

COMMUNICATIONS

A "Conference on the Origins and Early Spread of Alphabetic Writing" was held at the University of Manchester, 2-4 July, 1975. The papers scheduled included: Wilhelm Haas, "The writing of 'mixed' scripts." Lilian Jeffery, "The early Greek and Phrygian alphabets." Wilfred Lambert, "The 'Eteocretan' inscriptions." George Mendenhall, "The Byblos and 'Philistine' scripts." Alan Millard, "The Canaanite Linear Alphabet." Terence Mitford, "The Cypriote scripts." Takamitsu Muraoka & Mervyn Richardson, "The Alphabetic Cuneiform Script of Ugarit." Ronald Willetts, "The 'painted' inscriptions of Archaic Crete."

The Harriet Pomerance Fellowship of the Archaeological Institute of America was awarded for 1975-1976 to Livingston Vance Watrous, for his proposed study of the pottery from D. Hogarth's excavation in the Dictaeon Cave in Crete.

A supplementary Harriet Pomerance Fellowship was awarded to Robert R. Stieglitz, for his proposed study entitled "The Legacy of Caphtor—Minoan Impact on the Near East."

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor: - Since my letter of 1st February 1975, Theban Tablets II (TH II) has made an indirect contribution to the question of the Mycenaean measurements of capacity. A brief sketch of the progress of the argument will focus the point of impact.

1. From the outset Mesopotamian analogies were noted. There the functional factor behind the 1 to 60 ratio was the issuing of daily rations of 2 units on a monthly basis. This would point to V as the corresponding Mycenaean daily ration. This is divided into 4 "cups." The later functional equivalent, the choinix, was also divided into 4 kotylae.

2. PY An 128, properly interpreted, revealed that there was a conversion rate of two units of barley to one of wheat. The PY Fn series uses barley as a basis of accountancy: in Fn 50 the slaves seem to get V 1, that is half the estimated man's ration (cf. again Mesopotamia), while craftsmen get V 2. There are also higher rates, e.g. for the *qasireu*, the industrial connexions of whom appear in TH Ug 42.

3. The PY Ab series records rations for women at 2/5 of our basic scale with children at 1/5 (cf. Mesopotamian 1/6). An accompanying TA is on the woman's scale and a DA receives our man's ration.

4. There is close resemblance between PY and KN. In both with larger numbers of women and children a second TA was allowed for. KN provides further evidence that DA is a man. For

instance, H. 103, who wrote Ak 611 with TA 2 DA 1, also wrote As 608, which is a list of men's names, each followed by VIR 1 or DA 1. A similar list is KN Uf 1522, where all the names are followed by DA 1.

5. All this suggests that TA is a female supervisor and DA a male supervisor. This is where TH Of 34.1 impinges. Here a man's name *koturo₂* is followed closely by DA. John Chadwick, prompted by John Killen, is now inclined to accept "the theory" that DA stands for a supervisor.

6. A count of the escape hypotheses provides an objective criterion for choosing between competing solutions.

i) Docs.² (p. 418) rejects TA and DA as separate ration entities: they are merely extra payments given to unspecified members of the women recorded. Difficulties for this "easier" solution are offered by PY Aa 785 Ab 388, where on this view an unaccompanied woman gets a 100 percent bonus for looking after herself.

ii) This suggestion is abandoned in TH II (p. 92), but a PY DA is still thought to be a female on the supposition that "the words so abbreviated were common in gender or at least only distinguished by termination." Those who find less difficulty in the notion of a man supervising female workers will not require this hypothesis; nor will they need to ponder the "coincidence" that a female DA has a mannish ration.

iii) KN and PY have closely similar administrative systems. If we apply our PY scales to KN Am 819 we come within half a boy's ration of the estimated total (Interpretation 119). Docs.² (p. 393) equates boys with men (against the PY evidence) and by simple arithmetic arrives at a "credible" monthly barley ration of T 3 V 4 Z 2. This not only dissociates KN from PY (to say nothing of the comparable Mesopotamian system which also gave a child half a woman's ration) but also offends against the functional harmony of the system: our monthly ration is BARLEY 1. It involves also difficulties with the conversion rate: T 3 3/4 of barley is alleged to be a "reasonable equivalent" of T 2 of wheat (p. 420). And how is a daily ration of barley Z 3 reconcilable with the demonstrable basic accountancy unit of V 1 in PY Fn?

iv) Finally, Docs.², while accepting Mabel

Lang's basic unit of 0.8 litres, finds it "more plausible" to assume that this was Z 2. But this gives no plausible figure for a MU, which is calculated at 38.4 l. We accept Lang's equation of V 1, and our own figure of 24 litres gives a satisfactory round number: 24 l. is 30 times the postulated basic unit.

We submit that a solution which preserves the functional harmony of the system, the Mesopotamian analogues, the unity of PY and KN (with a single interpretation of DA), the exact application of the conversion rate, and the accountancy unit of Fn, is preferable. The later subdivision of the choenix into four "cups" is of interest for the continuation of Mycenaean practices.

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7 July 1975

Yours, &c.
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. . . qu'il est permis de rire entre mycéénologues

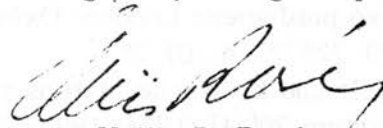
I wish to draw the attention of Nestor's readers to the fact that the existence
 of COSMONAUTS is attested for the fifth century B. C. at the latest, in Hdt.

III. 22. 2

λαβῶν δὲ τὸ εἶμα τὸ πορφύρεον εἰρώτα ὄ τι
 εἷν καὶ ὄκως πεποιημένον. εἰπόντων δὲ τῶν Ἰχθυοφάγων
 τὴν ἀληθείην περὶ τῆς πορφύρης καὶ τῆς βαφῆς, δολεροῦς
 μὲν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἔφη εἶναι, δολερά δὲ αὐτῶν τὰ εἶματα.
 2 δεύτερα δὲ τὸν χρυσὸν εἰρώτα, τὸν στρεπτὸν τὸν περιαιχένιον
 καὶ τὰ ψέλια. ἐξηγεομένων δὲ τῶν Ἰχθυοφάγων τὸν
 κόσμον αὐτοῦ γελάσας ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ νομίσας εἶναί σφρα
 πέδας εἶπε ὡς παρ' ἑωντοῖσί εἰσι ῥωμαλεώτεραι τουτέων
 πέδαι.

αὐτῶν S: αὐτῶ V(?)

Their number is, however, unknown, since the readings vary for sg. or pl.


 Haiim B. Rosén