## Encyclopedia Americanna 1966

Linear B was first found by Sir Arthur Evans in the palace of Knossos in Crete which was destroyed about B.C. and it was therefore regarded as a continuation of Linear A. Subsequently, however, Linear B began to be discovered on the Greek mainland. Jars bearing short painted inscriptions were found at the Mycenaean sites from Boeotia to the Peloponnese, and in 1939 the excavation of the "Palace of Nestor" at Pylos in Mysesnia by Carl W. Blegen revealed a large archive of clay tablets. Although as much as 200 years later than those at Knossos, in form, script, and content they are closely similar. Additional Linear B tablets of the 13th century B.C. were found in a building just outside the citadel of Mycenae, dug by Alan J. B. Wace in 1952 and later years.

The contents of the tablets are brief administrative memoranda recording such things as the daily receipts and disbursements of stores, the location of personel, ration lists, and the like. Typical entries are, "Kerowos, shepherd of Astatia watching over the cattle of Thalamatas: 1 man": "At Pylos, 22 sons of the bath attendants 11 boys": "For all the gods: one amphora of honey: for the Mistress of the Labyrinth: one amphora of honey": "One footstool inlaid with a man; a horse, an octopus, and a palm tree of imory." In many cases, however, the exact nature of the transaction remains obscure, because we do not know the circumstances in which the tablet was written.

It is none the less possible to form from these fragmentary and half understood records some sort of picture of the life of Mycenaean Greece. Knossos and Pylos were the palaces of kings who controlled all the operations of the economy through a large staff of officials. In the absence of any form of currency it was necessary to control the issue and receipt of all commodities, and many of the tablets serve to detail the whereabouts of the labor force employed by the palace and to note the issue to them of food and raw material. Other documents record details of land tenure, listing the holders of various plots of ground and the nature of their title: unfortunately the precise meaning of many of the technical terms temains obscure. Nor is it possible to assign precise limits to the kingdoms; that of Knossos appears to cover all Crete, but no territory outside the island; at Pylos too few place names can be located on the territory outside the island; at Pylos too few place

The worship of the principal Greek gods under their familiar names has been proved by the tablets; deities with unfamiliar names also figure in the lists; and, especially in Grete, it would appear that the pre-Helenic rituals continued alongside the Greek. The tablets have also thrown some light on the world of the Homeric poems, confirming the belief that many details, both factual and linguistic, were transmitted from the Mycenaean Age down to the time of Homer.