

The primal Greece : between dream and archaeology



Introduction

The Aegean civilisations in the French National Archaeological Museum

« This unusual form [...] reveals an unknown Greece within Greece [...] as solemn, profound and colossal as the other is radiant, light and considered; [...] all here meets the reputation of the Atrids and brings back the horror of the Achaean fables », wrote in 1830 in front of the walls of Mycenae, the traveller Edgard Quinet, who was passionate about Greek tragedies. Like other travellers before him, he was aware of approaching the memory of an unknown past, of a *primal Greece*, but he would never have believed that this Greece dated from prehistoric times.

It will be the end of the 19th century before the pioneers of archaeology reveal to the world the first civilisations of the Aegean. The « Museum of National Antiquities » played then a key role, spreading the knowledge about these fabulous finds. Here, as well as in the Louvre, the public has been able to meet the Aegean civilisations. The Comparative Archaeology department had a big display case entirely dedicated to them.

The exhibition invites visitors back to this era of endless possibilities in order to experience this great archaeological adventure.

Birth of a state, birth of an archaeology

As soon as it becomes independent (1832), Greece is concerned with preserving its antiquities and creates an Archaeological Service (1834). Shortly afterwards, *Ephemeris Archaïologike*, the first Greek archaeological review, is founded, at the same time as the Archaeological Society at Athens.

The French School at Athens is founded in 1846 in order to promote the study of antiquities, and is followed by a German study Institute in 1874; many other countries will follow the example of France and Germany. All these institutions conduct systematic archaeological research since 1870-1880 putting thus an end to the hunt for collection items.

Extended archaeological explorations start in the regions recently annexed to the Greek state: Thessaly and part of Epirus in 1881, Crete in 1913, after being autonomous since 1898. Finally, in Macedonia, recovered during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), many surveys are conducted in the course of the First World War and the opening, in 1915, of an oriental front.

Greece reconstructed its past while constructing its state.

PART ONE : The discovery of the first prehistoric objects in Greece

Collecting of polished axes and obsidian tools

« Greece passed through the different phases that we recognize in the childhood of Western Europe [...]. The Orient as well, went through a stone age which is still calling for curious intellects to study it » Albert Dumont

The end of the 19th century witnesses the appearance of pioneers interested in the most ancient past of Greece: its prehistory.

Two French scientists start collecting polished axes and various chipped-stone tools: François Lenormant, an orientalist, draws attention to the « stone age » objects that most scholars did not even bother to look at. Albert Dumont, a young member of the French School of Athens has a better understanding of prehistoric objects. He is in contact with an English historian, George Finlay, who travelled across Greece looking for stone tools and discredited the theory that they were weapons abandoned by the Persians.

Polished axes, known also as «pierres de foudre » (thunder stones) or « ceraunies » (from the Greek *keranos*, thunder), are surrounded by other prejudices: according to a popular belief, these stones are created in the ground forty days after thunder has struck, and are used as talismans. Archaeologists are thus obliged to circumvent superstition in order to discover the stones gathered and hidden by the villagers.

There are fewer preconceived ideas concerning blades and arrows made of obsidian, a glass rock of volcanic origin. Whereas the main deposit in Greece is located on the island of Milos, these tools are found all over Greece: therefore, the sea trade existed during « the stone age »!

The discovery of the Cycladic art

«*Sculpture just crawled miserably in the Cyclades [...]. The unique progress consisted of freeing the legs of the small figurines... All attempt to deal with more complicated subjects [...] produced monstrosities* » Gustave Glotz

Towards the end of the 18th century in the Cyclades, the collectors start acquiring very ancient objects, figurines and vases, which are currently dated as early as the 4th and 3rd millennia BC: the *cycladica*. These antiquities, although described as « ugly » and « barbaric », are nonetheless offered as gifts to the official guests of the Greek state. Such was undoubtedly the case of Théodore de Lagrené, resident and plenipotentiary minister of France who dwelled in Athens from 1835 to 1846 and donated his remarkable collection to the city of Amiens in 1849.

During the 1840s, in order to satisfy demand, art dealers take up clandestine excavations so as to get fresh supplies of *cycladica* and from 1880 on, most of these items end up in museums and private collections. The authorities realize the necessity to preserve them and the Greek state creates in 1886 the Ephorate of Antiquities for the islands. Thus, Christos Tsountas, « the father of Cycladic archaeology », brings to light in the 1890s, many graves, from Amorgos to Siphnos, as well as a settlement on the island of Syros. These scientific excavations reveal that most of the *cycladica* come from graves.

PART TWO: Santorini, a forgotten discovery

A civilisation under the ashes

« *At the current location of the Santorini bay, we realize that there existed in the past a big island inhabited by an agricultural, manufacturing and trading population. The geological evidence allows us to witness directly, so to speak, its destruction and to imagine the sight of the people crashed under the pumice stones or swallowed in the volcano abysses* » Ferdinand Fouqué

The Santorini volcano erupts in 1866. The event catches the attention of the geologist Ferdinand Fouqué, who is escorted by François Lenormant, special correspondent of the emperor Napoléon III.

In 1867, Fouqué takes an interest in a pumice stone quarry on the islet of Therasia: he pursues the excavation of the owner and completes the clearing of a building. He realizes that an entire village lies there buried under the debris of a colossal eruption, which he dates around 2000 BC.

During the same year, he explores two ravines near Akrotiri. There also, he notices wall sections, lava stone and chipped-stone tools, notably from Milos' obsidian, and heaps of broken vases. The pottery is carefully studied and Fouqué brings back in France some vases, such as those kept in the Louvre.

Fouqué is aware of discovering « a barbaric and ante-historic Pompeii », of which we know today that it disappeared during the Bronze Age, around 1600 BC.

The forgotten excavations of Gorceix and Mamet

« *The Santorini excavations [...] will certainly be considered among the biggest discoveries made by prehistoric archaeology for a long time* » Albert Dumont

In 1870, the director of the French School at Athens, Émile Burnouf, asks permission to clear out « a small part of the prehistoric Pompeii that Fouqué examined lately ». This excavation, that lasts from April 16 to May 22, 1870, is entrusted to two scientists: Henri Gorceix, who is a geologist, and Henri Mamet, who, according to rumour, is basking in the sun.

Resuming the study of the spots explored by Fouqué in Akrotiri, they find walls decorated with frescoes and many vases in excellent state of preservation. Besides, in the locality of Balos, they bring to light, buried under twenty two meters of pumice stone, a new building. A vast urban area emerges, with houses, wooden doors, tools and vases still full of barley, rye, peas and lentils.

Gorceix and Mamet bring back to the French School at Athens a quarter of their finds. Burnouf restores by himself the pottery on which Fouqué makes thin petrographic sections in order to observe the clay in the microscope. Burnouf also does many drawings and even orders photographs in view of a publication. But, alas, in Paris, the 1870 war and then the appeal of other excavations sink again the Santorini civilisation into oblivion. Excavations will not be resumed before 1967.

PART THREE: Heinrich Schliemann's archaeological revolution

Looking for the Troy of Homer

« *It is useless to wonder whether Schliemann, [...] started with a false or right hypothesis. [...] The burned city would still be buried and unknown, had not imagination guided the spade* » Rudolf Virchow

Troy ! The legend was born from the enchantment of the poems attributed to Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, composed during the 8th century BC. These epic creations narrate a war, in the course of which the Achaean (Greek) contingents came in Asia Minor to besiege a big city named « Troy », ruled by King Priam. Since the 18th century, the quest for the location of the legendary city attracted entire generations of travellers, such as Heinrich Schliemann, a rich, self-taught German.

After a meeting with the English diplomat Frank Calvert, Schliemann decides to concentrate his research on the hill of Hissarlik, near the Dardanelles straits. From 1870 on and for twenty years, he excavates not one but seven consecutive layers of cities, and names level II « the Troy of Priam ». The archaeological remains, charred by a terrible fire, seem to match the Homeric texts. However, in 1890, after bitter criticism and the revision of the data by his colleague architect Wilhelm Dörpfeld, Schliemann has to acknowledge that the « burned city » is earlier than the epoch of the Trojan war.

Nevertheless, Schliemann succeeded to reveal an important civilisation of the Bronze Age and to guide archaeology into modern era: team work with several specialists, rapid publications and study of even the humblest material remains. He also made his discoveries known to the

general public, notably through the picture of his Greek wife, Sophia, adorned with the « tresor of Priam ».

Some representative objects from the excavations of Troy

Schliemann unearths unknown objects and does his best to interpret them. Thus, from a quote in the *Iliad*, he names *depas amphikypellon*, literally « drinking cup with two handles », a deep, narrow beaker with two very big vertical handles. Many such vessels, undoubtedly used for wine, have been found in layer II, currently dated between 2500 and 2300 BC.

The Homeric Troy stood under the protection of Athena: it is tempting for the archaeologist to interpret the vessels in form of a schematic female body and marble figurines, as the representation of the goddess or her token animal, the owl, symbol of wisdom. The exact function of these objects that were found in the houses remains, however, unknown.

A modern archaeology: the daily life of the Trojans

Schliemann's excavations are followed by inventorying (description, drawings, sometimes photographs as well) and meticulous publication of each and every find, however humble or insignificant, even if functions are not always identified.

Schliemann discovers many stone tools: lava grindstones and especially polished axes. He realizes that those do not date from the « stone age », as they are found together with copper or bronze tools.

In addition to the vessels that the inhabitants used in their everyday life, Schliemann discovers small clay elements, which he names « volcanos ». They are often decorated with patterns that he interprets as religious symbols. In fact they are weighing devices for wool spindles (spindle-whorls)!

A controversial discovery

In August 1889, Schliemann visits the « Museum of National Antiquities », along with other participants of the International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology held in Paris, and is guided by the Director Alexandre Bertrand and the curator Salomon Reinach. But, on this occasion, a theory spreads according to which the hill of Hissarlik is a necropolis. Troy is in Troy no more!

In order to prove to his detractors that his finds are indeed the remains of superposed cities, Schliemann organizes new excavations in 1890 and goes as far as equipping the site with railways. He writes (in French and in Greek) to Salomon Reinach whom he tries to win over to his cause and invites famous scientists to a congress in Hissarlik.

The Mycenaeans make their entrance

« *To the civilisation which preceded Homer's era, the one that we now have agreed to call Mycenaean, Schliemann was Christopher Columbus* » Salomon Reinach

Contrary to the other « Homeric » cities, Mycenae has not been the object of a quest. There has never been any doubt about the location of the site or the dating of the remains to most ancient times. The Cyclopean Walls, the Lion Gate and certain tombs, such as « The Treasury of Atreus », are in plain view for centuries. They form the scenery for the myth of the cursed family of Atreus.

Schliemann starts excavating these ruins in 1874-1876. Within the area which will be later named « Grave Circle A », he discovers five inviolate graves dating from 1700-1600 BC, that yield hundreds of golden objects. In a golden mask representing a bearded man, he claims to have recognized the king Agamemnon. A new civilisation has just come to light, to be named «Mycenaean» some years later. This civilisation too is earlier than the era described by Homer,

even though the legendary wealth of « Mycenae rich in gold » has just been confirmed.

The discoveries in Mycenae impress, but also arouse jealousy: Schliemann is accused to be a « treasure hunter ». Yet, he was just lucky and, under the control of the Archaeological Society at Athens, conducted his excavations in a scientific manner. The Mycenaean archaeology is born, and as Schliemann himself foretold, the objects he discovered « are enough to fill a large museum, which will become the most marvellous in the world », the Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Mycenae « rich in gold »

The five shaft graves of « Grave Circle A » revealed to the world the amazing riches of the inhabitants of Mycenae: crowns, diadems, masks and vessels made of gold, sometimes of silver, and ceremonial weapons... Displayed proudly in the Archaeological Museum of Athens, these luxurious objects were soon reproduced by Émile Gilliéron, a talented artist who was working in Greece as archaeological draughtsman and restorer. The Gilliéron family business soon joined forces with a German firm in order to offer for sale to major museums electrotype replicas of the objects, made from moulds taken directly from the originals. This contributed to make the Mycenaeans known all over the world.

The Mycenaean, travellers

After Schliemann's discoveries in Greece, the Mycenaean are traced all over the Eastern Mediterranean, in Cyprus and the Levant. From the 14th century BC, many Mycenaean products have apparently been exported to coastal areas: wine, olive oil and perfumed oils transported in stirrup jars, but also tableware with elaborate decoration (cups, bowls, craters). Once in Cyprus, these products seem to have been redistributed towards the Levant, for example to the trading centre of Ras Shamra-Ougarit (Syria). Sailors and merchants, the Mycenaean had probably established trading posts in these regions.

The Mycenaean in Crete: the tombs of Ligortynos

Discovered in the 1890s, these two tombs contained Mycenaean vessels and funerary equipment of exceptional quality and in a remarkable state of preservation.

Thanks to the descriptions from the travel notebooks of the archaeologist Arthur Evans, it is possible to reconstitute the position of the furniture inside the tombs and the funerary rituals that took place there. The remains attest a strong Mycenaean presence in Crete during the 14th and 13th centuries BC. Some of the deceased belonged undoubtedly to the social elite of the Ligortynos community.

PART FOUR: Arthur Evans and the invention of the Minoans

Arthur Evans and the invention of the Minoans

« *The excavations of Mr Evans constitute a major event in the history of archaeology, they reveal a civilisation even richer and more advanced than the one that Schliemann's discoveries had taught us about.* » Salomon Reinach

After the discovery of Mycenaean objects in Crete, some scholars suppose that it was on this island that the Mycenaean civilisation was born. As early as 1878, Minos Kalokairinos, an erudite Cretan, draws the attention of scientists on the site of Knossos, the most famous Homeric city. Finally, in 1900, Arthur Evans, curator in the Ashmolean Museum of Oxford and ancient journalist, obtains the permission to explore the site.

During six years, Evans, with a multidisciplinary team and up to three hundred workers, unearths

a palace with complex architecture. A hitherto unknown civilization comes to light in Knossos and in the other sites excavated on the island: palaces, houses, necropolises, sanctuaries, columns, objects and frescoes of astonishing modernity along with tablets bearing inscriptions in three different scripts ...

Evans dates this « Cretan » civilisation as early as the 20th century BC: it is thus the most ancient known in Europe. He decides to call it « Minoan », after the name of the legendary king of Crete, Minos. Based upon the architectural remains, the objects and the frescoes, he reconstitutes, and sometimes invents, a society that is dominant in the sea, pacific on earth, where a priest-king rules and a mother-goddess is worshipped.

Self-confident, he proceeds to abundant restorations of the frescoes and the ruins at Knossos. This is the most controversial part of his work, as the architectural interventions with reinforced concrete are very difficult to undo.

Evidence of a new civilisation

While the Mycenaeans are known since the mid-1870s, peculiar objects make their appearance in the art market and in some museums. They are or should be from Crete, but their exact origin is rarely known. A magnificent example is the «Marseille ewer» with the exceptional Marine Style decoration. Its shape brings to mind certain metal Mycenaean vessels, but its decorative motives are hitherto unseen. At the same time circulate small bronze figurines, which do not attract much attention because their style is considered rough and primitive. It is unknown then that these are the first Minoan objects to have come to light.

Collecting Cretan seals

Arthur Evans arrives in Crete in 1894, intrigued by a « pictographic script » on Cretan seals: he is convinced that the Mycenaeans living in Crete possessed some form of writing. From one village to another he collects stones that are considered to be magic and the Cretan women wear around their neck as « milk stones » (*galopetres*). Indeed, he finds short inscriptions in a hieroglyphic script (still not deciphered today), but, most importantly, designs of animals, ships, architectural structures, and various spirits, Minotaurs and the likes, which reflect the preoccupations of the civilization he will soon call Minoan.

The collection of the Cabinet des Médailles, which comprises seals collected by Evans and others deposited from the Louvre, enables the visitor to discover these miniature masterpieces.

Palatial workmanship

In Knossos, Evans unearths a multi-storey, labyrinthine palace, with columns widening upwards, organised around a central court: the state rooms and sanctuaries surround the court, while the warehouses, residential quarters and workshops are on the outskirts. The excavation brought to light many vessels and other objects made of stone, carefully sculpted and polished. Emile Gilliéron, Evans' official restorer in Knossos, very soon produces casts of these objects destined to exhibit the work of the Minoan craftsmen in museums all over the world.

The Temple repositories

The items reproduced here were discovered at Knossos, inside two big stone-lined cists. They were probably deposited there after the destruction of a sanctuary, hence the name given to this spot by Arthur Evans, « Temple repositories ».

Many objects made of faience, an extremely rare material at that time in the Aegean world, are part of this ensemble. Restored and exposed in the Candia (Heraklion) Museum, they were copied by Emile Gilliéron who proposed their mouldings to various museums, so that they could display an identical presentation with the fascinating Snake Goddesses in the place of honour.

The Minoan frescoes: archaeology in full colour

The palace at Knossos revealed many wall paintings, created by teams of experienced painters. They decorated the staterooms, such as the «the King's » or « the Queen's » quarters and the entrances of the palace. The remains show a variety of subjects: they reveal the love of the palace residents for harmoniously drawn images of nature and animals, but also of religious ceremonies. These frescoes have sometimes been over-restored by Emile Gilliéron and his son, but constitute the foundation on which Evans based the world of the Minoans he imagined. A world of peace in which blue monkeys were gathering saffron...

Research in the rest of Crete

While Evans is exploring Knossos, other research excavations are conducted elsewhere on the island: the Italians explore the sites of Phaistos and Agia Triada in the Messara Plain, from 1900 on; the Americans work in eastern Crete, in Gournia, Mochlos and Pseira; the English in Psychro ; the Greeks in Tylissos and Malia.

Next to the many extraordinary objects that come to light, the collection of Alexis Schébounine gives a glimpse to some humble finds from the Agia Triada excavations.

On the other hand, the objects collected by Adolphe Reinach, member of the French School at Athens, during his surveys show the attempts of this institution to gain a foothold in Crete. However, the French will have to wait till 1920 in order to take over the excavation of the Malia palace.

PART FIVE: Greece, part of the Balkans

The excavations of Seure and Degrand in Bulgaria

« Our recent excavations have given us only very rudimentary information on the history of Thrace; nevertheless they let us suspect its prehistory » Georges Seure and Alexandre Degrand

While Evans brings to light the brilliant civilisation of the Minoans in the South of the Aegean world, two French scholars start to explore another civilisation in the North. Georges Seure, a young member of the French School at Athens, and Alexandre Degrand, consul of France in Plovdiv, excavate two hillocks in Northern Thrace. The first one, named « tell Ratcheff », near Yambol, had been reported by a French clergyman, father Jérôme. The second, near the village of Metchkur, some kilometres away from Plovdiv, was hitherto unknown.

At the time, there is a lot of discussion among scholars about the character and the chronology of the artificial hillocks very frequently encountered in the plains of the Balkans. Some interpret them as *tumuli*, i.e. funerary monuments, while others consider them as remains of settlements, similar to the Near-Eastern *tells*.

While father Jérôme immediately recognised the remains of prehistoric houses and workshops in these mounds, Seure and Degrand wrongly interpret them as tombs. Their conclusions are astonishing, all the more because their descriptions match those of settlement destruction layers: walls of raw clay, carbonised botanical remains and many objects in situ on the floor.

In spite of this error, the two scholars are among the first to have studied the remains of the « Mound Culture », mostly developed in Thrace and the lower Danube. The objects they discovered date from the end of the Neolithic period, in the 5th millennium BC.

Recording the prehistoric sites of Macedonia

« It is obvious [...] that the archaeological research in Macedonia and the adjacent countries can be extremely important for the investigation of the origins of Greece » Léon Rey

During the First World War, from 1915 to 1918, « the Salonika Front », mobilises the French soldiers of the Army of the Orient by hundreds of thousands: they travel all over Macedonia for the needs of military operations. As early as May 1916, the General Sarrail creates the Archaeological Service of the Army of the Orient, in order to ensure the protection of the antiquities as well as the scientific exploration of the region.

Among the works of the Service figures the research of « prehistoric settlements», conducted by Léon Rey, a former pupil of the Ecole des Chartes (Archive Training School), in the outskirts of Thessaloniki, on the coasts of Chalkidiki and in the valleys of the main rivers. This methodical investigation aims to create an archaeological map of the « first settlements of Macedonia », to draw topographic plans of the artificial mounds, and to collect pottery sherds and stone or bone tools. Excavations, in the form of trial trenches, complete the surveys. The careful explorations in the *toumba*¹ of Gona and the one of Sedhes produce certain important stratigraphic trenches. Unfortunately, these trenches did not reach the most ancient layers of the *toumbes*: the majority of the sherds and vessels date from the Bronze Age. However, this pioneer work opened the way to new expeditions.

PART SIX: France in the Aegean style

France in the Aegean style

« The Cretan and Mycenaean art with their decorative style [...] overwhelmed [...] the first painters working for Diaghilev ; all over, there were red lacquered columns enhanced with gold, octopus patterns, spirals, stylized bulls, blue gods, slim-waisted epebes [...] and the prima ballerinas, who were drinking from golden craters inspired from the Candia Museum, copied their tunics from the Snake Goddess »
Paul Morand

From the *Belle Époque* till the Golden Twenties, the fabulous archaeological discoveries of Schliemann and Evans have a strong impact on the French public. Many publications, national and regional dailies and magazines, and even the first magazines for children such as *Les Petits Bonhommes* or the *Journal de la Jeunesse*, circulate all relevant information, with rich illustrations provided by the archaeologists. The Parisians have even the opportunity to discover copies of the treasures of Mycenae during the Exposition Universelle of 1900. Besides, hundreds of French citizens, very privileged, visit the archaeological sites of Troy, Mycenae and Knossos by means of the archaeological cruises.

The artists of the French capital take on the phenomenon influenced both by the descriptions of the Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations – which they mix up in one and only « Cretan » civilisation – and by the patterns and colours of the frescoes and pottery. Thus the Minoans make appearances in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* and on the Parisian stage, in a play of the Comédie Française or in the operas and ballets where Léon Bakst creates the decors. Faced with this situation, the world of fashion plays also the « Cretomania » card, from Mariano Fortuny to Jeanne Paquin including Paul Poiret. Just before the Second World War, even a liner undertakes a cruise in an exclusively « Cretan » setting.

The archaeological tourism in Greece

The visit of the Greek prehistoric sites has become possible through a certain democratisation of the tourism. On the occasion of the Olympic Games of 1896, the magazine *Le Tour du monde* organises the first archaeological cruise, followed by the *Revue Générale des Sciences* which proposes various all-inclusive trips around the Mediterranean and the opportunity to discover Troy, Mycenae, Santorini or Knossos. The sightseers, engineers, professors, lawyers or

1 This is the name given in Greece to the artificial hillocks previously considered as tombs.

artistes, among who are also many women, are guided by archaeologists. These very lively cruises welcomed not only specialists like the Reinach family but also amateurs, such as Paul Marguerite de la Charlonie, who, seized by a passion for Greece, gathered the collection that formed the nucleus of the Museum of Laon.

Agamemnon in Paris

During the Exposition Universelle of 1900, the geologist and Homer enthusiast Louis de Launay offers to reveal what the « Underground World » holds, in the subterranean quarries of the Trocadero. Schliemann's recent discoveries in Mycenae are part of the show. Electrotypes replicas of the most famous items from the shaft graves (17th century BC) are displayed in a fanciful setup called « the tomb of Agamemnon », a downsized version of the Treasury of Atreus in Mycenae (13th century BC). The objects are disposed around two corpses: the king of the Atrids and his coach driver. This entertaining display introduced the Mycenaeans to the Parisians.

The Fury by Jules Bois, a play in the Minoan fashion

In February 1909, the Comédie Française stages *The Fury* by Jules Bois: the play, inspired by Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, introduces Hercules demented by an Egyptian hypnotist and is not a great success. The author has set the action in the Minoan era, of which he has an extremely personal and occult idea.

However, the scenery and costumes by Désiré Chaineux cause sensation. The designer, who is an amateur of archaeology, draws inspiration from the Knossos frescoes, the « snake goddesses » and the Agia Triada vases. Jeanne Paquin, a famous Parisian dressmaker who is responsible for the outfits of the three main actresses, declares that the Minoan women were extremely modern: in terms of fashion they had already invented everything!

« Forget the severely draped Greek costume: all is trimmings, ribbons and lovely little hats, so twentieth century. Mme Paquin, who attended to the costumes of the actors in the *Fury*, was delighted. « I will – she declared – launch the « mode Fury » for 1909... » Jules Bois

Léon Bakst and the modernity of primitive Greece

The Russian artist Léon Bakst lives in Paris but is deeply impressed by a Greek trip which brought him to Crete in 1907. Persuaded that the modernity of the « Cretan » art has the power to rejuvenate the art of his own era, he decides to use its elements in the decorations and costumes he creates for the ballet and the opera. From 1912, in *Daphnis and Chloe* or *The Afternoon of a Faun* for the Ballets Russes of Diaghilev and in the productions of Ida Rubinstein, such as *Helen of Sparta* (1912) and *Phaedra* (1923), he uses the primary colours of the frescoes, adopts the architectural forms and employs many Mycenaean and Minoan decorative patterns.

« I did all my research in Crete, in the labyrinth of Minos. And I have to admit that, there, I found what I was looking for. I have always believed that at the very beginning, Greek art [...] was not colourless » Léon Bakst

Aegean fashion by Mariano Fortuny

« Faithfully antique but powerfully original », such are, according to Marcel Proust, the textile creations of Mariano Fortuny. This Spanish-venetian artist who patented many inventions (lamps, the famous *Delphos* gown with permanent pleats, etc.) starts producing clothes in 1906. He possesses workshops and shops in Paris where he caters for celebrities like Sarah Bernhardt. His « Knossos shawl », decorated with Minoan and Mycenaean patterns, just like the many dresses he designs at the time, turn into a real trend and are extremely popular among the fashionable ladies.

Liner *Aramis*, Minoan art meets Art déco

In 1932, the shipping company Messageries Maritimes launches the liner *Aramis*, decorated in the « Cretan style », though it serves Shanghai. Indeed, even though Art Deco is in full swing, the President of the company Georges Philippar, clearly favours layouts that do not go out of fashion. Thus he tasks the architect Georges Raymond to design a decoration resembling a real exhibition: reconstructions of architectural elements, furniture creations and paintings, all inspired by the Minoan civilisation. Raymond accomplishes his mission with the help of interior designers-cabinet makers, such as the ateliers Schmidt & Cie or Marc Simon, and painters-decorators, such as Mathurin Méheut and Yvonne Jean-Haffen, who are dispatched to Greece in order to gather information. Unfortunately, the liner *Aramis* disappeared in the course of the Second World War.

The Aegean art, a modern art

Alongside the artists who are inspired by the colours or patterns of the Aegean art, such as Charles Catteau in the 30s, quite a few painters and sculptors take an interest in the pared-down forms of the Cycladic figurines. Displayed in the European museums, they are widely published by Christian Zervos who considers « poems made of marble » the same objects which in the past had been labelled « barbaric ». Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Giacometti, Brancusi, Matisse and Arp share Picasso's admiration: « There was a Little Fellow from the Cyclades. He decided to make this magnificent sculpture, just like that, didn't he? [...] No one has ever done anything so simple».

PART SEVEN: The Aegean archaeology today

The Aegean archaeology today

The Aegean archaeology of today has achieved a certain amount of independence. It is no longer mixed up, neither concerning its aims nor its methods, with Classical archaeology, dominant from the end of the 19th till the middle of the 20th century. The archaeologists do not anymore strive to check the accuracy of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* on the field, and all preconceived ideas about Mycenaean Greece have been upset by the deciphering of the so called « linear B » script. The finds are no more considered as simple works of art, independently from their context: the scientists endeavour to observe, reconstitute and understand their relationship with the space where they come from (buildings, graves), in order to explain the functions of both.

Many decades after Fouqué's findings in Santorini, the researchers discover again how much the natural sciences can enrich our knowledge of the past: the excavation teams are now real research groups assembling archaeologists, architects, botanists, zoologists, geomorphologists etc., who try to interpret, together and in a coordinated way, the remains that come to light. The examples presented in this room illustrate the contribution of these multidisciplinary undertakings. Yet, the Aegean archaeology of today preserves also, fortunately, its share of mystery and continues to inspire creative minds.