

19th October, 1989

Dear Bill,

Many thanks for yours of October 16th which arrived this morning.

I much enjoyed your stimulating talk yesterday, and have been thinking about it ever since.

I have read somewhere - it may have been you who wrote it- that there is a lot of local variation in Linear A.

For Knossos, the only tablets of which I can think with writing called by Evans Linear A are the ones from the Temple Repositories, and these must date from Middle Minoan III B (or according to Mervyn Popham perhaps from Late Minoan IA about contemporary with Thera) which is at least one whole period earlier than the mass (or all?) other known Linear A tablets which come from deposits of LM IB destructions.

But there does seem quite a lot of evidence for use of Linear A at Knossos in MMIII - LMI apart from these tablets. There are the roundels of the kind Hallager has been working on from the Temple Reps themselves, and various inscriptions on vases, some found by Evans and others since, not to mention the ink-written cups which I find it hard to exclude from the family of Linear A?

There is also the ligature on a conical cup which I published in Kadmos from a deposit of LM IB on the Royal Road.

This is more controversial, but I believe myself that Linear A was still in use at Knossos at the beginning of the Mycenaean period there (Late Minoan II) and that, by implication, Linear B was probably evolved from it there. There is the vase with a Linear A inscription from the Unexplored Mansion (but that might have been a survival like the pithos similarly inscribed from the West Mags in the palace) and more telling in my opinion the inscription in the entrance of the Kefala tholos tomb which looks contemporary with it (unlike the masons marks on blocks incorporated in its construction) and which I'm reasonably convinced was built in LM II and not earlier.

In the first year of excavation in 1900 Evans had the idea that the Hieroglyphic Deposit was late in date, and as late or later than the Linear B tablets! This comes in BSA vi (1899-1900) 59-63 with curious explanations of how it happened.

Re Thera, the present great bay was left by the collapse of the caldera after the Bronze Age eruption. But current thinking seems to be that the eruption of 18,000 BP left a similar caldera in roughly the same place, although the island afterwards was like Melos (where the bay is also the remains of a collapsed caldera of early times) in one piece and not as now divided into 3 bits. As far as I can gather the thinking is that most if not all of the other ten eruptions back to c. 200,000 BP were of more or less the same kind and erupted in roughly the same place.

Yours ever
J. Sinclair

PTO!

me of the excellent

Hector calling told me of the excellent

P.S. Yes - Khama



I am of course quite wrong. There is only one tablet (although there are inscribed roundels) from the Temple Reps.. The other 2 illustrated by Evans, PM i 619 fig. 455, are from the N end of the Corridor of the Sword Tablets (PM i 574 fig. 418 shows the find-place) and off the cuff might come from a LM I if not LM IB context: I think a LM I jug was found below the level of the Linear B tablets in the Corridor, but must look into this.