

## CHAPTER 9 BEADS

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Round and barrel beads of faience, blue frit, amethyst and carnelian found on Crete have sometimes been identified as Egyptian imports rather than local products.<sup>683</sup> The vast majority were identified as such by A.J. Evans, and often his stated origin has been repeated in the literature without further investigation. The premise of the present work is that the onus must rest on proof rather than assumption of importation, or at least a reasonable doubt of possible local manufacture must be shown before accepting an object (especially having no specific features of one or the other culture) as an import rather than of local origin. Round and barrel beads are universal, and common bead forms on Crete.

Some 'Egyptian blue' beads **{2; 443?}** arguably are imported pieces, but the surprising identification of the Vat Room beads **{152}** as of Aegean origin gives one pause. Context dates for these finds are wide-ranging, from early MM IB, MM IA–III(–LM?) and likely LM IIIA–B, but they are so rare in the earlier contexts that it would seem difficult to accept an indigenous production at that time, but the Vat Room beads *are* Aegean; the other(s) may also be locally made. Nonetheless, most 'Egyptian blue' beads are found in Neo-Palatial and later contexts. Most are simple types common to both Egypt and Crete, and so are not demonstrably imported.<sup>684</sup> It is likely, however, that the raw material was imported to produce them, as raw lumps have been recovered.<sup>685</sup> However, the Aghia Pelagia beads more likely are imported, as they are associated with a scarab **{1}** of similar material, but they more likely are post-Minoan.

Faience beads are problematic as their chemical

components have never been analysed, and their origin remains indeterminate.<sup>686</sup> However, the Minoans were quite capable of manufacturing faience beads by MM IA, when those from Gournes **{75}** were interred, early MM IB **{150}**, and (if faience) Pezoules Kephales **{443}** of later deposition. Unless further proof is forthcoming, it must be assumed that they were indeed of local manufacture. At present there are no specific reasons for identifying them as imported. Only two probable exceptions can be isolated. One is the group of Mochlos beads **{304}**, due to their early date.<sup>687</sup> The other is the faience 'sector globe' bead **{202}** found in the MM IIA level in the Royal Road excavations, due to its unusual and characteristically Egyptian decoration.

The origin of the spherical beads in the collection from the Isopata tomb **{244; 257}** is inextricably tied to that of the more elaborate beads and theriomorphic bead/amulets of the same lapis lazuli material. These at least are imported finds, although the material certainly originated from elsewhere, from Afghanistan or Iran. Some of the accompanying beads are Minoan types, and presumably the combination of imported figures and locally-made beads must have been a rare collection indeed.

Amethyst and carnelian certainly are imported stones, probably from Egypt,<sup>688</sup> but the beads themselves may have been made on the island rather than imported as finished products.<sup>689</sup> Certainly there are objects of indisputably Minoan manufacture in these rare stones,<sup>690</sup> so the raw material clearly had been imported. However, the presence of several carnelian cornflower beads<sup>691</sup> and a fly amulet **{272}** on the

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<sup>683</sup> See Distribution Map 22. Elaborate and readily identifiable Egyptian bead forms are separately discussed elsewhere according to their type. See STOCKS 2003:203–224 for bead manufacture.

<sup>684</sup> Beads from several Neo-Palatial and Final Palatial sites are identified as 'Egyptian blue' in KARETSOU *et al.* 2000:114–126 #93, #96 (MM III–LM I Poros), #97 (LM Aghia Triadha), #98 (MM III Mochlos) and #106 (LM IIIA Kalyvia), and by EVELY (Knossos, in POPHAM *et al.* 1984:I:7, 14, 93, 94, 251, 258, II:pl. 225:9–10, 232:20) and BETANCOURT (Pseira, in FLOYD 1998:126 #465, fig. 45:BS/BV 465). Whilst some are clearly Minoan and not Egyptian types, others are simple general shapes for which an origin cannot be ascertained. The cylindrical beads from Pezoules Kephales **{443}** also are ambiguous as described, if indeed of 'Egyptian blue.'

<sup>685</sup> See n. 428, above.

<sup>686</sup> Beads **{405}** (EM II context); **{75}** (no find context, but probably MM IA–early B); **{150; 151}** (early MM IB context). See Chapter 5 for discussion of faience manufacture.

<sup>687</sup> See HOOD 1978:132; Foster 1979:56–60. The question of the earliest Minoan manufacture of faience remains controversial. See also BIMSON and FREESTONE 1987:*passim*.

<sup>688</sup> See LUCAS and HARRIS 1962:389, 391–392; WARREN 1969:190 n. 1; WARD 1978:84–86; YULE 1981:193, 197.

<sup>689</sup> Amethyst: **{3}** (LM IIIA–B); **{65}** (LM II or later); **{505 (G)}** (no find context); Carnelian: **{505 (H–N)}** (no find context).

<sup>690</sup> YULE 1981:197, 204 n. 71.

<sup>691</sup> See Chapter 8.

island, of types found on single-strand necklaces interspersed with round beads of similar stone (i.e., carnelian), suggests that most likely some round beads also imported on finished necklaces were dismantled for reuse in Minoan arrangements.<sup>692</sup> Although no recognisably Egyptian beads are known on Crete (apart from the amuletic forms discussed elsewhere), the presence of several scarabs from probably dismantled Egyptian jewellery pieces<sup>693</sup> suggests that perhaps amethyst and carnelian bead necklaces too were dismantled and the beads reused.

Evans's major visual criterion for identification as an imported bead seems to have been the bead surface itself. Virtually every bead he identified as an import seems to have had a remarkably smooth surface, whereas those not so identified seem to have a 'rougher,' inadvertently faceted surface seemingly the result of being 'tumbled' rather than direct polishing. Thus he identified the amethyst beads from Aghia Pelagia {3} and Arvi {65} as Egyptian, but made no such claim for the carnelian beads found with them. The carnelian beads from Pyrgos (Khanli Kastelli) {505 (H-N)} also were identified as Egyptian, and with one exception have a surprisingly smooth rounded surface. The veracity of this observation is *not* borne out in further visual investigation by the present author of both other beads on Crete and Egyptian beads found in Egypt, although in general Egyptian beads seem to be of higher quality surface polish than Minoan beads. Other Minoan objects

in these and harder stones are highly and well-polished, including sealstones, and it is clear the Minoans were capable of making smoothly polished small objects including those with a rounded surface. Thus, it cannot be used as a criterion for distinguishing imported and locally manufactured beads, and it is more likely that they were in fact Minoan-made. Amethyst and carnelian (as well as the lapis lazuli likely from Afghanistan) may have been made into jewellery on Crete as early as sometime in MM IB,<sup>694</sup> at about the same time as they also became readily available and therefore popular in Egypt. The MM II popularity of hard stones for beads and seals on Crete lags slightly behind their availability and popularity in Egypt.

Nonetheless, the possibility of 'stray' carnelian and amethyst round and oval beads imported on Egyptian necklaces, then dismantled and re-used as ready-made elements to be strung into Minoan arrangements, cannot be ignored. It is notable that the collection from Pyrgos (Khanli Kastelli) are of two types, barrel and round, and each type comparatively similar in scale, with the exception of the single bead having a rough surface; they originally may have been components of one or more imported necklaces. This possibility extends to any simple bead forms in imported materials found on Crete, although the actual number of imports probably is rather small and imports are unlikely to be identified specifically.

<sup>692</sup> See PHILLIPS 1992b.

<sup>693</sup> See Chapter 7, Appendix.

<sup>694</sup> If accepted as of Minoan manufacture, the 'Aegina Treasure' amethyst and carnelian beads are a good example of the use of these raw materials (and possibly ready-made elements) for beads; see HIGGINS 1979:figs. 25, 27, 33, 35, 40 and {578-581}. Material from the upper (MM IB-II) layer

of Tholos E at Archanes included a necklace with 50 amethyst and three sard (brown carnelian) beads; see Archanes J. YULE (1980:193, 198) notes that both amethyst and carnelian/sard come into general use by MM II in conjunction with the working of hard stones for seals, but can be found also in MM IB.