EPILOGUE

John G. Younger

I am grateful to the editors and authors of this book for the opportunity to revisit a subject that has repeatedly absorbed my interest over the past fifty-some years. My first foray[1] was to study the physical relationships of Hieroglyphic inscriptions on multifacial prism seals from Crete in the New York Metropolitan Museum; this was in the fall of 1987 when I was teaching a course for Duke University, Institute of the Arts, and the curator of the Met's Classical Collection, Joan Mertens, invited me to examine the museum's Aegean seals on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. I had been intrigued by Jean-Pierre Olivier's occasional description of Cretan Hieroglyphic inscriptions on seals as '*une écriture ornementale*',[2] and I wanted to test that description by examining the prisms in the Met to see if their presentation on the prisms followed a consistent order. Physical examination showed that they did, but in their publication (*CMS* XII) they did not.

After *GORILA* was published (1976–1985) I asked permission from the authors to create a searchable website for the Linear A corpus and, as Godart and Olivier were working on *CHIC*, they asked me to be their 'beta tester' for their new volume (August 1996). That spurred me to create another website for Cretan Hieroglyphic.

Both websites are not only searchable but they can be corrected and augmented with new discoveries, ideas and developments in our continuing understanding of the Minoan scripts, Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A. By preparing these websites, I have had the opportunity to learn something of a new discipline, linguistics, and to be in communication with many scholars, but I do not claim any expertise in linguistics. I still identify myself as an archaeologist and my approach to Minoan texts is strictly combinatorial, using the contexts of the scripts to elucidate their meaning.[3] It is a great pleasure to see similar combinatorial approaches at work in this volume.

Cretan Hieroglyphic is certainly the earliest complete script invented in Crete, but writing had long been recognised in the southern Aegean, as the single surviving impression of a stamp seal on an EC II hearth

[1] Younger 1990. [2] Olivier 1981: 105. [3] cf. Davis 2014: 19–21.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 16 Nov 2026 at 09:09:35, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009490122.012

rim from Ayia Irini, Keos, demonstrates.[4] The circular face of the seal, probably of dentine, is bisected by an odd *djed* pillar; in the left half of the face, a waterbird and circle *Ra* disk; in the right half, a scythe and an EH II sauceboat that replaces the common Egyptian beer jug.[5] It is obvious that the EH II culture was on the verge of developing writing, but its destruction displaced and delayed that invention until the Protopalatial period in Crete.

CHIC publishes 331 inscriptions (122 inscriptions on clay, 67 impressions of seals and 136 seal stones). My Hieroglyphic website contained all this *CHIC* material and added 33 inscriptions since *CHIC*'s publication in 1996: 30 inscriptions from Petras,[6] an inscribed sherd from Pyrgos, a lame from Symi and an inscribed potter's batt from Gournia. The 364 inscriptions contain fewer than 1,000 signs. Contrast the almost 1,500 Linear A documents with close to 7,500 signs[7] and some 4,600+ Linear B documents with some 57,500 signs. If we arrange all signs on American standard sheets of paper (8″ x 11″, font Times New Roman, pitch 12, no spaces, 3,770+ characters per page) Cretan Hieroglyphic texts would take up little more than a quarter page, Linear A would take up fewer than two pages and Linear B would take up almost 14½ pages.

For Cretan Hieroglyphic, at least, it is obvious that the critical mass needed to make much grammatical or lexical sense of the script is lacking. And the same goes for Linear A, especially since neither script yields much evidence for inflectional suffixing.[8] Yves Duhoux, however, has pointed out that Linear A is heavily suffixed (just not inflectionally)[9] and Brent Davis has reconstructed a probable word order: verb-subject-object.[10]

We can amplify our understanding of the Cretan Hieroglyphic documents, however, by recognising that several documents from each site seem to go together, sometimes even physically, recording similar words/sequences and quantities. For instance, three bars from Knossos obviously form a set: the contributions on #057a–d total 100; those on *058b–d total 330; and those on #062 total 1,210 – all three subtotals combine for a grand total of 1,640, recorded on #058a.

Several scholars in this volume have remarked on the close affinities between Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A, starting with their almost contemporaneous invention in the early Protopalatial period.[11] Lending support for this nexus between the two scripts are those Cretan

[4] *CMS* V, no. 478; Younger 1974.
[5] Gardiner 1957, W22, p. 530. [6] Tsipopoulou and Hallager 2010. [7] Schoep 2002a: 38.
[8] Cf. Steele, this volume, esp. section 6.4. [9] Duhoux 1978. [10] Davis 2014.
[11] Godart, Preface, this volume.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 16 Nov 2026 at 09:09:35, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009490122.012

Hieroglyphic documents from Knossos that seem to influence similar Linear A documents.

Finally, Civitillo brings to our attention Cretan Hieroglyphic sign groups that appear on more than one document (Tables 4.5 and 4.7). She highlights the repeated word/sequence 031-021-061 (p. 112). A reasonable phonetic rendering would be RE-PI-061, where 061 functions as a standard terminal sign. The sequence occurs on a seal stone from Malia *Quartier Mu* (#197), a sealing from *Quartier Mu* (#149) impressed by a different seal and on a bar-tablet from Knossos (*GORILA* #059cB1). As I remark in my forthcoming paper on the Malia workshop seals, on the Knossos bar 'RE-PI-• is recorded as being responsible for a shipment of ten cows, presumably from Malia to Knossos, but eleven (documented by tally marks) actually arrived'.[12] My guess is that RE-PI was the Malia official in charge of the shipment of cows to Knossos and thus responsible for the extra bovine that arrived at Knossos (a calf born on the way?).

RE-PI may have been even more important, perhaps related to the recipient of wine stored at Ano Zakros, *GORILA* ZA Zb 32.[13]

Such a relationship would connect Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A even more closely, augmenting our understanding of these early Minoan scripts.

[12] Younger, *forthcoming*. [13] Cf. Davis 2011: 376–7.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 16 Nov 2026 at 09:09:35, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009490122.012