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THE ROCK SHELTER OF KSĀR 'ĀKIL NEAR THE CAVE OF ANTILYĀS.¹

By PROF. ALFRED ELY DAY (American University of Beirut).

THE Rock Shelter of Ksār 'Ākil is on the north side of the north branch of the Antilyās valley, less than two hundred yards distant from the well-known cave of Antilyās, which is on the north side of the south branch of the valley. The cave has been excavated by Tristram, Zumoffen and others, and has yielded a quantity of flints and bones of Upper Palaeolithic (Aurignacian) Age, together with some which may belong to the Middle Palaeolithic or Mousterian. The rock shelter of Ksār 'Ākil was discovered by two Beirut merchants who were digging for treasure. They had heard a story current in Lebanon of a cave in which the people of a village had taken refuge with their treasures and had been walled-up by the enemy. The proximity of the cave of Antilyās and a similarity in the contour of the face of the cliff had led them to hope that they might find the mouth of a cave buried under the ground at the foot of the cliff at Ksār 'Ākil. On beginning to dig they immediately began to turn out flints and bones. They consulted the writer, and were told that the deposit was thousands of years old, and that they would not find underneath it any treasures which had been buried for a few hundred years. They, however, clung to their belief, but agreed to share the expense of the excavation with the American University of Beirut, which assumed the conduct of the work. They agreed to give the flints and bones to the University, while retaining for themselves the right to any gold or jewels which might be found.

No cave was found, but a large shaft was dug to the depth of 15 metres (nearly 50 feet) before the virgin soil was reached. The bottom of the shaft was only a few yards higher than the level of the torrent bed in the valley. The overhang of the face of the cliff amounts to about 10 feet.

No marked differences in flints or bones were found at different levels, which is very surprising in such a thick deposit. Specimens of the flints and of the bones and teeth were sent to Prof. Marcellin Boule of the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine at Paris and to the British Museum. Both agreed in considering the whole deposit

¹ Translation of an article read at the Meeting of the International Archaeological Congress in Beirut, April, 1926.

to belong to the Upper Palaeolithic, and to present no important differences at different levels.

Prof. Boule says: "The animal bones belong to species occurring at all levels in your shaft. . . . I therefore do not see the means of establishing divisions according to fossils in your deposit. The stone industry seems to me no less homogeneous. The most ancient and the most differentiated forms occur at all depths. As a whole, it clearly belongs to the Upper Palaeolithic, although there are certain Mousterian types. In view of the distance of Syria from Europe, it seems to me imprudent to make closer comparisons.

Dr. Emmanuel Passemard has examined in detail the material at the American University and considers it all to be Aurignacian, although certain types are lacking, such as the Châtelperron point and the Gravette point.

Miss Dorothea Bate of the British Museum of Natural History has made a report on the bones and teeth sent to London, and has also examined the material at the University of Beirūt. She found the following mammals represented: *Cervus dama*, *Cervus capreolus*, *Capra* (cf. *C. nubiana*), *Gazella* sp., *Bos* sp., *Sus* sp., *Ursus syriacus*, and probably *Ursus spelaeus*. There is a lower jaw of *Ursus syriacus*, and there are two large canine teeth which may belong to *Ursus spelaeus*. The most numerous bones and teeth are those belonging to *Cervus dama* and to *Capra* sp., and these are especially abundant in the upper layers. The few examples of *Bos* and *Ursus* were found only in the lower layers.

Land shells (*Helix*) and sea shells (*Patella*, *Littorina*, *Petunculus*, *Cardium*) were found in large quantities at all levels. A piece of deer antler shaped like a spatula and polished by use was found at 9 metres. A piece of limestone shaped like a wedge or an axe, polished on two faces, was found at 8 metres.

No human bones nor teeth were found, neither were any engravings on bone nor any ornaments.

At all levels were found numerous pebbles of igneous rock, which come from an outcrop higher up the valley. At 11 metres was found a small slab of the same stone worn hollow on the two sides. On it rested a pebble of igneous rock, somewhat worn on one side. The slab is irregularly rectangular and measures 22 by 13 cm. It is from 2 to 4 cm. in thickness. In spite of the fact that Aurignacian man in Europe does not seem to have used mills, one is tempted to consider this slab to be a hand mill. Syria

is far from Europe, as Prof. Boule says, and we need not suppose that man learned to grind his grain in all parts of the world at the same time. Moreover Syria is perhaps the native country of wheat. On the other hand, the slab may have been used for grinding ochre, or for some other purpose.

The material at the American University has been arranged in three divisions according to depth; the first from the surface to the depth of 5 metres, the second from 6 to 10 metres, and the third from 11 to 15 metres. As stated above, the remains of the fallow deer and ibex are most abundant in the first or highest division, and the few bones and teeth of bears and oxen are confined to the lowest layer.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

1. *The P.E.F. Map of Ophel*: The following is a translation of a letter from the Revd. Father H. Vincent to Sir Charles Close on the subject of the Map.

École Biblique et Archéologique
Française, Jerusalem.

2nd May, 1926.

THE Palestine Exploration Fund has just sent me the beautiful and excellent map of Ophel of which you have directed the preparation. I will not delay to send my sincere thanks and congratulations. This clear and careful drawing is a new service rendered by the Fund to the topographical and archaeological study of the Holy City. The few hours that I have just devoted to a very careful examination of both maps enable me to appreciate what precision has been arrived at in the compilation of original documents of so varied and so unequal a character.

On one point alone, a small matter of detail, I interpret the archaeological facts differently: that is concerning the system of fortification at the south end of the hill. No doubt you have drawn this detail from the information provided by Commandant Weill, who directed the excavations in this region; his drawings have not yet been discussed publicly, but I have followed their preparation and have discussed their elements with M. Weill. Now I think, after much consideration on the site, that certain details should be slightly altered.