

THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
33RD & SPRUCE STREETS, PHILADELPHIA

May 21(?), 1942

Dear Alice,

I was just looking through your letters, and had another one of my usually unfortunate brain-storms. For whatever it is worth, here it is:

You objected to my using the word *τερέβινθος* as an example of a voiceless stop in Minoan, and pointed out that the original form of the word was probably \**τέρμινθος* or \**τρέμιθος*. You also commented on the strangeness of Minoan *b*, if it existed at all. I am perfectly willing to agree, in the light of your opus on the -inthos words. The brain storm is this, was the *b* by any chance a *w* (it is a *v* in Modern Greek)? If it was we would be dealing with the IE alternation of *m* and *w*. This is very common in Hittite, and occurs in Greek, as in *-μένα* vs. *-φεναι*. The question would be whether the change took place in Minoan (in which case, what does it mean), or whether it occurred in adapting the words to Greek. Of course it may be that the phenomenon is shared with some non-IE group: I don't know. (δοφίνα)

A second brain-storm, which is probably even more futile than the above, concerns stops in Modern Cypriote Greek, and the faint chance that they have a bearing on the single series of stops in the syllabary. It is undeniable that the modern Cypriote, particularly if not too well educated, tends to do funny things to stops. Both *τ* and *π* are usually voiced. Thus the word which is correctly transliterated phonetically *Bamboula* is written *πάμπουλά*. In the case of these two stops, however, the issue is clouded by the fact that what were originally their voiced counterparts have now changed. With *γ* and *κ*, however, there is a definite tendency to confusion preceding a back vowel (*γ* is *γ*, of course, before a front vowel, and *κ* is *ch*). Before *a* or *o*, however, Cypriote becomes *k* (*Γεώργιο* is pronounced *Yorko*). It would be easy to write the Greek of present day Cyprus with a single series of stops. This is probably a recent phenomenon, with no bearing on the earlier problem, but it is suggestive. *but maybe it isn't: I don't pretend to know.*

I have agreed to lecture for the Institute again this year, and am going to try to drum up some more trade for the Cypro-Minoan script, in the hope that the notoriety it got last winter will have aroused some interest. Needless to say, I will have a good deal to revise in the light of your comments. I am afraid that it will necessitate a fourth edition of my slides; the museum is beginning to suspect that I am extravagant in that matter.

The above is probably all nonsense. The sad truth is that I know almost nothing about linguistics; it would be safer if I knew absolutely nothing.

Hastily

Franklin D.