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FOUR FRAGMENTS OF WALL PAINTINGS WITH LINEAR A INSCRIPTIONS

The purpose of this article is to describe, assign a date to, and briefly discuss, three fragments of wall paintings with incised inscriptions (Nos. 1—3) from Hagia Triada and a fourth with a single painted sign (No. 4) from Knossos¹. These fragments have already been published² but examination of the actual material leads the present writer to suggest tentative new readings of certain signs on the fragments from Hagia Triada. Technical descriptions of the material, which have not previously been published, are given at the end of this article.

Nos. 1—3; The Fragments from Hagia Triada: Pls. 1—9, and Tables 1—3

The script

There can be little doubt that these inscribed fragments are contemporary for both technical and calligraphical reasons. The graffiti contain at least one sign, L 95, which is known to occur only on Linear A documents. This is a sufficient reason alone for believing that our graffiti are written in Linear A, as indeed all previous publishers of the fragments have assumed.

¹ The author wishes to thank the Director and Managing Committee of the British School of Archaeology at Athens for permission to publish here some of the results of his work as a student of the School; also Dr. S. Alexiou, Ephor of Crete and Director of Herakleion Museum, for permission to study this material; to Mr. M. R. Popham who has read and improved this article in draft form, and to Mr. G. Xylouris who supplied the photographs.

Professor E. Grumach, who suggested that this material should be republished, kindly checked Pls. 1—9 in Herakleion Museum, but for the commentaries on the signs on the Hagia Triada fragments the present writer is alone responsible.

² No. 1: HM 52. G. Pugliese Carratelli, *Monumenti Antichi ... della Reale Accademia d'Italia*, XL (1945), *Le iscrizioni preelleniche di Hagia Triada in Creta* etc. (hereafter abbreviated to PC 1), 590, Pl. XX (HT 155); W. C. Brice, *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, Oxford 1961, (hereafter abbreviated to Brice), 23, V 7, Pl. XXX V 7; G. Pugliese Carratelli, *Le epigrafi di Hagia Triada*

The find-place

They were found at a short distance above the floor level on the walls of a small three columned portico situated in the N. W. corner of the W. wing of the Villa³. In nearby rooms were found Linear A tablets, clay sealings (some of which were countersigned with Linear A signs) which had fallen from the upper storeys, the famous "Park" and "Seated Goddess" frescoes, other fragments of equally fine wall paintings, and a number of vases, two of which bore Linear A graffiti⁴.

The date

The destruction of Hagia Triada is generally believed to have taken place in the LM I B period⁵ on the evidence of pottery⁶, Linear A tablets⁷, and clay sealings⁸. Our fragments belonged to the same destruction level and are therefore LM I B or earlier in date. No documents in Linear A have been found in stratified deposits of a later date.

The readings

The buckled, cracked and worn surfaces of the fragments make the task of reading the graffiti extremely difficult. The lines on

in Lineare A, Supplement to *Minos* No. 3, Salamanca 1963, (hereafter abbreviated to PC 2), 67 (HT 155)

No. 2: HM 53. PC 1, 590, Fig. 229, and Pl. XXI (HT 156); Brice, 23, V 8, Pl. XXX V 8; PC 2, 67 (HT 156)

No. 3: HM 54. A. J. Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, (hereafter abbreviated to PM), Vol. I, (1921), 636f, Fig. 473; PC 1, 590, Pl. XXII (HT 157); Brice 23, V 9, Pl. XXX V 9; PC 2, 68 (HT 157)

No. 4: references given on p. 12

³ PC 1, 430—433, Fig. 1e

⁴ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁵ PM IV, 786, 885; A. J. Evans, *Scripta Minoa* Vol. I, Oxford 1909, 32f; J. D. S. Pendlebury, *The Archaeology of Crete*, (1939), 228; A. Furumark, *The Chronology of Mycenaean Pottery*, Stockholm 1941, 82; M. R. Popham, *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, Vol. 58, (1963), 91 note 9

⁶ *Mon. Ant.* XIII, (1903), 66, Figs. 52f.; (Furumark, *op. cit.*, 82 note 1); G. Maraghiannis, *Antiquités Crétoises*, Vol. II, Pl. XLI, 1 and 2; (Furumark, loc. cit.); M. Borda, *Arte Cretese — Micenea nel Museo Pigorini di Roma*, Rome 1946, 52f., Nos. 59—62; C. Zervos, *L'Art de la Crète*, Paris 1956, No. 572

⁷ Linear A tablets have been found at Zakro, Palaikastro and Tyliisos in LM I B destruction levels.

⁸ The sealings are comparable in style to others found in LM I B destruction levels at Zakro (House A), Sklavokambos and Gournia, and some sealings from these sites may be from the same ring, as S. Marinatos has pointed out: *Archaeologiki Ephimeris*, (1939—41), 89 No. 5; see too V. E. G. Kenna, *Archaeology in Greece*, 1960—61, 30.



No. 1. HT 155



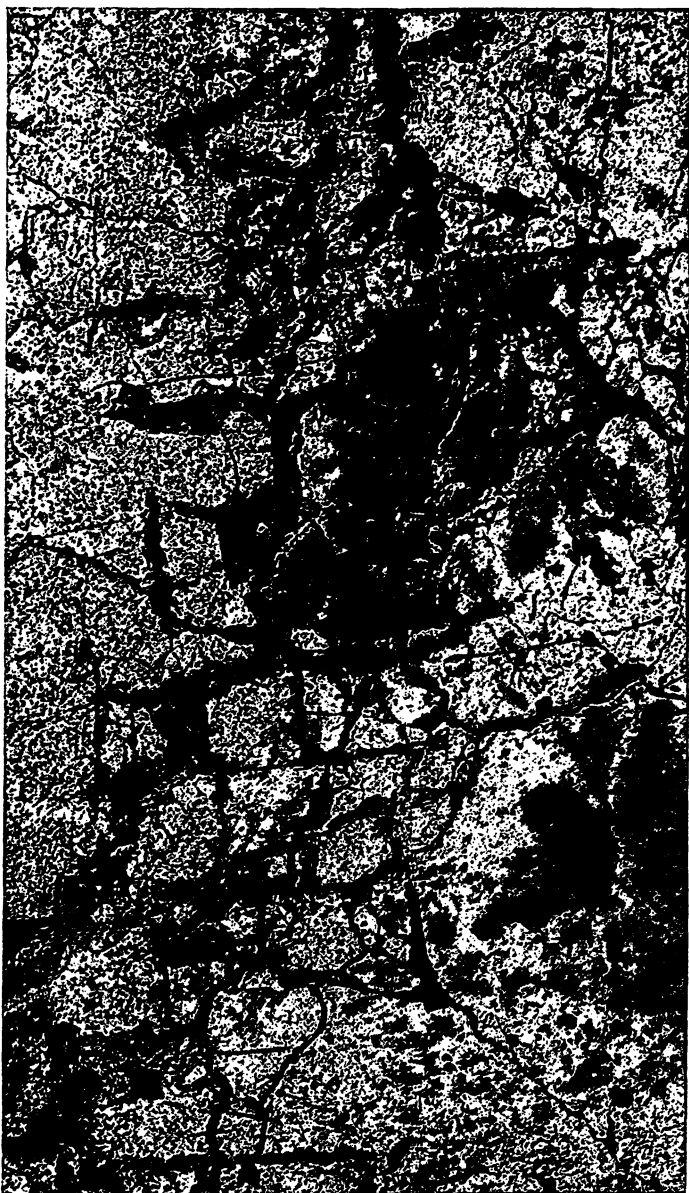




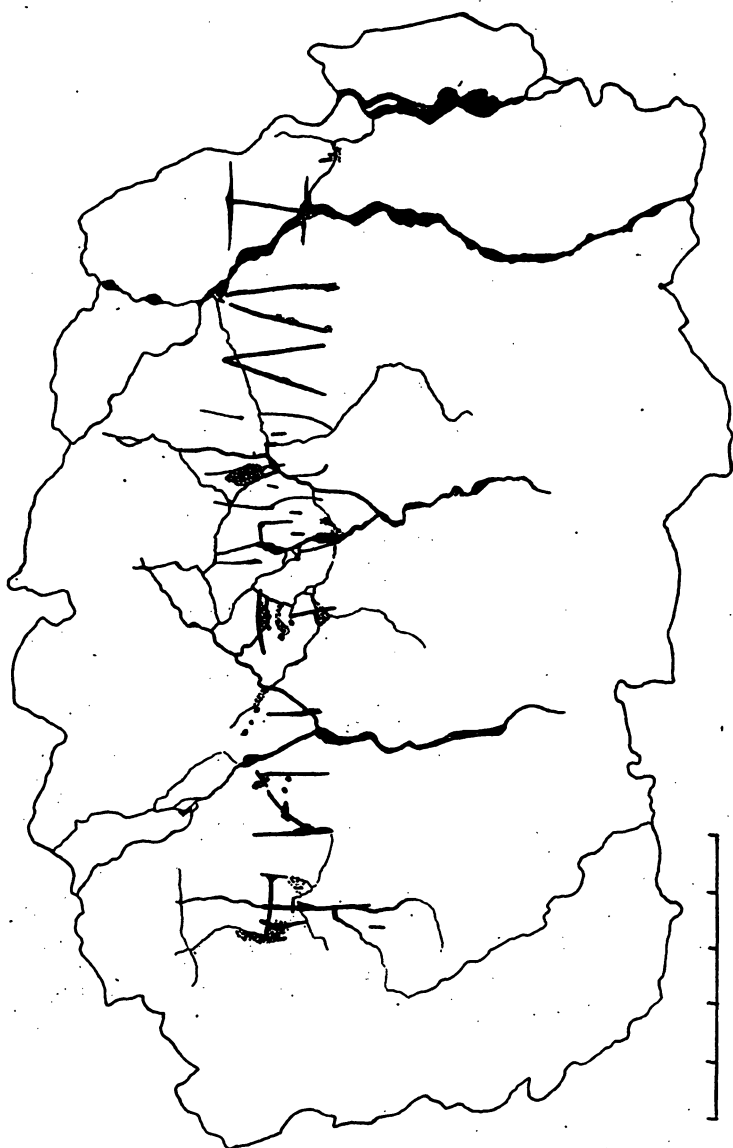
No. 1. Detail of signs 4-8



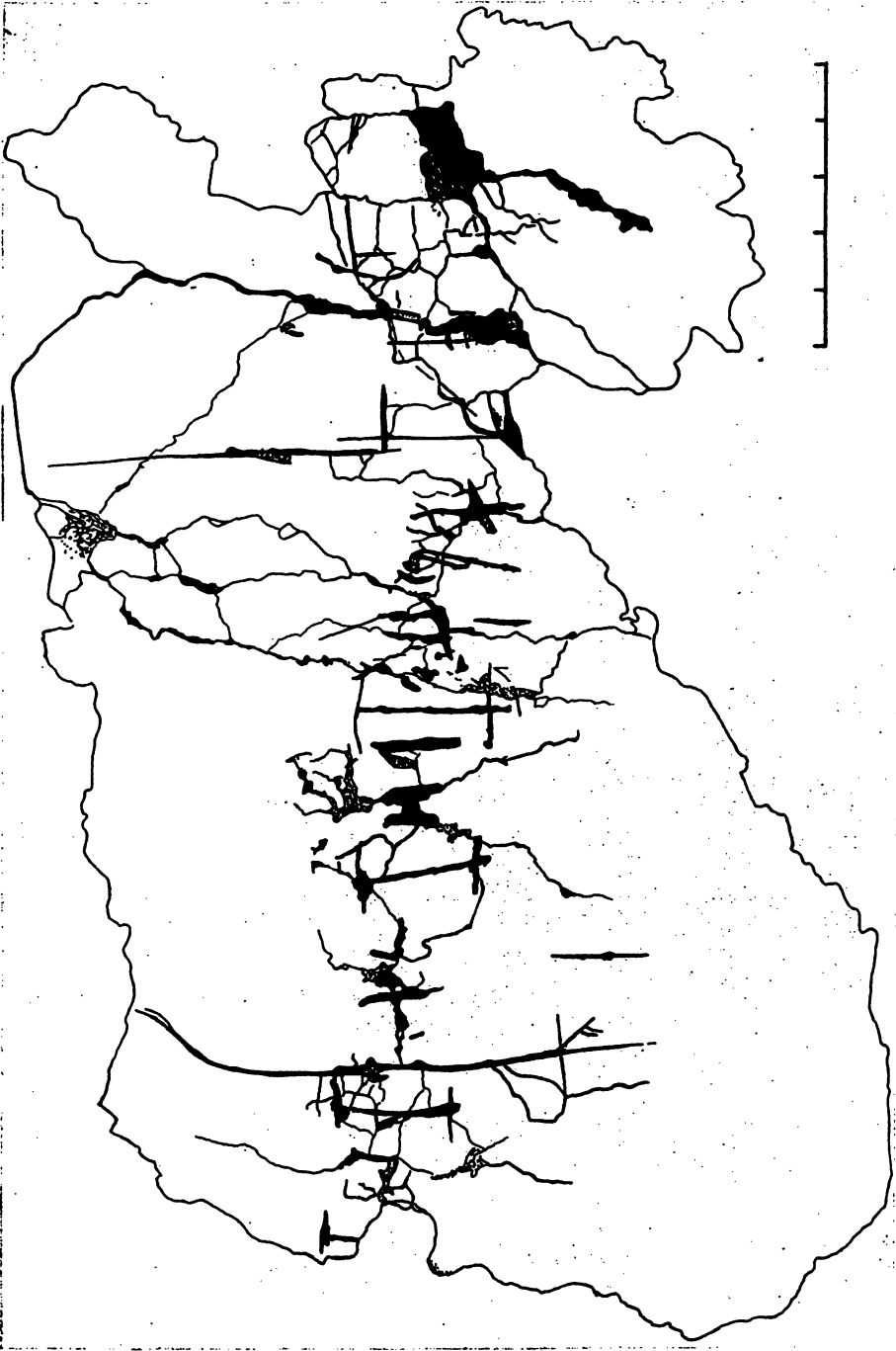
No. 2. Detail of signs 14-17



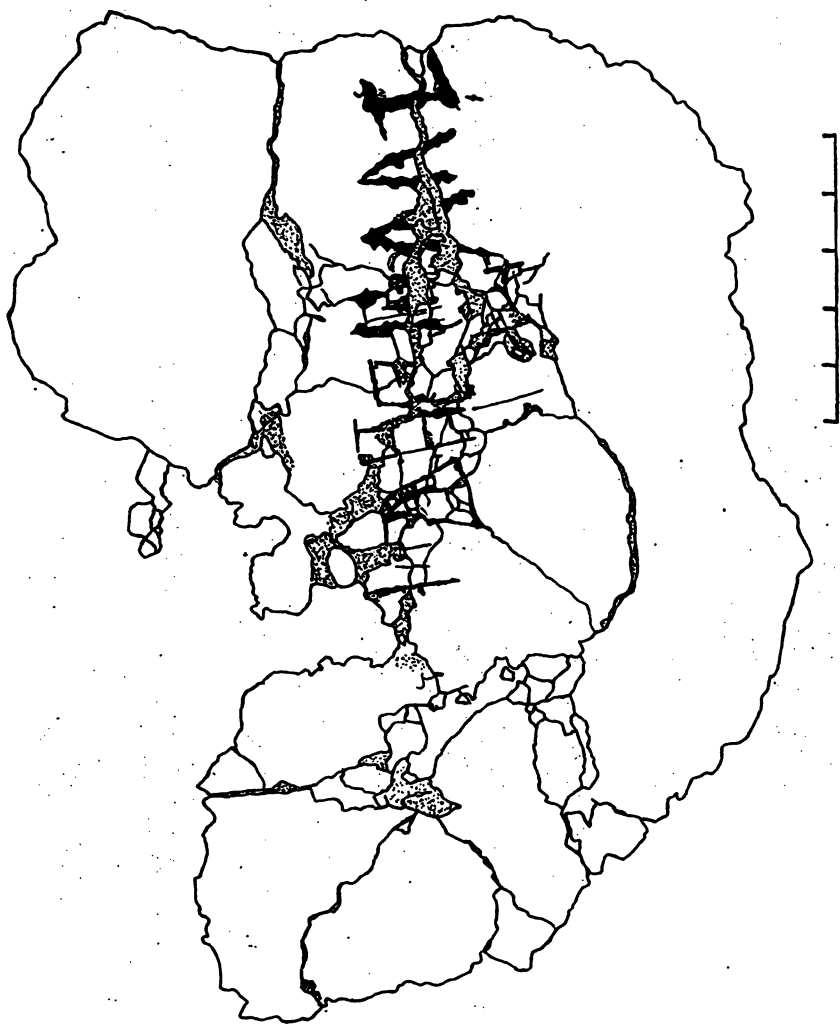
No. 3. Detail of signs 2-6



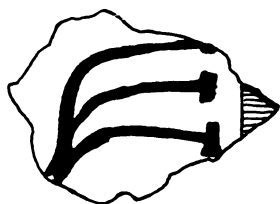
No. 1 (H.T. 155). Length of fragment 19.1 cm



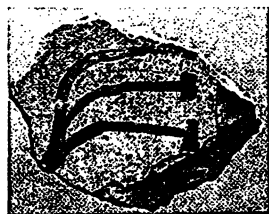
No. 2 (HT 156). Length of fragment 23.9 cm



No. 3 (HT 157). Length of fragment 17.2 cm



Scale full size



No. 4. Scale nearly full size

which we base our new readings are very fine and, for the most part, they occur in very mutilated areas of the fragments. Consequently our new readings should be clearly understood to be tentative suggestions. In general, our readings are closer to those of Carratelli than to those of Brice.

In Tables 1—3 previously published drawings of the fragments have been arranged in chronological order. To facilitate reference to individual signs a number has been given above each character, whilst the numbers below the signs refer to Carratelli's L corpus of signs and their occurrences⁹; some of the numbers are bracketed () indicating that the particular transcription can be identified according to Carratelli's corpus of signs although the individual author did not mention the L number. Lines which could be either part of a sign or the result of damage suffered in antiquity have been dotted. In Pls. 7 and 8 the major cracks are denoted by black lines, but in Fig. 9 it was found necessary to make a greater distinction between characters and major cracks by dotted instead of black lines.

The following are commentaries on the more illegible or controversial signs.

No. 1. HT 155. Pl. 1, 4, 7 and Table 1

Sign 2; not included in Carratelli's corpus of occurrences, but Brice transcribes it as L 96 (= L 68).

Sign 3; Carratelli proposes L 67? Brice reads it as a single unit.

Sign 5; the present writer agrees with Carratelli's identification, L 95.

Sign 6; this sign has the same outer form as sign 5 and three faint, minute, lines below the horizontal crack suggest the eyes and tip of nose of the "cat's head" sign, L 95, rather than Brice's L 76?: see Pl. 4.

There is general agreement on the identification of the other signs. A short vertical stroke appears at the beginning and end of the graffito as seems to be the case on No. 3.

No. 2. HT 156. Pl. 2, 5, 8 and Table 2

Sign 1 and 14 are transcribed by Carratelli (PC 1, 590) and Brice as L 14 and L 14?, and sign 16 by Brice as L 14?

Sign 2; a definite stroke, not simply a crack, although cracks run from it.

⁹ PC 1, 464—489, Figs., 45—53 and 60

HT155(M52)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
PC1, (MXX).									
L:	52		67?	26	95		78	78	14
BRICE, (MXXIX).									
L:	52	(96)		26		76?	78	78	14
PC2, (67).									
L:	(52)		(67?)	(26)	(95)		(78)	(78)	(14)
No.1.									
L:	52	68 or 96		26	95	95	78	78	14

Table 1. No. 1

Sign 4; transcribed by Brice as a crack, but it is a definite stroke. Only the lower part of this stroke is reproduced in Table 2: see Pl. 2 for its full length.

Sign 8; the vertical lines appear to be definite strokes. Brice may be right in transcribing these as separated strokes but it is difficult to decide whether the horizontal "stroke" which joins the two vertical lines is damage suffered in antiquity rather than an incised stroke: at this point a small hole goes down into the plaster.

Sign 11; the horizontal line below the two upper strokes seems to have been deeply incised; certainly incised is a vertical line (from which extends a crack) below the left upper stroke.

Sign 15; on the right of the stroke recorded by Carratelli another stroke (or strokes?) is visible through which a major crack runs vertically: see Pl. 5. Alternative readings: L 32, 59, 74, or number(s)?

Sign 17; doubtfully a sign.

There is general agreement on the forms of the other signs. It has

HT156.(M153)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
PC1 (M.XX0)	T BREAK																	
	L: 14	14				14				14				14?				
BRICE (M.XXX ^a Y 8)	T BREAK																	(PHOTO-GRAPH)
	L: 14	14				14				14				14		14?		
PC2, (67)	T BREAK																	
	L:	(14)				(14)				(14)				(14?)				
No.2.	T BREAK																	
	L: 14?	14				14				14				14?		14?	?	

Table 2. No. 2

HT157.(M154)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EVANS PM I, (63?)								
	L: (22?)	(28?)	(32)			(78)	(78)	(14)
PC1, (M.XXII)								
	L:	56?	32	59?	52?	78	78	14
BRICE, (M.XXX ^a Y 9)								
	L: 22	(28)	(32)	(59)	76	(78)	(78)	(14)
PC2, (68)								
	L:		(32)			(78)	(78)	(14)
No.3.								
	L:	28?	32	59?	95?	78	78	14
					68?			

Table 3. No. 3

been suggested that this inscription reads $1: 1\frac{1}{2} : 2\frac{1}{4} : 3\frac{3}{8} \dots$ ¹⁰, and may even be a "ready reckoner"¹¹.

No. 3. HT 157. Pl. 3, 6, 9 and Table 3

Sign 1; the horizontal crack half way up the vertical stroke lacks incised marks along its edges; the transcriptions of Evans and Brice could be mistaken.

Sign 2; L 28 (as Evans and Brice) rather than L 56 (Carratelli)?

Sign 5; a fine line curving downwards to the right is visible between the two major cracks which pass through this sign, the right side of which is very badly damaged. The remaining elements of the sign appear to correspond in form to signs 5 and 6 of No. 1 (HT 155). The last four signs of the latter and the present graffito could be identical, as Brice suggested¹², although the leading sign of the two groups could be interpreted as L 95 rather than his L 76. See Pl. 6, and compare Brice, IV, 5 "line 6". Below the present sign is at least one certainly incised vertical stroke and possibly a further vertical and two curved strokes which could perhaps be interpreted as L 68?: see Pl. 6 and Table 3.

There is general agreement on the identification of signs 3 (L 32), 4 (L 59?), 6 and 7 (L 78) and 8 (L 14). A short vertical stroke appears in front of sign 1 and another below sign 8: similar marks are found on No. 1.

No. 4. The Fragment from Knossos. Pl. 10

This fragment was discussed briefly by Evans in PM I, 637, and by Brice who illustrated it with a drawing: Brice, V, 10, and Pl. XXX.

General description

The drawing¹³ on Pl. 10 is life size; the scale was unknown to Brice. His drawing "regularises" the shape of the sign whose vertical strokes are in fact more untidy and the "feet" more shapeless.

¹⁰ G. P. Goold and M. W. M. Pope, *Preliminary Investigations into the Cretan Linear A Script*, Cape Town 1955, ix

¹¹ M. W. M. Pope, in a paper to the University of London Institute of Classical Studies, Minoan Linear B Seminar, Minutes of the Meeting of 30. 10. 1957, paragraph 3, and in BSA 55, (1960), 204; see too Brice, 8

¹² Brice, Vocabulary, V 9 and V 7 listed under L 76

¹³ Only the painted surface is given in this drawing. Broken edges and the surface below the slip may be appreciated from Pl. 10.

The sign, painted in black on a yellowish white ground, stands above a chocolate brown area, perhaps of a border band.

The script

The sign is common to both the Linear A and B scripts (L 64 and "pu" respectively). It is normally written with its "crest" pointing to the right. Here, however, the sign has been reversed¹⁴. This is characteristic of writings in Linear A but does not occur in Linear B. This sign may therefore be accepted as belonging to an inscription in Linear A.

The provenance and the date

The fragment was found in the "Area of the Taureador Frescoes"¹⁵; further details of its stratigraphical context are unknown, but a date can be assigned on the evidence of (1) a general conclusion concerning the dating of all Linear A documents, and (2) technical considerations.

(1) Evans suggested, on the grounds that the sign was common to the Linear B script and because the fragment had been found in the same area as the Toreador frescoes, that the fragment could be referred to the time when Linear B was coming into vogue¹⁶. However, our sign is considered to belong to Linear A for the reason already given above. There is as yet no evidence to suggest that Linear Script A continued in use after the LM I B period¹⁷.

(2) Evans described this fragment as belonging to the "finest style of painted plaster technique"¹⁸. The quality of the plaster, the use of a fine slip of plaster in preparation of the surface for painting, the surface sheen, good preservation of the black and brown paints, and even the attention to details of the sign, justify this statement. The absence of a highly polished surface and the use of black paint for a small detail of what must once have been a painting of some importance is more in accordance with Late Minoan than Middle

¹⁴ Similarly reversed signs: L 87, on a stone ladle from Troullos, (PM IV, 680 and 683; Brice, I 16; E. Grumach, *Gnomon*, 33, (1961), 737); L 53, on a fragment of a stone cup from Palaikastro, (PM I, 631, Fig. 469; BSA Suppl. Paper No. 1, (1923), 144; Brice, I 12: compare Brice, I 1, I 8a and I 16).

¹⁵ PM I, 637

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

¹⁷ The date at which Linear B was created is placed by M. W. M. Pope as early as MM III A, at Knossos: *Kretika Chronika*, IE'—I ΣΤ', (1961—62), Part I, 318.

¹⁸ PM I, 637

Minoan paintings at Knossos¹⁹. It should be noted that the first group of "signs" on some fresco fragments from the House of the Frescoes²⁰ (which was destroyed in LM I A²¹) were painted in a sepia colour: a similar colour was used for the area below our sign. This colour is not found on Minoan frescoes which for stylistic or stratigraphical reasons may be assigned to periods later than LM I B.

This evidence suggests that the fragment was painted sometime during the LM I period²².

Technical Descriptions

Nos. 1—3, from Hagia Triada.

Common Features. All the fragments are backed in gypsum, buckled and heavily cracked. A rust coloured paint once covered the surfaces but this is badly worn. The paint did not sink deeply into the plaster and "buon fresco" technique may be ruled out. The paint has washed into most of the incised strokes of the graffiti.

The plaster is uniform: thin, hard but broken into small pieces at the edges, dirty white in colour, and in general fine grained.

There is variation in the thickness of the strokes. The fine strokes were made with a sharp-pointed or sharp-edged instrument. The thicker strokes may have been executed with a blunter point or edge of the same or another instrument leaving ragged sides to the strokes. This suggests that the graffiti were made after the plaster had hardened.

No. 1. HM 52. HT 155. $19.1 \times 12.5 \times ?$ 0.8—1.0 cm. Major vertical cracks appear between or through parts of signs 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9. Medium sized cracks pass through signs 1, 3, and 6. This graffito is the neatest of the three inscriptions. The rust paint still remains over the inscribed area.

¹⁹ Evans regarded highly polished white surfaces on fresco fragments as an indication of an MM III date (PM II, 680). Much of the significant MM III B fresco material from the Royal Road excavations of M. S. F. Hood at Knossos, which the present writer has examined, shows a high polish over the entire painted surface. The polish of LM paintings is less fine, as in the present case.

²⁰ PM II, 440, Fig. 25f

²¹ Ibid., 435—437; Furumark, op. cit., 79f.

²² To this period Evans was inclined to assign the Toreador frescoes which he had found in the same area (PM III, 210). The present writer hopes to show elsewhere that this series of paintings may be dated later than LM I B, and, since only one fragment bearing a painted sign was found in an area containing many fragments of the Toreador frescoes, the present fragment may have been a remnant of an earlier system of decoration; thus there is no compelling reason why we should associate chronologically the present fragment with the Toreador frescoes.

- No. 2. HM 53. HT 156. About $23.9 \times 12.0 \times$ about 0.8 cm. Major vertical cracks appear between or through signs 10, 14—17, and medium sized cracks through signs 8 and 11, and between signs 10 and 11. Brushmarks are visible below signs 8—12.

Above sign 14 the straight edge of the plaster bears an impression from a horizontal feature but the line of this impression seems to pass very slightly below the two highest points of the plaster to the left. If the fragment had originally abutted against some architectural feature such as a horizontal beam or slat the inscription would be inclined a little downwards to the right, and the original height of the fragment *in situ* may have been roughly at the eye-level of a standing figure, or, since the fragment was found "at a short distance from the floor level", at the eye-level of a seated person.

- No. 3. HM 54. HT 157. $17.2 \times 13.4 \times$? not more than 1.0 cm. Major cracks are visible through signs 4—8 and below signs 4 and 5. Medium sized cracks pass through signs 1—3. Small pieces of plaster are missing at the top of sign 2 and around sign 5. Below the latter there is at least one certainly incised vertical stroke, and, less certainly incised, one vertical and two curved lines in front of it. Above sign 7 is a dark ring which could be a mark from fire.

- No. 4. from Knossos.

HM Box Gamma XVII in fresco store room. From the "Area of the Taureador Frescoes" (PM, I 637). $3.5 \times 2.5 \times 1.0$ cm. The sign is painted in black on a yellowish white ground. The paints hold well to the surface but are shallow in depth (not more than 0.3—0.4 mm.). Below the sign is a chocolate brown area that may have been part of a horizontal band. On the right side of this area black paint underlies the brown.

The plaster is hard, fine grained, white and in a single layer over which the sign was painted on a fine slip. This has a granular surface which bears a glossy sheen, perhaps because of the quality of the paint rather than from polishing. The surface below the slip, exposed on the left side of the fragment, may have been given a thin wash of yellow paint.

The vertical strokes and "feet" of the sign are somewhat irregular in shape. At the tip of the "crest" some paint is missing.