

OXFORD LATIN DICTIONARY

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OXFORD

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Dear Mr. Ventris,

Let me first offer you my congratulations on having solved the Minoan problem; it is a magnificent achievement and you are yet only at the beginning of your triumph. I am comparatively a newcomer to this research having been only seriously concerned with it for six years; and as Sir John Myres may have told you, I was appointed last winter to a lectureship in classical philology at Cambridge, and thus have not been able to spare the time for a real attack since *Scripta Minoa II* appeared. I hope I shall not be too late now to help you with a few minor suggestions. Ever since hearing your talk on the wireless I have been most excited, and when Sir John showed me your provisional list of identifications last Monday I set to work at once to verify your discovery. Thus I had already anticipated a few of your results before receiving your vocabulary yesterday morning. (By the way the address is 86^A not 56, I expect it is Sir J.'s writing!) It is very good of you to allow me to see your working, and I hope a philologist will be able to contribute something to this process. I shall be lecturing on the Greek Dialects, and it will be very nice if I can start with an account of your decipherment and some remarks on Mycenaean Greek.

One or two suggestions. You anticipated my guesses of Ϝ and Ϟ , but you have not got $\text{Ϡ} = \text{pu}$, perhaps because you were afraid of the prep. ἄπυ for ἄπο and ἄπυδοβίς (which may mean simply 'payment' as well as 'repayment'.) This is a very interesting feature of the dialect. The equation of course also gives $\text{Ϡ} + = \text{Πύδος}$; $\text{Ϡ} \text{ϟ}$ may perhaps be βύβος . I suspect $\text{ϟ} +$ may be πάρος , used in poetry for πρό (perhaps here like latin pro). I had taken pa-ka-na as φάσγανον , but your ἄραναί may be right. I wonder if ναυδόμο- means 'temple' rather than 'ship-builder' (ναυδόμος in an inscription; ναυπηγός is the word one expects for 'shipwright'). Is it possible that the termination of di-plé-ra-po-ro (also χρυσο-) is -πωλοί 'sellers' with a shift to o-stem ? For a-ta-ra-si-jo I had thought of ἀθαλάσσιοι 'non-naval' or possibly 'inland'; but this is not very convincing. Is it possible that po-si after ἄνικ is really all one word = ἄνικφοσι , dat.-abl. plur. in * -bhos(i?) , Latin -bus , Ital. -fs , Skt. -bhiti . πριετήρ sounds as if it should mean 'sawyer'. $\text{da}_2\text{-ma(ke)}$ is a puzzle: there is ἄμετας ἄμετας recovered for ἄμετας , and -ἄτας does occur for -ετας (οἰκιστάς) so I feel inclined to favour a derivative of δαίμος ; but it might be connected with Homeric Σπιῶες . An interesting addition to the Cretan place-names is ϕτϕῆ 'Ιδαῖος'.

The question of dialect is naturally of great interest to me.

Despite such features as the retention of the I-E. labio-velars, the dialect is not excessively archaic, and shows such characteristically East Greek features as $\pi > \beta$ (3rd plur. of verbs, $\beta\beta\beta\delta\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$ where West Gk. has $\beta\beta\tau-$). The use of $\alpha\pi\upsilon$ is restricted to what are sometimes called 'Achaean' dialects, i.e. Aeolic, Arcadian and Cyprian. In fact Mycenaean seems likely to be the ancestor of Arcado-Cyprian, though it seems to have $\acute{e}v$, not $i\upsilon$ for example. The problem of the ambiguity of the script makes it hard to be certain what is the right reading of the 3rd plurals like e-ko-si. Historically 'pro-ethnic' Greek $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\upsilon\tau\iota$ was retained in W. Gk. and gave $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\upsilon\tau\iota$ in Arcadian, $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\iota\upsilon\tau\iota$ in Lesbian, $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\upsilon\tau\iota$ in Ionic. I suspect therefore that ~~we~~ e-ko-si may conceal $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\upsilon\tau\iota$ (similarly $\delta\iota\delta\omicron\nu\tau\iota$ etc.) The same problem arises over acc. plurals of α - and o -stems.

If I am right in thinking that the script does not write two like vowels to indicate a long vowel, the forms a-pe-e-si, e-ne-e-si are interesting. The I.E. 3rd plur. is *sentī (Skt. santi), but Gk. carries over the initial e of the singular (*esmi, *esti) to the plural, hence $\acute{\epsilon}\beta\mu\epsilon\nu$ etc. The 3rd plur. would therefore be *esentī, so we may have $\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon(v)\tau\iota$ (or even $\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\nu\tau\iota$). a-peisi is surprising and needs to be looked into.

The news from Pylos is excellent; we may yet unearth a contemporary account of the Trojan War! I am very grateful to you for making your solution available to me, and I hope to see it published before long so that everyone can appreciate your success.

I should much like to talk about it with you and hope we can arrange a meeting. I suppose you don't often come to Oxford.

Anyway, if there is anything a mere philologist can do please let me know. I shall go ahead trying to unravel the tablets on the basis of your solution, and will let you know if I find anything helpful.

Yours sincerely,

John Chadwick
