

The Utterly *Unhinged* Elamo-Minoan Hypothesis

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Synopsis

The most pressing question in all linguistics: what was the secret *real* identity of the language of the Minoans? Proto-Greek? Proto-*Weak*? Semitic? Semit isn't. Luwian? Ludicrous. Hurrian? You better be hurryin' back to the drafting board. I bring you a new, fresh and bold hypothesis for the true identity of the Minoan language of Linear A, a hypothesis so startling that you might interpret it as merely a bit of humor at the expense of equally tenuous but quite serious proposals, an amateur linguistics paper *in Minecraft* if you will. Haha, unless...? Unless Minoan really is Elamite.

Elam who?

You can read [Wikipedia](#) yourself, but don't worry, you're not the first well-educated person to have never heard of Elam. They were located in the highlands of modern-day Iran a few thousand years ago and spoke an isolated language we barely understand. Yes, the highlands. The desolate highlands on the other side of the Fertile Crescent, far from the glittering blue Mediterranean and the paradise isle of Crete, host of the grand Minoan civilization. I'm not sure why you're stuck on that part.



Fig 1: proposed very normal migration route from Elam to Minoa. Google's TOS probably doesn't permit slapping random map screenshots in papers, but don't worry about that either.

The Elamite words and elements of grammar cited in this paper all come from the following handful of sources which constitute more or less the entire scholarship. We both know you're not actually going to fact check me on this. I'm *almost* certain none of them are Persian loan-words that trivially post-date the Minoan era.

- [Elamisches Wörterbuch](#), Walther Hinz and Heidmarie Koch, 1987
- [The Elamite Language](#), Margaret Khačikjan, 1998
- [Éléments de grammaire élamite](#), Francois Grillot-Susini, 1987
- [The Case of Elamite Tep/Tip](#), Jan Tavernier, 2007

The Linear A tablets are all quite real too, as slightly more people can personally attest. You can check John Younger's [old website](#) or [Linear A XYZ](#).

Linear A Transcription

Scholarship has already converged on a chart of approximate pronunciations for Linear A characters based on the better-understood Linear B used by the Mycenaeans. I have found it to be by and large correct, but the chart I shall use for this paper has some minor adjustments:

- The “j” series (used to represent “yod”) shall be understood as “h”: ja-sa-sa-ra-me → ha-sa-sa-ra-me.
- The “w” series corresponds to “l” in Elamite.
- Elamite “s” and “š” are merged in Linear A “s”.
- There is no “q” series in Linear A; “qi” should be moved to the previously missing “hi”.
- ፩ (symbol 301) has been identified as the missing “pe”.
- Don’t worry about the “o” column, they didn’t notate it in Cuneiform but Elamite totally had an “o”. (Desset 2022)
- This leaves the mystery of why Linear A has a conceptual split between D/T when no attested Elamite manner of writing observes a consistent difference between them. My answer is: shrug emoji 🤩

	A	E	I	O	U
	𠂔	ѧ	҃	Ӯ	Ӯ
D	𠁤	𠁧	𠁩	?	𠁥
H	𠁦	𠁪	𠁨	?	𠁫
K	⊕	*	𠁻	𠁰	Յ
M	᜵	᜹	᜷	?	ᜱ
N	ᜳ	ᜭ	ᜪ	?	՚
P	#	ᜯ	ᜮ	ᜲ	ᜳ
R	᜴	ᜪ	᜵	+	ᜰ
S	᜶	ᜪ	ᜬ	?	ᜱ
T	᜷	ᜪ	᜸	ᜰ	ᜱ
L	᜸	?	᜵	?	?
Z	ᜱ	ᜪ	?	?	ᜱ

$\text{pu}_2 = \Psi$; $\text{ta}_2 = \Psi$.

Fig 2: Undergrads will cite this version of the table because I took the time to make it nice, copy-pastable Unicode text freely posted to the internet and not a blurry pirate jpeg of a scan of a mimeograph of a soggy manuscript found at the bottom of a well on the Moon.

Elamite Acrophonics

By starting with the assumption that Linear A encodes Elamite or a close relative thereof, we can discover acrophonic connections between enough Linear A pictographs (or our strained interpretations of these pictographs, at least) and the leading sounds of Elamite words to convince ourselves that the assumption we started with is sound in a beautiful closed loop of logic.

- **a ḫ**: the Sacred Axe; the Elamite for “sacred, holy” is “akpi” and there is an unclear type of tool, “atti”, that may be an axe. Two for the price of one!
- **e ḫ**: an arched gateway; “el”, “gate”.
- **u ḫ**: a human head (compare Cuneiform); “ukku”, “head”.
- **du ḫ**: at first glance this seems to be a shepherd with a crook, but it’s actually a scribe with a stylus. “duppi, tuppi” “tablet”.
- **ha ḫ**: a small door, as on a house; “halti”, “door”.
- **hi ḫ**: used to stand for sheep in Linear B; “hidu” “sheep”.
- **hu ḫ**: not especially clear from the way it is stylized in fonts, but this is a hand grasping an object. “huma” “receive, take”.
- **ki ḫ**: a cup and straw; “kiš”, “beer” (a Sumerian loanword).
- **ku ḫ**: a bow and arrow (more obvious in less linearized hands); “kudara” “archer”.
- **mu ḫ**: used to stand for oxen in Linear B; the usual words for oxen in Elamite are not a match, but we can plausibly suggest “muhdu” “offering, sacrifice” or “mukti” “lord, master”.
- **na ḫ**: a load-bearing pillar. The book *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image and Symbol* (Marinatos 1993) postulates that the pillars in the basement of the Labyrinth were themselves revered as gods. Hence “nap”, “god”.

- **ni ṫ**: Buckle up, this one requires more explanation. This character is understood as being shorthand for figs. Younger's website says "*NI may be the acrophonic symbol for "nikuleon," an old word (Minoan?) attested by Hesychius for "figs" (Neumann 1962).*" Elamite gives us the word "nihi", whose meaning is not entirely clear, but it is a likely plant-based substance (annotated with the Cuneiform "wood" marker) stored in jars. As such, I propose Elamite "nihi" = Greek "nikuleon" = "figs". (Elamite also has "put" which is understood as "figs" but I'm not going to let a little detail like that dissuade me.)
- **pa †**: one line is right under the other to express "pat", "under, foot".
- **pi 𒀭**: a person in a big skirt; this is contextualized as "pitir", "enemy" by the compound glyph 𒀭𒀭 depicting a 𒀭 stabbing a 𒀭.
- **pu 𒂗**: a crawling baby; "puhu", "child".
- **ri 𒊩**: a side-view of a woman with breasts (compare the oldest form of Chinese 女); the Linear B 𒊩 is a clearer diagram of a woman (with the top-knot hairstyle seen in some Minoan art). "ritu", "wife".
- **ru 𒊩**: "ruh", "man", "ruku", "testicles", I think you understand.
- **sa 𒋰**: schematically identical with Egyptian 𓁻, a supporting post; "šaramanna" "underneath, supporting, answering to".
- **si 𒄑**: a pointy spear-tip; "sirum", "spear, lance".
- **su 𒋢**: it is notably similar to Egyptian 𠁾 "courtyard"; one is tempted to take it as the simplest possible depiction of the Labyrinth. This could well be "sunki", "king" (or "ruling queen" as it's not gendered).
- **te 𒋴**: a grain; "tedu", sowing or a similar agricultural term.
- **ti 𒋵**: a tongue, more clear in the rounder style with a line down the center, as in Linear B 𒈚. "tit", "tongue".

- za ♀: strongly resemblant of both the Egyptian ankh ☩ and the surprisingly-hard-to-find-a-first-attested-date-for Venus symbol ♀; both are associated with mirrors and the divine. It could also be seen as a scepter. “zaumin”, “divine will” and “zana”, “lady” are both plausible.
- zu ⚡: perhaps a fish seen from above, for “zul”, “water”.

Linear A Writing Conventions

It is generally supposed that a new writing system is always a perfect phonetic fit for the language for which it was first designed. Well, either that's not true or Linear A is already second-hand (I blame the Trojans), because it's not an especially tight fit for Elamite. The following three rules clarify how to convert an Elamite word to Linear A open syllables:

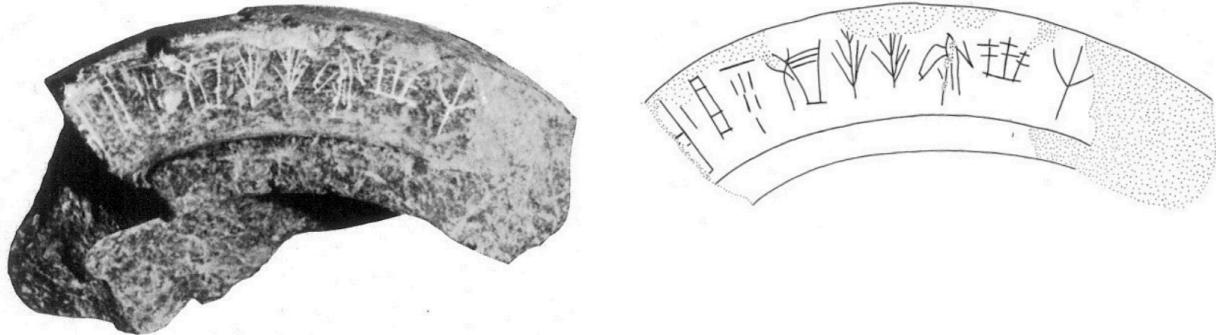
- Weak consonants at the end of a syllable (l, m, n, r) are generally omitted. For example, “sunki” would be written “su-ki”.
- If the syllable ends in a strong consonant, it is spelled out as its own character, repeating the vowel of the parent syllable.
- If a word ends in a consonant with grammatical significance, it is spelled with an e-vowel. For example, “sunkir” (“the king” as opposed to “sunki” any king in general) would be su-ki-re.
- The final consonant of one word in a clause may be joined to a leading vowel of the next as one character.

Will I immediately proceed to declare a hundred special snowflake exceptions to justify my readings? Time will tell.

Translations

Finally, the *good* part. The part that will earn me those millions of dollars that people get when they decipher ancient accounting tablets for sheep.

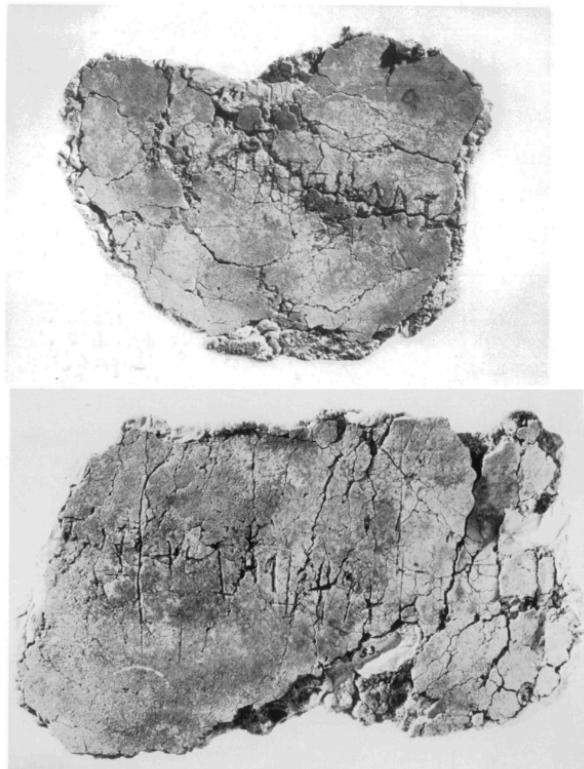
PKZa15: Circular Libation Table



The legible portion of this rim fragment reads ဟ迪基特ēdu-pu₂-re.

“Kitete” is the Elamite diminutive form of “kiden”, a protective magical spell, which was loaned *into* Akkadian. I analyze the inscription as “hadin kitete dub-r” where “hadin” is “a basin for cultic washing” (what the Linear A fandom calls a “libation table”) and “dub-r” is “the inscriber” (“tup” or “dub”, inscription, “-r” a specific person). Presumably the full inscription read something like “May the inscriber of this basin-protection-spell receive blessings...”

HTZd157+156: Accounting Tablet



LAHESU, AAI

T | T + T + T + T + T + T

LAHESU, AAI
I LAHESU, AAI

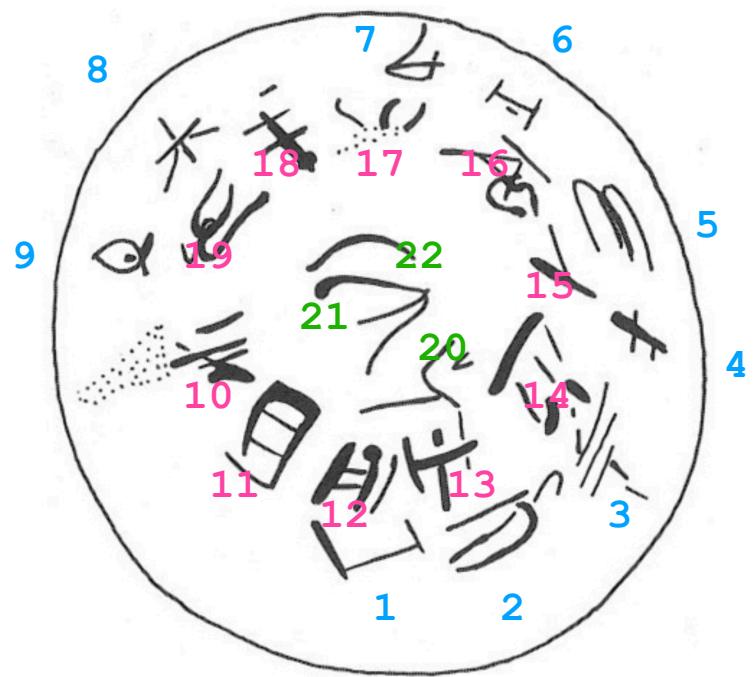
li-ha-su-ma-ti-ti | 1 | 1 1/2 | 2 1/4 | 3 3/8 | ta-
ha 1/16

"Liha" is Elamite for "give"; "lihaš" should be the third person complete tense. If I'm interpreting the terse German definitions in the only Elamite dictionary ever published correctly, "umatit" is something like "as you demand of me." "Taha" is "attach." Hence, I interpret this tablet as "The following quantities have been given as required; I have added an extra 1/16."

KNZc6 Painted Cup



The writing on the inside surface of this cup can be very charitably described as “charmingly vernacular,” and aside from the reading direction being exceedingly unclear, half the characters are absolutely off their rocker. I deeply disagree with previously published transcriptions of this cup. Reader, I tried:



Signs 1-9:

𒀭𒀭𒉤𒀭𒀭𒀭 a-ma-na-pa-ku-a-hi-i-zu

(The vertical stroke of the first 𒀭 has been misplaced between characters 12 and 13 above. Sign 2 honestly doesn't look like *anything* and was identified with great deliberation as 'ma' after an inordinate amount of staring at blurry photos of tablets to observe the variations of this character and there certainly was no motivated reasoning to make a coherent Elamite sentence emerge from sloppy Linear A handwriting.)

"Amma", "mother"; "nap", "god" with "-k" first person suffix ("I, as a god"); "u", "I/me"; "ahin/ain", "house"; "izzu" "to walk, go". Therefore: "I, Mother Goddess, come into this house." (The "house" may be the cup itself.) All in good subject-object-verb order, of course, as expected of Elamite, insofar as we know anything about what's expected of Elamite.

Signs 10-19:

𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭𒀭 a-ha-nu-a-ke-da-ki-ti-pa-ra

(Sign 14 is another good example of a sloppily placed stroke. This writer prefers the three-line 'ti' variant, whereas the font uses the two-line variant.)

"Ahan", "here"; "u", "I/me"; "ak", "and"; "eda", "thus"; "kit", "pour out"; "par", "seed, family." Taking "kit-par" to be a compound verb, that gives us: "And thus here I... pour out... my..."

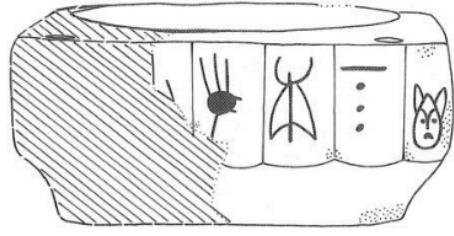
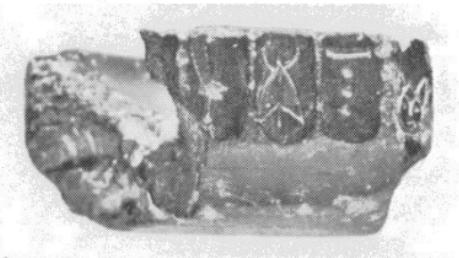
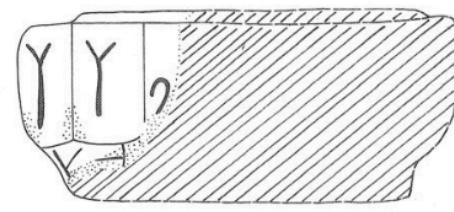
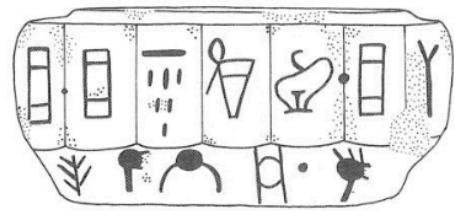
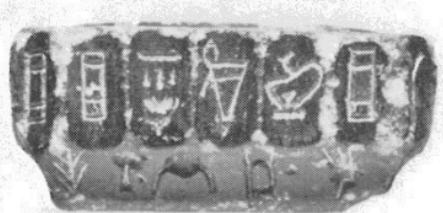
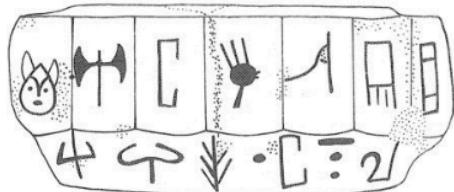
Ahh. This is one of them *fertility cult* cups.

Signs 20-22:

▮Λ? hu-ti-? or ?Λ▮ ?-ti-hu

I cannot say which direction these three characters should be read in, because the 'hu' is oriented strangely relative to the 'ti' and sign 22 defies identification in its simplicity and may just be an end-of-inscription marker. "Hut" is Elamite for "make, do." Perhaps this is analogous to "make it so."

Liberation Formula



Pictured: IOZa2 Libation Table. What a breath of fresh air compared to that cup; this piece is much more professionally made and the characters are quite clear even in these grainy jpegs. It's an excellent example of the notorious "Liberation Formula" that has been driving a very select group of people insane for a very long time. Please consult Younger's [Libation](#)

Formula table for a guide to which exact variations of the formula appear on which exact objects; we'll be tackling it by clusters of related words.

Elamite is known to have undergone psilosis, aka “the-h-fell-off” syndrome. Hence, variants such as ha-sa-sa-ra-me vs a-sa-sa-ra-me are taken to be the exact same word, where one is the more academically correct spelling and the other reflects actual pronunciation.

𒋻𒀭𒉤 a-ta-i-pe-la-ha; 𒋻𒀭𒉤 a-ta-i-pe-la-e

“Atta” is “father”, and “attaip” should be the plural form. “Lahan” is “dead”. This is an appeal to literal ancestors or chthonic gods. I suspect the form “la-e” is “la-ha(n)” degrading to “la-a(n)” and then “la-e(n)”.

𒋻𒁕𒂷 a-di-ki-te-te ; 𒄑𒁕𒂷 ha-di-ki-tu

Now this looks familiar, doesn't it? This is “basin protection spell” again. “ki-tu” in place of “ki-te-te” is clearly a minor morphological variation that I decline to come up with a clean explanation for.

𒋻YYL相伴 a-sa-sa-ra-me; 𒄑YYL相伴 ha-sa-sa-ra-me; 𒋻YYL相伴 a-sa-sa-ra-ma-na; 𒄑YL相伴 ha-sa-ra-a-na-ne

This eye-catcher of a recurring word has driven more than one academic completely off the deep end. Good thing I'm here to clear everything up once and for all. Let us first consider an Elamite term attested with and without its leading “h”: “haraššara/araššara”, a type of commissary official. “Šara” is a common word element meaning “underneath, supporting”; “šaramanna” refers to matters which fall *under* an official's responsibility. “Šarame” I believe is unattested, but it would refer to abstract “underness,”

perhaps best translated as “domain” or “office.” (Compare “sunkime”, kingship.)

Consider, then, that there is an Elamite political term “hašša” which refers to a certain high office involved in both civil judgment and temple concerns – “magistrate,” “governor,” something along these lines, and certainly not a king. We can then imagine a form “haššašara/aššašara” and its derivatives; a-sa-sa-ra-me and a-sa-sa-ra-ma-na would refer to the dominion of the hašša.

Ha-sa-ra-a-na-ne is to be parsed as “haššar anane”, “the wine of the hašša”; note that this is inked on the inside rim of a cup, KNZc7.

Taken altogether, “hašša” likely refers to the lord or lady of a Minoan palace, who was not a “king” or “queen” per se but an administrator with religious functions.

I have a deadline to get this paper out the door today, so I’m afraid that deciphering the rest of the Libation Formula is left as a trivial exercise for the reader.

Assorted Intriguing Coincidences

“Atlantis” resembles Elamite “atta”, “father” and “lan”, “to be present (of gods)” in the second person -t ending: “Father, You are present.” Crete is held to be the birthplace of Zeus. *Coincidence?*

In the same vein, one of the alleged sites of Zeus’s birth is the Cretan town of Lyktos. The Elamite word for lightning is “luk.” *Coincidence?*

Minoan Crete was referred to by other nations as Caphtor, Keftiu, Kaptara etc. We can analyze this in Elamite as “kappa” “assembly” + “-ta” completeness + “-r” specific animate suffix: “The whole assembly (of the people)”. *Coincidence?*

The Elamites had a goddess named Kiririša; “riša” is “great,” so “kiri” is likely a feminine term such as “goddess, lady, princess,” etc. The Linear A corpus gives us several terms in ki-ri- and ki-re-: ki-ri-ta₂, ki-ri-si, ki-re-ta₂, ki-re-ta-na, ki-re-za. Younger hypothesized that ta₂ is to be read as “tna”. In Elamite, “tena” means “sweet”, so ki-ri-tna could be “sweet goddess.” The Greek-speaking Cretans had a goddess called Britomartis, which was explained to other Greeks as being particular to their dialect and meaning “Sweet Maiden.” Ki-ri-tna also resembles “Crete” itself. *Coincidence?*

Conclusion

This is either an astonishingly over-researched April Fool's joke making fun of my own unhealthy interest in obscure languages and undeciphered scripts, or a complete upheaval of everything we thought we knew about the ancient Near East which will herald a glorious new age of scholarship. Either way, Reviewer 2, you know where the reject button is.

Haha, unless...?

Bibliography



But if you wanted to read a real paper about Elamite and mysterious writing systems, maybe consider [The Decipherment of Linear Elamite](#), Francois Dessel 2022.