

THE SOCIETY FOR  
THE PROMOTION OF HELLENIC STUDIES

Tuesday, Febr. 2nd 1932, Burlington House, 5 p.m.

THE MINOAN PALACE OF MALLIA.

M. Fernand Chapouthier, Professor at the University of Bordeaux, entrusted by the French School of Athens, for six successive expeditions, with the supervision of the excavations in connection with the Cretan Palace at Mallia, described the results of the completed work.

It is known that this 'palatial' civilisation, revealed to the scholastic world by the discoveries at Knossos and Phaestos, dated back to the beginning of the second millennium (2100 B.C.).

M. Chapouthier first presented the plan of the edifice; a collection of buildings, four-square round a central court. He specially insisted on its native characteristics.

The magazines in the east of the Palace contained a large number of jars and vessels, filled with carbonized beans, which can be identified; an ingenious device, providing for avoidance of waste in case of breakage of an oil-jar. A bench placed in the entrance corridor was the post for the official, supervising the entry and despatch of provisions. The seal used by this official has been recovered. He is represented seated before the oil-jars, on which he is setting his seal.

An enormous jar, 5 ft. 6 inches high, contained the provision of oil; near it an oil-separator served for the olive-working. Elsewhere, the armoury workshop contained the moulds in which bronze for dipping the tools was smelted.

In the workshop of the vase-drillers was an enormous stone jar, unfinished.

These magazines may be compared to those of Asia Minor or Cyprus, but the plan and arrangement are more varied. The Cretan detests symmetry. Thus, by adapting a hypostyle hall to their palace, they have intentionally given it a non-symmetrical plan.

Elsewhere they seem to have made an innovation. A little chapel with dromos and prodomos, seems the 'ancestor' of the Mycenaean megaron and of the Hellenic Temple, considered until now as of Continental origin.

#### The Terraces consecrated to Religious Rites.

The King, in Crete as in the East, was also High Priest. Several terraces above the central court were used for the celebration of religious rites. One of these, a real loggia, the ceiling of which was supported by round columns, contained an altar, and communicated by a small staircase with a sort of sacristy, in which were kept the ceremonial weapons.

The Insignia of Royalty, the Sceptre, an axe in schist, representing a leopard (such as were trained for hunting), and

an immense bronze sword, with hilt and knob of rock-crystal, decorated with gold-plate. These weapons, of such exceptional importance for the History of Metal-work in the primitive Mediterranean and the interest of which Sir Arthur Evans has already pointed out to readers of the Times (Dec.24th 1925), were carried by the Royal High-Priest at such ceremonies as took place in the loggia.

We have here a truly Oriental custom, and we may compare the train of our Minoan Pontiff to the representation of the King of Persia, which the soldiers of the garrison of Dura, on the shore of the Euphrates, sketched on the walls of the fortress. - Another terrace, on the contrary, draws us from the East and reminds us of Greece. There we see a round slab, deeply sunk into the earth, the surface of which is dug out into 34 slight depressions, arranged in a circle, round a deeper central cavity. This disposition recalls that of the kernos, a portable vase of similar shape, used in Greek mysteries for agrarian offerings to the Divinities of the Soil.

It certainly appears as if the idea of this form of vase or slab, permitting the placing of the gifts of different products of the earth before the great Goddess, originated in Crete.

### The Inscriptions.

One room, in the north of the palace, contains the princely archives. These consist of a collection of pastilles, medallions, bars or tablets in clay, covered with hieroglyphic and early linear signs. A similar collection was formerly found at Knossos; that of Mallia contains about twenty new signs.

The human head or profile, under a branch, the galloping bull, the bird, the bow with its arrow, the three-footed pot, are amongst the most original. Besides these symbolical figures, linear signs are marked on other tablets. If we cannot yet seize the phonetic value, we can study the form. We notice how figures of everyday life have gradually become transformed into more geometrical shapes, till finally they have developed into the letters of our Alphabet.

Here again Crete has played an important rôle in that period of History in which the old Oriental imagery has given place to more convenient and more rapid forms of writing.

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Sir Arthur Evans will offer the thanks of the Society for the communication.