

the village records, secondary as well as primary, were metropolitans operating from the nome capital; maybe there was a single nome-wide process, which also produced the nome summaries sent to Alexandria, again accompanied by full copies of the basic accounts. To understand management, we should perhaps work top-down, for example asking what fiscal decisions a Prefect might make at a nome *dialogismos* ('reckoning') and on the basis of what evidence.

D.W. RATHBONE
King's College London
Email: dominic.rathbone@kcl.ac.uk

JUDSON (A.P.) **The Undeciphered Signs of Linear B: Interpretation and Scribal Practices.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xx + 352, illus. 50 figs, 21 tables. £90. 9781108494724.
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Decipherment of any writing system means essentially the assignment of sound values to phonograms. Although often recorded in the history of scholarship as 'events', decipherments are commonly longer analytical processes, whose apex is represented by the point where assigned values make the identification of the language and at least general interpretation of texts possible. Linear B (henceforth LB), the Aegean syllabographic script used ca. 1400–1200 BCE to render an early Greek dialect and serve the book-keeping needs of the administrations of the Mycenaean 'palaces', is an example of such a process: Michael Ventris accomplished the decipherment of the majority of the signary in 1952; following his further collaboration with John Chadwick, the values of a few more signs were identified during the early years of Mycenaean studies (e.g. *85 <au>), but a few signs remained unidentified. Anna Judson's excellent monograph, based on her PhD thesis (Cambridge 2016) is precisely about those 14 LB phonograms (syllabograms) that still resist decipherment attempts and on whose values no consensus has yet been reached. Prospective readers must note from the outset that this work does not aim to 'complete' the decipherment of LB: its focus is on a balanced assessment of value assignment prospects for these signs and how such assessments may contribute to a better knowledge of the structure of LB phonography and decipherment methodology.

The book unfolds in six chapters. In the introductory Chapter 1 (1–35) Judson succinctly presents the main features of LB phonography, its place within the Aegean-Cypriot 'family' of syllabic scripts and the progress of decipherment through the history of Mycenaean studies with an important discussion of the methodology of value assignments in the post-decipherment era (31–35). Chapter 2 focuses on the 'categories' of LB sign values, going beyond the common C(onsonant)V(owel) structure which constitutes the 'core' of LB phonography into a discussion of the representation of antevocalic aspiration, diphthongs or semi-consonants set between stops and vowels. Her discussion (82–86) of the exceptional <pte> sign (currently *sui generis* and generally accepted to have been originally *<pye>) is interesting, as she supports that the sign had an original <pte> value, therefore generating the anticipation of a *pt-* series of signs. Judson's aim is to provide a *general* configuration, assessing the place of *deciphered* LB signs as well as 'vacancies' in LB phonography (the latter being the potential 'slots' where values of undeciphered signs may lie).

The final discussion in Chapter 2 (93–95) focusing on potential insights into Linear A (henceforth LA) and ‘Minoan’ phonology in the light of structural consistencies in LB phonography introduces the distinction made in chapters 3–4 (96–174), that of signs inherited from LA and those that lack such generally accepted correspondences, respectively. The distinction makes good sense, although the lack of LA correspondences rests on negative evidence, potentially hazardous as the discovery of sign *48 <nwa> on LA at Kato Syme (previously only known from LB and Cretan Hieroglyphic) may show. Judson acknowledges well the existence of probable correspondences to earlier Cretan scripts in signs *18 and *19 (151–60). In both chapters Judson provides detailed discussion of individual signs, with excellent illustration and in most cases based on her personal autopsy, whose quality is high, respectful of epigraphic facts and avoiding generalizations. One may note that the discussion on *22 (123–28) also considers its non-phonographic use as CAP, the sign for goat as a recorded commodity in LB records. Judson has decided (rightly, in my opinion) not to arrive at definitive suggestions for the values of these undeciphered signs, but to carefully assess alternative possibilities.

Chapter 5 (175–236) explores the palaeography of the undeciphered signs, drawing on the evidence presented in the preceding chapters. Undeciphered signs are taken as a case study, with careful considerations of morphological variations within and among sites. Judson’s well-reasoned critique of the chronological interpretation of palaeographic variation is not a deterrent to the latter’s chronological significance, but aims to provide a sound methodological basis for such inferences. This, as well as her suggestion of a broader intra-site mobility of individual ‘scribes’ (177, 214 with references to Judson’s previous work), occasionally transcending palaeographic entities such as the Pylian ‘Classes’, are very promising areas for future research.

Her sixth, concluding chapter (237–40) succinctly recapitulates the main contributions of this study, followed by a meticulously annotated Appendix (241–89) of all attestations of the undeciphered signs. The bibliography (290–331) is admirably full even up to the publication year (2020). The three indexes (LB sign groups, Aegean inscriptions and general) cover most reasonable needs of the printed book’s reader.

The sequence of sections is well placed strategically and discussion is consistently balanced and sound. Although substantially revised, the volume has retained all the virtues of an excellent dissertation, with minimal repetition and useful recapitulation when needed. Judson has produced an excellent study and, especially because of its recurrent focus on issues of method, one that will aid Mycenaean studies (or Mycenology) towards its proper rehabilitation in studies of other undeciphered or partly deciphered writing systems. I particularly applaud the decision *not* to use the term ‘logogram’ (6 n.10), resorting to the rather idiosyncratic (but ‘traditional’) use of the term ‘ideogram’ (obsolete in studies of most scripts). Overall, this work is an excellent sign of the current methodological refinement in Mycenaean epigraphy and the subdiscipline’s potential to be revitalized.

VASSILIS PETRAKIS

National & Kapodistrian University of Athens

Email: vppetrakism@arch.uoa.gr