INTRODUCTION

The Phaistos Disk (Figs 1, 2, 13, 14) is a small clay disk stamped with a series of unique ‘hieroglyphs’ purportedly excavated in July 1908 by Luigi Pernier in the palace of Phaistos on the island of Crete. It may not ever rank in the public’s mind with the Piltdown Man as an object of great renown in the field of man’s attempt to fool both the public and countless numbers of scholars. However, its exposure as the most famous fabrication of an ancient script should certainly end the long-standing controversy over its origins and the translation of its intriguing hieroglyphs. On this 100th anniversary of its ‘discovery’, the writer hopes to bring to light its dubious origin.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the attempts to decipher the disk is its innumerable interpretations and those of the individual glyphs. In fact, eight additional pages have been added to this issue of *Minerva* in order to present a comprehensive listing of these decipherments and the various interpretations of the different signs. The interpretations of the script range from scholarly discussions of its relationship to ancient Greek scripts such as Proto-Ionian and, obviously, Minoan, to Anatolian (Hittite and Luwian), as well as often far-fetched links to Basque, Indo-European, Proto-Slavonic, Rhodian, Coptic, Semitic, Proto-Byzantine, Tatarish-Turkish, scripts from the Black Sea area (South Caucasian/Georgian, Kartvelian, Colchian, Mingrelian-Laz), and even West Finnish or Old Estonian, Indian, Chinese, and Polynesian.

Attributions have been made of the ‘text’ on the disk relating to deities and events in Greek mythology including Zeus and the Minotaur, Theseus and Ariadne, Dionysos, and Icarus; in the Near East to the Hittites and Philistines; and in Egypt to Osiris and Isis, Thoth, and the pharaohs.

Over the past 100 years it has been interpreted variously as an adventure narrative, a poetic verse, a hymn, a prayer, a sacred text, a magic inscription – perhaps a curse, an aid-in-healing ritual, a funerary record, an almanac, or a calendar-diary. Others suggest an administrative document, a record of gifts made to a temple, a judi-
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Background
The story of the disk begins with the excavations of the Italian archaeologists in Crete in the 1880s, led by the noted Federico Halbherr. He was most famous for his discovery in 1884 at Gortyna of the early 5th century BC ‘Great Inscription’ inscribed on the walls of the city’s Odeum of the earliest legal code found in Europe. The long Greek text detailed the statutes for guilty individuals and the punishments for crimes. Halbherr, an epigraphist, concentrated on the study of ancient Greek inscriptions from 1884 to 1888 and was compiling a corpus of Cretan inscriptions with his mentor Domenico Comparetti. Later, Halbherr and his Italian colleagues, Roberto Paribeni, André Savignon, and especially Luigi Pernier, conducted excavations uncovering the Minoan palace complex of Phaistos, between 1900 and 1907.

Halbherr had often expressed his wish that written texts would be discovered at Phaistos. In 1900 he wrote that the excavation of the palace of Phaistos ‘has produced some very lovely Mycenaean vases, terracotta figurines… But to date there are no inscribed tablets, though we are hopeful that they will be found elsewhere.’ At the same time, the renowned English archaeologist (Sir) Arthur Evans (1851-1941), had already received much acclaim for his studies of the early hieroglyphic inscriptions on Cretan seals, and especially later on for his excavations of the site of the palace at Knossos. Evans visited Crete in 1894 to investigate the earliest pictographic script, or hieroglyphics, that appeared on Cretan seals, and especially later on for his excavations of the site of the palace at Knossos. Evans visited Crete in 1894 to investigate the earliest pictographic script, or hieroglyphics, that appeared on Cretan seals, and especially later on for his excavations of the site of the palace at Knossos. Evans visited Crete in 1894 to investigate the earliest pictographic script, or hieroglyphics, that appeared on Cretan seals, and especially later on for his excavations of the site of the palace at Knossos. By 1903 Evans had uncovered much of the foundations of the Palace (that he later famously overly-reconstructed), in addition to the Throne Room, the wonderful frescoes, and the faience female figurines. Evans also found many Linear A and Linear B tablets during the course of his excavations at Knossos.

Inspiration for the Phaistos Disk
What could Pernier ‘discover’ to bring him fame and glory and to rival that of Halbherr and Evans? He soon came up with the answer – the creation of a relic with an untranslatable pictographic text – the Phaestos Disk. Evans was obviously quite excited about the discovery of the disk. In Scripta Minua he published the preliminary details of the unearthing of the Phaistos Disk and a 21-page analysis based upon Pernier’s publication of the disk in 1908: ‘Il disco di Phaestos con caratteri pittografica in Annotia II, 255-302 (a 48-page study published in the same year of its discovery). It must be emphasised that forgeries are not just made for financial gain, but often to boost the reputation of an excavator or scholar, as in the case of the Piltdown Man in 1912.

Pernier (1874-1937) was trained as an archaeologist in Italy and among his readings he would have been quite familiar with the discovery of the Magliano Disk, found in Magliano, Italy in 1884, and published by L. A. Milani in 1893. This near-round lead disk (Fig 6) contained an Etruscan inscription spiraling inward on both sides. Since the Etruscan language had not yet been deciphered, its contents remained a mystery. Perhaps Pernier could create a similar disk – but for the
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The Phaistos Disk is a clay disk found in the Bronze Age. Last, but not related, except for the few signs that Pernier borrowed or adapted. These counts of uniqueness, each in a completely different category, point to the disk as a forgery.

Creation of the Disk

The disk is a hand-formed, irregular disk of fine-grained clay. It has been noted that the clay, even though as fine as that used for the local Kamares ware pottery, did not appear to be of a local origin, perhaps not even from Crete. The diameter varies from 15.8 to 16.5cm and the thickness from 1.6 to 2.1cm. Side B is thickest at the edges, side B is thickest at the centre. It was perfectly fired, unlike the tablets and seals that were baked by fires created by the destruction of the different sites.

Opinions differ as to the way that the two sides were printed. Ernest Gumach (1969) thought that each side was imprinted separately, then the two sides joined. ‘...the seam can still be clearly seen along the edge of the Disk’. Reinier Van Meerten (1977) suggested that...
that the basic disk, about 1.2 cm thick, was fired first, then layers 0.3-0.4 cm thick were applied to each side; next it was inscribed, the edges smoothed, and finally it was fired. Louis Godart (1990) believed that it was created in one piece, first imprinted on side A, then side B, the latter being impressed less deeply.

**The Stamping of the Disk**

Different stamps were used for several of the same signs. It has been suggested by various authors that the stamps were made of such diverse materials as gold, silver, bronze, lead, ivory, wood, and even stone. Godart favoured the use of gold for its durability and ‘clarity of the contours’. Pernier had suggested hard wood or ivory, while Evans thought that they were metal cast in matrices of engraved steatite.

Stamps were often placed on the disk in different directions – sideways, upside down, and so on. This is not a normal procedure in which such sophisticated symbols would be used in antiquity. It is apparent that the order of the signs was not carefully planned and that the sequence was being invented as they were being stamped on the disk. This indicates that it was certainly not an ancient document. The spirals do not end in the centre; the symbols near the centre are crowded; there are overstrikes of the symbols near the centre; and the final two symbols overlie one another.

Leon Pomerance (1976) proposed that the inscriptions were not printed with individual stamps, but that each side was prepared from a single limestone matrix on which all of the signs were engraved. He based this theory on the fact that there were ‘significant differences in the outline and shapes of identical symbols.’ Grumach had earlier noted these differences.

If the disk is ancient why have none of the stamps used to create it ever been found either at Phaistos or at any other site? The writer has previously pointed out that a series of stone stamps with symbols (Figs 11-12) had been made between the 1890s and the early 1900s by the perpetrator of the notorious ‘Michigan Forgeries’ (see ‘The Michigan Relics: An Archaeological Hoax, Minerva, July/August 2004, pp.
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45-48. They were apparently used to press into the soft clay tablets and other clay ‘relics’ which they produced. They were said to be the first evidence of the migration of an ancient Near Eastern people to modern Michigan. Were these inspired by the Phaistos Disk – or were they possibly one of the principal sources for Pernier for the creation of the disk? Unfortunately we do not know when the Michigan forger, James Scotford, created his stamps, before or after the ‘discovery’ of the disk. Some were found in a tin dating to 1910.

The Signs of the Disk
Of the 45 different signs (Fig 15), there are 123 signs stamped on side A separated by vertical lines into 31 groups and 119 signs on side B separated into 30 groups. The groups have been interpreted as words, sentences, and even complete verses. The signs basically face to the right as if they were meant to be read as pictographs of recognisable everyday objects, as they do – with the exception of signs such as the vertical ship and fish. The frequency of the signs varies considerably according to the whim of the creator. Thomas Balistier (1998) points out that the shield, no. 12, appears 15 times on side A, but only twice on side B, whereas the breast or helmet, no. 7, appears just twice on side A, but 16 times on side B.

Many of the signs on the disk are unusually naturalistic, depicting a liveliness not found to such a great extent in pictographic scripts of the time, such as Egyptian hieroglyphics. Clearly outlined representations, such as the striding man (no. 1), a bound prisoner (no. 4), and a flying bird (no. 31), are found only occasionally in other scripts such as Egyptian and Luwian. Scholars have argued for 100 years as to which writing system has been employed for this unique relic – do the signs represent words, syllables, or just letters?

It has been generally accepted that the signs just represent nouns and that verbs are lacking, the script being a syllabary, the signs acting as syllables and serving as an alphabet. Linear B is a syllabary. Godart points out that there are too few signs for a pictographic script of the time, such as Egyptian hieroglyphics. Clearly outlined representations, such as the striding man (no. 1), a bound prisoner (no. 4), and a flying bird (no. 31), are found only occasionally in other scripts such as Egyptian and Luwian. Scholars have argued for 100 years as to which writing system has been employed for this unique relic – do the signs represent words, syllables, or just letters?

In a pictographic script the sign represents the object that it depicts,
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Fig 19. The gold ring from Mavro Spillo with Linear A inscription (Kn Zi 13).

Fig 21. The Vladikavkaz disk. A forger’s prototype or a copy of the original forger’s?

The Direction of the Signs

Although there had been much disagreement about the direction in which the signs should be read – from the centre out or from the outside in, it has been accepted by most scholars that it reads from the outside in, from right to left, as with the Egyptian and Anatolian hieroglyphs – towards the direction that the heads of the people and animals face. In Linear A and Linear B the reading direction is from left to right, but some scholars such as Godart argue that it has no relationship to these scripts.

The Strokes, Dotted Bar, and Corrections

There is considerable argument regarding the meaning of the 16 or 17 slanted strokes that appear below the sign furthest to the left in some groups (Fig 16). Furthermore, on each side of the disk there is a single ‘dotted bar’ composed of five dots (some scholars contend only four) on side A (also Fig 16) and five dots on side B. The strokes and dotted bars were incised by hand, as were the main spiral lines and the vertical dividers.

The dotted bars led Alice E. Kober (1948) to surmise that there were other disks and that these were the fourth and fifth sides of a long document. Rudolf Hoschek considered them to indicate pages or chapters in a group of several disks. It is the writer’s contention that the strokes and dotted bars were added merely to lead scholars astray – another oddity to puzzle them – and a common trick amongst forgers.

Indeed, Dirk Ollenroth (1996), because of the strokes, regards the disk as ‘the oldest example of the use of natural punctuation’. The writer notes the similarity of the five dots on Linear B bar 057 (Fig 44) to the five dots on the disk. The dot in Cretan script represents the number 10; five dots represents 50 (Fig 15). Was this numbering system the source for the forger’s dotted bars? The writer notes that the vertical bar represents the Cretan script number 100 – is this the inspiration for the vertical lines of the disk? (See Fig 7 for a vertical bar and two dots, Fig 44 for a bar and five dots.)

In 16 instances signs were erased and replaced by different signs. One would not expect so many corrections in such an elaborate production if it was an ancient document. Ernst Grumach (1962) suggested that the scribe was not correcting mistakes but actually improving the content or form.

Comparisons

The Arkalochori Axe

For years local peasants had been digging in a shallow cave in Arkalochori in central-eastern Crete and unearthing a large variety of bronze weapons and other metal objects. Sadly, many of these have been lost because they were melted down and made into farm tools. A Greek archaeologist, Joseph Chatzidakis, first excavated the cave in 1912 and found many weapons – swords and daggers – and a large group of votive double axes. Soon thereafter a gold double axe was found by some children. The cave was then rapidly plundered by the locals.

In 1934 Spyridon Marinatos, the Director of the Herakleion Museum, confiscated many of the objects and renewed the excavations. One of 25 gold axes and one of six or seven silver axes found had short inscriptions in Linear A. A bronze axe (Fig 17), however, was inscribed with 15 hieroglyphic signs in three columns (Fig 18). Of the 15 signs, ten of them (with two repeated) seem to be unique. In her January/March 1935 American Journal of Archaeology report Elizabeth Pierce Blegen mentions the discovery in 1934 of the double axes in silver and gold, and bronze axes, knives, and swords ‘numbered by the hundreds’, but, oddly, no mention of any inscribed items. Godart stresses that ‘there are no definite comparisons between the signs of the Disk and the syllabograms of the three known Cretan scripts (Hieroglyphics, Linear A and Linear B)...’

The Gold Ring and Silver Pin from Mavro Spillo

A gold ring found in 1926 at Mavro Spillo, Crete, by Sir Arthur Evans has a spiral arrangement of the text which consists of 19 signs in Linear A (Fig 19). The ring, with an inner diameter of only 13mm, was certainly too small to wear and, in fact, its authenticity has been questioned. A silver ring of the same material also has an inscription in Linear A.

The Malia Altar Stone

A stone slab excavated in 1937 in Malia, Crete, by Fernand Chapouthier, has 16 inscribed hieroglyphs, three repeated twice, and is the only example of a Cretan hieroglyphic inscription on stone (Fig 20). Alice Kober (1938) stated that ‘...the resemblance between the signs of this inscription and that of the Phaistos Disk is very slight.’

The Vladikavkaz Disk

A clay fragment of a disk with 20 signs (Fig 21) was found in the basement of a house built in 1880 in Vladikavkaz, in the Russian Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, in 1991. It copies some of the signs and groups on the Phaistos Disk but they are incised rather than stamped. It is said that it was recognised by the local museum as a forgery and returned to the owner but has now apparently disappeared. It could possibly be a forger’s prototype for the disk.
or merely an attempt at copying the original forgery.

CONCLUSION
Several of the errors made by the forger of the disk fit into the categories tabulated by the writer in his ‘Aesthetics of the Forger: Stylistic Criteria in Ancient Art Forgery’ (Minerva, May/June 1992, 10-15). They include:
1. A disparity in the style of execution of the elements.
2. A disparity in the degree of abstraction of the elements.
3. A unique element in the composition.
4. A ‘unique style’: the appearance of a fully developed style or type hitherto unknown.
5. Repeated favourite ancient motifs and devices of the forger - in periods or regions where they do not ordinarily occur, or invented types.
6. Reversal of image.
7. A synthesis of geographically disparate styles.
9. Correction by elimination.

One can allow for a small number of these elements to occur in a genuine antiquity, but the preponderance of such elements for the disk leads to the conclusion that it is certainly a forgery. However, only a thermoluminescence test to determine whether the disk was created in the past century or two or over three millennia ago will finally settle this intriguing problem to everyone’s satisfaction. The writer has attempted to have this test carried out several times in the past but to no avail. It is not even possible to physically examine the disk outside of the case at the museum. In a reply to a most recent request to the museum to examine the disk, the Director, Dr Nota Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki, wrote:
‘Dear Dr Eisenberg, In reply to your e-mail of July 25, 2007, we would like to inform you that unfortunately we are not able to satisfy your request to examine the Phaistos disc and the inscribed Arkalochori axe. Specifically, the inscribed Arkalochori axe is encased and stored, whereas the Phaistos disc because of its uniqueness is considered as non-movable...’

Fig 22. Sign on Linear A tablet PH18 from Phaistos. Cf. to disk sign no. 1, the ‘pedestrian’.

Fig 23. Advancing boxer on Hagia Triada ‘Boxer Rhyton’. Cf. to disk sign no. 1. His hands are bound with fist wrappings similar to disk sign no. 8.

Fig 24 (below left). Sea Peoples in Egyptian 19th Dynasty wall relief. Cf. headdresses to headdress of disk sign no. 2, the plumed head.

Fig 25. The Luwian sign mu that resembles the plumes on disk sign no. 2, the plumed head.

Fig 26. Cretan captive with tattoo from Egyptian 18th Dynasty wall painting. Cf. tattoo on face of disk sign no. 3, the tattooed head.

Fig 27. Ivory figurine of a child with shaven head from Palaikastro. Cf. disk sign no. 5, the child.

Fig 28. Polychrome clay female figurine from the first palace at Phaistos, c. 1750 BC. Cf. disk sign no. 6, the woman.

Fig 29 (right). Sealstone from the controversial Treasure of Thirse, Boeotia. Cf. hair and garment of figure at left with disk sign no. 6, the woman.
Meanwhile the disk, which has long been considered to be ‘One of the most famous mysteries of archaeology’ (Wikipedia) remains an enigma. Our readers’ comments, as usual, are welcomed.

ANALYSIS OF THE PHAISTOS DISK SIGNS

The 45 different signs on the disk are numbered here according to the system set up by Sir Arthur Evans. The number in parentheses following Evans’ name for the sign (used here with some modification) is the number of times that the symbol appears on the disk. The first notations in most of the sign entries are the possible sources of the sign as suggested by various writers. For full references for the names of scholars mentioned, see Appendix: Attempts at Deciphering.

1. PEDESTRIAN (11) Crete, Egypt. Cf. stick figure on Linear A tablet PH18 from Phaistos (Fig 21); Mycenaeans in 19th dynasty wall paintings in Egyptian tombs. JME (the writer): Possible source for Pernier: The advancing boxers on the Hagia Triada steatite rhyton, the ‘boxer vase’ (Fig 22), coincidentally excavated (1900-1908) by Halbherr with Pernier. Also see the Luwian signs for ‘walking man’ or ‘walking legs’.

2. ARROW (10) Linear B tablet from Knossos. Cf. disk sign no. 10, the arrow.

3. BOW (16) Linear B tablet from Knossos. Cf. disk sign no. 16, the saw.

4. WINGED SUN DISK (11) Luwian hieroglyphic signs in the centre surrounded by Hittite cuneiform. The Luwian sign for a winged sun disk resembles the disk sign no. 11, the bow; also, the saw sign is very close to disk sign no. 16, the saw.

5. SHIELD (12) Pottery vase from Knossos. Cf. disk sign no. 12, the shield.

6. MANACLES (14) Abnormally long Minoan white steatite four-sided bead seal with hieroglyphic sign of mountains (on its side). Cf. disk sign no. 14, the manacles.

7. HELMET (7) Mycenean ivory relief of a man’s head with a boars’ tusk helmet. Cf. disk sign no. 8, the gauntlet. See also Fig 22.

8. GAUNTLET (8) An ancient cestus or boxing glove. Cf. to disk sign no. 8, the gauntlet. See also Fig 22.

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2. PLUMED HEAD (19) Sea Peoples (Pelesedt, Denyen, Tjekeker), Egypt; Crete. Cf. Sea Peoples in 19th Dynasty wall reliefs on Egyptian temples (Fig 23). It is vaguely similar to one of the signs on the Arkalokhori axe (Fig 18), though it is facing and the hairstyles on terracotta male figures from Traostalos near Kato Zakros, but far more sophisticated in its depiction. (Evans, Godard, Pernier: feathered helmet.) JME: Cf. Luwian sign for *mu* (Fig 25). The closest comparison, however, is the feathered headdress of the American Indian which required no visible skull cap.

3. TATTOOED HEAD (2) Crete, Egypt. Cf. Minoan man with figure-of-eight tattoo in Egyptian 18th Dynasty wall painting (Fig 26). (Dettmer: not a tattoo, but a Cretan double earring.) JME: It was certainly derived from the Egyptian wall painting.

4. CAPTIVE (1) Asia Minor, Egypt. Cf. Asian prisoners on 19th dynasty temple walls. (Aartun: walking farmer distributing seed; Dettmer: female prisoner.) JME: It was most probably derived from the Egyptian depictions of prisoners with their hands tied behind their backs, such as those depicted on Seti I’s Temple of Amon at Karnak.

5. CHILD (1) Crete. Cf. ivory figurine of a child with shaven head from Zakros for the use of a ‘bald’ child in Cretan art (Fig 27). JME: The first five signs for heads and persons all have bald heads making comparisons with the hairdos of people in other scripts or signs perhaps purposefully difficult. The source for the bald heads was perhaps one or more of the ivory figurines of children with shaven heads from Zakros and Hagia Triada.

6. WOMAN (4) Crete, Sea Peoples, Egypt. Cf. hairstyle to that of the Sea Peoples in 19th dynasty wall reliefs on Egyptian temple walls. (Evans: sharp contrast to Minoan-Mycenaean female type; Ipsen: relates it to Cretan garb; Doro Levi: found ‘parallel’ to female idols found at Phaistos.) JME: The apparent source for this sign was a small figurine with pendulous breasts, hair flowing behind, and a flounced skirt from room XCVII-XCVIII of the first palace at Phaistos (Fig 28) or another perhaps found previously by Pernier. Another source might be the sealstone from the controversial Treasure of Thisbe from Boeotia. This depicts a woman with hair flowing behind and flounced skirts (Fig 29).

7. HELMET or BREAST (18) Europe. Cf. Bronze Age helmets. (Godard: helmet; Evans, Dettmer: breast; Pernier: cap.) JME: Possible source for Pernier: the Phoenician or Bronze Age helmet (Fig 30). If it was a breast it would be more logical to show two of them. There is no ancient parallel for a single breast as a sign.

8. GAUNTLET (5) Crete. Cf. boxes with hands bandaged. (Godart: fighting glove; Dettmer: workman’s glove.) JME: Possible source for Pernier: the fist wrappings of the boxers on the Hagia Triada steatite *rython* – the ‘Boxer Vase’ (Fig 23) – excavated by Halbherr with Pernier; or the classical *cestus* (boxing glove) (Fig 31).

9. TIARA (2) Hittite. Cf. seals and rock carvings for similar headgear. JME: The most likely source for Pernier would be the nearly identical tiara which appears on rock carvings such as the one in a Hittite shrine at Yazilikaya, c. 1250-1220 BC (Fig 33).

10. ARROW (4) Crete. Cf. Linear A ideogram. But no arrowhead? (Ohlenroth: ear of grain.) JME: The Minoan sign of an arrowhead appears with or without a shaft, but no bars, as well as one with no arrow point but with bars – a complete reversal. However, on a Linear B tablet from Knossos the sign of an arrow is quite close (Fig 32), though simplified since it is inscribed on clay. A comparison made to Linear A sign AB79 is rather far-fetched.

11. BOW (1) Crete. Cf. Minoan seals. JME: Cf. the Luwian sign of a winged sun-disc (Fig 34).

12. SHIELD OR PLATE (17) Crete. Cf. Mycenaean shield examples. (Pernier: It resembles a *kernos* offering table) found at the palace of Malia (Fig 35), but it has 34 circular depressions around the rim, not six; Duhoux: a design stamped on a pottery vase around the rim, not six; Duhoux: a design stamped on a pottery vase from Knossos (Fig 36); Dettmer: a disk with seven points for the solar year.) JME: Pernier’s source certainly would have been the Luwian sign for bread, 128C5, a disc with up to seven dots, the seven dots being placed in the same positions (Fig 8) or, less likely, a similar Egyptian hieroglyph with four or five dots representing corn on the threshing floor. Also, Linear A sign AB78 is a circle with 3 dots.

13. CLUB (6) Greece. (Evans: club of Herakles; Dettmer: a plant; Ohlenroth: ‘cypress’.) The club of Herakles, to which it has been compared, first appears considerably later.

14. MANACLES (2) (Aartun: foot-
stool; Detmer: yoke; Evans: manacles or handcuffs; Pernier: mountains.) JME: Cf. a Minoan white steatite head seal with a hieroglyphic sign of mountains (Fig 37). This sign appears only vertically, not horizontally as often depicted.

15. MATTOCK OR PICK (1) Crete. Cf. actual mattocks (or picks); Linear A sign A364; Linear B sign B232. JME: Cf. Minoan white cornelian prism seal (Fig 38) A similar bronze mattock was found by Pernier at Phaistos. If this were a Minoan disk, the use of a single-headed pick rather than the double-headed axe would be unusual. Also, the direction is changed 90 degrees.

16. SAW OR KNIFE (2) Cf. Linear A sign AB74, though quite different. JME: Cf. Minoan head seal (Fig 3) and Linear B bar 066 (Fig 5). A close parallel can be found in a Luwian hieroglyphic sign (Fig 34); also an Egyptian hieroglyphic sign – set.

17. LID or TOOL (1) Crete. Cf. Minoan and Mycenaean lids; Linear A sign A322 is somewhat similar, though the direction is changed 90 degrees (Fig 9). (Evans: tool for cutting leather; Godart: lid.) JME: The source would be the Linear A ideogram.

18. BOOMERANG or SET-SQUARE (12) Egypt. Cf. weapons in Egyptian tombs. (Aartun: corner/angle; Evans: carpenter’s angle; Godart: boomerang.) JME: The source could be the Linear A sign AB77, though it has a much narrower angle and the direction is changed 90 degrees; or the Egyptian sign and amulet for the set square (kub), though it has an angle of 90 degrees.

19. CARPENTRY PLANE (3) Crete (Aartun: branch; Detmer: ruler with angles; Godart: carpenter’s plane.)

20. DOLIUM (2) Crete. Cf. the oblong dolium (sea shell) from Hagia Triada (Fig 40) (Aartun: dry-measure container; Detmer: vessel; Evans: vessel; Godart: ton shell.) JME: The shading or use of parallel lines is unique for this sign on the disk.

21. COMB OR FLOOR PLAN (2) Crete: palace floor plan (Aartun: hoe or rake; Detmer: weaving comb; Godart: comb.) JME: The source is certainly the sign on Proto-Palatian clay seal impressions on document HM 992 (Fig 41) at Phaistos (excavated by Pernier?) The suggestion by Woudhuizen that it resembles Swedish rock carvings of a team of plowing oxen is a bit extreme.

22. SLING or DOUBLE FLUTE (5) It has been compared to Linear A sign A315, but there is little resemblance. (Aartun: whis; Detmer: curve measure; Evans: double flute; Godart: slingshot or catapult; Ohlenroth: forked stick.)

23. COLUMN or HAMMER (11) Cf. Linear A sign AB06, though it consists only of lines at right angle. (Aartun: club; Evans: hammer; Detmer: a disk stamp; Pernier: column with capital.) JME: Cf. neat impressions on vases from Malia; faceting appears in Linear A sign AB80, though extremely simplified. The direction, however, is changed from right profile to a facing head. Linear A sign L149 is founded only on clay tablets. (Evans, Godart, Ohlenroth; cat; Detmer: wild dog; Pernier: bulldog.) JME: Cf. cat with facing head on a red cornelian prism found in 1898 (Fig 49). Why is the hind inverted twice in the same group on side A?

24. BEEHIVE or STRUCTURE (6) Lycia: cf. rock-cut tomb (Fig 42), Egypt: cf. Pant (Somalia) but on 18th dynasty Hatshepsut temple wall relief; Crete: cf. very simplified Linear A sign AB54 (Fig 9); Linear B sign 179 (Fig 43), also from Knossos. (Aartun, Detmer: house; Evans: pagoda-like building, animal coop, or bird cage; Godart: beehive; Erika Spann-Reinsch: covered palanquin.) JME: Cf. Cretan hieroglyph as on a four-sided clay bar (Fig 44). The forger, however, most probably used the Lycian tomb as the main source.

25. SHIP (7) Egypt: small Predynastic pots, c. 3200 BC, with symbols on the cabins of Nilotic ships (Fig 44); Cyclades (see below; Crete: gold ring from Mochlos (Fig 46). (Aartun: saw-bow; Detmer: plow) JME: Cf. ships on Cycladic ‘frying pan’ vessels, c. 2300 BC (Fig 47) An unusual case of a 90 degree shift in the position of the image to save space; most probably the only instance of a ship represented on its side as a symbol, though it is also depicted horizontally once on side B (therefore why should the vertical depiction be considered a space-saver?). It is lacking a mast; ships as Minoan hieroglyphic signs almost always have masts (Fig 48).

26. HORN (6) (Ox horn) (Aartun: tail) JME: Cf. Luwian sign no. 1287A (Fig 8) which is a more probable source.

27. HIDE (15) Crete: Cf. Linear B ideogram *258 from Knossos and *154 from Pylos. (Evans, Godart: cow/skin; Detmer: goatskin.) JME: Why is the hide inverted twice in the same group on side A?

28. BULL’S LEG or COW’S LEG (2) Crete. Cf. steatite seals with bulls’ legs from Malia. JME: An unusual case of reversal of image, in this case turning an animal part upside down. There are several instances of a Minoan hieroglyphic sign for a human leg (Fig 49), but none for an animal leg. Cf. Egyptian sign for the leg of an ox.

29. CAT HEAD (11) Crete: Cf. seal impressions on vases from Malia; faceting appears in Linear A sign AB80, though extremely simplified. The direction, however, is changed from right profile to a facing head. Linear A sign L149 is found only on clay tablets. (Evans, Godart, Ohlenroth; cat; Detmer: wild dog; Pernier: bulldog.) JME: Cf. cat with facing head on a red cornelian prism found in 1898 (Fig 49). Why is the cat head imprinted in different directions on the disk, some 90 degrees or more from the horizontal? It would not be the practice of a scribe executing such a sophisticated script; this is certainly
30. **RAM HEAD** (1) Some scholars relate this to the Linear A symbol of a ram - sign AB13, but this is a bit far-fetched, as the Linear A sign is highly abstract. JME: An Egyptian wall painting from the tomb of Useramon, c. 1460 BC, depicts Cretans bringing tribute to Egypt including animal-head rhytons (Fig 50). The writer believes that this may be the inspiration for the ram head sign (rather than using the more common bull's head rhytons. The Minoan hieroglyphic signs for the ram do not show the horns projecting beyond the profile of the head, although there is a goat head with outwardly curving horns on a Minoan seal (Fig 37). The single ram head and two cat heads on side B face upward, the same position as the animal head rhytons in the Egyptian wall painting. It should be pointed out that the writer is using the drawing from Robinson's book and he notes that the ram head - on side B - had been mistakenly replaced in the drawing by the artist for a helmet, disk sign no. 7. We have corrected this in our copy of the drawing.

31. **EAGLE AND SERPENT** (5) (Aartun, Ohlenroth: falcon; Evans, Dettmer, Godart: eagle.) JME: Imprinted in different positions: upward, to the left, and to the right. Signs for the eagle in Crete, AB81 (Fig 51), and Egypt are quite different, the former again being highly abstract.

32. **DOVE** (3) (Aartun: goose; Dettmer: duck; Evans, Godart, Ohlenroth: dove.) JME: It is unlike the preening and pecking birds of Cretan hieroglyphic script (Fig 52), however the source is certainly one of the Knossos frescoes with partridges (Fig 55), a bird no one has apparently considered previously.

33. **TUNNY** (6) (Dettmer: the scribe meant a 'large fish', but it is a dolphin; Evans, Pernier: tuna.) JME: cf. the fish on a Minoan bead seal (Fig 56). It could be an elaboration of a Minoan symbol or the fish on the Cycladic 'frying pan' vessels, as the one from Naxos with four fish, c. 2500 BC, published by A. K. Stephanos in 1955 (Fig 57).

34. **BEE** (3) (Aartun: wineskin; Dettmer: bird's-eye view of cow.) JME: Not a Minoan or Egyptian depiction of a bee, the symbol for which is done in profile. Pernier's inspiration for using this insect was probably a Linear A sign with the vertical line removed (Fig 53).

35. **PLANE TREE** (11) Crete. Cf. Linear A sign AB04, though only with one branch. (Aartun: fruit; Dettmer: oak; Evans: plant or tree; Godart: bush or branch with broad leaves; Pernier: branch of plane tree.)
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Godart: sieve; Ohlenroth: triangle.)

JME: The granulated triangle is a popular device for the forger (see the writer’s ‘Aesthetics of the Forger’, no. 14). Again, there are too many dots for a small hieroglyphic sign. His source may have been the triangles filled with small dots on the so-called Cycladic ‘frying pans’ (Fig 59).

44. SMALL AXE (1) (Aartun: aquatic plant leaf; Dettmer: bull’s hide; Godart: small hatchet.) JME: None of these suggestions would properly fit this oddly-shaped sign; it is too irregular.

45. WAVY BAND OR FLOWING WATER (6) (Dettmer: water channel; Godart: wavy bundle; Ohlenroth: wave; Perrier: flowing water as in the Egyptian hieroglyphic sign.) JME: The source is probably the identical Linear A sign AB76 (Fig 9), Linear B sign 76 (reversed), or the equivalent Luwian sign.

There are 22 disk signs that are closely or somewhat related to Linear A or Linear B, especially the former, but there are no double axes, horns, bull heads, or octopuses, symbols that are closely linked to Minoan Crete.

APPENDIX: ATTEMPTS AT DECIPHERING THE PHAISTOS DISK

Aartun, Kjell (1992) – ‘The Diskos von Phaistos: Die beschriebte Bronzearxt, Die Inschrift der Taragona-tafel Wiesbaden’ in Der Minoische Schrift, Sprache und Texte, vol. 1. A South Semitic syllabic text in metrical style, spoken in the south of Arabia (Yemen) before the Bronze Age, and a language to which modern Arabic and some Ethiopean languages belong. He believes that the writing system is the same as that on the Arkalochori axe. ‘…a Near Eastern/Semitic class in ancient Crete which provided political leadership and cultural guidance during the Minoan era.’ An extremely erotic poem, a ‘prescription for the execution of sexual rites in the Palace of Phaistos’ in Munich Beiträge zur Völkerkunde, vol. 1, 9-24. The differences in content from side A to side B represent ‘a thematic change from day to night and male to female’ (Balilist). Best, Jan, and Woudhuizen, Fred C. (1980) – Ancient Scripts of Crete and Cyprus.

Best, Jan, and Woudhuizen, Fred C. (1989) – Lost Languages from the Mediterranean. Best: an abstract of correspondence between King Nestor of Achaia (outgoing letter on side A of the disk) and the King of Phaistos (Tarhuntiwaqtas or Kunawa?) (incoming letter on Side B). (See Fred C. Woudhuizen.) Best dates it to the first half of the 14th century BC.


Bowden, Edgar (1992) – Cybele the axe-goddess: Alliterative verse, linear B relationships and cult ritual of the phaistos disk. Greek alliterative verse metrics describing an Anatolian religious cult of ‘Cybele Axe Goddess and Poseidon Hippios’.

Budirc, Steve (1998, website) – An astronomical interpretation using the solstices. It refers to the cycle of the sun over the year.


Butler, Alan (1999) – The Bronze Age Computer Disc. A system of measuring time, space, and distance, the primary meaning of the text was mathematical rather than linguistic… an astronomically explicit calendar… goes beyond the basic zodiac to include planetary movement… including the possible reality of Atlantis (in the Atlantic) and the possession by the Minoans of extensive knowledge of the outer solar system. This is a good example of ‘pseudo-archaeology’.


Chadwick, John (1958) – The Decipherment of Linear B.

Chadwick, John (1987) – Linear B and Related Scripts. A simple syllabic system. ‘None of the more complicated and thus distinctive signs can be paralleled. Its Minoan origin must thus rest in doubt until more evidence is available.’ ‘The world’s first typewritten document.’ It has been a millstone round my neck for decades.’

Coppens, Philip (2000) – ‘The Phaistos Disk’ in Frontier, January-February. It could be used for both a chance game and a ‘rule game’, like backgammon.

Corsini, Marco Guido (2002-2005, website) – ‘The Apothecary of Sequennera Tao II/Rhadamanthys, c. 1544 B.C. (on the Phaistos Disk)’ Greco-Cretan Egyptian, c. 1600-1540 BC. It is the Disk of the Ra/Sun Rhadamanthys. ‘Rhadamanthys was a pharaoh of Greek origins (and, following the Greek tradition, king of Phaistos). The Apothecary of Rhadamanthys was then deposited in the archives of the final phase of the first palace of Phaistos. Rhadamanthys was born in a Greek speaking city, probably Phaistos (following the tradition that he was born in Gortyna, which descended in origin from Phaistos, the capital of the Mesara), where since 1700 B.C. the Ionians adopted the script.’ Biston/lydia of the labyrinth, blissful Isonoa, lady of the coffins and protectress of the pyramid. The daughter of Creon Megara consecrate there to You, the daughter of Creon in the cell of the labyrinth, the daughter of Creon Megara consecrate there to You the dead.’

Crombette, Fernand (1880-1970) – Clartés sur la Cret (vols 1-3). Monosyllabic, pictographic signs in a Coptic text. Of Basque origin. Relates the adventures of Icarus; used as a board game. Crombette believed that the first king of Crete was the son of the first king of the 1st Dynasty of Egypt.

Crystal Links (website) – ‘The disk speaks about the spiralling nature of reality and creation which links to Sacred Geometry – the Golden Mean, Spiral – Phi Ratio – the manner in which consciousness moves between
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realities. 'In conclusion, the Phaistos Disk is another one of the ‘Games of Thrones’ created to bring awareness about the nature of reality.'


Davaras, Costis (1967) – Zut Herkunft des Diskos von Phaistos' in Kadmos, 6, 101-105. Because of the finding of the clay ‘plumed’ heads (cf. sign no. 2) at Traostalos near Kato Zakros, the disk’s non-Cretan origin is ‘losing more and more credibility’.

Davis, Simon (1967) – The Decipherment of the Minoan Linear A and Pictographic Scripts. An acrophonic syllabary in a Minoan or Hittite language. A resemblance to Anatolian hieroglyphs. Relating to the manufacture of seals. ‘..sealings stamps sealings I made stamps sealings great (one) stamps.’ Duhoux terms this translation ‘virtually gibberish’.


Dow, S. (1954) – ‘Minoan Writing’ in American Journal of Archaeology, 58, 2 (80pp.) He thought that the disk was too fragile an object to be an import from Anatolia.


Duhoux, Yves (2000) – How not to decipher the Phaistos Disc’, American Journal of Archaeology, 104, 3, 597-600. Cretan provenance, c. 1850-1600 BC. Could be related to Linear A. A review of Foucauannau’s Le déchiffrement du disque de Phaistos. Preuves et Conclusions. ‘The Minoan character of the disc, regularly debated in the past, is assured thanks to an impressive series of points in common with indisputable Minoan artifacts.’ He claims that the signs have ‘clear affinities with the Arkalochori area.’

Dunand, Maurice (1945) – Bybile Grammata. There is a strong resemblance to the Proto-Byblic script.

Eisenberg, Jerome M. (1999) – In a letter to The Economist, 16 January: ‘a joke perpetrated by a clever archaeologist from the Italian mission to Crete upon his fellow excavators…’ Taking a thermoluminescence test, which should date the firing of the clay at about 100 years ago, can solve the mystery of the disc.’


Evans, Arthur J. (1909) – Scripita Minou I, the written documents of Minoan Cretan… Non-Minoan, from Asia Minor (1921). The human figures and costume are non-Minoan and ‘no more than ten more or less recognizable Cretan hieroglyphic forms’. He compared sign no. 2, the plumed head, with the Philistine headress and sign no. 24, the building, with the Lycian rock-cut tombs. Possibly a hymn or religious chant to the earth goddess, the goddess of fertility, or the Anatolian Great Mother who was worshipped in both Asia Minor and Crete.


Fischer, Steven R. (1988) – Evidence for Hellenic Dialect in the Phaistos Disk. Greek dialect, syllabic script. A Minoan call to arms to repel Cretan invaders from Anatolia. ‘Like Ventris, Fischer gradually came to the idea that he might be dealing with early Greek or at least Indo-European.’ The translation offered involves a published announcement, or the transcription of a speech, by the commander of a Minoan naval force, urging his troops on to battle (apparently near Naxos) against invaders from Anatolia. ‘Hear ye, Cretans and Greeks: my great, my quick! Hear ye, Danaidans, the great, the worthy! Hear ye, all blacks, and hear ye, Pudaean and Libyan immigrants!’


Franklin, Kenneth (with Leon Pomerance) – A calendar or an almanac (see Leon Pomerance).


Georgev, Vladimir (1976) – On the similarity to Luwian (Historische Hieroglyphs and Linear B. An acrophonic, syllabic hieroglyphic script (noted earlier by H. Bossert (1932) and Simon Davis (1967). A story in Luwian about the Cretan king Minos.


Godart, Louis (1990, 1995) – The Phaistos Disc – the enigma of an Aegean script. From an Aegean culture. Middle or Late Minoan, c. 1550-late 13th century BC. ‘Among the written testimonies from ancient Crete there is not a single text that permits us to define any relationship whatsoever with the Phaistos disc. Thus we can say with certainty that the script on the disc is totally alien to the scripts of Minoan-Mycenaean Crete.’ Godart points out that ‘there are no definite comparisons between the signs of the Disc and the syllabograms of the three known Cretan scripts (Hieroglyphics, Linear A and Linear B).’

Minerva, July/August 2008

of Comparative Zoology, Harvard Uni-

versity, 200-217. He found Polynesian elements and suggested early contacts between the two civilisations.
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Gordon, F. G. (1931) – Through Basque to Minoan: transliterations and translations of the Minoan tablets. A hymn to the ‘rain lord’, associated with Aquarius, in a language allied to Basque. ‘...dogfish smiter on the creeping flower; the lord, smiter of the horse-hide; the dog climbing the path, the dog emptying with the foot the water pitchers, climbing the circling path, parching the winemilk...’

Grumach, Ernst (1962) – Die Korrektur des Diskus von Phaistos in Kadmos, 1, 16-26. Of Cretan origin. He suggests a change in content at a point near the end of side A from a male to female theme.


Haarmann, Harald (1990) – Language in Its Cultural Embedding. Ideographic writing. A sacred text of a funerary rite, the symbols representing persons, gods, spirits, offerings, events, places, attributes, and religious activities.

Hagen, Ole 1988, 2001 – The Phaistos Disk – Alias the Minoan Calendar. A calendar with the names of months. ‘He claims that the images describe ceremonies or duties that should be performed on the appropriate date’.


Hansel, Stanislav (1999, website) – It is probably written in a Semitic language that he calls Ktefian after the Egyptian name for Crete – Kefius.


Imperiali, Massimo (website, n.d.) – Possibly a political treaty with a list of geographical places.


Jeppeesen, Kristian (1962) – ‘Some remarks on the Archaeological Placing of the Phaistos Disc’ in KUML, 180-190. A similarity to several Egyptian hieroglyphs. After 1400 BC, probably c. 1100 BC.


Kean, Victor J. (1985) – The Disk from Phaestos. Pictographs filled out with text, 2100-1900 BC. ‘...the printed record of the journeys of an early Minoan who crossed to the coast of North Africa and headed deeper into the harsh conditions of the Sahara in the hope of persuading one particular group of nomadic hunters to cease their destructive way of life’.


Kretschmer, Paul (1931) – ‘Die Ältesten Sprachstiften auf Kreta’ in Glotta. A Carian document with a list of soldiers. A possible link to the Illyrians and to the Etrusco-Venetian and late Greek scripts.

Klitsopoulou, Konstantinos D. (1951) – ‘Die antike Punktion und der Diskus von Phaistos’ in Minos, 1, 7-25. According to Mark Newbrook, he decided that the text was in a Semitic language and dealt with gods, stars, prophecies and the white of eggs.


Louise, Olivier M. (website) – Greek, about a destruction of Thera.

Macalister, R. A. S. (1914) – ‘The Philistines’ in Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly 141 (JME notes, 1968). It has a Libyan connection and similarity to several Egyptian hieroglyphs. A judicial court list, dated, with the magistrates’ and witnesses’ names.

Mackenzie, Duncan (c. 1908) – Cretan Palaces. Mackenzie, Field Director for Sir Arthur Evans and an expert on Cretan clay tablets and sealings, thought that the clay is of foreign origin.

Marinatos, Spyridon (c. 1935-39) – A sacred script. He considers the disk and the Arkalokhori axe (found by Marinatos) to be ‘cultural artifacts of the same kind’.


Massey, Kevin and Keith, A. J. (1997-2003, website) – ‘Mysteries of History Solved’. A magical text, perhaps a curse, in an Indo-European syllabic script. ‘this Proto-Byblic script which is demonstrated by the Massey twins as being a closely related orthographic system to the Phaistos Disk’. ‘The underlying language of the Proto-Byblic script was Semitic. It is a linear script which displays many identifiable objects, like weapons, human figures, and body parts.’ Later, an unknown Greek script for an inventory of goods ‘similar to most of the Linear B tablets.’ What may have happened in the world of the Phaistos Disk is that farmers and merchants brought commodities to a palace, temple, or treasury and deposited them in this central location. For this deposit, they would be given a record, somewhat like a receipt. This is what Linear B tablets tended to be, listings of commodities and goods. The Phaistos Disk is the same thing.


Mellink, Machteld J. (1964) – ‘Lyttian Wooden Huts and Sign 24 on the Phaistos Disk’ in Kadmos, 3, 1-7. She links sign 24 with a motif of a wooden hut on a large Lyttian burial vase even though the vase is from the 3rd millennium BC.

Meyer, E (1909) – ‘Der Diskus von Phaestos und die Philistern auf Kreta’
in Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 33, 1022-1029. Related to the Phaistos Disk because of the plumed head sign, no. 2.

Muenzer, Paul J. (1985) – The Phaistos Disk Deciphered. It is a Greek text.

Myres, J. L. (1930) – Who were the Greeks? An Anatolian import.

Nahm, Werner (1975) – Vergleich von Zeichen des Diskos mit Linear A in Kadmos, 14, 2, 97-101. – Of Cretan origin, made at Phaistos. Comparison with some symbols to Linear A – the walking man, no. 1, to L148 and the cat’s head, no. 29, to L149, the two found only on tablet PHB from Phaistos.

Neumann, Günter (1968) – Zum Forschungsstand beim ‘Diskos von Phaistos’ in Kadmos, vol. 7, no. 1, 27-44. Of Cretan origin. It cannot be dated much earlier than the Arkalokhori axe. Ballistier quotes Neumann: ‘…whoever chooses this document as the object of his research must soberly assess the limits of his possibilities, if he does not wish to experience that no one but himself believes his theories to be correct.’ He notes a clay ritual plate from Phaistos with figures of cattle and spirals stamped around on the edge. He considers the disk, the Arkalokhori axe, and the Malia altar stone scripts to be ‘individual or local forms’ of the same pictographic script.

Olahnroth, Derk (1996) – Das Abaton des lykischen Zeus ander der Hain der Elaia. Of Cretan origin, made at Phaistos, c. 1850-1550 BC. Free verse in a Greek dialect, a phonetic, alphabetic script, the pictography almost doubling for each Greek alphabet sign. It is about two sanctuaries in the Peloponnese in mainland Greece and is a votive offer-

Palladino, Philippe (2007) – Ideogramms. It shows a greater relationship to Egyptian hieroglyphs ‘than to the rectilinear and austere tablets of the syllabic writings rediscovered with it’.


Polymenos, G. (website) – A Greek language. ‘Palace’s Priestess/shout loud so that I get healed/holy clothes I have brought up here to you./Respectable, perfect (animals for sacrifices) I have brought up here to you for the Palace’ (from www.Unilang.org).

Pomerance, Leon (1976) – The Phaistos Disk: An Interpretation of the Astronomical Symbols. Of Cretan origin. An astronomical document in a pictorial form of symbolic communication. He considers that the entire design had been ‘cut into a soft limestone matrix for each side and then pressed on a pancake of soft clay. The two disks of clay were then trimmed around the edges, not quite accurately, placed back to back, and joined with slipped clay’. This would mean that it was not just a case of individual stamps being used à la Gutenberg, but that is was indeed an amazingly early precursor of precast linotype.

Pavllov, Victor (2006* – website, in Russian) – A device for the manufacturing of metal wares. Semitic signs for a ‘polysiographic language’. It is similar to the internal structure of the deep-sea cephalopod nautilius pompilius.

Prendergast, Jane (website) – ‘Notes on the Phaistos Disc’. A Hittite origin because of: (1) the similarity between the number of differing symbols on the disk and the number of syllables in Hittite and Luwian; (2) resemblances of the symbols themselves to Hittite hieroglyphs and artefacts; and (3) correspondence of objects depicted by the symbols and themes from the History of Hattusil. It is possible for the disk to be a record of gifts made to a temple, possibly that of Arinna. She notes ‘the resemblances between the material of the disc and the text of the Wars of Hattusil’.


Rjabchikov, Sergei V. (1998) – Proto-Slavonic dialect, syllabic script. ‘…he makes the observation that the Phaistos Disk signs are the decorative version of the Linear A script. He reads the Disk – and Linear A – as early Slavic, more specifically as instructions for rituals; he also believes that Erruscan was close to early Slavic.’

Robinson, Andrew (2002) – Lost Languages. He quotes the writer (IME) in his letter to The Economist, 16 January, 1999: ‘…a joke perpetrated by a clever archaeologist from the Italian mission to Crete upon his fellow excavators…Taking a thermoluminescence test, which should date the firing of the clay at about 100 years ago, can solve the mystery of the disc.’

Roolvink, Hedwig (1999, website) – ‘The Disk of Phaistos. The millenium problem of Crete solved?’ An Anatolian script of pictograms, probably a very primitive Luwish script. ‘…an account of the expedition of a group of people who lived in the mountains and went in search of flat land.’


Sankarananda, Swami (1968) – Decipherment of Inscriptions on the Phaistos Disc of Crete. The language is Indian.

Schachermeyr, Fritz (1964) – Die minoische Kultur des alten Kreta. He explains the differences between the disk, the Arkalochori axe, and the Malia altar stone by the existence of different schools of writing in different places and that they showed their independence from one another. For him, the walking man (no. 1) and flying bird (no. 31) signs are ‘typical Minoan images of movement’.


Sittig, Ernst (1956) – ‘Zur Entzifferung der minoisch-kyprischen Tafel von
The Phaistos Disk

Enkomis’ in Minos, 4, 33-42. An early form of Greek.

Snowden, Clive (website) – A prayer in pictographs from Asia Minor. ‘The Phaistos Disc: deciphered’ The General mightiness sought. The High Priest. The offering the greatest in Heaven. Many offerings were killed, The General a courier gave, To the greatest person in highest Heaven…


Stawell, Florence Melian (1911) – ‘An Interpretation of the Phaistos Disk’ in Burlington Magazine, 91, 47, April, 23-29, 32-38. Homerian Greek, syllabic script, possibly connected to a Cyprian script. A matrix for religious symbols for a prayer, ‘used in the traditional rites of a great goddess’ such as Rhea, who was similar to Athena.

Styllos, Nikos (c. 1998) – Phainik. Stylos claims to have translated both the Phaistos Disk and the Maglian Disk. He claims that the text was used for teaching people to read and that the language is ‘archaic’.

Sundwall, Johannes (1927-28) – ‘Phaistos – Diskus’ in Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte 10, 124-126. He compares the stamp technique of the disk to the decorative style of the Middle Minoan III seal impressions (the source for some of the signs on the disk).


Trauth, Michaela (1990) – ‘The Phaistos Disc and the Devil’s Advocate’, Glottometrika, 12, 151-172. That it is of Cretan origin ‘can no longer be called into question’, but the language is not Greek.


Watson, Claire Grace (website) – ‘The Phaistos Disk Maze of Daedalus’. ‘The disk is a disk of the world that shows the Minoans’ religion and their reasoning about the Minoan Eruption and Tsunami.’ ‘The disk is a Minoan wave spiral on which is depicted the Aegean world of Minoan Crete, including a cave, a boat, a pyramid, a star, planets, a constellation, geometry, maths, and everyday life in Crete that mirrors the stars above.’


Whittaker, Helène (2005) – ‘Social and Symbolic Aspects of Minoan Writing’, in the European Journal of Archaeology, 8, 1, 29-41. Writing was also used as a marker of status and prestige and for communication with the divine.

Whittet, Steve (website, 1995) – A calendar.


Winter, Dan (website, 2000) – The Isís-Ösiris mystery myth. The disk, created c. 1600 BC, records the activities of the Isís-Ösiris sect as they convened inside the Great Pyramid of Cheops and worked to establish their group consciousness using the tools of sacred geometry. It is a ‘portal disk using magnetic portal geometry!’ Again, ‘pseudo-archaeology’ at its finest.

Woudhuizen, Fred., with an introduction by Jan Best (1992) – The Language of the Sea Peoples. From Anatolia – A resemblance to Luwian (Anatolian hieroglyphs. A Luwian letter to King Nestor of Achaia sent from Phaistos. (See Jan Best.)

Zebisch, Herbert W. (Russian web forum, 2006) – It is written in a South Caucasian/Georgian language, Kartvelian, or Colchian (Kolkhian) – Mingrelian-Laz, spoken by the people of the Black Sea coast. The pictorial signs are ‘specimens of ‘Colchian Gold-script… The Colchian language was spoken by the pre-Olympic Titans, the Sun-god Helios…[and] Queen Pasiphae, the wife of king Minos of Crete… The text… is a hymn ‘Nenana’, dedicated to the protector of ‘Aea-Neshkari’, Pelasgian-Colchian Great Mother Goddess Nan/Rhea-Cybele.


Recommended Reading


Illustration Credits


Bossett, H. T. - Akhette (1923): Fig 23.

Davaris, C. - Phaistos – Hagia Triada – Gortyn (n.d.): Fig 58.


Everson M. - Anatolian Hieroglyphs (2007, website), Draft N3236: Fig 8 (extract).


Robinson, A. - Lost Languages: The Enigma of the World’s Undeciphered Scripts (2002): Figs 9 (extract), 10 (extract), 13, 14, 17, 18, 36, 42.


Woudhuizen, F. - The Language of the Sea Peoples (1992): Fig 6 (after Milani, 1893), 34, 50.

www.ancientscripts.com/luwian: Fig 25.

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E-mail - London: minerva@minervamagazine.com; New York: ancientart@aol.com.