

Caroline Tully:
The artifice of Daedalus: Modern Minoica as Religious Focus in
Contemporary Paganism

That human society was peaceful, matriarchal and goddesses-worshipping from the Upper Palaeolithic period (45,000–10,000 years ago) until around 3000 BCE with the rise of patriarchy is a common belief within both the modern feminist Goddess Movement and contemporary Paganism. This paper examines the representation of Minoan Crete within the literature of the feminist Goddess Movement from the 1970s up to the present day. In addition, it investigates the utilisation of outdated and erroneous interpretations of Minoan religion within the separatist feminist practice of Dianic witchcraft, the predominantly female pursuit of goddess tourism and pilgrimage, and the theology of the male-only Neo-Pagan group, the Minoan Brotherhood. Analysis and critique of the matriarchalist interpretation of Minoan material culture as applied to figurines, frescoes, glyptic art, and architecture by these groups demonstrates that these archaeological objects are interpreted in a highly ideological manner in order to support both contemporary religious belief and magical practice. That such interpretations have little to do with actual Minoan religion is emphasised by focusing upon a group of the most important and evocative feminist icons of the Minoan past: the faience and ivory “snake goddesses.” Recent scholarship, *pace* earlier researchers such as the Cambridge Ritualists, has demonstrated that these objects range from being heavily reconstructed to outright forgeries and consequently are not reliable representatives of ancient Minoan religion. The use of Minoan artefacts of questionable authenticity along with an interpretative reliance upon outdated scholarship by modern Goddess worshippers means that their rituals, festivals and tours function as heterochronies, conceptually transporting participants to an idealised, imaginary past that provides aesthetic compensation for the imperfect world of today.

Keywords:

[Archaeology](#), [Feminism](#), [Goddess-worship](#), [Greece](#), [Neo-Paganism](#)

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