

VARIA

Yves DUHOUX, *L'éteoocrétois. Les textes — la langue.* Amsterdam, Gieben, 1982. (23 cm., 335 pp., 35 plates). Hfl. 125.—. ISBN 90 70265 05 2.

Eteocretan is the unknown language of a few inscriptions from Eastern Crete, written in Greek alphabet. This book gives a new edition of the texts and a linguistic analysis. Its author is well known for a series of studies in Cretan inscriptions.

In the introduction the ancient mentions are given. They say that Praisos, where most inscriptions were found, was a city of the Eteocretans, which were the autochthonous inhabitants of Crete. Archaeology confirms this, inasmuch as both Praisos and Dreros, the other city from where we have an inscription, provided clear evidence for the continuity of Minoan traditions, though both cities seem to be post-Minoan. Homer (Od. xix, 172-7) mentions five peoples in Crete: Achaeans, Eteokretans, Kydonians, Dorians and Pelasgians. As four of them are known otherwise, the fifth, that of the Kydonians, will also be reliable. (It may be noted that, though Homer says that many languages were spoken in Crete, it is not absolutely certain that the five peoples mentioned had different languages.) We also have the hieroglyphic and Linear A inscriptions. The author notes that Eteocretan may not be the only old language of Crete, because there is evidence for several immigrations from Asia minor, because toponymy seems to show different layers and because Homer mentions also Kydonians. He further concludes from Herodotus' story (7.170f) that Praisos did not partake in the expedition to avenge Minos' death in Sicily, that the Eteocretans were different from, and opposed to, the Minoans. I make the following remarks. First, Eteocretans seem to be different from Pelasgian, i.e. the inscription from Lemnos. Then, the Homeric tradition might call languages what in fact are closely related dialects (e.g. Kydonian the western, Eteocretan the eastern dialect). Third, the story is really meant to explain that the Eteocretans are the (only) old Cretans, because the others did not come back from the expedition to Sicily (it is said that thus Crete was depleted of people), and then the Eteocretans could not, of course, have participated. So we have to rely on the linguistic evidence. The author mentions that hieroglyphic and Linear A seem to represent one language spread over the whole island, but also that this language seems not identical with Eteocretan (see below).

The author suggests (following Ventris) that *Eteocretans* may not mean 'Real Cretans' originally, but contain the name of a people (cf. the Hatti) as in *Celtiberians*. (The same may be true of the Eteokarpathians.) This is quite possible, but unnecessary (it would ask very much of coincidence).

The texts are edited with full apparatus. From seven texts it is considered doubtful that they are Eteocretan, for several reasons, mostly also because the sequence of the sounds shows nothing typical of the other texts. I think the author's judgment is correct. Of the six real Eteocretan texts one is from Dreros, the others are from Praisos. The last (PRA 5) is very short, PRA 4 gives no new information at all, the others are not too small: there are 422 letters in

all. Three inscriptions date from the 7th and 6th, the others from the 4th to 2nd centuries. The text from Dreros has disappeared during the war. (It is astonishing that the excavator made just *one* photograph of it, instead of twenty.) It is supposed to have an Eteocretan (A) and a Greek text (B). However, the Greek text is quite ununderstandable, except that it contains εῤαδε and twice τυρο- ('cheese'?). There is an index of all letters in their context.

The language. There is first a detailed study of the value of the letters, some of which get a new interpretation. The conclusions are very convincing (*i*, zeta). Two new signs are distinguished (*y?* and *ts?*). Essential is the distinction made between archaic and recent texts. (Table of the signs p. 150; divergencies from Cretan Greek p. 180.)

As to the phonemic system, D. concludes that φ was a spirant, because otherwise the representation of φραισο- by πραισο- in Greek would be ununderstandable. One could add that this fits in with the fact that there are no θ and χ, because many languages have only the labial spirant.

From the variant Greek πῤασο- D. concludes that there was a diphthong *āi* beside *ai*. But there must not have been two of them: the Et. */ai/* may have had a longer *a*.

In the morphological analysis D. first tries to establish words, as wordboundaries are mostly not indicated. He assumes that a sequence of five or more identical letters (or four with a word boundary) point to a word. This is an acceptable starting point, but the results must not be true. It is remarkable that in this way only very few words can be established. I doubt whether ικαρκ is a word, as in PRA 3.11]. ννεικαρξ you would rather split off νεικαρ(κ). I am not convinced either by D.'s speculations about ραιραριφ, ειραρι, ειρερφ, ιρειρερει (and ιιρερ) as being root αιρ/ειρ, suffix αρ/ερ, suffixes (endings?) -ι, -φ, -ιφ, -∅ and reduplication (ι)ρ- (specially the last point). One difficulty is that four of these forms occur in one text, from lines 4 to 10 (lines having little more than 12 letters). This is also why I am sceptical about the suggestion that it is a verb (see below).

The identifications of the language as Greek, Phrygian, Hittite, an unknown Indo-European language, a Semitic language, a mixed language or Balto-Finnic are rejected, and rightly so. (Though with the criteria used DRE 1B would not be Greek: we recognize only two words, one of them 'cheese', which seems nonsensical.) The translations given are "une suite de mots sans queue ni tête".

The author tries to assign meanings to a few words on the basis of comparison with Greek inscriptions of the same character from the same towns. Thus ιναι would be 'πόλις', ισαλαβρ 'ἱκατι' ('the twenty', a council), κομν 'κόσμος' (the body of chief magistrates), ειρερ a verb. This is, of course, a good approach, but the results remain very uncertain. On p. 244 it is said that, if ειραρ etc. is a verb and -ι a genitive ending, ειραρι shows the existence of nominal forms of the verb. This conclusion is by no means allowed: e.g. the -ι of λούει is not identical with that of λόγοι. If ισαλαβρ means 'ἱκατι', D. suggests that it could be ισαλ-αβρ 'twenty-men', but one could think of other things: e.g. ισα-λαβρ 'two-ten'.

On the last pages the author gives a typological comparison with other languages. However, as the morphology and the syntax are unknown, only the phonology remains.

So what results is a comparison of the frequency of the sounds. This is the least important aspect for typology, so we could say that a typological comparison is impossible. What D. does is rather look whether Eteocretan can be *identified* with another language. Thus a relation with Etruscan and Lemnian is rejected because these languages have no *o*, which is typologically unimportant. (Genetically it also unimportant: Sanskrit has no *o* if we disregard *o* from *u*-diphthongs, but it is nevertheless Indo-European.) Further the most important languages, that of hieroglyphic and Linear A (and the Keftiu formula's), are even less known than Eteocretan. Nevertheless it is remarkable that the author concludes that, while there is a remarkable agreement between the Phaistos disc and Linear A, there is a clear disagreement between these two and Eteocretan. It is possible that the language knew a rapid evolution (in some seven centuries), the more so as it was a dying language subject to pressure of Greek. But if it is true that Linear A was a strongly prefixing language, it is remarkable that no prefixes have been established in Eteocretan. And this is a *morphological* element, which is not easily lost. The author's conclusion is that there is a 'parenté typologique indéniable' with Indo-European (p. 262). It should be remarked that 'parenté typologique' is a *contradictio in terminis*: you have typological agreement and this may or may not be due to genetical relationship. Then, the arguments adduced are too superficial to be of any use. (The ablaut *awr/ur*, though it could represent IE *our/ur* or *h₂eur/h₂ur*, is not very typical of Indo-European; a morpheme of the shape *-eur-* is impossible in Indo-European. Pokorny 80 *awer-/ūr-* is very problematic.) To me the Semitic inscriptions in Greek alphabet (p. 259f) look very Eteocretan!

What strikes me most is that there is hardly any evidence for inflection. In the words we can identify with certainty no endings can be identified with certainty, nor are there two consecutive words with the same ending (of the type *-ās ās*, *-ōrum ōrum*). E.g. we have thrice the sequence *δοφ*, but once the preceding and the following letters are unknown, the other cases have *αδοφτεν* and *σαρδοφσανο*, where we have no way of identifying the following or preceding elements (though *σανο* occurs again). *δοφ* could be an ending itself.

A colleague to whom I gave this review and the book remarked that the structure of the language reminded him most of Egyptian, and he asked whether it could not be a remote relative of this language and Berber. I wrote about it to specialists in these fields (in Leiden and Utrecht) and their first reaction was not too negative.

A few characteristics of the language might have been pointed out. Thus there is ample evidence for word final voiced stop (*-δ* DRE 1.2; *δδυο* PRA 5.1 where there is most probably a word boundary between the two *d*'s; the sequence *-γσ-* in PRA 1.3 may have final *-γ*; *-γδν-* in PRA 1.5 final *-γ* or *-γδ*).

A vocalic resonant has the word *λμο*. But the sequence *αρκροκλες* has one too, whether it is split up in two words or not. The same holds for *εστυμτορ*.

It may also be pointed out that *ατσε* has a strange sequence, whether it is split (*-ατ?*, *σε-*?) or not. (I don't understand the remark that the *ε* will be vocalic (p. 181): in that case an *u* would have been written.) A phoneme *t'* seems to me quite possible.

The word *σωρ* (PRA β, not Eteocretan) cannot be a (Greek) *r/n*-stem (p. 122) from the root of *σμήω*, *σώχω*. There are no *r/n*-stems of this type (*ῥδωρ*, *σῶρ* have a different structure). Neuters in *-ωρ* were not productive, and it is extremely improbable that an old Indo-European word, unknown in any Indo-European language, would turn up as the only word of an inscription in Crete.

As the author says, the book may prove fruitful specially when new inscriptions will be found. The results at present are very meagre, but the enterprise seems permitted as it may have been the language of Europe's oldest highly developed civilization, the Minoan culture.

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