

= Military of Mycenaean Greece =

The military nature of Mycenaean Greece (c . 1600 ? 1100 BC) in the Late Bronze Age is evident by the numerous weapons unearthed , warrior and combat representations in contemporary art , as well as by the preserved Greek Linear B records . The Mycenaeans invested in the development of military infrastructure with military production and logistics being supervised directly from the palatial centres . This militaristic ethos inspired later Ancient Greek tradition , and especially Homer 's epics , which are focused on the heroic nature of the Mycenaean @-@ era warrior élite .

Late Bronze Age Greece was divided into a series of warrior kingdoms , the most important being centered in Mycenae , to which the culture of this era owes its name , Tiryns , Pylos and Thebes . From the 15th century BC , Mycenaean power began expanding towards the Aegean , the Anatolian coast and Cyprus . Mycenaean armies shared several common features with other contemporary Late Bronze Age powers : they were initially based on heavy infantry , with spears , large shields and in some occasions armor . In the 13th century BC , Mycenaean units underwent a transformation in tactics and weaponry and became more uniform and flexible and their weapons became smaller and lighter . Some representative types of Mycenaean armor / weapons were the boar 's tusk helmet and the " Figure @-@ of @-@ eight " shield . Moreover , most features of the later hoplite panoply of Classical Greece were already known at this time .

= Military ethos =

The presence of the important and influential military aristocracy that formed in Mycenaean society offers an overwhelming impression of a fierce and warlike people . This impression of militarism is reinforced by the fortifications erected throughout Mycenaean Greece , the large numbers and quality of the weapons retrieved from the Mycenaean royal graves , artistic representations of war scenes and the textual evidence provided by the Linear B records . The Linear B scripts also offer some detail about the organization of the military personnel , while military production and logistics were supervised by a central authority from the palaces . According to the records in the palace of Pylos , every rural community (the damos) was obliged to supply a certain number of men who had to serve in the army ; similar service was also performed by the aristocracy .

The main divinities who appear to be of warlike nature were Ares (Linear B : A @-@ re) and Athena Potnia (Linear B : A @-@ ta @-@ na Po @-@ ti @-@ ni @-@ ja) .

= Tactics and evolution =

Mycenaean armies shared several common features with other significant Late Bronze Age powers : they were initially based on heavy infantry , which bore spears , large shields and , in some occasions , armor . Later in the 13th century BC , Mycenaean warfare underwent major changes both in tactics and weaponry . Armed units became more uniform and flexible , while weapons became smaller and lighter . The spear remained the main weapon among Mycenaean warriors until the collapse of the Bronze Age , while the sword played a secondary role in combat .

The precise role and contribution of war chariots in battlefield is a matter of dispute due to the lack of sufficient evidence . In general , it appears that during the first centuries (16th ? 14th century BC) chariots were used as a fighting vehicle while later in the 13th century BC their role was limited to a battlefield transport . Horse @-@ mounted warriors were also part of the Mycenaean armies , however their precise role isn 't clear due to lack of archaeological data .

= Fortifications =

The construction of defensive structures was closely linked with the establishment of the palatial centers in mainland Greece . The principal Mycenaean centers were well @-@ fortified and usually situated on an elevated terrain , such as in Athens , Tiryns and Mycenae or on coastal plains , in the case of Gla . Mycenaean Greeks appreciated the symbolism of war as expressed in defensive

architecture , thus they aimed also at the visual impressiveness of their fortifications . The walls were built in Cyclopean style ; consisted of walls built of large , unworked boulders more than 8 m (26 ft) thick and weighing several metric tonnes . The term Cyclopean was derived by the Greeks of the classical era who believed that only the mythical giants , the Cyclops , could have constructed such megalithic structures . On the other hand , cut stone masonry is used only in and around gateways .

= = Weaponry = =

= = = Offensive weapons = = =

Spears were initially long and two @-@ handed , more than 3 m (10 ft) long and possibly handled with both hands . During the later Mycenaean centuries , shorter versions were adopted which were usually accompanied with small types of shields , mainly of circular shape . These short spears have been used for both thrusting and throwing .

From the 16th century BC , swords with rounded tips appeared , having a grip which was an extension of the blade . They were 130 cm (4 ft) long and 3 cm (1 in) broad . Another type , the single @-@ edged sword was a solid piece of bronze c . 66 cm (2 @. @ 17 ft) ? 74 cm (2 @. @ 43 ft) long . This shorter sword was most probably used for close @-@ quarters combat . In the 14th century BC , both types were progressively modified with stronger grips and shorter blades . Finally in the 13th century BC , a new type of sword , the Naue II , became popular in Mycenaean Greece .

Archery was commonly used from an early period in battlefield . Other offensive weapons used were maces , axes , slings and javelins .

= = = Shields = = =

Early Mycenaean armies used " tower shields " , large shields that covered almost the entire body . However , with the introduction of bronze armor , this type was less utilized , even if it didn 't completely go into disuse , as attested in iconography . " Figure @-@ of @-@ eight " shields became the most common type of Mycenaean shields . These shields were made of several layers of bull @-@ hide and in some cases they were reinforced with bronze plates . During the later Mycenaean period , smaller types of shields were adopted . They were either of completely circular shape , or almost circular with a cut @-@ out part from their lower edge . These were made of several layers of leather with a bronze boss and reinforcements . They occasionally appear to have been made entirely of bronze .

= = = Helmets = = =

The most common type of Mycenaean helmet is the conical one reinforced with rows of boar tusks . This type was widely used and became the most identifiable piece of Mycenaean armor , being in use from the beginning to the collapse of Mycenaean culture . It is also known from several depictions in contemporary art in Greece and the Mediterranean . Boar 's tusk helmets consisted of a felt @-@ lined leather cap , with several rows of cut boar 's tusk sewn onto it .

Helmets made entirely of bronze were also used , while some of them had large cheek guards , probably stitched or riveted to the helmet , as well as an upper pierced knot to hold a crest . Small holes all around the cheek guards and the helmet 's lower edge were used for the attachment of internal padding . Other types of bronze helmets were also used . During the late Mycenaean period , additional types were also used such as horned helmets made of strips of leather .

= = = Armor = = =

A representative piece of Mycenaean armor is the Dendra panoply (c . 1450 ? 1400 BC) which

consisted of a cuirass of a complete set made up of several elements of bronze . It was flexible and comfortable enough to be used for fighting on foot , while the total weight of the armor is around 18 kg (about 40 lb) . Important evidence of Mycenaean armor has also been found in Thebes (c . 1350 ? 1250 BC) , which include a pair of shoulder guards , smaller than to those from Dendra , with additional plates protecting the upper arms , attached to the lower edge of the shoulder guards .

The use of scale armour is evident during the later Mycenaean centuries , as shown on iconography and archaeological finds . In general , most features of the later hoplite panoply of classical Greek antiquity , were already known to Mycenaean Greece .

= = Chariots = =

The two @-@ horse chariot appeared on the Greek mainland at least from the 16th century BC . Mycenaean chariots differed from their counterparts used by contemporary Middle Eastern powers . According to the preserved Linear B records , the palatial states of Knossos and Pylos were able to field several hundreds . The most common type of Mycenaean chariot was the " dual chariot " , which appeared in the middle of the 15th century BC . In 14th century BC , a lighter version appeared , the " rail chariot " , which featured an open cab and was most probably used as a battlefield transport rather than a fighting vehicle .

= = Ships = =

Mycenaean ships were shallow @-@ draught vessels and could be beached on sandy bays . There were vessels of various sizes containing different numbers of oarsmen . The largest ship probably had a crew of 42 ? 46 oarsmen , with one steering oar , a captain , two attendants and a complement of warriors .

The most common type of Mycenaean vessel based on depictions of contemporary art was the oared galley with long and narrow hulls . The shape of the hull was constructed in a way to maximize the number of rowers . Thus , a higher speed could have been achieved regardless of wind conditions . Although it carried mast and sail , it was less efficient as a sailing ship . The Mycenaean galley offered certain advantages . Although lighter compared to the oared @-@ sailing ship of the Minoans of Crete , it seated more rowers . Its steering mechanism was a triangular steering oar , a forerunner of the latter steering oar of Archaic era .

= = Campaigns = =

Around 1450 BC , Greece was divided into a series of warrior kingdoms , the most important being centered in Mycenae , Tiryns , Pylos and Thebes . Before the end of the same century , this militaristic civilization replaced the former priestess @-@ dominated civilization of Minoan Cretans in the Aegean . Thus , the Mycenaeans began to build up their maritime power in the Aegean Sea , expanding towards the Aegean Islands and Anatolian coast . The warlike nature of the Mycenaeans was probably a decisive factor in their diplomatic relations towards the other Late Bronze Age powers . Mycenaean warriors were also hired as mercenaries in foreign armies , such as in Egypt .

Contemporary Hittite texts indicate the presence of Ahhiyawa , which strengthened its position in western Anatolia from c . 1400 to c . 1220 BC . Ahhiyawa is generally accepted as a Hittite translation of Mycenaean Greece (Achaeans in Homeric Greek) . During this period , the kings of Ahhiyawa were clearly able to deal with the Hittite kings both in a military and diplomatic way . Ahhiyawa activity was to interfere in Anatolian affairs , with the support of anti @-@ Hittite uprisings or through local vassal rulers , which the king of the Ahhiyawa used as agents for the extension of his influence . In one occasion , in c . 1400 BC , Attarsiya (a possible Hittite translation of Atreus) launched a campaign deploying an army headed by war chariots and attacked regions which were under Hittite influence . Later , Attarsiya , invaded the island of Alashiya (Cyprus) together with a number of his Anatolian allies . The invading force finally succeeded in controlling the island and

overthrowing the local Hittite authorities . The campaigns of Attarsiya represent the earliest recorded Mycenaean Greek military activity against the Hittites . The Hittite @-@ Ahhiyawan confrontation in Wilusa , the Hittite name for Troy , in the 13th century BC may have provided the historical foundation for the Trojan War tradition .

In circa 1250 BC , the first wave of destruction has been witnessed in various centers of mainland Greece for reasons that cannot be identified by archaeologists . These incidents appear to have triggered the massive strengthening and expansion of the fortifications in various sites . In some cases , arrangements were also made for the creation of subterranean passages which led to underground cisterns . Nevertheless , none of these measures appear to have prevented the final destruction of the Mycenaean palace centers in the 12th century BC . The reasons that lead to the collapse of the Mycenaean culture have been hotly debated among scholars . The two most common theories are population movement and internal conflict .

= = Legacy = =

Due to the information offered by the Greek epics and especially by Homer 's epics , the Iliad and Odyssey , this time period of Greek history was regarded as a period of warrior @-@ heroes who led various military campaigns in Greece and adjacent areas . The picture of the Mycenaean Greeks in the Homeric Epics is one of a quarrelsome people and of a warrior élite to whom personal honor was the highest value .