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ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF J. N. COLDSTREAM

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In view of their close proximity to the metalliferous deposits in the Lower Pillow Lava formation, it seems logical to imagine that those fortified settlements had been established precisely there in order to defend copper deposits and to control production as the demand for this metal increased during this period, implying a greater opening up of the island to foreign traders or entrepreneurs. A similar arrangement has been observed in Early Bronze Age Spain.⁶⁰

Catling had already imagined that the Yialias valley, below the plateau on which *Barsak*, *Nikolizhes* and *Kafkallia* are located, could have been involved in the traffic of copper products.⁶¹ Moreover, he reached the conclusion that the valley does not seem to have been heavily inhabited in the Bronze Age⁶² probably as the Mesaoria plain was apparently still covered by trees⁶³ making it even more difficult to believe that all those large fortified enclosures were designed only to shelter, in time of imminent danger, local agriculturists living on the lands on the land in the plain below.

Knapp, 'Ethnicity, entrepreneurship, and exchange: Mediterranean inter-island relations in the Late Bronze Age', *BSA* 85 (1990) 137.

⁶⁰ J. Courtin, 'La guerre au Néolithique', *La recherche* 15:4 (1984) 456.

⁶¹ H.W. Catling, 'The ancient topography of the Yialias Valley', *RDAC* (1982) 232.

⁶² *Ibid.* 231-32.

⁶³ D. Christodoulou, *The Evolution of the Rural Land Use Pattern in Cyprus* (Bude 1959) 47 and 109; D. Frankel, 'Inter-site relationships in the Middle Bronze Age of Cyprus', *World Archaeology* 6:2 (1974) 190-208; D.K. Jones et al., *Report on Pasture Research, Survey, and Development in Cyprus* (Nicosia 1958) 51.

THE KOURION SCEPTRE: SOME FACTS AND FACTOIDS

ELIZABETH GORING

I am very glad to have the opportunity to offer a contribution towards this Festschrift celebrating the career of Nicolas Coldstream. My first meeting with Nicolas was in 1978 when I applied to Bedford College, University of London, to read for a Ph.D. in Archaeology. My proposed subject was the gold-work of Late Bronze Age Cyprus. Nicolas agreed to act as my supervisor, and throughout the period of work on my thesis he offered much valuable advice and encouragement. Since completing my thesis in 1983 I have been based in Edinburgh and, regrettably, personal contact has been limited, but I continue to think of Nicolas as a most respected friend. I feel privileged to have been one of his students.

The famous Kourion sceptre¹ is regarded as one of the greatest treasures of Cyprus, and it is rightly acknowledged as a masterpiece (figs. 1-2). Its significance has been of some interest to Nicolas, who sees it as the 'most spectacular of all status symbols in eleventh-century Cyprus'.² Despite the fame and importance of the sceptre, no detailed study of it has been published, and I would like to take this opportunity to offer a few observations.

I have examined the sceptre on several occasions and have discussed it at length with many people, to whom I am most grateful. I acknowledge responsibility for any errors that follow. My own interest in the sceptre developed after the completion of my thesis.³ As a result of the overview provided by that research, I felt there were a number of specific questions that needed to be tackled. As my study is still continuing, this essay represents work in progress; there are several important issues which require more detailed consideration. There seem, however, to be some misunderstandings about the nature of this superb piece that should be addressed in print as soon as possible.

Norman Maier coined the beguiling word 'factoids' in his introduction to *Marilyn*. Maier defines these as 'mere speculations or guesses which have been repeated so often that they are taken for hard facts'.⁴ He goes on to discuss the nature and development of factoids, pointing out that one of their principal 'decidedly unbiological' characteristics is their 'tendency to get stronger the longer they live'. Their formation is by no means malicious: 'the repetition of unproved hypotheses is facilitated by an attitude which is as indispensable in research as it is ambivalent: a certain amount of implicit trust in the results of other scholars' research.' I propose here to expand Maier's definition of factoids to include misunderstandings as well as 'mere speculations or guesses', for these too can be repeated so regularly that they are accepted as facts. Most of the factoids attached to the sceptre are included within this category.

¹ Cyprus Museum J 99; A. Pierides, *Jewellery in the Cyprus Museum* (Nicosia 1971) 23, pl. 12; H.-G. Buchholz and V. Karageorghis, *Prehistoric Greece and Cyprus* (London 1973) 167, 491 no. 1788, col. pl. 4.

² J.N. Coldstream, 'Status symbols in Cyprus in the eleventh century BC', in E. Peltenburg (ed.), *Early Society in Cyprus* (Edinburgh 1989) 329.

³ E. Goring, 'Late Cypriot Goldwork' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London 1983).

⁴ F.G. Maier, 'Factoids in ancient history: the case of fifth-century Cyprus', *JHS* 105 (1985) 32.

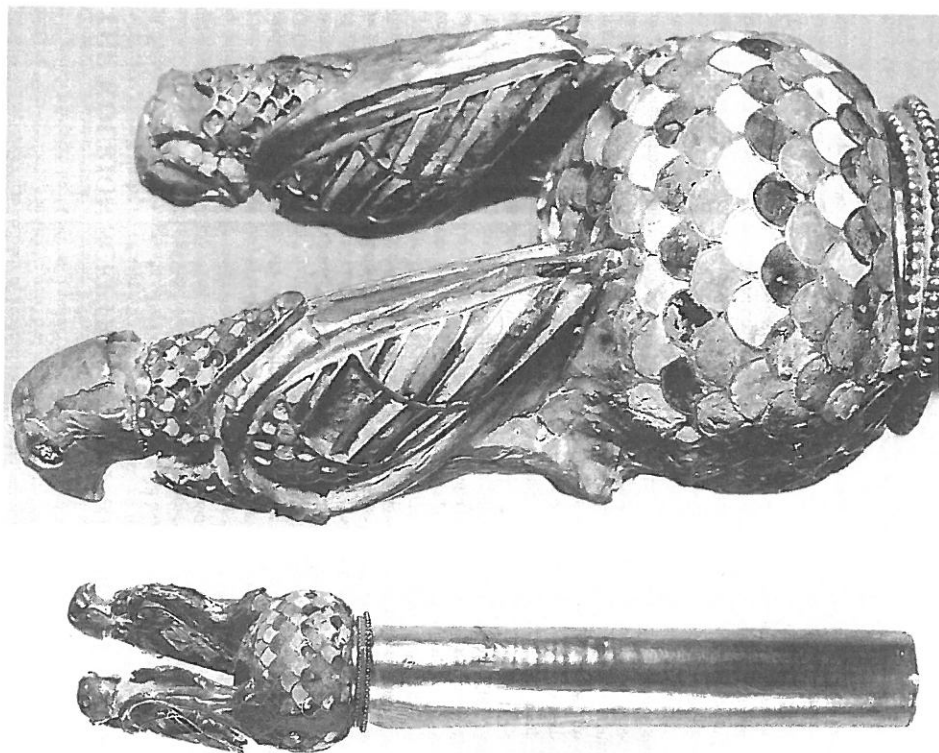


Fig. 1. Kourion sceptre, approximately actual size.

Fig. 2. Kourion sceptre, detail of sphere surmounted by two birds.

Such misapprehensions fall into two principal groups: those relating to the discovery of the sceptre, and those relating to the technique of its decoration. The continued existence of factoids in these areas impedes a comprehension of the true significance of this important object. This paper therefore attempts to present some facts.

The discovery of the sceptre

It is now forty years since George McFadden published his remarkable article describing the American re-excavation of Kourion *Kaloriziki* Tomb 40.⁵ There he demonstrated that the Kourion sceptre, previously of uncertain provenance, had originally been buried in this tomb. It is worth reviewing the actual circumstances under which the sceptre was retrieved, as reconstructed from the accounts given by McFadden and Markides.

In early December 1903, police raided the house of Constantinos Grammenopoulos in Larnaca, Cyprus. There they arrested three men, two of them from the village of Episkopi, and confiscated a number of objects which the men had looted. In a basket, the police discovered two ancient bronze tripods and the rim and handles of a bronze vase. In a cardboard box lay a superb gold and enamelled sceptre, one of the finest objects ever to have been unearthed in Cyprus. All these items had been sold to an Armenian merchant in Limassol, but had not yet been paid for. The bronzes and the sceptre were impounded, and languished for almost ten years in the Customs House at Larnaca until in 1912 they were finally housed in the new Cyprus Museum. According to McFadden, there are no police records of the confiscation.

At the time, little appears to have been discovered about the provenance of the bronzes or the sceptre. Markides, who was then Keeper of the Cyprus Museum, notes only that they were found 'in a field near the church of Hagios Armenis, at the village of Episkopi, the site of the ancient Curium'.⁶

The sceptre remained unpublished until 1932 (some thirty years after it was uncovered), when Dudley Buxton, Casson and Myres produced a joint article which began to look at it in some detail.⁷ Dudley Buxton had first been shown it by Markides in 1925. With reference to its discovery, he recounts 'A peasant digging in a field near the Church of Hagios Armenis at Episkopi, the ancient Curium, discovered the object under discussion together with two bronze tripods, the handles and rim of a circular vessel and fragments of a bronze vessel, to which the rim possibly belonged.' He goes on to say, 'That at least is the story. There seems no reason to doubt that the objects came from Episkopi, whether they were found together or not is uncertain ... Peasants in Cyprus are often in the habit of hoarding antiquities together of widely different date until the opportunity comes of selling them at a good price. I have seen such a hoard, in effect of no particular value.'

Five years later, Stanley Casson recorded that the sceptre's 'temporary owner told the story that it was found by a peasant digging in a field near Episkopi'.⁸ On a visit to Episkopi in 1935, however, Casson was assured that the villagers believed the sceptre had in fact been found at nearby Kourion itself, rather than in this particular field.⁹ (Although this point is not very clearly expressed, this does seem to be his meaning since he continues, 'If, indeed, it comes from ancient Curium ...')

It seems, therefore, that within a few years of the sceptre finding a permanent home in the Cyprus Museum, and for a significant period thereafter, its reported findspot and its association with the bronzes were viewed with some doubt. The establishment of a more exact provenance was to be much delayed.

⁵ G.H. McFadden, 'A Late Cypriote III tomb from Kourion Kaloriziki No. 40', *AJA* 58 (1954) 131-42.

⁶ M. Markides, 'A Mycenaean bronze in the Cyprus Museum', *BSA* 18 (1911-12) 95.

⁷ L.H. Dudley Buxton, S. Casson, J.L. Myres, 'A cloisonné staff-head from Cyprus', *Man* 32 (January 1932) 1-4.

⁸ S. Casson, *Ancient Cyprus: Its Art and Archaeology* (London 1937) 156.

⁹ *Ibid.* 157, n. 1.

In 1952, George McFadden visited Episkopi village. Fifty years after the sceptre had been unearthed, he found and talked to the only survivor of the original tomb robbers, Socrates Stylianou. By that time, Socrates was 'an old man, very ill with heart trouble and quite unable to leave his house'. Nevertheless, he was able to describe with accuracy the location of a tomb about 300 m east of the little Byzantine church of Ayios Ermoymenis. This tomb was in the locality of *Kaloriziki*, on a scarp between a fig tree and a carob tree with three trunks, facing the bluff of Kourion. He told McFadden in great detail exactly how and where the robbers had found the bronzes and the sceptre in the tomb. McFadden and his team from Pennsylvania did indeed locate a tomb at such a spot and went on to re-excavate it, with the remarkable results described in his article.

It has been generally accepted that McFadden proved the sceptre had originally been buried in *Kaloriziki* Tomb 40. As a result, published references to the sceptre rarely mention its unorthodox revelation. There are some exceptions to this,¹⁰ but for the most part no mention is made of the fact that it was found by tomb robbers.¹¹ There is possibly some danger that the truth of its discovery may become forgotten in the excitement of its existence. Quite innocent statements, such as that in the excellent catalogue of the Cyprus exhibition held at the British Museum describing the sceptre as from 'Kourion, *Kaloriziki*; Tomb excavated by American team', could conceivably lead to confusion.¹² There is nothing inherently wrong with this statement, but someone who had never read McFadden's article could take it to mean that the sceptre was actually found by the Americans.

The context of any archaeological object is of foremost concern. In the case of the sceptre, the context is critical to its interpretation. It is an object redolent with significance. Current views understand it as a kingly status symbol, a technically rare and superbly executed masterpiece, perhaps imported, and buried in the 11th century. Yet, as an object it is isolated in the Late Bronze Age, and none of these aspects can be confirmed on the basis of independent criteria since it has no known parallels.

How might we have assessed this object if McFadden and Socrates Stylianou had never met? When Dudley Buxton, Casson and Myres wrote their article for *Man* in 1932 they had no compelling reason to believe that all the objects confiscated from the tomb robbers were actually associated with each other. Their essays make this clear. On the basis of internal evidence, Casson favoured a dating of around the 7th century BC for the sceptre, and Myres slightly earlier. In a postscript to McFadden's article in 1954, Sjöqvist discussed Westholm's suggestion of a Late Roman or early Byzantine date, which he dismissed on the grounds of a comparison with the six recently discovered enamelled rings of indisputably Late Bronze Age date from Kouklia *Evreti* Tomb 8. (In fact, this comparison is inaccurate on technical grounds: see below.) In the absence of a datable context the sceptre clearly presented a challenging enigma to scholars.

The fact remains that the sceptre was not retrieved by scientific archaeological investigation. The details of its discovery, as recorded by McFadden, depend on the evidently acute memory of a sick old man who had unearthed it under less than ideal conditions fifty years earlier. McFadden's work was brilliant but he did not excavate the sceptre himself, and it could be dangerous to accept the details of its context, as recounted by Stylianou, as beyond all reasonable doubt. McFadden, in his re-excavation of *Kaloriziki* Tomb 40, did indeed find that the tomb had been (incompletely) looted. He also found bronzes similar to those confiscated from the tomb robbers. It is, however, a fact that the attribution of the sceptre to this tomb depends on a secondhand report.

¹⁰ For example, H. Wylie Swiny (ed.), *An Archaeological Guide to the Ancient Kourion Area and the Alotrii Peninsula* (Nicosia 1982) 52-3, although the date given for the tomb-robbing is at odds with McFadden's account; D. Soren and J. James, *Kourion: The Search for a Lost Roman City* (New York 1988) 156-9.

¹¹ For example, Pierides' catalogue entry (*op. cit.* n. 1) 23: 'Found in a "royal" tomb of Mycenaean type'; V. Karageorghis, *The Civilization of Prehistoric Cyprus* (Athens 1978) 185.

¹² V. Tatton-Brown (ed.), *Cyprus BC: 7000 Years of History* (London 1979) 56.

The decoration of the sceptre

The present appearance of the sceptre suggests that it must have been found in quite a fragmentary condition. It has since been much restored, apparently on a number of occasions. The current condition of the sceptre and its method of mounting affect the possibilities for technical study. It has not been possible to disassemble it in any way.

The object is not complete. At present, it consists of a narrow tubular shaft, 10.5 cm high, of smooth reddish gold. This once covered a core or rod (now replaced by a perspex mount). The top of the tubular shaft is inserted into a flattened sphere. The junction is marked by a separate collar consisting of a folded sheet of gold which encloses a round gold wire encircled on either side by a row of large gold granules. A thin, flat gold disc is set immediately underneath the spherical head.

The sphere itself is made of sheet gold, presumably over a core which gives it rigidity, but this is not visible. The sphere is decorated with enamelled scales arranged in an all-over network pattern. The enamel is very weathered but the colours now appear to be mauve, green and white. The soldering of the cloisons (cells) to the curving surface of the sphere is visible in places. Abrasion marks on the vertical walls of the cloisons indicate that the enamelwork was burnished smooth and flat. These marks could be recent, but it is likely that the ancient craftsman would also have finished the work in this way. Similar marks can be observed on the cells of the Kouklia finger rings (see below).

On top of the sphere there is a separate wedge-shaped section. This was probably once flush with the surface, but now stands proud. The wedge is decorated in the same manner as the rest of the sphere.

To either side of the top of the sphere, there is a three-dimensional bird of prey, 3.8 and 3.3 cm high. The difference in size between the birds is deliberate. The exact identification of the species has been much disputed; the current view is that they are falcons. The birds have large eyes, which were once inlaid, and hooked beaks. They were made of separate sections of gold sheet worked over a core (a most unusual technique at or before the period of *Kaloriziki* Tomb 40). Both birds have been extensively repaired, but much of the original decoration survives. The bodies and wings are decorated with enamelled cloisons: scale-shaped for the chests, the upper backs and the wing covers; long rectangular wedge shapes for the primary and secondary pinions. The claws and other details have been carefully indicated by chasing. The condition of the sceptre makes it difficult to determine how the birds were attached to the top of the sphere.

The sceptre is only 16 cm high in total (which is about the length of a pencil) and the spherical section is just 3.1 cm in diameter. It is frequently illustrated but usually without a scale; such illustrations tend to convey an impression of greater size. It is illustrated here (once again without a scale) at almost life-size (fig. 1). Its image appears at more than double life-size on the front cover of Vasos Karageorghis' *The Civilization of Prehistoric Cyprus*.¹³

The visual impact of the sceptre is more impressive close to than at a distance. Even mounted on a longer shaft, it would have remained more remarkable for its exquisite detail and craftsmanship than for its presence.

The cloisonné enamelling is conventional in type but exceptionally skilful. In this technique, the cells are formed by walls of thin flat wire soldered directly to a metal backplate. The cells therefore have closed backs. The glass is introduced into the cells in powdered form and heated until it melts. The continuing application of heat allows the glass to fuse to the metal. This enables a far closer fit between the glass and the cloisons than would be possible using inlay.

I am indebted to Maureen Carswell, of the British Society of Enamellers, for commenting on the technical demands of creating the sceptre.¹⁴ She views the sceptre as a virtuoso piece made by someone who was absolutely confident of their skills. Aside from the complexities of the construction, such as forming the object, making and attaching the wires and granules, and soldering the cloisons (which could

¹³ Karageorghis (*op. cit.* n. 11).

¹⁴ Personal communication, 1988.

conceivably have been carried out by a specialist), the enamelling would also have required considerable experience. Although enamelling on a curved or vertical surface is not too difficult, this is not a task which could be undertaken by a novice. If the goldsmith and the enameller were not the same person, close communication between them would have been essential. If any soldering is carried out prior to enamelling it must be extra-hard or it will melt when the piece is fired. There must be no trace of solder on the metal immediately below the enamel as it is not possible to enamel over a solder joint. Much experimentation would have been required before tackling an item as ambitious as this; it is clearly not an early product in the history of the technique.

It is often stated that the sceptre can be compared with the group of six enamelled finger rings from Kouklia *Evreli* Tomb 8 on the basis of the similarity of their enamelling technique.¹⁵ These are, so far, the only archaeologically excavated items known to come from a Late Bronze Age context in Cyprus which are indisputably decorated with enamel.

Examples of such comparison include 'These rings represent a new technique, the earliest true cloisonné enamelling recorded in the Mycenaean world. The famous sceptre head from Kourion ... is identical in workmanship' and 'The cloisonné technique now appears, of which the bezels of gold finger rings from Palaepaphos are examples ... This technique was also used for the globe and the falcons which top the tubular gold shaft of the sceptre from Kourion'.¹⁶ Such comparison seems reassuring in the face of what otherwise appears to be technological idiosyncrasy. Unfortunately, it is a factoid.

The Kouklia rings were enamelled using a fundamentally different technique from the Kourion sceptre. Unlike the sceptre, the rings are made from massive gold. Their hoops and shoulders are decorated with an unusual flame pattern which was apparently cast. The details of the six rings are not identical; they could not have been cast from a single mould. The bezels are circular, surrounded by filigree wires and granulation, and the edges of the hoops are bordered by block-twisted wire. Two of the rings have lost their settings and now retain only thin gold discs of uncertain function. The other four are intact and reasonably well-preserved, although weathered.

The rings were studied by Herbert Maron¹⁷ immediately after their discovery and they have also been examined by David Buckton (Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum), who specializes in enamelling, and Mavis Bimson (whilst at the Research Laboratory of the British Museum). I have examined them myself several times using a low-powered microscope. The bezels were definitely enamelled.

When the rings are studied closely, it can be seen that the cell walls are not soldered to any backplate and are inserted into a great depth of enamel. It is noticeable that the bezels are set within their own gold collars, then inlaid into a second gold collar.

The Kouklia rings were decorated with a special and distinctive variety of cloisonné enamelling similar in technique to *à jour* (or open) work. An open-backed network of gold cells was constructed to form a design of cup spirals. This was placed in a small mould and filled with fragments of glass. Maron observed that fragments of coloured glass up to an eighth of an inch across were used: several different colours of enamel appear in a single cloison, with noticeable lines between them. (It is interesting that the outlines of these fragments should have survived the heating of the glass. It is usual to use powdered glass.)

The mould was then topped up with more glass and fired. The cloisons are, therefore, not attached directly to any backplate, as with conventional cloisonné work, but are suspended within the glass. The result was, in effect, a glass plaque in one face of which was gold cloisonné enamel. The entire setting

¹⁵ H.W. Catling, 'Kouklia: *Evreli* Tomb 8', *BCH* 92 (1968) 168.

¹⁶ F.G. Maier and V. Karageorghis, *Paphos: History and Archaeology* (Nicosia 1984) 68; V. Karageorghis, *Cyprus from the Stone Age to the Romans* (London 1982) 109.

¹⁷ H. Maron, *Metalwork and Enamelling: A Practical Treatise on Gold and Silversmiths' Work and their Allied Crafts* (London 1954) 170.

was then inlaid into the ring bezel. The technique was still in use over 2000 years later.¹⁸ It is difficult to explain how or why the maker of the Kouklia rings came to use this variant 'upside-down' method.¹⁹ This type of cloisonné work could not have been used on the Kourion sceptre because of its three-dimensional form. The techniques used on the rings and the sceptre represent fundamentally different approaches which cannot readily be compared.

Lena Åström suggested that enamelling was discovered by 'an ingenious goldsmith working in the south-western part of Cyprus — where the rings and the sceptre with the same technique were found' (my italics), who 'more or less by chance had the idea of heating the pieces of glass to be inlaid and fusing them in position instead of cementing them as usual'.²⁰ The rings were not made by simply heating glass inlays; and they, like the sceptre, were evidently made by someone with a great deal of experience.

Finally, it is often supposed that the enamelling technique, as it is found in Cyprus, appeared suddenly and disappeared again. This is exemplified by such comments as: 'These rings and the Kourion sceptre are the earliest true cloisonné enamelling in the Mycenaean world'; 'The cloisonné decoration is the earliest example of the true technique known in the Mycenaean world'; 'the oldest example of true cloisonné enamelwork in the Mediterranean, preceding by many centuries the use of this technique in Egypt'; and 'a technique forgotten after the early twelfth century'.²¹ I hope I have demonstrated that the quality of the enamelling on both the Kouklia rings and the Kourion sceptre was sophisticated and developed. Could there be another factoid present here?

One of the greatest problems in tracing the development and spread of enamelling is that it is very difficult to recognize by eye. It is only since researchers have specifically begun to look for it that it has slowly become more widely recognized. It may be a fallacy that enamelling appeared suddenly in Cyprus and disappeared again; we may simply not have identified it.

Reynold Higgins and Jack Ogden both note the use of enamelling on jewellery from Mycenaean Greece.²² I have not examined any of the pieces in question myself but (at the risk of creating another factoid) on present evidence it seems that the earliest enamelwork so far known from the ancient world was produced in Mycenaean Greece by the end of the 15th century.

It apparently occurs in two variants. A dark blue vitreous material was fused into the hollows on a number of beads, in a form of repoussé or champlevé enamelling. This has been noted on jewellery from several sites dating from the end of the 15th century to about 1300 BC.²³ Higgins has identified cloisonné enamelling on the bezels of finger rings from the mainland and Crete dating from around 1400 BC.²⁴ All the rings are of typical Minoan-Mycenaean shape, with an oval bezel set at right angles to the hoop. Another link may be provided by two rings from Rhodes. One found in a 14th century tomb

¹⁸ D. Buckton, 'Enamelling on gold, a historical perspective', *Gold Bulletin* 15 (1982) 102. I am indebted to David Buckton for drawing the longevity of the technique to my attention, and for discussing the enamelling of the rings with me at some length.

¹⁹ Edgar Peltenburg has pointed out to me that it has some similarities with Egyptian work in faience; I hope to explore this suggestion further.

²⁰ L. Åström, *The Late Bronze Age: Other Arts and Crafts*, *SCE IV:ID* (Lund 1972) 574.

²¹ Tatton-Brown (*op. cit.* n. 12) 51; Bimson, in Wylde Swiny (*op. cit.* n. 10) 53; Soren and James (*op. cit.* n. 10) 157; and Coldstream (*op. cit.* n. 2) 329.

²² R. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery* (2nd ed., London 1980) 24-5; J. Ogden, *Jewellery of the Ancient World* (London 1982) 133.

²³ Mycenaean chamber tombs 88 and 103; see M. Rosenberg, *Zellenschmelzt* (Frankfurt 1921-2) 22, figs. 1-10; 24, fig. 25; *AE* (1887) pl. 13.27; Dendra Tomb 10; A.W. Persson, *New Tombs at Dendra near Midea* (Lund 1942) 79 and fig. 92.2; Volos tholos: *AE* (1906) 233-34, figs. 10-11.

²⁴ Including Sellopoulo Tomb 4; *BSA* 69 (1974) 199; Phaistos: *MonAnt* 14 (1904) 591, fig. 53; Vaphio: *AE* (1889) pl. 7.9.

appears to have been made using a conventional cloisonné technique; the other was found in a 12th century tomb.²⁵

There has been little published evidence for enamelwork from elsewhere in the Mediterranean, including Egypt. Aldred's suggestion of enamelling on the vulture pectoral representing Nekhebet which was found on the mummy of Tutankhamun²⁶ was disproved by Teeter ten years later.²⁷ The blue and green areas were inlaid; but there is evidence that a pliable resin was used for the red areas.

The picture may now be changing for Egypt. The recent publication of a pectoral in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts²⁸ apparently supplements the evidence found by Teeter. Newman, who carried out the technical examination of this pectoral, identified a technique of pressing mottled purple glass inlays into their cloisons in a semi-molten state. The dating of the pectoral is problematic, although Lacovara argues for a date in the Second Intermediate Period. This date should be treated with some caution. There is no other evidence for purple glass before the 18th Dynasty, and its analyses here, as Newman rightly points out, should in any case be interpreted with some caution due to its badly weathered condition. This identification of a technique of inlaying this glass in a semi-molten state should also be treated with caution since the evidence (the close fit of the inlays and the manner in which the glass has cracked) could be interpreted in other ways. The evidence of the use of a cementing layer under the glass should be noted.²⁹ If the use of such a technique could be substantiated at an early date, it might suggest an evolutionary development for the introduction of enamelling in Egypt.

Jack Ogden has recently identified true enamel in the central inlay of the gold cup of Wen-djeba-en-djed which was found at Tanis.³⁰ I formed the same impression when the cup went on display as part of the 'Gold of the Pharaohs' exhibition held at the City of Edinburgh Art Centre in 1988.³¹ The central rosette, 5 cm in diameter, is almost certainly executed in cloisonné enamel. The motif of interlinked cup spirals is strongly reminiscent of the bezels of the Kouklia rings, but with the addition of Egyptian lotus petals. The cup is dated to just before 1000 BC.

Jack Ogden now believes that enamel is likely to be more common in the early centuries of the 1st millennium BC than had been previously thought. A pectoral from the same tomb at Tanis may also be enamelled, but requires further investigation. It is possible that other examples of enamelling from Egypt or elsewhere may eventually be recognized. When that happens, it is likely that our current perception of enamelling in Late Bronze Age Cyprus as a technical oddity will prove to be another factoid.

In view of the very different techniques employed on the Kouklia finger rings and the Kourion sceptre, and their masterly execution, it seems that our understanding of Late Bronze Age enamelling in Cyprus needs some objective re-assessment. My future research on the sceptre will attempt to take many factors into account in the hope of distinguishing facts from factoids. The sophistication of its construction and enamelling technique, and its remarkable form and iconography, should be carefully considered in the light of its context in order to gain a clearer understanding of the significance of this exceptional object.

²⁵ Ialysos New Tomb 31, Ialysos New Tomb 61: *Annuario* 6-7 (1923-4) 166, fig. 94; 13-14 (1930-1) 261-62, fig. 7.

²⁶ C. Aldred, *Jewels of the Pharaohs: Egyptian Jewellery of the Dynastic Period* (London 1971) 128, 221, no. 103.

²⁷ E. Teeter, 'Enamelling in Ancient Egypt?', *AJA* 85 (1981) 319.

²⁸ P. Lacovara, 'An ancient Egyptian royal pectoral', *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 2 (1990) 18-29; R. Newman, 'Technical examination of an ancient Egyptian royal pectoral', *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 2 (1990) 30-7.

²⁹ Newman (*op. cit.* n. 28) 33.

³⁰ Cairo Museum JE 87741; unpublished paper, 'Decorative techniques in Early Iron Age Mediterranean jewellery', given at the Society of Jewellery Historians 5th International Symposium, *Decorative Techniques in Jewellery*, held in London, 12-13 June 1990.

³¹ 2 February - 30 April 1988; catalogue no. 26.

MYCENAEAN THOLOS TOMBS: SOME THOUGHTS ON BURIAL CUSTOMS AND RITES

LITSA KONTORLI-PAPADOPOULOU

The burial customs and rites of prehistoric people provide us with valuable and indispensable evidence for approaching and understanding their attitudes towards death and their beliefs about the afterlife, as well as for tracing and analysing the relationship(s) of the dead with his/her society.

As regards the Mycenaean age, it is generally agreed that the basic evidence for burial customs and rites derives mainly from the ubiquitous and most frequent and characteristic tomb type, the chamber tomb, and less so from other types of tomb. The reasons for this are two-fold: the small number of tholos and cist tombs as compared to the hundreds of chamber tombs, and the fact that relatively few of the tholos tombs escaped looting and were found with their original contents fully or partially preserved.

The problems concerning the construction and burial customs of the Mycenaean chamber tombs have been recently and systematically studied by me elsewhere,¹ and in this paper I seek to draw together for the first time the main points concerning burial customs and rites in tholos tombs.

To begin with, more than 136 Mycenaean tholos tombs are currently known,² spread throughout the Greek mainland and the adjacent Ionian islands. They are concentrated in the Peloponnese and especially in the regions of the Argolid and Messenia. This, if not a matter of chance, may be due partly to greater prosperity, power and significance as well as to more systematic archaeological excavations and studies of these two areas, and partly to the relative inattention which such tombs from other regions have, as yet, received.

Abbreviations

Cavanagh W.G. Cavanagh, 'Attic Burial Customs c.2000 - 700 B.C.' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London 1977).

TTCF O. Pelon, *Tholoi, tumuli et cercles funéraires. Recherches sur les monuments funéraires de plan circulaire dans l'Égée de l'âge du Bronze (Ile et Ile millénaires av. J.-C.)* (Paris 1976).

Wilkie N.C. Wilkie, 'Burial customs at Nichoria: the MME tholos', *Aegaeum* 1 (1987) 127-36.

¹ L. Kontorli-Papadopoulou, 'Mycenaean Chamber Tombs: Construction and Burial Customs' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London 1975; forthcoming as *SIMA* 85).

² Pelon's catalogue includes 108 tombs (*TTCF* 157ff). To these must be added 28 examples discovered since then: Peristeria South Tholos: G. Korres, *PAE* (1976) 507ff; (1977) 319ff; Nichoria Ts.1-6: *AE* (1973) 25-74; Koukounara-Gouvalari-Kremmidia: Kaminia = 3 small tholos-like built tombs: G. Korres, *PAE* (1975) 484ff; (1989) 125, 129; *ADelt* 30 (1975) B1 Chron, 91ff; Koukounara-Gouvalari Ts.1-10, b1: G. Korres, *PAE* (1975) 431ff; Nichoria, MME tholos: *Wilkie* 127ff; Dura: L. Parlama, *ADelt* 29 (1973-74) B2 Chron, 315ff; Anthelia-Kalamata: *PAE* (1975) 514; Kallithea-Laganidia: *Ergon* (1988) 24ff; Klaus-Petroto: unpublished. I thank the epimelete Mr M. Petropoulos for information concerning this tomb and his kind permission to use the plan of fig. 8. My thanks are also due to Prof. G. Korres for discussion, information and valuable suggestions on the Messenian tombs.