

A LINEAR A INSCRIPTION ON A PITHOS
FROM EPANÔ ZAKRO

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Between two of the upper handles of a *pithos*—excavated at Epanô Zakro in 1965 and after restoration exposed in the Heraklion Museum nowadays— an inscription has been engraved in two lines.¹ Comparing the twenty-five syllabic signs of the inscription with the variant forms of the signary drawn up by William Brice, we learn that the inscription belongs to the Linear Script A.² The upper line starts with the VINUM ideogram, directly followed by the notation of twenty-two units of a liquid measure for this commodity.³ The VINUM ideogram is also found on some *pithoi* from Knossos, where it is followed once by a notation of six units of a liquid measure.⁴ A strict parallel for the notation of twenty-two units as on the *pithos* from Epanô Zakro can be found on three tablets from Hagia Triada and one tablet from Tyllissos, the four of them written in the Linear Script of Class A.⁵ The ten syllabic signs of the upper line following the twenty-two units of a liquid measure for wine can be identified as: A 5I-A 5I-A 29-A 77-A 52-A 3I-A 27-A 6I-A 52-A 77.⁶ We may assign to these signs respectively the syllabic values: *di-di-ka-š/se-a-sa-mu-ni-a-š/se*.⁷ I would like to suggest a division of syllables into the three following combinations: *di-di-ka-š/se* | *a-sa-mu* | *ni-a-š/se*. The three separate

¹ Cf. for photographs, a description of the pithos and a drawing of its inscription Jan P. Stronk, *A Pithos from Epanô Zakro*, *Talanta* IV (1972), p. 85-86.

² W. C. Brice, *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, Oxford 1961, Table 1 (Signary of the Linear Script A).

³ Cf. for the interpretation of the VINUM ideogram St. Alexiou, *Guide du Musée Archéologique d'Heracleion*, Athènes 1969, p. 82.

⁴ Brice, *op. cit.*, II 6 ii, iii, VINUM ideograms, II 5, VINUM ideogram followed by six units of a liquid measure (plates XXIIIa/XXIII).

⁵ Brice, *op. cit.*, HT 6a. 7 (plates Ia/I), HT 89.2 (plates VIIa/VIII), HT 129.2 (plates XIIa/XII), IV 9a.1 (plates XXVIIa/XXVII).

⁶ See for the identification of these signs note 2 above.

⁷ Cf. for the value *š/se* (A 77) Jan G. P. Best, *Some Preliminary Remarks on the Decipherment of Linear A*, Amsterdam 1972, pp. 27-28, note 74.

words, resulting from the proposed division should anyhow be interpreted as terms referring directly to the wine in the *pithos*, because the inscription starts with the VINUM ideogram. It is remarkable that the orthography of the three words points to the coastal areas, h.e. the areas of the North-West Semitic dialects.

1. *di-di-ka-š/se*: a stative (permansive) with the personal ending of the 3rd person plural—after all the subject of the sentence, twenty-two liquid measures of wine, is a plural notion—derived from *dakāšu(m)*, meaning “to swell”.¹ In pure Akkadian this personal form would have been written *ti-id-ku-šu*.² Whether and to what extent the orthography *di-di-ka-š/se* in fact results from linguistical phenomena in the North-West Semitic dialects like $u > a$ and $u > i(e)$, is, however, a matter to be judged by Semitists.³

2. *a-sa-mu*: *assammû* “a large drinking vessel, usually made of metal”, “earthen jar (*Krug*)”, written also as *a-sa-mu*.⁴

3. *ni-a-š/se*: (-) *niāši(m)*, written also as *ni-a-ši*, “us” (dative).⁵ According to the proposed division, the upper line can be translated as follows: “Twenty-two units of wine made swell [a rather poetical use of the verb! J.G.P.B.] the large vessel for us”.

Of the fifteen syllabic signs, which form together the lower line of the inscription we cannot, unfortunately, identify each one with absolute certainty. Their order is as follows: A 52-X (badly damaged)-A 77-A 30 or A 31-A 66 (?) - A 102-A 29-A 52-A 54 (?) - A 95-A 54-A 26- vertical dash-A 78-A 78-A 98⁶ with the syllabic values: *a-X* (illegible) - *š/se-da* or *sa-twe* (?) - *de* or *ša*⁷ - *ka-a-re* (?) - *ma-re-na* - word divider - *ti-ti-ku*. In this context, the vertical dash can only be regarded as a word divider: next to dots as word dividers on the

¹ Cf. Akkadisches Handwörterbuch (AHW), s.v. *dakāšu(m)* ‘ausbeulen, aufreiben’ (*dikhšu(m)* ‘Ausbauchung, Schwellung’).

² Cf. for the ending *-u* Wolfram von Soden, *Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik*, Roma 1952, par. 75 (pp. 97-99).

³ Cf. Guy Jucquois, *Phonétique comparée des dialectes moyen-babyloniens du Nord et de l'Ouest*, Louvain 1966, par. 1.g, pp. 88-93, ($u > a$) en pars. 7-8, pp. 142-148, ($u > i(e)$).

⁴ Cf. AHW and CAD (The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), s.v. *assammû*.

⁵ Cf. AHW s.v. (-) *niāši(m)*.

⁶ See for the identification of the signs note 2 above.

⁷ A 102 might be the same sign as B 45 (*de*) or a sign only occurring in Linear A with the value *ša* (cf. Best, *op. cit.*, p. 24).

Hagia Triada tablets, vertical dashes occur as such on two clay cups from Knossos.¹ Considering our scanty knowledge with regard to the values of several syllabic signs occurring in the lower line of the inscription, it would be premature even to suggest an interpretation of the first twelve signs at all. But with a view to the contents of the upper line of the inscription it is possible to identify the last three syllabic signs behind the word divider, *ti-ti-ku*, as the name of the presumable owner of the *pithos*. It is worthy of notice that also on two Hagia Triada tablets the proper name *ti-ti-ku*/*ti-ti-ku-ni* (*titiku* and *titikun* at Alalakh, possibly Hurrian) is attested.²

¹ Cf. for dots as word dividers on tablets for example Best, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-24: *a-ka-ru· ku-ni-su*, *a-du· da-me*, *da-du-ma-ta· GRANUM da-me*, *a-du· sa-ru*; cf. for vertical dashes as word dividers on clay cups Brice, *op. cit.*, p. 1 and II 1, II 2 (plates XXIIa/XXII).

² Brice, *op. cit.*, HT 35.1 (plates Va/V), HT 96a.1 (plates VIIIa/VIII); cf. Best, *op. cit.*, p. 33 with note 102.