

EXCAVATIONS AT ZYGOURIES 1922.

During the past summer a supplementary campaign of excavations was undertaken at Zygouries with the double object, on the one hand of obtaining further information regarding the extent and the plan of the Mycenaean potter's shop revealed last year, and on the other hand of discovering if possible the Early Helladic cemetery. A generous contribution from Mr. C. B. Spitzer of Toledo, Ohio, was used to defray part of the cost of the expedition, the balance being met ~~by~~ from a special appropriation made by the Managing Committee of the School.

It is gratifying to be able to report that both of the objects mentioned were realized.

The potter's shop proved to be a much larger building than appeared in 1921. A corridor and three additional chambers were uncovered, occupying the area directly to the south of the rooms which last year produced such a startling store of pottery. The southernmost of these new chambers probably contained a broad stairway connecting the magazines below with the main floor of the building above. No steps of this stairway are now preserved, but ascending foundations are visible, and at one side at a level which would bring it beneath the flight of steps a large drain runs down from above.

A door provided with a substantial stone sill opens northward into what was presumably a corridor from which the other rooms in turn are accessible. The first of these was filled with a great mass of pottery. The vessels here stored were chiefly huge craters, or mixing bowls for wine. Two rows, each of ten such vases, stood along the south wall of the room.

Each vase was placed bottom upward and over it was set a second, and perhaps even a third. All told there must have been fifty or sixty of these great bowls. The inner end of the north side of the room was piled high with cooking pots of the type found in such quantities last year, and among them were also a dozen or more broad shallow basins, a stirrup vase or two, and some smaller cups. There were almost no cylixes - the principal store of these latter was evidently kept in the room farther north already excavated last year.

The next chamber, finally, last of those found in the present campaign, had a floor well paved with a sort of cement. Only three or four small vases were found here. But along the north side of the room ran an open terracotta drain in carefully fitting sections, resting for the most part on the floor, but sloping gradually downward so as to pass beneath the stone threshold of the door. The use of this room was not specifically indicated. But it may well have served some purpose in connection with the manufacture of the pottery stacked up in the other chambers. For it seems most likely that all these vases were made here on the spot. Only the western half of the building is now preserved. In the eastern half, which has unfortunately been washed down the hillside, we may conjecture stood the kiln in which these vessels were baked, and here too were no doubt the rooms where the materials were prepared.

That the pottery industry in this small settlement was of some consequence we may infer from the fact that in the battered portion of the building still existing not far short of one thousand vases have now been found - a total stock that must have possessed a substantial value. Other indications of the prosperity of the establishment appeared in the course of the excavations. For in

the débris with which these rooms were filled, obviously fallen from the upper and more important story, were numerous fragments of plaster of a fine quality, showing that the upper apartments were decorated in accordance with good Mycenaean fashion. These fragments of painted plaster were unfortunately too shattered to permit a recognition of the complete patterns represented, but with patience it may yet prove possible to fit together a considerable number of pieces.

The Early Helladic cemetery of Zygouries lay facing the town on the gentle eastern slope of a hill some 500 meters directly west of the site itself. This hillside continued to be the regular burial ground of the settlement at Zygouries during many centuries. For apart from the Early Helladic interments, graves of the Middle Helladic and of the Late Helladic Periods were found, and in addition traces of Greek tombs came to light and more than thirty graves of late Roman times were uncovered. These latter were extremely numerous on the hill and in many cases seem to have displaced earlier burials.

The Early Helladic graves are more properly speaking ossuaries. Three such were found in an undisturbed condition. One was a large, roughly oval pit, cut in soft rock, in which ~~were~~ were packed together twelve or thirteen skeletons. The bones had to a great extent decayed, but twelve skulls were definitely recognized. Though following somewhat the circumference of the oval, they lay in no order, some on their side, some on their crown, some upright, and other bones of the skeletons lay indiscriminately under, about, and over them in complete confusion. Among them were found two small vases, one crudely imitating a bird in form, and fragments of several others, a small triangular gold ornament with

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a gold wire and a bronze ring attached, two beads of agate and one of a crumbly green substance, a charm of gray stone rudely fashioned into the shape of a human foot, a sea shell, a bronze pin, a small fragment apparently of a thin silver band, and a delicate blade of obsidian. Surely a meagre list of objects from a grave in which a dozen persons were buried; but they testify to the primitive simplicity of a civilization which was already passing away by 2000 B. C.

A second and smaller ossuary of irregular shape contained but three skulls. Beneath one of them was found a thin bronze pin. Among the bones came to light a number of fragments of pottery and the greater part of two poorly made vases.

The third ossuary, oval in shape, was partly protected by an overhanging ledge of native rock. A natural cavern or crevice had no doubt here been slightly enlarged and utilized for purposes of burial. In this narrow sheltered space, measuring 1.96 X 1.78 m., were found heaped together helter skelter fifteen skulls and quantities of bones from the skeletons to which they had belonged. At the east end of the grave stood two rude vases, a shallow bowl or saucer, and a clumsy goblet with two handles. In the western part of the grave lay a diminutive dish. Other objects found include a triangular gold ornament, perhaps an earring, two large bronze pins, a cylindrical bead of agate, a bead of steatite, a small bronze implement (possibly a spatula for toilet purposes), a bone whorl or button, and under two of the skulls some thin fragile fragments of badly oxidized silver which may be the remnants of simple diadems.

A fourth grave of the Early Helladic Period like the one just described occupying a partly natural cave beneath an overhanging ledge of rock, had unfortunately been disturbed. Only two crumbling fragments of bone and the greater part of a crudely made clay vase, together with many potsherds, remained on the floor of the grave.

Apart from a single curious grave discovered at Corinth more than twenty-five years ago these ossuaries now brought to light in the cemetery near Zygouries are the only interments of the Early Helladic Period yet found on the Greek mainland. And in spite of the scanty number and the humble character of the objects found in them, they are of prime importance for a more complete understanding of the primitive civilization which they represent. From the point of view of comparative study too they are of no small significance. For the vases, the bronze pins, the spatula, the stone charm, and the fragments of silver diadems all point to intimate connections with the Cyclades, where similar objects have been brought to light in the Early Cycladic cemeteries. The two gold ornaments alone are unique and suggest that the mainland settlements in this early period were richer in the precious metal than those on the islands, since the very great number of Cycladic graves hitherto excavated have yielded no more than one tiny particle of gold.

Two graves of the Middle Helladic Period were uncovered, one lying directly above the other. In the upper were found most of the bones of one skeleton, accompanied by two vases of a type characteristic of the period, decorated in dull paint. In the lower grave lay two skeletons facing each other, each on its side and with knees drawn up. In each case the head was toward the west, though the remains of the skulls were almost impossible to distinguish. Between the two skeletons stood a small cup ornamented with simple geometric patterns in black paint without lustre.

The Late Helladic Period was represented by two chamber tombs of the well known late Mycenaean form - a long dromos or passage cut in rock leading to a door which provided an entrance to

a chamber hewn out of rock. In each case the door was found blocked by a built wall of undressed stones. Both tombs were unplundered. One contained twelve vases of various kinds, a steatite gem, a bead of the same material, three spindle whorls also of steatite, and three figurines of terracotta. In this tomb the bones were so badly decayed that no skeleton could be definitely recognized and it was not possible to ascertain whether there was more than one interment. The second tomb yielded ten vases, eleven figurines of terracotta, a small terracotta table, the head of a terracotta figure of a bull, a bead of agate, a button and a whorl of steatite. Two persons were probably buried in this grave. Only one skull was found, but a number of arm and leg-bones lay so far apart that they must almost certainly have belonged to two skeletons.

These two tombs date from the latter part of the Mycenaean period, since the vases represent a late stage of the type found at Tel el Amarna in Egypt.

Not far from the cemetery hill in a deep cutting of the Peloponnesian Railway a grave of the Geometric Period was discovered, or more correctly merely one end of a grave. It was a simple shaft cut in soft rock and originally covered by a slab of poros. In the course of grading operations of the railway company the greater part of this grave had been dug away, apparently without arousing suspicions as to its identity as a grave. The bones must have lain in this eastern part thus removed. In the small portion left undisturbed were brought to light two interesting Geometric vases, a deep basin and a large oenochoe, together with a heavy plain bronze ring.

The whole of the cemetery hill was riddled with shafts

of graves belonging to the late Roman period. These shafts, cut in rock, are rectangular, from 1.50 to 2.25 m. long by .80 to 1.20 m. wide, and usually have a depth of about one meter. At the bottom one side (sometimes both) is undercut and hollowed out, and a narrow bed is in this way fashioned, partly covered by the ledge thus artificially formed by the cutting. In this bed the body was laid and the open side of the depression was then closed by two or three large tiles set leaning against the side of the shaft.

In these graves, though many were opened, almost no traces of bones were found. In only one instance was it possible to recognize the position of the skull. No satisfactory explanation for the complete disappearance of these skeletons suggested itself. Apparently they had totally decayed and been absorbed by the earth in which they lay. In each of four graves one small non descript undecorated vase was found. In one of these four a well preserved bronze coin also came to light, and by the evidence of this "Charon's obol" we are fortunately able to date the graves. They belong to a comparatively unexplored period toward the end of the Roman Empire, in or after the time of Constantius Gallus Caesar, about the middle of the fourth century A. D.