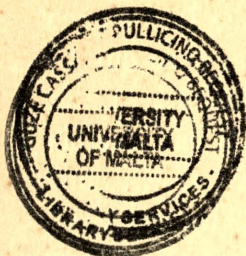


Ghar

Dalam.

DG
989.5
B357



THE MUSEUM,

AUBERGE D'ITALIE,

Valletta—Malta.

GHAR DALAM.

Ghar Dalam—the Cave of Darkness—is a natural water-worn tunnel in the Lower Coralline Limestone. It is situated on the north-east side of a rocky ravine, known as Wied Dalam. The cave, which varies in width from 20 to 60 feet, and in height from 10 to 18 feet, runs in a north-easterly direction for 270 feet, after which it grades off into several narrow branches, opening up here and there into wider and higher spaces; its total length being over 700 feet. The walls of the cave shelve inwards towards a deep central channel, of unequal width.

Ghar Dalam first came under the notice of Professor Issel, who in 1865 cut a trench 60 cms. deep, about 100 paces from the entrance. The next explorer was Mr. J. H. Cooke, who, in 1892, dug eight trenches of various sizes and depths, the first being about 30 feet, and the last about 350 feet from the entrance. After Mr. Cooke many casual excavations took place in the Cave the results of which were never made public. In the winter of 1912-13, Professor N. Tagliaferro, assisted by Mr. C. Rizzo, L.S.A., cut two trenches, one on

each side of the cave, a little further in than the last trench dug by Mr. Cooke. In May 1914, two trenches were cut by Dr. T. Ashby, under the direction of Prof. T. Zammit. Later on, Mr. Rizzo and Mr. G. Despott explored the cave at six different points. In 1921 Mr. G. Sinclair, A.M.I.C.E., sunk trenches both outside and inside the cave. In 1922 and in 1924, Miss Caton Thompson excavated at a distance of 150 feet from the mouth of the cave.

The stratigraphy of the deposit differs somewhat in different parts of the cavern. The principal layers, in descending order, are the following :

(A). *Surface Layers*, consisting of the cave floor and a pebble layer under it. These contain embedded in them potsherds ranging from the recent times to the Neolithic period. Flint, Chert, Obsidian, and bone implements, sling stones, and other artefacts, especially in the form of various pendants, have been recovered from the pebble layer, proving that the cave has been inhabited since prehistoric times.

(B). The next layer of brick *Red Earth* consists chiefly of red vegetable soil with, in certain places, alternating thin layers of whitish earth. This layer contains numerous remains of the deer family. At this level two human molar teeth, in an excellent state of preservation, were found in 1917. These teeth, according to Sir Arthur Keith, conform in structure to those at times associated with *Homo neanderthalensis*.

(c). The third layer consists of a *Bone Breccia* with about 75 per cent. of animal remains, chiefly hippopotamus and elephant. The bones occur in utter disorder, and a large proportion of the fragments are rolled into pebbles. It is probable that the bones found their way into the cave by being washed in by water. Herds of hippopotami and occasionally elephants may also have resorted to the cave and in time their accumulated carcasses were subsequently rolled about, at a period of a partial submergence of the cave.

(d). The bottom layer consists of *Clay*, covering the rocky floor as a laminated sediment representing a long period of time when the cave was flooded with water carrying silt. A certain number of plant impressions have been lately detected in this layer.

J. G. BALDACCHINO, M.D., F.G.S.

Curator—Nat. History Section.

26th May, 1934.