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MYCENOLOGICAL ACTIVITY IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE EIRENE COMMITTEE

The deciphering of the Creto-Mycenaean Linear Script B by M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, made public for the first time in the summer of 1952, soon met with a lively response all over the world, which changed quickly into almost general acknowledgement. This was the case also in the countries of the Eirene Committee, comprising Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia. (The designation springs from the fact that these states formed in the second half of the fifties an international organization for cultivating Classical Studies, which was given the above name.) Now, the Organizing Committee of our Conference have decided to introduce a report on the Mycenological activity of these countries as an item of the Proceedings. While undertaking this task I should like to stress that its object is not to differentiate the work of these states from the international co-operation of the Mycenologists of the whole world. It would be all the more preposterous since the world co-operation in this field of science is really exemplary, utterly disregarding all partition-walls. The only motive of this short survey is to give information to those who might be interested, as especially in the fifties the personal and working contact of research workers of the Eirene group with the main Mycenological centres of other countries was not always sufficiently close to ensure adequate mutual information about work done and results obtained. In view of this, it will surely be profitable for the registration of the Mycenological research performed up to now to draw up for each of the Eirene countries a bibliographic survey of this line of investigation. This short introduction only provides an impulse and should subsequently be amplified by a bibliographic report to be included in a special publication comprising the work of our Symposium. I believe that such a report will be found a useful aid in the hands of all Mycenologists.

The interest in the Linear B Script was already traditional in some of our countries before 1952. It was particularly the case with Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. Yet, we have to admit that Czechoslovakia was in this respect less successful. B. Hrozný, who had made his fame by interpreting the cuneiform Hittite and partly also by other discoveries, unfortunately failed when he attempted in the forties to solve the problem of the Cretan Linear Scripts. He was handicapped by having an insufficient number of texts at his disposal, while another obstacle was his too *a priori* methodical approach. If in three cases out of ninety his syllabic values of Linear B signs were identical with, or similar to, those of Ventris, it may have been a matter of chance or else due to the fact that certain signs are in a number of Oriental scripts similar

(e.g. sign No. 3 PA). A considerably greater success was scored here by Georgiev. The latter research worker was busy at this problem also since the forties, and on the threshold of the fifties he published several times in succession his own results: as to his attempt at deciphering, appearing in 1952, it might be pointed out that in the interpretation of the syllabic signs he happened to be in accord with Ventris in ten cases. And it is only right to add that after 1952 he responded to Ventris's deciphering very soon by subjecting his own results to speedy reinvestigation, whereupon he expressed in 1954 his acceptance of Ventris's and Chadwick's views in many points. It is true that at least for a certain time he still adhered to some of his own interpretations of the Linear B signs, refusing at the same time to accept Ventris's orthographic rules, and feeling inclined to attribute the peculiarities of Mycenaean Linear B orthography directly to the language, but in the course of time he was reconciled to Ventris's results almost completely. Even if his own standpoints do not always meet with an all-round acknowledgement, he, nevertheless, contributed significantly in a great number of instances to the progress of Mycenological research, particularly in the sphere of the language and interpretation of texts. Thus of the Eirene countries it is Bulgaria alone which has an intense Mycenological continuity since the time before Ventris's discovery, but, on the other hand, we must admit that this line of research has practically been restricted to Georgiev alone, with the exception of a few minor archeological contributions of other Bulgarian research workers.

A sort of pre-Ventrisian tradition of cultivating interest in the Mycenaean problems existed also in the Soviet Union. Its representatives were chiefly A. I. Tjumenev of Leningrad and S. J. Lurje of Lvov. These research workers along with J. A. Lencman of Moscow were also the first to make the scientific public in the Soviet Union acquainted in 1954—5 with the results of Ventris's work. It was, however, soon after that I. M. Tronskij of Leningrad joined them, and it was he who in 1958 — i.e. at the time of the most violent anti-Ventrisian campaign in the West — pointed in a programme-outlining article to the study of Ventris's Mycenaean Greek as one of the main tasks of Soviet Classical philology.

Thus, a characteristic feature of the Soviet Mycenology was the fact that those in the Soviet Union who took up after Ventris's decipherment the study of Mycenaean matters were scholars of repute, well known for their previous scientific activity, and this may have been one of the reasons why radical criticism of Ventris's theory found no fertile soil here. A certain handicap of the present Soviet Mycenology is that some of the above research workers are no longer alive (Tjumenev, Lurje), but of late one could hear of a number of younger adepts who intend to follow in their footsteps. Upon the whole, Soviet Mycenology has been devoting its main attention partly to linguistic questions (Lurje, Grinbaum) and partly to the problems of Mycenaean society (particularly Lencman, but also Lurje in his monograph *Jazyk i kultura mikenskoj Grecii* [= The Language and Culture of Mycenaean Greece], which has so far been the only critical monograph dealing with the Linear B problems written in the Eirene countries; however, this work is today a bit out of date). Noteworthy is also the fact that Lurje treated the subject of Mycenology in a short popular book for children as well, bearing the title *Zagovorivšije tablčki*.

In the year 1955 two more Eirene countries, namely Yugoslavia and Poland, began to display keen interest in Mycenological questions, even if further development has shown that each of them is following its own route. The Yugoslav Mycenology has been linked from its very beginning with the town of Skopje, the periodical *Živa antika*, and the name M. D. Petruševski. Since the above-mentioned year

a number of studies were published by this research worker, comprising mainly grammatical discourses and interpretations of Mycenaean words. In the course of time he found fellow-workers especially in P. Ilievski and his own wife D. Petruševska. Although the Mycenaean interest has found some expression also outside Skopje, these, however, have not exceeded the range of casual commentaries so that we may say that the general character of Yugoslav Mycenaeanology bears primarily the clear mark of the philological activity of the Skopje group. It must be put down to the merit of the Yugoslav Mycenaeanologists that Yugoslavia possesses today both a real and efficient Mycenaeanological centre and a relatively broad basis for this study throughout the whole country.

As we have already indicated, the Polish Mycenaeanology also had a comparatively dynamic start. In 1955 several informative articles were published on the Mycenaean problems (Safarewicz, Krokiewicz), and there was even a special publication, comprising the work of three writers on this subject (Konik, Press, Sadurska). Later, unfortunately, some of these names have not been met with in Mycenaean bibliographies. The scholar who has most of all maintained his interest in Mycenaeanology appears to be J. Safarewicz, but, contrary to Yugoslavia, it seems that no special Mycenaeanological centre has been formed in Poland — even though the Mycenaeanological problems, esp. those of archaeological aspect, have not ceased to arrest the attention of Polish scholars. Yet, to Poland must be ascribed one distinction among the countries of the Eirene Committee: it is the only one in whose language a translation of J. Chadwick's popular scientific book *The Decipherment of Linear B* (translated by J. Nieczko) has been published, so that the Polish reader has the advantage of being informed in his native tongue in detail about the various concrete aspects of this decipherment. (And as a curiosity let us mention that the motif of the LB decipherment has appeared of late in a Polish detective story, in which the heroine departs to a deserted Aegean island to search there for the Labyrinth of King Minos.)

After the death of B. Hrozný the Czechoslovak traditional interest in the Cretan-Mycenaean problems was broken off. His pupils became aware of the weak spots of his approach to the Linear Script B and they were less taken up with Mycenaeanology as such. It is true that the first information about the decipherment was published in Czechoslovakia as early as in 1954 (Frel, Hejnic, Zgusta), but these reports did not exceed the scope of brief comments. The first article treating the subject more systematically was written by A. Bartoněk as late as in 1956, and since that date the author of this paper has been trying to inform the Czechoslovak public regularly about the progress of Mycenaeanological research in the world, and has been concentrating on the analysis of various problems, particularly from the linguistic point of view. In this way the centre of Czechoslovak interest in these questions has shifted to Brno, and the *Sborník filosofické fakulty brněnské university* (= *Journal of the Philosophical Faculty of the Brno University*) has undertaken the task of acquainting the public with the results of this work. Of the other research workers it was especially L. Zgusta who found it possible to occupy himself more frequently with Mycenaeanological questions, likewise mainly linguistic, and later also the classical archaeologist J. Bouzek. Both of these work in Prague. As it is, we must say that Czechoslovak Mycenaeanology is still lacking closer co-operation of a greater number of scholars. Its present tendency is to study mainly the linguistic aspect, and partly also the archaeological one. The attention of other branches of research was not much arrested by these problems, the main reason probably being the fact that the interest in

Mycenology in our country was becoming more pronounced just at the time when the first critical comments on Ventris's decipherment appeared in literature. As a matter of fact, it seems that these critical voices found a more immediate response in Czechoslovakia than in any other of the Eirene countries, with the exception of the German Democratic Republic, and that the embarrassment over the question of whether Ventris was right or wrong resulted in the years 1957—9 in a certain degree of diffidence as to the investigation of Linear B documents.

In Rumania Mycenological research began in 1957, and these beginnings are connected with the name of the deceased A. Frenkian, who displayed on the threshold of the sixties an extensive Mycenological activity, and with the name of I. Fischer, who has of late revived his interest in Mycenology. The aims of Rumanian Mycenologists are in accord with the good tradition of Rumanian linguistics; they concentrate mainly on the linguistic problems making ample use of modern linguistic methods.

A special situation arose in the German Democratic Republic. It is true that in East Berlin there has existed since 1960 a special department for "Minoische Texte" in the Academy of Sciences, the head of which is H. Geiss, who has been occupying himself very keenly with the study of LB texts, but he investigates this material without applying Ventris's key to the LB syllabic signs. The object of his work is to test Ventris's solution with the help of punched-card machines. From the methodological point of view it is, however, necessary to point out that neither systems of languages nor systems of scripts are systems that can be analyzed solely on the logical basis, and thus it is open to discussion whether Geiss's working aim can be accomplished by merely ascertaining various inconsistencies of the Ventrisian interpretation of the LB texts. On the other hand, we have to admit that Geiss's strictly mathematical and statistical approach to the texts has already resulted in making our knowledge of some aspects of the LB material more precise, and that his activity must, in spite of his mistrust of Ventris's theory, be classified as Mycenological.

And finally, there is Hungary, where the development of Mycenological Studies has commenced but recently. Even though communications about the decipherment and the first attempts of applying it to the study of the Mycenaean world were published towards the end of the fifties (K. Marót, J. Harmatta, S. Szádeczky-Kardoss), nevertheless, it seems that it will be only now, with the publishing of the new university periodical in Debrecen, that there will be real prospects of establishing in Hungary a Mycenological centre, similar to that of Skopje and of Brno.

This survey may naturally appear subjective and incomplete in many respects, and for this reason I should like to make an appeal to all concerned to supplement it with further necessary information so that the published report on this subject in the printed Proceedings of this Symposium may be without substantial defects and gaps. A lack of uniformity in the development of the Mycenological Studies in the countries of the Eirene Committee has certainly a number of subjective and no doubt also objective causes. Among the latter we must include the fact that some places enjoy the advantage of the possibility of regularly publishing Mycenological contributions, as is the case particularly with the periodical *Ziva antika* in Yugoslavia and the Brno University Press. Another differentiating factor consists in the circumstance that the co-operation of several investigators in the same centre represents a great working advantage; this holds good especially for Skopje, while the Brno University has been trying of late to achieve a similar standard as well. In this connection it might be worth considering whether the present Sympo-

sium could not take some steps towards securing closer contact of Mycenologists of not only the Eirene countries but of all the centres of Mycenology in the whole world. The author of this paper will be very grateful for any suggestion that may be made by the participants of this Conference in this respect. Some steps have already been taken towards establishing prompter Mycenological co-operation. UNESCO has recently set up a Comité International Permanent des Études Mycéniennes; the General Secretary is M. Lejune, the Sub-Secretary O. Masson, and the other Committee members are E. L. Bennett, J. Chadwick, C. Gallavotti, M. S. Ruipérez¹. Besides there have been a number of national secretaries appointed (F. R. Adrados, Spain; A. Bartoněk, Czechoslovakia; E. L. Bennett, USA; J. Chadwick, Great Britain; L. Deroy, Belgium; C. Gallavotti, Italy; V. Georgiev, Bulgaria; A. Heubeck, German Federal Republic; P. Ilievski, Yugoslavia; O. Masson, France; E. Risch, Switzerland²).

By way of conclusion we should like to add the following: We are truly happy to be able to welcome the participants of this interesting Symposium to our country and especially the town of Brno. It is for the first time that Mycenologists of the countries the Eirene Committee have assembled in a greater number and met research workers in the same line from other parts of the world. In this way we have commenced a tradition, which, as we sincerely hope, will be preserved in the future. And besides I am sure that this new tradition built on a wider basis will be at the same time recognized as a continuation of the former traditional interest in Ancient Aegean civilizations, which used to be very keen in this part of Europe.

¹ The Committee has recently been enlarged. The new members are V. Georgiev and E. Risch.

² And most recently, F. Schachermeyr (for Austria).

