Minoan Civilization

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Geographic Location

• Originated on the Greek island of Crete

• Largest of the Greek islands, at 8,336 square kilometers

• Made up of large mountains and plateaus
Geographic location
Natural Resources

Rich in:
- Timber
- Abundant fresh water
- Fish
- Building Stone

Lacked:
- Fertile soil
- Metals and minerals
Monetary System and Trade

• It is unclear if the Minoans had a currency

• Bronze ingots are commonly found at excavation sites

• Coins and disks have been recovered as well, but these may have been for religious purposes
Monetary system and Trade

**Exported:**
- Timber
- Cypress wood
- Olive oil
- Wine
- Wool
- Purple Dye

**Imported:**
- Tin
- Copper
- Precious stones
Monetary System and Trade

• Crete’s geographic position allowed the Minoans to control Mediterranean trade routes

• This *thalassocracy* was reflected in the designs of Minoan palaces and cities: virtually no land fortification existed
Beliefs and Value Systems

• Minoan art centered around religion

• Sacrificed animals in sacred caves

• Little is known about the specifics of the Minoan belief system, but common symbols include:
  - The snake goddess Knossos
  - Bulls
  - The double-headed axe
Beliefs and Value Systems
Language

• A precursor to ancient Greek
• Used a base ten counting system

• **Linear A:**
  - Found with art and religious artifacts
  - Not yet deciphered

• **Linear B:**
  - Used to keep trade records
  - Deciphered
Language
Government and Social Hierarchy

- **Kings** - Most likely ruled from the largest palace, Knossos

- **Nobles, Governors** - Ruled from or lived in smaller palaces

- **Upper Class** - Seals depict an affluent upper class, perhaps merchants

- **Commoners**
Government and Social Hierarchy

Progression over Time:

- **Prepalatial (2600-1900 BC)** - No evidence of class a system, decentralized culture made up of small communities.

- **Protopalatial (1900-1700 BC)** - Smaller palaces are built, communities linked by a King. Social Structure emerges.

- **Neopalatial (1700-1400 BC)** - Grand palaces built, Minoan civilization at its height in power
Culture

• Sports played an important part in Minoan Culture

• Boxing and bull leaping—believed to be a precursor of bull fighting—were the most common

• Bull-leaping was likely reserved for ceremonial purposes
Technology

• Minoans created the earliest aqueducts

• Also created rudimentary indoor plumbing
Decline and Fall

• Knossos was destroyed in 1375 BC

• Exact causes are unknown, but possibilities include:
  - Eruption of Thera
  - Earthquake and subsequent tsunami
  - Mycenaean invasion

• Minoan civilization persisted, albeit not self-rulled
Lasting Influence

• Wide influence on concurrent civilizations as a result of trade overseas

• The first European civilization

• Unmatched common housing

• Pioneered a model of economic, rather than military dominance
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