

M. S. F. HOOD

STRATIGRAPHIC EXCAVATIONS AT KNOSSOS, 1957 - 61

For the last five years the British School has been excavating at Knossos with the object of examining the stratigraphy of the site. This series of excavations, begun in 1957, was brought to a successful conclusion this year.

The aim of these excavations has been to get as full a record as possible of the pottery with a view to checking, and where necessary supplementing or correcting, the definitions of the periods of the Minoan system as evolved by Evans.

The excavations have shown that the system of Minoan periods as defined by Evans does in general hold good at Knossos. In addition two important gaps in the archaeological sequence at Knossos have been filled with the discovery in 1958 of a pure deposit of the Early Minoan I phase, and this year of a large deposit of the Late Minoan I B phase, inferred by Evans. These discoveries are particularly welcome, because no really pure deposits of E. M. I or L. M. I B had been recognized at Knossos until now.

The excavations since 1957 have been in three main areas: 1) On the west side of the L. M. house (A) excavated by Hogarth in 1900; this lies south of the Palace near the south edge of the Minoan city; 2) On the south side of the Royal Road leading west from the Palace, opposite the Armoury and between it and the House of the Frescoes excavated by Evans; 3) and lastly, on the north side of the Royal Road west of the Armoury. In addition, useful deposits have been recovered during the course of various emergency excavations undertaken at the request of Dr. Nicolas Platon, whose active help and encouragement of our work it is a pleasure to acknowledge and record here. Notable among these was a M. M. II deposit from a pit, perhaps an abortive well, disclosed in laying a water-pipe on Gypsades hill, and another M. M. II deposit found during trials where the main road is being widened just west of the Palace. But still more interesting was the E. M. I well which came to light in 1958 during cleaning operations in the NE quarter of the Palace itself.

This E. M. I well was over ten metres deep with a uniform fill

of dark ashy earth, and large quantities of pottery, all homogeneous and assignable to E. M. I, except for a handful of Neolithic sherds. At the bottom of the well were remains of large water jugs with plain yellow-brown wiped or scraped surfaces. The rest of the pottery from the fill of the well included fragments of jugs decorated in dark on light in the Ayios Onoufrios style, and many pieces of high-footed bowls with burnished black, grey and red surfaces, and designs in «pattern burnish». Noticeably absent were the legs of cooking pots, which appear however during the subsequent E. M. II phase.

For the E. M. II phase we recovered some evidence this year in our excavations on the north side of the Royal Road. The earliest house-traces there seemed to belong to Early Minoan II, which is characterised by goblets on a fairly high foot, and by the appearance of the mottled fabric known as Vasiliki ware. These E. M. II house floors lay immediately below floors with pottery which, on the system of Evans, would appear to be assignable to Middle Minoan I A. This agrees with what Evans himself found in the Early Houses on the south edge of the Palace. Here Evans came upon floors with complete vases which he assigned to E. M. II, with M. M. I A above.

The M. M. I A period is characterised by goblets on a low foot, in shape like a modern egg-cup, but larger.

Early Minoan III, as this was defined by Evans, does not seem to exist at Knossos. Evans himself never identified a pure E. M. III deposit with characteristic features at Knossos, and he defined the period in terms of stray finds from Knossos itself, and of deposits from other sites in the east of Crete. It looks very much as if the material which Evans grouped as E. M. III is contemporary with his M. M. I A at Knossos, and some of his E. M. III material may be even later, contemporary with Knossian M. M. I B or M. M. II.

On the other hand, the M. M. I A material at Knossos is vast in quantity. It probably covers quite a long period of time, and is capable of sub-division. In the earliest phase there appears to be no trace of polychrome decoration. This pre-polychrome phase might therefore perhaps be called Early Minoan III and it may be this phase that Evans meant by E. M. III at Knossos itself. But it must be emphasised that E. M. III defined in this way has few of the characteristics of E. M. III as defined by Evans.

There is also an evolution in the foot of the typical M. M. I A

«egg - cup» goblet, the earliest goblet feet of the pre - polychrome (E. M. III ?) phase being rather high and wide like those of E. M. II, while the small low foot with up - turned edges appears to be late in the series.

It seems that it is not until the latest phase of M. M. I A that the spiral is first used as an element of design on clay vases at Knossos. On the south side of the Royal Road was a fill of M. M. I A pottery several metres deep. Not a single scrap out of the many hundreds of fragments of pottery recovered from this fill appears to have had spiral - like decoration. But on the earliest floor level subsequent to this fill on the south side of the Royal Road were one or two vases assignable to M. M. I A and decorated with simple spiral designs. This spiral horizon in the decoration of pottery at Knossos, if it proves to be well established, will clearly raise some interesting speculations.

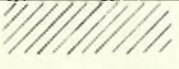
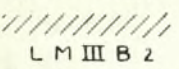

This M. M. I A floor on the south side of the Royal Road was the earliest of a series of three superimposed floors in little basement - like rooms. Above the two later floors were complete vases assignable to M. M. I B followed by classic M. M. II.


The M. M. I B horizon on this south side of the Royal Road is particularly important. It is during this phase that there is the first evidence for the use of the fast potters wheel in making clay vases. M. M. I A shapes like the «egg - cup» goblet continue, but such vases may now in M. M. I B be made on the fast wheel.

The M. M. I B vases from the south side of the Royal Road include many with shapes clearly imitated from metal, some of them with crinkly rims. One of these metallic vases, a tall goblet, has walls of egg - shell thinness, together with impressed designs, exactly like a metal vase.

Interesting are a pair of cups with arcades painted in white rising from the base. These cups are comparable in shape with some of the silver cups with fluted arcades rising from the base found in the Tod treasure of early Twelfth Dynasty date in Egypt. It may be that the Tod cups, if they are Minoan, belong to this M. M. I B phase. This would make M. M. I B overlap with the earlier part of the Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty.

From this same M. M. I B horizon on the south side of the Royal Road came fragments of a jug, evidently an import from one of the Cycladic islands. It seems to belong to the earliest category of matt - painted wares found at Phylakopi in Melos.

EGYPTIAN DYNASTIES	DATE B.C.	MINOAN PERIODS AT KNOSSOS
XXI	1000	
XX	1100	SUB-MINOAN 
	1200	LM III B 2
XIX	1300	LM III B 1
	1400	LM III A 2
XVIII	1500	LM II + III A 1
	1500	LM I B
	1600	LM I A
HYKSOS	1700	MM III B
	1700	MM III A
XIII	1800	MM II B
	1800	MM II A
XII	1900	MM I B
	2000	MM I A
XI	2100	EM III
FIP	2200	EM II
VI	2300	EM I
V	2400	
IV	2500	LATE NEOLITHIC

 = DESTRUCTION AT OR NEAR END OF PERIOD

Above the M. M. I B horizon on the south side of the Royal Road was an extensive deposit of M. M. II pottery, assignable, it seems, to Middle Minoan II B on the system of Evans. In this deposit was found an imported Egyptian scarab of late Twelfth or early Thirteenth Dynasty type (Πίv. A'), dateable in very rough terms about 1750 B. C.

The study of the material from the new excavations has not yet thrown any light on the differences between the various phases of M. M. II A, II B and III A on the system of Evans. But there is a drastic difference between what Evans called M. M. II B and his M. M. III B, and it must be possible to distinguish at least one phase (which Evans called M. M. III A) in the pottery between them.

Of the M. M. III B phase, which is very well marked at Knossos, we have deposits from the excavations by Hogarth's House A on Gypsades, and from both the north and south sides of the Royal Road.

For the subsequent L. M. I A phase there is a vast amount of new material, both from the area of Hogarth's House A, and from the north side of the Royal Road. This seems to have been a long and important period at Knossos.

What is of extreme interest is the recovery during the last two years of a large deposit assignable to the L. M. I B phase of Evans. This came from the north side of the Royal Road, mostly from a basement room on the western edge of the excavation, but partly from a plaster floor at a higher level some metres to the east of the basement. Parts of the same vases were found both in the basement and above the higher floor to the east.

These vases had presumably been housed in an upper storey of the building, from which they had fallen to be scattered in fragments over a wide area. Both the earth floor in the basement and the plaster floor at a higher level to the east of it overlay deposits of classic L. M. I A.

The material found this year in the basement is much the richest. It includes the upper part of a large jar decorated in the finest Marine Style (Πίv. B', 1), in shape and decoration comparable with one found by Evans near the SW corner of the Palace (P. of M. IV, p. 281 Fig. 215). There is also a tall bridge-spouted vase with a design of spirals above arcades, which, like the Marine Style (Πίv. B', 2), was regarded by Evans as classic L. M. I B.



Egyptian Scarab of late Twelfth or early Thirteenth Dynasty type
(about 1750 B.C.) from M.M. II B deposit on south side of Royal Road.
(See P 96).



1



3



2



4

Vases from the L.M. I B deposit found in the basement on the north side of the Royal Road in 1961. (See P 96).

Another feature of this deposit are stirrup vases of the early type with three handles. Still more interesting are a few bowls with low feet, which may be the prototypes of the standard low-footed goblet or kylix characteristic of the succeeding L. M. II period. True kylikes, however, are conspicuous by their absence.

A significant feature of this L. M. I B deposit is the appearance side by side with the naturalistic Marine Style of vases with naturalistic flower designs of a kind assigned by Evans to a late phase of L. M. I A. There seems no reason to doubt that these vases with the flower designs are contemporary with the Marine Style in the same deposit. It looks as if some of the deposits in the Palace itself (for instance, that below the later East Staircase of the Domestic Quarter), which were assigned by Evans to a mature phase of L. M. I A, may be contemporary with our deposit and belong to L. M. I B.

In our deposit were some cups with Reed designs closely comparable with ones illustrated by Evans from the East Staircase deposit. But it must be admitted that Reed decoration is equally characteristic of the preceeding L. M. I A phase. It may however be possible with further study to detect some difference in the style of the Reed designs of L. M. I A and B.

On the north side of the Royal Road deposits of the succeeding L. M. II period seem to be absent. But we have had L. M. II deposits on the south side of the Road, and on Gypsades.

On the south side of the Road we have also had several deposits covering the later phases of the Late Minoan period, L. M. III A 2-L. M. III B, with Proto-geometric stratified above the latest Minoan.

This outline of the results of the stratigraphic excavations at Knossos from 1957 onwards is of course tentative, and may need to be considerably modified in the light of the fuller study of the material.

ΕΥΖΗΤΗΣΙΣ

Ν. Πλάτων: Θὰ ἐπεθῶμουν μίαν διασάφησιν σχετικὰ μὲ τὴν χρονολόγησιν τῆς χαρακτηρηστικῆς ομάδος ΥΜ Ιβ. Πράγματι πρόκειται περὶ ἐξαιρετικῶς σημαντικοῦ στρώματος, ἀφοῦ διὰ πρώτην φορὰν βεβαιοῦται σαφῶς διαστελλόμενον στρώμα ΥΜ Ιβ. Ἀλλ' ἡ ὑπαρξίς ΥΜ Ια κεραμεικῆς καὶ ὄχι ὀλίγης ἀλλ' ἐν ἀφθονίᾳ ἐντὸς τοῦ στρώματος τούτου, ἰδιαίτερος δὲ καὶ κεραμεικῆς — ὡς δι' αὐτοψίας διεπίστωσα — τοῦ μεταβατικοῦ στρώματος ἀπὸ ΜΜ ΙΙΙβ εἰς ΥΜ Ια μήπως σημαίνει ὅτι ὑπάρχει χρησιμοποίησις τοῦ

οικοδομήματος εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ στρώμα κατὰ τὴν YM Ia καὶ τὴν YM Ib, οὕτως ὥστε τὰ μὲν πρωϊμώτερα νὰ ἀνάγωνται εἰς τὴν ἐποχὴν κατασκευῆς, τὰ δὲ τελευταῖα νὰ εἶναι κεραμεικὴ δαπέδον; Μήπως εἶναι δυνατὴ μιὰ τοιαύτη ἐξήγησις;

M. S. F. Hood: Ὑπάρχει ὡραία στρωματογραφία μὲ τὴν καταστροφὴν εἰς τὸ τέλος τῆς YM Ib φάσεως. Κάτω τοῦ στρώματος τούτου ὑπάρχει ἄλλο δάπεδον μὲ χαρακτηριστικὴν YM Ia κεραμεικὴν, ἀλλ' εἰς ἓν μέρος ὑπάρχει βαθὺ κατασκέυασμα τὸ ὁποῖον φαίνεται ὅτι δὲν εἶναι τόσον καλῶς στρωματογραφημένον, ἀλλὰ φαίνεται ὅτι ὑπῆρχεν ἐκεῖ YM Ia ἐπίχωσις ὑπὸ τὸ δάπεδον τοῦ YM Ib.

N. Πλάτων: Τὸ ἀμέσως κατώτερον στρώμα ποίαν κεραμεικὴν ἔχει; Τὴν τῆς μεταβατικῆς περιόδου;

M. S. F. Hood: Ὁχι εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὴ YM Ia.

N. Πλάτων: Εὐχαριστοῦμεν διὰ τὴν διασάφησιν.