

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

ARCHAEOLOGICAL interest continues to be focused on Greece. At Mycenae a new group of Shaft Graves was discovered in the winter of 1951. The first accounts were in the Greek *Praktika* for 1951, the *Illustrated London News* for 27 September 1952, and *Archaeology* for December 1952, the same year which saw Mr Ventris' announcement of his decipherment of the Linear B Script. The latest report of the Greek work at Mycenae which is being conducted for the Greek Archaeological Society by Dr Papademetriou is in the *Times* of 9 January 1954.



One of the chief problems is the political relation between Mycenae and Knossos ; which was dominant ? Professor Wace has long believed that in Late Minoan II (*circa* 1500–1400 B.C.) Knossos was under Mainland influence. His case is a strong one and it grows stronger with the evidence that Greek was being written there at that time. (We must not, however, underestimate the strong Cretan influence in the formation of Mycenaean culture during Late Helladic I, *circa* 1600–1500 B.C.). In reply to our last number Professor Wace wrote us a long letter which he kindly allows us to print here :—

‘ I think ’, he writes, ‘ that people generally do not yet realize the full implications of recent work on the Linear B tablets, and on the relations between Crete and the Mainland during the Late Minoan II/Late Helladic II period.

‘ For some time past several of us have been pointing out that in L.M. II at Knossos (but not in the rest of Crete) there are features which are Mainland : beehive tombs, throne-rooms, the Palace Style, alabastra, imitations of Ephyraean pots, and so on. Also the Knossian frescoes, as Luisa Banti points out, agree with the Mainland more than with the rest of Crete. Now Knossos alone in Crete has the Linear B script which is a different language from Linear A. Linear B is the Mycenaean script, and is known on tablets at Pylos and Mycenae and on pots from Thebes, Mycenae, Orchomenos, Tiryns and Eleusis. Linear B is more spread on the Mainland than in Crete. Linear B is Greek. So at Knossos in L.M. II there were Greeks. The Mycenaean were Greeks ; they were the Middle Helladic people developed after contact with the Minoan civilization and the Near East in Late Helladic I, or rather from just before the end of Middle Helladic through Late Helladic I. Thus the decipherment of the tablets confirms

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the result already arrived at archaeologically. Knossos in L.M. II was under strong Mainland influence, if not under Mainland control. There must then have been Greeks in Knossos in Evans' Palace Period. Evans saw a good deal of the archaeological evidence but (to paraphrase one of his sentences) he approached the Greek world backwards from the Minoan side! He thus missed the implications of the archaeological evidence.



' At Phylakope in Melos and at Ialyssos in Rhodes we have at first in L.H. I/L.M. I both Cretan and Mainland pottery, but by the next stage the Cretan pottery begins to die out and Mainland pottery dominates. This is due of course to the same circumstance as that which brought L.H. II and also Greeks to Knossos. The great spread of Mycenaean things around the Levant, which begins even in L.H. I, is due to the trading and colonizing tendency of the Greeks, just as it was in the great and later era of Greek colonization round the Levant, Aegean and Mediterranean generally. Now even in the West at Lipari, Ischia and elsewhere the Late Bronze Age pottery found is recognised as Mainland and not Cretan. This is the antecedent of the later Greek colonization in the West. If this is attributed in legend to Minos and Knossos, we must remember that in L.M. II, the days of the last Minos, Knossos was probably Greek. Is it possible that Minos was a Greek?



' Please do not think that all this is intended in any way to belittle the great culture of Early and Middle Minoan Crete, or even of L.M. I Crete; but we must look the facts in the face. You see how essential a proper understanding of the historical implications of the script-decipherment is to a clear view of the earliest history of the Greek race and Greek culture.



' There is yet another aspect. We have the Linear B Mycenaean script in use down to the fall of Pylos, which presumably came towards the end of the Bronze Age. The earliest date yet known for the use of the Phoenician alphabet as adapted by the Greeks is the 8th century B.C. The orthodox view at present is that there was a *Dark Age* after the end of the Bronze Age and in the beginning of the Iron Age, and that the Greeks of that period were illiterate. We, however, refuse to believe that a people like the Greeks, so intelligent and wide-awake and inventive, would ever have stopped writing and reading once they had learned to do so. Thus we think that the end of the Linear B script and the beginning of the Phoenician alphabet might even have overlapped. If we could only find an *inhabited* site of the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age period we might find tablets in it. All our knowledge of that period is from tombs. This is at the moment the crying need of Greek archaeology:—the finding and digging of a good inhabited site of that date, to see what the script and language situation was at that time. I do not see why people should reject this idea. In the 19th century the Roumanians changed their script, and the Turks have done so in our lifetime. In Cyprus the syllabary and the Greek alphabet overlapped. To-day the Croats use the Latin alphabet and the Serbs the Cyrillic for the same language and in the same state. The Germans still use two scripts.

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' You see how vital all this is for the early history of the Greeks. We now want to find more documents, tablets, from Pylos, Mycenae, and other sites, and we want an Early Iron Age inhabited site ; and we must look at the Knossos of L.M. II again from the beginning and with eyes wide open. I think it quite possible that all the carved friezes, which Evans found at Knossos and thought were the Knossian precursors of Mycenaean carved architectural ornament, are after all to be considered Mainland influences at Knossos. The same may be true of fluted columns. We must carefully sort things out. We are on the eve of great developments. We can no longer speak of pre-hellenic Greece, because from about 2000 B.C. onwards the Greeks were in Greece, and Mycenaean art is the first great manifestation of Greek art '.



We would emphasize the need of finding and digging somewhere in Greece a habitation-site that was continuously occupied during the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age—a period we call the Dark Age only because it is dark to us. This period has been neglected because of the lure of loot. One would like to see applied to the Dorian invasion the same methods of study and the same archaeological technique as have thrown so much light upon the arrival here of the Anglo-Saxons and upon our own origins ; the two problems have much in common.



In this number we publish photographs of the carvings on Stonehenge, first discovered by Mr Atkinson, with additions by the Editor. One of the most important—the Box symbol first recognized as such by Mr Newall on the fallen Stone 57—is gradually being worn away by people walking and children sliding over it. The only effective and permanent remedy is to set the stone upright again, and we hope it may be found possible to do this. Another fallen stone of the Horseshoe Trilithon (No. 58) could also be set up at the same time. There seems to be no archaeological objection to this procedure, and much advantage to be derived from it; for it will make this part of Stonehenge look more impressive and easier to comprehend. It is now generally agreed that the setting up of the fallen stones of the Outer Circle by the Board of Works (as the Ministry was then called) has been amply justified. Moreover, new knowledge may well be acquired in the process. Stone 55 is now broken into two pieces ; it lies on what was its inward face, so that any carvings on it are now invisible, and the same is true of Stone 59, which is in three pieces. It would not be difficult to raise them in order to test this ; the carvings, if present, will have had less weathering than the rest. The weathering of the breaks shows that the fall must have occurred many centuries ago.



The ' IV^e Congrès International des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques ' will be held in Madrid 21–27 April 1954 under the presidency of Professor L. Pericot (Secretary: Prof. A. Beltrán, Universidad, Zaragoza, Spain). The Bank of England will make available a special allotment of foreign exchange at the rate of £5 per day for the period 20–28 April inclusive (obtainable *through their own banks*) to a reasonable number of delegates whose names appear on a list to be approved by the C.B.A. Delegates should apply to the Council for British Archaeology, 10 Bolton Gardens, S.W. 5, to have their names included on the list not later than 10 March.