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LACONIA.

I.—EXCAVATIONS AT SPARTA, 1910.

§ 2.—THE MYCENAEAN CITY NEAR THE MENELAION.

(PLATES I, II, III)

LAST year's report contained an account of the excavation of the building on the hills to the east of the Eurotas, which has been identified with the Menelaion, the shrine of Menelaos and Helen mentioned by Herodotus and Pausanias.¹ Besides the numerous archaic objects which were then published, this work produced a few sherds of Mycenaean pottery and fragments of Mycenaean terracottas, always at a lower level than the deposits of Laconian and Geometric ware. A further clue was afforded by a Mycenaean house, which was found by a trial-pit on the eastern peak of the hill, and Tsountas' report that Mycenaean sherds were to be found on the surface in the neighbouring fields was also verified.

It therefore seemed probable that this region was the site of a Mycenaean city, and the fuller examination of these remains was the principal objective of the season's work. This was begun on May 25th, as soon as the short excavation described below at the Eleusinion of Kalývia tes Sochás was finished, and with the expert aid of our foreman Gregorios Antoniou and some twenty to thirty workmen the whole ground was carefully examined, and by the end of the campaign on June 13th the remains of an extensive Mycenaean settlement had been located.

Its position, on high ground rising directly from the eastern bank

¹ *B.S.A.* xv, pp. 108 *sqq.* For references to the Menelaion *v. ibid.*, footnote on p. 108.

of the Eurotas, is very striking. Seen from the site of classical Sparta the red water-worn scarps of these hills form a sharp contrast with the green plain and meadows, whilst behind them the heights of Parnon, upon which the snow lingers until summer, just appear upon the horizon. Opposite Sparta itself these hills lie some way back from the river, and only approach it in this way at a point nearly opposite its confluence with the Magoula river, withdrawing from it again at the point where it is joined by the next tributary stream from the west flowing down from Mistra. Between these two points the hills rise immediately from the Eurotas, and so steeply, that the slope has had to be cut away to make room for the carriage-road. In this way an elevated triangle is formed, bounded on the north-west by the plain, on the south-west by the Eurotas, and on the east by a ravine which opens upon it nearly opposite the point of junction of the Mistra river. South of this ravine the hills soon fall back from the bank of the river, as they do to the north of the triangle. The peak, upon which the Menelaion stands, is at the point of the triangle which overhangs the river near the chapel of Hagios Elias. Of the view enjoyed by the Mycenaean inhabitants over the plain of Sparta towards Taygetos some idea is given in the frontispiece to last year's report.¹ From their steep acropolis they looked down upon the future sites of classical Sparta, mediaeval Mistra, and the modern town.

It has now been shewn that the whole of this area was covered with Mycenaean houses. No traces of fortifications were observed; the natural position was so strong as to make such means of defence unnecessary. Except the Menelaion itself and the objects found with it, nothing at all of a later date than Mycenaean was found: a remarkable contrast to the classical site, which after five years' work has yielded nothing Mycenaean, except a single gem from the Sanctuary of Orthia.

Although the remains were thus extensive, they were everywhere very much destroyed, and the only house of which any well preserved remains were found, was the one near the Menelaion discovered in 1909. Elsewhere only small pieces of foundation were found, although always with Mycenaean sherds, so that no doubt is possible as to their date. The pottery was uniformly of the latest Mycenaean period (late Minoan III), and the pieces figured in this report shew that it is of the kind of which so much from Mycenae and Ialysos has been published by Furtwaengler

¹ *B.S.A.* xv, Frontispiece.

and Loeschcke as the 'Third Style.'¹ The traces of fire, which were found everywhere, shew that the city perished in a conflagration. After this the destruction was completed by the denudation due to the exposed and elevated position of the site, the house near the Menelaion owing its preservation to the shelter of the rock against which it was built.

The absence of remains earlier than late Mycenaean suggests further that the city was of no great antiquity at the time of its destruction. A careful search failed to find any tombs.

FIG. 1.—PLAN OF THE MYCENAEAN HOUSE.

The following description of the house near the Menelaion is illustrated by the plan in Fig. 1 and the view in Fig. 2, which is taken from the S.E.

¹ The vase shown in Pl. II, *a* is probably somewhat earlier.

corner. The dip in the distant hills beyond the Eurotas is the break in the range of Taygetos, where the Langada pass crosses to Messenia.

The ground-plan is rectangular, with an entrance on the eastern side leading into a passage, from which the rooms open. On the west it is bounded by the vertical face of the rock against which the house was built, the floor-level being a metre-and-a-half below the top of the rock, above which everything has been carried away. The north side was not fully excavated, and the two rooms to the north-east seem to belong to another house. The marks of destruction by fire were very evident. The space

FIG. 2.—VIEW OF THE MYCENAEAN HOUSE—FROM S.E. CORNER.

between the walls was filled with the red remains of burned brick, the level of the floors was marked by a layer of charred matter, and in the entrance to the south-west room were the carbonised remains of a wooden door-jamb. The construction was of rudely dressed stones without mortar, whilst for the upper part of the walls brick was clearly used. Fragments of wall-plaster shew the usual Mycenaean manner of finishing the interior of the house.

A series of vases was found, mostly in the third room to the left of the central passage and in the door-way of the opposite room. It was here that the trial-pit was made in 1909, which yielded the *askos* (Pl. II, *a*), the

FIG. 3.—MYCENAEAN SHERDS. (SCALE 1 : 2.)

only unbroken vase found. A number of painted sherds are given in Fig. 3, the majority of which came from this house. Of all this pottery the clay is yellow or pink, unless burned to grey, the slip the same, and the paint reddish-brown and lustrous.

The finest vases are three *kraters*, each about .32 m. in height, which are shewn with the necessary restorations in Pl. I. Their shape is characteristic of the latest Mycenaean pottery. At present the clay and slip are very grey, and the paint more often black than the original reddish-brown, but this is due to the action of the fire.

Two fragments are shewn in Fig. 4, which have the usual pinkish-yellow slip and red or reddish-brown paint. The more interesting is *b*, a piece of a large round-bodied vase with a design of fish.

FIG. 4.—FRAGMENTS OF MYCENAEAN VASES. (SCALE 1 : 4.)

Other vases are shewn in Pl. II. Of these the house near the Menelaion yielded the plain *askos* (*a*), the three-footed bowl (*b*), which is covered with a burnished brown coat of paint, and the squat three-handled vase (*d*) with a characteristic wave-pattern. The rest (*c*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *h*, and *i*) are from other parts of the site. The commonest form of all was a cup-like *kylix*, generally without handles, but all were so fragmentary that no photograph was possible. Of *buegelkannen* fragments of two or three small painted examples were found, and the sealed mouth of one very large specimen in plain unpainted clay, which must have measured some .16 m. across the handles.

The two clay sealings, which are shewn on Pl. III, give a new detail of Mycenaean life. They were found near the *askos* and the three *kraters*, in the house by the Menelaion. Each consists of a mass of red clay about .12 m. in diameter, with one side flat and the other convex. The convex

sides are shewn above on Pl. III; the two lower photographs shew the corresponding flat faces. With them were the fragments of the large plain jars which they had sealed, and the lower sides of the sealings shew the impress of the mouth of the jar. This is especially plain in *a*, where it can be measured as .11 m. The method of sealing was as follows. In the mouth of the jar was placed a potsherd, roughly shaped into a circular form, and below the sealing *a*, this was found still held in position by the edges of the clay. This disc prevented the soft clay from falling into the jar. On the lower faces of the sealings are the impressions of leaves, almost certainly of the vine. These leaves were evidently laid above the round sherd, to prevent any clay falling into the jar at its edges, which naturally did not fit the mouth exactly. Over these leaves was put the mass of clay

FIG. 5.—MYCENAEAN SEAL-IMPRESSION.
(SCALE 4 : 3.)

which served as a stopper. This was kept in place by cords, whose impress on the convex side of the sealings is clearly visible in the photographs. Lastly, one of the two examples (*a*) was stamped with a lentoid Mycenaean gem in no less than nine places. The cords and the friable nature of the clay would ensure the destruction of the sealing when the jar was opened, and in this way the impressions formed a guarantee against any tampering with the stopper. The design of the seal-stone, given in Fig. 5, has been recovered from a comparison of the different impressions; it is a characteristic group of two couchant animals back to back, with a tree between them. Two depressions appear on the clay at opposite points on the edge of the stamp. These marks, which can be seen on the photograph as well as on

the drawing, are made by the ends of the bar of the ring, which passed through the hole drilled in the diameter of the gem. The preservation of these sealings is due entirely to the clay having been baked hard in the fire which destroyed the house.

In one of the destroyed houses the terracotta figure of a woman was found which is shewn in Pl. II, *k*. The height is .14 m. The surface is much damaged, and no more can be said than that it preserves traces of paint. Although it is so much smaller, the upheld arms and the columnar base give it some resemblance to the figures found in Crete, at Knossos, Priniá, and Gourniá.¹ The breasts are well marked, the neck long, the face no more than a prominent nose and two hollows for eyes. The head-dress is indicated, and a long tress of hair rising from the crown of the head falls down over the shoulders.

The other finds were a broken stone hammer, three conical stone spindle whorls, three very rough and much worn terracotta figures of animals, and two frit beads with striations.

The comparatively large number of vases found in the only well preserved house shews that, if the city had not suffered so much from denudation, the finds would have been considerable. As it is, there is sufficient evidence that the settlement was of some size and importance, and everything points to its belonging to the end of the Mycenaean age. Neither iron nor bronze was found. Perhaps the most interesting historical result of the excavation is the evidence for the complete break of continuity between Mycenaean and classical Sparta, bridged over only by the persistence on the earlier site, of the cult of the old hero Menelaos.

R. M. DAWKINS.

¹ For Knossos, *v. B.S.A.* viii, p. 99, Fig. 56; for Priniá, *v. Ath. Mitt.* xxvi, Pl. xii; for Gourniá, *v. Boyd-Hawes, Gourniá*, Pl. xii, 1.

SPARTA: MYCENÆAN KRATERS (SCALE 1 : 6).

d

c

b

a

k

i

h

g

f

e

SPARTA: MYCENEA VASES (SCALE 1 : 5).

SPARTA : CLAY SEALINGS FOR JARS (SCALE 3 : 8).