to be those of women workers in the textile industry (e.g. those on the Mycenae Oe WOOL records); and (c) that adjectives of material rarely stand in initial position on records, and that among those that do is *po-pu-re-ja*, 'purple', an adjective describing cloth on KN L 474. But it would obviously be dangerous to argue that this evidence again points to a textile context for X 8833. We cannot guarantee that all the women's names found in initial position on tablets elsewhere are those of textile workers (at Pylos, for instance, since some of the women on the Aa, Ab tablets are domestic servants rather than textile workers, we cannot be certain of the occupation of *a-da-ra-te-ja* on Aa 785); and if it is possible for adjectives of material describing cloth to stand in initial position on records, there is obviously no reason why adjectives of material describing other commodities might not also do so (and note the genitives *e-ri-ka*, 'of willow', *pte-re-wa*, 'of elm' standing initially on Knossos WHEEL records).

<sup>7</sup> On the tablets from the Little Palace, see L. R. Palmer, *On the Knossos Tablets* (Oxford 1963) pp. 59f., 168f.; J.-P. Olivier, *Les scribes de Cnossos* (Rome 1967) pp. 116f. As Olivier shows, most of the tablets which Evans records as coming from the Little Palace have no links, in terms of scribal hand, with those from the main palace, while of the remainder DI 8103 (= 1643), though certainly in h. 118, is only doubtfully assigned to this find-spot; Dk 2129 is only doubtfully identified

some known in the main archive; but it is no cruder than, say, that of the Nc tablets from the Arsenal (h. 133).<sup>8</sup>

R. D. G. EVELY  
J. T. KILLEN  
M. R. POPHAM

## 2. Another Fragment of Linear B Tablet from Knossos

The fragment of Linear B tablet published here is held in a private collection in Great Britain. It is believed to have been in Great Britain for many years. The presence on the fragment of the sign \*22, which is not known on tablets from any other site, makes it overwhelmingly probable that it comes from Knossos.

A photograph, a drawing and the text of the tablet are given below. The fabric of the tablet (it is baked very hard, and has an almost metallic consistency) suggests that it may come from the Arsenal area (compare the similar fabric of many of the Mc, Nc and S-tablets); but its hand cannot be identified. There is no obvious join with any other tablet in the Iraklion Museum or elsewhere.

### Description of Fragment

The fragment comes towards the left-hand end of the tablet. It is not possible to say how many lines of inscription the record originally contained; but the thickness of the tablet does not suggest that it had many lines, and it could well have contained only one. Grey-black colour. Maximum length 3.8 cms.; maximum height 1.5 cms.; maximum thickness 1.1 cms.

---

as being in h. 120; and Ak 2126 (h. 108?) is certainly not from this location if, as seems probable, it is the same tablet as 1594. The subjects dealt with on the tablets that are certainly from this location include personnel (As 4493), goats (C 1902), wool (Dk 2129), sheep (D 2130) and textiles (L 2127, Wb 8711 and probably X 2128).

<sup>8</sup> We are grateful to John Chadwick for helpful comment on a first draft of the paper; to Sandy MacGillivray and Jean-Pierre Olivier for providing photographs; and to Jean-Pierre Olivier for providing the drawing.

Drawing (for the photograph see Pl. 2)



Scale 1 : 1

Text

Xf 8835

PRIV ( — )

] \*22-je-mi[

*inf. mut.*

-mi[ : -we[ also possible.

Commentary

There is no obvious interpretation of ] \*22-je-mi[, which is not a sequence of signs found elsewhere on the tablets. Given the position of the term on the tablet, the size of the signs in which it is written, and the possibility that this was a one-line record, the most obvious possibility which comes to mind is that it is a personal name, standing (as many personal names do) in initial position on the record. There is no means, however, of finally excluding other possibilities.

J. T. KILLEN

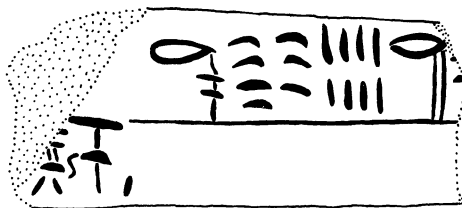
### 3. A Fragment of Linear B Tablet from Knossos in the Liverpool University Archaeological Museum

The Linear B tablet published below is in the Liverpool University Archaeological Museum (Accession no. C591). It was one of the antiquities bequeathed to the School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies, Liverpool University, by R. W. Hutchinson, who died in 1970. Mr Hutchinson was Lecturer in Classical Archaeology at Liverpool University from 1948–1949; earlier, from 1934 to 1947, he had been Knossos Curator. The tablet may have been acquired during this latter period.

## Description of Fragment

Central portion of a 'palm-leaf' tablet. Yellowish-brown colour. Maximum length 6.0 cms.; maximum height 2.5 cms.; maximum thickness 1.2 cms.

Drawing (for the photograph see Pl. 3)



Scale 1 : 1

## Text

Dv 8836

LIV (117)

.A ] ovis<sup>m</sup> 78 ovis<sup>f</sup> 20[  
 .B qa-na-]no-to [

## Commentary

The fragment is the middle section of a sheep record in hand 117. ]no-to at the beginning of line B, in the standard position for toponyms on records of this class, can confidently be restored as *qa-na-no-to*, a (relatively rare) place-name attested elsewhere on sheep records on Da 1351, Dv 1493, Db 7118, Dv 8287, (probably) Dv 8585, Dv 8836 and Dv 9601 (all in h. 117), and not found outside this context.

The tablet was probably a Db record i.e. contained no subsidiary entry besides the ovis<sup>m</sup> and ovis<sup>f</sup> entries on line A. If a subsidiary entry had stood on line B, we might have expected some trace of it to the right of the register: where there is a subsidiary entry on tablets of this type, it normally begins at a point to the left of the bottom of the ovis<sup>f</sup> entry. Very likely, therefore, the figure in the ovis<sup>f</sup> entry on line A was 22, giving the total of 100 animals which is such a regular feature of the Da-Dg, Dv records.



Pl. 1. Linear B Tablet from Knossos ('Unexplored Mansion').



CENTIMETRES  
INCHES

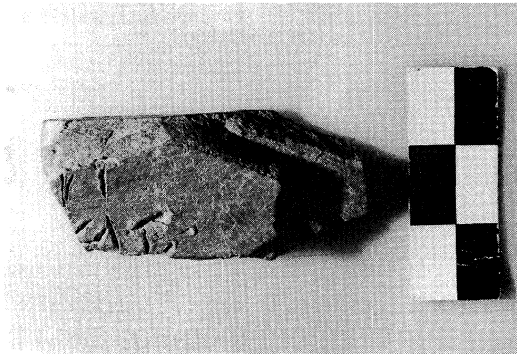


Pl. 2. Linear B Tablet from Knossos (private collection).





Pl. 3. Linear B Tablet from Knossos (Liverpool University Archaeological Museum).



Pl. 4. Linear B Tablet from Knossos (North Entrance Passage).

Db 7118 + 7229 + 7881 (117)  
 .A ] ovis<sup>m</sup> 78 ovis<sup>f</sup> 22  
 .B ]ma / qa-na-no-to  
 .B -to probably over erasure.

J. T. KILLEN  
C. MEE

The Linear B tablet fragment which is the subject of this publication was found in excavations in the Palace of Knossos in 1987. We give below (a) a description (by Peatfield) of the archaeological context in which the tablet was found; (b) a description, photograph and drawing of the fragment; (c) a transcription of the text; and (d) a commentary on the text.

<sup>10</sup> We are most grateful to Jean-Pierre Olivier for providing the drawing.

### Archaeological Context

The tablet was found in excavations in the Palace of Knossos in 1987. It was an unexpected find completely unconnected with the purpose of the excavation. Its findspot was a trial trench in the high ground east of the North Entrance Passage (Area K in the location plan of the Palace deposits in Pendlebury's Guide to the Knossos Stratigraphic Museum). The context was mixed, even confused, and can contribute nothing to the archaeological issues which involve Linear B.

The 1987 excavations in the Palace of Knossos were under the overall direction of Sinclair Hood. The purpose of the excavation was further to elucidate three separate problems encountered by Mr Hood in his ongoing study of the Palace – the recovery of a MM II deposit in the South-West corner of the Palace (supervised by Dr C. MacDonald), the architectural history of the rooms behind the Throne-Room (supervised by Dr D. Evelyn), and the EM III platform/structure in the north-west sector of the Palace (supervised by Dr A. A. D. Peatfield).<sup>11</sup>

In order to try to trace the line of the EM III platform, trial trenches were dug behind the west wall of the North Façade. These mostly proved successful in locating the platform and confirming its date. Evidence of an EM II structure on the same alignment was also discovered. This Pre-palatial material was preserved in the North-West corner of the Palace because of the necessity of levelling the natural slope of the hill by building up a platform. This platform was functionally useful too in the later history of the Palace. Further east in the same area EM III deposits are known, most famously the "Dungeons" and "Keep", but the building of the main Palatial periods has eradicated any EM III architectural traces. It was hoped therefore that we might find a continuation of the EM III platform in the next area east which might be an artificial build-up or fill – this was the high ground east of the North Entrance passage. It was here that the Linear B tablet was found.

For the stated purpose of the excavation, this area proved disappointing. Small soundings immediately came on to Neolithic strata. Only at the northern edge was material of any other period found. As no EM III architectural remains indicative of the platform wall were found, work was suspended here in favour of completing the soundings on the North Façade.

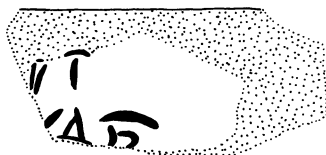
<sup>11</sup> H. W. Catling, *Archaeological Reports 1987–88* pp. 68f.; A. A. D. Peatfield, *Kritiki Estia* 4 (1988) pp. 322f.

The whole trench in the high ground of the North Entrance Passage should be designated as K III 1 (following Pendlebury's classification). The Linear B tablet was found in the northern end of the trench. Here the pottery in soft earth fill was predominantly EM III, but was mixed with later material, especially LM. This was presumably contamination from the construction of the walls of the East Bastion of the North Entrance Passage. The tablet seems to be associated with a shallow cutting running NNW to SSE, filled with small to medium-sized stones, probably a rudimentary wall. The pottery here again was very mixed, but had a greater concentration of LM (LM I-LM III). The area excavated was very small, and there was not enough of a ceramic sample to offer any conclusive chronological evidence.

#### Description of Fragment

Probably centre-left section of a 'palm-leaf' tablet, without a central ruling. Light red clay, extremely well baked. Maximum length 3.9 cms.; maximum height 2 cms.; maximum thickness 0.7 cms.(?)

Drawing (for the photograph see Pl. 4)



Scale 1 : 1

Text

- X 8838 (—)
- .a ]ki-ro [
- .b ]wi-pi-jo [
- inf. mut.*
- .a ]ki-to less likely.
- .b ]-pi-jo (or ]-e-jo or even ]-du-jo) perhaps safer.
- Trace at right in the break.

### Note on Hand

It is impossible to assign the record to a known scribe, because of the paucity of the evidence. None of the features of the writing, however, are incompatible with what we know of the general 'scribal tradition' of the North Entrance Passage area.

### Commentary

As neither of the sign-groups is certainly complete, and as only one of the signs can be read with certainty, no extended commentary is possible. Nevertheless, neither of the sign-groups is likely to be a toponym, given that neither can be restored in terms of a place-name known elsewhere on the records; and we may suspect therefore (a) that if there was a reference to place on the record, this was shown at the beginning of the tablet and (b) that at least one of the two surviving sign-groups is a personal name.

There are not many sign-groups ending in ]-*ki-ro* elsewhere on the documents. The following are those attested:

- (i) *o-ki-ro* Name of a shepherd at Phaistos (KN Da 1509.B).
- (ii) *si-ki-ro* A term of obscure meaning on KN U 8210.1 (which contains in addition the adjective *re-u-ka*, 'white', and the ideogram DI + PTE).
- (iii) *wo-ki-ro* Name of a shepherd at *a-ka-na-jo* on PY Cn 328.
- (iv) ]-*ki-ro* Perhaps a shepherd's name, at the beginning of KN Dk(1) 7902.

Terms ending in ]-*pi-jo* are the following:

- (i) *a-pi-jo* Name of a bronze-smith at Pylos (PY Jn 725.14), perhaps /*Amphiōn*/.<sup>12</sup> See also *a-pi-jo-to* (gen.) PY An 261.6–9; *a-pi-o-to* (var. spelling of same) PY An 261 v. 6.
- (ii) *du-pi-jo* MN at Knossos (KN Vc 287). (Note: the reading ]*du-pi-jo* is not entirely impossible on our document, but the curve in what is preserved of the sign seems much more consistent with *wi* than with *du*.)
- (iii) *ka-ri-pi-jo* Perhaps a MN at Knossos (KN X 7918).
- (iv) *ma-ra-pi-jo* Name of shepherd at *ru-ki-to* on KN Dd 1296.B.
- (v) *me-ta-pi-jo* PY An 654.3. Ethnic derived from place-name *me-ta-pa*.

---

<sup>12</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup> 591.

Though, as we have seen, we have no evidence for a sign-group ending in ]*wi-pi-jo* elsewhere in the records, one possibility which must be considered is that *wi-pi-jo* is complete, and is a variant spelling of the MN *wi-pi-o*, probably /*Wiphiōn*/, Gr. Ἰπίων, attested at the beginning of Nc 5103 at Knossos. (For omission of the glide -j-, cf. e.g. *a-pi-o(-to)* vs. *a-pi-jo(-to)* on PY An 261, mentioned above.) Was perhaps the term in line b this or another personal name; did the tablet begin with an indication of place; and is the term in line .a perhaps a description of a commodity indicated by an ideogram later on the tablet (traces of which are perhaps visible in the break)?

Even if these guesses be correct, however, there is no clue to the subject of the record. Since neither of the terms on .a and .b is restorable as a known toponym, this is almost certainly not a SHEEP tablet; further than this, however, it does not seem possible to speculate.<sup>13</sup>

J. T. KILLEN  
A. A. D. PEATFIELD

---

<sup>13</sup> We are grateful to Jean-Pierre Olivier for various observations on the text, hand and contents of the tablet and for providing the drawing.