

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
SAINT LOUIS

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

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Dear Emmett,

Your full and well-considered answers to my questions have made me see the problems raised by the chariot tablets in quite a different light. I am glad I had the nerve to take up your time; otherwise I would have written my article under several misapprehensions. You are very obliging to reply not just satisfactorily but generously.

First, I have obtained perfect clarification in regard to the pieces not shown on the plates of SM II. Forgive me for putting you to some trouble that I might have spared you, had I known my way around that volume. Your photographs make the preserved text of those tablets very plain; they show that the fragments have been joined irreproachably. There is no need for you to apologize for the photography; it is certainly better than what SM II has to show for the chariot tablets. If you can spare those two pages of photographs for a little while, I would like to write up that part of my paper with them in view. On the other hand, if you want them right back, I'll send them by return mail. You have every right to safeguard them, and would be quite justified in refusing to lend them altogether.

You are obviously most interested in the question I raised about validating the decipherment by using it to suggest the joining of fragments. I am certainly content with your assurance that it has not served that purpose and would be superfluous if so applied. I meant such a use of the decipherment to be one test, and not the only one. You argue strongly against it, especially in the last letter; perhaps I should explain a little better what I had in mind. This decipherment can hardly be a clear-cut solution to a problem in cryptanalysis; it is not quite like a modern military decipherment that yields a completely clear and intelligible text in a known language. Everyone ought to agree that much remains problematical; e.g., the sense of V 280 is extremely dubious in a way that the Gezer calendar, written in an unfamiliar Hebrew dialect, is not. So I say that the value of the Ventris decipherment should be judged as a theory. By that I mean not just, Is it in accord with the facts? but rather Does it draw attention to significant relations between facts? To the extent that I find it does, I want to try applying it further--not that I expect any theory to draw all relevant facts together adequately. Now if it could be said that the decipherment points the way toward putting together the fragments of a tablet, that would indeed be a service. I accept your expert judgment that the piecing together of the fragments proceeds without the decipherment. I am not so sure of your methodological argument in the last letter. My mind doesn't work well if confronted with an alternative like this: If Ventris is right, then X; if he is wrong, then Y. I had hoped that the piecing of fragments would help me decide in a case where I am in doubt how much of the decipherment is right.

I am particularly glad to see the evidence for connecting I-QI-J0 on Sd0415 etc. with the number two. It might have led to the interpretation that this word is a second declension neuter: when dual, it has the same

vowel in its last syllable as masculine attributives have; when plural, it has the same vowel as feminine attributives. Sf0428 would, however, have been an obstacle, if the numeral 1 is certain (you might check your photograph). Also, a-ra-ru-ja on many tablets is only like a feminine participle; hence i-qi-jo had to be taken as feminine, no matter how unprecedented this is in Greek. Even so, many grave difficulties remain. None of them absolutely rule out the decipherment as a failure, and I am weighing the possible ways of accounting for them. My conclusion, in brief, is that they leave the correctness of the decipherment unsettled, until other evidence can be brought in.

Your explanation of the variety in the shaping of 36 and 06 is altogether reasonable. I accept it without reserve, for you have unsurpassed (and I dare say, unrivaled) experience and capacity in the graphic analysis of Linear B writing. Many thanks for your speedy and invaluable aid.

With best wishes,

Saul