WHEN IS AN INSCRIBED CIGAR JUST A CIGAR?

As is well known in Aegeanist circles, I have been receiving periodic *Aegaeum* psychotherapy since 23-25 April 1990 when on the island of Corsica I happened upon what I thought was a pathway to inner understanding and enlightenment, an inscribed document that has proved to have no more to do with the real world we all live in than the story told by Franzis in the *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Verities, eternal or ephemeral, are hard to come by in human affairs whether in the physical or metaphysical world. But that does not mean that the rightly (in)famous *ra-pi-ne-u* and his ever-changing retinue of enablers and abettors will ever get discouraged.

I had the highest hopes that my psychological infirmities, mainly my obsessive impulses, shared by many scholars of Aegean prehistory worldwide, to sit through sessions of *Aegaeum* conferences, could finally be cured by coming to Vienna, birthplace of psychoanalysis, on 22-25 April 2014, the very days marking the 24th anniversary of the insular onset of my affliction at the age of thirty-eight.

As proof of my seriousness of purpose, I even enlisted on the final day of papers as a kind of Freudian Pausanias the help of a noteworthy ksenos, Dr. Reinhold Stipsits, Ao.Prof. Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft of the University of Vienna, a noted practitioner of psychoanalysis, a student of Carl Rogers (himself a student of Otto Rank) and a contributor to the recent volume *The Ethics of Remembering and the Consequences of Forgetting: Essays on Trauma, History, and Memory* (2014). I took this expedient measure in the fervent expectation that my past miseries connected with the machinations of *ra-pi-ne-u* could be forgotten and I would only then remember the Golden Age before *Aegaeum* conferences plagued the psyches of learned men and women with repeated reminders of how very little we know and how insecure even that little really is.

Reinhold eventually took me to where Freud practiced, the *fons et origo* of our modern exploration of the metaphysical component of our natures (Fig. 1). Perhaps, I foolishly thought—and Reinhold did nothing to dissuade me—the spirit of Freud and perspectives offered by the denizens of Vienna could help us reach a better awareness of the other-worldly visions of the Mycenaean and Minoans.

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**Fig. 1**

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**Fig. 2**

1 With whom I am related through *kseniā* with Prof. Ricardo Ainslie of the University of Texas at Austin.
But I am getting ahead of myself.

We all know that Freud with his own peculiar genius made much of word play and what we still call Freudian slips. In my first days of strolling around Vienna to the conference halls I met a physis-ian (Fig. 2)—not to be confused with a physician—who set me to pondering the formidable intellectual tasks to be undertaken at the 15th International *Aegaeum* conference. And I rehearsed in my psyche all the other mind-polluting questions that papers and discussions during the sessions of the conference were bound to raise and in fact did raise. (Fig. 3)

As the poster of the *Aegaeum Metaphysis* conference (Fig. 4) makes clear, there are ways in which even the Minoan human beings who lived out their days at Hagia Triada in the 14th century BCE had a proleptic, we might call it Nostradamian sense of our needs in the 21st century CE. They anticipated the admonition that a bit more wine—“just a drop”—can suffice as a libation to metaphysical powers. They tried to remove their plush toys, of which they had an inordinate fondness, so as not to confuse modern scholars who have an equally excessive fondness for iconographical speculation. And they thought ahead...
that such a conference would not only be what their modern Greek descendants would consider ὀρατή, but in the words of James Wright πολύ ὀρατή (OREA).

This induced a kind of collective nostalgia for the days of bygone times when life was simpler, when a state, whether Late Minoan Knossos, late 20th-century Heidelberg (Fig. 5), or Austria in the spring of 1938, could dream of being led by one heroic figure who had contacts with the powers that control the universe.

I recalled then a German postage stamp sheet (issued April 5, 1937) I bought in Vienna in 1982 that had four stamps with images of a mustached 48-year-old Führer and bore as its legend “WER EIN VOLK RETTEN WILL / KANN NUR HEROISCH DENKEN.” Such a leader must have supra-human inspiration and visions of kingdoms that will last a thousand years. The Minoan leaders were surely likewise in contact with powerful supernatural female forces of fertility and longevity that made them contemplate eternity. This realization made me turn to a personal source of divine inspiration, the music of Bob Dylan, and his philosophical contemplation of what it must feel like to experience ‘infinity’ in the form of eternal salvation, through his “Visions” not of a VIP Lady or Lord, but of an enigmatic “Johanna.” Here Minoan iconography and the artwork in the Louvre help guide us and also explain the peculiar disappearance of the lower legs of Minoan goddess-geniuses, who, if they ever deigned to look downward towards mortals, could not find their knees either (Fig. 6).

Such a revelation made me ponder what other questions should have been posed at the very start of the Metaphysis conference (Fig. 7). In particular, I wondered why (Fig. 8), when iconographers could not even explain why flying VIP Ladies had no lower legs, the prime mover of Aegaeum conferences, an iconographer and archaeologist, openly invited scholars who fantasized about reading Linear A, Linear B and Cretan Hieroglyphic texts. Surely this would be a formula for getting all the conferees “Lost in Translation.”

Further questions that should have been asked at the start

It would be much better, I thought as my mental visions were becoming clearer and sharper, for us to concentrate on minute details of miniature seals and seal impressions. And so, with an appeal to our
baser animal instincts, I administered the Tierisch Schwierig cult-and-religion solar-disc-sacred-cross examination, just to be sure we would all be up to a challenge of such epic proportions (Fig. 9).

Exhausted after this baffling Prüfung, the assembled participants headed out to a Trankopfer ceremony (Fig. 10) for “just a drop” or more and in search of human companionship that could divert their over-heated minds and bring them fully back to appreciating the simple pleasures of non-metaphysical reality. Unfortunately, the streets of Vienna are maze-like, despite the imposition of the Ringstrassensstil in response to the simply expressed fiat of Emperor Franz Josef: “Es ist meine Wille”—clearly a VIP with whom the willful rapineus has strong affinities and sympathies. Aegeanists, men and women, young and old, once out on the streets of old Vienna, felt disoriented, as if in a da-pu₂-ri-to, even before they participated in the Trankopfer ceremony (Fig. 11).

I myself took the occasion, as I said at the outset, not to imbibe of alcoholic spirits, but to plumb the depths of my own psyche, communing with the genius of Freud and his assemblage of be-legged and
beloved ancient figurines (Fig. 12). The spirit of Freud’s chow chow dogs greeted me as if they were Argos and I were Odysseus returned after twenty years (Fig. 13) or as if the soul of a Mycenaean ku-na-ke-ta had metampsychotically invaded my body.

I asked one question of Herr Doktor Freud as my mental being drifted into the narratological state familiar to patients who tell their stories to cigar-smoking psychoanalysts or sit too long through a session of Aegaeum conference papers. The smoke from my cigar and from Freud’s merged in a dream-like mist such as Hesiod once fantasized surrounding beautiful Muses dancing around the peak of Mount Helikon. I had the feeling that the story I then was thinking and here am telling was truly like the tale that Franzis told of Dr. Caligari in the expressionist grounds of the asylum in 1920. Freud gave me a plain-spoke answer (Fig. 14).

I drifted finally into a dreamless sleep wondering how my memories could ever get so deep. And when I awoke, in my hands, were the ashes of that inscribed cigar that I recall lighting and smoking that looked like this before I consumed it (Fig. 15).

I here translate the Mycenaean transcription of its text as I recall it:

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wiże-na-de ra-pin-eu ra-wa-ke-ta e-wa i-ra-no-po-ro-u-si jo-e-qe ni-ko-ka-
wa-qe ka-wo-ko-qe e-qe-ta MU 2 VIR 3 te-re-ta-qe pa-ta a-koi-ri-
po-ni-jia te-o-pa-to-qe e-ne-ka 2014 tu-wa ka-wo. te-o
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A cigar may just be a cigar. But a stimulating and successful conference has a strong chance to be an *Aegaeum* conference, whether it is held in this world or in the metaphysical world where the Minoans, Mycenaeans and their contemporaries thought that forces, powers and entities dwelled and took some regard of the lives that they, like us, lived in wonder, hope and intimations of something larger than themselves.

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