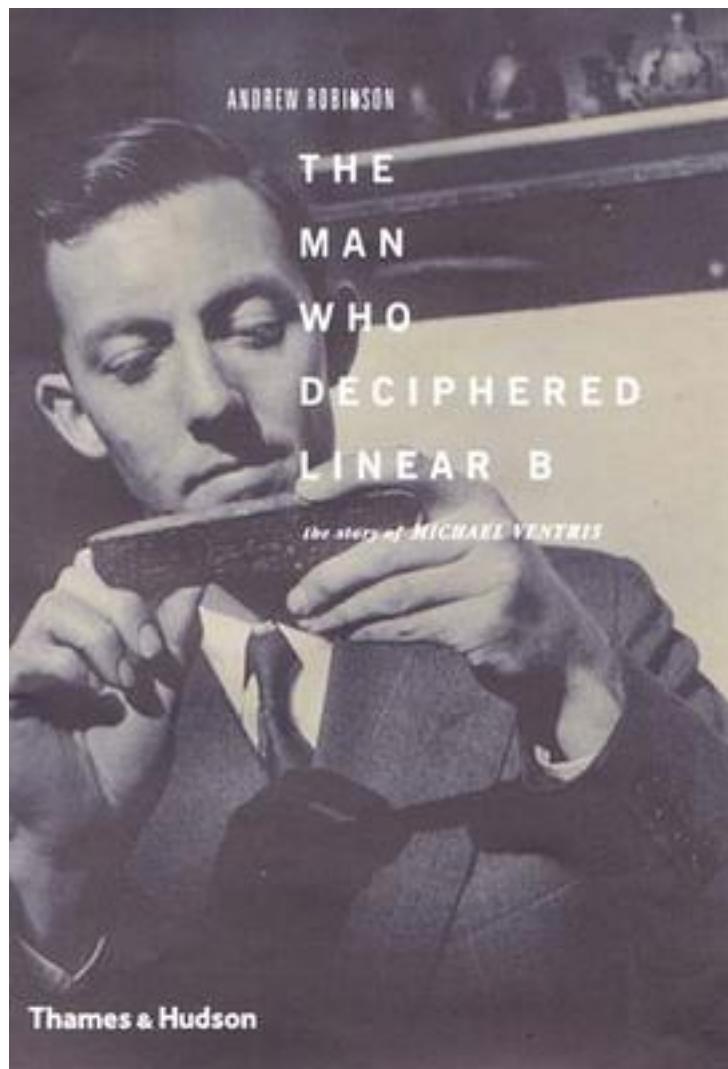


The Man Who Deciphered Linear B



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出版者:Thames & Hudson

出版时间:2002-6-17

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780500510773

Linear B is Europe's oldest readable writing, dating from the middle of the second millennium BC. First discovered in 1900, on clay tablets among the ruins of the Palace of Minos at Knossos, Crete, it remained a mystery for over fifty years until 1952, when Michael Ventris discovered that its signs did not represent an unknown language as previously believed, but an archaic dialect of Greek, more than 500 years older than the Greek of Homer. Dubbed 'the Everest of archaeology', the decipherment was all the more remarkable because Ventris was not a trained classical scholar but an architect by profession, who had first heard of linear B as a schoolboy. An initial fascination became a lifelong obsession for this intriguing and contradictory man, a gifted linguist but a divided soul. This is the first book to tell not just the story of Linear B but that of the 'modest genius' who broke the code.

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