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COMMUNICATIONS

Recent Lectures and Conferences

An International Colloquium "Sardinian Stratigraphy and Mediterranean Chronology", organized by Miriam S. Balmuth and Robert H. Tykot, was held March 17-19, 1995 at Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts. Sessions and papers of interest to *Nestor* readers included: **Chronology:** Renee Kra, "Radiocarbon Dating and Sardinian Archaeology: A View from an Editor's Desk"; Peter Kuniholm, "Tree-Ring Dating in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Model for Future Research in Sardinia"; Christopher Stevenson and J.G. Ellis, "Density Dependent Hydration Rate Determinations for Sardinian Obsidian". **Beyond the Laboratory: Dating By Style:** Angela Antona, "Stone Figurines: Context and Culture"; Giuseppina Tanda, "Evolution of Chalcolithic Reliefs in Domus de Janas". **Palaeolithic:** Paul Sondaar, "Human Fossils from Pleistocene Sardinia"; Gerard Klein Hofmeijer and Mario Sanges, "Corbeddu Cave"; Jean-Denis Vigne, "New Radiocarbon Dating for Preneolithic in Corsica". **Neolithic:** Ercole Contu, "Stratigrafie ed elementi di cronologia della Sardegna preistorica e protostorica"; Roberto Maggi, "Radiocarbon Chronology in Liguria: Neolithic to Early Bronze Age Comparisons with Sardinia"; Patricia Phillips and Linda Hurcombe, "Chronology and Artifact Function at the Grotta Filiestru"; Francois de Lanfranchi, "Neolitico Medio di Corsica e Sardegna: l'ambiente vegetale"; Vincenzo Santoni, "Il neolitico superiore di Cuccuru S'Arriu-Cabras (OR)"; Paola Basoli, "Aspetti di megalitismo nel territorio di M. Acuto"; Giuseppina Tanda, "Dating the Neolithic". **Chalcolithic Transitions:** Luisanna Usai, "Nuovi dati materiali per una definizione dell'Eneolitico Antico in Sardegna"; Alberto Moravetti, "Muraglie megalitiche, recinti e protonuraghi fra Eneolitico e Bronzo Antico in Sardegna"; Giovanni Ugas, "La cronologia tra il calcolitico al bronzo tardo"; Alba Foschi Nieddu, "Una fase Ozieri dell'età del Rame". **Nuragic:** Maria Ausilia Fadda, "Nuovi elementi di datazione dell'Età del Bronzo Antico e Medio". **Nuragic Figurines:** colloquial discussion. **Proposed Dating Changes; Anomalies:** Sturt Manning, "Radiocarbon and Chronology: The Loss of Innocence"; Peter James, "Mediterranean Chronology in Crisis"; Santo Tinè, "Anomalies in Radiocarbon Dating in the Mediterranean". **Sardinia in the Mediterranean: Round Table. Sardinia in the Mediterranean: Remarks on Data and Interpretation: Round Table. Aegean Chronology:** Philip Betancourt, "The Chronology of the Aegean Late Bronze Age: Unanswered Questions"; Sturt Manning, R. Housely, G. Cadogan, R. Jones, and R. Hedges, "Beyond Ambiguity: Radiocarbon and the Chronology of the Late Bronze Age Aegean and Related Areas"; Malcolm Wiener, "The Long and the Short of it" (with accordion accompaniment); Peter Warren, "Aegean Late Bronze 1-2 Absolute Chronology - Some New Contributions". **Conversation on Precolonial Possibilities:** Frank Cross, "Phoenician Epigraphy"; Brian Peckham, "Phoenician: Sidonian? Tyrian?"; Piero Bartolini, "La protocolonizzazione di Sardegna". **Shrdn? Sea Peoples?:** Peter James, "The Land Peoples and the Shardana"; Amihai Mazar, "Sherden in Canaan"; Vassos Karageorghis, "Sea Peoples in Cyprus". **From the Greek Side:** John Papadopoulos, "A Divide, A Transition, Chronology and Darkness: A View from the Aegean".

Future Lectures and Conferences

Elizabeth Barber will give the 1995 C. Densmore Curtis Memorial Lecture at Bryn Mawr College. She will speak on "Penelope's Web: Transmission of Aegean Culture in the Bronze and Early Iron Ages" in the Physics Lecture Room, Collier Science Building, Bryn Mawr College on Friday April 21, 1995 at 8:00 pm.

James R. Bowman will speak on "Minoan Male Ritual: The Education of Cretan Youth" at the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, Rutgers University, April 29, 1995.

The Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, University of Sheffield, UK will hold three Archaeomaterials Workshops in April and May: The first one on "Ethnography and Pottery Analysis" will take place Saturday, April 29, 1995. By highlighting recent ceramic ethnographic work, this workshop aims to examine the relationship between ethnography and the archaeological analysis of pottery, and to build on differing perception and classification of ceramic categories by those producing, consuming and subsequently studying pottery. Production in several areas will be discussed, including the Andes, Greece, Egypt, Bosnia and Croatia. Lectures and posters of interest to *Nestor* readers include: Richard E. Jones, "The Human Element: Ethnography and Interpretation in the Chemical Analysis of Aegean Pottery"; Peter M. Day, "Spoilt for Choice: Paste Recipes as Social Markers in Crete". Posters: Richard Carlton, "Pottery Making in the West Balkans"; Evangelia Kiriati, "Pottery Production in Bronze Age Macedonia, Greece: Toumba Thessalonikis"; Peter M. Day, Evangelia Kiriati, T. M. Whitelaw, and D.E. Wilson, "Pottery Importation in Early Minoan IIB Myrtos Fournou Korifi, Crete: A Reassessment"; Peter M. Day, "The Potters of Siphnos: Island Environment and the Dissemination of Tradition". For more information contact: Glyn Davies, Archaeomaterials Workshops, Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN, UK. E-mail: "archaeology@sheffield.ac.uk" (attention Glyn Davies); "p.m.day@sheffield.ac.uk".

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Le Disque de Phaistos enfin déchiffré

par Anonymasinus

Le Pr P.FAURE a récemment soutenu que le disque de Phaistos "ne fut, après tout, qu'un jeu d'enfant" (*Kretologia* 1976 p. 63). Nous pensons qu'il a raison et que le disque est bien un jeu d'enfant. C'est, plus précisément, un "jeu de l'oie".

Une telle solution peut paraître évidente et on peut s'étonner qu'elle n'ait pas déjà été proposée. La forme en spirale de l'inscription est en effet caractéristique du jeu de l'oie. L'origine de ce jeu est par ailleurs très ancienne puisqu'on a trouvé de tels jeux en Egypte, au temps des Pharaons. Malgré l'influence importante, signalée par A.EVANS, de l'Egypte sur la civilisation crétoise, on ne connaissait pas jusqu'à présent de jeu de l'oie minoen. Voici cette lacune comblée grâce au disque de Phaistos.

L'essentiel du jeu de l'oie, c'est d'abord ... l'oie elle-même. Elle est ici remplacée par un faucon (signe 31). Le fait que ce faucon ait des orientations différentes était resté jusqu'ici inexplicable. La thèse du jeu de l'oie en apporte la raison : la direction de la tête de l'oiseau marque le sens de déplacement du joueur au coup suivant : Si l'oiseau a la tête vers la droite, le joueur recule ; s'il l'a vers la gauche, il avance ; si elle est verticale, il saute à la ligne au-dessus.

On notera qu'il y a 12 cases à la périphérie du disque, sur les deux faces. C'est une nouvelle preuve qu'il s'agit bien d'un jeu de l'oie car 12 correspond précisément au double-six qui joue un rôle important dans le jeu.

Dans un jeu de l'oie, il faut un départ : C'est, sur les deux faces, ce que l'on a désigné du nom de "tête à plumes". Le symbole est évident : Il s'agit de la fermière qui veut attraper l'oie (Nota : certains savants voient dans les "plumes" des "cheveux" (en brosse) ou des "rayons". Nous pensons qu'il s'agit plutôt d'"épingles" maintenant la coiffure de la fermière).

Le signe 24 est resté longtemps inexplicable : maison lycienne, palanquin, cabane : C'est tout simplement la "volière". Le joueur qui tombait dans cette case devait sans doute passer son tour.

La présence du signe 16, le "couteau" surprenait dans les déchiffrements proposés : Que

The Phaistos Disk, finally deciphered!

translated by Anonymbubo

Professor Paul Faure has recently argued that the Phaistos disk "is, after all, nothing but a child's game" (*Kretologia*, 1976, p. 63). We think that he is right, and that the disk is really a child's game. More precisely, it is a "Game of the Goose".

Such a solution may seem obvious, and it should surprise us that no one has yet suggested it. The arrangement of the inscription in a spiral is, after all, characteristic of the "Game of the Goose". The origin of this game is, moreover, very early, since such games have been found in Egypt, in the time of the Pharaohs. Despite the important influence of Egypt on the Cretan civilization, as is emphasized by Arthur Evans, we knew nothing until now of a Minoan "Game of the Goose". Now this void is filled, thanks to the Phaistos Disk.

The most important part of the "Game of the Goose" is, first and foremost, the "Goose" herself. But here she is replaced by a "falcon" (sign 31). The fact that the "falcon" has different orientations has not yet been explained. Our recognition of the "Game of the Goose" in the Disk shows the reason: the direction of the head of the bird marks the direction of the player's next move. If the bird has her head to the right, the player backs up, if she has it to the left, he advances, if it is vertical he jumps to the line above.

Observe that there are 12 cages on the edge of the disk, on both faces. This is a new proof that it is really a "Game of the Goose", because 12 corresponds exactly to the "boxcars" (double-sixes) which play an important part in the game.

In the "Game of the Goose" there must be a starting-point: This is, on each of the faces, the sign called by the name of "Plumed Head". The symbolism is obvious; it is the sign of the "Farmer's Wife" who is trying to catch the "Goose" (N.B.: some learned scholars see in the "plumes" a "butch haircut, French style", or some "rays". We rather think that it is a matter of "hairpins" supporting the coiffure of the "Farmer's Wife".)

Sign 24 has been unexplained for a long time: "Lycian house", "Palanquin", "Cabin". It really is simply the "Birdcage". The player who lands in this cage certainly must pass his turn.

The presence of sign 16, the "Knife", seems an embarrassment in the decipherments that have been

vient faire un couteau parmi des constellations ou des notes de musique? Le voici désormais expliqué : Il sert à tuer l'oie. Le joueur qui tombe dans la case est éliminé. Le signe 15 (la hache) n'est qu'une variante. De même que le signe 11, plus raffiné (l'arc du chasseur) ou le signe 13, plus barbare (la massue). Il faut y rajouter, pensons-nous, le "pot" (signe 20) qui servira à faire cuire la bête. Toute ces cases éliminent le joueur.

D'autres signes sont bénéfiques ; le signe 1 "l'homme qui pourchasse la bête", ce qui prouve qu'elle court toujours ; le signe 32 (le pigeon) : l'oie échappe à son destin et est remplacée sur la table familiale par le pigeon roti ; le poisson (signe 33) et le mouton (signe 30) : même chose; l'"os à moelle" (signe 41) et le "jarret de veau" (signe 28) : même explication, mais le plat de remplacement est plus élaboré, plus cuisiné.

Nous n'insisterons pas sur les signes correspondant à des plantes qui servent à engraisser la bête. Leur sens est évident. Plus subtiles sont les signes 34 (la mouche) et 12 (l'aire de grain) qui jouent le même rôle, celui de nourrir le volatile.

Bien qu'il reste encore quelques obscurités, nous pensons que la démonstration ci-dessus prouve de façon irréfutable que le disque de Phaistos est un "jeu de l'oie". A ceux qui critiqueraient cette solution,¹ nous retournerons ce qu'a écrit le Pr E.J. BARBER dans "Archaeological Decipherment" (Princeton Univ. Press 1974, p 19) : "Not only is there not enough statistical information for anyone who claims to have deciphered a script for which only 241 signs of nonalphabetic text are known.....to prove his claim, but by the same token there is not enough for anyone else to disprove it".

¹ Que l'on ne s'étonne pas que nous n'ayons tenu aucun compte des virgules ou des corrections du disque... Nous n'avons fait en cela que suivre l'exemple de beaucoup de nos prédécesseurs.

The translator, Anonymbubo, would thank his colleague, who graciously helped him avoid making too many howlers.

The editor, Emmett Bennett, who thinks this is a capital entertainment, was asked by the Author not only to assure our readers that the Author composed this "decipherment" some time ago as a parody of then recently published "decipherments", but also to announce that the Author is also Author of a serious decipherment, worthy of serious consideration.

Emmett Bennett, as publisher, is very grateful to the Editor of *Nestor* for the opportunity to distribute copies of this material to the readers of *Nestor*, without endorsement or prior censorship.

proposed: What is a "Knife" doing among the constellations, or in the notes of music? Here is the explanation at last: It is used to kill the "Goose". The player who lands in this cage is put out of the game. The sign 15 ("Axe") is simply a variant of the same. Other variants are sign 11 ("Bow of the Hunter") - more sophisticated - or sign 13 ("Club") - more barbaric. In our opinion we must add here the "Pot" (sign 20) which is used to cook the bird. Any one of these puts the player out of the game.

Other signs are helpful to the player: sign 1 ("Man chasing the Quarry"), which shows that the "Goose" is still on the run; sign 12 ("Pigeon"): the "Goose" escapes from disaster and is replaced on the dinner table by roast squab. The fish (sign 33) and the sheep (sign 30)? The same thing. The "Marrowbone" (sign 41) and the "Leg of Veal" (sign 28)? The same thing, though these dishes are more elaborate, appropriate to "haute cuisine".

We don't need to say much about the signs representing the plants with which the "Goose" is fattened. Their meaning is obvious. Less obvious are signs 34 (the "Blue-Bottle Fly") and 12 (the "Threshing Floor"), which have the same function, to fatten the bird.

Although there do remain some difficulties in this solution, we think that this demonstration is sufficient to prove, without any doubt, that the Phaistos Disk is a "Game of the Goose". To those who might criticize this solution,¹ we will reply with the conclusion of Professor Elizabeth J. Barber in "Archaeological Decipherment" (Princeton University Press 1974, p. 19): "Not only is there not enough statistical information for anyone who claims to have deciphered a script for which only 241 signs of nonalphabetic text are known.....to prove his claim, but by the same token there is not enough for anyone else to disprove it".

¹ No one should be surprised that we take no account of the strokes drawn with a stylus, or the corrections on the Disk. We have merely followed the example of many of our predecessors.

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