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23 May 1948.

Dear Miss Kober,

It was extremely kind of you to send me copies
of your articles: I'm extremely glad to have them.

I hope I made amends for my -inthos mistake by
anticipating its proper genderlessness in my last letter.

I went down to see Sir John last week and dis-
cuss the book with him. He seemed a lot older than when I last
saw him, and I felt quite glad to be able to help him out a
little with his magnum opus.

We also touched briefly on work in general, and
I must say that I feel with him that the languages of A, B and
mainland are the same. On the other hand, while I've always been
keen to argue that all the various forms are alternative name-
formations, not inflexions, and that the spelling is purely
syllabic, I'm afraid he's probably going too far in this directi-
on. I'm glad he no longer regards Ⴕ and Ⴊ as ideographic,
or "power-words", but it would be deadly to assume that, with
1 or 2 exceptions, no word-group in the whole Knossos material
is other than a nominative name.

I think you've made out a good case for Ⰳ , Ⴖ and
Ⴢⵗ being connected together grammatically, and it's obviously
a very vital point to decide what this connection is. But the
fact that other declensions don't suggest themselves seems to
show that oblique cases occur very rarely, and that the nomina-
tive itself has no fixed ending. I suggest there are 4 possible
reasons for a variation in terminal signs:-

1) chance correspondence in the initial letters of totally un-
     related words.
2) alternative name-forming, adjective-forming, "denominal" etc
     suffixes applied to the same root.
3) Case and tense endings proper.
4) Alternative spellings of phonetically identical words in dif-
     ferent contexts.

I think that (2) will take care of most of the cases in the B
vocabulary, but that (3) must also occur, though they are dif-
ficult to determine, since:-

a) Case-endings may be identical in form with name-suffixes,
b) the same grammatical endings may have different functions,
     and
c) the same grammatical function may be expressed by alternative
     endings.

We can get useful analogues from Etruscan endings, whether or
not the language is related- it seems to have, at any rate, a
similar build.

Most of the words on the Lemnos inscription end fortui-
tously in one of the endings -z (-$) , -ai & -io. Let us for
the sake of argument equate ₹ with -$, and 目 with a syllable
consisting either of the vowel i or of some combination of the
semi-vowel j . Then we can draw up a highly confusing table of
the possible grammatical uses of such endings:-

	$ ending		-i- ending
1.	Etruscan zivas	corresponding with	Lemnian zivai (dative of an adjective?)
2.	hamfes genitive s.		hamfei dative s
	BUT the genitive overlaps with the dative in sense.		
3.	Larθus gen of masculine name		Larθia(l) alternative gen of same name.
4.	atis gen: of the mother		atia(l) alternative genitive.
5.	-s, -ns common ending of masc names.		-i -ia common ending of fem names. nominative.
6.	tins dative "to Jupiter"		tin, tina, tinia alternative forms of nom: "Jupiter"
7.	aras, turis		arai, aomai etc (Lemnian)
	III aspect of verb		II aspect of verb
8			Hirmina-ia genitive of gens-name Hirminai
			hetera-ia nom plural: "serfs"

There's an awful amount of irregularity: the -$ ending (? ₹)
can't very well be a feminine nominative or a nominative plural,
but otherwise either ending can represent almost any case in
noun or verb.
    I gather that you regard the ₹ / ₩s alteration as
a verbal form? We can bring that into our table of ambiguity
by making ₩s for example a syllable with k , - ke or ku.

	$ ending		-c- ending
1.	Laris masculine name formed from base Lar-		Larce other masculine name.
2.	aras turis		arce, turce
	III aspect of verb		V aspect of verb (perfect)

The verbal ending -ce, -cu can have a consonant element inserted
between it and the root: -nce, -sce, -θce (which last might be
spelt the same as the complete word tece "placed ") There's
an analogy here with endings like - ₹₩s , - ᛉ₩s .

    Hrozný gets a similar result by considering 目 as -ā,
and ₹ as -n. Then , by his reckoning, 目 may be:-

1. -ā   ending of feminine nominatives
2. -ā , -iā plural ending
3 -ā   genitive or dative
4 -ā   Permansive 3 person pl of the Piel form of the
         babylonian verb (!)
   ₹ may be:-
1 -n   "nunation", emphatic form of the nominative sing.

<u>Comments:</u>

(a)   I've resisted the temptation to in any of these to
      make either Linear A or B into Greek, Illyrian, or
      indeed into I-E. I think the spelling of Minoan names
      (assuming it is a full spelling, as probable) makes
      it impossible that there was a predominant ending of
      the nominative case, certainly not one in -s. Unless
      the names nearly all belong to a language other than
      that of the inscrr, that rules out all the IE dialects
      (including Hittite), Lydian and possibly Hurrian (though
      it isn't quite settled what the function of the "agentive"
      -š is). That only leaves Etruscan, ?Carian, Lycian , or
      some other, quite unprecedented language, as points of
      comparison.

(b)   I certainly don't think there's anything I-E about Etrus-
      can, except by casual borrowing, or by going back to
      some very pre-I-E stage of development. Admittedly Trom-
      betti enlarges the field of comparison between Etruscan
      and other languages (particularly Italic) quite bewil-
      deringly - he occasionally cites Tasmanian parallels,
      which is going a bit far!

(c)   The <u>names</u> from Knossos, Mainland, & Cyclades do seem to
      conform to a common type. To what language are they re-
      ferable? Most of them look "Aegean" in type, though per-
      haps we shall be able eventually to detect in them traces
      of different ethnic strata - but curiously, nothing Greek
      seems to appear anywhere , or does it?

(d)   Eteocretan, superficially, looks the sort of language whose
      nominatives one might expect to end in -s.

      I admit the phrase "average frequency" is a bad one.
Statistical methods will need accurate safeguards in method to
give a useful result, and you're probably way ahead of me there.
But what I chiefly meant in this context, of a possible clue
to :V: by vowel harmony, is this:- taking for example the letters
ꓤ and ᚲ , if ᚲ occurs among the most frequent letters <u>after</u>
ꓤ , and if ꓤ also occurs among the most frequent letters after ᚲ,
then there's a possibility, which can be measured relative to
other combinations.

      But this particular case I hope won't prove to be frequent
in this way. It isn't good statistics yet, but I feel that on
general grounds of initial frequency there's a fair chance of
ꓤ   equalling A. This ties in with frequency in pre-Hellenic
and Etruscan words and names, and with the fact that half the
"Keftian names" begin with aleph, ꝫ , if the Egyptian translitera-
tion is any indication.

      I've so far been chary of admitting <u>written long vowels</u>
into Linear spelling, because they represent an easy way out for
the transliterator of impossible words; but in words which begin
for example with ⊢ꓤ -, if ꓤ is <u>a</u> , then we might have to read
<u>taa</u>- or <u>tā</u>-. If -ia- and -ua- are written -ija- and -uwa- re-
spectively, which is only a guess, then all letters coming before
ꓤ might have to have :V: <u>a</u> . -A rather shaky grid possibility.

      Going on to consider feminines in - ᚻ , there is a
possibility that ᚻ is also a vowel, and is used to form a long
vowel-ending -ᚎ after ⋀ , ᚲ etc, rather than that it is part
of an ending -ia as I suggested, which I gather may be a recent
feature in Etruscan (? due to Italic influence).

This would make ⊟ either into
a) a lengthener after a preceding :V: i- ,
b) or the second element in vowel groups -ui-, -ai-, ?-oi-, ?-ei-.
    Initial ⊟ should be pretty rare, but ⊤⊟- would have
the value   ai- .(The group-⊤⊟- occurring in a position other
than initial might be tricky to justify).

    Finally one or two ideas on words. I'd be quite happy for
⊬⊱ to be a verb: if ⊯ represents a past ending in -k-, ⊬ would
be a monosyllabic verb-root. I couldn't quite gather from Sir John
whether he regards the ⊬⊱ names as contributors, recorders or
recipients. -If not a verb, perhaps at any rate an agent noun.
    I was wondering if ⊠ - might not represent a prefixed copula
(possibly m-): it might still be worth checking through the words
which are written on the same line immediately before ⊤⊬⊯ , on the
off-chance that they show, if not consistently ⊠ -, at any rate
:C: ⊠ .
    If the CS is any indication, ‡† looks rather like palo, un-
less it is a contracted form of a longer word. In the event of its
being a preposition, there is an Etruscan pre-/postposition
pul / epl , with a not very clearly defined meaning, sometimes "for"
(of persons), sometimes apparently "within" &c. It isn't clear if the
u of pul is original or is a way of spelling vocalic l, pl .
    The positions of ⊤⊬⋊ &c seem to suggest that a meaning "to-
gether, altogether" is possible. A number of languages construct
this word by a locative construction (en-semble, in-sieme, zu-sammen,
till-sammans, to-gether, v-meste &c) and there's a possibility
that ⋊ and ⊯ here represent two alternative forms of a locative
ending, ⊤⋊ being possibly a shorter form of the word. There's an
Etruscan word tuθi generally believed to mean "together" (but
subject to the same general lack of certainty), which would fit,
assuming, as before, that Etruscan u represents, in part or
in whole, an Aegean o. The Etruscan locative ending is -θ,-θi,
-t, or -ti.
    I tend to suspect that in Linear B words (but presumably
not names, owing to the danger of confusion of identical radicals)
there's a regular 2-letter contraction in operation, of which ⊤⊬
is an example. Otherwise it's hard to explain words like ⊕⊓ and
⊕⋔ , which seem to be indeclinable in the plural. There's a
possible parallel here, if the words do mean "child", in the Etrus-
can stem hus- "young" (husiur "sons", huzrnana "youthful" etc).
As ⊕ occurs internally, it would mean treating Etruscan h as the
initial variant of the phoneme X, which isn't unlikely. If ⊕ is
Xu, then words like ⊢⊤⌶⍁⎇⊕ , ⊯⋌⍜⊕   (Sir John thinks thise first
a verb) may be ethnica, and Πελασγοί may be an example of a
-Xu ending alternating with a -t- ending.
    That's about the lot for this time. A lot of rather vague
possibilities, I'm afraid, all fairly recently thought up. But it's
probably better than getting a letter beating you over the head
with arguments for passionate convictions.

                Yours sincerely,

                Michael Ventris

All of which goes to show, I think, that 𐀤 , 𐀁 and 𐊀 , whatever their correct vocalization, may cover a wide variety of grammatical functions, and yet need not in any given instance be flexional forms at all.

Other consonants that come into the running for 𐀤 are, it seems to me, n- or Θ-.

Tentatively, I'd interpret the -𐊤 -𐊨𐀁 -𐊨𐀤 series as -t. -tiia -tiś. But I'm not certain whether we should assume that a final consonant was written with an -e vowel , as in Cypriot, or with an -o (as 𐊤 might indicate if it equals XXX -l.) But it's probably dangerous to argue from Etruscan analogies here, because it's likely that a lot of actually-pronounced final and interconsonantal vowels have been eliminated in time by a strong stress accent.

The reduplication of some final letters is interesting, especially 𐀤𐀤 : I wonder whether it really represents a double sound, and might not rather be a way of indicating some peculiarity of pronunciation (? nasalisation - compare Cypriot's inability to write n before a consonant). I feel that one of the common Minoan name-endings should represent an -athos /-anthos variation, possibly tacked on rather loosely, but I can't suggest which one it should be.

The reduplication of 𐊠𐊠 seems to be an argument against it being a pure vowel. On the other hand the sign 𐊡 seems well suited to it. Incidentally, Sir John lent me Hrozny's articles, and I see that he also reads 𐊡 as ma , with the meaning "and" (as I hinted very unsurely in my last letter) but in the suffixed position and not in the initial, which he regards as a determinative. But the rest of his stuff is so off the beam that his unexpected agreement turns me against the idea. If 𐊡𐊤 - and 𐊡𐊨 have an adverbial or conjunctive use (Hrozny reads mapa "further, also" for the latter) they could equally well be ita- and ipa for Etruscan words of analogous function. 𐊀𐀁𐊠 𐊨 ǀ 𐊡𐊠𐊫𐀁𐊠 look to me like real case-endings. If 𐊠 is si , then the group could be (a) the genitive or dative of 2 singular or plural nouns,(b) a noun and an adjective. Here the meaning "and" for 𐊡 - might be arguable, though if 𐊡 is a vowel, and the second word a plural adjective (cf Etruscan: clenaraśi nacnvaiaśi "of or to his dear sons"), some form of the Etruscan pronoun eśt- might be more the sort of thing:

i ś. te ia śi ??

Of course 𐊡 might still mean "and" without necessarily having to equal ma.

I see that Pugliese-Caratelli refers in his bibliography to Bertoldi's surmise of the existence of a "mediterranean" plural in -ar(a), which I'd guessed myself to exist in the word ἄκαρα , and possibly in others of the same series: Φάλαρα etc. Perhaps this plural ending is to be considered more applicable to things occurring in pairs, sets or groups than the possible plural ending -ia. The name for Crete (I suppose it is Crete now, and not Arzawa) may be a case of a plural word varying between both endings, Kaftar(a) giving rise to the Semitic forms, Kaft(a)ia to the Egyptian.

3.

I hope my experiments with phonetic values don't seem too
completely arbitrary to you - I feel some of us must try out
some hypotheses of linguistic relationship in order to clarify
the possibilities.

But I agree with Sir John that any deductions from correspond-
ences in the first 2 or 3 signs of name-radicals with those of
Anatolian names don't really get us anywhere; because their struc-
ture is such that one can find a parallel to almost any combination
of syllables.

What books did you find useful in looking over Carian and
Lycian? I can't find anything that's much use at all- and I have
the feeling Sundwall's breakdown of Asianic names often tries to
divide into Lycian elements things which may have nothing to do
with the Lycian language.

On the whole Lycian and its neighbours have for me a decidedly
'Vorderasiatisch' look, whereas, with Schachermeyr and Pauli, my
intuition, for what it is worth, sees Minoan and Etruscan as "ägäisch
im engsten Sinne".

I have a suspicion that it is a half-Nazi ideology that makes
the central European blokes see everything in the 2nd millenium from
a vantage point in Hattusas, to feel that heavy-handed Nordics must
have had a hand in every worthwhile cultural manifestation, and to
put down all sorts of casually connected linguistic phenomena to the
all-pervading influence of Lûish.

We aren't able to trace historically any language of the ancient
world xxxxxxxxxxx in the process of becoming a so-called "mixed"
language- by its vocabulary and morphology becoming merged with
that of another language - all that we can say is that trading terms,
flora and fauna, and cultural terms (practically exclusively nouns,
all of them) get taken over in large numbers under given conditions,
when languages suddenly move into a new geographic and cultural
sphere. It's awfully easy to think of the Anatolian languages of
the 1st millenium as a series of "mixtures" crystallised out from
the melting-pot of the languages of the 2nd millenium - but I think
it's a lot safer to assume that all the languages we know have deve-
loped slowly through the period, along their own independent lines
of evolution in the main, and that any divergences, such as between
Etruscan, Lycian and Lydian, or between Hittite and the "normal"
I-E vocabulary, must be measured in units of a thousand years, rather
than by the scale of a few centuries that separate the last Minoan
inscriptions from the languages of the Classical period.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Ventris