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THE LINEAR A TABLETS IV 8 AND IV 9 FROM TYLISSOS

Although they were first published as long ago as 1912, these tablets were not available for study in their present form until they were republished by Carratelli in 1945 with their separate sections joined together. Their transcription in Myres's style was published in 1961, but the context was not appropriate for developing a comparison between them and other Linear A inscriptions¹. What follows is an approach to such a comparison, together with some suggestions for amendments to the transcription in ILA in the case of IV 9. The two tablets are sharply different in structure, but taken together they illuminate the workings of certain features of the script, notably the ligatures. They also afford a chance for comparing the script, as used in the north of the island, with that attested at Hagia Triada and Phaestos near the opposite coast.

Evans contributed to Hazzidakis's original publication of the tablets in *Eph. Arch.* 1912. In PM he published a drawing of IV 8, but not of IV 9. He did, however, leave notes on both tablets, to which the author had access for the preparation of ILA. Thanks are due to the Executors of Sir Arthur Evans and the Society of Antiquaries of London for permission to quote from these notes.

Tablet IV 8 (Her. Mus. 1374; Fig. 1), attributed by Evans (PM II 156) to LM I, is inscribed on one side only, and has been built up, since it was first published and studied by Hazzidakis and Evans, by the junction of seven extra fragments along its right side. To judge from the disposition of the ligatured combinations and the numerals, it was read, like IV 9, from left to right. It

¹ J. Hazzidakis, *Τύλισσος Μινωική*, *Eph. Arch.* 1912, 214 Fig. 20 (IV 8); 213 Fig. 19A, B (IV 9); *Tylissos à l'Epoque minoenne*, Paris 1921, 41 Fig. 20 (IV 8), 39—42 Figs. 19, 19A, 21 (IV 9) (Figures by Evans). — A. J. Evans, PM II 156, IV 795—6 Fig. 769, 809 (IV 8); IV 219 (IV 9). — G. Pugliese Carratelli, *Le iscrizioni pre-elleniche di Hagia Triada . . .*, *Mon. Ant.* 40, 1945, 599 Fig. 246, Pl. XXVI (Ty 2 = IV 8); 599 Figs. 247—8, Pl. XXVI (Ty 3 = IV 9). — W. C. Brice, *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, Oxford 1961 (hereafter ILA), 21, Pl. XXVII/a.

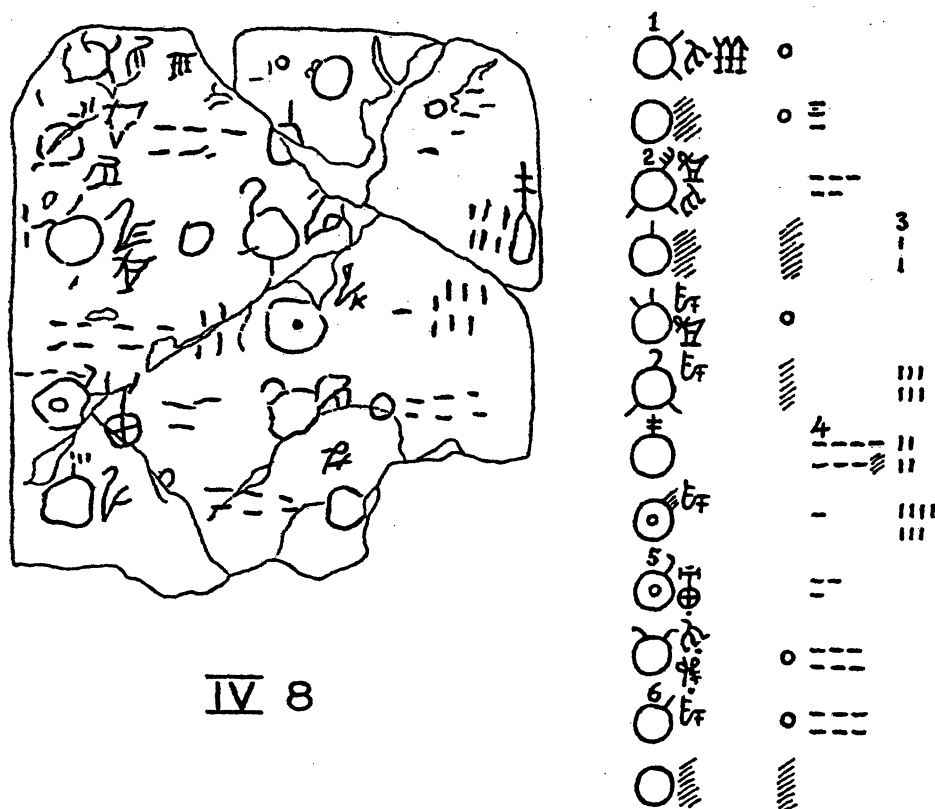


Fig. 1

appears to consist of a list of variant forms of a large circular sign, modified by the addition of a smaller circle in its interior or of bars and strokes on the exterior of the circumference. Associated with each major sign on its right side are minuscule pairs of subordinate signs, forming adjunct combinations rather than ligatures strictly speaking. There is no heading to the tablet, which includes only items and numerals².

From the note and drawing (Fig. 769) on page 796 of PM IV, and the further short references in PM II 156 and IV 809, taken together with his unpublished notes, it is evident that Evans regarded the large circle with small central circle at the beginning of line 5, and the smaller circular sign to the right with a cross in its interior, as representing the back and front wheels respectively of a chariot (Fig. 2). He saw the front wheel or wheels as attached to the shaft, and the small standing-place as resting on the chassis half-way between the two sets of wheels. According to his notes,

² This tablet may of course be one of a set, and intended to be classified under a heading on an initial tablet that has now been lost.

Evans regarded the pictograph as indicating that the rear wheels were solid, the front being equipped with spokes. He further speculated that the construction might have been of tricycle form, with two heavy rear wheels and a lighter single steering wheel in front, on the evidence that the numeral '60' above the rear wheel

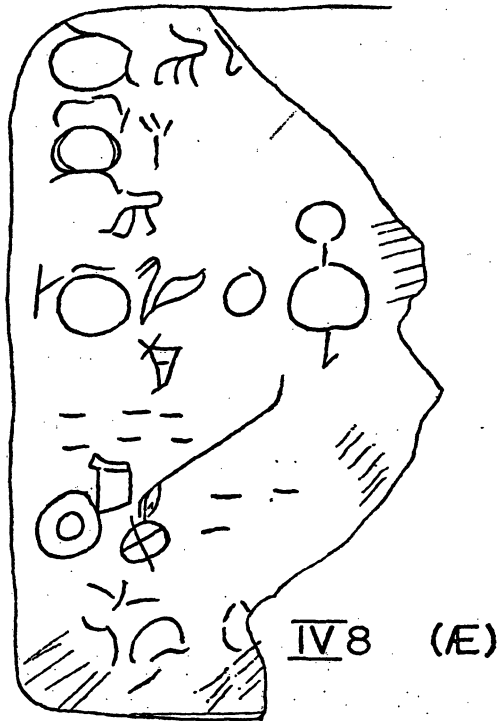


Fig. 2

is exactly double the '30' to the right of the front wheel. Carra-telli, however, pointed out that the 'shaft' recognized by Evans and emphasized in his sketch, PM IV Fig. 769, is in fact a deceptive fracture or flaw in the surface of the tablet. Further, from a study of the tablet as it is now built up, it is evident that the 'rear wheel' is just one example of a sequence of such circular ideograms, and that the strokes that make up the 'standing-place' or cab of the chariot are much more likely to form elements of the compound sign-group. Evans, in his manuscript notes, explains the other large circular signs of the tablet in the following way: "It is possible that the circular figures above [sc. above the 'chariot'], with flourishes, indicate the solid form of wheels, and the two with one uniting line [see PM IV Fig. 769, and Fig. 2 here] a pair of wheels with their axle. In this case the flourishes accompanying

the figures would have been the means of distinguishing the pictograph of the solid wheel from the plain circle which is the ordinary 'hundred' sign."

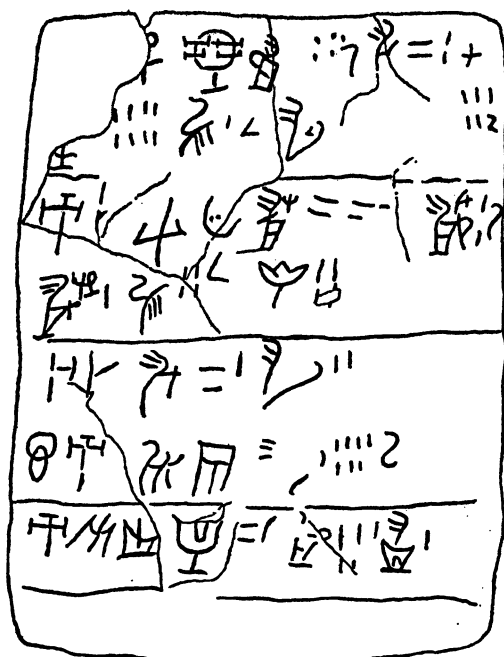
As for the signs adjoined to the main circular elements, L 64, L 103, and L 52 + 29 are well attested in ligatured combinations at Hagia Triada, but the variable sign L 68/106, the most frequently used of all in this list, has not been noted in compound groups elsewhere. L 105 is preferred in ILA at the end of line 3 to Carratelli's doubtful variant of L 99 (a human figure shouldering a triangle).

There is no tablet of comparable general structure from Hagia Triada, though the sequence of 'wheel' items (L 29) on HT 11b is reminiscent. A more valid comparison may be with side a of IV 15 from Phaestos, with its array of roughly circular signs with super-scribed additions.

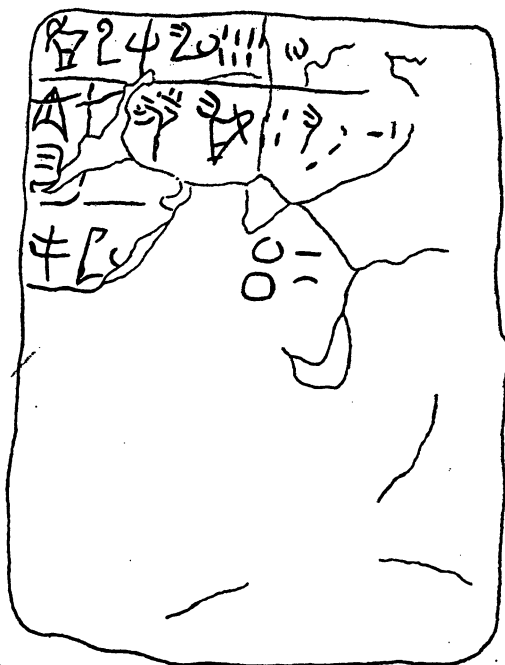
Tablet IV 9 (Fig. 3) was evidently discovered in two pieces, catalogued under numbers 1373 and 1375 in the Herakleion Museum Inventory, and was so published by Hazzidakis and Evans, neither of whom noticed the junction. As remarked above, the join had apparently been effected by the time of Carratelli's publication.

Evans noticed that the tablet (that is, the main portion as now reconstructed, excluding the lower right-hand corner as viewed from side a) was exceptionally large for Class A (118 × 82 mm.), "to which however the types of its characters and, notably, the compound forms clearly assign it." He identified the first two symbols of side a (according to the cataloguing of the two sides by Hazzidakis and himself — Carratelli lists them in the opposite order) as the ankh and sistrum signs, probably of Egyptian derivation. He compared the sistrum sign, as here depicted, with the instrument shown on the Harvester Vase from Hagia Triada, where it was presumably used in a ritual performance³. Another sign on this tablet with 'sacral' associations, according to Evans, was the 'saffron' at the end of the second section (line 4). As evidence for this view, he refers to the Miniature Fresco from Knossos, representing a religious dance, where saffron is the prevailing colour of the robes of the female devotees. Evans also remarked on the coupling of the first set of numerals in line 1 with the 'crook' sign, as on some of the hieroglyphic tablets, where it seems to have relation to quantity, especially of vegetable commodities (SM I

³ PM IV 219



a



b

IV 9

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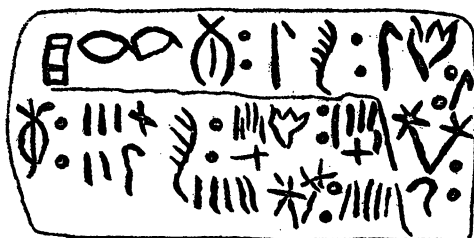
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Fig. 3



P 121

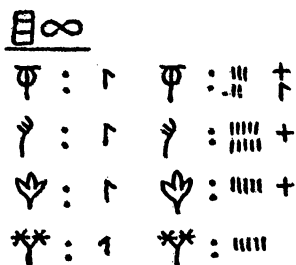


Fig. 4

193); "on the 'hieroglyphic' tablet from Phaestos (P 121), for example, it is associated with the palm, fig-branch and saffron" (Fig. 4).

Evans's 'sistrum' sign is evidently comparable with a sign on HT 102, the second of a two-sign group, the first of which is the 'cat's head', L 95. The same combination occurs on HT 6, where the 'head' of the sign, L 3, is slimmer and the horizontal hachures lack the terminal 'serifs' (Fig. 5). The surviving fragments of the sign that preceded L 3 on IV 9 certainly do not suggest L 95. If they are in fact Evans's 'ankh' sign (L 23), then we may recall the group L 97-37-23 of HT 10 and HT 85. If L 3 is a hachured or 'gunu' form of L 37 (cf. L 115 and L 110, Fig. 6), this could be

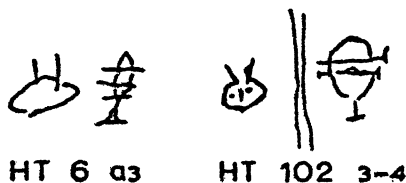


Fig. 5

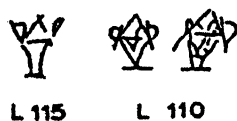


Fig. 6

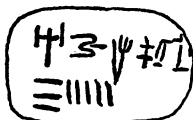
a case of an association of two signs (L 3/37-23) in inverse order, not an unusual phenomenon in Linear A⁴.

The tablet, inscribed from left to right, consists of eight lists, of a kind familiar in the Hagia Triada archives, comprising in each case a simple heading and a sequence of items, mainly in ligatured form, each associated with numerals. All lists start at the left margin, and in every case but one (a 5/6) they are separated by horizontal lines, a scribal device not regularly employed at Hagia Triada.

⁴ W. C. Brice, *Some observations on the Linear A inscriptions*, *Kadmos* 1, 1962, 45-7 Fig. 2 § 9.

As transcribed in ILA, the surviving 'items' in the lists consist of ligatured variants of the three-branched 'sedge' sign, L 89, one instance of the 'crocus' or 'saffron', L 49, and two signs unique to this tablet, L 129 and L' 35, this latter in two occurrences.

As an alternative to classifying L 129, in line 7, as a unique sign (in which decision ILA follows Carratelli), it may be considered whether it is not, after all, a scribal variant of the ordinary 'crocus' 'commodity' sign, L 49. In that case, the immediately preceding sign, L 6, may be regarded as belonging with it rather than in the heading. The heading at the opening of line 7 would then read 'double-axe — flying bird' (L 52-98), and match exactly that of the Papoura tablet, IV 7 (Fig. 7).



IV 7

Fig. 7

The combination of L 6 + 49 occurs three times at Hagia Triada in ligature (Lc 54), but nowhere without ligature. There is precedent for writing pairs of signs with or without ligature, namely L 95/55 and L 52/29, as pointed out by Grumach⁵, L 103/89, and possibly also L 32/55 (Fig. 8). There may be a simple practical explanation for the failure to use the ligature in this case. If the scribe began drawing L 6 too near to the upper line to allow room for the

Lc 46 (= L95+55)	HT 24a		HT 64/117a	
Lc 40 (= L52+29)	HT 38		HT 86a	
Lc 15 (= L103+89)	HT 28b		HT 44b	
Lc 32 (= L 32+55)	HT 6a		Cr IV 1b	

Fig. 8

⁵ E. Grumach, Positionswechsel in den kretischen Schriftsystemen H und A, *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 36, 1962, 117—18 Abb. 3

'crocus' sign above it, he would be obliged to separate the signs. The short horizontal stroke at the foot of the second sign, which provides the main argument for distinguishing it from L 49, may have been a way of indicating that it should be considered closely with the preceding sign; for the effect of the ligature Lc 54 is to impose a short horizontal stroke at the foot of the 'crocus' (Fig. 9).



Lc 54

Fig. 9

The absence of a central 'petal' from the sign would also argue against its equation with L 49; but there is a fracture in the tablet at the place where such a petal might be expected (Fig. 3).

The combination L 6 + 49 (Lc 54), in each of its three occurrences in the Hagia Triada archives (HT 50, 101, 116), is found low down in the list; while here it opens the list. But this difference may be due to the size of the numeral associated with it, for here, as at Hagia Triada, the items are listed in approximate descending order of the associated numerals.

As for the curious sign that occurs in fourth position in each of the first two lists, it is here proposed to consider this not, as in ILA, as a separate entity, L' 35, but as a variant form of the ligatured combination Lc 25 (= L 89 + 53). In the other form of this ligature (Fig. 10), L 89 retains its normal posture and L 53 is turned from right to left; while the opposite would be the case here. There is precedent for alternative orientation of signs in ligatured combinations, as the following variant forms of Lc 15 and Lc 34 demonstrate (Fig. 11).

Figure 3 shows a transcription of the tablet which takes account of these revised identifications, and which is therefore slightly different from that published in ILA.

In the Hagia Triada archives, the ideogram L 89 is seen more commonly than any other in a variety of ligatured forms. In HT 2

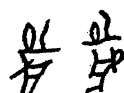


Lc 25

Fig. 10



Lc 15



Lc 34

Fig. 11

no other ideogram is listed. In the surviving portion of HT 58, only the ideograms L 89 and L 49 are seen (Fig. 12), as in the revised version of the Tylissos tablet under consideration. Other tablets where both these ideograms are included, along with others, are HT 14, 21, 44b, 50 (Fig. 12), 91, 101 and 116. It is notable too that the 'hieroglyphic' tablet from Phaestos (so called by Evans, SM I — P 121) incorporates both the basic ideograms of this Tylissos tablet (Fig. 4)⁶.

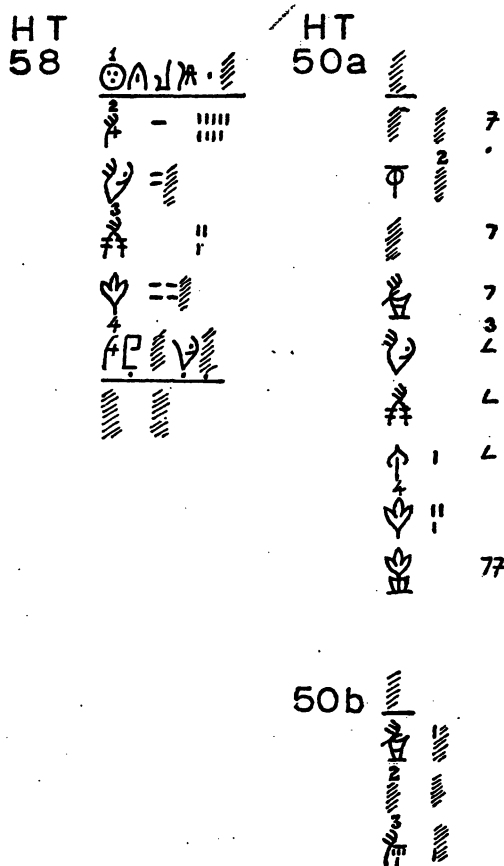


Fig. 12

⁶ SM I 179, 254—5 Fig. 111. Cf. Brice in *Europa* (Festschrift Grumach) 1968, 34 Fig. 1 § 2, 36. In the transcription proposed here, which follows Evans's suggested order of reading (SM I Fig. 111), both the 'crook' sign ("probably a symbol of quantity" — Evans) and the small cross (an "initial mark" — Evans) are regarded, by the analogy of usage at Hagia Triada, as fraction signs. Evans's "uncertain", "somewhat meander-like" sign after the second and third items of the lower list is here interpreted in each instance as a numeral consisting of five units plus a fraction cross. The extra five units inscribed to the lower right of the second sign (Evans's 'palm-branch') of the second list may represent an attempt to clarify the somewhat cramped five units above the associated fraction cross.

The 'commodity' lists of tablet IV 9 display one further feature that they share with the Hagia Triada archives, namely the use of triple ligatures. The significance of this scribal device is so clear and unambiguous in the first two lists on this tablet that this may be taken as its classic example. The ligature of two signs, Lc 15 (= L 89 + 103), seen once in the first list, is used three times in the second, in each case with one extra qualifying sign, L 54, L 97 and L 84, producing the triple ligatures catalogued under Lc 83 in ILA Table 2. In HT 24b a triple ligature, Lc' 3, combines two of the three elements of Lc 83; and, if L 103 in the heading of HT 24a be considered to 'control' the entire succeeding list, then the same two signs will combine within the second of the ligatures in that list (Fig. 13).

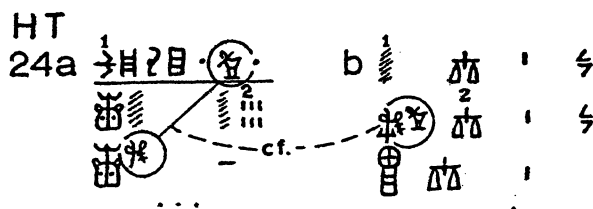


Fig. 13

The comparisons between the 'headings' of the lists in IV 9 and sign-groups recorded from other sites are less obvious. However, the following points may be noticed, in case subsequent discovery or research should show them to be significant:

(a) The parallel between the revised version of the heading of the final list on side a (L 52—98) and that of the Papoura tablet IV 7 has already been noted (page 126 *supra*).

(b) The centre pair of signs of the fourth heading (L 52—93) forms a well-attested heading at Hagia Triada, where it is found in seven cases. The association of L 45 with the initial sign of the group, L 52 (the double-axe), recalls a similar association, in the form a-b-a, on a Libation Table (I 4b) from Palaikastro.

(c) The first heading on side b, L 103-72-57, resembles the opening group L 103-72-86 of HT 114 and HT 121.

In general, tablet IV 9 shows a remarkable similarity in respect of its signary and structure with tablets from Hagia Triada and Phaestos. The conventions and principles of this form of writing were evidently used and understood in several parts of the island.

In brief, they involved the recording of numerals alongside items that incorporated primary, secondary, and sometimes tertiary notions, expressed by signs of independent (doubtless logographic) significance fused into ligatured or adjoined combinations. Each list was controlled by 'headings', which were much more variable in form than the items in the body of the lists; though it may be noted that, whether by accident or design, four of the five headings on IV 9a incorporate the double-axe, L 52, in three cases as the initial sign of the group.