

Beginnings and Before: Greek Sculpture in the Iron Age (circa 1000–600)

The question of beginning is always a thorny one, for nearly any topic can be pursued back in time until all evidence disappears; yet, to do so usually takes one far, too far, from the subject at hand. In studies of ancient Greek culture, an advantage is provided by the Greeks themselves, who figured their years from 776, the date of the first Olympic games. Should we do the same, we would find, at Olympia itself, the first traces of a continuous tradition in Greek sculptural production and usage. Yet the Greeks did not believe that time itself began in 776; we know from Homer the stories that the Greeks, as early as the eighth century, were telling one another of an earlier heroic age. Working from such accounts, archaeologists set out to find the physical settings for these legends – at Troy, Mycenae, Tiryns, Knossos, and other sites. They discovered earlier Greek cultures, which, unlike the neighboring kingdoms of Egypt and the Near East, left behind no historical accounts of their own. Lacking these, scholars had recourse only to material remains and so borrowed from the poet Hesiod the term “Bronze Age,” since the tools and weapons these cultures left behind were forged from that metal. Chronological structure within that era, in the absence of dynastic lists, was adapted from nearby Egypt in the form of a tripartite scheme (Early, Middle, Late) that corresponds to the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms.

In Egypt at that time, as well as in the Near East, conspicuous display of sculpture in stone and bronze, on scales ranging from miniature to colossal, played an important part in the expression of royal power. Although some Minoans and Mycenaeans surely had personal experience of these impressive sculptured monuments, they produced nothing comparable at Knossos, Mycenae, or elsewhere in the Aegean. The Bronze Age Greeks developed their own types of sculpture, working largely with native materials, in styles of their own, and serving functions that were characteristic also of later Hellenic work (see box). Small *votive* sculptures, for example, in bronze and terracotta especially, were used extensively in the modest domestic shrines and rural sanctuaries of the Minoans and Mycenaeans. Funerary

Box Uses of Sculpture in Ancient Greece

Archaic and Classical Greek sculpture served a narrow range of functions, all of which had to do with ritual practices. The Greeks themselves had little to say about the subject, so current beliefs are based more on inference than documentation. It is clear, however, that sculpture in ancient Greece was not, in either private or public spaces, used as visual embellishment without distinct religious purpose, as was conventionally done in Roman times.

It is often alleged or assumed that the most significant of ancient Greek images was the cult statue set up in the central room (**cella**) of a temple intended to “house” it; the statue, in which the deity could reside, could then “look” out through the temple’s front door to observe and receive the sacrifices and libations performed at an altar erected outside. The cult statue, temple, and altar together facilitated the process of interaction between deity and worshipper and ensured the presence of the god at the ritual. While this model is generally accurate, it is somewhat restrictive. The cult statue/temple/altar triad was common, but each could exist without the other(s). Moreover, a cult statue could serve more than one function; the giant gold and ivory statue in the Parthenon was at the same time part of the state treasury.

Many statues were votives, so-called because they fulfill a vow; inscribed dedications make clear that these were given as gifts (either personal or communal) to a deity in hopes of securing its beneficence in return. A term often used was **agalma**, or “pleasing thing,” but what constituted an agalma was not always obvious. It could represent the god himself or even another god, or it could substitute for a worshipper; it is not always easy to tell the difference. It could be an animal, perhaps but not necessarily representing a substitute sacrifice, or another creature such as a sphinx. Votives could be statues or reliefs, large or small, cheap or expensive, in almost any material. The cost was important, as an indicator of the magnitude of devotion involved, but equally so was the ritual act itself, of which the votive was a lasting reminder.

Sculptures were also used to adorn temples, in locations that were dictated by the architectural **order** employed. Subjects were drawn all but exclusively from episodes in Greek mythology. Some with universal applicability, such as the battle between gods and giants (**Gigantomachy**), were used frequently. Others were more local or limited in signification and occur rarely. Scholars focus intently on the relationships among the stories on a temple and consider how the embodied themes relate to the historical circumstances of the building’s construction. Did they simply reflect the shared values and religious beliefs of the society, were some myths meant to be metaphors for actual historical events, or were both readings simultaneously possible and intended?

Sculptures were also used as grave markers. Especially in Archaic times, funerary statues are mostly of the same types as used for votive functions – nude male **kouroi**,

draped female **korai**, sphinxes and other beasts – and are equally enigmatic in subject and meaning. Grave reliefs are usually more specific than statues, characterizing the deceased as a warrior, athlete, mother, or child. The Classical era has no counterpart to the Archaic funerary kouros and kore. Relief sculptures are now much more commonly used as grave monuments than statuary; these become so frequent and elaborate in fourth-century Athens that they were banned as excessively boastful by Macedonian overlords in 317, testifying once again to the social and political power of publicly displayed images.

sculpture is documented by the many marble idols from third-millennium graves on the Cycladic islands and also, a millennium later, by stone reliefs set up as markers in the royal cemetery (Grave Circle A) at Mycenae. Yet both of these categories of sculpture were limited to a particular time and place, reflecting a production that suddenly and inexplicably stopped long before the end of the Bronze Age. Despite the considerable amount of sculptured material that was produced, it is all but impossible to *characterize* prehistoric Aegean sculpture as a whole, since it consists of several circumscribed and largely unrelated categories of production.

Later Greeks on occasion came across artifacts from the heroic era, and that experience played no small role in their conception and construction of their own past. Occasionally we can be certain that this happened, as in the case of the fifteenth-century terracotta head reused seven centuries later as a cult object on Cycladic Kea. The most conspicuous of all such relics must have been the great Lion Gate at Mycenae, which has stood above the ground, with the fortifications it adorned, continuously from its installation around 1250 (Figure 1.1). The only monumental work of sculpture from the Greek Bronze Age, this great limestone relief sits atop the citadel's main gate as part of an enlarged circuit erected from massive stones in anticipation of troubles that would indeed materialize a half-century later. The relief has an architectural as well as decorative function: it screens the triangular open space left in the masonry in order to relieve the stress atop the gate's huge lintel block. The scene is static, symmetrical, and governed by principles of heraldic symmetry, influenced by Minoan sources and ultimately the Near East. The idea of gate decoration, and perhaps the carving technique as well, may also have come from parts east, most likely from the Hittites of central Anatolia. But the individual forms here, the felines (lions, griffins, sphinxes?), the hourglass-shaped altars on which they rest their forepaws, and the downwardly tapering column, are all part of a Minoan legacy that had been transformed over the previous centuries into a distinctly Mycenaean art. Like its Hittite counterparts, this sculpture was meant to be *apotropaic*, that is, to turn back unseen threats just as the gate it adorns was to repel more tangible dangers. Most important, it was, as far as we can tell, a *unique* monument, a synthesis of influences from other media and cultures, made for this one particular purpose at this one point in time, by a culture with no known tradition of monumental sculpture.



Figure 1.1 Mycenae, Lion Gate. Limestone. Circa 1250. H. 10' 2" (3.1 m). Source: © age fotostock/Alamy.

Sculpture and the Geometric Style

Not only was the Lion Gate without predecessors, it had no immediate followers either; it may have inspired the mythmakers of succeeding generations, but not its sculptors. Nor did it fulfill its intended function, for Mycenae was brought down – and Tiryns, and Pylos and the rest of the citadel sites catalogued by Homer in the *Iliad*. Some fell suddenly and violently, others more gradually owing to the changed economic circumstances that were brought about by the collapse of Mycenaean palace society. While there are important elements of continuity, such as language and religion, some features of Bronze Age society disappear altogether in the eleventh and tenth centuries: fortified palatial complexes and associated monumental tombs, figural wall painting, and writing. Yet, tombs with imported goods are more common in this era than had been previously thought. One important import from Cyprus was the technique of extracting and forging iron, a metal more readily available in Greece than those needed to make bronze (copper and tin) and one that could be worked to a sharper and more durable edge. This early “Iron Age” (or “Dark Age”) culture was not entirely imageless, but the artifacts that were locally made, mostly pottery, reflect a distinct lack of interest in the representation of any identifiable object; the human figure is especially conspicuous by its near total absence. Moreover, explicit representations of the scenes and subjects of Greek mythology, only imaginatively detected even in the considerable corpus of Minoan and Mycenaean art, were long believed to have first occurred in the art of the eighth century, or even later. One can imagine, then, the surprise when,



Figure 1.2 Terracotta centaur from cemetery at Lefkandi, Euboea. Eretria, Archaeological Museum. Circa 900. H. 2' 2" (0.36 m). Source: akg-images/De Agostini Picture Library. (See insert colour representation of the figure)

among the remarkable finds at the Dark Age site of Lefkandi on Euboea, there was unearthed a terracotta *centaur* (horse–man hybrid creature) that has given that site, succeeded by no known Classical city, its primary lasting fame (Figure 1.2).

The production of small votive statuary, common in the Bronze Age, never died out completely; Crete, with its important Dark Age “refuge” settlements such as Karphi and Kavousi produced many terracotta “goddesses” in a lingering Minoan style and an occasional bronze statuette as well. On the mainland, a few zoomorphic ceramic creations were attempted by potters of the tenth century. The Lefkandi centaur, however, stands out for its size (well over a foot tall), its quality, and especially its subject. Already broken in antiquity, its head and body were found associated with different graves; signs of repair suggest that this was a valued object. Its painted decoration, by comparison with that on

funerary vases, places it circa 900. The body is wheel thrown, with limbs, torso, and head modeled separately and attached before firing. Ventilation holes indicate experience in firing this kind of object. Its forms are simplified, in keeping with the formalized aesthetic of contemporary vase painting. Detail is at a minimum, but there is indication of joints in the legs, separate fingers, and modeled facial features, including large ears.

Fantastic creatures were common enough in Bronze Age art, but they were limited to items from the Near Eastern repertoire, mostly sphinxes and griffins. The centaur was not included in that cast and is generally taken to be a Greek creation, derived, perhaps, from the appearance of a man on horseback. It certainly plays a role (indeed, several) in Greek mythology and comes to be frequently represented in sculpture and painting. Its improbable combination of forms embodies the centaur's ambivalence. He is an emblem of the monstrous, like other such non-real creatures, but, being partially *anthropomorphic* (having human form), he represents the will to transgressive behavior that exists within humankind, as opposed to the inimical natural forces that threaten from without. The centaur can be immoderate and violent, especially under the influence of strong drink, but he can also be highly civilized and wise. One of the latter, Chiron, tutor to heroes such as Achilles, Jason, and Heracles, may be represented here. A nick in his left foreleg, deliberately added before painting and firing, could indicate the wound he accidentally received from Heracles. Concerning the role this object played among the tomb furnishings, or indeed whether it was even made for the grave, one can only speculate.

The fact that an interpretation for this object can be sought within the realm of classical myth indicates that the passage from the prehistory of Minoans and Mycenaean to the historical civilization of classical Greece is well underway; the watershed, wherever and whatever it may have been, is now crossed. One defining feature of this newly evolving culture is the establishment of clearly defined *sanctuaries* for the practice of cult. These may be small and modest, or extensive and physically spectacular; they may be strictly local, or involve Greeks from all reaches of the Mediterranean, and thus termed **Panhellenic**. Four were of special importance – Delphi (Apollo), Isthmia (Poseidon), Nemea (Zeus), and Olympia (Zeus), which was premier among them and the first to become an *agonistic* (*agon* = competition) sanctuary. Its games were founded, according to tradition, by the heroes Hercules or Pelops or both; there was surely a Mycenaean presence at Olympia, and, it is assumed, cult activity as well. The site is especially rich in early votive sculptures; some come from as far back as the tenth and ninth centuries, but the majority by far are roughly contemporary with, or later than, the first historical Olympiad in 776.

The subjects of these votives vary. There are many animals, both domestic and wild. Some, such as the bulls, may have been substitutes for, or lasting markers of, *sacrifice* (offerings made to a deity) or may have held other meanings. Especially prominent are horses, with their obvious heroic and aristocratic associations (Figure 1.3). The eighth-century examples are clearly conceived and carefully rendered; the individual features of the beast are suggested through geometric approximations that give the style, and the era, its name. Artistic representation necessarily involves a compromise between the two opposing approaches, the perceptual and the conceptual. Most simply put, the former strives to show



Figure 1.3 Geometric horse. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 21.88.24. Bronze. Eighth century. H. 7" (0.176 m). Circa 750–700. Source: © 2015. Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

things as they appear to the observer's eye, whether physically accurate or not; the latter appeals to what the viewer knows to be there, whether it is visible or not. As we will observe, the development of Greek art can be understood in terms of a gradual but continual shift along the spectrum of possibilities between the two polarities. In its reliance on abstract rather than naturalistic forms, the Geometric style locates itself toward the conceptual pole of this spectrum. The Geometric style is, moreover, both analytic and generic. In other words, the artist portrays his subject in terms of its clearly articulated component parts, and the simplified forms used in this portrayal are essential and universal rather than momentary or particular. This approach, and this style, was born from a Dark Age tradition in which vase shapes are similarly analyzed and articulated through systems of non-figural, geometric ornament. The patterns used are intricate, rhythmic, and formulaic; they have been compared to textiles on the one hand and Homeric poetry on the other. While Greek art changes over time in its relative conceptualism and perceptualism, it remains at all times both analytic and general, so it can be said that it is with the Geometric figural style that Greek art, as we know it, is born.

This horse has its own base, but many others were attached to the large ring handles of *tripod cauldrons*, on which they may stand either alone or together with a human figure, generally a helmeted male with his right hand raised and left lowered. These warriors are interpreted as leading horses and/or brandishing a spear. The cauldrons themselves – large bronze three-legged bowls – were expensive votives; the form was used as a prize in athletic

competitions, and those from Olympia have long been explained as having been dedicated there by victors. Warriors and horses fit in with the heroic and aristocratic imagery prevalent on painted vases, and with the elite status of the games' participants. They might also reference equestrian competition at the site, like the bronze charioteers that have also been found there; the distinction between the agonistic and the heroic is not always clear. These votive luxury objects were therefore thank offerings not only for good fortune in the games, but also for good fortune in being born to the dominant class. The elision of hero and aristocrat was a critical element of this message, and the essentialism of the Geometric style was especially well suited to deliver it.

The Geometric period, of course, saw not only the birth of major Panhellenic sanctuaries such as Olympia but also of the Greek **poleis** (sing. **polis**) – the basic political and geographic units of historical Greece, each of which comprised a center of concentrated population and a variously extensive range of surrounding territory. Structures of local rule varied considerably from place to place, and over time, but each was to some degree participatory within various levels of exclusivity; the type of monarchy implied by both Homer and archaeology for the Mycenaeans no longer existed. This shift in the social structure defines the difference between heroic and historic Greece as much as replacement of bronze by iron – probably more so. The poleis were politically independent of, although incessantly intruding on, one another, but they shared a language, economy, and, of course, religion. Indeed, the genesis of the Panhellenic sanctuaries has everything to do with the external and internal dynamics of the polis, since they offered a locus for both athletic competition and social discourse among the elites who constituted most of the participants in contest and cult alike. Despite its agonistic mission and the obvious opportunity for “patriotism” that this may have offered, institutions such as the Olympic games served equally to bind the elites of different poleis together and reinforce their shared separation from their own less privileged classes at home. Polis and Panhellenic sanctuary alike were therefore products of the fundamentally *competitive* nature of Greece society, a quality that, more than any other, distinguishes it from those of Egypt and the Near East, for example, which relied more on collaboration enforced from a highly centralized power structure. Both characteristically Greek institutions resulted from, and reinforced, the contrasting relations, both competitive and collaborative, among poleis and among classes, and it was in the balance between these opposing forces that order was elicited from the chaos of the Dark Age.

Despite the redundancy of many Geometric votives from Olympia, there are some imaginative and exceptional pieces. These include lion hunts with dogs, multi-figured animal scenes, musicians, a bow-stringer, a helmet-maker, and a man drinking from a vessel. Some are surely mythological, including this group of a man and a centaur, said to have come from Olympia (Figure 1.4). It fully embodies the late Geometric style in its articulation of both human and equine form and the clear indication of the differences between them. There are several myths of conflict between human and centaur in individual combat. Heracles alone was involved in at least three, and also full-out battles, such as those commonly depicted in later painting and sculpture. One that occurs with some frequency in the subsequent century is the vanquishing by Heracles of Nessus, who attempted to make off with the hero's wife Deianeira, displaying the lack of restraint for which centaurs



Figure 1.4 Geometric group of man and centaur. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.190.2072. Bronze. Circa 750–700. H. 4" (0.111 m). Source: © 2015. Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

were infamous. The popularity of this scene lies in the dramatic and violent encounter between the anthropomorphic and the monstrous, a visual metaphor for the increasingly adventurous world in which alien lands and consequent challenges were encountered and overcome. But perhaps there is more to it than that. One outcome of this particular encounter was Heracles' murder of his family, the crime for which he was enslaved to Eurystheus; as a result of this he accomplished his penitential labors and achieved immortality. This form of narrative through which a single image can prompt a stream of sequential, causative events in the mind of a knowledgeable viewer is a characteristic form of Greek artistic signification in later times. Some, however, deny the existence of any mythological narrative in Geometric art, and one must be circumspect about reading earlier imagery from a later perspective.

Orientalizing and the Daedalic Style

However much continuity can be traced through the Dark Age, then, something new was going on in the eighth century. Activities in sanctuaries were expanding; some, for example at Samos and Ephesus, were already being equipped with substantial, even monumental, temples. There, a powerful elite was beginning to mark itself off through its dedications and, at the same time, by conspicuous commemoration in cemeteries. The human figure and complex figural scenes were increasingly common in painting and sculpture; some of them appear to depict myth. Literacy reappeared, and Homeric poetry was taking its

ultimate form. The events of the era have been variously characterized as a revolution or a renaissance, but evolution might be just as accurate a description. It is now thought that evolutionary processes take place at an uneven pace, with periods of gradual development “punctuated” by points of rapid change. The Late Geometric period is one of several such points in the history of Greek art. However one characterizes the process, a, indeed *the*, major factor at this time was the sudden increase in the range and frequency of encounters between Greeks and non-Greeks. Several of the defining characteristics of this emerging Greek culture were inspired from the east. Iron-working has already been mentioned; one can add writing, since the Greeks, who now wrote in an entirely different kind of script from that used in the Bronze Age, took their alphabet from the Phoenicians. Similarly, new techniques and motifs that begin to occur in the arts of the time are traceable to the coastal lands of the eastern Mediterranean.

Thus the convention has been to call the late eighth and seventh centuries the “Orientalizing” period, although the term has become unfashionable, since it assumes and implies a greater distinction between the Aegean and the Near East than was the case during Greek prehistory. It is clear that a primary catalyst in Greek cultural and artistic developments of this time was an entrepreneurial spirit, prompted largely by an increasing demand for metals, which caused Greeks from the mainland to explore their world more widely and, in many cases, establish permanent settlements far from their homeland. Greeks came into closer contact not only with the inhabitants of these lands, such as the Etruscans, but also with their primary competitors – Phoenician merchants who were similarly engaged in exploration and trade. “Orientalizing” or not, this process brought about the transformation from Geometric to Archaic culture.

The story begins already in the Geometric era and most conspicuously on Crete. Given its proximity to both North Africa and the Levant, the island had long had close connections with Egypt and the Near East, and now it became a stopping-off point for Levantine merchants on the way to their new settlements in western North Africa, Sicily, and Spain. Finds of metalwork, notably in the sacred cave on Mt Ida, attest the presence of Phoenician or North Syrian craftsmen working in a local version of Levantine style that freely mixed Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs. By the late eighth century these new subjects – animal friezes, rosettes, palmettes, bands of **guilloche** – are incorporated into the painted decorations used in various Greek ceramic workshops, first in Corinth (**Dorian** like Crete, and, like Phoenicia, heavily invested in the west) and soon spreading to Athens, the Cyclades, Laconia, Ionia, and elsewhere.

From workshops on Crete emerges a new form of bronze statuary, quite unlike the solid cast statuettes at Olympia and other sanctuaries. In a modest temple dedicated to Apollo at Dreros were found three small statues assembled by hammering and riveting sheet bronze into hollow metal images (Figure 1.5). The male figure is sizable, over two and half feet tall; his two female companions are half as big. If a group, they could be Apollo, Leto, and Artemis, more likely recipients of cult activity than votive figures. Evidence suggests that they were set up around 700 or earlier. While the technique of working sheet bronze, similar to that used in the manufacture of armor, may have been learned from eastern craftsmen, the style is Geometric, as seen in both the form and the analytical assembly of Apollo’s limbs. The facial features, however, are far more detailed than those of the small cast



Figure 1.5 Statues from Temple to Apollo at Dreros, Crete. Heraklion, Archaeological Museum 2445-7. Bronze. Circa 700. H. (of male figure) 2' 8" (0.80 m). Source: akg-images/De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti.

figurines: the brow, nose, cheeks, mouth and chin are rendered with an attention both to surface appearance and cranial structure. The **polos** worn by the goddesses is a Near Eastern borrowing, as is the belted tubular garment with its decorated central band (**paryphe**) and cape pulled forward over the shoulders. These figures clearly stand between the Geometric and Orientalizing styles, as befits their Cretan origin.

Signs of eastern influence can be seen in the late eighth century on the mainland also, not only in the pottery, but also in a group of ivory figurines from the Dipylon Cemetery in Athens. The best preserved of these (Figure 1.6) shares features with the Dreros goddesses, most notably the polos, modeling of the face, and wide-eyed stare. Yet her body, with its Geometric interest in distinguishing component parts, resembles not theirs, but that of Apollo, who, like the Dipylon figure, is nude. Unclothed female figures are unusual in early Greek art and all but non-existent later. It is a feature taken from the Near Eastern tradition, where Astarte – the local equivalent of Aphrodite – was often shown in this manner. Moreover, the polos, an eastern feature, is here decorated with a carved key pattern (**meander**), a Greek motif. As in the case of the Cretan bronzes, an imported craft and style is used for the creation of a Greek monument.

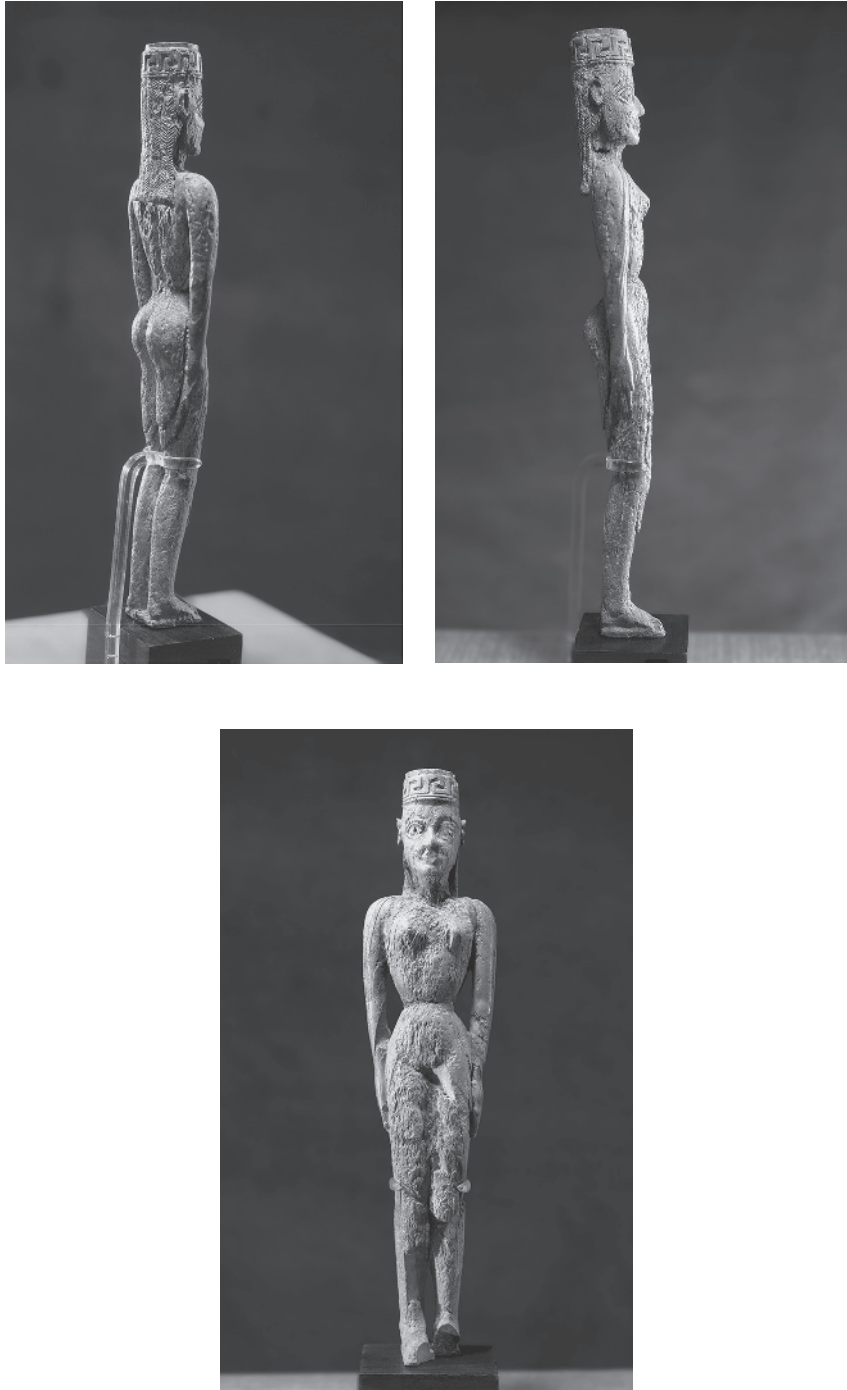


Figure 1.6 Figurine from Dipylon Cemetery, Cerameicus, Athens. Athens, National Archaeological Museum. 776. Ivory. Circa 720. H. 9" (0.24 m). Source: Athens, National Archaeological Museum.



Figure 1.7 Votive figurine from Gortyna, Crete. Heraklion, Archaeological Museum. Terracotta. Circa 650. H. 9" (0.175 m). Source: Heraklion, Archaeological Museum.

Sculpture of the seventh century is characterized by the style termed **Daedalic** after the legendary figure Daedalus. This artist, whose name means “skilled craftsman,” was associated in ancient writings with a variety of exploits and accomplishments. His famous commissions for Minos, such as the labyrinth, suggest a Bronze Age origin; his name occurs already in Homer as having worked at Knossos. He is also, as the reputed grandson of Athens’ early king Erechtheus, connected with that city’s heroic age. Yet other traditions place him later. Pausanias mentions him several times in conjunction with very early statuary; it was said that some of them could talk and walk (needing to be chained down to keep them in place), and their characteristic pose is compared to that of Egyptian work. This alleged similarity suggests the Archaic kouros type (see below), which originates at the end of the seventh century, and a number of artists who are mentioned as Daedalus’ pupils can be placed in the early Archaic period. Thus Daedalus and Daedalic, both sculptor and style, are constructs, ancient and modern respectively, and both can be traced to Crete.

The first examples are numerous mold-made terracottas found especially in the eastern and central portions of the island. The production of wheel-made terracottas persisted there from Late Minoan through sub-Minoan and Dark Age forms, but these Daedalic figures are distinctively different (Figure 1.7). The most obvious defining feature is the hairstyle, with large triangular masses falling down at either side of the face. The horizontal divisions, like cascading waves of hair, suggest a derivation from the pharaonic headdress of Egypt. The tresses may also be divided vertically into braids, a pattern closer to that found on the Syro-Phoenician ivories from which the style obviously derives (Figure 1.8). Other characteristics of the type are a strongly frontal and two-dimensional aspect, the



Figure 1.8 Syro-Phoenician plaque from Nimrud. Baghdad, National Museum of Iraq. Ivory. Circa 720. H. 6" (0.16 m). Source: © The Art Archive/Alamy.

triangular face with large almond-shaped eyes and smiling mouth, and a flatness at the top of the head, sometimes reinforced by a polos.

This Daedalic style was inspired by the luxury crafts of the Near East – not only ivories, such as the one illustrated here, but also incised and relief metalwork in bronze, silver, and gold. The Greek craftsman, true to his geometric tradition, prefers simplified forms, sharply defining the individual parts of his subject matter, giving the entire structure its characteristic angularity. The style is quite long lived. Datable vases with applied Daedalic heads document that the style originates by the mid-seventh century and lasts into the sixth. The accepted chronology, which assumes a smoothing, over time, of these sharp transitions and a growing preference for more rounded forms, can be questioned on numerous grounds. Mold-made terracottas, which form the bulk of examples, by their method of manufacture incline toward repeated forms and resist regular, coherent, stylistic development, as does also the conservative formalism of the style itself. Yet the assumption that certain features – rounded faces, subtler carving of facial features, and pronounced smiles – are later is based on just such a development. That these same features characterize the Near Eastern ivories from which the style derives may indicate not a later date but rather a closer adherence to Oriental prototypes.

On Crete the Daedalic style occurs also in limestone sculpture, including standing and seated figures in the round as well as sculptured reliefs, some of which may have been used to adorn buildings. There is great range, and the sense is that of variation in style and quality rather than a clear formal development. The best-preserved relief, from Gortyna, shows a striding male figure, with its head turned to face, flanked by two frontal females wearing very high poloi; these are most likely Apollo, Leto, and Artemis, with the god being shown as more animated relative to the goddesses (Figure 1.9). The heads are clearly Daedalic, dated by style to the latest period, toward the end of the seventh century. Yet the goddesses



Figure 1.9 Relief from Gortyna, Crete, with divine triad. Heraklion, Archaeological Museum 379. Limestone. Ca. 650–600 H. 4' 11" (1.50 m.). Source: akg-images/De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti.

here are nude - a Near Eastern trait they share with the much earlier Dipylon ivories, so features taken as late are equally likely to reflect closeness to Oriental practice.

Similar in style to the Gortyna relief are the sculptures associated with Temple A at Prinias, also on Crete. A rectangular element is carved in relief on its bottom surface and two adjacent sides; at each end of the top is placed a seated Daedalic female facing center (Figure 1.10). The relief on the bottom requires a visible surface, so the piece is plausibly restored as a lintel block with an open space above, framed by the seated figures. The view from underneath shows two standing figures similar in dress and style to the seated figures above. The garment of both seated and standing figures is the same as that of the two Dreros goddesses from a century earlier. A simple foldless tunic is belted at the waist; over this a cape is worn, pulled forward over the shoulders. Again they wear the polos, higher than those of the Dreros figures but much lower than those of the Gortyna relief. Their hair is arranged in vertical locks hanging over the shoulders, as at Gortyna. The vertical faces of the lintel show processions of animals, felines on one side, deer on the other; in each case three to each side converging at the center. In form and style these recall the friezes and figures on Orientalizing vases, especially Corinthian and **Ionian**, that date from the last



Figure 1.10 Prinias, Crete. Temple A. Lintel block. Heraklion, Archaeological Museum 231. Limestone. Circa 625–600. H. 2' 8" (0.82 m). Source: Heraklion, Archaeological Museum.

quarter of the seventh century down to the middle of the sixth. A date for this work somewhat before 600 seems likely.

If the Daedalic stone reliefs from the citadel at Mycenae pertain to the early temple, and if any of the Gortyna reliefs are architectural, then these Prinias sculptures would represent a third attempt at adorning a sacred building with sculptured stone reliefs and/or statuary. Since there is not yet an established tradition or pattern of architectural sculpture either on Crete or the mainland, sculptor/architects draw necessarily on the traditions of the minor arts. Each of these complexes reflects an entirely different means to achieve the visual monumentality that was increasingly an objective among Greek temple-builders. Within a generation these efforts would be codified into the architectural **orders**, which established fixed schemes for the plans, superstructures, and sculptured ornament of increasingly large and elaborate stone temples (cf. Chapter 4).

Freestanding statuary, both standing and seated, is also known. The best preserved of the former is a small statue nicknamed the “Lady of Auxerre” after the French town in which it was discovered in 1907, stored away in the municipal museum; its provenience is thus unknown, although its manufacture is assumed to be Cretan (Figure 1.11). The surface is unusually well preserved, revealing both painted and incised decoration; over her chest the tunic (chiton?) shows a polychrome scale pattern very similar to that seen on ripe Corinthian pottery of the late seventh century, and her skirt has geometric elements along its borders and on a broad *paryphe*. These patterns reflect elaborate decorations woven into a garment with divine and/or ritual associations. As on the Gortyna and Prinias figures, the horizontally sectioned vertical locks taper to a series of bound points over the breast; facial features are



Figure 1.11 “Lady from Auxerre.” Paris, Louvre 3098. Limestone. Circa 630. H. 2’ 1” (0.65 m).
Source: © 2015. Photo Scala, Florence.

also similar to those of Cretan work, but equally close to works from the Peloponnese, another major source of Daedalic sculptures. Her hand gesture is genuinely oriental, found on Astarte plaques as well as on Cretan terracottas. Chronology is difficult, as we have noted, but a date somewhere in the final third of the seventh century is likely.

The Daedalic style is found also in ivory and wood, a figurine from Samos being an especially fine example of the latter (Figure 1.12). Its intricately carved garment recalls the equally ornate dress of the Auxerre statue, and the very high headdress resembles those of the goddesses on the Gortyna relief. Here the hair springs almost horizontally from under the polos before it falls to the shoulders, an arrangement seen also on examples from Crete, the mainland, and the islands; it is generally thought late but also occurs on some Astarte plaques. This statuette is of particular interest for the clue it might offer in reconstructing a much debated and now lost sculptural form – the large wooden statue. It is generally assumed that the temple built already in the eighth century at Samos housed a large **cult statue**. A block from what is assumed to have been its base retains a cutting for a tenon – a method for attaching a wooden statue, presumably in the simple, columnar form of these Daedalic figures. The issue of large wooden statuary is of some importance because of a once popular view that Greek monumental stone statuary arose indigenously from large-scale wooden predecessors, with little outside influence from either the Near East or Egypt.

Although less often the focus of attention, male figures in the Daedalic style do occur, as seen on the triad relief from Gortyn. A bronze statuette in Boston, believed to be from Boeotia, is inscribed along his legs in two parallel arcs: “Mantichus dedicated me to the far



Figure 1.12 Statuette from Samian Heraeum. Samos, Archaeological Museum. H41. Wood. Circa 650–600. H. 11.4" (0.29 m). Source: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, DAI-ATH-1974/1278, photograph Gosta Hellner.

shooter of the silver bow from his tithes; Apollo [grant] something good in return" (Figure 1.13). The anticipated, even expected, reciprocity is something that is at the very heart of Greek votive practice, but the wording in this early example is more explicit than is common later, leaving nothing to chance. The statuette has clear associations with both its Geometric traditions and an emerging Daedalic style. The separation of limbs, torso, and neck is clearly indicated, and there is a simple linear depiction of the muscles of the chest and abdomen; the shoulders and legs are rounded and muscular, unlike the Geometric bronzes. The belt will soon become a standard feature of Apollo representations. He raises his left fist, in which he surely held the bow that would secure the identification. The figure is frontal and foursquare, legs held together. The face is triangular, the eyes are large and almond shaped with inlaid iris/pupil, and the mouth bears the hint of a smile. The hair falls to the shoulders in a rough triangle bisected into two long locks; the exaggerated length of



Figure 1.13 Male figure (Apollo?) dedicated to Apollo by Manticlus. Probably from Thebes. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 3.997. Bronze. Circa 675. H. 8" (0.20 m). Source: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA/Francis Bartlett Donation/Bridgeman Images.

the neck makes him look far less Daedalic than his individual features suggest. Despite its apparently Geometric features, the statuette must belong well into the seventh century.

A bronze figure from Delphi is considerably later, from the end of the century (Figure 1.14). His head is purely Daedalic. His belt is clearly indicated. Attention to musculature is more developed than on Manticlus' bronze; biceps and forearms, thighs, knees and calves are all clearly indicated; the transition from feature to feature is less abrupt. He strides forward tentatively with his left leg, suggesting again the vigor and animation appropriate to Apollo. His arms do not brandish an attribute, but rather are held down toward his hips, slightly forward, one more so than the other. They are not held tightly to his sides, so this is very close to, but not quite, the Egyptianizing scheme of the Archaic **kouros**, the first examples of which were carved around this time (Chapter 2). That is another step still, not simply in pose and gesture, but in material and scale as well.

This new material, as we will see, was marble, used for the Daedalic figures that support some *perirrhanteria* (water basins) erected at the entrances to sacred spaces (temples and *temenoi*) in the later seventh century (Figure 1.15). Typically, these consist of a broad basin supported by three or four female figures in a simplified version of Daedalic dress, on some of which, at least, detail is added in paint. Each figure, in turn, stands on the back of a recumbent feline, holding its tail in her right hand while holding in the left a leash



Figure 1.14 Statuette from Sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi. Delphi, Archaeological Museum 2527. Bronze. Circa 625–600. H. 7.8" (0.197 m). Source: Delphi, Archaeological Museum.



Figure 1.15 Perirrhanterion from Sanctuary of Poseidon, Isthmia. Isthmia, Archaeological Museum. Marble. Circa 625–600. H. 4' 2" (1.26 m). Source: Isthmia, Archaeological Museum.

connected to the beast's neck. The scheme recreates an arrangement known from Neo-Hittite supporting figures and which, in the Greek world, recalls the **potnia theron**, or mistress of the beasts. The perirrhanterion figures vary considerably in the degree to which they adhere to the standard Daedalic scheme. The garment is similar in form, although simplified; none have a clear indication of the Daedalic cape and two, from Isthmia and Samos, have faint traces of a painted diagonal mantle. These two also have a similar rendering of the masses of hair to either side of the face that lack, unless added in paint, either the horizontal or vertical divisions into tresses. The faces of the Isthmia figures do not look very Daedalic, a feature that has caused them to be placed stylistically as pre-Daedalic and thus very early (before mid-century), together with the similar Samian piece, on which the faces are not preserved.

There are nearly two dozen of these monuments known. The time of production is limited; aside from the anomalously early Isthmian and Samian examples, most date to the late seventh century, and very few (perhaps only one) to the sixth. Given the problems with the stylistic dating of Daedalic works, this gap is difficult to explain. As befits their function, most are found at major sanctuaries – Olympia, Samos, Isthmia, Delphi, and Ptoon, with other examples from Rhodes, Corinth, and Laconia, including the sanctuary to Apollo at Amyclae, near Sparta. Aside from a late work in Naxian marble from the Athenian Acropolis, they are generally carved from a bluish marble that has been established by scientific analysis as Laconian. Sparta was an important artistic center in the seventh century; it had a distinctive black-figure pottery style and was a major producer of Orientalizing ivories. It seems likely, therefore, that a sculptural workshop, using local stone, originated in Laconia at this time for the production of these lustral basins, which clearly derive from Orientalizing works.

Although its products travelled widely, the Laconian perirrhanterion industry was likely short lived, a generation or so at the end of the century. The gap in the current chronology seems an artifact of excessive reliance on an unlikely and outdated stylistic scheme. The variation in the degree to which these figures are truly (rather than “pre-”) Daedalic derives less from date than from the manner in which such models were followed within a production that is, overall, fairly simplified, even crude, as might be expected from the earliest marble sculptures. Despite their relatively large scale (some over a meter tall), the formal affinities of these basins remain with the minor arts. They recall the ivory and ceramic chalices with **caryatids** that have been found especially in Orientalizing Etruria but also in Greece. If the first large-scale marble statues, which conventionally form the beginning of Greek sculpture, were related to these perirrhanteria, the larger works probably followed the smaller rather than, as many would have it, the other way around.

Yet this was a beginning with two millennia of past history: the formal dead ends of the Bronze Age, when many of the functions and materials of later sculpture did first appear; the Geometric revival, by which sculpture was reborn in its new, conceptual, and analytic form; and finally the transformation of this highly structured mode of representation that was prompted by the emulation of neighboring cultures to the east. Near Eastern sculptors had long since perfected the eternal artistic challenge of combining perceptual and conceptual approaches through both the blending and juxtaposition of highly abstract and stunningly lifelike treatments of organic forms. Greek artists, in competition with, and through emulation

of, their Levantine counterparts, became newly concerned with surface appearance while losing none of their interest or expertise in the articulation of bodily structure.

Nor was the conceptual/perceptual polarity the only one in play. Toward the end of the seventh century was born Thales of Miletus, the earliest of Greek philosophers and conspicuously a product of this Orientalizing milieu. His mother was Phoenician, and he studied the observational sciences of Egypt and the Near East, which had a formative role in Greek philosophy analogous to Levantine and Egyptian sources of inspiration in the realm of Greek art. Thales is said to have stated that he was glad to have been born a human, not a beast, a man, not a woman, and a Greek, not a barbarian. His was a world of differences and, as a rational and analytical philosopher, he sought to elicit order (*cosmos*) from that world and define it in terms of polarities. As we will see below, those he lists – human/beast, male/female, Greek/non-Greek – will provide a core structure for subsequent Greek definitions of self and other, of identity and alterity. To these one might add distinctions of socioeconomic class, however termed (elite/middling is now popular), but Thales was famously disdainful of the pursuit of wealth, which was not, he once said, of interest to a philosopher, especially one who was, like Thales, already wealthy.

The late eighth and seventh centuries brought an era of rapid expansion and change for the Greeks, not only geographically but also intellectually. The resulting sensory overload challenged the rigid Geometric traditions in all aspects of life – economic, social, political, and religious as well as artistic. But Greek culture was nothing if not competitive, and these traditions would not be overwhelmed. The rational and analytical attitudes that emerged from the Dark Age permitted the Greeks to make sense of the protean world around them and to forge a distinct culture in the space between east and west. Thales, born in such a space, lived well into the sixth century and thus witnessed the emergence of this new Archaic Greek world, in which the definition of elemental units and the foregrounding of differences between them would provide the framework necessary both for defining order in the universe and for understanding mankind's role within it.