

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-06104-9 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 3: The Great Transitional Age in the Northern and Eastern Sections of the Palace
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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 3 first appeared in 1930.

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

VOLUME 3:
THE GREAT TRANSITIONAL AGE IN THE NORTHERN
AND EASTERN SECTIONS OF THE PALACE

ARTHUR EVANS



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THE PALACE OF MINOS
AT KNOSSOS

FRONTISPIECE (PLATE XXVI)



RESTORED VIEW OF 'QUEEN'S MEGARON' WITH DOORWAY LEADING TO EAST SECTION AND LIGHT-WELL BEYOND.
TO RIGHT, WINDOW OPENING ON SOUTHERN LIGHT-AREA: TO LEFT, PRIVATE STAIRCASE TO UPPER 'THALAMOS'

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

D.LITT., ETC., F.R.S., F.B.A., ROYAL GOLD MEDALLIST, R.I.B.A.

FOREIGN MEMBER OF THE R.ACAD. OF THE LINCEI, OF THE BAVARIAN, R.DANISH, SWEDISH, AND SERBIAN ACADS.
OF THE GÖTTINGEN SOC. OF SCIENCES, OF THE R.ACAD. OF SCIENCES, AMSTERDAM, OF THE GERMAN, AUSTRIAN
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: HON. FELLOW
OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE

VOLUME III

THE GREAT TRANSITIONAL AGE IN THE NORTHERN
AND EASTERN SECTIONS OF THE PALACE: THE MOST
BRILLIANT RECORDS OF MINOAN ART AND THE
EVIDENCES OF AN ADVANCED RELIGION

*WITH 367 FIGURES IN THE TEXT, PLANS,
13 COLOURED AND 11 SUPPLEMENTARY PLATES.
(SECTION OF THE 'GRAND STAIRCASE' AND
PLANS AND PERSPECTIVE DRAWING OF THE
'DOMESTIC QUARTER' IN POCKET AT THE END
OF THE VOLUME)*

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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P R E F A C E

IN the Second Volume of this work, issued in two parts, a good deal of space was reserved for a survey of the neighbouring town houses and dependencies of the Palace. It was also thought desirable to take a more general survey of Knossos in its geographical relations, its position with regard to Aegean traffic, and the record of some remarkable evidences of a line of ancient road connexion across the Island to a port on the Libyan Sea. The Third Volume, now completed, is, like the First, more exclusively connected with the Palace itself. The account of the building follows on that included in the latter half of Vol. II, Part II, relating to the great Restoration of the West Wing of the building after the destructive earthquake that took place towards the close of M. M. III.

The earlier and later history of the great Transitional Age, which embraces the whole of the Third Middle Minoan Period, is here methodically explored throughout the remaining Palace regions, beginning with the North-Western and Northern Entrance systems and working round by the Eastern slope, past the great Bastion—remarkable details of which have been now for the first time recovered—to the ‘Domestic Quarter’ beyond.

The artistic remains with which we are confronted in following out this circuit are in many respects pre-eminent amongst all such relics brought to light on the Palace site. The ‘Miniature Frescoes’—here illustrated by a series of Coloured Plates—that seem to stand in connexion with a small shrine of the North-West Palace section—with their vivid conversational sketches of Court ladies, are unique in Ancient Art. Fragmentary remains in the same ‘Miniature’ style and some closely related small reliefs lead us on the other hand to the siege scene—here regarded as a historic record—on the silver ‘rhyton’ from Mycenae, of which the original form is given for the first time.

So, too, a microscopic design of a coursing bull marvellously painted on the lower surface of a crystal plaque—illustrated by an enlarged coloured drawing—gives us a glimpse of the high perfection already attained in a Minoan Art more characteristic of the *Sei Cento*. In view of the parallels that they present to the miniature and other small Minoan wall-paintings, it has also been thought desirable here to supply some examples of the inlaid

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designs on weapons from Mycenae and elsewhere that have been well described as ‘painting in metals’. Thanks to the valuable assistance of Monsieur E. Gilliéron, fils, it has been possible to accompany these by a graphic record of the successive processes by which they were produced, and to add the first authentic illustration of the remarkable engrailed design of the ‘Swimmers’, recently revealed by cleaning on a blade from the Vapheio Tomb.

This series of designs in the ‘Miniature’ style finds its counterpart in a class of intaglios on signets, the funereal association of which can often be authenticated. The subjects of these—interesting examples of which occurred on clay sealings from the Palace itself—can in most cases be shown to have, directly or indirectly, a religious character, and from this point of view, as well as from the sympathy that it shows with the particular branch of the limners’ Art referred to above, it has been thought desirable to give a somewhat detailed account of the most remarkable relic of this class. This is the massive gold signet-ring, containing representations of not less than fourteen figures, found in a beehive tomb of Nestor’s Pylos, and which it was my good fortune—as the result of a special journey—to rescue from the hands of its native owner.¹ It is not too much to say that the successive scenes depicted on this ring supply our first authentic knowledge of the Minoan After-world—an Elysion rather than a Hades. The idea of resurgence is itself graphically conveyed by two chrysalises and corresponding butterflies above the Goddess’s shoulders. At the same time the striking parallelism displayed by the style of the figures and of the whole composition with the miniature class of wall-paintings has suggested an actual translation of the design into colours on the model of one of these.²

The reconstitution of the structures above the Northern ‘Lustral Area’, by which the remains have been saved from progressive disintegration, has made it possible to furnish an adequate record of what is one of the most elegant monuments of the site. Its sunken basin, indeed, and the sombre tone of the wall-painting, now in part restored, made its interior vault a fitting scene for rites connected with the Minoan Goddess as

¹ See p. 145 seqq., and compare my fuller account *The Ring of Nestor, &c.*, published by Macmillans; and cf. *J. H. S.* 1925. Fresh corroboration of the association of the Minoan Goddess with the chrysalis as the emblem of resurgence to a new life after death is given here from a Vapheio ring (p. 148, Fig. 97).

² Coloured Plate XX A, facing p. 157.

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Lady of the Underworld. In the same way, the parallel work on the Northern Entrance Passage has brought with it a better knowledge of this once splendid avenue of approach, overlooked on either side by the Porticoes containing the great bull-grappling reliefs in coloured plaster. These plastic compositions, to which the noble head of the charging bull belongs, have been here brought into relation with the Elgin slabs of Knossian gypsum from Mycenae, showing a similar head and the forefeet of a stationary bull. The full illustration of dual compositions, referring respectively to the hunting of half-wild bulls and the contrasted scene in which a decoy cow is used, has been traced in detail in the reliefs on the Vapheio gold cups.

At the same time, the great work of reconstitution of the upper stories carried out in the 'Domestic Quarter'—thanks to the new facilities for support supplied by reinforced concrete—has made possible a fuller understanding of the structural and decorative details of the great Halls on that side. The shield frieze, a copy of which is now set up in position in the lobby opening from the second landing of the Grand Staircase, is seen to give a satisfactory key to the actual arrangement of the 'Hall of the Double Axes' below, where restored replicas of the shields themselves have now been hung on the similar spiral bands above the dado. The evidence, now more fully interpreted, of the traces left in fallen stucco has also afforded adequate information of a wooden throne and canopy that had been fixed in the adjoining section of the Hall. The story of the contiguous 'Queen's Megaron'—the centre of the women's domain in the Palace—has been greatly augmented by the revelation of the earlier system, of which the fine 'mosaiko' pavement was in part uncovered beneath the floor of the later hall. The 'Megaron' itself, as now resuscitated, with its bath-room and other conveniences, calls up a vision of social life and amenities such as it would be hard to parallel in the Ancient World.¹

The relics found in the area behind, precipitated from a windowless upper 'Treasury', have been placed together in a collected group. Apart from the ivories, the most remarkable of these are steatite objects which as fitted together prove to be the locks of a Sphinx of Hittite type, of which a complete example from Tyliossos has been here added to one already known from Hagia Triada. These objects, with a socket in the back, are shown to be descendants of similar Chaldaean stone vessels, some of which

¹ See the Coloured Frontispiece to this Volume.

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seem to have served as inkstands. The remote antiquity of this type has been demonstrated by the recent discovery of one in the form of a boar in a very early stratum at Ur.

Among the ivories, the figurines of leaping youths, the remains of which are here fully illustrated, may be said to excel all known works of the kind in the *élan* and free action that they display. The remains of a small relief of an ivory Sphinx in the Minoan style, part of a miniature painting of a pillar shrine adorned with double axes, and two bronze axes themselves of the diminutive cult type, made it strange that no figure of the divinity itself should have occurred in the deposit. On the other hand, such an ivory figure, seen by a competent archaeologist in private hands at Candia, shortly afterwards emerged on the other side of the Atlantic as the ‘Boston Goddess’—divine sister of the Lady of Knossos,—holding out in this case golden snakes. The opinion, shared by our foreman and others, that this had been abstracted from the Ivory Deposit has certainly not lost in credibility from a remarkable sequel. Also emanating from private possession at Candia, but released after a further discreet interval of time, an ivory figure of a boy-God made its appearance. Having been successful in rescuing this from the midst of doubtful elements in a Parisian dealer’s hands, it has been possible to ascertain the fact that it not only answers to the other in its exquisite naturalistic style and individuality of expression, but, as shown standing on tiptoe and coifed with a high tiara, corresponds within a millimetre or so in measurement. The two figures in fact form a single group of the divine Child God saluting the Mother Goddess.¹

An illustration of the Minoan worship of the Mother and Child had been already supplied by the painted clay figurine of a later date found in a tomb of the Mavro Spelio Cemetery at Knossos. It is supplemented by a design on a gold signet-ring of the religious class recently found at Thisbé and published here for the first time.² On this we see the Holy Mother seated with the Babe on her knee and approached with gifts by adrant chieftains, remote predecessors of the Magi.

It will be seen that from the point of view of Comparative Religion this evidence—like that supplied by the subjects on the ‘Ring of Nestor’—is of the highest interest.

Important as are the remains of the ‘Domestic Quarter’ and the

¹ See the restored arrangement, p. 456, Fig. 318, below.

² P. 471, Fig. 328

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associated relics, it looks as if, in the later phase of the M. M. III Palace, as well as throughout the succeeding epoch, the monumental and artistic aspects of the building found their chief centre in a great East Hall, occupying the area immediately North of that quarter and approached from the Central Court by a stepped portico, facing, though on a larger scale, the 'Stepped Porch' on the other side of the Court. An earlier East Hall, to which the beautiful 'Ladies in Blue' fresco belonged, had been built at a lower level, somewhat below that of the pavement of the Court. A reconstruction of the plan of the later Hall¹ is here given, based on the well-preserved lines of the basement structures, while the existence of the central light-court is further assured by the existence of the head of the shaft by which it was drained. From the porticoes surrounding this had unquestionably been derived the remains of a series of painted high reliefs that had been precipitated into the space to the South-East at the time of the final destruction of the building.

These noble fragments, which must be regarded as representing the final development of the Minoan Art of plaster relief, are for the first time fully illustrated in the present Volume, and to the description of the most important specimens I am happily able to add notes kindly supplied to me by the late Sir William Richmond, R.A., whose artistic sense and special technical experience give a lasting value to his appreciations. For anatomic observations on these works I am also greatly indebted to Professor Arthur Thomson, F.R.S. The reliefs themselves are almost exclusively of an agonistic character and belong to boxing and wrestling bouts or the episodes of bull-grappling scenes. With them were also remains of a frieze of a more architectonic character, consisting of opposed pairs of Griffins, tied to columns. Fragmentary as they are, these various high reliefs represent the culminating achievement of Minoan plastic Art. The anatomical knowledge here displayed, the natural rendering of human forms, the delicate treatment of the flesh surfaces, combined with the most powerful muscular action, raise these works—executed not later than the first half of the Sixteenth Century B. C.—to a level of artistic execution that, on the same lines, has hardly been surpassed by any later Age.

It is tantalizing, indeed, that, for the completion of the figures and composition to which these fragments belong, we should only be able, and

¹ P. 491.

that occasionally, to turn to small reliefs on vases or to intaglios on gems and signets.

Another very interesting discovery made on the borders of the area occupied by the East Hall was of the same tantalizing nature. This consisted of large bronze curls belonging to the upper part of the forehead of a gigantesque female figure¹ that had been wrought in a perishable material, a clue to which may be found in the carbonized mass in which it lay. We have here in fact the evidence of a *Xoanon* or wooden image, such as the 'Daedalid' works still preserved at a comparatively late date in Greece, that may have stood on the back section of this great Hall. It doubtless represented the great Minoan Goddess in one of her aspects, and its presence would mark the Hall as a temple as well as a meeting place.

The circuit of the building included in this Volume may be said to complete the general survey of the structures and of the artistic and other remains belonging to the great Transitional phase of Minoan culture that covers the whole of the M. M. III Period. It has also inevitably included something of the succeeding Late Minoan style in the days of its early maturity, since, indeed, much of the later decorative system of the 'Domestic Quarter'—illustrated by the 'Shield Fresco', by the spiraliform dado bands in general, and by the traces of an extension of the Processional friezes to this region—belongs, as is fully demonstrated in these pages, to an intermediate era of partial restoration that dates from about the close of L. M. I *a*. To this, too, doubtless, the 'Taureador' panels must themselves, as a whole, be ascribed.

It is clear that a good deal of the decoration of this epoch remained on the walls to the time of the final catastrophe. But we already observe its supersession in places, and notably in the Hall above that of the Double Axes and adjoining East-West Corridor, by wall-paintings in the later style that marks the very latest phase of the Palace history and corresponds with the mature L. M. II Period.

A consideration of the remains of this later class—which represent the artistic fashions of the Age that saw the final destruction of the Palace as a Palace—is reserved for the concluding Volume (IV) of this work. The purest centre of these is to be found in the 'Room of the Throne' in the West section of the building with its antechamber and surrounding

¹ See pp. 522-4, Fig 365, 366.

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structures, which, as already pointed out, belong exclusively to this Period. Additional evidence is also afforded in that Palace section by the West Porch, with the remains of a bull-grappling fresco, and by the Magazines on that side in their existing state, comprising the bulk of the great store jars. There is also a mass of fine ceramic evidence from the Western borders of the building in the shape of large painted vases in the highly decorative ‘Palace Style’.

In the concluding Volume of this work must also necessarily be included some account of the inscribed tablets of the Linear Class B, which equally mark the latest stage in the Palace history—though in some cases they possibly go back to the closing phase (*b*) of L. M. I. The most important deposits of these are also associated with the Western Palace region, though they also occur throughout the site. Of these tablets I hope to give a more complete description in the concluding part of my *Scripta Minoa*, but no account of the Palace in its latest stage could be adequate without considerable reference to these clay archives. Although the script itself still eludes decipherment, the general purport of many of the documents is clear owing to the illustrations that they give of the objects to which they refer, while the accompanying numeration is also intelligible. They thus supply a very extensive source of information as to the contents of the Palace Magazines and Treasury as well as of the royal Arsenal and Mews at this epoch.

It is impossible for me to give adequate acknowledgement of the varied assistance afforded me in the present Volume by many kind friends and fellow workers. I am particularly indebted to my French colleagues, Messieurs J. Charbonneaux, Fernand Chapouthier, and R. Joly, for enabling me to profit by the results of their epoch-making discoveries in the Palace of Mallia.¹ For sphragistic records Dr. Doro Levi’s supplementary account of the clay sealings of Hagia Triada and of Zakro has also been of special service.² Valuable assistance in the field of Egyptian and Oriental research has, as usual, been freely given me by Dr. H. R. Hall of the British Museum, and Mr. E. J. Forsdyke has kindly looked over for me the

¹ Three recent publications by these explorers in the *Bulletin* of the French School at Athens (1928) may here be mentioned. F. Chapouthier, *Une Table à Offrandes au Palais de Mallia* (cf. p. 392 seqq., below); R. Joly, *La Salle hypostyle du Palais de Mallia*; J. Charbonneaux, *L’Architecture et la Céramique du Palais de Mallia*.

² Doro Levi, *Le cretule di Hagia Triada e di Zakro*, in the *Annuario* of the Italian School at Athens, 1929.

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proofs of this Volume. Useful suggestions regarding the Minoan ‘*rodeo*’ have been due to my friend Professor Baldwin Brown. On the other hand, I have suffered an irreparable loss by the untimely death of Dr. Stephanos Xanthudides, who did so much to illustrate the pre-history of his native Island, whose generous help was always forthcoming, and to whom I had been constantly indebted in the earlier Volumes of this work.

To Monsieur E. Gilliéron, fils, I am again greatly beholden for many fine drawings, including those illustrative of the technical processes made use of by the Minoan artists in inlaid metal-work. To his recent labours has been also due the restoration in the Palace itself of the ‘Shield Fresco’ on the Staircase Lobby and of the actual shields themselves in the great Hall below. Mr. Piet de Jong, the Architect of the British School at Athens, who has carried out, under my direction, the recent work of reconstitution in the Northern and Eastern Sections of the building, has executed a series of restored plans and elevations, notably of the elegant structures above the Northern Lustral Basin, of the Northern Entrance, with the porticoes above on either side, and of the Eastern Bastion, with its remarkable water-system. With the new facilities supplied by the use of ferro-concrete he has completed the work of roofing over the lower Halls and subsidiary structures of the ‘Domestic Quarter’ by the restoration of the upper floor, and in the case of the Grand Staircase this work of reconstitution has reached the fourth landing and adjacent lobby. For all these later undertakings the immense task already accomplished in this area by Mr. Christian Doll happily afforded a secure basis, and his meticulously accurate measurements have stood all tests.

As a result of these extensive works of conservation and resuscitation not only has a great part of the history of this part of the building been set forth in a permanent manner, but the progressive disintegration of gypsum surfaces from the effects of exposure to the heavy Cretan rainfall has been radically checked throughout a considerable area. It is with special satisfaction that I am able to record that the strength and stability ensured to the reconstituted structures by the use of this new method has enabled them to resist with complete success the fresh severe shock of earthquake that took place in February of this year.

ARTHUR EVANS.

YOULBURY, BERKS., NEAR OXFORD,
March 20, 1930.

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ERRATA

- Page 473, line 21, *for* 'wreaths' *read* 'reeds'.
- Page 525, lines 28, 29. Parentheses should replace the commas
before the word 'including' and after the word 'below'.
- Plan G in pocket. The Well in bottom left-hand corner of this
Plan should be omitted.

ERRATUM

- Page 97, footnote,
for βυθιζόμε πλοῖα *read* βυθιζομένα πλοῖα.