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THE KINDRED LINEAR A SIGNS, L 48, L 79 AND L 83

In his superb edition of 1945 of the Linear A inscriptions¹, G. Pugliese Carratelli distinguished clearly between the signs L 79 and L 83. As can be seen in Fig. 1, he apparently separated them on the considerations that L 79 has three 'legs' while L 83 has only two, and that the 'loop' stroke is less dominant and less inclined to the lower left in L 79 than in L 83.

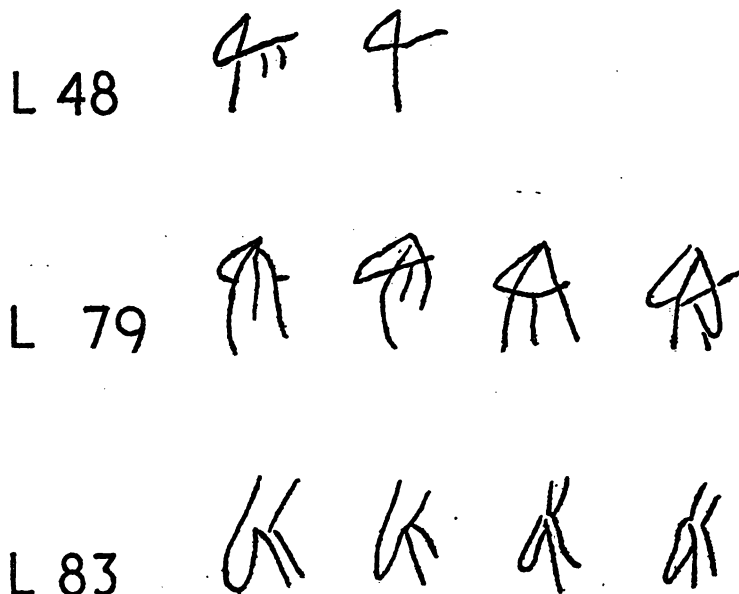


Fig. 1

He quotes (col. 475) eight occurrences of L 79, in HT 7, 94, 112, 117, 126, 129 and 137, and Pc 10 (= ILA I 6). In ILA of 1960², the present writer followed PC in the first six cases. The relevant sign in HT 137, however, was read in ILA as Lc 17, in view of a new junction since PC, while the faint sign on I 6 was identified as L 100.

¹ Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, *Le Iscrizioni preelleniche di Hagia Triada, etc.* (Mon. Ant. 40), 1945 (hereafter PC)

² W. C. Brice (ed.), *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, O. U. P. 1960

In addition, ILA proposed three further identifications of L 79, on HT 87, 132 and 136. Over the first of these there is now no serious difference of opinion, for it is apparently instance *c* of L 78 in PC, which, following Peruzzi, is identified with L 79 on page 83 of the shortened edition of 1963³. The relevant signs on HT 132 and 136 are both read as the simple human figure, L 99, in PC, although they lack 'head' and 'feet', and the 'wing' on the shoulder is not as angular as usual. The weakness of the identification in ILA is, of course, that both these signs have only two 'legs'.

As for L 83, PC makes the intelligent suggestion, following Sundwall, of comparing it with Evans's hieroglyphic sign No. 68 ("Testa equina?"). He quotes nine references⁴, including two classed as doubtful, HT 4, 9, 29?, 62?, 94, 115, 119, 122 and 135. On these identifications ILA raised no serious differences of opinion. The relevant sign on HT 62, queried in PC, was read as L 99; while that on HT 135 was drawn as L 96, an identification quoted as possible by PC in col. 585. The doubtful recognition of L 83 in ILA on IV 12b is not important.

It is here proposed to raise the possibility of conflating signs L 79 and L 83. The arguments in favour of this are as follows:

1. The range of orthographic variation if the signs were regarded as equivalent would be no greater than in the case of some other Linear A signs, L 97 for example. The special difficulty of the difference between the 'two-legged' and 'three-legged' variants may be countered by referring to other instances in Linear A where the number of equivalent strokes is variable, L 32, L 75', L 77, L 92 and L 100. If the ILA identifications of the relevant signs on HT 132 and 136 are accepted, they could be regarded as intermediate forms, having the small high 'loop' of L 79, but the two 'legs' of L 83.

2. The consistently close association of both L 79 and L 83 with the 'vase' sign, L 6 (Fig. 2). In one of the few cases where either is juxtaposed with another sign, on HT 122b, L 83 is followed by the 'rhyton' sign, L 103. But both L 6 and L 103 represent vessels, and there are two good contextual reasons for regarding them as akin (Fig. 3).

³ Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, *Le Epigrafi di Haghia Triada in Lineare A* (Suppl. to *Minos* 3, Salamanca 1963). In addition, it is there proposed to include in L 79 instances *d* and (doubtfully) *e* and *f* (added since the edition of 1945) of L 78; but these cannot be securely identified.

⁴ Equivalent to ten occurrences, since the sign appears on both sides of HT 9.

L 83



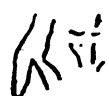
IV 12



HT 29



9a



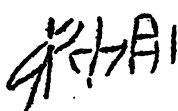
9b



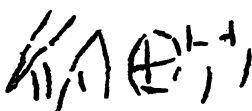
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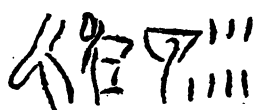
122a



115



4

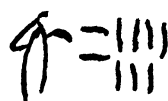


122b



94b

L 79



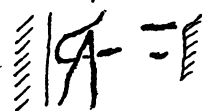
HT 132



112



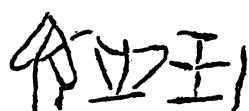
126



136



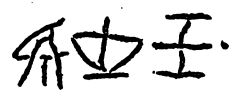
94a



7



87



117

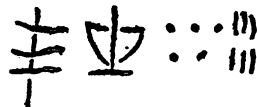


129

Fig. 2



HT 7



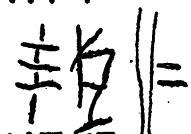
HT 13



HT 23



HT 116



HT 13



HT 122



HT 8



HT 18(etc.)

Fig. 3

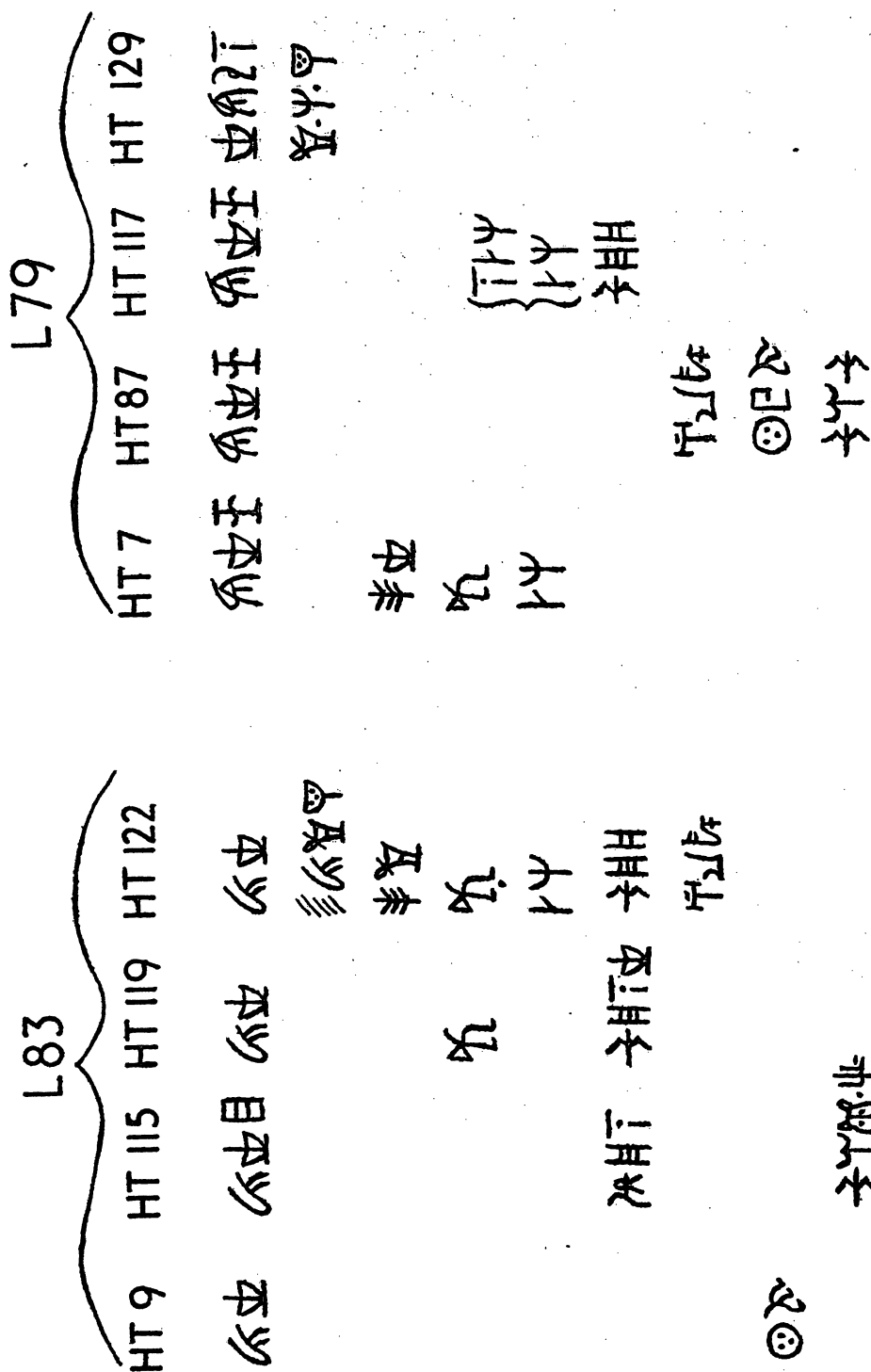


Fig. 4

3. The similarities of context of the sign-groups containing L 79 and L 83. Both tend to appear in lists associated with low numerals (single units, or units of less than ten). The lists concerned have other features in common, which may be best illustrated graphically (Fig. 4).

4. Although, in view of the manifest difficulties of equating the signaries of the linear scripts, it would be unwise to press this argument too hard, it may be worth observing that there is only one Linear B equivalent to which both L 79 and L 83 may be compared, namely B* 21/106 = SM II B 91⁵ (Fig. 5). In favour of

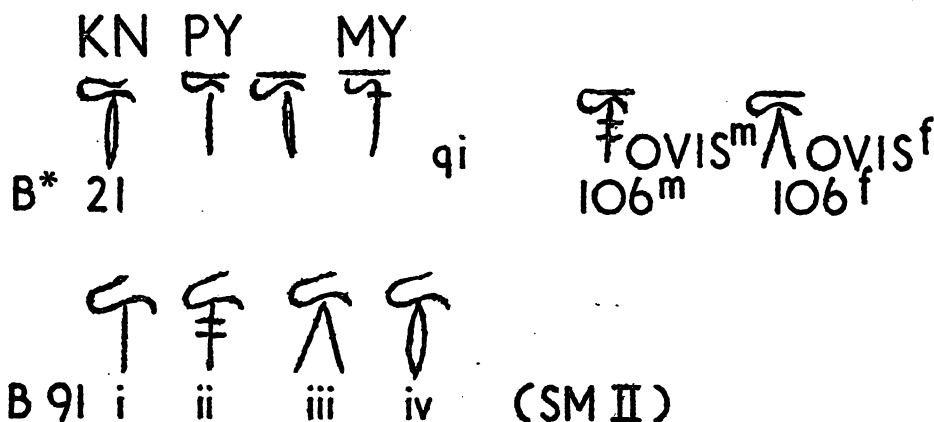


Fig. 5

this equation is the resemblance of the loop of the 'head' and 'ears' of B* 106 (OVIS) to L 83 (PC's "Testa equina?" — see above, p. 29); against it is the absence of a three-stroke variant among the 'neck' shapes in Linear B.

At this point the further possibility may be tentatively raised of conflating the rare sign L 48 with L 79/83. L 48 occurs twice, in an identical group, on opposite sides of HT 28, and once, in a variant form (separated in ILA as L 48') on HT 38 (Fig. 6). The contextual arguments for this further step in simplifying the Linear A signary are admittedly not strong. They consist of certain resemblances between the sign-groups of HT 28 and HT 9 (Fig. 7), and the consideration that the 'gate' sign, L 32, which is associated with L 48, occurs in the same group as L 83 on HT 115 (Fig. 2).

⁵ Myres's equivalent to L 79 was clearly A 119, but AB 62, which was quoted in ILA as the Evans/Myres equivalent of L 83 is evidently intended in the first instance to refer to the distinct sign B* 76 (= L 58).

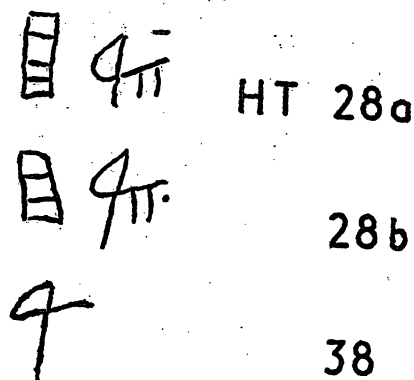


Fig. 6

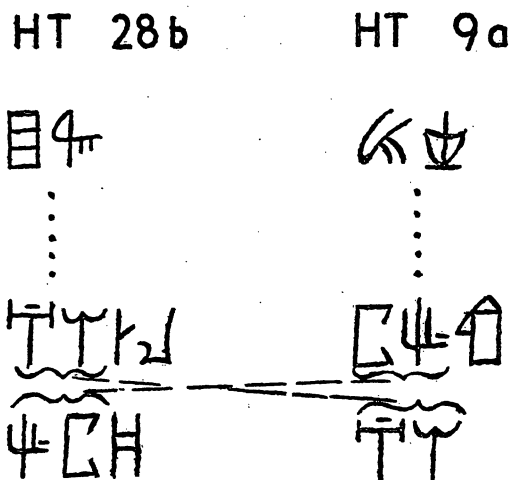


Fig. 7

However, if the simple variant of L 48 on HT 38 be equated with B* 106, then certain observations regarding resemblances between the contents of this Linear A tablet and those of particular Linear B inscriptions may take on an added significance. They are illustrated in Figure 8. Briefly, they are, first, that the association of B* 106 (OVIS) at Knossos with B* 108 (SUS) and with the combination double-axe — wheel can be paralleled at Hagia Triada: and, second, that three features of the Pylos tablet Un 853+ can be matched on HT 38, namely the sign B* 106 with L 48; the other animal sign, B* 108 (here ligatured with the 'wheel'), with L 113; and a ligatured form of B* 159 (Bennett's 'cloth', Grumach's 'façade') with similar forms of L 75'. It may be added that the 'vessel' ideograms, B* 123 and B* 132, which occur elsewhere in the Un series of Pylos (e. g. on Un 267 and Un 2), possibly parallel the vessel which composes the first surviving ideogram on HT 38.

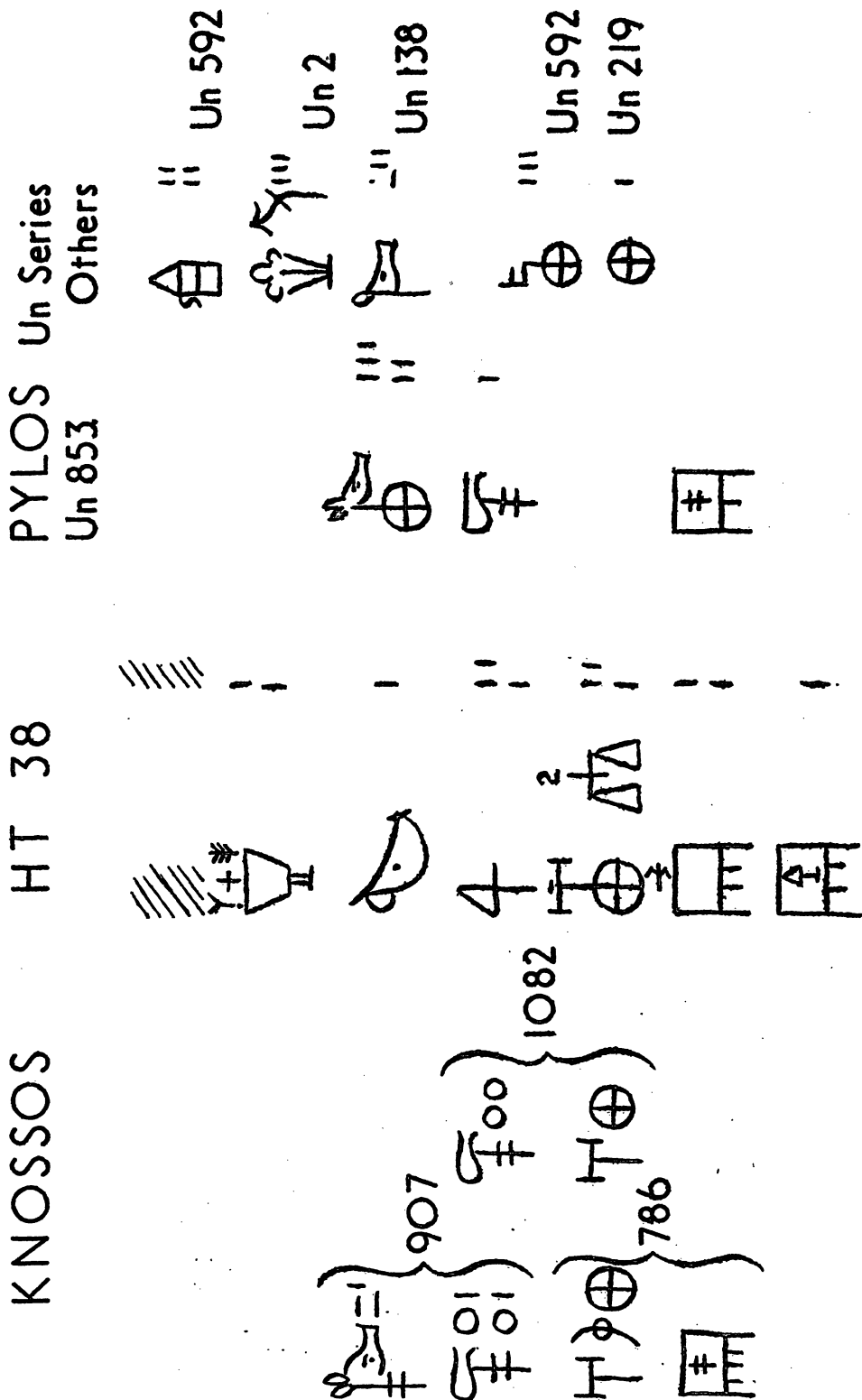


Fig. 8