

Additional Palaeographic Evidence for the Relationship of the Aegean Scripts to the Sumerian Pictography

Evangelos C. Papakitsos^{*1}, Ioannis K. Kenanidis²

¹Department of Linguistics, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Education & Religious Affairs, Directorate of Secondary Education of Dytiki Attiki, Vas. Laskou 35, 19200 ELEFSINA, Greece.

²Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Education & Religious Affairs, Directorate of Primary Education of Kavala, Ethn. Antistasis 20, 65110 KAVALA, Greece.

*Corresponding Author:

Evangelos C. Papakitsos

Email: papakitsev@sch.gr

Abstract: In the present paper, the relationship of the Aegean scripts, mainly of Linear-A and Linear-B scripts, to the Sumerian language is further exemplified through the presentation of additional palaeographic evidence, from various sources.

Keywords: Aegean scripts, Minoan language, Sumerian language, Linear A, Linear B, Cretan Hieroglyphic and archaeolinguistics.

INTRODUCTION

In a previous study [1], the Sumerian influence on the creation of the Aegean scripts was argued through (among other linguistic evidence) the presentation of 18 signs of the Aegean scripts (namely of Cretan Hieroglyphic, Linear-A, Linear-B and Cypriot Syllabary) along with the equivalent signs of the Sumerian scripts (i.e., Pre-cuneiform, Proto-cuneiform and Cuneiform) and their corresponding phonetic values. The relevant argumentation will be further exemplified through the presentation of additional palaeographic evidence, from various sources.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

In Davis [2] (Table 4, pp. 65-68), there are many pre-alphabetic signs, gathered from many other studies [3-8], presenting the palaeographic relationship of many archaic scripts, including four of the Aegean scripts, the Anatolian Hieroglyphs, the Egyptian, the Proto-Elamite, the Indus script and the Sumerian Proto-cuneiform that is the oldest one. Forty-two signs of the Aegean scripts, some repeated, are related to equivalent Proto-cuneiform Sumerian ones. Although there is not a full agreement about the equivalent interpretations to the studies of Kenanidis [9-10], there are two noteworthy matches of Davis [2] (No 18, p. 66 and No 33, p. 67) to the pictorial data of Kenanidis and Papakitsos [1] (Fig-5, p. 338 and Fig-18, p. 343), being presented in Fig-1 herein. The additional palaeographic evidences are listed to the next section.

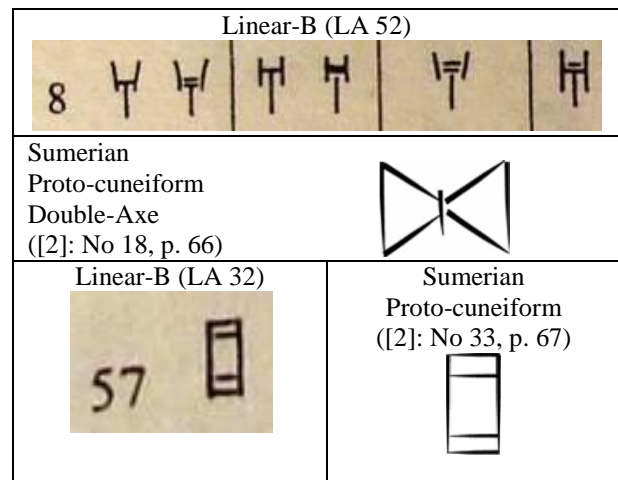


Fig-1. Sign *8 (“a”) and sign *57 (“ja”).

PALAEOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Twelve more signs are presented below, with their numerals and assigned phonetic values corresponding to Linear-B taxonomy. Once again, the Linear-A classification (LA) is presented in parentheses, according to Christidis [11]. It is reminded that the closing consonant of a monosyllabic Sumerian word was not pronounced, thus this consonant is separated by a dash from the rest of the characters, wherever applicable.

Sign *4

The signs of syllable **te** depicted the stalk of cereals (Fig-2), derived from the Archaic Sumerian equivalent word */tje/.

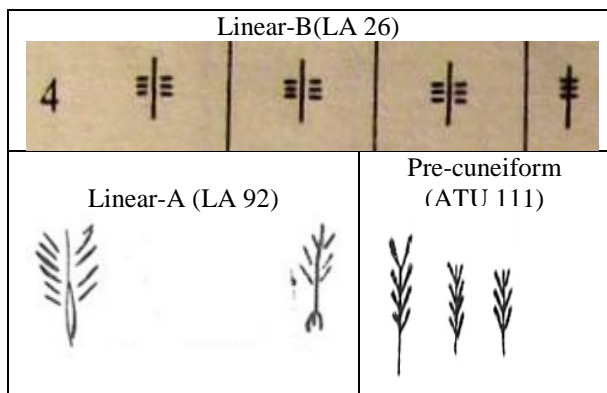


Fig-2. The sign forms for syllable te.

Sign *6

The syllable **na** is represented by a sketch denoting a column (Fig-3). It is encountered in Cypriot Linear as well, having a similar (simplified) sign. The late Sumerian word for the column was “nir” (pronounced /ner/), coming from the Archaic equivalent /na-r/. Notably, some sketches depict the unique feature of the Minoan columns having a base narrower than their top.

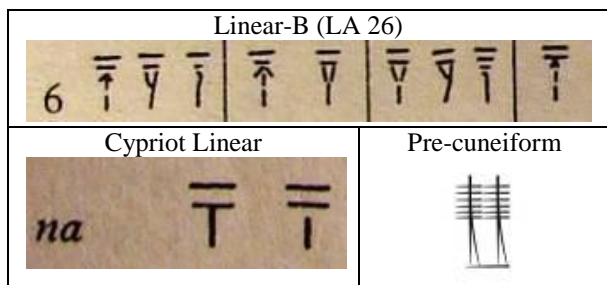


Fig-3. The sign forms for syllable na.

Sign *10

The sketches for syllable **u** depict the tusk of an elephant as a short vertical line next to the proboscis which is longer, on the left (Fig-4). The tusk was named /u-s/ in Archaic Sumerian. In cuneiform it is encountered as “u₂”, interpreted as a kind of horn, different though from sign *9 (see Fig-10 in [1]).

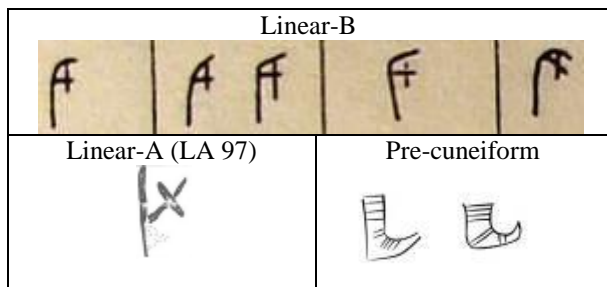


Fig-4. The sign forms for syllable u.

Sign *25

The Achaean syllable **ha** (aspirated “a”) is represented by sketches denoting a buffalo (Fig-5). The ancient Mesopotamian buffalo was named “a-lim”, where “lim” was a usual suffix for the names of wild animals. The archaic /h/ or /x/ hadn’t been preserved in cuneiform (see example 6.0.2 in [12]).

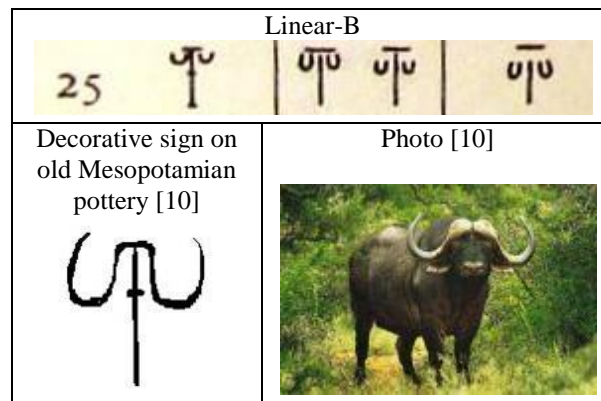


Fig-5. The sign forms for syllable ha.

Sign *31

The sketches for syllable **sa** depict the stalk of linen, which was the main material for making thread (Fig-6). The thread was named /sa/ (or perhaps /sa-p/) in Sumerian. In pre-cuneiform, the sign is probably encountered as GU = “cord, net; flax stalks”, having a similar form (see Fig-6).

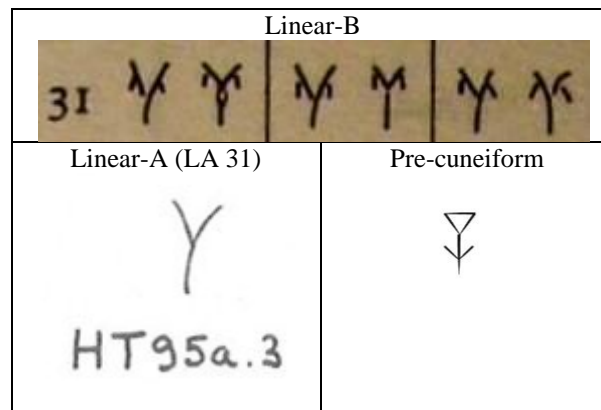


Fig-6. The sign forms for syllable sa.

Sign *39

The sketches for syllable **pi** depict a sword/blade (Fig-7). The sword existed as a logogram too, both in Linear-A (A312) and in Linear-B (233). In pre-cuneiform, the sword is depicted having its point downwards. Yet, there is a small horizontal line near the point, as in Linear-B. In Archaic Sumerian, the sword was named /pi-r/, which became “ġiri₂” (Akk. *naglabu*; *patru*) later on, because of a phonological conversion (see rule 5.0.15 in [12]).

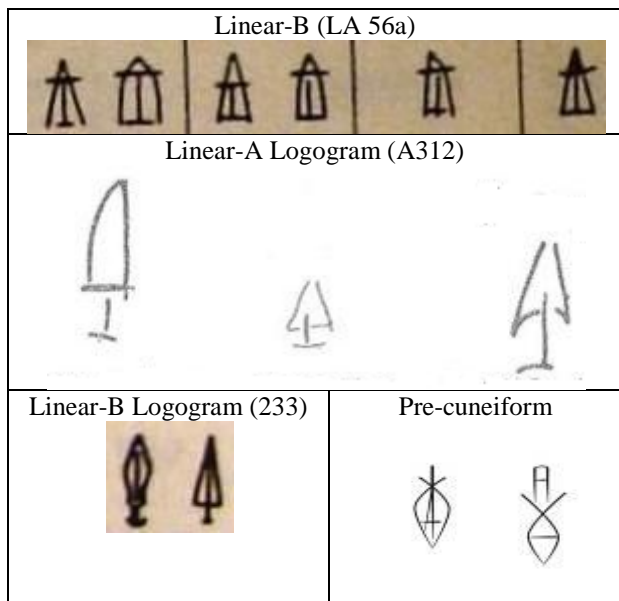


Fig-7. The sign forms for syllable pi.

Sign *59

This is the sketch of the most common musical instrument of the old Sumerians for syllable **ta** (Fig-8). It was a kind of harp named /ta-b/. The chords were fastened to the two opposite horizontal branches.

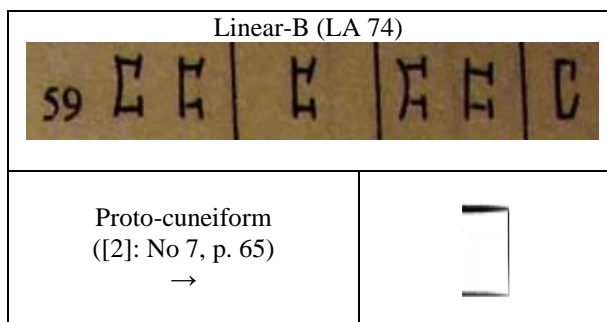


Fig-8. The sign forms for syllable ta.

Sign *66

The signs for syllable **tə** depict the pudenda (Fig-9). In pre-cuneiform and cuneiform alike, the logogram is called SAL (having the exact same meaning), while it is combined with other signs for denoting the meaning of “female”. Its actual pronunciation was /sɪl/, originating from the Archaic /tɪ-l/ because of a phonological conversion (see rule 5.0.31 in [12]). In Linear-B it was used for the syllable “ταῖ” (“ta₂”), as in the word “Λαυράται”, since ə/ɪ was used for the Greek “αῖ”.



Fig-9. The sign forms for syllable tə (“ta₂”).

Sign *73

The signs for syllable **mi** depict a woman’s body in profile, without the head and the legs (Fig-10). The Sumerian word for “woman” was /mi/ (see also the proto-cuneiform sign No 39, p. 67 in [2]).

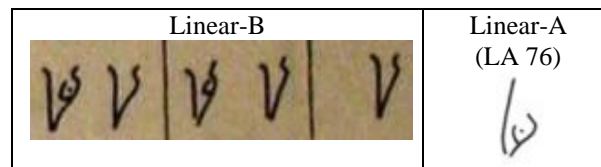


Fig-10. The sign forms for syllable mi.

Sign *74

The sketch of a saw was used to denote syllable **ze** (Fig-11). It is encountered in Linear-A and Cretan Hieroglyphs as well. The Archaic Sumerian word for “saw” was /še-m/, which became /šum/ later on (actually pronounced /šœm/) because of a phonological conversion (see rule 5.0.4 in [12]).

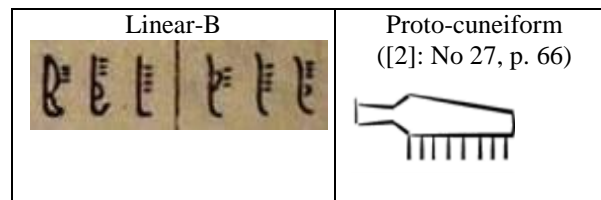


Fig-11. The sign forms for syllable ze.

Sign *77

The sign for syllable **ca/ka** is identical to the common Sumerian ATU 761, which meant “sheep” (Fig-12). It represented a clay token for each sheep of a Sumerian stock-farmer. The sheep was called /ga-n/ or /gan-am/ in Sumerian, where “-am” was the suffix denoting a female animal. An alternative interpretation is the Archaic Sumerian word /ga-r/, which is the wheel (of a chariot).

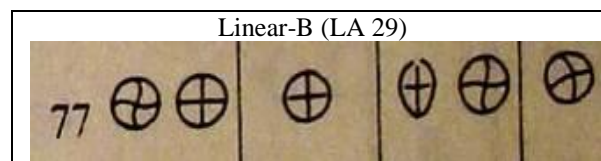


Fig-12. The sign forms for syllable ca/ka.

Sign *80

The sign for syllable **ma** abstractly depicts the face of a male calf, which was called /a-má-r/ in Sumerian, with the initial “a-” being an added prefix (Fig-13). To non-Sumerians it might reminded more of a cat (as in the similar sign of Linear-A), yet the male calf was culturally much more important to them than a cat. The curved-lines of the sign at its bottom stress the large nostrils of the calf instead of the cat’s moustaches. This word was metaphorically used as well for the young brave man.

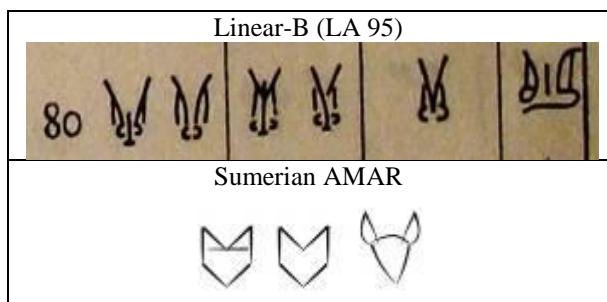


Fig-13. The sign forms for syllable ma.

CONCLUSION

Up to now, the palaeographic and phonetic relationship of 30 signs of Linear-B (18 of them in [1] plus 12 herein) to the Sumerian pictography and language has been demonstrated through the presentation of the relevant pictorial evidence. This total comprises 1/3 of Linear-B syllabic repertoire (respectively 35% of Linear-A equivalent), thus proving beyond statistical doubt the Sumerian origin of the Aegean scripts, since Linear-B (as well as Linear-A) had also been another derivative of the older but lost Cretan Protolinear script [1, 9, 10, 13]. Such a profound influence can only be attributed to a scribal guild (as suggested by Hooker [14] and Finkelberg [15] of Sumerian linguistic origin [1,9, 10] that must had created and used those scripts.

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