

47 Highpoint,
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LONDON, N.6.

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Dear Mr Chadwick,

Thank you very much for your letter. It is very encouraging to hear from someone who has been working on the Minoan problem that they agree with the Greek approach; because frankly at the moment I feel rather in need of moral support. The whole issue is getting to the stage where a lot of people will be looking at it very skeptically, and I'm conscious that there's a lot which so far can't be very satisfactorily explained. There's a kind of central area of sense, but still a great periphery which is baffling. Apart from broadcasting round a few more copies of the vocabulary, I propose to leave the problem alone for a month or so, and let the reactions to it solidify; and in particular to see what Blegen says about it. I feel sure that if there's something to this vocabulary, then there should be some pretty clear confirmation of it in the new material. It rather depends who they've got working out there on it, and how far they've got with cleaning and cataloguing the tablets. But if there's a chance of getting some advance news of what the new material consists of, then I'll certainly pass it on to you.

My suggestion
Bennett hasn't had a chance of looking at ~~it~~ in detail yet (in fact he's just been checking through his Linear B index, and couldn't afford to let himself be distracted by the new values); but he says that at first glance "there are a number of things which seem quite reasonable", though he doesn't like the idea of the abbreviated spelling. (Still, if you accept pa-te/ma-te for "father/mother" and -o for the nominative, I don't see how one can avoid the conclusion of abbreviation).

I've been feeling the need of a "mere philologist" to keep me on the right lines. I asked at the Hellenic Society and they suggested I should get on to Professor Page: he's interested and feels there's something in it, though he's skeptical about the details. But he disclaims being a philologist, and suggests that a specialist might be more useful. It would be extremely useful to me if I could count on your help, not only in trying to make sense out of the material, but also in drawing the correct conclusions about the formations in terms of dialect and stage of development. I ~~suggested~~ *sounded* JHS, who had asked me to review Scripta Minoa, if they would have room for an article on "Mycenaean Greek" in next year's number, for which the MS would have to be in by the end of November. I don't know yet whether they will agree to this (it may be a bit controversial still), but if they do, and if the vocabulary can be solidified some more by then, then would you be willing to collaborate in this article? We might meet and discuss it in a month or so.

I'm glad we coincided in some of the values which occurred to me after I wrote to Myres, though I suppose a court of law might suppose I'd already pre-cooked the material in such a way that the coincidence wasn't conclusive. $\pi = p u$ looks very promising.

I don't really understand the context of the Pylos Na series, not knowing what χ represents, but there does seem to be a recurrence of "trade" names on the bottom line. I feel that the form of the stem $\nu\alpha\upsilon$ - does look rather more like "ships": and is "temple-builder" really a distinct trade from "builder" rather than a complimentary epithet (after all, ships must be building most of the time, but temples only every so many years)?

I felt that $\pi\alpha\upsilon\sigma$ would be better, in spelling, for $\#+$; but can we let it take the dative?

For $\chi\epsilon\lambda\alpha\mu\eta$, I think we have to assume a noun $\chi\epsilon\lambda\alpha\mu\eta$

on which it is formed on the principle of the typical Greek contrast:

μοιραν ἔχοντες / ἄ-μοιροι

where the "lacking" adjective puts the stem into the 0- declension; and that it is the contrast between the smiths that have this thing and those that don't which corresponds to the fact that one lot have amounts of bronze next to their names and that the others are named without it. In fact, it was the idea of this contrast between ἔχοντες and ἄ- which first made me feel that the language must be Greek.

In the vocabulary, I suggested that the word was ταλάσια; I have seen it argued that the meaning of "wool-spinning" is only a secondary derivation, applied specifically to women's work, of a term which, if it comes from the stem τλα-, must originally have merely meant any concentrated handicraft. There's another occurrence of τλασθ on No. 42, which doesn't help much, except that the idea of craftsmanship obviously fits better on a tablet dealing with the construction of "wheels" than if we had found it, say, on a grain tablet.

τλασθ I still feel must be identical with the later τάμαρ. The addition of -θ in the plural distinguishes it in form from the agent nouns -τας. But it obviously has a meaning very different from the classical one, and nearer the derivation ταμ-αρτ- "house-putter in order". What they're doing on En02.1 I don't see. Your suggestions on the dialect position confirm what I had guessed myself, though your ἄνω brings the identification much closer. I toyed with the idea of writing ἔχονσι, σιάλωνς, but in the end I thought it was better not to beg the question. I've tried to follow the principle of adopting a archaic spelling where it was a reasonable reconstruction for a number of dialects, but not of interpreting an ambiguous spelling in a prejudiced way until the dialect position was confirmed independently.

On second thoughts, the spelling of φ for all the labio-velars isn't very clear, and it would be better to replace them by κ^w, γ^w, χ^w; or by κ^w, γ^w, χ^w, which does violence to Greek typography but less to the strict value of φ. The labio-velars will be a bone of contention, I expect, and one will have to have an external argument on why it is reasonable that they should not yet have been eliminated in the Mycenaean period. One indication is the notable spelling found by Bossert at Karatepe, where the legendary ancestor of the dynasty is referred to in Hittite as Moksas, but in Phoenician as MPS (= Greek Μόψος). Whether or not the ἄνω at Knossos is an illusion, it does seem to indicate that the sound was still Μόκ^wος in about the 13th century, when presumably the Achaeans settlement of Cilicia led to the contact in names. -οί^wς seems an awkward thing to pronounce, but is inevitable from names of ancient -ops etc.

Thank you for the suggestion for the spelling of the verb as to be. It doesn't seem quite so good if ΑΑΓ on An42.3 is "let them be": not so good for ἔστων, that is, but I suppose all right for ἔντων = ἔσεντων? ἔστων is, as you say, worrying. By all means use the Mycenaean suggestion in your lecture series: I leave it to you how much is presented as gospel and how much as more-or-less inspired guesswork!

Yours sincerely,

Michael Ventris

Other things that worry me: - No και; No definite article; The forms in -ΑΣΣ/-ΑΣΣΙ, -ΑΣΣΙ.

I think we have to assume a noun for ἄνω. I left that ἄνω would be better, in spelling, for ἄνω; but can we let it take the dative? ἄνω for ἄνω. I think we have to assume a noun for ἄνω.