

Royal Institution of Great Britain,

ALBEMARLE STREET, PICCADILLY, W.

January 1903.

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SYLLABUS

OF

A COURSE OF THREE LECTURES

ON

PRE-PHOENICIAN WRITING IN CRETE,

AND ITS BEARINGS ON THE HISTORY OF THE ALPHABET.

BY

ARTHUR J. EVANS, ESQ. LL.D. LITT.D. F.R.S.

KEEPER OF THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD.

(Illustrated by Lantern Slides.)

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To be delivered on the following days, at FIVE o'clock:—

LECTURE I.—THURSDAY, *January 15th*, 1903.

*Primitive Picture Writing and the conventionalised Pictographic Script of Crete.*

Articulate language of relatively late development—This fact increases importance of pictorial records in primitive times—Man drew before he talked—Hunting scenes already pictured in Reindeer Period—Gesture and sign language add elements of expression to picture writing

[TURN OVER

—Examples of picture writing among modern savage races—Rock paintings of California—Evidences of pictography in primitive Europe—Scandinavia—Ireland—Brittany—The Maritime Alps, “Maraviglie,” etc.—Bocche di Cattaro—Andalusia—Similar traces in North Africa—Tendency to conventionalism and systematic selection—Part for whole growth of pictographic scripts in widely different areas—Central America—China—New lights thrown on growth of Egyptian hieroglyphs by pre-dynastic remains—Traces of pictographic pictotypes of Babylonian Cuneiform characters—Conventionalised picture writing of “Hittites”—*A priori* probability of existence of picture writing and conventionalised script in prehistoric Greece—High primitive civilisation there first revealed by Schliemann’s discoveries—Did this really represent “Man before Writing”?—Personal doubts—Clues obtained in Greece lead to Crete—Explorations of Lecturer in that Island from 1894 onwards—Discovery of seal stones and other objects with pictographic and linear characters—Inscribed Libation-Table in Cave of Zeus, Mount Dicta—Characters systematically grouped—Accumulating evidences of existence of conventionalised pictographic script—Discovery of inscribed tablets in pictographic as well as linear script in Palace of Knossos—Table and analysis of Cretan pictographic characters—Probably both word-signs and syllables—Evolution of conventionalised pictographic system in Crete traced back to more primitive pictorial signs on seals, going back to third and probably fourth Millennium B.C.

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LECTURE II.—THURSDAY, *January 22nd, 1903.*

*The Linear Script of Minóan Knossos.*

Knossos, traditional centre of Minos’ sea-empire—Prehistoric site there secured by Lecturer in 1894—Excavation begun in 1900—Vast Minóan Palace brought to light—Discovery of deposits of clay tablets with Pre-Phœnician script—Great bulk (c. 1500) in linear writing distinct from Cretan pictographic system—Chests of clay archives with seal impressions countermarked and countersigned—Was there a classical find of the kind?—Story of Dictys Cretensis, his history of the Trojan War—Subject of inscriptions often shown by pictorial designs added—Many inventories and accounts—Treasures and various possessions referred to—Figures and system of numeration—Tablets dealing with percentages—Other documents—Linear script found on other objects—Clay labels, graffiti on pots—Inscription on painted vase—Ink-written inscriptions inside cups—Seals apparently belonging to correspondence on perishable materials—Modern characteristics of the writing—Analysis of signs—Pictographic origin visible in several cases—Word-signs and syllabic characters—About eighty of these in general use—Evidences of both

usages in case of the same sign—Signs of value, quantity, etc.—Systematic method in their variation—The grammarian at work—Long lists containing personal names—Compound character of many—Terminal signs distinguishing male and female names—Suffixes changing in different positions—Non-Semitic formation—Possibly Indo-European—Extraordinary phenomenon presented by Cretan discoveries—Two distinct systems of writing—The Pictographic of great antiquity on Cretan soil shown from the remains of Palace to go back into third Millennium—Its antecedent stages still more ancient—Linear comes in with later Palace about 18th century B.C., but pictographic system still survives in Crete—Some common elements, but linear system in the main independent of the Cretan pictographic series.

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LECTURE III.—THURSDAY, *January 29th*, 1903.

*Cretan Scripts and "Signaries" and the Phœnician Alphabet.*

Early Cretan signs or marks not belonging to systematic script—Comparisons with prehistoric Egyptian signs—Similar on pottery from Lachish—Alphabetic forms presented—Petrie's theory—Geometrical in character, but probably in many cases pictorial in origin—Others mere owners' marks—Become current stock for marks for potters, masons, inlayers, etc.—Two interesting series at Knossos—Marks on Palace blocks, some probably religious symbols—Similar at Phaestos—Signs on bone and porcelain inlays from Palace, Knossos—Extraordinary resemblances to later Greek alphabetic forms—Egyptian parallels—This early geometrical class of signs not origin of letters, but rather a formative influence in their development—Cretan evidence summed up—Pictographic and linear scripts and "signaries" for technical purposes all fully developed by about 1800 B.C.—Bearing of this on Phœnician alphabet—Imported into Greece c. 800 B.C.—Its earliest monuments go back to c. 900 B.C.—Existence of derivative South Semitic scripts, Sabæan and Minaean, point to earlier origin—Great advance on all other systems of writing—"Akrophony" known to Egyptians now made the sole basis—Attempt to trace letters to Egyptian source—Theory of De Rougé connecting alphabet with hieratic forms—Objections to this view—Possible Babylonian elements—Grotesque derivation from cuneiform characters—Old and simple view of Gesenius and others connecting names and original form of letters—Illustrative table of Sir J. Evans—Uncertainty attaching to several Semitic letter-names—Pictorial originals in Cretan script answering to the presumed prototypes of Semitic letters, side by side with linearised derivation—Complete analogy supplied in favour of pictorial origin of alphabet—Was there a more direct relation?—Philistines of Ægean largely Cretan origin—Caphtor Kefto, home of Kefts,

Egyptian name for inhabitants of Minóan Crete and its dependencies—Achish, Keft personal name c. 1500 B.C.; later typically Philistine—Philistine colonisation of Canaanite coast c. 1250 B.C., perhaps connected with break up of great Ægean power—Parallel occupation of Cyprus by Mycenæans—Gaza called Minóan and cult of Cretan Zeus implanted there—Minóan settlement in Canaan represents in the main triumph of a higher civilisation—The Philistines as “Kulturträger”—Become Semitised—Possibility that names of Cretan pictographs thus imported underwent similar conversion and became source of alphabetic selection—This theory would account for traces of unexplained foreign element in names of letters—Possible further influence of pre-existing scripts and signaries of Crete on Greek forms of Phœnician letters.

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