

The Mycenae-Vapheio Lion Group*

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Abstract

Efforts to identify artistic workshops of the Late Bronze Age have generally concentrated on products in individual media. Certain media, however, share techniques; for example, chasing in metal and carving in stone both use engraving techniques. Thus it is theoretically possible to attribute works in various media to a single workshop. The present paper discusses thirty-two Mycenaean objects ranging from bronze and niello daggers to lentoid sealstones. On stylistic grounds, these pieces may be divided into an early and a late phase of a single artistic workshop. On the bases of the provenience and dated contexts of the attributed works this workshop began production at Mycenae in LH I for the nobles buried in Shaft Grave III; the workshop's style seems to have run its course in LH II, as seen in the attributed works from the Vapheio and Rutsi tholoi. Because the products of the workshop have mainly been identified through certain stylistic traits in the rendering of lions, and because these products have mainly come to light at Mycenae and Vapheio, they may be said to form the Mycenae-Vapheio Lion Group.

Now that the efforts of many scholars have helped to articulate the general salient characteristics of Late Minoan and Mycenaean styles in a number of artistic media, a few are beginning to attempt to go further and identify workshops and hands. For the ceramic material results have been encouraging; with some confidence we can make attributions to a Reed Painter, to a Polyp Workshop, and to a group of Pictorialists.¹

*The idea for this paper was developed independently from, though approximately at the same time as, Professor Emily T. Vermeule's lecture, "The Art of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae." I am grateful to Professors E.T. Vermeule, G. Kopcke, and L. Richardson for reading this paper and for generously offering many valuable suggestions.

In addition to the usual abbreviations, the following have been used:

AGds — *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen* (Munich 1968-).

CS — V.E.G. Kenna, *Cretan Seals* (Oxford 1960).

CMS — *Corpus der minoischen-mykenischen Siegel* (Berlin 1964-).

GGFR — J. Boardman, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* (London 1970).

Karo — G. Karo, *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai* (Munich 1930-1933).

Fewer rings and sealstones survive than sherds, so less has been attempted in the way of attribution. Certain scholars, however, have expressed more confidence; and Boardman and the present writer have assembled groups of stylistically related seals and rings as the products of various glyptic workshops and masters.²

So far, scholars have attempted to identify a master or shop only from work in one medium. There is, however, no reason to assume that artists in the Bronze Age confined themselves to a single medium alone. Instead, it is likely that the prehistoric artist was a versatile artisan, working in a range of materials and techniques.

If there is any possibility of identifying such an artist of the Bronze Age, his diverse products ought to be recognized easily within a larger group of works that all come from one place and were all deposited at much the same time. The artifacts found in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae thus constitute a natural *point d'appui*, for they are roughly contemporary, belonging to the formative years of the Mycenaean period, and they differ greatly in form, function, and material. Another distinctive feature makes analysis easier; though the repertory of figured representations is large, the lion is the animal most frequently depicted.

This paper is concerned with thirty-two objects, many of which carry lions rendered in a highly distinctive way. Most of these objects come from

Vermeule — E.T. Vermeule, "The Art of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae," lectures in honor of Louise Taft Semple, presented 30 April and 1 May 1973 at the University of Cincinnati (University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).

¹ Respectively, M.R. Popham, "Late Minoan Pottery, A Summary," *BSA* 62 (1967) 341-42; P.P. Betancourt, "The Polyp Workshop: A Stylistic Group from LM Ib," *AJA* 77 (1973) 333-34; B.L. Benson, "Observations on Mycenaean Vase-Painters," *AJA* 65 (1961) 337-47; F. Stubbings, "Some Mycenaean Artists," *BSA* 46 (1951) 168-77.

² Respectively, *GGFR* 393-96; and J.G. Younger, "Towards the Chronology of Aegean Glyptic in the Late Bronze Age," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati 1973 (University Microfilms 73-24, 867) 405-49. Angela Tamvakis has collected four sealstones that may come from a LH IIIB(?) workshop, *AAA* 6 (1973) 308-15.

the Mycenae Shaft Graves; others come from the Vapheio Tholos Tomb. The lions on all these objects share certain anatomical peculiarities and conventions in rendering, which will be pointed out in the following catalogue. Additional attributions to the group can be made on the basis of similar conventions used in depicting animals other than lions.

Boardman has already pointed out stylistic similarities between the gold lion's head rhyton from Mycenae Shaft Grave IV (fig. 1) and lions on several sealstones.³ This rhyton may be taken as our point of departure and its type of lion then sought in other early works from Mycenae.

A. The Mycenae Subgroup

I. From Mycenae

a. Shaft Grave IV

1. (Fig. 1) Karo 273. Gold rhyton in the form of a lion's head.

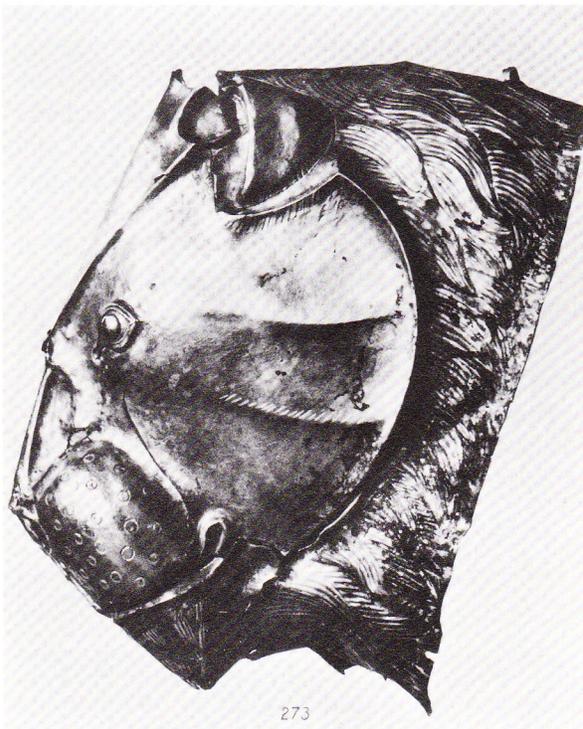


FIG. 1. No. 1. Gold rhyton from Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV (after Karo)

³ *GGFR* 395-96, Groups A and J.

⁴ Vermeule, p. 38, compares the style of this dagger to that of the Silver Siege Rhyton and Stele K. 1431, suggesting

This is a powerful and stately work; the broad planes for jowls and muzzle, the firm ridges for cheek muscles, the sharp articulations between head and mane and for nose and eyebrows, the impressed circles for whiskers, the short incisions for ruffs, and the overlapping flame-like locks of the mane, are all deliberate conventions which impart a bold but formal quality. The face raised, mask-like, above the rounded plane of the mane is a curious feature: the opposite is expected.

Many of the lions on smaller works from the Shaft Graves show similar characteristics: broad planes, incised ruffs that now appear on belly and haunches, flame locks for the mane, and the mask-like face. These lions also convey, characteristically, great power and spirit.

2. (Fig. 2) Karo 395. Dagger in niello. Obverse and reverse: three gold lions in low relief run in a flying gallop down the blade. Wavy contours in niello flow from the margins to fill spaces.

3. (Fig. 3) Karo 394. Dagger in niello. Obverse: a lion attacks a small herd of five gazelles. He fells one toward the hilt while the others flee in a flying gallop down the blade. Three gazelles are intent on escaping, but one worriedly turns its head regardant. Reverse: four men armed with shields, spears, and bows and arrows attack a pride of three lions. Two escape down the blade in flying gallop, but the third, the fiercest, having killed one hunter, turns to attack his four comrades.⁴

Besides the distinctive rendering of the lions, the gazelles too exhibit interesting features present in other depictions. Their heads resemble those of the horses on the gold ring No. 13 and on the sword No. 17, both below; their sleek bodies match those of the leopards on the dagger No. 15, and on the gold pommel, No. 5, where they appear similarly dappled.

This dagger also presents a highly sophisticated narration. On the obverse, a lion attacks gazelles, while on the reverse a lion defends himself against attackers. In both scenes the aggressor attacks from the hilt of the dagger, while the attacked is depicted toward the tip of the blade. The composition thus stands as a metaphor for the use of the dagger itself.

b. Shaft Grave III

4. (Fig. 4) Karo 295b. Ivory sword pommel. Around the body of the pommel four lions run clockwise in flying gallop; their heads, noses to center, form a tetraskelion design at the top. Though the crimped fur on the bellies and haunches of these lions is omitted, the treatment of manes and heads and the bold symmetrical composition require the inclusion of this pommel here.

for them all the same master. The present writer would prefer to table the question at this time.



FIG. 2. No. 2. Dagger from Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV, detail (photo author)



FIG. 3. No. 3. Dagger from Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV, detail (photo author)



FIG. 4. No. 4. Ivory pommel from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III, restored drawing (after Karo)

5. (Fig. 5) Karo 295a. Gold-plated sword pommel. Around the body of the pommel a lion attacks a leopard; both run clockwise in flying gallop.

The leopard's dappling resembles that of the gazelles on No. 3 obverse and the Kerbschnitt decoration on the tail resembles the grooving on the lion tails of No. 6. The crimped belly fur is here present again.

On the forelimbs of both felines a prominent vein curves from the elbow across the leg to the top of the paw. Such a vein occurs in nature across the hindleg where on the interior it is called the great saphena, and on the exterior the small saphena. These veins appear in other depictions of animals both correctly on the hindleg and incorrectly on the foreleg, both interior and exterior; cf. Nos. 7-11, 19, 20, 29, 30.

6. (Fig. 6) Karo 119/120. Inlays of reddish gold. Three lions attack a bull running in flying gallop. One apparently complete and one incomplete example are preserved with the bull to right; another fragment shows the bull to left.

The lion tails are thick like the leopard's on No. 5, and their grooving recalls the latter's Kerbschnitt. The locks of the mane are also depicted by repoussé ovals, a shape conveniently produced in small metal objects; the same manes appear in Nos. 7 and 8.

7. (Figs. 7, 8) Karo 34 (*CMS* I 10). Gold cushion-shaped seal. A lion runs left down a rocky

⁵ Vermeule, p. 38, sees this scene as a detail from a larger composition. It may more likely belong to the genre scene of solitary wounded animals; a few of these are lions (e.g., *CMS*

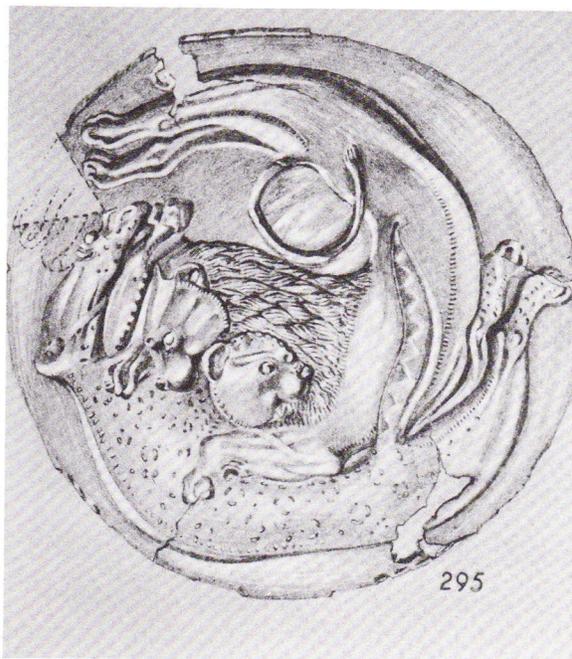


FIG. 5. No. 5. Gold-plated pommel from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III, restored drawing (after Karo)

slope. An arrow has pierced his shoulder and he turns his snarling head toward it.⁵

8. (Figs. 9, 10) Karo 33 (*CMS* I 9). Gold cushion-shaped seal. A lion at left rears right to bite the shoulder of a man who lifts his dagger to stab the lion in the neck.

The dimensions of both these gold cushion-shaped seals, Nos. 7 and 8, are exactly the same and so is the style of engraving. Also, both lions exhibit the correctly placed great saphena (inside the hindleg) but the small saphena is boldly, though incorrectly, placed on the foreleg's muscular exterior, no doubt for effect.

In addition, both lions have paws rendered by clusters of dots. Such a convention was probably thought appropriate for stone and gold carving (as, e.g., the oval manes), for such paws appear on all the succeeding sealstones, except Nos. 11 and 20.

I 248 from Vapheio and No. 25 below), but the most common are caprids on Minoan seals (but cf. No. 32 below).

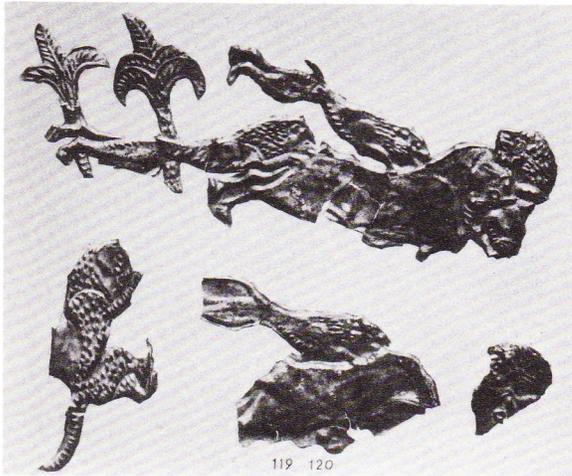


FIG. 6. No. 6. Gold inlays from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III (after Karo)



FIG. 8. No. 7. Gold cushion-seal from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III, impression (photo author)



FIG. 7. No. 7. Gold cushion-seal from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III (photo author)

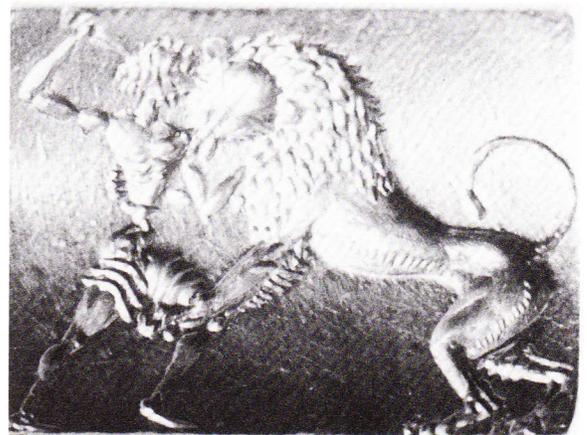


FIG. 9. No. 8. Gold cushion-seal from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III (photo author)

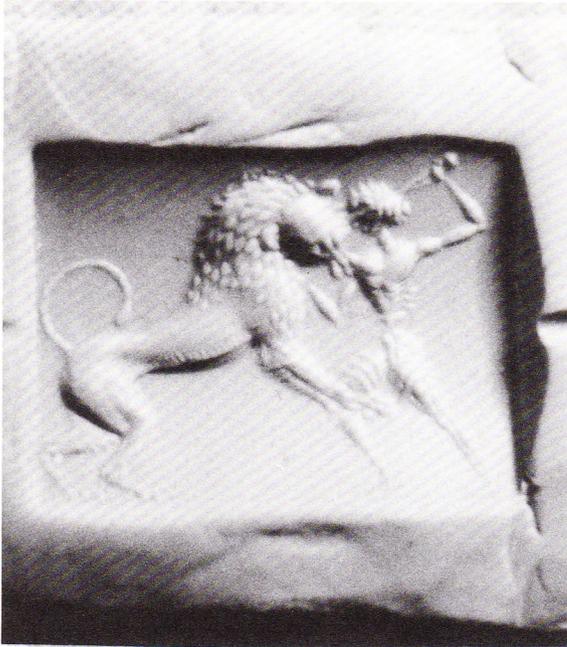


FIG. 10. No. 8. Gold cushion-seal from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III, impression (photo author)

II. From Elsewhere

9. (Fig. 11) *CMS* XIII 20. Lentoid of sard from Mycenae. Two lions rampant and antithetic attack a stag rampant between them.



FIG. 11. No. 9. Lentoid seal from Mycenae, impression (courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

10. (Figs. 12, 13) *AGdS* II Berlin 34, said to be from Athens. Lentoid seal of agate. A stag runs left, head up. Above, a lion to right bites the stag's hindquarters.

The detailed treatment of the flame-like locks of the mane seems reminiscent of good metalwork with which the rather dry modelling of the animals agrees. Compare the similar style of No. 29.



FIG. 12. No. 10. Lentoid seal, said to be from Athens (courtesy, Staatliches Museum, Berlin)

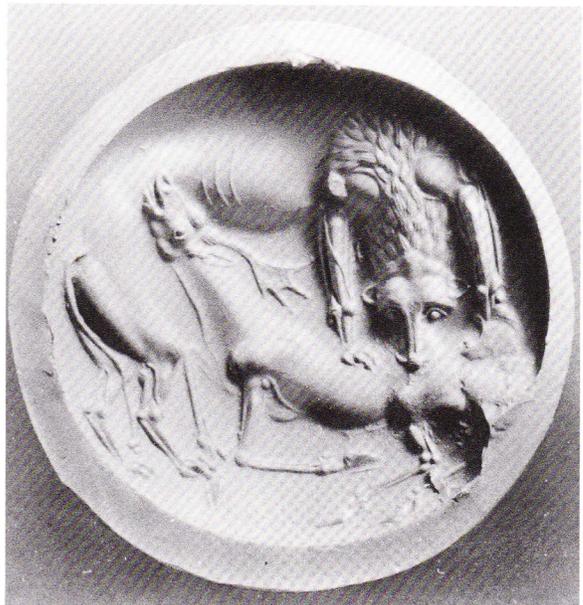


FIG. 13. No. 10. Lentoid seal, said to be from Athens, impression (courtesy, Staatliches Museum, Berlin)

11. (Fig. 14) CS k. 314 (*GGPR* pl. 91),⁶ provenience unknown. Lentoid seal of carnelian. A lioness stands right on rough terrain⁷ with her head under the belly.



FIG. 14. No. 11. Lentoid seal, provenience unknown, impression (photo author)

III. Pieces Attributable to the Mycenae Subgroup
a. Mycenae, Shaft Grave III

12. Karo 35 (*CMS* I 11). Gold cushion-shaped seal. Duel.

The warriors compare well with those on Nos. 3 reverse and 14. Though this cushion seal is smaller than Nos. 7 and 8 it is similar in shape and in technique, and must belong with them.

b. Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV

13. (Fig. 15) Karo 240 (*CMS* I 15). Gold ring. Two men stand in a chariot to right drawn by a pair of horses in flying gallop over rough terrain. One of the men, an archer, prepares to shoot a stag, upper right, running right regardant. Clustered drops and a plant serve as fillers.

The stag in pose, shape, and dappling resembles the fourth gazelle on No. 3 obverse, and both stag and horses have crimped bellies; cf. No. 32.

⁶ Kenna, *CS* 134 s.n. k.314, identifies this seal as the product of the same master who did our No. 10. He also aligns it with our No. 31 ("Some Eminent Cretan Gem Engravers," *Festschrift für Friedrich Matz* [Mainz 1962; hereafter abbreviated *Fest. Matz*] 9) and with *CMS* VII 114.

⁷ Could the "rough terrain" be an unfinished part of the composition? Compare the "leonine cloud" on *CMS* I 192



FIG. 15. No. 13. Gold ring from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III, impression (photo author)

14. (Fig. 16) Karo 241 (*CMS* I 16). Gold ring. In the center a hand-to-hand duel. At right a nude man sits on the rough ground, while at left a helmeted warrior prepares to strike the dagger wielder with a long spear, coming from behind a large shield. Clustered drops frame the scene.



FIG. 16. No. 14. Gold ring from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III, impression (photo author)

from Midea Chamber Tomb 10 (Younger, "A Glyptic Sketch from Isopata HM 908," *Kadmos* 13 [1974] 3 n. 11). Both terrain and cloud exhibit an incoherent outline and vague modelling which differ markedly from the crisper forms and distinct gradations of surface used in defining most iconographic elements on sealstones.

These two rings, Nos. 13 and 14, are identical in shape: their bezels and hoops are the same size and their decoration is in the same style. The men on No. 14 are rendered similarly to those on Nos. 8 and 13; and the clustered drops compare with those on No. 13.

c. Mycenae, Shaft Grave V

15. (Figs. 17, 18) Karo 765. Dagger in niello. Obverse and reverse: two leopards hunt ducks along a river teeming with fish and bordered by papyrus.

Karo has pointed out that the obverse carries two consecutive scenes, while the reverse carries two

simultaneous ones. The leopards are comparable to the animal on No. 5; the niello technique is also found on Nos. 2 and 3; and the narrative quality recalls that on No. 3.

16. (Figs. 19, 20) Karo 747. Bronze dagger. Obverse and reverse: four griffins in low relief run down the blade in flying gallop.

The wings are decorated with Kerbschnitt like the griffin's on No. 19 below, and like the leopard's tail on No. 5. Both the stiff pose and relief technique of the griffins match those of the lions on No. 2.

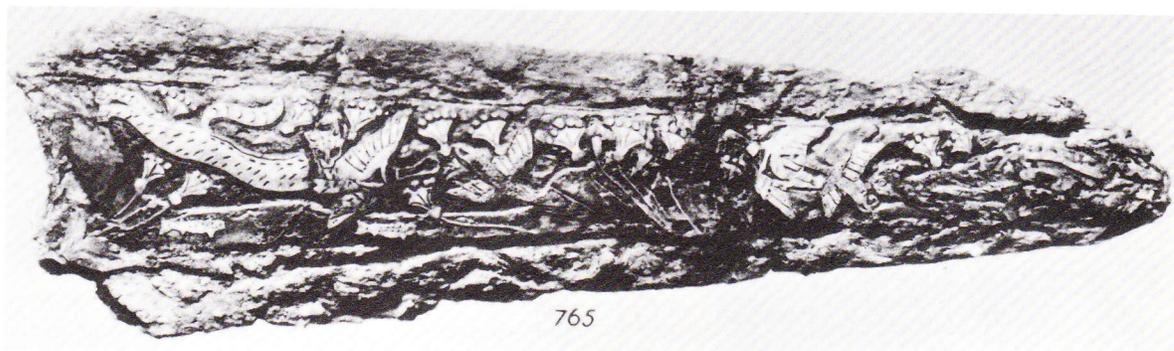


FIG. 17. No. 15. Dagger from Mycenae, Shaft Grave V, obverse (after Karo)

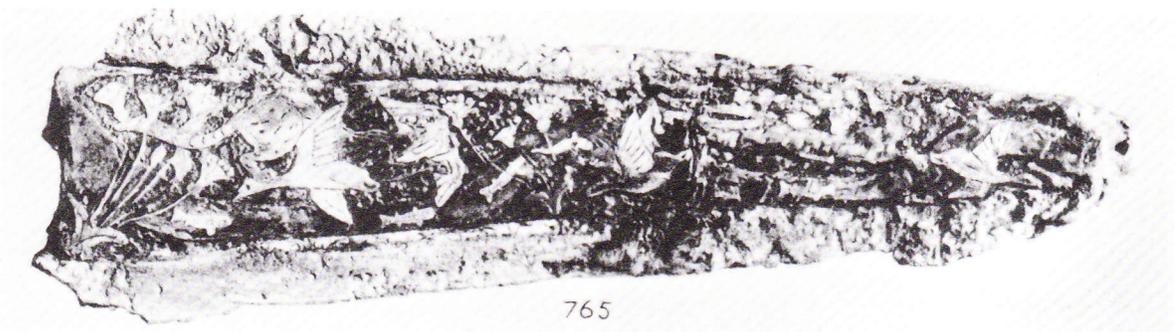


FIG. 18. No. 15. Dagger from Mycenae, Shaft Grave V, reverse (after Karo)

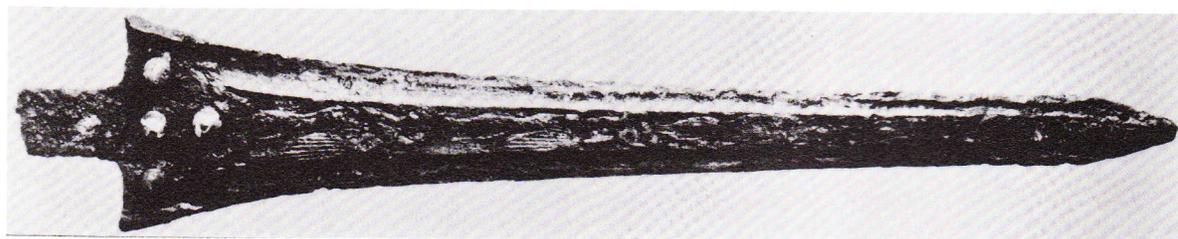


FIG. 19. No. 16. Dagger from Mycenae, Shaft Grave V, obverse (after Karo)

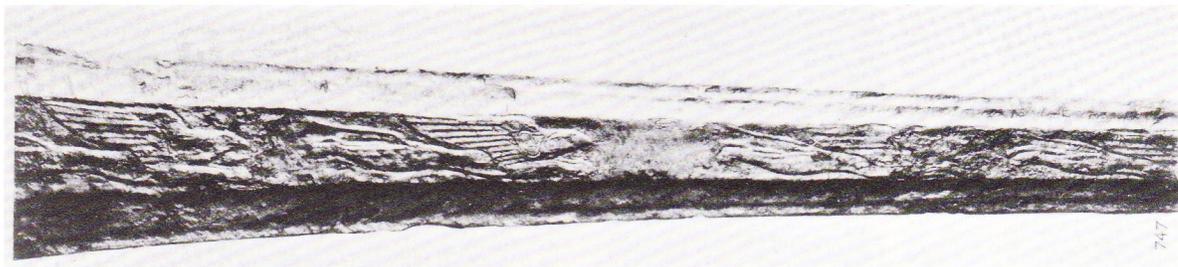


FIG. 20. No. 16. Dagger from Mycenae, Shaft Grave V, reverse (after Karo)

17. (Fig. 21) Karo 748. Sword. Ten horses in low relief run down either side of the keel of the blade in flying gallop.

Their shape, manes, and crimped bellies and haunches compare with those of the team of horses on No. 13; their full tails resemble those of the leopards on Nos. 5 and 15.

18. Karo 1427. Grave stele found over Shaft Grave V. A man stands in a chariot drawn by a horse in flying gallop over a fallen warrior with shield. Below, a lion right hunts an animal with horns and a long tail (roe? antelope?). Returning spirals frame the stele.



FIG. 21. No. 17. Sword from Mycenae, Shaft Grave V, detail (photo author)

The lion is comparable to other lions in this subgroup, though it is impossible to attribute it with certainty.

d. The Vapheio Cist (LH IIa)

19. (Fig. 22) *CMS* I 223. Lentoid seal of jasper. A long robed man (priest?) stands left leading a griffin on a leash standing left, regardant, and behind the man.

The griffin's wings are decorated with Kerbschnitt like those on No. 16, and like the leopard's

⁸ For the correct assignment of sealstones to the cist and chamber, see Younger, "The Vapheio Gems: A Reconsideration of the Find-Spots," *AJA* 77 (1973) 338-40.

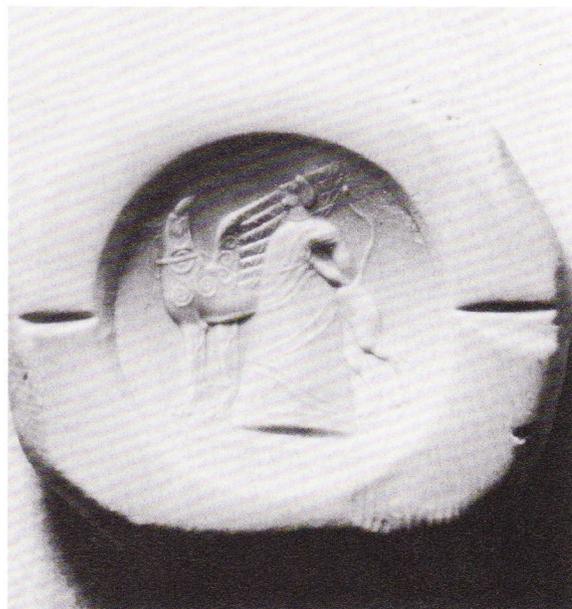


FIG. 22. No. 19. Lentoid seal from Vapheio, impression (photo author)

tail on No. 5; the monster's legs are veined; the paws are dotted like those on Nos. 10 and 21.

B. The Vapheio Subgroup

I. From Vapheio⁸

a. The Cist (LH IIa)

20. (Fig. 23) *CMS* I 252.⁹ Lentoid seal of agate. A bull runs right over rough terrain, head lowered. Behind, a lion rampant right bites the bull's neck near the shoulder.

The distinguishing characteristic of the lions in the Vapheio subgroup is the shape of the locks in

⁹ Kenna, *Fest. Matz* 9, points out the similarities between this seal and our No. 21.

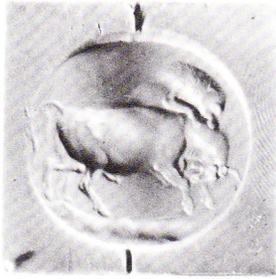


FIG. 23. No. 20. Lentoid seal from Vapheio, impression (photo author)



FIG. 24. No. 22. Lentoid seal from Vapheio, impression (courtesy, CMS)

the mane: a deep V-shaped groove, not the flame pattern of the Mycenae subgroup. The subgroup also seems to depict lions more simply: the saphenous veins appear only on Nos. 20 and 23, the crimping only on No. 23, and most paws do not consist of tightly grouped dots but of linear claws with dots for tips and knuckles.

b. The Chamber

21. *CMS* I 243. Lentoid seal of agate. Lion assis right, regardant.

22. (Fig. 24) *CMS* I 250. Lentoid seal of carnelian (sardonyx?). Two lions run clockwise, back to back, tête-bêche and regardant.

23. *CMS* I 249. Broken lentoid seal of agate. Two lions are couchant counterclockwise, back to back, tête-bêche, and regardant.

II. From Nichoria (LH IIIA:2-B)

24. (Fig. 25) *CMS* V 435. Lentoid seal of agate. Bull couchant left, head thrown back. Above, a lion left attacks the bull's neck.



FIG. 25. No. 24. Lentoid seal from Nichoria, impression (photo author)



FIG. 26. No. 26. Lentoid seal from Argos, T. 7, impression (courtesy, CMS)

There are strong similarities between this seal and No. 20, both in composition and in the treatment of the mane.

III. Pieces close to the Vapheio Subgroup

25. *CMS* I 277 from Rutsi (LH IIb).¹⁰ Lentoid of agate. A lion, bowed clockwise, head down and to left, is wounded in its flank by an arrow.

The lions on this seal, and on Nos. 26 and 27, have the locks of the mane rendered by deep V-shaped grooves that are bisected by a short, shallower stroke.

26. (Fig. 26) *CMS* I 204 from Argos Tomb 7 (LH IIIA). Lentoid of agate. A lion rampant left attacks from behind the back of a bull standing left regardant.

27. (Fig. 27) *CMS* I 141 from Mycenae Cham-

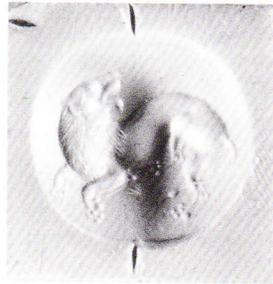


FIG. 27. No. 27. Lentoid seal from Mycenae T. 515, impression (photo author)

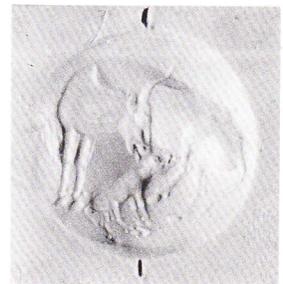


FIG. 28. No. 28. Lentoid seal from Mycenae T. 515, impression (photo author)

ber Tomb 515 (LH IIb).¹¹ Lentoid seal of agate. A lion runs left regardant.

This seal and the next, No. 28, are cut from the same stone.¹² The latter, therefore, should be by the same artist or workshop as No. 27.

28. (Fig. 28) *CMS* I 140 from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 515 (LH IIb). Lentoid seal of agate. A cow left turns her head to lick her nursing calf.

C. Pieces Related to the Mycenae-Vapheio Lion Group

I. The Shoulder Subgroup

Two seals carry lions with the mane type of the Mycenae subgroup, but their shoulders have a characteristically strong profile line; a third seal, No. 29, depicts a bull with the same profile line as well as saphenous veins.

29. *CMS* VIII 141, provenience unknown. Lentoid seal of agate. Bull with head contorted under belly. Saphenous veins cross the legs.

¹⁰ The pottery context is classed as LM II late/LH IIIA:1 for which Marinatos, the excavator, suggests a date about the end of the XVth century; in other words, ca. LH IIb (Marinatos, *Antiquity* 31 [1957] 97-100 and *ILN* 6 April 1957, 540-43).

¹¹ Furumark, *Chronology* 50-51.

¹² M.A.V. Gill suggested that these two seals were cut from the same stone, *Gnomon* 38 (1966) 266. The present writer concurs.

30. (Fig. 29) *CS* k. 315 from Knossos (LM II mature).¹³ Lentoid seal of rock crystal. Lion right with head contorted under belly.

A strong profile line appears along the belly reminiscent of the crimping characteristic of the Mycenae-Vapheio Group. Though the paws are dotted, the head is less mask-like.



FIG. 29. No. 30. Lentoid seal from Knossos, impression (photo author)

31. (Fig. 30) *CMS* I 62 from Mycenae Tomb 26.¹⁴ Lentoid seal of agate. A lion sits right regarding its cub which leaps on its back.

The lion here is much like the last two, except that its paws are not dotted, but shown as fairly long claws resembling fingers.

II. Miscellaneous

32. (Fig. 31) *CMS* I 242 from the Vapheio Cist (LH IIa). Lentoid seal of green jasper. Caprid rears right wounded in the chest by an arrow. A tree behind fills the field.

The fur along the abdomen is crimped recalling the common practice for belly-crimping on lions; the powerful shoulder and linear treatment of the upper legs compare well with similar treatments found on the other sealstones of the Mycenae Subgroup.

¹³ Kenna, *Fest. Matz* 9, suggests similarities between this seal and *CMS* VII 114 (also aligned with our No. 11 in his opinion), and, to the latter, he compares *CS* k. 296.

¹⁴ Kenna, *Fest. Matz* 11, implausibly aligns this seal with



FIG. 30. No. 31. Lentoid seal from Mycenae T. 26, impression (photo author)

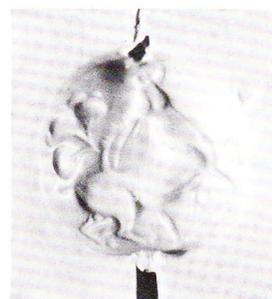


FIG. 31. Lentoid seal from Vapheio, impression (photo author)

Discussion

Style. A clearly marked type of lion, depicted on seventeen artifacts, provides the basis for attributing a group of fifteen stylistically related works of art to the same artistic milieu. The whole group, the Mycenae-Vapheio Lion Group and its relatives, consists of a gold rhyton in the shape of a lion head, three daggers in niello and one in relief, one sword and two pommels (one of gold, one of ivory), one set of gold inlays, three gold cushion seals, two gold rings, seventeen lentoid sealstones, and one carved stone stele.

All but the sealstones come from the Mycenae Shaft Graves: the daggers and swords, the grave gifts, and the tombstone. The sealstones come from other areas at Mycenae, from the slightly later Vapheio cist and other burial(s) in the Vapheio Tholos, and from places nearby, Rutsi, Nichoria, and Argos; a single seal, No. 30, probably made in Crete in the Group's style, comes from Knossos.

All the works or the figures on them can essentially be classed as miniatures, for the most part worked either in stone or in metal, usually gold.

Lions of the Mycenae-Vapheio Group are easy to recognize. Their heads are square and mask-like with manes that have locks either like overlapped flames or like arrows. The bodies are tough and lean usually with the fur on the belly and haunch crimped; the legs are thick, often with strong veins curving usually over the forelegs, and

HM 908 and 909 (both from Isopata T. 3; see J.G. Younger, "A Glyptic Sketch from Isopata, HM 908," *Kadmos* 13 [1974] 1-5), HM 166 and 179 (Kalyvia Ts. 4 and 9), *CS* k. 313, and *CMS* IX 123.

sometimes over the backlegs as well; the paws are depicted as clusters of dots or as dotted claws.

Other animals can be associated with these lions when they share certain of their characteristics like crimped fur: sleek gazelles and horses both with the snub muzzles of the Przewalski horse (to be seen in full on the ring No. 13 and the sword No. 17), dappled deer, fuzzy panthers and sinewy griffins both decorated with Kerbschnitt, and muscular bulls endowed with baggy dewlaps and prominent hip bones.

Some of the detectable differences within the group can be laid to differences in the media. For paws, gold may require clumped dots; stone, dotted claws. Similarly, gold lends itself to plastically rendered human heads; stone, to flat mask-like faces, like that of the Vapheio "priest" on No. 19. But for the most part, the characteristic details are the same on both metal and stone objects.

Certain other more significant variations in the depiction of lions have already been noted: manes can be rendered as flames or arrows, and legs though always naturalistic may be shown with or without veins. Most of the Shaft Grave lions have flame manes and leg veins; most of those from Vapheio are simpler, perhaps because later, with arrow manes and less powerful legs.

Consequently, on the basis of these two main sets of variations, in provenience and in iconography, the Mycenae-Vapheio Group can be clearly divided into a Mycenae subgroup and a Vapheio subgroup.

Chronology. Besides a stylistic differentiation between the two subgroups, there is also a chronological one. Of the Mycenae subgroup, Nos. 4-8 and 12 come from Shaft Grave III and date to LH I early; Nos. 15-18 from Grave V date to LH I late, while Nos. 1-3, 13 and 14 come from IV which seems contemporary with, or slightly later than V;¹⁵ No. 19 from the Vapheio cist dates no later than LH IIa. Of the Vapheio subgroup: No. 20 comes from the Vapheio cist (no later than LH IIa); No. 25 from Rutsi dating no later than LH IIb; No. 24 from Nichoria no later than LH III A:2-B. Nos. 27 and 28 from Mycenae Chamber

Tomb 515 seem close to the Vapheio subgroup and date no later than LH IIb, while No. 26 from Argos dates no later than LH IIIA. No. 30 from Knossos is related to the style of the whole group; Evans says it came from a "LM mature" context.

On the basis of the pieces from dated contexts, then, the Mycenae subgroup should be dated primarily to LH I and the Vapheio subgroup primarily to LH II, though this is less certain. Nos. 24 and 26 seem likely to have been heirlooms.

It is to be remembered, however, that the Mycenae-Vapheio Group displays a remarkable consistency of style; the distinction between the two subgroups is mainly to be laid to the simpler quality of the pieces in the Vapheio subgroup.

When therefore all the works from dated contexts are taken together the general pattern favors a date for the whole Group of LH I-IIa, a period which could have lasted as long as a century, approximately 1550 to 1450 B.C. The pieces from contexts dated LH IIb or later were probably deposited at a time significantly later than their manufacture. Because the pieces that make up this Group show a limited tolerance for stylistic variation, they are very likely the products of a single small workshop;¹⁶ probably for many of its productive years it was under the guidance of a single master who was primarily a chaser and engraver of sealstones.

It is, however, a rare master who can produce great works of art and create a style that will endure for more than fifty years; afterwards a workshop might create within his style for fifteen-twenty years before slipping into a new or detectably derivative development. Both spans seem large, however, even by cautious reckoning. It is obvious that if a single master had produced, by himself, the Mycenae-Vapheio Group, he would have worked for the Mycenae dynasts buried in Graves III-V; since none of his objects can be yet recognized in the latest Grave I, it is possible that he had by that time begun to expand his patrons to include the Vapheio Prince as well, though the artist may not have been active by the time that Spartan noble was buried. The Master's productive

¹⁵ Furumark, *Chronology* 46 and 85; Karo 256-58; Vermeule 11.

¹⁶ Vermeule, p. 11, suggests "no more than six or eight people are involved in all the metal objects . . ." and, pp. 43-44, for the lion representations, "nearly all examples can

be made by one or two craftsmen. . . ." The present writer would see at least two artists for the Lion Workshop (Master and his apprentice who later takes over), and probably at least two others responsible for the rest of the Shaft Grave lions.

period then plausibly spanned most of LH I and perhaps a decade or two of LH IIa, say 1530-1480 B.C. A career of fifty years may seem too long unless we remember that the chaser and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini (A.D. 1500-1571) worked for an equally long period. It is unreasonable, however, to expect a superannuated Master also to have produced the sealstones Nos. 27 and 28 for the patron buried in Mycenae Chamber Tomb 515 in LH IIb.

A workshop begun in LH I under the Master's exacting eye could, of course, have carried on his style, perhaps in a derivative way, through most of the remaining years of LH IIa, say until 1450 B.C. Thus, the Mycenaean buried in Chamber Tomb 515 wore lentoid seals that may have been the products of this workshop after the demise of its Master.

Origins. At the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, lions seem to have enjoyed a revived popularity. Early Minoan seals, especially the ivories from the Messara, frequently carry lions marching about the periphery; on the Mainland dogs seem to have enjoyed an equal popularity, especially in EH II. For the Middle Minoan period a few depictions of lions survive. Evans mentions¹⁷ lions associated with hieroglyphs on prism seals, though the present writer is aware of none which uses the lion as a hieroglyph. On several Phaistos sealings (MM Ib-IIa) lions stand, run in a primitive flying gallop, and even attack other animals (*CMS* II.5 270-286). From Knossos come three other MM representations of lions: a gold pendant¹⁸ from the Long Corridor in the West Quarter, dated to MM II through proximity to the Hieroglyph Deposit, though it is probably later (cf. two other gold pendants of couchant lions from Ayia Triada¹⁹); lifesize fragments of a lion's mane, neck, and leg in relief stucco from near the Shrine of the Double

Axes, and dated to MM IIa²⁰ but which also may be later;²¹ and gold-plated bronze curls, possibly parts of a lion's mane from the East Treasury and dated also to MM IIIa.²²

There are perhaps, then, a few Middle Minoan forerunners of certain elements to be seen in the Mycenaean-Vapheio lions. The flying gallop pose used with such grandeur on the niello daggers stems from the simpler pose on the Phaistos sealings in MM II, as Evans suggested.²³ Flame locks for lion manes occur on the MM III (?) relief stucco from Knossos, and a few representations of lions in metal were attempted before (?) those at Mycenae. Nevertheless, the Late Bronze Age sees more lions than did earlier periods, and there are more representations of lions in that period than of anything else. And of these lions, those in the Mycenaean-Vapheio Group stand apart because of their clean forms and great force.

Style. Contemporary Minoan lions, those on LM Ia sealstones and on many LM Ib sealings,²⁴ convey no power equal to that of the Mycenaean lions. Those on Crete are either unaggressive, their softly modelled bodies often decorated with speckles, or else they are rendered schematically by tools used for cutting, as in the so-called Talismanic style.²⁵ Only three or four LM Ia feline representations approach monumentality: the terracotta rhyton in the shape of a lioness's head from Thera,²⁶ and two similar ones in alabaster and marble from the Central Treasury at Knossos—a fragment of a smaller but similar rhyton comes from Delphi.²⁷ Lifesize representations of lions from Crete have not survived, if they ever existed, only domestic cats like that on a fresco from Ayia Triada.²⁸ The lioness rhyta from Thera, Knossos and Delphi may therefore have been inspired by their gold cousin from Mycenae, but they are all modelled more softly. This soft rendering may be the result of the medium—clay or soft stone, or of Minoan

¹⁷ *PM* IV, 525-26.

¹⁸ *PM* III, 411, fig. 275a; IV, 76.

¹⁹ *Mon.Ant* 14 (1904) 730-31, figs. 27 and 30. From the same tomb come the "statuette" (fig. 24) which seems MM, and the ring (fig. 31) which could be LM.

²⁰ *PM* II, 332-34, fig. 188.

²¹ Vermeule, p. 37 n. 59, would date this fragment to LM Ib, possibly later. The present writer agrees with the suggestion.

²² *PM* III, 413-14, fig. 276.

²³ *PM* I, 713-20.

²⁴ Cf., a lentoid from the Herakleion-Poros Ch.T. (MM III-

LM Ia context; *Praktika* 1967, pl. 190); a lentoid from Knossos (LM Ib context; *JHS-AR* 1961-1962, fig. 39); sealings from Ayia Triada and Kato Zakro (LM Ib contexts; *ASAtene* 8-9 [1925-1926] nos. AT 36-49 and KZ 105, 107-109, etc.); and *CMS* V 493 from Kea (LM Ib/LH II context).

²⁵ Boardman prefers the more neutral terms Hoop and Line Style (*GGFR* 42-45) and Cut Style (*GGFR* 48).

²⁶ Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera* 2 (Athens 1969) 19-20, fig. 10, pl. 37.1.

²⁷ *PM* II, 827-33.

²⁸ *PM* I, 539, fig. 391.

or Cycladic taste. Whatever the reason, the difference in effect is striking; the Mycenae lion in the rhyton and its congeners are rendered in metals and hard stones, materials whose hardness seems to have imparted a new and different power, a reflection of the new and different power of the dynasts of Mycenae themselves.

Importance. Within its own time the Mycenae-Vapheio Workshop influenced profoundly the production of other works of art. Several scholars would place the so-called Mask of Agamemnon from Shaft Grave V within the circle of the Workshop.²⁹ The gold cup from the same Shaft Grave (Karo 656) carries three lions running in flying gallop under the lip, their belly fur is crimped, and their claws are thin lines (cf. No. 31), but the work is vapid, like the lion on an amygdaloid seal from Vapheio (*CMS* I 244). A niello dagger from Rutsi³⁰ depicts leopards not unlike those on the Mycenae dagger No. 15, but they are so sleek and supple as to seem immature. In addition, there are many sealstones which carry lions apparently influenced by the Workshop, such as *CMS* I 103 from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 68, and *CMS* I 280 from Rutsi; influence can also be seen in the flame pattern on the dress of a lance-bearing woman depicted on the amygdaloid *CMS* I 226 from Vapheio.

Direct influence from the Workshop continued for a long time; it can be seen in two major works. From the Mycenaean deposit (LH IIIB) in the Artemision in Delos comes an ivory inlay portraying a lion attacking a griffin.³¹ The engraving is of masterly quality, but completely unexpected are the flame-like locks of the lion's mane, the

almost mask-like quality of the lion's head, and the veins over the forelegs of both lion and griffin; the spiral decoration on the griffin's wings, however, is a later trait. The second major work is the Lion Gate at Mycenae (also LH IIIB). On the thin block filling the relieving triangle over the lintel of the main gate of Mycenae two lions stand antithetically, their forepaws on a double altar. Their heads were of a different material from the bodies and were originally attached to look toward those approaching below.³² The pose and the softly modelled, almost mannered treatment of the bodies can be compared to the lions on a late (LH IIIB?) lenticular seal (*CMS* I 46) from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 8. Though the Lion Master influenced neither the composition nor the modelling of the Mycenaean relief, the lions with their mask-like heads created by him and his workshop may have provided the inspiration for the attached heads of the lions on Mycenae's main gate.

At the moment, the Mycenae-Vapheio Lion Group identifies the earliest detectable Mycenaean workshop. It produced works of distinction that influenced contemporary and subsequent artists, and it apparently contributed significantly to the creation of the style called Mycenaean by consensus. While these early Mycenaean works share a number of common characteristics with Minoan creations, highly developed techniques in chasing and engraving, and certain iconographic elements like the "priest" on No. 19 and the flying gallop pose, they also display other characteristics that are foreign to the Aegean. Behind the Minoan "priest" stands the griffin, a monster inspired by Near Eastern models; supple leopards seem to hunt in the

²⁹ Vermeule, p. 36, though not explicitly confirmed by G. Kopcke, "Zum Stil der Schachtgräbermasken," *AthMitt* 91 (1976) 1-13.

³⁰ *ILN* 6 April, 1957, 540-43, figs. 12, 15, 16.

³¹ For an excellent photograph, see Vermeule's *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago 1964) pl. 37 C.

³² Wace, *Mycenae* 52, notes that the large size of the dowel holes implies not bronze but a heavy stone, perhaps softer, like steatite, than the limestone of the relief. Mylonas, *AAA* 3 (1970) 425, seems to agree, adding that such a material could be "elaborately worked with a variety of details. . ." That Pausanias (2. 16.4) recognized the animals on the gate as lions does not imply anything about the survival of the heads to his day; with or without heads the bodies are obviously leonine. That he does not mention the heads implies either that they were not there, or, if they were, they were not wrought in a remarkable (to him) material. It is unlikely for the heads

to have survived long after Mycenae's prehistoric destruction if they were of a material intrinsically valuable, such as bronze or even gold—thus Pausanias would not have seen them. On the other hand, if the heads were carved in steatite or the like, the details may have been nearly obliterated by time and thus Pausanias would not necessarily have commented on them.

The present writer suggests a compromise: steatite covered with gold foil. Steatite is easily carved and thus lends itself to delicate details; the relief of the monument seems to demand a dramatic effect which a gold covering would provide. The technique is not unknown: a fragment of a steatite rhyton carrying a boar originally gold plated, from Palaikastro, *BSA-Supp.* I (1923) 137 fig. 118; a steatite tripod originally covered in gold foil, from Knossos, *PM* I, 387. Cf. the tablet KN K 872 where *Ku-ru-so* is found in a context that may refer to gilding the horns of such bull-head rhyta as that from the Little Palace (*PM* II, 527, figs. 330-32).

marshes of the Nile; and a number of daggers from this early period are rendered in niello, a Near Eastern technique.

Though the Lion Workshop was cosmopolitan, able to employ non-Greek techniques and themes, its style, especially apparent in its lions, seems wholly Mycenaean: formal,³³ patterned, and powerful. Even the realistic saphenous veins infuse more awesomeness than life into the Group's felines, bulls, and griffins.

But the Mycenaean epoch begins with the Shaft Graves and the Mycenaean style begins with the

objects found in them. Only a few pieces seem non-Mycenaean there: a few Minoan imports, a gold stag from the Russian steppes, and a gold-encased wooden box. The remaining works of art seem to be proto-Mycenaean in style, and, at its best, this style is to be found captured mainly in the products of the Mycenae-Vapheio Lion Workshop.

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³³ Vermeule, pp. 33-34, suggests that this formalism may have originated early; she points out the formal qualities in LM Ia

pottery.