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THE ETEOCRETAN INSCRIPTION FROM PSYCHRO

In a recent study (Kadmos 15, 1976, 84–86) Robert Stieglitz is correct, I believe, in regarding this inscription as a dedication. He reads the third line as ENETH ΠΑΡ ΣΙΦΑΙ ('Enete son of Sippai'), the name of the dedicator, and this interpretation is to be preferred to Cyrus Gordon's ENETH ΠΑΡΣ ΙΦΑΙ ('-nht-y b-'rs ypy, 'over my resting place in Land of Beauty')¹ since it not only makes better sense of the whole inscription² but also accords with the apparent spacing of words on the stone, as will be shown below.

However, his full interpretation is open to two objections: first, the reading of the initial line as ΕΠΙΘΙ is almost certainly incorrect; second, the transliteration of the fourth line (the three 'linear' signs) as *i-pi-ti* must be regarded as at best not proven. In his reading Stieglitz follows Gordon, who in turn followed Simon Davis in his publication *The Phaistos Disk and the Eteocretan Inscriptions from Psychro and Praisos* (Johannesburg 1961). Davis himself based his reading upon that given by Spyridon Marinatos in *Minoica* (Festschrift ... Johannes Sundwall, Berlin 1958). Marinatos, who was using a photograph supplied by Dr. Giamalakis, together with details sent him by Nicolas Platon, the then Director of the Iraklion Museum, added an important footnote to his reading of the text: "Nach N. Platon scheint der vorletzte Buchstabe der ersten Zeile 'eher Omikron' zu sein. Ich glaube aber das ursprünglich gelesene Theta auf der Photographie zu erkennen." This statement is discussed neither by Gordon nor by Stieglitz, nor by Davis in the publication cited above. It is noteworthy, however, that in his later book *The Decipherment of the Minoan Linear A and Pictographic Scripts* (Johannesburg 1967) Davis reads the first line as ΕΠΙΘΙ.

¹ Cyrus Gordon, *Evidence for the Minoan language*, New Jersey, 1966.

² Both Stieglitz and Gordon read the first two lines as representing the Semitic *b-ptḥ z-ytnṯ*, meaning 'the engraved monument which I have set'; Stieglitz also suggests that the second word could represent *z-ytn't*, meaning 'which I have erected'.

In the summer of 1976 I was fortunate enough, through the courtesy of Dr. Alexiou, the Director of the Iraklion Museum, and his assistant, Miss A. Lebesi, to be able to examine this inscription. As a consequence I now have no doubt that the first line reads ΕΠΙΟΙ, for I could find no trace of a mark within the *omicron* that would make it a *theta*. The second line is quite clear, and no one has ever cast any doubt on the reading ΖΗΘΑΝΘΗ. In the third line the letters are indisputable, but with regard to the word division it appears that, in addition to a definite and intended space between the *eta* and the *pi*, there is a gap greater than normal between the *rho* and the *sigma*. I consider that this second gap is also a word division³. The full inscription would therefore read:

ΕΠΙΟΙ

ΖΗΘΑΝΘΗ

ΕΝΕΘΗ ΠΑΡ ΣΙΦΑΙ (or possibly ΕΝΕΘΗ ΠΑΡΣΕΙΦΑΙ)

As regards the fourth line, all that one can safely say is that the three characters appear to be related to Linear A rather than to Linear B. In 1961 Davis transliterated the signs as *i-pi-ti*, and in this he was followed by Gordon and Stieglitz⁴. In all three cases the fourth line was taken to be a repetition of the first; this, however, cannot be so if the first line reads ΕΠΙΟΙ. In his later work, cited above, Davis vocalised the signs as *i-ne-ti*, which he took to be a repetition of the first word of the third line, a Hittite dative singular of a Hurrian loan-word *eni-* (meaning 'deity'). There is, however, no reason why the linear signs should be a repetition of any word in the Greek letters. Moreover, any attempt to read the three signs is uncertain in the absence of any generally accepted decipherment of Linear A, whether as Semitic⁵ or as Hittite-Luwian⁶.

Davis raises the further question of why characters from a script which must have been long defunct were used in an inscription of the

³ In this respect Stieglitz's reading of the third line is attractive. It would fit with the word division and also suggest a reason why the second word division is less wide, since the word *bar/par* (son) would naturally be taken closely with the patronymic.

⁴ As noted above, both Stieglitz and Gordon take this as the Semitic *b-pth* 'the engraved monument'; Davis, on the other hand, took it as a proper name 'Epiti'.

⁵ Cf. Gordon, *op. cit.*; also Maurice Pope, 'The Linear A Question', *Antiquity* 32, 1958, 97-99, and 'The Language of Linear A', *Minos* 6, 1958, 16-23.

⁶ Besides S. Davis in the two works already cited, cf. L. R. Palmer, 'Luvian and Linear A', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1958, and *Mycenaean and Minoan*, London 1965².

third century B. C. His conclusion, that it was a sacred script among the Eteocretans, is probably on the right lines. In this regard, Davis adds a very interesting comment: "cf. Millar Burrows, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls', London, 1956. In the commentary on Habbakuk, the ineffable name – Jahweh – is written in the old Phoenician script but the rest of the commentary is in the square Aramaic script now used for Hebrew." It is just conceivable that the whole of the Linear A apparatus was retained and handed down in cult use among the Eteocretan communities⁷; but it is more likely that only certain religious formulae or divine names would be so preserved. These linear characters might then spell the name of the dedicatee.

Davis's complete interpretation runs thus:

- ΕΠΙΟΙ – proper name, akin to the name which appears in Cuneiform Hittite as 'Epiui' or 'Epiāi', there being no written *o* sound in that script.
 ΖΗΘΑΝΘΗ – *Zitanti*, dative singular of *Zitantaš* (a Hittite goddess).
 ΕΝΕΘΗ – 'to the deity' (as explained above).
 ΠΑΡΣΙ – no known Hittite cognate; conjectured from the context to mean 'offering', or something similar.
 ΦΑΙ – *pai*, 3rd person singular, present tense, of Hittite verb 'to give'.
 ΨΗΨ – *i-ne-ti*, repetition of ΕΝΕΘΗ, 'to the deity'.

The whole text would then be understood to mean: 'Epiui gives to Zitantas, the goddess, an offering: TO THE GODDESS.'

Davis's identification of Epiui with a proper name attested in Asia Minor is attractive for both linguistic and archaeological reasons. This would however not necessarily imply a Hittite-Luwian connection, since many other languages were spoken in early Asia Minor, and proper names are notorious for crossing language barriers.

Davis's interpretations of ΖΗΘΑΝΘΗ and ΕΝΕΘΗ depend entirely upon the acceptance of his theory of the kinship of Minoan and Eteocretan with the Anatolian Indo-European languages. The reading of ΠΑΡΣΙ ΦΑΙ is weak on two counts: first, the proposed meaning of ΠΑΡΣΙ is, as Davis admits, pure conjecture; second, the word division is evidently mistaken.

The interpretations of Davis and Stieglitz have attractive points, but both also have weaknesses, the most serious, perhaps, being that each

⁷ There is a possibility that some of the Linear A signary was still used at Dreros in the seventh or sixth centuries BC; cf. Henri van Effenterre, 'Pierres inscrites de Dréros', BCH 85, 1961, 552–3.

depends ultimately upon a hypothetical kinship of Minoan/Eteocretan with another language group, in the one case Anatolian Indo-European, in the other Semitic. I regret that at present I cannot offer any interpretation of the inscription, but it may have been useful to compare the published decipherments in the light of autopsy.