

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enceinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

§ 90. PLANS FOR STRUCTURAL RE-CONSTITUTION CARRIED TO COMPLETION.
SECTION OF BULL-GRAPPLING RELIEF SET UP IN WEST PORTICO OF NORTHERN
ENTRANCE.

Unique conditions of Excavation on site of Knossos; Alternative of re-supporting upper Stories or of complete ruin; Earlier materials employed unsatisfactory; Problem solved by use of ferro-concrete; Results tested by Earthquakes of 1926 and 1930; Lateral reconstruction for buttressing important structures; Reconstruction of South-West Columnar Chamber—Pillar Crypt below; Deposit of L. M. I a pottery—votive figure of Ox; Sanctuary character of Columnar Chamber; Removal of fresco remains to Museum; Replicas of important frescoes replaced in situ on walls; Completion of this work North-West and North of Central Court; Reconstitution of West Portico of Northern Entrance Passage; Restored plan of area; Painted relief compositions of the two Porticoes relating to bull-sports; Comparisons made with Vapheio Cup and relief from 'Atreus' Tomb at Mycenae; Restoration of upper elements of North-West Porch; West Portico of Northern Entrance Passage as restored; Section of its painted reliefs replaced in replica, showing charging bull and olive-tree; Greek interpretation of Minotaur—a Minoizing bead-seal; Haunted site left deserted, except by 'House of Rhea'.

IN the long work on the site of Knossos which, with some interruption caused by the Great War, has engaged my own energies for the last thirty years and the preliminaries of which go back a good deal further, it early became evident that the problem of excavation was unique in more than one respect amongst monuments of the Past. The upper stories—of which in the 'Domestic Quarter' three successive stages were encountered—had not, as in the parallel case of other ancient buildings, been supported by solid piers of masonry or brick-work, or by stone columns. They had here been held up in a principal degree by a timber framework, the huge posts and beams of which, together with the shafts of the columns, were either supplied by the cypress forests, then existing in the neighbouring glens, or by similar material imported from over sea. The reduction, either by chemical processes or by actual burning of these wooden supports to mere crumbling masses of charcoal, had thus left vast voids in the interspaces. The upper floors and structures had indeed—in a manner that sometimes seemed almost miraculous—been held approximately at their levels by the rubble formation that had insinuated itself below—due largely to the falling in of bricks of unburnt clay, partly dissolved, from the upper walls.

Unique conditions of Excavation on site of Knossos.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enceinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 FERRO-CONCRETE SOLVES STRUCTURAL PROBLEM

Alternative of re-supporting upper stories or of complete ruin.

At the same time, whenever this intrusive material was removed, there was nothing to prevent the remains of the upper fabric from crashing down to a lower level. For the benefit of those who had not an opportunity of following in a practical capacity the long course of this arduous work, it is necessary once more to repeat that those who took part in it were confronted with only two alternatives. Either, at every step, the overlying mass had to be re-supported, or excavation itself would have reduced the remains of the upper stories—held up and preserved to us in such a marvellous fashion—to one indistinguishable heap of ruins.

Earlier materials employed unsatisfactory.

Such a catastrophic result was combated at first by means of wooden beams and posts, which, however, in the Cretan climate of violent changes showed a rapid tendency to rot. These were at first replaced by piers of masonry and shafts and capitals of columns laboriously cut out of stone, while upper pavements were supported by means of brickwork arches resting on iron girders. The expense of procuring from over sea girders of a length and calibre sufficient to span the larger halls was itself prohibitive. Owing, moreover, to the exposed character of the access to Candia by sea previous to the construction of the new port, and the frequency of fierce North-Westerly gales, the landing of the necessary materials was always a risky operation, and it has been already mentioned that two of the largest girders shipped from England lie at the bottom of the old harbour.

Problem solved by use of ferro-concrete.

Under these circumstances the introduction of the use of reinforced concrete was a real godsend, besides ensuring the additional advantage that the new work is at once distinguishable by the spectator. Piers and columns, with their capitals superimposed, could thus be moulded and the platforms of whole floors laid on over even the largest spaces, while the floors themselves at the same time have given a much necessary compaction to the surrounding walls.

Results tested by Earthquakes of 1926 and 1930.

The work of reconstitution already carried out in the important blocks throughout both wings of the Palace has been now tested by two earthquakes. The serious shock of June 26, 1926, that ruined houses in the neighbouring village and damaged the Museum in Candia, left even the upper structures of the Palace practically unscathed. That of February 1930, which was also severely felt on the site and throughout the neighbouring district, put a severe strain on the more recent reconstructions, which, however, they successfully resisted. It is worth remarking, moreover, that the only slight damage produced by these seismic shocks was the horizontal dislocation, to the extent of a few centimetres only, of a section

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enceinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SOUTH-WEST COLUMNAR CHAMBER RESTORED 3

of a shaft and pillar, both of masonry construction according to the earlier procedure.

It is to be observed that in the course of this work of conservation it was found advisable in places to go beyond the immediate objective and to carry up to a certain height walls and structures forming lateral supports to parts of the fabric that it seemed desirable to preserve from shocks in a special manner.

Lateral reconstruction for buttressing important structures

An instance of this is given below¹ in the case of the upper structures of the North-West Porch, which served in fact for a buttress to the high back wall of the West Portico of the Northern Entrance Passage—itself of such importance as having served as a field for the noble frieze of stucco reliefs relating to bull-grappling scenes. A similar necessity occurred in the case of the West Wall of the South Propylaeum, upon which the ‘Cup-bearer’ fresco that originally found a place there has been restored in replica.

Adjoining the Propylaeum on this side was what appears to have been a little sanctuary chamber with a single column, the lower support for which was supplied by a gypsum pillar rising in the middle of a small corresponding space below, which, according to various analogies, would have represented a sanctuary crypt. Access was probably obtained to this, as in other cases, by means of a ladder from a trap-door above.

Reconstruction of S.-W. Columnar Chamber
Pillar crypt below.

The upper chamber—recently restored, largely on account of the support it gave to the adjoining Propylaeum wall, and reproduced for the first time in Fig. 1—is itself of considerable interest in its bearing on the fine entrance system to the Palace from the South-West. It communicated with the light-area in front of the South Propylaeum by means of what has been interpreted as a double doorway, while two steps in its North Wall led down to it from the adjoining area at the back of the Propylaeum. Outside this doorway and the threshold in the adjoining corner, there was brought to light at an earlier period of the Excavation, in a pit about four metres deep, a considerable deposit of mature L. M. I *a* sherds, representing the same ceramic phase as the large accumulation of pottery found beneath the East Stairs. A figurine of an ox here occurred, and, among hundreds of small cups of the usual offertory class, were specimens covered with an unfixed pigment of a brilliant red, a ritual feature.

Deposit of L. M. I *a* Pottery—Votive figure.

The whole deposit clearly belonged to the votive class and may be taken to confirm the presumption suggested by the Pillar Crypt below that the adjoining Columnar Chamber had served a religious function

¹ See below, pp. 11 and 13, and Fig. 5.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Encinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 SOUTH-WEST COLUMNAR CHAMBER AND PILLAR CRYPT



FIG. 1. VIEW OF SOUTH-WEST COLUMNAR CHAMBER AS RECONSTITUTED ; SHOWING PILLAR CRYPT BELOW.

Sanctuary
character
of Colum-
nar
Chamber.

and stood in some ritual connexion with the entrance system on its borders.¹

¹ As the South-West angle of the building has been destroyed, it has been found convenient to arrange this South-West Chamber

as the avenue of access to the 'South Propylaeum' for visitors entering the Palace by the 'West Porch'.

SOUTH-WEST COLUMNAR CHAMBER AND PILLAR CRYPT 5

In the original Plans A and C,¹ neither the Columnar Chamber above, as brought out by the more recent investigations, nor the pillar crypt below had been defined. These, however, are shown in the emended Plans

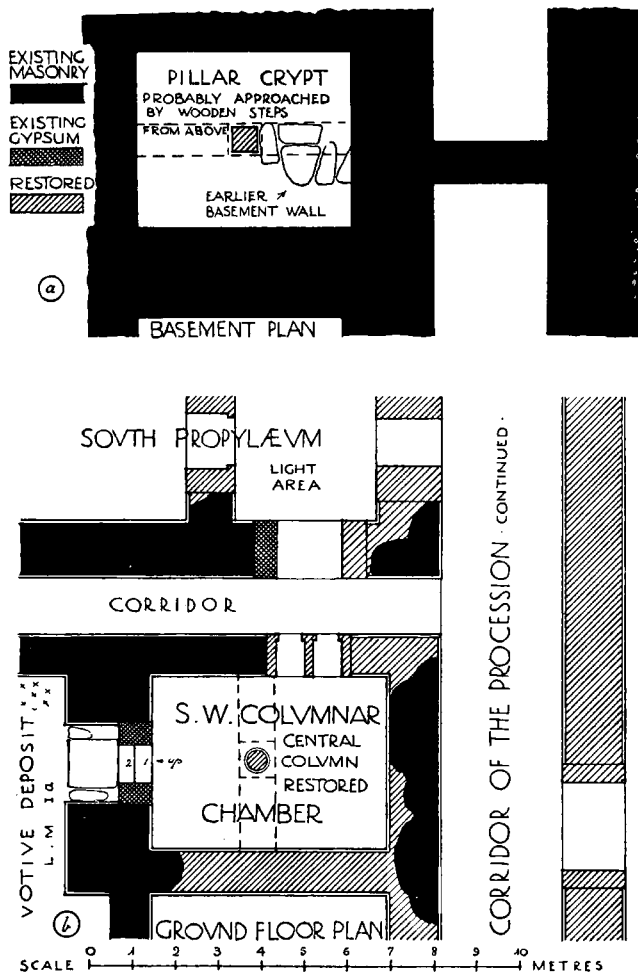


FIG. 2. *a*, GROUND PLAN OF S.W. COLUMNAR CHAMBER WITH ADJOINING SECTION; *b*, BASEMENT PLAN, SHOWING PILLAR CRYPT BENEATH.

of this section of the building at the end of this Volume. Special plans of this area by Mr. Piet de Jong are also given in Fig. 2, *a* and *b*.

A problem different from that concerned with the actual structures was presented by the considerable remains of painted stucco decoration found throughout the Palace, sometimes still clinging to the walls but to a much greater extent fallen from them. The scattered distribution of many of these remains, the parlous condition of some of them, the month-long study in many cases required for any attempt at their arrangement, made it necessary, when the preliminary arrangement had been concluded in our own workshop, that they should be transferred to the Museum.

But it seemed a duty of the excavator to preserve, wherever practicable, the history of the building by replacing *in situ*—even when it entailed some reconstitution of the walls—replicas of the fresco designs as completed from the existing fragments.

Removal of remains to Museum.

¹ Contained in the pocket of Vol. ii, Pt. II.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enceinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 REPLICAS SET UP OF IMPORTANT FRESCOES

Replicas
of im-
portant
frescoes
replaced
in situ
on walls.

Happily, in attaining this desirable result, I had at hand the invaluable services of the artist, Monsieur E. Gilliéron, fils, of whose practised skill in reproducing the masterpieces of Minoan Art the preceding Volumes of this work bear sufficient evidence.

In this way, as by no other means, it has been possible to preserve something of the inner life of the old Palace Sanctuary, to a degree, it may be fairly said, more considerable than in the case of any other great monument of Antiquity.

Already, at the head of the 'Great South Road', beneath the site, the little refectory of the 'Caravanserai'—there built for the weary traveller—has gained much in actuality from the replacement in facsimile of the 'Partridge frieze'—as appetizing a provision for the guests as the still-life pictures of game in an old Dutch dining-room. So, too, to those entering the Palace on the South-West, the restoration of the fresco of the 'Cup-bearer' and some of his associates on the wall where it had originally stood in the 'South Propylaeum' may help to carry with it a vision of the whole long series of stately processional figures that originally rose in tiers along the winding Corridors that led from the ceremonial Western Porch to the entrance hall of the *piano nobile*.

Following out in the same way the entrance system from the South—which may itself have stood in relation with a 'Pilgrims' Way' to the Sacred Mountain of Knossos—the painted bas-relief restored in the Corridor above, brings with it as it were the visible presence of a Priest-king, who wears his lily crown and collar and walks in an Elysian field, leading, it would seem, his guardian Griffin.

In the Residential Quarter, again, on the Eastern side, as shown in detail in the last Volume, the imposing fresco of the Minoan shields suspended against the spiral band, that has been restored in the lower loggia of the Grand Staircase, suggests an impression of military parade that fits in with what seems to have been the more aggressive character of the later dynasty. In the spacious Reception Hall below, to which they lead, where the spirali-form bands alone are depicted, it has been thought legitimate to fill the void with facsimiles of the shields themselves. On the other hand the dancing figure, replaced in replica on a pillar of the adjoining 'Queen's Megaron', marks it as a scene of more peaceful diversions, while the 'Dolphin Fresco' of somewhat earlier date, here also restored in the inner section of the Chamber, gives an example of the naturalistic style of Art that reached such a high stage of development in the Middle period of the Palace.

It would indeed have been a splendid achievement to restore some

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enclosure, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

REPLICAS OF IMPORTANT FRESCOES SET ON WALLS 7

part of the painted high-reliefs of agonistic subjects, the *disjecta membra* of which were found precipitated from the great 'East Hall' that had once overlooked the Central Court on this side. But the restoration of the 'East Hall' itself, according to the plan given in the text, however probable, was still conjectural, and the remains of the plastic reliefs, though representing the highest artistic level ever attained by Minoan skill, were too fragmentary to admit of their full development.

There remained, however, two outstanding points within the Palace border where this illuminating work of replacing *in situ* on the walls a record of the remains of their painted stucco designs in the same way as those already enumerated might yet be profitably attempted. These remains connected themselves with a more or less continuous area to the North-West and North of the Central Court, including on one side the 'Room of the Throne' and its surroundings, and on the other, the Western Portico of the Northern Entrance.

Comple-
tion of
this work
N.-W.
and N. of
Central
Court.

It had therefore been my intention mainly to devote the Season of 1930 to a continuance of the general work of reconstitution by its completion in this North-Westerly region of the site. As regards the first-mentioned field of work, which included the restoration of the upper structures of the Throne Room itself and the roofing over of its ante-chamber, the results will be described in detail in a later Section of this Volume.¹

The other task—which concerned the West Portico of the Northern Entrance Passage—might be regarded as the culmination of all these attempts at artistic reconstruction carried out throughout the whole area of the building. To those arriving at what may be called the 'Sea Gate' of the Palace from the Harbour Town—as, in later days, to the Achaean Vikings who first penetrated to the site through that haven—it offered the first glimpse of the mighty pile reared as their central residency by the Minoan Priest-kings. Immediately backed as it was by the ancient Keep that had formed the original nucleus of the whole edifice, this entrance system never to the last lost its character of a fortified approach.

Recon-
stitution
of W.
Portico
of N.
Entrance
Passage.

Nor had the architect who restored the building after the great destruction at the close of the Second Middle Minoan Period failed to avail himself of this vantage point to superimpose on the massive bastions of limestone masonry that formed its substructures a singularly impressive decorative scheme.

Those who came up from the Harbour Town, including travellers

¹ See below, Section 115.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enceinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8 RECONSTITUTION OF W. PORTICO OF N. ENTRANCE

from over sea, entered the Palace through the outer 'Sea Gate', facing West, and thence passed into an elongated open area flanked by the piers of the 'Northern Pillar Hall', and, turning to the right up this, passed through the Inner Gate into an ascending passage-way of narrower dimensions. This was overlooked on either side by the colonnades of two Porticoes, supported by triple blocks of masonry to which, for convenience, the name of 'bastions' has been applied though the gaps between them were filled by solid timber baulks, so that in fact the whole formed a single mass. Beyond the upper border of that to the right evidence was preserved of the steps by which the covered platform of the Portico was reached from the roadway.

The whole of the upper masonry of the structural supports of the Eastern terrace block had been removed at some later date for other uses, but of that which overlooked the entrance passage on the West all the courses were in places preserved up to the level of the horizontal beams, which, according to the regular practice, would have supported the coping slabs of the terrace level. Near the Northern extremity of the terrace, moreover, one of the column-bases of its colonnade was found only slightly below its original level.¹

Restored
Plan of
area.

All the elements, in short, for complete reconstitution of the Western Portico, including large parts of its back wall, were preserved, and it had been thus possible for Mr. Piet de Jong, the Architect of the British School, to execute for me on the basis of these the restored drawing of the entire inner entrance system, here reproduced (Fig. 3).²

Painted
relief
composi-
tions of
two
Porticoes
relating
to bull-
sports.

But the magnificence of the whole scheme centred in the fine plastic compositions in painted stucco—equivalent in hardness to the Italian *gesso duro*—that had originally adorned the back walls of both Porticoes. Of that on the Eastern side only a few scattered fragments were found below. Of the coloured reliefs that had found their place beneath the Colonnade to the West a whole series of remains were preserved, lying at intervals at about the same level along the whole length of the terrace.

In all cases these fragments belonged to subjects connected with the bull-sports that in such an extraordinary measure had engrossed the interests of the Palace-dwellers—an interest, which, as is shown by the 'Temple Fresco' and some new and surprising evidence given below, was shared in a singular degree by the Minoan Goddess herself.

Reasons have been given in the preceding Volume of this work for the conclusion that the painted relief compositions which seem originally to have faced each other at the back of the Galleries on either side of the Northern

¹ Compare the fuller details in *P. of M.*, iii, p. 160 seqq.

² See *P. of M.*, iii, p. 162, Fig. 107.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Encinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

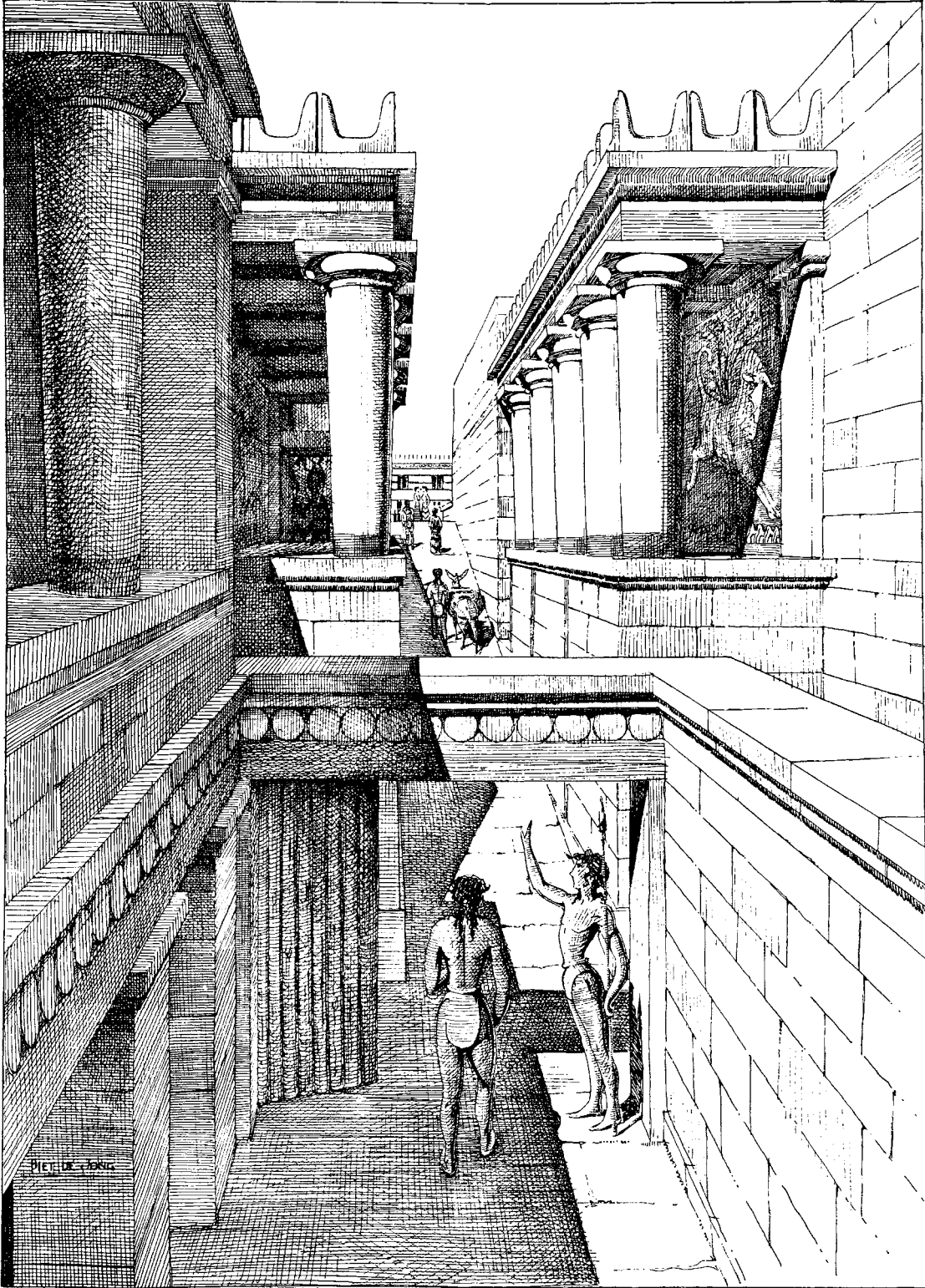


FIG. 3. RESTORED DRAWING SHOWING INNER GATEWAY OF NORTHERN ENTRANCE PASSAGE AND PORTICOES OVERLOOKING ASCENDING GANGWAY BEYOND. BY PIET DE JONG.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06105-6 - The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos: Volume 4: Part 1: Emergence of Outer Western Enceinte, with New Illustrations, Artistic and Religious, of the Middle Minoan Phase

Arthur Evans

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 RELIEF SUBJECTS COMPARED WITH VAPHEIO CUPS

Comparisons made with bull-grappling scenes of Vapheio Cup and relief from 'Atreus' Tomb.

Entrance Passage exercised a lasting influence on all later Minoan Art, in its Mainland as well as its Cretan home. The view is there expressed that the groups in the respective Porticoes in fact corresponded, at least in their main features, with the two contrasted versions of bull-hunting scenes as presented to us in a perfect form on the gold cups from the Vapheio Tomb.¹ Both series of groups illustrate the sport as seen practised in the open—in the palm- and olive-grown glens of the country-side. In the one case we see a drive of the half-wild animals, in the other their capture by means of a decoy cow.

Of still more suggestive interest is the circumstance to which attention has been also called,² that both of these dual schemes are reflected in what seems to have been a bas-relief frieze round a kind of fore-hall to the 'Atreus' Tomb at Mycenae. Among the sculptured fragments brought home by Lord Elgin were parts of two reliefs, one of them showing the two fore-legs of a stationary bull recalling the same portion of the animal lured by the cow in the last-mentioned Vapheio scene, while the other presented the head of a charging bull with the same lowered pose, cocked ear and protruding tongue as one of the galloping bulls of the other Vapheio goblet. What adds to the probability that both these types and the scenes to which they belong are derived from originals supplied by the monumental work above the Northern Entrance Passage is, that they are carved on slabs of Knossian gypsum.

The latter piece also shows, above the bull, part of the foliage of an olive-tree, such as we find associated with the Palace composition. A completed restoration of this painted relief by Monsieur E. Gilliéron, fils, is here repeated in Fig. 4.³

Unlike the case of the high relief fragments from the great 'East Hall', the fallen remains of the plaster composition at the back of the Western Portico offered some elements of reconstitution, while, for their setting up, the existing remains of the back wall had only to be raised to their original height. A considerable part of the two olive-trees—the place of which was indicated by their plaster edges to be at the beginning and the end of the composition—was capable of being pieced together. At the same time the largest of all the fragments supplied the complete head of the charging bull referred to, into connexion with which could be brought an extended forefoot. A small section of highly conventionalized rockwork foreground had also come to light.

¹ *P. of M.*, iii, p. 177 seqq.

² *Ibid.*, p. 192 seqq.

³ Reproduced from *P. of M.*, iii, p. 197,

Fig. 135. From a drawing by Monsieur E. Gilliéron, fils.