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The many lives of a ruin: history and metahistory of the Palace of Minos at Knossos*

Anna Lucia D'Agata

‘[...] the site of Knossos was never a ruin in the 19th or 20th century. Evans made it a ruin. By constructing a ruin, particularly by affecting the unfinished look of walls and rooflines, Evans influenced the perception of antiquity. [...] By blurring the distinction between ancient and modern, Evans’ Knossos was to engage the perception of visitors in ways that historical monuments had never achieved.¹ We owe these lapidary remarks to John Papadopoulos, who recently — and successfully — explored the ways in which Arthur Evans reconstructed the Minoan civilisation, and the huge impact that the *Palace of Minos* had on the idea that European culture formed of Bronze Age Crete. So it was — Papadopoulos insightfully concludes — that Evans enabled Europe to root its cultural identity in the great reservoir of classical tradition.

Papadopoulos’s research to some extent completes the work begun in the early 1990s by Alexandre Farnoux, who offered the first cogent demonstration that Evans’s approach took its inspiration from the cultural paradigms of his time, and that the picture offered of Minoan civilisation was modelled on European — and in particular British — society in the Victorian age.² Following on the work of Farnoux and Papadopoulos, a series of studies illustrated the impact of Evans’s reconstruction in various contexts, from the Greek national level to the local — Cretan — level, from mass tourism to Europe’s intellectual circles. In the last ten years the Palace of Knossos, as passed on to us by Evans, has become one of the most fashionable topics, above all for non-British scholars, in the realm of Aegean archaeology.³

Now, however, that most scholars concur with Papadopoulos that Evans’s Palace of Knossos was never an authentic ruin, and that its restoration sought to convey a culturally-oriented idea of Bronze Age Crete (FIG. 7.2), the history of the site can finally be properly retraced. Any account can, and must, start off from the Palace’s true ruins — those visible on the site of the building when it ceased to function and in fact turned into a ruin. It is clearly a rather less colourful story than the version featuring a setting of gaudy porticoes and columns artfully reconstructed with ladies of a vaguely Art Nouveau air portrayed in the luxurious Megaron of the Queen.⁴ It is, however, a very particular

story featuring a group of ruins left as such for centuries within an urban context, the vicissitudes of which can be followed from the end of the Bronze Age to the sensational discovery on the hill of Kephala at the beginning of the 20th century: of this — the subject also of a small volume on which I am working⁵ — I shall now try to trace the main outlines.

A PALACE IN RUINS

Covering a surface area of about 13,000 square metres, the Palace of Knossos (FIG. 7.1) grew on a helicoidal pattern which started from the central courtyard and developed over about 20 different levels. At the time of its greatest splendour — between the 16th and 15th centuries BC — it displayed what has been defined as a ‘ziggurat-like’ profile:⁶ something like a terraced pyramid on many receding levels. We may well imagine that once it had fallen into a state of ruin it still retained — at least for the first centuries of abandonment — a strikingly monumental appearance. This also explains the fame which the area evidently soon acquired and, as we shall see, its rapid transformation into a ‘mythic’ subject, or at any rate a generator of myths.

The slow but steady deterioration of the Palace of Knossos began in the 12th century BC, with the end of the Bronze Age. In contrast with the practice on other Cretan sites, where the monumental ruins were reused for cult purposes,⁷ the community that settled at Knossos in the course of the Dark Ages eschewed the area within the Palace limits. The great building rose

* This paper is based on D’Agata 2009.

1 Papadopoulos 2005, 91–2.

2 Farnoux 1993; 1995; see also MacGillivray 2000.

3 D’Agata 1994; Cadogan 2005; Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006.

4 The reconstruction of the Queen’s Megaron, reproduced opposite the title-page in Evans 1930 (= *PM III*), is the work of Emile Gilliéron fils, see Sturmer 1994. On the influence of the Art Nouveau on the reconstructions of Minoan frescoes, Farnoux 1996, 109–26; Blakolmer 2006, 219–40.

5 D’Agata 2009; forthcoming.

6 Farnoux 1993; Driessen 1999, 121–7.

7 For example at Phaistos and Ayia Triada: D’Agata 1999; D’Agata 2001, 345–54; D’Agata 2006, 397–414.

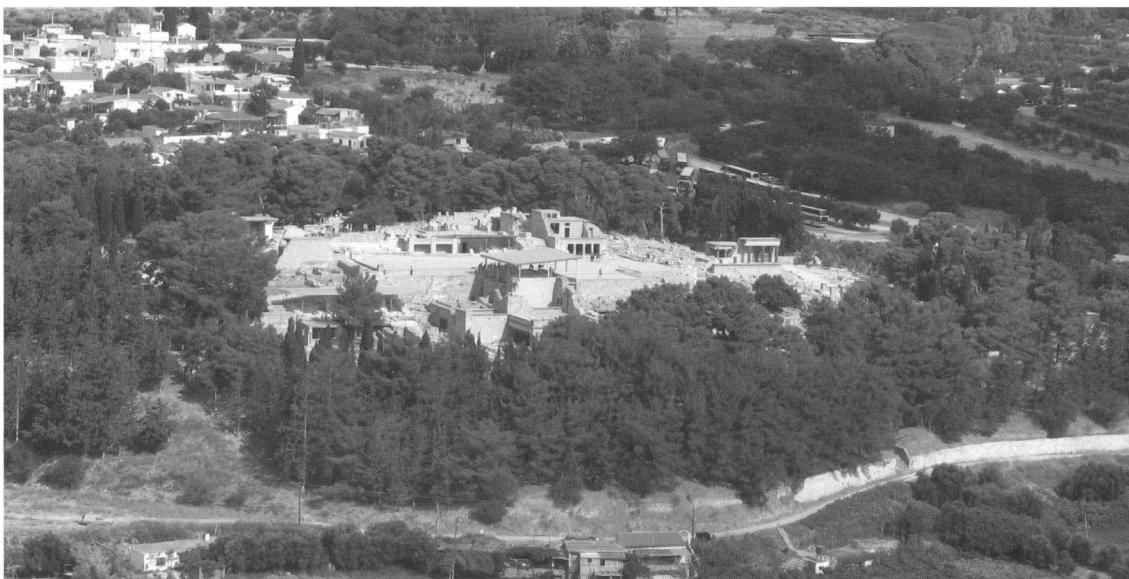


Fig. 7.1 (above). The Palace of Knossos from the east.

Fig. 7.2 (right). Evans's restorations of the North Entrance of the Palace at Knossos.



up at the east end of the more or less rectangular settlement area, forming a sort of ‘sacred island’ at the margin of the urban context (FIG. 7.3).⁸ It was to be at least three centuries before the Cnossian people once more frequented the ruins, in the late ninth or early eighth century BC.⁹

I will not dwell on the history of the ruins up to the second century BC. Suffice it to recall that, from the ninth century BC to the later Hellenistic age, they served as the setting for a communal ritual activity based on drinking.¹⁰ Originally restricted to a core of Cnossian aristocrats, from the Classical age the rite was opened to the local community. In other words, in these centuries the Palace ruins came to play an active part in the political life of Knossos.

However, from the time of the Roman conquest, if not some decades before, they no longer served this function, as is also evidenced by their distance from the civic centre. With the creation of the colony *Iulia*

Nobilis Cnossus in the Augustan age, the civic centre shifted northwards,¹¹ leaving the Palace isolated to the southeast. It was now, for the first time in its history, totally abandoned.

In each of these two phases, which we might for the sake of brevity define as Greek and Roman, through perception of the ruins in their context a well-defined,

⁸ Coldstream 2000, 296.

⁹ Popham 1978, 185–7; Coldstream 2000, 285–6; Prent 2005, 416–8.

¹⁰ Coldstream 1994; Coldstream 1998; Prent 2005; D'Agata 2009. On the numerous reconstructions and reuses of the Palace building, Macdonald 2005.

¹¹ P. J. Callaghan *apud* Popham 1978, 186–7. On Roman and Late Antique Knossos: Sanders 1982, 152–3; Paton 1994, 141–53; Sweetman 2004; 2005a, 481–8; 2005b; 2007.

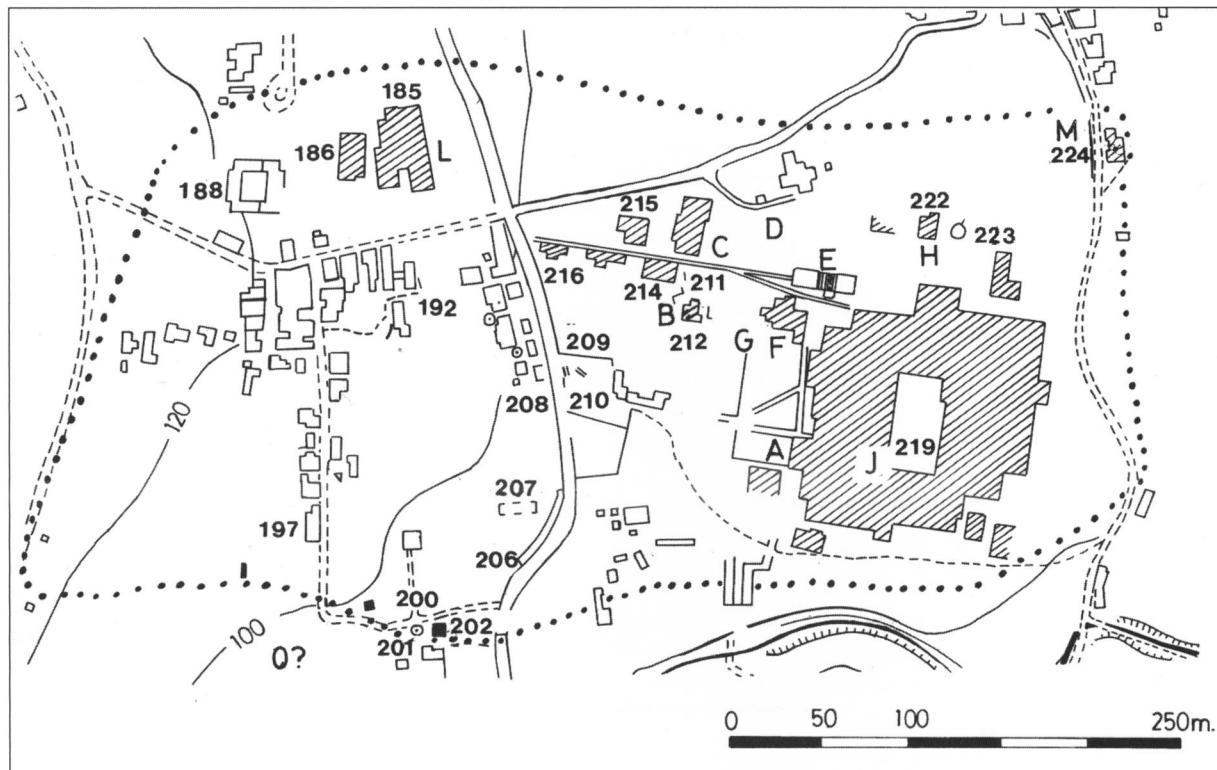


Fig. 7.3. Map of the settlement area of EIA Knossos (after Coldstream 2000, 261, fig. 1).

imaginary world of a kind that could generate significant ‘narratives’ came to be formed.

It was in the course of the fifth century BC, when the Palace ruins were still being used, that the Palace and its legendary inhabitants eventually found their place in the great sphere of Greek history and culture. Quite probably it was the special condition as ‘active ruin’ on the fringe of the Knossos *polis* that encouraged the formation of a legendary heritage. Fundamental is the role that the Palace and Minos appear to have played in the process of historicisation of the Theseus legend which Athenian culture worked upon in the closing decades of the sixth century and on through the fifth and fourth centuries.¹² To follow the story through, analysis of the literary tradition — which we cannot go into in detail here — offers three fundamental points worth stressing:

- From the Classical age the term labyrinth seems to have referred to the Palace, consisting of an interminable series of corridors and rooms in which one could easily get lost, but, even more importantly, from which it was difficult to exit.¹³ This image was conjured up by the sight of the ruins of the Palace itself, which were still to be seen on the fringes of the centre of Knossos at the time. Significantly, from the mid-fifth century BC, the labyrinth began to be depicted on the city’s coins, thereby highlighting the importance that these ruins must have had in the picture the city

formed of its past in the Archaic and Classical periods.¹⁴

- The Hellenistic age saw the Palace, or labyrinth if you will, and the legends that had developed around it receiving the attention of scholars in not-so-far off Alexandria. Having no direct knowledge of the places, and often looking to Homer for clues, these erudites created stories that embraced the entire Mediterranean. The most important contribution made by Hellenistic learning to the history of the labyrinth is the attribution of its creation to Daedalus.¹⁵

¹² The main Greek and Roman literary sources on the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur are: Diod. Sic. iv. 61. 3–5 and 77. 1–4; Ov. *Met.* viii. 1–182; Hyg. *Fab.* 40–42 and *Astr.* 5; Apollod., *Bibl.* iii. 15. 8 and *Epit.* i. 7–9; Plut. *Thes.* 15–19; Paus. i. 27. 10. On the iconography, *LIMC*, s.v. *Minotauros* (vol. VI, 574–81) and *Theseus* (vol. VII, 940–3); Neils 1987; Servadei 2005. On the continuous ‘manipulation’ of the legend: Calame 1990.

¹³ See Plut. *Thes.* 15–19; Paus. i. 27. 10. Hdt. ii. 149 refers the term to an Egyptian monumental building to the south of the Lake Moeris. Of the enormous bibliography on the labyrinth in general we can refer to the essential: Matthews 1970; Borgeaud 1974; Santarcangeli 2005.

¹⁴ Le Rider 1966, 175–80, 195; Price 1981, 461–6.

¹⁵ See Plin. xxxvi. 19. 85; Diod. Sic. iv. 77. 4. On Hellenistic erudition still fundamental Pfeiffer 1968.

- c. In the Roman age, as attested by Pliny the Elder, the labyrinth was said to exist no longer in its original form.¹⁶ This conclusion seems to derive from comparison with other structures known as labyrinths — in Egypt, for example — still in good state of preservation. As we have seen, however, the Cretan labyrinth must have been out of use before the conquest of Caecilius Metellus in 67 BC, and the transformation of Crete into a Roman province.

Knossos became a Roman colony around the year 27 BC,¹⁷ and it was probably the sheer scale of the ruins and the difficulty of doing anything with them that suggested leaving them out of the expanding urban fabric, but there may also have been a touch of respect, or better, perhaps, awe that enveloped them.

As sources of evidence on the ruins of Knossos in the Roman period we have — exceptionally enough — two literary texts offering two different pictures of extraordinary interest.

The first text is the dedicatory epistle preceding the *Ephemeris Belli Troiani*, a work claimed to have been written by Dictys Cretensis — a Knossian companion of Idomeneus, the mythic commander of the Cretan contingent to the war of Troy — which in its original Greek version dates back to the second or third century AD.¹⁸ Here we read an account of the chance collapse of the tomb of Dictys at Knossos and the subsequent find made by local shepherds of a casket in which were conserved inscribed linden tablets.¹⁹ The shepherds handed their find, as the story has it, to the proprietor of the place, Praxis, who in turn had the text transliterated into the Attic alphabet and sent it as a gift to the emperor Nero. Here the relationship of the inhabitants of Knossos with the ruins has nothing to do any longer with the attitude of the Archaic and Classical Greek *polis*, appearing, rather, to be based on a new, detached view which would characterise modernity as from the 18th century. The humblest sought ‘treasures’ there, while the most affluent hoped to come up with finds of artistic value to adorn their homes or gratify the powerful. The choice made by Praxis of offering the material found on his land as a gift to the emperor Nero reminds us of the behaviour typical of a large part of the aristocracy of the Kingdom of Naples in the 18th century, when they curried favour with King Carlo di Borbone, promoter of the excavations of Herculaneum, by offering him the finest of the archaeological finds turned up by chance on their lands.²⁰

The second text on the ruins of Knossos is contained in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, dating to the early third century AD. It offers evidence of the interest that visitors from outside took in the ruins of the Palace in the imperial age. The work recounts in fictionalised style the life of Apollonius, an extraordinary figure who lived in the first century AD, and who went to Crete with all his followers during

the reign of Nero. Here he immediately made for Knossos where, as the author writes, ‘the labyrinth which once housed the Minotaur is shown.’²¹ Now, the verb *deiknymi* which is used for ‘to show’ is in itself indicative of the fact that the Palace ruins were an object of interest in the imperial period. Even more significant is the fact that the followers of Apollonius appear eager to see (*idein*) this labyrinth, revealing a spirit of curiosity which is again much like that of the 18th-century travellers who ventured among the ruins of the ancient cities of southern Italy.²²

Here, too, the perception of the ruins of Knossos in the Roman age seems oddly modern, much like that of archaeological ruins through the eyes of European culture from the 18th century until, at least, the time of Gabriele D’Annunzio.²³ We may take it to have rested on the special capacity attributed above all to monumental ruins — for example, by Cicero and his friends — to induce reflections on the transitoriness of life.²⁴

What exactly went through the minds of Apollonius’s companions as they surveyed the Palace ruins we will never know. Nonetheless, in the prevailing mood of introspection inaugurated, in that golden autumn of the Empire, by the *Eis heauton* of Marcus Aurelius, permeated by the sense of consummation and the representation of death, we can well imagine that it had to do with the caducity of human nature.²⁵

¹⁶ Plin. xxxvi. 19. 90 (Diod. Sic. i. 61. 4).

¹⁷ Paton 1994, 143.

¹⁸ Of this work we only have a later Latin translation by one Septimius, also responsible for the dedicatory epistle.

¹⁹ See Driessen 1990, 15–6; Alcock 2002, 124.

²⁰ Salmeri 2007, 264. We can recall the presentation to Carlo di Borbone by Carlo Guevara, of the ducal family of Bovino, of the famous ‘tavole di Eraclea’, found by chance in 1732.

²¹ Phil. V4 iv. 34.

²² Salmeri 2001b.

²³ *La città morta*, the tragedy that inaugurated the theatrical career of Gabriele D’Annunzio in 1898, was inspired by the journey the poet made in Greece in 1895 and by his re-reading of the Greek classics. The action is set amidst the ruins of Mycenae. Similarly in 1787, inspired by the landscape at Palermo and Taormina, Goethe began work on a play dedicated to Nausicaa, see: Salmeri 2001b, 74.

²⁴ S. Sulpicius Rufus, governor of Achaia in 45 BC, wrote to Cicero crushed by the death of his daughter: ‘Returning from Asia [...] I had behind me Aegina, before me Megara, to the right Piraeus, to the left Corinth, cities that were once superbly flourishing and now lie in ruins before our eyes. Then I began to think within myself: “Oh how indignant we little men grow if one of us, whose life needs be short, dies or is killed, while in such a limited space lie so many cadavers of cities? Do you not wish to have command over yourself, Servius, and remember that you were born a man?” Believe me, Cicero, these reflections afforded me no little revival; if you will, try to picture the same scene before your eyes’ (Cic. Fam. iv. 5).

²⁵ M. Ant. iv. 48; ix. 28. 5; ix. 36; xi. 1. 3.

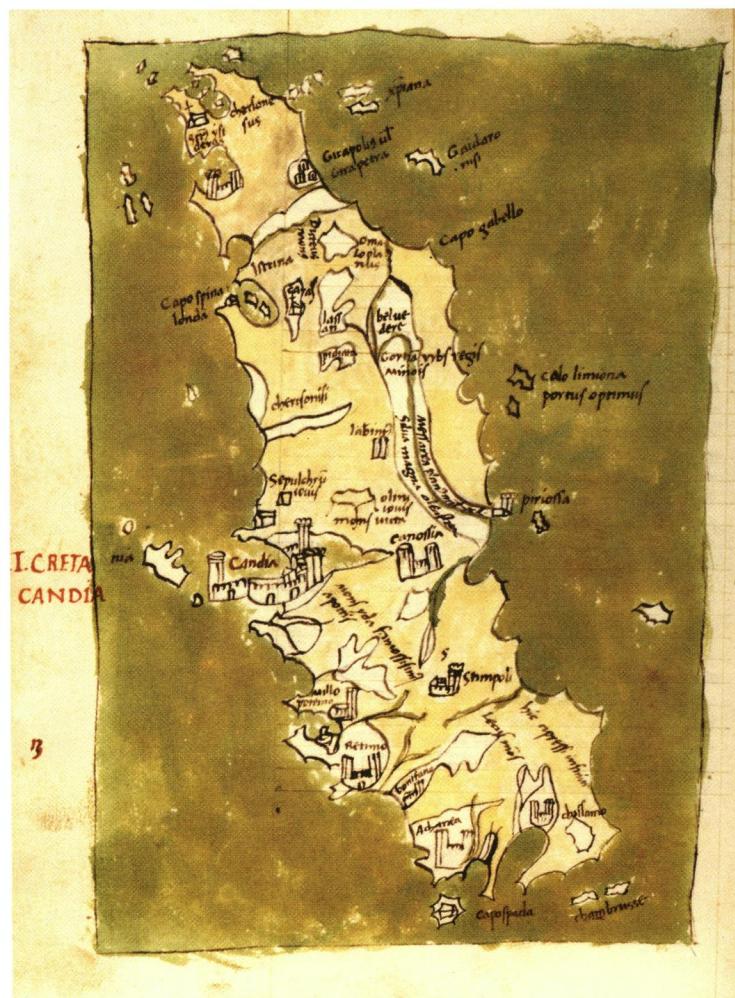


Fig. 7.4. Map of Crete in
C. Buondelmonti, *Liber Insularum
Arcipelagi*, 15th century MS,
Gennadios Library, American
School of Classical Studies, Athens.



Fig. 7.5. Map of Crete ex delineatione Obbo Emmii in Ph. Cluverius,
Introductio in Universam Geographiam (Amsterdam 1624).

A NAME WITHOUT RUINS

At this point in our account we must open a parenthesis with a leap to the age of Humanism when, between 1415 and 1418, a Florentine by the name of Cristoforo Buondelmonti made a number of visits to Crete and then wrote that *Descriptio insule Crete* which marked the beginning of modern antiquarian research on the island.²⁶

By then the name Knossos was no longer being used to refer to the area in the vicinity of the Palace ruins.²⁷ Knossos in Buondelmonti's text is located at Ayios Myron, on the eastern slopes of Psiloriti (FIG. 7.4). This misplacement seems to stem mainly from the fact that the name of the diocese of Knossos had been transferred to the village of Ayios Myron in the 10th century, which led the Florentine to identify this as the site of the ancient city of Knossos.²⁸

Actually, the fact that the city's place-name fell out of use in the late antique period also gave rise to the confusion marking the European cartography of the 16th and 17th centuries: even the great Philippus Cluverius placed the site of Knossos at random in the east of Crete (FIG. 7.5).²⁹

What was it, then, that happened at Knossos in the centuries of Late Antiquity — from the fourth century AD, that is? The civic centre seems to have shifted yet further north, in an area falling between two basilicas, while a second settlement developed around the basilica of Ayia Sophia, not far from the Palace ruins, in the area denominated Makrytichos, where, by the way, traces of occupation dating to the Arabic period have been identified.³⁰

The existence of various settlement focuses is indicative of the fragmentation of the ancient centre of Knossos, and probably of its disintegration in the historical memory. In any case, once the main settlement had been abandoned in the seventh century, and, above all, after the Episcopal denomination of Knossos had been transferred to Ayios Myron, the name given to the area of ruins of the Greek *polis* and the Roman colony of Knossos remained Makrytichos until the early 20th century. Buondelmonti volunteered the information that the ancient name of the city which yielded these ruins was Philopolis, which finds no mention in the ancient sources, and which, although most probably a mangled version of *paliopolis*, enjoyed great success in Renaissance cartography (FIG. 7.6).³¹

The disappearance of Knossos as a place-name at the end of the first millennium AD must also have favoured attribution of the appellation 'city of Minos' to Gortys, the major centre of the former Roman province. Latin poets had already made mention of the 'iniusti regis (i.e. Minos) Gortynia templi',³² but it was from the 11th century on — when the name of Knossos had fallen out of use — that it became common practice to refer to Gortys as the seat of Minos and the Minotaur.

In his *Expositio* Buondelmonti finds support for this identification in the impressive ruins of Gortys, unequalled in all the island, going as far as to identify the Palace of Minos in the so-called Kastro on the acropolis of Gortys — the huge sunken hall, of uncertain though definitely Roman date and function — on the evidence that the building was quite simply the most impressive then to be seen in the city, and the closest to a palace.³³

With localisation of the Palace of Minos at Gortys, the identification of the labyrinth in the area surrounding the ruins of the city gained ground: preceded by John Malala, in the 11th century Georgius Cedrenus in his *Summary of Stories* placed the Minotaur, having fled Gortys on Theseus's arrival, in a cave 'in the nearby land of labyrinths'.³⁴ This was the first time the labyrinth was presented not as a built-up structure, as the ancient tradition had it,³⁵ but as cave — a natural structure — thus forging an image that was to enjoy great popularity in the following centuries, to arrive at the Jungian interpretation proposed by Karl Kerényi.³⁶

Just a few kilometres to the northwest of Gortys, at Ambelouzos, the cave usually identified as the labyrinth³⁷ held a particular attraction for visitors in Crete after the island had come under Venetian rule, in the early 13th century.³⁸ What it was in concrete terms that aroused the curiosity of the European travellers and Venetian notables and made them clamber up the heights rising behind Gortys to see the cave where the Minotaur was said to have dwelt, can be gathered from Buondelmonti's *Descriptio Insulae Cretae*.

Just as Pietro Bembo climbed Mount Etna guided by the verses of Vergil in the late 15th century,³⁹ in the same century — and entirely in keeping with the

26 Buondelmonti 1981; 1996.

27 For the toponyms used in the area of Knossos in the 19th and 20th centuries: Vasilakis 2005. The mention of a village called *Cinosus*, apparently deriving from Knossos, in the writings of the Englishman George Sandys who visited Crete at the beginning of the seventeenth century, appears to be a *hapax*, see: Warren 1972, 75.

28 Buondelmonti 1981, 178–9, 284.

29 Zacharakis 2004, 212–3.

30 Hood, Smyth 1981, 153, nos. 235–6.

31 Buondelmonti 1981, 153, 256–7.

32 Catull. Ixiv. 75: the unjust king is clearly Minos.

33 Buondelmonti 1981, 173. On the so-called Kastro at Gortys: Sanders 1982, 71–2, 156; for a picture of the building, Di Vita 1984, fig. 107.

34 Johan. Malala *Chron.* iv. 86–87. On Georgius Cedrenus, Guarducci 1950, who ignores Malala.

35 Above notes 12–16.

36 Kerényi 1950.

37 Paragamian, Vasilakis 2002.

38 Woodward 1949.

39 Bembo 2005, 194–249.

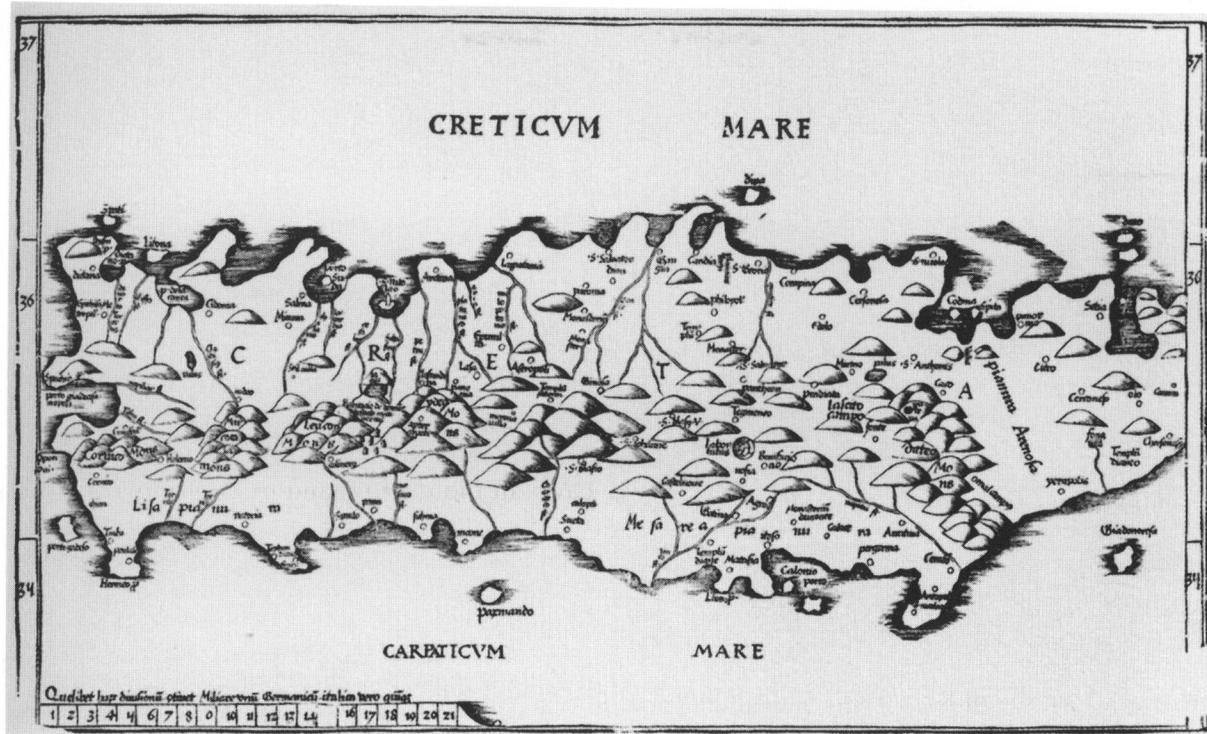


Fig. 7.6. Map of Crete in Claudii Ptolemaei Opus Geographiae (Strasbourg 1522).

absolute centrality that the texts of the ancient writers held in the world of learning — the need to find concrete evidence for the accounts of the ancient poets prompted interest in the labyrinth of Crete.

Nevertheless, in truly antiquarian spirit Buondelmonti concluded that the cave in the vicinity of Gortys was *not* to be identified as the labyrinth of tradition, which was in fact depicted by the ancient sources as an *artificiosa* construction, that is built by human hands.⁴⁰ Such learned observations cut no ice with the travellers visiting the island between the 15th and 19th centuries. Just as tourists throng to gaze up at the so-called balcony of Romeo and Juliet in Verona today, so they were content to consider the visit to the site a high point in their tour of the island. And at the same time the principal maps of the island produced in the 16th and 17th centuries from Münster (FIG. 7.7) to Ortelius invariably placed the circular sign created by Henricus Martellus around 1490 and used to identify the labyrinth,⁴¹ a little to the north of Gortys.

Thus, once it had lost its name Knossos was also deprived of its labyrinth, at least to European eyes.

KNOSSOS REDIVIVA

Shortly after Buondelmonti's visit to Crete in the second half of the 1430s, an account of Mediterranean travels by the Spanish writer Pero Tafur contains what appears to be the first modern reference to the ruins of Knossos as such. The part dedicated to Crete is very short, but

the author has occasion to record that 'the city of Candia is very large, with many great buildings', and that, according to its inhabitants, 'three miles away is that labyrinth, made by Daedalus, with many other antiquities'.⁴² On the evidence of this passage there can be no doubt that by the mid-15th century the inhabitants of Candia had identified, or, rather, re-identified the site of Knossos as the context of the labyrinth of Daedalus, and — no less important — we find that Candia itself now showed a capacity for critical assessment of its own past.

Actually, this is hardly surprising in the light of what we know of the intellectual life of the city and the island of Crete in the 15th century.⁴³ Such illustrious figures

⁴⁰ See Buondelmonti 1981, 177–8. In the course of the 16th century Pierre Belon (1553) and Prince Nicholas Radziwill (1583) opposed the identification of the cave of Ambelouzos with the Cretan labyrinth: Van der Vin 1980, 231.

⁴¹ Kaklamanis, Mavromatis and Tsokopoulos 2005, 93, 103, 111–5.

⁴² Tafur 1995 and Van der Vin 1980, 231. On Pero Tafur, Beltran 1991 (especially 142–64).

⁴³ Panagiotakis 1995 (especially 290–3); McKee 2000, 117. There is no doubt about the numerical superiority of the Greek speaking population in Candia, but although the 'Venetian' community — constantly renewed by a regular flow of officials, migrants and merchants — was small, its cultural predominance in the city also appears beyond doubt, *ibid.*



Fig. 7.7. Map of Crete in S. Münster, Cosmographia Universalis, originally printed in Basilea in 1544; the circular symbol of the labyrinth is located in the area of Gortys.

as Duke Marco Lipomano and Archbishop Fantino Valaresso had been sent by Venice to govern Crete, while among the fixed residents we find Nicola Cornaro, who had accumulated a remarkable collection of antiquities and a splendid library of Latin and Italian authors, including Dante, in his villa of Thapsanò in the region of Pediada. The Calabrian Leonzio Pilato, a celebrated Greek teacher who had dealings with Petrarcha and Boccaccio, spent 10 years in Crete from 1348 to 1358, possibly in one of the island's monasteries. In the 14th century those inhabitants of Candia who could afford it were able to frequent teachers like Pietro di Narnia or Bartolomeo de Hengelardis who taught Italian and Latin in the city. Thus the conditions existed for a cultural milieu to flourish; it consisted of local figures, above all of the church, and cultured Venetians with a good knowledge of Latin poetry, and proved able to generate the conviction that the ruins of the labyrinth lay not far from Candia.⁴⁴ In fact, the name Knossos was no longer used, but the painstaking accuracy of the learned, combined with knowledge of the places sufficed to revive the mythic structure of Daedalus. In other words, starting from the ruins that could still be seen at Makrytichos, together with the need to identify their exact place in the map of the island, and having at hand the information drawn from the ancient authors it was possible for these learned men of Candia to re-establish the location of the labyrinth — at Makrytichos, that is — leaving Gortys out of the picture.

This ‘discovery’ seems to have met with no response throughout the 15th century, apart from the incidental

mention in Pero Tafur, but it gained ground in the following century, above all in the works of Francesco Barozzi and Onorio Belli, leading exponents of the Cretan Renaissance.⁴⁵ Superseding the parochialism of Candia’s own scholars, they introduced the ‘discovery’ in the context of their *descrizioni* — ambitious works dealing with the island of Crete extensively.⁴⁶ Francesco Barozzi, who graduated at the University of Padua in the 1550s, was an intellectual who belonged to the Creto-Venetian elite of Rethymno, while Onorio Belli was a doctor of medicine from Vicenza who had also studied at Padua and arrived in Crete in the entourage of Alvise Grimani in 1583. Both developed a vast knowledge of the island and an extraordinary interest

⁴⁴ On libraries in Crete since at least the end of the 15th century: Kaklamanis 1998, 288. On education and cultural life: Pertusi 1961–1962; Panagiotakis 1995; McKee 2000, 115–24. On Nicola Cornaro: Buondelmonti 1981, 171–2.

⁴⁵ In general, Holton 1991.

⁴⁶ The *descrizioni* are historical-geographical works paying great attention to antiquities, and constituted one of the main genres in the output of European antiquarians in the 16th and 17th centuries, Salmeri 2001a, 265, 271–2. *Descrittione dell’isola di Creta* by Francesco Barozzi, 1577–78, existed only in manuscript form until its recent publication by S. Kaklamanis (Barozzi 2004). *Descrittione dell’isola di Candia (Rerum Creticarum Observationes variae, continentibus diversos actus, aedificia, inscriptiones, etc.)* completed by Onorio Belli in 1596 is no longer extant. Nonetheless a substantial amount of material from it has been published in Belli 2000.

in it, and, at least until the beginning of the 19th century, can be considered the most discerning and competent experts on the territory — in the broadest, modern sense — of the whole island.

In his description of Crete of 1577, Barozzi's primary concern is to demolish the identification of the cave near Gortys as the labyrinth. The cave — he firmly pronounced — was nothing more than the quarry from which stone was drawn to build the city of Gortys. The labyrinth that tradition attributed to Daedalus, was in the city of 'Gnosos', the island's major centre and the seat of Minos, as indicated by the numerous coins showing it and bearing the name of the city. The labyrinth, the writer adds, is a built-up structure and 'at present is not to be found since it lies entirely under ground and (is) now all covered by the ruins of the city of Gnosos together with its mouth, or entrance.' Coming finally to the visible ruins of Knossos, Barozzi situates them in the vicinity of the village of Makrytichos, where there are no end of collapsed blocks of stone and, above all, a long wall that most likely gave its name to the place.⁴⁷

Barozzi thus seems to be the first of the modern scholars to hold that traces of the labyrinth would be found if underground investigation were carried out in the area of Makrytichos, and also the first to hypothesise two 'stratified' levels of ruins at Knossos: one, underground, to be identified as the labyrinth, the other more recent, overlying it and still visible at Makrytichos.

An impressive example of the expertise achieved in antiquarian research on Crete in the last decades of the 16th century, Barozzi shows a degree of historical awareness such as is rarely encountered, and which can indeed be likened to that of William Camden in his *Britannia*.

However, neither Barozzi, nor Belli for that matter,⁴⁸ had any influence on the subsequent output dealing with Crete, and certainly not on the writings of the travellers visiting the island afterwards, for their works were destined to remain long in manuscript form. A slightly larger circulation might have been enjoyed by two historians of Crete contemporary with them, Antonio Calergi and Andrea Cornaro, who had no hesitation in attributing the labyrinth to Knossos.⁴⁹

To sum up, we may say that on Crete between the end of the 14th century and 1669 — the year Venetian domination ended — there was an erudite tradition of historical research able to fill out a historical and geographical picture of the island based on scrutiny of the sources and knowledge of the places, which attributed the labyrinth to Knossos, and not to Gortys, and identified the ancient city of Knossos with the ruins of Makrytichos. There were even some — Barozzi for one — who held that the labyrinth was a real building lying underground in the area of Makrytichos.

However, the Cretan — or, better, Creto-Venetian — tradition found no echo outside for a number of reasons also including the Turkish conquest, which

brought it to an abrupt end. Lacking the support of the local output, the accounts of travellers like Tournefort and Pococke, who usually seem well-informed for other areas of the eastern Mediterranean, leave much to be desired in the case of Crete and Knossos.⁵⁰

One significant exception is *Travels in Crete* by Robert Pashley. Here the section on Knossos,⁵¹ still known as Makrytichos in the early 19th century (FIG. 7.8), takes the form of an accurate overview resulting from conscientious observation of the site, but also from what was then known of the antiquarian output of the preceding centuries in part brought together in *Creta Sacra* by Flaminius Cornelius.⁵² Pashley, however, with his positivist spirit *ante litteram*, rules out the possibility that there ever existed at Knossos a labyrinth 'built by the hand of man' as referred to by certain ancient sources, adding that he had found no traces of a building comparable with the structure that Herodotus — speaking of Egypt, and not of Crete — indicated with the precise term labyrinth.

KNOSSOS REVEALED: MINOS KALOKAIRINOS AND ARTHUR EVANS

Quite the opposite direction to the sceptical Pashley was taken by the last protagonist of our story, the interpreter for the British Consulate and merchant, Minos Kalokairinos. Born in Candia in 1843 into a well-to-do family of merchants which came from Kythera, he was brother of the British vice consul in Crete and a collector of ancient relics. In 1878 and 1879, Kalokairinos carried out a few weeks' excavation on land he owned in the Makrytichos area at Kephala tou Tchelebi. This brought to light a series of large pithoi and archaeological remains, which he christened 'the royal palace of king Minos', and which do in fact correspond to a stretch of the western storerooms of the Bronze Age building that Evans later brought to

⁴⁷ Barozzi 2004, 217–8. The toponym Makrytichos is composed of *makry* (long) and *teichos* (wall).

⁴⁸ For references to the labyrinth at Knossos, see: Belli 2000, 15, 59.

⁴⁹ See Barozzi 2004, 146–7. On Antonio Calergi's library, considered the finest on Crete: Kaklamanis 1998, 290.

⁵⁰ In general, Warren 1972, 80–91; for Knossos, Kopaka 2005, 504–5.

⁵¹ Pashley 1837, vol. 1, 204–09; less critical Spratt 1865, vol. 1, 58–61, 64–6.

⁵² Cornelius 1755. This is a fine example of the superlative quality of 18th century Italian antiquarian studies achieved by Maffei and Mazzocchi: Salmeri 2001c. Cornaro's (Cornelius is the latinised form of Cornaro) volume begins with a reproduction of Buondelmonti's description of Crete accompanied by copious explanatory notes, a sort of systematic *summa* of antiquarian knowledge concerning the island.

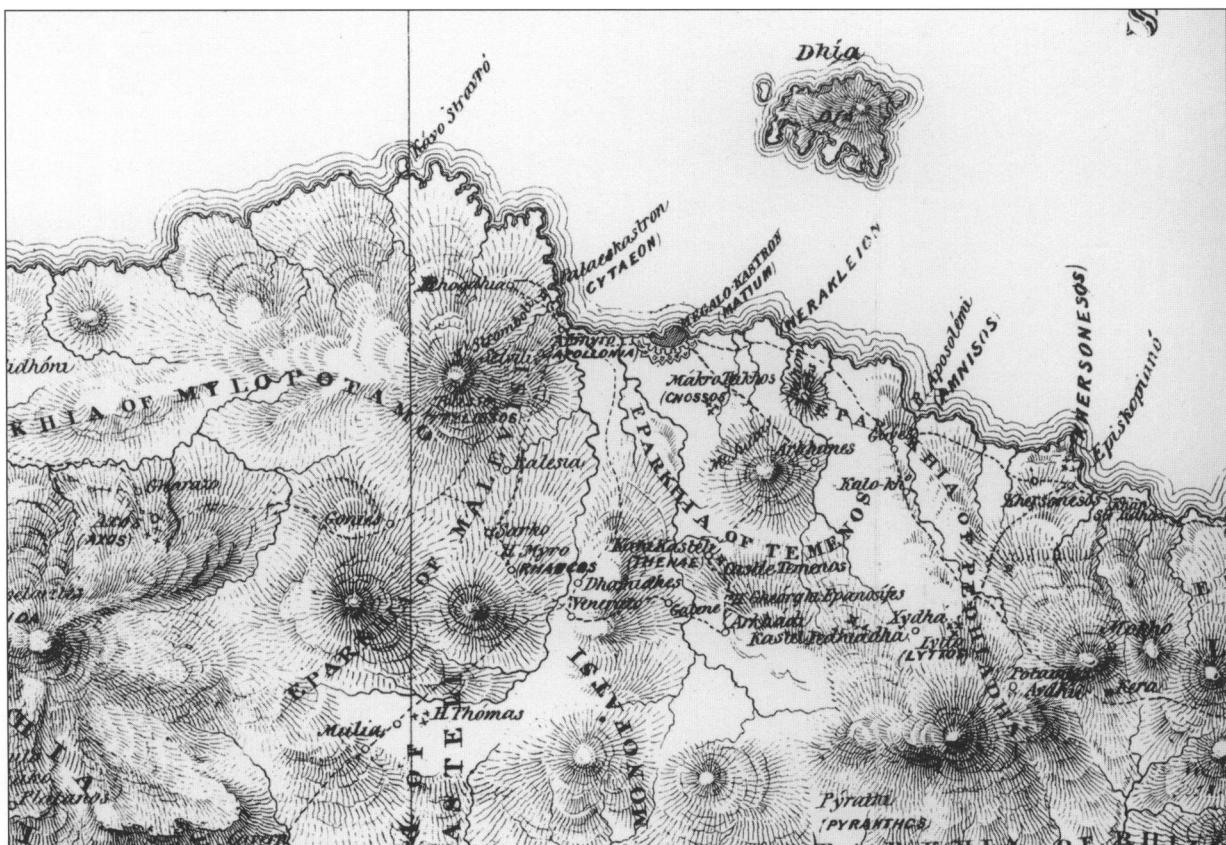


Fig. 7.8. Detail of map of Crete accompanying Robert Pashley, Travels in Crete I-II, London 1837.

light. Thanks to his detailed knowledge of the ancient authors, Kalokerinos tried to identify some of the buildings mentioned in the sources. He maintained that he had found the very room in which King Minos held court. In addition, the quarries that ran underground at Ayia Irini close to the Palace were identified as the labyrinth where Theseus and the Athenian youths and maidens were held prisoners. These quarries were said to have provided the stone blocks Daedalus used in constructing the Palace.⁵³

In the history of the discovery of Knossos, Kalokairinos's excavations were not able to attain the importance they merited: since Crete was still in Ottoman hands, the work was stopped by orders of the Cretan General Assembly. Under Ottoman law all significant material found had to be taken to Constantinople, and the Cretans had no intention of permitting this.⁵⁴ In his eagerness to attract foreign archaeologists to Crete and share his findings with them, not least to gain their assent, Kalokairinos was reckless in divulging data and information concerning his discoveries. Over the next few years this led to a conflict which has been referred to as 'the battle of Knossos', with all the foreign archaeological institutions then operating in Greece, with archaeologists of the calibre of Schliemann, trying to get their hands on the site.⁵⁵ In the end Arthur Evans prevailed:⁵⁶ Crete

gained its independence from the Turks in 1898, and once he had purchased the land, the rich and determined Englishman set about excavating the Kephala in 1900, making his name for ever synonymous with Knossos.

Kalokairinos was excluded from the proceedings, and spent the rest of his life in bitterness in being denied his due place in Cretan archaeology. It is only recently that he has been recognised as being the first person to find the site of the Palace.⁵⁷

Reconstruction of the personality and culture of Kalokairinos was attempted with great sensitivity by a fellow-citizen of his, Rhea Galanaki, in her novel *O Αιώνας των Λαβυρίνθων*, which appeared in 2002. Convinced that the rich merchant of Candia was not only an important figure in his day but also was well aware

⁵³ On Kalokairinos and his excavation at Knossos: Aposkitou 1979; Kopaka 1989–90; 1995; MacGillivray 2000, *passim*. See also Driessen 1990, 15–6.

54 See Aposkitou 1979.

55 Brown 1986; Driessen 2001.

56 On Arthur Evans: Evans 1943; Horwitz 1981; MacEnroe 1995; MacEnroe 2001; MacGillivray 2000.

57 Kopaka 1989–90; Kopaka 1995.

of the status of his activity on the Kephala,⁵⁸ Galanaki is undoubtedly motivated by a passion for Herakleion, the ancient Candia, and its past; but in depicting Kalokairinos as the heir of a Greek tradition of learning she may well be not wide of the mark. The impression we have of Kalokairinos is as the ideal heir to the antiquarian culture of the island—the culture that went back to Barozzi and Cornaro, and by the lights of which the labyrinth was situated at Knossos and its remains lay buried in the area of Makrytichos. His experience matured from the humus of local culture, which, while differing from that of the centuries of Venetian rule, had in common with it a truly intense enthusiasm for the object of study. It was this veritable passion that led Kalokairinos unwarily to share his archaeological discovery with Europeans of the calibre of Schliemann and Evans. Evans in particular benefited greatly from discussions with Kalokairinos, but, as Stylianos Alexiou remarked, ‘made only the barest mention of the contribution provided by the *philarcheos* of Herakleion [...] to the discovery of the palace’.⁵⁹ The ungenerous behaviour of the great English archaeologist cannot, however, detract from the happy end with which we will conclude our story: it was out of the local antiquarian tradition, whose origins went back to Creto-Venetian Humanism and which still showed considerable vitality in the 19th century, that there grew the new story—in a colonial framework, with results worthy of Disney,⁶⁰ but extraordinarily successful—of the Bronze Age Palace of Knossos on Crete.

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⁵⁸ Galanaki states explicitly that she was inspired by various local figures and archaeologists such as Spyridon Marinatos and Nikolaos Platon, who, as Directors of the Herakleion Museum, made a strong impact on life in the city: cf. the interview given to *TO BHMA* (1.12.2002).

⁵⁹ Alexiou 2005, 562.

⁶⁰ As defined in Hitchcock and Koudounaris 2002, 52.

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