

## Does Linear B ideogram \*21I<sup>vas</sup>+PO indicate a rhyton?\*

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The vessel ideogram \*21I+PO appears on two Linear B tablets, both from Knossos. The texts are as follows.

Fs 8 (139)

.A HORD T 1 NI T 1 [  
 .B pa-de, FAR v 2 [  
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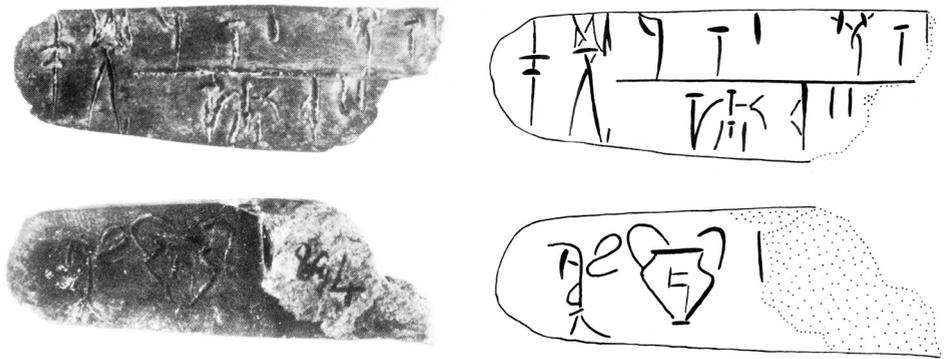
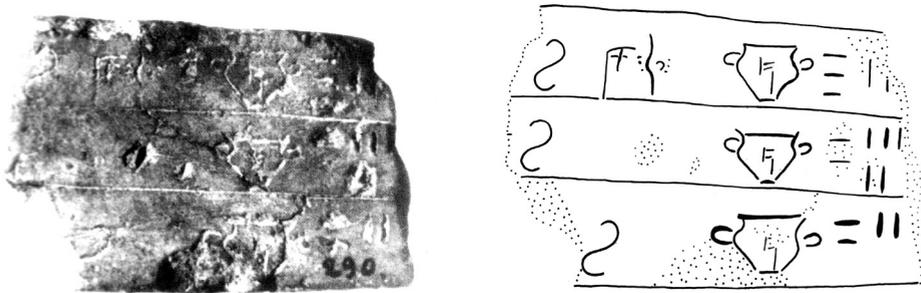
v. ME+RI \*21I<sup>vas</sup>+PO 1 [  
 K(1) 873 (102?)

.1 ]we u-do \*21I<sup>vas</sup>+PO 32 [  
 .2 ]-we \*21I<sup>vas</sup>+PO 25 [  
 .3 ]-we \*21I<sup>vas</sup>+PO 22 [  
 .2-3 Perhaps] .ro-we.

In both tablets the ideogram depicts a squat two-handled vessel surcharged with the syllabogram *po* (Figures 1 and 2), but the question of what the drawings corresponded to in the archaeological record remained unresolved by Vandenabeele & Olivier in their classic *Les idéogrammes archéologiques du linéaire B*.<sup>1</sup>

\* This article is written in the deepest admiration of the work of Jean-Pierre Olivier and Frieda Vandenabeele, which laid the foundation for such studies. I am grateful for their kind permission to reproduce images to L. Godart, R. Koehl (courtesy of INSTAP), P. Mountjoy, J.-P. Olivier, Y. Tzedakis, P. Warren, the British School at Athens and the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. Line drawings from both VO and COMIK were made by L. Godart. I would like to thank for comments and further references John Bennet, John Killen, Philomen Probert, Richard Hitchman, Donna Kurtz, Peter Warren and José Melena. I am also grateful to José Melena for originally accepting the article for *Minos* and to Julián Méndez Dosuna for seeing it through the final publication. Any remaining errors or omissions are my own. The article was submitted before Koehl's 2006 *magnum opus* on Aegean Bronze Age rhyta had appeared; I attempted in the revised version to take new data into account but it was not possible to pursue here all points of interest in light of his new study.

<sup>1</sup> Vandenabeele & Olivier 1979, 205-207, 265-266. Vandenabeele & Olivier 1979 is cited as VO hereafter.

FIGURE 1: KN Fs 8, *recto* and *verso*, photos and line drawings. Source: *COMIKI*, 7.FIGURE 2: KN K(1) 873, photo and line drawing. Source: *COMIKI*, 353.

As Vandenaebale and Olivier (VO hereafter) pointed out, the two tablets may actually record different vessels. The vessel shapes are not identical and VO rightly assigned subclasses: \*211(a) on K(1) 873 and \*211(b) on Fs 8 (Figures 3 and 4).<sup>2</sup> The same ideogram number had originally been given to both drawings because of a general similarity in shape and because they share the surcharge *PO*.<sup>3</sup> The present study begins by considering the two variants separately, but will suggest that they may after all be the same *type* of vessel, and that the type of vessel concerned was a rhyton. This is a vessel type which does have many different shapes in the archaeologically attested repertoire, and it may be possible to relate known examples to the variant forms of \*211.

<sup>2</sup> VO, 206, 265; Anderson 1994-1995, 304 with n. 39. The vessel shown on Fs 8 is discussed by VO under the heading of “amphoroid vases”.

<sup>3</sup> VO, 206.

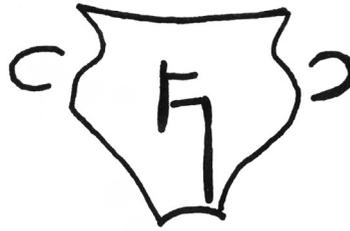


FIGURE 3: VO photo and drawing of \*211(a) from K(1) 873.1.  
Source: Vandenabeele & Olivier 1979, Pl. CXVI:2.



FIGURE 4: VO photo and drawing of \*211(b) from Fs 8 verso.  
Source: Vandenabeele & Olivier 1979, Pl. CXXXIII:2.

We begin with a brief discussion of the tablet contexts in which the ideogram appears along with a summary of points raised by VO. We will then look at possible correlates for the vessel shapes.

#### THE TABLET CONTEXTS

The context of Fs 8 is probably religious offerings.<sup>4</sup> It is one of a series of 17 or 18 tablets<sup>5</sup> found in the Clay Bath at Knossos,<sup>6</sup> each of which records small amounts

<sup>4</sup> On the Fs tablets see Ventris & Chadwick 1973, 328; Palmer 1963, 237; Chadwick 1966, 30-2; 1976, 101; De Fidio 1977, 109; Foster 1977, 33; Palmer 1994, 125-142; Weilhartner 2005, 28-34; Bendall 2007, 108-111.

<sup>5</sup> The lost tablet Fs <32> may have joined Fp 18 rather than belonging to the Fs series (Firth 2000-2001, 307, citing an unpublished extract from T. Palaima; for further discussion see Bendall 2007, 107).

<sup>6</sup> Olivier 1967, 84-85.

of barley, figs, flour, wine, oil and honey registered against various recipients. An example is Fs 4, the text of which is as follows.

(139)

Fs 4

.A      HORD T 1 NI v 3 FAR v 2 VIN v 2

.B      a-ro-do-ro-o , / wa-ḳe-ta , HORD T 1 NI v 3 OLE v 1

.B wa-de-ta also possible.

↓

v.            ME+RI z 2

Fs 4 is less broken than Fs 8 (of which only the left hand portion survives), so gives a better sense of a “complete” Fs tablet. Honey (*ME+RI* = *Imelil*) is always recorded on the *verso* and, with the sole exception of Fs 8, is measured in liquid units.<sup>7</sup> Most of the Fs recipients are obscure and unattested elsewhere but *pa-de* of Fs 8 is known from a number of offerings tablets (Fp(1) 1.4, -48.2, Ga(3) 456.1, and possibly C 394.4 and Ga 953.2). The word is thought probably to refer to a deity rather than being a monosyllabic shrine name plus allative.<sup>8</sup>

The other tablet, K(1) 873, is broken at left and the only surviving sign-group is *u-do* which, as VO note, it is tempting to see as *lhudōr* “water”, although the context does not allow confirmation.<sup>9</sup> The tablet was probably written by hand 102, who wrote several other tablets dealing with vessels, all classified as K(1) and found in the area of the North Entrance Passage.<sup>10</sup> The other K(1) tablets record *di-pa* vessels, cups, jars and bull’s head rhyta. Some of the vessels are metal, and \*211 could also be a metal vessel although, as VO point out, the large numbers recorded (totalling seventy-nine minimum) point in the direction of clay vessels.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, the central points are that \*211 is associated with liquids (definitely in Fs 8 and perhaps in K(1) 873) and should in the case of Fs 8 be suitable for containing honey and offering to a deity.

#### THE SURCHARGE PO

As VO argue, *PO* almost certainly represents the beginning of the name(s) of the vessel(s).<sup>12</sup> If referring to the contents, the sign would more likely be written

<sup>7</sup> The Fs set itself records no unit larger than z for honey and this measure is used also for solids, but the diagnostic liquid unit s is used for honey on Gg(1) 7369.

<sup>8</sup> Gérard-Rousseau 1968, 162-3; *DMic* II, 65-6, with further references; Weilhartner 2005, 31.

<sup>9</sup> VO, 206.

<sup>10</sup> Olivier 1967, 42-3.

<sup>11</sup> VO, 206.

<sup>12</sup> VO, 205, 265. As they rightly point out, the vessels needn’t have had the same name.

above or beside the ideogram. Compare for example the Gg tablets recording amphorae, the vessel which honey is usually issued in at Knossos. In these tablets, *ME+RI*, indicating honey, is written before \*209+A (Figure 5), and the surcharge *A* abbreviates the vessel name: *a-po-re-we lamphorēwes!* (MY Ue 611; TH Ka 113) or *a-pi-po-re-we lamphi-phorēwes!* (KN Uc 160) “amphorae”.<sup>13</sup> In Fs 8 the content is known to be honey, so *PO* again probably refers to the vessel name.

VO suggest that *PO* might abbreviate *po-ro-ko-wo lamphowos!*, attested in MY Ue 611.2 but not accompanied there by a drawn ideogram. However, they rightly note that this is speculative and that neither of the examples of \*211 resembles the classical vessel called *πρόχοος* (Att. *πρόχουος*), which is believed to have been a jug or ewer.<sup>14</sup>

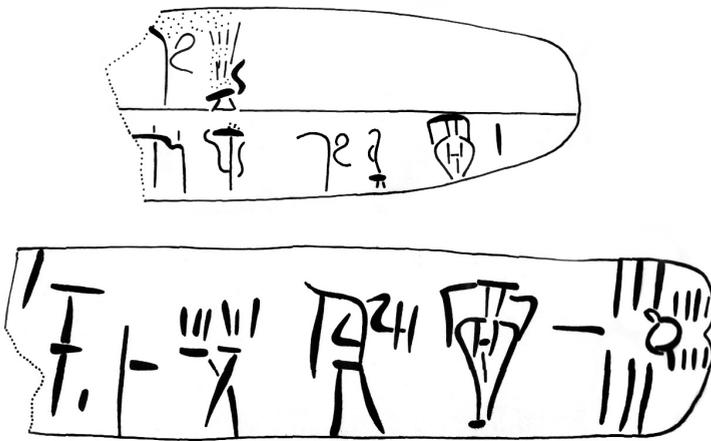


FIGURE 5: Examples of tablets with \*209+A (bottom: Gg 701; top: Gg 704). Source: *COMIKI*, 266-7.

### THE SHAPES OF \*211

\*211(a) and \*211(b) are similar in that both show vessels with squat bodies, short wide necks with slightly flaring rims, and vertically set handles. They differ in details

<sup>13</sup> The same variants existed in classical Greek: *ἀμφορεύς/ἀμφιφορεύς*. For discussion see VO, 259-63; Anderson 1994-5, 299, 310-12.

<sup>14</sup> VO, 205. They also rightly dismiss a suggestion (Ventris & Chadwick 1973, 328) that the vessel name might have been *po-ti-[.]-we*, constructed from K 875.6 and the ending *-we* on K 873. Note that on K 875.6 *po-ti-* follows the ideogram, whereas a vessel name would be more likely to precede it. The vessel ideogram in K 875.6 is transcribed as \*202, and is associated instead with the *di-pa* vessels (VO, 234-9) (although it should be noted that it is not actually called a *di-pa*). Ventris and Chadwick had in any case offered the idea as “only a conjecture”.



FIGURE 6: Vessels from the Temple Tomb. Source: Evans 1935 [*PoM* IV], 1017, Fig. 965 (top part).

of the bases and handles. \*211(a) has a flat or slightly concave base while \*211(b) has a pointed base. Note the line drawing of Fs 8 in *COMIK* (Figure 1 here) depicts \*211(b) as having a flat base, but the line drawing and close-up photograph from VO (Figure 4 here) clearly show the base is pointed. The handles differ in shape and place of attachment. \*211(a) has small loop-handles joined on the body of the vessel, while those of \*211(b) are large and high, extending above the rim, and set onto the rim and upper body.

VO conjecture that \*211(a) may somewhat resemble two kraters found in the Temple Tomb (Figure 6; referring to vessels c and d), although, as they rightly note, the similarity is not strong.<sup>15</sup> For example, the handles of the kraters are horizontal, while those of \*211(a) are vertical; also, the upper body and neck are much wider in the kraters.

\*211(b) on the other hand is classed by VO with the “amphoroid” vases. They observe that, like the amphora proper (\*209), it is associated with honey and was probably usually made of clay, but offer no specific suggestions for possible parallels.<sup>16</sup>

Having outlined the main points discussed by VO, let us further consider possible parallels for the ideogram shapes. We begin with some suggestions about \*211(b) then return to \*211(a).

#### SOME THOUGHTS ON \*211(b)

\*211(b) is somewhat similar to a piriform jar, a type of vessel well suited to containing viscous liquids such as honey and unguents.<sup>17</sup> A range of variants exists

<sup>15</sup> VO, 207, referring to Evans 1935, 1017, fig. 965c-d.

<sup>16</sup> VO, 266.

<sup>17</sup> Mountjoy 1993, 127-128; Koehl 2006, 296 (speaking of “miniature piriform pithoid jars”).

in this shape,<sup>18</sup> and some examples compare well to our ideogram. Figure 7 shows a fairly typical piriform jar compared with \*211(b).<sup>19</sup> The two are similar particularly in the upper body profile, wide mouth and slightly flaring rim. Differences pertain mainly to the base (flat rather than pointed) and handles (set lower in the vessel than in the ideogram and not joining the rim).



FIGURE 7: A typical piriform jar compared with \*211(b). Source: Vessel: Mountjoy 1993, 70, Vase 142 Ideogram: Figure 4 *op. cit.*

Parallels for the base and handles of \*211(b) exist elsewhere within the piriform range. A piriform rhyton from Pigi now in the Archaeological Museum at Rhethymnon has a handle similar to those in the ideogram (albeit only one), rising well above the vessel rim and attached at the same points, rim and upper body (Figure 8). Another piriform rhyton, from Sarandari near Palaikastro, has handles (in this case three) also attached at the same points, although they do not project above the rim (Figure 9).<sup>20</sup> The profile of both vessels is again roughly similar to \*211(b).

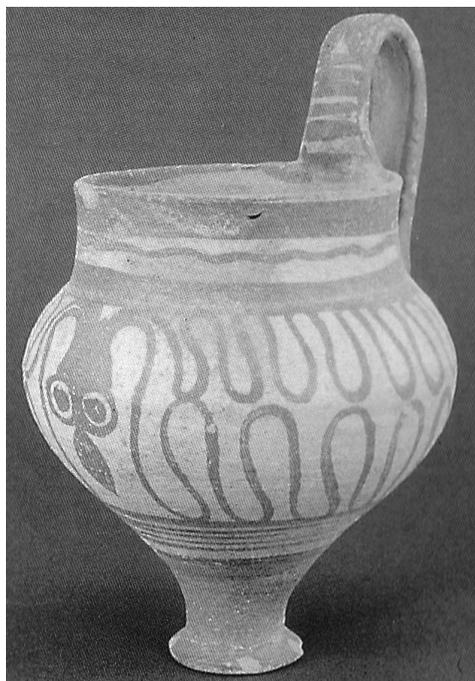


FIGURE 8: Piriform rhyton from Pigi. Source: Godart & Tzedakis 1992, Pl. CLV.1.

A parallel for the pointed base of \*211(b) appears in yet another piriform rhyton, from Phaistos (Figure 10).<sup>21</sup> The vessel is taller (or more “elongated”

<sup>18</sup> For the piriform and piriform-conical shape in general see Furumark 1972 I, 18-27.

<sup>19</sup> The vessel is from the Athens Agora; the illustration here is from Mountjoy 1993, 70, Vase 142.

<sup>20</sup> Figure 9 shows the photo from Bosanquet & Dawkins (1923, 103, fig. 86).

<sup>21</sup> See Pernier and Banti 1951, 175, figs. 103, 104; Koehl (2006, 132-133, cat. no. 380, fig. 14, Pl. 31). It is also illustrated by Marinatos & Himer (1960, Pl. 85).



FIGURE 9: 'Trick vase' from Sarandari. Source: Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, 103, fig. 86.



FIGURE 10: Piriform rhyton from Phaistos. Source: Photo: Koehl 2006, Pl. 31: 380. Drawing: Pernier & Banti 1951, 175, fig. 104.

than that shown in the ideogram, but again the upper body, neck and rim are similar, as is the attachment of the handle. It may be particularly relevant that the base of \*211(b) is shown as pointed. This is of course a classic feature of a rhyton,<sup>22</sup> and it seems at least possible, since parallels for various aspects of the ideogram exist within the range of piriform rhyta, that this could be what \*211(b) was intended to depict.<sup>23</sup>

A peculiarity of the Phaistos vessel may be noted at this point. It is a special kind of rhyton, commonly referred to as a "trick vase" because of the false internal funnel sealed to the upper rim. The Sarandari vessel happens also to be of this type. Its internal structure is described by Bosanquet and Dawkins as similar to a vessel from Zakro illustrated elsewhere by Dawkins (Figure 11).<sup>24</sup> As they discuss, this vessel had a hole in the bottom and, in addition to the main opening at the top, a small airhole near the handle (top left in the figure). Once the vessel was filled, holding a finger or thumb over this airhole would create a vacuum by means of

<sup>22</sup> Although of course as we have just seen, not all rhyta have pointed bases, e.g. the Rhythymnon and Sarandari vessels.

<sup>23</sup> For piriform rhyta in general see Koehl 2006, 43-45, 131-136 (cat. nos. 370-409: Type III piriform); 57, 211-213 (cat. nos. 1130-1140: Type IV piriform and piriform with internal cone). Rhyta are classified in the first instance according to the size of the primary opening and presence or absence of a foot (Koehl 2006, 7): Type III has a wide opening and is footless; Type IV has a wide opening and a base. See also Koehl 1981, 180.

<sup>24</sup> Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, 102-103, referring to Dawkins 1903, 253, fig. 16; the vessel is now also described by Koehl (2006, 212, cat. no. 1133). Koehl also now illustrates the internal structure of the Sarandari vase (Koehl 2006, 213, cat. no. 1140, fig. 41).

the internal funnel, inhibiting the liquid from flowing out through the hole in the bottom. Uncovering the airhole would allow the liquid to flow forth freely. The stream could thus be closely controlled and Bosanquet and Dawkins suggest that such vessels could have been used for libations.<sup>25</sup> (Koehl has now experimented on this type of vessel and found that in fact the vacuum created is not complete so that blocking the airhole slows but does not entirely prevent flow from the bottom secondary hole. It does however affect the filling of the cone. With the airhole closed the vessel could be tipped over and the cone vacated while liquid would still remain in the area between the cone and outer wall. The vessel would thus appear empty, but uncovering the airhole would allow the cone to fill again, as if by “magic”. As Koehl suggests, such vessels could have been used to good effect in ritual.<sup>26</sup>)

These types of vessels may be relevant to \*211(a), to which we now turn.

#### SOME THOUGHTS ON \*211(a)

\*211(a) does not particularly resemble the piriform rhyta discussed above. It does, however, look rather like some other archaeologically attested examples of “trick vases”. An especially good parallel is an amphoroid rhyton discovered by Warren in the Stratigraphical Museum excavations at Knossos.<sup>27</sup> Figure 12 shows this vessel compared with \*211(a). The shape of the body and base plus size and setting of the handles are similar. The Knossos vase had four handles, whereas the ideogram shows only two, but the scribe would have been unable to depict the handle on the side facing the viewer due to the presence of the surcharge *PO*, so this may not be



FIGURE 11: Amphoroid ‘trick vase’ from Zakro illustrated by Dawkins. Dawkins 1903, 253, fig. 16.

<sup>25</sup> Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, 103.

<sup>26</sup> Koehl 2006, 273, 275. On mechanical aspects of filling rhyta in general see Koehl 1981, 181-182; 2006, 259-276.

<sup>27</sup> Warren 1981a, 81-84, fig. 35; 1981b, 156, 158, fig. 6; 2000, 462-463, Pl. 5; the find is catalogued as SEX/79/P274 (P. Warren pers. comm.). The vessel is also discussed by Rehak (1992, 118-119, fig. 7) and Koehl (2006, 213, cat. no. 1137, see also p. 304).

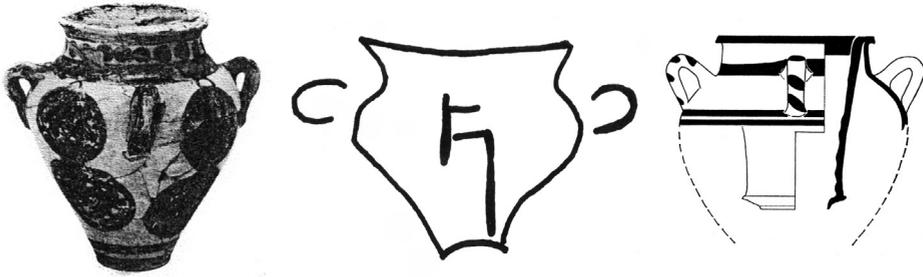


FIGURE 12: Left to right: (i) Amphoroid 'trick vase' from the Stratigraphical Museum excavations at Knossos; (ii) ideogram \*211(a); (iii) Amphoroid 'trick vase' from the Acropolis Houses at Knossos. Source: Vessels: Warren 1981b, 158, fig. 6; Catling *et al.* 1979, 52, fig. 37, V258. Ideogram: Figure 3 *op. cit.*

significant. Also, the neck of the vessel in the ideogram is wider than that of the Knossos vessel, but not out of range.

The Knossos vessel, like the Sarandari and Phaistos rhyta, is a "trick vase" with an interior funnel joined to the rim and small holes at the top and bottom. Warren mentions as parallels the Phaistos rhyton, a vase from Thera, and an amphoroid rhyton from the Knossos Acropolis Houses, shown here in Figure 12(iii).<sup>28</sup> This vessel has a wider mouth than Warren's vessel, and is closer in this respect to the ideogram.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted that Warren's vase dates to LM IB,<sup>30</sup> so is earlier than the Linear B ideogram, but the same excavation yielded a vase similar in shape (although it was not a trick vase) possibly dated to LM IIIA1.<sup>31</sup> The vessels discussed here date from LM IA to IIIB, so the chronology broadly speaking may be acceptable.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Warren 1981b, 156 n. 4. For the Thera vessel see Marinatos 1974, 31-32, Pl. 70 (it is shown in various stages of assembly, illustrating the internal structure); see also Koehl 1990, 353, 355-356; 2006, 212, cat. no. 1135. For the Acropolis Houses vase see Catling *et al.* 1979, 52, fig. 357; Koehl 2006, 212, cat. no. 1136, fig. 41, Pl. 52.

<sup>29</sup> The Zakro vase shown in our Figure 11 is also similar, as is one mentioned by Bosanquet and Dawkins (1923, 103) and published by Bosanquet (1902-1903, 285, fig. 4; see now Koehl 2006, 212, cat. no. 1134, Pl. 52).

<sup>30</sup> Warren 1981b, 155, see also 156.

<sup>31</sup> Warren 1997, 160, fig. 8. Another similar vessel dated to IIIA1 is a jar from the Phylakopi shrine (Renfrew 1985, 158, fig. 5, Vase 53, 160).

<sup>32</sup> The issue of the date(s) of the Knossos tablets is not essential to the present question because the relevant vessels date from the whole span of LM IA-IIIB (for dates of the Knossos tablets see e.g. Bendall 2007, 10-13 with further references). Of the vessels discussed here, the Knossos Acropolis Houses vessel is LM IA (Catling *et al.* 1979, 51-2); the Phaistos vessel is LM IB; the Sarandari vessel is LM IIIA2 (Koehl 2006, 213) – Bosanquet & Dawkins (1923, 103) had described it as LM III "early"; note their comparison to a jug found in an "early LM III larnax" (*loc. cit.* 79, fig. 63.I); the

DOES \*211+PO REPRESENT A RHYTON?

Our discussion so far has been based on vessel shapes alone, without reference to possible meanings of the surcharge *PO*. The idea that the two forms of \*211 could reflect variants within the archaeologically attested pottery repertoire of rhyta prompts a return to the question of the name of the vessel.

As noted above, *PO* may have abbreviated *po-ro-ko-wo* /*prokhowos*/, thought to have referred in the classical period to a jug or ewer. The word is a compound formed from the prefix *πρo-* and the verb *χέω* “I pour”, indicating something for “pouring forth”.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, such a name would be appropriate for a jug. It could also, however, be appropriate for a rhyton. The word *ῥυτόν* is derived from the semantically similar verb, *ῥέω* “I run, flow”.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, the names of the vessels refer to their functions.<sup>35</sup>

“Rhyton” is not attested as the name of a vessel in Mycenaean Greek, although rhyta are encountered in the Linear B records.<sup>36</sup> This silence is not necessarily significant, but it may be important that while we do have ewers/jugs depicted in the Linear B documents, these are not called *po-ro-ko-wo*, but *qe-ra-na*.<sup>37</sup> This leaves *po-ro-ko-wo* open to depict a different kind of vessel. Could it have been the – or at least *a* – Mycenaean name for a rhyton?<sup>38</sup>

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Agora piriform jar (not a rhyton) is LH IIIA1 (Mountjoy 1993, 70; Immerwahr 1971, 186, Vase VII-13); the Rhethymnon vessel is LM IIIB (Godart & Tzedakis 1992, 97-8). Koehl’s catalogue of Type III piriform vessels “with internal cone” includes another dated to LM II (Koehl 2006, 213, cat. no. 1139); for the complete group see Koehl 2006, 212-213, cat. nos. 1133-1140. Other rhyta with internal funnels noted by Koehl (2006, 45, 132-134) are cat. nos.: 380 (the Phaistos vessel), 382 (LM IB), 387 (LM IIIA2 late), 390 (LH IIIA2-IIIB1). Cat. no. 387 is illustrated (Koehl 2006, Fig. 15), but does not particularly resemble our ideogram. C3 (Koehl 2006, 244, fig. 47, Pl. 59) from Enkomi also has an internal cone but also does not resemble the ideogram. On rhyta with internal cones see also Furumark 1972 I, 72-73.

<sup>33</sup> Chantraine 1999, 1255-1256 (*s.v.* *χέω*); Anderson 1994-1995, 311-312.

<sup>34</sup> Chantraine 1999, 971 (*s.v.* *ῥέω*).

<sup>35</sup> As Anderson (1994-1995, 312) notes for *prokhowos*.

<sup>36</sup> A possible ostrich-egg rhyton (\*217) appears in K 434.2 (although it could be a flask; VO, 241-5), and a bull’s head rhyton (\*227) is shown in K(1) 872.1.2 (VO, 268-71). The latter is referred to as *ke-ra-a* probably indicating the presence of horns (*DMic.* I: 343-4) thus likely referring to the shape, rather than being a general word for rhyton.

<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to John Killen for bringing this to my attention. See PY Ta 711.2. 3, with ideogram \*204<sup>vas</sup> (*DMic.* II, 195; VO, 246-252). Other names applied to ideograms resembling jugs are *a-te-we* (on PY Tn 996 with ideogram \*205; interpretation uncertain) and *ka-ti* (again on Tn 996; prob. *kāthis*, cf. *kēthis*) (*DMic.* I, *s.v.v.*). On these jugs see also Sherratt 2004, 197 with n. 64.

<sup>38</sup> It might be objected that a sense of “pouring out” would more appropriately apply to a jug/ewer than to a rhyton if a sense of tipping the vessel is implied, but the Greek need not have this connotation and even where it did there is evidence that in some cases rhyta may have been “tipped” to expel the

Such a solution would explain why the two variants of \*211 may have had the same name, even though they were different in form, since the name would have referred to the function rather than to the shape(s) of the vessels. The surcharge would have been particularly important because a drawing of a piriform or amphoroid rhyton on a Linear B tablet would otherwise simply resemble an “ordinary” vessel. But if *prokhowos* could mean “rhyton”, the scribe might indicate the special feature of such vessels by means of the abbreviation *PO*.

The evidence does not allow a definitive conclusion, but it seems at least plausible that \*211+*PO* represented a rhyton and that the vessel was called a *prokhowos*. We conclude here with a note of some of the possible implications if this were correct. These are offered as speculations only.

#### SOME POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

1. If \*211+*PO* were a rhyton, its appearance together with honey on Fs 8 would suggest that rhyta were used in a religious context for making libations of honey. This would hardly come as a surprise, but it would be good to have the evidence.<sup>39</sup> This would be a relatively rare instance in Linear B of an indication not merely of the supply of a substance for religious purposes, but of how it was used. It might also be significant that whereas most of the recipients in the Fs series, who are otherwise unknown figures (deities? humans?), are allotted honey in liquid measures, it is the figure most plausibly identified as a deity, *pa-de*, who alone receives a vessel – perhaps a rhyton – of honey.<sup>40</sup>

contents (see e.g. Koehl 2006, 262, 273) so either way the sense would be acceptable. Προ- may be taken in the sense of “forth from” and, while the radical sense of χέω may be given in English as “to pour, pour out” (cf. Liddell & Scott, *s.v.v.* χέω, προχέω), the verb includes the sense of “scatter, shed, let fall” (albeit applied to solids rather than liquids) or, as Chantraine (1999, 1255) gives for the basic sense, “verser, répandre, laisser tomber”. Note his comment (*loc. cit.*): “Ce verbe et son groupe expriment toutes les nuances correspondant à la notion de ‘verser, répandre (en abondance)’; noter en particulier l’importance des ‘libations’ que l’on répand, p. ex., χοῖν ου χοῦς χέειν...” He refers to Benveniste: “marquant la différence avec σπένδω et λείβω et soulignant la valeur correspondante en indo-iranien, ‘faire une oblation liquide’”. On the possibility that *prokhowos* applied both rhyta and ewers see below. (On the subject of χέω and its derivatives, note as an aside that it need not be that *choai* were associated with chthonic deities in Mycenaean religion as was apparently the case in later Greek religion [Burkert 1985, 70] – we cannot tell.)

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Weilhartner 2003.

<sup>40</sup> One puzzle is that the commodities on the Fs tablets may be intended for “shipping” somewhere else, and a rhyton would not be a vessel well suited for transport. However, especially if we are looking at a “trick” variety, closing the small upper and lower holes would not have been difficult and some sort of cap or binding could have been provided over the wider mouth. For use of plugs with rhyta see Koehl 2006, 260.

De Fidio long ago suggested that the goods on the Fs tablets might be intended for filling *kernoi*.<sup>41</sup> Palmer objected to this idea on the grounds that goods intended for *kernoi* should be issued in equal amounts,<sup>42</sup> but not all archaeologically attested *kernoi* are composed of equally sized receptacles,<sup>43</sup> and exactly how they were used remains obscure.<sup>44</sup> If the vessel on Fs 8 were a rhyton, it would be worth further exploring de Fidio's suggestion.

2. We should also consider that rhyta could be used for other things than for making libations. Koehl, for instance, suggests that they may have been used for filling drinking cups<sup>45</sup> or (presumably held by a servant) for "ceremonial" washing.<sup>46</sup> One wonders if the possible mention of */hudōr/* "water" in connection with \*211(a) on K(1) 873 could be relevant to this second suggestion. The tablet records at least seventy-nine vessels, which suggests large-scale use. Rather than individual libations ceremonies, it could be that such vessels were intended as part of the service for a banquet (whether "ceremonial" or otherwise), as may have been the case for at least some of the vessels recorded in the K(1) set.<sup>47</sup> The filling of cups or washing of hands with "trick vases" could be deployed with magnificent effect in terms of palatial display in the context of a ceremonial banquet. We are accustomed to think of rhyta as primarily for religious use and this may be mainly correct, but different social elements in the Aegean LBA may have had different perspectives, changing over time, and place, and we cannot assume that rhyta would never have been thought acceptable for use for more "secular" utilitarian (but still socially significant) purposes.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup> De Fidio 1977, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Palmer 1994, 129.

<sup>43</sup> For example the well-known *kernos* from the Central Court at Malia (see e.g. Marinatos & Hirmer 1960, Pl. 56) and the Linear A inscribed offering table from the Psychro Cave (Boardman 1961, 63-64).

<sup>44</sup> There is at least some evidence for use of rhyta with *kernoi*, e.g. Koehl (2006, 274) notes a vessel from Mycenae which makes an explicit link between a rhyton (in this case conical) and a *kernos* in that the two vessels are actually joined to one another; see also e.g. Koehl 2006, 289, 325.

<sup>45</sup> Koehl 2006, 266, 333. Rhyta are very often associated with drinking vessels, see e.g. Koehl 2006, 297 (Thera), 301 (Zakro), 305 (Agia Triadha), 311 (Agia Irini, Kea), 313-314 (Apollo Maleatas), 314 (the Unexplored Mansion, Knossos), 321 (LM III mortuary contexts). This pattern is not, however, ubiquitous – e.g. not at LM IA Gournia (Koehl 2006, 289).

<sup>46</sup> Koehl 1990, 358-9. See also Anderson 1994-1995, 318-319 for the sense of the IE root \*ǵheu "to pour" as extending to both washing and libations.

<sup>47</sup> Bendall 2007, 241, 243, 287.

<sup>48</sup> The question of whether all Mycenaean banquets had a religious aspect remains unresolved, but it is probably anachronistic to approach the matter in terms of "sacred" vs. "secular". There is much literature on the issue, but for present purposes see comments in discussions following Koehl's papers (1981, 187-188; 1990, 361-362), and Bendall 2007, 15 with further references. Other

3. If *prokhowos* were the Mycenaean name for a rhyton, it would be notable that it is a purely Greek word, composed of Greek elements. It is reasonably certain that the Mycenaean did borrow words from the Minoan language(s?),<sup>49</sup> but it would be of interest if they did not borrow the Minoan word (whatever it was) for what is one of the most typically “Minoan” religious artefacts *par excellence* – the so-called rhyton. That provisional observation would be consistent with the idea that when “mainlanders” came into contact with this type of Cretan vessel, they did not necessarily deploy them in “Cretan” ways. It has long been noted, for instance, that the distribution of rhyta is different in Crete and the mainland, with most Cretan rhyta from habitation contexts and most mainland examples from graves (although this could also be partly due to depositional factors of various sorts).<sup>50</sup> The failure (or reluctance?) to adopt the Minoan word, but simply to take the object itself, might be consistent with the notion that while speakers of Mycenaean Greek had accepted or “received” a good deal of “Minoan” material culture and iconography, their belief systems were not necessarily affected, or at least not to a similar degree in all respects.<sup>51</sup> This idea might also be consistent with R. Hägg’s argument that libation was already an established practice in the Middle Helladic period.<sup>52</sup> If so, the associated vocabulary might already have been developed for early speakers of what we call Mycenaean Greek. That *prokhowos* pertains to function, rather than form, would have facilitated its application to a new vessel shape fulfilling a familiar

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possible functions Koehl (2006, 296-297) notes for rhyta include use in perfume manufacture and as strainers more generally, whether for “domestic” or ceremonial purposes (e.g. Koehl, 1981, 186; 1990, 354; 2006, 271). His suggestion (2006, 271) that wool impregnated with spices might have been set into the bases of some rhyta both to strain out impurities and to add flavour to the substances decanted is intriguing. It should be noted, however, that straining drinks in particular is a Near Eastern habit with a long (and archaeologically well-attested) history in the region (Moorey 1980), which is not the case in the Aegean, and it may be significant that the prime example Koehl cites for the practice in his 1990 article is from Ugarit; examples from his 2006 book are also all from the Near East (see also the general discussion in Koehl 1990, 361-362). On the other hand, there does seem to be evidence for beer at Thera and this would have required straining (Koehl 2006, 292 with further references).

<sup>49</sup> Renfrew 1998.

<sup>50</sup> Hägg 1985, 213; 1990, 183; Koehl 1981, 186-187 with n. 40; 2006, 278, 298-299. The distribution pattern, however, should not be overstated. Rhyta do appear in Mycenaean settlement and/or cult contexts (e.g. Koehl 2006, 312-313, 315-316) and before and after the Neopalatial period they occur in mortuary contexts in Crete (note e.g. the Sarandari and Rhethymnon vessels discussed above). Also note Hägg’s point that finding rhyta in graves does not preclude their having been *used* elsewhere (Hägg 1990, 183). Further, Haysom (2007, esp. 302) has now interestingly challenged the idea that rhyta did have a specifically religious character even in “Minoan” contexts.

<sup>51</sup> Renfrew 1981, 31-32; Hägg 1985, esp. 205-207, 213-214.

<sup>52</sup> Hägg 1990, 184; 1997, esp. 17-18; see also 1985, 221-222, n. 34. For further new evidence on Mycenaean libations see Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001.

purpose.<sup>53</sup> Such a scenario would have implications for the extent and nature of Minoan-Mycenaean religious and cultural symbolic transmission(s).

4. Even for the classical period it can be difficult to determine which archaeologically attested vases correspond to which Greek vessel names. The word “chous” for instance does generally apply to an ewer-like vessel, but various sorts of vessels are so called, and such matters on occasion seem to have been confusing even to native speakers, as semantic shifts occurred.<sup>54</sup> If *prokhowos* were the Mycenaean name for a rhyton, it would be interesting to ask: When was the semantic shift? When is *prokhowos* first securely attested as an ewer? A study of the post-Mycenaean history of the word, and its companion term rhyton, is beyond the scope of this paper, but we may conclude with an observation that the first post-Mycenaean occurrences of the word are in *Od.* 18.397 where a *prokhoos* is carried by a cupbearer at a banquet, and in *Il.* 24.304, *Od.* 1.136, 4.52, and 15.135, where the vessel is being brought by attendants for washing.<sup>55</sup> Washing and filling cups are both functions which as noted above could be as pertinent to a rhyton as to a ewer. These passages constitute part of the evidence for taking *prokhoos* as an ewer. But, whatever the word meant in classical Greek, need it have meant the same in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*?<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Hägg suggests that before the rhyton was adopted libations had been carried out using standard domestic ware, a practice which would partly explain the “invisibility” of MH religion (Hägg 1997, 17-18).

<sup>54</sup> See for instance the following passage from Athenaeus (11.495a-c): “Krates... writes thus: ‘Choes were called pelikai, as we said. The type of pitcher earlier on was like the Panathenaic (amphorae), when it was called a pelike, but later it had the form of an oinochoe, like those put out at the festival, a sort that they once called olpai... But now such a pitcher, having been sanctified in some manner, is used only in the festival, and the one for daily use has changed its form, most like an arutaina, which in fact we call chous’”. Translation by Hamilton (1992, 28, see 31-2 for discussion). I am grateful to Donna Kurtz for bringing this study to my attention.

<sup>55</sup> For Homeric banqueting in general see Sherratt 2004, esp. 186 for use of the *prokhoos* in washing and 197 n. 64 for *qe-ra-na*, also in a washing context.

<sup>56</sup> By way of a caveat, it should be noted that *prokhowos* could have applied to both rhyta and ewers in Mycenaean Greek, the central concern being once again the function. Alongside the rhyton, the other important Bronze Age libation vessel was indeed a high-necked and high-handled ewer (the type is depicted in the well-known Tiryns ring; see Nilsson 1950, 147-153 for more examples). Rhyta and ewers are often found together in archaeological contexts (e.g. Koehl 2006, 324, 341, 342) and in iconography, for instance the well-known seal from Naxos (e.g. Koehl 2006, 255-256, 339, cat. no. S5, Pl. 61, with further bibliography), and Koehl (2006, 339) suggests that together they “form the core components of the Aegean libation set”. If the word *prokhowos* perhaps applied to both sorts of vessels in Mycenaean it would be a question not so much of a fundamental semantic shift, but rather of a restricted use developing which eventually came to exclude one of the vessel types in use during the Late Bronze Age. The ambiguity of the usage in Homeric epic leaves open the question of when such change may have taken place.

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