

## SUMMARY

# THE PICTOGRAPHIC AND LINEAR SCRIPTS OF MINÔAN CRETE AND THEIR RELATIONS

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MR. EVANS briefly traced the earlier stages in the evolution of an indigenous system of writing in Crete as brought out by his researches from 1893 onwards. Finally, in 1900, his discovery of the clay in archives in the prehistoric Palace of Knossos had supplied conclusive evidence of the existence of both a semi-pictorial and a linearized system of writing, of a highly developed kind. The relations of the two scripts, however, had remained obscure, as, owing to the circumstances under which the tablets of the pictographic class were first discovered, there was no proof that the two styles were not contemporary. The recent exploration of strata below the later floor-levels now showed that the pictographic inscriptions really belonged to an earlier Palace belonging to the 'Middle Minôan Period' and already displaying a high civilization together with indications of contact with XIIth Dynasty Egypt (c. 2800-2200 B.C.). Mr. Evans was also able to establish various new facts with regard to this conventionalized pictographic script. The numerals, like those of the later, linear script, proved to belong to the decimal system. It was also possible to trace the order of the writing in many cases.

What seemed to have been a dynastic revolution destroyed the earlier Palace about the close of the third Millennium B.C. In the later Palace, which came down to about 1500, a new, linear system of writing is found established. In what relation did this stand to the earlier quasi-pictorial class? The most recent excavations had now produced new comparative material of the highest interest. It appeared that the later Palace itself was divided by some internal disturbance, probably involving some change of government, into two distinct periods. Chambers and repositories were found below

the later floors of this Palace, which belonged to an earlier period in its history. The most important of these repositories, containing relics from a Sanctuary, the central cult-object of which seems to have been a marble cross, also presented clay tablets and sealings with inscriptions in a form of linear script in several respects divergent from that of the latest Palace Period. In certain respects, as in the form of the tablets, the numerals, and some characters, a greater approach to the pictographic types was visible. It did not, however, wholly represent an anterior stage of linear writing, since some signs common to this and the other class appeared in a somewhat more advanced form. It was therefore to be regarded as a parallel and alternative script replaced by the other owing to a dynastic change. It further appeared that this script answered to that of inscriptions brought to light by the Italian Mission in the small Palace or royal villa of Hagia Triada, in this and the preceding year, as well as of an inscription found by the British School at Palaeokastro. The two linear systems had a large element in common, and together revealed a considerable indebtedness to the earlier pictographic signary. The identity of certain sign-groups, moreover, showed that the language of the two was essentially the same.

The linear tablets of the latest Palace Period were much more abundant—about 1600 having now been discovered. Besides inventories of precious vases, ingots, chariots and horses, arms and other possessions, the meaning of which was partly made clear by pictorial illustrations, there were other clay documents which might prove to be deeds or public records. Ink-written inscriptions on vases were also found, pointing to the former existence of writings on papyrus or other perishable materials. Very important were long lists of men and women giving what must certainly be regarded as personal names with the ‘man’ or ‘woman’ sign attached to each. A comparative study of these names enabled Mr. Evans to trace the existence of male and female terminations and of changing suffixes, as well as of compound formations of a similar type to the Indo-Germanic. Both linear scripts were provided with a decimal numeration, including signs up to 10,000, and tablets dealing in percentages further showed its prevalence. Most signs seemed capable of an ideographic as well as syllabic or possibly, in cases, alphabetic usage. The artificial variations in certain signs, to supply different nuances of sound or meaning, betrayed the grammarian’s hand.

Among the conclusions that might be deduced from the evidence of the different forms of script were : 1. Its indigenous developement. 2. Unity of language in Minôan Crete going back to a remote period

and probably corresponding to the Eteocretan language found later, in a Greek guise, at Praesos. 3. Consequently, an ethnography altogether different from that of the Homeric tradition which included Achaeans, Dorians and Pelasgians, as well as the Eteocretan element. 4. Clear evidence that the language was not Semitic.

In conclusion, Mr. Evans pointed out the parallels existing with signs of the Cypriote Syllabary and the suggestive correspondence of many characters with the probable prototypes of Phoenician letters.