

How did the minoans influence the mycenaean civilization history essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Mycenaean civilization transpired during the late Bronze Age or the late Helladic period around 1600 B. C. Excavations at Mycenae were undertaken by Heinrich Schliemann only to be found that during this period, the Helladic culture in mainland Greece was altered though the influence from the Minoans in Crete, and the collapse of this civilization was brought about by the Dorian invasion, although there are several other theories that have been attributed towards the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization. The most important Mycenaean cities were Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos and Athens. The Mycenaean civilization was divided into the Early Helladic (c. 2800-2000 BC), Middle Helladic (c. 2000-1500 BC), and Late Helladic (c. 1500-1100 BC) periods. These chronological periods are approximately parallel to the Minoan civilization.

In Crete, the Mycenaean's took advantage of the weakened Minoan state and conquered Knossos around 1400 B. C. Soon afterwards the Mycenaean's adopted the Minoan script, more commonly known as the Linear A script and later adapted this script to write the Linear B. Mycenaean's highly developed through conquest unlike the Minoans who advanced through trade.

They were a vigorous and active people who engaged in trade and some piracy over a wide area extending from southern Italy in the west to Troy and the Black Sea in the northeast.

Minoans were a civilization that benefitted from trade, and hence for it to have a significant impact on the Mycenaean civilization, trade was the main solution. During the Second palace period, Minoans traded to the islands of Thera, Melos and Kea towards mainland Greece. They extended all the way

towards the sites of Kythera and the settlement of Kastri including the east end of Crete to Kasos and Karpathos towards Dodecanese and Anatolia where thriving Minoan settlements were found.

Minoan cultural influence shows that it went beyond the Cyclades and had contact with the early Egyptians, which is clearly evident as Minoan pottery is recovered and a number of inscriptions or texts relating to 'keftiu', which means places from the midst of the seas, are found. On Egyptian tombs, paintings of Minoan people bringing in high quality gifts can be seen, and this can easily be linked to Minoan products. Hence an intensification of Minoan influence was found on the Greek mainland and on the islands of the Aegean by the Second palace period and therefore very minoanized.

Supporting Helladic Greece, the fluctuations in Minoan styles and techniques

Minoan colonies can be found at settlements at Kastri on Thera, which were islands close to the Greek mainland that were influenced significantly by the Minoans for thousands of years until the Mycenaean's overpowered them. It is clearly evident that the Minoans has economic powers when it came down to trade.

Minoan techniques and styles in ceramics also provided models, of fluctuating influence, for Helladic Greece.

Pottery

Minoan pottery was an excellent tool for dating back to civilization especially when pottery was at its peak, around the Second Palace period at Knossos.

According to Fitton in *People of the Past: Minoans*, he states that 'pottery in the Second Palace period shows a new interest in naturalism'[1].

What showed a clear interest in naturalism was classical Kamares pottery, and this defined the high point in Minoan pottery. Classical Kamares pottery was often characterized by abstract motifs but then slowly evolved into pictorial motifs. Minoan pottery was firstly dominated by the light-on-dark paintings during the First Palace Period and soon transitioned towards the dark-on-light style. Hence the classical Kamares pottery displayed 'white motifs' where spirals, sloping lines, dots and floral patterns painted on a black background. This new evolved style gave rise to fresh designs, which were mainly inspired by organic materials such as the marine life, plants and flowers. The popular 'tortoiseshell ripple'[2] was a type of decoration of wavy dark line on a light background was soon joined.

Decorative and innovative paintings continued till the end of the Bronze Age such as floral styles of plants and flowers as well as reed and foliated patterns. Shortly, other patterns started evolving such as geometric and abstract styles, marine patterns that was inspired from sea-creatures, shells, rocks and seaweed. One of the most famous designs is the octopus writhing around the surface of the vessel and can be found on most Minoan pottery. These pottery styles defined the Minoan product, hence when found outside Crete, it was easily recognizable.

The early Mycenaean period started with a huge and dramatic influence from the Minoans; hence most Mycenaean's from mainland Greece became Minoanized. Around 1400 B. C., the Mycenaean's overpowered the palace of

Knossos and the Minoan pottery style began to evolve from its basic stylistic domination.

We can see that the fine pottery is decorated with glistening paint increases dramatically, and a certain uniformity begins to emerge in its painting style as well as in other aspects. The Mycenaean pottery style was coined the 'Koine style'[3], according to Sinclair Hood in *The Arts in Prehistoric Greece*, due to its unique uniformity, both stylistic and technical.

The metamorphosis of the Mycenaean goblet began to evolve into the 'kylix', slowly transforming into elongated the stems and shallower bowls. Shortly, Stirrup jars began to appear, and prevalent patterns were spirals, while naturalistic motifs become less popular and more stylistic. Soon Mycenaean pottery began to produce regional ceramic styles of high quality and considerable art interest such as the Octopus style, Pictorial style and Close style[4], rather than solely abstract motifs.

The Octopus style evolved with representations from of course, octopuses, fish and birds. The main transition from Minoan 'marine style' pottery to the 'octopus style' was that it modified from an organic to a symmetrical style. Pictorial styles and Close styles continued to evolve until the end of the Mycenaean period, where sub-Mycenaean pottery took over with simplistic designs, which was the precursor of the Geometric styles.

FRESCOES

There is hardly a doubt that all human art primarily developed in the service of rituals and that the autonomy of ‘ art for ‘ art’s sake was achieved only by another, secondary step of cultural progress’

k Lorenz, on aggressions (pg. 73)

showing that artistic creation was not only a serious activity but also that it was not devoid of magico-religious connotations. (marinatos 1984pf 30)-

A significant part of the Minoan art and culture were the frescoes. Walls were decorated with paint plaster from the end of the Neolithic period onwards.

Early during the bronze age, red was the most common color used, although by the period of the First Palaces, a wide array of colors were composed such as blue, grey, yellow and white.

Early compositions were mainly geometric and sometimes floral, but then they switched to plain white washes.

According to Fitton in *People of the Past: Minoans*, examples from the First Palace period show that Knossos was always the centre of the art of wall painting, although they are fragmented[5]. The earliest illustrations were the ‘ saffron gatherer’ and ‘ the bull-leaping’ frescoes from Knossos. From these illustrations, certain conventions were magnified from the use of their limited colors such as male figures were always painted in a dark reddish brown while a creamy white was used to characterize female skin tones.

Naturalistic elements were found from the ‘ House of the Frescoes’ at

Knossos. Fragments detailing scenes of birds and monkeys in a scenic
<https://assignbuster.com/how-did-the-minoans-influence-the-mycenaean-civilization-history-essay/>

landscape through which water streams would flow. These depictions of flora and fauna as well as other compositions have been portrayed as 'naturalism' in Minoan art.

Minoan techniques and themes, in relation to frescoes, have been found outside Crete and hence have been a great influence on Mycenaean frescoes, which have been found at Pylos, Mycenae and Tiryns. The earliest Mycenaean fresco decorations were very similar to Minoan traditions such as embodying regional themes and ceremonial procession figures in palaces. Frescoes embodying ritualistic actions were also particularly characteristic. Quite parallel to the Minoan 'naturalistic' theme, the Mycenaean Greeks reflected their depictions through animals. One famous exhibit is the bull-jumping fresco found at Tiryns and Mycenae. Other frescoes included many depictions of processions and battle scenes.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Linear A

The hieroglyphic script started to fade early during the Neopalatial period and Linear A script slowly eased in around 1800 B. C till 1450 B. C. Linear A still remains indecipherable although it gives a general idea of what language was prevalent at Minoan Crete. The distribution of Linear A script was quite widespread and was found all way to the Aegean Islands showing the extent of Minoan influence. The Linear A script was found engraved on a number of different objects all the way from pottery vessels, bronzes, jewelry, stone vessels and most importantly libation tables and so forth. It came from country houses and palaces where they were used as rectangular

clay tablets from Knossos, Zakros and Mallia. Most of the clay tablets found were baked, although originally were of unbaked clay and therefore lead us to a conclusion that there might have been a fire, but not necessarily on purpose.

Linear B

Linear B scripts appeared right after the demise of the Linear A tablets around 1450 B. C till 1375 B. C. It was a system of archaic Greek writing, the language of the Mycenaean's. Linear B scripts were discovered in a similar manner as Linear A- preserved as baked clay although according to researchers they were unbaked and most probably used for temporary records since there were no dates mentioned, just references to ' this year' or ' last year'. Found mainly at Knossos and at Mycenaean mainland, they could have been baked accidentally by fire.

During Evan's excavations groups of tablets were found distributed throughout the palace of Knossos and this made it difficult for them to stratigraphically pin them. This problem has led to years and years of disputes regarding the date and type of destruction or what exactly happened to them. Once deciphered, it was found that these scripts were merely accounting records of goods, military supplies and palace stores and in some, land disputes.

The origin of Linear B script as previously mentioned before has been a matter of dispute for quite a while, although now it is generally accepted that it was adapted from Linear A scripts and Hieroglyphics or in other words, Minoan intervention. According to___ It was derived from non- Greek, Linear

A language and then adopted by mainland Greeks[6]. This shows that there was a cultural and a verbal communication between the mainland Greek and the Cretans.

TOMBS

Minoans had a great influence on the Greek mainland as well the island of the Aegean during the Second Palace Period. During the Minoan Civilization 'tholos tombs' were built and a series of them were excavated at Knossos in the 1960's. The Mesara type of tholos is peculiar since it links to the Mycenaean tholos as they both contain a 'dromos'. Mycenaean tholos tombs have been found on mainland Greece as well as on Crete.

Now going back to Mycenaean burial, through the rich finds found in the shaft graves, one could easily guess the rising power of the Mycenaean's. These rich contents lets us conclude that they were aristocratic burials, which were made in grave circles around 1650 to 1500 B. C at Mycenae. These treasuries included Minoan products produced by either on the mainland by Minoan craftsmen or in Crete itself. According to Fitton, this compilation of 'Minoan arts and crafts would continue to be a feature of Mycenaean Greece' as well as on Crete 'creating a situation where a distinction between Minoan and Mycenaean producers can sometimes scarcely be drawn.[7]'

With the discovery of the 'grave of Agamemnon' and its 'gold portrait mask' enabled Heinrich Schliemann put the Mycenaean civilization on the map a little more than a hundred years ago. Castleden says that 'the early

Mycenaean graves were simple and functional, without pretention, and virtually unchanged from those of the preceding middle Helladic'[8].

Mycenaean graves were described as a shallow pit dug into a rock, large enough to take up a folded human body. Other graves also persisted such as the cist graves, which were merely a rectangular grave pit lined with stone slabs. From 1620 B. C. onwards, shaft graves were soon constructed as the Mycenaean culture began to evolve into a hierarchical one, where there was a significant increase in their leaders personal status. Soon, Mycenaean rulers began to abandon haft graves and opt for more favorably burial techniques that has been developing in Messenia for decades, the ' tholos tomb'. One of the first tholos tombs constructed was immediately after the last shaft grave and was known as the Cyclopean tomb, this occurred around 1490 B. C.

A few characteristics of the tholos tomb were that they appeared as a beehive vault and were made out of dry stone masonry. These tombs were built against a mound on ground level, where the weight of the mound gave support to put together the beehive vault. A ' dromos', which was a horizontal passage way went into the mound, creating an impressive doorway. In all probability, the Mycenaean sought their inspiration from the Middle Minoan's round tombs. This makes it even more likely that the Mycenaean tombs were directly derived from the Middle Minoan's ' mesara' type of tholos tombs.