Ancient Crete: Minoan Civilization

So-called “Throne of Minos” found at Cnossus in Crete
Archaeology

• Cretan history previously known only through myths and legends

• British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans found and studied remains on Crete

• Called “Minoan” civilization after numerous kings named Minos

Sir Arthur Evans
Natural Resources

• Copper
• Fertile soil
• Gold
• Good harbors
• Lead
• Silver
Early History

• 3000-1400 B.C.E. – Cretan empire

• Parts of Asia and Greek peninsula, and other Aegean islands

• Major cities
  – Knossos (a.k.a. Cnossus)
  – Phaestus
Economy

• Leading sailors and traders before the Phoenicians
  – Traded metal goods, pottery, and textiles
  – Traded with Egyptians, Syrians, and others

• Strong navy
  – Exacted tribute from neighbors
  – Protected the merchant marine
Decline and Fall

- 14th century B.C.E.
  - Conquered by barbarians from central and Eastern Europe
  - Hellenes attacked and destroyed Crete
  - Mixture of Cretans and Hellenes became the Greeks
Legacy

• Link between ancient Egypt and classical Greece
• Cretan writing remains largely undeciphered
• Palaces had baths, drains, and plumbing
• Stressed athleticism – boxing, dancing, and running
• Women enjoyed a level of equality with men
Art and Religion

• Principal deity was a goddess

• Art illustrates religious festivals and rituals

• Colorful palaces

• Painting, pottery, and sculpture
Review Questions

• What famous British archaeologist first excavated and studied Minoan remains at Crete?
• Upon what was the Minoan economy based?
• What caused the decline of Minoan civilization?
• Describe Minoan culture.