



**PLATE I.** Jug of the 15th Century B.C. from Kourion

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## THE ACHAEANS AT KOURION

THE University Museum has played a distinguished part in the rediscovery of the pre-Hellenic civilization of Greece. The Heroic Age described by Homer was first shown to have a basis in fact by Schliemann's excavations at Troy in 1871, and somewhat later at Mycenae and Tiryns, and by Evans' discovery of the palace of King Minos at Knossos in Crete. When the first wild enthusiasm blew itself out it became apparent that many problems raised by this newly discovered civilization were not solved by the first spectacular finds. In the period of careful excavation and sober consideration of evidence which followed, the University Museum had an important part. Its expeditions to various East Cretan sites did much to put Cretan archaeology on the firm foundation it now enjoys.

After the excavations at Vrokastro in East Crete in 1912 the efforts of the Museum were directed to other lands. It was only in 1931, when an expedition under the direction of Dr. B. H. Hill excavated at Lapithos in Cyprus, that the University Museum re-entered the early Greek field.

The Cyprus expedition was recomposed in 1934, still under the direction of Dr. Hill, with the assistance of Mr. George H. McFadden and the writer, and began work at its present site, ancient Kourion. Kourion was

in classical times the capital of one of the independent kingdoms of Cyprus, and was traditionally Greek. Its port was, according to Strabo, the point of departure from Cyprus to Greece. Both Strabo and Herodotus note that it was colonized by "Argives," that is to say, Mycenaeans.

Three seasons of excavation on the Eamboula site at Kourion have cast such important light on the question of the Mycenaean colonization of the city, that a general statement of the problem of the relations of Mycenae to Cyprus may now be made.

European civilization first blossomed on the island of Crete, in the second and third millennia B. C. Crete dominated the Aegean until the end of the 15th century B. C., when invaders sacked its palaces and destroyed its towns. The center of the European world then passed to the Greek mainland, where Mycenae rose to be the capital of a powerful Achaean empire, whose influence was felt throughout Greece and the Near East. An interesting problem is raised by this Mycenaean expansion. Can we speak of a true empire, with colonies and political control overseas, or does the evidence indicate trade relations only?

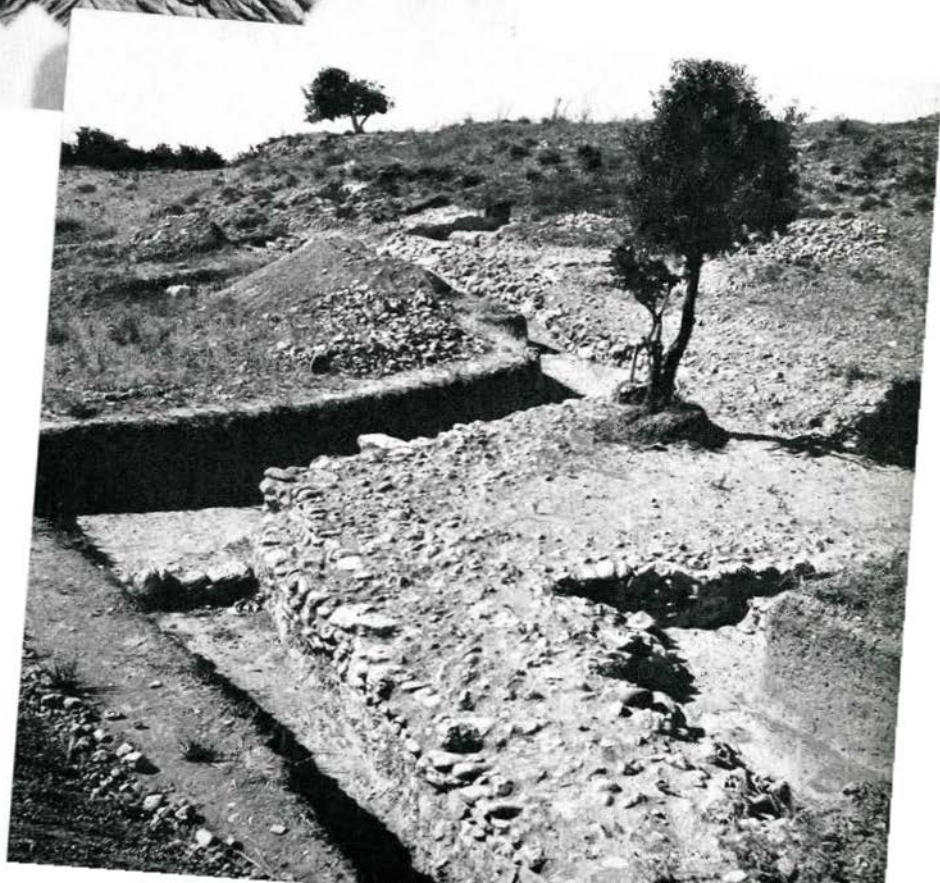
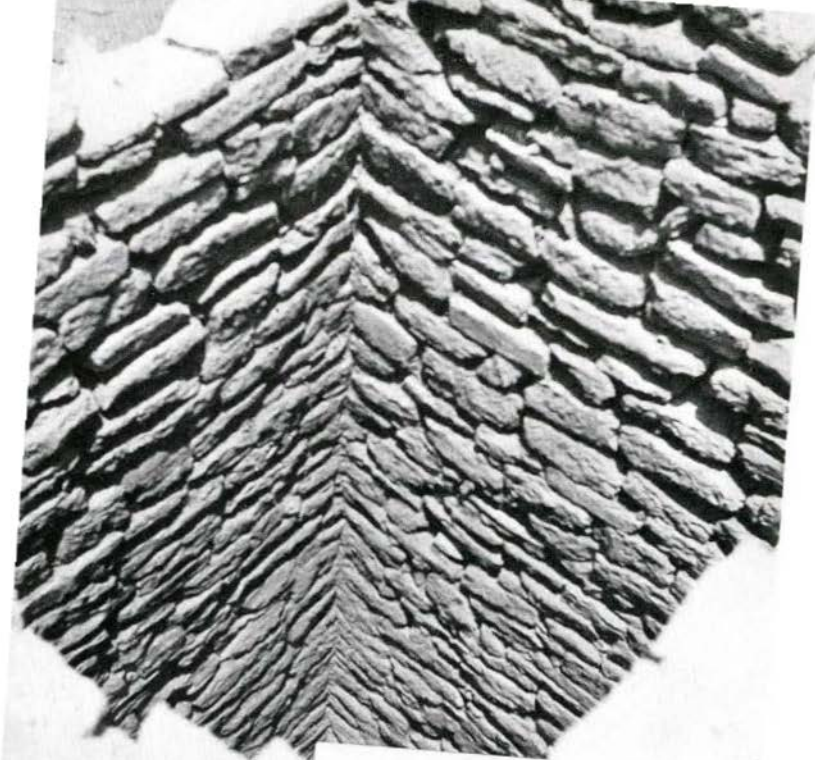
The island of Cyprus holds a key position in the Mycenaean problem. It lay on the direct trade route from Mycenae to the East, and was about equidistant from Egypt, Syria, and the Hittite kingdom. As the chief source of copper in the East Mediterranean it was in contact with all these lands. If we can determine the extent of Mycenaean influence in Cyprus we will be in a better position to judge the situation in surrounding countries. Greek tradition gives us some help, and there are references to both Cyprus and the Achaeans in Egyptian and Hittite records. The bulk of the evidence, however, is archaeological.

Beginning at about 1400 B. C. great quantities of Mycenaean pottery were exported to many lands, especially Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Cyprus. Mass exportation continued into the 13th century, but soon after 1250 it stopped and Mycenae dropped out of the Near Eastern picture. The isolation of Mycenae was doubtless due to piracy, which became

PLATE II.

Kourion.

(a) The Well, 14th Century B. C.



(b) Part of the Circuit  
Wall with Tower.

prevalent in the Mediterranean in the late 13th century.

This brief contact with Mycenae had little permanent effect in Egypt and the Levant, save at one or two places such as Ras Shamra, and indicates trade relations only. In Cyprus, however, the situation is totally different. There is a clear Greek tradition of Mycenaean colonization on the island. This is confirmed by the survival of many elements of Mycenaean civilization in Cyprus long after Mycenae itself was destroyed by the Dorian invasion, in the late 12th century B. C.

The Mycenaean colonization of Cyprus is generally admitted, but there has been much discussion as to its nature and date. The all-important archaeological evidence was extremely scanty until three years ago. No settlement of the Mycenaean period had been excavated in Cyprus, but only tombs, and most of these had been carelessly dug for booty and were without scientific value. No one site could present a complete chronological sequence of even bungled tombs.

The University Museum has filled the gap with its excavations on Bamboula hill at Kourion. In the course of three seasons' work we have cleared large parts of a settlement and cemetery of the entire Late Bronze Age. These date from 1600 to shortly before 1000 B. C., and enable us to study not only the period of contact with Mycenae, but also the stages which preceded and followed this contact.

The settlement was an unusually large one. It consisted of an outer city, extending from the river Kouris to the modern village of Episkopi, and a fortified inner city or acropolis on the low hill known today as Bamboula. It is about two miles from the sea.

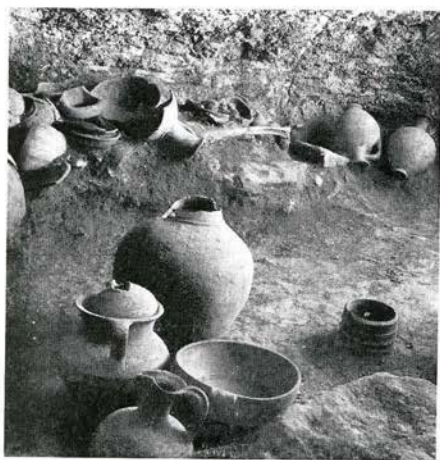
The 14th century circuit wall on the east slope of Bamboula has been mentioned in previous reports in the *Bulletin*. It had a massive foundation of rough-hewn blocks and doubtless a lofty superstructure of sun-dried brick. A jog in the wall contained a large tower (Plate II, b).

We found a large well of the 14th century B. C., on the top of the hill. (Plate II, a). It is six feet square and goes to a depth of 68 feet below the

PLATE III

Kourion

(a) A Section  
of the  
Settlement



(b) Interior of Tomb 33.



(c) Room with Floor of Potsherds.

present top of the hill. It is one of the finest wells of the period, and still contains abundant water.

Many private dwellings were found on Bamboula hill. The earliest levels were badly disturbed by later foundations, so we were able to define only one house of the 16th century B. C. This was a building of some consequence. The foundations were over a meter thick, suggesting an upper story. One room had an interior colonnade. This building remained in use through the 15th century. The houses of the 14th and subsequent centuries were less pretentious (Plate III, a). These were built in large blocks with party walls, and had an average of six rooms each, grouped around a courtyard. They were constructed of rubble foundations and walls of sun-dried brick, which were often faced with plaster. They had flat mud roofs, and the floors were generally of plaster or flagging.

One room has a floor of potsherds (Plate III, c). This photograph illustrates the sequence of several periods on one spot. The house with the floor of potsherds was built in the 14th century B. C. It later collapsed and another house was built over its ruins in the 13th century. The later walls can be seen cutting across the earlier ones in this picture. We were able to establish four different periods in the deposit in this room.

Combining the results of similar excavation throughout the settlement we distinguish thirteen major and several minor strata. Absolute dates may be ascribed to strata 1, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 12, because of datable foreign objects found in them, or because of the stylistic identity of their pottery to that of Cypriote pieces which were exported and have been found in dated contexts abroad.

There was an extensive cemetery on the north side of the acropolis. Tombs were also found under a street entering the town on the northwest, but never within the settlement proper. These were family sepulchres, and were used for as long as three centuries. Each person was buried with a selection of his belongings, and, no doubt, offerings from friends. Little respect was paid to the mortal remains of ancestors, which

were frequently swept aside to make more room. Plate III, b, shows part of the interior of an interesting tomb. In the foreground are the offerings accompanying the last burial, made in the late 12th century B. C. In the background is a mass of objects of the early 12th and 13th centuries, which were brushed aside at the time of the last burial. Under the 13th century remains we found a similar heap of the 14th century. This tomb is significant in that it proves the continuity of burial customs into the 12th century. This has been denied by some scholars.

The cemetery has suffered many vicissitudes. Tombs were often cleared out in the Early Iron Age and reused for burial by the poorer inhabitants. A large expedition investigated Bamboula in the most thorough manner in the Roman period. Finally, a British Museum expedition excavated here in 1895. Nevertheless, we found six unlooted tombs, and re-examined many of the rifled ones to our advantage.

In the 16th and 15th centuries B. C., Cyprus was artistically independent of Mycenae. Kourion must have been an important cultural center at this time, for it produced pottery which may surprise those who are accustomed to the dreary Cypriote collections of most museums. The jug shown in Plate I is a masterpiece not only of design, but also of ceramic technique. Though more than a half a meter in height it is only one and a half millimeters thick at the widest part.

The krater (Plate IV, f) is unique both in shape and decoration. It is of the same egg-shell ware as the jug.

Mycenaean pottery became available in the 14th century, and for the next century and a half all the finest pottery was imported. The British Museum expedition found at Kourion many fragments of an exceptionally fine Mycenaean krater of the 14th century. These are proudly displayed in London, restored with large expanses of plaster of Paris. We re-excavated the tomb in which they were found, and secured thirty-five new fragments, including the finest of all, illustrated in Plate IV, d. We also found ten other vases, more or less complete (Plate IV, c), six gold ear-rings in the





**PLATE IV.**

**Kourion.**

(a) Tomb 13, Gold Ear-rings.



(b) Tomb 6, Mycenaean Krater.



(c) Tomb 17, 13th Century Plate.



(d) Tomb 17, Mycenaean Sherd.



(e) Tomb 19, Figurine.

(f) Cypriote Krater, 15th Century B. C.



shape of bulls' heads (Plate IV, a).

Many small objects in precious and semi-precious materials were found, even in the plundered tombs. The crystal seal shown in the tailpiece is probably the finest yet found on the island. The design and workmanship look Mycenaean, but the shape is a native one not used in Greece. It may have been made by a Mycenaean engraver for a Cypriote order. Several cylinder-seals were found, exhibiting a mixture of Mycenaean and Oriental elements. One is made of gold leaf over a core of carved steatite. The female figurine in Plate IV, e is a fine example of a class often found in Cyprus.

The fine Mycenaean krater shown in Plate IV, b was found in one of the un plundered tombs. The style shows that it belongs to the 13th century and is one of the last pots imported to the island before the isolation of Mycenae.

In the late 13th century Mycenaean pottery ceased to be available in Cyprus, so imitations were made on the island. The plate in Plate IV, c is typical of these. A contemporary krater decorated with schematized fish, a tree, and various geometric designs, was illustrated in the *Bulletin*, April, 1939, pl. X.

For about 75 years Cyprus was almost completely shut off from Greece and continued to develop the ceramic style of the early 13th century. In the second quarter of the 12th century, however, contemporary Greek types again occur, reflecting the very last days of Mycenae.

It has been claimed, on the basis of the incomplete evidence of a few years ago, that the Cypriote contact with Mycenae in the 14th and 13th centuries was similar to that of Egypt, and did not involve colonization. A complete break was seen in the late 13th and early 12th centuries, at which time the Mycenaean tradition was lost. According to this view, Mycenaean culture was reintroduced in the late 12th century B. C., when

the Achaean population of Greece fled before the Dorian invasion and came to live in Cyprus, founding new cities to take the place of the old ones, which were destroyed. This theory appeared to explain the old centuries. When importation ceased, a local school arose which copied evidence, but it can not be reconciled with the facts as we know them from the excavations at Kourion.

Kourion was inhabited throughout the period in question, and there was no break in the continuity. The populace continued to live in the same houses and bury in the same tombs. There is no sign of a general destruction of the city at any time in the six centuries under discussion. Mycenaean pottery was imported to Cyprus in the 14th and early 13th centuries. When importation ceased, a local school arose which copied the old types. In the 12th century Cyprus again found contemporary Greek models. The new types fused with the 13th century survivals, and from their blend sprang the characteristic art of the Cypriote Iron Age.

Cyprus preserved into late Classical times the dialect of Greek which was spoken in the Argolid in Mycenaean times. Writing of the Minoan-Mycenaean group appeared in Cyprus in the 15th century B. C., and survived there until the Hellenistic period. Our skeletal material has not yet been studied by a qualified anthropologist, but it seems to point to an important Greek strain as early as the 14th century.

The excavations at Kourion thus make it fairly certain that Achaean colonists settled in Cyprus during the first wave of Mycenaean expansion, in the 14th century B. C. New groups may have come out from time to time and strengthened the Greek element in the island. A second wave of Achaeans came to Cyprus as a result of the Dorian invasion of Greece. They came not as conquerors, but settled peacefully among kinsmen who were already established in the island.

The Kourion excavations have brought the deciphering of the Minoan

script nearer to realization. There are some 2000 inscribed tablets in Crete, and more than 600 were found this summer at Pylos on the Greek mainland. Their deciphering is of supreme importance for the early history of Greece.

Minoan writing began with hieroglyphs at about 2000 B. C. These were gradually simplified, and reached a linear stage in the 17th century. The Pylos tablets and other inscriptions of the Greek mainland belong to a late offshoot of the Minoan script, and are assigned to the late 13th and early 12th centuries. The excavations at Kourion show that an earlier branch of the Minoan script, the so-called "Cypro-Minoan," was introduced to Cyprus by the second half of the 15th century B. C. In contrast to Crete and Greece, where no inscriptions of this type are found after the 12th century, a tenacious descendant of the "Cypro-Minoan" script was used in Cyprus into late Classical times.

This Classical Cypriote syllabary was deciphered years ago with the aid of bisyllabic inscriptions, and offers the only real hope of ever reading the Minoan tablets. Modern research is largely concerned with tracing its lineage, so that its sound-values may be applied to the earlier records. The all-important intermediate step is the "Cypro-Minoan" script, through which the Classical Cypriote syllabary is related to the Minoan. This, unfortunately, is only imperfectly known.

When we started work on Bamboula hill, only 66 different signs were known from Bronze Age contexts in Cyprus, and of these 31 were on objects which were probably imported from abroad. Thus, only 35 signs could be attributed with assurance to the "Cypro-Minoan" script. Our excavations have brought the total number from 66 to 96, that of definitely "Cypro-Minoan" signs from 35 to 59. There is no need to stress the importance of this.

Future seasons at Kourion will add to the "Cypro-Minoan" script, and

we may be reading the Cretan tablets sooner than some believe. Three Kourion inscriptions of the 13th century have already been deciphered. They are the oldest known examples of writing in the Greek language. (See *Bulletin*, Vol. 7. No. 1).

J. F. D.

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NOTE: The following articles concerning the progress of the work at Kourion have appeared previously in the *Bulletin*: "The Cyprus Expedition" by George H. McFadden, Vol. 5, No. 4; "Kourion: The Late Bronze Age Settlement" by John Franklin Daniel, Vol. 7, Nos. 1 and 3; "The Palace" by John Franklin Daniel, and "The Sanctuary of Apollo" by George H. McFadden, Vol. 7, No. 2.



Impression of Crystal Seal.