

Dear Franklin.

One of these days I'm coming to Philadelphia and do away with you, because you are a dangerous character. As I work away I get "brainstorms" which I store away in my mind for future reference, and sooner or later, you write to me and wonder whether so and so couldn't perhaps be the case. Seriously, I am delighted, of course, because when two people independently wonder about the same thing, there is so much more probability that there is something in it.

About B d H: there does seem to be some correlation between the use of the form with dots, and the single stroke in H and H but that may be just because the writer in these cases was careless or lazy--or even because the tablet is not well-preserved. The trouble is that there are six different versions of B7 *BB B B B B B B 3 dots* (The last two are not B 6, in spite of Evans. B 6 is *H (standing line), H, H*) How can I tell? B7 is never certainly initial in B, and only three times dubiously. B 6 is---although it occurs so rarely that little can be said about it). Now, as to the variants of B7, the second, third and fourth forms (lines extending to the verticals, lines not extending to the verticals, and dots) are easy to confuse. I find that when I write rapidly myself, I tend to use the incomplete line form ~~---H~~, even when I do not mean to. This is especially likely when I am writing with several carbon copies--something that more closely approximates a Minoan's writing on clay with a stylus than other kinds of modern writing. Perhaps their writing equipment had something to do with it, or the state of dryness of the clay. At any rate, my analysis does not show a clear-cut distinction in use between the forms. The forms with three dots ~~xxx~~ or bars are for the most part simply carelessness. The same words occur with four in other inscriptions.

Incidentally, I've been meaning to ask you for a long time: Is it possible to make clay tablets, experiment with various degrees of dryness and wood, bone and metal styluses (Heavens! what a plural!) and actually rewrite one or two of the inscriptions from memory to see what would happen? A side-line archaeologist like me has no equipment and no experience and so can't tell what can or can not be done. Has the clay of the tablets ever been chemically analyzed? Blegen insists that the Pylos tablets had been baked, but how? In an oven? And why? I've always wondered why some of the Minoan writings were put on clay. The material is inconvenient, fragile, hard to stack, and impossible to file. A brainstorm----could the clay tablets have been set into the tops or sides of chests with documents, as a sort of tag? They don't seem to show any traces of fastening on B or at Pylos, but the tags with holes from A seem to show some sort of summarizing. The set of adze tablets that Evans published as found in SM Fig. 21 and PM 4 Fig. 655 seem to have been laid together in sequence, with a summarizing tablet at the bottom. Is there any parallel for this sort of thing? *(By means of inscriptions, in a chest cover)* For a time I thought the tablets might have been at the top and bottom of a stack of palm-leaves in book shape, like the wooden ends of a Sanskrit book, but then they must have been fastened in some way.

As for m vs thw: Yes, I also think so. As I remember faintly, a similar alternation occurs in Semitic. Ask Speiser, he certainly can say definitely. I also think it occurs in some American Indian dialects, but I will have to check that this summer at Chapel Hill. But I can't prove it in pre-Hellenic itself. It often occurs in Greek loan-words from Persian and other languages, and may simply reflect a Greek peculiarity. Incidentally again, have you noticed any strong tendency in apparently pre-Hellenic words toward the existence of pairs of similar meaning in which the initial group of consonant, vowel, consonant reverses? It seems to occur in several ~~-xxx~~ -inth- words. An example that comes to mind is *Πείριπτα: εἰνίπτα (εἰνέρπτα)*. I had a theory about that once, but I've been too busy with the Minoan Script to go on with my investigation of pre-Hellenic words.

As for stops: The tendency to confuse stops, especially by uneducated people, seems to be universal. Vide: dat for that, Toity-Toid for Thirty-Third. Rule here? Aspirated stops become voiced before some vowels, voiceless before others? The second example seems also to show assimilation and dissimilation in Toid. I think the observation is important when one deals with an early form of writing, since the originator of a writing system must of necessity work with the same untutored viewpoint that a semi-literate person uses to-day. English, of course, is hardly a fair criterion, since our t and d are actually aspirated sounds, and th is something quite different. But since stops of the same group are easy to confuse, especially as regards the voiced and voiceless, I think it is fair to assume that Minoan had no original distinction. Maybe there were ~~aspirated~~ different signs for aspirated syllables there. What is bothering me just now is that if Minoan had five vowels, it could hardly have had more than 12 consonants. That's mighty few. They could hardly have had less than three vowels, and only that if they did not distinguish at all between long and short vowels. They may have used an additional vowel sign after a syllabic sign to lengthen the vowel, but I can't find any evidence for that. German uses h orthographically to lengthen the preceding vowel.

Oh well, like Alice in "Through the Looking-Glass" I'm running very hard and getting nowhere fast. I'll compromise on four vowels and fifteen consonants. That gives me 64 signs, which is just about right, allowing for a few combinations that never occur, as is the case with Cyprian.

Double consonants ~~are~~ another thing that bothers me. Some are so common in pre-Hellenic words that it seems almost logical to assume that certain ones were written with one sign.

Skip it!

I'm finishing my analysis of B 40. Allowing for a week for each sign, and six weeks out for the Linguistic Institute at Chapel Hill, that means I'll finish it early in '43. And now I find that my analysis should be analyzed next. I find some very interesting things: Certain signs are often prefixed, or suffixed, to roots. Some are often intrusive. I have some roots. Pretty soon I'll be able to conjugate or decline them, but I still can't read them.

Whenever you write and tell me that you just haven't the time to spend on Cyprio-Minoan, I feel sad, and then brighten up at the reflection that you probably can't really tear yourself away entirely. I can't. I've tried several times, but it's no go. I've resigned myself,; if I want peace I must first finish the job, or work till someone else finishes it.

I envy you. Your work is related to your field of interest. I have to teach beginners Latin, or read papers in which I am told that the inner ~~frieze~~ frieze of the Parthenon portrays the Panatheistic Procession. 'Tain't funny! Not when I spent a period describing and discussing the darn thing!

Good luck with your course. I'd still like to attend it, but I'm afraid that the war will make rail travel almost impossible. Let me know anyway when it meets.

Alice

P.S. As I read this over, I find I haven't really said what I meant to: namely, that I agree that all your "brainstorms" are likely. By this time you ought to realize that when I think a thing is possible, I do my best to prove it isn't.

I'm looking forward to hearing you again. I'll sit in the front row (I mean the second - the front row is reserved for the big shots) and make