

## THE ETEOCRETAN INSCRIPTION FROM PSYCHRO AND THE GODDESS OF THALAMAI

1.

The so-called Eteocretan inscription from Psychro, dating to the Hellenistic period, is written on the triangular upper part of a broken stone plate and consists of five words, of which four are written in Greek characters and one in Linear A signs (FIG. 1).<sup>1</sup> The alphabetic part of the inscription reads ΕΠΙΘΙ (or: ΕΠΙΟΙ) | ΖΗΘΑΝΘΗ | ΕΝΕΤΗ ΠΑΡΣΙΦΑΙ.



Figure 1 (after Marinatos)

The Linear A part consists of three signs, the execution of which indicates that the engraver was only remotely acquainted with the Bronze Age script he was using. As has already been pointed out, one of the possible Linear A equivalents of the first sign is AB 28 (= *i*).<sup>2</sup> As for the second sign, its single 'leg' and two upper branches crossed around the central stroke seem to point in the direction of the Linear A sign which, as I have argued elsewhere, should be taken

<sup>1</sup> S. Marinatos, «Γραμμάτων διδασκαλία», in E. Grumach (ed.), *Minoica. Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Johannes Sundwall*, Berlin 1958, p. 226; Y. Duhoux, *L'Étéocrétois. Les textes — la langue*, Amsterdam 1982, pp. 95-111.

<sup>2</sup> See S. Davis, *The Decipherment of the Minoan Linear A and Pictographic Scripts*, Johannesburg 1967, pp. 254-57; Duhoux, *L'Étéocrétois* (n. 1), p. 110.

as equivalent to the Linear B no. 24 (= *ne*).<sup>3</sup> The closest Linear A equivalent of the third sign seems to be AB 37 (= *ti*) with its characteristic middle stroke within an inverted 'V'. This would result in the reading *i-ne-ti*. Given the highly conventional character of the signs, *i-ne-ti* is admittedly only one of the possible ways in which the Linear A part of the Psychro inscription can be read.<sup>4</sup> But this reading considerably gains in plausibility as soon as we take into account that it renders the Linear A word virtually identical to the word ENETH written in Greek characters. This remarkable coincidence offers an opportunity for further inquiry, which is well worth pursuing.

The ending *-ti* is attested on HT 104, one of the Linear A tablets from Hagia Triada. The tablet contains a list of three names, each of which ends in *-ti*: *da-ku-se-24-ti*,<sup>5</sup> *i-du-ti-ti*, *pa-da-su-ti*. Since two of the names on the list are attested elsewhere without this ending (see *da-ku-se-24* HT 103.2-3, 4-5; *pa-da-su* HT 20.1), it is reasonable to suppose that the ending *-ti* stands for an element in Minoan nominal or verbal inflexion. The dative ending *-ti*, attested in both Luwian and Hittite, seems to provide the closest parallel. According to J. Friedrich, this ending is a Luwian replica of the Hurrian directive in *-ta*, but I agree with E. Laroche and A. Kammenhuber that it would be wiser to approach the dative in *-ti* from the general standpoint of Luwian. However, rather than associating it with the Luwian ablative in *-ati*, I would think of the final *t* of the stem, being dropped in the nominative for reasons of spelling or orthography and emerging before *-i* in the dative, cf. Greek and Latin inflexion of the type γέρων (nom.) / γέροντι (dat.) or *nox* (nom.) / *nocti* (dat.).<sup>6</sup> However that may be, the association of the Minoan ending *-ti* with the Hittite-Luwian dative ending in question allows us to suggest that HT 104 deals with three recipients of

<sup>3</sup> See M. Finkelberg, «On signs AB 41 and AB 53 in the Linear A syllabary», in Y. Duhoux (ed.), *Briciaka. A Tribute to W. C. Brice*, Amsterdam 2003 (= *Cretan Studies* 9), pp. 38-40. L. Godart and J.-P. Olivier, *Recueil des inscriptions en linéaire A (GORILA)*, Vol. 5., Paris 1985, p. xxxv, take the relevant Linear A sign as equivalent to the Linear B no. 41 (= *si*). The present interpretation agrees with that of G. Pugliese Carratelli, «Le iscrizioni preelleniche di Haghia Triada in Creta e della Grecia peninsulare», *Monumenti Antichi* 40, 1945, pp. 422-610; P. Meriggi, «Zur Lesung des Minoischen (A)», in Grumach, *Minoica* (n. 1), p. 240; W. C. Brice, *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, Oxford 1961, Table I; J. Raison and M. Pope, *Corpus transnuméré du linéaire A*. 2nd ed., Louvain-la-Neuve 1994, pp. 21-22.

<sup>4</sup> The reading *i-ne-ti* first in Davis (n. 2), pp. 254-57. Duhoux, *L'Étéocrétois* (n. 1), p. 110, reads it as *\*i-zo-si* or *\*si-zo-i*.

<sup>5</sup> I follow Carratelli, Brice, and Raison and Pope (n. 3) in holding that the Linear A sign identified in *GORILA* as AB 24 (= *ne*) has no equivalent in the Linear B syllabary. See further Finkelberg, «Signs AB 41 and AB 53» (n. 3), pp. 39-40.

<sup>6</sup> J. Friedrich, *Hethitisches Elementarbuch*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1., Heidelberg 1974, p. 59; A. Kammenhuber, «Hethitisch, Palaish, Luwisch und Hieroglyphenluwisch», in B. Spuler (ed.), *Altkleinasiatische Sprachen*, Leiden/Köln 1969, p. 271; cf. E. Laroche, *Dictionnaire de la langue louvite*, Paris 1959, p. 138 n. 13.

commodities (the latter are detailed after each name) and should read as ‘For Dakuse24... For Iduti... For Padasu...’.<sup>7</sup>

The stem *ine-* / ENE-, isolated as a result of the above analysis, is virtually identical to the common Anatolian stem for ‘mother’ as attested in Lycian and Lydian, see Lycian *êni-*, Lydian *êna-*, cf. Hittite and Palaic *anna-*, Luwian *anni-*. That is to say, if we take -TH/-*ti* as the dative ending known to us from Luwian and Hittite, it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that *i-ne-ti* should be read as ‘for Mother’, and ENETH ΠΑΡΣΙΦΑΙ as ‘for Mother Parsipha’. ENETH / *i-ne-ti* thus gives us a clearly identifiable Anatolian form with good parallels in Lycian and Lydian (cf. also the Lycian expression *êni qlehi ebijehi*, ‘the Mother of this precinct’).<sup>8</sup>

ZHΘANΘH of the alphabetic part of the inscription evokes the Anatolian proper name Zidanta/Zidanza.<sup>9</sup> If ΕΠΛΘΙ (or ΕΠΛΟΙ) is a verbal form, the alphabetic part of the inscription may tentatively be interpreted as a votive sentence, to the effect of ‘Zidanthi [the verb] for Mother Parsipha’, and the Linear A part as ‘For Mother’, that is, as a recapitulation of the alphabetic text. If correct, this interpretation would account for the irregularities and the highly conventional character of the Linear A signs of the Psychro inscription. Namely, if *i-ne-ti* bears the sacral meaning of dedication to the Mother Goddess, it could well have been artificially preserved as an ossified graphic formula even after genuine knowledge of the Linear A syllabary had been irrevocably lost.

## 2.

To my knowledge, no attention has been paid thus far to the fact that the name ‘Parsipha’ of the Psychro inscription evokes that of Pasiphae, the wife of king Minos, whose famous union with the sacred bull sent by Poseidon

<sup>7</sup> On the interpretation of the language of Linear A as one of the languages of the Anatolian family see L. Palmer, *Mycenaeans and Minoans: Aegean Prehistory in the Light of the Linear B Tablets*. 2nd ed., London 1965, pp. 333-38; M. Finkelberg, «Minoan Inscriptions on Libation Vessels», *Minos* 25/26, 1990/91, pp. 43-85 and «The Language of Linear A — Greek, Semitic, or Anatolian?» in R. Drews (ed.), *Greater Anatolia and the Indo-Hittite Language Family. Papers presented at a Colloquium Hosted by the University of Richmond, March 18-19, 2000* (Washington 2001), pp. 81-105; E. L. Brown, «The Linear A Signary: Tokens of Luvian Dialect in Bronze Age Crete», *Minos* 27/28, 1992/93, pp. 25-54.

<sup>8</sup> It is uncertain whether the word ENETH is treated as an ossified equivalent of the Linear A word, as part of the compound ENETH ΠΑΡΣΙΦΑΙ or as a noun in the dative case. For the latter possibility cf. Str. 14.1.41 p. 648, which makes it clear that, as far at least as the nouns of the *a-* stems were concerned, the final iota of the dative was generally regarded as optional already in the first century B.C.

<sup>9</sup> E. Laroche, *Les noms des Hittites*, Paris 1966, nos. 1555 and 1557. Note that the Hittite *z = ts*, see further Laroche, *Dictionnaire* (n. 6), p. 132; on Luwian orthographic *z* as representing a voiceless dental affricate see H. C. Melchert, «Language», in H. C. Melchert (ed.), *The Luwians*, Leiden 2003, p. 178.

culminated in the birth of the Minotaur.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, when turning to Thalamai on the nearby coast of Laconia we shall find there the oracle of a certain Pasiphae (actually, 'Pasipha', see below), which was widely known in antiquity. This is what Plutarch has to say about it:

. . . the temple of Pasiphae. This was a famous temple and oracle at Thalamai; and this Pasiphae some say, was one of the daughters of Atlas, who had by Zeus a son called Ammon; others are of opinion that it was 'Kassandra, the daughter of King Priam, who dying in this place, was called Pasiphae, as the revealer of oracles to all men etc.

The epigraphic evidence corroborates that of the literary sources: an inscription with a dedication to *Pahipha* < *Pasipha* (ΤΑΙ ΠΑΗΙΦΑΙ) was uncovered by British archaeologists in the 1900s, and there are also others to the same effect.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, according to Pausanias, who visited the place in person, the oracle of Thalamai in fact belonged to Ino:

The road from Oitylon to Thalamai is almost ten miles, with a sanctuary and an oracle of Ino on the way. The oracles are given in sleep: whatever people ask to be told the goddess reveals it to them in dreams. There are bronze statues in the sanctuary in the open air, one of Pasiphae, the other of the Sun . . . Pasiphae is a title of the Moon, not a local divinity of Thalamai.<sup>12</sup>

The name of Ino is strongly evocative of the Anatolian word for 'mother' discussed above (cf. especially Lycian *êni-*, Lydian *êna-*). If I am correct in suggesting that the Greek part of the Psychro inscription contains the dative ENETH ΠΑΡΣΙΦΑΙ, probably 'for Mother Parsipha', and the Minoan part the dative *i-ne-ti*, probably 'for Mother'. it would follow from this that the inscription from Psychro bears a dedication to the same goddess Ino Pa(r)sipha who was also worshipped at Thalamai in the southern Peloponnese. Examination of Ino's religious and archaeological background allows us to take this suggestion several steps further.

Ino, daughter of Kadmos, is mainly known in Greek tradition as the nurse of the baby Dionysos, son of her sister Semele, and for her attempt at suicide by leaping over a cliff into the sea together with her infant son Melikertes or Palaimon: rather than drowning, she was turned into a benevolent sea-goddess under the new name of Leukothea ('White Goddess').<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For a similar phonetic development see Thess. Larissa > \*Larsa > Lassa; cf. M. Lejeune, *Phonétique historique du mycénien et du grec ancien*, Paris 1972, p. 138 n. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Plut. *Agis* 9.28; *BSA* 10 (1904), p.173 = *IG V 1* no. 1317. See also *ibidem* nos. 1312-1326, 171ff; nos. 14-20; 131ff.; *SEG* 13,260. 22.309.

<sup>12</sup> Paus. 3.26.1. In a mysterious inscription from the Aenian district in Central Greece, adduced in the pseudo-Aristotelian *On Marvellous Things Heard*, 'Pasiphaessa' is treated as one of the titles of a goddess named Kythera, to whom the inscription was dedicated, viz. Κυθήρα Περσεφάεσσα Πασιφάεσσα Arist. *mir. ausc.* 843b27ff.

<sup>13</sup> Io's transformation is referred to already in Homer, see *Od.* 5.333-35.

The cult of Ino-Leukothea was popular along the entire southern coast of Laconia: besides Thalamai, it is also attested for Boiai and Brasiai.<sup>14</sup> It is significant in this connection that, as is generally recognized today, in the Bronze Age nearby Cythera was in fact a Minoan colony.<sup>15</sup> It is also significant that Laconia is thus far the only region of southern Greece that has yielded a Linear A inscription. I mean the stone object inscribed with two signs in Linear A, found on the surface level in the course of the British excavations at Ayos Stephanos in southern Laconia. Richard Janko, who published the inscription in 1982, wrote in his conclusions:

It is a pity that it lacks a clear-cut archaeological context; but it is a further valuable indication of the close links between this part of South Laconia and Minoan culture. Linear A is already known from Cythera, and study of the pottery from Ayos Stephanos has revealed early and prolonged Minoan influence, probably mediated via Cythera . . . If this is indeed the first scrap of Linear A from the Laconian coast its very existence is informative in itself.<sup>16</sup>

The archaeological evidence thus also makes it likely that Ino-Pasiphae worshipped at Thalamai was the same goddess whose name appears in Greek and probably also in Linear A characters on the Eteocretan inscription from Psychro. As far as our evidence goes, she must have originally been a Minoan mother-goddess.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Boiai and Brasiai Paus. 3.23.8; 3.24.4, with P. Levi's commentary on 3.23.8, in *Pausanias, Guide to Greece, translated with an introduction by Peter Levi*. Vol. 2, Harmondsworth 1971, p.87.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Rutter, *The Prehistoric Archaeology of the Aegean*, Dartmouth College. devlab.dartmouth.edu/history/bronze\_age/ 1996; revised 26.6.1997, Lesson 18. O. T. Dickinson, «Minoans in Mainland Greece, Mycenaeans in Crete?», *Cretan Studies* 5, 1996, pp. 70-71, although taking it for granted that Cythera was a Minoan colony, rejects such a possibility for the southern Peloponnese; however, even if this region was not actually populated by Minoans, this fact in itself does not exclude the possibility of cultural influence or religious syncretism.

<sup>16</sup> R. Janko, «A Stone Object Inscribed in Linear A from Ayos Stephanos, Laconia», *Kadmos* 21, 1982, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> On Ino's Bronze Age background see further M. Finkelberg, «Ino-Leukothea Between East and West», forthcoming in I. Rutherford (ed.), *Greek Religion and the Orient (Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 6, 2006).