To what extent is Linear B Greek?

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Subject: Ancient Greek (Classics)

"A heart with a stem running through it", "a three-legged dinosaur looking behind him", "a tall beer glass, half full with a bow tied on its rim"[1] are the historian David Khan's descriptions of the symbols that make up the script known as Linear B. This collection of 90 distinct syllabic characters and many more ideograms (single signs representing entire words) was, through the efforts of Michael Ventris and John Chadwick in the 1950s, found to represent a language referred to as Mycenaean. Accordingly, the extent to which we accept Linear B as Greek depends firstly on whether it is likely that the script could represent Greek, secondly on the extent to which we accept Ventris's decipherment and thirdly on the question of whether Mycenaean is a dialect of Greek.

A fact that should be borne in mind is that Linear B is by no means isolated. The symbols themselves, though not necessarily their phonetic values, are related to the undeciphered Linear A and, by extension, to its mother script, known as Cretan Hieroglyphics. Since the exact nature of the language of Linear A and Cretan Hieroglyphics is still hotly contested, they cannot be used to make any observations concerning that represented by Linear B. Another sister script, the Cypriot syllabary, has proved far more useful. This was deciphered by George Smith in the late 1870's and was used to write the Greek dialect Arcado-Cypriot during the classical period. That a dialect of Greek was written in syllabic form using a sister script of Linear B clearly makes it more plausible that Linear B itself could also represent a dialect of Greek. The Cypriot syllabary was the first port of call for any wishing to decipher Linear B through the equation of certain signs in the two scripts. The yield with this method was, however, quite disappointing with only seven or eight signs being easily equated and others only by pure guesswork[2].

What the Cypriot script did do was show how the Greek language, which many only thought of as being written alphabetically, might be rendered in a syllabary where only open syllables (*CV* = Consonant + Vowel) were allowed. The fact that the spelling conventions of Linear B, which have been the object of much criticism, are to a large extent reflective of those of the Cypriot syllabary seems largely to have been ignored by those who rejected Ventris' theory. Here, aspirated, voiced and voiceless consonants are not distinguished and *kh*, *g*, and *k* were all written using one series for velar stops, referred to as *k*, and similarly with labials *ph*, *b*, and *p*. The Cypriot syllabary revealed how consonant clusters might be rendered through the repetition of a neighbouring vowel with each individual consonant, or through simple omission in cases where *n* occurred before another consonant. In cases of a final consonant, as often occurs in Greek, a "dead" or unpronounced vowel (usually *–e*) will be added. The example usually used to demonstrate these rules is *a-to-ro-po-se* which we would render as *anthrōpos*.

This final spelling convention was an important piece of evidence used to support the theory that Linear B was not Greek. *s* is the most common final consonant in Greek and so in a Greek syllabary we might expect the sign *–se*, one of the few signs that appears in an almost identical form in both Cypriot and Linear B, to appear frequently at the end of words. This is not the case in Linear B. It later turned out that this was due to a difference in orthography in Linear B

[1] David Kahn, quoted in Singh (1999), p.221
[2] Chadwick (1958), p.23

where final consonants are eliminated, but for many it seemed to prove that whatever language Linear B represented, it was not Greek.

One of the most ardent proponents of the barbarous identification of Linear B was Arthur Evans, the archaeologist who had discovered the script written on clay tablets. The principal reason for this appears to be that he had originally unearthed the tablets at Knossos on Crete, the home of the Minoan civilisation – a culture thought to be non-Greek with a similarly barbarous language. When tablets were also found at Pylos and Mycenae, which were, at least during the Late Helladic Period, Mycenaean, most archaeologists favoured the idea of Minoan domination of mainland Greece. Mycenae and Pylos were thought to be ruled by the Minoan civilisation and the tablets found there representative of the Minoan language, rather than the Greek expected to be spoken by the Mycenaeans. For Evans and many others there was "no place at Mycenae for Greek-speaking dynasts … the culture, like the language, was still Minoan to the core"[3].

There were a few who did think that Linear B was Greek. Among these Greek theorists Vladimir Georgiev came up with an interesting idea in which the tablets displayed an amalgamation of archaic Greek and pre-Hellenic elements, evidence for which was found in clearly barbarous place names, such as *Korinthos, Halikarnassos* and *Zakunthos*. The nature of this pre-Hellenic language is still contested and seemed, for Georgiev, only a way of explaining away difficulties in interpretation rather than an actual insight[4]. Although Ventris himself originally thought that Linear B was Etruscan, he later became convinced of a Greek identification after embarking on what he called "a frivolous digression"[5].

Due to space constraints, I am unable to do justice to the method of Ventris' decipherment, an account of which can be found in such works as Chadwick's *The Decipherment of Linear B* and Simon Singh's *The Code Book*. Suffice to say that, building on the cataloguing work of E.L. Bennett Jr. and the vital observations of Alice Kober, Ventris was able to build up a grid showing the vocal and consonantal relationships between the various syllabic signs. As each new phonetic value was discovered, initially through the use of place names as keys, many more were yielded and eventually whole tablets could be read and understood. One such tablet is that referred to as Pylos No. 704. This will be particularly useful in the later discussion of the problems of Linear B and the linguistic features of the dialect it represents and so I give here a syllabic rendering, transliteration and translation of a few lines of the tablet:

> *kiritewija onato ekosi kekemena kotona paro damo toso pemo*
> *Krithewiai onaton ekhonsi kekeimenas ktoinas paro damoi tosson spermo*
> The Kritherian women hold a lease of a shareland plot from the people – so much seed
>
> *erita ijereja eke euketoqe etonijo ekee teo damodemi pasi kotonao kekemenao onato ekee*
> *Eritha hijereia ekhei eukhetoiq^{w}e etonion ekhehen theon damos de min phasi ktoinaon kekeimenaon onaton ekhehen*

[3] Sir Arthur Evans, quoted in Singh (1999), p.224
[4] Chadwick (1958), p.31
[5] Ventris, quoted in Singh (1999), p.230

> Eritha the priestess has and makes solemn declaration that the goddess has an *etonion* (type of land holding), but the people say that she has a lease of shareland plots[6]

This tablet evidently details land ownership and in the second part we can actually view a dispute which took place over 3000 years ago between a priestess, Eritha, and the people. We are able to make sense of the groups of signs on the tablets and extract from them information in the form of Greek words through Ventris' decipherment. It appears that Linear B does represent Greek.

Ventris' theory, however, has by no means gone unchallenged. I shall now discuss a number of the perceived problems with the decipherment and thus with the identification of Linear B as Greek. One of Ventris' most vigorous opponents was A.J. Beattie[7] who in 1956 published an article entitled *Mr Ventris' Decipherment of the Minoan*[8] *Linear B Script* in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*. He questioned the identification of a number of words, especially pieces of 'specialised vocabulary', such as the ones we see on the tablet Pylos No. 704 shown above. He did not accept Ventris' reading of *ko-to-na* as *ktoina* meaning a 'plot of land' since in classical Greek it meant 'a small village community'[9]. Other pieces of technical vocabulary such as *etonion* appeared as inventions when Ventris could not find a Greek word he could fit in to the collection of syllables his decipherment had revealed.

Beattie, however, fails to appreciate the nature of the tablets. These were brief records kept in the palace archives of official transactions in a time when literacy was probably only confined to a group of highly skilled professional scribes[10]. Not coming across pieces of technical or unfamiliar vocabulary would be a greater cause for suspicion since there would have been little use in recording something easily memorable. One would expect this bureaucratic society to have developed a specialised vocabulary for dealing with such transactions. It is also entirely natural that certain words, like *ktoina*, should change their meaning over the 700 years or so between the Mycenaean and Classical periods. The reading of these words in Pylos

[6] Translation based on Palmer (1980), p.39

[7] Beattie's main objection seems to be against Ventris' method of decipherment, which he seems to suggest was based on the identification of the Greek *–eus* declension, rather than the use of place names. The account he gives shows Ventris twisting the script to suit his theory, rather than the objective cryptanalysis which epitomised his actual method. His perception of the results of Ventris' work was thus influenced by his view of the decipherment and led him to see proof of "some degree of fundamental error" (Beattie, 1956, p.1). The reason for this is in part that Beattie's article was written after the publication of Ventris and Chadwick's first article – *Evidence for Greek Dialect in the Mycenaean Archives* – but before that of their second work – *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*. In *Evidence*, the pair were forced by space constraints to give an inadequate account of the construction of the grid, which led to many misunderstandings, even among their supporters. *Documents* gave a much better reflection of the decipherment process and would probably have dealt with many of Beattie's reservations. Nevertheless, Beattie's article does give a good overview of many of the issues raised by critics of Ventris' decipherment and of the identification of the script as Greek.

[8] Immediately noticeable is his use of the word 'Minoan' to describe Linear B, despite the fact that he himself thought that the language it represented was Greek – almost certainly not that of the Minoans.

[9] Beattie (1956), p.5

[10] The issue of literacy in Mycenaean society is addressed by Chadwick in the chapter *Life in Mycenaean Greece* in his book *The Decipherment of Linear B*. Due to the lack of stone-cut inscriptions in the script either on grave-stones or public buildings, he says we should view Mycenaean Greece, aside for the tablets and some inscribed jars, as illiterate (p.129). Writing had not progressed very much further than scribal circles and was closely connected with palace administration.

No. 704 as technical terms for land tenure appears entirely natural in the context both of the tablet and of the Mycenaean civilisation at large.

Another criticism often levelled at Ventris' reading of Linear B as Greek, by Beattie as well as many others, has been connected with the extensive orthographic rules of the script. One of these is the omission of such letters as *m*, *s*, *r*, *l* and *n* when they occur at the end of a syllable or word finally. The problem is that the *s* and *n* are essential to Greek inflection and without them most case endings are reduced to *–o* in the second declension and *–a* in the first, made more problematic by the fact that long and short vowels are not distinguished, making o equal to both ω and ου. Beattie even went so far as to say that the decipherment chiefly depends on the rule of the omission of these consonants and that the rules of spelling allowed Ventris to make Greek out of barbarous or even meaningless collections of sounds[11].

The need for such orthographic principles might suggest that Greek simply does not work written as a syllabary, making it highly improbable that Linear B was Greek. Further evidence for this idea may be that the limitations of a syllabary force the script to use a single series of signs for aspirated, voiced and voiceless consonants, all of which were still distinct in Greek, so that the numbers of different signs do not become ridiculously high as an entirely new series of *CV* syllable signs would have to have been invented wherever these consonants diverged. To make matters worse, *l* was not distinguished from *r*, with a single series also being used for both these consonants. The combined effect of this and the orthographic rules was that one sign could have any number of possible phonological readings, with signs such as *ka* having in excess of 70 different interpretations. This could lead to the Greek for 'bad' being confused with 'bronze' as both κακος and χαλκος were written *ka-ko*[12]. It also seemed quite a jump from the syllables *pa-ka-na* to the Greek word for 'swords' – φασγανα.

This argument relating to orthographic rules and the limitations of the script seems at first damning for the theory that Linear B could represent Greek. Indeed, the idea that Greek did not work well as a syllabary was one of the reasons that originally deterred Ventris from making the Greek identification of Linear B. This argument has, however, been very successfully refuted by Chadwick and his supporters. The orthographic principle governing the omission of *m*, *n*, *r*, *l* and *s* was shown by Rhys Carpenter in his 1957 article *Linear B* to be an entirely logical method for dealing with the problem of closed syllables in a syllabic script. The five consonants shown above are the only ones sonant enough to exist without an accompanying vowel and thus "their omission from the written record, however regrettable phonologically and however baffling for modern decipherment did not constitute a fatal defect in the syllabary system of notation"[13].

In his discussion of the apparent consonant ambiguity of the script, Beattie made the understandable, yet fundamental error of getting caught up in the English notation for the Linear B signs.  , the Linear B sign for the sound rendered in the Roman alphabet as '*ka*', would obviously not have represented the letters *k* and *a* or even κ and α to the Mycenaean scribe, but "simply indicated a velar stop, the exact nature of which was determined by the

[11] Beattie (1956), p.6-7
[12] Beattie (1956), p.7
[13] Carpenter (1957), p.51

context"[14]. In truth the sign ⊕ indicated *ga* or *kha* just as much as it did *ka*. Carpenter summed this up beautifully when he said "printing pa-ka-na but reading pha(s)gana is not the syllabary's devious deceit, but our own"[15]. The argument that Greek does not work as a syllabary can be easily refuted by the existence of the Cypriot script (see above). The fact that the orthography rules of this writing system are similar to those of Linear B also strongly suggests that Ventris and Chadwick were not just creating them in order to produce ambiguity and find Greek when there was none.

The most conclusive piece of evidence which provided an objective demonstration of the accuracy of Ventris' decipherment of Linear B as Greek is the tripod tablet. This was actually discovered after he had found all the values necessary to read it and so was a piece of entirely external evidence. The tablet showed a series of ideograms, the first collection of which were evidently three legged vessels. The phonetic values obtained by Ventris were substituted for the first sign group on the inscription to read *ti-ri-po-de* which clearly means 'tripods'. One cannot successfully refute the evidence provided by the perfect coincidence of ideogram and phonetic rendering on this tablet, meaning that we must accept that Linear B has been correctly deciphered as Greek.

Professor Saul Levin disagreed. He accepted that it was clear from the tripod tablet that the decipherment was at least partially correct. Viewing the interpretation of the tablet as a whole, however, he concluded that "no two consecutive words can be read and understood" and could only see eight words in the tablet as being "securely defined"[16]. Only nine sign values found by Ventris appeared to him to be beyond doubt and this suggested to Levin the presence of another language beside Greek in the Linear B tablets. He supported this theory with the fact that both the Greek alphabet and the Cypriot syllabary were used in Classical times to represent languages other than Greek. The presence of another language was also suggested to him by certain non-Greek elements on the tablets, such as the *jo-* (pronounced *yo-*) sign value. He claimed that Ventris and his supporters had made an unjustified leap from "There is Greek in Linear B" to "Linear B is Greek"[17].

I disagree with Prof. Levin as the meaning of entire tablets has been obtained through the treatment of the deciphered values as Greek. In the Pylos No. 704 tablet we find a coherent account of a land dispute (see above) and even the presence of Greek accusative and infinitive indirect statement construction - *eukhetoiq^{w}e etonion ekhehen theon*. His assertion that there are no two consecutive words in the tripod tablet whose meaning can be understood is quite false. The three word[18] phrase *a-pu ke-ka-me-no ke-re-a$_2$*, for example, can easily be understood as "*apu kekaumenos skeleha*", meaning "burnt off at the legs". We can even see here the appearance of the accusative of respect – a development familiar from later Greek[19]. We are, in the face of such evidence, left with no choice but to accept Ventris' decipherment.

[14] Chadwick (1958), p.97
[15] Carpenter (1957), p.52
[16] Saul Levin, quoted in Douglas (1965), p.539
[17] Douglas (1965), p.541
[18] Or two words – here the compound verb participle *apukekaumenos* has been split into two words as often occurs in Linear B texts.
[19] Colvin (2007), p.78

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the correctness of the decipherment does not mean the language is necessarily Greek. I shall now address the question of whether the language found on the Linear B tablets referred to as Mycenaean can be called a Greek dialect. For a language to be classified as Greek, a certain number of linguistic changes need to have taken place from its Proto-Indo-European ancestor so that it has a linguistic physiognomy which, while affirming its family relations, at the same time sets it apart from all other members of the Indo-European group[20]. I do not have enough space to cover by any means all relevant linguistic innovations and conservations in Mycenaean, but what follows is a discussion of the most striking features that show the dialect as being 'more' or 'less' Greek.

Among the characteristically Greek morphological features we find the presence of the *–eus* declension. This is remarkably well attested in Mycenaean, albeit with the so called 'digammas' preserved in the oblique cases, which had disappeared in later dialects. To take the example of *khalkeus* ('bronze smith') we can see the nominative preserved in *ka-ke-u* and the oblique stem *–ēw-* in forms such as *ka-ke-we* (*khalkēwes, nom. pl.*), along with the *–eusi* dative plural form in *ka-ke-u-si*. Other such characteristic morphological features include the *–uia* ending of the feminine perfect participle which is attested in the Knossos chariot tablet (KN Sd 4401) as *a-ra-ru-ja* (*araruia*) meaning 'fitted', where the intervocalic *-i-* has weakened to a glide.

The aspiration of the ante- and intervocalic -**s*- sound change is often thought to be one of the defining linguistic developments of the Greek language, which had clearly occurred due to the use of the a_2 value in place of *sa*. Examples can be found wherever the neuter plural form of a noun appears, such as skeleha (written *ke-re-*a_2) in the tripod tablet. That the aspirate was retained is evident from the use of the sign with the posited phonetic value a_2 being present when an aspirate would be expected to appear before the vowel in speech[21].

Relating to aspirates, it appears that the *s* had not yet been lost in the cluster *-ksm-*, a change present in all later Greek dialects[22] - we find the form *aiksmans* (*a*$_3$*-ka-sa-ma*) where Classical Greek has αἰχμη. Another pan-Hellenic development not present in Mycenaean is the *-t-* in the masculine and neuter perfect participle since *-woh-* (the *s* had undergone aspiration) appears in all cases, attested in forms such as *te-tu-ko-wo-*a_2 = *tetukhwoha* meaning 'finished'. A surprising feature of Mycenaean is a general lack of augment in the aorist and imperfect tenses of the verb. There is one example of the augment in the tablet referred to as Gn 1184 where the form *a-pe-do-ke* (spelled elsewhere *a-pu-do-ke*) appears, but it is otherwise entirely absent. This I do not regard as a problem for the Greek classification of Mycenaean since the augment down to the time of Homer was by no means a grammatical necessity. At the time that the tablets were written, I would suggest that the augment was still developing from a free sentence particle meaning "previously" in the proto-language[23] to a more concrete feature of Greek grammar.

[20] Palmer (1980), p.4
[21] Palmer (1980), p.41
[22] Thompson (2010), p.191
[23] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Greek_language

A phonological feature that poses a more serious threat to classifying Mycenaean as Greek is the retention of the entire labiovelar series from Proto-Indo-European, found in such words as *qa-si-re-u* = g^{w}*asileus* – the title of a local official – and in the enclitic conjunction *–qe*. This means that Mycenaean had not experienced the divergence of the labiovelars to dentals and labials (as well as dissimilation to *k*) that is regarded as a defining linguistic change in Greek[24]. Another such characteristic change is the double treatment of the word initial **y* glide. **y* had already become an affricate in roots corresponding to those written with a ζ in classical times and is thus rendered using the *z* series in Linear B, e.g. *ze-u-ke-si* = *dz(/zd)eugesi* meaning 'pairs'. The group where the **y*- becomes an aspirate in Classical Greek, however, is represented in Linear B alternately by the *j* series and pure vowels, which presumably conceal an initial aspirate. We find the word for 'how' (ὡς in Classical Greek) spelt both *o*- and *jo*- = *ho*- and *yo*- and spellings of the temporal adverb as *o-te* contrasting with those of the indefinite relative *jo-qi*. Rupert Thompson in *Mycenaean Greek* suggests two possible explanations for this phenomenon: firstly that spellings with *j*- are historical retentions or secondly that the weakening of **y* to *h* was current at the time the tablets were written[25]. I am inclined to think that this was a relatively recent change not reflected in the script due to the conservative influence of scribal schools, with the aspirate not being distinguished in every instance from the glide.

It is my opinion, and that of the vast majority of Classical scholars, that Mycenaean seems to be sufficiently developed to be regarded as a form of Greek, if anything because enough linguistic changes had taken place from PIE for the meaning of the Linear B tablets to be obtained by regarding the language represented by the symbols as Greek rather than any other Indo-European language. It would seem arbitrary to label certain phonological and morphological changes as being more 'characteristically Greek' than others. We cannot truly say whether the aspiration of the *s*, which had taken place, is more or less Greek than the divergence of the labiovelars, which had not. The conclusion to be taken from the above analysis is that Mycenaean represents a stage, often referred to as 2nd millennium Greek, spoken before a number of 'common Greek' changes which affected all dialects took place or possibly even while they were in progress, as with the double treatment of the **y* glide. In our classification of the nature of Mycenaean we should next consider how it fits into the Hellenic linguistic landscape, relating to its similarities or differences in grammatical or phonological features to other Greek dialects.

We can say that Linear B represents an East Greek dialect. The Pylos No. 704 tablet exhibits the result of a characteristic Achaean and Attic-Ionic assibilation in which *ti* becomes *si* as the form *e-ko-si* = *ekhonsi* appears where West Greek would have *–onti*. The Linear B tablets also use the form *o-te* = *hote* for 'when' rather than the West Greek *hoka*. A feature that distinguishes the Mycenaean of Linear B as being a member of the Achaean group, which also

[24] Beattie saw this as another piece of evidence against the accuracy of Ventris' decipherment of Linear B since he regarded the existence of the entire labiovelar series as unlikely at this stage in the development of the language. He argues that at this time the labiovelars would not be clearly distinguished in all circumstances from other sounds (Beattie, 1956, p.6). In answer to Beattie's objection, it may be argued that the labiovelars could, as he says, have started to lose their distinction with dentals and labials and the appearance of the labiovelar series in all instances in writing is a spelling archaism.

[25] Thompson (2010), p.190

contains Arcadian and Cypriot dialects, is the *o*-vocalism of the 2nd person singular and 3rd person singular and plural. We find the verb *e-u-ke-to = eukhetoi* in Pylos No. 704 and similarly forms such as κειτοι in Cypriot which appear in other dialects as εὐχεται and κειται respectively. This last is, however, a shared archaism which should not be used on its own to indicate similarity. A possible shared innovation is that Mycenaean may also show *o*-vocalism reflexes in their treatment of syllabic liquids *r̥ and *l̥. The word for 'table' appears as *to-pe-za = torpedza < (*k^{w}e)twr̥-pedya* "four footed" where other dialects have τραπεζα. *o*-vocalism reflexes of the liquids would be a potentially significant link with Arcadian and Cypriot[26].

Arcado-Cypriot and Mycenaean also share a number of distinctive grammatical features, such as the lack of remodelling of the feminine present participle on the analogy of the masculine since this form of the verb 'to be absent' appears as *a-pe-a-sa = apehasai* in Mycenaean and ἀπεασσα in Arcadian. We also find the innovation of the use of παρα (*pa-ro* in Linear B) in the ablatival sense with the dative, an instance of which appears in Pylos No. 704 (*paro damoi* = 'from the people'), in both Mycenaean and Arcado-Cypriot. Although Mycenaean diverges from these other dialects in extending the *–hen* infinitive to the athematic conjugation, we can still say that Mycenaean is at least related to the ancestors of Arcadian and Cypriot, making it a member of the Achaean dialect group.

Mycenaean fits well into the current narrative of the ancient Greek language in which Proto-Greek speakers arrived in Greece proper, at which point the language began to differentiate into three or four dialects corresponding to what would become the main dialect groups of the first millennium[27] - Achaean, of which Mycenaean is a member, Attic-Ionic, Aeolic and West Greek. I regard it as significant that Mycenaean started to become a distinct dialect at a similar time to the ancestors of other dialects, that is after the arrival of the Proto-Greeks in the Balkan Peninsula. It is just as much a part of the history of the Greek language as are its contemporaries - the predecessors of Attic and Doric. There is no reason to suppose that Mycenaean would not have completed the same pan-Hellenic changes as the other dialects, such as the elimination of the labiovelars, had it not become extinct after the destruction of the palaces of the Mycenaeans in c.1200 BC. Their dialect only appears further removed linguistically because it has remained in a state of temporal distance from the other attested dialects and thus retains certain archaic features. In fact, as the above discussion demonstrates, there are many points of relation between Mycenaean and other dialects of Greek.

I have shown that, although contemporary scholars rejected a Greek identification, Michael Ventris' decipherment of the Linear B script as Greek should be accepted since it provides a plausible and coherent reading of the tablets in the Mycenaean archives and that the objections to his work can in every case be satisfactorily dealt with. Linear B, therefore, represents an East-Greek dialect with connections to Arcado-Cypriot known as Mycenaean. This dialect is archaic in the extreme due to the fact that it predates the Greek of Homer by over 500 years and as such contains a number of features signifying its early stage in the

[26] Thompson (2010), p.192
[27] Rau (2010), p.173

development of the language[28]. It marks an intermediary stage between proto-Greek and alphabetic inscriptions and should be classed placed among the already remarkably diverse dialects encompassed by the term 'Greek'. Edith Hall in her book *Introducing the Ancient Greeks* views the Mycenaeans as the first Greeks, by virtue not of their language, but their character. In palace records of expeditions to non-Greek lands, inventories of huge volumes of wine and perfume and instances of amusing animal names like *Stomargos* (Talkative) she reads the definitively Hellenic qualities of seafaring curiosity, a joy-loving disposition and a sense of humour[29]. In answer to the question of the extent to which Linear B is Greek, we can say that it is a script found in Greece, used by Greeks to write Greek.

4,388 words

[28]How we define the term 'language' and its relation to 'dialect' may play a role in how we consider Mycenaean's relation to the Greek language. There seems to me to be quite enough breadth in 'language' to allow for the unique features of Mycenaean. For purposes of illustration, shown below are the opening lines of one of the greatest works of English literature – Beowulf:

> Hwæt wē Gār-Dena in geār-dagum
> þēod-cyninga þrym gefrūnon,
> hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon.

A speaker of modern English could hardly make much of this, even when the values of the unfamiliar characters were correctly sounded to them. This is because English has undergone a number of monumental linguistic changes since the Old English in which this poem is written, not least among them the introduction of many Romance loanwords after the Norman invasion and the Great Vowel Shift of 1350-1700. Nevertheless, this work is still regarded as 'English'. I have no doubt that an Athenian of the Classical period learned in Homer could make more of a transliteration of the Mycenaean archives than an Englishman could of the entirety of Beowulf. It would be highly inconsistent to allow for such variation within the definition of the English language but not of the Greek, especially considering the dialectal differences already present even without the inclusion of Mycenaean. Mycenaean should be recognised as a dialect of the Greek language, even if this means having to insert the qualifier "2nd Millennium" on the analogy of "Old" and "Middle" English.

[29] Hall (2015), p.44

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