Minoan Archaeology

Perspectives for the 21st Century

Sarah Cappel
Ute Günkel-Maschek
Diamantis Panagiotopoulos
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The Unknown Past of Minoan Archaeology

From the Renaissance Until the Arrival of Sir Arthur Evans in Crete*

Nektarios Karadimas

To Nicoletta Momigliano μικρό αντίδοτο φιλίας

The article aims to systematically present the period from the Renaissance until the beginning of the 1890s, when Arthur Evans first arrived in Crete. It discusses how scholars discovered and identified prehistoric sites in Crete, defined cultures and coined terms, which inspired Evans in the construction of his Minoan paradigm. In doing so, it resurrects the work of scholars, such as Buondelmonti, Müller, Hoeck, Pashley and Spratt, and it assesses their importance in the development of Minoan studies, showing the intellectual debt that Evans owed to them. Moreover, this article aims to show that the period before the 1890s was no tabula rasa for Minoan archaeology, but an important and interesting phase, in which important discoveries and theories took place, some of which continue to influence current scholarship.

Arguably, most works on the history of Minoan archaeology begin with Sir Arthur Evans’s excavations at Knossos, thus implying that the period before him represents for Minoan studies some kind of tabula rasa. However, while Evans remains the main discoverer of the material remains of what he called “Minoan civilisation”, in terms of his interpretations, he is much indebted to previous scholarship. For centuries before Evans, other scholars were interested in what we now call the prehistoric times of Crete: on the one hand, philologists and historians, who never visited the island, worked through their libraries and studied the ancient history of Crete; on the other hand, travelers, who actually set foot on the island, made the first topographical and archaeological observations. This article discusses this long period of “Minoan studies” before Evans, which lasted almost 500 years, and is divided into four main sections: 1) from the Renaissance to 1820; 2) the decade between 1820 and 1830, which saw the emergence of very influential studies on ancient Crete by scholars based at the university of Göttingen; 3) the period of 1830–1875, which saw the first archaeological and topographical researches on the island; and 4) the period of 1876–1894, representing the phase between Schliemann’s discoveries at Mycenae and Evans’s first visit to Crete.

I. The Unseen Foundations of Minoan Archaeology (From the Renaissance Until 1820)

The Renaissance was a cultural movement that deeply shaped modern thinking largely through the renewed study of ancient classical texts and ancient civilisation. As few “pre-Dorian” material remains were known, most scholars, philologists and historians exclusively based their ideas on ancient written sources. By meticulously examining the Homeric poems and other ancient works, they endeavoured to describe the religion, politics, ethics, social organisation of Crete during the Heroic or Homeric times, as the prehistoric times were commonly called at that period.

In terms of religion and social organisation, it is interesting to note that scholars, such as William Mitford, believed that kings in Heroic and Homeric times exercised supremacy in matters of religion in addition to their political obligations. Kings were effectively considered to be Priest-Kings, a term that was frequently employed in Homeric discussions of the 18th–19th centuries. The best example was Minos himself, as suggested by Gottfried Herrmann

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* Most part of the present article is based on my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation “Prolegomena to Aegean Archaeology; from the Renaissance until 1876” (University of Bristol, 2009). I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Nicoletta Momigliano for her help and continuous support, as well as my examiners Prof. Gerald Cadogan and Dr Silke Knippschild.

1 See, for example: McDonald 1967, chapters I–IV; Warren 1975, 1–12, esp. 12; Stiebing 1993, 124–42; Fitton 1996, 9–46.

2 Mitford 1784, 65–6.
in 1802: “Priester und König bestanden bei den Griechen in einer Person. Minos war König und Priester.” The notion of a Priest-King was also adopted by Arthur Evans himself, who sought to identify portraits of Priest-Kings in a series of Late Bronze Age seals, and, most famously, in a relief fresco known as the “Priest-King.”

The figure of Minos is also important for other issues concerning the religious, social and political organisation of prehistoric Crete, which found their way into the work of the “father” of Minoan archaeology. Many contradictory ancient Greek myths existed around King Minos: most ancient authors supported the existence of a single person, while others spoke of two Minoses. To solve this problem, most scholars suggested that there had been two Minoses: the first was the lawgiver and the second the master of the seas. The problem became more acute towards the end of the 18th century, when Indo-European studies begun. Some scholars, such as Jacob Bryant, William Holwell and William Jones noticed many similarities between Minos and other mythical figures from other cultures, such as the Egyptian Menes, the Indian Menus, and the German Mannous. Other scholars preferred comparisons with the Jewish Moses, who had climbed Mount Sinai to receive the laws from his God, in the same way as Minos had climbed Mount Ida to receive the laws from Zeus. Besides their almost identical names, these figures shared a number of features: they were sons of gods, first kings, and had introduced laws and arts to their people. Because of this, some scholars, such as Allwood and Plass, argued that Minos’s name indicated a title or a dynasty, and this became a crucial tenet in Evans’s reconstruction of Minoan Crete.

While philologists and historians tried to understand Crete’s most distant past through the available written evidence, Crete was becoming the centre of intense archaeological interest. From the Renaissance onwards, travellers visited the island in increasing numbers. Unsurprisingly, during this period interest in non-classical sites or monuments was very limited. Classicism prevailed in Europe during the 15th–18th centuries, and this caused travellers to visit mainly classical monuments. This phenomenon was further accentuated by the publication of Winckelmann’s *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke* (1755), and from 1762 onwards by Stuart’s and Revett’s *magnum opus*, *The Antiquities of Athens.*

Two Cretan sites, which were dated to Minos’s times, were the most popular attractions: Knossos (or Gnossus as it was usually called at that period) and the Labyrinth of Minos. The renewed interest in these sites was due to the intellectual revolution of the Renaissance, which soon reached Venetian Crete. The eighth book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, devoted to the story of Minos, piqued visitors’ interest in the latter. In particular, after the invention of the printing press, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* underwent many editions, which sometimes included elaborate illustrations of Minos’s labyrinth, based on coins found at Knossos.

References to the ancient site of Knossos started to appear in Venetian documents at the end of the 14th century. Knossos had largely disappeared, but its original location was never forgotten. Following Strabo (X.4.7), who wrote that the site of Knossos was 25 stadia from the sea, most travellers remarked that walls, potsherds and coins of the city of Knossos existed very close to a small village, which from the beginning of the 15th century AD was
known as Makrytoichos (Μακρύτοιχος). Among the dozens of visitors who visited Knossos a few are worthy of mention: Onorio Belli (visit in 1586), Francesco Basilicata (in 1630) and Claude Etienne Savary (in 1779).  

Regarding the Labyrinth of Minos, it was often believed that this famous structure was a cave/quarry near Gortyn, as this is well illustrated by numerous maps of the 15th–18th centuries. It is likely that this identification grew in prominence because the “Gortyn Labyrinth” seemed manmade, containing numerous dead ends. This belief was particularly promoted during the Cretan Renaissance by the Venetian governors, who sought to have the “real” Labyrinth in their territory. Gasparino Barzizza mentioned that the Venetian rulers of Crete regularly organised pleasant journeys to the “Gortyn Labyrinth” for magistrates or other visitors from Venice. Using only torches or candles, travellers reached the last hall, which was called Trapeza, where they wrote or carved their names on the walls. However, in the 18th century most travellers suggested that the “Gortyn Labyrinth” was, in fact, a quarry that provided building materials for the ancient city of Gortyn. Among the most important visitors to the “Gortyn Labyrinth” are Cristoforo Buondelmonti (visit in ca. 1415), Pierre Belon (visit in 1547), Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (in 1700), John Hawkins (in 1794), Charles Cockerell (in 1811) and Franz Sieber (in 1817).

II. The “Göttingen School” and the Idea of a Minoan Civilisation (1820–1830)

When, at the end of the 18th century, the distinguished German classicist Friedrich August Wolf (1750–1824) introduced the idea of Altertumswissenschaft or “science of antiquity” as a new approach to the study of the past, little did he know of the impact that his ideas were going to have on Minoan and Aegean studies in general. According to this new approach, the ancient world was to be studied in its entirety, by encompassing all the aspects of a civilisation. History had to be concerned not only with narratives of events, kings, and battles, but also with other aspects of life such as religion, art, and economy.

Influenced by the ideas and the methods of the new Altertumswissenschaft, three scholars played a significant role in the subsequent study of Minoan archaeology: Karl Otfrid Müller (1797–1840), Karl Friedrich Neumann (1793–1870) and particularly Karl Hoeck (1794–1877) (fig. 1). They were all based at the well-known University of Göttingen, and it is fair to say that the publications of these scholars, whom one may dub the “Göttingen School”, established a number of influential theories about prehistoric Crete that had a great impact on many scholars, and most importantly on Sir Arthur Evans. In 1820, Neumann published the Rerum Creticarum Specimen, written in Latin. From 1823 until 1828, Hoeck published his seminal three-volume work Kreta. Ein Versuch zur Aufhellung der Mythologie und Geschichte, der Religion und Verfassung dieser Insel, von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Römer-Herrschaft, while in 1824, Müller published Die Dorier, which was also translated into English (in 1830 and 1839).

Neumann’s, Müller’s, and Hoeck’s works are excellent examples of the methods of the Altertumswissenschaft applied to classical sources on Crete. For the first time, the earliest history of Crete was examined systematically and meticulously. This involved the study of comparative religion, the etymology of personal names such as Minos, Europa and Pasiphae, and the examination of toponyms. Not only mythology, but also ancient artefacts, whenever possible, were used as valid sources for a better understanding of Greek and Cretan history and prehistory. The most important contributions of the Göttingen scholars to the study of Aegean prehistory were made by Müller and, in particular, by Hoeck. Both promoted the idea that in the second half of the second millennium BC Crete

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15 On Belli, see Falkener 1854; Beschi 1999. Basilicata’s manuscript was published by Spanakis in 1969. Savary 1788a, 192–93 and 1788b, 214–15. On Knossos before the first excavations, see also Kopaka 2004.
16 See Woodward 1949; Guarducci 1950.
17 Aposkiti 2002, 50; Belon 1553, 8; Tournefort 1702; Lack and Mabberley 1999, 126; Cockerell 1820, 402–9; Sieber 1823, 1:510–20 and 2:293–97.
19 For example, in the first volume of Kreta, Hoeck included a small chapter on the “Gortyn Labyrinth”, reproduced a map of the Labyrinth from Sieber 1823, and illustrated two coins of the ancient town of Knossos (Hoeck 1823, 447–54, pl. II).
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had been the home of a brilliant civilisation. This civilisation was dubbed “minoisch” (which British scholars, including Evans, later translated as “Minoan”), while the period in which it flourished was called “minoische Zeit”. Moreover, Hoeck suggested that the ancient Greek sources had attributed to a single historical or mythical figure named Minos, a series of events which took place over a long span of time, and thus Hoeck claimed that the name Minos represented the totality of acts that occurred during a period of about two centuries before the Trojan War. This notion of a “Minoan Age” appears to have been formulated by analogy with that of the “Homeric Age”, which was already established by the early 19th century.

In view of later developments in Minoan archaeology, it is worth noting that the Göttingen scholars also produced fairly detailed suggestions about the chronology of Cretan Prehistory (fig. 2). For the period before the “Return of the Dorians” they made extensive use of notions of growth, maturity, and decadence – notions that formed an important part of Evans’s own Minoan chronology. Neumann subdivided Cretan prehistory into the pre-Minos’s, Minos’s and post-Minos’s times. Hoeck, on the other hand, distinguished four periods. The first was called pre-Minoan (vorminoisch), and related to the times before King Minos; during this period Phrygian and Phoenician colonists came to Crete and, through their mixing with aboriginal inhabitants, Homer’s “Eteocretans” were born. Hoeck’s second or “Minoan” period occupied two centuries before the Trojan War; it was the most brilliant in the whole history of the island, during which the non-Hellenic Eteocretans created a splendid civilisation, which was farther ahead than its Greek mainland counterpart. This “Minoan period” included the “Minoan Thalassocracy”, which ended around 1250 BC, and soon afterwards Crete came under a strong Hellenic influence. When the Trojan War started (around 1200 BC), a period of decline and decadence began, a post-Minoan phase. For a brief period of almost 160 years a Hellenised Minoan dynasty continued to rule, which surely reminds us of Evans’s reoccupation period. By the time the Dorians arrived at Crete around 1040 BC, little remained of the Minoan civilisation.

Müller’s reconstruction presented some fundamental differences. The most important was that, according to Müller, the Minoan Cretans were Greek, and more specifically Dorians. This could be proved not only by the myth of the Dorian Tectamus, who was Minos’s grandfather, but also by the cult of the main Dorian god, Apollo, who was usually associated with the Minoan Cretans. Müller divided Crete’s most ancient times into four phases. The first embraced the first Dorian migration to Crete from their original homeland in Thessaly, and saw the foundation of temples of Apollo at Delphi, Delos, and Crete. During the second phase, the acme of the Minoan civilisation, the Dorian Cretans took control of the Aegean sea and spread their cult of Apollo everywhere. After Minos’s death, two or three generations before the Trojan War, a period of decline began. This period was followed in turn by the main Dorian migration.

In view of recent critiques of the term “Minoan”, it is interesting to note that in the works of Müller and Hoeck the term “Minoan”, unlike today, did not have racial or ethnic connotations, but essentially a chronological meaning. In a sense, it was used in a way similar to the term “Pharaonic”, because for the Göttingen scholars the term did not refer only to the reign of the mythical King Minos, but to a period of up to two centuries. Whenever Hoeck and Müller referred to the prehistoric inhabitants of Crete they used phrases such as the “Minoan Cretans” (die minoischen Kreter) or the ethnonyms Eteocretans (Hoeck) and Dorians (Müller), if they wished to refer to their

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20 On the term “Minoan”, see also Karadimas and Momigliano 2004.
21 Hoeck 1828, xxxi: “Alles bedeutsame mehrerer Jahrhunderte ward an jenen Namen (Minos) angereiht.”
22 As suggested, for example, by Uvarov 1819, 7: “seitdem der Nahme Homer nicht mehr einen Menschen, sondern eine Epoche bezeichnet.” See also below, section III.
23 For Hoeck’s absolute dates, see Hoeck 1823, 359–61; 1828, 4.
Interestingly enough, Evans himself in his early work did not use the term “Minoan” in an ethnic sense, for he was still closely following Hoeck’s views. For example, in the early years of the excavations at Knossos, Evans constantly used expressions such as “Minoan architects”, “Minoan dynasts” and “Minoan Priest-Kings”, which certainly resembles Hoeck’s similar expressions, such as “minoischer König”, “minoischer Kreter” or “minoischer Stamm”.25

The publications of the “Göttingen School”, especially Müller’s and Hoeck’s books, had a tremendous impact on Cretan scholarship. Very soon, Müller’s and Hoeck’s ideas of a “minoische Zeit” and a superior Cretan civilisation spread through not only Germany, but also other countries. The historian Evelyn Abbott was not wrong when he wrote in 1893: “Hoeck’s Kreta is still the best book about the island”.26

III. George Grote’s Rationalism and the Beginning of the First Archaeological and Topographical Researches (1830–1875)

The rationalism and philological criticism of the 18th century, so well illustrated by the “Göttingen School”, gave also momentum to another tendency, which regarded the use of ancient written sources for historical purposes with great scepticism. The main attack on the credibility of the ancient Greek tradition came in 1795 when Friedrich August Wolf published his Prolegomena ad Homerum. In this book Wolf refused to accept the historical existence of an individual poet called Homer, suggesting instead that the Iliad and the Odyssey represented the unification of many different rhapsodies, composed over several centuries and collected under the name of Homer. Wolf’s theory soon led to the debate on the “Homerian question”, while Wolf’s followers were dubbed analysts.27

In the mid 19th century the most important reaction to the use of myths as historical sources came from the British historian George Grote, with his twelve-volume History of Greece. Influenced by Wolf and the analysts, Grote suggested that Homer was not a real historical character, but was invented to explain the historical guild that was constituted to conserve and transmit the Homeric poems. Moreover, in the preface of the first volume published in 1846, Grote noted that he was going to use myths to describe the earliest times of the Greeks, without, however, trying to detect how much or how little historical matter they contained. In doing so, he compared Greek myths to a marvellous curtain that hid nothing and would greatly disappoint anyone who opened it.28

Nonetheless, Grote’s scepticism about the usefulness of myths stands almost alone in British historiography. British scholars preferred to follow in the steps of the “Göttingen School”. It is fair to say that this sceptical attitude had little if any impact on Aegean and Cretan archaeology. According to Arnaldo Momigliano, by making this distinction between a mythical and historical Greece, Grote “broke with K.O. Müller and his English admirers”.29 It seems that only Arthur Evans was slightly influenced by Grote, but only in the early stages of his career. In 1883, when Evans wrote a review of Schliemann’s Troja, he noted that “Archaeology has little call to concern itself with the fitting on of poetical topography to altered physical conditions”.30 Twenty years later, enchanted by his remarkable discoveries at Knossos, he would forget his initial scepticism.31

During the period discussed in this section, Crete continued to attract travellers from all over Europe, such as Félix Victor Raulin (visit in 1845), George Perrot (in 1857), and John Skinner (in 1867), while in 1864 the painter Edward Lear visited Knossos and painted two unique watercolours (now housed in the Gennadius Library).32

Two travellers, however, laid the foundations of modern Cretan archaeology: Robert Pashley and Thomas Abel Brimage Spratt.

In 1834, Robert Pashley (1805–1859), a young classics don from Cambridge and later a respected lawyer, took his Grand Tour to the Ionian islands, Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor in 1833–1834.33 From February until September of 1834 he travelled through the island of Crete, as recounted in his Travels in Crete (1837). His book contained many topographical notes. Pashley discovered and described the existing vestiges of more than 20 an-

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24 E.g., Hoeck 1828, vi, xxiv, 187, 189, 233, 236, 369, 378, 380, 391; Müller 1824, 234.
26 Abbott 1893, 122–23.
27 On the “Homerian question” and in general on Wolf, see Ferreri 2007 with extensive bibliography.
28 Grote 1846, lxii–xiii.
29 Momigliano 1966, 63.
30 Evans 1883, 438.
31 See also Momigliano 2006.
32 Raulin 1869; Perrot 1867; Skinner 1868. On Lear, see Fowler 1984.
33 On Pashley, see Garnett 2004.
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Pashley also visited the “Gortyn Labyrinth”, and remarked that it was a cave. Following the tradition according to which the Labyrinth was not a cave but a building erected by Daedalus at Knossos, he concluded that it was “as clear as the sun at noon day, that the grotto in question was no more connected with the mythical labyrinth of Crete”.35

Thomas Spratt (1811–1888), naval officer and hydrographer, surveyed the coast of Crete in the 1850s to produce the British Admiralty Charts, as well as the interior of the island for his geological map of Crete. In 1865 he published his Travels and Researches in Crete, which focused on the physical geography and geology of the island, and tackled many problems of ancient topography. Spratt visited Knossos, about which he wrote a whole chapter. He explored the “tortuous passages and chambers” of the “Gortyn Labyrinth”, which he suggested was a quarry. He discovered the ancient site of Zakros in eastern Crete. During his explorations he also collected some “primitive” seal stones, such as those that previous travelers had observed and collected in the Cyclades, and for this reason they were usually called “island stones” (fig. 3).36 He published them in 1879, soon after Schliemann’s impressive finds at Mycenae. Most of these seals are now dated to the Late Bronze Age. Spratt’s most important contribution to Cretan archaeology was probably his discussion of the acropolis of Goulas near Hierapytta (modern Ierapetra). According to Spratt, the acropolis should be dated to an early date, as shown by the earliest and rudest Cyclopean walls.37

Pashley’s and Spratt’s books became the standard guidebooks for the island in the 19th century, and inspired Arthur Evans when he started his Cretan exploration. For example, Evans who visited the site of Goulas three times, originally wanted to excavate Goulas, because he thought it was a prehistoric citadel.38 On the other hand he never visited the “Gortyn Labyrinth”, simply because, according to Pashley or Spratt, it was a cave or a quarry. Similarly, following Pashley’s text, Evans visited the summit of Juktas twice, while in 1909 he conducted a small excavation there, and discovered the remains of a peak sanctuary.39

34 Pashley 1837, 1:210–11.
35 Pashley 1837, 1:296–97, see also 208.
36 See, for example Milchhoefer 1883, chapter 2 entitled “Inselsteine”. For the history of “island stones”, see Boardman 1963.
37 Spratt 1865, 1:chapter XIII.
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<tr>
<td>1878 (July)</td>
<td>Palamidi (Naφlio): Chamber tombs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Potamianos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878 (end of Aug.–beg. of Sept.)</td>
<td>Palamidi (Naφlio): Chamber tombs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Kastorchis &amp; Kondakis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878 (Dec.), 1879 (March–April)</td>
<td>Knossos</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Kalokairinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879 (30 April–7 June)</td>
<td>Menidi: Tholos tomb</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Lolling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880 (February)</td>
<td>Palamidi (Naφlio): Chamber tombs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Kondakis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880 (11 March)</td>
<td>Palamidi (Naφlio): 1 chamber tomb</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Lolling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880 (end of Nov.–beg. of Dec.)</td>
<td>Orchomenos: Treasury of Minyas and adjacent area</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Schliemann (with the collaboration of Efstratiadis, Sayce &amp; S. Schliemann)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881 (12 April–end of April)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1884 (end of Jan.–beg. of Feb.)</td>
<td>Antiparos: Almost 40 tombs of the Early Cycladic period</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bent</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884 (17 March–24 May)</td>
<td>Tiryns</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Schliemann (&amp; Dörpfeld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885 (mid of April–mid of June)</td>
<td>Tiryns</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Dörpfeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885 (October)</td>
<td>Amorgos: Early Cycladic tombs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dümmler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886 (27 Feb.–10 March)</td>
<td>Dimini: Tholos tomb known as Lamiospito</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Kondakis &amp; Kousis (with the collaboration of Lolling &amp; Wolters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886 (March–beg. of June)</td>
<td>Mycenae: Acropolis (palace)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886 (beg. of May)</td>
<td>Orchomenos: Treasury of Minyas</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Schliemann (&amp; Dörpfeld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887 (18 Oct.–31 Dec.)</td>
<td>Mycenae: 15 chamber tombs and 1 Tholos tomb</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888 (20–29 March, June–Dec.)</td>
<td>Mycenae: Acropolis and 36 chamber tombs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888 (August)</td>
<td>Epiδauros: Chamber tombs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888 (December)</td>
<td>Eleusina: Mycenaean tomb</td>
<td></td>
<td>Filios</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889 (Spring)</td>
<td>Pagasai (Vолос): Mycenaean cemetery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wolters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889 (4–12 April, 13 May–15 June)</td>
<td>Vafio: Tholos tomb</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889 (18 May)</td>
<td>Troizina: Mycenaean tomb</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889 (July)</td>
<td>Mycenae: Acropolis</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889 (November)</td>
<td>Palaiopyrgos: Mycenaean pottery and stone finds</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889 (November)</td>
<td>Arkina: Tholos tomb</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890 (summer?)</td>
<td>Amykles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890 (Sept.–Dec.)</td>
<td>Mycenae: Acropolis &amp; 2 chamber tombs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890 (December)</td>
<td>Thorikos: Tholos tomb (known as A)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Mycenae: Tholos tomb of Clytemnestra</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>Tsountas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 4** Prehistoric excavations in the Aegean during the period 1877–1892. The third column shows sites that had been identified as Heroic (i.e. prehistoric) before Schliemann’s excavations at Mycenae.
In 1876, Heinrich Schliemann excavated at Mycenae where he discovered the “rich in gold” Shaft Graves. This unexpected discovery changed the history of Aegean prehistoric archaeology. Until that time, Greek scholars were almost exclusively interested in classical antiquities, largely as part of the general effort to link the Greek modern State with its celebrated classical past. After Schliemann, suddenly the Greeks remembered that they also had a Heroic past, so gloriously sung by Homer, and in the following decade, Greek archaeologists excavated almost all the sites that had been identified by previous travellers as Heroic, i.e. prehistoric, as clearly demonstrated in figure 4. Their excavations brought to light the remains of a pre-Classical civilisation, which was soon named “Mycenaean” by German scholars.

In the following years, until Evans’s arrival in Crete in 1894, many archaeological researches were also conducted in Crete, of which the most important are as follows.

At the end of 1878 beginning of 1879, taking his cue from Schliemann’s discoveries, the Cretan Minos Kalokairinos excavated at the well-known site of Knossos. His results were very promising: he excavated part of the west magazines, where he found pithoi, Linear B inscriptions, and many vases. However, due to the troubled political situation in the island – almost a decade before the Cretan Insurrection – his excavations were soon stopped. Kalokairinos’s finds were later seen by Arthur Evans, who also visited Knossos.

A significant contribution was made in 1883 when Arthur Milchhoefer published the book Die Anfänge der Kunst in Griechenland. Milchhoefer, who was Privatdozent in archaeology at the University of Göttingen, revived Hoeck’s “Minoan” theory; he argued that the origins of the newly discovered Mycenaean civilisation should be found on the island of Crete. Now, for the first time, Cretan prehistoric archaeological finds could support this opinion: the so-called “island stones”, Cyclopean walls seen by Pashley and Spratt, a stirrup jug recently found in Crete, and in particular Kalokairinos’s newly discovered finds at Knossos. Milchhoefer’s theory became a fundamental principle in Evans’s “Minoan” paradigm. As noted by John Myres in his obituary of Evans, “Milchhoefer’s Anfänge der Kunst (1883) may have influenced him more than he would afterwards admit”.

Last but not least, in 1884, a new piece of the “Minoan” jigsaw puzzle came to light. Federico Halbherr, exploring the site of Praisos, discovered an “Eteocretan” inscription (i.e. written in Greek letters, but expressing a non-Greek language). It was this inscription that persuaded Evans about the correctness of Hoeck’s non-Greek theory about the inhabitants of Crete in the “Minoan Age”.

Conclusions

In 1894, when Arthur Evans arrived in Crete, he was following in the footsteps of remarkable predecessors. As shown in this paper, Evans not only used previous archaeological and topographical research, but also borrowed

41 On Minos Kalokairinos’s excavations, see a small selection of articles: Haussoullier 1880; Aposkiti 1979; Kopaka 1990, 1992 and 1996.
42 Milchhoefer 1883, 121–37.
43 The stirrup jug was published a few years later in 1886 by A. Furtwängler and G. Löschcke (Furtwängler and Löschcke 1886, 24, pl. XIV, no. 88).
44 Myres 1941, 14.
45 The inscription was published by Domenico Comparetti in 1888 (Comparetti 1888, 673–76).
or modified earlier theories in order to interpret his finds. Unfortunately, in his publications, he paid little tribute to earlier scholars, whose ideas he relied upon, giving thus the false impression of exclusive originality in everything that related to “Minoan” Crete. The history of archaeology, involving the study of now forgotten works such as Hoeck’s *Kreta*, may help us not only to correct such false impressions, but more importantly, to regard the work of past archaeologists within the broader intellectual context of their time. As Glyn Daniel has remarked, “One of the great values of studying the history of archaeology is to realize that it is not a simple straightforward record of discovery; it is a record of discovery mixed with false assumptions and forgery and refusal of established archaeologists to regard their work historically.”

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Nektarios Karadimas


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