

ROBERT A. SUCHARSKI
Institute of Classical Philology
University of Warsaw

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KRZYSZTOF T. WITCZAK
Chair of Classical Philology
University of Łódź

U-PO-JO PO-TI-NI-JA AND THE CULT OF BAETYLS

Abstract: The authors suggest that the Mycenaean goddess *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja* was venerated outside the *pa-ki-ja-ne* sanctuaries, so probably in the open-air. If *u-po-jo* is etymologically connected with the Sanskrit word *yúpa-* (m.) denoting 'a sacrificial post, a sacred pillar', then the Greek theonym may convincingly mean 'the Lady of the sacred post'.

Michael Ventris' epoch-making discovery (i.e. the decipherment of the so-called Linear B syllabary and the proof that this system of script was used as means to write down a Greek dialect) – since being perhaps the highest achievement of the post-war Greek philology turned out to be in many cases a sort of criterion by which many former theories appeared to be right and many others proved to be false. Besides, it has also had another merit, maybe even more important – it opened new possibilities of research, hence it rightly deserves a name of a "milestone" in the development of the Hellenic studies.

A new scientific branch therefore has been brought into life and the 1950s and 60s have seen an enormous list of publications dealing with Mycenaean subjects from the linguistic, religious, archaeological, historic and philological points of view. But, despite of an imposing progress in our knowledge of *realia* of the Greece of the second millenary BC many questions, after primary ardour, have been left unsolved or at least left without any decisive proposals. Such is the case of a well-known Mycenaean word *po-ti-ni-ja*, a Linear B equivalent of the classical Greek appellative *πότνια* (f.) and Sanskrit *pátnī* (f.) 'lady, mistress'; it is highly probable that *po-ti-ni-ja* serves in most, if not in all, cases as a designation of a goddess, but we can not conclude whether it is the designation of only one or several goddesses. The question is even more complicated, given the fact that *po-ti-ni-ja* occurs many times together with other attributes. We find

therefore: *po-ti-ni-ja* (PY Fr 1231.1; Fr 1235.2; Tn 316.3; Un 219.7; MY Oi 704.1; TH Of 36.2), *da-bu-ri-to-jo*¹ *po-ti-ni-ja* (KN Gg 702.2; Oa 745.2), *a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja* (KN V 52.1), *si-to-po-ti-ni-ja* (MY Oi 701), *po-ti-ni-ja i-qe-ja* (PY An 1281.1), *po-ti-ni-ja a-si-wi-ja* (PY Fr 1206), *e-re-wi-jo-po-ti-ni-ja* (PY Vn 48.3), *ne-wo-pe-o po-ti-ni-ja* (PY Cc 665) and finally *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja*. In our opinion the variety in "epithets" can not be insignificant; that is why "one would expect *potinija* to designate several figures, since it is a generic term and its specific meaning depends on the context"².

This article has been thought as proposing a new interpretation of data regarding the two words: *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja*.

This pair of words is found in the up-to-now excavated texts only three times, and only among the inscriptions coming from Pylos. These are: Fn 187, Fr 1225 and Fr 1236. Their texts read as follows³:

Fn 187	.1 a-pi-te-ja	HORD[] NI 2
	.2 po-si-da-i-jo-de	HORD[] NI T 1
	.3 ka-ru-ke	HORD[] FAR
	.4 pa-ki-ja-na-de	HORD T 1[] NI T 2
	.5 ka-ru-ke	HORD T 1 V 3 NI T 1 V 3
	.6 de-do-wa-re-we	HORD T 1
	.7 ku-ri-na-ze-ja	HORD T 2 NI T 2
	.8 u-po-jo-po-ti-ni-ja	HORD T 5 NI T 4
	.9 o-pi-tu-ra-jo	HORD T 3
	.10 au-to-*34-ta-ra	HORD T 1
	.11 a-ma-tu-na	HORD T 1
	.12 te-qi-ri-jo-ne	HORD V 3
	.13 u-do-no-o-i	HORD T 3
	.14 po-te-re-we	HORD T 4 NI T 4
	.15 a-ke-ti-ri-ja-i	HORD T 1 V 3
	.16 ka-ru-ke	HORD T 1 V 3
	.17 i-so-e-ko	HORD T 2 [[V 3]]
	.18 po-si-da-i-je-u-si	HORD T 1 V 3

¹ We transcribe the Linear B sign *29 (*pu₂*) as *bu* following the interpretation presented by K. T. Witczak, A b-series in Linear B, *Kadmos* 1993, 32, pp. 162–171, esp. 168. See also K. T. Witczak, K problemu suščestvovanija *b v mikenskom grečeskom, *Voprosy Jazykoznanija*, 1996, No. 1, pp. 108–115.

² J. C. van Leuven, Mycenaean Goddesses Called Potnia, *Kadmos* 1979, 18, p. 112.

³ According to: E. L. Bennett and J.-P. Olivier, *The Pylos Tablets Transcribed*, vol I, Roma 1973 (henceforth: *PTT I*).

	.19 *34-ke-ja	HORD T 1 V 3 NI[
	.20 a-ro-ja	[HORD] V 3
	.21 ka-ru-ke	HORD T 1 V 3
	.22-23	<i>vacant</i>
Fr 1225	.1 e-ra ₃ -wo, u-po-jo, po-ti-ni-ja	
	.2 we-a ₂ -no-i, a-ro-pa	OLE + A S 1
Fr 1236	.1 pa-ki-ja-ni-jo, a-ko-ro, u-po-jo, po-ti-ni-ja, OLE + PA S 1 V 1	
	.2	<i>vacant</i>

The first glance at these three documents might instruct us of a slight difference in spelling: Fn 187 presents us *u-po-jo-po-ti-ni-ja* against *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja* of Fr 1225 and Fr 1236. In their commentary on PY Fn 187 E. L. Bennett and J.-P. Olivier point out the following: "*u-po-jo-po-ti-ni-ja* over erasure; there is perhaps a divider before the second *-po-*, where it might be expected, but it is more likely a trace from original text"⁴. If the latter were true and if it were not a simple scribe's lapse it might prove, in our opinion, a tight connection between both elements, *u-po-jo* therefore turning out to be a fixed and not only casual epithet of *Potnia*⁵.

Tablets Fr 1225 and 1236 belong to what is widely known as the "Olive Oil Tablets"⁶ and these documents are of special importance for the understanding of the phrase *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja*. We find on Fr 1236 another pair of words: *pa-ki-ja-ni-jo a-ko-ro*. How to interpret *pa-ki-ja-ni-jo* is clear – undoubtedly it is an adjective of appurtenance built on the stem of *pa-ki-ja-ne*. It is therefore to be understood as "of *Pa-ki-ja-ne*, belonging to *Pa-ki-ja-ne*", whatever the proper pronunciation is. One need not remind here that *Pa-ki-ja-ne* is the religious centre of the Pylian kingdom. The matter is slightly more complicated with *a-ko-ro*; the first interpretation which comes into mind is obviously ἀγρός 'field, countryside'⁷, however two others

⁴ *PTT I*, p. 153.

⁵ It is worth noticing that such a difference occurs in tablets having been written by the same scribe – Hand 2, cf. E. L. Bennett, J.-P. Olivier, *The Pylos Tablets Transcribed*, vol. II, Roma 1976, p. 12. (henceforth: *PTT II*).

⁶ Cf. E. L. Bennett, *The Olive Oil Tablets of Pylos*, Salamanca 1958, *Suplementos a Minos* N° 2 (henceforth: *Olive Oil*).

⁷ As far as we know for the first time: A. Furumark, *Eranos* 52, 1954, p. 58; cf. M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge 1956, p. 350, 387 (*ro-u-si-jo, a-ko-ro*); *Olive Oil*, pp. 25–26 (*pa-ki-ja-ni-jo, a-ko-ro*). See I. K. Prombonas, *Λεξικό της Μυκηναϊκής Ελληνικής*, vol. 1, Athens 1978, pp. 51–52.

have been proposed: **ἄγορος* and **ἄγολος* 'group of persons'⁸, to which one could add e. g. *ἄκρον* 'summit'. Nevertheless, the context rather proves that these latter are "less likely"⁹. Thus we are faced with "the field of *Pa-ki-ja-ne*". It is not a unique case, because we find also "the Lousian countryside" – *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro* (PY Fr 1220, Fr 1226, Ua 1413, Un 47, Vn 10). Again, it is very interesting how these tablets, or more precisely Fr 1220 and 1226, are interpreted and then translated into English by the first editor. We read therefore:

Fr 1220 *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro pa-ko-we* OIL + PA QT 4
di-pi-si-jo-i wa-na-ka-te OIL + PA LM 1

'To the Lousian countryside a quantity of sage-scented:
(sage-scented) OIL QT 4 (i. e. 8 1.)

Among the Dipsioi for Wanax a quantity of (sage-scented)
OIL LM 1 (i. e. 12 1.);¹⁰

Fr 1226 *ro-u-si-jo a-ko-ro te-o-i pa-ko-we* OIL + PA QT 3

'To the Lousian countryside for the gods, a quantity of
sage-scented: (sage-scented) OIL QT 3 (i. e. 6 1.);¹¹

Given the exact parallel between Fr 1226 and Fr 1236 (both belong to the same series written by the same scribe¹²; the set of their texts is to be hardly recognized as different) we are able to translate the latter as follows:

'To the *Pa-ki-ja-ne* country for *u-po-jo Potnia*: (sage-scented)
OIL S 1 V 1¹³.

One may finally ask: what does *u-po-jo* mean?

Before the answer, or more precisely, before an attempt at an answer we shall cite once again E. L. Bennett, commenting in Fr 1236: "There is one textual feature of this text [...]. The mark of punctuation between *a-ko-ro* and *u-po-jo* is markedly higher than the others"¹⁴. In our opinion this mark might prove that the designation

⁸ C. Gallavotti, I documenti unguentarii e gli dei di Pilo, *Parola del Passato* 1959, 14, p. 101; accepted by: I. Tegyey, *The Communities of Pylos*, in: *Studia Mycenaea*, Brno 1968, p. 144.

⁹ F. A. Jorro, *Diccionario Micénico*, vol. I, Madrid 1985, p. 48: "menos verosimil". *Predmetno-ponjatijnyj slovar' grečeskogo jazyka. Krito-mikenskij period* by V. P. Kazanskiene and N. N. Kazanskij, Leningrad 1986, does not even mention them.

¹⁰ *Olive Oil*, p. 51, 52.

¹¹ *Olive Oil*, p. 57.

¹² Cf. *PTT II*, p. 12.

¹³ We do not give values in our numbers because the question of the absolute values of the Mycenaean symbols for weight and volume has not yet met a full agreement.

¹⁴ *Olive Oil*, p. 62.

of place finishes together with *a-ko-ro*, *u-po-jo* therefore becoming part of the designation of the goddess. Let us sum up:

a) *u-po-jo* is a part of the pair of words tightly connected with each other.

b) the second part of this pair is a well-known goddess designation: *Potnia*.

c) *u-po-jo* does not seem to be a part of the designation of place; it seems rather to be a part of a goddess' name.

d) *U-po-jo Potnia* is worshipped in the contryside; that could be observed thanks to the difference between *pa-ki-ja-ni-jo a-ko-ro* of Fr 1236 and *pa-ki-ja-na-de* of Fn 187; in the latter text *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja* is left apart of *pa-ki-ja-ne*, what proves, together with *a-ko-ro*, that the cult of *U-po-jo Potnia* has its place outside the sanctuaries, so probably in the open-air.

There could be only one conclusion: *u-po-jo* (both the ending and the position show it is a genitive form) must describe anything that is found *sub Iove*: a tree, pillar or stone – the cult of such objects is a well-attested East-Mediterranean ritual¹⁵. Problems, however, remain: the Greek dialects of the first millenary BC do not know any word that would be similar and would bear any of the meanings listed above. Such a word, however, exists in a cognate Indo-European language, namely in Sanskrit. In *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* we can find a word *yúpa-* (masc.), having the meaning of: 'a post, beam, pillar; (esp.) a post or stake to which the sacrificial victim is fastened, any sacrificial post or stake'¹⁶. What is important here is the fact that the Sanskrit word not only corresponds exactly to the Greek one (gen. sg. *yúpasya* = gen. sg. *u-po-jo* read as *ῦποιο*, nom. sg. should be **u-po*: *ῦπος* = *yúpah*) but it also evokes a religious context. We might therefore postulate such a word in the Mycenaean Greek and translate "Ὕποιο Πότνια" as 'The Lady of the (Sacred) Post'¹⁷. Another argument may strengthen our hypothesis. As we read Fn 187 paying atten-

¹⁵ For a classical treatment of the question, see A. J. Evans, The Mycenaean tree and pillar cult and its Mediterranean relations, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1901, 21, pp. 99–204. Recent state of research is presented by B. Rutkowski, Der Baumkult in der Ágäis, *Visible Religion* 1984, 3, pp. 159–171, and by P. Warren, Of baetys, *Opuscula Atheniensia* 1990, 18, pp. 193–206.

¹⁶ M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford 1899, reprinted Delhi 1993, p. 856. Cf. K. Mylius, *Wörterbuch Sanskrit-Deutsch*, Leipzig 1987, p. 392: "yúpa- m. 1. Rit. Opferposten m., -pfahl m; 2. Säule f."; V. A. Kočergina, *Sanskritsko-russkij slovar'*, Moskva 1987, s. 532: "yúpa m. stolb dlja privjazyvanija žertvennogo životnogo, žertvennyj stolb". A. M. Lubotsky, *The system of nominal accentuation in Sanskrit and Indo-European*, Leiden 1988, p. 74, lists *yúpa- m.* 'sacrificial post' among the Sanskrit words of uncertain meaning or etymology (sic!).

¹⁷ The Mycenaean Greek theonym could be hypothetically rendered into Old Indic as ***Yúpasya Pátnī*.

tion to the numbers describing quantities of barley (HORD) and figs (NI) it turns out that in the preserved records Ὅποιο Πότνια gets the highest amount of barley and the second amount of figs (*a-pi-te-ja* takes the highest one). Again, if we suppose that *a-pi-te-ja* took even higher amount of barley, but it is not preserved in the text, it would appear that the position of Ὅποιο Πότνια among other recipients is rather high, given the total amount of all the offerings¹⁸. We would thus expect Ὅποιο Πότνια to be a rather important goddess and traces of her cult can indeed be found in the iconography.

Another piece of information may be found in Fr 1225. In the second line of the document we read of *ſehávoihi ἀλοιφά* 'ointment for robes'¹⁹. Given the fact that robes are put together with Ὅποιο Πότνια we may suppose such dresses play a rôle in the cult of the goddess. Indeed, there is enough material that proves our interpretation. Let us cite P. Warren²⁰:

"cult scenes suggest a baetylic ritual whose sequence may be reconstructed. *First* [...] a man or a woman, a mortal participant in ritual, often naked, approaches a baetyl, perhaps having already brought and deposited a female's *dress* [our italics], as a votive offering elsewhere in the cult area [...]. *Second* [...] the participant kneels and touches the baetyl, and summons the divinity to the stone by gestures [...]. *Third* [...] the participant finally embraces and kisses the boulder in communion with it and the divinity".

Also the Sanskrit word *yúpa-* appears especially in the ritual context, and the compounds such as *yúpavestana-* (n.) 'Umwinden des Opferpfostens (*mit Tüchern*)'²¹ prove a connection of sacrificial posts with dresses or robes in the Old Indian cult.

We may conclude: the internal interpretation of tablets shows that *u-po-jo po-ti-ni-ja* is a goddess worshipped in the open-air; *u-po-jo* seems to be a word cognate to the Sanskrit *yúpa-* 'a sacred pillar'; in the iconography we find documents attesting our hypothesis.

¹⁸ We do not enter the much disputed question, which of the words engraved in this tablet serve as designation of gods and which of men (words serving as toponymes seem to be easily recognizable).

¹⁹ *Olive Oil*, p. 56.

²⁰ P. Warren, *op. cit.*, pp. 198–200.

²¹ K. Mylius, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

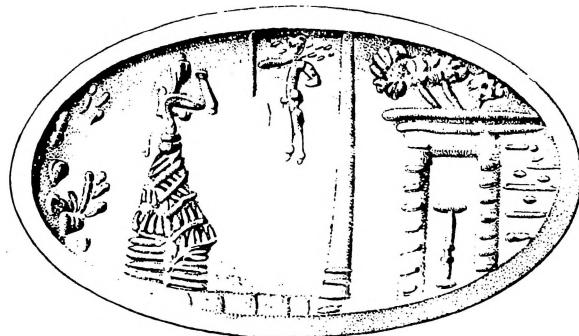


Fig. 1. – Dual Pillar Worship on Gold Signet Ring from Knossos. [After Evans]



Fig. 2. – Impressed Glass Plaque from Mycenae: Daemons pouring Libations on a Beatylic Tripod-Lebes. [After Evans].



Fig. 3. – Worship of Group of Pillars on Cylinder,
Mycenae (3/1). [After Evans]