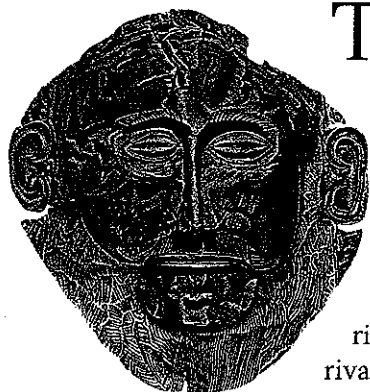


THE MYCENEANS 2000–1200 B.C.

Mycenae was a city on the southern peninsula of Greece. It was the center of the first Greek civilization, which developed after that of the Minoans in Crete.



This gold mask was found in a grave in Mycenae by archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann. He thought it was Agamemnon's mask—modern scholars think it belonged to a man who lived 300 years earlier.



This beautiful gold goblet from Mycenae clearly demonstrates the skill of the local craftworkers. It shows men hunting bulls, a common theme at that time.

The Mycenaeans (known as Achaeans) migrated to Greece from the Balkans around 2000 B.C. Mycenaean civilization began as a series of hillside villages occupied by people speaking an ancient form of the Greek language. By about 1650 B.C., many villages had grown into fortified towns, with rich palaces and luxurious goods that rivaled those made by the highly skilled Minoans. Mycenae consisted of about 20 city-states.

MYCENAEAN TOMBS

Before they built fortresses and cities the Mycenaeans buried their leaders in elaborate "beehive tombs." These were built of large stone blocks, shaped to form a great dome. One tomb at Mycenae, the Treasury of Atreus, has a doorway nearly 20 ft. (6m) high, that opens into a chamber 43 ft. (13m) high and 46 ft. (14m) wide. It was once lined with bronze plates. The richness of these tombs shows that a great deal of money and effort was spent on royalty and the aristocracy. One king had as many as

This reconstruction shows the city of Mycenae as it probably looked at the height of its power. The royal palace on the hilltop was built on several levels.



The ruins of the Lion Gate at Mycenae, the main entrance to the city, built around 1300bc. It was one of the few ways through the walls, which were built with huge stones and were easy to defend.

400 bronzesmiths and hundreds of slaves. Wealthy Mycenaeans treasured the gold that they imported from Egypt. Skilled craftworkers made gold cups, masks, flowers, and jewelry; even their swords and armor were inlaid with gold.

EXPANSION AND DOWNFALL

Around 1450 B.C., the Mycenaeans conquered Crete and established colonies around the Aegean Sea and on the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus. They traded throughout the Mediterranean, particularly with Phoenicia, Egypt, and Italy. However, around 1200 B.C., Mycenae fell to invading wandering raiders called the Sea Peoples. Many Mycenaeans were forced to flee to other countries.

