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o-u-ka, o-u-ko and the Mycenaean tablets revisited

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The Linear B terms *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* only appear in three tablets from Mycenaean: ¹ **Oe 108.2**, Hand 54, **Oe 111.1.3**, Hand 51, and **Oe 120**, Hand 55. These texts are the following:

Oe 108

.0	<i>vacat</i>	
.1	sa-pa , o-no	LANA 4
.2	o-u-ko	LANA 3
.3	we[]	<i>vacat</i>

Oe 111 + 136

.1	pe-ru-si-nwa , o-u-ka[
.2	wo-ro-ne-ja pa-we-si / [•]-me-'jo-i'	LANA[
.3	ne[-wa]o-u-ka	LANA[
.4] -k̄i-ni-*56	LANA 100[
.5] o-ta-pa-ro-te-wa-ro	LANA 200[
.6] <i>vacat</i>	

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¹ Another record could be on tablet **Oe 113**, Hand 54, according to the critical apparatus of *TITHEMY*, 65, where Melena suggests *o-u-k̄o* before LANA 1 at the beginning of line 1, but this reading is uncertain.

Oe 120

o-u-ko

LANA 2

Although each tablet has been written by a different scribe, all three belong to the **Oe** series, formed by 29 tablets coming from Room 2 of the House of the Oil Merchant [henceforth: HOM], which record mainly wool allotments to textile workers or wool intended for specific fabrics.²

Scholars unanimously accept that *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* belong to the same lexeme. This is generally interpreted as an adjective derived from /*owis*/ ‘sheep’, namely, /*owikos*, -a, -on/ ‘of sheep’, referring to the wool.³ *o-u-ka* is taken in the neuter nominative plural in **Oe 111.1.3**, in agreement with the not preserved wool units, and *o-u-ko* in the neuter nominative singular, which would not be in agreement with the wool units (three in **Oe 108.2** and two in **Oe 120**), but with the word for wool (probably the predecessor of Greek εἶρος, which is neuter) implicit in the logogram: see, for parallels, the entries *ne-wo* LANA 4, in **KN Od(1) 689.a.b**, by scribe 103, or *to-so o* LANA 14, in **KN Od 666.a**, by scribe 115.

However, there is a spelling problem in this interpretation: /*owikal*/ should be written ***o-wi-ka* in Mycenaean Greek, as the noun *o-wi-de-ta-i* in **PY Un 718.2** and **Wa 731.B**, if its interpretation as /*owidertā^{hi}*/ ‘to the sheepskinners’ is right,⁴ and the personal name *o-wi-ro* in **KN Dd 1218.B**, probably /*Owilos*/,⁵ make evident. The parallels quoted by Pierre Chantraine for the spelling *o-u-ka* instead of ***o-wi-ka*, the alternative spellings *di-wi-ja* (**PY An 607.5**) / *di-u-ja* (**PY Cn 1287.6**, **Tn 316.v.6**) and *me-wi-jo* (**KN Ak 611.2**, etc.) / *me-u-jo* (**KN Ak 612.B**, etc.), are not valid, because in these words there is a jod after vowel /*i*/, while in *o-u-ka* there is a velar stop.⁶ One could think that this spelling without vowel

² See VARIAS GARCÍA 2012, 156-159 for a complete description of the contents of this series.

³ Original interpretation by PALMER 1969, 439, followed by most scholars (see references in *DMic* II, 56 and *LGM*, 355; the same interpretation is found in NOSCH 2014, 373, 376 (with doubts), 379).

⁴ For this interpretation see *DMic* II, 58 and *LGM*, 355-356.

⁵ *DMic* II, 58. A Greek personal name Οἶλος appears in an inscription from Sardes of the 4th century BC.

⁶ CHANTRAINE 1966, 177; in note 1 of this page he admits this different phonetic situation, but adds: “mais une influence du premier type, au moins dans la graphie, est plausible.” A similar objection can be made to LUJÁN 1999, 127-128 and notes 2 and 3, who follows Palmer’s interpretation and proposes for *o-u-ka* a phenomenon parallel to the term *ko-u-ra*, if this is a doublet of ***ko-wi-ra* (cf. *ko-wi-ro-wo-ko* /*kowilo-worgos*/, a specialised worker, in **KN B 101.1**), Classical Greek κοῖλα: as Luján says, this Greek interpretation of *ko-u-ra* is not certain (see *DMic* I, 394), and, even if it were right, there is here a liquid after vowel /*i*/, not a stop like in *o-u-ka*.

/i/ of a word derived from *owis was specific to Mycenae and different from Pylos and other Mycenaean sites, but there is no justification for it.

Apart from this linguistic difficulty, there is a problem in the meaning of *o-u-ka/o-u-ko* as a wool adjective ‘of sheep’: why is it written only four times in the wool tablets? Does it mean that most of the wool recorded in the HOM, which is not qualified as *o-u-ka* or *o-u-ko*, is not ‘of sheep?’ *Non liquet*. The common explanation is that *o-u-ka* is written in **Oe 111.1** because it is opposed to the term *wo-ro-ne-ja* in **Oe 111.2**, which is interpreted as ‘of lamb;’ besides, **Oe 111** is thought to be a summing up document of all the wool recorded by scribe 51 (and perhaps of most of the wool recorded in the HOM), because of the opposition between *pe-ru-si-nwa* /*perusinwa*/ ‘of last year’ on line 1, and *ne-wa/newa*/ ‘of this year’ on line 3, wool (LANA), and then the adjective *o-u-ka* should be implied in the rest of the tablets. Even if this is accepted, the writing of *o-u-ko* in **Oe 108.2** and **Oe 120** is not explained: in **Oe 108** *o-u-ko* is applied only to the wool recorded on line 2 (three units), not to that on line 1 (four units), which is preceded by the transaction term *o-no/onon*/ ‘benefit’ (see below), so that if *o-u-ko* were the adjective ‘of sheep,’ we would have to deduce that the wool recorded on **Oe 108.1** would be not ‘of sheep,’ without any indication of the animal it comes from, which is unlikely.

The best approach to this question is to consider that the opposition between *pe-ru-si-nwa o-u-ka* and *ne[-wa o-u-ka* in **Oe 111** could be similar to that found in Knossos between *ne-wa po-ka*, which appears with the sheep’s logogram in the totaling tablet **KN Dp 997.b** (*]to-sa* is written at the beginning of the tablet), and the possible *?pe-ru-si-]nwa po-ka* in **KN Dp 7742.1**. These are the only two occurrences of the term *po-ka* in Mycenaean Greek, so perhaps *o-u-ka* at Mycenae is analogous to *po-ka* at Knossos, although the latter refers to sheep, not to wool. For *po-ka* there are two interpretations: the most widely accepted one takes the word as the nominative plural /*pokai*/, a variant of Classical Greece πόκος ‘fleece,’⁷ but Melena proposes a *nomen actionis* in *-ā*: /*pokā*/ ‘standing either for the clipping or for the clip or wool yield,’⁸ considering that the Knossian tablets refer to last year’s and current year’s shearing. Those following the first interpretation see in the pair of tablets **KN**

⁷ See references in *DMic* II, 133 and *LGM*, 393.

⁸ MELENA 1987, 443, who mentions in note 206 a similar observation of LEJEUNE 1997, 57 and n. 10.

Dp 997 and **Dp 7742** similar records to **MY Oe 111**, namely, totaling records of sheep wool (because of the appearance of logogram OVIS^f after *po-ka* in **Dp 997.b**) of the previous and the current year. On the other hand, if Melena's proposal is accepted, one would see in *o-u-ka* an action noun in *-ā* like *po-ka*.

Leaving aside the interpretation of *po-ka*, there are in Mycenaean Greek some certain *nomina actionis* in *-ā* with *o*-grade in their roots corresponding to verbs in *e*-grade, describing different types of production in the Mycenaean economy: thus *o-pa* /*hopā*/ 'preparing or refurbishment work' (cf. ἔπω 'to make ready'), *to-u-ka* /*touk^hā*/ 'finishing work' (cf. τεύχω 'to prepare, to fully produce') and perhaps *wo-ka* /*worgā*/ 'task' (cf. (Ϝ)ἔργω 'to work').⁹ Along this line Hugo Mühlestein¹⁰ interpreted *o-u-ka* as an action noun corresponding to verb εὔχομαι, attested in Mycenaean in the 3rd person singular of the present indicative: *e-u-ke-to* 'she declares solemnly' in **PY Eb 297.1** and **Ep 704.5**; *o-u-ka* is rendered /*ouk^hā*/ 'declaration' or 'vow,' hence 'vow of delivery' as solemn heading of tablet **Oe 111**, which would make this the introductory tablet of this series.

Also, Mühlestein interpreted *o-u-ko* as /*ouk^hos*/ with the same meaning as *o-u-ka* /*ouk^hā*/ "im Ablaut zu εὔχομαι (vgl. *e-u-ke-to*) wie φόρος und φορά zu φέρω, πλόκος und πλοκή zu πλέκω u. a. m.; εὐχή ist an εὔχομαι angeglichen," adding that "*o-u-ko* und *o-u-ka* gehören verschiedenen Schreibern und können nach ihrer Bildungsweise Synonyma sein."¹¹ The main problem to this morphologically irreproachable interpretation of *o-u-ko* as /*ouk^hos*/ 'vow of delivery' is the content and shape of the tablets where this term appears: **Oe 108.2** and **120**, which are simple index cards, very different from **Oe 111**; a solemn noun /*ouk^hos*/ 'vow of delivery' does not seem suitable for both tablets. The fact that each tablet has been written by a different scribe: 51 (**Oe 111**), 54 (**Oe 108**) and 55 (**Oe 120**), as Mühlestein himself stressed, could indicate

⁹ The other proposed interpretation for *wo-ka* is /*wok^hā*/ 'chair' (cf. (Ϝ)ἔχω 'to transport'). See the discussion in *DMic* II, 441 and *LGM*, 217-218.

¹⁰ MÜHLESTEIN 1968, 114; see *DMic* II, 56 note 6 for the authors who follow Mühlestein's interpretation, also accepted by MELENA 2014, 33, 165.

¹¹ MÜHLESTEIN 1968, 114. García Ramón points out to me *per litteras* that a Greek thematic substantive *οὔχος would perfectly correspond to Vedic *óha-* (**h₁óu^{gh}-o-*); also, there is in both languages a neuter in *-o/es-* εὔχος 'boast; vow, votive offering': Vedic *óhas-* 'fame' (**h₁éu^{gh}-es-*). Other Greek parallels to the coexistence of both forms *οὔχος: *οὔχά are τόμος: τομή, or σκόπος: σκοπή.

that each scribe wrote this notable term only on one tablet each though it is to be understood in the rest of his records as well; however, this is not certain.

Tablet **Oe 108** might give us the key to interpret the term *o-u-ko*. Line 1 of this tablet records four units of wool preceded by the terms *sa-pa* and *o-no*. As it is well known, the transaction term *o-no* /*onon*/ ‘benefit’ refers to a delivery of raw material by the palace to individuals as payment for the supply of a commodity, which in **Oe 108.1** is *sa-pa*, probably a textile item.¹² Differently from most of the records where *o-no* appears, like **PY An 35.5**, **Un 443.1**, **Un 1322.4.5**, **KN Fh 347.2** or **Fh 372**, no recipient of this payment is recorded on **Oe 108**; although an interpretation of *o-u-ko* as a personal name is theoretically possible,¹³ the fact that this term is recorded on line 2 in another entry of wool (three units), different from that of *o-no* on line 1, excludes it as denoting the recipient of this payment.

In **Oe 108.1**, as in the other inscription from Mycenae where *o-no* appears, **Oe 109**, both tablets by scribe 54, the payment in raw material is wool. These two records of wool are different from most of the **Oe** tablets, where wool is allocated by the palace to textile workers to make several types of fabrics in the *ta-ra-si-ja* system of production, as tablet **Oe 110**, which records the term *ta-ra-si-ja* on line 1, shows.¹⁴ If the three units of wool of **Oe 108.2** are not recorded as *o-no*, but as *o-u-ko*, and this term does not stand for an adjective ‘of sheep’ or for a personal name, but it is similar to the term *o-u-ka* recorded on **Oe 111.1.3**, everything indicates that *o-u-ko* is an administrative term contrasting with *o-no*.

An important common fact of the four records of *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* LANA is that there is no recipient of this wool, contrary to the great majority of records of wool in the **Oe** series, where wool is allocated either to textile workers designated by their personal names (women: *a-pi-do-ra*, *a-qi-ti-ta*, etc., or men: *ka-sa-to*, *di-du-mo*, etc.) or by their

¹² On the meaning of the transaction term *o-no* in all its occurrences in the Mycenaean inscriptions, see ultimately BENNET & HALSTEAD 2014. I do not discuss here the interpretation of the term *sa-pa*, for which see *DMic* II, 280.

¹³ A personal name Εὔχος is attested in an inscription from Epidamnos-Dyrrhachion of the Hellenistic-Imperial period (see *LGPV* III.A), so a variant *Οὔχος of the same lexeme is plausible as personal name in Mycenaean times.

¹⁴ See VARIAS GARCÍA 2012, 157-159 for the two types of palatial economic control, the *ta-ra-si-ja* system and the *o-no* system, in the **Oe** series.

occupations (*a-ke-ti-ri[-ja-i /askētriā^hi/* ‘to the (female) decorators;’ *ka-na-pe-we /knap^hēwei/* ‘to the fuller’), or to other workers (*a-to-po-qo-i /artopok^woi^hi/* ‘to the bakers;’ *ke-ra-me-wi /keramēwi/* ‘to the potter’). Therefore, it seems that the wool recorded as *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* in the **Oe** tablets, kept in Room 2 of the HOM, which functions as a temporary wool storeroom, is still waiting to be supplied to different individuals, and hence its record as */ouk^hā/* or */ouk^hos/* ‘vow of delivery’, to confirm its necessary allocation. Given that **Oe 111** records wool to make *pa-we-a* cloth on line 2, and the whole tablet belongs to the *ta-ra-si-ja* system, a very attractive interpretation of *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* in the **Oe** series could be ‘vow of delivery’ of wool to make cloths in the *ta-ra-si-ja* system.

Oe 111 is certainly the most important tablet by Hand 51 who is the main scribe responsible for the bookkeeping of the textile industry at Mycenae.¹⁵ The tablet arrangement, with an entry for the first part of *pe-ru-si-nwa*, *o-u-ka* [LANA (line 1) ‘last year’s wool’ opposed to the entry for the second part of *ne[-wa]* *o-u-ka* LANA [(line 3) ‘wool of this year’, suggests that **Oe 111** is chronologically earlier than the current year’s tablets in the **Oe** series, as evidence for the annual accounting of which Hand 51 was in charge. Also, **Oe 111** is the tablet with the largest amount of wool recorded at Mycenae by far: at least 100 units (= c. 300kg) in line 4 and 200 units (= c. 600kg) in line 5, to which the not preserved quantities of the first three lines must be added. All this fits with the interpretation of *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* as referring to wool which has not yet been allocated: the *o-u-ka* LANA of **Oe 111.1.3** is probably a big amount of wool obtained in two different years to make *pa-we-a*, the plain type of cloth recorded on line 2 and perhaps understood in lines 4 and 5.

The record of two different systems of acquisition of commodities by the palace, *o-no* and *o-u-ko*, if the second is inside the *ta-ra-si-ja* system, on a single tablet, **Oe 108**, is not a problem, because there are other Mycenaean tablets in which a completely different entry is recorded besides an *o-no* transaction: thus **PY An 35** records the dispatch of builders to different places on lines 1-3, while it notes an *o-no* payment of several raw materials for alum on lines 5-6, or **PY Un 443** records an *o-no* payment on line 1 and a different allocation to another individual on line 3. This fact could actually indicate that *o-u-ko* on line 2 of **Oe**

¹⁵ See VARIAS GARCÍA 2012, 156-157 for a detailed analysis of tablet **Oe 111**.

108 is only applied to this entry of three units of wool, and is not to be understood in the other tablets written by scribe 54,¹⁶ and the same is valid for the entry *o-u-ko* LANA 2 of **Oe 120** by Hand 55. The latter is a brief inscription which, according to the editors of the tablet,¹⁷ is cut at bottom, originally being the upper part of page tablet, which strengthens the idea that *o-u-ko* is applied only to these two units of wool and that **Oe 120** is different from the other tablets written by scribe 55, four of them records of wool allocated to different individuals and a fifth one recording *pa-we-a* cloth.

The main civilisations of the ancient Near East record the administrative management of wool in a similar way to the Mycenaean administration, because in all of them wool is the main raw material to make textiles. For instance, the Neo-Babylonian texts mention the '*lubuštu* / *sig-ba*' allocation to refer to the direct wool allocation to the temple workers or to the royal palace workers.¹⁸ In the Neo-Sumerian texts of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2150-2000 BC) the term *mu-ku*_x 'delivery' is recorded in a heading of a list of textiles from several places on line 5 of the obverse of tablet BM 110453 (*túg mu-ku*_x -*ensik* 'textiles: delivery of governor:'),¹⁹ and it appears also in a record of wool for their manufacture on column II, line 2, of the reverse of tablet BM 110320 (*sig-kur-ra mu-ku*_x 'mountain (sheep) wool delivered').²⁰

But it is the Akkadian term *sattukku* which best corresponds to the Mycenaean terms *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* as they have been interpreted here. The meaning of *sattukku* is 'regular delivery, regular offering,' and while in Mari this designates '(non-cultic) deliveries,' in the other ancient Near Eastern archives it mostly refers to temple offerings.²¹ Thus in the Neo-Babylonian documentation one qualification of the wool was '*sattukku*'s wool,' which, according to Francis Joannès, "was probably reserved for the manufacture of the gods' clothes."²² If the Mycenaean terms *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* 'vow of delivery' correspond to Akkadian *sat-*

¹⁶ Additionally, this conclusion would be confirmed if the reading *o-u-ko* before LANA 1 on **Oe 113.1**, another tablet in Hand 54, were assured (see note 1).

¹⁷ *TITHEMY*, 66.

¹⁸ See JOANNÈS 2010, 401.

¹⁹ Tablet transliterated and translated by POMPONIO 2010, 188.

²⁰ Tablet transliterated and translated by POMPONIO 2010, 194.

²¹ See BLACK *et al.* 2000, 319 for this distinction in the meaning of *sattukku*, with some examples.

²² JOANNÈS 2010, 401.

tukku and can qualify wool, the question immediately arises whether *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* have a meaning similar to the one most frequently attested in the ancient Near Eastern texts, except in Mari, that is, whether *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* do not refer to a secular vow of wool delivery in the context of the *ta-ra-si-ja* system of textile production, but to a 'cultic' vow of wool delivery to deities or in a religious context.

There are several Mycenaean texts from different sites, Knossos, Pylos, Thebes, which record cloth and wool in a religious context, as offerings to deities or allocated to sanctuary workers, which shows the importance of the religious sector in the Mycenaean textile industry.²³ For example, three **Od** tablets from Knossos, **Od(2) 714, 715** and **716**, record three small wool offerings to the goddess *e-re-u-ti-ja* /*Eileithyia*/ Hom. Εἰλειθυῖα, Classical Greek Ἐλευθιά, two of LANA 1 (c. three kg) and one of LANA 4 (c. 12kg); three **Of** tablets from Thebes record wool allocations to workers dealing with deities, of Hera (**Of 28.2**), Hermes (**Of 31.3**) and *Potnia* (**Of 36.2**), and tablet **Un 6.6** from Pylos records an allocation of five units of wool (c. 15kg) to the female deity *pe-re-**82 in a banqueting context.

Therefore, it would appear plausible to interpret the records of *o-u-ko* LANA on tablets **Oe 108.2** and **120** from Mycenae like the abovementioned religious wool tablets from Knossos and Thebes as two vows of offerings of small quantities of wool, three and two units, respectively, although neither of them records any deity. However, this religious interpretation does not fit well with the term *o-u-ka* in **Oe 111**, given the large quantities of wool recorded on this tablet, and the fact that at least on line two the wool is destined to make *pa-we-a* cloth.

In conclusion, the Linear B terms *o-u-ka* /*ouk^hā*/ and *o-u-ko* /*ouk^hos*/, following Mühlestein's interpretation (see above), are two substantives with the same meaning: 'vow of delivery,' an administrative term appearing only four times in the **Oe** series from Mycenae to refer to quantities of wool which are still in the storeroom Room 2 of the HOM and have to be allocated (to individuals or workshops). It is also suggested here that both terms can correspond to the Akkadian term *sattukku*, which mostly (but not always!) refer to cultic deliveries in the ancient

²³ For a commentary of the Linear B tablets recording wool and textiles in a religious context see BENDALL 2007, 221-241, who does not include the Mycenae **Oe** series among them. For a good description of the use of cloth in the Mycenaean cult on the basis of the textual evidence, see NOSCH & PERNA 2001.

Near Eastern texts. That *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* could also have a religious meaning is by no means clear; in that case, the Mycenae **Oe** series would cover a great variety of contents, like the Knossos **Od** tablets: wool records in the *ta-ra-si-ja* system of textile production, wool payments as *o-no*, vows of wool allocations to workshops connected with deities. But even if *o-u-ka* and *o-u-ko* have nothing to do with a religious delivery, and refer only to a plain vow of delivery, their exclusive record in the **Oe** tablets from Mycenae is an evidence of the complexity of this series, much less uniform than has been thought in scholarship so far, with records of several phases in the *ta-ra-si-ja* textile production (storage of wool to be allocated, wool allocation to textile workers, to make or to finish textiles) and of payments in wool to other workers. This would explain better why there are five scribes: 51, 52, 54, 55, and 56, involved in this wool department, if we consider that only a very small portion of this series has been preserved.

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