





THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF HERAKLEION



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NOTA DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF HERAKLEION



JOHN S. LATSIS
Public Benefit Foundation

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IT IS WITH PARTICULAR PLEASURE that I salute the publication of the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and EFG Eurobank Ergasias about the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion, one of the most important museums in the country and first in terms of the number of visitors.

The largest museum in Crete houses and displays the material remains of the island's significant cultural heritage representing a period of seven millennia, from the Neolithic Age to the Roman period. Its uniqueness, however, undoubtedly lies in its rich, celebrated collection of exceptional works produced by the glorious Minoan civilisation that flourished in Crete during the third and second millennia BC. Its collections from the Hellenic and Roman periods, also with important exhibits, provide a picture of the centuries-long, often groundbreaking cultural contribution of Crete as a vital part of the Hellenic world.

This book, which is of the highest standards in both scholarly and aesthetic terms, is addressed to the broad public and demonstrates vividly the significance and particularity of the Minoan world: its variety and multiformity, its polychromy, superb art, worship of nature, joy in life, and complex social and political structures, as well as its impact on the Aegean and the Levant. The book also depicts the emergence of the Hellenic world and the evolution of the Hellenic culture in Crete, where it developed dynamically, continuing the glorious Minoan tradition of old.

The Herakleion Museum is already in the process of having its building remodelled and enlarged. The next step to be taken by the Ministry of Culture is to effect a modern re-exhibition worthy of the Museum's significant cultural reserves.

Congratulations to all those who collaborated in this particularly high quality publishing venture, which constitutes an important contribution to promoting the archaeological wealth of Crete.

PETROS TATOULIS
Deputy Minister of Culture



CRETE CONTRIBUTED THE FIRST GLORIOUS CHAPTER TO THE CENTURIES-long history of Greece's ancient civilisation. On this crossroads of the Mediterranean, where three continents are united and separated, a unique cultural undertaking took shape and grew with incredible energy, reflecting the island's extraordinary social organisation, religious structures and groundbreaking economic development.

The land that inspired the creative imagination of the mythmakers and supplied Greek mythology with some of its most charming ancient legends is the same land which, for millennia, lovingly safeguarded in its bosom the peerless Minoan civilisation that was to enrich world culture with significant works of pottery, stone carving, miniature sculpture, goldwork and wall paintings, around the core of its amazing buildings.

Thousands of masterpieces of Minoan art, products of the labour and progress made by Cretan artisans, are housed in the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion. This year, the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and EFG Eurobank Ergasias have chosen to present the diverse and polychrome Minoan world, as well as important cultural artefacts from the later Hellenic and Roman periods that are also in the Herakleion Museum, placing this book among the series of museological titles that they have sponsored.

Here it is our duty to pay tribute to all the distinguished archaeologists who laid the foundation for the Herakleion Museum and have served it at various periods. Warm thanks to all those who have contributed to producing this book and in particular to the Museum Director, Archaeologist Mrs Nota Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki, whose introductory texts and captions accompany the reader on his or her imaginary journey into the distant past.

MARIANNA J. LATSIS



The "Tricolumnar Shrine": part of a miniature fresco depicting a colonnade from the façade of a building, certainly a shrine, as indicated by the cult symbols, double axes and "horns of consecration" above and between the columns. Palace of Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).

CRETE, THE LARGE ISLAND in the centre of the Mediterranean, has a singular geographical advantage that has always been decisive in shaping its particular cultural development. As the crossroads of sea routes over which travelled not only material goods and works of creative art, but also new ideas, information and innovations, Crete received and utilised strong cultural stimuli. In addition, its size allowed it to be self-sufficient and its geographical independence fostered the development of local, autonomous cultural expression.

In the third and second millennia BC, these were contributing factors to the development and prosperity of the glorious Minoan civilisation, with its special character and its diverse, complex and multiple manifestations. Elements such as the advanced architecture and technology, the art that in all its aspects was characterised by originality, stylistic renewal, a decorative approach and technical excellence, the multi-levelled social structures determined by the development of the palace system, the religious ideology that was expressed as worship of nature, and the strong administrative and state organisation on which trade and power at sea, the so-called “Minoan Thalassocracy”, were based were all part of the wondrous Minoan world, the first great maritime power in the Aegean. Crete’s glorious Minoan past, which is reflected in the legends of Greek mythology, coupled with the historical circumstances, constituted the fertile ground in which the ancient Hellenic civilisation, structurally different but with similar pioneering creativity, later took root and flourished in Crete.

Outstanding artefacts from the unique Minoan collection and significant works from the Hellenic collection of the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion are presented here selectively, accompanied by informative texts that introduce the particular chronological, historical and other themes. This richly illustrated book, the first of its kind for the Herakleion Museum, was made possible by the generosity of the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and EFG Eurobank Ergasias which have financed a series of books that provide extensive publicity to significant Greek museums and archaeological sites.

Special thanks are addressed to Mrs Marianna Latsis, whose personal interest in promoting high quality cultural activities was responsible for selecting the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion for such a publication. Special thanks are due to Mr. Evangelos Chronis, General Director of the Latsis Group, for the proposal that I write the text and for his active interest and support throughout the production of this volume. The excellent editorial work is due to the superior professionalism, experience and constant care of Irene Louvrou. The elegant, creative layout is the work of Dimitris Kalokyris, and the artistic photography that of Giannis Patrikianos; for the careful processing of the pictures in the workshop, credit is owed to D. Plessas and for the fine printing to D. Kadianakis.

I would also like to express my warm thanks to the personnel of the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion, archaeologists, conservators and custodians of antiquities who worked on the preparation of this book, and particularly to archaeologist Dr. Giorgos Rethemiotakis for his support throughout all stages of this effort, and to the Museum’s chief conservator Pan. Sinadinakis for his tireless assistance. This book is addressed to the general public in the hope that it will attract the reader to the fascinating world of Cretan archaeology.

NOTA DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI



Depiction of Herakleion (Candia) in a drawing by Captain J. Spratt (1852), based on earlier views by E. Rewich (1486), Braun and Hogenberg (1598), J. Peeters (1669) and others. The splendid Venetian church of Ayios Frankiskos (St Francis) is a major landmark. Many years later, the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion was built on the same site, near the ruins of this church (Herakleion Museum Archives).



I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Archaeological Museum of Herakleion, one of the most significant museums in Greece, and for many years first in numbers of visitors, houses and displays the archaeological treasures of Crete, especially those of central and eastern Crete, dating from the Neolithic age up to the late Roman period. The main body of the exhibition comprises the famous works of the Minoan civilisation.

The Museum collections began being put together in the late 19th century, when Crete was still under Ottoman rule. In 1878, during a period of temporary calm following the insurrections of the Cretan people, when the Turkish government granted certain freedoms and Crete was acknowledged as a privileged and autonomous province of the Ottoman state, a group of distinguished citizens established the Educational Association of Herakleion with a view to founding schools and developing Greek education and culture on the island.



The first exhibition hall of the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion.

In 1883, under its new chairman, the antiquity-loving doctor Joseph Hadzidakis, the Association expanded its activities and, having secured a special written decree from the Sultan, obtained recognition as a quasi-official archaeological authority and devoted itself to collecting Cretan antiquities with a view to establishing a Cretan Museum. Donations of local private collections were gradually added to the artefacts gathered by the Association. This important archaeological material was originally housed in two rooms in the churchyard of the Cathedral of Ayios Minas and in this way was saved, thanks to the actions of Hadzidakis, during the turmoil of the 1896 uprising. In 1899 the struggles of the Cretan people for freedom were vindicated, and the autonomy of Crete was recognised under the protection of the four Great Powers. The Association ceded the Cretan Museum to the Cretan Polity, and an archaeological law was passed immediately by which two archaeological districts were designated under ephors Joseph Hadzidakis and Stephanos Xanthoudidis.

In 1900, with the proclamation of the autonomy of Crete, the Museum's significant acquisitions were housed in part of a barracks building, which today accommodates the Prefecture of Herakleion. At the same time, intense excavation activity had been undertaken by the Greek ephors and by foreign scholars and archaeological schools who showed a lively interest in Cretan antiquities. The growing number of splendid finds required the construction of a special building to accommodate them. Thus, between 1904 and 1907 a large open-plan

museum was built and one year later, a rear porch (*opisthodomos*) was added. In conformity with the general plan of a Classicist order drawn up by Panagiotis Kavvadias and the famous architect-archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld, the west wing and the Classical-style façade were added in 1912. Nevertheless this building, from the point of view of space, functionality and quality of construction was, from the outset, totally inadequate to provide secure housing and exhibition space for the Museum's unique archaeological treasure, which kept growing with the addition of important finds from excavations. Immediately after construction of the Museum, and especially after 1913-1914 when Crete became part of Greece, the demand was put forward to construct a more suitable, modern Museum. After Hadzidakis' retirement in 1923 and Xanthoudidis' untimely death in 1928, the issue was raised again by the next active ephor, Spyros Marinatos. In the meantime, the building had suffered further serious fatigue after successive earthquakes. In 1934, work began on the new building in which the Museum is housed to this day. Between 1937 and the outbreak of World War II, it was virtually completed. It was built on the same prominent site as the previous building, which was demolished, at a central location in the city of Herakleion, on the inner side of the eastern Venetian wall near the ruins of the famous Venetian church of Ayios Frankiskos. The anti-seismic building, with a total area of 8,800 m², built to a design drawn up in 1933 by architect Patroklos Karantinos (1903-1976), is one of the most significant products of the modern architectural movement in Greece during the interwar period. It is an avant-garde building in terms of both style and functionality, with applications that were innovative for their time on a global scale, such as the special lighting system with the use of light wells. It is regarded as one of the most important international works of the "new architecture". A characteristic fact is that, in a significant early post-war catalogue, it was assessed as being one of the eight most representative European "exhibition and recreation buildings" among museums in Italy, Finland, Spain and Austria. Even though it is not particularly well known and despite the fact that the 1933 design was not applied in full, the Herakleion Museum building constitutes a top-ranking example of 20th-century Greek architecture and a point of reference for significant works by other important architects, such as the National Gallery in Athens, the Museum in Ioannina, etc.

The re-exhibition of the ancient artefacts began in 1951, overseen by the then ephor Nikolaos Platon; at the same time new storage facilities were built. In 1952 the main exhibition had already been presented. In 1964, the next ephor, Stylianos Alexiou designed a new wing that included four additional halls. The Museum today comprises twenty halls that are open to the public, the Scholarly Collection that is open to researchers and scholars alone and also contains significant finds, storage areas and conservation workshops. Exhibits from the Neolithic, Minoan, Geometric and Archaic periods and sculptures from the Hellenic and Roman periods can be found on the ground floor. On the upper floor are the Minoan wall paintings and, since 2002, the exhibition entitled "The Ring of Minos" featuring gold Minoan signet and other rings. The Archaic, Hellenistic and Roman small artefacts and the Giamalakis Collection, which were once displayed in two halls on the upper floor, have been withdrawn, owing to the many travelling exhibitions.

Despite the extreme importance of its works from the Hellenic period, the singularity of the Museum lies in the wealth of Minoan masterpieces that constitute its primary exhibition material. The more than 10,000 artefacts found in Minoan palaces, villas, settlements, shrines and cemeteries illustrate the panorama of the Minoan world and demonstrate its amazing

diversity. Among them, emblematic and celebrated works can be singled out, such as the snake goddesses, the bull's head rhyton, the Prince with the Lilies, the bull-leaping fresco, the gold bees, the "Parisienne", the Harvesters' Cup and many others.

It is obvious that, as almost fifty years have elapsed since the last reorganisation, the Museum was urgently in need of radical renovation, as regards both the building and the exhibition. The remodelling of the building includes extensions, additions and modern infrastructure works and is already taking place on the basis of plans drawn up by architect Alexandros Tombazis. This will be followed by the re-exhibition of old collections and new finds, structured into chronological and thematic units in accordance with modern museological specifications, so that the significance, development and continuity of the ancient Cretan civilisation over a period of seven millennia, from the 7th millennium BC to the 4th century AD, can be displayed with emphasis on the singularity of the Minoan collection.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CRETAN EXCAVATIONS

Throughout the Ottoman occupation and up to the mid-19th century, no excavation research was conducted in Crete, although historical and archaeological material had been gathered by various scholars from travel writings and elsewhere. The palace of Knossos was discovered in 1878 by the wealthy antiquarian Minos Kalokairinos from Herakleion, who excavated part of the storerooms with the large earthenware jars (*pithoi*) but, owing to unfortunate circumstances, was unable to continue the excavation. In 1884 the Educational Association, in conjunction with the Italian archaeologist-epigraphist F. Halbherr, conducted excavations at the famous Idaean Cave, which had been discovered by a peasant, and the cave at Amnissos. In the same year, the law code of Gortyn was found and published by Comparetti, Halbherr and Fabricius. Halbherr excavated the temple of Pythian Apollo at Gortyn, while the French archaeologist P. Demargne undertook the cities of Itanos and Lato in eastern Crete. But large-scale excavations did not begin until Crete gained its autonomy in 1900 after which they kept increasing. Space here allows just a brief and selective reference. Greek and foreign archaeologists, representing respectively the Hellenic archaeological authority and foreign archaeological schools, unearthed palaces, settlements, temples and cemeteries and brought amazing finds to light. The excavation of Knossos by Arthur Evans (later Sir Arthur Evans) was of exceptional importance, and began in March 1900. It was Evans who, apart from revealing the palace at Knossos, the most eminent Minoan monument, defined Minoan chronology and terminology. Halbherr and L. Pernier of the Italian Mission excavated the palace at Phaistos; Halbherr and Paribeni discovered the royal villa at Ayia Triada. On the Messara plain the rich tombs at Kalyvia near Phaistos were excavated by Xanthoudidis. The excavation of Gortyn was continued by the Italian Mission, which discovered the Odeion, Praetorio and temple of Isis, and at Levina that of Asclepius. Pernier discovered the Archaic temples on the acropolis of ancient Rizenia. Xanthoudidis excavated the important Early Minoan tombs at Messara and the elliptical building at Hamezi, then some years later the megaron at Nirou Chani and the cave of Arkalohori; Hadzidakis unearthed the Minoan megara at Tylissos, while the English archaeologist R.M. Dawkins explored the cave at Kamares and D.G. Hogarth the one at Psychro. The British School, under R.C. Bosanquet and Dawkins, was active in eastern Crete, where significant settlements were discovered at Palaikastro and Zakros, as well as in the



The Palace of Knossos, partial view: The Grand Stairway (photo: Nelly's, 1930).

Eteocretan region of Praisos. The Americans with Harriet Boyd excavated the Minoan settlement at Gournia, while R. Seager worked at Pseira, Mochlos and Vassiliki in eastern Crete.

After Crete was united with Greece in 1913-14, Greek archaeologists continued their efforts, while foreign ones suspended their work for a few years because of World War I. In 1915, Hadzidakis discovered the palace at Malia. Then the explorations at Knossos, Phaistos, Ayia Triada and Gortyn were extended and an important Geometric cemetery at Arkades was excavated by Doro Levi. The French school, with F. Chapouthier, J. Charbonneaux and P. Demargne, undertook to excavate the palace of Malia. The next ephor, Spyros Marinatos, excavated the Minoan megaron at Sklavokampo, tombs at Voros and Karteros, and the Arkalohori cave with Nikolaos Platon, the cave of Eileithyia, the Minoan "Villa of the lilies" at Amnissos, and the temple of Apollo Delphinios at Dreros. Payne and Platon excavated Geometric graves at Fortetsa. Platon also excavated some rock-cut graves, among which was a cave tomb at Poros, the main port of Knossos. Smaller-scale excavations were conducted in central and eastern Crete by Greek and foreign archaeologists, as well as in western Crete, e.g. at Apodoulou where Marinatos excavated Minoan houses.

During World War II, archaeological exploration was obviously curtailed, but began again intensively after the war. The ephor Nikolaos Platon excavated a number of tombs and settlements; Marinatos explored the Minoan megaron at Vathypetro and other sites. Stylianos Alexiou, who succeeded Platon as ephor of antiquities, conducted research on the site of the other Knossos port at Katsambas where, among other things, he found important tombs, and likewise excavated the Early Minoan tombs at Lenta and at ancient Apollonia (Ayia Pelayia). The curator



Knossos, The Throne Room before restoration of the fresco. (photo: Nelly's, 1930).

and later ephor of eastern Crete, C. Davaras, excavated a number of Minoan and Geometric graves in central Crete. Excavations by foreign archaeological schools continued, the British School at Knossos under S. Hood and later M. Popham, P. Warren and others; the Italian School with Doro Levi at Phaistos, which yielded exceptional pottery findings, with V. La Rosa at Ayia Triada and G. Rizza at Prinias. The French School continued at Malia with H. Gallet de Santerre, J. Deshages, Dessenne and later with Pelon, J.-C. Poursat, H. van Effenterre and others. In the Siteia region, Platon identified and excavated the intact Minoan palace of Zakros and a number of tombs, villas and settlements in eastern Crete. John Sakellarakis, later ephor of antiquities for Herakleion, excavated a Minoan country villa in the Zakros region. In 1963, in collaboration with Efi Sapouna-Sakellarakis, he began significant excavations at Archanes, the extensive Minoan cemetery at Fourni with extremely rich finds, where the palace building and sections of the Minoan settlement were revealed, and the Minoan "sacred house" at Anemospilia. Sakellarakis also continued the excavations begun in 1983 of the famous Idaean Cave on Mt Psiloritis (known also as Mt Ida) on whose slopes he found and excavated the magnificent Minoan megaron at Zominthos.

After 1973, when the Ephorate for Eastern Crete was established, the Herakleion Museum was enriched solely with finds from excavations in central Crete, i.e. from the prefecture of Herakleion, conducted by the Ephorate of Antiquities for Herakleion. From 1973 on, the significant Hellenic sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Syme Viannos, which had a previous Minoan phase of

operation, was excavated by ephor A. Lembesi. On Mt Yuchtas (Archanes), archaeologist A. Karetsou excavated the peak sanctuary that had been identified by Evans. D. Vallianou excavated the Early Minoan tomb at Kouses Messara, a Minoan country villa at Pitsidia and the Hellenic acropolis at Smari Pediada. The American School under J. and M. Shaw have been conducting digs on the site of the important port installations at Kommos on the south coast, which dates from the Minoan to the Hellenic period. G. Rethemiotakis excavated the Roman Bouleuterion and Hellenistic houses at Lyttos, the main building and parts of the Minoan settlement at Kastelli Pediada and three peak sanctuaries. Since 1992, he has also been excavating the fifth Minoan palace at Galatas Pediada. Nota Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki excavated a vaulted Early Minoan tomb at Hodigitria, a number of Minoan rock-cut graves on various sites, sections of Minoan and Hellenic settlements at Kalamaki, Kouses, Krousonas, Ayia Pelayia and, in the last 20 years, a number of large Minoan Neopalatial tombs, houses and workshops at Poros, with extremely rich finds. Eva Grammatikaki, today director of the Ephorate of Antiquities, excavated Roman grave monuments in the Knossos region and A. Vassilakis the Early Minoan settlement at Trypiti in southern Crete.

The excavations conducted by the Ephorate, mainly of a preservative nature, continue at the same pace on all the important archaeological sites, at Knossos, Chersonissos, Levina, Kastelli and many others. The Museum and the Ephorate were separated administratively in 2003 but excavations by the Ephorate keep the Museum constantly supplied with new finds that will be taken into account in planning the forthcoming re-exhibition.

HISTORICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL DIAGRAM

*Amidst the wine-dark sea lies Crete,
fair, rich and sea-girt ...*
ODYSSEY 19, 172

The particular cultural identity of Crete is mainly due to its geographic location. This large island is situated in the centre of the Mediterranean, the sea that divides but also unites, at the crossroads of three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia, thus facilitating external contacts and fruitful cultural interactions. At the same time, geographic isolation and historical circumstances favoured the creation of an original and self-sufficient cultural expression, as shown eloquently by the brilliant Minoan civilisation.

The dawn of Cretan prehistory was in the Neolithic period (or Stone Age), which began in the 7th millennium BC and lasted until the 4th millennium BC. The groups of colonists who then inhabited Crete introduced the first domesticated livestock and cultivated plants to the island, and used stone to make their tools. The long Neolithic period is divided into sub-periods, the Early, Middle, Late and Final Neolithic.

Early in the 3rd millennium BC, Crete experienced the technological revolution brought about by the processing and use of metals, chiefly copper. It was then that the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age took place, as did the evolution from the limited and static nature of the Stone Age to the multidimensional variety of the Minoan world. During the 3rd millennium BC – the Early Minoan or Prepalatial period, which is divided into three sub-periods – social structures were

being shaped, as was the religious ideology and artistic expression of the Minoan civilisation, a name coined by Arthur Evans, the excavator of Knossos, after the mythic king Minos. Early in the 2nd millennium BC, with the establishment of the first palaces at Knossos, Phaistos and Malia, the palace social and administrative system came into being, marking the beginning of the Middle Minoan or Protopalatial period that lasted until 1700 BC and is also divided into three sub-periods and partial stages. By then, the fundamental features of the Minoan world had been established, its worship of nature and delicate miniature art, and its glory began to radiate over the broader Mediterranean basin.

The destruction of the first palaces in 1700 BC by earthquake and fire did not halt its cultural development. New and more splendid palaces were built, and the great heyday of the Minoan civilisation began, the so-called Late Minoan or Neopalatial period. The system with the composite state, social and religious structures, the financial prosperity, the wonderful burgeoning of art, the political power and broader influence in the Mediterranean world and the Levant were at their peak, when it all collapsed abruptly in about 1450 BC. The magnificent palaces were destroyed for good and ceased to function. The sole exception was the palace at Knossos, where the Mycenaeans established themselves until 1350-1300 BC, and where archives were kept, no longer in the Minoan language, but in Greek. The Postpalatial period was accompanied by financial and artistic decline, although Mycenaean elements that co-existed with the Minoan tradition were disseminated.

The gradual weakening was completed by the late 12th cent. BC. The transitional, Sub-Minoan period in the 11th century BC closed the Bronze Age and heralded the new one. From then on, Crete was part of the Hellenic world. At the beginning of the first millennium BC, Dorian tribes invaded and conquered the island, and spread throughout it during the Protogeometric period (10th-9th cent. BC). They were the bearers of a different culture of an apparently rudimentary nature, simple and austere, with aristocratic social structures and military ideals, which nevertheless gave new impetus to developments. Iron, the new metal, also offered new capabilities. The strong social organisation and state structures became entrenched in the Geometric period (8th cent. BC) and society flourished anew. During the Orientalising-Daedalic period that followed (7th cent. BC), contacts with the Levant and multiple Eastern influences led to an artistic renaissance and to the production of high quality works that once again bore witness to the pioneering place of Crete in the arts. In the Archaic period (6th cent. BC), the quality of artistic creation was preserved, but cultural introversion and historical conditions did not foster the creation of further high art. This became more visible in the subsequent periods, the Classical (5th-4th cent. BC) and the Hellenistic period (late 4th-early 1st cent. BC) when the vigour of Cretan cities was drained by civil conflicts, and artistic output followed and copied the types produced in the rest of the Hellenic world. The Roman conquest in 67 BC brought Crete into the Roman Empire and secured the conditions required for peace and comparative prosperity. Then public buildings were constructed and works of art were produced that were of a uniform quality with those made elsewhere on Roman territory. The chronologically latest exhibits in the Herakleion Museum belong to the Late Roman period (4th cent. AD), when the ancient world was in decline.

Later, Crete became part of the Byzantine Empire, then succumbed to the Arabs (826/828 AD), was reconquered by the Byzantines in 961 AD, was subsequently subjugated by the Venetians

(1204-1210 AD), and then occupied by the Ottoman Turks (1669) after which it suffered two centuries of cruel occupation. The bloody struggles of the Cretan people for freedom were rewarded with the autonomy of the island (1896), the establishment of the Cretan Polity and finally union with Greece (1913).

Since the end of the 19th century, excavations have brought to light artefacts from the brilliant ancient cultural legacy of Crete, whose material traces, from the 7th millennium BC to the 4th century AD, are presented in the 20 halls of the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion.

NEOLITHIC PERIOD		
Aceramic		6800-6500 BC
Early Neolithic		6500-5800 BC
Middle Neolithic		5800-5300 BC
Late Neolithic		5300-4500 BC
Final Neolithic (Sub-Neolithic)		4500-3200 BC
EARLY BRONZE AGE		
Early Minoan I		3200/3000-2600 BC
Early Minoan II	PREPALATIAL PERIOD	2600-2300 BC
Early Minoan III		2300-2100 BC
MIDDLE BRONZE AGE		
Middle Minoan I	PROTOPALATIAL* PERIOD	2100-1900 BC
Middle Minoan II		1900-1700 BC
LATE BRONZE AGE		
Middle Minoan III	NEOPALATIAL PERIOD	1700-1580 BC
Late Minoan I		1580-1450 BC
	FINAL PALATIAL PERIOD (KNOSSOS)	1450-1350/1300 BC
Late Minoan II		1450-1400 BC
Late Minoan III	POSTPALATIAL PERIOD	1400-1070 BC
Sub-Minoan		1070-1000 BC
HELLENIC-ROMAN AGE		
Protogeometric period		1000-850 BC
Protogeometric B period		850-810 BC
Geometric period		810-700 BC
Orientalising or Daedalic or Early Archaic period		700-600 BC
Archaic period		600-500 BC
Classical period		500-323 BC
Hellenistic period		323-67 BC
Roman period		67 BC-4th cent. AD

* The term "Protopalatial" should replace the word "Palaeopalatial" wherever it occurs in the text and captions.



THE THRESHOLD OF CRETAN PREHISTORY

The Neolithic period – 7th-4th millennium BC



The Stone Age – the earliest period of prehistory, when the technology of metal had not yet been discovered and stone was the basic material for making tools – is divided into three main periods, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic. In contrast to other regions in the Mediterranean basin, no traces have been found in Crete of the Palaeolithic or Mesolithic periods. The earliest evidence of human activity that has been found so far dates from the 7th millennium BC, the so-called Aceramic (pre-pottery), which was the transitional phase between the Mesolithic and the Neolithic period (6800-6500 BC) and continued without interruption through the subsequent phases, the Early Neolithic (6500-5800 BC), Middle Neolithic (5800-5300 BC), Late Neolithic (5300-4500) and Final Neolithic (4500-3200), at which time the Stone Age ends and the Bronze Age begins.

Even though the question of where the first inhabitants of Crete originated has not been definitively answered, there are indications that groups of agriculturalists, possibly from western Asia Minor, arrived in Crete as permanent settlers via the islands of the eastern Aegean and the Cyclades, bringing with them species of grain, trees and livestock that constituted the initial domesticated fauna and cultivated flora on the island and the foundation for the agricultural and stock-breeding economy of Neolithic habitation.

The oldest human presence on the island, at the beginning of the 7th millennium BC, has been identified solely at Knossos, on the same site on which the famous Minoan palace was built much later. This early small Neolithic settlement of the aceramic phase, in essence a camp, does not appear initially to have numbered more than one hundred inhabitants. There were no constructed dwellings, just wooden huts supported by poles, as indicated by small apertures to hold the poles and the remains of an oak beam. The absence of pottery is characteristic of this phase, the so-called aceramic, during which people were limited primarily to the use of wooden implements. The find of a pile of seeds of barley, wheat and lentils and abundant animal bones – sheep, goats, pigs and to a lesser degree cattle – proves the agricultural and stock-breeding nature of the settlement's economy, the types of early crops and the fairly advanced stage of production, with the noteworthy existence of domesticated cattle.

The discovery in aceramic Knossos of obsidian from Milos in the Cyclades was of special significance, since it constituted evidence of navigation and trade beyond Crete at this very early period.

Graves of adults or burial grounds have not been found on Crete from the aceramic phase or from subsequent Neolithic phases. Just a few graves of infants and children, buried without funeral gifts in pits dug in the floor of the dwellings, have been identified.

Findings from the next, the Early Neolithic (6500-5800 BC), which is characterised by the appearance of pottery, have likewise been ascertained only at Knossos, where an extensive settlement gradually developed. Here houses were being built with rectangular rooms and walls of clay resting on groundwork of rubble masonry and flat roofs made of branches daubed with clay. The spaces between houses were also plastered with clay. Pottery, the most ancient and unique to Crete, was fairly advanced technologically by the first phase of the Early Neolithic, although typologically it evolved conservatively until the Final Neolithic, without visible non-Cretan influences from the contemporary Aegean or Helladic world. Most pots are of an open shape, mainly bowls (*phiales*) of various types, some wide-mouthed vessels and others with a narrow neck, with bifurcated handles or projecting triangular handles. Typically they are decorated with coils of clay that have been affixed, and incised marks that were filled with a white or reddish substance, creating an interesting effect.

Characteristic of the other finds from the Early Neolithic settlement at Knossos are bone and stone tools, mainly clubs and axes, as well as quantities of obsidian from Milos. Spindle whorls, loom weights and possibly "shuttles" for weaving on cloth, dating from the end of the period, are of particular interest, bearing witness to the dissemination of weaving by the end of the Early Neolithic. As pointed out earlier, no cemeteries or graves of adults have been found, which is why we have no evidence of burial customs. It is moreover difficult, owing to the lack of sufficient evidence, to interpret the figurines of clay and stone that obviously reflect the magico-religious beliefs of the age. Of all the strongly schematised Knossos figurines from the Early Neolithic period, there is a figurine in fine-grained white marble with arms folded on its chest, which stands out owing to its rare material, the plasticity of its volumes and the realistic rendering of its anatomical details, all of which are quite impressive, given its early date.

In the fairly short Middle Neolithic period (5800-5300 BC), habitation has been confirmed on other sites such as at Katsambas, where a house has been excavated with two rooms and an enclosure, perhaps for keeping animals. A relative improvement is noted in its pottery. Among the shapes, carinated bowls are prevalent, and in decoration there is tortoise rippleware and incising. A few figurines, a number of stone tools, among which are several axes, and a few bone tools supplement the picture.

The Late Neolithic (5300-4500 BC) is the period during which Neolithic dwellings spread from one end of Crete to the other, to shores, high ground, lowlands, mountains and caves. The ability to exploit the geophysical advantages of each site was the criterion for habitation and determined its particular character within the context of the age's productive economy, the nature of which had not yet been substantially differentiated. It was based on primary agricultural and stockbreeding output with the parallel development of the barter trade made possible by advances in navigation.

Habitation in the Late Neolithic, which became increasingly dense from the western part of Crete to the east, did not of course develop in a homogeneous way: in some cases there is evidence of organised dwellings such as the strange two-part house in Mangasa Siteia, while others have been identified solely by a few pottery sherds. The most important permanent Late Neolithic settlements were found in Knossos and Phaistos, on key positions in geophysical terms: in the middle of fertile plains crossed by rivers and surrounded by highlands, and in the centre of Crete on mountains



Neolithic bone and stone tools from Knossos, Palaikastro and Zakros: awls, flint knife, axes and clubs (6500-3200 BC).





Cups from Knossos, Late Neolithic (5300-4500 BC).

appropriate for animal husbandry. With easy access to the ports of the north and south shore respectively and to the maritime trade routes, these sites provided every natural advantage for development. They were never abandoned and it is hardly accidental that the two largest palaces of Minoan Crete were built on these same sites.

The settlement of the Late Neolithic at Knossos, the largest in Crete, developed gradually, eventually covering an area of almost 2 hectares, beyond the limits even of the later Minoan palace. It is estimated that the settlement numbered between one to two thousand inhabitants at this period. Even though construction of the first Minoan palace destroyed large sections of the Late Neolithic settlement, strata have been brought to light with many small rooms that do not appear to follow a specific architectural plan, but probably constitute additions to two larger main chambers. The existence of permanent fireplaces in the settlement houses is noteworthy.

The pottery from this period, the study of which was based on material from the two main settlements at Knossos and Phaistos, generally follows the earlier typological patterns and conservative evolution, without any particular innovations or inventive features that might suggest external influences. A variety of types existed, and new shapes were created, whereas in terms of decoration, incised and spiky decoration continued although in a somehow looser arrangement of motifs; fluting and pattern burnished ware appeared. One special feature of Phaistos pottery at the end of the period was the use of red pigment in decorative patterns. Despite the lack of any impetus for renewal, the pottery of the period presents technological advances and the characteristics of organised production. Improvement is noted in firing techniques; there was a greater variety of types; efforts were made to adopt new decorative techniques; specific decorations were selected for certain types of pots and methods were applied to speed up the production process, as shown, for example, by the use of cylinder seals for impressing bands of hatching motifs on the surface of a pot.

As regards tools, Late Neolithic equipment does not appear to have evolved typologically, even though its numbers increased. Stone axes of two types, spherical and amphiconic clubs, awls, tools of flint and obsidian from Milos, bone tools and clay objects for weaving cloth are among the usual finds. In the house at Mangasa Siteia, some twenty axes were found all together, having perhaps been manufactured there by some artisan.

Finds such as figurines with ideological symbolism are few and their interpretation uncertain. Some figurines of animals, most of

Clay figurine of a stout seated woman with heavy buttocks and a realistic rendering of the flesh on the belly, arms and thighs. Outstanding example of a naturalistic figurine from Neolithic Crete. Kato Horio Ierapetra, Middle-Late Neolithic (5800-4800 BC). Height: 14.7 cm.



which are cattle, have been found at Knossos in particular, together with a few figurines of humans, rendered in an abbreviated naturalistic way. At Phaistos, a figurine was found together with seashells, miniature pots and a piece of iron, and then a second figurine was found with a sea triton painted red. These constitute the only possible evidence of the ritual or religious function of the Neolithic figurines, most of which have been sporadic finds and do not come from a significant excavation environment. Of particular interest is the figurine of a woman from Kato Horio Ierapetra, the largest Neolithic figurine ever found on Crete, 14.7 cm high, depicting a female figure with fat buttocks and thighs sitting cross-legged. Figurines of this type representing steatopygous female forms are found over a broad geographical area, and are believed to depict the Great Goddess or figures related to fertility cults and activities.

By the Final Neolithic (4500-3200 BC), a period of transition to the Bronze Age, Neolithic habitation had spread over the entire island, in settlements and caves. Types of pottery and decoration were being produced that had been in use for some time or had appeared during the previous period. There is an interesting group of intact pots with a special shape: a round body and high neck for drawing and decanting water that were found in a well dug at Fourni Mirabello. Their mottled surface presents chromatic contrasts of a particular decorative nature that is achieved by uneven firing.

During the last two Neolithic phases, Crete seems to have been culturally homogeneous and autonomous, without visible external influences. Trade certainly existed, as testified by the early imports of obsidian from the Cyclades and sporadic finds from the Early and Final Neolithic phase, particularly at Knossos, such as a fragment of ivory from Syria or Egypt and a bronze axe imported from some place beyond Crete that had already acquired the technology of metal.

The new era was already discernible. At the end of the 4th millennium BC, significant developments may have been triggered after the advent of new colonial groups who enriched the old Neolithic substratum and led to the creation of the brilliant Minoan civilisation.



Carinated cup with incised decoration from Knossos. Middle-Late Neolithic period (5800-4500 BC).



Tripod cylindrical vase with lid, with incised and dotted decoration in the Neolithic style. Knossos, Prepalatial period (3rd millennium BC).



Two-lug round pot with high neck. Fourni Mirabello, Final Neolithic (3200-3000 BC).



THE DYNAMIC GENESIS OF THE MINOAN WORLD

Early Bronze Age – Prepalatial period – 3rd millennium BC



At the end of the 4th millennium BC, man's mastery and dissemination of the technology of metal – gold, silver, lead and especially copper – marked the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age.

It has been argued that the revolutionary change in Crete was related to the arrival of new colonial groups in the late 4th millennium BC, possibly from western Asia Minor via the Cyclades. These new colonists, who are believed to have brought metallurgy to Crete, together with the old tribal substratum of the early Minoans, constituted the dynamic creators and vehicles of the splendid Minoan civilisation. The third millennium BC is the age in which this civilisation came into being, took on its characteristic features and first flourished. It is called the Early Minoan period and is divided into three sub-periods (Early Minoan I, II and III); it is also called Prepalatial because it covered the centuries prior to the establishment of the Minoan palaces. The first phase of this period, in the early 3rd millennium BC, essentially constitutes a transitional, sub-Neolithic phase during which existing Neolithic elements gradually evolved, such as those observed in pottery, and decisive innovations were made, such as metallurgy that sparked unprecedented progress in all fields. Developments led to an increase in the number of settlements, to the expansion of trade and to the improvement of craft production which, in its later phases, produced works of exceptional art. Primary agricultural output was enriched by the cultivation of olives and grapes. New metal tools offered fresh capabilities for both cultivating the land and developing the agricultural economy, as well as for expanding secondary production and craft activity into sectors hitherto unknown. Shipping and trade were expanding constantly, providing impetus to the economy and support for barter trade, ensuring the importation of the raw materials that could not be found on Crete and transferring the know-how that the Minoans rapidly exploited. The new techniques and tools, as well as imported materials such as copper, gold, silver, ivory and semiprecious stones, laid the foundation for workshop-craft production and fostered a sharp increase in metalworking, jewellery production and the goldsmith's art, seal engraving, miniature art, and stone carving, especially in the late phase of this period. In pottery, new shapes and decorative styles kept being created, following the dynamic of other crafts. The creative artisans responsible for craft production already constituted a new class, as did merchants and seamen. Even though the economy was still based on agriculture and stockbreeding, these new classes that supported secondary production, when added to farmers and stockbreeders, created a new social reality.

In the late phases of this period, the obvious economic prosperity and specialised production led to the emergence of powerful new social elite groups. Among them should perhaps be included groups of technicians, that is guilds of people with specialised skills, particularly in metalwork which was the spearhead of secondary production. Progressive "urbanisation", i.e. the creation of large settlements and the growth of an administrative structure, may very probably have led to the concentration of power, to the emergence of ruling groups or classes and eventually of local leaders with administrative and political authority. At the end of this period, with the organisation of a community religion and worship, a new class of priests may have joined the powerful upper echelons of the society. This political and social structure seems ultimately to have led to the emergence of strong leaders and to the building of the first palaces at the dawn of the 2nd millennium BC.

1. Settlements, sanctuaries and cemeteries

A thousand years before the establishment of the Minoan palaces, early in the 3rd millennium BC, the Early Minoan I period began with the increased density of habitation sites, although initially there was only a minor differentiation in settlement practice. The houses in the early phase of this period did not present any substantial differences from those of the Neolithic, and people continued to inhabit caves. In the second phase, the Early Minoan II, a significant period in all respects, the first large organised Minoan settlements were established. On plains or high ground, in bays on the coast or at crossroads of land communication, Early Minoan settlements each developed their own particular character: either agricultural and stockbreeding or trade, maritime and craft, as part of an increasingly strong economic, social and artistic dynamic.

At Myrtos, on the shores of south central Crete, an extensive and organised Early Minoan settlement has been excavated dating to the Early Minoan II. On the slopes of a low hill overlooking the Libyan Sea, two large building complexes were constructed amphitheatrically with a total of some ninety rooms. There is no clear architectural or town planning, but there are three streets and two main entrances to the settlement. Typical finds from the excavations of certain areas determined their function: in one room, obviously a ceramic workshop, potters' wheels were found that testify to technological progress and to the systematisation of pottery production. Large storage jars (*pitharia*) were found in the room next door, and may have held the wet clay or water used in the workshop. Elsewhere another room operated as a kitchen. Of special interest, however, was a sanctuary with three rooms, the most ancient Minoan shrine, in whose main chamber, beside an altar, was an odd clay figurine that has been named the Goddess of Myrtos.

At the same time, other sites of coastal habitation were developing in eastern Crete, as indicated by the Early Minoan houses at Gournia and Palaikastro. The Early Minoan settlement at Vassiliki, established on an exceptionally advantageous site on the isthmus of Ierapetra, is particularly important. This is the narrowest part of Crete, where the island is just 14 km. wide, and separates or rather brings together the two seas, the eastern Aegean in the north and the Libyan Sea in the south. The obvious advantages for the transit trade may have been the reason for the particular prosperity enjoyed by the large Early Minoan settlement at Vassiliki, in which, in contrast to the settlement of Myrtos, more organised architecture and town planning can be discerned. A large building complex is especially worthy of note, with its spacious rooms, built of bricks on a stone

foundation, with walls supported by timber frames and made colourful by red plaster. The fact that it was flanked by houses that were smaller and less carefully built reinforces the picture of it as the settlement's main building, possibly the seat of a local leader. Furthermore, the large stone-paved court prefigures one of the most basic architectural and functional features of subsequent Minoan palaces; this is also why it has been hypothesised that early forms of palace planning and administrative organisation can be encountered in Vassiliki. The significant settlement of Vassiliki appears to have been the main centre in which the Vassiliki ware typical of the Early Minoan II phase was produced.

Needless to say, not all Early Minoan habitation was as important as the settlement of Vassiliki. The main body of the population lived in small villages in the countryside, organised by clans and subsisting by means of the agricultural and stockbreeding economy. The settlement at Trypiti on the south coast of central Crete is representative. It was founded on a low hill near a spring on a small picturesque bay early in the period and developed during the next. Its area does not exceed 350 sq. metres, and it consists of two districts with a total of seven houses built in tiers on two levels with a street in between. The small stone houses have one larger main room and three or four small side ones. Because the walls are still standing up to a height of 2 m., door and window openings have



Ewer and cup with mottled decoration in the Vassiliki style. Vassiliki Ierapetra, Prepalatial period (2500 BC).





Clay kernoi with two to four cups for offerings. Grave at Pyrgos, Prepalatial period (3200-2500 BC).



been preserved, together with cupboards, low benches and fireplaces on the floors. The flat roofs of these buildings were made of branches, straw and mud. The finds indicate that the main occupations of the inhabitants were agriculture, stockbreeding and fishing.

On the contrary, the coastal settlement at Poros, in the middle of the north shore of Crete and just 5 km from Knossos, is of a completely different nature, oriented to trade and crafts. Here, throughout the Early Minoan period, there is evidence of the intensive processing of obsidian imported from the Cyclades, on a scale unprecedented in Crete. Most important of all, however, is that during the first two Early Minoan phases, metallurgy was being practised here, as shown by recent finds testifying to the processing and smelting of copper, which is the earliest evidence of such activity on the island. The Cycladic pottery that was found in remarkable quantities in the Early Minoan strata at Poros also indicates the paths by which the imported raw materials arrived, and the first products of the new metal technology in Crete. The settlement at Poros, a significant port and centre of craft production in the Early Minoan period, retained its character in the subsequent centuries, when it evolved into the main harbour of Minoan Crete and port of the palace at Knossos.

At Knossos, as at Phaistos, Tylissos, Ayia Triada and other habitation centres, there is little evidence extant regarding residential architecture, particularly that of the Early Minoan III period.

Evidence of religion and worship is equally limited. There are no organised community sanctuaries; the first shrines of open-air popular worship were established at the end of this period and the beginning of the next, the Middle Minoan period, with the dawn of the 2nd millennium BC. The small shrine with the figurine of the Goddess of Myrtos was an isolated event, although figurines of a similar type, which is believed to depict fertility figures, have been found in Koumassa, Mochlos and Malia.

On the contrary, the worship of the dead, funeral offerings and rituals have been confirmed by a number of finds. This is perhaps not unnatural since more Early Minoan cemeteries have been excavated than settlements. There are four main types of burial grounds



Clay figurine-rhyton of a woman whose gesture indicates female fecundity. Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2300-2000 BC).

Unusual clay libation vessel-rhyton with pipes for the double outflow of liquid offerings. From the vaulted tomb at Koumassa Messara, Prepalatial period (2300-2000 BC).



or structures: burial caves, rock-cut pits or chambers, constructed grave enclosures and built vaulted tombs.

Caves, which in the Neolithic period were places of habitation, were also used in the Early Minoan as burial grounds, as has been ascertained on various sites, e.g. at Miamou and Trapeza Lasithi. The rock-cut graves are pit-type or chamber-type, with a small antechamber in a few cases. They are more common in central and eastern Crete, in Kyparissi and Partira, Pyrgos and Ayia Fotia Siteia. On the contrary, grave enclosures, the first category of built funerary structures, are more common in eastern Crete, Mochlos, Palaikastro and elsewhere, but have also been excavated in the cemetery at Fourni Archanes in north central Crete. These are rectangular structures of rough-hewn stones, with two or more rooms, some without entrance openings, an indication that interment was effected from the roof, which would have been light in structure, perhaps of branches and clay. The most monumental built grave structures of the period were vaulted tombs, circular buildings above the ground with a vaulted roof, monolithic entrances, stout walls from 1.5 to 2.5 metres thick, and a diameter of between 4 and 14 m. in the case of the large tomb at Platanos Messara. The vaulted tombs were either isolated or part of larger burial complexes that included chambers for interments or ossuaries for secondary burials, repositories and stone-paved courts, and were defined by built enclosure walls. Most of the vaulted tombs have been found on the Messara plain in south central Crete, where they first appeared in the Early Minoan I period, as indicated by the tomb of Lenta. During subsequent periods they were also built on a number of other sites on the Messara plain, at Kalathiana, Koumassa, Platanos, Marathokefalo, Siva and later at Drakones, Vorou, Porti and elsewhere. They appeared occasionally in other regions too, such as Fourni Archanes with two vaulted Early Minoan tombs, at Krasi and at Myrsini Siteia.

A great deal of evidence has been unearthed about the burial customs of the period in the excavations of Early Minoan cemeteries. Cemeteries were essentially of a community nature, especially the larger vaulted tombs, which contained dozens of bodies, members of the clans that formed the social structure of the early communities. Initially the dead were laid on the floor of the tombs where, in some cases, the accumulation of bones, funeral offerings from graves and secondary burials is very dense. The practice of interment in

clay sarcophagi also began early and continued into later periods. Burials are occasionally observed in large storage jars (*pitharia*) as well. The dead were buried with funeral gifts, personal objects and whatever else their families believed they should have with them on their journey to the next world. Thus, the variety and richness of the funeral offerings in Minoan tombs reflect the life of the living, since most of the objects that have been preserved to date originated in graves rather than settlements. In Early Minoan graves, the dead were buried together with all the humble and valuable belongings they used when they were alive: gold jewellery, seals, stone and clay pots, bronze and silver weapons. Grave offerings related to burial beliefs constitute a special category and attest to practices of worship of the dead: stone and clay dishes (*kernoi*) for multiple burial offerings, figurines of humans, animals and birds, with the Cycladic ones constituting a special category, also odd ritual vessels such as rhyta for libations, as well as the bones of animals or birds that have been found in graves and may indicate that funeral feasts were held.

These finds constitute valuable material which, in conjunction with evidence from excavations, helps us to understand the Minoan world and to appreciate the high art created early in the 3rd millennium BC.



Small stone vases in various shapes from graves at Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-2000 BC).

2. The flourishing of Early Minoan art

The introduction of metal technology was the turning point in the transition from the Stone Age to the Early Bronze Age, which, in conjunction with the growth of shipping and trade, fuelled developments of an economic and social character that shaped the context in which the Minoan civilisation emerged in the third millennium BC. In the realm of art, the intense development unleashed by the use of the new material, metal, and by the mastery of metallurgical and metalworking techniques is particularly obvious. New sectors of production came into being that exploited the potential of the new technology for manufacturing luxury metal objects of bronze, gold and silver. The new metal tools lent impetus to the evolution of other sectors such as seal engraving, jewellery making and miniature art, which employed imported materials such as semiprecious stones or ivory. The general economic progress and the rise of powerful social classes or groups were accompanied by a trend to social ostentation and the flaunting of power, wealth and prestige by members of the elite. This was accomplished by the acquisition of luxury objects, products of the new technology of the age, made of precious imported materials. The demand for such goods created a class of talented craftsmen and specialised workshops that produced works of astonishing quality.

Metalworking, the jeweller's craft, seal engraving, stone carving and pottery were sectors in which rapid technological progress was made and objects of a high technical and artistic level were produced.

POTTERY has always been the most sensitive indicator of typological and technological differentiation, and consequently of evolution over time. During the long Neolithic period, pottery was characterised by uniformity and slow typological and technological development. In the Early Minoan I period, technical improvement can be observed with the appearance of large burnished pots and very soon the first characteristic pottery styles began to appear that constituted the dynamic starting point of the famous Minoan pottery. Pottery styles have been named conventionally after the site on which the typical samples that defined each style were found initially or with the greatest frequency.

The Pyrgos ware characteristic of Early Minoan I can be found throughout Crete. It is dark-coloured burnished ware that includes small-mouthed pots, but primarily cups (*kypella*), the most typical examples of which are *kylix*-type goblets with a long stem. The technique and certain shapes of Pyrgos ware can be correlated with Final Neolithic types, but analogies with contemporary Cycladic or Asia Minor pottery have likewise been pointed out. In the very early Minoan pottery, this blend may reflect the more general intermingling of the old Neolithic substratum with the new Minoan element.

Ayios Onoufrios pottery also appeared in Early Minoan I and continued into the next period; it is typical of central Crete, particularly the south, as well as its advanced variation, Koumassa ware. This embodies an attractive new decorative concept which "brightens" pots that were usually spherical in shape with light-coloured slip, and the surface is then decorated with linear or lattice motifs in red on the light ground.

To the same chronological level belongs the Levina ware with white linear motifs on a brownish-red ground. The original, bold shapes present special interest with their angularities and peculiar handles, but also pots in the shape of a boat, barrel, hut, fruit etc.

An important technological development became visible in pottery production and in other sectors during the Early Minoan II. The pottery workshop at Myrtos and the potters' wheels, the planoconvex clay disks that were found there, bear witness to progress in both the manufacturing technique and the organisation of production. Typical of this period, particularly in eastern Crete, was the Vassiliki ware, which utilises technological improvement to achieve a technically flawless and superbly decorated result. Pots with bold shapes, "sauce boats" with a markedly elongated spout, ewers with a high, beaked neck, as well as the most conventional cups bear ingenious brownish-red and black mottled decoration, which is created by the controlled uneven firing of the pot using a special technique.

Of particular interest in the Early Minoan III period is the so-called White style, typical of eastern Crete in particular. This is a sophisticated style with a variety of shapes and rich decorative motifs that presents one significant innovation: the motifs now included spirals, circles, tendrils and dots painted in white on a dark-coloured slip creating an unusual decorative effect. This technique continued to evolve in the main pottery styles of the following period, the Middle Bronze Age.

In addition to the main styles, simpler rough pottery, undecorated or with rudimentary decoration, was produced in all regions; there was also local pottery of a limited commercial range.



Unusual tripod boat-shaped pot with lid, from vaulted tomb at Levina Messara.
Prepalatial period (2700-2500 BC).



Large clay cup in the shape of a chalice;
the foot has incised and burnished decoration.
Grave at Pyrgos, Prepalatial period
(3200-2700 BC).



Pots with the linear decoration of the Koumassa and Ayios Onoufrios style of pottery, from various sites in central Crete. Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).





Three unusual pots: two in the shape of a barrel and a wild animal, and one carinated with lid and large bifurcated handles. From vaulted tomb at Levina Messara, Prepalatial period (2800-2500 BC).





Unusual clay pot in the shape of a pod.
Replica of a round house with chimney.
Three-bodied ewer. From vaulted tomb
at Levina Messara, Prepalatial period.





Unusual ritual vessel from the cemetery at Fourni Archanes. Late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).

Ewer of the "teapot" type, with an elongated spout and decoration in the white style. Vassiliki Ierapetra, Prepalatial period (2300-2000 BC).



Cup decorated with double axes in the white style. Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2300-2000 BC).





Cups of various shapes and ewers with white fish and decorative motifs in the white style. From Palaikastro, Mochlos and Vassiliki in eastern Crete. Late Prepalatial period (2300-1800 BC).



METALWORK, using copper in particular, was the new technology and art that marked the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age. The metal was certainly imported to Crete, since there are no indications that the limited deposits of copper in southern and western Crete were exploited. It has recently been discovered that during the first two Early Minoan phases, copper was processed at Poros, the harbour settlement on the north coast that was the port of Knossos for a long time. Here many finds confirm the very early practice of the technology of metal. Fragments of crucibles, a small furnace nozzle, copper slag, a tiny ingot of pure metal, and fragments of clay moulds for the smelting of daggers with a mid-rib on the blade identify the first known Early Minoan coppersmith's workshop. At Chrysokamino in eastern Crete, copper ore was processed during the last phase of the period.

The evolution of technology, the acquisition of advanced techniques and the skill to apply them were impressive. Tools were upgraded rapidly through the use of bronze (an alloy of copper and tin), making them more durable and easy to use. Despite the relatively small number of Early Minoan tools that have been preserved, largely from central and eastern Crete, their variety is characteristic: chisels and skewers, needles and drills, a saw, scrapers, blades, knives and double axes, but also strange items that are difficult to identify such as the two so-called "ear-cleaners".

Very significant early metalwork products include bronze and a few silver daggers, short triangular ones or more elongated, some with a bone or ivory handle, affixed with silver nails with or without a mid-rib. Three hundred daggers have been found, mainly in the vaulted tombs of Messara but also in eastern Crete. They are luxury goods, expensive examples of the most advanced technology of the age, having both functional as well as decorative value, particularly the silver ones. But even more, they constituted symbols of the superior social class, authority and power of their owners, with whom they were buried.



Triangular bronze daggers from Koumassa, Ayia Triada and Platanos Messara.
Prepalatial period (2500-1800 BC).



Long and triangular silver and bronze daggers from Viannos, Tekes, Koumassa and Platanos. Prepalatial period (2300-1800 BC).



Gold funeral band with embossed linear decoration from the cemetery at Mochlos (2500-2000 BC).

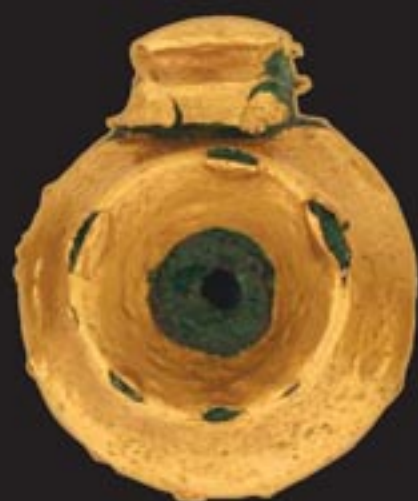
[Page 51]: Gold band diadem, necklaces of stone beads and wheel-shaped gilt bronze pendants. From the vaulted tombs at Levina and Ayios Onoufrios. Prepalatial period (2700-2300 BC).

THE JEWELLERS' ART also used bronze as the basic metal to manufacture items such as ordinary rings. But the most important jewellery was of gold and silver and adorned with semiprecious stones. The jewellery from Mochlos, the vaulted tombs of Messara and Archanes was mainly gold. To make these items, Minoan artisans used all the simple as well as the most advanced techniques, including hammering, extrusion, cutting sheets of metal, soldering and nailing. In the final phases of the period, repoussé decoration, casting, filigree and gold granulation were also applied to produce exceptional works of the goldsmith's art and miniatures that expressed the inspiration and skill of the gifted artists who created them in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC.

Even the simplest jewellery in technical terms, the gold banded diadems for the hair, were splendid. They have holes at both ends so that they can be tied around the forehead, and vary in length and width: some are narrow bands up to 30 cm long, some are wider, and others have a special shape, such as the diadem from Koumassa which broadens into a triangle in the middle, or the diadem from Mochlos with narrower decorative bands. Of particular interest are those that have repoussé decoration, either simple linear or more complex, such as the diadem that has two eyes indicated by indented points, or the band with four animals that look like dogs. Ornaments to be sewn on were made using similar techniques, some in the shape of a disc or star with holes so that they can be attached to clothing. Beautiful pins (*perones*) with floral finials may possibly have been hair ornaments. Noteworthy for their special technical skill and inspiration are the necklaces with beads and pendants in various shapes and materials that create a special decorative effect and include beads of gold and silver, of multicoloured stones, bone and ivory, faience, rock crystal and semiprecious stones such as amethyst or, at the end of the period, sard. Pendants that were also pectoral ornaments were made of the same materials as the necklaces: gold, silver, ivory or crystal. The famous tiny gold frog from Koumassa is the earliest known example of the granulation technique. The spirals made using the filigree technique to embellish the little cylindrical gold bead from Kalathiana are indicative of exceptional workmanship. There is also a gold pendant in the form of a flower, cast in solid gold. Using the technique of soldered filigree, wonderful gold chains with large pendent gold leaves were made in Mochlos.

All the excellent artefacts by early Minoan jewellers were found in graves to which they had accompanied their wealthy owners, as they had in life.

[Pages 52-53]: Necklaces with beads of steatite, semiprecious stones, faience and gold from tombs at Levina and Mochlos. Prepalatial-Early Palaeopalatial period (2700-2000 BC).













Gold funeral bands with repoussé linear or dotted decoration that covered the forehead or was sewn onto the garments of the dead person. Cemeteries at Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).



[Page 54]: Necklaces with beads of semiprecious stones: sard, crystal, steatite and chlorite. Platanos Messara, Prepalatial-Early Palaeopalatial period (2200-1800 BC).

[Page 55]: ABOVE: Two valuable necklaces with beads of various shapes made of gold, ivory and green nephrite from the cemetery at Fourni Archanes. Late Prepalatial period (2200-1800 BC).

BELOW: Funeral band of gold leaf with the dotted repoussé representation of human eyes, perhaps to cover the eyes of the dead person. Cemeteries at Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).



Band-type gold funeral diadem with a triangular projection and a necklace of round and amphiconic beads made of thin gold leaf with two beads bearing spiral filigree decoration. Vaulted tombs at Koumassa and Platanos, Prepalatial period (2500-1800 BC).

[Page 59]: Gold leaf-shaped grave jewellery hanging from delicate, ornate chains, and appendages of necklaces. Cemeteries at Mochlos and Sfoungara Gournia, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).



Two gold decorations that were sewn onto funerary dress: six-pointed star and perforated sheet.

Two pendants, one a prismatic crystal bead set in gold and another of solid gold in the shape of a floral calyx. From graves at Kalathiana, Ayios Onoufrios Messara and Mochlos in eastern Crete. Prepalatial period (2200-1800 BC).







Gold jewels in the shape of olive leaves with a stock of twisted gold wire, appendages of diadems or necklaces. Cemeteries at Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).





[Page 62]: Gold funerary band and gold daisies on a long stalk, appendages of diadems or hair ornaments. Cemeteries at Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).

[Page 63]: ABOVE: Tiny gold pendant in the shape of a frog with granulation, a masterpiece of miniature goldwork and at the same time the oldest known use of the granulation technique. Koumassa Messara, late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC). Length: 1.1 cm.

BELOW: Two disk-shaped gold beads decorated with a four-petal and a whirling five-petal rosette respectively. Cemeteries at Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC). Diameter: 1.3 cm.







Ivory cylinder seal with leaves and spirals on the lateral seal surface. Cemeteries at Fourni, late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).

Babylonian cylinder seal of haematite from the era of Hammurabi. The figure of a male deity or king is depicted with sceptre. A significant find as regards determining Minoan chronology. From the vaulted tomb at Platanos, late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).



Ivory seal in the shape of a seated monkey. The seal surface, with three lions in a torsional configuration, is on the base. Platanos Messara, Prepalatial period (2200-2000 BC).

SEAL ENGRAVING was a significant field of expression in Minoan art; the scenes depicted on seals and gems tell us a great deal about the life and activities of the Minoans. Sealstones were used for practical purposes, but were also worn as jewellery or amulets, as pendants. By the sealing, i.e. the imprint of the seal on a small lump of damp clay attached to some object, its owner could certify the ownership of an object or the authenticity of a trade mission. Even though the practice of using seals must have arrived in Crete from the East and Egypt, early Minoan seals are unique in terms of their originality and variety, in contrast to the standardisation of Eastern cylinder seals or Egyptian scarabs. Early Minoan sealstones, especially the simpler ones, were made of soft stone such as steatite, slate, and chlorite. In the second phase, Early Minoan seals, mainly from Messara and Archanes, were made of imported materials like elephant or hippopotamus ivory, particularly those with the most original and complex shapes. Seals can be cylindrical, conical, rectangular, prismatic, discoid or hemispherical with one, two or three seal surfaces, depending on the shape. One ivory seal from Archanes has fourteen seal surfaces. Some seals are famous, especially those made of ivory, the animal-shaped ones that have been fashioned in the form of animals, people, birds or insects, such as the seal from Trapeza in the form of a seated monkey, the one from Archanes in the form of a fly, and the seal from Kalathiana in the form of a lion mauling a man.

The most customary and simplest decorative themes used on the seal surfaces were linear, curvilinear, spirals or leaves. Representations of animals such as lions in a torsional disposition, or scorpions and fish are less prevalent.

Most of the sealstones, like jewellery and daggers, were found in graves, an indication that they were not solely functional objects, but that they had decorative and/or prophylactic and apotropaic significance.



Ivory seal in the shape of a fly, possibly apotropaic, to avert evil. Cemeteries at Fourni Archanes, late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).



Ivory seal with three scorpions, an amulet to ward off evil. Platanos, Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).



Ivory seal in the form of a monkey seated on a globular rock. Linear motif on the round seal surface of the base. Trapeza Cave, Lasithi, Prepalatial period (2500-2000 BC).



Ivory seal bearing the form of a seated animal, from Platanos. On the rectangular seal surface on the base, two lions are surrounded by rows of circles. Prepalatial period (2200-2000 BC).

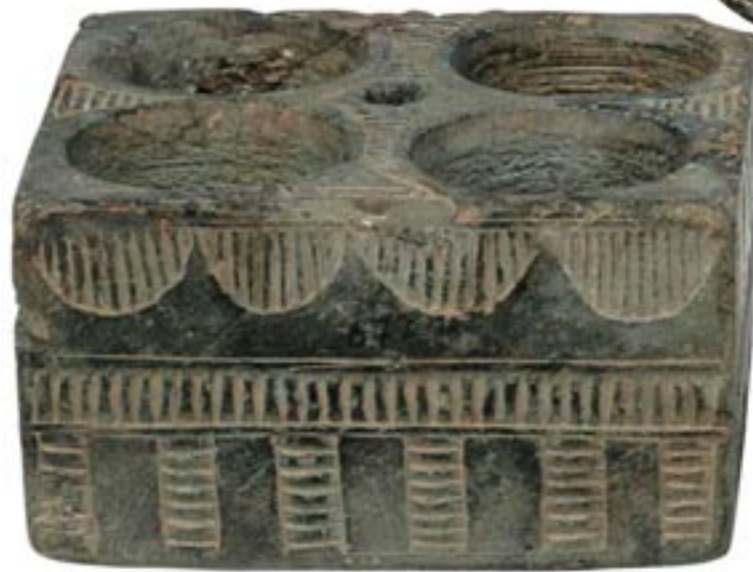
THE ART OF STONE VASE MAKING in the Protominoan period, particularly in its later phases, created some exceptional works the quality of which is intriguing because of the absence of any previous tradition. Multicoloured, veined and monochrome stones, alabaster and stalactites, veined and monochrome marble, imported basalts, chlorites and steatites, conglomerate rock, serpentine and gypsum were used to make a number of miniature or functional pots of every shape. The veining and colours of the stones were exploited beautifully in the processing so as to achieve an impressive, almost painterly, decorative result. Specimens from graves in Mochlos and Messara, most of which are miniatures, indicate the high standards of manufacturing stone vases in the Early Minoan period. The lid on a cylindrical jewel case (*pyxis*) from Zakros with a relief reclining dog for a handle is similar to the lid on a similar *pyxis* from Mochlos; they were both certainly made by the same artisan. There is also a wonderful amphiconic *pyxis* jewel case from Maronia with complex spiral decoration, and ritual vessels called *kernoi*, i.e. rectangular receptacles with two, three or four small shallow cups for placing offerings. Typical of the period are the so-called "bird's-nest" vases that resemble birds' nests, and blossom vases with relief decoration reminiscent of the petals on the calyx of a flower. Other stone vases were found in settlements, but a large number were certainly burial offerings found in graves, particularly vessels of a ritual shape or a non-functional size such as *kernoi* and miniature pots.

Vases of veined stone in various shapes. From Mochlos in eastern Crete, Porti and Platanos Messara. Prepalatial period (2500-1800 BC).





Jewel box (*pyxís*) with lid and the lid of a similar pyxis of slate with incised linear and relief decoration in the form of a dog lying down, from Mochlos and Zakros respectively. Considered to be the work of the same artisan. Prepalatial period (2500-2000 BC).



Stone kernos from Koumassa, with four cavities for offerings and incised ornamentation. Prepalatial period.

Amphiconic jewel case with incised spiral decoration. Maronia, Prepalatial period.



Small stone box with cover and incised linear decoration, perhaps for keeping some cosmetic substance. Koumassa, Prepalatial period.



FIGURINES are undoubtedly related to religious beliefs and ritual practice, although of an unverified nature owing to the lack of sufficient evidence. In Early Minoan Crete just one sacred site has been identified, as noted earlier, the small sanctuary in the settlement of Myrtos, dating to the Early Minoan II phase, in which the clay figurine of the so-called Goddess of Myrtos was found.

The earliest Early Minoan figurines were of stone or clay, entirely schematic with a pointed ending without any indication of anatomical details. Of this type, the most remarkable one, for its size (65 cm), is a figurine from Sampa in central Crete. In the later phases of the Early Minoan there were figurines with more naturalistic features. Although comparatively few have been found, the marble Cycladic-type figurines in a schematic, abbreviated style that depicts standing women with their arms folded under the breasts constitute a special category. Dozens of these figurines have been found especially in graves in central Crete. Despite their characteristic morphology that identifies them as specific Cycladic types, some of these figurines might possibly have been made in Crete. In this regard it is worth noting that at Archanes, a "Cycladic" figurine made of ivory was found, i.e. a material that was not used in the Cyclades, but was popular in Cretan miniature art.

Clay pots and ritual vessels in human and animal shapes have been found chiefly in graves. Three such ritual vessels in the form of a woman with her arms on her breasts were found in Koumassa, Mochlos and Malia. An anthropomorphic rhyton with two apertures was found at Archanes. Ewers (*prochoi*) in the shape of birds were found in graves at Messara, as were figurines of animals, bulls and wild goats. Two clay figurines of bulls are of particular interest, because small human figures have been attached to and between the horns, depicting the capture of the animal and alluding to later representations of bull-leaping. These early works of the potter's craft are full of inspiration, freshness and vitality, a craft destined to enjoy a long and fruitful future.



Two small stone figurines of the Cycladic type on a common base. Tekes Herakleion, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).

Two libation rhyta in the shape of a female figure.
Fourni Archanes and Malia, Prepalatial period
(2200-1800 BC).





Stone male figurine in a religious stance.
Porti Messara, Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).



Marble seated figurine of a rare
Cycladic type. Tekes, Prepalatial period
(2500-2300 BC).

Cycladic type marble figurine. Koumassa, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).



Cycladic type ivory figurine, unique in terms of its material. Fourni Archanes, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).





[Page 72]: Marble figurines of the Cycladic type. Koumassa, Prepalatial period (2500-2300 BC).



Hemispherical vessel with figurines attached inside it representing a flock of sheep with shepherd.
Palaikastro, late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).

3. Trade and external contacts

The sea route between Crete and the Cyclades was already open by the 7th millennium BC, as testified by finds of obsidian in Neolithic Knossos. Moreover, all evidence indicates that it was once again through the Cyclades that Crete became acquainted with metals and their technology and in this way, at the beginning of the 3rd millennium, passed into the Early Bronze Age. Throughout the Early Minoan, close relations with the Cyclades have been confirmed by imports of obsidian, by the importation and imitation of clay and marble Cycladic pots, and possibly by the importation of silver and lead. Crete's Cycladic figurines in particular, as objects with ideological symbolism, indicate the depth of relations with the Cyclades. The development of shipping and trade, economic prosperity, the evolution of craft production and the need to import raw materials that did not exist on the island brought Crete into contact with regions beyond the Cyclades, such as Kythera and the Peloponnese.

Through trade, semiprecious stones reached Crete, as did scarabs and stone vases from Egypt, copper from the Aegean and Cyprus, tin from Asia Minor and ivory from the ports of Syria.

The ever-increasing activity is attested by representations of ships on seals and clay models of boats, such as the two from Mochlos and Palaikastro, while the clay model of a cart, again from Palaikastro, gives us a picture of the means of land transportation and communication used towards the end of the Early Minoan period.





Clay model of a four-wheeled cart with solid wheels. Palaikastro, late Prepalatial period (2000-1800 BC).



Clay model of a boat. Mochlos, Prepalatial period (2500-1800 BC).



THE WONDROUS MINOAN WORLD

Middle and Late Bronze Age – 2nd millennium BC

PALAEOPALATIAL, NEOPALATIAL AND POSTPALATIAL PERIODS



At the dawn of the second millennium BC, a multitude of developments took place that had been set in motion at the end of the third millennium and had a decisive influence on the amazing zenith of the Minoan civilisation in the centuries to come. The new reality was marked by the establishment of the first Minoan palaces, which were centres of secular and religious power and of administrative and economic organisation, as well as the seat of princes who had very probably come forward from the class of local leaders of the foregoing period. The largest palace centres developed on sites of significant Prepalatial settlements that developed into cities clustered round the palace, surrounded by regional settlements and linked with harbours to support and develop commercial and financial exchanges as well as the market network. Bureaucracies were established that used two different types of writing, hieroglyphics and Linear A script, in addition to sealing with seals and rings.

Contrary to the previous period, religion took shape in an organised system of worship in the palace, home and open-air. Splendid group ceremonies were held in palaces, cities and sanctuaries in the countryside, events that testify to social cohesion. The complex, well-organised social and administrative system headed by the prince and the increasingly powerful palace and religious hierarchy caused the Minoan civilisation to spread throughout the Aegean and Mediterranean. References to the "Pax Minoica" and to the "Minoan thalassocracy" allude to the power of the Minoan world during the period of its heyday. And it was at precisely that point, almost like a law of nature, that the system suddenly collapsed. In about 1450 BC, the palaces, villas and settlements were all destroyed and the Minoan presence in the Aegean and the East vanished. Natural disasters and internal political and social disruptions may possibly have caused the collapse of the Minoan system. The palace of Knossos alone survived, but the old ruling class was replaced by a new dynasty. The new princes of Knossos were Mycenaeans, as shown by their archives, written in Linear B script in the Greek language. But, despite the force of their arms as demonstrated by the finds, Mycenaean rule of Knossos was short-lived and in the 14th century BC, the palace was destroyed for good. After 1200 BC there is no evidence of central administration in Crete. By the

[Page 76]: The "Prince with the Lilies" or "King-Priest". Relief wall painting from the palace of Knossos, one of the most famous works of the Minoan period, emblematic image of the Minoan world. The young man is depicted striding proudly to the left with one hand on his bare chest, toward a meadow with lilies in bloom, just a few fragments of which have been preserved. He is wearing the typical Minoan short garment, the *zoma*, a splendid crown of lilies and long feathers on his head and necklaces round his neck.

end of the 2nd millennium BC, the new Dorian tribes arrived to provide their contribution to the civilisation of the historical Hellenic years, early in the first millennium.

Palaces, villas and settlements

The largest palaces were constructed in the centre of the most important Minoan cities, Knossos, Phaistos and Malia in central Crete, early in the second millennium BC. Smaller and later ones were those of Zakros and Petras in the east and Galatas in the centre. Also significant was the palatial structure at Archanes near Knossos. But the most important palace on Crete and the most distinguished monument of the Minoan civilisation is unquestionably the palace at Knossos, seat of the mythic King Minos and, for more than three hundred years, the strongest centre of power in Minoan Crete.

The Minoan palace is a magnificent complex of buildings around a central court, in which miscellaneous functions, ordinary and official, administrative and religious were accommodated. The palace ran the bureaucracy that controlled and transported output, organised domestic and foreign trade, kept records, stored products, and produced luxury goods. The king and his court were at the top of the social hierarchy. The authority residing in the palace sought to ensure the stability of the social system, its prosperity and cohesion, and at the same time set its seal on the social hierarchy by promoting a refined life style. Ceremonies and symposia were held in large ceremonial halls. Public gatherings, feasts and events of a social or religious nature were held in out-door areas, such as palace courts, where the population would gather on feast days.

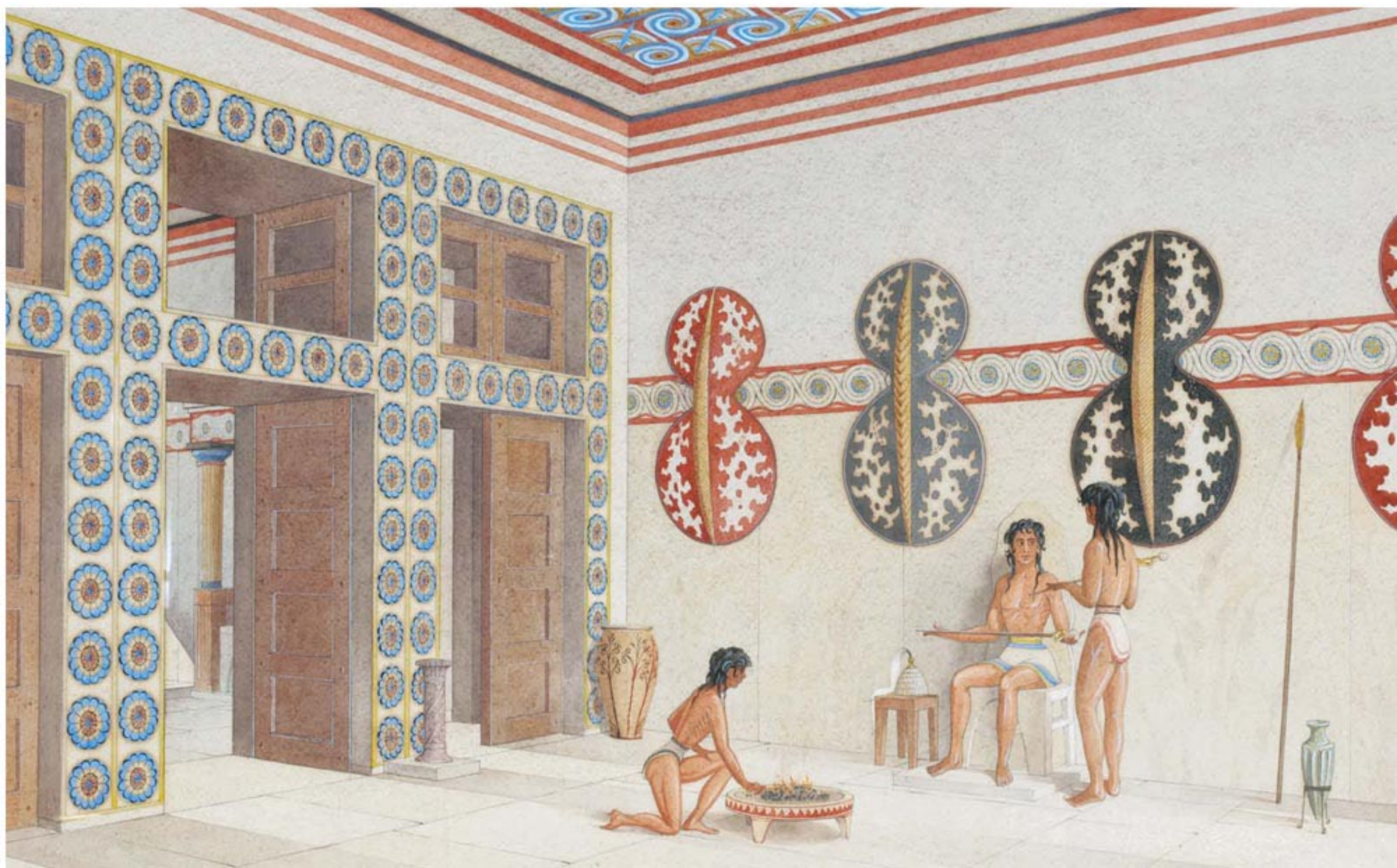
Cities grew up around the palaces, with a systematic town plan, city blocks and stone-paved streets that led to the palace and the port, as can be observed in the city of Malia. Urban dwellings, depending on the relationship of their owners with the palace hierarchy, were lavish buildings with two or more storeys, wall paintings, large rooms, interconnected rooms with pier and door partitions (*polythyra*), staircases and light wells, such as certain houses near the palace of Knossos. In the smaller settlements, houses are also smaller, with one or two storeys, and with one room larger than the others. In larger settlements, such as Palaikastro, houses have dressed stone facades and form city blocks that are defined by straight intersecting streets. The settlement at Gournia, built on the slope of a hill, has three streets that lead to the main building. A clear picture is provided of the Minoan house in 1550 BC by the unique Minoan model from Archanes, a clay model of a two-storey Minoan house with doors and windows, a covered flat roof and a balcony.

Villas, whether included in small settlements, or isolated buildings in flat or mountain regions, were large structures with spacious rooms and large storage areas. They constituted key points in the system of managing and controlling production in the countryside and likewise performed administrative functions, as shown in several cases by finds of archival tablets bearing Linear A script and clay sealings. Other villas were in agricultural regions such as the country villa at Vathypetro with its well-preserved grape press, but also in mountainous areas like Zominthos on Mt Psiloritis, in order to capitalise on stockbreeding production and timber from the forest; others were in coastal areas, perhaps trading posts, like Amnisos.



ABOVE: View of the west wing looking toward the Central Court of the palace at Knossos.

BELOW: The interior of the "Hall of the Double Axes" ("King's Apartment") at the palace of Knossos. Painted reconstructions by Piet de Jong, who collaborated with Arthur Evans.





The Palace of Knossos

The celebrated palace of Knossos, the most magnificent Minoan monument, residence of the mythical king Minos, was for about three hundred years, i.e. from 1650 BC to 1350 BC, the main centre of power in Crete. Its history is even longer and its architecture as complex as its functions. The palace was built early in the second millennium and destroyed two hundred years later, at the end of the Palaeopalatial period. It was re-built in a more splendid form, suffered fresh disasters and repairs and was ultimately destroyed by fire in 1350 BC. For the last hundred years of its life, it was the seat of the Mycenaean dynasty that had succeeded the Minoan kings after the large-scale disaster in Crete in 1450 BC and the collapse of the Minoan palace system.

Built with sumptuous materials, on the basis of an intricate and coherent architectural design, using highly advanced construction techniques, and boasting an impressive water supply and sewage system, the palace of Knossos, twice the size of the other two large palaces at Phaistos and Malia, is the monumental symbol of the Minoan civilisation. Labyrinthine corridors and the famous Grand Staircase linked the multiple areas of buildings from three to five storeys high that were situated around the Central Court. The west wing housed the religious and cult activities; in the east wing were the royal apartments. The palace contained large storerooms in which were enormous storage jars (*pitharia*) and various workshops. The South Propylaeum and North Entrance were fortified by colonnaded bastions. Public events were held in the so-called Theatre with the Royal Road and the open-air Courts. The Throne Room, with its wall paintings and contiguous underground purification tank (or "Lustral Basin"), was the most official venue for religious activities. This was where the famous "Throne of Minos" was located, the alabaster throne on which – according to Arthur Evans, the archaeologist who excavated Knossos – sat the "King-Priest", the secular and religious leader, and head of the senior officials who were seated on the benches surrounding the throne.

Many of the exceptional exhibits in the Herakleion Museum have come from the excavation of the palace and the large structures around it, including some of its most famous works, symbols of Minoan civilisation, such as the Snake Goddesses and other findings from the Sacred Treasuries, the rhyton in the shape of a bull's head, the ivory bull-leaper, the relief wall painting of the "Prince with the Lilies", the wall painting of the bull-leaping, and others.

[Pages 82 and 83 BELOW]: Clay architectural model of a two-storey Minoan house from Archanes. The entrance, window frames, stairway and roof are rendered in detail, as is the balcony on which a human figure was standing. Neopalatial period (1600 BC).





Clay model of the façade of a two-storey building. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).



The Palace at Phaistos

Early in the 2nd millennium BC, the palace at Phaistos, the powerful political and administrative centre of south central Crete, was built on the Messara plain. According to mythological tradition, the king of Phaistos was Rhadamanthys, brother of Minos, the illustrious king of Knossos. Of the first palace at Phaistos, which was destroyed in 1650 BC, one section of the dressed stone façade has been unearthed together with the West Court and storerooms in which hundreds of examples of the famous polychrome pots known as Kamares ware were found, perhaps the most attractive pottery exhibits in the Herakleion Museum. The palace's administrative activities are attested to by various scenes depicted on clay sealings. The new palace was built in about 1500 BC but its life was short. It was destroyed in 1450 BC, without ever having reached its previous level of prosperity. The enigmatic inscribed clay disk known as the Phaistos Disk, one of the Museum's best-known exhibits, was brought to light during the excavation of this palace.

The Palace at Malia

The second largest palace after Knossos was in north central Crete at Malia; it was larger than Phaistos, but built of less costly construction materials. A very small part, chiefly the stone-paved West Court, has been preserved of the first palace on the site, which was founded early in the second millennium and destroyed around 1700 BC. The new palace was built in 1650 BC and, like almost all the large Minoan centres, was destroyed in 1450 BC. Around the central court there were platforms, a crypt and an altar, while the north wing contained the official quarters, workshops and storerooms. In the Herakleion Museum, significant finds are exhibited from the palace at Malia, such as a dagger and three swords with hilts of crystal, ivory and gold, the latter bearing the representation of an acrobat, the stone handle of a sceptre in the shape of a panther's body and an axe, all of which were probably symbols of the power of the leader and the palace officials of Malia.

The Palace at Zakros

On the southeast edge of Crete, the palace at Zakros was established just before 1500 BC in a valley that ends in a harbour, a strategic site that enabled its inhabitants to exploit the maritime trade routes to the East. In the east wing were the official apartments and an outdoor area with a circular water tank. The south wing contained the workshops and in the north one were storerooms and a purification tank. In the main west wing, which housed shrines and large halls for ceremonies and symposia, treasuries were excavated that were found intact under the disaster level of the 1450 BC fire. The famous stone religious vessels from the treasuries and the valuable imported materials such as talents and tusks are exhibits of particular interest in the Herakleion Museum.

The Palace at Galatas

The fifth Minoan palace being excavated in central Crete, at Galatas Herakleion, is at the centre of an extensive Minoan settlement. Four wings are grouped round the stone-paved central court. In the middle of the largest one, the north wing, which houses the official apartments, there is a great hall with interconnecting rooms (*polythyra*) and a light well, which constituted the seat of the local authority. In the east wing, there was a hypostyle hall with a central fireplace beside the palace kitchen, in which officials may have dined. It was built in about 1650 BC and was destroyed by an earthquake in 1500 BC.

The "Royal Villa" at Ayia Triada

The "Royal Villa" at Ayia Triada, which is situated very close to Phaistos, was built in about 1550 BC, i.e. just before the new palace at Phaistos, and was destroyed by fire in 1450 BC, like all other important Minoan centres. It succeeded the first palace at Phaistos as the economic and administrative centre of the region, depriving the new palace there of this role, and appears to have had connections with Knossos. The two wings, with an open-air space between them, consisted of groups of interconnecting rooms (*polythyra*), storerooms and stairways. On the site of the ruins, a Mycenaean megaron, the so-called "Agora" and an open-air shrine were subsequently built.

In the villa's disaster layer from the fire in 1450 BC, excavation revealed a valuable group of exceptional works of art, precious materials, records in Minoan script and sealings. The famous black serpentine vessels, the "Harvesters' Vase", the "Boxers' Vase" and the "Chieftain's Cup", the wall paintings depicting the natural landscape, the bronze and clay figurines of worshippers and the copper ingots from the Treasury are among the Museum's most noteworthy exhibits.

The palace building at Archanes

The palace complex that is being excavated at Archanes, 15 km. south of Knossos, was, in Evans's opinion, the summer dwelling of the kings of Knossos. The multi-storeyed building had an impressive gateway with two columns and four incurved altars, a number of rooms, some of which were adorned with wall paintings, and extensive storerooms filled with large storage jars. It was destroyed by fire in 1450 BC.



Social structure and daily life

At the tip of the social pyramid was the king, flanked by the palace hierarchy; under them were regional leaders who resided in country villas or smaller palaces. The priestly class occupied a special position as they supervised religious activities. The wealthy middle-class lived in the cities, while seamen – who opened the maritime trade routes to the Aegean and the East and fostered trade – lived in the ports. Primary production relied on the farmers and stockbreeders in the countryside who supplied the cities. Skilled artisans worked on imported raw materials in their workshops, where they made the famous Minoan artefacts that were luxury items in great demand on foreign markets. Women wove cloth of linen and wool and needle-women embroidered the heavily decorated clothing worn by the men and women of the upper class.

Ceremonies, feasts, symposia and spectacles were all events that everybody attended and participated in, each according to his status in the complex Minoan hierarchy. Details about the Minoan way of life and daily occupations are provided by visual representations, especially wall paintings, seals and sealings, finds from graves and settlements, inscribed tablets bearing the Linear B script, analyses of organic remains, the osteological study of bone matter, and research into technological applications. The upper classes demonstrated their social status by wearing lavish clothing and elaborate coiffures, paying attention to their appearance, and acquiring costly objects of precious material. The Minoan women who are depicted on wall paintings and in



figurines wore a long skirt, either plain or flounced, and a fitted bodice. Aprons, short stoles over the shoulders, headdresses or hats completed the outfit according to the occasion and the season. Precious jewellery was added to enhance their appearance. The short men's garment, the *zoma*, covered the buttocks and thighs and consisted of a loincloth and codpiece and was wrapped around the thighs and tied at the waist with a band. Older men wore a long cloak like a mantle. One factor in the upper-class way of life was their concern for their appearance, as shown by mirrors with elaborate carved ivory handles, blades for men – who are always represented without beards – tweezers, finely worked ivory combs and elaborate cases in which beauty objects and cosmetics were kept.

The life of the lower, productive classes was of course different, since their daily life was interwoven with arduous, difficult labour that affected the state of their health and the mortality rate of members of these social groups, as several studies have shown.

The dietary habits of the population were based on what is called today the Mediterranean trio: cereals, pulses and olive oil. They also included wine and considerable quantities of meat, as shown by the abundant animal bones, mainly sheep and goats, cattle and pigs, but also game such as hares, wild goats and deer.

There were utensils of all types and of various materials, clay, metal and stone, but also of wood,



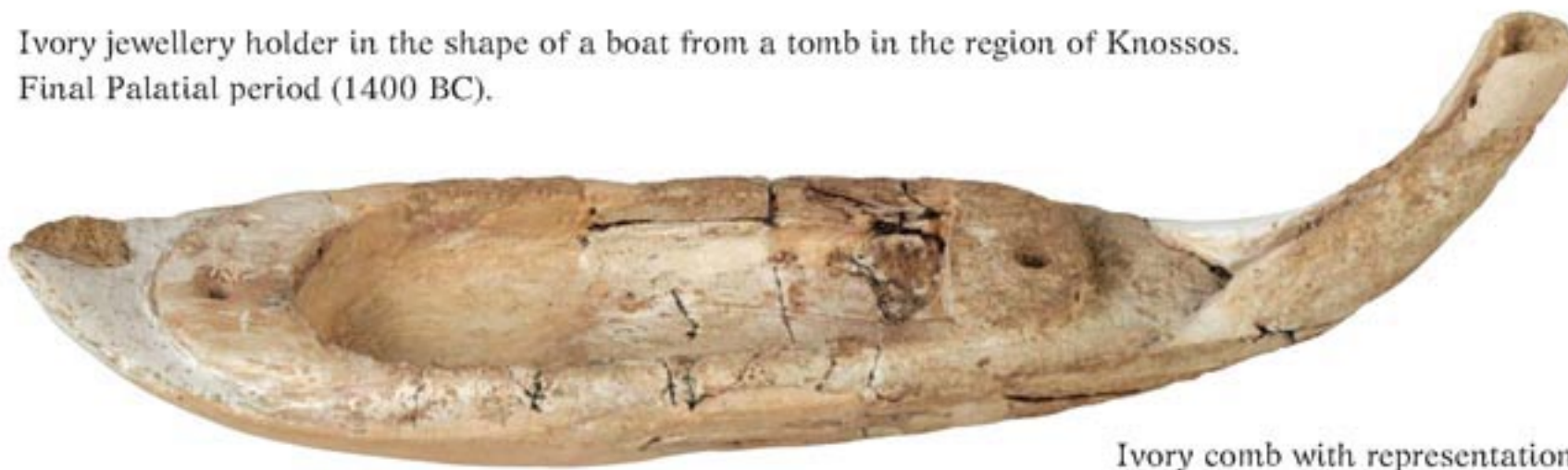
Bronze tools: chisels, pickaxes, sickle, awl, tongs and fishhooks of various sizes. From different sites in central and eastern Crete, Neopalatial-Postpalatial period (1600-1300 BC).

straw and leather that have not been preserved. There were tripod cooking pots in all Minoan houses, and in the palaces luxury utensils served the various daily household needs.



Ivory comb bearing the image of reptiles and a rosette from a grave at Karteros. Final Palatial period (1400-1300 BC).

Ivory jewellery holder in the shape of a boat from a tomb in the region of Knossos. Final Palatial period (1400 BC).



Ivory comb with representations of sphinxes, a rosette and spirals from a grave at Katsambas. Final Palatial period (1400-1300 BC).



Religion and cult

The religion of the Minoans is expressed as the worship of nature. The forces of fertility in nature, the wellsprings of life, are deified and represented in human form as the Great Goddess of Nature. Her procreating attributes are indicated for the first time in the 3rd millennium BC in the figurine of the Goddess of Myrtos, who is holding a pitcher and giving life to nature through water. During the second millennium BC, the established common religious awareness and cult activities are reflected in the rich iconography focused on the emblematic image of the famous Snake Goddess.

The religious universe of the Minoans came into being gradually, starting in the late 3rd millennium BC, during which time religious and cult activities were expressed as worship of dead ancestors and spirits at Early Minoan graves. Early in the second millennium, the dynamic developments taking place in all realms also marked the mass dissemination of this worship which, from 1900 to 1700 BC was performed in the open air, on mountain tops, slopes and high grounds or in clearings in which simple stone structures were built. In the Peak Sanctuaries, as these early Minoan shrines are called, the faithful would gather from the surrounding agricultural and stockbreeding regions to place their many dedications and offerings, seeking the assistance and protection of the deity for themselves and their animals. These clay votive offerings are anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, women with long skirts and high hats, men wearing a codpiece with a dagger at the waist, cattle, sheep and goats, birds and other animals such as foxes or weasels. Among these, one is moved by the offerings of the sick who are seeking a cure: replicas of afflicted limbs, legs and arms, half-bodies perhaps denoting a hemiplegic state, a woman with one markedly swollen leg who is depicted seated, incapable of standing, and the naked body of another woman with her sex emphasised, perhaps suggesting gynaecological disease or infertility.

The shrine at Piskokefalo Siteia, where clay figurines of a particularly high quality were found, dates to the end of this period. Women worshippers are portrayed with a long skirt pleated on the side and with particularly elaborate hair-dos. Male worshippers, wearing a zoma, have a slim waist and strong, overemphasised thighs.

Most outdoor shrines of this type were abandoned in about 1700 BC. Some of them, however, were upgraded between 1700 and 1500 BC by the erection of large structures, enclosures and platforms, such as the sanctuaries at the peak of Mt Youchtas near Archanes and in the mountains of Syme Viannos. It seems that the faithful from the well-to-do classes of the palace and urban centres used to come to these sanctuaries where, apart from votive offerings, they would dedicate bronze figurines such that of the worshipper from Syme, sealstones, jewellery and stone offering tables with dedicatory inscriptions carved in Linear A script. An outdoor sanctuary of this type, such as at Youchtas and Syme, is depicted in low relief on the chlorite ritual rhyton found in the palace of Zakros: in a mountainous rocky landscape, a three-part sanctuary is surrounded by a constructed enclosure at the centre of which there is a platform. Altars, horns of consecration and the birds that symbolise the presence of the deity all emphasise the sacredness of the shrine; wild goats are seated on the roof of the shrine and cavort among the rocks.

At the same period, worship was conducted in several large caves such as the Dictaeon Cave in eastern Crete and at Skoteino in the centre of the island, from which we have the two beautiful bronze male figurines in the characteristic stance of the Minoan worshipper with the upper body bent backward and one hand touching the forehead in a gesture of prayer. But the most important



Clay head from a female figurine with elaborate hairstyle, possibly from the peak sanctuary at Pyrgos Tylissos (1700-1600 BC).

bronze figurines of this type in the Herakleion Museum are the two worshippers from Tylissos, who are represented in the typical stance of worship described above, with the hand to the forehead. One depicts a young man bending his body backward in a movement of great intensity, the other an older, stout man. The find from the small cave at Arkalohori was also very important, as it turned out to be a veritable treasury of gold, silver and bronze double axes and hundreds of votive swords of all sizes. It has been hypothesised that a military deity may have been worshipped here.

The official palace and household cult was different in form from open-air worship. Religious rites were conducted in rooms in the palaces, while mass religious gatherings were held in their open-air courts. In houses near the palace that belonged to officials of the palace hierarchy, there were likewise special rooms with a platform and columns for holding cult rituals. At Knossos, the palace cult areas occupied the greater part of the west wing of the palace, and constituted the so-called Main Sanctuary that included, among other things, the Throne Room with the purification tank ("Lustral Basin"), the colonnaded crypts with the Sacred Treasuries, and also the two large central and west courts that were venues for mass social and religious events. In repositories below



Two attached bell-shaped figurines with a schematic human figure between them and a bell-shaped figurine. Tylissos, Early Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).

Model of small rhinoceros beetles (genus *Oryctes*) from the peak sanctuary of Traostalos Siteia. Palaeopalatial period (1800-1600 BC).



the floors, an assemblage of valuable cult vessels from the sanctuary was found that had been kept there after the palace was destroyed in 1600 BC. The objects in the Sacred Treasury at Knossos constitute a very significant group with strong symbolism, related to the cult of the Great Goddess of Nature and, for this reason, extremely important to the study of the Minoan religion.

The most outstanding items in the group as a whole are three female figurines of faience, two of which have been preserved intact with their painted details. They are the famous Snake Goddesses, landmarks of Minoan civilisation and perhaps the most popular exhibits in the Herakleion Museum. Their name was derived from the snakes that the two of them are holding: on the larger goddess, they are coiled around her body and arms; the smaller one is displaying them by holding them out in her hands. The snakes symbolise the earthly, chthonic nature of the goddess's cult and the feline animal on the head of the smaller one suggests her rule over wildlife. The goddesses are wearing rich clothing: a long flounced skirt, an apron painted to render embroidered or woven details of real clothing, and a fitted bodice open in front leaving their full breasts uncovered, symbol of the fertility of the woman, the goddess and, by extension, nature.

The other objects from the group supplement the conceptual symbolism of the figurines, depicting aspects of the cosmic universe over which the goddess rules: the stone cross, unexpectedly similar to the Christian symbol, is nevertheless a most ancient symbol of the heavens and the stars. The replicas of branches with fruit and the blossoms of the lily, crocus and papyrus in faience symbolise the flowering and fecundity of nature. The taming of nature's wildlife and the fertility of the animals are implied conceptually on two faience tablets that depict in relief a cow and a wild goat nursing their young. The marine domain of the goddess is signified by the nautilus, flying fish and schematic rocks, but also by the many seashells, painted in stripes of red pigment. The two faience models of dress – which perhaps suggest the dedication of actual sacred garments in shrines – are adorned with crocuses in flower, alluding once more to the procreative power of the goddess over nature.



Clay male and female figurines of worshippers from the peak sanctuaries at Petsofas and Traostalos and from the "Hamezi House". The women are wearing long skirts and hats, the men a short *zoma* with a dagger at the waist. Palaeopalatial period (1800-1600 BC).



The ways in which the goddess appears to men and the various stages and interpretations of this appearance (Epiphany) are represented chiefly on a number of gold signet rings. The famous "Ring of Minos", rings from Isopata and Selopoulo Knossos, and from Archanes, Poros, Phaistos and Mochlos depict the various stages of the Epiphany, the primary cult activities related to the visionary divine appearance and the physical space and shrines in which the marvellous event takes place. The goddess appears descending from heaven, as she hovers in the air, and then sits on the ground, on pillars or shrines and even floats on a boat in the sea; thus her advent unites sky, earth and sea, that is the cosmic universe of her realm. In the Epiphany cycle, a male divinity also appears, of equal importance, the goddess's male consort. Representations of the "Sacred Conversation" between the two may perhaps suggest the forthcoming intercourse of the divine couple. The main cult activities associated with the Epiphany are tree-worship, i.e. the worship of the sacred tree by adorants in a state of ecstasy, and the cult of the sacred stone *baitylolatria*, which is conducted in front of the *baityl*, a sacred rock or small pillar, by worshippers who are either lying or kneeling on the ground.



Clay figurine-rhyton in the shape of a pregnant woman in an attitude of worship. Gournia, Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).



Clay models shaped like arms, legs, half-bodies, and the bottom part of a female trunk, from the peak sanctuary at Petsofas. Seated figurine of a woman with a swollen leg from the peak sanctuary at Traostalos. These were votive offerings requesting the cure of the corresponding ailing parts of the body Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).

Clay figurines of cattle and goats from the peak sanctuary at the Maza site, Kalo Horio, Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).



A primary element in the rites of the Epiphany was the dance by groups of women, as depicted in the scene on the ring from Isopata and on a clay offerings table from Phaistos. The sacredness of the cult site, building and vessels is signified and emphasised by the symbols of the Minoan religion. First was the emblem of the Minoan religion, the double axe, perhaps derived from the axe as the instrument by which the bull is sacrificed. Characteristic examples of the type are the impressive enormous axes from Nirou Chani, a highly embellished axe with double edges from Zakros and the valuable assemblage of gold, silver and bronze axes from the cave at Arkalohori. Another potent symbol is that of the horns of consecration or *kerata kathosioseos*, possibly a schematic rendering of the horns of the sacred cult animal, the bull. The sacral knot has apotropaic significance. The incurved altar as a symbol of sacredness was taken from an actual small altar; similarly the eight-shaped shield, perhaps also a deterrent symbol, was based on the shape of a real shield.



After the devastation of the palaces and large centres in 1450 BC, the centrally coordinated official cult was also undermined. Small communities now had their own shrine, a little room with a bench around the wall, on which were placed figurines of the goddess in the stereotyped stance with the raised hands, a gesture of entreaty or blessing. Sacred symbols such as horns, birds, snakes etc., identified the attributes of the goddess. The oldest small shrine of this type is at Knossos and functioned in about 1300 BC after the palace was destroyed. Striking idols of the goddess, with raised hands and sacred symbols on the diadem round her head, have been found in analogous shrines at Gazi, Kania Gortyn, Karfi and elsewhere, such as the significant and much discussed Goddess of the Poppies found at Gazi, whose diadem is embellished by replicas of the fruit of the *Papaver somniferum*, the opium poppy. Astral symbols such as the disk of the sun suggest the cosmic realm of the goddess, the horns of consecration her divine essence; the birds symbolise the Epiphany and the snakes her earthly, chthonic essence. Cult vessels were standardised in these post-palatial shrines, such as the clay tubes that were probably used for libations in front of the idols of the goddess with the raised hands.



Clay figurines of a pair of worshippers from the open-air sanctuary at PISOKEFALO SITEIA. The woman is depicted carefully coiffed wearing a long skirt, the man with powerful thighs and a zoma. Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).





Clay heads of women with elaborate hairstyles and a high hat.

Two clay models and, between them, a real rhinoceros beetle; the models were related to the beliefs of stock-raising communities. Open-air sanctuary of Piskokefalo Siteia, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).





Cylindrical clay kernoi with attached cups for placing offerings. Knossos, late Palaeopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).



Clay architectural model of a sanctuary with three columns topped by horizontal roof beams with birds sitting on them. The birds are believed to symbolise the epiphany of the deity. Knossos, late Palaeopalatial period.



LEFT: Small amphora with perforated body and affixed relief snake. RIGHT: Model of three stacked "honeycakes" with a snake coiled between them. Evans believed they were related to the sacredness of the snake and the cult of the "household serpent". Knossos, late Palaeopalatial period.



Clay model of the façade of a shrine crowned by the horns of consecration (sacred horns). Knossos, late Palaeopalatial period.



Small clay figurine in the shape of a seated female monkey wearing a cap.
Phaistos, late Palaeopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).



Clay figurines-rhyta of a bull for the offering of liquids. Phaistos, late Palaeopalatial period.



Figurine of a woman worshipper, whose face is sculpted naturalistically, with hair carefully arranged and a long skirt. Phaistos, late Palaeopalatial period.



Clay replica of a female figure suspended between two posts, probably a depiction of the Epiphany.
Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).





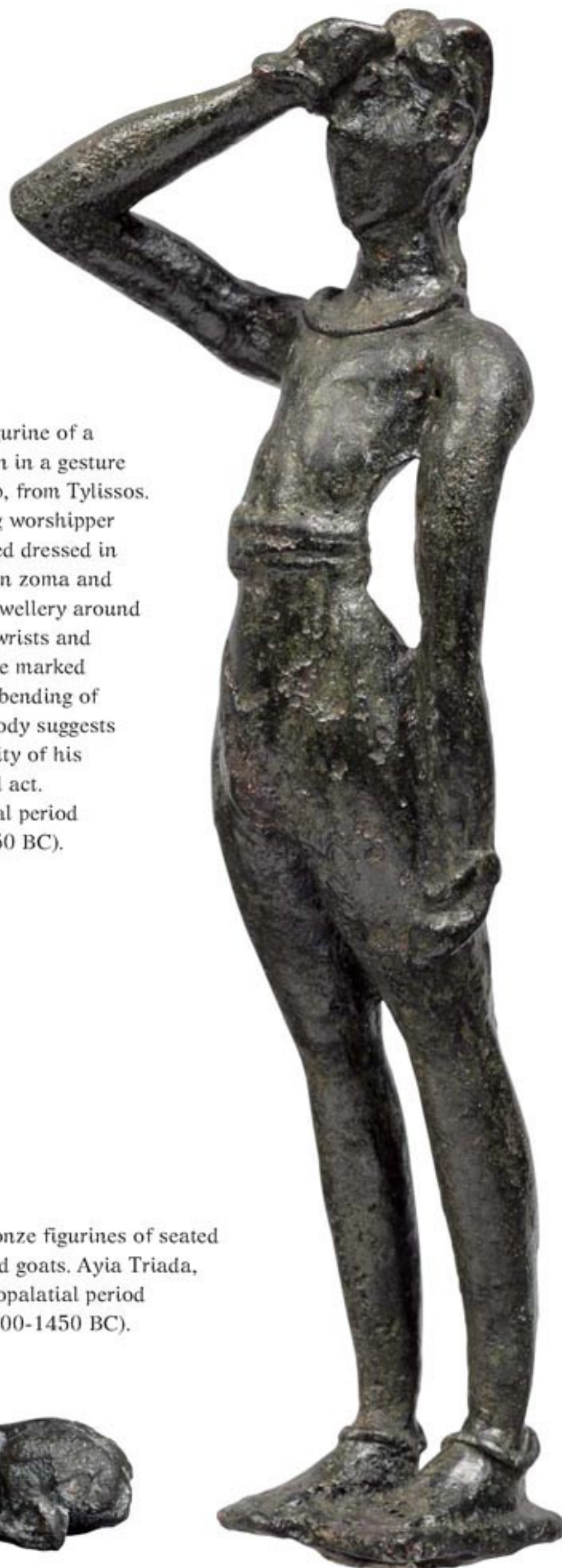
Figurine of a seated female figure. Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



Clay figurine of a *kourotrophos*: a female figure, perhaps a goddess, holding a child. From a grave in the Knossos region, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



Bronze figurine of a mature man in an attitude of worship, Tyllissos, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



Bronze figurine of a young man in a gesture of worship, from Tyllissos. The young worshipper is portrayed dressed in the Minoan zoma and wearing jewellery around his neck, wrists and ankles. The marked backward bending of the lean body suggests the intensity of his devotional act. Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



Bronze figurines of seated wild goats. Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).

Bronze figurine from Grivigla Rethymnon,
Postpalatial period (1400-1300 BC).



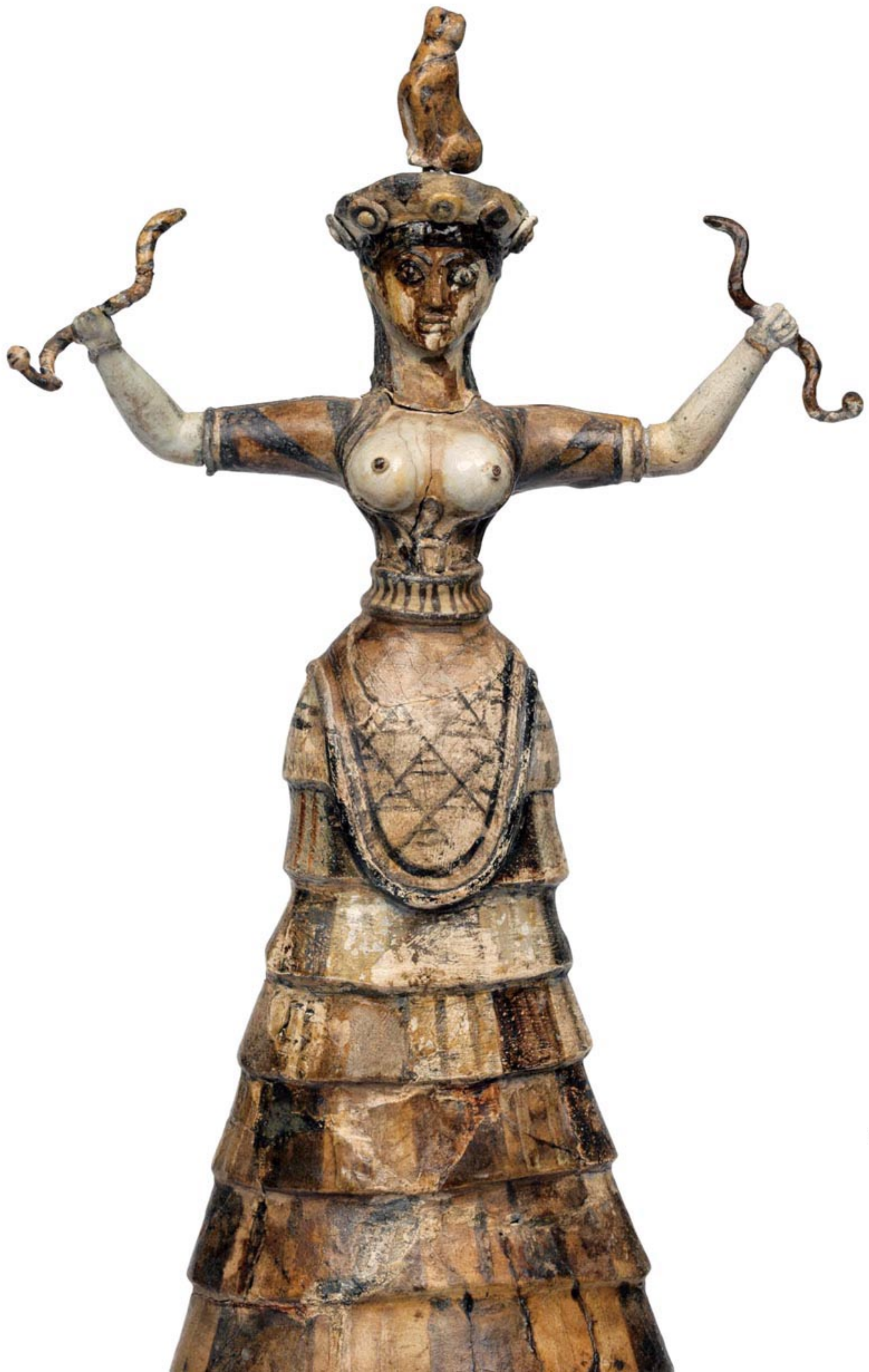
Bronze figurine of a woman.
Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period
(1600-1500 BC).



Small bronze figurine of a worshipper, typical
example of the Minoan naturalistic style.
Skoteino Cave, Neopalatial period
(1600-1500 BC).

The famous figurine of the Snake Goddess. Made of painted faience, it depicts a bare-breasted female figure, a goddess or a priestess. She is wearing rich garments, a long flounced skirt and an embroidered apron, a belt that highlights her narrow waist and a bodice open in front, leaving her full breasts uncovered. The coiling snakes she is holding in her outstretched hands and the small feline creature on her head suggest her dominion over wildlife. The emphasised breasts allude to her fertility attributes. The figurine was found in the "Sanctuary Treasury" at the palace of Knossos. Neopalatial period (1600 BC).





The second, slightly larger faience figurine of the Snake Goddess. The goddess or priestess is presented with bare breasts and richly dressed in a long skirt and embroidered apron. Snakes are coiled around her arms that she is holding out in front of her, and around the hat on her head, on which the head of a snake is visible. Found in the "Sanctuary Treasury" at the palace of Knossos. Neopalatial period (1600 BC).









[Page 112]: Appliqués of faience in a variety of shapes: flying fish, argonaut and cockle shells, eight-shaped shields and a rocky terrain, from a composition depicting a marine landscape (perhaps on a wood panel). From the "Sanctuary Treasury" at the palace of Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600 BC).

Votive faience clothing decorated with crocus flowers. Suggests the offering of actual garments to the deity, a ritual practice that is known in subsequent periods as well. From the "Sanctuary Treasury" at the palace of Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600 BC).



Cross, an astral symbol of veined marble. From the "Sanctuary Treasury" at the palace of Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600 BC).



Faience plaque, part of a larger composition, with a relief depiction of a female wild goat nursing her kid. "Sanctuary Treasury" of Knossos, Neopalatial period.





Two small faience cups with foliate decoration.
"Sanctuary Treasury" at Knossos, Neopalatial period.



Faience plaque, part of a larger composition, with the relief
scene of a cow nursing her calf. "Sanctuary Treasury"
at Knossos, Neopalatial period.



Finial-handle of a sceptre of green slate in the shape of a panther and axe. Believed to symbolise the secular power and religious authority of the king. Palace at Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Clay replica of the horns of consecration, sacred symbol of the Minoan religion. In the centre the haft of a double axe was supported. Knossos, 1500-1350 BC.



Stone hairdo from a large
wooden idol or sphinx.
Knossos, Neopalatial period
(1700-1500 BC).



Artist's reconstruction of
the head of the idol with
the stone coiffure.



Two gold votive double axes with incised decoration from the Arkalohori cave. Early Neopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).

[Page 119]: Gold votive double axes of different sizes from the Arkalohori cave. Early Neopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).





Bronze votive double axes from the
Arkalohori cave. Early Neopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).



Clay figurines of birds from Palaikastro. Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



Bell-shaped model of a ritual faience hieratic "mask" with painted facial features.
Poros, Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).



The "Parisienne". Fragment of a fresco with a female figure, possibly a young priestess, with the sacral knot at her back. The name was given to her by Arthur Evans because of the concern for appearance indicated by her heavily made-up face. Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).

Wall painting to which the "Parisienne" belongs, depicting a symposium. Knossos, Final Palatial period.









[Pages 124-125]: The "Ring of Minos", the largest Minoan gold ring. The bezel and views from the back and side are shown. It depicts the Epiphany and cult activities: the goddess is presented as a small figure in the upper right suspended in the heavens, then seated on a stepped shrine and finally sailing on the sea in a sacred boat. The composition is supplemented by two scenes of tree worship by a man (in the centre) and woman (left) worshipper. Sacred trees sprout out of the shrines, while a small shrine is also shown on the barge. The sea is indicated by a wavy net pattern and the coastline by massive boulders. The suggested symbolism of the scene alludes to the concept of the goddess's dominion over the three levels of the physical world: air, land and sea. Knossos region, near the "Tomb-Shrine", Late Neopalatial period (1500-1400 BC).



Gold ring representing the Epiphany and an ecstatic dance by women in a field of flowers. They are celebrating the wondrous event of the goddess's appearance to mortals on earth. The goddess is depicted as a small figure in the sky with sacred symbols. Tomb at Isopata Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600 BC).



Gold ring portraying a griffin and a goddess suspended in the air with arms outstretched. Cemetery at Fourni Archanes, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



Gold signet ring depicting worship of the *baityl* (sacred stone) by male adorants, between a tree and a bird in flight. From a grave at Selopoulo Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Gold ring depicting a female deity, flanked by scenes from the worship of trees (right) and of the sacred rock (*baityl*) by male worshippers (left). Sacred symbols and a butterfly supplement the picture. Cemetery at Fourni Archanes, Neopalatial period (1600-1400 BC).



Gold signet ring with the scene of a "sacred conversation" between a female and a male deity. The Epiphany is indicated by the small, suspended figure and sacred symbols in the sky; the picture is supplemented by large birds and a scene of tree-worship. Grave at Poros Herakleion, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).

Gold signet ring representing worship of the tree and the sacred rock (*baityl*) by a woman and man worshipper, together with a flying bird. Kalyvia Phaistos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Gold signet ring depicting a seated goddess, a standing female figure in a gesture of worship and a monkey. Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).

The so-called "Dancer". Fragment of a wall painting, most probably representing a suspended female figure, from a pictorial composition depicting the Epiphany, rather than a dance. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).



Gold ring representing eight-shaped shields and sacral knots. Cemetery at Fourni Archanes, Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).



Idols of a goddess with raised hands
from the shrine at Karfi. Postpalatial
period (1200-1100 BC).





Idol of a goddess with raised hands and a bird attached to her conic hat, from the shrine at Gazi. Postpalatial period (1200 BC).

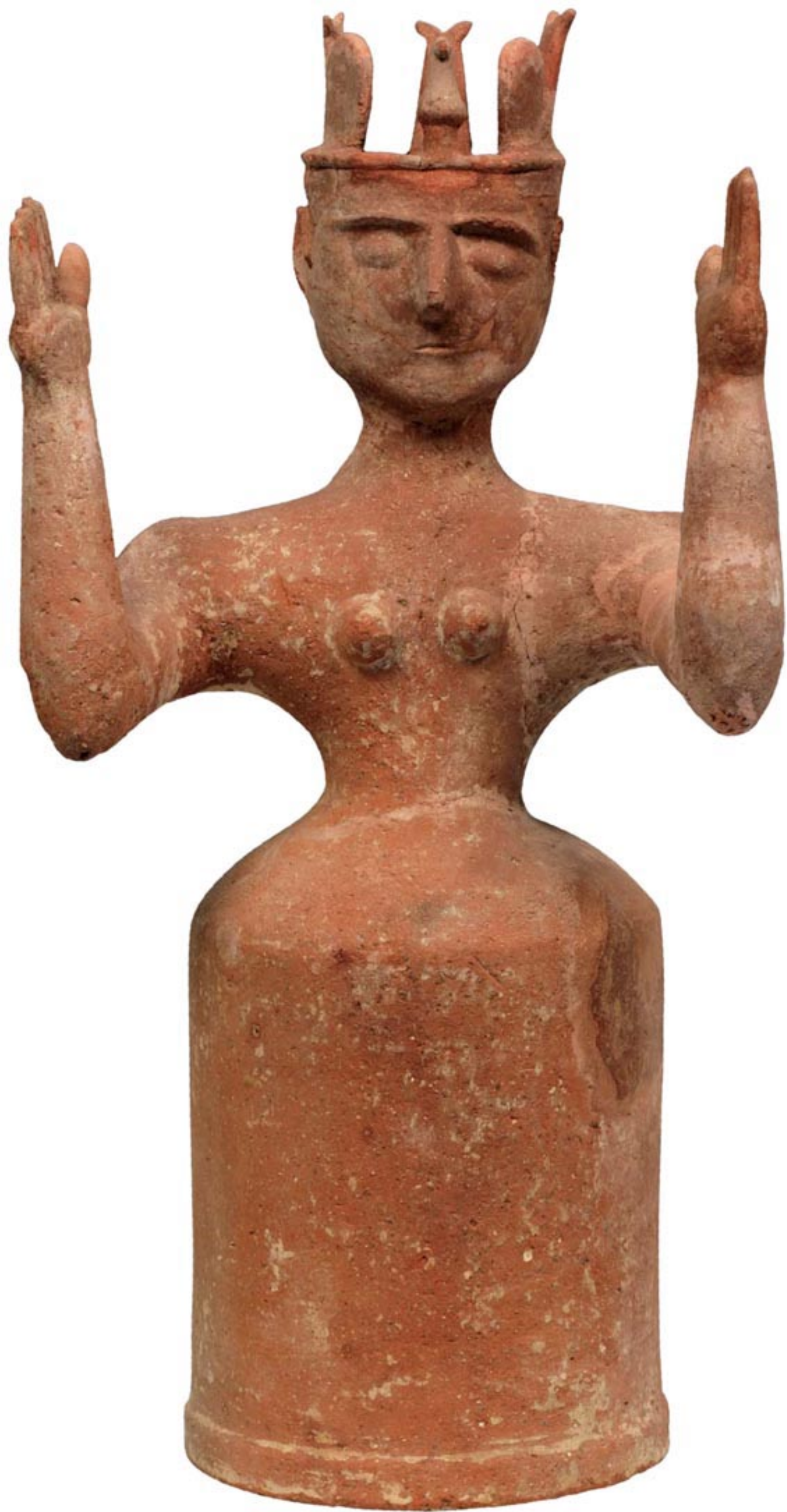


Idol of goddess with raised hands
with three decorative pins on her
diadem, shaped like pods of
the opium poppy, from Gazi.
Postpalatial period (1200 BC).





Idol of a goddess with raised hands and sacred symbols on her head. Shrine at Gazi, Postpalatial period (1200 BC).







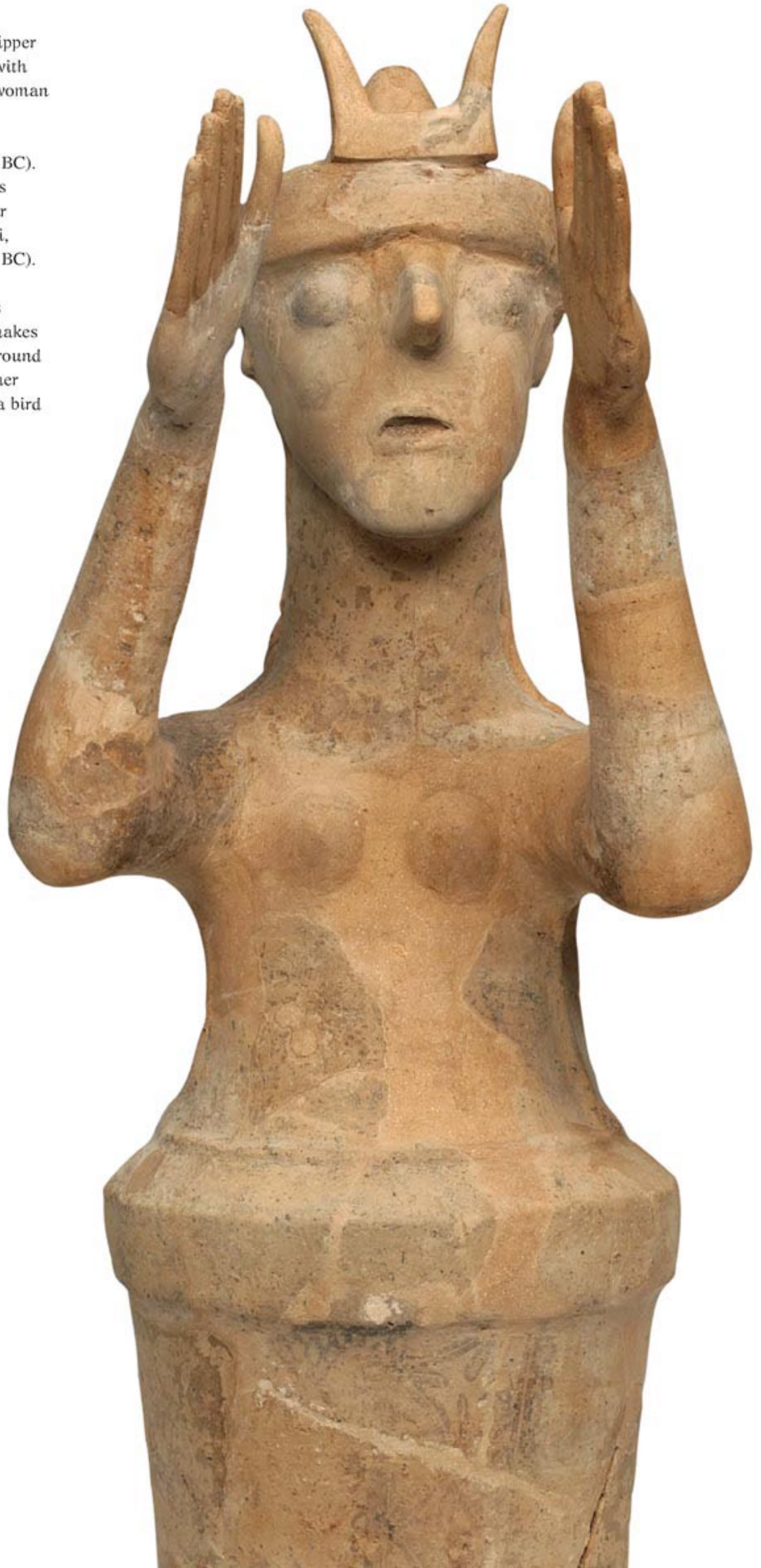
Idol of goddess with raised hands,
with horns of consecration and birds
on the brim of her conic hat.
Shrine at Gazi, Postpalatial period
(1200 BC).





[Page 138]: Figurine of a worshipper holding a bird, idol of goddess with raised hands and figurine of a woman worshipper from the Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos. Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC). Clay stand with open-work walls in the shape of an incurved altar and horns of consecration. Karfi, Postpalatial period (1200-1100 BC).

[Page 139]: Idols of the goddess with raised hands, with relief snakes around her arms, snakeheads around the diadem and on the brim of her conic hat. On one idol, there is a bird attached to her cheek. Shrine at Kania Gortyn, Postpalatial period (1300 BC).



Idols of goddess with raised hands, with diadems decorated with horns of consecration, birds and disks. Shrine at Karfi, Postpalatial period (1200-1100 BC).





[Page 142]: Face of a clay anthropomorphic vase or idol from the Dictaeon Cave. Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC).



Clay figurine of a worshipper. Palaikastro, Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).



Figurine of a bull from Phaistos.
Sub-Minoan period (1100-1000 BC).



Clay figurine of a bull from Phaistos.
Postpalatial period (1200-1100 BC).



Figurine of a creature with the body of
an ox and the head of a man. Ayia Triada,
Sub-Minoan period (1100-1000 BC).



Head of an idol of a goddess or an anthropomorphic being. Kalo Horio, Sub-Minoan period (1100-1000 BC).

Cylindrical offerings vessels with many handles and horns of consecration from the shrine at Gournia. Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).





Rhyton in the shape of a chariot with three wheels, three attached ox-heads and a charioteer behind the semi-circular guard on the chariot. The hole for pouring in the libation liquid is at the top of the charioteer's head, whereas the hole for pouring out the libation is in the snout of the middle ox-head. Karfi, Postpalatial period (1200-1100 BC).



Cult and ritual vessels

The sacred cult vessels and vases, made of various materials, including selected rock, clay, or faience, are among the more important exhibits in the Museum; some of them are unique creations of Minoan art.

Cult vessels were used in the ritual observances of palace, household, open-air and community shrines for liquid, solid or flaming offerings. Rhyta in various shapes, conic, oval, spherical and superbly zoomorphic, were the most popular. Rhyta are vessels for pouring liquid libations and have small holes at appropriate points for filling and pouring out. There are also high kylix-type goblets, the so-called "communion cups" that resemble chalices, vessels in the shape of a triton and large numbers of objects such as offerings tables, clay dishes with multiple receptacles for offerings (*kernoi*), small portable altars of various shapes and materials, some inscribed with Linear A script, incense burners and tubular clay vessels that are found in community and household shrines together with the figurines of the goddess.

There are two superb zoomorphic stone rhyta from Knossos, one in the shape of a bull's head, the other in that of a lioness. The serpentine rhyton in the shape of a bull's head is an outstanding work of Minoan art and an emblem of the Minoan world. The head of the animal has been rendered naturalistically, with the folds in its skin and the curls on its head; particular features are emphasised in different materials, such as the inlays of white seashell around the outline of the snout and the transparent rock crystal eye with an iris of red jasper, lending remarkable vitality to the piece. The rhyton shaped like the head of a lioness in milky off-white marble is a superb work of unique naturalistic plasticity, which also originally had inlays to emphasise the eyes and the snout, but they have now been lost.

Exceptional Minoan works of this type travelled as far as the princely courts of Egypt and the Orient, either through trade or as royal gifts, as shown by wall paintings on Egyptian tombs in which Cretans, called Keftiu, are depicted bringing rhyta to Egypt similar to those found at Knossos.

In the Treasury of the sacred vessels at Knossos, in addition to the lioness, a number of other rhyta were found in various shapes, conic, oval and spherical, and made of marble, alabaster or conglomerate stone. But a fuller picture of the astonishing content of a palace treasury is provided by the ritual vessels from the sanctuary Treasury at the palace of Zakros, which was found intact, just as it had been left at the moment of destruction in 1450 BC. The ritual vessels of Zakros – mainly conic and oval rhyta and long-stemmed "communion cups" like chalices, but also unusual amphoras and one jug – were made of rare stone such as veined marble, alabaster, porphyry, basalt and obsidian, and with singular technical skill. The lapidary artists of the palace workshops made unique vessels, with particular shapes and elaborate handles, with very thin, sometimes crinkled walls and fluting as though this intractable rock had been pliable material. They were concerned to produce not only technical perfection but also high aesthetics. This was why they carefully selected the most appropriate rock cores so that the multicoloured veins would conform as well as possible to the particular shape of each vessel. A characteristic example is the amphora with the double rim

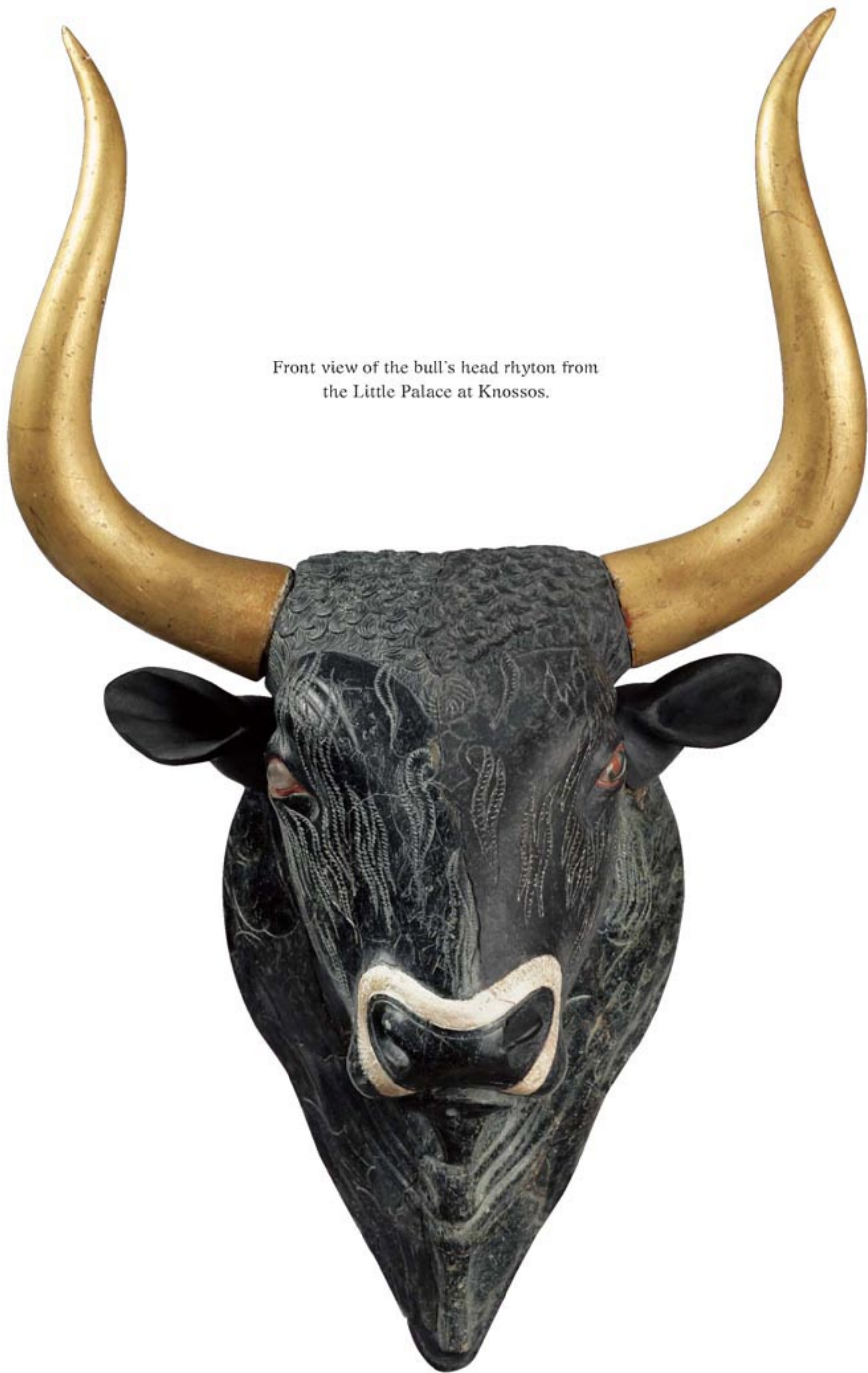
and the high handles on which the artisan succeeded in making spectacular use of the red core of the grey marble by placing it in the centre of the round body. There is also a small rhyton of rock crystal, the most truly elegant work of art among all the vessels found at Zakros, that is another sample of the high degree of technical skill required to process hard natural rock. The handle is made of crystal beads strung onto a bronze wire, while the ring around the neck is decorated with ivory beads covered by gold leaf. Ritual vessels in the form of a triton were also found in Zakros and elsewhere and are usually made of marble or alabaster, so as to approach their natural marine model, but can also be made of obsidian or serpentine. They may have been used in rituals as resonators to invoke the deity.

The three celebrated stone vases from Ayia Triada with the bas-relief representations were also ritual vessels. The famous "Harvesters' Vase" showing a procession of farmers singing as they walk, headed by a priest dressed in a ritual cloak, is regarded as the most significant, owing to the density of the composition and its flawless execution. Equally important is the "Boxers' Vase", on which there are horizontal friezes depicting Minoan sports in low relief: bull leaping, boxing, wrestling. The third, the "Chieftain's Cup" portrays a group of men whose leader is holding a sword on his shoulder and standing in a position of reporting to an official holding a sceptre.

Pots in a shape resembling stone ritual vessels exist in clay as well, such as the rhyta. Some of them will certainly have been used as funnels for practical purposes, but most were ritual objects. Some were elaborately constructed, like the elegant rhyton from Phaistos with its mouth in the form of a lily; others are adorned with sacred symbols, e.g. the sacred horns, or with some decoration of particularly high quality, such as the rhyton in the marine style from Pseira.

There are also several clay zoomorphic rhyta that are counterparts of the expensive stone ones. They are mainly in the form of a bull's head or the entire body of a bull, like the rhyta from Pseira. Their ritual use as libation vessels is corroborated by the small holes for pouring liquids in and out.





Front view of the bull's head rhyton from
the Little Palace at Knossos.



The stone "Chieftain's Cup" from Ayia Triada, depicting an official or priest with a long sceptre and a young man holding a sword. Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).







[Page 156]: Three footed cups, two of which are of veined stone and the middle one of obsidian from Nysiros, and three stone rhyta, two conic and one oval. Ritual vessels with a high degree of aesthetics and superb workmanship from the "Sanctuary Treasury" of the palace at Zakros. Late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



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Elaborate ritual amphora of multicoloured veined stone, with a central red "eye" from the "Sanctuary Treasury" of the palace at Zakros. Late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



[Page 158]: Rhyton in the form of a lioness's head, of off-white translucent limestone, a work of exceptional plasticity rendered naturalistically. The inlays in the snout and eyes, possibly of jasper and crystal, like those on the bull's head rhyton (Photo 150), have not been preserved. Palace of Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



Oval rhyton of rock crystal, a superb work of Minoan lapidary art. The handle consists of crystal beads threaded onto a bronze wire, and gilt disks adorn the ring around the neck. Palace at Zakros, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



Kamares ware rhyton with flower-shaped rim and polychrome decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Rhyton with relief spiky decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Cup-rhyton with double axe and
"sacral knot" from Phaistos.
Late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



Conic rhyton depicting horns
of consecration, from Knossos.
Early Postpalatial period
(1350-1300 BC).



Rhyton of Spartan basalt. Zakros,
Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



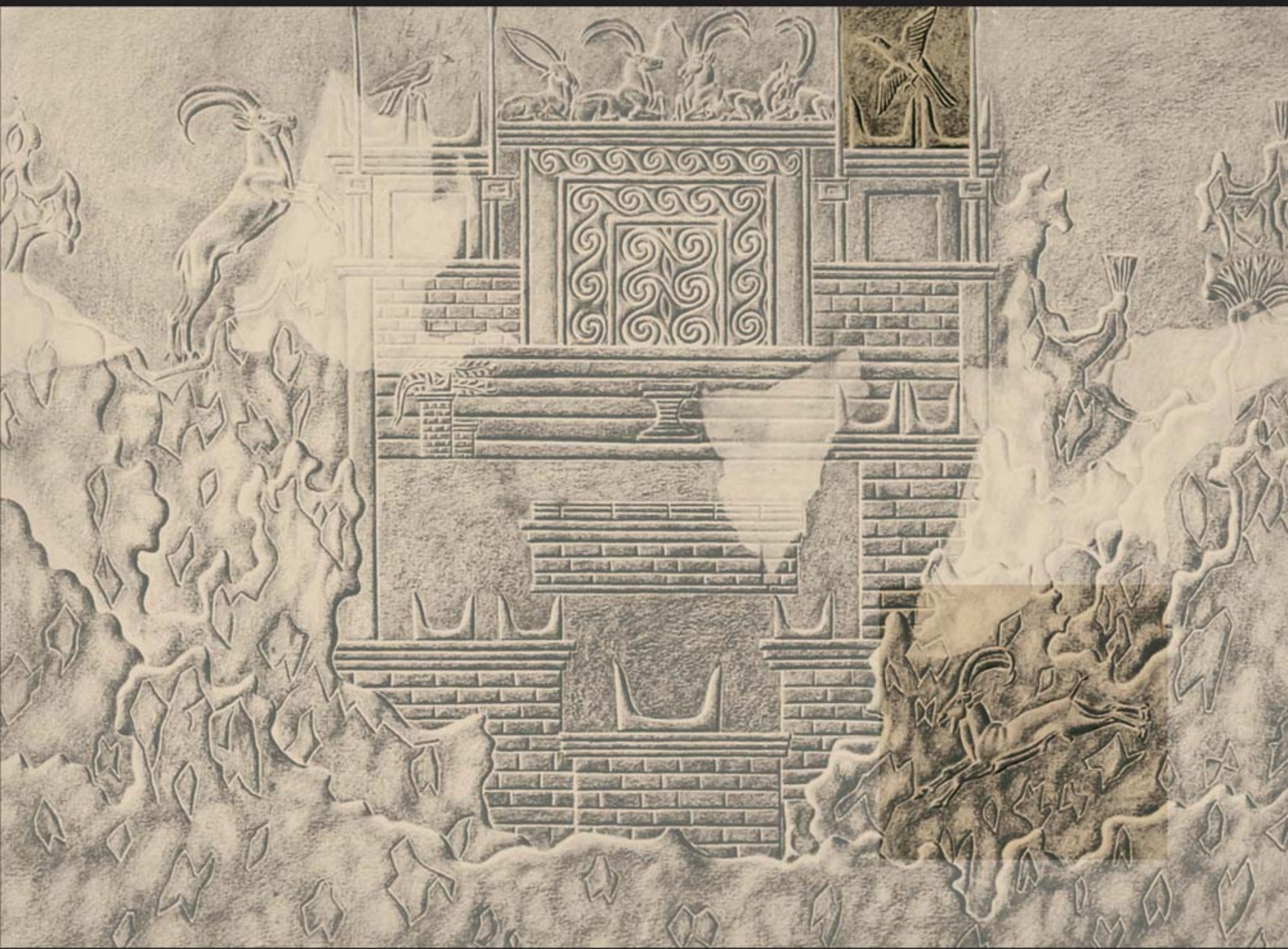


Oval steatite rhyton that was initially covered with gold leaf, traces of which have been preserved. The entire surface is decorated with a low-relief scene of an open-air peak sanctuary crowned with horns of consecration, in a superb composition with a mountainous landscape in which wild goats are sitting on the top of the shrine or leaping about among the rocks and birds are flying in the sky. It was found at the palace of Zakros and has been dated to the late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).

[Page 164]: Details from the Zakros rhyton: the bird flying over the horns of consecration on the roof of the shrine, and the wild goat in a flying leap between the rocks.

[Page 165]: Drawing of the design on the Zakros rhyton by the artist Thomas Fanourakis.







Graves and burial customs

Differentiations in burial practices can be observed at the end of the 3rd millennium BC. The last interments in vaulted Early Minoan tombs were not in the ground, but in clay sarcophagi or large jars (*pithoi*). This practice, which continued throughout the 2nd millennium, individualises each burial within a tomb that is common to all and perhaps reflects the structure of urban palace societies and emphasises individuality within a broader social group. In the large tomb of the Palaeopalatial cemetery (1800-1700 BC) at Profitis Ilias Knossos, many such individual interments in large jars were found. The next stage was the creation of monumental burial structures that emphasised the superior social status in life of some groups or of one particularly distinguished dead person. This type includes the imposing tomb at Kamilari Messara, which was used during two periods, 1700-1600 BC and 1400-1350 BC, the magnificent tomb at Isopata Knossos that was destroyed by German occupation troops, and the "Tomb-Shrine" near the palace of Knossos, with its unusual architectural form. The organised cemetery at Fourni Archanes, was in use for a number of centuries down to the Postpalatial period. It is a complicated and extensive burial ground with five vaulted tombs, burial chambers and enclosures, a grave precinct and a building that was not used for burials. At Poros, the main port of Knossos, the large, rich rock-cut tombs in the cemetery in the period of its heyday (1600-1450 BC) provide a clear picture of burial practices. The tombs at Poros were used for multiple interments of members of the urban community in wooden coffins, on burial couches or litters. Burials of distinguished people were differentiated not only by their rich funeral gifts, but also by their special placement in the common tomb. After 1450 BC, the Mycenaeans who occupied Knossos and the surrounding region were buried in smaller rock-cut graves with rich funeral gifts, especially weapons. Wealthy interments have also been found at Phaistos and in the cemetery of Archanes, where there is a very important burial of a woman accompanied by lavish funeral gifts, as well as the sacrifice of a horse and a bull, which is the only real evidence we have today of the sacrifice of bulls in honour of the dead, as depicted on the sarcophagus of Ayia Triada.

The dead were buried together with funeral gifts of all types that constitute a valuable source of information and a treasure trove of works of Minoan art: a wide variety of splendid jewellery in



Sarcophagus from Vassilika Anogeia with representations of papyruses, birds and fish. Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).



Cist-shaped sarcophagus depicting a boat, symbolic reference to the overseas voyage of the dead person. Gazi, Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).

Cist-shaped sarcophagus with a high saddle-like cover, decorated with papyrus. Gazi, Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).



gold, silver, bronze, semiprecious stones, glass paste and faience, bronze vessels and outstanding weapons, sealstones and pendants, miniature sculptures in ivory, figurines and abundant pottery adorn the chambers of the Herakleion Museum. The largest groups of rich grave findings, particularly jewellery and bronze vessels and weapons, originated in the cemeteries of the Neopalatial and late Palatial period (1600-1350 BC) from Poros, Knossos, Archanes and Phaistos.

After 1350 BC with the disintegration of palace-related and urban social structures, graves are of the rock-cut chamber type, bodies are either laid on the ground or in clay burial chests (*larnakes*) and funeral gifts are fewer and simpler, usually a few pots and some paste jewellery.



Cist-shaped sarcophagus depicting a griffin, horns of consecration and plants. Palaikastro, Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC).

Sarcophagi, funeral couches and litters

Sarcophagi or clay chests appeared at the end of the Prepalatial period in vaulted tombs together with grave enclosures, and reflect a new attitude towards individualising interment in a common tomb. They are in the shape of a casket, rectangular or with curved walls, and fairly small in size compared to the human body. The dead person was buried in the larnax with arms and legs folded in a manner resembling the foetal position.

Excavation evidence from the large cave tombs of the Neopalatial period at Poros shows that bodies had been placed on wooden litters or on real couches with a wooden frame, legs and wicker or slats. This may perhaps suggest the belief that death is no more than eternal sleep. At the same period, wooden coffins were used, among whose traces the blue pigment with which they were painted has been preserved, possibly an allusion to the colour of the sky and the sea that the soul of the deceased would cross on his long voyage.

In the Postpalatial period, interments were usually in clay larnakes, in the shape of a box or cist with a saddle-shaped cover, or in the shape of a bathtub without a cover. The broad relief bands along the edges of the sides and on the walls imitate the initial wooden structure of posts and boards. Their decoration included a broad repertory of decorative and pictorial motifs, but there are many without decoration or with very simple band decoration. On the most extensively decorated sarcophagi, compositions include many themes densely arranged. Most customary were the spiral, frames, bands, lozenges and "Nile motifs", i.e. the papyrus and palm tree reminiscent of the flora of the Nile. Of particular interest are pictorial motifs including the wild goat, the bull, fish, marine birds, octopi, nautiluses and imaginary creatures like griffins. Sacred symbols such as the double axe, the horns of consecration and the incurved altars that frequently accompany such scenes bear witness to the fact that they were not merely decorative paintings, but compositions with a cosmological content and religious symbolism. Divine figures and symbolic scenes associated with the religious iconography of the Epiphany cycle are found on a few larnakes. On two others a ship and chariot are depicted recalling the images in which a boat is offered to the dead person, and chariots are drawn by wild goats and griffins, both from the important sarcophagus of Ayia Triada, which provides the fullest religious burial iconography.

Thus, the iconography of burial chests with a variety of scenes from the natural world and symbolic religious representations appears to reflect faith in life after death and in the voyage of the dead person to the next world.

Bathtub-shaped sarcophagi: one from Episkopi in eastern Crete portraying octopuses, the other from Gournia with two cows and a nursing calf. Postpalatial period (1300-1200 BC).





Worship of the dead

The ritual vessels that have been found in graves – rhyta, offerings tables, kernoi and incense burners – attest to the fact that burial rites were held in honour of the dead. Significant facts about the worship of the dead are provided by the clay models from the tomb of Kamilari Messara (c. 1650 BC) and especially by the scenes on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus (1350 BC).

The first model from the Kamilari tomb represents men dancing, holding each other's shoulders, in a circular place with horns of consecration. This symbol indicates that it is a sacred dance and therefore a ritual act, perhaps in honour of the dead.

The second model depicts a circular shrine with sacred symbols, in which two figures are seated in front of a table, while a third watches from the entrance. This may portray a funeral feast.

The third model shows small standing figures making offerings at altars in front of seated figures in a square space with columns. Here too the scene very likely depicts a ritual offering to dead ancestors.

On the contrary, on the unique poros stone sarcophagus found at Ayia Triada, ritual acts of worship of the dead are set out in detail, painted in bright colours on the plaster covering the four sides of the sarcophagus. The dead person is depicted on one long side, in front of his tomb, receiving offerings of a boat and two bulls, while libations are being poured between double axes to the accompaniment of a lyre. On the other long side we see the sacrifice of a bound bull set on a table-altar to the accompaniment of a flute; alongside are offerings in baskets near a shrine with a tree and a mast with a bird on top. On the two short sides there are figures on chariots drawn by wild goats and griffins, possibly suggesting the voyage of the distinguished dead person to the next world and his deification. The scenes on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus portray the ritual observance of the interment and funeral offerings and, at the same time, suggest the views of the Minoans on life after death.



Clay model of a house-shrine from the vaulted tomb at Kamilari portraying an offering to four seated figures, perhaps deceased ancestors. Neopalatial period (1650 BC).

The sarcophagus of Ayia Triada: one long side depicts worship of the dead with the offering of a boat and animals to the deceased, who is portrayed wrapped in a hide mantle in front of an altar. To the left, liquid offerings are being poured into a tub between axes to the accompaniment of a lyre held by a musician wearing a long garment. Painted on the plaster that covers the poros stone surface of the sarcophagus. Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC).



[Pages 174-177]: Details from one long side of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus: offerings of a boat and animals to the dead person (right). Liquid offerings are poured by priests and priestesses into a tub between masts with double axes, to the accompaniment of a musician playing a lyre.



The narrow sides of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus depict chariots in which divine figures are riding, and which are being drawn by wild goats and winged griffins.













The narrow sides of the sarcophagus: scenes with a chariot being drawn by griffins and wild goats with deities riding in it. This may perhaps be a reference to the metaphysical voyage of the deceased.

[Pages 180-181]: Detail of the other long side of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus: scene in which a bull is being sacrificed in honour of the dead to the accompaniment of a double flute, and offerings are being made at an altar in front of a shrine with tree.







Symposia and feasts, music and dance

Among the typical features of the palace way of life were symposium gatherings. The prince, court officials, and senior members of the priestly class would gather together in the special official halls in the palace in which symposia were held. The existence of many costly dishes for food and drink, such as those found at Phaistos, and the large quantities of animal bones suggest the magnitude and luxury of these events, the purpose of which was to demonstrate the social status of the upper class and its refined way of life. The same practice was disseminated on a secondary level to regional palaces like that of Galatas, to the smaller administration centres and to the upper urban class, operating in each case as a means of affirming the social structure. Gatherings of a closed circle of participants at the palaces undoubtedly had religious aspects and were not just secular in nature, as shown in the central sanctuary with the Throne Room at Knossos and in the shrine of the first palace at Phaistos, where the rooms had benches for the members of the group to sit on.

Large-scale religious ceremonies were public, with the participation of the entire population. They were directly related to the main structural element of Minoan religion, the worship of nature and the vegetation cycle, the key event in which was the Epiphany, i.e. the appearance of the Great Goddess to men.

Mass religious rites were held in the large central and west courts of the palaces or in open-air spaces around sanctuaries; all classes took part in them. As manifestations of the official religion, they were organised with the supervision of the priestly class and the palace, and functioned as a means of emphasising social stability and cohesion.

The Epiphany rituals included ecstatic dances by groups of women, prayers and religious re-enactments, and were supplemented by processions of men and women and by music. The magnificent procession at Knossos that is depicted on the wall painting of the same name, in which the young people of the upper class participate, among whom is the "Rhyton-bearer", is the most important version of these ceremonies during which ritual vessels were carried and the cult symbols displayed.

Religious feasts of an agricultural nature took place in the countryside, as depicted on the famous "Harvesters' Vase" from Ayia Triada. Here a group of farmers is presented with singular vitality as they return from the fields singing and holding winnowing fans. The procession is headed by an elderly man, clearly a priest as indicated by his characteristic garments, while a musician accompanies the song and the procession with a *sistrum* or rattle.

[Page 182]: Miniature wall painting depicting a tripartite shrine and platforms with standing and seated female figures in front of a multitude of men and women gathered together. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).

The sistrum, an Egyptian musical instrument that was imported to Crete, the seven-string *kithara* and the *diaulos* (double flute) were the main instruments used for the music that accompanied religious ceremonies. The triton was used in rituals as a trumpet to invoke the deity and its shape was copied on costly ritual stone vessels. The dances are portrayed in representations and clay replicas. The men's dance in a circle depicted on the model from the grave at Kamilari (1650 BC) is very probably related to grave rituals of worship of the dead. The dance by a group of women to the accompaniment of a lyre, also in a circular formation, can be seen on the clay model from Palaikastro dating to the same period. Near the palace of Knossos, three constructed circular platforms were found that have been interpreted as dance floors.



Clay model of men doing a religious dance in a circular area with horns of consecration between them. Found in the vaulted tomb at Kamilari, Neopalatial period (1650 BC).



Clay model of women dancing in a circular formation to the accompaniment of a lyre. Found at Palaikastro, Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC).



[Page 184]: "The Fresco of the Procession" representing groups of men and women in processional array carrying precious objects. A fragment of the magnificent painting that decorated the walls of the "Processional Corridor" from the West Court to the Great Propylaeum of the palace at Knossos. Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).

The "Rhyton-bearer" is the best preserved figure from the Fresco of the Procession.

It depicts a young man in a richly decorated *zoma* carrying a large silver conic rhyton. Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).





The steatite oval "Harvesters' Vase". Decorated with a relief procession of men holding winnowing fans and singing to the rhythm of the rattle (*sistrum*). They are led by a man holding a staff, an official or priest, who is wearing a scaly mantle. An exceptional work with a dense, strong composition in a naturalistic style. Villa at Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).





Detail from the "Harvesters' Vase" with men singing to
the accompaniment of a sistrum.





View of the entire composition on the "Harvesters' Vase" from Ayia Triada.



Clay rattle (*sistrum*), replica of a bronze model. Musical instrument of Egyptian origin, the *sistrum* consists of a horseshoe-shaped or oval frame that holds the cross bars with the disks that produce sound as they clink together. Found in the cemetery at Fourni Archanes (1900 BC).



Sports and games

In Minoan Crete, the idea of sport and of athletic contests came into being very early, in order to foster competition and as a show for the enjoyment of the spectators within the context of organised socio-religious events. The main Minoan sports were bull leaping, boxing, wrestling, acrobatic floor exercises especially somersaults (*kybistisis*), footraces and chariot races.

The most spectacular, but also dangerous sport was unquestionably bull leaping. Its origin may go back to the hunting and capture of wild bulls and in some representations, the sport with the bull is indeed associated with its capture. In bull leaping, young athletes, men and women, as shown in the famous Knossos bull-leaping fresco, would grab the horns of the bull as it was running free and, executing a "death leap" over its back, would land on the ground behind it. The oldest depiction of bull leapers hanging onto the horns of the bull is seen in the clay models from Koumassa and Porti Messara, and date from the early 2nd millennium BC. Among the most celebrated works of Minoan art, however, is the ivory bull leaper, part of an entire composition on the theme, which shows the moment when the athlete is suspended in the air while executing the amazing leap. It is regarded as the first three-dimensional representation in the history of art of a free motion in space. The sport of bull leaping was held in open spaces, either in large palace courts, or in arenas in the surrounding area; measures were certainly taken to protect the crowds of spectators from being charged by an angry bull. Most of the representations of bull leaping on wall paintings and reliefs painted on walls, on miniature sculptures, seals and sealings come from the palace and the region of Knossos. Perhaps the conduct of this impressive sport was a special means of promoting the power of the Knossos palace leaders.

Boxing and wrestling, together with bull leaping, are depicted in relief in bands on the important stone "Boxers' Vase" from Ayia Triada. The boxers, with their trained muscular bodies, are represented competing in couples wearing boots, gloves that were probably leather, a codpiece and a boxing cap with side flaps to protect the face. Their dress and stance recall modern boxing matches.

Kybistisis was a demonstration of tumbling, a floor exercise that included a backward somersault movement. An athlete who was executing such a movement with his body bent backward in a circle is depicted on a round sheet of gold that covered a sword pommel from Malia. It has been hypothesised that during ritual events in the Minoan palaces, as is known from later years, this same sword was placed with the blade upward and the athlete executed the somersault over the blade trying not to cut himself.

Representations on sealings and fragments of Mycenaean wall paintings from Knossos suggest that chariot races were held perhaps as part of splendid ceremonies; runners are also depicted on two recent finds, a gold ring from Syme Viannos and a gold three-sided seal from Poros, Herakleion.

Minoan athletes are generally portrayed with trained bodies, strong muscles and supple limbs, indications of the constant exercise and training to which they were subject in order to meet the demands of the sport and the expectations of the spectators.

Bronze sword from Malia with a pommel sheathed in gold leaf, and with gold coverings on the rivets. The wheel-shaped sheath bears the embossed depiction of an athlete executing a full back somersault. It has been hypothesised that athletes executed the leap of the *kybistisis* over the tip of the sword that was standing upright on the ground, as was the case at recreational demonstrations in the much later Hellenistic period. Palace of Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).





Clay rhyton which is a model of bull leaping, on which three male figures are shown holding the horns and head of the bull. From the vaulted tomb at Koumassa Messara (2000-1900 BC).





The famous Bull-Leaping Fresco: two young women athletes are shown in front of and behind the bull and a young male athlete is executing



the dangerous leap over the back of the bull. From Knossos, dating to the Final Palatial period in about 1450-1400 BC.



The steatite "Boxers' Vase". Relief scenes of boxing and bull leaping in front of porticos with columns are represented in four successive bands. The figures are depicted with power and realism, in stances and dress that are reminiscent of modern boxing. Found in the Villa at Ayia Triada. Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



View of the relief scenes on the "Boxers' Vase" from Ayia Triada, with depictions from boxing and bull leaping (1500-1450 BC).



Weapons, war and the Pax Minoica

The Minoan palace system, with its entrenched social and administrative structure, developed and operated for more than 500 years, during the first half of the second millennium BC, without any fundamental differentiations or dramatic changes. The picture of the Minoans that has been conveyed in the past was that of a peace-loving people with discerning taste in art, who worshipped nature and lived peacefully in cities without walls. The reality is not too far removed from this, but one should not lose sight of a precept that has proven its validity over time: that the stability of power systems is safeguarded by the force of arms.

Archaeological findings confirm that the Minoans were not, in fact, unfamiliar with weapons. Bronze and silver daggers were manufactured in the early 3rd millennium BC, as shown by the casting moulds from Poros and the hundreds of daggers found in Early Minoan tombs. In addition to their practical value, they also functioned as symbols of authority and designations of the upper social class. The sword and the dagger constituted ageless symbols of power and social superiority. In the era of the first palaces, early in the 2nd millennium, the clay figurines found in peak sanctuaries with a dagger in their waistband likewise highlighted the possession of weapons, masculinity and social class.

Within the context of this approach and given the fixed nature of palace power, the weapons of the ruling class became larger and more lavish. One dagger from the palace of Malia has a gold-sheathed hilt, as does a very long sword ending in an octahedral crystal pommel. Of the two thinner, slightly later swords (16th-15th cent. BC) from the palace at Malia, one has an ivory pommel in the shape of a mushroom while the hilt of the other was faced with gold leaf decorated with the embossed representation of an acrobat. A beautiful dagger with a hilt sheathed in perforated gold leaf also comes from Malia. These costly weapons were certainly not intended to be used as instruments of war, but primarily for display and as symbols of authority and power on the part of the palace elite. They were nevertheless functional military weapons as shown by the lance-shaped dagger from Anemospilia Archanes with the incised image of a boar's head and pieces of swords, daggers, spears and boars' tusks from the "teeth-fenced" helmets found in the graves at Poros dating from the 16th-15th century BC. The enormous numbers of votive daggers and swords in the cave at Arkalohori may have been dedicated to a military deity and suggest the corresponding existence of real weapons and a warrior class. The depiction of a group of warriors bearing spears and shields on a wall painting in the Minoan city of Thera confirms this hypothesis. Some of the shields were large, eight-shaped and made of a frame covered with ox-hide; others were smaller and rectangular. Archers used arrowheads of bronze, flint or obsidian.

All the above facts support the view that there were organised military forces and a class of warriors, which was, in addition, required by the need to safeguard trade routes and trading posts, to protect the system of business activities and to support the entire political and social establishment.

Seen in this light, i.e. ensuring peacetime conditions on the basis of military might, the frequent references to Pax Minoica are meaningful as an analogy with the Pax Romana.



The Mycenaeans who came to Crete and settled in Knossos after 1450 BC had weapons that were technically better, more durable and more effective. In the "Tombs of the Warriors" around Knossos, where members of its military aristocracy were buried, superb and valuable swords and spears were found. The swords are shorter than their Minoan counterparts, their blade reinforced with a middle rib. Two of them are decorated with incised spirals and have a hilt of agate and ivory. Another two have gold-sheathed hilts decorated with spirals and a scene showing lions attacking wild goats.

The three swords decorated with incised spirals that were dedicated in the sanctuary at Syme Viannos are the type with "projecting teeth" blades, permitting more effective use and protecting the warrior's hand. Spears, also frequently decorated, are splendid examples of the weaponry of the age. In the tombs of the Mycenaean warriors at Knossos, helmets have also been found, a bronze one with a plume knob and a "teeth-fenced" one, plated with boar's tusks.

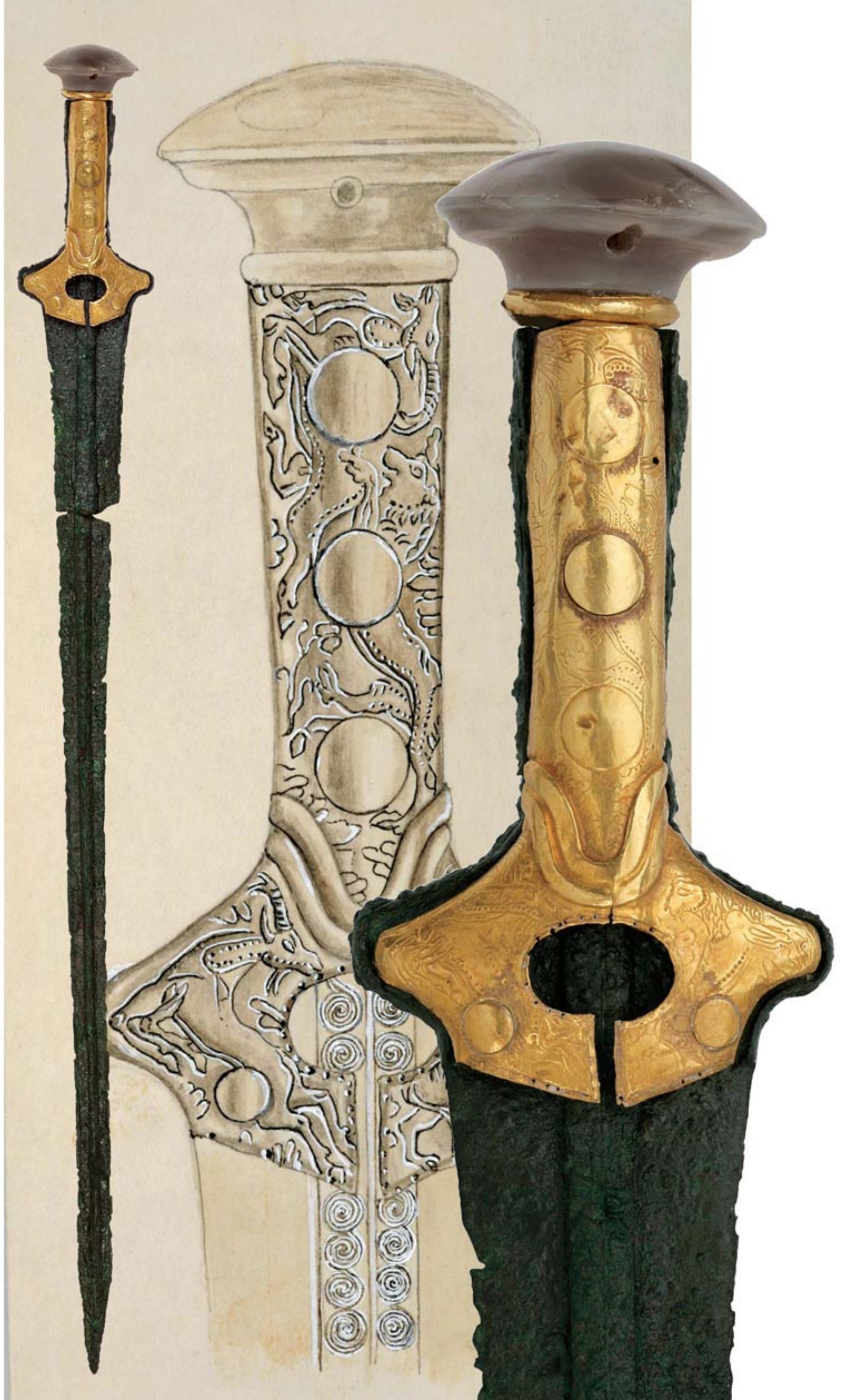
War chariots have not been found, but they are referred to in the Linear B script archives found in the palace of Knossos dating to 1350 BC. Chariot fittings are recorded in the archives as are the amounts charged to warriors for horses and chariots. It is estimated that in this way some 400 chariots have been recorded. In the archives there are ideograms for swords with short blades and for cuirasses, while on one tablet more than 8500 arrows were recorded.

The number and variety of these weapons attest to the might of the Mycenaean leaders' military machine at Knossos from 1450 to 1350 BC.

Bronze dagger with a hilt of perforated gold plate.
Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).

Bronze sword with gold-sheathed hilt and gold-covered rivets, decorated with relief spirals. Cemeteries of Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).





[Page 202]: Bronze sword with gold-sheathed hilt and gold-covered rivets bearing a crystal mushroom pommel. Decorated with carved scenes in which lions are hunting wild goats. Artist's rendering of the scene (middle). Knossos tombs, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



Bronze sword with bone-plated hilt. Cemetery of Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).





Minoan swords: a) Sword with gold-plated stone hilt and a mushroom pommel made of a large piece of rock crystal, from Malia. Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC). b-d) Long bronze rapiers of various types from Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).

Bronze sword with gold-sheathed hilt and gold-covered rivets.
Cemeteries of Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Bronze spearheads from Knossos,
Final Palatial period.



Bronze sword with gold-riveted hilt and an ivory mushroom pommel. Cemeteries of Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Arrowheads of bronze and flint, from Knossos and Poros. Neopalatial period (1600-1350 BC).



Boar's tusk helmet. Cemeteries of Knossos,
Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



The Minoans in the Aegean, Egypt and the Levant

The Minoan Thalassocracy



Seal surface of an Egyptian scarab bearing symbols of hieroglyphic script. Knossos 1750-1650 BC.



Alabaster Egyptian amphora bearing the mark of Pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt's 18th dynasty, carved in hieroglyphic script, from the Minoan tomb at Katsambas Herakleion. The hieroglyphic inscription is translated as follows: "The good God / Men-Heper-Re / son of the Sun / beautiful in transformations / endowed with life eternal". Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).

Starting from the era of the early palaces, the Minoan presence in the Aegean kept growing stronger until it was dominant by the period of its great heyday (1700-1450 BC). Trading posts and settlements were established on the Aegean islands from the Cyclades to Samothrace and on the shores of Asia Minor. Traces of Minoan habitation have been found in Kea, Milos and Rhodes, in Kythera and Miletus. The large Minoan-style figurines from Kea, the peak sanctuary with the bronze figurines and the rock-cut Minoan-style tombs on Kythera, as well as the plentiful Minoan pottery recently excavated at Miletus bear witness to the degree and nature of Minoan penetration. The excavations at Akrotiri on Thera (modern Santorini), a city with a clearly Minoan orientation, have unearthed imposing buildings in Minoan-style architecture and wall paintings that illustrate Minoan themes and techniques.

The close commercial relations with Egypt led to dynastic contacts and exchanges of princely gifts. The lid of an Egyptian jewel-case found at Knossos bears the carved cartouche of the Pharaoh Khyan of the Hyksos dynasty; and an Egyptian alabaster amphora that was found at Katsambas, secondary port of Knossos, has an inscription referring to the Pharaoh Thutmose III of the 18th dynasty. Egyptian pots of alabaster and diorite were found in the royal tomb at Isopata near Knossos and an Egyptian figurine showing the name of the merchant User was also found at Knossos. Likewise, many Egyptian scarabs have been found in Crete.

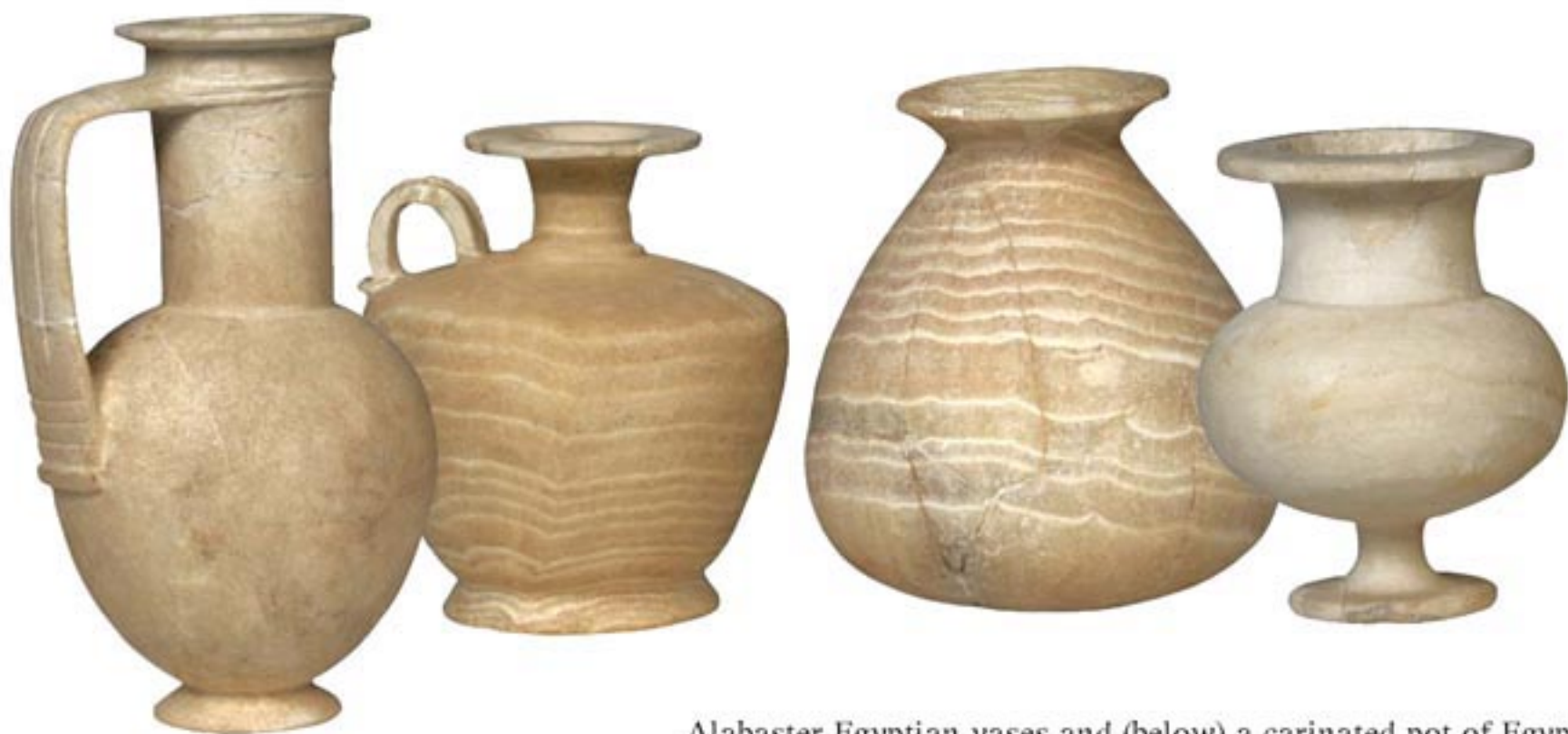
The Egyptians knew the Cretans as the Keftiu who live "in the islands in the middle of the big green sea". On wall paintings in tombs of the 18th dynasty (15th cent. BC), they are depicted in typical Minoan dress carrying valuable Minoan objects which they offer to the Pharaoh. In Avaris, capital of the Hyksos dynasty, the palace built by Pharaoh Ahmose I in about 1500 BC was adorned with wall paintings reflecting Minoan art and themes such as bull leaping.

Conversely, what the Minoans appear to have learned from the Egyptians was the art of casting small sculptures of faience and glass.

The expensive raw materials employed by Minoan artists to make the famous Minoan artefacts were transported to Crete from Egypt and from the ports of Syria and Palestine. Copper ore, the primary material, was imported from Cyprus; silver, lead and copper were brought in from Siphnos and Lavrion. Gold came from Egypt, ivory and hippopotamus teeth for miniature sculptures from Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Gemstones – sard, jasper, agate, amethyst and rock crystal – were imported from Egypt, basalt from Laconia, and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan through the ports of the Levant, as was the tin required to turn copper into bronze.

On its part, Minoan Crete exported valuable utensils and luxury objects, textiles and embroidered cloths, and pottery like the greatly prized Kamares ware, as well as timber, aromatic oils and wine.

The breadth of trade and economic activities, the network of Minoan settlements and trading posts, the level of inter-state contacts and relations throughout the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean basin all contributed to building the naval might of Minoan Crete, the so-called Minoan Thalassocracy.

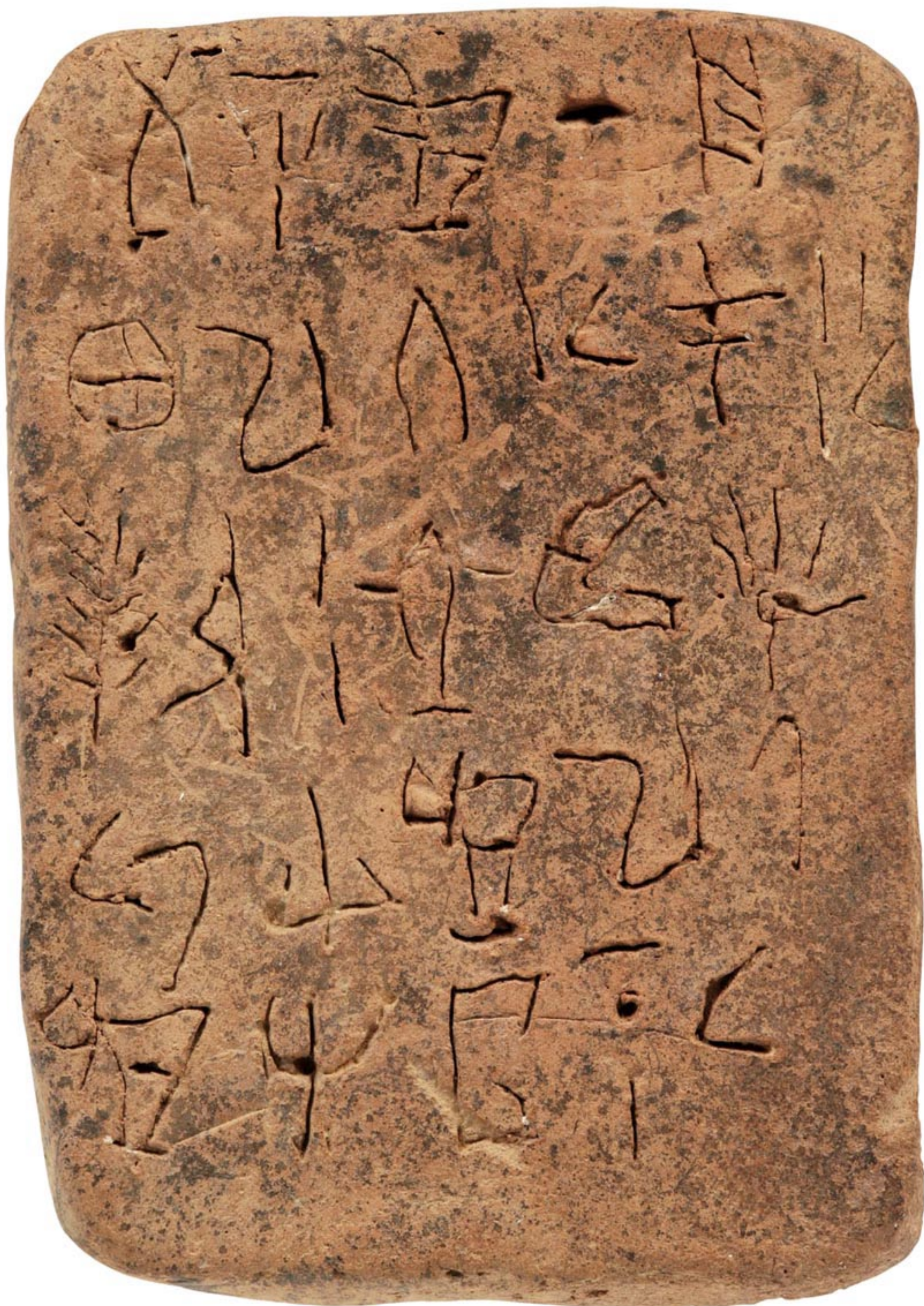


Alabaster Egyptian vases and (below) a carinated pot of Egyptian diorite from the "Royal Tomb" at Isopata Knossos. Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



[Page 211]: ABOVE: Copper ingot or *talent*, imported raw material for smelting bronze with a weight of approximately 30 kg, bearing symbols in linear script. Ayia Triada, Late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).
BELOW: Two-coloured amphora with painted bird, imported from Milos in the Cyclades. From the "Sanctuary Treasury" of the palace of Knossos. Neopalatial period (1600 BC).





Writing

In Crete during the second millennium BC, three systems of writing were in use. They were, in chronological order starting with the oldest, hieroglyphics, Linear A and Linear B script. In some periods two systems were used simultaneously, when, for example, texts in hieroglyphics co-existed with texts in Linear A script.

Hieroglyphics appeared in Crete on seals in the late 3rd millennium BC and constitute the oldest examples of writing in the Greek world. Humans, animals, birds and other symbols can be identified in the hieroglyphic symbols and pictograms on the seals from Archanes. Six of the 14 seal surfaces on an ivory seal bear hieroglyphic symbols.

Hieroglyphic script was systematised early in the second millennium BC when the first Minoan palaces were established and the administration system organised. Symbols, syllabaries and ideograms were scratched on clay tablets and on objects of hard material, such as four-sided gemstone seals. Hieroglyphic writing, which developed into linear hieroglyphics, continued to be recorded on writing tablets, on small four-sided rods and on horseshoe-shaped disks even after the establishment of the new palaces. The celebrated Phaistos Disk, the most famous inscribed Minoan object, as well as the most enigmatic exhibit at the Herakleion Museum, dates to approximately this period, c. 1700 BC. Both sides of the Disk were impressed with seals one by one, in a spiral configuration that includes 241 hieroglyphics and 45 different symbols. Because of the fact that the symbols were impressed using separate seals, it is regarded as the oldest example of printing. These symbols, however, are different from other Cretan hieroglyphic inscriptions. This uniqueness of the Disk makes it difficult to decode, even though many views have been put forward about the content of the text and the unknown language in which it was written. Most interpretations converge in the hypothesis that it was a magico-religious text, possibly a hymn. The earlier Aegean language of the Minoans was written in the hieroglyphic and Linear A script, neither of which has yet been deciphered.

Some of the symbols on the Phaistos Disk present similarities with certain hieroglyphic symbols incised on a bronze votive axe from the Arkalohori cave. A spiral configuration of script can also be found on an inscribed gold ring from Mavrospilio Knossos. This evidence suggests that the Disk is of Cretan origin and that it was not imported from some remote region, as was once hypothesised.

Hieroglyphic script was used up to about 1500 BC. Examples of it have been found outside Crete as well, in Minoan settlements or trading posts in the Aegean.

Early in the Neopalatial period, parallel with hieroglyphics, Linear A script began to be used. It evolved from the linear morphology of the hieroglyphic symbols, and precisely because of the linearity of its symbols, was named Linear A script by Arthur Evans who excavated Knossos. As noted earlier, it has not been deciphered. It is syllabic script with ninety symbols that correspond to phonemes, with a decimal arithmetical system and parallel use of ideograms that depict objects and function in a supplementary way. It was used mainly in the service of the palace bureaucracy for inventory records of a business and accounting nature. The texts were scratched on clay tablets, but there are also inscriptions on objects like storage jars, pots, ritual vessels and jewellery, and on offerings tables, shield-shaped ladles, and gold and silver dressing pins.





The famous Phaistos Disk. Clay disk with symbols of hieroglyphic script impressed with seals on unbaked clay in a spiral configuration starting around the outside and ending in the centre. The symbols and ideograms, most of which depict recognisable objects, may record a religious text, which has not been deciphered. The disk was found at Phaistos and dates to the early Neopalatial period, c. 1550 BC. Diameter: 16 cm.

On these objects, the inscriptions undoubtedly have a special, although unknown, content, such as the standardised libation formula. Inscriptions in Linear A have been found in many parts of Crete, both in palace archives and in the large regional centres that constituted part of the administration system. They have also been found outside Crete, on islands in the Aegean and as far away as Miletus, in settlements and trading posts where there was a strong presence of Minoan seafarers.

Linear B, as an evolved form of Linear A, was the script of the Mycenaeans who occupied Knossos in 1450 BC. As proven by Michael Ventris and John Chadwick who deciphered it in 1952, the language of Linear B is Greek in its earliest form. Fifty of the symbols of Linear A are also used in B and it is believed that they have the same phonetic value in both the Minoan and Greek languages, although not the same meaning.

The syllabaries are sometimes supplemented by ideograms that picture the objects being recorded. The Linear B archives at Knossos are accounting inventories recording products, animals and miscellaneous goods. They likewise provide information about the political and administrative structure and about the activities of the great palace in the last phase of its operation. The leader who was the centre of all power was the *anax* (lord), but there was also a second degree of power, the *basileus* (king). As can be seen from reference to place names, Knossos controlled many regions, especially in central and eastern Crete (Amnissos, Tylissos, Phaistos, Inatos, Lato), but its range also extended westward (Sybrita, Kydonia, Aptera). Flocks of sheep numbering from 30 to 400, mainly rams, added up to what was at that time the enormous total of 80,000 sheep, which belonged to the palace. They were bred mainly for their wool, the quantities of which are scrupulously recorded. They were overseen by shepherds who are referred to by name, and details are registered about each flock. Some tablets refer to groups of people, men and women, and others record carriages and fittings, horses and weaponry such as cuirasses, swords and arrows.

The strict bureaucratic system and central control through the keeping of archives collapsed definitively with the final devastation of the palace of Knossos in 1350 BC.



Leaf-shaped tablet bearing a text in Linear B script with numerical records of objects and livestock. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Cup with Linear A inscription written inside it with cuttlefish ink. This may be a magic maxim or refrain. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



Rod-shaped tablet with Linear A script from Malia.

Small marble crest-shaped offerings table with an inscription in Linear A script. Archanes, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



Two small jugs with symbols in hieroglyphic script. Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).





Semi-cylindrical sard seal with a brief hieroglyphic inscription. Malia, Palacopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



[Page 218]: Clay inscribed tablet from Knossos with a long text in Linear B script comprising an inventory and accounting records kept by the palace bureaucracy at Knossos. Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Gold ring from the cemetery at Mavrospilio Knossos with an inscription in Linear A script carved in a spiral configuration on the round bezel. Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).



Inscribed bronze axe from Arkalohori with a hieroglyphic inscription on the haft groove. BELOW: Detail. Early Neopalatial period (1700-1600 BC).



Disk-shaped tablet with an inscription in Linear A. Such tablets were attached by a thin thread to packages and movable objects as documentation. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1500 BC).





Pottery

The originality and quality of Prepalatial pottery acquired new momentum early in the second millennium BC. In the centuries that followed, Minoan pottery reached pinnacles that transcended the ordinary artisan's output and can be more fittingly called "fine" art, as it was practised by true artists rather than by ordinary craftsmen. The establishment of the first palaces and the creation of palace workshops contributed to the wider standardisation of pottery styles. A little earlier, pottery production was characterised by particular local styles and unnatural shapes, such as the "teapots" from Vassiliki with their exaggeratedly long spouts or the quite peculiar pots from Lenta. Despite some local particularities, the uniformity of styles at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC continued, spurred by the output of palace pottery, until the destruction of the palaces in 1450 BC; then it came full circle in the 13th century BC with a uniform common style.

Minoan pottery, whether luxury works by palace workshops or modest provincial products, served all the everyday and public events in Minoan society. Household utensils, ritual vessels, votive offerings in shrines, and funeral gifts in graves all testify to the high level of Minoan pottery, which was directly influenced by the creations of other arts, such as wall painting or metalworking.

Early in the Palaeopalatial period, the most characteristic decorative styles were the white style, with motifs in white on a dark ground, and the strange barbotine style, with a spiky or rough surface like a seashell that was emphasised by painted decoration. The dissemination of the potter's wheel, starting in the 19th cent. BC, opened up new horizons of creativity to the Minoan potter. At the same time, bright colour (red, orange and crimson), in conjunction with white, was used on pots in the "early polychrome" style, which gradually evolved into the famous Kamares ware.

Kamares ware, which is perhaps the most decorative of all prehistoric styles, was created by palace workshops, mainly those of Phaistos and Knossos, in the 18th and 17th cent. BC. The style derived its name from the Kamares cave on Mt Ida, in the region of Phaistos, where the first polychrome pots were found. The multiformity and precision of the shapes and the originality and complexity of the exquisite multi-coloured decoration made Kamares ware true works of art, luxury items in demand even outside Crete. The decorative motifs are drawn in red, white, and crimson pigment onto the black ground of the pot, and sometimes applied relief motifs made the result even more striking. The shapes are sophisticated, quite frequently elaborate and altogether original. The decorative motifs are geometric, plant and pictorial with preference shown for composite spiral and whirling motifs, petals, rosettes, tassels, leafy bands and tendrils that are arranged in swirls, radially or cyclically in inexhaustible combinations that make most of these pots one of a kind.

Kamares ware pots are at the same time products of flawless technical workmanship. Some cups, with walls as thin as metal, are called "eggshell" ware.

The hoard of Kamares ware from the first palace of Phaistos is particularly impressive. Outstanding among these pots is the famous "royal dinner set" which attests to the splendour of palace symposia. It consists of a large fruit stand, a krater for mixing wine, a dish stand and a ewer, all with rich polychrome decoration supplemented with the addition of high relief lilies and petals.

Seen in twos, these pots bear similar decoration, painted and relief, an indication that they were made by the same artist-potter as items for the same set. The "little boat" utensil in a strongly decorative mood, the polychrome trays, the lovely ewers, several bridge-spouted jugs and multicoloured cups are characteristic examples of this ware. The unique lampstand (or songbird's cage) and pots for everyday use such as fruit squeezers, but also splendidly decorated storage jars of various sizes, show the refined way of life in the Minoan palaces. The miniature pots of miscellaneous shapes that are exhibited in the Museum on a tripod tray may possibly have been used for special purposes, but may also reflect the playful inspiration of Minoan potters.

The cylindrical base or pedestal decorated with relief dolphins swimming among rocks and shellfish, and the lovely little jar with white palm trees on a coal black ground belong to the late phase of this style. Kamares ware, as luxury merchandise, was an object of Minoan export trade and examples of it have been found throughout the Mediterranean, in Cyprus, the Cyclades, the Peloponnese, Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

After the destruction of the first palaces and palace workshops, a trend to less showy pottery can be discerned. In the late 17th century BC, parallel with the use of white colour on a black ground, the reverse style appeared, i.e. decoration in a dark shade on a light-coloured ground. The age of the new palaces had dawned, the period of the amazing heyday of Minoan civilisation. Now the colour reversal in the decoration of pots became established, and was effected in a glossy brownish-red or brownish-black against the light-coloured clay, and the manufacturing technique was improved. This style did not change for centuries, until the end of the Postpalatial period. Typical decorative motifs on Neopalatial pottery are from the plant world and the so-called tortoise rippleware.

It was in the mature Neopalatial period (first half of the 15th century BC) that the next great moment in Minoan pottery occurred. This was the pottery of the so-called Special Palace Tradition, produced by palace pottery workshops, especially in Knossos. It has elegant, refined shapes and elaborate, striking decoration that includes geometric and schematised motifs, but mainly pictorial themes from the plant and marine worlds that were called respectively the Foliate or Floral Style and the Marine Style. These exceptional pots, albeit few in number, have been regarded by experts as perhaps the most important works in all Minoan pottery. Specific artists have been singled out who painted particular pots that have given their creators their conventional names. Works by the "Reed Painter" include the ewer from Phaistos that is decorated with a dense network of leafy reeds over the entire surface and a cup with similar decoration. Flowering branches of olive trees adorn the pots decorated by the "Olive branch Painter". To the "Marine Style Painter" are attributed two splendid pots, a flask from Palaikastro and a false-mouthed amphora from Gournia, which are adorned with octopuses whose tentacles wind around the entire surface of these pots. The "Polypod Painter" decorated pots calligraphically, such as the rhyton from Palaikastro adorned with nautiluses. Outstanding examples of this style are three ewers in the marine style decorated with nautiluses that were produced by the same workshop. Two of them, found in Poros and Zakros, are displayed in the Herakleion Museum and the third is in the Marseilles Museum. The ewer from Poros is embellished with applied relief seashells and trefoil motifs leading decoration to its culmination and the style to its limits. Immediately afterwards, the devastation of the palaces and Minoan centres in 1450 BC put an end to all production by specialised palace workshops.

In the next stage, during the Mycenaean dynasty in Knossos, the pots of the so-called Palace Style display magnificence and a decorative spirit but also extensive schematisation in decoration. The striking Palace amphora-type large wine jars (*pithamphoreis*), the so-called Ephyrean goblets (*kylikes*) and the "bread-shaped" vases (*alabastra*) are characteristic examples.

In the 14th century BC and in the Postpalatial period, large quantities of high quality pottery were produced, but with standardised decoration that was tending increasingly toward greater schematisation and abstraction. In the last Postpalatial period (12th cent. BC), with which the long cycle of Minoan pottery closed, the trends led from frugality to decorative excess, as represented by the Plain and the Close or Fringed Style respectively. The use of symmetry, schematisation, repetition and geometric motifs tended to lead to the evolution of pottery styles in the historic Hellenic period that followed.



Kamares ware tray with handles decorated with polychrome whirling motifs. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Kantharos-kernos with lobed rim and little cuplets affixed inside, also with lobed rim, to hold offerings. Myrtos Ierapetra, Early Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).

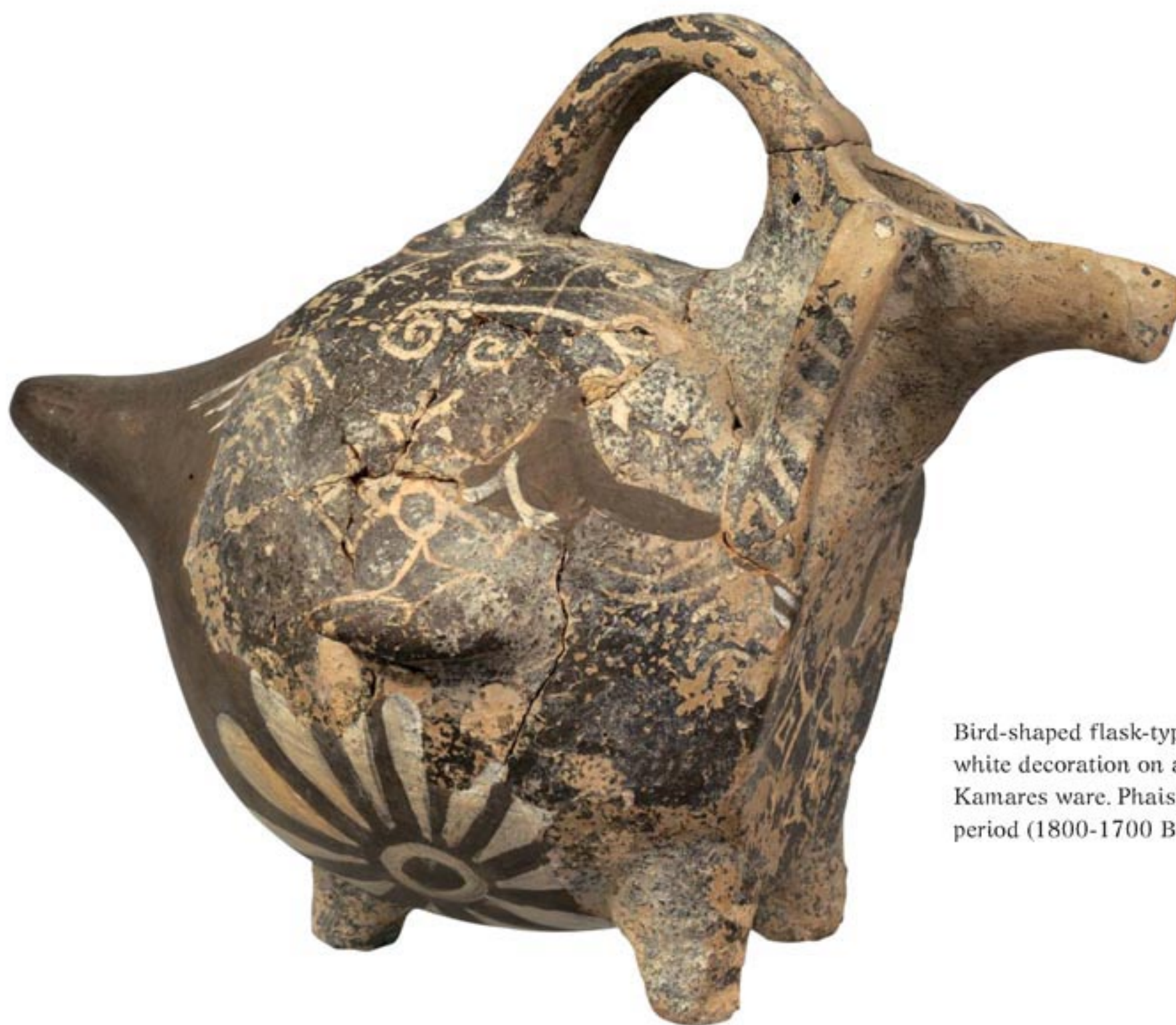


Kamarae were ewer or pitcher with three handles and relief spiky and painted decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).



Three cups: carinated, hemispherical and conic. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).





Bird-shaped flask-type pot with complex white decoration on a black ground, Kamares ware. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



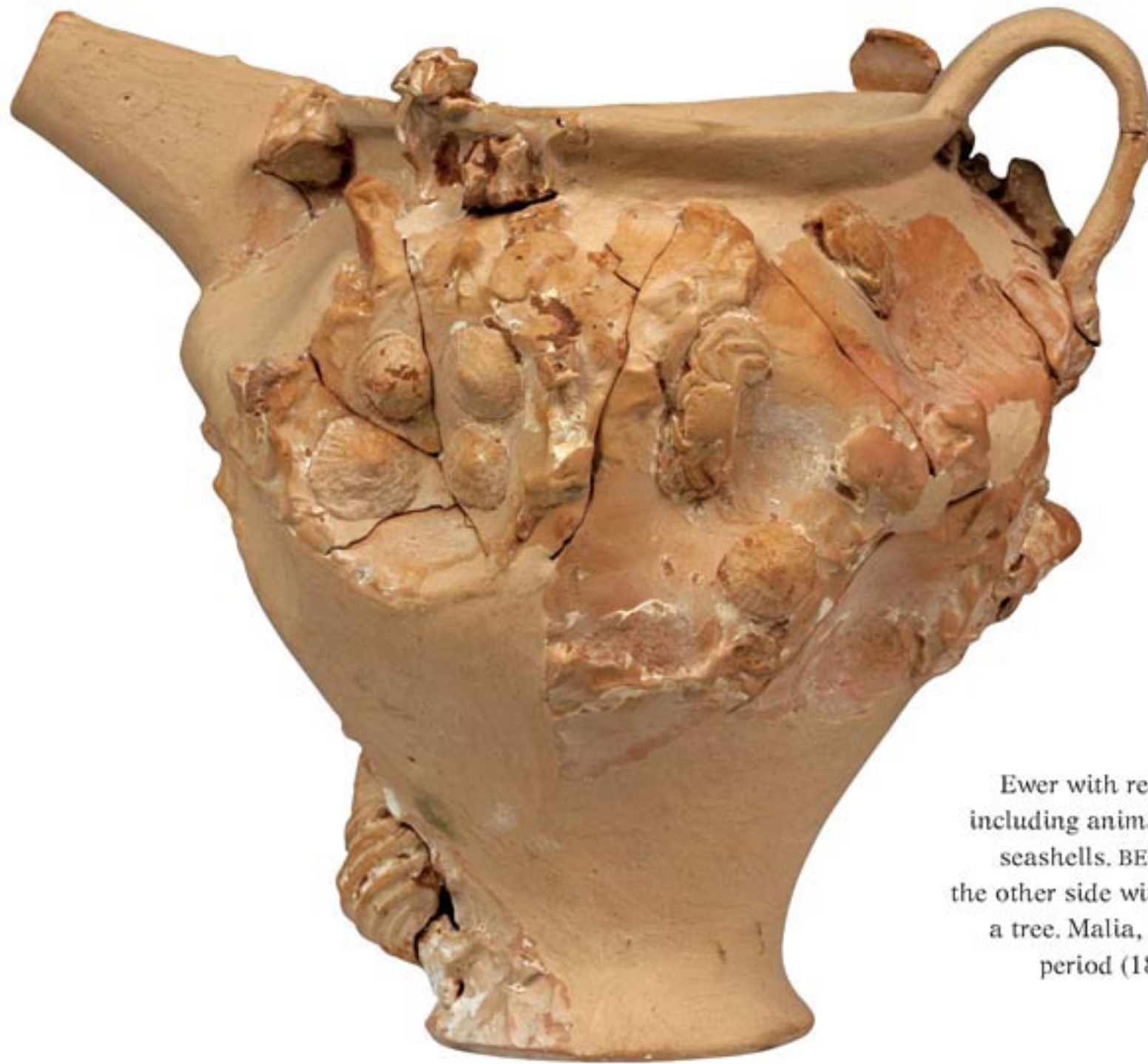
Bridge-spouted Kamares ware ewer with painted and relief decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1900-1800 BC).



Four Kamares were hemispherical cups with polychrome or white decorative motifs and compositions. These cups are of the type called "eggshell" ware because of their very thin walls. From Knossos (the two above) and Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).







Ewer with relief decoration including animals, plants and seashells. BELOW: Detail of the other side with a feline and a tree. Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



[Page 228]: Applied clay ornament in the form of a sphinx. From the relief decoration of a pot that shows Egyptian influences. Malia, Palaeopalatial period.



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Bridge-spouted Kamares ware ewer with spiral-plant decoration.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Amphora with decorative foliate motif.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Cylindrical vase with white rosettes.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Small amphora with white crocus blossom.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Bridge-spouted Kamares ware ewer with composite
decoration. Knossos, Palaeopalatial period.



Carinated cups and conic cup with polychrome decoration. Kamares ware. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).

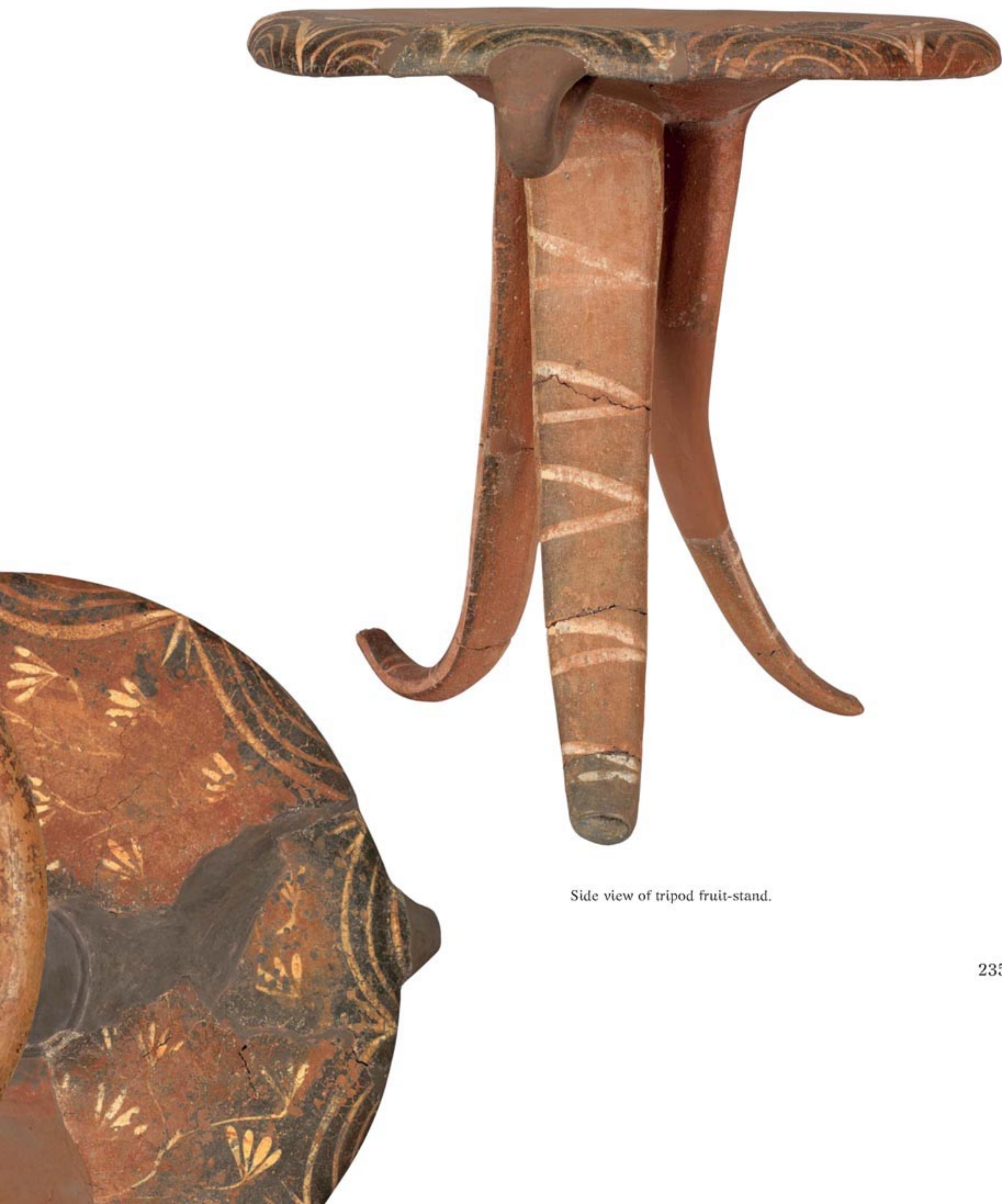




Cylindrical cups with rich polychrome decoration. Kamares ware. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.

Three tripod fruit-stands (from above)
with composite, white delicate floral
and foliate decoration. Malia,
Palacopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).





Side view of tripod fruit-stand.

Amphora with pointed rosette and ewer with foliate decoration, both Kamares ware. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Two ewers, one with a white, many-petalled rosette, the other with sigmoid spirals and intricate polychrome motifs. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.





Two Kamares ware bridge-spouted ewers.
(BELOW) Pot with spout in the shape of a boat,
with polychrome decoration in the Kamares style.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).





Kamares ware conic basin (*lekanis*), ewer and amphora with white spiral decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Kamares ware fruit-stand
with high foot. Phaistos,
Palaeopalatial period.



Two Kamares were hemispherical cups/tablets with composite geometric and foliate decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).





Unusual clay pot, perhaps a lantern for holding and carrying an oil lamp, decorated with white loops. Two-handled pot decorated with a white leafy branch. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).





Two examples of Kamares ware: round drinking cup (*skyphos*) decorated with a white spiral, and a spouted, basket-shaped vessel embellished with dotted and painted polychrome garlands. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.







[Page 244]: Kamares ware fruit-stand decorated with exceptionally intricate polychrome spirals, tassels, and hatching. Cut-out appliquéd leaves adorn the perimeter of the rim. Outstanding example of decorative composition on luxury symposium ware for the Phaistos palace. [Page 245]: The foot of the Kamares ware krater from Phaistos (page 220) with a moulded lily and polychrome decoration. The relief decorative ring around the base is similar to that of the fruit-stand (page 245). These two lavish pieces probably belonged to the same palace dinner set. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Kamares ware dish stand, with relief and painted decoration. The similarity of the relief, lacy decoration on the rim to that of the fruit-stand (page 245) indicates that they may have been items in the same set of dishes for palace symposia. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.

Two Kamares ware cups with polychrome decoration.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Kamares ware ewer, decorated with motifs
from the "draughtboard" and from the
"acanthus" or "rock" that adorn the krater
(page 220), an indication that they belonged
to the same set of luxury palace dishes.
Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Small pot with long spout and polychrome Kamares ware decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Clay cup with burnished black surface imitating a metal pot. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Flask-type Kamares ware pot with multi-lobed spout and white decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Two round bridge-spouted jugs with polychrome Kamares ware decoration.
Phaistos, Palacopalatial period.

Bridge-spouted Kamares ware jug with relief rosette-shaped disks and the relief depiction of a wild goat surrounded by a painted wavy border, conventional rendering of rocky terrain. Phaistos, Palacopalatial period.





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Small jar decorated with fish, spirals and hatching, one of the few examples of Kamares ware with pictorial motifs from nature. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



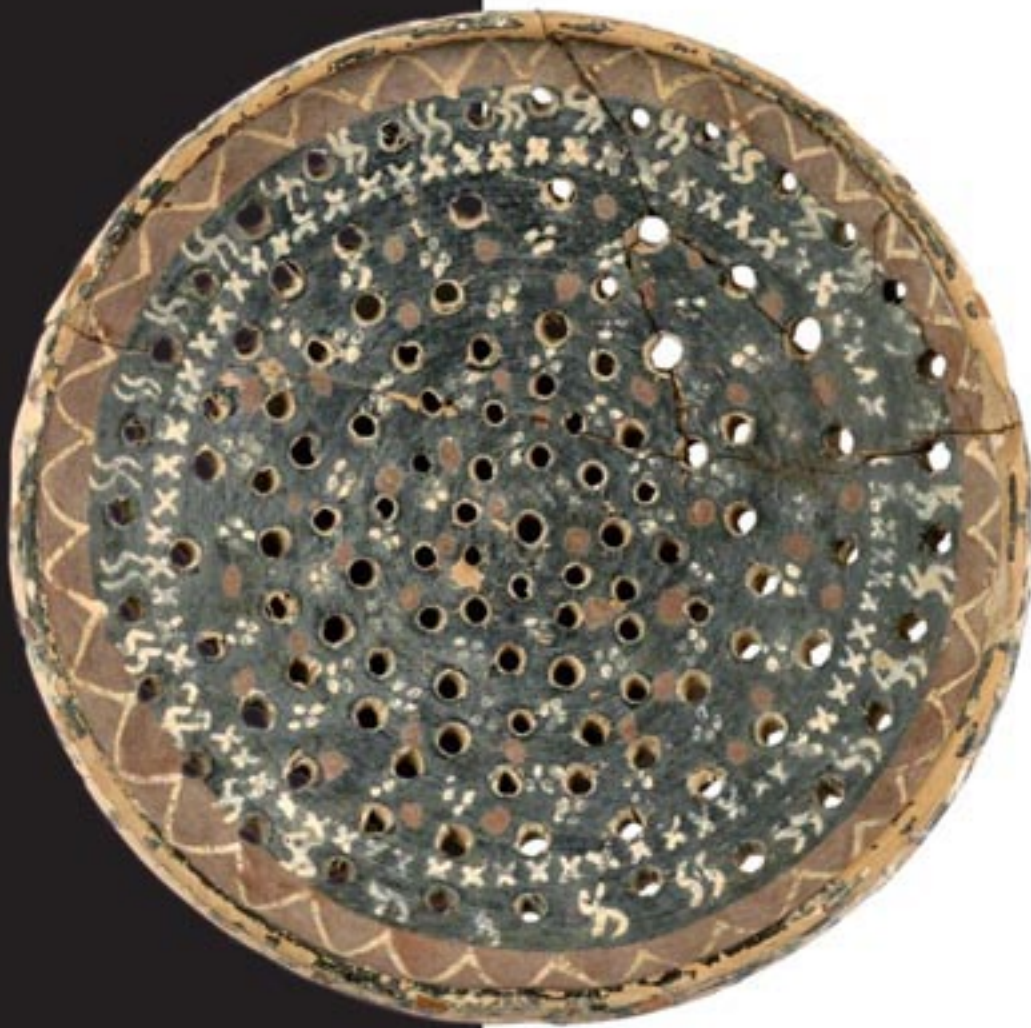


[Page 252]: Richly decorated Kamares ware tub-shaped pot with composite polychrome spiral and foliate motifs. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Small basin (*lekanis*) with decorative lily flowers and plants on the inside and outside wall. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.

High cup with lobed rim. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



Strainer with calligraphic decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.





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Bridge-spouted Kamares ware pitcher with spiral decoration. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



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Small Kamares ware jar with spiral and foliate decoration. In addition to their functional value, luxurious pots also served as decorative objects for palace interiors. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period.



[Page 256]: Foot of a fruit-stand with relief dolphins, rocks and cockles. Phaistos, late Palaeopalatial period.



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Small jar with white palm trees on wavy soil, in high contrast to the dark ground of the pot.
Knossos, late Palaeopalatial period (1700-1650 BC).

High three-handled ewer with white dotted decoration.
Knossos, Early Neopalatial period (1650-1600 BC).



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Tub-shaped vessel with white lily stalks and flowers.
Knossos, Early Neopalatial period.



Bridge-spouted jar with white spirals and foliate decoration. Aitania, Early Neopalatial period.



Cup with tortoise rippleware decoration.
Knossos, Neopalatial period (1550-1500 BC).



Cup with plant decoration. Knossos,
Neopalatial period (1550-1500 BC).



Rhyton with the sculpted head of a wild goat as handle
and with painted crocus flower decoration. Palaikastro,
Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Large cup with
reed-type decoration
in the "foliate" or "floral"
style. Knossos, Neopalatial
period (1550-1500 BC).



Pair of basket-shaped pots with floral decoration depicting crocuses. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Double ewer decorated with lilies. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).





Elegant ewer with reed-type decoration that creates a pattern of dark and light colours on the surface of the pot. Example of the decorative mannerism of the late Neopalatial period, a work by the artist conventionally referred to as the "Reed-Painter". Phaistos (1450 BC).



Bridge-spouted ewer with reed-type decoration. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).







[Page 266]: Unusual ritual vessel with sigmoid handles and coloured decoration with spirals and helmets. Tomb at Isopata Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



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Jar with strainer inside (*ithmopyxis*). Decorated with spirals and white foliate decoration. Zakros, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).





[Page 268]: Small four-handled amphora with reed decoration. [Page 269]: Strainer-lid with pointed rosette in the centre. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC). Large wine jar (*pithamphoreas*) in the palace style decorated with lilies and papyrus. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



Small bridge-spouted jar with lid, decorated with lily flowers. Mochlos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



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Jar (*pithos*) with relief applied coil decoration and disks. Palace at Galatas, Neopalatial period (1600 BC).



Basket-shaped pot with Greek key-type decoration from the "Unexplored Mansion". Knossos, Neopalatial period.



Basket-shaped pot decorated with bands of double axes. Pseira, Neopalatial period.



Rhyton with decoration in the marine style consisting of nautilus, coral and rocks. Palaikastro, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



Flask decorated with a large octopus and supplementary motifs: sea urchins, seaweed and rocks, an outstanding example of the mature marine style. Palaikastro, late Neopalatial period.



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Wine jar (*pithamphoreas*) with many handles decorated in the marine style with octopuses, tritons, rocks and coral. Knossos, late Neopalatial period.





Two conic rhyta painted with spirals and plants and an oval rhyton with decoration imitating conglomerate rock. Gournia, Neopalatial period.

[Page 276]: Jar with strainer decorated in imitation of conglomerate rock. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1550-1500 BC).



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Jar (*pithos*) adorned with an interconnecting spiral pattern. Pseira, Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



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Wine jar (*pithamphoreas*) painted with loops, spirals and reeds. Zakros, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



[Page 281]: Pitcher with relief and painted calligraphic decoration depicting nautiluses, three-lobed rocks, shells and coral on a densely patterned ground that suggests the sea floor. Superb example of the decorative mannerism of the mature marine style, a product of the workshop of the "Special Palace tradition" from the Knossos region. Found in a tomb at Poros Herakleion. Late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).

Ewer in the marine style decorated with nautiluses. Taken with the ewer from Poros (page 281) and the Minoan ewer in the museum in Marseilles, these pots constitute the three most outstanding examples of the marine style, having the same elegant shape and similar decoration with nautiluses. Works by highly specialised potters. Zakros, late Neopalatial period.





[Page 282]: Ewer with spiky relief and painted papyrus and nautilus decoration, from a grave at Katsambas. Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).



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Ewer decorated with papyrus. Palaikastro, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).





[Pages 284-285]: Ewer with dotted spiral and foliate decoration. Knossos, late Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).
Ewer with intricate foliate and spiral decoration and rosettes. Palaikastro, late Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).
Squat perfume vase (*alabastro*) with a band of lilies and papyrus. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).
Flask with concentric bands of triangular motifs with a rosette in the centre. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).
Tub-shaped pot with rows of ivy leaves and papyrus. Pseira, late Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).





Four cups (*kylikes*) of the "Ephyrean" type with representations of an octopus, papyrus, rosette and nautilus.
Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



Cup-rhyton painted with bands of tooth-like decoration.
Knossos, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



Cylindrical jar with spout and marine style decoration with tritons and seaweed. Nirou Chani, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



Oval rhyton decorated in the marine style with a starfish-sun, tritons and seaweed. Zakros, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



Bridge-spouted ewer with spirals and arches. Knossos, late Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Oval rhyton with bands of spirals. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



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Wine jar (*pithamphoreas*) in the palace style with octopus decoration. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



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Pithamphoreas in the palace style adorned with papyrus and a rocky terrain.
Knossos, Final Palatial period.



Ewers with representations of birds, fish, papyrus and ivy from the cemetery at Katsambas. Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).





Storage jar (*pithos*) in the palace style from Knossos, with painted and relief decoration depicting papyrus and medallions. Final Palatial period.



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Pear-shaped vase for perfume or oil (*alabastro*) painted with birds and flowers, from Kalyvia Phaistos.
Early Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC).

Sherd of a pithos decorated with relief double axes.
Psychro, Postpalatial period (1400-1300 BC).



Clay incense burner with a cylindrical-conic perforated lid,
and painted with a lozenge pattern. Karteros, Postpalatial
period (1350-1300 BC).



Large cup with spout, decorated in the
so-called dense style with an octopus. Karfi,
Late Postpalatial period (1200-1100 BC).



Anthropomorphic rhyton in the form of the head of a bearded man. Phaistos, Postpalatial period (1350-1300 BC).



The arts

Even by the period of Hellenic antiquity, the products of superb Minoan art that had been transported by sea throughout the Aegean and the Levant had secured the reputation of Cretan art and Minoan craftsmen. The myth of the ingenious Daedalus, the man who is credited with building the great projects in Knossos, and the myth of the Cretan Telchines, daemon-protectors of crafts and craftsmen, are not accidental, nor was the conviction prevalent in the Levant that the god of art dwelt in Crete.

In contrast to Oriental and Egyptian monumental art, "miniature" Minoan art, as it has been called, was defined by the avoidance of the massive and oversized. Conformity to the natural scale and the rejection of ostentation can be seen indicatively in the plastic depictions of the deities, in the idols and figurines. At the same time, artistic creation was manifested in a decorative viewpoint with strong movements and twists, with the free development of compositions and fluid forms without being bound by the laws of nature, but solely by the inner rhythms of the artistic style. This trend toward decorative realism, which lends freshness and vitality to Minoan art, differentiates it from the static geometricity of Eastern art. Minoan works of art were famed not for their size or their precious materials, as these were not rare in the countries of the Levant. They were in demand as artistic creations of high inspiration and flawless workmanship which was able to render details that were hard for the naked eye to discern. Precious material like gold, silver, semiprecious stones and ivory served and supplemented artistic creation by adding colour, brilliance and, of course, value without overburdening it.

Minoan art represents the multiform, complex, open and perpetually moving Minoan world.

THE FRESCOES

The great art of fresco painting, interwoven with the luxurious lifestyle and the mechanisms for displaying and propagating the palace system, developed in the middle of the second millennium BC. The walls, floors and ceilings of the palaces, but also those of the large urban structures and villas that belonged to members of the upper social class, were covered with richly coloured frescoes, i.e. paintings on plaster. Religious and cult scenes, themes from nature with animals and plants and decorative motifs comprise the iconography of the frescoes. The miniature frescoes fall into a special category with representations on a small scale, as do relief wall paintings on which themes are rendered in low relief and then painted over.

Decorative motifs painted on plaster can be seen in the early palaces, for example on the floor with the curvilinear motifs at Phaistos. But real pictorial representations and other compositions do not appear at the palace of Knossos until early in the Neopalatial period. The oldest, dating from the mid-17th cent. BC, is the "Crocus-gathering Monkey" depicted gathering crocus blossoms on a meadow. The miniature frescoes are dated to the same period. The "Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco" shows groups of worshippers, men and women, in a festive rite in a grove outdoors. The fresco of the "Tripartite Shrine" ("Grandstand Fresco") also depicts a cult scene with a crowd

around a three-part shrine with columns and grandstands; another type of shrine is possibly portrayed in the "Tricolummar Shrine" fresco.

Some of the most beautiful fresco compositions date to the next stage (1500-1450 BC). The fresco with images from nature, bluebirds and small monkeys in the midst of plants, rocks and water that adorned the walls of the "House of Frescoes" at Knossos, is indicative of the themes that inspired Minoan artists. A cult scene that also takes place in a natural landscape is the fresco on the wall of a small shrine in the villa at Ayia Triada. The lovely "Fresco of the Lilies", a stylised composition with stalks of white lilies and red irises, is from the villa at Amnissos. The "Fresco of the Partridges" from the "Caravanserai" near Knossos is a multicoloured decorative composition with partridges sitting among plants and rocks. During this same period, pictures were painted on themes related to the cult and the society that have been preserved only in a fragmentary state. The wall paintings of the final palace period (14th century BC) include the well-known "Bull-Leaping Fresco" from Knossos that depicts young men and women athletes executing the dangerous leap over the back of a running bull. The "Ladies in blue" in the fresco of the same name are ladies of the court at Knossos dressed in rich garments, jewellery and hairstyles. The "Dancer" from the Queen's Apartment at Knossos is a small part of a composition that is probably not related to dancing, but to the Epiphany, as shown by the hair blowing in the wind, similar to seal images of the deity descending from heaven.

The "Procession Fresco", which probably belongs to the late Neopalatial period, is a grand painting with hundreds of men and women dressed in costly clothing who are carrying ritual vessels and offerings to the king of Knossos and are depicted in a row along the great Processional Way. Among them is the "Rhyton-bearer" a youth bearing a large conic rhyton. A decorative fresco with wreaths of red roses, dittany leaves, red lilies and myrtle leaves was found in a house near the palace of Knossos that was destroyed by fire in 1450 BC. The large, striking "Fresco of the Eight-Shaped Shields" that decorated the light well of the Grand Stairway at Knossos dates to the Final Palatial period. The most famous work from the Neopalatial period (1650-1550 BC) is the relief fresco, "The Prince with the Lilies" or the "King-Priest" who is depicted wearing a diadem adorned with lilies and walking in a meadow full of flowers. The relief fresco of the Bull at the North entrance to Knossos is of exceptional quality, as the animal's head is so lifelike that it appears to be panting with a half-open mouth. It may be part of a representation of the hunt and capture of the bull, in a landscape with olive trees. Among the other relief frescoes are the pictures with griffins from Knossos and the "Goddesses" from Pseira in eastern Crete, who are richly dressed standing or seated figures. The period of the Mycenaean dynasty at Knossos (1450-1350 BC) is represented by the imposing fresco on the walls of the "Throne Room", with griffins and a riverside landscape with reeds and palm trees that flank the throne of the lord of Knossos. The fresco depicting the ceremony in which the figures are holding up a communion cup and drinking goblets (*kylikes*) dates to the same period. Part of this latter composition is the famous "Parisienne" with her strongly Mediterranean features and make-up on her face, perhaps a priestess as indicated by the sacral knot at her back. Another interesting fragment is that of the "Captain of the Blacks" fresco, the name given by Evans to the depiction of a Minoan official holding two spears and leading a group of African men in a fast march. It would appear that Africans, probably Nubians, were also in the service of the king of Knossos, as Evans hypothesised. The painted floor from the shrine at Ayia Triada that represents a marine landscape with dolphins, octopuses and fish in a naturalistic style belongs to the same period.



The "crocus-gathering monkey". Fresco with monkeys in a rocky terrain gathering crocus flowers in baskets. Non-realistic, decorative miniature composition. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600 BC).

After the destruction of the palace centres, and especially that of Knossos and Ayia Triada, there is no evidence that the art of fresco painting continued.

The art of the fresco required skill and experience. The technique was mixed, between *buon fresco* and *fresco secco*, i.e. painting on wet or dry plaster. After the preparation of the surface, the colour was spread initially on damp plaster and then on dry. The artisans used special implements, spatulas, awls and natural pigments, but also "guides" such as threads for drawing straight lines, and silhouette-painters for repeated outlines. The pigments are usually the earth colours, reds and ochres, organic ones such as black from charcoal, or minerals like the green of malachite and the grey-blue of riebeckite, while blue was a mixture of oxides and other materials mixed in accordance with an Egyptian formula.

The art of the fresco, an art pre-eminently suitable for social advancement, was disseminated beyond Crete, to the Aegean and the Levant, to regions within range of the Minoan civilisation. As shown by the growing numbers of recent finds, the frescoes outside Crete copied not only the Minoan technique but also its themes, a significant piece of evidence in assessing the degree of cultural penetration. The groups of frescoes that have come to light at Thera in the Cyclades and at Avaris in Egypt are extremely significant in this regard.





The "blue bird".
The fresco depicts a blue
bird sitting on a rock among
plants and flowers. Part of
a larger decorative
composition with rocks,
flowers, birds and monkeys.
"House of Frescoes",
Knossos. Neopalatial period
(1550-1500 BC).



The "fresco with the partridges", in addition to partridges, includes another bird with a long tail, among plants and rocks. Found in the "Caravanserai" at Knossos. Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Part of the fresco with a marine landscape. Ayia Triada (1450-1300 BC).



[Pages 304-305]: The "blue ladies". Fresco with life-sized figures of women, perhaps ladies of the Court at the palace of Knossos, richly dressed with elaborate coiffures and lavishly bejewelled, on a blue ground (1500-1450 BC).









Relief fresco with bull, olives and rocks, perhaps part of a pictorial composition depicting bull hunting. The head of the panting bull, with strongly and realistically drawn anatomy, is a splendid example of the naturalist style of the Neopalatial period. From the north entrance to the palace at Knossos (1600-1500 BC).





The famous gold jewel with the bees. Consists of two bees holding a piece of honeycomb between their legs, a filigree "cage" containing a gold bead balanced on their heads and little disks hanging down from their wings and sting. An exquisite example of Minoan goldwork, it combines hammering, filigree and granulation. From the necropolis of Malia (1800-1700 BC).

The richness and variety of the jewellery that has been found in Prepalatial tombs are associated with the emergence of the higher social strata late in the third millennium BC. After the palace system came into being early in the second millennium BC, the demand for evidence of social superiority such as valuable jewellery was reinforced. But few pieces of jewellery can be dated to the age of the early palaces, since no large tombs from this period have been excavated. Nevertheless, the best-known jewel in the Herakleion Museum, "The Bees" from the grave precinct on the Chrysolakkos site near the palace of Malia, dates to this period. This marvellous gold pendant consists of two facing bees that are holding a disk, possibly a piece of honeycomb, with their legs. Above their heads, a gold filigree container encloses a small sphere, perhaps a drop of honey, while little disks hang from their wings. All the most advanced techniques of the jeweller's art were used to make this piece: repoussé and engraving to form the bodies, extremely fine granulation on the comb and the details of the body, and the filigree cage at the top.

The same cemetery yielded a dressing pin with a blossom-shaped finial.

The largest and most significant hoards of jewellery in the Herakleion Museum came from the cemeteries of the Neopalatial and Final Palatial period at Poros, Knossos, Archanes and Phaistos.

The jewellery that represents the Minoan jeweller's art during the period of its heyday (1600-1450 BC) has come from the large Neopalatial tombs at Poros, and includes necklaces with beads in a variety of shapes, materials and colours, in gold, amethyst, sard and other semiprecious stones or cast of glass paste or faience, earrings of gold, silver and bronze, silver dressing pins and pendants of all kinds. Of particular importance are the gold signet rings with religious scenes, and other, purely decorative rings, such as one made using the cloisonné technique, i.e. with wire divisions on the bezel that are filled with molten enamel. Two gold beads depict ducks among lilies. Moulds, materials and tools were found in workshops in the Minoan harbour settlement at Poros that had been used for making such jewels.

The gold jewellery of this period includes a tiny lion with fine granulation and a lovely pendant in the shape of a duck from Knossos, another small zoomorphic bead in the shape of a fish, two seated lion cubs and a pendant in the shape of a bull's head. A gold amulet from Ayia Triada bears relief symbols to ward off evil, including a scorpion, snake, spider and the palm of a hand.

The few cemeteries from the Final Palatial – early Postpalatial period (1450-1350 BC) at Knossos, Archanes and Phaistos have also provided a wealth of exquisite jewellery. There are beads from splendid gold necklaces, in the shape of ivy leaves, papyrus, rosettes, a double argonaut, globular and grain-shaped beads, all hammered in moulds. There are similar beads in many different shapes on necklaces of cast blue glass paste or faience, while the necklaces with large beads of sard or crystal and cornelian from Phaistos are especially valuable. A very special piece of jewellery was found in Selopoulo Knossos with a sealstone gem mounted in gold that hangs from a necklace of small gold beads. Likewise characteristic are the lovely gold earrings in the shape of a bull's head, the snout of which is a cone of dense gold granulation.

Some very important gold signet rings with religious scenes were found in the same cemeteries at Archanes, Knossos and Phaistos, and an impressive gold cloisonné ring from Selopoulo Knossos.

At the end of the Postpalatial period, jewellery of similar types was still being manufactured, but with fewer precious materials and inferior workmanship. One of the examples is the highly decorative ring from Praisos (1150 BC) with gold granulation on the bezel, but without the high quality workmanship characteristic of previous periods.



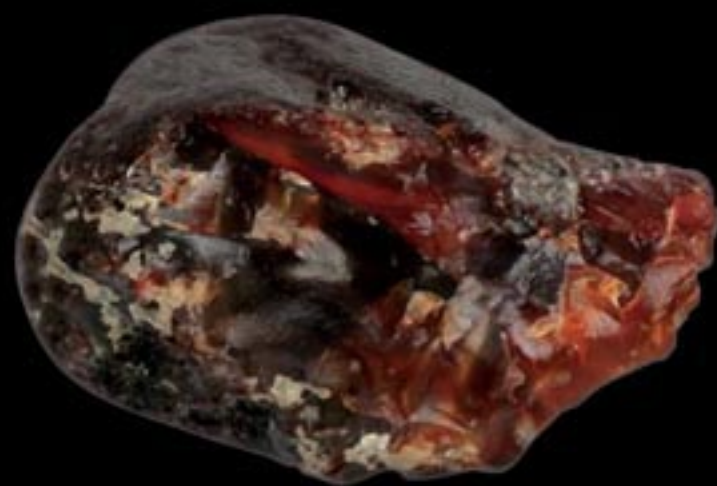
Three gold bulls' heads, appendages of necklaces. Ayia Triada, Early Postpalatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Gold pendant in the form of a seated lion. Ayia Triada, Early Postpalatial period.







[Page 312]: Three necklaces with beads of rock crystal and gold from Mochlos. Late Palaeopalatial-Neopalatial period (1800-1600 BC). Raw material: pieces of amethyst and sard and round semi-processed beads of the same gemstones, from a jewellery workshop in Poros Herakleion. Neopalatial period (1500 BC).



Necklaces with beads of sard and amethyst.
Poros, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).

Necklaces with beads of various shapes and colours
made of gold, amethyst, rock crystal, glass, faience and
lapis lazuli. Poros, Neopalatial period.



Necklaces with beads of amethyst, sard, rock crystal etc. from the cemetery at Kalyvia Phaistos.
Early Postpalatial period (1400-1300 BC).



Gold pendant representing
an aquatic bird and flowers.
Poros, Neopalatial period
(1600-1450 BC).

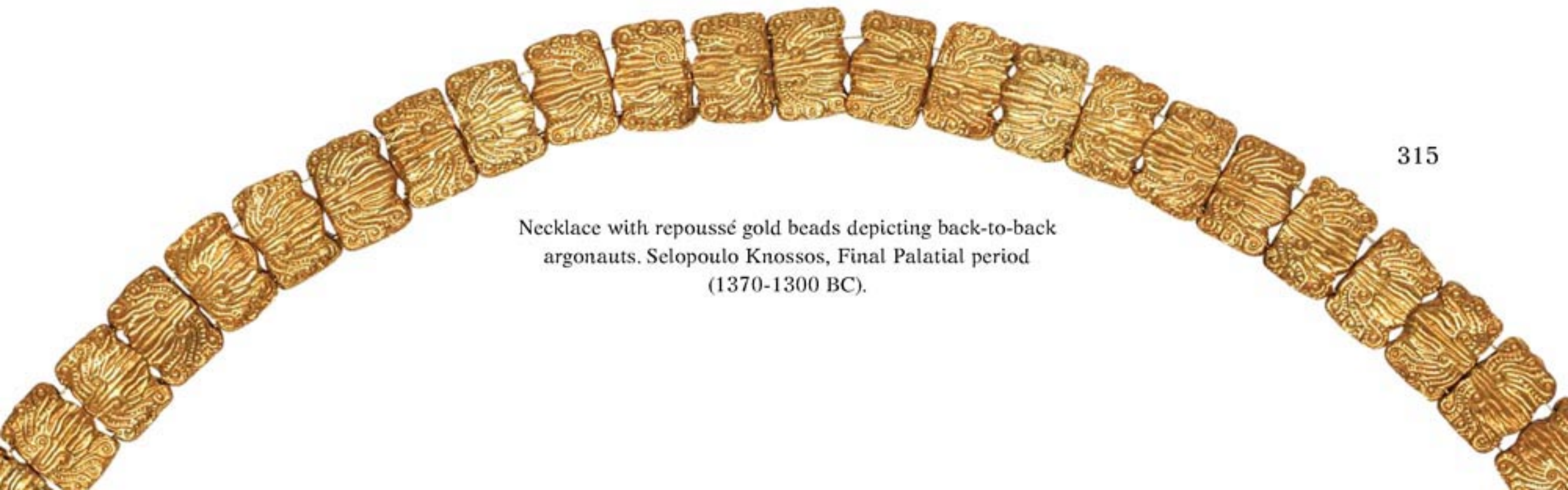


Necklace of steatite beads. Cemeteries of Kalyvia Phaistos. Early Postpalatial period (1400-1300 BC).

Ring with cloissonné decoration
consisting of straight and curved
gold dividing lines that create
concentric geometric shapes:
a circle, a square and a lozenge,
with blue and white glass paste
filling the hollows. It is the
earliest known application of
the cloissonné technique in
Minoan Crete. Poros, Neopalatial
period (1600-1450 BC).



Necklace with repoussé gold beads depicting back-to-back
argonauts. Selopoulo Knossos, Final Palatial period
(1370-1300 BC).







[Page 316]: Necklaces with beads of rock crystal, sard, amethyst and steatite from the tomb at Kamilari Phaistos, Neopalatial-Early Postpalatial period (1650-1300 BC). BELOW: Two necklaces with gold beads in the shape of rosettes from the cemetery at Fourni Archanes. Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC).

Necklace of small round gold beads with a pendent sard seal mounted in gold. Selopoulo Knossos. Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC).
Necklace with beads of faience and necklace with beads of blue glass and gold. Fourni Archanes, Final Palatial period.



[Page 317]; Necklaces with faience beads in various shapes,
from the cemetery at Kalyvia Phaistos (1400-1300 BC).
BELOW: Two necklaces with gold beads in the shape
of rosettes and back-to-back argonauts. Fourni
Archanes, Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC).



Necklace of small gold beads and larger blue glass ones in the shape of rosettes. Necklace with beads of blue glass in the shape of cockles. Necklace with gold and rock crystal beads in a variety of shapes: round, grain-shaped, in the form of rosettes, lilies and papyrus, and with a middle bead in the form of an eight-shaped shield. There is also an unusual gold bead with filigree decoration. Fourni Archanes, Final Palatial period.



[Page 320]: Necklace with gold beads in the shape of ivy leaves, from Selopoulo Knossos. Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC). Three gold clasps (*sphikotires*) that were woven into locks of hair. Fourni Archanes, Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC).



Three necklaces with gold beads and a hair pin of twisted gold wire from cemeteries at Knossos and Katsambas. Necklace with gold beads from the Tomb-Sanctuary at Knossos. (1450-1300 BC).



Necklace of amethyst beads from Mavrospilio Knossos. Final Palatial period.





[Page 322]: Necklace with gold beads, and with a small gold central pendant from Fourni Archanes.
 BELOW: Two necklaces with gold, papyrus-shaped beads, from Selopoulo Knossos. Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC).

[Page 323]: Necklace with beads in various shapes: round gold beads with granulated decoration, drop-shaped gold ones and round rock crystal ones. Elaborate necklace with gold and sard beads, highlighted by the large sard bead set in gold in the middle and the two filigree beads. Fourni Archanes, Final Palatial period (1370-1300 BC).
 BELOW: Necklace of gold grain-shaped and drop-shaped beads. Ayia Triada, Early Postpalatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Bezel of gold ring depicting a griffin. Selopoulo Knossos. Final Palatial period.



Small gold pendent bead in the form of a female figure with hands on her head. Gournia, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



Gold ring bearing a combination of the granulation and cloisonné techniques, the latter created by a network of thin pieces of gold arranged in a scaly pattern, with molten glass poured into the hollows. Selopoulo Knossos, Final Palatial period.



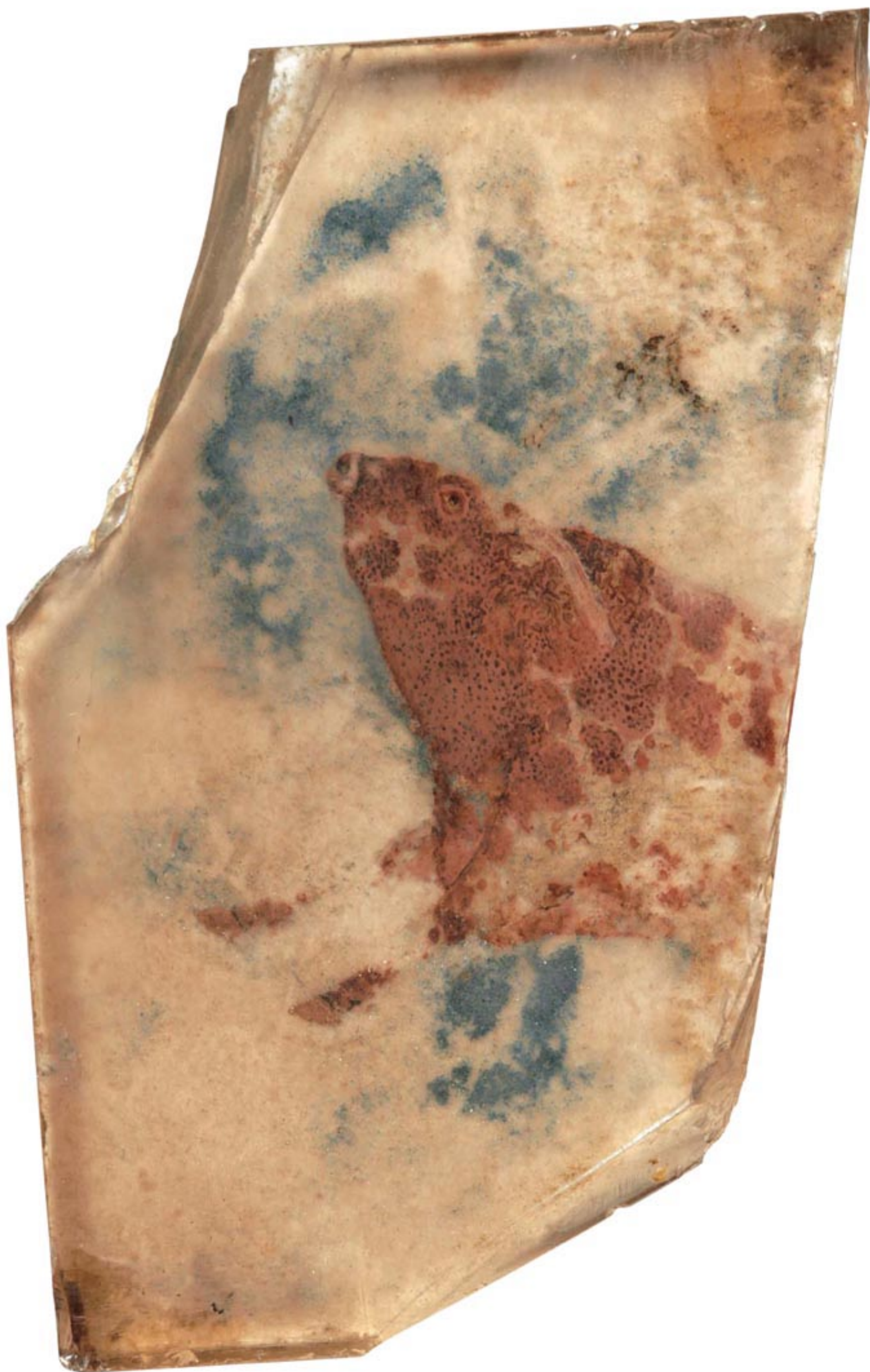
Gold ring from Praisos ornamented with spirals and granulation.
Postpalatial period (1200-1100 BC).

Page 326]: Gold beads in the shape of a papyrus, a bull's head and a bird, from Malia and Palaikastro. Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC). Gold leaf-shaped pendants from Malia. Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC). Gold pin with floral finial. Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).

[Page 327]: Four gold earrings in the form of a bull's head with dense, fine granulation, each tiny grain applied separately to the conic snout of the bull's head. They are examples of the high level of the goldsmith's art in Minoan Knossos in the Neopalatial and Final Palatial period. Knossos (1600-1350 BC). Gold pendant in the form of a duck, with granulated decoration. Knossos, Neopalatial-Final Palatial period (1500-1400 BC).







MINIATURE ART

The avoidance of monumental size that characterises "miniature" Minoan art is expressed nowhere more fully than in miniature art. The various compositions of miniature three-dimensional models and decorative painted or relief plaques and inlays, works of special artistic quality, were made mainly of ivory, rock crystal, glass and faience. The plaques and inlays have holes or notches by which they were affixed to the surfaces they decorated. They depict rosettes, helmets, women's figures, a crescent, a sphinx, a butterfly, birds, plant themes, the sacral knot, zoomorphic daemons and other motifs. Most of them have been found in the palace of Knossos and some are works from the excellent palace workshops.

A unique example of painting is the rock crystal plaque with a miniature coloured scene of the capture of a raging bull that was painted in red on a blue ground. Arthur Evans described this lively representation as the "ne plus ultra of Minoan naturalism".

Of particular interest is the so-called Town Mosaic, a work consisting of rectangular faience plaques that were inlaid and represented the facades of buildings in a city, as well as human figures and animals. The houses have one or two storeys, with doors and windows and a room on the flat roof over the stairwell. The plaques with the people, animals and vegetation give the picture of a natural landscape surrounding the town, as well as the basic form of a Minoan urban centre, possibly Knossos itself.

On the splendid "Draftboard", also from Knossos, a royal table game that was played with pawns, a variety of inlays of different materials was used. The rectangular board, which may have covered a chest or table, is made of ivory, rock-crystal, blue glass, and gold and silver leaf. It is framed by carved rosettes with crystal inlays, while its inner surface is covered with crystal plaques alternating with glass paste and silver leaf, and with ivory inlays in between. The four large conic ivory pawns seem to be counterparts to the four large circles on the board. The type of object and the luxury of its manufacture are indicative of the standard of living in the Minoan palaces, particularly at Knossos.

There are two ivory figurines of children from Palaikastro among the miniature sculptures, and two dressing pins in the shape of male figures from the villa at Nirou Chani. But the masterpiece of Minoan miniature sculpture is the bull-leaping composition with the ivory "Bull leaper". This is a landmark work of pre-historic art, as it is the first time the movement of a young athlete is depicted in three dimensions at the instant he is suspended in the air executing the dangerous leap over the horns of the bull. In the initial composition, the bull leaper hung in the air, possibly held by fine chains, wires or thread, since there are no visible points indicating where the figure was supported. To the same composition belong heads and arms of similar figures, but also pieces of fine gold leaf, perhaps from the zoma worn by the bull leapers who would thus have been gold and ivory statuettes, precursors of the much later chryselephantine statues of the ancient Hellenic period.

All the above works are dated to the Neopalatial period, up to 1450 BC. The composition of the ivory plaques from Fourni Archanes that depict relief eight-shaped shields and the heads of warriors with helmets dates to the period of the Mycenaean dynasty (1450-1350/1300 BC). This work adorned the front and sides of a footstool. Relief plaques of ivory, such as the one depicting a wild goat, that decorated small chests were also found at Fourni Archanes.





Faience tiles from the so-called Town Mosaic, inlays on a wooden structure or panel. As a set, they convey the image of a Minoan city made up of two-storey houses with doors, windows and projecting roofs over interior stairways. Knossos (1600-1500 BC).



Tiles of ivory adorned with eight-shaped shields, relief heads of warriors wearing helmets and schematic papyrus. They were all decorative inlays on a small wooden chest or footstool, from Vaulted Tomb A in the cemetery at Fourni Archanes. Final Palatial period (1350 BC).

Ivory tile with the relief head of a warrior wearing a boar's tusk helmet, from the decoration of the small chest from Archanes. This type of helmet, plated with boars' tusks, was mentioned by Homer in the *Iliad*.









Ivory jewel case from a grave at Katsambas, with a relief composition showing a bull hunt and bull leaping in a rocky terrain. Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



Ivory double axes and an ivory inlay in the shape of a butterfly, from the palace at Zakros. Late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



[Page 337]: ABOVE: Three ivory Minoan "portraits". The first two heads of figurines (left) come from Archanes. The third, from Knossos, is the head of a bull-leaper figurine. Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).

BELOW: Ivory plaque with a relief wild goat. Fourni Archanes, Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).





Lentoid sealstone of sard depicting two bulls. Knossos,
Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



Semi-processed lentoid sealstone of agate, a sard bead, and rough gemstones that were to be processed
(agate and jasper), from a Minoan seal-engraving workshop at Poros (1500 BC).

The numerous seals and sealings from the Palaeopalatial and especially the Neopalatial period, with their wealth of visual representations, constitute a very important source of information on iconography. Early in the second millennium BC the zoomorphic types of seals from the Prepalatial period were abandoned and new shapes such as the three-sided prism, the cylinder, and the signet on a stock prevailed, and stone became a more common material than ivory. The two major collections of seals and sealings from the Palaeopalatial period (1900-1680 BC) are the seals from Malia and the sealings from Phaistos. In the Malia collection, where the seals were usually made of steatite and prism-shaped, various interesting themes are depicted, such as the potter sitting next to a large jar, the fisherman holding a fish, a ship, and an upright loom with loom weights. Some of them bear hieroglyphic symbols or geometric motifs. On the Phaistos collection of sealings, various animals, religious themes and above all, complex geometrical decorative motifs are depicted with exceptional precision of design.

In the Neopalatial and early Postpalatial period (1650-1350 BC), the art of seal engraving reached its peak. The materials used then were primarily gemstones with beautiful colors and veins, such as sard and agate, amethyst, rock crystal, jasper, chalcedony and sardonyx. Gold is rarely used alone, but can be found on a signet in the Giamalakis collection and on two seals from Poros. There are also some gemstone seals set in gold. The most customary shapes are lentoid, amygdaloid, discoid, and three-sided prisms. Their subject matter includes scenes from nature, religious themes, scenes from the sea, bull leaping, etc. Talismanic seals constitute a special category and, owing to the style of their schematised representations, were believed to have been endowed with magic powers of averting evil, as the name suggests. The themes from nature depict land and sea animals in a variety of scenes, as well as landscapes. The representations are detailed, imaginative and extraordinarily naturalistic; a few are almost poetic. The religious scenes include sacred sites, gods, worshippers, daemons, ritual and sacred symbols, cult activities and ceremonies and the surrounding landscape. Some seals show battle scenes or warriors in hand-to-hand combat, chariot races or parts of the armour worn by warriors, such as the boar's tusk helmet. The popular sport of bull leaping is frequently portrayed. Among the scenes with ships, oarsmen and other human figures, some of which are linked with the cycle of the Epiphany, it is worth noting the exceptional rectangular seal from Anemospilia Archanes, made of black and white agate depicting an oarsman with strong muscles propelling his boat alone in the darkness.

The representations on sealings from a Minoan house near the palace of Zakros do not fall into any of the thematic cycles mentioned above. They depict monstrous beings in amazing combinations produced by an orgiastic imagination expressing the artistic particularity of a unique sealstone carver, the "Zakros Master".

After the 14th century BC, the art of seal engraving declined. The material used then was usually ordinary chlorite or steatite, and the themes represented were mainly animals executed with mediocre workmanship.



[Page 341]: Amygdaloid sealstone of sard, showing a libation vase and branches, from the cemetery at Sfoungara Gournia. Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).

Amygdaloid sealstone of sard depicting a lion. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).

Lentoid sealstone of lapis lazuli set in a gold border adorned with granulation. The seal surface shows a lion and a male figure. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).

Large lentoid sealstone of agate depicting a goddess between griffins with "three-arched bows" over her head. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1400 BC).



Chalcedony sealstone, set in gold, in the shape of a flattened cylinder depicting a lion and two male figures. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).





Amygdaloid sealstone of haematite depicting a priest carrying a hieratic axe. Vatheia, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Amygdaloid "talismanic" sealstone of chlorite with the image of a schematised papyrus/mask. Gypsades Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1400 BC).



Gold signet on a stock with a hole by which to hang it; its seal surface has a whirling spiral design. Malia, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC).



Three-sided sealstone pendant of sard set in gold with granulated decoration around the holes by which it was hung. On one seal surface is a double axe and "sacral knot". Poros, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Sealstone of veined agate in the form of a flattened cylinder depicting an oarsman propelling his boat with a sweep; an excellent example of decorative miniature sculpture. The intensity of the boatman's effort is expressed superbly by the bent body, and the strong, flexed muscles of the arms and body. The evocative, spare composition is enhanced by the rare black-and-white ground of the two-tone agate. From the sanctuary at Anemospilia Archanes (c. 1650 BC).



Cylinder seal of lapis lazuli from Syria or Babylonia. The gold mounting and granulation was executed in a Minoan goldsmith's workshop. On the lateral seal surface are images of Eastern daemonic figures and symbols. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).



Lentoid sealstone of sard depicting lions, from Poros. Lentoid sealstone of basalt representing bull leaping, from Gournes. Neopalatial-Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).





Lentoid sealstone of haematite showing a lion attacking a large animal and a lentoid steatite sealstone with the image of an octopus. Knossos, late Neopalatial period (1450-1400 BC).



One of the most active craft-based activities throughout the second millennium BC was metalworking, especially in bronze. Evidence of the processing of metal has been found on several sites such as at the "Unexplored Mansion" near the palace of Knossos, at Mochlos and Palaikastro in eastern Crete and in ports, such as Kommos in south central Crete and Poros, where the main port of Knossos was located, east of Herakleion. Especially in the latter, where copper began being processed in the Prepalatial period early in the 3rd millennium BC, a major metalworking centre developed during the second millennium BC, from the Palaeopalatial to the Postpalatial period, as can be confirmed by the relevant findings of bronze talents, small ore furnaces and air ducts, pot bellows, crucibles for smelting metal, moulds for casting various metal items and large amounts of tailings and slag. These workshops made objects of all kinds, from tools and utensils for everyday use to ritual vessels and cult objects like figurines. Jewellery and miniature sculptures were also produced.

Despite the substantial number of metal exhibits in the Museum, it is certain that most Minoan metalwork objects, not just those of gold or silver but bronze ones as well, have been lost forever. Valuable and coveted artefacts of Cretan metalwork, such as the gold and silver utensils decorated with inlays that are shown being carried by Minoan Keftiu on the walls of Egyptian tombs, have never been found in Crete. This of course is largely due to the fact that the value of the metal remains even when the object is no longer used. The recycling of metals by re-smelting them to make new objects is an age-old practice that continues to this day. It is notable that just a few decades ago, some of the most important Minoan bronze exhibits now in the Herakleion Museum, including hundreds of votive axes from Arkalochori and the enormous cauldrons from Tylissos, were saved at the last moment by the Museum's first directors, who found them at the copper works in Herakleion where they had been sold for re-smelting as common "copperware" by the villagers who had discovered them.

It is therefore not hard to explain why the metal utensils that have been preserved to the present day are so few in number, and even fewer are those made of precious metals such as gold and silver. That we have so few such objects is likewise due to the fact that no unplundered burial grounds have been found dating before the 15th century BC. Just one silver kantharos from Gournia has been preserved from the Palaeopalatial period (1800 BC). There is also a miniature faience pot of the same date from Knossos, with a neck and base of gold leaf. Four silver vessels (one ewer and three bowls, one of which is decorated with relief spirals) dating to c. 1500 BC were found in a rich house in Knossos and one was found at Fourni Archanes. A small silver ewer adorned with gold bands was found in Zakros, and a small silver kylix with a gold plated handle and rim in Knossos. The only gold Minoan pot that has survived is a cup with relief spirals, from a grave near Knossos.

Bronze utensils from the Palaeopalatial period are also very few, two tripods and a tray from Malia and a bowl from Kalathiana. Most bronze pots and vessels are dated to later periods, Neopalatial and early Postpalatial (1650-1300 BC).

Ewers, basins, two-handled bowls and tripod cauldrons have been found in houses in the city of Knossos. The three oversized bronze cauldrons for preparing food for a communal meal were from Tylissos. Two large hoards of copper pots were found in tombs. Ewers and hydrias, tripod cauldrons, drinking cups (*skyfoi*), basins, lamps, and cups were found in the "Tomb of the tripod hearth" at Knossos, in Vaulted Tomb A, and in the Mycenaean rock-cut tomb enclosure at Fourni Archanes.

Some of these utensils bear relief decorations. One copper ewer from Knossos is decorated with a wavy band that forms curved motifs like drops, whereas the basins have relief leaves and flowers or spirals on the rim and the handle. A cup from Mochlos is decorated with relief vine leaves, a ewer and a hydria from Fourni Archanes with a triton and a cockle, and a lamp from Knossos with spirals.

Minoan metalwork declined gradually after 1300 BC, when the collapse of the palace system restricted the availability of raw materials.



Bronze tripod cauldron from the cemetery at Fourni Archanes. Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).





Silver *kylix* with gold-plated handle and rim. Grave in the Knossos region. Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Bronze lamp from the Tomb of the "Tripod Cooker" at Knossos. Final Palatial period (1400-1350 BC).

[Page 348]: Small faience pitcher with gold leaf on the base and neck. Knossos, Palaeopalatial period (1800-1700 BC). Two tiny boxes with gold lids, probably pendants and/or amulets. From Vaulted Tomb A in the cemetery at Fourni Archanes. Final Palatial period (1350 BC). Gold cup with embossed decorative spirals and arches, from a grave in the Knossos region. Neopalatial-Final Palatial period (1450-1350 BC).



Bronze bowl with leafy repoussé decoration on the rim and handle, from a house in Knossos. Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).

STONE CARVING

From the Prepalatial to the Postpalatial periods, stone vases never stopped being manufactured in Crete. From the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, small vases became less common in the Prepalatial tombs and were replaced by larger, more luxurious ones. The most striking are perhaps the ritual vessels that have already been mentioned, crafted from rare stone with special coloring and veining, or with a glossy surface, sometimes decorated with relief religious representations or themes from nature, and in special shapes such as conical, oval or zoomorphic drinking cups (*rhyta*) and the so-called communion cups. These vases were products of specialised palace workshops such as the "Lapidary's Workshop" at Knossos, where pieces of Spartan basalt were found that had been stored for further processing. The most common vases are in the shape of a flower or a bird's nest.

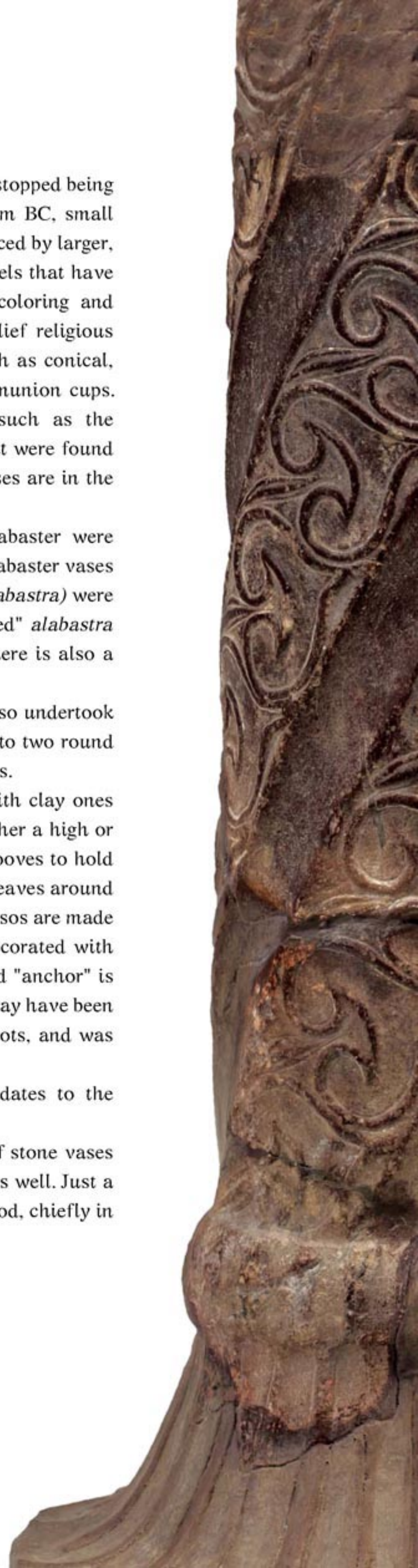
During the Neopalatial period (1650-1450 BC), vases of alabaster were popular, a few imported from Egypt, such as the collection of ten alabaster vases from the "Royal Tomb" at Isopata Knossos. Flask-shaped vases (*alabastra*) were common during 15th-14th century BC, whereas the "bread-shaped" *alabastra* found in the Throne Room of Knossos were made of gypsum. There is also a large amphora made of the same material.

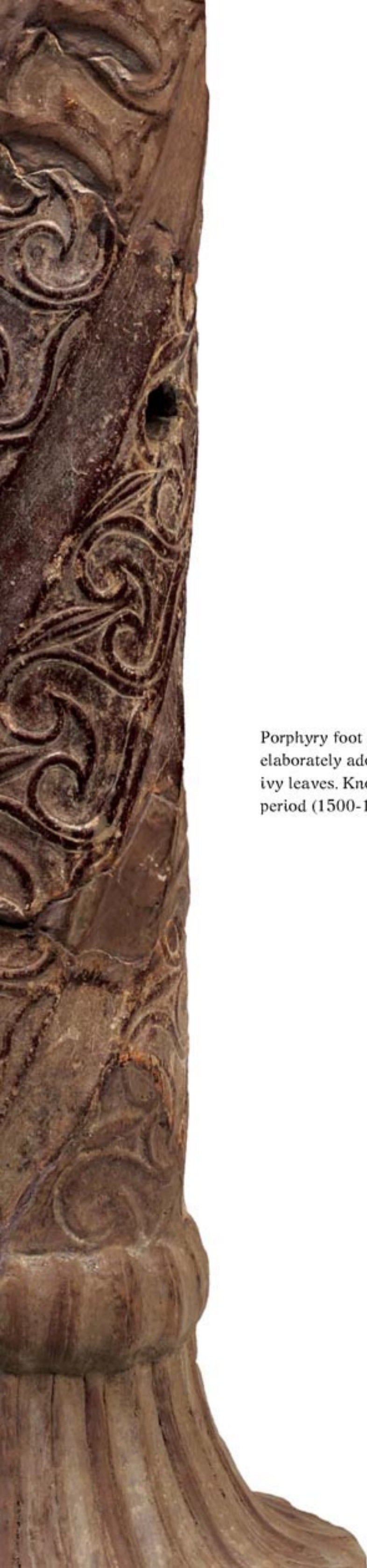
In addition to creating their own works, Minoan stonecarvers also undertook to alter others, as can be seen by the modifications and additions to two round basalt vases from Zakros, to bring them in line with Minoan shapes.

Increased numbers of stone lamps were used in conjunction with clay ones during the Neopalatial period. There were two basic types: with either a high or low foot, a central cavity for the oil or fat used as fuel and two grooves to hold the wick. Some of the low ones are decorated with relief spirals or leaves around the rim. Two beautiful lamps with a high cylindrical foot from Knossos are made of imported Peloponnesian antico rosso stone and elaborately decorated with diagonal bands of relief ivy leaves and flower petals. The so-called "anchor" is of the same material and adorned with a striking relief octopus. It may have been the official state standard for controlling the weight of copper ingots, and was kept in the palace of Knossos.

The beautiful stone frieze with relief half-rosettes probably dates to the Mycenaean period on Knossos (1450-1350 BC).

After the destruction of Knossos in 1350 BC, the production of stone vases and utensils declined, as was the case with other arts and crafts as well. Just a few pots, ordinary and nest-shaped, have been found from this period, chiefly in graves.



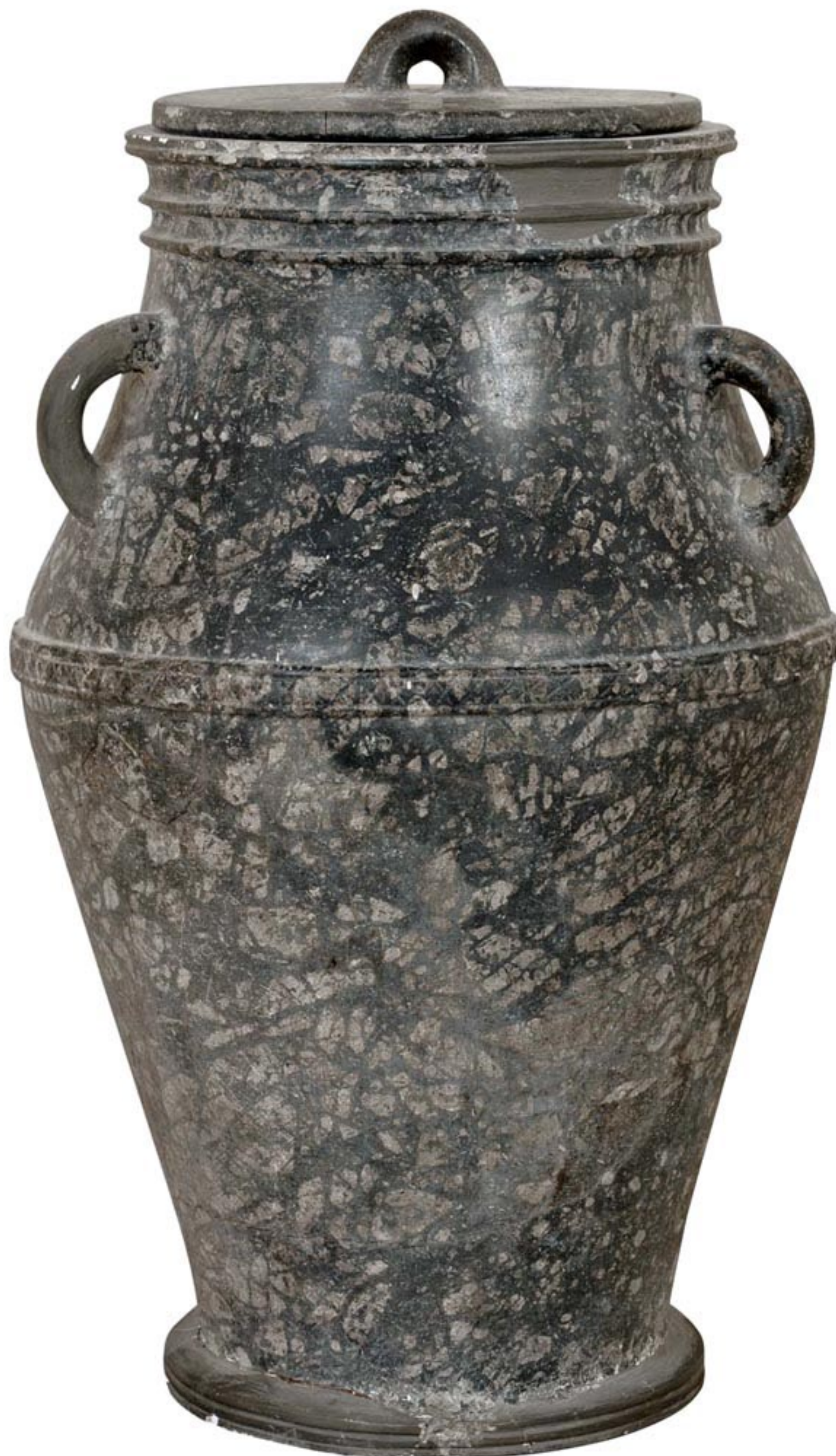


Stone offerings table with foot. Malia, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).

Porphyry foot of a lamp elaborately adorned with relief ivy leaves. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1400 BC).



Porphyry standard perhaps for weighing copper ingots (about 30 kg.), decorated with a relief octopus. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1400 BC).



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Small serpentine jar with lid. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1600-1400 BC).



Stone flower-shaped pot with relief foliate decoration. Palaikastro, Neopalatial period (1600-1450 BC).

Bridge-spouted serpentine ewer with white decoration inlaid in the round cavities. From the Knossos region, Neopalatial period.



Lamp with relief decoration on the foot and rim. Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1400 BC).

Decorative frieze of slate, with relief symmetrical semi-rosettes. Knossos, Final Palatial period (1400-1300 BC).



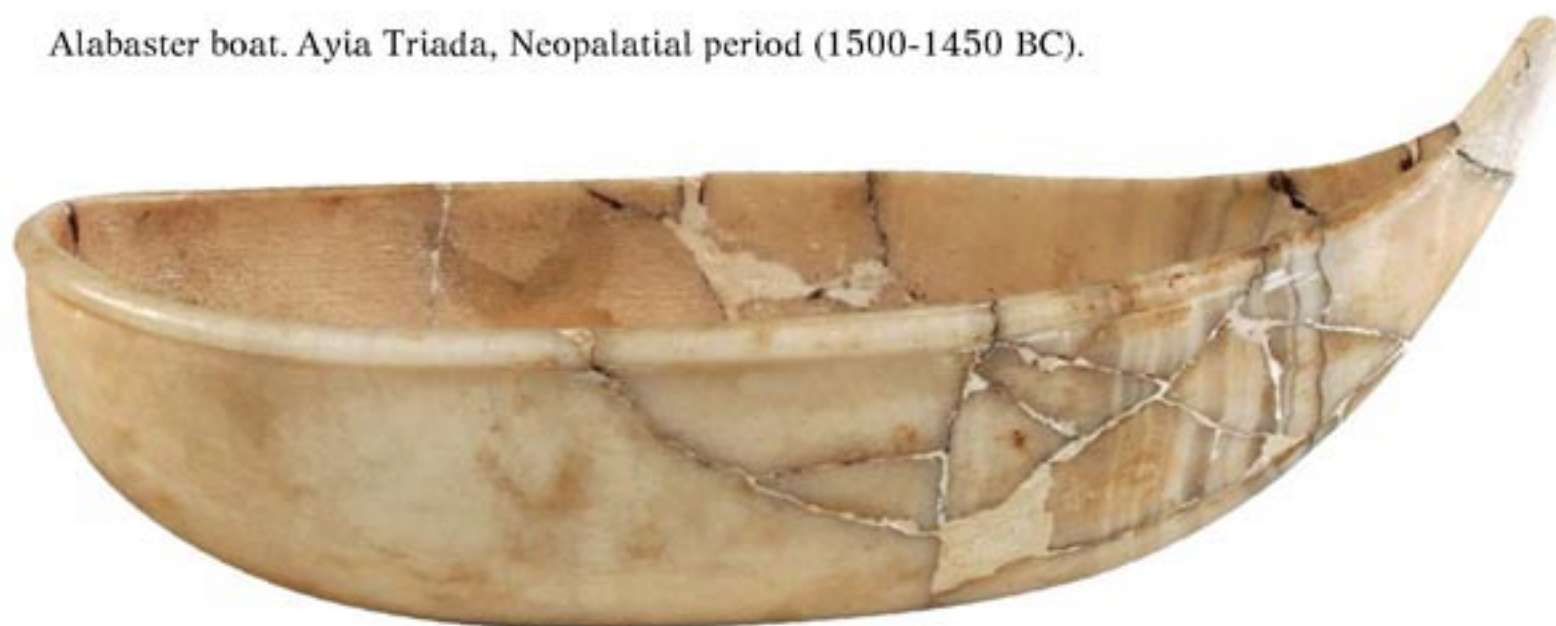
Flask-shaped oil jar (*alabastro*) from Kalyvia Phaistos. Postpalatial period (1400-1350 BC).



Stone vase with incised birds. Phaistos, Palaeopalatial period (1900-1700 BC).



Alabaster boat. Ayia Triada, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).



Two-lug Egyptian pot made of Egyptian basalt with fluting and with handles that had been re-worked by a Minoan artisan. Zakros, late Neopalatial period (1450 BC).



CRETE IN THE HELLENIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

First millennium BC – 4th century AD

1. From the Dorians to the Romans: Historical development, state and social structure



The Mycenaean world in Crete gradually declined until, in the late 2nd millennium BC, it came to an end. At the same time, vigorous military tribes were moving into and spreading through Mycenaean lands. In the 11th century BC, waves of fierce Dorians reached Crete, which they conquered and settled. Despite their apparently low cultural level in comparison with the brilliant Minoan tradition of Crete, these new military tribes had some noteworthy features that in time led to new creative developments. The Dorians brought a new metal with them, iron; they established new state and social structures, introduced the Greek pantheon and different burial traditions, and created new cultural expressions which thereafter placed Crete firmly in the Hellenic world.

The local population was assimilated and learned to live with the newcomers in old settlements and in new ones that were established in the mountains and lowlands. Some groups from pre-Hellenic communities sought refuge in inaccessible mountainous regions where they lived for centuries, preserving their age-old language. These were the Eteocretans referred to by Homer, the original, indigenous Cretans who, it would appear, retained the memory of their Minoan descent and wrote their unknown language using the Greek alphabet, as indicated by the inscriptions found in Dreros and Praesos, mountainous sites in eastern Crete.

The Dorians organised mixed communities, joining the new tribes and the pre-Hellenic local population in a military-clan structure that initially included the institution of the kingship. A basic element in the Dorians' rigid socio-political organisation was the establishment of an army and the education of young people, which was assigned to Companionships (*Etaireies*) comprising men from the clans of every tribe. In contrast to the citizens, whose obligations were of a military nature, farming, crafts and commerce were practised by social groups who had no political rights. The strategic location of Crete favoured commerce and contact with the Levant, Cyprus and Egypt, and this in turn fostered cultural influences and the flourishing of art. The Geometric culture of the early centuries developed into the Orientalising one. Communities merged and became towns. In the Archaic period (7th and 6th centuries BC), Crete went through a period of great prosperity and the major towns became centres of artistic creation.

In the 7th century BC, an aristocratic state structure came into being as a result of the fact that authority was concentrated in the hands of the powerful classes. Political and military power was

exercised by a body of nobles or magistrates (*Kosmoi*), who were elected by those bearing arms, who also supported their authority. The *Ekklesia*, the body of male citizens, met in the city's Agora, where they ratified or rejected the proposals of the *Kosmoi*. Legislative and judicial power was exercised by a Council of Elders, or Senate. The Horsemen (*Ippeis*), who were obliged to own a military horse and were entrusted with keeping order, originated from the ranks of the nobility. The strictly ordained socio-political organisation aimed to create citizens with a military ideal, who were capable of defending the integrity and interests of the community. Women had no political rights, although they took part in social and religious events and could own property. For the male citizen-warriors, communal meals called *Andreia* were provided in a public edifice where they would gather every day.

Special care was taken in Dorian cities to ensure that the education of young people was strictly laid down. After the basic education in reading, writing and music, Cretans youths left their homes, after which the rest of their upbringing was provided by the city. They lived together in groups called *Ageles*, were taught hunting and the arts of war and were inured to hardship. Ancient writers noted that educating young people in Crete included an initiation rite in which a mature man would live with the youth for two months in a mountainous region where they would hunt together. As a rule, the trainer was a member of the highest social stratum whose selection was an honour for the youth being initiated. After initiation, the purpose of which was for the young man to acquire the virtues of a citizen and warrior, the trainer gave him three traditional gifts: a suit of armour, a cup and an ox to be sacrificed. A special ceremony called *Ekdysia* was held for the youths who had completed all the stages of their education. At it, the young men, now adults, received their weapons, made their sacrifice, took the vow of the citizen-warrior to the gods, and were married in group weddings. In addition to the written sources, other important testimony as to coming-of-age rites is provided by votive offerings from the sanctuaries of Hermes and Aphrodite at Syme Viannos, particularly the bronze open-work plaques with characteristic representations of hunting and transporting the quarry.

The aristocratic political system that ruled Cretan cities was retained for centuries and did not develop into a republic, as it did elsewhere in the Hellenic world. Conservatism and the lack of renewal also affected artistic output, which showed no creative originality, but simply followed Hellenic models. The long, harsh civil wars between Cretan cities that lasted for centuries and sapped their vigour also played a major part in the cultural stagnation evident from the 5th BC century on. One typical incident was the terrible destruction of Lyttos by the Knossians in 220 BC, as dramatically described by the historian Polybius. In the Hellenistic years, experienced Cretan warriors, particularly their renowned archers, were much sought after as mercenaries. In the 2nd century BC, Crete became a lair for pirates who raided ships and even Roman ports. Rome had already involved herself in Cretan affairs, initially as a mediator in its civil disputes. In 67 BC, Quintus Caecilius Metellus, named the Cretan, conquered the island following stiff resistance by the locals. Crete became part of the Roman province of Cyrenaica, and the city of Gortyn that had put up no resistance against the Romans was designated the seat of the administrative pro-consul. As a part of the Roman Empire, Crete enjoyed peace and experienced a new era of prosperity with commercial activity, financial growth, urban renewal, and road and irrigation works; theatres, temples and baths were built, and sculptural works were created to adorn cities and sanctuaries. However, despite the preservation of the Greek language, Roman rule left no margin for a separate culture and Crete became merely a province of the Roman state.

Bronze open-work plaque depicting the god Hermes holding a staff, wearing shoes and a richly decorated mantle. Sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Syme Viannos, Early Archaic period (7th cent. BC).





2. Cities and cemeteries

In the early centuries of Dorian rule, the settlements on sites such as Karfi, Kavousi, Vrokastro, Prinias and elsewhere kept growing and later, towards the end of the 8th century BC, developed into cities, independent political entities with a state structure that made laws, entered into alliances and waged wars. In Homer, Crete is referred to as having a "hundred cities" and the density of its population is confirmed by the place names of the countless settlements mentioned in ancient texts. The most important autonomous cities, Gortyn, Phaistos, Knossos, Lyttos and others began to mint their own coins in the 5th century BC. The names and sites of approximately forty cities of the Classical and Hellenistic periods have been identified. At this period, the long, bloody civil disputes resulted in the predominance of some strong cities, the destruction of others, and a general weakening of all due to the constant turmoil and the interference in the internal affairs of Crete by foreign powers such as the Spartans, the Athenians, and the Ptolemies. In central Crete there was rivalry between Knossos and Lyttos that lasted for many years and constant antagonism between Gortyn and Knossos. Kydonia in the west and Ierapytna in the east were among the strong cities. Excavations of these cities have shed very little light on the period prior to the Roman conquest. The Prytaneion, seat of the Kosmoi, was unearthed by excavations at Ayia Pelayia, site of ancient Apollonia. In Knossos, Hellenistic houses were found; in Prinias (ancient Rizenia), a wall with towers was discovered. Reliefs like the metope with Heracles and Eurystheus were found in significant buildings, and architectural pieces like the doorframe of a house. During Roman rule, Gortyn became the capital and Knossos was ceded as a colony to Capua. Beautiful mosaics have been preserved from the Villa Dionysos in Knossos, while a mosaic depicting Poseidon in a chariot pulled by tritons and sea horses, a work by the artist Apollinaris, was found in another house in Knossos. Important cities were rebuilt at this period with the construction of grand public buildings that were decorated with works of sculpture. In Lyttos, the Bouleuterion has been excavated; in Chersonissos houses with mosaics, wide paved roads, baths and fountains have been found, while excavations in Gortyn revealed temples and public buildings.

During the entire first millennium BC, from the arrival of the Dorians to the Roman conquest, political and social changes and developments in art were reflected in funerary customs that are visible in findings from the cemeteries in Knossos, Prinias, Vrokastro, Afrati, Gortyn and elsewhere. Radical changes in burial habits are associated with the presence of the Dorians. From the 10th century BC on, cremation began to be more widespread than interment of the dead. Family or clan tombs were of the same type as Minoan ones, i.e. chambers dug into soft rock, vaulted tombs or grave enclosures. The ashes and remains from the burning of the body were placed in tombs in cinerary urns, along with funeral gifts, weapons, jewellery, figurines, unguent jars and other objects that testify to the prosperity of the period.

In the 7th century BC, and particularly from the 5th century BC on, individual graves became more common and gradually burials began to replace cremations. Important graves were marked with relief or engraved steles such as that from Kounavoi with a representation of a maiden and from Ayia Pelayia with the representation of a young hunter.

In the Hellenistic years, rich and interesting funerary offerings continued to be placed in graves, for example the gold jewellery from the grave at Asites, Eros figurines, stone and glass vases and unguent jars from the cemeteries of Gortyn and Knossos.

During Roman rule, in the large cemeteries of Knossos and Gortyn, in addition to simple tile-covered or cist graves, imposing grave monuments were also built in the mausoleum style or rectangular chambers with arcosolia were hewn out of the rock, such as those in Knossos and in Matala. Grave steles were erected on Roman graves as well. The wealthier graves were furnished with marble relief sarcophagi, similar to the impressive sarcophagus from Malia with relief Meduses, Erotes, bulls' heads, lions' heads, lions, eagles and wreaths of leaves and fruit.



Large Roman sarcophagus of marble with rich relief decoration including garlands, bulls' heads, Erotes and Medusa heads. It contained the body of a woman interred with gold jewellery. Malia, Roman period (2nd-3rd cent. AD).

3. Religion, sanctuaries and temples

After the advent of the Dorians, the twelve gods of Olympus were introduced to Crete in the early first millennium BC, where they co-existed with elements from the primeval Minoan religious tradition. The cult was practised in sacred "houses" like those of Karfi and Kavousi in the 11th century BC, and later in temples, e.g. at Prinias, in outdoor sanctuaries like that of Syme and in caves like the Idaean Cave and the Psychro Cave. The temple at Prinias (ancient Rizenia) was decorated in the 7th century BC with exceptional sculptures and relief friezes. Cretan temples never acquired monumental size, or the external colonnade that surrounds Hellenic temples.

From the Classical period on, a number of sanctuaries devoted to the gods of the Olympian pantheon and to other Greek deities were established in Cretan cities: the temple of Demeter in Knossos, of Zeus Thenatas in Amnissos, and of Asclepius in Levina. Mystic cults and revivals of ancient faiths flourished in Crete in the Hellenistic period, and in other areas of the Hellenic world as well. As in other places, the worship of Sarapis and Isis was propagated widely in Crete because of relations with Egypt, and temples were established in Gortyn and several other cities. During the Roman period that followed, the cult of the emperors was added to the existing deities. The number of sanctuaries and temples in the major cities increased; they were at the same time adorned with sculpted works similar to those from the temple of Gortyn, capital of the Roman province of Crete and Cyrenaica. The colossal statue of Pythian Apollo that was found in this temple is among these sculptures.



Little circular house with a door panel that closes, inside which is the seated figure of a goddess with raised hands. On the roof, two male figures look through the chimney opening; beside them is an animal, perhaps a dog. May be a scene depicting worship of the goddess of nature or the Underworld. Initially in the Giamalakis collection, Archanes, Geometric period (late 9th cent. BC).

4. Pottery

The late Postpalatial pottery styles foreshadowed their evolution in conformity with the decorative trends of the Hellenic period. In the Protogeometric and Geometric periods (10th to the 8th centuries BC), and under the dominance of the Dorians, the trend towards austere geometric design and simpler decoration became established and motifs began being designed with a compass and ruler. Cinerary urns decorated with concentric circles and other geometric shapes, small vessels like spherical oil flasks (*aryballoi*) and a number of zoomorphic or anthropomorphic vases, mainly bird-shaped flasks (*askoi*), are typical of the output of this period. Pictorial scenes were not frequent and even the human figure was represented geometrically.

The pottery workshop at Knossos was very important at this time. It continued to operate into the next century, the so-called Orientalising period, when Eastern influences were particularly evident, not only in pottery but in art more generally. Themes included Oriental motifs and decorative compositions. Characteristic products of the Knossos workshop at that time were cinerary urns with unusual multicoloured ornamentation of black, red, blue and white. Also important are the pots from Afrati that were decorated with relief human or daemonic figures and pictorial images painted in black or white. Large storage jars more than 1.5 metres high and decorated with bands of relief ornamental and representational subjects constituted a typical group.

In the Archaic period (6th century BC), Cretan pottery output began to show a decline in creativity, and in the Classical period (5th and 4th centuries BC), pots imported from Attica and local copies of them were in the majority.

In the Hellenistic period (late 4th century BC to the Roman conquest in 67 BC), pottery was mainly local and of a rather slipshod manufacture, usually undecorated, although vases were also produced with minimal decoration consisting of motifs that were common to all Greek cities. Among the decorated pots are some painted with white motifs, the so-called West Slope Style. Very few Hellenistic pots have relief decoration.

The local pottery from the years of Roman rule (late 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD) adapted the shapes of the previous period and produced large numbers of undecorated pots for everyday household use. On special occasions, the well-to-do used luxurious tableware with relief decoration that had been imported from the major centres of the Roman world.

Lamps are in a separate category. They include the noteworthy multiple-wick lamps of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods, the large relief lamps from the Idaean Cave and a number of small Roman lamps with daring erotic scenes.



Clay cauldron (*lebes*) with rich painted decoration and three moulded griffin busts with relief and painted bodies. Afrati, Orientalising period (7th cent. BC).

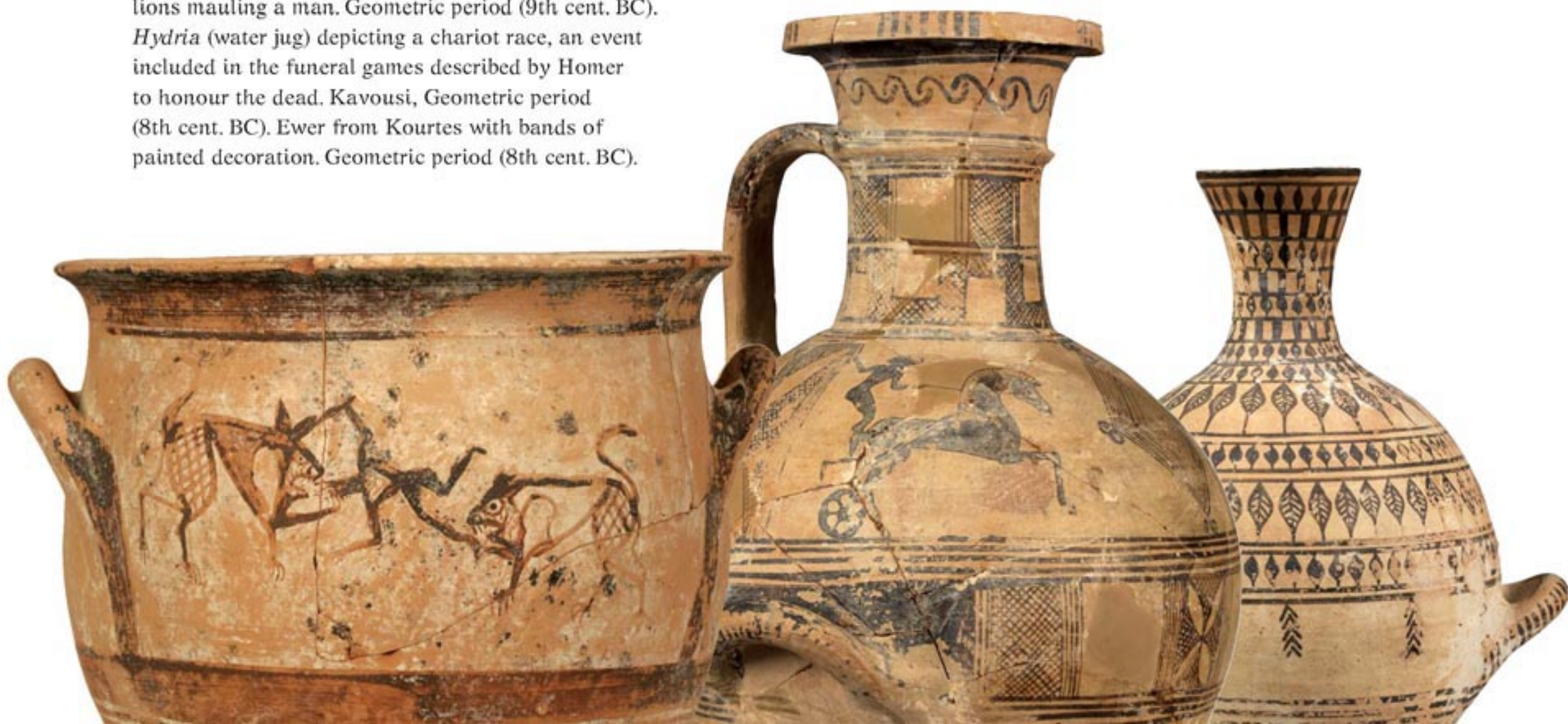
Ring-shaped *kernos* that is also a rhyton, from the north cemetery of Knossos, with three bird-shaped flasks attached to the front part and three small amphorae and a cup attached to the back. Geometric period (8th cent. BC).

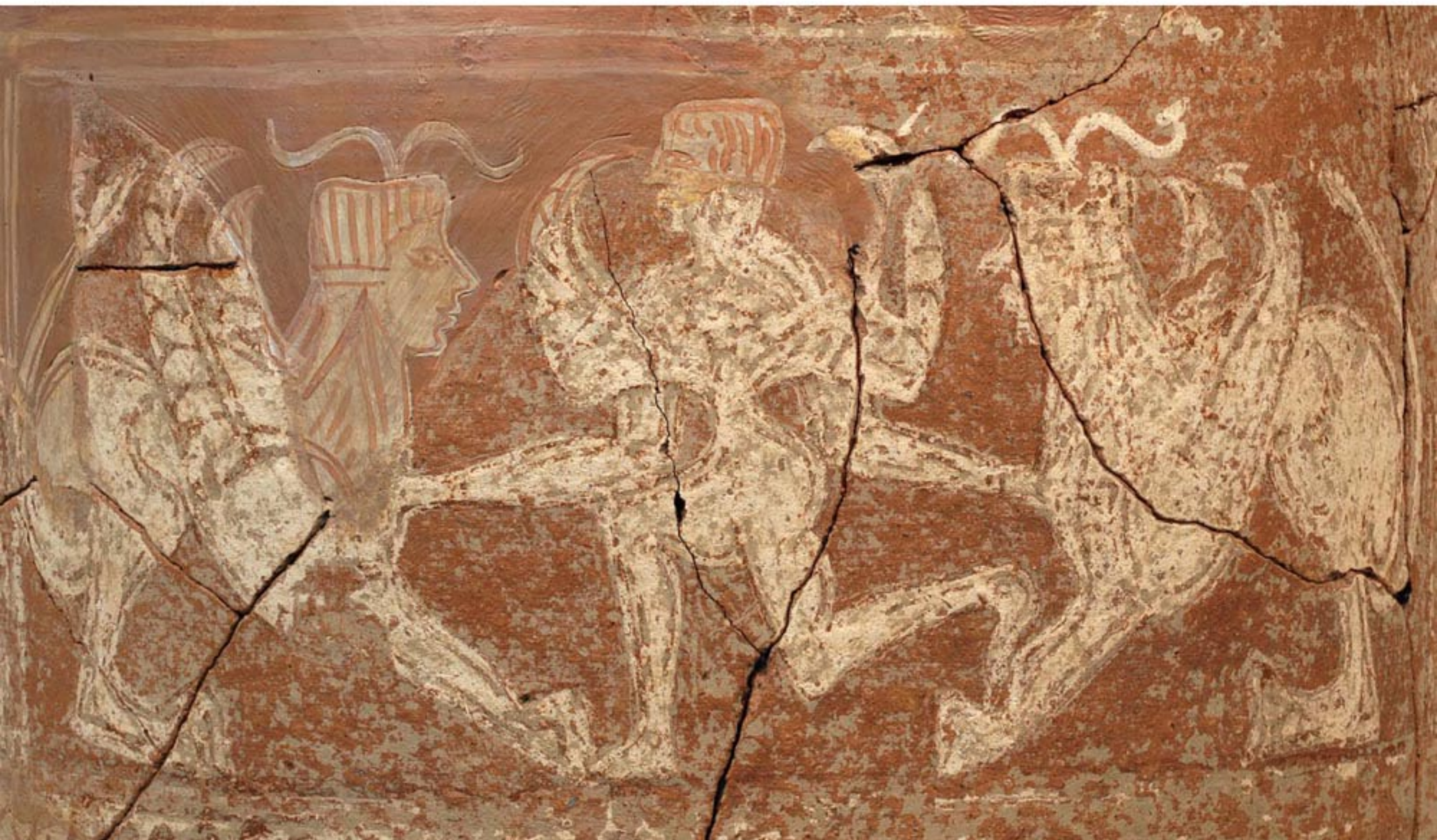


Cover of a cinerary urn with dense painted decoration. Zeus is depicted with bolts of lightning, a tripod cauldron and a bird. Fortetsa Knossos, Geometric period (8th cent. BC).



Krater (bowl for mixing wine and water) bearing images of lions mauling a man. Geometric period (9th cent. BC). *Hydria* (water jug) depicting a chariot race, an event included in the funeral games described by Homer to honour the dead. Kavousi, Geometric period (8th cent. BC). Ewer from Kourtes with bands of painted decoration. Geometric period (8th cent. BC).





Funerary urn depicting a winged male figure, perhaps the mythic Talos, between sphinxes. Afrati, Orientalising period (7th cent. BC).

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Polychrome funerary tripod jar with lid. Fortetsa Knossos, Geometric period (8th cent. BC).



Large jar (*pithos*) with relief griffins and sphinxes in rectangular frames.
Afrati, Early Archaic period (7th cent. BC).



[Page 368]: Detail from the neck of a ewer portraying a loving couple, perhaps Theseus and Ariadne. Afrati, Early Archaic period (7th cent. BC).



Composite tripod pot (*hippalectryon*) comprising the head of a horse, body of a bird, a small pitcher on the tail and a seated human figure attached to the arched handle. North cemetery Knossos, Geometric period (9th cent. BC).

Unusual two-bodied ewer with a spout in the shape of a wild goat's head and a handle in the shape of the neck and head of a swan. Gouves, Geometric period (8th cent. BC).

Composite pot with a bird-shaped body, the head of a bull and a handle in the form of the head and body of a woman in an equestrian position, perhaps an allusion to the myth of the abduction of Europa by Zeus in the form of a bull. Rich painted decoration covers the surface of the pot, highlighting individual features, such as the wings of the bird and the face and hair of the female figure. North cemetery of Knossos, Daedalic period (7th cent. BC).



Lamps from the Roman period with realistic depictions of erotic scenes. Kavousi and other sites.





Multi-wick lamp, consisting of a high-footed disk to which 13 small lamps have been attached in a circle. Levina, Hellenistic period (3rd cent. BC).



Hydria with plant decoration of the Hadra type. Ai-Yannis Phaistos, Hellenistic period (mid-3rd cent. BC).

5. The arts

Throughout the 1st millennium BC, Cretan art should be considered within the context of Greek art more broadly, enriched in some cases by local features and external influences.

The Doric austerity and robustness of the Geometric art of the early centuries evolved into Orientalising art with Eastern influences and flourished again in the Archaic period, contributing decisively to the evolution of monumental sculpture. Later, during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, art adopted Hellenic models without any particular creative originality and eventually, during Roman rule, Cretan art was incorporated into that of the Roman world, which frequently copied forms and types from earlier Hellenic art.

FIGURINES

The great tradition of Minoan figurines is also reflected in the output of the first millennium after the Dorian invasion. Many figurines were offered in sanctuaries by worshippers and accompanied the dead to their graves. Clay figurines were shaped by hand, on the wheel or in moulds, while bronze ones were cast.

In terms of their technical features, Sub-Minoan figurines evolved gradually between the 10th and the 8th century BC, when they acquired the characteristics of the Geometric style. The so-called "Apollonian Triad", a very important find from Dreros dating to about 700 BC, comprises three statuettes, a male and two females, believed to represent Apollo with his mother Leto and his sister Artemis. They were made of riveted sheets of hammered bronze pressed over a wooden core, and combine stylistic features from the Geometric and Daedalic style. In the 7th cent. BC, the so-called Daedalic style prevailed in figurine making, on which it imposed its characteristic features: body masses rendered geometrically, a strongly sculpted face and characteristic hairstyle. This period produced clay and bronze works of particularly high quality.

From the beginning of the first millennium, Cretan figurine makers produced works representing a broad range of subjects. Many figurines of humans represented votaries under ordinary or religious circumstances and on various occasions in their lives. Musicians, archers, warriors, women lamenting or giving birth and worshippers seeking blessings are some of them. Figurines of pregnant women, loving couples, a woman breastfeeding and a baby covered in its cradle were all found in the cave of Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth, at Inatos. The figurines from the cemeteries of Knossos, Prinias and Arkades represent sacred trees with birds in their branches, animals, birds, ships and imaginary creatures.

Relief clay plaques from the 7th century BC constitute a special category of votive offerings found in a number of sanctuaries and had been impressed with female figures, nude deities, mythological scenes and daemonic figures. The group of clay plaques from Gortyn is characteristic.

The important ivory plaques and semi-sculpted figurines found in the Idaean Cave are miniature sculptures that also represent human and other figures.

In the 6th century BC, the general stagnation in art was reflected in figurine production as well. Figurines were mass produced through the widespread use of moulds and from the 5th to the 1st century BC, common types prevailed throughout the entire Greco-Roman world. As in other realms, production was more varied and intense during the Hellenistic period. Erotes (figurines of Eros)

from Gortyn, figurines of women, dolls and rattles were typical samples of the output. The masks are also of interest, ranging from the Geometric mask for ritual use from Vrokastro, to the later ones that were copies of ancient tragedy and comedy masks.



The "Apollonian Triad".
Three statues of hammered bronze
that were found in the Delphinio
at Dreros and are believed to depict
the god Apollo, his mother Leto
and his sister Artemis. These are
highly significant works in terms of
art history, as they are the earliest
hammered bronze statues ever
found. Late Geometric period
(late 8th cent. BC).

Clay figurines. Ayia Triada, Daedalic period (7th cent. BC).



Male figurine from the Dictaeon Cave at Psychro Lasithi, Daedalic period (7th cent. BC).



Figurine of a female goddess sitting side-saddle on a horse, Archanes, Protogeometric period (1000-800 BC).



Figurine of a musician playing a phorminx, characteristic musical instrument of the Geometric period. Afrati, Geometric period (8th cent. BC).





Bronze figurine of a man playing a phorminx. Geometric period (late 8th cent. BC).



Figurine of a man found in the Idaean Cave. Archaic period (6th cent. BC).

Bronze figurine of a kouros (7th cent. BC.) Bronze figurine of a man holding a cup, perhaps an offering related to young men's coming-of-age initiation rites and their admission to the social status of a citizen (8th cent. BC). Bronze figurine of a man (7th cent. BC). From the Sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Syme Viannos.





Bronze figurine of a man. Vrokastro, Protogeometric period (10th-9th cent. BC).



Bronze model of a chariot from the Dictaeon Cave (8th-7th cent. BC).



Bronze figurine of a horse. Ayia Triada, Geometric period (8th cent. BC).

Bronze figurine from the Idaean Cave. Geometric period (8th cent. BC).

Bronze figurines of bulls from Ayia Triada, offerings to an outdoor shrine (7th-6th cent. BC).

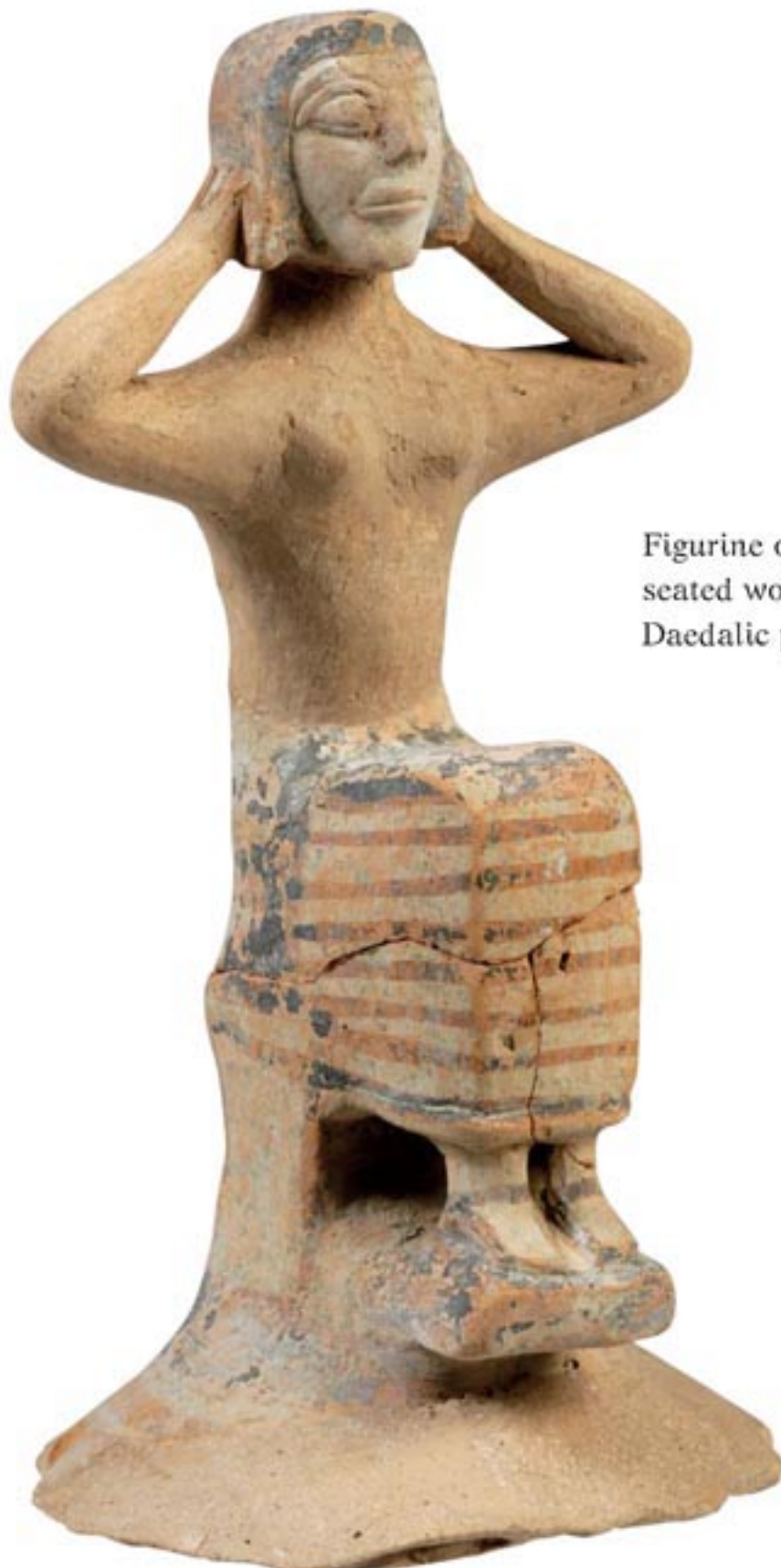


Bronze figurine of a horse from Ayia Triada. Geometric period (8th cent. BC).





Clay figurine of the Daedalic type. Gortyn, 7th cent. BC.



Figurine of a lamenting seated woman. Prinias, Daedalic period (7th cent. BC).



Schematic clay model of a sacred tree with birds on its branches symbolising the Epiphany, perhaps a counterpart of the Eastern "tree of life". Cemetery at Fortetsa Knossos, Orientalising period (7th cent. BC).

Erotes from Gortyn.
Hellenistic period (3rd-2nd cent. BC).





Marble plaque with a relief representation of the sexual union of Zeus, metamorphosed into a swan, and Leda. The magnificent divine swan with his wings raised leans on the thighs of the naked Leda who, bending her body, has lifted her face slightly in an expression of voluptuous ecstasy. Knossos, Roman period (1st-2nd cent. AD).

SCULPTURE

Dorian Crete occupied a special place in the creation of monumental sculpture, i.e. stone figures in life size or larger-than-life size. Because of the early date and high quality of Cretan work, it is believed that Daedalic sculpture originated in Crete in the 7th century BC. In addition to the early free-standing sculptures, the earliest architectural statuary to adorn temples was produced in Crete. The basic types of statues at the time were the standing male figure or *kouros*, the standing female figure or *kore*, and seated female figures. Crete contributed greatly to the stylistic development of these types of statues that are characteristic of Hellenic sculpture up to the 5th BC.

The typical features of the Daedalic style are the austere articulation of the body in geometric volumes, the strong facial features and the standardised hair arranged in horizontal or vertical curls resembling a wig. Owing to the lack of marble in Crete, the material used to carve sculptures was comparatively fragile limestone or poros stone (a form of limestone). The limited durability of this material did not favour the creation of large, free-standing sculptures; but it did lead to the carving of statues that were reinforced by added support, as are the architectural sculptures on temples. The largest Daedalic sculpture to have survived is the torso of a seated goddess from Astritsi in central Crete. The relief from Malles dating to the first half of the 7th century BC also represents a seated goddess, whereas the torso of the seated goddess from Eleftherna and the enthroned Athena from Gortyn, with added decoration of painted rosettes, anthemias and interlinked spirals, were created at a later period.

Architectural sculpture is represented by the sculpted and relief works that adorned the 7th-century temple of Athena in Gortyn and the temple at Prinias (ancient Rizenia), which may have been dedicated to Rhea. The façade of the temple in Gortyn was adorned with large rectangular stone slabs bearing relief representations of the divine triad: a male god between two female goddesses in one instance, and three nude female deities wearing hieratic headwear, the *polos*, in the second. A large frieze with a procession of riders holding spears and shields, an early work in the austere Dorian mode, decorated the temple at Prinias. The lintel over the temple doorway, which has been reconstructed in the Herakleion Museum, is embellished with seated goddesses and relief animals.

Relief grave steles depicting figures of warriors with a double outline, a figure seated on a throne and possibly a divine figure holding a wreath and a bird originated in the necropolises of Prinias.

In the 6th century BC creativity in Crete presented stagnation in all realms of art, in contrast to the situation in other areas of the Hellenic world. Some works – such as the head of a *kouros* from Axos, or the poros stone eagles from the sanctuary of Zeus Thenatas at Amnisos and the late Archaic stele of a *kore* from Kounavoi – show the artistic continuity that led to the Classical age in which Hellenic models were adopted. A few works date to the Classical period, such as the grave stele of a young archer from ancient Apollonia (Ayia Pelayia), the grave stele from Herakleion that portrays the deceased bidding farewell to his wife and child, and the metope of the temple that depicts Heracles bringing the Erymanthian boar to Eurystheus who is hiding in a jar. However, most of the sculpture exhibited in the Museum dates to the later Greco-Roman and especially the Roman period, when Gortyn was capital of the province of Crete and Cyrenaica. The beautiful bronze grave statue from Ierapetra that depicts a youth wrapped in a himation with a markedly sad expression on his face dates to the late Hellenistic years (1st century BC). During the Roman period there were two prevailing trends in sculpture: on the one hand there were the portraits of Roman



Grave stele of a young archer, possibly an Attic work. Ayia Pelagia, Classical period (5th cent. BC).

emperors or private citizens, and on the other there were copies and reproductions of famous older works of Hellenic sculptural art. The colossal statue of Pythian Apollo with the long draped *peplos*, as well as the group of Pluto and Persephone with Cerberus between them, who are portrayed as Sarapis and Isis – evidence of the growing worship of Egyptian gods in this period – originated in Gortyn. Also of interest are the portraits of emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty including Augustus, and of Septimius Severus, Antoninus Pius, Trajan and others. The statues of Aphrodite, Pan, the group of Niobe protecting her children from the arrows of Artemis, the statue of a philosopher, statues and portraits of Roman ladies are also of interest. The most noteworthy reliefs are those with mythological subjects, including Leda with Zeus disguised as a swan, the hunt of the Calydonian boar, Bellerophon with winged Pegasus, the dispute between Eros and Anteros and sleeping Cupids. Most of them date to the two imperial centuries, 1st-2nd century AD, a time of prosperity and intense building activity in Crete, during which many large public buildings were constructed and cities were decorated with sculptures inspired by the superb works of earlier Hellenic art.

Poros stone head of a statue from Axos. Archaic period (6th cent. BC).



The upper half of a poros stone statue from Eleftherna. Daedalic period (7th cent. BC).

Grave stele depicting the dead man taking leave of his wife and small child. The woman is holding a jewel box, the child has a school scroll and an aryballos, the vase used by athletes to hold oil. Herakleion, Classical period (4th cent. BC).

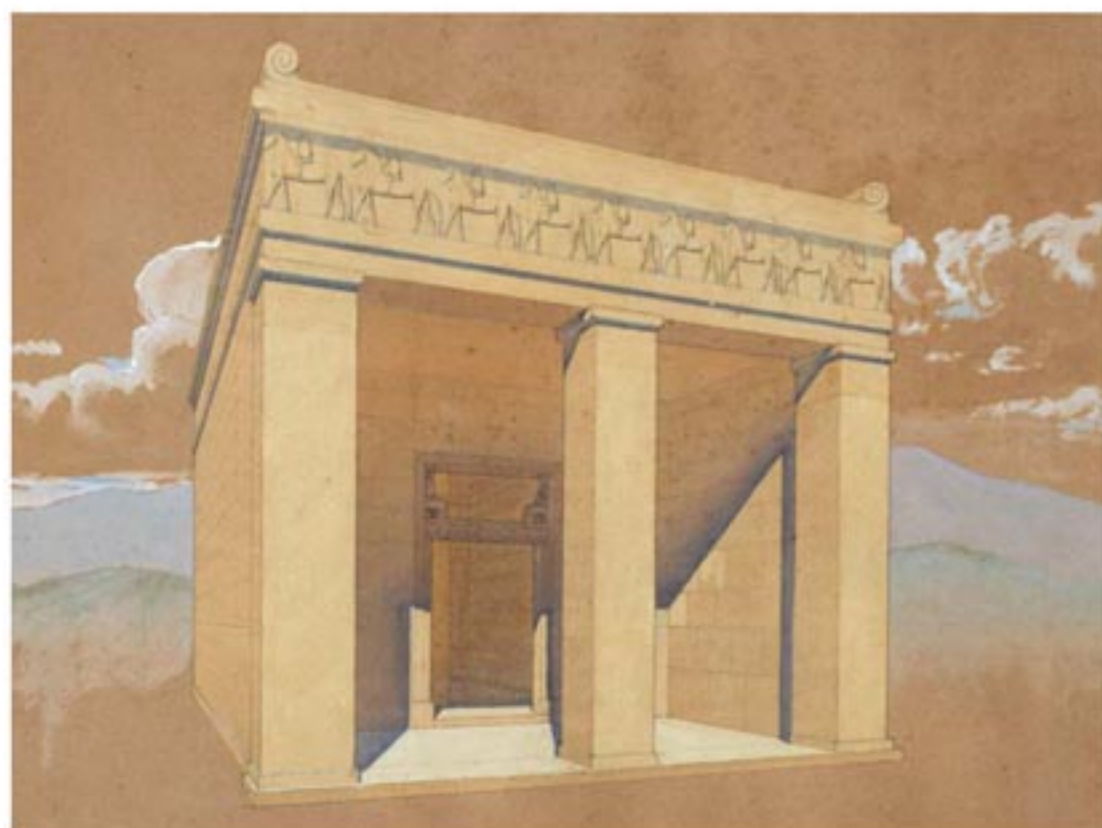




Poros stone frieze from Temple A at Prinias representing a procession of men on horseback holding shields and spears. It is the earliest known example of a stone frieze with pictorial content from a Hellenic temple that records the eminent status of the military Dorian aristocracy of horsemen. Early Archaic period (7th cent. BC).



Pictorial reconstruction of the façade of Temple A at Prinias, showing the frieze of the horsemen on the epistyle of the porch.





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Bronze grave statue of a young man wrapped in a mantle. Sorrow at his untimely death is imprinted on the boyish face. A high quality work from the late Hellenistic period. Ierapetra, 1st cent. BC.

[Page 387]: Two statues from the temple of the Egyptian gods at Gortyn that combine iconographic elements and symbols of Hellenic and Egyptian deities alike.

The Isis-Persephone figure is holding a sistrum and wearing a moon disk, the symbol of Isis, on her head. Zeus-Sarapis, with a *modio* on his head, represents Pluto with Cerberus beside him, the three-headed dog that guards the Underworld. Roman period (late 2nd cent. AD).





Portraits of the Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius (left) and Trajan. Found in Gortyn and Lyttos respectively (2nd cent. AD).

Statue of the goat-footed god Pan. Argyroupoli Rethymnon, Roman period (2nd cent. AD).

Statue of Aphrodite holding a basin. Gortyn, Roman period (2nd cent. AD).





Statue of a philosopher or physician with a staff in his hand and books beside his leg. Roman period (2nd-3rd cent. AD)



Small statue of Dionysus-Sardanapalus, Roman period, from Knossos.



The old tradition of the celebrated Minoan jeweller's art was reborn in the first millennium BC, particularly from the 9th century BC on, when contact with other cultures and Oriental influences enriched this art with new elements. Techniques that were known to goldsmiths from Minoan times, such as hammering, casting, granulation and filigree, as well as inlays of semiprecious stones, were all used to produce striking jewellery. Despite some similarities in the manufacturing technique, the jewellery of the Dorians differs greatly from the delicate jewellery of the Minoans. From the very early years, new types of jewellery prevailed and were disseminated: dressing pins (*perones*) and clasps that were used to secure the new type of garment, the Dorian *peplos*. In the 8th century BC, bow-shaped clasps of iron and especially of bronze acquired an ornamental plaque with incised images. Dressing pins were frequently made of precious metals, as are a pair of small, delicately decorated gold pins dating to the 7th century BC from Knossos, which are linked by a chain and embellished with microscopic birds. At the same period, impressive jewellery was found with a variety of pendants and attachments in the cemeteries of Knossos, Prinias, Arkades and the Idaean Cave. The most exceptional pieces found there include a crescent moon made of rock crystal decorated with granulation and filigree and hanging from chains, a gold pendant adorned with tiny human heads and birds and highlighted with very fine granulation, a gold crescent-shaped pendant, a small hammered gold jewel in the shape of a comb and an elliptically shaped pendant with an inlaid Minoan amethyst sealstone mounted in gold. Gold, faience, glass and semiprecious stone beads were used to make necklaces such as the one with the large rock crystal beads. Rings were either simple bands or embellished with inlays or with hammered decoration.

Other ornaments such as beautiful little gold figures carrying rams, a microscopic insect, a delicately hammered Daedalic head and a small lion's head pendant bear witness to the development of goldwork. Open-work gold plaques that were hammered and cut into various shapes such as rosettes or in the shape of eight-shields with relief or incised decoration were probably attached to clothing. There are also plaques depicting a variety of scenes and mythological themes. One open-work gold plaque from Knossos that dates to the mid 8th century BC portrays a man with a helmet and sword fighting to overcome two lions. A similar subject is depicted in relief on a gold band dating to the early 7th century BC from Knossos. On an open-work gold plaque from the Idaean Cave dating to the same period, the Dioscuroi and Helen are represented.

As in the other arts, from the 7th-6th centuries BC on, one can observe some stagnancy in gold and metalwork. During the Classical period, as in other realms of the Hellenic world, gilt clay jewellery was manufactured. Jewellery output increased in the Hellenistic and Roman periods and quality improved. Necklaces, beautiful bracelets and rings, dressing pins and elaborate earrings of gold and semiprecious stones were produced in intricate designs and shapes, with a variety of representations.

[Page 390]: Gold pendants and pectoral ornaments with rock crystal inlays, filigree and granulation. Of remarkable quality is the elaborate large jewel decorated with spirals, birds and two women's heads on the finials of the crescent, and the pectoral ornament hanging from chains and adorned with a crystal inlay in the shape of a crescent with pendants in the form of the sun on crescent moons. From the vaulted tomb at Tekes Knossos. Geometric period (8th cent. BC.)



Three gold ornaments in the shape of insects, with granulation.
From the north cemetery at Knossos and Afrati (8th-7th cent. BC).



Gold jewel in the form
of a man carrying
a ram, from Tekes
Knossos (7th cent. BC).



Gold necklace pendant
depicting a mask from
Lyktos (7th cent. BC).





Silver bracelets with finials in the form of ram's heads, from a grave in the Knossos area. Hellenistic period (3rd-2nd cent. BC).



Large silver dressing pins with disk-shaped head, from Praisos and Afrati. Early Archaic period (7th cent. BC).



Gold ring with a gemstone of lapis lazuli on which the image of a laurel-crowned head is carved, perhaps Dionysus. Lyttos, Roman period (3rd cent. AD).



Gold ring with a gemstone of sard, bearing an engraved representation of Zeus-Sarapis wearing a *modio* and standing on an eagle. Levina, Roman period (2nd cent. AD).



Glass unguent jar with multicoloured and gold veins. From a grave in the Knossos area. Hellenistic period (3rd-2nd cent. BC).

[Page 395]: ABOVE: Two gold earrings in the form of a winged Nike hanging from decorative rosettes. Kalo Horio, Hellenistic period (2nd cent. BC).
BELOW: Necklace of beads in the shape of a Lesbian *cymatium*. Asites, Hellenistic period (1st cent. BC).



Offensive weapons of iron appeared in Crete with the descent of the Dorians. Bronze swords were replaced by more durable, lighter iron ones. The main offensive weapons continued to be spears, swords and bows. The countless iron and bronze arrowheads, as well as the depictions of archers in many scenes and the figurine from Syme are evidence of the Cretans' mastery in archery. The bronze lining of a quiver from Knossos is decorated with a male figure worked in relief, the *Potnios Theron* or god-master of wild animals, who is depicted taming lions while surrounded by sphinxes. This is one of the earliest works of Cretan metalworking which, up to the 6th century BC, was producing defensive weapons of exceptional quality, adorned with battle scenes, mythological representations and imaginary animals, combining Hellenic and Levantine themes and techniques. From the 9th century BC on, Crete's commercial contacts with Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Cyprus fostered foreign cultural influences and contributed to the revival of the superb Minoan tradition in metalworking and to the creation of significant workshops at the Idaean Cave, Arkades, Knossos, Dreros and Axos, where fine works were produced. Also of exceptional quality were the decorated items used for defence such as shields, helmets, cuirasses and mitres. The superb votive shields from the Idaean Cave, dating to the late 8th century and early 7th century BC, bear repoussé representations with strong Levantine influences depicting the goddess of nature and wild animals called *Potnia Theron* (Mistress of the Animals), among lions or in scenes where men are



Bronze mitre, appendage to armour, depicting Athena in military outfit emerging from a tripod flanked by two lions. Axos, Orientalising period (7th cent. BC).

battling lions, sphinxes and snakes. The shields have a central boss in the shape of a lion's head or eagle, sphinxes and snakes. Other significant works of metal from the Idaean Cave include a drum with a representation of Zeus who is depicted treading on a bull and killing a lion with his hands while surrounded by the Curetes who are portrayed as Assyrian daemons beating drums. According to legend, Zeus was raised in the Idaean Cave and the daemon Curetes would beat their drums so that the infant's father Cronus, who swallowed each of his children at birth, would not hear him crying. Other interesting metalwork items found in the Idaean Cave are bronze bowls like one representing a chorus of women and an offering of birds and fish to the divinity, and others with bulls and deer and other animals. From the same cave is an open-work decorated base of a cauldron (*lebes*) depicting a ship with oarsmen, a male figure with a helmet and shield and a female figure with raised arms. It has been conjectured that the scene represents Theseus' abduction of Ariadne. Other fragments bear representations of a large bird attacking a sailor, chariots, warriors, women, animals and sphinxes. A bronze votive belt from a Geometric grave in the region of Knossos is included in the category of defensive weaponry. It is decorated with a repoussé representation of a sanctuary and a triad of one male and two female deities protected by an array of archers as they are being attacked by war chariots. This is a Cretan work, with strong Eastern influences. Other significant items used for defence were cuirasses, e.g. the small child's or adolescent's cuirass from Arkades. Cuirasses consisted of sections linked with rivets or hooks.

The Cretan helmet was a variation of the Corinthian one. Some helmets, exceptional examples of Cretan metalwork, were decorated with scenes and bore incised inscriptions with the names of those who offered them to sanctuaries. The decoration on the helmet from Axos dating to the 7th century BC features Pegasus, the winged horse, and dragons.

The *mitre* was a piece of defensive equipment peculiar to Crete, a semi-circular plaque hanging from the cuirass or belt that protected the warrior's abdomen. There are interesting mitres that bear the names of those who offered them as well as decorated ones. Included among the latter is the mitre from Arkades with two panthers that have one common head, and those from Axos depicting the epiphanies of Athena and of a war god wearing a winged cuirass and surrounded by four youths. The military nature of Dorian society is attested to by many miniature clay and bronze votive offerings in the shape of weapons, mitres, cuirasses and greaves that warriors offered to sanctuaries.

Interesting works by Cretan bronze workers include the bronze open-work plaques dedicated to the sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Syme Viannos and bearing depictions of hunting scenes and the transport of the quarry that are related to young men's coming-of-age rituals.

Compositions, possibly with mythological content, from the decoration of a bronze stand from the Idaean Cave. Among the themes depicted are hoplites, chariots, animals, the figure of a woman holding a sword, and a boat on which are oarsmen and a couple consisting of a hoplite and a female figure. It has been suggested that it depicts Theseus' abduction of Ariadne. Geometric period (8th cent. BC).





Bronze drum from the Idaean Cave with a representation of the myth of Zeus' Cretan birth and upbringing by the Curetes. In the centre is Zeus standing on a bull and taming a lion. He is flanked by the Curetes, who are portrayed as winged Assyrian daemons beating drums. It is a work that demonstrates the strong influence of Oriental iconography. Early 7th century BC.

Bronze open-work plaque from the sanctuary at Syme Viannos, representing a worshipper carrying a wild goat with bound feet on his shoulder to be offered as a sacrifice. (7th cent. BC).



Bronze open-work plaque of the god Hermes depicted as an archer with a winged sandal and foliage on his head, a direct reference to his vegetation-fertility attributes. From the sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Syme Viannos. Archaic period (6th cent. BC).



Bronze open-work plaque from Syme Viannos of a worshipper carrying a wild goat to be offered at the sanctuary (7th cent. BC).



Silver coin from Knossos with the labyrinth on one side and the head of Demeter on the other (3rd cent. BC).

Silver coin from Gortyn with a female figure in a tree on one side and a bull on the other, images that allude to the myth of the abduction of Europa by Zeus as a bull. The legend tells us that their love was consummated under a plane tree in Gortyn.



6. Coinage

Evidence of coins being minted in Crete dates to the 5th century BC, i.e. later than in the rest of the Hellenic world. This may have to do with conservative political and social structures that possibly inhibited the development of a monetary economy. The first Cretan coins, minted in Kydonia in 474-450 BC, were made of silver. In the second half of the same century, Gortyn and Phaistos followed suit and then Knossos and Lyttos. The identifying symbols on these coins are scenes from mythology related to the cities in question such as the abduction of Europa (Gortyn, Phaistos) and the myth of the Minotaur (Knossos). From the end of the 4th century BC through the Hellenistic period, coins were minted more frequently, mainly silver coins up to 270 BC and bronze ones to 200 BC. In the 2nd century BC, silver coins were minted again followed by bronze ones. The Gortynian tetradrachms of Attic weight are worthy of note as are those of Lyttos and Knossos that date to the end of the century. In the first century BC, the Attic tetradrachm began to be copied and the particular symbol of each city was added, such as a labyrinth on Knossos coins. Depictions on Cretan coins included mythological tales, gods, demigods, daemonic creatures, symbols and special Cretan themes such as Minos, the Minotaur and Talos. Coins from the entire Helladic and Mediterranean world circulated widely in Crete, but Cretan coins were not as widespread in these same areas. Hoards of coins dating before Roman rule have been found on sites in central Crete, at Charakas, Chersonissos and Knossos.

Following the Roman conquest of the 1st century BC, cities like Knossos and especially Gortyn acquired the right to mint their own coins adapted to the Roman system. From the 2nd century AD, all local minting stopped and Roman coins alone were used. Roman coins depicted the head of the emperor on the obverse and other motifs on the reverse. The local myths of Crete appeared with increasingly less frequency up to the end of Roman rule in the 3rd century AD.

Inscribed stone stele from the sanctuary of Dictaeon Zeus at Palaikastro, bearing a hymn to Crete-born Zeus, the "great Kouros", and protector of cities, youths and nature. The stele is from the 3rd cent. AD, but the text is believed to be from an earlier period.



7. Writing and inscriptions

After the collapse of the Mycenaean world and of central palace rule, there were no written documents in the Greek world until the middle of the 8th century BC. Commerce brought the Greeks into contact with the Phoenicians in Syria and Palestine and with their writing. The Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet and used it to write the Greek language. The Doric Cretan alphabet was very close to its Phoenician model. The first inscriptions were written from right to left and later they were written *boustrophedon* (as the ox turns), i.e. where one line was written from left to right, the next from right to left, etc. Among the earliest inscriptions were the laws of cities such as those of Dreros that date to the mid-7th century BC. The most famous Cretan inscription is the Gortyn Code, the longest inscription in Greek, written on stone slabs that were built into a circular structure on the archaeological site of Gortyn. Other early brief inscriptions were votive ones incised on helmets and other pieces of armour and offered in sanctuaries.

After the 5th century BC Crete, like other Hellenic territories, adopted the Ionic alphabet of Miletus, but the dialect continued to be Doric. In addition to religious laws, votive or honorary inscriptions, state decrees and funerary inscriptions, most were the texts of treaties that determined alliances in and beyond Crete, mainly during the Hellenistic period, one of great turbulence and civil disputes in Crete. These later inscriptions were written in the so-called *koine* Greek language which contained elements of the Doric dialect.

A special category of inscriptions found in the region of Praisos in eastern Crete are the so-called Eteocretan ones that were written between the 6th and 2nd century BC using the Greek alphabet but in an unknown language that is believed to be the age-old language of the Minoans that was preserved and spoken by certain groups in isolated mountainous regions.

After the Roman conquest in 67 BC, there were inscriptions paying homage to Roman emperors and many inscriptions of a public and private nature. The famous "Curetic hymn" to Zeus from the sanctuary of Dictaeon Zeus in Palaikastro in eastern Crete dates to the late Roman period (2nd-3rd centuries AD). The text of the hymn, which is older than the inscription, is a plea to the "Great Kouros", Zeus, who is called upon to appear in the ritual being carried out in his honour and fertilise the fields and the flocks.



MINOAN CRETE IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

*The capital is the great city of Knossos, ruled by Minos
who talked familiarly with great Zeus every nine years*

ODYSSEY 19, 178



rete's glorious Minoan past and ancient traditions bequeathed strong memories to later generations and supplied Greek mythology with a rich source of tales.

The Minoan worship of the forces of nature, the spread of Minoan power, and the prestige of the brilliant Minoan civilisation whose central figure was Minos, king of Knossos and leader of Crete, laid the foundation for the tradition that shaped the ancient myths surrounding the island.

According to the most important of these myths, Rhea gave birth to Zeus, the top-ranking god in the Hellenic pantheon, in a cave in Crete to which she had fled to hide her newborn son from the fury of her husband Cronus, who swallowed all his children because he had learned that he would one day be overthrown by his own offspring. The goat Amaltheia was the infant's wet-nurse, and the task of protecting and raising him was undertaken by the good Cretan daemons, the Idaean Dactyls and the Curetes, who would beat drums so that Cronus would not hear the newborn infant crying. Thus Zeus was given the epithet *Cretagenes* or Cretan-born, and as a youthful god succeeded the Minoan vegetation deity.

Later, metamorphosed into a bull, the sacred animal of Minoan Crete, Zeus abducted Europa, daughter of the king of Phoenicia, carried her to Crete and lay with her under a plane tree in Gortyn. From their union three boys were born: Minos, Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon. Zeus then gave Europa in marriage to Asterion, king of Crete, who adopted her children. In this way Minos, son of Zeus, inherited the throne of Crete. The celebrated Minos, king of Crete, plays a leading role in Cretan myths. In the ancient tradition he is presented with contradictory features: as a wise and just leader, but also as the cruel and violent despot who exacted the harsh tribute of Athenian youths to feed the Minotaur. The positive view of Minos prevailed among the ancients, as stated by Homer, who recounted that after his death he was a judge of the Underworld. Minos was acclaimed as a wise legislator who instituted laws and exercised power justly, according to the precepts given to him by his father Zeus every nine years.

Minos married Pasiphae, daughter of Helios and the nymph Creta, and with her acquired many descendants, sons and daughters, whose adventures are presented in a number of myths. Other parallel legendary accounts refer to the dramatic events that took place in the palace of Knossos. As a gift from the god Poseidon, Minos received a white bull that he was supposed to sacrifice to

the god, but did not do so, reluctant to kill such a beautiful creature. As punishment Poseidon inspired in Pasiphae an indomitable passion for the handsome bull. Daedalos, who tradition tells us was an innovator in the arts and crafts and created wonderful statues, lived in the palace of Knossos which he created to serve Minos, and helped Pasiphae to consummate her passion for the bull. According to the most imaginative version of the tale, Daedalos built a wooden image of a cow in which Pasiphae was hiding and was thus united with the bull. From this unnatural union the Minotaur was born, a man-eating monster with the body of a human and the head of a bull, whom Minos imprisoned in the Labyrinth, the confusing and complex structure that Daedalos had built at Knossos. Every year, seven youths and seven maidens were sent from Athens and thrown into the Labyrinth to be devoured by the Minotaur, as a blood tribute after the Athenians were defeated in a war with Minos. Theseus, son of king Aegeas of Athens, decided to deliver his country from this bondage and went to Crete with the doomed young people. When they arrived at Knossos, Minos' daughter Ariadne fell in love with Theseus, and upon the advice of the inventive Daedalos, helped Theseus to kill the Minotaur and escape from the Labyrinth by tying a ball of thread at the entrance. Theseus left Crete taking Ariadne with him; Daedalos had to confront the wrath of Minos who kept him confined and would not allow him to leave Crete, for the additional reason that he did not want the wonderful works built by the famous engineer at Knossos to be created anywhere else. Then the ingenious Daedalos built a large set of wax wings and used them to fly away from Crete together with his young son Icarus. But Icarus, despite his father's warnings, flew high up into the heavens, where the sun melted his wings causing him to plunge into the sea and drown, and from then on this body of water became known as the Icarian Sea. According to tradition, Minos pursued Daedalos as far as Sicily. There Minos was put to death in the bath by the daughters of the local king Kokalos in consultation with Daedalos, and was then buried in Sicily, legend tell us.

The brothers and descendants of Minos played a leading part in other tales as well. One of his brothers Rhadamanthys ruled in Phaistos and imposed order on the Aegean islands; his other brother Sarpedon founded Miletus in Asia Minor which he then ruled. Descendants of Minos colonised the islands of the Aegean, Staphylos went to Peparithos (Skopelos), Thoas to the island of Thera, Oenopion to Chios, Althaimenis to Rhodes, Naxos to the island of the same name, and Kydon to the city of Kydonia in western Crete. Idomeneus, grandson of Minos and king of Knossos, took part in the Trojan War with eighty ships. He was a brave warrior and the only leader in the Homeric epic who succeeded in bringing his men safely home.

The fascinating ancient myths, notwithstanding their inventive narrative freedom, frequently contain a traceable core of historical and cultural fact. The wise legislator Minos symbolises the justly governed society of Crete, the mythic artisan Daedalos its pioneering position in the arts and crafts, the Labyrinth recalls the complex palace of Knossos and the bull-man Minotaur the sport of bull leaping. Accounts of the expeditions of Minos and the colonisation of the Aegean by his brothers, sons and descendants echo the Minoan thalassocracy. The spread of Minoan influence to the islands, to the coasts of Asia Minor and throughout the broader Mediterranean world are verified by excavations old and new that confirm the Minoan presence on a large number of sites from Thera to Samothrace, from Kythera to Rhodes, from Kea and Milos to Miletus in Asia Minor and to the coast of Syria and Palestine.



Ancient art frequently drew its themes from Cretan mythology. The timeless echo of the Cretan legends, untarnished up to modern times, has also provided abundant wellsprings of powerful symbolic motifs to contemporary visual and literary art, including the Minotaur of the surrealists and Picasso, the bull-god and Europa of Anthony Caro and the labyrinths of Borges.

Section of the "Fresco of the Procession". The lower limbs of male figures can be discerned, together with those of one female figure, probably a priestess, dressed in a long, richly decorated garment. Palace of Knossos, Neopalatial period (1500-1450 BC).

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[Pages 410-411]: Wall painting of a monkey in a rocky terrain with plants and flowers, part of a larger composition from the House of Frescoes at Knossos. Neopalatial period, c. 1500 BC.



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