CRETE — THE RISE AND FALL OF A NAVAL POWER

By ÉTIENNE PALÉZIEUX

3,500 years ago there existed a mighty naval power: Crete. It controlled the sea lanes and possessed naval bases and spheres of influence wherever its ships could go. Within the limits of the Western world then known, Crete was as powerful as Great Britain was in our modern world up to 1939. Today nothing is left of Crete but memories.

It is of particular interest to study the rise and fall of Crete at a time when we are witnessing the life-and-death struggle of another naval power. While our own generation’s judgment of Great Britain may be colored by sentiments depending on whether we are her friend or foe, the earliest known sea power, Crete, is now so remote that its story can be told with a wide perspective and without a trace of passion. This is done by the author of the following article, in which he presents a comprehensive and clear picture of a subject little known and hitherto usually hidden in scientific volumes and research publications.

The author lived for many years in Greece, where he collaborated with Wilhelm Dörpfeld, the last surviving pioneer of archaeology, famed through his excavations at Olympia and Troy.

The decorative borders used in this article are faithful reproductions of motifs used in Minoan art.—K.M.

NO ONE who has approached the sunbathed island of Crete will ever forget how the unusually rough seas which wash the shores of this island demand the utmost in the art of navigation in order to bring a ship safe and undamaged to one of the numerous good ports or anchorages. One must admire the seafaring qualities of the Cretan mariners, and, in the circumstances, it seems perfectly natural that their ancestors should have possessed these qualities even many thousands of years ago.

Well, we too arrived safely and disembarked off Candia (or Iraklion, as it is now called) without a hitch, although to the accompaniment of the noise which seems inevitable in those latitudes. For the time being we postponed our visit to the museum in Candia, which contains many of the archaeological finds of the island, and entrusted ourselves to a bus heading inland towards Knossos. The bus was crowded to bursting point, and the roof was loaded with luggage, empty chicken crates, a few bags of rice, and an old water heater. The passengers consisted of peasant women, the Orthodox priest of Makrytichos, two Palikars (veterans of the war of liberation against the Turks) in baggy trousers and with silver-embossed daggers in their sashes, half a dozen sailors on leave, a notary from the town, a Greek carpet dealer from Smyrna, and a troop of Cook’s travelers. As I was a foreigner and spoke Greek—as was revealed when I bought my ticket—I was soon asked the question which has remained unchanged since Homer’s days: “Who are you, and of what people? And where is the town of your birth?” (Odyssey, XV, 263.) A very lively conversation followed.

After three and a half miles, the bus stopped near the area of excavation. As a parting gift, I presented the Cretans with the latest newspapers from Athens,
which were accepted enthusiastically in exchange for gifts consisting of a piece of white cheese, six cigarettes of the "Papastratos No. 1" brand, a quarter ticket in the State lottery, and three candied figs. For in a little nation that still counts the wily politician Venizelos among its greatest sons, politics and the discussing of politics are daily bread.

LEGENDS COME TRUE

The ruined city of the Minos lies on the other side of a little river called the Kaeratos on a low hill in the midst of a fertile depression. The mountain of Iouktas forms the background. The city covers an area of 1,125,000 square meters. In the center of the city stands the royal palace, forming a rough square with sides 130 yards long. The whole layout is extremely spacious and gives an impression of grandeur and pomp. The men who ruled and lived here must have been powerful and highly civilized. However, the precious relics of an ancient culture had long lain buried under debris in the heart of this palace during the periods which saw Homer's heroes throwing spears, saw Assyria rise and fall, saw the beauty of Babylon wither, and gave the world the loveliness of Egypt, the brilliance of Persia, the glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome. The kings who had once held sway here had already faded into mythical figures, and scholars believed that they had probably never existed after all.

And now the spade of the explorer suddenly caused the throne of the Minos actually to rise up intact out of the earth and to bear witness to the power and the glory of a mythical empire.

Fig. 1. (See also top of page.) Cretan hieroglyphics and pictographs engraved on a four-sided seal made of red carnelian

Hesiod, Homer, Strabo, Thucydides, and especially Herodotus, the "Father of History," have told us this or that detail about the Cretan empire that had been handed down to them. Light was only brought into the mythical darkness of the history of the island by the excavations made by Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, Greeks, and Americans, who had been stimulated by the famous German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann. Further light was cast on it by the discovery in neighboring civilizations of reports and descriptions regarding Crete. However, we shall not gain complete knowledge of all the phases of Cretan history until we have learned to read the numerous inscriptions.

THE SECRET OF THE SCRIPTS

Most of these inscriptions were discovered by Sir Arthur Evans in the years 1893 to 1896. Years of study revealed that there were five different systems of writing: one picture-writing system from the earliest times, two hieroglyphic systems (the later one from the "Period of the First Palaces"), and two linear systems that came into use during the later periods of the Cretan empire. In 1909, Evans presented the scientific world with the documents he had discovered, under the title of Scripta Minoa, Vol. I. In his preface, he stated that an analysis of the inscriptions would be published in a second volume. This volume has still not appeared; Evans could not solve the riddle of the script. But others, too, did not succeed—the script is silent. What is lacking for Crete is a polyglot like the Rosetta Stone, which made possible the deciphering of the Egyptian hieroglyphics. But, even if we should succeed
in discovering the meaning of the signs, there still remains the problem of determining their pronunciation. For, with the exception of some hundred trade terms to be found in the ancient Greek language as expressions borrowed from the Cretan, we are also ignorant of the Cretan language. Thus, as in the case of the Etruscan language, the inscriptions of the Easter Islands, and the proto-Indian inscriptions of Mohenjo-Daro, we must for the time being do without valuable documentary material in the case of the Minoan scripts for throwing light on historical developments.

RICH LAND AMID THE SEA

The geographical conditions for the founding of an empire were especially favorable for early Crete. The island stretches from east to west and lies across the southern end of the Aegean Sea, being connected with the Peloponnesos by a chain of islands. In this way, Crete lay close enough to Asia Minor and North Africa to be situated in the focal point of all these cultural regions. Moreover, it was big enough (8,000 square kilometers) to offer enough soil for its own development. The climate is mild and sunny, and the winter rains make production easy. To the north and south of the mountain ranges of the Ida and the Iouktas there are two fertile plains, that of Knossos and that of Messara. In the numerous valleys grew grapes, grain, and olives far up the mountain sides. Cattle-raising, hunting, and fishing supplied all else that was necessary. Anxiety over food was unknown to the inhabitants of the island. In the Odyssey (XIX, 172/3), Homer describes the island as it was before his own time:

![Map of the Aegean World](image-url)
There is a land amid the wine-dark sea Called Crete; rich fruitful, girded by waves; She boasts unnumbered men and ninety towns.”

Racially, the population of Crete was formed by an old Mediterranean stock, mixed with proto-Indo-Germanic elements that had migrated from the mainland.

At the beginning of Crete’s own cultural development we find an old neolithic culture, homogenous or at least related with that of the other peoples of the Aegean region. The start of the Cretan or Minoan culture (named after the legendary King Minos) as a unified, independent phenomenon dates from about 2800 B.C. Till its disintegration about 1200 B.C., it ran a distinct course whose early period (till 1800 B.C.), flowering (till 1500 B.C.), and late period (1500 to 1200 B.C.) are clearly discernible.

IN THE DAYS OF TROY

As early as the first centuries after 3000 B.C., brisk activity prevailed on the island, at least in the east and in the center. Numerous places of a town-like character flourished close together. The population was prosperous. Copper utensils, gold and silver ornaments, vessels of hard, colored stone, and ivory carvings, bear witness to the artistry and good taste of this period. The high level of development is shown above all in ceramics: pottery wheels and various colors were employed. Variations in form and decoration (first, light colors on a dark background, later, vice versa) indicate a certain flexibility of the spiritual life, and the discovery of seals proves the use of a picture-writing system.

In those times, there was as yet no central political power. Many individual communities existed side by side in which lived a population organized in clans as well as in different social cate-

imentos. Crete’s prosperity was founded on navigation and on the industry of its population. There were lively commercial relations with Egypt, Babylon, the Cyclades, and Troy. Because of these foreign relations, the political center of gravity was to be found in the east and southeast of the island. The greatest number of towns and the richest ones (Hagia Triada, Hagios Onouphrios, Kalanthiana, Platanos, Koumasa) and especially the most important harbors (Zakro, Palaiokastro, and Mochlos) were to be found here too.

Crete was independent of the great powers of that time—Egypt, Sumer, and Akkad. Its insular position, the seafaring ability of the inhabitants, and the absence of hostile navies, insured it against outside attacks. On the other hand, the island itself was not a leading power in the eastern Mediterranean during this period.

THE OCCIDENT’S FIRST NAVAL POWER

All these potentialities were further developed in the ensuing “First Bronze Age” (2400-2000 B.C.) and in what is known as the “Period of the First Palaces” (2100-1750 B.C.).

During this time, Crete’s political position underwent a considerable change as a result of revolutionary political and economic events. The penetration of foreign tribes from the north into Greece as far as Thessalia led to central Greece and the Peloponnesos shutting themselves off toward the north for centuries. The whole region from the Spercheus valley to Cape Malea was consolidated and, culturally speaking, took on a uniform appearance. The Cyclades became part of this region and gradually lost importance for Crete as trade partners. Consequently, Crete turned its attention toward another direction, especially as, since the pharaohs of the VI Dynasty (2420-2270 B.C.), Egypt’s relations with the island had grown increasingly
strong. Thanks to the island's favorable geographical position and to the shipping space at their disposal, the Cretan merchants soon became the sole agents of trade between Egypt and Asia Minor.

However, of still greater importance for Crete was an industrial revolution which took place almost simultaneously throughout the Aegean region: the beginning of the Bronze Age. As is well known, copper and tin are required for the production of bronze. The former had from time immemorial been supplied to the ancients by the island of Cyprus; the latter was much more difficult to obtain, since the tin mines were situated far off in Etruria, Gaul, Iberia, Cornwallis, and in the Erzgebirge. Caravans brought the valuable ore from these countries to the Adriatic coast. From there it was fetched by Cretan ships which carried it to the countries of the eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, the Cretans did not confine themselves to trading in this ore but made use of the opportunity to manufacture bronze articles themselves and to supply them to the markets of those parts visited by their ships. Naturally, it was not possible for this trade to flourish or for the raw-material supplies to be ensured without control of the maritime communications. Hence the Cretans systematically enlarged their fleet and thus became the first naval power in the history of the Occident. In this way, the Bronze Age, which lasted nearly a thousand years, became more or less the period of Crete's position as the leading naval power.

Between 2400 and 2100 B.C., the old social order of the island underwent a change. The clans dissolved into individual families. The various families of a place or district then combined, sometimes under energetic leaders. Among them, the chieftains of Knossos and Phaistos were outstanding; they were also the leaders of the above-mentioned trade policy. This resulted in the internal political center of gravity being shifted from the east of the island to the center.

MAGNIFICENT PALACES

The increase in power and wealth made it possible for these feudal lords in the years around 2000 B.C. to erect great palaces in Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia. Except when these palaces were protected by their situation in the mountains, they were, on account of the internal struggles for power, encircled by mighty walls (up to seven and a half feet thick) and dominated by a citadel.

Between 1900 and 1780 B.C. these palaces were torn down and replaced by new buildings. This time they remained unfortified, since in the internal struggles Knossos had gained the leadership and had reduced the dynasties of the other great residences to vassalage.

The palace of this period usually covered a large area (Fig. 3). An intricate maze of rooms clustered around a central courtyard. This labyrinth was divided up into various quarters: rooms for worship, offices, archives, workshops, living quarters, storerooms, etc., (Fig. 14). Several floors were built one over the other. Magnificent stairways connected the various parts and admitted light through inner courts. The cool sea breeze was conducted into every corner by cleverly built shafts. The hot summer sun was kept out, but all the living quarters were open to the mild winter sun. The buildings were decorated with colonnades and frescoes.

Large cities arose, with paved streets, drainage systems, and many-storied houses. There were industrial towns where
weaving, pottery, metal working, shoemaking, oil refining, and metal foundry were carried on. Arts and crafts flourished. Ceramics (including the famous "Kamares" vases), as hard and thin as porcelain, showed most artistic color combinations. Goldsmiths, stonecarvers, and swordmakers produced masterpieces of applied art. The primitive picture-writing system was replaced by a system of hieroglyphics which had developed from native elements and as a result of stimulus from Egypt and the Near East (Fig. 1).

**CRETE'S "WOODEN WALL"**

This development of Cretan culture was made possible by the wealth which flowed to the island through its trade. The Kamares goods went up the Nile to Upper Egypt as well as to Cyprus; silver articles to Byblos; terracotta and soapstone vases to Troy, Phocis, and Argolis. In return, the Cretans obtained spices and medicinal herbs from Cyrenaica, seal stones from Babylon, copper and wood from Cyprus, toilet articles, necklaces, falenas, and ivory from Egypt. Besides this, they supplied Egypt with wood from Lebanon, copper bars from Cyprus, silver from the mines of Laurion, as well as tin and amber from the north. In return for this, the Egyptians had to concede a free port to the Cretans on the island of Pharos.

Outwardly, the island was protected by that "wooden wall" which was one day also to protect England: the fleet. The islands of Melos and Thera had acknowledged the ruler of Knossos as their overlord. Political and commercial relations with the other countries and peoples were normal. Only the Greek mainland remained closed to the Cretans during the "Period of the First Palaces."

This highly developed state experienced a terrible disaster about the year 1750 B.C. The palaces in Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia, and Tylissos were destroyed in a surprise attack and their glories buried under ashes and collapsed walls.

**TERRESTRIAL AND POLITICAL CONVULSIONS**

What had happened? As far as research has been able to establish, an earthquake had taken place which was regarded by the masses as a sign that the gods disapproved of the actions of the rulers. The mandate granted by Heaven seemed forfeited, and the people carried out the will of the gods and revolted. It has not yet been possible to determine the nature of this revolution, whether it was social, feudal, or national. But it is certain that the rising started in the eastern part of the island with its mainly rural population and was directed against the ruling class, which consisted of a national minority. A seal has been found with the portrait of a king from the time following the revolution which indicates that a new human type, with a differently shaped head, had gained supremacy.

The new ruling house ascended the throne in Knossos and immediately ensured itself of administrative authority by introducing a new, linear script (Fig. 4).

![Cretan linear script, about 1800 B.C.](image)

The former administration had used hieroglyphics and had issued all its decrees, etc., in this script. By abolishing this script, everything that the old regime had issued in the way of laws and decrees became invalid. The new, linear script consisted of only seventy-six signs and can be compared to the hieratic script of the Egyptians. Henceforth, only this linear script was taught and was permissible in official communications. Broadly speaking, it remained in use on the whole island and its foreign possessions till the downfall of the dynas-
ty, which coincided with the downfall of the whole Cretan empire.

The revolution had no repercussions on foreign politics. Crete remained mistress of the seas. On the other hand, it was not at that time in a position to enlarge its sphere of influence.

ART AND SOPHISTICATION

Nevertheless, it was nearly fifty years before the consequences of the revolution had been overcome. About 1700 B.C., Crete rose to new glory and, in the ensuing three centuries, experienced its greatest prosperity. This period was at the same time one of lively spiritual activity. The center of the island’s life was the courts of the newly built palaces, in which culture developed to its highest maturity, but also to a dangerous sophistication. Cretan architects produced masterpieces. They provided the extensive palace buildings with pillared halls and colonnades of cypress wood as well as with monumental flights of steps. One wing in Knossos was even built to a height of four stories (Fig. 6). Reception halls and living rooms were richly decorated with oil-tinted parchment windows and frescoes depicting court life or scenes from Nature or the mythical world. The painting and applied arts of this period are characterized by fine, lively drawing and flowing lines proceeding from a sensitive feeling for Nature. Crete’s close association with the sea is expressed by the constantly recurring motifs taken from the life of the sea (Figs. 2, 7, & 18). Richly chased weapons and articles of daily use made of bronze, inlay work of gold and ivory, and naturalistic-}

ly painted or finely wrought vessels, bear witness to great artistic maturity (Figs. 16 & 17).

THE MINOS

About 1700 B.C., relations with Egypt, which had fallen into the hands of the conquering Hyksos, were interrupted, an event which contributed toward increasing the superiority of Knossos over Phaistos. Consequently, the Cretans concentrated more on trade with the islands of the Aegean and undertook a very successful export campaign to the Greek mainland, where they came as the bringers of superior civilization, technology, and organization.

From that time on, the Minos of Knossos enjoyed unchallenged supremacy over the whole island. One should not imagine a definite ruling personality to be represented by the term “Minos.” There was a Minos in Crete just as there was a Pharaoh in Egypt, a Caesar in Rome, and a Tsar in Russia. “Minos” is the dynastic title of the king in Knossos (Fig. 11). The Minos was above all a priest-king and was regarded as the incarnation of the Minotaur, the bull-god (Fig. 5). The investiture of the royal power for a period of nine years was carried out by a religious ceremony. At the end of these nine years, the Minos ascended the holy mountain of the island and conversed with the Minotaur in the dreaded labyrinth, from which, according to legend, no mortal escaped except...
the clever Theseus with his ball of wool. If the Minos' administration found favor in the eyes of the gods, his term of government was renewed for a further period of nine years.

The Minos was simultaneously the supreme judge of his people. His legislation and the strict justice of his sentences were so famous that legend made him one of the three judges over the dead in Hades. The throne room where he carried out his functions is still preserved (Fig. 8). The Minos bore the same insignia as the bull-god: the scepter and the double-axe (Fig. 19). Besides these, there appears, apparently as a symbol of the ruling dynasty, another emblem—the three lilies. In a stucco relief painting (Fig. 11), the king is wearing the crown of fleur-de-lis topped with great plumes and the necklace of fleur-de-lis. All royal decrees were published in a script reserved for this purpose—a special form of the above-mentioned linear system (known as the "Evans Linear Script Class B").

Since the country was completely pacified, all fortifications were demolished. The fleet offered enough security and was the most effective instrument of power. Art experienced its heyday, but lacked its earlier spontaneity and freedom and took on a conventional appearance. Artists were given state commissions for frescoes, bronze articles, glazed terracotta tiles, weapons, and many other things. It was the period of what is known as the "Palace style" (Fig. 9).

THREE LILIES COME TO GREECE

In the sphere of foreign politics, the Cretan empire now had the greatest success in all the 2,500 years of its history: its economic and cultural penetration of Greece.

The Cretan merchants with their high-quality products had become the pioneers for the culture and the political influence of their native island. Soon the whole Argolis was Cretanized. The Greeks learnt to cultivate vines and olive trees. Cretan architects built mighty castles, like those of Mycenae and Tyrins, for the lords of Argolis and constructed princely underground family tombs for them which remained intact for more than three thousand years, until Schliemann's genius unearthed their splendor. Artists from Crete adorned these castles with frescoes and equipped them with precious objects. Greek ladies wore model dresses (full skirts with bolero jackets) from Knossos (Fig. 12). Even the goddess Rhea, the great mother of the mountains, mistress of all animals, moved over to the Greek mainland with her attributes and all her liturgy.

From the plain of Argolis, this stream of culture flowed on to Corinth. Cretan merchant ships called at all the coastal towns of the Peloponnesos. Via the island of Cythera, where they took soapstone vases, the ships reached Laconica. The two towns of Pylos on the west coast of the Peloponnesos, where the Cretans delivered swords and vessels, developed into ports whence further advances were undertaken into the Gulf of Corinth and via the Ionic Islands into the Adriatic. The flow of goods reached Aegina and Euboea, thence Thebes and Orchomenos, Athens, Thorikos, Iolkos, and Volos. In those days, Athens had to supply seven youths and seven maidens every year as toreadors for the bullfights in Knossos. Legend later turned this into human sacrifices for the Minotaur. Bullfights seem to have been a very popular form of entertainment in Crete at that time, and we find numerous bullfighting scenes among the frescoes in Knossos.

The Cretans landed in Krissa and in this way brought their gods and their religion to Delphi.
IN THE PALACE OF THE MINOS

Fig. 8. Throne room in the Palace of Knossos. In the background the actual throne of the Minos

Fig. 9. Fresco painting of 

Fig. 10. Ewers, basins, and handle from the palace bronze hoard (as found)

Fig. 11. Painted stucco relief of the "Priest-King" in one of the corridors of the palace
4,000 YEARS OF CRETE

Fig. 12. Cretan lady (about 20th cent. B.C.)

Fig. 13. Cretan lady (20th cent. A.D.)

Fig. 14. Magazine jars, with conventionalized cord decoration (about 20th cent. B.C.)

Fig. 15. Magazine jars (20th cent. A.D.)

Fig. 16. Gaming board, glittering with gold and silver, ivory, and blue enamel
A Cretan architect designed the interior decoration of the Cadmeia, the castle of Thebes. Experts in underground engineering from Crete drained Lake Copnis. Finally, even Thessalia was reached by this influence, overland via Phocis and by sea through the Pegasus Gulf. About 1450 B.C., pottery of Cretan origin reached the foot of Mount Olympus. Throughout Greece the sign of the three lilies was to be found. In Thera and Phylakopi, in Mycenae and Pylos, it appeared in frescoes, earthenware, weapons, and ivory carvings. The empire of the Minos was the empire of the three lilies.

However, overseas trade to distant shores also flourished. In Iberia, the Cretans exchanged glass beads for valuable tin; in Marseilles they obtained a connection with the overland route of the Rhône valley; from the Lipari Islands they obtained lapis lazuli, which is rich in quartz, for the manufacture of vessels and lamps; they supplied Sardinia with ore from Cyprus; from the mouth of the River Po they obtained amber; and between Sicily and Troy they acted as brokers. They settled on the islands of Karpathos and Cos and founded the three largest as well as many small towns on Rhodes. Cyprus was for Knossos not only a storage place for goods and the jumping-off place for trade with Asia Minor: the economic penetration of that island went so far that Crete held the entire foreign trade of Cyprus in its own hands.

The driving out of the Hyksos from Egypt and the conquest of Palestine and Syria by Pharaoh Thutmose I (1539-1514 B.C.) enabled the Cretans to reestablish their former relations with these countries. From Syria they obtained cedarwood, ivory, perfumes, and horses, and in return they supplied mainly stirrup vases and weapons. Toward the north-east, the ships of the Minos carried freight to the Danube and, through the Dardanelles, linked up with the trade brought by caravans from the East.

THE FALL OF AN EMPIRE

After a certain length of time, the lords of Mycenae and Tyrins sought to rid themselves of their Cretan mentors and suppliers, in order to eliminate the political influence of the Minos in Greece. The Greeks had realized that, in the long run, they could only defend themselves against Crete if they succeeded in breaking its naval superiority. For this purpose they had first to become capable seamen themselves — although they did not even have a word for “sea” (thalassa was a foreign word borrowed from pre-Hellenic times) and at first called the sea “inhospitable.” Once they were accustomed to the sea, they began not only to do without their former teachers but even to represent an unpleasant competition.

The incipient change in the political aspect of the eastern Mediterranean first made itself felt by a diplomatic event: Egypt, who was a leading power under Amenhetep II (1447-1420 B.C.) and desired to free her trade from the agency monopoly of the “Keftiu,” as the Cretans were called in Egyptian documents, came to an agreement with the lords of Mycenae regarding a direct exchange of goods. The successors of Amenhetep continued this policy. This soon resulted in an inevitable conflict between Knossos and the lords of Argolis.

About 1400 B.C. the fleet of the Minos had been sent out on a punitive expedi-
tion against King Kokalos of Sicily and on its return was wrecked on the southern coast of Italy. At this moment, a surprise landing of the Mycenaeans and their allies took place on Crete. Since no fortifications, even in the ports, had been built after the suppression of the revolt of 1580 B.C., the attack was successful. When the conquerors stormed the palace at Knossos, the Minos was rushed by his followers into the throne room, where he was to be made invulnerable by anointing with sacred oil. However, there was no time for this, as the fire laid by the enemy had spread very quickly. Implements of worship and oil vessels had to be abandoned: they were found three thousand years later under the ruins just as they had been left (Fig. 10). During their flight through the maze of palace buildings, the king and his court found their death under the collapsing, blazing buildings.

So ended the last Minos. The country shared his fate. Towns and residences went up in flames and buried the power and the glory of the Minoan civilization under their debris. Henceforth, Egyptian documents ceased to mention the “Keftiu”; they now belonged to history.

THE STORY OF DAEDALUS

The collapse of the rule of the king of Crete was felt to be so epoch-making an event at that time that it later found its way into legend in the story of Daedalus and Icarus.

According to this myth, when Daedalus of Athens, a genius in art and engineering (a sort of Leonardo da Vinci of ancient times) was returning home from Egypt via Crete, he was engaged by Minos to construct the ill-famed labyrinth of Knossos. When the fair-haired Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, fell in love with Theseus, one of the tribute youths from Athens, Daedalus advised her to give Theseus the ball of wool by the aid of which he found his way out of the labyrinth. Minos heard of this and sought to avenge himself on Daedalus and his son Icarus. Both of them attempted to flee, but Minos had all the shores of the island watched. So Daedalus made wings for himself and his son which he fastened with wax into wooden frames, and both escaped into the air. Icarus, who flew too near to the sun, fell into the sea. His father reached Italy, whence he went to King Kokalus of Sicily. Upon hearing this news, Minos equipped a vast expeditionary force in order to apprehend Daedalus. Kokalus, however, refused the request to hand over Daedalus. Thereupon the Cretan fleet besieged the capital Kamikos for five years, but in vain. After that it sailed away, and on the journey home it met with the fateful shipwreck.

SAFEGUARDING THE SEA LANES

Those of the native population who remained after the massacre were made into semi-independent state slaves, emigrated, or were forced back into the mountains in the eastern part of the island. By the end of the thirteenth century B.C., Cretan art was extinct, the Cretan language silent. People and state had probably died out. The Greeks had conquered Crete in the same way as Rome later conquered Greece. Just as the Greeks became the spiritual teachers of Rome, the religious and spiritual elements of the Minoan civilization had penetrated into the life of the conquerors from the mainland and became one of the foundations of Greek culture.
What are the underlying causes of this sudden downfall? During the course of their history, the Cretans had become accustomed to the idea that, because of their supremacy on the sea, they were entitled to preferential rights to the common route of communication of the world of that time—the Mediterranean. They believed they had a title more or less to police the sea. The other peoples tacitly and in practice acknowledged this title, since none of them possessed the means effectively to dispute it. Of course, the Cretans also contributed to the common good by exploring the lesser known sea routes and shores and by clearing the Aegean of pirates.

**STRIKING PARALLEL**

In the main, however, their naval supremacy served them in the achievement of imperialistic goals. The methods they employed to this end can be found in a surprising parallel with the great naval power of modern times, the British Empire.

At first there appeared at certain places—ports or islands—the trader who regularly returned by boat; later the merchant who founded a trading post, to which a factory was soon added. By this means, craftsmen were settled who were expert in new techniques and arts. Gradually the enterprise became a trading company, which also penetrated into the hinterland. Then followed the priest with his gods and rites. Meanwhile, the economic dependence of the place had become so great that all privileges desired by the Cretans could be acquired without much trouble. Of course, the very existence of the Cretan navy was enough to give every demand the necessary emphasis. Later the trading posts were turned into naval bases, which again were the starting points for new undertakings by sea or by land.

The outward forms of control differed greatly in the various places. To use modern terms, Cyprus was a protectorate, Rhodes, Cos, and Karpathos were crown colonies, while the numerous ports called "Minoa" (for example, in Sicily and Palestine) were settlements. In the case of Egypt, who was a great power herself, the Cretans were satisfied with a free port on Pharos.

Naturally, a young and warlike people such as the Greeks were bound to oppose this economic encirclement with its political consequences as soon as conditions were favorable. The Cretan fleet was no longer a threat. Minoan civilization had been visibly deteriorating since the fourteenth century B.C. The population had fallen into a life of luxury, and its moral and physical power of resistance had languished. Military training and ideas were neglected and foreign mercenaries employed instead (from Nubia, for instance). Significantly enough, we find no monument dedicated to the martial spirit in Crete.

It is true that these political and economic reasons were not the sole cause of the campaign against Crete. The Greeks themselves were exposed to strong pressure on the part of barbarians penetrating from the north. Through the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt, the tribes in the Near East, especially in Asia Minor, had been disturbed. The migratory movement thus caused had continued across the Hellespont into the Balkan countries and led to warlike herdsmen tribes from the mountains penetrating into Greece. Thus the destruction of Knossos can partially be traced to connections similar to those existing between the invasion of the Huns in Europe and the conquest of Rome by the Visigoths. In the final analysis, the history of mankind shows a constant repetition of that fate according to which those who are feasting at the tables of life are driven from hall and palace by the hungry "have-nots."