

HOW SCHLIEMANN SMUGGLED “PRIAM’S TREASURE” FROM THE TROAD TO ATHENS

IN AN ARTICLE in a recent volume of *Antiquity* Donald Easton discussed two mysteries surrounding the treasure Schliemann claims to have discovered towards the end of his 1873 excavation at Troy: (1) exactly when the large find which Schliemann called “Priam’s Treasure” was made and (2) how he smuggled it past the Turkish officials to ship it to Athens.¹ Since then considerable progress has been made towards reaching a consensus for the date of the discovery.² It now seems to be generally agreed that Schliemann made a substantial find on 31 May, which he dispatched later that day to Frederick Calvert’s farm at Akça Köy, some four miles south of Hisarlık.³ Debate now centers on whether the finds shipped to Calvert’s farm were only those made on 31 May or included a substantial number of valuable gold and silver pieces found earlier.⁴ Less progress has been made in determining how Schliemann smuggled the treasure out of Turkey. Easton suggests that it was loaded onto a cargo boat that put in at Karanlık Limanı, just as had been done the year before when the Helios metope was shipped, and that it was probably once again Frederick Calvert who delivered it there from his farm.⁵ Mylonas, on the other hand, believes that the treasure was shipped from Beşika Bay, which he erroneously regards as the loading place for the Helios metope in 1872.⁶ Curiously, however, he thinks that he is in agreement with Easton, for he cites Easton’s article in *Antiquity* as if it confirmed his view.

A major piece of documentary evidence that has so far been overlooked throws welcome new light on the subject. It is a letter written by Schliemann in modern Greek to Tzerlent and dated 25 May/6 June 1873.⁷

¹ D. Easton, “Schliemann’s Discovery of ‘Priam’s Treasure’: Two Enigmas,” *Antiquity* 55, 1981, pp. 179–183.

² D. Traill, “Schliemann’s ‘Discovery’ of ‘Priam’s Treasure,’” *Antiquity* 57, 1983, pp. 181–186 and (a fuller version) *JHS* 104, 1984, pp. 96–115; D. Easton, “Schliemann’s Mendacity—A False Trail?” *Antiquity* 58, 1984, pp. 197–203 and “‘Priam’s Treasure,’” *AnatSt* 34, 1984, pp. 141–169; D. Traill, “Schliemann’s Mendacity: A Question of Methodology,” *AnatSt* 36, 1986 (pp. 91–98), p. 92.

³ The Calverts were an expatriate British family who lived for several generations at the Dardanelles (Çanakkale) and in the Troad. Of the five brothers who were contemporaries of Schliemann at least three exchanged a number of letters with him. James was at this time the American Vice-Consul at the Dardanelles (an office later discharged by Frank). Frank, who was engaged in a variety of business interests, including mining, had a strong interest in archaeology and an unrivaled knowledge of ancient sites in the Troad. It was he who convinced Schliemann that Hisarlık, not Pınarbaşı (Bunarbaşı), was the site of Troy; see D. Traill, “Further Evidence of Fraudulent Reporting in Schliemann’s Archaeological Works,” *Boreas* 7, 1984 (pp. 295–316), pp. 305–310. Frederick managed the family farm at Akça Köy near Hisarlık. For more on the Calverts, see J. Cook, *The Troad*, Oxford 1973, pp. 35–36 and *passim*.

⁴ For a detailed account of the activities of 31 May, see D. Traill, “Hisarlık, 31 May, 1873, and the Discovery of ‘Priam’s Treasure,’” *Boreas* 11, 1988, pp. 227–234.

⁵ Easton (footnote 1 above), pp. 182–183.

⁶ G. Mylonas, «Ἀνέκδοτος ἐπιστολή τοῦ H. Schliemann καὶ ὁ θησαυρὸς τοῦ Πριάμου,» *Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν* 61, 1986 (pp. 153–171; English summary, pp. 172–174), p. 159.

⁷ The letter (my translation) is in the Gennadius Library, American School of Classical Studies, Athens (Gennadius Library, BBB 32, pp. 336–337). I am grateful to the Director, George Huxley, for permission to

Dear Mr. Tzerlent:

I have the honor to send you enclosed bill of lading for C 11/16—6 chests and 1 bag with Trojan antiquities—and I ask you to pay the freightage, one hundred and thirty francs, to the account of my brother-in-law, Mr. Spyridon Kastromenos of Athens. Since my foreman, Spyridon Demetriou, is returning to Athens, I charged him to accompany the above antiquities and to bring them to my house in Athens. Therefore I warmly beg you to leave the shipment in the *Taxiarches* until the day when the steamer leaves for Piraeus, then to instruct the man to carry them to the customs-house. You would much oblige me if you explain to the director of the customs-house that I am a benefactor of Greece, because everyone is stealing antiquities from Greece, but I have been working for three years in the Troad on behalf of the glory of Greece and I send all the antiquities I excavate to Greece and am bequeathing them to the Greek nation. So I warmly beg you not to open the chests in the customs-house, because they are all sealed. I swear that they contain nothing except Trojan antiquities.

I hope that you will do me the favor of seeing to it that they don't open them. Please get a receipt from the customs-house specifying 6 chests and 1 bag with Trojan antiquities. If they refuse to give such a receipt without opening them, then let them give no receipt, for I am afraid to leave the consignment without a seal.

All the small outlays he has to make, for the captain, etc., my man will pay, and please leave the consignment in his care to take to Athens.

My man will leave with the consignment by the Austrian boat if the Austrian boat departs before the Greek one.

Asking your forgiveness for the trouble which I am causing you and ready to serve you at all times

I remain etc.

More details are provided in Schliemann's letter to Frederick Calvert dated 31 May, 1873. The relevant sections follow:⁸

My Dear Sir

. . . I am sorry to inform you that I am closely watched and expect that the turkish watchman who is angry at me, I do not know for what reason, will search my house tomorrow. I therefore take the liberty to deposit with you 6 baskets and a bag begging you will kindly *lock* them up and *not* allow by any means the turks to touch them. . . .

The villagers betray me to the turk so that I cannot anymore take their horses. So, when I want to remove the baskets, pray, lend me for three hours in the night

publish this letter and the excerpts from other letters included in this article. The double dating reflects the fact that whereas most of Europe had adopted the Gregorian calendar, Greece and Turkey were still officially operating on the Julian calendar, which was 12 days behind the Gregorian.

⁸ The full text of this letter appears in *Boreas* 11, 1988, pp. 228–229. The section “I am sorry to inform you . . . the turks to touch them” appears in H. Schliemann, *Briefe*, E. Meyer, ed., Berlin 1936, p. 132, where it misleadingly bears the date “30. May 1873”. On the dating of the letter see Traill, *JHS* 104, 1984 (footnote 2 above), p. 106.

three horses. I shall gratefully acknowledge this service and pay you for each horse forty piastres; please do not refuse for I am quite in despair; having spent here more than 100,000 franks I cannot take away a little broken pottery.

Pray, lock my things up at once.

Saturday

Yours very truly
H. Schliemann

It will be noticed that both letters refer to "6 chests and 1 bag". Since scholars are agreed that the chests and bag mentioned in the letter of 31 May almost certainly contained the objects Schliemann identified as "Priam's Treasure", it seems clear that the letter of 25 May/6 June concerns the subsequent shipping of these same objects from Turkey to Greece. The letter to Tzerlent confirms Easton's assumption that the treasure was dispatched from Karanlık Limanı.

Tzerlent, who is mentioned in an unpublished letter of Schliemann to his father-in-law, George Kastromenos, dated 5/17 April 1873, appears to have been a shipping agent in Syros and a friend of Kastromenos. When Schliemann was shipping a consignment of antiquities from Troy to Athens in April 1873 by the Greek ship *Omonoia*, the plan was that Tzerlent should inform Kastromenos of the arrival of the *Omonoia* in Syros and that Kastromenos should leave Athens at once for Syros and make the necessary payments for the transportation of the consignment and see it safely through Greek customs on Syros and onto a ship for Athens. He was to get a receipt for the 22 baskets, 3 bags, and 5 chests of Trojan antiquities without letting any of them be opened if possible. In other words, the transaction in April 1873 was similar in many respects to the one outlined above in the letter to Tzerlent.

The foreman accompanying the treasure in June 1873, Spyros (Spyridon, Spyridion) Demetriou, was an Athenian who had apparently been recommended to Schliemann by Schliemann's brother-in-law, Spyros Kastromenos. He was warmly recommended by Schliemann at the close of *Troy and its Remains* to future excavators in the Troad.⁹ In 1876 he was Schliemann's principal foreman at Mycenae.¹⁰ The ship in which he was to sail to Syros with the treasure, the *Taxiarches*, was the same one Schliemann had used in August 1872 to smuggle the Helios metope out of Turkey and intended to use in March 1873 to ship a number of Greek inscriptions from the Troad to Athens.¹¹ In the latter case Schliemann actually shipped the inscriptions in April by the *Omonoia*. In both August 1872 and March 1873 the plan was that the cargo was to be taken on clandestinely at the bay of Karanlık, five kilometers due north of Hisarlık.

⁹ H. Schliemann, *Troy and its Remains*, London 1875, p. 357.

¹⁰ See *Myth, Scandal, and History*, W. M. Calder III and David A. Traill, ed., Detroit 1986, pp. 129, 142, 143, 144, and *passim*.

¹¹ For the 1872 shipment see Schliemann (footnote 8 above), pp. 122–123 and Calder and Traill, *op. cit.*, p. 56. In 1873 Schliemann intended shipping the antiquities on 19 or 20 March by the *Taxiarches* (*ibid.*), but in fact, as is evident from an unpublished letter to his father-in-law dated 5/17 April 1873 (Gennadius Library, BBB 32, p. 189), did not dispatch them until mid-April and then on the *Omonoia*.

Before offering a tentative reconstruction of how Schliemann smuggled “Priam’s Treasure” out of the Troad, it might be useful to summarize Schliemann’s activities between 31 May and 6 June. By combining the evidence of the 1873 diary (Gennadius Library, Diary 14) with the evidence of the letter copybook for May–June 1873 (Gennadius Library, BBB 32) and a few other sources, it is possible to correct the dating errors in his diary. Most of these errors seem to be due to Schliemann’s reckoning only 30 days in May instead of 31 when calculating double dates. It should be noted, however, that there can be no certainty over when Schliemann actually made any given entry in his diary. On the other hand, there is reasonable certainty over the *sequence* of entries.¹²

Saturday 19/31 May: Schliemann makes a major find (“Priam’s Treasure”) before nine-thirty in the morning. Heinrich Bulthaupt arrives in the morning, presumably after nine-thirty, from Frederick Calvert’s farm. Gustav and Themistokles von Eckenbrecher reach Hisarlık in the evening about seven o’clock. “Priam’s Treasure” is dispatched to Calvert’s farm. All three German visitors stay overnight at Hisarlık. The events of this extraordinary day are discussed in detail elsewhere.¹³

Sunday 20 May/1 June: Schliemann shows his visitors around the site. Frederick Calvert arrives, reports on the temperature of springs near his farm, and departs with Bulthaupt. Schliemann writes up “20/2 June” entry in his diary (Diary, p. 270).¹⁴

Monday 21 May/2 June: Schliemann writes a letter to his wife, in which he speaks of an important find in Priam’s palace.¹⁵ The Eckenbrechers depart for Calvert’s farm and Pınarbaşı.¹⁶ Schliemann writes up the first section of the “31 May” report (Diary, pp. 271–280).

Tuesday 22 May/3 June: Schliemann makes “22/4 Juni” entry (Diary, p. 281). He pulls down his wooden house in order to excavate the soil beneath it.

Wednesday 23 May/4 June: Schliemann continues “31 May” report (Diary, pp. 281–284).¹⁷

Thursday 24 May/5 June: Schliemann writes a letter to his brother-in-law, Spyros Kastromenos, in which he mentions that he has made an important find and that further

¹² The major exception is the problematic sequence of the opening section of the “31 May” report, which begins at the top of p. 271, and the “20/2 June” entry, which occupies the bottom third of p. 270. Generally speaking, Schliemann did not leave spaces in his diary. This would suggest that the “31 May” report was written on or after 2 June. Schliemann, however, left the bottom third of p. 88 blank in order to begin his 15 March report to his publishers at the top of p. 89. Similarly, he may have left the bottom third of p. 270 blank to begin the “31 May” report at the top of p. 271 and later filled the blank space with the short “20/2 June” entry. On the other hand, he may not have got around to writing the “31 May” report until 2 June or later. Since six of the eight 1873 reports to his publishers are dated to a Saturday, he may have chosen to backdate the report to 31 May to conform to this pattern. Certainty is impossible. Since 31 May was a particularly busy day for Schliemann, I have assumed that the “31 May” entry was not started until his visitors left on 2 June.

¹³ Traill (footnote 4 above).

¹⁴ For the argument that this entry should refer to 20 May/1 June see Traill (footnote 4 above), p. 230, note 19.

¹⁵ Text and translation in Traill, *JHS* 104, 1984, p. 110. It seems very likely that Schliemann gave this letter to the Eckenbrechers to mail at the Dardanelles.

¹⁶ Traill (footnote 4 above), p. 229.

¹⁷ There is no regular diary entry, although there is a workman’s receipt (p. 284) correctly dated (in Greek) “Wednesday 23/4 June”.

excavation will delay his departure until 7/19 June and in which he asks why Sophia's last letter was so cold (BBB 32, pp. 331–332). He writes up the brief "Donnerstag 4 Juni" entry (Diary, p. 288) and the final section of the "31 May" report (Diary, pp. 288–290), which includes the report of the find of 19 coins under the wooden house and the commendation of his assistants.¹⁸

Friday 25 May/6 June: Schliemann bridges the Scaean gate in order to remove soil from the site of the wooden house. He writes up "Freitag 25/6 Juni" entry (Diary, p. 290) and captions for plates 180–188 of *Trojanische Alterthümer* (BBB 32, pp. 333–335). He writes the letter to Tzerlent quoted above (BBB 32, pp. 336–337).

It would have been in the evening of 25 May/6 June that Schliemann gave Demetriou the above letter for Tzerlent and sent him off to Calvert's farm. We may suppose that the trusty Yannakis, Schliemann's personal servant, cook, and paymaster, went with him for security reasons. Calvert presumably provided the three horses as requested in Schliemann's letter of 31 May. Each of these horses probably carried two of the chests. At Karanlik Demetriou and Yannakis put the chests and bag on board the *Taxiarches*, and Demetriou embarked. Yannakis took the horses back to Calvert's farm.

Whether everything went more or less as planned in Schliemann's letter to Tzerlent we do not know. The six chests and bag, however, do seem to have arrived in Athens safely enough. Schliemann himself probably departed from the Dardanelles early on 19 June and arrived later that day at Thessaloniki.¹⁹ He did not reach Athens until 26 June.²⁰ That same day he unpacked the chests and began to write up a new account of the discovery. This account initially bore the date "Athen 26 Juni", but this was subsequently changed to "Troja 17 Juni".²¹ On 27 June he sent the following telegram to his Leipzig publishers, Brockhaus: "Ne imprimez pas mon article trente un Mai car je le changerai. Ajouterai description détaillée trésor. Henri Schliemann."²² Between 27 June and 5 July Schliemann wrote up a new version of the discovery of the treasure, which, unlike the version of 31 May, included a detailed description of the gold and silver pieces. This account was published in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* of 5 August 1873. It caused a sensation.

DAVID A. TRAILL

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS
Department of Classics
Davis, CA 95616

¹⁸ Significantly, there is no mention of the inscriptions which he also stated that he found under his wooden house. For further discussion of this entry see Traill, *AnatSt* 36, 1986 (footnote 2 above), pp. 95–98.

¹⁹ In his letter to Koumanoudis of 29 May (9 June Gregorian) Schliemann indicates his plan to leave the Dardanelles by the Italian boat of 19 June and to spend a day at Thessaloniki. His 1873 diary has an entry under the dateline "7/19 June Thessaloniki". Both the text of the letter to Koumanoudis and the diary entry are published by Mylonas (footnote 6 above), pp. 154–155 and 166.

²⁰ An unpublished letter to P. Beaurain, dated "Athènes 26 juin 1873", begins "J'ai reçu, Monsieur, à Troie, d'où je suis revenu ce matin . . ." (BBB 32, p. 370). The original date on the "17 June" report was therefore probably 26 June and not 25 June, as I tentatively suggested, *JHS* 104, 1984, p. 101.

²¹ For the text of this version of the discovery see Traill, *JHS* 104, 1984 (footnote 2 above), pp. 99–101.

²² A just barely legible copy of this telegram is to be found in Schliemann's letter copybook (BBB 32, p. 369).