

Outline 5: Late Bronze Age Hellas: the Mycenaeans

Monday, January 23, 2017

Reading: C/F 36-47 + videos (see below)

Καλημέρα (kah-lee-meh-rah)

Z ζ zeta is for Zeus: sky god (sky gods came from the indo-europeans), pronounced as in wisdom.

People who lived on Crete in the Middle Bronze Age were not Greek (they didn't speak Greek) and their palaces were not fortified showing that they did not fear or have any enemies. Believed that Crete had power over the mainland at one point. Later, on Crete, another group of people appeared who did speak Ancient Greek. They have agriculture (domesticated animals and plants), adept at working metal, gold, copper, tin, etc, and they had monumental buildings. Don't have a system of writing and their population was <5000. While the Minoans were excelling, the people on the mainland in the MBA were not.

Late Bronze Age mainland = also called Late Helladic (LH), Hesiod called this age the Heroic Age because many stories of heroes came about like of Hercules, also called Mycenaean.

Mycenae: home of King Agamemnon, had a palace 15 km from the sea (inland) and it was fortified (walls are 9ft thick outside, but thinner walls on the inside of the palace)

Palace: There was a well in case of a siege so they could have a supply of water.

Pausanias (quotation: C/F p. 39)

- 2nd century C.E, travelled and wrote about Mycenae and said the palace had a gate surmounted by lions and that it was the work of Cyclopes (giants), there was a difference in the stone work done by Cyclopes (Cyclopean masonry) and Minoan stone work

Lion Gate (C/F p. 36-7)

- two lions next to an inverted pillar
- relieving triangle: walls have huge stones and there is a triangular stone on top of doorways which relieves the weight on other stones
- Minoan influences: inverted columns (thought but not proven that Mycenaeans invaded Crete and that's how they learned about Minoan architecture)
- symbolism: lions signify power, alters signify religion, therefore the palace must have a religious significance and it housed someone (perhaps King Agamemnon)

Heinrich Schliemann

- archeologist, made a fortune in San Fran gold rush and fur trade in Russia, big fan of Homer, wanted to find Troy and had excavated at Troy before he went to Mycenae, it was said that Mycenae was rich in gold and that excited him (people thought of him more as a treasure hunter than an archeologist), it was said that the tomb of King Agamemnon was hidden in the palace and Schliemann excavated it
- found Grave Circle A

Mycenae: Grave Circle A (C/F p. 41)

- found in the palace in Mycenae, 5 were excavated by Schliemann, the other by Greek Archeologists
- shaft graves (burials at the bottom of a shaft), lots of gold at the bottom of the shafts
- stele: fancy archeological term for a tombstone, has lots of spiral ornaments, a man in a chariot and an enemy that he is attacking with a spear (C/F p. 45)
- Mask of Agamemnon: Schliemann found a mummified body in a shaft that had a death mask covered in gold and he thought it was the King's (but he's not a real person) (C/F p. 40)
- also found a gold crown, gold cups, gold foil covering bodies of children, representation of a lion made from gold, gold octopus clothing decoration, rhyton that looks similar to one found in Knossos, amber beads, gold dagger showing a hunting scene with people who look like Minoan males (similar clothing), ostrich eggs (C/F p. 40)
- many of the things are not found in Peloponnese (gold, amber, ostriches, etc)

What do the shaft graves tell us about the Mycenaeans?

- 30 pounds of gold were found inside of them so they had a lot of gold
- dagger shows they liked to hunt
- had a large trading network
- rhyton shows they are influenced by the Minoans

Tholos tombs (C/F p. 42-3)

- was seen before in other Greek civilizations, inspired by Minoan Tholos tombs w some slight differences
- Minoan had burials in entryway, the ones in Mycenae do not
- 9 of these tombs found in Mycenae, many were robbed so there is not much left
- some stones weigh up to 20 tonnes (how did they do it)
- dromos:
- tumulus:
- corbelling: technique creating a kind of pointy rock igloo, rocks on the bottom are bigger than the rocks on the top

Common Features of Mycenaean Palaces

- hilltop sites
- overlook plain
- same basic plan
- megalithic (mega=big, lithic=stone) construction
- fortifications
- connecting roads

Uluburun Shipwreck (p. 47)

- went down off the southern coast of what is now Turkey, tells us about transferring writing onto wax

Palace Features

- megaron: structure that is larger than the surrounding structures and has a porch and an entryway and storage space (C/F p. 38-39)

Linear B (C/F p. 44):

- influenced by Linear A (but Linear A is undeciphered), has similar symbols
- found on mainland of Hellas and also on Crete
- 3 types of symbols: syllables (syllabary, like Japanese), symbols that represent objects (ideograms), and numbers
- read from left to right
- each word is separated by a vertical line
- for bureaucratic use only
- Michael Ventris: deciphered Linear B
- scholars agreed that it was just a temporary medium (like scratch paper)
- was written on clay and wax and stuff bc paper was not invented then

Purpose of Mycenaean Palaces

- same as Minoan with a few additions
- residential: there was an upper story that is assumed was residential
- military centres: Linear B tablets tell us that there were generals, boars tusk helmets, figure 8 shields, bronze armour, chariots (not used in battle bc the ground wasn't flat enough, but used in parades) have all been found (C/F p. 45 upper right)
- in Greek mythology there is a Kalydonian Boar Hunt
- centres of government: in Pylos, Linear B tablets tell us that it was a monarchy and the king was supported by his generals
- centres of redistributive economy: 2853 cups found in 1 room, kept track of what is in the store rooms, tax records were found, land registry
- centres of religion: Linear B tablets tell us that there were priests and deities, no peak sanctuaries on the mainland but there were open air sanctuaries

(introduced by Indo-Europeans), phi and psi figurines (possible goddesses/ female deities)

- industrial centres: metal work, jewelry, wool and linen textiles, furniture, perfume (made from using olive oil and flowers and spices), pottery, some of the women who produced these were foreign slaves (found from descriptions in Linear B), these goods were traded with other countries (now Libya, Syria, etc)
- pottery: there are realistic designs (lots of marine motifs like octopus) but over time, the designs become more abstract (particularly the octopus)

Mycenaeans: 1st Civilized Greeks

Agriculture

Towns of 5000+

Monumental Buildings

Metallurgy

System of Writing

Summary

Images: C/F p. 36-37, 39 (plan), p. 40 (mask, rhyton, dagger), p. 41 (plan, container), p. 42, 44, 45 (all)

Classics Museum Replicas: gold cup, gold medallion

Words to Remember

People: Pausanias, Schliemann, Agamemnon, Cyclopes, Ventris

Places: Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Grave Circle A

Terms: Mycenaean, Late Helladic, Heroic, stele, shaft grave, tholos tomb, tumulus, dromos, corbelling, relieving triangle, syllabary, Linear B, mask of Agamemnon, megaron

Map: Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos

Think About It!

1. What Minoan influences do you find on the Late Bronze Age mainland?
2. In what ways did the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations differ?
3. Compare the men on the Warrior Vase (p. 45) with the warrior on the ivory plaque (p. 45). Are the men on the Warrior Vase Mycenaeans? Why or why not?

Dive on an Bronze Age shipwreck!! (see p. 47)

Interactive Underwater Archaeology

Uluburun Wreck: <http://sara.theellisschool.org/shipwreck>

Mycenae Videos:

The Palace and Grave Circle A: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-history-400-c-e--ancient-cultures-1/aegean-art/v/mycenae-palace> (4:13 min)

Lion Gate: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-history-400-c-e--ancient-cultures-1/aegean-art/v/mycenae-lion-gate> (6:37 min)

Lion Gate Quiz: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-history-400-c-e--ancient-cultures-1/aegean-art/e/lion-gate--mycenae>

Mask of Agamemnon: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-history-400-c-e--ancient-cultures-1/aegean-art/v/agamemnon-mask> (3:51 min)

Treasury of Atreus: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-history-400-c-e--ancient-cultures-1/aegean-art/v/Treasury-of-Atreus> (4:09 min)