New Archæological Lights—II*

On the Origin of Civilization in Europe

By Sir Arthur Evans, D.Litt., LL.D., P.S.A., F.R.S.

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TURNING to the Nile Valley, we are again confronted with an extraordinary revolution in the whole point of view effected during recent years. Thanks mainly to the methodical researches initiated by Flinders Petrie, we are able to look back beyond the dynasties to the very beginnings of Egyptian civilization. Already by the closing phase of the Neolithic and by the days of the first incipient use of metals the indigenous population had attained an extraordinary high level. If, on the one hand, it displays Libyan connections, on the other, we already note the evidences of commercial intercourse with the Red Sea; and the constant appearance of large rowing vessels in the figured designs shows that the Nile itself was extensively used for navigation. Flint-working was carried to unrivalled perfection, and special artistic refinement was displayed in the manufacture of vessels of variegated breccia and other stones. The antecedent stages of many Egyptian hieroglyphs are already traceable, and the cult of Egyptian divinities, like Min, was already practised. Whatever ethnic change may have marked the establishment of Pharaonic rule, here, too, the salient features of the old indigeneous culture were taken over by the new regime. This early dynastic period itself has also received entirely new illustration from the same researches, and the freshness and force of its artistic works in many respects outshine anything produced in the later course of Egyptian history.

THE CONTINUITY OF HUMAN TRADITION

as a whole in areas geographically connected like Eurafica on the one side and Eurasia on the other has been here postulated. Since, as we have seen, the Late Palæolithic culture was not violently extinguished, but shows signs of survival both north and south, we are entitled to trace elements of direct derivation from this source among the inherited acquisitions that finally led up to the higher forms of ancient civilization that arose on the Nile and the Euphrates. In many directions, we may believe, the flaming torch had been carried on by the relay runners.

But what, it may be asked, of Greece itself, where human culture reached its highest pinnacle in the Ancient World, and to which we look as the principal source of our own civilization?

Till within recent years it seemed almost a point of honor for classical scholars to regard Hellenic civilization as a wonder-child, sprung, like Athena herself, fully panoplied from the head of Zeus. The indebtedness to Oriental sources was either regarded as comparatively late or confined to such definite borrowings as the alphabet or certain weights and measures. Egypt, on the other hand, at least till Alexandrine times, was looked on as something apart, and it must be said that Egyptologists on their side were only too anxious to preserve their sanctum from profane contact.

A truer perspective has now been opened out. It has been made abundantly clear that the rise of Hellenic civilization was itself part of a wider economy, and can be no longer regarded as an isolated phenomenon. Indirectly, its relation to the greater world and to the ancient centers to the South and East has been now established by its affiliation to the civilization of prehistoric Crete and by the revelation of the extraordinarily high degree of proficiency that was there attained in almost all departments of human art and industry. That Crete itself—the “Mid-Sea Land,” a kind of half-way house between three continents—should have been the cradle of our European civilization was, in fact, a logical consequence of its geographical position. An outlier of mainland Greece, almost opposite the mouths of the Nile, primitive intercourse between Crete and the further shores of the Libyan Sea was still further facilitated by favorable winds and currents. In the eastern direction, on the other hand, island stepping-stones brought it into easy communication with the coast of Asia Minor, with which it was actually connected in late geological times.

But the extraneous influences that were here operative from a remote period encountered on the island itself a primitive indigenous culture that had grown

up there from immemorial time. In view of some recent geological calculations, such as those of Baron De Geer, who, by counting the number of layers of mud in Lake Ragunda, has reduced the ice-free period in Sweden to 7,000 years, it will not be superfluous to emphasize the extreme antiquity that seems to be indicated for even the later Neolithic in Crete. The Hill of Knossos, upon which the remains of the brilliant Minoan civilization have found their most striking revelation, itself resembles in a large part of its composition a great mound or Tell—like those of Mesopotamia or Egypt—formed of layer after layer of human deposits. But the remains of the whole of the later Ages represented down to the earliest Minoan period (which itself goes back to a time contemporary with the early dynasties of Egypt—at a moderate estimate to 3,400 B.C.) occupy considerably less than a half—19 feet, that is, out of a total of over 45. Such calculations can have only a relative value, but, even if we assume a more rapid accumulation of debris for the Neolithic strata and deduct a third from our calculation, they would still occupy a space of over 3,400 years, giving a total antiquity of some 9,000 years from the present time.* No Neolithic section in Europe can compare in extent with that of Knossos, which itself can be divided by the character of its contents into an early, middle and late phase. But its earliest stratum already shows the culture in an advanced stage, with carefully ground and polished axes and finely burnished pottery. The beginnings of Cretan Neolithic must go back to a still more remote antiquity.

KNOSSOS.

The continuous history of the Neolithic Age is carried back at Knossos to an earlier epoch than is represented in the deposits of its geographically related areas on the Greek and Anatolian side. But sufficient materials for comparison exist to show that the Cretan branch belongs to a vast province of primitive culture that extended from Southern Greece and the Ægean islands throughout a wide region of Asia Minor and probably still further afield.

An interesting characteristic is the appearance in the Knossian deposits of clay images of squatting female figures of a pronouncedly steatopygous conformation and with hands on the breasts. These in turn fit on to a large family of similar images which recur throughout the above area, though elsewhere they are generally known in their somewhat developed stage, showing a tendency to be translated into stone, and finally—perhaps under extraneous influences both from the North and East—taking a more extended attitude. These clearly stand in a parallel relationship to a whole family of figures with the organs of maternity strongly developed that characterize the Semitic lands and which seem to have spread from there to Sumeria and to the seats of the Anau culture.

At the same time this steatopygous family, which in other parts of the Mediterranean basin ranges from prehistoric Egypt and Malta to the north of Mainland Greece, calls up suggestive reminiscences of the similar images of Aurignacian Man. It is especially interesting to note that in Crete, as in the Anatolian region where these primitive images occur, the worship of a Mother Goddess predominated in later times, generally associated with a divine child—a worship which later survived in a classical guise and influenced all later religion. Another interesting evidence of the underlying religious community between Crete and Asia Minor is the diffusion in both areas of the cult of the double axe. This divine symbol, indeed, or “Labrys,” became the special emblem of the palace sanctuary of Knossos itself, which owes to it its traditional name of Labyrinth. I have already called attention to the fact that the absorptive and disseminating power of the Roman Empire brought the cult of a male form of the divinity of the Double Axe to the Roman Wall and to the actual site on which New-castle stands.

The fact should never be left out of sight that the gifted indigenous stock which in Crete eventually took to itself on one hand and the other so many elements

of exotic culture was still deep-rooted in its own. It had, moreover, the advantages of an insular people in taking what it wanted and no more. Thus it was stimulated by foreign influences but never dominated by them, and there is nothing here of the servility of Phœnician art. Much as it assimilated, it never lost its independent tradition.

It is interesting to note that the first quickening impulse came to Crete from the Egyptian and not from the Oriental side—the Eastern factor, indeed, is of comparatively late appearance. My own researches have led me to the definite conclusion that cultural influences were already reaching Crete from beyond the Libyan Sea before the beginning of the Egyptian Dynasties. These primitive influences are attested, amongst other evidences, by the forms of stone vessels, by the same æsthetic tradition in the selection of materials distinguished by their polychromy, by the appearance of certain symbolic signs, and the subjects of shapes and seals which go back to prototypes in use among the “Old Race” of the Nile Valley. The impression of a very active agency indeed is so strong that the possibility of some actual immigration into the island of the older Egyptian element, due to the conquests of the first Pharaohs, cannot be excluded.

The continuous influence of dynastic Egypt from its earliest period onwards is attested both by objects of import and their indigenous imitations, and an actual monument of a Middle Empire Egyptian was found in the Palace Court of Knossos. More surprising still are the cumulative proofs of the reaction of this early Cretan civilization on Egypt itself, as seen not only in the introduction there of such beautiful Minoan fabrics as the elegant polychrome vases, but in the actual impress observable on Egyptian art even on its religious side. The Egyptian griffin is fitted with Minoan wings. So, too, on the other side we see the symbols of Egyptian religion impressed into the service of the Cretan Nature Goddess, who in certain respects was partly assimilated with Hathor, the Egyptian Cow-Goddess of the Underworld.

My own most recent investigations have more and more brought home to me the all-pervading community between Minoan Crete and the land of the Pharaohs. When we realize the great indebtedness of the succeeding classical culture of Greece to its Minoan predecessor the full significance of this conclusion will be understood. Ancient Egypt itself can no longer be regarded as something apart from general human history. Its influences are seen to lie about the very cradle of our own civilization.

The high early culture, the equal rival of that of Egypt and Babylonia, which thus began to take its rise in Crete in the fourth millennium before our era, flourished for some two thousand years, eventually dominating the Ægean and a large part of the Mediterranean basin. To the civilization as a whole I ventured, from the name of the legendary king and law-giver of Crete, to apply the name of “Minoan,” which has received general acceptance; and it has been possible now to divide its course into three Ages—Early, Middle, and Late, answering roughly to the successive Egyptian Kingdoms, and each in turn with a triple subdivision.

MINOAN CIVILIZATION.

It is difficult indeed in a few words to do adequate justice to this earliest of European civilizations. Its achievements are too manifold. The many-storied palaces of the Minoan priest-kings in their great days, by their ingenious planning, their successful combination of the useful with the beautiful and stately, and, last but not least, by their scientific sanitary arrangements, far outdid the similar works, on however vast a scale, of Egyptian or Babylonian builders. What is more, the same skilful and commodious construction recurs in a whole series of private mansions and smaller dwellings throughout the island. Outside “broad Knossos” itself, flourishing towns sprang up far and wide on the country sides. New and refined crafts were developed, some of them, like that of the inlaid metal-work, unsurpassed in any age or country. Artistic skill, of course, reached its acme in the great palaces themselves, the corridors, landings, and porticoes of which were decked with wall paintings and high reliefs, showing in the treatment of animal life

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*For a fuller statement I must refer to my forthcoming work, “The Nine Minoan Periods” (Macmillans), Vol. I.: Neolithic Section.

not only an extraordinary grasp of Nature, but a grandiose power of composition such as the world had never seen before. Such were the great bull-grappling reliefs of the Sea Gate at Knossos and the agnostic scenes of the great Palace hall.

The modernness of much of the life here revealed to us is astonishing. The elaboration of the domestic arrangements, the staircases, story above story, the front places given to the ladies at shows, their fashionable flounced robes and jackets, the gloves sometimes seem on their hands or hanging from their folding-chairs, their very mannerisms as seen on the frescoes, pointing their conversation with animated gestures—how strangely out of place would it all appear in a Classical design! Nowhere, not even at Pompeii, have more living pictures of ancient life been called up for us than in the Minoan Palace of Knossos. The touches supplied by its closing scene are singularly dramatic—the little bathroom opening out of the Queen's parlor, with its painted clay bath, the royal draught-board flung down in the court, the vessels for anointing and the oil-jar for filling there ready to hand by the throne of the Priest-King, with the benches of his Consistory round and the sacral griffins on either side. Religion, indeed, entered in at every turn. The palaces were also temples, the tomb a shrine of the Great Mother. It was, perhaps, owing to the religious control of art that among all the Minoan representations—now to be numbered by thousands—no single example of indecency has come to light.

A remarkable feature of this Minoan civilization cannot be passed over. I remember that at the Liverpool meeting of this Association in 1896—just before the first results of the new discoveries in Crete were known—a distinguished archaeologist took as the subject of an evening lecture "Man Before Writing," and, as a striking example of a high culture attained by "Analfabeti," singled out that of Mycenæ—a late offshoot, as we know now, from Minoan Crete. To such a conclusion, based on negative evidence, I confess I could never subscribe—for had not even the people of the Reindeer Age attained to a considerable proficiency in expression by means of symbolic signs? To-day we are able to trace the gradual evolution on Cretan soil of a complete system of writing from its earliest pictographic shape, through a conventionalized hieroglyphic to a linear stage of great perfection. In addition to inscribed sealings and other records some two thousand clay tablets have now come to light, mostly inventories or contracts; for though the script itself is still undeciphered the pictorial figures that often appear on these documents supply a valuable clue to their contents. The numeration also is clear, with figures representing sums up to 10,000. The inscribed sealings, signed, countermarked, and countersigned by controlling officials, give a high idea of the elaborate machinery of Government and administration under the Minoan rulers.

The minutely organized legal conditions to which this points confirm the later traditions of Minos, the great lawgiver of prehistoric Crete, who, like Hammurabi and Moses, was said to have received the law from the God of the Sacred Mountain. The clay tablets themselves were certainly due to Oriental influences, which make themselves perceptible in Crete at the beginning of the Late Minoan Age, and may have been partly resultant from the reflex action of Minoan colonization in Cyprus. From this time onwards Eastern elements are more and more traceable in Cretan culture, and are evidenced by such phenomena as the introduction of chariots—themselves, perhaps, more remotely of Aryan-Iranian derivation—and by the occasional use of cylinder seals.

Simultaneously with its Eastern expansion, which affected the coast of Phœnicia and Palestine as well as Cyprus, Minoan civilization now took firm hold of Mainland Greece, while traces of its direct influence are found in the West Mediterranean basin—in Sicily, the Balearic Islands, and Spain. At the time of the actual Conquest and during the immediately succeeding period the civilization that appears at Mycenæ and Tiryns, at Thebes and Orchomenos, and at other centers of Mainland Greece, though it seems to have brought with it some already assimilated Anatolian elements, is still in the broadest sense Minoan. It is only at a later stage that more provincial offshoot came into being, to which the name Mycenaean can be properly applied. But it is clear that some vanguard at least of the Aryan Greek immigrants came into contact with this high Minoan culture at a time when it was still in its most flourishing condition. The evidence of Homer itself is conclusive. Arms and armor described in the poems are those of the Minoan prime; the fabled shield of Achilles, like that of Herakles described by Hesiod, with its elaborate scenes and

variegated metal-work, reflects the masterpieces of Minoan craftsmen in the full vigor of their art; the very episodes of epic combat receive their best illustration on the signets of the great days of Mycenæ. Even the lyre to which the minstrel sang was a Minoan invention. Or, if we turn to the side of religion, the Greek temple seems to have sprung from a Minoan hall, its earliest pediment schemes are adaptations from the Minoan tympanum—such as we see in the Lions' Gate—the most archaic figures of the Hellenic goddesses, like the Spartan Orthia, have the attributes and attendant animals of the great Minoan mother.

Some elements of the old culture were taken over on the soil of Hellas. Others which had been crushed out in their old centers survived in the more Eastern shores and islands formerly dominated by Minoan civilization, and were carried back by Phœnician or Ionian intermediaries to their old homes. In spite of the overthrow which about the twelfth century before our era fell on the old Minoan dominion and the onrush of the new conquerors from the North, much of the old tradition still survived to form the base for the fabric of the later civilization of Greece. Once more through the darkness the lighted torch was carried on, the first glimmering flame of which had been painfully kindled by the old cave-dwellers in that earlier Palæolithic world.

The Roman Empire, which in turn appropriated the heritage that Greece had received from Minoan Crete, placed civilization on a broader basis by welding together heterogeneous ingredients and promoting a cosmopolitan ideal. If even the primeval culture of the Reindeer Age embraced more than one race and absorbed extraneous elements from many sides, how much more is that the case with our own, which grew out of the Greco-Roman! Civilization in its higher form to-day, though highly complex, forms essentially a unitary mass. It has no longer to be sought out in separate luminous centers, shining like planets through the surrounding night. Still less is it the property of one privileged country or people. Many as are the tongues of mortal men, its votaries, like the Immortals, speak a single language. Throughout the whole vast area illumined by its quickening rays its workers are interdependent and pledged to a common cause.

Early Maps Relating to the Search for "El Dorado."

THE name "El Dorado," which dates back to the first part of the 16th century, is Spanish for "the gilded one," and an abbreviation for "the gilded man" (el hombre dorado). It was first applied to a native South American ruler or priest who, so early Spanish writers state, was gilded at a certain annual ceremony and then bathed in a lake near Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia. The name next came to signify a legendary golden city, also called Manoa or Omoa, much sought after but never found. Later it was used to indicate a mythical country somewhere in South America where gold and precious stones were to be found in great abundance, and for which many expeditions searched in vain, among them those of Ordaz, Orellana, von Hutten, Quesada, and Sir Walter Raleigh. To-day El Dorado is used metaphorically to designate a place where wealth can be rapidly acquired.

A pamphlet issued by the Smithsonian Institution relates to the recent investigations of Dr. Rudolf Schuller, who writes on two 16th century maps which relate to the Ordaz and Dortal expeditions in search of El Dorado. The first map he attributes to Oviedo, placing the date after 1542, and the latter, which is anonymous, Dr. Schuller believes to have been made about 1560.

Diego de Ordaz, a former companion of Cortez, also credited as the first person to ascend the great volcano Popocatepetl near the City of Mexico, was granted a tract of land in South America by the Spanish Crown in 1530. His concession was for the colonization of the then every indefinite district of Marañon on the mainland. Ordaz sailed for South America, October 20, 1531, with 450 men in three vessels; he was met at the Canaries by another vessel and 150 men, but owing to severe storms the Admiral's ship was the only one to reach the coast in the neighborhood of the mouth of the Amazon. Thence he sailed northward to Paria, where he found and captured a fort built by Antonio Sedeno, justly claiming that this fort was on his concession where Sedeno had no right. Being dissatisfied with the region of the mouths of the Amazon and the coast of southern Guiana, however, Ordaz abandoned all attempts to colonize there and sailed north to the mouths of the Orinoco to explore the delta.

Two of the inscriptions on the old Spanish map refer

to this exploring expedition, which set out from Paria on June 23, 1532, with 280 men, 18 horses and one mule, in seven galleys, and finally arrived at an Indian village called Huyapari or Aruacay. A translation of the legend reads: "The large village of Huyapari is situated two leagues inland from the Orinoco." According to Indian informants the source of the river was in a large lake lying in the mountains, the route to which lay through a province called Meta, where gold was abundant. This was El Dorado.

But the second legend inscribed above the mountains in the upper right-hand corner of the map, informs us that "Ordaz could not pass this chain of mountains (by the river, on account of) the bad condition of the water, and from this mountain he returned down the same river to the sea." Another inscription states that "To this side (west of the mountains), or the other end of this rock, Christians had not (yet) come," while an added note by the cartographer Oviedo mentions the accident on the return trip from the expedition in search of Meta-El Dorado—"Ordaz's large canoe remained (here) on dry (land)."

Although he later tried an overland route, Ordaz never located El Dorado; he suffered misfortune, lost his holdings in South America, and finally died on the way to Spain in 1533.

In 1533 Geronimo Dortal, treasurer of the Ordaz expedition, was granted the position formerly held by Ordaz, and also made governor of Paria. Shortly after his arrival, in 1534, Dortal equipped a new expedition to search for the famous Meta-El Dorado—under the command of Alonso de Herrera, a former lieutenant of Ordaz, and the itinerary of his ill-fated voyage is described on Oviedo's map in several legends, the last of which tells pathetically of his end: "Here they killed Alonso de Herrera, lieutenant of Governor Dortal; and to this place came afterwards the said Dortal and found true marks of the death of the aforesaid Herrera; and there were found among other things, a little bell and a tin-cup."

In 1536, about a year after Herrera's death, Dortal organized another expedition which is said to have discovered the domain of the female chief Orocomay, an independent community of Indian women, located on Oviedo's map between the Huyapari and the Barrancas rivers. This legend reads: "Here are the villages and domain of Queen Orocomay, who employs only females." Similar Amazons were also reported by Orellana in 1542, but to-day science does not credit such communities to South America.

One other legend relating to El Dorado reads: "Beyond these chains of mountains of the river Huyapari, there are vast plains which are believed to be the land of Peru, and the Indians say that beyond these chains of mountains there are great treasures and much gold." Contrary to some students of history Dr. Schuller places the date of this early map as after 1542, believing that it could not have been made until two or three years after the latest date recorded.

The second map, showing the rivers Amazon and Orinoco and the adjacent shores, is believed by Dr. Schuller to date about 1560. It includes two references to the Ordaz expedition in 1532, and much other interesting information to students of geography and history.

The region where on other maps is generally shown the legendary lake of Manoa, is here occupied by the following inscription: "This chain of mountains extends from the kingdom (of New Granada) and from Peru; in Peru it is rich in silver; and in the kingdom it is rich in gold; and this is what they call El Dorado."

The author feels that: "The influence of El Dorado and other similar traditions of genuine Indian origin, on the cartography of South America during the second half of the 16th century has not yet been studied with the care and attention which such an important historical and geographical question deserves."

Prompters Boxes for Theatres

A RECENT European idea relates to an arrangement of a theatre stage with several prompters' boxes of a new kind. The boxes are arranged to display the text in illuminated letters upon an endless band upon rollers, passing in front of electric lamps. Part of the roller device can lie below the stage, while the lamps are placed in the box and behind the transparent band so as to show up the part of the text that is passing. The boxes are connected with each other by any suitable driving gear and the machinist operates all the outfit from the side of the stage by a crank. A number of boxes are preferred, so that the text can be seen from all parts of the stage. An electric motor can also be used for running the device.