

The Minoanisation of Modern Crete



**MINOAN
LINES**

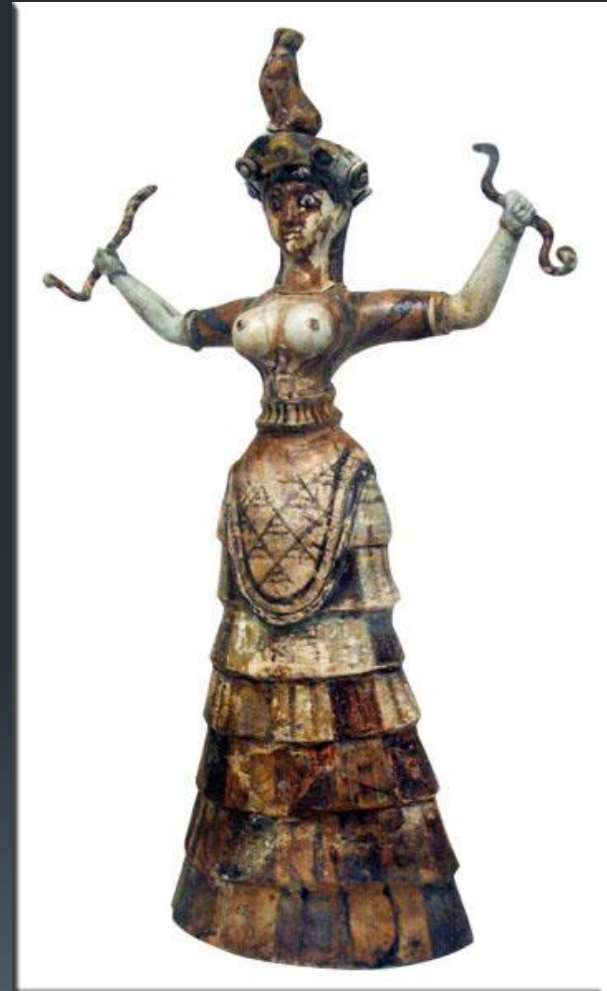
**Theory &
Methodology**

What is Reception?

- Derives from literary theory:
 - Individual reader's response to & interpretation of a text's meaning
 - Their reception...
- Classical reception theory:
 - Largely focuses on Greek & Latin literature
 - How the ancient world is represented in the medieval & modern world
- Archaeology
 - Critiques how the past is presented in the present

Reception of Minoan Crete

- The invention of Minoan Crete
- How Minoan Crete has become embedded in the modern consciousness



Faience “snake goddess”, Knossos

Invention of Minoan Crete

- Current **popular** knowledge of the Minoans is largely a construct/vision of Sir Arthur Evans
- “he started the process of materialising his pre-conceived dream, his ‘ecstatic vision’” (Hamilakis 2002)



Sir Arthur Evans

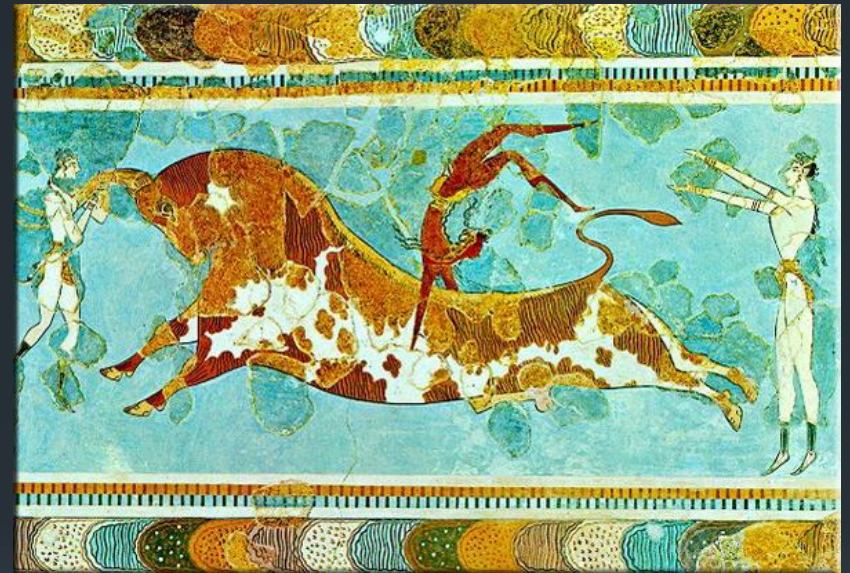
Evans' Image

- Idealised world: peaceful, elegant, athletic Minoans who worshipped the Mother Goddesses & a cult of nature
- Minoan sea empire (thalassocracy) in the image of Victorian British mercantile domination of the seas:
- Produced iconic images:
 - “some of the most persistent signifiers of local & regional identity in Crete” (Hamilakis & Yalouris 1996)



Evans' Image

- Projected an idealised view of Edwardian society onto the past
 - Bull-leaping motif
 - ‘long before the days when enslaved barbarians were “butchered to make a Roman holiday”, captives perhaps of gentle blood, shared the same fate within the “House of Minos”’ (Evans 1901)



Knossos, bull-leaping scene

Evans' Narrative

- Apparent prevalence of women in Minoan art
- Matriarchal society
- Worship of great Mother Goddess.
- Influence of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*
 - Early societies with more simple social organisation were matriarchies
 - Appearance of warrior societies/social complexity associated with a shift to patriarchies



Snake goddesses, Temple Repositories, Knossos

Reconstructions

- Heavily reconstructed the palace & wall paintings
- Very difficult to know the reality of Minoan Knossos
- But huge impact on modern reception of Minoans



The Blue Boy

Reconstructions: Impact



The Blue Ladies



Reconstructions: Impact

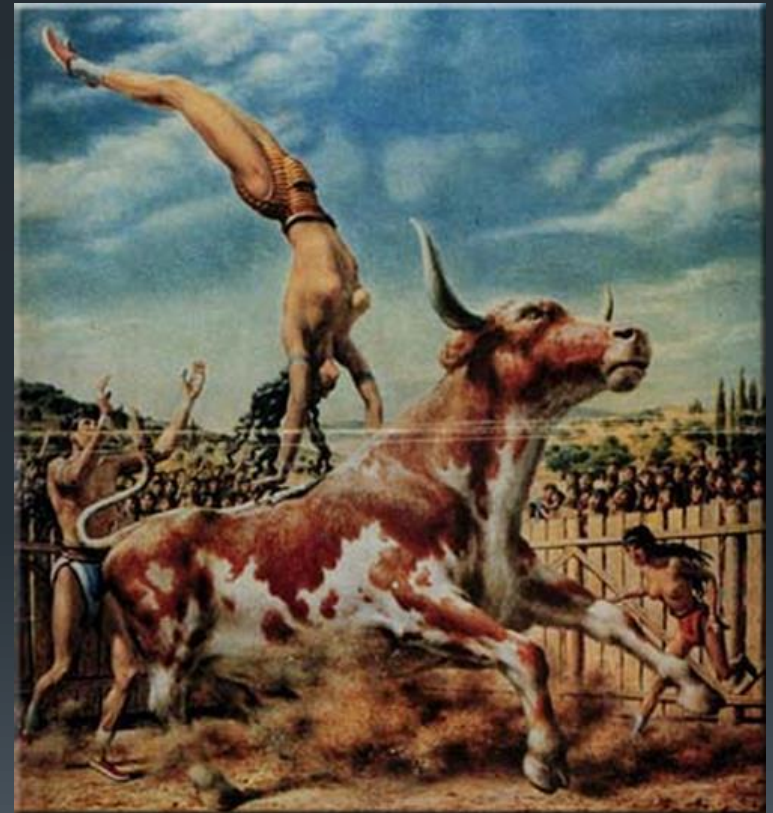


Priest-King / Lily Prince



Modern Reception

- Minoans are very much alive as an everyday appropriation of the past, in tourism, education, the branding of products & services
- Cretans adamant that they are the kin descendants of Minoans: unbroken lineage
 - This is **their** past



Bull-leaping in school book

Product Branding & Modern Consumption



Nauplion: National Bank of Greece



<https://www.minoantaste.com/>

2004 Athens Olympics

- Tableau as part of the Opening Ceremony:
- 52 themes, of which 9 specifically refer to Minoan archaeology



Suggested Readings

- Cadogan, G. 2004. “The Minoan distance”. The impact of Knossos upon the 20th century. In G. Cadogan, E. Hatzaki and E. Vasilakis (eds), *Knossos: Palace, City, State*. London: British School at Athens, 537-45
- Hamilakis, Y. (ed.) 2002. *Labyrinth Revisited: Rethinking ‘Minoan Archaeology’*. Oxford: Oxbow Books
- Hamilakis, Y. and Yalouri, E. 1996. Antiquities as symbolic capital in modern Greek society. *Antiquity* 70: 117-29
- Klynne, A. 1998 Reconstruction of Knossos: artists’ impressions, archaeological evidence and wishful thinking. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*. 11: 206-29
- Simandiraki, A. 2004. Minopaidēs: the Minoan civilisation in Greek primary education. *World Archaeology* 36: 177-88
- Simandiraki, A. 2005 Minoan archaeology in the Athens 2004 Olympics. *European Journal of Archaeology* 8: 157-81

Summary

- Evans 'succeeded brilliantly in conjuring up both a physical & imaginative world of the lost civilisation that dominates our vision of the Minoans even today' (Bintliff 1984)
- It can be said that Minoan civilisation was created in the 20th century by Sir Arthur Evans, who has left us with but a single Knossos: a concrete futuristic vision of a timeless legendary past constructed in a Victorian present' (Hitchcock and Koudounaris 2002)