



















## A 17th c. BC Minoan Votive Double Axe (Labrys) The Arkalochori Axe and its siblings

Abstract: *The “siblings” of the Arkalochori Axe are two small votive axes found also in the Arkalochori cave, and one Cretan Hieroglyphic inscription arranged in columns just like the one on the Arkalochori axe (abbreviated here as A.a.). These documents are transcribed here, and their connection to the Minoan Protolinear script is shown. The inscriptions on the axes are interpreted. While all Cretan Hieroglyphic inscriptions convey the Cretan dialect of Sumerian, the two small votive axes are some of the very few documents of Linear A that coincide with Protolinear, i.e. they convey that Sumerian dialect. The Phaistos disc, although of a system consciously imitating the Minoan script, is not itself classified as Minoan.*

The most complete presentation of the Arkalochori Axe is found in the German Wikipedia,<sup>[i]</sup> where the following grid is taken from:

<b>Kolumnen der Inschrift auf der Axt von Arkalochori</b>		
<b>Spalte 1</b>	<b>Spalte 2</b>	<b>Spalte 3</b>
		
		
		
		
		
		

The whole context of the inscription makes it clear that it records a ritual phrase, and the good state of conservation makes it easy to read, as far as we are acquainted to the scribe’s handwriting.

As to the type of writing system, there are hitherto 3 theories:

1. that this inscription belongs to Linear A;
2. that it is yet another inscription of Cretan Hieroglyphic (C.H.);
3. that this is the same system as that used on the Phaistos Disc.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> theory should be discarded without any doubt, because it is only based on quite superficial similarities between a few signs, namely the “head” and the “branch” sign. However, a human head on the Phaistos Disc is depicted in different ways, which means that it did not really mean “head”, but in one case it meant “a king” (wearing a type of royal crown), and in another case probably “a slave” (with a tattoo or piercing on the cheek).

After a careful look, it is evident that the Phaistos Disc belongs to a system quite different than all kinds of Minoan writing. As we have shown[ii], Minoan writing is based on a very neat rebus system in which every CV syllable is depicted as an object of a monosyllabic name (very few signs are disyllabic: CVCV); that was possible for the Sumerian language, because it had many picturable nouns with a monosyllabic CV type name; but for other languages, at least in the old world around the Mediterranean, it was impossible to apply such a system, and the Phaistos Disc is a proof of that: it conveys, in my opinion, a text in Luwian language, in a system related to Luwian Hieroglyphic (the system earlier called “Hittite Hieroglyphic”); even in Kenanidis 1992[iii], page 6, it was written that *“the Hittites (sic) who were settled in Crete, by imitating the Cretan Hieroglyphic, created the Phaistos Disc system, which in Asia Minor evolved into the “Hittite Hieroglyphic”*. This might have given the idea to Achterberg et al. (2004) [xviii] to “read” the whole Phaistos disc in Luwian, the most reasonable attempt so far, however their decipherment attempt has not been enough serious or acceptable: “a letter to the King Nestor of the Achaeans” would not have been written in such a spiral and decorative form, which shows it is a religious document, and also a letter to the Achaeans ought to be written in Linear B, which was the only form of the Minoan script that the Achaeans could read through their secretaries. I will not now detail the arbitrariness by which Achterberg et al. (2004) identified the signs and their phonetic values, as this paper’s scope is other than the Phaistos disc.

As the IndoEuropean Luwian language could not find common Luwian monosyllabic picturable words, the Luwians necessarily resorted to words partly similar to syllables they wanted to depict, and also to rare words – while on the other hand the Cretan Protolinar system utilized very common and familiar objects with names exactly same as the syllables they depicted. For all these reasons, the Phaistos Disc system, although superficially similar to the Minoan writing systems, and although it deliberately tried to imitate the principles of Minoan writing, it is in itself a very different system of writing in which different objects and with different phonetic values were utilized.

Now, considering the theories [1] (Linear A) and [2] (Cretan Hieroglyphic, C.H.), they are both close to reality if we are aware of the existence of the Protolinear script, which is the original form of all Minoan scripts including Linear A, Linear B, and Cretan Hieroglyphic.

While Linear A extant documents convey usually some non-Sumerian language, the Arcalochori axe surely conveys the language of the original creators of Protolinear, that is a conservative Sumerian dialect, described in “cwepeker”[iv] and Kenanidis & Papakitsos[ii]. We know that because the axe itself is the most typical cultural object of those who created the Minoan civilization, and the whole context it was found with is purely of Minoan worship, by which double axes, the symbol of God “An”, and much more numerous sacred swords and knives (probably used for sacrifices) were offered to God by being placed in high and hardly accessible caves [iv, v].

Another indication that points to original Protolinear is the shape of signs, which are consciously pictorial although simplified and stylized after a distinct personal handwriting: the scribe was conscious of what object each syllabic sign depicted.

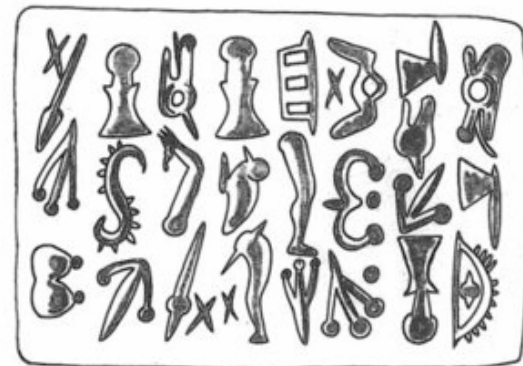
I prefer to classify the A.a. inscription into Cretan Hieroglyphic, but it is not in the usual style of it, because Cretan Hieroglyphic is really more ornamental and cryptic, its signs are deliberately written in very fanciful ways which make it more difficult to recognize the signs and know their orientation and order so as to read the short texts of Cretan Hieroglyphic usually on seals. The axe inscription is written in delineated columns, which is a feature rare, although not totally unknown, to Cretan Hieroglyphic; the picture below shows a Cretan Hieroglyphic inscription also in delineated columns. It is relevant to remember here that Sumerian writing in Cuneiform and pre-Cuneiform was normally written and read in vertical columns (from right to left), although modern scholars prefer to turn around all Cuneiform documents and signs by 90 degrees so as to make them appear in horizontal lines written from left to right.

Note also in this Hieroglyphic inscription that the same sign can be oriented in different ways, as also we see on the Arcalochori axe. This is a mannerism found in all C.H. inscriptions, however it is more striking in the 8-column inscription below because it is longer and has the signs neatly arranged in columns in contrast to the bulk of C.H. inscriptions.

The 8-column inscription, according to the reconstruction of Protolinear in “cwepeker” [iv], reads (in downward columns from left to right: šotiho raweti opi ramojo deŋei qorui todutira otohe.

Therefore, the Arcalochori axe is a rare type inscription of Cretan Hieroglyphic, which is close to ordinary Protolinear being used for secular purposes.

#314 [1] NEAPOLIS S (8/8) 01 / CMS VI, •.



AM 1938.1166. Prisme à 8 faces (0,4 x 1,9 cm; Ø 0,9 cm). Agate veinée.

(Image taken from [vi])

To say that the A.a. inscription belongs to Linear A would be at least not precise, for two reasons: the extant Linear A documents use, as the name says, linear signs, while the axe signs are more pictorial, with not so strict an orientation<sup>1</sup>, and more flat, 2-dimensional; and, the extant Linear A documents usually convey non-Sumerian languages used by non-Sumerian nationalities living in Minoan Crete, while this axe, like all C.H. documents, is an occurrence of an original inscription by Minoan Sumerians.

While this axe inscription should be classified as Cretan Hieroglyphic, its style is coming close to secular Protolinar, so we should note that it was different than the usual Protolinar inscriptions of that time, as Protolinar was normally linear and similar to the known inscriptions of Linear A and even more similar to Linear B, written on delineated rows (horizontally), with word-division and carefully to draw each sign as a recognizable object but as quickly as possible. The axe signs are more pictorial and consisting of surfaces rather than lines, for an obvious reason: this inscription is very sacred and revered, so it had to be written in a more careful ornamental way to show reverence. There was no need for hurry as on accounting or long texts. Considering the ease of hand, we can understand that the scribe, who was probably a priest, had written many texts in that ornamental manner. The other difference from usual Protolinar is its arrangement in columns instead of rows: probably some religious concept dictated that it ought to be written along, and not across, the axe's handle.

This inscription was written on soft material (wax), although it resulted in bronze: it was obviously the technique of clay mold made by covering with clay the wax

<sup>1</sup> So, the "da" sign faces once left and once right; the "šo" is depicted with point down, while in ordinary, secular Protolinar was normally with point upwards, as discussed below.

likeness of the object; then the wax was removed by melting while the clay kept inside the original shape of the wax so as to form the clay mould for molten metal.

After all the research done in order to reconstruct the whole Protolinar script as presented in [iv], it is not difficult to identify the signs as following:

sodamanalumı soljanasomate šo(qu)rıda.

Notes on the signs (numbered in columns downwards, from left to right):

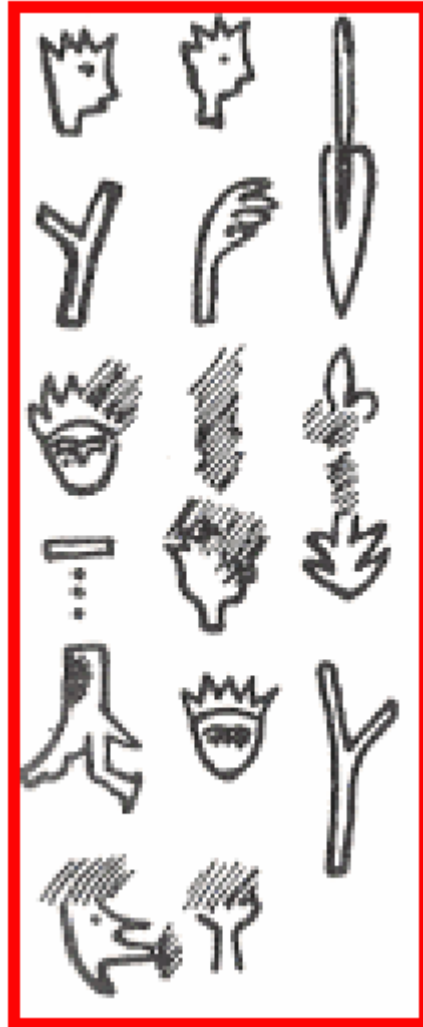
1, 7, 10: this is clearly the head sign, well known from Linear B as “so”.

2 and 15: this is the well known sign depicting a branch, known as “da”.

Although in our European culture it might seem strange why the sign is once leftward and once rightward on the same inscription, that is actually quite normal for this manner of writing; in fact, it would be strange if it were drawn otherwise: the scribe wanted to make it face outwards, to the left on the left column, and to the right on the right column, where it is also the last sign so it had to delimit the text by its orientation; both these “da”, delimit the short text, one near the beginning and the other ending the text; there were aesthetic reasons, and possibly also religious once, for this orientation of the “branch” sign.

3 and 11: the well known sign for “ma”, depicting a calf’s face (calf =amá(r) in Sumerian); not a cat’s face as scholars use to describe. Indeed today cities’ people are only familiar with cats and not with calves, and even in ancient times there was some reminiscence of a cat’s face (if we judge by the Hieroglyphic seal [APPENDIX]), but the Sumerian speaking users were conscious that this depicts a calf. This is why the sign has no whiskers (even on the Hieroglyphic seal [APPENDIX]). Also the sign here has not the neck and the human ears of the human face sign “qa”.

4 and 9: the well known pillar sign “na”. There is an observable difference between signs 4 and 9, but then there is some damage on the artifact just upon the sign 9, so perhaps the form of the sign has not been rendered very precisely: see below how it





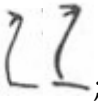
has been rendered in [vii]. Both signs 4 and 9 cannot seem to depict anything other than a pillar (“na”), while the similar signs of axe (“to”) and emmer (“di”) should be excluded: the axe handle could not be represented as consisting of pieces (shown as dots), and the emmer sign has a very elaborate top even in the less detailing Linear A and Linear B.

5: this sign can be recognized only after the research based on the principle of the Sumerian naming of Protoliner signs. In 2011 [iv] I wrote (in Greek) 1334 words and 8141 characters to explain the pictorial origin and phonetic value of the sign, which was “lu”, meaning “ploughshare” as a noun, and “to tear, scratch, stab, break up” as a verb, that is the action of the ploughshare.

Here I give only some interesting forms of the sign in Linear A: in the famous

golden ring KN Zf 13 the sign appears twice:





On the clay tablet: TY 3: . On KH 6:  HT 24: ;


(Tablet number not mentioned in [iv]):



PH28: , HT25: , HT 115: . On KH19, a ligature of the "lu" syllabogram

with the oil ideogram: , meaning a kind of oil with a name starting with lu.


Especially important is the form on tablet PH 7: , because that scribe was exceptionally careful in drawing his signs and the tablet contains no number, so it was probably not an accounting one, but probably bore a religious text.

A homomorph in pre-Cuneiform is , which came to be «APIN» (=plough) in Cuneiform.


The sign was very common in Linear A but absent in Linear B, which means that it was a common syllable (as those with the consonant L), which however was not useful for Greek where the scribes could not differentiate R from L.

For more details on the sign, see [iv], page 149 (in Greek).

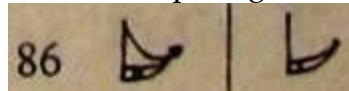
6: This letter is a little puzzling here only because it was written with such simplicity, however, it cannot be anything else except the sketch of a boat or small ship, which is well known in all forms of Minoan writing. I also suspected that it might have

been the sign “qi” depicting a fox, in pre-Cuneiform ATU 61:  and in

Linear A perhaps: , but with a more careful consideration we observe that the

fox sign has very explicit ears, and this sign here (  ) cannot depict any animal.

Comparing the sign, 6th on the axe, to the forms of the ship sign in Linear B:



86



, in pre-Cuneiform:





, A.T.U. 216-219




, and especially in Linear A:



we can be sure that this sign depicted a ship, and therefore it had the phonetic value «m» (which also suits the context, as it probably represented the Sumerian copula –m) which will be discussed later.

8: The eighth letter on the axe is , which instantly brings to mind the Linear B sign \*88 which belongs to the “signs deleted (Melena 2014, 3, 12)” [viii]. On [viii] the sign is “standardized” as , I read through J. Melena’s works on <https://ehu.academia.edu/Jos%C3%A9LMelena> and had a personal conversation with him through e-mailing, he gave me a listing of Linear B signs by St. Dow, Amer. Journal of Archaeol. LVIII [1954], p. 88,

where \*88 appears as  88, but he only concludes that “It (the sign \*88) was eliminated in the late fifties and there is no room for any paper on it. It was an epigraphical question solved long ago”, without giving an explanation of what was misinterpreted for it and how the question was solved.

Professor John G. Younger<sup>2</sup> has given me a more detailed explanation “It appears in Emmett Bennett’s transcription of the Pylos tablets (1953) where he transcribed the

<sup>2</sup> Professor of Classics, Director of Jewish Studies, Interim Director of Global & International Studies, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045 USA



tablets found in the summer of 1939. But the sign is not mentioned in Ventris & Chadwick's Documents of Mycenaean Greek (1953), so it was deleted soon after Blegen resumed his excavations at Pylos in 1952. I guess it is possible that Blegen's new excavations produced tablets that made the earlier reading (and identification) of a sign \*88 problematic and consequently the sign was deleted".


In Emmett Bennett's transcription of the Pylos tablets (1953), which is an excellent work rendering the signs very faithfully as they appear on the tablets, the sign has the

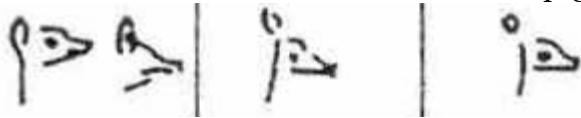


form as I carefully copied it during my university years. So we have three




forms: of a syllabogram which "does not exist" (in the

exact words of J. Melena). If that sign (Linear B \*88) existed, then  would be its old form in the axe. On the other hand, since I am assured that Linear B \*88 did never exist, I conclude that a form of the pig ideogram (identical to Linear B \*85



) was misinterpreted as a different sign that was numbered \*88. Then, as we know that a syllabic sign depicting wings existed in

Proto-linear (Lin. B sign 76, see [iv] page 171), this  sign on the A.a. must be the homomorph of Lin. B 76, so depicting a wing or feathers and therefore the phonetic value is lja.

12: The 12<sup>th</sup> letter is of course Lin. AB te, a sketch of an ear of corn.

13: The 13<sup>th</sup> letter is a sketch of a spear, therefore its phonetic value should be šo. I must explain why I do not take it for arrow with the phonetic value "ti". The syllabic letter "ti" (arrow) appears in every type of Minoan and Sumerian script, and in all cases it is depicted short, especially in Cretan Hieroglyphic (where this axe really belongs to), in which the arrow shaft appears not longer than its point (see

[http://www.cefael.efa.gr/detail.php?site\\_id=1&actionID=page&serie\\_id=EtCret&volume\\_number=31&issue\\_number=0&ce=dhgr5ba9u1tcs40us32c3r2se58b5h9u&sp=413](http://www.cefael.efa.gr/detail.php?site_id=1&actionID=page&serie_id=EtCret&volume_number=31&issue_number=0&ce=dhgr5ba9u1tcs40us32c3r2se58b5h9u&sp=413));

while the spear sign (see

[http://www.cefael.efa.gr/detail.php?site\\_id=1&actionID=page&serie\\_id=EtCret&volume\\_number=31&issue\\_number=0&ce=dhgr5ba9u1tcs40us32c3r2se58b5h9u&sp=414](http://www.cefael.efa.gr/detail.php?site_id=1&actionID=page&serie_id=EtCret&volume_number=31&issue_number=0&ce=dhgr5ba9u1tcs40us32c3r2se58b5h9u&sp=414)), much less frequent on the inscriptions, is depicted quite differently: the shaft is long and the point relatively small. Also, the shaft is sometimes not smooth, but with a series of knobs (which are handy for holding a spear, but not for shooting an arrow). The C.H. 8-column inscription discussed and transcribed above starts exactly with the signs šo-ti, so the difference between these two is obvious, and you can see how the šo sign has the same form on both the 8-column inscription and the A.a.

The sign on the axe has one more peculiarity that makes it even remoter from an arrow: it is depicted with point down; this is helpful in identifying it as a spear, because the spears could be held with point down for safety reasons or for keeping the spear upright, thrust in the ground, so it was ready to grab, during a short repose time between fighting; on the other hand, the arrows are always seen with point up inside the quiver. Still one more indication to recognize this sign as spear (and not arrow) is the following sign with phonetic value r1.

14. The 14<sup>th</sup> sign can be no other than the sketch of a flower, with the phonetic value r1. A similar sign very frequent in Cretan Hieroglyphic is the plant sign (as seen



two times in the 8-column inscription above: ). Can the A.a. 14<sup>th</sup> sign be the same? No. The plant sign (phonetic value “i”) appears hundreds of times in C.H. (probably the most frequent of all signs in C.H.) but it is always in this form,



homomorph of Linear B “i”: . It shows the top of a plant with its stalk between two leaves. The A.a. 14<sup>th</sup> sign is surely of plant origin, but not simply “a plant”: it is the homomorph of Linear B sign 33



which depicted a flower, with the phonetic value “r1” in Protolinear. Although some handwritings make it without leaves in Linear B, and even in C.H.

i#023.δ!



\*159bis: , the sign on the axe has the lower leaves in order to clearly differentiate it from the plant sign (“i”); this differentiation means that the sign is “r1” (flower) and not “i” (plant, weed).

The phonetic value “r” probably points to a special reading in connection to the previous sign of spear. We know [iv, page 125] that the spear sign is read as šo due to šo(q)=spear in Sumerian; but, at least in Cuneiform, the word for spear appears with the suffix –r, as šoqur; that suffix –r was very common for nouns, it was in old times a kind of definite article and useful to mark nouns for objects, so we can understand that although spear was named “šo(q)”, it was more usually called šoqur: the longer form was useful for better disambiguation from similar sounding words. The case is something analogous to Greek diminutive suffixes to names of things, which suffixes became so popular during Byzantine times, that today in Modern Greek all nouns describing objects carry a diminutive suffix, which has lost its diminutive meaning since long ago. Let us consider, for example, “foot” which is “pódhi” in standard Modern Greek, but it is also “podhári” (with a suffix which is no more diminutive), and that form, “podhári” was the main form in many varieties of the Greek language where “pódhi” was known, but not common in use. In the same way, the community of the A.a. scribe knew the word šo(q) but preferred to use šoqur for “spear”. So, when the scribe wanted to write “šoqurida”, he wrote the spear sign knowing it is “šo”, but at the same time found it easier to spell šo-r-da because he knew that the spear is more commonly called šoqu(r), especially if the sign šo stood not only for the syllable šo, but also for the word šoqu(r) meaning “spear”.

After studying many C.H. inscriptions I have reasons to believe that this kind of spelling was not at all uncommon in C.H. (and probably in Proto-linear itself): when a syllabic sign stood also for the thing it depicted, it was enough to write that without phonetic complements. We have seen this kind of spelling in the “ama denejno” inscription (discussed in APPENDIX below) where the calf’s (“amá(r)”) face sign was taken to imply “ama” (mother) and not “ma” as usually, and that even in a case where the sign did not mean “calf” (“amá(r)”), but the homophonous “ama” (“mother”).

Another example of such spelling is the 8-column inscription discussed above, its signs are read as “šotiho raweti oipi ramojo denej qorui todutira otohe”, some of these words (denej, qorui, tira) are very common on C.H. seals, but in “oipi” we find a hiatus that was, in my opinion, impossible in the Sumerian language as also in most other languages of the world. This hiatus would be very easily avoided if the sign “o” (image of wild beast) were pronounced “or”, which is the full word for “wild beast; especially: lion”; the final –r like every other final consonant in Sumerian was silenced – except if the following word or suffix started with a vowel, just as in this case. It is also quite reasonable that the sign here meant what it depicted: “lion”, as a usual element of a personal name. Even the other two signs of the word “oipi” could here mean what they depict, and the name would make good sense as a man’s name:

“or” (lion, i.e. brave man)

“i” ([with] arm, commonest symbol of power for the Sumerians and many other Asian people)

“pi” ([holding a] sword).

In this sense, it could well have been the name of a Sumerian deity, and also this could well be the origin of the Greek “Orpheus”: in \*oripi, note that Sumerian (or Turkic) “i” sounds negligible in Greek ears, and Sumerian p (along with q, k, t) was aspirated. But even if only the first sign “o” was taken with the full name “or” of “lion”, the hiatus was avoided, and so we have a good example of this type of spelling as it was probably also in šo(qu)rīda, the last word on the axe. The sign rī was understood as an indication that the previous sign šo had a phonetic value ending in –r. This is a quasi-logographic usage, not very common in C.H., but quite common in the Cuneiform script, and even more common in writing Japanese today with kanji (logographic characters) complemented with kana (syllabic signs).

Before investigating the meaning of

sodamanalumi soljanasomate šo(qu)rīda,

I must first discuss some observations put forth in the German Wikipedia:

*„Neben der beschriebenen Axt konnte Marinatos hunderte von langen Schwertern, Messern und Doppeläxten aus Bronze, als Weihegaben wie auch in nutzbarer Form, sowie 25 kleine goldene und 7 silberne Doppeläxte bergen. Unter letzteren befanden sich eine goldene und eine silberne Votivaxt (AR Zf 1 und AR Zf 2), beide nur etwa 5 Zentimeter breit, die eine gleichartige Linear-*

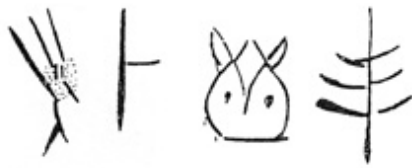
*A-Inschrift eines Wortes trugen:* 

*Die phonetische Umschrift dieser Zeichen der beiden kleinen Doppeläxte lautet I-DA-MA-TE, wobei eine Lautähnlichkeit mit der Göttin Demeter/Damater besteht, der „Mutter Da“ oder „Mutter der Erde“. Alle vier Linear-A-Zeichen ähneln bestimmten Zeichen auf der wesentlich größeren bronzenen Votivdoppelaxt mit den Inschriftenkolumnen. Die dortigen ersten vier Zeichen der ersten Kolumne bedeuten I-DA-MA-NA (nach Gareth Owens). Insgesamt weisen die Fundstücke und sonstigen Überreste in der Höhle auf ein ehemaliges militärisches Heiligtum an dieser Stelle hin“.*

The fact that many swords, knives and double axes (“hundreds of bronze double-axes, 25 golden ones and 7 silver”[ix]) were found in the cave, does not mean that it was a “military place of worship” („militärisches Heiligtum“); while the double axe was the main symbol of God AN [iii, iv, v], all double edged swords and knives were also sacred for the Minoans, for two reasons: the cutting property of implements and weapons symbolized the gods’ power and authority; and, the double edged feature symbolized the double (“yin and yang”, negative and positive) aspect of the divine.

It is very interesting that two small votive double axes, a golden and a silver one, were found also the same cave, and they both carry the Linear A inscription, which is better to see in [vii] and [ix]; from the latter I copy the pictures that appear below:

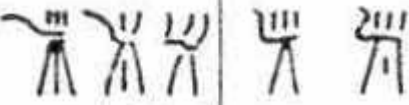




I - DA - MA - TE




But it is totally illogical to read as “idamate”. The first sign is clearly the sketch of a hand so it must be read “no”; even if taken as an “arm”, that would be “i” in our transcription, but this “i” (back vowel) means it is homomorph to Linear B 43

43  , used for Mycenaean Greek “ai”, and NOT to Linear B 28 which is the real “i”, (front vowel) sketch of a weed

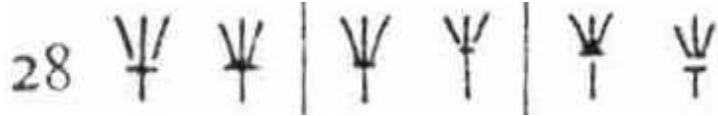
28  ).

There can be some arguments in favor of “arm” (“i”): the sign in both the two handwritings shows only three fingers and the summary of a thumb, analogous to Lin. B 43, while in Lin. B “no” (sign 52) all 4 fingers and the thumb are explicit. Also, in this religious context, the arm could make good sense, as the word (“i”) means also “strength, power”.

On the other hand, the hand sign in Lin. B 52  is the open palm of the right hand with the thumb of the right, and the arm is only briefly indicated, as happens

exactly on the axes inscription: the sketches have the thumb on the right, and make very little “mention” of the arm. “Hand” makes also good sense in the context, implying that “it is the hand of God that holds this ritual axe”. “Arm” means strength, but here the hand is more important, because it is the hand that holds the axe, performs every ritual, handles the tools that govern the world, writes the decrees of fate, and opens to give the desired gift to the devotee. The fact that not all 5 fingers are accurately depicted can be easily attributed to the scarcity of space on the small axes: as the axes are about 5 cm broad, the 4-sign inscription takes no more than 16 mm, that is less than 4 mm for each sign, so the signs would not be easily drawn and easily recognizable if they had crammed one more line there. It is exactly analogous to the Disney cartoon figures like Mickey Mouse and Goofy who are drawn with only 4 fingers (three and a thumb) in each hand; in reality, people and animals have five fingers in each hand, but in this case there was concern to show that “this is a hand”, and not to imitate reality which would make the fingers smaller and thinner, so not fit for those figures. For these reasons I prefer to read “nodamate”, and not “idamate”; while “idamate” is totally out of the question; and much more illogical is Gareth Owens’ reading I-DA-MA-NA of the first 4 letters on the big Arkalochori axe.

That reading I-DA-MA-NA is of course based on similarities with Linear B, but



we already saw that Lin. B “i”

sketches a weed, and anyway by no means it can depict a head, as is obviously the sign



. So we see how detrimental it is for all the Linear scripts when scholars do not care at all about what the signs depicted, and when they don’t know that all Protoliner signs, while they are phonetic, they always depicted things, so as to lend the name of the thing to their phonetic use. Sometimes, as we have repeatedly seen in this essay, a sign could mean exactly what it depicted, and of course it was phonetic at the same time.

Concerning the connection to the Greek name “Daamaateer”, there is no necessity to think that such a name is to be read on the A.a. Even on the smaller votive axes with the word “nodamate” we cannot say whether it is a mention to the Greek goddess. Indeed the name of “Daamaateer” is borrowed from Sumerian in all likelihood, but the Greeks might have changed the form of the name due to popular etymology, so the original Sumerian form and meaning cannot be certain. However, we can be sure that the original Sumerian form of that divine appellation had nothing to do with gaia (earth) or maateer (mother). Rather, an appellation like “damate” in Sumerian must be connected to Sumerian “dam” (spouse), by which many Sumerian divine names started.

To interpret the whole inscription

sodamanalumı soljanasomate šo(qu)rıda

is not an easy task, although we know that the language is the Sumerian dialect of Crete, however nobody knows that language really well, especially for a religious text that may contain unknown divine names and even special words used only in incantations.

I can observe, anyway, that the “so” starting the first two phrases can mean indeed “head” in the sense “master, chieftain, ruler”, or in the sense “person”, or “in person, personally present”, with an allusion to the “head” (metallic part) of the axe.

After the first “so”, “dam” may well mean “spouse”, and then “an” should be AN, the supreme God of the Sumerians, especially important in the city of Uruk and in Crete which was colonized when Uruk was the dominant city of Sumer [iii], [iv], [v] [x], [xi].

The –mı in the end of the phrase must be the Sumerian copula “me”, which is very common in Cuneiform as “-am”. In fact, that “-am” ended in –ı, which was the “weakest” (least prominent) vowel in Sumerian, analogous to Japanese short “u”, and it was the vowel added in every case that a final consonant had to be pronounced. There is a similar practice today in Turkish: they add a “ı” only to enable the consonants to be pronounced, e.g. the word “protein” is pronounced as “pıroteyin”, because they cannot pronounce a consonant cluster in the beginning of a word.

So the first phrase says something like: “(SO) the head (DAM) of the wife (AN) of An God (ALU) the highest(?) (MI) it is”.

The second phrase is tentatively interpreted as: (SO) the head (LI) of the man (AN) God An (ASO) the powerful(?) MATE and victorious(?)

And the third phrase ŠO(QU)RIDA is “šo(qu)r” (spear) with ı to enable the final –r to be pronounced and –da the suffix of the comitative case meaning “on the side(s)”.

In short, sodamanalumı refers to the one “head” of the axe (i.e. its left side) which represents the female, or “yin” aspect of the divine; soljanasomate refers to the other “head” of the axe (i.e. its right side) which represents the male, or “yang” aspect of the divine; both these are “šo(qu)rıda” on the (two) sides of the “spear”, which is the central shaft of the axe, uniting the two “heads”. The spear is not only a symbol of authority and power: as it unites the two aspects of the divine, it implies sexual union between male (symbolized by the spear – shaft of the axe) and female (symbolized by the hole in the metal part of the axe, where the shaft is fixed). It is relevant to cite a proverb that I know from my grandmother, who was born in Niğde, Cappadocia: «έχει στο τσεκούρι, έχει και στο στυλιάρι» or «φταίει το τσεκούρι, φταίει και το στυλιάρι», literally “there is some fault in the axe, but there is also some fault in its shaft”. This was used as an allegory implying that “in this couple both the man and the woman have a fault; the problem is due to both of them”. It is interesting, because the proverb symbolizes a husband and a wife as an axe and its shaft; and it is known that Sumerians were in Cappadocia too [xii].



Analogous is the inscription “nodamate” on the small, golden and silver, axes: NO (the hand) DAM (of the wife) of A(N) the supreme God TE the omnipotent(?). Here the two aspects of the divine are mentioned as DAM (the female, “yin” aspect) and AN (the male, “yang”, aspect).

The interpretations above followed by a question mark (?) are the ones I conjectured from the context. To give substantial interpretations based on the modern knowledge of Sumerian language as documented in the Cuneiform has been a tedious work, but the results are satisfactory; the dictionary used has been [xiii].

In “so-dam-an-alu-mi”, “alu” is, in my opinion, of the same root as Sumerian “il<sub>2</sub>=to raise”; a very common verb (1362 occurrences and 246 distinct forms in [xiii]), which forms also many idiomatic phrases, like “igi il<sub>2</sub> “to raise the eyes” Akk. *našû ša inī*”, the same expression in Akkadian and in Modern Greek too («σήκωσε τα μάτια/το βλέμμα»); there is also “<sup>ḡeš</sup>il<sub>2</sub>-il<sub>2</sub>; <sup>ḡeš</sup>il<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>; <sup>ḡeš</sup>il<sub>2</sub> “lever””, (Akk. *habbiru* “(part of a loom)”; *naššû* “carrier”, that is “tools for raising and keeping up”). Clearly the root has the meaning “high, elevated”, and it had a form “alu” in Minoan Sumerian; so “so-dam-an-alu-mi” = “the head of the wife of God AN the highest (it) is”. The more conservative form “alu” became “eli” (written “il<sub>2</sub>”) in Cuneiform Sumerian [iii, iv, xiv phonetic rules 5.0.3 and 5.0.2].<sup>3</sup>

In “soljanasomate”, -aso- is what appears in Cuneiform as “aš-ša<sub>4</sub>; aš-ša “perfect””, and that obviously derives from “aš “one””, in the sense “one quality in the whole”, as also in the Modern Greek expression «μιά χαρά» (literally “one gladness”, i.e. “perfectly alright”); the š is only a common convention in the transcription of the Cuneiform [iii, iv, xiv phonetic rules 5.0.38, 5.0.39]; the sign named AŠ is also transcribed “aša, az<sub>3</sub>, as<sub>3</sub>”.

“mate” in “soljanasomate” is what appears in Cuneiform as “mes “hero; (to be) manly; young man””. An old final -t was very easy to become -s through spirantization [iii, iv, xiv phonetic rules 5.0.31, 5.0.39], and as for the old “a” to become “e”, it is the same case as above with “alu” [iii, iv, xv phonetic rule 5.0.3]. The final -e appears to be the ergative case suffix, but such a meaning does not suit the context, as “soljanasomate” is not the subject of an extant active verb, rather it is no subject of any kind of sentence; as subject, we should take “so-dam-an-alu-mi” (the copula “-mi” was a well known way to emphasize a word, and here this emphasized word cannot seem to be anything else than the subject of the phrase). As the whole inscription appears to say “the Goddess with her husband (God) on the sides of the ‘spear;’”, the -e in “soljanasomate” is probably the suffix -e of the so called “directive”[xvi] case; this is equal to the European usage of “and”; Sumerian did not have a word for “and”, sometimes only used such case affixes to join words.

<sup>3</sup> Falkenstein 1964 observes that “e” is usually written as “i” in Cuneiform. This is confirmed by many examples in [iii], [iv], [xiv].

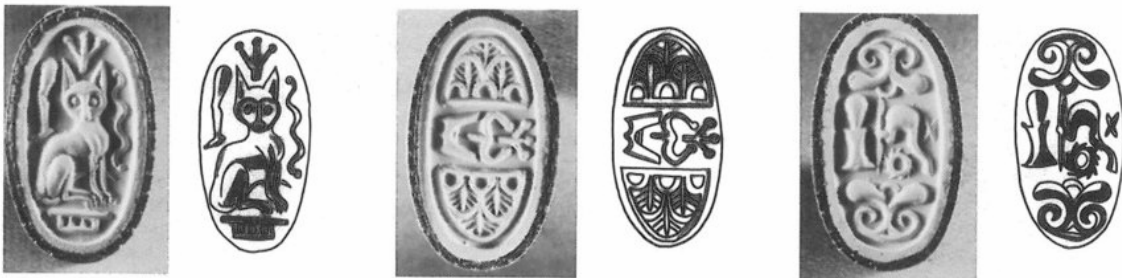
So, “so-lj-an-aso-mate” = “the head of the man(ly) God AN the perfect and heroic”. This phrase emphasizes the manly aspect of the God, as “mat” (Cuneiform “mes”) has a primary sense of “real man”. The previous phrase “so-dam-an-alu-mi” referred to the feminine aspect of the divine. The two aspects are united by “šo(qu)rīda”, as explained above. Note that the three phrases on the axe all start with so- or šo-, so as to create a special assonance fit for an incantation.

As for the short inscription “nodamate” on the small gold and silver axes, the difficulty lies in that –te. One might think that this is “teš<sub>2</sub>”, wrongly translated in [xiii] as “pride”, as Akkadian renders it “*bāštu* “dignity””; it rather means “dignity, magnificence”; this is a suitable attribute for a deity, however I feel that the supreme God was even loftier in the conscience of the Minoans, so as to describe him as ubiquitous, present everywhere; then the word used must have been \*te(g) or \*te(ĝ), meaning basically “to reach, reach out” ([xiii] gives as a short definition “teĝ<sub>3</sub>; teĝ<sub>4</sub> “(to be) near to; to approach” Akk. *teĥû*”, but after carefully studying the context where it is used, it becomes evident that the original meaning was “to reach, reach out”; a phrase “šū-te”, equivalent to Modern Greek “*απλώνει χέρι*” (“to stretch out the hand”) is frequent on accounting tablets, meaning “to receive”. In a religious context, the meaning must be “to reach out (in order to rescue or help)”, “to reach everywhere, be present everywhere”.

So, “no-dam-a(n)-te” = the hand of the wife of God AN who reaches (everywhere, to rescue his devotees)”. Again, the verb “to reach” («φτάνω») has also the meaning “to rescue” in Modern Greek (e.g. «τρέξτε, φτάστε» meaning “quick! rescue!”).

As to the origin of the Greek Goddess name Daamaateer, that was probably a Minoan deity called \*dam-mat- “wife of the Hero” (as we have seen “mat” above, corresponding to Cuneiform “mes”).

#### APPENDIX



AM 1938.791. Prisme à 3 faces (0,9 x 1,8 cm). Cornaline rouge.

#258 [8] CRS (3/3) 06 / CMS XI, 13.

(© 1996 - 2016 École Française d'Athènes. Available from:

[http://www.cefael.efa.gr/detail.php?site\\_id=1&actionID=page&serie\\_id=EtCret&volume\\_number=31&issue\\_number=0&ce=bup686on4bv1cvt58vpgii50hgs36abi&sp=260](http://www.cefael.efa.gr/detail.php?site_id=1&actionID=page&serie_id=EtCret&volume_number=31&issue_number=0&ce=bup686on4bv1cvt58vpgii50hgs36abi&sp=260) ).

The most interesting in this seal is the first (left) side where the three most common signs “de-ηe-i” circle around the image of a cat: “de” is below, “ηe” on the left, “i” at the top, and “ηo” on the right, so

the 4 signs forming the word “denejjo”. (Again remember that the syllabic script could not render the semivowel –j unless with “i”). As explained in Kenanidis (1992[iii], 2013[iv] where all readings in this treatise are based on), the “no” sign depicts a snake, while the “ma” sign is a sketch of a calf’s face (from Sumerian “amá[r]” meaning a calf. Note this here has no whiskers or anything that would really make it a cat; it can resemble a cat’s but it is still a calf’s face). We know that the great Goddess of the Minoans is associated with the cat, since there are representations of the Goddess with a cat on her head. So I interpret this image as follows:

“denejjo” clearly means “my (personal) deity” (-no being the original form of the Sumerian suffix known as -“nu”, meaning “my” in Cuneiform). So, does the image mean “the cat is my deity”? Of course not, because the cat is the symbol of the Minoan Goddess, and not the Goddess herself. So the meaning of the image is “the great Goddess is my personal deity”. Knowing the origin of the sign “ma” (“amá(r)” = a calf) we can understand what name of the Goddess is given here: as “ama” meant “mother” in Sumerian, the calf’s face sign was taken to imply “ama” (mother) and not “ma” as usually, and it was modified so as to fit into the body of a cat (symbol of the Goddess), therefore this side of the prism is an ingenious rebus conveying the meaning: “the Mother (Goddess) is my personal deity”.

**Ioannis K. Kenanidis, Ptychion (Philology/Linguist.)**

Primary Education Directorate of Kavala.

ioakenanid@sch.gr

---

## REFERENCES

<sup>i</sup> [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axt\\_von\\_Arkalochori](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axt_von_Arkalochori)

<sup>ii</sup> Kenanidis I.K., Papakitsos E.C., 2015a. A Comparative Linguistic Study about the Sumerian Influence on the Creation of the Aegean Scripts. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1E), pp. 332-346.

<sup>iii</sup> Kenanidis I., 1992. ETEOKREETES MEGALEETORES. Athens: National Library of Greece (in Greek).

<sup>iv</sup> Kenanidis I., 2013. cwepeker. In *Historical and Linguistic Studies*, pp. 26-191. Kavala: E.P. Lazidou (in Greek).

<sup>v</sup> Papakitsos E.C., Kenanidis I.K., 2015. Additional Palaeographic Evidence for the Relationship of the Aegean Scripts to the Sumerian Pictography. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(3C), pp. 734-737.

<sup>vi</sup> *Corpus Hieroglyphicarum Inscriptionum Cretae*.

Godart, Louis and Olivier, Jean-Pierre, *Études crétoises*, 31, 1996, © 1996 - 2016 École Française d'Athènes.

---

<sup>vii</sup> D. Rumpel: The Arkalokhori Axe Inscription in Relation to the Diskos of Phaistos Text. Anistoriton Journal, vol. 11 (2008-2009) In Situ. Available in [http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/2009\\_4s\\_Anistoriton.pdf](http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/2009_4s_Anistoriton.pdf) .

<sup>viii</sup> John Younger: Linear A & B Grids (5 September 2015). Available in: <http://www.people.ku.edu/~jyounger/LinearA/ABgrids.html>

<sup>ix</sup> Labyrinth/Λαβύρινθος: Bilingual journal edited by the Technological Institute of Crete; available in <http://www.teicrete.gr/arkalochori/linear-inscription.php>

<sup>x</sup> Algaze G., 2005a. The Uruk World System: The Dynamics of Expansion of Early Mesopotamian Civilization. Second Edition, University of Chicago Press.

<sup>xi</sup> Algaze G., 2005b. The Sumerian takeoff. Structure and Dynamics: Ejournal of Anthropological and Related Sciences 1(1), pp. 1–41.

<sup>xii</sup> Sundsdal Kjetil, 2011. The Uruk Expansion: Culture Contact, Ideology and Middlemen. Norwegian Archaeological Review, 44:2.

<sup>xiii</sup> The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary. Available in <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>

<sup>xiv</sup> Kenanidis I., Papakitsos E.C., 2013. Yet another suggestion about the origins of the Sumerian language. International Journal of Linguistics, 5(5), pp. 30-44.

<sup>xv</sup> Kenanidis I., Papakitsos E.C., 2013. Yet another suggestion about the origins of the Sumerian language. International Journal of Linguistics, 5(5), pp. 30-44.

<sup>xvi</sup> English Wikipedia article: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian\\_language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_language)

<sup>xvii</sup> Falkenstein, A. (1964). Das Sumerische. Handbuch Der Orientalistik. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

<sup>xviii</sup> Achterberg, Winfried; Best, Jan; Enzler, Kees; Rietveld, Lia; Woudhuizen, Fred, *The Phaistos Disc: A Luwian Letter to Nestor*, Publications of the Henry Frankfort Foundation vol XIII, Dutch Archeological and Historical Society, Amsterdam 2004