



*Fig. 36 At Knossos outside the king's chambers*

tional amounts of goods so that they could receive even more. Still more pressure was provided by the growth of local villas in size and substance as leading families competed to show their affluence. As a result, these homes began to compete with the once-dominant trading houses as symbols of power.

So a decision was made to reach into the vaults of these trading houses, which were bursting with riches, and create new buildings that were vastly more majestic than anything else in the land. These structures once again became awe-inspiring—and reestablished visible proof of the king's ascendancy.

Since these vast new edifices belonged to the king, they were called palaces. Yet clearly they were not palaces in the usual sense of the word. Traditional palaces were the lavish homes of kings and queens. That the highest affairs of state were conducted in a traditional palace was also true. However its primary purpose was not normally to be the main business house of the realm, nor was it usually the house of parliament or the national cathedral.

In Crete, these incredibly lavish and extensive new buildings were all of these things. Yet they also held the royal apartments of the king and queen, and each of the functions at these sprawling estates nominally belonged to the king. Consequently these massive buildings have come to be called palaces.

All these things became abundantly clear when these ancient palaces of Crete were finally unearthed by archaeologists and preserved for us by able conservators. Yet before they were excavated, the concept that these palaces existed at all was held up to ridicule for many years. This was due to the main evidence for their existence being a handful of tales from mythology, which began before the time of the classical Greeks in Athens, Sparta and their related cities.

In ancient Greek mythology, King Minos was the son of Zeus and the Phoenician princess Europa. Zeus was supposed to have seen Europa walking beside the sea in Lebanon gathering wildflowers and immediately fell in love with her. Changing himself into a white bull, he gently approached her and knelt at her feet. Fascinated by the remarkable animal, she climbed upon his broad back. Unexpectedly he rushed over the sea, abducting her to Crete. Changing back into his human form, he had three sons by her: King Minos, along with his brothers Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon. As sometimes happens, this legend mirrored the reality of the Phoenicians' arrival on Crete and the creation of the Minoan civilization.

The main story of the elder son, King Minos, is briefly told here.

Minos, in Greek mythology, king of Crete, (was) son of Zeus and Europa. He was the husband of Pasiphaë, who bore him Androgeus, Glaucus, Ariadne, and Phaedra. Because Minos failed to sacrifice a beautiful white bull to Poseidon, the god caused Pasiphaë to conceive a lustful passion for the animal, by whom she bore the Minotaur, a monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man. The craftsman Daedalus constructed the labyrinth in which the monster was confined. When King Aegeus of Athens killed Androgeus, Minos vengefully forced Athens to pay him an annual tribute of seven youths and