THE BRONZE AGE IN THE AEGEAN

- Bronze: alloy of copper and tine, superior for making weapons and tools
- Metal ores imported from Europe, Arabia, and Anatolia
- Aegeans were sea farers; shipwrecks offer vast amounts of information about the material culture of these ancient societies.
  - Ulu Burun
    - Off the coast of turkey, thought to have sunk between 1400-1350 BCE carried cargo of metals, bronze weapons and tools, aromatic resins, fruits and spices, jewelry and beads, African ebony, ivory tusks, ostrich eggs, raw blocks of blue glass used for faience and ceramics from the Near East, mainland Greece and Cyprus.
- Epics - Homer (Iliad and Odyssey)
  - Heinrich Schliemann located and excavated Homeric Troy in modern western Turkey.
  - Sir Arthur Evans - Crete, palace of King Minos
- Date of finds, thorny
  - Cataclysmic event has helped with dating- huge volcanic eruption on the island of Thera devastated Minoan civilization there and on Crete.
  - Outside of the eruption, relative dating is relied upon based largely on pottery.

CYLADIC ISLANDS

- Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age had a thriving culture
  - Engaged in agriculture, herding, some crafts, and trade.
  - Used local stone to build and fortify towns and hillside burial chambers
  - Left no written records, so origins remain obscure
  - From about 6000 BCE on, artists used a coarse, poor-quality clay to make ceramic objects
  - 3000 years later, they continued to produce crude but engaging ceramic figurines of humans and animals as well as domestic and ceremonial wares. Also produced marble sculptures.
- Naxos and Paros
  - Ample supplies of fine and durable white marble
  - Create a unique type of nude figure ranging from a few inches to about 5 ft.
  - Often found lying on graves
  - Sculptors used scrapers and chisels made of obsidian from the island of Melos and polishing stones from Naxos
  - A few male figurines have been found (musicians and acrobats) but representations were largely of women.

MINOAN CIVILAZATION ON CRETE

- 3000 BCE- bronze age people living on the largest Aegean island of Crete
  - 155 miles long, 36 miles wide
  - Economically self-sufficient: producing grains, olives and fruits, cattle and sheep
  - Lacked force for bronze production- traded elsewhere: Greece, Egypt, Near East and Anatolia. Became a sea power
- 1900-1375 BCE Minoan culture flourished in Crete
  - Discovered by British archeologist Sir Arthur Evans- named from the legend of Minos who had ruled from the capital- Knossos
    - Minotaur legend- son of the wife of King Minos and Poseidon
Athens sent yearly tribute of 14 young men and women to appease the beast. Theseus, son of King Aegeus of Athens, vowed to free the people by slaying the monster.

Ariadne (Crete’s princess) gave him a sword and threat to mark his path through the labyrinth- ultimately defeated the minotaur

Forgot to change sails from black to white- king threw himself off a cliff= Aegean sea

2 early forms of writing: hieroglyphic and linear A. Linear B early form of Greek later translated and gave record of administrative history and inventories= material culture

Old Palace Period, c. 1900-1700 BCE

- Complex at Knossos discovered in 1900 CE.
- Had been occupied in the Neolithic era and then constructed over during the Bronze Age
- Called the great architectural complexes “palaces”, but we don’t know the actual sociopolitical structure of the society.

Ceramics

- Developed extraordinarily sophisticated metalwork and elegant new types of ceramics- spurred in part by the introduction of the potter’s wheel early in 2000 BCE
- Kamares ware- after the cave on Mt. Ida overlooking the palace complex at Plaistow in S. Crete. So sought after that they were exported to Egypt and Syria
  - Had extremely thin walls: used color, graceful, stylized and painted decoration.
  - Globular body and beaked spout
  - Decorated with brown, red and creamy white pigments on a black body

Metalwork

- Sophisticated goldwork
- 1700 BCE- metalworkers were producing objects rivaling those of Near Eastern and Egyptian jewelers, may have adopted their technique

New Palace Period, c. 1700-1459 BCE

- Elaborate new construction after the Thera eruption c. 1650-1625 BCE
- Rebuilt at Knossos and elsewhere- complex eventually covered 6 acres

Metalwork

- 1450 BCE- Mycenaens from Greece conquered Crete
- Stayed until the destruction of Knossos about 1375 BCE
- By 1400 BCE center of or political and cultural power in the Aegean shifted to mainland Greece
- Repousse- technique of hammering from the back of the sheet
- Handles attached with rivets, the cup then lined with sheet gold
- Depicting the capture of bulls in many ways
- Olive trees could indicate sacred grove- possibly long lost heroic tale

Mycenean Culture (Helladic)

- Archaeologists use the term Helladic= Hellas- Greek word for Greece
  - Designates the Aegean Bronze Age on mainland Greece
- From about 3000 to 1000 BCE: concurrent with Cycladic and Minoan periods
- Greek speaking people moved from the northwest to mainland Greece- brought advanced techniques for metalworking, ceramic ware and architectural design. Displaced the local Neolithic culture
- Minoan culture decline after about 1450 BCE and was overtaken by Mycenae

Helladic Architecture

- Distinct from the Minoans- built strongholds of megaliths called citadels to protect palaces and rulers
- Contained megarons
- Axial plan
- Build vaulted tombs, round in shape cut from stone to bury their dead
- **Metalwork**
  - Had been looted upon discovery by Schliemann: gold and bronze swords, daggers, masks, jewelry, and drinking cups often buried with members of the elite
- **Ceramic Arts**
  - Krater- bowl for mixing water and wine, used in feasts and as grave markers
  - Technically superior (produced between 1300 and 1100 BCE)
  - Highly stylized decoration