

# The Mycenaeans



# Two Bronze Age Societies

The Minoans - peak: 1700–1450 BCE

- Knossos

- Akrotiri on Thera [*destroyed in 1628*]

The Mycenaeans - peak: 1500-1100 BCE

- Mycenae, Kingdom of Agamemnon (today)

- Pylos (Friday)

  - KNOSSES (*again!*) (today)

# The Mycenaeans:

## Three Things to Emphasize

- **Conspicuous power** (esp. expressed architecturally and in material remains):  
“**Mycenae, rich in gold**” (Odyssey 3.304)
- **Bellicosity** (in material remains and in likely takeover of Minoan sites)
- **Homeric connections** (with more on this topic Friday ...)

# Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890)



# Sophia Schliemann (1852-1932)





# The Fortress Site of Mycenae



# The Mycenaean Realm







Lion Gate  
entrance to  
Mycenae,  
ca. 1300-1200  
BCE



# Grave Circle A, Mycenae, ca. 1600 - 1500 BCE





# Goods from Grave Circle A, Mycenae, ca. 1600 -1500 BCE



*Gold elliptical funeral diadems, leaves, wheels, cups, earrings, pendants and pins from shaft grave III, "Grave of the Women", Grave Circle A, Mycenae. 1600-1500 BC. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.*

“Lion Hunt” Dagger, ca. 1550-1500  
BCE: Bronze with inlay of gold, silver,  
and niello





# Gold Death Mask, Grave A









Example of a *Tholos*, 1250 BCE,  
Mycenae: “Treasury of Atreus”



A *tholos* fit for a *wanax* (“king”) or a *lawagetes* (“leader of the people”)?









# What about ordinary lives?

- *doeroi/doerai* - slaves
  - Perfume manufacturing workers
  - Textile workers
- **Bronzesmiths**, bow-makers, chariot-builders  
shepherds mentioned in tablets
- **People who carded wool** and weaved flax for ships' sails
- **People who grew** and harvested beets, sesame, fennel, mint, celery
- **Geronsia (council)** and **damos (group of landholders)**  
→ “Gerousia” (council of elders in Sparta) and  
“demos” (people)

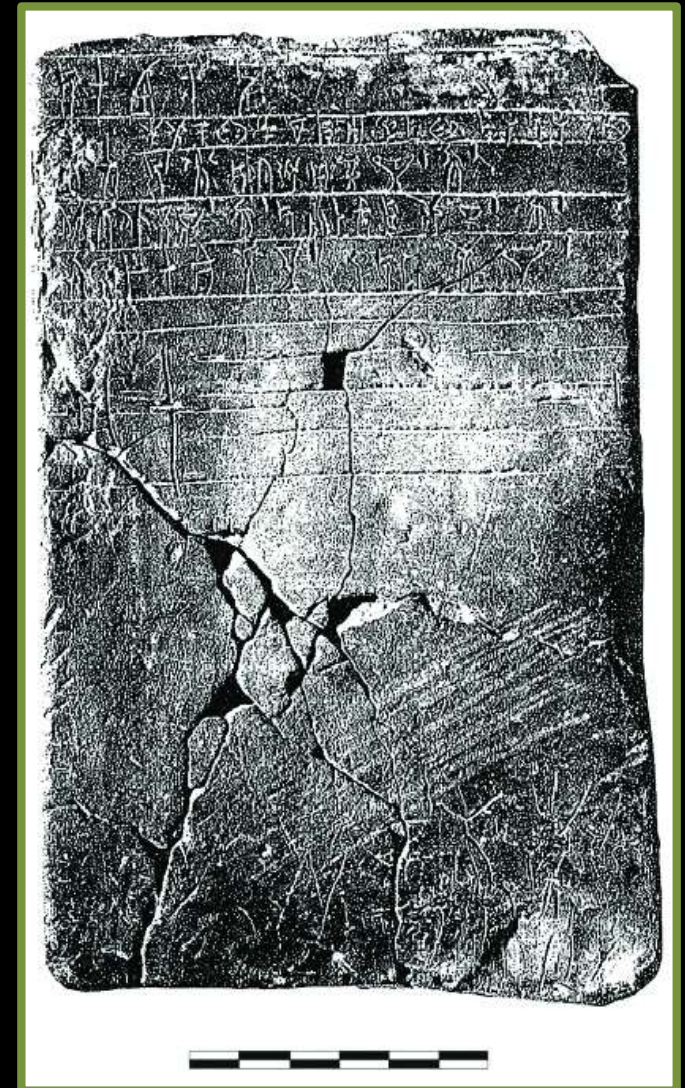
# Mycenaean Takeover of Knossos ca. 1450 BCE

*The “smoking gun”:  
the replacement of  
Linear A (Cretan) by Linear B (early Greek) at Minoan sites*



# Pylos Linear B Tablet Tn 316

- .1 po-ro-wi-to-jo ,  
.2 i-je-to-qe , pa-ki-ja-si , do-ra-qe , pe-re ,  
po-re-na-qe  
.3 pu-ro a-ke , po-ti-ni-  
ja AUR \*215<sup>VAS</sup> 1 MUL 1  
.4 ma-na-sa , AUR \*213<sup>VAS</sup> 1 MUL 1 po-si-  
da-e – ja AUR \*213<sup>VAS</sup> 1 MUL 1  
.5 ti-ri-se-ro-e , AUR \*216<sup>VAS</sup> 1 do-po-  
ta AUR \*215<sup>VAS</sup> 1  
.6 vacat  
.7 vacat  
.8 vacat  
.9 vacat  
.10 pu-ro vacat  
*reliqua pars sine regulis*





# qa-si-re-u → *basileus*

## Palaeolexicon

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The Linear B word qa-si-re-u

**Word**

qa-si-re-u

𐀓 𐀆 𐀔 𐀕

**Transliteration**

qasireu

**Meaning**

king, local leader

**See also**

Linear B: wa-na-ka 'overlord, king, leader'

Cypriot Syllabic Script: pa-si-le-wo-se 'king'

Cypriot Syllabic Script: pa-si-le-wa-ta-u 'a kings son, a prince'

Greek: βασιλεύς 'king'



# Linear B



Λ2 F M, 3 M F, M Y H P, 2 M 3 || T T A, P A A, A B 2 A 3 ||

'Two tripods - Aigeus the Cretan (?) brings them. 2 Tripods.' 'Two big three-handled vases. 2 Vases.'

# Pylos Linear B Tablet

## Ta 641

“Two tripod cauldrons with goat decorations, of Cretan workmanship; one single-handled tripod cauldron with one foot; one tripod cauldron of Cretan workmanship with the legs burnt away (**useless**); three wine jugs ...”

# Linear B “Personal” Names?

- Euplous (“Mr. Good Journey”)
- Euneos (“Mr. Nice ship”)
- Nausicles (“Mr. Famous for his Ships”)
- Okunaos (“Mr. Quick Ship”)

# Clarifying **Linear A** & **Linear B**

Both syllabaries

Example: three symbols for “chrysalis” =

**CHRY-SA-LIS**

**% - \* - #**

## **Linear A**

- Minoans
- Untranslated

## **Linear B**

- Mycenaeans
- Translated
- Form of Greek
- **Presence at Minoan sites indicates Mycenaean takeover at those sites**



# The “Evidence” from Homer?



# Reading the *Iliad*

- Focus on the main issues in each book: conflict and consequences (Book 1); the death of Patroclus and the description of Achilles' shield (Book 18); and the destruction of Troy and the human consequences, esp. Andromache's lament (Book 22).
- Pay attention to its aesthetics (similes, descriptive epithets for characters): why are these there, and how do they generate sympathy and enhance the reading experience?
- What does it mean that a culture's first great work of literature focuses on pain, rage, *pathos*, of an individual, more than on the triumph of the Greeks over the Trojans?

# *Iliad* Book 1.1-7 (trans. Lombardo)

Rage:

Sing, Goddess, **Achilles'** rage,  
Black and murderous, that cost **the Greeks**  
**Incalculable pain**, pitched **countless** souls  
Of heroes into Hades' dark,  
And left their bodies to rot as feasts  
**For dogs and birds**, as **Zeus'** will was done.

Begin with the clash between Agamemnon –  
The Greek **warlord** – and **godlike Achilles**.