

sealings. On Linear B page-tablets at the very beginning we already find well-defined epigraphical features absent from Linear A: a columnar arrangement, regular use of ruled lines, the use of spacing and majuscules to stress a prominent information, etc. Since these features are so noticeable and regular, and not just occasional, it appears that the administrative system, as reflected in the RCT, already followed well established rules. This suggests, at least to me, that the RCT does not represent the earliest Linear B records, but is a step away from the initial period. On the other hand, some transitional features can still be noticed, implying that the RCT records could not be much later than this initial period, for example, the occasional use of flat-based nodules, which completely disappeared in later Linear B. The conclusion is that the RCT is close enough to Linear A to reflect particular transitional features, but distant enough to reflect a well-established administrative system distinct from the latest Linear A one (as is obvious from the comparison of the LM IB Linear A and the RCT records, which is in detailed presented in Tomas 2004).

5. THE LIKELY DATE AND PLACE FOR THE CREATION OF LINEAR B.

The earliest so far preserved Linear B inscriptions date from the LM II period or early LM IIIA1, as argued by Driessen (1990), but this period does not seem right for the creation of Linear B for two reasons. First, since the RCT administration is already so well-defined and distinct from Linear A, we must allow enough time to arrive at this stage: Linear B could not have been created in LM II, unless at its very beginning, and still have developed such an established form by the end of the period. Second, there is no prototype in LM II to be adapted, since the regular use of Linear A seems to cease at the end of the LM IB period. Furthermore, if a Cretan Hieroglyphic influence is to be acknowledged, we must seek a period closer to MM III, which again makes LM II a less convincing date for the creation of Linear B.

From this it follows that Linear B must have been created during LM IB (or very early LM II), and the historical circumstances in the LM IB period, as presented by Driessen and Macdonald (1997: 117), support this possibility. The results of their study show that Crete was likely to have been susceptible to foreign take-over during the LM IB period, since the stability of the Cretan society appears to have been precarious at the time. Thus, the decline of Minoan LM IB palaces was not solely a consequence of foreign invasion, but of a general decline in society, as evidenced by a number of features, as well as of internal strife which, as a result, facilitated the

takeover. In general, the territorial and political fragmentation of the island during the LM IB period is observable through the weakening of the palatial authorities and the proliferation of the local elites (as suggested by the prominence of Archanes over its neighbour Knossos, Haghia Triada over Phaistos, and Palaikastro over Kato Zakro). The decentralisation of Linear A administration would be one reflection of this process. It seems likely that the Mycenaeans sought to exploit this social unrest and, as suggested by Driessen and Macdonald (1997), arrived on Crete towards the end of the unstable LM IB period (or the beginning of LM II) to pacify the island and “fill a power vacuum”. LM II may then be regarded as a period of recuperation or recovery, during which Knossos begins once again to function as a palatial centre, whereas the ruins of other palaces were populated by ‘squatters’.³⁸

If we accept that the arrival of the Mycenaeans to Knossos can be dated to LM IB or early LM II,³⁹ it follows that they created Linear B as soon as they captured the island. I disagree with the possibility that Linear B was created on the Greek Mainland before their arrival to Crete. As I have argued, influences other than the latest Linear A administration are apparent, which means that Linear B was created under the Cretan Hieroglyphic influence. This, of course, could not have happened on the Greek Mainland, where no CH documents were ever discovered. The suggested influence of the Cretan Hieroglyphic administrative system on the development of Linear B indicates that the script must have been created in the Cretan environment (i.e. where the CH milieu had existed), most probably at Knossos, where we find the earliest attestation of Linear B (Driessen 1990).

There is another reason why Knossos appears the most likely candidate for the place where Linear B was created: both Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A administrations left their traces here, which means that the scribes of both systems used to operate at the palace. This is a crucial circumstance considering the overall argument of this book that Linear B in its origin relied on both Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A. Future Linear B users

³⁸ For the Mycenaean arrival to Crete, see Macdonald (2010: 195–223).

³⁹ A suggested by Driessen (1990). In this book and elsewhere I accept Driessen’s argument that the RCT deposit is older than the rest of the Knossian tablets and that should be dated to LM II or early LM IIIA1 (Driessen 1990: 130; 1997; 2011: 71–72); I believe that results of my own research support such a view, as does the research of some other scholars, for example Firth’s work on find-places of tablets (1996–97: 75; 2000–0: 188–189), or Landenius Enegren’s prosopographical study (2008 : 30–36). Whereas some scholars accept this earlier dating of the RCT (for example, Weingarten 1988: 11; Palaima 2003: 164; 2011, 115; Marazzi 2009: 147), others disagree with it (see, for instance, Warren 1992; Popham 199: 177; Pini CMS II.8, 8–9; Hallager 2005: 250–251; 2011, 327, n. 14).

may have thus encountered traditions of both Minoan administrations and adopted from each whatever suited them better.

I believe that scholars would more readily accept the possibility of the Cretan Hieroglyphic influence if it was not for the significant chronological gap. The case with Linear A is different. Thus, although Linear A is not attested in Knossos itself during LM IB (which does not mean that it was not used, see below), numerous finds all over the island testify to its regular use in this period. Unfortunately, we do not have any Cretan Hieroglyphic from this time. However, the dating of the Hieroglyphic Deposit from Knossos to MM III, or even MM III – LM I as argued by Pini (Pini in CMS II.8, 2002: 6–7), significantly reduces the gap between the (so far attested) latest use of Cretan Hieroglyphic and the earliest use of Linear B. One important point must be recalled here: the lack of any LM IB Linear A documents in Knossos has been explained by the fact that Knossos escaped a total destruction at the end of this period which would, as was the case with other administrative centres, bake and preserve its clay documents for the posterity. I wonder if the same can be posited for the absence of any Cretan Hieroglyphic documents from this period at Knossos, i.e. if the Cretan Hieroglyphic system exceptionally continued to be used here, but has not been attested due to a lack of a destruction-causing LM IB fire. One explanation for how the nascent Linear B administration got acquainted with some typically Cretan Hieroglyphic features may be found in the just proposed scenario.

I conclude that Linear B was most likely to have been created in Knossos towards the end of LM IB (or the very beginning of LM II). I do not find it plausible that it was created prior to LM IB, since we may assume that typically Linear B features would have possibly influenced contemporary LM IB Linear A documents, which would then show examples of columnar arrangement or regular use of ruled lines. However, it may be that these particular Linear B epigraphical features did not develop until LM II, even though the script may have been created earlier.