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Understanding Relations Between Scripts: The Aegean writing systems, edited by P.M. Steele, 2017. Oxford: Oxbow Books; ISBN 978-1-78570-644-8 paperback £36. xv+221 pp., 85 b/w figs, 23 tables

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Nine of the papers in this volume were delivered at a conference held in Cambridge in March 2015; the tenth is an introduction containing a summary of the goals of the planned URBS series and the scope of the papers in this collection, plus an outline history of writing in the Bronze Age Aegean and Cyprus that will orientate anyone approaching the papers from the outside. The editor is not only to be congratulated on prompt publication, but also on assembling a series of contributions that move us towards a richer appreciation of the relations between the scripts of the Aegean and Cyprus in the second and early first millennia BC. In this respect the collection reflects both the maturity of a field effectively created in the middle of the twentieth century with the decipherment of Linear B and the involvement of a generation of early- to mid-career scholars eager to build on the substantial body of knowledge developed over the past 60+ years.

The nine papers are grouped roughly chronologically. The first, by Silvia Ferrara, deals in general with four writing-systems created in the eastern Mediterranean in the second millennium BC: Cretan Hieroglyphic, Anatolian Hieroglyphic, Cypro-Minoan and alphabetic Ugaritic. She wants to bring discussion of their origins into a larger discussion of script creation that moves beyond a narrowly technological view of writing to a contextualized view that examines such practices in 'archaeological, historical, epigraphic and anthropological contexts' (p. 31). She accepts that all four instances explored are 'secondary' creations of script, since writing clearly existed in

their broader environment at the time of creation, but distinguishes Cretan Hieroglyphic and Cypro-Minoan from the other two scripts, because both were created or adapted in a location where writing did not exist. She argues that there can be no monocausal explanation for such creation: Cretan Hieroglyphic does not appear to have been created to meet administrative needs, as often argued, while Anatolian Hieroglyphic and alphabetic Ugaritic were reactions to the logo-syllabic cuneiform systems that predominated both in Hittite Anatolia and Ugarit. Roeland Decorte follows with a contribution specifically on the Cretan Hieroglyphic script. Drawing on research carried out for a now completed Cambridge doctoral thesis, he makes a convincing case that we may be missing key elements of the Cretan Hieroglyphic script because of a narrow definition of script signs *versus* other elements, often characterized as 'decorative'. In this he builds on and moves beyond work by Anna Margherita Jasink, while also usefully drawing on potential parallels in Maya writing. Decorte seeks to challenge the distinction between 'writing' and 'art': our modern, etic understanding may not have obtained at the time of the earliest Cretan Hieroglyphic inscriptions on seals.

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The next four papers deal with the relation of the deciphered Linear B script and its undeciphered predecessors: Linear A and Cretan Hieroglyphic. Helena Tomas summarizes views on the relationship between Linear A and B, first developed in an Oxford doctoral thesis in 2003. She outlines the problems inherent in a simple derivation of the Linear B script from the Linear A: in part due to the difficulty of bridging the chronological and spatial gap between the latest attested Linear A (best documented at the site of Ayia Triada in south-central Crete) and our earliest Linear B attested at Knossos at least 50 years later, in part because comparison cannot be limited to the writing system alone, but must also involve the broader set of administrative practices (sealing, metrology, etc.), not all of which involved writing. To help

account for the overall Linear B system, she suggests possible inheritances also from Cretan Hieroglyphic. Vassilis Petrakis addresses some of Tomas' questions in his exploration of the context and process by which Linear B was created in fifteenth-century BC Crete. His bold, but well-argued hypothesis is that the seeds of the Linear B system we find at Knossos at the end of the fifteenth century BC can be identified in hybrid deposits combining elements of both Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A at the Middle to Late Bronze Age transition in both Knossos and nearby Malia. Since evidence for *any* form of script is almost absent from Knossos in the intervening period, Petrakis suggests that a set of practices involving the Linear B script developed here, unfortunately unrepresented in preserved finds. Linear A documents from sites outside this north-central area (such as Ayia Triada) indicate a parallel tradition of Linear A use. Although this hypothesis cannot be proven, it deserves serious consideration in offering us a better understanding of how a single, Linear B-using administration might have emerged at Knossos by the end of the fifteenth century BC. A point that neither Tomas nor Petrakis fully addresses is the transformation in the metrological system between the fractional (aliquot) system of Linear A and that of Linear B based on sub-units.

The volume's editor and Torsten Meißner critically evaluate the practice of using the known phonetic values of Linear B signs to 'read' the, in theory, unknown values of Linear A, summarizing the results of multiple different approaches: parallels in sign form and value across Linear A through Linear B, Cypro-Minoan and Cypro-Greek; shared sign-sequences in Linear A and B; variations in sign-sequences and possible morphological patterns in Linear A; statistical analyses when random values are applied (drawing on work by David Packard in the 1970s); continuity of logograms and acronyms; and the overall context of adaptation. The applicability of Linear B values to the Linear A script is a much discussed topic and this contribution concisely

makes the case that Linear B sign-values most likely can be applied to their counterparts in Linear A. Anna Judson, drawing again on the conclusions of a subsequently completed Cambridge doctoral thesis, ends this section with an evaluation of the significance of the 'extra' signs in Linear B: those that have values that sit outside the normal pattern of pure vowel or consonant-plus-vowel signs. It has often been argued that these signs were borrowed from Linear A, which is why they do not fit into the normal pattern of the Linear B system. Judson plausibly demonstrates that a number were developed to assist in notating specifically Greek sound-sequences, thus emphasizing an active role of Greek-speakers in the creation of the Linear B script, while also demonstrating that innovation probably extended over the script's attested life, since not all such 'innovative' signs appear in the earliest inscriptions on Crete. It is worth noting that these four interrelated contributions reassuringly reinforce one another, although they employ different approaches.

The remaining three contributions focus on the syllabic scripts found on Cyprus and at Ugarit in the later second and early first millennia BC. Miguel Valério conducts a systematic evaluation of the development of signs from Linear A to Cypro-Minoan to Cypro-Greek, with a view to evaluating the plausibility of the (generally accepted) theory that writing travelled from Crete to Cyprus at some point before the earliest known inscriptions appear there in the sixteenth–fifteenth century BC. Combining palaeography with structural analysis, he adds further support to this argument. Particularly interesting is his reconstruction of a plausible process by which Cypro-Greek innovated by distinguishing between the r- and l- series of signs (important in Greek, but not distinguished in Linear B), using inherited Aegean forms to notate the l- series and creating new signs for the r- series. Additional confirmation of the inheritance from Linear A challenges us to develop a better understanding of broader relations between Cyprus and Crete in this

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period, which remains something of a 'black hole'. Yves Duhoux examines statistically whether there is any reality in the proposed separation between the Cypro-Minoan script found on Cyprus (conventionally referred to as CM 1 and 2) and its manifestations at Ugarit (CM3). Using sample texts from CM 1 and 2 comparable in length to two examples of CM3, with a 'control' sample from the deciphered Cypro-Greek syllabary, he makes a plausible case that the CM3 corpus was distinct. The implication, however, is left unexplored: entirely different script, or a related script adapted to record a different language? In the final paper, Markus Egetmeyer reviews the limited evidence for writing on Cyprus between *c*. 1050 and 750 BC (the Cypro-Geometric [CG] I–III period) in the light of two recently published inscriptions: one a late Cypro-Minoan inscription on a bronze bowl belonging to CG I (*c*. 1050–950 BC), unless an heirloom; the other a transitional Cypro-Minoan/Cypro-Greek inscription on a potsherd of the CG III period (*c*. 850–750 BC). For Egetmeyer, the new data confirm the view that the Cypro-Greek syllabary was first used, then adapted (probably at Paphos) to record the Greek language by Greek-speakers (like Opheltas, whose name was recorded on a CG I bronze spit) recently arrived on the island, while Cypro-Minoan continued as a medium to record an indigenous language (which we call 'Eteocypriot'), but was later also replaced by the Cypro-Greek syllabary, which came to notate both languages.

The implications of this collection, I suggest, are twofold. Firstly, it demonstrates a maturity in a relatively new field of study. The contributors, well trained in the language-focused aspects of the field, also take on board archaeological data and situate their studies within the cultural and historical contexts of the second and early first millennia BC. Secondly, what emerges is a closer relationship among the Cretan scripts from their point of appearance in a period of social and material innovation at the end of the third

millennium BC, no doubt stimulated by the transport revolution sparked by the introduction of the sail, throughout the second millennium BC, as well as a clearer demonstration of the continuity of that tradition on Cyprus, undoubtedly in a different cultural and political context, down into the first millennium BC. There is then the mild *caveat*, implied by Duhoux' paper, that the manifestation of the Cypro-Minoan script on the east Mediterranean mainland at Ugarit may not belong fully in that tradition, but represents a development in another different cultural and administrative context. The importance of the newly 'understood relationship between (these particular) scripts' is that behind the material manifestations through which scripts become available for study in the present are the actions of people in the past; strictly scripts do not interact, but rather the people who create and use them. The contributions here thus offer something of a challenge to archaeologists to evaluate their arguments within broader examinations of human activity.

In a less well-documented era, before Linear B was deciphered, Arthur Evans, who first identified, discovered and wrote at length about the Aegean scripts, argued for the same continuity this volume convincingly presents on the basis of more data and new understandings. Evans, however, wanted to go further and also derive the alphabetic scripts of the first-millennium BC eastern Mediterranean from their Aegean 'predecessors'. Evidence now confirms this is implausible and there is a parallel history of alphabetic scripts that ultimately extends about as far back as the earliest Aegean scripts. This different story was the topic for the second URBS conference in March 2017, successor to that presented in this volume.

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