

SCHLIEMANN AND THE SO-CALLED 'AGAMEMNON'S MASK'

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The Mycenaean funerary masks

When Schliemann started his excavations at Mycenae, 7 August 1876, no one must have had any premonition that he would discover a new Bronze Age civilization shortly after. It is well-known that Schliemann sought the tombs of Agamemnon and his fellows, and when excavations ended in December of the same year, he thought to have found them inside the Citadel walls, enclosed in the monumental precinct which is now known as Circle A. It is now clear that the five Shaft Graves excavated by Schliemann, dating to the very beginning of the Mycenaean age, had nothing to do with the Homeric heroes since they are much earlier than the Trojan War¹. However, it was inevitable that the profusion of precious goods he found near the corpses in the graves led him, and some other contemporaries, to believe he was right.

* The present research has been carried out jointly by the two authors. However, Elisabetta Pezzi mainly analyzed Schliemann's personality and activity, while Giampaolo Graziadio especially focused on the more specifically archaeological study.

¹ Taking into account the relevant associations, such masks are to be ascribed to the advanced/ later phases of LH I. Indeed, there is wide agreement that the two men burials in Shaft Grave IV belonged to a middle phase of use of Circle A, while the last burials may be assigned to the final phase. The same is true of Shaft Grave V (Graziadio 1991, 433 tab. 4). Therefore, since the burial with the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' is the last in Shaft Grave V, the mask itself may be assigned to a late phase of LH I. According to Dickinson and Matthäus this might belong to a "middle phase", while I. Kilian-Dirlmeier attributed it to the final phase (see Graziadio 1991, 433 table 4 with refs.). In the sequence of the burials with funerary masks in the two Circles, the third burial in Circle B Shaft Grave Γ is no doubt the earliest one and may be assigned to the beginning of LH I since this grave is contemporary with the earliest graves in Circle A, i.e. Shaft Graves II and VI (Graziadio 1991, 432-33; for the antiquity of this grave also see Biesantz 1958, 15; Blegen 1962, 245-46). However, if one considers that the entire period of use of the Shaft Grave (MH III, LH I, and the beginning of LH IIA) is not longer than 100-150 years (Rutter 2001, 135-36 and n. 165 with refs.), the time lag between the earliest masks and the latest ones is very short, whatever absolute chronology one prefers for the LH I period: for the 16th century chronology, see Manning 1988, 20 table 1; for the 17th century chronology, see *ibid.*, 56 table 10; also see Dietz 1991, 316-21 and fig. 93 (1700-1625 BC). If at the end of XIX century it was already evident that "Priam's Treasury" and the Shaft Graves at Mycenae were not contemporaneous (Dickinson 1976, 164-65), the time span between the period of use of the masks and the Troy War can not be indisputably established, since it depends on the various chronological problems also concerning the period of the Homeric destruction of Troy. It is enough to recall here that the chronological range of the War (or Wars) of Troy varies from LH IIIA early to LH IIIC middle, i.e. from 14th to 12th centuries BC: for a recent discussion on the chronology of the Trojan War, see Benzi 2002, 351-55 with refs. Therefore, the Mycenaean Shaft Graves may be considered from over three to over five centuries earlier.

As it has been noted, the five golden masks that he discovered in Grave IV (Schliemann's no. 4) and Grave V (Schliemann's no. 1) are not real funerary masks directly moulded on dead faces, since the gold sheet is too thick², while they were obtained by hammering the sheet on a solid, probably wooden, mould where the facial traits of the dead had been preliminarily cut³; details were added later by means of pointed tools⁴. G. Karo as well as other scholars maintained that the masks were made to reproduce the somatic traits of real people⁵. In an anthropological study E. Fischer suggested that they reproduced individuals of northern race, different from the Creto-Mycenaean and Mediterranean people⁶, but according to a traditional view⁷, there was a local development of the Shaft Grave élite. Even if they were made of relatively heavy gold sheets, the masks were exclusively for funerary use⁸. Schliemann asserted that he had found them on the deceased faces, but the small holes on their sides may also indicate that they might have been fixed to a certain support. According to V. Stais and A. Evans, nails were used to fix the mask to a wooden coffin⁹. However, in Circle B Grave Γ, where the only other Mycenaean mask made of electrum was found, this was behind the deceased's head, although the original place is not clear, but according to the excavator the mask was not fixed to any wooden coffin; the same should be true of other ornaments, such as the gold disks¹⁰. On the other hand, O.T.P.K. Dickinson suggested that some burials in the two Circles were originally covered with shrouds or funerary wrappings, and the masks as well as the so-called breast-plates were fastened to the wrappings, which may explain the extraordinary state of preservation of the "mummy"¹¹. A. Åkerström basically shared Dickinson's view: the shape itself of the masks may prove that the bodies provided with masks were wrapped, since the "flattened edge was made to facilitate the wrapping around the face..."¹². In fact, the "black ashes", found by Schliemann and incorrectly interpreted by him as the remains of funerary pyres, have been identified as the decayed remains of shrouds¹³. A third possibility, already taken into account by G. Karo, is that the

² For example, the weight of the mask MN 624 is 168, 5 gr. (Demakopoulou 1990, 139).

³ Schuchhardt 1891, 226; Blegen 1962, 245.

⁴ Demakopoulou 1990, 139.

⁵ For discussion on this topic see Blegen 1962, 245.

⁶ Fischer 1930.

⁷ Dickinson 1976, 166-67.

⁸ Dickinson 1977, 75.

⁹ See discussion in Evans 1929, 5-6, fig. 2. It is worth noting that in the original photo of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' the nails in the side holes only serve the purpose to fix the mask to the backdrop (*ibid.*, 8). The possibility that wooden coffins and biers were used, especially in Circle A Shaft Graves III (and probably I, IV, and V) was thoroughly discussed by Åkerström 1978, 38-54; also see Hägg, Sieurin 1982, 178-80.

¹⁰ Mylonas 1973, 76, Γ-362, pl. 60: α. For its findspot, see Mylonas 1973, pl. 35: α, β. Masks and disks are not always associated, as shown by Shaft Grave IV where three masks were found, but no disk (Mylonas 1957, 108; Mylonas 1966, 92-93). However, some of the golden ornaments found in Circle A were provided with nails and may therefore have been fastened to wooden coffins (Hägg, Sieurin 1982, 184 and n. 71 with refs.).

¹¹ Dickinson 1977, 72.

¹² Åkerström 1978, 51, 52, fig. 11: 2.

¹³ Åkerström 1978, 40 with refs; Hägg, Sieurin 1982, 179.

masks were directly put on the deceased faces; in such a case the purpose of the holes on the masks was to allow to fix them to the heads by threads or ribbons¹⁴.

Since they were associated to men with wealthy burial goods in the larger and richer tombs¹⁵, funerary masks have been considered unusual status indicators of major symbolic meaning even in the exceptional context of the Shaft Graves, not having any parallel or antecedent in the Aegean Bronze Age¹⁶. They may be reasonably considered "exotic" items probably related to Egypt¹⁷, but they do not provide circumstantial evidence either for a foreign conquest or for the appearance of an intrusive élite at all, since a close continuity with the earlier local background is basically apparent in the context of Shaft Graves culture¹⁸. They may be rather regarded as one of the experimental innovations conceived for the élite distinction, which did not continue in the following periods¹⁹.

The five golden funerary masks as well as most of the famous findings of Schliemann are from the two largest and richest tombs, i.e. Shaft Grave IV (Schliemann's no. 4), where masks MN 253 and MN 254, MN 259 were found, and Shaft Grave V (Schliemann's no. 1), from which masks MN 623 and 624 came²⁰. The social status of the burials is also apparent from differences in the display of wealth in gold among the various Circle A graves. Despite the fact that not all the golden objects were weighted by G. Karo for the complete publication of Circle A finds (1930-1933), it is indeed meaningful that, on the whole, Shaft Grave IV contained 7 kilograms of gold, Shaft Grave V 2300-2400 grams, in contrast to the earliest and poorest graves, II e VI, which contained respectively only 34, 5 e 35, 9 grams of gold²¹.

¹⁴ Karo 1915, 135-38. Evans (1929, 13) did not rule out the possibility that, as suggested by Karo, the mask was fixed to the deceased's head in the first instance, while it was nailed on the coffin on the occasion of the final burial.

¹⁵ Six people out of the 27 skeletons of the identifiable men in the two Circles (Mylonas 1966, 132). Two additional masks with roughly depicted facial traits from Shaft Grave III may be added, but they are part of a gold foil complete thin covering for two children bodies (Karo 1930-33, 62 no. 146 pl. LIII).

¹⁶ Dickinson 1989, 132. Mylonas (1957, 125) also maintained that they may be "an intrusive element" given that they do not have any antecedent in Greece.

¹⁷ In addition to the "mummy" (*infra*, n. 22), according to Mylonas (1966, 90, 132-33) more in general an Egyptian connection should be proved by the "Nilotic" inlaid swords and by the ostrich eggs as well as the funerary masks. Also, Taylour (1964, 224) maintained that the masks recall the funerary Egyptian usage, while Hood (1994, 164) made reference to the Tutankhamon's sarcophagus for the idea of covering the dead with gold. However, Dickinson (1976, 166) noted that both the masks and the stelae might be rather regarded as "locally developed expressions of wealth and pride, possibly inspired by distant rumours of Egyptian practice", and there is no clear evidence of direct communication between Egypt and the Greek Mainland in this period (Hägg, Sieurin 1982, 182 and n. 61 with refs.).

¹⁸ Dickinson 1977, 108; Dickinson 1989, 132. Also see Dickinson 1997; 1999.

¹⁹ Touchais 1989, 114, 121. For a later gold face from Phylakopi, but probably used for a religious purpose, see Van Leuven 1989, 196.

²⁰ Grave IV is 6,55 m. x 4,10 m.; Grave V is 5,77 m. x 2,85 m. For a detailed discussion on Grave V see Åkerström 1978, 48-49. For a list of goods belonging to each burial see Laffineur 1989, 236-37. It is worth noting that the grave dimensions are also indicative of the social status: Wright 1987, 174; for a comparison of the grave dimensions see Graziadio 1991, 410 and n. 52.

²¹ Graziadio 1991, 436. For discussion concerning the relative wealth of Graves IV and V, also see Dickinson 2005, 304 and ns. 21-22.

It is now worth considering Shaft Grave V more in detail, where the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' was found. The mask MN 623 belonged to the northern body, the so-called "mummy"²², which was found in so extraordinarily well preserved conditions that Schliemann arranged to consolidate and reproduce the face by means of an oil painting²³. The mask MN 624, which is generally known as the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask', belonged to the last burial, lying in the southern side of the shaft. Despite the limited variety of his goods in comparison with those of the man wearing the mask MN 623²⁴, the deceased was a very high rank man; he wore a breastplate, an armlet and a necklace, and many weapons and two silver vases can be also attributed to him. Many weapons (60) were also found heaped near the body, thus providing clear evidence of a sort of treasuring, although only a part of them may be ascribed to him since the others probably belonged to the earliest burial.

The debate on the authenticity of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask'

Many scholars have discussed the mask typology, but the most detailed analysis has been carried out by G. Kopcke²⁵, who emphasized evident differences between the mask MN 624 (the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask') and the others: in contrast to the schematic traits of the latter²⁶, the former has an oval face, almond-shaped eyes set close together, straight nose and thin kidney-shaped and nearly undercut ears, thick curly beard and moustache²⁷. G. Karo and, later on, some other scholars also

²² Taking into account many factors such as the embalmment, an ostrich egg, a sword with a "Nilotic" scene, and a wooden box with ivory applications, which were considered indicative of an Egyptian origin of this individual, according to Mylonas (1969, 140) this may be interpreted as the body of a woman, perhaps an Egyptian princess. However, O.T.P.K. Dickinson (1977, 57-58), on the ground of the various reports by Schliemann as well as the association of some swords and a mask to this dead, confirmed this was a man. For additional bibliography concerning the goods of this burial see Laffineur 1989, 237; Graziadio 1991, 435-36 ns. 251-255.

²³ Schliemann 1879, 379 fig. 454. The original painting was found in Schliemann's Album III, published by S. Hood (1960, 62-63, 64); also see Hood 1990, 118-19 and figure on page 117.

²⁴ Dickinson 1977, 49; 2005, 304.

²⁵ Kopcke 1976. Also see *ibid.*, 2 n. 2 for earlier references.

²⁶ It has been repeatedly noted that the conventional mask from Circle B Grave Γ is of archaic character, appearing cruder than the Circle A masks (Mylonas 1966, 102). The flat masks from Grave IV (MN 253 e 254) which were supposedly made by means of the same mould since they only vary in the incised details (Blegen 1962, 244) are equally conventional, and are rather similar to the Circle B example in the brows as well as in the eyebrows. Also Biesantz (1958, 15) regarded them as very similar, and Kopcke (1976, 4-6) discussed them jointly, but it is unclear whether such analogies depend on kinship, chronological identity or simply on the adherence to a standard type (Dickinson 1977, 49). On stylistic grounds, it seems reasonable that they were earlier than the other mask (MN 259) from the same Grave IV. According to some scholars (Biesantz 1958, 16; Blegen 1962, 246), the latter as well as the two masks from Shaft Grave V, being tridimensional, attempted to represent real people. Despite the fact they have some common elements, such as the high, or relatively high, forehead, the neat eyebrows, the straight nose, the thin lips, the high cheekbones, they are different in other important details such as the beard and moustaches in addition to the shape of the eyes, of the mouth, of the lips. The two masks Karo no. 259 (from Grave IV) and no. 623 (from Grave V), which were called "round" by G. Kopcke (Kopcke 1976, 10-12), seem to represent elder men, despite the Mylonas' attempt to interpret the "mummy" as a female body (see *supra*, n. 22).

²⁷ Kopcke 1976, 2, 6-7.

devoted particular attention to the imperial, i.e. the well-formed tuft of beard below the lower lip²⁸. Therefore, the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' seems to represent the visage of a bearded man of power. Noting the shape of his nose, Schliemann stated that he had a Greek physiognomy, and even C.W. Blegen emphasized his "classic Greek profile"²⁹.

Although the topic of the authenticity of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' is well known by many scholars, it is worth examining again the main points of the debate especially in the light of a very recent study by O.T. P. K. Dickinson³⁰. The discussion was opened by W. M. Calder III and D. Traill who stressed the differences between the mask NM 624 and the other Mycenaean masks. They stated that the beard with an imperial and the moustaches with the turned upwards extremities (intended as an indicator of power and authority)³¹ are unattested elsewhere in the Aegean art, while these are shared by nineteenth-century authoritarian German figures such as Bismark, Wilhelm I and Wilhelm II. Moreover, the scholars carried out a circumstantial analysis on the assumption that a tendency towards imposture was deeply rooted in Schliemann's personality³². They demonstrated that some events of his life related by Schliemann himself, as well as his accounts of some archaeological discoveries, were false³³. Also the increasing tendency to narrate his life in a self-supporting style, enriching it with invented episodes, is acknowledged by many scholars³⁴. However, there exist different evaluations of the actual distortion of the truth by Schliemann in relation to Sophia's role as a first-hand witness to the discovery of "Priam's Treasure"³⁵. Calder and Traill asserted that in Schliemann's

²⁸ Karo 1930, 121 sub no. 624 ("eine kleine "Fliege"). Also see Blegen 1962, 246; Kopcke 1976, 9 n. 19; Demakopoulou 1990, 139; Demakopoulou 1999, 57 (where this is compared to the triangular beard of the well-known lion-head rhyton from Grave IV).

²⁹ Schliemann 1879, 394; Blegen 1962, 246.

³⁰ Dickinson 2005.

³¹ Also see Traill 1999b, 186-87, 190.

³² The discussion on Schliemann's personality begun 6 January 1972, when W. M. Calder III pointed out that his biographies were exclusively based on the accounts written by himself on the occasion of the celebration of the 150th anniversary at Mecklenburg (Calder 1972; Turner 1996). According to Traill, the famous episode of the origin of Schliemann's interest in Homeric archaeology was invented by him (Traill 1999b, 218; for an opposite view, however, see Turner 1999, 236).

³³ For example, such is the case of his White House meetings with the American presidents Fillmore and Johnson and his statement to have been a first-hand witness to the destruction of San Francisco by fire in June 1851; for the meetings, as referred by Schliemann, see Ludwig 1933, 80; cf. Weber 1942, 25-26; Calder 1972, 338-339; Chambers 1990, 397. For Schliemann's account of S. Francisco fire, see Ludwig 1933, 81; cf. Weber 1942, 63-65; Traill 1978-79; Chambers 1990, 404. According to H. Duchêne (1996, 26-27), however, his notebook containing such falsifications may be regarded as "no more than an exercise in style, initially not intended for publication". As to the false archaeological accounts concerning Attic inscriptions, see Korres 1975; Traill 1999b, 296-97; for the debated episode of the discovery of the "Cleopatra Head" see Easton 1984b, 198; Schlinder 1986; Bloedow et al. 1989, 148; Traill 1999b, 291-96.

³⁴ See, for example, Dickinson 1976, 159; Easton 1984b, 198; Bloedow et al. 1989, 147; Turner 1996, 236.

³⁵ Traill 1983; 1984; 1988, 231 and n. 22. For the discussion on the date of the discovery of the Priam Treasury from the end of May, according to Schliemann (1884, 57) to the middle of June (Ludwig 1933, 179), also see Easton 1981, 179-81. According to some scholars (Easton 1984a, 144; Easton 1990; Bloedow et al. 1989, 154; Turner 1996, 237), the absence of Sophia at the discovery does not affect the archaeological find *per se*, and the Schliemann's account may be considered the materialization of his desire without any fraudulent purpose.

time there were rumours that Schliemann enriched the "Priam's Treasure" with modern additions and that he did not have any scruples in passing off some forgeries as genuine³⁶. The scholars directed their attention to the interruption of the excavations in November 25 and 26, since Schliemann was then unaccountably away from Mycenae. They suggested that he might have gone to Athens, where a relative of his wife was alleged to have been a goldsmith, in order to obtain the mask, which he might have pretended to have found in Shaft Grave V a few days later. According to Bloedow, however, the explanation for the two days interruption in the excavation might be found in a letter Schliemann addressed to Max Müller, where he refers to some unspecified problems with the Greek competent authority; moreover, he remarks that the golden finds, buttons and disks (also suspected to be pieces of work of the Athenian goldsmith) as a matter of fact, are hardly mentioned in all the excavation reports³⁷. Calder and Traill also regarded the time of the discovery of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' as suspicious. This was a few days earlier than the closing of the excavations, given that the excavations at Troy were similarly closed just after the discovery of "Priam's Treasure". To sum up, in the view of Calder, Schliemann wanted to close the excavations with a sensational finding such as the portrait of a leader, given that the other masks were not worthy of a king. However, Dickinson has recently shown that the burial with this mask (NM 624) was cleared earlier than the northern burial ("the mummy"), which wore the mask NM 623, and only after the clearing of this burial Schliemann's excavations ended³⁸.

Two other eventualities have been considered by Traill³⁹. The suggestion that the mask might have been altered, adding the moustaches with the turned upwards extremities, will be discussed below. The third possibility, namely that the mask is an authentic finding from a later tomb in the Circle A area, is clearly in contrast with the archaeological evidence since no comparable grave was found outside the Circle⁴⁰.

On the opposite hand, K. Demakopoulou as well as other scholars pointed out that no Aegean archaeologist has ever seriously questioned the authenticity of the mask; by contrast, this has been regarded as a genuine Mycenaean creation depicting a true portrait⁴¹ and it has been repeatedly noted that this mask shares some features with the others⁴². Other main objections concern the possibility that Schliemann

³⁶ This appears from a correspondence with Beaurain (June 26/28- July 8, 1873) where Schliemann explored the possibility of having duplicates of finds from the "Priam's Treasure", to be made in Paris; he intended to give the duplicates to the Ottomans, while he had agreed to split the Trojan finds with them (Traill 1986; cf. Bloedow et al. 1989, 150 with refs.).

³⁷ Bloedow 1988, 9-15. Also see Dickinson 2005, 305.

³⁸ Dickinson 2005, 302-303. Also Bloedow (1988, 22 n. 70) suggested that the "mummy" might have been found one day after the discovery of the southern burial.

³⁹ Traill 1999a, 56.

⁴⁰ Traill 1999b, 187-89. Cf. Dickinson 2005, 304-305.

⁴¹ Demakopoulou 1999; indeed, most scholars who have been recently consulted on the question of its authenticity have considered the mask as genuine (Harrington et al. 1999, 59).

⁴² Dickinson in Harrington et al. 1999, 59. Also J. Younger (*ibid.*, 59) pointed out that its eyebrows are striated like those of the two masks from Grave IV, while the sharp line of its nose is comparable to the nose profile of the electrum mask from Shaft Grave B Grave Γ. Lapatin (1999, 58) emphasized that the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' lip has the same outlines as the upper lip of two other masks.

might have obtained such a fake within a few days and put it into Shaft Grave V under the scrutiny of Stamatakis and his team⁴³.

A careful analysis of the various reports by Schliemann leads to the same conclusion. First of all, it is worth discussing the origin of the denomination "Agamemnon's Mask" which in the archaeological literature has been frequently ascribed to Schliemann in relation to the mask NM 624⁴⁴. Schliemann did not ever suggest explicitly that the burial with this mask belonged to Agamemnon. By contrast, O.T.P.K. Dickinson has recently produced good arguments to suggest that Schliemann eagerly thought, at first, that the homeric hero might be identified in the body wearing a mask (NM 623) in the same Shaft Grave V, the so-called "mummy", which was found in exceptionally well preserved conditions⁴⁵. Reference has been frequently made to the text of the telegram (or telegrams) he sent to communicate, *inter alia*, that he called a painter to draw the "mummy". In fact, referring to this burial he asserts: "The corpse very much resembles the image which my imagination formed long ago of wide-ruling Agamemnon"⁴⁶. In fact, there is no trace of the telegram to the Kaiser or to the King of Greece with the phrase "I have gazed on the face of Agamemnon" which some apocryphal source has ascribed to Schliemann⁴⁷. However, in this connection it may be noted that, despite the fact that he paid particular attention to the northern burial ("mummy") with the mask NM 623 both in excavation and publication, it does not appear that Schliemann had a different feeling from his first one for a long time to come, since this was not clearly expressed anywhere else⁴⁸. In the telegram of 28 November 1876 to the King of Greece George, in fact, he looked rather cautious in asserting that he himself had found the graves that the tradition, echoed by Pausanias, ascribes to Agamemnon and his fellows⁴⁹. In our opinion, a passage in Schliemann's biography written by E. Ludwig is also of decisive importance. Schliemann's reply to a contemporaneous scholar is reported there. The scholar had criticized him for

⁴³ Such suggestions have been, in fact, repeatedly questioned by many scholars: Bloedow 1988, 20-21; Bloedow *et al.* 1989, 151-52, 163; Dickinson in Harrington *et al.* 1999, 58; Lapatin 1999, 58; Masson 1995, 595; Dickinson 2005, 305-306.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Matz 1956, 125; Marinatos 1959, 115 (where the breastplate no. 168 = Karo no. 625 is also ascribed to the so-called Agamemnon's body); Blegen 1962, 246; Taylour 1964, 223 (where the apocryphal telegram to the Kaiser is also quoted, see *infra*, n. 47); Luce 1975, 21, *sub* fig. 13; Alsop 1962, 7; Mylonas 1983, 34 *sub* fig. 20. Also see, recently, MacGillivray 2000, 60.

⁴⁵ Dickinson 2005, especially 306. Also see Demakopoulou 1990, 100. However, even Calder and Traill (1986, 238 n. 26) noticed that "it is clear, if rather surprising, that Schliemann regarded the mummy and its unprepossessing mask, rather than the "Agamemnon" mask, as resembling Agamemnon".

⁴⁶ Dickinson (2005, 301-302) carefully discusses both the text of a telegram "to the Minister" quoted by the biographer E. Ludwig (1933, 235-36) and a very similar text of a telegram sent to the Greek press (Calder, Traill 1986, 235 no. 14). However, reference has been frequently made to the latter: also see Dickinson 1976, 164; Demakopoulou 1990, 100; Hood 1990, 118 and n. 13 with refs.; Fitton 1996, 91. For discussion, also see Åkerström 1978, 49-50; Bloedow 1988, 21-22.

⁴⁷ Fitton 1996, 91. According to Traill himself (1999b, 181) this text was a simplistic, popular version of the text of the actual telegrams (see *supra*, n. 46) which was adapted to the "Agamemnon's mask". Also see Dickinson 2005, 302.

⁴⁸ For a review of Schliemann's diary, concerning the 1874-1876 period, also see Åkerström 1978, 42-44.

⁴⁹ Schliemann (1879, 464) reported the text of this telegram, as well as His Majesty's reply.

the claim to have discovered the Agamemnon corpse. Schliemann retorted that he himself never maintained to have found Agamemnon's tomb, while William Gladstone, in his preface to the *Mycenae* book, showed that such a grave was discovered. This is undoubtedly true⁵⁰, and it is worth also stressing that, in his comment to this event, the biographer Ludwig notices that *the world* regarded as true what Schliemann popularized as *possible* [our italics]⁵¹.

Schliemann's attitude to the recognition of Agamemnon's body is also apparent from the way of divulging his own Mycenaean discoveries as widely as possible. His book *Mycenae* promptly followed the end of the excavations and was simultaneously published in London and New York in 1877, and was followed by German (*Mykenae*, Leipzig 1878) and French (*Mycènes*, Paris 1879) translations. Even in Chapter X, which is entirely devoted to prove that there is a relationship between the five tombs and the Royal House of the Pelopids⁵², Schliemann always generically refers to corpses wearing funerary masks, and never tries to identify the single Homeric heroes, though he himself is clearly convinced that the burials belonged to the figures recorded in the epic⁵³.

Therefore, Schliemann's paternity of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' for the mask NM 624 cannot be ascribed to Schliemann directly. Maybe he changed his mind on the identification of Agamemnon's body only by 1889⁵⁴, but he did not make it public⁵⁵. By contrast, at the time of the discovery and publication he might have more clearly suggested such an identification, if he simulated to rediscover the mask NM 624, which would be of the utmost importance for his historical setting.

When was the mask MN 624 baptized as "Agamemnon's Mask"? It is however difficult to come to an answer. From the time of the exceptional discoveries at Mycenae, considerable scepticism on the correspondence between the Homeric heroes and the men buried in the Circle spread throughout the academic world, especially among the German scholars. It is well-known that according to E. Curtius the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' portrays a Byzantine Pantocrator Christ⁵⁶. Since no identification was attempted by Schliemann, this is a likely reason for the absence of expressions such as the 'Agamemnon's Mask' or, more explicitly, 'the mask of the Schliemann's Agamemnon' in the archaeological literature for some decades from

⁵⁰ See Gladstone's considerations on the identification of the "mummy" with the Agamemnon's body in the preface to Schliemann 1879, 28; also see the following discussion *ibid.*, 34-37. For a scientific profile of Gladstone, also concerning his relations with Schliemann, see Vaio 1989, 415-30; also see *ibid.*, 458 and n. 59, for his support to Schliemann's interpretation.

⁵¹ Ludwig 1933, 269, 270.

⁵² Schliemann 1879, 417-31. Despite the criticisms, he did not change his mind in the last phase of his life too (Ludwig 1933, 350-51).

⁵³ Schliemann 1879, 421.

⁵⁴ See Dickinson 2005, 306 and n. 36 where he refers to a private meeting between Schuchhardt and Schliemann himself, mentioned by Traill.

⁵⁵ The potential contradiction between the wealthy "mummy" burial and the southern burial may be the reason for this, as suggested by Dickinson (2005, 306).

⁵⁶ Evans in Ludwig 1933, XXIV; Ludwig 1933, 269; Dickinson 1976, 164. On the other hand, Evans (1929) suggested that the Shaft Grave skeletons belonged to the bodies removed from the Mycenaean tholos tombs.

discovery; at most the mask appears to be attributed to an undefined "prince"⁵⁷. According to our research, the denomination "Agamemnon's Mask" seems to have been firstly imputed to Schliemann in the preliminary study of Shaft Grave finds by G. Karo (1915)⁵⁸, and it was repeated later in the final publication of Circle A (1930-1933)⁵⁹, but, in the archaeological literature, such link more frequently appears since the second half of the XX century⁶⁰.

Literary evidence also shows that, in his own written works, Schliemann never clearly emphasized the stylistic differences between the masks, which he found in Shaft Graves IV, and V⁶¹, nor did he underline the appearance of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' (NM 624), although this is markedly different from all the others. Schliemann's diary of the year 1876, published by D. Traill, ends on 28 november with the report of the excavation of the Shaft Grave T. IV, while the excavations in Shaft Grave V ended the following days⁶². However, we can know the discoveries of those days by reports in Greek newspapers. In his 30 November report, Schliemann just made reference to the discovery of a golden mask of a bearded man of natural size which is "much finer than those found hitherto", and in *Ephemeris* he reported the discovery of a golden mask without any additional detail⁶³. Even Calder and Traill acknowledge that no special emphasis is given to this object in the Schliemann's report on the *Times* of 1 December, where this was simply described as a "large massive gold mask", while Schliemann gave a more careful description of the "mummy"'s body and mask⁶⁴. The same is true of the final report in the *Mycenae* book where he briefly compares the traits of the mask of the southern burial with those of contemporary Greek people, while he asserts once more that the body found in the northern side of Shaft Grave V was marvellously preserved beneath his mask⁶⁵. From this perspective, too, Schliemann's behaviour toward the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' is not consonant with any attempt to make credible suggestions that this mask, which was patently the finest one depicting a man of power, belonged to the supreme chief of the Greeks⁶⁶. It is

⁵⁷ In late nineteenth century books such as Perrot, Chizep 1894, 798-799. The same is true of Matz 1956, *sub* pl. 87. Tsountas and Manatt (1897, 90, 99) did not attribute the mask to specific people, but they noted "there is a rude attempt at real portraiture, but without any great success".

⁵⁸ Karo 1915, 137.

⁵⁹ As noted in Dickinson 2005, 306 n. 37.

⁶⁰ See *infra*, n. 44.

⁶¹ Harrington et al. 1999, 52. However, in the account to *Times*, Schliemann maintained that each mask found in the Shaft Grave IV had a different appearance reproducing the traits of the heroes whose face they covered, but the description of the masks is rather brief (Traill 1999b, 179). As for the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask', even Traill (1999b, 180) acknowledges that Schliemann never stressed its finer appearance than the others.

⁶² See discussion Calder, Traill 1986, 229.

⁶³ Calder, Traill 1986, 232 no. 9, 233 no. 10.

⁶⁴ As noted by Calder and Traill themselves "it is surprising that Schliemann does not comment on the superior quality of this mask". For *Times* report on Grave V excavations see Calder, Traill 1986, 254-56. For the "mummy" discovery as reported by the newspaper *Argolis* see *ibid.*, 232 no. 12. Also see Dickinson 2005, 306.

⁶⁵ Schliemann 1879, 377-78. For the mask of the southern burial description, see *ibid.*, 394.

⁶⁶ Same considerations in Bloedow 1988, 22 n. 72; Witte 1990, 45.

not easy to explain why the *Argolis* reporter in his account of 20 November/2 December strangely denied that this mask had moustaches, but it is however worth noting that in the same report he described the “mummy”’s discovery with many more details and much more astonishment than the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’⁶⁷. K. Lapatin, taking into account the *Argolis* report, considers the possibility that the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ might have been over-restored after discovery, adding moustache or modifying its shape, in order to make it more pleasant, that is “more in line with the expectations of the day”⁶⁸. Well-founded objections have been raised⁶⁹, and it should be also considered that, as shown below, the mask was published by Schliemann before its complete restoration and lacking some important details⁷⁰.

The so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ reproductions

Additional data may be obtained by considering now the iconographic evidence, especially the pictures of the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ published in the decades following its discovery. The first point we do wish to stress is that the earliest picture, included in the final publication of the Mycenae excavations, shows some differences from the original mask in the National Museum at Athens. Like all the other engravings illustrating Schliemann’s book, this is based upon the photographs, which Schliemann took care to have done either in 1876 or before the first half of 1877. The source for the engravings of the book, in fact, may be found among the 284 plates of photographs, which were the work of early Greek photographers, the Romaidis brothers, and were included in Schliemann’s three-volume *Album on excavations*, along with the original plans, water-colours of finds and the oil-painting of the “mummy” from Shaft Grave V⁷¹. Although not all of them were published, the photographs are extremely useful. They give proof that they were taken before most finds were restored and in some cases before they were fully cleaned⁷², in spite of the very active cleaning of some finds which was the cause of the criticisms by C. Newton and J.P. Mahaffy⁷³. As to the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’, its original photograph was published by A. Evans in 1929 in his study on the Shaft Grave, in connection with the discussion on the way of using Mycenaean funerary masks: it still showed the nails in the side holes to fasten the mask to the photographic

⁶⁷ Calder, Traill 1986, 233, cf. reports nos. 11 and 12.

⁶⁸ Lapatin 1999, 59. Also see Traill 1999a, 56; 1999b, 190.

⁶⁹ See Dickinson 2005, 307 with refs.

⁷⁰ Lapatin reports that in the catalogue offering reproductions of Minoan and Mycenaean finds, including the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’, in the early twentieth-century P. Wolters informed potential customers that the objects had been resetted in their original forms (Lapatin 1999, 58).

⁷¹ Schliemann’s *Album* was also examined by the Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro II, in London on Friday, 22 June 1877. This was lost up to 1955 when S. Hood purchased it (Hood 1960; 1990). These photographic negatives are today preserved at the German Archaeological Institute in Athens. It is remarkable that “A large proportion, but by no means all, of these numbers [i.e. numbers added in red pencil against the objects in the *Album* photographs] are identical with the numbers of the illustration published in *Mycenae*” (Hood 1990, 115).

⁷² Hood 1960, 65; 1990, 119.

⁷³ As reported by Dickinson 2005, 307 and n. 46 with refs.

background⁷⁴. One can see that this photograph reflects its uncompleted restoration. There are the moustaches with the turned upwards extremities, but both sides of the mask are straight and vertical, since the pieces above and beneath its ears were still folded inside and were opened later, as clearly appears from the folding marks visible on the mask on display in the National Museum (Fig. 1 left)⁷⁵. The same may be true of the broken plate in the upper right edge, which had still folded up parts in the engraving in Schliemann's book⁷⁶. The engraving in the *Mycenae* publication, being based on this photograph, has the same appearance, of course, but it is striking that Schliemann had this partially restored object published without the particular care, which it deserved.

Such scarce attention for its publication is confirmed by the earliest published pictures of the mask. The engraving as illustrated in Schliemann's book is the archetype for most of the pictures published earlier than 1900⁷⁷. This also appears clearly from the lack of the imperial (i.e. the pointed beard below the lower lip) both on the engraving published by Schliemann and on the various later pictures (Fig. 2), although this is commonly considered a distinctive feature of the mask, a symbol of authority⁷⁸; it is also worth stressing that no description of the imperial can be found in these publications⁷⁹. Such lack of the imperial on the mask representations up to 1915⁸⁰ is probably due to the fact that this detail was not noticed by the engraver who carefully copied the original photograph of the mask. The imperial was, in fact, not clearly visible on the photograph, as results from the picture published by Evans in 1929 (Fig. 2 upper left). As regards the possibility (although unlikely) that the mask was altered during its restoration⁸¹, it is the imperial and *not* the upraised extremities of moustaches, which might be added. In such a case, however, Schliemann would have not been able to arrange to alter the mask, since, as shown above, this was completely restored later than its publication in the *Mycenae* book. When were the golden masks completely restored? It is worth considering the sequence of representations of the "mummy" mask NM no. 623, to which, as repeatedly noted, Schliemann devoted particular attention in all his publications including the final one and which in all probability he firstly considered

⁷⁴ The mask picture in Evans 1929, fig. 2, is in fact derived from "Schliemann's original photograph" (*ibid.*, 8); it is worth noting that there are two nails in the side holes to fix the mask to the backdrop; according to Evans, this is the manner used to fix the mask to a wooden coffin. (also see *supra*, n. 9).

⁷⁵ It is worth noting that in Matz 1956 pl. 87, a side of the beard is still folded inside, but this may be explained when considering that the picture was taken independently (Photo Marburg) from Karo's publication: see *ibid.*, 272 (*sub* T. 87).

⁷⁶ Compare in fact Schliemann 1879, fig. 474; Karo 1930-1933, pl. LII; plate in Demakopoulou 1990, 138.

⁷⁷ See, in fact, Schuchhardt 1891, 253 fig. 254; Perrot, Chipiez 1894, 798 fig. 373; Tsountas, Manatt 1897, 98 fig. 35; Kavvadias 1909, 258 fig. 303.

⁷⁸ See, in fact, Blegen 1962, 246; Demakopoulou 1999.

⁷⁹ The imperial is neither noted nor described by Schliemann (1879, 394, where beard and moustaches are described; Schuchhardt 1891, 257; Perrot, Chipiez 1894, 798-99.

⁸⁰ Cf. Hall 1915, 243 fig. 101, where there is a picture of a "bearded man" (taken from a reproduction in the British Museum: *ibid.*, XX) without any reference to Agamemnon. Note, however, that there is the imperial, while the side parts are still folded inside.

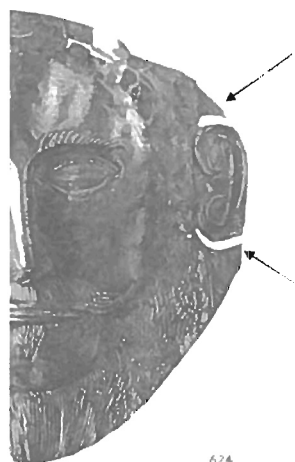
⁸¹ See *supra*, n. 39.



Detail of the original
photograph
in Evans 1929, fig. 2



Detail of the engraving in
Schliemann 1878, fig. 474



Detail of Karo 1930-
1933 pl. LII no. 624

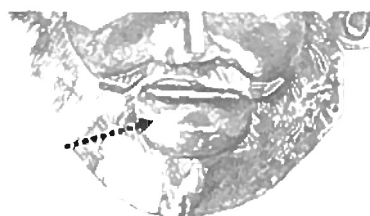
Fig. 1 – A comparison between different reproductions of the right half of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask'.



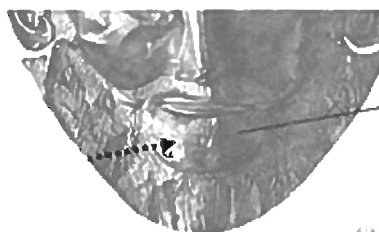
Detail of the
original
photograph in
Evans 1929,
fig. 2



Detail of the
engraving in
Schliemann 1878,
fig. 474



Detail of the engraving
in Perrot, Chipiez 1894,
fig. 373



Detail of Karo 1930-1933
pl. LII no. 624

Fig. 2 – A comparison between different reproductions of the lower half of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask'.

the real "Agamemnon's Mask". The original photograph of this mask, preserved in one of Schliemann's Albums, has been published by S. Hood⁸² (Fig. 3 left). Both in the photograph and in the corresponding engraving in the *Mycenae* book, the mask looks to be still curled up or, at least, to be in a stage prior to the final restoration.

However, it appears already restored on the engraving in the Schuchhardt's book on Schliemann's excavations (1891). Since this representation was derived "from photograph taken in 1889"⁸³, this may be the year "*ante quem*" the restoration of the Mycenaean golden masks was carried out (Fig. 3, right)⁸⁴.

It is well known that Schliemann took care of the implementation of the photographs intended to be the sources for the engravings of his book⁸⁵. However, as many other finds from the Shaft Graves, the golden funerary masks were clearly published hastily, because Schliemann was probably determined to pursue other objectives as soon as possible, being rather full of frenetic anxiety⁸⁶. It has also been stated that, while Schliemann was engaged in the excavations in 1876, he was simultaneously preparing the publication of his book *Mycenae* that he ended in the following year, when he also devoted himself to deliver some lectures in Paris and

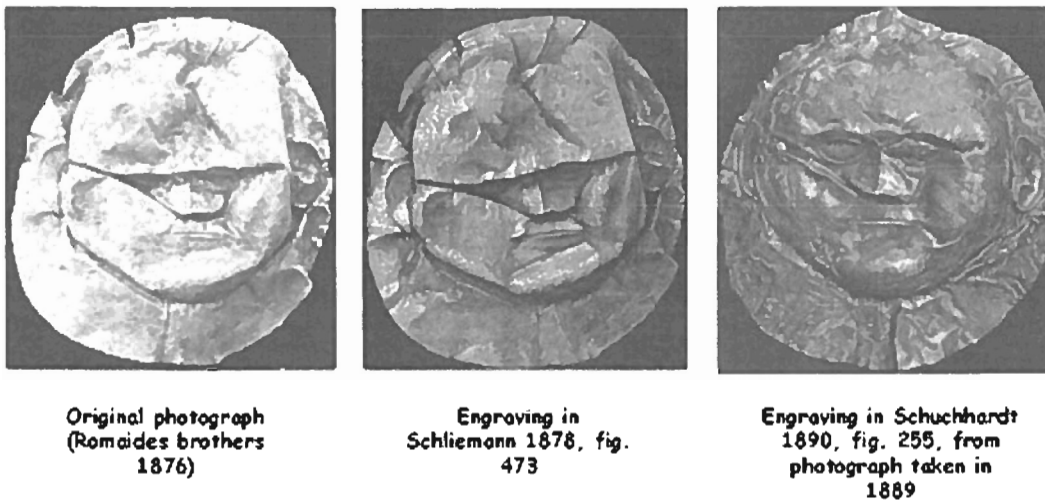


Fig. 3 – A comparison of different reproductions of the "mummy" mask (NM 623).

⁸² For the engraving, see Schliemann 1879, 417 fig. 473. For the original photograph see Hood 1960, 64. Also see, in general, Hood 1990, 116, 118-19.

⁸³ Schuchhardt 1891, 254 fig. 255; also see Perrot, Chipiez 1894, 798 n. 1. For the source of this illustration, see Schuchhardt 1891, XV *sub* no. 255, where this picture is also compared to that illustrating Schliemann's book; by contrast, the source for the picture of the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' is represented by Schliemann 1879, fig. 474 (see Schuchhardt 1891, XV *sub* no. 254).

⁸⁴ However a reproduction of the mask NM 259 was published still curled up, before restoration, but this is a design by Saint-Elme Gautier derived from a photograph of an undetermined period: Perrot, Chipiez 1894, 796 fig. 371.

⁸⁵ Traill 1999b, 182-183.

⁸⁶ For a sort of frenetic anxiety, which characterized this period of his life, see, in fact, Ludwig 1933, 269.

London to popularize his discoveries; in 1878 he was already involved in archaeological research on Ithaca and, in the same year, he resumed the excavations at Troy⁸⁷.

To sum up, it is worth stressing again that, while preparing the final publication, Schliemann not only did not devote any emphasis to the discovery of the mask in the written report, but also did not take care that the object, which would most concur to the identification of Agamemnon's body, was represented in an exact way. By contrast, the most beautiful mask was published before the complete restoration, also lacking the significant detail of the imperial.

The Konya Mask

In the sixties of the last century, a golden mask closely similar to the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' was kept at Konya, in central Anatolia, in the collection of Mr. Aydin Dikmen. Although published in 1965 in *Belleten* by Sedat Alp, this was unnoticed by most scholars, probably as a consequence of the fact that the Turkish archaeological review mainly circulated among the specialists in Anatolian archaeology⁸⁸ (Fig. 4). S. Alp took various hypotheses concerning its authenticity into consideration, but he did not draw any certain conclusions⁸⁹. In fact, information on the finding conditions is ambiguous and dubious. According to the collection owner, the mask was found in a tomb located in an unspecified "impassable mountainous district in central Anatolia". Although S. Alp was led there, the exact findspot was not identified, nor was any object found so as to confirm its authenticity. Nevertheless, the Turkish archaeologist deemed it possible that the Anatolian mask was authentic and closely related to the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask'. Despite the clear affinities in general appearance and style, the two masks are different in size (the Konya example is cm. 12,7 high, while the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' is cm. 26 high); there are also differences in the eyes, since, although similar in shape, they are proportionally larger in the Anatolian mask, and the imperial in the Konya example is crescent shaped. However, despite such differences, the general shape is similar, the cut out ears are alike, and the beard and moustaches are similarly treated.

If the Konya mask is authentic, the main problem is to understand whether this was imported from Mycenae or it was a local product⁹⁰. The first case seems to be unlikely since there is very scarce evidence for trade links between Anatolia and the Mycenaean World. On the whole, there are, in fact, only twelve Hittite imports to the Aegean throughout the whole Late Bronze Age⁹¹. In the Shaft Grave Period only

⁸⁷ For a discussion on the end of Mycenae excavations and the 1878 campaign at Troy, also see Fitton 1996, 94-96.

⁸⁸ A noticeable exception is represented by I.A. Todd (2001, 211) who recently wrote: "A gold mask of very Mycenaean aspect, but smaller than the examples in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, has received less attention than it might".

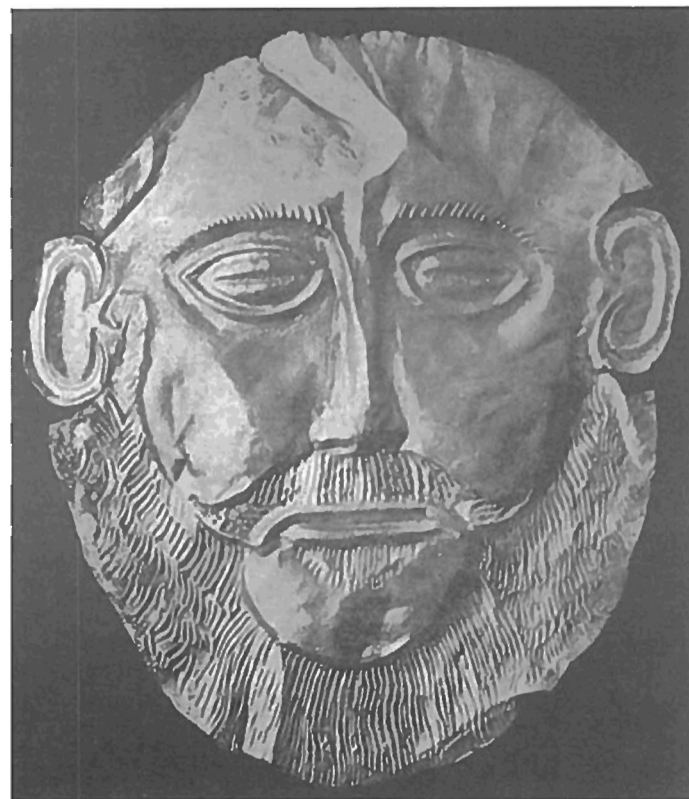
⁸⁹ Alp 1965, 19-20.

⁹⁰ Alp 1965, 22-23.

⁹¹ Todd 2001, 213 with refs.; Cline 1995, 93; the LH IIIA-B kylix stem from Boğazköy (Genz 2004) as well as the Mycenaean sherds found in 2003 at Kuşaklı near Sivas (*ibid.*, 79 n. 25) may also be added. For a discussion on the contacts between the Aegean and the Anatolia, including the Hittite world, see Benzi 2002, 381-85.



Karo pl. LII no. 624



Konya mask

Fig. 4 – A comparison between the so-called 'Agamemnon's Mask' and the Konya mask.

two finds from the Grave IV may be related to Anatolia: the heavy - kg. 2,5 – silver Stag Rhyton (Karo no. 388), of a rather crude manufacture, which, however, has also been considered an heirloom⁹², and a golden pin with an animal representation which has been identified as an “Argali sheep” (*caprovis argali*), i.e. the sheep of Anatolian origin which lives in Central Asia and is also called the “Marco Polo sheep”, as first described by the famous Venetian traveller⁹³. On the Anatolian side, possible evidence for contacts may be only provided by a short Type B sword from Alaca-Höyük⁹⁴ and by another Type B sword from Izmir⁹⁵, but such weapons were also produced later than the Shaft Grave Period, in LH IIIA1 and even later⁹⁶.

If one assumes that the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ was faked by Schliemann, one might suggest that he used Anatolian masks such as the Konya example as a model for the Mycenaean example. Not only it should be pointed out that no comparable items have been so far found elsewhere in Anatolia, but also a more decisive point may be made from the above discussion. In fact, apart from some slight differences, some correspondence between the Konya mask and the original ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ on display in the National Museum at Athens can be identified, precisely on the base of the details suggested in above discussion, i.e. the lateral sides of beard not folded inside, and the presence of the imperial which has been especially highlighted. Therefore, the Turkish mask seems to have more direct links with the fully restored example than with the picture of the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ in Schliemann’s book. Then it is likely that the Konya item was inspired by the so-called ‘Agamemnon’s Mask’ and not the other way round. Taking the doubts on the discovery circumstances into account, it may be reasonable to regard the Turkish mask as the actual fake, produced on commission, using the Mycenaean original as a model.

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⁹² Dickinson 1977, 53, 81; Cline 1995, 104 no. 69; Koehl 1995. The isotopic analysis seems to prove that the rhyton was made of silver of not-Aegean origin, which may be preliminarily regarded as consistent with a provenance from Taurus. However, this may be paralleled in the Third Millennium BC; in such a case the possibility that it is an heirloom, long earlier than the Shaft Grave IV, cannot be ruled out (Stos-Gale, Macdonald 1991, 272, 277-79 figs. 12 a, b). For a contrary view, i.e. the possibility of an Aegean origin, see Laffineur 2005, 56.

⁹³ Cline 1995, 98, no. 13 with refs.

⁹⁴ Benzi 2002, 383 and n. 197 with refs.

⁹⁵ Benzi 2002, 384 and n. 200 with refs.

⁹⁶ Benzi 2002, 361 and n. 74; this is probably the chronology of an “uncanonical” Type B sword from Hattusha which has a cuneiform inscription celebrating the victory by Tudhaliya against a coalition of people from Assuwa (Salvini, Vagnetti 2004).

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