

3000-2200 BCE Beginning of Bronze Age. Early "Minoan" Age of Cretan civilization. Greece and its islands, including the Cyclades Islands, occupied by Greek-speaking peoples.



Female Figurine (Folded-arm Type)
Cycladic, 2600-2500 BCE, Marble
Gift of Wright S. Ludington
1992.37.13

The Early Bronze Age peoples of the Cyclades produced sculpture of exceptional elegance and simplicity. Using carefully calculated canons of proportion, and an unerring sense of line, these prehistoric sculptors depicted the human body using principles of formal harmony and balance that seem altogether modern.

2200-2000 BCE Middle "Minoan" Age, building of first palaces of Knossos (on the island of Crete) and the second city of Troy (in Asia Minor, now Turkey).

2000-1400 BCE Crete becomes a leading power in the Aegean. Greek city-state of Argos established. At the Palace of Knossos on Crete, King Minos confined the Minotaur (half bull, half man, the offspring of Minos' wife and a beautiful bull) in a labyrinth constructed in the palace garden by Daedalus (of wax wing fame). It was in King Minos' court that bull dancing was begun, later celebrated in murals and on vases.



In the spring, when nature blossoms into life, and again harvest-time, the Cretans held great religious festivals to give thanks to the Fertility Goddess.

The proceedings were enlivened by sporting events, dances and songs in addition to the solemn ritual ceremonies. Surviving frescoes, reliefs on stone vases, engraved seal-stones and other finds give us a clear picture of what these events were like.

The favorite sporting events appear to have been boxing, wrestling, jumping over upright swords and, of course, bull-leaping. In this spectacular and dangerous sport the "toreador" had to grasp the horns of the charging bull, let himself be tossed up over its head and turn a somersault in mid-air to land feet first on the enraged beast's back, where he had to perform more acrobatic feats to keep his balance. Success called for the utmost daring and skill, without which the bull-leaper was sure to be gored and trampled to death. He was supported by a team of assistants, both male and female, who caught him when he jumped down to the ground.

- Guide to Knossos, Greek Government publication, n.d.

1600-1100 BCE "Mycenean" Age in Greece. Myceane was a city state on the eastern side of the Greek peninsula, the Peloponnesus, ruled from 1200 until 1170 by Agamemnon, who avenged the abduction of Helen of Sparta by Paris of Troy, in the ten year Trojan Wars, ending with the Trojan Horse stratagem and the destruction of Troy in 1184 BCE. Beginning of the Iron Age. Athens is founded.

1058 BCE Athens becomes a republic.

900-800 BCE Homer composes the Iliad and Odyssey. The Iliad recounts the adventures of Achilles and begins: "Divine Muse, sing of the ruinous wrath of Achilles, Peleus' son, which brought ten thousand sorrow to the Greeks, sent the souls of many brave heroes down to the world of the dead, and left their bodies to be eaten by dogs and birds; and the will of Zeus was fulfilled. Begin where they first quarreled, Agamemnon the King of Men, and the great Achilles." The Odyssey recounts the travels of Odysseus returning from the battle of Troy.

800-700 BCE Rise of the aristocracies throughout Greece.

776 BCE Traditional date of the first Olympic Games

753 BCE Founding of Rome

610 BCE Sappho [**saf** foe], Greek Poetess

544 BCE First public library at Athens opens, collects the poems of Homer in 530.

540 BCE Pythagoras [pie **thag** or us], Greek philosopher from Magna Graecia, in Southern Italy, discovered the multiplication tables.

495-400 BCE Aeschylus [**es** kuh lus], Sophocles [**sof** uh clees] and Euripides [u **rip** uh dees], the three great Greek playwrights; Herodotus [hair **odd** e tus], the father of history; Phidias [**fid** e us], the greatest sculptor.

480 BCE Athens becomes a democracy with leaders (archons) elected annually.

480-320 BCE Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the first philosophers of western thought

431-404 BCE Peloponesian war begins. Sparta defeats Athens and rules Greece.

370-330 BCE Praxiteles [prak **sit** eh leez] and Lyssipus [lye **sip** us], Greek sculptors

399 BCE Socrates dies.

356-338 BCE Warfare between Greek states allows Philip of Macedon to master Greece

334-323 BCE His son, the 20 year old Alexander, inherits the throne, defeats the Persians, conquers eastern Iran and northwest India, and dies in Babylon in 323 at 33.

322 BCE Death of Aristotle

146 BCE Greece becomes a Roman province under the name Athens.