

Damaged Goods

La contextualisation de la destruction intentionnelle d'objets à l'Âge du Bronze en Egée et à Chypre

Atelier international organisé par le groupe de
recherches AegIS (UCL-INCAL-CEMA)

Contextualising Intentional Destruction of Objects in the Bronze Age Aegean and Cyprus

International workshop organized by the Aegean
Interdisciplinary Studies research group

(UCL-INCAL-CEMA)

Première Journée/First Day (Thursday 7 November 2013)

8h30-9h: **Accueil et inscription/Registration**

9h-9h15: Introduction par Jan Driessen, **responsable d'AegIS** (UCL)/Introduction by the heads of the research group AegIS (UCL)

9h15-10h: **John Chapman** (Durham University) Keynote address: *Bits and Pieces: The Fragment as Transformation*

10h-10h40: **Katherine Harrell** (UCL) *Traumatology in the Mycenaean Period and Early Iron Age*

10h40-11h10: *Pause café/Coffee break*

11h10-11h50: **Stratos Nanoglou** (16th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Hellenic Ministry of Culture) *Going the Other Way: Providing a Framework for the Destruction of Objects in the Bronze Age*

11h50-12h30: **Peter Tomkins** (University of Sheffield/Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) *Flattening Objects: Towards a More Fully Relational Understanding of 'Intentional Destruction'*

12h30-13h10: **Notes/comments/discussion** (Chairman: **C. Renfrew**, University of Cambridge)

13h10-14h40: Lunch break

14h40-15h20: Michael Boyd (University of Cambridge)
Destruction and Other Material Acts of Transformation in Mycenaean Funerary Practice

15h20-16h: Carl Knappett (University of Toronto) *The Rough and the Smooth: Care and Carelessness in the Forgetting of Buildings*

16h-16h30: Pause café/Coffee break

16h30-18h: Notes/comments/discussion (Chairman: **C. Renfrew**, University of Cambridge)

18h-21h: Reception

Seconde Journée/Second Day (Friday 8 November 2013)

9h-9h30: **Accueil et inscription/Registration**

9h30-10h10: **Colin Renfrew** (University of Cambridge) *The Special Deposit South at Kavos on Keros: Evidence for Ritual Breakage in the Cycladic Early Bronze Age*

10h10-10h50: **Mario Denti** (Université Rennes 2) *Damaged Greek "Orientalising" Goods in an Indigenous Western Mediterranean Context in the Late Iron Age*

10h50h-11h20: *Pause café/Coffee break*

11h20-12h: **Maria Pantelidou Gofa** (Professor emerita, University of Athens) *Damaged Pottery, Damaged Skulls at the Tsepi, Marathon Cemetery*

12h-12h40: **Giorgos Vavouranakis** (National & Kapodistrian University of Athens) and **Chryssi Bourbou** (28th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Hellenic Ministry of Culture) *Breaking Up the Past: Patterns of Fragmentation in Early and Middle Bronze Age Tholos Tomb Contexts in Crete*

12h40-14h: **Discussion générale et fermeture/General discussion and closure** (Chairman: **J. Chapman**, Durham University)

Présentation de posters/Poster Presentation (Thursday and
Friday, 7-8 November 2013)

Evi Margaritis (University of Cambridge) *Acts of Destruction
and Acts of Preservation? Plants in the Ritual Landscape of
Prehistoric Greece*

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Bits and Pieces: The Fragment as Transformation

John Chapman

In this keynote speech, I hope to achieve three aims: (1) to convince all of you that there was such a social practice as 'deliberate fragmentation' and that it played an important role in societies in many different time-places, including the Aegean Bronze Age; (2) to discuss the relationship between fragmentation and destruction, as well as other key relational terms such as mimesis, defacement and sacrifice; and (3) to problematise the relationship between fragmentation, enchainment and personhood, using Aegean examples.

Part (1): In the first *Fragmentation* book, (2000), I defined five ways of producing broken objects:

- Accidental breakage
- Objects buried because they are broken (*e.g.* Garfinkel 1994)
- Ritual 'killing' of objects (*e.g.* Grinsell 1960; Hamilakis 1998)
- Dispersion to ensure fertility (*e.g.* Bausch 1994)
- Deliberate breakage for re-use in enchainment

In addition to the obvious taphonomic processes that can and do break things, all of these causes can be documented in the past. However, the key point that arises at a certain scale of spatial closure is that none of the first four processes or

practices can explain the absence of parts of the broken thing. For closed contexts, such as graves, the phenomenon of the missing part is a good indication of deliberate object breakage. A methodology has been developed to identify re-fits between fragments of the same object, with re-fits occurring at different spatial scales – in the same pit, between different features on the same site, between adjacent sites and between remote sites (e.g., the 63-km. re-fit!). Inter-site re-fits almost always constitute excellent evidence for deliberate fragmentation. New intra-site ceramic re-fitting methodology developed by Antonio Blanco Gonzalez at Durham incorporates archaeometric evidence to confirm sherds of similar appearance do indeed derive from the same vessel. Large-scale re-fitting studies, as in the Earlier Neolithic of Britain at Kilverstone and Etton, as well as in several Balkan prehistoric sites and in EBA Greece at Keros, have enabled fragmenterists to tell increasingly elaborate narratives about their material culture.

Part (2) Several important terms have been used in the conference abstract, all of which have relational links with deliberate fragmentation. Thus 'deliberate fragmentation' can be contrasted with Harrell's 'full physical destruction' of objects, in which there is no sense of re-use of the broken parts (e.g., broken swords). Neither 'object transformation', leading to the modification of complete objects but with different uses, nor 'object disability', with its complete objects but no

functionality, seems part of deliberate fragmentation. However, 'ritualised destruction' provides a context for deliberate fragmentation practices, not least in the arena of sacrifice, where most sacrifices involve the damage or destruction of the object sacrificed and the consumption of parts of the dead sacrifice. The enchainment of social relations between those consuming and those not would be a classic case of differentiation.

A new avenue for fragmentation studies starts from Taussig's (1993) discussion of the mimetic faculty "to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other." It can be readily appreciated that the fragments of a once-complete object are, in one sense, partial copies...imitations of the other fragments, providing the opportunity to contextualise difference...becoming the Other. Taussig has demonstrated how mimesis grants the copy the power of the original, the representation the power of the represented; indeed, mimesis has the power to represent the world and to falsify, mask and pose. These insights can lead to a more dynamic story of fragmentation practices.

A classic example of defacement is the iconoclasm of art objects, as found in the Mediterranean Iron Age. But defacement magnifies, not destroys, value – drawing the sacred out of the objects especially when they are routinized or social. There is also a link between defacement and mimesis

insofar as defacement can be a kind of mimetic component of sympathetic magic (e.g., in the defacement of effigies).

Part (3) Brittain & Harris (2010) have critiqued the notions that fragmentation and enchainment are a consequence of each other – a universal two-way relationship – as much as that fractal personhood and fragmentation bring each other into existence. One of the responses to this critique is to problematise the notion of 'enchainment', which has been used in fragmentation studies to identify social relations created or developed through the use of objects as synecdoche for wider human encounters. In this section, I draw on a range of Aegean examples to show how 'enchainment' is not always related to deliberate fragmentation in the same way but is an 'umbrella' term which we need to unpack.

Traumatology in the Mycenaean Period and Early Iron Age

Katherine Harrell

The practice of damaging swords in the Mycenaean and Early Iron Age worlds is a consistent activity only in its unpredictability. The methods for damaging blades represent a wide spectrum of methods, including careful bending into L- or S-shapes, or rings, to splitting down the midrib, to other instances of simply damaging the weapon beyond functional use. Moreover the sites at which sword damaging was practiced vary through time, from the southwest Peloponnese in the early Mycenaean period to Athens and Lefkandi in the Early Iron Age. Even within these sites the practice is irregular, with some blades in the same grave unharmed, while others are bent or broken. Damaged swords are always unusual finds, even at sites where the practice took place.

All of these variations lead archaeologists to speculate on the human intentionality that underscore the myriad of decisions that must have been made concerning each sword blade, whether damaged *or* left untouched. It is the aim of this paper to explore the fixation on swords in the Mycenaean and Early Iron Age mind, objects singled out for damage in a way that other mortuary artefacts, such as jewellery or pottery, are not. To highlight this fixation, I adapted C. Renfrew's term *thraumatology* to suit this special artefact category. The long-term yet erratic nature of the practice is not considered to be a

drawback to outlining a theoretical viewpoint of the practice of sword damaging. Instead, this paper will consider the mutability of swords, as objects that have a shifting nature, as its focal point.



Going the Other Way: Providing a Framework for the Destruction of Objects in the Bronze Age

Stratos Nanoglou

The usual reason offered for interpreting an object as intentionally destroyed is that it is destroyed. Almost all arguments in favour of such a practice rely on the ubiquity of fragmented artefacts, sounding very familiar: 'it's too extensive a practice to be fortuitous'. I want to go the other way and turn the question on its head, by asking: when is an object intact? What are the practices that involve intact objects and in what way do they differ from the ones that employ (or result to) fragmented ones? Furthermore, what is the framework within which notions like intact or fragmented make sense? Ultimately, what is the framework that allows concomitant intentions to be formed and supported? I will specifically offer such a framework, going the other way on yet another level, turning to the Neolithic to acquire a sense of the ground on which people built when they addressed the destruction of objects during the Bronze Age.

*Flattening Objects: Towards a More Fully Relational
Understanding of 'Intentional Destruction'*

Peter Tomkins

'Ritually-killed'. 'Deliberately destroyed'. What actually do these terms mean? Beyond taxonomy, what do we gain from their deployment? They seem to imply a permanent disabling of an object's ability to exist in a 'normal' way; a permanent diversion of an object from 'normal' functional usage. However functional diversion encompasses a wider realm of behaviour (e.g. secondary usage); while killing and destruction imply something more – that the object no longer really exists. But manifestly this is not the case: a bent sword is still an object; a broken pot still exists in sherd form. Killing and destruction thus seem rather unhelpful in that they are imprecise, not to mention overly dramatic and distracting. But how then should we describe such behaviours? Manipulation? Transformation? But these are more general terms that include other fields and forms of human-object interaction. Is our category dissolving as we look at it more closely?

By deploying 'ritually killed' or 'deliberately fragmented' we seek to isolate an 'extreme' form of object transformation and separate it from 'normal' human-object relations. By isolating and labelling it people believe they will gain greater purchase upon its meaning, in the best traditions of rationalist thought. However, through this selective process

of purification might there not be connections and meanings that then become obscured or lost? Moreover the isolation of a category within the data is generally accompanied by an analytical expectation (to be tested) that similar generative principles are involved in each instance: in this case that extreme object transformation at different times and in different places occurred for the same or broadly similar reasons? But is this realistic or reductive, useful or decontextualizing? Might there not be more diversity than that? What sort of approach to archaeological materials would be most sensitive to such diversity?

More generally we might observe that terms such as 'ritually killed' and 'deliberately fragmented' speak to an ontology of human existence where human cognition is understood to be internal to the mind and where people act upon external objects (i.e. a 'classical' or 'Cartesian' view where people 'kill' or 'break' objects). In recent decades, however, work in the social and cognitive sciences (e.g. ANT, the 'material turn') has explored how human cognition is also distributed beyond the body and may be sought in the interaction between people and their material worlds. People kill objects, but also objects kill people. Agency is not confined to one or the other, but emerges from the interaction of the two and is distributed along the networks of connections that brought both into existence and interaction (e.g. ANT). And so, if humans and objects are mediating and transforming each

other continually, we might ask ourselves why we have deemed it is useful to isolate a specific, extreme field of human-object interaction as being especially meaningful or indicative of past materialities? Surely all instances of human-object interaction are meaningful. Moreover, it may be argued that more extreme interactions gain their vitality and meaning from their connections to wider webs of relations between people and things. Thus it is thus only by tracing all those relations that 'make a difference' (cf. Latour 2005) that we can hope to gain a sense of the meanings enacted in instances of extreme human-object interaction.

This paper will attempt to explore these ideas further using a number of case studies taken from the author's work on pottery from FN IV-MM contexts on Crete.

*Destruction and Other Material Acts of Transformation in
Mycenaean Funerary Practice*

Michael Boyd

Instances of 'ritual killing', where an object (such as a sword) is intentionally damaged during funerary acts leading to deposition, have long been recognised in Mycenaean tombs. As the preamble to this workshop acknowledges, these acts are transformational in nature. As such, they belong with a wider grouping of transformational acts within the funerary field of action. These acts include other instances of destruction that have not hitherto been widely recognised.

The introduction of an item into the funerary sphere brings about a profound transformation in how it may be perceived. Whether previously unused or projecting a rich biography, the use of the object in funerary rites and its deposition in the tomb transforms it into an object whose most recent association is with funerary acts and the context of the tomb. However an initial act of deposition in the tomb will rarely have been the final instance of use of these objects. Most Mycenaean grave assemblages were rearranged and dissociated several times leading to multiple instances of object use within (or between) tombs.

Within these acts other subsets of intentionally destructive acts may be recognised. Aside from the

deformation of weaponry already mentioned, other physically transformational acts include the crushing of metal objects, breakage of pottery and other items, and the disassembling of composite items (sometimes with concomitant reassembly using components from multiple sources). These actions on material culture are paralleled by seemingly destructive actions on skeletons and grave contexts as a whole, and the construction of new contexts composed of mixed and fragmented skeletal material and objects. Unfortunately, the resulting tomb contexts have been (and continue to be) regularly misconstrued by excavators as a series of formerly pristine burial contexts damaged by looting (or tomb collapse) and thus inherently less worthy of our concern than the imagined, but lost, pristine contexts. The role of meaningful intervention, and its regular occurrence, has thus not been foregrounded in contextual interpretation.

Not all these acts should be reduced to a single motivation relating to transformation. However, transformation through destruction and reconstruction was a strong motivator. This paper will examine this aspect of the larger funerary field of action, aiming to interpret some of the broken and disjointed materials lurking in lists of material inventories, but rarely adequately contextualised.

*The Rough and the Smooth: Care and Carelessness in the
Forgetting of Buildings*

Carl Knappett

In this paper I explore tensions between the perceived instantaneity of human intentionality, and the slowness of material agency. When archaeologists describe 'intentional destruction' or 'ritual killing', they imply human actions directed at materials that are instantaneous: the smashing of a figurine, the burning of a building. These are instances in which even in prehistory one might have some notion of the intentionality underlying human agency. But what of more gradual processes of change, when the agency of materials is more prominent, as houses collapse 'by themselves', or artefacts 'simply' disintegrate? Do such situations really imply an absence of intentionality? If abandonment or disintegration results from a lack of investment in materialities—a kind of carelessness, or even negligence—then is this not also a form of (passive) intentionality? Allowing materialities to take their course can amount to an absence of care—and such absence can be just as wilful as active destruction. I will develop these ideas by drawing on recent work in architectural theory, and archaeological and ethnoarchaeological observations from the Aegean on the temporality of buildings. With many traditional houses in Greek villages, it is about the smooth becoming rough again, as the whitewash peels away to reveal the

underlying stone. Some buildings are forgotten or grow old with care, others without. The aim, then, is to raise questions concerning the loci of agency and intentionality that are of relevance more broadly for studies of material culture and society.



*The Special Deposit South at Kavos on Keros: Evidence for Ritual
Breakage in the Cycladic Early Bronze Age*

Colin Renfrew

Excavations at Kavos on the Cycladic island of Keros, opposite the islet of Dhaskalio, have revealed hundreds of fragments of marble vessels and figurines along with fragmentary pottery and other materials that were clearly deliberately broken before deposition, in the third millennium BC. It is clear that they were not broken at this location, but brought to Keros from other islands in a process of ritual deposition. Kavos on Keros can now be recognised as a sanctuary, a place of ritual congregation, which served the Cycladic islands for several centuries.

Damaged Greek "Orientalising" Goods in an Indigenous Western Mediterranean Context in the Late Iron Age

Mario Denti

One of the most important sites for studying the interaction between Greek and non-Greek peoples during proto-Archaic times is the hill of Incoronata, on the Ionian coastal of the region of Basilicata, southern Italy. An indigenous community (Oenotrians) occupied this hill in the 8th century BC, building structures and producing ceramics in a local workshop. During the 7th century, Greek peoples and artisans from the Aegean settled here and worked in the same *kerameikos* with the indigenous potters, where they created notably splendid "orientalising" painted and decorated ceramics.

The abandonment of the site at the very end of the 7th century BC was highly organized and involved a complex obliteration of all the structures (filled or covered by layers of earth, pebbles, and thousands of ceramic sherds). This obliteration was sanctioned by an articulated series of ritual acts, which included deliberate deposition and fragmentation of ceramics in numerous specially dug pits.

This particularly rich and articulated record offers a useful assemblage for comparison and reflection with other areas of the Mediterranean, allowing us to discuss a number of questions, including: Can we recognise in those actions the

individual agency of a mixed (“Oenotrian-Aegean”) community? Are we able to understand the meaning of the strategy of intentional fragmentation of objects in this particular context? What significance did the Greek pottery shapes and iconography hold for the indigenous people and the Greeks living within this community, and did these values impact the ritual of intentional destruction? Can the ritual destructions of structures and objects guide us in our interpretation of the function of this site (which we cannot as of yet clearly identify)? In the moment of transitioning from “protohistory” to “history” - which our record chronologically crosses – how did protohistorical patterns model behaviours for people in the subsequent era? *E contrario*: are we sure that we can still use those categories (“protohistory” versus “history”) to understand this kind of phenomenon?

Damaged Pottery, Damaged Skulls at the Tsepi, Marathon Cemetery

Maria Pantelidou Gofa

In the Early Bronze Age cemetery at Tsepi, Marathon, some years ago, a large deposit pit full of pottery and small miscellaneous objects were found. An immense number of broken vases, as well as other objects, were thrown in heaps or groups into the pit, filling it to the top. In spite of the prevailing full mess, the content has to be classified as a closed context, which was in use at the Late Chalcolithic for a very short period of time.

The position of the pit in the cemetery, as well as the traces of purification rites that had taken place at the bottom, make clear that the pit was used as deposit for burial offerings. According to detailed indications in the field notebook and the numbers of the groups written on every sherd of the restored vases (approximately 700 vessels), as the mending of the pottery is nearly complete, we have been able to shed light on some phases of the funeral process. All the vases used in the rites were broken in place, then thrown on the ashes of a big fire and finally placed into the pit followed by a violent stoning.

Recent excavations in the cemetery revealed that several graves were used in two successive chronological phases. The earlier graves, being contemporary with the

pottery of the deposit pit, contained remains indicating that a special treatment was paid to the skulls. Frequently the mandible, the lower jaw, is missing. In a single case it was dragged down to the chest. Most peculiar is that of two skeletons, found intact *in situ*, where the lower jaw is completely detached and lies in front or next to the skull. All three cases reveal novel funeral rites, which may have to do with the deceased's journey to the afterlife.

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Breaking Up the Past: Patterns of Fragmentation in Early and Middle Bronze Age Tholos Tomb Contexts in Crete

Giorgos Vavouranakis and Chryssi Bourbou

The end of the Early Bronze Age and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age mark the passage of Crete from Prepalatial kin-based communities to Protopalatial primary state societies. This passage is consequently marked by an intensification of funerary rites, attested both in the introduction of clay coffins, the complex handling of human remains and an increase in the deposition of pottery. The paper argues that such a picture indicates different patterns of intentional and socially meaningful fragmentation, which pertained to the transformation of funerary rites and heralded the wider social changes of the late Prepalatial period. The argument hinges upon the examination of indicative tholos tomb contexts, such as the unpublished tomb B at Apesokari, and the recently published tholos Gamma at Archanes and Moni Odigitria tholos tombs A and B.

The paper contrasts different patterns of fragmentation regarding early Prepalatial, late Prepalatial and Protopalatial human remains and pottery vessels and maps different ways in which dead people and pottery vessels were de(con)structed. The tangibility and physicality of human remains, highlight the dual character of the human body as both material (the science-based analysis of the skeleton), and

historical (as a social construction that is contextually and historically produced). Their manipulation transformed them from dead persons to social artefacts. Thus, they were in accordance with the rest of the deposited artefacts, which also attained their own materiality and their active funerary and wider social role. The late Prepalatial manipulation of both human remains and artefacts may be interpreted as an attempt to fragment the past, de(con)struct and commodify it as an entity through the manipulation of its material remains. Such manipulation was instrumental in the subsequent establishment of the palatial institution in Crete.

Acts of Destruction and Acts of Preservation? Plants in the Ritual Landscape of Prehistoric Greece

Evi Margaritis

How can we interpret finds of charred plant remains in ritual contexts? Are such finds incidental or the result of deliberately destructive and transformative acts?

Recent work on plant remains in archaeological deposits has revolutionised our understanding of fundamental aspects of the past: agriculture, domestication, environmental change, diet, economy and daily life. A key missing element has been the place of ritual: this poster explores the use of plants in ritual and funerary contexts, analysing a completely new source of data for Europe and the Mediterranean: a large dataset of archaeobotanical remains from prehistoric Greece.

Ritual, cult and religion are subjects that have been a focus of Greek archaeology, centring on such aspects as architecture, pottery and other material culture and employing theoretical models, especially concerning mortuary practices. For the Greek Bronze Age, it has been suggested that religious rituals, festivals and major rites of passage commonly involved specific types of feasting and drinking, mainly on the basis of pottery assemblages and more rarely on animal bone evidence. However the new evidence considered here shows that ritual use and deposition of plant material is a more

widespread – and diverse – phenomenon. The limited case studies of plant remains published hitherto in Greece, mainly from funerary contexts, interpret the deposition of the plant remains as offerings, remnants of meals, or in connection with the agricultural year and with memory. The ritual deposits under study for this poster are both funerary and sacrificial and will offer alternative and additional interpretations, highlighting the common element of these contexts: the deposition of *charred* plant remains. This highlights the importance of fire in ritual practices, and suggests the presence of carbonised plants as an act not only of destruction but also as a positive act of preservation through transformation and sacrifice. This poster will show that the importance of transformation and preservation through fire seems to be very strongly embedded in ritual practice through time and space and how the practice of burning and depositing plant material is widespread and deep-rooted not only in Greek prehistory but also later in the Classical periods. It aims to understand the fields of action within which such practices were constituted and how the specific instances under study contribute to a wider understanding of the affordances of burnt destruction and transformation in the reproduction of Greek ritual practice.