

It certainly isn't your fault that your lists of Knossos words have errors - it's mine. I can't help it, but the fact remains that if my lists were up-to-date, you wouldn't have any trouble. Mea culpa

Feb. 16, 1949

Dear Mr. Bennett,

I do hope that the youngsters are better. It does seem to be a law of nature that if one comes down with something, the others do too, even if they have to invent something new to come down with.

And the less said about teaching assignments, the better. Blankety-blank-blank will have to do. Too bad we can't get paid for doing what we want to.

I've been racking my brains, trying to think of some way to save you trips. The total results are zero. My last attempt wasn't what I'd call a success--though I meant well. I am now working on the vocabulary list, but it will take at least three months to finish--if I'm lucky. It took me two weeks to work about three-quarters of the way through the sign A. But then, I've decided that the slow way is the only way, in the long run.

Either day you mention will be fine. On Thursday you can stay at college, if you wish--but not on Saturday. And since there are four other people in my office, and they all have some afternoon classes, I'm afraid you wouldn't get much work done, with people in and out all the time, and conferences with students. This continues all day, and until 11 P.M. at night--since the Evening Session teachers also use the office. On Saturdays they only admit people with special passes. A city college is no place for scholarly research, I've found to my cost.

The vocabulary list I have should be all right. As I said, I listed the whole line each time, so that even if there is a mistake in a number, it doesn't matter, since the inscription is identified. It would be better for you though, if you work at it at my home, so you can ask me about anything that isn't clear.

There is another possibility. If you want to send me your list, a piece at a time, I can correct it for you. With the Pylos material at hand, I've made a few changes in the Knossos material, since certain dubious readings are now eliminated, and what seemed only a possibility before has sometimes become a certainty. These changes are not yet recorded in the vocabulary, since I'm planning to put them all in the new list.

The difference in our alphabetical order doesn't bother me as much, I think, because I've had to learn how to work with other people's lists. But it is a nuisance. I wouldn't want you to use Evans' list, because yours is much better. I wish Blegen would let you publish it officially. It would simplify everything. As it is, I'm neatly stuck. Myres would be hurt if I used another list in preference to his. I did get him to make a few necessary corrections, but he won't make all, because he wants a comparative list of A and B, and that means he lists ideograms and phonetic signs together--and that makes the list inconvenient, to say the least. And his use of B numbers from Evans for the signs not in both scripts causes very many complications. But you can see that for yourself.

The classification is a different matter. The trouble there is in our different viewpoints. I've subdivided much more, and find that subdivision very necessary for my further analysis of the inscriptions. I'm looking for a simple way of indicating the contents of the inscription, and the function of a particular word. In your system for instance, Eb means normally, a two-line inscription (probably a palm-leaf tablet--I haven't checked ~~xxxx~~ the photographs) with the ideogram Φ and perhaps others. I've temporarily assigned most of these to ~~Ke~~ Ke. If I write Ke ~~2~~ (f₃ 1) that gives me a complete identification of a word in your present Eb03. The Ke 20's are all inscriptions with parallels in your present Ep. F₃ means formula three of the ~~AM~~ series, of which ~~AM~~ is the first word. I therefore need only ~~five~~ nine signs, counting letters, numbers and parentheses, to say what ~~xxx~~ would take several lines of English, plus a Minoan word. My system isn't completely worked out yet, of course, but wherever it is, I find it an enormous help, especially in the vocabulary list. When a word is used several times, this notation shows me exactly how the word is used in the various inscriptions. Later, this will serve as the basis for some important conclusions. For example, you've probably observed by this time that E (H) equals AB (I). To interpret--that the head (or principal word) of the E inscriptions, belongs to the same category of words as the single words used as items in AB inscriptions. They are probably also the same as your words after ~~++~~, but I haven't yet gone through all of them to verify this. ~~(AOL)~~ and its family, on the other hand, are all \odot words. That is, they occur only in statements. At least, I ~~think~~ so; I haven't gotten to them yet in my vocabulary.

Your classification is an infinite improvement on a list of meaningless numbers, based only on the order of discovery of the tablets, but for what I have in mind, I need even greater classification. Also, while your system of using consecutive numbers in a category has some decided advantages, it has one very great disadvantage. You can't slip in similar inscriptions. My broken numbers allow for a great deal of ~~xxxx~~ expansion.

Your An 24 and 25 certainly belong with my AA01, and I can easily slip them in.

But my system has this disadvantage. I need all the letters of the alphabet. You can leave arbitrary blanks. My blanks depend entirely on the contents of the inscriptions themselves. To you, putting Ei with F and G because they all have ~~the same~~ ^{the same} To me that is impossible, because they are entirely different kinds of inscriptions, using the same ideograms, or similar ones, but ~~with~~ not in the same way. For my word analysis, it makes a difference even, that one word is ~~RExx~~ Fb (b) and another Fc (b) --I'm using b in parenthesis for a word in the lower register. This distinction may be all-important in deciphering Minoan. I daren't lose it. At present, as I said, it looks as though all E (H) words were similar--but that may not be true. But I'll bet anything that all Ed 200 (b) words are the same, and all Ed200 (H) words are the same, though different from each other. If I can get every subdivision homogeneous, I can proceed from there with almost mathematical accuracy, and, in time, perhaps enlarge the categories.

I'm writing at such length because I don't want you to think I'm unreasonable or uncooperative about this classification business. The actual notation makes little difference. But I can't give up the ground I've gained in my study of Minoan. The subdivisions I've made so far may not be completely accurate, but they have a certain validity. I'm quite willing to change them to something

else so far as letters and numbers are concerned. I'm even willing to throw categories together, but only if you can prove to me that there is no difference between them.

There is no real need for a distinction between A and B, if they are differentiated by small letters, but I've used up the entire alphabet after A in fitting in the Pylos inscriptions. And, indeed, I really need more. There's a limit to what I can do in using tens and hundreds for distinctions.

And B too, is pretty well filled.

I've changed Kf to Kk, because I needed the letters for Pylos material, but the ~~xxxxxxx~~ "saffron" inscriptions must come here, I think, because \uparrow is in other inscriptions combined with the "saffron". I tried to put all inscriptions which use signs sometimes found in combination ~~with~~ \uparrow (when they are not "value" signs) in the K category.

I've temporarily put your Kno1 and Kno2 with the A group. Since Kno2 also uses the "woman", it had to go with human signs, and Kno1 is too similar to separate-- though I do distinguish by using ~~xxxxx~~ Ao01 for Kno1 and Ao11 for Kno2. I'm still pondering the Jn group. Jno3 is certainly an A inscription as well. The same thing is true of En02--that is, if the sign in line 2 is a "man". Your Er group I ~~xxxx~~ transferred to A bodily.

The listings don't satisfy me completely. The whole thing is still liable to constant change and revision. But when I see a word comes from what I now call An01, I know it is from what you call ~~xxxx~~ Jn03, which differs from the other Jn inscriptions because it has a "man". That may be very important, not for the item words, but for some of the statement words. I can't say yet, because I haven't begun working over the words in each classified inscription. If it turns out to have no significance, I will ~~xxxx~~ change the classification. But you see, my letters and numbers mean much more than just the ideogram used. They also indicate how the ideogram is used, and with what kinds of words. I want a classification which will still be useful after Minoan is deciphered, and one which further discoveries of tablets will not upset completely. The fact that the Pylos material, which contains a great deal of material entirely different from that at Knossos, only made me change a few categories is encouraging. I was afraid that the whole scheme of using the alphabet might have to be discarded.

I can't pass any judgement on your suggested list of the use of capitals. What I need is a list, for example, of the A inscriptions as you want them divided. Then I can see if that division will be one that I can use as indicated above.

At present your An category has become for me, Br, Bl, As, At, Al (I don't like "l" but can't skip the letter) Ad, Ab, Aa, An, Aq, Af, Am, Ak, Ax, ~~Bd~~ Bd (in some cases, of course, several inscriptions go together, but the Ab types are scattered all through your An, and so are some of the others). Your Ab and Ad are each quite homogeneous, though I had to rearrange them to show the number and arrangement of the words, and the presence or absence of certain ideograms.

All this may seem to you quibbling, but it's important to me. Naturally, anything I did with the Pylos inscriptions is very

superficial, since I'm not yet familiar with the material.

As I see it, there are two divergent, and equally necessary approaches to the decipherment. One is the mechanical one of sign counts, digraphic counts, graphs, comparisons of the use of signs, based on mathematical formulae which compare random distribution with what we actually have, and all that sort of thing. The other is the examination of the inscriptions for evidence of the function of words, inflection, parts of speech, perhaps meaning. If we get on the right track, the two should supplement one another eventually.

It is for the second approach that I need the subdivided categories. That a certain word is used in "chariot" inscriptions is interesting. The fact that it has a certain function in one type, and a different function in another, is important, and even more important if I find that another word duplicates these two different functions.

With about 2,300 inscriptions, one simply can't remember factors. The notation must convey the information automatically.

According to your interpretation of O, "tools, unexplained objects" Oh and Oj can go elsewhere. But I define O as "metal objects", and therefore Oh and Oj, which have ingots, belong here. My V doesn't necessarily have inscriptions without numbers. It contains the few inscriptions in which words are arranged in boxes.

I don't see where you put my "tree" inscriptions, which I put in "I". U isn't defined as inscriptions without ideograms, but as inscriptions in which numbers are used directly after words, a great many of the ~~X~~ X inscriptions are without ideograms too.

There are too few sealings to make any trouble in ^K and Py, but I was thinking of using a similar classification eventually for Linear A and the Pictographic (Hieroglyphic). There really aren't any pottery inscriptions. That L.M.III sherd is too late to matter. But here again, there are those mainland jars. If we aren't successful with our present stock of inscriptions, we'll have to use the others as well. And being able to put them in a similar classification will be a big help. I didn't assign a letter to pottery, but did think vaguely of W.

I don't think we need worry about using K and P. We are ~~using~~ using A, B, H (which are also standard abbreviations), as is C. We'll just have to use (Pylos) and (Knossos) or (Pyl.) and (Knos.)/. It would be safer anyhow. We don't have to worry for our own records, since we're both using differently colored inks. It happens, I have no P and you have, and we both have K now. I can't say it's caused me the slightest difficulty, even though you actually have Kn. Besides, a lot of people write Cnossus. It won't help much anyhow to leave them out. Thompson may find something at Athens, and Saul Weinberg has hopes for Corinth. Delphi is also possible. I don't know whether I hope something will be found or hope it won't.

In my classification P and Q are still open. We still need a category for graffiti (I mean those on walls, etc., of course). The only one known from Knossos has been washed away, but there may be some at Pylos.

I don't understand why you want to separate Kd, ~~KE~~, Kg, Kh from K. Well, yes, I do understand. You want room ~~xxxx~~ for your En-Er. I really treated those very shabbily. I put them all in a new Kg, except Er, which has become Ak, as I said. Kg took them nicely, using tens for distinctions. If you feel indignant, it will help

you to understand how I feel about my carefully worked-out divisions. They are much more similar to one another than a lot of my inscriptions which had to be treated in the same way.

It is quite true that most of the Pylos and Knossos material, while similar, requires different small letters. But there are a few inscriptions which are of identical types. I tried very hard to keep the same small letters each time, but it's impossible. In ~~xxx~~ A, Pylos spreads out, in J, Knossos, and in K they must be, to some extent, interwoven, because types should be kept together.

At present, Ka-Kc are Knossos inscriptions, Kd-Kg Pylos, Ki-Ko Knossos, Kq-Pylos (hold your breath--these are your Na) Ks and Kt Knossos. Only one Knossos inscription has the ideogram. I don't object to transferring these all to T; it's not a bad idea at all, but it will mean revising T (I rather filled it up with your Sn, On, some Un, one Va---which are all unique, and therefore use up separate small letters).

Besides, I wanted to leave T fairly clear, because some of my X inscriptions may belong there. Your X consists of fragments, but my X, while the inscriptions are fragmentary, are sometimes very large, and quite important.

I don't see any way out of this, except for us to sit down and figure it out inscription by inscription. Maybe we can do it this summer, meanwhile thinking about it, and exchanging ideas. Whatever harm has been done by my former references in print is done. I hope I won't have to write another article this year. In any event, I suppose both of us will be happier about it when we have familiarized ourselves with the other's material.

Perhaps we can work out a system which is different from both of ours. The trouble is, when we use a similar system, we can't help remembering the one we worked out. There is another idea in the back of my mind. It would be nice if it would be worked out, though I doubt that it can. That is, to use the small letters of each category for inscriptions which combine as principal ideogram the one designated by the capital, and as another ideogram the one which is principal in another type. That's as clear as mud. I'll give an example. Take your Kx Jno3, with its confounded "man". If it remains J, it would be Ja (because A is the "man" category). Is that clearer? I don't know how it would work, because each set has too many unique inscriptions. If we only had an alphabet with about 80 signs, like Minoan. Or we might try reversing the notation, with numbers first and letters second. Then we could number the ideograms, and needn't worry about how many there are. This arbitrary limit of 26 causes a lot of the trouble.

Do you think it might be worth thinking along those lines? A new classification of a different type would cause less confusion than using the same type with an new meaning. I must confess I hate to give up Aa01 etc., in favor of something like ~~xxxix~~ 101.3 f but it might grow on us.

I think this letter is long enough. It took me hours to write, and will take you a long time to read.

You're welcome anytime. I'll bring the vocabulary to college if you want me to, though I advise against your trying to work there. But it's up to you. *If you want to send the lists for me to check, instead, I'll gladly do it.*

Sincerely
Alice Kober