

## FURNITURE, PRECIOUS ITEMS AND MATERIALS RECORDED IN THE LINEAR B ARCHIVES

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The present article examines the elements found in the Linear B archives relevant to furniture excluding vases (which will be presented in a further article and part of which are among precious items). In particular, the article deals with wood – the main material of furniture, in all the different aspects recorded in the archives – as well as with some other precious items and materials. This inquiry will show, especially for Pylos, a palatial world with a major need of display and luxury, which employs a great number of skilled craftsmen in order to satisfy this need. Among these craftsmen, specializations may be found, whose existence surprises us and reinforces the image of luxury that we have of the courts of the Mycenaean palaces. A characteristic example are the *ku-wa-no-wo-ko*, the lapis lazuli craftsmen, a great number of whom are recorded at Mycenae.

The series of documents that gives us the most numerous and interesting information on utensils and items, is the Pylos Ta series. It is worth noting that out of 44 different words, mainly adjectives, referring to furniture and furniture decoration, only 5 are not recorded in the Ta series. In this series, three types of furniture are recorded: 11 tables on Ta 642, 713 and 715 (*to-pe-za* /torpedza/ τόπεζα, cf. classical Greek τράπεζα), 5 seats or thrones on Ta 707, 708 and 714 (*to-no* /t<sup>h</sup>ornos/ θόρνος-θόρονος, not ordinary chairs, but honorary seats of sovereigns, as their artistic decoration implies) and 16 (or 17) stools (*ta-ra-nu-we* /t<sup>h</sup>rānues/ θράννες, cf. Hom. θρήνες). Of these, 4 (or 5), recorded on Ta 707, 708 and 714 together with *to-no*, were probably simple footstools, while 12, recorded on Ta 710, 721 and 722 without *to-no* and followed by the ideogram \*220, were probably used as seats<sup>1</sup>.

Similar inventories can be found in the Alalakh tablets no. 417-424. The most characteristic of them is no. 419, which records 20 tables, 32 seats and 35 footstools of Irihalpa's house. It is important to note that in these tablets from Alalakh the number of items recorded do not correspond to each other<sup>2</sup>.

In what follows, the furniture recorded in the Linear B archives will be analyzed. Such furniture represents items belonging to the palace, like in the Pylos Ta series, which actually form a kind of palatial inventory, about the purpose of which, however, there is no agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> *Docs*<sup>2</sup>, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> *Docs*<sup>2</sup>, p. 500.

*To-pe-za "tables"*

On the whole, eleven *to-pe-za* are recorded. On Ta 642 three tables are recorded and all of them are characterized as *ra-e-ja* /lāhej(j)ā/ λαεία, cf. λάος 'stone', a word that M. Ventris and J. Chadwick consider as an adjective of material in -εία and interpret as 'of marble'<sup>3</sup>. Subsequently, there are words referring to decoration (technique, materials and motifs) of the tables. Thus, for example there are the words *a-ja-me-na* and *qe-qi-no-to* (in other tablets the participle *qe-qi-no-me-na* is found), that are related to the decoration technique. The *a-ja-me-na* /aia(s)menā/ αία(σ)μένᾱ, nom. fm., is most probably related to the inlay technique, while the *qe-qi-no-me-no* /g<sup>w</sup>eg<sup>w</sup>inōmenoi/ or *qe-qi-no-to* /g<sup>w</sup>eg<sup>w</sup>inōtoi/ (cf. Hom. δινωτός 'technically elaborated') probably refers to turning or engraving special patterns<sup>4</sup>. The decorative motifs are distinguished into principal and secondary. So, on Ta 642 are recorded: the word *a<sub>2</sub>-ro-u-do-pi*, maybe ἄλως ὑδό(τ)φι 'with aquamarine' (for which L. Palmer suggests the meaning '(decoration) in waves')<sup>5</sup>, *ko-ru-pi-qe* /korupp<sup>h</sup>i (k<sup>w</sup>e)/ instr. pl. of κόρυς 'with helmets' engraved in the ivory, etc.<sup>6</sup>.

On Ta 713 three more tables are recorded. One of them is again characterized as *ra-e-ja*, the other one was of ivory, as the adjective *e-re-pa-te-ja* /elep<sup>h</sup>antej(j)ā/ shows, and the last one is made of the material that probably was "pseudo-ebony" (*ku-te-se-jo* /kutesej(j)os/ 'of *ku-te-so*'), which like ebony, was a common furniture material in Egypt<sup>7</sup>.

On Ta 715 five tables are recorded, one of *ku-te-so*, two of ivory (*e-re-pa-te-ja*) and two probably 'of smilax', if the term *mi-ra<sub>2</sub>* /l(s)miljās/ (cf. (σ)μίλαξ, (σ)μίλος) is correctly interpreted<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, of the 11 tables totally recorded on Ta series, 4 were of stone, 3 of ivory, 3 of "pseudo-ebony" and 2 of *mi-ra<sub>2</sub>*.

Regarding their shapes, there were semicircular tables, if the term *me-no-e-ja* /mēnohej(j)ā/ is correctly interpreted as crescent (although C. Ruijgh suggests that they were decorated with half-moons)<sup>9</sup>, round tables, if the term *a-pi-qo-to* /amphig<sup>w</sup>oitos/ is related to the Homeric verb ἀμφιβαίνω (L. Palmer interprets it as 'with wide and crude legs')<sup>10</sup>. Some of them seem to be with projections and horizontal parts, since they are characterized with the term *po-ro-e-ke*. Problems also emerge with the terms *e-ne-wo-pe-za* and *we-pe-za*, which probably concern the number and the shape of the props (legs) of the tables. The transliteration generally admitted is /ennewoped<sup>z</sup>ā/ ἐννεφέπεζα 'with nine legs' and /(h)wesped<sup>z</sup>ā/ 'with six legs', although these numbers seem to be excessive if referred to the number of legs. Therefore, many different interpretations have been suggested about the table construction, in order to explain the terms above. There are some representations on seals, that might reinforce the idea that they refer to tables with six or nine legs

<sup>4</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup>, p. 334; I. Hajnal, *Mykenisches und Homerisches Lexicon*, 1998, p. 22-23.

<sup>5</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek Texts*, Oxford 1963, p. 345.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> D.H.F. Gray, "Linear B and Archaeology", *BICS* 6 (1959), p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 347.

<sup>9</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup>, p. 500.

<sup>10</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup>, p. 499-500.

(CMS I, 80 from Mycenae; CMS I, 264 from Pylos; R 13 from Knossos)<sup>11</sup>. According to J. Chadwick, the terms perhaps denoted tables of six or nine feet as a measure of length and referred to their dimensions<sup>12</sup>.

Indicative of the precious character of these tables is the inlay of precious materials such as lapis-lazuli (*ku-wa-no*), ivory (*e-re-pa-te*), the *pa-ra-ku* material, about which many different interpretations have been proposed (παράργυς 'silver', 'tin', 'tin-plate', 'amber', \*σφραγύς related to σφραγίς, -ῖδος with the original meaning of 'precious stone')<sup>13</sup>, while an inlay of crystal rock (*we-a-re-ja* /*we(h)alej(j)ā*/ which is related to the adjective ὡλεῖα) is also recorded<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, on Ta 715.3 there is a reference to *pu-ko-so* /*pukso*/ πύξος 'box-tree', of which was made part of a table<sup>15</sup>. In the tablets referring to tables we may also find the words *ko-ki-re-ja*, *pi-ti-ro<sub>2</sub>-we-sa* as well as *to-qi-de*, which are related to decorative motifs. Thus, the term *ko-ki-re-ja* /*konk<sup>h</sup>ilej(j)ā*/ may denote a kind of decoration with shells (κογχύλια) and the term *pi-ti-ro<sub>2</sub>-we-sa* /*ptilowessa*/ πτιλόφεσσα may describe a table decorated with πτίλον 'feather motif' (but it could also denote a table with a big featherlike edge)<sup>16</sup>. The *to-qi-de* /*tork<sup>w</sup>idei*/ (cf. τρέπω) is connected with the decorative technique *qe-qi-no-to* / *qe-qi-no-me-na* and is believed to denote a sort of spiral<sup>17</sup>.

The tables recorded in the Ta series are all precious and belong to the treasure of the palace; therefore the scribe is interested in describing their decoration in details. The archaeological findings certify the information of Linear B and confirm the two decoration techniques, engraving and inlay, at Pylos.

The word *to-pe-za* is also found at Knossos on V(2) 280, which was discovered in the *Room of the Chariot Tablets* and probably was of religious character, since the heading records the name of a month, *wo-de-wi-jo* /*wordēwios*/, also recorded in two tablets of the KN Fp series. In this case it might be a table of ritual use, while all the items in general, according to some scholars, were related to ritual and religious use<sup>18</sup>. However, there are also different points of view, such as Palaima's, who considers that it is a text similar to those of the Ta series, i.e. a list of tables made on a given month<sup>19</sup>. Some of the words of this tablet remain obscure regarding their meanings, e.g. *o-u-te-mi* (*o-u* = οὐ has been interpreted as indicative of lack of support, i.e. 'with no leg', since according to Hesychius τέρμις = πούς); *a-pe-*

<sup>11</sup> M.S. Speciale, "Furniture in Linear B: The evidence for tablets", in *Πεπραγμένα του Η Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου*, Iraklion 2000, p. 233; M.S. Speciale, "La tavoletta PY Ta 716 e i sacrifici di animali", in *Epi ponton plazomenoi. Simposio italiano di Studi Egei dedicato a Luigi Bernabò Brea e Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli* (Roma, 18-20 febbraio 1998), V. La Rosa, D. Palermo, L. Vagnetti (eds.) Roma 1999, p. 291-298.

<sup>12</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 347; J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 150.

<sup>13</sup> R. Halleux, "Lapis-lazuli, azurite du pâte de verre? A propos de *ku-wa-no* et *ku-wa-no-wo-ko*", *SMEA* 9 (1970), p. 45 n. 5; M.D. Petruševski, "Parakuwe, Parakewe", *ŽAnt* 15 (1965), p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> *Docs<sup>2</sup>*, p. 500.

<sup>15</sup> J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 346-347; C. Gallavotti, "Note omeriche e micenee", *SMEA* 15 (1972), p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Docs<sup>2</sup>*, p. 333-336.

<sup>18</sup> M.S. Speciale, "Furniture in linear B: The evidence for tablets", cit., p. 234-235.

<sup>19</sup> Th.G. Palaima, "Θέμις in the Mycenaean Lexicon", *Faventia* 22 (2000), p. 13ff., 18ff.

*ti-ra<sub>2</sub> /amp<sup>h</sup>estr(i)ja/* (probably an adjective derived from ἀμφί and ἔδω ‘eat’ or ἔζομαι ‘sit’, characterizing a table around which or at both sides of which one could sit and eat)<sup>20</sup>; the phrase *e-pi i-ku-wo-i-pi* (here *e-pi* might not be a preposition, but an adverb or the first member of a compound, written separately as a technical term characterizing a type of tables)<sup>21</sup>.

### *To-no “thrones”, “seats”*

On Ta 707, 708 and 714, five *to-no* /t<sup>h</sup>ornoi/ θόρνος, θρόνος ‘seats’ are recorded (two on Ta 707, two on Ta 708 and one on Ta 714). Four out of the five thrones seem to be of *ku-te-so*, “pseudo-ebony”, while the fifth is described as *we-a<sub>2</sub>-re-jo* ‘of crystal rock’ (most probably not all of it).

On Ta 707.1 the throne seems to have a golden (*ku-ru-sa-pi* /k<sup>h</sup>rūs(s)āp<sup>h</sup>i/) decoration, ‘on its back’ (or ‘its sides’, according to L. Palmer, who interprets this way the term *o-pi-ke-re-mi-ni-ja-pi* /opikelemniāp<sup>h</sup>i/; while M. Ventris and J. Chadwick relate it with ἀμφικελεμνίς, ἀμφικελεμνόν = ἀμφιβαρές ‘round the shoulder’: \*ὀπικελεμνιάφι would denote a decoration on the edges of the back)<sup>22</sup>. The *o-ni-ti-ja-pi* /ornit<sup>h</sup>iāp<sup>h</sup>i/ \*ὀρνιθιάφι would probably denote decoration with birds (cf. ὄρνις). On Ta 707.2 a throne of *ku-te-so* is recorded, decorated like the throne of the first line (*o-pi-ke-re-mi-ni-ja-pi*) with a variety of decorative motifs, such as *se-re-mo-ka-ra-o-re*, which probably denotes decoration with animals’ heads (deer or other mythical animals, and not sirens as suggested by H. Mühlestein)<sup>23</sup>, *a-di-ri-ja-te* /andrijante(i)/ ἀνδριάντει ‘decorated with a figure’) and *po-ti-pi* /portipp<sup>h</sup>i/ πόρτιφι, probably ‘decorated with heifers’)<sup>24</sup>.

On Ta 708 two thrones are recorded, which are both made of *ku-te-so* and have *o-pi-ke-re-mi-ni-ja* decoration of ivory (*e-re-pa-te* in line 1 and *e-re-pa-te-ja-pi* in line 2), while the second throne has *se-re-mo-ka-ra-a-pi* and *a-di-ri-ja-pi* decoration. A Mycenaean piece of ivory belonging to the decoration of the front part of a throne has been found in Thebes<sup>25</sup>. On Ta 714 a luxurious throne is recorded, as it bears pieces of crystal rock and decoration of *ku-wa-no*, *pa-ra-ku* and gold on the *o-pi-ke-re-mi-ni-ja* part of the throne. If the throne description of line 2 continues in line 3, then the throne bears the following decorative motifs: men, animals’ heads and probably palm-trees (*po-ni-ki-pi* /p<sup>h</sup>oinīk<sup>h</sup>p<sup>h</sup>i/, cf. φοίνιξ). The number of decorative motifs related to this throne leads us to the conclusion that the back of the seat was decorated, as this is the part with the largest surface.

Consequently, all the five thrones recorded on Ta are incredibly luxurious, with extraordinary decorations and the use of precious materials.

<sup>20</sup> M.S. Speciale, “Furniture in linear B: The evidence for tablets”, cit., p. 227-229.

<sup>21</sup> C. Varias García, “Observations on the Mycenaean vocabulary of furniture and vessels”, in *Colloquium Romanum*, A. Sacconi et al. (eds.), Pisa-Roma 2008, p. 777.

<sup>22</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup>, p. 343; L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 349.

<sup>23</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 349; H. Mühlestein, “Sirenen in Pylos”, *Glotta* 36 (1957), p. 152-156.

<sup>24</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 348-349.

<sup>25</sup> F. Vandenabeele, “Quelques remarques sur l’ameublement des palais mycéniens”, in *Atti e Memorie del Secondo Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia*, Pisa-Roma 1996, p. 1329.

The word *to-no* is also attested at Knossos on V(5) 1043 + 7709 + fr. (*to-no-qe* 1), but in this case it could be a personal name, while on KN As 1517.12-13 there are three persons characterized as *to-ro-no-wo-ko* /t<sup>h</sup>ronoworgoi/ \*θρονοφοργοί, a term that probably meant 'throne manufacturers'. This means that, since there were specialized artisans in making thrones, who were recorded in the palatial archives and therefore worked for the palace, then there must have been a great amount of thrones in the Knossos palace, but their inventories have not been found.

Another characteristic term is also *to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo* /t<sup>h</sup>orno(h)elktēriōn/ \*θορνοελκτήριον, probably a festival, during which the throne was dragged (a compound formed by the noun θρόνος and the verb ἔλκω). It has also been suggested that the initial meaning of the word θρόνος was bloom or herb and that the homeric word θρόνα must have been bloom-like or herb-like ornaments or decorative patterns. Accordingly, the term has been interpreted as /t<sup>h</sup>orno(h)ektēriōn/ \*Θορνοεκτηρίων 'ritual holding of blooms or herbs' and referred to a ceremony in which the participants were holding blooms to honor the goddess Potnia<sup>26</sup>.

### *Ta-ra-nu-we* "footstools"

The third and most abundant category of furniture is that of the 'footstools', *ta-ra-nu-we* (*ta-ra-nu* \*220 /t<sup>h</sup>rānus/, cf. Hom. θρήνυς). Homeric θρήνυς is a piece of furniture put in front of seats or thrones as a support for the legs (*Il.* XIV 240, XV 729; *Od.* I 131, IV 136, etc.). On Ta 707.2, 708.1-2, 710.1, 714.1, 721.7 and 722.4, 16 *ta-ra-nu-we* are recorded (17 counting also the footstool first written and then erased by the scribe on Ta 708.1).

On Ta 707 two *ta-ra-nu-we* are recorded and for one of them, in line 3, the material of construction is also recorded, i.e. *ku-te-so*, while both of them bear as decorations ivory inlays and *a-u-de-pi*, probably also a decorative motif.

On Ta 708 there are two more *ta-ra-nu-we* of *ku-te-so* recorded, with ivory inlays, and one of them, in line 3, bears decorative motifs of men and lions, resembling to the lion-hunting scene on the dagger from Grave IV of Circle A at Mycenae<sup>27</sup>. On Ta 710 one *ta-ra-nu* is recorded, with an ivory inlay and a decorative motif described with the words *au-de-pi so-we-no-qe*, which probably denote a rosette motif (or a flame motif or some kind of a decorative band, as it has been suggested)<sup>28</sup>.

The tablet Ta 714 records one *ta-ra-nu* with luxurious decoration, including inlays of lapis lazuli (*ku-wa-no*), *pa-ra-ku*, gold and golden *ko-no-ni-pi* /kononipp<sup>h</sup>i/ κονονί(δ)φι, cf. κανόνις, a decoration with 'golden bars'<sup>29</sup>. Ta 714 seems to record the most luxurious decoration of the entire inventory.

The tablet Ta 721 records seven *ta-ra-nu-we*, all with ivory inlay and *a-u-de-pi*

<sup>26</sup> V. Petrakis, "To-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo reconsidered", *Minos* 37-38 (2002-2003), p. 298-302.

<sup>27</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 348-349.

<sup>28</sup> L.R. Palmer, "A Mycenaean Tomb Inventory", *Minos* 5 (1957), p. 64; D.H.F. Gray, "Linear B and archaeology", *BICS* 6 (1959), p. 47-57.

<sup>29</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit. p.351.

decoration. Five of them bear, among others, the decorative motif described by the word *so-we-no*. In line 1 a spiral motif is recorded (*to-qi-de*) as well as *ka-ru-we* /*karu(w)ei*/ κάρυ(F)ει, term related by M. Ventris and J. Chadwick to κάρυον 'nut', and by L. Palmer to κάλυκας 'calyx' as decorative motifs<sup>30</sup>.

On Ta 722 four *ta-ra-nu-we* are recorded, bearing ivory inlay and various decorative motifs. In line 1: a man (*a-to-ro-qo* /*ant<sup>h</sup>rōk<sup>w</sup>ōi*/ ἀνθρώπῳ), a horse (*i-qo* /*(h)ikk<sup>w</sup>ōi*/ ἵππῳ), a palm-tree (*po-ni-ke* /*p<sup>h</sup>oinīkei*/ φοινίκει) and an octopus (*po-ru-po-de* /*polupodei*/ πολύποδει)<sup>31</sup>; in line 2: *ka-ra-a-pi* /*karaapp<sup>h</sup>i*/ (maybe 'heads', if the word is connected to κάρα 'head'), *re-wo-te-jo* /*lewonteiois*/ λεφοντείους (probably a decoration with lion-heads) and *so-we-no*; in line 3 the word *ka-ru-pi* might imply decoration with calyces or a nut-shaped motif. Due to the two different forms of the ideogram in the tablet PY Ta 722, it has been suggested that there should be footstools with and without legs, all of them with cavities at their sides<sup>32</sup>.

From the archaeological point of view, a wall-painting from the Southwest House of the Cult Centre of Mycenae (LH III B) with a leg resting on a rectangular stool, certifies the existence of footstools with legs. On the other hand, a ring from Tiryns (LH I), probably represents a deity seated with her legs on a footstool. Perhaps, something similar can be found on some Mycenaean craters of LH III A-B<sup>33</sup>. M. Ventris thought that it was a stool to seat on and not to support the legs<sup>34</sup>. Some scholars now agree with that opinion, based on findings and archaeological criteria.

The material of these pieces of furniture is indicated only in three cases and in all of them it is *ku-te-so* (a kind of wood used in four of the five thrones and a number of tables). We realize that the scribe was particularly interested in the decoration of this furniture, which is of ivory in 16 out of 17 cases of *ta-ra-nu-we*.

The dominating decorative motifs of *ta-ra-nu-we* are *a-u-de-pi* (9 times) and *so-we-no* (5 times), but unfortunately we are not sure about the meaning of these words (for *a-u-de-pi* it has been suggested that it denotes human or humanlike beings)<sup>35</sup>.

It is important that the plural *ta-ra-nu-we* is also found on PY Vn 46 twice (lines 4 and 7) followed by the figures 12 and 6, but not by an ideogram. The word is also found four times at Knossos on V 1521.2.3.[4.5], but the context here is not clear<sup>36</sup>.

It has been suggested that the items called *po-da* on V 1524.3-5 were related to

<sup>30</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup>, p.344.

<sup>31</sup> L.R. Palmer, "A Mycenaean tomb inventory", cit., p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> F. Vandenabeele, "Quelques remarques sur l'ameublement des palais mycéniens", in *Atti e Memorie del Secondo Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia*, Pisa-Roma 1996, p.1328.

<sup>33</sup> F. Vandenabeele, "Quelques remarques sur l'ameublement des palais mycéniens", cit., p. 1328-1329.

<sup>34</sup> M. Ventris, "Mycenaean furniture on the Pylos Tablets", *Eranos* 53 (1955), p. 110-111; M.C. Di Filippo, "L'ideogramma \*220 nei testi micenei", in *Atti e Memorie del Secondo Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia*, Pisa-Roma 1996, p. 246-247.

<sup>35</sup> A. Hurst, F. Bruschweiler, "Descriptions d'objets à Pylos et dans l'Orient contemporain", in *Colloquium Mycenaeanum. Actes du sixième colloque international sur les textes mycéniens et égéens tenu à Chaumont sur Neuchâtel du 7 au 13 septembre 1975*, E. Risch, H. Mühlestein (ed.), Neuchâtel - Genève 1979, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> F. Vandenabeele, J.-P. Olivier, *Les idéogrammes archéologiques du linéaire B*, Paris 1979, p. 163.

furniture context. In addition, the \*246 *a-sa-mi-to* /*asamint<sup>h</sup>os*/ ἀσάμινθος, found on the sealing Ws 8497.α.γ and possibly referring to a kind of bathtub, should be added to the items of furniture.

Similar to our texts are the cuneiform tablets n° 417-427 from Tell Atchana / Alalakh<sup>37</sup>. In the Near Eastern sources, however, such detailed descriptions are rarely found.

In conclusion, on the Ta tablets, as far as furniture is concerned, the following details are recorded: the kind of furniture; the decorative material, and in particular that concerning the whole piece of furniture or part of it; the technique of decoration (*a-ja-me-na*, *qe-qi-no-me-na*) and the decorative motifs: a) human figures (*a-to-ro-qo*, *a-di-ri-ja-te*), b) animal patterns (e.g. *i-qo*, *o-ni-ti-ja-pi*, *po-ti-pi* etc.) and c) plant patterns (e.g. *po-ni-ki-pi*, *ka-ru-we*).

### *Other precious objects*

Apart from the precious vases and pieces of furniture, the Ta series contains other objects, which are not directly connected with the rest of the items recorded, but nevertheless give us the opportunity of attempting to interpret the series.

The tablet Ta 709, apart from vases (lines 1 and 3), records also items used as fire equipment. Line 2 mentions: 1 *au-te*, probably /*austēr*/ αὐστήρ, from the verb αὔω 'kindle', possibly 'a poker'<sup>38</sup>; 2 *pu-ra-u-to-ro* /*puraustrō*/ πυράστρω (dual, cf. *πύραυστρα* and *πυράγρα*) a 'pair of tongs'<sup>39</sup>; 1 *qa-ra-to-ro* /*sk<sup>w</sup>alat<sup>h</sup>ron*/, cf. *σπάλαθρον* and *σκάλευθρον*, a 'device for poking the fire' (Higgins suggests the interpretation of 'shovel' or 'pitchfork')<sup>40</sup>; and 2 *e-ka-ra* /*esk<sup>h</sup>arai*/, cf. *ἑσχάρα* 'fireplace', 'gridiron', one of them *a-pi-qo-to* /*amp<sup>h</sup>ig<sup>w</sup>otos*/ ἀμφίβοτος, ἀμφίβατος, probably meaning 'with oblique legs' or 'with a rim around', and *pe-de-we-sa* /*pedwessa*/ πέδφεσσα 'portable with legs', and the other *i-to-we-sa* /*histowessa*/ ἰστόφεσσα 'equipped with a mast or an upright support' and described as *so-we-ne-ja au-de-we-sa*, a sort of decorative motifs<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, at the end of line 1, 6 *ko-te-ri-ja* are recorded, maybe /*k<sup>h</sup>ōstēria(i)*/ χω(σ)τήρια(ι) 'shovels' (?), from the verb χώννυμι<sup>42</sup>. So, we have to do with tools connected with fire, but we cannot be sure that all of them were made of bronze, and few of them have been found in the excavations.

The tablet Ta 716 records items that raise doubts about its connection with the rest of the series. It records 2 *pa-sa-ro ku-ru-so a-pi-to-ni-jo*, which probably means: '2 golden chains on both sides of the throne'<sup>43</sup> (according to L. Palmer, *a-pi-to-ni-jo* should be interpreted as 'double plaited'). J. Taillardat interprets the phrase as ψαλὼ ἀμφοιστορνίω and considers that it describes the clasp fastening on both sides the

<sup>37</sup> M. Ventris, "Mycenaean furniture on the Pylos Tablets", cit., p. 110-111.

<sup>38</sup> *Docs*<sup>2</sup>, p. 499-500.

<sup>39</sup> M. Ruipérez, J. Melena, *Los Griegos Micénicos*, Madrid 1990, p. 175.

<sup>40</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p.343; R. Higgins, "The archaeological Background to the Furniture Tablets from Pylos", *BICS* 3, 1956, p. 43.

<sup>41</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 343; *Docs*<sup>2</sup>, p. 499-500.

<sup>42</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 343.

<sup>43</sup> M. Ruipérez, J. Melena, *Los Griegos Micénicos*, cit., p.175.

belt. S. Hiller interprets the word *pa-sa-ro* as πασσάλω, suggests the meaning of 'nail' bearing an object and concludes that the two *pa-sa-ro* were probably the bearers of the two double axes recorded on the tablet on the same line. According to him, the word *a-pi-to-ni-jo*, if interpreted as ἀμφὶ θρόνιον, would be connected with the verb τρνεύω or τρνόω, 'turning', 'making round' and would mean 'poles shaped on the lathe all around' or 'poles on both sides of the throne'. As a most suitable example he gives the sarcophagus of Haghia Triada, where two props with double axes are placed on both sides of an altar<sup>44</sup>. M.S. Speciale, considering that the sacrificial victims were often adorned before the sacrifice, compares *to-ni-jo* with θοίνη giving to the word the sense of 'victim' and suggests the interpretation 'golden necklaces around the victim'<sup>45</sup>. The tablet then records 2 *wa-o* \*232, possibly, according to the ideogram, two double axes. Finally, on line 2, a couple of *qi-si-pe-e* /k<sup>w</sup>sip<sup>h</sup>e(h)e/ \*234 'knives', 'swords' (cf. ξίφος) are recorded<sup>46</sup>. Ta 716 seems to show the emblem of the Pylos sovereign himself, but even if that is not the case, it definitely has to do with objects that demonstrate the power and the magnificence of the "court" of Pylos.

#### *Attempts of interpreting the Ta series*

The content of the tablet Ta 716 has led many scholars to interpret this series in a way that is different from the common one, according to which the items recorded would be the content of a storeroom. The tablet Ta 716 and the introductory phrase of Ta series, Ta 711.1, *o-wi-de, pu<sub>2</sub>-ke-qi-ri, o-te, wa-na-ka, te-ke, au-ke-wa, da-mo-ko-ro*, which is interpreted as 'thus *pu<sub>2</sub>-ke-qi-ri* saw when the sovereign appointed *au-ke-wa* as *da-mo-ko-ro*', are our main clues to interpret the series.

A reason for writing down this series might have been the fact that the *da-mo-ko-ro* was going to become responsible for these items and, prior to that, an inventory was made both of the items and of their condition. It could also have been a list due to the periodical check by this official and, in that case, it might have no relation with these items. M. Ventris thought that it was the content of a luxurious reception room and compared it with the one described in the *Odyssey* (XIX, 53-62)<sup>47</sup>. Later on, J. Chadwick revised that opinion, considering that it had to do with heirlooms, that were in a storeroom and belonged to the *wa-na-ka*<sup>48</sup>. C. Gallavotti thought that the Ta series was relevant to the nomination of an official to his new duty and that the presence of swords and double axes implied that a ritual sacrifice would take place. The scholar proved also that the number of the items recorded is

<sup>44</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 357-358; J. Taillardat, "Notules mycéniennes", *REG* 73 (1960), p. 5-7; S. Hiller, "Beinhaltet die Ta-Serie ein Kultinventar?", *Eirene* 9 (1971), p. 82-83.

<sup>45</sup> M.S. Speciale, "Furniture in Linear B: The evidence for tablets", cit., p. 227-234.

<sup>46</sup> M. Del Frio, "Miceneo *a-pi-to-ni-jo* e la serie Ta di Pilo", *SMEA* 28 (1990), p. 309.

<sup>47</sup> M. Ventris, "Mycenaean furniture on the Pylos tablets", cit., p. 111.

<sup>48</sup> *Docs*<sup>2</sup>, p. 497.

<sup>49</sup> C. Gallavotti, "Note omeriche e micenee III. La sala delle cerimonie nel palazzo di Nestore", *SMEA* 15 (1972), p. 24-32.



regular and based on number "6"<sup>49</sup>. Palmer's proposal that the series referred to the content of a grave provoked several attempts to refute his statement<sup>50</sup>. M. Doria considered that the series was an inventory of domestic devices, probably owned by the *wa-na-ka*<sup>51</sup>. M. Lejeune observed that the presence of damaged objects was not compatible with the content neither of a grave nor of a luxurious reception room and proposed that it was the content of a storeroom<sup>52</sup>. A. Sacconi agrees with the main viewpoint of M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, namely that it is a reception and demonstration room<sup>53</sup>, while S. Hiller believes that we have to do with religious objects and the inventory of the treasure of a temple<sup>54</sup>. M. Del Frio considers that the series records the objects of a reception room<sup>55</sup>. T. Palaima believes that it is an inventory of furniture and tools that might be used for a ritual feast, which, according to J. Davies and J. Bennet must have taken place in the yard of the Southwestern Building, in the main palatial complex. According to T. Palaima the connection of the Ta series with the tablet Un 718 (an inventory of products to be consumed in a feast) strenghtens the opinion above. Moreover, T. Palaima believes that, concerning the furniture recorded, each table was accompanied by two seats, which would explain the proportion 1:2 between the 11 tables and the 22 thrones and footstools<sup>56</sup>. G. Mariotta considers it probable that this tablet, like the Ta series in general, was related to the taxation process and that the objects recorded came from taxes<sup>57</sup>. However, some of the items recorded are damaged (e.g. a tripod had only one leg, *e-me po-de / hemei podei / \*ἐμὲι ποδεί, ἐνὶ ποδί*, while the legs of another were burned). According to this fact, it seems more plausible that these objects came from the *wa-na-ka*'s storeroom or were of religious importance, since usually the objects dedicated to a deity were not removed even if damaged. Despite of the viewpoints above, what seems to be undisputable is that the Ta series records precious items, which, even though some of them are damaged, are valuable heirlooms and of a special use, mainly proving a more demonstrative character of the palatial elite of Pylos. There is no similar series at Knossos, therefore it is once more confirmed that the court of Pylos had greater wealth and luxury.

### *De-mi-ni-ja "beds", "stools", "bedclothes"*

An interesting group of objects, probably furniture or bedclothes, are those

<sup>49</sup> L.R. Palmer, "A Mycenaean tomb inventory", cit., p. 58-92.

<sup>50</sup> M. Doria, *Interpretazioni di testi micenei I. Le tavolette della classe Ta di Pilo*, Trieste 1956, p. 3-29.

<sup>51</sup> M. Lejeune, "Le damos et la société mycénienne", in *Mémoires de philologie mycénienne III*, Roma 1972, p. 135-154.

<sup>52</sup> A. Sacconi, *Problemi omerici alla luce dei ritrovamenti archeologici. Appendice. Un problema di interpretazione omerica: la freccia e le asce nel libro XXI dell' Odissea*, Roma 1971, p. 1-46.

<sup>53</sup> S. Hiller, "Beinhaltet die Ta Serie ein Kultinventar?", cit., p. 69-86.

<sup>54</sup> M. Del Frio, "Miceneo *a-pi-to-ni-jo* e le serie Ta di Pilo", cit., p. 318; T.G. Palaima, "Sacrificial Feasting in the Linear B Tablets", in *The Mycenaean Feast*, J. Wright (ed.), Athens 2004 (= *Hesperia* 73:2), p. 228-243.

<sup>55</sup> T.G. Palaima, "The Pylos Ta Series, From Michael Ventris to the new millennium", *BICS* 44 (2000), p. 236-237.

<sup>56</sup> G. Mariotta, *Struttura politica e fisco nello "stato" miceneo*, Padova 2003, p. 121-126.

which are depicted by the ideogram \*169 and recorded mainly in the Pylos Pa and Pn series as well as on the tablet Vn 851. The same object might be present also on the Mycenae tablet V 659. Its name is alluded to by the acrophonic abbreviation *DE* which precedes the ideogram. Most probably the word abbreviated by *DE* is *de-mi-ni-ja* /*demnia*/ δέμνια (on the sealing Wr 1326 the form *de-mi-ni-jo* is attested), which in the Homeric poems describes light beds quickly assembled for guests or available for other usage.

The ideogram \*169 actually depicts two upright supports or poles attached to each other and rounded at the top. The Pylos Pa series records: *DE* \*169 10[ (Pa 49), *DE* \*169 7 (Pa 53), and \*169 11 (Pa 889 [+] 1002), i.e. at least 28 *de-mi-ni-ja* (there are no figures on Pa 398). The Pn series records: 23+26+13, i.e. a total of 62 \*169. So, the two series together record more than 90 \*169. This quantity seems too big to refer to beds. Moreover, it would be unusual for a bed to be depicted by its narrow side. A. Sacconi, however, considers that \*169 represents a bed<sup>58</sup>. On the contrary, F. Vandenabeele and J.-P. Olivier think that \*169 might represent a stool to seat on and present archaeological comparanda (attic craters and amphoras of the Late Geometric Period), where such stools are depicted<sup>59</sup>.

L.A. Stella considers that on the tablets the word for 'bed' is *re-ke-e-to-ro-te-ri-jo* /lek<sup>h</sup>e(h)eistrōtēriōn/ \*λεχεσ-/λεχεχει-στρωτήριον, \*λεχεστρωτήριον, which is found on PY Fr 1217 and, written as *re-ke-to-ro-te-ri-jo*, on PY Fr 343, although it has been claimed that this was a festival during which beds were laid down (a compound word from the noun λέχος and the verb στόρνυμι, 'spread', 'lay down'). This term, however, is found in tablets of religious context and was probably of religious use only. L.A. Stella considers that *de-mi-ni-ja* were mattresses or bedclothes of the palatial staff<sup>60</sup>. J. Manessy-Guitton and N. Weill, based on Pa 49 and Pn 30, believe that among the several \*169 two different forms should be distinguished, \*169a and \*169b, and claim that they denote a stool<sup>61</sup>.

The Pa series offers us extremely important information about the way of making these products. Thus, on Pa 49 and Pa 53 the preposition *pa-ro* is recorded, followed by a personal name. Most probably, in this case we have the manufacture of \*169 in some district, outside the palace complex, in workshops that received orders from the palace for the manufacture of a given number of *de-mi-ni-ja*. The names following *pa-ro* might be the chiefs or the owners of the workshops who received the orders, maybe in the form of palatial demand. They could also denote the palatial officers or mediators between the palace and the workshops, who were responsible for delivering the defined quantity of \*169 ordered by the palace. The numbers recorded (10+7) are not particularly high, even if \*169 denotes a bed and, *a fortiori*, if it denotes stools or bedclothes. However, there is no indication about the deadlines for fulfilling the order.

On Pa 398 we have another very important indication about the way these objects were made, as the word *qa-si-re-wi-ja* /g<sup>w</sup>asilēwīā/ is mentioned, which may

<sup>58</sup> A. Sacconi, "L' ideogramma \*169 dei testi micenei", *Studii Clasice* 15 (1973), p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> F. Vandenabeele, J.-P. Olivier, *Les idéogrammes archéologiques du linéaire B*, cit., p. 174.

<sup>60</sup> L.A. Stella, *La civiltà micenea*, Roma 1965, p. 114.

<sup>61</sup> J. Manessy-Guitton, N. Weill, "Dormir à Pylos?", *REG* 89 (1976), p. 206-215.

describe the group of artisans that were most probably under the surveillance or the possession of a dignitary with the title of *qa-si-re-u*. The word *a-pi-ka-ra-do-jo* perhaps denotes the name of the responsible and chief of this *qa-si-re-wi-ja*, i.e. the name of the *qa-si-re-u*. On the other hand, the word could also be an indication of the place where this *qa-si-re-wi-ja* was located. The most undisputed indication of the provincial production of these items is the word *pe-ra-ko-ra-i-ja*, that means that this particular *qa-si-re-wi-ja* was in the Further Province of the kingdom of Pylos. Besides, the reference to *qa-si-re-wi-ja* indicates that this product was made in the districts of the kingdom of Pylos, as *qa-si-re-u* /g<sup>w</sup>asileus/ βασιλεύς is considered to be a provincial dignitary. There are scholars who consider that *qa-si-re-u* was a prince, who could rule a restricted area under the supervision of *wa-na-ka*<sup>62</sup>. It seems more likely that *qa-si-re-we* were chief-leaders of regional communities preexisting the palatial system and that they were the link between the local communities and the central administration. After the collapse of the palatial system, the *qa-si-re-we* took advantage of the power vacuum and became the most powerful persons of the political scene, the kings of the archaic period. In any case, the peripheral role of the *qa-si-re-we* is indubitable.

Pa 889 [+] 1002 refers to the manufacture of 11 \*169 in the context of a *qa-si-re-wi-ja*, defined by the name *a-ta-[.]wo-no*.

A very important tablet is Pn 30. In line 1, a palace official, named *a-ko-so-ta*, receives (*o-de-ka-sa-to* /deksato/ δέξατο), most likely at the palace, a great quantity of \*169, probably from provincial workshops. The personal names recorded might also belong to provincial agents of the palace, responsible for the fulfilment of the orders and the delivery of the items to the chief palace official, *a-ko-so-ta*, who was in charge of the receipt at the palace. A very significant clue for the inclusion of the manufacture of \*169 in the system of *ta-ra-si-ja* is the recording of *o*, the abbreviation of *o-pe-ro* /op<sup>h</sup>elos/ ὀφελος 'debt'<sup>63</sup>. In each line, the recorded quantities are followed by the word *o-pe-ro* (the figures 10 and 9 are found in lines 2 and 3, while the figure on line 4 is not preserved). Compared to the quantities delivered, the *o-pe-ro* quantities are large in all three cases. It seems that all the workshops or the persons responsible for the deliveries, did not comply adequately to the palatial demand.

In any case, in the Pa and Pn series, the reference to *o-pe-ro*, the formula *pa-ro* + personal name, the probable function of the *qa-si-re-wi-ja*, the verb *de-ka-sa-to* (which indicates a delivery to the palace), all these details indicate that the manufacture of \*169 was part of the *ta-ra-si-ja* system or, at least, that these items were produced by provincial workshops following palatial "orders".

A.M. Jasink thinks that on Pn 30 it is recorded the delivery of stools to *a-ko-so-ta* by three carpenters, but she alternatively suggests that it could also denote furni-

<sup>62</sup> C.J. Ruijgh, "Fάναξ et ses dérivés dans les textes mycéniens", in *Floreat Studia Mycenaea*, S. Deger-Jalkotzy, S. Hiller, O. Panagl (eds.), Wien 1999, p. 527-529; P. Carlier, "Qa-si-re-u et Qa-si-re-wi-ja", in *Politeia. Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age*, R. Laffineur, W.-D. Niemeier (eds.), Liège-Austin 1995 (= *Aegaeum* 12), p. 355-364.

<sup>63</sup> The system of *ta-ra-si-ja* is the attribution of raw material from the palace to the artisans and the workshops and the demand that they should produce the corresponding quantity of finished products and deliver them to the palace.

ture elaborated in the palatial workshops to be distributed afterwards through *a-ko-so-ta*<sup>64</sup>. It is interesting, however, that the scribe 2, who wrote Pn 30, is the same who wrote the Ta series. Therefore, he might have been specialized in recording furniture and other utensils at the palace of Pylos.

The tablet PY Vn 851.1 records the word *de-mi-ni-ja* followed by two names per line. In most cases, the names are followed by the number 1 and a checkmark. J. Chadwick considers it possible that these persons were female visitors of the palace supplied with the bedclothes necessary to spend the night there<sup>65</sup>. However, it is not certain that they were visitors. They could have been palatial workers occupied outside the palace, to whom bedclothes were distributed. Furthermore, since part of line 1 (before the word *de-mi-ni-ja*) is lost, the information recorded could also refer to the delivery of *de-mi-ni-ja* to the palace by these women. However, if we have to do with the delivery of these products by women, it is more likely for *de-mi-ni-ja* to denote bedclothes than beds, as it is much more difficult for women to manufacture beds. On the other hand, the ideogram itself, which seems to denote a piece of furniture, prevents us from considering these objects as bedclothes. Besides, we should not ignore the linguistic evidence of the word δέμνια and its meaning in the Homeric poems.

There is a tablet from Mycenae, V 659, which is relevant here for its structure and content. In line 1, there is again the word *de-mi-ni-ja* and, before it, the word *wo-di-je-ja*, possibly a female personal name, although this word could also be a descriptive adjective of *de-mi-ni-ja*. In the following lines, there are two female names per line, connected to each other with the enclitic *-qe*. In two cases (lines 5 and 6), only the name of the first member is recorded, while the second one is replaced by *tu-ka-te-qe* /t<sup>h</sup>ugatēr k<sup>w</sup>e/ θυγάτηρ τε 'and her daughter'. This is similar to the lists of female workers dependant on the palace found at Pylos and Knossos. According to M. Ruipérez and J. Melena, *de-mi-ni-ja* are portable beds and the numbers recorded refer to women sharing the same bed<sup>66</sup>.

An alternative hypothesis is that the *de-mi-ni-ja* is descriptive of a special category of women. This viewpoint in my opinion is not convincing<sup>67</sup>. In any case, it is important that *de-mi-ni-ja* are not recorded in the Knossos tablets. In contrast, the palace of Pylos seems to be particularly interested in their manufacture, which is integrated within the context of ordering-demanding to the workshops. The Pa and Pn series are related to their production, while Vn 851 probably records their use. At Mycenae there are no tablets referring to their production, but V 659 probably attests their use, which, as at Pylos, is connected with female workers.

### *Records of precious raw materials and artisans working with them*

Precious materials are often recorded, proving the palaces' tendency for display of wealth as well as their commercial contacts.

<sup>64</sup> A.M. Jasink, "Funzionari e lavoratori nel Palazzo di Pilo", *Minos* 25-26 (1990-1991), p. 212.

<sup>65</sup> J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 30.

<sup>66</sup> M. Ruipérez, J. Melena, *Los Griegos Micénicos*, Madrid, cit., p. 265-266.

<sup>67</sup> *DMic.* I, p. 166.

Gold is recorded at Knossos and Pylos in relation with vases and decorated furniture (e.g. on KN K 872.3a, PY Ta 707.1, Ta 714.1.2, and Ta 716, while the ideogram for 'gold' is found e.g. on Tn 316 and Tn 996) implying the luxury of the courts. Indicative of the specialization in manipulating gold is the reference, on PY An 207, of four *ku-ru-so-wo-ko* /k<sup>h</sup>rusoworgoi/ χρυσοφογγοί, professionals who worked, perhaps exclusively, this precious metal<sup>68</sup>. The fact that this profession is attested at Pylos shows, once more, that the elite of this palace had a more demonstrative tendency than the others.

Silver is also attested at Knossos and Pylos, in a context where the making of chariots wheels is recorded (e.g. Sa 287 *a-ku-ro* /arguros/ ἄργυρος), a fact that makes it difficult to interpret the word *pa-ra-ku* \*παραργός as silver. L. Palmer considers that, according to Ta 714.1, the term *pa-ra-ku* denotes the 'tin', since it is recorded together with *ku-wa-no* and *ku-ru-so*, like in the *Iliad* (XI, 24-25)<sup>69</sup>. D. Gray thinks that this could be the word for amber, which is often found in the archaeological excavations, but the corresponding term has not been recognized in the tablets<sup>70</sup> (as the word once transliterated as *re-di-na-to-mo*, \*ρετσινατόμος, is now read as *i-qo-na-to-mo*)<sup>71</sup>. Moreover, *pa-ra-ku* can be also interpreted as 'emerald' or 'precious stone' (σφραγύς -ῥδος, cf. σφραγίς)<sup>72</sup>. In any case, the term *pa-ra-ku-we* (the nominative \**pa-ra-ku* is not yet attested) is recorded only at Pylos as a decorative element of furniture (Ta 642.1, Ta 714. 1, 715.3). It now seems probable that the Pylos tablet Tn 316 contains also the logogram for 'silver'<sup>73</sup>.

At Knossos, the tablet Og 1527 contains the word *mo-ri-wo-do* /moliwodos/ \*μολιφοδος or \*μολιφδος, cf. Hom. μολιβος, possibly denoting the 'lead'. This interpretation is strengthened by the small quantities recorded after this term (M 1[ ], M 3, M 3). Consequently, it is a material weighed in small quantities. At Pylos it is only found as a personal name<sup>74</sup>.

On PY Ta 642.1 and Ta 714.1.3 *ku-wa-no* is recorded, while on Ta 714.3 the adjective *ku-wa-ni-jo* is also recorded. Five tablets at Mycenae (Oi 701-705) record the word *ku-wa-no-wo-ko* /kuwanoworgois/ \*κυFanoFopγοίς (dat. pl.) 'to the *ku-wa-no* artisans'. These tablets are brief lists of personal and professional names. To these artisans, quantities of a product represented by the ideogram \*190 are attributed. It is important that *ku-wa-no*, lapis-lazuli, is found at Pylos and artisans of lapis-lazuli are recorded at Mycenae, but there is no similar evidence from Knos-

<sup>68</sup> J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 147.

<sup>69</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 351.

<sup>70</sup> D.H.F. Gray, "Linear B and archeology", *BICS* 6 (1959), p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> H. Hughes-Brock, "Amber and some other travelers in the Bronze Age Aegean and Europe", in *Autochthon. Papers presented to O.T.P.K. Dickinson on the occasion of his retirement*, A. Dakouri-Hild and S. Sherratt (eds.), Oxford 2005 (= BAR-IS 1432), p. 306.

<sup>72</sup> F. Householder, *CJ* 52 (1957), p. 380; M. Ventris, "Mycenaean furniture on the Pylos tablets", cit., p. 117; M.D. Petruševski, "Parakuwe, Parakewe", cit., p. 202.

<sup>73</sup> L. Godart, "I due scribi della tavoletta Tn 316", *Pasiphae* 3 (2009), p. 106-113.

<sup>74</sup> H.G. Buchholz, "Blei in Mykenischen kultur", *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 87 (1972), p. 18; P. Chantraine, "Le témoignage du mycénien pour l'étymologie grecque", *Minos* 12 (1971), p. 205.

sos. Hence, regarding *ku-wa-no*, it is once more implied a more demonstrative character of the palatial court of Pylos. As far as Mycenae is concerned, the great professional specialization and the presence of lapis-lazuli experts are impressive, indicating that the palatial elite of Mycenae had this material used for decorating their objects. Moreover, since there are references to more than one lapis-lazuli artisan, it is obvious that that material was widely used in the palatial court as well as in the palatial workshops for the decoration of items to be exported. At Thebes, this material may not be recorded in the tablets, but cylinders or lapis-lazuli have been found, and this discovery makes it difficult to accept the assumption that the *ku-wa-no-wo-ko* were making vitreous imitation of lapis-lazuli<sup>75</sup>. R. Halleux considers that *ku-wa-no* was a kind of glass, rejecting the interpretation of lapis-lazuli, supporting that *ku-wa-no-wo-ko* of the Oi tablets meant the glass-craftsmen or the niello-craftsmen<sup>76</sup>. According to G. Nightingale, the term *ku-wa-no* could denote glass, as in the Mycenaean times glass was dark-blue and not transparent and colorless as is today. The scholar emphasizes that archaeological findings confirm that glass was used together with gold and silver<sup>77</sup>.

The most frequently recorded material is undoubtedly ivory. Ivory was an imported product and confirms the contacts with Syria and Egypt. Ivory working was a pure palatial art. Its wide use is archaeologically attested in palatial buildings and tombs. Extensive use of ivory as an inlay material and generally a decorative material of furniture (e.g. Ta 642.2 *e-re-pa-te a-ja-me-na*, Ta 642.3 *e-re-pa-te-jo*, Ta 707.2 *e-re-pa-te-ja-pi*, etc.) is testified mainly by the Ta series of Pylos. Such frequent presence of ivory is one more proof of the magnificence of the Pylos' court. Ivory is also recorded in other tablets from Pylos. A typical one is Va 482, where the word *e-re-pa* /elep<sup>h</sup>ans/ ἑλέφας is found. This word, which in Homer means 'ivory', later on designates the 'elephant'. It is important that in this tablet ZE(ύγη) 'pairs' of *e-re-pa* are recorded, most probably ivory in its primary form, i.e. in pairs of tusks. The word *e-re-pa* is followed by the word *a-no-po*, which is interpreted by M. Lejeune, as well as by P. Chantraine and A. Dessenne as ἄνωπον 'raw'<sup>78</sup>, while A. Sacconi believes that it refers to a personal name (found as such on PY Cn 131.6) like the following *a-ko-so-ta*<sup>79</sup>. *A-ko-so-ta* is one of the more important persons of the Pylos administrative system and is represented in many texts taking or giving something on behalf of the palace (e.g. on Pn 30.1, Un 267.1 and Wa 917). Thus, on Va 482 we have an ivory transaction, where *a-ko-so-ta* seems to have received the ivory from *a-no-po*, or viceversa, since there is no verb. Subsequently, there are two different types of ivory, the one defined as *qe-qi-no-me-no e-wi-su-\**79-ko and the one described as *ro-i-ko*. The distinction, according to A. Sacconi, is between four carved

<sup>75</sup> M. Ruipérez, J. Melena, *Los Griegos Micénicos*, cit., p. 167.

<sup>76</sup> R. Halleux, "Lapis-lazuli, azurite du p  te de verre? A propos de *ku-wa-no* et *ku-wa-no-wo-ko*", cit., p. 65-66.

<sup>77</sup> G. Nightingale, "Glass and the Mycenaean Palaces of the Aegean", in *The Prehistory & History of Glassmaking Technology*, P. McCray (ed.), Westerville (Ohio) 1998, p. 213-215.

<sup>78</sup> M. Lejeune, *M  moires de philologie myc  nienne I*, Paris 1955-1957, p. 213 n. 32 ; P. Chantraine, A. Dessenne, "Sur quelques termes myc  niens relatifs au travail de l'ivoire", *REG* 70 (1957), p. 202.

<sup>79</sup> A. Sacconi, "L'avorio nella tabella di Pilo Va 482", *Minos* 13 (1972), p. 175.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

tusks and two convex ones<sup>80</sup>. P. Chantraine considers that the expression *qe-qi-no-me-no e-wi-su-\**79-ko denotes tusks cut into slices<sup>81</sup>. The purpose of the tusks recorded on Va 482 is their possible use for manufacturing legs of tables made of solid ivory. From an archaeological viewpoint, similar findings have been discovered at Thebes and Cyprus<sup>82</sup>. Also the tablet Va 404 contains the word *e-wi-su-\**79-ko and might contain a record of ivory.

At Knossos, the use of ivory as a material for the decoration of chariots is testified. Thus, e.g. on Sd 4401, 4403 and 4408, where plates of ivory are used to decorate the frame and the front parts of a chariot<sup>83</sup>. Ivory is also attested at Knossos in connection with the fabrication of swords (Ra series: *e-re-pa-te de-de-me-na*)<sup>84</sup>.

A.M. Biraschi's assumption, according to which the professional name *pi-ri-je-te* / *pi-ri-je-te-re*, found both at Pylos and at Knossos<sup>85</sup>, denotes the artisans who were specialized in carving ivory, is interesting. Their professional name is related to the verb *πρίω* and it is important that in the Homeric poems the adjectives *πριστός* and *νεόπριστος* (*Od.* VIII, 404; XVIII, 196; XIX, 564) are always connected with ivory<sup>86</sup>. If this theory is valid, then it would be another proof of the existence of specialized craftsmen, occupied by the palace to satisfy its needs for luxurious equipment or even for the manufacture of products to be exported. The presence of ivory at Knossos implies its contacts with the Near East, while the absence of *ku-wa-no* and *pa-ra-ku* could indicate the difficulty of Knossos to get in touch with the West.

### References to wood and construction materials

In this paragraph the references to the wood and construction materials are presented. As far as wood is concerned, the most significant information comes from Pylos and is found in particular in the Va and Vn series.

The tablet Vn 10 is of extreme importance, mainly because of the content of line 1 *o-di-do-si du-ru-to-mo*, a phrase recording the delivery of carpenters' stuff by *δρυτόμοι* 'woodcutters'. These men deliver *a-ko-so-ne* 'axles' and *e-pi-[-]ta*, maybe *e-pi-pu-ta* / *epip<sup>h</sup>uta* / *\*ἐπίφυτα*, possibly "stems". This material was delivered to a wheelwright's workshop (*a-mo-te-jo-na-de*). L. Palmer thinks that *a-ko-so-ne* were axes of wheels and that also the *e-pi-pu-ta* should be parts of chariots, since their number is the same as the axes<sup>87</sup>. The word *to-sa* for 'total' indicates that the "provincial" community of *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro* / *Lousios agros* / *Λούσιος ἄγρος* contributed with 100

<sup>81</sup> P. Chantraine, A. Dessenne, "Sur quelques termes mycéniens relatifs au travail de l'ivoire", cit., p. 309-310.

<sup>82</sup> A. Sacconi, "L'avorio nella tabella di Pilo Va 482", cit., p. 180-181.

<sup>83</sup> J.M. Blazquez, "Ivoires minoens et mycéniens", *Minos* 12 (1971), p. 399.

<sup>84</sup> A. Bernabé, "Some Thoughts on the Knossos Ra Series", in *Colloquium Romanum*, A. Sacconi et al. (ed.), Pisa-Roma 2008, p. 111-120.

<sup>85</sup> KN Ra 1547, 1548, 1549, *pi-ri-te* on Ra 1543; PY An 207, *pi-ri-e-te-re* on Fn 1427 and *pi-ri-e-te-si* on An 7.

<sup>86</sup> A.M. Biraschi, "Miceneo pirijete, intagliatore d'avorio", *PP* 33 (1978), p. 281-285.

<sup>87</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 368.

axles and 100 *e-pi-pu-ta*. This fact means that the palace had demanded or ordered from a community a specific amount of stuff, probably for making chariots. The fact that the contribution of the woodcutters is recorded separately from that of the *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro* community and that no place name is recorded, means perhaps that the woodcutters depended directly on the palace. But it cannot be excluded that they were the *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro* woodcutters, and that of the 100 axles and 100 *e-pi-pu-ta* contributed, 50 were delivered to a wheelwright's workshop. The reading *e-pi-\*19-ta* of the word *e-pi-[-]-ta* has led to new attempts of interpretation. A recently published article proposes that this word is an alternative spelling for *e-pi-zo-ta* (< *\*epi-tuō-ta*), a word with the probable meaning of 'protection items' or 'scabbards'<sup>88</sup>. In any case, this is further evidence that the palace required the professional groups and the local communities to produce items on its behalf.

The tablet Vn 46 is also very important, as it contains a list of timber or construction materials in general<sup>89</sup>. The main terms recorded on this tablet are: *pi-ri-ja-o* /p<sup>h</sup>liā(h)ōn/ gen. pl. of φλιά, maybe 'doorposts' (line 7); *pu-to-ro* /p<sup>h</sup>utroi/ φυτροί, φυτροί (?) 'trunks' (lines 9-10), maybe a different kind of beams; *e-ru-mi-ni-ja* /elumniai/ (lines 3 and 12), cf. Hsch. ἐλύμνια· δοκοὶ ὀροφῆναι; *e-pi-\*65-ko*, maybe *e-pi-ju-ko* (line 11) 'main beam' (cf. Hsch. ἐπιτύγιον· μέρος τῆς νεῶς 'part of a ship': this gloss has led someone to conclude that the material recorded was intended for ship construction); *e-to-ki-ja* /entoik<sup>h</sup>ia/ ἐντοίχια, maybe 'beams for walls', but this interpretation is made difficult by the fact that these pieces are recorded in large numbers (Vn 46.6, 879.3); *j-ke-te-re*, perhaps *pa-ke-te-re* /paktēres/ πακτῆρες (Vn 46.6, 879.4; Wr 1415), probably 'wooden nails' from the root of πήγνυμι; *o-pi-te-te-re* /opit<sup>h</sup>etēres/ \*ὀπιθετήρες, possibly fine pieces of cloth or decorative pictures (Vn 46.3); *ki-wo* /kiwōn/ cf. κίων 'column' (Vn 46.12; acc. on Vn 48.4 *ki-wi-na-de*); *ta-to-mo* /stat<sup>h</sup>moi/ σταθμοί (Vn 46.11), probably 'wooden stakes'<sup>90</sup>.

The word *ka-pi-ni-ja* (Vn 46.2-4) is probably the genitive /kapniās/ and can be compared to the word κάπνη 'chimney'; the word *ta-ra-nu-we* (Vn 46.7), as already mentioned, is θρήνυες, but in this case it probably corresponds to θράνος 'transversal beam'; the word *a-ti-ja* (Vn 46.2) is maybe the neutr. pl. *lantia*/ ἀντία 'transversal beams', from the adjective ἀντίος; the *o-pi-ra<sub>3</sub>-te-re* (Vn 46.5) are interpreted by M. Ventris and J. Chadwick as /opir(r)aistēres/ \*ὀπιρ(ρ)αιστήρες, a sort of devices preventing the beams from damage<sup>91</sup>; the \*35-*ki-no-o* (Vn 46.5.10), due to the large numbers recorded, must have been small pieces of wood, while the term *qe-re-ti-ri-jo* (Vn 46.8) is interpreted by L. Palmer as the dual /g<sup>w</sup>eletriō/ or /g<sup>w</sup>letriō/ βελετρίω or βλητρίω 'band', 'hoop', and by J. Chadwick as /k<sup>w</sup>(e)let<sup>h</sup>riō/ 'wooden threshold'<sup>92</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> M. Civitillo, "Il sillabogramma \*19, status questionis e proposte di lettura", in *Colloquium Romanum*, A. Sacconi et al. (eds.), Pisa-Roma 2008, p. 145-146.

<sup>89</sup> F. Hocker, T.G. Palaima, "Late Bronze Age Aegean Ships and the Pylos Tablets Vn 46 and Vn 879", *Minos* 25-26 (1990-91) [1994], p. 300-312; T.G. Palaima, "Maritime Matters in the Linear B Tablets", in *Thalassa*, R. Laffineur, L. Basch (eds.), Liège 1991, p. 292-306.

<sup>90</sup> C. Milani, "La lavorazione del legno nei testi micenei", *Contributi dell'Istituto di Storia Antica* 1 (1972), p. 5-7.

<sup>91</sup> *Docs<sup>2</sup>*, p. 503-504.

<sup>92</sup> L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 366-367; J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976, p. 139.



One of the major problems with this tablet, which presents some similarities with Vn 879, is its purpose. M. Ventris, J. Chadwick and L. Palmer believe that it is a list of construction materials<sup>93</sup>. It could be a list of the content of a storeroom (e.g. of the palatial timber storeroom) or even a list of what was left in the store-room after the construction of a building. It could also be a list of the materials necessary for a specific construction or repairing. The materials recorded are enough to construct a room or an arcade, but not a whole house, unless the tablet belongs to a series of lost tablets, related to the construction of a whole building. L. Baumbach considers that this is a list of construction materials necessary for repairs<sup>94</sup>. H. Van Effenterre, who thinks that this is a list of materials for ship construction, interprets *ka-pi-ni-ja* as derivative of σκάφος 'vessel', *ta-ra-nu-we* as θρηῖνες 'bench of rowers', etc. He believes that Vn 46 records the wood necessary for constructing a keel for a ship equipped with 30 oars<sup>95</sup>.

Terms related to timber are also attested on Vn 48. Thus, for example, the word *tu-ra-te-u-si* /t<sup>h</sup>urāteusi/ of line 5 can be related to θύρα 'door' (term found also on PY Ae 872, *tu-ra-te-u*, KN B 755, *tu-ra-te-we*, and PY Gn 428.3, *tu-ra-te-u-si*)<sup>96</sup>, while in line 4 the accusative of *ki-wo* κίων (*ki-wo-na-de*) 'column' is recorded.

A very important tablet is Vn 865, where in line 1 the word *na-u-do-mo* /naudo-moi/ \*ναυδόμοι is recorded, probably 'shipbuilders'. In the subsequent lines a number of personal names are recorded, each followed by the figure 1. This tablet possibly records a palatial order to naval architects, each of them was required to build a ship, obviously with the competence of the chief naval constructors. The tablet, however, could also record the delivery of such ships to the palace.

Vn 879 records timber in the form of *e-to-ki-ja*, *pa-ke-te-re*, *a-ti-[ ]* (three terms recorded also on Vn 46) and *ko-ni-ti-ja-ja*. According to the structure of the tablet, the word *qa-ra-de-ro* seems to characterize *e-to-ki-ja* and *pa-ke-te-re*, while *pe-\**65-*ka* describes *ko-ni-ti-ja-ja* and *a-ti-[ ]*. Perhaps, *qa-ra-de-ro* and *pe-\**65-*ka* were two different types of wood (*pe-\**65-*ka* can be related to πεύκη 'pine')<sup>97</sup>.

### Types of wood

Both at Pylos and Knossos there are several terms connected with wood. Thus, on KN Gv 864.3 *pu-ta* is perhaps /p<sup>h</sup>uta/ φυτά 'plants', while *pu-te* /p<sup>h</sup>utēr/ φυτήρ (KN As 1516.4), *pu<sub>2</sub>-te-re* /p<sup>h</sup>utēres/ φυτήρες (PY Na 520.2) 'planters' were in charge of plant cultivations. In addition, the following kinds of wood are recorded: *pte-re-wa* /ptelewās/ πετέλης (gen.) 'of elm-tree' (e.g. KN Se 879, 891, 892, 893, etc.), used for chariots and wheels; *e-ri-ka* /helikās/ ἑλικίης (gen.) 'of willow' (So series), used for wheels; *mi-ra<sub>2</sub>* (Ta 715.3), maybe σμίλος, σμίλαξ 'smilax'; *ku-te-so* /kutesos/ κύτισος, probably "pseudo-ebony", used for tables, thrones and stools (e.g. Ta 707.1.2.3,

<sup>93</sup> Docs<sup>2</sup>, p. 503-504; L.R. Palmer, *Interpretation*, cit., p. 366-367.

<sup>94</sup> L. Baumbach, "Further Thoughts on PY Vn 46", *Minos* 12 (1971), p. 396-397.

<sup>95</sup> H. Van Effenterre, "Un navire mycénien?", *REG* 79 (1966), p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> C. Milani, "La lavorazione del legno nei testi micenei", cit., p. 34.

<sup>97</sup> L. Baumbach, "Further Thoughts on PY Vn 46", cit., p. 383-385.

708.1.2.3, etc.); *ku-pa-ri-se-ja* /kupa-ris-sej(j)a/ 'of cypress', adjective describing wheels (PY Sa 488); *pu-ko-so* /puksos/ πύξος 'box-tree' (Ta 715); and *po-ni-ki-ja* /phoinikiā/ 'of palm-tree'<sup>98</sup>.

### *Professional terms related to wood*

There are several terms denoting professions related to wood: *du-ru-to-mo* /drutomoi/ δρυτόμοι 'woodcutters' (PY Vn 10.1), *u-re-u* /uleus/ ὑλεύς 'lumberjack' (PY Vn 865.9), although it is probably a personal and not a professional name, *te-ko-to-ne* /tektones/ τέκτονες 'carpenters', a term attested both at Pylos and at Knossos. It is important that specialized artisans for the construction of thrones are recorded at Knossos (KN As (2) 1517.11). Other artisans specialised in woodworking were perhaps the *ko-wi-ro-wo-ko* /kowiloworgoi/ \*κοFυλοFοργοί, probably those who prepared the wood for inlay (KN B(4) 101.1), the *a<sub>3</sub>-te-re* (KN B 101), probably /aitēres/ αἰτήρες, a sort of wood craftsmen, the *ki-jo-ne-u-si* (PY Gn 428.5), perhaps 'column makers', as well as many artisans who produced arms, like the *to-ko-so-wo-ko* /toksoworgoi/ \*τοξοFοργοί, most probably 'bow makers' (PY An 207.18), etc.<sup>99</sup>. From the Near East there are similar examples of such professions, e.g. at Ugarit, where woodcutters *bnš mlk* are recorded, possibly dependent on the palatial court (KTU 4.609), along with carpenters *bnš mlk*, whose profession seems to have had an hereditary character (CTA 85,I), and potters *bnš mlk* (CTA 74,11, KTU 4.99)<sup>100</sup>.

### *Conclusion*

A clear and general conclusion that can be drawn from what precedes is that Pylos offers more evidence about wood and constructions made of wood than the other palaces. Important is the pedantry with which the palatial administration of Pylos records numbers of beams and wooden materials for constructions in general.

There are no similar tablets at Knossos, but this does not mean that the palace there did not need wooden items, since references to woodworkers are attested in both palaces. At Pylos, however, there is a larger variety of furniture and timber recorded.

After examining the Ta series, we realized an exceptional luxury and a plenitude of precious items at Pylos, something which is without parallels at Knossos.

The recording of wealth in the Ta tablets is probably not to be connected to the threat of the invasion that the Pylos kingdom was facing, because, in that case, the scribe would not have been interested in describing in such a detail the decorative motifs of the objects recorded.

<sup>98</sup> C. Milani, "La lavorazione del legno nei testi micenei", cit., p. 7-14.

<sup>99</sup> C. Milani, "La lavorazione del legno nei testi micenei", cit., p. 35-37.

<sup>100</sup> J. Heltzer, "Royal economy in Ancient Ugarit", in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 23 (1988), p. 482-494.

The Ta series, as well as the other data about furniture, precious items and precious materials in general, probably confirm the special need for display that the Pylos court had, compared with the small number or even the complete lack of such evidence from other Mycenaean kingdoms.

Probably, the palatial elite of Pylos felt more pressure by members of the society to take part in the government. In general, at Pylos the palatial administration was more concentrated in comparison with the other palatial centers of the Mycenaean world and probably with a bigger need of luxury demonstration caused by these socio-political circumstances.

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#### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with furniture and other wooden objects recorded in the Linear B tablets as well as with the craftsmen specialized in their production. The social implications of these craft activities at Pylos are also discussed.*