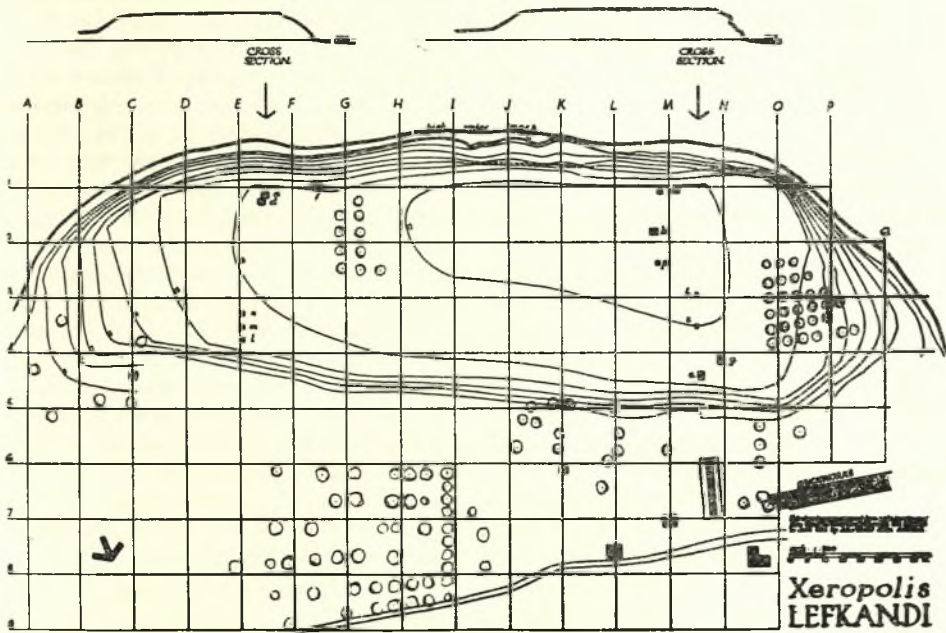


## LEFKANDI

Trial excavations designed to assess the potentialities of the hill site of «Xeropolis», near Lefkandi, were carried out by the British School from the 1st to 23rd June, 1964. During this period two sectors of the elongated hill were tested (Plan 1), one towards the E. end, the other towards the W; the tests extended from the N. to S. faces of the hill, amounting

ment, at least in Protogeometric times, well outside the immediate slopes of the hill. Unfortunately, in the limited areas tested this season, extensive erosion of the summit had removed all trace, except sherds, of this period of occupation, which was one of its main interests, except on the NE. edge of the hill. In this area a sequence was found in stratified layers of Geometric, Protogeometric and Mycenaean IIIC occupation at which stage further exca-



Plan 1. The site showing location of trial trenches

to a partial cross section of the site at these points. Local reports of burials on the edge of Lefkandi village about 100 metres NW. of Xeropolis led to the opening of a few cist tombs.

From these tests it was learnt that the shape of the hill has altered considerably since its last occupation. The centre of the area has been eroded so that bed rock is only about a metre below the surface whereas the extreme edges of the hill, particularly to the N., are better preserved and in some cases are covered with a fair depth of surface wash.

Surface exploration before excavation had indicated that «Xeropolis» was a major Geometric and Protogeometric settlement; further surface exploration during excavation confirmed this and pointed to an extension of the settle-

ment into the deeper levels had to be stopped. Elsewhere the latest levels preserved were Late Helladic and, in all cases but one, LH IIIC. In fact one of the achievements of the excavation has been to reveal the existence of a considerable town of LH IIIC date with strong indications of an intensive and prolonged occupation during this period. The earliest levels found were Early Helladic in date; the intermediate stages of Middle Helladic and Late Helladic I - IIIB being represented in a somewhat scrappy state in several of the trenches; to judge from the large Middle Helladic surface sherds, the results of the tests were not a completely representative picture of this period on the site.

In greater detail, Geometric pottery was found

apart from a superficial surface scatter in most of the trials, in trenches L and M on the NE. edge of the hill. In the case of trench L the deposit was sealed below a very hard compacted level which in turn lay beneath a stratum of large stones (Pl. 340 a). Below this level was found a succession of Protogeometric layers nearly a metre in total depth, characterised by pendent-semicircle bowls and bowls with isolated concentric circles (Pl. 340 b). A particular feature of these levels, some of which cleaned off so clearly that they could hardly be other than floors of a building whose walls were not found, was the ashy content of their make-up. In this same test, LH IIIC was found immediately below the Protogeometric but in insufficient quantity to indicate to which stage of the period the latest level should be ascribed. Indeed, it was an unfortunate feature of all the trenches in this area that they had to be limited to two metre squares since permission to dig there was obtained only in the last week of the excavation and larger soundings could not have been completed in time. Trench M, five metres higher up the slope, produced a similar Geometric level though more in the nature of a surface deposit and immediately below it appeared LH IIIC. Trench N, a further five metres up the hill, revealed a short depth below the surface walls of LH IIIC date. These three soundings, one above the other on the slope of the hill-top, at five metre intervals, illustrate well the way in which the site is more eroded the further the ridge of the hill is approached.

On very much the same axis as trenches L, M and N, trials A and D were made on the S. edge of the site overlooking the sea. Earlier investigation of the steep slope of the hill-side had revealed levels of LH IIIC and B character with a super-imposed floor of uncertain date and it was hoped to find the same levels on the edge of the field above. Trench A, nearest the edge, while producing a well constructed wall, apparently of LH III date, was so disturbed by a large pit that it was abandoned and trench D was opened up immediately adjacent to it. Some pebble «floors» were found close below the surface but below them until bed rock some 1.5 metres down, the pottery was Middle Helladic apart from a small intrusive pit. A further trial trench, F, in a depression on the actual slopes of the cliff-edge uncovered some back

walls of rooms probably of LH IIIC date with small areas of preserved floors: on one of these was a crouched burial without grave goods.

Of the trials near the W. end of the site, the most informative and productive were those placed near the extreme N. and S. edge of the plateau. That at the N. end, trench C, produced a deposit of early LH IIIC vases in a clear destruction level of burnt wood and mud brick. Outstanding among the vases was a large straight-sided alabastron with a frieze of animals depicted in white on a black background around its waist (Pl. 340 c). Among the creatures represented are two griffins feeding their young in a nest, a sphinx and a stag. A stirrup vase with applied white decoration and a deep bowl with solid dark paint inside and out, were all among the vases found with the alabastron which itself had the inverted foot and stem of a kylix inserted in its neck as an improvised lid. Below the clay floor on which these pots lay, was a deep fill of LH IIIC pottery with at least one intermediate clay floor. This fill lay in part between two walls at right angles to each other, both having a pronounced batter. In the space between these walls and over a metre from their top was found a clay floor with a clay oven upon it of LH IIIC date. One of the walls was, in turn, founded immediately upon an earlier wall of rather massive construction and associated with Middle Helladic sherds. These walls might well have been part of a fortification complex.

Since the superficial levels in this trench had produced some Geometric and Protogeometric sherds, three further tests were made at intervals higher up the hill. Walls were found in each trench but all appeared to belong to the LH IIIC period.

Opposite these trenches, on the S. slope of the site towards the sea, three tests were made. Trench E on the very edge of the cliff produced a deposit of LH IIIC pots mostly fragmentary on an ill-defined earth floor; traces of burning were far less marked than in the destruction level in trench C. This floor overlay a wall associated with LH IIIC sherds and it, in turn, was resting on an earlier complex of walls in which two periods of construction could be traced. All this building activity appeared to have taken place within the LH IIIC period; the stratum below was, to judge from the sherds found in it, of Middle Helladic date.

Higher up the S. slope, trench B uncovered a large pit, or cutting, dug down into Early Helladic levels and filled with a grey ashy deposit containing much animal bone and LH IIIC pottery. The remains of a clay lined pit were found in the Early Helladic levels; it rested on bed rock which lay a metre below the surface at this point. The same loose grey ashy deposit, found to be characteristic of the IIIC levels over the whole of the site, appeared also in trench P some ten metres above trench B; it too contained a considerable quantity of broken pottery and bones.

In all, 7 trenches 3 x 4 metres and 6 trenches of smaller size were dug. They confirmed the indications of sherds on the surface that «Xeropolis» had been occupied from Early Helladic to Geometric times. They revealed a considerable town of LH IIIC date which must have covered practically the whole of the hill and which lasted long enough to produce massive deposits of refuse and to contain at least three building phases. Two good deposits of IIIC pottery, one at least the result of destruction by fire, will be a welcome addition to the material known from this period; the pictorial alabastron being one of the outstanding vases of its age. While the Geometric and Protogeometric

occupation levels have been largely eroded away, stratified levels were found in one area and there is considerable hope that the same levels have been preserved along much of the NE. edge of the hill. The material from these levels, in itself of great value, has been usefully augmented by the pots found in the cemetery near Lefkandi, where three cist burials were uncovered; the vases from inside and outside the cists range from Late Mycenaean IIIC into Protogeometric; the latter period being represented by a fragmentary amphora containing a cremation burial (Pl. 340 d). The absence of bones and the small size of the cists strongly indicate that they too were cremation burials.

Thanks are due to Dr. V. Callipolitis, Ephor for Attica and Euboea, whose representative Mr. Papadopoulos attended the excavations. The work was directed by the undersigned, who had the assistance of seven students of the School. All the finds from the trial excavations have been lodged in the Chalcis Museum.

It is hoped to undertake in 1965 a systematic stratigraphical excavation in the area of trench L where the Geometric and Protogeometric levels are preserved.

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Euboea. Lefkandi: a. Geometric sherds from trench L, b. Protogeometric amphora from trench L, c. LH III C alabastron from trench C, d. Protogeometric amphora from the cemetery

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