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MARIE-LOUISE NOSCH

**THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY AT THEBES IN THE LIGHT
OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRIES AT PYLOS AND KNOSSOS***

Among the newly discovered Linear B tablets on the Kadmeion¹ is a tablet recording the first attestation to textiles at Thebes.

TH Lf 139

(Trench I of the 'Armoury')²

to-po-ne TELA²+PO 13

To *to-po*, 13 pieces of cloth of the type *po*.

In the other Mycenaean palaces, at Knossos, Pylos and Mycenae, the textile industry was an important part of the palace economy and the scribes kept a strict record of the textiles, their type, number, destinations and provenance. It was therefore assumed that the palace at Thebes monitored a textile industry as well. Although we still do not have much data about the Theban textile industry, the newly discovered tablets and the comparison with the previous Theban tablets³ and especially with the textile industry at Knossos provide many hints and suggestions to the function and structure of the textile industry administered by the Theban scribes. The aim of this paper is to gather all our textual evidence

* This contribution is a part of a paper given at the *4th International Congress of Boeotian Studies in Greece*, Levidia, 9-12 September 2000. I thank the *Society of Boeotian Studies* for the permission to dedicate this paper to Prof. Bartoněk. A study focusing on the Theban textile industry will appear in the proceedings of the *4th International Congress of Boeotian Studies in Greece* (forthcoming). I would like to thank Richard Firth, John Killen and Françoise Rougemont for their helpful comments on this paper. For editorial reasons, dotted syllables are double underlined in this paper.

¹ See preliminary publication and discussion of a few new tablets in *Kathemerini* 15 January 1995, 29; Aravantinos, Godart & Sacconi 1995; Aravantinos 1995; 1996; 1999.

² This tablet was not found in the same deposit as the tablets under Pelopidou Street, but according to Aravantinos the two stratigraphies are associated. See Aravantinos in Aravantinos, Godart & Sacconi 1995, 823.

³ Chadwick 1970; Chadwick & Spyropoulos 1975; Hooker 1975; Godart & Sacconi 1978; Bartoněk 1988; Melna & Olivier 1991.

concerning textile industry in the Mycenaean Thebes to delineate the characteristics of this economic sector compared with the evidence from the other Mycenaean palaces. The publication of the newly discovered Theban tablets is still in prospect, but fortunately there have been some preliminary discussions of some of the tablets.⁴

At Thebes, tablets concerning wool were discovered in 1970 in Epameinondas Street. They are all written by the scribe named 303. According to Symeonoglou's outline of the Mycenaean palace at Thebes,⁵ the deposit in Epameinondas Street was situated in the West Wing of the palace. This recalls the find-spots of wool records in the West Wing of the palace of Knossos. In the palace of Knossos the records concerning wool are also mainly written by one scribe, named 103. It is, however, also possible that the building in which the wool tablets were found was a separate construction and not a part of the palace. This would not be astonishing either: it would recall the House of the Oil Merchant at Mycenae, outside the palace, where wool records were kept.

In any case, the place where the Theban wool tablets were found was probably a clearing house, as was suggested by Cynthia Shelmerdine,⁶ and not a workshop as supposed by the excavator.⁷

The newly discovered tablets in the deposit in Pelopidou Street are dated to the end of Late Helladic IIIB2, and they are thus contemporaneous with the wool tablets from the deposit in Epameinondas Street. There may therefore be a direct productive and administrative link between the wool tablets and the tablet Lf 139 recording thirteen pieces of cloth qualified as *PO*.

Vassilis Aravantinos has suggested that *PO* is the acrophonic abbreviation for *po-ki-ro-nu-ka*, 'with variegated fringes'.⁸ But here the first problem occurs. It is true that the endogram (the syllable written inside) in the other Mycenaean cloth ideograms *TELA+TE* and *TELA+PU* seems to designate the *type* of cloth (*te-pa, pu-ka-ta-ri-ja*)⁹ and not the *treatment* or the *decoration* of the cloth. The treatment or the decoration of the cloth is generally recorded with the help of an adjunct (a syllable written in front of the ideogram and abbreviating a qualification of the product denoted by the ideogram) and not with the help of an endogram. If *PO* in *TELA+PO* describes the decoration of the cloth, then the scribe should, in theory, have written an adjunct and not an endogram. If this is correct, then *TELA+PO* at Thebes does not denote *po-ki-ro-nu-ka* but a still unknown type of cloth whose name begins with *po-* or, as José Melena has recently suggested, the Theban version of the cloth type *pharweha / phorweha*.¹⁰

4 See note 1.

5 Symeonoglou 1985, 47-50.

6 Shelmerdine 1997, 387-389.

7 Spyropoulos in Chadwick & Spyropoulos 1975, 53.

8 Aravantinos 1999, 54.

9 Melena (1975, 110) further suggests interpreting *TELA+ZO* as *zo-ta* cloth.

10 Melena forthcoming, note 7. Melena also discusses the name **to-po-*. I thank José Melena for his helpful comments.

| | | |
|---------|--|----------|
| KN L(5) | 7380 + 7500 | (209) |
| .a |] <i>qe-te-o</i> TELA ¹ 2[| |
| .b |] -ra / TELA ^x 4 <i>po</i> TELA ^x [.b] <u>ka</u> -ra or] <u>qe</u> -ra possible. | |
| KN L(5) | 513 | (209/F7) |
| .a | <i>qe-te-o</i> TELA ² [| |
| .b | <i>po-po</i> TELA ² 4 [| |
| v. | [[a-mi-si-ja TELA ¹ 12]] [| |
| KN L(5) | 7393 + 7834 + 9498 + 9528+ <i>frr.</i> ¹⁵ | (209) |
| .a |] <i>qe-te-o</i> <u>TELA</u> ^x 3 | |
| .b |] •-• / <u>TELA</u> ^x 10 <i>po</i> TELA ¹ 1 | |
| KN L(5) | 5092 | (209/F7) |
| .a |] <i>qe-te</i> [-o | |
| .b |]so TELA ¹ [| |
| KN L(5) | 8441 + <i>fr.</i> | (209) |
| .a |] <i>qe-te-o</i> [| |
| .b |] -u TELA 2 [| |
| | .b Trace on right edge, possibly <u>po</u> [(cf. L 7380.b). | |

The entries in the L(5) set consist of men's names in the nominative. We can only read *po-po* (L[5] 513), a name ending in]-u (L[5] 8441) and most probably *a₃-ka*]-ra (L[5] 7380).¹⁶ *po-po* and *a₃-ka-ra* are textile workers and they are also recorded in the L(1) set for linen production. The acrophonic abbreviation *po* occurs in line .b associated with the second ideogram TELA, and *po* probably distinguished the first TELA from the second TELA in line .b. *qe-te-o* seems to distinguish the TELA in line a. from the TELA in line .b, and it is a term from the administrative vocabulary, probably indicating that the cloth is due to be paid by the palace.¹⁷ It is very possible that *po* TELA designates *po-ki-ro-nu-ka* decorated cloth, but the possibility that it was 'red' cloth, *po-ni-ki-ja*, or even some other term, cannot be ruled out.

It is plausible that cloth was produced, then decorated and finished, and later distributed by the Theban palace officials to dependent personnel, for example to *to-po* on TH Lf 139. The L(5) set from Knossos and the Theban tablet Lf 139

¹⁵ This tablet is shown according to joins made by J. Melena and J.-P. Olivier in Godart et al. 1992-1993, 58. In *CoMIK* III (Chadwick et al. 1997) the fragment 7834 is shown separately.

¹⁶ I have discussed this reading with John Killen who had come to the same result.

¹⁷ The term *qe-te-o* is attested at Thebes on nodules and is used for a payment of sheep, goats, bulls and pigs (TH Wu 49, 50, 53, 63). *qe-te-o* is discussed in Piteros, Olivier & Melena 1990 and Hutton 1990-1991.

thus show two successive stages of the Mycenaean textile administration: the *po-(ki-ro-nu-ka?)* cloth is decorated by textile workers (L[5]) and subsequently given to dependent personnel (Lf 139). Since at Knossos (Ld[1] set) the *po-ki-ro-nu-ka* cloth is of the type *pa-we-a*, it is plausible that the new Theban tablet Lf 139 also records *pa-we-a po-ki-ro-nu-ka*.

The famous Theban tablet Of 36 shows that some female textile finishers were under the authority of the king and the Potnia.

TH Of 36

(303/Epam. str.)

- .1 no-ri-wo-ki-de *ku* LANA 1 a-ke-ti-ra₂ , wa-na-ka[
 .2 po-ti-ni-ja , wo-ko-de , a-ke-ti-ra₂ *ku* LANA 1

[To] the *no-ri-wo-ki-de*,¹⁸ 3 kilograms of *ku* wool; [to] the royal female finishers[
 [To] *Potnia's woikos*, the female finishers, 3 kilograms of *ku* wool.

This tablet is extraordinary testimony to the Theban textile industry. Female 'finishers' or decorators (*a-ke-ti-ra₂* from ἀσκέω) are associated either with the king or the royal sector of the economy, or with Potnia's οἶκος. It is possible that women were attached to the sanctuary and worked there for the needs of the priests and cult personnel. Equally, the cloth on offering tablets could have been manufactured by such groups of women.¹⁹

The tablet is also extraordinary because it gives many cross-references to textile industries in the other Mycenaean palaces. We do not know what the occupational designation *no-ri-wo-ki-de* means, but there are also *no-ri-wo-ko* women on the Pylian lists of personnel, so it was probably a common Mycenaean term for specialised women-workers in the textile industry.

For a long time it was not known what the Theban scribe named 303 meant when he wrote the designation *ku* in front of the wool ideogram. But a new join at Knossos may give the solution:²⁰ the Knossian tablet Od 667 records small quantities of wool, probably of fine quality and *pa-ra-ku* colour, and used for the decoration of cloth. The Knossian scribe distinguished two types of fine wool, 'Cretan' (*ke-re-si-ja*) wool and 'Cypriot' (*ku-pi-ri-ja*) wool:

KN Od 667 + 5898 + 8292 + fr.

(–)

- .A 'ku-pi-ri-ja' LANA 1 M 2 P 4[
 .B][·]-ku / ke-[]-ja M 2 P 1[

lat. inf.] sa-mu[] 1 qo-ja-te P 1[

.B] pa-ra-ku not impossible; ke-re[possible

¹⁸ Probably the dative singular of feminine substantive or adjective in *-is, -idos*, according to Chadwick in Chadwick & Spyropoulos 1975, 87-88.

¹⁹ See Nosch & Perna 2001.

²⁰ See comment by José Melena in Bennett et al. 1989, 204-205.

Although one cannot be sure that the abbreviation *ku* on the Theban tablet Of 36 is designating *ku(-pi-ri-ja)* 'Cypriot' wool, the comparison with the Knossian wool tablet Od 667 certainly makes it likely that wool of the 'Cypriot type' was given to the Theban textile workers for the decoration of locally produced cloth.

The bureaucratic tradition of the Theban palace scribe named 303, who wrote the tablet Of 36, has strong links to the bureaucratic tradition at Knossos and Pylos: John Killen has suggested that the layout of the Linear B tablets often follow the following pattern: the Knossian and Pylian scribes first record palace or royal matters and subsequently the matters concerning the cult.²¹ At Pylos (Jn series), for example, smiths and their *ta-ra-si-ja* bronze allocation are recorded first, and subsequently the *Potnia* smiths are recorded with their allocation. A Knossian tablet, F 51, first records the barley for the king, *wa(-na-ka)*, then the barley for the official *po-ro-de-qo-no*, and finally for the divinities *di-we* and *ma-ka*.²² The same pattern appears in the layout of the Theban tablet Of 36: the royal finishers are recorded in the first line, while the *Potnia* finishers are recorded in the second line.

At both Thebes and Mycenae²³ the palace scribes record series of tablets listing small amounts of wool and various people, divinities and groups of workers with occupational designations. The administrative purposes of these wool series are not entirely clear: distribution of wool to textile workers; remuneration; or offerings?

Opinions are thus divided concerning the Theban wool series and its purpose. In the Theban Of series, small amounts of wool are given to individuals, to deities (*Potnia*, *Hermes*, *Hera*), or to groups with an occupational designation: *a-pi-qo-ro* (*amphipoloi*), *a-ra-ka-te-ja* (women working with the ἡλακάτη, the distaff), *te-pe-ja* (women producing the cloth named *te-pa*), *a-ke-ti-ra₂* (*asketriai*, female decorators) and *no-ri-wo-ki-de* (?). The occupational groups are attested to in the other Mycenaean palaces as well: they are groups of women and children who perform various tasks within the palace.

John Chadwick²⁴ sees the Of tablets as representing small amounts of wool for offerings or other cult activities. He also interprets the occupational groups

21 Killen 1987, 61-72. See KN K(1) 875; PY Jn 310; 431; and perhaps Un 1426.

22

KN F 51

recto HORD T 7 V 5 Z 3[

verso .1 wa HORD T 1 V 3 po-ro-de-qo-no V 2 Z 2

.2 di-we HORD T 1 HORD T 4 Z 1 ma-qe HORD V 6

.2 ma-ka not excluded.

See Aravantinos, Godart & Sacconi 1995, 834-835.

23 I thank Carlos Varias García for letting me read his unpublished thesis on the tablets from Mycenae (Varias García 1993). See also Melena 1973 and Killen 1985, 295 n. 83.

24 Chadwick in Chadwick & Spyropoulos 1975, 92.

(*a-ra-ka-te-ja*, *te-pe-ja*, *a-pi-qo-ro*²⁵ etc.) as having cult functions in this series. John Killen²⁶ sees the Theban Of series as distributions of wool to workshops, which could be both palace workshops or workshops in sanctuaries. Stefan Hiller²⁷ suggests that the Of tablets were records of wool rations. It is an attractive interpretation because of the Mesopotamian parallels,²⁸ and because it would explain the distribution of wool to the *a-pi-qo-ro*, a domestic occupational group and not a traditional textile-producing designation.

It is quite plausible though that the Theban Of series (and the Mycenae Oe series and the Knossian Od series) record transfers of wool for several purposes. The problem is therefore bureaucratic – may we assume that the Theban scribe named 303 only recorded wool for one purpose and to one type of receiver; or may we assume that scribe 303 recorded out-going wool from a magazine, no matter to whom (work-groups, sanctuaries) and for what purpose (finishing, offerings)?

Some textile workers are recorded under the authority of a so-called ‘collector’.²⁹ At Knossos such ‘collector groups’ are mainly defined through a man’s name in the genitive or in the nominative form. A few collector groups, however, are defined through a possessive adjective derived from a man’s name. All three forms of description are found in the following tablet from Knossos recording women workers of the collectors *a-no-qo-ta*, *ko-ma-we* and *we-ra-to*:

KN Ap **618 + 623 + 633 + 5533 + 5922** (103/F14)

.1 *a-pe-a-sa* / *i-ta-mo*, ‘*do-ti-ja*’, MUL 1 *ki-nu-qa* ‘*56-*ko-we*’ MUL 1 [

.2 *ti-wa-ti-ja* / *a*-*79 ‘*a-no-qo-ta*’ MUL 3[] *ko-ma-we-to* MUL 2 *we-ra-te-ja* MUL

2 [

The absent women: *i-ta-mo*, at *do-ti-ja*, 1 woman; *ki-nu-qa*, at *56-*ko-we*, 1 woman;

Women from **ti-nwa-to*: *a*-*79 of *a-no-qo-ta*, 3 women; of *ko-ma-we*, 2 women; workers of *we-ra-to*, 2 women.³⁰

²⁵ As an example, the *a-pi-qo-ro* at Pylos also occur on Fr 1205. The Fr series has been interpreted as distribution of oil for offerings, and the occupational title might therefore have a function in the cult. Hiller (1987) sees the *a-pi-qo-ro* with cult functions in the Theban Of series and on PY Fr 1205 and as an occupational designation for textile workers in the Pylian A-series.

²⁶ Killen 1985, 289 and n. 89.

²⁷ Hiller 1987, n. 25.

²⁸ Gelb 1965, 235; Waetzoldt 1987, 125–126.

²⁹ See the various interpretations of collectors in Bennet 1992; Carlier 1992; Driessen 1992; Godart 1992; Killen 1995.

³⁰ We can be fairly sure that the women under collector *ko-ma-we* produced cloth: on another tablet *ko-ma-we* from Phaistos delivers the heavy cloth type *te-pa* to the palace at Knossos:

KN Le **5629 + 5867 + 8446 + 8522 + 8559 + fr. [+]** **8512** (103)

.1 *e-ki[-si-]ja* TELA¹+TE [

.2 *vest.*[*ija* / *a-pu-do-si* TELA¹+TE [

.3 *pa-i-to* / *ko-ma-we-to* TELA¹+TE [

At Pylos, by contrast, all collector groups are defined through a possessive adjective derived from a man's name. At Thebes, the collector groups are recorded in the same bureaucratic tradition as at Pylos, by the means of a possessive adjective derived from a man's name. This is one of the most intriguing problems in Mycenaean studies today: collector names occur at Knossos, and designations derived from some of these same names occur at Knossos, but also at Thebes and at Pylos.³¹

TH Of 35

(303/Epam. str.)

- .1 ko-ma-we-te-ja , te-pe-ja , ku LANA 1
 .2]ma-ri-ne-we-ja-i , a-ki-a₂-ri-ja-de ku LANA 3

- .1 The *te-pa-ja* women of *ko-ma-we*, 1 units of *ku* wool (3 kilograms)
 .2 The women of *ma-ri-ne-u*, going to the coast [αἰγιαλός], 3 units of *ku* wool (9 kilograms)

This tablet from Thebes records two distributions of wool to two collector groups: to the women of *ko-ma-we* and to those of **ma-ri-ne-u*.³² *ko-ma-we-te-ja* is the derived form of the collector name *ko-ma-we*, which also occurs at Knossos.³³ The women in the first line are described both by their collector name and an occupational title, *te-pe-ja*, *te-pa* makers. One unit of *te-pa* weighs ca. 21 kilograms of raw wool, so it must be very large or heavy, or a bundle of cloth. Thus the of wool on Of 35 may be used for the decoration of *te-pa* cloth. Here again a Theban tablet delivers useful data to our understanding of the whole Mycenaean palace textile industry. It has namely been assumed that more or less unskilled women workers made *te-pa* and delivered their production to more specialised men, the 'finishers' who decorated and 'finished' the *te-pa* cloth. The Theban tablets Of 35, however, suggests that decoration was also taken care of by women workers.

The textile workers at Pylos and Knossos are recorded on lists of personnel according to a rigid pattern: first the women workers, then the supervisors *DA* and *TA*, then girls and finally boys. Although no list of personnel has been found Thebes yet, such lists most probably existed, because one of their important members, the supervisor *DA*, is recorded on a Theban wool tablet.

TH Of 34

(303/Epam. str.)

- .1 a-pi-qo-ro , ne-wa , ko-tu-ro₂ , DA , LANA 3 [[PA 1]] [
 .2 a-ra-ka-te-ja , pa-ra-ja LANA 1 [

31 Killen (1979, 176-178; 1995) proposes an interpretation of this phenomenon as an international elite. Rougemont (2000; forthcoming) comments on this suggestion.

32 Whether this is a collector or a divinity is not clear. See discussion in Melena 1976, 135-140.

33 Ap 618; B 798; Dk(1) 920; As(2) 1519; Le 5629.

(to ?³⁴) The new³⁵ *amhipoloi*, under *ko-tu-ro*₂ the *DA*, 9 kilograms of wool.
 (to ?) The old spinners, 3 kilograms of wool.

The Theban supervisor *DA* is called *ko-tu-ro*₂. It was tablet Of 34 which allowed John Killen to suggest that the supervisor *DA* is a man.³⁶

There are a few Mycenaean occupational designations for men in the textile production: *ka-na-pe-u* 'fuller', *pe-re-ke-u* 'plaiter' or 'weaver?', **to-te-u* 'bedding-maker?', **i-te-u* 'weaver', and *ra-pte* 'sewer, tailor'. The designations *ka-na-pe-u* and *pe-re-ke-u* also occur in the new Theban tablets.³⁷ The *ka-na-pe-u*, *κνάφενς* is an occupational title only for men: we know some *ka-na-pe-we* by name in the Pylian land-holding tablets, one of them is even *wa-na-ka-te-ro*, 'royal', and fulling was probably hard, physical work. A fuller and a *pe-re-ke-u* also occur at Mycenae. The *pe-re-ke-u* must be cognate with *πλέκω*, and designate someone who is weaving or plaiting cloth. We even have the verb *pe-re-ke*, and it designates the process by which the workers in the villages *do-ti-ja* and *ka-ma*, and those under the collector *sa-mu-ta-jo*, transform six units of wool (18 kilograms) into one unit of cloth of the type which is described by the ideogram *164:

| KN L | 520 | (-F8) |
|------|------------------------------------|-------|
| .1 | do-ti-ja , LANA 18 pe-re-ke *164 3 | |
| .2 | ka-ma LANA 12 *164 2 | |
| .3 | sa-mu-ta-jo LANA 24 *164 4 | |

The ideogram *164 looks like a piece of cloth with holes for the head and the arms. But one piece of cloth can hardly weigh 18 kilograms, and we cannot say what the *pe-re-ke-we* specifically did.

Three observations seem to be important. First, the *pe-re-ke-u* and the *ka-na-pe-u* occur in the new Theban tablets. In other archives they often occur together, too.³⁸ Second, if *pe-re-ke* indicates a kind of weaving then it is perhaps a different technique compared with the one performed by the *histeus*, the weaver. Third, while the Mycenaean textile industry generally distinguishes between men's and women's occupations, the two terms for weaving seem to occur in the forms of both men's and women's occupations:

³⁴ See Hiller 1987, 245-246 and the discussion of case.

³⁵ It is not completely certain whether *ne-wa* and *pa-ra-ja* are descriptions of the women or of the wool. See Hiller 1987, 244-245.

³⁶ Killen 1983.

³⁷ Aravantinos 1996, 183.

³⁸ At Mycenae in the wool series (Oe 119; Oe 129; Oe 130) and on the Pylian tablet Cn 1287 recording deliveries of goats (or goat hides) from, among others, a *pe-re-ke-u* and a *ka-na-pe-u*.

pe-re-ke-u / *plekeus* and *pe-re-ko[-sa]* / *plekonsai*³⁹
i-te-we / *histewei* or *histewes* and *i-te-ja-o* / *histeiaon* (feminine genitive plural)

A third occupation, also performed by both women and men, is the decoration or application of *o-nu-ke* onto cloth, or the manufacture of *o-nu-ke*. We know well the designation for women, *o-nu-ke-ja*, from Pylos (Ab 194; Ad 675), and the many records of *o-nu-ke* at Knossos made it likely that *o-nu-ke-ja* were at work in Knossos, too.⁴⁰ It came as a surprise that one of the new Theban tablets records an *o-nu-ke-wi*, that is, an **o-nu-ke-u* in the dative singular form.⁴¹ The **o-nu-ke-u* is a male *o-nu-ke* maker, or a decorator who appliques *o-nu-ke* onto cloth. The Theban tablets show that this textile occupation, too, was not only performed by women.

The major part of the Theban textile terminology is also found in the other palace archives: there seems to be a common terminological *koinè* regarding textile production between the Mycenaean palace centres:

ka-na-pe-u is attested to at Mycenae, Pylos and Thebes
pe-re-ke-u / *pe-re-ke* is attested to at Knossos, Mycenae, Pylos and Thebes
a-ra-ka-te-ja is attested to at Knossos, Pylos and Thebes
no-ri-wo-ko / *no-ri-wo-ki-de* is attested to at Pylos and Thebes.
te-pe-ja is attested to at Knossos, Pylos and Thebes
a-ke-ti-ri-ja / *-ra* / *a-ze-ti-ri-ja* is attested to at Knossos, Pylos, Mycenae, Thebes.
o-nu-ke-u / *o-nu-ke-ja* / *o-nu-ke* is attested to at Knossos, Pylos and Thebes

But although the Mycenaean palaces all seem to produce similar kinds of cloth and although the textile industry in the palaces seems organised according to similar patterns, there was probably a trade or exchange in textiles going on between the palaces. A tablet from Mycenae demonstrates that Thebes imported the common cloth type *pu-ka-ta-ri-ja* (sometimes recorded as TELA+PU⁴²).

³⁹ Killen (1998) proposes restoring *pe-re-ko[-sa]* (*plekonsai*) on:

KN Xe 544 (scribe 103/ found in F10)
 .a *pe-re-ko*[
 .b *da*22-ti-ja* / *a-ze-ti-ri-ja*

⁴⁰ KN Ld(1) 584.2; 591; 5615; 5916; Ln 1568 *lat. inf.*; M 683; Od(1) 485; 681; 682; Xe 692; Ws 1703.

⁴¹ Aravantinos 1999, 72.

⁴² On this type of cloth, see Nosch 1998.

MY X 508

(House of Shields)

.a] te-qa-de , ta [

]ze-ta , pu-ka-ta-ri-ja ma-ri-ne[

.a Traces at right, not incompatible with LANA[

]ze-ta (name? or *asketai* 'finished'), *pu-ka-ta-ri-ja* cloth, *ma-ri-ne*[(name? god?), going to Thebes,⁴³ *ta* [

The Theban textile industry certainly resembles our evidence from the textile industries in the other Mycenaean palaces. There are women with the personal name *te-qa-ja* at both Pylos and Knossos, and this recalls the contacts between the other Mycenaean sites and Thebes.⁴⁴ It is difficult to say whether the textile industry at Thebes presents features more in common with Pylos or with Knossos because textile tablets are so unevenly preserved. Some common features between Thebes and Knossos have been emphasised,⁴⁵ but it still remains unclear whether the Theban textile industry is organised as on the other mainland sites or as on Crete. But the new Theban tablets, compared with the previous Theban tablets and the tablets on the other Mycenaean sites, offer an opportunity to review an important part of the palace economy, namely the textile industry.

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⁴³ On many of the Theban nodules we find the phrase 'to Thebes' / *te-qa-de*. The nodules probably follow the animals coming to the Kadmeion from outside. It is therefore likely that the Boeotian Thebes is meant, both on the Theban nodules and on the Mycenaean tablet. Against the identification of Boeotian Thebes on the Mycenaean tablet, see Olivier 1998, 277-279.

⁴⁴ PY Ep 539,6; KN Ap 5864,4. See also Godart & Sacconi 1999, 538-546.

⁴⁵ Hiller 1989, 59-60, stresses that the palace cultures at Thebes and Knossos, from a Linear B textual and mythological point of view, have much in common.

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