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## THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE KNOSSOS EXCAVATIONS

It has become known that I have doubts about Evans' dating of the Knossos tablets. But today I do not offer arguments to convince you of a conclusion. I do not present theories or hypotheses. I offer you facts—fundamental facts. They concern the find places of the tablets. Many of these facts have never been revealed. Professor Blegen in his article in *Minoica* (1958) pointed out that we have accepted Evans' dating without knowing the facts on which that dating was based. He asked for the re-examination of all available evidence. This I have carried out.

The facts I present today are taken from the records of the Knossos excavations kept in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. I repeat: my sole task today is to offer some specimens of these new sources of information. Some people have said that I offer a different hypothesis, an alternative one to the hypothesis of Evans. This is not true: I simply say «look». Again, the reproach is made that I am not an archaeologist. I cannot deny the accusation. Fortunately the sole claim I need make today is that I can read.

The tablets can be dated archaeologically only by the pottery found with them. This is common ground. This reduces our task to two simple questions: 1) which tablets? 2) where and with what objects were they found? I now offer you my first sample from the sources. It is taken from the northern deposit of tablets. Why do I choose this? Because it is Evans's own choice. It was here that he found his only decisive piece of stratigraphy bearing on the tablets.

In the Room of the Stirrup Jars he said he found LM III B jars on a clay floor. 20 cm below it was a concrete floor. On this lower floor, according to Evans, rested a hoard of tablets depicting stirrup jars. (A slide was shown). Now let us examine his own records. (A slide was shown). This is a page from the Handlist of the Linear B tablets compiled by Evans himself. The Handlist is the source of *Scripta Minoa II*. You see here a piece cut from Evans' own notebook of 1900 bearing the drawing which subsequently appeared in the *Palace of Minos* in his exposition of

his chosen key stratigraphy. It is clear that Evans found no hoard of stirrup jar tablets anywhere in the Palace. He found only this one fragment. Where did he find it? Look! Here is the indication of the find spot written by Evans himself in 1900: «W. Area: Nr SW Entrance».

Now look at the other indications. They are written in red ink. Evans has marked off the drawing with 4 crosses and written underneath the words «Same size». These are his instructions to the press for making the figure in his book which you saw in the first slide. This, then, is the factual situation we must face. For 35 years Evans had kept these facts to himself. In 1935 he composed the finished version of this decisive stratification—his only one. He consulted his record. He sent the drawing to the press with his instructions. But what appeared in the book was wholly different from the record. One fragment has become a hoard; the piece found «west area near southwest entrance» is now situated in the northern part of the palace precisely 20 centimetres beneath late Minoan III B pots.

But some tablets were found in this room. They are recorded in my second main source—the Daybook kept by Duncan Mackenzie. His statement is short and clear. He writes that they were found «on the clay floor». Here is his sketch plan. (A slide was shown). You see the tablets entered alongside the stirrup jars. There is no stratification recorded as observed.

But we must not consider this room alone. These tablets formed only the fringe of the great northern deposit. The great mass lay in the Northern Entrance Passage. Here they were entangled with a large mass of double amphorae, which Evans dated to LM III B. (A slide was shown).

These are the plain facts of the observed stratigraphy. Again, all I say is «look». I leave it to others to devise complicated hypotheses to explain away the recorded facts.

It has been suggested that Mackenzie's record is open to doubt. But I must remind you that this is the official record and that Mackenzie was employed for this purpose. Fortunately, we have Evans' own notebook. It contains a sketch plan of the same area. (A slide was shown). Note the following points:

- 1) the tablets in the RSJ are shown alongside the stirrup jars. Evans agrees with Mackenzie.
- 2) the tablets in the Northern Entrance Passage are shown alongside the double amphorae. Again there is agreement.

3) In 1901 excavation was carried deeper. A second floor appeared 40 cm below the first. In the centre was a gypsum slab: the rest of this floor level consisted of «concrete» joining on to the slab.

4) In 1923 there was further excavation and investigation. Mackenzie dug alongside the end block of the late wall running north-south in the room to the south of the Room of the Saffron Gatherer. On the west side, 32 centimetres below the level of the gypsum paving, he found the fragments of a LM II B pithos. Mackenzie concluded that this very crude construction was of reoccupation date. You see that Evans revised his drawing. He altered the position of the end block and wrote opposite the word «later».

Mackenzie next examined the composition of the floor. Plaster extended over the northern part of this room. It stepped down onto the threshold in the doorway and again down on to the floor of the room to the north (the Room of the Saffron Gatherer). Here it continued and joined on to the central gypsum slab uncovered in 1901.

Mackenzie examined closely the nature of this plaster. There were two layers of it showing repeated repairs. He noted, that it was typical of re-occupation plaster found elsewhere in the Palace and in the contemporary Mycenaean palaces.

These facts have been challenged recently by Mr. Boardman in the September number of *Antiquity*. It is a vital issue. First, what is said of the LM II B pithos here, 32 cm below the level of the pavement? Do you agree that an excavator has the duty to communicate his finds to his fellow scholars? Yet no word of this important result, secured 38 years ago, was published until my article in *Antiquity* last June.

What of the re-occupation plaster? Again, nothing was said until my article quoted the entire passage from the 1923 Daybook. An effort has been made to correct me (J. Boardman in *Antiquity*, September 1961). It is said that the plaster observed in 1923 was on the 1900 floor, 40 cm above the 1901 level. Here in Crete we are in a happy position to decide. Let us go to Knossos. I have been there and inspected the rooms. Traces of plaster still remain. They are in the positions recorded by Mackenzie. In the room of the Saffron Gatherer the plaster to the west of the entrance curves up from the floor on to the wall, just as Mackenzie described

it. It is on the same level as the gypsum slab and not 40 cm above that slab, as Mr. Boardman would have us believe.

Here, then, are the recorded facts for this room.

1) tablets «on the clay floor».

2) a concrete floor below the clay floor.

3) a second floor below that with typical re-occupation plaster.

What are the implications of this stratification? Everything found above that plaster floor must surely be later than it. First the tablets. But look at the other entries made by Evans on his sketch plan :

1) large steatite vase with spirals,

2) broken lamp,

3) perfect lamp,

4) the Saffron Gatherer fresco.

I must now correct another untrue statement in the September number of *Antiquity*. The author, Mr J. Boardman, has declared that the notebooks show no record of tablets in the southern half of the Room of the Saffron Gatherer above the late plaster floor. Here again we have a simple question of fact. All I say is «look». See here the words entered by Evans : «some tablets» precisely in the southern part of the room next to the door where in 1923 Mackenzie observed the re-occupation plaster on the next floor down. Go to Knossos and see for yourselves.

Now today I can offer you only a small selection from the mass of new evidence. But I should like to say that I have been able to satisfy Professor Blegen's desire for information. I have been able to establish with great precision the find positions of the great majority of tablets and the associated sealings. In addition, I have much unpublished information affecting key areas such as the Magazines and the Room of the Chariot tablets. But I give one more illustration of the confusion which reigns, about the basic facts of the Knossos excavations. I choose it from a book recently published by the Oxford University Press (1960). It is *Minoan Seals* by Mr. V. E. G. Kenna. Mr. Kenna reproduces a well-known sealing. (A slide was shown). He believes it was found in the Temple Repositories and he dates it to Middle Minoan. None of this is true. How do I know? Again my source of information is Sir Arthur Evans' own notebook. Let me summarize. In 1901, the famous Toreador fresco was found in the Court of the Oil Spout in the East Wing. In 1902 Evans returned to look for more fragments of

the fresco. He found that late walls had been built into the Court with correspondingly late pottery. Of this nothing was reported. But in this late deposit he found Mr. Kenna's sealing and he drew it in his notebook. (A slide was shown). These, then, are the facts. A sealing found in a re-occupation deposit in the East Wing has been transformed into a Middle Minoan sealing found in the Temple Repositories in the West Wing. I use this as a warning example to my colleagues. I suggest they ask themselves the question «how do we know»? I hope they will now be encouraged to wait until the publication of the full recorded facts. One man deserves our admiration and gratitude. It is Duncan Mackenzie. His records are a model of precision and accuracy. Discussion without knowledge of these facts would be inadvisable. But let me say in conclusion that my philological deductions are in harmony with the recorded facts. When I made those deductions, I did not know of the existence of those records. Indeed, some of them were not in Oxford. They were bought in August 1960 from an Italian bookseller after my lecture and the publication of my article. My final advice is Socratic: «be conscious of what you do not know».

My belief is that in 1900 Evans uncovered the Palace of the Mycenaean King Idomeneus. At a lower level, in 1901, he uncovered an earlier phase. Perhaps that was the palace of Idomeneus' grandfather, Minos. At all events Mackenzie's investigation and records of 1923 shows that it was still Mycenaean Greek.

Addendum : Evans's sketch plan of the Room of the Saffron Gatherer etc. has now been published in *Antiquity* December 1961, plate XXXIV.