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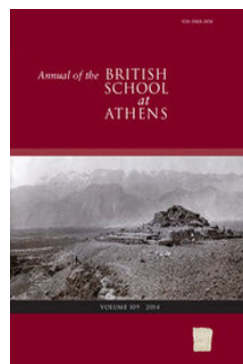
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I.—Excavations At Sparta, 1907: § 9.—A Sanctuary on the Megalopolis Road

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LACONIA.

I.—EXCAVATIONS AT SPARTA, 1907.

§ 9.—A SANCTUARY ON THE MEGALOPOLIS ROAD.

PAUSANIAS¹ in his description of Laconia noted two sanctuaries within a short distance of Sparta on the road to Arcadia and Megalopolis. The modern bridle-track leading in the same direction past the villages of Kastaniá and Leondári crosses the Acropolis hill, and emerges into the plain of the Eurotas about a quarter of a mile from the iron bridge on the Sparta-Tripolis high road; it then passes between a shoulder of the hill Análipsis and the vineyards on the right bank of the river. We may assume that the ancient road followed the same course, at any rate for some miles from Sparta, since any other direction would entangle it in the network of low hills and torrent-beds stretching from the river to Taygetus itself.

In the vineyard² of Stratios Bomborés, about fifty yards to the east of the road, a large number of miniature vases and occasional terracotta figurines have been found yearly during the spring vine-trimming, and the surface was littered with fragments on my first inspection of the ground in 1906. Besides these obvious traces of ancient occupation there were stories of other and richer finds made on the site: thus I was told that valuable bronzes had been discovered here twenty-five years ago, and that slabs of marble were still occasionally unearthed in digging.

¹ Paus. iii. 20. 8. The statue of Athena Parea and the sanctuary of Achilles.

² **N 8** in the General Plan.

A certain spot was pointed out as the nucleus of the hoard of miniature vases,¹ and work was commenced here with four men on March 27th. Four days sufficed for the necessary operations. A pit was sunk on a low embankment between two vineyards, and from the surface downwards the ground consisted of a tightly packed mass of the miniature vases referred to above. As soon as we got below the actual surface of the vineyard, the colour of the soil changed from brown to black, and we struck a burnt

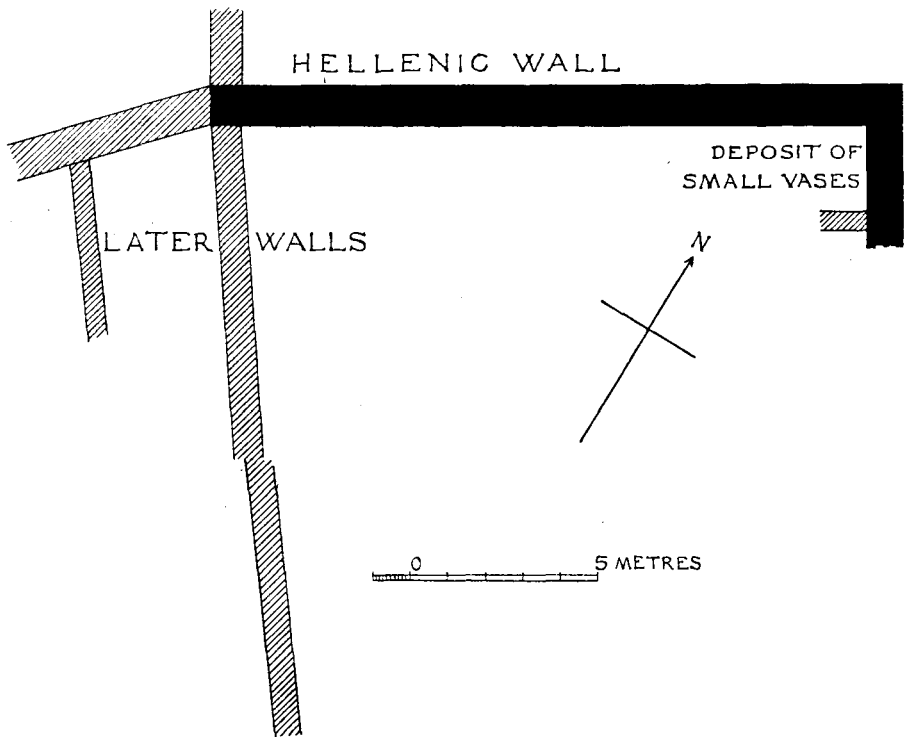


FIG. 1.—PLAN OF SANCTUARY. (SCALE 1 : 200.)

stratum 50 m. thick containing an admixture of charred bones. The vases were more tightly packed as we descended. In this burnt stratum was a wall, 20 m. below the surface of the field, composed of irregular blocks of stone piled together roughly without mortar; its height, which was greatest in the spot where we first struck it, was 1.50 m.

¹ Some of the main types of these vases are shewn in Fig. 2. They are discussed by Mr. Droop on p. 129.

Further excavation along the line of the wall revealed its plan as shewn in Fig. 1. It proceeds in a south-westerly direction from the nucleus of vases for 18.50 m., but then its direction changes, and it meets a cross-wall running north-west to south-east. The depth here amounts only to .50 m., and the whole of the soil has been disturbed; there is no trace of the burnt stratum, and the walls are built more carelessly of smaller stones. Miniature vases are here only found on or near the surface, where they have been scattered during agricultural operations. Thus we may conclude that these walls, and the others marked by hatching in the plan, were built at a later time, and have no connection with the original wall, which is shewn black in Fig. 1. The antiquity of this wall is, I think, established by the clear stratification of the soil, which has remained undisturbed owing to the coincidence of the embankment with the line of the wall. It will be noticed that the wall bends in a south-easterly direction at its northern end, enclosing the nucleus of the vases, which extends over a space of not more than four square metres. Close to this wall, on its outer, *i.e.* northern and eastern, sides were found fragments of tiles, usually with a black or brown glaze on one side, which correspond with those found together with Orientalising pottery at the Orthia Sanctuary.¹ In the same stratum of that sanctuary were found also considerable quantities of miniature vases.²

Trenches were made in all directions on both sides of the wall, but there was only one find of any consequence, a fragment of a Doric column made of a very coarse stone, originally covered with fine marble stucco. It was found on the line of the short arm of the wall a few metres from its termination. On restoration the column would be .32 m. in diameter, with 20 flutes .052 m. in width, and a slight entasis of about .005 m. in the .47 m. of height preserved. The stucco exists in small patches on three of the four surviving flutes. Elsewhere we found the soil disturbed, and the occasional fragments of wall shewed no coherence and no signs of antiquity.

The results of our investigations, therefore, go to shew that the ancient wall and its return are the only surviving remains of an ancient precinct. In this precinct stood some erection of which we possess a fragment in the piece of a Doric column. The scale of this fragment

¹ *B.S.A.* xii. p. 322.

² *B.S.A.* xii. p. 329.

points to an altar, or small shrine, such as would be suitable for a Heroön.¹ The charred earth and the bones exist as evidence for burnt sacrifice, and in the myriad vases, the terracottas, and the lead figurines we see the votive offerings of the shrine, numerically enormous, but of the cheapest and most ordinary description. Doubtless many a traveller from Sparta to Megalopolis halted to offer his gift at the wayside shrine, and the great number and small value of the offerings are an eloquent tribute alike to the piety and the poverty of the Spartan wayfarer.

As to the date of the sanctuary, the discovery of a few Hellenistic

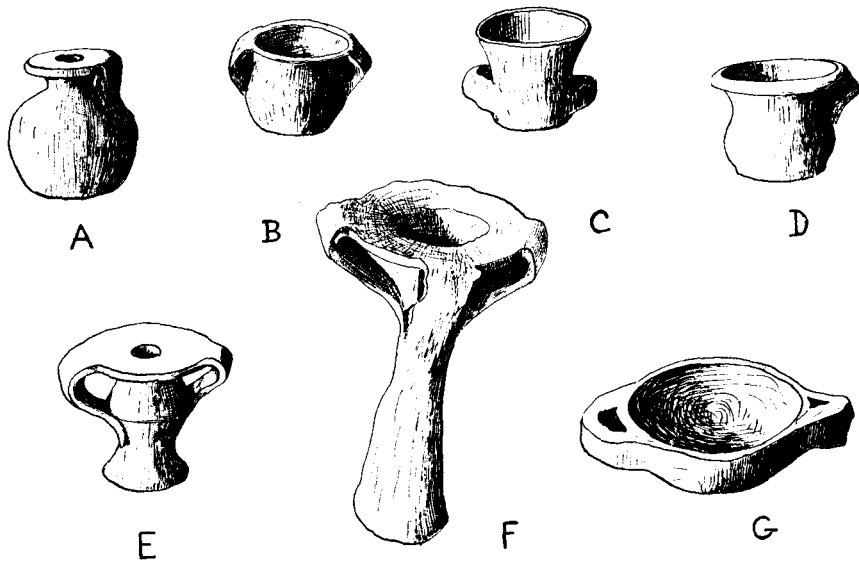


FIG. 2.—MINIATURE VASES FROM SANCTUARY. (SCALE 1 : 2.)

fragments of pottery suggests that it survived as late as the third or second century B.C., while the general character of the miniature vases, the tiles, the lead wreaths, and fragments of Orientalising pottery shew, I think, that the heyday of its reputation corresponded with the Orientalising stratum of the Orthia Sanctuary, viz. from the middle of the seventh to the middle of the sixth century B.C.

It is impossible to say with certainty, in the absence of an inscription,

¹ For examples of Heroä of this type cf. Wace and Hasluck in *B.S.A.* xi. p. 89; Roscher, ii. pp. 2493 *seqq.*

whether we should recognise in this sanctuary the sanctuary of Achilles seen by Pausanias, but its position and character offer no difficulties to the attribution of the name.

The following is an inventory of the objects found in the angle of the wall.

1. Miniature Vases :—whole, about 4000 ; damaged, about 8000.
2. Terracotta figurines : 8, of very poor quality.
3. Lead figurines : 44 crowns, 1 palm-branch, 3 warriors, 1 lady with high head-dress.
4. Miscellaneous objects : 1 small lead saucer, 3 large lead discs ;¹ 5 lumps of iron, 3 bars of iron,² 1 iron instrument ; 2 loom-weights ; 1 rubbing-stone ; 1 small bone disc ; 2 small terracotta discs.
5. A tray-full of bone fragments.
6. Three baskets-full of tiles.
7. Pottery fragments ranging in date from Orientalising to Hellenistic.
8. Part of a Doric column.

GUY DICKINS.

¹ Probably for securing iron or bronze cramps and dowels.

² Perhaps currency.