

Introduction

PROJECT BACKGROUND

'What has dominated the interest and energies of archaeologists in the (re)construction of prehistoric life has been what goes beyond the household: for example, the corporate production of surplus goods, exchange and alliance on a regional and inter-regional scale, the struggle of humans to control the environment, the hierarchies and dominance structures between settlements. This is surprising in view of the pretensions of the discipline to be a social science.' (Tringham 1991: 99)

'[A]rchaeology is a social science, yet people are rarely identified in archaeological writing.' (Bolger 2003: 1)

The following is a study of gaming stones in Bronze Age Cyprus. My aim is to locate these artefacts within their social and cultural setting, specifically to determine their purpose and function in relation to the archaeological record. This dissertation aims to people the past and thus remove what Tringham (1991) has termed the 'faceless blobs' of prehistory. The discipline of archaeology is primarily concerned with people; however, throughout its history this fundamental aspect has often been ignored or dismissed. I hope to reinstate awareness of this seminal attribute through a study of material culture which moves away from static processual models and beyond post processual concepts to a middle ground in which methodologies and practices from contemporary social theory can be used together to determine a fuller understanding of our past.

It is anticipated that a study which focuses on a specific aspect of material culture will demonstrate human agency and social interaction. The gaming stones have this potential as objects highly imbued with social meaning. Agency and action are obvious in their physical and symbolic make up despite their many possibilities for purpose and function in Late Bronze Age Cypriot society. In this way they may help to relocate the faces of the past and remove the anonymous images of ancient societies so often depicted by the discipline of archaeology.

Throughout this dissertation the primary focus is the inland site of Arediou-Vouppes (grid reference 519015/3878700), interpreted as a LBA agricultural production settlement

located at the foothills of the Troodos Massif, Cyprus. During the course of four seasons of survey and excavation a total of eight ¹ gaming stones have been discovered from within varying contexts across the site.

Originally identified in 1993 by the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project, directed by Bernard Knapp and Michael Given, the site was named *Arediou-Vouppes* after the 1923 Cadastral Map in which *Vouppes* referred to the field system below in the bed of the Aloupos river valley which runs along the eastern parameter of the site (Fig. 1). However, in the local nomenclature the area of fields which make up the site are known as *Lithosouros*, meaning Mound of Stones ². As often the case within local dialogue, this is an obviously appropriate name and reason for its choosing can immediately be found in the sites appearance; its entire surface is littered with stones, rocks and small boulders, often having spilled over from the old field boundaries which delineate the surrounding area and cross the site at random intervals.



Figure 1: View of Arediou-Vouppes from the west bank of the Aloupos River. (Rod Millard)

¹ The seventh gaming stone was located in a field boundary separating Fields 3 and 4, during a brief visit to the site in April 2008. It is currently awaiting cataloguing and recording. The eighth gaming stone was discovered by Papa Pedros, the priest of Arediou. Details as to the size, shape and type of this gaming stone are unknown and it is not included in the recorded finds from the site.

² Although it would be preferable to adopt this local name, a number of publications already use the name *Arediou-Vouppes* and the finds already registered in the Cyprus Museum, Nicosia are too numerable to alter at this stage. Therefore the name used for the duration of this dissertation is that given the site by SCSP in 1993.

Many of the material remains which constitute the LBA occupational debris consist of ground stone tools and ground stone objects, thus demonstrating that stone has never been a scarce resource in the sites immediate surroundings. I have therefore chosen this specific item of material culture, the gaming stones, as they are relatively common on the site and made from an abundant resource, but do not constitute the majority of settlement debris and still hold a mysterious position in the archaeological record. Their existence on other Cypriot BA sites provides good material for comparison in this study and suggests that although their deeper significance in BA Cypriot society remains elusive ‘it is clear that the gaming stones of *Vouppes* belong to an ancient and persistent cultural tradition on the island, one which in the Late Bronze Age incorporated both the rural hinterland and the urban centres.’ (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press)

Chapter 1

AREDIYOU AND THE MOUND OF STONES

AREDIYOU-VOUPPES (LITHOSOUIROS): A CYPRIOT LATE BRONZE AGE PRODUCTION SETTLEMENT

The site of Arediou-Vouppes, otherwise known as *Lithosouros*³, is situated approximately 1km from the village of Arediou, in the northern foothills of the Troodos Massif (Steel and Janes 2005; Steel 2005, 2006, 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press) (Fig. 2). Initial discovery and investigation were made during the 1980s by the Department of Antiquities under the direction of Dr. Maria Hadjicosti. At this time agricultural buildings were being constructed in the northern section of the site, the foundations of which were consequently excavated (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). However, in 1993 it was SCSP (Knapp, Held, Johnson and Keswani 1994; Given 2002; Given and Knapp 2003; Steel and Janes 2005), who identified the site as a LBA production settlement of the 13th century BCE, working to provide agricultural surplus to support the nearby copper mining industry (Knapp *et. al.* 1994: 337-338; Webb and Frankel 1994; Knapp 1997a: 48-52; Knapp 2003; Keswani and Knapp 2003; Given, Knapp, Meyer, Gregory, Kassianidou, Stratton Noller, Wells, Urwin and Wright 1999; Given 2002; Given and Knapp 2003; Steel and Janes 2005; Steel 2005; Steel 2006, 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). This would then support notions of centralised control in terms of agricultural production in inland Cyprus during the LBA (Given *et. al.* 1999; Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press).

³ As seen in the introduction, the site's local name of *Lithosouros* is immediately understood upon visiting Arediou-Vouppes as its entire surface is scattered with stones and large river pebbles having spilt over from the old field boundaries; ground stone tools are also often found amongst this surface debris. Therefore the name certainly does 'reflects the present topography of the site.' (Steel and Thomas In Press)

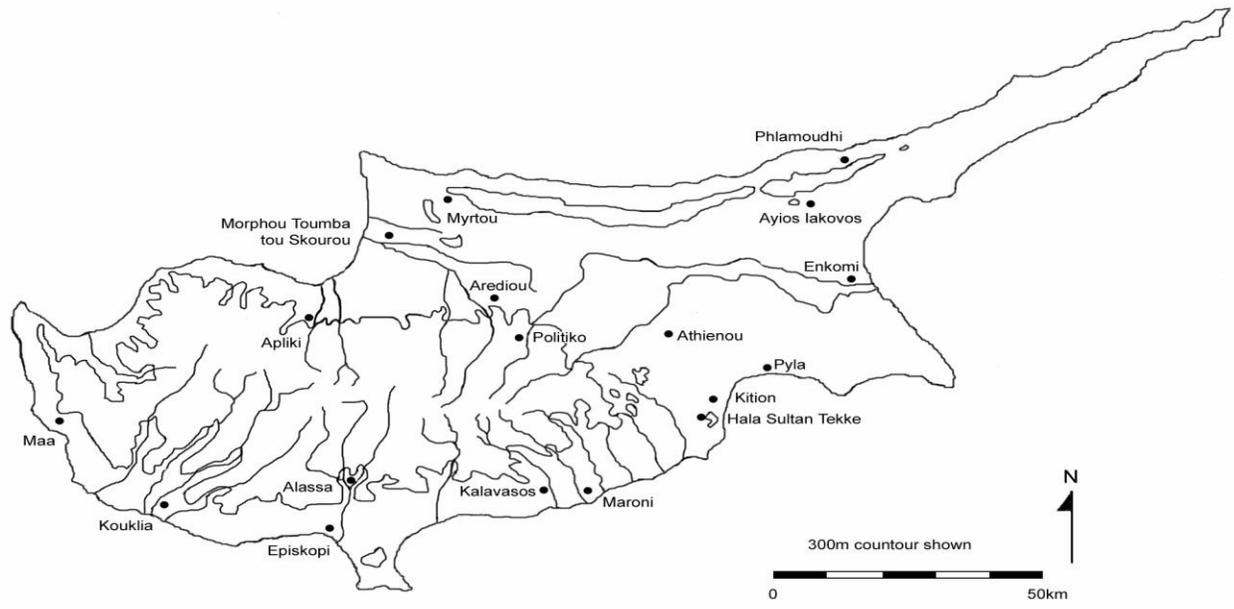


Figure 2: Map of Cyprus showing sites mentioned in text.

Following SCSP’s work at the site, four seasons of detailed survey and excavation have been carried out under the direction of Dr. Louise Steel (Steel and Janes 2005; Steel 2006, 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press). This ongoing work aims to broaden the understanding of inland Cypriot LBA settlement patterns in relation to their material remains and inter/intra island relations, moving away from traditional coastal orientated studies of LBA urban centres and towards the everyday aspects of the inland communities of the period. Currently the site ‘forms the lynchpin in the development of political-economic models based on the island’s settlement hierarchy.’ (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press)

Traditionally settlement models such as Catling's (1962) tripartite system, later revised by Knapp (1997a, 1997b) to include a fourth category⁴, have been appropriated when discussing social settlement patterns and socio-political organisation during the second millennium BC in Cyprus. However, such approaches largely rely on the comparison of information collected from the extensive investigation of large urban coastal centres in relation to the scarce examples of material recovered from regional survey on inland settlements (Catling 1962; Given and Knapp 2003). Indeed, as Steel and Thomas (In Press) stress in this instance:

[W]hile the LC period is characterised by an expansion in settlement throughout the island and diversified use of the Cypriot landscape, our understanding of this period is largely derived from excavations of a small number of the coastal towns such as Enkomi (Courtois *et. al.* 1986) and Kalavastos *Ayios Dhimitrios* (South *et. al.* 1989); meanwhile the current state of knowledge of the Cypriot interior during this period is very limited and largely dependant on survey material.

Arediou-*Vouppes* is situated on an alluvial terrace of limestone, sandstone and conglomerate, along the eastern banks of the Aloupos drainage system, at the interface of the sedimentary rocks of the Mesaoria Plain and the pillow lavas of the northern foothills of the Troodos (Steel and Janes 2005; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). SCSP based

⁴ Catling's (1962: 142-3) original settlement pattern for the period was based on three main settlement types: (1) coastal urban centres, situated most commonly along the southern coast of the island; (2) inland agricultural settlements, and (3) copper producing centres, located largely in the 'metalliferous zone' of the Troodos massif (Catling 1962: 142-3; Steel 2004: 156). Knapp (1997a: 56-61, 1997b: 156-8) revised this system, suggesting a fourth category of settlement type be included into the hierarchy. He divided this model as follows: (1) primary coastal centres, those sites previously referred to as the main urban centres; (2) secondary inland centres, with the capability to store goods and carry out administrative organisation; (3) tertiary inland centres; and (4) specialised economic sites, used for the production of agricultural goods, pottery and/or metallurgical procurement (Knapp 1997a: 56-61, 1997b: 156-8). Sites such as Enkomi, Morphou-*Toumba tou Skourou*, Hala Sultan Tekke, and Kourion-*Bamboula* are examples of the major coastal urban centres, which Knapp (1997a: 56) argues became highly important in the islands political and economic elite as early as the MC III-LC I transition (Knapp 1997a: 56; Steel 2004: 156). This group of coastal urban centres later grew along the southern coast to include sites such as Kalavastos-*Ayios Dhimitrios*, Maroni, Alassa and Palaepaphos (Steel 2004: 157). Sites linked to categories (2) and (3) of Knapp's (1997a, 1997b) four part settlement model include what he has termed as those sites with a religious or possibly ceremonial function (Knapp 1997a). Examples are Athienou, Myrtou-*Pigadhes* and Ayios Iakovos, although this third site does not appear to fit the model as well (Webb 1992: 94-6; Steel 2004: 157). Sites associated with the fourth category may include those smaller, specialist production centres such as Apliki and Politiko-*Phorades* (du Plat Taylor 1952; Knapp, Kassianidou and Donnelly 1999), Sanidha-*Moutti tou Ayiou Serkou* and Analiondas (Webb and Frankel 1994), Arediou-*Vouppes* (Steel 2004, 2006, 2007; Steel and Janes 2005; Steel and Thomas 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press) and perhaps Ayia Irini (Gjerstad, Lindros, Sjöqvist and Westholm 1935).

their original interpretations on surface scatters of pottery and lithic artefacts (pithos sherds from storage jars and large quantities of ground stone tools), consequently dating the site to the 13th century BCE as previously seen (Given and Knapp 2003: 179-82; Steel and Janes 2005; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). As a result it was concluded that *Arediou-Vouppes* had functioned primarily as a subsidiary production site for nearby copper mining areas such Mitsero, Agrokippa (Steel and Thomas In Press) and the LC I site of Politiko-*Phorades* (Given *et. al.* 1999: 35; Given 2002; Given and Knapp 2003; Knapp 1997a: 48-52; Knapp 2003; Knapp and Given 1996; Knapp *et. al.* 1994: 337-338; Keswani and Knapp 2003; Steel and Janes 2005, Steel 2006, 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press), which in turn might also indicate possible socio-political relationships with the coastal urban centres (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press). As Given *et. al.* (1999: 35) notes:

Such mining site in agriculturally unproductive areas would need a system of agricultural support villages, such as that at *Aredhiou-Vouppes* (SCY010), to provide the necessary food surplus (Knapp *et. al.* 1994: 337-338; Knapp 1997: 48-52; Webb and Frankel 1994)

The region offers much evidence to indicate metallurgical activity during antiquity, however, as Knapp, Kassianidou and Donnelly (2002) and Given and Knapp (2003) note, evidence for LBA settlement in the area is lacking (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). Therefore, as seen above, *Arediou-Vouppes* offers significant information for Cypriot LBA settlement models and modes of communication.

Located on privately owned agricultural land, the site was originally thought by SCSP to cover an area of approximately 2 hectares (Steel and Janes 2005); however, work carried out by Steel, including the comparison of the results from the 2004 survey, the geophysical findings, and discussion with local inhabitants who work the land, has demonstrated that it may well spread over a much larger area (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press). Estimates now stand at approximately 10 hectares (Steel and Thomas In Press). This has also provided information to suggest greater time depth in the north

east of the site where ‘a discrete group of LC 1 (16th century BC) pottery was located.’ (Steel and Thomas In Press).

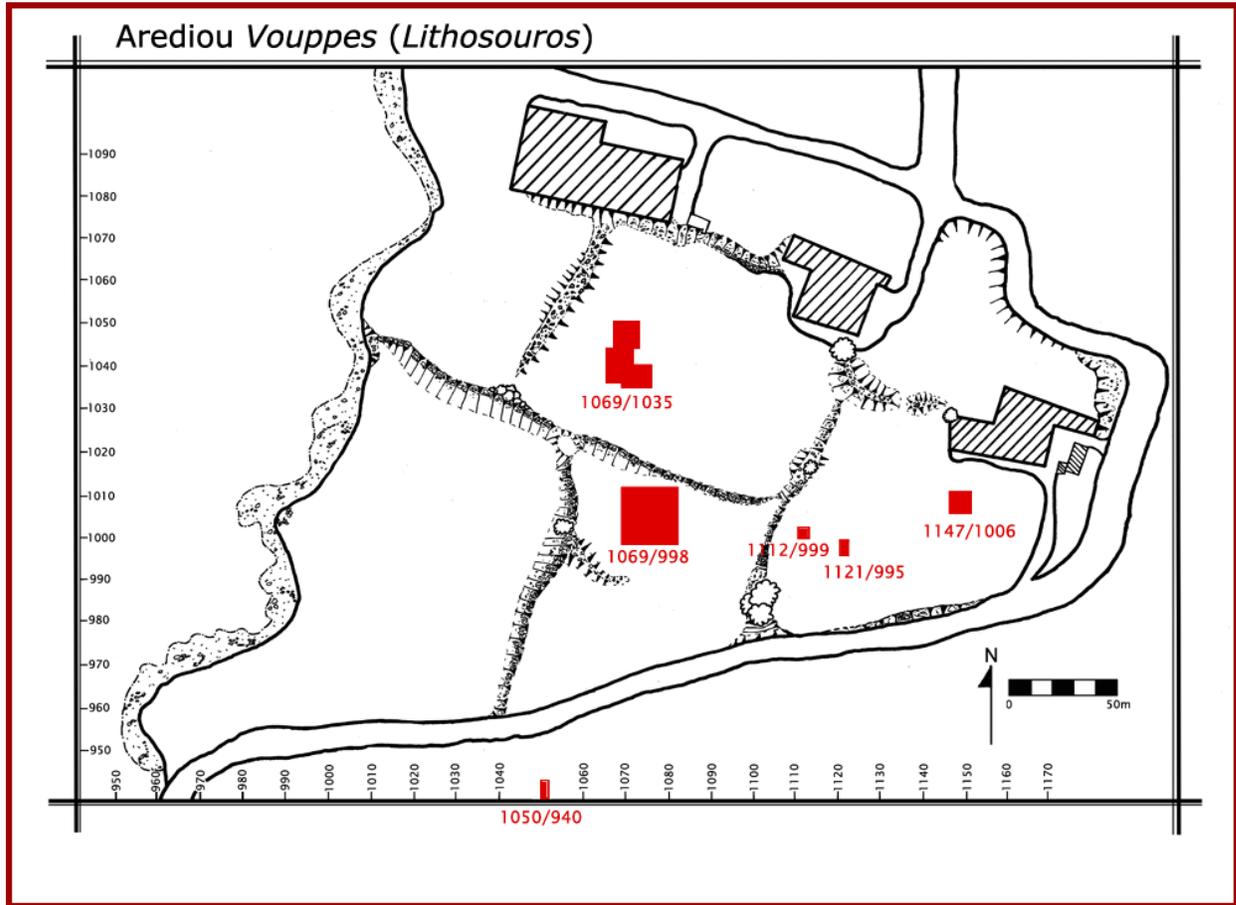


Figure 3: Site plan. (Steve Thomas)

Spread across seven fields in total, attention has thus far been paid to Fields 3, 4 and 5, the area now generally thought to be the nucleus of the site (Fig. 3). Excavation has been concentrated in this area, revealing the footprint of several significant architectural structures and large quantities of LBA occupational debris, as well as a tomb located in Field 5. A large structure (Building 1) was identified in test trenches in Field 3 during the 2005 season. Excavations in 2006 further revealed the complex nature of this building and the surrounding areas of the site (Unit 1069/998, fig. 3, 4). Steel (2007: 92) argues that ‘[A]t present, this does not appear to fit within the range of known Late Bronze Age buildings on Cyprus in terms of its architectural layout and some of the architectural practices.’ The picture presented by the excavations which have taken place in Field 3 demonstrate that this area of the site was primarily non domestic and the work areas,

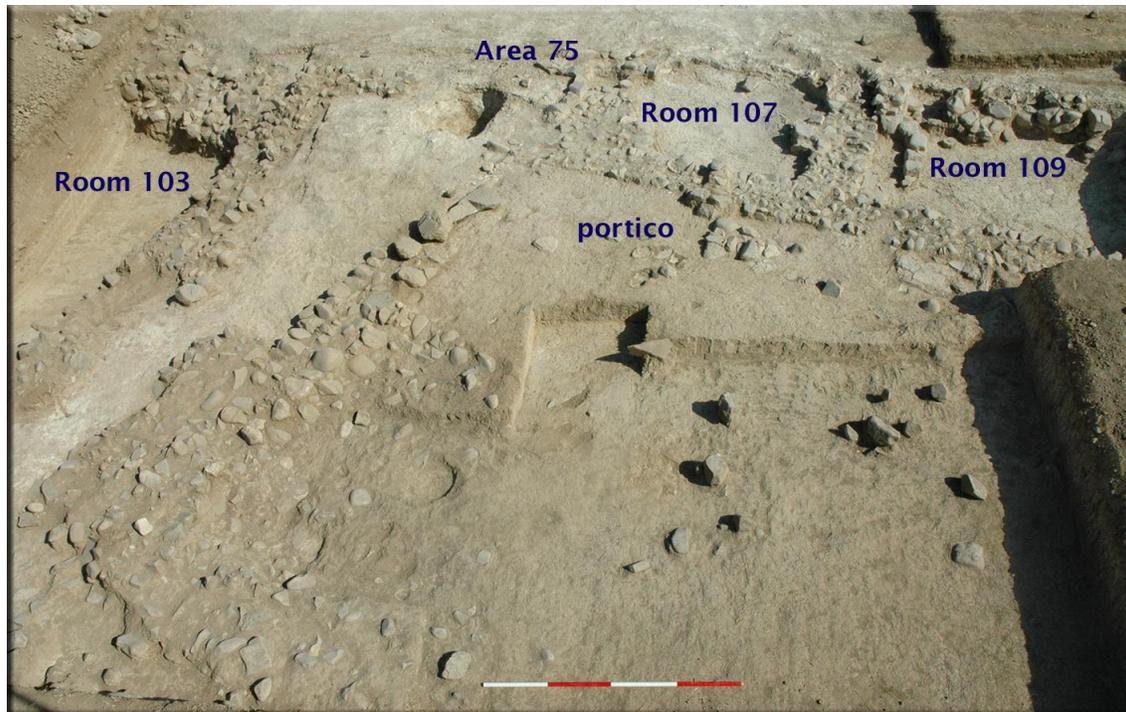


Figure 4: Unit 1069/998, interpreted as a unit of varying areas and rooms for work/production related activities (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). (Steve Thomas) courtyards and rooms uncovered through excavation appear to have ‘housed a range of specialist...activities.’ (Steel 2007: 95). A small series of stone piers which appear to protrude out from the east wall of Building 1 have been identified as the supports of a covered area, which could be argued to be analogous with a ‘colonnaded porch’ (Steel and Thomas In Press) or covered courtyard. This south facing area would therefore have provided a location shaded from the sun during the summer months and sheltered from the weather during the winter, thus allowing for such activities, or simply leisure and entertainment, to take place here in relative comfort all year. This interpretation of the area was also supported by the discovery of significant occupational debris including fragments of various utilitarian ware vessels found *in situ*, a badly worn quern unturned besides the doorway⁵ and a small amount of copper slag (Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press).

⁵ Similar to the example of a stone quern found at the entrance to room 54 at Maa-*Paleokastro* (Karageorghis and Demas 1988: pl. XIII.6)



Figure 5: View of Building 2, contexts [95] showing the well, [92] and a section of [93]. (Loveday Allen)

Field 4 has also yielded significant architectural remains which include the footprint of a substantial building (Building 2, Unit 1069/1035, fig. 3, 5) which housed a well approximately 5.2m deep (Fig. 4), into which a large ground stone saddle quern had been deposited (Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). Originally identified through geophysics in 2004, this structure, once excavated, was seen to comprise of a long, relatively narrow room [96] 2x9m, a smaller room [95], approximately 1x2m, and a possible courtyard area [92] (Steel and Thomas In Press) (Fig. 4). Finds

appear relatively scarce in this general area, however, a foundation deposit under the south wall of the structure of a substantial portion of a plain ware jug dates construction to the LC 11 period (Steel and Thomas In Press). Other finds of particular interest in this instance include a fully preserved gaming stone of the 10x3 type (AV06-06-01), the best example yet found at *Arediou-Vouppes*, more details of which shall be provided in later chapters.

It is now thought that this area of the site was developed primarily for the purposes of storage and the initial processing of harvested resources. Whether on a small or industrial scale is still unclear. However, the significant lack of mega pithoi suggests that *Arediou-Vouppes* was not concerned with large scale centralised storage characteristic of sites such *Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios*. Rather, the site functioned as a centre for the specialised production, storage and possible processing of agricultural and natural

resources on a slightly smaller scale (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press), as has been suggested for the site of Analiondas-*Palioklichia* (Webb and Frankel 1994: 16). Webb and Frankel (1994) have argued that the high quantities of pithos sherds at this site are uncharacteristic of the ceramic distribution at other similar LC sites. It also suggests, along with the apparent lack of other LC wares (Webb and Frankel 1994) that it is ‘indicative of a site set aside for a limited range of specialized economic activities which did not include a domestic function.’ (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). A second site identified and interpreted in a similar fashion includes a possible agricultural village at Phlamoudhi-*Sapilou* (Catling 1976; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press).

The shape and size of Building 2 suggest that it was likely to have been some form of barn or storage area, possibly used to deposit harvested crops prior to processing. Water was obviously an important resource in this area of the site, supported by the presence of the well in section [95]. In addition to the transportation of goods from the fields, domesticated animals trained to bear heavy loads such as donkeys, may have also been employed to carry water with which to irrigate the crops, supporting notions of a well organised agricultural production settlement. Linked to this interpretation, it could also be argued that the courtyard area may have provided a space in which the initial processing of grain occurred prior to its transferral to other areas of the site for further processing

and later distribution across the region.



Figure 6: Tomb during excavation showing the *stomion* or blocking stone. (Steve Thomas)

The tomb in Field 5, excavated in 2006, following its initial indication in a trail trench dug in 2005, demonstrated the standard chamber tomb of LBA Cyprus. It comprised of a small elliptical chamber fed by a semi-circular *dromos* complete with the *stomion* or blocking stone Fig. 5), albeit disturbed during looting (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press). The upper sections of the tomb had been

removed, presumably through topographical modifications that have affected the site as a whole due to farming and agricultural practices. It had also been backfilled with stones rubble and boulders following looting during the IA. Evidence for this came from the discovery of a fragmented but almost complete Plain White jug, suggesting clear links to IA activity and a greater time depth in this area of the site (Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). Despite the obvious looting activities which had taken place, several grave goods and disarticulated human remains were located in the eastern corner of the tomb. A number of long bones, ribs and mandibles have been identified, currently thought to represent the remains of three adult individuals⁶. The grave goods, though scarce and concealed in the eastern side of the chamber, include a fully preserved LH IIIA2 stirrup jar, a Black Slip Wheelmade jug, now fully restored, and an undamaged hook-tanged spearhead (Steel and Thomas In Press; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). The Black Slip jug and the spearhead provide further evidence for sustained occupation and prolonged activity in this area of the site up until the 16th century BC, as initially proposed by the survey data from 2004 and 2005 (Steel and Thomas In Press).

Previously SCSP had only identified Fields 1 to 5 (Steel and Janes 2005), possibly due to the type of regional surveying techniques employed during their investigation of the area⁷. Regional survey, by its nature, does not allow for a detailed appraisal of any one area but rather a holistic understanding of a wider setting. As Cherry (1983: 387) states: ‘[E]xcavation reveals a lot about a little of one site; survey can tell us a little about lots of sites.’⁸ The current project underway at *Arediou-Vouppes* aims to achieve a detailed view of the site whilst setting it in its wider contexts, environmentally, politically and socially. As seen, since 2004 several seasons of survey and excavation have been carried out, revealing large quantities of material data which are currently being archived and prepared for publication. It is my hope that the findings of this project will appear alongside the work and form part of the overall back catalogue of information on

⁶ As initially identified by Dr. Ros Coard of the University of Wales Lampeter.

⁷ For further details on the methodologies and techniques used by SCSP during the survey see Given *et. al.* (1999).

⁸ However, this ultimately depends on the type of survey carried out.

Arediou-Vouppes. It is an exciting site with much potential for further archaeological investigation.⁹

⁹ For further information on the *Arediou-Vouppes* Project see Steel and Janes (2005), Steel (2006, 2007), Steel and McCartney (2008 In Press) and Steel and Thomas (In Press).

Chapter 2

LOCATING THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITE IN ITS SOCIAL SETTING

'Microscale archaeology of the social relations of production in prehistory...is an essential prerequisite for an engendered prehistory and, I would argue, any kind of social archaeology. When carried out...it allows us to engage in the study of a prehistory "with faces", faces behind which lie gender, age, hope, fears, aspirations, "the whole catastrophe" as Zorba has described to us. Such faces may be less visible to those who prefer to study only large general trends and patterns of adaptive processes, but they are certainly not irrelevant to the trajectory of human transformation.' (Tringham 1991: 125)

OVERVIEW OF METHOD AND THEORY

I have, thus far, provided a brief overview of my aims and objectives in carrying out this project and presented a surmised view of the site of Arediou-Vouppes and the ongoing archaeological investigations that are currently taking place. In the following chapter I shall discuss the theoretical element of this study whilst also defining my methodology. By looking at the reasons behind the choice to focus on the social nature of archaeological sites in relation to their material remains, I hope to people the past and create an identity for Arediou-Vouppes through an investigation of its cultural fabric, more specifically the gaming stones.

Following a discussion on the various theoretical approaches concerned with materiality and personhood in the past, the data on gaming stones from both Arediou-Vouppes and other BA sites on the island will be assembled and placed in the context of this discussion. It is anticipated that this will demonstrate how such an item of material culture can act as a tool of interpretation for a site which has so far eluded any rigid categorisation in terms of the existing Cypriot LBA settlement models. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how an aspect of material culture can be used to people the past and remove the faceless blobs (Tringham 1991) which are often perceived to populate prehistory. By adopting a methodology which applies a combination of archaeological and anthropological social theory to a site and its material remains this aim will be

achieved through comprehensive discussion and interpretation of the data in relation to the current understanding of the site in its social setting.

*HOW AND WHY?
THE REASON BEHIND IT*

Archaeology is primarily concerned with people. It is the study of past societies and how they lived, an appraisal of material remains from around the world and throughout time. Why then is it that we are so often found to be lacking the human element in archaeological studies?

Social archaeology is an area within the discipline which is developing rapidly, often having drawn on anthropological methodologies and practices. In an attempt to offer a fresh perspective to the old problem of dealing with issues surrounding the identity of the past and the social contexts of archaeological sites, I shall be drawing on a combination of social theories. Combining methodologies in this way will benefit the development of archaeological theory and help with what Schiffer (2000: 1-13) has termed the 'building of bridges' within the discipline and between cognate disciplines. In addition it will focus on the human aspect of the past in an attempt to populate its many hidden recesses. This will then further illuminate the archaeological record and allow for the creation and perception of identity in the past. Tringham (1991) has commented on the anonymous nature of the past which the archaeologist creates. She states that the attempts of Mesoamerican archaeologists and others (Ashmore and Wilk 1988: 4-5; Wilk and Netting 1984; Wilk and Rathje 1982) to locate the household in terms of material remains alone, using scientific methods to deduce the function of objects and architectural remnants, will still result in a faceless past: 'it nevertheless leaves prehistory hanging in a cloudy nowhere land of faceless, genderless categories.' (Tringham 1991: 101) Referring specifically to the issues of gender in prehistory Tringham comments that archaeologists have succeeded in creating a past peopled by 'faceless blobs' (Tringham 1991: 94). She continues by arguing that:

[U]ntil, as an archaeologist, you can learn to give your imagined societies faces, you cannot envisage gender... And until you can engender prehistory, you cannot *think* of your prehistoric constructions as really human entities with a social, political, ideological and economic life. (Tringham 1991: 94)

These sentiments, earlier iterated by Conkey and Spector (1984), have subsequently been adopted by Bolger (2003), who has looked specifically into gender in prehistoric Cyprus. However, I would suggest that this approach can be applied to multiple aspects of the archaeological record, in effect to remove barriers that we as archaeologists have erected around the many constructs, models and hypotheses of the discipline. If due consideration is not given to the complex social dimensions of the past, our understanding of earlier societies, communities and peoples will necessarily be the weaker. As Sutton (1998: 3) has argued in relation to Rosaldo's (1980) work *Ilongot Headhunting 1883-1974*: '[W]ithout the context-dependent richness of historical practice, we will continue to reproduce sterile theoretical dichotomies.' For this reason I hope to now present my findings in such a way as to not only incorporate the human element of the past, but to make it my main focus in an attempt to understand the LBA site of Arediou-*Vouppes*.

How can this goal be achieved? As Tringham (1991: 103) states, in relation to household archaeology and issues of gender, space, materiality and personhood in the past:

If one does not assume households to be faceless units of cooperation, and if one does not assume that housework is a given universal pattern of devalued at-home social action, and if one does not assume that the roles and relations of men and women in domestic space is more or less uniform, and if one does not assume that the built environment looks the same to prehistoric eyes as it does to ours, then where does one start?

This is not a simple question for there are many possible avenues down which to tread. In this instance I wish to approach the problem from an interdisciplinary perspective which not only includes the archaeological narratives of the site and its immediate surroundings, but also the contemporary dialogues of the present into which the past must now enter.

It is important today to appropriate such holistic methodologies in archaeological investigations in light of the many developments in archaeological theory and alterations in the discipline. As noted, social archaeology, broadly speaking, is an area within the discipline which has witnessed much development over the past decades (see among others Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 1987b; Gero and Conkey 1991; Yoffee and Sherratt 1993; Preucel and Hodder 1996; Schiffer 2000; Bender and Winer 2001). As such I shall be adopting a methodology reliant upon the current social theory of both archaeology and anthropology in my attempt to people the site of *Arediou-Vouppes*. However, as Schiffer (2000) comments, there has been an explosion in the literature within this area of archaeology, and as such it becomes impossible for any one individual to possess a knowledge of all the relevant material in existence. My primary concern is with the material remains of the site, and as such I have taken Tringham's (1991: 98) words very much to heart when she stresses that we must recognise material culture as occupying a greater role in archaeology than simply 'a passive reflection of human behaviour' (Tringham 1991: 98). By drawing attention to the gaming stones and their positioning on the site, I wish to explain their relevance in dispelling the myth of an anonymous past and demonstrate how they can be seen as more than indicators of human action; they signify something deeper in the human psyche, binding together the elusive social unit of a society built on industrial and production orientated actions. As Hodder and Hutson (2003: 6) argue:

Material culture does not just exist. It is made by someone. It is produced to do something. Therefore it does not passively *reflect* society – rather, it creates society through the acts of social agents.

In this light it is now appropriate to discuss some of the anthropological theories I shall be adopting in my discussion of material culture, the gaming stones and their role in peopling the site of *Arediou-Vouppes* and placing it in its social setting.

Despite the fact that material culture as a category is a modern Western construct which does not account for the wide variation in the way objects are perceived and recognised in human culture as a whole, it does offer a useful analytical tool for understanding

humanity through its material manifestations. The traditional anthropological view of material culture is that it is what defines human beings from the animal kingdom (Miller 1998; Dant 1999). As Dant (1999: 1) comments:

Things, both natural and man-made, are appropriated into human culture in such a way that they re-present the social relations of culture, standing in for other human beings, carrying values, ideas and emotions.

Despite the fact that this argument has been challenged through the suggestion that non-human animals are also capable of making and appropriating objects (Alger and Alger 1999; Sapolsky 2006; McGrew 1998; Griffin 2001; de Waal 2000, 2001), I would suggest that as such a seminal aspect of human culture it can offer us much in terms of understanding human society and social relations both past and present. Material objects have often been argued to form cultural ties to those who make and use them; in other words they form an aspect of that individual's biography whilst simultaneously creating and enhancing their own.

This approach, first adopted by Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1954), focusing on the potential of material objects to obtain an identity and a living connection to their owner or creator, has largely been pioneered by anthropologists such as Appadurai (1986), Kopytoff (1986), Strathern (1988), Weiner (1992), Miller (1998; 2001) and Hoskins (1998, 2006) and it is this area of anthropological theory which I will be adopting throughout this study¹⁰.

¹⁰ Much anthropological work throughout the history of the discipline has focused on the idea that objects and things can take on the attributes of people and *vice versa* (Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1954; Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; Strathern 1988; Weiner 1992; Hoskins 1998, 2006). Occasionally these objects can become so closely linked to persons that they become inalienable to them (Weiner 1992). Any object can be invested with agency and significance in this way, but so too can they invest those qualities in the people who interact with them through their creation and use, or by simply acknowledging their presence. The qualities of materiality have continually been linked to the 'mobilizing and mediating of memory.' (Meskell 2004: 62) Hoskins (2006: 81) relates to this process in relation to Meskell's (2004) work on Ancient Egypt and argues that 'Meskell's notion of the "material biography" brings together questions of personhood and the meanings of objects in relation to an ancient culture that is heavily documented but still incompletely understood.'

*WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS?
A QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION*

All archaeological sites possess social dimensions by definition, as all archaeological sites are products of human action. This notion can also be related to the way in which humans manipulate the environment around them, and how they then engage with that environment to form material objects. If we perceive these objects as socially created things which leave their imprint on the people and the places that made them, it could then be suggested that they are key tools in the identification and understanding of that site and its former inhabitant's identity, in other words the social dimensions. As we have seen in relation to the anthropological literature, material objects have the capacity to both contribute to human identity whilst also assimilating their own, thus supporting this claim. The methodological stance followed throughout this study employs such theories in a discussion to determine the gaming stones purpose and use in peopling the past and in turn the site of *Arediou-Vouppes*. By suggesting that material objects can contribute to human biographies may imply that they can in turn tell the story of the life of those individuals. Thus providing a tool with which to understand the archaeological sites we study and the past societies, communities and peoples who inhabited them in terms of their social identity rather than simply their material remains. Material objects can then be seen to form the key with which to open the door into past worlds.

Looking at these issues in relation to landscapes and what they are, what they signify and what they mean to us as human beings, Bender (2001) has commented that they are not simply the stage upon which human actions are played out. They are connected to us in a far more complex way, always changing, always in flux, and always affecting us as we affect them. She therefore states that 'we affect and are affected by the landscapes we move through.' (Bender 2001: 15) This is also very much related to phenomenological approaches and to what Tilley (1994) and others have term a phenomenology of landscape. We can therefore recognise the archaeological sites we study in a similar light, as they are integrated within the landscapes we inhabit and as such are inherently socialised. What these social dimensions may be however is a question of interpretation.

Within the framework of social archaeology I anticipate a deeper motivation; as Bender (2001; 2006), Shanks and Tilley (1987a, 1987b) and Tilley (1994, 2006) have suggested, archaeological sites are not simply products of human agency, but rather impressions of humanity and expressions of identity, both on a cultural and individual basis. This can then be witnessed in the material remains of those sites. As Shanks and Tilley (1987a: 57-58) have argued:

[O]n the question of identity – the identity of anything does not consist of a list of attributes (to what would they belong?), but must be referred to a relational order... Identity presupposes a relation of difference to something else. Identity is differential, depending on systems of difference, relational sequences. Identity is always incomplete, never final because of the potential infinity of relations of difference.

Therefore, in the same way that we cannot determine identity from a list of attributes, neither can we suggest that the social dimensions of a site, in other words its identity, are easily quantifiable. They will depend completely on the way in which the site is perceived, understood and recorded, by which methodological approaches are taken and by what research questions are asked. This in turn will then lead to relations of difference and as such demonstrates that ‘[A]ll this means that every identity – social, conceptual or material – is negotiated in practice [and] This act of negotiation is a political practice.’ (Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 58) Therefore, we can argue that the very concept of identity, the site and the social dimensions of archaeology are products of humanity and cultural practice. However, this is not to suggest that locating the social dimensions of a site such as *Arediou-Vouppes* is a futile action, but rather an individual one which, as seen, depends entirely on the level of engagement and interpretation.

In this light I would argue that the social dimensions of this site are not only found in its study, but also within those who study it. Depending on the methodological stance taken during investigation, social and cultural pointers are constantly identified by the archaeologist. Archaeology is the study of past human societies, and as such cannot avoid the inherent sociality of its subjects. As seen, archaeological sites are products of human agency and expressions of identity, past and present, therefore it can be argued that the

site of Arediou-*Vouppes* is rich in these qualities. This study of the site in relation to the gaming stones will, I hope, demonstrate is how we may recognise not just the surface traits of social actions within the material culture we encounter through archaeological investigation, but rather recognise that '[S]tudies of materiality cannot simply focus upon the characteristics of objects but must engage in the dialectic of people and things.' (Meskell 2004: 2) As such, it should therefore be us as archaeologists, who lead this tradition, as it is due to what Meskell (2004: 2) has termed 'our dependence upon the interpretations of the material world as our ontological bedrock' that the discipline of archaeology has continued. In this sense we can recognise the social dimensions of a site such as Arediou-*Vouppes* as those elements to which we can relate to as human beings.

This site is particularly interesting as it does not instantly present a picture of a highly sociable settlement in which many dynamic relationships are played out, but rather one far more concerned with production and practicality. This view instantly demonstrates how archaeological interpretation is bound to context and *vice versa*. As Hodder and Hutson (2003: 5) have suggested '[T]he interpretation of meaning is constrained by the interpretation of context.' However, if we take the gaming stones as an example of the site's complex social motivations, we can begin to see that distinctions and labels appropriated through the rigid interpretations of archaeological contexts are often narrow and demonstrate how contemporary assumptions are connected to past activities. Simply because we may label something as functioning purely on a practical basis does not mean to say that we cannot then envisage another side to past life in the area. Due to the relative prevalence of gaming stones on the site we might suggest that they were everyday objects, and as such fulfilled a specific function or role within the daily lives of those who lived and worked there. This does not have to imply that they were revered or set apart from ordinary activity, but rather that they were simply objects created and incorporated into daily life, thus taking on their own role in that social environment and appropriating what Gell (1992) has termed their 'instrumentality', or more recently, their 'agency' (1998).

Therefore the site did not simply exist solely to produce supplies for the mining communities in the area. Rather it was a small, busy and sociable settlement, developed on the back of the land and sustained by the rich fertile soils of the area and the well developed agricultural tradition. This allowed for surplus, and in turn the opportunity to develop trading relationships with the mining centres, but also created time for leisure pursuits and the passing on of knowledge. In this setting such items as the gaming stones can offer us, the archaeologists, a glimpse of how life may have been, encouraging a holistic understanding of the site and in turn the archaeological record as a whole.

There are then many questions which can be posited to further this interpretation, for example: how were they able to produce and use the gaming stone? They lived in a highly resourceful area with many natural reserves and had developed a strong agricultural tradition which provided stability. Why did they take on and adapt these games which were being integrated into Cypriot society during the BA? They may have developed an interest and were able to make time to learn the rules of games introduced through travel and contact with other nations. Perhaps individual versions of such games were then formed within separate communities? They may also have developed ways of incorporating them into either the practical side of life, possibly using them as counting devices and certainly using them as building stones as shall be seen. Other interpretations may centre on religious practices, some elements of gaming possibly finding their way into funerary rights and mortuary rituals, as has been witnessed in Egypt and the Levant. Despite some spurious evidence to suggest that the gaming stones were incorporated into funerary rights in BA Cyprus, for example the 10x3 stone found lying amongst debris looted from a EC/MC tomb at Margi-*Kapparka* and the stone found in the middle of the ECII to MCII Cemetery B at Bellapais-*Vounous* displaying parallel rows of roughly pecked indentations (Swiny 1986), Swiny (1986: 57) argues that if used in religious activities it is likely that more care would have been taken in their manufacture. He also notes that if they were used as offering tables, as was originally suggested by Karageorghis (1976) in relation to the re-used stone slab displaying three rows of carefully executed depressions built into the Phoenician altar of Temple IV at Kition-

Kathari, the depressions would only have been large enough to contain meagre offerings of seed (Swiny 1986: 57) suggesting that this also was not the case.

However, such statements as made above in relation to the gaming stones purpose and use, although partly derived from archaeological research and investigation, are also based on personal preference, experience and interpretation. Therefore we must learn to accept such arguments whilst also understanding that what is said is not absolute, but is rather a collection of ideas and interpretations of aspects of material culture, constantly changing and developing.

Despite the difficulty of introducing faces to our past we must not shy away from the potentials it may bring. Tringham (1991: 101) has noted that she has even found this problematic in her research due to the inhibitions inherent within the discipline to suppress unscientific methodologies and discussions. However, we should not take this as an excuse to ignore the social dimensions of archaeological sites. As Tringham (1991: 102) states:

[T]here is no doubt that the architectural remains of prehistory can be used much more imaginatively (this is *not* the same as speculatively) than...to reconstruct functions and technology of the buildings as reflecting past human behaviour. Ethnographic and architectural data show that buildings and their associated material culture act and have acted as both context and media in domestic tension, gender relations, and dominance structures (Blier 1987; Bourdieu 1973; Donley 1982, 1987; Douglas 1972; Hodder 1986; Moore 1986).

WHERE ARE THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SITE?

LOCATION AND POSITIONING

If we follow the argument that the social dimensions of an archaeological site are dependent on individual interpretation and the practice of archaeologists to create identity through material remains and relationships of difference, then we can also argue that these same so called social dimensions cannot be located *per se*. They are not physical elements visible to the human eye, but are rather found in accordance with their

discoverers personal understanding of the site in question. In the light of recent developments in social theory Tilley (2006: 9) has argued that:

[I]dentity is transient, a reflection on where you are now, a fleeting moment in the biography of the self or the group, only partially connected to where you might have come from, and where you might be going.

If this is the case, then we can also suggest that as products of human identity, the social elements of archaeological sites are also transient reflections, relating to the state of the individual or group who perceive them at any given moment. They are not, therefore, static and unchanging, but rather dynamic and constantly shifting to reflect the thoughts of those who engage with them, both in the past and in the present.

Arediou-Vouppes offers us the example of a site highly socialised, by its previous inhabitants and its present researchers. It appears to have functioned as an animated production settlement and as seen, current interpretation suggests that it acted to support the nearby copper mining industry with surplus agricultural goods (Given 2002; Given and Knapp 2003; Given *et. al.* 1999; Knapp 2003; Knapp and Given 1996; Knapp *et. al.* 1994; Keswani and Knapp 2003; Steel and Janes 2005, Steel 2006, 2007; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press; Steel and Thomas In Press), thus developing and maintaining links with other communities on the island and even across seas. As seen, this in itself presents the archaeologist with an image of an active community, integrated with its surroundings and acting as part of a wider society, whilst also existing as an entity in itself, maintaining a certain degree of independence. If this is the case the social dimensions are numerable and deeply layered. Many relationships are likely to have existed to support this settlement, both internal and external to its boundaries. For example administrative, economic and political relationships would have existed between the inhabitants of the settlement and those of the copper mines. These may well have spread further to the urban coastal centres, the settlement either coming under the influence of Toumpa tou Skourou in the northwest, or possibly Enkomi in the east (Given and Knapp 2003; Keswani and Knapp 2003; Knapp 2003; Steel and Janes 2005), where central control may have been based.

However, politics and economics aside, *Arediou-Vouppes* was also a community in itself, and as such its inhabitants would have developed intricate individual social dynamics and relationships with each other on a smaller scale. The gaming stones may therefore represent a form of binding agent in this society, a vehicle for forming social ties within an engineered setting, a form of communal activity acting as social glue. Similar instances of culturally constructed forms of “social glue” have been witnessed in several recent anthropological studies. Kirtsoglou (2004) looks specifically at issues of gender and hidden yet overtly performed same sex relations in the context of a rural Greek town she terms *Kallipolis*. She states that the women of the *parea* (company) refer to themselves as a group, ‘an affective community of friends bound by emotional ties who pursue erotic relationships with women.’ (Kirtsoglou (2004: 1) Yet at the same time they consciously decide to ‘engage in a constant politic of “concealment and display” (cf. Herzfeld 1987).’ (Kirtsoglou 2004: 2) This, she argues, ‘signals their ambition to remain fully integrated members of the social context within which they exist.’ (Kirtsoglou 2004: 2) Therefore their existence as a group does not infringe on their participation in the wider setting of the community. Danforth (1982) focuses on the death rituals of provincial Greece as a form of cultural bonding agent in a society struggling to cope with the universal paradox of death. The dilemma humanity faces in death is how to accommodate mourning and yet continue to live meaningfully in the present. Danforth argues that it is these performed death rituals which help the rural Greek community of Potamia deal with the emotional weight of death and maintain social cohesion as a group. He states at the end of his book *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (1982):

The performance of these rituals and the singing of these laments constitute...an admission that human existence is marred by an insurmountable contradiction that cannot be ignored. Death will continue to tear apart the socially constructed world of the women of rural Greece. Their parents, their husbands, and their children will continue to die. These new deaths will remind them of past deaths, call forth old pain, and reopen wounds that never fully heal.

Sutton (2001) looks specifically at the construction of memory in relation to food on the Greek island of Kalymnos and how this may also form aspects of social glue, binding a community together through the shared experience of the creation and consumption of food. Through the connection of food and memory the social unit is constantly reinforced in a joined experience of remembered and forgotten consumption. As Sutton (2001: 2) notes, he was not overly surprised on his earlier trips to the island when he was told to '[E]at, in order to remember Kalymnos.' These ideas link to both examples above, as the consumption and commensality of food enter into the group activities of the *parea* in the performance of their identity (Kirtsoglou 2004) and to the death rituals of Potamia and many other Greek funeral rights (Danforth 1982).



Figure 7: 'Vassilis' daughters light their candles and place them on the earth mound above their father's three day old grave. Then they sit down with their handkerchiefs in their hands and begin to cry and sing.' (Danforth 1982: Pl. 19)

Therefore, it could be argued that, lacking in overtly domestic areas and yet apparently segmented into sections designated for storage, production and processing, with one area of the site providing evidence on a more intimate level (that of the tomb and possible sanctuary or dwelling), the gaming stones filled a missing aspect in the social lives of the

people who lived and worked there. In this sense Tringham's (1991: 125) quote at the beginning of this chapter can be considered; it can be argued that it is human nature for people living and working together in such a way to form many close bonds. This can be linked to Carsten's (1995, 2000) notion of "fictive kinship", which in turn relates to White's (2004) notion of "relatedness". It could then be argued that the inhabitants of *Arediou-Vouppes* developed these close relationships, ascribing one another kinship titles where technically there were none, drawing themselves together through this shared activity in such a way as to form themselves into a close knit group maintained through the practice of gaming. We must therefore recognise this fact when investigating anything relating to the past and take note of the micro as well as the macro within archaeology.

Here is where we may begin to locate the social dimensions of the site through the material we recover. As previously noted, the gaming stones offer a very enigmatic example, which could appear as subjective and therefore inherently dogged by bias, but which also allows us to relate to the past and in turn develop a deeper understanding of its intricacies. Human nature dictates sociality and therefore we must recognise this in the archaeological sites we study. As Bender (2006: 303) has commented in relation to the concept of landscape:

"Landscape"... is "the world out there" as understood, experienced, and engaged with through human consciousness and active involvement. Thus it is a subjective notion, and being subjective and open to many understandings it is volatile.

It can therefore be suggested that archaeological sites, as inherent parts of the "landscape" are also perceived and affected through human experience and as such are social in their make up, yet also volatile in their existence. We cannot therefore say where the social dimensions of a site are located, what they are exactly, or how they exist, but rather understand them for the fluctuating concepts that they are and by doing so recognise the human element of the pasts we create.

*RELATING THE DISCUSSION TO THE SITE:
SOCIALLY CONTEXTUALISING AREDIYOU-VOUPPES*

Thus we cannot pinpoint the individual social dimensions of the site of *Arediou-Vouppes* any more than we can create a fully accurate picture of life there during the Cypriot LBA. However, we can understand that all archaeological sites are intricately bound up with human action, agency, consciousness and experience. As part of the landscapes through which we move they affect us as we affect them. They are socialised by default and cannot escape the inevitable influence of humanity. The material remains we recover are animated through the archaeological process and offer us glimpses of past lives which we then embellish in such a way as to relate to them in the present, using them to “read” the past (Hodder 1986; Hodder and Hutson 2003). Past trends in archaeology have shied away from such practices due to the many pitfalls which may be encountered (Tringham 1991). With subjectivity comes bias, as has been suggested in the anthropological debates surrounding this subject by individuals such as Okely and Callaway (1992) in their work *Anthropology and Autobiography* and Davies in her book *Reflexive Ethnography: a guide to researching selves and others* (1999). However, the current climate of archaeology encourages us to engage with our subjects on a deeper level, thus allowing for a study which incorporates both the past and the present in a dualistic approach to establish and maintain identity through things, in so doing creating a past populated by recognisable human beings which we are then able to relate to in the present.

By attempting to people the site of *Arediou-Vouppes* in this way, the gaming stones can be used as a lens through which to imagine scenes of entertainment, possible ritual and work, scenes of daily life in other words, therefore encouraging us to actively engage in the material we recover and recognise the significance and agency of its creation, use and deposition. As seen, objects and things have often been argued to form identities of their own with which they influence and affect the identities of those who create and use them (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; Strathern 1988; Weiner 1992; Miller 1998, 2001; Hoskins 1998, 2006; Meskell 2004). In this way the gaming stones can be recognised as objects which have absorbed cultural traits and social actions, becoming actively part of

the society in which they were made, but also that in which they have been discovered. As such they then affect and influence the ways in which we interpret them and the contexts from which they come, thus helping us to perceive the social dimensions of the site and recognise the individuals among the masses, the faces among the blobs. Arediou-*Vouppes* was a settlement inhabited by living people linked through numerable ties and the intricate social relations that exist in such a setting, despite the sites industrial and production orientated connotations. The gaming stones are an aspect of material culture present at the site which can enable us to perceive this fact and understand its significance in interpreting the archaeological record. They provide us with the clues needed to understand the intricacies of such a complex site and its social dimensions.

Chapter 3

GAMING STONES IN CONTEXT

'Ordinary objects which have long been used by one master take on a sort of personality, their own face, I could almost say a soul, and the folklore of all nations is full of these beings more human than humans, because they owe their existence to people and, awakened by their contact, take on their own life and autonomous activities, a sort of latent and fantastic wilfulness.' (Claudel 1965: 1243)

THE CYPRIOT GAMING STONES:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Swiny's (1980, 1986) seminal work, gaming stones have slowly begun to emerge as significant objects in BA Cyprus. Discussion has thus far tended to focus on their distribution and number across the island – detailing the sites from which they have come and the dates of those sites in relation to their make up and general nature. Swiny's article *Bronze Age Gaming Stones from Cyprus* published in the *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1980) was the first written work to record all the known examples of Cypriot gaming stones at the time. It detailed the number, location and size of each stone, listed in order of type¹¹ and site, and offered a detailed discussion as to the background and history of gaming stones and their appearance on the island. This was later reworked by Swiny in 1986 as part of the excavation report for the KSU Expedition to the LBA site of Episkopi-Phaneromeni¹². This revised version of the text compared the examples from Episkopi-Phaneromeni and other sites investigated by the KEU Survey in relation to the other gaming stones of the island and further comparative data ranging from the Aegean to the Middle East, whilst also adding newly discovered material and correcting past mistakes in the interpretation and dating of some of the stones. Swiny (1986: 32) notes at

¹¹ The two main types of Cypriot gaming stones recorded are the 10x3 and the spiral. In both the 1980 and 1986 publications Swiny divided the 10x3's into two sub types (Type 1 and Type 2) according to size. These sub types have since been abandoned due to the great variability between the BA stones witnessed across the island (Swiny 2003: 231).

¹² Carpenter (1981) has also contributed to the work on the *Phaneromeni* gaming stones. For further information see Carpenter, J. R. (1981) *Excavations at Phaneromeni: 1975-1978*. In J. C. Biers and D. Soren (Eds.) *Studies in Cypriote Archaeology*. Monograph XVIII. Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, University of California: 59-78.

the beginning of the section that ‘[I]n early 1979, 196 *Senets*¹³ from 15 sites were known. Six years later, at least 194 from 33 sites...were recorded.’ This demonstrates the quantities of gaming stones already found across the island at the time. This number has now risen to well over 200¹⁴.

As can be seen, Swiny has contributed much to the work on Cypriot gaming stones and their interpretation as such. He comments in relation to Episkopi-*Phaneromeni* that when the first two stones were discovered in 1975 the only comparative material available on the island was a ‘Red Polished Ware brick-shaped terracotta with 3 parallel rows of 10 shallow depressions’ (Swiny 1986: 33; fig. 55:c) belonging to the Hadjiproddromou

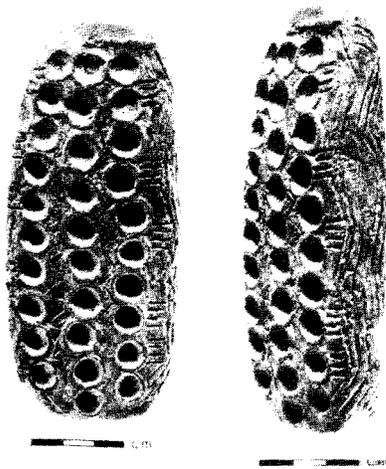


Figure 8: The red polished ware terracotta gaming stone from the Hadjiproddromou Collection (Swiny 1986: Fig. 55: c).

Collection in Famagusta (Swiny 1986)¹⁵. Having such little data original to Cyprus available for comparison suggests that the work which went into the interpretation of the stones from *Phaneromeni* and the other sites from the KSU Survey was considerable and involved much research into examples of similar artefacts from elsewhere, for example the Levant, Egypt and the Aegean. As previously noted, tentative first interpretation of the stones, as documented by Karageorghis in 1976 in relation to the re-used stone slab incorporated into the altar of the Phoenician Temple IV at Kition-*Kathari*, was that they were

Kernoï or offering tables (Karageorghis 1976: 880; Swiny 1986: 37). This was soon dismissed by Swiny (1986: 57) as the indentations on the stones would have only served as receptacles for very small offerings of seeds or something of a similar nature, as has been noted above. In light of the comparative data from the Middle East and Egypt it was

¹³ *Italics added*

¹⁴ See Graph 1 for a cross section of gaming stones from the Cypriot BA and the number found at each site.

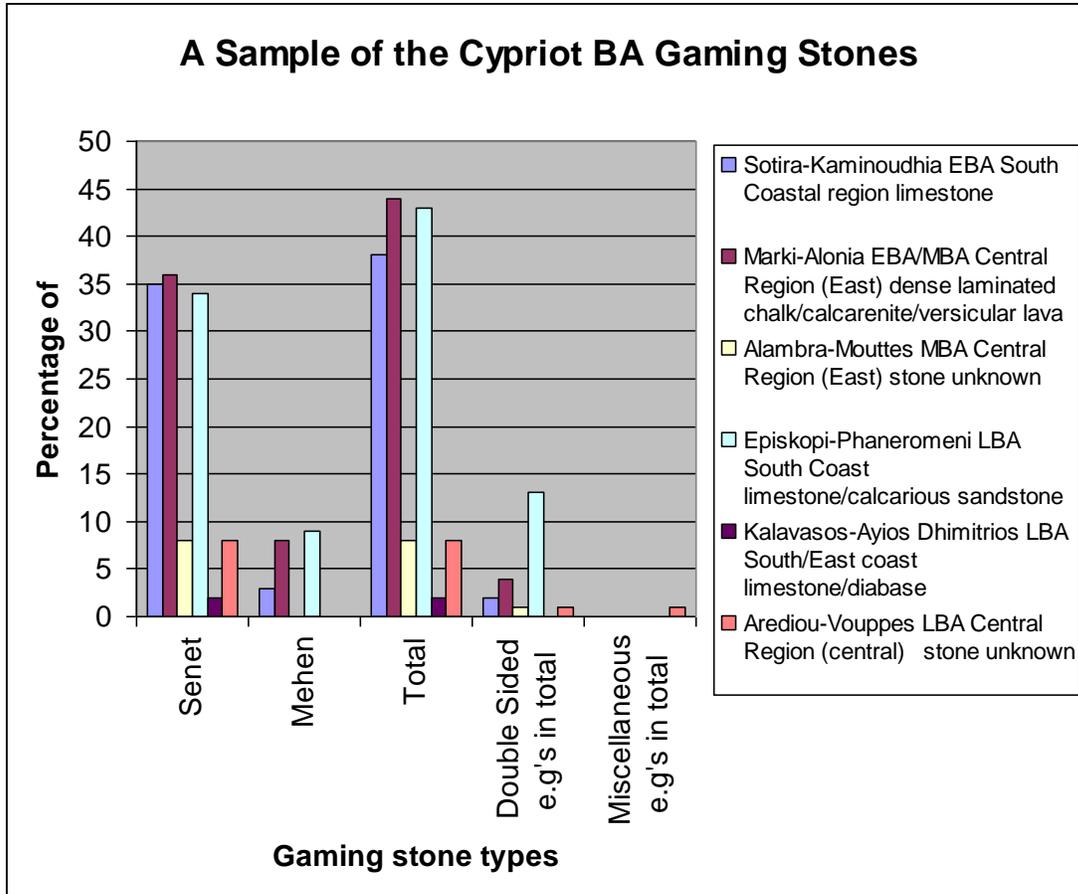
¹⁵ As Swiny (1986: 33) notes, since 1974 the location of this find is unknown, however, Mr. Hajiproddromou believes he acquired the stone from Kotchati. Swiny (1986: 33) thanks Dr. P. Flourentzos of the Cyprus Museum for this information. It is believed to be MC in date, originating from the cemetery near the village of Kotchati, suggesting it was part of a funeral deposit, for which the burials in the vicinity are famous (Swiny 1986: 33).

argued that the stones were in fact gaming stones, related to the Ancient Egyptian games of *senet* and *mehen*. As Swiny (1986: 57) argues in relation to the spiral stones from Cyprus:

[A] final reason for suggesting an Egyptian origin for the spiral motifs is that no other satisfactory meaning or function has yet been provided. Following the same argument as that put forth in connection with *Senet*¹⁶, the crowded arrangement and small size of the depressions of most spirals would effectively preclude their serving as offering tables for anything larger than seeds.

Further contributions were made by Buchholz (1981, 1982). Swiny (1986: 36) comments that '[W]ith these two articles Buchholz has made a significant contribution to the study of ancient games in Cyprus especially in connection with later materials and that from the Aegean and Europe.' Coleman and Barlow (1979) and Mogelonsky (1996: 174-176) have also made a valuable contribution to the study of Cypriot gaming stones in relation to the MBA Alambri-*Mouttes* finds. Additional work on the gaming stones has been carried out by Frankel and Webb (1996; 2006) and Webb (1998) in relation to the EBA to MBA settlement of Marki-*Alonia*. Other contributors to the body of information on the Cypriot gaming stones include the work done by South, Russell and Keswani in *Vasilikos Valley Project 3: Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios II. Ceramics, objects, tombs, specialist studies* (1989). Swiny has also since added to his collection of works on gaming stones in the 2003 publication on the ground stone from the EBA site of Sotira-*Kaminoudhia* (Swiny 2003: 221-87).

¹⁶ *Italics* added.



Graph 1: A sample of the Cypriot BA gaming stones¹⁷. (Loveday Allen)

Other works including gaming stones may only refer to them very briefly. There has yet to be a publication of the existing examples of Cypriot gaming stones to rival Swiny's (1980, 1986) work. However, despite their great detail and coverage, these works are now outdated and lack a certain amount of interpretative discussion relevant to contemporary studies in the Cypriot BA.

I shall further the work that has thus far been carried out on the Cypriot gaming stones in relation to their connections with Egypt and the Middle East, the dispersion and transmission of knowledge and the individual stones from *Arediou-Vouppes*. This will then bring new insight to the study of ancient gaming in relation to peopling the past and creating identity through material remains.

¹⁷ Information for this graph was gathered from Swiny (1980, 1986, 2003), South *et. al.* (1989), Frankel and Webb (1996, 2006), Mogelonsky (1996) and Steel and McCartney (2008 In Press).

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GAMING STONES

Gaming stones form a distinct part of the archaeological record and have been discovered across many different countries and periods in time (Finkel 2007). However, they also form a great mystery for the archaeologist and have posed many difficult questions for those who have studied them previously. For this reason they have also been hugely under represented by the discipline itself, but also by the entire network of the social sciences. As Finkel (2007: 1) has stated:

Historically speaking board games have scarcely received the attention they deserve from historians, anthropologists or sociologists, as well as many other fields with which their study overlaps.

This is also true of the Cypriot gaming stones, despite the various works of individuals such as Swiny (1980, 1986, 2003), Buchholz (1981, 1982) and others, as noted above. As previously mentioned, their appearance, position, distribution, location, function, style and type have all been noted in much detail; however, at this stage very little has been said on their meaning, purpose or function, suffice to say that they were primarily located in domestic and possible funerary settings and played a part in the make up of BA Cypriot society. Finkel (2007: 1) has stated that

There has been a general tendency, say in archaeological excavation reports, to lump games together with toys, with the implicit conclusion that they are all somehow ‘childish’ or at least the domain of children.¹⁸

An aspect of the study on Cyprus has, however, taken into consideration the fact that their existence on the island provides further evidence to support the development of Cypriot maritime travel during the BA, the two major types of gaming stone present on the island arguably being Egyptian in origin (Swiny 1980, 1986; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004), as previously noted. This then goes hand in hand with the

¹⁸ This, although often the case, would be an oversight on the archaeologist’s part, as until the commercialism of games set in across Europe during the Eighteenth Century, board games were mainly the preserve of adults (Finkel 2007), often not even associated with entertainment but rather notions of divination and ritual.

expansion of the copper industry, the exportation of Cypriot goods to other countries and kingdoms and the diffusion of Cypriot cultural traits with the parallel occurring on the island itself (Knapp 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b; Karageorghis 1996; Steel 2004).¹⁹ However, Swiny (1980, 1986) has argued that the scarcity of work carried out on the function and meaning of these objects in the Cypriot archaeological record is due to a lack of primary evidence as to their use and general purpose in Cypriot BA society.

I would now argue, however, that this is an area we can readdress as further evidence has come to light since Swiny (1986) made this observation. As noted above, the central aim of this project is to use the gaming stones as an aspect of material culture which can demonstrate that they are not simply a passive reflection of human action, but rather a result of direct engagement and involvement with ones surroundings, both physically and culturally. In this way I wish to address the problems raised above and bring about a solution for dealing with the similar difficulties encountered by the social archaeologists concerned with giving the past an identity and creating awareness of the social dimensions of ancient societies. This will then create what we could term an anthropology of the past, which is very much in keeping with the central premise of social archaeology. However, as Owen and Porr (1999: 2) have commented ‘we have only just begun to understand the mutual histories of people and objects in the past and the present’; therefore suggesting that we must continue with caution whilst not forgetting the potential of such approaches in archaeological research.

THE CYPRIOT GAMING STONES IN CONTEXT

Before considering in further detail the wider framework of the archaeology of gaming stones and their significance in the Cypriot BA, I shall first look at the individual gaming

¹⁹ Cypriot links to Egypt and the Near East have been clearly identified as a result of the copper trade,; the island finding itself frequently associated with the state of Alashiya, reference to which is made in contemporary Near Eastern and Egyptian documentation (Steel 2004; Knapp 1996b; Goren, Bunimovitz, Finkelstein and Na’aman 2003).

stones from Arediou-*Vouppes*. To date eight gaming stones²⁰ have been recovered from Arediou-*Vouppes*. Style and preservation vary, as does their contexts and positioning across the site. Generally they fit into the two main categories described by Swiny (1980, 1986: 32-64) as the 10x3 (*senet*) and the spiral (*mehen*) as noted above. Both *senet* and *mehen* are Egyptian in origin (Finkel 2007; Piccione 1980, 1990a, 1990b, 2007). Close parallels with the ancient Egyptian game boards have led to the use of the names when describing and categorising the Cypriot gaming stones.

On reflection, eight gaming stone may appear as an insignificant amount when compared to other Cypriot BA sites such as Episkopi-*Phaneromeni*, which has produced a total of 43 (Swiny 1986). However, when the material is studied it becomes clear that sites where a larger concentration of gaming stones are found usually date to the Early and Middle BA, such as Sotira-*Kaminoudhia* (EBA) (Swiny 2003), Marki-*Alonia* (EBA-MBA) (Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006) and Alambra-*Mouttes* (MBA) (Mogelonsky 1996), giving EC to MC dates. This therefore suggests that the data from Arediou-*Vouppes* is of considerable note in light of the sites' LBA (LC) associations. The only LBA site which noticeably stands out from this pattern is, of course, Episkopi-*Phaneromeni* (Swiny 1986). In relation to the earlier finds Swiny (1986: 58) notes that '[T]he discovery of numerous *Senets* and three *Mehens* at Sotira-*Kaminoudhia* unequivocally proves that

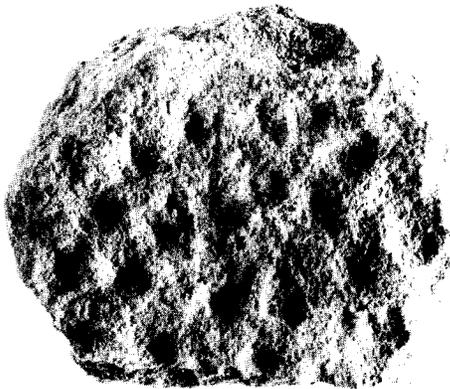


Figure 9: The earliest example of a Cypriot gaming stone from Lemb-*Lakkous* (Swiny 1986: Fig. 59: e).

both games were much favoured by the Philia Culture.' The earliest date for a Cypriot gaming stone, however, comes from Chalcolithic layers at Lemb-*Lakkous* (Peltenberg 1982: 48, 1985: 289, fig. 86:3, Pl. 48.2; Swiny 2003: 233; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). Such early finds are sporadic at best, but this example does suggest that the original transmission of the concept of games was introduced to the island prior to the BA (Pelteburg 1982: 48, 1985: 289, fig. 86:3; Swiny 2003: 233; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press).

²⁰ See Introduction for detail on the seventh and eighth gaming stones from the site.

Swiny (1980: 72) had originally suggested an early MC date for the transmission of such knowledge to Cyprus, arguing that the 10x3 motif first appeared at this time; however, following CAARI's findings from Sotira-*Kaminoudhia* during the 1981 to 1983 excavations and the discovery of the gaming stone from Lemba-*Lakkous*, the date for original interception was pushed back. As seen, it also gradually became apparent that gaming stones were even more common during the EBA to MBA than they were at later stages of the LBA and EIA when attitudes towards their purpose and use appear to change, funerary and religious context of discovery becoming far more common. Once again, when compared to other LBA sites such as Kalavassos-*Ayios Dhimitrios*, situated on the south coast of the island, which has only produced two gaming stones in two decades of excavation (South *et. al. Vasilikos Valley Project 3: Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios II. Ceramics, objects, tombs, specialist studies* 1989), the material from Arediou appears as highly significant in terms of the LC appropriation of these objects.²¹

Does the evidence from Arediou support the notion of inland sites retaining old rural traditions and customs due to their geographic location or offer us insight into the formation of inter/intra island communication and trade networks and the possibility of changing attitudes towards the gaming stones during the LBA and EIA? These variations in the recovery of gaming stones from different BA sites on Cyprus demonstrate that the size and location of settlements does not necessarily determine the presence of these artefacts; rather the date of settlements seems to have been the determining factor in the quantity recovered, as seen above in relation to several EBA and MBA sites. To date most LC sites only offer limited examples, most of which have been re-used in architectural features, incorporated into various domestic structures (Swiny 1986: 36-7, 40-1; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). These examples include the gaming stone built into the wall of a structure at Kalavassos-*Ayios Dhimitrios* (South *et. al.* 1989), the various stones found incorporated into table tops and altars at Kition (Karageorghis 1976: 880; Swiny 1986: 37), the inclusion of one in the coping of a well at Episkopi-*Bamboula* (Weinberg 1983: pl. 8c; Swiny 1986: 37), one used as a threshold to Room 73 at Maa-

²¹ It is now estimated that the site of Arediou-*Vouppes* stretches over an area of approximately 10 hectares (Steel and Thomas In Press), comparable to that of Kalavassos-*Ayios Dhimitrios*; however, it cannot as yet be stated with any certainty that the LBA occupation was continuous over the entire area.

Palaikastro (Karageorghis and Demas 1988: pl. XXXIV) and, of course, the examples from *Arediou-Vouppes* where a gaming stone was found walled into Building 2 in 2006 and all other stratified finds have been found in association with rubble tumble from collapsed buildings (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). This may then provide an answer to why so many of the LBA examples are found incorporated into stone architectural structures. Is it possible that gaming stones were falling out of use due to changing social interests or were they walled into buildings due to personal or religious/ritualistic reasons? This question shall be addressed in more detail at a later point.

As noted, gaming stones appear to be relatively common everyday objects during the BA, the EC to MC periods especially, having been found at a wide range of sites (Swiny 1980, 1986, 2003; Buchholz 1981, 1982; South *et. al.* 1989; Mogelonsky 1996; Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006). These objects were not limited only to the urban or coastal regions of the island, but are found at inland sites such as *Marki-Alonia* (Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006; Webb 1998; Swiny 1986), *Alambra-Mouttes* (Mogelonsky 1996; Swiny 1986) and *Arediou-Vouppes* (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). This geographic distribution does not appear to tie in with the temporal distribution of the stones, as LC sites such as *Arediou-Vouppes* can now be included in the body of data available on inland settlements. However, as noted above, it is generally accepted that the concept and knowledge of these games was originally imported to the island from Egypt and the Middle East, if indirectly. Swiny (1986: 58) argues that as direct contact between Egypt and Cyprus was not established until at least the MC II period, several hundred years later than the earliest appearance of the stones on the island, it is likely that the games were introduced indirectly via possible routes from Syrio-Palestine or, more plausibly in his opinion, from EB II Tarsus in Cilicia.

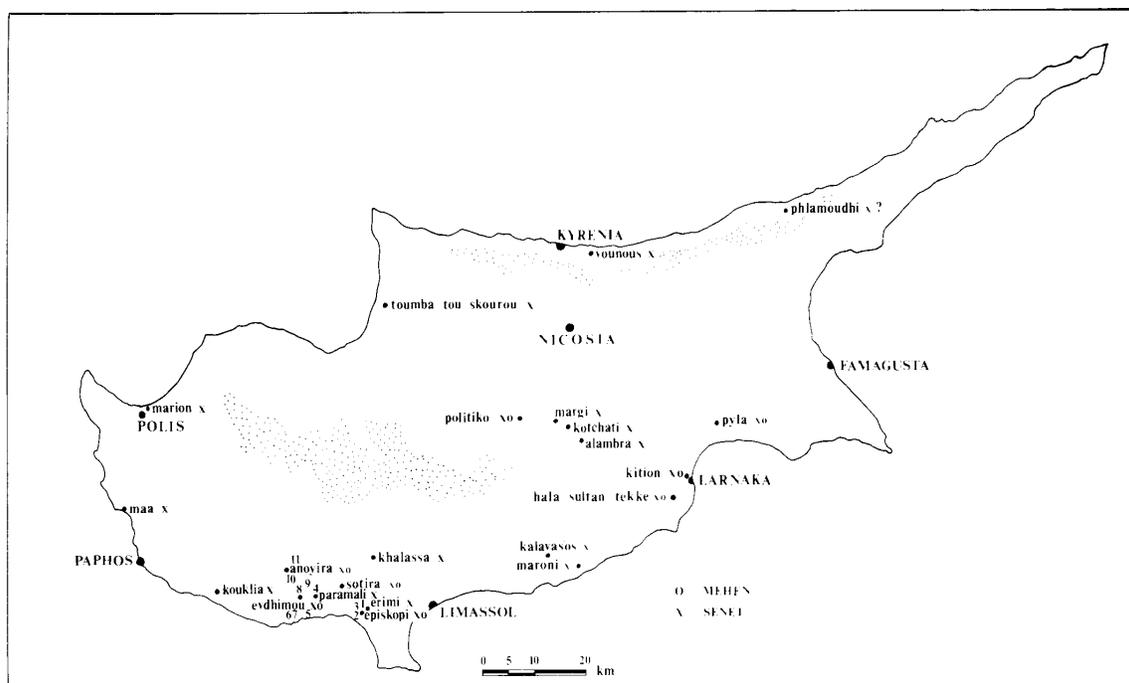


Figure 10: Distribution map of Cypriot *senet* and *mehen* stones (Swiny 1986: fig. 43: e).

It therefore appears strange that as the gaming stone begin apparently to decline in LC contexts or change in their use and significance (not always in parallel to the evidence from Egypt), international communication networks begin to develop as a result of growing trade, due to the increased exploitation of Cypriot copper resources and changing socio-political and economic organisation.²² However, Helms (1988) does not attribute long distant travel and communication simply to relationships of trade but also looks specifically to political-ideological and even cosmological aspects of movement and contact. In so doing she aims to ‘sharpen our awareness of the diversity of underlying contexts, motives, and activities involved in traditional long-distance associations.’

(Helms 1988: 6)

²² This upheaval in the socio-economic organisation of Cyprus and the development of its maritime activity also goes hand in hand with the development of literacy on the island (Swiny 1985; Hirschfeld 2000, 2002; Steel 2004). Evidence for two writing systems, the Linear B and Cypro-Minoan script, grows during this period, several examples of which have been found incised on various LC and imported pottery sherds from Arediou-Vouppes (Steel 2007; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press; Steel and Thomas In Press). A sign belonging to either scrip was found on the handle of a fragment of a LM IIIB stirrup jar, a second on a Plain ware handle and a third on the handle of an imported Canaanite jar (Steel 2007; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press).

This idea concerned with the differences in motivation for long-distance travel ties in with the transferral of knowledge and the understanding of space, both in a practical and esoteric sense. We can then relate it to the way in which information about the gaming stones was brought to Cyprus during the BA. Helms (1988: 8) argues, in agreement with Giddens (1979: 198-225; see also Pinxten, van Dooren and Harvey 1983: 15-16, 159-60), that ‘space (like time) is a dynamic factor in many aspects of social life and, accordingly should be considered more seriously in our formulation of social theory.’ She then links this idea to the passing on of (esoteric) knowledge over long distances and the significance of the acquisition of knowledge in many societies, both past and present (Helms 1988).

Knowledge is often seen to bring power and prestige to those who have the ability to acquire it, usually seen to have come from “afar”, brought to a society by an “outsider”, or gathered by individuals of that society who have travelled long distances to do so. Esoteric knowledge, Helms (1988: 13) argues, is ‘knowledge of the unusual, the exceptional, the extraordinary; knowledge of things that in some way or another lie beyond the familiar everyday world.’ Therefore it is not surprising that such knowledge is often seen as having derived from other lands (Helms 1988: 13). The fact that knowledge of gaming and the gaming stones may have originally entered Cyprus as a form of esoteric knowledge is possible; however, they do quickly appear as mundane objects in the archaeological record at early stages of the BA. Their deeper significance seems to have developed later on in their presence on the island, possibly having accrued religious or cult connotations during later episodes of the BA and EIA (Swiny 1986; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). As seen, the example from Kition-*Kathari* may support this interpretation, as might the instance of one found in the temple to Aphrodite at Amathus (Swiny 1986: 37, 2003: 232-3; Aupert 1997: 21, fig. 3; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press). As noted above, this change in attitude may also be supported by the inclusion of gaming stones into built structures and possible foundation deposits, as witnessed at *Arediou-Vouppes* (Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press).

Other issues involved may concern the invention of separate games, possibly relating to *senet* and *mehen*, having taken on their own form, and how they occurred. As Swiny (1986: 34) notes in relation to *senet* type stones: ‘Although it is obvious that the stones and terracotta with 10x3 divisions form a remarkably homogenous group, there are a few examples which either represent aberrations or rare occurrences of altogether different games.’ These anomalous stones include the example of a surface find from Episkopi-*Bamboula* (Swiny 1986: 34, fig. 35, 55: a) on which five parallel rows of 10, 8, 8, 7, and 6 depressions are noticeable. Swiny (1986: 34) notes that the rows on the left of the stone are slightly more regularly executed than those on the right, thus suggesting that this side may have originally been intended for a *senet* board (Swiny 1986: 34). A commonly recognised type of anomalous stone found at BA sites in the Maroni area is that made up of four rows of 10 hollows, again a possible regional variation on *senet*. However, Swiny (1986: 35) does note that the fourth row is often less carefully executed and regularly remains unfinished, suggesting that it simply represents a mistake. However, an interesting addition to these finds is that of the stone found in association with a tomb at Amathus (Aupert 1997: 20-21: fig. 3). It is adorned with 12 depressions arranged in three lines of 4, as Aupert (1997: 20) states, ‘a unique disposition.’²³ The site of Anoyira-*Peralijithias* has produced yet another interesting example; this triangular stone has a total of 47 peck marks arranged in parallel rows also forming a triangular shape on its surface (Swiny 1986: 35, fig. 55: d)²⁴. Swiny (1986: 35) states that ‘[u]nless the stone represents the idle doodling of some post-Bronze Age shepherd who noticed the 10x3 motif on local stones and was influenced by it, we can consider this as a MC aberration and an ingenious variation of the canonical 10x3 arrangement.’ Another unusual stone was also recovered from Episkopi-*Phaneromeni*; this surface find found in Area G (Swiny 1976: 55, fig. 5, 1986: 34) may have been made post-BA, however, Swiny (1986: 34) argues that the workmanship is typically BA. It consists of four rows of between 9 and 10 depressions. Swiny (1986: 34) suggests that ‘the additional row may indicate that the original pattern consisted of a whole series of lines with random numbers of depressions.’

²³ Such unique patterning may suggest an entirely different type of game, possibly something which developed in the early stages of the IA.

²⁴ For further detail on this stone see Swiny (1986: 35)

Thus far seven of the eight stones recovered from Arediou-*Vouppes* fit into the main category of the 10x3 or *senet* type, however, stone AV04-05-01²⁵, a doubled sided example, has the spiral or *mehen* pattern on one side, and four parallel rows of approximately 6, 9, 9, and 8 depressions respectively on the other, although the ends of each row are very difficult to distinguish. Could this be an example of an error or a local variation on the game of *senet*? Is the stones' double sided nature of import in this instance? Swiny (1986: 32) notes in relation to the *senets* from Episkopi-*Phaneromeni*, with only two exceptions²⁶, that '[i]f more than one surface is worked (fig. 34), one motif is always more carelessly executed, incomplete or partially effaced and no variation in the basic arrangement is recorded.' This may also be the case in this example from Arediou-*Vouppes*, however, it could also signify something else.

If these games were appropriated but then later changed according to regional variation, distortion in the transferral of knowledge, or personal preference, could this also be linked to the transferral of esoteric knowledge and relations of power and ideology? If so why did certain BA societies decide to alter the games at all when such effort had been expended in acquiring the knowledge originally? Or was it a case of gradual transferral over time, in which case much distortion and natural change may have occurred? As noted above, the appearance of the first gaming stones on Cyprus during the Chalcolithic and EBA do not show any obvious signs of accrued significance or status and it is not until later that they may have been elevated to positions of standing in LBA and EIA society. However, through an appropriation of Helms (1988) work such as this anthropological data can be applied to elucidate material culture acquired through archaeological investigations.

²⁵ Further details given below.

²⁶ S179, 244, 280 and 91 (Swiny 1986: 32: figs. 40, 41)

THE GAMING STONES FROM AREDIOU-VOUPPES

Registration Number	Unit	Context	Condition	Size	Type
AV04-05-01	1110/1020	0	Good/worn	15.5x25x7.8cm	<i>senet?/mehen</i> (double sided)
AV05-06-03	1121/997	24	Damaged but good	10.5- 10.15x12.5x6cm	<i>senet</i>
AV05-06-04	1040/1100	0	Damaged/good/worn	13x12x9-12cm	<i>senet</i>
AV07-06-01	1069/1035	E. wall Building 2	Damaged/highly worn, eroded	10-12.5x17.5- 14.5x2.5-4cm	<i>senet</i>
AV06-06-01	1069/998	93	Good/intact	27x16x7cm	<i>senet</i>
AV06-06-02	1969/998	98	Damaged but good	20x16x7.5cm	<i>senet</i>

Table 1: The gaming stones from Arediou-Vouppes. (Appendix 1)²⁷

Gaming stone AV04-05-01, reference to which has been made above, was found during intensive site survey in 2004 (on the boundary between Fields 4 and 5) and shows signs of weathering and damaged; the corner of one end of the stone has been badly chipped, it now measures 15.5 x 25 x 7.8cm. This piece is of great interest, as noted above, as it appears to have been a double sided board showing parallels to other stones found elsewhere at Episkopi-Phaneromeni (Swiny 1986), Marki-Alonia (Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006), Alambra-Mouttes (Mogelonsky 1996) and Sotira-Kaminoudhia (Swiny 2003). A sizeable piece, it displays, as previously noted, what appears to be the spiral pattern of *mehen* on one side and the parallel rows of *senet* or a similar game on the other (Fig. 9, Appendix 1, Pl. 1). It is difficult to make out the exact number of indentations on either side and the additional row of peck marks on the side thought to represent a *senet* board may suggest a possible regional variation or an entirely different game altogether,

²⁷ As noted, the seventh and eighth gaming stones from the site have not been included in this table as they have not been recorded or catalogued. Reference to these stones shall only be made in passing.

as seen above. However, the similarities it bears to both *senet* and *mehen* are unmistakable. As a surface find it offers potential problems with contextualisation and preservation, however, it is important at this stage to consider how such artefacts end up as surface finds²⁸. Discounting the seventh and eighth gaming stones, a further gaming stone has also been found on the surface²⁹. Once again, they have caused certain interpretational difficulties, but both gaming stones recovered from the survey have also added to the general collection, allowing us to recognise these artefacts as important aspects to the sites overall material make up.

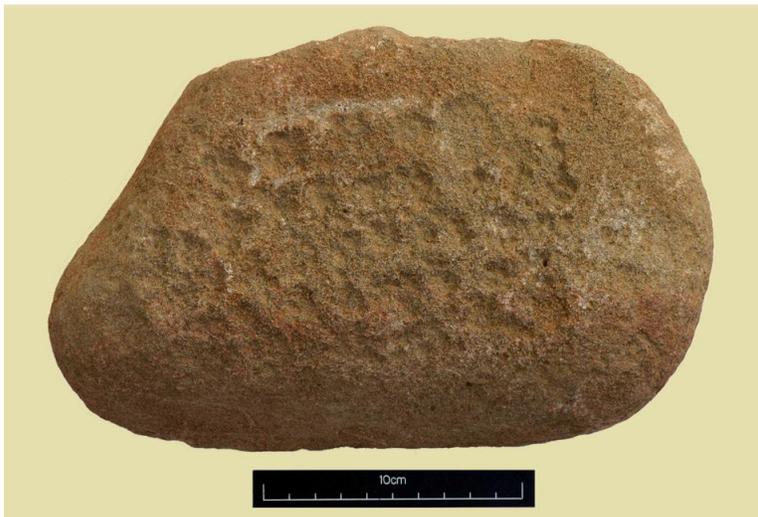


Figure 11: AV04-05-01 displaying the four rows of worn indentations suggesting it may have been a variation of a *senet* board. (Steve Thomas)

A fragment of a second and incomplete gaming stone (AV05-06-03) was located during the early stages of excavation in 2005, in trial Unit 1121/995. Located in context [24], directly under the surface, it was associated with a large quantity of building collapse and consistently with 13th century material. Preservation in this general area of the site appears good; however, less than half of the stone survives, although the remaining depressions are still clearly visible (Appendix 1, Pl. 2). It is roughly triangular in shape and measures 10.5-10.15x12.5x6cm. The three rows of remaining indentations adorning

²⁸As much of the site remains very close to the surface, finds of this nature are not uncommon. Much of the original morphology of the site has change dramatically due to the longevity of certain farming practices such as ploughing, planting and animal herding in the immediate area and as mentioned previously, much material can be found though field walking and site survey. Excavation on this site is indeed a last resort to support the evidence for settlement and occupation accrued through unobtrusive means.

²⁹AV05-06-04.

the surface are roughly pecked and unevenly spaced, amounting to 13 in total, 2 of which have been cut through by the break in the stone (it now stands flat on the broken end) (Appendix 1, Pl. 2). It was originally a *senet*, possibly damaged during pre-depositional disturbance. However, the damage to the stone may also have occurred during the LBA occupation of the site. If so it may have then been walled into the building found in Unit 1121/995, as its use as a gaming stone would have been cut short. The fact that it was associated with building collapse, underneath which a wall was found, aligned on the same angle as the walls of Buildings 1 and 2 at a depth of 0.5m and numerable pottery sherds, suggests that this area of the site may have been of significant import to its overall make up³⁰. Based on the existing ceramic evidence it could be argued that it may have been a domestic area, with “industrial” activity and storage to the west³¹. The presence of the gaming stone may then be easier to understand. However, if it was walled following damage this would suggest that the specific purpose for the building was irrelevant and, as an easily portable object when still in use, its owner(s) could simply have carried it around with him/her when necessary, once again making the specific area’s function superfluous in any direct interpretation of the artefact itself. This is an issue which shall be considered in more detail at a later date.

Approximately half of a third gaming stone (AV05-06-04) was found on the surface adjacent to the NW corner of the barn in Field 2 in 2005 (Fig. 10, Appendix 1, Pl. 3). Despite the fact that it appears to have been broken in half, the surviving indentations are easy to make out; extant it measures 13 x 12 x 9-12cm. Rectangular in shape it is another example of a possible *senet* stone with slightly rounded corners. As noted, its surface has been adorned with a pattern of peck marks running in three paralleled lines; these total 18, suggesting that the stone was broken approximately half way along its playing surface, rendering it useless as a gaming stone. As it was located on the surface it once again poses problems in terms of reconstructing its original context and assisting in the peopling of the site through the example of the gaming stones. There is no direct

³⁰ Associated finds include large pithos rim sherds and small pieces of fine ware, such as Mycenaean pottery, a plain ware jug handle and kitchen material. However, it is difficult to ascertain more clearly the significance of this area as only a small section was uncovered during excavation.

³¹ This area will be the focus of further excavation in 2008.

evidence to suggest that this stone was used in construction, rather it seems to have simply been discarded once broken, however, once again we should consider the various taphonomic processes which material culture from the archaeological record undergoes. In this instance the gaming stone has been badly damaged. Due to its presence on the surface it does show signs of wear, however, generally speaking its overall preservation is good. Purposeful deposition is probably, however, unintentional deposition caused by either humans or natural processes is also possible. We cannot offer any information on its original position on the site, however, we can comment on similar processes of transformation, deposition and preservation. It could therefore be argued by association that this gaming stone is contemporary with the others found at *Arediou-Vouppes* and was a likely part of its LBA cultural assemblage, therefore adding to the site's social and material make up.



Figure 12: AV05-06-04 displaying three rows of indentations. The stone has been broken and now only has a total of 18 depressions. (Steve Thomas)

Part of a fourth gaming stone (AV07-06-01) was discovered during the excavation of Building 2 in Field 4 in 2006. It was set into the foundations of the west wall as a header

stone and remains *in situ* (Fig. 11)³². It appears to be a broken fragment of a *senet*, displaying three rows of 7 indentations which can only be seen in certain lights due to its bad state of preservation. It has been chipped on the top right corner, suggesting that originally it was of the 10x3 design but had suffered considerable damage before being placed in the wall. It measures 10-12.5 x 17.5-14.5 x 2.5-4cm and is roughly rectangular in shape, however, as noted one corner has been badly chipped.



Figure 13: AV07-06-01 *in situ* in the west wall of Building 2. (Loveday Allen)

As noted above, the incorporation of damaged and undamaged gaming stones into built structures appears as a regular occurrence at Arediou-*Vouppes* and other LBA sites. Were they simply chosen due to their appropriate shape or was there a more significant reason? Was this intentional deposition or the simple appropriation of useful pieces of stone? One possibility is that objects such as gaming stones and other personal possessions were placed in the foundations and walls of buildings during construction as a means by which to commemorate the individual(s) to whom it belong and to prolong its life, or as a form of time capsule or keepsake. We still regularly come across such examples in many cultures; builders often intentionally deposit objects in walls as a way to prolong a

³² For this reason it has only been photographed rather than drawn.

memory and leave their mark. A possible personal exercise only known to the individual or a public event orchestrated by the larger group. Herva (2005) looks at the building deposits intentionally placed in Minoan architecture on Crete and argues that buildings and objects can be seen as living organisms. He relates the deposits to a conscious effort to engage with the life-cycle of the buildings and moves away from the traditional view that they were concerned with ritual behaviour. He proposes an alternative argument which focuses on an ecological approach...

...which allows for a degree of sociality between humans and non-human entities and treats building deposits as an essential practical means of manipulating the relations between humans and the (built) environment in situations of potential stress. (Herva 2005: 215)

The same could be argued for the Cypriot LBA, and it could also be said that we can relate to such practices today. This realisation will then allow us to imagine the people who may have acted in such a way, demonstrating aspects of a society which could ultimately allow us to see the faces and identities of a living community. Objects and things have often been related to people in a biographical sense and are often seen to take on human attributes and *vice versa* (Malinowski 1922; Mauss (1954); Appadurai (1986); Kopytoff (1986); Strathern 1988; Weiner 1992; Hoskins 1998, 2006). However, it is also difficult to assess to actual level of intentionality and therefore meaning behind such actions; were these objects meant as foundation deposits, possibly made to facilitate social memory on a group or individual basis? If so did the builders know they were walling gaming stones into their buildings? These are questions which will be addressed at a later stage.

A fifth gaming stone (AV06-06-01), this time complete, was discovered in the removal of rubble from a tumbled wall at the southern end of Building 2, in context [93] (Fig. 12, Appendix 1, Pl. 4). Pushed into the SW corner of the trench the tumble rose steeply from the natural surface up to the remains of the wall. In this mass of fallen stone the gaming stone was located along with several other objects of significance, one of which was the intact handle and shoulders of a large plain ware jug, buried as a possible foundation

deposit under the wall in context [93]. This once again poses questions concerned with the intentionality and signified meaning behind this possible tradition of foundation deposits on the site. Such finds do demonstrate that even if this gaming stone was not built into the wall itself, there appears to have been a tradition of depositing objects of a personable nature in the foundations of built structures.



Figure 14: AV06-06-01 demonstrating a whole *senet* with an additional hollow at one end. (Steve Thomas)

An elongated oval stone, larger than some, measuring approximately 27 x 16 x 7cm, was found in a good state of repair and shows far less signs of weathering than most. Although it is slightly worn in places the surface indentations are clear; these are arranged in the now familiar three rows of 10;

however, this time there is also an extra hollow at the end of the stone,

presumably to keep gaming pieces in. Examples of sites where additional depressions of this nature have been noted on several gaming stones include *Sotira-Kaminoudhia* (Swiny 2003), *Alambra-Mouttes* (Mogelonsky 1996), *Marki-Alonia* (Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006), *Kalavastos-Ayios Dhimitrios* (South *et al* 1989) and *Evdhimou-Beyouk Tarla*, *Anoyira-Peralijithias* and *Episkopi-Phaneromeni* (Swiny 1986) among others. Swiny (1986: 32) notes in relation to the *senets* from *Episkopi-Phaneromeni*:

[T]he criteria governing the position of the complimentary depressions are the size and shape of the stone rather than an inherent pre-established pattern. If the stone is elongated, the hollows are placed at one end, but if broad and irregular, they tend to be located at one side.

The above evidence may suggest continued use as a gaming board, however, due to the stones position in the tumble and its largely unworn appearance, it could be argued that it had also formed part of the general foundation deposit (as discussed above), similar to AV07-06-01, built into the lower structure of the east wall. In which case we are faced

with a similar dilemma regarding its status in the society of LBA Arediou-Vouppes. I argue for intentional deposition for personal reasons involving the memories and actions invested in objects and buildings as seen above in relation to Herva's (2005) comments concerning the intentionality in building deposits and the idea of the life-cycle of built structures. This can also be linked to Weiner's (1992) work on inalienable possessions.

Another suggestion could be that these gaming stones were in some instances constructed *in situ* and used on a temporary basis, to be covered over as the building progressed. If this was the case then it could be argued that even as the gaming stone was imbued with social memory, it was also suppressed, intentionally perhaps, for '[C]onstructing memory...entails diverse moments of modification, reuse, ignoring and forgetting, and investing with new meaning' (Meskell 2004: 63), all of which would have been achieved through the stones inclusion in a wall or foundation. (Appendix 2)

A sixth and again damaged gaming stone (AV06-06-02) was discovered lying as if discarded amongst the tumble of yet another wall, this time in Building 1 context [98]. It once again poses similar questions to those above in relation to the practice of foundation deposits and inclusion into built structures. It is 20x16x75cm and has an eroded surface, but the remaining depressions are clearly visible (Appendix 1, Pl. 5). Irregularly arranged, they once again amount to 18 in three roughly parallel rows of 6, suggesting that it was a *senet* stone which was either badly damaged, an unfinished example, or simply an anomaly. The evidence suggests that these examples of apparently incomplete gaming stones are damaged versions of *senet* boards. It would also appear that the damage often occurred on the sixth row, leaving 18 indentations intact. Is this significant? Could we argue that damage was caused intentionally to these stones or is it simply coincidental that thus far two have been discovered broken in the same place? Once again we can find parallels in Swiny's work (1980, 1986). This area of Unit 1068/998 has been identified as a production site or series of workshops, possibly used in

the processing of grain and other food stuffs. Was the gaming stone kept there because these people also had time for leisure?³³ (Appendix 2)

As noted, evidence suggests that this section of Field 3 is likely to have accommodated production on quite a large scale; however, other areas of the site, for example parts of Fields 4 and 5, have yielded architecture slightly more in keeping with ideas of domestic living. Still further, certain areas within Field 3 and Unit 1068/998 itself have also provided certain artefacts which may be assumed to carry domestic associations, such as cooking pots and small storage jars. This further demonstrates that the site was neither purely for production or domestic purposes, but rather both. We can therefore suggest that it followed the norm for small inland settlements with environmental advantages on their side, being able to produce enough surplus with which to trade, and therefore also enabling the community to enjoy periods of rest acquired through the profits of exchange. Thus we turn to the gaming stones and they no longer appear as such anomalies, but rather as normal objects made and used by a successful, peaceful community with a little time to spare for leisure pursuits. Gaming stone AV06-06-02 was located in the area of the trench which has been interpreted as a courtyard at the centre of the cluster of workshops and storerooms, surrounded by a sheltered portico (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press). Is it possible that it was found there after having been discarded by someone returning to work inside one of the workshops? In which case, we could return to the realm of imagination and picture the scene of two workers, sitting outside in the shade of the portico, enjoying their break over a quick game of *senet*. And as social archaeologists why should we not envisage such scenes?

³³ Such activities are not something often associated with production sites, however, it must be remembered that this site was also partly domestic and probably inhabited all year round, suggesting it was more than simply a settlement based on producing goods for the copper mines, it was also a community in its own right.

THE HISTORY OF GAMING STONES
AN OVERVIEW OF THE CYPRIOT GAMING STONES

Finkel (2007: 1) has commented in relation to the first archaeological examples of gaming stones, discovered during the excavation of the pre-pottery Neolithic sites in the Middle East dating from approximately 7000 BC. He notes that:

Form the context of their discovery, it is evident that their appearance on the stage of human social evolution coincides with the development of structured and sedentary communal living, associated with shared responsibility and labour. It is under these circumstances that *leisure* first makes itself apparent, and it is surely leisure that is the prime requirement for the invention and play of board games.

Despite the early appearance of gaming stones in the Near East and Egypt, they do not become common in the Cypriot archaeological record until the Chalcolithic (Erimi Culture – ECU) and EBA, (Philia Culture – EC), c. 3900-2000 BCE (Swiny 2003: 7). On their introduction to Cyprus they gradually developed within the culture and spread inland, eventually becoming totally immersed in the BA society (Swiny 1980, 1986, 2003; Carpenter 1981; Buchholz 1982; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004). This can then be argued to be related to the growth in maritime travel and the exchange of goods during the period (Knapp 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b; Karageorghis 1996; Steel 2004). At this stage of the archaeological record, their appearance on the islands quickly becomes a common sight and as Swiny (1986: 32) has commented: ‘if the rate of discovery continues unabated, Bronze Age settlements without gaming stones will be the exception rather than the rule!’ This is a very telling remark and supports the notion that these were everyday objects during the EC/MC periods at least, despite the fact that their purpose and function during the LC period may have changed. We, as archaeologist, should therefore recognise this and in turn use the gaming stones to demonstrate how material culture functions as more than an indicator for passive human action. As seen from Finkel’s (2007: 1) comment above, the prevalence of these items can assist us in developing a deeper understanding of how the society functioned and at what level the people interacted with one another, on an individual and group basis.

The Cypriot evidence is by no means insignificant in this great body of material and as such deserves further attention. As Morris and Papadopoulos (2004: 232) have stated, ‘Cyprus has produced some of the most important examples linking games of the Bronze and Iron Age’. Due to the fact that the Cypriot gaming stones are largely attributed to Egyptian games, much research has been done on the spread of these games (Swiny 1980, 1986; Finkel 2007; Kendall 2007; Piccione 1980, 1990a, 1990b, 2007; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004). The diffusion of the originally Egyptian games of *senet* and *mehen* was wide spread, reaching both the Aegean and the Mediterranean (Morris and Papadopoulos 2004; Finkel 2007). Many of the Cypriot gaming stones have associations with both *senet* and *mehen*, thus supporting the evidence for international diffusion. However, as Frankel and Webb (1996: 87) have noted in relation to the spiral stone from Lemba-*Lakkous*:

The 3x10 game appears to have been introduced to Cyprus early in the Bronze Age from Anatolia or the Levant, although the mechanisms of this transfer remain uncertain (Swiny 1986a: 58-59). The recovery of a spiral stone from a mid-third millennium context at Lemba *Lakkous* indicates a somewhat earlier date for the arrival of this type (Peltenberg 1985: 289, Fig. 86.3, Pl. 48.2).

Thus, as previously noted despite the games original connections to Egypt it is more likely that they were introduced to Cyprus during their general diffusion across the wider geographical area, likely coming from Anatolia or the Levant as Swiny (1986) and Frankel and Webb (1996) have suggested. Tracing the legacy of their past, however, is but one element in the study of gaming stones, and it may remove much of the personable nature from such research when considered in isolation. Background knowledge is essential, but why stop there?³⁴

³⁴ This is a trait of macroscale archaeology, which invariably only considers monumental events and actions. Microscale archaeology, on the other hand, allows for a more precise look at one subject, so that details otherwise missed might be noted (Tringham 1991). It is also important to remember that microscale archaeology, such as that which would focus specifically on the household, for example, carries influence beyond its perceived boundaries, thus giving it greater significance in the general scheme of things: ‘In recognising the rich variability of social arrangements, dominance structures, and tensions produced in the social relations at this “domestic” scales, we see immediately that it is necessary never to forget that action at a microscale is an essential part of the social relations of production at larger scales, such as the village and the region and the known (unknown) world.’ (Tringham 1991: 102)

The Cypriot examples of *senet* appear as a stone or board adorned with three rows of 10 indentations, creating 30 small hollows in total, arranged across the surface of the stone in parallel lines (Swiny 1980, 1986, 2003; Carpenter 1981; Buchholz 1982; Monelonsky 1996; Frankel and Webb 1996; Piccione 2007). Piccione (2007: 54) has stated that this pattern rarely changed in over 3000 years and was the main identifying point of the game (in an Egyptian context which was then expanded to include the Cypriot variation as well as others). Kendall (2007: 33), when speaking in relation to the tomb of Hesy-Re at North Sappara from the Third Dynasty, has commented that the game of *senet* was first identified from the ‘elaborate offering list bearing the names of many of the same objects depicted in the earlier tombs.’ He states:

At the top of Hesy-Re’s tableau appears a game that was played on a rectangular board of thirty squares, the surface of which is marked off into three rows of ten. Besides it is an ebony box of playing pieces for the two opponents. Between the pieces is a set of four elongated rods, which can be recognised as a set of two-sided dice sticks of a type still in use in the Nile Valley. From Rahotep’s offering list and other references, we know this was called *zn.t* (*senet*) or ‘to pass’, or simply ‘passing’. Of the three games pictured, it is by far the best known and can be followed in the archaeological record almost uninterrupted throughout pharonic history. (Kendall 2007: 33)

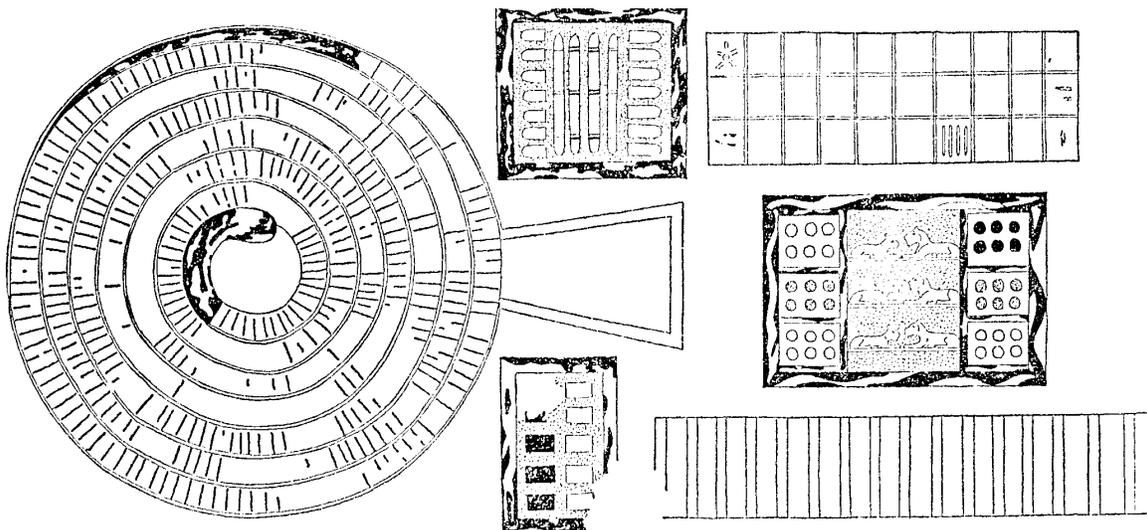


Figure 15: The board games painted in the Third Dynasty tomb of Hesy-Re, approximately 2700BC (Kendall 2007: 32, Fig. 4.1 after Emery 1961: 251, Fig. 150).

Egyptian *senet* boards are often far more decorative and complex than the Cypriot examples, including hieroglyphic symbols presumed to bear connection to the game (Wilkinson 1992).

Senet appears to have been a two person game, in which the players would sit opposite each other with the board situated between them (Swiny 1986; Wilkinson 1992; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004; Piccione 2007). Cypriot evidence comes in part from the existence of threshold stones bearing the *senet* arrangement, such as the examples from *Alambra-Mouttes*, *Maa-Palaeokastro*, and the probable example from *Evdhimou-*



Figure 16: Details of threshold stone from *Evdhimou-Stympouli* (Swiny 1986: Fig. 54: d).

Stympouli (Swiny 1986: Fig. 54: d; Monelonsky 1996). A white stone threshold has also been found in the entrance of Building 1 at *Arediou-Vouppes* which may signify the use of specific stone for such a purpose (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press), but as yet has not yielded any evidence of

markings relating to gaming stones. The positioning of the threshold gaming stones noted above however, would allow for no more than two people to sit opposite each other in the course of play (Swiny 1980, 1986) further supporting the fact that it was likely a two person game (Swiny 1986; Wilkinson 1992; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004; Piccione 2007). (Appendix 3)

Mehen is likely to have occurred earlier, during the Chalcolithic period (Peltenburg 1982, 1985; Swiny 1986, 2003; Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006). These boards, as previously noted, bear a spiral arrangement, often ending with a larger indentation at the centre,

which in more elaborate boards often takes the shape of a snake's head (Fig. 13) (Piccione 1990b; Kendall 2007).³⁵

Spiral stones have been discovered on several BA sites on Cyprus (Swiny 1980, 1986; Monelonsky 1996; Frankel and Webb 1996) including on one face of the double sided stone from Arediou-Vouppes (AV04-05-01; Appendix 1, Pl. 1). However, once again, they are far less elaborate than those found in Egypt, the snake symbolism still visible but in a far less obvious or standardised form. This game appears to have followed a far less rigid typology to *senet*, with no standardisation in size or the number of peck marks (Swiny 1986; Kendall 2007). However, despite this fact Kendall (2007: 34) argues that it has, of the three game types found in Hesy-Re's tomb, 'perhaps the most enigmatic history.' (Fig. 13) At present in Egypt only fourteen specimens of the *mehen* game board have been found, other evidence coming largely from tomb paintings and offering lists such as in the case of Hesy-Re's tomb. This is likely to suggest that these boards were mainly constructed from wood or other perishable materials³⁶. In Cyprus, however, stone

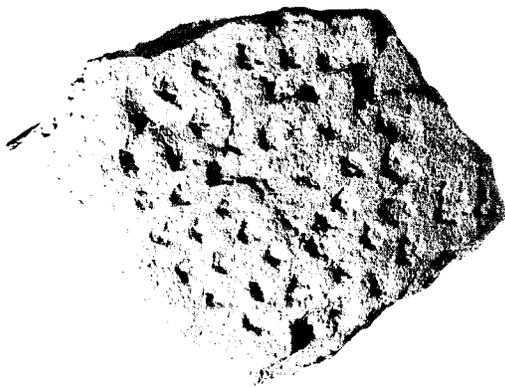


Figure 17: Spiral Gaming Stone S13 from Marki-Alonia (Frankel and Webb 2006: 245, Fig. 6.49).

examples are relatively prevalent, if not quite so common as the rectilinear 10x3 examples and have been found at a large number of sites across the island including Lemb-Lakkous (Peltenburg 1982, 1985; Swiny 1986, 2003), Sotira-Kaminoudhia (Swiny 1986, 2003), Marki-Alonia (Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006; Swiny 1986, 2003), Hula Sultan Tekke (Åstrom 1984; Swiny 1986), Dhenia-Kafkalla (Swiny 1986, 2003), Kition-Kathari (Karageorghis 1976; Swiny 1986, 2003), Politiko-Tamassos (Swiny 1986) and Episkopi-Phaneromeni (Swiny 1986, 2003). However, as Frankel and Webb (1996: 87) comment:

³⁵ The word *mehen* or *mhn* comes from the ancient Egyptian word "coiled" or, as a noun, the "Coiled One" (Pace 1983; Piccione 1990b; Kendall 2007: 34), and as Kendall (2007: 34) has commented 'the playing surface takes the form of a coiled snake, its tail on the outside and its head in the middle.'

³⁶ However, Swiny (1986: 56) does note that with the end of the Old Kingdom, approximately 2180 BC, *mehen* appears to fall out of favour, only to remerge in Twentieth-Sixth Dynasty funerary scenes, possibly providing a reason for the apparent lack of the actual boards in Egyptian contexts.

The proportion of spiral to rectilinear stones at Marki, at 4:15, is similar to that from other sites where gaming stones have been recovered in substantial numbers (9:41 at Episkopi-*Phaneromeni*, 1:8 at Alambra-*Mouttes* and 3:34 at Sotira-*Kaminoudhia*).

This is similar to the percentage of *mehen* stones to *senet* stones at Arediou-*Vouppes*, there being only one example found thus far at the site, and this a double sided gaming stone also showing a *senet* on the reverse (AV04-05-01; Appendix 1, Pl. 1). This may signify a similarity to the lack of Egyptian stone *mehen* boards, suggesting that they may have been made from a different, more perishable material, or suggest perhaps that the game was simply not as popular as *senet*. One comparable factor in the Cypriot examples of *mehen* stones is that they are often too large to be easily moved or are indeed immovable features pecked into the bedrock (Swiny 1986, 2003), suggesting the game was consistently played in the same space. This may suggest that the community actively created spaces given over to entertainment and leisure pursuits and could demonstrate a cognitive thought process which accompanied the notion of gaming, instilling social rules and structures which were maintained and upheld during play. This could be linked to Bachelard's (1964) concept of the poetics of space and how those who inhabit and use that space signify it with lived experience. However, other examples of the *mehen* type of gaming stone, similar to that from Arediou-*Vouppes*, are smaller and easier to manoeuvre, demonstrating that these objects were also of a portable nature which allowed the player to set up a game in any given location. This view may be more appropriate for Arediou-*Vouppes* as it does not appear to have been predominantly domestic, and as such most spaces would have been given over to work related tasks as opposed to leisure pursuits; but to recognise the potential of space and how it is created and used is of importance in this type of archaeological investigation. 'Space has been characterized as a "morphic language" used by societies to communicate and interpret the relationships between groups (Hillier and Hanson 1984)' (Bolger 2003: 21), it has been used to demonstrate the importance of the (built) environment and the humanly constructed layers of social, economic, political and religious organisation (Moore 1986; Price 1999; Bolger 2003). Therefore it is essential in an understanding of the formation of societies both past and present.

Despite their lack of decoration, style or consistency, and their marked difference to the examples from Egypt, the *mehen* gaming stones can give us much needed evidence on the form this game may have taken. As seen, it had the potential to be both portable and permanent, as too did *senet*, the players were not governed by standardisation, and as such were free to interpret the rules and pattern of the board as they willed, presenting possibilities concerned with ideas of cognition and understanding. As seen, stones bearing the *mehen* pattern were initially interpreted as offering tables (Karageorghis 1976), however, this notion has since been squashed to due their size and nature (Swiny 1986). Swiny (1986: 57) also notes that if used specifically for religious purposes it is likely that more time and care would have been taken in the making of the boards. However, there is some Cypriot evidence to place *mehen*, and for that matter *senet* stones in funerary settings, for example the various 10x3 and spiral stones found pecked into the bedrock around the *dromoi* of the large cemetery at Dhenia-Kafkalla (Swiny 2003: 232) and the examples of gaming stones incorporated into religious/funerary contexts at both Kition and Amathus as noted above (Swiny 1986, 2003: 232-233; Aupert 1997: 20, fig. 3). This therefore suggests that although gaming stones may well have changed in their significance and meaning, they were still used following the BA at major IA cult centres (Swiny 2003: 233).

There are also arguments to suggest that gaming stones may have provided the community with a basic form of calendar, a device which would have greatly benefited a settlement reliant on agriculture and farming. Possible supporting evidence comes from Tell Farah, Gezer and Lachish in the Levant (Swiny 1986). Each site has provided examples of small bone plaques with loops for possible suspension and 30 holes drilled into the face (Swiny 1986: 44, fig. 42f.). Of IA date, they have been interpreted as calendars by Petrie (1930: 31), who states ‘[T]he calendar tablet of bone 481 shows the Egyptian reckoning of the month as 10x3 days. This is curiously like a modern day Javanese calendar board.’

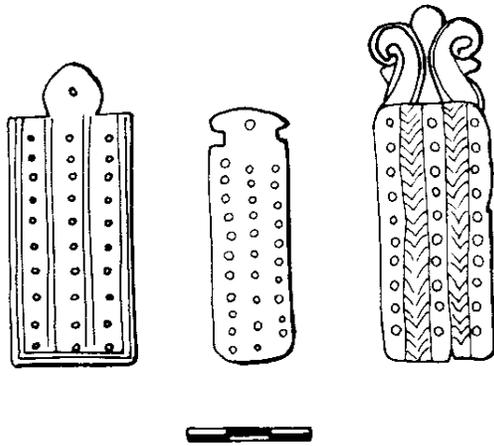


Figure 18: Ivory plaques, interpreted as possible calendars, from Lachish, Gezer and Tell Farah in Israel (Swiny 1986: Fig. 42: f).

Interpretation has been left open by others, who suggest either a calendar or gaming use (Swiny 1986: 44). Swiny (1986: 44) does note, however, that ‘[I]t might be interesting to note that at both sites the associated material includes Cypriot pottery.’ Despite the intrigue that a form of BA/IA calendar may offer, it is difficult to confirm this speculation, especially in relation to the *mehen* boards, where, as noted above, standardisation was lacking.

Interpretations of a similar vain could argue that the *senet* boards may have also acted as counting devices or form of abacus, allowing the owners to keep track of crop production and yield, for example. As Swiny (1986: 48) notes, ‘[T]en is a significant number if a decimal system common to those in the Middle East were in use (Neugebauer 1969: 17).’ This would then follow with the Cypriot preoccupation with incorporating foreign notions into their own culture for their benefit (Swiny 1986: 48), or possible distortion brought about through the transferral of information from one culture to another. However, if this interpretation is accepted it inevitably overlooks the evidence for gaming offered by the double sided boards. Swiny (1986: 57) argues that double sided boards offer the most plausible evidence for a connection with Egypt. He then comments that ‘[T]he concept of dual function gaming boards can be traced throughout the history of the Orient down to the present day.’ (Swiny 1986: 57).

Returning to the above mentioned alternative interpretations for the stones Swiny (1986: 49) concludes in relation to the *senet* examples by remarking that ‘[F]inally the most satisfactory explanation is also the simplest. Accounting, reckoning the time, or religious beliefs are less likely reasons for the motif than the simple desire for recreation!’ This statement precisely summarises the reason for the popularity of the gaming stones and their continued existence on Cyprus. Why does it always appear as necessary in such investigations of archaeological material to provide highly complex hypothesis as to the

purpose and function of such items? Is it not enough that humanity will inevitably crave enjoyment?

*RECOGNISING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GAMING STONES AND REMOVING
THE 'FACELESS BLOBS':
MATERIAL CULTURE AS MORE THAN PASSIVE REFLECTIONS OF HUMAN
ACTION*

As seen, Swiny (1986: 41) has argued that although approximately 200 stones and a terracotta have been found displaying the 10x3 design, 'primary evidence is lacking as to their purpose and function.' In light of his highly detailed and informative work as referred to above, this statement appear out of place. He continues (1986: 41) that although on occasion the motif was included in 'the paraphernalia of a MC burial...elsewhere the associations are domestic.' Indeed, Frankel and Webb (1996: 86-87) commented that, all of the 194 *senets* from thirty-three Bronze Age sites and 24

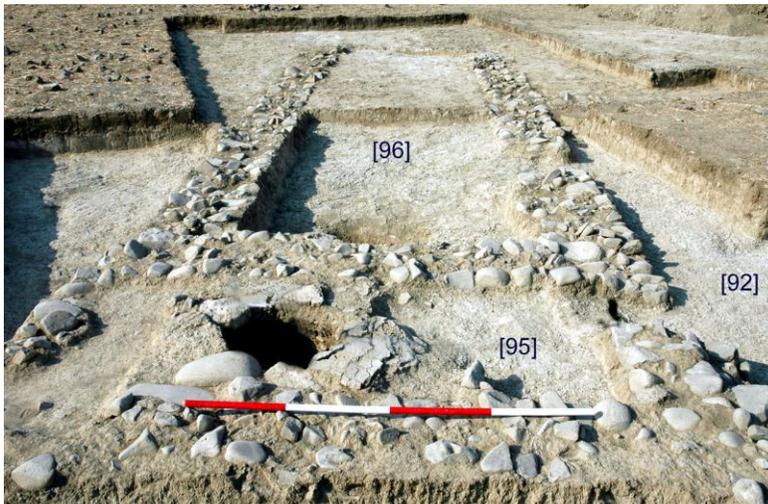


Figure 19: Unit 1069/1035 where two of the gaming stones were found (AV06-06-01 ([93] – foreground) and AV07-06-01 (west wall of Building 2 [96]). (Steve Thomas)

mehens from twelve sites, identified by Swiny (1980, 1986) and Buchholz (1981, 1982), with the exception of 3, came from domestic contexts. This is one aspect where Arediou-Vouppes may differ; although domestic and funerary contexts exist on the site, thus far all of the gaming stones have been

located in work/production related contexts, built into the walls and foundations of rooms or simply as dislodged surface finds. This reiterates the point made previously stating that all earlier work on gaming stones has focused primarily on their location, shape and size as opposed to a deeper interpretation of these objects. However, it is my opinion that

despite a lack of primary evidence on purpose and function (Swiny 1986: 41), it is still possible to extrapolate more from the contexts in which these objects have been located.

Returning to ideas of materiality, memory and personhood and the need to recognise material and architectural remains as more than just passive reflections of human action (Tringham 1991), we can then begin to use this data to unravel the social lives of the past societies we study. As Meskell (2004: 3) has argued:

[W]e should acknowledge that humans create their object worlds, no matter how many different trajectories are possible or how subject-like objects become. Materiality represents a presence of power in realizing the world, crafting thing from non-thing, subject from non-subject. This affecting presence is shaped through enactment with the physical world, projecting or imprinting ourselves into the world (Armstrong 1981: 19). Such originary crafting acknowledges that there are no a priori objects; they require human interventions to bring objects into existence. The being of objects can never be sensed, experienced and believed (Simmel 1979: 61). Those qualities are both human and subjective. Alternatively, persons exist and are constituted by their material worlds: subjects and objects could be said to be mutually fashioning and dependent.

But why choose gaming stones as my focus in this attempt to understand the social makeup of the LBA inhabitants of *Arediou-Vouppes*? There are many more prevalent forms of material culture found on the site which may be of equal use in trying to extrapolate this information. As seen gaming stones offer a specific aspect of material culture which has been under studied and under represented in the archaeological discourse, but which holds a seminal position in the Cypriot LBA as previously demonstrated by Swiny (1980; 1986, 2003) and others (Coleman and Barlow 1979; Carpenter 1981; Buchholz 1981, 1982; South 1989; South *et al* 1989; Monelonsky 1996; Frankel and Webb 1996, 2006).

Each stone on the site was located in a different context. *Arediou-Vouppes* has been identified as a subsidiary production settlement, existing to support the nearby copper mining industry during the LBA (Given 2002; Given and Knapp 2003; Given *et. al.* 1999; Knapp and Given 1996; Knapp *et. al.* 1994; Knapp 2003; Keswani and Knapp 2003; Steel and Janes 2005, Steel 2006, 2007; Steel and McCartney 2008 In Press; Steel

and Thomas In Press). Thus domestic areas appear to have been kept to a minimum on the site despite the existence of a tomb located within the settlement boundaries and several architectural features with possible domestic connotations (Steel and Thomas In Press). So, why are these pieces of material culture, generally associated with domestic and funerary contexts (Swiny 1980, 1986, 2003; Buchholz 1981, 1982; Frankel and Webb 1996: 86-87) situated in areas of the site with non domestic connotations? Swiny (1986) notes that gaming stones located elsewhere on the island, for example those at Episkopi-*Phaneromeni* Settlements A and G, have often been found lying, randomly scattered in association with other occupational debris, on the floors of abandoned buildings. Others have been reused as building material or threshold stones, but none have as yet been found associated with any ‘specific objects such as counters, gaming pieces or votive offerings.’ (Swiny 1986: 41) However, he does not think that the games could easily have been played with pebbles, seeds or shells (Swiny 1986: 48). (Appendix 2)

These are all points which increase the mystery of these objects within the Cypriot archaeological record and throw further conjecture onto the social lives of their manufacturers. The stones found at Arediou-*Vouppes* also appear in similar circumstances, but often associated with building debris, construction or production related material indicative of large scale grain processing, occasional copper smelting and storage. Once again we are left wondering why they were deposited here and under what circumstances. If this was indeed a settlement which existed to sustain the mining communities of the area then one wonders how much time existed for game playing; however, living by the agricultural calendar there are likely to have been some “slack” periods. (Appendix 2)

In Egypt the game of *senet* is thought to have originated as a secular pastime which developed to gain religious significance in the transition to the afterlife (Wilkinson 1992; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004; Piccione 2007)³⁷, however, Piccione (2007) has warned that there is as yet no solid proof of this secular beginning. Is it possible, as suggested above, that the simple nature of the stones from Arediou-*Vouppes* and their positioning

³⁷ This shall be discussed in more detail at a later date.

on the site are due to their use not as religious objects, but rather as either objects of entertainment or possible secular tools which held a purely practical role, as discussed above.

Many of the gaming stones on the site have been found associated with or set into the footings of substantial stone walls (AV07-06-01, Fig. 12; AV05-06-03, Appendix 1, Pl. 2; AV06-06-01, Fig. 12, Appendix 1, Pl. 4; AV06-06-02, Appendix 1, Pl. 5). Often these appear either damaged or badly worn, as is the case at many of the other Cypriot sites where gaming stones have been found. For example, the stone located in the east wall of Building 2 (AV07-06-01, Fig. 12) is incised with 3 rows of 7 small peck marks which can only be made out in certain lights due to their highly eroded appearance. As noted above, it has been chipped on the top right corner, suggesting that it was possibly of the 10x3 design but had suffered damage, thus making it obsolete as a gaming stone but useful as building material. Due to its suitable shape and size (10-12.5x17.5-14.5x2.5-4cm) it has been laid as a header stone.

Such examples demonstrate the many ways in which these objects can be interpreted which will further the understanding of the site's social nature. Other examples of gaming stones built into structures on the island have been provided by Swiny (1980, 1986) in relation to *Espiskopi-Phaneromeni* and South *et. al.* (1989) in relation to *Kalavastos-Ayios Dhimitrios* among others, suggesting this was not an uncommon practice, especially during the LC period.

It is easy to enter the realm of conjecture and begin to make assumptions and extrapolate what we wish to from the past in such a way as to create a set of myths or stories (Appendix 2). This is what Swiny (1986) is referring to when he comments that there is not enough primary evidence to support theories concerning the gaming stones purpose and function in Cypriot BA society. However, surely our aim is not to ascribe a strict function and purpose to these items, but rather to simply ask questions concerning their origins and those who may have been involved in their creation and use. If this approach is taken and applied with methodical care and precision, whilst still taking into

consideration the facts uncovered by the science of archaeology, as Tringham (1991) recommends, then it may have some potential and could help us to understand the social nature of past societies. It is wonderful to envisage how the objects we discover on sites were used without always resorting to interpretations based on present day assumptions and therefore we should not automatically dismiss such methodologies, even if they go against our better judgment. As Appadurai (1986: 5) suggests, despite the notion that we imbue our material with meaning and significance, this ‘does not illuminate the concrete, historical circulation of things.’ (Appadurai 1986: 5) This is found only by ‘following the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories.’ (Appadurai 1986: 5) Thus, he argues that ‘[E]ven though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things – in – motion that illuminate their human and social context.’ (Appadurai 1986: 5)

If this is the case we are therefore able to understand the history and identity of objects and their contexts through following their trajectories. As archaeologist we could gain much from tracing the path an artefact takes in order to understand it and the site from which it came, whilst also reminding ourselves that it also originated from social environments engineered by humanities cultural nature. For Appadurai (1986) the emphasis lies in contextualisation. Once an object is observed in its social setting one can then begin to disentangle its movements and trajectories, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of its meaning within that context. Concerned with the issues involving the differentiation observed between commodities, gifts, and objects he argued that we should approach all material from within the situation in which it is found. Although this poses problems for the archaeologist, who is constantly faced with the task of reconstructing the original context of an artefact and is vulnerable to numerable biases, it could still be used as a methodological approach in the process of peopling a faceless past and discovering the humanity evident within the archaeological record.

Chapter 4

THE GAMING STONES OF AREDIU-VOUPPES PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING

'Over the ages good and bad games alike have appeared, just as they still do. The good ones survive, evolve and, above all, spread. A useful analogy is a dropped bottle of milk; the milk runs freely everywhere into the most unreachable places, and it is much the same with board games. Occasionally a church or government has tried to outlaw a particular game, but never with success. In fact, games spread from culture to culture in a way that has hardly any parallel. They exist on a level impervious to religion or politics, and represent a free means of communication between people that nothing can successfully interrupt.' (Finkel 2007: 1)

THE GAMING STONES AND THEIR PURPOSE OF STUDY

Taking the gaming stones as my focus of study throughout this project, has I hope, opened the field up to revised approaches to material culture studies. As Meskell (2004: 34) argues in relation to Miller's (1985: 204) seminal work '[I]n this dialectic, mundane objects such as pottery aid in the contextual understanding of the lifeworld but also simultaneously constitute that world.' As such, the gaming stones, like pottery, can be appropriated in the same way and used to help in 'our understandings of the ways society and culture reproduce and transform' (Meskell 2004: 32). Finkel (2007: 1) demonstrates the prevalence of games throughout time and across culture, illustrating how they have spread, dispersed and endured. Consequently, this area of material culture provides us with a unique tool with which we can attempt to access certain aspects of past social life.

As previously noted, gaming stones comprise a very low percentage of the total material from Arediou-Vouppes, nonetheless these artefacts are still a significant component, and moreover present a number of interesting research questions. The methodology applied throughout this dissertation has included an appropriation of the gaming stones from Arediou-Vouppes in conjuncture with work done on other BA Cypriot gaming stones so as to demonstrate their potential in peopling the past and providing archaeological sites with an identity. Their use in this area can be found in their ability to cross time and space as has been noted above; they are familiar objects to us despite the many ways in

which they have changed and evolved. Board games are still highly common among many contemporary societies and, relatively speaking, have not changed much over time³⁸. This can be witnessed in the many examples of gaming cultures which originated thousands of years ago but have continued, spreading across many contemporary

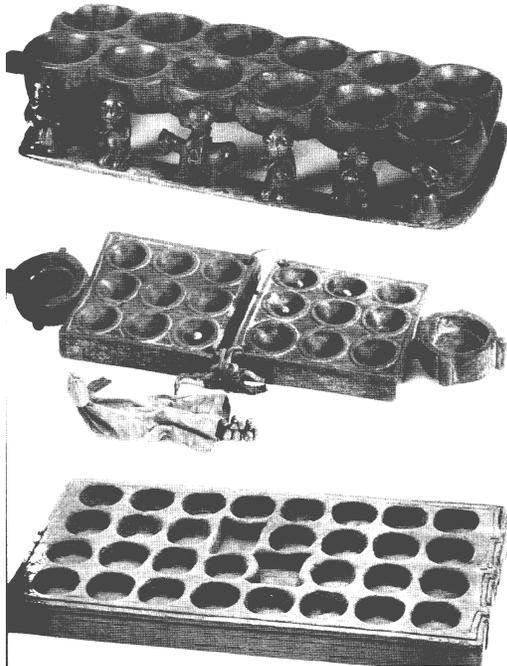


Figure 20: Examples of 20th to 21st century wooden *mankala* boards from different parts of Africa (Walker 2007: Fig. 28.1).

societies, as has been seen in relation to games such as *mankala* (Grunfeld 1977: 20; Townshend 1979, 2007; Swiny 1986: 61; Russ 2007; Walker 2007). Much anthropological work has been carried out in this area, demonstrating the prevalence of gaming as a form of social expression. Townshend (1979) looks at *mankala* in a primarily African contexts and argues that its persistence and popularity across much of the continent, and also many other areas of the world, including parts of the Caribbean, the Middle East, Arabia and Central and Southeast Asia, exist due to its ability to express ethnic loyalty among those who play it. He states (1979: 794):

It seems to me certain that the spread and persistence of *mankala*³⁹ owe something to its peculiar potential for expressing, through the extensive gamut of variation possible in its rules, a wide range of ethnic options – from identification with to hostility towards a group other than one’s own ethnic one – over and above its capacity for expressing individual peoples’ or more general African values. In either case the game is no static reflection, but an agent of ongoing sociopolitical process.

We recognise the appearance of games and can make informed assumptions as to their use, function and position in the societies of the past; even in the case of Arediou, where primary evidence is often lacking and contextualisation can pose problems due to

³⁸ Swiny (1986: 60) notes that, in comparison to games played on a spiral motif, ‘[B]oard games consisting of parallel rows of cups or squares are played throughout the world, although it would seem that they are particularly popular in the Near East, Africa and India.’

³⁹ *Italics added.*

dislocation or poor preservation in certain areas of the site. However, we must also be careful not to project our own notions onto these objects. As Miller (1985) and Tringham (1991) have warned, we must avoid the pitfall of employing material remains as a means by which to allocate classifications and categories. Miller (1985: 11) states ‘[T]here is no



Figure 21: Example of a possible *mankala* playing surface carved into a rocky outcrop on Lewa Wild Life Conservancy, Kenya. (Renate Parkinson)

“true” typology or taxonomy, but equally, the producers cannot be disestablished as the creators of order under study.’ As Meskell (2004: 34) notes in relation to this comment, ‘[H]ere the material world is used to objectify conceptualization, to naturalize social relations and to mark social categories.’

Whereas Swiny (1980, 1986) regarded the body of material currently available on Cypriot gaming stones as insufficient to make judgements concerning purpose, function and meaning, despite his exhaustive research in the area, I attempt to demonstrate that meaningful

information can be derived from this corpus. Tringham (1991: 102-103) has argued that architectural remains, their material associates, the household and gender relations should also be considered, thereby demonstrating that the archaeological record can be far more informative if we allow ourselves to move away from traditional methodologies:

The architectural remains of the archaeological record can provide a rich source of information if one can be free, if only slightly, from the restrictive effects of the testing requirements of logical positivism and from the need to attribute the record to function, gender, or “domestic unit” before one can think further about the context of gender relations and household tensions.

The day to day routines of past societies are equally as important in understanding their general make up as the monumental events which are often regarded as the sole elements in forming past worlds. Therefore objects such as the gaming stones hold many possibilities. We can imagine them in use and recognise the different ways in which they may have been made, employed and later disposed of and through these processes also witness possible changes in attitude towards these objects.

When this is taken further it may also be possible to consider why this occurred. In relation to *Arediou-Vouppes* I argue that they were brought into the community via trading networks with the coastal settlements, who in turn maintained links with overseas nations through maritime travel. Possibly the first gaming stones were brought back to the settlement by a party returning from the coast and it was not until later that they became fully immersed into community life. Working with the premise that *Arediou-Vouppes* functioned as a specialised agricultural settlement, predominantly operating to produce and store certain goods and natural resources for dispersal across the region, it may be suggested that it did not serve as an ordinary working village, but rather a settlement inhabited only by those who worked there, possibly housed on a temporary basis in a form of settlement area in Fields 4 or 5⁴⁰. In this case the gaming stones may have been brought to or made on the site to fill a gap in the social lives of the people who lived there. Men and women working together without the luxury of returning home at the end of the day will inevitably crave a replacement for those aspects of domestic social life which they are missing as a result of their occupation. This may account for the fact that the number of gaming stones thus far found at *Arediou-Vouppes*⁴¹ is significantly greater than that of far larger urban coastal settlements such as *Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios*⁴². However, it is also likely that this site functioned as a relatively normal

⁴⁰ This theory has yet to be investigated through further excavation. However, it is likely that if any semi domestic area does exist on the site it will be in this section. The tomb may also be linked to a possible domestic area and could represent that of the individuals who established the centre, or possibly the leaders of the community influential in its running and maintenance.

⁴¹ Currently 8.

⁴² Currently 2 (South *et. al.* 1989).

settlement, in which case the gaming stones are easily recognisable as objects of entertainment in a close knit society⁴³.

The above discussion is not intended to imply any direct analogy between past and present, or to make assumptions based purely on our current cultural presuppositions. To do so would simply result in a highly ethnocentric, bias and probably inaccurate account of the past, reflecting simply what we may wish to see. It is rather to demonstrate the need to remove the layers of abstract theorisation and return to the crux of the discipline and the reasons we endeavour to study the past; that is the people themselves and the ways in which they may have lived. The gaming stones could then be related to all aspects of society, from adults to children, men to women, rich to poor, removing otherwise often ingrained notions of social segregation constructed as a result of contemporary Western thought. In this sense the social expression developed and displayed through gaming can be recognised. As Swiny (1986: 47) notes in relation to *senet* in an Egyptian context:

The evident popularity of the game...and its widespread distribution in humble burials proves it was not exclusively reserved for the literate minority. Common folk would possess *Senet*⁴⁴ boards of wood, terracotta, stone, or could if necessary scoop out a series of holes in the ground.

Therefore, by focusing on the gaming stones from *Arediou-Vouppes* I am attempting to build a picture of the site according to its material remains, hopefully demonstrating more than 'a passive reflection of human behaviour' (Tringham 1991: 98) in which the daily and sometimes mundane are recognised as important elements in recreating a past true to the archaeological record. These people were not likely to be concerned with abstract notions of the production and dispersion of their resources; rather they lived their lives from day to day as ordinary human beings who were guided by their sociality and human

⁴³ However, as previously seen, evidence for specifically domestic structures is still lacking, despite several possible areas which may be classed as such. Expanding this investigation will be at the forefront of future excavations in 2008.

⁴⁴ *Italics* added.

nature as well as the surrounding environment and their position in the landscape, both physically and socially.

By simply allowing ourselves the time to consider such approaches we are making progress and beginning to recognise the importance of locating the social dimensions of the past, moving away from the static models of logical positivism concerned only with environment and economy. By appropriating an aspect of material culture such as the gaming stones we can simultaneously pinpoint specific aspects of daily life whilst ensuring that methodological steps are taken to bridge the gaps evident in the social theory of archaeology. The working day would have been broken up into sections of activity and inactivity. When breaking from the workroom or the fields, companions may well have picked up one of the gaming stones left behind by someone else earlier, and sat down to enjoy a short break over a quick game or, alternatively may have scraped playing surfaces on the stones they were walling into buildings.

There is also the possibility that by the LBA and EIA the gaming stones in Cyprus had acquired a higher status in society, possibly of a religious nature, as seen in relation to the examples noted by Swiny (1986: 37, 2003: 232-233) of gaming stones being incorporated into religious features at sites such as *Kition-Kathari* and *Amathus*. However, I would argue that the evidence from *Arediou-Vouppes* does not infer religious connotations, but rather indicates a secular purpose. This may have included personal feelings of sentimentality and imbued significance in the objects themselves, even including notions of shared experience and the facilitating of social memory in relation to the practice of foundation deposits witnessed at the site, but not the specific religious attachments seen at the sites named above. If this was the case it could support suggestions that the dispersion of changing cultural ideas and expressions did not reach inland communities in the same way as those on the coast, despite regular contact. However, as Swiny (1986: 57) notes in relation to *Episkopi-Phaneromeni* and *Hala Sutlan Tekke*, *mehen* stones were re-used in architectural features, however, no specific significance in their positioning is evident and they were not appropriated places of special import, such as a

corner stone. This, he argues supports a secular interpretation and denies their existence in the buildings as intentional foundation deposits (Swiny 1986: 57).

There are also other ways in which the *mehen* boards may be interpreted, especially in LBA contexts where their appropriation appears to change, which do not necessarily give them religious significance. Such interpretations may regard them as representing the journey taken in the acquisition of (esoteric) knowledge and information from the outside world to the centre or the homeland, demonstrating the distance travelled in the pursuit of wisdom from afar. This could also be seen in relation to the notion of the Centre as the focus for religious and political power and social organisation in many societies (Eliade: 1969). Helms (1988) argues that the gathering of esoteric knowledge in nonindustrial societies is often connected to power in a political and cosmological sense. This then leads to notions of a heartland in relation to foreign or exotic information. In this sense I argue that the spiral of the *mehen* stones may have come to represent such relationships of knowledge, power, mythology, cosmology and the Other in connection with the growth of maritime travel and communication during the LBA. Related to this notion of political power and cosmology in geographical space, and the acquisition of esoteric knowledge, the *senet* stones could then be seen to represent a more linear movement, possibly that which is often seen to exist between heaven and earth, from above to below and *vice versa*. As Helms (1988: 4-5) states:

As a corollary I argue that in traditional societies horizontal space and distance may be perceived in sacred or supernatural cosmological terms in much the same way that vertical space and distance from a given sacred centre is often perceived in supernatural dimensions and accorded varying degrees of cosmological significance, perhaps being seen as ascending (or descending) and increasingly mystical levels of the universe, perhaps identified as the home of the gods, of ancestors, or of good or evil spirits or powers.

Appropriating such a methodology for interpretation allows for a fuller notion of the site's social history to be explored, thus combining a fusion of theory and practice with which to investigate the data.

The inhabitants of Arediou-*Vouppes* created and used the gaming stones within the social framework of their society; the fact that they were also used as building material in certain contexts is simply another example of the evident human agency witnessed in their production, use and significance. As seen, this may demonstrate a changing nature in attitudes and suggest evidence for creating and using them *in situ* whilst working on a building, or indicate other social connotations, suggesting imbued significance within the objects themselves. As previously noted, *senet* in particular is likely to have developed from a secular pastime into a highly religious activity within Egypt (Swiny 1980, 1986; Piccione 1980, 1990a, 2007) and possibly across the other areas to which it later spread. However, the clue is in the name, for the word “*senet*” translates as “passing” (Piccione 1980, 1990a, 2007). This has been linked to the passing of the *ba* or soul in later Egyptian contexts and shall be discussed in more detail presently; however, it could also suggest that *senet* was originally designed as a way in which to pass the time. Human nature dictates sociality and therefore we must recognise this in the archaeological sites we study.

PEOPLING THE PAST THROUGH THE GAMING STONES

Piccione (1980, 1990a, 2007) and others have carried out much work on the game of *senet* or the thirty square game. Evidence from Egyptian tombs has been used to piece together the rules of the game and the contexts in which it may have been played. As seen, in the case of *senet* its social function is likely to have changed dramatically throughout its history in Egypt and probably elsewhere. Piccione (2007: 55) notes that *senet* was considered a race game, however, this did not deter from the players ability of ‘flexibility in moving draughtsmen across the game board.’ In so doing this enabled the players to ‘develop strategies and execute tactics designed to obstruct or destroy the opponents pieces, as well as to facilitate their own progress.’ (Piccione 2007: 55-56) This characteristic of the game demonstrates the need for skill and patience. There was also, however, an element of uncertainty as the movement of pieces across the board was dictate by the throwing of casting sticks, astragali (knuckle bones) or a teetotum die known only from one Egyptian context (Dunham 1978: 72-73; Piccione 2007: 56). Here in

lay the spirit of the game and its aura of unpredictability. Possibly this is where it later became related to religious activities and divine intervention in an Egyptian context; the unsure outcome possibly being associated with otherworldly activity. As seen, the ritualistic element of *senet* in Egypt was seen to relate to the migration of the *ba*, often referred to as the “soul” and the cycle of life, death and spiritual rebirth (Piccione 1980, 1990a, 2007).



Figure 22: Two scenes of *senet*-playing, from the tomb of Mernetjer-Izezy on the left (the deceased plays with the living) and from the tomb of Kaemankh on the right (Piccione 2007: Figs. 6.2 and 6.3 after Junker 1940: Fig. 9).

Meskell (2004) relates the notion of the Egyptian *ba* to Küchler’s work based in Melanesia (1993, 1999, 2002) in which she looks specifically at the *malanggan*, ‘a ritually elaborated wooden carving or vine weaving that invokes the ancestral body brought to life as it is placed upon the grave of the deceased.’ (Meskell 2004: 65) In Küchler’s account the *malanggan* is simply a vessel ready to receive the soul of the individual who has passed. Meskell (2004) argues that both concepts rely upon a material presence, provided by the living, to anchor them to those who they spiritually represent, thus actively supporting both the memory of that individual through the material connection, but also the act of forgetting in relation to both the object and the deceased which it signifies. Therefore, in the Egyptian context, the *senet* gaming boards may have been facilitators of memory and the receptacle for the spirit, whilst also enabling the spirit to move on and leave the physical world. This once again forms a dualism between memory and forgetting and demonstrates how one item of material culture can simultaneously provide moments of both. This approach could also link to notions of cognitive thought in terms of psychological investigations, where it has been argued that

‘board games present opportunities for studying perception, memory, and thinking.’
(Gobet, De Voogt and Retschitzki 2004: 2)

Returning to the secular elements of gaming, Piccione (2007: 58) has suggested that although *senet* has often been argued to have originated as a past time created purely for entertainments sake, this has as yet not been proved and should therefore not be relied upon: ‘In its origin, the game may have had only a secular and recreational use. However, that secular origin is far from certain and should not be assumed automatically.’ I feel however, that it is reasonable to suggest from existing evidence, that the Cypriot examples of 10x3 gaming stones are largely of a secular nature, as the findings from *Arediou-Vouppes* and other sites on the islands have demonstrated. There is evidence to suggest religious connotations, as seen above; however, this is very much in the minority on the island and appears only to develop at later stages of the BA and the transition to the IA. However, in an Egyptian context much of the evidence for game playing comes from funerary contexts and despite the risk of automatic assumption, it is often suggestive of religious connotations. This is one element of distortion which can be caused through the dispersion and distribution of any product, as seen above. Although contact between Cyprus, the Near East and Egypt was strongly established during the LBA this does not mean to say that the transferral of information always went uninterrupted and unchanged. Cultural variation is natural in all human societies, and as a result individuality arises in all communities.

Returning to the question of play and the rules of the game, Piccione (2007: 56) aptly describes the method used in the throwing of the casting sticks and relates this to an episode recorded by Edward Lane (1860: 354) in which he witnessed the playing of the similar but relatively contemporary Sudanese and Egyptian game of *tab el-seega*:

Casting sticks, which occur in sets of four to six, are associated with *senet* in art and archaeology from as early as the 1st Dynasty. Each stick was a slip of wood, flat on one side (often coloured white) and rounded on the other side (black or darkened). In the nineteenth century Edward Lane described the use of casting sticks – identical in number and physical style to the ancient variety – in his description of the contemporary Sudanese and Egyptian game *tab el-seega* (Lane 1860: 354).

After throwing all the sticks down, the players counted the number of white or flat sides facing up. If all faced down, they counted 2 plus the total number of sticks. This description is similar to Thomas Hyde's seventeenth-century account of casting sticks in the Near East, although he noted that they counted the number of black sides facing upwards (text translated by Tait 1985: 47)

This passage demonstrates how we have recognised gaming and board games throughout history and across space, and have also regarded them as a useful means of study when researching other communities and cultures. The medium of games could be seen as universal, despite the many guises it takes, and as such should be recognised as an appropriate analytical tool when studying not just contemporary societies but also those of the past. As Finkel (2007: 1) aptly states: '[I]t is not an easy matter to point to a society, ancient or modern, where no kind of board game has been – or is – played.'

Many forms of material culture exist, all of which have multiple uses in piecing together a picture of the past. Gaming stones and their counter parts have the potential to not just show us the mechanisms of daily life in the past, but also the social relations which went into the conception of these games, and in turn their creation and use as material objects employed in many forms of cultural expression.

Despite the fact that casting sticks or astragali have yet to be found in association with Cypriot gaming stones, we may still reference the material from Egypt and other places in an attempt to describe the way in which we can relate to gaming in the ancient world. As previously noted, the Cypriot examples of gaming stones, thus far, appear as far more simplistic in their nature, possibly signifying a lesser place in the society, or simply a more secular use. The fact that casting sticks and astragali are lacking from Cypriot contexts could well be due to their perishable nature, if made from wood, or the fact that they may not have been fashioned especially for the purpose of play, but rather found in the debris of twigs and animal bones strewn across the ground and discarded after use. This is where comparative studies can be used to fill in missing evidence, although caution must also be applied. The nature of the game is likely to have been very similar and therefore much information can be gathered from cross cultural research as demonstrated by Lane as early as 1860 and to a certain extent Townshend's (1976, 2007)

and Walker's (2007) work on *mankala*. In this way we can also hope to use the evidence to help us in our understanding of the over all society under investigation and our attempt to people the past with animated humans as opposed to 'faceless blobs' through an appropriation of the gaming stones as evidence for lived experience.

PEOPLING THE SITE OF AREDIUO-UOUPPES THROUGH THE GAMING STONES

The eight⁴⁵ gaming stones which have been found at Arediou-Vouppes were all located in different contexts, as previously noted. They may appear as inconsequential besides the huge volume of other material remains the site has thus far yielded, however, their appearance on the site can also help to establish their position in the society and define their many possible uses and functions.

As the site has been identified as primarily production orientated (Fig. 23), gaming stones could appear as an odd addition to the catalogue of artefacts found here as previously noted; however, so could several of the other artefacts found, and we should therefore remember Tringham's (1991) words when she argued that categorisation of this type is



Figure 23: Room 109 in Unit 1069/998 which has been interpreted as a work room in a general production area (Steel 2007; Steel and Thomas In Press). (Steve Thomas)

futile and relatively pointless. I have already explored the possibility of practical uses possibly attributed to the gaming stones, in which case they would cease to be gaming stones and become tools of production. If this were the case and they have thus far been misinterpreted, then their appearance on the site may be

easier to explain. However, this view still relies on seeing the site as purely a means of production rather than a social settlement housing an active community who both lived and worked there. In this sense I still argue that they were objects of entertainment used

⁴⁵ See notes in previous chapters for reference to the seventh and either stones.

in a small working inland island community as a way in which to pass the time and provide amusement during periods of inactivity in the sites day to day running. This may even have developed further, as we have witnessed with similar pass times in contemporary societies, such as chess and backgammon, and developed into a form of competitive pursuit in which winning counted for everything. If this was the case it would have been necessary for players to have the time to develop such skills as were required in the playing of the game. These appear to have been numerable as we have seen from Piccione's (1980, 1990a, 2007) description of the rules and characteristics of the game of *senet* in particular. Thus it could demonstrate one way in which the gaming stones may have been ascribed a higher status within community life; as a taste for the games developed so too would their popularity among the inhabitants of the community, thus elevating them to a position of some importance, possibly even resulting in the allocation of certain times and places for playing and the labelling of certain individuals as experts.

However, the relative dispersal of the gaming stones around the site may also suggest that they were predominantly used on a more sporadic basis, for example, during breaks from work, as has been previously seen. As domestic areas remain largely unaccounted for, I argue that the gaming stones were carried around by their owners, as would a deck of cards or a board game today, to provide an immediate source of entertainment should it be needed. This would then move away from ideas of standardisation and designated status in community life, but would still maintain notions of gaming as a means to bind individuals within the society, creating and enhancing social relations which otherwise may not have developed⁴⁶.

Being an island culture Cyprus has adopted many foreign products and commodities and absorbed them into its social make up throughout its history (Swiny 1986); this has formed a highly eclectic cultural tradition which is constantly in flux and as such additions to this medley of inventions, institutions and concepts should be expected

⁴⁶ For further discussion on the anthropological debates surrounding ideas of communal activities forming social bonds and relationships see Kirtsoglou (2004), Danforth (1982) and Sutton (1998, 2001).

throughout the course of the island's history. Board games still form a highly important aspect of Greek Cypriot culture today, which can be recognised on visiting the island, where one will find a multitude of different board games on sale in shops and market places, the playing of various games in action on verandas and café porticos across the region, and many examples of a competitive yet friendly nature in the people who pass the time in this way.



Figure 24: Two men sitting enjoying a game of backgammon. (Steve Thomas)

The community of the modern village of Arediou is no different. On visiting many of the houses in the village one is likely to see a board game set up on a garden table, or members of the household engaged in a friendly contest of wits over a game of chess, draughts or backgammon, all of which have been argued to have their earliest origins in the

ancient board games of the Near East. At this stage of the discussion caution must be taken not to oversimplify the issues at stake by making direct analogies to the past, however, we may also be able to recognise a certain significance in the behaviour and actions of these people in relation to the material objects we recover from the many archaeological sites around the island. As Hoskins (2006: 81) suggests in relation to Meskell's (2004) work on Ancient Egypt and issues of materiality:

The mysteries provided by this vanished world suggest ways in which ancient objects are used to meditate between past and present, and to summon up an alternative cultural space to explore contemporary concerns with mortality and materiality.

As noted, gaming, more so than many other human constructs, appears to have withstood the test of time. We are able to recognise board games and form opinions as to their meaning and significance for those who owned and played them. Is it then reasonable to argue that this sense of familiarity goes beyond a simple state of recognition? Is there an element of the human psyche that requires such forms of entertainment? In many cases it may not even be classed as entertainment, but rather something of religious or divine significance in which case the argument could then be developed to include questions of divinity, otherworldliness and abstraction from reality. In other instances, as we have seen, these objects may be understood as practical tools associated with production and trade. There are many questions which can be asked, all of which may assist us when discussing the socialising of archaeological sites such as *Arediou-Vouppes*.

Conclusion

The art of the game may be too old for claims of priority in any human culture. The first hunters (or early hominids?) bored with a long vigil for game, early farmers confined to endless winters between growing and harvesting seasons, and children at all ages, must have devised ways to amuse themselves with pebbles as counters moved along a course of squares or hollows. (Morris and Papadopoulos 2002: 232)

This quote epitomises the significance of the gaming stones, for it instantly locates the human element in the past in relation to game playing, demonstrating the longevity of the pastime and its importance in society.

This study has presented a picture of Arediou-Vouppes by drawing on its material remains in such a way as to constitute an understanding of the former BA inhabitants. It described to the reader not only the significance of the site within its wider context, both spatially and temporarily, but also has impressed upon the audience a methodology through which ancient sites and their remains can be appropriated in such a way as to describe their past lives. Despite the Cypriot focus, and the singling out of the gaming stones, this is an approach which can be applied to a wide spectrum of archaeological sites and enter into the current stream of debate surrounding issues of personhood, sociality, identity, humanity and materiality in relation to the archaeological record.

This project's aim was to look at Cypriot LBA society through the material remains available to us in an attempt to consider the social relations of past societies and remove the faceless blobs which we, as archaeologists, have continued to people that past with. I shall now reevaluate that aim and consider whether, through perusing this project, I have been successful in my overall objective of peopling the past and learning to recognise the social dimensions of the sites we study.

I have approached this study from the parameters of social archaeology, attempting to follow the theoretical and methodological progression of that sub discipline and use its various approaches concerning identity and personhood in the past to build a picture of

life in the LBA settlement site of *Arediou-Vouppes*. The gaming stones have offered me a very specific focus, one which I have been able to appropriate to further my aims and objectives. I have considered the history of gaming stones and board games in the general area, previous archaeological work carried out on them in Cyprus and the wider context of the Near East and Egypt, and attempted to relocate them in their social as well as physical context, both on the site and on the island during the BA.

I feel that I have met these objectives as far as can be done in such a short study and attempted to draw from the findings information that has assisted me in my aim of constructing an archaeology of identity whereby we can recognise the constructs we create as possessing truly human elements resulting in a definable social make up. Recognising the potential of the material from the past to create an identity for its inhabitants and those of us in the present, is seminal in the development of archaeology. This project has been an attempt to do as much through an appropriation of the gaming stones. They are objects with which it is still possible to relate. They can assist us therefore in our attempt to people the past because we are able to picture them in use, their creation and maintenance, their possible functions and uses in a close knit society in which work counted for survival. However, there was also time for leisure, the pursuit of fun and the following of religious activities, all of which may have influenced the construction of the gaming stones. For this reason the gaming stones offer themselves to such a project and therefore I chose them as my main focus in a study. Humanity is evident in all archaeology and as such we must endeavour to include it in our research projects and studies. In so doing we must learn from it in order to better understand the present which we have created and must now inhabit.

Appendix 1

THE GAMING STONES OF AREDIOU-VOUPPES

Drawn by Alison South

Originally drawn on a scale of 1:1 the images have been reduced here to fit on the page. Gaming Stone AV07-06-01 does not appear here as it remains *in situ* in the wall of Building 2. The seventh and eight gaming stones are also not included as they are unregistered finds at present.

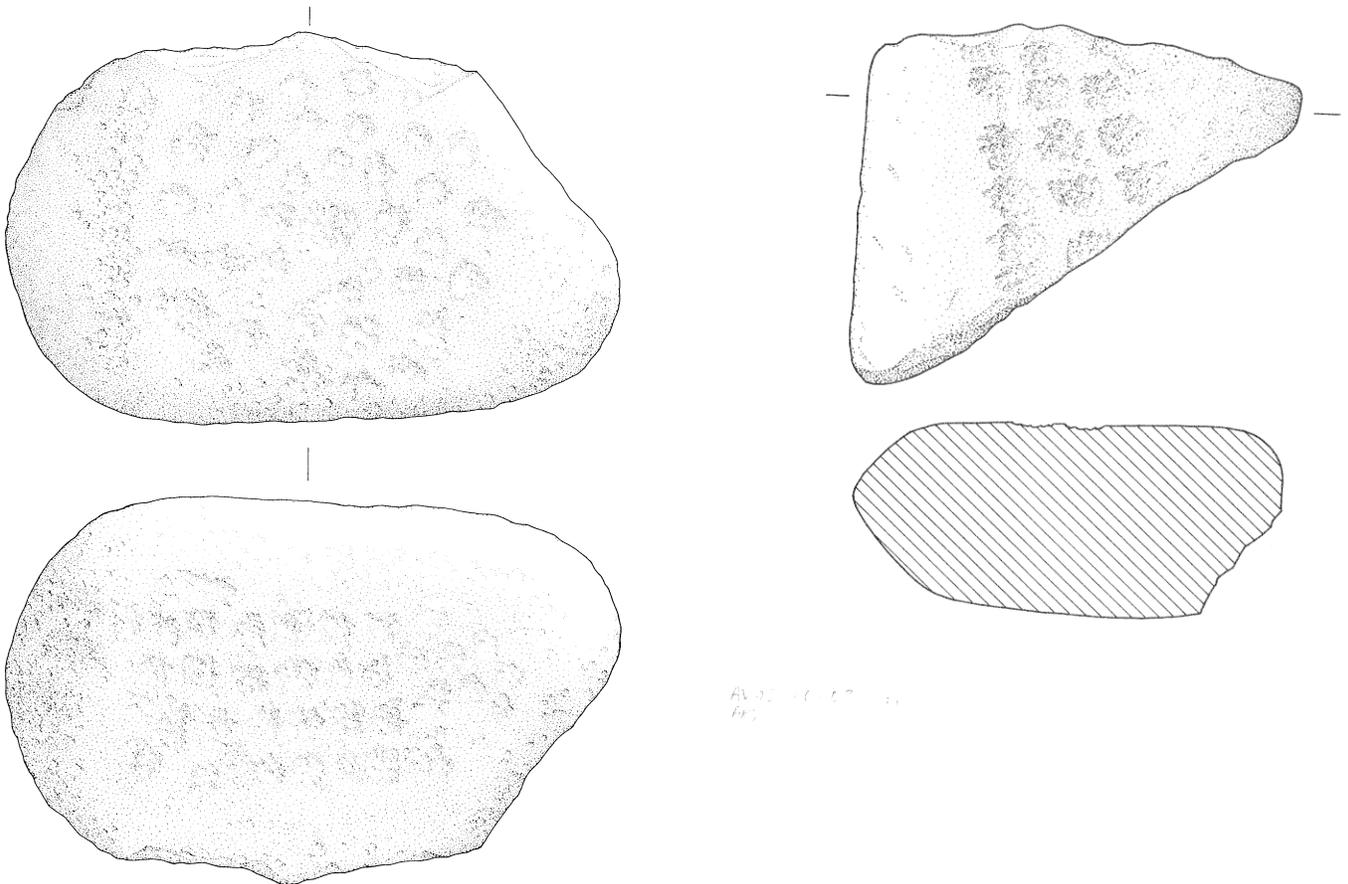
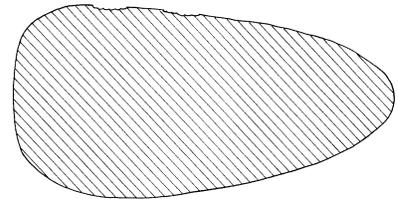
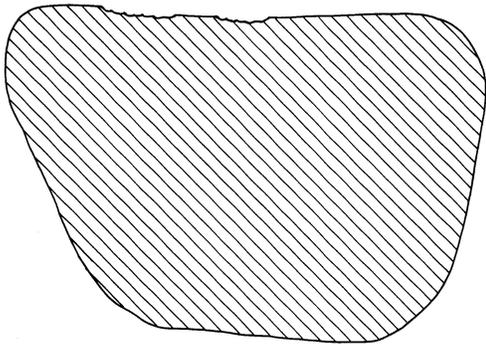
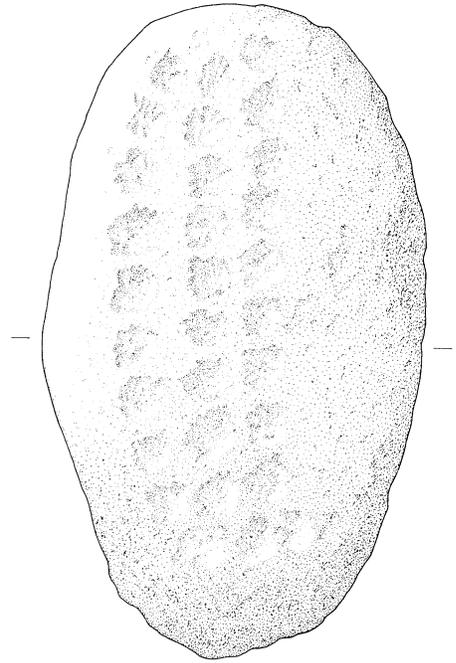
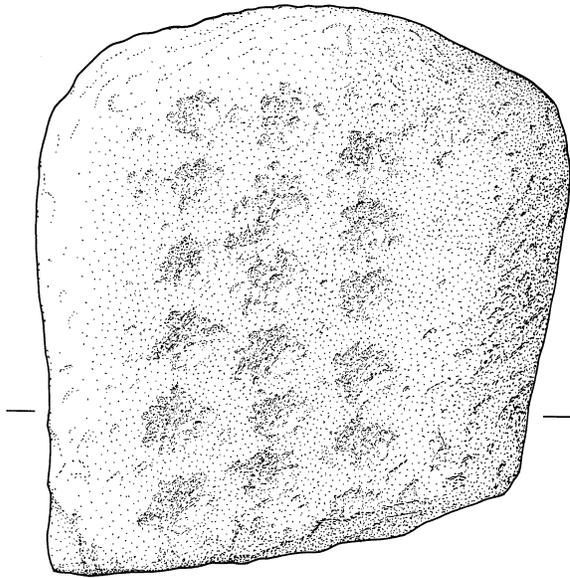


Plate 1: AV04-05-01 Double Sided Gaming Stone displaying the *mehen* motif on one side and a possible variation of *senet* on the other.

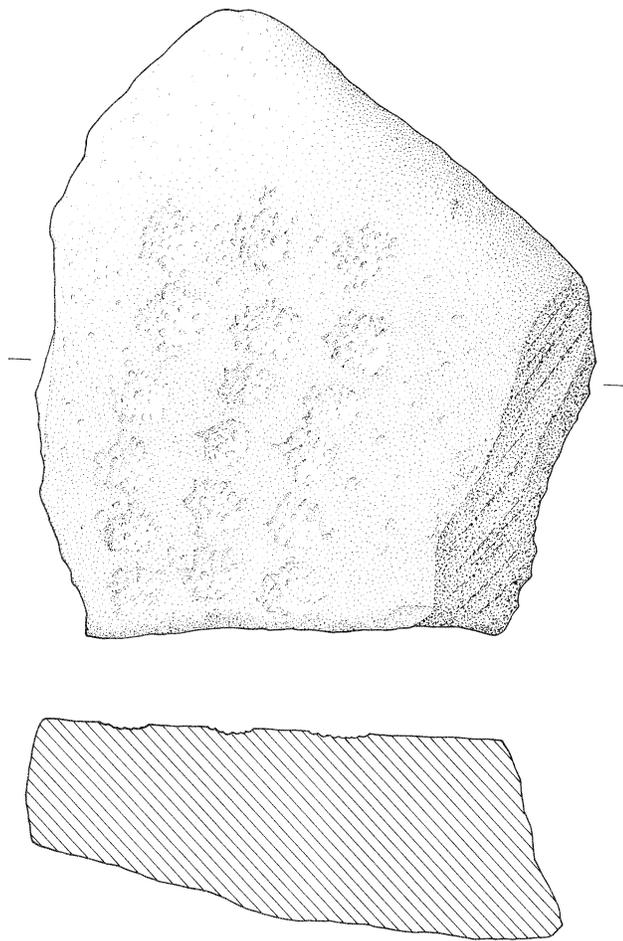
Plate 2: AV05-06-03 Damaged Gaming Stone fragment displaying the characteristic rows of indentations associated with the *senet* design.



AV05-06-04
AV06-06-01

Plate 3: AV05-06-04 Damaged Gaming Stone displaying three rows of parallel indentations arranged in the *senet* style.

Plate 4: AV06-06-01 Whole *senet* displaying 30 indentations organised in three parallel rows of 10 with an additional hollow at one end possibly for storing gaming pieces in.



AV06-06-02
1/2

Plate 5: AV06-06-02 Fragment of a damaged Gaming Stone displaying the three rows of parallel indentations associated with the *senet* motif.

Appendix 2

What follows is the imagined scene of how the gaming stones may have arrived at Arediou-Vouppes during its LBA occupation:

MUSINGS UPON THE PAST: A STORY OF HOW THE GAMING STONES WERE INTRODUCED TO AREDIOU-VOUPPES

“A stone mason is laying a wall; he takes a minute to sit idly and begins to scrape a small hollow in the stone he’s just set. Thinking of the simple gaming board his cousin had shown him earlier, bought during the last trading excursion to the coast, he begins to fashion a replica. With his skilfully manufactured tools the job is quickly completed. Calling over a friend he casually looks around where he sits to locate something appropriate to use for gaming pieces. The children have already begun to assemble a small pile of pebbles to be used in the draining surface besides the well when it is ready. Sifting through the pile he quickly finds a couple of distinctive enough shape and colour. Happy with his choice he turns to his companion who has now come to sit besides him and begins, hesitantly, to explain the rules of the game his cousin had told him earlier. They begin playing on the roughly fashioned board built into the structure of the wall. A small crowd gathers around them, trying to work out the intricacies of this new game. The man’s cousin wanders over to see what the commotion is about. Seeing the game between the two men in full flourish he smiles to himself, pleased that this innovation which he has brought back from the coast has been so quickly adopted; he feels sure that this will prove to be a popular pastime during the quieter months when there is little work to be done and entertainment is scarce. Even as the stone is later covered over by the next course of the wall the memory of the game and how it begun lives on, to be occasionally revisited, the story inevitably embellished.”

By Loveday Allen

Purely an exercise in imagination, and therefore highly subjective, such activities may nonetheless help us envisage the LBA community of Arediou through reawakening the memories imbued within the gaming stones. As Meskell (2004: 62) notes in relation to Foucault’s (1972) argument, ‘the reality of the past resides in the artefacts of its representation.’ By conjuring such a scene we are at least attempting to move beyond traditional methodologies which focus specifically on the scientific analysis of artefacts and rigid typologies, in relational to the use and function of these objects.

Appendix 3

NOTES ON THE EGYPTIAN EVIDENCE FOR THE PLAYING OF SENET

Much Egyptian evidence to suggest that *senet* was a two person game is found in the form of tomb paintings and papyri (Wilkinson 1992; Morris and Papadopoulos 2004). Examples include a satirical scene embossed on a papyrus from the Twentieth or Twenty First Dynasty of a lion and gazelle playing a board game likely to be *senet* (Wilkinson 1992).



Figure 25: Satirical scene of a lion and gazelle playing *senet* (Wilkinson 1992: 210, Fig. 1).

Other evidence for the boards themselves has been found across Egypt; Piccione (2007: 54) stated that ‘[A]t present, at least 120 surviving *senet* boards are known from ancient Egypt (Piccione 1990a: 382-451).’ He also notes that these come in three main forms: the slab style boards, graffito-boards, and box-type boards (Piccion 2007: 54). Of these three types the slab-style from the New Kingdom is most often found to be decorated. However, as the game developed to include religious connotations these decorations changed in meaning and significance:

While the boards of the Old and Middle Kingdom display only secular decorations (numbers and directions), the New Kingdom slab-style boards depict only religious designs (gods and religious concepts), indicating that the *senet* game had developed a religious function, which may or may not have been separate from the game’s secular and recreational use. (Piccione 2007: 55)

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