

## PREFACE

This booklet has been inspired by research of Tom Palaima, whom I always considered to be my academic idol in the field of Mycenaean epigraphy, which is why I dedicate this book to him. The book is conceived as a textbook for the class on Mycenaean epigraphy, taken by students of the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb.

### TOM PALAIMA – THE CONNECTOR

In his famous book *The Tipping Point* Malcolm Gladwell develops an idea that a certain kind of people function as Connectors. These are a specific type of person who has the contacts, knowledge, and social skills to effectively spread an idea far and wide.

According to Malcolm Gladwell, Connectors tend to be connected to many communities, whether through interests and hobbies, jobs that cause them to work with people in other fields, or other experiences. Their strength is in occupying many different worlds and bringing them together. They usually know people across an array of social, cultural, professional, and economic circles, and make a habit of introducing people who work or live in different circles. They are people who link us up with the world... people with a special gift for bringing the world together. It's the connector who really gets the idea moving and helps it expand.

The connector is likely to be well known, for example an educator or a frequent speaker at events. He will be a person who connects with different networks and the people in them. Some people just seem to have a gift for connecting people and ideas. They seem to know people in all sorts of industries, with varying interests, and they're able to 'connect the dots' between people and ideas and bring them together. They are 'Connectors'. The Connector, according to Gladwell, is a person who is able to make connections between what seem to be very different and disparate people and ideas. Connectors are the ones who seem to know everyone, and are always trying to connect people and their ideas. Connectors, according to Gladwell, have an extraordinary talent for making friends and acquaintances. They are then able to use these relationships and grow and connect people to each other.

Some people's personalities are just more inclined toward making connections with people, a skill that can be learned and practised. But the ability to connect ideas is a much tougher one to learn. There seems

to be a subset of people who have the ability to see things in ways others do not, and make connections in their minds that eventually lead to new breakthroughs.

In the field of Mycenology, Michael Ventris can definitely be taken as the first Connector. He set up a system of Worknotes that he used to write and distribute around the world. Thus he literally connected all scholars who were at the time working on deciphering Linear B. It was this collective effort, established by Ventris, that eventually led to the successful decipherment. Thanks to a generous invitation by Tom Palaima in spring 2018, I spent a month at PASP in Austin, as a visiting scholar. While exploring rich PASP archives, I realised that Emmett L. Bennett Jr. was the next Mycenology Connector. Hundreds of letters and notes written to him by Mycenologists are stored at PASP. Even larger is the number of letters and notes written to Tom Palaima. They testify that he was the next Connector in the field of Mycenology. And he still is so.

I entered this field by being introduced to the late Maurice Pope during my first visit to Oxford in 1996. He invited me to his home, where I timidly told him that I was interested in Linear A and B, but knew nothing about those scripts, nor did I know where to start learning about them. His answer was: start by reading everything that Tom Palaima has written. Everything by Tom Palaima was a lot. It took me months, but I made it. Having read it all, I became very keen to meet him in person. Numerous conferences where I met him gave me more and more knowledge on Mycenology, and they taught me that in addition to considering him my academic idol I could also gain his friendship. He was always cheerfully ready to talk about countless topics. I especially treasure the memory of our 2018 drive from the Aegean Conference in Venice to Nürnberg in Germany, where he took me to Bob Dylan's concert. Then we drove to Zagreb, where he was a guest speaker at our Aegean Seminar. The whole trip was about 2000 km. That is a lot of hours of conversation, the result being that our friendship was sealed.

His invitation to spend a month at PASP in Austin was an honour for me.<sup>1</sup> I had the privilege to hold in my hands original notes by Alice Kober

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<sup>1</sup> PASP is an acronym for Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory – an institute founded by Tom Palaima in 1986 at the Department of Classics, university of Texas at Austin. This institute is a research centre devoted to a study of prehistoric scripts in Greece and Cyprus. PASP at Austin is where I completed the manuscript of this book, whereas I started writing it in 2005 at Carl Blegen Library (University of Cincinnati, Ohio) while holding the Margo Tytus visiting Fellowship. I am grateful to Tom Palaima for granting the PASP fellowship to me in 2018. Also I am grateful to the PASP members Joann Gulizio, Kevin Pluta, Dimitris Nakassis and Garrett Bruner for their assistance during my research at the PASP.

and countless other Mycenological treasures. I filled gaps in my knowledge on historiography of Linear B decipherment and consequently had an opportunity to complete this book on the Origin of Linear B. It is a book inspired precisely by Tom’s work on the topic (Palaima 1988a). It was also at PASP that I realised that Tom is the Connector. While at PASP I met several of Tom’s graduate students, and was kindly invited to attend their study of RTI images of Linear B tablets from Pylos. Having shared for a month the premises of PASP and having observed his ways of teaching and discussing the Aegean Scripts, I learned why Tom has always been considered such a superb teacher and not only a superb scholar. He has a talent for creating circumstances in which, in a very skilful and spontaneous way, he can lead his students through a complex labyrinth of prehistoric scripts (whether deciphered or still undeciphered) and bring them to a proper, self-confident and independent research path. In addition to all his knowledge and expertise, he has an inspiring and charismatic personality, so sharing a work and research environment with him for a month was a true scholarly joy. For all those reasons Tom’s invitation to Austin and an offer of a visiting fellowship was an exceptional privilege for me, and his introduction of me to some of his friends from different scholarly fields has led me to remember M.Gladwell’s idea of Connectors.

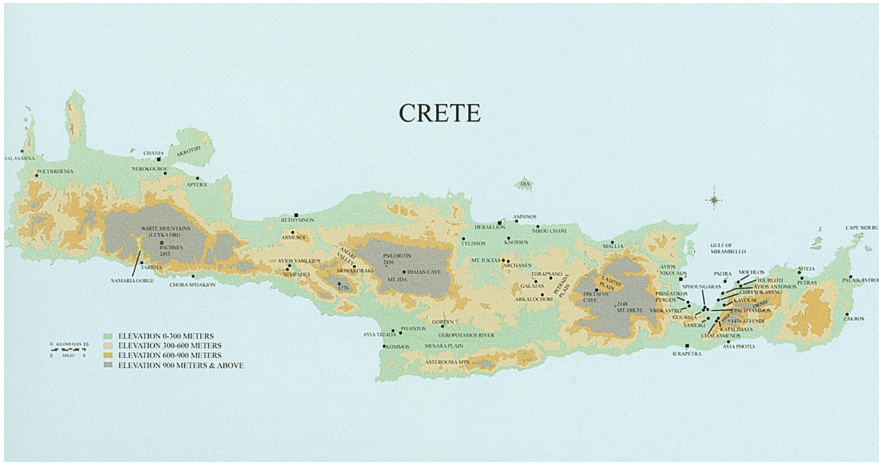


Figure 1. Map of Crete showing Cretan sites mentioned throughout the book.