

1930 CAMPAIGN AT KNOSSOS

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Reconstitution of N.W. Palace Region

THE initial object of the work undertaken at Knossos last season had been to carry to completion the great work of reconstitution and conservation already pursued during the preceding years. The area of the Throne Room and adjoining North-West Portico and the terrace remains on the West side of the Northern Entrance passage were now dealt with. Thanks to the expert co-operation of the Artist, Monsieur Gilliéron, Fils, and the Architect of the British School, M. Piet de Jong, the Throne Room and its Antechamber have been roofed over and the original clerestory system replaced above, approached by a small winding staircase. At the same time the full effect has been restored below and the guardian Griffins of the walls restored both on each side of the Throne and of the doorway opening on an inner Shrine beyond. What, however, may be regarded as the most striking achievement has been the reconstitution of the Portico overlooking the Northern Entrance on the West side, so far as to admit of the replacement in replica on its back wall of a section of the great painted relief composition of a bull-grappling scene, showing—beside an olive-tree and above a conventional rock ground—the fore-part of a charging bull. This splendid relief, the remains of which here came to light, thus looks forth once more above the North Gate of the Palace, as it did at the coming of the Achaeans.

Discovery of Outer Enceinte on West Border and of New Interior Structures

But minor soundings undertaken on the West borders of the building had meanwhile resulted in developments of a wholly unexpected and far-reaching nature which made it necessary to carry out works of excavation on that side comparable in extent to those of the first years of the Excavation. In all this Mr. J. D. S. Pendlebury, Curator of Knossos, gave valuable assistance.

A line of outer enceinte wall was, in fact, here struck dating back to the early proto-Palatial Age of the close of the Third Millennium B.C., together with traces of an entrance system from the West and the ramp of a Minoan roadway approaching it. This outer enceinte had included, besides the old West Court, a conglomeration of early acropolis houses North of it.

New 'Koulouras' or Refuse Pits with Remains of Early Houses below

Amongst other structural discoveries were two additional 'Koulouras' or round-walled refuse pits, with M.M. I *a* houses below full of relics of that Period, of which indeed it may be said to have contained a real *Corpus*.

Fresh Ceramic Evidence

The 'Koulouras' themselves—as well as a deposit to the North-East of them—were found to contain a mass of pottery illustrating the finest Age of Middle Minoan polychromy. Much new knowledge regarding the whole history of that ceramic class was thus forthcoming. In particular, fresh evidence has come to light as to the

origins of the 'barbotine' or 'prickle ware' fabric from marine objects like the 'thorny oyster' and 'thorn-back' crab, and, in general, of the influence of shells on Minoan ceramic decoration. A wholly new class of 'creamy bordered' ware also emerged, originating in silver plate. On the painted ring of a vase dating from about 1900 B. C. were scratched signs of Minoan linear script.

*Sculptured Remains affording New Links with
Mycenae*

Sculptured remains of considerable importance also came out along the West borders, among them a small stone altar of a wholly new class, showing double axes and the 'sacral horns' in relief. Other fragments presented close parallels to the decorated reliefs of Mycenae. These include another section of a 'triglyph' and half rosette frieze, like those of the 'Atreus' façade, and, what is extremely significant, parts of a large slab with rows of spiral reliefs recalling a grave *stela* of Mycenae.

*Discovery of Domestic 'Snake Room' and Revelations of
Primitive Cult*

But the most interesting discovery—as throwing a wholly new light on the most primitive Religion of the spot—was a room of a private house, coeval with the last Palace period, containing the remains of about forty vessels and other objects devoted to a purely domestic form of snake cult.

Unlike some otherwise analogous household sanctuaries found in Crete, no image of divinity here occurred. The relics relating to the tending and worship of the

reptiles themselves were, on the contrary, of the most varied kind—the snakes themselves being in some cases moulded on the objects, one of them representing cakes of wild honeycomb. A 'snake table' was found, arranged for a party of four, as well as 'snake tubes', with little cups attached, made to give shelter to the reptiles and shown to be modelled on sections of Early Cretan drain- or water-pipes. The 'tube' itself, with some modifications, survived as an article of cult and was finally adapted to the service of the Cyprian Aphrodite—in the form of a dove-cot!

The 'ring' or 'grass snake', so abundant still on the site and fond of swimming in the pools of the stream below, was probably here represented. The very primitive domestic cult of which we thus have evidence is of world-wide extension. In it the snake itself is supplied with drink-offerings as the 'house-mother'.

The Adder Mark of the Goddess

But as was here shown, the more developed worship of the Snake Goddess of the Palace Shrines, in which she appears as a Lady of the Underworld and as a potent succour in this land of Earthquakes, had its more terrific side. The snakes here are of a viperous breed and, as Sir Arthur demonstrated, the special emblem of the Goddess, resembling a succession of waves and dots, is, in fact, taken from the markings on an adder's back. The proof of this was supplied by vases of a ritual class in which bands with this design actually terminate in snakes' heads.