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Art of the Aegean Bronze Age

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Front cover: Head from a figure of a woman. Cycladic, Early Cycladic II, Spedos type, ca. 2700–2500 B.C. (see fig. 22). Inside front and back covers: Stirrup jar with an octopus (detail). Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIC, ca. 1200–1100 B.C. (see fig. 83)

Additional information about the Minoan seals in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (with the two noted exceptions, all were part of the Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926) pictured in fig. 39 on page 24, from left to right in each row: Row 1 (at top): see fig. 57; jasper stamp seal with hieroglyphs, 1750–1600 B.C. (26.31.169); see fig. 47; jasper amygdaloid seal with a crustacean and a vase, 1600–1450 B.C. (26.31.223); steatite signet with an embellished spiral, 1900–1750 B.C. (26.31.110). Row 2: see fig. 55; steatite conoid seal with two incurving C-spirals, 2200–2000 B.C. (26.31.40); carnelian amygdaloid seal with fish between starbursts and vegetation, 1650–1500 B.C. (26.31.228); agate lentoid seal with a lion attacking a goat, 1400–1375 B.C. (26.31.292); agate lentoid seal with two rampant goats flanking a column, 1400–1300 B.C. (Rogers Fund, 1907, 07.286.123). Row 3: steatite triangular prism with a vase, a bucranium, and whorls, 2000–1700 B.C. (26.31.94); see fig. 60; marble lentoid seal with an octopus, 1450–1375 B.C. (26.31.240); chalcedony amygdaloid seal with two fish and a two-handled vase between vegetation, 1700–1450 B.C. (26.31.186); steatite stamp seal with a rib with projections, 2200–1900 B.C. (26.31.4). Row 4: carnelian bell-shaped stamp seal with a double axe, 1700–1600 B.C. (26.31.147); carnelian amygdaloid seal with a two-handled vessel and vegetal sprays, 1750–1600 B.C. (26.31.252); steatite scaraboid seal with four interlocking groups of concentric circles, 1900–1750 B.C. (26.31.46); serpentine triangular prism with circles, 2200–2000 B.C. (26.31.83); carnelian stamp seal with a feline face, 1900–1600 B.C. (26.31.167). Row 5: ivory elliptical seal with a lion(?) and four buds, 1900–1750 B.C. (26.31.286); serpentine triangular prism with a Cretan dog, a bucranium with two goats' heads, and a floral motif, 1900–1750 B.C. (26.31.120); rock crystal lentoid seal with an architectural motif, 1700–1600 B.C. (26.31.357); carnelian prism with two flying fish and a plant, 1650–1500 B.C. (26.31.183); see fig. 74. Row 6 (at bottom): chalcedony discoid seal with a ram, 1700–1600 B.C. (Gift of Arthur Sambon, 1912, 12.214); serpentine lentoid seal with a structure and a tree beside a human figure, 1600–1450 B.C. (26.31.347); carnelian amygdaloid seal with a stylized flying bird, 1700–1450 B.C. (26.31.166); see fig. 48; agate lentoid seal with an architectural motif, 1700–1450 B.C. (26.31.230).

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Director's Note

The strikingly beautiful sculpture and artifacts that represent the prehistoric cultures of mainland Greece and the islands of the Aegean Sea are the foundation of the Metropolitan's rich holdings of ancient Greek and Roman art. The bold, spare contours of the marble sculptures created some five millennia ago in the Cyclades, the islands that form an archipelago in the southern part of the Aegean, have inspired modern artists from Picasso and Modigliani to Henry Moore. Distinctive painted pottery, finely wrought metalwork, and intricately carved stone seals, figurines, and jewelry survive to document the sophistication and ingenuity of the craftsmen of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece, the first great civilizations of Europe, which developed, flourished, and eventually collapsed over the span of two thousand years from about 3200 to 1050 B.C. The artistic endeavors of these Bronze Age societies are the antecedents of the remarkable achievements of later Greek art.

The first Mycenaean antiquities to enter the Museum came as part of the Cesnola Collection of ancient art from Cyprus in 1874, when Aegean archaeology was still in its infancy. Since then the collection has grown primarily through gifts, in particular a large group of objects from Minoan Crete bequeathed by the archaeologist Richard B. Seager in 1926 and two major Cycladic sculptures given by Christos G. Bastis in the 1960s.

In 1979 the Metropolitan hosted "Greek Art of the Aegean Islands," the first loan exhibition sent by the Republic of Greece to the United States. In 1996 the opening of the Robert and Renée Belfer Court for Prehistoric and Early Greek Art initiated the reinstallation of the entire Greek and Roman collection, which was completed in 2007. The new rooms include a study gallery featuring a major section on the arts of prehistoric Greece and Cyprus. In 2010 the Museum established a lecture series on Cycladic and ancient Greek art through a generous gift in memory of Dolly Goulandris from the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens. That same year the distinguished scholar Pat Getz-Gentle announced her intention to donate to the Department of Greek and Roman Art a photographic archive of Cycladic art that will be a valuable resource for scholars for years to come. And the 2011–12 exhibition "Historic Images of the Greek Bronze Age: The Reproductions of E. Gilliéron & Son" examines the important contributions to the study of Aegean art made by Emile Gilliéron and his son Emile, the chief fresco restorers who worked with Arthur Evans at Minoan Knossos on Crete in the early twentieth century.

Art of the Aegean Bronze Age is the first publication devoted solely to this major part of the Museum's collection. Its author, Curator of Greek and Roman Art Seán Hemingway, has for more than two decades been part of the team excavating under the auspices of the British School at Athens at the Minoan settlement of Palaikastro in eastern Crete. We wish to express our appreciation to The Adelaide Milton de Groot Fund, in memory of the de Groot and Hawley families, which has generously supported the Metropolitan's participation in the archaeological fieldwork at Palaikastro. We also owe our gratitude to The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation for its support of publications at the Met, including this *Bulletin*.

Thomas P. Campbell
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Art of the Aegean Bronze Age

1. Seated harp player. Cycladic, late Early Cycladic I–Early Cycladic II, ca. 2800–2700 B.C. Marble, h. 11½ in. (29.21 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1947 (47.100.1)

The ancient Greeks believed in a time before their own when heroes walked the earth. The Greek poet Hesiod listed the Heroic Age—when mere men shared the earth with demigods and great warriors—as the fourth of the five ages of mankind, just before his own far less glorious era, which he called the Iron Age. Hesiod wrote his 800-verse didactic poem *Works and Days* in about 700 B.C., and his age of heroes is now associated with the Late Bronze Age, about 1600–1050 B.C. Myths of a heroic age were passed down through a much older oral tradition whose earliest manifestation can be seen in a series of sculptures representing harp players from the Cyclades (see fig. 1). For the ancient Greeks the most important works of literature were Homer's epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, which many scholars believe were written in about the eighth century B.C. Plato called the legendary and still-mysterious Homer (fig. 2) the educator of Greece, and his stories of the Trojan War and the Greek warrior Odysseus's long journey home from Troy embodied values that remained at the core of Greek self-identification throughout antiquity.

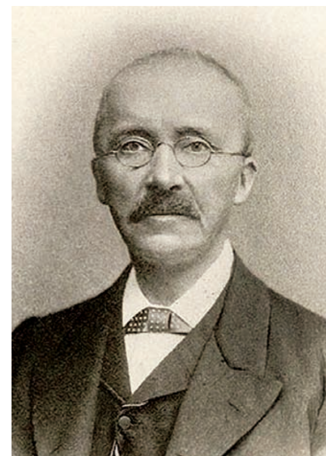
2. Head of Homer. Roman, ca. 1st–2nd century A.D. Copy of a Greek statue of the 2nd century B.C. Marble, h. 18½ in. (47 cm). Collection of Andrés A. Mata (MMA L.2011.44)

In Greek mythology the Trojan War was seeded by an argument between Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite after Eris, the goddess of discord, gave them an apple designated for the most beautiful among them. When Zeus asked Paris of Troy to judge the contest he chose to bestow the apple on Aphrodite, and she in turn rewarded him with the love of the exquisite Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. After Paris returned home, taking Helen with him, Menelaus's brother Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, sent troops to Troy to avenge the insult, and they assaulted the city for a decade. Physical evidence of the heroic tales of Hesiod and Homer was manifest in the Peloponnese some fifty miles southwest of Athens, in the great cyclopean walls of the citadel of Mycenae with its impressive Lion Gate (fig. 3), which has remained standing and visible since it was constructed in the thirteenth century B.C. The impression of a long-gone era writ large in the imagination of classical Greeks was strengthened by the occasional discovery

3. Martin Birnbaum (American). *Mycenae – Gate of the Lions*, ca. 1957. Gelatin silver print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the artist, 1957 (57.562.5)

of tombs like those found in the fifth century B.C. on the island of Skiathos, one of which held the bones of a large man the Athenian leader Kimon identified at the time as belonging to the hero Theseus, son of both the mortal King Aegeus and the god Poseidon and mythical founder of the city-state of Athens.

The Aegean Bronze Age was rediscovered in the nineteenth century through the groundbreaking work of Heinrich Schliemann, who set out to find Troy and Mycenae. A successful German businessman turned archaeologist who was also a brilliant linguist, Schliemann (fig. 4) was a remarkable and sometimes controversial figure. In October 1871 he began excavations on the Anatolian peninsula in what is now modern Turkey (then the homeland of the Ottoman Empire) at Hissarlik, a 100-foot-high mound about six miles inland from the Aegean Sea (see map, fig. 5) that was suspected to be the Troy of Homeric legend. Spectacular discoveries soon ensued, including a hoard of precious objects Schliemann identified as treasure belonging to Priam, the king of Troy during the Trojan War. In reality the wealth of jewelry and objects Schliemann unearthed belonged to an early phase of the city's history, a stratigraphic level known as Troy II that is datable to about a thousand years before the war, which many scholars believe took place in the twelfth century B.C. (that is, if the tale was not a conflation of many different stories of wars that had been embroidered over centuries). A two-handled cup, a beaker, a distinctive lidded vessel, and a bowl with a central knob that is an early predecessor of the Greek phiale, or libation bowl (fig. 6), exemplify the sophisticated metalwork produced at the end of the Early Bronze Age. The beaker is a metal version of a contemporary ceramic type from the island of Samos. The other three objects, especially the lidded vessel made of electrum (a naturally occurring alloy of silver and gold), are similar to vessels from Troy II.[1] A large nephrite jade axe (fig. 7) that is said to be from the Troad and probably dates to between 2000 and 1600 B.C. is an elegant reminder that stone tools continued to be used in the Bronze Age, in this case quite possibly for ceremonial purposes.



4. Heinrich Schliemann (1822–1890) and his Greek wife, Sophia Engastromenos Schliemann (1852–1932), wearing gold jewelry Schliemann excavated at Troy, part of what he called the "Treasure of Priam"

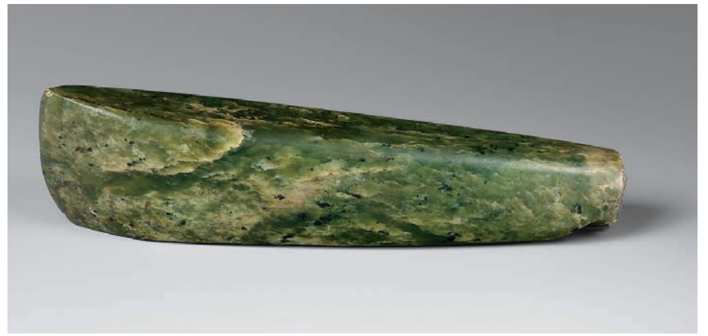
6. Two-handled cup, beaker, bowl, and lidded vessel. Said to have been found together; findspot unknown. Northeastern Aegean–northwestern Anatolian, latter part of Early Bronze Age, ca. 2300–2000 B.C. Silver and electrum; cup: h. 3¼ in. (8.1 cm), beaker: h. 4⅛ in. (10.4 cm), bowl: diam. 5⅛ in. (12.9 cm), vessel: h. 9 in. (23 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Norbert Schimmel Trust, 1989 (1989.281.45a,b–48)

5. Bronze Age Greece, 3200–1050 B.C.

After encountering difficulties with the Ottoman authorities over his improper export of finds from Troy, Schliemann returned to Greece to undertake excavations there. In a letter he wrote in Athens on August 6, 1874, he described a recent visit to Orchomenos in Boeotia:

> *I avail myself of this opportunity to make a few remarks on the Treasury of Minyas at Orchomenos, which I have just visited on a tour through northern Greece. This monument is built of fine white marble, but for the rest in the same style as the well-known Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae. . . . King Minyas must have reigned several generations before the time of Homer, who only mentions his name as an epithet of the city (Iliad 2.511). The Treasury was in a perfect state of preservation when visited by Pausanias in the second half of the second century after Christ . . . . I have no doubt but that in excavating this Treasury many objects will be found which will be as many pages of the history of the so-called heroic age. I have therefore requested the Archaeological Society to begin the excavations at once at my expense.*[2]

Schliemann would eventually excavate at Orchomenos in 1880, but it was his archaeological investigations in 1876 at Mycenae that captivated the world. Grave Circle A at Mycenae, which he associated with King Agamemnon and his family, the House of Atreus, revealed wealthy shaft graves filled with golden treasures and carefully wrought weapons. Schliemann's work at Troy and Mycenae initiated an era of scientific inquiry into the prehistoric cultures of Bronze Age Greece. Among his predecessors was Luigi Palma di Cesnola, whose amateur archaeological digging on Cyprus between 1865 and 1870 yielded the first major group of antiquities to be acquired by the Metropolitan Museum.[3]



7. Axe head. Said to be from the Troad. Anatolian, probably Middle Bronze Age, ca. 2000–1600 B.C. Nephrite jade, l. 8⅝ in. (21.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift, 1936 (36.122)

Cesnola considered himself Schliemann's rival, although because he generally did not keep records of his excavations much valuable scientific information about the specific archaeological contexts of the objects he found has been lost. The Cesnola Collection at the Metropolitan includes a large and representative selection of artifacts from Bronze Age Cyprus, which played an important role in the trade of copper to the Aegean, especially in the Late Bronze Age. A tripod from about 1250 to 1050 B.C. (fig. 8) is testament to the fact that in addition to pure copper ingots, fine bronze objects with strong affinities to Aegean metalwork were manufactured on Cyprus. Mycenaean Greeks settled on Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age, and large quantities of Mycenaean pottery were imported to the island in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C., some of it, or its contents, perhaps in exchange for Cypriot copper. A krater in the Cesnola Collection (fig. 9) is a particularly fine example of Mycenaean pictorial pottery that was probably made in the Argolid region in the northeast Peloponnese and imported to Cyprus, where it would have been used as a

8. Rod tripod. From Cyprus. Cypriot, Late Bronze Age, ca. 1250–1050 B.C. Bronze; h. 14¾ in. (37.5 cm), diam. 9¾ in. (24.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 (74.51.5684)

9. Chariot krater. From Cyprus. Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIB, ca. 1300–1230 B.C. Terracotta; h. 16⅜ in. (41.6 cm), diam. of mouth 12⅛ in. (30.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 (74.51.966)

10. Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) at Knossos, Crete, 1935

funerary vessel. The draped figure riding behind the driver of the chariot in the scene depicted on the body of the vessel is likely the deceased, whose departure is witnessed by a woman raising her arms in farewell.

With the end of Ottoman rule on Crete in 1898 came new opportunities for excavations on the island. In 1900 Arthur Evans (fig. 10) began to dig at Knossos, and over the next thirty years he uncovered a massive complex of buildings, restoring large sections of the Bronze Age settlement to give visitors to the site a better understanding of the grandeur of its architecture (see figs. 11, 12). Evans dubbed the prehistoric society Minoan after Minos, in Greek mythology the ruler of Crete who commissioned Daedalus to create the Labyrinth at Knossos to house the dreaded Minotaur (see fig. 13). The vast mazelike complex of interconnecting rooms at Knossos may have been the basis of the myth. Evans established a tripartite (Early, Middle, and

11. North entrance to the palace complex at Knossos, 1600–1400 B.C. Evans called the complex of buildings the Palace of Minos.

12. The Throne Room in the palace complex at Knossos, which was restored in 1930

Late) chronology for the Minoan Bronze Age that with some modifications continues to be used to this day (see chronology, page 48).

Evans was the curator of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and a considerable number of "duplicate" objects that he excavated at Knossos were allowed to leave Crete for the Ashmolean, which still holds the largest collection of Minoan antiquities outside Greece. In 1911, in an effort to enlarge its representation of Aegean Bronze Age art, the Metropolitan Museum exchanged a group of ancient Cypriot artifacts from the Cesnola Collection for sixty-five objects in the Ashmolean Museum that had been excavated at Knossos and at Phylakopi in the Cyclades. Among them was a large Cycladic beaked jug with a bird in flight on its shoulder (fig. 14), one of more than a dozen such jugs found together at Knossos, that provides evidence of trade between Crete and the nearby Cycladic island of Melos in the last phase of the Middle Bronze Age.[4]

Evans was not alone in his archaeological explorations of Crete in the early twentieth century. Greek and foreign schools were excavating all over the island. American archaeologists were active in the east, where excavations at Gournia by Harriet Boyd in 1901–4 and Richard Seager in 1910 for the American Exploration Society yielded extensive remains of a Late Bronze Age Minoan town that is still the finest example one can visit today.[5] These early excavations were carried out under quite primitive conditions. The journey to Gournia from Herakleion, in the center of the island, now less than two hours by car, was a two-day trek on muleback along rough dirt tracks (see fig. 15). Boyd was a pioneer in a field that was still very much dominated by

13. Coin (tetradrachm) with the head of Ariadne (obverse) and the Labyrinth of Knossos (reverse). Minted at Gortyn. Greek, Cretan, Hellenistic, 2nd–1st century B.C. Silver, diam. 1 in. (2.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1905 (05.44.574)

14. Beaked jug. Excavated at Knossos. Cycladic, Melian, Middle Cycladic III, ca. 1700–1600 B.C. Terracotta, h. as restored 21⅜ in. (54.41 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, by exchange, 1911 (11.186.13)

15. Harriet Boyd (in the foreground riding a mule with a wooden saddle) with part of her excavation team on the road to Gournia, Crete, 1900

men.[6] She guided another woman who would make significant contributions to the study of ancient art, the British-trained scholar Gisela Richter, who began working at the Metropolitan in 1906 and served as its curator of Greek and Roman art from 1925 to 1948. The two first met in 1904 in Athens, where Richter was studying at the British School, and the friendship grew when Richter visited Boyd on Crete during the summer of 1905:

> *Realizing that I had not yet been to Crete and would probably not return to Greece another year, I decided to go to Crete by myself to visit at least Knossos. Harriet Boyd, the famous discoverer of Gournia, whom I had met at a party at the American School [in Athens], had told me that she was going to go to Crete in July and to stay at the hotel in Candia (now Herakleion). On the steamer that took me there I aroused considerable interest; for at that time a young girl travelling alone to Crete was a surprising sight. The steamer in fact was full of Russian and other soldiers bound for their respective garrisons, for Crete was still governed by 'the four powers', of which Russia was one. So I was introduced to the colonel who was the head of the British Station. He too was surprised to see me travelling by myself, and kindly said that if anything should happen to me I was to inform him. I was grateful, but thought to myself 'what should happen to me?'*
>
> *On arrival at the hotel in Candia I found Harriet Boyd, who proposed to take me to Knossos to see the sights the very next day. We went there on mule back, stopping en route at a little lake for a rest. After a memorable day at Knossos, I became ill the next day with gastric fever, probably occasioned by the bite of a mosquito at the (stagnant?) lake. The doctor*

16. Thirteen objects from the early excavations at Gournia in eastern Crete. Minoan, Early Minoan II–Late Minoan IIIB, 2700–1200 B.C. Arsenical copper and bronze. Clockwise from top left: tweezers: l. 3½ in. (9 cm), awl for working leather: l. 5 in. (12.7 cm), needle: l. 5¼ in. (13.4 cm), two chisels for working wood: l. 4 in. (10.3 cm) and 7¾ in. (19.8 cm), four knives: l. 5–5¾ in. (12.7–14.6 cm), cylindrical fitting: l. 3⅞ in. (9.9 cm), fragmentary double axe and double axe: l. 7 in. (17.8 cm), hemispherical bowl: h. 2 in. (5.1 cm), diam. 5½ in. (14.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the American Exploration Society, 1907 (07.232.1–13)

at the British station was notified and took care of me. I had to stay in bed for a week, during which time Harriet Boyd brought me potsherds, so that I might learn the various periods of Minoan chronology. But the most important result of my illness was that Harriet and I became close friends.[7]

That same year Boyd encouraged Richter to come with her to the United States and seek a curatorial position at the Metropolitan.

The Cretan authorities allowed the American Exploration Society to have a small collection of finds from the excavation at Gournia. These objects were sent to the United States in 1904, and fifty-five of them, including an important group of bronzes, were given to the Metropolitan Museum in 1907. The bronzes from Gournia (fig. 16) illustrate the kinds of utilitarian tools that were used on Crete in the Bronze Age, including tweezers, a needle, an awl for working leather, chisels for working wood, knives, and double axes. In 1914 the Metropolitan acquired by exchange with the University Museum in Philadelphia sixteen more Minoan works in terracotta and stone from early American excavations in eastern Crete, at Gournia, Kavousi, Priniatikos Pyrgos, Pseira, Sphoungaras, Vasilike, and the Early Iron Age cemetery at Vrokastro.[8]

The work accomplished in eastern Crete by the American archaeologist Richard Seager (fig. 17) illuminated the earliest periods of Minoan culture, the very beginning of Aegean civilization.[9] Seager's investigations at Vasilike revealed an Early Minoan settlement that produced distinctive handmade pottery with a lustrous glossy surface mottled red, brown, and black. His excavations on the nearby islands

17. Richard Berry Seager (1882–1925)

18. Leaf ornaments, flower pendant on a chain, collared globular bead, and hairpin in the form of a flower. Minoan, Early Minoan II–III, ca. 2300–2100 B.C. Gold; leaves: h. 1–2⅝ in. (2.5–6.6 cm), pendant and chain: l. 3½ in. (8.9 cm), bead: h. ½ in. (1.4 cm), hairpin: h. 1⅛ in. (3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.418, 419, 421, 427, 502, 508–10)

of Pseira and Mochlos added significantly to the corpus of information about Minoan culture in the Early Bronze Age. Especially surprising was the carefully worked gold jewelry he unearthed in wealthy house tombs on the island of Mochlos, just off the coast of eastern Crete (fig. 18), evidence of a hierarchical society with significant social differentiation on Crete already in the middle of the third millennium B.C.[10] Like many early archaeologists, Seager also collected antiquities, and when he died in 1925 he left most of his collection to the Metropolitan Museum. The Seager bequest represents the single most important group of Minoan artifacts to enter the Museum's collection and remains the core of its Aegean Bronze Age holdings.[11] The large and varied group of prehistoric objects from Crete includes not only 368 Minoan sealstones but also stone tools and bowls, terracotta vases, gold jewelry, votive objects, and bronze implements and figurines.

Because laws in Greece generally forbade the export of prehistoric antiquities from excavations, the Metropolitan sought to supplement its display with reproductions of the Bronze Age masterpieces that archaeologists were continuing to discover. Between 1906 and 1932 hundreds of reproductions—electrotypes, painted plaster casts, and watercolors of Minoan, Cycladic, and Mycenaean frescoes—were put on view.[12] After 1932, however, the Museum began to focus instead on acquiring original works of art. Since then, the Aegean collection has grown through gifts, bequests, and judicious purchases in a concerted effort to form a representative selection of the art of three major cultures of Bronze Age Greece: Cycladic, Minoan, and Mycenaean.[13] The many objects now on display in the Robert and Renée Belfer Court, opened in 1996 as the first phase of the Museum's master plan for the reinstallation of the Greek and Roman galleries (completed in 2007), are arranged according to these three broad cultural divisions.

Aegean archaeology is a constantly evolving discipline. New research continues to add to our knowledge of what life was like in Greece during the Bronze Age. Because there are almost no historical records and the architecture and objects that have survived represent only a small fraction of what originally existed, archaeologists must reconstruct the past from a wide array of fragmentary evidence. Each new discovery adds information that requires a reevaluation of the archaeological record. A single exceptional object like a gold and ivory statuette from the Minoan settlement of Palaikastro in eastern Crete (fig. 53), where I have worked for more than twenty years as part of an excavation conducted under the auspices of the British School at Athens, can provide entirely new insights into these prehistoric cultures as well as a new appreciation of their incredible artistry. More often, however, it is the painstaking analysis of mundane artifacts, utilizing a variety of specialized techniques, that adds, bit by bit, to our understanding of the ancient Cycladic, Minoan, and Mycenaean societies and their arts.

Early Cycladic Art and Culture

19. Female figure. Cycladic, Final Neolithic, ca. 4500–4000 B.C. Marble, h. 8⅜ in. (21.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971 (1972.118.104)

The Cyclades form an archipelago in the southern part of the Aegean Sea stretching from mainland Greece to the neighboring Dodecanese Islands off the western coast of Turkey (see fig. 5). Evidence exists for human activity on the Cyclades more than 15,000 years ago, when obsidian was being procured from the island of Melos and circulated to the Peloponnese and elsewhere. The earliest sculpture from the Cyclades in the Museum's collection (fig. 19) dates to the final period of the Stone Age, the Neolithic, when occupation ranged from the seasonal use of caves to more permanent, even fortified, settlements. Even though the head is missing, the female figure with its full legs and buttocks is an especially fine example of a type known as steatopygous. The front of the figure is surprisingly flat; it may have been displayed so it could be viewed from the side, perhaps in a seated position. The massive thighs and buttocks no doubt signified abundance and fertility in a culture that considered female obesity desirable. Other figures like this have been found in far-flung sites around the Aegean, from the island of Aegina in the Saronic Gulf to mainland Greece, the Cyclades, and Anatolia. The widespread occurrence of the sculptural type confirms that people were navigating the sea and interacting with one another as early as 4500 B.C.

Marble sculptures, primarily of women, represent the most remarkable artistic achievements of the Early Bronze Age in the Cyclades. Carved from fine white local marble with emery and probably flint or obsidian blades and then polished with pumice, these figures range from a few inches to nearly five feet high. During the first centuries of the Early Bronze Age, from about 3200 to 2800 B.C., Cycladic sculptors produced both stylized and more naturalistic statuettes. The most realistic type of sculptures are called Plastiras, after an Early Cycladic I cemetery on the island of Paros where they have been found. Despite the formal differences between the two types, the basic stance and the position of the arms leave little doubt that the Plastiras sculptures evolved from the Late Neolithic standing figures (fig. 19). (To explain the large gap in time, it has been posited that a tradition of figures carved from wood, none of which survive, existed during the intervening centuries.)[14] A female figure of the Plastiras type in the Metropolitan's collection (fig. 20) is characteristically nude except for a plain cylindrical headdress demarcated by deep incisions. The eyes would have been inlaid with obsidian or dark sea pebbles. The pair of holes in the right leg are what remain of an ancient repair that would have included a clamp, possibly made of lead. Similar repairs on a considerable number of Cycladic statuettes are sure indications that the objects were valued and used.

20. Female figure. Cycladic, Early Cycladic I, Plastiras type, ca. 3200–2800 B.C. Marble, h. 8½ in. (21.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1945 (45.11.18)

The extensive looting of cemeteries on the islands in the twentieth century has unfortunately left most Early Cycladic sculptures without an archaeological provenance.

Some of the relatively few that have been documented in controlled excavations were clearly deposited in tombs, perhaps as offerings in burial rituals.[15] At the site of Kavos on the island of Keros archaeologists discovered a deposit of hundreds of Early Cycladic marble statuettes (the so-called Keros Hoard) that appear to have been intentionally broken, most likely after being used in religious rituals.[16]

21. Side and back views of the harp player in fig. 1

The harp player in the Museum's collection (figs. 1, 21) is one of the earliest of a small number of ancient Cycladic representations of musicians. Although some scholars have questioned its authenticity, there are compelling reasons to accept the statuette as an ambitious early work of this rare type.[17] The large harp (albeit held unrealistically to the side of the legs rather than on them as in the other known examples) ornamented with what appears to be the head of a bird, possibly a swan; the sensitive modeling of the arms and hands; the rendering of the mouth; and the clear indication of the musician's sex ally the sculpture with other naturalistic figures of the Early Cycladic I period. The elaborate high-back chair on which the figure sits was anomalous until a similar example came to light in an excavation on Naxos in 1971.[18] Perhaps most significantly, the traces of red pigment preserved on the eyes and mouth, visible only under magnification, and the differential weathering of the marble on the top of the head, which indicates that the figure may have worn a skullcap or had a closely cropped hairstyle, are not the kind of details one would attribute to a forger working in the 1940s, when the statuette appeared on the art market. The sculpture most likely represents a member of an Early Cycladic island community who fulfilled an essential role as a repository and communicator of his people's history, mythology, and music in a time before writing. He can be seen as an early predecessor of the professional performers of the heroic Mycenaean Age who are alluded to in Homer's epic poems and in the rich tradition of oral poetry in ancient Greece.

The predominant human form in Early Cycladic sculpture is the folded-arm figurine (see figs. 27, 28), of which there are some five different types, named for the sites at which they were found. The variety called Spedos, after an Early Cycladic cemetery on the island of Naxos, was the most widely distributed. A head in the Museum's collection (fig. 22) is from an early example of this type. The eyes, in extremely low relief, were originally rendered with pigment that protected the marble so that it weathered less rapidly than the adjoining unpainted surfaces, leaving a lighter "ghost impression." The bold, minimal contours of the head epitomize the pure, distilled formal qualities that so excited artists who saw Cycladic sculptures in the early 1900s in the Louvre, the British Museum, and the other European museums that had begun collecting them in the preceding decades (see figs. 23–25).

22. Head from a figure of a woman. Cycladic, Early Cycladic II, Spedos type, ca. 2700–2500 B.C. Marble, h. 10 in. (25.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Christos G. Bastis, 1964 (64.246)

Auguste Rodin was an ardent collector of antiquities and owned two fragmentary Cycladic marble statuettes, and his student Constantin Brancusi was much influenced by Cycladic images in his quest to express the essence of things through sculpture.[19] Amedeo Modigliani made studies of Cycladic art at least as early as 1911, and its impact is reflected in the distinctive style that emerged in his later sculptures and

23. Constantin Brancusi (French, born Romania; Hobita 1876–1957 Paris). *Prometheus*, 1911. White marble, h. 5⅜ in. (13.7 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950 (1950-134-5)

24. Amedeo Modigliani (Italian, Livorno 1884–1920 Paris). *Lola de Valence*, 1915. Oil on paper mounted on wood, 20½ x 13¼ in. (52.1 x 33.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), 1967 (67.187.84)

25. Pablo Picasso (Spanish; Malaga 1881–1973 Mougins, France). *Standing Nude,* 1907–8. Watercolor and charcoal on paper, 24¼ x 18⅝ in. (61.6 x 47.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, 1998 (1999.363.62)

masklike portraits.[20] Pablo Picasso was also profoundly impressed. André Malraux recalled a conversation he had with Picasso during World War II in his studio on the rue des Grands-Augustins in Paris:

> *He was holding [an ancient] violin-shaped idol from the Cyclades and looking at it. . . . He was saying: "From time to time I think: There was a Little Man from the Cyclades. He wanted to make this really terrific piece of sculpture, just like that, right? Exactly like that. He thought he was making the Great Goddess, or something to that effect. But what he made was that. And I, here in Paris, I know what he wanted to make: not a god but a piece of sculpture. Nothing's left of his life; nothing's left of his kind of gods; nothing's left of anything. Nothing. But this is left, because he wanted to make a piece of sculpture."*[21]

Part of the fascination of Cycladic art from the Bronze Age was simply its survival, the fact that it has endured while practically everything else from that time and place is gone.

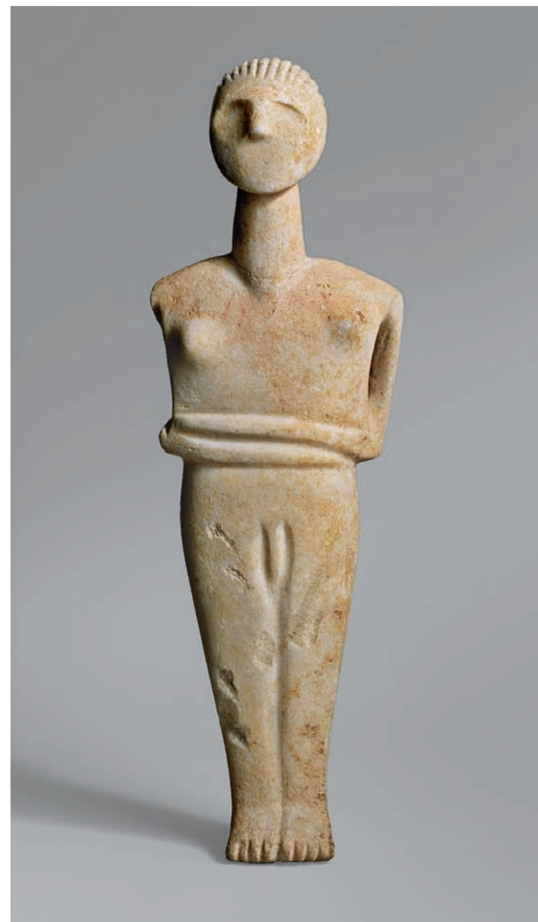
Of course most of the pure white sculptural forms of Cycladic figures that modern artists found so appealing would originally have been brightly painted. Some of the few Early Cycladic statuettes on which original pigment remains are adorned with painted jewelry and have painted eyes, hair, and pubic areas.[22] In a number of instances an intricate pattern of red dots covers the face. One scholar has plausibly suggested that the vertical rows of dots were applied during a burial ritual and represent

26. Palette and pestle. Cycladic, Early Cycladic I–II, ca. 3000–2200 B.C. Marble; palette: 2½ x 5⅛ in. (6.5 x 12.9 cm), pestle: 2 x 1¼ in. (5.1 x 3.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1996, 1997 (1996.323,1997.70)

tears of mourning.[23] Marble pestles for grinding pigments and marble palettes and bowls for mixing them have survived from the Bronze Age (see fig. 26). Bone and bronze styluses as well as terracotta vessels containing pigments have also been found. Traces of a textile preserved on the forearm and belly of one statuette indicate it may once have been at least partially wrapped in cloth, which raises the question whether other Cycladic female statuettes were once draped.[24]

A study carried out in the 1990s utilizing special lighting conditions in the Metropolitan Museum's Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation revealed that nearly every Early Cycladic statuette in the collection preserves some traces of paint.[25] Most remarkable is the statuette (fig. 27) attributed to the Bastis Sculptor (named for Christos G. Bastis, who donated the sculpture to the Museum), a gifted artistic

27. Attributed to the Bastis Sculptor. Female figure (front and side views). Cycladic, Early Cycladic II, Spedos type, ca. 2600–2400 B.C. Marble, h. 24¾ in. (62.79 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Christos G. Bastis, 1968 (68.148)



28. Male figure. Cycladic, Early Cycladic II, Dokathismata type, 2400–2300 B.C. or later. Marble, h. 14⅛ in. (35.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971 (1972.118.103)

29. Kandila (collared jar with a high foot and four lug handles). Cycladic, Early Cycladic I, ca. 3000–2800 B.C. Marble, h. 9 in. (22.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1935 (35.11.23)

30. Spouted bowl. Cycladic, Early Cycladic II, ca. 2700–2200 B.C. Marble, h. 3⅝ in. (9.1 cm), diam. 6⅞ in. (17.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Judy and Michael Steinhardt, 2001 (2001.766)

personality whose hand can be recognized in several sculptures based on recurring systems of proportion and details of execution.[26] The Spedos-type female figure has a mannered elegance expressed in the curved surface of the head, the restrained swelling of the breasts and abdomen, and the slightly convex soles and pointed toes of the feet, all executed with exceptional technical command. The proportions of the figure were carefully measured with a compass, and it can be divided into four nearly equal parts. The arc of the head corresponds with the curve of the waist, the curve of the shoulders completes the curve at the knees, and the curve of the toes is followed through in the curve implied by the hips. Traces of red pigment, revealed by ultraviolet reflectography and computer enhancement, describe a variety of almond shapes, some clearly eyes, all over the face as well as on the back of the head and the upper right thigh.[27] The surprisingly bold designs could represent body painting or tattoos, applied either to a living person or as part of a burial ritual. In any case, the

31–32. Two bowls. Said to be from Euboea. Cycladic, Early Cycladic I–II, ca. 3200–2200 B.C. Silver; left: diam. 8 in. (20.4 cm), right: diam. 10½ in. (26.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971 (1972.118.152); Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1946 (46.11.1)

33. Pyxis (box). Cycladic, Early Cycladic I, ca. 3200–2800 B.C. Terracotta, h. 2½ in. (6.4 cm), diam. 4⅜ in. (11.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Claude Claire Grenier Gift, 1995 (1995.497)

34. Collared jar with four lug handles. Cycladic, Early Cycladic I–II, ca. 2700 B.C. Terracotta, h. 5⅛ in. (13 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Andrés A. Mata, in memory of Elodia Mata, 2004 (2004.342.1)

inexplicable traces of painted decoration hint at how different the sculpture looked originally and suggest that the surface was at least as important as the sculpted form.

Another variation of the Early Cycladic folded-arm figurine, called the Dokathismata type after a cemetery on the island of Amorgos, is represented in the Museum's collection by a slightly later enigmatic statuette with a penis and an apparently masculine hairstyle but female breasts (fig. 28).

Stone vessels were made in a limited variety of shapes in the Cyclades in the Early Bronze Age. The most distinctive and representative shape was the collared and footed jar called a kandila after the similarly shaped hanging oil lamps used in Greek Orthodox churches (see fig. 29). Kandilai found in controlled excavations all come from tombs of the Early Cycladic I period (3200–2700 B.C.). Two or more were often deposited in a single grave. Handmade stone bowls were popular in the Early Cycladic II period. Also found in tombs, often with Cycladic figurines, they were probably used in funerary rituals. A marble spouted bowl with a small lug handle (fig. 30) is exceptional for its thin walls, finely articulated spout, and large size. Beakers, palettes, and a variety of boxes known as pyxides were also made of stone during this period.

Metal vessels from the Early Cycladic Bronze Age are rare.[28] Two shallow bowls decorated with alternating groups of vertical lines and chevrons in varying patterns (figs. 31, 32) illustrate the high quality of Early Cycladic silverwork. Silver was mined locally on the island of Siphnos, and its malleable properties facilitated the creation of bold forms. Like the incised decoration on a terracotta pyxis, or cylindrical box (in this case without its lid), from the first centuries of the same period (fig. 33) and some of the painted designs on a group of later ceramic vases (see fig. 35), the patterns are reminiscent of basket weaving, an art form also occasionally echoed in Early Cycladic vessels made of marble.

The first pottery of the Cycladic Early Bronze Age was handmade of coarse clay that was burnished and sometimes decorated with incised rectilinear patterns, often

35. Kernos (vase for multiple offerings), jug, and jar. Found together on Melos in 1829, presumably in the same tomb. Cycladic, Early Cycladic III–Middle Cycladic I, ca. 2300–1900 B.C. Terracotta; kernos: h. 13⅝ in. (34.6 cm), jug: h. 10⅝ in. (27 cm), jar: h. 16⅜ in. (41.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Annenberg Foundation Gift, 2004 (2004.363.1–3)

filled with a white substance to enhance the design. Pyxides and collared jars (see fig. 34) are among the best-known shapes from cemeteries. Painted decoration came into vogue in the Early Cycladic II period, when the number of different vessel shapes also increased. The Metropolitan's small collection of Cycladic pottery was significantly enhanced by the acquisition of a group of three exceptionally well-preserved vessels from the end of the Early Bronze Age (fig. 35). The kernos, jug, and jar were found together in 1829 on Melos, presumably in the same tomb.[29] Each vessel is carefully potted, covered in a white slip, and decorated with linear designs in dark paint. The kernos, a vase for multiple offerings, is especially important because it is one of the largest, most elaborate, and most elegant of its kind to have survived. It consists of

36. Kalathos rhyton (basket-shaped vase for libations). Excavated at Phylakopi, Melos. Cycladic, Late Cycladic I–II, ca. 1550–1425 B.C. Terracotta, h. 5⅛ in. (13 cm), diam. 7¾ in. (19.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, by exchange, 1911 (11.186.14)

37. Fisherman. Detail of a fresco from Room 5 of the West House at Akrotiri, Thera (Santorini). Cycladic, Late Cycladic I, ca. 16th century B.C. Painted plaster. National Archaeological Museum, Athens

twenty-five flasklike containers encircling a bowl on a tall conical stand. The offerings it held could have been seeds, grain, flowers, fruit, or liquids or a combination thereof. The kernos seems to have been a specialty of the potters on the island of Melos, and the type may also have been used in domestic contexts, for fragmentary examples have been found within the settlement at Phylakopi.

The Cycladic Islands, visible from one to the next, are a unique geographic phenomenon, forming a virtual bridge across the Aegean Sea that in antiquity enabled contact between the neighboring cultures of Anatolia, Crete, and mainland Greece. As they developed their maritime trade in the Middle Bronze Age, the Minoans of Crete exerted more and more influence on Cycladic art and culture.[30] A small measure of this can be seen in the basketlike form of a Late Cycladic vase from Phylakopi (fig. 36) that was probably inspired by Minoan pottery. The sensitive rendering of the grass painted on the body of the vase that evokes an island landscape was likely partially inspired by contemporary wall paintings. Indeed, the most thrilling discoveries of Cycladic art from the Late Bronze Age are the fine fresco paintings (see fig. 37) excavated in many different buildings at the settlement of Akrotiri on Santorini (ancient Thera), which were amazingly well preserved by the eruption of the volcano on Thera in the later part of the sixteenth century B.C.[31] The Theran frescoes perhaps best exemplify the close connection that existed between the artists of the Cyclades and Crete and their shared interest in nature and the sea.

The Art and Archaeology of Minoan Crete

38. Axe head. Cretan, Neolithic, 5th–4th millennium B.C. Jadeitite, 1¼ x 1¼ in. (3.1 x 3.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.507)

It is now known that humans came on sea craft to Crete as early as the Lower Palaeolithic period, some 130,000 years ago.[32] By the Neolithic period (ca. 6000–3200 B.C.), the last phase of the Stone Age, there was already a major settlement at Knossos that produced its own pottery with incised decoration and carefully burnished surfaces.[33] The working of stone for figurines, jewelry, and tools was also a well-developed craft (see fig. 38).[34] The fundamental techniques of metalworking were introduced toward the end of the Neolithic. The arts of Bronze Age Crete can be broadly divided into three periods: Prepalatial, Palatial, and Postpalatial. The first encompasses the Early Minoan and the first hundred years of the Middle Minoan period (3200–1900 B.C.), the second marks the development of major administrative centers called palaces in the Middle and Late Minoan periods (1900–1350 B.C.), and the third covers the subsequent collapse of the palace-based society in the Late Minoan period, toward the end of the Late Bronze Age (1350–1050 B.C.). Minoan craftsmen expressed their skill and talent in myriad and varied works of art, best represented at the Metropolitan by seals exquisitely carved from precious and semiprecious stones at the apogee of the Palatial culture (see fig. 39).

39. Minoan seals, ca. 2700–1375 B.C. Gemstones and ivory. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (see page 2 for additional information)

The Prepalatial Period. During the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3200–2000 B.C.) numerous settlements on Crete produced pottery in many regional styles. One of the most distinctive pottery styles of the Early Minoan II period (ca. 2700–2200 B.C.) is Vasilike ware, named for the site in eastern Crete where it was first found. Thick-walled with a highly burnished surface, the slip was mottled black, red, and brown during the firing process. Typical shapes included beak-spouted jugs, small goblets, and spouted conical bowls (see figs. 40–42). The mottled decoration on some of these vases is haphazard; on others, the beak-spouted jug in the Metropolitan's collection (fig. 40) among them, the design appears to have been intentional. The sharp, angular forms of the jug seem to imitate metal vessels, very few of which have survived from this early period. In addition to plain wares, Early Minoan potters made vessels that were painted with a wide variety of linear patterns in what are called Light-on-dark and Dark-on-light styles (see figs. 43, 44), which continued to be produced into the Middle Bronze Age.[35]

During the Early Bronze Age gold was imported to Crete, possibly from Syria, and worked locally with relatively simple techniques, primarily in cut and hammered sheet metal, sometimes with punched decoration. The gold jewelry that Richard Seager bequeathed to the Museum (see fig. 18) represents the kinds of objects the island's goldsmiths created.[36] The leaf ornaments, flower pendant on a chain, hairpin

40. Beak-spouted jug. From Vasilike. Minoan, Early Minoan II, ca. 2600–2200 B.C. Terracotta, h. 5⅞ in. (14.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the American Exploration Society, 1907 (07.232.14)

in the form of a flower, and collared globular bead all have close parallels in the finds from the Early Minoan house tombs at Mochlos and are said to be from that part of Crete. The organic motifs exhibit an interest in nature that was to become a hallmark of Minoan art.

Stone carving was a well-established art on Crete by the Prepalatial period. Minoan craftsmen utilized a variety of soft, brilliantly colored stones to make bowls, cups, jars, jugs, and other vessels. Most Early Minoan stone vessels have been found in the house tombs of eastern Crete and the circular tholos tombs of the Mesara plain in south central Crete. They appear to have been specially made for funerary purposes, as was the practice in contemporary Old Kingdom Egypt.[37] As the tombs were communal and often in use for hundreds of years, the pieces can rarely be closely dated by the context in which they were found, although archaeologists have been able to establish a detailed classification of the various types.[38] A small, deep bowl with a

41. Spouted cup. From Vasilike. Minoan, Early Minoan II, ca. 2600–2200 B.C. Terracotta, h. 4⅜ in. (11.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.438)

42. Footed cup. From Vasilike. Minoan, Early Minoan II, ca. 2600–2200 B.C. Terracotta, h. 3¾ in. (9.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.439)

43. Light-on-dark style one-handled cup. From Pseira. Minoan, Middle Minoan I, ca. 2000–1800 B.C. Terracotta, h. 2⅜ in. (5.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Acquired by exchange, 1914 (14.89.4)

44. Dark-on-light style jug. From Knossos. Minoan, Early Minoan II, ca. 2700–2200 B.C. Terracotta, h. 9⅛ in. (23.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cesnola Collection, by exchange, 1911 (11.186.1)

45. Vase with a spout and lugs. Minoan, Early Minoan II–Middle Minoan I, ca. 2600–1900 B.C. Serpentinite, h. 2⅝ in. (6.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.429)

spout and three lugs on its body (fig. 45) exemplifies the refined forms the carvers achieved and the care with which they typically finished their wares. Comparing this bowl with the approximately contemporary marble spouted bowl from the Cyclades (fig. 30) highlights the different approaches of Minoan and Cycladic artisans in the middle years of the Early Bronze Age.

Before literacy became widespread, carved seals served as a form of identification or to mark ownership. Earlier seals made of perishable organic materials may have existed, but the first known Minoan seals are from the Early Minoan II period and were carved from easily worked materials such as ivory, bone, shell, and soft stones like serpentine and steatite (see figs. 46, 47).[39] Along with a handful of artifacts found on Crete that had been imported from Egypt and the Near East, the exotic imagery (lions and apes not native to Crete, for instance) on these early seals is evidence of the Minoans' overseas contacts during the Prepalatial period. A large steatite stamp

46. Fragment of a conoid seal with two recumbent lions (with impression). Minoan, Early Minoan III, ca. 2200–2000 B.C. Ivory, diam. 1 in. (2.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.38)

47. Triangular prism seal with a water fowl, a dog, and a bull's head (three sides, with impression of each). Minoan, Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan II, ca. 2200–1700 B.C. Steatite, w. of each side ⅜ in. (1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.101)

seal that is one of many that came to the Metropolitan as part of the Seager collection (fig. 48) is composed of four interconnected quadrilateral spirals, a motif associated with sea waves that has a long history in Minoan art.

48. Seal with four S-spirals and a bridge handle (front and side views). Minoan, Early Minoan II–III, ca. 2700–2000 B.C. Steatite, w. 1⅛ in. (2.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.39)

The Palatial Period. Minoan culture reached its peak with the establishment of the palaces, which were centers of political and economic power as well as artistic activity. Minoan palaces have been identified at Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia, Zakros, Petras, and Galatas. The first palaces developed in about 1900 B.C., and new ones were built during the eighteenth century B.C., after many buildings on the island were destroyed, probably by one or more earthquakes. With the palaces came many important artistic and technical advancements such as the potter's wheel, which enabled large-scale production of standardized pottery shapes. No doubt as a result of the record-keeping demands of the palace economy, writing was introduced, and the Minoans employed two types of script: a hieroglyphic probably of Egyptian origin and Linear A, which was perhaps inspired by the cuneiform writing of the Near East.

The palace culture spawned new religious rituals, and votive objects became not just expressions of devotion but important status symbols as well. For the first time, small-scale sculptures of men and women were cast from bronze or lead and placed in caves as elite offerings.[40] Less expensive votives in the form of humans, animals, and body parts modeled in clay and, less frequently, bronze, gold, or stone were deposited in large numbers at open-air sanctuaries on mountaintops. Miniature ritual equipment was also produced. A miniature altar with incurving sides (fig. 49) is a traditional type in Minoan and later Mycenaean art. Similar examples have been found at the Minoan peak sanctuary on Mount Juktas, near Knossos.

49. Miniature offering table. Minoan, Middle Minoan I–II, ca. 2000–1700 B.C. Chlorite schist; h. 1⅛ in. (3 cm), w. 1¾ in. (4.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.394)

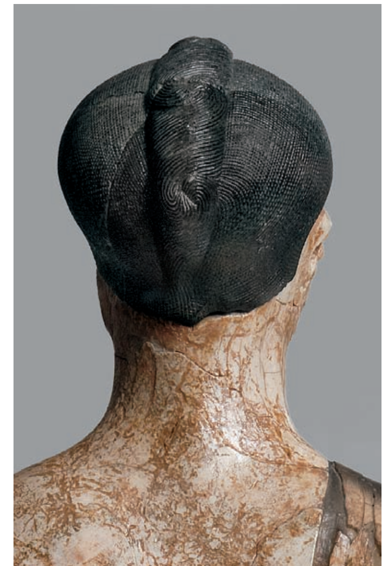
A group of miniature bronze double axes (fig. 50), a potent symbol in Minoan art, are said to come from the Diktaian Cave, also known as the Cave of Psychro, in the mountains above the Lasithi Plateau a few miles inland from Mallia in east central Crete. The cave nestled in the Dikti Mountains is one of the most impressive on the island and has long been associated with the legendary birthplace of Zeus. British archaeologists first came to excavate at Palaikastro, some fifty miles away on Crete's eastern coast, in 1902 in the hope of locating the Greco-Roman sanctuary devoted to Diktaian Zeus that rivaled the Diktaian Cave as the most famous place for the worship of Zeus on Crete in antiquity. During five seasons, from 1902 to 1906, they not only identified remains from the sanctuary but also excavated many houses lining the broad streets of a Minoan settlement located on a plain known today as Roussolakkos, or "Red Pit," because of its deep red soil, which is actually decomposed mud bricks from the Minoan buildings that stood there. An archaeological survey of the outlying area located numerous Early to Late Minoan burial sites in several different cemeteries, as well as a Minoan peak sanctuary on Mount Petsophas, overlooking the settlement (fig. 51). The excavations were resumed in 1962–63 to check the stratigraphy and results of the 1902–6 campaign by making a number of trial trenches in the Roussolakkos area and to investigate remains of the final Minoan occupation of the site in the Late Minoan IIIC period (1200–1050 B.C.), when there was only a small refuge settlement on the top of the rocky hill, called Kastri, overlooking the harbor.

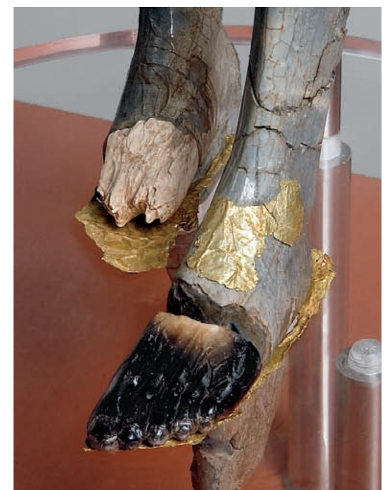
A new survey of the Roussolakkos area was conducted in 1984, once more under the auspices of the British School at Athens, and excavations began again at Palaikastro in 1986 and continued through 2003. The finds are still being studied and published.[41] Among the primary objectives of this third campaign were to locate the public administrative center of the Minoan town and to glean information about the inhabitants' diet and environmental conditions at the site. The careful excavation of seven new buildings (see fig. 52) and two wells provided a much more detailed understanding of the Palatial and Postpalatial phases of the Minoan settlement and produced a wealth of artifacts, including works of art of exceptional quality. A geophysical survey utilizing sonar that was carried out in the winter of 2001 estimated that the Minoan settlement occupied about ninety acres and was thus one of the largest urban centers on the island.[42] No palatial center was found, but the same survey identified a promising new area as a possible location for it that will be the focus of future archaeological fieldwork.

50. Four double axe heads. Said to be from the Diktaian Cave. Minoan, Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I, ca. 1700–1450 B.C. Bronze, w. 2⅛–3⅝ in. (5.4–9.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.466, 467, 482, 514)

51. The Roussolakkos plain in eastern Crete viewed from the Kastri hill, with Mount Petsophas in the background, 2011. The excavations of the settlement at Palaikastro are in the valley in the middle ground. The remains of the Minoan town continue into the sea.

52. Buildings 4 (in the foreground) and 5 (with roof) at Palaikastro, 2011





53. The Palaikastro Kouros (with details of the back of the head, the left hand, and the feet). Excavated in Building 5 and the nearby square, Palaikastro. Minoan, Late Minoan IB, ca. 1525–1450 B.C. Ivory, gold, serpentine, rock crystal, and wood; h. ca. 19¾ in. (50 cm). Archaeological Museum, Siteia, Crete

An exceptional find from the recent excavations at Palaikastro sheds new light on Minoan religious sculpture. The gold and ivory statuette (fig. 53), known as the Palaikastro Kouros, is a masterpiece of Minoan craftsmanship.[43] The torso of the figure was unearthed during the 1987 season and its serpentine head in 1988. On Wednesday, May 23, 1990—one of the most exciting days of my life—I was supervising the excavation of a trench in an inner room of Building 5 (see fig. 52), some thirty feet from the spot in the square where the upper half of the statuette had been found. We were not expecting to come upon more of the statuette where we were digging, but since the spectacular discoveries two and three years earlier the entire team was especially alert to the possibility of more ivory finds. When a long lower leg and large thigh of burnt ivory came to light, followed by the glint of gold sandals, we realized immediately that this could be more of the statuette. With the new fragments we now had most of the statuette, and we could assume that Building 5 had been its shrine. Some six tons of soil from a layer of habitation that had been destroyed by fire in the square, the adjacent street, and Building 5 were saved and water-sieved. This painstaking process produced the statuette's ivory feet, the rock crystal eyes, part of one ear, and hundreds of tiny additional fragments of ivory and gold. After four years of intensive conservation, the restored figure was placed on display in the Archaeological Museum in Siteia, Crete.

The Palaikastro Kouros is the largest and finest example of ivory sculpture to survive from Minoan Crete.[44] It was made from eight separate sections of hippopotamus ivory (most likely imported from Syria or Egypt) that were joined together with olivewood dowels and then adorned with gold leaf, rock crystal (for the eyes), and a gray-blue serpentine stone (for the head). The figure has a distinctive hairstyle with a shaved scalp and Mohawk-like crest. He stands with his left foot forward in a pose that, like the similar stance of later Greek statues of *kouroi* (youths), may well have been adapted from ancient Egyptian sculpture. He holds his arms chest high in a gesture that also appears on earlier terracotta figurines from the nearby peak sanctuary on Petsophas. Remains of his gold kilt and the ivory pommel of a dagger were also found but have not been incorporated into the restoration. The Minoan artist rendered the figure's anatomy in incredible detail, even down to the veins and tendons of the hands and feet. The exaggerated physique—wasp waist, broad shoulders, and elongated, muscular legs—represents the idealized human form of what must surely be a male divinity, perhaps a Bronze Age predecessor to Diktaian Zeus, who was also worshiped as a young man and a sanctuary to whom was located nearby. Judging by the fragments found at the site, the statuette probably stood on a blue base covered with gold spangles to simulate the nighttime sky. The figure is well preserved except for the face, which has been obliterated. The extreme heat that discolored the ivory to deep black in places could not have been accidental, and the way the face was destroyed and the figure ripped apart clearly indicates human agency. The archaeological context of this unique find is the clearest indication that the fires that razed the town at the end of the Late Minoan IB period, in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C., were set by invaders, probably Mycenaeans from the Greek mainland, who also destroyed the shrine in Building 5 and its precious cult image.

Minoan bronzeworking was highly developed in the Late Bronze Age when Crete established access to copper and tin through maritime trade networks. Copper ingots, called oxhide ingots because they are shaped like the hide of an ox, found at the Minoan palaces of Knossos and Zakros and at impressive Minoan country houses such as Tylissos and Agia Triadha attest to the large scale of bronze production on the island. Fragments of ingots, doubtless originally from the palaces, have also been excavated at the Minoan settlements of Gournia, Mochlos, and Palaikastro. Each ingot weighs approximately seventy pounds, a sizable amount of raw copper. An example said to be from Asia Minor (fig. 54) is of the same early type found at many of the Minoan sites. A ship that sank in the fourteenth century B.C. at Uluburun, off the coast of Turkey, was found to have been carrying more than ten tons of copper ingots from Cyprus, probably toward the Aegean.[45] Cyprus was certainly one source of copper for Minoan Crete in the Late Bronze Age, but copper and especially tin were also coming from much farther afield, perhaps even from as far as Afghanistan. Aside from votive objects, most of the bronze finds on Crete have been tools (see fig. 16) and utilitarian vessels in a variety of shapes made from hammered sheet (see fig. 72), often with cast handles riveted to the body.

54. Oxhide ingot. Said to be from Asia Minor. Cypriot, Late Bronze Age, ca. 1450–1050 B.C. Copper, 17½ x 14⅜ in. (44.5 x 36.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1911 (11.140.7)

Significant advances were made in seal carving during the first part of the Palatial period (Middle Minoan IB–Middle Minoan IIIA, or 1900–1650 B.C.). With the adoption of the horizontal bow lathe from the Near East, artisans were able to carve brilliantly colored hardstones into new types of seals for the palace administration, among them three- and four-sided prisms featuring complex groupings of pictographs carved with great precision (see fig. 55). The patterns on the carved stones were pressed into lumps of soft clay that were then used to seal the fasteners on doors, containers, or documents. Because these clay sealings were usually not baked, they disintegrated unless they were accidentally preserved in a fire. A rare sealing from about 1600–1450 B.C. (fig. 56) consists of a clay nodule with three separate impressions, taken either from a single three-sided prism or from multiple seals, that was formed around a string that would have been tied around a container or document. During the Palatial period seals were also worn as personal adornment (see fig. 66), threaded onto bracelets, necklaces, or earrings by means of the holes drilled through them. The most popular motifs on seals were animals (often bulls), plants, and marine elements (see figs. 57–60). Scenes with human figures are much rarer.

55. Triangular prism seal with Cretan hieroglyphs on all three sides. Minoan, Middle Minoan II–III, ca. 1800–1600 B.C. Agate, l. ½ in. (1.4 cm), w. of each side ⅜ in. (1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.150)

The repertoire of stone vases expanded in the Palatial period to include larger vases that served domestic functions (see fig. 61). Stone lamps, bowls, and other vessels were produced in palace workshops in a wide assortment of colorful stones. One of the most popular types was the blossom bowl. Several examples in the Museum's collection (see figs. 62–64) illustrate the intricacy of the vessel type and its many subtle variations. Blossom bowls exported from Crete have also been found on other Aegean islands and in the Peloponnese. The finest stone vases made in the Late

56. Three-sided sealing (views of two sides with a drawing of one side). Minoan, Late Minoan I, ca. 1600–1450 B.C. Clay, h. 1⅜ in. (3.4 cm), w. of each side ¾ in. (1.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.409)

57. Amygdaloid seal with a palm tree with suckers (front and top views). Minoan, Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I, ca. 1700–1450 B.C. Carnelian, ¾ x ⅝ in. (1.95 x 1.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.211)

58. Cushion-shaped seal with four fish (seal and impression). Minoan, Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan IA, ca. 1700–1525 B.C. Agate, ¾ x ½ in. (1.67 x 1.33 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.261)

59. Lentoid seal with a wounded lion (seal and impression). Minoan, Late Minoan I–II, ca. 1600–1400 B.C. Carnelian, diam. ⅝ in. (1.63 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.278)

60. Lentoid seal with a bull (seal and impression). Minoan, Late Minoan IB, ca. 1500–1450 B.C. Banded agate, 1 x 1⅛ in. (2.5 x 2.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, by exchange, 1911 (11.196.2)

61. Bowl with a spout and handle. Minoan, Late Minoan I, ca. 1600–1450 B.C. Serpentinite, h. 5⅞ in. (14.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.430)

62. Blossom bowl. Minoan, Late Minoan I, ca. 1600–1450 B.C. Serpentinite; h. 4¼ in. (10.8 cm), diam. 7 in. (17.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.433)

63. Blossom bowl. Minoan, Late Minoan I, ca. 1600–1450 B.C. Serpentinite; h. 2½ in. (6.3 cm), diam. 4⅜ in. (11.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.436)

64. Blossom bowl. From Nipidhito. Minoan, Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I, ca. 1700–1450 B.C. Serpentinite; h. 1¾ in. (4.5 cm), diam. 4¾ in. (12.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Archaeological Institute of America, 1953 (53.5.2)

Minoan I period featured figural decoration in relief and were sometimes covered in thin hammered gold foil to imitate gilded metal vessels. The lower part of a steatite rhyton, or drinking vase, unearthed in the fill of a Minoan well at Palaikastro (fig. 65) is carved with swimming dolphins in the marine style that was so popular during the Late Minoan IB period.

65. Rhyton (vase for libations) fragment with dolphins. Excavated in Well 605, Palaikastro. Minoan, Late Minoan I, 1600–1450 B.C. Steatite, h. 6½ in. (16.5 cm). Archaeological Museum, Siteia, Crete

The sophisticated frescoes that decorated Minoan palaces and villas on Crete are represented at the Metropolitan by one-to-one reproductions made by the Swiss restorers Emile Gilliéron père et fils (see fig. 66), who worked with Arthur Evans at Knossos in the early 1900s. Most of the original Minoan frescoes from Crete are in the Herakleion Archaeological Museum. Minoan painters were clearly admired throughout the eastern Mediterranean, for Minoan-style frescoes—perhaps even by itinerant Minoan artists—have been recovered from sites not only elsewhere in the Aegean but also in Syria and Egypt (see fig. 67). The volcanic eruption on Thera in about 1525 B.C. preserved in the settlement of Akrotiri numerous wall paintings (see fig. 37) that show strong affinities with Minoan frescoes. The effects of the cataclysm less than a hundred miles to the north have been studied at Palaikastro, where deposits of Theran volcanic ash have been identified in the new excavations. Two wells (not a common feature of Minoan settlements) were discovered at Palaikastro that first came into use after the eruption, which is thought to have caused adverse climatic changes on Crete.[46] Scholars now believe that many buildings at the site were leveled by a tsunami or series of tsunamis at least thirty feet high generated by the erupting volcano.[47] A leg from a fine painted plaster offering table that may have been damaged by the tsunami (fig. 68) hints of the elegance and sophistication of Cretan culture at the height of the Palatial era. Similar offering tables were preserved in the volcanic ash at Akrotiri.[48]

66. Emile Gilliéron, père (Swiss, 1850–1924). Reproduction of the “Cupbearer” fresco from Knossos (Late Minoan II–IIIA, ca. 1450–1300 B.C.), ca. 1908 (with detail of the figure’s wrist). Watercolor, 82½ x 27½ in. (209.6 x 69.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dodge Fund, 1909 (09.135.1)

The numerous new styles of Minoan pottery produced in the Palatial period are only partially represented in the Museum’s collection, by sherds and a small number of complete or nearly complete vases from the early excavations at Gournia, Knossos, Priniatikos Pyrgos, and Pseira. One of the most distinctive shapes, quite possibly associated with religious rituals, was the conical rhyton used for libations (fig. 69).[49] A storage jar (fig. 70) that was

67. Ceiling painting from the palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata. Egyptian, Dynasty 18, ca. 1390–1353 B.C. Dried mud, mud plaster, paint gesso; 55⅛ x 55⅛ in. (140 x 140 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1911 (11.215.451)

68. Leg from a tripod offering table with narcissus. Excavated in Building 7, Palaikastro. Minoan, Late Minoan IA, ca. 1600–1525 B.C. Painted plaster, h. 9⅞ in. (25.2 cm). Archaeological Museum, Siteia, Crete

69. Conical rhyton. From Gournia. Minoan, Late Minoan I, ca. 1600–1500 B.C. Terracotta, h. 11¼ in. (28.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the American Exploration Society, 1907 (07.232.26)

70. Pithoid jar with three handles. Said to be from Knossos. Minoan, Late Minoan IB, ca. 1525–1450 B.C. Terracotta, h. 13½ in. (34.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.139.76)

71. Portable hearth and grill. Excavated in Building 4, Room 14, Palaikastro. Minoan, Late Minoan IB, ca. 1525–1450 B.C. Terracotta, l. of grill 19⅛ in. (48.5 cm). Archaeological Museum, Siteia, Crete

72. Bowl with loop handle. Excavated in Building 4, Room 13, Palaikastro. Minoan, Late Minoan IB, ca. 1525–1450 B.C. Bronze, diam. at rim 9¼ in. (23.5 cm). Archaeological Museum, Siteia, Crete

once in the collection of Heinrich Schliemann and is said to have come from Knossos is painted with bold spiral motifs in the Abstract and Geometric style, one manifestation of the Special Palatial Tradition of painted pottery produced at Knossos in the first half of the fifteenth century B.C.[50]

The Palaikastro excavations have yielded significant information about the diet of the Minoans. A team of experts found evidence of the consumption of wheat, barley, peas, lentils, and other beans, as well as olives, grapes, figs, and wild herbs, which would have been used for medicinal purposes and in the preparation of meat and fish dishes. The bones of goats, sheep, and cattle were unearthed, as were the bones of a variety of fish, including sea bream, mullet, mackerel, and anchovies, which may have been made into *allec*, a type of salted fish sauce.[51] A number of animal bones, most notably the nearly complete skeleton of a feral piglet, were found together with an unusually complete deposit of cooking pots in a Late Minoan IB layer of destruction in Building 4.[52] The deposit included tripod cooking pots of several different sizes, from approximately eight to twenty inches tall, as well as a large baking dish, amphorae, basins, drinking cups and bowls, and miniature jars that likely contained spices or condiments. The piglet would have fit perfectly on a large terracotta portable hearth and grill (fig. 71) that preserved traces of residual fat on its surface and dripping down its sides. The utensils and bones had fallen from an upper story into two basement-level rooms where a fine shallow bronze bowl with a loop handle that may have served as an oil lamp (fig. 72) was also discovered.

The destruction in the Late Minoan IB period at Palaikastro was part of a series of disasters on the island in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C. that ended a renaissance of Minoan fine art and architecture. All the Cretan palaces ceased to function except the one at Knossos (see figs. 11, 12), where Mycenaeans from mainland Greece appear to have taken over. The administrative records at Knossos from this period are written in Linear B, the Mycenaean script that is an early form of Greek. And new kinds

73. Vase in the form of a bull's head. Said to be from Attica. Minoan, Late Minoan II, ca. 1450–1400 B.C. Terracotta, h. 3¾ in. (9.5 cm), w. 5½ in. (13.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alastair Bradley Martin, 1973 (1973.35)

74. Lentoid seal with a griffin (seal and impression). Minoan, Late Minoan II, ca. 1450–1400 B.C. Agate, diam. 1⅛ in. (2.7 cm), depth ½ in. (1.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, by exchange, 1914 (14.104.1)

75. Cushion-shaped seal with bulls or cows (seal and impression). Minoan, Late Minoan IIIA, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Banded agate, ⅝ x ½ in. (1.73 x 1.23 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, by exchange, 1911 (11.195.1)

76. Lentoid seal with the Bull-man. Minoan, Late Minoan IIIA, ca. 1400–1375 B.C. Spartan basalt, diam. ⅝ in. (1.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.243)

of gravesites, including sumptuous tombs for warriors, were erected on Crete about this time, especially in the cemeteries around Knossos.

The pottery of the last years of the Palatial period was largely a continuation of what had come before, but the decoration became increasingly stylized and the shapes more standardized (see fig. 73). A tablet from the Linear B archive at Knossos lists at least 1,800 terracotta stirrup jars (see fig. 83), whose shape takes its name from the configuration of the spout and the two attached handles.[53] Large quantities of such vases were made as containers for goods such as olive oil and wine that were traded throughout the Aegean. The palace archives also record that a hundred thousand sheep supplied wool for textiles, another major export. Although none have survived, the colorful and intricate woven patterns of Minoan textiles are sometimes reflected in fresco paintings, at sites both on Crete and elsewhere in the Mediterranean (see figs. 66, 67).

Stone vessels seem no longer to have been made at the Knossian palace after the arrival of the Mycenaeans, but the art of seal engraving continued at a very high level (see figs. 74, 75). One of the most interesting new motifs was the Bull-man found on a number of seals from Knossos (see fig. 76). The Bull-man was probably the inspiration for the ancient Greek myth of the Minotaur, a story that may already have existed on Crete in the second half of the fifteenth century B.C.

The Postpalatial Period. After the final destruction of the palace at Knossos in about 1370 B.C. numerous independent settlements developed on Crete. Major harbor towns such as Khania in the west, Kommos in the south, and Palaikastro in the east were evidently tied in to the Mycenaean trade routes around the Mediterranean Sea and enjoyed considerable prosperity during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. The recent excavations at Palaikastro have provided a much better understanding of the last phases of Minoan occupation at the site. The early excavators at Palaikastro did not focus on the Late Minoan III period, and even during the second campaign the archaeologists tended to think that the settlement on the Roussolakkos plain was reoccupied only sporadically before the inhabitants moved to their refuge on the Kastri hill at the end of the Bronze Age.[54] Subsequent reanalysis of the Late Minoan III finds from the early excavations, including ritual equipment such as conical rhyta, showed, however, that the whole area was reinhabited a number of times from the fourteenth to the eleventh century B.C.[55] This was confirmed by the seven newly excavated buildings at Palaikastro, which had often been significantly modified. While the quality of the architecture does not compare to the Palatial period, these were sizable

77. Pithoid jar. Minoan, Excavated in Building 4, Room 4, Palaikastro. Late Minoan IIIA2/B, late 14th–13th century B.C. Terracotta, h. ca. 39⅜ in. (100 cm). Archaeological Museum, Siteia, Crete

78. Pyxis (box). Minoan, Late Minoan III, ca. 1400–1100 B.C. Terracotta, diam. 10¼ in. (26 cm). Gift of Alexander and Helene Abraham, in honor of Carlos A. Picón, 1999 (1999.423)

homes. Building 4 (see fig. 52), the best-preserved house, had fourteen rooms during these centuries. The complex had areas for processing grains and liquids, a domestic shrine, a large interior courtyard, and at least a partial second story reached by a stairway. Two storerooms held more than two hundred whole or nearly intact domestic vases of various types, including a large painted pithoid jar (fig. 77). Building 4 serves as a fine example—certainly as compared to houses at other sites—of a relatively well-appointed Late Minoan III house whose owner must have enjoyed a reasonably high standard of living.

The painted designs on the pottery of Postpalatial Crete are not as fine as the decoration on the pottery produced earlier in the palace workshops, but the quality of the potting and firing reached a high point at this time, as is evinced by a cylindrical pyxis in the Metropolitan's collection (fig. 78). The painted designs on a larnax, or coffin, from the mid-thirteenth century B.C. (fig. 79) are typical, as is the boxlike shape, thought to derive from Egyptian wooden chests and one of two standard forms in use at the time (the other being a bathtub shape of Minoan origin). Such coffins were typically placed into simple rock-cut tomb chambers.

Bronze objects appear much less frequently in the archaeological record of the Postpalatial period, due in part to a diminished supply of metals but also in part to the fact that metal objects were typically destroyed so the material could be reused. Small bronze votives in human and animal shapes (see fig. 80) continued to be produced to be deposited as offerings at shrines and sanctuaries. A bronze statuette of a man with his arm held out in a gesture of offering (fig. 81) adheres to a type made in

79. Larnax (chest-shaped coffin). Minoan, Late Minoan IIIB, mid-13th century B.C. Terracotta, with lid 40 x 18 x 42¼ in. (101.6 x 45.7 x 107.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift, in memory of Nicolas and Mireille Koutoulakis, 1996 (1996.521a,b). The tie holes on the side of the coffin box do not match the lid, suggesting either that the lid was reused on this coffin in antiquity or that it belongs to another coffin.

80. Bull. Minoan, Late Minoan III, 1400–1200 B.C. or later. Bronze, h. 2⅛ in. (5.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31. 492)

81. Male figure. Minoan, Late Minoan III, 1400–1200 B.C. or later. Bronze, h. 2⅛ in. (5.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.490)

the fifteenth century B.C., but the stylized features of the head indicate a date in the Late Minoan III period. Sometimes information about works of art comes not from the objects themselves but from the tools that were used to make them. A deposit of metallurgical debris from the Late Minoan III period at Palaikastro contained a selection of discarded metalworking tools such as tuyeres (blowpipes) and crucibles, as well as terracotta molds for tools and a large decorative stand similar to the rod tripod stands found predominantly on Cyprus (see fig. 8).[56] The deposit was proof that a variety of metal objects were being made on Crete during the last phase of the Bronze Age, even though archaeologists have found relatively few of them.

Scholars now debate whether the art of seal engraving continued on Crete after the destruction of the palace at Knossos, although heirloom pieces are certainly known.[57] Poorly executed seals cut from soft stones may well have been produced in the thirteenth century B.C. A steatite seal illustrating a traditional altar with offerings (fig. 82) probably dates to those years. In the twelfth century B.C. many Cretan towns and villages ceased to exist, and people moved to remote defensible sites in the mountains. Indeed, all the arts were in decline on Crete by the middle of the eleventh century B.C., when the island entered a period of impoverishment sometimes called the Dark Age.

82. Lentoid seal with an altar. Minoan, Late Minoan IIIB, 13th century B.C. Steatite, diam. ¾ in. (2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Richard B. Seager, 1926 (26.31.339)

The Art of the Mycenaean Greeks

83. Stirrup jar with an octopus. Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIC, ca. 1200–1100 B.C. Terracotta, h. 10¼ in. (26 cm), diam. 8½ in. (21.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Louise Eldridge McBurney Gift, 1953 (53.11.6)

Although it was a period of prosperity, evidence of artistic endeavors on mainland Greece during the Early Bronze Age, or Early Helladic period (ca. 3200–2000 B.C.), is relatively scarce. The Museum's collection is richer in objects from the Late Helladic period (see fig. 83), when Mycenaean culture was well established. American archaeologists uncovered substantial remains of an Early Helladic settlement and associated cemetery at Zygouries, in the northeastern Peloponnese, in 1921 and 1922, and in 1927 the Greek government gave a selection of Early and Late Bronze Age pottery from the excavations to the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the first such gift from Greece. A group of terracotta vessels from Zygouries (fig. 84) gives a good sense of the kind of handmade pottery that was produced at one local center.[58] The forms of the sauceboat, shallow bowl, and bowl with a ring foot are characteristic of the Early Helladic II period, from about 2700 to 2200 B.C. Most impressive is the sauceboat, an elegant vessel that was probably used for drinking. The shape is thought to have appeared first in the Cyclades and is echoed in objects from all around the Aegean Sea, but it became a specialty of Early Helladic potters. The fluid form was inspired by metal prototypes. Only two gold examples, both said to be from the Peloponnese (see fig. 85), have survived as reminders of how much of the material record is missing from this early period, when great artistry and wealth were the prerogative of at least part of the populace.[59]

The Helladic Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000–1600 B.C.) saw a decline in the arts, and the period is represented in the Museum's collection only by pottery. Two kinds of ware predominated: Minyan and matt-painted. Minyan ware was first discovered at Orchomenos by Heinrich Schliemann, who named it for the ancient city's legendary ruler Minyas. The pottery is characterized by its burnished, soapy surface (typically gray but sometimes yellow, red, or black) and sharply carinated wheel-made shapes, which probably imitate metal vessels.[60] Matt-painted ware features linear decoration in dark paint on a light buff ground. A matt-painted jug with a tall beaked spout (fig. 86) exemplifies a type made at the end of the Middle Bronze Age; similar jugs were unearthed from Grave Circle B at Mycenae and from other sites in the Argolid region of the Peloponnese.[61] The seemingly whimsical stylized eyes painted on the spout may have conferred apotropaic powers.

Luxurious grave goods found in burials on mainland Greece reflect the increasing prosperity of the settlements there toward the end of the Middle Bronze Age. The accumulation of wealth by the ruling class during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1600–1100 B.C.) is nowhere more evident than in the shaft graves at Mycenae, which held

84. Six vases. From the Early Helladic settlement at Zygouries. Early Helladic II, ca. 2700–2200 B.C. Terracotta; clockwise from top left: sauceboat: h. 8⅛ in. (20.6 cm), collared jar with two handles: h. 4⅞ in. (12.5 cm), shallow bowl: diam. 6¼ in. (16 cm), small shallow dish or lid: diam. 2½ in. (6.5 cm), bowl with ring foot: diam. 5¾ in. (14.5 cm), jug: h. to top of handle 4⅝ in. (11.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Greek Government, 1927 (27.120.4, 5, 11, 14, 15, 17)

an impressive array of precious works of art: gold funerary masks and shroud ornaments; gold, silver, bronze, and stone vessels; ivory reliefs; gold jewelry; Baltic amber, rock crystal, and other precious stones; and richly ornamented weaponry, especially swords and daggers. Mycenaean goldwork is represented at the Metropolitan by a gold drinking cup called a kantharos (fig. 87) said to be from Thebes, one of the great Mycenaean strongholds mentioned by Homer. The craftsmanship is typical of the period. The body was raised from a single disk of sheet gold, and the two handles, decorated with a leaf pattern, were worked separately and attached with gold rivets. Both the body and the handles show signs of reworking, and it is possible that they did not originally belong together. The kantharos shape appeared in Minyan ware in the Middle Bronze Age and remained popular in the first

85. Drinking vessel, known from its shape as a "sauceboat." Said to be from the Peloponnese. Helladic, Early Helladic II, ca. 2700–2200 B.C. Gold, h. 6½ in. (16.6 cm). Private collection

86. Beak-spouted jug. Helladic, Middle Helladic III, ca. 1700–1600 B.C. Terracotta, h. 7¼ in. (18.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Peter Sharrer, 1994 (1994.587)

part of the Late Bronze Age, when this cup was made. Other examples in gold are known from Shaft Grave IV in Grave Circle A at Mycenae and from Kampos, near Kalamata in the southern Peloponnese.[62]

Mycenaean artisans were strongly influenced by Minoan art. Amid the shaft grave material at Mycenae were a considerable number of Minoan imports. A gold cup that is said to be from Mycenae and dates to the last half of the sixteenth century B.C. (fig. 88) has no close equivalents in Mycenaean goldwork, but its shape is close to Minoan terracotta ogival cups of the early fifteenth century B.C.[63] It may well have been a Minoan import to mainland Greece. It has been suggested that the cup had a loop handle, but the rim is intact and there is no indication that a handle was ever attached. Metal cups like this one could have served as prototypes for the handleless terracotta versions.[64]

In the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C., at the height of their power, the Mycenaeans built great fortified palaces. The Lion Gate (fig. 3) is a rare survival of their monumental stone sculptures, in this instance used to embellish the main entrance of the citadel at Mycenae, which was encircled with cyclopean fortifications made from massive stones of irregular shapes. The Mycenaeans were great engineers, and they built impressive roads, bridges, beehive-shaped tombs, and drainage and irrigation systems. They were fierce warriors, skilled farmers, and accomplished merchants with extensive trade networks who sent Mycenaean goods like textiles, wine, and olive oil across the Mediterranean and imported a wide variety of raw materials and finished goods from foreign lands.

87. Kantharos (drinking cup with two high vertical handles). Said to be from Thebes. Mycenaean, Late Helladic I, ca. 1550–1500 B.C. Gold, h. 3⅛ in. (7.9 cm), diam. 6½ in. (16.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.286.126)

88. Cup. Said to be from Mycenae. Mycenaean, Late Helladic I, ca. 1550–1500 B.C. Gold, h. 2 in. (5.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Walter C. Baker, 1961 (61.71)

89. Ornaments. Mycenaean, Late Helladic III, ca. 1400–1200 B.C. Glass, h. of largest ornament 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm). Ornament at top right: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.78.21). All others: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.160.49)

Early Mycenaean jewelry was heavily influenced by Minoan jewelry, which was also imported to the mainland. After the destruction of the Minoan palaces in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C., however, the repertoire of Mycenaean jewelry shrank. Diadems, pins, and bracelets were rare, and earrings became uncommon except on Crete. Finger rings continued to be made of gold, silver, or precious stones, sometimes decorated with enamel. Most popular were beads and pendants made from gold, lapis lazuli, rock crystal, faience, and glass paste. The Metropolitan has a good selection of the glass relief-decorated beads that are perhaps the most typical Mycenaean ornaments (see figs. 89, 90). The mold-made forms include stylized representations of marine life, flowers, animals, and locks of hair.

90. Ornaments with recumbent deer. Mycenaean, Late Helladic III, ca. 1400–1200 B.C. Glass, h. 2⅝ in. (6.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.139.79)

Mycenaean sculptors worked in clay more often than in stone, and numerous small-scale painted terracotta works have survived. In addition to animals such as bulls and cows (fig. 91), deer, dogs, and sheep, highly stylized human figures were popular. Most of the clay human figurines made on the Greek mainland in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. are female and may represent goddesses in long dresses standing in conventional poses (see fig. 92). The relatively few Mycenaean

91. Bull or cow. Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIA, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Terracotta, h. 3¼ in. (8.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1936 (36.11.6)

92. Three female figures. Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIA, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Terracotta, h. 4⅛–4¼ in. (10.5–10.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1935 (35.11.16–18)

terracotta figurines that have been found in situ had been placed in house shrines, where they were most likely used as votive offerings, or in tombs, where they may have served as protective tokens for the deceased.

Like the jewelry of the Mycenaeans in the sixteenth century B.C., early Mycenaean pottery owed a debt to the products of Minoan Crete. After the fall of all the Minoan palaces except Knossos and the rise of Mycenaean palatial centers on the mainland between about 1400 and 1200 B.C., Mycenaean pottery became much more independent, and the various regional centers established their own styles. In the fourteenth century B.C., during the Late Helladic IIIA period, a kind of koine, or

93. Kylix (stemmed cup) with murex decoration. Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIA, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Terracotta, h. 8⅜ in. (21.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971 (1972.118.137)

common language, developed whereby the shapes and decoration were much more standardized across the Mycenaean world, and the pottery was widely exported. One of the most popular shapes for drinking vessels was the kylix, which was typically decorated with painted marine motifs such as whorl shells (see fig. 93). A particularly interesting shape found on mainland Greece and the island of Rhodes is the basket vase.[65] An example said to be from Rhodes (fig. 94) stands on three sturdy legs each composed of three connected rods, a form related to contemporary Mycenaean bronze tripod cauldrons and to the later bronze rod tripod stands of Cyprus (fig. 8). The elaborate lid interlocks with the tall rolled handle in an unusual way reminiscent of metalwork.[66]

94. Basket vase. Said to be from Rhodes. Mycenaean, Late Helladic IIIA, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Terracotta, h. 10⅝ in. (27 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1906 (06.1021.3a,b)

By the early twelfth century B.C. Mycenaean civilization and its art were in decline after a wave of destruction, whether by natural disaster or invading armies is not known, spread throughout the land. Much of the remaining populace relocated to coastal settlements, the islands, or even more remote refuges. To judge from the archaeological record, the luxury arts all but disappeared, although metalwork and painted pottery continued to be produced on a moderate and diminishing scale. One of the most characteristic Mycenaean ceramic vases at the end of the Late Bronze Age was the octopus stirrup jar (see fig. 83). Commonly used to transport liquids, these vases were made for export by Mycenaean potters in Attica and on the islands of Rhodes, Naxos, and Crete. That they have been found at many sites in the southern Aegean islands, on mainland Greece, and on the west coast of Asia Minor attests to the widespread connections that existed among Mycenaeans even at this time of uncertainty.

The collapse of civilization in the Aegean world at the end of the Bronze Age led to significant cultural change and impoverishment in the ensuing centuries. There was some continuity of material culture and indeed of the Greek language itself, although writing fell out of use. In the communities on Cyprus and Crete, for example, myths and other remnants of Bronze Age cultural history, like the legends of the Trojan War later recorded by Homer, were passed down from generation to generation. Yet by the time the Greek city-states emerged during the Iron Age (1050–900 B.C.) and the subsequent Geometric period (900–700 B.C.), the remarkable artistic achievements of the Aegean Bronze Age were largely forgotten, and Greek art was taking a new direction.

NOTES

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE

Prepalatial

Palatial

Postpalatial

<table>
<tr><th>B.C.</th><th>Cyclades</th><th>Crete</th><th>Mainland Greece</th></tr>
<tr><td>3200
3100
3000
2900
2800</td><td>Early Cycladic I</td><td>Early Minoan I</td><td>Early Helladic I</td></tr>
<tr><td>2700
2600
2500</td><td rowspan="2">Early Cycladic II</td><td>Early Minoan IIA</td><td>Early Helladic IIA</td></tr>
<tr><td>2400
2300</td><td>Early Minoan IIB</td><td>Early Helladic IIB</td></tr>
<tr><td>2200
2100</td><td>Early Cycladic III</td><td>Early Minoan III</td><td>Early Helladic III</td></tr>
<tr><td>2000</td><td>Middle Cycladic I</td><td>Middle Minoan IA</td><td>Middle Helladic I</td></tr>
<tr><td>1900</td><td rowspan="2">Middle Cycladic II</td><td>Middle Minoan IB</td><td rowspan="2">Middle Helladic II</td></tr>
<tr><td>1800</td><td>Middle Minoan II</td></tr>
<tr><td>1700</td><td rowspan="2">Middle Cycladic III</td><td>Middle Minoan IIIA</td><td rowspan="2">Middle Helladic III</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Middle Minoan IIIB</td></tr>
<tr><td>1600</td><td>Late Cycladic I</td><td>Late Minoan IA</td><td>Late Helladic I</td></tr>
<tr><td>1500</td><td rowspan="2">Late Cycladic II</td><td>Late Minoan IB</td><td rowspan="2">Late Helladic II</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Late Minoan II</td></tr>
<tr><td>1400</td><td rowspan="4">Late Cycladic III</td><td>Late Minoan IIIA1</td><td>Late Helladic IIIA1</td></tr>
<tr><td>1300</td><td>Late Minoan IIIA2</td><td>Late Helladic IIIA2</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Late Minoan IIIB</td><td>Late Helladic IIIB</td></tr>
<tr><td>1200
1100
1050</td><td>Late Minoan IIIC</td><td>Late Helladic IIIC</td></tr>
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