



AEGEAN LECTURES

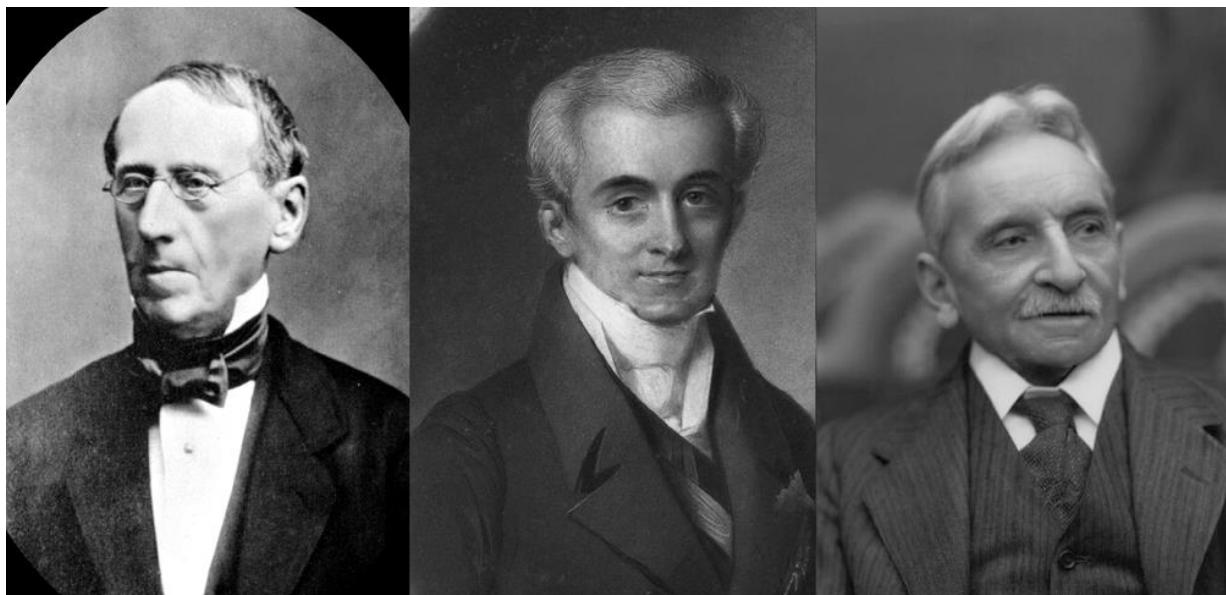
Friday 30 January 2026, 19:00

Swedish Institute at Athens (Mitseon 9, Acropolis Metro station)

Did Ioannis Kapodistrias know of the existence of a “Minoan” civilisation in Crete?

Karl Hoeck, Arthur Evans and the “construction” of the “Minoan” civilisation (in Greek)

Nektarios Karadimas (Aegeus – Society for Aegean Prehistory)



Karl Hoeck, Ioannis Kapodistrias and Arthur Evans

In his recent film entitled *Kapodistrias*, the award-winning director Yiannis Smaragdis presented a meeting between Ioannis Kapodistrias and the Austrian Chancellor, Klemens von Metternich, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. There, Metternich, arguing that no Greek race exists, received the following reply from Kapodistrias: “The race I speak of is descended from three civilisations: the Minoan, the classical Greek and the Byzantine. What other people possess a triple civilisation?” Could this immensely important Greek politician, in 1815 –or even at any point up to the end of his life– has given such an answer?

The purpose of the present lecture is twofold. First, it presents the state of archaeology in the period during which Ioannis Kapodistrias lived and was active. It describes both the archaeological terminology that was in use at the time and the few monuments that were then known, which today are referred to with remarkable ease as prehistoric, “Mycenaean” or “Minoan”. It then goes on to recount how and when the term “Minoan” was constructed. This term, together with the expressions “Minoan period” and “Minoan civilisation”, are inventions of the German philologist Karl Hoeck, who, between 1823 and 1829, published his seminal three-volume work *Crete*.

Seventy years later, the British archaeologist Arthur Evans, in his attempt to interpret the finds that emerged from his surface surveys in Crete in the years 1894-1899 and, above all, from his excavations at Knossos, turned to the works of Karl Hoeck. He fully embraced Hoeck’s ideas. Thanks to Evans’s work, the notion of a “Minoan” civilisation became established, a term that is still widely used today.

Is the anachronistic use of the term “Minoan” by the Greek film director legitimate within the framework of artistic expression and creativity, and especially in the context of a biographical film such as that of Ioannis Kapodistrias? To what extent does it reveal how we, as modern Greeks, perceive our past? In the end, could the idealisation of our past –often through the distortion of archaeological or historical evidence– lead to nothing more than *self-love*?

A few words about the speaker

Nektarios Karadimas studied archaeology at the University of Ioannina; his professor was Lila Marangou. He went on to pursue postgraduate studies in Paris and completed his doctoral dissertation at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom as a State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) scholar. He has taught prehistoric archaeology at the University of Crete. He has taken part in numerous excavations and surface surveys, including on Amorgos, Keros, Gavdos, Dia and at Knossos. In 2009, together with other archaeologists, he founded the non-profit organisation *Aegeus - Society of Aegean Prehistory*, of which he is still the administrator. Since 2011, he has been involved in the systematic excavations at Agios Vasileios in Laconia, under the auspices of the Archaeological Society at Athens. From 2018 to 2022, he successfully completed a postdoctoral research programme at the University of Crete, focusing on excavations conducted in the West and South Stoae at Agios Vasileios. The results of this postdoctoral research are expected to be published in 2026. Individually or in collaboration with others, he has published dozens of articles and books on the history of archaeology and prehistoric archaeology. From 2022 to the present, he has been working at the Ephorate of Antiquities of East Attica, excavating the Neolithic settlement of Nea Makri. In recent years, he has founded the Archaeologist’s Home, through which children in kindergarten and primary school –the future of our world– learn to love archaeology.