In this chapter you will...

- Be able to compare and contrast the art and architecture developed by three Aegean Bronze Age Cultures.

In this chapter you will...

- Be able to evaluate how archaeology has recovered, reconstructed, and interpreted ancient Aegean material culture despite the lack of written documents.

In this chapter you will...

- Be able to assess differences in the designs and use of the large architectural complexes created by the Minoans and the Mycenaean.

In this chapter you will...

- Investigate the relationship between art and social rituals or communal practices in the ancient Aegean cultures.

Wall Painting at Akrotiri

- This elegantly posed & sharply silhouetted girl, reaching to pluck the crocus flowers blooming on the hillside in front of her, offers us a window into life in the ancient Aegean world.

Aegean Bronze Age

The Bronze Age in the Aegean

- Using metal ores from Europe, Arabia, & Anatolia, Aegean peoples created exquisite objects of bronze that were prized for export.

The Cycladic Islands

- On the Cycladic Islands, late Neolithic & early Bronze Age people developed a thriving culture.
- They engaged in agriculture, herding, crafts, & trade, using local stone to build fortified towns & hillside burial chambers.

Figure of a Woman (with drawing showing original painting scheme), 2600-2400 BCE

- The originally smooth marble surfaces were enlivened by painted motifs in blue, red, & more rarely green paint, emphasizing their surfaces rather than their 3-dimensional shapes.
- Today we use controlled lighting & microscopic investigation to see the patterns & decoration made in paint.

Head (with remains of painted decoration), 2500-2200 BCE

- Art historian Gail Hoffman has argued that patterns of vertical red lines painted on the faces of some figures were related to Cycladic rituals of mourning their dead.
The Minoan Civilization on Crete
- By 3000 BCE, Bronze Age people were living on Crete, the largest of the Aegean islands (155 miles long and 36 miles wide).

The Minoans
- About 1900 BCE and 1375 BCE a distinctive culture flourished on Crete-discoverer, the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans, named it Minoan from the legend of Minos, a king who had ruled from the capital, Knossos.

Legend of King Minos & the Minotaur...
- According to legend, a half-man, half-bull monster call the Minotaur- son of the wife of King Minos & a bull belonging to the sea god Poseidon- lived at Knossos in a maze called the Labyrinth.

The Old Palace Period 1900-1700 BCE
- Minoan civilization remained almost a mystery until Sir Arthur Evans discovery of the complex at Knossos, on Crete’s north coast in 1900 CE.

Palace Layouts
- Walls of early Minoan buildings were made of rubble and mud bricks faced with cut and finished local stone
- Columns and other interior elements were made of wood.

Ceramic Arts
- During the Old Palace Period, Minoans developed extraordinarily sophisticated metalwork and elegant new types of ceramics
- One type of ceramics known as Kamares ware, was so sought after it was exported as far away as Egypt and Syria

Metalwork
- Matching their sophistication in ceramics were early Minoan goldwork.
- About 1700 BCE, Aegean metalworkers were producing objects rivaling those of Near Eastern and Egyptian jewelers, who techniques they may have adopted

The “New Palace” Period: 1700-1450 BCE
- One of the most famous and best-preserved paintings at Knossos from the New Palace Period depicts bull leaping

Sculpture: Woman or Goddess with Snakes, New Palace Period
- Surviving Minoan sculpture consists mainly of small, finely executed work in wood, ivory precious metals, stone & faience (colorfully glazed fine ceramic)

Stone Rhytons:
The Harvester Rhyton
- Almost certainly of ritual significance are the stone vases and rhytons- or vessels used for pouring liquids- that Minoans carved from steatite (a greenish or brown soapstone)
Bull’s Head Rhyton, New Palace Period
- The sculptor of a bull’s head rhyton found at Knossos used a block of greenish-black steatite to create an image that approaches animal portraiture.

Details of the Bull’s Head Rhyton
- Circular patterning along the neck suggests its dappled color
- White bands of shell outline the nostrils, & painted rock crystal & red jasper form the eyes

Ceramic Arts: The Octopus Flask, New Palace Period
- Minoan potters also created more modest vessels
- Some of the most striking ceramics were done in what is called the “Marine Style”, because of the depictions of sea life on their surfaces

The Vapheio Cup & Repousse
- The skills of Minoan artists, particularly metalsmiths, made them highly sought after in mainland Greece.

Landscape or Spring Fresco before 1630 BCE
- In an Akrotiri house, an artist has created a landscape of hills, rocks, & flowers
- This mural is the first pure landscape painting

Details of the Landscape or Spring Fresco before 1630 BCE

The Mycenaean (Helladic) Culture
- Archaeologists use the term Helladic to designate the Aegean Bronze Age on mainland Greece
- The Helladic period extends from about 3000-1000 BCE, concurrent with the Cycladic and Minoan periods

The Citadel at Mycenae
- Greek writers called the walled city of Mycenae the home of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army that conquered the great city of Troy

The walls were rebuilt three times (1340 BCE, 1250 BCE, and 1200 BCE) - each time stronger than the last and enclosing more space

Mycenaean Tombs
- Tombs were given much greater prominence in the Helladic culture of the mainland
- By about 1600 BCE kings and princes on the mainland had begun building large above-ground burial places commonly referred to as tholos tombs or more popularly known as bee-hive tombs due to their shape

Mycenaean Tombs

Metalwork
- The tholos tombs at Mycenae had been looted long before archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann began his search for Homeric Greece
- But he did excavate the contents of shaft graves at the site

36 Dagger Blade with Lion Hunt 1550-1500 BCE
- Among the other objects found in the graves at Mycenae was a bronze dagger blade decorated with inlaid scenes
- The artists cut shapes out of different colored metals – copper, silver, and gold- and inlaid them in the bronze blade and then added the fine details in niello (or a black sulfur)

37 Ceramic Arts: The Warrior Vase
- In the final phase of the Helladic Bronze Age, Mycenaean potters created highly refined ceramics