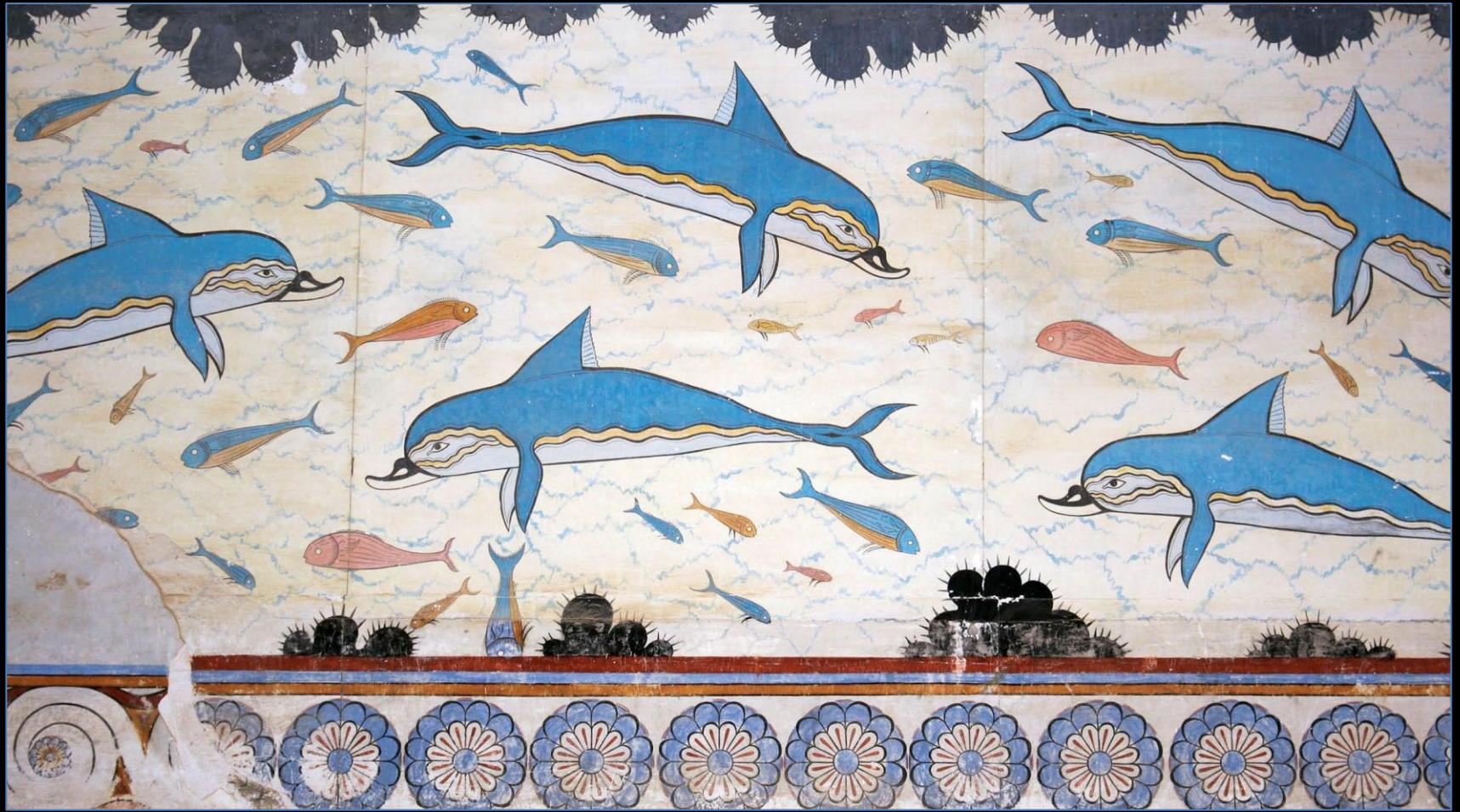


The Big Bang: The Case of the Minoans



The Greeks before “the Greeks”

- Neolithic Greece (7000-3000 BCE)
- Bronze Age (3000-1200 BCE)
 - Focus today on Minoans;
 - Wednesday on Mycenaean
- Iron Age (Next Week)

A fundamental fact:

There is much that we do not know.

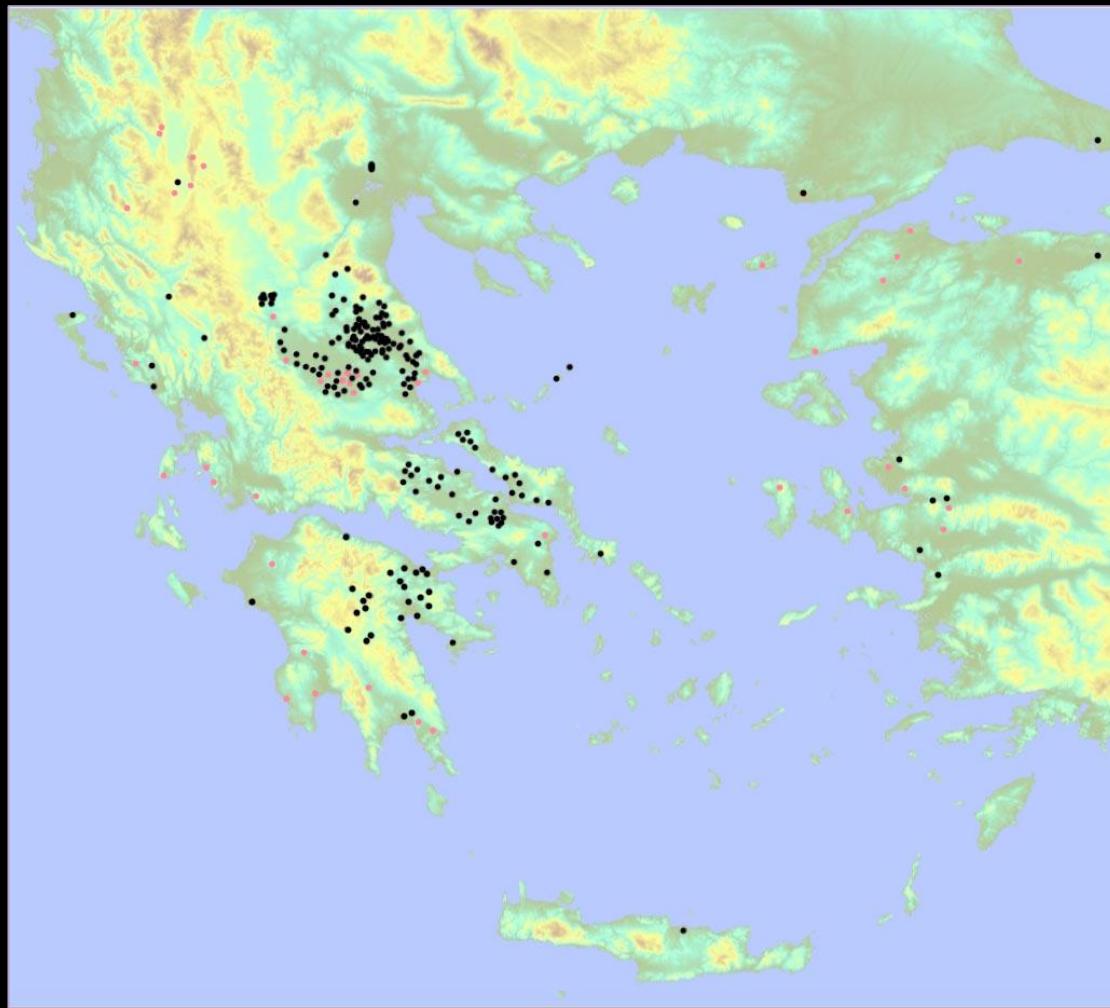
Greece “before the Greeks”

- The nature of the evidence: mostly non-textual
- How might we “read” that evidence?
- When we read Homer this week and next, how should we relate Homeric poetry to the societies of Bronze Age Greece?

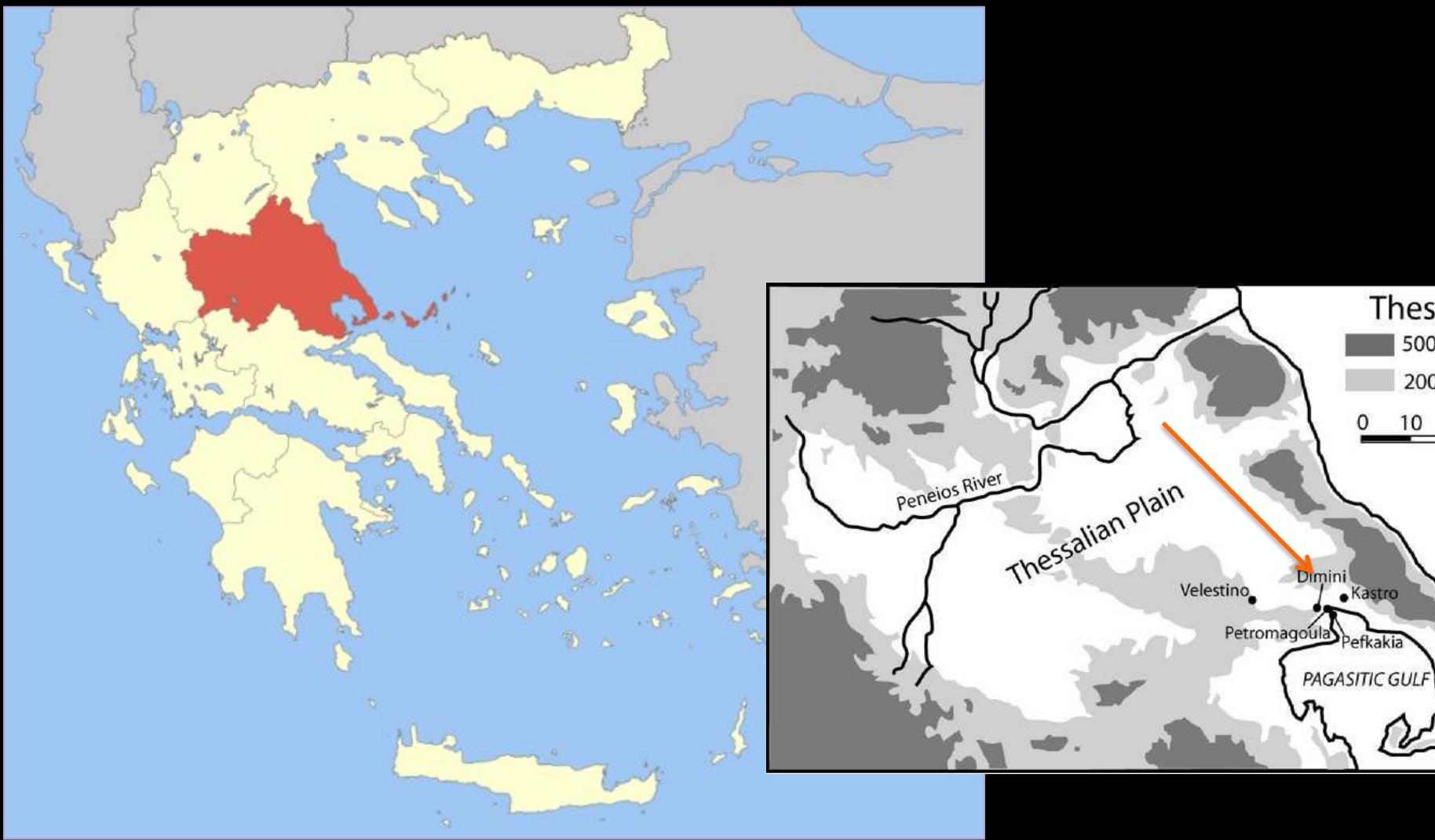
Big Questions in Background

- What are the roles of beauty – decorative objects, paintings, etc. – in Bronze Age (i.e. Minoan and Mycenaean) culture?
- How might we speculate about the societal structure of Bronze Age societies? Consider ideas of hierarchy, redistributive economy, and possibly gender roles.
- What functions does religion seem to have?

Neolithic Greece (ca. 7000-3000 BCE)



Late Neolithic Sites: Sesklo and Dimini



Polychrome (multi-colored) Vase from Late Neolithic Dimini (5300-3300 BCE)



Dimini (ca. 4800-4500 BCE)

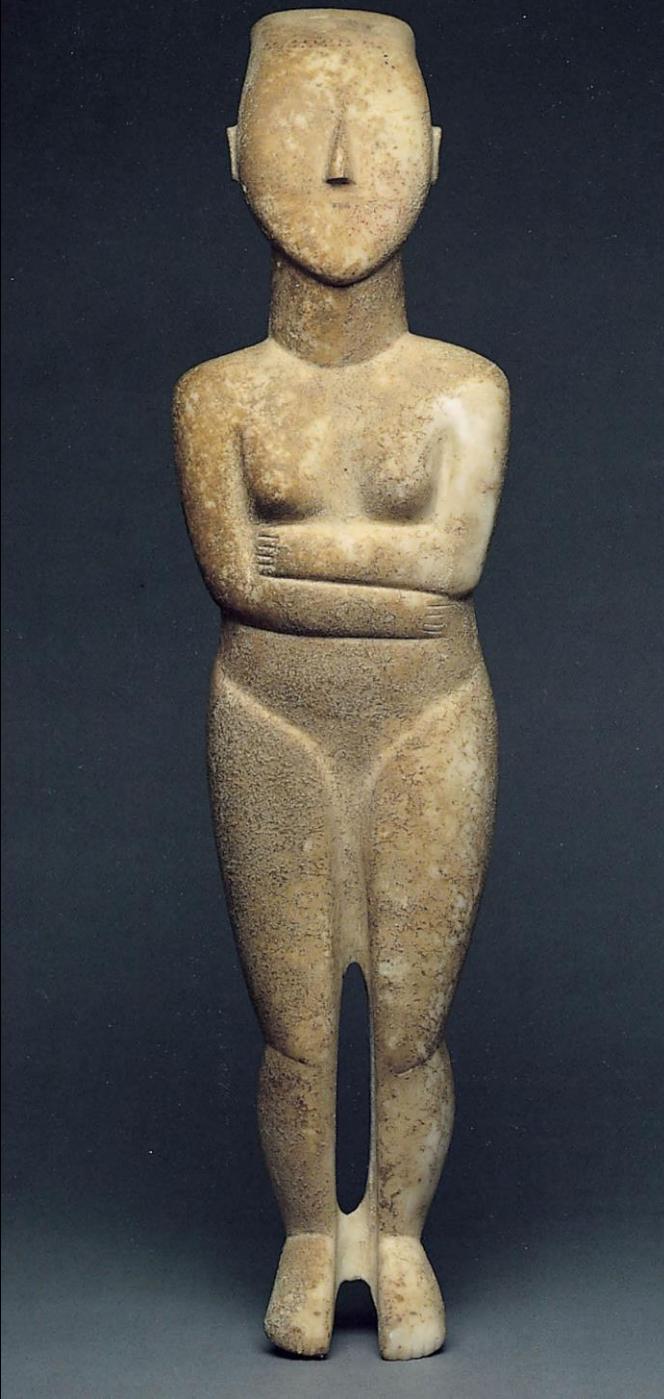


Megaron
(large central building)



The Bronze Age (ca. 3000-1200 BCE)

- Widespread adoption of bronze metallurgy (alloy of copper and tin, and sometimes other metals)
- → Signifies a technological advance from Neolithic (New Stone) Age
- Circulation of goods and people throughout Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean
 - Port-to-port trading (*cabotage*)



Cycladic
Figurine,
from Island of
Naxos
2600-2400
BCE, Marble
(20 in)

The “Minoans”



Minoan Culture (1900 BCE– ca. 1450 BCE)

- One of two major Bronze Age cultures of Ancient Greece (the other being Mycenaean)
- Primary site of inhabitation: island of Crete



Minoan Settlements at Knossos and Thera



The Minoans

Aesthetics

(from the Greek for “to sense, to perceive”)

Mystery

(from the Greek for “something hidden”)

Myth

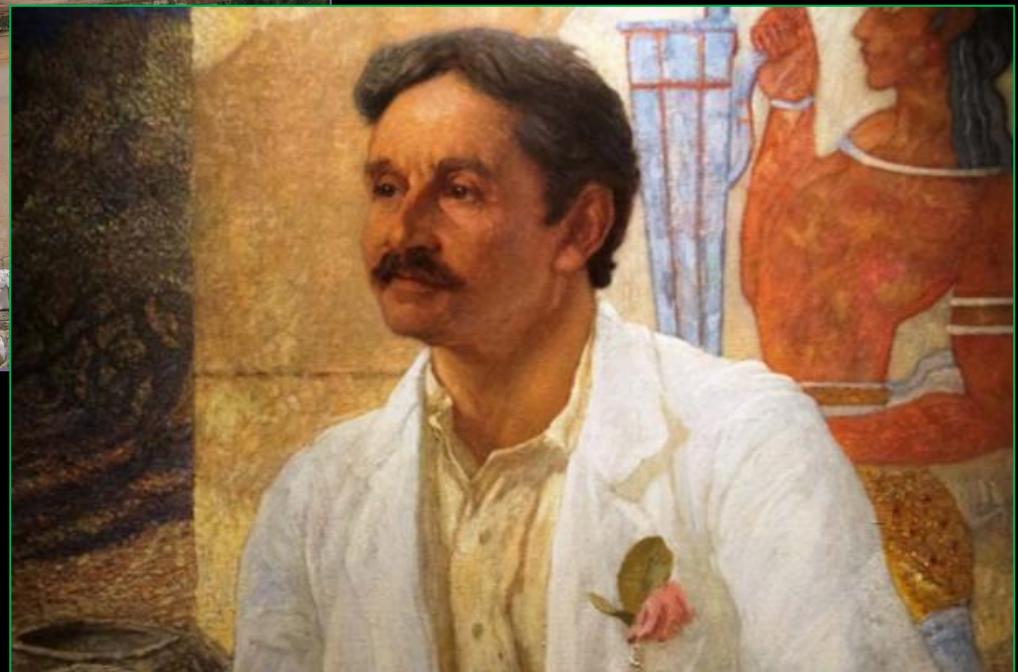
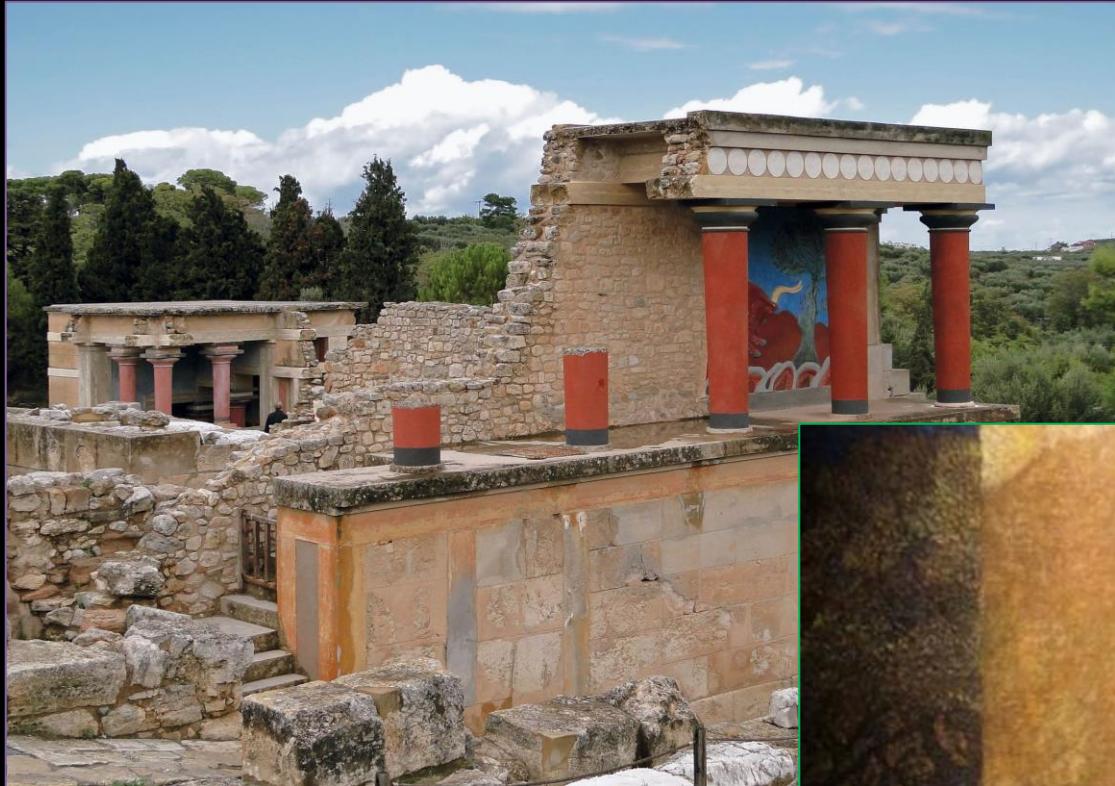
(from the Greek for “story”)

Projecting in Antiquity?
Thucydides (5th Century BCE),
History Book 1, ch. 4

“Minos, by all reports, was the first to build a navy; he made himself master of most of what is now the Hellenic Sea, ruled the islands called the Cyclades, and sent colonies to most of them ... As one would expect, he freed the seas from piracy as much as he could.”

→ “*Thalassocracy*” – rule by/of the sea

Knossos (and Sir Arthur Evans, 1845-1941)

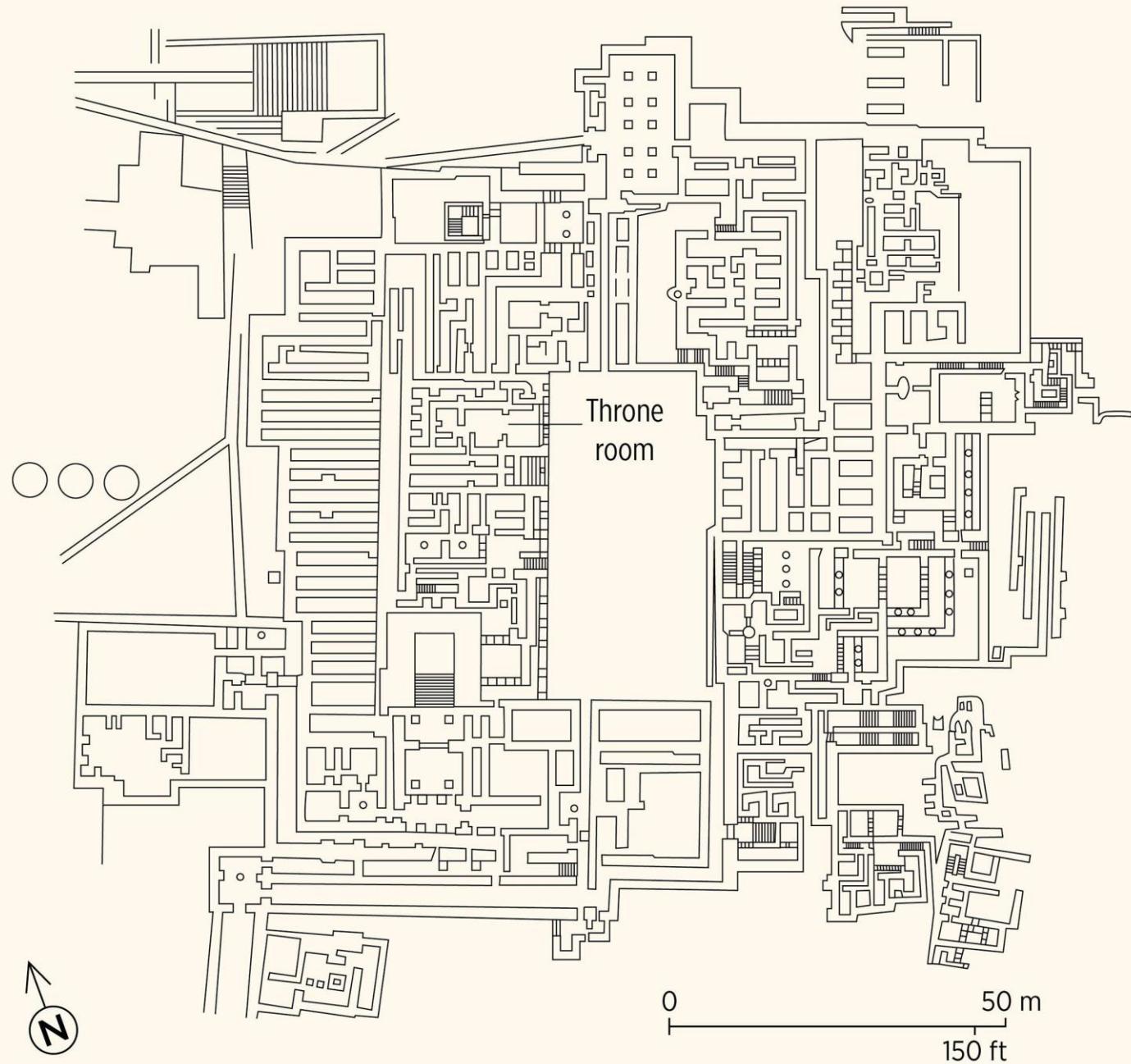


Man?

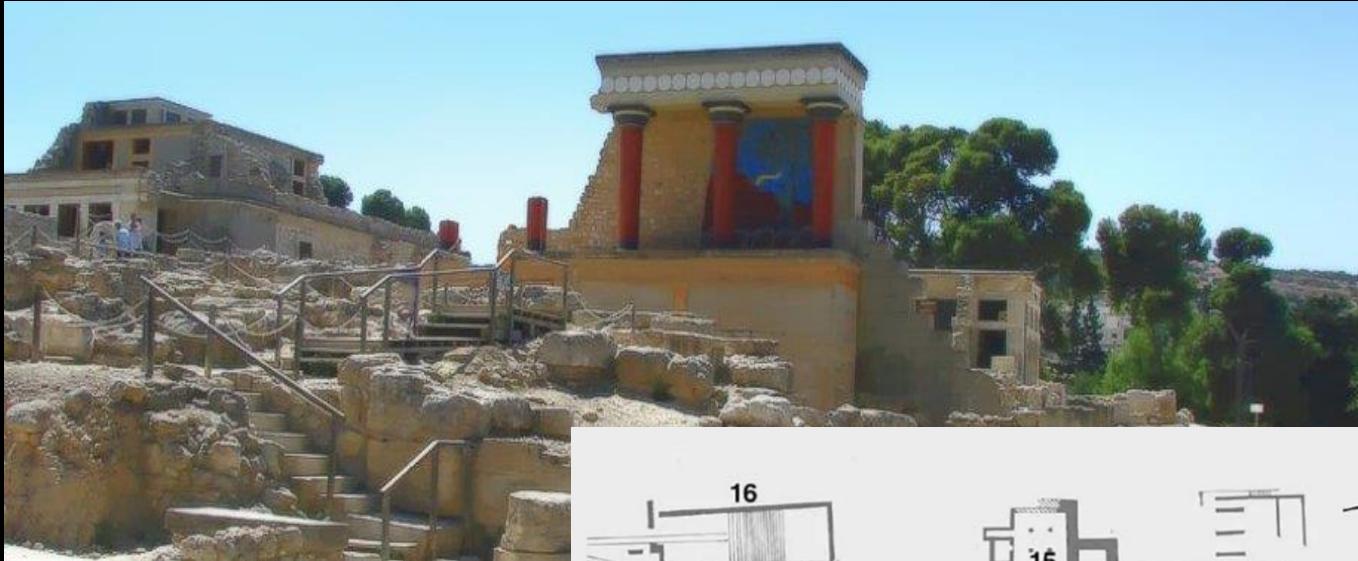


Nope: Monkey!



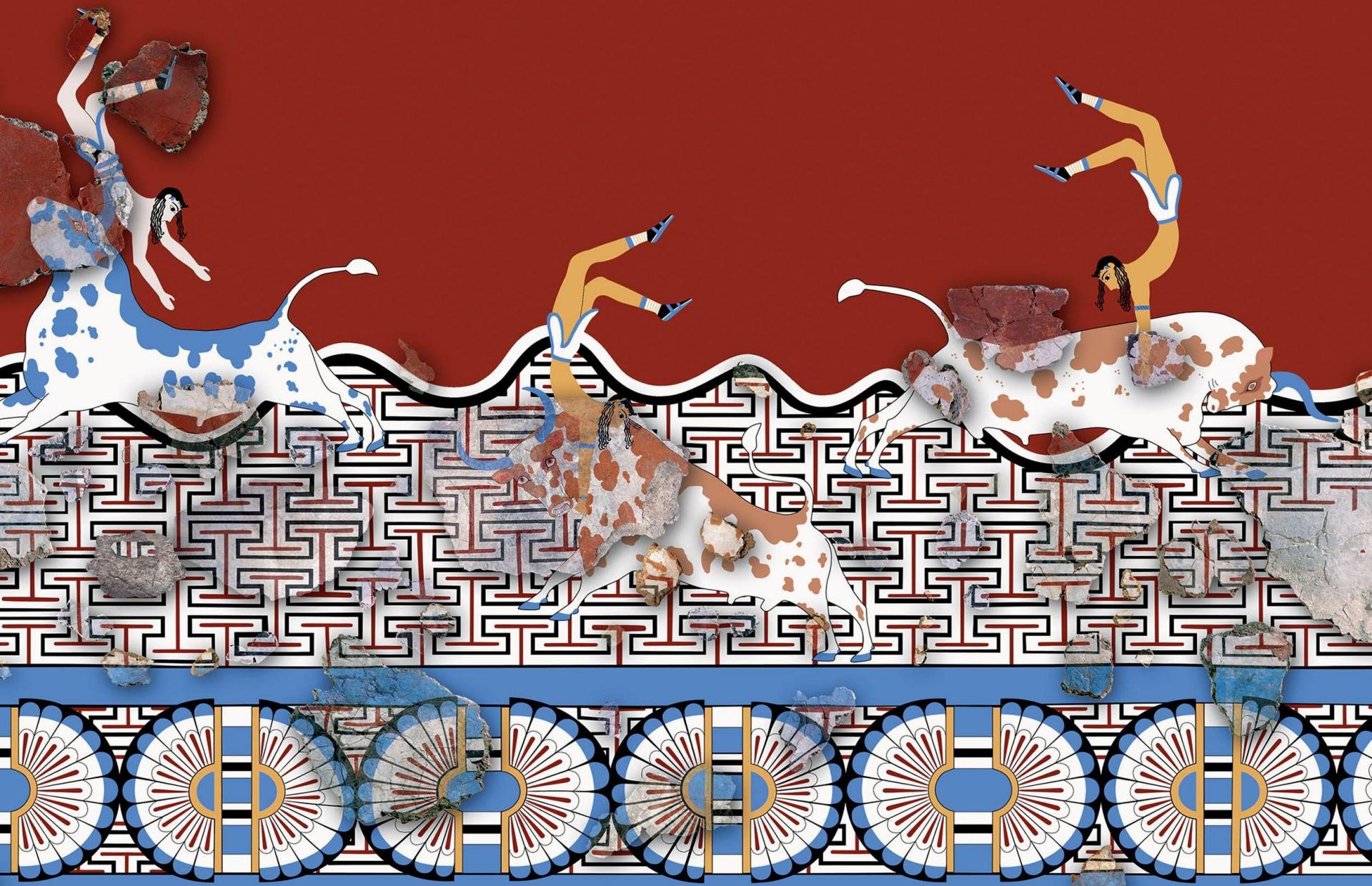




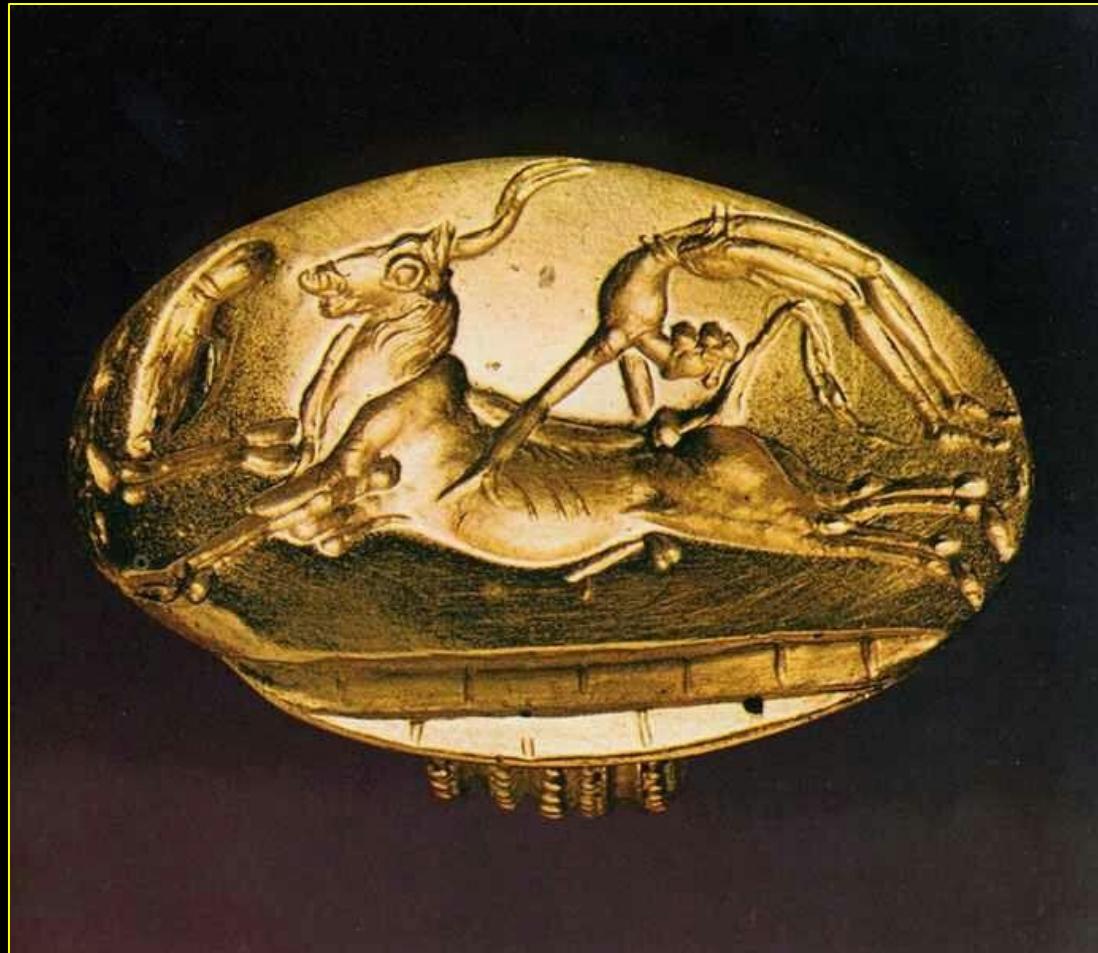


Palace at Knossos





Bull-Leaping Signet Ring (ca. 1700 BCE), Crete

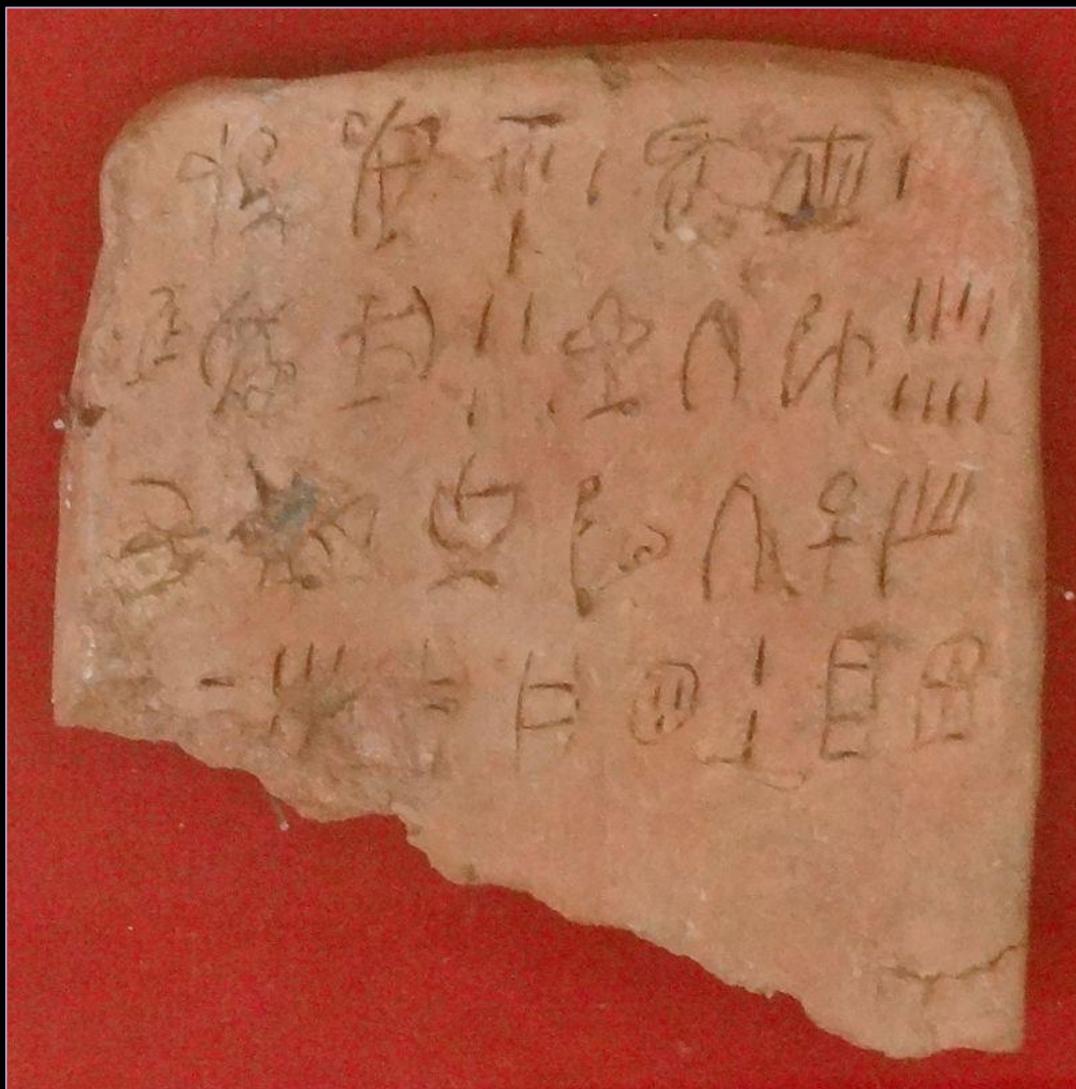




Bull's
Head
Rhyton,
Knossos
1550-1500
BCE



Linear A



Linear B Tablet, Knossos



Pithoi (Large Storage Vessels)

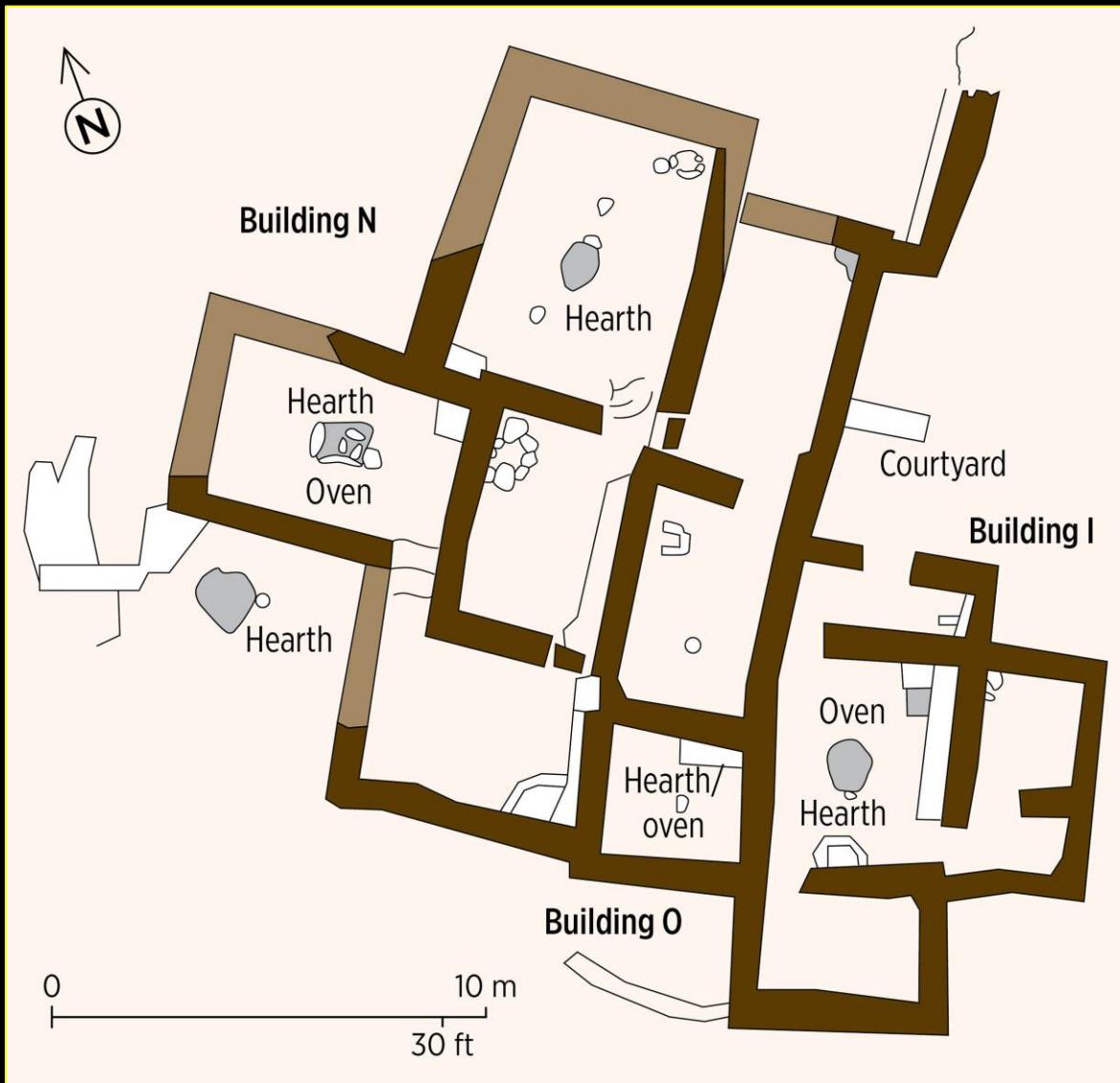


Harvester Vase, Agia Triada (Crete), 1500 BCE

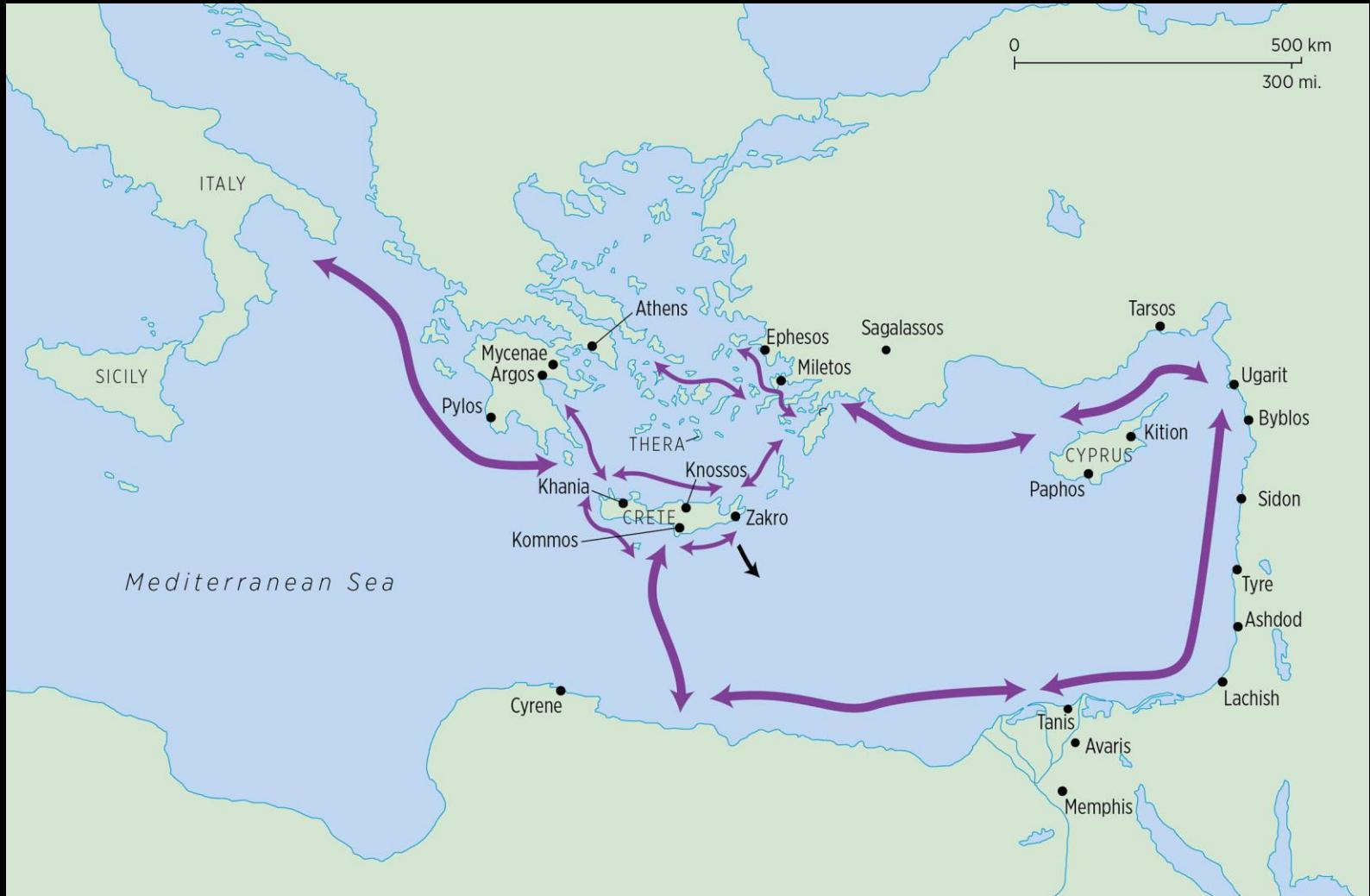


Corvée
labor?

Less Elite Crete? Building I-O-N at Vronda



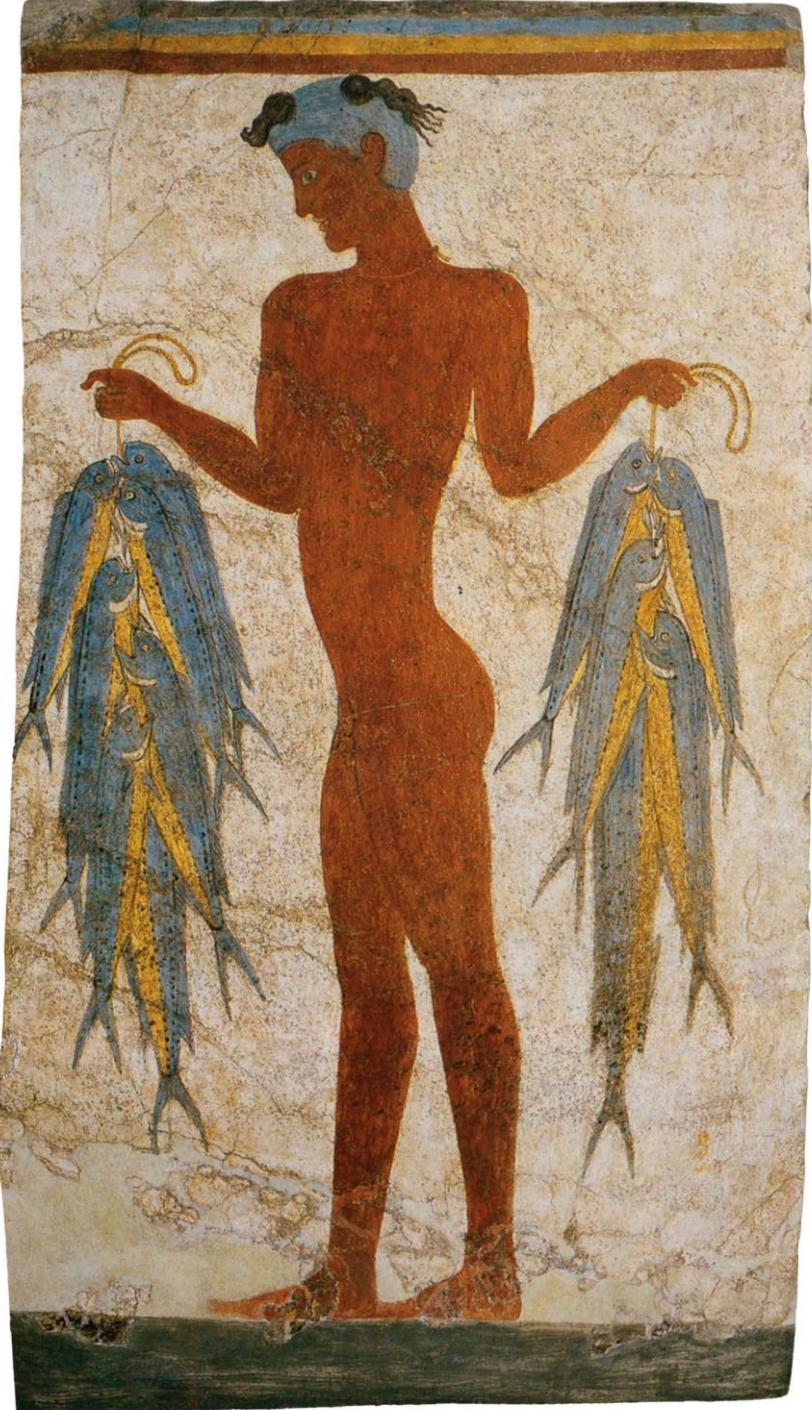
Akrotiri, Thera (Modern Santorini)



Frescoes from Akrotiri



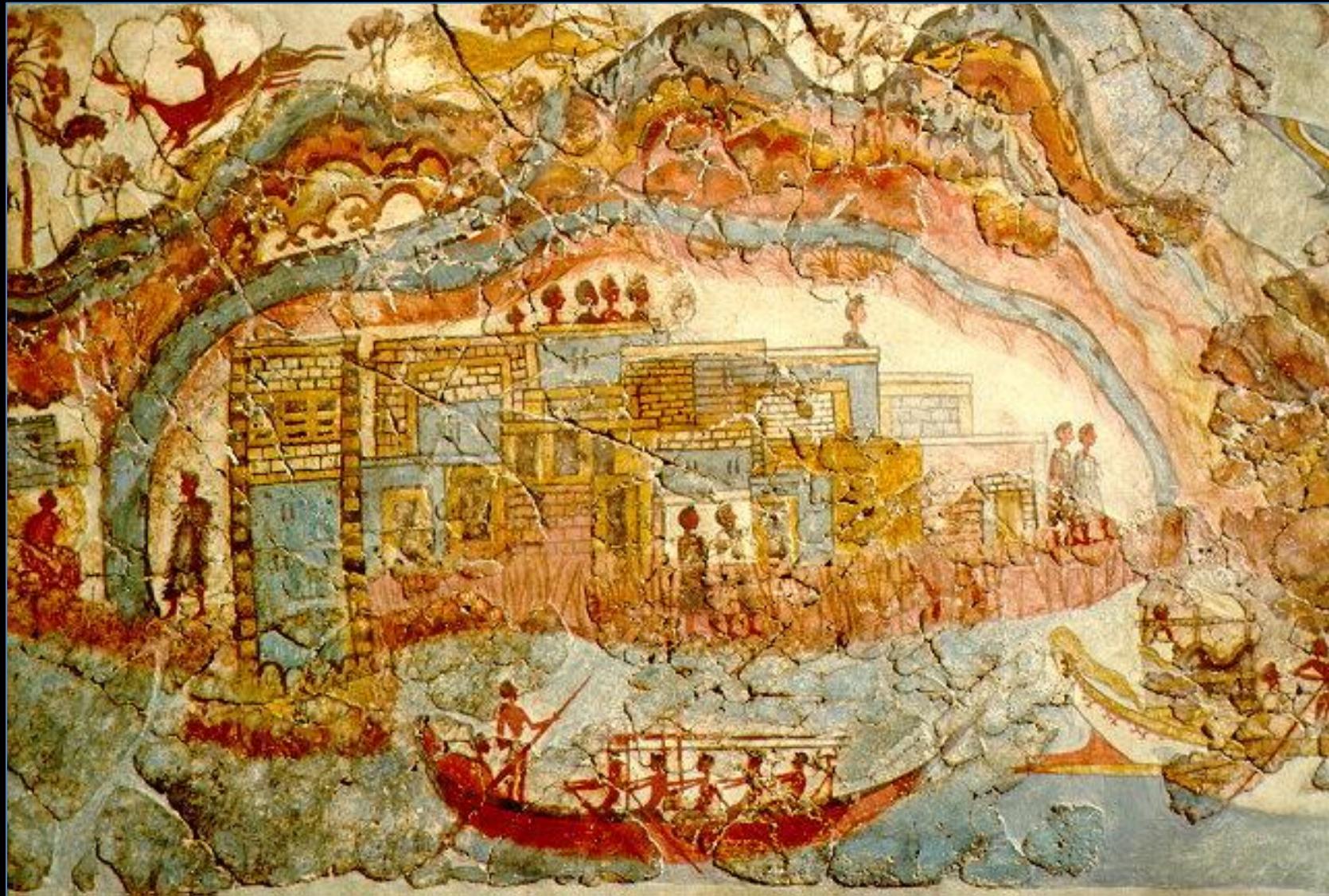
“Saffron Gatherer,” Akrotiri



“Fisherman
Fresco”

Akrotiri,
Thera

“Flotilla Fresco,” West House at Akrotiri, Thera

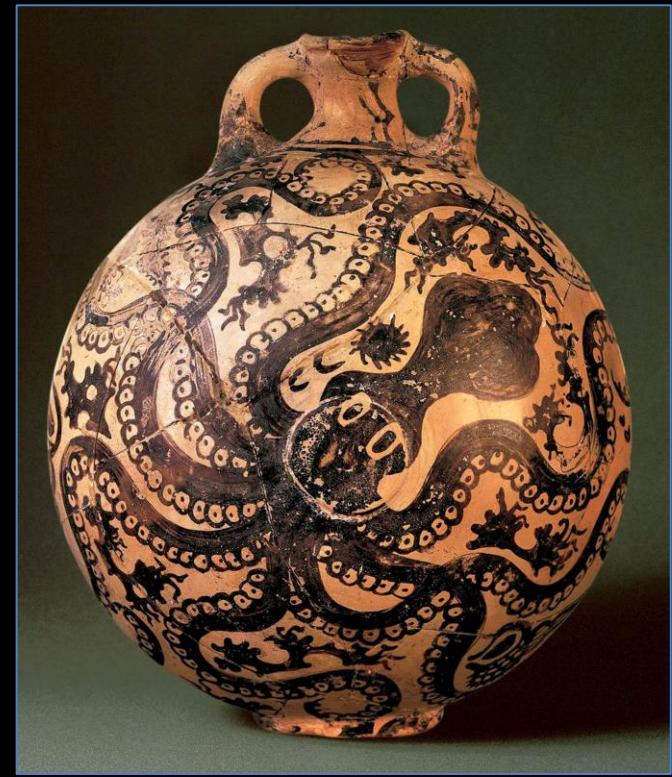


West House Fresco, Akrotiri



The Big Bang: What Destroyed Minoan Culture?

- Myth Helpful? Destruction of Atlantis (Plato's *Timeaus*, 4th C)
- The Problems of 1628 BCE and 1450 BCE
 - Marine style pottery (see image →) post-dates volcanic eruption at Akrotiri (1628)
 - Safest conclusion: destruction of Thera disrupted trade networks and likely hurt agriculture (from ash) elsewhere, but other Minoan sites persist until 1450 BCE



Tentative Conclusions about Minoans

- Architecture implies some kind of centralized authority and possibly a redistributive economy.
- Frescoes especially suggest an attention to aesthetics (but to what end?).
 - But “man v. monkey” example a reminder that we can mistakenly project meaning onto Minoans.
- Religious objects and spaces indicate awareness of fragility of life? Destruction of Thera in 1628 and other sites around 1450 BCE.

The Mycenaean ...

**TO BE
CONTINUED... ➤**