On Second Thoughts...

GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology as romance: Schliemann's excavations at Troy in 1873 uncovered the ruins of an Hellenic temple to Athena with these large wine jars embedded in the earth. The temple was 'sacred for Schliemann to dig deeper and bring Troy itself to light'.

FROM SCHLIEMANN TO SURVEYS

It is probably fair to say that perceptions of Greek history between the eighth and first centuries B.C. have almost completely altered in the past sixty years. Archaeology is mainly responsible for this.

Everyone reading Greek history will have found themselves confronted, in books and articles, by frequent references to archaeological evidence. What historians mean by 'Greek archaeology', however, may not be immediately apparent. Many people think of it in terms of beautiful works of art (the Elgin Marbles, the Charioteer of Delphi), or the impressive Bronze Age sites (the palace of Knossos, Mycenae with its Lion Gate, or the Thera frescoes). To others, archaeology conjures up the romance of discovery: Michael Ventris, a young English architect.

Graham Shipley discusses how new archaeological discoveries and techniques are progressively refining our views of Classical Greece.

deciphering a lost Bronze Age script, or the expeditions of Schliemann.

These things are an important part of Greek archaeology, and the flow of exciting finds has certainly not dried up. Pride of place amongst recent discoveries goes to the tomb of Philip II (father of Alexander the Great) at Vergina in Macedonia, in which a wealth of gold objects and frescoes were found (amply illustrated in, for example, R. Lane Fox, The Search for Alexander, Allen Lane, 1981), together with the cremated remains of Philip himself. The story of how the king's identity was revealed, by comparing the skull from the tomb with descriptions of him in ancient writers, makes a good detective story (Journal of Hellenic Studies, 1984).

Turning to architecture. American excavators in the Athenian Agora have uncovered the Painted Stone, one of the most famous buildings of antiquity (Hesperia, 1984). Elsewhere, at Lindos on the island of Rhodes, a joint British-Greek excavation has revealed what may be the earliest temple-like building in Greece (Anti-
Schoeler, whose Ancient Greece from the Air (Thames and Hudson, 1974) is an atlas of archaeological sites photographed from the air, J.E. Bean's excellent series of guides to sites in Asia Minor (Asia Minor, Turkey, etc., John Murray) are helpful both to scholars and to the 'educated layman'.

A laudable antiquarian enthusiasm also lay behind many of the earliest large-scale excavations, which were often at famous sanctuaries such as Delphi, Olympia, and the Athenian Acropolis. These were promising places to excavate, because their descriptions in ancient sources suggested that they contained monuments and statues by the greatest Greek artists. The most famous excavation of this kind, of course, is at Troy, in Turkey, where Heinrich Schliemann fulfilled his lifelong dream of finding the city described in Homer's Iliad. Today, the same romantic regard for ancient culture inspires popular treatments such as Michael Wood's successful television series (and book), The Search for the Trojan War (BBC Books). These are sometimes cooly received by scholars, who regard them as falling short of their own rigorous standards, but they do more than anything to keep alive a widespread interest in the ancient world.

Actually, of course, most archaeological work in Greece proceeds in a less than epic fashion, and few excavations make it as far as the Sunday supplements. The Greek Archaeological Service sustains almost single-handedly the huge burden of rescue excavation, but shares most other work with foreign research institutes such as the British School at Athens (BSA), which has just celebrated its centenary (H. G. Rawlinson, The British School at Athens; the first hundred years, Thames and Hudson, 1986). Once collected, archaeological material is not published in detail until it has been thoroughly studied. This is a slow process, because most senior archaeologists also hold full-time university posts. Final publication takes place either in periodicals, such as the Annual of the BSA and the American School's Hesperia (the latter often includes new studies of buildings on the Acropolis), or in special volumes such as the American School's Corinth and Athenian Agora series. Such volumes are expensive and often highly specialised, but helpful reviews of these, and of books in other languages, are to be found in Greece & Rome, Classical Review, and the Journal of Hellenic Studies.
two Euboean towns of Chalcis and Eretria. Little is known about this war; yet its date is uncertain, although the written sources tend to place it in the late eighth century BC. To the delight of historians, excavations in the 1960s at Leïkandhi, between Eretria and Chalcis, revealed a flourishing settlement that declined in prosperity in the decades before circa 700, and was then burnt and abandoned, just at the time when Eretria became important (M.R. Fogg and others, *Leïkandhi*. Thames and Hudson, 1981.) Warrior-graves of similar date at Eretria, near the road leading to Leïkandhi and Chalcis, may indicate an attack from that direction (E.J.N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*. Methuen, 1977.) Was Leïkandhi, then, the earlier location of Eretria? Was it sacked by the men of Chalcis, rebuilt on a new site, and attacked again? Unfortunately, neither the literary nor the archaeological evidence gives an unambiguous answer. The choice of answer depends simply on one's view of the relation between these kinds of evidence, and in turn on one's overall approach to early Greek history.

The introduction of new archaeological evidence may prove more decisive in the case of the 'Dorian Invasion', an alleged movement into the Peloponnese, several centuries before the historical period, by northern tribes from whom the Classical Spartans claimed descent. A crude class of pottery, known as 'Barbarian Ware', has recently been found near Sparta, on other Peloponnesian sites, in north-west Greece, and elsewhere (BSA Annual, 1981). It is not unlikely that the people who made this pottery did enter the Peloponnese from the north, which seems to support the legend; but it is impossible to tell whether they were hostile, and it is not clear that they stayed for more than a few generations. Therefore the question of whether they were the ancestors of the Spartans is unsolved. In fact, it might be more fruitful to ask what effect the legends about this invasion had on the classical Spartans' perceptions of themselves, irrespective of whether there was any truth in them.

A sceptical approach to written evidence – especially sources later than the fifth century BC – is a well-proven tool for Greek archaeology, but by using archaeology simply to check the accuracy of literary sources, historians have failed to exploit its full potential. Pottery, to name only one artefact, is discovered not simply in a hole in the ground, but in a grave, or in a room, or on a floor. Yet it is often called upon to help solve socio-economic or political questions, without any reference being made to its origins.

Moreover, the kinds of questions that have attracted historians are often 'pre-selected' for them by a prevailing attitude to Greek culture which defines it in terms of art, literature, and political theory. It may be no coincidence that politics in mid-twentieth-century Britain tended to treat 'the community' as if it were an indivisible unit. Moreover, most historians came from a class that was used to governing other nations and was inclined to take a broad, statist perspective of history. This reinforced the tendency to concentrate on the very things that interested ancient authors: war, diplomacy, and political institutions – so that archaeology was treated within a framework of meaning imposed by ancient attitudes.

Some scholars, of course, had wide horizons and succeeded in combining the new evidence of excavation with literary evidence (and, where available, with documents inscribed on stone) to build up completely new pictures of particular regions. For most of these, for all that its general themes are not altogether universally accepted, was M. Rostovtzeff, *Local and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941). One year earlier, A.H.M. Jones produced his comprehensive study, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941). Recent works of the same kind include V.R.D. Desborough, *Greek Dark Ages*, Benn, 1972; J.N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*: John Boardman, *Greek Overseas*, Thames and Hudson, 3rd edn., 1980; and F.W. Walbank, *Hellenistic World*, Harvester, 1981. Nevertheless, the preoccupations of ancient history remained largely the same after the Second World War, even though archaeologists in other fields (including Aegean prehistory), who had relatively little written evidence or fine art to help them, were developing scientific methods for recovering precious organic evidence. These included carbon-14 dating, palynology (the study of pollen), dendrochronology (dating trees by ring-counting), and special techniques for dealing with bones, reconstructing farming practices and diets from seeds, and so on.

Greek archaeology, with its tradition of concentrating on art-historic, was late in adopting these techniques, so
that ancient historians knew little of them.

Moreover, in archaeology in the 1980s there is a growing interest in using illustrative models, statistical patterning, and anthropological parallels. This 'new archaeology' was aware of the variety of possible human cultures and made use of some of the insights of Continental philosophy and literary theory (principally Marxism and structuralism). As it happens, there has been a slight retreat from earlier heights of abstraction, and the 'individual' has made a reappearance. In Reading the Past (Cambridge University Press, 1986) Ian Hodder points out that it is not socio-economic trends but people that paint pots; they invent them with meanings that cannot be understood by way of statistical regularities alone. Therefore the social and ideological context of artefacts must also be considered. 'New archaeology' also emphasized that methodology (or a 'theory') should be made explicit, and that evidence can by no means 'speak for itself'. The interpretation of artefact assemblages is particularly sensitive to the observer's theoretical assumptions and general outlook (a theme explored in Hodder's The Present Past, Cambridge University Press, 1983).

One area where assumptions affect the answers is early Greek trade, M.J. Finley, in The World of Odysseus (Bergin), took over from social anthropology the idea of disinterested gift-exchange in order to explain certain episodes in the Iliad and Odyssey. Other 'primitivists' or 'minimalists' have gone further, and tried to explain away all the archaeological evidence of trade in these terms. However, it seems likely that, while trade may have been conducted within a ritual structure resembling gift-giving, its motivation and its effects, both economic and cultural, were similar to those of 'trade' in the conventional sense (see Oswyn Murray, Early Greece, Harvester Press; G. Shipley, History of Saxon, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987).

The third category of archaeological evidence embraces the results of recent excavations and other work, much of which represents a break with traditional archaeology. In recent years, there has been something of a change in the intellectual origins of Greek archaeologists. A classical education is still common, but many now come from ancient history, pure archaeology, sociology, and the experimental and earth sciences. Partly as a consequence of these changes, there has been an increase in fruitful cooperation between all these disciplines. A different kind of history is now being written, which uses archaeology in a more imaginative way. Among the mainstream history textbooks in which excavated evidence and its socio-economic interpretation feature prominently are Oswyn Murray, Early Greece and Anthony Snodgrass, Archaic Greece.

Greek archaeology has thus achieved a double emancipation: from art history, and from Greek history. But ancient history, too, has begun to be 'liberated'. Despite the fact that in most universities it is a 'sub-branch' of Classics, it now sees itself more as a department of history as such, and is therefore in close contact with archaeology. Even before this happened, historical studies of various aspects of archaeology, particularly building, appeared: R.E. Wycherley, How the Greeks Built Cities (Macmillan, 1962) is a brilliant study of town-planning, written under the influence of French historians. R.A. Tomlinson, Greek Sanctuaries (Elek, 1976) is a comparative study of religious architecture in a historical framework. Alison Burford uses inscriptions to illuminate the social history of a famous sanctuary in Greek Temple Builders at Epidauros (Liverpool University Press, 1969), and J.J. Coulton combines social history and buildings in Greek Architects at Work (Elek, 1977).

Recently, R.A. Tomlinson has written the first book which synthesizes (aristocratic dinner-parties) were held. This links up with historical work by Oswyn Murray and others showing the central role of symposium in Archaic society (see for example chapter 12 of Murray's Early Greece). Turning to smaller artefacts, A.W. Johnstone has used potter's marks to illuminate Archaic trade (article in Greece & Rome, 1974; and Trademarks on Greek Vases, Arts and Phillips, 1970), while Yvon Carlin's chapter in Trade in the Ancient Economy (ed. Carnes et al., Chatto, 1983) uses amphora handles for a similar purpose.

In recent years there has been increasing interest in rural settlements, and in how the broad mass of the ancient population exploited the Greek landscape. One result has been a succession of books about individual cities and regions, some of which place archaeological data in a historical and geographical setting; for example, Tomlinson, Argos and the Argolid (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), Paul Cartledge, Sparta and Lakonia (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), and J.B. Salmon, Wealthy Corinth (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984). Between them, these studies and others like them have made clear the enormous diversity of the Greek city-states. A broader view is taken by Robin Osborne, Classical Landscape with Figures (George Philip, 1985), which looks at various different Greek cities in relation to their countryside.

Archaeologists have excavated new kinds of rural sites. In Attica, J. Ellis Jones and others have explored two Classical farmhouses, the Dema House and the Vari House (BSA
In parallel with this change, the last two decades have seen an increase in geographical fieldwork. C. Vita-Finzi, *The Mediterranean Valley* (Cambridge University Press, 1960) discussed the relation between changes in the landscape over the past few millennia (particularly the deposition of new sediments over old surfaces) and the state of the archaeological record. This has been picked up in a number of geomorphological studies, and problems in this area have exercised historians, archaeologists, and earth scientists.

These debates have encouraged an existing trend towards organised archaeological survey. Although excavation is extremely important, archaeological remains also lie scattered across the entire Greek countryside. Using survey techniques, the landscape can be explored systematically and the material interpreted. Although often unexcavated, the finds can indicate the presence of sites not mentioned by ancient authors, such as houses, workshops, cemeteries, and small shrines. Survey informs us, as excavation cannot, about rural settlement and agriculture throughout the whole territory of an ancient town.

The first modern survey was, in effect, the University of Minnesota’s Messenia Expedition (ed. W.A. McDonald and G.R. Rapp, 1972), a series of separate studies aimed at reconstructing the Bronze Age landscape of the south-west Peloponnesus. Recent surveys have followed its example by using specialists from many disciplines, but have preferred to gather information about all periods.

Observation of the present-day countryside can be combined with archaeological survey, and can tell us a lot about ancient agriculture and rural society. This has been the case, for example, in the survey at...
Attic country life; John Ellis (above) reconstruction sketch of the Vasi House he excavated in 196, with (next) a restored ancient beehive (on the left). Remnants found at Vasi and elsewhere indicate that the pottery beehive still occurredly used today in Greece and Cyprus (on the right) have a long history.

Melesna in the north-east Peloponnese (Lin Foshall, History Today, July 1966). The rapid modernisation of Greek agriculture thus makes survey doubly urgent: not only are traditional farming practices disappearing fast, but archaeological evidence is being destroyed at an alarming rate by the use of deep ploughs and bulldozers to clear the land. There are many surveys going on at present, and different approaches have been evolved in different areas (see John Cherry’s essay in Archaeological Survey in the Mediterranean Area, ed. D.R. Keller and D.W. Rupp, British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, 1983). The Melos survey was among the first to rely heavily on statistical techniques to re-examine a settlement pattern (C. Renfrew and J.M. Wagstaff, An Island Policy, Cambridge University Press, 1982), and its conclusions and methods have been widely debated. Turning to the mainland, the Cambridge and Bradford Boeotia expedition is exploring the economic relationship between three ancient towns: Haliaeis, Thebes, and Aegina, the birthplace of the poet Heidus (Journal of Field Archaeology, 1985). Further south, the RSA Lazioia Survey has surveyed an area east of Sparta, which will clarify relations between that city and its subject peoples (Archaeological Reports, 1985-86).

Despite the varying methods used, surveys of all kinds have revealed unexpectedly large numbers of sites in the countryside. But a problem for many of them is the lack of accurate dating criteria for un焙nt pottery and other domestic artefacts, hitherto regarded by excavators as of minor importance. There may soon be a need for new excavations at rural sites, to obtain good dating sequences for un焙nt pottery.

So far only the Melos survey is fully published, but already it is clear that historians are thinking about the Greek city-states in a new way. They are taking more account of agriculture, the mainstay of the ancient economy, and of the differences between regions. For these reasons, the survey is the most influential and exciting development in ancient history for many years.

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Towards the New Dark Age?

The Age of Empire, 1875-1914, by E.J. Hobsbawm. 404 pp. (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £16.95)

The apparently limitless capacity of the productive system established by Professor Hobsbawm has now taken him into a third volume of what has turned out to be a general survey of the nineteenth century in world history. He tells us that it was not his original intention to write anything so "crazy ambitious." It is only this present volume which was consistently conceived as the final part of a trilogy. His bi-fold purpose has been to understand and explain the nineteenth century and its place in history, to expound a world in process of revolutionary transformation, to trace the roots of our present back into the soil of the past, and to see the past as a coherent whole rather than a medley of different topics. Professor Hobsbawm is not a person to set himself modest objectives.

His fascination with the decades of this present volume derives in part from his own age and ancestry. Born during the First World War, his understanding of the preceding decades derives from his extensive reading, but also from impressions formed in childhood from his parents' generation. Moreover, he was born in Alexandria during the British occupation of Egypt. His mother was Austrian and his father was English (whose family had only recently arrived in England from Russian Poland). Professor Hobsbawm's status as a child of the "Age of Empire" appears unassailable. The conjecture which produced Eric Hobsbawm has in turn led to his fascination with the blending of classes, economies and societies. Readers will no doubt be impressed by his vigorous attempts to see these decades as a whole. They will admire the mass of miscellaneous information on which he has drawn, but whether they will find the underlying structure and argument persuasive is another matter.

The author is clearly addicted to 'ages'. He has managed to find no less than three in what he calls the 'long nineteenth century'. However, he is not inclined to linger long discussing contradictions and discontinuities. Our emo-