

**AEGEAN ARCHITECTURE AND THE ORIGINS OF GREEK CIVILIZATION**

Neolithic Period, or Late Stone Age (c. 6000-3000 BC)  
Bronze Age (roughly 3000-1000 BC)

Long before the coming of the Greeks, other peoples dominated the Aegean world. Traces of palaeolithic habitation have been found in various places, and abundant remains of the Neolithic or Late Stone Age, dating from the sixth to the fourth millennium BC, have also been discovered. The Bronze Age defines a period when tools were no longer made of stone and not yet of iron, but were of copper and then of bronze. It was in the wake of the Bronze Age that the major civilizations of the Eastern Mediterranean flourished (and fell).

Note that the Greek mainland and the adjoining islands were successively invaded by groups of people from the Asia Minor region. The racial stock of these peoples may have been same but their ideology, and art and architecture were different.

Two principal early Greek civilizations:

- (1) The Cretan or Minoan Civilization based on the island of Crete,
- (2) The Mycenaean Civilization based in the Greek mainland.

**CRETE AND THE MINOAN CIVILIZATION (c.2000-1500 BC)**

Palace: The Myth of the Labyrinth

Palace Court

The cult of the Bull Dance

Vegetal/Floral motifs in art

**MAINLAND GREECE AND THE MYCENAAN CIVILIZATION (c.1600-1100BC)**

Fort/Palace in Tiryns and Mycenaean

Megaron as principal space of dwelling

The cult of the Tomb: "Treasury of Atreus"

Lion Gate

Vocabulary:

*Helladic*: designates the related culture of Greek mainland at the time of Bronze Age civilization based in Crete.

*Megaron*: ceremonial hall in Mycenaean palaces.

*Tholoi*: Mycenaean circular tombs with corbelled domes (example: building known as "Treasury of Atreus").

**Comparing Mycenaean and Minoan palaces.**

- (1) The heart of the Minoan palace is the central court, while the heart of the Mycenaean palace is the megaron, the king's ceremonial hall. The megaron is the largest element in the composition.
- (2) Axiality. In the Minoan palace, there is no particular axiality, in fact, the layout has been described as "labyrinthine," in line with the myth of the labyrinth. The path is not straight and the goal not predetermined. In the Mycenaean palace, an axial approach organizes the plan, at the end of which is the megaron.
- (3) with the *megaron* as the center in a Mycenaean palace, the king's hall and ritual for the gods are conducted in the same space. In the Minoan palace, while there is an elaborate throne room, the principal activity - ritual and social - is in the court where the famous Bull Dance took place.
- (4) The Minoan palace is sited on a flat land creating a symbolic relationship with surrounding mountains. The Mycenaean citadel is often sited on a mountain top, with the palace at the summit. Also, it is much more fortified.