

KOURION: The Late Bronze Age Settlement

SINCE 1935 the Museum has been conducting under its auspices, partly through the generosity of Mr. George H. McFadden and partly through the income of the Sharpe Fund, a series of excavations on the island of Cyprus. These were at first centered about Lapithos where under the direction of Mr. B. H. Hill a large series of tombs of the Early Bronze Age and of the Geometric Period were excavated, which provided not only a corpus of interesting scientific data but has also greatly enriched the Museum's collections in this field.

In 1935, with Mr. Hill still in charge, assisted by Mr. McFadden and Mr. John Franklin Daniel, chief activities were transferred to what has since been identified as Kourion, a site which not only has yielded rich remains of the early Greek civilizations on the island, but of the earlier epochs as well. One phase of the work at Kourion, the clearing of the Basilica with its important mosaics and of the Sanctuary of Apollo was described in the last issue of the Bulletin by Mr. McFadden. In the following paper Mr. Daniel of the Expedition staff describes the 1938 excavations on the Bamboula which also provided much of scientific interest.

DURING the 1938 season on the Bamboula, work was divided between further excavation in the area begun in 1937 (lot 270) and soundings in the adjacent lot 236, on the northwest and west slopes of the hill.

Trench 2 was extended to the northeast to include the circuit wall along its entire width. The wall was examined in detail and its long and interesting history established (Plate IX). It was first built in the 14th century B.C. (Late Cypriote II period), and continued in use without much change until nearly the end of the first millenium B.C., when the Bamboula was abandoned in favour of another site nearer the sea. The city lay in ruins until about 700 B.C., when the wall was rebuilt. We have not yet found any remains of dwellings of this period, so it may be that the wall served only as a fort to command the river Kouris. Later restorations perhaps belong to the time of the Ionian revolt, when Cyprus tried to defend herself against Persia. Still later repairs date to Hellenistic and Imperial Roman times. In all except the Roman period the wall consisted of a fairly well built outer face of stone, which held in place a great

mass of loose stones. This was the foundation, over which was a super-structure of brick, of unknown height. Another mass of stones, running inside the wall, seems to have been a road, shut off from the city proper, and used for easy communication within the defense system.

In clearing outside the wall last year we were puzzled by a series of depressions in the bed-rock, obviously artificial, but with no indication of purpose. This season's work showed that these pits were the remnants of Early Bronze Age tombs, which once covered this region. Before the circuit wall was built the surface was levelled by quarrying, and in the course of this most of the tombs were plundered and destroyed. One, however, was found partly intact. Its walls had been cut down to within a few inches of the bottom, and the circuit wall was built across half of it. In the part which projected beyond the wall we found skeletal remains, a bead, and fragments of pottery of the early third millenium B.C.

Two tombs were cleared on the north slope of the Bamboula. One of these belongs to the end of the 13th century B. C., and furnished complete specimens of the pottery of which many fragmentary pieces were found in the settlement. The other tomb dates back into the 14th century. It had been a rich tomb, but was plundered in the 13th century B.C., when a later burial was made. A still later burial in this tomb must be assigned to the Iron Age, for it contained a fine iron knife, and a fibula of transitional type.

Not far from these tombs we found a few walls of the 9th century B.C. It is uncertain to what type of structure they belonged.

The palace was probably on the top of the hill. Unfortunately the rock is bare in most places and there are but few traces of buildings. The Bamboula has been, until quite recently, the scene of extensive quarrying in the course of which the top of the hill has been cut away. We made soundings in several places where there is undisturbed earth, in the hope of finding traces of the palace cellars. The chief discovery was a large well. It is six feet square, and has been cleared to a depth of over 35 feet. The upper twenty-five feet are built of rectangular blocks of a hard limestone which seems to have been brought from several miles away. The masonry is set in an enormous cutting in the rock, which is very crumbly, and was apparently not trusted. Below 25 feet the rock is very hard, and



I. Roman
 II. Hellenistic
 III. Classical

IV. Archaic

VIII. Early
 Bronze
 Age Tomb

V. Late Cyp-
 riote III

VI. Late Cyp-
 riote II B

VII. Late Cyp-
 riote II A

PLATE IX. Kourion, Bamboula. Cross-section of Circuit Wall.

masonry was not used. Present evidence indicates that the well was built in the 14th century B.C., and continued in use into the Archaic period.

On the west slope, facing Episkopi, a large deposit of still uncertain nature was discovered, in trench 12. It contained masses of pottery fragments, some of very fine workmanship, well stratified from the 14th century B.C. back into the 16th. Thanks to this we now have a complete stratigraphical sequence from the 16th century down to nearly 1000 B.C. This is of great importance, and is not paralleled elsewhere in the island.

Toward Episkopi from trench 12 we found the remains of houses of more ample proportions than any hitherto discovered (Trench 16). Several rooms were cleared late in the season; the work will be resumed in 1939. The latest habitation level is characterized by objects dating from the second half of the 13th century B.C. Several good pots were found here, including the fine krater (Plate X), decorated with vertical bands of fish, geometric patterns, and a tree. It belongs to a rare class of pottery, chiefly known from our excavations.

All of the objects found in 1937 and most from 1938 have been cleaned and studied. These seem to verify the chronology suggested in the report for the first season. "Period 1" of the main level in trenches 2 and 4 dates from the last quarter of the 13th and the first quarter of the 12th century. Remains of houses found under these, in trench 2, belong to the late 14th and 13th centuries B.C. The deposit in trench 12 takes up where that of trench 2 leaves off, going back into the 16th century. The third millennium B.C. is represented by the tomb under the circuit wall.

There have been several small finds of interest. These include two excellent Cypriote cylinder seals, several interesting terracotta figurines, a few small ivory objects, and numerous beads and whorls of stone, terracotta, and silver-lead.

These pithoi were sunk into the ground with only their necks protruding above the earthen floor. A thin slab of limestone which served as a lid was found among the fragments of one of the pithoi. Several such pithos-lids were found during the excavations; one had a hole for attaching a wooden handle. All three inscriptions are on the upper outer face of the rounded lip, where they were clearly visible to anyone bending over the jar. This is an unusual position for inscriptions, and has a direct bearing on their meaning.



Above: Kourion. The classical site from the North.

Right: Kourion, Bamboula. Painted Krater, late 13th Century B.C.



The Bamboula collection of inscriptions in the "Cypro-Minoan" syllabary now contains 42 items, mostly on pottery, but including signs on a cylinder seal, a terracotta figurine, and what seems to be a gaming piece. Many of the characters are new, and throw important light on the relation of the Cypriote to the Minoan script.

In an article which will appear in the March number of the *American Journal of Archaeology* I have made a full publication of the inscribed pithoi discovered last year, and mentioned in the *Bulletin* for November, 1937. Further investigation and the discovery of new evidence necessitate the rejection of the earlier interpretation.

The two syllabic signs were first read as *ku* and *ri*, but the reading of the second must now be changed to *te*. There are no less than twenty-seven ways in which these two syllables might theoretically be transliterated into Greek, but only one combination gives a Greek word. This is *κύθη*,

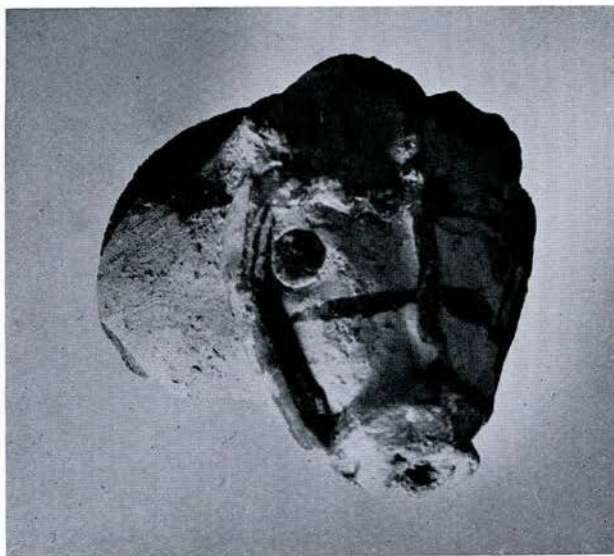


Figure 3. Kourion, Bamboula.
Fragment of rhyton. End of 13th Century B.C.

the second aorist imperative of *κεῖθω*, and means "cover up completely," or in other words, "put the lid on." The verb is commonly used in Homer, and is thus compatible with the early period to which these inscriptions must be assigned.

If the interpretation is correct these are the earliest dated examples of the Greek language in Cyprus. If they antedate the Eleusis false-necked jar, they are the earliest anywhere.

AN ARCHAIC TOMB IN EPISKOPI MOSQUE

AN archaic tomb was discovered in the course of remodelling the mosque in Episkopi village. This was originally a Christian church, with the floor of the apse about a foot higher than that of the nave. It was turned into a mosque after the Turkish conquest. The scheme for its renovation included bringing the level of the apse floor down to that of the nave. No sooner was the work begun than skeletal remains and pottery began to appear.

Such chance finds are usually investigated by the Department of Antiquities, but thanks to the kindness of the director, Mr. A. H. S. Megaw, I was permitted to undertake the excavation, and the finds were subsequently allotted to the Kourion expedition.

There were two burials. One, in the center of the apse, was only a few inches below the floor. There were no burial offerings, but it appears to be of medieval date, during the existence of the church. This skeleton lay in part over the other burial, which long antedates the church. This earlier tomb, of the late seventh century B.C., had apparently collapsed before the church was built, and so passed unnoticed. It contained decomposed skeletal remains, and a considerable quantity of pottery. The best finds were a terracotta votive shield of exceptional size and a large figurine of a horse and rider, with polychrome decoration.

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