

2

AEGEAN CULTURE AND EARLY GREECE

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

AEGEAN CULTURES

Early Mediterranean people, myth and the arts

THE RISE OF ANCIENT GREECE

Western civilization takes root

NOTE: Although we have included “The Rise of Ancient Greece” material in the Chapter 2 Summary and all relevant Key Terms, we suggest treating all of Greek art within the context of Chapter 3. Greek art demonstrates quite clearly the concept of the evolution of art, and it works very well to focus upon the Classical phase, presenting it in terms of what came before and what followed. Therefore, please see Chapter 3 in the Instructors’ Manual for all Greek material, including Resources.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, the student should be able to . . .

- . . . define key terms.
- . . . compare and contrast the arts and cultures of the Aegean and Early Greece.
- . . . outline the specific contributions of the Minoans to architecture.
- . . . identify the Presocratic philosophers and outline their specific ideas.
- . . . trace the development of visual arts in Early Greece.
- . . . compare and contrast black-figure and red-figure pottery.
- . . . explain the connection between the Greek religion and its culture and arts.
- . . . name some of the gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What contributions to architecture are specifically Minoan?
2. Compare and contrast the *Woman of Willendorf* to the Cycladic statuette of a woman. What were the beliefs associated with each one? What does the appearance of each say about their respective cultures of origin?

3. Examine the *Toreador Fresco* and works from Mesopotamia featuring bulls. Why was the image of the bull so important to these cultures? How are some of these ideas still important today and how do we see them presented?
4. Who were the two early archeologists working in the Aegean and what were their discoveries? What are some of the differences between archeology then and how it is practiced now?
5. How are Gilgamesh and Achilles alike or different in representing the idea of an “epic hero”? What about their characters reflects the values of either Mesopotamian culture or Homeric Greek culture?
6. Outline the characteristics of a few of the Greek pantheon and compare them to other gods or goddesses from contemporary religions you may be familiar with. How are the deities different?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A number of cultures flourished along the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean and on the islands of the Aegean Sea between about 3000 and 1100 B.C.E. For centuries the principal evidence that these cultures existed was found in Homer's Greek epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, until the discoveries of archeologists Heinrich Schliemann (Troy and Mycenae) and Arthur Evans (Knossos on Crete), confirmed the truth of Homer's words. These civilizations were the basis of later Greek traditions and beliefs.

The early Aegean period was dominated by a rich maritime culture which included trading with Egypt. In addition, the Aegean cultures shared a common Greek language. The earliest Aegean civilization developed in the Cyclades about 2500-2000 B.C.E. Archeologist Sir Arthur Evans established that life flourished on the island of Crete between about 2800 and 1400 B.C.E. The Minoan civilization had developed significantly by 2000 B.C.E. Then about 3000 B.C.E., Greek-speaking peoples began to invade the Greek mainland from the north, inaugurating the Mycenaean Age. After 1500 B.C.E., when the Minoan culture began to decline, these mainland peoples began to have increasing influence. They built strong fortresses and were more militaristic. Mycenae was the richest and most powerful center, so the entire culture has taken its name from this city.

In about 1000 B.C.E., the Greeks of the mainland began to forge a new civilization that would last until the fifth century B.C.E. The history of this civilization is divided into the Geometric period, from 1000-700 B.C.E.; the Orientalizing period, from 700-600 B.C.E.; and the Archaic period, from about 600-480 B.C.E.

The Geometric Period is sometimes referred to as the Heroic Age, since it was during that time that Homer created his poetic epics *The Iliad* and *the Odyssey*. The communities which began to emerge took the form of independent city-states, each called a "polis." It is the development of the Greek polis which led to the later

Western ideal of democracy. In the Orientalizing period, the Greek city-states began to trade abroad and to colonize. For the first time in 300 years, Greece made contact with the civilizations of the Near East, in particular, Egypt and Persia. These contacts had a great impact on Greek art and life. The Archaic period was a time of rapid change and development in ancient Greece.

Nothing distinguishes the rise of ancient Greece as a civilization more than its love of pure thought. The Greeks were the first to practice “philosophy,” literally “the love of wisdom,” in a systematic way. Both before the ascendancy of Socrates and his pupil Plato in the fifth century B.C.E. and after, Greek thinkers hotly debated the nature of the world and their place in it. Prominent groups included the *materialists*, who explained the world in terms of the four elements; the *atomists*, who conceived of the world as being made up of atoms and the void; and the *pythagoreans*, who viewed numbers at the heart of all things.

MyHumanitiesKit RESOURCES, CHAPTER TWO

Objectives

Flashcards

Study

Critical Thinking

Multiple Choice

Interact – Closer Look:

Snake Goddess or Priestess

Review and Explore

Image Links

Humanities PPT

Glossary

Audio Glossary

College Art Association

Write and Research

MySearchLab: www.MySearchLab.com

KEY TERMS

Linear A and B
corbelled dome
platform
pediment
dromos
labyrinth
rhyton
colonnade
Doric
amphora

pithos
mythology
entablature
entasis
capital
terra cotta
polis (pl. poleis)
crepis
kouros (pl. kouroi)
tholos

Kamare Ware
Geometric style
stylobate
kore (pl. korai)
frieze
Palace Style
krater
column
Archaic smile
architrave
faience
oinochoe
peristyle
philosophy
calyx krater
lintel
olpe
shaft
red-figure style
atomist
relieving triangle
black-figure style
fluted
ashlar masonry
lyric

SUGGESTED TEACHING OUTLINE

I. AEGEAN CULTURES

A. BRIEF HISTORY

B. CYCLADIC CULTURE [ca. 2500-2000 B.C.E.]

1. Background
2. [Fig. 2.1] Statuette of a woman, third millennium B.C. E.
 - **TEACHING STRATEGY:** Contrast the *Woman of Willendorf* [Fig. 1.2] with the Cycladic statuette of a woman [Fig. 2.1]. Examine how both figures are thought to have been connected with early beliefs about human fertility. Discuss again how scholars must resort to piecing together clues as to a work's function and meaning.
 - **TEACHING STRATEGY:** Compare this statuette with modern works by Henry Moore, Constantin Brancusi, or Barbara Hepworth. Ask students to list what similarities they observe. Are they coincidental?
3. [Fig. 2.2] *Landscape*, wall painting with areas of modern reconstruction, from Akrotiri, Thera, Cyclades, before 1630-1500 B.C.E.

C. MINOAN CULTURE [ca. 2800-1400 B.C.E.]

1. Background
 - Sir Arthur Evans, British archaeologist (1900)
 - **TEACHING STRATEGY:** discuss in detail the work of Evans at Knossos, including methods of archaeology and of reconstruction. Have students consider the role of myth (such as that of King Minos and the labyrinth) in spurring on the efforts of early archaeologists. What have been the *positive* effects of archaeology, and what have been some *negative* effects? In this regard, particularly consider how archaeological methods have improved over the years.
 - **TEACHING STRATEGY:** show a documentary about the discoveries at Knossos.
2. Palace at Knossos [Figs. 2.3 and 2.4]
 - The Myth of the Minotaur
 - **TEACHING STRATEGY:** consider showing Titian's *The Rape of Europa* as you recount the myth

3. Minoan Fresco: [Fig. 2.4]: *Toreador Fresco*, Palace Complex, Knossos, Crete, ca. 1550-1450 B.C.E.

- **ADDITIONAL LECTURE TOPIC:** explain the meaning of the bull in ancient cultures and bring the topic up to date with Picasso's art (such as *Guernica*) and the continuing practice of bullfights and the "running of the bulls" in Spain.

4. Minoan Religion [Fig. 2.5] *Snake Goddess*, from the Palace Complex, Knossos, Crete, ca. 1700-1500 B.C.E. Also, in [MyHumanitiesKit](#), examine Chapter Two, Interact, *Closer Look: Snake Goddess or Priestess?*

- **ADDITIONAL LECTURE TOPIC:** Use the "Then and Now, the Snake Goddess" section of the chapter as a springboard for presenting the nature of historical revisionism that has occurred in response to the Feminist movement.
- **ADDITIONAL LECTURE TOPIC:** discuss what the authors call "the demonization of women" in ancient cultures.

5. Minoan Painted Pottery

6. Discoveries at Thera

- **ADDITIONAL LECTURE TOPIC:** Consider presenting the ongoing Greek excavations at the site of Akrotiri on the island of Santorini (ancient Thera).

D. MYCENAEAN CULTURE [ca. 1600-1300 B.C.E.]

1. Background

- Heinrich Schliemann, German businessman turned archaeologist (late 1860s)
- The Legend of Agamemnon:
[Fig. 2.8] Gold mask, from tomb V of Grave Circle A, Mycenae, ca. 1550-1500 B.C.E.

2. Citadels [Fig. 2.6] *Lion Gate*, Mycenae, ca. 1300-1200 B.C.E.

- Cyclopean Masonry (relate term to the mythological Cyclops)

3. Tombs

4. Mycenaean Pottery

[Fig. 2.9] *Warrior Vase*, from Mycenae, ca. 1200 B.C.E.

II. THE RISE OF ANCIENT GREECE – *Please see Chapter 3 in the Instructors' Manual*

ASSESSMENTS

Student self-reviews: [MyHumanitiesKit](#), *Review and Explore*

RESOURCES

IMAGES:

[MyHumanitiesKit](#), *Image links*

BOOKS:

- Barber, R.L.N. *The Cyclades in the Bronze Age*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987.
- Betancourt, Philip P. *A History of Minoan Pottery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Cadogan, Gerald. *Palaces of Minoan Crete*. London: Methuen, 1980.
- Doumas, Christos. *Thera, Pompeii of the Ancient Aegean: Excavations at Akrotiri, 1967-1979*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1983.
- The Wall-paintings of Thera*. Athens: Thera Foundation, 1992.
- Fitton, J. Lesley. *Cycladic Art*. 2nd ed. London: British Museum, 1999.
- Graham, James W. *The Palaces of Crete*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Higgins, Reynold. *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*. Rev. ed. World of Art. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1997.
- McDonald, William A., and Carol G. Thomas. *Progress into the Past: The Rediscovery of Mycenaean Civilization*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990.
- Marinatos, Nanno. *Art and Religion in Thera: Reconstructing a Bronze Age Society*. Athens: Mathioulakis, 1984.
- Preziosi, Donald and Louise Hitchcock. *Aegean Art and Architecture*. Oxford History of Art. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999.
- Warren, Peter. *The Aegean Civilizations from Ancient Crete to Mycenae*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier-Phaidon, 1989.

VIDEOS:

Crete & Mycenae. Museum Without Walls. KVC Home Video, 54 minutes.

King Minos and the Minoans of Crete. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 48 minutes.

Minoan Civilization. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 53 minutes.

