



See p. 6.

Slightly reduced.

DIORITE FIGURE FROM EAST COURT OF THE PALACE AT KNOSSOS.

THE PALACE OF KNOSSOS IN ITS EGYPTIAN RELATIONS.

BY ARTHUR J. EVANS.

THE results of my excavations in what proves to be the prehistoric Palace of Knossos supply new and interesting evidence of the contact between Aegean and Egyptian culture in the Mycenaean and immediately preceding period. This evidence, as will be seen, is both of a direct and indirect nature.

The plan of the building itself, not yet completely excavated, with its large courts and numerous small chambers, and its long central corridor flanked by a succession of magazines, presents some striking affinities to Egyptian models. These resemblances, as in the case of certain architectural elevations seen on fragments of wall-painting, at times descend to details. Thus the chequer arrangement of dark and light squares on the façade of a Mycenaean shrine depicted on a fragment of miniature fresco recalls the decoration seen, for instance, over the door of a house from a VIth Dynasty tomb (Maspero, *Man. of Egypt. Arch.* Engl. ed. p. 21). A structural parallelism, moreover, is exhibited in the insertion between the capital of the columns and the beam above of a small rectangular cushion, though the columns themselves conform to the Mycenaean canon in gradually decreasing in diameter towards their base. The fine stone tank of the Throne-room seems also to point to Egyptian analogies, but in this case it was accompanied by a kind of *impluvium* with a support of cypress wood columns. The clay and rubble walls of the inner rooms of the Palace, with their facing of painted plaster, recall the similar structural arrangement of Tell-el-Amarna, where the most finished frescoes were backed by Nile mud. The colours themselves of the frescoes—here as there, so singularly durable—must have been largely of the same composition.

A very beautiful adaptation of an Egyptian architectonic motive is seen in a tall stone lamp of porphyry-like material, the pedestal of which is shaped like a lotus column. Its section, however, is quatre-foil, and the

carving round the upper surface of the receptacle shows a foliation of a free Mycenaean character. In this as in other instances it will be seen that the borrowing, when it took place, was not of a servile nature. Egyptian elements were taken over, but they were at the same time assimilated.

The indebtedness to Egyptian instruction in technical processes was, as usual in Mycenaean remains, very marked. Many fragments of vitreous paste were found of pale green and blue, and a brilliant lapis-lazuli colour. Various objects also occurred with green, black, and purple glazes covering a fine sandy core. Among these were flounced female figures of the usual Mycenaean character and of evidently indigenous manufacture. The most remarkable relic of this class was a spouted vase with a pale bluish-green glaze, of unique character, originally provided with two upright handles. Its form does not seem to find any close parallel in Egypt, and like the flounced ladies must be set down as of native fabric. The same must also be said of a series of glazed plaques and roundels for inlaying, most of which were found on the floor of the Throne or Council Chamber. Some of the roundels show a certain approximation in style and tone to those of Tell-el-Yahûdiyeh.

A special feature of the decorative art of Knossos seems to have been the inlaying of caskets with finely cut plaques of rock crystal. Some of these show traces of painting on their lower surface—in one case the fore-part of a galloping bull in the most exquisite miniature style. This “back-work on crystal,” as it would have been described by sixteenth century writers,—paralleled by the rock crystal pommel from Mycenae,—seems also to have been an Egyptian art. Professor Petrie has compared the example from Mycenae with a rock crystal scarab painted inside, from Gurob.

When we come to examine the fresco remains in which the Palace was so exceptionally rich, a wide field of comparison at once opens itself. The brilliant and varied decorative designs show numerous points of resemblance to the motives of XVIIIth and XIXth Dynasty ceiling patterns, though here again the borrowing was by no means of a literal kind. Among the artistic conventions of Egyptian origin may be noted the practice of surrounding the contours and branches of trees with a separate outline, within which the leaves and twigs are enclosed. It is also observable that in the execution both of patterns and figures the Cretan artist made the same preliminary use as the Egyptian of vertical and horizontal lines dividing the field to be decorated into small squares for the guidance of his brush.

It was not for nothing that Daedalos, according to the priestly tradition, sat at the feet of Egyptian masters. In view, however, of the counter

influences which at Tell-el-Amarna and elsewhere this Minoan art of Crete seems to have exercised on that of the Nile valley, it is important not to leave out of sight the converse traditions which make Daedalos build the propylaeum of Hephaestus (Ptah) at Memphis, and receive divine honours in a neighbouring shrine (Diod. i. 97). The name of "Labyrinth," which really belongs to the Palace of Knossos, with its inner columnar shrines of the *labrys* or double axe,—the symbol of the Cretan and Carian Zeus,—was transferred back to the great Egyptian building on the shores of Lake Moeris.

What seems to be the only known example of Egyptian chiaroscuro, supplied by the wall-painting representing the young princesses at Tell-el-Amarna (see Petrie, *Tell-el-Amarna*, p. 15), finds an Aegean analogy in the frescoes of guardian griffins in the Throne-room at Knossos, where the lower parts of the bodies are shaded by hatched lines. The griffins of these frescoes are of the ornamental Mycenaean type, but unlike other known examples they are wingless and bear crests of peacock's plumes. A smaller version of the same monster occurs on a fragment of fresco in a miniature style from another chamber. In this case he bears a similar peacock's crest, but is provided with wings which show angular markings akin to those visible on the wings of the griffin of Mentu on Queen Aah-hotep's axe. Another fresco fragment of the same class exhibits a female sphinx in a decorative style resembling that of the griffin.

The landscape pieces, with flowering reeds and running water and fish below, that adorn other walls of the Throne-room at Knossos, recall in their choice of motives Egyptian paintings like the pavement of Tell-el-Amarna. This Nilotic tradition, which is very marked in the pictorial designs of Mycenaean Crete, is well brought out by the subject represented on a painted clay sarcophagus or "larnax" from a bee-hive tomb at Ligortino, some hours north of the site of Knossos, destroyed with the village itself during the recent insurrection. The design of this, which I had happily been able to copy, shows water-fowl among papyrus-like plants, one of which, as often in Egyptian paintings, is seen pursuing a butterfly. These motives, parallels to which recur on some of the lentoid gems of the island, are specifically Nilotic and quite out of place in Crete. In this connexion it is worth observing that these clay sarcophagi which form so characteristic a feature in the Mycenaean sepulchral chambers of the island, and which have been erroneously supposed to represent houses, are, in fact, almost literal copies of the painted wooden chests of contemporary Egypt.

Still more interesting are the comparisons suggested by the paintings of life-sized human figures that decorated the corridor leading from the S.W.

entrance of the Palace at Knossos and its southern propylaea. Here we see large processional scenes of strikingly Egyptian character. The succession of youths, perhaps in this case, too, tributaries, bearing vases set with precious metals, irresistibly recalls the procession of Keft chieftains on the walls of the Rekhmara tomb. Here, as elsewhere on the Knossian frescoes, the Egyptian conventions of flesh-colouring are maintained—ruddy-brown for the men, white for the women. The general attitude of the figures is also the same: the heels and toes of both feet are represented flat on the ground, but the modelling of the limbs is fuller and more advanced, the eye is partly in profile, the outline of the face is almost classically Greek. The hair, though dark and apparently curly, has not the triple locks rising above the forehead which distinguish some of the Keft chieftains in the Egyptian paintings; the mocassin-like leg gear is also replaced by simple anklets of blue beads; but the similarity of the general effect remains. The short tunic round the loins is of the same rich embroidered character, and in one case indeed we seem to detect a similar pattern. The sash that hangs from the front of the waist of the Keft youths ends at times in a kind of beaded fringe. Those of the Knossian procession show a beaded network hanging down from the projecting front of the tunic. Both fashions somewhat recall the pendent *uraei* of Egyptian princes. The most remarkably preserved of the youthful figures, that from the southern propylaea, bears in his two hands a long pointed vase, apparently of silver mounted with gold, which answers both to a typical Mycenaean ceramic form and to one of the most characteristic of the metal vases borne by the Keft chieftains.

These parallels acquire additional significance from the appearance of some of the other characteristic forms of the Keft tributary offerings on clay tablets found in the Palace of Knossos, accompanied by linear Mycenaean inscriptions which apparently relate to the royal treasures. Conspicuous among these is a vase of the Vapheio type, ox-heads like the gold examples of the Rekhmara tomb, and objects with incurved sides which recur there accompanied by the sign for copper, in connexion with the other valuables. In these we must recognize a usual form of early ingot, such as have been found in Sardinia and more recently in the Mycenaean bronze-founders' hoard at Enkomi in Cyprus. On the clay tablets of Knossos this representation is followed by the balance (the Greek *τάλαντον*) and cyphers that seem to be indicative of the value of the copper ingots in Mycenaean gold talents.

The clay tablets of the Palace of Knossos exhibit two independent forms of writing—the hieroglyphic and the linear—neither of which betrays

anything more than an occasional resemblance to the Egyptian. Yet a certain number of parallels may be established, to some of which, in the case of the hieroglyphic series, I have already alluded in earlier papers on the prae-Phoenician script of Crete. On the new materials a variety of the Palace sign  is specially frequent, and the so-called bee, or hornet, also recurs. The presence of these signs on clay documents, relating to the royal stores, certainly suggests at least the possibility that the meaning as well as the sign may in these cases have been taken over. In a more general way the analogy between the Cretan and Egyptian hieroglyphs is very striking, and it seems probable that the evolution of this island script in its conventionalized form was aided by a knowledge of the existence of the highly-developed Egyptian system. It is an additional proof of the intimate relations existing between Crete and Egypt under the XVIIIth and XIXth Dynasties.

The linear documents, which form the great bulk of the Knossian series, show a much more advanced method of writing, and the Egyptian parallels are here less in evidence. A sign resembling the *ankh*  seems, however, to point to direct borrowing, and so also does another resembling the rectangle which holds the *ka*-name of Egyptian kings. The system of numeration, moreover, which I have now succeeded in elucidating, certainly shows a close parallelism with the Egyptian. The system is decimal. The units, consisting of upright strokes, are practically the same as the Egyptian. The tens are generally horizontal lines, which, however, at times show traces of curvature, suggesting an original derivation from the curved Egyptian form. The hundreds are circles, the lines of which are at times somewhat irregular and overlapping, thus recalling the Egyptian coil, which has the same significance.

It is impossible here more than to allude to the very important bearing of the existence of these early Cretan scripts on the question of the origin of the Phoenician alphabet. Taking the theoretic pictorial originals of the Phoenician forms, as indicated by their names, it appears that over two-thirds of them correspond with actual types of one or other of the Cretan systems. The analogy, at any rate, is overwhelming; and it is not too much to say that, in view of this parallel evolution on opposite shores of the same East Mediterranean basin, De Rouge's theory of the origin of the Phoenician letters from hieratic forms, such as those presented by the Prisse Papyrus, must be definitely abandoned. It is possible even to go further and to see in the Semitic and Cretan characters members of the same generic group. A key to this phenomenon may eventually be supplied by the early Ægean

settlement on the coast of Canaan, as represented by the Philistines. The fresh evidence, to which Dr. Wilhelm Max Müller (*Mitth. d. Vorderas. Ges.* 1900) has called attention, of the identity of Caphtor with the land of the Keftiu makes it more and more probable that the Biblical traditions were right in making Crete the original home of at least one large section of the Philistines. Gaza, itself, never forgot its Minoan foundation, and to its latest pagan period maintained the cult of the Cretan Zeus.

Hitherto we have been concerned with more or less indirect evidences of Egyptian contact with Crete during the last half of the second millennium before our era. Various relics, such as vases and sealstones, which lie outside my present scope, carry the proofs of this intercourse back to the time of the Old Empire.* So far as the Palace of Knossos itself is concerned a monument remains to be described which shows that direct relations existed between its royal house and the land of the Pharaohs at a date anterior to the great days of Mycenae. This is a small seated male figure of diorite (see Plate), the upper part of which is broken, but which bears hieroglyphic inscriptions on three sides. It was found in the great Eastern Court of the Palace.

Mr. F. Ll. Griffith, to whom I submitted photographs and squeezes of the inscription, reads and interprets it as follows:—



Back:—*Ym'ly l'r ntr · nb pt | Yb-nb-ms-w'zt(?)†-w'sr m'· hrw.*

“Devoted to the Great God, Lord of Heaven Ab-nub-mes-wazet (?)—user, true of voice.”

Sides:—*Ym'ly Yb-nb-ms-w'zt(?)·w'sr m'· hrw | ms n ym'lyt s't-Hthr m'·t hrw.*

“The Devoted Ab-nub-mes-wazet-user, true of voice, born of the devoted Sat-Hathor, true of voice.”

Mr. Griffith observes that “the names are of Middle Kingdom style, such as lasted to temp. Thothmes III. of the XVIIIth Dynasty, but it would be impossible to find such a collocation of old names on an XVIIth Dynasty monument. The epithet *m'· hrw* “true of voice” for “deceased”

* See my *Cretan Pictographs, etc.*, and *Further Discoveries of Cretan and Aegean Script*.

† Apparently the name of the Aphroditopolite nome, the Xth of Upper Egypt.—ED.

excludes the period before the XIth Dynasty." He adds that, "the long compound name of the person figured is very strange and perhaps points to the last days of the XIIth or to the XIIIth Dynasty as the date of the statuette."

From the character of the name, combined with the style of the figure, both Professor Petrie and Dr. Budge assign the monument to the XIIth Dynasty. The fine style of the sculpture in such a hard material as diorite at least makes it unreasonable to suppose that the monument belongs to a period of confusion and decline such as succeeded the time of the XIIIth Dynasty. It must certainly be taken in connexion with the earlier elements of the Palace, of which the prae-Mycenaean painted pottery of the Kamaraes class (see J. L. Myres, *Proc. Soc. Ants.* 1895) forms a distinguishing feature. In the neighbouring houses, where this stratum was more fully explored by Mr. D. G. Hogarth, a very beautiful series of this early painted ware was obtained. Pottery of this style was found by Professor Petrie at Kahun in a XIIth Dynasty association, and he rightly insisted on its Aegean source. In one of the chambers of the Palace at Knossos pieces of fresco were found executed in the same prae-Mycenaean style, upon which is seen a figure of a youth gathering crocuses and placing them in an ornamental vase. This fact alone gives a sufficient idea of the high state of culture that prevailed within the Palace of Knossos at the end of the third or the beginning of the second millennium before our era, and sufficiently explains the civilized intercourse with the Egypt of the Middle Kingdom which was instrumental in conveying the diorite monument to the place where it was brought to light.*

* A bronze statuette of Amon Ra, wanting only the feet, was also found by Mr. D. G. Hogarth in the lower sanctuary of the Dictaen Cave. It is attributed by Dr. Budge to the time of the XXIIInd Dynasty.

