

The Eteocretan Inscription from Psychro (Crete) is Genuine

In 1958, archaeologist Prof. Dr. Sp. Marinatos reported the existence of an inscription from Psychro (Crete), belonging to the private collection of Dr S. Giamalakis (Fig. 1). Professor Marinatos and later works, as well, originally attributed the inscription to the Eteocretan language (Brown 1978; Duhoux 1982). Apart from the first author of this essay (Kenanidis 2013), at least four serious attempts to translate the text have been made. The conveyed languages considered have been Semitic (Gordon 1966; Stieglitz 1976), Hittite (Davis 1967) and Slavic (Serafimov 2007). Brown (2011a) presents a commentary about the shortcomings of each one of the four attempts mentioned while attempting also to prove that the inscription is a modern fake (Brown 2011b), based essentially on Kritzas (2004). The two above sources show literally a passion to convince the reader that the inscription is a modern forgery by using unsubstantial arguments.

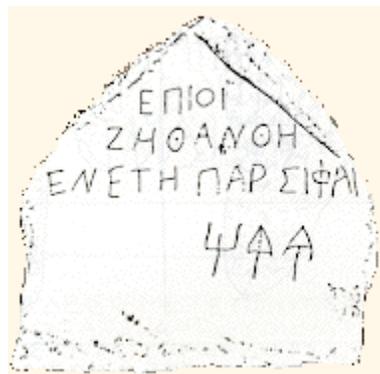


Fig. 1: The Psychro inscription (Brown 2011b).

Nobody could have a reason to produce such a fake as described in the above sources (Brown 2011a,b; Kritzas 2004) and even if we assume that there was a reason, nobody could have the knowledge to do that. The people who advocate the forgery-theory try to preoccupy the reader by broad and bold impressive headings like “The ‘Epioi’ fake” (Brown 2011b) and they go straight to assert with all their strength that the inscription is fake before they offer any evidence to it. When they give arguments, those are only of a rhetoric style to create impressions and not to found an opinion by pure logic. By reading Brown 2011b, it becomes clear that the doubts on the genuineness of the inscription were generated by two facts:

1. This is the only Eteocretan inscription preserved in good condition and appearing to be entire but still nobody could offer, until now, a plausible reading or explanation.
2. Although the inscription is dated about the year 300 BC, there are Minoan syllabic signs in it of a script supposed to have been extinct since about 900 years before.

These two are the only substantial reasons to doubt the genuineness of the inscription; all other arguments follow up to support the above, without any solid documentation, as can be seen later.

First, we shall examine the main arguments mentioned above. Firstly, the fact that this is the only Eteocretan inscription preserved in good condition and appearing to be complete is by no

means a proof that it is not genuine! By the simple law of possibilities we should understand that not all Eteocretan inscriptions should nowadays be damaged and mutilated; that would be possible but not likely. It is like throwing a dice ten times and the number 2 does not appear even once; then it is likely (although still not quite certain) that the next throw will contain the number 2. It would be easy to say that the other Eteocretan inscriptions are not readable because they are badly preserved; but in the case of this inscription (let us call it “the EIIIIOI inscription”) every scholar would feel that every hope to discover or to know the Eteocretan language is lost, since such a well preserved inscription is not readable – unless that is a fake!

Secondly, that is really a puzzle for all researchers: the existence of the Minoan syllabic script along with the Greek alphabetic script. The Minoan syllabic script, though could have been preserved as long as there were even a few Minoans who could still speak the Minoan language. The Minoans could have kept their language for many centuries after Greeks conquered Crete, even until the Roman times, because (a) there were no mass media, (b) no obligatory schooling, (c) there was a considerable geographical isolation, and (d) a sense of national pride for the glorious Minoan past. To keep their syllabic script was easy for them because it worked totally on the rebus principle (Kenanidis & Papakitsos 2015). In fact, apart from the EIIIIOI inscription there are other sporadic syllabic signs, as well, in at least one other Eteocretan inscription that has been neglected (Fig. 2): the fragment of Praisos #5 (Guarducci 1942; Duhoux 1982: PRA 5, pp. 82-85):

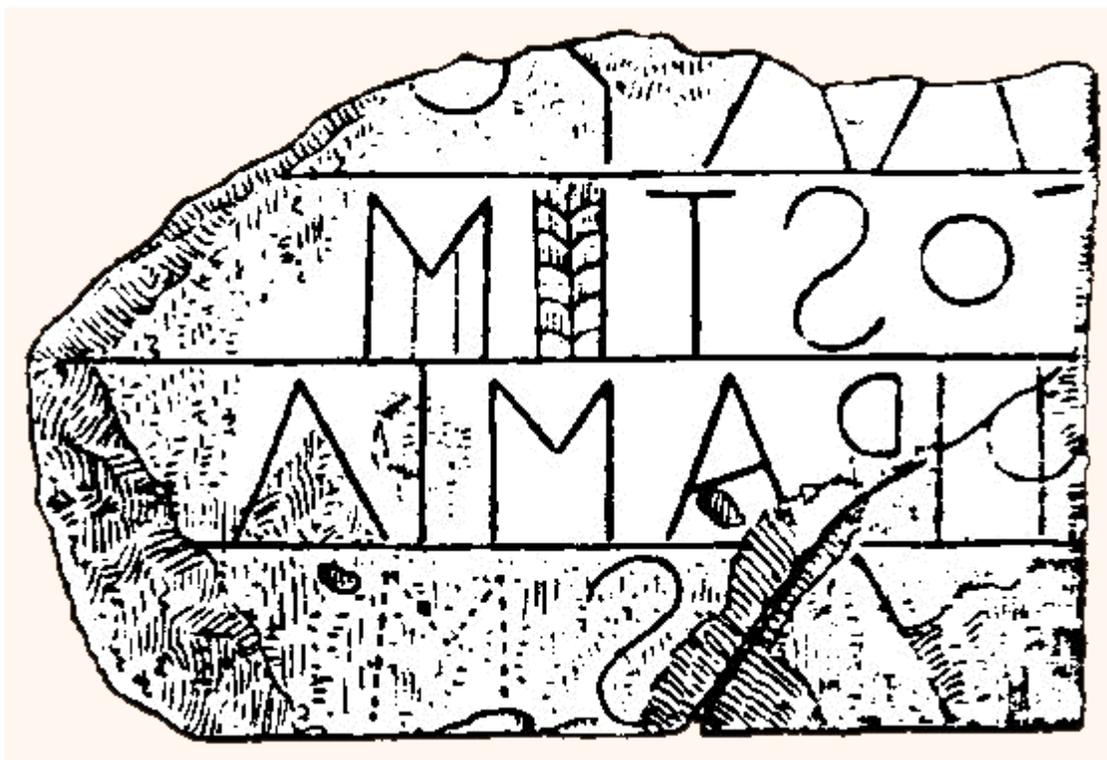


Fig. 2: The fragment of Praisos #5 (PRA 5).

On the second line of PRA 5 we can see, in front of a T, the syllabic sign “te” (LB 4 / LA 26), depicting the ear of cereals (Papakitsos & Kenanidis 2015, p. 735). After it, we may also see the syllabic sign “pete” (LB 62: Babiniotis 2002, p. 85), modified so as to resemble an alphabetic M

(actually conveying the sound /s/ in the archaic Cretan alphabet – the real alphabetic M can be seen in the third line), because the alphabetic-similar form was much more suitable for writing on stone. Curiously, nobody considers this inscription fake, although, as Brown says (Brown 2013): “*This was apparently discovered [by] the Italian Archaeological Mission in 1924 in a field in place called Paravoli. It seems it is now lost*”. Then Brown goes on to give a bibliography of four publications by eminent scholars, and after that he notes: “*This is not an exhaustive bibliography and, as far as I know, none of the above have seen the actual inscription itself.*” And yet, Brown has no doubt that the inscription is genuine. This reveals that the main reason for considering the EIII OI inscription as fake is that it was better preserved. For all inscriptions in a bad condition, Brown and other scholars can have a good excuse for not being able to understand them but for the EIII OI inscription they cannot use such an excuse, so that and only that had to be declared a fake.

The Minoans used their syllabary on unbaked clay tablets and generally on perishable materials. They did not normally use those scripts on stone or any durable material because their syllabary was created mainly for writing on clay. Surely it was not suitable for writing on any hard material because their signs consisted mostly of “sensitive” curves (that is, curves drawn in detail, that could not be altered too much because they had to represent objects) and such curves are too hard to carve on stone or hard material. When the Eteocretans had to write on stone, they preferred the Greek alphabet of their times, which was quite often used by the Greeks for writing on stone and other hard materials. The Greek alphabet was the common, the proper and the suitable script to use on stone or stone-like material. This is a reasonable explanation why no other inscriptions of the syllabaries survive after the Greek conquest of Crete.

We have discussed the main arguments in order to doubt the genuineness of the EIII OI inscription. Now we can take a closer look to more amusing causes of doubt. Brown (2011b) wrote:

- *"Another odd thing about this inscription is that three of the five words could be Greek".*
- *"If a non-Greek origin is attributed to this inscription, it is not clear that the language is the same as that of D2, D7, P1, P2 and P3", i.e. the language does not bear any obvious resemblance to that of the Eteocretan inscriptions from Dreros and Praisos.*

For the first one, we can observe that the ancient Greek language is so rich in words and word forms that in fact not only three but all the words of the inscription could be interpreted as Greek if we use a little imagination – yet the whole text makes no sense in Greek. Why should it be suspicious if the three words look like Greek (making no sense anyway)? If the supposed forger wanted to present Greek words on the inscription, why should he not make all the words Greek or why did he not make those three words have some meaning in their context? Anyway, if the forger wanted to show an Eteocretan inscription, s/he would have made all the words appear non-Greek (perhaps with a sporadic Greek loanword that would make some sense in the context). If the forger wanted to show that the Minoan syllabic letters coexisted with the alphabet, s/he would have used some well-known Minoan signs, as, for example, on the Kafkania pebble (Palaima 2002-2003), which is an obvious indisputable fake: its signs were copied from a modern list presenting “standardized” forms of Lin. B signs.

The second note of Brown is no less naive because it implies that apart from Greek there was only one other language spoken in Crete and that remained the same through the centuries. It

is perfectly clear though that quite more than one non-Greek languages were spoken in Crete (Kenanidis & Papakitsos 2015; Woudhuizen 2005; Duhoux 1998). How could it ever be possible to judge whether the language is the same as on the other Eteocretan inscriptions, when it is well-known that all the other Eteocretan inscriptions are very few in number and contain very short texts. They are also some centuries older than the EPIIOI inscription, they are very badly preserved, too fragmentary, with no word division, and written in Greek alphabet, that is a script not suitable for precisely rendering the non-Greek Eteocretan languages. Therefore, the scribes had to improvise how to approximate the “Eteocretan” sounds using a script made for a different language, thus making it even harder today to determine the language.

Anyway, since the first publication of the EPIIOI inscription seems to be that of Marinatos (1958), the discovery of the EPIIOI inscription must have been made some years before 1958. So, it is questionable whether it was discovered after or before the first publication of the *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (1952) by M. Ventris and J. Chadwick which made people more interested in the Minoan scripts. Even today, very few Greeks know what Linear B was and only a couple of them know how to read it; then, years before 1958, who could have the knowledge needed to forge such an inscription? Surely not an uneducated person. If it were a scholar who made the supposed forgery, that scholar would have used some identifiable Minoan signs. But this is clearly not the case: the three Minoan letters in the forms they have on the EPIIOI inscription were unknown, and still they are not identifiable by modern scholars, with a single exception (Kenanidis 2013, 1992).

If it were an educated person who did the forgery, the only motive could have been to sell it to the private collection of Dr Stylianos Giamalakis; but why do that? If one wants to make money by selling antiquities, there are too many real antiquities everywhere in Greece to sell illegally. Do you know of any other Minoan inscription that was forged in order to sell and make money? The Kafkania pebble might be quoted but that was only a child’s joke not an educated person’s forgery with the purpose of selling it for money.

Well, now we shall not be surprised if some people start making some forgeries after seeing this publication, just in order to reinforce the crumbling theory that the EPIIOI inscription is fake. There are at least two persons with a passion for that theory: Ray Brown (2011a,b), and Ch. B. Kritzas (2004), the latter probably was inspired by seeing that there is much desire internationally to prove the inscription fake. It was a good opportunity for him to make a publication presenting “evidence” to that direction. Ch. B. Kritzas’s “evidence” is in his own exact words is that:

1. *the text has not been engraved on a stone, but on clay (as Spyridon Marinatos, its first editor, had firstly thought);*
2. *this clay is a fragment of a yellowish brick of the Roman period;*
3. *there are clear traces of modern attempts to conceal the fresh traces of cutting the brick and engraving the stone.*

As for the first point, we can only say that the photographs we have seen in Duhoux’s book (1982) and on the internet (e.g. see Brown 2011b) appear to be of stone, not clay. It is funny if a prominent archaeologist like Sp. Marinatos could not have correctly judged whether an inscription is on brick or stone: firstly thought it to be clay and later realized it was stone and it would take so many years, from 1958 until 2004, for a scholar like Ch. B. Kritzas (2004) to

definitely judge that it is brick. Anyway, Ch. B. Kritzas and everybody else agree on two facts: that the inscription exists and it is not on plastic material. Whether it is brick or stone, it makes not the slightest difference from the point of genuineness of the inscription.

As for the second point, we do not understand how that piece can be called a brick when the shape clearly shows it was made to fit into an architectural triangle (what is called “ανακουφιστικό τρίγωνο”, i.e. a triangle formed over a door, in this case of a very small structure). Anyway, if it is made of clay and every piece of baked clay is to be named brick, we have no objection to call it so. Now the big question is how Ch. B. Kritzas could date the “brick” to the “Roman period”, when even the provenance of the inscription is uncertain: Brown (2011b) explains in detail the three possibilities for its provenance: Ini of Monofatsi (Ἰνὶ Μονοφατσίου), Psychro (Ψυχρό), and Amnisos (he rejects the latter with good reason). So, in the absence of any context, how could Ch. B. Kritzas date that to “the Roman period”? Did nobody use bricks or clay before the Roman period? If he had some special means to date it, which no other scholar had (!) before 2004, then he ought to date it more precisely, and not so vaguely “in the Roman period” (which formally is from 146 BC to 330 AD for Greece).

On the third point (“observation”) of Ch. B. Kritzas: “there are clear traces of modern attempts to conceal the fresh traces of cutting the brick and engraving the stone”, we must observe that generally Brown’s use of English language on those pages is not very good (2011b), but in this phrase it is even worse: first, we are puzzled with what the supposed forger did: did he “cut the brick” or did he “engrave the stone”? Previously Ch. B. Kritzas said it is clay or brick, now what is that “engraving the stone”? Further, if the traces are so clear, how come that nobody noticed them before 2004? Now, the word “attempts” in plural means that there were more than one attempt to do the forgery, so was there not only one, but more forgers, in different times? Although that phrase is in bad English, we can understand that it means there are scratches on the inscription, which are to be interpreted as “attempts” to conceal the “freshness” of the engraving. However, scratches and general wear and tear on a stone from antiquity can be due to countless reasons, and not necessarily to modern attempts of concealing. There is still a good chance that the stone was part of a larger stone (or brick, if you prefer), of which the illicit seller preferred to cut the interesting part (that bearing the inscription) in order to carry and sell it. Therefore, that illicit seller did make scratches and leave modern traces on the stone (or brick) while trying to cut it off the whole structure it belonged to, not in order to conceal anything – except the exact place of its provenance (because that exact place of provenance could give him away, it could have been in his field or his house yard).

There is one more “argument” supporting the theory of forgery: in the exact words of R. Brown: *However, Bjarte Kaldhol wrote to me 15th December 2003, saying, “I saw [the inscription] and studied it intensely some years ago, and some of the Greek letters were quite modern, among them the N”*. This statement clearly proves to what extent people could resort to ludicrous arguments in order to reinforce their own thesis which is against common sense. The shape of the letters is clearly that of the Greek alphabet of the time around the year 300 BC, and nobody, not even R. Brown can deny that. Indeed, that alphabet was quite similar to modern capital letters. The letter N did not change its shape since ancient times. Any substantial difference between the modern N and the N of 300 BC is only to be found in Bjarte Kaldhol’s

imagination. One can judge for her/himself by looking at Fig. 1 whether the N on it looks “modern” rather than of 300 BC.

R. Brown is absolutely right when he judges that all hitherto “translations” of the EΠΙΟΙ inscription as Greek or as in other languages are really ludicrous (Brown 2011b). In his own words: “*I submit, however, that the Greek mis-translation is no more strained or incoherent than any of the others I give on the "Translations" of the Eπιοι text page.*” (i.e., Brown 2011a).

Apart from the authors, nobody else, before the publication of ETEOKREETES MEGALEETORES in 1992 (Kenanidis 1992), could have the knowledge to make the inscription perfectly suitable to all the knowledge presented there. That knowledge is not drawn from the EΠΙΟΙ inscription, but from a long and profound research into the Minoan language and writing (Papakitsos & Kenanidis 2015; Kenanidis & Papakitsos 2015, 2013; Kenanidis 2013, 1992), taking into account all historical as well as other linguistic evidence too (Kenanidis & Papakitsos 2013). That knowledge is only confirmed by the EΠΙΟΙ inscription. Thus, to make a forgery of the EΠΙΟΙ inscription could have been possible only for the writers of this presentation, who, however, were not yet born when the inscription was discovered. An interpretation of the EΠΙΟΙ inscription, based on that knowledge, is beyond the scope of this article, since it deserves an exclusive presentation in the near future.

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