

Minoan Gold Pendant



Sheet Gold Pendant, Greece, c1850-1550BCE, c15x15cm, British Museum

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The pendant comprises a central male figure with an ornate headdress or crown, holding the neck of a bird with each hand. The birds are flying outwards and are framed by ridged, snake-like horns. The figure is standing amidst flowers. His stance is unusual in that the feet are pointing to the right of the pendant as if striding off, but the body and head are facing forward.

Three circular pendants hang from the base of the figure and a further one from each side. They are plain but have a stippled pattern stamped around the circumference of each one.

There is a lot of detail in the gold work to show the birds' feathers and wings, the face and kilt of the central figure, and the ridged horns and the flowers.

The British Museum website¹ describes the pendant "A male figure stands among lotus flowers, his arms outstretched to grasp a goose by the neck with each hand. The animals allow us to identify him as a god. This pose, known as that of the 'Master (or Mistress) of the Animals', is intended to show that the deity subdues the wild animals, and therefore has control over nature. It is more common with a female central figure."

The website states that the outer features (snake-like horns) are "stylised bull's horns" and that "Bulls are common in Minoan religious iconography, and this symbol also confirms the divinity of the male figure".

The British Museum considers the pendant as "distinctively Minoan" but notes the Egyptian influence on this piece. It details how "Lotus flowers are common in Egyptian art, and the figure stands on something resembling the stylised papyrus boats known from later Egyptian representations".

¹ http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/g/gold_pendant_-_aigina_treasure.aspx