

## KNOSSOS AND MYCENAE

### THE GREAT CLEAVAGE OF L. M. II AND EVIDENCES OF THE CONTINUED RE- ACTION OF MINOAN CRETE ON THE 'MYCENAEAN' WORLD AFTER THE FALL OF THE PALACE.

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by SIR ARTHUR EVANS.)*

THE Mycenaean civilization in Greece is overwhelmingly the product of Minoan Crete. At the date to which the earliest relics of the Shaft Graves belong, representing the transitional epoch between Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan or round about 1600 B.C., there was still some survival of the Hellado-Minyan culture on that side, together with an infusion of elements derived from the Central and North Aegean areas. The term 'Middle Helladic' or 'Hellado-Minyan' is thus still applicable for the surviving local products, though certain branches of them, such as a class of polychrome pottery then existent, were due to a Cretan connexion going back to M. M. II.

But by the time of the mature Late Minoan I style—L. M. I  $\alpha$ —from about 1550 B.C. onwards, the native ingredient had become practically non-existent among the remains of what later became 'Mycenaean' Greece. The use of the words 'Late Helladic I' is, indeed, not only unwarranted but highly misleading.

Local materials, indeed, were extensively used and

the painted pottery for instance was no doubt largely the handiwork of local potters, but they had either actually received their training in Minoan Crete or copied and developed purely Minoan models.

As I have elsewhere pointed out, whatever the earlier relation of the Cretan lords to those of the Mainland regions, the archaeological evidence before us points at this time to the results of wholesale conquest.

The outgrowth of the earlier L. M. I phase, known as L. M. Ib, reveals in every department an uniformity of culture in Crete and the Mainland areas. A leading feature of this is the survival in a splendidly ornamentalized style of designs that go back to naturalistic Cretan prototypes of the latter part of the Middle Minoan Age. Among these may be mentioned the frutescent palm-tree and the madonna lily, marine forms such as the argonaut and octopus, and a curious product of the earlier metallurgic art, the 'Sacral Ivy'. A kind of flowering papyrus, already well represented in the earlier L. M. I wall-paintings, was also much in vogue. Designs in a marine style—such as those on the well-known 'Marseilles' ewer—the origins of which pre-eminently centre on Knossos, are specially characteristic of this epoch both in Crete and the Morea, as well as on imported objects found in Egypt in tombs of Thothmes III's time.

But there now supervenes curious ceramic evidence of an artistic cleaving. While the Mainland regions on both sides of the Gulf of Corinth maintained awhile the old decorative tradition, at Knossos and in the area immediately dominated by it, there succeeded a specially grandiose 'Palace Style' which seems to reflect the ambitious and domineering spirit of its latest dynasts.

This style is specially reflected on the great palatial jars and 'amphoras', and exhibits a monumental and often a religious character. Certain devices like the argonaut among marine forms and the frutescent palms incline to drop out, though they are preserved and further developed on the Mainland side. On the other hand, the octopus, stately groups of flowering reeds and papyrus plants,—towards the close of the period accompanied by waterfowl—are of constant repetition on vases of the palatial group. It is of great interest to observe that in the Peloponnese itself the Palace Style of Knossos' was shared by Argos.

The name of L. M. II has been given to this 'Palace Style', a term to which is set by the fall of the great Palace itself about 1400 B.C.

It is generally assumed that L. M. III which succeeded to it in Crete was faced on the Mainland side by a more or less related culture, but there does not seem to be any definite recognition of the fact that there continued to exist on the Mainland side a degenerate outgrowth of the L. M. I *b* style, parallel with L. M. II at Knossos.

It must be clearly understood, however, that the ceramic class of which we now have evidence in the 'Mycenaeen' area is not in any degree a 'Hellenic' revival. It merely brings out the fact, that while, apparently, under a warlike and ambitious dynasty, Knossos was the centre of a new and in some respects brilliant departure in ceramic and kindred arts, the Mainland regions remained conservatively Minoan. The existing forms and designs—all of them in their origins Cretan—were adhered to, but in a course of rapid degeneration. The frutescent date palm, reduced to

sprays without the trunk, becomes hardly recognizable ; the 'ivy-leaf' grows three stalks, the double-axe itself takes the appearance of bivalve shells. The motives on the so-called 'Ephyraean' cups belong to this dull traditional style ; and their shape, so far from being Minyan, is equally a L. M. I *b* inheritance.

To this Mainland culture parallel with L. M. II in Crete the only scientific term available is 'L. M. I *c*'.

The fall of the Palace at Knossos has been taken as synonymous with the break-up of the Minoan civilization. Pictures have been even drawn of Achaeans breaking down its gates. Its end was sudden, certainly, but there is nothing to show that it was not due, as certainly in a previous case, to one of the recurring earthquakes of this geographical area, with the usual sequel, a destructive conflagration. The later settlement within its shell and that of the Little Palace opposite and other indications may, indeed, show that it was followed by some successful outbreak of depressed elements of the population. But whatever the set-back, the evidence of the neighbouring Cemetery of Zafer Papoura, as pointed out by the writer long since, is sufficient to indicate that the decline in the insular culture was still gradual.

Of the influence of Cretan art and culture in the last days of the Palace there is definite proof in the remains of painted stucco at Mycenae in the style of its latest re-decoration, and still more in the diffusion in the immediately succeeding epoch, answering to the beginning of L. M. III, of a form of the linear script B practically identical with that of the Palace Archives. This is best seen on a series of vases from the Boeotian Thebes, but there are traces of the same form of writing having existed at Tiryns and Mycenae.

Surprising, moreover, as it may seem in view of the prevalent notions as to the cause and effect of the destruction of the 'House of Minos', the continued operation of strong Cretan influences on the Mainland side is traceable throughout the succeeding epoch.

It is clear that during the period answering to L. M. III *a* in Crete there was both on the 'Mycenaean' side and over a wide Aegean and East Mediterranean region a certain recovery from the dull traditionalism of 'L. M. I *c*'.

This recovery is well marked by a series of vessels from Mycenae itself, such as some of those of the 'Granary' series,<sup>1</sup> and is brilliantly illustrated by examples from Rhodes. It is also shared by Crete, and in examining the details of characteristic specimens of this class it becomes evident that they are to a large extent outgrowths of designs that appear in L. M. II vases of the palatial group.

Among such elements may be specially mentioned ornamental derivatives of architectural motives such as are seen on a L. M. II 'amphora' from the 'Royal Tomb' of Isopata, depicting the façade of a shrine with axes inserted in the pillars. This type, indeed, now becomes generalized in the 'Mycenaean' world and gives rise to some highly decorative motives on a class of pedestalled goblets as well as on two-handled bowls of the bell-shaped kind.

The chariot scenes of Cretan sarcophagi, on which horses and griffins alternately appear, supply the source of a large number of designs on Cypriote bowls. Aquatic subjects of similar origin react in the same

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Wace, *B.S.A.* xxv, Pl. VII *a* and IX *b*.

direction and the decorative water-fowl on a Rhodian bowl have real stylistic merit.

That the Cretan tradition played a leading part in the works of this decorative revival can be shown, moreover, by the appearance of certain details of purely Knossian evolution that characterize the L. M. II style. One of these is due to the reduction of a triple marine motive to a group of three C-like figures, sometimes of only two. The denaturalized octopus, gradually freed of its other marine elements by the Knossian ceramic artists, attains now its widest vogue.

It further appears that certain types of vessel such as the two-handled *hydria* or *krater*, now assuming a bell-shaped outline, and a spouted one-handled tankard of wide diffusion in the 'Mycenaean' World were of Knossian origin.

In opposition to current views it seems necessary to conclude that as late as the fourteenth century B.C.,—in the Period that immediately succeeded the final destruction of the Palace at Knossos,—Minoan Crete was still exercising a considerable influence in the formation of the more or less generalized form of culture now springing up in Mainland Greece and over a wide Aegean and East Mediterranean area.