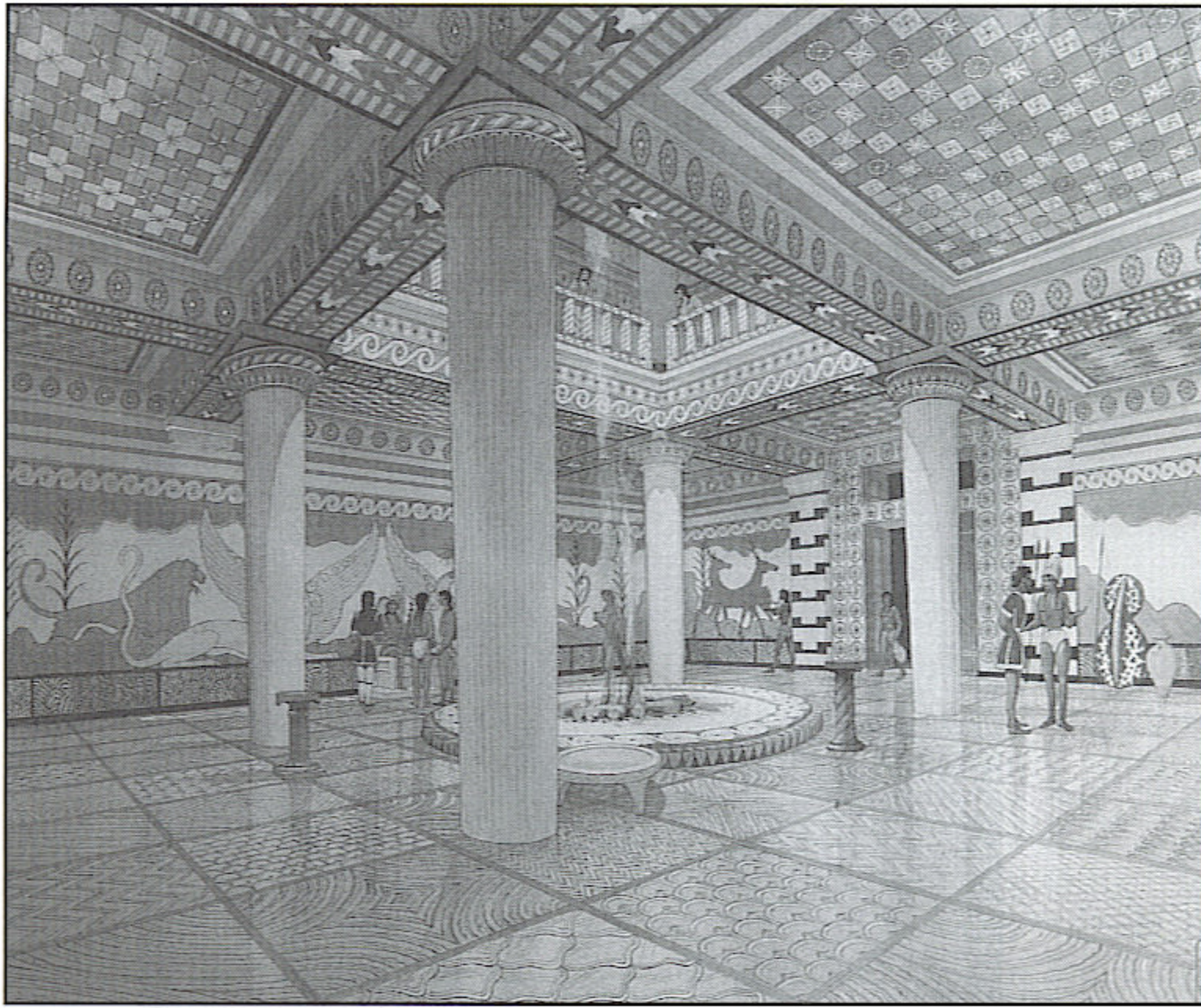


Mycenaean Artifacts



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The Mycenaeans (pronounced my-sih-NEE-inz) valued military strength and fine weapons for warfare. Many of these weapons were made of *bronze*, a mixture of copper and tin. Craftspeople who worked in bronze, or *bronzesmiths*, created splendid bronze daggers, swords, shields, and helmets for the Mycenaean army. Bronzesmiths also made chest, arm, and leg guards (called *chain mail*) for soldiers, and bronze fittings for their horses. Kings and high-ranking soldiers had bronze wheels made for their chariots, instead of the usual wooden ones. In addition to military equipment, bronzesmiths made small cooking pots and larger pots, called *cauldrons*. Mycenaean craftspeople also worked with gold. *Goldsmiths* fashioned gold into exquisite rings, earrings, necklaces, seals for documents, cups, bowls, and artwork. Gold objects were made only for kings and nobles, and were buried with them when they died. The object shown here is a gold funeral mask, which was placed over the face of a dead king or noble at his burial.



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Palaces in Mycenae (pronounced my-SEE-nee) were centers of government administration and defense. They were surrounded by high stone walls 23 feet thick and 60 feet high, and were guarded by Mycenaean soldiers day and night. Outside the high walls, in the countryside, Mycenaean farmers and shepherds lived in small homes made of wood or mud-brick. Craftspeople such as carpenters and metalworkers had workshops closer to the palace. Non-royal Mycenaeans were not allowed inside the palace grounds unless the city was under attack by enemy forces. All Mycenaean palaces had similar layouts. There was one central entrance gate decorated with stately statues of lions or other fierce creatures. This gate led to a small courtyard, and then a rectangular hall, or *megaron* (pronounced MEH-ger-on), where the throne room was located. Apartments for the royal family, cooking rooms, and storage rooms were arranged in orderly rows on either side of the megaron. Rooms were painted with colorful scenes from nature, as well as battle scenes and boar hunts. Between the palace and the high walls outside, the royal dead were buried in circular tombs underground. Pictured here is the throne room of the Palace of Pylos (pronounced PEE-lohs), located on the southwestern part of the Peloponnese (pronounced peh-loh-puh-NEE-suss). The walls and ceilings are painted with colorful designs and murals of wild animals and plants. Large, downward-tapering pillars can be seen in the throne room. The king's throne is in the center of the far wall. In front of the king's throne is a circular pit where ritual oils and grasses were burned.



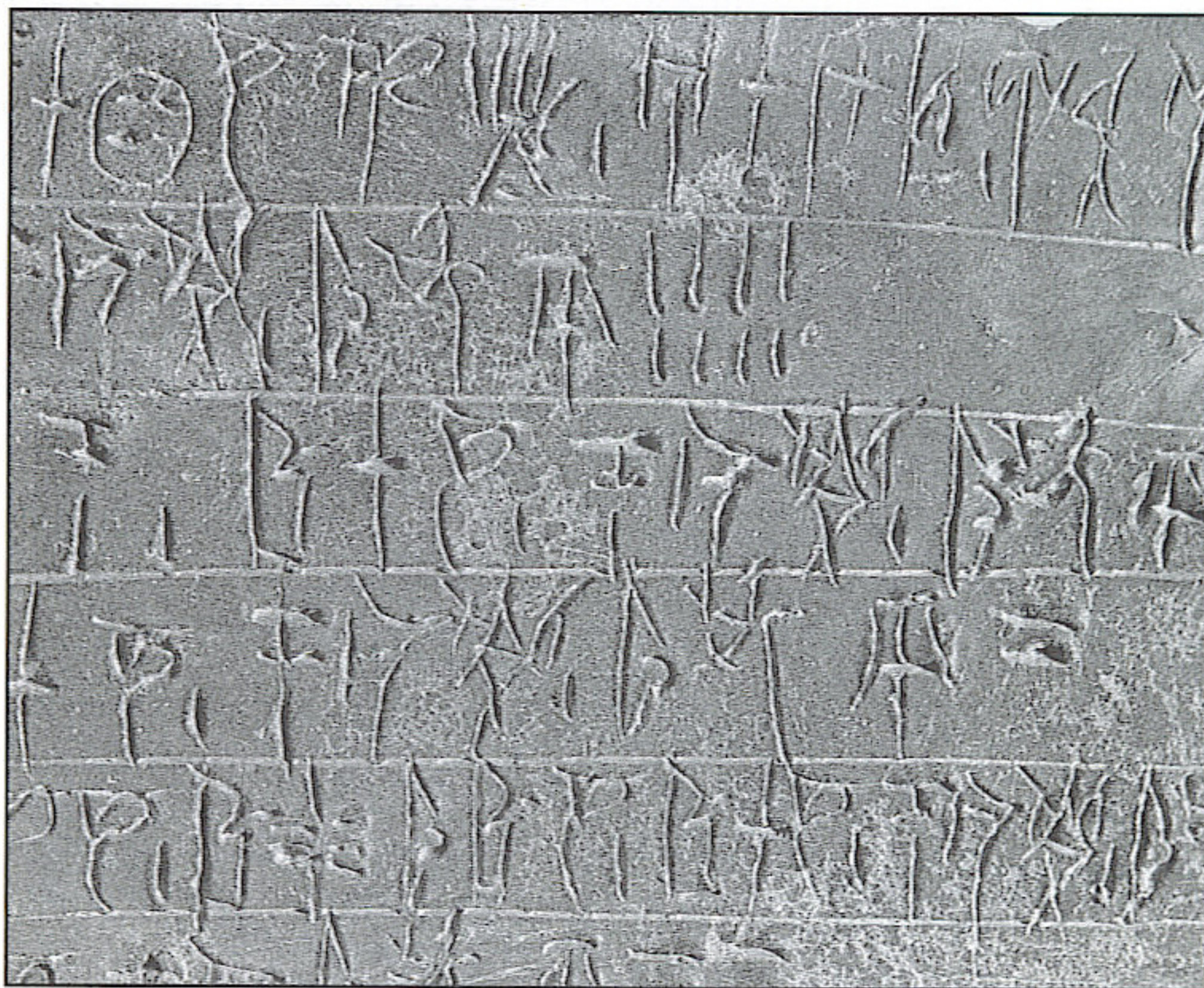
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Early Mycenaean (pronounced my-sih-NEE-in) pottery was made of unpainted baked clay and formed by hand. Potters created simple shallow bowl and cup shapes without handles. Later, potters designed narrow, upright vases and jugs that were deeper. They painted them with white paint over dark glazes, or with fine red or black lines on white glazes. Later still, Mycenaean potters designed more sophisticated vases with deep, rounded shapes and handles. These were colored with red, yellow, and green glazes. The Mycenaean also developed the *goblet*, a cup attached to a stem, used for important celebrations and religious rituals. Among the ruins of Mycenae, archeologists have excavated large, unpainted clay pots that were used for storing olive oil and grains. They have also found cups, jugs, and other vessels painted with scenes of sea creatures, people picking grapes, and heroic soldiers fighting battles. The drinking vessel, or *rhyton* (pronounced RY-tun), pictured here is illustrated with a simplified, or *stylized*, octopus surrounded by his eight swirling legs, or *tentacles*. It was excavated in the Middle East and may have been a Mycenaean trade item. This rhyton dates from 2000–1000 B.C.E. and was probably used to hold wine or water.



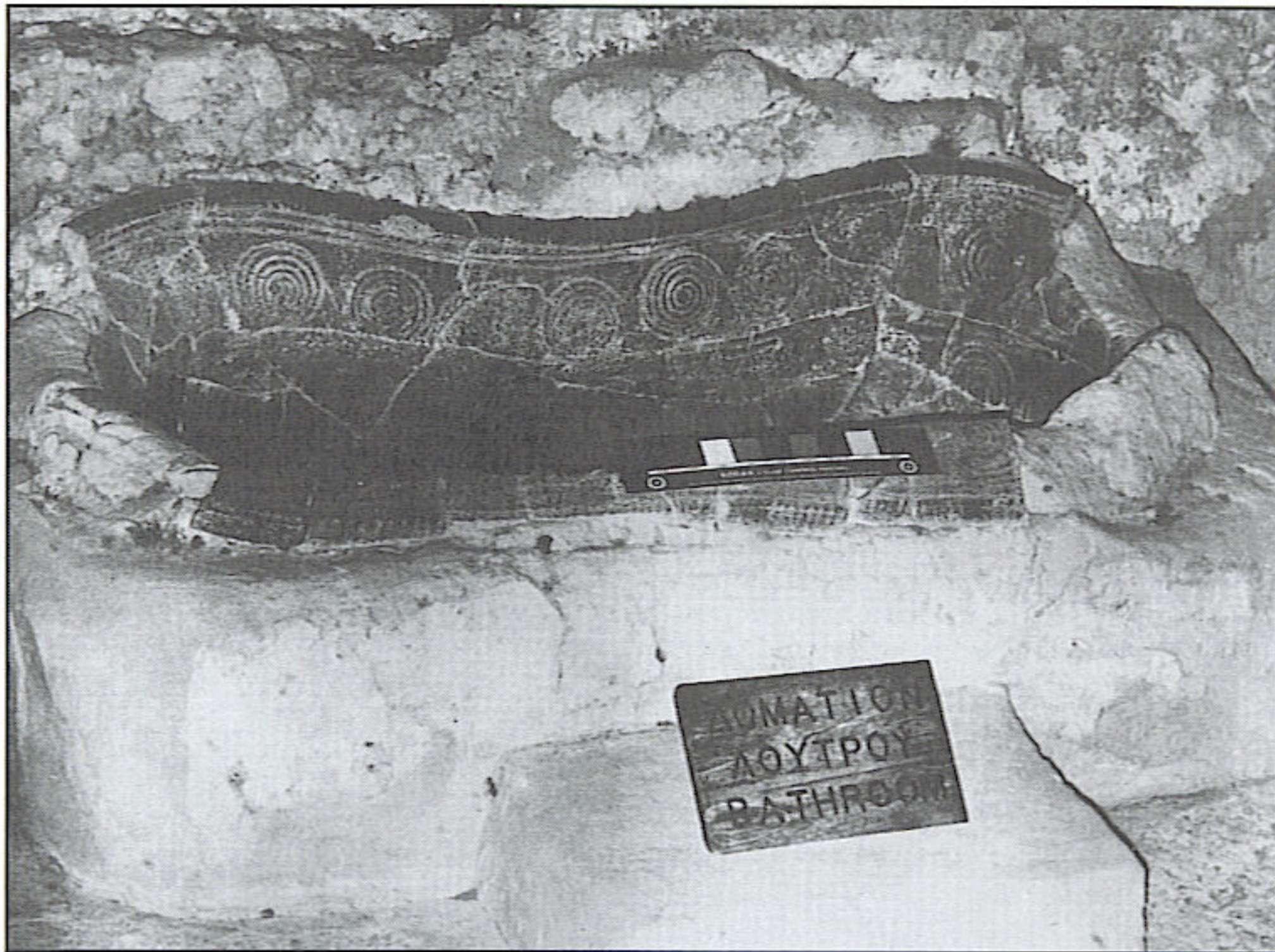
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Early Mycenaeans (pronounced my-sih-NEE-inz) conducted religious rituals outdoors, in caves or near waterfalls. They worshipped one supreme Earth Goddess, who was the guardian of animals, birds, and fish. The Earth Goddess also looked after warriors in battle. Over time, as Mycenaeans developed communities and built palaces, kings and nobles set up small altars indoors and worshipped a number of Goddesses. Mycenaean artists sculpted small figurines of these Goddesses from wood and clay. These figurines were usually lined up on low benches in special religious rooms, or *sanctuaries*, in the palace. Mycenaean men and women were the priests and priestesses who tended these sanctuaries. Worshipping the Goddesses involved ritual bathing, burning grasses and oil, and prayer. The two Goddess figurines from Mycenae shown here are holding their arms up in a gesture of religious power and blessing. Details of their clothing and facial expressions are painted in simple lines and shapes. As Mycenaean culture developed, other Goddesses and Gods were added to the Mycenaean religious rituals. Some of them were early forms of the famous Olympians—such as Zeus, Hera, Athena, Hermes, and Poseidon—that would influence ancient Greek religion for the next 1,500 years.



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The written language of Mycenae (pronounced my-SEE-nee) was named “Linear B” by archeologists, because it is written in a *linear* arrangement, or in straight lines. It has been translated, and is the earliest known form of the Greek language. Linear B is a written language that is made up of a mixture of simple symbols, or *characters*, that resemble letters of the Greek alphabet, and simple illustrations, or *ideograms*, that are used to represent complex ideas. Details of the daily life of the Mycenaeans and their interactions with other cultures are recorded in Linear B on clay tablets and on an ancient form of paper called *papyrus* (pronounced puh-PY-russ). These details include Mycenaean religious rituals; military training records; lists of trade goods sent to Egypt, Africa, and Asia Minor; government expense accounts; and literary works. These documents were kept in wicker baskets and wooden boxes in special storage rooms in Mycenaean palaces. Many stories of famous heroes and battles by ancient Greek writers such as Homer were based on the literature of the Mycenaeans.



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The Mycenaean Palace of Pylos (pronounced PEE-lohs) had at least three rooms for bathing. Two were attached to the king's and queen's private chambers. The third was placed close to the central hall, or *megaron* (pronounced MEH-ger-on), and may have been used for the ritual bathing of palace guests. Inside the rooms were bathtubs that were set into the walls and fixed to the floors. These tubs were made of clay or stone, were deep, and were contoured to fit the body comfortably. Bathers stepped up and into the bath by standing on a small stone step at the foot of the tub. There was a small shelf inside the tub, where the bathers could conveniently place a sponge or a small vessel of oil. Mycenaean bathers used water and olive oil to cleanse themselves. Servants may have heated both water and oil before using clay vessels to pour the mixture over the bather. After bathing, the water was baled out of the tub and poured into a large drainpipe in the wall. The bathroom floor was tilted to allow excess water to run to a smaller drainpipe set in the floor. The drainpipes ran under the palace and let out into the grounds outside the palace walls. The Mycenaean bathtub shown here is from the Palace of Pylos in the southwestern part of the Peloponnesus. It was made of baked clay, or *terra cotta*, and was covered in white plaster. Patterns of swirling circles decorate the tub.