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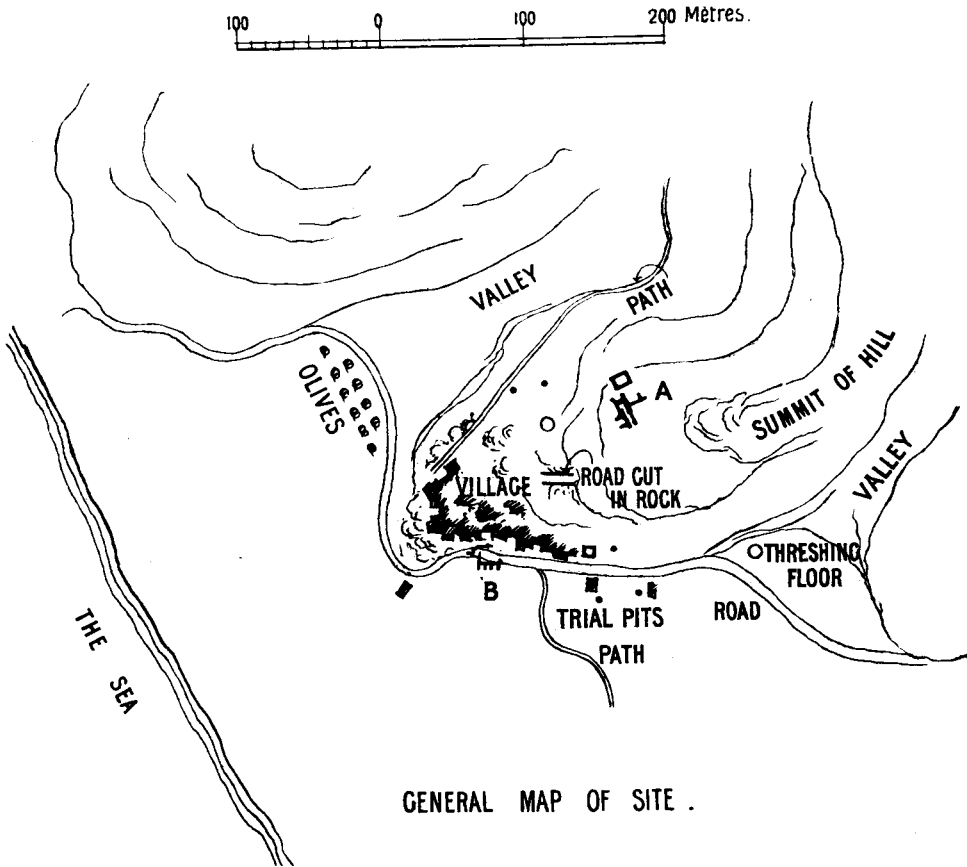
## EXCAVATIONS AT PETRAS.

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ON a low spur of the hills that shut in the Sitia valley on the east, immediately overlooking the sea and separated from the port of Sitia by nearly a mile of sand-bar, stands the unimportant hamlet of Petras, originally Venetian, afterwards 'Turkish' or Moslem-Cretan, and for the most part ruined and deserted since 1896. Mr. Marshall came here in January, 1901, and collected sherds which left no doubt about the early date of the remains, treated by previous travellers as Hellenic. Lying on a deep bay and commanding as it does the easiest route into the Eteocretan highlands, it seemed likely that Petras might furnish useful clues, if not to the indigenous culture of the district, at any rate to the foreign influences that were at work here during the Bronze Age. Later, when two months of work at Praesos had produced very little Kamáres pottery of the familiar mid-Cretan types and no Mycenaean, it seemed doubly desirable to examine this, the nearest definitely Mycenaean site, and to ascertain what had been the local varieties of early pottery. Accordingly I made trials at Petras on June 17th and 18th, 1901, employing ten men the first day and sixteen the second.

With the exception of the ground occupied by cottages at the northern tip of the spur, the whole hill is cultivated. It was covered with wild undergrowth until fifteen years ago, when two Moslem brothers bought and reclaimed it, setting a large force of labourers to demolish the ancient masonry and to form the hill-sides into cultivation-terraces. The field-walls contain many roughly-dressed 'megalithic' blocks of limestone, and a certain amount of ashlar, making it evident that there were extensive buildings here. My informants said that the destruction had been systematic and complete, and trial-pits in the fields showed them to be

right. In such a case the best chance is to try the roads. Cuttings into the roadway skirting the west side of the village (B. on Fig. 1) revealed a well-built wall 17 m. long and 1.50 m. high running north and south; a return-wall projected at either end, and two others between them divided



GENERAL MAP OF SITE .

FIG. 1.—PETRAS NEAR SITIA.

(N.B.—The sea is to the North of the village.)

the long front into three nearly equal compartments. We had the complete length of the building, but could not ascertain its width, all the cross-walls being broken off where they emerged from the protection afforded by the terrace carrying the road. The wall at the north was 1.40 m. thick, that at the south 1.10, the two partition-walls .80 m. The building was

dated by two large *pithoi* in the middle compartment and by the two vases shown in Figures 2 and 3, which lay close by at a higher level, as if



FIG. 2.—'KAMÁRES' JAR FROM PETRAS ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ).

fallen from an upper storey. The one is a wide-mouthed jar, '26 m. high, covered with a coarse Kamáres slip varying from red to black, on which are painted bands and zig-zags in white; it has two handles and midway between them on each side a little button-like protuberance decorated with a white cross. The other is a small spherical vase covered with a plain brown slip; it has a flat top suggestive of a closed mouth, and over it a low cross-handle. If we could trace the evolution of the *pseudamphora* we should doubtless

find vases of this form (with the mouth open) among its ancestors.<sup>1</sup> The present specimen, however, belongs to a stage of Mycenaean art at which the *pseudamphora* was already well established.

At the time of the excavation there was a tendency to treat all 'Kamáres' ware as anterior to Mycenaean; later discoveries have shown that the native technique of white decoration on dark slip was still to a certain extent in vogue along with the Mycenaean method, when the blow fell which caused the ruin and desertion of these settlements on the coast. Vases shaped like those in Figures 2 and 3 were found in House B. at Palaikastro; the Mycenaean village at Petras belonged to the same age, and we can hardly doubt that it met the same fate, as Zakro, Palaikastro, and Gournia.



FIG. 3.—SPHERICAL VASE FROM PETRAS ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ).

<sup>1</sup> Most of the spherical *askoi* of this type are small vases. For larger ones the division of the handle by an elevated false neck served to give the handles a stronger hold on the vase, which would be heavy when filled. The *pseudamphorae* found in the Cretan coast-settlements are for the most part large and coarse storage-vessels; the small examples of fine ware become common in the succeeding period. Both forms, *pseudamphora* and *askos*, are simply bottles in which oil and other liquid commodities could be sealed up; in many specimens the funnel-like shape of the spout would make it easy to insert a stopper and cover it with the maker's seal.

I also examined a plateau north of the actual summit of the hill (A on Fig. 1), where tradition said that a 'church' had been discovered in the work of demolition. Only the footings of walls remained, but these seemed to be those of a large mansion, dated by a few fragments of Mycenaean pottery. There was the beginning of a staircase, 1.70 m. wide with three steps *in situ*, and a finely dressed door-sill of black basalt-like stone unknown in the district, measuring 1.55 m. by .75 by .28. At the northern limit of this plateau there projects a tower constructed in megalithic fashion of irregular limestone blocks: its front is 11.40 m., its side 8 m., its walls 1 m. thick. There is a similar tower, projecting and standing nearly 3 m. high, below the building B. In both cases the rock within is considerably higher than without and is so denuded that excavation within the towers is useless. Between sites A and B there is a pathway mounting the hill which for a few yards is cut through the rock.

On the second day we dug into the slopes outside the ancient settlement on the North-east and came upon a large rubbish-heap containing masses of Kamáres pottery, chiefly cups in all degrees of coarseness and delicacy, a few scraps of transitional Mycenaean ware, numerous terra-cotta cubes with four parallel perforations (loom-weights), pieces of a smooth hemispherical steatite bowl, and fragments of three-legged cooking pots. Closely mixed with the heap were quantities of stone-chippings and other refuse suggestive of house-building or house repairs. A possible explanation is that the place had been sacked and then re-occupied. The inhabitants swept out and rebuilt their homes, and threw the resultant rubbish outside the town.



FIG. 4.—MYCENAEAN LAMP FROM PETRAS (4).

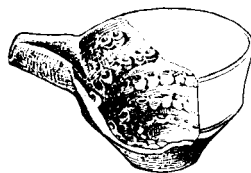


FIG. 5.—VASE WITH INTERNAL CELLS FROM PETRAS (4).

Among the thousands of fragments there were a few whole cups, and three lamps (Fig. 4) of a form known from several Mycenaean sites in East Crete.

The most curious vessel is the spouted cup shown in Fig. 5, which is provided internally with five rows of tiny cells; I have no idea of their use. Trial-pits elsewhere yielded an amygdaloid bead of reddish-yellow sard, obsidian flakes, a clay 'label' 9 cm. in diameter with three parallel strokes incised near the perforation at the top, a plain red sherd incised with a character like the letter N, and part of a large earthenware vase-support with triangular openings, painted in the style of the coarse pseudamphora figured on p. 313 below. The only part of the site where undisturbed deposits are likely to exist is the ground East of the building B, at present covered by the village; but the results would hardly justify the expense involved in the removal of the houses.

R. C. BOSANQUET.