

Linear A between sound and meaning: Uncertain signs, logograms, and hybrid words

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Abstract

This paper examines specific features of writing in Linear A, with the aim of deepening our understanding of the internal functioning of this graphic system and its relationship to the underlying linguistic processes. The analysis focuses on three domains: (1) the most frequently attested signs of uncertain reading and the interpretative issues they raise; (2) the use of signs with logographic value, employed to denote specific concepts or terms within the texts; (3) the occurrence of hybrid words, which appear to reflect lexical formation dynamics and possible linguistic interferences, and may thus serve as indicators of an intermediate stage in the evolution of writing.

The purpose is twofold: on the one hand, to offer a critical and updated discussion of these three categories, grounded in a systematic comparison of the various editions of the texts and in an approach that privileges objective and verifiable data; on the other, to advance an interpretative framework—one I have long supported—according to which Linear A constitutes the medium of expression of a language that can be traced back to a protogreek idiom with evident Doric inflections. This hypothesis seeks to reopen the debate on the interpretative potential of Linear A and on its role within the broader history of writing and of the archaic Greek language.

Keywords: Linear A, logographic writing, hybrid words, lexical formation, protogreek, Doric inflections, Aegean and Mediterranean studies.

Introduction

The writing system of Linear A has been the subject of numerous attempts at decipherment, most of which have historically relied on an analogical approach with Linear B, through the application of its phonetic values and the search for correspondences with known languages of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean, including Greek, Luwian, and various Anatolian as well as Semitic languages. Such methodologies, however, tend to privilege external linguistic comparison while largely neglecting the internal dynamics of the Linear A graphic system. As a result, they limit the possibility of identifying either autonomous structural regularities or the internal criteria that govern word formation.

This study adopts an endogenous and structural perspective in the analysis of Linear A, aiming to detect possible morphological and lexical recurrences through a systematic examination of the available epigraphic material. Specifically, the investigation focuses on three distinct but interrelated domains: (1) frequently attested signs whose phonetic value remains undetermined; (2) the logographic use of signs; (3) the occurrence of hybrid forms, interpretable as the outcome of internal phonological and morphological adaptation processes.

Ultimately, the analysis of the data supports the view of a structural affinity between the language underlying Linear A and an archaic variety of Greek, plausibly connected to a protodoric area, whose attestation can also be traced in onomastic repertoires and in the lexicographical sources of antiquity.

Methods and Aims

The method employed is comparative in nature. Occurrences and co-occurrences of individual signs or groups of signs are examined systematically, with consideration given, in each case, to their position within the textual records and to the nature of the epigraphic and functional context. Where possible, a comparison is proposed with Linear B, with the awareness that Linear A is chronologically earlier and therefore represents a prior stage in the evolution of the Aegean writing system.

The analysis does not rely on a single critical edition but is grounded in a cross-comparison of the principal available editions (Pugliese Carratelli, Raison-Pope, Brice, GORILA, etc.), with particular attention to lexically problematic or disputed textual segments. The terms transliterated in Greek characters are all attested in the standard dictionaries of Classical Greek commonly adopted in both academic and educational contexts.

The primary aim of the investigation is to identify a network of phonetic, morphological, and semantic correspondences capable of reconstructing, as far as possible, the structural specificities through which Minoan speakers articulated their language.

Data Analysis

1) Uncertain Signs

Several signs of Linear A still present an uncertain or disputed reading. Among these, particular importance attaches to a group of signs that are relatively frequent and partly interconnected, insofar as the interpretation of one facilitates that of the others. The signs in question are AB24, AB118, AB21^f, AB34, and A301. In this section, phonetic values are proposed on the basis of their respective occurrences, as well as on possible analogies with Linear B.

With regard to the sign AB24, it may be observed that, as with many other Minoan signs, it presents numerous graphic variants, including, for instance, A319. The problem of variants constitutes a major obstacle to understanding Linear A, since it is not always easy to distinguish between differences arising from individual scribal variants and signs possessing independent meaning. In the case of A319, however, it can be stated with certainty that this represents a distinct variant with a different meaning, given that both signs appear in the same document (HTZd156), each followed by different numerals, thereby excluding the possibility of mere graphic choice by the scribe. In a tablet from Phaistos (PH7b,3), AB24 preserves a more archaic, pictographic form, suggesting that the sign originally represented the stylization of a vessel. From a phonetic perspective, AB24 alternates with AB65, which corresponds to the phonetic value *ju* in Linear B. This alternation is attested in the forms *de-ju-ku* (HT93a,6) and *da-jo-ku* (HT117a,8–9), and appears consistent for several reasons. First, the sign TI following *da-jo-ku* in HT117a functions as a logogram which, according to the established practice, is systematically placed after the term it refers to (see afterwards). Second, Linear A is marked by notable vocalic instability, with alternations such as *a/e* and *o/u* widely documented also in Linear B. Finally, comparative analysis of the occurrences shows that both *de-ju-ku* and *da-jo-ku* represent a proper name, with a single Greek equivalent, Δηίοχος, also attested in the Iliad (XV, 341).

The attribution of the phonetic value *jo* to AB24 is further supported by statistical data drawn from the sign lists published in GORILA 5. According to these data, AB24 appears in final position in 70% of cases—a high frequency, well suited to a value *jo* and fully comparable with that of *ju* (57%), which also frequently occurs in final position, and with *ja*, which appears in final position at

a high rate (37%), though lowered by the fact that it is also very common in initial position where it alternates with A.

The sign AB118 is closely connected, in interpretative terms, with the previously discussed AB24. A comparative analysis of the occurrences and co-occurrences of the forms *qe-tu-jo* (HT12) and *AB21^f-tu-jo* (HT7b,1 etc.) with those of *qa-AB118* (KH10,3 and *passim*) and *AB21^f-AB118* (KH88,1 and *passim*) reveals considerable congruence. These terms occur in analogous positions, always in the heading of the list, in the same place as the so-called transaction signs. They are never used as independent items in lists and possess a very clear semantic feature: they reduce contextual entropy, in the same way as transaction signs or other transaction-related indicators (totals, deficits, surpluses, and so forth). This suggests that forms ending with AB118, on the one hand, and *qe-tu-jo* / *AB21^f-tu-jo*, on the other, are phonetically related, with the former constituting abbreviated versions of the latter. Based on this observation, AB118 may plausibly be assigned the phonetic value *twjo*, simplified to *tjo*. Accordingly, the term *qa-tjo*, from an earlier *qa-twjo*, may be interpreted as a verbal adjective, analogous to the Mycenaean *qe-te-o*, which Chadwick proposed to read as a neuter singular with the semantic value “to be paid” or “owed.”

Three elements converge in support of the hypothesis that *qa-tjo* represents a verbal adjective in Linear A:

- a) AB118 occurs with high frequency in final position (66%), a statistically significant figure within the Linear A corpus;
- b) The forms *qa-tjo* and *AB21^f-tjo* are attested several times in lists, where their rendering as verbal adjectives produces a coherent and intelligible context. For instance, KH10a, lines 3–4, reads:
I-pa-sa-ja . *qa-tjo* [] a-ki-pi-e TE GRA 90
translatable as: “*Ἀλκιβίη* (a-ki-pi-e) must give (*qa-tjo*) as TE tax 90 units of grain (GRA) to *IPasaia*.”
- c) There exist further verbal adjectives whose textual distribution and co-occurrences are entirely analogous to those of *qa-tjo* and *AB21^f-tjo*. Among these are *da-tjo* (SYZg1) and *pa-tjo* (PA1,1 and HT43,1–2).

The term *pa-tjo*, in particular, occurs in two accounting documents (PA1 and HT43) that display significant structural similarities. In PA1 we read:

a-ku YU *pa-tjo* 35,

which can be transliterated as: “*Ἀργών* (or *Ἀλκόν*) must produce (*pa-tjo*) 35 units of spelt (YU),” where *pa-tjo* corresponds to *σπαρτέον*, a verbal adjective from *σπείρω* (“to sow,” “to produce”).

Similarly, in HT43 we find:

Ma-ne DU . *pa-tjo* . I IGRA 5[

that is: “*Μάνης*, as offering (DU = *δῶς*), must produce (*pa-tjo* = *σπαρτέον*) for sacred purposes (I) 5[units of sacred grain (IGRA)¹.”

The recurring presence and consistent semantic function of such verbal adjectives in agricultural or transactional contexts further support the interpretation of *twjo/tjo* as the phonetic and functional value of AB118. At the same time, it is difficult to resist the temptation to regard *qa-tjo* as the Doric form of the verbal adjective *θετέον* from *τίνω* (“to be paid”) and *δάτεον* from *δατέομαι* (“to be divided”).

The sign AB21^f also presents an uncertain reading. Its interpretation is closely linked to A306, attested also in Linear B with the phonetic value *wo* and iconographically representing an ovine.

¹The concept of sacred wheat (IGRA) is well-documented in the texts (see HT93a, 120, etc.).

According to the conventions of Linear B, AB21_f indicates a female sheep. Comparison of the respective occurrences suggests that the variation between the two signs is more graphic than phonetic—a phenomenon observed with other signs as well, where no real change of value is involved. It may therefore be hypothesized that AB21_f represents a specific variant of *wo*, which can be conventionally designated as *wo*₂, thereby maintaining phonetic continuity with A306 while distinguishing its specific usage. Consequently, the verbal adjective *wo*₂-tjo would correspond to οἰστέον (“to be carried, paid”).

AB34 is likewise of uncertain interpretation, but two highly indicative elements support the attribution of the value *mna* to it. First, it appears in the variation u-mi-na-si (HT117a,1–2; etc) / u-mna-si (HT15,1; etc.), which can be traced to the Greek term ὑμνησις. Both forms appear in the headings of accounting lists, suggesting an introductory function, perhaps ritual or celebratory. Second, from a graphic perspective, AB34 seems to represent a stylized lunar symbol, corresponding to the Greek μήνη (“moon”), thereby reinforcing the proposed phonetic association.

The sign AB301 has traditionally been associated with the value *jo*, but several factors cast doubt on this reading. First, the frequency of AB301 in final position is virtually nil, unlike *ja* and *jo*, which occur in final position at 38% and 57% respectively. Second, AB301 alternates with the sign *qe* in the pair sa-qe-ri (HT11b,4) / sa-AB301-ri (ZA11b,1), two fully congruent forms plausibly interpretable as a proper name, based on their textual position. Finally, AB301 displays a high frequency both as a logogram and in ligature. In light of these elements, it is proposed to assign it an alternative value, preferably *qe*₂, or alternatively *qi*, indicating a possible phonetic variant of the sign *qe*.

In summary, the following values are proposed for the following signs:

Sign	Proposed Value	Main Comment
AB24	<i>jo</i>	Alternates with <i>ju</i> in de-ju-ku / da-jo-ku; final position frequency ~70%, comparable to <i>ju</i> (~57%).
AB118	<i>twjo</i> / <i>tjo</i>	Is present in the variation qe-tu-jo / qa-twjo, occurring mainly in headings; final position frequency ~66%.
AB21 _f	<i>wo</i> ₂	Graphic variant of A306, equivalent to the sign for <i>wo</i> in Mycenaean. Denotes the female sheep.
AB34	<i>mna</i>	Alternation u-mna-si / u-mi-na-si = Greek ὑμνησις; occurring in list headings; lunar symbolism graphically consistent with μήνη (“moon”).
AB301	<i>qe</i> ₂ (o <i>qi</i>)	Negligible frequency in final position (unlike <i>ja</i> , <i>jo</i>); alternates with <i>qe</i> in sa-qe-ri / sa-AB301-ri; predominantly used as a logogram and in ligature.

2) Logographic Use

Most of the signs attested in Linear A, as in Linear B, perform a dual function, being employed both as logograms and as phonograms. This phenomenon is entirely understandable and fits within the evolutionary framework shaped by the application of the acrophonic principle, which accompanied the gradual—and often ambiguous—transition from an essentially ideographic system to a phonetic one. This principle was first applied to signs already in use, which thus acquired a dual value: on the one hand logographic, on the other phonetic.

In this context, it is important to clarify a relevant point: the so-called logograms are not ideographic signs, but rather phonetic signs that indicate a word through the sound of its initial syllable. Therefore, in Linear A, alongside logograms and phonograms, there are also signs of pictographic and ideographic nature, whose interpretation still relies on their direct visual impact.

In light of this, it is inaccurate to define Linear A as a logo-syllabic writing system, since such a classification excludes the ideographic component (pictograms, ideograms and ligatures formed by these two types of characters), which instead constitutes a structural element essential to the system. It is more accurate, therefore, to consider Linear A as an ideophonetic (or ideosyllabic) system, in which the ideographic component is made up of pictograms and ideograms, while the phonetic component is expressed through logograms and phonograms. To these two components must be added the category of ligatures, that is, complex graphic compositions that may assume different values depending on the nature of the combined signs. When such ligatures are composed of pictographic or ideographic elements—for example, a vessel containing a measurement sign or the figure of a man armed with a spear—they retain a marked visual value and continue to be understood as ideographic compounds.

Alongside the use of phonetic signs, Linear A writing also shows a significant employment of signs in a logographic function, particularly evident in administrative documents. These signs can be divided into several functional categories: transaction signs, other signs related to accounting activities, determinatives, signs representing human beings, signs referring to products, and polysemic signs, that is, signs with more than one meaning.

Transaction Signs

The transaction signs are five distinctive signs, already listed in a previous study (*Minos*, 1988). Their salient feature is their systematic position at the heading of lists, frequently framed by two points. They are accessory signs used by the scribe to provide additional information regarding the nature of the recorded transaction. Contextual analysis of their occurrences allows their meaning to be hypothesized with a good degree of reliability.

The first of these signs is TE (AB04), which occurs in mixed contexts and appears connected to fiscal operations. The sign can be interpreted as the logogram of the Greek term *τῆλος*, “tax,” derived from *τελέω* (“to pay”), itself traceable to the root *tel-* of *τέλλω*.

The second sign is I (AB28), whose occurrence is limited to religious contexts. It introduces lists clearly intended for ritual or cultic purposes, as will be discussed later. Its function thus seems to be to indicate the religious destination of the registrations that follow.

The next two signs, A307 and A638, are both variants of PI (AB39), with A638 represented by the repetition of the sign (PIPI). This latter has been plausibly associated with the Greek term *πέμψις*, “procession,” an interpretation supported by the contexts in which the sign appears. In particular, in HT85a,1 and HT97a,3, A638 introduces records of personal names, suggesting that these are lists of participants in processions or collective ritual events.

The sign A326, though rare, appears in HT35a,1 in association with the word *ti-ti-ku*, the equivalent of the Greek adjective *θυτικός*, meaning “sacrificial” or “pertaining to sacrifice.” Here again, the context suggests the use of the sign to qualify an activity belonging to the cultic sphere.

Other Signs Pertaining to Transactions

Among other signs indicating fiscal activities are TI (AB37) and DU (AB51). These signs, while

not heading the list like the transaction signs, serve to clarify the status of the action and the destination of the record.

The sign TI displays a constant graphic behavior: it is always placed after the term to which it refers, thereby signalling a completed action. Analysis of its occurrences consistently suggests the meaning “paid.” A representative example is provided by the second list on the tablet HT117a, whose heading is sa-ta (n. pl. of *σᾶτον*), a term corresponding to a measure of grain. In this context, the logogram TI follows the names of two contributors, *Κόσανος/Κοσσανός* and *Δηίοχος*, and indicates that they have already paid their share.

TI also appears on both recto and verso of the tablet KN1, which records quantities of a substance not yet identified (AB38), whose amounts are always significantly higher than those of the other listed substances, suggesting a greater bulk of the substance itself. In this document, on side a the lord a-ku (interpretable as *Ἄργος*) and on side b the lady ja-du-ra (*Ἥδυλῃ*) are recorded as having respectively paid 240 and 105 units of the substance in question², with TI placed after both to mark the completed payment.

A further attestation of the sign TI is found on side c of the tablet MA1, which does not contain figures but constitutes the official record of a cultic offering. At the beginning of side a appears the sign X, also employed in Linear B to validate administrative documents. In this context, TI confirms that the offering was effectively dedicated to two divinities: to the sacred (I) DU–wi (dative of *Δῶς*, goddess of the gift) and to the royal (A) MA, the logogram of *μήτηρ*, an epithet of the “Great Mother.” The text specifies that the offering was made “with profit” (*qe-de-mi-nu = κερδημένος*), reinforcing the value of TI as an indicator of the completed act of payment.

In some cases, the sign TI appears in ligature with other signs, conferring on them a more specific meaning. In ZA10a,2, for example, the transaction sign TE shows two small appendices at its lower part. This ligature with TI does not alter the meaning of the original logogram but specifies that the tax in question has already been paid. Such usage demonstrates the graphic and functional versatility of the sign TI within the Linear A system, as well as its central role in recording completed transactions. TI, with the value “paid,” appears on a vessel (KNZb5) in the form *A tu-ri-si TI*, which can be transliterated as “payment (TI) for the royal (A) θυρίσι = doors,” probably indicating a tax to be paid for entry into the Palace.

The logogram DU (AB51), *δόσις* or also *δῶς* (in which case it is a monosyllabic word), carries the meaning “donation”; however, from a functional perspective, it must be understood as a genuine tax. In most cases, DU occurs in association with the sign A, with which it forms a locution indicating a donation destined for the palace. There are, however, occurrences where DU directly follows another term, as in tablet HT43, where it appears in connection with the name *Μάνης*—an individual who, as already noted, must sow a certain quantity of sacred grain. In this context, the simultaneous presence of DU and the verbal adjective *σπαρτέον* specifies the obligatory nature of the “donation,” which thus takes on the features of an actual tax.

Determinatives

The logograms A and I share two fundamental characteristics: they are generally placed before the term to which they refer, and in some cases they may be omitted. They display all the features of determinatives.

² Since AB38 corresponds to the sound *e*, it could be the logogram for *ἐρέβινθος* = chickpea or *ἐλάτη*, a date palm inflorescence from which a fragrant oil was extracted that was still widely used in classical times.

The sign A precedes various kinds of terms, as attested, for example, in the alternation ka-ru (HT97,1, etc.) / A-ka-ru (HT2,1, etc.), which designates a transaction and corresponds to the Greek *καῖρον*, understood, when preceded by A, as a “measure agreed upon” with the palace (i.e. a formal agreement, hence the use of the determinative A).

In other cases, A introduces a distinctive element with respect to the term it precedes, as in the alternation pa-ra-jo (HT115a,4) / A-pa-ra-jo (HT96a,1–2), which is linked to the Greek *παλαιός* and which, when preceded by A, can be interpreted as “royal elder,” evidently an honorific title. Similarly, in the dative plural A-si-da-to-i (ARKH2–3), which is connected with the Greek *σύνδετοι* (dat.pl. from *σύνδετος*) the sign A assigns to the term the value of “royal relatives,” thereby reinforcing the function of the logogram as a nobiliary or institutional determinative.

It can therefore be concluded that A functions as a qualifying prefix, attributing to the nouns it precedes a special status, generally associated with the royal and administrative sphere. It is in this sense, in my view, that it is also occasionally found preceding Mycenaean proper names.

The logogram I, besides being employed as a transaction sign, also appears before the names of deities, functioning as an indicator of sacrality. A significant example is I-DA (PKZa18), which can be interpreted as “sacred Δᾱ” (an epithet of the Great Mother, called Zᾱ in Cypriot). The same value is attested before pa-sa-ja (Ψαία) a divinity documented on a tablet (KH10). In this context, I specifies the cultic quality of the recipient of the offering, emphasizing its religious nature and reinforcing the institutional significance of the entire transaction.

Just like A, I may also be regarded as a determinative in its own right. In addition to preceding divine names, it may appear in ligature with other logograms, to which it confers a cultic value. A meaningful example occurs in tablet HT7a,1–2, where I is associated with the pictogram of a man, most likely indicating the figure of a “sacred man,” to be understood perhaps as a priest or ritual official. The same graphic-functional mechanism is also attested before the ideogram of grain. In these cases, I qualifies the product as “sacred grain,” a notion that, although it may seem unusual, is in fact amply documented (HT93a,3–4; HT120,4; etc.).

The recurrence of I in administrative contexts tied to the religious sphere—whether referring to persons or to material goods—confirms its semantic value as a marker of sacrality. Its systematic presence in accounting documents indicates that, within the Linear A writing system, the distinction between Palace goods and cultic goods was recorded and made visible through a codified use of the determinatives A (referring to the Palace) and I (which means holy, sacred).

The use of these determinatives in prefixed position finds a clear parallel in Mesopotamian systems, where determinatives function as semantic markers or classifiers, able to delimit the lexical field of the following logogram. Similarly, comparison with Egyptian shows that determinatives, although devoid of phonetic value, operate as indicators of semantic category, reinforcing the link between sign and referent. In the case of Linear A, such usage appears to follow an analogous structural principle: the integration of logographic elements and phonetic determinatives in order to specify, disambiguate, and, above all, anchor meaning in a ritual or institutional context.

Other Essential Administrative Signs

At this point, since the signs connected with transactions are considerable in number and demonstrate how broad and precise the Minoan fiscal system was, although they are not logograms,

I wish to recall three further signs that are truly indispensable for understanding the administrative system codified by Linear A. These signs are: ku-ro, ki-ro, and sa-ra₂.

Ku-ro. As it is well known, it is the word that means total. It is the equivalent of the Greek word *κύρος* = check, confirmation, from the verb *κυρόω* = to verify, to confirm. So, it must be translated “verified total” or, simply, “verified”. Po-to ku-ro means φόρτος = goods which have been verified, that is loaded goods which have been confirmed.

Ki-ro stands for deficit. Minoan people had three words to indicate a deficit. They are ki-ro = *χῆρος*, devoid, not having, which is the most used one; ki-ra-ja = *χρεία*³ lack, lack of, need (see Hsch: *χρηία· πηνία· Κρηῆτες*); and ki-ra which is *χρή* it is necessary.

Sa-ra₂ appears on more than a tablet. I have been looking for its meaning for a long time but actually seeing as *σάλλω* is the Dorian form of *θάλλω* which means to flourish, to prosper and seeing as *θαλία* means abundance, prosperity, I am convinced that sa-ra₂ is *σαλία* and means surplus, reserve, stocks.

Logograms Indicating Men

Among the most clearly identifiable logograms within the Linear A corpus are those associated with the pictogram of the man. In this regard, four tablets are particularly significant — HT 27a, HT 89, HT 94a, and HT 100 — which exhibit an almost uniform structure. Each of them opens with a list that can with certainty be referred to men, since the pictogram of the man appears and all items are summed together. This first list is usually followed by one or more additional lists (cf. HT 94a) recording products such as barley, wine, figs or perfumed oils.

This textual structure suggests a context of distribution, probably reserved for specific categories of persons. The systematic association between the man pictogram and the enumeration of material goods destined for consumption strengthens the interpretation that the names or logograms appearing in these contexts should be referred to the semantic category of “man.” These were, in all likelihood, individuals receiving rations or payments, possibly connected with administrative, ritual, or labor functions, among whom also appears the pictographic ligature HOMO+HASTA, evidently denoting a type of soldier.

The recurrence of this configuration across the four tablets allows the terms they contain to serve as a reliable basis for identifying additional logograms referring to men. Once the elements occupying positions analogous to the pictogram HOMO have been securely distinguished, the analysis can be extended to other documents by applying a comparative criterion rooted in lexical co-occurrence and textual structure. In this way, further designations of individuals or social groups may be recognized even in texts lacking the pictogram itself, provided they contain terms associated with it and parallel in syntactic construction and distribution of content. On this basis, other logograms, used for designating men, are:

RE (AB27). This is one of the most frequently recurring signs within the lists, and its interpretation is made plausible by its co-occurrence with the names of deities (cf. first table of “hybrid words”), which allows us to hypothesize for it a meaning close to “attendant” or “cult official.” Such an interpretation is further reinforced by possible etymological parallels, for example with the Greek verb *λεῦσσω* = “to see, to pay attention” (cf. *λεσῶνις*, “supervisor” in Egypt).

³ Here and elsewhere, the graphic anaptysis is rendered by inserting an *i* after the first consonant (see also u-mi-nasi/ὑμνησις).

SA (AB31). This sign appears in correlation with RE on the tablet HT 27b. The record documents several types of wine: *waVIN* (to be associated with the Greek *ἁπαλός*, “light”), *neVIN* (related to *νέος*), as well as a combination wine + grain. The latter combination would be more plausible if it referred to wine + barley, that is, beer, a product certainly known in Minoan culture. The taxpayers in question are two persons, Mi-da- and Pa-se (*Μίδας* and *Πᾶσης*), and the quantities received by RE are significantly greater than those assigned to SA.

Although the exact meaning of SA remains obscure, the context suggests that this logogram too must refer to a category of men. A possible interpretative clue is offered by Hesychius: *σαῖος . κοῦρος* (“youth” or “servant”), which may imply a subordinate function with respect to RE. In this sense, SA could designate individuals of lower rank or with different tasks, yet still integrated into an organized system of distribution and redistribution.

SE (AB09) appears in correlation with TA, but it also occurs in attestations confirming its use in cultic contexts. In tablet ZA ZB3, for instance, SE is referred to the deity DI, the only male figure among the identified divinities, who is qualified as di-kaSE, interpretable as “SE of justice” (from Greek *δίκη*, gen. *δικῆς*), and A-SE, namely “royal SE.” The dual attribution suggests both a sacral and an institutional function: SE may constitute a title or qualification, approximately translatable as “representative,” “authoritative figure,” or “chief.” In this sense, it cannot be excluded that SE should be understood as an abbreviation of *σημάντωρ* or *σημάντηρ*, Greek terms designating a leader, a guide or head. It also occurs in a hybrid word such as ma-kaISE = “sacred (I) SE,” i.e., “sacred guide,” of *Μάχα*, “battle,” here most probably referring to the goddess, in correlation with another hybrid word: ma-kaITA = “sacred *θής*⁴” (Od. 4.644), “sacred servant of *Μάχα*”. From this latter term is derived *μαχητής*, “soldier.” Both words recur in ZA8,4 and Pk1,8 in related roles.

MI (AB73) is likewise attested in religious contexts and seems to belong to the semantic field of care or healing. A plausible etymology may connect it with the Greek verb *μεδέω*, “to provide, to take care of,” suggesting for MI a function linked to therapeutic practices or rituals of purification.

KI (AB67) is more ambiguous in nature, though no less significant. It designates a specific class of men. The most convincing interpretation connects it with the Greek term *κίρων*, attested in Hesychius with the meaning “*ἀδύνατος πρὸς συνουσίαν*”, that is, incapable of procreation, hence “castrated.” In the Linear A documentation, KI indeed refers to both animals and men. In tablet HT118, the logogram is employed in reference to swine, which reflects a well-documented practice: the castration of pigs in order to increase their fat mass. In HT85b, KI appears as heading followed by the term ki-ra-ja (Greek *χρεῖα*, “lack, need”) and by a list of men. The recto of the same tablet (HT85a) presents a list clearly referring to individuals, thereby strengthening the hypothesis that KI identifies a specific human category, perhaps bound labourers, servants, if not literally eunuchs. Although such an interpretation may appear uncomfortable from an ideological perspective, the documentary evidence — both in its terminological distribution and in the parallel with Linear B usage (where KI designates lambs) — supports a coherent identification, even though the semantic value differs markedly between the two systems.

Logograms Indicating Divinities

The most important are two: MA and DI. We will discuss the latter in polysemic signs.

⁴ See Hsch: *θής . δούλος, μισθοτός*.

MA (AB80) recurs in religious and cultic contexts and must be interpreted as one of the epithets of the supreme goddess of the Minoan pantheon. It most probably represents a graphic form of the Greek word *μάτηρ*, “mother,” thereby confirming its role in the cultic sphere. One of the most significant attestations is found in tablet HT117a, where MA appears at the beginning, followed by the term *ka-ri-te*, which can be traced back to the Greek *χαρίτες*, “thanksgivings,” an interpretation fully suited to the ritual context. The heading also contains the word *umi-na-si*, which, on the basis of comparative evidence, corresponds to *ὑμνησις*, “hymn of praise.” This is therefore a text that records a hymn of thanksgiving to the goddess MA, expressed through offerings and ritual invocations.

Another important attestation is represented by tablet MA1b, where MA appears in the form AMA, “Regal MA.” Such usage confirms the institutional dimension of the divinity, whose authority extended both to the cultic and to the royal-administrative spheres.

Logograms Referring to Products

Among the logograms used to indicate contents — that is, material goods or offerings — the most significant are KA (AB77) and SU (AB58).

KA clearly designates an offering, which, when preceded by the determinative I, as in the ligature IKA (HT91,1 and HT102,4), is a sacred offering. The sequence I+KA is not a word but, as shown by comparison of the editions, where KA is written smaller and linked to I, a ligature with the meaning of “sacred offering.” The sign KA is in all probability an abbreviation of the Greek terms *κάννα* or *κανᾶ* (cf. Hesychius: *κανᾶ · κανῖσκια*), referring to ritual containers or baskets employed during ceremonies. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that *κανᾶ* is the heading of tablet HT23a, where it introduces a list of various goods, including sesame and different kinds of perfumed oils.

A distinctive feature of KA is the variation in size with which it is written: in some tablets (ZA4a,8; etc.) it appears in a reduced format compared with the other signs, which signals its use as a logogram. KA also appears in ligature with the man logogram (HOMO+KA), as in HT28a,4 and in other cases, where it refers to bearers of offerings. A particularly eloquent example is tablet HT115a,5, where the hybrid word KApō-ru occurs. Here KA retains the meaning of “offering, basket” while po-ru is to be connected with the Greek *φόροι*, “bearers.” The combination suggests a direct parallel with the figure of the *κανηφόροι*, the youths or virgins charged with carrying offerings in Greek ritual. The mixed term KApō-ru thus attests not only to linguistic interaction but also to a formalized cultic structure, in which the role of the offering is inseparable from that of the bearer. It is also expressed ideographically by the symbol of a man carrying a KA (offering basket) in his hands (HT28a,4 and *passim*).

SU (AB58) can be identified with a specific type of vessel. This interpretation is confirmed by its occurrences, particularly in tablet MA10a, where SU appears inscribed within the representation of a container. Even when it occurs alone, the sign SU always appears in contexts consistent with its interpretation as a container, thereby reinforcing its identification as a logogram designating a type of vessel.

A similar case is represented by the sign KE (AB44), attested, for example, in HT26a,1, inscribed within a vessel. Its semantic value can plausibly be traced back to the Greek *χερνίψ*, “lustral water,” and by extension to the vessel that contains it. This interpretation assigns a ritual function to the

vessel represented by KE, confirming the importance of purificatory water in Minoan cultic contexts.

Monosyllabic Words: DA and TA

In addition to proper logograms, Linear A presents a limited number of monosyllabic words used independently, which, though not logograms, play a precise semantic role.

The sign DA (AB01) is used in religious contexts and represents the name of the Great Mother. It is a word of Doric origin, Δᾱ, which can occur alone or in association with the Doric word μάτηρ. There is no doubt that Δᾱ μάτηρ is the Doric form of Demeter, which strengthens the theory that the Minoans were proto-Doric. For if they were not, why would they worship as their supreme divinity a goddess bearing a Doric name?

The sign TA (AB59), on the other hand, seems to indicate a servile or subordinate condition. It must be related to the Greek term θής, glossed by Hesychius as θής . δοῦλος, μισθωτός, that is, “servant” or “hired worker.” This value is consistent with the administrative contexts in which TA is attested.

Polysemic Logograms

The presence of logograms with more than one meaning should not only cause no surprise but in fact be expected, since this is a common feature of all systems containing both logograms and phonograms. A logogram is essentially a phonetic abbreviation of a word by means of its initial syllable. It follows that, in systems such as Linear A — as in Linear B — logograms with identical graphic forms may refer to several phonemically related but semantically distinct terms. Evidence for this is provided by the lists of terms appended to the second edition of *Documents* edited by John Chadwick.

Among the potentially polysemic logograms, NE (AB41) stands out. When used as a logogram, NE consistently refers to a term equivalent to νέος, “young,” just as in Linear B. However, in some tablets — for instance HT106 — NE seems to designate a vessel or a measure, suggesting a second technical sense, perhaps within the sphere of contributions. HT106, in fact, records six and a half units of grain produced by μνοίτης (“servant, servitude”), which are divided into two NE: one of five and a half units and the other of a single unit.

Another noteworthy case is QE (AB78), which is used predominantly to indicate a spice, often in association with the grain logogram (HT18,1 and others). Yet in other attestations QE appears in contexts suggesting its use as a unit of measure, perhaps referring to the quantity of spice distributed or received.

DI (AB07), used in administrative contexts, designates a specific class of men, as can be deduced from the distribution of its occurrences and the contexts in which it appears. Although this term could have an equivalent in the Greek names Μένδης or Σμέρδης, it is not a proper name, both because the co-occurrences demonstrate otherwise and because in HT69 a punctuation mark separates MA and DI. DI systematically follows the term to which it refers, in an order suggesting a relation of belonging or subordination. For example, in HT85b,5, we read the sequence MA DI, interpretable as “the DI men of MA.” Similarly, in ZA15b,1 the expression KA . DI is attested, likewise interpretable as “the KA offering of the DI men.” In both cases a clear punctuation mark between the two logograms confirms the syntactic autonomy of the terms and strengthens the analytical reading of the construction.

Taken together, these attestations make it possible to identify DI as a logogram referring to a well-defined class, perhaps with ritual and administrative functions.

However the logogram DI, when it occurs in religious contexts assumes a radically different meaning and can be identified with a divinity, probably the same *DI-we* also documented in Linear B texts. A particularly eloquent example is provided by tablet HT102, which contains two distinct lists but both headed by the word ka-pa (from *καρπύω*, to collect). The second list, beginning on line three, records a set of goods: three ma-dja (*μαῖζα*, a type of flatbread), ten units of WI (in HT25b,2 connected with the term *θέρος*, “harvest, crop”), and five sacred donations marked by the ligature I+KA. All these items are specified — by the Indo-European suffix *-na* — which indicates belonging- as destined for the divinity *DI-we* (Di-we-na). Here the function of *DI* as a theophoric name is unequivocal and fits fully within the lexical system of Minoan religion, where the identity of the deity is marked both by its position in the syntagm and by the goods offered to it.

In conclusion, DI is a paradigmatic example of functional polysemy in Linear A. On the one hand, it is a logogram that refers to a male category identifiable in administrative contexts. On the other hand, it is a divine name that appears in cult-related documents. Combined analysis of the signs, syntactic position, co-occurrences and usage contexts reliably distinguishes between these two spheres of meaning.

3) Hybrid Words

In the context of Linear A writing, the expression “hybrid words” refers to linguistic units that combine logographic and phonetic signs. These mixed graphemes, or hybrid forms, differ from ligatures, which remain predominantly ideographic compounds, and instead constitute semiotic structures in which meaning and phonetic value coexist within the same written unit.

The existence of such composite forms can be considered implicit, since writing systems that combine logography and phoneticism tend, by their very nature, to produce combinations of this type. The phenomenon is attested not only in Linear A but also in Linear B: one may think, for example, of the Of series, where words such as KU LANA (Of 37, 38, 40) or KU LANA PA (Of 26, 28, 31) occur.

Similarly, many ancient systems — from Egyptian to Akkadian, from Mayan script to modern Japanese — display compositions of a hybrid nature. In these, numerous examples can be observed of written units associating an ideo/logographic sign with one or more phonetic signs. This structural principle is commonly interpreted as a strategy aimed at disambiguating, specifying, or completing the phonological and/or grammatical information connected to a logogram.

In Linear A, hybrid words are recurrent and, in some cases, may include more than one logographic element. Significant examples are Inu-maRE (ZA 4a,5-6, etc.) and Ara-naRE (HT 1a, 4), both composed of a phonetic base (nu-ma and ra-na), followed by the logogram RE and preceded, respectively, by the determinatives I and A.

These compounds may be interpreted as “attendant (RE) of the sacred (I) pasture” (*νομή*) and “attendant (RE) of the royal (A) *Ῥένη*” (a nymph). They are most likely formations that originally possessed full semantic value, later reinterpreted in Linear B as proper names. In Linear A, by contrast, they seem to preserve their original lexical meaning. Their structure confirms that the logogram RE fulfils a specific semantic function, probably connected with a ritual sphere or role.

Other examples of hybrid words, interpreted according to the performative style of the logograms composing them, are the following:

- KApo-ru (HT115a,5), carriers (*φόροι*) of offerings (KA);
- KAKupa (Wc3016a), KA *κύμβη* (*κύπη*), “offering bowls”;
- DUda-ma (HT6b,4), part (*δάσμα*) of the donation (*δῶς*);
- Ma-neDU (HT43,1), *Μάνης* (man’s name) donation (*δῶς*);
- Pa-roSU (HT20,1), vessels (SU) containing *βᾶρος* (an ointment);
- Aka-ru (HT2,1), *καίρος* (available) for the palace (A);
- Asa-ra₂ (HT89,1), “stocks (*σαλία*) belonging to the Palace” (A).

Naturally, the attestations are not exhausted by the examples given⁵. Hybrid words are in fact widely documented within the Linear A corpus; however, their distribution does not appear to be random. Linear A writing constitutes a graphic system ordered according to criteria which we must attempt to discern but which were perfectly clear to the scribes themselves. Not all signs used in logographic function give rise to hybrid words: some, more than others, appear particularly productive in this type of lexical formation. Emblematic in this respect is the case of the logogram RE and the monosyllabic word DA, both frequently involved in the creation of hybrid forms.

Hybrid Words Formed with RE

Word	Phonetic Part	Logogram	Meaning	Reference
na-daRE	na-da	RE	RE of <i>Νάδα</i> , a nymph	HT117a,5
ne-daRE	ne-da	RE	RE of <i>Νέδα</i> (the same nymph as above, with a/e variation)	HT17,3
te-jaRE	te-ja	RE	RE of <i>Θεία</i> , a goddess	HT117a,5
pa-jaRE	pa-ja	RE	RE of <i>Βαία</i> , the nurse, an epithet of Demeter	HT8b,5 etc.
DARE	DA	RE	RE of <i>Δᾱ</i> , the Great Goddess	passim
MARE	MA	RE	RE of <i>Μάτηρ</i> , epithet of the Great Mother)	HT55a,1
RARE	RA	RE	RE of <i>Ρᾱ</i> , <i>Ρέα</i> , a goddess	HT117a
Ara-naRE	ra-na	RE	RE of the royal (A) <i>Ρήνη</i> , a nymph	HT1,4

This evidence confirms the value of RE as 'attendant', 'priest', or something comparable. He was certainly a high-ranking official.

Hybrid Words with DA

Word	Logogram	Phonetic Part	Greek Transcription (= meaning)	Reference
DAsi-tjo	DA	si-tjo	<i>σιτίον</i> = grain	HT85a,3-4
DAqe-ra	DA	qe-ra	<i>θήρᾱς</i> = of the hunt	HT6a,6
DAku-na	DA	ku-na	<i>γυνή</i> = young bride	HT103,4

⁵For further documentation cf. “The Ideophonetic System of Linear A” available on the site patriapugliese.com.

Word	Logogram	Phonetic Part	Greek Transcription (= meaning)	Reference
DAku-se-jo	DA	ku-se-jo	χύσεως (< χύσεως) = of metal fusion	HT103,4-5
DAna-si	DA	na-si	νήσις = weaving	HT126a,1
DAta-ra	DA	ta-ra	θηλή = prosperity	HT6a,1
DAwe-da	DA	we-da	ῥδης = of the family (Hesychios)	HT10a,4
DAMinu	DA	minu	σμήνος = beehive	HT117a,8
DAu-pu ₃	DA	u-pu ₃	ὄπιον / ὀφίων = opium / of snakes	HT120,3-4
DAdu-ma-ta	DA	du-ma-ta	δῶματα = the houses of DA	HT95a,1
DAna-tu	DA	na-tu	νηστός = spinning	ARKH6,1

While in the case of RE it is clear that we are dealing with the names of divinities, the interpretation of hybrid words composed with DA requires a more nuanced analysis. On the basis of contexts and co-occurrences, all indications suggest that these DA designate categories of individuals or ritual confraternities connected with the cult of the “Great Mother,” a central figure of pre-Indo-European religions. This hypothesis finds comparative support in other cultures of the Mediterranean and the ancient Near East, where confraternities or initiatory groups were often organized around the veneration of a generative female divinity. From this perspective, DA is not merely a productive lexical element but a revealing sign of a broader socio-religious structure, in which communities found their cohesion precisely through ritual devotion to a universal deity.

Discussion

The complexity of the Linear A graphic system is thus evident. It presents itself as a mixed system, in which the ideographic component, consisting of pictograms and ideograms, coexists with a phonetic component, expressed through logograms and phonograms. As in other contemporary writing systems, Linear A experiments with various types of compounds, such as ligatures and hybrid words, which testify to an evolutionary stage oriented toward phoneticism, though not having fully achieved it.

The difficulties of interpretation emerge on two main levels: phonetic and lexical. On the phonetic level, the critical issues derive both from the high number of graphic variants (almost every sign possesses at least one, sometimes more than one), and from the polysemic character of several signs. A significant example is that of the sign I, which can function as a transaction sign or as a determinative — in both cases with the constant value of “sacred” — but which, on the phonetic level, may assume the values *i* or *no*⁶. Other signs share the same ambiguity, confirming the multivalent nature of the system.

Differences are often signalled by means of hyphens or dots, yet two problems arise. First, the scribe — who knew perfectly well the value of the signs and took the interpretation for granted — did not always resort to this device, thereby leaving the meaning implicit. Second, even when diacritical marks were applied, they are not always visible: sometimes due to material damage to the tablets, sometimes because, as in the GORILA edition, the dots were omitted already in print. The editors themselves acknowledge the issue and, in the preface to the *corrigenda*, note that most of the corrections concern precisely the dots eliminated by printers who, out of excessive zeal, had considered them mere “pétouilles.” The problem, however, persists because although about fifty such dots were reintegrated, as many continue to escape registration. To verify this, it is not even

⁶In the final word, it always has the value of *no*, unless it is an ending (cf. Asi-da-to-i ARKH2,2-3).

necessary to compare other editions (Raison-Pope, Pugliese Carratelli, Brice, etc.), which are much more precise in this respect; it is sufficient to compare the photographs, when clear (those of the ZA series are not always so), with the other copies in order to perceive this visually. Sometimes dots are placed before the signs, sometimes after, occasionally more than one, as in Cypro-Minoan. Their value is difficult to infer, but for this very reason they should not be omitted, since they are diacritical marks — indeed the only ancient and universal diacritical sign employed by the scribe.

The implications of this fact are far from negligible: the presence or absence of a dot can alter the phonetic or lexical reading of signs and words, thereby influencing the reconstruction of logographic values and of hybrid formations. Editorial tradition does not merely transmit the material but actively shapes its interpretation, imposing upon the philologist a constant need for direct verification of the originals and a critical stance toward printed editions. With regard to Linear A, such work has often not been carried out: later databases, modelled on the GORILA edition, reproduce its errors, and even when authors correct them, their followers frequently continue to adopt the erroneous version.

The problem of diacritical marks and the uncertainties introduced by editorial tradition is not a marginal detail but touches upon the very nature of Linear A, understood as a graphic system still in the process of definition. The loss or omission of a dot compromises not only paleographic accuracy but also highlights the intrinsic instability of a code oscillating between phonetic, logographic, and determinative functions. Analogous situations emerge in other archaic systems: in Egyptian hieroglyphs, for example, the distinction between phonetic, logographic, and determinative values often depends on minute signs or graphic conventions whose absence profoundly alters the reading; in the earliest Sumerian cuneiform documents, the accumulation of polysemic values and the lack of systematic diacritics produced considerable ambiguities, resolved only through later standardization by Babylonian sages.

Placed within this comparative perspective, Linear A does not appear as an exception but as yet another example of the inherent difficulties of writing systems in formation. The presence of hybrid words, attested in many ancient and modern traditions, should therefore not be considered an anomaly but rather as the manifestation of a structural principle common to mixed writing systems: the constant interaction between sound and meaning. This dynamic, shared from Egyptian to Akkadian, from Maya to modern Japanese, shows that the instability between ideographic and phonetic dimensions is not a limitation, but a creative resource capable of generating new interpretive possibilities and of nourishing the very vitality of writing.

Egyptian Writing

In the Egyptian writing system, the combination of phonetic and ideographic signs constitutes the fundamental principle. The ideogram, often also defined as a determinative, conceptually represents a word or a semantic root and is frequently accompanied by phonetic complements: signs that repeat, integrate, or specify the pronunciation of the logogram. This technique responds to a twofold need: on the one hand, to reinforce the desired phonetic reading (*phonetic reinforcement*), and on the other, to distinguish between homophones or polysemic terms (*semantic disambiguation*). A significant example is the sign ☉ (*r*'), which depicts the sun and, by extension, the solar deity Ra: its writing can be completed with the phonetic signs *r* and ' (laryngeal), thereby making explicit the phonetic sequence *r*' and ensuring its correct reading. In many cases, the determinative has no phonetic value but serves exclusively a semantic function, while phonetic complements actively contribute to the phonologization of the lemma. Pleonastic writings, in which a phonetic group is followed by an ideogram not read aloud but inserted by the scribe solely to reinforce its semantic value, are widespread in Egyptian. An example is the sequence *r/u* LEO, where *r/u* signals the

phonetic form “lion,” and the ideogram *LEO* reiterates its meaning through the pictorial representation.

Akkadian Cuneiform Writing

Akkadian cuneiform reflects the coexistence and interaction of two distinct linguistic traditions: Sumerian, an agglutinative language and Akkadian, a Semitic language adopted as the vehicle of communication and power in the ancient Near East. The grafting of one system onto the other produced a complex graphic mechanism, in which Sumerian logograms — the so-called *Sumerograms* — continued to function as high-frequency logographic signs, but were read in Akkadian and reinterpreted according to the corresponding phonetic translation.

This practice, which may be described as a genuine “*graphic bilingualism*,” manifests particularly in administrative formulas, legal texts, and diplomatic correspondence, where the economy of writing offered by logograms combines with the need to adapt them to Semitic morphology. Sumerograms are often followed by Akkadian syllabic signs that clarify their reading, disambiguate their value, or complete their inflection. The canonical example is LUGAL, the Sumerian term for “king,” which in Akkadian is read as šarrum; in more explicit contexts it appears as LUGAL-u, with the nominative singular suffix *-u* of Akkadian. In this way, the sequence combines logographic value with a phonetic morpheme, exemplifying the logographic nature of the system.

Akkadian writing is also characterized by the high polysemy of its signs: the same character can have multiple phonetic values and can also function as a logogram, a syllabogram, or a phonetic complement, depending on the context. Such flexibility, though it generated interpretive ambiguities, also allowed for notable graphic and stylistic variation. In literary or religious texts, for example, the choice between pure syllabic notation and logograms could have aesthetic value or underline a particular connection with the Sumerian tradition.

From a comparative perspective, the Akkadian model presents features common to other mixed writing systems. Just as in Egyptian hieroglyphs determinatives and phonetic complements regulate the balance between image and sound, so in Akkadian cuneiform the coexistence of logograms and syllabic signs reveals the constant tension between graphic economy and phonetic precision. This constitutes a universal semiotic strategy: maintaining the conceptual weight of the ideographic sign while ensuring the morphological and phonetic accuracy required by a highly inflected language such as Akkadian.

Maya Writing

In the script of the Classic Maya, the principle of mixed words is central. Glyphs may be logographic, phonetic (syllabic), or composite. Frequently, a logographic glyph is accompanied by syllabic glyphs indicating part or all of its pronunciation. This mechanism, known as *phonetic complementation*, allows the reader to disambiguate the reading of the logogram, specify its morphological variant, or indicate its phonological root. A classic example is the glyph for *k'uhul* (“sacred/divine”), where the root *k'uh* (“god, divinity”) is usually rendered with a logogram: while the phonetic part is rendered by the ending *ul*. In other cases, an entire word can be constructed using a logogram and two or more syllabic signs, a technique similar to the hybrid forms documented in Linear A.

Modern Japanese

Modern Japanese provides a contemporary and particularly systematic example of hybrid writing, in which logographic elements (kanji) coexist with phonetic syllabaries (hiragana and katakana). The kanji, of Chinese origin, convey stable semantic meanings, while the kana perform a phonetic and grammatical function, allowing inflection, conjugation, or classification of words.

An emblematic example is the word 食べる (taberu), meaning “to eat.” The kanji 食 (“food/eat”) represents the semantic core, while the kana べる provide the phonetic reading and the grammatical information (in this case, the base form of a second-group verb). The result is a mixed form in which semantic and grammatical-phonetic information are distributed across two different writing systems, analogous to what is observed in other mixed writing systems.

Conclusion

The analysis of uncertain signs, logograms, and hybrid words opens new perspectives on the nature of the language conveyed by Linear A and shows how this script is far more complex than was once imagined. It cannot be reduced to a simple phonetic code to be deciphered through the mechanical application of values known from Linear B, for such a procedure proves to be a misleading shortcut: it produces non-existent words and traps the language within a graphic system that does not belong to it.

The central problem does not lie in forcing a direct linguistic correspondence at all costs, but rather in investigating the internal criteria of word formation and the logic specific to the writing system itself. Only in this way is it possible to grasp the specificity of Linear A, which must not be treated as an “opaque variant” of Linear B, but as an autonomous code, rooted in a broader tradition of ideophonographic scripts of the Mediterranean and the Near East. Within this comparative scenario, Linear A situates itself alongside systems such as Egyptian and Akkadian, in which the coexistence of ideograms, logograms, phonetic signs, and determinatives responds to a structural dynamic common to all: the constant interaction between sound and meaning, between graphic unit and linguistic value. Considering Linear A within this constellation not only relativizes attempts at “direct translation” but also allows us to recognize its full dignity as a complex graphic system, capable of conveying a language and a culture with rules of its own.

It is also futile to expect miracles from AI: even the most advanced architectures currently available — next-generation transformers such as GPT-4/5, PaLM 2, LLaMA 2/3, or multimodal models such as Gemini or Claude 3 — cannot operate outside the constraints imposed by their training data and input. Their strength lies in the ability to detect patterns, correlations, and regularities within large corpora, but not in correcting at the root erroneous information or a structurally flawed dataset. If the input is noisy, inconsistent, or incomplete, the output will inevitably reflect these defects: the well-known logic of *garbage in, garbage out*. In this sense, even the most advanced and complex neural networks do not possess an autonomous principle of 'truth verification'; at best, they can estimate uncertainty or highlight statistical anomalies. Therefore, the quality of the results primarily depends on the philological and methodological accuracy of the data. Without this, any AI, however sophisticated, will merely amplify and formalise the original biases. If the data are flawed and ideograms, logograms and phonograms are confused, or if the criteria of word formation are misconstrued, how can we expect AI to understand what we do not understand?

One question, however, has remained implicit until this point: once the criteria of word compilation have been identified, once the manner in which ideograms, logograms, and phonograms aggregate has been clarified, and once the rules governing the compilation of economic lists have been recognized — what is the language that lies behind Linear A?

Upon closer examination, the evidence points clearly in one direction: the language is Greek. This is demonstrated, first, by the proper names, which unambiguously attest to their Hellenic origin. It is further supported by the phonetic structure of the words—whether hybrid or otherwise—and even by the ligatures, whose logograms function as phonetic abbreviations of Greek terms. Moreover, the variety of Greek in question is not generic, but distinctly marked by strong Doric features, as consistently shown in the material analyzed thus far, which has highlighted clear Doric elements such as:

- a) the predominance of the vowel *a* over other vocalic elements, a main trait very characteristic of Doric;
- b) the recurrence of Cretan lexical items (see, for instance *μνωίτης*) which indicate a clear local grounding;
- c) the employment of verbal adjectives ending in *-tjon*, fully consistent with the morphological patterns of ancient Doric Greek.

Above all, it is confirmed by the fact that the terms retrievable in Linear A *are found in classical vocabularies*, without the need to postulate a separate and unknown lexicon. It follows that the Greek of Linear A, despite its dialectal peculiarities and the peculiar graphic garb of its writing system, is not an unknown language: it is a variety already documented, comprehensible in the light of Greek sources and lexicographic traditions. The supposed “enigmatic” nature of Linear A thus dissolves as soon as it is considered not as the code of an alien language, but as a different graphic instrument applied to a known language.

The Dorian elements that emerge in Linear A are not isolated; they also appear in Mycenaean, suggesting that the Dorian substratum was an integral part of Aegean civilisation. John Chadwick⁷, the renowned Linear B interpreter, emphasised that such traits were not marginal and that a Doric component was present among the Mycenaean population⁸.

In this light, the Minoans may be seen as proto-Dorians: Greek communities of Doric stock, rooted in Crete. Weakened by catastrophic events, such as the earthquakes that marked the island’s history, they were conquered by the Mycenaeans and partly migrated to the mainland. From this, it becomes clearer that the Dorians known in the historical age were not “newcomers” at all, but heirs of an ancient Cretan tradition.

Social organization likewise contributes to confirming this hypothesis: the Minoans, like the Dorians, appear divided into tribes. This tribal structure, together with the common linguistic and cultural features, reveals not two separate civilizations but two branches of the same archaic Greek matrix.

⁷ I have dedicated my book *“The Incredible Mystery of Linear A”* to his memory.

⁸ See John Chadwick *“Who were the Dorians?”* in *“La Parola del Passato”* 1976, pp103-117.