

# Wonders Lost and Found

A celebration of the archaeological  
work of Professor Michael Vickers



edited by  
Nicholas Sekunda



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## Preface

This volume originated in a day of papers organised to celebrate the archaeological work of Professor Michael Vickers, Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at the University of Oxford, an Emeritus Fellow of Jesus College, and former Curator of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum and Senior Research Fellow in Classical Studies at Jesus College.

Michael Vickers now holds the post of Dean of Degrees of Jesus College, Oxford. He formerly taught at University College, Dublin, the University of Libya in Benghazi, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has been a Visiting Member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton and is a Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute and of the Archaeological Institute of America. He was co-director of the joint British-Georgian Pichvnari Expedition 1998-2010.

The commemorative day was held in the Habbakuk Conference Room, Jesus College, University of Oxford on Wednesday 18 May 2011. The title of the book, somewhat unimaginatively, repeats the title of that meeting. Sometime after the meeting I, somewhat unwisely, enquired whether there were moves afoot to publish the papers given there. On being told that there were not I, somewhat rashly, offered to take on the task.

Since that time many things have changed. Over the last decade the amount of senseless administrative tasks required of academics by successive Polish governments has risen exponentially, making serious inroads into the time which I had available to work on the volume. Also the original intention was to publish this volume in the monograph series 'Akanthina', produced by the Department of Mediterranean Archaeology of Gdańsk University. Changes in policy at University and Faculty made this no longer possible.

Thus the volume languished for several years without a publisher, until Michael Vickers directly intervened and spoke to David Davison of Archaeopress, to whom I am very grateful for taking on the task of publication. I hope this will be sufficient explanation of why this book has taken such a long time to appear. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Rajka Makjanić, also of Archaeopress, who has done such a competent job of preparing the work for printing.

I look upon this book as very much a joint effort with Michael, not only for his finding a publisher. At the original meeting, constraints of time meant that only nine speakers were asked to deliver papers, and, for various reasons, some of these were not able to offer their papers for publication. It was necessary to co-opt further authors to the task in hand. It was with Michael's assistance that a list of further potential contributors was drawn up. All expressed enthusiasm for the concept, but not all were able to find the time to contribute. The resulting volume consequently reflects Michael's wide range of archaeological interests. It is fair to say that Michael has taken an active part in this book in all stages of its appearance.

One of Michael's friends who expressed great enthusiasm for the project from the outset, is Elspeth Dussinberre. By way of compensation, we have reproduced as the cover of this book, the object which she would have discussed, if time and health had permitted. It is an Achaemenid gem (Oxford 1885.491), a Chalcedony scaraboid (height: 2.7 cm, width: 2 cm), dating to the end of fifth, or the beginning of the fourth century BC. It comes from a female burial (Grave 5) from the Crimean city of Nymphaeum, which was presented to Oxford University by Sir William Siemens in 1880. It seems to be quite appropriate to use in a book dedicated to a person of such eclectic tastes. Of course Michael's interests are not confined to archaeology alone, but, given the history of the genesis of this volume, the papers contained in it are.

Nicholas Sekunda  
Gdańsk 29 January 2020



# Early Cycladic? Lead model boats in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Susan Sherratt

## Introduction

Michael Vickers has a long and distinguished history of effectively overturning the established received wisdom, the *idées fixes*, of earlier generations of Classical archaeologists, sometimes in the face of sustained opposition and in a very difficult environment. He has beamed probing searchlights into interpretations of archaeological and literary material which were once regarded as settled beyond question, and the effect has been that many of his colleagues and younger archaeologists will never be able to accept these with quite the same confidence again. Among his many inspired acts in the late 1990s as Senior Assistant Keeper in charge of Greek antiquities in the Ashmolean (as he was then) was to send the ivory statuette of the 'Minoan Boy God', acquired by Sir Arthur Evans from a dealer in the early 1930s and published by him in 1935 in volume 4 of *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* (Evans 1935: 468-83, figs. 394, 396, suppl. pl. LIII; more recently Galanakis 2013: figs. 139-40 in colour) as a 'young male divinity', the youthful consort of the Minoan Mother Goddess in Evans's well developed view of Minoan religion, for carbon-14 dating at the Oxford Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art.<sup>1</sup> The result - that the ivory of the statuette was modern (Bronk Ramsey *et al.* 1999: 203), and its implications, and those for a number of other supposedly Minoan ivory statuettes which surfaced on the art market between 1914 and the 1930s, are recounted in Kenneth Lapatin's delightfully readable book, *Mysteries of the Snake Goddess* (Lapatin 2002).

Evans was taken in by his 'Boy God' largely because he was already conditioned to believe in his existence, not only because of the other, now equally suspect, ivory figurines of the Goddess or her youthful consort which had already surfaced, but largely because they all fitted in so well into his ideas of the nature of Minoan religion; and there is little doubt that this statuette, and probably also its companions, were designed and manufactured by someone (or more than one person) who knew exactly what Evans expected and hoped to find. However, there are reasons to think that he, and others, were also on occasion taken in by other

artefacts, not so much because they fitted neatly into their already formed visions of the past as because they added objects of a unique nature to private or museum collections of antiquities and seemed (at least at the time of initial acquisition) plausibly genuine.<sup>2</sup> The essay that follows here concerns just such a set of objects whose authenticity could perhaps only be questioned with hindsight.<sup>3</sup> It is offered to Michael, a good friend and inspiring colleague, who long ago encouraged me never to take too much for granted.

## The lead boat models and their history

There are in the Ashmolean three lead boat models, which are purportedly of Cycladic provenance and of Early Bronze Age date. Together with a fourth, now in the Merseyside County Museum, Liverpool, they are the only examples of their kind so far known from the Early Bronze Age Cyclades.

The first, and most complete, of the models (Ashmolean Museum 1929.26) (Figure 1) arrived in the Ashmolean in 1929 as the gift, through Sir Arthur Evans, of Professor R.M. Dawkins, who had been Director of the British School at Athens between 1906 and 1913. The other two (Ashmolean Museum 1938.725-6) (Figures 2-3) were given to the Museum by Evans himself in 1938 along with much of what then remained of his own personal collection of prehistoric Aegean antiquities. The fourth model (Merseyside County Museum 55.66.180) was deposited in the Merseyside County Museum in the early 1930s, on loan from the collection of Robert Carr Bosanquet, who immediately preceded Dawkins as Director of the British School from 1900 to 1906.<sup>4</sup>

There is very little explicit information about the provenance and circumstances of finding of these models, which were barely mentioned by anyone

<sup>1</sup> This was the second statuette of the 'Boy God' that Evans had acquired. The first, bought by him in the 1920s, ended up in the Seattle Art Museum (see Lapatin 2002: 98-9). The Ashmolean statuette was given to the Museum by Evans in 1938, along with most of the rest of his personal collection of Aegean antiquities.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Kevin Butcher's and David Gill's account of the history of the 'Fitzwilliam Goddess' (Butcher and Gill 1993). The Fitzwilliam statuette, acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1926, was in fact endorsed by Evans.

<sup>3</sup> It was originally presented as a paper at the joint meetings of the American Institute of Archaeology and American Philological Association in New Orleans in January 2003, in a session on forgeries organised by Kenneth Lapatin, to whom Michael originally introduced me.

<sup>4</sup> For the Ashmolean models, see also Renfrew 1991: 50, pl. 14, and more recently Sherratt 2000: nos. 5.2-5.4, figs. 55-57, pls. 69-71, col. pl. 3; Badisches Landesmuseum 2011: 306 no. 106; Galanakis 2013: fig. 146. For the model in Liverpool, see Mee and Doole 1993: 48 no. 490, pl. 26.



Figure 1. Ashmolean Museum 1929.26, gift of R.M. Dawkins.

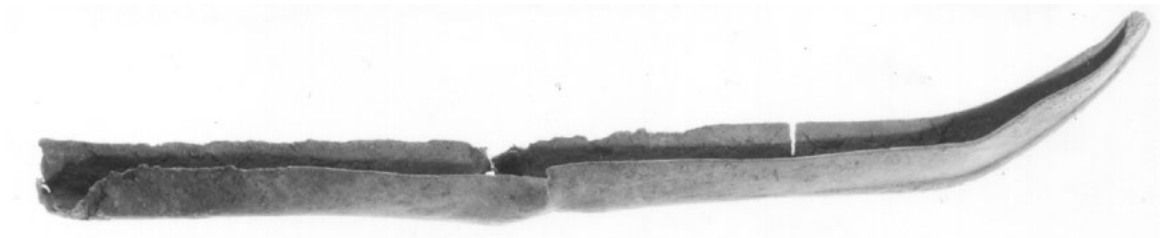


Figure 2. Ashmolean Museum 1938.725, gift of A.J. Evans.



Figure 3. Ashmolean Museum 1938.726, gift of A.J. Evans.

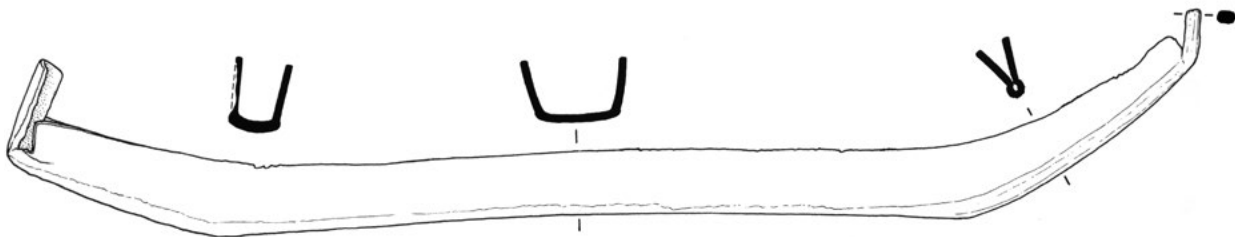


Figure 4. Ashmolean Museum 1929.26. Drawing by Keith Bennett.

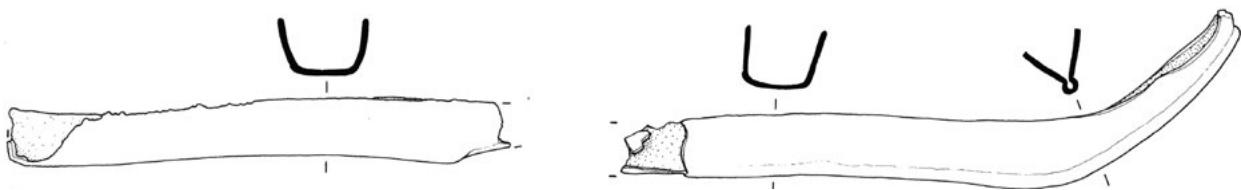


Figure 5. Ashmolean Museum 1938.725. Drawing by Keith Bennett.

All illustrations courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum.

before their publication in 1967 by Colin Renfrew (1967: 5, 18, pls. 1:12, 3:12-14).<sup>5</sup> In his 1909 publication, *Scripta Minoa I*, Evans referred in passing to lead boat models 'from Amorgos' (Evans 1909, 26), but thereafter never seems to have mentioned them again, despite the fact that two of them were in his possession probably from at least 1909 onwards. This is all the more surprising since in the second volume of *The Palace of Minos* Evans devoted a considerable amount of discussion to early Aegean boats, including those of the Cyclades (Evans 1928: 239-42).

What little we do know about the lead boat models is contained in a letter written by Dawkins to Evans shortly before he presented his boat model to the Ashmolean in 1929. Dawkins says that he acquired his model in Athens around 1907, and that it was said to have been found on Naxos along with three other broken examples and at least three marble figurines, two of which were then in his possession. Dawkins also presented these two figurines to the Ashmolean at the same time as his boat model, in 1929. They are a couple of folded arm figurines of Kapsala variety, probably of Early Cycladic II date.<sup>6</sup> A Dawkins label already attached to one of the figurines when it arrived in the Museum records that the two figurines and the lead boat model together originally cost Dawkins 550 drachmae.

In 1946, Dawkins presented a number of other marble figurines from his own collection to the Ashmolean. One of these, a Plastiras figurine of pre-folded arm type,<sup>7</sup> carried a label stating that it was bought in November 1907 and 'was probably found with the lead boats'. The label also recorded that it came from Drakatis, Naxos. Try as I might, I have been quite unable to find any mention of a site or place of this name on Naxos in either the 19th or 20th century literature or maps, or to find anyone who has ever heard of it amongst some of those most familiar with the history of archaeology on the island. This is not to say that a location with this name does not or did not exist on Naxos: but it does not appear to be a location which is known to have produced any other antiquities.

### Their design

The two Evans models (Figures 2-3) appear to have been broken deliberately across the middle of the hull. However, as far as their state of preservation allows us to tell, all four boat models appear to be of identical design and manufactured by the same method (Figures 4-5). They seem to be made from a single strip of lead

which has been slit into three narrow strips for about one-third of its length in much the same way as a cobbler would cut the leather for a traditional Turkish slipper, two for the sides and one for the bottom of the vessel. The prows of the models are formed by clamping the two outer strips together with the middle one, producing a section which looks rather like an inverted clothes peg. The result of this is a narrow prow which rises fairly gently upwards with a keel-like ridge on its underside. The prow is topped by an upward projection of the 'keel' in the form of a rod which appears in all cases to have broken off either at or just above the tip of the prow. The stern on Dawkins's model, which shows no sign of damage, takes the form of a flat rectangular structure, formed by the continuation of the bottom strip which is bent upwards. There are gaps between it and the ends of the sides, covering the entire depths of the sides, with the result that it looks rather like the tailgate on a ferry. The stern section of one of the Evans models is missing entirely, and on the other Evans model and the Bosanquet model the stern sections are damaged. Nevertheless, enough of the stern remains on each of the latter two to make clear that the design was essentially the same as on the undamaged model. On the Dawkins and Bosanquet models, on which the stern is either undamaged or less damaged, the hull is canted upwards at this end.

### Which end is which on Early Cycladic longboat representations, and how many different types of longboats were there?

This decidedly odd stern construction poses some problems, since it is clear that the gaps left on either side of the hull on Dawkins's model are quite deliberate, and not the result of damage, with the edges of both sides of the hull and the 'tailgate' remaining sheer and vertical. It thus presents us with a boat design which seems disconcertingly precarious for use on the open sea, not least since the gaps go right down to just above the waterline, even making allowances for the slight upward slope of the hull towards the stern. In the light of this, it seems particularly unfortunate that it is the stern end that is either missing completely or badly damaged on all but one of the models, especially since all of the prows are, by comparison, well preserved and extremely confidently executed.

The design of the models makes it clear beyond any shadow of doubt which end is intended as the bow and which the stern, which is more than can be said for the two-dimensional representations of Early Cycladic longboats found on the Syros frying pans, first brought to light by C. Tsountas in 1899 (Tsountas 1899), and on the Korphi t'Aroniou plaques excavated in the 1960s by C. Doumas (Doumas 1965), about which opinions have

<sup>5</sup> Renfrew's statement (1967: 18) that 1929.26 was bought by Dawkins in 1917 seems quite simply to be either a mistake or a misprint.

<sup>6</sup> Ashmolean Museum 1929.27-8. See Sherratt 2000: nos. 7.18, 7.19, figs. 86-87, pls. 159-164.

<sup>7</sup> Ashmolean Museum 1946.118: Sherratt 2000: no. 7.12, pls. 140-142, col. pl. 8.

varied over the years.<sup>8</sup> Tsountas himself believed that the high end on these representations was the prow, as did both Bosanquet and Dawkins (1923: 7) as well as Evans (1928: 240) and others. Others, however, starting with R. Dussaud (1914: 415) and including S. Marinatos (1933: 182-5), were more inclined to regard the high end as the stern, possibly acting as an aerodynamic feature to keep the boat steady in a following wind. In 1967, when he published the lead models, Renfrew believed that they settled this question once and for all. There was no doubt in his mind that they represented the same type of boat as those represented on the frying pans, and quite clearly the high end was the prow (Renfrew 1967: 5; see also more recently Wachsmann 1998: 69-70, fig. 5.1; Matthäus 2011: 117).

Renfrew was misled, not at all surprisingly in my view, by the *superficial* resemblance of the lead boats to the frying pan representations and by his very reasonable assumption that the lead models did indeed represent Cycladic longboats: but in fact he almost certainly did not look at them closely enough. At any rate, the arguments about which end was which on the frying pan boats continued, particularly amongst naval architects and others with direct experience of ships and seafaring.

In 1987, Lucien Basch published a particularly convincing discussion of the frying pan boats in which he argued that the high projection, which has a sharply defined angle of 90 degrees or less between it and the bottom of the hull, would not only serve no useful purpose as the prow but would actually obscure the view of the crew and make it much harder to keep the boat steady in either a following or a head wind, while the sharp angle at the base would make beaching difficult (Basch 1987: 85-6). On the other hand, as the stern, it would actually contribute to stabilising the boat, particularly in a head wind. At the same time, Basch also argued that the curious lateral projection from the other end of the frying pan boats, whose interpretation had (by his own admission) more or less baffled Tsountas (1899: 91),<sup>9</sup> was a horizontal spur which projected on the waterline and which made excellent sense at the prow of a longboat where it would facilitate cleavage through the waves, thus protecting the front of the hull from their full force and minimising the risk of frontal overwash. It would also have the effect of helping to hold the craft on course in a choppy sea. Basch was greatly aided in this interpretation by a terracotta boat model from Palaikastro, first published relatively unobtrusively in 1904 (Dawkins and Currelly 1903-4: 197, fig.1:k),<sup>10</sup> which

in profile bears a very strong resemblance to several of the Syros frying pan representations. From this model, it is quite clear that the high projection is solid, with (as on the frying pan boats) a sharply defined angle at the base. It is also quite clear that the horizontal projection at the other end is indeed a solid spur which sits nicely on the waterline.

Yiannis Vichos has also carried out research (including some experimental replication) on the design of the frying pan longboats, and has shown conclusively (to my mind) that the interpretation outlined by Basch must be correct: the high end is indeed the stern (Vichos 1991).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Basch has also gone a long way to explaining the canting upwards towards the stern seen on some (but not all) of the frying pan representations by showing that, if these are viewed from a slightly different angle on the circular background of the frying pans, not only do the boats acquire a plausible keel, but the horizontal projection sits squarely on the waterline (Basch 1987: 87-8).

Although not clear to Renfrew, it has seemed abundantly clear to Basch and others that the lead models differ in certain very significant features from the Syros and Korphi t'Aroniou representations and from the Palaikastro model. In particular, on the lead models the high end, which is hollow, slopes more gently upwards and lacks the sharp angle at the base, is quite clearly the prow. As a result, some scholars, such as Basch and Michael Wedde, have concluded that the lead models represent quite a different sort of boat from those represented on the frying pans, on the Korphi t'Aroniou plaques and by the Palaikastro terracotta model. Both Wedde (1991: 88) and Basch (1987: 79-80) have suggested that they represent a unique and otherwise unknown category of vessel, while Basch has argued that the odd double-canted outline of their hulls would make them potentially unstable, and that they could only therefore have been used for relatively unadventurous activities such as inshore fishing or coastal cabotage.

At this point, we ought to consider not only the material of which the lead models are made but also the context from which they purport to come. Lead is intimately associated with the cupellation of silver, one of the salient characteristics of the Early Cycladic II period,

<sup>8</sup> See now also the rock engravings of longboats from Strofilas on Andros, of slightly earlier, Final Neolithic, date (Televantou 2008: 46-49, figs. 6.8, 6.10).

<sup>9</sup> Tsountas suggested very tentatively that it might be some sort of steering contraption.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that, although the Palaikastro model was first

published in 1904, it was done so very unobtrusively and in English. Moreover it does not seem to have affected the belief of Dawkins, Bosanquet, Evans etc. as to which end on either it or the Syros representations was the prow. In 1923 (in *The Unpublished Objects from the Palaikastro Excavations, 1902-1906*) Dawkins and Bosanquet argued (perhaps under the influence of the lead models, though these were not mentioned) that the high ends of both the Palaikastro model and the frying pan boats represented their prows (Dawkins and Bosanquet 1923: 7). The lateral projections at the other ends were seen as some sort of fixed rudder attached to the stern (cf. Evans 1928: 240).

<sup>11</sup> See, too, the reconstruction by Thomas Guttandin in *Badisches Landesmuseum* 2011: 304-5 no. 105.



and, like representations of longboats themselves, likely to symbolise one of the cornerstones of elite status and lifestyle. The fact that all four of the models are alleged to have been found in a single grave which also contained a number of marble figurines implies a relatively prestigious context, which in turn suggests a function whose prestige and symbolism was probably at least comparable to that of the longboats more usually portrayed on frying pans and marble plaques rather than something equivalent to a humble inshore dinghy. What the existence of these lead models, taken together with the material of which they are made and the context in which they are said to have been found, invites us to infer, in effect, is the co-existence of two quite different types of equally prestigious longboat, each designed to travel in the opposite direction to the other. Though this might not be completely impossible, when viewed in this way it does seem decidedly unlikely.

### A contextual explanation?

It seems to me that there is a much more satisfactory explanation which can take account not only of the somewhat eccentric design of the unique lead models and in particular the curious stern construction which makes little sense in terms of vessels designed to cope with the open sea, but also of the timing of and decidedly murky circumstances surrounding their appearance in the first few years of the 20th century.<sup>12</sup> The key to this lies in their superficial resemblance to the Syros frying pan representations which convinced Renfrew and others that they were indeed three-dimensional models of the longboats shown on the frying pans and the Korphi t'Arioniou plaques. This strange mixture of extremely plausible superficial similarity combined with what we can recognise (largely thanks to the Palaikastro terracotta model and to Basch's expert analysis) to be radical differences in structural design can perhaps best be explained if we regard the lead models as the result of a rationalised interpretation of the frying pan representations (published in 1899), executed on the basis of Tsountas' account of these by someone who knew enough about boats in general to attempt a plausible three-dimensional version.

Whoever constructed these models seems to have assumed (like Tsountas) that the high end on the frying

pan boats was a hollow prow, in which case the modified slope and angle in order to produce a more practical prow design becomes quite understandable; as does the provision at the same end of a strongly marked keel whose projection forms the broken-off stem on which we might envisage the attachment of a fish pennant like those seen on the frying pan longboats. It is the treatment of the stern, however, which perhaps more than anything else indicates that a rationalised interpretation of the two-dimensional frying pan representations is what we are actually witnessing. In place of the horizontal projection at the other end of these representations, which can have made little sense to anyone used to late 19th century craft (and which certainly baffled Tsountas), the model-maker has perhaps quite reasonably constructed the sort of raisable tail-gate with which some river ferries and shallow-draught livestock carriers were equipped by the late 19th century, which - when envisaged in a lowered position - provides an extremely good visual replica of this end of the frying pan longboats. However, that the model-maker himself may have felt understandably tentative about attaching this particular interpretation of the horizontal projections on the representations to sea-going craft is at least suggested by the curious coincidence that on three of the lead models it is this 'tailgate', rather than the prow, which is most consistently damaged or missing altogether.

The suspicions which arise from the very curious (not to say improbable) design of the four lead boat models, and their superficial similarity to the Syros frying pan representations, are compounded by the timing of their appearance just a few years after Tsountas' publication of the latter, by the murk which surrounds their find circumstances (not least that all four appear to have come from the same dealer who seems to have led Dawkins at least to believe that they were found together), and by the fact that no other models or representations of boats of the same type have ever been found before or since. To this we can add the striking silence about their existence on the part of Dawkins, Bosanquet and Evans, despite the fact that the latter devoted several pages of one of his *Palace of Minos* volumes to early Aegean boats, including the Syros frying pan representations. This suggests that they, too, may well have had serious doubts about their authenticity. Evans's single mention in 1909 of lead boats 'from Amorgos' (at a time when two of the boats may already have been in his possession) is curious, since almost certainly it refers to the same boats.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps this is what he was told by the dealer, or perhaps he was merely giving them a plausible provenance. Amorgos, from the late 19th century, was an island from which

<sup>12</sup> The lead from which the models were made was originally thought, as a result both of lead isotope analysis and chemical composition, to be of Siphnian origin (Gale and Stos-Gale 1981: 213, fig. 13, table 10; cf. Sherratt 2000: 104 with nn.12-13). Subsequently, however, this was changed to become 'isotopically consistent with Pb/Ag ore from Gümüşköy in [north-west] Anatolia' (Gale and Stos-Gale 2008: 388, 402, fig. 37.7). All that this demonstrates to me is the inadvisability of using lead isotope analysis for positive identifications of provenance on the basis of databases that are inevitably less than comprehensive. In any case, lead continued to be extracted both on Siphnos and at Gümüşköy until well into the twentieth century (Sherratt 2000: 106, with further references; Kaptan 1981-1982).

<sup>13</sup> A note attached to the register entries of 1938.725-6 refers to relevant correspondence in the archive - presumably Dawkins's letter concerning the supposed association of all four models.

collectors expected prehistoric Cycladic antiquities to come, and the centripetal pull of this expectation seems to have exerted an effect on several objects now in the Ashmolean register whose Amorgan provenance may be seriously doubted.

## Epilogue

What conclusions (or, if you like, what moral) can be drawn from all this? The first is the obvious general one: that objects bought through antiquities dealers, the provenances and contexts of which (if any) are vague and uncertain, can at best be of very limited use and at worst (as probably in this case) downright misleading. Although there is perhaps little point now in criticising the activities of late 19th and early 20th century collectors (who saw the collecting and classifying of archaeological no less than geological or zoological specimens as a primarily scientific activity), this is as undeniably true of artefacts collected a century ago as it is of those which surface in the hands of dealers today. As for the particular problem of forgery, there is little comfort to be found in the idea that an object safely deposited in a museum a hundred years or more ago can automatically be regarded as above suspicion. One need only glance at the contents of a lecture delivered by John Evans (Arthur Evans' father) at the Royal Institution in 1865 (Evans 1893), in which he bewails the quantity and variety of forged antiquities of all types already washing around Europe, to realise that this is not the case; while, as far as the prehistoric Cyclades are concerned, objects such as obsidian tools, ceramic 'kernoi' and marble figurines (often illicitly rifled from graves) had been assiduously collected from the time of the Greek War of Independence and were particularly prized from the 1880s onwards. The price of 550 drachmae paid by Dawkins for the lead boat model and two figurines, probably something like 30 times the daily wage of an archaeological foreman, alone demonstrates the incentive to provide the kinds of antiquities that might be thought attractive to collectors.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that, whereas nowadays the best strategy for a forger is to produce objects which fit comfortably within known typological categories, sixty to a hundred years ago the premium put by collectors and museums on unusual or unique objects - ones which would stand out within any given class or general type of object - meant that the manufacture of antiquities provided scope for a greater element of original but informed creation. In this context, the creation of the lead boat models as an exercise in turning Tsountas's frying pan representations into unique three-dimensional versions is particularly fascinating, since it fulfils both of these criteria at once. As an exercise in itself, though not in

the long run entirely successful, one could even regard it as legitimate and worthwhile. Indeed, it was only at the point at which these models were sold as genuine antiquities (something which perhaps their maker might just conceivably never actually have intended) that any potentially lasting damage was done.

The third and final point that arises from a consideration of the lead boat models is that modern scholars should perhaps beware of seizing too enthusiastically on 'discoveries' of objects found languishing apparently ignored in museum collections, particularly when those of an earlier generation, who are known to have been fully aware of their existence, can be seen to have been unexpectedly reticent about them.<sup>14</sup> This is especially so in cases where such objects are recruited to the cause of 'solving' major interpretational problems - and in such circumstances one can only recommend that their 'discoverers' examine them and what is known of their history, and the timing and context in which they first surfaced, with the greatest care.

Looking a little more closely at the models reveals that, despite their beguiling superficial resemblance to the frying pan representations, there are some significant differences - the noticeably gentler rise of the prows, for example, and the much more obtuse angle seen at the bases of these. One also has to wonder about the plausibility of the curious stern construction which apparently leaves deliberate gaps down the entire length of the hull (of which, incidentally, Renfrew made no mention in 1967). Either one has to conclude, with Basch and Wedde, that the models represent a quite different type of boat from those shown on the frying pans, the Korphi t'Aroniou plaques and by the Palaikastro terracotta, or that there is something decidedly odd about them. As it is, the timing of their collective (and unique) appearance in the hands of an Athens dealer in 1907, and their congruence with Tsountas' interpretative description, published just a few years earlier, of the boat representations incised on the Syros frying pans seem to me to offer good reasons to doubt both their authenticity and their ability to supply an independent solution to the problem of which end was which on the frying pan boats.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Renfrew (1967: 5) who expresses surprise that nobody has mentioned them, and wonders if 'the rather unexpected material of which they are made has led to doubts about their authenticity'. In his letter to Evans Dawkins includes the remark 'I think that there is no doubt at all of the genuineness of these things', which suggests that both he and Evans may indeed have harboured some doubts.

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# Two Cushions, a Bes, a boar and a bead New ‘discoveries’ in the Aegean collection at the Ashmolean

Helen Hughes-Brock

The subjects of this small offering to Michael are several small objects which lived in what was for 39 years Michael’s kingdom and which perhaps he handled a time or two early in that period. The word ‘discoveries’ in the title is not entirely truthful. In fact, what follows is the tardy correction of some old oversights - oversights by me and others, not by Michael!<sup>1</sup>

The Ashmolean volume of the *Corpus der Minoischen und Mykenischen Siegel* (CMS 6, published in 2009) is one of the largest in that series, containing entries for 516 engraved seals and rings as well as brief details of related items such as unengraved ‘seals manqués’, possible seals too worn to be sure about, genuine but foreign or post-Bronze Age seals and pieces condemned as fakes (CMS 6: pp. 26–29). The volume had a very long gestation. It could not have come into the world at all without Michael. For years he was pestered by unending requests to get this or that seal out of its display case, or, having put it back, to get it out yet again - always a fiddly job with seals, and made the more fiddly by the little individual boards with pin attachments which were used in the Arthur Evans Room. To say that Michael was always positively cheerful about it would be going too far, but good-natured he always was, and helpfulness incarnate throughout.

At the earliest preliminary stage of work on CMS 6 a quick look was taken at a drawerful of anomalous and dubious-looking pieces. Some of these on later re-examination were ‘rehabilitated’ (Hughes-Brock 2000a). Several others, however, had been dismissed earlier, put aside and never looked at again. Alas! - for thus it was that after all the work on CMS 6 two fine Minoan seals were left out of it.

The first is a loop or stalk signet said to be from Crete (Figure 1), which had been in the collection of A.B. Cook and after Cook’s death was bought by the Ashmolean from Sotheby’s in 1952 (catalogue 15 January 1952, p.

4 lot 13), registered as AN1952.107, diameter 1.65cm, height 1.3cm. Cook himself illustrated it in his monumental *Zeus* and actually recognised it as Minoan. He dated it to Middle Minoan II but saw the motif as a Gorgoneion, ‘the earliest Gorgon’s head known to me’ (Cook 1940: part 2, 845, fig. 659). Clark Hopkins (1961: 32) in a later discussion of the Gorgon was not entirely convinced, since, though ‘rather unpleasant in expression’, it was not the demon face with prominent teeth and protruding tongue which characterises the Greek Gorgon. V.E.G. Kenna, meanwhile, had excluded it from his catalogue of the Ashmolean seals as not Minoan on the grounds of ‘unusual’ size, style and motif (Kenna 1960: 154, pl. 20).

Unfortunately the preoccupation with Gorgons coupled with Kenna’s rejection deflected the attention of the CMS team from Cook’s correct Minoan dating. Once seen in the ‘rejects’ drawer, it was not looked at again. It was assumed that the piece was Archaic, for indeed it does have features in common with Archaic Gorgoneia (as e.g. Boardman 1968: 36 no. 68 = Boardman 1970/2001: 180, pl. 289). The shape, however, is good Minoan, the loop signet with perforation at the top of the handle which in Minoan seal literature often goes by its German name, *Petschaft*. *Petschafte* of the soft stones steatite and chlorite are dated to Middle Minoan I-II (Yule 1981: 85–6). Kenna was more familiar, however, with the more elaborate versions of the shape which are found commonly on the hard-stone examples. The size, *pace* Kenna, is hardly unusual, though on the big side for this shape (diameter 1.65cm, the general range being from 1cm to 1.5cm). The material is entirely unexceptional, a rather shiny black Cretan steatite in fashion at this period (its source not yet pinned down). What Kenna had in mind about the ‘unusual style’ we do not know, but whereas many loop signets were made of the new hard semi-precious stones and thus finely engraved with the new rotary tools (drills and cutting wheels), soft-stone seals like ours, which were engraved mainly with hand-held tools, do have a rather different appearance and Kenna in the 1950s was not used to seeing them in this shape.<sup>2</sup> That leaves the motif - and so we come to our Bes.

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: Olga Krzyszkowska and Judith Weingarten made their contribution in Michael’s honour by taking the photographs (respectively Figures 1 and 2 and Figure 3) and Yannis Galanakis by scanning Figures 4 and 5, all reproduced by courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University. They and other friends deserve my warmest thanks for fruitful and entertaining conversations, for information and for sending forthcoming or published papers: Lucia Alberti, Robert Arnott, Lisa Bendall, John Boardman, Paul Collins (Ashmolean Museum), Oliver Dickinson, Sybille Haynes, Leonora Ives (aged nine) and Jennifer Moody.

<sup>2</sup> His first catalogue was Kenna 1960, in which most loop signets were high-quality hard-stone seals from Arthur Evans’s collection; the one steatite example is broken and he did not discern its shape (CMS 6 nos. 124–137 *passim*). His four CMS volumes, composed in the 1960s and 1970s, contain a greater number of soft-stone pieces. On the tools see Krzyszkowska 2005: 81–85.



Figure 1 a and b Loop or stalk signet AN1952.107. Black steatite. Possibly Bes

It was Judith Weingarten who first suggested that the long-lived popular Egyptian demon Bes might have inspired motifs on some Minoan seals, in that instance some of the bizarre motifs on LM I seal impressions found at the palace of Zakro (Weingarten 1983: 101–3). Later, in a conversation with me, she wondered whether the crudely carved face on a Middle Minoan II steatite prism might not be an early Bes, a suggestion I thought worth mentioning *re* CMS 6 no. 71b. That face has fat bulging cheeks, bristling upright hair, round ears (like a bear's) and round open mouth; the eyes are hard to discern. It might alternatively look like a boar's head with the strokes at the sides seen as the tusks. Either way it is unusual. On three-sided prism steatite seals of this period boars are not unusual but they are depicted whole in profile.<sup>3</sup> The face on our *Petschaft* has very fat bulging cheeks, a big nose, eyes apparently open, hair on the forehead and spiky hair or bristles above; its ears are not identical and neither may be complete; the mouth, also perhaps incomplete, looks open. It has some features in common with contemporary pieces, e.g. two four-sided prisms CMS 3 nos. 237 and 238, both carefully engraved hard stones (agate, quartz).

Weingarten's 'possible early Bes' prism in the Ashmolean has been discussed recently in a major study of Middle Minoan prisms by Maria Anastasiadou, who returns to the old Gorgoneion theory for the 'Gorgo mask' motif (as she calls it), arguing that it suggests that the Greek Gorgon had Minoan prototypes (Anastasiadou 2011: vol. I: 207–9; vol. II: 632 no. 494).

Recent discoveries, however, at Petras in Eastern Crete have produced several remarkable additions to the body of MM II seals, both loop signets and prisms as well as a fine banded agate seal in the uncommon rectangular plate or tabloid shape. This last is the most

remarkable of all, with a pretty lattice pattern on one side, and the other side depicting a unique and detailed frontal figure with bulging cheeks, staring eyes, round ears and toothy mouth (Krzyszkowska 2012a: 153–5, fig. 8). Krzyszkowska cautiously suggests Bes. This must be right, and Weingarten carries it further, arguing that more precisely this figure should be his lesser-known female variant Beset. The pose of the figure – frontal, standing with legs apart – distinguishes it from the familiar bow-legged squat Bes, as do the pendulous and un-Minoan-looking female breasts (Weingarten 2013).

Our black *Petschaft*, then, fits very neatly into an emerging picture of Bes-like images from MM II. Three contemporary hard-stone seals show rather similar faces and Krzyszkowska conveniently illustrates these together on one page (CMS 3 nos. 237b and 238a allegedly from Mallia, CMS 6 no. 101a, allegedly from central Crete; Krzyszkowska 2012a: 154–5, fig. 9; see also Anastasiadou and Pomadère 2011).

How did Bes and Beset come to appear in Crete? Bes was popular in both senses of the word, a demon without great temples and retinues of priests and one whose cult was widespread and had a longer life than almost any other (Weingarten 1983: 101–3). In this he matches another immigrant, the demon Taweret (to use but one of her names), whose curious transformation and assimilation in the Aegean has aroused interest and discussion for several generations of scholars now (see especially Weingarten 1991). Both demons play a protective role around childbirth and children. Put them together with the hints that there were Cretan women working as weavers (or 'websters', to use an older English term) in Middle Kingdom Egypt, and perhaps we can pin down who brought them both to MM Crete (Barber 1991: 76–7, 351–2; cf. Hughes-Brock 2000b: 122).<sup>4</sup> This might explain why the only certain

<sup>3</sup> Anastasiadou (2011 vol I: 177–8, pls. 17–18) knows of 34 examples. Add now a prism from Petras with a handsome pair of boars – handsome for this soft-stone prism-type which stand out among the other examples (Krzyszkowska 2012a: 149, fig. 4c).

<sup>4</sup> The weaver's waste which Barber thought probably Aegean has since been radiocarbon-dated as mediaeval (Kemp and Vogelsang-

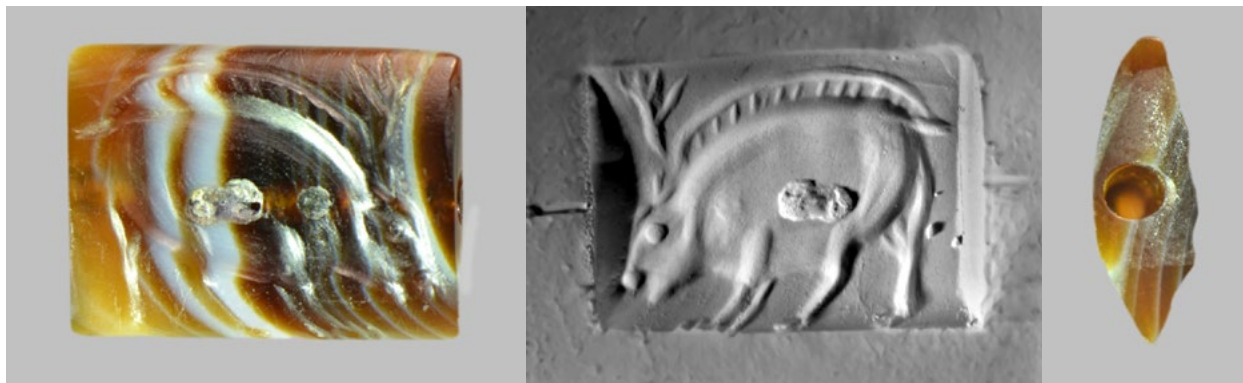


Figure 2 a, b and c. Cushion- shaped seal AN2014.1. Agate. Boar.

images of Bes in Minoan Crete are in glyptic, i.e. on small personal objects (Phillips 2008: vol. I, 153).

The Beset seal from Petras fits in neatly with this, for Petras was an important centre of textile production throughout the MM period and into LM and indeed had even been playing a part in the Eastern Cretan purple dye industry as early as MM I (Burke 2010: 36–7, 60–1; Brogan, Betancourt and Apostolakou 2012; cf. Moody 2012: 257). The mainly MM II soft-stone prism seals from Eastern Crete may possibly illustrate textile production on one of their quite common motifs, a bar with several round objects attached to it by two little strokes. To Evans this suggested vessels slung on a pole, and most have followed him. Burke, however, has argued for loomweights on a warp-weighted loom (Burke 1997: 417–9, pls. 160–1 and 2010: 44–8). Sometimes a human figure appears in conjunction. Burke does not pick up these cases but Anastasiadou (2011: vol. I, 303–4, vol. II, pls. 107–9) includes them in her much fuller list of ‘string vessels’, as she calls the motif. The Ashmolean alone has no fewer than six prism seals showing men holding or touching a bar with Burke’s ‘loomweights’ and three other prisms with both man and ‘loomweights’ but on different faces (CMS 6 nos. 36a, 51c, 59a, 60a, 70c, 71a, on different faces on nos. 50, 66, 68; cf. Wingerath 1995: 26). As it happens, one of those with a man and ‘loomweights’ on one face has Weingarten’s ‘possible early Bes’ on another (CMS 6 no. 71a and b). Is this just coincidence? Note that the human figures with this motif are always male. Did women weave the cloth but men see to the marketing of it, rather as in some of the family cloth businesses known from their lively letters in Old Assyrian texts (Thomason 2013, esp. 94–8)?

Our next seal (Figure 2a, b and c) unequivocally depicts a boar. It is a cushion-shaped seal (‘flattened cylinder’ in older writings) with the unusual feature of a shapely contoured back, made of a handsome agate, dark

brown and light brown with narrow white bands, 1.78 x 1.33cm, thickness 0.42, perforation 0.21; its accession number AN2014.1 was only assigned at last in 2013 for the purposes of this article. The boar has a simple round dot eye, some degree of modelling of the body, curved bristly back with (a not uncommon feature) outline running above the bristles, short stumpy tail. He stands head downwards in the way of rooting swine. In the field above his head is a small plant or branch. Condition is good except for an unfortunate damaged place right in the centre, where there is a break through to the string-hole.

It comes early in the corpus of agate seals, which were at their most popular rather later and on the mainland. Egypt, with abundant sources of agate in the Eastern Desert, probably provided most of the raw material, such as the chunks found in the Sanidakis plot workshop in Poros, Herakleion, destroyed in LM IA (Dimopoulou 1997: 436–7, pl. 172c). The Indian Subcontinent has good sources too; some agate from there reached the Aegean occasionally by way of Mesopotamia in the form of finished beads (Arnott 2019: 43–5).<sup>5</sup> The cushion shape in its rather short heyday, MM III–LM I, produced some of the most captivating of Minoan engravings, with vivid depictions of animals and interesting human scenes masterfully executed on beautifully coloured stones (e.g. CMS 6 nos. 177–184 with Krzyszkowska 2005: colour pls. 17, 21, 24, 26). Distinguished banded agate cushions include the famous bull and leaper at a much-discussed rectangular structure (CMS 6 no. 182), an *agrimi* with spectacular horns which was flattered by being copied on a well-known fake (CMS 6 no. 178), and – from the most dramatic archaeological setting! – the cushion from Archanes with a remarkable boat scene which the tall ‘priest’ engaged in a human sacrifice was wearing on his left wrist when the earthquake struck the

Eastwood 2001: 53).

<sup>5</sup> The large collection of 29 stones from the Vaphio tholos tomb (LH IIA, contemporary with LM IB) includes a significant number of agates. Agate ex-bead seals are betrayed by their shapes: barrels, very long amygdaloids, natural ‘eye’ stones, and two multitubular beads with intriguing motifs on rectangular faces (Hughes-Brock 2000a: 114–5 and in CMS 6: 17; Krzyszkowska 2005: 123, 196, 239).



shrine at Anemóspilia and killed him (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1991: 148–51, fig. 128; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997: I, 294–308, II, 692–4 figs. 793–5). Our animal is not quite the masterpiece that the finest cushions show us but is well executed. The legs and body are treated in a slightly sketchy way, as on the frustrated barking dog of CMS 6 no.180, which can suggest an earlyish date, MM III–LM IA.

Minoan engravers delighted in animals both wild and domesticated, pigs included. Though coming a poor third after sheep and cattle, pigs were important for food and sacrifices (Moody 2012: 237–9, 242–3, 247; Halstead 2007: 28–31). Their pig-snouted sign is instantly identifiable in the Linear A and B tablets dealing with herd management and catering for banquets, and wild boar too occasionally figured in sacrifices and on the menu (Shapland 2010: 113–5; Palaima 2008: 101–3, fig. 12.39; Bendall 2007: 58, 118–21). Which kind is our animal?

As Evans remarked, it is not always easy to tell the difference (cf. Krzyszkowska 2014: 344). In a passage on wild boar and domestic swine he takes the fine fat bristly-backed pig on a MM II chalcedony prism seal to be a domestic animal because of the gate in front of it (Evans 1935: 571–4 = CMS 6 no. 95b). The ‘gate’, to be sure, is a fairly common Hieroglyphic sign; earlier, Evans had suggested that the pairing of gate sign and pig ‘seems to indicate some such title as “Keeper of the Swine”’ (Evans 1909: 153 no. P22a, 199; Olivier and Godart 1996: 254 #256, sign no. 038). Olivier once mentioned this suggestion ‘just for fun’ because he found it appealing (his own suggestion was that the ‘gate’ could be read as part of a word or ‘sentence’ running over the three sides of the prism: Olivier 1990: 13; 1981: 113). Another appealing idea is Joseph Shaw’s, that the pig is portrayed at the gate to its sty (Shaw 1978: 247 n. 47). Rather sadly, both these ideas were best abandoned, and likewise Evans’s ‘whole litter of little pigs’ beneath a pair of all-over bristly pigs: the piglets, prosaically, are really nothing more than uneven or rocky ground (Evans 1935: 572 fig. 548 = CMS 2,6 no. 72, a sealing from Hagia Triada, LM IB).

The bristles on the back, as on our seal, do not exclusively denote a wild animal. All ancient swine were bristlier and leaner than modern farm pigs are, so that wild and domestic looked more alike (even in their bones and teeth, which can perplex zooarchaeologists: Rowley-Conwy, Albarella and Dobney 2012, esp. 2, 36–7). Their tails, however, can mark the difference, the wild animal letting its tail hang down limp and straight while the domestic pig’s tail is curled. Egyptian artists sometimes took care to depict either a straight hanging tail or a curly one (Osborn and Osbornová 1998: 142–3). So, I am told, does the original illustrator of ‘Asterix’, Albert Uderzo. The matter is not entirely straightforward,

however, for tail behaviour is an indicator of state of mind in swine, as in cats and dogs. Generally speaking, a domestic pig’s tail curled means a happy, confident pig; straight, it can be negative or neutral. Our animal’s tail is held out straight behind, very short at the edge of the stone. On many other seals the tail is not clear. The pig on a rock crystal discoid seal a little earlier than ours (MM II) has a round lump eye and curved back like our pig’s, but its back is smooth and its tail curly (Boardman 1970/2001: pl. 19 = CMS 6 no. 153a). Smooth back and curly tail are also seen on two sturdy long-snouted pigs, the front one with head down as though rooting, on a sealing from Myrtos-Pyrgos (LM I) impressed by a hard-stone cushion (CMS 2,6 no. 232). The pig on a lentoid from the Royal Road at Knossos (LM IB) is so hefty that one might think of a fatted animal, like those mentioned on the tablets, but its back is bristly and it has a tusk; the tail is not clear but may be curled over the rump (Hood 1960: 23–4, fig. 27).<sup>6</sup> Another fine lentoid of about the same date shows three animals with well-bristled backs, the front one’s tail curled over its rump (Evans 1935: part 2, fig. 549 = Boardman 1970/2001: pl. 87 = CMS 9 no. 136). Some pigs like these might give the impression of being domesticated (or boar captured and fattened?), but perhaps the engraver meant them otherwise. One might give thought here to Andrew Shapland’s consideration of peaceful ‘nature studies’, such as Evans and Shaw were inclined to see on the examples mentioned above, *versus* his own view of a more vigorous and subtle expression of an animal’s role in human society (Shapland 2010). Whether as sacrifice, formidable prey for the huntsman or provider of the ultimate in helmets (a Minoan invention, or elaboration of a Middle Helladic one?), the wild boar unquestionably interacts with human society in a more exciting way than a domestic pig does.

This piece came to the Ashmolean in 1970 as a gift from Herbert Cahn, the director of Münzen und Medaillen, Basle. It was left unregistered because considered dubious or a fake. Who was responsible for that verdict, and why, would be interesting to know but is probably beyond us now. Why it came as a gift, rather than a purchase, is perhaps slightly puzzling, since Cahn was a dealer and collector. At Münzen und Medaillen A.G. he continued his family’s business, specialising in coins and medals, in Basle (originally in Frankfurt-am-Main, but removed from Nazi Germany), but he had a serious scholarly interest in Greek vases too, and also knew his way a little around Aegean seals, of which he included a few in a Münzen und Medaillen exhibition in 1965 (Cahn 1965).

<sup>6</sup> The tusk, a line across the face, is clearer in a photo taken by Olga Krzyszkowska, who also corrects the identification of the material (Krzyszkowska 2012b: 742; cf. 2010: 253).

The intermediary was the late John Betts. Betts was the scholar who knew the Aegean seal market and he was moreover engaged in serious study of forgers and forgeries. This was indeed the period at which the *Corpus der Minoischen und Mykenischen Siegel*, still in its early days, was much occupied with the problem of forgeries and how it should treat them in the CMS catalogues (see Hughes-Brock 2010: 231–2 and e.g. Betts 1981, Pini 1981a). Betts was also the compiler of CMS 10, the Swiss collections, published in 1980, which in fact included ten seals from the Münzen und Medaillen collection. Perhaps, then, Cahn showed our piece to Betts to ask his opinion.<sup>7</sup> Did one of them, or both, have doubts about it? Was that perhaps why Cahn was content to donate it? Or perhaps he did think it genuine but unlikely to fetch a good price because of the conspicuous damaged place. Or perhaps, being very much a ‘networker,’ he saw it as a useful piece of ‘social currency’.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the reason, he thought the Ashmolean a good place for it.

In the event it was not John Betts but John Boardman who handed it over to the Ashmolean. The very unusual contoured back may well have aroused suspicion. (A well-known cushion from Knossos with flat-faceted back had been illustrated some seven times because of its significant motif of a ‘priestess’ carrying implements, but its profile was not published until 1984: CMS 2,3 no. 16, table p. 459). Boardman did not much like the engraving and was uneasy about the motif: the branch is so close to the animal’s head that it almost created the nonsensical impression of a boar with antlers. Nonetheless, in the normal way of things it would have been entered in the Accessions Register, as were several strange objects in 1968 and 1970, duly registered although some were clearly unorthodox (Hughes-Brock 1989: 79–86, fig. 1). Perhaps in the end the reason why it was side-lined was simply that the Aegean collection was in a state of change then as Hector Catling was preparing to leave the Ashmolean to take up the Directorship of the British School at Athens. By the time Michael Vickers took over in 1971 our seal was firmly settled in the fakes drawer. There it remained until 2012, when Olga Krzyszkowska came

to Oxford on a work trip and a curious feeling about it nudged me to look at it with her. That we recognised it instantly as a good Minoan seal demonstrates very happily how well glyptic studies have advanced in the last 45 years (see Krzyszkowska 2005: 311–340; Hughes-Brock 2010: 231–2).<sup>9</sup>



Figure 3. Bead AE 312g. Transparent quartz.

Our second cushion (Figure 3) is unengraved, a bead which never progressed to its undoubtedly intended life as a seal. Its social life (to hijack Appadurai’s happy phrase)<sup>10</sup> was clearly eventful but remains unclear. It is of translucent quartz 2cm x 1.25cm, thickness 0.4–0.45cm; perforation 0.2cm, drilled from both ends, as often, with the join visible in the clear stone; AE 312g). The edges are fairly straight; one side is slightly more curved than the other. There are no fissures visible. The surface is slightly worn. A little patch of paper is stuck to the unmarked side, the remains of an old glued label or display device.

It belongs to a group bought by Evans in Athens in 1893 from Athanasios Rhusopoulos. Rhusopoulos, a key figure in the early days of archaeology in Greece, was a collector and dealer like Herbert Cahn, but there the resemblance ends. Though he published little on archaeology, his work for the University of Athens, the National Museum and the *Ephemeris Archaïologike* was distinguished and lasting (Galanakis 2008: 297–8).<sup>11</sup>

The details of the Evans-Rhusopoulos deal which began this slightly murky chapter in the social life of our cushion bead are related by Yannis Galanakis

<sup>7</sup> Betts’s papers (and perhaps seal impressions) are now with the CMS in Heidelberg and await study. They will undoubtedly yield much of interest and must certainly include correspondence with Herbert Cahn. Had Cahn perhaps come to England in 1970, for the funeral or memorial service of Sir John Beazley? His obituary of Beazley is written in warm and personal terms.

<sup>8</sup> A ‘social currency’ consideration perhaps lay behind Cahn’s gift to the British Museum in 1960 of a Mycenaean glass seal quite lacking in charm (CMS 7 no. 137 = Krzyszkowska 2005: 268 no. 538, colour pl. 48). Nobody could have foreseen its archaeological importance then. It is a mass-produced mould-formed seal of a significant class not systematically studied until 1981 (Pini 1981b). Moreover, it was formed in the same matrix as seals found later in 1980s excavations in the Elis region and in Thessaly. Such matches, of which there are now several known, indicate something about relations between the sites, though it is not yet certain what. See Hughes-Brock 2008: 139–141.

<sup>9</sup> An important recent advance: the CMS database is on the internet now.

<sup>10</sup> A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge 1986).

<sup>11</sup> For more on Rhusopoulos see Y. Galanakis’ recent articles in *BSA* 106 (2011), *Anglo-Hellenic Review* 45 and 46 (2012), *Journal of the History of Collections* 24 (2012), 25 (2013), *AJA* 117 (2013); also Hughes-Brock 2000a: 119 n. 37; CMS 6: 7.



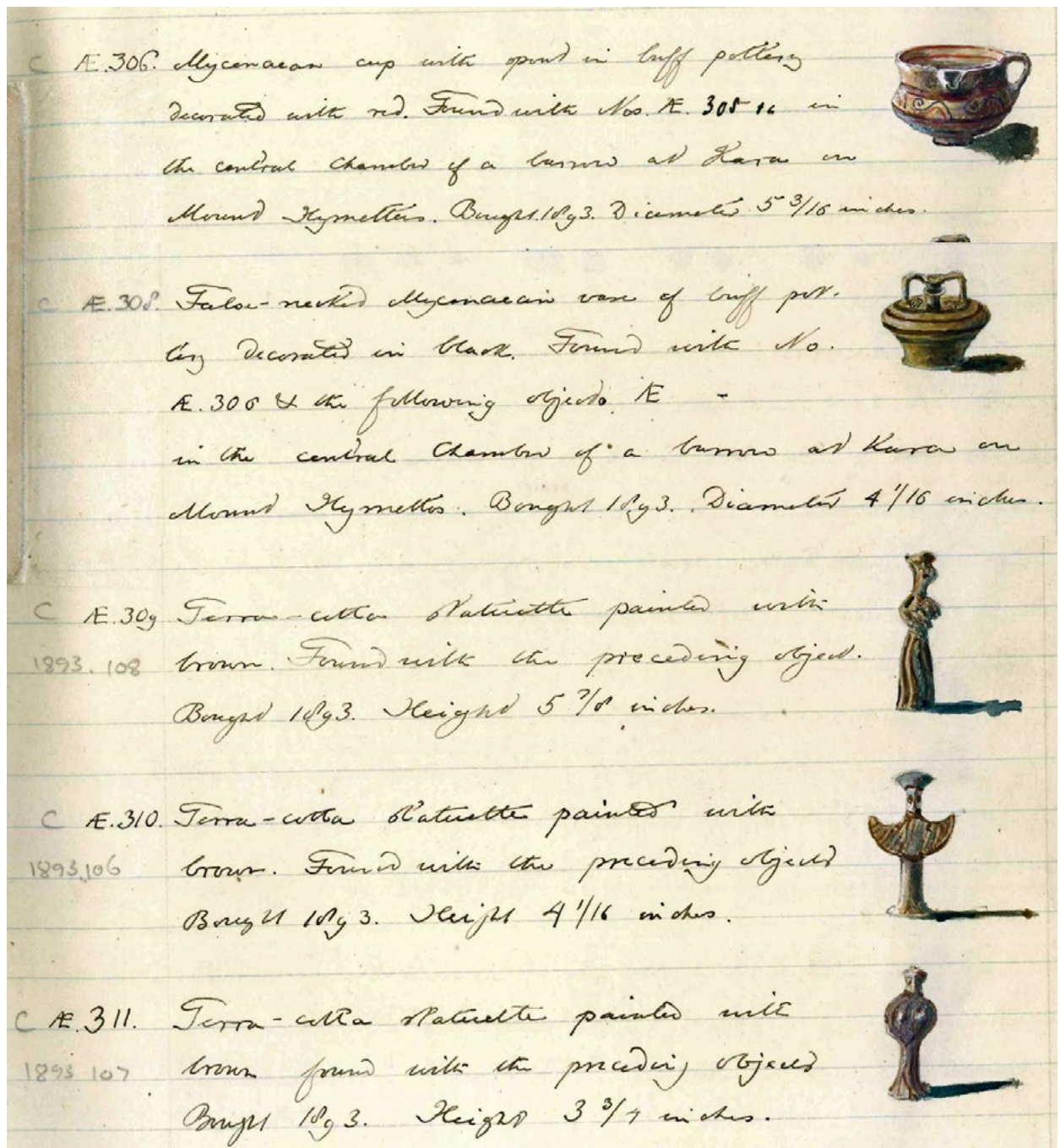


Figure 4. Entries in the Ashmolean register for AE 306 and AE 308-311; two pots and three terracotta figurines found together with AE 312a-g in a chamber tomb at Kará on Mt Hymettus.

(2008: 299-301) together with details of the find-place, a chamber tomb at Kará (now Karéas) on the west slopes of Mt. Hymettus, the illicit excavation of which Rousopoulos had some connexion with, though exactly how far it went is not clear. The two pots, three terracotta figurines (Figure 4) and seven small objects, including our cushion, were published together with similar material in the Allard Pierson Museum by Joost Crouwel (1973), who had spent time at Oxford working with Catling.

The seven small objects were registered together as AE 312a-g: three conuli, a mended glass bead, a small amber bead, an unperforated stone cylinder and our object (Figure 5; Crouwel 1973: 98-9). Our object apart, this is a rather nondescript handful, though the now perished amber bead plays its little part in the Mycenaean amber statistics and one wonders just what the cylinder was (limestone, not marble as published, 2.8 cm. long; oval in section, so not a vessel core; probably not an unfinished seal; a weight of about 10gm?)

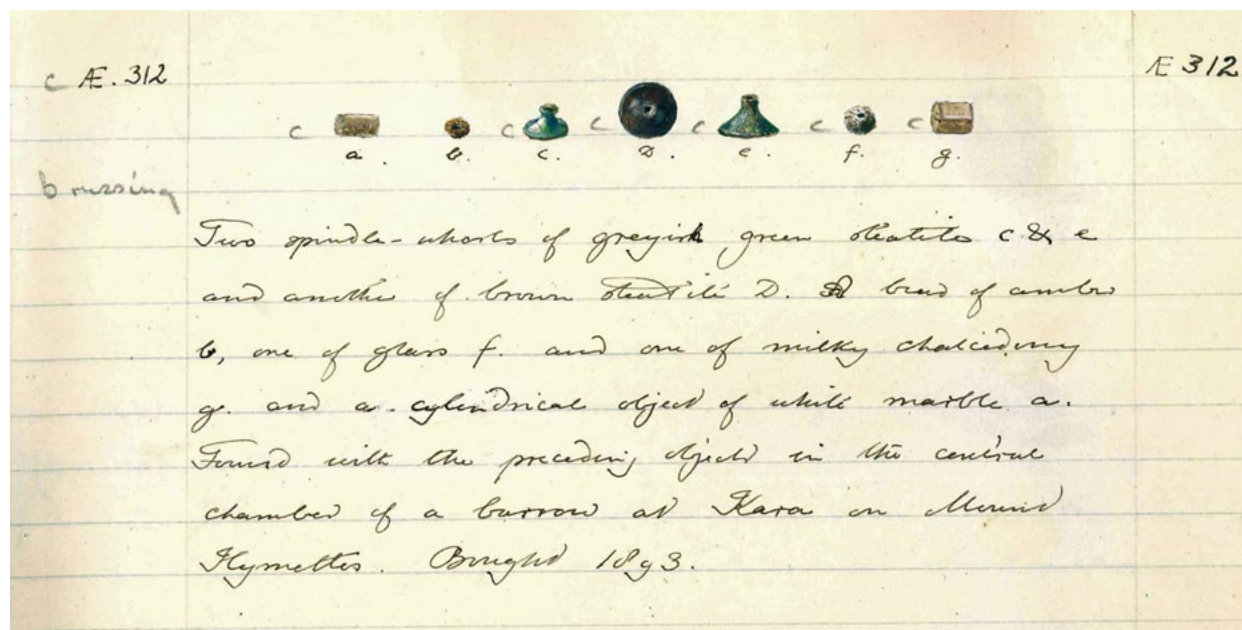


Figure 5. Entry in the register for AE 312a-g

Our clear quartz bead AE 312g was described as ‘milky chalcedony’ in the Accessions Register but ‘chalcedony’ is most often used (and now limited to that use by the CMS) for the blue or bluish-grey quartz from which several dozen seals are made, including the ‘pig and gate’ mentioned above, and a few ‘star’ cushions (Pini 2010: 239). The sources of the blue stone are still uncertain, but the clear quartz has a source in Eastern Crete (Stamatatou 2004: 7). Just as there are several materials, blue chalcedony among them, which almost never occur for beads (the seal-makers evidently got first choice) so too the cushion shape, with rectangular face so obliging for the engraver, almost never occurs for beads (Hughes-Brock 1995: 111–3; 2008: 137–8). Our blank cushion must have come from a Cretan seal workshop and probably not later than LM I. Here begins another murky chapter in its social life. How did it leave the workshop? It was not someone’s private property there, for such workshop material very seldom ended up in graves and not often in sanctuaries.<sup>12</sup> The same applies clearly to the moulds for vitreous and gold relief ornaments found near Knossos, one in the Kephala tholos tomb (Hughes-Brock 2008: 136–7), one at Mavrospelio (Evely 2000: 414 no. 21). Disorderly goings-on, as e.g. when the Poros workshop mentioned above was destroyed in LM IA, no doubt offered opportunities for craftsmen to purloin, for mainlanders to ransack and so on. It can only have been in some unofficial and probably rather discreditable way that our object,

cheated of its future as a fine Minoan seal, ended its active life a few generations later in a grave in Attica as a bead.

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<sup>12</sup> For other seal blanks see e.g. Evans 1905: 479, fig. 101 nos. 99a/8 (ivory cushion?), 99a/12 (prism?); Evely 1993: 164–5 with n. 98. From the Psychró (Dictaeon) Cave; Betancourt 1983: 42 nos. 108–9; CMS 6: 27 no. AE 714. Cf. Hughes-Brock 2008: 136–7.

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