

Letter from JC to MV, 13 vii 1952

86a Banbury Road
Oxford
13th July 1952

Dear Mr Ventris,

Let me first offer my congratulations on having solved the Minoan problem: it is a magnificent achievement and you are yet only at the beginning of your triumph. I am comparatively a newcomer to this research having been only seriously concerned with it for six years; and as Sir John Myres may have told you, I was appointed last winter to a lectureship in classical philology at Cambridge, and thus have not been able to spare the time for a real attack since *Scripta Minoa II* appeared. I hope I shall not be too late now to help you with a few minor suggestions. Ever since hearing your talk on the wireless I have been most excited, and when Sir John showed me your provisional list of identifications last Monday I set to work at once to verify your discovery. Thus I had already anticipated a few of your results before receiving your vocabulary yesterday morning. (By the way the address is 86a not 56, I expect it is Sir J's writing!). It is very good of you to allow me to see your working, and I hope a philologist will be able to contribute something to this process. I shall be lecturing on the Greek Dialects, and it will be very nice if I can start with an account of your decipherment and some remarks on Mycenaean Greek.

One or two suggestions. Your anticipated my guesses of ~~𐀀~~ and 𐀀, but you have not got 𐀀 = pu, perhaps because you were afraid of the prep. ἀπό for ἀπό and ἀπόδοσις (which may mean simply 'payment' as well as 'repayment'). This is a very interesting feature of the dialect. The equation of course also gives 𐀀† = Πύλος; 𐀀𐀀 may perhaps be βύσσις. I suspect 𐀀† may be πάρος, used in poetry for πρό (perhaps here like Latin *pro*). I had taken pa-ka-na as φάσγανα, but your σφαγναί may be right. I wonder if ναυδόμο- means 'temple-' rather than 'ship-builder' (ναυδόμος in an inscription; ναυπηγός is the word one expects for 'shipwright'). Is it possible that the termination of di-pte-ra-po-ro (also χρυσο-) is -πωλοι 'sellers' with a shift to o-stem? For a-ta-ra-si-jo I had thought of ἀθαλάσσιοι 'non-naval' or possibly 'inland'; but this is not very convincing. Is it possible that po-si after ἀνια is really all one word = *ἀνιαφοσι, dat.-abl. plur. in *-bhos(i?), Latin -bus, Ital. -fs, cf. Skt. -bhih. πριετήρ sounds as if it should mean 'sawyer'. da₂-ma(-te) is a puzzle: there is δαμετας recorded for δημοτης, and -άτας does occur for -ετας (οἰκιατας) so I feel inclined to favour a derivative of δᾶμος; but it might be connected with Homeric δμῶες. An interesting addition to the Cretan place-names is 𐀀†𐀀𐀀 Ἰδαίος.

The news from Pylos is excellent; we may yet unearth a contemporary account of the Trojan War! I am very grateful to you for making your solution available to me, and I hope to see it

published before long, so that everyone can appreciate your success. I should much like to talk about it with you and hope we can arrange a meeting. I suppose you don't often come to Oxford. Anyway, if there is anything a mere philologist can do, please let me know. I shall go ahead trying to unravel the tablets on the basis of your solution, and will let you know if I find anything helpful.

Yours sincerely,
John Chadwick