

Studies in Mycenaean Inscriptions and Dialect, 1980–1997

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STUDIES IN MYCENAEAN INSCRIPTIONS AND DIALECT, 1982–1983, edited by *Elizabeth Sikkenga* and *Peter van Alfen*, with *Christina Bush*, *Nick Dobson*, *Stephie Nikoloudis*, *Kevin Pluta*, and *Jason Railsback*. Pp. 235. Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, Department of Classics, The University of Texas at Austin 1998. \$15 (students, seniors), \$25 (faculty). ISBN 0-9649410-2-3 (paper).

STUDIES IN MYCENAEAN INSCRIPTIONS AND DIALECT, 1980–1981, edited by *Elizabeth Sikkenga*, with *Nick Dobson*, *Susanne Hofstra*, *Bruce LaForse*, *Jason Railback*, *Mary Shapiro*, and *Peter van Alfen*. Pp. 286. Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, Department of Classics, The University of Texas at Austin 1997. \$15 (students, seniors), \$25 (faculty). ISBN 0-9649410-1-5 (paper).

STUDIES IN MYCENAEAN INSCRIPTIONS AND DIALECT, 1979, edited by *Elizabeth Sikkenga*, with *Nick Dobson*, *Susan Lupack*, *Anne Thompson*, and *Kathryn E. Walsh*. Pp. 221. Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, Department of Classics, The University of Texas at Austin 1995. \$15 (students, seniors), \$25 (faculty). ISBN 0-9649410-0-7 (paper).

THE PROJECT

Studies in Mycenaean Inscriptions and Dialect (SMID) is an analytical bibliography for publications relating to Linear B, Linear A, and other Aegean Bronze Age scripts. It was created in 1955 by Michael Ventris, in collaboration with John Chadwick and Leonard Palmer, and was published annually or biannually until 1978. After a hiatus, the project was revived in 1995, under the overall direction of T.G. Palaima at the Program of Aegean Scripts and Prehistory (PASP) at the University of Texas at Austin. The new volumes, listed above, seek both to bring the *SMID* bibliography up-to-date and to fill in the years of *SMID* hiatus. At the invitation of the *AJA* book editor, the present review goes beyond the new volumes to touch on the history, aims, and usefulness of *SMID* as a whole.

It should be said at the outset that the recent editors of and contributors to *SMID* are to be congratulated for carrying on Ventris' monumental labors and should be assured that their work—a complex, onerous, and probably too often thankless task—is gratefully received with warm thanks by those working in Mycenaean studies.

History and Future

The project to create a comprehensive and analytical bibliography of Linear B and related scripts was initiated in 1955 by M. Ventris, J. Chadwick, and L.R. Palmer, at the suggestion of M. Lejeune. In 1956 Ventris presented the first installment, covering the years 1953–1955, at the First Mycenological Colloquium at Gif-sur-Yvette.¹ The bibliography appropriately begins with Ventris' and Chadwick's famous publication of the decipherment of Linear B.²

Ventris had a habitual concern with categorizing information and producing databases, and *SMID* was not dissimilar to bibliographic compilations he had made in the course of his initial work on the decipherment. It also had strong parallels with work he was undertaking for the Architectural Trust in 1956. The central point was to make information readily available for research. Already by 1955, literature on Linear B since the 1952 decipherment had proliferated to the point of becoming unwieldy. Lejeune considered the need for a comprehensive bibliography of more immediate concern even than the compilation of a new corpus of transcriptions of tablet texts (a matter in which Ventris was also deeply involved).

The general structure and form of *SMID* as established by Ventris is still in the main followed today, and publication of the volumes has continued through a series of editors. The history of the series is divided into two main phases: 1955–1978 and 1995–present.

¹ Lejeune 1956.

² Ventris and Chadwick 1953.

1955–1978. Following Ventris' initial installment in *Études Mycéniennes*, space and other considerations necessitated an independent publishing vehicle, and *SMID* was established as a regular journal of the Institute of Classical Studies, University of London. After Ventris' tragic early death in 1956, Chadwick and Palmer continued the compilations; they were joined in 1959 by L.J.D. Richardson, and in 1968 (until 1970) by A. Morpurgo Davies.

By the late 1960s, there were so many *SMID* volumes that they had themselves become unwieldy to consult, and L. Baumbach hit on the excellent idea of creating a compilation volume (*SMID 1953–1964*). Publication of the annual volumes continued under Richardson from 1971, joined by Baumbach in 1973. J.T. Killen took over the editorship in 1974, and the publishing base was moved to the British Association of Mycenaean Studies, Cambridge. In 1986 Baumbach supplied another compilation volume (*SMID 1965–1978*). In 1978 the annual volumes were discontinued, but the following years were eventually covered by a similar bibliography produced as part of a separate project: *Staat, Herrschaft, Gesellschaft in frühgriechischer Zeit: Eine Bibliographie 1978–1991/92*.³

1995–Present. By 1995 the need to continue the *SMID* bibliography was recognized, and the project was revived by T.G. Palaima of PASP. The old volume numbers were abandoned, with issues instead ordered according to the years covered. The first three volumes of the new series covered 1979–1983, but it was thereafter decided also to “keep up” with more recent publications, and the next two volumes covered 1994–1997. The plan for the future is to intersperse years from 1998 onwards with the years of the *SMID* hiatus (now narrowed down to just nine years, 1984–1993).

Filling in the years of the *SMID* hiatus will be a useful undertaking despite the existence of Eder's fine bibliography, above all because an online database is planned, which once completed, will be a valuable resource. Most of the PASP edited volumes are already online (1979–1983, 1994–1995) and can be accessed via <http://www.utexas.edu/research/pasp/>.

The PASP volumes will also probably soon reach a stage where new Baumbach-style compendia volumes would be useful. These should doubtless await the filling-in of the hiatus and the bringing up-to-date of the series from 1997 to nearer the present. But such volumes would be of value even once the online resource is complete: one might not always be in a position to access the online database, for instance, and one's own volumes can be annotated. Further, the volumes are rewarding simply to “browse through,” an activity not normally practicable using online search engines.

Aims and Contribution

The central aim of *SMID* is to create a comprehensive and analytic bibliography of all publications relating to Linear B, including those in its subdisciplines (e.g., pinacology) and sister-disciplines (chiefly, but not exclusively, philology and archaeology). In short, it is a reference guide for all

that Linear B scholars in general call “Mycenology.” While hardly of interest as introductory literature, *SMID* is an invaluable resource for scholars, advanced students, linguists, archaeologists, Mycenologists, and indeed anyone interested in Linear B and other Aegean Bronze Age scripts.

Linear B is at the heart of the bibliography and can be searched not merely by subject area but by individual words, signs, ideograms, and texts. Linear A publications receive a similarly detailed treatment, while other related scripts, such as Cretan Hieroglyphic and Cypro-Minoan, can be accessed through the subject index. Cypriot Syllabic is included only sporadically.

In the early years, *SMID* also contained reference to purely archaeological publications, in keeping with Ventris' and Chadwick's original insight that the bringing together of philological, epigraphic, and archaeological scholarship was essential. But by the 1970s, published works on Aegean archaeology had so proliferated that a decision was made to include in *SMID* “archaeological material only where this material is of importance to Linear B studies (such as reports of discoveries of texts, and the dating of the Linear B tablets and vase inscriptions).”⁴

The new PASP volumes have somewhat expanded archaeological references, but on the whole follow the format established in the 1970s. This was a reasonable decision for several reasons, not least of which is that an outstanding archaeological bibliography already exists in *Nestor* (<http://classics.uc.edu/nestor/index.html>). But *SMID* is not simply a “smaller version” of *Nestor*, limited to Linear B and related scripts. Mycenology, while highly interdisciplinary, is a unique field and often includes matter (above all, philological) not covered by *Nestor*. Further, Linear B and other related scripts are included in *Nestor* in a variety of ways, necessitating not only a high level of scholarly expertise and experience but also a good deal of time to extract from it all the relevant publications. Similarly, philological databases, such as the excellent *L'Année philologique* (<http://www.annec-philologique.com/aph/>), provide an invaluable resource but do not cover all areas of interest to the Mycenologist. It is notable that *SMID* has a few philological references that even *L'Année* overlooks; the reverse is also true. There is a place and a call for all of these resources, and that Ventris, Chadwick, and others already found it difficult to keep on top of a flourishing literature in 1955 underlines the continuing need for a specialized Mycenological bibliography today, a half century later.

Above all, the usefulness of *SMID* is in that it is an “analytic” bibliography. For instance, in categorizing publications by individual Linear B words, signs, ideograms, and tablets, *SMID* allows searches, some of which can be done in no other convenient way. Publications for Linear B words are supplied in F. Aura Jorro's excellent *Diccionario micénico*,⁵ which should still be referred to in all instances, but *SMID* will be useful for more recent

³Eder 1994; reviewed by Shelmerdine 1997.

⁴Baumbach 1986, preface

⁵Aura Jorro 1993, 1999.

references. Similarly, F. Vandenabeele and J.-P. Olivier's classic *Les idéogrammes archéologique du linéaire B*,⁶ remains a standard reference for ideograms, but as indicated by the title, it is not concerned with all ideograms, and *SMID* is again useful for post-1979 references. Another important resource, not for publications but for occurrences of words, signs, and ideograms, is the *Index généraux du linéaire B*,⁷ but this is now very dated, especially in the light of the last few decades of work on tablet joins.⁸

While providing an indispensable supplement to the resources noted above (especially once it is brought up-to-date), *SMID* goes beyond them, particularly with its listings of publications for signs and tablets. Without *SMID*, for instance, one might try to find literature on a particular tablet by looking up sign groups found on that tablet in *Diccionario micénico* and by skimming through all of the standard publications. Yet this time-consuming process would, even so, not necessarily track down all relevant material. With *SMID* the task is greatly facilitated.

SMID also provides the ability to search by subject area. For instance, a few examples from a couple of pages of one of the new volumes include nasals, Neleus, Nestor, Nichoria, olive, onomastics, opium, Osthoff's Law, overview Minoan civilization, overview Mycenaean civilization, palace administration Mycenaean, and palaces Minoan. The subject search allows one to access publications whether or not the subject in question is included in the title of a given work, as it needs to be in the case of many search engines.

In addition to publication details, an outstanding feature of the new volumes is the inclusion in each of a brief description that provides an excellent aid in compiling reading lists. For instance, "JLM presents 13 joins affecting nine published tablets and one new item. It includes an extensive discussion of the interpretation of joined text PY An 7+Fn 1427" (*SMID* 1996–1997, 19). Although the user should be aware that the descriptions are very short and cannot possibly indicate all that is covered in a given work, the publication summaries make it profitable simply to read through any given *SMID* volume as a whole.

CRITIQUES

The new volumes of *SMID* are admirably complete, but they are not infallible, and there are some omissions and oversights. A positive development is the increasing contribution of young European scholars to the editorial board, which will help ensure that non-Anglophone publications are systematically included. Yet there are occasional oversights even with English publications, particularly where these appear in nonstandard journals for Mycenaeanology.⁹

The subject analyses are also occasionally incomplete. For instance, an enormously useful feature of *SMID* is the ability to search for new tablet finds, a procedure otherwise involving a time-consuming (albeit interesting) process of reading through entire volumes of the relevant archaeological journals. *SMID* helpfully extracts such ref-

erences in the subject category, "Linear B, new texts." But some inconsistencies are apparent. For instance, *SMID* 1982–1983 overlooks Catling in *AR*, although this is listed in its main bibliography (HC 9); *SMID* 1994–1995 similarly omits French 1994 (EWF 500). More systematic inclusion of reports in the standard Greek archaeological journals (e.g., *AAA*, *Ergon*, *ArchDelt*, *CretChron*) would also be a welcome development. (Somewhat puzzlingly, the "new texts" category is omitted from the online database, but the project is currently in progress, and doubtless such oversights will be attended to in due course.)

These minor criticisms are in no way meant to impugn the importance of *SMID* as a scholarly research tool. Although the careful researcher will still wish to cross-check *SMID* with other reference works, it is an excellent and indispensable source of information. It should not be underestimated how much time it takes to produce *SMID*. John Killen recalls spending two months a year on the publications when he was editor (pers. comm. 2004), and he was helped by a large team of indexers, including Baumbach, Chadwick, J. Hart, J. Hooker, M. Davies and, earlier, L.R. Palmer. Having the work done by a central team, as is now happening again, means a great deal of time will be saved for the many scholars working in the field, who would otherwise have to do it for themselves, almost certainly less effectively.

Again, the recent editors and contributors are to be congratulated on keeping up the fine standards established by Ventris and others, and are to be warmly thanked for providing such an invaluable resource.

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⁶ Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979.

⁷ Olivier et al. 1973.

⁸ See, for example, Melena 1992–1993.

⁹ For example, Killen 1983.

28:307-24.

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