

Homer famously described the settlement of Mycenae as 'rich in gold'. When, in the nineteenth century, archaeologists first began to excavate this predominately Late Bronze Age site (dating from the seventeenth to eleventh centuries BC), they found that Homer's words seemed to ring true. Fascinating gold objects, such as decorated cups, intricate jewellery and the curious death masks, were found alongside abundant examples of artefacts made from silver, bronze and lead. This treasure trove of artefacts has led many scholars to argue that **metal played a decisive role in the political, economic and social development of the community at Mycenae**, which became one of the foremost centres of Mycenaean culture across the entire southern Greek mainland. Despite this, there has been no comprehensive study of metalwork from Late Bronze Age Mycenae and previous scholarship has only considered a limited range of research questions. In fact, **we still understand very little as to how metals were integrated into the lives of the inhabitants**.

Humans and objects have very complicated relationships. People frequently blame objects for deliberately letting them down due to breakage or malfunction, discuss the characteristics of an object as if they were personality traits and form close bonds with objects. The complexity of this web of relationships is well expressed through the term *entanglement*. Recently, specialists in Material Culture Studies have sought to incorporate this way of thinking about objects into their research. This has led to renewed interest in the way that objects are integrated into social practices, that is to say how objects are used within the vast range of ordinary and special activities that interweave together to form the culture of a specific society. This can be studied by following the *biography* of individual objects from their production, through possibly many different phases of use, to their eventual removal from the human world, perhaps, for example, by burial in a tomb or accidental loss.

Such a practice-orientated approach has never been applied to Mycenaean metalwork before. To do this, my project will collect data on approximately five thousand metal artefacts from the site, drawing upon evidence from excavation records and firsthand examination of the objects themselves. The characteristics and context of each artefact will be statistically analysed and, in conjunction with contemporary evidence from images and texts, be used to identify patterns that shed light on the entanglement of relationships between metalwork and people at Mycenae. My project has been especially designed to consider the entire spectrum of society at Mycenae, not just the wealthiest citizens, and investigate change over time.

My research will:

- 1) demonstrate which social practices metalwork was and was not involved in
- 2) investigate the culturally defined criteria which governed access to metals at Mycenae and any associated processes of adaptation, exclusion and resistance in the community
- 3) establish the typical object biographies for metalwork, identify artefacts that deviated from this standard path and explore why this may have occurred.

Answering these three research questions will significantly increase our understanding of the *entanglement* between people and metalwork at Mycenae, a relationship that was instrumental in the emergence, florescence and decline of the Mycenaean World.