

## THE WORDS QASIREU, QASIREWIJA AND KEROSIJA

These three words were originally interpreted as being βασιλεύς, βασιληΐα and γερονσία. These interpretations have been questioned by Prof. Palmer, who rightly points out that the contexts of the words do not seem to support such meanings. But are Prof. Palmer's suggestions satisfactory?

The word *qasireu* appears four times at Pylos, all of them on the J-series. In three cases the word *qasireu* followed by a name (and twice by the number one) concludes the list of bronzesmiths who have a *tarasija* and comes before the total (Jn 431.6, 601.8, 845.7). In no case does the *qasireu* have an allocation of bronze himself. In the fourth case (Jo 438.20) the words *akeru qasireu* are found against the entry AUR P 3x. The *qasireu* seems to be of the same order of importance as the *porokoretere* — both receive or give P 3 — the smallest amount on the tablet.

So, the only known function of the *qasireu* is the supervision of the distribution of bronze, but he is only found in three places. In the glossary of „Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek Texts“ (p. 442) Palmer gives the meaning of the word as „Official responsible for royal bronze-smiths as opposed to *potinijawejo*“. But only in a minority of cases does a group of bronze-smiths have a *qasireu* — the vast majority are not *potinijawejo*, yet do not have a *qasireu*.

Prof. Palmer says elsewhere that *qasireu* falls in the semantic field „craftsman“. This has more to favour it. The three names of *qasireu* in the Jn-series recur, in more cases than not connected with bronze. *Erikowo, qasireu* at an unknown place (Jn 845) recurs as a non-working smith on the fragmentary Jn 944. The name also appears on the *oka* tablets (An 656) and is the name of a *tejo doero* on Ep 212. *Paqosijo, qasireu* at *powiteja* (Jn 601) recurs as a non-working smith at *akerewa* (Jn 310) and on Jn 832. *Apiqota, qasireu* at *apekee* (Jn 431) is found on An 260 and 616, the *kerosija* tablets, which, as we shall see below, have a strong connection with the Jn-series. While it is possibly co-incidence that the names of *qasireu* on the Jn tablets should recur in contexts associated with bronze-smiths and rarely elsewhere, it seems more likely that these homonymous men on the Jn tablets are the same as the *qasireu*.

The *qasirewe* of the Jn-series are then craftsmen. But does the word fall in the semantic area „craftsman“? In no case does the *qasireu* practice his craft. Other evidence (the Jo-tablet) suggests that the *qasireu* is of the same standing as a minor official. This evidence would be congruent with the hypothesis that the word *qasireu* is indeed βασιλεύς and here means „chief“, probably of a bronze-smiths' guild or religious brotherhood, of the sort which may have existed at Arkajohori<sup>1</sup>.

The same objection may be made to this hypothesis as to the one that they were royal officials: why are only three named? I would suggest that the guild-chief has only been named specially when he had no *tarasija* — the clerks felt he belonged with the more important group, but did not repeat his name if it had already been mentioned against an allocation of bronze.

We now pass to the word *qasirewija*. This is undoubtedly a derivative of *qasireu*. Palmer says on this word: „The general context emerges as „manufacture, and the names point to the Jn series“<sup>2</sup>. This is true only for the word *qasireu*, not for *qasirewija*. None of the names associated with *qasirewija* are found on the Jn tablets. Two are found on short, incomplete tablets of the A series: *apikaradojo* (Ae 398) and *ata[ ]wono* (Ae 889) — neither recurs. On Fn 50, a barley tablet, we find *akito*, *keko* and *atano(r)*. The first reappears only on Fn tablet, the second does not recur and the third is only found again on Vn 130. There is no connection at Pylos between the word *qasirewija* and bronze and while the possibility that it is connected with manufacture cannot be disproved, it is not apparent.

The word *qasirewija* is also found on the Knossos tablet As 1516.12&20. This tablet consists of single names, followed by VIR 1. In two cases we find

. . *ti-jo a-nu-to qa-si-re-wi-ja* VIR 1

and

*se-to-i-ja/su-ke-re-o, qa-si-re-wi-ja* VIR 1.

These two names *anuto* and *sukere* are found again, the former on X 697 and the latter on As 40, another tablet with lists of men followed by VIR 1. The word *qasirewija* is also found on K 875, a list of handleless *dipa*. This evidence is probably insufficient to establish the role of *qasirewija* in Mycenaean life. They had personnel belonging to them, they received barley at Pylos and either gave or received pots at Knossos.

One thing is clear — the names associated with *qasirewija* at Pylos have no connection either with the *qasirewe* or anyone else in

<sup>1</sup> see. S. Marinatos „Zur Frage der Grotte von Arkalochori“ Kadmos 1, 1962 p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Interpretation* p. 227.

the bronze trade there. *Qasirewe* cannot have merely been chiefs of the bronze-smiths: the six other names must have been some other kind of chief. Unlike the *koretere*, the *qasirewe* are rarely identified by place name — *apikarado* had a *perakoraija qasirewija*, that is one across Aigoleon and *atano(r)* can be shown to have been at *pakija*<sup>3</sup>, but no one is identified as *qasireu* and simultaneously given a precise location. This makes it unlikely that these *qasirewe* were territorial princelets<sup>4</sup>. The hypothesis that, like those on the Jn-tablets, they were leaders of some sort of guild, also has the advantage of economy — no further assumptions need to be made.

The word *kerosija* must also be considered. There are four *kerosija* on the Pylos tablets. An 261, which is reasonably complete, gives the names of four owners. These four and no others appear in the summary on An 261, which is repeated on An 616. In neither place can there be any other names on the list.

Since one of the *kerosija* owners is a *qasireu* of the bronze-smiths, the reading  $\gamma\epsilon\rho\nu\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  „council of elders“ was proposed at an early date. But the other *kerosija* have no connection with *qasirewe*. They are however connected with bronze-smiths. Two names *otwowe* and *apijo(t)* recur as bronzesmiths with *tarasija* (Jn 658 & 725 for *otwowe*, Jn 725 for *apijo*). The fourth name *tawesijo* does not recur. Palmer is clearly right to associate *kerosija* with bronze.

But his suggestion that it is „a craftsman’s establishment, perhaps at a lower level of organization than the *qa-si-re-wi-ja*“<sup>5</sup>, runs into two problems. Firstly the available evidence does not suggest that a *kerosija* was markedly smaller than a *qasirewija*. The *qasirewija* at KN As 1516.19 has 23 men. The *kerosija* at Pylos range from fourteen to twenty men<sup>6</sup> while no figures can be given for the *qasirewija* there. On this evidence a *kerosija* and a *qasirewija* are of the same order of size.

Secondly, if a *kerosija* is a workshop, why are four and no more found on the tablets? If they are workshops, there is something special which distinguishes them from other workshops. In that case it is unlikely that the word has an etymology meaning „workshop“ and no more, so Prof. Palmer’s suggestion of a derivative of  $*\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\nu$  is improbable. The absence of any other evidence for a form  $*\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\nu$  also counts against it. ( $\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\nu\alpha\acute{\zeta}$  is  $\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\text{-}\sigma\text{-}\alpha\nu\alpha\acute{\zeta}$ ) A form  $*\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\nu$  would be partly paralleled by  $\chi\alpha\lambda\kappa\epsilon\omega\nu$  „forge“ (although the root there is the object worked) but a suffix  $*\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  added to a nominal root in  $-\acute{\omega}\nu$  is not. Buck and Petersen’s Reverse Index does not provide a single case. On all counts  $*\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\nu\text{-}\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  for *kerosija* seems unlikely.

<sup>3</sup> Vn 130. 7.

<sup>4</sup> as suggested by Lejeune, *Historia* 10 p. 422.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.* p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> An 616.

Moreover it cannot be a bronze workshop. None of the surviving names of personnel in a *kerosija* corresponds to a name of a bronze-smith in the group to which the „owner” of the *kerosija* belongs. Therefore they would seem not to be smiths.

No clear idea emerges of what special thing it could be which is associated with bronze-smiths and employs from 14 to 20 men. Perhaps some bronze-smiths also played other roles in the community. One might suggest that it was after all, a *γερονσία*, a council of elders. It cannot be a council of the bronzesmiths' guild, since only one member was a bronze-smith. But it is not impossible that some local council was headed by a prominent bronze-smith — perhaps because of his religious associations — but this must remain a tentative suggestion. Whatever view is taken the word remains obscure.

Within limits conclusions can be reached from this evidence. There were several varieties of *qasirewe* in Mycenaean times. One group were chiefs or headmen of the bronzesmiths, who may have formed guilds or religious brotherhoods, associated with bronze, although they may have been chiefs of similar groups in other professions. It seems unlikely that they were territorial kinglets.

There seems no objection to connecting *qasireu* with *βασιλεύς*, having a basic meaning of „chieftain“, particularly when it is recalled that Hesiod uses *βασιλῆες* of the whole noble group. *Qasirewija* is then *βασιλεία* and the meaning suggested in Docs<sup>7</sup> „the retinue of a *βασιλεύς* (?)“ is probably the best. Practically nothing can be said about such *βασιλείαι*.

The only certain things which can be said about the *kerosija* is that they are closely connected with a limited number of bronze-smiths, but their personnel are not themselves on the lists of smiths. The word could still be *γερονσία*, but there seems no compelling evidence either for or against this interpretation. Even if it is accepted, we still know nothing about the composition or functions of these *kerosija*.

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<sup>7</sup> on p. 404,