

PREFACE

There are at least two ways of approaching the Bronze Age scripts of Crete and Cyprus. One may consider them as insular phenomena in splendid isolation: no need then to question their possible origins, let alone to feel urged to decipher them with the help of external evidence. Alternatively, one may view them as imports from abroad: in that case one is bound to identify their homelands. The authors have chosen for the last approach; the earliest scripts, found in Crete and Cyprus around 2000 and 1600 B.C. respectively, happen to be elements of larger cultural assemblages imported from Syro-Palestine. The same holds true for the Phaistos disc, which only fits in an Anatolian cultural context. Of course this approach does not exclude the possibilities of later insular developments of originally imported scripts as the change of one Cretan Pictographic variant to Linear A or the derivation of Linear B from Linear A show; the derivation of Linear D from Linear C in Cyprus is also a purely insular development.

Pioneer work always is deficient in one or more respects. Our book is no exception to this rule. If it would give opportunities to the reader to amend its faults and to attain more specific and more precise results, it will have reached its aim: the insight that the ancient scripts from Crete and Cyprus are only decipherable when placed in their proper original settings. This, at least, is the case in so far as the two authors of the present enquiry are concerned: no matter on how many details the authors may differ of opinion, their method is the same.

Finally both authors wish to express their gratitude for the help they received from Jan P. Stronk, who expertly took care of the majority of the drawings.

Jan Best
Fred Woudhuizen