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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. Part 1 of Volume 2 first appeared in 1928.s

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# The Palace of Minos

*A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages  
of the Early Cretan Civilization  
as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*

VOLUME 2  
PART 1: FRESH LIGHTS ON ORIGINS  
AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

ARTHUR EVANS



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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108061025](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108061025)

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This edition first published 1928  
This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-06102-5 Paperback

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THE PALACE OF MINOS  
AT KNOSSOS



FRONTISPIECE



‘THE PARTRIDGE FRESKO’ (SECTIONS 1 AND 2)  
From Pavilion of ‘Caravanserai’  
(Restored drawing by E. Gilliéron, fil.)

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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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AND AMERICAN ARCH. INSTS. AND THE ARCH. SOC. OF ATHENS : CORRESPONDANT DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE  
HONORARY KEEPER AND VISITOR OF THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

VOLUME II : PART I  
FRESH LIGHTS ON ORIGINS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS :  
THE RESTORATION IN TOWN AND PALACE AFTER SEISMIC  
CATASTROPHE TOWARDS CLOSE OF M. M. III, AND THE  
BEGINNINGS OF THE NEW ERA

*WITH FIGURES 1-223 IN THE TEXT, PLANS, AND  
COLOURED AND SUPPLEMENTARY PLATES*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON  
1928

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PREFACE

SINCE 1921, when the First Volume of this work was published, the active researches set on foot by me to clear up moot points and to enlarge the horizon in many directions have been carried on almost continuously. The excavation of Knossos itself may almost be said to have renewed its youth. The results, indeed, have been a perpetual source of wonderment, while, at the same time, it may fairly be claimed for them that they have supplemented and confirmed in a remarkable manner the general conclusions set forth in the previous Volume.

They have filled up gaps and made the story more continuous. They have helped, moreover, to set it on a new foundation. As regards the actual birth of the more advanced type of culture that may properly be called ‘Minoan’, the discovery of houses beneath the Central Court belonging to the very latest Neolithic stage has supplied fresh links with the pre-dynastic—or proto-Libyan—civilization of the Nile Valley and confirmed the view that it was thence that came the first formative influence that reached the ‘Mid-Sea land’ and enabled Cretan civilization gradually to detach itself from an inert Aegean mass.

The fresh materials obtained by Dr. Xanthudides from the primitive beehive tombs of Mesarà in the extreme Southern district of the Island have given substance to this view. As a sequel to these, moreover, explorations undertaken by myself across the whole central zone of Crete, and here for the first time recorded, have made it possible to trace at intervals the course of a very ancient Minoan paved way, which ultimately brought Knossos into connexion with what seems to have been an important port at Komò on the Libyan Sea.

The corollary to all this has been the emergence of new and striking evidence of the importance formerly attaching to the Southern approach to the Palace site itself, of which the earlier excavations had given no inkling. In Sections of the first part of this Volume are described the piers of the mighty Viaduct by which the ‘Great South Road’ approached the bridge-head on this side and the monumental ‘Stepped Portico’ that led up from it to the South-West Palace Angle. Here, moreover, as in the case of another

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hitherto unrecognized entrance to the North-West, the proofs were afforded of the former existence of portals adorned with sculptured bands resembling those of the 'Treasury of Atreus' at Mycenae.

Of even greater human interest than this once stately Portico is the extensive building brought to light on the opposite slope, overlooking this approach. It is impossible to describe it otherwise than as a 'Caravanserai' or Rest-House for travellers. It revealed, indeed, varied arrangements for their convenience, including elaborate bathing accommodation, a spring-chamber—later a scene of cult—and an elegant little refectory, adorned with an appetizing frieze of partridges.

The Southern route served in later days as an avenue of intercourse with dynastic Egypt, in connexion with which many new data are supplied by the present Volume. A deposit of imported Minoan polychrome pottery at Harageh in the Fayum—more closely dated than any similar discovery of the kind—will be seen to stand in a near stylistic and chronological relation to a splendid hoard of M. M. II vases now brought to light near the South-East Palace Angle. The evolution of a whole series of Minoan libation vases from an Egyptian ostrich-egg type is also of peculiar significance, as well as the formation of a decorative style that can only be called 'Egypto-Minoan'. This style contains a very early Cretan element—here for the first time clearly defined—and will be seen to have a special bearing on the history of many later types, including the Mycenae jewels.

There can be no doubt that, to the last, these Egyptian influences remained preponderant at Knossos, but from the very beginning of the Age of Palaces—as is shown by many evidences here collected—direct relations, such as had not hitherto existed, were opened out with the Easternmost Mediterranean shores, and certain characteristic Minoan objects, such as the 'rhytons' in the form of bulls, ultimately go back, as is here shown, to remote Sumerian prototypes. In the opening out of these Oriental connexions, as well as for intercourse with the East Cretan havens, the Harbour Town of Knossos—some account of which is here given—played an important part, and relics derived from its lapidaries' and artisans' quarters show that here, too, was an important artistic centre. The port of Niru Khani, a little farther East again, illustrates the manufacture, apparently for propaganda purposes overseas, of such ritual objects as tripod altars and huge Double Axes

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of the Cretan cult. At Mallia, East again of this, the results of the French exploration of an early Palace—here summarized—illustrate the Anatolian sources of the actual Palace plans

In tracing out these broad relationships it has also been thought well to add some new and striking evidences of the connexions of the Minoan world with the Maltese Islands as well as with the Illyrian Province on the East Adriatic shores, the arts of which have a wider interest as having later reacted on the Celtic tribes. On the other hand, there is here noted the curious appearance in a Mycenae Shaft Grave of a halberd type that can be traced, via the Po Valley and the high passes of the Ligurian Alps, to a form characteristic of the advanced Irish Bronze Age Culture.

The main theme of the present Volume as regards the Palace and its surroundings is the epoch of Restoration which opens what has been here called the ‘New Era’, and at the same time heralds the evolution of the early phase of the ‘Late Minoan’ Style. And here, at the outset of my researches, some illuminating phenomena, afforded by the exploration of the collapsed South-Eastern Angle of the Palace, for the first time definitely established the fact that the great overthrow that had preceded and rendered necessary the work of restoration was the result of a great Earthquake that took place towards the close of the Third Middle Minoan Period,<sup>1</sup> early, it would seem, in the second quarter of the sixteenth century B. C.

A contemporary seismic deposit was traceable beneath the restored town-houses as well as throughout a large part of the Palace. It might well be asked, indeed, if other similar stratified evidences of destruction here

<sup>1</sup> My former conclusion that the great catastrophe visible on the site marked the actual close of the Third Middle Minoan phase proves to have been inaccurate. The numerous tests now carried out show that the great Restoration in Palace and Town alike took place at a time when the M. M. III *b* culture as ceramically defined was still in existence. The L. M. I *a* phase had not as yet been evolved. At the same time, since objects from the ‘seismic’ stratum already show the operation of early Eighteenth Dynasty influences, the date of the Earthquake itself can be hardly placed earlier than about 1570 B. C. The ‘Restoration’ which almost immediately succeeded on this may be set down therefore at about 1565 B. C., and it is highly improbable that the new ceramic style—L. M. I *a*—could have taken its characteristic form before 1550. This brings down the beginning of the Late Minoan Age to a somewhat later date than had been hitherto supposed. It agrees, however, with the fact—of which the evidence is given below—that the L. M. I *b* ceramic phase almost exactly coincides with the reign of Thothmes III, and may therefore be approximately dated 1500–1450 B. C. But, in any case, historically speaking, the ‘New Era’ may be said to begin with the Restoration.

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traceable might not have been also due to the hand of Nature. The records of modern and Venetian Candia as well as of its classical predecessor show, in fact, that this particular Cretan district has been more liable to earthquakes than perhaps any European area—the greater shocks averaging two in a century. To archaeological science it will be certainly a new suggestion that the successive destructions at Knossos, of which we have the stratified evidence, and which can indeed be approximately dated, correspond with successive seismic overthrows.<sup>1</sup>

In June 1926, as related below,<sup>2</sup> I shared the dramatic and awe-inspiring experience of a fairly severe earthquake shock—overdue, according to the local reckoning—in the head-quarters house on the actual site of Knossos, and the vivid experiences there gained have greatly assisted my own realization of the tremendous destructive force that had been operative on the site at perpetually recurring intervals. These experiences at the same time brought with them a new understanding of the ‘infernal’ side of the local cult.

The architectural work of the ‘Restoration’ is in many ways best illustrated by some of the good town-houses of Knossos, of which a series is here described—several of them wholly or largely for the first time. The evidences of culture and well-being among the burgher class in the first half of the sixteenth century B.C. are truly astonishing, and nowhere more than in the comparatively small ‘House of the Frescoes’ with its stacked remains of brilliant friezes of natural scenes and its painted as well as engraved inscriptions. The floral designs of these frescoes are in many cases repeated on the vases found on the house floors, and are of great interest in their bearing on the genesis of Late Minoan ceramic decoration. Many other objects of art found in these private dwellings—such as the ivory Griffin and the inlaid bull’s head ‘rhyton’, with its crystal eyes—were of surpassing beauty, and a whole series of hoards also came to light of bronze tools and of elegant vases, including a silver service. The variety and convenience of the house-planning is also remarkable. The size and disposition of the houses of the inner town have themselves been so far sampled that I have ventured—with a proportional estimate for the poorer outer quarters—to come to some conclusions as to the actual population of ‘broad Knossos’ in its

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 320, note 3. <sup>2</sup> See p. 315 seqq.

great Minoan days, which, if we add the Harbour Town, can hardly be safely reckoned as having included less than 100,000 inhabitants. To the cemeteries has now been added that of Mavro Spelio, facing the Palace on the steep beyond the stream, of the greatest interest as carrying back the rock-cut type of chamber tomb common later in Mainland Greece to, at least, the eighteenth century before our Era, and as supplying a link with Egyptian rock-tombs dating from the early part of the Middle Kingdom.

The Palace itself in its restored form has been described in the present Volume, so far as the plan is recoverable, throughout its Western quarter. Indications are here given of the existence of an important stepped entrance, with its sculptured portal, at the North-West Palace Angle. At the same time evidence due to supplementary explorations has thrown a wholly new light on the history of the Western entrance system, where the passage ran originally due East. The imposing West Porch as it existed in the later Palace and the adjoining 'Corridor of the Procession' (which is shown to have had an earlier scheme of decoration) are very fully illustrated, while fresh researches have given a surprisingly complete shape to the South Propylaeum by which this State passage reached the *piano nobile* of this quarter of the building and its principal 'Tri-columnar Hall'. In the reconstituted bay of the Propylaeum a replica of the Cup-bearer Fresco there found has been replaced in position, and the original grandeur of this stately hall, the prototype of those of Tiryns, can be gathered from Mr. Fyfe's restored drawing.<sup>1</sup> The processional scheme of frescoes, to which the Cup-bearer belonged, and which runs through all this quarter of the building, has been carefully compared in the second part of this Volume with the wall-paintings representing Minoan 'tributaries' from Keftiu and 'the Isles of the Sea' in the tombs of a series of Egyptian Viziers at the Egyptian Thebes.

Partly served by a continuation of the 'Procession' Corridor, partly in direct connexion with the South Porch, was another stately entrance passage of which a full account is here for the first time given. This 'South-North Corridor' is shown from the remains with which it is associated to have had a specially ceremonial character. It was flanked near its Southern end by what seems to have been a small shrine, to which the 'Palanquin Fresco

<sup>1</sup> P. 711, Fig. 445.

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with its sacerdotal figures belongs, together with many clay seal-impressions and a remarkable matrix presenting a religious scene. In the section approaching the Central Court the sacral aspects of this Corridor culminated in the discovery of the remains of a painted stucco relief of a male personage wearing a lily crown with peacocks' plumes (reproduced in the frontispiece of Part II) in whom we may legitimately recognize an actual Priest-King of the Palace Sanctuary.

A careful study of the remains connected with the extension East of the façade line of the Palace on the Central Court, which was the special characteristic of the restored fabric, has proved the existence of a series of open porticoes and verandahs occupying the space between the earlier and later frontage. On the basis of this the remarkable restoration of the late Mr. F. G. Newton, opposite p. 814 in Part II of this Volume, gives for the first time a trustworthy view of the façade of the West Palace Section as it once existed, rising three stories, terrace above terrace, on this side of the Central Court.

In the middle of this façade stood a small columnar shrine of the class well known from frescoes and embossed gold plates, and of which the actual ground-plan, with the column-bases on the wings and indications of the central *cella*, had been recognized by me some years since. A revised restoration of this is here given.

Supplementary researches have thrown fresh light on the Stepped Porch immediately North of this, which proves to have had a second column on a higher level, while East of the landing here by which access was obtained to the first floor of this quarter, a remarkable development took place. Blocks *in situ* or only a little sunken were found above the lower wall-tops showing the cuttings for the steps (parts of which also came to light) of a fine central staircase leading up to the higher floors. This was flanked by a passage way on its South side leading to what proves to have been a broad open corridor above the 'Long Corridor' of the basement Magazines. This passage also gave access to what was clearly the principal Sanctuary hall 'of the three columns' into which opened a small treasury chamber containing a rich deposit of votive vessels mostly of marble-like material, more of which have now been put together. Among these were rhytons 'in the shape of lions' and lionesses' heads answering to the cult of



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the lion-guarded Minoan Rhea, as seen on seal-impressions found by the neighbouring shrine. Of all the objects of ritual character found at Knossos these may be thought to have the highest interest, since part of a lion's head 'rhyton' of the same material and fabric as those from the Central Palace sanctuary was found at Delphi beneath the very *adyton* of the temple of Apollo, showing that the site had once been the scene of the Minoan form of worship in which the Goddess was supreme.

General plans on a large scale of both the Eastern and Western Sections of the Palace are inserted at the end of Part II of this Volume, together with a restored Plan of the Western Quarter. Among subjects reserved for the concluding Volume of this work may be mentioned the 'Miniature Frescoes' from the deposit North of the Central Court, the bull-grappling reliefs of the Northern Entrance, and the 'Cow-boy Frescoes' of the Eastern terrace border. Important supplementary materials belonging to the great Age will be also illustrated from the Domestic Quarter, including the Ivory Deposit and some remarkable relics that stand in close relation to it. The fragmentary high reliefs of wrestling and bull-grappling, perhaps the noblest products of Minoan Art and derived from what seems to have been the principal hall of the East Quarter, also remain to be recorded. Finally, the remains of the last Palace period—L. M. II—will receive some special treatment including the Room of the Throne and its fresco decoration, the noble 'Palace Style' jars, the numerous seal-impressions, and some general account of the information supplied by the inventories and other documents preserved on the clay tablets of the Linear Class B.

I can only here repeat the acknowledgements contained in the Preface to my first Volume to fellow workers in the same field, and in a principal degree to Dr. Duncan Mackenzie, my assistant in the excavations, and now fulfilling his new post as Archaeological Curator at Knossos. To some quarters indeed I can no longer turn for friendly help, nor can I convey the acknowledgement of my indebtedness. Richard Seager, from whose felicitous explorations so much seemed still to be gained for the story of Minoan Crete, has been called away before his time. The architect, F. G. Newton, of whose singular ability in reproducing the living images of ancient buildings from their *disjecta membra* this Volume contains splendid proof, has also been taken from us.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I have to record that Mr. Theodore Fyfe, at present Director of the Cambridge University School of Architecture, to whom the earliest plans of the Palace were due, was able at my request to pass some weeks at Knossos in 1926, where he superintended the final reconstitution of the exquisite little Royal Villa—the earlier planning of which was also due to him—thus assuring its permanent conservation. He has also been able to bring the general plans of the Palace, including that of the restored *piano nobile* of the West Section, up to date in the form in which they are presented at the end of Part II of this Volume. He has thus incorporated the results of Mr. Christian Doll's thoroughgoing work in the East quarter, as well as the late Mr. F. G. Newton's restorations of the Upper Palace halls on the West. At the same time he has been able to execute for the present work the fine restored view of the South Propylaeum, and to reproduce a series of delicate details of sculptured friezes.

The plans of the 'South House'—with many interesting details, even to the form of Minoan locks—here for the first time published—as well as those of the 'Little Palace', are the work of Mr. Christian Doll. For several plans and sections both inside and outside of the Palace, and some excellent drawings, I have also been indebted to Mr. Piet de Jong, whose services were on several occasions placed at my disposal by the Director of the British School at Athens. Thanks to the Trustees of the British Museum, Mr. E. J. Forsdyke of the Department of Classical Antiquities was able at my request to assist in the excavation of the early cemetery beyond the Kairatos, and this was continued by him independently with interesting results in 1927.

To Monsieur E. Gilliéron, fils, I have been continually indebted for his invaluable assistance in piecing together painted plaster panels and his skilled restoration of the fresco designs, some of which have supplied the Coloured Plates of this Volume. With his help I have also been able to place replicas of some of the most interesting of these in the positions occupied by the originals on the Palace walls.

My researches into the early relations of Knossos with the pre-dynastic civilization of the Nile Valley, set forth in the earlier Sections of this Volume, have been much assisted by the fertile exploration of the *Vaulted Tombs of Mesarà* by Dr. Stephanos Xanthudides, the Cretan Ephor of

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Antiquities, who has always placed his own information and the resources of the Candia Museum at my disposal in the most obliging way.

To my French colleagues, Monsieur J. Charbonneau and, after him, Monsieur F. Chapouthier, I am in a special way indebted for the friendly permission to study on the spot their epoch-making discoveries in the early Palace of Mallia about which I have been therefore able to give some first-hand appreciations, illustrated by means of photographs liberally supplied by the excavators themselves. The comparative value of these for the Knossian Palace in its earliest shape is very great.

In the early Nilotic and Egyptian field I have received most valuable help from Professor P. E. Newberry, who has placed valuable materials at my disposal, and I have also had the benefit of the admirable drawings illustrative of the Minoan tributaries depicted in the Theban tombs by Mr. and Mrs. de Garis Davies. As in the past, moreover, I have received scholarly and painstaking help from Professor F. Ll. Griffith of Oxford, from Dr. H. R. Hall, Keeper of Oriental Antiquities in the British Museum, and from Dr. Alan Gardiner, the Editor of the *Journal of Egyptology*.

I have endeavoured throughout this work to express, however imperfectly, my acknowledgement to the current publications of fellow workers. But it is always possible—especially for those engaged largely in field work—to miss printed materials, scattered as they now are beyond all compassable range. That others may have corroborated conclusions independently reached in the course of these inquiries is itself all to the good. Some important contributions to Minoan archaeology, indeed, that have appeared since this Volume was in the press I have, perforce, been unable to refer to. Amongst these may be mentioned Professor Martin Nilsson's important work on Minoan Religion,<sup>1</sup> which traverses so much common ground in all that affects that subject. For his generous references to my own work I can only here offer my warm acknowledgements. My best commentary is supplied by the new materials concerning the attributes and cult of the great Minoan Goddess contained in this Volume, and in particular the evidences of her chthonic aspect.

Nor can I make more than a very inadequate reference here to the

<sup>1</sup> *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*. Lund, C. W. K. Gleerup: Oxford University Press, &c., 1927.

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Memorial Volume of Essays on Minoan subjects <sup>1</sup> that has just reached me—the work itself of a select group of scholars and presented to me, in honour of my seventy-fifth birthday, under the auspices of the Oxford Philological Society, on behalf of a much larger number of well-wishers, not only in my own University, but of many countries, including most of those whose names I most highly respect for their achievements in archaeological and allied subjects. It is a touching tribute and a great encouragement.

ARTHUR EVANS.

YOULBURY, BERKS.,  
NEAR OXFORD,

*October 15, 1927.*

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Aegean Archaeology*, presented to Sir Arthur Evans in honour of his seventy fifth birthday : edited by S. Casson. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927.

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„	XIX. Part of Ivory Griffin seizing on Bull, South House, Knossos (Photographic Views).	



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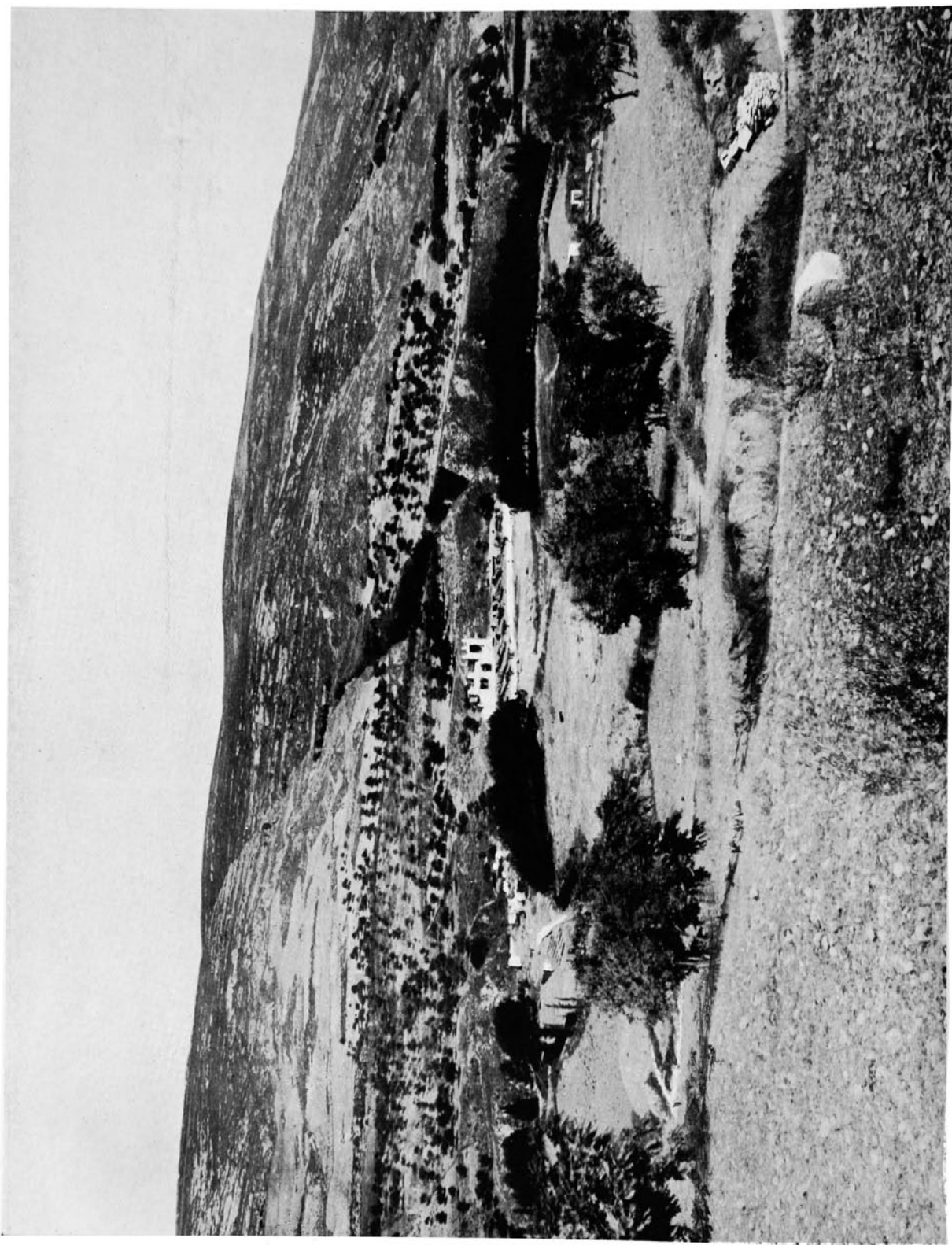


FIG. 1. VIEW SHOWING PALACE SITE AS SEEN FROM THE NORTH-WEST.