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GREEK ἰδᾶ ‘BATTLE, FIGHT, COMBAT’: A TERM OF MINOAN ORIGIN?

In the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century Günter Neumann published a number of articles on some Greek appellatives, which seem to be borrowed from a Minoan substratum.¹ It is possible and necessary to follow this line of thought. Therefore I intend to seek words of Minoan origin in the Hesychian glossary. My research begins with the following gloss: ἰδᾶ μάχη (ι 156).²

Kurt Latte, the recent editor of the Hesychian lexicon, lists the lemma ἰδᾶ with the *crux philologorum* (†).³ His doubts are obvious. The semantics of the glossema (‘battle, fight, combat’) is not compatible with the well-known word ἰδη (f.) ‘timber-tree, wood, wooden hill’, which appears abundantly in the Greek literature and glossaries.

In my opinion, the gloss is not fictitious. It seems to be connected with the Linear A text AB28-AB01-AB80-AB04, which can be transcribed as *i-da-ma-te* according to the values of the Linear B script. This text appears twice on two inscribed Minoan double axes (indexed AR Zf 1; AR Zf 2), which were found in the Arkalokhori cave.

All the interpretators of the Linear A inscriptions agree that the word *i-da-ma-te* represents a votive dedication and refers directly

¹ G. Neumann, Zur Sprache der kretischen Linearschrift A, Glotta 36, 1957, 156–157; idem, Zwei minoische Gefäßbezeichnungen, Glotta 37, 1958, 106–112; idem, Griech. βατιάχη, Linear A *pa-ta-qe*, Glotta 38, 1959, 10–14; idem, Minoisch *kikina* „die Sykomorenfeige“, Glotta 38, 1959, 181–186; idem, Weitere mykenische und minoische Gefäßnamen, Glotta 39, 1960, 172–178; idem, Νικύλεον, Glotta 40, 1962, 51–54. His research is perfectly summarized by A. F. Deyanov, in: I. M. D’jakonov (ed.), Tajny drevnikh pis’men. Problemy dešifrovki. Sbornik statej, Moskva 1976, 99–100 (after the article entitled “O jazyke kritskogo linejnogo pis’m’a A” [On the language of the Cretan Linear A Script], ibidem, 97–99, which is a Russian translation of the first article by G. Neumann).

² See Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon, post Ioannem Albertum recensuit M. Schmidt, vol. 2 (E–K), Ienae 1860, 342.

³ See Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon, recensuit et emendavit K. Latte, vol. 2 (E–O), Hauniae 1966, 346.

to a Minoan deity, which was celebrated in the Arkalokhori cave. However, they differ as to the exact interpretation of *i-da-ma-te*. To the best of my knowledge, four different explanations have been suggested so far:

1. N. K. Boufidis, the Greek archaeologist, proposed that the Linear A dedication means “The Mother of Ida” (= Gk. Ἰδα ἡ μήτηρ) or “The Idaean Mother” (= Gk. Ἰδαία ἡ μήτηρ).⁴

2. M. Pope, the editor princeps of the inscription AR Zf 1, identified the Linear A term as the Pre-Hellenic name of Demeter (Ion.-Att. Δημήτηρ, Dor. Δαμάτηρ), suggesting that the syllabic sign AB 28 (*i-*) represents a “prefix”.⁵

3. F. Crevatin did not accept the identification of Linear A *-ma-te* with IE. **māter* (f.) ‘mother’ and considered the sequence *-ma-te* as a Pre-Greek element *-martis*, which can be seen in the name of the Cretan goddess Βριτόμαρτις.⁶

4. P. Faure divided the preserved form into some separate elements, explaining the element *-ma-* as the alleged theonym “Ma/Maia” and the final item *-te* as θεῶ or θεός.⁷

The two former explanations are impressive, but some objections appear in relation to Boufidis’s connection of *i-da-* with the Cretan oronym Ἰδα, which contains a digamma (f-) in the initial position; see Zeus’ epithets Βιδάτας/Ἰδάτας or Ἰδαῖος (both meaning ‘Idaean’).⁸ Thus the Linear A form should have been written **wi-da-*, not *i-da-*.

Crevatin ignores the fact that the theonym Britomartis is a literary form, whereas an exclusive variant Βριτόμαρτις appears in Crete.⁹ The observed fluctuation between *-t-* and *-p-* indicates the existence of the original labiovelar stop **k^w* in this proper name. In fact, Βριτό-μαρτις/Βριτό-μαρπις (literally ‘sweet maiden/dulcis virgo’, according to Solinus, *Coll. rer. memor.* XI 8) can be identified with the Mycenaean theonym *ma-qe* (dat. sg.), attested in the Cnossian

⁴ N. K. Boufidis, Κρητομυκηναϊκὰ ἐπιγραφὰ ἐξ Ἀρχαιολογίου, Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς 2, 1953–1954, 64–65.

⁵ M. Pope, Cretan Axe-Heads with Linear A Inscriptions, ABSA 51, 1956, 134–135.

⁶ F. Crevatin, La lingua «minoica»: metodi d’indagine e problemi, in: Studi Triestini di Antichità in onore di Luigia Achillea Stella, Trieste 1975, 32–33.

⁷ P. Faure, Ἀφιερώματα σε γραμμικὴ Α γράφη, Ἀμάλθεια 72–73, 1987, 184; idem, Écritures préhelléniques dans dix cavernes de Crète, Cretan Studies 7, 2002, 78.

⁸ H. Verbruggen, Le Zeus crétois, Paris 1981, 140.

⁹ M. Guarducci, Diktynna, Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni 11, 1935, 189; eadem, Inscriptiones Creticae, vol. 1, Romae 1935, 35–36, 84, 119, 188.

tablet KN F 51.¹⁰ Faure’s proposal, as well as his reading *on-da, ma-te* (‘δόσις Μαιᾶ θεῶ’), is fantastic and highly unconvincing. In other words, the latter two interpretations (suggested by Crevatin and Faure) are morphologically and formally dubious, so both must be abandoned.

In 1993, the Greek archaeologists, who made excavations in a peak sanctuary in the island of Kythera, found a stone ladle with three clear signs on the upper rim AB01-AB80-AB04 to be transcribed as *da-ma-te* (KY Za 2). The immediate comparison of this Kytherean inscription with the two inscribed bronze axes from the Arkalokhori cave, which carry the same three signs preceded by AB28 (*i-*), appeared to affirm equating (*i-*)*da-ma-te* with the Greek Demeter.¹¹

It is obvious now that the final part *-ma-te*, attested in *da-ma-te* (KY Za 2) and *i-da-ma-te* (AR Zf 1, Zf 2), refers to the Indo-European term for ‘mother’.¹² However, the identification of the Kytherean goddess *da-ma-te* (= Gk. Δημήτηρ) with the Cretan deity *i-da-ma-te* seems far from being certain for two reasons.

Firstly, it is highly probable that the final part of both these theonyms contains the same noun denoting ‘mother’, but the differences observed in the initial part seems to indicate two different goddesses. Note that the Latin gods *Dis pater* and *Iuppiter* differ diametrically as to their functions, but both these theonyms contain the same Indo-European term for ‘father’ (IE. **p₂tér*). Thus the similarity between *da-ma-te* and *i-da-ma-te* may be due to chance.

Secondly, Demeter is undoubtedly a Greek (or Pre-Greek) goddess of nature, fertility and crops, whereas *i-da-ma-te* seems to denote a

¹⁰ A. Morpurgo, *Mycenaeae Graecitatis Lexicon*, Roma 1963, 177; K. T. Witzak, *Quaestiones Mycenaeae* II, *Meander* 47, 1992, No. 9–10, 461–462. Cf. also F. Aura Jorro, *Diccionario micénico*, vol. 1, Madrid 1985, 422.

¹¹ I. Sakellarakis, J.-P. Olivier, *Un vase en pierre avec inscription en linéaire A du sanctuaire de sommet minoen de Cythère*, BCH 118, 1994, 343–351; Y. Duhoux, *LA > B da-ma-te = Déméter? Sur la langue du linéaire A*, *Minos* 29–30, 1994–1995, 289–294; G. Owens, *New Evidence for Minoan “Demeter”*, *Kadmos* 35, 1996, 172–176.

¹² It is worth emphasizing that the Linear A inscription from Palaikastro (PK Za 11) registers the theonym *i-da* [,] *pi-te-ri* (dat. sg. ‘to the Father of Battle’), who seems to be a male partner of *i-da-ma-te* (‘Mother of Battle’). Therefore I agree with G. A. Owens, *Evidence for the Minoan Language* (1): *The Minoan Libation Formula*, *Cretan Studies* 5, 1996, 163–203, that these two terms of relationship, *-ma-te* ‘mother’ and *-pi-te-ri* ‘father’, guarantee the Indo-European status of the Linear A language.

Cretan deity of military character, as suggested by numerous archaeological findings in the Arkalokhori cave.

In fact, at modern Arkalokhori there is one of the most remarkable caves, called ο Σπήλιος του Προφήτη Ηλία in Modern Greek (literally „The Cave of Prophet Elias”),¹³ which was a cult centre frequented throughout the Minoan periods. The Arkalokhori cave is tripartite and the middle section was first explored (1912) by J. Hatzidakis and J. Bambakas¹⁴, while the entire cave was examined later (1934, 1935) by N. Platon and S. Marinatos¹⁵. The cult place, with something like an altar, was in the innermost recess of the cave. A veritable treasure containing mainly double axes and weapons of bronze or precious metal together with sundry statuettes mostly dating from MM III and LM I was found at that place. Cult there perhaps continued sporadically until the Protogeometric period, but suffered, or came temporarily to a stop, through the collapse of the roof in LM II. The nature of the cult offerings, which were almost entirely composed of weapons, and a remarkable absence of pottery seems to point to a spherical cult which may have differed from that occurring in other Cretan caves.

The wholly military nature of the votive objects in the Arkalokhori cave, like the double axes, shields, knives, daggers and lances, which have not been discovered anywhere else in such profusion, and to the virtual exclusion of any other kind of objects, suggests that a military deity was worshipped in the cave in question.

The votive objects of military character, devoted to the Minoan goddess called *i-da-ma-te*, demonstrate clearly that the Minoan deity, worshipped in the Arkalokhori cave, was a war-goddess. She was called *i-da-ma-te* (literally “Mother of Battle”) after the Minoan appellative *i-da-* (> Gk. ἰδα f. ‘battle, fight, combat’) and *-ma-te* (= IE. **mātēr* f. ‘mother’). This Pre-Greek goddess of war has nothing to do with the Greek Demeter, the goddess of fertility.

If the explanation of *i-da-ma-te* (AR Zf 1; AR Zf 2) as the Minoan war-goddess, suggested on the basis of the archaeological findings in the Arkalokhori cave, be correct, then the Hesychian gloss ἰδα: μάχη should be treated as a term of Minoan origin.

¹³ P. Faure, *Fonctions des cavernes crétoises*, Paris 1964, 160–162; idem, *Ιερά σπήλαια της Κρήτης*, Heraklion 1996, 72–74.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Hatzidakis, J. Bambakas, *An Early Minoan Sacred Cave at Arkalokhori in Crete*, *ABSA* 19, 1912–1913, 35–47.

¹⁵ S. Marinatos, *Scavi nella grotta di Arkalochori*, *Rivista di Filologia* 1934, 547–549.