



THE ORIGINS OF GREEK CIVILIZATION:

**FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE POLIS
CA. 2500–600 B.C.E.
A Collection of Three Teaching Units**



**Bronze Age Civilization in the Aegean:
Crete, Mycenae, and Troy Ca. 2500–100 B.C.**

**Rhoda Himmell
Amanda H. Podany**

Homer's Odyssey: An Elementary Passion

David Millstone

The Polis

Peter Cheoros

**National Center for History in the Schools
University of California, Los Angeles**

**THE ORIGINS OF
GREEK CIVILIZATION:
FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE POLIS
CA. 2500–600 B.C.E.
A Collection of Three Teaching Units**

**Bronze Age Civilization in the Aegean:
Crete, Mycenae, and Troy Ca. 2500–100 B.C.**

**Rhoda Himmell
Amanda H. Podany**

Homer's Odyssey: An Elementary Passion

David Millstone

The Polis

Peter Cheoros

**National Center for History in the Schools
University of California, Los Angeles**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Approach and Rationale | 1 |
| Content and Organization | 1 |

General Background

| | |
|---|---|
| Overview | 2 |
| Correlation to the National Standards for World History | 3 |
| Unit Titles | 4 |

BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATION IN THE AEGEAN: CRETE, MYCENAE, AND TROY CA. 2500—100 B.C.E.

Teacher Background Materials

| | |
|--|---|
| Unit Overview | 6 |
| Unit Context | 6 |
| Unit Objectives | 7 |
| Introduction to <i>Bronze Age Civilization in the Aegean: Crete, Mycenae, and Troy Ca. 2500 - 100 B.C.E.</i> | 8 |
| Lesson Plans | 9 |
| Evaluating the Lessons | 9 |

Lesson Plans

| | |
|---|----|
| Lesson One: The Minoan Civilization of Crete | 11 |
| Lesson Two: Evaluating Evidence: The Decline of Minoan Civilization | 20 |
| Lesson Three: Mycenae | 27 |
| Lesson Four: The Trojan War: Causes | 31 |
| Lesson Five: The Trojan War: Archaeology | 36 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Annotated Bibliography | 42 |
|---|-----------|

HOMER'S ODYSSEY: AN ELEMENTARY PASSION

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 46 |
| Selected Activities | 48 |
| Odyssey Projects | 53 |
| References | 56 |

THE POLIS

Teacher Background Materials

| | |
|--|----|
| Unit Overview | 60 |
| Unit Context | 60 |
| Unit Objectives | 61 |
| Introduction to <i>The Polis</i> | 61 |
| Lesson Plans | 62 |
| Evaluating the Lessons | 63 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Dramatic Moment | 64 |
|----------------------------------|-----------|

Lesson Plans

| | |
|--|----|
| Lesson One: The Polis: Organization | 65 |
| Lesson Two: The Polis: Functions | 70 |
| Lesson Three: The Polis: The Beginnings of Nationalism | 72 |
| Lesson Four: Comparing Political/Social Organizations | 73 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Bibliography | 77 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|

LESSON ONE

THE MINOAN CIVILIZATION ON CRETE

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To establish a geographic focus for the Bronze Age Aegean civilizations.
2. To understand the basic chronology of Minoan civilization.
3. To explore the nature of the ancient culture which flourished at several sites on the island of Crete.
4. To examine the archaeology of the Minoan sites with particular emphasis on the work of Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Pass out *The Palace of Minos* (**Dramatic Moment**) and *Minoan Civilization* (**Document 1-A**). Have students read the materials and lead a class discussion.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- a. What might have been the purpose for the tall jars in the store rooms (“magazines”)?
 - b. Why did Sir Arthur Evans regard the clay tablets as the “crowning discovery” of his excavation?
 - c. Why did Evans believe that the palace of Knossos might have been the source of the legend of *King Minos and the Labyrinth*?
2. Locate the Minoan, Mycenaean, and Trojan sites on a map. Students may be given the map exercise (**Student Handout 1**) to do in class or for homework. This exercise requires students to locate the important cities of the Bronze Age as well as the later settlements of classical Greece and the surrounding area.
 3. Distribute **Document 1-B** and explain the chronology and terminology showing parallel development in Crete, Mycenae, and Troy.

D. RESOURCES

1. "The Search for The Trojan War," Part 2. This segment of the BBC six-part series about Troy is especially relevant for the study of the Minoans in that it brings together the mythology and archaeology at Troy, Mycenae, and Crete.
2. Commercial slides available for purchase.
3. Photographs which may be found in survey books about the art or archaeology of this period.



Silver cup, Priam imploring Achilles to return the body of Hector, (1st century B.C.)
University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

DRAMATIC MOMENT

THE PALACE OF MINOS

The Palace was entered on the southwest side by a portico and double doorway opening from a spacious paved court. Flanking the portico were remains of a great fresco of a bull. . . . Along nearly the whole length of the building ran a spacious paved corridor, lined by a long row of fine stone doorways, giving access to a succession of magazines. On the floor of these magazines huge storage jars were still standing. . . . One of these jars, contained in a small separate chamber, was nearly five feet in height. . . .

But manifold as were the objects of interest found within the palace walls of Knossos, the crowning discovery— or, rather, series of discoveries—remains to be told. On the last day of march, not far below the surface of the ground . . . there turned up a clay tablet of elongated shape, bearing on it incised characters in a linear script, accompanied by numeral signs. My hopes now ran high of finding entire deposits of clay archives, and they were speedily realized. . . .

There can be little remaining doubt that this vast edifice, which in a broad historic sense we are justified in calling the ‘Palace of Minos,’ is one and the same as the traditional ‘Labyrinth.’ A great part of the ground plan itself, with its long corridors and repeated succession of blind galleries, its tortuous passages and spacious underground conduit, its bewildering system of small chambers, does in fact present many of the characteristics of a maze.

Source: Arthur Evans, “The Palace of Minos,” in *The Monthly Review*, March, 1901.



Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941)
Hellenic Ministry of Culture

MINOAN CIVILIZATION

By Amanda H. Podany

The Aegean (ih-JEE-un) region, the setting of the Minoan (mih-NOH-un) and Mycenaean (my-shu-NEE-un) civilizations, consisted of the lands around the Aegean Sea and the islands between them. The largest of the Aegean islands is Crete, where the earliest civilization in this area, that of the Minoans, flourished between around 2000 and 1450 B.C.E. Later Mycenaean culture developed on the mainland of Greece and gradually spread throughout the Aegean between 1550 and 1200 B.C.E.

Throughout the Aegean, the climate is mild with enough rainfall for farmers to grow wheat and barley. Olives and grapes also grow particularly well in these regions; olive oil and wine have been important local products ever since ancient times. Not only were the olive oil and wine consumed by the immediate population, they could also be packed in large jars and traded abroad. The evidence for this trade is seen in the many pieces of Minoan and Mycenaean pottery that have been found in other lands bordering the Mediterranean, such as Syria and Egypt, and on the island of Cyprus.

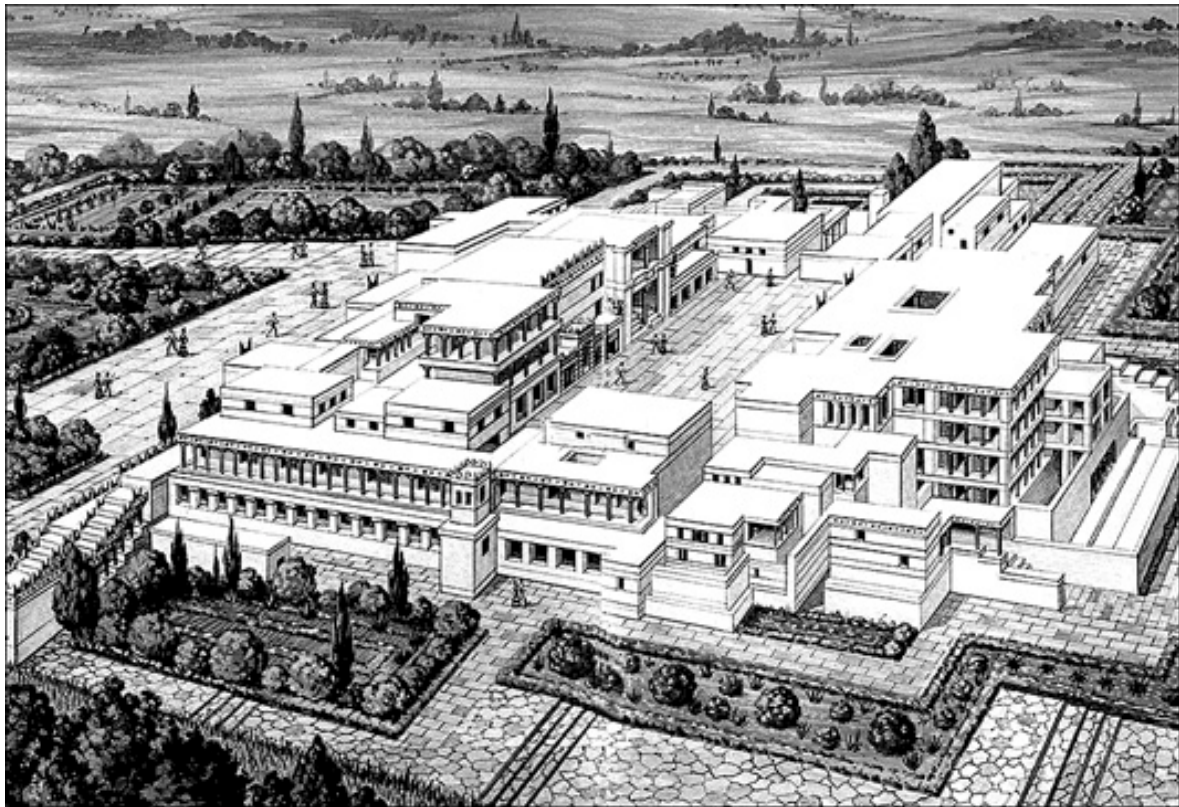
Trade was important to the ancient people of the Aegean for a number of reasons. Although they were self-sufficient in most ways (their land produced enough food, lumber, and stone for the population), metal ores essential for the production of bronze had to be imported. Luxury goods like gold and most precious stones also came from foreign lands. Trade also must have brought the people of the Aegean into contact with the great civilizations of the Near East: those of the Egyptians, the Hittites, and the Mesopotamians.

In honor of the legendary Cretan king Minos, the name “Minoan” is used for the earliest Cretan civilization; we do not know by what name the Minoans referred to themselves or to their island. We do not even know what language they spoke, because we cannot read their writing. The language may have been related to that of the earliest men and women who arrived on Crete before 6000 B.C.E. from Anatolia (modern Turkey), who brought with them their domesticated plants and animals and who settled in small communities. More invaders may have arrived around 3000 B.C.E., after which the civilization developed, uninterrupted, until 1450 B.C.E. when it suffered a catastrophic change.

The Minoans lived in cities dominated by palaces. The largest of the palaces (of which there are at least four on the island) is that at Knossos (NAW-suhs). It was excavated by Sir Arthur Evans, an English archaeologist, in the early twentieth century. Each palace consisted of a large rectangular courtyard surrounded on all four sides by rooms: residence apartments, ceremonial halls, shrines, workshops, and many storerooms. The storerooms contained agricultural products probably collected from throughout the community. These products were then redistributed as rations to people dependent on the palace. Officials kept track of the goods entering and leaving the palaces by means of written documents. The earliest documents (from 2500 to around 1600

B.C.E.) were written in a pictographic script; later documents (from around 1775 to 1450 B.C.E.) were written in a script known as Linear A. Although neither of these scripts has been deciphered, historians can tell that most of the texts consist of lists of commodities.

During the last century of Minoan civilization, a new culture, that of the Mycenaeans, was flourishing on the Greek mainland (the Mycenaeans will be the topic of **Lesson 3**). The Mycenaeans and Minoans were clearly in contact with one another, for example we can see strong Minoan influences on Mycenaean artwork at this time, but initially they do not seem to have come into conflict.



Artist's impression of the Palace of Knossos
http://www.dilos.com/region/crete/kn_01.html

MAP EXERCISE—THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD

Place each of the following on your outline map in CAPITAL LETTERS

ATTICA
BOEOTIA
CHALCIDICE
CRETE AEGEAN SEA
EUBOEA
GULF OF CORINTH
HELLESPONT

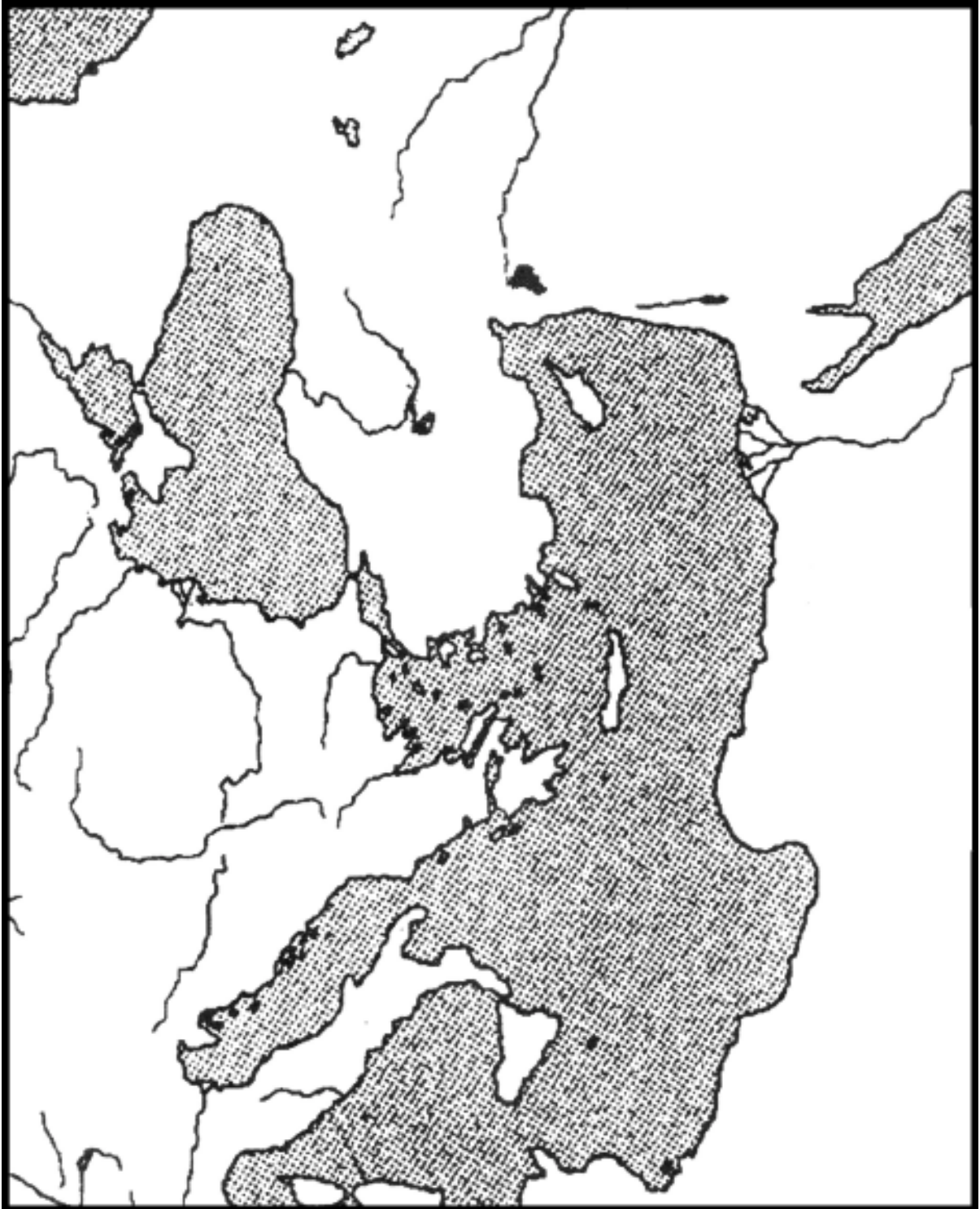
IONIAN SEA
MACEDONIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
MESSENIA
PELOPONNESUS
THESSALY
THRACE

Place each of the following on the map in small letters.

Athens
Corinth
Delos
Delphi
Ionia
Knossos
Lesbos
Marathon
Miletus
Mount Olympus

Mycenae
Naxos
Piraeus
Pylos
Rhodes
Samos
Sparta
Thebes
Tiryns
Troy

THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD



LITERATURE AND HISTORY (ALL DATES B.C.E.)
MINOAN-MYCENAEAN GREECE

| Date | Greece | Crete | Near East |
|-------------|--|--|---|
| 2000 | First Greek speakers enter Greece | “Palace Period” begins (until ca. 1300) | First composition of <i>Gilgamesh</i> epic? |
| 1900 | | | |
| 1800 | | | First composition of <i>Enuma Elish</i> ? |
| 1700 | | Destruction of palaces at Knossos & Phaistos (later rebuilt) | |
| 1600 | Shaft graves at Myceane | Linear A in use (non-Greek) | |
| 1500 | | Eruption of Thera | Rise of Hittite Empire |
| | | Catastrophic destruction of Cretan palaces (ca. 1450) | |
| | Tholos Tombs | Greeks in Knossos, Linear B in use. (Greek) | |
| 1400 | Palaces at Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos; Linear B | Destruction of last palace at Knossos (ca. 1375) | |
| 1300 | | | |
| 1200 | Destruction of Troy VIIA | | Overthrow of Hittite Empire |
| | Traditional Date of Troy’s fall: 1184 (Eratosthenes) | | |

“GEOMETRIC” (OR “DARK AGE”) GREECE

| Date | History | Literature | Archaeology (vase painting styles) |
|-------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1100 | (1104) Traditional date of Dorian invasion of Peloponnesus | | Protogeometric (1100-950) |
| 1000 | (1044) Traditional date of migration to Ionia (Asia Minor) | | |
| 900 | | Golden age of oral epic poetry | Geometric (950-700) |
| 800 | (776) First “historical” Olympic Games | (ca. 750) Introduction of Greek alphabet | |