

Il Prof. Olivier ha espresso forti riserve, vertenti da un lato sulla liceità dell'attribuzione di valori fonetici al sillabario A, soggiacente all'opera di trascrizione e formalizzata nel testo teorico, dall'altro sull'utilità medesima dell'operazione, che a suo parere rappresenta la logica continuazione della traduzione dell'archivio di Pilo, ad opera di C. Consani e M. Negri.

Alle obiezioni del Prof. Olivier hanno replicato, oltre ai due citati membri del gruppo PTILA, i professori Franco Crevatin e Domenico Silvestri, i quali hanno per contro ravvisato elementi di forte opportunità nel tentativo di sottrarre il Corpus Lineare A al limbo della documentazione inutilizzabile, e hanno con diversi argomenti confortato il criterio di trascrizione.

Traendo le conclusioni il Prof. Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli si è rallegrato per l'iniziativa della tavola rotonda, dove pur nella doverosa espressione di sostanziali contrasti teorici, alcuni degli studiosi maggiormente impegnati, come lui stesso, sui testi minoici, hanno arrecato importanti riflessioni, che a suo parere si configurano come significativi progressi, ed infine si è complimentato con gli estensori dell'opera, che a suo vedere costituisce un significativo progresso, auspicando una rapida conclusione dell'intero progetto.

FEDERICA CORDANO

CORPUS HIEROGLYPHICARUM INSCRIPTIONUM CRETAE

par Jean-Pierre Olivier et Louis Godart (avec la collaboration de Jean-Claude Poursat), Études Crétoises 31, pp. 447, Éditions De Boccard, Paris 1996.

The existence of the Cretan Hieroglyphic script has been known to modern scholars since the end of the last century; documents bearing Hieroglyphic inscriptions were included in private collections, and were found in excavations until recently*. Nevertheless not a great deal of progress has been achieved in its study and our understanding of this prehistoric writing system is still far from being complete. One of the main reasons for this delay is the fact that the documents had to wait for almost a whole century for their proper and detailed publication. Eventually a volume containing all the Hieroglyphic inscriptions known until 1991 is published under the name of *Corpus Hieroglyphicarum Inscriptionum Cretae* (henceforth: CHIC).

CHIC is the 'major' edition of the incised, carved, and painted Hieroglyphic inscriptions. It subscribes to the principles set in the Mycenological Colloquia of Gif-sur-Yvette (1956), Wingspread (1961), and to Chadwick's suggestions made in the Mycenological Congress in Rome (1967) for the editing of Mycenaean texts. It also resembles the major edition of the Linear A documents, the *Recueil des inscriptions en linéaire A* (GORILA I-V, 1975-85, by the same authors); the two writing systems have some characteristics in common, the most important being that they are both undeciphered and they should therefore be published and studied under a similar perspective.

⁹⁹ The discovery of an important Hieroglyphic documents assemblage in Petras, Siteia, in the summer of 1996, just when CHIC was in press (after more than three decades from its original conception, which belongs to the late E. Grumach), is, to say the least, ironical; it is nevertheless a fortuitous coincidence and it offers the rare opportunity of putting the corpus under test immediately, while at the same time it should serve as a working tool for the study and publication of the new material.

As far as the content of the volume is concerned, CHIC includes only inscriptions in the true sense of the word (the total of at least two signs), and not isolated marks (such as masons/pottery marks, or the ones found on seal faces). One cannot help but notice the fact that, when GORILA was being baptised, the authors preferred not to name it a corpus, because (according to them) the word was misused and, in any case, the various isolated Linear A marks were not included, with two exceptions: nodules, sealings and roundels bearing a single sign, which were found in the archives or deposits, and pottery marks (only when indicating the content). With this in mind, one should expect some Hieroglyphic isolated marks to be included in the corpus, at least the ones found on seal faces, while the other face(s) of the same seal contained a Hieroglyphic script inscription. Yet, these solitary appearances of Hieroglyphic signs appear only in seal sides photographs, but they were neither transcribed nor transnumerated, even though they are securely associated with the Hieroglyphic writing system. Moreover, the fact that their photographs were given seems to derive from the principle that all seal sides (bearing inscriptions or not) of a Hieroglyphic seal were presented in any case, and it does not prove any special attention to Hieroglyphic marks.

A difficult problem to be solved, since one is dealing with a relatively small number of documents, was the division of the material in categories. The 331 documents were divided in four major categories: 122 'archival documents' (under the letter "H"), 136 seals ("S"), 57 seal imprints ("I"), 16 'other documents' ("Y"). They were then arranged further: "H" and "Y" categories were divided first geographically and then typologically again, whereas for the "S" and "I" categories the division was first typological and then geographical. At first the system might seem rather complicated, but it is clear that, since a chronological or palaeographical division is impossible in the present state of affairs, the choice was dictated by the needs of the material itself (incised and carved script characters, unknown provenience of a significant number of seals, etc.) and managed to bring some order in an otherwise chaotic material.

In some cases, however, the division is a false one, since some of the so-called 'archival documents' were inscribed and bore seal imprints at the same time (in reality also seal imprints had an archivist function). Document numbers in CHIC are preceded by the mark "#", but sometimes they do not stand neither for individual objects nor for a single inscription.


To give but an example, #18 is the transcription and transnumeration of three sign-groups incised on two (out of four) nodule sides. This nodule, however, also bears two seal imprints with Hieroglyphic inscriptions on its first side, which are naturally listed under the "I" category (#140 and #158). This division (incised inscriptions ≠ stamped inscriptions), already adopted by Evans, can make one lose sense of the fact that the nodule *did* bear graffiti and stamped inscriptions simultaneously, and they were (with all probability) supplementary to one another. On the other hand, the nodule is listed under "Ha (03)" category ('nodules with seal(s) imprint(s) and β and γ faces inscribed'), whereas one of the seal imprints, #140, is listed under "I (1/3)" (single impression from a three-sided prism) and the other, #158, under "I (1/4)" (single impression from a four-sided seal).

The whereabouts of the three inscriptions can be easily traced through the cross-references provided, and all this information combined, emphasises the fact that the object was sealed by two different seals, a three-sided and a four-sided one, an observation not to be neglected. One wonders, however, if it would have been preferable to present the nodule as a unity, just as it was intended by the ancient administrator, since it seems more important to stress the fact that the nodule bore both written and stamped sign-groups, than the fact that a three-sided and a four-sided seal was used. It is a choice made by the

editors in favour of epigraphy and palaeography, which leaves archaeology in second place. It is understandable, since it is after all an epigraphical corpus, it has nevertheless as a result the dispersal of part of the material.

The introduction (p. 9-25) explains mostly how the corpus was compiled rather than what the script is all about. It is quite useful, because it introduces the reader to the problems related to the study of the script, and I imagine that the corpus was made exactly for that: to promote and facilitate the study of the Hieroglyphic script. Under the same spirit, a section devoted to the chronology of the Hieroglyphic documents (p. 27-32) was written by J.-Cl. Poursat, who managed to draw very briefly the outline of the chronological problems. What is appreciable is the fact that, while he seems to support the view that the Knossos "Hieroglyphic Deposit" belongs to MMII, and not to MMIII, he is careful enough to leave a question mark in the end, since there can be no definite solution to the problem and there probably never will be.


In p. 17 we are presented with a table of signs of the Hieroglyphic script. Whereas the original intention of the editors, as expressed in the Ohrid Colloquium, was to integrate all the signs of the Hieroglyphic, Linear A and B scripts in the same system (starting from 01 to 900 and something, with the Hieroglyphic starting from 801), in *Mykenaika* we see that they thought it over and the signs were renumerated starting from 01. Also the idea to class the signs according to their frequency was abandoned and finally, always with respect to Evans' tradition, the sign enumeration was based more or less on Evans' table of signs, with the necessary adjustments for added or eliminated signs. The thought which prevailed in the compilation of the sign list is that it was better to give different numbers to the sign versions that diversified a great deal from what could be considered as the standard form of a sign, because it is easier afterwards to unite two sign numbers than to create a new one. This providence might prove useful in the future, for signs like 052 and 053, which attestations seem suspiciously alike.

The signs possibly common to all three Aegean scripts were given in a second table (p. 19). There are in fact signs common to the Hieroglyphic and Linear A, which is more or less expected; but there are also a few signs common only to Hieroglyphic and Linear B, although it is hard to be certain about it. A sign that can be possibly added to this table is 046 () which could be compared to the well known Linear A 88 sign.

The presentation of the documents (p. 59-318) contains a photograph, a facsimile of each document, a transcription of the signs in normalised computer fonts (normal for the signs attested on archival documents, bold for the seal and sealings signs), a transnumeration, a tabular transcription (only for the archival documents) and a critical apparatus, the shortest possible, as is the customary practice of the authors. It is evident that in a corpus of an undeciphered script the transliteration is replaced by the transcription of signs, but it is the first time that we see a transnumeration side by side with the transcription in the texts presentation section. The quality of photographs is excellent, and so is the quality of the drawings (the merit for the latter belonging to L. Godart). All the above information is neatly given in opposite pages.

A problem regarding the legibility of some of the signs attested on seals was put forward by Olivier in the Marburg Siegel-Symposium in 1978 and brought about the question of phoneticism. The speaker was at the time convinced that the signs on some (or parts of) certain seal faces were not carved to be read, but their primary purpose was ornamental. Olivier's conviction dictated one of the *CHIC* principles regarding the transcription and transnumeration of signs found on seals and sealings: there are signs that were transcribed, but not transnumerated, on the basis that they constitute in theory decorative supplements and do not entail phonetic values. So far so good, because in order

to be as objective as possible, the authors established a special mark to indicate (in the transcription, and not in the transnumeration) the presence of these so-called 'decorative' sign(s) (see CHIC, p. 63). In this way the readers (especially those who do not wholeheartedly share this theory, like myself) would be in a position to decide for themselves whether they think that the decision taken was justified or not.

The problem begins when the authors choose to leave some signs completely untranscribed. An example are the manifestations of what the authors transcribe as  and transnumerate as 036-092, without providing any indication that in six out of seven sealings and seal faces in which this particular sign-group is attested exist also other escorting signs: #131, where *019* or *031* is omitted (italics for uncertain reading); #229, where 063 and another difficult to discern sign are omitted; #263, where *045* is omitted; #265; #267, where 063 is omitted again; #288, where one (031) for certain, maybe a second (063 again?) sign are omitted. It is a choice rather unjustified, for they could have easily used the diacritical mark for 'decorative' signs and not leave these incomprehensible blanks. Their decision is explained in p. 13-15, but it still leaves a pair of questions unanswered (of the type, which were the criteria used for the listing of a sign under 'decorative', why signs otherwise attested in the Hieroglyphic repertoire and in the same sign sequence are thought not to have a phonetic value, etc.).

The issue of phoneticism of seal signs cannot be answered based on the data available so far. Evans' belief, that everything 'pictorial' was more primitive, is not supported by the evidence at hand; in CHIC, sometimes it seems as if everything 'pictorial' was not even phonetic. The fact that there is no apparent or even remotely logical connection between the signs on the faces of #256, for instance, a seal which Evans boldly opted to interpret as "the keeper of the swine", does not mean that the seal was intended to be only partly read, because otherwise it does not make sense (to us at least). Although the Hieroglyphic script has given enough samples of what could be considered as 'anarchy' when it comes to 'reading' it, this does not mean that it is rule-free. The fundamental conception upon which a script is based is the establishment of conventions, which are known to all users (either active or passive), in order to achieve the transmission of the message. It seems hard to believe that the Hieroglyphic script users chose arbitrarily to attribute phonetic values to the same signs in some instances and in others not, obeying more to some aesthetic criterion rather than the script rules. Of course nothing assures us that the seal users were in fact literate, and the same goes for the seal makers, and that they all actually knew how to interpret what was written; but at the same time we cannot be sure of the opposite.

Besides the presentation of the Hieroglyphic texts, the volume also contains a succinct introduction with general information about the script, plus all the necessary concordances: one general, two for the correspondence of CHIC sign numbers with the previous publications sign numbers, a typological, a geographical, a museographical, and a material (only for the seals). These concordances are about as complete and detailed as one would expect from the editors, who have shown here as much devotion and attention to subtleties as in their past publications.

The corpus closes with a "Sign index", which includes all known sign-groups both transcribed and transnumerated, an extremely (for obvious reasons) useful working tool, and an equally indispensable and well-executed section which contains the facsimiles of individual signs. The quality of this section depended on the quality of the execution of the facsimiles of each document, since these are copies made from the drawings of the documents. It is a tool which gives the reader the opportunity to judge for himself if the transcriptions are correct or not. The quality of the designs is immediately evident: one can

tell, for example, at first sight which signs are attested incised on clay and which are carved on seal faces.

Those who have even the remotest relation with the study of the prehistoric Aegean scripts will realise at one glance the arduous task undertaken. Even with the edition of this corpus, which is indispensable for the study of the script, our understanding of the Hieroglyphic script does not seem to get any more secure. Now there exists, at least, the opportunity to study it properly and with as much confidence as if one was studying the objects themselves, without any mediators. Whether there is something new to be said or written, it will hopefully be supported and verified (or rejected, for that matter) by the newly found material.

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