

EXCAVATIONS AT SALIAGOS

Excavations were carried out during July and August 1964 on the island of Saliagos near Antiparos. They were sponsored by the British School of Archaeology and directed by Professor J. D. Evans of the University of London and Mr. Colin Renfrew of Cambridge University. The campaign owed much to the cooperation and encouragement of Mr. N. Zapheiropoulos, the Ephor of Antiquities for the Cyclades, and Miss I. Dhekoulakou, acting for the Ephor, was a frequent and very welcome visitor to the site.

The small islet of Saliagos lies in the narrow channel between the northeast end of Antiparos and Paros. It is one of several small islands in this channel, none more than 100 metres in length, and was first visited by Mr. Zapheiropoulos, who discovered there traces of a prehistoric settlement. An examination of the site and its surface material in 1963 suggested that here at last was a settlement in the Cyclades of neolithic date, and plans were made for its excavation.

Like all sites in the Cyclades, Saliagos is somewhat eroded. To test the depth of soil, a series of trenches was cut along its length revealing a depth sometimes of only 30 centimetres. At the south end however there are up to 2 metres 50 of stratified deposits, and work was there undertaken in a grid system of 4-metre squares. The extensive stone debris of destroyed houses was found covered by some 30 cms. of wind-blown soil. These remains were overlain at one point by the rough and massive stones of a tomb of the 1st or 2nd century A.D., the only remains discovered on Saliagos during the season which were later than the Neolithic.

The baulks between the squares in the principal excavated area were removed to aid the interpretation of the building remains, producing a space of 20 metres by 10 metres. The overall plan of settlement is not yet clear, but the houses seem to have had rectangular rooms, which were roughly three metres in length (P.L. 660 a).

The three squares to the south of this area produced a well stratified deposit up to a depth of 2 metres 50. Traces of an earlier building phase were observed some 60 centimetres below the later one, but they were scanty in the areas studied, and the matter requires further in-

vestigation. The lowest levels in this region contained traces of burning and considerable quantities of well preserved pottery.

At the north end of the island, walls were again found and below them traces of earlier occupation, with finds of pottery and obsidian.

Pottery was abundant in all levels of the site, and showed considerable uniformity. The island was clearly occupied for one period only, although further work should enable some chronological subdivision of the material to be made, on both typological and stratigraphical grounds. The fine wares were in general dark-faced, and burnished. The commonest form is a flat based, rather straight sided open bowl. This was sometimes set on a very tall fruit-stand base. Decoration in matt white paint was common, usually rectilinear in style (P.L. 660 b) although curvilinear motifs are present (P.L. 660 c). There was no pattern burnish, and only a few sherds are decorated with incisions. These, like the handful of fragments with dark-on-light painted motifs, are probably imports.

The obsidian industry was exceptionally rich: over 20,000 pieces were studied, and 1,000 catalogued and drawn. The raw material was imported from Melos. The most notable type was the bifacially flaked arrowhead with prominent tang (P.L. 660 d), and some fifteen other types of artefact were classified.

Stone axes of haematite-limonite were common, as were bone awls and points. Several worked shell spoons were found, and the small finds included a fragment of a bracelet made of spondylus and an anthropomorphic amulet of bone.

Considerable quantities of discarded animal bones on the site provided evidence of the consumption of sheep/goat, cattle and pig. Dog was also found. The bones will be the subject of specialised study, as will the grain impressions and the numerous shells. Pollen samples were taken from the site, and from suitable low-lying land in Antiparos. First indications however suggest that the pollen was not well preserved and samples taken from other islands, notably Delos, may throw more light on the palaeoecology of the area and on the date of its deforestation. It seems that the economy was one of mixed farming, with emphasis on the rearing of sheep or goat. But the great role played by the sea is demonstrated by the quan-

tities of shell found and by fish-bones, some of extremely large size.

Underwater exploration provided ample evidence of sea-level change, the land having subsided some three metres since Roman times. Among other indications was a complicated system of rock-cut trenches, visible now below water level. That these continue on land and were in fact cut on land was demonstrated by a small supplementary excavation on Antiparos. Submerged building remains, including a well-head of classical date and several Early Cycladic cist graves, confirm this point. It seems indeed probable that Saliagos in the Neolithic period was not an islet but a promontory linked both with Antiparos and with Paros.

The excavations have amply confirmed the Neolithic date of the Saliagos settlement. Similar finds have recently been studied from the site of Mavrispilia in Mykonos. There is no doubt that they are earlier than the «protocycladic» graves found in Antiparos by Bent and Tsountas. Although there are few parallels for cross-dating, it seems that the settlement

was roughly contemporary with the Late Neolithic of Greece and the islands of the eastern Aegean. A date early in the fourth millenium seems likely, and it is hoped to confirm this by radiocarbon determinations.

Assisting in the excavation were Mrs. J. D. Evans, Miss Jane Bagenal, Miss Linda Beigel, Miss Barbara Bender, Mr. Ian Clegg, Miss Jane Ewbank, Mr. Constantinos Gallis, Mr. Ian Morrison, Mr. Bill Phelps and Mrs. Cressida Ridley. The foreman was Mr. Vassili Adamachos, helped by Mr. Petros Frangiskos from Naxos and fifteen workmen from Antiparos. The vase-mender of the British School, Mr. Petros Petrides, was in charge of restoration. Miss Judith Turner, palynologist, and Mr. John Dixon, geologist, visited the site during the season. The underwater survey was conducted by a team of five aqualung divers.

The finds have been drawn and photographed and are now in the safe keeping of the Paros Museum. It is hoped that the excavation of Saliagos will be continued and concluded with a further season's work in 1965.

J. D. EVANS - COLIN RENFREW





Cyclades, Saliagos, Neolithic Settlement : a. House remains in the principal excavated area,
b. White-painted bowl, formerly with high base, c. White-painted sherds, d. Obsidian artefacts