

PREFACE

THE aim of the present publication is to give in the first place a *Corpus* as complete as possible of the existing records of the script of Minoan Crete by means of photographic facsimiles and copies of the documents. In the second place I have endeavoured to supply a preliminary *apparatus criticus* in the form of tables and explanatory catalogues of the different signaries, the classification of the documents according to their form and contents, an analysis of the principal formulas employed, and an examination of the order in which the inscriptions run, often facilitated by the auxiliary marks that accompany them. It has, moreover, been possible to elucidate the different systems of numeration associated with the successive types of the Minoan scripts, and, in cases where the characters afforded an ideographic clue, to assign a meaning to certain sign-groups and formulas. But, in the absence of bilingual inscriptions, the material as a whole has not reached the stage when any comprehensive attempt at interpretation or transliteration is likely to be attended with fruitful results. The present work is of a more preliminary nature, and the main object before me has been so to set forth the evidence as to supply a basis for further studies.

But in a World so new, where it has been necessary in a large measure to quarry the material as well as to lay foundations for the future fabric, my task could not be limited to a mere reproduction and analysis of the inscriptions. These have to be also considered in their broad anthropological aspect as a singular, in many respects an unique illustration of the evolution by successive stages of an advanced system of script out of the universal elements of primitive pictography. In a more special way these various stages have to be placed in their relation to the several periods of the marvellous civilization of ancient Crete, to which in a comprehensive and generalized use of the word I have ventured to apply the word 'Minoan'.¹

¹ As at least a convenient term for the prehistoric civilization of Crete, the word has now acquired a general currency in France, Italy, the United States, and our own country, as well as among many German scholars. In extending to the word

a dynastic sense we have at least the warrant of the ancient tradition preserved by Diodoros, who, like Herodotos, seems to have drawn largely from Eteocretan sources, that there were two kings of the name of Minos (iv. c. 60, § 25). As I have pointed out