

# THE MYRTOS–PYRGOS AND GOURNIA ROUNDELS INSCRIBED IN LINEAR A: SUFFIXES, PREFIXES, AND A JOURNEY TO SYME\*

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## THE ROUNDELS

The roundel from Pyrgos, PYR Wc 4, which Paul Rehak and I found at the LM IB Country House in August, 1993 (Rehak and Younger 1995), is pentagonal in shape (H. 3.0, W. 2.7–2.9, Th. 1.2 cm) and of light reddish-brown to dark brown clay, badly cracked in the conflagration that destroyed the building. It is inscribed on both sides:

PYR Wc 4 (FIG. 001 top)

a.1-2: TI-[•]-I-SI (possibly TI+DU-I-SI)

b: logogram unknown, but perhaps the Linear A predecessor of Linear B \*I4I 𐀀 AURUM (Hallager 1996: 2-197).

Around the rim of the Pyrgos roundel are five seal impressions from two seals, CMS II, 6 no. 234, a lentoid carrying two lions attacking a bull (two impressions), and no. 235, a cushion seal with a cult scene (three impressions). All five impressions are countermarked with the numeral 1.

The best parallel to the pentagonal shape of the Pyrgos roundel is GO Wc 1, from Gournia House Cf, room 25 (H. 3.6, W. 3.3, Th. 1.4 cm; GORILA 2: 2); it was burnt dark grey to black, but not cracked, by a fire probably in LM IA (Hallager 1996, 2: 11; Weingarten 1990: 109–10, n. 30). GO Wc 1 is also inscribed on both sides:

GO Wc 1 (FIG. 001 bottom)

face a: A-SA-SU-MA-I-SE (the SU is cursive but secure)

face b: BOSm 5

The rim was impressed five times by a single lentoid seal (CMS II, 6 no. 159) carrying a bovine. The five impressions therefore confirm the number 5 written on face b.

While the two roundels are approximately the same size and share the pentagonal shape, it is probably the amount of information and the five impressions on both roundels that determined the shape and size (Hallager 1996, 1: 112).

## INTERPRETATION OF THE ROUNDELS

Hallager has deduced that roundels are receipts for commodities moving out of the administrative centre; the number of impressions correspond to the number of commodities being moved (Hallager 1996, 1: 117). The seals that impress the roundel rims should correspond to the personnel responsible for the delivery of the commodities and perhaps their return.

I would therefore interpret GO Wc 1 as specifying five bulls travelling from Gournia to some destination in the care of the person owning the lentoid that impressed the roundel—and I would expect that in-

1. Top: PYR Wc 4. Drawing: Paul Rehak. Scale 1:1.  
Bottom: GO Wc 1. Drawing adapted from GORILA 2: 2. Scale 1:1.



dividual either to have obtained a receipt of delivery at the destination or to have brought the bulls back.

PYR Wc 4 could be interpreted similarly: five units of gold (?) leaving the Pyrgos Country House in the care of two individuals whose seals impressed the roundel. From the number of impressions and from the seals, we might infer a hierarchy in the personnel. The cushion with cult scene impressed the roundel three times, while the lentoid impressed it twice, perhaps implying that the owner of the cushion may have been slightly more important than the owner of the lentoid. And if this is true, perhaps the iconography complements that distinction, the cult scene on the cushion referring to its owner acting in the religious sphere, the animal scene on the lentoid referring to a more secular sphere.

I speculate further that if the commodity to be transferred was indeed gold, it might have played a role in some religious ceremony, much like the gold vessels on PY Tn 316. If we interpreted PY Ae 303 as complementing Tn 316, we would see its inscription (“Pylos: (female) *doera* of the Priestess ‘for the sake of’ (*enek*a) the sacred gold: WOMEN 14[“] as specifying persons to accompany the “sacred gold” from the Pylos palace to somewhere, perhaps a shrine (Hiller 2011: 180-1). PY Ae 303, therefore, would function much like a Linear A roundel, as a receipt for the return of the “sacred gold.”

The five bulls on GO Wc 1 are also an important commodity. Since transferring bulls from one pasture to another or from one owner to another would not have necessitated a roundel as receipt, I imagine them going where they could be put to a more important use or be sacrificed for a feast: five bulls could feed 500 people (Stocker and Davis 2004: 72).

#### THE SUFFIXES TO THE SIGN GROUPS OF THE ROUNDELS

Both roundels list sign groups that end in -I-SE/SI. Since Linear A is highly suffixed and prefixed (Duhoux 1978), these endings might be suffixes.

There are a few parallels:

That -I-SE/SI is probably a suffix seems to be demonstrated by the existence of at least one unsuffixed form (“base word”: U-TA-I-SE/SI from U-TI or U-TA<sub>2</sub>; cf. JA-PA-RA-JA-SE and PA-RA) and by the existence of two other suffixed examples ostensibly built upon the same base word (MA-KA-I-SE / MA-KA-I-TA; A-SA-SU-MA-I-SE / JA-SU-MA-TU / WI-JA-SU-MA-MA-TI-TI-\*319).

That there may be no semantic difference between -I-SE and -I-SI may be indicated by the two forms apparently built upon the same base word U-TI or U-TA<sub>2</sub>. The choice between the two forms may have depended on the height of the main vowel in the base word. Thus, the low vowel A in -SU-MA-

and MA-KA- may have elicited -SE for vowel harmony, while the high vowel U in KA-PU<sub>3</sub> may have similarly elicited -SI—the two forms U-TA-I-SE/SI may either derive from two different base words (U-TA<sub>2</sub> eliciting U-TA-I-SE, U-TI eliciting U-TA-I-SI) or a confusion over which vowel was the main vowel in the base word, U or A.

If there was no semantic difference between the two suffixes, we might deduce that the final vowel is “dead” chosen to harmonize with the main vowel of the base word. The written suffix could then be summarized thusly: base word + I-S<sup>v</sup>, the phonetic suffix being /IS/.

The meaning of the suffix is difficult to deduce from so few examples, but it could convey a sense of destination, as if “to” or, as in the doublet MA-KA-I-SE / MA-KA-I-TA, an “upper” or “lower” place (vel sim.).

#### MEANING OF THE ROUNDEL SIGN GROUPS

The sign group A-SA-SU-MA-I-SE on GO Wc 1, may be both prefixed and suffixed, if the base word is SU-MA, as the affixed parallels JA-SU-MA-TU (SY Za 2a) and WI-JA-SU-MA-MA-TI-TI-\*319 (HT Zd 157) might imply. From other studies, it is possible to see in JA-SU-MA-TU the prefixes I- and A- and the suffix -TU. Prefix I- is likely to mean “to” (Duhoux 1997) while prefix A- and suffix -TU probably indicated “from” (Valério 2007). A parallel formation, JA-DI-KI-TE-TE-DU-PU<sub>2</sub>-RE, has been reconstructed to mean “to [I/J-] the DU-PU<sub>2</sub>-RE of [A- + -TE] Dikte” or “to the Diktaian DU-PU<sub>2</sub>-RE” (Valério 2007: 8-11). If so, JA-SU-MA-TU could mean “to the one from SU-MA” or “to the Sumaian.” If so, it is tempting to identify SU-MA as the Linear A place name for Syme (Σύμη), the Bronze Age sanctuary on the south slopes of Mt Dikte (Lebessi and Muhly 1987, 1990). Paul Faure (1967: 71) cites the earliest attestations of the place name in the Venetian period (1271 and 1577), but he lists it as pre-Hellenic in form.

If so, the sign group A-SA-SU-MA-I-SE on GO Wc 1 might be reconstructed as prefix A-SA + base word SU-MA + suffix I-SE — in fact, the three-line layout of the sign group on GO Wc 1 exactly demands this reconstruction.

That A-SA is a prefix is borne out by the way A-SA-SA-RA is written on Hieroglyphic seals and on some Libation Tables: with one exception (CMS II 6, no. 231), the sign group is separated A-SA and SA-RA-NE/ME across two faces of all the multifacial Hieroglyphic seals that carry the sign group (CMS II 1, nos. 391, 393 and 394; CMS II 2, no. 217; CMS VI nos. 13 and 14; and CHIC: no. 313), across two panels on a single face of two Hieroglyphic seals (CMS VII no. 35, and CMS II 8, no. 129), and across adjacent sides of two Libation Tables inscribed with the Linear A Libation Formula (IO Za 12a, b [Karetsou, Godart, and Olivier 1985: 143]; and IO Za 2 [GORILA 5: 18-19]).

Whatever A-SA- might mean, it was clearly prefixed to an important word in the Libation Formula and could have itself carried important significance. If so, A-SA-SU-MA- might also have implied something important at Syme, i.e. the sanctuary.

#### FINAL SPECULATION

What if the five bulls from Gournia and the five units of gold (?) from Pyrgos were indeed related? The Pyrgos roundel could be contemporary with the LM IA Gournia roundel, as the almost identical shape, size, text layout, and lexical information of the two documents suggest. I can imagine the five bulls sent to “the important place at Syme.” They would have first walked down the fairly level Ierapetra isthmus (14.6 km), then turned west along the shore, reaching Myrtos-Pyrgos (another 15.7 km) after a total of 30 km (at a slow 3 km/hr, 10 hours). Pyrgos would have made a welcome stop for a restful night-over for the two Gourniotes and their five bulls before continuing the next day, each bull laden with a unit of gold (?), and all now joined by a Pyrgiot. Although the final stage of the journey was only another 15.8 km, it would have taken much longer, surely a whole day, if not two, since from sea level at Pyrgos the party of three people and five bulls had to climb 1140 meters (800 meters to the site of the modern village of Kato Syme and another 340 up to the sanctuary).

Perhaps the suffix -I-SE/SI did mean “upper” and thus A-SA-SU-MA-I-SE means “to the upper important place at SU-MA.”

-I-SE			
Document	Sign group + I-SE/SI	Sign group without suffix	Comparisons
GO Wc 1a	A-SA-SU-MA-I-SE		JA-SU-MA-TU (SY Za 2a); cf. WI-JA-SU-MA- <u>MA</u> -TI-TI-*319 (HT Zd 157)
SY Zb 9	JA-PA-RA-JA-SE	PA-RA (HT 128a.1; PH 3a.3)	
ZA 8.4	MA-KA-I-SE		cf. MA-KA-I-TA (PK 1.8; ZA 5b.2-3)
SY Zb 7	•-RA-KI-•-SE	cf. RA+KA (HT We 1021g)	
KH 7b.2	U-TA-I-SE	U-TI (HT 10b.1), U-TA <sub>2</sub> (HT 103.1)	

-I-SI			
Document	Sign group + I-SE/SI	Sign group without suffix	Comparisons
PH Wc 37	KA-PU <sub>3</sub> -SI	cf. KA-PA (HT 6a.1, 102.1, 105.1)	
KH 51.1	]SI-I-SI		
PYR Wc 4	TI-[•]-I-SI		
KH 16.2	U-TA-I-SI	U-TI (HT 10b.1), U-TA <sub>2</sub> (HT 103.1)	

#### NOTE

\* It is a pleasure to write this rather fanciful study for Gerald Cadogan, whose wit, imagination, and creativity sustained us during our re-excavation of Myrtos-Pyrgos in the summer of 1994. All Linear A texts can be found at Younger 2000.

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