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Dear Mr. Bennett,

Thank you very much for your letter. Please don't worry about the time-lag! -Actually, it formed part of a very enjoyable batch waiting for me when I got back yesterday from a month's motoring & camping trip in Sweden.

I expect we can leave the discussion of frequencies for the moment, as the general approach is the same, and the various personal refinements can't really be weighed until they do useful work in helping the actual decipherment. But I'd very much like to go on discussing with you the question of vocabulary.

To my mind there are 2 main working hypotheses for the relationship of the "B" language, which one might call the "P"-alternative and the "L"-alternative; - the first assuming a relationship through a Pelasgian/Etruscan group of dialects, the second through a Lycian/Lelegian/Luvian/Hittite group of strictly Indoeuropean languages. Other alternatives, such as relationship with no surviving languages, are possible too, but don't provide the material for any comparative tests. I've been concentrating on material for the "P"-alternative:

‡ †

I was interested that you suggested the function of ad-ac might even be prepositional (I hadn't seen it on any of the Knossos material available to me: where does it occur?): the "P"-analogy I've had noted for the last year or so is with the Etruscan preposition/postposition

p u l , e p l (*épul).

Pallottino (Elementi p 63) regards it as probably a preposition of place ("in, on, towards" perhaps "for") which governs either the nominative or the locative:-

epl tularu "within the boundary"
pul alumna-θ "in the sacred place"

If ad-ac ‡ † actually is a preposition at Pylos, I suppose its exact meaning depends rather on whether one considers the groups which follow and precede it to be place-names, proper names or divinities. And then again, one wonders why these groups are picked out with it, when in other tablets groups must occur which are also in some sort of prepositional relationship to the transaction involved.

If ad-ac is to be read pa-lo, then the comparison would depend on the following assumptions:-

1. The U in p u l is the Etruscan spelling of a colourless vowel forming part of a sonant -l, -m, -n, -r, as in:-

-(u)m "and"

mulaX / mlaX "offersing"

muli / male / mle "offers"

lavtun / lavtn "family", etc.

2. "B" final -lo corresponds to Etruscan -l in its possible uses as a genitive-dative; collective plural; metonymic; ethnic etc; - the final -o being explained:-

a) as a fuller vocalisation lost in Etruscan.

b) due to a velarisation of a closing L similar to that in Cretan Greek.

c) as the normal Minoan spelling of a final "dead" vowel (final consonant).

Final -l as an apparent grammatical ending occurs in the Lemnos inscription (vanalasiā, morinail); the word ōkiasiale, if it is connected with Phocaea, is presumably not a single ending but a double one: either

a) the dative of the ethnic "to the Phocaeon", or

b) a 'redetermined' locative "at Phocaea" like E: taXna-l-θi "at Tarquinii".

There might be an instance of a similar "redetermined" dative-locative in the final -ij 2] of the group av-ub-ub-ij / ig-ub-ub-ij 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 / 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 in the "A" syllabary, which so many people seem to suspect is the name of the divinity. If ij corresponds to the Cypriote li, the "P"-analogy is with forms like

E: aisvale (*aisu-al-i) "to the goddess Aisu-".
larθiale "to Larth" etc.

Miss Kober suggested a-ka-ka-li Akakali's. My guess would be Ammali, tying up with the name of the mother-goddess, and with the Hesychian gloss Ammalō' "festival in honour of Zeus at Troezen", which someone, I forget who, has suggested emending to "in honour of Demeter".

Reduplicated consonants are unusual in Etruscan spelling, but may have occurred in the spoken or earlier forms of the language; and the reduplicated m in the Lallname for "mother" is perhaps to be expected anyway. But, of course, it may turn out that ub can't stand this m- value.

The alternation of ig- and av- seems to show that the sounds represented must be fairly similar, and I'd be inclined to regard them both as vowels - av possibly being caused by the presence of words immediately preceding, in some way which does not occur in the "B" syllabary spelling, where initial av- seems to be much more unusual.

Have you any clues as to what the alternation of -𐌆 and -𐌆 represents? I've tried to list the possible alternatives:-

- 1) Different cases of the same word.
- 2) Different numbers of the same word.
- 3) Alternative spellings or forms of the same case or number ending.
- 4) Different ways of expressing the same idea, such as "Athens" and "the Athenians".

(1) and (2) seem awkward because the contexts of the inscriptions in which the variations occur are apparently so similar. But you probably know a lot more about it than I've tried to guess at.

Hrozný seems to have shown fairly good reasons for dividing off a word ta in lines 2 and 12 of the long "man" tablet (his No 41), introducing the first actual entry in the 1st and 2nd paragraphs after the introductory phrase:

2	ab.ig-at-θl-ix	XX 1	𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆
12	ab.il-og-ag	XX 1	𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆

This Hrozný translates "here", which gives a good "L"-analogy with the Hittite ta, and the IE pronoun stem t- in general (although it doesn't seem represented in Lycian).

The "P"-analogy would be with the Etruscan pronoun ta, ita "this", whose emphatic form eit/θ, et/θ is used as an adverb "thus" to introduce a quoted speech. Perhaps Hrozný is right in regarding ab-oj 𐌆𐌆 as containing the same stem?

I'm rather at a loss what to say to Hrozný in thanking him for the copy of his "Inscriptions Cretoises". One of the few points of detail on common ground is his discussion of the names for 'children' 𐌆𐌆 and 𐌆𐌆. I wonder whether he is right in calling 𐌆𐌆 the masculine half of the pair. Apart from a prejudice I have to make -𐌆 a more feminine ending than 𐌆, I look at it this way: On Evans' tablet fig 690 (Hrozný's 45) the 𐌆𐌆 are only included among the very young, and then not many of them; and they are named second. In a tablet dealing with women, presumably for some palace service, one would expect the girls to be of greater importance, since they would presumably be kept on with their mothers, whereas the boys would be taken off at an early age (somewhere about 1/4 of the way through the 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 grade?) to be trained for other work. From the alternation of 𐌆𐌆 and 𐌆𐌆 I suppose one might assume that 𐌆 and 𐌆 share the same consonant, and that 𐌆 functions here as a diminutive ending ("P"-analogy with Etruscan -l-, -z-, -v-?). It is curious that 𐌆𐌆 and 𐌆𐌆 followed by numbers show no plural ending: Pallottino mentions traces of an old Etruscan collective identical with the singular, such as tusurθi "spouses", and avil- "years" when used with numbers.

Any ideas what the apparent suffix - $\tau\eta\zeta$ / - $\tau\eta\mu\varsigma$ means? Hrozny doesn't seem to divide it off at all (as perhaps sometimes it can't be), regarding it as an ending -ra-i. Myres I think had a thought that it might be a verb. The only other thing I can think of is either that it represents some adjective (diminutive??) added on (connected with $\tau\eta\zeta$ or $\tau\eta\uparrow A$??); or that it has a parallel with the enclitic articles c-, t- used in Etruscan, quite often (according to Pallottino, Elementi pp 46-47) with names of divinities, less often with names of persons.

eg: calu \mathfrak{s} -tla "of the god Calu"
 a θ umi-cs "of the Athumi"
 vipinal-tra "of the gens Vipina"
 *vel θ i-tai "to the god Veltha"
 lautne \mathfrak{s} -cle "in the family" etc
 tesn \mathfrak{s} -tei \mathfrak{s} "of the law(?)"

and possibly arai-tiz on the Lemnos inscription.

If $\tau\eta$ is indeed based on the consonant c-, then $\tau\eta\zeta$ might be connected with E: **ceru** apparently meaning a "pottery vessel" (indicating a distinction, on the tablets, from a metal form) - derived from the verb **car- cer-** "to make" (and connected also with $\kappa\epsilon\rho\alpha\mu\omicron\varsigma$??). But this sort of speculation is so wild it's perhaps better not to bring it out in the open!

As part of the job of clearing away the red herrings which still clutter up the list of neighbouring languages, I had the idea the other day that some of the features of the Eteocyprian inscriptions from Amathus might have a flavour of Lycian about them. Noticeably the first part of the bilingual

a-na-me?(ma?wa?)-to-ri-u-mi-e (tu?)-sa-i-mu-ku-la-i-la-sa-na
 a-ri-si-to-no-se-a-ra-to-wa-na-ka-so-ko-o-se
 ke-ra-ke-re-tu-lo-se-ta-ka?-na-ku?-mu?-so-ti-a-lo-ka-i-li-po-ti

= ἡ πόλις τῶν Ἀμαθουσιῶν Ἀριστωνᾶ Ἀριστωνάκτος
 εὐπατριδην.

~~which might~~ which might correspond to the known Lycian words

ene wedri U.....zai mluhidaza~~z~~ A. A.

in which **wedri** is the word for "town", **-zai, -ze'** is ~~th~~ an ending of the genitive plural of ethnica, and **mluhidaza** is the title of some privileged cast or office (**d-** having the likelihood of a spirant pronunciation, cf. the transliteration **Dapara / Λαπαρας**). I asked Pedersen's advice on it: he was kind but quite unhelpful, saying he was "not competent in the question". So if he won't say whether the idea makes nonsense or not from the Lycian angle, I suppose we shall have to let the matter rest there for the moment.

I wish ~~someone~~ would have another crack at Eteocretan, and clear the decks of that one.

I was very interested to hear from Miss Kober of the setting up of the Centre for Minoan Linguistic Research, and I hope it will act as a great stimulus to the work. Let our motto be: on the way to a decipherment by 1950 !

Yours

Michael Ventris