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Front cover: Detail of the skirt, showing the loose belt on ivory figurine NAM 6580, Prosymna.

### Contents

Ac	knowledgements	V
Co	ntributors	vii
1	Investigating Neolithic and Copper Age Textile Production in Transylvania (Romania Applied Methods and Results <i>Paula Mazăre</i>	
2	Spindle Whorls From Two Prehistoric Settlements on Thassos, North Aegean Sophia Vakirtzi, Chaido Koukouli–Chryssanthaki and Stratis Papadopoulos	43
3	Textile Texts of the Lagaš II Period Richard Firth	57
4	In Search of Lost Costumes. On royal attire in Ancient Mesopotamia, with special reference to the Amorite  Ariane Thomas	74
5	Elements for a Comparative Study of Textile Production and Use in Hittite Anatolia and in Neighbouring Areas  Giulia Baccelli, Benedetta Bellucci and Matteo Vigo	97
6	Buttons, Pins, Clips and Belts 'Inconspicuous' Dress Accessories from the Burial Context of the Mycenaean Period (16th–12th cent. BC) Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi	143
7	Textile Semitic Loanwords in Mycenaean as Wanderwörter Valentina Gasbarra	158
8	Constructing Masculinities through Textile Production in the Ancient Near East Agnès Garcia-Ventura	167
9	Spindles and Distaffs: Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Eastern Mediterranean Use of Solid and Tapered Ivory/Bone Shafts  Caroline Sauvage	184

v Contents

10	Golden Decorations in Assyrian Textiles: An Interdisciplinary Approach Salvatore Gaspa	227
11	e-ri-ta's Dress: Contribution to the Study of the Mycenaean Priestesses' Attire  Tina Boloti	245
12	Flax and Linen in the First Millennium Babylonia BC: The Origins, Craft Industry and Uses of a Remarkable Textile  Louise Quillien	271
13	Two Special Traditions in Jewish Garments and the Rarity of Mixing Wool and Linen Threads in the Land of Israel  Orit Shamir	. 297

# 7. Textile Semitic Loanwords in Mycenaean as *Wanderwörter*

#### Valentina Gasbarra

Language is the most direct means of expression and the most spontaneous reflex of the culture which it represents. In this sense, the decipherment of Linear B and the publication of Mycenaean archives have led us to examine how Mycenaean society was organized and, from a strictly linguistic point of view, the contacts and exchanges between the Mycenaean world and its immediate or more distant neighbours, as well as the connections with 1st millennium Greek forms.

Even though Mycenaean tablets consist exclusively in bureaucratic or administrative documents, they testify to the most fundamental linguistic categories of later Greek and allow us to follow and reconstruct the evolution of the language between the two stages under the phonological, morpho-syntactical and lexical profiles. This task does not occur without any surprises: as we can see, for example, by taking a glance at some morphological categories, such as the compounds. The Mycenaean lexicon displays a well consolidated tendency in replacing some terminological blanks with neologisms, which are often not yet included in the standard vocabulary, and for this reason present with a high degree of internal transparency and a clear recognizability in terms of constituents. On this subject, the other strategy available is the borrowing, and particularly, the borrowing of special terminology. This sector of research is not completely exhaustive at the present time, although Mycenaean studies have known a significant impulse in recent years, thanks both to the interest of scholars and to the edition of corpora of documents, which have made a wide survey of the Mycenaean archives and have shown the spread of the language.

The infrequent loanwords in the Mycenaean Linear B archives belong mainly to the field of commercial exchange and they provide valuable evidence of Greek-Semitic interaction in the 2nd millennium BC. Let's start from the examples of textile terminology (e.g. those associated with fibre production, textile names, weaving and manufacture of garments, names of the workers employed in the textile industry) which are borrowed in the Mycenaean tablets: this contribution is aimed at elucidating the procedures and the categorization of linguistic borrowings, taking into account the typology of loanwords and the degree of the adaptation phenomena, such as the formation of compounds and derivatives modeled by using the morpho-syntactical structures of the Greek language. Another topic, which will be focused on, is the continuity between the semantic classes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For a survey of studies about Greek and Semitic interference during the 2nd millennium BC, see: Vaniček 1878; Muss-Arnolt 1892; Lewy 1895; Grimme 1925; Mayer Modena 1960; Astour 1967; Masson 1967.

in the Semitic loanwords of the 2nd millennium BC and those of the later stage of the Greek language. Although the number of Semitic loanwords in the Mycenaean tablets is few, the terms that the Greek language continues borrowing from the Semitic languages are still related to the names of plants, metals, materials and garments and, mostly, to technical and commercial terminology. *A latere* of these considerations, the influence of the Anatolian languages must be underlined: the role of Hittite, particularly as the intermediary language from which Mycenaean Greek inherited some Semitic loanwords, will be also stressed.

#### The pre-Greek substrate and Greek in contact with other languages

The contacts between Greek and other languages, and the effects produced by these contacts, provide the most conspicuous evidence of the historicity of language. In ancient times, just as today, linguistic borrowing reflects judgements of cultural value and historical progress of a language is dependent on precisely such judgements.<sup>2</sup> The question of Greek in contact with other languages cannot be separated from the reflection on "common Greek" and on the substrate and contact languages on the Greek territory before the Hellenization. After the collapse of the Mycenaean kingdoms and the disintegration of the palatial societies, the linguistic outline of Greece was completely thrown. The so-called "Greek Dark Ages" (9th–8th centuries BC) corresponds with a social, economic and cultural withdrawal³ as testified by the archaeological evidence, and with the consequent loss of the use of writing. The Dark Ages can therefore be considered as a formative period of the culture of archaic and classical Greece, at the end of which⁴ the adoption of alphabetic writing inherited from the northern Semitic scripts (φοινικήια γράμματα 'Phoenician script') is one of the most important innovations.

The linguistic outline of Greece before the introduction of the Linear A and B writings is widely debated, and scholars are divided between those who believe that the Greek language has become dominant on a pre-existent Indo-European substrate,<sup>5</sup> and those who are inclined to believe in a so-called "Indo-Mediterranean substrate" with a very general and indefinite features, but with a clear and discriminating Non-Indo-European origin.<sup>6</sup>

These are both *a priori* assumptions and, as such, cannot be defended. The only fact that we can also evaluate is the presence of a number of words in the Greek lexicon which have no obvious connection in the cognate languages and are therefore suspected of being loans of "autochthonous" population inhabiting those areas before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans.<sup>7</sup> The generic notion of substrate has to be interpreted in a weak sense, as a sort of "inheritance" or, as "migrant words", which occur in other Mediterranean languages and for which no plausible etymology can be found (the most well known examples are: ĕλαιον 'olive oil' or οἶνος 'wine').<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the question of loanwords from pre-Greek languages is particularly complex in the evaluation of words like  $\xi \acute{\epsilon} vo \zeta$  'foreign',  $\check{\alpha} v\alpha \xi$  'lord',  $\beta \alpha \sigma \iota \lambda \epsilon \acute{\nu} \zeta$  'king',  $\pi \acute{o} \lambda \epsilon \mu o \zeta$  'war',  $\theta \epsilon \acute{o} \zeta$  'god'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For an exhaustive introduction of languages in contact with Greek, see Christidis 2007, 721–732.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> On the return to a self-sufficient economy and on the abandonment of complex and hierarchical social organizations as reaction caused by the collapse of the palatial administration, see Snodgrass 1987, 186–188.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Amadasi Guzzo, 1991, 293–309.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Palmer 1980, 4–9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Belardi 1954, 610; Silvestri 1974, 35–38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Szemerényi 1964, 404–405.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> On the names and on the "etymological reasons" of 'olive oil' and of 'wine' see Silvestri 2013, 335–340.

etc., with a high degree of specialization in the form and in the meaning and with no connection in the other Indo-European languages, although attested in the Mycenaean archives and, afterwards, in all 1st millennium Greek dialects.

It's not possible to go further: all the efforts directed to individualize a specific substrate (Aegean, Pelasgian, Asianic etc.), sometimes according to the testimony of ancient historians about the origin of their language, have never met unanimous consensus among scholars, because they always show a lot of weaknesses on the phonetic, morphological or semantic point of view, since many of these terms may be borrowed from languages not yet directly attested. 10

#### Mycenaean Contacts with the Near East

The Mycenaean palatial system required intensive exploitation of regional resources: sudden expansion of the power of a single palatial centre to control broader regional resources and production would have created new hierarchies of power, work and socio-political networks.<sup>11</sup> That organization required a high degree of specialization within specific industries (e.g. wool, flax and dve substances for cloth production; olive oil; perfumed substances and related pottery manufacture etc.). The long list of trades and occupations, which can be identified in the Linear B documents, implies the development of a specialization of labour, which goes far beyond that seen in Homer. Textile production in particular, is one of the most ancient human technologies, playing a crucial role in societies world-wide throughout our past and giving a clear measure of the level of technical know-how. Textile production reflects human interactions with the environment since the end of the Ice Age. Across the Mediterranean area, it testifies to cultural contacts and exchanges between the West and the Ancient Near East. The textile loanwords in the Mycenaean archives point primarily to extensive commercial relations with the Semitic East, but also to the high level of lexical (and, consequently, social and cultural) permeability between the Semitic and the Greek world. The study of textile terminology has a strong inter-disciplinary component, because it is closely connected with the study of material culture and techniques and with the role of textile production in ancient societies with its significance in the economy. The complex organization of production in Mycenaean times might in any case be inferred from the high level of trades. They can also be identified on similar tablets from the Eastern archives, in which craft production was of prime importance and, although textiles are largely invisible in the archaeological record due to their perishable nature, the presence of a linguistic term of a given procedure or tool implies its existence in the society where the language was spoken.<sup>12</sup>

When Linear B was first deciphered, it was immediately clear<sup>13</sup> that "the most useful and significant analogies" lay with the better documented and more fully understood societies of ancient Near East: often, though, the cryptic practices described in the Mycenaean tablets have been illuminated by the Near Eastern documentation. <sup>14</sup> The presence of foreign goods in Greece and

<sup>9</sup> Strabo (Geogr. 7.7.1) said: « Ἐκαταῖος μὲν οὖν ὁ Μιλήσιος περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου φησὶν διότι πρὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἤκησαν αὐτὴν βάρβαροι ».

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Duhoux 2007, 223–228.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See Palaima 2004, 285.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For a general introduction to ancient Near Eastern craft and technology, see Sasson 1995, vol. 1 chapter 7. For a recent review of the ancient Western and Near Eastern textile terminology, see Michel and Nosch 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ventris and Chadwick 1956, 106; 113; 133; 135–136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> For the analogies between Mycenaean and Near Eastern societies, see Shelmerdine 1998, 296–298.

Crete, confirmed by the presence of foreign words (names of spices, plants, metals and materials) in the Linear B written texts, testifies to trade contacts with the Semitic populations for most of the 2nd millennium BC. For example, many of the foreign references come from Pylos, where the tablets date to the last year of the palace administration at the end of LH IIIB. At this time, trade contacts with the Near East continued, though probably not on as large a scale as prevailed during LH IIIA2–IIIB1. On the other hand, the Pylos archives provide textual evidence for state-organized production of linen textiles and perfumed oil in industrial quantities, similar to the Knossos wool industry.

#### Mycenaean textile industry

Textile production is, however, labour intensive and involves many different processes: it implies specialization and division of tasks. Textile terminologies are closely associated with the study of material culture and techniques, and to the role of textile production in society and its significance in the economy. For this reason, the tablets record specific occupations such as spinners, weavers and fullers. 15 We have information on textiles from various Mycenaean centres (Thebes, Mycenae, Knossos, Pylos), but the most extensive documentation comes from Knossos, 16 where we can distinguish data about flocks, wool, production of clothes and names of textile workers, and from Pylos, where the production of flax and linen cloths is well documented. In the Mycenaean world, the textile industry – whose expertise already existed throughout the palatial territories, probably inherited from Minoan culture – was controlled and monitored by the palaces by supporting workers<sup>17</sup> and by controlling the quantities of raw materials from stage to stage until products were finished. The raw materials were distributed to textile workers with the expectation that set production targets would be met and finished textiles delivered back to the palace. 18 Distribution and requisition of raw materials to dependent workers is known as ta-ra-si-ja system, 19 and well documented in several areas of craft production. The palace control of goods and materials as well as the management of economic activities involved not only the textile industry, but also all the specialized industries evidenced in the Linear B texts<sup>20</sup> (furniture and woodworking, the manufacture of perfumed oil, bronze production, pottery, work with precious materials as gold, lapis-lazuli and ivory etc.).

As evidenced above, the main typologies of fibres testified in the Mycenaean archives are wool and flax, which is documented both as cultivated plant and as a fibre ready to be woven.<sup>21</sup> The cultivation of flax and the linen industry were wide spread in Greece, as it is shown by the terms designating production and manufacture of flax/linen articles in all periods of the Greek language and by place-names<sup>22</sup> derived from the term for "flax" etc. Cultivation and manufacture

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See Killen 1984; Palaima 1997; Nosch 2000.

<sup>16</sup> See Luján 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> As Killen 1984 evidenced, groups of textile workers were supported by palatial food rations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Cline 2010, 436.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See Nosch 2000; 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See Palaima 2003, 166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> See Del Freo *et al.* 2010, 344–345, who identifies a regular distinction in the tablets between the plant and the fibre through two different syllabograms: \*31=SA (LINUM), attested in Pylos and Knossos, and RI, attested in the Ma series of Pylos, in PY Mm 11 and in KN Nc 5100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> For a review of ancient, koine, medieval and modern Greek terms and names for "flax", "linen" and their derivatives, see Georgacas 1959.

of flax (*linum usitatissimum*) are also well attested in the documents from Near Eastern archives, in which different kinds of cloths and different kinds of employment are regularly distinguished. This subtle distinction is not noticeable in the Mycenaean texts, which only make reference to a particular typology of linen in the Knossos tablet J 693 where the expression *ri-no re-po-to*, Gr. λίνον λεπτόν 'very fine linen', before *ki-to*, Gr. χιτών is attested. The other terms with a Semitic etymology, like βύσσος 'byssos' (Akk.  $b\bar{u}su$ ; Ugar. and Phoen. bs; Hebr.  $b\bar{u}s$ ) and σινδών 'fine woven cloth, fine linen garment' (Akk. saddinu/saddi(n)um; Hebr.  $sad\bar{u}n$ ), that denote different and more valuable typologies of linen, appear in the Greek vocabulary exclusively from the 5th century BC. This late attestation – in a certain sense – confirms the pure nature of "loanwords by necessity", <sup>23</sup> connected with the need for naming new products obtained thanks to the improvement of cultivation and manufacturing techniques.

#### Textile terminology and Semitic loanwords in the Linear B texts

Linear B records a very small number of names of garments, in strict connection with the flax industry. The Mycenaean documents record the word ki-to, Gr.  $\chi\iota\tau\acute{o}\nu$  'chiton, tunic, designation of a garment without sleeves'. The term is passim attested in the Knossos archive and it represents a well-known example of a Semitic loanword, probably lent from the Akk.  $kit\^u(m)$ , and which can be compared with Ugar. and Phoen. ktn, Hebr. kutonet.<sup>24</sup>

Although the etymology of the word is widely debated, 25 the Akkadian term  $kit\hat{u}(m)$ , on which the Greek χιτών is modelled, is probably inherited from the Sumerian GAD, GADA<sup>26</sup> 'linen, linen garment'.

The term ki-to (nom. sing.) is attested in the Knossos archive twice (KN Lc 563.B and L 693.1), as well as the forms ki-to-ne (nom. pl.) and ki-to-na (accus. sing.) attested respectively in KN L771.2 and KN Ld 785.2b, and the instrumental ki-to-pi in KN Ld 787.B. The term represents a good degree of adaptation into the Mycenaean lexicon, making a derivative and internally transparent adjective through the insertion of Greek affixes, like e-pi-ki-to-ni-ja, e7 Gr. eπιχιτωνία, an adjective that specifies a cloth which is 'worn over the ki-to'.

The fact, however, that the term is spread among numerous Indo-European and Non-Indo-European languages and cultures with the regular and very general meaning 'tunic, linen tunic', suggests a close relation with the category of "wandering words", words which have been borrowed from language to language, across a significant geographical area.

In studies of linguistic interference, it is important to record the distribution of words of foreign origin, making a clear distinction between those words which are widely attested in the host language and those of more limited occurrence. The early contacts between Greek and Semitic attested in the Mycenaean tablets belong mainly to the field of commercial exchange, for this reason the borrowed names with a Semitic etymology in the Linear B texts coherently exhibit this kind of behaviour. They also belong to the categories of plants/spices (e.g. Myc. *ku-mi-no-(a)*, Gr. κύμινον

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> For a general introduction to lexical borrowings see Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009, particularly chapter 2, 35–54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> For all the North-West Semitic attestations, see Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, s.v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> See, lately, Vita 2010, 330.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Cfr. AHw, CAD (vol. 8) and CDA, s.v.; Ellenbogen 1962, 96; Masson 1967, 29; GEW and EDG, s.v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> In KN L 693 and, probably, in KN L 7514.

'cumin' to be compared with Akk. kamūnu(m), Phoen. kmn and Hebr. kammon;<sup>28</sup> Myc. sa-sa-ma, Gr. σήσαμον 'sesame' to be compared with Akk. šamaššammū(m) and Ugar. and Phoen. ššmn;<sup>29</sup> Myc. ku-pa-ro, Gr. κύπαιρος 'cyperus', whose model, maybe, could be traced in Hebr. koper) and metals (e.g. Myc. ku-ru-so, Gr. γρυσός 'gold'). The word for 'gold' is widely attested in many Semitic languages, like Akk. hurāsu(m), Ugar. hrs, Phoen. hrs<sup>30</sup> and Hebr. hārūs, and its frequency demonstrates the importance of the gold trade in the ancient economy of Aegean and Near East. Beside the noun for 'gold', the Mycenaean archives record the material adjective ku-ru-so and kuru-sa-pi<sup>31</sup> (Hom. Gr. γρύσειος, γρύσειος, Αeol. γρύσιος 'golden, made of gold'), and a compound in -wo-ko /worgos/, ku-ru-so-wo-ko (PY An 207.10), Gr. \*γρυσο-Fοργός 'gold-worker', which is inscribed in a large group (c. 40) of compounded substantives with verbal second member, usually indicating professions or functions, characterized by their internal recognizability.

In addition to the Semitic words just mentioned, two terms for precious materials can be added: Myc. ku-wa-no, Gr. κύανος 'lapis-lazuli' and Myc. e-re-pa, Gr. ἐλέφας, 'ivory'. Ku-wa-no and e-repa represent a different typology of loanwords, 32 because they have been inherited in Mycenaean Greek not directly from a Semitic language, 33 but through the intermediation of Hittite, as the Hittite forms ku(wa)nna(n) and lahpa – clearly demonstrate.

#### Some tentative conclusions

If the analysis conducted is correct, we can also assume that 2nd millennium Greek displays a small nucleus of terms with a Semitic etymology. These loanwords belong to the field of "special terminology" and they shed a light about contacts and exchanges between Mycenaean Greeks and their immediate or more distant neighbours in the Mediterranean basin during the Bronze Age. They also seem to confirm a high degree of continuity in the semantic classes, because the terms that the Greek language continues to borrow from Semitic languages during its history belong mainly to the field of trades and techniques. These later loanwords are evident in a specific proportion of the need for naming new activities and new objects. For example, the etymology of the Greek word μνᾶ (to be compared with Lat. mina and Skt. manā-), which appears in Greek texts and inscriptions from the 6th century BC and which designates the name of a weight standard and a sum of money, can be traced in the Akkadian  $man\hat{u}(m)^{34}$  (Hebr.  $m\bar{a}n\bar{e}$ , and Ugar. mn), the term for the verb 'to count' and for 'a mina-weight (c. 480 grams)'.

Similarly, the Greek word σίγλος/σίκλος (Lat. siclus) 'shekel', which represents both a coin and a unity of weight (but with a smaller geographical distribution than  $\mu\nu\tilde{\alpha}$ ), can be considered a loanword from Akk. šiqlu(m) (Hebr. šeqel), the name of a weight and capacity measure.

A latere of these more general considerations, it is important to evaluate – although the terminology in Mycenaean archives is always profoundly fragmentary and scarce - the typology

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> For Phoenician and Hebrew, see Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, s.v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, s.v.

 $<sup>^{30}</sup>$  See Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, s.v.  $hrs_4$ .  $^{31}$  ku-ru-so in PY Ta 714.2.2 and ku-ru-so-pi in PY Ta 707.1; 714.3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> For a further analysis of the role of Hittite as a bridge language between Indo-European and Non-Indo-European world, see Gasbarra and Pozza 2012, particularly paragraph 3.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Cfr. the Akkadian terms  $ugn\hat{u}(m)$  'lapis-lazuli' and alpu(m) 'bull, ox'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> The Akkadian *manū* has been generally interpreted as a loanword from Sumerian MANA, see AHw, CAD (vol. 10 part I) and CDA, s.v.

of linguistic interference we can analyze in the 2nd millennium BC Greek documentation. The analysis of loanwords, within the context in which they appear, suggests a close relation with the category of "wandering words" (*Wanderwörter*). This class of words is spread among numerous languages and cultures, usually in connection with trade, and it reveals a wide range of difficulty in establishing the etymology of the terms, or even their original source-language. The separation of *Wanderwörter* from loanwords is often ambiguous, and they may be considered a special class of loanwords, well distinguished from the category of *Lehnwort*.

In this sense, the textile terminology inherited from a Semitic source shows a coherent behaviour with all the terminology of plants, metals and materials in Mycenaean archives with a Non-Indo-European origin. These loanwords are also well adapted in the Mycenaean lexicon, as shown by the formation of derivative adjectives or compounds, and they represent a particular combination of endogenous and/or exogenous structures, creating new words well anchored to the sphere of technical pertinence and without any secondary semantic developments.

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#### **Abbreviations**

- AHw von Soden, W. 1965–1981 Akkadisches Handwörterbuch: unter Benutzung des lexikalischen Nachlasses von Bruno Meissner (1868–1947). Bearbeitet von Wolfram von Soden, I–III. Wiesbaden.
- CAD Gelb I. J. et al. 1956–2010 The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Chicago.
- CDA Black, J., George, A. and Postgate, N. (eds) 2000<sup>2</sup> A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian. Wiesbaden.

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