Linear and cult art: addenda, corrigenda, conclusenda

These notes are not intended to correct specific errors in previous papers, but rather to highlight areas where I think my overall approach or understanding was significantly incomplete or otherwise inadequate.

On chimneys (and other scenes)

I now think that most, perhaps nearly all of the images (ancient or modern) to be found on objects (of whatever date) associated with “Linear and cult art” (as proposed in The Problem with Linear B at https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:20833/) can be explained as imagistic play with homonyms of the sounds O KO KO WO KA M(I) NO | TE RE O(U) WA | PE RA KO KO WO (theoretically expressible in putative “Linear B” by equivalent syllabic signs).

Section 6 of The Problem discussed those, essentially three formulaic elements (O KO KO WO etc) extensively, but, at the time, I did not appreciate the pervasive importance of play upon the sounds KA M(I) NO. For reasons explained further below, I do not intend providing further graphic or verbal illustration or exemplification, but those interested in exploring the correlations of sound and image for themselves might find just a little related discussion helpful in their quest. For it does seem that the range of verbal and imagistic play can only be perceived and understood fully if the underlying sounds – KA M(I) NO – equate, in particular and among other things, to: καμίνος, kamino(s), a furnace, oven, kiln. Some illustrations of related imagery were provided in discussion of Linear B tablets KN Vc 74 and KN Dk 1073 in Section 7 of The Problem. But the “art” lies in appreciating and seeing the – many – metaphorical significations or extensions of the word or concept (such as hot, forged, probably “engine”, [furnace] red, [sooty] black); (σ)καμίνο(ς or ν), (s)kamno(s, or n), where the underlying word or concept equates to the modern Greek σκαμνί, stool or trestle, a diminutive of σκαμνός or -oν, the Latin scamnum with the same meaning. Now σκαμνός(ν) would thus appear to be a relatively “late” Greek word, derived from the Latin, but I do not believe that the origin of the Latin is itself understood. In Linear and cult art imagery, the case of the noun can be difficult to determine, partly because it varies by its function in extended word play, but the corresponding imagery clearly and commonly reflects the cognate ideas of “sitting”, “squatting”, “perched”;

καμίνο(ς), *kamino(s), I think unattested in Greek lexicons, but based on whatever noun it was that is now evidenced in, for example, the French “chemin”, way. Again, the implication would be that any related verbal and imagistic play must be “late” (Roman, Byzantine, medieval), and although that may be true for much of it, the problem remains, as with σκαμνός, that we do not know the history or origins or transmission of whatever the word or related words may be. From the corresponding Linear and cult art imagery, the range of related, cognate meanings includes “stepped”, “ridged”, “terraced” as well as (given “chemin” etc) “of the way or road” or “mobile”.

In some arguably later manifestations of Linear and cult art, the several meanings of (*καμίνος become conflated in representations of variously motorised vehicles, that is, for example, an όχος

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2 So, for example, πεμμα, pemma on page 19 of How dysfunctional can an “archive” be https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:21149/ means cooked food, not condiment, but the correction does not affect the point the paper is making.

3 KA MI NI JO is a likely variant, with similar, but not identical word and image play.

4 The Linear B “spelling rules” might require KA M(O) NO, but any signs can only be an approximation to a set of oral sounds – here M+vo CV – that could also be apprehended in word play as equating, despite the accent (not stress), to, say, (ε)σκαμμόνος, dug, or (modern Greek) καμένος, burnt, or σκαμμένος, broken, as well. For the apparent elision of the initial “s”, an accepted feature of the “rules”, see, for example, page 169 of The Problem. There is more to say about its rationale, but it does seem to be a true apperception. I use capital letters for sounds solely in the interests of legibility.

5 For the etymological possibilities, see, for example, discussion of the late Latin camminus in Wikipedia (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/camminus#Latin).
Given some of the corresponding imagery, it is likely that apparent present participles such as χωρών are often indeclinable in Linear art, as in modern Greek (-οντας, -ωντας). It is not clear — to me at least — when such practice arose in the Greek language, nor whether the Linear participles are really that or more like a Latin "gerund", in which case the origin might be considerably older that one might otherwise surmise. Possibly both things are true, the language evolving over time no less than the imagery.

See page 89 of The Problem. So possibly also, and sometimes better than merely SA MA O(U) WA, sama hwras, σαμα ὡρας, sign of time, SA MA TE RE O(U) WA, samanteres hwras, σαμαντήρες ὡρας, the pointers or hands of a clock. I would suggest adding KA DI (J)A to the KE MA etc list.

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images of pins, needles, and so forth, as in KN Ai 739 (page 68 of *The Problem*), on the basis of their correlation to KO WO, σκωλος, skwlos, anything pointed. So a (σ)κωλο(ς και)μνου, (σ)κ culmination of KO WO KA M(I) NO, is an upholstery tack.

Nor, I think, is there anything in the proposed imagery of the “tripod tablet”, PY Ta 641 (page 109 of *The Problem*), that cannot be explained by reference to those same formulaic sound motifs, without the need for recourse to additional sounds or wording, such as putative TI RI PO.

Linear art relies on recognisability, how far the ritual sounds of basic formulae can be pushed to suggest correlated images without breaking the bounds of plausibility in a contemporary ear, and conversely how far imagery can be represented in ways – again varying over time – that suggest corresponding “key” sounds. It remains possible, even plausible that the imagery of some Linear and cult art (though not, I think, a great deal) is based on variant supplementaries, such as, say, O KO KO WO KO NO, but in such cases it may be the exceptional graphic imagery which is primarily responsible for providing the verbal clue as to that variation, rather than any signs.

Increasingly it also seems to me likely that the “O” sound of the formulaic phrases could, in some cases, plausibly be conflated or confused with a “U” sound, as already proposed in TE RE O(U) WA. So O KO KO WO, ὁ κυκλος (h)o kuklo(s), the circle; οἰκου κυλο(ν) or (σ)κυλο(ς), oikou kuwn, or skulos, the house dog; ὀγκον ὀχυρον, onkon okhuron, massive stronghold. Again I am not certain because I have yet, I think, to see imagery that cannot be explained – albeit not as well or as simply – by correlation with words still featuring purely “O” sounds.

But if all imagery in Linear and cult art can be understood as playing on primarily the sounds O KO KO WO KA MI NO etc, occasionally a few other variants such as KO NO⁸, then the need for a Linear syllabary largely evaporates. Most perceived Linear signs are far better understood as

- on the one hand, interventions contributing to images – suggested but multiple, often multi-layered – playing on the formulaic expressions;
- on the other, arbitrary products of wishful or reductionist thinking, in that successive generations of scholars have chosen to isolate only those interventions on a surface that contribute to their preconceptions about signage, ignoring the multitude of others that do not “fit”, or where they cannot be ignored, inventing additional (and incomprehensible) “signs” to explain the impasse.

Similarly, many at first sight apparently convincing individual “signs” can be better understood purely pictorially as highly condensed (and often highly ingenious) images playing on the meanings of the basic formulae, that is as complex motifs or cartoons expressive of those meanings.

“The signs of the Cypro-Minoan and later Cypriot syllabary are derived from or related to the Linear system, so all three must be real writing systems.” But are they really so derived? To a sceptical eye, even if we assume (and it is a large assumption for the reasons set out in *The Problem* and elsewhere) that the Linear signs have been correctly identified in the first place, then the rather few correspondences between the proposed signs of the various proposed systems, in so far as they exist at all, might still be coincidence or misperception.

“Some interventions, particularly numbers, look like signs.” Yes, I still think that may be true, though many apparent number signs are also better explained as component parts of imagery.

In truth I do not have a definitive answer, and I still find it difficult to see, at present, on what basis it might ever be possible to decide whether the Linear syllabaries ever “really” existed. The fundamental problem is, as I have tried to show in *The Problem* and other papers, that Linear and cult art – from all periods and places – often chooses to conceal as well as express itself by its deployment within other art forms, whether “native” art or writing and number systems. The latter can be genuine, as in Mesopotomia, but they can also probably be entirely fictitious, as I suspect the Voynich manuscript, or hybrid, as possibly the – remarkably lightly evidenced – later Cypriot script, where the signs reflect a language (Greek) systematically, but may have been invented entirely for the purposes of mediating Linear and cult art. Both the various Cypriot and the Linear syllabaries may have emerged over time – possibly far later than currently conceived – as epiphenomena of Linear and cult art, with no real existence outside its boundaries. The constant repetition of familiar images correlating to the sounds of the basic motifs (O KO KO WO etc and

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⁸ I no longer see need or grounds for a variant O KO KO WA, or inverted O(U) WA TE RE (page 83 and 89 of *The Problem*).
maybe also PO KO KO WO etc) could have been the starting point – as I suggested in Section 6 of *The Problem* – for such a gradual and, in the case of the Linear scripts, possibly always semantically limited evolution. Limited because it would not have extended much beyond signs equating to the sounds of the basic formulae.

At which point it is timely to remark that even if the scripts are illusory or secondary, it remains true that the verbal play of Linear and cult art – hence its correlated imagery – is based primarily, though not, I think, exclusively on *syllabic* spelling, syllabic sounds.

**Ubiquity and age of Linear and cult art**

When writing *The Problem*, I did not fully appreciate how ubiquitous Linear and cult art was in the historic world – and I mean all round the world – nor how – if, by now, only relatively modestly – widespread still in modern times. Key symbols and other visual aspects of Freemasonry, for example, seem rooted in the cult art, though the same is unlikely to be wholly true, I think, of the masonic orders’ ethics. In other respects, the art form seems more akin to some traditions of “graffiti”, plausibly informing one recent “high-profile” exemplar of UK street art.

But even if somewhat curtailed as to its extent, the modern survival of the living art form, as well as its intrinsic nature, pose an obvious and serious problem. It is a hidden art, as well as, for some at least, maybe cult, or set of related beliefs. It relies for a large (though not the only) part of its effect on concealment and disclosure, ignorance and revelation, a sudden if fleeting or transitory insight on the part of the viewer into what he or she had previously failed to see in the artist’s work. It may “only” be an added dimension, an enlargement of experience, but that, after all, is no small thing. As such, it is or should be a personal experience, and the more some pundit pontificates by way of “helpful” clarification and exemplification, the more the specific art work in question and the art form as a whole is diminished, debased, profaned.

So that is one reason why I have abandoned further illustrations. Another is that I do not pretend to understand fully either the art form itself or any related cult, or the intentions, morality, technology, even fundamental identity or age of its practitioners. Some of its contemporary exponents seem, to my eyes, to have taken considerable risks to perpetuate its influence in ways and contexts that pay-masters, politicians, public and academe might find highly objectionable and insidious, if only they knew, or unless some of them, too, are complicit.

I have no intention of exposing or compromising such individuals any further than I may already have done, though I might have misgivings if and as it ever came to light that the “art” extended into the formation or deformation of “real life”. For the time being, it may suffice to conclude that however vibrant, inventive and challenging Linear and cult art may be, it can also, in effect and probably also sometimes by intent, be mischievous and subversive.

So, for example, I would not be surprised by the sudden future “discovery” of “historic documents” in clear, bold, unambiguous “Linear script” which contain no trace of Linear or cult art, but on the contrary entirely, and equally unambiguously administrative content. For the practitioners of Linear and cult art are, among other things, absolute masters at creating as well as recycling artefacts from the past (wherever, whenever and whatever that may be) in ways which suit their own purposes (whatever those, too, may be).

I proposed in *The Problem* (page 170) that much Linear and cult art appears on items that have been broken or worn. In many cases the “damage” is integral to the effects. So, for example, “cracks” may be used as substitutes for, but otherwise in the same way as drawn lines. But it is often difficult, sometimes impossible to determine whether the artefact was originally designed to be or look so impaired, or whether the artist has taken advantage of an item that originally had some other primary purpose and, maybe, artistic design, the subsequent damage to which created a congenial field for the deployment of Linear and cult art. What I had not fully reckoned with was that the uncertainty or ambiguity might itself be sometimes something calculated.

*The Problem* discussed the varied and consequential difficulty of dating Linear objects (page 174). I think it necessary to emphasise that that difficulty is compounded, more than I then realised, by the practices that I have just been describing, as well as by others of similar ilk. For
example, some museum artefacts may have continued to be subject to further interventions for the purposes of Linear and cult art even during the period of their curation. On reflection, it should at least have occurred to me that museums, archaeology, anthropology, even astronomy are areas of occupation that devotees of a “mother earth” cult art might wish to target as a high priority. If such practice does exist, it may, again, appear wholly unacceptable to the more “scientifically” minded by virtue of its apparent degradation of the integrity of the evidence base, and so, again, for reasons stated, I will not give examples. But there is another domain in which Linear and cult art finds expression in ways I now realise are still more problematic, one that I therefore think does warrant some minimal illustration, or as minimal as I can decently make it.

The photography (and cognate reproduction) of Linear and cult art

Although it features, world-wide, on the grandest natural and man-made structures as well as in “fine” art, historically Linear and cult art appears most at home on smaller, even hand-held objects, often of seemingly humble origin, rooted in the physical and human environment from which they were drawn, many also appearing to have enjoyed further local, artistic interventions possibly over many years. But such practice, and any related beliefs can only have struggled in the face of industrialisation, with its disruptive and dehumanising influence on both populations and artefacts.

The invention of photography appeared to offer salvation and renaissance in two main respects:
- although initially difficult technically, it has always been possible to rework or manipulate photographs to encompass, among other things, the compound, complex, suggestive art forms typical of Linear and cult art. The practice is yet another illustration of how the art uses other media to conceal and to express itself, in this case both the photographic technology as well as any ostensible subject matter (natural scenery and so forth);
- photographs are capable of both wide dissemination by various means of reproduction and, similarly, great longevity. In theory they might be manipulated more than once over time.

Digital photography and graphical applications have enhanced the possibilities still further. The “layers” of image manipulation software, for example, provide an almost exact modern equivalent to the way in which the surface of clay tablets or amenable stone objects can be reworked to suggest multiple images. Arguably the software provides an even better, quicker means of achieving, as well as sharing, the same traditional effect.

Again, to some the facility might appear to carry an unacceptable price, particularly in the case of photographs of wider historic or scientific import. For it would mean that they were not bona fide approximations to reality, but rather deliberate distortions thereof. However, I believe that, in general, manipulation of photographic images in the interests of Linear and cult art has been
- either purely art for art’s sake; or
- only carried out as an extension of that same artistic tradition, in other words where the photograph’s subject itself already incorporates earlier Linear and cult art; or
- perpetrated where, however much the context might seem to suggest the contrary, the image is of only limited interest or utility when it comes to so-called hard science; or
- concentrated, though not exclusively, on areas of an image that are not of primary interest to historic or scientific inquiry. So far example, it tends to exploit areas of foliage rather than human constructs. Again, such discretion is typical of an often self-effacing art form, but it is also artistically liberating. Naturally occurring or random foliage, for example, is an ideal field in which to suggest imagery because it can, in itself, be inherently and highly suggestive. (What continues to distinguish the presence of Linear and cult art from wholly accidental “faces in trees” is the high precision and compelling nature of the suggested image, as well as its conformity with the techniques and motifs discussed in The Problem and alluded to above.)

Examples of early photographs manipulated to conceal and to express Linear and cult art appear to include those taken by Charnay and Maler in central America in the later 19th century. In theory, it is possible that such historic photographs, as are now available on the web, have themselves

9 Examples might include photographs I used in Hoa Hakananai’a and other potential Linear and cult art in the southern hemisphere (https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7816671).
been manipulated digitally only relatively recently. But extensive manipulation may also and already be found in surviving hard copies of, for example, “Wonderful Britain, Its Highways, Byways and Historic Places”, edited by J A Hammerton and published in the 1920s or 1930s.\footnote{A mysterious four-volume publication by the Harmsworth (Amalgamated) Press. Who manipulated the photographs and when is now impossible to tell. Many were taken years or even decades before publication by large photographic houses, typically engaged in producing picture postcards. But local photo shops and “local photographers” also practise Linear and cult art. Their use of client and other personal data may not have been legal or ethical in all cases.}

Distortion of “real subjects” by Linear and cult art interventions can, in some photographic archives or looser collections, appear to be both so intense and so extensive one is left wondering whether there is anything “real” that survives at all. Similar reasoning might suggest the possibility that Linear A and B photographs are also victims of some such fate, that all photographs of “Minoan” or Mycenaean or any other artefacts bearing images of Linear and cult art are but recent fabrications, by whomsoever, the objects themselves devoid of the imagery.

Such concerns are valid, and would require pages of discussion in each and every context to resolve, but, in addition to the points just made above, there are, essentially, two main controls:

- the continued existence of the real-life object. So, for example, I have been fortunate to have access to tangible examples of what I have called Linear and cult art (see Annex A of The Problem), though the reader will have to take my word for that;
- the availability of multiple photographs of the same object. Now, perhaps regrettably, where those have been taken “professionally” or semi-professionally or in an academic or scientific context, they are not, necessarily, at all reliable. But where they are “mere” tourist snaps, it is less likely – ever less the more such snaps exist – that imagery featured therein or thereon is the product of later photographic manipulation.

But why would Charnay and Maler have wanted to alter photographs of archaeological sites and objects in meso-America in the interests of Linear and cult art? Both were artists as well as photographers, and so may have been exposed to the cult art form earlier in their careers. The specific prompt in central America may have been the realisation on their part that the indigenous cultures with which they were coming into contact – both historic and contemporaneous – were themselves masterful exponents of an art form that they were already familiar with from home. The two Europeans chose to continue the tradition photographically in their new locations.

If so, did Arthur Evans or members of his team behave similarly in Crete? A plausible example might be the famous “libation table” fragment from the Psykhro cave (see PS Za 2, page 27ff of The Problem). Whilst the original fragment may have been “genuine”\footnote{“Genuine” because the fragment is impossible to date, but might at least contain some artistic interventions that are truly old.}, maybe also one or more of those found subsequently, the drawing, photographs and reconstructions in Evans’s several publications appear intended, rather, as self-contained, innovative works of Linear and cult art, yes maybe still reflecting some original “Minoan” designs, but highlighting, enhancing or supplementing them each in their own separate and distinct ways by additional, later interventions. (The other fragments may also possibly have been later fabrications to the same end.)

In the preface to the final (two part) volume of “The Palace of Minos”\footnote{OUP 1935, online with fuller credits and other details at https://archive.org/details/cu31924081667812}, almost by way of a parting image, Evans drew attention to an aerial snapshot as he calls it, of the Knossos site (page xxv). Yet solely on technical grounds, it is exceedingly unlikely that the “snapshot” is any such thing.

Firstly, at face value, as an aerial archaeology site photo, there is no reason why the blurred border (A below, blue arrows) should be included at all. It would not have been difficult to crop. Secondly, it is simply impossible to understand the cast of shadows. Some (e.g. at red “a” and “b) are apparently caused by foliage, and suggest a low sun in the southeast (the photo being oriented north), an impression confirmed by the shadowing in only some of the excavated ruin hollows. But at “c”, although it is not clear what the surface features really are, the shadow, still projected from the south east, looks considerably less than one might have expected, and at “d”, though the same proviso applies, it looks to be plainly projected from the south west. The dark discolouration of the central courtyard, marked with Xs at “e”, might, in theory, have various “explanations”, but other areas, such as “f” appear brilliantly lit, as if overexposed or under direct overhead light.
However, the blur, the *chiaroscuro*, and other oddities, such as just detectable trace lines (some examples highlighted green in “A”) that run across large areas of the site, all become comprehensible if the photograph is viewed not or not only as a site “snapshot” but as a work of Linear or cult art. It is a perspective that requires a considerable adjustment of vision, of preconceptions, as well as appreciation of the art form’s techniques and motifs, in sum the suggestion (almost never completion) of multiple, complex images based on recurrent motifs.

So for example in B, the outline of a shoe13 (red), and a south-east pointing hare or rabbit (green). My highlighting does no justice – particularly to the facial features and rear paws – but there is often more than one adjoining suggestion of similar imagery. The minimalistic artistic interventions are, as ever, exactingly precise. I have highlighted another example, part of a larger suggested and suggestive complex, where the delineation of the eye (light brown) is particularly marked.

In Linear and cult art, the hare is nearly always superimposed by a larger bird with pronounced beak. In this case there appear to be at least two suggestions, as highlighted red in C, one of a corvid, one of a roosting gull. The discoloration of the central courtyard seems designed to suggest a complex of mainly left profiles, most obviously perhaps of a woman, highlighted blue.

There is, again, more than one suggestion of the child she typically holds, and I have outlined the facial features of only one candidate to her left (turquoise). The child typically looks on the tail of a bird. The art work, particularly in this rotation of the image, is full of birds, but I have highlighted two, left-profiled and more or less proportionate to the scale of the cameo (green)14. The child also typically looks on the posterior of a woman, the erotic pose of a “crane” or stork dance or, in modern terms, “can-can” or similar, and there is, again, at least one appropriate such suggestion of a prone left-profiled torso (light brown). Similar motifs are replicated on the far right of the picture where a frontal man (yellow), possibly wearing a hat, holds a left-profiled squatting child (purple, its left leg and foot particularly diagnostic) who looks onto the “tail” of the left-profiled woman above (turquoise) or, in different perspective, the courtyard woman (blue).

Much of the suggested imagery is typically erotic, aided in part and in particular by the blurring at the picture’s base. Thus, for example in D, a curvaceous, left-profiled torso (red). As for the pig and lamb imagery that also typifies Linear and cult art, a smaller frontal lamb, one paw advanced (green), larger left-profiled ovine head (yellow), and a larger and smaller right-frontal pig face (blue, purple).

Exploiting the *chiaroscuro* of the ruins, other imagery looks not only modern but modernist, the figures mechanical or robotic, a form perhaps more typical of some meso-American Linear and cult art. But there is antiquity to that perspective or conceptualisation in Crete itself. I have highlighted a right-profiled girl (green in E), but also a frontal child in a pram (red). There is, in particular, more than one suggestion of the child, a smaller more naturalistic version highlighted yellow, a naturalism also reflected in the suggested adjacent image of a right-profiled woman or man (blue). Note too the suggestion of a probably broken wine glass or bottle (purple).

The imagery continues, often with more “obvious” examples, in different rotations. Is it all only a later, even recent “digital” interpolation? Was Evans unaware of it? Did someone in his entourage or employ do the work? I think the first two hypotheses implausible. Crucially, drawings, as well as photographs, in one of Evans’s much earlier publications about Celtic urns15 also conceal and express the techniques and motifs of Linear and cult art. It remains possible that another artist was responsible for the interventions, in either work, but even if that was the case, I think it highly unlikely that Evans was unaware of the effects. Short-sighted he may have been, but he had a keen eye, strong powers of visualisation, drew well, and could have come into contact with the proposed cult art form at several points in his earlier career.

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13 I cannot see a common Greek word for “shoe” corresponding to the sounds of the basic formulae, but the imagery of the art form is often based on periphrases, and the appearance of the shoe itself can vary. So, for example, ὀχυων σκωλοις *kamino(s), I think unattested in Greek lexicons, but based on whatever noun it was καμινος, a step gripping by spikes, such as the stride of a hob-nail boot, running or (now old) golf shoe.

14 Though the shadow that suggests a left-profiled running duck in the lower left corner can also be seen, moving left to right, as the right-profiled silhouette of a chimney sweep, his brush, and his chimney boy.

Indeed, the drawings that he made on a journey through Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875 include the clearest possible evidence, given the hidden nature of Linear and cult art, of his own youthful mastery thereof, for example a Turkish café (for example, the smoke in the hearth or the “railway” arches), three people, and, perhaps especially, pottery vessels\(^\text{16}\), but I shall focus briefly on the later urns paper. Its first drawing (its figure 1 at left) contains wholly unnecessary foliage (which may itself contain hidden imagery) as well as over-complex shading. It is in this latter, in particular, that subtle tonal shifts and other techniques (such as the lines, bands, striations, also exploited by Linear “tablets”) help to suggest the multiple images so typical of Linear and cult art. It takes the eyes (or mine at least) several minutes to begin to adjust to the sensitivity required, but once they do, the images start to emerge, albeit as ever incomplete, with ghostly clarity. I offer a few examples below under some enlargement (even more helps), but without much in the way of further explanation. Figure 4 of the same paper arguably contains shading that makes it easier to see its latent designs. The same may be said of many or all of the photographs.

\[A\]

\[B\]

In A, the right-profiled, behatted seated woman (yellow) is small-scale but as precisely suggested as the left-profiled man’s head with a cap (green). The shaft and head of his golf club woods are suggested bottom left (green). He is in the hole! The larger right-frontal male visage (red) is possibly a jockey wearing the trade-mark cap, also shaped like a saddle. A horse’s eyes and (also smaller) ears are suggested bottom right (blue).

In B, the frontal female face (red) almost seems to wear a “flapper’s” cloche hat. The former eye of the golfer helps suggest a right-profiled sheep’s head (blue, note the lips), so also a left profile (green), and, above, a right-profiled pig’s (purple).

\(^{16}\)https://www.cabinet.ox.ac.uk/drawings-arthur-evans-made-during-journey-through-bosnia-and-herzegovina-1875
The likelihood must be, then, that Evans himself had some awareness of Linear and cult art, probably related personal expertise, whatsoever and howsoever obtained, well before the Knossos dig. But if so, then in theory many “Minoan” finds, or even just the photographs thereof, might be only a contemporary fiction, their sole purpose, origin and existence being to both conceal and express the art form. Yet whilst that proposition may hold some truth, the sheer volume of Knossos Linear tablets and related “fragments”, the excavation’s other and highly wrought “Minoan” artefacts, the nature of the photographs as published in Scripta Minoa II, the albeit often rare availability of other photographs to act as comparators, and, of course, similar discoveries made elsewhere all indicate, to my mind, that there must be some real historic basis to the finds themselves. They are unlikely to be all recent fabrications. The problem remains establishing their true first date, where later artistic interventions, whether by Evans or earlier or even, just possibly more recent generations, plainly do not help to clarify already turbid waters.

But if Evans was aware of the presence of historic Linear and cult art in his also historic finds, yet made no overt mention of it in his Knossos (or Celtic) reports, doesn’t that undermine his personal integrity, the credibility of his discoveries, the Linear scripts, the “Minoan” culture? I think the answer can only be yes, but it is a yes that is to some extent contingent on how far the values of “science” are privileged at the expense of those of Linear and cult art. An individual might have genuine regard for both. So Evans may have perceived the presence of the cult art form in what he unearthed, sincerely respected it, even added to it – both its art and its concealment – just like Maler and Charnay, yet also believed, rightly or wrongly, that the putative writing system, other cultural artefacts, his stratigraphy and dating sequence all had a discrete, scientific basis.

Evans’s awareness of, but reluctance to expose Linear and cult art might also help explain what can, with the benefit of hindsight, seem a most curious selection of illustrative material in the early sections of Scripta Minoa I, other passing remarks that he makes, and possibly his entire – and protracted – approach to divulging the Knossos excavations. At roughly eighty, it may be unlikely that he himself reworked the aerial snapshot of the exposed site, but it was perhaps the best summary testimony he could leave, whilst remaining true to the principles of a hidden art

All of which amounts only to mitigation, not complete exoneration, and the same may be said as regards the practice of the art form on some other occasions in modern times.

Curiously, the sounds of the basic formulae of Linear and cult art, possibly also corresponding to suggested imagery on some artefacts, provide various reflections on Evans’s or other archaeologists’ activities, some implicitly critical, some less so or not at all. For example, Ο ΚΟ ΚΟ ΒΟ ΚΑ ΜΙ ΝΟ | ΤΕ ΡΕ Ο(Υ) ΖΑ | ΡΕ ΡΑ ΚΟ ΚΟ ΒΟ, ὁ χουν χοων Γας Μινω τελει ὁραι Πελασγον χωρον, ho khoun khown Gas Minw telei horai Pelasgon khwron, The one digging soil of Minos’s land [archaeologist] in the end sees Pelasgian [Greek?] land.

John Buchan

Some will jib at the absence of any written testimony, any authority, as they might see it, as to the historical existence and continued currency in the modern world of what I have called Linear and cult art. Given the nature of the proposed entity, as I have tried to describe it, such objections would be inherently unreasonable.

And, in fact, the life and works of John Buchan provide ample evidence, for those with the eyes to see and mind to reflect. The Dancing Floor is an obvious starting point, but there are many other insights in many others of his works and in several aspects of Buchan’s own personal experience. Partly for the reasons I have already given in relation to “decoding” images, I do not intend expanding any further on the proposition here.

With the exception of ambivalent allusions in The Gap in the Curtain and (especially) The Lemnian, Buchan, to my knowledge, never mentions Evans or his activities. On many counts, that silence is astonishing. But then they were both, in their own ways, men of mystery.

17 Though the photograph of Evans himself, opposite his dedication to Halbherr in the same volume, is, on closer perusal, a similarly graphic, cryptic, and brilliant cult art swansong, only, self-evidently, more personal. Note Evans openly says “From a photograph by X” in both cases.