

Art of the Ancient Aegean

AP Art History

Where Is the Aegean Exactly?

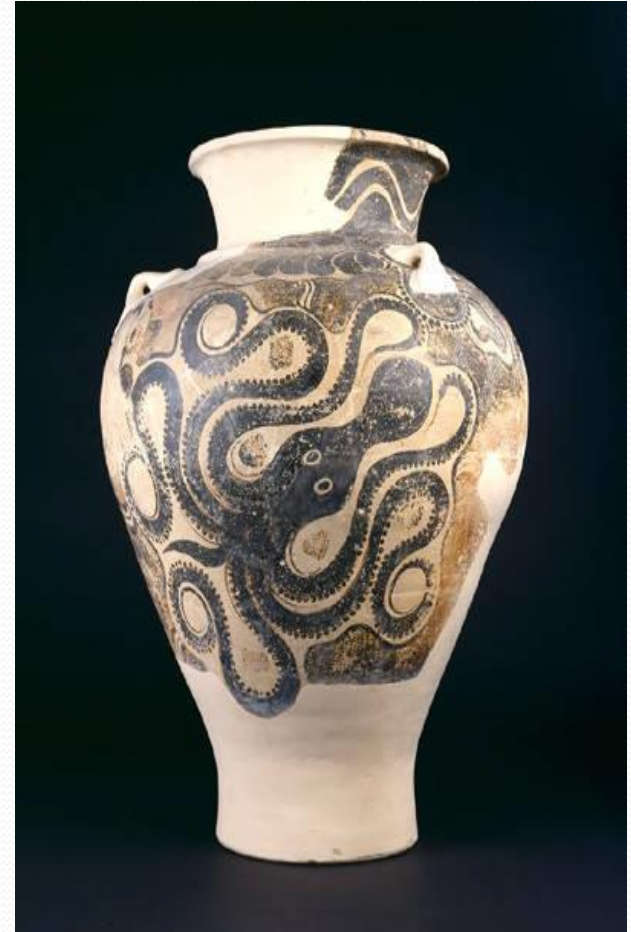


3 Major Periods of Aegean Art:

- **Cycladic: 2500 B.C.E - 1900 B.C.E**
 - Located in Aegean Islands
- **Minoan: 2000 B.C.E - 1400 B.C.E**
 - Located on the island of Crete
- **Mycenaean 1600 B.C.E – 1100 B.C.E**
 - Located in Greece

All 3 overlapped with the 3 Egyptian Kingdoms.

Evidence shows contact between Egypt and Aegean.



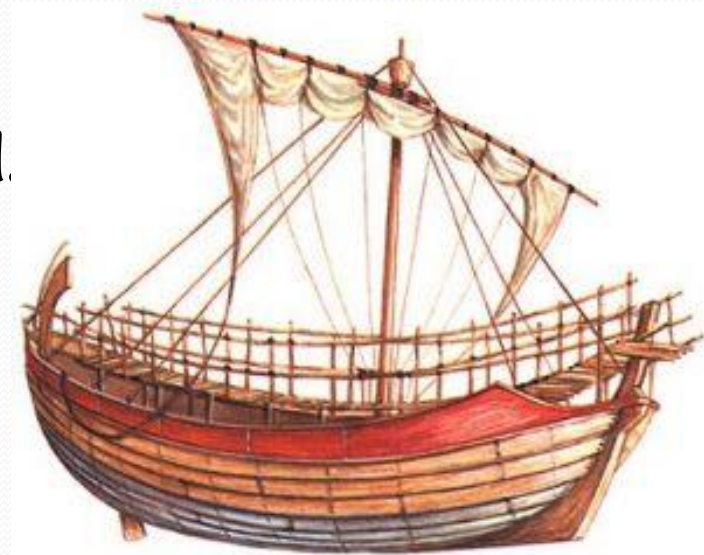
Digging Into the Aegean

- Similar to Egypt, archaeology led to understanding of Aegean civilization through art
 - 1800's: Heinrich Schliemann (Germany) discovers Mycenaean culture by excavating ruins of Troy, Mycenae
 - 1900: Sir Arthur Evans excavates Minoan palaces on Crete
 - Both convinced Greek myths were based on history
 - Less is known of Aegean cultures than Egypt, Mesopotamia



The Aegean Sailors

- Unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia, Aegean cultures were not land locked.
 - Access to sea allowed for expansion and exploring, adaptation of other cultures (Egypt)
 - Much information about Aegean culture comes from items found on shipwrecks
 - Egyptian scarabs
 - African ivory, ebony
 - Metal ore imports



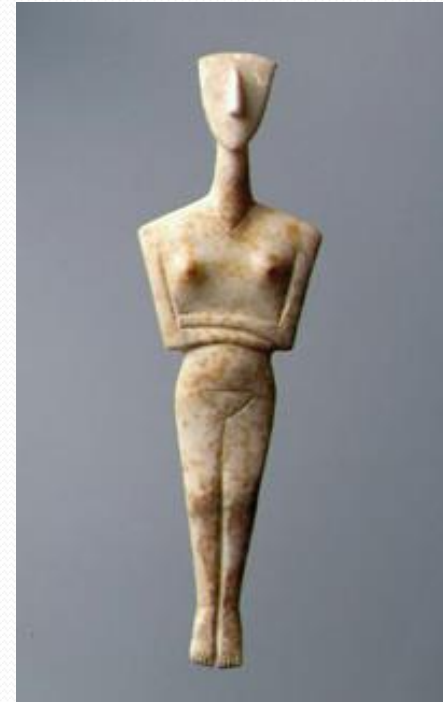
The Cycladic Culture

- **Cyclades:** Circle of Islands
- Left no written records, essentially prehistoric
- Artifacts are main info source
- Originally created with clay, later shifting to marble
- Most surviving objects found in grave sites like Egypt
 - Figures were placed near the dead



Cycladic Figures

- Varied in size (2” to 5 feet)
- Idols from Greek word *Eidolon*-image
- **Primarily female (always nude), few males**
 - Made of marble, abundant in area
- Feet too small to stand, meant to be placed on back near the deceased



Peculiar Painting

- Cycladic sculpture has been found with remnants of paint
 - Asymmetrical painting
 - Eyes appear in strange places (belly, back, etc)
 - Many hypothesis exist for meanings of these paintings



What does this art show about the people who made it?



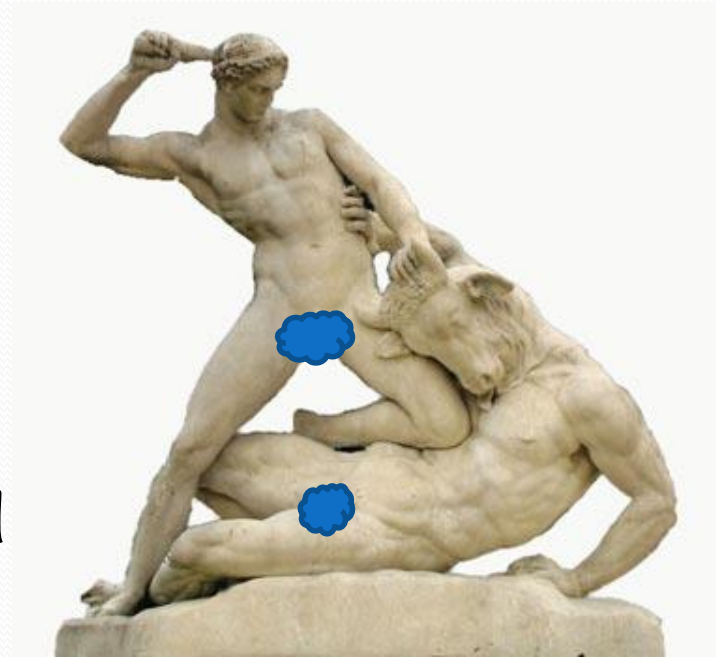
Meet the Minoans

- Lived on island of Crete
 - First civilization to be completely surrounded by sea
- Relatively isolated
- Developed unique culture
- Traded with Egypt and Mesopotamia
- Art focused on life, beauty and fun
- Make peace, not war
 - Early hippies? 😊



The Legend of King Minos

- According to Legend...
 - King Minos ruled Crete from the capital in **Knossos**
 - Kept a **Minotaur** (half bull, half man) in a Labyrinth maze.
 - Minotaur was son of his wife and Poseidon's bull
 - Ordered Athens to send 14 young men and women to feed the Minotaur each year
 - *(early "Hunger Games?")*
 - Finally killed by Theseus in the maze

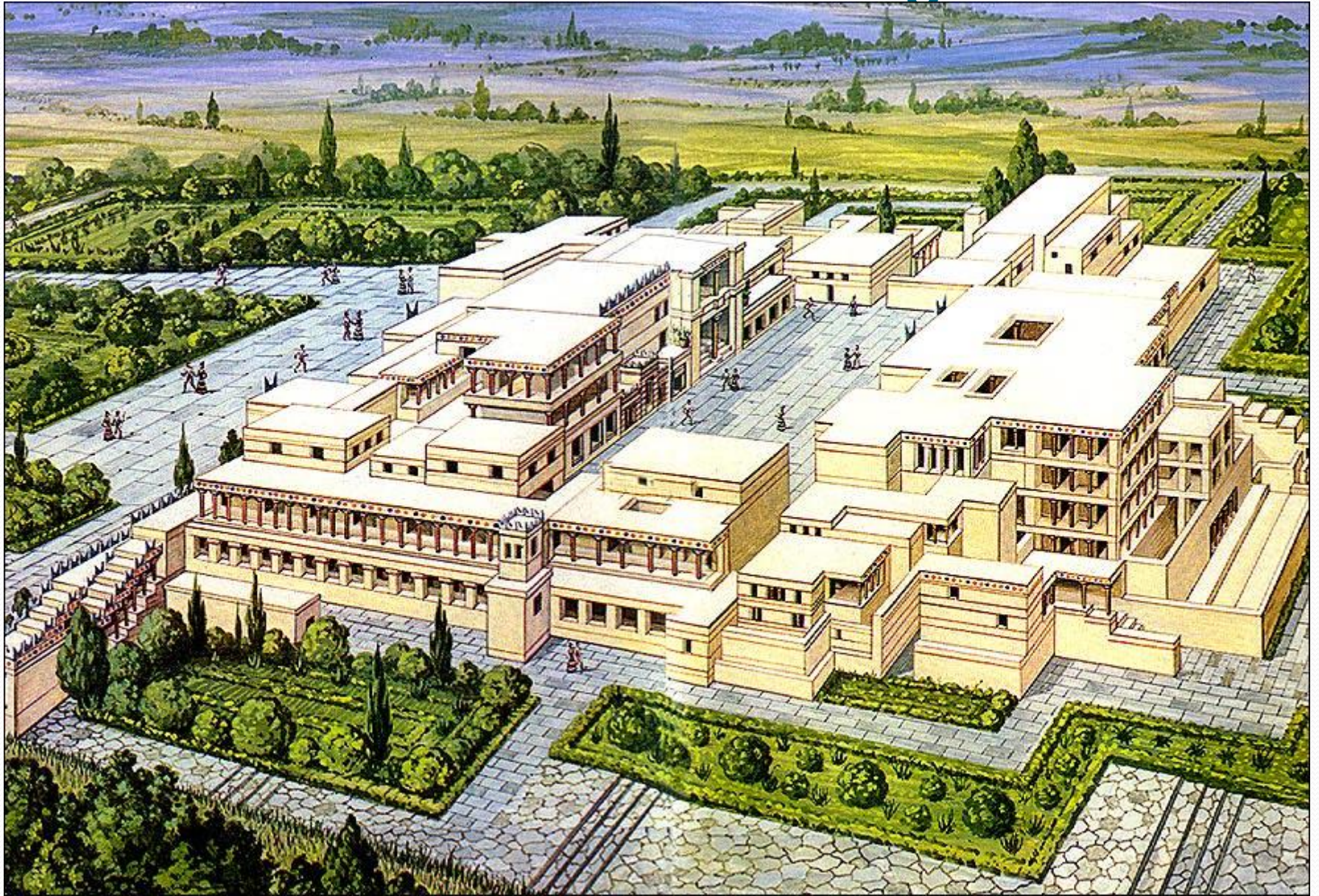


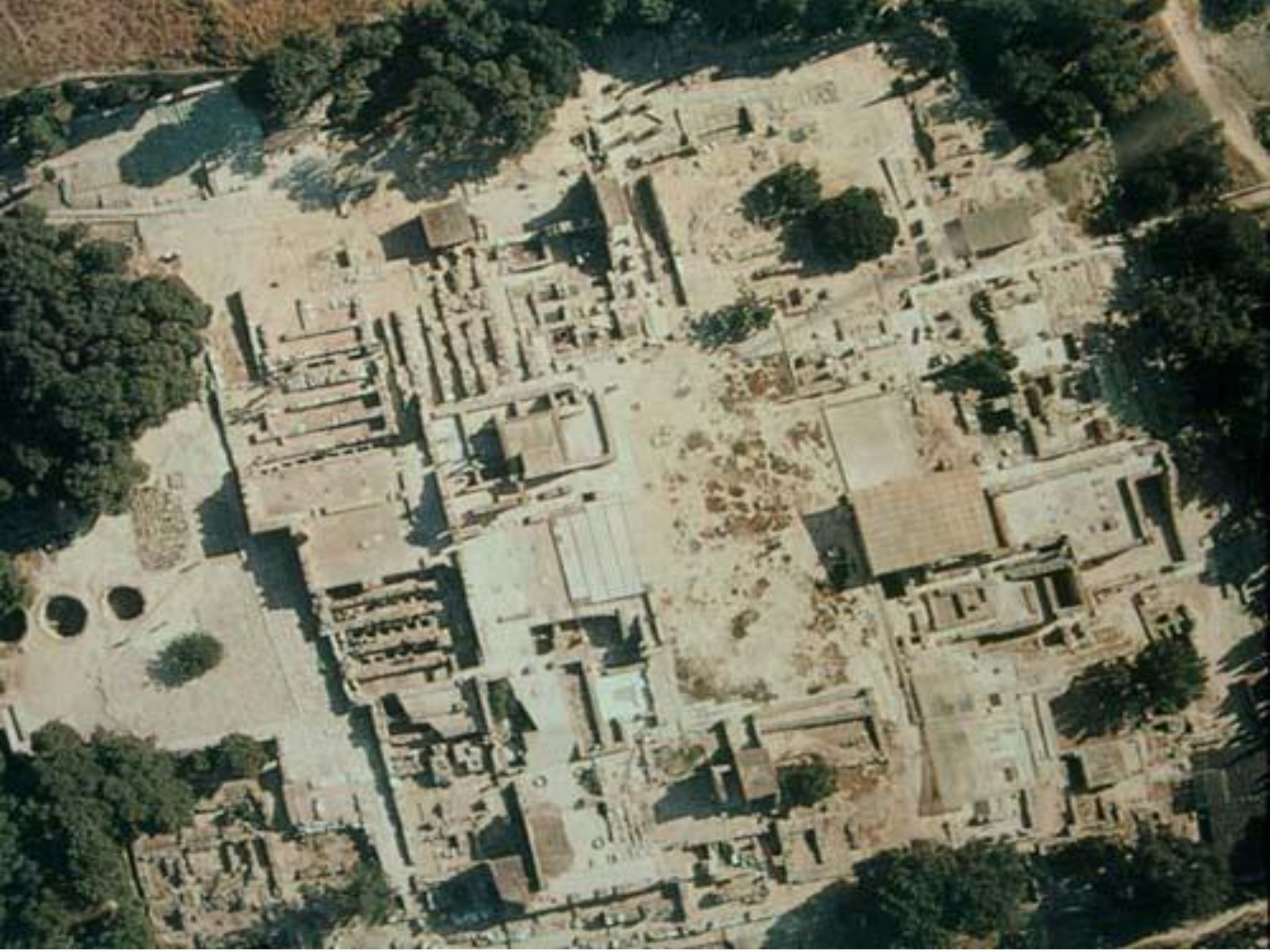
Now We Know about Knossos

- 1900 CE: Sir Arthur Evans uncovers remains of a palace at Knossos
 - Named the civilization after the Minotaur legend that inspired his search
 - Similar to discovery of Rosetta Stone/King Tut's tomb
 - Revealed much about the nature culture through palace design



What does the design of this palace reveal about the culture? Good design? Bad?



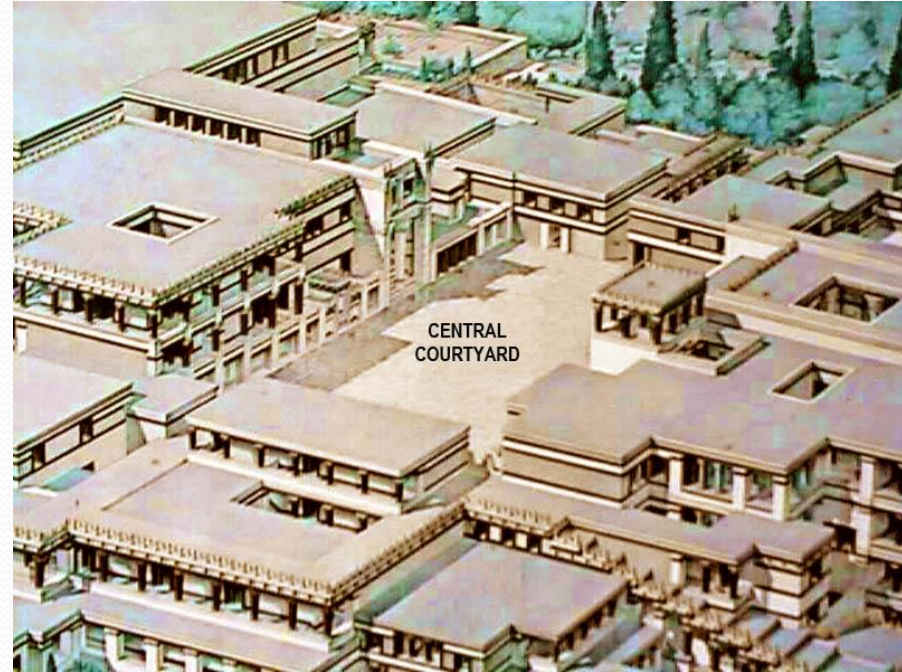


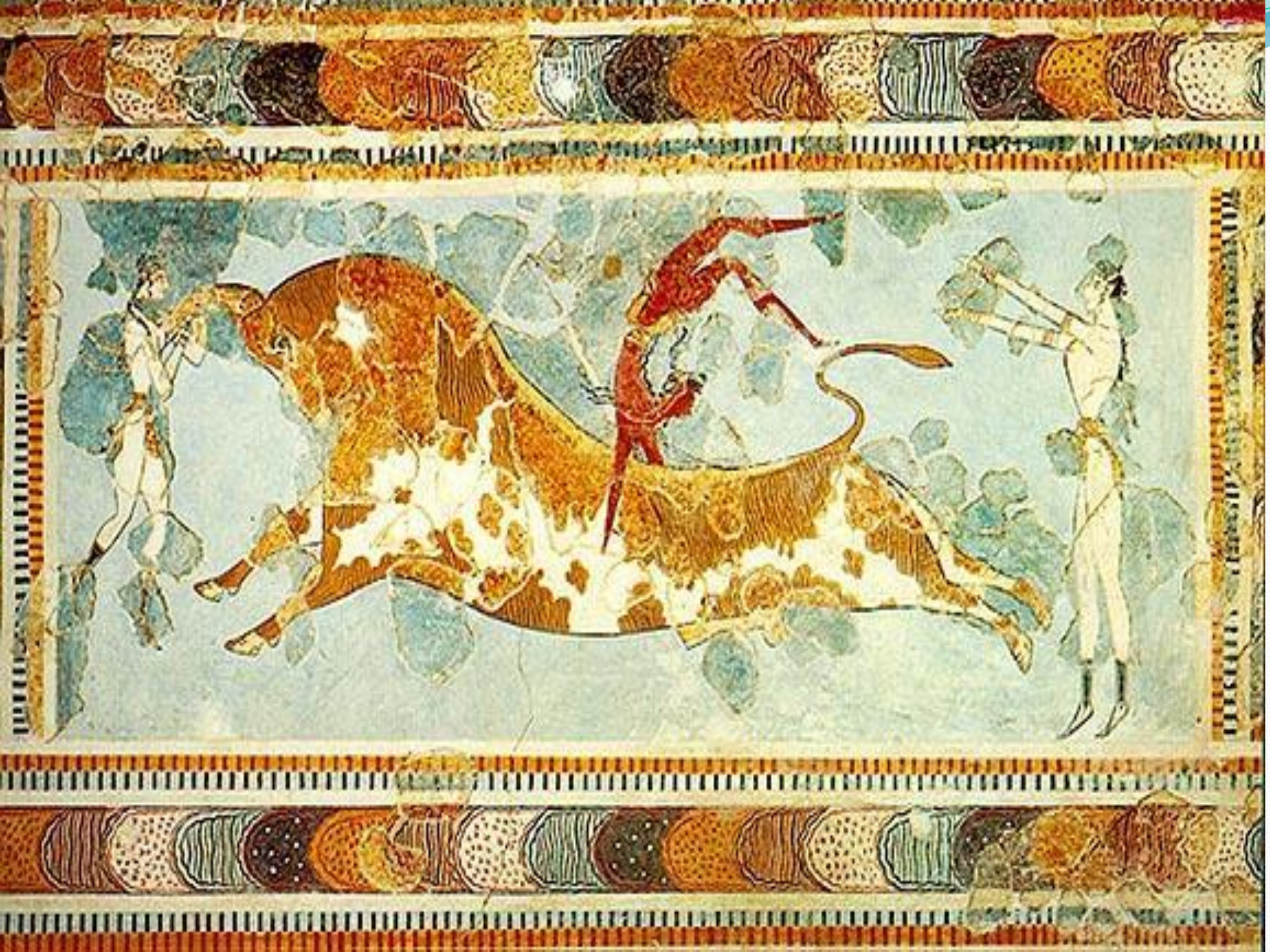
The Minoan Maze

- Minoan architecture is very complex
 - Frequent earthquakes led to rebuilding, multiple stories, multiple rooms
 - Wood often used to frame and brace walls
 - Flat roofs
 - Columns utilized to bring in light and air
 - Courtyards were the biggest component
 - Not fortified: Strong navy and island base made invasion very rare



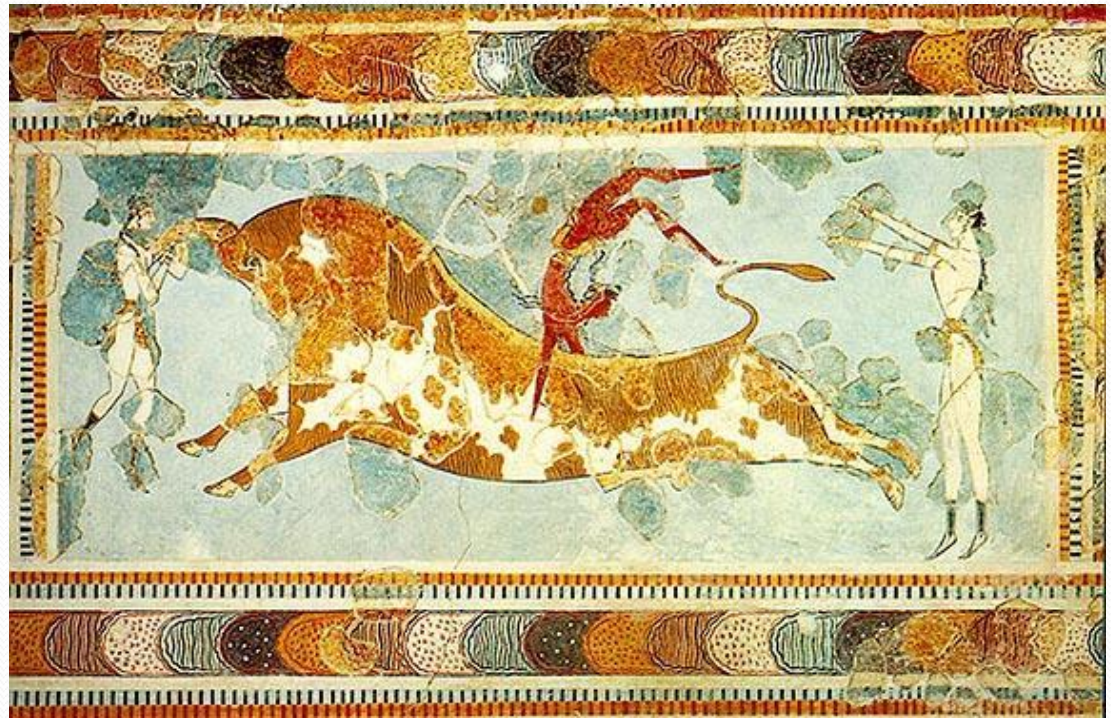
The Palace at Knossos: Not Very Practical





The Fantastic *Toreador* Fresco

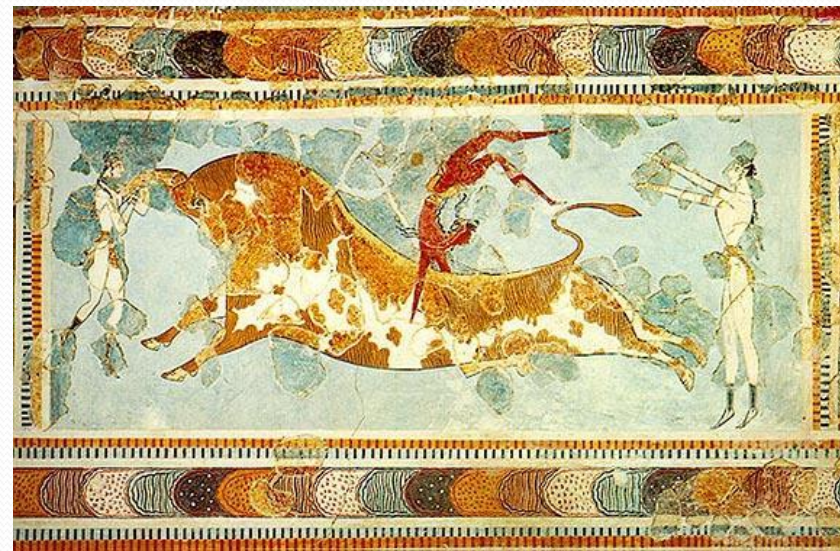
- **Fresco:** Painting technique involving placing water-based paint on a freshly plastered wall. Paint forms a lasting bond with plaster
- What does this fresco show you about the Minoans?
- How is it different from previous cultures?



What do we find in the frescoes?

- Sexual Equality
- Life/motion/energy
- Man and nature are one
- Sequence of action
- Wavy S shapes (like the ocean)
 - Buon (True) Fresco: Applied to wet wall (Aegean)
 - Drying paint meant faster, more fluid strokes
 - Implies movement, life (unlike Egyptian)
 - Fresco Secco: Applied to dry wall (Egyptian)

VERY non-militaristic themes, unusual from previous cultures examined.



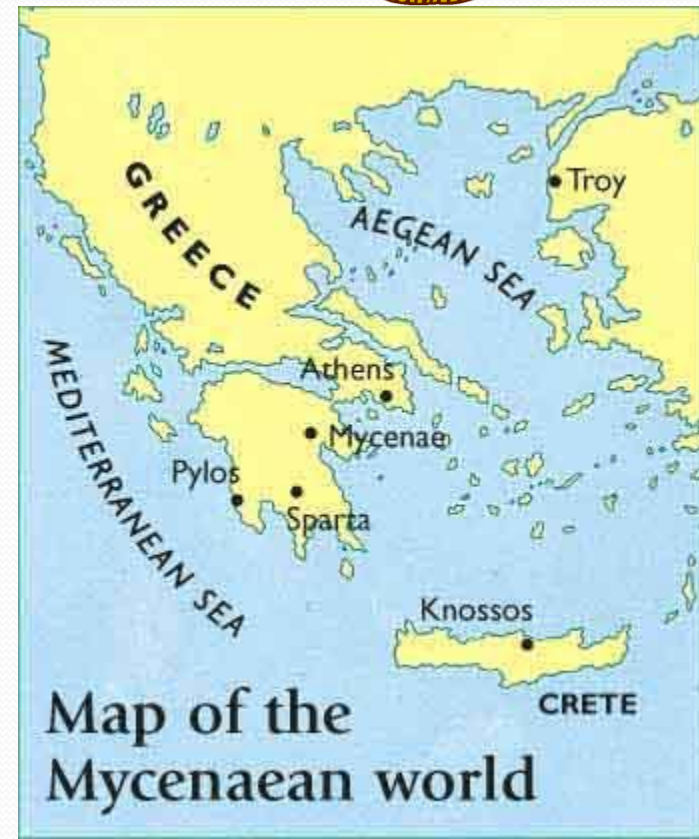
Not Exactly Egyptian...

- Minoans, like Egyptians, painted on their walls but....
 - Actually showed profile or face views
 - Created one of the first landscapes in existence:
 - *Spring Fresco*
 - Uses color and movement to represent nature.
 - No human in the scene



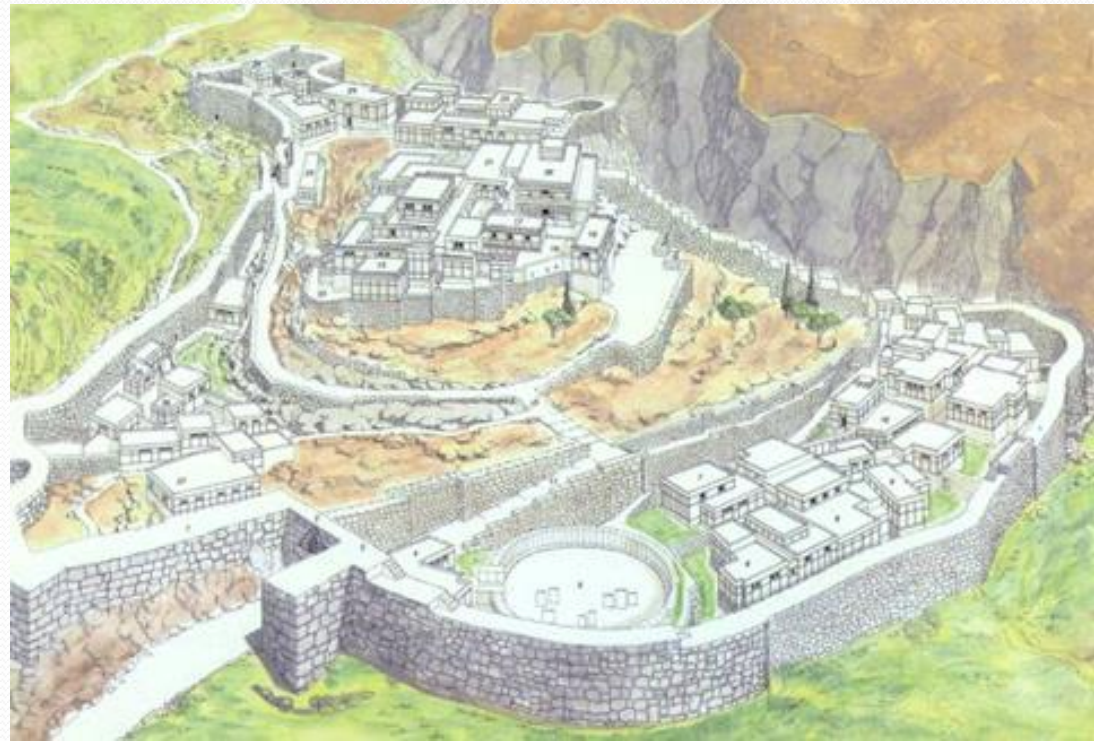
Merging with Mycenaen

- Minoans may have been too easy going
- 1500 B.C.E, aggressive tribes from Greek mainland invaded Crete, merging with the Minoans
 - Created the Greek myths
 - Launched the Trojan War
 - Not as laid back or “out of touch” as the Minoan’s were
 - Figures in art were depicted as more “fit” for battle



The Mycenaeans Move In

- Mycenae rose to power on the mainland and spread throughout the Aegean after the bronze age.
- War-like people, built and designed art differently from Minoans.
- How does this palace show a difference?



No Mud for Mycenaens

- War was common for Mycenaens, not Minoans
 - Mud brick was replaced with thick stone for protection
 - Large, rough cut, irregular blocks were used to build walls
 - Called **Cyclopean Walls (Masonry)** because only a Cyclops could move such heavy bricks



The Lion Gate of Mycenae

- Entrance to the citadel (fortress) of Mycenae
- Post and Lintel structure
- Relieving triangle lessens pressure
 - This triangle has a relief of two lions with paws on an altar
 - Lions serve as guardians, obedient to their goddess
- **Corbelled Arch:** Arranging stones in layers (courses) until they meet at the top, creating an arch



Central column
between lions....where
did they get that idea?



Alan Witschonke

Mortality in Mycenae



- Tombs were given more importance in Mycenae than in Minoan culture
- Honor = burial of warriors
 - Earliest burials were shaft graves
 - Important people had bigger tombs
 - Enclosed in a circle
 - Left with clothes, jewelry, weapons, wealth
 - Gold funerary masks- Egypt Influence?

Who was Agamemnon?

- Brother of **Menelaus** (of Sparta) whose wife, **Helen**, ran away with **Paris** of Troy
- **Agamemnon**, launched 1,000 troops to get his brother's wife back AND attack Troy for himself
 - Legendary warriors **Achilles** and **Odysseus** went to fight for Agamemnon, whose warriors couldn't breach the walls of Troy
 - Pretending to leave, Agamemnon's men built a Trojan Horse and hid inside, which Troy took into the city
 - Greeks burnt the city to the ground and took Troy



The Mask of Agamemnon

- Not actually Agamemnon
- Definitely a death mask of someone
 - What does this remind you of?



Even Pottery Shows Power

- Mycenaeans excelled in ceramic pottery
 - Functional and decorative
 - Tradition continues in ancient Greece
- Kraters: Bowls for mixing water, wine
 - Used for grave markers or in feasts
- Highly stylized decorations
 - Less vibrant energy
 - Disciplined warriors instead



The Importance of Aegean Art

- Serves as an artistic and geographical bridge between Mediterranean Art:
 - Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Greek.
 - Seen through formal elements and content
- Influenced styles and traditions that will be adopted by the Greeks and later, Romans

