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Ancient Crete: Minoan Civilization

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Slide 2

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

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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
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**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

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**Art and Religion**

- Principal deity was a goddess
- Art illustrates religious festivals and rituals
- Colorful palaces
- Painting, pottery, and sculpture

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**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.