Ancient Mycenae is located in the Southern region of Greece between Corinth and Argos. It was a part of the Late Hellenic III period, which was also during the Bronze Age which was from roughly 1550 to 1100 BCE (Taylour 20). Mycenae has been excavated by the most renowned archaeologists, experts in their field yet many things about this city remain a mystery. The artifacts found in Mycenae brought up a wide category of questions, including who, why, and how was this city founded? Who inhabited this city within this strong, enclosed fortress? From the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, historians and archaeologists such as Dr. Heinrich Schliemann, George Mylonas, and Chrestos Tsountas devoted their lives to unraveling the mystery of this ancient city (Taylour 17). From the pottery, gems, graves, and fragments of walls that were left behind in the ruins of Mycenae only scarce details have been found of its early inhabitants (Mylonas Mycenae 7). Almost all evidence of a written language was destroyed after the Dorian Invasion in the twelfth century BCE (Mylonas Mycenae 4). Mycenae can only be represented through those discoveries and whatever clues the surrounding areas can provide. According to the Homeric poems, Mycenae was a legendary city, the Ancient capitol of Greece and the city of Agamemnon. In the Iliad Mycenae had the most powerful Greek kings, including Agamemnon, the leader of the Archaean soldiers against Troy (Taylour 15).

In Ancient Greece, mythology was a way of explaining to the people the origin of their lives and to their best knowledge explained how life itself worked. When searching through many different resources, both old and new, we have come up with the same conclusion on how Mycenae came to be. Mind you, it isn't what historians would
like to use as a logical explanation, but from what was left behind there was little to
interpret. Mycenae in Greek mythology was founded by Perseus, the son of Zeus and of
Danae, daughter of the king of Argos (Mylonas Mycenae 5). As legend has it the
decision to place Mycenae where it was, was apparently made by the Greek demi-God
Perseus, but we won't go into that very much (Mylonas Mycenae 15). The following
quote gives us the best example of why the mythical Demi-God Perseus would choose
this land to build Mycenae.

According to his version, Mycenae was founded on the site it occupies "because
in that site the cap of his scabbard had fallen off and he regarded this as a sign to
found a city". But he added: "I have also heard that being thirsty he chanced to
take up a mushroom and that water flowing from it he drank, and being pleased
gave the place the name of Mycenae" (Mylonas Mycenae 5).

Mycenae was founded roughly between 1600 to 1550 BCE (Mylonas Mycenae 13). The
people who were said to inhabit the mountainous land, where Mycenae was later to
develop, were a mix of many tribes (Tsountas 332). Martin P. Nilsson explains the
fundamental fact is that the Mycenaean age was a period of very extensive movements
and migrations of the Greek tribes (Nilsson 239). Looking at the first Mycenaean
in the early sixteenth century, the findings show that their culture was already rich and
complex (Taylour 166).

From the very start, however, these tribes exhibited the racial characteristic that
distinguished the Greeks of the Classical period; it was natural that these people,
settled among inhabitants who were racially related to the Cretans, sooner or later
would be exposed to the Minoan culture. Under that influence, these
mainlanders late in the seventeenth century B.C.E. began to develop a new culture, the
Mycenaean, which gradually and almost at the turn of the century, about 1600
B.C.E. reached great heights (Mylonas Mycenae 3).

Mycenae was placed on a mountainous terrain with defensive advantages that let it grow
to become a strong, powerful city (Mylonas Mycenae 46). The city was built on a
flat-topped mountain, allowed for a clear view of the surrounding area (Mylonas
Mycenae 15). In addition to its great position, there was sufficient water supply and rich
soil (Tsountas 18). These were fundamental natural resources that led to the
development of a great city.

Perhaps the site was chosen for its dominant position over the Argive
plain which gave it control over the passes that led to the north and
Corinth, to the east to the plain of Berbati, and to the west to Arkadia.
Whatever prompted the choice of the site and inspired its name, the fact
remains that Perseus is the acknowledged founder of Mycenae and was
venerated as such to the time of Pausanias (Mylonas Mycenae 5).

The Mycenaean citadel sat on top of a flat rocky hill that was about 280 meters above sea
level, with walls stretching some 900 meters around a triangular area (Mylonas Mycenae
15). Inside the citadel's walls were some 30,000 square meters of space (Mylonas
Mycenae 16).

The situation of Mycenae is beautifully described by Homer, "In the depth of the
horse-feeding Argos, "because it lies in the north corner of the plain of Argos, in a
recess between the two majestic peaks of Mount Euboea, whence it commanded
the upper part of the great plain and the important narrow pass, by which the
roads lead to Phlius, Cleanae, and Corinth. The Acropolis occupied a strong rocky height, which projects from the foot of the mountain behind it in the form of an irregular triangle sloping to the west. This cliff overhangs a deep gorge, which protects the whole south flank of the citadel. Through the abyss below winds the bed of a torrent usually almost dry, because it has no other water than that of the copious fountain of Perseia, which is about a half mile to the north-east of the fortress (Schliemann 29).

According to legend the Cyclopes, gigantic one eyed monsters, built the walls surrounding Mycenae and also have been credited with helping build the city of Tiryns (Mylonas Mycenae 5). Schliemann states that the "Cyclopean walls" were built by distinguished architects (Schliemann 3). George E. Mylonas states that the rulers of Mycenae, their relatives, and perhaps their friends, had their houses in the Citadel. The people at large lived beyond the walls and, as we have seen, in small groups surrounded by the graves of their ancestors (Mylonas Ancient 70). Mycenae was constantly fighting for control over the Mediterranean with the Minoans. After the volcanic eruption of 1470 BCE, the destruction of Knossos left Mycenae with the opportunity to gain advantage over its powerful neighbor Crete, and to finally gained supremacy of the region (Castleden 145).

The whole of the eastern half of Crete would have been coated to a similar depth with the fine, while, sterilizing ash. The silent fall of white dry dust, darkening the sky, choking the livestock and smothering the crops, was easily enough to put all the farmland of the centre and east out of production for several years and cause widespread famine…The Minoan economy was assailed by earthquakes, fires,
aerial blast, towering tidal waves, and thunderous bullroar of Thera exploding. Knossos and its territory were finally wrecked by a white pall of slowly falling dust, blanketing and paralyzing the countryside, cutting off the life-blood of the Labyrinth (Castleden 146).

According to Mylonas, some scholars believe that by the middle of the fifteenth century, by 1450 B.C., the Mycenaeans were able to subdue the great king of Knossos and to establish their domain in the very city of Minos, which they ruled for some fifty years at least (Mylonas Mycenae 3). Much of the culture from Crete carried over to the mainland and became a part of Mycenaean culture (Taylour 21). Taylour states during his research of Mycenae, Sir Arthur Evans started his campaign in Crete. During his campaign, he established Crete to be one of the great powers of the Bronze Age in the Aegean (Taylour 21). Sir Arthur Evans was very struck by the Cretan character of Mycenaean art during its early stages, that he was led to believe that Greece at one point was a Cretan colony (Taylour 21-22). The exact date of the volcanoes eruption is uncertain, but it is apparent to certain scholars from the archaeological evidence alone that Mycenaean influence was already strongly established in the Minoan capital before it was destroyed (Taylour 167). This event marks the beginning of the peak in the Mycenaean civilization. Since the destruction of the Minoans cargo from the Greek mainland went unchallenged throughout the most of the Mediterranean (Taylour 170). This gave Mycenae a chance to develop into the main artistic, religious, and cultural center of the Aegean world (Mylonas Ancient 14). At this time the center of power was in Mycenae, its monuments in the Argolid surpassed all others in Greece (Taylour 171).

The peak of Mycenae lasted roughly from 1400 to 1200 BCE during this time
Mycenae started its artistic advances which led it to be a short-lived, but successful civilization (Tsountas 318). The peak began after the Mycenaeans conquered and took over Crete. After this they devoted their existence to destroying and ravaging other civilizations (Tsountas 209). Since Mycenae was ruled by a monarch, also referred to as a wanax or a basileus, the wealth that the city made was given to the ruler (Taylour 44). The wealth accumulated came from piracy and conquering other cities. This wealth provided them with the weapons and military strength they needed to continue being a dominant figure in the southern regions of Ancient Greece (Tsountas 355). This isn't where all the wealth went though they also spent a lot of money and time on making sculptures, pottery, and gems that celebrated their success as a powerful civilization (Schliemann 16). The religion of the Mycenaean's is not clearly stated in any texts, but extravagant graves have been found, in which their kings are respectfully buried, and a few shrines that could have been used in worshipping Gods.

We know very little that is definite about the religion of the Mycenaeans although we know a great deal about certain aspects of their burial customs that pertain to religious rites and practices. Sanctuaries or shrines are few and poorly documented, and no cult statues exist about which we may be absolutely sure. (Mylonas Mycenae 136)

Another portion of the city's wealth went to burying their king, either in a grave or in the Tholos Tomb which was later discovered and used by the Mycenaeans (Mycenae Mylonas 118). In everyday Mycenaean life the foods they went after not only provided for their families and city, but it also played along with the characteristics of the Mycenaean people.
For the meat there was principally mutton or lamb, goat, pork, and beef. The tablets of Knossos record great quantities of sheep, and the Grecian countryside is equally well suited for the grazing of sheep and goats. Cattle, then as now, were more rare. Pig bones have been identified and apart from the meat of domesticated animals, there were the rewards of the chase: venison, wild boar, hares, duck, geese, and partridge. Hunting wild game was a favourite activity among the Mycenaeans and is frequently portrayed in their art. Among the more dangerous pursuits was the lion hunt (Taylour 120).

In Mycenae it can be assumed that much of the protein in their diet came from the sea, because Greece had a long coastline with fish that are known for their savior. Shellfish of all kinds were popular, and the octopus is a favorite subject on vases and was undoubtedly considered a delicacy as it is today. Most of the diet would have been bread made from wheat or barley, according to the tablets the flour was ground by the woman and baked by the men. Also from the tablets we find out that they made cheese from the milk of sheep and goats. At excavation sites there are remains of vegetables such as peas, beans, vetches, and lentils. Fruits and nuts are not well documented, but figs, pears, apples, pomegranates, almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts should be expected to be here, hence they are the usual Mediterranean varieties. Olive oil which has both archaeological and written evidence must have been one of the most important sources of wealth. It may have been used for cooking and lighting, and if there was a surplus it could have possibly been exported. From the above mentioned resources lots of delicious meals could have been prepared (Taylour 126). From the very few Mycenaean tombs that have escaped robbery two famous cups have been found. These
artifacts were beautiful examples of "Minoan craftsmanship", which states that "Minoan influences were strong within the Mycenaean culture". On these cups were various scenes from a dangerous sport called "bull leaping" (Taylour 127). In his book, Lord William Taylour describes an Ancient Mycenaean game called bull leaping. In the first scene the bull is attracted by a decoy cow. His attention thus engaged, he is caught unawares by the trainer and tethered by foot. On the second cup the bull is seen struggling in a net; he is in captivity. But later on he is seen venting his rage on two athletes, both of whom are in dire peril, if not doomed (Taylour 127). This game or ritual had a long tradition in Crete, and might have been the foundation for the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur (Taylour 127). The Mycenaean's always looked for a challenge, whether conquering the city of Troy or bringing down the strongest lion of the pride. You can see depictions of their heroic conquests of untamed animals on pottery, weapons, golden cups, and other Ancient artifacts (Mylonas Mycenae 193). The eight characteristics of a civilization are seen throughout the Mycenaean culture. From the Minoan culture the Mycenaean's learned the art of writing and the benefits from that including efficient bureaucratic organization. Minoan Linear A was developed into Mycenaean Linear B, which was their form of writing (Taylour 168). The clothes worn by the Minoans didn't differ substantially from those of the Mycenaean's (Taylour 121).

The fashions of dress, at least for the women, were originally dictated by Minoan society and it is surprising to find that there should have been no noticeable change throughout the whole of the Mycenaean age. The dress worn by the Goddess from Shaft Grave III (sixteenth century) is not recognizably different from that of the woman portrayed on the ivory handle from the 'Tomb of Clytemnestra'
This choice of clothing is different from that of men and women. The regular warm weather dress for men was a loin cloth or short kilt. The formal dress for men was a simple tunic with short sleeves, a narrow waist and a full but short skirt. Leggings were often worn during colder weather or to protect one's legs. Anyone who had to go through the thick and thorny scrub of Greece would appreciate the advantages of legging. Men often had beards, with their upper lip shaved; their hair was not allowed to fall below their shoulders. Signet rings were worn both by men and women in high positions and they were either made from gold or silver (Taylour 123).

The decline of Mycenae was a lengthy process. During the Trojan War the might of Mycenae penetrated all of the central and eastern Mediterranean, but there is evidence that Mycenae had already passed its prime. Around the middle of the thirteenth century BCE, Mycenae's capital suffered damages to homes outside the citadel that were never rebuilt. It is also possible that the citadel was damaged. We are not sure if these damages can be attributed to a civil war, because there is no way of telling (Taylour 171-172).

The Descent of Herakleidai is said to occur eighty years after the Fall of Troy, and has been calculated by scholars as a correct approximation for the fall of Mycenae (Mylonas Mycenae 218). The Descent of Herakleidai brought about the collapse of Mycenaean power and its centers. The Mycenaean sites were said to have been destroyed or abandoned during the second half of the thirteenth century BCE, due to the Dorian Invasion (Mylonas Mycenae 218). In 1956 George Mylonas repeated this view and
placed the destruction of Mycenae at the end of LH III B. He concluded that the incursions of the invaders lasted a long time and that even though the lower city of Mycenae "was sacked sometime before the end of the 13th century, the citadel may have held out for many years against repeated attacks." This proved that the Trojan expedition could not have been launched in LH III C times (Mylonas Mycenae 218). Out of all the Mycenaean strongholds, only Athens held out and for a long time to become the pride of later Athenians. They repelled foreign invasions and archaeology seems to confirm that (Taylour 176). The succeeding period around 1200 BCE shows signs of impoverishment (Taylour 176). The Mycenaean culture ceased to exist after the Dorian Invasion, Athens then became its own society and the remaining people of Mycenae dispersed throughout the country.
This section of the reading is an idea presented by historians which we find to be relevant in our search for the decline of Mycenae.

The date of the Fall of Troy is of paramount importance to the study of the Mycenaean Age for, according to the ancient testimony repeated by Thucydides, eighty years after the fall there occurred what is known as the "Descent of the Herakleidai" or "the Dorian Invasion", which is generally assumed to have brought about the collapse of Mycenaean power and the end of the age. (Mylonas 4)

Mycenae has a very mythological interpretation on how their city was founded in this following quote, which has found to be the only explanation found by historians.

The building of Mycenae is attributed by legends to the mythical Perseus, the son of Zeus and of Danae, daughter of Akrisios, the King of Argos…According to his version, Mycenae was founded on the site it occupies "because in that site the cap of his scabbard had fallen off and he regarded this as a sign to found a city". But he added: "I have also heard
that being thirsty he chanced to take up a mushroom and that water flowing from it he drank, and being pleased gave the place the name of Mycenae. (Mylonas 5)

"For the construction of its walls, as noted above, Perseus is reported to have used the Cyclopes, the legendary builders of Tiryns, and to this tradition Euripides refers when he calls the walls of Mycenae Cyclopean and Mycenae itself a Cyclopean city."(Mylonas 5-6)

"Perhaps the site was chosen for its dominant position over the Argive plain which gave it control over the passes that led to the north and Corinth, to the east to the plain of Berbati, and to the west to Arkadia. Whatever prompted the choice of the site and inspired its name, the fact remains that Perseus is the acknowledged founder of Mycenae and was venerated as such to the time of Pausanias," (Mylonas 5)

There can be little doubt that in the realm of construction and architecture the Mycenaecans reached a high state of development, the progress of which we have already outlined. The builders of Cyclopean walls, of the tholos tombs, of the palaces within the citadels proved their greatness with their ability to cut and shape hard stone, to transport, lift, and place in position immense blocks of conglomerate, to terrace, rearrange, and fit the natural terrain to their building schemes, as they did in Mycenae…Their sense of orderly design in construction is proved by the Megara they built…They were able to provide for those occupants whatever their needs and their sense of grandeur and
authority demanded…We may again admire their ability in constructing roads over miles of mountainous terrain, roads of which sections have defied time and could be used even today….it seems that stone aqueducts bringing water to their cities from far away mountainous springs were not beyond their powers of achievement. (Mylonas 187-188)

"The latter prove that by the end of the seventeenth century the people of Mycenae were very prosperous and had, under influence of the Minoan Crete, started to develop what came to be known as Mycenaean art and culture." (Mylonas 15)

"Relations between Crete and the lands bordering the Eastern Mediterranean were close from an early time, and the Mycenaeans had many trade contacts with those countries in the days of their hegemony. It is only natural therefore to suppose that Minoans and Mycenaeans alike shared the conception of a Mother Goddess and her divine son, and sometimes consort, who is fated to die or be sacrificed at the death of the old year, which he symbolizes, and to be reborn in the spring. The rebirth was celebrated with great solemnity accompanied by fertility rites that were often of an orgiastic nature."(Taylour 61)

"We know very little that is definite about the religion of the Mycenaeans although we know a great deal about certain aspects of their burial customs that pertain to religious rites and practices. Sanctuaries or shrines are few and poorly documented, and no cult statues exist about which we may be absolutely sure." (Mylonas 136)
"For the meat there was principally mutton or lamb, goat, pork, and beef. The tablets of Knossos record great quantities of sheep, and the Grecian countryside is equally well suited for the grazing of sheep and goats. Cattle, then as now, were more rare. Pig bones have been identified and apart from the meat of domesticated animals, there were the rewards of the chase: venison, wild boar, hares, duck, geese, and partridge. Hunting wild game was a favourite activity among the Mycenaeans and is frequently portrayed in their art. Among the more dangerous pursuits was the lion hunt." (Taylour 120)

"From the very start, however, these tribes exhibited the racial characteristic that distinguished the Greeks of the Classical period; It was natural that these people, settled among inhabitants who were racially related to the Cretans, sooner or later would be exposed to the Minoan culture. Under that influence, these mainlanders late in the seventeenth century B.C.E. began to develop a new culture, the Mycenaean, which gradually and almost at the turn of the century, about 1600 B.C.E. reached great heights."(Mylonas 3)

"Some scholars believe that by the middle of the fifteenth century, by 1450 B.C., the Mycenaeans were able to subdue the great king of Knossos and to establish their domain in the very city of Minos, which they ruled for some fifty years at least."(Mylonas 3)
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