DĀMOS: An annotated database of Mycenaean Greek (Linear B) inscriptions at the University of Oslo, Norway

A. The database: **Federico Aurora**

DĀMOS is an annotated corpus of all the published texts of Mycenaean Greek, the only attested Greek dialect of the II millennium B.C. Mycenaean texts are administrative documents, written mostly on clay tablets, found within the remains of palaces in Crete and mainland Greece. They amount to ca. 5,900 documents, but many of them are brief or fragmentary. They are written in a syllabic script conventionally called Linear B, a script not related to the later Greek alphabets, but in scholarly practice they are conventionally transliterated into Roman characters. Although apparently an efficient tool for palace administration, Linear B is not well suited for rendering the phonetic system of the Greek language. The language of the documents, the oldest attested Indo-European language after Hittite, has several archaic and interesting linguistic features and poses questions crucial for the history of Greek, which, especially because of the fragmentary state and the concise nature of the documents and the shortcomings of the script, are still in need of an appropriate answer.

To create the database, text files with updated versions of current editions have been imported into a relational database. The texts are then being annotated (partly manually, partly semi-automatically) for morphological, syntactic and lexical information. A rich set of metadata has also been added, which is available for searches and can thus be crossed with more strictly linguistic data. This includes the epigraphical information contained in the Leiden conventions-based transliterations, which is automatically imported.

One of the advantages of digital editions is that they allow for a better account of the manifoldness that often lies in our data, while by use of non-digital media, one needs to compromise a great deal on account of physical constraints. With ‘manifoldness’ I mean here especially the presence of more possible values for a given linguistic unit (e.g. interpretative hypotheses of an ambiguous form) and of more possible representations of such a unit (e.g. different levels of normalization/lemmatization). But, this leads to more complex data that may pose methodological challenges regarding the theoretical and technical organization of such complexity. The data in DĀMOS are stored in multiple normalization and lemmatization layers (both on the epigraphic and the linguistic side) and multiple analyses of a given linguistic unity (in turn, connected to a given reading of a form) can be entered. Thus, for example, different hypotheses on the meaning of different readings of a word (e.g. *te-qa-jo-į* vs. *te-qa-jo*) can be entered and ranked according to different criteria. This feature is, indeed, essential for work with material such as the Mycenaean, where interpretations are often uncertain and dependent on context and intertextual comparison. The linguistic interpretation of a given

phenomenon (e.g. case syntax) can, thus, depend on competing variants of a net of hypotheses (on the number of case forms, on the phonological value of certain graphemes, etc.) and implications; it is then crucial to be able to test and compare the different possible linguistic interpretations by varying the value of certain (sets of) analyses in performing complex database queries. This organization of the data benefits particularly from the modularity structure of a relational database.

Modularity is also what allows DĀMOS to have open and (easily) extendible structure. Even though linguistic investigation has been the initial catalyst of the project and constitutes its core, the design and architecture of the database are also a consequence of the ultimate goal of creating a resource that can be useful (for research, teaching and dissemination) to specialists and non-specialists with an interest in the Mycenaean documents. This presupposes the possibility of expanding the scope of its content, both through addition of new information and linking to already existing collections of data.

B. Respondent: **Artemis Karnava**

The response to the presentation of DĀMOS comes from the point of view of a scholar who intends to use the database for his/her work on Linear B.

I will first focus on the two paths that lay before me when approaching, studying and publishing a Linear B text: by use of the traditional working tools (printed corpora and dictionaries), and by use of DĀMOS. I will use as a specimen the text attested on the fragment of a Linear B tablet found in Volos, Thessaly, which I published myself some years ago, with the collaboration of the archaeologist E. Skafida and the epigraphist J.-P. Olivier[1]. The established method of publishing a Linear B text (the majority of which is found on clay tablets, and present us therefore from the start with multiple problems of transcription and understanding) is a rather fix and potentially tedious process. The actual epigraphical and philological work starts after a transliterated text is produced. It is there that this presentation will show how one can go about using the database, and what is to be gained by its use.

The second strand of my presentation will focus on how the database is more likely to be used by Linear B scholars, namely in order to investigate already published material. The discovery of new Linear B documents is a fairly rare occasion and it is most common for Linear B scholars to offer new insights on the Mycenaean language and history on the basis of old material. That said, a new archive of more than 100 clay tablets was reportedly unearthed in Lakonia last year, and we eagerly await its presentation in the forthcoming Mycenological conference this coming September in Copenhagen. For the purpose, therefore, of dealing with already published Linear B texts, the database is more likely to be used when one searches for a specific inscription and its content (by looking up a tablet reference in an article, for instance);

[1] E. Skafida, A. Karnava & J.-P. Olivier, « Two new Linear B tablets from the site of Kastro-Palaia in Volos », in P. Carlier, Ch. de Lamberterie, M. Egetmeyer, N. Guilleux, Fr. Rougemont & J. Zurbach (eds.), Études mycéniennes 2010. Actes du XIIIe colloque international sur les textes égéens, Sèvres, Paris, Nanterre, 20-23 septembre 2010, Biblioteca di “Pasiphae” X (Pisa-Roma 2012), p. 55-73.

when one wants to compare a tablet text with other texts from the same text series (a notion to be explained in the presentation); when looking for a specific word and its attestations in different texts.

The presentation will additionally address the research objectives that cannot be approached through the material available in DĀMOS, as well as how (and if) it is possible for the database to be used by (or even create) a wider audience (at the moment not existent).