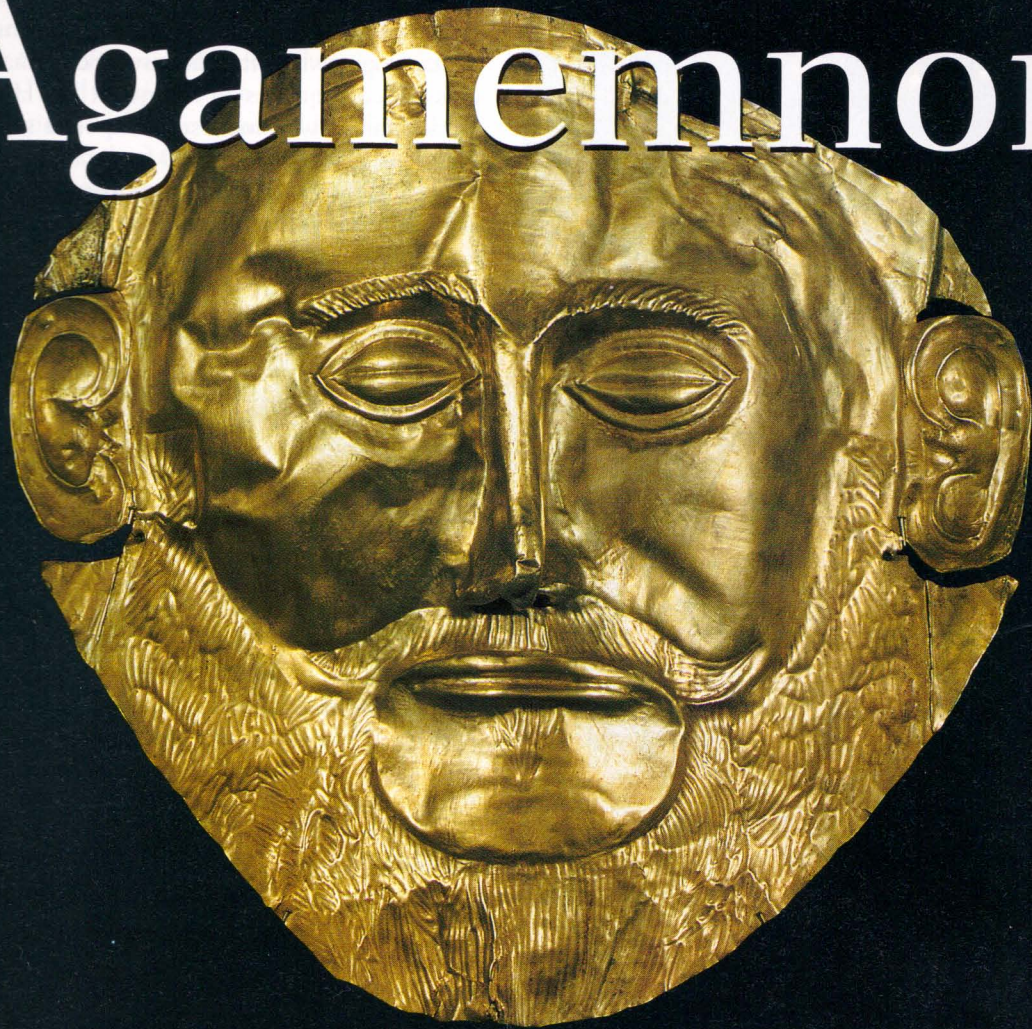


Behind the Mask of Agamemnon



“I HAVE OPENED UP A NEW WORLD FOR ARCHAEOLOGY,” SAID HEINRICH SCHLIEMANN AFTER HIS 1871–1873 EXCAVATION OF TROY. SCHLIEMANN WAS SPEAKING THE TRUTH; THE BUSINESSMAN-TURNED-ARCHAEOLOGIST HAD SHOWN THAT HOMER’S EPICS MAY HAVE BEEN BASED IN FACT. SCHLIEMANN NEXT TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO MYCENAE, WHERE THE ANCIENT GEOGRAPHER PAUSANIAS HAD LOCATED THE GRAVE OF AGAMEMNON, THE LEADER OF THE GREEK ASSAULT ON TROY, AND HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS. UNLIKE PREVIOUS SCHOLARS, SCHLIEMANN INTERPRETED PAUSANIAS AS MEANING THE HOMERIC GRAVES WERE WITHIN THE WALLS OF THE BRONZE AGE CITADEL, NOT OUTSIDE. TESTS SCHLIEMANN CONDUCTED IN 1874 INSIDE THE WALL REVEALED HOUSE WALLS, A TOMBSTONE, AND TERRACOTTA ARTIFACTS—PROMISING EVIDENCE FOR A FUTURE INVESTIGATION.

IS SCHLIEMANN’S FAMOUS FIND A MODERN-DAY FORGERY?



Two years later, between August and December, he excavated at Mycenae on behalf of the Greek Archaeological Society, which held the excavation permit. His work was supervised by Panagiotis Stamatakis, a conscientious Greek archaeologist who often accused Schliemann of destroying classical antiquities in his quest for Homeric remains. Schliemann's workmen soon exposed stelae marking the perimeter of a grave circle 90 feet across just within the citadel's gate. By the end of August the first of five Bronze Age shaft graves was found within it. This grave circle became known as grave circle A, its five tombs indicated with Roman numerals. A second grave circle, known as B, was found by Greek archaeologists outside the walls between 1951 and 1952. Its graves are labeled with Greek letters.

WHILE SCHLIEMANN'S DIARY and newspaper and book accounts of the location and dates of his discoveries in the shaft graves are often vague and contradictory, it is clear that by the end of November he had excavated tombs containing the bodies of several Mycenaean chieftains, five of whom wore gold face masks. Elated, Schliemann sent a telegram to King George of Greece:

With great joy I announce to Your Majesty that I have discovered the tombs which the tradition proclaimed by Pausanias indicates to be the graves of Agamemnon, Cassandra, Eury-medon and their companions, all slain at a banquet by Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthos.

Though the graves were later shown to be at least 300 years earlier than the conjectured date of the Trojan War, for a time it appeared as though Schliemann had once again laid bare the Homeric world.

Of all the masks discovered at the site, the Mask of Agamemnon from grave V is the most famous. "I have gazed on the face of Agamemnon," Schliemann is said to have telegraphed a Greek newspaper on first seeing the mask. In fact, he himself never identified it as belonging to Agamemnon, but since it was the finest of the specimens it became associated with the hero. Nor did Schliemann ever note in writing the obvious stylistic differences—facial hair, ears cut out from the body of the mask—that set it apart from the others. In any case, the masks and gold jewelry Schliemann found at Mycenae brought him world fame; he was henceforth known as the Father of Mycenaean Archaeology.

Nearly 30 years ago, William M. Calder III, now a professor of classics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, began to question the veracity of the claims in Schliemann's autobiographical writings. An award-winning author and editor of numerous books on nineteenth-century classical studies, Calder demonstrated that Schliemann had a penchant for self-mythologization. Stories he told about himself—his desire from the age of eight to excavate Troy,

The beard, handlebar moustache, and cut-out ears of the Agamemnon mask (preceding page) are characteristics absent from the four other masks excavated by Schliemann in Mycenae's grave circle A.

Spiros Tselenitis/SuperStock, bottom three masks; Erich Lessing, Art Resource, top

his 1851 White House meeting with President Millard Fillmore, his discovery of a bust of Cleopatra at Alexandria—were patently untrue. Calder also questioned the authenticity of the Mask of Agamemnon. “I’ve learned to doubt everything Schliemann said unless there is independent confirmation,” said Calder. While his revisionist scholarship has been criticized by some (Machteld Mellink, a former president of the Archaeological Institute of America, characterized it as a “vendetta against Schliemann”), many now concur that Schliemann was a brilliant dissembler.

Late last year *ARCHAEOLOGY* received a manuscript from

Calder restating his claim that the mask is a forgery. It appears below. While his evidence is circumstantial, he believes that considered cumulatively it is sufficient to kindle skepticism. Because of its serious implications, *ARCHAEOLOGY* solicited responses from five experts, printing in full those of David A. Traill, author of *Schliemann of Troy: Treasure and Deceit*, and Katie Demakopoulou, former director of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Although several scholars here refer to Traill’s work, only Calder’s text was circulated for comment.—SPENCER P.M. HARRINGTON



IS THE MASK A HOAX?

Nine reasons to be skeptical. by WILLIAM M. CALDER III

FOR 25 YEARS I HAVE RESEARCHED THE LIFE OF HEINRICH SCHLIEMANN. I have learned to be skeptical, particularly of the more dramatic events in Schliemann’s life: a White House reception; his heroic acts during the burning of San Francisco; his gaining American citizenship on July 4, 1850, in California; his portrayal of his wife, Sophia, as an enthusiastic archaeologist; the discovery of ancient Greek inscriptions in his backyard; the discovery of the bust of Cleopatra in a trench in Alexandria; his unearthing of an enormous cache of gold and silver objects at Troy, known as Priam’s Treasure. Thanks to the research of archaeologist George Korres of the University of Athens, the German art historian Wolfgang Schindler, and historians of scholarship David A. Traill and myself, we know that Schliemann made up these stories, once universally accepted by uncritical biographers. These fictions cause me to wonder whether the Mask of Agamemnon might be a further hoax. Here are nine reasons to believe it may be:

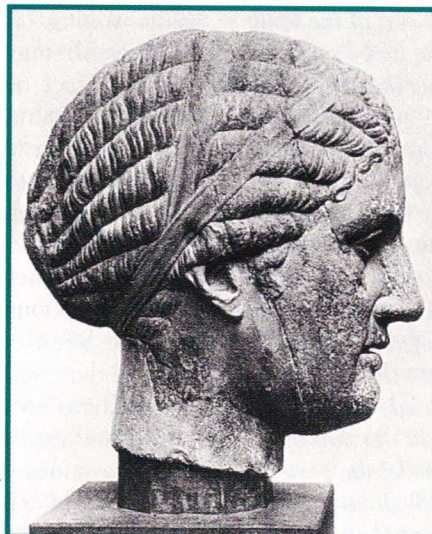
1. Günter Kopcke of New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts has stressed that the Agamemnon mask is stylistically different from all other Mycenaean masks. He draws attention to its distinctive eyebrows, ears, beard, and moustache. Kopcke suggests it is the work of an innovative and highly talented goldsmith: “Certainly the...mask is more original and has a stronger effect [on the viewer than the other masks]—the goldsmith...invested enthusiasm and pride in his craft.”

2. Schliemann was quite ready to have duplicates of finds made that he would pass off as genuine. He had agreed to split his finds with the Ottomans in exchange for permission to excavate Troy. Once he discovered the gold and silver objects he called Priam’s Treasure, however, Schliemann smuggled them to Greece. When it appeared as though the Ottomans might claim their fair share of the treasure, he explored the possibility of having forgeries manufactured in Paris to give to the Turks.

3. Memoirs of informed contemporaries preserve allegations that Schliemann planted finds with the intention of later “discovering” them. Among the skeptics were British scholars Sir Charles Newton, Percy Gardner, and A.S. Murray, who, discussing Schliemann’s career, declared, “He who hideth can find.” Ernst Curtius, director of the excavations at Olympia and professor of ancient history at Berlin, called him a *schwindler und pfuscher* (swindler and con-man). One could go on.

4. The Mycenae excavations took place between August 7 and December 3, 1876. The mask was discovered on November 30, 1876. Three days later the excavations were closed. Similarly, excavations at Troy were closed just after the discovery of Priam’s Treasure. In both cases did Schliemann simply assume that the most valuable objects had been found, or had he only found what he had planted?

5. Excavations were also closed on November 26 and 27 while Schliemann was away. Where was he? A rela-



Bust of Cleopatra that Schliemann most likely purchased rather than excavated, as he claimed.

Courtesy Detlef Roessler



1877 engraving of grave circle A on Mycenae's acropolis, where Schliemann found five gold masks, jewelry, and weaponry.

The Granger Collection

tive of his wife, Sophia, is alleged to have been an Athenian goldsmith. Did Schliemann obtain the mask from Sophia's relative in Athens, then return to Mycenae and bury it, to find it on the 30th?

6. Priam's Treasure is the richest single find in all Bronze Age Anatolia and was rumored to have been improved by modern additions. No Mycenaean grave has one-tenth of what was in shaft grave V. Was Schliemann's luck at Mycenae too good to be true?

7. There are suspicious details in Schliemann's publication of the mask. I quote his *Mycenae: A Narrative of Researches and Discoveries at Mycenae and Tiryns* (1880):

In a perfect state of preservation, on the other hand, is the massive golden mask of the body at the south end of the tomb (No. 474). Its features are altogether Hellenic and I call particular attention to the long thin nose, running in a direct line with the forehead, which is but small. The eyes, which are shut, are large, and well represented by the eyelids; very characteristic is also the large mouth with its well-proportioned lips. The beard also is well represented, and particularly the moustaches, whose extremities are turned upwards to a point, in the form of crescents. This circumstance seems to leave no doubt that the ancient Mycenaeans used oil or a sort of pomatum in dressing their hair. Both masks are of repoussé work, and certainly nobody will for a moment doubt that they were intended to represent portraits of the deceased, whose faces they have covered for ages.... We are amazed at the skill of the ancient Mycenaean goldsmiths, who could model the portraits of men in massive gold plate, and consequently do as much as any modern goldsmith would be able to perform.

One searches for a subtext. The opening reference to "a perfect state of preservation" is intended to anticipate suspi-

cion. The mask's long, thin Hellenic nose makes me suspicious, as if it were created to fit the idea of Greek nobility articulated by the influential eighteenth-century German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Stress on the moustaches suggests that Schliemann believes them to be the most suspicious detail. He anticipates the objection that upturning a moustache requires pomade, which the Greeks did not possess, by asserting, through circular argument, that because of the moustaches, Greeks must have possessed pomade. At the end he shows his hand: "the ancient Mycenaean goldsmiths...could...do as much as any modern goldsmith." Why mention modern goldsmiths unless Schliemann knew that indeed a modern goldsmith had made the mask? In the English edition there is a note after "crescents" stating, "There is nothing new under the sun."

8. Schliemann stated that he had excavated objects which in fact he had purchased. One example is the so-called Cleopatra bust which he claimed to have excavated from a trench in Alexandria in February 1888. Wolfgang Schindler, however, pointed out that Schliemann's alleged 25- to 35-foot-deep trench would have been considerably below Alexandria's water table; the bust was most likely purchased a year before from an Egyptian dealer. There are also Attic inscriptions published by Schliemann and said by him to have been excavated in his garden. George Korres showed they were in fact bought from private collections.

9. There are obvious motives for Schliemann to have buried and excavated a modern forgery. He wanted to close the excavations with a bang. He also desperately needed a *Herrscherbild*, a portrait of a leader. The other four masks—billiard bald or pancake-flat—were not worthy of a great king. The authenticity of these masks is substantiated by later, similar finds. We must recall how contemporary German artists imagined Agamemnon. The great example is the

brooding Agamemnon in a wall painting depicting Achilles dragging the fallen Hector about Troy in the Achilleion, a villa built on Corfu between 1890 and 1891. He has a full black beard and moustache. The closest parallel to the moustaches on the mask are those of Bismarck, Wilhelm I, and Wilhelm II. Prussian men of power, in Schliemann's day and after, all boasted beards and moustaches. Clearly Agamemnon required one. Schliemann ordered a *Herrscherbild* that combined Winckelmann's Greek nose with Hohenzollern facial hair.

My evidence is circumstantial. When considered cumulatively, however, it is enough to make me skeptical. If the mask is genuine, Schliemann is the luckiest archaeologist until Howard Carter. If it is a fake, he was a genius who duped the leading archaeologists and historians in the world

for more than a century. Because I am a great admirer of Schliemann and spend a lot of time studying his life, I hope it is a fake. It is much better to be a genius than just lucky.

William A. MacDonald of the University of Minnesota observed that modern Schliemann research "is a mean spirited scholarly enterprise—particularly when aimed at one who cannot defend himself.... If deposits of genuine artifacts were salted with fake copies, scientific tests (not unsupported insinuations) are the constructive way to ascertain the facts."

The fact is that David Traill has more than once sought to test the mask, and the National Museum in Athens has consistently denied his request. This has always puzzled me. A metallurgist could silence annoying critics. What we must have is a public test by an independent expert not associated with the National Museum.



INSISTENT QUESTIONS

A simple test could resolve the matter. by DAVID A. TRAILL

SOME OF THE STRONGEST GROUNDS FOR SUSPECTING THE AGAMEMNON MASK derive from its appearance and its relationship to the other gold and electrum (gold-silver alloy) masks from Mycenae. William Calder refers briefly to them. Let me go into more detail. As Günter Kopcke points out, the mask bears a general resemblance to the two flat gold masks that Schliemann found in grave IV of grave circle A and to the flat electrum mask found in grave gamma in circle B in the early 1950s. (The two rather podgy gold masks that Schliemann found in graves IV and V are not flat but three-dimensional, or "in the round," and belong to quite a different tradition.) But when we compare the Agamemnon mask with the three other flat masks, striking differences emerge.

First, consider the eyebrows. On the other flat masks they form a single arch, and the hairs are indicated by engraved strokes. However, on the Agamemnon mask the eyebrows form two arches, and the individual hairs are actually cut out so that when the mask is viewed in profile they are seen to stand out from the brow.

Now consider the eyes. The other flat masks have their eyes closed at mid-eyeball; the lashes are engraved. The Agamemnon mask also appears to have its eyes closed at mid-eyeball (though the lashes are not indicated), but at the top and bottom of the eyes the eyelids are shown to be open. Now look at the ears. In the other three flat masks (and also in the two three-dimensional ones) the ears are incorporated within the body of the mask. In the Agamemnon mask, they are cut out like flaps.

Now consider the mouth, lips, and chin. The other flat masks have short mouths with thick, ill-defined lips and no discernible chins. The Agamemnon mask has a wide mouth, thin lips, and a well-defined chin. Finally, the facial hair. The others have none. The Agamemnon mask has a beard that runs from ear to ear, an upturning handlebar moustache, and an imperial (a pointed beard growing below the lower lip). Neither handlebar moustache nor imperial is

attested elsewhere in Mycenaean or Minoan art. As Calder suggests, these features were fashionable symbols of authority in the nineteenth century and they contribute to our perception of the mask today as the portrait of a king. But had they a similar significance in Mycenaean Greece? Did people even wear them then? The Agamemnon mask is our only evidence.

The three other flat masks establish a norm, which, evidently, was highly conventionalized. Their consistency renders the many departures from that norm shown by the Agamemnon mask very surprising. The range of stylistic innovation that it presents becomes all the more remarkable when one reflects that graves IV and V, where Schliemann found the two flat masks and the Agamemnon mask, respectively, are dated by scholars as virtually contemporary, representing the burials of not more than two generations.

None of this proves that the mask is a fake. There are several good reasons for considering it to be authentic. Chief among these is the fact that below the chin the beard begins to form the characteristically Mycenaean V shape. But the numerous differences between the Agamemnon mask and the other flat masks do raise serious questions. Now that there is wider recognition that Schliemann was

repeatedly dishonest, in both his private life and his archaeological reporting, questions need to be asked about the mask's authenticity.

Perhaps its most troubling feature is the upturned moustache. Closer inspection shows that the moustache also droops down to the beard on either side of the mouth and that the upturning parts seem to be later additions. These additions have been carelessly done. In the upturning part on the right (our right) the hairs run more or less horizontally. On the left they run vertically. Whether the additions were made ca. 1525 B.C. or some 3,400 years later is hard to say. Conceivably, the mask could be ancient but altered on Schliemann's instructions to give it a more imposing appearance. Interestingly, of the three earliest eyewitness descriptions of the mask, Schliemann's gives no details (simply "a gold mask"), Stamatakis mentions the beard but says nothing about a moustache ("a gold mask of a bearded man, of life size, much finer than those found hitherto"), and that of the reporter for the Greek newspaper *Argolis* actually denies the presence of a moustache ("a gold mask likewise intact, which depicts the likeness of a young man, handsome and brave.... He has an engraved beard four to five inches long, but no moustache." After its removal to Athens the mask was kept with the rest of the most valuable finds in the National Bank of Greece, of which Schliemann was a founding shareholder. The earliest photograph of the mask, which shows it with the moustache, dates from January or February 1877—at least five weeks after its discovery.

Anthony Snodgrass of Cambridge University, in a review of my Schliemann biography, recently called him "profoundly dishonest." Even Schliemann's staunchest supporters are beginning to admit that Priam's Treasure is probably not the single find that Schliemann claimed. So far, however, there is no proven instance of either his manufacture of a fake (though he certainly explored this option in the case of Priam's Treasure) or alteration of an authentic find.

This brings us to a third possibility: the Agamemnon mask is an authentic find from a later tomb. This could account for the differences between it and the other three flat masks. It is certain that Schliemann combined unrelated finds to create larger and more dramatic assemblages. He has been shown to have done this on several occasions at Troy. At Mycenae there is abundant evidence in Schliemann's diary that he came across far more tombs in and around the grave circle than the five shaft graves he reports in *Mycenae*. We know that Schliemann hid many of his best finds from the Turkish supervisor at Troy in 1873. The same could have happened at Mycenae, for Stamatakis, the conscientious Greek supervisor, frequently pointed out to his superiors in Athens that his staff was inadequate to super-

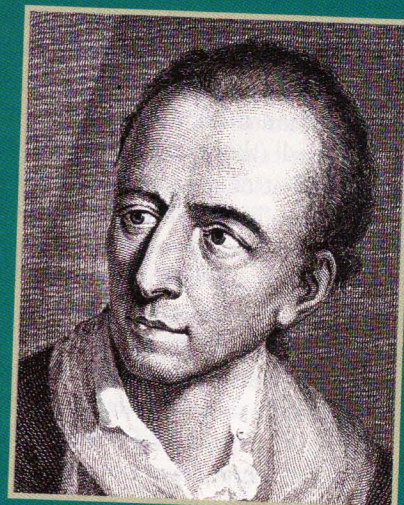
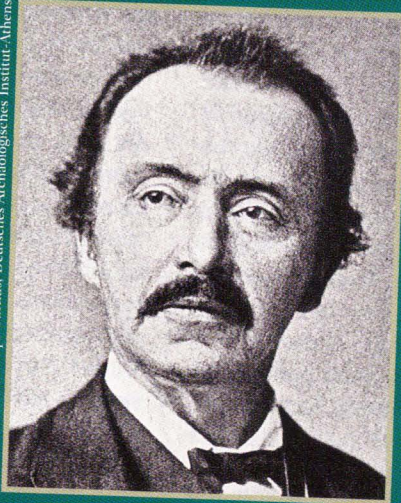
wise the 100 or so workmen that Schliemann was employing in various parts of the site. Schliemann gave a bonus to each workman for every antiquity found. Presumably, as at Troy, the bonus was higher if the piece was brought to him without the supervisors' knowledge.

In most of these scenarios, the Agamemnon mask would have to have been added to grave V before it was excavated on November 30. Here it is important to remember that the British scholar Percy Gardner reported that rumors were rife in Athens shortly after this that Schliemann had "salted" the graves. But how could he have done this? If we examine Schliemann's diary, it is clear that grave V had been excavated to within a meter or so of the burials by November 20. Given nine full days and nights, Schliemann was certainly capable of finding a way of adding the Agamemnon mask to the mud of grave V.

If asked to say whether I think the Agamemnon mask is an authentic piece found just as Schliemann reports, an authentic piece that has been altered, an authentic piece from a later burial, or a modern fake, I would have to say I simply do not know. It is easiest just to believe Schliemann, but that leaves many questions unanswered, and his credibility, even in his archaeological work, is steadily eroding.

Calder calls for a test of the mask. Such a test would be fairly straightforward. Though gold itself is not corroded by ground water, no ancient object was ever made of pure gold. The alloyed minerals that are constantly found in ancient gold do corrode and the effects of this corrosion are perceptible in the crystalline structure of objects that have lain underground for prolonged periods. A simple microscopic examination that would cause no harm to the mask could determine in a matter of minutes whether it had been buried for centuries or not. In 1982 and again in 1983 I proposed that such an examination be conducted by a recognized expert, but on both occasions Greek authorities denied permission. Now, nearly 20 years later, the questions have not gone away, but have rather become more insistent.

Corbis-Bettmann, except Curtius, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athens



William Calder contends that Schliemann (left) forged the mask to fit Prussian conceptual art historian Johann Joachim Wincklemann (second from left), while contemporary detractors were vehement. Ernst Curtius (far right), director of excava-



THE CASE FOR AUTHENTICITY

Why Calder and Traill are wrong, by KATIE DEMAKOPOULOU

WILLIAM CALDER AND DAVID TRAILL HAVE FOR SOME TIME NOW LEVELED SERIOUS CHARGES against Schliemann, not only for his character defects but also for his archaeological work. The most serious of these accusations is that Schliemann compromised his excavations by planting fakes. As a prime example they cite the erroneously named Mask of Agamemnon, whose authenticity they have repeatedly called into doubt without, however, giving any scholarly basis for their arguments.

It must be emphasized from the start that the two scholars' accusations against Schliemann have not been generally accepted by the academic community. Furthermore, they have succeeded neither in reducing the importance of Schliemann's excavations for archaeology, nor in shaking the view that Schliemann was a pioneer researcher of the prehistoric Aegean.

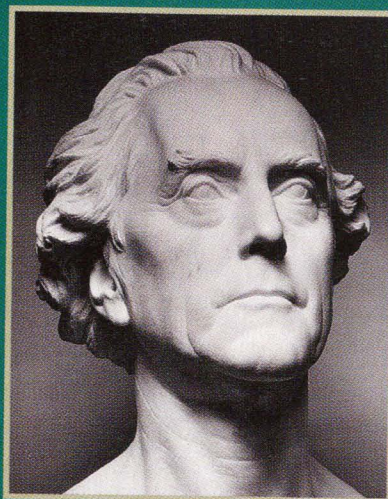
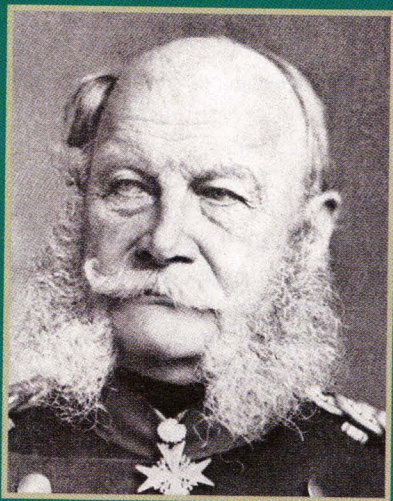
The Mask of Agamemnon has been considered from the very beginning to be a genuine Mycenaean creation, like the five other gold and electrum masks from grave circles A and B at Mycenae. Apart from Calder and Traill, no one has ever seriously questioned the authenticity of the mask or any other finds from the grave circles. To be sure, the Mask of Agamemnon is the finest of all the masks. Its technical workmanship and rendition of a man's features, which in a sense makes it a true portrait, allow no doubt that it is an original Mycenaean work, a judgment shared by specialists such as Emily T. Vermeule in *The Art of the Shaft Graves of Mycenae* and Sinclair Hood in *The Arts in Prehistoric Greece*. Moreover, Günter Kopcke's article on the style of the masks, to which Calder refers, nowhere states that the mask is not genuine. Ellen N. Davis has drawn attention to the fact that in their rendition the locks of the mane and beard of the gold lion-head rhyton from shaft grave IV

and the beard of the Mask of Agamemnon are "almost identical." Vermeule had noted this earlier, attributing both rhyton and mask to the same artist and citing them as characteristically Mycenaean works. I should add that the rendering of the moustache on the mask is similar to the locks of the mane on the lion-head rhyton; moreover, its shape is the same as the upper lip of two of the masks from grave circle A. The small triangular beard growing below the lower lip of the mask also recalls the triangular beard of the lion-head rhyton.

Calder and Traill's theories are totally unsupported archaeologically; specialists have nonetheless seen fit to respond to these groundless accusations. Among them are Edmund F. Bloedow, Reinhard Witte, and Sinclair Hood. More recently, Olivier Masson's "Recherches récentes sur Heinrich Schliemann" in the *Revue des Études Grecques* has a well-documented discussion on the authenticity of the Agamemnon mask. Traill, also, in *Schliemann of Troy*, is no longer so categorical on the subject of the mask's authenticity, influenced, probably, by the negative reaction of specialists. David Turner's review of Traill's book in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, for example, includes a sharp reply to the theory that the mask is not genuine. Calder makes no reference to these studies. Moreover, he uses rumors and unpublished comments as evidence without providing sources.

It is not clear what Calder's purpose is in questioning the authenticity of the mask. I must stress the fact that the mask came from Schliemann's excavation at Mycenae in 1876, which the Greek state, at that time, took care to supervise closely. The work was carried out under the aegis of the Greek Archaeological Society and with the continuous supervision of the ephor (director) of antiquities, Panagiotis Stamatakis. Stamatakis' conscientious supervision of Schliemann's excavation is well known, an important piece of evidence refuting charges that Mycenae's royal tombs were planted with fakes.

Calder refers to Traill's request for a scientific examination of the mask to



tions of nobility. He says its long, thin nose reflects Greek nobility as conceived by the its handlebar moustache mimics that of Kaiser Wilhelm I (third from left). Schliemann's tions at Olympia, called him a *schwindler und pfuscher* (swindler and con-man).

determine its authenticity. It is true that this request was rejected, quite rightly, by the Central Archaeological Council in 1983, following the National Archaeological Museum's negative opinion. It was determined that since there was no reason at all to throw doubt on the authenticity of the mask, it was unnecessary for it to be tested.

Casting doubt on the authenticity of a famous masterpiece of ancient Greek art that comes from a venerable

excavation may be calculated to arouse commotion. It demands, however, a groundwork of scholarly evidence. Calder is obliged to show on what evidence he bases his argument that the mask is a fake, and he is obliged to provide thorough archaeological data. Since Calder is, by his own admission, not qualified to evaluate the archaeological evidence, it might be better to leave these serious matters in the hands of specialists.



NOT A FORGERY. HOW ABOUT A PASTICHE?

by KENNETH D.S. LAPATIN, Department of Art History, Boston University

ON ACCOUNT OF THE AGAMEMNON MASK'S PHYSICAL ANOMALIES and Schliemann's proven mendacity, Calder, Traill, and others have suggested that it might be a forgery. My own work on early twentieth-century forgeries of Minoan gold and ivory statuettes suggests the distinct, mutually exclusive categories of genuine and false are often unhelpful and ultimately limiting, that we should consider a more elastic category, that of pastiches, ancient pieces reworked in modern times.

The alternately bulbous and flattened faces of the other masks from the shaft graves might not have lived up to notions of the proper appearance of a hero who led the Greek host against Troy. Schliemann, however, was happy to attribute heroic qualities even to the more unsightly flat or podgy masks. Still, it remains possible that one of those less aesthetically pleasing pieces was, shall we say, enhanced. The Mask of Agamemnon's curled moustache, whose existence is explicitly denied in the report published in the *Argolis* newspaper on December 2, 1876, has the same outlines as the upper lip of two of the less spectacular masks. These masks are both circular like the Mask of Agamemnon, both have a "bib" running around the edges, and both lack eyelashes (as well as eyebrows). Bearded men without moustaches, moreover, appear not infrequently in Mycenaean art in diverse media. Examples found at Mycenae itself include an inlaid silver cup from chamber tomb 24, an amethyst gemstone from grave circle B, and the famous Warrior Vase. Of course, if Schliemann had had the opportunity to enhance the Mask of Agamemnon after its discovery, Stamatakis, who commented on its quality almost as soon as it came out of the ground, should have been aware of the fact. But we must remember the quantity of material emerging from the shaft graves as well as its condition. Hundreds of objects had to be extracted from the mud and cleaned; many were in need of restoration, so much so that the now famous gold lion's head rhyton, whose mane has been cited as a stylistic parallel to Agamemnon's beard, moustache, and imperial, was mistaken for a helmet when

it was first excavated.

Attitudes toward restoration vary with time and place. In an early twentieth-century catalog offering reproductions of Mycenaean and Minoan antiquities, including the Mask of Agamemnon, Paul Wolters, director of the Munich Glyptothek and former secretary of the Imperial German Archaeological Institute at Athens, informed potential customers that the objects, made "with the help of exact mouldings...as now presented to us, are not in the bent, crushed, or broken condition in which they were found, but have been reset in their original forms so far as these could be ascertained with certainty. Even the needful restorations are throughout founded on reliable traces, or trustworthy analogy." I do not know the chronology of the restoration of the shaft grave material. Might the Agamemnon mask have been "restored" to what Schliemann, or perhaps even someone else, thought it should look like?

This brings us to motive. When he wrote *Mycenae*, Schliemann had decided that he had indeed gazed on the remains of Homer's heroes. Schliemann had set out to find the legendary wealth of Atreus, father of Agamemnon and Menelaus and ruler of Mycenae, but there is no evidence that he resorted to salting his finds. To be sure, Schliemann stopped excavating prematurely, after clearing the fifth shaft grave, but Pausanias, whom he followed closely, mentions only five graves within the walls. The shaft graves were extraordinarily rich, but that too was in keeping with ancient belief in the wealth of the Atreids. Addressing Ptolemy II Philadelphos, the third-century B.C. poet Theokritos (*Idyll* 17) remarks,



Art Resource

Mane on this gold lion-head rhyton from Mycenae's grave circle B resembles the beard on the Mask of Agamemnon.

What can be finer for a wealthy man than to win good fame among men? Even for Atreus' sons that endures, while the countless treasures won when Priamos' great house was sacked lie hidden somewhere in that mist from which there is no return.

When Schliemann excavated at Orchomenos and other Homeric sites alleged to be rich in gold, he came up with nothing. No forgeries were planted there.

Nor does the pattern of deceit that Calder would like to trace from Troy to Mycenae seem to include the production of forgeries: Priam's Treasure, so far as I am aware, is ancient, even if it neither belonged to Priam nor was found precisely as Schliemann described. But those who have produced and marketed forgeries of Minoan ivory and gold statuettes, like those who faked Hellenistic figurines from Tanagra in central Greece earlier and Cycladic statuettes later, did so to meet the demands of enthusiastic collectors

eager to own newly discovered relics of ancient civilizations. The market conditions surrounding the discovery of the Agamemnon mask were quite different, and though it might be argued that Schliemann was a market in and of himself, it should be remembered that his finds were initially dismissed as Byzantine or worse.

In short, I do not believe Schliemann could have commissioned the Mask of Agamemnon before the discovery of the other masks, and it is difficult to see how he might have done so and inserted it to be discovered between November 28 and 30, especially as he was under rather strict scrutiny. The mask just might be an example of over-restoration, of making a find more palatable after discovery, which is to say, more in line with the expectations of the day, as Calder notes. Exactly when this might have been possible, or who might have been responsible, I cannot say. But would Schliemann have previously sought a goldsmith in Paris if he could turn to one of his wife's relations in Athens?

EPILOGUE

IT MAY NEVER BE POSSIBLE TO PROVE conclusively that the mask is fake, genuine, or a pastiche; most scholars we queried thought it genuine. Oliver Dickinson of the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Durham University cast doubt on the possibility that Schliemann could have had a copy of the mask made in short order and under the scrutiny of his Greek supervisors:

Calder, like Traill before him, offers no suggestions as to how this [faking the mask] possibly could have been achieved without the knowledge of Stamatakis, and in the last stages of the excavation with other Greek archaeologists present and soldiers guarding the site, let alone how a fake as good as the mask could have been made in the extremely short amount of time available, by a craftsman who could not have seen the other masks, with at least two of which it has notable points of resemblance.

John G. Younger of Duke University's Department of Classical Studies thought the perfection of the mask's iconographic details ruled out the possibility of a forgery:

By perfection, I mean it has everything right—everything is executed in the right technique and in the right size. Its eyebrows are striated like the eyebrows of the two masks from grave IV, and the sharp line of the nose is paralleled on the electrum mask found in the 1950s at grave circle B, which of course Schliemann didn't know about. Calder's other points, about the Hellenic nose...are specious pandering to the sensationalism of his subject.

While the National Archaeological Museum in Athens has been reluctant to test the mask, there are a number of procedures available to determine authenticity in addition to that outlined by Traill. The simplest and least damaging is X-ray fluorescence, which could reveal whether or not the

gold was alloyed with other metals. Minoan and Mycenaean gold, when mined or panned, was typically composed of between five and 30 percent silver. "If the test revealed the mask were pure gold, or if it were alloyed with copper, that would be cause for worry," says Paul Craddock, head of the metals section of the British Museum's Department of Scientific Research. Craddock adds that examination of tool marks on the mask's surface would be fruitless since the "marks look much the same whether they were made in the second century B.C. or 100 years ago."

Two other tests are theoretically possible, but have not yet been tried routinely on ancient gold. The first is laser-ablated inductively coupled mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS), which produces a trace-element fingerprint for gold that can be matched with source mines. But, says Craddock, "sourcing ancient gold is a real problem. There were most likely a multitude of small sources for Greek gold, any number of rivers and mines." Nevertheless, the test might provide evidence for authenticity if the mask were shown to contain the same trace elements as other objects found in the tombs. LA-ICP-MS would require a small sample from the mask and other gold objects from the shaft graves. The second test, known as helium dating, has only recently been developed at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg; the procedure reveals the date a gold piece was last melted by measuring helium produced in the gold during the radioactive decay of the trace elements uranium and thorium.—S.P.M.H.