

THE MINOANS - A WELSH INVENTION?
A VIEW FROM EAST CRETE

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ABSTRACT

'Minoan', the term used to designate the Bronze Age of Crete and its derivatives are no mere typological curiosities. It is, rather, a highly loaded 'theoretical' term that has shaped the study of all periods in Cretan archaeology and history. This chapter discusses its intellectual consequences and emphasises the East Cretan and 'Eteocretan' dimension of its development, especially the lingering connotations of the 'Minoans' as a lost race. Analogy with British history was used by early scholars to argue that the 'Eteocretans' were the historical remnant of the 'Minoans', a remnant which had been left in the mountain fastnesses of the east of the island after successive invasions of Achaeans and Dorians. The intellectual consequences of this idea are significant and paradoxical: the 'Minoans' have provided a means by which the Bronze Age could be colonised by the preoccupations of traditional Classical archaeology, and helped to sustain a culture-historical paradigm in Aegean prehistory.