

7. IV. 55

Dear Michael,

Sorry to have been so long with this, but I have had a deal to do as you will see, and in addition have lost a day through a minor illness. I had a very pleasant time in Crete staying at the Taverna — very pleasant, should like to spend a month or two there — and working in the Museum. Access to the tablets was not so easy as here; I could not have them all out at once, and had to examine those on exhibition in their glass cases, but I think I have done a fair job and overlooked none of the tablets for the book (i.e. silence on them in the notes means confirmation of the reading). I copied as well a large number of tablets joined by Bennett, especially where he had added unpublished fragments. I didn't try to check every single tablet; that would have taken far too long. You will see a good many new readings, but most of them are already in the Index. I'm sorry about Se 1006 as it is going to upset our theorizing about -qs; though the tablet still remains isolated. On the whole I am again impressed by the excellent work Bennett has done.

I had several long talks with Platon and think I have made some impression on him; in particular the affair of Ca 895 shook him. He told me that there were some trays full of rotted and crumbling tablets which had become exposed to the weather as a result of broken windows during the war; and Bennett evidently never saw these. They were thick in dust, and many have crumbled completely to a coarse red sand; some fall to pieces at the slightest touch (and were illegible anyway); but a great number are reasonably sound and well preserved. They are of course like the 5000 series only tiny fragments, many of them a mere sign or two or a numeral or merely blank ends. But I picked out any that looked large enough to contain a whole word, and in some cases was able to make joins — 2 or 3 tablets I completely resuscitated from these trays. The important thing is that these fragments will doubtless help to complete the published ones — but I couldn't start to tackle the job of looking for joins; it would take a month at the very least to clean and sort up everything and get all the other tablets re-sorted by categories so as to give you

a reasonable chance of success. My one great discovery was simply the result of reading i-90 followed by what looked like the beginning of a horse's head. This was too good to overlook, and on getting it clean I thought of 895 and took the fragment downstairs to see if it could possibly be a join. I laid it on the glass and it looked good, so I summoned Platon and he opened the case and lo, it was good. I left him to get it glued, and when I came back on Monday (after spending the week-end at Phaistos), the chucks had stuck it on the wrong end, with half the tablet upside down! I told Platon and it's being rectified!

Got back to Athens on Monday afternoon and have now spent some time with Blegen and have helped him join a few more of his new fragments to the Pylos material. All results herewith. I have not got much out of Blegen yet (except a promise to give us a copy of his AJA article with the rooms marked on the plan).

Went to Etresis to-day and saw the Mycenaean stirrup-jar with the inscription. I feel sure it must be a Cretan import: da-²²-to is the place of origin and da-pu₂?-ra-zo[wa] may be the maker's name. I wonder what the archaeologists will say to that?

I am still uncertain how best to fill in my last week here, but hope to get away soon. There is no more real work I can do on the tablets, though much on the book.

I think I had better get this off soon, so that you can digest it and query anything. On the subject of BULL/ox, I feel obliged to differ, for there isn't a general name for the bovine species other than ox, and its meaning as 'castrated bull' is only secondary. I quite appreciate your difficulty and think the point should be mentioned at the beginning of the chapter; but CATTLE will hardly do as it is too wide and has no singular! After all they were quite right to use F^{t} for the working ox; they considered ^{natural} sex more important than any human interference with it.

Weather was very hot in Crete but has been cold since I got back to Athens. Hope all is well with you

Yours,

John