



Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Eras of cultural development of Crete

(Keyword history: ancient history (stone & bronze age), Minoicum)



Ancient history

According to common definition the early history includes stone and Bronze Age and ends with effect from the Iron Age at around 1200 BC

Stone Age (600000 – 2800 BC)

- **Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic Age)**
at Crete, the earliest finds go back only to the Neolithic (new stone age)
- **Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic Age)**
- **New Stone Age (Neolithic Age) (6200 – 2800 BC)**

Within the Aegean island world Neolithic deploys at earliest to spread from here to the north across the Balkans to the Danube area. The preclinical ceramic and the ceramic phase are distinguishable from each other.

Characteristics are:

- o - Dissociation from dependence on prescribed natural conditions, instead deliberately manufacturing design (Culture)
- o - Increasing sedentariness instead of nomadism and formation of colonies. Differentiation and specialization in the performance (building construction, fabrication of stone tools and ceramic), and the exchange of goods (“business”)
- o - Origin of burial areas (necropolis)
- o - Crop farming and agriculture instead of collection and hunting
- o - Neolithic habitats

There are relatively few Neolithic places at Crete; *Knossos*, *Phaistos*, *Eileithia cave* are known and *Katsambas* (the harbour of Knossos)

Bronze Age (Helladic Era) (2800 – 2000 BC)

The use of bronze advances the cultural development in all areas. It allows the intensification of agriculture and leads in an increase in population.

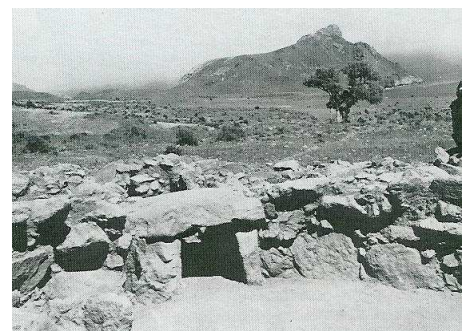
Minoicum

For the Greek historian (HERODOT, THUKYDIDES), the mythical king “Minos” is the representative of early Crete, if not “Minos” is only a title borne by all kings at Crete. A. EVANS, the excavator of Knossos, named the Cretan culture “Minoan culture” based on him (unlike the Mycenaean culture unearthed by H. SCHLIEMANN). The Egyptians called the Cretans “Keftiu” (this is documented by epigraphs from Egyptian graves from the period 1500 – 1300 BC). The structure of the Minoan history is showing the following chronology (classification scheme by N. PLATON)

Early Minoicum: 2600 – 2000 BC

(Praepalatial period: 2600 – 2000 BC)

- o - We suspected immigration of non Indo-European people from Anatolia to Crete during this time. Preferred settlement areas were the fruitful *Messara* rank (Messara culture) as well as East Crete. Settlement areas were: *Mochlos*, *Vasiliki*, *Palaikastro*, *Zakros*, *Phaistos* and *Malia*.
- o - large round- and tholos craves with square grave-chamber in front, protected by rocks or enclosed.
- o - new ceramic styles: Pygros-Style, Vasiliki-Style, (beak-spouted ewer) “cream-on-dark ware”-Style, gold jewellery.



Early Minoan Graves at *Lebena*

Middle Minoicum: 2000 – 1580 BC

(Protopalatial period: 2000 – 1700 BC)

- o - With beginning of the 2nd millennium initial palaces emerge in *Phaistos*, *Knossos*, *Malia* and *Kydonia (Chania)*.
- o - Destruction of the palaces probably happened around 1700 BC by a natural disaster
- o - The form of society was probably a tightly organized monarchy where the king also perceived religious functions.
- o - There were no mayor temples for religion but close to nature places of worship (e.g. caves and grottos). Predominantly feminine deities. Cult symbols: e.g. Bull horns, double axes (*Labrys*), holy node. It seems that the Minoan have known human sacrifices, also a cult of death were likely.
- o - Scripture: a sparsely verified hieroglyphic script **Linear A**: Syllabary (still not deciphered, language unknown). The form used in *Hagia Triada* is still older than the hieroglyphic script. There is nothing similar for the decoding of "*Discos of Phaistos*"; its deciphering seems currently impossible.



Linear A - plate

Late Minoicum: 1580 – 1140 BC

(Neopalatial period: 1700 – 1400 BC)

- o - Around 1600 BC marvellous rebuilding of the destroyed palaces in *Phaistos*, *Knossos* and *Malia*.
- o - Scripture: **Linear B**: a further development of **Linear A**. Is deemed to be deciphered (M. VENTRIS und J. CHADWICK); Language Greek (an ancient Greek-Mycenaean dialect)
- o - Destroying of all palaces by the end of the neopalatial period. Varying theories: natural disaster, hostile invasion (Archaier / Mykener), rebellion of islanders.



Linear B - plate

(Postpalatial period: 1400 – 1100 BC)

- o - Revival of palace-culture on a simple standard.
- o - The last Minoans withdrew towards Eastern Crete (*Lassithi*, *Sitia*) and claimed there under the name "Eteocretan" ("real Cretan").

After the Minoicum (1100 BC) the "Historical time" begins for Crete (Greek dark ages). For further information see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minoan_civilization (~ 2600 – 1600 BC)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mycenaean_Greece (~ 1600 – 1100 BC)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Dark_Ages (~ 1100 – 800 BC)



Three (3) documents from historical time of Crete: left the "*Lion of Pressos*", the capital of "Eteocretan". It was located at a strategic location in the centre of the island and had two ports: *Itia* on the *Gulf of Marabello* and *Stiles* in the south towards the *Libyan Sea*. The most important *Doric* town of East Crete, *Hierapytna*, was in Greek time arch-rival of *Pressos*. The conflict ended 145 BC with the destruction of *Pressos*, which no longer was settled after. Thus the "Eteocretan", the last representatives of Minoan culture disappeared forever.

Centre Picture: Bronze figure from the Greek Archaic (approximately 700 BC): "Shepherd" with lamb. (Archaeological museum Iraklion).

The figure right shows a skull with a wreath from Golden olive sheets from the 1. Century BC. The skull was found on a Roman Cemetery in *Lato (Agios Nikolaos)*. A silver "Tetradrachm" (from the time of the Emperor of Tiberius) was placed in the mouth of dead (probably as "Ferry payment" towards "Charon"). (Archaeological museum Agios Nikolaos).