

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON DIRECTIONS AND A MODEST PROPOSAL

IT is an honor to have been invited to make a small contribution to this special number of *Hesperia* in recognition of Carl Blegen's eightieth birthday. Over a quarter century ago, in spring 1939, I was first associated with the dean among American archaeologists working in Greece. That season was about the mid point, and it may have been the high point, of his long and remarkably successful professional career. Certainly it was a revelation to a student apprentice to observe the masterful way in which he went about the preliminary surface survey, the sound judgment which led to the selection of *the* site, and the superhuman restraint which greeted the appearance of the first Pylos tablets.

Since then, I have served on his staff in a further campaign of excavation at the palace of Nestor, and we have been in almost annual contact in planning the University of Minnesota's program of surface exploration of southwest Peloponnese. This project was originally suggested by Professor Blegen and has been carried on with his constant advice and unfailing support. His closest associates can testify that he runs a trim and disciplined field campaign; but in the evenings, with a companion like Piet de Jong to match his reminiscences and witticisms, Carl Blegen's warmth and kindness are as unforgettable as his unswerving attention to business while on the site or in the workrooms. Since 1948, fate has located me in the area where Carl Blegen grew up. A resident of the Twin Cities very soon realizes that Blegen's parents, brothers and sisters share with him an affectionate and honored place in the memories and hearts of many hundreds in the metropolitan area of Minnesota.

In recent years I have spent a good deal of time reviewing the literature of the century over which Greek prehistoric archaeology grew to maturity. Although many able scholars have made notable contributions to this development, there is no doubt in my mind that, as Schliemann and Evans were the pioneers in their respective generations, so Blegen has been in his. And, from the whole bulk of his publications which are uniformly distinguished in grace as well as in care and knowledge and insight, one essay seems to me outstanding. The occasion was a Symposium on the Arts and Architecture, organized in 1940 as a feature of the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of the University of Pennsylvania. I propose to use two quotations from it as texts for the suggestions which follow.

Blegen was the first among several distinguished speakers, and his theme was "Preclassical Greece."¹ The essay is a modest yet authoritative review of the current

¹ *Studies in the Arts and Architecture: University of Pennsylvania Bicentennial Conference*, Philadelphia, 1941, pp. 1-14.

status of two major issues—the essential distinctness of the Minoan and the Mycenaean cultures (on which he had been correct in opposing Evans' view) and the essential continuity between Mycenaean and later Greek culture (where he had been Evans' ally). But the unique quality of the Philadelphia paper appears particularly in the closing paragraphs. They identify the author as a kind of "prophet" or "philosopher" to his people. He seems to stand aside for a moment from his own immediate work as well as from his generous assessment of others' efforts and to point the direction in which the greatest promise lies in the future. With a quarter century of continuous and successful field work already behind him (to which an equal span has now been added), who has a better right to a respectful hearing?

The first point I want to underline is Blegen's quiet rejection of the prevailing fallacy that excavation is the be-all and end-all of archaeological field work. "The amplification of any synthesis in the present state of our knowledge," he wrote, "has urgent need, apart from further actual digging, of a systematic comprehensive survey of the districts of Greece, province by province, with the recording and mapping of all ancient sites. Most of the large centers have long ago been noted, but scores, not to say hundreds, of smaller settlements still await discovery. . . . When the whole country has thus been methodically and thoroughly explored and the results have been properly tabulated and made available, we shall know infinitely more than we now do regarding the extent of occupation and the movements and distribution of population from period to period. In each district where investigations have hitherto been inadequate, two or three sites might then be carefully excavated for supplementary detailed information."

This was sound doctrine in 1940, and it is much more apposite in 1966. All of us must be aware of the accelerating pace of physical change which our mighty modern machines are inflicting on the countryside in Greece and almost everywhere else around the world. We could not, even if we would, hold back the bulldozers, the drainage and irrigation projects, the tractor-drawn ploughs. They represent legitimate economic hope; and the present generation justifiably welcomes them. The latest news is of a billion dollar contract being negotiated between the Greek government and an American company to develop the agricultural and industrial potential of two Greek districts which still hold untold archaeological secrets on and just below their surface. Equally extensive inroads on other areas will surely follow within our lifetime.

The salvage work necessitated by this frantic activity is already taxing the capacity of the Greek Archaeological Service. The Service could not possibly spare trained manpower to carry out a crash program of intensive, coordinated surface exploration ahead of the bulldozers. But American and other foreign archaeologists, with their students, could cooperate with the Service to complete the task by 1980. The known sites where everyone clamors for a permit to begin or continue excavation

can wait; the less obvious, undetected sites and monuments, now so gravely threatened, cannot. Among the essential new techniques, good aerial photographs in competent hands can at least double the speed and effectiveness of surface exploration. A prompt and united effort would not only record a great deal of evidence that will soon have disappeared forever, but it would disclose (and save) many important locations for unhurried and increasingly efficient excavation by our own and future generations.

Properly conducted surface surveys provide at least as valuable and varied training for students as do excavations; and mistakes can be rectified without destroying vital evidence. Field reconnaissance is less expensive and at the present juncture far more pressing. There is no scientific reason why excavation should carry greater prestige. Archaeologists who complacently encourage the misconception that excavation is the only field activity which merits financial support and the interest of the general public are ignoring the history of their own science. Practically without exception, the great excavators (like Blegen) have been dedicated explorers as well. The trained observer, sans spade, still has a vital role to play. Every year we are reminded through chance finds or purposeful search that there is seemingly inexhaustible new information still waiting to be detected *above* ground. Speaking only of the mainland, Desborough² has stated within the past year: "There is no district that would not repay further exploration and excavation, but certain regions such as Arcadia, north Elis, the Megarid, Phocis and Locris, much of Boeotia, . . . and even parts of Attica, Corinthia and the Argolid need basic surveys."

Blegen's point that thorough exploration of the environs should always precede the excavation of a site is absolutely incontestable. In dozens of important aspects this kind of intensive regional study should make an eventual excavation (if there is to be one) far more profitable and effective. Indeed, one might suggest that this should be a prior condition to the issuance of an excavation permit, just as the applicant should be required to guarantee that the excavated area will be properly protected and that the scientific results will be fully published without unreasonable delay.

The time is already here (and almost past) when all available archaeological personnel should be mobilized for a general survey of almost every district in Greece and the islands. My "modest proposal" is that some existing agency (or one to be organized specifically for the purpose) undertake immediately the necessary negotiations and arrangements. Willing help is not far to seek. Students of classical archaeology and their instructors would comprise the basic field staffs. Some background in the classics might be required of all recruits; but advanced students with training in a dozen or more fields (as will be brought out in a moment) could also contribute most usefully.

An individual task force assigned to a particular area could easily become a direct

² "The Greek Mainland, c. 1150-c. 1000 B.C.," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, XXXI, 1965, pp. 213-228.

channel to stimulate wider interest in Greek archaeology. A local group in this country (or in others) could sponsor the participation of a qualified student. University and college departments, which are continually seeking opportunities to engage in field work abroad, could contribute both personnel and funds. Students who participated in one or more seasons of the survey would learn a great deal more about Greece, its language, its people and its history than they could through casual visits or conducted tours. Indeed, the survey should be organized as a carefully handled teaching and learning experience. Field directors of excavations do not always have sufficient time to devote to teaching the few students who can be included on their staffs; we ought to face the fact that novices sometimes learn the increasingly complex craft of excavation in a somewhat haphazard manner.

Another paragraph in the Philadelphia address is equally valid and timely. "In the future," said Blegen, "I believe we shall come more and more to rely on pure science for help in solving many of the problems that face us. Anthropologists, metallurgists, chemists, and zoölogists have already been called in to collaborate, to the great advantage of many excavations; and there are tasks for physicists, botanists, and geologists as well. . . . By combined effort we shall ultimately ascertain far more than we yet know regarding the formative period in the history of the Greek people."

It is somewhat ironical that, as late as 1940, Blegen should have felt constrained to phrase this recommendation so largely in the future tense. Some reform has been effected in the intervening 25 years, but not nearly enough. It is no secret that the uneasy relationship between "anthropological" and "classical" archaeologists centers here. The one group views itself as following in the footsteps of men like Pitt Rivers; the other still operates (or is thought to) with the aims and methods of Ernst Curtius at Olympia. Greek prehistorians, as was already obvious in the case of Schliemann and Evans, are caught between the two traditions. They feel somewhat bereft without the comforting support of contemporary written documents, although the Linear B tablets have now brought some of them within the spectrum of "historical" time. And on the other hand, most of them have not been trained to take full advantage of the manifold varieties of non-literary and comparative evidence.

Greek prehistorians must not surrender their allegiance to the "humanistic" tradition of the west and ought not to subscribe to the extreme "anthropological" view that any culture is abstractly as important as any other. At the same time, they and their colleagues who work in later Greek horizons must learn to use with good will and discrimination the help proffered by social and natural scientists. It is no accident that Dr. Glen T. Seaborg, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, recently cited archaeology as *the* discipline where collaboration between science and the humanities is being most dramatically achieved.³

³ See his address to the American Philosophical Society, published in the *ACLS Newsletter* for May, 1966, pp. 1-11.

Archaeology has, in fact, become an area where interdisciplinary research, so vital to achieve a reversal of the trend toward specialization and isolation, has one of its most promising theaters of operation. There is both wisdom and a curious defensiveness in several statements made recently in this connection by an eminent spokesman for the classical archaeologists.⁴ It is, of course, true that "modern technological procedures in field work and new-fashioned gadgets are very inadequate substitutes for a native ability to read the story of the past from stratified earth." Actually, the author has demonstrated in the course of excavations under his direction that there need be no either-or. We need both; and the one complements the other. No doubt, too, "as the senior branch of archaeological studies the classical has perhaps some reason to be conservative"; but if it does not make wise use of new methods and techniques (in addition to conserving the best of the tried and true) it will deprive our science of vital evidence and useful lines of communication. Furthermore, if classical archaeology takes the road of ultra-conservatism, it will be bypassed before the end of the century, as could possibly happen to all classical studies.

It is a colossal understatement to say that the classicist (including the classical archaeologist) has no easy role in the contemporary American academic scene. His discipline will no longer automatically assert its right to attention without his patient and tactful demonstration of its continuing relevance. Archaeology is not the core of classical studies nor should any archaeologist (particularly the prehistorian) proclaim or presume that it is. The core of classical studies is and must remain the literary documents. But archaeology, properly presented, is a powerful magnet in attracting to classical studies the interest and respect of students, colleagues, and the public. If, as we are told, our society is becoming one of increasing leisure where interesting and satisfying avocations will become correspondingly critical, archaeology has tremendous possibilities. The spate of recent books written by scholars for the very numerous interested laymen is a straw in the wind. We need more such books, particularly for the classical and later periods. A much more effective job can be done to integrate archaeology with other areas within our total discipline.

Each of us knows how eagerly and generously many of our colleagues in the natural and social sciences react to questions and discussions about problems in Greek archaeology. I have yet to see a group of students or faculty or the public that is not fascinated to hear about a discovery such as that by Catling and Millett in connection with the inscribed stirrup jars from Thebes.⁵ This kind of problem combines an important new scientific technique with tantalizing historical, economic, technological, and even linguistic puzzles. It is not difficult (as I can vouch from experience) to

⁴ "Archaeology: Horizons New and Old," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* CX, 1966. The paper on "Classical Lands" (pp. 100-104) was read by Professor Homer A. Thompson.

⁵ *Archaeometry: Bulletin of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford University*, VIII, 1965, pp. 3-37.

persuade colleagues with a variety of relevant specialized backgrounds to assume responsibility for an archaeologically-oriented project. And funds are far more readily available for such interdisciplinary enterprises than for "conventional" excavation.

Is it too utopian to suggest that coordinated regional surveys might be staffed not only with archaeologists and their students but also with a whole battery of social and natural scientists or advanced students working under their direction? Every one of the disciplines listed by Blegen can make valuable contributions to archaeological exploration as well as excavation. And others such as agricultural economics, civil engineering, geography, and ceramic engineering are equally pertinent. In the interests of economy (with which most classical archaeologists are much too concerned in an age of affluence), some specialists might move from team to team. And some types of research could be carried on in the specialist's own laboratory with material properly collected by relative amateurs.

The coordinated project also has attractive one-world aspects. One can visualize the useful international contacts as one team compares its results with another of a different national origin, and field personnel, both students and senior scientists, might be exchanged.

The published results of the surveys might be organized by regions and include all chronological subdivisions. Or they might follow the model of Richard Hope Simpson's recent publication on the Late Bronze Age habitation pattern in the whole Aegean basin.⁶ In any case, the discovery and mapping of man-made monuments would be only one part of the project, though at present the most pressing. A complementary study of the modern and palaeo-environment of each region would help to amplify and explain the record of human occupation. And both studies would need to be supplemented by a thorough review of the historical documents for the periods where they are available. One might even suggest a fourth feature, the systematic recording of regional toponyms (place names), which could be conducted by the more linguistically inclined in each team. Here again precious evidence is being lost, as the older residents take their memories with them to the grave.

It must be confessed that the suggestions outlined above go somewhat beyond Carl Blegen's recommendations in his Philadelphia paper. But they are in the spirit of his prescriptions and I feel such they would have his support. Perhaps we might even persuade him to allow the survey to be called "Project CWB."

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⁶ *A Gazetteer and Atlas of Mycenaean Sites*. Institute of Classical Studies Bulletin Supplement No. 16, University of London, 1965.