

Bronze Tripods from Kourion

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ONE OF THE MOST OFTEN CITED EXAMPLES of continuity between the Late Bronze Age and the Geometric Period in the Aegean area is a distinctive type of bronze tripod, of which a number have been associated with Kourion. The occurrence of yet another example in a dated tomb excavated by the late J. F. Daniel is sufficient reason — especially since the example is an interesting and somewhat problematic one — to call attention to it in a special notice apart from the general publication of the necropolis of Kaloriziki at Kourion. It also gives occasion to provide a critical check-list of the known specimens of this category which may help to put the new member of the group in its proper place.

The piece in question (Plate 1) has the catalogue number K 1088 and is from Tomb 39, assigned to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania where its accession number is 49-12-1053. It consists of a ring, legs, oblique rods and horizontal struts. The ring is decorated horizontally with a moulded leaf pattern comparable to that impressed on the handle of a (clay) jar found in a somewhat earlier context at the neighboring site of Bamboula.¹ The center line, however, consists of a single rib and the leaves are more schematically conceived and placed, rather like grains of wheat. The ring consists of one long strip soldered together at the top of one of the ogival arches formed by oblique rods. The pattern described above appears in positive relief on both the inside and outside of the strip.

There are three cast legs, each terminating in a cloven hoof, but there is no further articulation to suggest that any particular ruminant animal was intended. The legs taper gradually to the top where they are flanked by volutes so that the entire leg suggests basically

¹*The Aegean and the Near East: Studies presented to Hetty Goldman* (Locust Valley 1956) Pl. 8: Fig. 12, B 1432.

an Ionic column. The volutes are in the same relief technique as the ring pattern. It is difficult to be certain at what stage these were joined to the tripod. They could have been cast along with either the ring or the legs (or perhaps neither).² In one instance the leg apparently did not fit smoothly between the volutes so that an amorphous blob of bronze has been clumsily "plastered" over their front and back, largely obscuring them. On the other hand, the oblique rods were almost certainly cast with the legs, from each side of which they diverge like a branch. Where they met at the main ring they were soldered together and the union was sealed with a vertically placed loop which could have received a pendant. Since, however, the tripod is in relatively good condition and no pendants were found, it seems reasonable to assume that none was ever placed in it. The horizontal struts seem likewise to have been cast with the legs. The ends were then soldered to a horizontal center ring which in the sense of design repeats and unites the vertical loops of the oblique rods.

The condition of the bronze is in general good; the surface is lustrous dark brown in color and has been attacked by only a few spots of green disease. One leg and its adjoining struts were poorly and clumsily cast and display not only greatly uneven thickness but a kind of granulated dark green surface. One of the oblique rods became very thin; a section of it is missing but this break may have occurred in antiquity, indeed during manufacture. The same clumsy technique is evident in the manufacture and joining of the horizontal ring to the horizontal struts and in the joining of the oblique rods of the poorly cast leg to the vertical rings they touch. All of this is in marked contrast to the more professional look of the remainder of the workmanship and leads one to wonder whether such clumsiness does not belong to a repair rather than the manufacture of the object. In any case, it must be admitted that the entire piece, though potentially handsome, is marred by a certain warped asymmetry.³

²For a comment on casting technique, see *JHS* 70 (1950) 17.

³The extent of this will be evident in the dimensions:

The diameter of the ring varies between 10 cm. and 10.2 cm.

The height of the tripod varies between 10.5 cm. and 11.2 cm.

The span of the legs varies between 12 cm. and 13.6 cm.

It is not necessary to discuss the context of K 1088 in any detail as there is no complication of any kind in its dating. Tomb 39 was found intact, housing a single cremation burial in an urn and thirty-three grave gifts, mostly pottery. Several plain hemispherical bronze bowls, of a sort and size which might have rested in the tripod, accompanied the burial. Also of interest are a bronze strainer (K 1086) and an iron knife (K 1101.) The pottery allowed the burial to be dated to the Cypro-Geometric IA period, or to the years after 1050 B.C., according to the chronology worked out for the Kourion excavations.

In order to relate K 1088 to other tripods found in the Aegean and Near East areas, and particularly to focus attention on the distribution of these, I have prepared a list based on type and find place, thus both bringing up-to-date and expanding in scope the list of P. Riis in *Acta Archaeologica* 10 (1939) 5ff. (hereafter referred to as Riis, with appropriate numbers from his list; in general I have avoided repeating references given by him unless some comment on them is necessary).

I. ROD TRIPODS

Kourion (No. 1 is only putatively from this site)⁴

1. New York. G. Richter, *Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes* (New York 1915) 345:1180 (hereafter referred to as *GERB*) with three illustrations and references to older literature; Riis, No. 1; G. Richter, *Handbook of the Greek Collection* (Cambridge, Mass. 1953) 17, Pl. 10a; J. du Plat Taylor and others, *Myrtou-Pigadhes* (Oxford 1957) 89 (hereafter referred to as *Pigadhes*). Animal frieze on ring; volutes and leaf design on legs. H: 37.4 cm. There has been considerable variation in the dates suggested. Richter in *GERB*: "not . . . later than about 1300–1200 B.C."; in *Handbook*: "about 1200 B.C. or a little later." Myres, *Cesnola Collection*, 480 "perhaps as early as 1200 B.C." Benton, *BSA* 35 (1934–5) 124: "hardly . . . after 1450 B.C." Riis: not before 1450 B.C.
2. Nicosia, CM Cat. 299. E. Gjerstad, *Studies on Prehistoric Cyprus* (Uppsala 1926) 238:3; Riis, No. 7; P. Dikaios, *Guide to the Cyprus Museum* (Nicosia 1953) 32:139D; *AJA* 58 (1954) Pl. 27:39. Volutes like No. 1 and bull protomes where struts join legs. H:40 cm. This tripod is classified by G. McFadden as Find No. 37 of a tomb at Kaloriziki which I have designated as Tomb

⁴One might also take into account here components of an elaborate bronze vessel generally designated as being part of a cauldron for use on a tripod: W. Lamb, *Greek and Roman Bronzes* (London 1929) 32, Pl. 10a (hereafter referred to as *GRB*). However, the more complete example of a vessel with similar components from Kaloriziki, Tomb 40 (*AJA* 58 [1954] Pl. 21) proved to be a kind of krater.

40 of the series excavated under the auspices of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. In the final publication of this series the absolute date of the context of this tripod is being regarded as 1100–1050 B.C.

3. Nicosia, CM Cat. 310. Gjerstad, *op. cit.* 238:2; Riis, No. 6; *AJA* 58 (1954) Pl. 27:38; *Pigadhes*, 89. Concentric circles on ring; goat protomes on leg. H: 13.5 cm. From same tomb as No. 2.

4. Nicosia, CM 309. Gjerstad, *op. cit.* 238:1; Riis, No. 5, where it is grouped with my Nos. 2–3 (from Tomb 40) as being from Kourion. Since this tripod is neither specifically identified nor commented on by Gjerstad, I do not know where Riis got his information about the provenance. Dr. H. W. Catling kindly writes that there is no evidence to support it. I quote from his letter to supplement the poor illustration which does not facilitate any description beyond a double ring and legs with volutes: "The lower part of each leg is hammered flat and is cloven, perhaps to suggest the cloven hoof of some ruminant." H: 11.5 cm.

5. Philadelphia, UM 49–12–1053. K 1088 from Kaloriziki, Tomb 39. Foliate pattern on ring; volutes. See detailed description in this article. H: 11.6 cm. Cypro-Geometric IA context (thus, 1050 B.C. or slightly later). PLATE 1.

Enkomi

6. London, BM 97.4–1.1571. This is perhaps the piece alluded to by Smith, Walters and Murray, *Excavations in Cyprus* (London 1900) 17 (hereafter referred to as *ExC*) in which case the reference to *ibid.*, Fig. 30:1517 is somewhat misleading; *GRB* 34:6 (Miss Lamb says it was put together too late to be published with the other Enkomi finds); E. H. Hall, *Excavations on Eastern Crete: Vrokastro* (Philadelphia 1914) Pl. 34:3, where it is wrongly identified as BM 97.4–1.1516; Riis, No. 8; E. Gjerstad, *Swedish Cyprus Expedition IV*, Pt. 2 (Stockholm 1948) 149:25 (hereafter referred to as *SCE*); *Opuscula Atheniensia* II (1955) 33: according to H. W. Catling, BM 97.4–1.1571, which is No. 76 of Walters' catalogue (see reference under No. 7), may be either from OT 15 or more likely from the Foundry site. Bands of rope pattern on ring; Ionic volutes on leg. Apparently only one pendant is preserved. H: 43 cm.

7. London, BM 97.4–1.1516. Riis, No. 4. Add the following references: H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman and Etruscan . . . in the British Museum* (London 1899) 5:62; *Jdl* 26 (1911) 288, ". . . Miniatur Dreifuss, der mit einem in einem athenischen Dipylongrab gefundenen, grösseren Dreifuss formell bis in die kleinsten Details übereinstimmt" (on this basis Poulsen dates the Dipylon grave not much later than 1000 B.C.); F. Poulsen, *Dipylongräber* (Leipzig 1905) 29; *Vrokastro*, 132ff. (notice that Pl. 34:3 illustrates BM 97.4–1.1571); B. Schweitzer, *Untersuchungen zur Chronologie der geometrischen Säule Griechenlands I* (Karlsruhe 1917) 39. A confrontation of Walters' description with Poulsen's remarks suggests that the latter not be taken too literally. Ionic volutes and a projecting rim around the ring (*cf.* No. 8). See also n. 7. H: 11.5 cm. The list of contents of OT 58, from which this specimen came, as recorded in *ExC*, 31, suggests a date not

earlier than Late Cypriote IIIA for the tomb; however, since the excavation was not conducted on a stratigraphic basis, no reliance can be placed on this. *N.B.* Unpublished rod tripods from Kokkinokremnos (Larnaca) and in the "Florence Museum" are mentioned by H. W. Catling (for reference, see Nos. 17–20).

Vrokaastro

8. Herakleion. Riis, No. 9. Add reference to *Vrokaastro*, Fig. 80. Plain ring, Ionic volutes and attenuated foot. H: 37.7 cm. Occurs in a tomb with pottery originally described as Sub-Mycenaean or Early Geometric, now more accurately specified as Protogeometric: cf. P. Demargne, *La Crète Dédalique* (Paris 1947) 237 (hereafter referred to as *Crète D.*). T. Dunbabin in *Gnomon* 24 (1952) 195 suggests the possibility of lowering this date a little.

Knossos

9. Herakleion. Riis, No. 11. Plain ring, Ionic volutes, struts and ogival supports like K 1088. Midriff on leg extends to abacus. H: 18 cm. From Grave 3. For dating of context, see Schweitzer, *Untersuchungen* I 39; *Vrokaastro*, 132ff., "fully developed style of geometric pottery"; *BSA* 29 (1927/8), end of Protogeometric period; *Crète D.*, 240, where the possibility of Cretan manufacture is suggested; J. Brock, *Fortetsa* (Cambridge 1957) 22.

10. Herakleion. Riis, No. 10. *JHS* 70 (1950) 17; *Fortetsa*, 22:188, Pls. 13, 138. On ring, two rows of spiral decoration in coiled wire; Ionic volutes and vertical running spirals on legs. H: 17. Brock dates 950–900 B.C., Miss Benton apparently *ca.* 800 B.C.

Tiryms

11. Athens, NM 6229. Riis, No. 3. Rope pattern on ring and legs, which have Ionic volutes. Flattened feet. Pendants: pomegranates (4), birds (4). Bull protome and two ram protomes where struts join legs. H: 34. Preserved is also the bronze basin which sits on the stand (*Jdl* 55 [1930] 132, Fig. 4). Miss Lamb dates tentatively to the tenth century B.C. *Crète D.*, 239: "Il peut dater . . . de l'extrême fin de l'époque mycénienne."

Pnyx, Athens (near Athenian slaughterhouse in plain SW of extreme spur of Pnyx)

12. Athens, NM 7940. Riis, No. 12. Groups of double spirals (bordered by rope design) on ring. Ionic volutes and leaf design on legs. Extra quarter circle supports under struts. H: 45 cm. Also preserved is the handleless bronze basin which sits on the stand (*AM* 18 [1893] Pl. 14). The late Geometric pots NM 2876–2883 (*AM* 18 [1893] 414ff.) accompanied the tripod. Poulsen's date of *ca.* 1000 B.C. for the context (see No. 7) is too early. Miss Benton in *JHS* 70 (1950) 17 suggests tentatively the first half of the eighth century B.C. R. S. Young, *Hesperia Suppl.* II (1939) 48, 74: "late eighth century."

Olympia

13. Olympia(?). GRB 34 and n. 3. *Olympia IV* (A. Furtwängler, *Die Bronzen* [Berlin 1890]) 130: 823–824. Several volutes of rod tripods.

Beth-Shan

14. Jerusalem, Palestine Archaeological Museum. Riis, No. 2. Rope bands on ring and perhaps also on legs. Ionic volutes. H: 33 cm. (information from curator). Date tentatively suggested by excavators: first half of twelfth century B.C.

II. STRUT TRIPODS

Enkomi

15. London, BM. Walters, *Catalogue of Bronzes*, 5:61; *ExC*, 16, Fig. 30; *Jdl* 26 (1911) 232 (where it is described as a simplified form of No. 12); Schweitzer, *Untersuchungen I*, 40. Wavy line on ring. Vertical loops below this for pendants. H: 8.9 cm. From T. 97. Found with a bronze stand (*ExC*, 10, Fig. 18) and "Mycenaean saucers" (apparently discarded by the excavators).

Idalion

16. New York. GERB, 348:1181, with other literature. Add: SCE IV, Pt. 2, 149:26. Karo, *AM* (1920) 129, erroneously refers to this piece as being from Kourion. Horizontal zigzag on ring, vertical ridges and floral designs on legs. Elongated pendants. H: 9.5. Richter ascribes to the Late Mycenaean period.

Myrtou-Pigadhes: the date suggested by H. W. Catling for these specimens is 1250–1200 B.C.

17. Nicosia, CM. *Pigadhes*, 88:416. Plain ring and legs. Three pendants. H: 6.5 cm.

18. Nicosia, CM. *Pigadhes*, 88:417. Concentric circles on ring, legs plain. The feet are apparently elaborate stylizations of animal claws. H: 8.2 cm.

19. Nicosia, CM. *Pigadhes*, 88:418. Horizontal zigzag on rim. Two pairs of converging relief lines on legs. H: 9.9 cm.

Amathus

20. Nicosia, CM. *Pigadhes*, 89.

Ras Shamra

21. Damascus. Riis, No. 9. C. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica III* (Paris 1956) 267, Fig. 232. Ridge in center of ring, which has a flat rim. Legs have three metallic ridges and taper markedly to panthers' claws which rest on raised struts joining in a rosette. Fifteen vertical loops on underside of ring for pendants of two different types. H: 12 cm. Schaeffer (*op. cit.* 255) dates the deposit in which this tripod was found to the fourteenth century B.C.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

BRONZE ROD TRIPOD FROM KOURION, *ca.* 1050 B.C.

(Photos by Linda Benson)

PLATE 2 BENSON

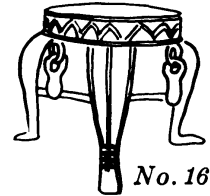
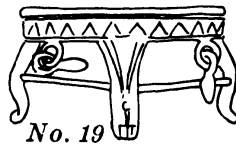
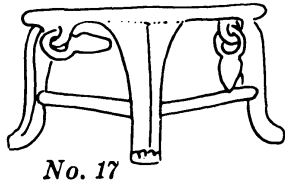
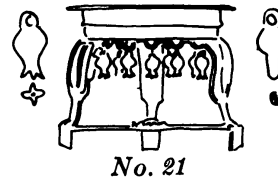
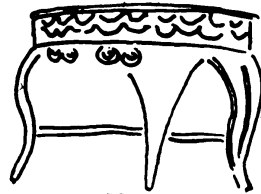
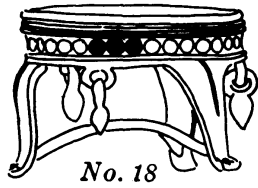


Figure 5. Strut Tripods

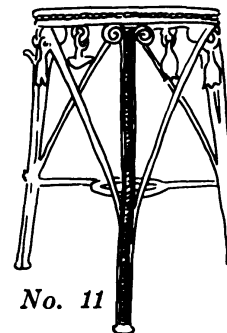
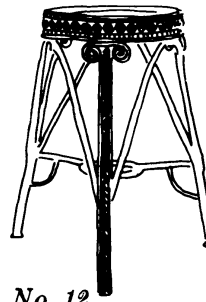
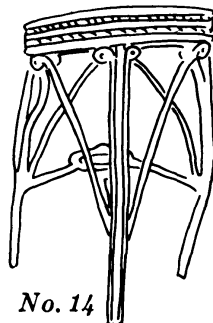
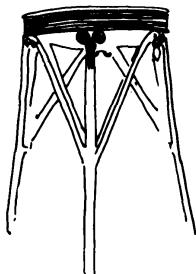
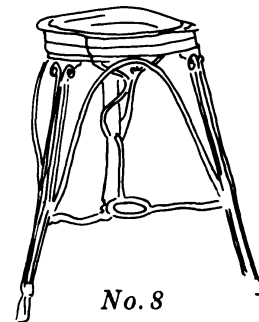
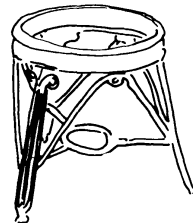
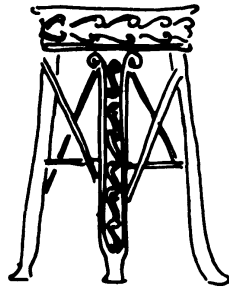
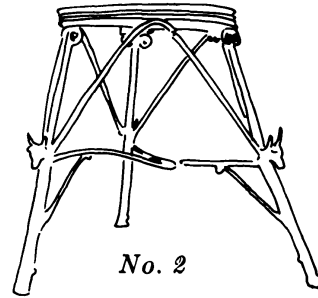
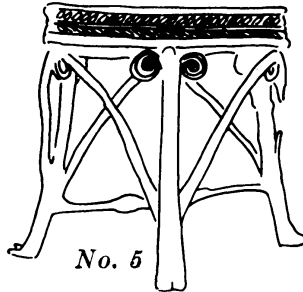
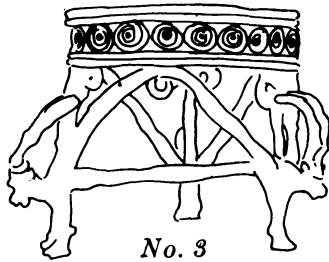


Figure 6. Rod Tripods

SKETCHES OF STRUT AND ROD TRIPODS
(Sketches not to uniform scale)

Among scholars who have recently dealt with this subject Gjerstad,⁵ following Riis, accepts Cyprus or the Cypro-Syrian area as the original home of the rod tripod and assumes that those rod tripods found in Greece and Crete, being of the same type, are imports from Cyprus. These are then cited again and again as evidence of commercial or cultural contact between Greece and Cyprus during the Protogeometric and earlier Geometric period, although they admittedly stand alone so far.⁶ This is, in fact, the customary interpretation found in archaeological literature;⁷ several scholars, including Gjerstad, have, however, made the suggestion that at least some of the tripods found in Crete may be local imitations.⁸

If it is at all possible to make a contribution to the subject at this stage, that contribution must consist in an attempt to bring into sharper focus, on the basis of the assured chronology of various Kourion pieces and of whatever stylistic analysis is possible, a picture which is generally painted in rather sweeping terms, as can be seen from the summary above.

It is logical to begin with the strut tripods as being the older type. From the table presented immediately below (see also Plate 2) it is clear that we may ascribe to them origin and use in the Late Bronze Age. Here is obviously an oriental miniature type which apparently did not ever reach the Greek world; the question of its survival into Geometric times must await publication of No. 20. Place of manufacture, whether Cyprus or Syria, cannot be decided as of now but is relatively unimportant.

Group A

No.	FIND PLACE	HEIGHT	TYPE OF FOOT	DATE OF CONTEXT
15.	Enkomi	8.9 cm.	plain termination?	Late Cypriote II-III
16.	Idalion	9.5 cm.	claws	Late Bronze
17.	Pigadhes	6.5 cm.	claws	1250-1200 B.C.
18.	Pigadhes	8.2 cm.	claws	1250-1200 B.C.
19.	Pigadhes	9.9 cm.	claws (?)	1250-1200 B.C.
21.	Ras Shamra	12.0 cm.	claws	1400-1300 B.C.

⁵*SCE* IV 403. I use the terms 'rod tripod' and 'strut tripod' as H. W. Catling, *Pigadhes*, 89, ⁶*Ibid.*, 417, 420, 447.

⁷*Cf.*, e.g., *GRB*, 32; *BSA* 35 (1934/5) 124.

⁸*SCE* IV 403; *GRB*, 32, n. 3. Demargne (*Crète* D, 240) seems to suggest survival in Crete of a Mycenaean tradition as the explanation of the examples found there.

The rod tripods do not present such a unified picture and have so far not been well dated. It is just at this point that the Kourion evidence is valuable. No. 3 with a *terminus ante quem* of 1050 B.C. and No. 5 with a *terminus ante quem* of perhaps 1000 B.C. are extremely reminiscent in their size, squat proportions and use of animal feet (which are now hooves rather than claws) of the earlier strut tripods (see Plate 2 and list below).⁹ It would appear likewise that the pendants for which loops are always provided on the rod tripods were derived from the strut type.

Group B

No.	FIND PLACE	HEIGHT	TYPE OF FOOT	DATE OF CONTEXT	SPECIAL FEATURES
3.	Kourion, NT 40	13.5 cm.	hooves	1100-1050 B.C.	goat protomes
4.	uncertain	11.5 cm.	cloven	—	—
5.	Kourion, NT 39	11.6 cm.	hooves	1050-1000 B.C.	—
7.	Enkomi, OT 58	11.5 cm.	rounded	Late Cypriote IIIA?	—

On the basis of these factors it seems possible to consider the rod tripod, at least tentatively, as an evolved form of the strut tripod with a distinct tendency toward Mycenaean decorative features. At the time concerned, such an evolution could perhaps have occurred more easily in Cyprus, in view of the Greek colonists there, than on the Syro-Palestinian littoral. Again, however, there is no really decisive criterion for deciding this point. Furthermore, the problem is complicated by the appearance at Kourion of No. 2 simultaneously with No. 3. Although with the same hooves, Ionic volutes and protomes (though of bulls rather than of goats), No. 2 is both a more monumental and a more graceful version of the rod tripod. If there was an evolution, the large and the small type must have emerged simultaneously, or nearly so. On the basis of time lag in tombs one might rather easily push this event back somewhat into the twelfth century B.C. In any case, it seems reasonable to associate No. 1, if it is from Kourion, with the group just discussed; even if it is not, stylistic correspondence is striking enough to ensure the association: several commentators have arrived at a dating only slightly higher on a purely arbitrary basis.

⁹No. 7, on which little information is available, has been tentatively ranged with Nos. 3 and 5 as being of the same type. Dr. H. W. Catling kindly informs me that "the legs have no true feet; they curve outwards at their lower end, and are rounded off at their extremities."

We are now obliged to deal with Nos. 6 and 14, from Enkomi and Beth-Shan respectively. These two form a unit and a new departure: in comparison with the Kourion group they are much simplified in their decoration. Notice particularly the squared feet, simple rings and lack of protomes. Unfortunately, the date of each is rather uncertain. The excavators of No. 14 suggested the early twelfth century B.C. On the basis of the Kourion group it does not seem rash to suggest the later rather than the earlier part of this century; be that as it may, we seem to have here a third roughly contemporary version of the rod tripod. It is no longer difficult to suggest that the invention of the rod tripod was accomplished to the accompaniment of experimentation with types. It is perhaps not insignificant that the square foot unite Nos. 6 and 14 with several tripods found on Greek soil.¹⁰ It is a natural, but I think not inevitable, conclusion that all this experimentation went on in the Levant. If the square-footed type should be a mainland version of the Levantine type, then the find place of Nos. 6 and 14 could be explained, if not by commerce, at least by the movements of people.

Group C

No.	FIND PLACE	HEIGHT	TYPE OF FOOT	DATE OF CONTEXT
6.	Enkomi	43 cm.	squared	Late Cypriote IIIA/B?
11.	Tiryns	34 cm.	squared	Sub-Mycenaean?
12.	Pnyx	45 cm.	squared	800–700 B.C.?
14.	Beth-Shan	33 cm.	squared	Twelfth century B.C.

It has already been suggested that the group of tripods found in Crete might be of local manufacture. These specimens are related formally by a very similar type of foot which looks as if it might have originated as a stylization of the animal foot; it can be described as attenuated. Certainly all of these tripods appear to be of roughly the same period, the tenth century B.C., and are thus a little later than the Kourion group.

¹⁰The date of the context of No. 11 is uncertain; the contextual date of No. 12 is much later than one might expect. Nevertheless, it seems logical to me to suppose that No. 12 originated in the general epoch when the others of its class were made. I am uncertain how the fragments found at Olympia (No. 13) are related to the other examples found in Greece.

Group D

No.	FIND PLACE	HEIGHT	TYPE OF FOOT	DATE
8.	Vrokastro	37.7 cm.	attenuated	Protogeometric
9.	Knossos	18 cm.	attenuated	Protogeometric
10.	Knossos	17 cm.	attenuated	950–900 B.C.

To summarize the results of this investigation, which should be taken as a progress report rather than as laying claim to any finality:¹¹ the so-called Cypriote type of rod tripod is a phenomenon of the twelfth to tenth centuries B.C.; it is, in effect, a later version of the strut tripod; its origin, but not necessarily all the manifestations of its development, is to be sought in the Levant. Thus, in the decoration of a striking type of funerary or cult object, we are confronted with the efflorescence throughout the Greek world of the Mycenaean spirit during the critical period of transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Geometric Period. It is sometimes assumed that this is not remarkable if the phenomenon occurred in Cyprus, since the Mycenaean culture is supposed to have “survived” longer there.¹² But a close study of the pottery and artifacts of the Transitional and Geometric Periods in Cyprus would show that a relentless evolution and metamorphosis went on there as elsewhere. True, many elements of Mycenaean civilization were integrated into the new culture there just as they were in the whole Greek world. But the flourishing of objects so overtly Mycenaean in spirit as these is as significant a phenomenon against the general Cypriote background as it is on the Cretan and mainland scene. It is a reflection of the fact that during the so-called “Dark Ages” there was, in some phases of life at least, a strong sense of continuity between past and present.

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¹¹On this basis I have not attempted to discuss the related problem of the so-called stands of which several have been found in Cyprus.

¹²See, e.g., *GRB*, 32.