

Racial Discourses in Aegean Prehistory c. 1900: The Case of the Cupbearer Fresco at Knossos

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This article traces characterizations of the Cupbearer fresco, named after the large vessel the figure holds and uncovered at the site of Knossos in 1900, in light of the research agendas about the ‘races’ of the prehistoric Aegean and traditions of racial science current in late Victorian Britain. The head of the Cupbearer was compared to Classical Greek art, modern Cretan populations, and cranial remains from prehistoric contexts. Drawing from academic publications, articles in the press, and reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the author situates the discourse surrounding the Cupbearer in the context of scholars seeking the origins of ‘European’ civilization in prehistory, and the creation of racial typologies, especially using cranial measurements and photography. The Cupbearer gained a dual status as a racial portrait comparable to past and present human populations, but also as a work of art that prefigured the later achievements of Classical Greece.

Keywords: Aegean prehistory, frescoes, race, craniometry, Arthur Evans, Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

A recent aDNA study posed the questions of whether ‘the labels “Minoan” and “Mycenaean” correspond to genetically coherent populations’ and how these prehistoric populations are ‘related to Modern Greeks who inhabit the same area today’ (Lazaridis et al., 2017: 214). As has been highlighted in critiques of this study (Hamilakis, 2017; Greenberg & Hamilakis, 2022: 146–48), several assumptions built into these research questions hark back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—in particular the racialization of archaeological cultures and the search for national ethnic origins in prehistory.

Through the case study of the Cupbearer fresco of Knossos, this article considers the construction of some of these assumptions, as well as the intersection with ‘science’ at the time, during the decades in which Aegean prehistory was coming into its own as a discipline.

The site of Knossos, on Kephala hill in northern-central Crete, was discovered and excavated by Minos Kalokairinos in 1878–79 (Kopaka, 2015; Kotsonas, 2016). While others, including Heinrich Schliemann, had ambitions to continue the work at Knossos in the following decades, it was Arthur Evans who was able to acquire the land, and he began excavations on 23 March 1900

(Momigliano, 2020: 43–45, 51). On 5 April, Evans documented finding ‘two large pieces of Myc[enae]an Fresco’ in rubble debris over a floor level near the west wall of the South Propylaeum (Evans, 1928: 704; MacGillivray, 2000: 178). When reconstructed, the fresco was shown to depict a human figure in profile view with dark hair, a nude torso, patterned kilt, and jewellery (Figure 1) (Evans, 1928: 704–08; Cameron, 1976 (III): 9–10; Immerwahr, 1990: 88–90). The initial restoration and reproduction of the fresco were done by the Gilliérons (Émile Gilliéron and son, artists specializing in archaeological reproductions in the employ of Arthur Evans), and in his own illustration of the fresco Cameron made minor alterations, including adding an eyebrow and the hairstyle behind the neck (Evely, 1999: 192–93). Evans named the figure the ‘Cupbearer’ on account of the rhyton he holds and interpreted him as part of the so-called ‘Procession Fresco’, which featured figures carrying various offerings, winding its way through several areas of the palace (Evans, 1899–1900: 16; Immerwahr, 1990: 88). While Evans initially dated the fresco to either the LMIA (Late Minoan IA; all LM phases abbreviated hereafter) or LMIB, more recent consensus places the Cupbearer and Procession Fresco in the LMII period (c. 1450–1400 BC) (Cameron, 1976 (III): 10; Immerwahr, 1990: 53, 88; Hood, 2005: 66).

The central aim of the present study is not so much the Cupbearer fresco itself but rather what the early twentieth-century discourse surrounding it can reveal about the frameworks that produced a racialized understanding of ‘culture’ in the early days of Aegean archaeology. As noted by several scholars (Greenberg & Hamilakis, 2022; Maran, 2022), the adoption of ‘Mycenae’ and ‘Minoan’ to refer to both populations and archaeological



Figure 1. *The Cupbearer fresco.* Reproduced by permission of the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion—Hellenic Ministry of Culture—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development—HOCRED.

cultures was part of a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century phenomenon that not only viewed cultures as bounded entities but as ethnic (and racial) realities. At the turn of the twentieth century, ‘Mycenae’ was commonly used to refer to the prehistoric culture of Greece, following Heinrich Schliemann’s discoveries at Mycenae in the 1870s. While Evans did not invent the term ‘Minoan’ (Karadimas & Momigliano, 2004), he appropriated and popularized its use,

especially from around 1902 onwards, to refer to the prehistoric culture of Crete, which he began to see as distinct enough from that of mainland Greece to merit its own designation (Evans, 1921: 1; Cadogan, 2006). Soon after its discovery, the Cupbearer, specifically his head, was evaluated in terms of Classical Greek art, was characterized as a portrait of the ‘Mycenaean’ race by Evans and others, and was integrated into arguments concerning the racial make-up of the prehistoric (and later) Aegean. In this article, I contextualize these threads in terms of contemporary research agendas in Aegean prehistory, as well as late Victorian race science, such as craniometric measurements and racial photography practised by the Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom in the 1890s. The latter was set up by the Folklore Society, the Anthropological Institute, and the Society of Antiquaries of London under the aegis of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to study the physical anthropology, folklore, language, monuments, material culture, and historical evidence for the people inhabiting the United Kingdom. I argue that, despite some inconsistencies in scholarly consensus, the Cupbearer was understood concurrently as a quasi-photographic racial portrait and a distinctly ‘Hellenic’ work of art. Both interpretations served to bolster the claim that the Bronze Age inhabitants of Crete represented an ‘indigenous’ European population.

The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century excavations in Crete by Evans and other foreign archaeologists were conducted in a complex political landscape, as Crete was in the process of gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire and being integrated in the modern Greek state (McEnroe, 2002; Varouhakis, 2015; Genova, 2019). At the same time, archaeology was a vehicle through which

colonialism lingered in terms of the nature of the acquisition of sites and materials as well as the integration of prehistoric Crete into larger myth-making narratives concerning the ‘origins’ of Europe (Hamilakis, 2002, 2006; Papadopoulos, 2005; Varouhakis, 2015; Schoep, 2018; Momigliano, 2020). While Evans’s invocation of the Cupbearer in his discussions concerning the ‘race’ of the Minoans and attempts to ‘Europeanize’ the prehistoric populations of Crete has been noted (Schoep, 2018: 18–19; Momigliano, 2020: 63), the implications of the analogies to a portrait and the broader background of the British Ethnographic Survey have not been explored. In addition, although Evans excavated and provided the richest descriptions of the fresco, the Cupbearer appeared in scholarship beyond that of Evans, including discussions that included craniometry as a method of categorizing race. By connecting these research agendas and broader discourses about determining the races (or racial mixtures) which inhabited the prehistoric Aegean to the British Ethnographic Survey and Victorian race science more generally, this article illuminates the intellectual context in which the nascent discipline of Aegean prehistory emerged.

‘INDIGENOUS’ EUROPEANS? THE SEARCH FOR ORIGINS IN PREHISTORY

The discovery of prehistoric civilizations in the Aegean was instrumental in shaping several interrelated discourses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including when the first Indo-European (Greek) speakers arrived in Greece, the origin of the Aryans in Europe, the ‘race’ of the Bronze Age inhabitants of Greece, including the Mycenaeans (and, as added later, Minoans), and the relationship of these ‘races’ and cultures to the later Greeks and Europeans more broadly (e.g.

Myres, 1896: 341; Hawes, 1908: 7). These research agendas were in part a product of the late nineteenth-century landscape of prehistoric studies in Europe, in which an increasing number of scholars had grown dissatisfied with the so-called *ex oriente lux* model, arguing instead for culturally independent prehistoric development within Europe (Schoep, 2018: 7).

In some contexts, the term ‘indigenous’ came to be used to articulate the idea that a recognizable European culture—and race—existed in prehistoric Europe and that this culture/race was distinct from ‘Eastern’ civilizations, driven by its own innate force of cultural development. For example, in his summary of Graeco-Egyptian antiquities in the 1893–94 Archaeological Report of the Egyptian Exploration Fund, Cecil Smith declared: ‘in the new impulses lately given to the study of the Oriental’ and especially Egyptian influence, there was ‘some danger of going too far, and of minimizing the independent and indigenous causes which in turn the Western races contributed to the evolution of their culture’ (Smith, 1893–1894: 30). He followed this statement by citing Salomon Reinach’s *Mirage Oriental* (1893), as well as Evans’s (1894) recent forays into collecting samples of ancient writing in Crete and the Peloponnese. In the latter, Evans specifically characterized the ‘primitive Cretan population’ as an ‘indigenous European culture’ and reasoned that this culture ‘must have reached a comparatively advanced stage’ before direct Egyptian influence (Evans, 1894: 333). While Evans and Reinach accepted an ‘Eastern’ influence on the ‘early civilizations’ in Europe, they rejected the notion that the inhabitants of prehistoric Europe were passive recipients of ‘Asiatic’ cultures (Reinach, 1893: 40; Evans, 1896: 922; Fotiadis, 2006: 10–17; Schoep, 2018: 7). Similarly, in the 1897 edition of *The*

Mycenaean Age: A Study of the Monuments and Culture of Pre-Homeric Greece, a chapter is dedicated to ‘The problem of the Mycenaean Race’, which characterized Mycenaean art as ‘a native growth’ and ‘indigenous’ (Tsountas & Manatt, 1897: 326). While influence from ‘the earlier civilizations of the Cyclades and East’ was acknowledged, Tsountas and Manatt also argued that the ‘race’ which produced this art was ‘of Hellenic stock’, thereby also implying racial continuity between prehistoric and later Greek civilization.

Evans was more forthright in 1896, four years before he began work at Knossos but several years after he had been travelling in Crete looking for evidence of early writing systems. In an address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science titled ‘The “Eastern Question” in Anthropology’, he concludes:

‘This brief survey of “the Eastern Question in Anthropology” will not have been made in vain if it helps to call attention to the mighty part played by the early Aegean culture as the mediator between primitive Europe and the older civilisations of Egypt and Babylonia ... The independent European element is not affected by its power of assimilation ... I have laid some stress on the part which Crete has played in this first emancipation of the European genius ... Inhabited since the days of the first Greek settlements by the same race, speaking the same language, and moved by the same independent impulses, Crete stands forth again to-day as the champion of the European spirit against the yoke of Asia.’ (Evans, 1896: 922)

With the title alone of this piece, Evans drew a connection to the then current geopolitics, which is made explicit at the end of the passage, when he attributes an

innate sense of (European) independence to the Cretans, from earliest prehistory to their current struggle against the Ottoman Empire. While Evans acknowledges the ‘Eastern background’ of early European civilization, he maintains not only that there was an ‘independent European element’ that was able to resist full assimilation but suggests that Crete was where European ‘genius’ was able to fully establish itself.

THE DISCOVERY AND RECEPTION OF THE CUPBEARER

Fragments of the Cupbearer fresco were recovered very soon after Evans began excavations in Knossos in spring 1900. In October 1900, Arthur Evans and David Hogarth (Director of the British School at Athens from 1897–1900) wrote a letter published in *The Times* and several other newspapers (Sherratt, 2009: 623–24), in which they summarized the most significant discoveries at Knossos. They specifically highlighted the Cupbearer, describing the figure as follows: ‘A beautiful life-size painting of a youth, with a European and almost classically Greek profile, gives us the first real knowledge of the race who produced this mysterious early civilization’ (Evans & Hogarth, 1900). They focus on the face (‘profile’) of the figure, asserting that it is at the same time ‘European’, ‘almost classically Greek’, and representative of the race that produced it. Within a few short sentences, both the artistic quality and perceived ‘race’ of the fresco are associated with Classical Greece, and, in turn, European-ness. The European connection is drawn out more explicitly in the rest of the piece, as its aim was not only to describe discoveries at Knossos but to exhort the British public to fund Evans’s expedition in the form of donations to the Cretan Exploration Fund.

The research at Knossos, they concluded, ‘lies about the fountain-head of our own civilization’ (Evans & Hogarth, 1900). The contention that the face of the figure ‘gives us the first real knowledge’ of race is significant, given the more explicit connections made in subsequent publications to portraiture; indeed, as discussed below, racial portraits held a certain evidentiary quality among both the British public and scientific communities.

In his report of the 1900 excavations at Knossos, Evans provided a similar description of the figure of the Cupbearer (explicitly named as such), with a few more details:

‘Parallel with the west wall of the Propylaeum ... was excavated a passage, on the floor level of which came to light, face uppermost, two large pieces of fresco ... the head and face were preserved, affording the first real portraiture of a Mycenaean man. The regular, almost classical features, the dark eyes and black curly hair and high brachycephalic skull present close points of resemblance to certain types still to be found, especially in the highlands of central and western Crete. The profile rendering of the eye and the modelling of the face and limbs show an artistic advance which in historic Greece was not reached until the fifth century before our era ...’ (Evans, 1899–1900: 15–16)

Evans characterized the fresco as ‘the first real portraiture’, repeats the comparison to ‘classical features’, and includes an evaluation of the (imagined) skull shape, which he compares to some modern Cretans. Finally, he elaborates on the level of artistic skill in the creation of the portrait, which is articulated in terms of fifth-century (Classical) Greek art. The use of the term ‘brachycephalic’ is the first explicit connection to craniometric science in

descriptions of the fresco. ‘Brachycephalic’ was the term used in the so-called cephalic index to refer to ‘round’ or ‘broad’ heads, based on the breadth of a skull in proportion to its length. In *The Races of Europe*, William Ripley asserted that the cephalic index was the best measurement ‘for all racial purposes’ and clarified the method for obtaining the index, which was to measure the width as a fraction of the length (taken to be 100): an index above 80 would be categorized as ‘brachycephalic’, and below 75, ‘dolichocephalic’ (Ripley, 1899: 37). As we shall see, scholars working in Crete in the early twentieth century demonstrated familiarity with Ripley’s work. In addition, the so-called cephalic index was one of the measurements recorded during the Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom, in which some of these scholars either participated or served on the organizing committee.

Evans repeated and elaborated his description of the Cupbearer, including the characterization of the head shape in terms of craniometric language and alignment with ‘indigenous’ Cretan populations, in an account of his discoveries at Knossos published in *The Monthly Review* in March 1901:

‘at the back of the southern Propylaeum there came to light two large fragments of what proved to be the upper part of a youth bearing a gold-mounted silver cup ... For the first time the true portraiture of a man of this mysterious Mycenaean race rises before us ... The profile of the face is pure and almost classically Greek. This, with the dark curly hair and high brachycephalic head, recalls an indigenous type well represented still in the glens of Ida and the White Mountains—a type which brings with it many reminiscences from the Albanian highlands and the neighbouring regions of Montenegro and Herzegovina. The lips

are somewhat full, but the physiognomy has certainly no Semitic cast. The profile rendering of the eye shows an advance in human portraiture foreign to Egyptian art, and only achieved by the artists of classical Greece in the early fine-art period of the fifth century BC.’ (Evans, 1901: 124–25)

Evans’s focus is here again on the head and face, and he repeats the mentions of ‘the true portraiture’ of the ‘mysterious Mycenaean race’, which at the same time is ‘pure and almost classically Greek’. As in his excavation report, Evans compared the head to modern Cretans, but he also notes similarities to other Balkan populations. Before embarking on his archaeological career, Evans had spent time in the Balkans as a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* and sometime-ethnographer (Brown, 1993; Elezovic, 2021). Finally, the details that ‘the physiognomy has certainly no Semitic cast’ and that the artistic advancement shown in the rendering of the figure is beyond the capabilities of Egyptian art and only equalled by Classical Greek artists are likely to have served to emphasize that the figure—and the artist(s) who created it—were not ‘Eastern’. When brought into dialogue with Evans’s 1896 ‘Eastern Question’ address, the comparison of the Cupbearer’s head (and that of prehistoric Cretans) to some modern Cretan ‘types’ reflect Evans’s desire to see a continuous racial element inhabiting Crete, independent of any ‘Eastern’ cultural or racial domination, past or present (Momigliano, 2020: 63). It is worth noting too that while artistic characteristics of the fresco are leveraged by Evans to argue for its European qualities, at the same time his incorporation of modern populations to serve this argument dehumanizes them in that they are here reducible to quasi-

artistic or archaeological ‘types’ to be categorized.

Evans’s publicizing of the discoveries at Knossos, including the fresco, quickly made their way into broader discussions concerning ‘Mycenaean’ and earlier Bronze Age populations in the Mediterranean. Several scholars integrated the Cupbearer with the then-recent syntheses of Ripley, and of the Italian anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi, who argued for an autonomous ‘Mediterranean race’ identifiable around the Mediterranean in early prehistory, which was not only the driver behind the greatness of later Mediterranean civilizations such as the Greeks and Romans but separate from the ‘Aryan’ races of Asiatic origin (Sergi, 1901: v–vii, 29–30).

A short report by the British geologist and anthropologist William Boyd Dawkins appeared in 1900–1901 concerning some of the skulls David George Hogarth had excavated in the cave burials in the gorge near Zakro in eastern Crete. Hogarth characterized these burials as belonging to an early phase of the Bronze Age, but also noted the presence of post-Bronze Age (Geometric) cave burials elsewhere in the gorge (Hogarth, 1900–1901: 142–47). In his analysis, Boyd Dawkins followed the arguments of Ripley and Sergi by proposing that ‘the aboriginal race in the Mediterranean, both east and west, was long-headed, and that it was invaded, in the Bronze Age, by the round-headed peoples’ (Boyd Dawkins, 1900–1901: 155). He also compared the morphology and cranial indices of the Zakro skulls to previously studied ancient crania from around the Mediterranean and concluded that they ‘belong[ed] to the small dark Mediterranean people, the oldest, if not the only, ethnical element in the Pelasgians of Crete, whose swarthy complexions and dark hair are so vividly depicted in the frescoes of the great Palace-temple of Knossos, now being

explored by Dr A.J. Evans’ (Boyd Dawkins, 1900–1901: 155; a footnote on that page states that Evans viewed the ‘head of the youth in the fresco [to be] brachycephalic, and of the same shape as those of some of the present inhabitants of Crete’). While this reveals a difference of opinion concerning the head shape of the figure in the fresco, with Evans arguing for brachycephalic and Boyd Dawkins for dolichocephalic, both parties treat the fresco as evidence that could be reliably brought into dialogue with skeletal analyses.

A somewhat different perspective—though one that still foregrounds the fresco as indicative of race—was presented around the same time by William Ridgeway, then the Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge, in his first volume of *The Early Age of Greece*. In discussing cranial evidence from prehistoric Greece, Ridgeway states:

‘Yet as the physical anthropologists cannot agree upon any principles of skull measurement, the historical inquirer must not at present base any argument on this class of evidence. But our first real knowledge of the physical aspect of the race, who produced the Mycenaean culture, has now been given to us by the discovery at Cnossos of a beautiful “life-size painting of a youth with an European and almost classical Greek profile”.’ (Ridgeway, 1901: 79)

Ridgeway does not provide a citation or concrete examples for the disagreement he mentions about skull measuring, but it is striking that he dismisses this method in favour of understanding the fresco at Knossos as a physically accurate portrait of the ‘Mycenaean’ race and essentially quoted the description written by Evans and Hogarth in *The Times* in 1900. Elsewhere, however, Ridgeway (1901: 264, 283–84) suggested not only that

there was a dark-complexioned, dolichocephalic race in Greece since Neolithic times (Sergi's 'Mediterranean race') but that this race created the Mycenaean civilization and even continued into Classical times. In his review of Ridgeway's book, the Oxford scholar John Linton Myres countered this claim by arguing that this was complicated in the Aegean by 'a short-headed though likewise dark-haired type, which has left clear traces in modern Crete and Lycia' and invoked the Cupbearer, noting that 'the only Mycenaean portrait which has been recovered seems to Mr. Evans, who knows Albania well, to reproduce the "high brachycephalic head" of the Alpine-Anatolian type' (Myres, 1902: 71). In the introduction to her 1908 report of the excavations at Gournia and Vasiliki, Harriet Boyd Hawes declared: 'Many authorities now agree in considering the earliest inhabitants of Greece and Crete to have been, in the main, long-headed, small and swarthy, non-Aryan in speech and culture, as were the Neolithic inhabitants of Italy and Spain' (Hawes, 1908: 8), citing Ripley and Sergi, among others. She went on to argue that, as the ceramic sequence (and therefore culture) was continuous between the Neolithic and Bronze Age, one could understand 'the human figures that appear in the frescoes and on the gems of Knossos ... as representations of this native stock' (Hawes, 1908: 8). In referring to 'frescoes', she does not name a specific example, but the Cupbearer fresco would have certainly been one, if not the primary, fresco meant here.

In sum, we can see several, related discourses. Evans's evaluation of the fresco characterized it as a 'portrait' and focused on artistic ability, including comparison to later Greek Classical works of art, but he also compared the head shape in craniometric terms to modern populations in the Balkans and Crete. While other scholars

(except Myres) diverged somewhat from Evans about the head shape, significantly, they accepted that the fresco could be taken as an accurate portrait of whatever 'race' the Bronze Age civilization of Crete was, and integrated it into larger discussions of cranial and racial typologies in the prehistoric Aegean.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, RACE SCIENCE, AND PHOTOGRAPHY

One place we can turn to for understanding more fully the background to some of the intersections between conceptions of race, culture, craniometry, and portraiture is the Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom initiated in the 1890s. Both Arthur Evans and William Boyd Dawkins served on the committee of the Ethnographic Survey from 1893 to 1899. In addition, W.L.H. Duckworth, who studied the human remains from prehistoric burials near Palaikastro in Crete (Bosanquet et al., 1902–1903: 344–55), contributed to the survey's physical anthropological observations (Urry, 1984: 94). Many of the practices and ideologies that were incorporated into the Ethnographic Survey had long traditions by the late nineteenth century (Stocking, 1987; Harlan, 2018), but the Survey was significant for institutionalizing them under the umbrella of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS hereafter) (Urry, 1984).

Different organizations and individuals had various motivations for undertaking the Survey, but a primary reason was an interest in the racial history and composition of the United Kingdom. At the 1893 BAAS meeting, the lawyer and anthropologist E.W. Brabrook proposed that the BAAS support an Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom (Urry, 1984: 89) and, in an essay titled 'On the

Organisation of Local Anthropological Research’, declared that ‘Our purpose is wholly one of research, not the establishment of any preconceived views or the support of any theories, but the thorough investigation into the natural history of man as differentiated by such racial characters of all kinds as survive in various parts of the country’ (Brabrook, 1893: 263). The early reports of the Survey, which appeared in the yearly BAAS reports, reveal a concern with the practicalities of obtaining consistent data from multiple local societies across the UK, and this was addressed by providing not only instructions but standardized forms and short local reports. For example, the ‘form of schedule of physical types of inhabitants’ (Figure 2) which had been agreed upon for England featured in the 1894 report (BAAS, 1894: 423, 426–27). Figure 2b shows that both the length and breadth of the cranium was to be recorded, which is how the cranial index was calculated, and the choice of nose shape shows a concern with profile. Directions for measurement were provided in Appendix II of the report (BAAS, 1894: 428–29).

The update on the Survey presented at the 1895 meeting of the BAAS gives an illuminating glimpse into some of the aims and methods, as well as the people involved (Figure 3). In 1895, the committee who drew up the report included not only Evans and Boyd Dawkins, but the eugenicist Francis Galton and the archaeologist General Pitt Rivers, among others (for Galton, see Challis, 2013). The subjects in which the Survey was most interested are listed (Figure 4): physical types, current traditions and beliefs, a linguistic element (‘peculiarities of dialect’), archaeological evidence (‘monuments and other remains of ancient culture’), and historical evidence as to continuity of race.

The published appendices to this report—which included ‘Circular to Local

Societies’, ‘Circular to Medical Men’, and ‘Explanatory Notes’—further reveal the interconnectedness of these inquiries, and in particular the use of photographic portraits and measurements of head shape as a way to trace racial continuity. The ‘Circular to Local Societies’ included the following instructions:

‘The object is to devote attention chiefly to the inhabitants of districts where the population has long been stationary and little changed ... It is desired to obtain physical measurements and photographs of individuals who appear typical in their respective districts, individuals selected, if possible, from those among those whose forefathers have dwelt in the neighbourhood as far back as can be traced.’ (BAAS, 1895: 511)

The specific instruction to choose ‘individuals ... whose forefathers have dwelt in the neighbourhood as far back as can be traced’ is based on the assumption that such individuals would embody a supposedly purer representation of race, as they were part of ‘stationary’ populations.

The ‘Circular to Medical Men’ also emphasized the need for photographic portraits along with measurements:

‘I may add that the Committee think it desirable that any individual measured should also be photographed. The instructions as to photographs have been complained of as somewhat minute; but their object is to permit the use of the photographs by Mr. Galton’s composite method. The Committee will be quite willing, however, to make the best use that can be made of any photographs that do not fully comply with their requirements. If the procuring of photographs should be a matter of expense the Committee would be glad to be informed of it beforehand, and to render any assistance in their power towards meeting it.’ (BAAS, 1895: 513)

(a)

APPENDIX I.
FORM OF SCHEDULE.

Place _____ Name of Observer _____

Physical Types of the Inhabitants.

Number	Date of Measurement	Surname	Christian Name	Age	Sex	Town or Village	County
SURNAMING		SURNAME of your Father	SURNAME of your Mother before she was married	What district do your Parents' people come from ?		Your Father's ?	Your Mother's ?
Have your Father's people occupied that part of the country long ? If not, state what you know of their original locality							Occupation
GENERAL CONDITION: (1) stout; (2) medium; (3) thin.				Photograph number. (N.B.—The photograph of the person measured should be sent along with this schedule.)			
SKIN: (1) pale; (2) ruddy; 3 dark.				Freckled (?).			
HAIR: (R) red; (F) fair; (B) brown; (D) dark; (N) black.				(1) straight; (2) wavy; (3) curly.			
COLOUR OF BEARD: (R); (F); (B); (D); (N).							
EYES: (1) blue; (2) light grey; (3) dark grey; (4) green; (5) light brown; (6) dark brown.							
SHAPE OF FACE: (1) long and narrow; (2) medium; (3) short and broad. (a) cheek-bones inconspicuous; (b) cheek-bones prominent.							
PROFILE OF NOSE: Compare with outline figures at foot, and give the number with which the nose under examination most closely corresponds.							
LIPS: (1) thin; (2) medium; (3) thick.							
EARS: (A) Flat; (B) outstanding; (c) coarse; (d) finely moulded.							
LOBES OF EARS: (1) absent; (2) present; (a) attached; (b) detached.							

426 REPORT—1894.

(b)

HEIGHT		CRANIUM		FACE				
Standing	Sitting	Length	Breadth	Length	Upper Face Length	Breadth	Interocular Breadth	Bigonial Breadth
NOSE		Height of Head	Height of Cranium					
Length	Breadth							

Fig 1. Fig 2. Fig 3.
Fig 4. Fig 5.

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Figure 2. 'Form of Schedule' provided in the 1894 BAAS Report (pp. 426–27) showing data (a) and specific measurements (b) to be collected. CC BY-NC 3.0

Galton's 'method' mentioned here was one he had been experimenting with and developed from the 1870s onwards in attempts to study racial and criminal 'types'. It proved too complex to

implement in the survey and was replaced by a simplified procedure from A.C. Haddon, a Cambridge zoologist turned ethnologist and anthropologist (Urry, 1984: 91). This adaptation, which was

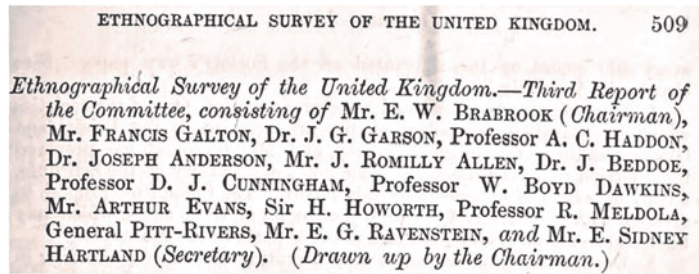


Figure 3. Detail from the BAAS Report (1895: 509) with composition of the committee.

implemented in the hope of acquiring more photographs, and the offer to aid in expenses underline how important the photographic portraits were to the committee. The connection between photography, cranial measurements, and racial types (and mixing) was further articulated in the ‘Explanatory Notes’ section of the report by E.S. Hartland, who explained that the comparison of individuals ‘should enable us to determine in what proportions the blood of the various races which have from time to time invaded and occupied our soil has been transmitted to the present population of different parts of the United Kingdom’ (BAAS, 1895: 514).

Photographs of individuals, specifically portraits, and measurements were employed and conceived as part of a larger research programme designed to understand racial categories, continuity, and mixing within the United Kingdom. Such intellectual agendas, although they were

created in the context of the Ethnographic Survey, find an echo in how the Cupbearer fresco was readily compared to living populations as well as skeletal evidence based on perceived head shape. But why was this fresco understood as analogous to a *photographic* portrait? The interest in photographic portraits during the nineteenth century extended beyond the BAAS Survey. In her work on the intersections between photography and anthropology during the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Edwards has argued that not only did photography play an important role in scientific endeavours, but portrait photographs were widely produced for and consumed by the public, and public and popular consumption could drive scientific inquiry. In both spheres, photographs held a certain status in terms of evidentiary quality, but also contributed to preserving a hierarchy of racial types (Edwards, 2009: 169). Importantly, it was

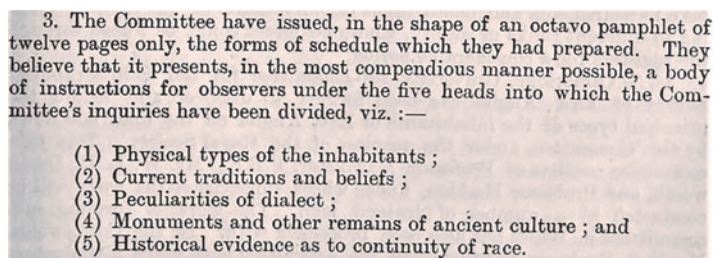


Figure 4. Detail from the BAAS Report (1895: 509) listing the five areas of inquiry targeted by the committee.

not just photographic portraits of modern populations that were assembled and consumed in late Victorian Britain. Debbie Challis has examined extensively Flinders Petrie's study of 'racial portraits' from ancient Egypt, as well as his collection of Fayum 'Mummy' portraits in the late 1880s (Challis, 2013: 85–114). Petrie displayed these Mummy portraits among other finds from his excavations at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly during the summer of 1888. Challis quotes a letter from Petrie to Amelia Edwards describing public reception of the exhibition in which he notes that Arthur Evans was one of 'several solid folks' who attended 'more than once' (Challis, 2013: 113). To scholars from the United Kingdom, the Cupbearer may have been understood as something akin to these Mummy portraits—an ancient depiction seen through the modern lens of portraiture, which was racialized in both scientific and popular contexts.

EMERGING TENSIONS: THE CUPBEARER, RACE, AND AEGEAN PREHISTORY

In the case of the Cupbearer, the perceived scientific nature of photographic portraiture intersected with notions of artistic production. That is, the 'portrait' of the Cupbearer was considered accurate, and therefore a representation of the 'race' of the civilization which produced it. At the same time, it was assumed that the level of artistry (let us recall Evans's comparison to Classical art) could only have been achieved by a member of a 'European' civilization, thereby offering support to the notion of the origins of Europe on modern European soil. However, within the larger programme of establishing an origin narrative for Minoan civilization as the first truly 'European' civilization, it was not necessarily a straightforward elision between Minoan, Greek, and

(modern) European civilization. Evans and others went a step further, arguing that later Greek civilization could not be explained without its prehistoric roots (Evans, 1912; Momigliano, 2020: 63). In the introduction to his report on the excavations at Mochlos, the American archaeologist Richard Seager outlined a narrative in which 'northmen' including Achaeans and Dorians invaded Crete, but that 'the inherent artistic spirit of the conquered Minoans revived in the mixed race, driving it into that amazingly rapid development which seemed so inexplicable before the spade lent its aid to the historian' (Seager, 1912: 2). Seager presents racial mixing, including the 'spirit' of the superior (Minoan) race, as an explanatory mechanism for 'rapid' cultural development of later Cretans/Greeks, while also invoking archaeological tools to stand for prehistoric archaeological discoveries. Such argumentation was part of a methodological and rhetorical effort by Aegean prehistorians to define and legitimize their discipline in relation to the better established Classical archaeology (Dunay, 2020: 28–48). The discourse surrounding both the racial and artistic elements of the Cupbearer can thus be understood in the context of this broader disciplinary negotiation, especially in Anglo-American circles.

While a narrative of racial mixing over the course of Greek prehistory, in which the 'Minoans' and 'Mycenaeans' featured as a dominant force paving the way for Classical Greece, coalesced in Anglo-American scholarship during the early twentieth century, the way in which the connection between ancient and modern Greeks (and Cretans) was used by foreign scholars was more fraught. In a letter written in November 1903 and published in the newspaper *Patris*, Minos Kalokairinos accused Evans of dismissing the claim that modern Cretans could be descendants of ancient Cretans on the

basis of ‘cranioscopy’ (Varouhakis, 2015: 103; Genova, 2019: 216–17). While Evans did in fact draw parallels between the Cupbearer and modern populations, Kalokairinos’s letter provided a critique of the authority given to cranial measurement as a method of racial categorization and that such categorization should be a sole indicator of ethnic character. In addition, it reflects a broader pattern of ‘Western’ scholars sometimes paradoxically expressing colonialist views of the modern population of Greece and Crete, i.e. that they were inferior to their illustrious ancestors (e.g. Hogarth, 1910: 87), while at the same time stressing what they perceived as continuities between prehistoric and present-day Crete in the service of a European origin myth. Indeed, these attitudes were an even more widespread phenomenon in early twentieth-century archaeology conducted by European and American scholars in the Mediterranean and Middle East. As Baird has demonstrated (2011: 430) in analysing the archival photographs of the excavations of Dura-Europos in Syria during the late 1920s–1930s, locals and workmen were often placed by the excavators within the ancient structures as ‘passive props or mere scales’, visually signalling that they were at once ‘analogous’ to the ancient past but also disconnected from it by means of their objectification. Such a practice, as Baird also notes, underlines how photographs taken with a seemingly scientific purpose were not in fact objective, as the intent of the composer of the photograph was significant to their meaning (Baird, 2011: 431–32). The question of who was able to produce material and narratives was one that played out in the legal sphere too: in 1907 Kalokairinos filed a lawsuit claiming Evans had not only excavated on his land but also sent objects abroad, contrary to the Law of Antiquities, but he died before the matter was resolved

(MacGillivray, 2000: 240; Genova, 2019: 212–14).

By the time Evans’s first two *Palace of Minos* volumes were published in the 1920s, the Cupbearer is still cited in discussions of the Minoan ‘race’, but tension between its status as a work of art and as evidence of a racial type appears in Evans’s somewhat contradictory descriptions in volumes I and II. In the first volume, Evans included the fresco in a broader discussion of evidence for the Minoan ‘race’, and, after summarizing existing skeletal evidence, characterized the Cupbearer as a ‘representative of the Mediterranean race’, both of which he described as ‘long-headed’ (Evans, 1921: 6–8). He included a footnote seemingly backtracking from his initial interpretation of the ‘brachycephalic’ head and similarity to Cretan and Albanian types, clarifying that it ‘is unsafe to draw too exact craniometrical deductions from this, in part, conventionalized wall-painting’ (Evans, 1921: 8). That is, the artistic aspects of the fresco (‘conventionalized wall-painting’) take precedence over association with cranial data. In the longer discussion of the Cupbearer in the second part of the second volume, however, Evans seems to attempt to incorporate both positions by reverting to his original characterization of the Cupbearer’s head as ‘brachycephalic’ and similar to ‘the indigenous Cretan type of the White Mountains’ (Evans, 1928: 707). He acknowledged that the appearance is ‘generalized’ but argued that ‘from the racial point of view this rather increases its value’ and concluded ‘We have here before us, in fact, a sun-burnt scion of the “Mediterranean race”’ (Evans, 1928: 707).

CONCLUSION

Evans’s ‘sun-burnt scion’ somewhat faded out of scholarly considerations of Aegean frescoes and prehistoric races, but attempts

to archaeologically identify and define an ancient ‘Greek’ race originating in prehistory lingered on (e.g. Blegen, 1941). While the broader epistemological entanglement between ‘culture’, art, and ‘race’ in the first half of the twentieth century extends beyond the immediate study, the case of the Cupbearer provides an entry point to examine not only elisions between ‘race’ and ‘culture’, but also the racial and cultural hierarchies underlying the definition of archaeological ‘cultures’ in Aegean prehistory, as informed by Eurocentric and Hellenist research agendas. The close connection between photography, head features, and racial categorization made by the Ethnographic Survey of the United Kingdom provides a context for the Cupbearer being regarded as a quasi-racial ‘portrait’. In sum, the Survey was a culmination of nineteenth-century approaches to racial science, as were Ripley’s and Sergi’s syntheses treating ‘European’ and ‘Mediterranean’ races, and all three provided scholars working in Crete around 1900—some of whom had been directly involved with the Survey—with research frameworks and a specific language for identifying and evaluating the ‘races’ of prehistory in relation to later Greeks and Europeans.

In this study, I have focused on British ethnography and race science to highlight the overlap in personnel involved in the ethnographic survey of the 1890s and archaeological endeavours in Crete and to illustrate the importance of scholarly networks in constructing intellectual history. As Richard McMahon (2019) and others have emphasized, the development of race science—including how it was employed to nationalist ends—was a transnational endeavour during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was probably influenced by French anthropologists and regional surveys conducted in France (Urry, 1984: 87–88).

I also suggested that the assumptions of racial mixture underlying the aims of the Survey may have provided a narrative model of racial mixing then applied by some scholars to the prehistoric Aegean. This legacy of ‘racial mixture’ brings us back to recent aDNA research, mentioned at the start of this article. In the early twentieth century, research concerning the ‘races’ of the inhabitants of the prehistoric Aegean—including their origin, development, and interactions—was bound up in a larger agenda designed to establish the ‘Greek’-ness or ‘European’-ness of prehistory in Greece. Although multiple races or racial mixing were acknowledged, the distinct ‘Greek’ or ‘European’ element was characterized as capable of absorbing sufficiently other elements while also standing out from them (e.g. Evans, 1896; Seager, 1912). Greenberg and Hamilakis (2022: 148) have noted the similarity in this type of thinking to an agenda of seeking persistent ancestry into the present in certain aDNA studies while using language of ‘admixture’. The original interpretations of the Cupbearer and the Ethnographic Survey provide some concrete ways to draw connections between the premises of certain aDNA research questions and those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like Evans and others who considered art that depicted human figures such as the Cupbearer to represent the appearance—and ‘race’—of Aegean Bronze Age populations, Lazaridis et al.’s (2017) aDNA study takes the ‘colourful frescoes and pottery’ of this period as a basis to reconstruct appearance (i.e. ‘phenotype’) of the actual Bronze Age inhabitants of the Aegean (Lazaridis et al., 2017: 217). In a different study concerning the genetic ancestry of Peloponnesian populations, its authors obtained samples from individuals only ‘if all four grandparents originated from the same village or from villages that were <10 kilometres

apart' (Stamatoyannopoulos et al., 2017: 640). Like the 1895 survey instructions to select 'individuals ... whose forefathers have dwelt in the neighborhood as far back as can be traced' (BAAS, 1895: 511), this selection strategy is based on the premise that such individuals would represent a 'purer' genetic, or racial, signature. It is certainly possible to trace nineteenth-century racialized frameworks persisting in other forms of archaeological interpretation, but it is especially important to illuminate echoes and replications of such assumptions in some aDNA studies, given the authority attributed to 'scientific' research; moreover, broader public interest, and the fallacy of constructed 'ancestries' of modern national identities and ethnicities from archaeological 'cultures' through the language of genetics (Frieman & Hofmann, 2019; Maran, 2022; Greenberg & Hamilakis, 2022: 141–48), means that such studies require level-headed assessment.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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Le débat sur les races en préhistoire égéenne autour de 1900 : le cas du porteur de rhyton sur une fresque de Knossos

Cet article traite de la caractérisation de la fresque dite du « porteur de rhyton » (représentant un personnage portant un grand vase) découverte sur le site de Knossos en 1900 dans le cadre d'une thématique de recherche sur les « races » occupant le milieu égéen préhistorique et les traditions de la science raciale en Grande-Bretagne à la fin du XIXe siècle. On compare la tête du porteur de rhyton à celles qui figurent dans les œuvres d'art de l'Antiquité grecque classique, aux populations crétoises moderne et aux crânes découverts dans des gisements préhistoriques. Sur la base de publications scientifiques, articles de presse et rapports de l'Association britannique pour l'Avancement des Sciences, l'auteur situe le discours concernant le porteur de rhyton dans un contexte qui cherchait à établir l'origine des civilisations 'européennes' préhistoriques et à élaborer une typologie des races, principalement au moyen de clichés photographiques et de méthodes craniométriques. Le porteur de rhyton jouait un double rôle, comme portrait d'un type racial comparable aux populations crétoises anciennes et modernes mais aussi comme œuvre d'art préfigurant les réalisations de l'Antiquité grecque classique. Translation by Madeleine Hummler

Mots-clés: préhistoire égéenne, fresques, race, craniométrie, Arthur Evans, enquête ethnographique au Royaume-Uni

Der Diskurs über Rassen in der ägäischen Urgeschichte um ca. 1900: Der Fall des Rhytonträgers auf einer Freske von Knossos

In diesem Artikel wird die Charakterisierung der im Jahre 1900 entdeckte „Rhytonträger-Freske“ (welche eine Figur mit einem großen Trinkgefäß darstellt) angesichts der Forschungsthematik über „Rassen“ in der ägäischen Urgeschichte und der Traditionen der Rassenkunde des späten 19. Jahrhunderts in Großbritannien untersucht. Der Kopf des Rhytonträgers wurde mit Kunstwerken der griechischen Antike verglichen, aber auch mit der modernen kretischen Bevölkerung und urgeschichtlichen

Funden von Schädeln. Auf der Basis von wissenschaftlichen Veröffentlichungen, Zeitungsartikeln und Berichten der britischen Vereinigung für die Förderung der Wissenschaften diskutiert die Verfasserin, wie die Rhytonträger-Freske im Rahmen eines wissenschaftlichen Milieus – in welchem man versuchte, den Ursprung der urchichtlichen, europäischen. Zivilisationen zu bestimmen und eine Rassentypologie besonders durch Kraniometrie und fotografischen Aufnahmen aufzustellen – angesehen wurde. Der Rhytonträger spielte eine doppelte Rolle, als Bildnis einer mit kretischen Bevölkerungen in der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart vergleichbaren Rasse, aber auch als Kunstwerk, das die späteren Leistungen der Antike angekündigte. Translation by Madeleine Hummler

Stichworte: ägäische Urgeschichte, Freske, Rassen, Kraniometrie, Arthur Evans, ethnographische Studie des Vereinigten Königreichs