

JOSÉ L. MELENA, *Textos griegos micénicos comentados*, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Eusko Legebiltzarra/Parlamento Vasco 2001, pp. 79.

Since the appearance of the second edition of M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge 1973) (= *Docs*², first edition of 1956 = *Docs*¹) and S. Hiller and O. Panagl, *Die frühgriechische Texte aus mykenischer Zeit* (Darmstadt 1976), scholars outside the field of Mycenaean studies have had no user-friendly text-focused handbooks of Linear B documents to consult for a synoptic view of developments in our highly technical field. A. Morpurgo Davies and Y. Duhoux, *Linear B: A 1984 Survey* (Cabary 1985) (= *LB 1984*) provides an unsystematic survey of the Linear B evidence relating to a limited selection of general subjects (the writing systems; the language represented by Linear B and its relationship to historical Greek, the historical Greek lexicon and Homer; three aspects of religion; and Mycenaean economy). But *LB 1984* only served as a stopgap, and its idiosyncratic treatments of several of its limited number of topics have left many of the sub-fields of Mycenaean studies *terra incognita* for non-Mycenaean specialists.

Some help was provided by M.S. Ruipérez and José L. Melena, *Los griegos micénicos* (Madrid 1990) (rev. by K. Cox in *Minos* 25-26, 1990-1991, pp. 465-467) and the fine updated Greek edition of this volume that appeared under the title *Οι Μυκηναίοι Έλληνες* (Athens, Ινστιτούτο του Βιβλίου — Μ. Καρδαμίτσα 1996). Now we get more help in the form of this βιβλίδιον which is 15 x 21 cm. and flat and bendable enough to be slipped inside the back pockets of jeans, the inside pockets of sports coats or the outer pockets of overcoats, and can find room in even the fullest backpack, briefcase or suitcase. I have slipped it into folders taken to bureaucratic meetings and discreetly and happily read several of Melena's interpretations of new texts while the kind of nonsense that gives satirists of academic life their easy livelihood went on around, and temporarily without, me. Many of the accompanying illustrations and charts are taken from the just-mentioned Ruipérez-Melena volumes, but the 128 representative sample texts have been chosen with good judgment to inform general readers about significant evidence since the mid-1970's (from all sites, but mainly from Thebes, Tiryns, Khania and Midea) or new interpretations that are of more than specialist interest. The texts match *Docs*² and Hiller-Panagl in breadth of coverage, but the design of the volume does not allow for equal depth, detail of analysis, or bibliographical referencing. *Textos griegos* has no glossary, onomasticon or Mycenaean word or subject index.

A brief introduction (pp. 8-20) informs the reader about the archaeological discovery of inscriptions in the linear scripts, the identification of the scripts, the decipherment of Linear B, the general chronological framework for the inscriptions, the physical appearance of tablets, sealings, labels and stirrup jars, and the structure of the Linear B script itself. The syllabic grid presented on page 15 provides even Mycenaean and Mycenaean students with the latest view on the phonetic values of the core signs of the syllabary and the better and poorer attested alternative signs. It takes into account the work done by Melena himself and by scholars like M. Janda and Y. Duhoux since the appearance of *LB 1984* in trying to determine the approximate values of the alternative signs in view of the discovery of new texts and in view of what we now know about the overall structures of the Linear A and Linear B writing systems, about the alternative spellings of words with and without these signs in Linear B, and about pertinent lexicographical glosses. Of particular significance is the tri-vocalic series *56 = *pa*₂, *22 = *pi*₂, and *29 = *pu*₂ the signs of which represent an originally Minoan modified labial (most likely somehow prenasalized) consonant in combination with the three best attested — and perhaps only — vowels (a, i and u) in the language that is represented in the Linear A texts. Less certain are conjectured values for very rarely occurring signs such as *19 = *ru*₂ and *63 = *zi* and *79 = *wo*₂, although these three proposals have merit in making certain

spellings 'work' and in conforming to the apparent structure of the Linear B writing system.

Then follows a 56-page anthology of Linear B texts with commentary. The tablets are presented in Mycenaean series order, which were defined—even before the decipherment of Linear B—according to the ideographic contents of tablets. These move, therefore, from lists of personnel (Pylos tablet Aa 240) to samples of labels and sealings from Pylos, Mycenae, Thebes and Midea (PY Wa 114, MY Wt 503, TH Wu 68 and 75, MI Wv 5) to inscribed stirrup jars from Thebes and Midea (TH Z 839, 849 and 853, MI Z 4). All sites that have yielded Linear B clay tablet or sealing inscriptions are represented, including 2 tablets from Tiryns and 1 from Khania. The inclusion of the Midea and Thebes sealings, the Midea stirrup jars and the Thebes, Tiryns and Khania tablets should surprise scholars outside Mycenaean studies who only access the texts through *Docs*² or Hiller-Panagl or *LB 1984*. Each text is given in standard Latin transcription, followed by a Spanish translation and/or a brief commentary on the significance of its contents and important interpretive or linguistic details. Translations are lacking for a few texts where they would have been especially helpful, mainly where the precise identification of individual lexical items is not made clear in the accompanying commentary (e.g., Pylos Ub 1318 pp. 70-71). The volume is thus less useful than it could have been for those whose knowledge of classical Greek is not sufficient to make sense of the archaic forms of Mycenaean Greek lexical items transliterated here in italicized Roman alphabetic characters. But the choice was undoubtedly owing to considerations of space.

The 'anthology' is followed by a two-and-a-half-page bibliography geared to the intended general intelligent Spanish-Basque readership. Besides references to Ruipérez-Melena and the Spanish edition of J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World* (Madrid 1998), the bibliography focuses on the technical publications of the inscriptions, some general recent—but not necessarily the latest—assessments of the state of knowledge on such subjects as Linear A, sealings and roundels and inscribed stirrup jars, and the principal studies of scribal hands. It signals the work of Francisco Aura Jorro toward a new comprehensive index of Mycenaean words that will replace the long-outdated 1973 standard. Such bibliographical limitation in itself shows how few accessible synoptic views of Mycenaean subjects there are and how inaccessible or unknown to outsiders other survey collections, e.g. *Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici* 20 (1979), have become.

Even on the fairly technical level, it would have been better to refer readers to E. Hallager's magisterially comprehensive, methodologically sound and clearly written two-volume study *The Minoan Roundel* (Liège and Austin 1996) than to a much earlier short, preliminary article by the same author. For the general picture, I would have liked to have seen here reference to L. Godart's well-illustrated overview of Aegean writing and exploration of Minoan and Mycenaean culture: *Le Pouvoir de l'Écrit* (Paris 1990) and to Andrew Robinson, *The Story of Writing* (1995) and the James-Hooker-introduced *Reading the Past* (1990) for their equally well-illustrated and succinct treatments of Aegean scripts in the context of other world scripts and cultures. In *Reading the Past*, pp. 138-195, the late John Chadwick sums up not only Linear B, but Linear A, Cypriote scripts and the Phaistos disk, in the crisp, clear and direct style that was his hallmark. The color photographs in the Godart volume are among the few available of some of the inscribed material from Minoan-Mycenaean culture and the author's engaging style gives the cultural-historical contexts that helped shape—and help us to understand and interpret—the views of the original researchers of Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean scripts, languages and material culture.

One could fuss here and there about the selection of the 128 sample texts in *Textos griegos*—in comparison, *Docs*¹ in 1956 had 300 selected texts—but any sensible reviewer will let the principle *de gustibus editorum non disputandum* prevail. As American film star Spencer Tracy once remarked of a character played by Katherine

Hepburn —with a here unreproduced dialectal pronunciation: “What there is is choice”. And this does not depend entirely on newly discovered texts. The other great advance in Mycenology since *LB 1984* has been in making joins, both among the Knossos tablets and among the Pylos tablets. Here, for fifteen years, José L. Melena has been in the forefront with an unmatched passion and genius for joining even uninscribed *frustula* to existing tablets or parts of tablets. *Textos griegos* gives us a choice example of the results of work done by Emmett L. Bennett, Jr. and Melena in first correctly identifying the series classification and then making a join to produce what is now called tablet Pylos Ea 102 (pp. 36-37). The new text, which was waiting for nearly sixty years to be constructed and read, first in the Bank of Greece vaults during World War II and then in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, now gives us a second absolutely incontrovertible reference to the god Dionysos in the Linear B texts (to add to a reference on the Khania record of offerings Gq 5, here on p. 48, that was discovered in the early 90’s, and to three other probable references relating to this deity or to his theophoric, including PY Xa 1419, here treated out of series order on p. 37 so as to be in context with Ea 102). The full implications even of Ea 102 remain to be considered, but we now have identification in the territory of Mycenaean Pylos of a locality designated as *Diwonūsoio eskharāi*, or ‘the sacrificial altar of Dionysos’.

The ‘anthology’ also presents in whole or part 10 of the ca. 240 new Thebes tablets (discovered in 1993-95) that had appeared in preliminary publications, and now are clearly presented and interpreted *in toto* by Vassilis Aravantinos, Louis Godart and Anna Sacconi, as reviewed here. Comparison of the interpretations of the ten new Thebes texts found in both volumes clearly shows that Mycenologists will have to spend some time studying the richest new material since the discovery of the Pylos tablets before even approaching consensus. This is the normal pattern for the field since the days when the late Leonard Palmer interpreted the second clause of Pylos Ta 711.1 (here pp. 67-68) as a reference to a royal interment and the late John Chadwick advanced the idea of a royal appointment.

Lastly, we applaud the fact that almost all texts in *Textos griegos* are presented in their entirety (the exceptions being the three Thebes Fq tablets, used here for a discussion mainly of their heading formulae and available to the author only in partial form in preliminary publications of the new Thebes material; note also that Fq 121 is now numbered Fq 126 and line .3, whether correctly or not, is now read by the editors as *ko-ru* over an erased text *ko-ru-we*, rather than as here with *ko-ru-we* as the final text). Melena also proposes alternative explanations for problematical elements of the selected texts, sometimes other than his own. Problems are signposted even where Melena offers an ingenious and plausible solution to a textual dilemma. This fine little book will be ideal to place in the hands of students who have just finished the Linear B chrestomathy or who want an up-to-date survey of Mycenaean Greek texts as we enter the second half-century since their decipherment. It serves as a fitting tribute to the great Spanish schools of Rui Pérez and Adrados, whose students have done and continue to do so much to enlighten us about prehistoric and historical Greek language and culture.

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