

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-06101-8 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization
as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 1: The Neolithic and Early and Middle Minoan Ages
Arthur Evans
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The Palace of Minos

Inspired by Schliemann's discoveries at Mycenae and Troy, Sir Arthur John Evans (1851–1941), keeper of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum from 1884 to 1908, trustee of the British Museum and fellow of the Royal Society, used his inherited wealth to purchase land in Crete at Knossos. From 1900 he commenced excavations there in co-operation with the British School at Athens. Work continued for eight full seasons, uncovering a Bronze Age palace and bringing to light further architectural and artefactual remains of Minoan civilisation, including numerous texts in Linear A and Linear B. Evans' speculative reconstruction of the site in reinforced concrete remains controversial, and some of his interpretations are disputed, but his pioneering work is painstakingly detailed in this highly illustrated multi-volume work, published between 1921 and 1935, with an index volume appearing in 1936. Volume 1 (1921) opens with a sketch of Minoan civilisation and then surveys its early history.

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The Palace of Minos

*A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages
of the Early Cretan Civilization
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VOLUME 1:
THE NEOLITHIC AND EARLY AND MIDDLE MINOAN AGES

ARTHUR EVANS



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THE PALACE OF MINOS
AT KNOSSOS



FAÏENCE FIGURE OF SNAKE GODDESS

THE
PALACE OF MINOS

A COMPARATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE SUCCESSIVE
STAGES OF THE EARLY CRETAN CIVILIZATION
AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE DISCOVERIES

AT KNOSSOS

By SIR ARTHUR EVANS

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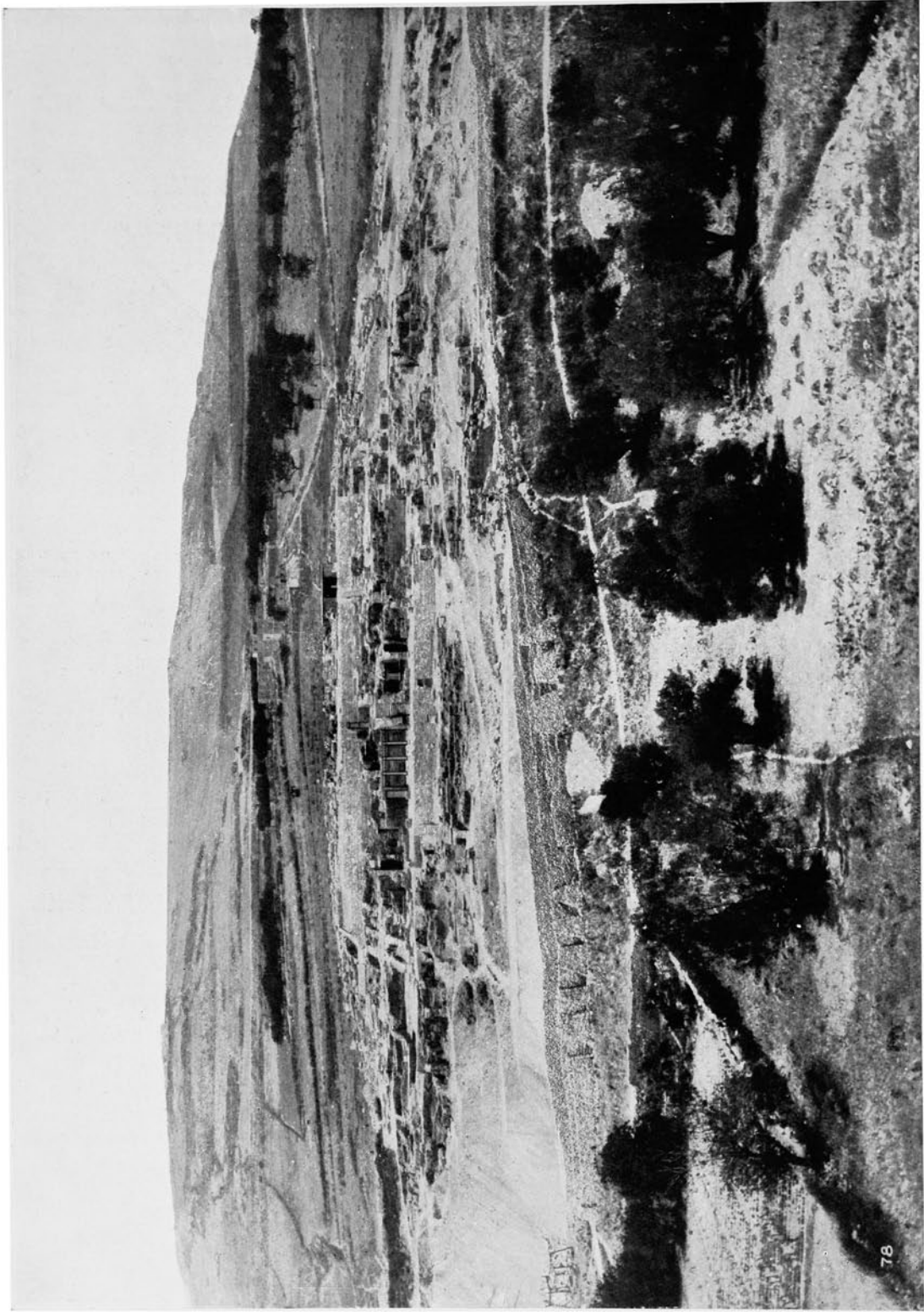
VOLUME I

THE NEOLITHIC AND EARLY AND MIDDLE MINOAN AGES

*WITH 542 FIGURES IN THE TEXT, PLANS, TABLES,
COLOURED AND SUPPLEMENTARY PLATES*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1921



PREFATORY FIGURE.
VIEW OF PALACE SITE ON KEPHALA HILL, KNOSSOS, SHOWING THE EXCAVATIONS ON THE EAST SLOPE. TO LEFT ARE SEEN SLOPES OF DUMPED EARTH, ABOUT CENTRE, SECTION OF 'DOMESTIC QUARTER'. ABOVE, IS PLATEAU OF CENTRAL COURT (DENUED EASTWARDS), AND, TO RIGHT, SHELTER OVER 'ROOM OF THE THRONE'. IN FOREGROUND, IS VALLEY OF KAERATOS STREAM.

PREFACE

THE excavations carried out by me from 1900 onwards on the site of Knossos, which brought to light the prehistoric Palace and its dependencies, were provisionally described in my somewhat full and copiously illustrated Reports in the Annual of the British School at Athens. Of the extent of the great building the view opposite, showing its remains from the East, and the 'Tell' on which it stood, will give the best idea. It embraced fully six acres of ground.

But to the excavators, entering on what was then in fact a wholly unexplored world, the true relationships of the vast mass of new materials there brought to light could only be gradually elucidated. The finds in many cases necessarily came out piecemeal, and the lacunas in them were often only filled in after intervals of years. The ground-plan of the Palace itself and its successive stages could only be laboriously traced out by means of the cumulative results of successive campaigns. Every step forward was in the dark. There was no existing building of the class to serve as a guide, and logically consecutive exploration was impossible. It became evident, moreover, that, marvellously rich in materials as was the Palace Site of Knossos, its full story could only be told with constant reference to the supplementary light supplied by the parallel excavations which the discovery of the 'Palace of Minos' had called forth on other Cretan sites.

It seemed to be highly desirable, therefore, that at least a summary presentment of the results obtained by the excavations at Knossos should be set forth in a systematic fashion, as part of a single story and in close relation to the evidence obtained from these other sources. As a preliminary step, however, to any such undertaking it was necessary to elaborate a system of archaeological classification which should cover the vast field occupied by the prehistoric Cretan civilization. With this object I had already submitted to the Anthropological Section of the British Association, at its Cambridge Meeting in 1904, a preliminary scheme for classifying the successive phases of the prehistoric civilization of Crete, and for which I then ventured to propose the term 'Minoan'. An outline of this scheme, by which this Minoan Civilization was divided into three main Sections—

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Early, Middle, and Late—each with three Sub-Periods, was submitted by me to the Prehellenic Section of the Archaeological Congress at Athens in 1905,¹ of which I was a President.

The proposed classification was favourably received by my colleagues, to several of whom I subsequently had an opportunity of explaining many points in detail on the scene of the excavations at Knossos itself.

Subsequent discoveries made some modifications of the original system desirable, and a sketch of this revised outline of classification was laid by me before the Archaeological Congress at Rome in October, 1912, where the idea of the present work received most welcome encouragement.

In the case of the Palace site of Knossos not only the immense complication of the plan itself, with its upper as well as its lower stories, but the volume and variety of the relics brought to light—unrivalled perhaps in any equal area of the Earth's surface ever excavated—have demanded for the working up of the material a longer time than was required for the actual excavations. To take a case in point, the painted stucco fragments could only be gradually pieced together as the result of long and laborious efforts. Prof. Droop, for instance, who kindly undertook the investigation of the remains of the Shield Fresco devoted a whole season to its reconstitution, and many weeks again were spent in a necessary revision of this. Mr. Theodore Fyfe, my architect in the earlier campaigns at Knossos, has done most brilliant work in illustrating the decorative designs of the wall-paintings,² while Mr. Noel Heaton has brought his expert chemical and technical knowledge to bear on a minute examination and careful analysis of the painted stucco itself.³ The restoration of the painted stucco reliefs has also been a very lengthy task. In all this work the fine artistic sense and archaeological intuition of Monsieur E. Gilliéron has been constantly at my disposal. The elaborate

¹ Unfortunately, indeed, owing to the incompetent hands to which the editing of the *Comptes rendus* of the Congress was entrusted, the abstract supplied by me of the above communication appeared not only in a mutilated but in a wholly misleading form. The order of Periods was inverted, and I was made, for instance, to ascribe the chief masterpieces of Minoan Art to the last epoch of its decadence! I published therefore a corrected version of the proposed scheme, which appeared in 1906 under the title of *Essai de classification des époques de la civilisation minoenne*.

² See his monograph on the 'Painted plaster decoration at Knossos', *Journ. of the Royal Inst. of British Architects*, vol. x, no. 4 (1902).

³ See Noel Heaton, B.Sc., F.C.S., 'The Mural Paintings of Knossos', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Jan. 7, 1910. 'Minoan Lime Plaster and Fresco Painting', *R.I.B.A. Journ.*, Sept. 1911, and compare his contribution to G. Rodenwaldt, *Tiryns*, vol. ii, p. 211 seqq.

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architectural plans of Mr. Theodore Fyfe and Mr. Christian Doll have been the result of years of expert labour. On Mr. Doll mainly devolved the Atlantean task of raising and re-supporting the sunken elements of the upper stories, and his practical experience of the anatomy of the building has been of service at every turn. Many drawings for this work have been gradually executed by competent artists like Monsieur E. Gilliéron and his son, Mr. Halvor Bagge, and Mr. E. J. Lambert.¹

It will be seen that this process of reconstitution and restoration, carried out after the publication of the provisional Annual Reports, has given many of the most important finds a wholly new value, and a summary illustration of these fresh results will be found in the present work. Among the hitherto unpublished specimens of Knossian antiquities here represented,—in addition to frescoes and coloured reliefs,—are a whole series of ceramic and other relics, and plans, sections, and details bearing on the successive Minoan phases.

For an account of the actual course of the principal campaigns of excavation in the Palace area itself,—which, as already explained, had to follow more or less experimental lines,—and also for many minor details, readers may be referred to the above Reports published in the Annual of the British School at Athens from 1900 to 1905 inclusive. The results of the supplementary researches made on this site in the succeeding years, and notably in 1913, have, however, only to a partial extent seen the light, and that in a very abbreviated form. A fuller description of the ‘Little Palace’ to the West, with a revised Plan, will be found in Vol. II of the present work, and, in addition to the adjacent houses such as the ‘Royal Villa’, the very important ‘South House’ will be for the first time described. A summary account of the neighbouring cemeteries will be also given in a later Section and especially of the Royal Tomb of Isopata and of the important tomb of the ‘Double Axes’ more detailed descriptions of which have been already published by me in *Archaeologia*.² The object of the present work, as already stated, is, while correcting as far as possible erroneous impressions contained in the original Reports, not only to complete the actual materials, but to co-ordinate and systematize them in such a way as to present the discoveries at Knossos as

¹ Coloured Plates in a fuller form will be issued in a separate Atlas.

² See *Archaeologia*, lix (1906), ‘The Prehistoric Tombs of Knossos’: I. The Cemetery of Zafer Papoura; II. The Royal Tomb of Isopata: lxv (1914), I. The Tomb of the Double Axes and associated group at Knossos.

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part of a continuous story and as illustrating the course of the Periods into which I have ventured to divide the Minoan Age.

But for the proper setting forth of that story, comparative illustrations from other sources have been constantly necessary. Gaps in the Knossian evidence have thus been filled in, with the kind permission of my friends and colleagues who have excavated other Cretan sites. In the case of the Palace itself I have had constantly in view the parallel edifices explored by the Italian Archaeologists at Phaestos and Hagia Triada, the discoveries in which have been placed so freely at my disposal by their excavators, Professor Federico Halbherr and Dr. Luigi Pernier. The town sites and their contents brought to light by Mrs. Boyd Hawes at Gournià and by Prof. R. C. Bosanquet and Prof. R. M. Dawkins and their colleagues at Palaikastro, on behalf of the British School at Athens, as well as that of Zakro excavated by Dr. D. G. Hogarth—with its remarkable hoard of Minoan sealings—and the interesting researches of Prof. J. L. Myres in the votive sanctuary of Petsofà, have also supplied many valuable comparisons. Miss Edith Hall (Mrs. Dohan) has done much to elucidate the sepulchral remains and cultural evolution of pre-historic Crete. To the Committee of the British School at Athens and to the Council of the Hellenic Society I am much beholden for their liberal permission to reproduce illustrations of these discoveries from the *Annual* and *Journal*. In the course of this work I have been constantly indebted to the kindness of the Director of the Candia Museum, Dr. Joseph Hatzidakis, who by his own excavations at Tylissos, Malia, and elsewhere has himself made such important contributions to our knowledge of Minoan times. In all this I have also to associate his colleague Dr. Stephanos Xanthudides, the Ephor General of Cretan Antiquities and fortunate Explorer of the early ossuary ‘tholoi’ of Messarà, and of the Sepulchral Cave and later Sanctuary at Nirou Khani, N.E. of Knossos.

This fresh material from other sources has been specially helpful as regards the Early Minoan Age. The evidence regarding this, though continuous at Knossos, was more fragmentary in its nature than that relating to the Age of Palaces. Supplementary data of considerable interest have here been forthcoming from the Sepulchral Cave referred to, from the primitive ‘tholos’ ossuaries excavated by Professor Halbherr and Dr. Xanthudides, and from the early settlement at Vasiliki explored by the American archaeologist, Mr. Richard Seager. The full brilliancy attained by this Early Minoan phase of Cretan civilization was first revealed, however,

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by Mr. Seager's epoch-making discoveries in a cemetery of that Age in the little island of Mochlos.¹ Part of these excavations I was myself privileged to witness, and, thanks to Mr. Seager's great kindness, I have been enabled to make a large use of his materials in illustrating the Early Minoan Sections of this work.

It must, however, be clearly understood that the site of Knossos is the central theme of the present work. Not only am I able to speak at first hand about this, but the series of objects from that site is, on the whole, more complete than can be found elsewhere. Moreover, the stratigraphic evidence on which my whole system is grounded is here better ascertained and more continuous, going back in fact without a break to remote Neolithic times.

In attempting to set forth the characteristic products of the successive Minoan Periods it will be seen that I have not relied on a single category only, such as ceramic types—indispensable as they are in this connexion. I have here done my best to correlate these with other parallel branches of art so as to present a collective view of contemporary phenomena. Much, indeed, is lost by looking at one class of objects without taking constant count of the side lights thrown by other works of the same epoch. The clay and metal forms of vessels, for instance, are inseparably connected ; ceramic designs at Knossos are seen to be largely the reflection of the decoration of the Palace walls ; and the history of the Greater Arts is well illustrated in a compendious form by the types on seals and gems. These latter objects indeed, so abundantly forthcoming from the soil of prehistoric Crete, have proved of special utility in the present work of classification, and in some respects fulfil the same function as coins at a later date. Closely allied, moreover, with the sphragistic category, especially in the Early and Middle Minoan Age, is what many will regard as the most important of Cretan discoveries, the evidence of the successive stages in the evolution of the Art of Writing, beginning with a rude pictography and advancing through a conventionalized hieroglyphic signary to a fully developed linear script, which itself shows an earlier and a later phase.

In the present work it is naturally impossible to give more than a conspectus of the successive forms of script. The earlier part of the subject

¹ The excavations took place in 1908. The final publication was made in 1912 (*Explorations in the Island of Mochlos*, by Richard B. Seager. Published by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Boston and New York, 1912).

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has been already dealt with in the first volume of my *Scripta Minoa*,¹ and the materials for the full publication of the clay documents of the two linear scripts A and B are already in an advanced stage of preparation. The special employment of Class A for religious purposes in the closing phase of the Middle Minoan Age is illustrated below, and some of the most important documents in the developed linear script B, from the Archives of the Later Palace, together with a summary account of its inner economy as illustrated by them, will be given in the concluding part of this work.

I have also felt that the view here presented of the Minoan Age, though based throughout all its earlier outlines on the Cretan discoveries, could not be adequately drawn out without some attempt to set forth its relation to the Mycenaean culture of Mainland Greece, of which, in fact, it supplies in an overwhelming degree the antecedent stages. Among the earlier contents, at least, of the Shaft Graves the finest objects are seen to be actually of Cretan importation and, in the absence of intact royal tombs, at Knossos, those of Mycenae are practically the sole repertory for the Minoan goldsmiths' work of that epoch. The results will surprise many. Few probably have yet realized how absolute is the dependence which these comparisons substantiate. In this work of comparison I am specially grateful for the helpful information supplied me by Dr. G. Karo, Director of the German Institute at Athens, who has made the subject of the Mycenaean relics a special subject of research, and whose friendly offices even the outbreak of the Great War did not interrupt. I am further indebted to his colleagues, Dr. Kurt Müller and Dr. Gerhart Rodenwaldt, and to the kind facilities accorded by Dr. V. Stais, Director of the Athens Museum. To Mr. A. J. B. Wace, the Director of the British School, I am also greatly obliged for much help at Athens as well as for the early communication of the results derived from his supplementary investigations at Mycenae.

The opportunity here offered has also been seized to bring into relief many new points of view, and to throw out suggestions regarding the genesis and evolution of various types. The Egyptian relations of pre-historic Crete have been particularly emphasized, and much fresh evidence has been brought forward as to the relations of Minoan civilization with that of the Nile Valley, with other parts of the Aegean world, and even with the further shores of the Ionian Sea and the Western Mediterranean basin.²

¹ Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1909.

² For more general views of the results of excavation in Crete and of the comparative place that they occupy, I need hardly refer to the luminous survey of the late Professor

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On Egyptological matters I have received valuable assistance from my Oxford colleague, Mr. F. Ll. Griffith, while Professor Flinders Petrie, the late Dr. L. W. King and Dr. H. R. Hall of the British Museum, and Mr. C. C. Edgar, of the Cairo Museum, have supplied me with much required information.

In cases where the same conclusions may have been put forward by other investigators before the appearance of these pages, I can at least claim that my own views as here expressed have been independently arrived at through a continuous experience of the results of the excavations both at Knossos and on other Cretan sites. The writer has, therefore, some right to be allowed to set down his own conclusions, gradually formed, in the course of years, from a first-hand knowledge of the materials, without seeking to inquire at every turn whether similar opinions may have been already expressed in print in other quarters. Where I have been consciously indebted to the researches or ideas of others, I have, indeed, always endeavoured to express my acknowledgements. I was fortunate in securing the services of Dr. Duncan Mackenzie as my Assistant in the excavations, and my thanks are exceptionally due to him for the continued help that he has rendered to me at every turn in the course of the present work, and for his careful revision of the proofs. His special archaeological knowledge, particularly in the ceramic field,¹ is so widely recognized that it is with great satisfaction that I am able to record that in all main points in my scheme of classification he is in complete agreement with me.

In 1913, in order to decide various important problems regarding the building which remained to be elucidated, I undertook a supplementary campaign of excavation on the Palace site, in the course of which I executed about a hundred fresh soundings beneath the floors.

Difficulties and preoccupations, however, caused by the Great War delayed the publication of this work, the materials for which were already in an advanced state in 1914. Since then, moreover, a vast amount of new R. M. Burrows in *The Discoveries in Crete and their bearing on the History of ancient Civilisation*, London (John Murray), 1907 ; to Professor René Dussaud's *Civilisations préhelléniques dans le bassin de la mer Égée*, Paris (Geuthner), 1914 ; or to the learned series of contributions by Dr. H. R. Hall, of which the last are contained in his *History of the Near East* (Methuen and Co.), London, 1919.

¹ Two monographs on Minoan pottery have been published by Dr. Mackenzie in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vols. xxiii, pp. 152-205 ; xxvi, pp. 243-67. See too his comparative studies on the relations of Crete and Melos in *Excavations at Phylakopi*, pp. 238-72, and on *Cretan Palaces and the Aegean Civilization*, in *B. S. A.*, XI-XIV.

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evidence has accumulated, partly due to the gradual completion of fuller architectural plans of the Palace itself and its contiguous buildings, and to the laborious reconstitution, already referred to, of the frescoes and other remains, partly to the results of fresh excavations, such as those which Mr. Seager and the Cretan Ephors as well as others in Mainland Greece were able to pursue, and all this has had to be assimilated with the data already collected. This further supplementary process, since it was indispensable in order to bring the work up to date, has necessitated the repeated breaking up and remodelling of the large part of this book that was already in print, and the insertion of a whole series of new figures and plates. In order, moreover, to obtain a fuller knowledge of the fresh materials and for the further investigation of certain doubtful points, I commissioned Dr. Mackenzie to visit Crete in the Autumn of 1920, and the valuable information that he was able to obtain for me on the spot is also incorporated in this work.

The present Volume, prefaced by a general sketch of the Course of Minoan Civilization, is devoted to a brief survey of the Neolithic stage and of the Early Minoan phases, followed by an account of the Palace in the Middle Minoan Age. It is hoped that the Second Volume may cover the history of the Later Palace and with it the First and Second Periods of the Late Minoan Age. A Third and supplementary Volume on a smaller scale will include a short history of the site in the concluding Late Minoan part of the Age, together with a tabular view of the Nine Minoan Periods, a general index, and Plans and Sections of the Palace in separate folding sheets and in a more elaborate form than has been yet attempted.

ARTHUR EVANS.

YOULBURY, BERKS., NEAR OXFORD,
June 1, 1921.

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