

Preface

Copenhagen, September 2015: the *Comité international permanent des études mycéniennes* (CIPEM) accepts John Bennet's proposal to host the 15th Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies in September 2020, in Athens, based at the British School at Athens (BSA), thus returning the meeting to Greece for the first time since 1990, while also retaining a British connection for the first time since 1963. Torsten Meißner and Artemis Karnava generously agree subsequently to assist with organisation and publication of the colloquium and its proceedings.

March 2020: the world is struck by the Covid-19 pandemic, severely affecting travel and forcing a significant proportion of the world's population into some form of lockdown. Given the lack of certainty about how the situation would develop for the rest of the year, the organisers, with the support of CIPEM, reluctantly and with great disappointment postpone the colloquium for one year, to September 2021. However, despite the successful introduction of vaccines early in 2021, the situation remained uncertain, particularly given the international nature of our field that would require many to travel (some over considerable distances) in order to participate in person. And in the meantime, in addition to health concerns, international air and train travel routes had been severely curtailed, making an in-person *rencontre* practically impossible to hold. Accordingly the difficult decision was eventually taken not to hold the colloquium in person, nor to attempt a wholly virtual meeting, given time differences and the impersonal nature of the on-screen interactions that we were all experiencing in our daily routine.

Instead, the colloquium's necessary business (committee meetings, etc.) was carried out virtually on the days originally scheduled for the physical meeting. As a public-facing bonus, colleagues working on new finds from Knossos on Crete and Ayios Vasileios in Laconia presented these in on-line keynote lectures attended by large audiences. The organisers also undertook to publish all papers originally accepted for the collo-

quium, together with written versions of the keynote lectures, as the proceedings of ‘the colloquium that never was’, its title (*parce-qu’il est permis de rire entre les mycénologues*) *ko-ro-no-we-sa* (cf. **PY Ta 711.2**). Thanks to Artemis Karnava, and with financial assistance generously made available by the Cambridge Faculty of Classics, the volume you have in your hand – or perhaps are reading on-screen – has been published in the *Αριάδνη* series of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Crete.

As editors and organisers, we were gratified to note a good number of early- and mid-career scholars among those contributing to this volume, and even more early-career scholars and students had expressed an interest in attending the meeting itself, leaving the editors in no doubt that interest in Mycenaean, and indeed Aegean studies more widely, is unbroken and continues to attract the intellectual attention of rising academics in a large number of disciplines. It is also pleasing to note the creation of a new CIPeM sub-committee on digital approaches, first proposed in Rome in 2006 and long overdue, plus a general eagerness among sub-committee members to continue their work in the years between colloquia. We wish them well in those endeavours.

The ‘colloquium that never was’ proceedings volume contains 33 contributions that have been divided into five sections: the two keynote lectures that include important new material, for which we are indebted to the respective excavation directors and their teams (KANTA *et al.*; VASIOLOGAMVROU *et al.*); a lengthy section with reports, project and database descriptions as well as archival discoveries (DEL FREO; EGETMEYER; PERNA; AURORA; FLOUDA & NOTTI; GRECO; PIQUERO RODRÍGUEZ; ARAVANTINOS & MARAVELIAS; KARNAVA); a section on the texts, their historical, social and palaeographic information (ALONSO MORENO; FIRTH; GODART & SACCONI; KILLEN; NIKOLOUDIS; NOSCH; ROUGEMONT & VITA; SALGARIELLA & JUDSON; WEILHARTNER); a section on the linguistic aspects of the texts (BERNABÉ; DŽUKESKA; GARCÍA RAMÓN; JIMÉNEZ DELGADO; PALAIMA; PIERINI; THOMPSON; VARIAS GARCÍA); and, finally, a section on scripts and archaeology, into the latter of which creep in papers also outside this section (CIVITILLO; DAVIS *et al.*; HRUBY & NAKASSIS; MOUTHUY). The volume concludes, as every Mycenological volume, with the Minutes of the CIPeM meeting, and the Committee Resolutions (*Comité des signes; Comité des instruments de travail; digital approaches to Aegean scripts*).

We list here some of the signs of times evident in this collection of papers:

- Project descriptions and the explanations of methodology, as well as reports of all kinds, take up considerable space in humanities conferences nowadays, and have also made a dynamic entry here. It is the case that a number of early- and even mid-career scholars without permanent employment are constrained to produce academic work within the frame of time-limited projects, and the projects become the employer and the *raison d'être* of research initiatives and goals. They therefore take on a life of their own. Only recently has research in the Aegean scripts benefitted from two large European ERC grants (not present in this volume: CREWS, <https://crewsproject.wordpress.com/>, now succeeded by VIEWS, <https://viewsproject.wordpress.com/2022/12/22/when-ideas-of-writing-spread/> based in Cambridge; INSCRIBE, <https://site.unibo.it/inscribe/en> based in Bologna), breaking with the 'traditional', Mycenaean solitary investigation, or its collaborative spirit on account of the publication of new texts. The new projects have a hierarchical structure, whereby the Principal Investigator (PI) sets the research agenda for the whole group of researchers, selected by them in the first place. Primary material, its discovery or study, is not within the permitted scopes of these projects, but they rather focus on the *grandes synthèses*, the secondary handling and further elaboration of published material.
- Digital approaches have been narrowing in on epigraphy for some time now, but they appear to have claimed more vital space in the frame of this colloquium. Epigraphy is the oldest discipline among those studying the ancient world, and ways of handling and presenting inscriptions have been pondered upon and offered at least since the time of Ciriaco d'Ancona. But despite its age, epigraphy proved equally non-resistant to the digital sirens of the 21st century. However, digital editions of texts are not only merely another form of accessing our material, but they seem to have a transformative quality in terms of the methodologies we use and our very research possibilities and agendas.
- The pool of countries and nationalities involved in Linear B and related scripts maintains its Babel-esque character, but also shows signs of regression. Mycenaean was, from the start, an international enterprise and it largely remains so. The countries represented in the colloquium are in the European continent (Greece; Italy; Spain; France; UK; Austria; Belgium; Denmark; Norway; North Macedonia), along

with the US and Australia. Individual scholars' institutional affiliations do not always match their countries of origin (we have, for instance, two German participants who are active in the UK and France), which makes up for interesting intellectual combinations and realities. One cannot help but notice the near-absence of a new generation of scholars in various countries of Eastern Europe, and – surprisingly – Germany, where Classical studies enjoy a long tradition. Nevertheless, the field continues to be inhabited by a majority of researchers (primarily philologists or linguists) whose main research output centres, in fact, around the Linear B texts. It is additionally interesting to see how participants combine Mycenology with their (other) research interests, namely archaeology and historical linguistics.

- This colloquium – odd due to circumstances of the global pandemic – marks some more 'revolutionary' occasions. A colloquium that was attended, until recently, by invitation only, saw a number of near-unsolicited participants. Invitees responded to the organising-and-now-editorial committee's targeted call for papers (CfP) by also involving their project partners, and there was a general opening towards more archaeological approaches, given that the materiality of inscription substrates has become of paramount importance to the discipline of epigraphy. This response on the part of the invitees seemed uncoordinated and spontaneous, so we did not consider it appropriate to attempt to stem the tide. The previous colloquium in 2015 in Copenhagen had announced a completely open CfP. This may be an appropriate time to examine and perhaps adapt the traditional structure and workings of CIPeM so as to ensure that it continues to act as a unifying force for Aegean studies while retaining its affiliation with UNESCO.

And on that final note: as part of CIPeM's business in September 2021, it was agreed that the next colloquium would be held in 2025 in Madrid, jointly organised by CIPeM's new Secretary General, Carlos Varias García, together with Eugenio Luján and Alberto Bernabé. As organisers and editors of the 15th colloquium, we wish them a smoother ride than we experienced – good luck/καλή επιτυχία!

John Bennet (Athens/Sheffield) – Artemis Karnava (Rethymno) –
Torsten Meißner (Cambridge)

December 2022,
the year that marks 70 years since the decipherment of Linear B

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Finally we thank all contributors for their patience as the colloquium was first postponed, then cancelled, for working with us to meet the word-limits necessary in such a large volume, and for responding constructively to feedback offered to improve their contributions. We hope the results meet with their approval.