

KO-RO-NO-WE-SA

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Historical reflections on the Pylos Ta series: putting *te-ke* in its place

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The Pylos **Ta** series is arguably the single most studied and restudied set of tablets in the Linear B corpus. Michael Ventris, in his famous letter to Emmett Bennett, Jr. dated June 18, 1952,¹ gives Bennett, in tablet-number order, samples of the clear or highly probable readings in Greek of sign sequences that Ventris's decipherment had then produced in the then known Knossos and Pylos tablets. Of course, there was as yet nothing so probative and handy as the sequence

PY Ta 641.1 ti-ri-po-de , a₃-ke-u , ke-re-si-jo , we-ke *201^{VAS} 2.

And probably just as well, given how resistant to definitive interpretation the phrase a₃-ke-u , ke-re-si-jo , we-ke and the related phrases ke-re-si-jo , we-ke , *34-ke-u and ke-re-si-jo , we-ke , o-pi-ki-wi-ri-je-u, both also associated with *201^{VAS} on **PY Ta 709 + 712 + fr.**, have proved to be.

It was not too long afterwards that the **Ta** tablets made their appearance on the stage of Mycenaean research. As Stephen Tracy has traced the chronology for us,² Carl Blegen, working from the end of March to mid-May 1953 on new tablet finds from the 1952 excavation season at Pylos, focused on **PY Ta 641** and the clear correlation between what the Ventris decipherment made it possible to read as *ti-*

¹ <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/20898> [last accessed March 14, 2023].

² TRACY 2018, 2.

ri-po(-de) and the ideogram now identified as *201^{VAS}. Blegen realized that the text of **Ta 641** offered singular support of the strong probability that the Ventris decipherment was more than essentially correct. He, therefore, made sure that **Ta 641** was published swiftly in January 1954.³ This permitted Ventris to make the evidence of **Ta 641** widely known. He presented the key phrase here (the first entry on **Ta 641.1**) as: *t-ri-po-de, Ai-ge-us K-re-si-jos we-chei*⁴ making it more readily ‘readable’ by the general readership of *Archaeology* than the phonetic transcription in our strict system: *ti-ri-po-de, ai-ke-u, ke-re-si-jo, we-ke*. Our system represents dummy vowels in consonant clusters, makes no distinction in the palatal stops between voiced and unvoiced, has no marking of aspiration and no representation of word-terminal /s/—and there is no capitalization of proper nouns or adjectives.

For almost seventy years now, the full **Ta** series of thirteen tablets is hardly ever not under discussion. The contents of the **Ta** tablets are diverse, significant, and puzzling, for research in many aspects of Aegean cultural history. They record: a. clearly drawn ideograms of ceremonial vessels with phonetic rendering of their names (*qe-ra-na, pi-je-ra*₃); b. the materials used to construct and decorate pieces of furniture (*ku-te-se-jo/-ja, e-ra-pe-te-jo/-ja* and *ra-e-ja, ku-ru-so*); c. descriptions of the abstract or figural motifs of decoration (*a-di-ri-ja-pi, re-wo-pi* and *to-qi-de*); d. observations on the state of repair of specific objects (*a-pu, ke-ka-u-me-ṛo[, ke-re-a*₂); e. the region of manufacture of particular items (*ke-re-si-jo*); f. entries referring none too clearly, for us now, to implements connected with sacrificial actions (*pa-sa-ro, wa-o* and *qi-si-pe-e*) and equipment used in connection with fire (*au-te, pu-ra-u-to-ro, qa-ra-to-ro* and *e-ka-ra*). We should add that all this information was registered explicitly as g. the results of an inspection inventory involving a person named *pu₂-ke-qi-ri*, whose status as an elite functionary, perhaps even a collector, is undebatable, although whether he is the actual tablet-writer of the **Ta** series and other important tablets that are identified as the work of Hand 2 is still being discussed.⁵

The header line for the **Ta** set specifies that the records were written h. on the occasion when the king (*wa-na-ka*) did something important

³ BLEGEN 1953-1954.

⁴ VENTRIS 1954, 18.

⁵ BENNET 2001, 31-33; DUHOUX 2008, 314-318; GARCÍA RAMÓN 2009, 10-23; NAKASSIS 2013, 354; OLIVIER 2001, 151, 155; VARIAS GARCÍA 2016, 552-553.

(*te-ke*) with regards to an individual named *au-ke-wa* and the significant office of *da-mo-ko-ro*. Finally, i. other important socio-political terms are embedded in the descriptions of individual items: for example, *wa-na-se-wi-ja* and *a-mo-te-wi-ja*.⁶

I have been working with and thinking about the **Ta** set periodically since autumn of 1974 when I was writing my MA thesis at the University of Wisconsin Madison under the guidance of Bennett, who took little convincing when I proposed to try to ‘prove’ that Pylos Hand 2 was in reality the same tablet-writer as Hand 1. I tried my best, working from the Emile Seraf black and white photographs, as an *advocatus diaboli*. I was not able to prove this radical proposition. However, then and throughout my association with Bennett from Spring 1974 until December 2011, I learned a lot about open-mindedness, about testing hypotheses, about his pure enjoyment of new ideas, even or especially those that contradicted his own past or current ways of thinking, and about scholarship being a wonderful ongoing polite conversation with the dead, whom he has now joined, and with the still living—and, among the living, particularly with younger scholars of the next generation who will carry research in our field forward in new ways. My MA exercise did confirm for me that Bennett’s assignments of scribal hands were made on a sound basis. Jean-Pierre Olivier working in collaboration with Bennett confirmed this at approximately the same time.⁷

I have taken up different aspects of the **Ta** series on a number of occasions.⁸ It is not my objective here to ‘prove’ any particular view on significant points that we have been questioning and answering in different ways since 1954. On many issues that have been long debated we should begin to speak of probabilities for alternative interpretations and hypotheses that we might consider reasonably tenable. We should also not judge arguments only as they pertain to particular points at hand within the **Ta** series, but also consider the ramifications that alternative proposals have for interpreting the contents of other documents upon which particular interpretations of **Ta** texts might have an effect.

⁶ For what the term **a-mo-te-u* (cf. attested genitive singular *a-mo-te-wo*) underlying the adjectival form *a-mo-te-wi-ja* signifies and implies, see PALAIMA 2020 §§19-35; PALAIMA 2021 §§1-12.

⁷ PTT I-II.

⁸ PALAIMA 1999; 2000; 2003; 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2008; 2011; and more recently 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022. See PALAIMA in bibliography for references. For many references within PALAIMA 2011, 318 (index).

Take, for instance, the well-known heading phrase of **Ta 711** (and of the entire **Ta** series), to which I referred above: *o-wi-de*, *pu₂-ke-qi-ri*, *o-te*, *wa-na-ka*, *te-ke*, *au-ke-wa*, *da-mo-ko-ro*. Olivier identified *pu₂-ke-qi-ri* here in the Pylos **Ta** series header document as among high status ‘collectors’ (cf. **TH Of 27** *pu₂-ke-qi-ri-ne-ja*)⁹ whose names are inter-regionally linked.¹⁰

There has been considerable debate on the status of ‘tablet-writers.’ I still hold to the reasonable ‘compromise’ position that “that neither Driessen’s nor Bennet’s suggestion can be universally applied: ‘scribe’ and ‘elite administrator in charge’ were in some cases different persons.”¹¹ Was the ‘tablet-writer’ of the **Ta** series (PY Hand 2) a high-status ‘collector’ named *pu₂-ke-qi-ri* or an unnamed ‘tablet-writer’ (PY Hand 2) assisting the ‘collector’ named *pu₂-ke-qi-ri* in the inventory process?

This is significant when we turn to records in other series. Take, for example, **PY Pn 30**, which is also written by Hand 2. It specifies that an individual named *a-ko-so-ta*, one of four notable collectors at Pylos (*a-ke-o*, *we-da-ne-u*, *a-ko-so-ta*, and *a-pi-me-de*), ‘received’ (*o-de-ka-sa-to*) 62 ‘stools’ (*169) from three named individuals and was ‘owed’ at least 19 others. Is this tablet record generated by a process whereby *pu₂-ke-qi-ri*, acting partly as a high-level administrative record-keeper, interacted anonymously with a social peer, a fellow collector named *a-ko-so-ta*? Or is this the ‘scribe’ known as Hand 2 recording here the activities of yet another high-status individual as he recorded *pu₂-ke-qi-ri* making an inventory inspection in the **Ta** series? Note also that on **Eq 213** (recorded by Hand 1) *a-ko-so-ta* does the ‘field inspection tour’ (*o-wi-de*, *a-ko-so-ta*, *to-ro-qe-jo-me-no*, *a-ro-u-ra*, *a₂-ri-sa*) and on **Un 267** (again Hand 1) he is recorded as giving aromatic substances to an unguent-boiler. And *a-ko-so-ta* appears elsewhere in other activities recorded by other hands. How we answer these questions of the identification of high-status agents and record-keepers certainly affects the premise upon which our follow-up questions are based. But right now neither I nor anyone else has definitive answers. But Maurizio del Freo lays out the options succinctly and precisely.¹²

⁹ OLIVIER 2001, 151, 155.

¹⁰ KILLEN 1979, 176-179.

¹¹ BENNET 2001; DRIESSEN 1994-1995; DUHOUX 2011, 113, 115; PALAIMA 2003, 175-177 and n. 39; PLUTA 2011, 281-284; STEELE 2011, 120-121.

¹² DEL FREO 2016, 203.

New perspectives about the *Ta* tablets have been offered in many recent publications.¹³ I will take up here one particular point because it is unresolvable and, therefore, a good example of when we should not use a categorical either-or switch, but speak in terms of probabilities without rejecting any not improbable option. Moreover, these smaller points require much deeper thought about the pieces of evidence that are brought into consideration than we usually can give to them when addressing them in the context of larger arguments.

Here I will discuss the meaning of *te-ke* and how we read the phrase that defines the occasion for the inspection inventory by *pu₂-ke-qi-ri*. My recent work with Nicholas Blackwell on the interpretation of the items on **PY Ta 716** and their relationship to the full *Ta* series and with Rachele Pierini on the MAST@chs quarterly seminars has made me more inclined than ever not to rule out the option originally advanced by Leonard Palmer that *te-ke* here could be taken to have the meaning ‘buried.’¹⁴ (I should make clear that I am focusing in this paper on *te-ke* on **Ta 711.1**, not on the related form *-te-to* which occurs on **TH Fq 126.1**: *o-te*, *tu-wo-te-to*. The interpretation arrived at by Bernabé and Pierini by careful criticism of proposals by other scholars strikes me as sound: ὅτε θύος θέντο.)¹⁵

Regarding *te-ke* on **Ta 711.1** meaning ‘buried,’ I wish to highlight two significant points.

First, it is interesting that (1) the best iconographical evidence for the sacrificial stunning axe (*wa-o* *232 on **Ta 716**) being used in ritual is a funerary scene of the *prothesis* of a corpse on a bier on an LH III C Middle pictorial krater from Agia Triada (Elis);¹⁶ and (2) that the only good iconographical evidence for the restraining bridle device (the ideogram-less *pa-sa-ro* on **Ta 716**) used to control the sacrificial animal victim in ritual slaughter is from the famous Mycenaeanized LM III A2 Hagia Triada sarcophagus.¹⁷ These two pictorial representations at least link the use of the instruments on **Ta 716** with sacrificial practices

¹³ AURA JORRO 2021; BERNABÉ 2021; BERNABÉ & PIERINI 2017; BLACKWELL & PALAIMA 2021; DEL FREQ 2016; FARMER & LANE 2016; KELDER & POELWIJK 2016; PALAIMA & BLACKWELL 2020; PIERINI 2021; VARIAS GARCÍA 2016; and no doubt others I have missed during the last six years.

¹⁴ PALMER 1957; 1969, 340-363 and 493-494.

¹⁵ BERNABÉ & PIERINI 2017, 526-527.

¹⁶ PALAIMA & BLACKWELL 2020, 83-84 fig. 13.

¹⁷ BLACKWELL & PALAIMA 2021.

performed during burial rituals and thus involve the associated ritual paraphernalia of the **Ta** series at least in principle with funeral activities.

Second, recent discoveries in the proximity of the Palace of Nestor confirm that ritual burials of notables from the LH II period onwards had a constant importance in maintaining the ideology of the late-forming Pylian state.¹⁸ In this context, burial ceremonies for key elite figures would have had serious and relatively long-lasting socio-political and no doubt religious significance.¹⁹ Given that the two provinces of the whole palatial territory documented in our Linear B archives from LH III C were late in unifying, transitions in the principal offices of state (*wa-na-ka*, *ra-wa-ke-ta*, and especially the heads of the two provinces *da-mo-ko-ro*) whether caused by the death of the current office-holder or by inauguration of the new one, would have been critical. Such transitional periods are when state communities are acutely unstable and vulnerable.²⁰

If such a ceremony were taking place, a 'scribe' in giving brief contextual information about a tablet or series of tablets written mainly for the internal record-keeping mnemonic purposes of the tablet-writers themselves would not have had to be expansive in providing information. A burial of an elite office-holder or the inauguration of his or her replacement would have been a 'national event,' news of which would have been spread along social networks throughout the united territory of Pylos. Large-scale feasts are held to bring or reinforce cohesion during such critical periods.²¹ Unfortunately for us 3,200 years later, we do not know the background circumstances in detail and find the tachygraphic brevity of the tablet headings cryptic.

¹⁸ NAKASSIS 2013, 181-183 with further citations in n. 114 and n. 122.

¹⁹ DAVIS 2022, 80-86. See also MURPHY 2014; MURPHY *et al.* 2020. Reverence for the dead and the 'communal immortalization' in the social memory of those males who had conducted themselves in warfare in selfless devotion to their 'states,' clans, families, wives and children underlie the heroization of the noble 'enemy' war leader Hector in the *Iliad*. Collective 'immortal' reverence by members in the enduring community is a repeated message in the poems of Archilochus, Tyrtaeus and Callinus and is chief among the main notes sounded in Pericles' funeral oration. Even if conspicuous tombs near the Palace of Nestor went out of use much earlier than the destruction of the palace in early III C, the sizeable number of male elites of each generation (20-25 years?) would have been ceremonially honored and socially remembered in burials somewhere in the region.

²⁰ PALAIMA 2012, on the preoccupation with security in the ideology of Mycenaean palatial territories.

²¹ PALAIMA 2004a; STOCKER & DAVIS 2004.

Here is an analogy. On November 24, 1963, a memorandum note is created in the Congressional office of a US senator. On it are written a list of items or things to do. The heading states simply ‘ceremony for president’ or ‘JFK tomorrow.’ Few further specifics would have been required. Those with access to the memorandum would have known the information written in the memorandum was related to the assassinated President John F. Kennedy and to the ceremonies involving his corpse that were taking place on Sunday and Monday, November 24 and 25, in the Capitol Rotunda, in the White House, at St. Matthew’s Cathedral, and at Arlington National Cemetery.²²

Many significant scholarly voices, mine excluded, now explicitly propose that the interpretation of the verb *te-ke* aorist of τίθημι as ‘buried’ should itself be ‘laid to rest.’²³ Ruling out *te-ke* = ‘buried’ has some seriously distorting consequences when it comes to interpreting the Linear B evidence for larger purposes. To cite one example, Jorit Kelder and Marco Poelwijk translate **Ta 711.1** as “Thus *Pu₂-ke-qi-ri* witnessed (the following) when the wanax appointed *Au-ke-wa* as *da-mo-ko-ro*.”²⁴ They make no mention of any possible alternative interpretation in further claiming, “This text has received considerable scholarly attention, primarily because it represents the *sole unambiguous* proof for the wanax’s position as head of the state, in the act of appointing an official, rather than (as has been suggested in the past) a figurehead or religious leader.” (Italics mine.) This so-called proof is only unambiguous if we discard the alternative interpretation of the verb as ‘buried’ as completely untenable and leave it out of our reconstructions.

There is really only one counter voice, Yves Duhoux’s,²⁵ joined with mine. Aura Jorro does a good job of laying out fairly the alternative possibilities for why and how the thirteen-tablet **Ta** inventory record came into being and how it relates to the somewhat enigmatic heading on **Ta 711**. And he gives a concise history of Palmer’s ideas, how they

²² <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/john-f-kennedy-funeral> [last accessed March 14, 2023].

²³ AURA JORRO 2021, 20; BERNABÉ & PIERINI 2017, 524-526; VARIAS GARCÍA 2016, 552-553. NAKASSIS 2013, 226 and PIERINI 2021, 108-109, take as certain the reading of **Ta 711** as the king making an appointment of *au-ke-wa* to the position of *da-mo-ko-ro*. This is even so in *LSJ-RS*, 293, who follow the growing orthodoxy after *Docs*²: “τίθημι B II 1, at end add ‘Myc. 3 aor. *te-ke* (in sense B I 1),’ i.e., “*put in a certain state or condition, make one something, with predicate in apposition.*”

²⁴ KELDER & POELWIJK 2016, 572-573.

²⁵ DUHOUX 2002-2003; 2008, 316-317.

were received and what small modifications Palmer later made.²⁶ Accepting Palmer's view of *te-ke per se* as 'buried' was made difficult right at the start because, a. Palmer proposed that the many, many pieces of exquisitely manufactured furniture, ceramic and metallic ceremonial vessels and practical implements used in making and cooking with a fire were part of a tomb inventory; and b. Palmer interpreted *da-mo-ko-ro* "no como un título sino como un patronímico." In addition, Aura Jorro discusses Palmer's criticism of Ventris's ideas (and by extension later of Chadwick's ideas) as deriving from Palmer's view that Ventris, as an 'outsider,' lacked validated scholarly training and the tools for close textual interpretation. Varias, too, lays out multiple options for how to understand the nature of the inventory in relationship to the heading phrase.²⁷

Removing the background noise from Palmer's claim, let us take up the *teke* = 'buried' equation.

I believe we need to rethink what now prevails as the basis for objecting to interpreting *te-ke* ἔθηκε as 'buried.' I cite three major recent 'refutations' of the Palmer-Duhoux-Palaima position by scholars whom I have just cited and whose scholarly work we all consider of the highest quality: ingenious, insightful, clear, logical and both essential to our collective progress and invitingly collaborative, i.e., fully in keeping with the cordiality we Mycenologists know as *l'esprit de Gif*. They all share amiably in our collective pursuit of scholarly truth, in Mycenology an apple of Tantalus swaying in the boughs just out of reach above us.

- a. τίθημι, con este significado ('enterrar') rige, *siempre* de manera explícita, el complemento circunstancial del lugar del enterramiento ('en...'). (Italics mine.)²⁸
- b. Diversi autori, tuttavia, hanno obiettato a ragione che in greco τίθημι, quando significa 'seppellire' regge *sempre* in forma esplicita il complemento di stato in luogo ('in...') (Italics mine.)²⁹
- c. Chadwick's criticism³⁰ of Palmer's interpretation is *indisputable*: in order for τίθημι to mean 'to bury' there needs to be an indication of

²⁶ AURA JORRO 2021, 19-21.

²⁷ VARIAS GARCÍA 2016, 552-553.

²⁸ AURA JORRO 2021, 20.

²⁹ VARIAS GARCÍA 2016, 553.

³⁰ *Docs*², 584.

what is being buried (bones or a corpse) or where it is happening (in a tomb, in the soil). Duhoux offers a counter example to reject criticism: *TAM* 2.1.51.15-16 ὁ θείς τινα ἀσεβῆς ἔστω ‘whoever will bury somebody will be sacrilegious.’ However, this is unacceptable since it is presented without its context: *TAM* 2.1.51.11-16 ἀλλῶ δὲ μηδενὶ ἐν τῷ πυργίσκῳ τεθῆναι μετὰ τὸ ἐνταφῆναι αὐτήν· ἐπεὶ ὁ θείς τινα ἀσεβῆς ἔστω [θεοῖς καταχθονίοις]. The section cited by Duhoux implies elements from the previous sentence, where not only does the required dative of the tomb ἐν τῷ πυργίσκῳ appear, but ἐνταφῆναι is also used as a synonym of τεθῆναι.³¹

This line of argumentation, including the Chadwick citation embedded in *c.*, seems to be dependent entirely on the *LSJ* entry for τίθημι (*s.v.* p. 1791). The *LSJ* entry is the source for Duhoux’s citation of part of the inscription *TAM* 2.1.51, 15-16 and for Bernabé’s and Pierini’s citation of the fuller text of this part of the tomb inscription (*TAM* 2.1.52, 11-16). We should note, however, that neither the *LSJ* nor Chadwick say that “in order for τίθημι to mean ‘to bury’ there *needs to be* [*italics mine*] an indication of what is being buried (bones or a corpse) or where it is happening (in a tomb, in the soil).” Neither Chadwick nor the *LSJ* claims that when τίθημι means ‘bury,’ it *always* has specification of place.

Chadwick, because he is relying on the *LSJ* and because he himself had a passionate interest in lexicography, knows the limitations of particular citations. What Chadwick says is “The sense ‘buried’ *normally* [*italics mine*] requires a mention of earth, bones, etc.”³² Likewise, the *LSJ* entry 1791 A11 gives as a particular meaning of the verb “*lay in the grave, bury, ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὅστ’ ἔα* 23.83 (*freq.* [*italics mine*] with words added, ἐν τάφοισι, ἐς ταφάς, etc., *v. supr.* 1b)” and 1b cites *Iliad* 24.793 and 797 ἐς λάρνακα, ἐς κάπετον and Sophocles, *Ajax* 1110 ἐς ταφάς and with middle voice ἐν τάφοισι θέσθε *Oedipus at Colonus* 1410.

Neither the *LSJ* nor Chadwick gives an example of the default, the use of a form of τίθημι meaning ‘bury’ without explicit written mention of place or of what is being buried. But both sources observe caution. They do not say categorically that τίθημι *te-ke* cannot (or can never) mean ‘bury’ or ‘buried’ unless accompanied, a. by specification of what

³¹ BERNABÉ & PIERINI 2017, 526.

³² *Docs*², 584.

is being buried (the objection for accepting the personal name *au-ke-wa* as *what* is being buried), and b. by explicit reference to the place of burial, which is absent from our **Ta 711.1** text. Chadwick's 'normally' and the LSJ's 'frequently' leave open that the meaning of *te-ke* here is disputable and is not unambiguous. That is to say, we still have two options: 'appoint' and 'bury.'

If we think about this further, we will understand our dilemma as more than quibbling over *minutiae*. We should ask ourselves how or why mentions of place of burial and item being buried are made in the kinds of poetical texts that we have (Homeric epic and Greek tragedy) and why such mentions may occur in inscriptions on Roman-imperial-period tombs in Asia Minor. Likewise, we all know that the Linear B texts have a telegraphic brevity because they are largely ways of keeping short-term notes of internal information for use by the 'scribes' themselves. This is taken to extreme in the Thebes **Fq** series, where, as Bernabé and Pierini astutely observe, the four-word sequence *o-te*, *tu-wo-te-to*, *ma-ka* 'they placed (= celebrated) the burnt offering' 'for kneading' is sufficient in the header of **Fq 126** to explain the occasion and purpose that required this long tablet of allotments of HORD to be created.³³

Let us pose now two basic questions. As we reviewed at the start, the tablet-writer (Hand 2) connected with inventorying the items in the **Ta** series at Pylos was either himself a member of the socio-political elite or intimately connected with the affairs of such elites. How would he or his record-keeping peers not know—or remember within the limited annual life span of the tablets (the current 'administrative year' of the palatial center)—when later reading or re-reading *te-ke* in **Ta 711.1** whether *au-ke-wa*, the *da-mo-ko-ro*, was a. dead and buried after a large-scale ritual sacrifice and commensal funerary ceremony or b. alive and serving as *da-mo-ko-ro* of the Hither Province after being inaugurated and having a large-scale banquet involving animal sacrifice held in celebration of his political promotion? Would the phrasing on **Ta 711.1** really have been ambiguous to contemporaries?

The tablet-writers also were *not* trying to present vivid images in oral songs set to a metrical rhythm (hexameter) that was not 'natural' to Greek speakers,³⁴ nor were they using formulaic building blocks to

³³ BERNABÉ & PIERINI 2017, 527, 531-534.

³⁴ RUIJGH 2004, 527, 531 for arguments in favor of Meillet's theory that dactylic hexameter was taken over by the Greek-speakers from Minoan culture.

instantiate song creatively and not via rote memorization. The mere mechanics of oral verse composition would call readily into play, and encourage singers to maintain, a large repertory of phrases that specify corpses and bones, tombs, graves and fires. Likewise, authors of lines from tragedies as sung verses need to be aware of line structures and sometimes to overemphasize details. We should keep in mind that not only for Aeschylus were our surviving plays scraps from the banquet of Homer.

Regarding Homeric citations we should remember that formulaic phrases and epithets were “building blocks used by oral performers” and had a twofold purpose in performance: a. operating as compositional tools for the singers; and b. having “a very practical purpose, similar to techniques used by radio broadcasters to catch the listener’s ear” and to assure that listeners do not miss key aspects of the contents of the song as it is being performed.³⁵ The Mycenaean tablet-writers have no such needs in writing records that they themselves would later consult.

Let us take one oft-cited passage used to support the idea that in order for τίθημι to mean ‘bury’ we need specification of the ‘object’ buried. In *Iliad* 23.83 the dream ghost of the dead Patroklos comes from Hades and speaks to Achilles. Two-thirds of the way through his speech, he declares:

μη̄ ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὅστ’ Ἄχιλλεῦ *Iliad* 23.83

This follows immediately upon his prediction that Achilles, too, will die at Troy:

καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ μοῖρα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ’ Ἄχιλλεῦ,
τείχει ὕπο Τρώων εὐηφενέων ἀπολέσθαι. *Iliad* 23.80-81

And it precedes his final wish that both Achilles’ and his bones be concealed (ἀμφικαλύπτει) in one container (σορός) that is a golden amphora that Achilles’ mother gave to him (Achilles).

ὣς δὲ καὶ ὅστ’ ἐὰν νῶϊν ὀμῆ σορός ἀμφικαλύπτει

χρῦσεος ἀμφιφορέυς, τὸν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ. *Iliad* 23.91-92

³⁵ DRAPER 2002, 48.

Patroklos refers to burial of his bones (ὄστέα) in 23.83 because he himself now resides in Hades and what is left of him on the earth are his ὄστέα. Likewise, in 23.91-92 he again uses ὄστέα and uses another word ἀμφικαλύπτοι, rather than a form of τίθημι or θάπτω, to mean effectively ‘bury.’ The oral poets have him speak this way here because all that will remain of Achilles and Patroklos after Achilles is killed is their ὄστέα. The poet singer also is playing with his building blocks to achieve a pleasant-sounding effect ἀμφικαλύπτοι ... ἀμφιφορέυς. My point is that phrase usage of this kind operates in poetry under much different constraints and for much different purposes than those connected with our non-verbose Linear B tablet records. Remember Bernabé’s and Pierini’s truly brilliant explication of **TH Fq 126** as our poster child for compressed notation of the when and why in the heading of Linear B records.³⁶

The tomb inscription from Telmessus is likewise formulaic, as we see when we review the fuller corpus of such texts. These kinds of inscriptions are formulaic. They often make reference at the start to what is called a ‘tomb’ or ‘heroon’ or in the text from Telmessus cited by the LSJ a πυργίσκος ‘little tower.’ Why? Because the opening sections of such inscriptions generally contain proud proclamations that the individual builders/dedicators of such tomb structures have built them for the use of their spouses or extended families, often explicitly stipulated, and themselves. A second section, often omitted, then prohibits use by outsiders. It then further specifies penalties for violators. Indeed, this provides the context for understanding that the generic ὁ θεὸς τινα means “If anyone [other than the prior specified family members] ‘sets’ anyone [to rest herein, i.e., effectively ‘buries’] let them be accursed.”

I would suggest that if this tomb inscription were fragmentary, and only the phrase ἐπεὶ ὁ θεὸς τινα ἀσεβῆς ἔστω θεοῖς καταχθονίοις were preserved, it would be perfectly readable. The introductory section is not a *sine qua non* for understanding θεὸς here as ‘buried’ in the second part. In some real sense, it is not even connected with the second part.

I would also suggest that ἐνταφῆναι is not, strictly speaking, “used as a synonym of τεθῆναι.” What we have here is a public legal document

³⁶ BERNABÉ & PIERINI 2017, 526-527, 531-534.

that not only invokes curses upon those who illegally use the tombs of others to bury their own dead, but also further specifies penalties that the community in whose territory the tomb is located must exact from such perpetrators. In such a case, there is a genuine and meaningful difference between the dedicator saying μετὰ τὸ ἐνταφῆναι αὐτήν ‘after she has been buried’ properly and with every full legal right *stricto sensu* and τεθῆναι to ‘set to rest,’ i.e., place in the tomb physically, *vid.* ‘bury,’ but without proper burial rights.

As for having to specify the burial as thing or things buried (e.g., ὄστέα or νέκυς), many tomb inscriptions refer to the individual, often pronominally of an aforementioned party, while using only a form of τίθημι. One example will suffice.³⁷

- 1 Ἀντικράτης Εὐκλεία τῇ ἑαυτοῦ
 γυναικὶ μνείας χάριν· ἥρωσ χρηστὲ χαῖρε.
 ἐνέχομαι μηδένα ἕτερον τεθῆναι χωρὶς
 ἐμοῦ ἢ γ<ο>νεὺς Λονγίνος. ἐὰν δέ τις
 5 ἕτερος τολμήσῃ, δώσει ἐς τὸ ταμεῖον (δηνάρια) βφ’.

IG IX.2.931 Pelasgiotis Larisa, Roman period

In this inscription (lines 1-2) Antikrates declares, without even mentioning the tomb on which the inscription is made, that [it] is for his wife Eukleia and for the sake of her memory. He then specifies that he has made it legally binding upon himself (ἐνέχομαι) to τεθῆναι ‘set,’ i.e., ‘bury,’ μηδένα ἕτερον τεθῆναι χωρὶς ἐμοῦ ἢ γ<ο>νεὺς Λονγίνος ‘no other except me or my father Longinus.’ And then comes the abbreviated curse and penalty stipulation: “If any other dares, he will give into the treasury” (ἐὰν δέ τις ἕτερος τολμήσῃ, δώσει ἐς τὸ ταμεῖον (δηνάρια) βφ’) a specified sum. Here τεθῆναι clearly means ‘to bury.’ There is no explicit mention of the place, which is understood from context. And the parties to be buried are referred to either by personal name or by indefinite pronoun. And all of this is clearly understandable in context.

I hope the reason for careful wording by the *LSJ* and John Chadwick is now clear. Understanding the context of historical inscriptions is all.

³⁷ <https://epigraphy.packhum.org/text/148876?hs=138-146> [last accessed January 31, 2022].

The late Eugene Vanderpool put it this way to me during my graduate student days, when we were looking at historical inscriptions: “An inscription is easy to read if you know what it says.” This surely applies even more so to our Linear B proto-historical inscriptions.

In conclusion, I politely request that we keep *te-ke* = ‘buried’ in **Ta 711.1** on the table for future interesting discussions of the implications of the **Ta** series.

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