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# The Snake Goddess Dethroned: Deconstructing the Work and Legacy of Sir Arthur Evans

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THE SNAKE GODDESS, DETHRONED:  
DECONSTRUCTING THE WORK AND LEGACY OF SIR ARTHUR EVANS

by

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## ABSTRACT

While the Minoan Snake Goddess is one of the most reproduced and familiar images in the art historical canon, her function—and indeed, her very essence—continues to be shaped by the man who coined the term Minoan and discovered the site in which she and her sisters lay for generations undisturbed. When Sir Arthur Evans concluded that these statuettes were evidence of Minoan worship of a single great Mother Goddess in 1903, he finally fulfilled his aim discover a prehistoric European civilization to rival that of the ancient Near East. However, Evans did not simply discover these statuettes (and on a broader scale, the ruins themselves)—he meticulously restored and reconstituted them in order to fit his own narrative concerning Minoan religion. Evans's finds at Knossos have proven to be a watershed moment in the field of Mediterranean archaeology and as such, his interpretations of the Snake Goddess, although unsubstantiated, continue to shape modern perceptions of Minoan art and culture. In an attempt to understand how Evans came to the conclusion that the Snake Goddess was one manifestation of the Great Mother Goddess, this thesis takes on a historiographical lens by critically examining and deconstructing the scholarly traditions and popular anthropological paradigms that Evans worked within in order to determine the degree to which preconceived notions of prehistory influenced Evans's reconstruction and interpretation of the Snake Goddess figurines.

*In Memory of Floyd A. Johnson*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, it has been an honor to work alongside a thesis committee comprised of diverse and experienced educators in their respective fields whose generous criticism, amendments, and suggestions as well as their professional and educational contributions to this project have been integral to its completion: Professor Wolff, Professor Newsom, Professor Linehan, and Professor Ellis—it has been a pleasure being your student. Sincerest of gratitudes are owed to my advisor, Professor Michael Grillo, who has unfailingly supported all my academic endeavors over the course of my undergraduate career. Mentor, counselor, confidant, magister—Professor Grillo is all of the above. Grazie mille.

I am also indebted to many scholars—archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, and feminist historians—both presently and in the past, who have sought to reconcile the pervading mythos of the Minoans and without whose contributions to the field this thesis would simply not exist. I would specifically like to recognize Dr. Nanno Marinatos, Dr. Cynthia Eller, Dr. Ilse Schoep, Dr. Kenneth Lapatin, and Dr. John K. Papadopoulos whose publications I found particularly compelling and vital to the primary themes of my research. Special recognition is given to Dr. Philip P. Betancourt, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Temple University and who encouraged me to consider higher education in Minoan studies. Of course, I cannot exclude the man himself, Sir Arthur Evans, whom I respect immensely (despite being a critic of his methodological practices) and whose contributions to the field of Aegean Bronze Age archaeology are incontrovertible and innumerable.

On a more personal note, I thank B. V., B. C., C. B., and J. M. for the gift of friendship and companionship. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was this thesis; but these four remarkable people made the writing process a lot more enjoyable and certainly not as lonely. I am grateful not only for their unwavering confidence in my abilities as both a writer and art historian but also for their constant support, encouragement, and empathy; for their willingness to proof-read chapter after chapter; for their company throughout my highs and lows (especially in the past year); and for their unique abilities to brighten my day. I give to each of them a piece of my heart.

I am infinitely thankful to my parents, Lynn and Kevin Taylor, who have nurtured and encouraged my academic and personal growth since day one and who have supported me emotionally, physically, and fiscally throughout my undergraduate years. I would not be the person I am today if not for their compassion, care, and guidance. Finally, I am so fortunate to have been reunited with my big sister, Kristen, after twenty-two years apart. Thank you for being strong.

## PREFACE

My personal and academic fascination with the idea of ‘Minoan’ stretches back to my first year of high school. My introduction to the contentious topic of ‘what is Minoan?’ was in Bettany Hughes’s 2005 book *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore*, which strove to reveal the historicity of the infamous face-that-launched-a-thousand-ships. Hughes described what a historical Helen—a Bronze Age Helen—would have looked like, how she would have dressed, using as material and visual evidence depictions of the female form in frescoes, ivory statuettes, and seal stones and impressions from Minoan Crete. Not only was I shocked to discover that Helen would not have been blonde-haired, blue-eyed—as I had been led to believe from Rossetti and de Morgan’s Pre-Raphaelite paintings of Helen—but I was utterly captivated by what these artifacts revealed: ivory-skinned prehistoric Greek women with long coils of black hair intricately bedazzled with strands of beads (the “Ladies in Blue”); thick eyebrows, large eyes lined with kohl, and bright red lips (“La Parisienne”); and wrapped up in brightly colored costumes that could be described as consisting of a tightly-laced bodice that revealed the breasts, a flounced skirt, and an apron (the “Snake Goddess” figurines). So this is what Helen would have looked like: a far cry from the Pre-Raphaelite vision of rosy cheeks, golden locks, and flowing classical-esque tunics.

My attraction to Bronze Age Aegean art stemmed from the primary place the female form held in the iconography. I was captivated by the way in which women were represented: the hourglass proportions of their bodies, the un-classicalness of their opulent costumes, the elaborateness of their hair and makeup, and the flora and fauna



they were so often depicted alongside. I cut and pasted images of frescoes from Knossos and Mycenae, signet rings and seal stone impressions, and the Snake Goddess figurines into a leather-bound journal and transcribed Hughes's description of a 'Bronze Age Helen' within its pages. I sketched my own Bronze Age versions of Helen, Clytemnestra, and Penelope and clothed them in colorful skirts and bodices à la the Snake Goddess figurines. I even tasked my mother with sewing a Snake Goddess (HM 65, to be exact) outfit for my Princess Jasmine Barbie doll so I could present her as my entry in the Maine Junior Classical League's annual spring convention competition (for her snakes I wrapped green tape around flower wire). My high school had chosen to perform a one-act adaptation of *The Odyssey* for the 2012 Maine Drama Festival and I persuaded the director to take a more 'historical' approach to the production—to set our story firmly in the prehistoric past, the Bronze Age, rather than the familiar and, in my opinion, overexposed Classical period. I based the set design for Odysseus's Ithacan palace on the Palace of Minos: the throne, columns, and 'frescoes' depicting griffins and birds drew directly from images of the 'Throne Room' at Knossos. Hours of paint-mixing were spent after school to ensure that the set matched the bright reds, blues, and yellows of the frescoes in the Palace of Minos.

Penelope's costume was a near-reproduction of that worn by the Snake Goddess figurines sans bare breasts. With help from my mother's sewing skills, we designed a purple bodice trimmed with a gold border that scooped below the bust, which was covered by white ruching; a long golden-yellow skirt, open in the front, was worn over a layered, brown skirt. The actress also donned an intricately braided, long black wig with coiled strands across her forehead separated by a simple gold cloth headband, similar to

the hairstyle worn by the Ladies in Blue. Her face was painted a powder-white, her light-colored eyebrows darkened, and her eyes were heavily lined with black eyeliner. The result was mesmerizing: as the actress recited her lines in front of the throne room set, it was as though a Minoan fresco had come to life.

Over the course of my undergraduate career in the history of art, I encountered several devastating revelations about my preconceived notions of the Minoan past, beginning in my freshman seminar in Greek, Roman, and Egyptian art. My professor succeeded in overturning most of my preconceptions about the ancient world, but what hit me the hardest was his insistence that most of what is visible at Knossos today is not from the Bronze Age but is rather the result of massive reconstructions by the archaeologist who discovered the site, Sir Arthur Evans, in the early twentieth century. Moreover, the paintings, statuettes, and other ‘artifacts’ from the site are not entirely indicative of a Minoan Bronze Age style of art, nor were they unearthed as unspoiled and complete as they appear to the modern viewer—they too are the twentieth-century products of extensive and often superfluous restoration (and in some cases, re-creation) by Evans’s talented team of artists.

I felt as though I had been betrayed by the very images that had initiated my love for the art and architecture of the ancient world. I had been drawn to Minoan Crete in high school on account of the pervasiveness and apparent primacy of the female form in its visual media. I had concluded, mistakenly, that precedence of women in the material culture denoted the precedence of women in Minoan society as a whole; and I believed that ‘artifacts’ like the Snake Goddess statuettes were key to uncovering the ‘truth’ of my beloved mythological heroines. These assumptions rested on the idea that what I was

seeing in the pages of Greek art coffee-table books—images of the Palace of Minos and its features and artifacts—were all unearthed without any intervention from modern archaeologists. Having realized that the Snake Goddess statuettes were unearthed in situ in fragmentary bits and were subsequently reconstructed with new faces and limbs and accessories, I was faced with the realization that my cherished icons were, for the most part, modern creations which subscribe to Evans’s grand vision of the Minoan past.

I had constructed my Snake Goddess Barbie as re-creation of a re-creation, a reproduction of a cobbled-together reproduction. She is more a testament to the craftsmanship of a twentieth-century artist than to that of a Neopalatial workshop. I was thus prompted to re-evaluate my relationship with Minoan art, as I became increasingly aware of how frequently the cultural needs and desires of the present are projected onto the material culture of the past. My Snake Goddess Barbie (who so diligently sat near my desk as I tackled this topic over the past year) serves as reminder that I too have projected my own fantasies and vision onto the Minoan past, as does Penelope’s purple bodice from *The Odyssey* which somehow found its way into my closet after the last performance seven years ago (it has not moved since).

I certainly struggled to set aside my deeply-rooted attachment to, and preconception of, the Minoans throughout this writing process. As I read through the substantial literature and scholarly publications on this contentious topic it became evident that what constitutes ‘Minoan’ has been defined and re-defined since the civilization’s unearthing by those who also have an attachment or preconception of the Minoan past. I found that the meaning of ‘Minoan’ is mercurial at best and often contingent upon the social and cultural environment and values of the individual who is

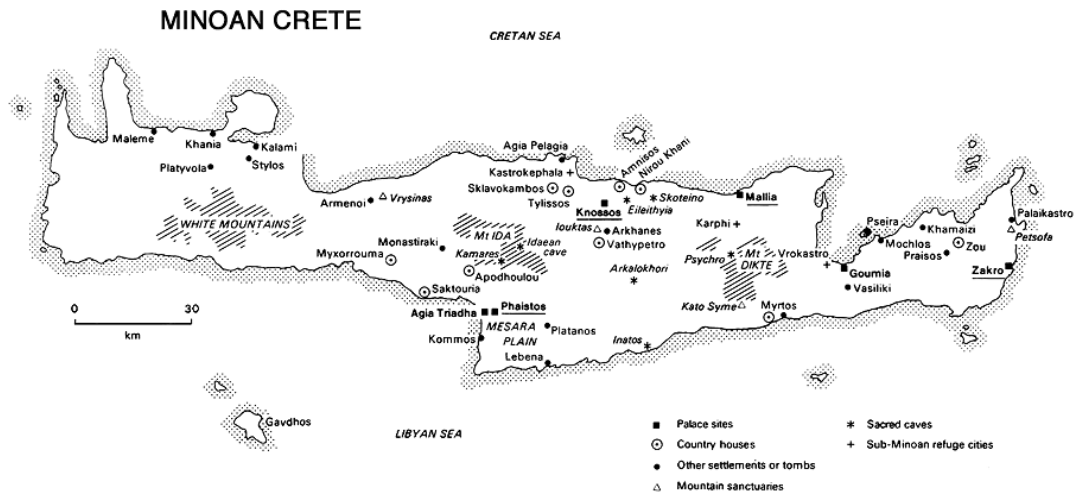
interpreting it. At different points over the past century-and-a-half, the Minoans have been labelled as the progenitor of a supreme European civilization, a pacifist and modernistic people, and the epitome of the ultra-feminine, goddess-worshipping, matriarchal past. The Minoans, or at the very least the concept of the Minoans, have evolved alongside the disciplines that have struggled to define them for the past century or so. They have always been a product of both the past and the present, and as such we cannot discuss the Minoan past without discussing the Minoan present. This constant reshaping of the past to suit the needs of the present is perhaps the greatest overarching theme of this project.

I consider this thesis to be a culmination of nearly a decade of my discovering and re-discovering of the Minoans, of my attempt to reconcile and make sense of the images that have, for so long, mystified and intrigued me as a burgeoning art historian. And while this year-long project has unquestionably been the most demanding and onerous undertaking of my entire academic career, I hope this does not mark the end of my academic inquiries about the Minoan past and modern conceptualizations of that past. Rather than marking the culmination of my Minoan odyssey, perhaps this thesis serves as the launching pad from which my future academic career can ascend.

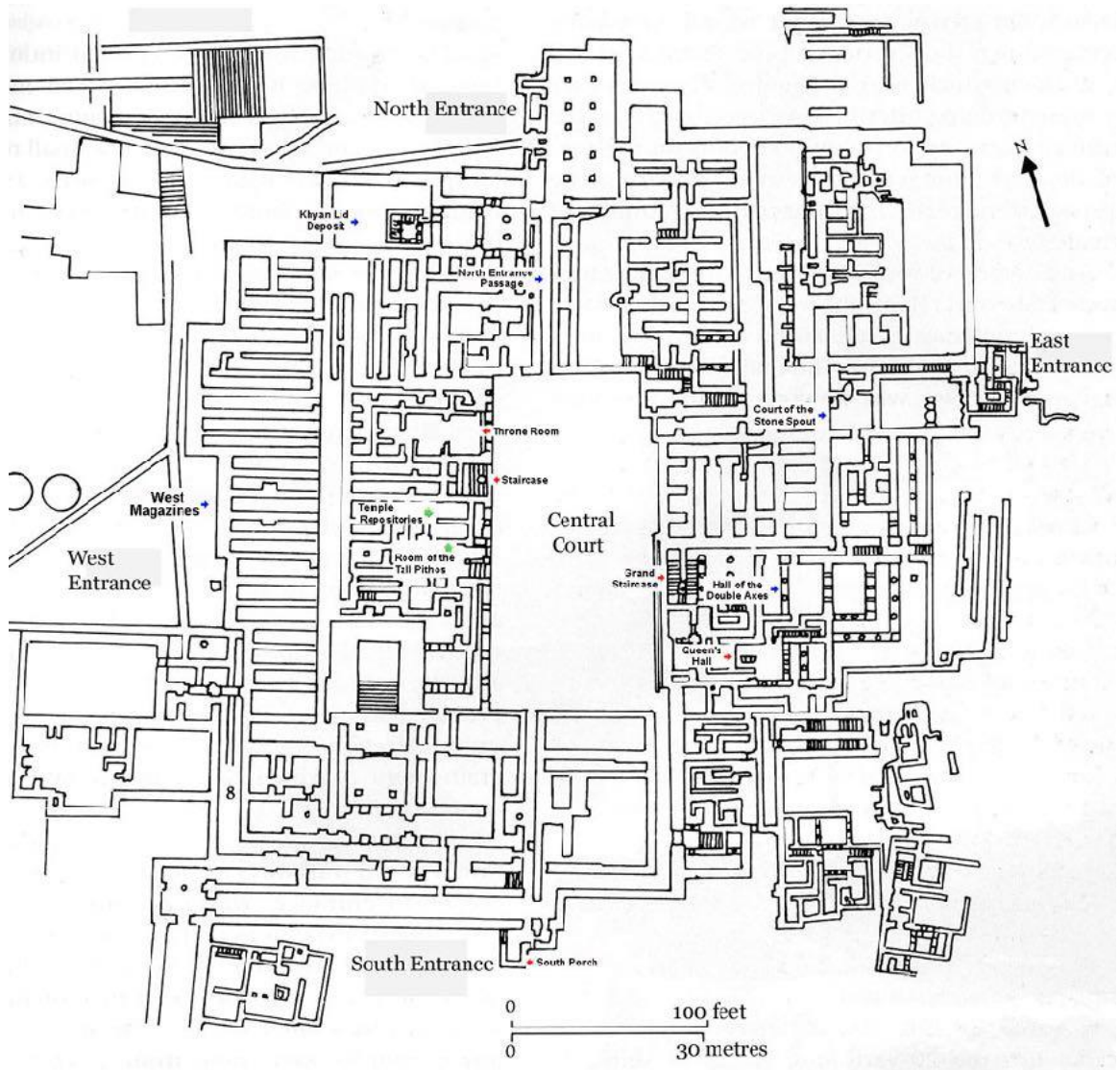
# MAPS



Map 1. The Bronze Age Aegean and important archaeological sites. Courtesy of the Dallas Museum of Art.



Map 2. Minoan Crete. Courtesy of Berkeley University.



Map 3. Plan of the Palace of Minos at Knossos. Courtesy of Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe.

TABLE OF RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY

Pottery Phase	Relative Dates	Absolute Dates (BCE)
<u>Early Minoan IA</u>	Early Pre-Palatial Period	3100–3000
EM IB		2900–2650
EM IIA		2650–2450/00
EM IIB		2450/00–2200
EM III		2200–2100/2050
<u>Middle Minoan IA</u>	Late Pre-Palatial Period	2100/2050–1925/00
MM IB	Protopalatial (Old Palace Period)	1925/00–1875/50
MM II		1875/50–1750/00
MM (A–B)	Neopalatial (New Palace Period)	1750/00–1700/1675
<u>Late Minoan IA</u>		1700/1675–1625/00
LM IB		1625/00–1470/60
LM II	Monopalatial Period (at Knossos only)	1470/60–1420/10
LM IIIA <sub>1</sub>		1420/10–1390/70
LM IIIA <sub>2</sub>		1390/70–1330/15
LM IIIB	Final Palatial Period	1330/15–1200/1190
LM IIIC		1200/1190–1075/50

Table 1. Relative and Absolute chronology of Minoan Crete. Courtesy of the author.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Dedication*

*Acknowledgements*

*Preface*

*Maps*

*Table of Aegean Chronology*

I. Introduction: The Cretan Conundrum	1
The Meaning of ‘Minoan’	8
Chronological Frameworks	11
Situating the Minoans in Time and Space: A Brief Chronological Context	14
II. The Development of Bronze Age Aegean Archaeology	18
Aegean Prehistory As Told by the Ancients	18
Re-Discovering Greece: the Grand Tour, Winckelmann, and Schliemann	20
Evans and the Site of Knossos	28
III. Theories of Cultural Evolutionism and Prehistoric Matriarchy in Nineteenth Century Anthropology and Archaeology	31
Theories of Development, Evolutionism, and Animism	31
The Theory of Matriarchal Prehistory	38
Prehistoric Goddess Figurines	40
Was Evans a Visionary?	41
IV. “Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult” and Evans’s Use of Nineteenth Century Anthropological Theories	45
Evans and Evolutionism	46
The Increasing Significance of the Goddess	51
Shifting from the Divine Pair to the Mother Goddess and Her Divine Son	55
V. <i>The Palace of Minos</i> and the Cult of the Snake Goddess	59
The ‘Temple Repositories’ and the Shrine of the Snake Goddess	60
Identifying the Origin and Ritual Characteristics of the Cult of the Snake Goddess	66
Conclusions	67



VI. Reassessing the Iconographic Evidence For a Female Divinity in Minoan Religion	69
Depicting the Female Form in Neopalatial Figurative Art	70
The Issue of Polytheism vs. Monotheism: Did a Great Mother Goddess Exist?	75
New Interpretations of HM 63 and HM 65	79
VII. The Conundrum Continues: Contemporary Discourse Concerning Evans's Methodologies and Archaeological Processes	87
The Issue of Evans's Eurocentric Agenda	89
Evans and the Gilliérons: Manufacturers of the Minoans	95
The Great Goddess Debate: Modern Critiques (and Reclamation) of the Goddess Thesis	106
VIII. Concluding Thoughts	120
<i>Bibliography</i>	123
<i>Appendix of Images</i>	128
<i>Author's Biography</i>	165

INTRODUCTION:  
THE CRETAN CONUNDRUM

May of 1903 was a crucial turning point for the ongoing excavation of the palace complex at Knossos. Three years after the first trowels had hit the ground and nearly a decade since his arrival on the island of Crete, Sir Arthur Evans was nearing the end of his fourth campaign when the discovery of two deposits located in the central palace sanctuary area at the West Wing—later dubbed the ‘Temple Repositories’ and the ‘Vat Room Deposit’—were identified as being directly related to Minoan cult practices.

Having noticed a slight depression in the pavement, Evans ordered his crew to lift some of the gypsum slabs in a small chamber west of the Central Court that had been previously overlooked (Fig. 1.1 and 1.2). To his delight, the slabs revealed two large rectangular stone-lined cists filled with gold, fragments of worked ivory, rock crystal, bronze and stone implements, and more than two hundred faience objects which were immediately interpreted as ritual equipment or offerings that were deliberately buried (Fig. 1.3).<sup>1</sup>

In his preliminary report, Evans declared that the objects from the Temple Repositories ““for beauty and interest equalled, and in some respects surpassed anything found during the whole course of the four seasons’ excavations.””<sup>2</sup> The discoveries of most value to Evans, however, rested at the very bottom of one of the cists underneath a

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<sup>1</sup> Lapatin, Kenneth, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess: Art, Desire, and the Forging of History* (Da Capo Press, 2002), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Evans, Arthur J, “The Palace at Knossos: Provisional Report for the Year 1903” (*Annual of the British School at Athens* 9: 20, 1903); quoted in Panagiotaki, Marina, “Dating the Temple Repositories Vases,” (*The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 1993), 93: 40.

covering of red earth and vases mixed with rubble and gold foil: fragments of as many as five bare-breasted, clenched-waisted faience statuettes sporting snakes coiled around their limbs (Fig. 1.4).<sup>3</sup> Following the prompt and excessive reconstruction of two of these figurines (hereby referred to by their Herakleion Museum accession numbers, HM 63 and HM 65) with the assistance of Danish painter Halvor Bagge and Swiss father and son artist duo Émile Gilliéron *père* and *fils*, Evans swiftly promoted the ‘Snake Goddess’ figurines in his substantial publication *The Palace of Minos* as material evidence of a Minoan cult centered around one Great Mother Goddess. In doing so, he finally fulfilled his goal of discovering the cultural precursor to Greek religion (Fig. 1.5).

Yet in spite of his assertion that the Snake Goddess encapsulated prehistoric feminine authority, her presence in Minoan art is actually quite rare and the evidence relatively ambiguous. Nevertheless, that unsureness has never hindered the Goddess from capturing the imagination of the public since her unearthing and reassembly at the start of the twentieth century. In fact, the Minoan Snake Goddess has effectively taken on a personality all her own, not merely within the realm of Aegean archaeology but also, and perhaps even more so, in mainstream popular culture. Hungarian fashion designer Madame Eta (Eta Vader Hentz) evoked the Snake Goddess’s flounced skirt and plunging neckline in an elegant evening dress for her Grecian themed collection in 1943.<sup>4</sup> A performer dressed as the Snake Goddess was the leading figure in the artistic procession at the opening ceremony of the 2004 Summer Olympics in Greece, which featured a parade of Greek culture spanning from the Minoan civilization to the twenty-first century (Fig. 1.6). If one browses the official webpage for the Heraklion Archaeological

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<sup>3</sup> Panagiotaki, “Dating the Temple Repositories Vases,” 52.

<sup>4</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 85

Museum, the Snake Goddess is prominently featured alongside five other iconic pieces of Minoan art: a gold headed double-axe, a colorful fresco featuring jovial monkeys, a bee amulet, and two kamares ware. Replicas, jewelry, charms, and even a vintage bottle opener all depicting the Snake Goddess can be purchased anywhere from museum bookstores to online sites such as Amazon, eBay, and Etsy (1.7). The Snake Goddess holds a prominent place on the cover of *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* as a New Age symbol of the Goddess Movement (Fig. 1.8). Professor of art at Northeastern State University Diane Boze has noted that many of her students “[...] when asked to choose an image within their art survey textbook that especially draws their attention and interest (one of my first assignments), out of the great range of choices of a variety of cultures, mediums, and time periods, [...] often choose to focus on the Minoan Snake Goddess.”<sup>5</sup>

In all, the substantial attention garnered by the Snake Goddess over the course of a century speaks to her status as one of the most exotic yet most recognizable icons of Greek material culture. She is, undoubtedly, one of the most reproduced and familiar images in the art historical canon yet her function—and indeed, her very essence—continues to be shaped by the man who coined the term Minoan and discovered the site in which she and her sisters had for generations remained undisturbed. That the Snake Goddess is almost always pictured in her heavily restored state in art historical survey texts and coffee table books on Ancient Greek art without mention of her considerable restoration and questionable past is indicative of the broader mythos of Minoan art and

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<sup>5</sup> Boze, Diane, “Creating History By Re-Creating the Minoan Snake Goddess,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 15 (2016): 2.

culture invented and cultivated by Evans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As eloquently expressed by archaeologist J. Papadopoulos, in transforming the poorly preserved ruins of the archaeological site previously known as *Tou Tseleve he Kephala* and *Ta Pitharia* into the brightly frescoed, multi-storied and blatantly modern Palace of Minos, Evans “transformed the monument, through reconstruction and restoration [...] beyond what the preserved remains reasonably permitted. By doing much more than replacing falling architectural blocks, he constructed, in reinforced concrete, his own idea of what the palace site might have looked like in its heyday” (Fig. 1.9).<sup>6</sup>

Modern renderings of the palace frescoes after the highly fragmentary compositions that remained were painstakingly reassembled and repainted by the Gilliérons, and, in some cases, were superimposed directly onto the ancient walls.<sup>7</sup> In the case of the famous “Priest King” relief, an ear attached to the crown was the only part of the figure’s face to have survived, prompting the restoration by Gilliéron *père* to engage in some creative liberty (Fig. 1.10). To make the interpretation of the composition even more problematic, the figure’s skin was clearly painted white. This posed quite an obstacle for Evans and his team considering he had, up to that point, applied to his interpretation of Minoan art the convention shared by ancient Egyptians according to which men were depicted as always having red skin and women as always having white skin. Ultimately Evans bypassed the material evidence and decided that the Priest King

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<sup>6</sup> Papadopoulos, John, “Inventing the Minoans: Archaeology, Modernity and the Quest for European Identity,” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 18 (2010): 110.

<sup>7</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 131

should be depicted as having red skin.<sup>8</sup> In this way, Evans's vision of the Minoan past was solidified through the extreme and often unnecessary restoration of the site and its artifacts. The issue here, then, is that to the casual observer and standard tourist—as well as students of archaeology and art history—Knossos appears as a rather well-preserved relic of the second millennium BCE. The fact that the majority of the structure standing today was constructed in the early-twentieth century by an archaeologist of questionable motives is not plainly evident.

Just as Evans did not simply 'discover' the site of Knossos, he also did not 'discover' the Snake Goddess figurines unbroken and untouched in the Temple Repositories. Rather, they constituted a facet in Evans's grand romantic vision of the Minoan past as he meticulously restored and reconstituted them in order to fit his own narrative concerning Minoan religion. His finds at Knossos have proven to be a watershed moment in the field of Mediterranean archaeology, and, as such, his interpretations of the Snake Goddess, although unsubstantiated, continue to shape modern perceptions of Minoan art and culture.

This thesis is merely one contribution to the impressive breadth of scholarship from diverse academic fields—archaeology, art history, historiography, anthropology, gender and sexuality studies to name but a few—that have wholly ruptured the status quo of the field of the Bronze Age Aegean by dismissing the conventional and established versions of the 'Minoan narrative' in favor of a comprehensive reappraisal of the available chronological, material, and visual data, and by seeking out more inclusive and historically-conscious interpretations of Minoan ritual and art. Indeed, the influx of

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<sup>8</sup> Gere, Cathy, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2009): 121.

reflexive discourse on the concept and implications of the Minoan narrative has brought us to a truly exhilarating and optimistic moment in the field at large.

Stimulated by this impressive range of interdisciplinary scholarship, this thesis attempts to critically evaluate and reflect on the ‘Minoan narrative’ of the past and present, with the issue of the identity of Snake Goddess serves as a catalyst of sorts for a broader discussion about the pervasiveness of Evans’s construction of the Minoan past and the inadequacy of his main theoretical narratives. This volume, by engaging historiographically to assess and deconstruct several issues directly concerning Evans’ lasting impact on Minoan studies of art and religion, aims to:

1. Provide the reader, in this introduction, with a general overview of the terminology, chronology, and methodology typically utilized in the field of the Bronze Age Aegean.
2. Situate Evans and his excavations at Knossos within a broader historical context by examining Evans’s archaeological and anthropological predecessors.
3. Explore the main theoretical paradigms and methodological principles employed and popularized by Evans’s academic contemporaries, namely the theories of evolutionism and matriarchal prehistory, to determine the degree to which preconceived notions of prehistory influenced Evans’s work at Knossos.
4. Analyze Evans’s initial interpretations of the visual evidence from Knossos as detailed in his 1901 essay “Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and Its Mediterranean Relations,” and to determine why he ultimately discarded the idea of a Divine Pair in favor of the idea of a Great Mother Goddess of many manifestations.

5. Discuss Evans's discovery, restoration, and interpretation of HM 63 and HM 65 and the crucial role the figurines played in reifying Evans's new thesis of a monotheistic Minoan religion centered on an omnipotent Great Goddess.
6. Reassess depictions of ritual scenes and representations of the human and divine form in Neopalatial iconography to determine the merit of the Goddess thesis and point to the need for a comprehensive re-examination of HM 63 and HM 65 and what their purposes may suggest (or not suggest) about the nature of Minoan religion.
7. Evaluate several new paradigms and interpretive frameworks that contemporary scholars have employed as means of challenging, recontextualizing, or reframing Evans's interpretations and methodological practices, and to explore the broader legacy of the Snake Goddess in the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, art history, as well as her reclamation by the modern Goddess Movement.

This thesis concludes that the methodological principles and practices utilized by Evans in both his writings and excavation work were fundamentally inadequate, and his problematic and inaccurate interpretations and reconstructions of the Snake Goddess figurines are a testament to his unsound paradigms. Recognizing the multitude of interpretative problems associated with Evans's legacy in Minoan studies, this thesis ultimately suggests that HM 63 and HM 65 should be reassessed and recontextualized in light of recent scholarship.



## The Meaning of 'Minoan'

According to D. Preziosi, the Minoans are as much a twentieth-century “academic artefact” as they were inhabitants of a certain part of the Bronze Age Aegean.<sup>9</sup> One needs, however, to consider the etymology of the term ‘Minoan’ in order to better understand the intricacies and contentions in Minoan studies. Prior to Sir Arthur Evans’s excavation of Knossos, the term ‘Minoan’ had a relatively limited use in the English lexicon, referring solely to King Minos of Crete. Minos and his associated mythos has appeared in various sources throughout antiquity, the earliest approximately in the fifth century BCE in Thucydides’ history of the Peloponnesian War:

Minos, according to tradition, was the first person to organize a navy. He controlled the greater part of what is now called the Hellenic Sea; he ruled over the Cyclades, in which he founded the first colonies, putting his sons in as governors after having driven out the Carians. And it is reasonable to suppose that he did best to put down piracy in order to secure his own revenues (Thucydides I.4).

It has been argued equitably by J. Papadopoulos that Evans himself was responsible for the commencement of Minos’s ‘modern career,’ as the Cretan king was extracted from the annals of history and repackaged as the namesake of a newly discovered prehistoric civilization.<sup>10</sup> In the first volume of *The Palace of Minos* (1921), Evans declared that ‘Mycenaean,’ as the name for the Later Prehistoric Age in the Aegean area, “no longer sufficed” following the discovery of another early civilization on Crete.<sup>11</sup> He proposed instead the application of the term ‘Minoan,’ since “by the Greeks

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<sup>9</sup> Preziosi, D. and Hitchcock, L. A. *Aegean Art and Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 2

<sup>10</sup> Papadopoulos, *Inventing the Minoans*, 95.

<sup>11</sup> Evans, Arthur J. *The Palace of Minos. A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*. London, 1921) 1: 1

themselves in the memory of that Great Age that had preceded their own diffusion throughout the Aegean lands was summed up in the name of Minos.”<sup>12</sup> Not wishing to associate the high civilization of his ‘Minoan Age’ with the image of a ruthless despot and his deadly Minotaur, Evans alleged that “Athenian chauvinism” exaggerated the tyrannical side of Minos throughout antiquity; it was “the spade of the excavator” that had been able to cast reasonable doubt on such a claim:

The ogre’s den turns out to be a peaceful abode of priest-kings, in some respects more modern in its equipments than anything produced by classical Greece [...]. Minos ‘the destroyer’ may certainly have existed. That the yoke of the more civilized ruler should at times have weighed heavily on subject peoples is probable enough.<sup>13</sup>

In these first few pages, Evans emphasizes the figure of Minos as both law-giver and patron of the arts, ruler of one of the most technologically and artistically advanced civilizations of prehistory:

Of ordered government we have the proof, and, in a not less striking degree, the evidence of extraordinary achievements in peaceful arts. The Palace traditionally built for Minos by his great craftsman Daedalos has proved to be no baseless fabric of the imagination. The marvelous works brought to light at Knossos and on the other sites show moreover that the artistic skill associated with his name fell, if anything, short of the reality. At the same time the multiplicity of technical processes already mastered, the surprising advance in hydraulic and sanitary engineering—leaving Egypt far behind—bear witness to a considerable measure of attainment in the domain of science.<sup>14</sup>

That Evans repeatedly stresses the historical reality of a King Minos, Daedalos, *et al.* is paramount to his (and our historiographic perspectives of his) understanding of Aegean prehistory. In this way, Evans conceded that archaeological evidence could substantiate the existence of the fabled Greek heroes—although to a far less zealous degree than his predecessor Schliemann, admitting that the term ‘Minos’ could have

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 1, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 2.

functioned in a dynastic sense of the word instead of for an individual monarch (equatable with the Egyptian title of Pharaoh), stated: “it seems certain that we must recognize in Minos the bearer of a divine title [...] He is of of divine parentage and himself the progenitor of divine beings.”<sup>15</sup>

To Evans, the Minoans and their art and architecture not only demonstrated a prehistoric Mediterranean culture that was on par with—even superior to—contemporary Egypt, but also appeared to confirm the veracity of the old Greek legends, which “may not have been nostalgic fantasies of a lost golden age spun out of whole cloth, but rather seemed to be dim memories of a very real, rich, and vibrant civilization antedating the world of the Greeks by many centuries.”<sup>16</sup> In short, by the onset of the twentieth century the Minoans had the potential to disrupt and reshape the fields of prehistory and archaeology.

The question of whether Evans discovered or simply manufactured the Minoans as we have come to recognize them persists in Bronze Age scholarship. Certainly there was a civilization that flourished on Crete 5,000 years ago, but at this point in time we do not have the ability to translate the negligible Linear A text that survives. As a result, art historians and archaeologists must form their evaluation of Minoan society through visual and material evidence alone: fresco fragments, signet rings, ceramics, faience figurines and other historical survivors. What is clear, however, is that those who inhabited the island did not consider themselves ‘Minoan,’ nor could they have known that they were living in a ‘Minoan Age.’ In other words, the Bronze Age population of Crete did not

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Preziosi, “Aegean Art and Architecture,” 2.

consider themselves through the Greco and archaeological lenses that we have acquired over the past two or more centuries.

### Chronological Frameworks

The Three Age System, the division of human prehistory into successive ages of Stone, Bronze, and Iron, has endured as *the* fundamental chronology for the European world since its inception in the mid-1830s by Danish archaeologist, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen.<sup>17</sup> This system was accepted and utilized by Evans in *The Palace of Minos* when he explicated that the term ‘Minoan’ “embraces the Copper and Bronze Ages of Crete but does not include that more primitive stage of culture represented by the Later Stone Age.”<sup>18</sup> In terms of tangible dates, the Aegean Bronze Age spanned from ca. 3100/3000 BCE until c. 1070 BCE, during which various groups of people arose from basic subsistence to cultural prominence along the Mediterranean basin.<sup>19</sup> Only through the methods of archaeology can we examine the cultures of the Bronze Age Aegean, for there is no mass documentation for the Minoans and Mycenaeans to delineate their history. Of the four scripts that are known to have been utilized in the Bronze Age Aegean—Cretan Hieroglyphic, the script of the Phaistos Disc, Linear A, and Linear B—only the latter has been deciphered; the data sets for the remaining scripts remain simply too small to interpret.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rowley-Conwy, Peter. *From Genesis to Prehistory: The Archaeological Three Age System and Its Contested Reception in Denmark, Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford University Press, 2007): 1

<sup>18</sup> Evans, *PM* 1, 13

<sup>19</sup> Shelmerdine, Cynthia W, *The Cambridge Companion to the Aegean Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 1

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 11

Besides bestowing on Bronze Age Crete the name ‘Minoan,’ Evans also introduced a tripartite chronological framework based on ceramic phases in *The Palace of Minos*: Early (EM), Middle (MM), and Late (LM) which in turn are divided into three subdivisions—I, II, III, broken down even further into two sections—*a* and *b* (see Table 1 for a comparative chart detailing the relative and absolute chronologies of Minoan Crete). These phases correlate roughly with the division of Egyptian history into Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms.<sup>21</sup> Evans was confident that this was the most practical system, noting, “This tripartite system, indeed, whether we regard the course of Minoan civilisation as a whole or its threefold stages, is in its very essence logical and scientific. In every characteristic phase of culture we note in fact the period of rise, maturity and decay” (It should be noted that this model, certainly normal within Evans’s time, is questionable now).<sup>22</sup> In this way, Evans adhered to the long-established view of the cyclical nature of history, a framework which adapts the socio-biological model of birth, maturity, and decay to the development of societies.<sup>23</sup>

There is, however, a predicament with Evans’s categorization as Marinatos has previously touched upon: that while the starting point of his chronological system is indeed based on similitudes of artifacts found together in the same deposit in either Egypt or in Crete, the correspondence is not in and of itself meaningful in historical terms. For instance, the transition from the Old to the Middle Kingdom corresponds to a historical event. On the other hand, no discernible event coincides with the transition from EM to

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<sup>21</sup> Evans, *PM* 1, 25-27

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 25

<sup>23</sup> McEnroe, John, “Sir Arthur Evans and Edwardian Archaeology” (*Classical Bulletin* 71, 1995):11

MM. It is, therefore, “mechanical and arbitrary.”<sup>24</sup> As a relative chronological system, Evans’s tripartite framework is dependent on correlations between ceramic types found in reliable stratified deposits but, in all reality, a site’s stratigraphy is often far from certain and precise.<sup>25</sup>

Absolute dating poses further issues, for there are two unreconciled ‘high’ and ‘low’ Aegean chronologies. P. Warren and V. Hankey are proponents of the lower chronology, which is based on the traditional method of cross-dating by establishing ceramic synchronies with Egypt and Mesopotamia (both having long independent absolute chronologies).<sup>26</sup> The higher chronology is the result of more recent scientific studies and techniques, namely dendrochronology and radiocarbon dating.<sup>27</sup> Other scholars and archaeologists, such as Levi (excavator of Phaistos) and Planton (excavator of Zakros) have preferred another chronological division for Crete: *Prepalatial*, the era before the palaces; *Palatial*, the palace era (subdivided into *First* (or *Proto-*) and *Second* (or *Neo-*) *Palace* periods); and *Postpalatial*, the period after the fall of the palaces.<sup>28</sup> Dickinson (1994) has argued for a system of five broad divisions “that reflects the rise and fall of the palace societies, close to that favored by Planton and others.”<sup>29</sup> Again, one should bear in mind that these divisions may also not have been perceived by the Minoans themselves.

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<sup>24</sup> Marinatos, Nanno, *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol* (Columbus: University of South Carolina Press, 1993): 2.

<sup>25</sup> Shelmerdine, *Cambridge Companion*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> McEnroe, “Evans and Edwardian Archaeology,” 6.

<sup>27</sup> Shelmerdine, *Cambridge Companion*, 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Dickinson, Oliver, *The Aegean Bronze Age* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 11.

Developments within the study of ceramics over the past few decades have allowed scholars to evaluate periods of time more precisely (within a generation or two) rather than by broad historical epochs, which facilitates a better understanding of the relationships between sites.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, Evans's system carries on as the favored means of identifying and classifying Aegean prehistoric material, speaking to the endurance of his paradigms in mainstream academic discourse.<sup>31</sup> Of course, it may do so merely as convenience, given that we have all trained with it. This thesis recognizes that Evans's nomenclature and chronological frameworks have remained the standard in the field and, for the sake of consistency, will subscribe to his models. However, we need to remain conscious of how his systems affect our perceptions of the Minoans.

#### Situating the Minoans and Their Culture in Time: A Brief Chronological Context

Now that the contentious history of the word 'Minoan' has been established we can inquire into the definite characteristics (i.e. those that can be discerned archaeologically) of the culture itself. According to P. Tomkins and I. Schoep, the quality of data, alongside a broadening of theoretical and analytical range, over the last three decades has allowed for a "more critical evaluation" and refinement of the archaeological evidence thanks to advancements in stratigraphic and ceramic studies.<sup>32</sup> With this in mind, prehistorians may ask the preliminary question: who exactly were the people who inhabited Crete during the period known to us as the Bronze Age? And what have up-to-date archaeological data revealed to us? The account below is a *very* brief and broad

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<sup>30</sup> McEnroe, "Evans and Edwardian Archaeology," 7.

<sup>31</sup> Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Tomkins, T., and Schoep, I, "Crete," *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 67.

overview that seeks not to provide a meticulous examination of every aspect of the Minoans through time but rather to provide the reader with a general chronological and archaeological context.

Our discussion of the cultural chronology will begin at the earliest phase of Minoan society from EM I-III (3100-2200 BCE) which developed “as a long and gradual process with small changes in economics, agriculture, social advancement, [and] technology” and was, by EM II (2650-2200 BCE), a society characterized by “unprecedented advances” in trade, technology, economic development, and social actions.<sup>33</sup> Previously inhabited by village-dwelling agricultural farmers in the Neolithic, the Early Minoan period brought a wave of external migration to Crete as coastal sites found high-value materials and technologies such as metal more accessible.<sup>34</sup> P. Betancourt has worked intensively to identify the new forms of wealth that occurred throughout the Early Minoan period, focusing his studies on the emergence of a revolutionary ceramic style that appeared suddenly and without no obvious antecedent, made of pale-firing clay and decorated with bold linear designs.<sup>35</sup> He argues that these hard, dense, and durable vessels were technologically more ‘advanced’ than those of the Neolithic, and their use as storage and shipping containers greatly benefited Crete’s domestic economy and position within the wider Aegean.<sup>36</sup> EM I, and the technological

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<sup>33</sup> Betancourt, P. P.. *The Bronze Age Begins: The Ceramics Revolution of Early Minoan I and the New Forms of Wealth That Transformed Prehistoric Society* (INSTAP Academic Press, 2009): 3.

<sup>34</sup> Tomkins and Schoep, “Crete,” 67.

<sup>35</sup> Betancourt, *Bronze Age Begins*, 4

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 9.



advances had it had sprung, thus marks the point at which Cretan society emerged as a ‘true civilization.’<sup>37</sup>

While the arrival of the ‘First’ or ‘Old’ Palaces at several Cretan sites, including Knossos, Malia, Phaistos, and Petras, have historically been situated in the Middle Bronze Age (1925/1900 BCE, often referred to as the Protopalatial period or First/Old Palace period), it is now apparent that some of their key features (e.g. orientation) can be traced back as early as EM IIB.<sup>38</sup> Schoep has criticized Evans’s interpretation of the large court building as a ‘palace’ where the dynasty of priest-kings resided; closer examination of the material evidence in these structures—including the contents of elaborate storerooms, Kamares ware, and Linear A and Cretan hieroglyphic documents—reveals that “the palatial model in which complete power is concentrated in the ‘palaces’ should be revised because [...] There is no empirical evidence to support the traditional interpretation of the ‘palaces’ as the residence of a single, centralized authority whose domain was the political, religious, and economic affairs of the community.”<sup>39</sup> Importantly, *production* in these structures concerned not high-quality prestige goods but rather textiles, with the scale of the buildings leading archaeologists to concur that they were aimed at a much wider public.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> n.b. We should, however, be critical of this type of interpretation. The term ‘true civilization,’ as well shall see, is subjective and carries evolutionist connotations and many scholars are increasingly hesitant to use such terminology today.

<sup>38</sup> Schoep, Ilse, “The Minoan ‘Palace-Temple’ Reconsidered: A Critical Assessment of the Spatial Concentration of Political, Religious and Economic Power in Bronze Age Crete (*Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 23, 2011): 113.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 122.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

The Neopalatial period (MM III to LM I, or 1700-1450 BCE) has long been considered the pinnacle of Minoan civilization, with Evans himself proclaiming that MM III, specifically, marks the “Golden Age of Crete” which was followed (after a “level interval”) by a “gradual decline.”<sup>41</sup> The palaces, which by now populated the island, were the epicenters of production, storage, redistribution and residences for highly-skilled workers and craftsmen; a complex bureaucracy had been established through which intricate networks of administration and writing were controlled by a powerful elite class.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, with the pervasiveness of ritual and cult iconography and symbolism within these palace complexes, particularly at Knossos, as well as technical advances in *buon* fresco painting and figurine crafting, Minoan civilization reached its artistic and ideological peak—it is, then, not surprising that HM 63 and HM 65 are products of this culturally rich and dynamic period. Naturally, this thesis’ examination of the iconographic and representational evidence of Minoan religion will concern itself primarily with the Neopalatial period, and any further discussion concerning ritual and cult practices will remain in the confines of 1700-1450 BCE.

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<sup>41</sup> Evans, *PM* 1, 27.

<sup>42</sup> Adams, Ellen, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete: Social Dynamics in the Neopalatial Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 1

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRONZE AGE AEGEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

### Aegean Prehistory as Told by the Ancients

While Aegean archaeology as a discipline has come under a wave of fresh reappraisals, interest in the origins of Greek civilization can be traced back to the works of Homer in seventh century BCE. Although the Classical Greeks lost all material evidence of a Bronze Age which had been obscured deeply beneath the earth, they reflected on their past through a vivid mythical tradition, as testified by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two poems that spoke of a ‘heroic age’ specifically located in the remote past.<sup>43</sup>

The setting of these stories can be construed as generally Archaic, but it is clear that there is an amalgamation of elements from different dates (O. Dickinson argues that the Homeric poems reflect the Dark Age more than any other period).<sup>44</sup> These stories go back orally at least as far as the ninth century BCE, whilst Homer wrote closer to 720 BCE, and were taken to be historic fact for generations until the fifth century BCE when the “historical consciousness” of Thucydides and Herodotus introduced the disciplinary rigors of History by rationalizing and questioning the veracity of mythic narratives.<sup>45</sup>

Writing around the time of the Persian wars, Herodotus perceived the Trojan War as a prelude to the East-West conflicts of his era, and he even traveled to Egypt for the purpose of finding factual information that could pinpoint a date for the war.<sup>46</sup> According to J. L. Fitton, Herodotus’s questioning of whether and in what way the events described

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<sup>43</sup> Muskett, G., “The Aegean World,” *The History of Archaeology: An Introduction* (Ed. Bahn, P. New York: Routledge, 2014): 39.

<sup>44</sup> Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Fitton, J. L., *The Discovery of the Greek Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 14.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 19-20.

in the Homeric poems actually occurred demonstrates “an early stage of what we can recognise as critical thinking of an essentially modern sort.”

Similarly, the writing of Thucydides (also writing in the fifth century BCE) explicitly drew conclusions from hard evidence rather than passively accepting events as resulting from divine intervention. His *History of the Peloponnesian War* relegated the authority of legend, myth, and poetic license in favor of historical and investigative inquiry. That the Trojan War was a historical event which could be traced back in time was accepted by Thucydides wholeheartedly.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, he introduces his historiography with the admittance that the remote past often lacks clear-cut evidence:

I have found it impossible, because of its remoteness in time, to acquire a really precise knowledge of the distant past or even of the history preceding our own period, yet, after looking back into it as far as I can, all the evidence leads me to conclude that these periods were not great periods in warfare or anything else.<sup>48</sup>

Honoring their historical placement of the heroic age as a specific period in an earlier stage of the Greek past, Dickinson concurs with Fitton when he affirms that the “learned speculations” of Herodotus and “brilliant extrapolations” of Thucydides are analogous to the codification and interpretation of material employed by modern scholars.<sup>49</sup>

The search for the Aegean past before writing persisted into the second century CE when the majority of the Greek mainland was under the dominion of the Roman Empire. Pausanias’s travel guide of Greece vividly describes the remnants of Bronze Age sites, most notably Mycenae, providing a fascinating indication as to what material evidence was visible to the Roman Empire over a millennium later. The first-hand

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Thucydides, tr. R. Warner 1954, 35

<sup>49</sup> Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age*, 1.

accounts of ancient travelers and tour guides, as well as their description and classification of places and monuments, can then be framed within the disciplinary methods of art history.

### Re-Discovering Greece: the Grand Tour, Winckelmann, and Schliemann

Remnants of the Greek past remained visible into the period of the Renaissance, making it possible for sixteenth- through eighteenth-century antiquarians to bring about a renewed awareness and interest in the ancient past through the collection of Greek and Roman artifacts. The chronologies, styles, and historical contexts of these relics, however, were not systematically analyzed and recorded until the eighteenth century when yet another revived interest in ancient Greek culture and literature arose among European aristocratic circles.

The Grand Tour was, as dubbed by Boulton and McLoughlin, a kind of “cultural pilgrimage” in which a young aristocratic man, often having completed his years at Oxford or Cambridge in his early twenties, would spend a year or two traveling throughout Europe with stops at the intellectual and cultural hotspots of France, Italy, and even Greece.<sup>50</sup> Visits to these sites served in many ways as a corroboration of what students learned first through texts, thus fulfilling their preconceptions set by their previous studies, and so making them fit what they saw to these already formed ideas. This *in situ* study was, essentially, a “rite of passage” where one could immerse himself

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<sup>50</sup> Boulton, J. T., and McLoughlin, T. O. *News From abroad: Letters Written By British Travellers on the Grand Tour, 1728-71* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012): 5.

in other cultures, observe different social habits and political systems, and “marvel at the monuments of classical times and the renowned artworks of the Renaissance.”<sup>51</sup>

The Dilettanti Society of London, established in 1734 as a dining club for participants of the Grand Tour, was the premier supporter of the serious study of Classical art and architecture. In 1751, the Society sponsored the archaeological work of James Stuart and Nicholas Revett in Athens and the subsequent publication of their influential work *The Antiquities of Athens, Measured and Delineated*.<sup>52</sup> As a result, it became clear that mere knowledge of the famous Greek and Roman texts was now insufficient for the enlightened upper-class of Europe. Rather, one’s appreciation for the art and culture of antiquity had to be *experienced* through serious and scholarly excursions among the ruins of Greece and Rome. As such, these sites were deemed vestiges of a mythic-historical tradition. As N. Marinatos relays, the French count Choiseul-Gouffier projected Greek history onto prehistory in his travels around the Greek islands and the Troad by constructing historical maps that corresponded epic tradition with the physical ruins themselves “without second thoughts.”<sup>53</sup>

As Classical artifacts found their way from unearthed sites into the hands of private collectors and museum institutions, new methodologies were being developed through which the scores of ancient art and architecture could be systematically classified. Perhaps the most influential player in the dissemination and popularization of this systemized Graeco-Roman art history was German scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Prior to the publication of his *History of the Art of Antiquity* in 1764,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age*, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 10.

minimal priority was given to the precise dating of antiquities. Classical scholars largely perceived artifacts as supplements to their reading and study of ancient literature, a means for visualizing what had already been described in the texts.<sup>54</sup>

*Connoisseurship* of ancient art, on the other hand, was based exclusively on the aesthetics of the works themselves. By separating the meaning of artifacts from their aesthetic value, Winkelmann, in the opinion of A. Potts, “sought to claim for the scholar-historian the prerogatives of the connoisseur and man of taste” through the bridging of patterns of historical development and the aesthetics of art.<sup>55</sup> His *History of the Art of Antiquity* introduced a historically-conscious paradigm in which the objects under study were situated within a definite chronological framework through which ancient art could be examined and synthesized. Examining mainly Roman copies of Greek originals (so much Greek work only survives through Roman copies), Winkelmann proposed a system of four stylistic phases for Greek art, with particular emphasis on sculpture: the “straight and hard” style of the Archaic, followed by the high style of the early classic period which included the “grand and square” qualities of Pheidias sculpture, succeeded by the “flowing beauty” of Praxiteles during the late classical period, and proceeding until the decline of artistic achievement with the rise of Rome to power when art became imitative and derivative of tradition. This approach follows a biological model, with the development of Greek art defined by periods of growth, maturity, and decay.<sup>56</sup> Above all else, Winkelmann’s belief that high Classical art was the utmost achievement in ideal

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<sup>54</sup> Potts, Albert M., *The World’s Eye* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982): 380.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 384.

<sup>56</sup> Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age*, 29.

beauty and absolute perfection significantly influenced how Graeco-Roman art was understood and shaped by the disciplines of the History of Art and Archaeology.

A significant development in British philhellenism occurred in May of 1801 when the seventh Earl of Elgin, Thomas Bruce, took advantage of his position as British ambassador to Constantinople to obtain a permit for the purpose of removing architectural sculptures from the Parthenon. These pieces were then purchased by the British Government in 1816 and were incorporated into the collection of the British Museum, where they remain today (most controversially). The display of the Elgin Marbles, enhanced by the frieze removed from the temple of Apollo at Bassai, further encouraged British interest in Greek culture.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, while Winckelmann's popularity with, and veneration by, the following generation's great philhellenics is beyond question, modern scholars have been more reluctant to accept the traditional notion that he is father of Classical archaeology. In fact, S. Marchand has insisted that Winckelmann's "vibrant literacy style," the uniqueness of his character and personal life, as well as his erotic descriptions of Greek sculpture, all contributed to his initial appeal to younger contemporaries. Moreover, his association of nature, genius, and freedom with the Greeks and the unnatural, the overspecialized, and the tyrannical with the modern world seemed to corroborate the idea that Greek culture and art exemplified all that is beautiful and liberated.<sup>58</sup> Noting that Winckelmann's *History* was not without its literary precedents, Marchand concludes that he "hardly

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<sup>57</sup> Gill W. J.. *Reception Hellenic Histories: The Cultural, Ideological and Political Issues of the Archaeology of Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 2006): 58.

<sup>58</sup> Marchand, S. L. *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996): 7-8.



merits the exalted title Goethe later lavished upon him: Columbus to the undiscovered continent of the Greeks he was not.”<sup>59</sup> Speaking with a similar conviction, Papadopoulos argues that Winckelmann’s role in the history and development of archaeology “certainly is over-inflated,” and he relegates the German scholar’s contribution to simply “the gentlemanly voyeurism of classical archaeology.”<sup>60</sup>

Papadopoulos’s notion of a gentlemanly voyeurism within the discipline of eighteenth-century archaeology is of consequence when contrasted with the work of Heinrich Schliemann in the latter half of the nineteenth century, for he was successful in disrupting the elitist discipline with his discoveries of prehistoric civilizations on both the Greek mainland and Turkey, through which an entirely new field of archaeological study was established.<sup>61</sup> C. Moorehead describes the self-made German businessman-turned-archaeologist as a romantic and adventurer in a world full of scholars and skeptics, “a dilettante in a field of professionals” whose “boastful, impatient, [and] provocative” character was guaranteed to infuriate the discipline—a far cry from the distinctive gentlemanly voyeurism initiated by Winckelmann a century prior.<sup>62</sup>

Most importantly, Schliemann was driven by the desire to authenticate through actual material remains the Troy of Priam and Hector. He had been infatuated with the Homeric epics since boyhood but it was only upon reaching his forties in 1863 that he retired from his profession, from which he gained his fortune supplying war materials to the Russian army during the Crimean War, in search for archaeological sites that could

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 105.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Moorehead 1996, 70.

authenticate the historicity of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>63</sup> He first traveled to Greece in the spring of 1868 with the intent of finding the palace of Odysseus on the island of Ithaca. To his dismay, he was only able to unearth cremation burials instead of the grand architectural relics he had initially sought. From Ithaca, Schliemann journeyed to the Turkish side of the Dardanelles (modern-day Turkey) in search of the lost city of Troy.<sup>64</sup>

Diplomat and fellow amateur archaeologist Frank Calvert, who had previously excavated the site of Hisarlik, convinced Schliemann that the ruins of Troy could be found in the area. Like Schliemann, Calvert was intent on pinpointing the natural setting of Homer's poems, and had earlier bought the northern part of the mound of Hisarlik with the hope that the British Museum would be interested in funding the excavations; yet when the Museum declined his proposition, Calvert found himself with a lack of funds for his preliminary campaigns.<sup>65</sup> A veritable opportunist with ample monetary resources, and convinced that Hisarlik contained the real ruins of Homer's Troy, Schliemann picked up where Calvert left off and conducted his own archaeological campaign in the beginning of 1870. So eager was Schliemann to dig, in fact, that he broke ground before gaining a permit, or *firman*, from the Turkish government and without the permission of either the authors or the landowners themselves (Schliemann was, however, able to *legally* excavate by October of 1871).

In the first season, as well as the start of the second season, the initial strata yielded the unsatisfactory discovery of mere remnants of a Hellenistic city, leaving

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<sup>63</sup> Fagan, B. M. *A Brief History of Archaeology: Classical Times to the Twenty-First Century* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005): 89.

<sup>64</sup> Muskett, "The Aegean World," 41-42.

<sup>65</sup> Dickinson, *Bronze Age Aegean*, 53.

Schliemann both disappointed and perplexed.<sup>66</sup> Yet the further his team dug, the more promising the finds became: the lower strata contained a multitude of bronze and copper artifacts, including brooches, knives, spearheads, and nails, along with terra-cotta pitchers containing human remains; and it was not only a question of whether the mound contained the relics of Troy but rather “which of the occupation levels of the site corresponded with the Homeric city,” and more specially, with Priam’s fabled citadel.

Over the course of the nearly twenty-year period of separate excavations, Schliemann employed a multitude of workers to dig a succession of trenches, each deeper than the last, until artifacts were found that could be associated with the objects described by Homer’s *Iliad* (Fig. 2.1). On the morning of May 31, 1873 Schliemann unearthed the crowning glory of his archaeological career, the long-awaited evidence of his childhood heroes: King Priam’s treasure (Fig. 2.2). This hoard of Early Bronze Age artifacts, stashed in a chest, included vessels, vases, and weapons of copper, bronze, and silver as well as nearly 9,000 gold jewelry, ornaments, and other precious goods.<sup>67</sup> Schliemann was confident that this was indeed the treasure described in Book 24 of the *Iliad*:

It is probable that some member of the family of King Priam hurriedly packed the Treasure into the chest and carried it off without having time to pull out the key; that when he reached the wall, however, the hand of an enemy or the fire overtook him, and he was obliged to abandoned the chest, which was immediately covered to a height of from 5 to 6 feet with the red ashes and the stones of the adjoining royal palace.<sup>68</sup>

To Schliemann, Priam’s Treasure was a crucial discovery: it proved that the Bronze Age site was the historical setting of the Trojan War. The treasure, as D. F.

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<sup>66</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>68</sup> Schliemann H. *Troy and its Remains: A Narrative of Researches and Discoveries Made on the Site of Ilium, and in the Trojan Plain* (London: J. Murray, 1875): 333.

Easton states, also offered “[...] vindication of his [Schliemann’s] first three years of excavation and one in the eye for the academic establishment, especially in Berlin.”<sup>69</sup> Yet Schliemann’s interpretation of these artifacts has been severely criticized by scholars over the past few decades. C. Gere has dedicated an entire chapter to the archaeological misdeeds of Schliemann in her book *Knossos & the Prophets of Modernism*. Gere censures this “self-mythologizing” man for his “prophetic grandiosity” while condemning his interpretation of Priam’s Treasure as “a florid piece of Homeric archaeological fantasy.”<sup>70</sup>

Easton also admits that the separation of fact from interpretation “is a recurrent problem in Schliemann. The burnt citadel of Troy II was Troy; the gate was the Scaean Gate; the building inside the gate was Priam’s palace, and the treasure was Priam’s Treasure.”<sup>71</sup> There are certainly other facets of Schliemann’s methodologies and practices which extend beyond his excavations at Troy and throughout his time at Mycenae and Tiryns. These have (and with good reason) been called into question, but they are beyond the scope of this paper’s investigation. What needs to be stressed, however, is the great extent to which Schliemann influenced his discipline and, by consequence, Evans. By establishing the very *existence* of prehistoric Aegean civilization, he set the precedent for a new school of archaeology that had the potential not only to substantiate the reality of mythical locations but also the existence of a cultural history that was just as impressive as that of Classical Greece.<sup>72</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that this opportunistic and equally sentimental thrill-seeker sent shockwaves through a field of study that was, up to that

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<sup>69</sup> Easton D. *The Quest for Troy* (London: Orion Publishing Co, 1998): 336.

<sup>70</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 18, 23.

<sup>71</sup> Easton, *Quest for Troy*, 336.

<sup>72</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 17.

point, confined to a gentlemanly realm where archaeological work was considered supplementary to academia.

### Evans and the Site of Knossos

Evans came onto the archaeological scene shortly after Schliemann's exciting discoveries. In 1893, he bought a seal stone, engraved with mysterious symbols and scenes featuring human figures, at a flea market in Athens and was certain he had discovered the existence of a Mycenaean script, an early form of Greek writing. The following year, he turned over his duties as keeper of the Ashmolean Museum to an assistant to pursue further clues on the island of Crete, as the source of the unknown script was suggested in Arthur Milchhöfer's 1883 *The Beginning of Art* to be found on the island. Upon his arrival, Evans purchased an additional forty-three seal stones, plus a gold signet ring said to have been discovered near the site of Knossos.<sup>73</sup>

Evans visited the site—known as *Tou Tselve he Kephala, Ta Pitharia*, or simply Kephala Hill—on 19 March 1894. The palace had previously been excavated over the course of three months from December 1878 to the end of February 1879 by Minos Kalokairinos (S. Hood and W. Taylor surmise that Kalokairinos was possibly inspired by Schliemann's discoveries at Troy and Mycenae in 1876 to begin his own search for the legendary Labyrinth of Knossos). Kalokairinos's main finds were twelve intact storage jars, or *pithoi*, from the West Wing of the palace, several of which were subsequently shipped off to museums in London, Paris, Rome, and Athens.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 94.

<sup>74</sup> Hood, S. and Taylor, W. "The Bronze Age Palace at Knossos: Plan and Sections," *The British School at Athens: Supplementary Volumes* 13 (1981): 1.

Only a few weeks after Kalokairinos's excavations ended, Thomas B. Sandwith, the British Consul of Crete, attempted to initiate a British excavation in a series of letters to Charles T. Newton, Keeper of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, in the spring of 1879.<sup>75</sup> In 1881, another potential excavator had his eye set on Knossos: the American photographer of archaeological sites, William J. Stillman, who reported to the newly formed Archaeological Institute of America that the remains on top of the mound could possibly be those of the legendary Labyrinth of King Minos.<sup>76</sup> Schliemann himself inquired about obtaining permission to excavate Knossos, writing to Photiadas Pasha, the Turkish Governor-General of Crete, in 1883, but he was ultimately unsuccessful due to the "exorbitant price" demanded by the owner of the land and hesitance on the part of the influential body of Greek opinion on Crete who were anxious to prevent any excavations while Crete remained under Turkish rule.<sup>77</sup> Evans, then, was certainly not the first archaeologist to express an interest in the site of Knossos, but it was not until 1900, a year prior to the Cretan liberation from the Ottoman Empire, that Evans was able to purchase the land. His first excavation season officially began on March 23 at the west part of the south front of the palace.<sup>78</sup>

Gere's assessment that Schliemann's story provides the "essential background" to Evans's work at Knossos is true, but only to a certain extent.<sup>79</sup> Before Evans, Aegean prehistoric archaeology centered on the reconstruction of the proto-history of Greece and

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<sup>75</sup> Hood, S. "An Early British Interest in Knossos" *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 82 (1987): 85.

<sup>76</sup> Papadopoulos, "Inventing the Minoans," 96.

<sup>77</sup> Hood and Taylor, "British Interest in Knossos," 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 17.

its interconnection with the traditional Homeric epics with the archaeological sites as primary evidence of this mythic-historical relationship.<sup>80</sup> This was the criterion clearly laid out by Schliemann. To quote N. Marinatos, Evans “liberated prehistoric Cretan archaeology from the tyranny of Greek myth” through his refinement of how material evidence was evaluated and interpreted. By “steer[ing] scholarship away from Homer, gently directing it to the broader Mediterranean world,” Evans’s work marks a clear turning point in the discipline.<sup>81</sup> Papadopoulos articulates this Schliemann-Evans dichotomy effectively:

[...] whereas Schliemann’s discoveries forcefully showed that ancient mythology and epic poetry—the ‘word’—might be connected with historical events and actual places—the ‘dirt’—Evans’s achievement was that his excavations took him back before Schliemann’s protohistoric, Homeric Greece. In so doing, Evans ventured into a realm of interpretation based [...] purely on material and on his own imagination.<sup>82</sup>

A consideration of the backdrop of Aegean Bronze Age studies is thus necessary to contextualize Evans’s career and achievements fully. For although Schliemann and Evans were by no means of the same professional and moral character, the former undeniably paved a path for Evans to proceed with his inquiry concerning a prehistoric Greek civilization. With the history of the archaeological discipline in mind, the following chapters will examine the particular methodologies and ideas popular in the late-nineteenth century that could have potentially shaped Evans’s vision of Minoan civilization.

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<sup>80</sup> Marinatos, N. *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete: Creating the Vision of Knossos* (I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2015): 10.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>82</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 105.

## THEORIES OF CULTURAL EVOLUTIONISM AND PREHISTORIC MATRIARCHY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The scholarly consensus in the modern field of Bronze Age studies is that Arthur Evans's perception of Minoan civilization and its religion was determined not by the close examination of Cretan artifacts and features but rather by the sentiments and theories held by his contemporaries (see Eller 2012; Gere 2009; Papadopoulos 2005; Lapatin 2001; Marinatos 1993). Thus, to understand Evans's initial inferences about Minoan religion, we must first consider the degree to which he was influenced by the popular theoretical frameworks within the relatively new disciplines of anthropology and archaeology. This chapter seeks to determine the extent to which popular theories concerning human and religious development, cultural evolutionism, and animism were reflected in Evans's early career, and how these ideas may (or may not) have materialized in his later work at Knossos. It will be argued that Evans's conception of Minoan religion, and specifically his belief in a Great Mother Goddess, had been established well before the remains of the faience figurines were exhumed in 1903. As such, these artifacts were interpreted not on account of the material evidence but rather as physical confirmation of Evans's predetermined conclusions.

### Theories of Development, Evolutionism, and Animism

First, it is important to consider broader scholarly tradition within which Evans was working. The overarching theoretical cornerstone of Victorian anthropology and archaeology was a form of evolutionism: "the idea that human history was essentially the



story of progress from simple, primitive beginnings to an advanced present, with the promise of a Utopian future beyond.”<sup>83</sup> As laid out by J. MacEnroe, evolutionist

archaeology consisted of five general themes:

1. A belief in the psychic unity of mankind.
2. The assumption of unilinear process in universal stages. Progressive evolution involved not only matters of technology, but also intelligence, emotional life, and mortality.
3. The use of ‘survivals’ to predict earlier stages of development. ‘Survivals’ are cultural traits that appear out of place in a society and are explained as having their origin in more ‘primitive’ stage of the society.
4. The ‘time-machine’ approach: the belief that ‘primitive societies’ could be studied as representing stages of our own past. Ethnology and archaeology were linked.
5. The use of numerous, global comparisons as a means of explanation and proof.<sup>84</sup>

In short, evolutionist theory stressed the classification of societies in terms of technological progress and increasing complexity. The publication of archaeologist and naturalist John Lubbock’s *The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man* (1870) introduced the development theory of human prehistory to British academia. As defined by L. Ratnapalan, the development theory states “that human societies everywhere originate in a period of savagery (distinguished by activities of hunting and gathering), before progressing through a stage of barbarism (nomadism and pastoralism, then agriculture), and culminating in the kind of industrial civilisation that Lubbock would have recognized as his own.”<sup>85</sup>

Lubbock’s model was corroborated only a year after *The Origin of Civilization* was published, when natural historian Charles Darwin proposed a similar scheme of

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<sup>83</sup> MacEnroe, “Evans and Edwardian Archaeology,” 3-4.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>85</sup> Ratnapalan, L. “E. B. Tylor and the Problem of Primitive Culture,” *History and Anthropology* 19, 2008: 132.

gradual evolution in his *Descent of Man*. He argued that humans do *not* possess a privileged position but rather are subject to the same evolutionary mechanisms that affect the rest of the natural world<sup>86</sup>:

The homological structure, embryological development, and rudimentary organs of a species remains to be considered, whether it be man or any other animal, to which our attention may be directed but these great classes of facts afford, as it appears to me, ample and conclusion evidence in favor of the principle of gradual evolution [...] The sole object of the work is to consider, firstly, whether man, like every other species, is descended from some pre-existing form; secondly, the manner of his development; and thirdly, the value of the differences between the so-called races of man.<sup>87</sup>

The search for human origins, as well as the evolutionary framework suggested by Lubbock and Darwin, quickly gained momentum inside British intellectual spheres by the late-nineteenth century, as evidenced by the two-volume work by the eminent anthropologist . While certainly not the first individual to propose a unified, progressional cultural development, Tylor was an indispensable figure in the dissemination of evolutionary and developmental ideas within his discipline.<sup>88</sup> His *Primitive Culture* concerned itself with the ways in which non-physical manifestations among different societies developed into more intricate entities.<sup>89</sup>

Like his contemporaries, Tylor believed in the essential psychic unity of mankind and made use of comparisons and analogies of societies across time and space as evidence of a single human origin.<sup>90</sup> *Primitive Culture* also marked Tylor's first use of

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<sup>86</sup> Sera-Shriar E.. "Synthesizing the Discipline: Charles Darwin, Edward Burnett Tylor and Developmental Anthropology in the Early 1870s. *The Making of British Anthropology, 1813-1871* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018): 158.

<sup>87</sup> Darwin, Charles, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1874): 2.

<sup>88</sup> Sera-Shriar, "Synthesizing the Discipline," 154.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 163.

<sup>90</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 15.

his theory of “survivals,” a term that was unapologetically evolutionist, which held that human cultures exhibit “processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.”<sup>91</sup> Tylor’s theory of survivals concluded that the animistic elements of the primitive past continued to take part in the beliefs of contemporary societies, thereby situating primitive cultures within the concerns of the present day.<sup>92</sup>

Evolutionist theory proved to be a mainstay of mid-Victorian anthropological sentiment. Yet, by the end of the century, the younger generation of anthropologists and archaeologists began to abandon the idea of unilinear evolution. Cultural development was now understood not as the result of a natural law of progress but rather as the result of invasion, migration, and diffusion (epitomized in the theory of diffusionism). Ethnicity succeeded evolution and progress as the foundation of understanding cultures, and the geological model of development that had once served as the foundation for evolutionism was replaced by a historical model that emphasized the interaction among specific cultural groups of people.<sup>93</sup> Significantly, it was at this critical transition point in the discipline that Evans—who had been brought up and educated in the midst of Victorian scholarly tradition—wrote his preliminary observations on Bronze Age Aegean religion in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* and subsequently initiated a series of major archaeological campaigns at Knossos.

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<sup>91</sup> Tylor E. B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (London, 1871): 15.

<sup>92</sup> Ratnapalan, “E. B. Tylor and the Problem of Primitive Culture,” 132.

<sup>93</sup> McEnroe, “Evans and Edwardian Archaeology,” 5-6.

### The Theory of Matriarchal Prehistory

The widely accepted notion that human development was a staged evolutionary process in which society moved “from an unsavory, irreligious promiscuity toward the twin beacons of monogamy and monotheism that Christian European culture” coincided with nineteenth-century anthropologists’ growing interest in sex and gender roles and the possibility of an ancient pre-patriarchal society.<sup>94</sup> The source of this inquiry can be linked to the concern that the Victorian institution of the patriarchal family was currently subject to challenge even as patriarchal custom was being reinforced further in civil law.<sup>95</sup> As women increasingly sought emancipation from the limited sphere of domesticity for the sake of higher education, better-paid professions, property rights, and the right to vote, the theory of matriarchal prehistory—reliant on evolutionist anthropology—ultimately gave credence to the normative nature of patriarchy as the highest and uppermost form of society.<sup>96</sup> As a result, evolutionist anthropology and the new discipline of archaeology seemed to validate the current gender norms of Western culture while affirming the predetermined notion that male dominance was an *improvement* in human social relations. C. Eller, having written extensively on this theory, asserts that the nineteenth-century “myth of matriarchal prehistory” is contingent on several assumptions:

[...] that women held greater power and place in times past than they do today; that male dominance, at least in the form we’ve known it in the past couple of millennia, is a comparatively new invention; that the gender of the deities a culture worships is indicative of which human sex it values more; and that we

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<sup>94</sup> Eller, Cynthia, “Sons of the Mother: Victorian Anthropologists and the Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory,” *Gender & History* 18, no. 22, 2006: 286.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>96</sup> Ruether: R. R. *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History* (London: University of California Press, 2005): 250-251.

know stand at an important world historical turning point where gender relations are concerned.<sup>97</sup>

Men, particularly educated European men who could be considered “armchair anthropologists,” made up the principal proponents of the theory of a universal matriarchal stage of cultural evolution, with Swiss jurist Johann Jakob Bachofen effectively “discovering” the gynocentric nature of prehistoric societies. Bachofen’s *Das Mutterrecht (Mother Right)*, published in 1861, marked the first text to suggest that the development of all human cultures was characterized by a universal matriarchal phase which ultimately served as a precursor to the more advanced phase of patriarchy, relying heavily on the ancient myths and legends of Greece and Rome, which he considered a direct reflection of the social evolution of society.<sup>98</sup> In this work, Bachofen utilizes the evolutionist principle of dividing ancient society into five distinct stages in time but differs from his contemporaries in that this progression is not irreversible nor automatic and continually threatened by the prospect of regression.

Bachofen’s three-stage system is as follows: the oldest and most primitive stage of human culture, the Hetaeric stage (from the Greek *hetaera*, or courtesan), was characterized by male promiscuity, in which all men had sexual access to all women. This stage was related to a pre-agricultural economy.<sup>99</sup> By contrast, the second stage was characterized by the idea of “mother love” as well as the rule of women (*Gynaikokratie*) in which the transmission of status, property, and lineage is traced through the mother, or matrilineally. Designated as Demetrian matriarchy, this stage was closely associated with

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<sup>97</sup> Eller, C. *Gentlemen and Amazons: the Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, 1861-1900* (London: University of California Press, 2015): 5

<sup>98</sup> Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 255.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 255.

the development of agriculture.<sup>100</sup> This so-called Demetrian matriarchy witnessed the institution of monogamous unions (marriage) following female revolt against the excessive male promiscuity of the Hetaeric stage. In the brief period of Amazonism, women carried gynecocracy too far by violently separating from men entirely but, because women are both incapable of true independence and weak in the face of the seductive power of men, this was quickly overthrown by men, represented by the erotic Dionysus. This culminated in the restoration of relations and the establishment of true equality between the sexes.<sup>101</sup> The final stage—the Apollonian age—saw the overthrow of matriarchy by a patriarchal revolution in which universal legal principles and abstract thought triumphed over the bodily realities championed by maternal thinking. Cultural progress is thereby achieved through the spirituality of Apollonian paternity which results in the formation of imperialism and industry.<sup>102</sup>

Bachofen's model shares the Victorian notion of the cyclical nature of history in which there is an inherent tendency towards aging, decadence, and the return from the social to the natural state of things.<sup>103</sup> This schema also stresses the fundamental dichotomy of the two basic social relationships: paternity and maternity. Where maternity is grounded in what is material and real, paternity is spiritual and fictive; the evolution of cultural development thus unfolds away from the material realm of the feminine toward the spiritual realm of the masculine.<sup>104</sup> To Bachofen, this progression liberated the human

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<sup>100</sup> Eller, C. "Two Knights and a Goddess: Sir Arthur Evans, Sir James George Frazer, and the Invention of Minoan Religion," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 25 (2011): 43.

<sup>101</sup> Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 255.

<sup>102</sup> Eller, *Gentleman and Amazons*, 46.

<sup>103</sup> Stagl J. "Notes on Johann Jakob Bachofen's *Mother Right* and Its Consequences," *Phil. Soc. Sci* 19 (1989): 185.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

race from earthbound materiality as characterized by the feminine nature of agriculture and brought it to a higher spiritual plane bolstered by the androcracy's innate spirituality through which civilization could flourish.<sup>105</sup>

Although the thesis of *Das Mutterrecht* was well received at the time of its publication, the book itself drew little excitement in scholarly circles.<sup>106</sup> Yet, if the theory of matriarchal prehistory did not find much notoriety in Bachofen's work, it certainly captured the discipline's interest in British attorney-turned-anthropologist John Ferguson McLennan's *Primitive Marriage* (1865), in which he "devised an intricate and persuasive (to many) version of the thesis of matriarchal prehistory."<sup>107</sup> McLennan was a bonafide cultural evolutionist whose premises were founded on a type of human universalism in which all peoples of all cultures progressed through the same stages, whether slowly or quickly, with the later stages being superior not only technologically, but also in terms of morals. While McLennan had no knowledge of Bachofen's previous work, his theories concerning the roles of women in prehistory followed a similar line of reasoning: promiscuity, the most primitive human social structure, begins the evolutionary timeline followed by maternal kinship, marriage by capture, exogamy, and polyandry. This led to paternal kinship and finally to 'father right,' in which property and lineage transmitted through men—a progression portrayed by McLennan as the outcome of good common sense.<sup>108</sup> The rise of male dominance in society was unquestionably an improvement in the timeline of human history.

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<sup>105</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 71

<sup>106</sup> Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons*, 60.

<sup>107</sup> Eller, "Sons of the Mother," 288.

<sup>108</sup> Eller, *Gentleman and Amazons*, 78-82.

McLennan's theories were championed by Scottish philologist William Robertson Smith who succeeded in extending the reach of his predecessor's theories within an academic environment at Cambridge University and applying them to his own delineation of the survival of a matrilineal family system among the Arabs. However, Smith's contributions to matriarchal theory were ultimately eclipsed by his intellectual protégé, Sir James George Frazer.<sup>109</sup> As a proponent of evolutionist theory, Frazer sought to trace primitive modes of thought that were universal to all mankind across different cultures in his magnum opus, *The Golden Bough*, in which he systematically classified and examined ancient and primitive religious conceptions over twelve volumes published from 1890 to 1922.<sup>110</sup> It should be stressed here that *The Golden Bough* was not only immensely popular throughout Europe over the course of its publication but also played a significant role in the transmission of matriarchal myth from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. The work of many Classicists and anthropologists, namely that of Jane Ellen Harrison (who will be discussed in the following chapter), lifted from the major themes of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.<sup>111</sup>

At the epicenter of this massive work are the archetypes of the Great Mother Goddess and her consort-son, the Dying God—a pairing which Frazer argues underlies the most primeval religious conceptions.<sup>112</sup> In this configuration, the male deity—both son *and* lover of the Great Mother Goddess—is incarnated in a priest-king who reigns for a year before ultimately being killed, maimed, or castrated.<sup>113</sup> The mythical duo is

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 92-96.

<sup>110</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 71.

<sup>111</sup> Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons*, 96.

<sup>112</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 124.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 124.



represented across cultures by Ishtar and Tammuz in Mesopotamia, Isis and Osiris in Egypt, Kybele and Attis in Anatolia, Gouri/Isnai and Iswara in India, Astarte/Aphrodite and Adonis in Cyprus and Greece, Selene and Endymion, and Mary and Jesus.<sup>114</sup> The assumed endurance of these universal religious archetypes undoubtedly recall the evolutionist theory of “survivals” as popularized by Tylor years prior.

The nature of female social structures within the evolution of human culture, and the degree to which women had superior authority in society, remained at the forefront of late nineteenth century anthropological debate with contributions from Lubbock, who contended that matriarchal prehistory involved an evolutionary process brought about by social development. Even Tylor, the most eminent scholar of his discipline at the time, briefly supported the idea of ‘mother right’ in his 1889 study. By the end of the century his views on prehistoric matriarchy became more skeptical, but his initial acceptance of this thesis, as expressed by Eller, “left an indelible mark on the discipline of anthropology that could never truly be washed away, no matter how much later anthropologists may have desired to do so.”<sup>115</sup>

### Prehistoric Goddess Figurines

A variety of female figurines from the Upper Paleolithic (c. 26,000-10,000 years ago) were discovered in Europe and the Levant over the course of the Victorian period, and they were used by archaeologists and anthropologists as further evidence of the universal worship of a single prehistoric Mother Goddess. Commonly referred to as ‘Venus’ or ‘Mother Goddess’ figurines, these artifacts are remarkably uniform in style

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<sup>114</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 72.

<sup>115</sup> Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons*, 97.

and characterized by markedly large breasts, buttocks, bellies, and thighs, with other parts of the body, such as arms, feet, and facial features imprecisely rendered or absent altogether, and generally appear naked apart from the occasional addition of ornamental girdles or chest bands. The Venus of Dolní Věstonice and the Venus of Willendorf are two notable figures in this group (Fig. 3.1 and 3.2).<sup>116</sup> The sexual and fecund characteristics of the ‘Venus figurines,’ particularly their large, sagging breasts and pubic triangles, were emphasized by writers and viewed as archetypal fertility figures that “represent the desire for the successful births that any culture needs to maintain and increase its population” and projected the “sheltering, protecting, and nurturing character of the prehistoric Mother Goddess.”<sup>117</sup>

#### Was Evans a Visionary?

From this brief survey of the literature published over the course of the nineteenth century regarding matriarchal theory, it becomes evident that the dominant narrators and consumers of matriarchal prehistory and its ties to cultural evolutionism were *male* anthropologists. C. Eller has credited the popularity of this theoretical framework with the men of the discipline to the prevailing moral sentiments of the period in which it thrived: “For British anthropologists, prehistoric women existed almost wholly within the confines of sex, marriage, and family: the same places that Victorian men encountered the only women they recognized as truly women.”<sup>118</sup> In other words, the matriarchal thesis was contingent on Victorian ideas of marriage and gender relations. The end of the

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<sup>116</sup> Ehrenberg M. *Women in Prehistory* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989): 66-67.

<sup>117</sup> Lapatin, K. “Snake Goddesses, Fake Goddesses,” *Archaeology* 1 (2001): 69.

<sup>118</sup> Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons*, 68.

century, however, marked a significant shift in the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology as matriarchal myth, similar to the broader framework of evolutionism, found itself outmoded and increasingly challenged by the following generation of scholars, with Evans once again standing at the the center.

The exact degree to which Evans's early work was determined by the Victorian notion of human cultural development has remained a point of contention within the field. Harlan has argued that Evans's ideas of cult practices stemmed directly from the evolutionary paradigms popularized by Lubbock and Tylor. They can also be dated back to his unpublished series of lectures in 1885 on the development of megalithic monuments, where he outlined the concept of religious thought from the Paleolithic to the Bronze Age. Moreover, his theoretical approach in "Tree and Pillar Cult" illustrates his preconceived notions of unilinear evolutionary development. Harlan concludes that "Contrary to the views of some, Evans was not simply a late-Victorian visionary, but rather was applying the theory and methodology of nineteenth century British prehistory to interpreting his newly discovered Minoans."<sup>119</sup>

Similarly, I. Schoep concurs with Harlan in her assessment that "Evans was heavily influenced not only by the cultural and intellectual currents of the times in which he lived but also by his own personal experiences and agenda," and that his initial conclusions live on in the popular literature and in mainstream academic discourse.<sup>120</sup>

Marinatos, however, opposes the idea that Evans was fully driven by the sentiments of

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<sup>119</sup> Harlan D. "The Cult of the Dead, Fetishism, and the Genesis of an Idea: Megalithic Monuments and the Tree and Pillar Cult of Arthur J. Evans," *European Journal of Archaeology* 14 (2011): 229.

<sup>120</sup> Schoep, I. "Building the Labyrinth: Arthur Evans and the Construction of Minoan Civilization," *American Journal of Archaeology* 122 (2018): 5.

previous scholarship. While she acknowledges that Evans had indeed inherited a certain “mental kit” from Tylor which he then applied to his studies of Minoan religion, she negates the idea that Evans was a proponent of the “simplistic evolutionist idea that progress is steady and inevitable over time and that later cultures are *always* more advanced than earlier ones.” Rather, Evans believed in the possibility of cultural *regression* as indicated by his assertion that Minoan culture was not situated within the “age of ignorance” but was as (or perhaps even more so) advanced as Classical Athens despite preceding the latter by a thousand years.<sup>121</sup> Despite these conflicting assessments, some definite inferences can be made. First, Evans undeniably believed that the cult of the dead as well as the anthropomorphic gods of Minoan Crete signified the cultural advancement of Bronze Age Aegean religion. Secondly, Evans considered the Minoan religion to be sophisticated (as opposed to ‘primitive’), as indicated by his analogy to Hebrew worship. Thirdly, Evans believed in the unity of mankind—Evans indisputably relayed the sentiments of Tylor in his own assessments of Minoan religion, and therefore these notions cannot be credited to him alone.

In spite of that, Evans was ambitious in the sense that his method of examining material and iconographic evidence was far sounder and more comprehensive than that of Schliemann. In this way, he succeeded in shifting the conversation about Aegean prehistory away from the mytho-historical realm, as championed by Schliemann, towards a more refined study that neither projected Greek history onto prehistory nor merged proto-history with the narrative tradition laid out by the Homeric epics. On the other hand, the widely accepted theory of cultural evolutionism provided Evans with a firm

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<sup>121</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 11.

methodological framework through which the religious and cultural eminence of Minoan society could be reasoned: that the Minoans ushered in an advanced religious phase characterized by anthropomorphic gods and animistic elements in trees, pillars, and rocks.

## A PARADIGM SHIFT FROM ANICONIC WORSHIP TO THE MOTHER GODDESS

Evans's scholarship on the religious and cultural aspects of the Bronze Age Aegean is remarkable for its severance from previous prehistoric archaeological tradition as inaugurated by Schliemann. By shifting the conversation away from the possible Homeric ties of prehistoric Greek civilization, Evans was able to incorporate both pre-established as well as more recently developed anthropological paradigms into his evaluations of the material evidence. His 1901 publication for *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, "Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and Its Mediterranean Relations," constitutes a good starting point for a discussion about his prolific writings on Minoan Crete, for it summarizes his thoughts on Minoan religion as he was processing the results of the first season at Knossos.<sup>122</sup>

It is important to note that Evans's views on Minoan religion were neither fixed nor resolute. In fact, many of his initial interpretations revised or dropped entirely as new material evidence from Knossos was unearthed over the nearly thirty-year period in which he excavated the site. Since the progression of Evans's scholarship is invaluable to our discussion of his later interpretations of the finds at Knossos, specifically HM 63 and HM 65, this chapter will briefly examine the methodological processes laid out in "Tree and Pillar Cult." The main objective of this chapter, however, is to determine *why* Evans opted to revise his initial theses and advocate instead for the existence of a monotheistic Minoan society that worshipped a single Great Mother Goddess with many manifestations (along with her Dying Consort-Son) rather than the existence of a mainly

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<sup>122</sup> Harlan, "The Cult of the Dead," 214.

aniconic religion that worshipped a ‘proto-Zeus’ Warrior God and his lesser female consort which he had previously subscribed to in “Tree and Pillar Cult.”

### Evans and Evolutionism

It must be recognized that by the time Evans set foot on Crete in 1894, he had already formed a particular conception about prehistoric societies based on the popular notion of cultural evolutionism advocated by the writings of his contemporaries. The inaugural lecture given by Evans in November of 1884 when he was appointed Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum demonstrates his fervent belief that all societies evolve like living organisms by progressing in a gradual manner:<sup>123</sup>

By coming fresh from the border-land of our civilization [*i.e.* his travels in the Balkans], I have had perhaps exceptional opportunities of bringing home to myself that great doctrine of Evolution which is the central truth of Archaeological as of all other Science.<sup>124</sup>

He would later adopt a three-age chronological system for Minoan Crete (Early, Middle, and Late), based on the evolutionist presumption that cultural development is universally successive and gradual and consisting of periods of growth, maturity, and decay.

While Evans was already heavily influenced by evolutionist theories long before his excavations at Knossos commenced, he did *not* come to Crete with a pre-established assumption that Minoan religion centered upon a Great Mother Goddess.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, it is unlikely that he projected his “most intimate sorrows and desires” onto the prehistoric

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<sup>123</sup> Hamilakis, Yannis. *Labyrinth Revisited: Rethinking ‘Minoan’ Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011): 5-6.

<sup>124</sup> Evans, Arthur J. 1884. *The Ashmolean Museum as a Home of Archaeology in Oxford* (Oxford: Parker): 28.

<sup>125</sup> Eller, “Two Knights and a Goddess,” 76.

past on account of his mother's untimely death when he was six years old, nor was the "lyrical intensity of his search for the Great Cretan Mother" prompted by "unresolved grief" on account of that personal event, as C. Gere has argued extensively.<sup>126</sup> Rather, Evans's full embrace of the Mother Goddess thesis arrived far after the initial unearthing of the material evidence and was only fully fleshed-out in *The Palace of Minos*, which he had begun to write in the 1910s.

From 1894, the beginning of his excavations at Knossos, to 1901 when he composed "Tree and Pillar Cult," Evans considered the representational imagery on rings, sealstones, and impressions from at the sites of Knossos and Mycenae to be evidence of aniconic worship of a Cretan or proto-Zeus figure in the form of trees and pillars. The Goddess was simply assumed to be the deity's consort, one half of a divine pair. Evans identified the male figure repeatedly depicted on these artifacts as the "warrior Sun God," or Cretan Zeus. For instance, a male figure holding a shield painted on the side of a sarcophagus from Milato, Crete that Evans unearthed in 1899 was described in his essay as the "Rayed Shield-Bearing God" (Fig. 4.1).<sup>127</sup> His extensive discussion in his essay about the pictorial similitude between the Minoan God and other male sky/war deities from Egypt and the Near East (with possible connections to the later Adonis, Ares, Apollo, and Dionysus) suggests that Evans's initial conceptualization of and fascination with Minoan religion rested on the idea of a primary male deity, *not* a female deity.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 15, 52.

<sup>127</sup> Evans, Arthur J. "The Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and Its Mediterranean Relations," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901): 174.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 120, 125.



Evans's earliest interpretations of the visual evidence at Knossos in "Tree and Pillar Cult" leaned heavily on the evolutionist theories of animism and the assumption of unilinear progress in universal stages as outlined by Tylor thirty years prior in *Primitive Culture*.<sup>129</sup> Evans concluded that the votive and sacrificial artifacts situated within sanctuaries on both mountain tops and caves throughout Crete were evidence of "a highly developed cult of departed Spirits," and he cites sanctuary remains on Mount Ida and Mount Dikta as evidence of the cult of a proto-Zeus divinity, the "Cretan Zeus," whose symbol, the Double Axe may have embodied the "presence" of the god (Fig. 4.2).<sup>130</sup> In the context of Tylor's theory, these animistic elements proved that the religion of the Minoans was based on a progressive development towards a higher theological system.

Along with asserting the animism of Minoan culture, Evans concluded that nature-worshipping was integral to Minoan spirituality. He supported this claim on account of the rendering of tree and pillar imagery on contemporaneous rings and seals. Moreover, he asserted that the gods were interchangeable with pillars or trees and were thus worshipped because the deities could enter into and dwell within the objects. He argues, "The idols remained aniconic, but the Gods themselves were naturally pictured to worshippers under a more or less human aspect."<sup>131</sup> Evans used the theory of animism in his interpretation a gold signet ring found near Knossos (acquired from a Candia-based antiquities dealer in 1894) that pictures a small, nude male god bearing a spear floating down from the sky to enter his tree and pillar sanctuary where a female figure greets his arrival (Fig. 4.3).<sup>132</sup> Evans notes that the cult objects of prehistoric Crete "almost

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<sup>129</sup> McEnroe, "Evans and Edwardian Archaeology," 5.

<sup>130</sup> Evans, "Tree and Pillar Cult," 99.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 123.

<sup>132</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 17.

exclusively consisted of sacred stones, pillars, and trees” and that the omnipresence of this “dual cult” suggests a definite early stage of religious evolution. It is at this point in his argument that he cites and quotes Tylor in his footnotes:

For the ideas underlying this widespread primitive cult I need only refer to Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 160 *seqq.* and p. 215 *seqq.* The spirit is generally forced to enter the stone or pillar by charms and incantations, and sometimes also passes into the body of the priest or worshipper. The ‘possession’ itself of the material object is only in its nature temporary. ‘When the spirit departs the ‘idol’ remains only a sacred object. When a deity is thus brought down into a tree it blends with the tree life.’<sup>133</sup>

Additionally, Evans draws comparisons between the Hebrew *Beth-el* (‘God’s house’) set up by Jacob and Minoan pillar worship and the sacred Minoan pillar. He thus comes to the conclusion that the Minoan ring displays “a scene of stone or ‘*baetyl*’ worship, also partly associated with the cult of trees,” where the sacred tree constituted the central part of the cult in the open-air sanctuary (see Fig. 4.4. for an etching of a *baetyl* offering table to altar).<sup>134</sup> This correlation between the manifestation of the Minoan/Mycenaean deity in stone and the Biblical narrative of Jacob’s stone and Joshua’s pillar underscores an evolutionary transition to a higher, more complex religious stage of development.<sup>135</sup> As D. Harlan deduces in her own examination of Evans’s interpretation of this ring, “Interpretation of the imagery and art historical analyses enabled Evans to extend his ideas in explanation of cult practice and to deduce a higher level of religious development.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, the coexistence of “realistic imagery side by side with the material objects of primitive cult” marks a discernible transition to

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<sup>133</sup> Evans, “Tree and Pillar Cult,” 105, 106.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 170-173.

<sup>135</sup> Harlan, “Cult of the Dead,” 222.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* 225

the more advanced religious stage of anthropomorphism.<sup>137</sup> What can be taken away from “Tree and Pillar Cult,” then, is Evans’s theory that the Minoan/Mycenaean cult of the dead indicates a certain evolutionary progression of prehistoric religion from the primitive to the complex realm on account of the highly sophisticated representations of the spiritual realm. Therefore, Minoan art appeared to substantiate Tylor’s theory of animism through the visual representation of gods entering pillars and trees and temporarily dwelling inside them.<sup>138</sup>

“Tree and Pillar Cult” concludes that the Minoans worshiped a “dual cult of two associated divinities,” both of whom had the ability to dwell within sacred trees, pillars, and rocks.<sup>139</sup> Having confirmed that Bronze Age Aegean religion centered around the aniconic worship of an anthropomorphic divine pair, Evans expands upon their relationship and the cult practices associated with their veneration. He argues that the cult of the divine pair is corroborated by the iconography on a gold signet ring from the Akropolis Treasure at Mycenae (Fig. 4.5). The scene depicts a large female—identified by Evans as the Goddess—sitting below her sacred tree who receives flowers and fruit from female worshippers. The young Warrior God, holding a shield and spear, descends from the sky which contains the supernatural elements of the sun and moon appearing simultaneously and a floating Double Axe; lion heads appear on the left side. In Evans’s interpretation, the ring illustrates both the cosmic realm as inhabited by the divine pair and their celestial symbols as well as the mortal realm in which the ecstatic ritual practices of the Minoans and Mycenaeans can be discerned. Evans was particularly

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<sup>137</sup> Evans, “Tree and Pillar Cult,” 124.

<sup>138</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 18.

<sup>139</sup> Evans, “Tree and Pillar Cult,” 169.

interested in the spiritual significance of the Double Axe which he believes to be “surely something more than a mere symbol.” The axe’s proximity to the Warrior God to the left leads Evans to believe that it is “one of the cult forms under which he was worshipped.”<sup>140</sup> Once again, it is evident that Cretan Zeus holds the primary position in the Minoan pantheon, not the goddess.

In sum, the inferences drawn from the material evidence discovered at Mycenae and from the first excavation season at Knossos in Evans’s “Tree and Pillar Cult” were influenced significantly by nineteenth-century anthropological principles of animism, shared human culture, and the universal roots of society. Evans’s primary interest lay in Cretan Zeus, the primary Minoan deity who was worshiped in the form of trees and pillars, rather than in the significance of the reoccurring Goddess figure, who was identified as the God’s consort.

### The Increasing Significance of the Goddess

Eller notes that by 1902, Evans was paying increasingly more attention to the female divinity depicted repeatedly alongside Cretan Zeus on account of several new finds. These included a group of small terra-cotta pillars topped by doves found in a ritual context as well as a cylindrical female figure with a dove resting on her head. Naturally in his reports, he spoke of a “cult of the Dove Goddess,” and he referred repeatedly to a “divine pair.”<sup>141</sup> Evans also admitted that the Double Axe is sometimes found with images of the goddesses as well as the god and thus could symbolically apply to both. By

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>141</sup> Eller, “Two Knights and a Goddess,” 81.

1903, he noted that *both* divinities could be identified with pillars as well as with the Double Axe.<sup>142</sup> Overall, according to Eller, the 1903 excavation report “gives an inconsistent picture of Minoan deities.”<sup>143</sup> For instance, sometimes the God is depicted as the dominant figure while in other cases the pair are equal and, for the first time, Evans suggests the possible preeminence of the Goddess in his analysis of two seal stones depicting a male and female with lions; the male is identified as Cretan Zeus, but, significantly, he is referred to as the “satellite” of the Goddess, identified as Rhea, thus making the God her son (Fig. 4.6).<sup>144</sup>

Evidently, Evans was not entirely satisfied with his original thesis of the divine pair from “Tree and Pillar Cult,” which led him to heavily revise his paradigm following World War I over the course of his many publications of *The Palace of Minos* beginning in the 1910s.<sup>145</sup> Several distinct modifications stand out:

1. The Goddess was promoted from her secondary role as consort to the Warrior God to the principal deity of the Minoans, the ‘Mother Goddess,’ while her male counterpart was demoted from his title of ‘Cretan Zeus’ to her son Minos, a ‘priest-king’ whose name was used dynastically and who was born to rule and die only to be replaced by another version of himself. In *The Palace of Minos*, Vol. 1, Evans states that Minos “is of divine parentage and himself the progenitor of divine beings. Son of Zeus by Europa herself,

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<sup>142</sup> Evans, Arthur J. “The Palace at Knossos: Provisional Report of Excavations of the Year 1902,” *Annual of the British School at Athens* 8 (1901-1902): 101-102; Evans, Arthur J. “The Palace at Knossos: Provisional Report for the Year 1903.” *Annual of the British School at Athens* 9 (1902-1903): 36.

<sup>143</sup> Eller, “Two Knights and a Goddess,” 82.

<sup>144</sup> Evans, *Provisional Report 1903*, 81.

<sup>145</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 58.

perhaps, an Earth-Goddess, wedded to Pasiphaê, ‘the all-illuminating,’ the father of Ariadnê ‘the Most Holy’—Minos, in the last two relationships at least, was coupled with alternative forms of the Mother Goddess of pre-Hellenic Crete.”<sup>146</sup>

2. The Goddess, now the principal deity of a monotheistic religion, was identified as the mother of all living things. Evans reiterated this adjustment in a lecture given at Cambridge University in 1931: “We are in the presence of a largely Monotheistic Cult, in which the female form of divinity held the supreme place.”<sup>147</sup>
3. The Goddess was a unitary deity with many manifestations and as such she embodied all aspects of the cosmos including the sky, earth, sea, underworld, and day and night; her duality is represented by the visual motifs of day and night and the sun and moon accounted for the perfect symmetry of divine symbols including the Double Axe, Horns of Consecration, the incurved altar, the split rosette, and the figure-eight shield.<sup>148</sup> This view had been previously mentioned in the third volume of *The Palace of Minos*, in which Evans declared: “Clearly the Goddess was supreme, whether we are to regard her as substantially one being of varied aspects, celestial, terrestrial, or infernal, or partly differentiated divine entities. As a working hypothesis, the former view has been here preferred.”<sup>149</sup> The Goddess’s singularity is testified to

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<sup>146</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Evans *PM 3*, 41

<sup>148</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 59.

<sup>149</sup> Evans, *PM 3*, 457.

“distinctive symbols like the Double Axe,” a statement that negated his previous interpretation of the Double Axe as a cult symbol of the Dying God.<sup>150</sup>

Evans amended many of his earlier identifications of the Divine Pair to suit the idea of a monotheistic Minoan society that worshipped a unitary Great Goddess; such was the case for the reading of an electrum signet ring from a tomb of the Lower Town of Mycenae (Fig. 4.7). In “Tree and Pillar Cult” Evans identified the two figures, a large seated female and a smaller standing male, as the divine conjugal couple on account of their mutual gesture, a pointed figure, which he believed to convey “the idea of plighted troth.”<sup>151</sup> Yet thirty years later, Evans revised his interpretation of the scene to corroborate his new thesis, arguing that the gesture indicates “rather the relationship of a son to to a mother rather than of a husband to a wife or mistress.”<sup>152</sup> The Goddess’s large size also indicated that she held primary authority.

In another instance, Evans updated his interpretation of a ring impression famously known as the “Mother of the Mountain” which had been discovered in the second excavation season at Knossos years later in *The Palace of Minos*, Vol. 2, Pt. 2.. The image depicts a female figure in a flounced skirt, holding a spear atop a mountain flanked by two lions, and a smaller male figure dressed in a kilt and appearing to salute the female figure; a structure of horns appears behind the female (Fig. 4.8). In 1901, Evans identified the female figure as a goddess, comparable to the Anatolian Kybele, and the male figure as a proto-Zeus sky god, an assessment in line with his sentiments from

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<sup>150</sup> Evans *PM* 2, 277.

<sup>151</sup> Evans, “Tree and Pillar Cult,” 176

<sup>152</sup> Evans, *PM* 3, 464.

“Tree and Pillar Cult.”<sup>153</sup> Later in *The Palace of Minos*, however, Evans calls this goddess “Minoan Rhea” and asserts that she “is clearly the Minoan Mother Goddess.” The peak that she stands on represents the sacred Mt. Juktas, and the structure behind her, adorned with the “Sacral Horns,” represents her pillar sanctuary.<sup>154</sup> This interpretation better suited his new thesis of a single Great Mother Goddess associated with different attributes depending on her manifestation and surroundings. In his thinking, Evans believed the Minoan Goddess could be identified as the “‘Mountain Goddess,’ ‘Snake Goddess,’ ‘Dove Goddess,’ ‘Earth Goddess,’ ‘Goddess of the Caves,’ ‘Goddess of the Double Axes,’ ‘Goddess of the Sports’” and the ‘Mother Goddess.’”<sup>155</sup>

#### Shifting from the Divine Pair to the Mother Goddess and Her Divine Son

For what reasons did Evans adjust his earlier thesis? And how did he come to view the female deity, previously a Minoan Kybele, as a unitary Mother Goddess with multiple manifestations? It has already been argued that Evans’s methodological framework for interpreting Minoan religion, which rested on the idea that Minoan culture was sophisticated and culturally advanced, had its roots in the evolutionist paradigms of Lubbock and Tylor. Lapatin takes this supposition one step further by suggesting that not only was Evans aware of the theory of matriarchal prehistory, but he also propagated these ideas in his conclusion that the imagery depicted on Minoan artifacts corresponded to a Goddess-centered religion.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Marinatos 2015: 27.

<sup>154</sup> Evans, *PM* 2, 808.

<sup>155</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 74.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 70-72.



Eller is of a similar mindset. Noting that Evans's conceptualization of a preeminent Minoan Mother Goddess and her Consort-Son is "textbook Frazer," she argues that "there can be no doubt that by the time Evans began writing his tome, he was quite determinedly making Minoan religion an exemplum of Frazer's theory about the Mother Goddess and the rising and dying God, her son."<sup>157</sup> That Frazer is rarely cited in any of Evans's writings is not alarming, because he was "referring to things people *knew*, to scientific matters Frazer had proven, not to theories Frazer has *proposed*, and thus he felt no need to cite Frazer when describing Minoan worship of a Great Mother Goddess and her son/consort."<sup>158</sup> Again, it must be stressed that Frazer's *Golden Bough* was lauded by both general and academic audiences alike around the time that Evans was conducting his research and excavations at Knossos, so it is natural to presume that Evans was familiar with the Mother Goddess and her Resurgent Son trope propagated in Frazer's writing.

However, Marinatos disagrees with Lapatin and Eller on the matter of Frazer's influence on Evans, arguing that his interpretations of ecstatic rites "seem very tame and utterly devoid of the violent and dramatic content that made *The Golden Bough* a bestseller in the interwar period"; where Frazer describes a violent goddess, Evans's Minoan goddess is neither violent or sexually wanton.<sup>159</sup> Nonetheless, the parallel between the archetypes of the Great Mother Goddess and her Dying Consort-Son, as described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* and Evans's Minoan Goddess and her son

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<sup>157</sup> Eller, "Two Knights and a Goddess," 91.

<sup>158</sup> Eller, "Two Knights and a Goddess, 90-91.

<sup>159</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 35.

(later identified as her consort), makes for a strong case that Evans's revised goddess thesis was due, at least in part, to Frazer's work.

Another factor that could have influenced Evans's decision to change his goddess thesis was the work of his contemporary, the Cambridge Ritualist Jane Ellen Harrison, who knew Frazer personally and whose notion of a Great Earth-Mother Goddess and her dying-resurgent son/consort in pre-classical Greek religion was undoubtedly indebted to him.<sup>160</sup> Harrison had previously traveled to Crete in 1901 and spent three days with Evans at Knossos. While Evans was still attempting to gather his evidence for the aniconic worship of trees and pillars, Harrison was immediately inclined to identify the artifacts as proof of the original matriarchal divinity. Upon returning to England, she composed a series of lectures that would eventually become her most famous work, *Prolegomena to a Study of Greek Religion*, first published in 1903.<sup>161</sup> Rather than studying Greek religion in terms of the Olympian gods, Harrison's research emphasized the forerunners of classical gods, the existence of which she was able to uncover in the "survivals" evident in the later myths and rituals of Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite, and other Olympians.<sup>162</sup> In the chapter "The Making of a Goddess," Harrison interpreted several of Evans's finds as being indicative of a "primitive" religion of pre-classical Greece that was matriarchal, matrilineal, and goddess-worshipping:

These primitive goddesses reflect another condition of things, a relationship traced through the mother, the state of society known by the awkward term matriarchal, a state echoed in the lost *Catalogues of Women*, the *Eoiai* of Hesiod, and in the Boeotian heroines of the *Nekuia*. Our modern patriarchal society

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<sup>160</sup> Eller, "Two Knights and a Goddess," 92; Harrison, Jane E. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903): 263.

<sup>161</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 89.

<sup>162</sup> Shelley, A. "'For Love of an Idea': Jane Ellen Harrison, Heretic and Humanist." *Women's History Review* 5 (1996): 169.

focuses its religious anthropomorphism on the relationship of the father and the son; the Roman Church with her wider humanity includes indeed the figure of the Mother who is both Mother and Maid, but she is still in some sense subordinate to the Father and the Son.<sup>163</sup>

Eller surmises that while Evans did not settle on Harrison's interpretations heedlessly, "perhaps the knowledge that Harrison would greet his new finds with awe at the presence of the Great Goddess encouraged Evans to consider the possibility that he was looking at a Mother Goddess with her male satellite, where before he had seen a variety of priestesses, votaries, gods, goddesses, and aniconic symbols of the divine."<sup>164</sup>

While many of Evans's conclusions about Minoan religion had undoubtedly been solidified by 1903 when he discovered the Snake Goddess figurines, it is certainly plausible that Frazer's idea of a universal Mother and Son-Consort pair, in conjunction with Harrison's characterization of pre-classical Greek religion as matriarchal and goddess-worshipping after her visit to Knossos, prompted Evans to shift his methodology away from the evolutionist theories of Tylor and abandon the idea of the aniconic worship of Cretan Zeus towards the possibility of a monotheistic worship of a Great Mother Goddess in the 1910s while at the same time giving him reason to reconsider the religious significance of the faience figurines.

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<sup>163</sup> Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 261.

<sup>164</sup> Eller, "Two Knights and a Goddess," 92.

## *THE PALACE OF MINOS AND THE CULT OF THE SNAKE GODDESS*

In observing the Goddess's predominance in the iconography and her supreme position over the Warrior-God, Evans concluded that the Minoans practiced a form of monotheism in which the unity of the cosmos was personified by a Great Mother Goddess with multiple manifestations. The Goddess's usurpation of the throne from her male consort, now relegated to the role of Son instead of chief deity, in turn marked an important shift in Evans's conceptualization of the Minoan belief system. Moreover, any and all ensuing archaeological discoveries made by Evans at Knossos that could possibly be associated with cult practices or identified as objects of veneration were now seen in the light of this paradigm shift. But how did Evans settle on this thesis? It has been previously suggested that Evans's goddess thesis might have been revised in the 1910s on account of the prehistoric Mother Goddess theories popularized by Frazer and Harrison, and that these theories may have prompted Evans to reconsider the material evidence he had collected earlier in the decade.

This chapter will discuss one set of material evidence from Knossos, the finds in the so-called 'Temple Repositories' at Knossos—specifically, the relics from the Shrine of the Snake Goddess, originally discovered in 1903 but later reported on in *The Palace of Minos*, as ample material evidence of the unitary Great Minoan Goddess and her chthonic manifestation. This chapter will present a summary of Evans's findings from the 'Temple Repositories' with an emphasis on the large role that two heavily reconstructed Snake Goddess figurines (and their many iterations) from the Shrine played in Evans's comprehension of the role of the Goddess in Minoan religion; a synopsis of Evans's

linkage of the Minoan Cult of the Snake Goddess to an analogous Egyptian cult will also be provided.

### The ‘Temple Repositories’ and the Shrine of the Snake Goddess

As Evans strove to record his archaeological finds and present his theses on Minoan culture in *The Palace of Minos*—almost twenty years after breaking ground at Knossos—the discoveries made earlier on in his campaigns in the West Wing of the Central Court were salvaged as evidence for his Goddess theory.<sup>165</sup> Evans worked extensively and continuously to restore the architectural remains of West Court, dated between MM III and LM IB (c. 1750-1490 BCE), which comprised of a porch that functioned as a reception and filler area, the ‘Corridor of the Procession,’ and the South Propylaeum. On the north end of the west facade of the Central Court sat the ‘Throne Room Complex,’ very likely the most important ceremonial space in the Palace, which incorporated a symmetrical pattern made up of benches and central seats. Also connected to the Central Court was the ‘Tripartite Shrine’ behind which sat the Central Palace Sanctuary, consisting of the ‘Lobby of the Stone Seat,’ the ‘Vat Room Deposit,’ the ‘Great Pithos Room,’ the East and West Pillar Crypts, and lastly the ‘Temple Repositories’ (see Map 3).<sup>166</sup> While exploring the southern part of the Throne Room in late May of 1903, Evans and his workmen encountered two large stone-lined pits covered by gypsum paving stones that measured approximately two meters long and one and a half meters wide and deep (Fig. 5.1).<sup>167</sup> Evans had disregarded these pits as merely

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<sup>165</sup> Marinatos, *Sir Arthur Evans and Minoan Crete*, 61.

<sup>166</sup> McEnroe, J. C. *Architecture of Minoan Crete* (Austin: University of Texas Press): 69-73.

<sup>167</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 60.

superficial only two years prior, but he was prepared to reevaluate their contents. Upon the removal of the overlying stone pavement of the Eastern cist, a clay layer of a “reddish terra-cotta hue” was revealed, under which was a darker layer of earth that contained an assortment of debris and charred wood interspersed with fragments of gold foil. The deposit also included an assemblage of closely-packed amphorae identified by Evans as belonging to, at the latest, MM III.<sup>168</sup> In the case of both the Eastern and Western cist, the lowest stratum revealed “precious relics” of which Evans surmised had been transferred from a damaged shrine and deliberately buried in antiquity, and were thus labeled as the ‘Temple Repositories’ on account of their “religious character”:

The discovery, beneath the entrance to the ‘Vat Room’ and on the borders of the East Pillar Room, of a deposit belonging to some shrine that had already existed in a period that preceded the foundation of the existing Palace, shows how persistent had been the traditional sanctity of this region [...] it was found that these cists were set in a pavement overlying earlier stone repositories of much greater capacity, the contents of which afforded what can only be described as a new revelation, both of Minoan Art and of the character of the Palace Cult.<sup>169</sup>

Of great interest to Evans were the “elegant” and “marvellous” series of fragments of at least five faience statuettes, almost exclusively contained within the Eastern Repository although several related relics were also found in the Western Repository, including a piece of an upper torso.<sup>170</sup> Deposited alongside the figurines in both Repositories were a variety of important artifacts dating from MM III: a clay tablet and three disks of gold-foil inscribed in Linear A, a hoard of 150 clay seal-impressions with what Evans took to be religious emblems, bone inlays in the form of pomegranate buds, crescent-shaped bone relics and an ivory handle of an instrument that was perhaps a

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<sup>168</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 466.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* 463, 466.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* 468.

sacrificial knife, the ‘Libation Tables,’ or libation vessels, made of steatite and other materials, and other faience objects including beads, pendants, cups, and vases with painted designs of flowers, fruit, foliage, and shells (Fig. 5.2). Evans praised the “Minoan faculty of adapting natural forms to symmetrical designs” and noted the similitude of the “naturalistic manner” of these relics with the Egyptian treatment of the lotus and papyrus.<sup>171</sup>

As for the statuette fragments themselves, Evans contracted the services of Danish painter Halvor Bagge and Swiss artist Émile Gilliéron *pere* for the task of promptly and heavily reconstructing the two figurines for which he had the most pieces (hereafter referred to as HM 63 and HM 65). On account of the “matronly proportions” of her breasts, HM 63 was quickly identified by Evans as “the Under-world form of the great Minoan Goddess” and thus constituted the “central figure of the shrine.”<sup>172</sup> Reconstituted, HM 63 stands 34.2 cm tall and is depicted as wearing a purplish-brown cylindrical tiara with a white border; a necklace; an embroidered tight bodice with a laced corsage that reveals her bare breasts (the back is decorated with a spiraling pattern); a bell-shaped skirt with a short double apron; and three green snakes with purple-brown spots which coiled around her (one extending from her right arm to her left arm, the other two coiling around her waist which form her belt, one slithering up to wrap around her hat and the other slithering across the apron); her shoulder-length hair is cut squarely in a fringe on her forehead; her ears appear “to be of abnormal size.” Her eyes and eyebrows are black and her overall skin-color is a “milky-white” (Fig. 5.3 and 5.4).<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid. 495-500.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 500

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 500-501; Goodison, L. and C. Morris, eds. 1998. *Ancient Goddesses: the Myths and the Evidence* (London: British Museum Press, 1998): 124.

The problematic restoration of HM 63 was as complicated as it was extensive. Evans combined the figure's disconnected head, torso, and right arm, all of which were found in the Eastern Repository, with a belt or girdle in the form of a snake from another torso found in the Western Repository (Fig. 5.5 and 5.6). The missing skirt was restored using a faience piece supposedly from a particularly damaged fragment from HM 64 and an apron was added to complement the Goddess's companion, HM 65.<sup>174</sup> Evans and his team also "filled in the blanks" by adding the nose, mouth, and hair beneath the conical hat.<sup>175</sup>

HM 65, also found in the Eastern Repository, stands slightly shorter at 29.5 cm with outstretched arms around which two small snakes are coiled along with a bracelet (Fig. 5.7). She wears an embroidered, dark-orange bodice with purplish-brown bands which exposes her breasts and slim waist, a checkered double-apron, and skirt with purplish-brown flounces which gives the effect of "that of a fashionable Court lady." Her dark-colored hair, much longer than her larger companion, falls to her hips; and her skin is "pure white." Evans identified her as a "priestess or votary" or "double of the Goddess" rather than as another manifestation of the Goddess herself, on account of her smaller stature and gesture of holding out two snakes which was more "appropriate" for a votary (although he does not explain why this gesture denotes this status).<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Jones, Bernice R. "The Three Minoan 'Snake Goddesses,'" *Studies in Aegean Art and Culture* (2016): 96-99.

<sup>175</sup> Bonney, Emily M. "Disarming the Snake Goddess: A Reconsideration of the Faience Figurines from the Temple Repositories at Knossos," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 24 (2011): 173.

<sup>176</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 501-503.



Like HM 63, the Votary was heavily restored and patched-together from multiple fragments to form a complete statuette (Fig. 5.8 and 5.9). The head, left forearm, and portion of the snake below HM 65's right hand were originally missing but was "eventually found capable of complete restoration."<sup>177</sup> Her restoration comprised of a new head with modern facial features, the addition of long hair extending onto her back, and a circular headpiece of embossed medallions "forming perhaps a conventual rendering of an original crown of roses," which had been reconstituted from a fragment of unknown provenience and topped by a separate piece, a small seated feline or lioness (Fig. 5.10).<sup>178</sup> Evans's justification for the inclusion of this headpiece rested on his Goddess theory, which maintained that the lion was a sacred animal of the Great Minoan Mother Goddess.<sup>179</sup> As further support for the inclusion of the lion piece, Evans cites two seal impressions from the Western Repository: the first depicting a lion standing beside a standing female figure (taken to be the Goddess) who wears a pointed headpiece and holds a shaft or spear, the second sealing picturing a male warrior wearing a similar pointed headpiece and carrying a spear and shield who appears to be marching past a lioness or pard (Fig. 4.6). A third sealing from Hagia Triada is referenced as a supplement, again picturing a warrior, this time with a horn-blow, with similar headwear and standing beside a lion.<sup>180</sup> Notably, Evans downplays the great extent to which the figures were reconstructed and is plainly dismissive of the broken state of both HM 63 and HM 65.

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<sup>177</sup> Jones, "Three Minoan Snake Goddesses," 64-65; Evans *PM I*, 503.

<sup>178</sup> Jones, "Three Minoan Snake Goddesses," 94; Bonney, "Disarming the Snake Goddess," 175.

<sup>179</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 505.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

Evans's report briefly acknowledges a series of fragments and remains of several other possible Goddess or Votary figures from the Repositories. These figures include a third faience statuette of which only her skirt, apron, metal girdle, fragments of her jacket and laced bodice, and her waist-length dark hair remain intact (like HM 65, she was identified as a Votary or attendant rather than the Goddess) and several votive robes and girdles of faience figurines decorated with sacred saffron-flowers (taken to be an apparent pictorial emulation of contemporaneous Egyptian lotus clusters) taken to have been "central objects" of the shrine due to their religious character" and archaeological context (Fig. 5.11).<sup>181</sup>

Furthermore, two other notable statuettes are detailed as "accumulating evidences [...] of the survival of the cult of the Snake Goddess at Knossos and in other parts of Crete." The chryselephantine Boston Goddess, who holds two golden snakes, is argued by Evans to be dated from LM I and belonging "to the same Palace reliquary of the Domestic Quarter at Knossos as the ivory figure of the 'Leaping Boy,' and a LM I bronze female figure with a triple group of snakes, displayed at the Berlin Museum, noted similarly as belonging "to the same class" as the statuettes from the Shrine at Knossos (Fig. 5.12 and 5.13).<sup>182</sup> Lastly, Evans makes note of a Shrine recently discovered at Gourniá which contained "a rude female idol rising from a cylinder below, with a serpent coiling about her waist and over one of her raised arms" which, along with other cult objects, "[...] are bases, tapering upwards and set with Sacral Horns, above which other serpents raise their heads."<sup>183</sup> Altogether, this extensive catalog of Minoan female

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<sup>181</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 506-507.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* 507-508.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

figurines and their associated relics are accepted as authentication of an island-wide cult that centered on one particular aspect of the Great Minoan Goddess—the Snake Goddess.

#### Identifying the Origin and Ritual Characteristics of the Cult of the Snake Goddess

After inventorying a wide range of Bronze Age statuettes from Crete as supplementary evidence for the identification of HM 63 and HM 65, Evans expanded upon the religious attributes and origin of the Cult of the Snake Goddess, his principal line of argument being that the evidence proves *not* the worshipping of a distinct goddess but rather of the chthonic aspect of the Great Minoan Goddess. The snake, far from signifying any inherent “malignant significance,” represents this chthonic side of the Goddess due to its symbolic association with the earth and the underworld, while at the same time possessing “a friendly and domestic aspect.” Evans attests the benign, domestic characteristics of the snake to the religious lore of Herzegovina and the Serbian lands East of the Adriatic where “it was not an uncommon thing for snakes, who had sought such human hospitality, to be fed with milk and treated as domestic pets. Such a household snake is known, indeed, as *domachilsa*, or ‘house-mother.’”<sup>184</sup>

Evans traces the “homely origin” of the Cult of the Minoan Snake Goddess to the “old indigenous tradition” of a similar cult in the Western Delta of Egypt, and he argues that the Snake Goddess’s attributes and characteristics constitute an evolution from, and reaction to, this Nilotic cult.<sup>185</sup> For instance, the snake raising its head above the tall conical headpiece worn by HM 63 recalls the *uraeus* worn in depictions of the Egyptian goddesses Hathor, Isis, and Wazet, the latter of whom also carried a *uraeus* snake-

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 509.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

entwined *waz* (or papyrus scepter) and could transform into a serpent herself (Fig. 5.14). This *waz* symbol was subsequently adopted into the religious iconography of the Minoans, particularly on signet rings and seal types from MM to LM. Other Egyptian religious icons that can be discerned in the Temple Repository group include faience plaques depicting the cow and calf (often associated with the Cult of Hathor) and the wild goat and its young, the latter associated with the Huntress aspect of the Minoan Goddess (Fig. 5.15 and 5.16).

Evans concludes: “Considering the very ancient and intimate relations of Crete with the Nile Valley [...] it was natural that the great Delta Goddess [...] should have impressed herself in an exceptional degree on the Minoan religious imagination.”<sup>186</sup> In linking the many aspects of the Egyptian Mother Goddess to that of the Minoan Mother Goddess, Evans is proposing that 1) the Minoan idea of the Great Mother Goddess has its origins in the goddess cults of Egypt; 2) that both civilizations worshiped a Great Goddess with multiple manifestations; and 3) in terms of spiritual sophistication, Minoan Crete was on the same level as Egypt.

### Conclusions

By singling out HM 63 as the Minoan Mother Goddess and HM 65 as her votary/attendant/priestess, Evans was able to wield these figurines as substantial evidence for the worship of a single yet multifaceted Mother Goddess. Unable to read Minoan text, Evans sought out parallels for his Great Goddess in the pantheon of contemporary Egypt. However, his interpretations and subsequent restorations of the figurines were both

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 509-511.

ideologically driven and methodologically unsound. Clearly Evans erred not in asserting the existence of a Great Mother Goddess, but in *presuming* her existence in the first place. The following chapters stress the need for a comprehensive re-examination and re-interpretation not only of HM 63 and HM 65, but also of much of the iconographic evidence taken by Evans to portray the worship of a preeminent Mother Goddess.

REASSESSING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR A FEMALE DIVINITY  
IN MINOAN RELIGION

The last few decades have seen an increased tendency within Bronze Age Aegean studies to classify and order, in a more systematic way, the iconographic and symbolic aspects which constitute Minoan art.<sup>187</sup> We are fortunate enough to have a rich assortment of imagery from Minoan Crete that depict the human form, including scenes in which figures interact with one another in an apparent ritual context. Yet instead of shedding light upon the nature of Minoan religion, its pantheon, and its cult practices, these artifacts present substantial problems related to the identification of the figures and definition of their gestures, leaving scholars who are attempting to ‘decode’ the vague imagery with more questions than answers. With the majority of Aegean scholars rejecting much of Evans’s original assessment of Minoan religion, the Goddess thesis, and the ‘New Age’ interpretations championed by Gimbutas, several questions remain: what does the iconographic evidence indicate about the status of women in the sacred sphere? Does it infer that the Minoans worshipped a single, omnipotent Goddess? Does Evans’s original assessment of a monotheistic and gynocentric religion hold up against contemporary re-examinations of the archaeological evidence?

It will be argued 1) that while there is a distinct predominance of the female form in representational media, particularly in the Neopalatial period, this does not necessarily indicate predominance of females in the Minoan pantheon or in ritual activities; 2) that the iconographic evidence for the worship of a single, multifaceted Great Mother

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<sup>187</sup> Alberti Benjamin. “Faience Goddesses and Ivory Bull-Leapers: The Aesthetics of Sexual Difference at Late Bronze Age Knossos,” *World Archaeology* 33 (2001): 192.

Goddess is ambiguous at best with contemporary scholarship unable to settle on an ultimate conclusion; and 3) that the Snake Goddess figurines do not constitute substantial evidence of a Minoan Goddess, as Evans had believed, and should instead be reconsidered and reinterpreted in light of new methodological inquiries. The aim of this chapter is not to produce a final solution for the extremely complex and multifaceted issue of female divinity in Minoan religion, nor to suggest that there is a definitively ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer to this question. Rather, it aims to present some of the iconographic problems scholars have continued to encounter, and to facilitate a discussion of the evidence for a divinity (or divinities) in Minoan art.

#### Depicting the Female Form in Neopalatial Figurative Art

The Neopalatial period presents a rich assortment of figurative imagery and religious iconography—from frescoes, seal rings, impressions, and figurines—in which individuals seem to be engaged in ritual action along with the frequent inclusion of a divine figure.<sup>188</sup> Seal rings and impressions are particularly fraught with depictions of ritual action including processions, offering scenes, and epiphanies (manifestations of the divine), the latter which has been recognized as a crucial aspect of Minoan religion.<sup>189</sup> Scholars have identified two types of epiphany: *enacted*, whereby worshippers interact with and presents gifts and libations to a deity, whose role may have been acted by a human priestess, and *envisioned*, whereby the deity is featured as a small, hovering, or

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<sup>188</sup> Blakolmer F. “A Pantheon Without Attributes? Goddesses and Gods in Minoan and Mycenaean Iconography” in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Boston: Leiden, 2009): 37.

<sup>189</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 175.

descending figure who appears to worshippers through an ecstatic vision.<sup>190</sup> The ring from Isopata near Knossos and the gold ring from Knossos (sometimes called the Oxford ring) are often cited as depictions of an envisioned epiphany in which both male and female divinities appear to the worshipper (Fig. 6.1 and 6.2). A seal-impression from Knossos, depicting a seated goddess on a tripartite construction receiving gifts from worshippers, can be interpreted as an enacted epiphany, as the goddess could actually be a priestess taking on the deity's role (Fig. 6.3).<sup>191</sup>

While both sexes are featured in these scenes, women not only appear more frequently but are also depicted as powerful and prominent figures.<sup>192</sup> However, the basic identification of these figures remains the most pressing challenge for Minoan scholars.<sup>193</sup> The line between the image of a goddess and the image of a priestess, votary, or worshipper is both blurry and fluid, and the fact that Minoan deities are often physically depicted in the mortal realm interacting *with* human worshippers makes the identification of divinities a rather difficult task.<sup>194</sup> Nonetheless, it may be possible to identify a goddess (or goddesses) through ritual gesture, position, size, and relation to other subordinate figures within the compositional scheme. For instance, on a seal impression from Knossos dubbed "Mother of the Mountain," the powerful stance of the large, central female (presumably the goddess) on the mountain peak indicates that she holds the most authority in the scene and is the subject of veneration. Outstretching her

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<sup>190</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 175; Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 128; Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 223.

<sup>191</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 161-62.

<sup>192</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 128; Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 214.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* 214

<sup>194</sup> Blakolmer, "A Pantheon Without Attributes?" 37.



arm with a gesture of command, and displaying her “staff of authority,” she asserts dominance over the other figures—two flanking lions and an adoring male figure who stand below her (Fig. 4.8).<sup>195</sup>

The combination of a female figure with animals, such as lions, griffins, snakes, birds, dolphins and plants such as lilies, indicates the existence of a ‘Mistress of Animals’ type of goddess linked to the natural world.<sup>196</sup> There are several seal images and impressions that depict a female figure feeding, holding, and petting goats, deer, and lions (Fig. 6.4) as well as depictions of peaceful (and often identical) animals that attend/guard/flank the figure, as in the aforementioned “Mother of Mountains” (Fig. 6.5). She is almost always depicted alongside her animals in an outdoor or natural setting with trees or flowers. She always wears a distinctive costume consisting of a tight bodice that reveals bare breasts, and a flounced, bell-shaped skirt; very rarely is she depicted fully nude. She is either accompanied by animals or other female figures, leading Marinatos to conclude that she “seems to have been primarily the protectress of her own sex,” whose iconographic representations point to her “nurturing” abilities as a goddess of nature.<sup>197</sup>

Female predominance in the iconographic evidence cannot be denied, and the fact that men and women tend to appear in sexually segregated groups points to a distinctiveness of gender roles within the sacred sphere.<sup>198</sup> However, although far scarcer than for female divinities, evidence for male gods suggests that they were “neither rare nor unimportant.”<sup>199</sup> Male divinities are primarily depicted as youthful; there is a lack of

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<sup>195</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 154; Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 130.

<sup>196</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon Without Attributes?” 38.

<sup>197</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 162, 166.

<sup>198</sup> Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 214.

<sup>199</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 166.

bearded gods, which would signal an older deity (such as creator or a god of wisdom, types that exist in contemporaneous religions in Egypt and the Near East) as well as armed ‘martial’ deities in apparent military gear.<sup>200</sup> While Evans identified this male figure as the youthful ‘Dying God’ consort/son of the Mother Goddess, scholars today have acknowledged that such a figure can be iconographically defined *only* as a “subordinate male” to a goddess.<sup>201</sup> From the New Palace period onward, the male deity appears as a ‘master of animals’ who holds a pair of wild and powerful animals (often lions, goats, griffins, or bulls) in a position of “submission or subjugation” (Fig. 6.6).<sup>202</sup> Marinatos highlights the difference between the female and male deities: while both commonly feature animals in their presence, only the female divinities feed and tend to the creatures; the function of the male god, on the other hand, “is to control nature, not to nourish it” and thus the figure is always shown as exerting his dominance over the animals.<sup>203</sup>

Several conclusions can be made from the iconographic evidence: 1) that the female form undeniably predominates representational and narrative imagery; 2) that scenes containing rituals, especially epiphanies, are commonly depicted and feature an important female figure, presumably a goddess or priestess enacting the role of the deity; 3) that divinities can be distinguished through size, gesture, and position within the compositional scheme; and 4) that both male and female divinities fall into distinct iconographical types which incorporate the animal and natural domains in dissimilar

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>201</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon of Attributes?” 39.

<sup>202</sup> Depictions of the male deity with only one animal are less frequent; Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 169.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. 174.

manifestations. These points seem to indicate that a female divinity (or divinities) played a significant role and possibly possessed a high status in Minoan religion.

This isn't to suggest, however, that women in Minoan Crete also enjoyed high status. To argue that Minoan society was matriarchal, or that females held any sort of power, from the limited iconographic evidence would be impossible, because iconographic predominance *does not* necessarily indicate social or religious predominance.<sup>204</sup> Likewise, there is little evidence to suggest that women in cultures whose religions include important female deities enjoyed particularly high status—Lapatin points to Athena in Athens, Kali in India, and Mary in Rome as examples of this discrepancy.<sup>205</sup> In that case, it may be unwise to presuppose that the dominance of the female form in the representational imagery signifies a certain authoritative position for Minoan women (surprisingly, however, there is also little iconographic support for an individual male ruler on Crete).<sup>206</sup>

If there were substantial overlaps between religion, society, and politics in Neopalatial Crete, a considerable amount of power and influence *could* have been held by priestesses, but nevertheless it is possible that art and administration may signify different realities and that representational imagery “does not necessarily reflect political structure as a simplistic snapshot.”<sup>207</sup> The absence of “ruler iconography” makes any attempt to pinpoint who exactly held authority in the temporal realm of the Minoans a difficult task and, as such, the question remains unresolved.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ehrenberg, *Women in Prehistory*, 118.

<sup>205</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 89.

<sup>206</sup> Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 216.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* 216

<sup>208</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 130.

Finally, despite the abundance of imagery depicting religious practices and ritual actions, many iconographic uncertainties and ambiguities continue to hinder the identification of the figures. Most of the time, scholars must take on generic anthropomorphic figures as there are only a few cases in which the iconographic schema reveal a “relatively clear definition and delimitation of a deity.”<sup>209</sup> That deities and humans are depicted as interacting with one another in the same realm also complicates identification. What can be deduced, then, is that the frequent occurrence of representations of goddesses, paired with the fact that most of her worshippers and/or priests are overwhelmingly female, suggests that Minoan religion was relatively female-centric and emphasized the natural world, although men and male gods also existed and participated in these ritual actions. In other words, there is ample iconographic evidence for the existence and worship of predominant female deities in Minoan Crete, but the precise nature of this veneration cannot be determined.<sup>210</sup>

#### The Issue of Polytheism vs. Monotheism: Did a Great Mother Goddess Exist?

Thus far, the female divinity worshipped in Minoan Crete has mainly been referred to in the singular, but there is a great possibility that there existed, in fact, *several* goddesses. As a whole, however, the field of the Bronze Age Aegean has been unable to come to a consensus on the issue of whether the Minoans worshipped one Great Goddess with many manifestations or rather a pantheon of multiple goddesses (and gods). Scholarship has effectively been split into two camps since M. Nilsson argued against Evans’s monotheistic paradigm in favor of polytheism in *The Minoan-Mycenaean*

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<sup>209</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon Without Attributes?” 40.

<sup>210</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 73, 87.

*Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion* (1927, 1950), in which he also claimed that there is no solid evidence for a Mother Goddess in Minoan religion.<sup>211</sup> Proponents of Evans's monotheistic paradigm have included S. Marinatos (1937), Persson (1942), and Warren (1977), while scholars over the past thirty years, such as N. Marinatos (1993), Dickinson (1994), Goodison and Morris (1998), Lapatin (2002), Blakolmer (2009), *et al.* have tended to favor the polytheistic proposal championed by Nilsson.<sup>212</sup> Moreover, Evans's idea that primitive religion was universally characterized by a unitary Mother Goddess of nature, along with modern 'reclamations' of this thesis by Gimbutas and the Goddess Movement, have been rebuked by contemporary prehistorians and archaeologists, most recently by Talalay (2012), Eller (1991, 2003, 2011), and Meskell (1995).

Evans's Mother Goddess paradigm has largely been abandoned on account of the striking absence of typical maternal imagery in the archaeological evidence, such as pregnant females or a mother and suckling child, which comprise the two dominant variations of women in ancient art.<sup>213</sup> While Evans had identified HM 63 as the Goddess based on the 'matronly proportions' of her breasts, there is no evidence to suggest that bare breasts were inherently indicative of maternity, divinity, or fertility in the schema of

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<sup>211</sup> See Nilsson M. P. *The Minoan and Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion* (Lund: Berlinsgka Boktryckeriet, 1927): 335 for the quote "Whether the name 'Mother' is permissible needs proving," and 288, 292, 389-425.

<sup>212</sup> *n.b.* S. Marinatos and N. Marinatos are not the same individual: Nanno is the daughter of Greek archaeologist and former director of the Heraklion Museum, Spyridon.

<sup>213</sup> Only in LM does the image of mother and child appear, but nonetheless very rarely; Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 114; Morris C. E. "From Ideologies of Motherhood to 'Collecting Mother Goddesses,'" *Archaeology and European Modernity: Producing and Consuming the 'Minoans'* (2006): 72; Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 214.

Minoan representational imagery, as Evans had assumed.<sup>214</sup> Bare breasts are certainly emphasized by the tight bodices worn by female figures, but they are rarely held or drawn specific attention to, as they are in Astarte figurines from the Near East, and thus cannot be representative of fertility.<sup>215</sup> Because breasts are presented “so matter-of-factly” in Minoan figurative imagery, Adams suggests that they “may be indicative of some kind of status or role rather than a general allusion to childbearing or sex.”<sup>216</sup> If mothering does not seem to be the main concern of divine females, and if the young male figure can only be identified as a subordinate male rather than the son of the goddess, then Evans’s monotheistic model based on a Mother Goddess “bears a very low or no probability.”<sup>217</sup>

The case for monotheism in Minoan Crete is weakened further by the textual evidence. Written in early Greek, Linear B clay tablets provide ample evidence for the existence of several deities that were collectively worshipped by regions of the Late Mycenaean world. Although dating at least two hundred years later than the Snake Goddess figurines and other Neopalatial representational art, and characterizing the Mycenaean acquisition of Minoan Crete, Linear B tablets from Knossos document a *multiplicity* of gods and goddesses, not just one Great Mother Goddess.<sup>218</sup> The names of multiple goddesses are mentioned, including *pi-pi-tu-na* (Piptuna; cf Diktyinna), *e-re-u-ti-ja* (Eleuthia/Eileithyia), *a-pe-ti-ra* (Aphetria), and *e-ri-nu-we* (Erinys); while male gods include *e-nu-wa-ri-jo* (Enyalios) and *pa-ja-wo-ne* (Pai[a]on).<sup>219</sup> A prominent and reoccurring goddess in the pantheon on both the Greek mainland as well as Crete is *po-ti-*

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<sup>214</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 81; Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 125.

<sup>215</sup> Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 214.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 214-15.

<sup>217</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon of Attributes?” 24.

<sup>218</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 90.

<sup>219</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon of Attributes?” 25.

*ni-ja* (Potnia), who appears with varying “*epikleseis*” such as *i-qe-ja po-ti-ni-ja* (Potnia Hippeia) and *po-ti-ni-ja a-si-wi-ja* (Potnia Aswija) at Pylos, *si-to-po-ti-ni-ja* (Potnia Sito) at Mycenae, and *da-pu<sub>2</sub>-ri-to-jo po-ti-ni-ja* (Potnia Labyrinthoio), as well as *a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja* (Potnia Athana) at Knossos.

It is currently unknown whether these are separate goddesses or rather one goddess with various personalities. Unfortunately, any specifics regarding the identification, nature, or functions of these deities have not been recorded on the tablets.<sup>220</sup> However, J. Gulizio and D. Nakassis have argued that these names can be identified as Minoan, because they were found only on tablets from Crete and they exhibit linguistic features that are distinctively Minoan: “the dominance of the vowels a, i, and u”; “initial reduplication”; and “the presence of distinctive signs or sign sequences present in Linear A but used in Linear B to write non-Greek words.”<sup>221</sup> While one cannot expect these Postpalatial tables to simply reflect preexisting (Neopalatial) Minoan beliefs—as they largely reflect the needs of Mycenaean administrators—the authors argue that “It would be very surprising indeed if no Minoan divinities whatsoever were preserved in the Linear B texts, given the extensive influence of Minoan palatial culture on Mycenaean elites.”<sup>222</sup> The Linear B tablets from Knossos thus provide significant and relevant evidence concerning Minoan polytheism despite belonging to a later period.

Additionally, scholars have doubted Minoan monotheism on account of the absence of other contemporaneous monotheistic societies within the Aegean: “Why

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>221</sup> Gulizio, J. and Nakassis, D. “The Minoan Goddess(es): Textual Evidence for Minoan Religion,” *KE-RE-ME-JA: Studies Presented to Cynthia W. Shelmerdine* (2014): 119, 120.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. 116.

should we believe that the Minoans, unlike their successors in Greece and contemporaries in Egypt and the ancient Near East, were monotheists rather than polytheists?" asks Lapatin.<sup>223</sup> Marinatos agrees that "female polytheism almost certainly did exist," and notes that while this debate "may never be satisfactorily resolved," one must agree that polytheism "is more in tune with the thinking of the times."<sup>224</sup> Goodison and Morris suggest that the "repeated and insistent message" of the iconographic evidence "is that there are gods as well as goddesses, and that they are many not one."<sup>225</sup> Yet the polytheistic model also comes with methodological issues: not only can the functions and domains of these Minoan divinities not be discerned through the textual evidence, but the fact that the Minoans depicted their deities as unspecific humans makes it extremely difficult to differentiate between humans and deities.<sup>226</sup> For as long as the rules about the visual definition of a divinity remain obscure and ambiguous, the 'Great Mother Goddess debate' will be disputed in Bronze Age scholarship.

#### New Interpretations of HM 63 and HM 65

The disciplinary shift from a monotheistic paradigm centering on a Great Mother Goddess to a polytheistic system of many goddesses and gods, as well as the acknowledgment that a female divinity can only be defined as being *associated* with nature and animals, has prompted thorough re-examinations and re-considerations of the function of the Snake Goddess figurines. If the Snake Goddess cannot be identified as the chthonic manifestation of the Great Mother Goddess, then who is she? What does she

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<sup>223</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 89.

<sup>224</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 147, 165.

<sup>225</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 132.

<sup>226</sup> Blakolmer, "A Pantheon of Attributes?" 24.



represent? What purpose does she serve? In order to unpack these questions, we must set aside Evans's original reconstitutions and interpretations—and his antiquated evolutionist frameworks—and instead take into consideration recent scholarly proposals.

HM 63 and HM 65 have historically been read as figures of cultic significance and have substantiated arguments for an indigenous cult of the Snake Goddess when, in reality, there is simply no evidence for such a cult in Palatial Crete.<sup>227</sup> The two faience figurines are the *only* examples associated with snakes from the Palatial period; even in the Prepalatial period there is no snake goddess.<sup>228</sup> The Snake Goddess does not appear in surviving frescoes, engraved seal rings, or impressions from the period<sup>229</sup> nor do any images reveal women as participants (whether as goddesses, priestesses, or worshippers) in a Snake Goddess cult.<sup>230</sup> While the association of the female divinity *with* the snake is undeniable, it should not be overstressed at the expense of other symbols and animals that are also associated with the divinity in Palatial times. As voiced by Marinatos, “Why not speak of a Lily, Goat, Lion, or Griffin Goddess?”<sup>231</sup> She proposes that figurines constitute simply one variant of the ‘goddess with animals’ type rather than a specific Snake Goddess.<sup>232</sup> In any case, the moniker ‘Snake Goddess’ must be dismissed from the current discussion, as it carries certain connotations that belie the actual functions and identities of HM 63 and HM 65.

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<sup>227</sup> Bonney, “Disarming the Snake Goddess,” 178.

<sup>228</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 148.

<sup>229</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 76.

<sup>230</sup> Bonney, “Disarming the Snake Goddess,” 171

<sup>231</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 277.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.* 159.

Secondly, the Snake Goddess' role as 'guardian of the household and the palace' needs to be abandoned. Although Evans had assumed that the snake embodies a "friendly or domestic aspect,"<sup>233</sup> Marinatos argues that "there is a dangerous equation [to be made] here": Evans equates the household with the palace despite the "huge social gulf" that separates them. This facet, along with the absence of similar goddess figures from any private Minoan Palatial household, suggests that the notion of a 'household' goddess of snakes is "a modern myth."<sup>234</sup> Likewise, the assumption that the figurines are holding snakes to begin with may be called into question. Both J. A. MacGillivray and E. M. Bonney have contended that the textured surface of the spirally-striped 'snakes' held in the fists of HM 65 should be construed as "the craftsman's intent to depict a twisted object such as a rope or cord."<sup>235</sup> B. R. Jones, however, has rebuked this theory: "If so, one would have expected incisions cut into the faience as marks of the spiraling recesses of a cord rather than painted strips [...] both twine and cord, to my mind, seem to limp to generate such a firmly curved form."<sup>236</sup> The contentious nature of this debate demonstrates the ambiguity that lies at the very heart of the figurines' personas.

We cannot identify with certainty which figurine represents a goddess and which one represents a priestess or votary. Evans had relegated the role of HM 65 to a votary, because her gesture of holding out two snakes was more appropriate to that of a mortal attendant, whereas the taller HM 63 (with her matronly bosom) was deemed to be more

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<sup>233</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 509.

<sup>234</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 148.

<sup>235</sup> Bonney, "Disarming the Snake Goddess," 178; MacGillivray, J. A. *Minotaur: Sir Arthur Evans and the Archaeology of the Minoan Myth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000): 223.

<sup>236</sup> Jones, "Three Minoan Snake Goddesses," 96.

goddess-like.<sup>237</sup> However, our understanding of Minoan ritual gesture is still rather limited, and therefore it is a difficult concept to study; gesture is culturally constructed,<sup>238</sup> and meanings can often be complex, especially in cases where some ritual gestures appear to have various meanings.<sup>239</sup> The votary interpretation has been contested on the grounds that both HM 65 and HM 63 are not depicted in one of the poses widely accepted as characteristic gestures of worship from a votary to a deity in Minoan imagery and votive bronze and clay figurines, which include arms pressed to the chest or fist to the forehead. As a result, HM 63 and HM 65 may be understood as depictions of a deity.<sup>240</sup> Yet we can also discount the suggestion that HM 63 (or HM 65) represents a certain manifestation of a Great Mother Goddess, the term ‘Mother’ being inaccurate to the role(s) of the Minoan female deity. As formerly expressed, the exposed breasts of HM 63 are not indicative of maternity or fertility, nor do they purposefully attract the attention of the viewer (*e.g.* by holding her own breasts), as is the case in the imagery of the Near East.<sup>241</sup>

It has been suggested thus far that the labels and terminology commonly linked to the Snake Goddess remain unhelpful to and ineffective in our discussions of the figurines, as well as of Minoan religion generally. Nearly every aspect of these figurines—from their titles, to their poses to the ‘snakes’ that they hold—can be disputed or interpreted in diverse ways that remain disputed within the discipline. In light of the many ambiguities and issues that result from the current terminology, it may be more beneficial to

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<sup>237</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 501-03.

<sup>238</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 125

<sup>239</sup> See Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 169.

<sup>240</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 125, 209.

<sup>241</sup> Adams, *Cultural Identity in Minoan Crete*, 214.

discontinue the misnomer ‘Snake Goddess’ in favor of the labels HM 63 and HM 65, which provide improved clarity and impartiality to the subject.

Up until this point, we have explored what HM 63 and HM 65 may—or may not—be images of. Both may be identified as a goddess but, if this is the case, it should not be presupposed that each figurine signifies the existence of a cult of a Snake Goddess, for which there is no iconographic evidence. What purpose, then, do HM 63 and HM 65 serve? According to Goodison and Morris, images of a deity may serve multiple functions, including: “1) an actual cult image, i.e., a focal point of veneration in a shrine; 2) an image presented or revealed as part of a ritual; 3) images which in themselves represent or ‘permanently enact’ a ritual (e.g. dressing a deity or handling snakes).”<sup>242</sup> Regardless of whether HM 63 and HM 65 represent cult images (a “visualization of the sacred for human worshippers”), there cannot be established “any clear criteria” for the definition and identification of such images.<sup>243</sup> With no direct evidence for the purpose of the faience figurines and a lack of comparable figurines in the archaeological record, a definitive answer to this question is, at the present time, unlikely.

Nonetheless, there are several compelling proposals and re-interpretations of the figurines that bear further discussion and consideration. Blakolmer has suggested that HM 63 and HM 65 are *not* cult images, as they have been viewed historically,<sup>244</sup> but rather “dedications or valuable objects of identity on the palatial level of religion, social, or politics, and not a focal point of rituals” on account of the lack of evidence for “the

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<sup>242</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 125.

<sup>243</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon Without Attributes?” 45.

<sup>244</sup> See Evans, *PM I*, 500-505 and Panagiotaki, M. “Dating the Temple Repositories Vases,” *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 93 (1998): 96-100.

existence of a consistent ‘Snake Goddess’ in the Minoan iconographic tradition.”<sup>245</sup> The latter statement echoes the opinion previously given by Marinatos.<sup>246</sup> Bonney has expressed a similar point-of-view on the matter and dismisses the idea that the figurines were objects of an indigenous palatial cult of the Snake Goddess as well as the notion that they are illustrative of elite palatial fashion. She argues that there is no indigenous formal source for much of the figurines’ iconography, including their straight hair, HM 65’s tiara, and the positions of their hands which “are unknown in Cretan art until nearly the conclusion of the Late Minoan period” in the ‘Goddesses with Upraised Arms’ statuettes.<sup>247</sup> While the tight, open bodices of HM 63 and HM 65 conform to numerous other representations of women in the iconographic evidence, the construction and overall checkered pattern of HM 65’s seven-tiered flounced skirt only has one Aegean parallel in a gold brooch attached to a silver pin from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae on which a woman wears a skirt with seven flounces comprised of alternating plain and striated squares (Fig. 6.7).<sup>248</sup> The combination of the specifically Cretan bodices with contemporaneous Syrian gestures and flounces indicates that Knossian elites were “informed by and aware of eastern iconography” (Fig. 6.8.) Thus with only some of their roots grounded in Cretan iconography, Bonney proposes that the figurines should be understood as “hybrids” containing elements from both the Minoan and Syrian artistic tradition as an “intentional evocation of the exotic” by palatial elites at Knossos.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Blakolmer, “A Pantheon Without Attributes?” 46.

<sup>246</sup> Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 148.

<sup>247</sup> Bonney, “Disarming the Snake Goddess,” 178.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.* 177-78.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.* 181.

Finally, Bonney stresses that these ‘Cretan-Syrian’ hybrids were produced at a time of increased interaction and trade between the emerging elite class of Neopalatial Crete and the monarchies of the Levant. The prestige goods commissioned by the Minoan elite at this time *purposefully* emulated Syrian iconography and exotic imagery as a means for communicating the legitimacy of their authority and reifying the burgeoning hierarchy. Like the building of the new palace complex at Knossos, the manufacturing of these figurines “embodied access to, and control of, resources and specialized knowledge.”<sup>250</sup>

With these proposals taken into consideration, it is reasonable to conclude that HM 63 and HM 65 are *not* cult images of a Minoan Snake Goddess cult, as generally assumed by Evans and other scholars, but rather prestige goods exhibiting a hybrid of qualities from both Syrian and Cretan iconography. However, until more evidence comes to light, the true purpose of the faience figurines will remain nebulous and open to scholarly interpretation. Yet, there are several conclusions that may be drawn from re-examinations of the material evidence: the objectively negligible amount of visual and textual evidence for a specific cult of a Snake Goddess on prehistoric Crete, in tandem with the ambiguous and often intelligible renderings of *both male and female* deities and ritual gesture/action in the iconography, indicates that while women (mortal and immortal) play significant roles in the sacred sphere, Minoan religion most likely was not centered around a Great Mother Goddess with various manifestations. Instead, it is more likely the case that the Minoans worshipped a pantheon of deities of both genders with a

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid. 184.

goddess of nature holding a prominent position, although this position remains a source of contention among scholars in the field.

THE CONUNDRUM CONTINUES:  
CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE CONCERNING EVANS'S METHODOLOGICAL  
PRACTICES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF MINOAN RELIGION

Up to this point, this inquiry has examined 1) the academic and archaeological environment within which Evans was conducting his research and excavations at Knossos; 2) the ways in which key anthropological frameworks, including the theories of development, evolutionism, animism, and 3) prehistoric matriarchy contributed to Evans's understanding of the material evidence; and the role that the Snake Goddess figurines played in Evans's reassessment of the evidence to suit the prehistoric Mother Goddess theory popularized by his contemporaries.

It has been argued that Evans was set apart from his predecessors because he was *not* interested solely in reconstructing the proto-history of classical Greece nor in discovering the mythic-historic relationship between archaeological sites and the Homeric texts, as Schliemann had endeavored previously. Instead, Evans was concerned with establishing the existence of a sophisticated prehistoric Aegean civilization that preceded the classical period. That his initial conception of a Minoan religion centered on the aniconic worship of Cretan Zeus sprung from the established anthropological frameworks of development, evolutionism, and animism; and that his paradigm shift in the 1910s from the worship of a proto-Zeus deity to the idea of a primary Mother Goddess and her dying and resurgent Consort-Son was most likely precipitated by the prevailing academic notion of matriarchal prehistory, popularized largely by Frazer's *Golden Bough* and further disseminated among Evans's contemporaries such as Harrison.



The Snake Goddess figurines and their associated relics, when reconsidered in light of Evans's new Goddess thesis, appeared to substantiate the existence of a unitary Mother Goddess who could take on multiple manifestations. Viewed as the 'chthonic' or 'Underworld' version of the divinity on account of the figures' snakes and their apparent similarities to Egyptian Goddess archetypes, these figurines were a crucial piece of evidence for Evans's final reports in *The Palace of Minos*, almost twenty years after their discovery in the Temple Repositories.

Evans's interpretations of Minoan religion were not only largely accepted among his contemporaries and widely advertised in the media of the earlier twenty century, but they have also endured as the definitive lens through which the Minoans are perceived in mainstream academic discourse.<sup>251</sup> This investigation has proposed that Evans's interpretations of HM 63 and HM 65 are inadequate when considered against recent reassessments of the iconographic evidence, which suggests that the figurines are not cult images but rather Cretan-Syrian hybrids whose exotic aspects legitimized the claims of the Minoan elite class. While representational imagery from Neopalatial corroborates the worship of female divinities on Crete, there is minimal evidence to suggest that the Minoans worshiped a single omnipotent Goddess, although a goddess of nature seems preeminent.

However, over the past three decades, the field of Bronze Age Aegean studies has witnessed an extensive critical reassessment of both Evans's paradigms and the material evidence he collected, alongside an increased engagement in historiography.<sup>252</sup> This chapter explores some of these reinterpretations, reconsiderations, and reassessments

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<sup>251</sup> Schoep, "Building the Labyrinth," 6; Papadopoulos, "Inventing the Minoans," 95.

<sup>252</sup> Schoep, "Building the Labyrinth," 5.

offered by modern scholarship over the past few decades that have tackled issues of Evans's Eurocentric agenda, his 'invention' of the Minoan past through extensive and often unnecessary restorations, and the reclamation of the presumed Goddess-centric religion of the Minoans by the modern Goddess Movement. Furthermore, this chapter will consider how these current 'reframings' of the Minoans affect the ways in which the Snake Goddess is perceived and understood.

### The Issue of Evans's Eurocentric Agenda

The suggestion that Evans's laudatory perception of the Minoans was determined largely by Eurocentric notions of what constitutes a 'high civilization,' rather than by the merit of the archaeological evidence itself, remains a significant point of contention in the literature. It has been argued that Evans's archaeological agenda was a direct response to a broader Western desire to discover an independent and indigenous prehistoric European civilization that could legitimately rival, and conceivably surpass, the 'high' civilizations of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.<sup>253</sup>

The nineteenth century witnessed remarkable developments in the study of ancient Near Eastern civilizations following the systematic exploration of Egypt by French scholars who accompanied Napoleon's invasion from 1798 to 1799. The steady flow of new archaeological finds not only added over 3,000 years of history to the Near East but also positioned the Orient as the cradle of civilization, thereby "directly challenging the chronological primacy of Europe."<sup>254</sup> The discovery and decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian cuneiform in the mid-nineteenth century were

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>254</sup> Papadopoulos, "Inventing the Minoans," 98.

further evidence of Near East's sequential superiority, as literacy, according to Tylor in his 1865 *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, was one of the defining characteristics of civilization.<sup>255</sup> As writing provided the means for the codification of laws, the collection of historical records, as well as the composition of literature, the discovery of Near Eastern scripts predating the writing of Greece and Rome was unsurprisingly an astounding development in the field of archaeology.<sup>256</sup>

With the cultures of classical Greece and Imperial Rome now seeming recent in comparison, Europe was now in need of a prehistoric civilization with a language of its own.<sup>257</sup> Evans, having been originally attracted to the island of Crete on account of the seal stones featuring a mysterious scripts he had purchased in 1893, was able to fulfill this nationalistic desire in his first season at Knossos when he and his team uncovered not only evidence of an advanced European civilization in the form of inscribed tablets but also the remains of an architecturally sophisticated palace complex with stairways, provisions for running water, and frescoed walls of vivid and naturalistic scenes.<sup>258</sup>

Evans was certain that he had unearthed a prehistoric *European* civilization whose sophistication in writing, technology, and the arts proved that not only could the cultural superiority of ancient Egypt and the Near East be challenged, but that it could even be surpassed by European excellency. He makes explicit this point in the first volume of *The Palace of Minos*: "For the first time there has come into view a primitive

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<sup>255</sup> Tylor, E. B. *Researches Into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (United Kingdom, 1865): 15, 87.

<sup>256</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 38.

<sup>257</sup> Papadopoulos, "Inventing the Minoans," 98.

<sup>258</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 46.

European civilization, the earliest phase of which goes back even beyond the days of the First Dynasty of Egypt.” Later he continues, “In other words, this comparatively small island [...] was at once the starting point and the earliest stage in the highway of European civilization.”<sup>259</sup> In bringing to light an early European civilization, as Papadopoulos has contended, Evans provided “politically dominant Europeans of the early 20th century a noble ancestry.”<sup>260</sup>

To Evans, the cognitive sophistication of the Minoans was owed first and foremost to the quality of their material culture which was wholly original, distinct, and superior than that of non-European prehistoric peoples.<sup>261</sup> As early as 1896, he contrasted the superior European nature of Aegean art to the less-innovative art of the Levant and Near East:

We see the differences if we compare [the Aegean with] the civilisation of the Hittites of Anatolia and Northern Syria [...] The native elements were there cramped and trammelled from the beginning by the Oriental contact. No real life and freedom of expression was ever reached; the art is stiff, conventional becoming more and more Asiatic, till finally crushed out by Assyrian conquest [...] But in prehistoric Greece the indigenous element was able to hold its own, and to recast what it took from others in an original mould. Throughout its handiwork there breathes the European spirit of individuality and freedom.

Evans goes on to praise Minoan Crete for the “emancipation of the European genius” and asserts its artistic superiority over contemporaneous civilizations.<sup>262</sup> He also compares Minoan art to that of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods of Europe. To explain the production of fine Minoan ceramics discovered in the Temple Repositories, Evans drew analogies to the factories of the early modern period: “The

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<sup>259</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 1, 24.

<sup>260</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 126.

<sup>261</sup> Schoep, “Building the Labyrinth,” 11.

<sup>262</sup> Evans, Arthur J. “The Eastern Question in Anthropology” in *Proceedings of the British Association* (1886): 916, 922.

Palace manufactory of Knossos is the remote predecessor of Vincennes or Sévres, of Medicean Florence, of Urbino or Capodimonte, of Meissen and other princely establishments of the same kind.”<sup>263</sup> By taking on European concepts and values, as Schoep has argued, Evans’s Minoans “became familiarized, accessible, and part of an origin myth for European modernity.”<sup>264</sup> In other words, by attributing modern European characteristics to Minoan material culture, Evans effectively created a prehistoric past and identity for Europe.

As archaeological evidence of Minoan Crete’s European sensibilities and modernity, Evans turned not only to the writings and monumental architecture but also to depictions of the female form in fresco fragments and in statuary, including the Snake Goddess figurines, which he read as exemplars of the sophisticated and remarkably modern court culture and fashion in the Palace complex at Knossos. In the third volume of *The Palace of Minos*, Evans describes a (heavily reconstructed) miniature wall painting unearthed in a small chamber to the northwest of the central court depicting a large group of men and women observing some type of activity. While the men are represented in “pictorial shorthand” by rows of heads rendered over red wash, the women are represented individually and significantly larger and more intricately, their outfits reminiscent of the attire worn by the Snake Goddess figurines with open bodices exposing bare chests and flounced skirts (Fig. 7.1).<sup>265</sup> Evans’s commentary on the female figures, “highly polite groups of Court ladies,” rests on preconceived notions of modern European femininity with direct comparisons to the behavior of contemporary European

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<sup>263</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 52; Evans, “Provisional Report, 1903,” 67.

<sup>264</sup> Schoep, “Building the Labyrinth,” 9.

<sup>265</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 117.

women: “their puffed sleeves, their wasp waists, and elaborate hairdressing” evokes “rather Versailles than Florence.”<sup>266</sup> Their conversation, he continues, is “broken up into pairs, very much as an English dinner party.”<sup>267</sup> Yet another allusion to the Minoans’ cultural and artistic superiority and modernist tendencies is elaborated on: “These scenes of feminine confidences, of tittle-tattle and society scandals, take us far away from the productions of Classical Art of any Age. Such lively *genre* and *rococo* atmosphere bring us nearer indeed to quite modern times.”<sup>268</sup> This pictorial representation of Minoan females is perceived by Evans as signification of a strikingly modern prehistoric civilization unmatched in elegance and charm.

The Snake Goddess figurines and their affiliated statuettes were taken similarly as material evidence of the Minoans’ innate ‘Europeanness.’ The identification of a Great Minoan Mother Goddess implied that Bronze Age Cretan culture was, as Morris states, “more evolved, more modern, and by extension more European than their Near Eastern polytheistic neighbours.”<sup>269</sup> Morris suggests that Evans “mapped out from the ambiguous material evidence not a sensual but a maternal ‘Mother Goddess’ who better fitted European sensibilities,” for the “erotic belonged to the sensuous world of the Orient, while the Minoans had been appropriated as ‘European.’”<sup>270</sup> In this way, the construction of a monotheistic status for Evans’ Snake Goddess conformed to Western scholarly attitudes of the universal evolution of religion while at the same time proclaiming a

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<sup>266</sup> Evans, *PM* 3, 49.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

<sup>269</sup> Morris, “From Ideologies of Motherhood to ‘Collecting Mother Goddesses.’” 70.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

proper ancient European civilization that could legitimately rival the cultures of the sensuous and primitive Near East.

Likewise, Evans's pairing of the Boston Goddess statuette with her 'Divine Son,' the unprovenanced Boy-God statuette is suggested by Gere to be a blending of "Victorian stereotypes of spiritualized maternity with modernist images of androgynous athleticism" (Fig. 7.2).<sup>271</sup> Gere considers the Boy-God statuette as a "more coherently Edwardian figure, a sacrificial pagan king laced with wistful overtones straight out of *Peter Pan*" whose very pairing with the 'Mother Goddess,' the Boston Goddess, constitutes a "Frazerian scheme" in which the male god is both son and consort to the Great Goddess. Importantly, however, this scheme never crosses the line into incestuous territory, as that would be perceived as overtly primitive and therefore un-European. Rather the "purity" of the relationship between the Minoan Mother Goddess and her Divine Son, as portrayed by the statuette pair, is analogous to that of Christ and the Virgin Mary.<sup>272</sup>

In many ways, Evans's Minoan Crete was rather like a prehistoric, preindustrial England: a maritime superpower that was "in some respects more modern in its equipments than anything produced in classical Greece," led by a priest-king and an enlightened aristocracy (predecessors of later, western European absolute monarchies); a "peaceful abode" that produced sophisticated and innovative works of art and a complex writing system; and a marker of high civilization on account of its monotheistic belief in a Virgin Mary-like Great Mother Goddess and her Christ-like dying and resurgent child.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 123.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. 123-124.

<sup>273</sup> Evans, *PM I*, 1; Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess* 51; Schoep, "Building the Labyrinth," 24.

### Evans and the Gilliérons: Manufacturers of the Minoans

Minoan scholars over the past three decades have generally concurred that Evans's extensive and superfluous contemporary reconstructions—or 'restitutions' as he preferred—of the archeological material at Knossos “effectively [blurred] the distinction between ancient and modern;” that Evans was all too willing to accept unprovenanced objects, fragments, fakes, and forgeries as veritable evidence of a prehistoric Aegean civilization; and that Evans and his team of restorers and artists, particularly the Gilliérons, were key inventors, manufacturers, and marketers of an idealized and subjective Minoan past.<sup>274</sup>

For nearly every aspect of his excavations at Knossos from 1900 to 1930, Evans and his team did not merely unearth ruins and artifacts, but they *rebuilt* them in a way that suited Evans's grand vision of the Minoan past; walls, floors, ceilings, columns, frescoes, and the faience Goddess statuettes all underwent liberal and exhaustive restoration and, in some cases, creation.<sup>275</sup> As Papadopoulos has observed, the Palace of Minos that stands today—from the 'Grand Staircase' of the 'Domestic Quarter' to the 'Queen's Megaron'—to which millions of tourists have flocked is *not* the structure that the Minoans would have known but is, rather, “an edifice of the 1920s and 1930s: a monument to modernity” (Fig. 7.3).<sup>276</sup> Ironically, the Palace of Minos enjoys the distinction of being one of the first reinforced concrete buildings ever erected on Crete.<sup>277</sup> Papadopoulos argues that excavation, interpretation, and restoration of the palace are

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<sup>274</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 91; Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 174.

<sup>275</sup> Boze, “Creating History By Re-Creating the Minoan Snake Goddess,” 4.

<sup>276</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 88.

<sup>277</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 1; Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 87.



“inseparable from the work and vision of Evans”; that the site of Knossos was never a ruin—Evans *made* it a ruin and effectively influenced the public’s perception of the Minoans.<sup>278</sup>

To clarify, Evans certainly did not begin his excavations with the intention of ‘modernizing’ the material culture of the Minoan past. Shortly after the first season, Evans realized that he had to somehow protect and support the fragile remains of the palace structure from disintegration; but what had begun as a strategy to preserve the “original fabric” of the site (such as roofing and the use of iron girders and wood-and-plaster columns for scaffolding) “evolved into full-scale recreation.”<sup>279</sup> As Papadopoulos and Lapatin have discussed, the Palace of Minos is as much a tribute to and an example of Art Nouveau and Art Deco architecture as it is to anything prior to the nineteenth century.<sup>280</sup>

The ‘Throne Room’ Complex is a much-discussed aspect of this liberal restoration program undertaken by Evans in the second phase of the excavation (Fig. 7.4). In 1900, Evans and his crew discovered one of the most important finds of the season, a gypsum ‘throne’ which immediately posed an issue of conservation since the back of the chair was plastered to the wall and thus could not be removed from the site to a museum and the ruins of the room were exposed to the elements; the following year, the ‘Throne Room’ was roofed over; in 1904, a more modern structure, a permanent, tiled, pitched-

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<sup>278</sup> Papadopoulos, John, “Knossos.” *The Conservation of Archaeological Sites in the Mediterranean Region* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1997): 94; “Inventing the Minoans,” 91.

<sup>279</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 131.

<sup>280</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 91; Lapatin, “Snake Goddesses, Fake Goddesses,” 131.

roof with iron girders, replaced the former structure. As time progressed, the restoration and ‘conservation’ of the room and its protective structure became increasingly elaborate with the assistance of architect Piet de Jong, who oversaw the addition of new “Technicolor Art Nouveau” frescoes, columns, two new stories, and a staircase.<sup>281</sup> The brightly colored ‘Throne Room’ Complex of 1930 was a far cry from the pile of inscrutable ruins that had been dug up in 1900.

Evans’s principal restorers, father-and-son duo Émile Gilliéron *père* and *fils*, were primarily responsible for the substantial ‘reconstitution,’ ‘completion,’ and in some cases re-creation, of the material evidence; their restorations are now amongst the most iconic and reproduced works of Minoan art: the “Ladies in Blue,” “Blue Boy,” and “Priest King” frescoes as well as a handful of ivory figurines, including HM 63 and HM 65 (Fig. 7.5). Émile Gilliéron *père*, a Swiss artist who specialized in archaeological drawing, had been employed by various archaeological schools in Athens and had, at one point, served as drawing master to the royal Greek court. Furthermore, Gilliéron operated a workshop in the fashionable Kolonaki district of Athens at Odos Skoufa 43, making him among the first of his countrymen to run a lucrative business that turned galvanoplastic and painted plaster replicas of ancient artworks, including Bronze Age frescoes and artifacts, into tangible profits.<sup>282</sup>

Along with a catalogue of replicas of finds from Schliemann’s excavations and other sites, *A Brief Account of E. Gilliéron’s Beautiful Copies of Mycenaean Antiquities in Galvano-Plastic* was printed around 1906; later, Gilliéron *père* and *fils* issued at least two editions of a multilingual catalogue, *Galvanoplastic Copies of Mycenaean and*

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<sup>281</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 106-108.

<sup>282</sup> Papadopoulos, “Inventing the Minoans,” 99.

*Cretan (Minoan) Antiquities*, in which replicas of finds recovered in Richard Seager's 1906–08 excavations at Mochlos and Pseira as well as finds from Evans's excavations at Knossos were available for purchase (Fig. 7.6).<sup>283</sup> According to Lapatin, these copies, despite their high cost, sold well and were commended in the sales literature for their high quality; before the outbreak of World War I, gilded replicas of the Vapheio cups were sold for 75 marks each (approximately \$250 today) and the 'complete' version of the Harvesters' Vase from Hagia Triada (the upper half is accurate to the original—the lower half is a complete invention) was priced at 100 marks, with the most expensive items consisting of copies of bulls' heads in silver plate with gilded horns from Mycenae and similar bulls' heads with glass eyes from Knossos, both of which were priced at 300 marks. Significantly, the Gilliérons' works were widely displayed in museum and university collections: the South Kensington (now the Victoria and Albert) Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, University College Dublin, the Winckelmann Institute, Harvard University, the University of Montpellier, the Ashmolean, the Fitzwilliam, and other institutions acquired Gilliéron replicas, but as Lapatin notes, these works "today [are] for the most part relegated to storerooms."<sup>284</sup>

It became clear that Minoan antiquities, in both their fragmented and heavily restored states, were immensely desirable to museum institutions as well as to private collectors. Yet, this demand for Cretan artifacts also stimulated the market for forgeries headed by illicit excavators, smugglers, and even those who worked closely with Evans. Workshops produced an array of goods to satisfy this demand, including stone carvings, bronzes, gold-work, seal stones, and ivory statuettes resembling HM 63 and HM 65, of

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<sup>283</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 136.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.* 138-39.

which at least fourteen of these unprovenanced ‘goddesses’ were purchased and displayed in museums and private collections.<sup>285</sup>

Evans himself was duped by these forgeries. While he *was* aware of their existence, he supposedly did not believe that modern craftsmen were capable of producing figurines of such high quality and thus “all too willingly accept some fakes as genuine and then employed these ‘artifacts’ as evidence that validated the authenticity of other unprovenanced ‘finds’ and helped to reconstruct prehistoric Cretan art and culture.” According to Lapatin, Evans acquired two fake Minoan figurines, his favorite being the “Boy God” (currently held by the Seattle Art Museum), which he had purchased from Parisian antiquities dealer Feuardent Frères in 1924 (Fig. 7.7).<sup>286</sup> Evans believed that the Boy God once formed a group with the “Boston Goddess,” an unprovenanced ivory statuette that arrived under mysterious circumstances at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in the summer of 1914. While this pairing certainly suited Evans’s notions of the Minoan Mother Goddess and her Divine Son, closer examination reveals that these statuettes are most likely fakes inspired by previous finds at Knossos produced to satisfy an enthusiastic and growing market for Minoan goddesses. Lapatin has argued that the pose and lack of genitalia present on the Boy God indicate that he is not a boy at all but rather a pre-pubescent female modeled after the white-fleshed figures on tip-toe in the “Taureador Fresco” from Knossos (Fig. 7.8). The Boston Goddess, he contends, is also a fake that combines the imagery and pose of HM 63 with precious gold and ivory, thus conveying “what was considered to be the most important imagery of ancient Crete

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<sup>285</sup> Lapatin, “Snake Goddesses, Fake Goddesses,” 33-34.

<sup>286</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 96.

in the most prestigious materials.”<sup>287</sup> He explains that genuine Minoan ivory statuettes “tend to be made of small pieces carefully fitted together” while the bodies of fakes “are of single large pieces.”<sup>288</sup>

Along with the slew of forgeries that have since come to light, the Gilliérons and their “extravagant” reconstructions have been subject to criticism by scholars in recent years, with Gere asserting their work to be “always crossing and recrossing the blurry boundary between restorations, reconstructions, replicas, and fakes.”<sup>289</sup> Fresco scenes were often misinterpreted and the artists had no qualms about combining fragments from different paintings to create an entirely original composition. Lapatin cites a couple cases of this ‘artistic liberty’ taken by the artists: first, a fresco depicting a monkey gathering saffron was reconstructed as a boy by Gilliéron *père* (subsequently titled the “Blue Boy” fresco); the composition of the “Taureador” fresco was completed from a series of fragments from separate scenes; and the famous “Ladies in Blue” fresco actually went through *two* phases of restoration, the first under Gilliéron *père* and re-restored by Gilliéron *fils* after the earthquake of 1926 when the plaster was damaged and the lost original fragments has to be replaced—in the words of Lapatin, “the familiar image of this ‘ancient’ fresco is, in fact, the restoration of a re-creation—or a re-creation of a restoration.”<sup>290</sup>

There is, of course, the issue of Evans’s inclination to wholeheartedly accept these reconstitutions, forgeries, and unprovenanced artifacts and paintings as veritable material evidence. As has been touched upon in the previous chapter, the Snake Goddess figurines

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<sup>287</sup> Lapatin, “Snake Goddesses, Fake Goddesses,” 35.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>289</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 111-12.

<sup>290</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 134-36.

were discovered within the ‘Temple Repositories’ in incomplete fragments but, under the direction of Evans and the artistic skills of the Gilliérons and Danish artist Halvor Bagge, they received extensive restoration work. The extent to which the figurines were reconstituted, how many pieces the figurines were found in, how the artists made their decisions, and the rationale for the restorations, were not specified by Evans in *The Palace of Minos*. Evans and his team filled in the blanks, so to speak, by adding new limbs, accessories, and snakes to the figurines for which he had the most fragments: HM 63 was given a nose and a mouth, shoulder-length brown hair, and a skirt identical to the fragmentary HM 64 while HM 65 received a head and waist-length dark hair. She also was given a tiara reconstituted from a tiny fragment of uncertain original purpose topped with a small feline, the purpose of which was also unknown; a second snake was added to her hand complete the presumed pair.<sup>291</sup>

Several issues arise from the reconstituted versions of HM 63 and HM 65. First, they have become representative not only of the splendor and sophistication of Neopalatial Crete but also of the high status of Minoan women and the fashion that was worn by elite women in this period.<sup>292</sup> Secondly, it is assumed that the figurines are typical and characteristic of Neopalatial art and cult activities. Thirdly, the presumed religious significance of the figurines as originally suggested by Evans—that they are evidence of the worship of the chthonic manifestation of the Minoan Mother Goddess—has achieved the status of accepted authority.

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<sup>291</sup> Bonney, “Disarming the Snake Goddess,” 173-74.

<sup>292</sup> Jones, Bernice, “The Minoan Snake Goddess, New Interpretations of her Costume and Identity” *POTNIA: Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Belgium: University of Liège, 2001): 259.

Evans, according to Bonney, by transmitting the “ambiguous remnants” of the figurines “into complete, fashionable, and visually arresting images” effectively imposed “coherent content, packaging them, in effect, to convey his understanding of the ‘truths’ that underlay the figurines.”<sup>293</sup> As such, the restored figurines are problematic in that they ultimately demonstrate *not* the absolute verification of a Snake Goddess cult but rather the manipulation of archaeological evidence in order to suit Evans’ desired outcome. And since these assumptions rely on the downplaying of, or complete disregard for, the restoration process undertaken by Evans and his team, modern scholars run the risk of discussing the Snake Goddess figurines as they appear today as though they were products of a Neopalatial workshop.

The fact of the matter is that no Bronze Age craftsman worked on the Snake Goddess figurines or “Ladies in Blue” fresco as they are presented today. They are irrefutably products of the twentieth century, crafted by the Gilliérons and Bagge under the direction of Evans, and thus there is nothing ‘authentic’ about them. Yet they have endured, troublingly, as some of the most recognizable images of Minoan Crete. For instance, in *Greece: History and Treasures of an Ancient Civilization*, Minoan Crete is represented pictorially by Evans’s reconstruction of the Palace of Minos and the frescoes that decorate it, as well as by finds from Evans’s excavations including HM 65. Significantly, the author does not mention Evans, his excavations, nor the restorative work completed by the Gilliérons. The caption for the “Ladies in Blue” fresco notes that it is from the ‘Throne Room’ at Knossos and is dated c. 1600 BCE, while the caption for HM 65 briefly states “The famous faience figurine in lively colors represents the Snake

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<sup>293</sup> Bonney, “Disarming the Snake Goddess,” 175

Goddess and is from a cult room at the Palace of Knossos; 1600-1580 BCE

(Archaeological Museum, Heraklion).”<sup>294</sup> The author thus presents these works as genuine vestiges of the prehistoric past rather than taking into consideration Evans’s role in their reconstruction and recreation. The eighth edition of *Janson’s History of Art, Vol. I*, a common survey text for undergraduate art history courses, does well to note that “Evans’s work at Knossos included a considerable amount of reconstruction [...] In fact, it was Evans, not the Minoans, who built much of what a visitor now sees at Knossos,” the description of HM 65, titled *Snake Goddess*, similarly disregards any reference to its heavy restoration, thereby taking the figurine at face-value:

Archaeologists did find two small-scale faience statuettes from the Middle Minoan III phase (about 1650 BCE) at Knossos. One shows a female figure raising a snake in each hand and wearing a headdress topped by a feline creature [...] She is clad in a flounced skirt similar to those worn by women in the *Grandstand Fresco* [...], and bares her breasts. Her tiny waist is another consistent feature of Minoan representations of humans, like the men on the *Harvester Vase* [...] These statuettes came to light along with remnants of furniture in pits sunk in the floor of a room on the west side of the central court. Because some ancient religions associated snakes with earth deities and male fertility, and because of this statuette’s bared breasts, some scholars have associated them with a mother goddess or ritual attendants, and identified the room as a shrine.<sup>295</sup>

The text describes HM 65 as though it were discovered unbroken *in situ* with the cat-topped tiara and snake pair already attached rather than disclaiming that these features were added during the restoration process by Evans. The comparison between a figure that is mainly a product of the twentieth century to Bronze Age works that depict the human form also diminishes the extent to which HM 65 was reassembled to complement

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<sup>294</sup> Maggi, S., *Greece: History and Treasures of an Ancient Civilization* (New York: Metro Books, 2007): 32, 39.

<sup>295</sup> Davies, P. J. E., Denny, W. B., Hofrichter, F. F., Jacobs, J., Roberts, A. M., Simon, D. L. *Janson’s History of Art*. vol i., eighth ed (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2011): 87, 91-92.



Evans's grand vision of the Minoan past, thereby taking the figurine to be an exemplar of the Minoan representation of women. Additionally, the passage reveals just how much of Evans's original interpretations have become the authority for Bronze Age art: the connection between snakes and earth deities, the title of 'mother goddess' and 'ritual attendants' (votaries), and the identification of the findspot as a shrine were all conclusions made by Evans in the chapter dedicated to the Snake Goddess of the 'Temple Repositories' in the first volume of *The Palace of Minos*.

Minoan fakes, re-creations, and restorations have undeniably played a key role in the fashioning of modern conceptions of the art and culture of the Bronze Age Aegean. That Evans's paradigm of Cretan archaeology rests so heavily on these modern 'artifacts' is troublesome because of the weight his authority still holds; fakes and reconstitutions—and the terminology and labels produced as byproducts—have been an enduring presence in the popular history of the Minoans for over a century to the extent that they have entered the art historical cannon through textbooks, encyclopedias, scholarly journals, and more popular books and publications.<sup>296</sup> Their presence within the standard bibliography ultimately affects the training of students, an issue discussed by Professor Diane Boze in her own examination of the modern 'creation' of Evans's reconstituted Snake Goddess. She asserts that almost all aspects of Evans's Minoans can and should be questioned by both students and educators and criticizes textbooks that dismiss the extent to which the Minoan past is a twentieth-century creation:

Much of what is recognized about this culture is based on his [Evan's] modern re-creations, restorations, reconstitutions. There is very little about the general presentation such as in general education books or popular culture that escapes the ambivalences that are a part of the formulation of histories. Consequently in textbooks, for example, even if the analyses expressly acknowledge some of the

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<sup>296</sup> Lapatin, "Snake Goddesses, Fake Goddesses," 36.

ambiguities involved in the information, the presentation—with its reproductions clearly labelled ‘Snake Goddess,’ or ‘Toreador Fresco,’ or ‘Palace of Minos’—implies a certainty that it is easy for both non-expert instructor and learning student to accept, and by doing so, help to promote.<sup>297</sup>

Lapatin, who has researched and written extensively on the issue of Minoan fakes and reconstitution and has expressed his doubts as to the authenticity of many Minoan goddess figurines, echoes this proposition. He has declared that the ‘artifacts’ fashioned by “Cretan workmen of the twentieth century A.D., rather than the mid-second millennium B.C.” not only *misrepresent* the Minoans but also serve as testimony to have scholarly interpretations “can be distorted by the desires of the present.”<sup>298</sup> Fortunately, many of these forgeries have been removed from museum displays over the past two decades. A copy of the Boy-God figurine from the Ashmolean was removed as was the original from the Seattle Art Museum, and a ‘Minoan’ stone goddess from Cambridge University’s Fitzwilliam Museum has been taken off exhibit (Fig. 7.9). Even the Boston Goddess has been quietly removed from view, a significant turn in events considering that the MFA has long-defended the figurine’s authenticity. However, there remains the issue of popular history books and textbooks presenting key heavily-reconstituted Minoan artifacts, like HM 63 and HM 65, as veritable products of the Bronze Age and labeling them with titles like *Snake Goddess* that convey a sense of certitude rather than expressly acknowledging the significant amount of restoration and reconstruction they have undergone.

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<sup>297</sup> Boze, *Creating History By Re-Creating the Minoan Snake Goddess*,” 30.

<sup>298</sup> Lapatin, “Snake Goddesses, Fake Goddesses,” 36.

The Great Goddess Debate: Modern Critiques (and Reclamation) of the Goddess Thesis

Evans's interpretations have been further critiqued for their subscription to and propagation of the idea of matriarchal prehistory which, as discussed in chapter three, was an evolutionist paradigm that contended that the earliest societies, from the beginning of time to the rise of the patriarchy, were gynocentric or matriarchal and representative of a more primitive stage of human development. This conceptualization of human prehistory gained popularity and widespread acceptance in academic circles in the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly among British anthropologists (it was only largely disregarded in the early years of the twentieth century).<sup>299</sup> The correspondence between Evans's Great Mother Goddess and her Dying Son and the divine mother-son trope outlined by Frazer's *The Golden Bough* has also been noted. Over the past two decades the discourse in Minoan studies has placed particular emphasis on Evans's adherence to the prehistoric matriarchy paradigm with scholars, notably Eller, Morris, Lapatin, and Gere, concurring that Evans's understanding of a gynocentric Minoan religion was influenced to a great degree by matriarchal theory. Evans's compliance with this theory is problematic, not only because of his prevailing and, until recently, unchallenged authority in Minoan studies, but also because it directly affects how images depicting the feminine form, like the Snake Goddess figurines, are (re)interpreted.

First and foremost, the fact that Evans took part in matriarchal discourse is generally agreed upon by contemporary scholars. According to Eller, Evans's exposure to the popular work of his contemporary Frazer likely motivated him to shift his analysis of

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<sup>299</sup> Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons*, 7.

Minoan religion to that of a Goddess-centric cult; that the Minoan Mother Goddess and her Son consciously resembles the ‘universal trope’ outlined in *The Golden Bough*; that “This particular goddess, the Great Minoan Mother Goddess, was invented by two knights—Sirs Arthur [Evans] and James [Frazer]”; and that Evans was so attracted to this theory that he was willing to overlook evidence in some cases while accepting dubious artifacts like the “Boy God” statuette in order to conform his vision of the Minoan past to this Frazerian scheme.<sup>300</sup> Gere goes further as to critique the very essence of what Evans’s Minoan Mother Goddess stood for: a “primitive and yet complex, nurturing, powerful, and fecund” archetype of divine femininity that represented a bygone era of gynocentrism. The theory of matriarchal prehistory, to Gere, permeated his interpretations of almost every aspect of the Palace of Minos. She notes that in the first excavation report, he describes the seat of the gypsum ‘throne’ in the titular room as “hollowed out to suit the form of a human body” while remarking that the “hollowed space” of another ‘throne’ crudely carved and made of wood in an adjoining room was “larger” and thus making it probable “that this was intended for a woman [...] while the seat of the [gypsum] throne seems better adapted for a man.”<sup>301</sup> Gere ponders why Evans would consider a *larger* seat to better suit a woman, to which she refers to a footnote which clarifies his position:

The prominence of the female sex in the Mycenaean period—as illustrated by the cult-scenes on the signet rings—might itself favour the view that a queen had occupied the throne here [...] But it must not be forgotten that the masks on the royal tombs of Mycenae were of the male sex. The leading part played by Goddesses and female votaries in the cult-scenes may have been due to the long survival in the domain of religion of ideas attaching to the matriarchal system.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Eller, “Two Knights and a Goddess,” 95.

<sup>301</sup> Evans, “Provisional Report, 1902,” 38.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. 43.

Evans appears to insinuate here that while matriarchal rule dissolved into earlier prehistory (thus paving the way for men to rule temporally), spiritual authority remained firmly in the hands of women in Minoan civilization.<sup>303</sup> This sentiment is echoed in the third volume of *The Palace of Minos* where Evans writes: “It is certain that, however much the male had asserted himself in the domain of government by the great days of Minoan Civilization, the Religion still continued to reflect the older matriarchal stage of social development.”<sup>304</sup> While Evans makes no direct reference here to Bachofen, it is clear that his predecessor’s evolutionary schema “in which the nexus of mother-right (matriarchy)-primordial goddess lies at an early and primitive stage of human development” presents itself in this quote.<sup>305</sup> The similitude between Evans’s notion of a gynocentric Minoan religion indicative of an earlier matriarchal period with the universal matriarchal stage outlined by Bachofen in *Das Mutterrecht* is certainly difficult to disregard which has led modern scholars to label Evans as “a true heir of Bachofen.”<sup>306</sup>

If we accept that Evans indeed applied the theory of matriarchal prehistory to his work at Knossos, we must ask *how* this affected his interpretations of the images of Minoan femininity. If nineteenth-century matriarchal theory constitutes an androcentric paradigm, does Evans’s notion of the Great Minoan Mother Goddess also rest on androcentric principles? Gere insists that his Great Goddess, with her multiple manifestations, was “a thoroughly modernist female archetype” that was distilled from many different images “like one of the ‘composite photographs’ so beloved of fin de siècle criminologists, in which the imposition of dozens of different faces one on top of

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<sup>303</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 80.

<sup>304</sup> Evans, *PM 3*, 457.

<sup>305</sup> Morris, “From Ideologies of Motherhood to ‘Collecting Mother Goddesses,’” 71.

<sup>306</sup> Lapatin, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess*, 104.

another was supposed to yield the typical features of a murderer or a hysteric.”As he attempted to reconstruct the sexual politics of Minoan Crete, the “coordinates” that Evans used to define Minoan womanhood “consisted of a gloriously heterogeneous index of fin-de-siècle assumptions about femininity, in which Victorian stereotypes of the spiritualized angel in the house jolted uneasily with Orientalist visions of the harem, and smoking-room quips about the eternal frivolity of womankind confronted the New Woman’s androgyny.”<sup>307</sup>

Modern scholarship has also suggested that Evans’s concept of a Minoan Mother Goddess was informed not only by the writings of Frazer, Bachofen, and the intellectual climate of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, but also by the Victorian idealization of, and concern with, the Western construction of motherhood. The notion of the idealized mother subscribed to the belief that the most important contributions a woman could make to her country are her fecundity and fulfillment of domestic role—concerns intimately related to the broader European anxiety about the population and welfare of the nation-state.<sup>308</sup>

C.E. Morris has argued that Evans’s descriptions and interpretations of female imagery in Minoan art present themselves “through a language of maternity,” particularly in the case of his discussion of the Snake Goddess figurines in the first volume of *The Palace of Minos* where he notes “matronly proportions” of HM 63’s bare breasts; that Evans associates snakes with the domestic sphere may also indicate his subscription to the Victorian relationship between womanhood, maternity, and domesticity. And whereas the sensual and erotic are specifically oriental, the Minoan Mother Goddess conforms to

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<sup>307</sup> Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 80-81.

<sup>308</sup> Morris, “From Ideologies of Motherhood to ‘Collecting Mother Goddesses.’” 72.

the Victorian model of motherhood in her Virgin Mary-esque integration of maternity and virginity.<sup>309</sup>

When Evans describes the Great Minoan Goddess as a “Goddess of Maternity” belonging to “the very ancient class of Virgin Mothers,” it becomes evident that Victorian notions of femininity and chastity were applied to his conception of the deity; the Great Minoan Mother Goddess is, at once, both an emblem of Victorian gender constructs and thus an archetype of the sophisticated European civilization, a testament to modernity, and an exemplar of a primitive yet powerful prehistoric cult of femininity.<sup>310</sup> As a result, the Minoan Mother Goddess is fraught with complex and antithetical connotations, all of which derive from traditional notions of femininity and the theory of universal matriarchal prehistory. Critical consensus indicates that Evans’s reconstruction of Minoan religion projected onto the prehistoric past Victorian notions of maternity as well as the evolutionist notion of a primitive feminine, nature-worshipping, pacifist belief system as presided over by an all-encompassing Great Mother Goddess.

However, following its enthusiastic reception in the late-nineteenth century, the theories of matriarchal prehistory and the worship of a prehistoric Mother Goddess have been abandoned by the majority of modern scholars, who insist that there is little sound archaeological evidence to support the idea of a matriarchal, goddess-worshipping prehistoric past. Moreover, academics argue that ‘meta-narratives’ like the matriarchal thesis are precarious, for they cast religion as static development despite momentous social changes over the millennia. Additionally, they warn that the worship of a Mother Goddess who presides over cosmological creation, fertility, and death does *not*

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid. 74-75.

<sup>310</sup> Evans, “Provisional Report, 1903,” 86.

necessarily entail nor reflect a “pacific matriarchy” or “female power” in prehistoric society.<sup>311</sup> Thus, the matriarchal thesis relies on a “particularistic version of prehistory,” one that is not shared by either archaeologists or anthropologists; rather, it is reflective of “our cultural needs and desires, and those of its earlier narrators.”<sup>312</sup>

The late-twentieth century witnessed a resurgence in the matriarchal thesis that, once again, fed into new cultural needs and desires. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, just as archaeology began to rebuke the idea that every prehistoric figurine is representative of a Mother Goddess archetype in favor of a more nuanced and contextual engagement with the material evidence, the nineteenth-century notion of a universal matriarchal, goddess-centered prehistoric past was being revived in a transparently feminist way by sectors of the new women’s movement who sought to ‘reclaim’ the ideas of prehistoric matriarchy and the primacy of a Great Goddess.<sup>313</sup> Most proponents of the new Goddess movement held the view that “there was a time when the nurturing capacities of women, ‘the feminine,’ and nature were celebrated, and when authority and power were more evenly distributed among the sexes.”<sup>314</sup> Decisive in the popularization of the feminist reclamation of prehistoric matriarchy and Goddess worship were several publications, including Elizabeth Gould Davis’s *The First Sex* (1971). Davis argues that women were literally the original human beings who reproduced parthenogenetically, further contending that the matriarchal order of human society was overthrown by a

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<sup>311</sup> Talalay, L. E., “A Feminist Boomerang: The Great Goddess of Greek Prehistory” *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Edinburgh University Press, 2003): 7.

<sup>312</sup> Eller, C., “Relativizing the Patriarchy: the Sacred History of the Feminist Spirituality Movement” *History of Religions* 30 (1991): 283; Eller, *Gentlemen and Amazons*, 13.

<sup>313</sup> Morris, “From Ideologies of Motherhood to ‘Collecting Mother Goddesses,’” 70; Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 244.

<sup>314</sup> Talalay, “A Feminist Boomerang,” 8.



patriarchal revolution, epitomized in the Christian church; and Merlin Stone's 1976 *When God Was a Woman*, which also perceives the Christian church as a means of disseminating patriarchy and male monotheism in the West and describes a similar shift from prehistoric goddess worship and female power to patriarchy and the worship of a male deity.<sup>315</sup>

Also stemming from this re-imagining of the prehistoric past in the late-twentieth century was the rise of the feminist spirituality movement, of which Goddess worship, neopaganism, divination, and witchcraft are encompassing. As defined by Eller, feminist spirituality is syncretistic as it borrows and adopts certain practices and beliefs from other cultures. Significantly, the idea of prehistoric matriarchy is the keystone to this movement's 'sacred history,' which describes "an alternative to male dominance such that feminists are freed from the onus of demanding social order that is utterly unprecedented in human history and granted the much easier task of working for a return to a former, historically tested, and supposedly quite successful pattern of social organization." This sacred history "is an effort to deal religiously with a challenge faced by all feminists: that of finding an adequate explanation for the existence and persistence of male dominance."<sup>316</sup> In spite of its overtly feminist standpoint, the movement's employment of a revisionist history of Western civilization is, in essence, analogous to the nineteenth-century paradigm propagated by Bachofen and Frazer, in its reliance on the traditional matriarchal view of cultural evolutionism. Thus, while Bachofen's evolutionist interpretations have been discredited by academia for over a century, his

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<sup>315</sup> Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 244-45.

<sup>316</sup> Eller, "Relativizing the Patriarchy," 281-82.

legacy has endured through the contemporary Goddess movement and in discussions of prehistoric female figurines.<sup>317</sup>

The modern Goddess and feminist spirituality movements are crucial to the issue of ‘matriarchal Minoans’ because, despite having been discredited by art historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists alike, the matriarchal paradigm continues to dominate and shape both academic and popular discussions of Minoan spirituality and interpretations of images of the female form in the material culture. Over the past thirty years or so, an intense debate on the nature of female divinity in prehistoric European and Mediterranean societies has stirred between academics and members of the Goddess movement as both sides have sought to ‘claim’ these images of the female form: Goddess movement writers have accused archaeologists and prehistorians of willfully ignoring evidence of female supremacy in prehistory while contemporary academics have largely dismissed the Goddess thesis altogether.<sup>318</sup> Advocates of the Goddess movement have repeatedly employed female iconography from Minoan Crete as material evidence of the prehistoric worship of a Great Goddess cult.

Most notably, the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas championed the belief that the abundance of Neolithic female figurines discovered at sites in Greece and south-eastern Europe is indicative of an early, pan-Mediterranean belief in a Great Mother Goddess, a matriarchal social structure, and a period when women ruled supreme or in equal partnership with men.<sup>319</sup> Gimbutas effectively became the most influential and

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<sup>317</sup> Meskell L., “Goddesses, Gimbutas, and New Age Archaeology.” *Antiquity* 69 (1995): 77.

<sup>318</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 6.

<sup>319</sup> Talalay “A Feminist Boomerang,” 308; also see Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe* (1974) and Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (1989).

authoritative voice of the Goddess movement as her recognized academic standing and experience in fieldwork at southeast European sites appeared to offer archaeological validity to this revamped prehistoric Goddess paradigm.<sup>320</sup>

In a chapter dedicated to Minoan religion in her 1999 work *The Living Goddesses*, Gimbutas claims that numerous manifestations of the Great Minoan Goddess—identified as the goddess of regeneration, goddess of childbirth, the pregnant vegetation goddess, the vulture goddess, and the snake goddess—are descended from the Neolithic goddesses of Old Europe while the Minoan young dying god is comparable to the Neolithic “sorrowful dying god.”<sup>321</sup> She further postulates that the feminine iconography represented on Minoan seals, rings, frescoes, and sculptures, reflects the gynocentric spirituality of the Old European Neolithic as Crete (and other Aegean islands) were among the few regions that remained unaffected by Indo-European-speaking invaders during the third millennium. The precedence of the divine female form in the iconography thus suggests that “the Minoans continued the Neolithic artistic and goddess-centered cultures” in the worshipping of a Great Goddess.<sup>322</sup> Among the images employed to substantiate her thesis are the Snake Goddess statuettes (HM 63 and HM 65), which are taken to represent “the snake goddess or priestess performing snake dances or other rituals connected with life’s regeneration after the winter season.” Gimbutas’s labeling of the statuettes as ‘snake goddess’ and ‘priestess’ is in line with

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<sup>320</sup> Morris, “From Ideologies of Motherhood to ‘Collecting Mother Goddesses,’” 70; Meskell, *Goddesses, Gimbutas, and New Age Archaeology*,” 74.

<sup>321</sup> Gimbutas, M., *Living Goddesses* (London: University of California Press, 1999): 209.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.* 197-214.

Evans's original assessments, as is her conclusion that the Snake Goddess constitutes just one aspect of the Great Minoan Goddess.<sup>323</sup>

Gimbutas's interpretations have found widespread popularity among members of the Goddess movement, who have employed her writings to legitimate their own feminist positions on Minoan art. "As Gimbutas has shown," write Ann Baring and Jules Cashford, "Crete was the direct inheritor of the Neolithic culture of Old Europe."<sup>324</sup> Taking another cue from Gimbutas, the authors proceed to describe a Great Minoan Goddess of life, death, and regeneration that had survived from earlier Neolithic spirituality and, once again, HM 63 and HM 65 are used as visual evidence of the worship of the Great Goddess in Minoan religion. The open bodice and bared breasts of HM 63 are "eloquent of the gift of nurture" while the "caduceus-like image of intertwined snakes on the belly suggests that the goddess whose womb gives forth and takes back life is experienced as a unity." The pose of HM 65, on the other hand, contains "all the ritualized gesture of divine statement." Moreover, the net pattern on her skirt, "which gathers significance from its Palaeolithic and Neolithic ancestry, suggests that she is the weaver of the web of life, which is perpetually woven from her womb." That the skirt has seven layers is representative "of the days of the moon's four quarters, which divide into two the waxing and waning halves of the cycle, like the Neolithic cross inside the circle" while the two snakes HM 65 holds symbolize "two poles of dualism." The authors conclude that the "trance-like, almost mask-like, expression of these two goddesses comprises a meditation upon this theme of regeneration."<sup>325</sup> These

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Baring, A. and Cashford J., *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* (London: Clays Ltd., 1991): 109.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid. 111-12

interpretations pose several issues, as the authors assume that HM 63 and HM 65 appear now as they had in the Bronze Age. They neglect to acknowledge that both statuettes were found in incomplete fragments with HM 65 having been unearthed *headless* and holding what appeared to be only *one* snake. In all, these conclusions are unsubstantiated by the actual material evidence.

Yet, despite its overwhelming acceptance in the contemporary Goddess movement, the majority of Aegean prehistorians and Minoan archaeologists and art historians have rejected the prehistoric Goddess thesis as well as the reading of the iconography as evidence of a matriarchal Minoan society. Moreover, this perspective cannot be accounted for by any accumulations of supporting archaeological data over the past few decades. In particular, feminist archaeologists have been harsh critics of goddess feminists, who they perceive as “trivializing the discipline of archaeology, irresponsibly inventing pasts that suit their personal tastes and political interests, and reproducing in the prehistoric past a set of gender stereotypes that they feel ill serve women today.”<sup>326</sup> For L. Talalay, the Goddess thesis is “an unsalutary alternative to androcentric interpretations” that ultimately “acts as a boomerang to the women’s movement and the future of gender studies” in its deeply rooted in nineteenth-century mentality which has continued to permeate modern scholarship.<sup>327</sup>

The theory of matriarchal prehistory has been criticized as “almost insultingly simplistic” in its portrayal of the complex and shifting gender roles that existed in antiquity and essentialist in its assumption that “the elevated status of women was

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<sup>326</sup> Eller, C. “The Religious Use of Prehistoric Imagery in Contemporary Goddess Spirituality” *Public Archaeology* 3 (2003): 80.

<sup>327</sup> Talalay, “A Feminist Boomerang,” 308-09; 314.

ultimately due to their reproductive capabilities,” thus locking women within “an unchanging domestic sphere” that serves to isolate women as outside of history. Talalay warns that with the enduring popularity of the Goddess thesis in the literature, women’s hypothetical dominion in the prehistoric past “will continue to be viewed as *given* and not *earned*.” In order that women are not perceived as cultural *objects* rather than cultural *agents* in both the past and present, she suggests that feminist archaeology seeks to shift that perspective “by identifying how and in what contexts women were active participants in society.”<sup>328</sup>

This sentiment is shared by feminist archaeologist L. Meskell, who argues that, while the idea of a universal prehistoric matriarchy “appears to embrace aspects of cognitive, gender and even feminist archaeologies, the interpretations it presents are simply hopeful and idealistic creations reflecting the contemporary search for a social utopia.”<sup>329</sup> Meskell asserts that Gimbutas’s publications are fundamentally flawed because female figurines are considered and interpreted largely to the exclusion of male and sexless examples, a selection that ultimately shaped the vision of a single, omnipresent female deity. Her assumption that the role of women in the Neolithic was not subordinate to men, due to the ‘exclusivity’ of these female figurines, is also unsatisfactory because male, sexless, and zoomorphic figures do exist from this period, making the notion of an omnipotent Mother Goddess “difficult to support.”<sup>330</sup> Like Talalay, Meskell perceives the Goddess thesis to be a detriment to feminist archaeology and serious gender/feminist studies of the prehistoric past; that by emphasizing one sex to

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid. 317-18.

<sup>329</sup> Meskell, “Goddesses, Gimbutas, and New Age Archaeology,” 74.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. 76, 80.

the exclusion of another, this paradigm—fought with nineteenth-century sentiments of cultural evolutionism—only serves to threaten “the interpretive integrity of archaeology.”<sup>331</sup>

The pronounced paradigmatic dichotomy between archaeologists and the Goddess writers points to the need for a unified, more systematic process for better understanding prehistoric female figurines. Goodison and Morris have provided several helpful steps that allow such objects to be recontextualized by archaeologists, scholars, and feminists alike:

- 1) First and foremost, describe, handle, and draw the artifact to avoid making interpretations while missing important details.
- 2) Explore the *find* context. Where was the object discovered? How might it have ended up there? What other objects were discovered at the findspot?
- 3) Explore the *social* context. What other evidence is available for understanding the society in which the artifact was produced?
- 4) Explore the *religious* context. Can cult places, ritual paraphernalia, depictions of ritual activity be identified?
- 5) Take into consideration *time* and *chronology*. What is the historical context of the figurine?
- 6) Finally, consider, evaluate, and be responsive to other current scholarship on the subject.

Unless it is properly situated in the archaeological record through the process of recontextualization, the artifact in question becomes “simply a passive object onto which

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid. 84.

the beholder can project his or her fantasies.”<sup>332</sup> In the case of HM 63 and HM 65, recontextualization allows for an investigation of other possible purposes and significance beyond being ‘cult images.’ Bonney’s publication, in particular (discussed in the previous chapter), succeeds in recontextualizing the figurines by broadening the scope of her investigation to evaluate not only their religious context but also their physical, social and chronological contexts. In doing so, she arrives at the conclusion that HM 63 and HM 65 are *not* cult images because there is minimal evidence for cult worship of a Snake Goddess, but they are instead prestige goods produced to exemplify the claims of the burgeoning elite class in Neopalatial Knossos. She cites iconographic evidence from Minoan Crete and the Levant, with support from the work of her contemporary B. Jones, to claim that the figurines are Cretan-Syrian hybrids. By consciously seeking to recontextualize the figurines through challenging and reassessing Evans’s problematic narrative Bonney’s work is meritorious and worthy of consideration by the field of the Bronze Age Aegean.

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<sup>332</sup> Goodison and Morris, *Ancient Goddesses*, 14-16.



## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The empirical method of the discipline of archaeology has demanded impartiality from archaeologists; they must proceed *from* the material evidence *to* their conclusions with the least possible amount of personal interference.<sup>333</sup> Yet, the tendency of archaeologists to emphasize and prioritize certain facets of the archaeological record, such as social power and status, gender dynamics, or religion and ritual practices, to the exclusion of other aspects of the material culture, is nothing new. As the last chapter stressed, Evans began his excavations at Knossos with a particular vision of the Minoans and a toolkit of pre-established conceptions about the prehistoric past. His interpretations and reconstructions of the archaeological remains at Knossos, including HM 63 and HM 65, reflect a certain agenda that emphasized superiority of European prehistoric societies over contemporaneous civilizations in the Near East and Egypt.

This thesis, like many publications on the topic of the Bronze Age Aegean over the past thirty years, has attempted to examine aspects of Minoan religion and iconographic representations of ritual action by recontextualizing and deconstructing the primary evidence unearthed by Evans. Furthermore, it has sought to remain mindful of the problematic methodological processes and theoretical frameworks employed by Evans over the course of his prolific academic and archaeological career. Having closely considered the implications of Evans's initial interpretations of the material evidence, specifically regarding HM 63 and HM 65, the author has come to the conclusion that the central issue lies, *not* in the fundamental flaws and Eurocentric ramifications of his

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid. 9.

interpretations but rather in the enduring legacy of Evans's narrative in Minoan studies, as evidenced in the pages of several survey books in art history. Fortunately, the past thirty years have witnessed a major disciplinary shift in which thorough and holistic recontextualizations of the Minoan past aim to challenge Evans's inadequate methodological and archaeological practices and interpretations: scholarship, by and large, recognizes that Evans was working within "an epistemological paradigm and an interpretative ideology with a long and persuasive history" centered on social evolutionism, androcentric notions of a matriarchal prehistory, and the mythical history of the European nation-state.<sup>334</sup>

Nevertheless, scholars must remain conscious of how their own academic fields and environments shape their perspective of the Minoan past, and they must recognize that the Minoan canon is malleable and ever-changing. As centuries' worth of discourse demonstrates, the rewriting of the Minoan narrative persists as long as the methodological principles and standards of the discipline evolve. The Snake Goddess serves as a testament to the malleability of this narrative. Her identity and purpose change with the times: to Evans, she embodies one of the many manifestations of the Great Mother Goddess; to Goddess writers, she is proof of the survival of early gynocentric Goddess worship in Bronze Age society; to modern archaeologists, she is a product of fantasy, unsubstantiated by the actual iconographic evidence. As the discipline continues to develop and reflect more inclusive methodologies and practices, and until more iconographic and textual evidence comes to light, the identities of the Snake Goddess

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<sup>334</sup> Preziosi, D., "Archaeology as Museology: Re-Thinking the Minoan Past" *Labyrinth Revisited: Rethinking 'Minoan' Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010): 36.

figurines—and the nature of Minoan religion generally—will remain a much contended topic of discussion.

At the same time, archaeologists, art historians, and Goddess writers alike must be aware of our own place in history and contemporary debate, and recognize that, like Evans, we are all products of our time; that the social, political, and ideological contexts that we situated ourselves within inevitably shape our thoughts and perceptions of the Minoan past. While no prehistorian is completely free of partisanship, we must collectively strive our hardest to investigate the past with thoughtful consideration and open minds. In other words, all competing and conflicting reconstructions of the prehistoric past must be debated in a way that is both respectful and receptive. Finally, it must be understood that no single group ‘owns’ the Minoans and their material culture. A crucial aspect of HM 63 and HM 65’s popularity and endurance in both mainstream popular culture, New Age religion, and in academia derives from the objective beauty and craftsmanship of the objects themselves. In the end, scientific privilege holds no place to dictate an individual’s spiritual or aesthetic connection to art.

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APPENDIX OF IMAGES

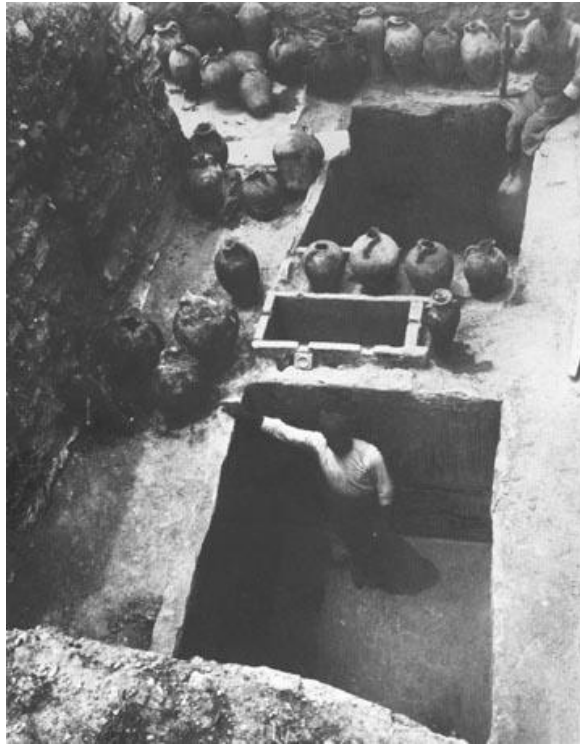


Figure 1.1. The ‘Temple Repositories’ and their contents being unearthed in May, 1903. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



Figure 1.2. The ‘Temple Repositories’ as can be seen today by visitors at Knossos. (Bryn Mawr College, Mellink Archive).

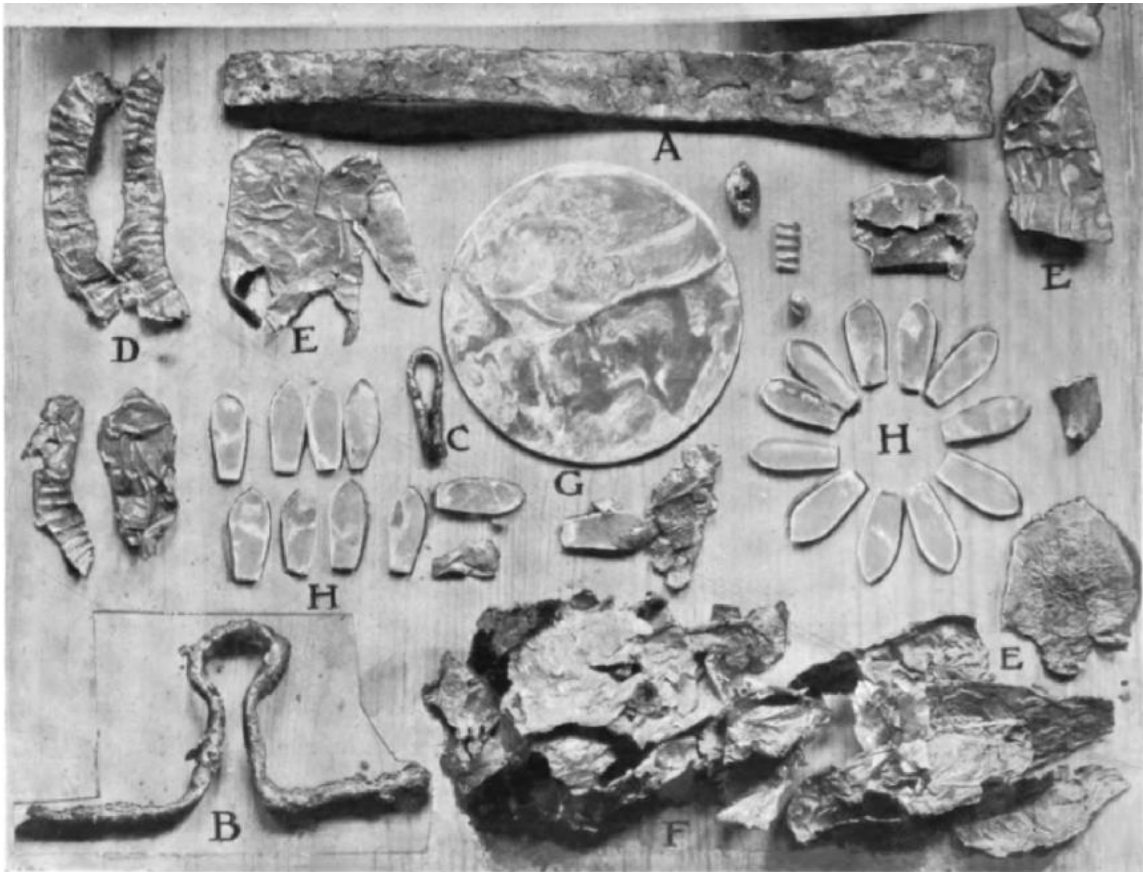


FIG. 337. FRAGMENTARY RELICS FROM W. REPOSITORY: A. BRONZE CLAMP; B, C. BRONZE HANDLES; D. GOLD-FOIL FROM RIBBED CRYSTAL BARS; E, F, GOLD-FOIL FOR VARIOUS INLAYS; G. CRYSTAL DISK WITH SILVER BACKING; H. CRYSTAL PETALS OF MARGUERITE PATTERN.

Figure 1.3. Various relics and fragmentary artifacts discovered in the 'Temple Repositories' by Evans and his team. Photographed in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1.



a.



b.

Figure 1.4. a. A photograph of the contents of the ‘Shrine of the Snake Goddess’ arranged by Evans, 1903 (*The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1). b. The reconstructed Snake Goddess figurines HM 63 (left) and HM 65 (right) in their display case at the Archaeological Museum in Heraklion, Crete. (Heraklion Museum).



Figure 1.5. Sir Arthur Evans admiring his finds at Knossos. (Asmolean Museum, Oxford).



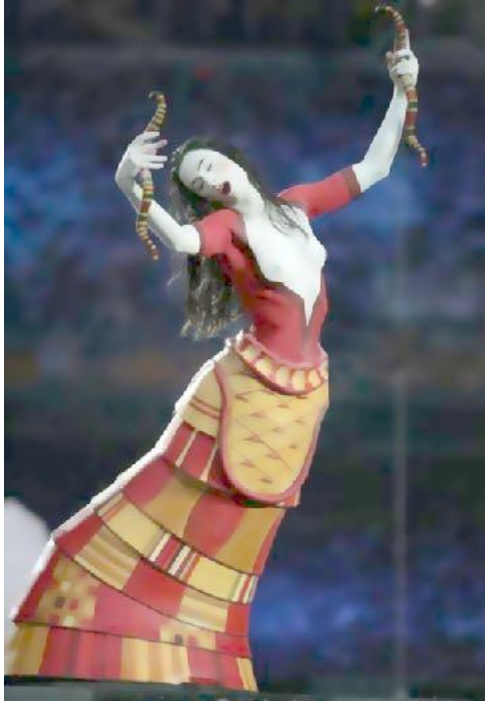


Figure 1.6. The 'Snake Goddess' leading the procession at the 2004 Olympic Games.



Figure 1.7. A reproduction of HM 65 selling for \$39.58 on etsy.com.

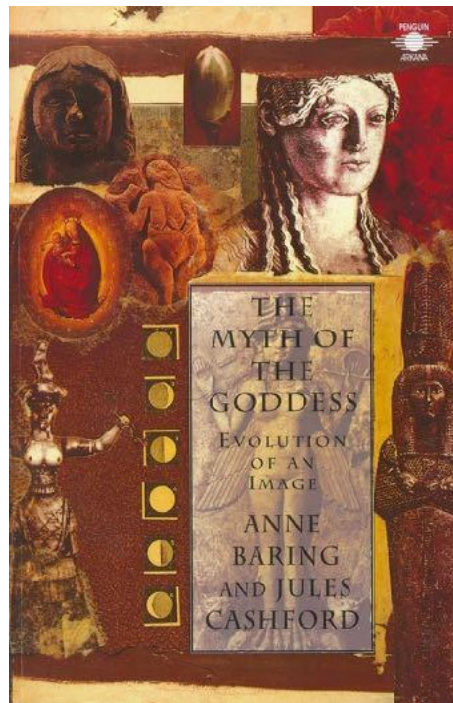


Figure 1.8. HM 65 is pictured on the bottom right of the cover of *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*.



Figure 1.9. The ‘modern’ Knossos built by Evans and his team in the early twentieth century. Courtesy of Bernard Gagnon



Figure 1.10. The “Priest King” Fresco underwent extensive and liberal restoration under Gilliéron *père*. On view at the site of Knossos.



Figure 2.1. This engraving from 1873 depicts Schliemann's excavations at Hisarlik, Turkey, which is thought to be the historic city of Troy. (Rue des Archives/Granger Collection, New York)



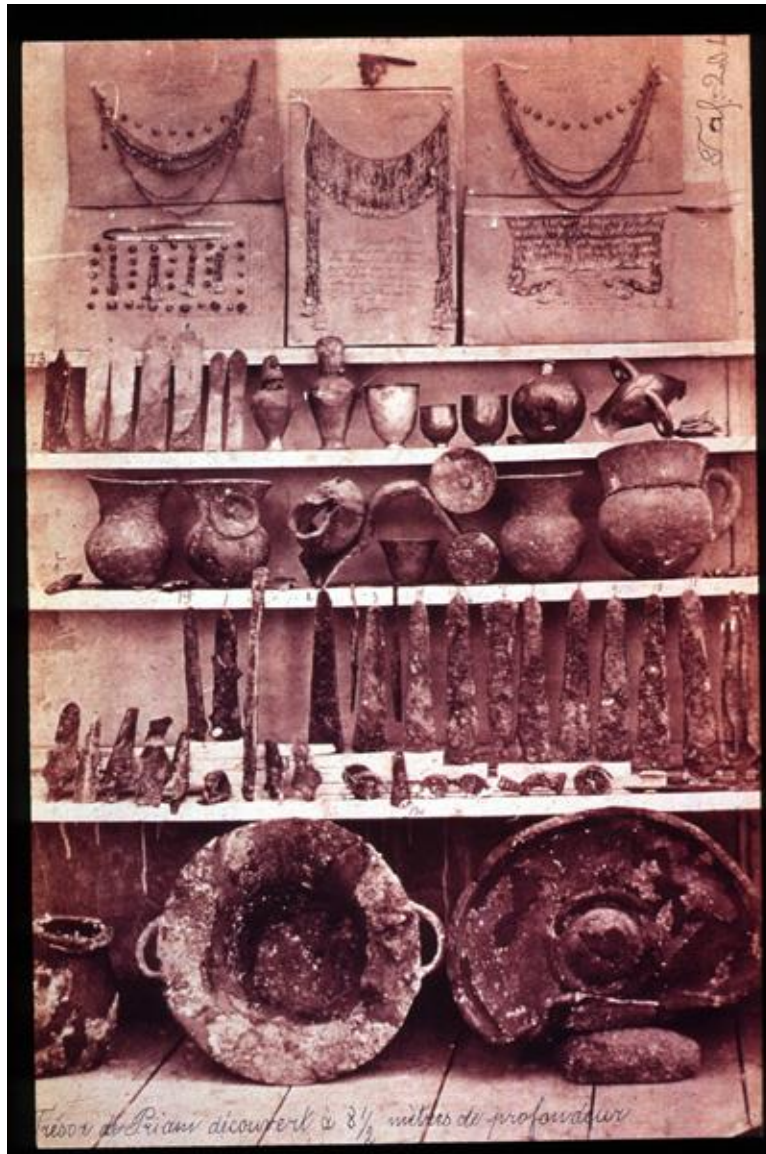


Figure 2.2. King Priam's Treasure was unearthed by H. Schliemann in 1873 at the site of Hisarlik in modern-day Turkey. The majority of artifacts from this cache is now on display at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. This photograph of Priam's Treasure was published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1874.





Figure 3.1. The Venus of Dolní Věstonice, found at the Paleolithic site Dolní Věstonice in the Moravian basin south of Brno, in the base of Děvín Mountain. Dated to 29,000-25,000 BCE. (Moravské zemské muzeum, Brno, Czech Republic).



Figure 3.2. The Venus of Willendorf, found in an Aurignacian loess deposit near Willendorf, Austria. Dated to 30,000 to 25,000 BCE. (Museum of Natural History Vienna)



Figure 4.1. An etching of a painted sarcophagus depicting the “Rayed Shield-Bearing God” that Evans unearthed during his excavation at Milato, Crete in 1899.



Figure 4.2. A painted Mycenaean vase depicting the Double Axe with the Horns of Consecration between two bulls' heads with similar Double Axes. On display at the British Museum at the time Evans composed “Tree and Pillar Cult.”

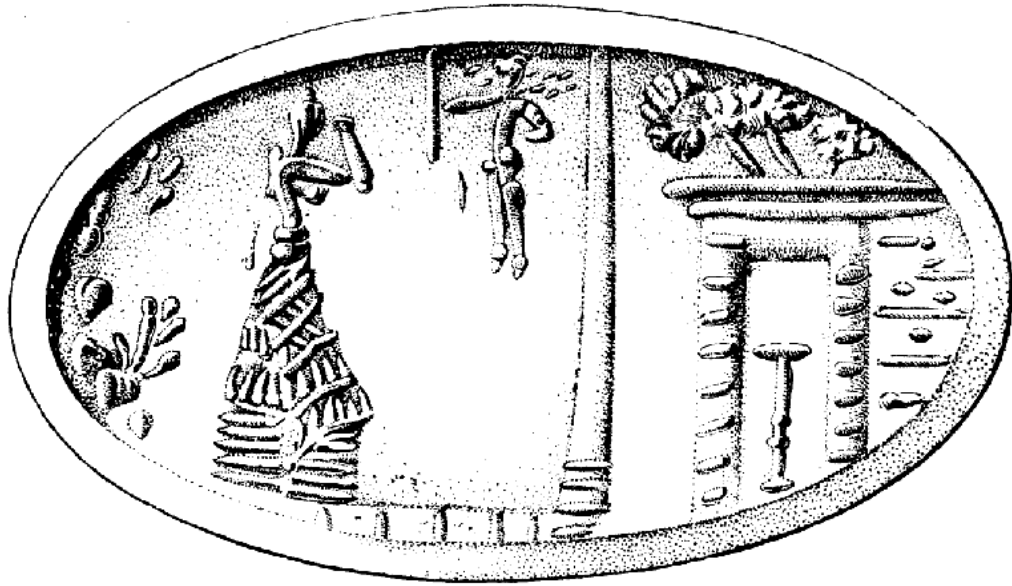


Figure 4.3. An etching of a gold signet ring found near Knossos that Evans had acquired from a Candia-based antiquities dealer in 1894. The ring features a small nude male bearing a spear floating down from the sky to enter his tree and pillar sanctuary where a female figure greets his arrival. Evans identified the floating male as the Warrior-Sun God (the primary Minoan deity) and the female figure below as his votary or priestess.



Figure 4.4. An etching of a *baetyl* offering table/altar found at Cyrenaica, Crete. The *baetyl* has four pillars as legs and a receptacle on top for offerings. Evans believed this table was the central object of worship in the indigenous Cretan cult of trees and pillars.



Figure 4.5. An etching of a gold signet ring from the Akropolis Treasure at Mycenae (discovered by Schliemann). Evans identified the seated female as the Goddess and the small, flying male with a figure-eight shield as the God: the 'Divine Pair.'

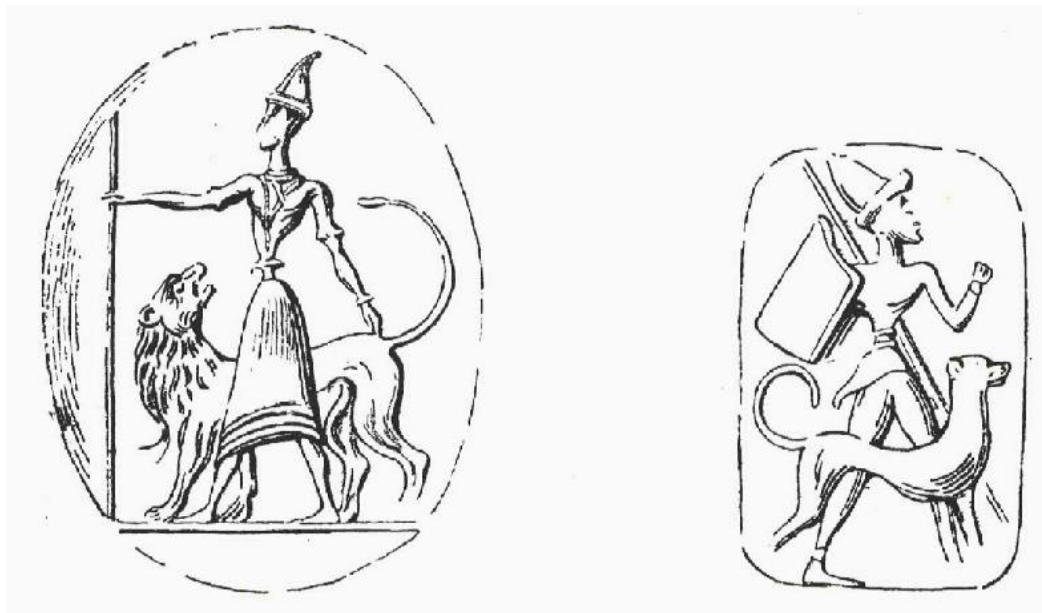


Figure 4.6. Two seal impressions from Knossos featuring a female figure (left) and a male figure (right) both accompanied by lions. The female figure was identified by Evans as the Goddess and the male as the Goddess's satellite, her son. This is the first time that Evans suggests the preeminence of the Goddess.

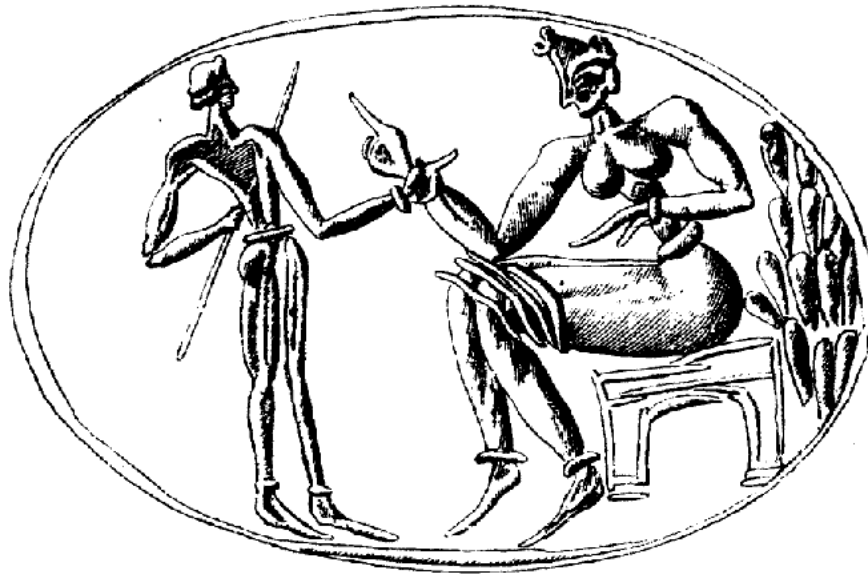


Figure 4.7. An etching of an electrum signet ring discovered at a tomb of the Lower Town in Mycenae. Evans initially identified the figures as the Divine Pair but later revised his reading to reflect his new paradigm of a prime Mother Goddess and her Divine Son.

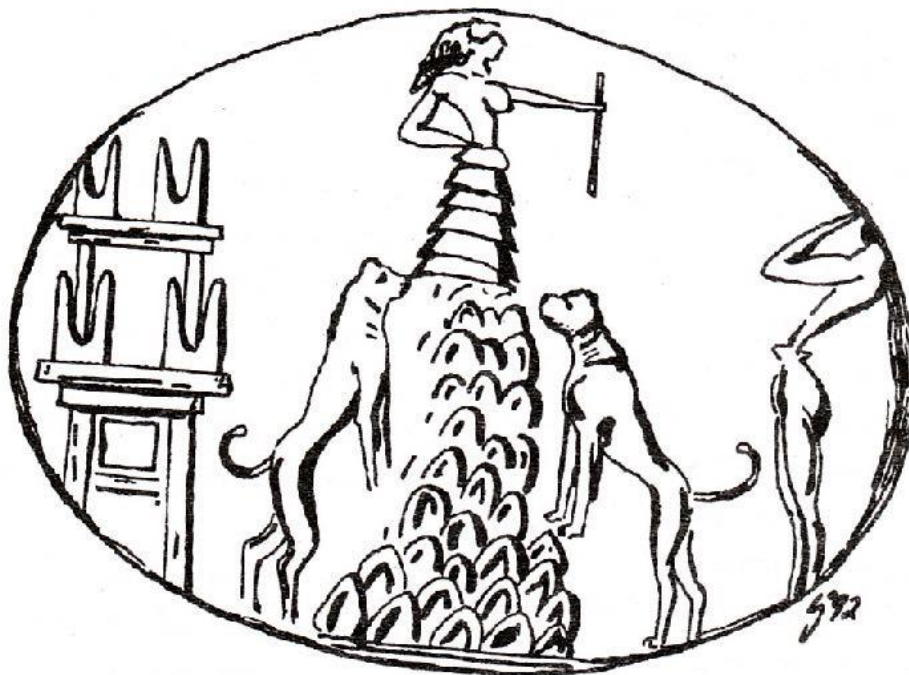
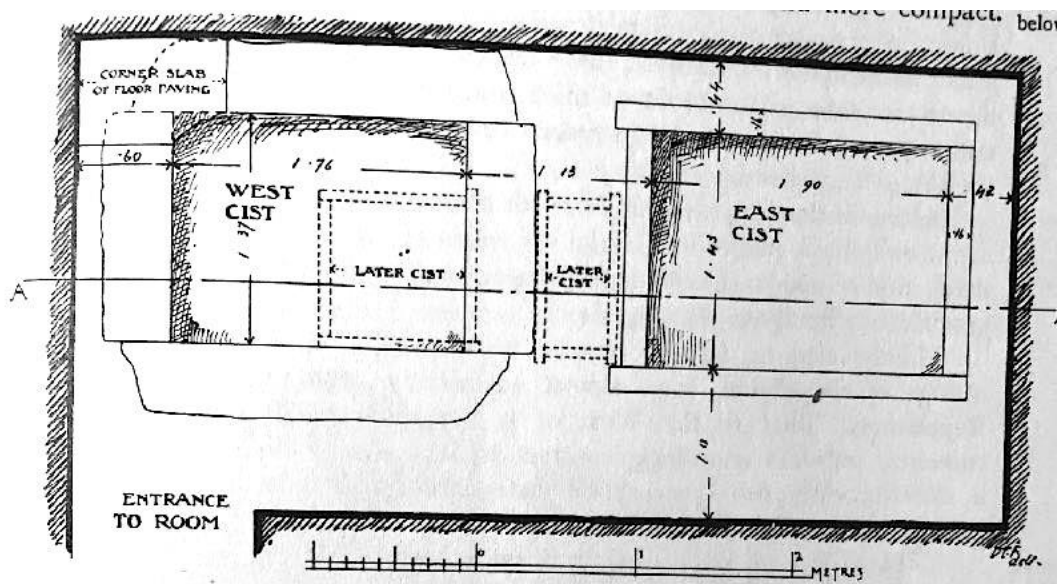


Figure 4.8. An etching of the "Mother of the Mountain" ring. Discovered in the second excavation season at Knossos, Evans later identified the female standing on the mountain peak and flanked by two lions as the Mother Goddess, "Minoan Rhea."



**PLAN**

FIG. 335 A. PLAN OF 'TEMPLE REPOSITORIES'.

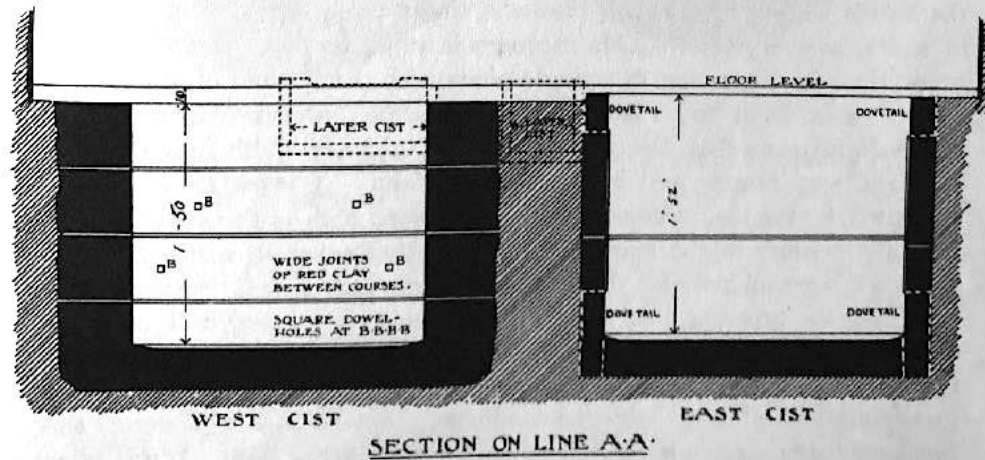


FIG. 335 B. SECTION OF 'TEMPLE REPOSITORIES'.

Figure 5.1. A drawing of the West and East 'Temple Repositories' in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1.





a.



b.



c.



d.

Figure 5.2. Artifacts from the West Repository photographed and illustrated in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1.

a. Libation Tables of steatite, b. faience chalices, c. faience vessels and a pendant, d. faience fruit and flowers.



Figure 5.3. The colorized frontispiece in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1 of HM 63.





Figure 5.4. A drawing of the back view of HM 63.

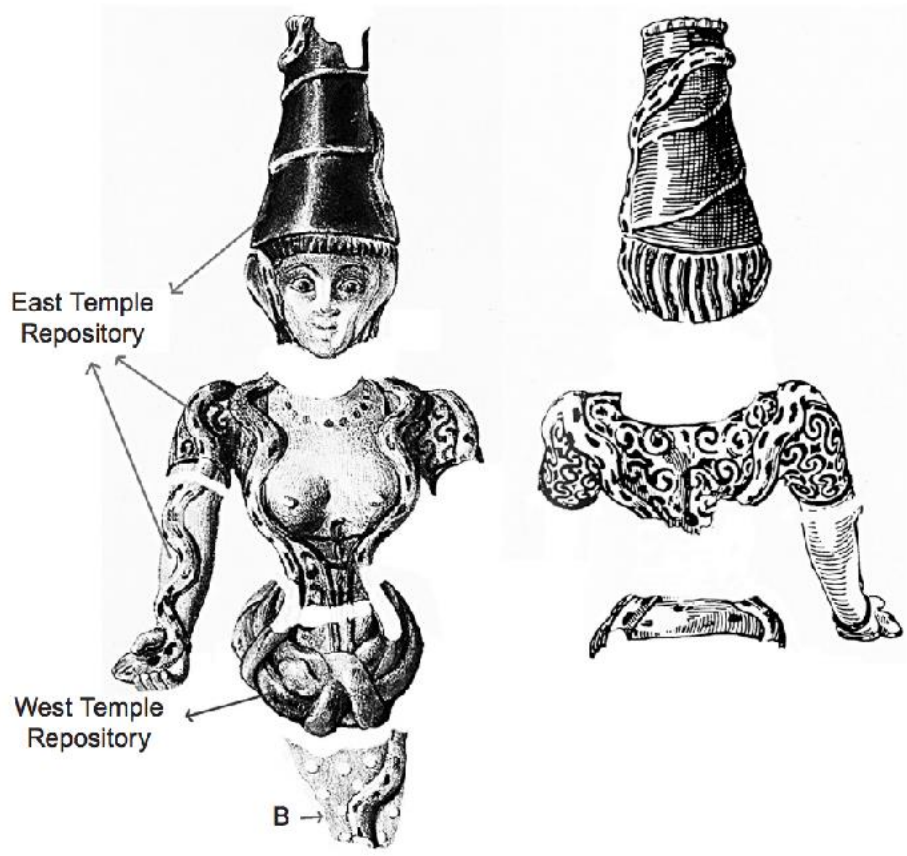


Figure 5.5. The disconnected head and torso of HM 63.

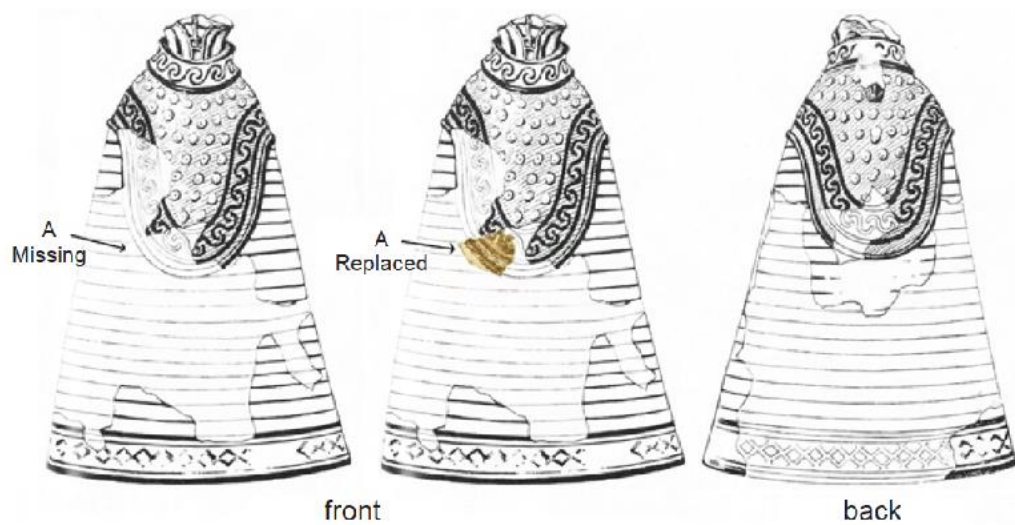


Figure 5.6. The skirt of HM 64 was added to HM 63.



Figure 5.7. The reconstructed HM 65 is on view at the Heraklion Museum.



Figure 5.8. A photograph of a headless and armless HM 65 in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1.

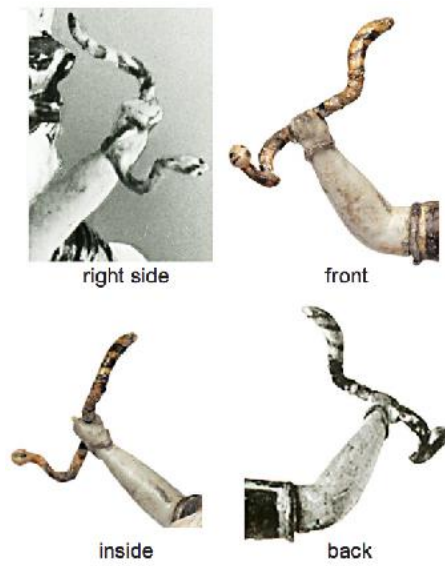


Figure 5.9. Detail of HM 65's arm.

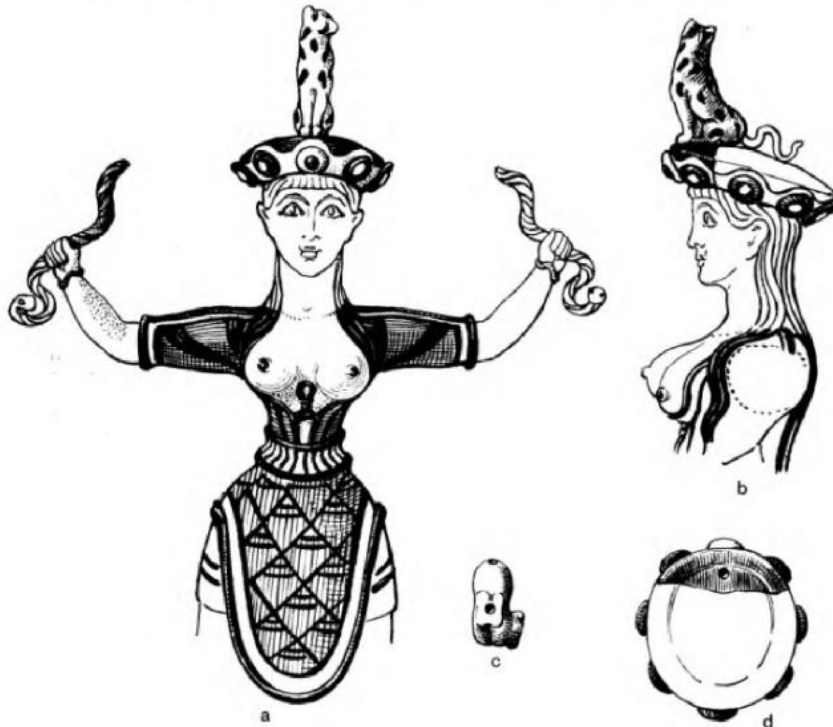


Figure 5.10. An illustration of the upper part of HM 65 with a completely modern head and feline tiara with rivet holes in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1.



Figure 5.11. An illustration of faience votive robes and girdles in *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 1.





Figure 5.12. The 'Boston Goddess' made of gold and ivory (chryselephantine). Thought to be LM I but Lapatin has made the case that the Goddess is actually a forgery. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

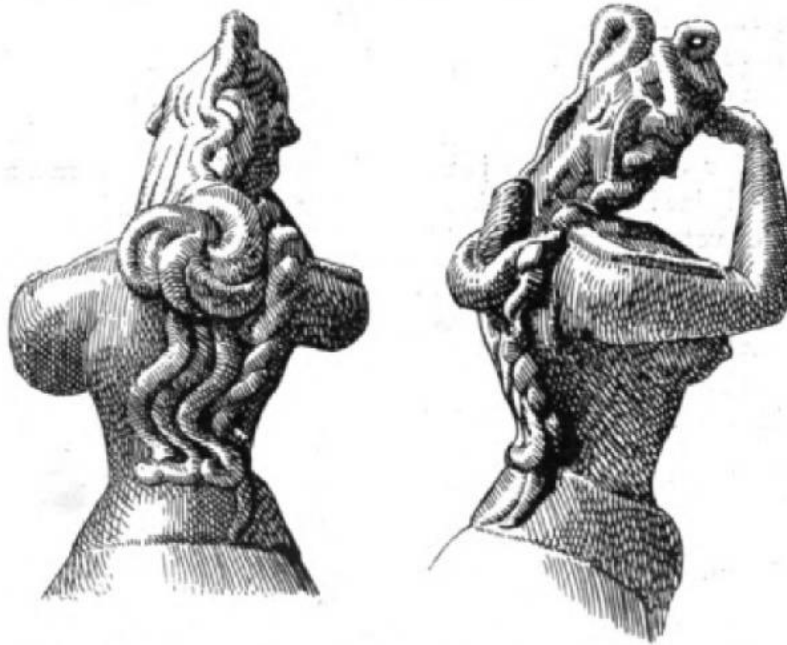


Figure 5.13. An illustration of a bronze figure with a triple coil of snakes at the Berlin Museum. c. LM I.



Figure 5.14. Detail of a mural painting from the Tomb of Amen-her-Khopshef in Valley of the Queens, Luxor, Egypt depicting Hathor wearing a headpiece with cow horns and the *uraeus*.



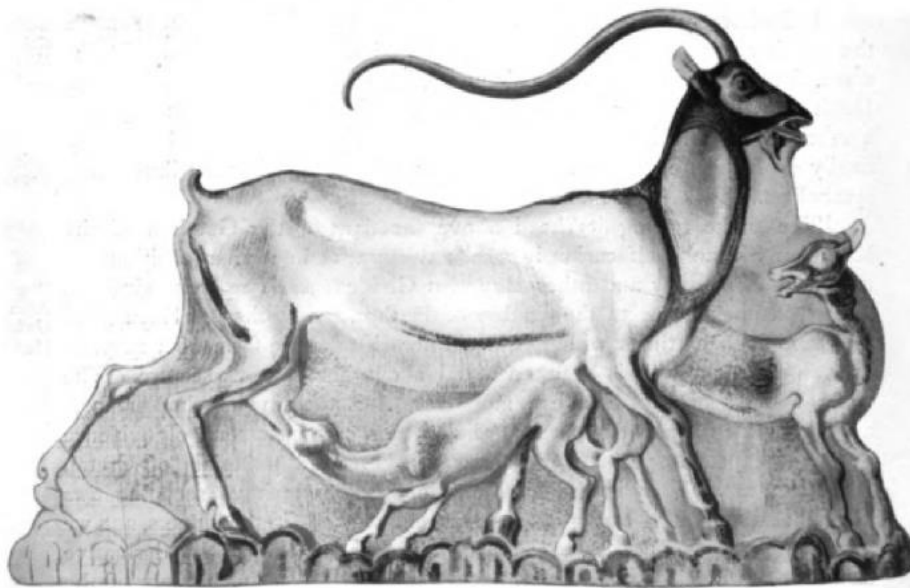


Figure 5.15. Faience panel from the Temple Repositories depicting a goat and two kids.



Figure 5.16. Faience plaque from the Temple Repositories of a cow and a calf.

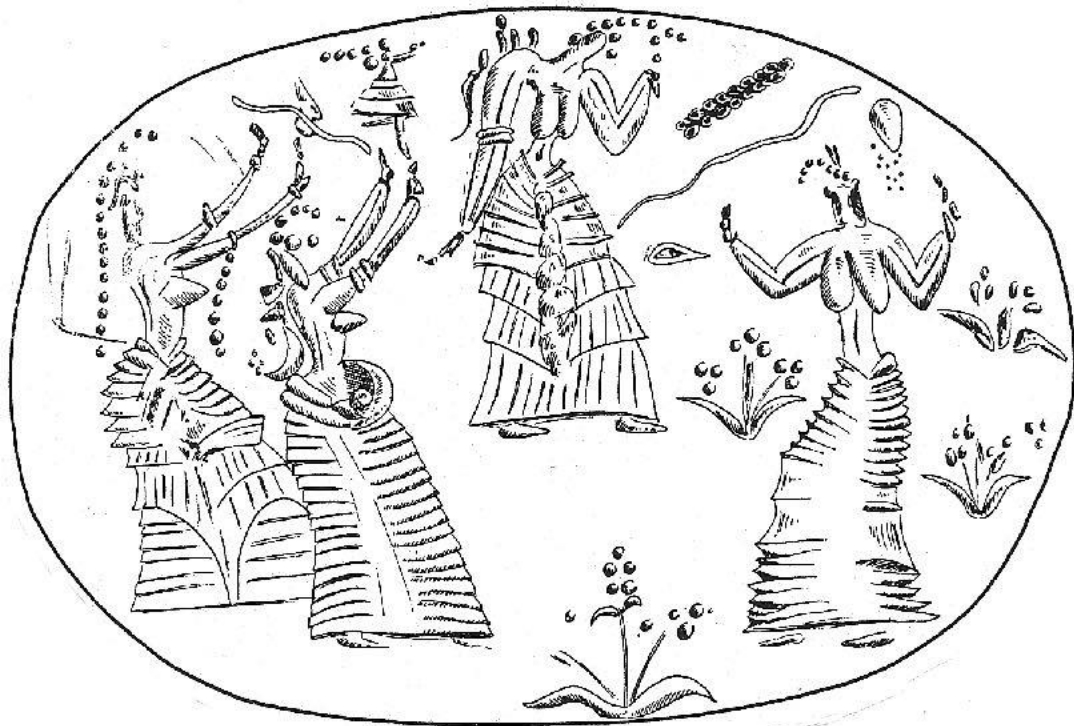


Figure 6.1. Illustration of a gold ring from the Isopata tomb near Knossos depicting an envisioned epiphany. (Heraklion Museum).

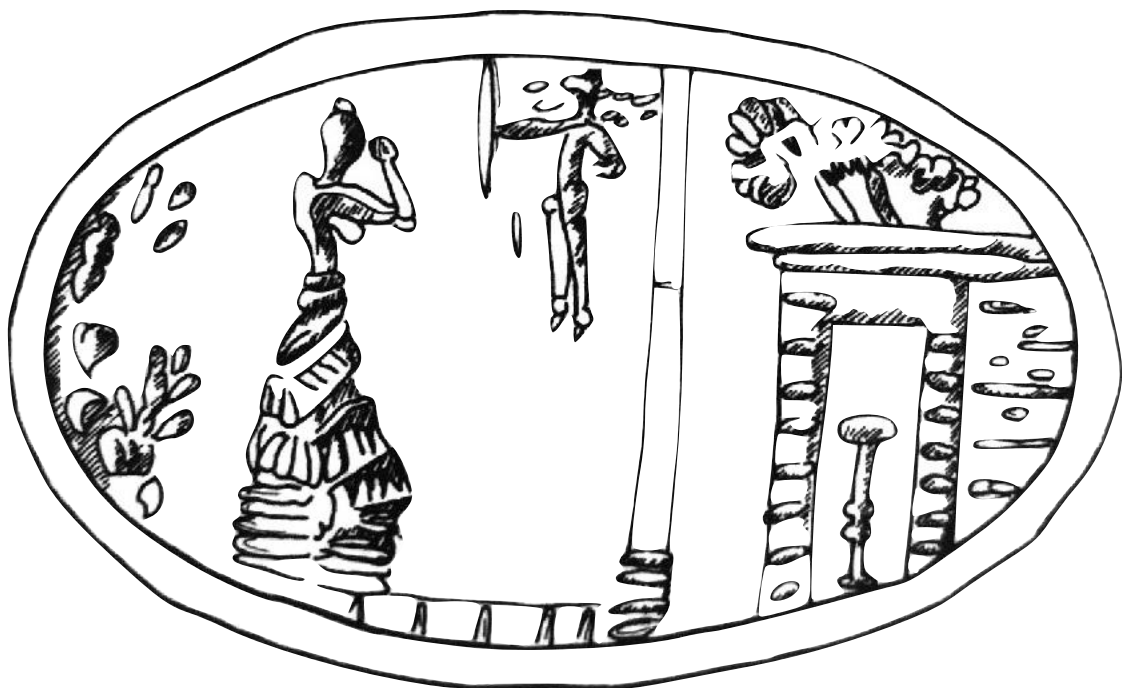


Figure 6.2. Illustration of a gold ring from Knossos showing the epiphany of the God as a hovering image next to a tree shrine. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



Figure 6.3. Seal impression from Knossos showing a Goddess seated on a tripartite construction, receiving offerings from two worshippers. This scene may be interpreted as an enacted epiphany, as the goddess could actually be a priestess taking on the deity's role. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



*a.*



*b.*



*c.*



*d.*

Figure 6.4. *a.* Seal impression from Chania of a goddess ('Mistress of Animals') feeding a deer(?). *b.* Slightly reconstructed drawing of a goddess feeding a goat. *c.* Seal from Armenia showing a goddess and an unidentified animal. *d.* Ring from Mycenae of a goddess with a griffin. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



*a.*



*b.*

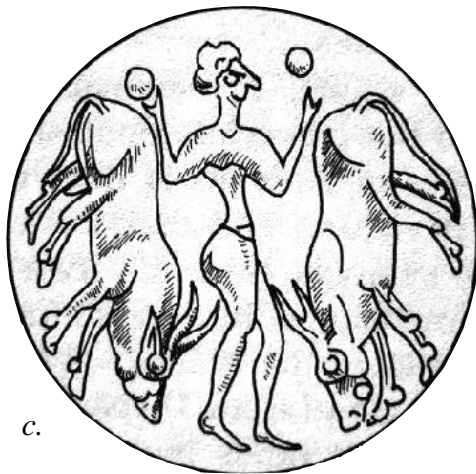
Figure 6.5. *a.* Seal from Rhodes depicting a goddess flanked by griffins and wearing a double crown of sacrificed bull's horns. *b.* Seal from Routsis of a goddess holding two birds by the neck. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



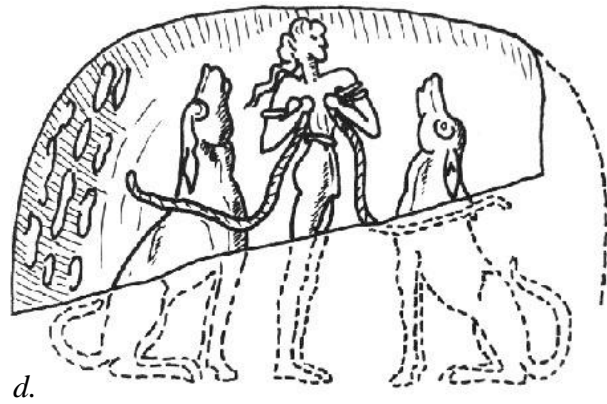
*a.*



*b.*



*c.*



*d.*

Figure 6.6. *a.* Seal with the Master of Animals holding a pair of lions. *b.* Seal with the Master of Animals holding another pair of lions. *c.* Seal of the Master of Animals flanked by two upside-down bulls. *d.* Restored seal impression from Knossos flanked by two mastiffs. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



Figure 6.7. Detail of the finial of a pin from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae.



Figure 6.8. Detail of painted plaster wall with Suppliant Goddesses from Room 132, Palace of Mari, Syria. Note the similarity of the figures' skirts to that of HM 65.



Figure 7.1. Detail of Group D of the “highly polite groups of Court ladies,” as Evans described the seated female figures in this fresco from Knossos. (*The Palace of Minos*, vol. 3)



Figure 7.2. Drawing by Emilé Gilliéron,  *fils* of the Boy-God adoring his Divine Mother, the Boston Goddess. (*The Palace of Minos*, vol. 3).





*a.*



*b.*

Figure 7.3. *a.* Tourists flock to Crete's most popular attraction, the restored Palace of Minos. *b.* Interior of the 'Queen's Megaron,' built by Evans and his team. The famous fresco featuring leaping dolphins can also be seen.





*a.*



*b.*

Figure 7.4. *a.* Evans's crew excavating the 'Throne Room,' from the title page of a brochure appealing for support issued by the Cretan Exploration Fund, 1900. *b.* The 'Throne Room' as seen today with a roof and "Technicolor Art Nouveau" frescoes.





*a.*



*b.*

Figure 7.5. *a.* The famous “Ladies in Blue” Fresco. *b.* “Blue Boy” Fresco. Both were heavily restored from minuscule fragments by the Gilliérons and are on view at Knossos.

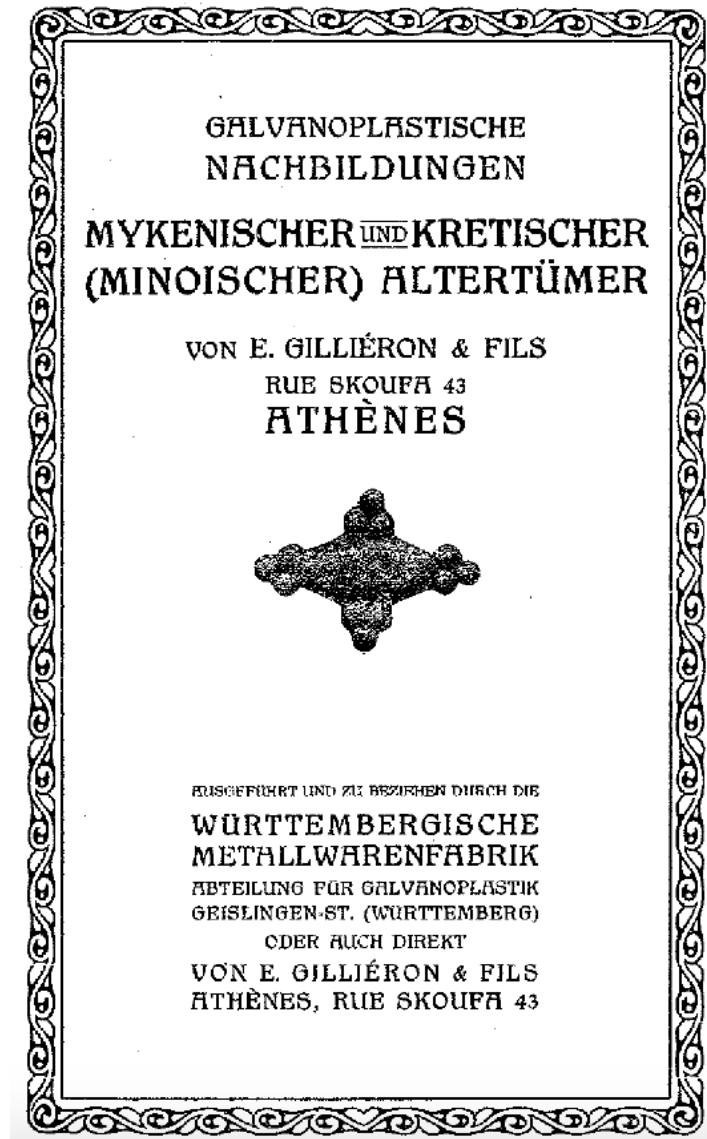


Figure 7.6. Cover of the multilingual (German, French, English) catalogue *Galvanoplastic Copies of Mycenaean and Cretan (Minoan) Antiquities*, offered for sale by E. Gilliéron and Son from their workshop on Odos Skoufa, in the Kolonaki district of Athens.





Figure 7.7. The ivory 'Boy-God' photographed in the condition in which it was found. (Seattle Art Museum).



Figure 7.8. The "Taureador Fresco" restored by the Gilliérons. Note that females are indicated by white skin and the male with red skin. On view at Knossos.



Figure 7.8. The stone Fitzwilliam Goddess has recently been removed from display, as it has been identified as a forgery. The Fitzwilliam Goddess joins the Boston Goddess and the Seattle Boy-God in being relegated to museum storage. (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lindsay M. Taylor was born in Beverly, Massachusetts on 6 September 1996. She was raised in Rockport, Maine and graduated from Camden Hills Regional High School in 2014. A fourth year student in the Honors College the University of Maine with a major in art history and minor in anthropology, she is also a member of several academic organizations Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Golden Key International Honour Society as well as an active member of Greek Life as a sister of Phi Mu. She is a recipient of the History of Art Department Scholarship, Robert B. Thomson Memorial Thesis Fellowship, and the Outstanding Senior Award for the Department of Art. Upon graduating *summa cum laude*, Lindsay will pursue a graduate degree in art history.