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EXCAVATIONS AT PALAIKASTRO. II.

§ 10.—HAGIOS NIKOLAOS.

ON March 31st, 1903, and the three following days I conducted a trial excavation at a site situated at about an hour's distance from Rousolakkos, and known as Hagios Nikolaos from a small church of that name. During the first three days I employed ten men, on the fourth only two.

The most prominent feature of the landscape is the height called Mórdhi (1776 ft.). From the foot of this there runs almost due east a deep valley with a river-bed, which, although quite dry at the time when I saw it, must sometimes carry off a considerable volume of water from the surrounding hills. The valley is at first narrow and its sides very steep, but a little way above the chapel it broadens out considerably: although the left bank is steep and in places almost precipitous, the right side rises in a gentle slope, forming a series of terraces which are under cultivation and afford a good harvest in spite of the stony character of the soil. It is on this southern slope that the chapel stands, situated on a small outcrop of rock and surrounded by cornfields. These, however, lie chiefly to the north and west: on the south the ground rises more and more sharply, the cultivated fields giving place in some fifty yards to a steep slope covered thickly with bushes and undergrowth and terminating in a line of low cliffs known locally as *στὴν ἄγριο μέλισσα τὸ φροῦδι*, 'the Wild Bee Crag.' Above these, again, the ground rises very rapidly to form the northern portion of the great upland plateau of Magasá and Karýdhi. On the east the gentle slope of the valley extends for about a hundred yards beyond the chapel, where it is intersected by a

deep, though narrow, torrent-bed running down from the low cliffs just referred to and joining the main watercourse. Beyond this the soil is waste and uncultivated as far as a second and larger stream-bed, which breaks through from the upper plateau by a wild and precipitous gorge, and which also runs down to the main river-bed, its lofty eastern bank forming the remarkable natural bridge or ramp over which runs the road connecting Palaikastro with the plateau and with the Karóumes valley. This ramp is continued northwards by a low line of hills which closes on the east the Hagios Nikolaos valley, and forces the river to take a sudden bend in a northerly direction, which it follows until, emerging on the open plain of Palaikastro, it turns once more east and flows through the plain to the sea.

The site had been previously visited by Professor Halbherr, who found built into the *ἀγία τράπεζα* of the chapel a fragment of an inscription recording a treaty between Knossos and Hierapytna,¹ as also by Mr. Evans, who directed our attention to the possible significance of this piece of evidence. Shortly after our arrival at Palaikastro, Mr. Bosanquet and I revisited the site together. We found the inscription somewhat disguised under a liberal coating of whitewash which had been recently applied to it in common with the whole interior of the chapel. The same whitewash also partially concealed the material, though not the form, of a fine Mycenaean 'table of offering'² of black steatite, which was used as a *θυμιατήριον*: we subsequently obtained permission to remove it, and it is now in the Candia Museum. This 'table of offering' was similar in form to the usual type of steatite lamp found on most Mycenaean sites, with a circular stalk or stem below and a round bowl in its upper surface; this bowl, however, was complete, and was not furnished with lips such as lamps of this type have for their wicks. It had been found at Rousso-lakkos, and brought from there to Hagios Nikolaos. The presence of the inscription was harder to account for, though it may have been brought by sea from Knossos or Hierapytna as ballast and left on the beach at Palaikastro. There is, however, a local tradition to the effect that it was found on the spot, and as the place would accord well with the data supplied by

¹ Published in *Museo Italiano di Antichità Classica* III (1890), p. 612, Collitz-Bechtel, *Sammlung*, 5073.

² Its dimensions are—height '18 m., length and breadth '35 m., interior diameter of bowl '18 m., rim of bowl '02 cms.

the Toplu inscription¹ for the site of the temple of Dictæan Zeus, the principal sanctuary of the Eteocretan territory, we decided to test the ground by digging trial trenches in the most likely-looking spots.

Remains of Early Houses.—No traces at all of ashlar masonry were found, nor any architectural members either in marble or in local stone. I was told, indeed, that a 'squared block of marble' had been discovered at a spot some little way N.W. of the church, and had been carried off to the village of Palaio Mitato: I did not, however, see the stone in question, and trial pits at the place indicated showed no traces at all of any building. On the other hand, indications were not wanting that the valley had been the scene of an early settlement. On the N. bank of the stream, about ten minutes' walk from the chapel, stands a group of two or three houses with the remains close by of a massive megalithic wall, which unfortunately has been made to contribute largely to the building of a modern house and byre. Further up the valley, in a commanding position on the crest of a low hill, I discovered the foundations of a small house of unhewn stones: the sherds found in and around it were not, however, sufficient to determine its date. Close by the chapel the evidence was more definite. About 150 yards N.W. of it a small two-roomed house² of unhewn stones was found, which is dated by the objects in it to the Mycenaean period. In the room to the E. were many large fragments of two or more *pithoi* of the ordinary Mycenaean type, a number of fragments of steatite, of which the largest was perforated, a small circular lid of steatite (diameter '083 m.), a "saddle-quern," and several bits of a thick white floor-plaster. The western room contained a small hoard of stone rubbers, thirteen in number, found together close to the south wall: two of these must have been in long use to judge by the extraordinary polish of their surfaces, while three appeared to have been very little used. Along with these was found a hone '145 m. long, '048 m. broad, and '035 m. high. This room also yielded a large *pithos*-cover with handle, three 'saddle-querns,' two fragments of a broad clay runnel (?), and a flat stone with two smooth surfaces, very roughly circular, '19 m. in length and breadth.

¹ Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, I 290; Spratt, *Travels and Researches in Crete*, II 430 foll.; Halbherr, *Museo Italiano*, III (1890) 570; Kern, *Inschriften von Magnesia ad Maiandrum*, No. 105; Dittenberger, *Syloges*, II No. 929; Holleaux, *Hermes* xxxix. (1904) 78.

² It consisted of two rooms, communicating by a door in the partition wall: total breadth 4'4 m., length 5'7 m.

Immediately outside the house to the north was found a small cup of the common Mycenaean type, of very rude make (diameter at mouth 0.07–0.08 m., at foot 0.04 m.), along with fragments of other cups, and a fine black stone rubber with two highly polished surfaces. A second runnel with two parallel 'ribs' crossing the flat bottom and a small yellow plaque with incised lines appeared to me to belong to a much later date than the rest of the pottery found in this house, and the inference that it was inhabited right on into Hellenic times was confirmed by the discovery of a bronze coin, which, though in a bad state of preservation, I believe to be certainly Hellenic.

The most striking point about this house was its extreme smallness, the two rooms measuring 2.03 × 1.3 m. and 2.4 × 2.1 m. respectively. These dimensions would seem to point to the conclusion that the building was of the nature of a store or outhouse rather than a dwelling.

A short distance to the S.E. the foundations of another building were cleared: this also consisted of two rooms, divided by a partition wall about .5 m. thick. The interior of the house measured 5.5 by 5.8 m., and produced one green stone rubber and a large number of sherds: among these there was nothing distinctly Mycenaean, while a number of them looked rather Hellenistic or Roman. Another house was located S.W. of the chapel, but as it yielded only a few sherds, and those of uncertain period, I did not entirely clear it.

The Cave Burials.—The cliffs above the chapel, to which reference has already been made, contain a number of small caverns and rock-shelters: of these I examined three, which were pointed out to me by inhabitants of the valley as containing 'human heads.'

I. At the foot of the cliff, above and slightly eastwards of the chapel, is a shallow cavern, with a low wall at its entrance. It proved to contain a number of human skeletons, whose skulls, seven or eight in number, were particularly well preserved: several of these were afterwards examined by Mr. Duckworth. Along with these were the bones of various animals which had probably made the cavern their lair: these included bones of badger, hare, sheep (?), and partridge. No metal objects were found, and of pottery only two small fragments.

II. In a second rock-shelter, some little way to the W. of the chapel, two or three persons seem to have been buried. The bones were in a fair

state of preservation, but I only found fragments of one skull. No pottery came to light, but a bronze buckle and button were discovered pointing to a late date for the interment, which was probably medieval.

III. The third rock-shelter I examined was situated half way up the cliff, above a steep slope called 'the charcoal hollow' (*καρβουνολάκκος*); it lies a little to the E. of the chapel, and immediately above the stream-bed referred to above (p. 336) as bounding the cultivated area. It is not very easy of access, and I was guided to it by Stavros Kandikakis, one of my workmen, who remembered having seen bones there while a shepherd boy forty years ago. Before the rock lies a narrow ledge or platform some eight metres in length, fronted by a low wall at a distance of two metres from the face of the rock. On this ledge I found the remains of a clay *pithos*, with an ornament consisting of a single band of 'ropework': it was lying on its side, and more than half of it had been broken off and had disappeared. The part which remained was full of human bones, while on one fragment was a double-axe, which had been deeply, though rudely, incised while the clay was still soft. Mr. Bosanquet subsequently examined these fragments and found that the *pithos* was contemporary with the chief settlement at Palaikastro. Besides the general similarity of the ware, he noticed three specific points of agreement: (1) the relief band on the shoulder ornamented with finger impressions, (2) the way in which the handles tended to detach themselves, owing to their having been merely impressed while the clay was soft on the surface of the jar, which was scratched in order to afford them a better hold, and (3) the flange or band running round the *pithos* at its base.

No traces of later interments were here visible, but at a slightly lower level I found evidence that the rock-shelter had been used as a place of burial at a very early period. There was a large accumulation of skulls and other bones, all of them human with the exception of the jaw of a pole-cat and the tooth of an ox. These bones were examined by Mr. Duckworth, who accompanied me to Hagios Nikolaos on April 3rd with that object. Along with the bones, placed close by the skulls, were found some very early vases, which must be attributed to the very beginning of the Bronze Age. These vases, which are with one exception of a coarse grey clay, are all hand-made: they are without bases and are so imperfectly flattened at the bottom that they do not stand at all firmly. Two small fragments were found with a pattern of cross-hatched lines finely

incised on the polished clay, but all the other fragments as well as the whole vases are devoid of any incised or painted decoration.

FIG. 1.—VASES FROM ROCK-SHELTER.

The whole vases are ten in number, and fall into four classes :—

A. Vases with oblate spherical bodies tending to angularity at the line of greatest circumference : above this body is a short cylindrical neck, on which fits a corresponding cap, which would act as a cover and also, perhaps, as a cup. Both vases and caps are provided with vertical suspension holes, enabling lid and vase to be tied together : the 'lugs' through which these holes are pierced are either single flattened bosses projecting from the body of the vase or the top of the cap, or they consist of pairs of short circular stumps. Of this class five examples were found—

1. Vase with double handles and cap (Fig. 2 a, b).

FIG. 2.—TYPES OF VASES FROM ROCK-SHELTER. B. 5.

2. Vase with single handles and cap. Height '108 m., diameter '095 m., height of cap '063 m., diameter of cap '042 m.
3. Vase with single handles and cap. Corresponding dimensions, '075 m., '077 m., '045 m., '052 m. The cap, however, is too large for the neck, and there is some doubt whether it belongs to this vase.

4. Vase with single handles, without cap. Here the angularity above referred to is very marked, forming a sharply defined, though irregular, line round the body. This has the smoothest surface of all the vases, a surface which in some places is blackened by smoke (Fig. 2 c).
5. A similar vase with the neck broken off.

Among the fragments were three broken bowls, probably remains of vases of this type, and also the neck of such a vase.

B. A vase of finer clay, thinner ware, and more delicate form. The transition between body and neck is more gradual, and the top of the neck ends in a lip in which are pierced four small horizontal holes (Fig. 2 d).

C. A cup-like vessel of yellowish-brown clay, narrower at the top than at the foot. The handles, which are pierced with suspension-holes, are not set on horizontally, but rise from the body: originally it had a spout, but this has been broken off. This vessel is of coarser make than the rest, and the bottom is so rounded that it will not stand straight (Fig. 2 e).

A second example of this type was also found.

D. Two basins; the 'lugs,' pierced with suspension-holes, are situated close under the rim of the bowl.

The relations between these vases and those found at Palaikastro have been discussed on p. 299 of the present volume by Mr. Dawkins, to whom I wish to express my warm thanks for the help he has given me in writing the foregoing description and catalogue, and for making the drawings which have been reproduced in the accompanying figure.

In form and technique there is a certain resemblance between the vases of class A and some which were discovered in prehistoric graves on Paros and Despotikon by M. Tsountas (*Εφημ. Ἀρχαιολ.* 1898, Pl. IX. Nos. 1-5), and at Pelos on Melos by Mr. Edgar (*B.S.A.* III. 35 foll.), though the bodies of the Cretan vases are more squat, the necks more nearly cylindrical, and the union of neck and body in consequence more clearly marked. Points of comparison may also be found with the vases from the prehistoric grotto of Miami excavated by M. Taramelli (*Am. Journ. Arch.* 1897, 287 foll.). But the closest parallels I can find are with the pottery from the earlier period of the second town at Troy, described by H. Schmidt in Dörpfeld, *Troja und Ilion* (Athens, 1902), I. 252-280, and in the catalogue of *Schliemann's Sammlung trojanischer Altertümer* published by the Berlin Museum (Berlin, 1902): many of these are also illustrated and described in Schliemann, *Ilios* (London, 1880), 356-369. The Cretan vases, however, are more primitive in appearance: the majority of those from Troy have the top of the neck turned outwards so as to form a slight lip, while most

have also a base or three short legs. The 'lug' approaches very nearly that figured in Schmidt's Catalogue, No. 556, p. 28, as also one from the first city at Troy (*Troja u. Ilion*, I. p. 247, Fig. 102), while the closest parallel to the Cretan caps is also from the lowest Trojan stratum (*op. cit.* I. p. 249, Figs. 110, 111): the two caps there illustrated, however, have four 'lugs,' all of which are in the first instance pierced with suspension holes, while in the second only two are so pierced, the other two remaining as ornamental projections. Somewhat similar caps of silver were also found at Troy covering thin-necked silver jars (*op. cit.* I. 350-1, Figs. 276, 277). The holes pierced directly under the lip of the vase of class B were for the attachment of a flat lid; similar lids with two or four string-holes occur at Troy in considerable numbers: see Schmidt's Catalogue, Nos. 485-494, 759-804.

Besides pottery the only small objects found were (1) a small leaden or silver bead, pierced, cylindrical in shape but pinched in the middle, and (2) a fragment of an article in bone, .053 m. in length, resembling in form the end of a pocket paper-knife.

At the left-hand side of the ledge a small cavern in the rock, sufficient to shelter half a dozen sheep or goats, has evidently been much used by shepherds, by whose fires it has been blackened, and by their flocks, which have rubbed the rock quite smooth in places. If there were ever any human remains here, as I believe to be more than likely, they have long since been cleared out. Below the earth which was in this cavern three levels were distinctly traceable. There was first a thin layer of small stones, seemingly water-worn; immediately below this was a stratum of charcoal, in which were found an obsidian chip and a considerable number of sherds similar in character to the vases described above, though of a more reddish tinge; and beneath this was the floor level of a hard clayey earth, 'like that which we put on the roofs of our houses nowadays,' as one of the workmen explained.

MARCUS NIEBUHR TOD.