THE CONTEXT OF THE KNOSSOS TABLETS

by J. T. Hooker

Certain opinions about Aegean prehistory are beginning to harden into dogmas. Theories which were evolved before the last war in direct and deliberate opposition to the authority of Sir Arthur Evans have themselves become orthodox; and it is necessary to subject these theories, in their turn, to continual testing. An outstanding example of this type of theory is concerned with the context of the Linear B tablets from Knossos. Evans believed (correctly, in my view) that the great bulk of these tablets were preserved by a disastrous fire which swept through the palace at the end

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1 The abbreviations of the titles of periodicals are those used in L'année philologique. Other abbreviations are as follows:

AoC = J. D. S. Pendlebury, The archaeology of Crete (1939).


CMP = A. Furumark, The chronology of Mycenaean pottery (1941).

CS = V. E. G. Kenna, Cretan seals (1960).


LMWG = M. S. F. Hood & P. de Jong, ‘Late Minoan warrior-graves from Ayios Ioannis and the new Hospital site at Knossos’, ABSA xlvii (1952), 243-277.


Tiryns = G. Rodenwaldt, Tiryns II (1912).
of the Late Minoan II ceramic period, c. 1400 B.C. Like all subsequent observers, Evans was impressed by the unique character of the Late Minoan II period at Knossos. It is only at Knossos that a distinctive ‘Late Minoan II’ culture can be discerned. Evans thought the reason for this was that the inhabitants of Knossos had destroyed one by one the other sites in Crete and then, under the leadership of «a new and aggressive dynasty», had assumed control over the whole island \(^2\). This picture has been confirmed by an examination of the pottery found at Cretan sites other than Knossos. The palatial settlement at Mallia was destroyed at the outset of Late Minoan Ia. Furumark argues from ceramic evidence that Gournia, Mochlos, Palaikastro, and Pseira, which had maintained a vigorous life throughout Late Minoan Ia, came to an end some time before the close of Ib. The latest palace pottery from Ayia Triada and Phaistos also, according to Furumark, belongs to the Ib period \(^3\). The so-called ‘megaron’ at Sklavokampos was destroyed apparently at the beginning of Ib \(^4\). Recent excavation at Zakro has confirmed that there too the palace was devastated in Late Minoan Ib \(^5\). So far the evidence is negative: we know simply that the foregoing sites were destroyed before the beginning of Late Minoan II. The connexion with Knossos seems to be established by the fact that, of all the main Cretan centres, only Knossos with its dependency at Nirou Khani survived into Late Minoan II as a palatial site \(^6\). The conclusion that in Late Minoan II Knossos had control over, or at least administrative interest in, widely scattered sites does not rest on surmise. The Linear B tablets mention, besides Knossos itself, the following places: Amnisos, Dikte, Kydonia, Lyktos, Phaistos, Setaia, Tylissos, as well as some more dubious names \(^7\). The demonstration by Betts that seal-impressions from the same ring occur at different sites in Crete is consistent with the concept of a «centralized bureaucracy at Knossos.» \(^8\) It seems likely that, whether or not Knossos was responsible for devastating the other centres, it was at any rate the beneficiary of their destruction. Apart from the place-names, the tablets give another indication of the aggressive character of Knossos at the end of the fifteenth century. Long before Ventris’ decipherment, Evans inferred from the ideograms depicted on some classes of tablets (notably those now known as Ra, R, Sc, Sd, Se, Sf, Sg, Sk, So) that they were the

\(^2\) *PM IV*, 786, 885.
\(^3\) *CMP*, 82; *OpArch* vi (1950), 250 n. 3.
\(^4\) Marinatos, *AE* lxviii (1939-1941), 94.
\(^6\) I am not yet convinced that the cessation of these sites can be ascribed to an eruption on Thera.
\(^8\) *Kadmos* vi (1967), 27.
inventories of large amounts of warlike stores: chariots, chariot-wheels, horses, corsets, spears, arrows, swords, and helmets. Whether the horse and war-chariot made their first appearance at Knossos in Late Minoan II, as Evans believed, is made doubtful by Alexiou's publication of fragments of a chariot-fresco which may belong to an earlier period. But the main conclusion is not disturbed: the militaristic character of Knossos at this time is something unprecedented in Minoan history. Evans saw other clear signs of this militarism in the 'Captain of the Blacks' fresco and, above all, in the construction of warrior-graves.

At no time did Evans consider the possibility that some of the innovations he detected in Late Minoan II Knossos had been brought in from outside. But during the 1930's a number of writers wondered whether some features which Evans had identified there might not be due to Mycenaean influence. In particular, the distinctive 'Palace Style' of Late Minoan II Knossos was thought to be an import from the Mycenaean centres of the Peloponnese. G. A. S. Snijder, in his Kretische Kunst (1936), claimed to have discovered mainland traits in the artefacts (especially the frescoes and pottery) of this last palatial period; and even Pendlebury, Evans' disciple, thought it was hard to argue against him. Pendlebury was of course a long way from supposing that mainlanders had invaded Knossos during the fifteenth century; in fact, he explicitly dissociated himself from any such theory. But Wace and some other scholars had come to believe in a Mycenaean invasion and occupation by the time that Pendlebury's Archaeology of Crete was published in 1939. Ventris' decipherment of the Linear B script was thought to make even stronger the case for mainland control of Knossos in Late Minoan II. Only those writers who reject the validity of the decipherment reject also the notion of a Mycenaean conquest. For Wace, the presence of Greek at Knossos was only the fact which clinched the case for a mainland occupation. He found the evidence for mainland connexion in some of the types of pottery found in Late Minoan II Knossos, the construction of tholoi, the style of the frescoes, and the insertion into the west wing of the palace of a throne room with mainland antecedents. An investigation of the milieu of the tablets must take account of all these facts of the Knossian palace culture in its closing phase.

**Pottery**

Late Minoan II pottery of the 'Palace Style' appears only at Knossos.

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9 AA (1964), 785-804.
10 PM IV, 826-871.
11 AoC, 227 n. 1.
Its most grandiose representatives show a different spirit from that of the majority of Late Minoan Ib pottery known to us. The number of motifs is reduced, while abstract decorative patterns tend to be more fussy and elaborate and are often modelled on the wall-painting of the period. Naturalistic motifs are much more highly stylized than in Ia and Ib. A common floral motif consists of a clump of lilies growing up from the lower part of the vase. The Ib type of octopus sometimes occurs as main decoration, but now with its tentacles 'combed out'. Fewer vessel-type are found: the most characteristic shape of the Palace Style, and the one on which most care was lavished, is the large 'pithoid jar', with three or nine handles. Furumark has shown that in Late Minoan II, in contrast with the situation in the preceding period, there is little direct Cretan influence on mainland pottery. On the contrary, it may well be that the Palace Style vases of Knossos were made by artists consciously imitating the pottery of the mainland. The monumental character of the Knossian style, its relatively poor fabric and florid decoration, and above all its use in warrior-graves in association with weapons point to its inspiration by mainland customs. Snijder was thus right to consider the possibility that the Knossian Palace Style was a sign of mainland influence on Crete. What Snijder carefully does not say is that the Late Minoan II pottery is merely an offshoot of the mainland style. It is in fact most unlikely that this pottery was made by Minoans to the order of Mycenaean conquerors. A most important objection to such a theory arises as soon as Late Minoan II pottery is seen in its historical context. The LM II pottery style grows organically out of the LM Ib, which at Knossos, as Evans saw, overlaps it chronologically. Evans wrote further: « In order to understand this 'Palace Style' — so intimately connected with the residence of the last Priest-Kings — it is necessary to pass in review the products of the preceding LM I stages, particularly of LM Ib, from which it indeed arose by a gradual transition. The grandiose fabrics of the last palatial epoch very largely depend on this later LM I style... » It is still easier to follow this organic development now that a stratified deposit of LM Ib pottery has been found to the north of the 'Royal Road' at Knossos. The deposit contained the upper part of a pithoid jar decorated in the 'marine style', which the excavator rightly regards as the ancestor of the LM II jars.

13 'Pithoid jar' is the term used by Furumark to describe his Form 7. Evans called this shape 'amphoroid jar'; for him, 'pithoid jar' meant something different, PM IV, 262. For a fuller account of LM II pottery than is possible or necessary here, see especially PM IV, 297-371; MP, 166-169; AoC, 208-212.
14 MP, 489-497.
15 KK, 124.
16 PM IV, 322.
17 PM IV, 259; see also MP, 166.
The context of the Knossos tablets

decorated with marine motifs. The discovery at Knossos of a direct ancestor of the Palace Style must significantly weaken the link between that style and the practices of the mainland. So long as all the examples of grandiose pithoid jars which antedated Late Minoan II came from the mainland, it was easy to attribute their manufacture in Late Minoan II Knossos solely to the operation of mainland influence. In particular, the magnificent series of pithoid jars from Kakovatos in Messenia were seen as the immediate inspiration of the Late Minoan II Palace Style. Now that the great pithoid jar at Kakovatos decorated in the marine style finds its analogue in contemporary Crete, we must surely abandon the scheme:

Mainland Palace Style

Cretan LM Ib Marine Style

Cretan LM II Palace Style

in favour of a much simpler and more plausible one:

Mainland Palace Style

Cretan LM Ib Marine Style

Cretan LM II Palace Style

Furumark has demonstrated further that Late Minoan II pottery uses some motifs which have clear antecedents in Late Minoan Ib but none on the mainland; while the mainland characteristics of Furumark’s ‘Mycenaean IIa’ style are accentuated in Mycenaean IIb. Another important contribution by Furumark to the study of Aegean pottery is his confirmation of the existence of a separate ceramic style, called by him Late Minoan IIIa1. This represents a further development of Late Minoan Ib and is exemplified by some of the latest pottery-deposits at and near Knossos just before the destruction of the palace. Evans himself foreshadowed the separate LM IIIa1 style when he called an alabastron from Zapher Papoura a « copious illustration of the immediately succeeding ceramic style, which may best be referred to the early part of LM IIIa... Chronologically even it may actually come within the limits of the Palace period. » The motifs of this rather

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19 Müller, MDAI (A) xxxiv (1909), pl. XVI (Vase 1) = PM IV, 278 fig. 213. One has to admit that Evans confused the issue by assuming that ‘Palace Style’ jars, whether found in Crete or on the mainland, were all equally of Cretan fabric.
20 OpArch vi (1950), 257.
21 CMP, 83-84; MP, 169-171.
22 PM IV, 356. Alexiou has assigned a beaked jug from Tomb II at Katsambas to the same style, Kretika Chronika vi (1952), 37.
degenerate style are developed from those of Late Minoan II, but the marine
and vegetable designs are fast losing any contact with reality and are merely
space-filling ornaments. It is very important for our present purpose to
note that the corresponding style on the mainland, Furumark’s Mycenaean
IIIa1, is quite different from Late Minoan IIIa1 and, so far from reacting on
the Minoan style, it has itself received some influences from Crete 23.

As well as the Palace Style jar, the ‘Ephyraean’ goblet has been thought
to indicate far-reaching Mycenaean influence in Late Minoan II Knossos 24.
Wace, who is concerned to prove a domination by mainlanders at this time,
concedes that Cretan imitations of Ephyraean ware are markedly inferior to
the mainland originals in both fabric and design 25. It seems to me very
difficult to reconcile the theory of mainland domination with the suggestion
that the two characteristic shapes of mainland pottery were being imitated,
not with great success, by Cretan craftsmen. The invasion of aggressive
Mycenaeans in which we are invited to believe would surely have provoked
the initiation of a new and vigorous style, as it did in Cyprus and in Rhodes
— not the tired and rapidly degenerating one which we see in fact. Failing
the establishment of a new local style, the invaders would have brought their
own pottery with them; and yet even Wace can point to only two fragments
of mainland pottery at Knossos 26. The Late Minoan II-IIIa1 pottery no
more suggests a Mycenaean domination in Crete than the ‘Mycenaean I’
pottery in the Shaft Graves implies a Cretan supremacy over the mainland.
In the Shaft Grave era the culture of Crete was in the ascendant, and My­
cenaean pottery in the Cretan manner was demanded; so in the last palatial
period at Knossos, when the cultural initiative had passed to the mainland,
perhaps it was Mycenaean pottery that the Cretan craftsmen were set to
copy 27.

Seals

The late Minoan II period at Knossos is not marked by any sudden
changes in the art of seal-engraving 28. The antithetic or heraldic style which

23 MP, 504-505. Cf. also Schachermeyr, ArchOrient xvii (1949), 349. In the course
of his re-examination of the pottery actually in use when the palace was destroyed,
Popham has discerned no sign of mainland influence, Antiquity xi (1966), 24-28.
24 Knossian imitations of Ephyraean ware are illustrated at PM IV, figs. 302, 306,
and at LMWG, 263 fig. 9:1, 2, with pl. 55b.
25 ABAI li (1956), 126.
26 Namely the sherds illustrated by Evans at PM II, 485 figs. 291 d-e.
27 One shape at least, the squat alabastron, which has long been held to be of
mainland origin, may very well have begun in Crete, since in Tomb I at Katsambas and
in some of the graves at Ayios Ioannis squat alabastra have been found of exactly the
same fabric as that of the associated pottery and without any indication of a foreign
provenience, Hutchinson, Antiquity xxviii (1954), 184; LMWG, 254-255.
28 CS, 55.
had arisen in LM Ib continued in LM II \(^{29}\), and several examples of seals showing animals confronting each other date from both these two periods \(^{30}\). Another mannerism is typical of the mature palace period: an animal in a contorted posture, with its head turning toward the centre of the field \(^{31}\). Apart from this torsional type (which there is no reason to think is other than Cretan \(^{32}\)), there is little development in the design of seals within the palace period, except that toward the end of the palace period a decline seems to set in, corresponding to the ceramic transition from LM II to LM IIIa\(^{33}\). It is suggested by Kenna that some of the seals of the last palatial period show signs of mainland workmanship: for example, a seal from Ayios Ioannis bearing the picture of a lion, a sealing from the Little Palace where a horse with mane dressed in the mainland manner has been superimposed on a ship, and a large lentoid with a Minoan subject (snake-goddess with griffins) treated in a mainland style \(^{34}\). In addition to these examples of mainland style, H. Biesantz sees evidence of mainland structure on a chalcedony seal from Tomb I at Isopata \(^{35}\), whereas, according to him, the gold ring found in the same tomb \(^{36}\) displays a purely Minoan structure \(^{37}\). If this analysis is correct (and the non-specialist is bound to say that there seem to exist no certain or well-defined criteria for distinguishing mainland from Cretan work \(^{38}\)), the Isopata tomb presents the same picture as that given by the tholos at Vaphio, where Mycenaean and Minoan seals were found side by side. The witness of the seals then seems to confirm the evidence from pottery: the workmanship is for the most part Cretan, but it seems to be infected here and there by mainland taste, while objects of an indisputably mainland origin form only a small part of the total material.

\(^{29}\) AoC, 220-221; MMR, 387.
\(^{30}\) E.g. MMR, figs. 162, 168, 173, 188; PM III, 515-516 fig. 362.
\(^{31}\) See especially the picture of a lion on a lentoid associated with LM II pottery CS, 55 fig. 115 = PM IV, 588 fig. 583.
\(^{32}\) It is only a late and highly sophisticated development of a trait which is seen on the best Cretan glyptic from its earliest days: the ability of the seal-engraver to make his subject fit exactly the field available to him. See Matz, Die frühkretischen Siegel (1928), pll. IX 23, XIV 10, and, above all, XIX 5c; and compare PM IV, 588-589.
\(^{33}\) Kenna, Kadmos iii (1964), 29-57, deals with the seals of LM II and IIIa. For the Knossos sealings inscribed with Linear B signs, see especially Gill, Kadmos v (1966), 1-16.
\(^{34}\) Respectively: AWG, 93-95 fig. 5 no. 3; PM IV, 827 fig. 805 = CS, 58 fig. 121; LMWG, 272 no. III 20. On this last, cf. CS, 63.
\(^{35}\) TDA, 9 figs. 13, 14.
\(^{36}\) TDA, 10 fig. 16.
\(^{37}\) Kretisch-mykenische Siegelbilder (1954), 47.
\(^{38}\) See CS, 80-81, and Betts, AJA lxx (1966), 368-369. Kenna replies to Betts at AJA lxxi (1967), 409-410.
In broad outline, the following account is given by Evans of the progress of wall-painting in the new palaces which arose in Crete at the very end of Middle Minoan III. In the paintings of the MM IIb-LM Ia transition, human beings do not as a rule play a dominant part; generally, the scenes are excerpted from wild nature (blue monkeys in a rocky landscape, partridges and hoopoes, cats stalking a pheasant) or from parks and gardens (as on a fresco at Amnisos). Human figures begin to appear on frescoes, at least at Knossos, rather later in the LM Ia period. The Palanquin Fresco shows a robed figure carried by others; on the Toreador Fresco, girls and young men vault over charging bulls; while the Priest-King Relief depicts a gorgeous figure (whom there is no reason to suppose is either priest or king) wearing a head-dress of feathers. Still later in the history of the Knossian palace, large surfaces were covered with paintings, such as the Procession and Camp-Stool Frescoes, the Captain of the Blacks, and the Griffin Fresco in the throne room. Therefore, following the scheme laid down by Evans, we may say that at the outset of the late palace period the wall-painters favoured naturalistic landscapes, in all likelihood (to judge from a comparison with the floral motifs on Middle Minoan II pottery) similar to the frescoes of the earlier palaces. Gradually they superimposed human figures on this naturalistic background; but these figures seem still to inhabit a curiously unreal world. As Miss Banti rightly says, the elements taken from nature are not yet an accessory part of the decoration but are necessary to it. The fully-developed Palace Style, on the other hand, depicts human figures in ceremonial attitudes taking part in some elaborate ritual connected with palace life (as on the Procession and Cup-Bearer Frescoes) or consists of a heraldic device with a highly stylized background (above all on the Griffin Fresco).

Miss Banti herself thinks that this change of emphasis in the subject-matter of the Knossian frescoes is explained best by postulating an influence from the mainland, particularly since the change to the more pompous and ceremonial style is not seen elsewhere in Crete. She points out that in what we know of Mycenaean art man is the protagonist while nature is disregarded: it is this artistic canon which has reacted upon Knossian wall-painting to produce the frescoes of the developed Palace Style. In reply to the objection that Mycenaean art provides no antecedents for this style before the fifteenth century, Miss Banti suggests it is possible that Minoan artists had gone to the mainland before the Late Minoan II period and had begun to paint the subjects demanded by their masters at Mycenae and Tiryns, so forming

39 See also AoC, 197, and PC, 275-278.
40 PM IV, 1002 supp. pll. lxvii a-b.
41 Luisa Banti, Γέρας Αντωνίου Κεραμοπούλου (1953), 121.
a school which in its turn influenced wall-decoration at Knossos. So Snijder brings the latest Knossian frescoes into relationship with the contemporary Palace Style pottery of LM II; frescoes and pottery, he maintains, are alike the product of «a new spirit», which may be traced back to the mainland and which aims throughout at the formal and the abstract.

So far from agreeing with Miss Banti and Snijder that the LM II frescoes are the products of a Mycenaean school, I find it hard to believe that the Knossian paintings of any period show particularly strong traces of influence from the mainland. Such a conclusion would be at variance with a fact of which there can hardly be any doubt, namely, that in the earlier mainland palaces the frescoes were painted by Cretans or by mainlanders under Cretan tutelage. After a careful comparison of the Cretan and early mainland frescoes on the one hand and the later mainland work on the other, Rodenwaldt concludes (and I see no reason to disagree with him) that all the oldest paintings at Tiryns, Mycenae, and Orchomenos were produced by Cretan artists who had set up workshops there. To this list we may now add Boeotian Thebes. Not only are Cretan mannerisms everywhere apparent on the earlier wall-paintings on the mainland, but one or two examples, such as the Shield Fresco at Tiryns and the Frieze of Women in the Kadmeion, are directly descended from Knossian frescoes known to us. We are therefore faced with the same choice which confronts us in the case of the LM II pottery from Knossos: either a simple hypothesis of a common origin of both the mainland and the Knossian Palace Style, or the more complicated one which supposes that the Knossos style has not developed directly from its native ancestors.

Even so, the differences between the mainland frescoes and the earlier examples from Crete are not so clear cut as Miss Banti suggests. The Ladies in Blue Fresco seems to date from the beginning of the last palace at Knossos, and yet it already shows a concern with human figures. Again, Miss Banti is surely wrong to state that no fresco-fragment from the mainland displays the naturalism which was dominant in Crete. Wholly Minoan in spirit are the Tiryns fragments depicting vegetable life which derive from

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42 Steiner, 127.
43 KK, 154.
44 Tiryns, 202.
45 Reusch, Die zeichnerische Rekonstruktion des Frauenfrieses im böotischen Theben (1956).
46 Tiryns, 34-40 pl. V. Some painted fragments from Thebes seem also to form part of a shield-frieze, AA (1953), 16-25.
47 Rekonstruktion des Frauenfrieses, 48-59.
48 PM I, 544-547 fig. 397.
49 Steiner, 125.
the naturalistic frescoes of the Cretan palaces: we have a bird in a thicket \(^{50}\), part of a tree \(^{51}\), flowers on a white ground \(^{52}\), a blue ground \(^{53}\), a red ground \(^{54}\). Rather than believe that there is any profound gap between the mainland and the Cretan frescoes, I should say that the fragmentary paintings from the mainland palaces of Late Helladic I and II give the same picture as that presented by some of the Minoan monuments in the Shaft Graves: that is, they are thoroughly Cretan in style and technique, but sometimes their subject-matter corresponds more closely to what was demanded by mainland taste. Many fragments, for example, depict scenes of warfare and hunting which are uncommon in Crete. A frieze showing a warrior and his attendants with chariots and horses comes from the earlier palace at Mycenae \(^{55}\), while two fragments from Tiryns belong apparently to a chariot-frieze \(^{56}\). In Crete these subjects were rarely treated by fresco-painters so far as we know: the most 'militaristic' painting from Knossos is the Captain of the Blacks, with which some fragments from Tiryns showing marching soldiers with spears \(^{57}\) may perhaps be compared.

In order to show that the Late Minoan II frescoes at Knossos point to a Mycenaean supremacy there it would presumably be necessary to prove that at the beginning of LM II, for the first time, the Knossian frescoes display characteristics which may be referred unequivocally to the mainland. No such proof can be forthcoming unless, first, a method for the exact dating of frescoes is worked out and, second, it is shown that some of the traits shared by Knossos and the mainland came from the mainland to Crete and not vice versa. At present, of course, we are very far from having any criteria by which to date frescoes with any exactness; and it is not surprising that the principal writers on Cretan archaeology differ widely in their chronology of Minoan wall-painting \(^{58}\). What seems clear enough is that the more formal and ceremonial style of the later frescoes found at Knossos represents a gradual breaking-away from the largely naturalistic school which flourished at the

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\(^{50}\) *Tiryns*, 19-20 pl. I 5.

\(^{51}\) *Tiryns*, 20-21 pl. III 5.

\(^{52}\) *Tiryns*, 21-22 pl. III 3.

\(^{53}\) *Tiryns*, 22 pl. III 2.

\(^{54}\) *Tiryns*, 22 pl. III 1. The closest stylistic analogy with this fragment is found in the bottom right-hand corner of the so-called Saffron Gatherer fresco from Knossos. Miss Lamb observes further a resemblance between a flower on the miniature frescoes at Mycenae and the flowers on the Griffin fresco at Knossos, *ABSA* xxiv (1919-1921), 191.

\(^{55}\) *ABSA* xxv (1921-1923), 164-165 pl. XXVII.

\(^{56}\) *Tiryns*, 8-10 pl. I 3-4.

\(^{57}\) *Tiryns*, 5-8 pl. I 6; except that the form of the soldiers' tunics is un-Cretan.

\(^{58}\) For the difficulties of dating the Cretan wall-paintings, see especially Levi, *PP* xv (1960), 113-114.
beginning of the later palaces; but this divergence is certainly apparent already in the LM Ib period, and it is therefore best attributed to the changing attitudes of the Cretan artists themselves, who were also at that time initiating a tradition of wall-painting on the mainland.

**Warrior-graves**

Many of the tombs in the Zapher Papoura cemetery, a little to the north of the Knossian palace, are shaft graves similar to those in Grave Circles A and B at Mycenae. As with the mainland graves, some of the tombs at Zapher Papoura (notably the shafts 36, 42, and 44, and a number of the chamber tombs) contain weapons buried along with the corpse. In Zapher Papoura 36, the so-called Chieftain’s Grave, Evans found a particularly rich deposit, with decorated weapons in the sepulchral cell with the corpse and domestic utensils laid on the covering slab. A chamber tomb to the west of the palace, dated by Evans to Late Minoan Ib, yielded the earliest example of a ‘horned’ sword yet found in Crete. More recently, five tombs near Knossos (a shaft grave at Ayios Ioannis and Tombs I, II, III, and V on the Hospital Site) have been excavated. Each of these contained a large spear-head and a ‘cruciform’ sword, analogous to Evans’ finds at Zapher Papoura. Another warrior-grave in the same area has yielded an even richer deposit of weapons: a cruciform sword, two daggers, six spear-heads, a small riveted blade, and six arrow-heads. The excavator, M. S. F. Hood, compares this armoury with the contents of the Mycenaean shaft graves and the tholos tomb at Dendra. Probably indeed the custom of burying a warrior with his personal arms, though a natural enough development in such a militaristic milieu, had been imitated from the mainland, where it had been practised from at least as early as the close of the Middle Helladic period. However, those scholars who believe that Knossos became a Mycenaean enclave in Late Minoan II have not been content to speak merely of imitation in respect of the warrior-graves and other Knossian tombs. They have pointed to the well-known fact that, apart from the Early Minoan vaulted tombs of the Mesarà, built graves did not become common in Crete until near the end of the palatial era. Schachermeyr, for instance, has argued from the shape of some of the LM II tombs and from some of the objects found in them that a Mycenaean warrior-caste was in possession of Knossos by LM II. «The most convincing argument,» he writes, «seems to me to lie in the sudden appearance of the Mycenaean chamber tomb about 1460.»

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59 PTK, 441-449; PM IV, 859-867.
60 PM IV, 849.
61 LMWG passim.
62 AWG passim.
Schachermeyr thus assumes at the outset the very fact he is seeking to prove, namely, that *Mycenaean* tombs make their appearance at Knossos at about 1460; and it may be questioned whether his evidence permits so far-reaching a conclusion. He draws a sharp distinction between the shape of Cretan chamber tombs before the beginning of LM II and the shape they assumed during that period. The older type, represented by some of the tombs in the Mavro Spelio cemetery, had no *stomion*, while the chambers consisted of mere cavities in the rock of irregular shape. On the other hand, some of the LM II tombs have a well-marked *dromos* with a proper room, not just a cavity, for the interment of the dead — good examples being provided by Tomb III on the Hospital Site, the Tomb of the Double Axes, and the Royal Tomb at Isopata. Schachermeyr, remarking that this type of chamber tomb had been common on the mainland from Late Helladic I onward, concludes that it must have been transplanted from there to Knossos.

It is always hazardous to try to trace the influence of one type of tomb on another simply by looking at the ground-plans and ignoring the details of construction. Such a procedure has led Persson, for example, to the most unlikely conclusion that the Mycenae chamber tombs were derived from Egypt. The fact is that the construction of no Cretan built tomb before 1400 can be related so closely to any of the three great mainland tomb-types — shafts, chambers, and tholoi — that it must have been derived from a mainland prototype. The ‘tholos’ tomb on the Kephala ridge near Knossos, whose construction is of uncertain date but is placed by Hutchinson in Late Minoan Ia, can be traced back to the Mesarás tombs without the necessity of postulating any influence from the mainland. In the same manner, the LM II chamber tombs could have developed organically from their native forerunners in Middle Minoan III, as Pendlebury suggested in respect of the Mavro Spelio cemetery: «the old rock shelters were now beginning to be improved by deeper cutting into the hillside and are foreshadowing the later chamber tombs.» Such a development would be quite in keeping with the grandeur of the last palace period at Knossos, exemplified also by the Palace Style pottery found in many of the tombs. In any case, by the time that the new palaces were built, late in the Middle Minoan III period, the concept of an elaborate built tomb was no longer alien to the

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63 JOEAI xliv (1960), 62.
64 *ABSA* xxviii (1926-1927), 243-296, especially 256 fig. 8.
65 *New tombs at Dendra* (1942), 164-175.
66 *ABSA* li (1956), 74-80.
67 Of interest also is Hutchinson’s remark, op. cit., 76, that both the Kephala and the Isopata ‘tholoi’ lie on the crest of a ridge and are not cut into the slope as is usual with Mycenaean tombs.
The context of the Knossos tablets

Minoan mind. In the transition between MM IIIb and LM Ia, the great Temple Tomb in its first form was built to the south of the Knossian palace, being restored and enlarged later in the Late Minoan period.69

Two of the actual examples of Late Minoan chamber tombs cited by Schachermeyer may be considered in a light which damages rather than helps his case. The construction of the Royal Tomb at Isopata cannot be placed beyond all doubt in the LM II period. Schachermeyer states that there is no reason to believe that it was built in LM I.70 Yet Evans has mentioned two grounds for suspecting that, in spite of the LM II character of most of the finds, the tomb itself was built earlier. The affinities of the Egyptian objects nos. 3, 4, 12, 21 suggest that they belong to a period considerably before the beginning of LM II.71 Four incised signs were found on a coping stone of the tomb, which correspond to those in fashion when the palace was re-built.72 If there is even a possibility that this princely tomb was built in fact well before Late Minoan II, it should not be used as evidence to prove a «sudden appearance» of a certain tomb-type at the beginning of that period.

Another tomb cited by Schachermeyer to show that there were Mycenaean interments at Knossos in Late Minoan II is Evans' no. II at Isopata, the Tomb of the Double Axes. Here there are different reasons for discounting Schachermeyer's conclusions. The date of the construction of this tomb at some time within Late Minoan II is attested by the presence of Palace Style pottery,73 while there is nothing to suggest an earlier date. There are, however, strong indications that, so far from being the burial-place of a Mycenaean conqueror, the Tomb of the Double Axes was dedicated, at least in part, to the usages of a purely native Minoan cult. «The rock-cut ledge in front of the recess immediately beyond the inner border of the sepulchral cist» described by Evans74 is reminiscent of the ledge in a whole series of Minoan shrines, of which the foremost example is the Shrine of the Double Axes in the Knossian palace (MM III).75 On the floor of the tomb were found fragments of a bull's head rhyton and, near them, a pair of double axes in bronze and a tall vessel with coiled handles which also may have been intended for a ritual purpose.76 If we consider this tomb as a whole,

69 PM IV, 973-983 fig. 938. It is noteworthy that the excavator puts the building of Tomb B at Arkhanes (a tholos with dromos) in the early part of the palatial period; Ergon (1966), 136. Cf. also Archaeology XX (1967), 276-281.
70 JOEAI xlv (1960), 63.
71 PTK, 555-556.
72 PTK, 557.
73 TDA, figs. 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67.
74 TDA, 55.
75 PM II, 335.
76 TDA, 53-55.
bearing in mind the ledge, the rhyton, and above all the double axes which had been from Early Minoan times typical implements of Cretan cult, and if we add to these already significant circumstances the facts that the cist was actually cut out of the rock in the shape of a double axe and that the chamber «proved to be of a complex form altogether unique among any existing Minoan or Mycenaean tombs, » 77 we see how little reason there really is to postulate here an influence from the mainland. The arrangements and contents of the tomb clearly reflect the type of house-sanctuary developed in Cretan palaces in Middle Minoan. Moreover, these manifestations of native cult-practices are connected with the burial of a person of some consequence, for whose sole use there was constructed a large and elaborate tomb containing weapons and luxurious pottery.

An examination may be made of some of the other objects found in the Knossian warrior-graves, to see whether these point to the essentially Minoan character of the tombs or suggest an overwhelming influence from the mainland. Among the warlike contents of the graves, the swords are the most impressive and the most immediately relevant. Although, as has already been suggested, the interment of warriors in splendid tombs along with their personal arms may well reflect mainland practice, the swords actually found at Knossos are far from giving any clue to the nationality of the dead warriors. I suspect that sometimes these are taken to be Mycenaeans simply because the mainland seems to be the home of warfare in the Aegean. Persson, for instance, holds that «we are justified in assuming the sword to be an invention of the Greek Mainland — it is more in keeping with the warlike princes around the Argive plain than with the art-loving and peaceful Cretans... The fact that the same types of weapons and, to a certain extent, strikingly similar examples exist in Crete, e.g. from tombs near Knossos, must not be allowed to mislead us. The Cretan tombs concerned belong to the late Mycenaean period, a period when the inhabitants of the Mainland made themselves lords of the island and certainly to a great extent supplanted the former inhabitants. » 78 The facts fail to support so emotional a judgment. In his fundamental treatment of Aegean sword-types, Evans distinguished three great classes which I shall refer to here respectively as (i) the long rapier with prominent midrib, (ii) the 'horned' type of sword, and (iii) the sword of 'cruciform' shape 79. It is illuminating to consider the distribution of these types both on the mainland and in Cretan deposits. Both (i) and (ii) were found in the shaft graves of Circle A at Mycenae 80; and it may be

77 TDA, 35.
78 The royal tombs at Dendra (1931), 61.
79 PM IV, 845-867.
80 Karo, Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai (1930), 97-98. My (i) = Karo's Typus A (fig. 31) and (ii) = Typus B (fig. 30).
noted that the same two types were present also in the earlier Grave Circle B. Karo, no less than Evans, saw that the forerunners of at least one of the shaft grave types, namely (i), were to be found in Crete. The most striking early representative of this type from Crete is the well-known sword from Mallia, which presumably ante-dates even the first Grave Circle at Mycenae. It therefore seems at least possible that the earliest swords in the Aegean were made by Cretans, from whom the mainlanders borrowed the idea. The use of sword-type (i) had however died out by Late Minoan II, and types (ii) and (iii) were those found in the Knossos warriorgraves. Their derivation is harder to establish with certainty. As Evans pointed out, the true horned sword (ii) is found first in the Mycenae shaft graves, whereas the cruciform type (iii), though not occurring in the shaft graves, makes its appearance at Mycenae in the immediately succeeding period. While (ii) seems to originate on the mainland, there is no strong reason for placing the prototype of (iii) there rather than in Crete. The flanged dagger from Gournia cited by Evans, which is roughly contemporary with the later shaft graves of Circle A, seems clearly to foreshadow the cruciform type (iii). Again it seems likely that a Cretan invention was both taken to the mainland and developed within Crete itself; but of course it remains possible, as Miss N. K. Sandars states in her careful study of Aegean swords, that there were two parallel inventions, mainland and Cretan. With armaments, as with other artefacts, we can see that the native tradition has come under more or less influence from the mainland; but there is no question of a wholesale displacement of Minoan culture by Helladic.

An indication of the Minoan character of some of the tombs is given by a peculiar kind of sepulture practised there, burial in a clay coffin or 'larnax'. In the Zapher Papoura cemetery, Evans found that while skeletons sometimes lay on the floor of the tombs in other cases the dead had been placed in larnakes. Now the practice of burying the dead in larnakes was of very long standing in Crete. The latest investigator has distinguished no fewer than four basic types of larnax which were in vogue in Crete in the Early and Middle Minoan periods. It has been suggested that the Late Minoan II-III oblong larnax, with legs and gabled lid, was derived from

82 *Schachtgräber*, 200-201.
83 *PM* II, 273 fig. 163.
84 *PM IV*, 847-853; *PTK*, 495-503; *LMWG*, 255; *AWG*, 95; *ABSA* li (1956).
85 *PM IV*, 851 fig. 835.
86 *AJA* lxv (1961), 25.
87 So also with spear-heads; *LMWG*, 255-256.
88 *PTK*, 396-400.
the wooden coffins which had made their appearance at Knossos in the second palatial period. Such a derivation is possible but not certain, since the Late Minoan type could result from the elaboration of a larnax-shape current in Middle Minoan I-Ill which was tending toward sharp angles even though legs were wanting and the lid was flat. The facts speak for themselves. Burial in larnakes was the custom in Crete throughout the Bronze Age, whereas on the mainland it was practically unknown until after the destruction of the Knossian palace. The few examples of larnakes from the mainland in Late Helladic III are due presumably to Cretan influence.

Architecture

When Evans wrote his account of the last palace at Knossos, he found no reason to suppose that it had been substantially altered, with one exception, from the time of re-building at the end of Middle Minoan until its destruction in 1400. The sole exception consisted in the building of the 'throne room' system to the west of the central court. From the court steps lead down to an ante-room, along two walls of which run gypsum benches. The ante-room gives access to the throne room itself: on the right-hand wall as one enters stands the throne, flanked by frescoed griffins, and opposite that is a lustral basin sunk below the level of the throne room. A door let into the wall of the throne room leads to an 'inner shrine'. The whole arrangement seems to have some sacral significance. As Evans says, «the State chamber with which we are concerned in this place, together with its ante-rooms, was throughout designed to serve a religious purpose.» Any doubts about the religious intention of the throne room system should be removed by the presence of the lustral basin opposite the throne. The lustral basin had a long history in Minoan cult, but it is not found in any mainland palace. The benches found in both throne room and ante-room are paralleled in a number of Minoan house-sanctuaries but by nothing from the mainland. The impression that the throne room is a solemn precinct of great consequence is heightened by the griffins antithetically disposed on either side of the ‘throne’. Evans thought that the throne room complex was inserted into the palace at the beginning of Late Minoan II, and his description of

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90 AWG, 86-87, following PTK, 399. Cf. Rutkowski, 106.
91 Rutkowski's Type 4. Cf. his pl. XLIII 8 = Seager, The cemetery of Pachyammos, Crete (1916), pl. XII = PM I, 586 fig. 429c.
92 Wace, Archaeologia lxxxii (1932), 139-140.
93 Vermeule, JHS lxxxv (1965), 123-148.
94 PM IV, 935.
95 MMR, 93-95, 241-242.
96 See above, p. 83.
97 Cf. Platon, Kretika Chronika v (1951), 393.
it would lead one to the conclusion that structurally it was a fundamental departure from everything that had gone before. The throne room represents, he says, «a revolutionary intrusion, effacing all previous remains. It was not here a question of engrafting on to an existing system or of raising a new structure over its remains. What we here encounter is a tabula rasa, with a wholesale invasion of new elements.» 98 This goes too far. The construction of the throne room is better regarded as a re-building than as a violent intrusion. It marks the end of a process which began with the restoration of the palace in Middle Minoan III and which involved constant alterations to the west wing. While cleaning and repairing the throne room system, Hutchinson and Platon found traces of an earlier floor, «that should not be later than the Middle Minoan IIIa period,» 99 under the 'Late Minoan II' floor of the ante-room. The whole picture is that of a set of rooms, closely conforming to the lay-out of earlier times, which was let into the west wing during Late Minoan II: there was nothing revolutionary about this — in fact, it fits neatly into the gradual evolution of the west wing as a suite of ceremonial rooms — and it does not represent an intrusion by any elements foreign to Minoan architecture or Minoan cult 100.

From what we have seen so far, the throne room system would seem to offer little comfort to those who believe that Knossos came under Mycenaean domination during the fifteenth century. Yet it is one of the principal pieces of evidence offered by the upholders of that theory. Wace was content to assert that the presence of a throne room at Knossos betrayed mainland influence, on the grounds that «the three palaces so far excavated on the Mainland at Tiryns, Mycenae and Pylos have throne rooms. Knossos has a throne room which belongs to the latest part of the palace and seems to be a later insertion into an earlier plan; the other Cretan palaces have not so far revealed throne rooms.» 101 Dow is less inhibited. «In the building itself the Greeks made few changes. Most conspicuous was the creation of a Throne Room. It was not a very large chamber, and we do not know what went on in it: but definitely it is similar to the design of Mainland throne rooms.» 102 The throne room system, then, is claimed as evidence for the seizure of Knossos by a mainland king who, it is said, caused the west wing of the palace to be remodelled drastically so as to make room for a 'megaron' of the type found in the mainland palaces at Mycenae, Pylos, and Tiryns. I think we may fairly ask the upholders of this view to show three things: first, that the fully-developed 'megaron' as seen in the mainland

98 PM IV, 902.
99 PC, 165.
101 Foreword to Ventris-Chadwick, Documents, xxiii.
102 The Greeks in the Bronze Age (1960), 15.
centres is anterior in date to the Knossian throne room; second, that the throne room system is a completely alien intrusion into the structure of the Minoan palace; third, that the throne room itself is comparable in shape, size, and intention with the mainland megaron. In considering this question, we may call in aid the masterly article of Helga Reusch, ‘Zum Wandschmuck des Thronsaales in Knossos’\textsuperscript{103}, which, I am sorry to say, has not yet become required reading among Aegean specialists.

We know little of the ground-plans of the mainland palaces as they existed before 1400; and, while we can discern there the forerunners of the later megaron, the true megaron with its great round hearth fixed in the centre does not yet appear. It is indeed tempting to infer from the close similarity between the frescoes in the Knossian throne room and those in the megaron at Pylos that the throne room may «represent a remodeling, carried out by a Mycenaean conqueror who came from the mainland.»\textsuperscript{104} Miss Reusch shows, however, that this is unacceptable on grounds of chronology\textsuperscript{105}. The fresco in the throne room, with its reclining griffins heraldically disposed, has no obvious parallels at Knossos so far as wall-painting is concerned, and, since it decorates a peculiarly sacred and important part of the palace, that is perhaps not surprising; but it takes its natural place as the final manifestation of the formal style which arose during Late Minoan Ib, in fresco-painting as in the other arts\textsuperscript{106}. There is nothing to show that the griffins at Knossos were in any way excerpted from the fresco in the Pylian megaron\textsuperscript{107}. On the contrary, at Pylos one griffin is associated with other animals and also, possibly, an episode from myth. The natural inference is that the painter of the Pylian megaron borrowed from Knossos the dominant motif of his composition, and not \textit{vice versa}\textsuperscript{108}. There is then no single fact which would indicate that the decoration of the Knossos throne room owes anything to the Pylian megaron or even that the megaron-type which is so marked a feature of the later mainland palaces had been developed by the time that the throne room was built.

We have seen already that Evans’ own description of the building of the throne room as a revolutionary intrusion has seriously misled many

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Minoica, Festschrift Sundwall} (1958), 334-358. Miss Reusch’s later paper, ‘Zum Problem des Thronraumes in Knossos’, \textit{Minoica und Homer} (1961), 31-39, is little more than a summary of her \textit{Minoica} article, except that she uses the facts so powerfully marshalled there to cast serious doubt on the possibility of an Achaean occupation of Knossos in LM II.

\textsuperscript{104} Blegen, \textit{AJA} lx (1956), 95.

\textsuperscript{105} See Reusch, \textit{Kadmos} iii (1965), 179-182.

\textsuperscript{106} See p. 78 above.

\textsuperscript{107} There is no way of differentiating ‘Minoan’ from ‘Helladic’ griffins; cf. Desenne, \textit{BCH} lxxxi (1957), 209-210.

\textsuperscript{108} Picard, \textit{RA} xlviii (1956), 77-78.
writers, and we may go on to ask a final question: to what extent is the throne room as we see it similar to the mainland megaran? Its small size makes it most unlikely that it was ever intended to be the principal ceremonial room of the palace. This point was made with great clarity and force by Evans \(^\text{109}\), but it has had to be re-stated by recent writers on ancient architecture \(^\text{110}\). It is apparently overlooked by those who think the throne room plays the same part in the Knossian palace that is played by the megaron in the mainland palaces. The mainland megaran, like the Knossos throne room, were intended to be used for ritual purposes; but the kind of cult to which they were dedicated is quite different. I have mentioned already that the lustral basin, which must have been of great importance in the ceremonies of the throne room, is a complete stranger to the mainland. On the other hand, the fixed hearth of large dimensions is unknown in Crete. The megaron is a house-type of purely mainland antecedents \(^\text{111}\), and the development of the hearth as the centre of a cult was similarly confined to the mainland \(^\text{112}\). Nothing of all this was transplanted from the mainland to Crete. The Knossian throne room was not produced by a sudden intrusion from outside; it differs in fundamental respects from the mainland megaran which are claimed as its models; and it could be used much more cogently to prove the persistence of Minoan cult than a sudden break with it. It is, in any case, completely inconsistent with the theory of a mainland occupation. Whatever the identity of the lords of Knossos in Late Minoan II, the throne room must have lain at or near the centre of their life. We cannot dismiss the throne room as the embodiment of an ancestral native custom which an alien dynasty allowed to continue in a remote part of the palace. Those who insist that Late Minoan II was a period of mainland domination at Knossos must face some disturbing facts. We should have to suppose that the mainland conquerors deliberately adapted a set of rooms for their use, equipped them to serve as the centre of a purely Minoan cult, and embellished them with decoration evolved in Crete and lacking any forerunners on the mainland.

**Conclusion**

The prevailing view of Late Minoan II Knossos gives rise to so many difficulties and sometimes, as with the throne room, to so many absurdities, that I am persuaded we must reject it. The mere presence of Greek words

\(^{109}\) *The 'Room of the Throne' that forms the centre of the Late Palatial section... must by no means be regarded as the Throne Room proper of the royal residency as a whole*, *PM IV*, 935.


\(^{111}\) Cf. Müller, *AJA* xlviii (1944), 342-348.

\(^{112}\) Schweitzer, *ABSA* xlvi (1951), 167.
and names on the Knossos tablets is not enough to prove that the tablets were written in a Mycenaean milieu. I am no more surprised to find Greek names in Late Minoan II Knossos than I should be to meet Minoan names on the mainland at the time of the shaft graves. In either case, the presence of the proper names would merely confirm what our archaeological evidence gives us no room to doubt, that from about 1550 onward there were very frequent and close contacts between mainlanders and Cretans. Settlement, migration, and even the interpenetration of one population by another are all very different from conquest and occupation. I cannot help feeling that many writers have been seduced by dramatic, even flashy, explanations which have not been subjected to the scrutiny they deserve. Here I have suggested some directions in which criticism might profitably proceed. I may in conclusion point to the plausibility of a continuing Minoan dynasty, in the light of the historical situation generally. The improbability of a Mycenaean occupation of Knossos is emphasized when we ask the question, how was the palace destroyed? An earthquake was hardly responsible, since it could not by itself have caused the terrible fire which devastated the greater part of the palace: it is significant that the many earthquakes which had previously destroyed parts of the palace were not accompanied by burning. If the destruction of c. 1400 was in fact caused by human agency, we cannot regard it as likely that a rebellion by disaffected Cretans could have visited the palace with destruction on the scale indicated by the burnt areas, particularly when we bear in mind the hundreds of chariots and other warlike gear at the disposal of the king of Knossos. It seems probable that military force of this nature could have been overcome only by superior force; and, so far as we know, there is no other place in the Aegean apart from the cities of the Argolid which could have mounted such a successful attack. The identification of the destroyers as mainlanders is corroborated by evidence from the mainland itself and from other parts of the Mediterranean. The mainlanders stood to gain from the fall of Knossos, and that they did gain is shown by the enormous increase of Mycenaean trade in the thirteenth century, by the supersession of Cretans by mainlanders in Minoan settlements abroad, and by the sudden appearance of Cretan objects on the mainland c. 1400. If Mycenaean were already in control at Knossos in Late Minoan II, it is hard to understand why the great commercial expansion and colonization by the mainlanders were delayed until after the destruction of the Knossian palace. The facts so far given are explicable only if we assume the continuation of Minoan rule at Knossos in the Late Minoan II period. Although the influence and power of Crete were receding fast, she would still have been a considerable stumbling-block to the commercial ambitions

\[\text{Furumark, } OpArch \text{ vi (1950), 264-265. Cf. AJA lxxi (1967), 276.}\]
of the mainland powers, not least because of her remote trading-posts in Rhodes and on the Anatolian coast. It may be suggested that the mainlanders removed this competition by destroying the Knossian palace so effectively that it never again became a kingly centre. After 1400 we see in fact the growth of an immense Mycenaean trade in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, with increasing interests also in Italy and Sicily.\footnote{See especially Desborough, \textit{The last Mycenaeans and their successors} (1964) and Taylour, \textit{Mycenaean pottery in Italy} (1958).}