# Case 4-Eur-Greece-Mycenaean-Vapheio Cup

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| Two Gold Cups, Vapheio, Laconia, 1400-1450 BCE. Reproduction.  **Formal Label:** Two Gold Cups, Vapheio, Laconia, Greece-1400-1450 BCE  **Accession Number:**  **LC Number:** N5330.A1  **Date or Time Horizon:** 1400-1450 BCE  **Geographical Area:** Vapheio tholos tomb, Laconia, Greece  **Cultural Affiliation:** Cretan-Mycenaean metalwork  **Medium:** Gold  **Dimensions:** First cup above, 7.6 x 9.9 cm (3 x 3 7/8 in)  **Weight:**  **Provenance:** Museum reproduction.  **Condition:**  **Discussion:** The Vapheio tholos tomb, which is five miles south of Sparta in southern Greece, consists of a 97-foot walled approach, leading to a 33-foot diameter, corbelled-vaulted chamber in the floor of which a grave had been dug. In this grave two gold cups were found by Christos Tsountas in 1888, which he excavated in 1889. These cups have a flat base, straight flaring sides, and a single handle. “Vapheio style” cups are found in middle Minoan levels in Cretan sites and were popular on mainland Mycenaean sites in the late Helladic Period.  The first cup above shows a bull’s hind legs being hobbled with a rope, while simultaneously the animal mates with a cow as three grazing bulls look on. The second cup above shows one bull caught in a net, as traditional hunter-gatherers had done for millennia, while another attacks two hunters as a third hunter flees.  The cups appear to have been imported from Crete where bulls were considered sacred. Both cups were probably made in the same atelier with the first being the product of a master Mycenaean goldsmith, as it is more carefully executed, while the second, which is slightly inferior to the first, is probably the product of a Minoan understudy (Perrot and Chipiez 1894). The first cup shows scenes of the violent capture which was conceived and executed by a Mycenean artist, while the cup with scenes of bulls being hobbled was made by a Minoan artist (Davis 1974: 472). The naturalistic compositions were added via repoussé, a technique in which the relief is made by hammering the reverse side of the metal.  References:  Davis, Ellen N. 1974. “The Vapheio Cups: One Minoan and One Mycenean?” *The Art Bulletin*, 56: 4, pp. 472-487.  Perrot, G. and C. Chipiez, 1894. *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité***,** [**VI, La Grèce primitive, l'art mycénien**](http://www.worldcat.org/title/histoire-de-lart-dans-lantiquite-tome-vi-la-grece-primitive-lart-mycenien/oclc/491609373&referer=brief_results)**.** Paris, Hachette, 784-794. |  |
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| http://www.namuseum.gr/images/blank.gif |

 