



**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

## Archaeology and history of Crete

### Minoan human sacrifice / The Epimenides paradox

#### Minoan human sacrifice\* on Crete

\* The term "human sacrifice" means a rite which was exercised in many ancient cultures. The victims were ritually killed with the intention to express supplication, thanks and appeasement from the deity. Sacrifices in natural catastrophes, events such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts etc. were seen as a sign of anger or resentment of the gods; they sacrificed to appease the wrath of God. The Minoans (Cretans) probably tried to stop destruction of Crete by natural disasters.

Two little separated excavations (Anemospilia and Knossos) brought in summer 1979 first archaeological evidence that there may have been another side of so often described peaceful Minoan culture. It is the Greek excavations of *Giannis* and *Efi Sakellarakis* in **Anemospilia** near Archanes and the British under *Peter Warren* in **Knossos**.

In **Anemospilia** at the northern slope of Mount Jouchtas the remains of a small building that has probably been destroyed by an earthquake at the end of the late palace period about 1700 BC has been discovered and where four people were apparently surprised during a ritual sacrifice act. Here however was not a bull or a goat sacrificed, but a young man. The oppressive scene took place in the Western of the three rooms that were connected by a long corridor with the doorway in the East. The collapsed beams lay on 3 skeletons: a woman (late twenties), a man (end 30) and a young man of about 18 years. The young man was tied to a higher stone altar. It is believed that he had been slain by the older man who had cut his neck with a bronze knife, which was found on this position. The woman could have been a priestess, and a fourth skeleton that was found in the hallway next to an with a bull ornamented vessel was maybe an temple servant, he was going to bring the blood of the victim to the God as sacrifice. This never happened. The impact of the earthquake ripped the small, remote temples and captured its occupants in a scene that brought much unrest among the Greek archaeologist, they until now believed that the Minoans were a very peaceful people.

In **Knossos** excavations behind the stratigraphic Museum brought the remains of a building to light which probably was destroyed by fire during the late palace period around 1500 BC. Finds of ritual "libations"-vessels brought the archaeologist team the idea that it could be to a shrine, which was under a layer of ashes. In the western area of the building remains then the unburned bones of at least two children (8 and 11 years) were found. Incision marks were found on the bones, which showed that the children were murdered in a similar manner as the Minoans slaughtered their animals. Fine cuts at arms, legs and the clavicle prove that the meat was removed from the bones.

Both excavation and the detailed studies on the skeletal remains have forced the Greek archaeologist to rethink the religious practices of the Minoans and more seriously grapple with the primitive aspects of Greek mythology. Archaeology knows of the Minoan iconography that bulls and under extreme circumstances people were sacrificed to the gods. It may have been also part of a rite, as the later Dionysian rites

which probably originated in the Cretan cult of Zeus. The mythology tells that the young Zeus was held by the Titans who tempt him from the Curetes with toys. They tore him into pieces and devoured him. Many scientists have suspected for a long time that this Greek myth originates in Crete, and the finds from Anemospilia and Knossos seem to confirm this theory.

## The Epimenides \* paradox

Epimenides, Cretan thaumaturge and theologian in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC, is a entwined by many legends figure. Collections of oracles and prayers; in addition an apprenticeship of Gods shall originate from him. He is alleged to have said, according to PAULUS (in Titus 1: 12): “Cretans are always liar, evil brutes, lazy gluttons”. As Greek atoning priest with a view for practical needs he invented e.g. a useful in siege “conserve”. Also miracle stories were his profession, for example his statement, "he slept 57 years in a cave and now come to heal disaster".

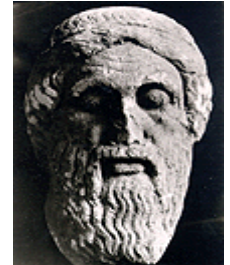


Fig. right: fantasy of HOMER: *Epimenides-Typus* (Glyptothek 273, München; Stempel Negativ - Nr. 422-D 799)

A Cretan (*Epimenides*) said: “Cretans are always liar”. Is this statement right or wrong?

Assume it is correct, can it be than, that under the Cretans despite one tells the truth? May be this example of a contradictory statement is not paradoxical. This statement is not a real self-contradiction (Antinomy): to do this you must define the in natural language concept inaccurate term of liar's more precisely.

If a liar is someone who sometimes lies (common usage): then obviously no contradiction arises, no matter whether you considered the testimony of *Epimenides* false or true.

If a liar is someone who always lies (that is, each of his sayings is wrong): also no self-contradiction arises because the statement is wrong.

- Assume the statement is true; it is in its content wrong, because it comes from a Cretan. Therefore it cannot be true.
- Assume the statement is wrong, than it does not apply that all Cretans are liar. Therefore there is at least one Cretan telling the truth. But this can not be Epimenides because his statement was adopted as false.

Thus “the Epimenides paradox” is actually none, because the implication "all Cretans lie", says the Cretan" read: If all Cretans lie, this Cretan lies as well. So the statement is wrong. But the negation of this statement is NOT: “All Cretans tell the truth” - but rather “not all Cretans lie”. The logical implication is: **There is at least one Cretan telling the truth but it is not Epimenides, he lies.**



Fig. left: source Wikipedia: Epimenides from "Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum"

For more information on “Epimenides paradox” see Wikipedia at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epimenides\\_paradox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epimenides_paradox)

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