Aegean Linear Script(s)

When does a *continuum* become a divide? This book investigates the genetic relationship between Linear A and Linear B, two Bronze Age scripts attested on Crete and Mainland Greece and understood to have developed one out of the other. By using an interdisciplinary methodology, this research integrates linguistic, epigraphical, palaeographical, and archaeological evidence, and places the writing practice in its socio-historical setting. By challenging traditional views, this work calls into question widespread assumptions and interpretative schemes on the relationship between these two scripts, and opens up new perspectives on the ideology associated with the retention, adaptation, and transmission of a script, and how identity was negotiated at a moment of closer societal interaction between Cretans and Greek-speaking Mainlanders in the Late Bronze Age. By delving deeper into the structure and inner workings of these two writing systems, this book will make us rethink the relationship between Linear A and B.

Ester Salgarella is a Junior Research Fellow at St John's College, Cambridge, and in the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, specialising in Bronze Age Aegean scripts.
CAMBRIDGE CLASSICAL STUDIES

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Aegean Linear Script(s)
Rethinking the Relationship between Linear A and Linear B

ESTER SALGARELLA
St John's College, Cambridge
This book is dedicated to my beloved family, whose support, encouragement and love have been my invincible summer.
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Preface

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;
L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l’observent avec des regards familiers.

Baudelaire, Correspondances (1–4)

Signs. This work deals primarily with signs: those constituting the sign repertory of two Bronze Age Aegean scripts, Linear A and Linear B. The research conducted investigated the genetic relationship, on structural and palaeographical grounds, between these two scripts, understood to have developed one straight out of the other. By using an interdisciplinary methodology, I integrated linguistic, epigraphical, palaeographical, and archaeological evidence, and placed the writing practice in its socio-historical setting.

This volume starts with a systematic enquiry into the reasons behind the current classification and distinction between so-called Linear A and Linear B, and how it arose (Chapter 1). Terminological issues are explored and examined, as well as the historical circumstances and approaches that led to (and shaped) current definitions, interpretations, and interpretative schemes. To give solid grounds to this analysis, a theoretical framework is put forward for interpreting writing systems and their constitutive components, which serves as the basis for the contextual examination of these two specific writing systems and their genetic relationship. Further to this, a comprehensive and systematic assessment is carried out of the structural characteristics underlying both systems and the relationship between their graphic and phonetic components (Chapters 2–3). In particular, a detailed palaeographical analysis of their respective sign inventories is conducted as well as an examination of sign variant distribution, since neither area has yet been adequately covered in the current scholarship.

Built on these analyses, two interpretative models are put forward (Chapter 4), one to account for the structural characteristics of these systems, the other to account for palaeographical features and palaeographical variation. The structural model explores the way in which Linear A and Linear B arranged their constitutive components (simple and composite signs). The palaeographical
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model shows how sign variants were transmitted from Linear A down to Linear B and which variants are likely to be taken as new introductions in Linear B. The conclusions this examination arrives at (Chapter 5) have wide-ranging implications not only for the history of the writing tradition on Crete, but also, more broadly, for our appreciation of the contemporary socio-historical context. In fact, a more detailed understanding of the Linear A to Linear B transmission process would not only cast light on the history of the script on Crete but also have significant implications for our understanding of the momentous historical and social changes that led from the Minoan-speaking to the Mycenaean Greek-speaking administration of the Late Bronze Age in the final period. The interpretation advanced opens up new perspectives on the ideology associated with the retention of a script, matters of identity, and how identity was negotiated at the very moment when Cretans and Mainlanders came into closer contact in the Late Bronze Age, at the same time giving us productive insights into societal interaction.
Acknowledgements

This volume originates from my doctoral dissertation, completed at the University of Cambridge in 2018, and jointly funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Peterhouse. I am forever indebted to both my supervisors, Dr Torsten Meissner and Dr Yannis Galanakis, to whom I express extensive gratitude for their insightful comments, sensible suggestions, and invaluable advice, as well as constant support, enthusiastic motivation, and unremitting encouragement throughout all stages of my research (and beyond). Special thanks must go to Dr Rupert Thompson and Professor Helena Tomas, who carefully examined my dissertation, for their wise comments and the most rewarding and stimulating discussion we had during the *viva voce* examination. For this unforgettable experience, I thank them sincerely.

I should also extend my gratitude to the other members of the Mycenaean Epigraphy Group (Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge): Professor John Killen, for his illuminating knowledge and inspirational presence; Dr Philippa Steele, for her uplifting amiability and entertaining talks about Cypriot scripts; Dr Anna Judson, for the many in-depth discussions on Linear B palaeographical issues and the converging results of our respective works; Dr Roeland Decorte, for the highly stimulating and productive discussions on Cretan Hieroglyphic and for sharing his expertise so willingly; and Dr Sarah Finlayson who, although not formally a member of the Group, has always been part of it in spirit, for her supportive encouragement and insightful chats on the role materiality plays in understanding Bronze Age Aegean writing and administrative practices.

I would also like to express my greatest appreciation to Professor Robin Osborne and Professor James Clackson for their most valuable feedback and constructive suggestions, as well as their willingness to give their time so generously, when reviewing the manuscript of this book and during all the stages leading to the final publication. I am also genuinely grateful to Dr Michael Sharp for his editorial assistance during the preparation of this book and for his help in accommodating the complex needs of this palaeographical work. I am deeply indebted to Professors John Killen, Jean-Pierre Olivier, Louis Godart, and Anna Sacconi for so wholeheartedly giving me permission to incorporate into this book and the related appendices images of Linear A, Linear B, and Cretan Hieroglyphic individual signs taken from *GORILA*, *CoMIK*, and *CHIC* respectively (said images are courtesy of the authors, when not otherwise specified). I should also like to acknowledge the following institutions and individual scholars for their kind courtesy in giving me permission to use their images: the British School at Athens,
Acknowledgements

the École française d’Athènes, Professors Jan Driessen, Richard Firth, Erik Hallager, and John Younger. Heartfelt thanks also go to Dr Laura Preston for having kindly let me read and cite her unpublished paper, which discusses matters of significant importance for the present work. Last but not least, I should also like to extend my thanks to St John’s College (Cambridge) for having provided me with the time necessary for revising my dissertation and turning it into a book during the first year of my Junior Research Fellowship, and to Professor Geoff Horrocks for having been an outstanding academic (and life) mentor in College (and beyond).
Abbreviations
The following abbreviations are used throughout this volume.

Cretan scripts
LA  Linear A
LB  Linear B
CH  Cretan Hieroglyphic

Chronological periods
MM  Middle Minoan (Crete)
LM  Late Minoan (Crete)
MH  Middle Helladic (Mainland Greece)
LH  Late Helladic (Mainland Greece)

Linear B tablet deposits (Knossos)
RCT  Room of the Chariot Tablets
NEP  North Entrance Passage
NWI  North-West Insula
RCB  Room of the Column Bases

Place names
AP  Apodoulou
ARKH  Arkhanes
ARM  Armenoi
CR  Crete
GO  Gournia
HT  Haghia Triada
HV  Haghiou Vassileios
IO  Iouktas
KE  Kea
KH  Khania
KN  Knossos
KO  Kophinas
Abbreviations

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