

30 Bury Walk,

LONDON S.W.3.

20th October, 1968.

Dear Professor Brice,

Thank you for your very pleasant letter.








"Basis" is a difficult word to use, in that if one extends it, it can cover quite easily many different aspects of the same problem - the nature of the people of Crete. It could be an extremely difficult question of yours to answer fully, for the puzzle would be where to begin and where to end, what to put in and what to leave out as too detailed.

The simplest answer is to pose you the following general considerations, and ask, is the picture drawn of the solution entirely unacceptable to your mind?

You know the present difficulties of Aegean studies - that one has these very similar cultures of Crete and the mainland centres, so like that the theory used to be the mainland centres were the result of a colonizing Crete. You have in Crete a people with a straight cultural history back to around 1900 B.C., and with a not very observable break between 1500 and 1450 B.C. when the mainland people took over one centre in Knossos after, it is thought, the volcanic explosion at Thera depth-charged the Minoan autocracy out of existence. Then followed the floriation of Mycenaean supremacy ended by the harrowing of the Dorians. Minoans and Mycenaeans have every appearance of a familial culture, in script, dress, building habits, deities, aesthetic tastes, yet with the natural variations of two separate centres. The examination of Linear B has led to the conclusion that the mainlanders were early Greeks, and that Linear B was an adaptation to the Greek language of Linear A which was used for the expression of the unknown Minoan tongue. Despite their resemblance, Linear A cannot be read from Linear B to form its patterns; and in the midst of this graphic puzzle is the hybrid Phaistos disc, the hybrid Enkomi script found in a Mycenaean centre, the yet uncoded hieroglyphic seals of Crete which also differ from the linear scripts in their own respects, and the classical Cypriot script which bears likeness to them all and has given a reading syllabically rendered of Greek but also of what might be called a "Language X". One even gets a puzzle like the interesting Amathus 'bi-lingual' which is in the Hellenic alphabet and the old script, and is no more bilingual than this letter in the sense of two tongues being used, for Mr Chadwick obligingly rendered it for me in the Greek of the Hellenic inscription and then the early Greek of the syllabic part!

The result of this is that the commonsense of those who see the strong cultural links between the island and the mainland, the lack of distinction between the best artistic products of each culture, the puzzling relationship of the Aegean scripts, cannot really swallow the Greeks in Knossos and the

mainland, and an entirely alien Minoan people; and prefer Sir Arthur Evans' view of an old and unknown people, with an unknown script and an unknown tongue. On the other hand, the adherents of the Linear B Greek-speaking people cannot deny the validity of the facts emerging from the tablets so far as they have been deciphered, but try to 'legalize' their position by emphasising the somewhat minute differences between the peoples, the lack of correspondence in reading between Linear B and the Enkomi script, and popularly relegate the Phaistos Disc to as far a geographic region as possible. If they could locate the Linear A people as emerging from India, if some link could be found to there, they would be extremely happy, for the respectability of their position depends on their severing the connection with Minos as far as possible, and adducing a Language X for any centre where a like script emerges which cannot give the Linear B pattern. There are certain groups in Linear A which are Linear B in pattern, and this has led to some conclusion by students that there may possibly be two languages in Linear A which could form a respectable link with Mycenae without however altering the position of the Minoans as a foreign people; there is a German student of the disc who is busy tracing Dravidian-Greek patterns in the Phaistos disc, and I expect you are aware of R. Kamm's Sanscrit patterns.

My basic position simply is to go back to the real break that occurred in Crete around 1900 B.C. and to say that, agreeing with the stated academic position that the early Greeks entered the Mediterranean in the second millenium B.C., they are the people who then settled in Crete, overriding the original Neolithic settlers. Why indeed should they not? - there was a large empty advantageously placed island, with the Neoliths not too thick on the ground - it would seem more odd that they should not settle there than that they should take advantage of the position. I say they brought with them, if not in existence already, the idea certainly of the hieroglyphic script which most probably was the parent-stock of Linear A and B and the Cypriot scripts, and was exported early from the island. The differences in the scripts arise from their subsequent evolution in different centres, and from the different approaches to the central concept that is inherent in each original hieroglyph. For one instance of this, vowel "o" in Linear B is , Linear A and the Phaistos disc it is respectively  , and in the Enkomi script . In each case, it represents the same object, a shield; but the Mycenaean picture represents the profile view of their long rectangular shield (or in some variants of the picture the same view of the figure-of-eight shield) with the arm-thong showed as a flick-stroke, while the Minoan picture represents a round shield which was probably their type, and the Enkomi picture is the pared-down speedwriting form of the Linear A picture. Again, the concept behind the sound "ia" is feminine, that is, in the Phaistos disc for the sound there is used a picture of a sheepskin hide, which I related to the robe worn by the female hierophant on the HT sarcophagus; in Linear A and B it is the simple robe sign , in the Enkomi script it is either pared down to  or else, because the Enkomi script did not use circular forms, it is the feminine circle expressed as a square; in the classical script, the form has become  which is either a degeneration of the original square form, or it is an expression of the original concept behind the sign. One can trace a number of these histories and I have done so in one of my papers to illustrate a particular section; but

the real problem remains to relate back the linear and other scripts to the hieroglyphic forms, for as children are like and yet differ from their parents, so do these scripts differ from the hieroglyphic script, and a great deal of codification is necessary as the hieroglyphic seals possess a much larger number of signs and one will have to assess the element played by determinatives.

The rooting of the essential Greek stock early in Crete does not entirely eliminate another factor to affect the mainland centres and other islands, and that is, if a people came early along one route, others of their people were bound to follow after at a later date by the same route; and the concept of different waves following each other, ending in the last and most vigorous wave, the Dorians, and bringing with them their linguistic variations and ideas, cannot be left out of sight. But generally, speaking, I would assert that the history of Crete and Mycenae which is so much in dispute, could be reconciled quite easily if one accepts that when Knossos was occupied, one Greek-speaking people walked in on another Greek-speaking people, - a not unknown factor in later Greek history. I will not adduce the well-known Homer reference which is used by the Linear B adherents in support of their Language X for the Minoans, but if you want my view, I consider he was mainly referring to dialects of the same language, just as we refer to the Scots tongue, meaning the Scots shaping, pronunciation and variety of English, and the only truly foreign element might have been what was left of the original Cretan Neoliths. Homer in referring to Achaeans, and indeed to Trojans, draws a picture of One World, rent only by the familiar inter-Greek quarrels, but otherwise at one level in understanding and culture. He makes no reference to the Cretans in any way as foreign, nor refers to a language X which must have been pretty widespread enough to have deserved mention, and yet which is simply absent by its silence. And written proto-Homer is much earlier than people normally put it.

With the concept then of one tongue underlying the hieroglyphic seals, Linear A, the Phaistos Disc, Linear B, the Enkomi script and the later Cypriot scripts, the task of reading them is much simplified. It means separate examination of each script by analysis and observation, and a judicious use of likeness only after consideration of all other factors has been made, for a like sign in each script is no guarantee it will represent the same sound, it may present a different concept or word. But there do appear to be a group of constants, that is, sign and sound remain identical through all the scripts; and then each linear script has its own idiosyncratic class. The third class of sign that is observed after that is the one [REDACTED] to be careful with, for it is the class of signs that are like in appearance and different in sound.

However, there are two other aspects that render decipherment of the texts difficult, exclusive of their small bulk, and that is the abbreviating rules used by the clerks in each centre in what was nearer a shorthand than a speedwriting system. The rules are not necessarily the same, nor are they fully known for all the scripts, and they need to be anticipated. The second consideration is that these scripts were written from sound only, the clerks never had an alphabetic picture of a word before them as we do. It is difficult for people trained in the alphabet, philology and the visual picture, to return entirely to the aural concept, to understand . . .

a language picture in which the only picture one ever had of the phonemes was in an abbreviated syllabic pattern with the emphasis on the consonantal sequence and the vowels of secondary importance, where language was written down as it sounded, not as a historical picture. Miss Henle's paper that you sent me with yours was a graphic illustration of this difficulty in the academic mind. It really is the stumbling block for the scholar; he is really too well-equipped for the task, and unless he can manage to discard these attainments for the primary task of understanding the training and mental approach of the clerk who wrote down these texts, he will find it very hard to break the stones in the quarry.

This is the basis which has been formed by my practical work in the scripts over the last seven years. I could write you a note on it if you like, but it would be quite rough, that is, without references or footnotes for there are none, it arising from the practice carried out; I could include character spans, however, as Professor Bennett liked that section of my third paper on the Phaistos disc and suggested I write it up with another section he liked into a separate paper, but I passed this over because the paper is a unity and he wished to cut down the phonetics to a minimum which made it even more difficult. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ I should be quite happy, however, if I were just given freedom to state the value of the sound for each picture, without further explanation, as this would not be necessary, but it would be necessary to make clear the value syllabically held throughout the scripts in the selected instances. But this is only a suggestion. However, I will send you under separate cover photocopies of the sheets Professor Bennett selected, and you can see what I was aiming at, if you like.

I had better stop here as it is getting rather extended. I hope it answers your question.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Beatrice Gwynn

Beatrice Gwynn.

VI. The Place of the Disc in the Aegean Scripts.

The Disc has always, in a sense, ^{been} homeless in the Aegean scripts. Tumbling out of the waves of Time, it was as incomprehensible as Venus Anadyomene and stimulated so many interesting theories about itself as the latter personage for much the same cause - its beauty, its unique nature & its unknown origin. Hanging in the fine modern museum at Heraklion, pale dull gold in appearance, with a sheen like marble & the rich procession of little pictograms circling round each face, it evokes an interest & admiration hard to put on one side.

It seems then not surprising that Sir Arthur Evans should have hoped it would reveal some lost & ancient poem in its text, or that Miss Stawell should have sought to fit in it a hymn to the goddess Rhea. The unanimous feeling has been that something not every day was marked by its construction & workmanship, & when Schwartz (1959) posed the question that it might be a list of place-names with comments about each, he yet envisaged them as sacred place-names & the advice offered that for pilgrims texts. Even though its findspot was identified as an accounts repository, its clay recognised as Cretan, its script queried as linked to Linear A & B; its Greek origin mooted, yet there still remained the general & human speculation about it as treasure trove from the sack of some unknown city overseas, the one relic of a departed race, "Souvenir des Pays Lointains", some due to the inaccessible past we have not

yet found.

The main difficulty that lay in the identification of any of the Cretan scripts was the extreme romance that Sir Arthur Evans, willy-nilly, contributed to them. He was a product of the ^{nineteenth century} of which Charles Darwin, H. Rider Haggard, Schliemann and Sir ~~Arthur~~ ^{Ronald} Ross were equal children. One doubts now whether any ~~modern~~ scientist would sit down to write a hymn of thanks on discovering why malaria is contracted; lost races in Africa have melted into the mist of memory; the equanimity of Darwin sleeping on a sofa half the day & discovering the origin of species on a private income would not be left undisturbed by modern attitudes; Schliemann would be advised, if not required, to take a course in practical archaeology; and anyone bold enough to produce a new fragment of the Iliad would be referred to a textbook on philology. Sir Arthur Evans, however, undertook his work at a time when the world was considerably freer in certain attitudes, and romantic beliefs could co-exist as an integral unity with the working of an able mind. Having under romantic circumstances performed the intellectual feat of discovering what none had known ever existed, he injected into his work the accuracy & drive of a genius at the full flavour of Victorian romanticism. He gave to the world, willy-nilly, the creation of this Atlantis-like civilisation with its hidden language & unbreakable script, all treated a dash that has not yet faded from educated minds. I doubt if he would like to

have learned they were early Greeks^{in Knossos}, any more than those who do not hold with Linear B being early Greek would like to give up the idea that the Mycenaeans were really Pelasgians; but being Sir Arthur Evans, once he had accepted it, he would have raced to the fore as once before.

Nor would Sir Arthur be the only one reluctant to abandon King Minos of Atlantis; driven from Linear B, all the romance of the strange discovery of an early & sophisticated civilisation is still vested in Linear A, in the Phaistos Disc, in the Eukroni Tablet, in the "unknown language" that still haunts the shores of Cyprus & the Egyptian inscriptions with such faithfulness; and one wonders sometimes how much, unthinkingly, it is present in those reasoned & able arguments for a language X. When one has been brought up on the idea of a mystery, sometimes habit, sometimes the cast of one's mind can rise not to destroy it but to preserve it — perhaps wisely for knowledge comes equipped with a lamp and a sword. One can sympathise with those unconscious defenders — who cannot help feeling it is something wondrous that sends Siegfried in to slay a dragon that requested only to live in its own cave and lead its own life in the manner born? After all, the conclusion that Linear B was in Greek brought such heartrending to the academic world that perhaps has not been seen since Champollion conferred the benefits of reading the Egyptian

script used on particular occasions of a higher level than everyday. Hence A might then be related to it, as the hieratic cursive script to the hieroglyphs, and this supposition would explain the hitherto puzzling point of the existence of hieroglyph A contemporaneously with what was regarded as a script still in the hieroglyphic stage.

The nature of the document would appear to fit in with the hieroglyph B land texts, and it could be defined as feudal in its nature if the suppositions about Face A are correct.

If the text is fully acceptable, it would explain why the Disc existed, why it was what it is, and why many other of the same family must have existed, and where they went and why they have not been found. We could perhaps even place the Disc in the season of the year in which it was made (if we assume it was for instant despatch) and the season of the earthquake that caused its entombment.

Clearly it was not a document that was issued more than once a year, but if we go by the remark "on wazei" of Face B, it was an annual event because the hieroglyph B records with a similar statement ~~seems~~ annual records. Moreover, the breaking-up of fallow lands must surely occur every year if something like the old ~~operational~~ rotation of land was followed. Being sent from the official centre and bearing the two 'lay' messages with their

legally-involved Transfers would explain the use of a more distinguished script than hieroglyphs. A because these Discs were, in effect, the seals of palace approval. Hence also the this unusual day which not only took the pictograms more clearly but must also have been a mark of distinction. One is reminded very much of those Officers who follow the habit of using two kinds of stationery, a choice of typewriters according as the letter to be sent out is of particular importance or just run-of-the-mill business. The making of the clay was to preserve the document against handling, to maintain it as a reference document, & to ensure its safe transport. The need to send many such of the same family type must have brought into being the stamping of the characters; & the reason why no more have been found or are likely to be found is because they were sent to those outlying settlements in the Messara and as far as the Palace of Phaistos, extended its influence and there, if they still exist, they are buried. Why this sole disc was left is unlikely ever to be known. Perhaps it was the first to be stamped or perhaps the last. All one can say is that it may have been Autumn when it was executed & when the earthquake occurred.

The final point about the Disc is placing it in the Aegean scripts is that for the first time we ^{may} have a complete point of reference back to the Hieroglyphic system. We have only 45

characters given, but of these it is possible to equate quite a few in corresponding sound & sign from the Disc through Linear A & B & into the Cypriot scripts, which represents, from, say, 1800 B.C. to the 6th A.D., over two thousand years of graphical history in one chain. It is possible to trace the divergencies in picture or sound of the same stroke that resulted in Linear A & Linear B, so alike & yet sometimes so different. Thus by this thread, we may be able to attempt a full comparative history of the signs over the centuries, & this perhaps is the most interesting issue that arises in placing the Disc in context of the Aegean scripts. Examples of such character histories have, therefore, been chosen to form the next section of this paper.

VII. Some Character Histories Considered.

In making this note, I have, of necessity, to touch without explanation on the values reached by me in studying the Linear A texts & the Eukhomi tablet; so this section may be considered as one of speculation with which the reader may well choose to disagree.

The order in which the character examples from each script will extend across the page will be given below but not again as it is desired to leave the eye perfectly free to make its own judgment.

In selecting from the Cypriot scripts, it is well

understood the great number of variants makes representation only partial, but one example is given in each case from the Paphian & non-Paphian classes, in order to go some way toward this difficulty.

The order of representation then will be

CRETAN			CYPRIOT		
Phaistos Disc	Linear A	Linear B	Eteocyprian	Paphian	Non-Paphian

CHARACTER HISTORIES:

A number of characters agree in sound & picture, & from this class I have selected ten.

i. SA [? Musical notes]

⌘ Y Y' F V V

[It should be explained here that the Eteocyprian script differed from the Linear scripts in its mode of execution & I quote Eshon's clear exposition (p. 41 The Teson Tablet of Eteocyprian: Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, LXV, 1961)

"...One obvious reason why the Eteocyprian signs had to differ from & be simpler than the Linear B signs was the method of writing that the Cypro-Mycenaean had developed. They made their signs by jabbing strokes, in the clay & not "with a drawing motion.... with the free point of a stylus" as in Linear B. The inventor limited himself to jabs, long & short jabs, straight, slanting or slightly curved jabs, horizontal & vertical jabs & parallel or hooked double jabs....."

The Eteocyprian scribe in his simplifying process reduced most closely a number of different symbols to

separate orders of appearance in his system without losing the essential outline, & the slight vase-like appearance of his symbol for SA arises from its place in his graphic order. The different orders are most clearly exhibited in the table of signs drawn up by Michael Ventris & given in Documents.]

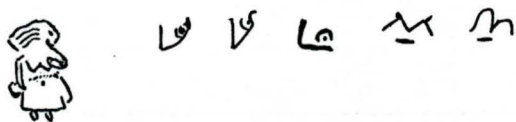
ii. JA [a sheepskin]



iii. KA [a flower? rose? sunflower]

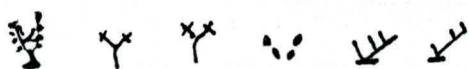


iv. MI [woman with arm bent to her breast]

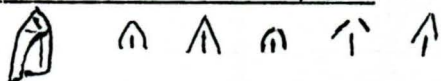


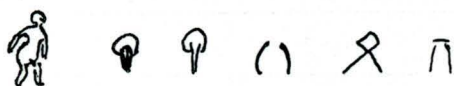
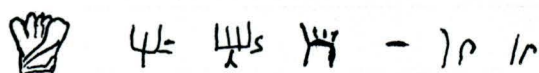
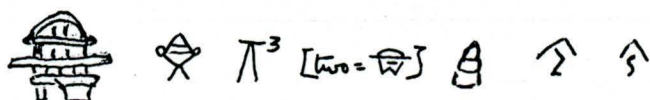
The theme presented is the bent arm and exposed breasts

v. NI [a lig spray]

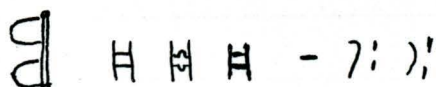


vi. TI [a tiara cap]



vii. KO [the male organ - boy]viii. NO [an outspread hand]ix. WO [a tiered building ? beehive ? domed carrying-dair]

The Cypriot script tries to make the difference between TI and WO by zig-zagging the internal line in descent from the tiering of the building. KA was distinguished by the underlying base line.

x. NU [? a yoke / vessels]

The differences between the two linear scripts, however, lie in two classes of characters -

1. Those idiosyncratic to each script and not found in the other
2. Those which share a similar sign but with a different sound; or the same sound and a different

of the second class I would like to trace in particular the history of four characters.

1) MA [a dagger or short sword]

𐀀 𐀁 𐀂 𐀃 𐀄 𐀅

The Linear B version of this picture is commonly equated with the Linear A character 𐀀, but this latter pictogram has actually the value of "jo" and can be traced as follows:

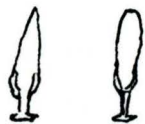
𐀀 𐀁 𐀂 𐀃 𐀄 𐀅

The Linear B symbol, in my opinion, represents an outside profile of the animal, and if reference is made to variants of the Linear B symbol where a less rigid outline is used, the likeness will be more clearly seen as 𐀆.

But as regards MA, the Linear B derivation may I think, be found in a representation of the pommel and hilt of this short weapon and this will be clearly seen, for example, if reference is made to

PALMER: Mycenaean & Minoan (1st edn. pp. 181/2)

where types of weapons are illustrated with sword tablets. The types numbered ⁽³⁾LM III A and ⁽⁴⁾LM III A are shown below and I reverse the illustration to make the point clear: -



The ideogram used at Knossos is also given (p. 181)



and among the tablet ideograms shown we note Tablet 1548

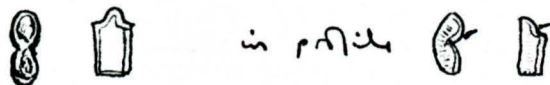


and put our character MA underneath

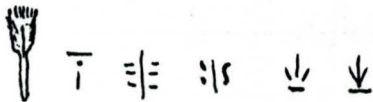


2) O [a shield]

I think the sound for vowel "O" was from a term for a shield; but that the difference between Linear A and Linear B is the type of shield represented. On the Disc A in Linear A is shown a round metal shield of Carian type; but in Linear B is illustrated the profile view of the rectangular shield with the arm-throw, showing, or in alternative variants the figure-8-shield also in profile, thus -







[cf. ALSEP, J.: from the Sidant East - where a fine enlarged photo of a seal shows two men fighting, one with figure-8-shield in profile.]

3) TE [an arrow pointing downwards]

The Linear A version is normally equated with the Linear B symbol for NA $\bar{\text{T}}$ and in passing I would point out that this sound NA is represented in the classical Cypriot script by $\bar{\text{T}}$ which in turn is the Linear B symbol for TO. There is some basic confusion here which would bear investigation.

In point of fact, however, the Linear A symbol represents TE and a straight character history can be obtained while removing from the Linear A texts an impossible frequency of NA. A variant of the Linear A sign is $\bar{\text{T}}$.

- 4) TO and KU [a flying bird]
 as KU   [Linear B / Cypriot]
 as TO   [Phaistos Disc, Linear A]

In the Enkomi Tablet TO follows the Linear B sign, and KU the Linear A sign (not illustrated) which again differs from the Linear B symbol.

If the Linear scripts did not vary in some particulars, it would be possible to read Linear A from Linear B; but they do vary in individual characters, and this is one variation that is of some importance as the character forms part of the total sign in Linear A texts. The object is a flying bird, and he is commonly taken for an eagle carrying a serpent. In point of fact he is just as likely to be a vulture, and he carries no serpent but is illustrated with his claws showing as in similar fashion are shown the birds in Etruscan tomb paintings. He has the value of KU in Linear B and of TO in Linear A and the Phaistos Disc, and I think this is the case where a different word was employed locally for the same object, or else the object held a different connotation in Crete to that in Mycenae, i.e. a different bird.

This concludes my selection of character histories illustrating likenesses and differences. Other fascinating histories can be traced, and my only regret is that the Disc gave 45 characters only, and also differences of the two Linear scripts.

sometimes make the linkage to separate in different directions. The many variants of the Cypriot script may spring from this dual inheritance, and it is possible that what may seem an unknown language arises merely from lack of knowledge that an apparently plain character carries a history of two sounds. An example of this is the symbol $\bar{\Gamma}$ which is consistently tried out in Cypriot inscriptions with the classical value of NA, giving such a predominance of this sound as leads one to wonder if the higher B value for the same symbol, TO, might not be the missing factor.

VIII.

A General Note on Conclusions reached by previous Writers on the Disc.

At the conclusion of my own observations on the Disc, it would perhaps not be inappropriate to list those other persons who either partially or wholeheartedly engaged on similar work and in whom I found either reason to change some view of mine, or support for some observation of my own, or else an unexpected lead. With them I choose to include the names of those people who commenced the whole process of unveiling Cretan history; and those whose work is higher than I followed in making my own study thereof, in order to pursue further the observation of the Disc. All these people seem to me to form part of a