

December 8, 1946

1050 East 43rd St.
Brooklyn 10, N.Y.
November 20, 1946

Dear Professor Blegen:

The writing of this letter has been postponed for months, while I debated in my mind the advisability of making a request of you that could, perhaps, not be granted. I finally wrote to Professor Swindler, to ask her advice, and she told me that I should write.

to ask

My request I think you can guess. It is whether there is any possibility that I can see the Pylos inscriptions. The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation has granted me a Fellowship for the year Sept. 1, 1946-Sept. 1, 1947 to work on the Minoan Scripts. While my work has dealt largely with Linear Class B, the Pylos inscriptions seem to resemble it so closely, that they would be an invaluable aid, whether the languages are identical or not.

I have postponed writing to you because I realize that there might be dozens of reasons why my request to see the inscriptions cannot be granted, but since both Miss Swindler and Mr. Moe of the Guggenheim Foundation see no reason why I shouldn't at least ask, I am doing so, with apologies for disturbing you. If I could have more material with which to work during my year of freedom from academic duties, it might mean a great deal.

My idea has been, ever since I began work on the problem over fifteen years ago, not to read the inscriptions, but to work out the inflection pattern of the language (or languages) in which they are written, and then, on the basis of that, to see what can be done about assigning phonetic values. (I have, incidentally, carefully laid aside reprints of my articles for you, but have never sent them, because all I knew of your whereabouts since the war started was, first that you were in Washington, and then, in Greece. I did not want to burden you with unnecessary mail while you were so busy. If you will tell me where to send them, they will go off in the next mail).

Unfortunately, this hunting for inflection makes the context of a word more important than the word itself, and therefore words without context are in a way worse than nothing at all.

If it is in any way possible, under any conditions whatever, to see and take notes on the inscriptions, either in Cincinnati or in Greece, during this year when I can devote my entire attention to the work, I would be more grateful than I can say in words. If not, I can understand, and shall devote myself to what I now have, with the hope that perhaps Professor Myres will make the Knossos inscriptions available.

Such a request is, I know, an imposition, but I feel I must write, on the chance that it may be granted.

With apologies

Alice C. Kober

December 9, 1946

Dear Professor Blegen:

The writing of this letter has been postponed for months, while I debated in my mind the advisability of making a request of you that could, perhaps, not be granted. I finally wrote to Professor Swindler, to ask her advice, and she told me that I should write.

Dear Miss Kober:

Your letter of November 20 which reached me some time ago is not the first request of its kind we have had. Several others have also desired advance access to our tablets from Pylos. The difficulties in the way of granting it have arisen not from a dog-in-the-manger attitude on our part--for we are eager to make the material available to all scholars as soon as possible--but from considerations of a practical nature.

The tablets themselves are still packed away underground in Athens in a bomb-proof vault, where they remained during the war; and when they will be brought out again is wholly uncertain. I was not able to see them during my recent sojourn in Greece, and no early reappearance is at all likely.

On this side we have no negatives, but only a single set of photographs which are in use all the time. We likewise have but one complete set of accurate transcriptions, also constantly needed in our own work. Under these circumstances we felt ourselves obliged to refuse similar requests in the past; and the situation has not changed today.

In the meantime considerable progress has been made in the classification and organization of the material, and we hope it may be ready for publication without too great a delay. We have no intention of holding it back for any attempt on our part to solve the language problem; we are planning to issue a sort of corpus, presenting photographs and transcriptions of all the tablets and fragments for the use of any one who may wish to study them.

I have read your articles in the A. J. A., and it seems to me that investigations of the kind you are pursuing are useful preliminaries to any serious endeavor to assign phonetic values. But accurate transcriptions are indispensable.

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Such a request is, I know, an imposition, but I feel I must write, on the chance that it may be granted.
With apologies
Alice E. Kober