Definition: **Mycenaean civilization** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Ancient Bronze Age civilization (c.1580-1120 BC) centred around Mycenae, S Greece. The Mycenaeans entered Greece from the N, bringing with them advanced techniques particularly in architecture and metallurgy. By 1400 BC having invaded Crete and incorporated much of Minoan civilization, the Mycenaeans became the dominant power in the Aegean, trading as far as Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and importing luxurious goods for their wealthy and cultured citadel palaces. The reasons for the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization are uncertain, but it was most likely due to invasion by the Dorians.

Summary Article: **Mycenaean civilization**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (mīsēnēˈən), an ancient Aegean civilization known from the excavations at Mycenae and other sites. They were first undertaken by Heinrich Schliemann and others after 1876, and they helped to revise the early history of Greece. Divided into Early Helladic (c.2800–2000 B.C.), Middle Helladic (c.2000–1500 B.C.), and Late Helladic (c.1500–1100 B.C.) periods, the chronology roughly parallels that of the contemporary Minoan civilization. The Mycenaeans entered Greece from the north or northeast c.2000 B.C., displacing, seemingly without violence, the older Neolithic culture, which can be dated as early as 4000 B.C. These Indo-European Greek-speaking invaders brought with them advanced techniques in pottery, metallurgy, and architecture. Mercantile contact with Crete advanced and strongly influenced their culture, and by 1600 B.C., Mycenae had become a major center of the ancient world. The exact relationship of Mycenaean Greece to Crete between 1600 and 1400 B.C. is extremely complex, with both areas evidently competing for maritime control of the Mediterranean. After the violent destruction of Knossos c.1400 B.C., Mycenae achieved supremacy, and much of the Minoan cultural tradition was transferred to the mainland. The Mycenaean commercial empire and consequent cultural influence lasted from 1400 to 1200 B.C., when the invasion of the Dorians ushered in a period of decline for Greece. Events from 1100 to 900 B.C. are extremely obscure, but by the 9th cent. B.C. the centers of wealth and population showed a decisive shift. Although the Mycenaeans had certain innovations of their own, they drew much of their cultural inspiration from the Minoans. The great Mycenaean cities—Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Thebes, Orchomenos—were noted for their heavy, complex fortifications and the massive, cyclopean quality of their masonry, while Minoan cities were totally unfortified. Mycenaean palaces were built around great halls called megara rather than around an open space as in Crete. Unlike the Cretans, the Mycenaeans were bearded and wore armor in battle. Their written language, preserved on numerous clay tablets from Pylos, Mycenae, and Knossos, appears to be a form of archaic Greek linguistically related to ancient Cypriot. The presence of this script, known as Linear B, at Knossos c.1500 B.C. indicates that Mycenaean Greeks had invaded and dominated Crete during the Late Minoan period before the final collapse c.1400 B.C. The works of Homer have been radically reevaluated since the archaeological discoveries of Mycenaean Greece. He is now considered to give admirable glimpses of the culture of the late Mycenaean civilization of the 12th cent. B.C. (see Achaeans).

See Taylour, W., *The Mycenaeans* (1964);
Samuel, A. E., The Mycenaeans in History (1966);
Mylonas, G. E., Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age (1966);
McDonald, W. A., Progress into the Past (1967);
Chadwick, J., The Decipherment of Linear B (2d ed. 1968).

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