The deciphering of the Linear A tablet Malia 10

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Abstract

The Linear A tablet Malia 10 has inscriptions on four sides of six. Sides A and B have relatively well-preserved inscriptions containing syllabograms, logograms depicting different vessels, and numerals. Previously it was shown that Minoan and Hattic are rather close, so phrases from the tablet can be decoded through Hattic. The component tew from the phrase dupitewa from side B correlates with Hattic tepušne/tewušne “libation”. The -a ending correlates with Hattic imperative -a. The component -u- in the syllable du correlates with Hattic marker of 2sgsb- u- / un-. The syllable pi correlates with Hattic marker of plural object -p-. The phrase ru from the side A correlates with Hattic verb lu “to be able”.

Keywords: Linear A; Minoan language; Hattic language

1. Introduction

At the site of Malia (fig. 1) were found several tablets with texts of so-called linear A. One of them is a tablet marked as Malia 10. The tablet is a clay parallelepiped; its sizes are the following: 8.5 cm * 2.5 * cm * 2.8 cm; and it is attributed to MMIIIB period1 (see MA10a). The table has inscriptions on four sides of six. A part of the tablet was broken/missed (see fig. 2).

Fig. 1. Location of Malia in the island of Crete (map drawn by the author)

1 MMIIIB or the Early Neopalatial period lasted from 1750 to 1700 BCE.
Fig. 2. Photos of the tablets (image source – Godart L., Olivier J.-P. 1985: 50)
2. The structure of the inscription

In the inscriptions of the tablet can be seen signs depicting different vessels (fig. 3 – fig. 6).

Fig. 3. Side A of the tablet (image source – MA10a)

Fig. 4. Side B of the tablet (image source – MA10b)

Fig. 5. Side C of the tablet (image source – MA10c)
It seems that the text on sides A and B has been preserved almost completely, while on sides C and D significant parts have been lost.

It is possible to say that signs depicting different vessels are logograms/determinatives, and so the text is about different vessels probably with different liquids. The inscription contains syllabograms, logograms/determinatives, and signs of numbers. Logograms are usually followed by numeral signs, and it is interesting that inside or near each logogram can be seen syllabograms that probably are abbreviations specifying the type of vessel or the type of liquid. (It is interesting to note that the key point that helped the deciphering of Linear B also was a tablet where were described different vessels, the famous Pylos 641 tablet.)

It seems perfectly logical to read the inscription from left to right: first comes a certain phrase, then come logograms followed by the corresponding numbers; the same structure is demonstrated by the texts of Linear B, for instance by the famous Pylos 641 tablet (see: Chadwick 2014: 81 – 100).

2.1. Side A

Side A of the tablet (fig. 3) has the following structure (from left to right): syllabogram ru (fig. 3, sign 1, fig. 7, also see MA10a).

Fig. 7. Syllabogram ru, left is the sign from the tablet, right is sign from the list of Linear A signs (see Linear A Signary)
Then there is a dot that can be a sign or can be a defect of the tablet (fig. 3, sign 2), then a logogram (fig. 3, sign 3) depicting a vessel with a handle, wide rim, and probably with a spout, inside the logogram can be seen a syllabogram, supposedly su (see fig. 8), the logogram is followed by the number 2 (two strokes, fig. 3, sign 4), then comes another logogram (fig. 3, sign 5) depicting a vessel with one handle with tapering and expanding neck and with a spout, inside this logogram can be seen a syllabogram, supposedly ti (see fig. 9, however, this point is pretty doubtful yet, then comes the numeral 4 (four strokes, fig. 3, sign 6), then comes the same logogram (fig. 3, sign 7) depicting the same vessel as the previous, but with another syllabogram inside that looks like lowercase letter f (now it isn’t possible to identify this sign), and then comes the sign of number 2 (two strokes, fig. 3, sign 8), but this sign also can be the sign of 4 that simply lost its part.

Fig. 8. Syllabogram su, left is the sign from the tablet, right is sign from the list of Linear A signs (see Linear A Signary)

Fig. 9. Left is the sign from inside of the sign 5 of side a, right is syllabogram ti (image sources – MA10a, Linear A Signary)

2.2. Side B

The text of side B (fig. 4) begins with syllabogram du (fig. 4, sign 1, see MA10b, and fig. 10)

Fig. 10. Variants of syllabogram du from different tablets (image source – MA10b)
The second sign of the side B is syllabogram \( \pi \) (fig. 4, sign 2, see MA10b, and fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Variants of syllabogram \( \pi \) (image source – MA10b)

The third sign of the side B is syllabogram \( \tau e \) (fig. 4, sign 3, see MA10b, and fig. 12).

Fig. 12. Variants of syllabogram \( \tau e \) (image source – MA10b)

The fourth sign of side B is syllabogram \( w\alpha \) (fig. 4, sign 4, see MA10b, and fig. 13).

Fig. 13. Variants of syllabogram \( w\alpha \) (image source – MA10b)

The fifth sign of the side B is a logogram depicting a vessel with two handles and a wide rim (fig. 4, sign 5), inside the logogram can be seen another sign, supposedly a syllabogram, this sign looks much like syllabogram \( z\varepsilon \) (see fig. 14), however, this point is pretty doubtful yet and evidently requires further researches.
As it has been already noted above syllabograms that are inside or near a certain logogram probably are abbreviations specifying the type of a vessel or the liquid that is inside.

The sixth sign, a vertical stroke (fig. 4, sign 6) is the number 1.

The seventh sign is a logogram depicting a vessel with one handle with tapering and expanding neck and with a spout, inside this logogram can be seen a syllabogram supposedly ti (see fig. 9), the same as in the sign 5 of side A (fig. 3, sign 5).

The eighth sign of side B, three vertical strokes (fig. 4, sign 8) is the number 3.

The ninth sign of side B (fig. 4, sign 9) is just a small fragment of a sign, supposedly a logogram depicting a vessel.

The tenth sign of side B is four vertical strokes (fig. 4, sign 10), it is possible to say that this sign is number 4.

The eleventh sign of side B is a logogram depicting a vessel with a handle, wide rim, and a spout (fig. 4, sign 11). This sign is the same as sign 3, fig. 3. Inside the logogram can be seen syllabogram a (fig. 4, sign 11, fig 15).
The twelfth sign of side B, two vertical strokes (fig. 4, sign 12), is number 2.

The thirteenth sign of side B is a syllabogram (fig. 4, sign 13), this syllabogram is connected with the logogram that comes next (fig. 4, sign 14). This syllabogram looks like syllabogram pu (see fig. 16).

![Fig. 16. Left is syllabogram located near sign 14 fig. 4 (image source – MA10b), right is syllabogram pu (image source – Linear A Signary)](image)

The fourteenth sign of the side b is a logogram depicting a vessel with one handle with tapering and expanding neck and with a spout (fig 4, sign 14). This sign is the same as the seventh sign of side B, and the same as the fifth and seventh signs of side A.

The fifteenth sign of the side b, two vertical strokes (sign 15, fig. 4), is the number 2.

### 2.3. Side C

Much of the text of side C was lost.

The first sign of side C (fig. 4, sign 1) looks like the remains of a number.

The second sign of side C (fig. 5, sign 2) is a logogram depicting a vessel with one handle with tapering and expanding neck and with a spout, inside this logogram can be seen a syllabogram, supposedly ti (fig. 9). The same logogram with the same syllabogram inside is the above-considered sign 5 from side A (fig. 3) and sign 7 from side B (fig. 4).

The third sign of side C, two vertical strokes (fig. 5, sign 3) is the number 2; this sign is the same as sign 4 of side A (fig. 3).

The fourth sign of side C (fig. 5, sign 4) is a logogram depicting a vessel with one handle with tapering and expanding neck and with a spout, inside this logogram can be seen a sign like lowercase letter f that supposedly is a syllbogram, but now it isn’t possible to identify it. The same sign is sign 7 of side B.

The fifth sign of side C, three vertical strokes (fig. 5, sign 5) is the number 3.
The sixth sign (fig. 5, sign 6) is a small fragment of a logogram that also probably depicts a vessel.

2.4. Side D

Most of the text of the side D was lost, there are only two logograms.

One of them was seriously fragmented (fig. 6, sign 1), so it’s impossible to conclude something about the shape of the vessel, but we can see that the logogram ‘wears’ a sign that looks like lowercase letter f inside (the same sign can be seen inside sign 4 of side C, see fig. 5, and inside sign seven of side A, see fig. 3).

Sign 2 of the side D is a logogram that depicts a vessel with a body that is wider than the bottom and the top, with a wide rim, a handle, and a spout (fig. 6, sign 2). Inside the logogram there is a sign that isn’t possible to be interpreted now.

3. Interpretation

It is possible to try to decode the text of the A and B sides. I suppose that side B is the main side, i.e.: the text of the tablet begins on side B.

The structure of the Hattic verb is the key that can decode verbs from the Keftiw/Minoan incantation against the samuna ubuqi disease from the London Medical Papyrus (Akulov 2017b).

The fact that the Hattic verb can be immediately applied to Keftiw/Minoan verbs means that Hattic and Keftiw/Minoan are very close, i.e.: belong to the same group.

Upon the side B of the tablet there is the following phrase: dupitewa with the following syllable structure: du-pi-te-wa (see 2.2). I suppose that morpheme borders can be inside syllables.

As has been already mentioned above the whole text of the tablet is about different vessels and probably different liquids. And so the phrase dupitewa also most probably is about vessels/liquids.

In this dupitewa can be singled out the component tew that correlates with the root of such Hattic words as tepušne/tewušne “offering”, “libation” (Soysal 2004: 314) and *tefu “to pour” (Kassian 2010: 364) – both have tepu/tewu/tefu as root. And thus, it is possible to suppose that the component tew means something about “libation” or “pour”, and also it is possible to suppose that this tew is the root in the dupitewa word-form.

Then, it is possible to say that the ending of the word-form, namely -a correlates with the Hattic marker of imperative -a that is suffixed to the root (Kassian 2010b: 180).

The component -u- in the syllable du correlates with the Hattic marker of subject/agent of 2nd person singular – u- / un- that is prefixed to the root (Kassian 2010b: 179).
The syllable pi correlates well with Hattic prefix -p- that is a marker of the plural object (Kassian 2010b: 179).

The component d of the syllable du can probably be a marker of a version (direction of action). The category of version/directional is well developed in Hattic (Kassian 2010b: 180), and also the category of version is represented in Northwest Caucasian (Matsovic 2010) and Yeniseian languages (Werner 1997: 183). This component d of syllable du correlates well with Ket markers of the subject version of 1st person: di-/d-/t- (Werner 1997: 183) that are placed in the terminal left position. Of course, Yeniseian and Hattic are very distant relatives, however, the subject version markers of 1st person existing in Ket are actually the closest analogy of component d of syllable du. This explanation of d also correlates well with the fact that the text of the whole tablet is about vessels/liquids and the phrase dupitewa is a request/demand.

And, thus, the phrase dupitewa most probably has the following structure:

\[ d-u-pi-tew-a \]

a marker of centripetal or subject version-2sgsb-3(?)obpl-POUR/BRING-marker of imperative.

On side A of the tablet there is a phrase containing the only syllable: ru (see 2.1). This ru correlates with Hattic verb lu “to be able” “can” (Soysal 2004: 293).

It seems that Hattic /l/ correlates with Minoan /r/ (Akulov 2017a: 17).

It is possible to interpret this short phrase as an abbreviation of the following: “if it will be possible bring also the following items...” or “optionally bring also the following items...” or “it would be nice to bring also...”

References


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2 Hattic is now classified as a language that belongs to the Sino-Caucasian macrofamily (Kassian 2010a). According to my conclusion, Hattic is a member of Ainu-Minoan macrofamily/stock (Akulov 2018); Ainu-Minoan stock consists of the following languages/language families: Ainu, Sino-Tibetan, Great Andamanese, Northwest Caucasian, and Hattic. Also Yeniseian and Northeast Caucasian languages belong to the stock (Akulov 2019, 2021), and inside the stock Hattic is pretty close to Northwest Caucasian and Yeniseian.


Linear A Signary https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linear_A#Signary – accessed September 2021


