

A SECOND LINEAR A TABLET FROM PYRGOS

In May 1975 a second broken Linear A tablet was found during study of the pottery from the Minoan country house at Pyrgos near the village of Myrtos in the eparchy of Ierapetra in Crete¹.

The tablet lay in a level of Minoan destruction debris filling the south side of the house's light-well and part of the main entrance passage where it meets the light-well². The level, however, cannot be dated to the Late Minoan IB destruction of the house, as it contained Hellenistic pottery as well as Minoan: it must instead be either material which was shovelled into holes in the ground in Hellenistic times, to make a level surface for a shrine of Hermes and Aphrodite and, apparently, all the gods, which was built over the light-well; or possibly it is the fill of a pit for votive offerings at the shrine³. In either case the Minoan destruction debris is not in its original context, and one cannot be certain where the tablet lay immediately after the destruction. Originally it might have been part of the contents of the probable shrine on the upper floor of the house, as the first tablet seemed to be, together with four clay tubular offering-stands, a faience conch shell, a bronze rosette and

¹ We should like to thank the Editor of *Kadmos* for publishing the tablet here, and for his helpful suggestions, and the Managing Committee of the British School at Athens. We should also like to thank the Hon. Henry Hankey who, with Cadogan, drew the tablet, Mrs. Mallory Walker who photographed it, and Mr. Stylianos Andreou, who read the manuscript.

We published the first tablet from Pyrgos in *Kadmos* 10, 1971, 105ff. Pl. I (= PU 1 Raison-Pope, PYR 1 Godart-Olivier) and it has since been discussed by Hooker (*Kadmos* 12, 1973, 93f.). There are no signs on the back of the first tablet.

² The level was at the top of the plan in BCH 95, 1971, 1047 fig. 536, around and to the left of the number 3 (the room-number of the light well).

³ The Hellenistic material from Pyrgos will be published by Miss Sara Paton in the report of the excavations. The dedication is known from an inscription: the nearby, and important, shrine at Symi was also dedicated to Hermes and Aphrodite (Lembesi, PAE 1972, 197).

The level with the tablet also contained a fragment of a bowl of Yiali obsidian, a small indication of the riches of the Minoan country house.

two clay sealings⁴. The group was found fallen more-or-less straight down, and resting on the collapsed flagstones of the upper floor in the main entrance passage. If the new tablet was part of the shrine group, and if it really did reach the light-well in Late Minoan IB, it would have had to have fallen to the North in a different direction. It is interesting that the Marine Style sherds, which date the destruction, were also found fallen, in a compartment adjacent to the shrine group to the East: one wonders if the jug from which they probably come was also part of the furnishings of the shrine.

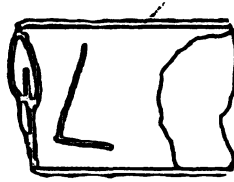


Fig. 1

The tablet (Pl. I, Fig. 1) (excavation no. MP/70/210; now on display in the Heraklion Museum, with no. HM 1681) is burnt and broken on the sides and underneath, probably as a result of the Late Minoan IB fire which we have found was fierce enough to have shivered the stones of the building. The tablet is 0.027 m. wide, 0.005 m. thick (lacking an underside) and 0.0185 m. in length. It is made of a surprisingly fine pink-to-buff clay with a few pink and grey grits, and has a buff slip on the preserved surface, which is slightly curled, presumably from the fire. Two signs are preserved between two ruled lines. The first sign is 0.0155 m. high and the second 0.012 m., and the lines are 0.017 m. apart. The signs seem to have been cut by a right-handed person, who held the tablet at a slant in his left hand. The tablet broke along the ruled lines and along the first sign. Three scratches visible in the photograph are recent.

⁴ As we discussed in 1971 (Kadmos, loc. cit.). For the tubular offering-stands see also Cadogan, *Pepragmena tou Tritou Dhiethnous Kretologikou Synedhriou* 1, 1973, 34ff. pls. 9—10. Conclusive evidence has recently been found that the clay tubes were used as offering-stands: further study showed that one tube had a bowl with two rim-lugs fixed on top of it; and another bowl was mended up from the shrine group, of the same type except that it has a plug-base, so that it could be held in the fist or set into the top of any of the other three tubes. Thus the tubes were offering-stands with either fixed or moveable bowls.

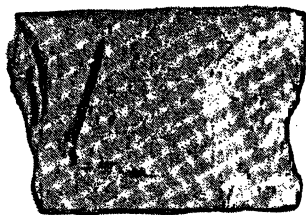


Plate I. The Pyrgos tablet fragment

The second of the two signs is almost certainly Lm 9, a fractional sign whose value is still disputed ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$?)⁵. There seems to be no reason to deny this obvious comparison or to identify the sign with the somewhat similar L 53.

The identity of the first sign, which is not complete, is not obvious. In other tablets Lm 9 normally follows a number, but here it seems unlikely that our first sign is a numeral. However, Lm 9 is also found after groups of syllabic signs (e.g. in HT 8 a5, b3; 30,3; 98 a3; 115 a3) and after logograms (e.g. in HT 28 b2; 30,5; 50 a3; 128 a3; 139,2). In other words, our first sign may be either syllabic or logographic. Unfortunately this does not help with its identification. Perhaps the most likely hypothesis is that it is a sign hitherto unattested; if not, we may compare it on formal grounds with some occurrences of L 54 (especially in HT 3,5; 17,3 and Phaistos IV 17 ii Brice = PH 10 Raison-Pope, PH 11 Godart-Olivier), of L 86 (cf. HT 90,3) and of L 97 (or L 101) (cf. KN Z 27 Raison-Pope = II 5 Brice)—but it must be accepted that none of these comparisons is immediately convincing⁶. It is remarkable that, in HT 139.2, L 89 appears in logographic function and in a form not too dissimilar from that of our sign, and likewise before the fraction Lm 9.

As for the ruling: odd division lines are found in the Ayia Triadha tablets (cf. e.g. 8 b; 9 a; 10 b; 22; 49 a, b; 56 b; 86 a; 96 a; 101; 106; 108) and elsewhere; but regular ruling of the type found in Linear B tablets is less frequent, though it is attested outside Ayia Triadha, for instance on the tablets from Palaikastro and Tylissos (PK 1, TY 3 Raison-Pope, Godart-Olivier = IV 5, IV 9 Brice) and some other documents from Phaistos (IV 17 i Brice = PH 11 Godart-Olivier; IV 17 vi Brice = PH 8 Raison-Pope, Godart-Olivier), Khania (Hallager, *Kadmos* 12, 1973, 23 KH 3 = *Opuscula Atheniensia* 11, 1975, 56 KH 3), and Phylakopi on Melos (Archaeological Reports 1974—75, 24 fig. 44). Our fragment seems to belong to this second set rather than to the Ayia Triadha type.

It is unlikely that any more Linear A tablets will be found at Pyrgos, as the excavation of the country house has now been completed⁷.

⁵ Cf. Brice, *Inscriptions in the Minoan Linear Script of Class A* 1961, 7ff., with a resumé of earlier work. More recently see Was, *Kadmos* 10, 1971, 35ff. and Billigmeier, *AJA* 77, 1973, 61ff. (with the reply by Was, *Kadmos* 13, 1974, 82).

⁶ Other possible comparisons are with L 23, L 36, L 37, L 42, L 71 or even L 100.

⁷ Two four-sided Hieroglyphic seals have however been found in the settlement at Pyrgos, which are being studied by Mr. John Betts for publication in the report of the excavations, and some pot marks.