

EXCAVATIONS AT SALIAGOS

The British School's second and final season of excavations in the Neolithic settlement on the islet Saliagos was conducted during July and August under the direction of Professor J. D. Evans and Mr. A. C. Renfrew. This further campaign was made possible by the generous financial aid of the Wenner Green Foundation, the British Academy, the Cambridge Faculty Board of Classics, the Crowther Benyon Fund and the Gordon Childe Fund. The work again benefitted from the support of Mr. N. Zaphiropoulos, Ephor of Antiquities for the Cyclades, whose assistant Miss Anna Kontsa was a frequent and welcome visitor to the site. There were two principal objectives. The first was to extend the central area of excavation, opened in 1964, in the hope of interpreting the building remains then uncovered; the second to obtain a larger sample of archaeological material from the deeper layers. A further intention was to prepare all the records and illustrations required for a speedy publication of the results obtained.

The excavation staff, numbering 15 students, was drawn chiefly from the London University Institute of Archaeology and from Cambridge University, and included specialists making a full-time study of the animal bones and marine molluscs, two trained draughtswomen and a photographer. The complex problem of surveying the stone scatters and structures was undertaken by Mr. Ian Morrison of Edinburgh University, using photogrammetric methods. Twenty-five local workmen were employed under the direction of the foreman, Mr. Stelios Karathanasis assisted by Mr. Petros Frangiskos from Naxos, and two vase-menders, Mr. Petros Petrakis and Mr. Stavros Kassandris, worked on the pottery. Digging lasted five weeks, with three weeks for the subsequent study of the finds.

The central area uncovered in the 1964 excavations was extended to west and south. It became clear that the central building complex was enclosed by a perimeter wall. The rectangular area enclosed by it was some 15 metres in width and more than 15 metres in length. At one corner, where the wall was more than a metre thick, stood a semicircular bastion-like structure supported by an added

buttress. One had the impression that the wall had a defensive purpose.

To the west the stratified deposits were satisfactorily thick, sometimes exceeding two metres in depth, and it proved possible to make an arbitrary division into three strata, corresponding to phases of occupation. The essential homogeneity of the material throughout these phases was striking, and there is no doubt that Saliagos was occupied in prehistoric times for only a few centuries by a single group of people with a very uniform cultural equipment.

The central building complex described belongs principally to the third phase of occupation. Scanty building remains, again in the form of stone foundations, were found in the earliest phase, while from the second stratum came a well-defined rectangular room some three metres in length, and part of another (Pl. 420 c). A circular structure was also found, some two and a half metres in diameter, with a succession of three well-laid stone floors. These showed traces of burning, but the purpose of the structure is uncertain — it may simply have been a grain storage silo.

The finds were studied in Antiparos, with a systematic count of all sherds and of obsidian waste. The animal bones showed that the most important domestic animal was the sheep, followed by goat, pig and cattle. A study of the preserved grain showed the presence of emmer, einkorn and two-row barley. Over forty species of marine mollusc were identified, and a study of the fishbones showed the presence of whale, shark and turtle as well as more conventional marine foods.

The pottery was again a homogeneous assemblage, the most striking shape among the fine wares being the open bowl on a high stand base (Pl. 419 a). Some twenty complete pots were restored. The predominant decoration was white paint on the dark burnished surface, although a few dark-on-light import sherds were again found. An interesting find was part of a typical Saliagos «fruit-stand», but decorated with the incised and pointillé motifs previously thought to characterise imports, but now recognised as local. A careful phase-by-phase count of the pottery emphasised the continuity, but there would seem to have been a decline in the white-painted wares in the third phase of occupation on the

site. Plastic decoration on the coarse wares, and flat rims, on the other hand, are most common in the second phase of occupation.

The chipped stone industry, chiefly of Melian obsidian (as analyses have confirmed), is extremely rich. Some 25.000 pieces were studied, including 1.200 with good secondary working. The ovate and especially the tanged arrow-head (P l. 419 b) are the most striking forms. Again, the industry is homogeneous through the phases, although there is a rise in the proportion of parallel sided blades in the third phase.

The small objects include a fine series of worked shell spoons and spatulae, a range of bone tools, some thirty stone axes, spindle-whorls of clay, waisted weights of stone and numerous mortars, pestles, querns and grinders. Two fragments of marble vessels were found, which are of interest in view of the subsequent

Early Cycladic development of the industry. Of particular importance in this respect was the well-stratified find of a schematic « violin-idol » of marble, nearly seven centimetres in height, closely comparable to the Early Cycladic series (P l. 420 b). A headless figurine of a fat seated woman of the type familiar in the Neolithic of Mainland Greece is of note (P l. 420 a), while several other anthropomorphic representations in clay and stone were found.

Samples of shell and soil were taken for Radiocarbon determination, and confirmation is awaited for the date of the site, at present set hypothetically early in the fourth millennium B.C. At the conclusion of the work the finds were deposited in the stores of the Paros Museum. The drawings and photography of all the finds was completed, and work on the final report was well advanced in the autumn of 1965.

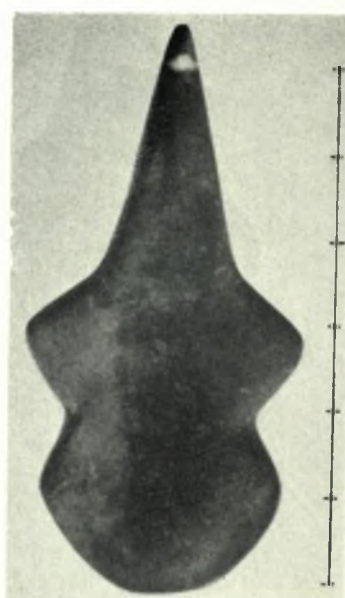
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Cyclades. Saliagos. Neolithic Settlement; a. White - painted high - stand bowl, b. Obsidian arrow - heads

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Cyclades. Saliagos. Neolithic Settlement: a. Headless female figurine, b. Marble «violin idol»,
c. House remains of second phase

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