

Eine strukturelle Analyse der Hagia Triada-Tafeln. By LOUK C. MEIJER. Pp. viii + 151. [Publications of the Henri Frankfort Foundation 8.] Amsterdam: B. R. GRÜNER. 1982. Hfl. 80.—.

L. C. Meijer's contention is that a structural analysis of the Linear A texts is a prerequisite to any attempt to solve the problem of their language of composition. His goal is to isolate and classify as many words as possible, based on their positions, combinations, and contexts within the tablets. Meijer limits himself to the Hagia Triada (HT) texts, excluding Linear A inscriptions found elsewhere on Crete. Since every HT text includes numerals, Meijer assumes that they are a registry of some sort, presumably of transactions. Accordingly, he further assumes that every word on the tablets can be placed into one of four categories: 1) the transaction itself (T), 2) the parties of the transaction (P), 3) the wares or commodities transacted (W), and 4) the measures (M) (pp. 35–36).

The approximately 150 HT texts are divided into the 79 whose structures make them usable for this task (pp. 7–25) and the remainder which are not, mainly due to fragmentation (pp. 26–33). The former are given a thorough analysis (pp. 56–129) with like texts and similar combinations within texts being rigorously compared. One-by-one and little-by-little, the words on these texts are each classified into one of the four categories. Classifications are determined by context, through the aid of Linear B, and/or use of accompanying ideograms and pictographs.

When all is said and done, Meijer is able to present 234 words classified as T, P, W, or M (pp. 131–143). Of these, 212 are P, i.e., parties to the transactions and therefore chiefly personal names. These, Meijer states, should not be used to decipher Linear A because onomastica often include foreign elements. Of the remaining 22 words, 19 are W, 3 are T, and none are M. It is these elements, he implies, which should form the basis of future research into the nature and identification of the Minoan language.

Accordingly, it is on the basis of these words that Meijer's work must be evaluated. For after putting the HT texts to a thorough structural analysis, Meijer is able to present very little information which has not been previously known. For example, among the W words, Meijer notes that *ka-ro-pa₃*, *qa-pa₃*, *su-pa₃-ra*, *su-pu*, and *pa-ta-qe* are vessel names. But this can be adduced quickly from HT 31 where they occur with pot pictographs. Indeed the first four of these were the initial key to C. H. Gordon's interpretation of Minoan as Semitic, equaling *krp*, *kp*, *spl*, and *sp*, attested in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and/or Hebrew (cf. *EML = Evidence for the Minoan Language* [Ventnor, N.J., 1966], p. 26). The fifth

vessel name has been compared with Aramaic *pytq'* (R. J. Richard, *Kadmos* 13 [1974], pp. 7–8).

Similarly, the conclusion that *ku-ni-su* and *mi-nu-te* are grains is an easy one to reach, for each is accompanied by a grain ideogram. The former was another of Gordon's earliest clues, as he identified the word with Akkadian *ku(n)nīšu* (*EML*, p. 26). And recently Gordon compared the latter with *ḥittē minnīt* in Ezek. 27:17 (*Forgotten Scripts* [New York, 1982], p. 172), building on the groundwork laid by M. Dahood (*apud* G. Pettinato, *The Archives of Ebla* [Garden City, N.Y., 1979], pp. 292–293).

Meijer's three T terms, *ki-ro* = "deficit," *ku-ro* = "total," and *L21-10-ku-ro* = "grandtotal," have been understood for quite some time now (see already M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* [Cambridge, 1959], p. 36; *EML*, p. 27).

The point of all this is that one must question the painstaking work carried out by Meijer. If only 22 out of 234 words are germane, and of these the meanings of 10 are so easily adduced, one wonders whether the structural analysis or the contextual or combinatory method is worth all the labor. This is even truer when one realizes that—due to the similarity of so many Linear A and Linear B signs with the assumption that like signs have the same values—we can already *read* most of the Minoan texts anyway. Our problem lies mainly in determining the language of the texts, and surely there are better methods than Meijer's.

Of the remaining 12 words classified by Meijer, two require special comment. In HT 31, amongst the five vessel names with pot pictographs referred to above, occur *ki-de-ma-L9-na* and *sa-ja-ma*, but without pictographs. Meijer's methodology, because they appear with words which are vessels, calls for these two items to be similar vessels (p. 99). But this is a failing of structural analysis, for in a text which uses the pot pictograph so consistently, one would expect it adjoining *ki-de-ma-L9-na* and *sa-ja-ma* as well if these also indicated typical vessels. Accordingly, one would concur with Gordon (*Kadmos* 8 [1969], pp. 131–133) and Richard (*op. cit.*) to read them as "gold" and "silver," cognate to *kim* and *sym* which occur in Semitic texts. They probably do refer to pots, very special ones made out of these precious metals, but the pot pictograph does not accompany them because it must have been restricted to ordinary clay vessels.

In short, Meijer has done lots of work and—given his method—has done it well. But given the present status of Minoan studies—for we can pronounce most of Linear A and translate a sufficient proportion of the texts as Northwest Semitic—the combinatory method without linguistic knowledge is *passé*. Structural analyses made sense thirty years ago, and many fine ones were produced in the 1950's. Meijer himself cites some of these (p. 53). But since then,

progress has been made through the combination of etymological and contextual methods, and this is the avenue which scholars should pursue today.

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Umma in the Sargonic Period. By BENJAMIN R. FOSTER. Pp. 228; 9 figures; 42 plates. [Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. XX.] Hamden, Connecticut: ARCHON BOOKS. 1982. \$39.50.

This work is the core of the author's 1975 Yale PhD dissertation, much revised. The author has identified a group of 487 related documents, 392 of which are assigned to the group on the basis of the mu-iti dating system and the remainder on the basis of other criteria. The study confirms the generally assumed provenance of the Umma area for these documents and dates them to a period ranging roughly from the time of Lugalzagesi to Šar-kali-šarri.

The work has enduring value as a bibliographical tool. The identification of almost five hundred related tablets deriving from irregular or illegal excavation and scattered to the four winds via the antiquities' market is a significant achievement in and of itself. The author is keenly aware of the significance of tablet format and related features that are obscured or entirely lost in conventional hand copies and has therefore made extra efforts to see as many of the tablets as possible with his own eyes. An important part of this collection of material is the 75 hand copies of previously unpublished texts from a number of collections in the United States and Britain.

The author classifies the texts into an early group (A), a later group (B), identified by one of the principal figures as "the Ur-Šara Archive," and a still later group (C). Within each group the texts are subdivided according to content, an overview of which is provided in the table of contents. To what extent this pioneering attempt at chronological and typological classification will stand up when subjected to detailed analysis remains to be seen, nevertheless, for all these labors his professional colleagues are and will continue to be indebted.

The chief weaknesses of the book—as perceived by the reviewer—are traceable to the author's belief that one can take a corpus of documents like this, proceed to analyze it, and understand not only individual texts but also their original function and relationships to others. It is the reviewer's opinion that this book has demonstrated precisely the contrary, and, in so doing, the book makes another important contribution.

Professional colleagues familiar with third millennium documents will find cause for both chagrin and *Schadenfreude* as the author doffs his cap politely to this difficulty, nods to another, and passes others by without stopping to ascertain their character or even look them in the eye. Those not familiar with such documents at first hand will do well not to base any crucial arguments on the author's translations or historical inferences without first consulting other specialists.

The interpretive sections of the book would not have turned out so badly, had the author exercised a little more care. The reviewer has in mind things like the discussion of zid *za-al-tum* on p. 12, where the author comments that "one may connect this word with *s/šaltum*, a kind of flour, *AHw s.v.*" Under this word, however, *AHw* (p. 1016) says only "eine Getreideart," whereas in the "Nachträge" (p. 1587) the reading *raqtu* (used by E. Reiner & M. Civil in their edition of *ḪAR-ra = hubullu XXIV 130, MSL 11 (1974) 81*) is considered and the meaning "eine Hülsenfrucht" is offered (this interpretation is uncertain). Flour is nowhere mentioned; the passages cited by *AHw* provide no basis for such an interpretation; and the only attestations of the word that can be associated with seed of any kind are written with the ambiguous sign SAL, posing sufficiently serious problems for identification with *za-al-tum* to at least require a bit of discussion, space for which could have been found by deleting some of the commentary that is useless to the professional (who will discover these easily enough by working through the "Index of Words Discussed" on pp. 225–226) and irrelevant to the novice.

This lack of attention to detail is compounded by preconceived notions that lead to tendentious translations. Perhaps the best example of this is the author's idea that ZA-búm, written ZA.BALAG, is a work camp and to be identified with the place names written sa-bum^{ki} and sa-bu-um^{ki}. Sweeping aside with a characteristic flourish the orthographic/phonetic difficulties involved in identifying ZA-búm with Sabum, the author organizes the evidence to fit the theory. Omitting discussion of the obvious problems (no geographical determinative with ZA-búm, the construction ka-ZA-búm-ma-ka, ugula a-ZA-búm-ma-gé in CT 50 47:5), the author regales us with choice items like: "the énsi sent the work troops to Sabum" (a mistranslation of *Nik II 49 rev. 1f.*); "the cupbearers were presumably the people responsible for serving food at the site" (excogitated out of ugula SILA₃-ŠU-DU₈-ne lugal-ra in *Nik II 49:5*, who is probably, in spite of the obvious grammatical difficulties, a high royal official, "head of the cupbearers of the king," like the later *rab šāqē*: conventions of punctuation by line argue against the interpretation of lugal-ra as a personal name or as "to the king"), "huge masses of reeds" being transported to Sabum to be used by smiths for melting down copper tools and reworking them