

THE LINEAR SIGN AB 30

By

MAŁGORZATA ZADKA

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The character AB 30 (or L60)¹ in Linear B script has the phonetic value *ni* and ideographic function NI ‘fig’ assigned to it. It appears in *Scripta Minoa* I², where it is explained as a ‘fig tree twig’, as well as in SUNDWALL³, who translates this term as ‘fig tree’ and ‘fig’. It frequently occurs with quantitative terms and together with other ideograms depicting plants (such as a sign AB 131a ‘wine’)⁴. Since it is assumed that the phonetic value of the ideograms could also be the first syllable of the word, which it symbolically represented (for example: *120 GRAnum may be associated with syllabogram AB 41 SI from σῖτος ‘grain’)⁵, scholars also established that the syllable *ni* probably begins the word meaning ‘fig’.

Among the Greek names of this plant no word of such a beginning is found (Greek word for fig is σῦκον; wild fig is ἐρινεόν and φήληξ; edible fruit of wild fig is ὄλυθος or ὄλονθος; dried one is ἰσχάς)⁶. So attention was paid to the word νικύλεον, which appears at Athenaeus (III 76e): Ἐρμῶναξ δ’ ἐν Γλώτταις Κρητικαῖς σύκων γένη ἀναγράφει ἀμάδεα καὶ νικύλεα. Although the place in the text where the word νικύλεα appears was at first seen as corrupt⁷, it was accepted later by VENTRIS, CHADWICK⁸ and FURUMARK⁹. NEUMANN not only

¹ Numeration according to PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1945.

² EVANS 1909: 220.

³ SUNDWALL 1943: 10 f.

⁴ NEUMANN 1960: 182.

⁵ BARTONĚK 2003: 118.

⁶ See LSJ s.vv.

⁷ Cf. also NEUMANN 1962: 52.

⁸ VENTRIS, CHADWICK 1956: 35, 96, 130.

⁹ FURUMARK 1956: 11.