

THE DICTAEAN LIBATION TABLE

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In his work on the Linear A inscriptions, William Brice presents us a reconstruction of a libation table,¹ a reconstruction based on some fragments² which are said to have formed part of this table. Though the bottom left corner does not fit to the two other fragments of which the libation table "consists", nowadays,³ Brice argues that: "there can be little doubt that it belongs to the same libation table as they do, for it is composed of black steatite similar to that of the right hand section, its cup and marginal rim correspond to those on the other fragments, and on its underside it carries, as does each of the other two pieces, a square attachment for one of the four angle columns (cf. Evans's reconstruction, PM I, fig. 465; Bossert (1937), no. 219). J. Boardman mentions, as possible evidence for forgery, that the cut of the characters on this piece is much sharper and neater than that of those on the other parts. But this difference may be due to the accidents of exposure and weathering. It is incredible that any forger should have known enough about the Linear Script A to be able to invent this inscription".⁴

This last conclusion is, in my opinion, quite correct. Other arguments, however, need a closer examination. Steatite — at least the material called steatite by Evans and in the Minoan publications after him, in reality being serpentine⁵ — has been a quite common material for the fabrication of libation tables and bowls⁶: about 47% of all Minoan stone vessels are made of this

1. William C. Brice, *Inscriptions of the Minoan Linear Script of Class A*, Oxford 1961, I 1.

2. See for a description of the fragments Brice, *op. cit.*, p. 11 - 12.

3. See Plate I.

4. Brice, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

5. Peter Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 138 - 140.

6. Cf. Brice, *op. cit.*, I 2, I 3 and I 4 (Plates XVIIa/XVII), I 6, I 7 and I 12 (Plates XIXa/XIX), I 13 and I 14 (Plates XXa/XX); the two libation tables recently published in *Kadmos* 11 (1972), pp. 101 - 112 (Hag. Nik. Mus. Inv. No. 2469 and 2470); cf. also Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 62 ff.



Fig. 1
The Dictaeon Libation Table
From: Brice, *ILA*

kind of stone. The square attachments for the angle columns, too, cannot be seen as decisive evidence for the correctness of Brice's opinion: this feature is common to a number of libation tables, as stated by Warren.⁷

The only feature, in my opinion, that may decide whether the two parts belong to the same table or not must be the writing. Unfortunately, both parts have only one sign in common, A 20, but yet some interesting differences occur.⁸ In the first place we note that the shape of the two signs A 20 is rather different: the sign on the left hand fragment is more "sophisticated", that on the right hand fragments more "clumsy" of execution. Moreover we note that the execution of A 20 on the right hand fragments differs, however slightly, from that on the left hand fragment, having a third vertical line in its centre. Thirdly we see that the signs on the left hand fragment are all practically of the same size (varying from about 1,75 - 2,00 cm.), while the size of the signs on the right hand fragments rather varies (from about 2,20 - 3,25 cm.!).

Concluding, I would say that the probability of the reconstruction of a libation table with three bowls is certainly not absent, on the contrary; but, in my opinion, bearing in mind the striking differences in the writing, one should not accept the evidence given by Brice that the left hand fragment in his reconstruction has originally been a part of this libation table.⁹ Much more I prefer the opinion that the left hand fragment may have belonged to a libation table of Warren's group five of the libation tables.¹⁰

7. Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 67 sub 8 *Psykhro Cave*, p. 66 sub 5.

8. See for the argument Plate I and the drawing of A 20 (fig. 1).

9. The assumption that both fragments belong to a libation vessel is confirmed by the occurrence on both parts of a fragment of a, or may be the?, libation formula: the right hand part with *ya-sa-sa-ra.me* (cf. e.g. Brice, *op. cit.*, I 8a (Plates XIXa/XIX) and I 16 (plates XXa/XX)) and *a-sa-sa-ra.me* (Brice, I 12 (Plates XIXa/XIX) and I 17 c (Plates XXa/XX)); *ta-na-nu-tī* (A 88) may be related to *(ya)-ta-nu-tī* (Brice, I 4a (Plates XVIIa/XVII), I 5a (XVIIIa/XVIII), I 14 (Brice, Plates XXa/XX)) or *a-ta-nu-tī* (Brice, I 16 (Plates XXa/XX)).

10. Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 66 sub 5 and fig. 2.