

Notes and News

A Minoan Dagger from Gournia

The date of the dagger with silver-plated rivets, published in December's *ANTIQUITY* (1968, 278), is clearly a matter of some importance in view of the advanced metallurgical techniques used in the dagger's manufacture. As Dr Stubbings observed, it belongs to a numerous group of broad short-daggers, the great majority of which are to be placed in the period MM III–LM I. The development of this type of weapon from the daggers of EM III–MM I has recently been studied in detail (Branigan, 1968a), and it now seems clear that its origins are to be found in a small group of round-heeled daggers with thickened profiles and three rivets in triangular formation, several of which reveal their ultimate inspiration from an east Mediterranean source by the retention of a small rounded projection in the centre of the heel base (Branigan 1967, 225–7). Many of the experimental dagger types produced in MM Ib–II have lost this feature, and none of the broad short-daggers found in deposits of MM III onwards retains it. The daggers from the South House at Knossos (MM III, Evans, 1928, fig. 392, 13), from the houses of Gournia (LM I, Boyd-Hawes, 1908, pl. iv, 52–54, 60–61), and from the second palace of Phaistos (MM III–LM II, Borda, 1946, pl. lvi, 8) all have a heel base with no projection. It is significant therefore that the dagger studied by Dr Charles has a small rounded projection on the heel base. This feature is highly suggestive of a date earlier than MM III for the dagger, and the closest extant parallel to this weapon is another

broad short-dagger found in the vestibule of tholos B at Agia Triadha (Evans, 1921, fig. 142b). On both daggers the projection is rather flattened, but it has not yet disappeared entirely. Typologically, we should expect these two daggers to date to MM II, and two other weapons found in the same deposit at Agia Triadha also presented anomalies which suggested they belonged in the period immediately before the Neopalatial era began (Branigan, 1968b, 17). The associated pottery is difficult to date precisely, but whilst some vessels might be attributed to MM II, there was none that could be recognised as belonging to the period of the new palaces. The archaeological context of the Agia Triadha dagger therefore supports the typological recommendation of a date not later (and almost certainly not earlier) than MM II for the dagger from Gournia.

It is interesting to note that one of the two anomalous weapons found in association with the Agia Triadha dagger features three large silver, or silvered, rivets (Branigan, 1968a, fig. 3, 21). Unfortunately it has not been possible to make a close examination of this piece so that the precise nature of the rivets has not been determined, but there is clearly a possibility that this fragmentary weapon represents a second example of the technique noted on the Gournia dagger. Minoan metallurgists had used their small supply of imported silver for the production of dagger rivets since EM I–II (Branigan, 1968c, 221, 224). Two examples of daggers with rivets wholly made of silver in this way were found on the island of

Mochlos, in the Gulf of Mirabello not far from Gournia. The continuity of this practice from EM II to MM II is indicated by examples of silver-riveted daggers from Platanos (EM III-MM I), Kalathiana (MM I-II), and Agia Triadha (MM II). It seems likely therefore that the plating technique evolved in Crete, during MM I-II, and this conclusion might be significant in relation to the development of inlay techniques. As to the centres where the technique of silver-plating may have originated, we might suggest that they would be situated somewhere in north-central Crete where a silver-working tradition is best evidenced during the Early Bronze Age (Branigan, 1968c, 222, 226).

KEITH BRANIGAN

The Quest for Arthur's Britain

Professor Charles Thomas's review-article of (ed.) G. Ashe, The Quest for Arthur's Britain (ANTIQUITY, 1969, 27) has aroused widespread comment. We print here a contribution from Dr C. A. Raleigh Radford, Chairman of the Camelot Research Committee, and a reply from Professor Thomas.

The March number of ANTIQUITY includes an article 'Are These the Walls of Camelot?' by Charles Thomas. Though formally a review of 'The Quest for Arthur's Britain', it is, in large part, a thinly veiled attack on the Camelot Research Committee, its Officers and its Director of Excavations. As Chairman of the Committee I must ask to be allowed to correct certain errors and implications. I am not strictly concerned with the reviewer's opinion of the book, even though he falls into a number of misconceptions in the course of his strictures. E.g. the Monymusk Reliquary is a portable reliquary and, though I should not ascribe to it a date as early as c. 600 on art-historical grounds, it is inaccurate to say that such reliquaries were necessarily made at the time of enshrinement or later. Professor Thomas seems to have confused the portable reliquary with the tomb shrine—also a reliquary—and in the context his statement is irrelevant and misleading.

The gravamen of Professor Thomas's charge

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is that he objects to 'a controlling Committee embracing bodies and individuals, whose interests are non-archaeological and, in so far as eventual interpretation is concerned, certainly not objective.' This can only mean that the final—and presumably also the interim—reports on the excavations at South Cadbury will be coloured—to use no stronger a term—by the views of members of the Committee or of the bodies by whom they were nominated. This charge is supported by no reference to the two preliminary reports, published in the *Antiquaries Journal*, the notes in ANTIQUITY or any other publication. The Camelot Research Committee follows a normal procedure. The Director of Excavations is appointed by the Committee and reports to it; his report is formally received and publication agreed to. The reports in the *Antiquaries Journal* were discussed with the Editor by Mr Alcock and myself. The result was reported to the Committee when the report was tabled and publication agreed to without discussion. I have known an *Editor* insist on alterations to a report; I have never heard of a Committee or its members seeking to exercise such a function. In this case, as Chairman of the Committee, I must absolutely reject the idea that such alterations have even been considered.

Professor Thomas dislikes the publicity