

## Schliemann's contribution to Greek Bronze Age archaeology: Was he really the 'father of Mycenaean archaeology'?

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The first edition of Ventris and Chadwick's *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, published in 1956, was a landmark in Aegean Bronze Age archaeology. For the first time, it was possible to use contemporary texts to throw light on the period. It was fitting that Wace, one of the most distinguished Aegean specialists then living, should write the foreword: but was it so fitting that it should be dedicated to the memory of Heinrich Schliemann as "father of Mycenaean archaeology"? Does he deserve this proud title?

More than any other early figure in archaeology, Schliemann has caught the popular imagination. Probably many more people know that he uncovered Troy and Mycenae than could name the excavators of Nineveh, Jericho, the Royal Tombs at Ur, or the Tomb of Tutankhamun, and many relish the apparent fact that he was an amateur who, by acting on his simple faith in the essential truth of Homer's poems, confounded the scholars of his generation. For I think that people commonly feel impatience with the cautiousness and skepticism with which modern scholars generally approach the past and traditions about it; they prefer conclusions to be firm, and traditions to be proved true, or at least to contain truth.

But if one wishes to enter the realm of the scholars, one must play by their rules, and one of the most fundamental of these is that theories and arguments should be supported by adequate verifiable evidence. In the case of Schliemann's contribution to archaeology, this is bound to involve trying to see past the glamour cast by precious objects, to establish what his real achievement was. For there is a great deal more to archaeology than finding treasure, and it is legitimate to ask whether Schliemann did any more than find treasure. Moreover, since so much of the evidence derives solely from his own accounts, it is legitimate to ask how far these can be trusted. For even

professional archaeologists can succumb to the temptation to shape their account of the facts somewhat, to fit what they want to believe, and can give accounts that are not strictly truthful in all respects, for example by suppressing inconvenient facts rather than admitting them and then trying to explain them away. In the case of Schliemann, it has become only too clear that his account of his life is full of self-promoting romancing, which he even incorporated into supposedly contemporary diaries at a later date, that his ethics were, to say the least, questionable on occasion, and that he carried over some of this into his archaeological activities. The outstanding example is his account of his discovery of the so-called 'Priam's Treasure', which cannot be true as it stands, for his wife was not there, although she plays an important part in the story;<sup>1</sup> yet in a later letter he was ready to swear that she was, on the bones of his father, no less, making one wonder whether, to quote Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, he had attained that high perfection in which a man believes his own lies. The part which he gave her in the excavation of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae may equally well be exaggerated, but it is a question of some importance whether he simply embroidered the truth to make a better story and give his wife greater prominence, or whether he falsified the account of what had been found and where, and even enhanced the splendour of his discoveries with purchased items and modern forgeries. All of this has been claimed not only with regard to 'Priam's Treasure', but recently with regard to his discoveries at Mycenae as well, in Dr. Traill's publication of his diary of the 1876 excavations at Tiryns and Mycenae.

I look forward to Dr. Easton's comments on Troy, but do not wish to trespass on his topic more than absolutely necessary. For no archaeologist would deny that Trojan and Mycenaean archaeology are two

1. See Schliemann's letter to Charles Newton dated 27

December 1873 (published by Fitton 1991, 24).

very different fields, despite the links between prehistoric Greece and Turkey, and my concern here is with Mycenaean archaeology. But I do think it worth commenting that Troy was always Schliemann's first love. He returned to the site again and again, whereas he never returned to Mycenae after 1876 and did relatively little elsewhere on the Greek mainland except at Tiryns, which he also abandoned after a season. He had plans to excavate at Knossos, but abandoned these – fortunately, in hindsight. It seems to have been partly his discoveries in Greece that made him return to Troy, for he perceived how different the remains at Mycenae were from those that he thought to be Homeric Troy, and was evidently puzzled by this. But he was not inspired by them to embark on further campaigns at the Greek sites; despite his grandiose plans to uncover Mycenae and later Tiryns completely he never achieved a tenth of this – fortunately, again.

The basic questions to consider with regard to his alleged fathering of Mycenaean archaeology are, how important was what he discovered, how reliable are his accounts of it, and how far did these accounts provide a useful foundation on which to build. In considering them we must not forget the condition of scholarship about the remoter past in Schliemann's day. Archaeology as a means of learning about the past was in its infancy then, and it would be quite unfair to blame Schliemann for failing to do what nobody before had even conceived that it was necessary and valuable to do. Scholarship with regard to the prehistoric past of Greece and nearer Asia, for which there were no contemporary records such as were being discovered at Egyptian and Mesopotamian sites, was in fact dominated by classically-based book learning. It seems to have been felt that sufficiently sophisticated analysis and interpretation of the scraps of information recorded in Greek and Roman sources could reveal much about the past, for these sources were then treated with a respect that, it has become clear, they did not deserve for the most part. Even the great Thucydides's account of the past of Greece has been revealed to be wrong in most respects for the prehistoric period, and the reason is obvious: it was based on flawed sources. Thucydides could hardly have known this, but the nineteenth century scholars should already have received warning that even the oldest Greek sources were not reli-

able, given the largely nonsensical version of Egyptian history that Herodotus presents, derived no doubt from ill-informed if not largely ignorant guides. Yet so great was the reverence in which ancient authors were held that the eminent Egyptologist Flinders Petrie seriously proposed to reverse the order of two sections in Herodotus's Egyptian book, in order to make his account of Egyptian history accord more closely with established fact. The notion that such authors' writings were a product of the conditions of their own day and should always be read with that in mind was still alien to scholars. The idea of actually trying to establish facts about the past by archaeological excavation was, in fact, rather suspect; it seems to have been felt that, at best, it should illuminate the testimony of the ancient sources and the deductions which had been drawn from them through the application of superior brainpower, which sometimes could be enhanced by modern observations, such as were used in the argument over where in the north-west of Asia Minor Troy had stood. Schliemann fully shared this attitude; he was attempting to verify details reported in the Homeric poems and the account of Mycenae by the second century AD traveller Pausanias in his early excavation. But he deserves credit for going to find out for himself, and for establishing that discoveries through excavation had a right to be taken at least as seriously as textual information, and also for demonstrating, if unwittingly, that texts did not tell the whole story.

Hence, I am by no means as impressed by the comments of various eminent German scholars on Schliemann as Dr. Traill and his colleague Dr. Calder, themselves products of the world of textual scholarship rather than that of archaeology, seem to be. Much of what these eminent Germans considered to be absolutely proved has now been called into question, even in their chosen fields, and many of their ideas were considerably more questionable than Schliemann's own interpretations. Curtius, one of the original excavators of Olympia, called Schliemann a botcher and con man. The same man refused to accept that Schliemann's finds at Hisarlik could possibly point to a prehistoric Troy, because source analysis was generally reckoned to point to the superior-seeming but as it has proved quite un-prehistoric, site of Pinarbaşı (generally but incorrectly called Bounarbashi) on grounds quite as naive on Schliemann's own;<sup>2</sup> he also

2. Curtius 1877.

confidently identified the finest mask from the Shaft Graves as a Byzantine portrait of Christ, without, apparently, putting himself to the trouble of reconciling this with the circumstances in which it had been found or the material found in association with it. I have more respect for Furtwängler, another eminent early excavator, who commented that Schliemann had no idea whatsoever of the meaning of his excavation; a harsh judgement, perhaps, but not wholly undeserved, given that Furtwängler was one of the original publishers of Mycenaean pottery from the Greek mainland and recognised the relationship between finds from different sites, as Schliemann himself refused to do, e.g. for finds made soon after his own at Mycenae, at a site called Spata in Attica. Schliemann was interested in all sorts of aspects of his finds, it may be agreed: but he was not very systematic about analysis and patently felt out of his depth when he had not the comfort of an ancient tradition to guide him.

It is time to consider Schliemann's activities in Greece. He visited Mycenae and Tiryns as early as 1868, when he carried out also a little excavation on the site of Aëtos in Ithaka, hoping to discover Odysseus's palace and even the very olive tree round which he had built his marriage bed, as described in Book XXIII of the *Odyssey*. When little of interest to him was found, he abandoned the project. But he only seems to have begun to consider digging in Greece seriously when his first campaigns at Troy had not been as productive of marvellous finds and links with the epics as he had hoped. Even before he found 'Priam's Treasure', he was making approaches to the Greek Government to get the permit to dig at Mycenae (April 1870 first) and Olympia; once he had the Treasure he used it as a bargaining counter in negotiations with several nations, whether to gain a right to excavate, as in Greece and Italy, or simply to sell, as to the British Museum – what a pity that never came off! He was in fact extremely chagrined when the permit to excavate Olympia was given to the Prussian Government. I find such behaviour and opinions significant, for to me they suggest that his primary motivation was not to verify the truth of the Homeric poems, but to gain fame as the discoverer of marvellous finds, wherever it might be – for Olympia has effectively no place in Homer and little in Greek legend, and Italy even less. Hence his constant trying and abandonment of sites when they turned up nothing

remarkable in his eyes; in 1875, it may be noted, he had a go at Motya in Sicily, a famous Phoenician site, but swiftly gave it up.

His first activities at Mycenae were without a permit; or rather, he went off into the Argolid in February 1874 without waiting to learn whether his application for a permit had been successful, indeed expecting it to be refused, though claiming to the local authorities that it would be approved. He did not have to identify Mycenae; its site had long been agreed, and the Archaeological Society at Athens cleared the Lion Gate of much of the debris that had built up around it in 1840. This was one of the features mentioned by Pausanias in the only ancient description of the site that exists. Since Schliemann used this as his guide, it seems worth quoting extensively: "Still, there are parts of the ring wall left including the gate, and lions stand on it; they say that it was the work of the Cyclopes, who built the wall at Tiryns for Proitos. In the ruins of Mycenae there is a spring called Perseia, and underground buildings of Atreus and his sons, where their treasures of wealth lay. There is the grave of Atreus, and graves of those who came back from Troy with Agamemnon and were slaughtered by Aigisthos as he feasted them. The Spartans who live about Amyklai dispute the tomb of Cassandra. But another is the tomb of Agamemnon, another that of Eurymedon his charioteer, and one grave holds Teledamos and Pelops – for they say that Cassandra bore these children to Agamemnon, and that Aigisthos slaughtered them when still babies – and one grave is Electra's... Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos were buried a bit outside the wall; they were not considered fit to lie inside, where Agamemnon himself and those slaughtered with him lay."

It is worth taking a moment to comment that while the most natural interpretation of the underground treasure-houses is that this was a reference to the tholos tombs which surrounded the site and were visible in Schliemann's day, there can be absolutely no certainty what remains were identified as these various graves. Wace and others have believed that Schliemann verified a genuine tradition that there were royal graves in the citadel; but it is difficult to see how this tradition could have survived the apparently complete abandonment of Mycenae from the earlier fifth century B.C. to the third. There are some indications that prior to this abandonment some kind of hero cult took place in the region of the Grave Circle;

but it seems quite plausible that the remains shown to Pausanias as the various graves were not tombs at all, for it must be regarded as virtually certain that no trace of the Grave Circle survived to his own day, though we cannot be absolutely sure, for Schliemann removed all of the later strata above the Grave Circle with scarcely any record. When Wace says, “The fact that nothing was ever built above the Grave Circle indicates that the area was regarded with veneration”,<sup>3</sup> he is making a quite unjustified assumption, I must point out; we simply do not know whether there was anything there or not.

It is a pity that, in publishing the diary of Schliemann’s 1876 excavations, Dr. Traill did not include the few pages in French relating to his 1874 activities, since they are full of interest. Although, as Schliemann was to write later, he dug many trial trenches at various points on the acropolis hill, taking them to several metres deep in some cases, he also, as he does not mention in his publication, carried out quite substantial excavations in the tholos tomb now known as the Treasury of Atreus, then also known as the Tomb of Agamemnon, particularly, it seems, in its side-chamber. At one point he even thought that some stones might cover the mouth of the shaft leading to “le véritable sepulchre” (the real burial place) of Agamemnon, but in fact he discovered nothing. Although he had argued in an earlier published work that the burials of Agamemnon and his followers were within the old walls of the citadel, he evidently was not so convinced by his own arguments as to fail to pass up a chance of investigating a supposed tomb further away; and he further commented on “a large tomb of conical shape” near the citadel, which he would certainly dig if he got a permit to excavate, and a smaller one near it that was shown him. These were clearly the tholos tombs now known as the tombs of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, of which he did indeed dig the former in 1876. His concern, in fact, was evidently with the heroic tombs reported by Pausanias, since these were almost the only landmarks on the site.

It did not take long for activities on this scale – at one time he was employing 25 workmen – to become known of in Athens. When Schliemann and his wife went to Nafplion on 1 March, the police inspector was shown by them some baskets of pottery sherds, which he considered insignificant since they did not differ

from what could be found anywhere on the site, and he did not repossess them, to the anger of the Minister.<sup>4</sup> But he was not shown what Schliemann considered most interesting, as no doubt others would have done, some fragments of Mycenaean figurines, which Schliemann was already relating to the “ox-eyed (or ox-faced) Hera” named in Homer. Schliemann writes in the diary in injured tones of how he was supposed to give up all that he found in his “petites fouilles” (little excavations), but he must have realised, one would think, that activities on this scale could hardly be justified; yet he was so unrepentant that he went off to the Argive Heraion site and employed two workmen to dig there until lack of finds and illness caused him to abandon the idea.

I feel that this episode shows Schliemann in an unpleasant light, as a man determined to do whatever he could get away with. However, it also leads to two other points, which are of relevance to Dr. Traill’s suggestion that Schliemann hid finds made elsewhere during the excavations to produce a great treasure at its end, inserting them, in fact, among the material from the Shaft Graves. It is perfectly evident that finds of the kind predominant in the Shaft Graves, that is, metal items, often of gold and silver, were not scattered about freely in the settlement layers, because Schliemann did not find them. Indeed, they hardly ever are common on settlement sites, except when a rich site like Troy has been destroyed and much material has been buried or lost because fire engulfed its buildings before they could be ransacked. Nor did Schliemann make any attempt to fake up any splendid find in the so-called Tomb of Agamemnon, as on Dr. Traill’s reading of his character he might well be expected to have done; but this is, admittedly, a weaker argument, since Schliemann had no permit to be digging there and he might have shrunk from revealing this.

In fact, when Schliemann was finally given permission to excavate at Mycenae, it was under stringent safeguards, and although he often tried to evade these, there is no evidence that he could have concealed any finds. Stamatakis, the Greek ephor, that is chief archaeological officer, in charge of the Argolid, seems to have supervised Schliemann as best he could; in one letter quoted in Emil Ludwig’s 1931 biography of Schliemann, he writes that after staying

3. Wace 1949, 8.

4. Ludwig 1931, 194.

all day at the excavations, "Schliemann and I sit up until 2 a.m., entering up the finds".<sup>5</sup> In a letter to Max Müller, a famous scholar of the period with whom Schliemann was now corresponding, he rages at Stamatakis's "arrogance".<sup>6</sup> It is clear from Ludwig's account that Stamatakis was attempting to keep Schliemann to the limits of his permit; to quote, "I said that the Ministry had given permission for only fifty or sixty workers, and not for ninety, and not per kilometre".<sup>7</sup> This last appears to be a reference to Schliemann's having, as it were, subcontracted the clearance of the area within the Lion Gate to a foreman Dimitrios, at a rate of a drachma per cubic metre of earth removed; I am afraid that this sheds a revealing and unflattering light on Schliemann's methods, and gives the lie to any suggestion that Schliemann was excavating carefully and was displaying particular interest in this area, where in fact the Grave Circle was ultimately to appear. It is painfully clear that Schliemann believed that the fact that he was spending his own money on the excavation entitled him to do anything he liked; further, he believed that his discoveries at Troy made him the complete expert, far better able to judge the value of any remains than Stamatakis, and he was still using his possession of 'Priam's Treasure' as a bargaining counter – if the Greek Government did not let him do what he wanted, he would take it elsewhere.

It is one of the great defects in our knowledge of the Mycenae excavations that the diary of Stamatakis, reported to exist still in the library of the Archaeological Society at Athens, has never been published, although the late Professor Mylonas once proclaimed his intention of doing so. This would provide the only possible first-hand check on Schliemann's own accounts, and might have done much to rein in some of Dr. Traill's wilder speculations about what went on. In fact, since Dr. Traill has evidently seen Stamatakis's letters to the Ministry, I am surprised that he did not try to get a look at the diary. But I do not think that anything sinister lies behind this, although many of Dr. Traill's insinuations about Schliemann rest on nothing more solid than making an unexplained circumstance seem suspicious.

Given that Schliemann had workmen excavating in several places at once, and could not have super-

vised all of them, it is obvious that they could have concealed finds from him. But that he could have conspired with them to gull Stamatakis must seem unlikely, since, as anyone knowing anything about Greek villagers will realise, it would have been almost impossible to keep the thing a secret or to involve everyone in it, given the feuds and antagonisms that normally exist within and between villages – and Schliemann had men of several villages working there. But even if he had been able to conceal items and insert them later among the grave finds, the resulting mixture of items of different phases would have become perfectly evident once the different phases of Mycenaean culture became known, for the graves belong to the sixteenth century B.C., while almost all the material to be found in the settlement strata belongs to the fourteenth to twelfth centuries. Here, I am afraid, Dr. Traill demonstrates his lack of knowledge of the field, misunderstanding comments about the mixture of material in the Shaft Graves that I and others have made. Schliemann may on one occasion have incorporated two late Mycenaean figurines among the finds from the first grave completely cleared, because he wished to bolster his linking of the figurines with the "ox-eyed Hera" in Homer; but he never did this again, which makes one suspect that the first inclusion might have been an honest mistake, for his case would have been much better if the richer graves also contained such figurines.

Similar arguments can be applied to the suggestion that Schliemann purchased antiquities locally and included them among his finds. Tomb-robbery was not at that time the scourge that it has later become, since, to be blunt, the peasants had no means of appreciating the value of anything that was not actually of precious metal; the market in antiquities had barely commenced. So Schliemann would have been lucky to find anything at all, let alone anything of the right period; for it is another remarkable fact that hardly any of the graves around Mycenae belong to the same period as the Shaft Graves themselves. In any case had any fine metal items been found, they would have been melted down for their bullion value most probably, not preserved to sell to a foreigner.

As for the suggestion that copies and downright forgeries, like the most famous burial mask, were

5. Ludwig 1931, 202.

6. Meyer 1962, 90, letter of 28/8.

7. Ludwig 1931, 202-203. See, also, Traill's article in this volume.

inserted, even on the very site of excavation, this has to be described as quite fantastic: considerations of the time available to Schliemann to get this done (only three days separate the discovery of the first burial masks from that of this one), the difficulty of doing this undetected at a time when there were soldiers on guard and other Greek archaeologists at Mycenae as well as Stamatakis, even the sheer unlikelihood that Schliemann could or would have been absent from Mycenae, to collect his improvements to the finds, for any length of time – all these argue against the idea, apart from any considerations of motive. For what would be the point of having this fine mask made, if it was not to be attributed to Agamemnon? Yet all the indications suggest that it was the body at the north end of the grave, with a much less prepossessing mask but provided with much richer finds and remarkably well-preserved, according to his account, that Schliemann took for Agamemnon; although he never specifically identified any burial as Agamemnon's, he showed much more interest in this burial in his publication.<sup>8</sup>

Let us, then, ignore these arguments as flights of fancy, based ultimately on the theory that if Schliemann was a rogue, as he certainly was in some things, any peculiarity, discrepancy or unexplained feature, such as his proclaimed indebtedness to the local police chief, must be proof that he was up to something. Those who have sat upon a jury, as I have, will recognise the technique of trying to give a sinister significance to incidents that can have simple explanations, in the course of creating a general atmosphere of suspicion. Let us take it that Schliemann's finds were genuine, essentially found as he said, and thus an amazingly apposite justification of Mycenae's ancient epithet "rich in gold", which effectively ensured that the name "Mycenaean" should be applied to prehistoric remains in the Aegean, at first all prehistoric remains – the term was used by Evans at Knossos in the first season or so. The question remains: how much credit does Schliemann deserve for making this great contribution to knowledge?

In point of fact, it is not possible to get a completely clear idea of what Schliemann's intentions were in 1876. For example, he never states why he chose to spend a week excavating at Tiryns before starting at Mycenae, in the course of which he opened

up trials on and around the citadel. I suspect that he was hoping for a big find at the start, such as part of a palace or an item of spectacular nature, like the "important inscriptions and some more of such sculpture as the two lions above the entrance gate" which he confidently hoped to find at Mycenae according to his first letter to the *Times* (a series of such letters was published in the *Times*, sometimes in adapted form, and forms the basis of most chapters of his book *Mycenae*).<sup>9</sup> Finds like this had eluded him in his 1874 investigation at Mycenae, which may be one reason why he tried Tiryns; but, finding nothing of striking nature there, he went on to Mycenae, stating in his *Times* letter that before returning to Tiryns he must "finish the much more important excavation of the Acropolis of Mycenae and two Treasuries". This is the nearest we come to a plan of campaign, although in the event he only cleared a small part of the Acropolis and investigated one of the "treasuries", by which he clearly meant the "Treasury of Atreus" and "Tomb of Clytemnestra".

Quite possibly Stamatakis prevented him from digging in the "Treasury of Atreus" as well as the "Tomb of Clytemnestra", since it was remote from the acropolis hill and could not have been adequately supervised by either of them; at all events, he began excavations in three places, in the "Tomb of Clytemnestra's" entrance, inside the Lion Gate to open a way into the acropolis, and further south on the slope, the region which he subcontracted to Dimitrios. His trials here had been promising, he wrote, producing remains of walls and a possible tomb stone. In fact, he clearly imagined that the palace would be here, since in his second letter to the *Times* he writes of his amazement at finding what he took to be tombstones "in the natural soil near the Lions' Gate, and this in the most prominent part of the Acropolis, in a place where I should have expected to find the King's Palace...".<sup>10</sup> Indeed, he later decided that what is now called the House of the Warrior Vase must have been the palace, since no better building had been found on the acropolis. It is not clear why he was so decided that it could not be on the higher terraces, except that the depth of soil was not great there and it seems to have been an article of faith with Schliemann that the oldest remains must everywhere be buried very deep. He certainly gave little prominence to the "pa-

8. On this, see now Dickinson 2005.

9. Schliemann 1876a.

10. Schliemann 1876b.

lace" in his account, and until near the end had great hopes of the "treasury", expecting it to contain better preserved sculptures than the tombstones that he was unearthing in fragments above the Grave Circle area. I wonder if he ever quite gave up his original idea that what he was calling treasuries, following Pausanias, were in fact tombs – as we know they were – and hoped for great finds; but all had been robbed long before. He perceived that at least the "Tomb of Clytemnestra" could not have been what was shown to visitors in ancient times as one of the tombs of the ancient heroes, since its entrance passage had been quite filled in and the remains of a row of seats for a late Greek theatre were built over it. Clearly these tombs were always in his mind, and it is surprising that he did not follow up the lead that he might appear to have through his identification of the Grave Circle wall slabs as tombstones and the discovery, fairly early on, of fragments of the relief-decorated tombstones from the Shaft Graves. But when he discovered some of the latter *in situ*, on what was in fact a raised ground level, where they had been re-erected in the course of a late Mycenaean tidying up the Grave Circle, he thought that they were sunk in virgin soil, so that they could not be over graves; and I suspect also that he could not believe that the tombs of such figures as Atreus and Agamemnon were simple shafts surmounted by tombstones – he was expecting something much more grand.

There is not all that much to be said about his excavations until he really began on the Grave Circle. He was, effectively, proceeding in the same wholesale fashion that he had adopted at Troy; while interested in individual objects, particularly the ubiquitous figurines, he had no obvious interest in planning their distribution, let alone in trying to peel off the successive strata as he could, at least in some places, have done. As Stamatakis complained, he was totally uninterested in any of the remains of the Greek and Roman periods, wishing only to clear them away.<sup>11</sup> And through the primitive state of knowledge of the Greek past of that time, for which he cannot be blamed, he was quite unable to distinguish the decorated pottery and figurines of the Geometric phases from those of Mycenaean times, although he did have an intuition, supported by his observations at Tiryns, that a range of plain polished wares, which he thought handmade, were older than any of the deco-

rated wares, as to a great extent has proved to be true. A great deal of potentially interesting information has been lost; it may even be that Linear B tablets were cleared away unrecognised, since fragments have been found further south in more careful excavations. All this, I feel, is partly Schliemann's own fault, since he did not take a close interest in the area where the Grave Circle was until really quite late on, concentrating rather on the work in the "Tomb of Clytemnestra" and Lion Gate, where massive stones had to be removed, and in the area of the Circle wall rather than its interior.

It was the discovery that the standing tombstones were set in an artificial fill, not the natural soil, that attracted his attention, and shortly the outlines of a tomb cutting appeared beneath them in one area, but with nothing more appearing in several days of excavation he seems to have lost interest, until gold-covered buttons began to turn up. But he still believed that the tombs had been plundered, hence producing this scatter of buttons and other items, and as it was constantly raining he was having difficulty getting workmen. Hence I see nothing surprising in his comment, in his diary for Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November "wishing to terminate the excavations today in order to leave tomorrow morning", although this can only refer to the Grave Circle site, since the foreman was still clearing the "Tomb of Clytemnestra", and may be characteristically Schliemannic in its optimistic assumptions about the speed of progress. Since he nowhere published this remarkable instance of the archaeological law that you make the most interesting finds at the end of the digging season, I do not see how it can be an improvement for effect, as Dr. Traill would have it.

At all events, on that day the first burials were uncovered, and in less than three weeks Schliemann excavated five of the Shaft Graves and then stopped. It was after he left the site that a gold treasure of slightly later Mycenaean date was found cached south of the Grave Circle by the engineer who was planning it for him, and not until 1877 did Stamatakis discover the sixth grave. Why did Schliemann leave so abruptly, to the amazement of many? Again, I see nothing suspicious about this, if one recollects the circumstances. He had been excavating more or less continuously for four months, apart from a trip to show off the remains at Troy to the emperor of Brazil; weather conditions had become atrocious and work-

11. Ludwig 1931, 202-203; Petrakos 1987, 101-104.

men hard to get; and his own quarrel with Stamatakis had blown up again, because Stamatakis was making his own reports of the finds to newspapers and thus, in Schliemann's view, grabbing part of his glory. Moreover, he was suffering from intense frustration: on the 27th November he wrote to Müller, "but these immense treasures make the Greeks tremble of their shadow (i.e. afraid of their own shadows); thus delay after delay in the excavation, for two days they have stopped me saying that the governor of the province must be present and the governor came but said two officials from Athens must assist. But at all events I hope to continue the work tomorrow and finish it this week".<sup>12</sup> It was with these "officials", actually professors from Athens, that he excavated the last grave, with the finest mask and well-preserved burial, not with Mrs. Schliemann, who returned to Athens on the steamer that brought them. Perhaps because he believed he had found the correct number of graves mentioned by Pausanias, he stopped; it would be like him. But he also wrote to Müller on the last day of the year: "Believe me, I have had hard times at Mycenae. I had here an overseer not a bit better than that furious Turk whom I had at Troy; in fact, a man who would have made an excellent executioner, but who was an insupportable burden in scientific researches. Only 'τὸ ἱερόν πῦρ τῆς ἐπιστήμης' (the holy flame of knowledge) made Mrs. S. and me endure all; 'πάταξον μὲν ἄκουσον δὲ' (strike me, but hear me, a quotation from Plutarch that one might feel more appropriate in the mouth of Stamatakis). They all beg me to continue the work; but I won't do it".<sup>13</sup>

To me, this rings true as the bitterness of a man who has not been taken at his own valuation. It is indeed true that he had made great discoveries and endured considerable privations to do so; but despite earlier comments on his procedures at Troy he seems to have maintained his naive belief that the remains of the Heroic Age must necessarily be buried deep in the soil, and also to have considered it entirely legitimate to clear away anything found above them without more than the most cursory record. On the credit side, it can be said that he did record a fair amount of information and certainly had many photographs made of his finds around the Acropolis, including of more than a thousand pieces of pottery, and that he

showed an interest in many matters, having some analyses made of metal objects from the graves. He also recorded from what grave various finds had come, and since in this respect his diary agrees with the published account it should be preferred to the later National Museum catalogue which Karo used as the basis for his full publication of the material in the 1930's; but until the end he recorded very little detail about what was found where in any grave, even though one might have expected him at least to record how the bodies were dressed and ornamented. Even the most exacting analysis of his writings can only produce a general impression, relating to some of the more prominent items. With such a mass of material, one could hardly expect every item's position to be individually recorded; but he could have done a lot more than he did.

His publications of his finds may be fairly described as a somewhat tarted-up version of his reports to the *Times*, and it omitted details that he had noticed in his diary. More surprisingly, he was curiously reluctant to identify the burial of Agamemnon or any of the others specifically, and he did not really cope with the problem that, although he believed the graves to be simultaneous, the hurried interments of murdered people, Pausanias quite clearly spoke of one grave as that of Atreus, Agamemnon's father, and of another as that of Electra, his daughter, whose burial must have taken place long after Orestes's revenge for his father. Indeed, when criticisms of his theory were produced, he reputedly commented that he never said that he had discovered the tomb of Agamemnon, but that Gladstone, in his preface to the English publication, had proved it.<sup>14</sup> But in private he was a believer, as shown by Ludwig's entertaining story that once he said, "What? So this is not Agamemnon's body, these are not his ornaments? All right, let's call him Schultze."<sup>15</sup>

More serious, from the point of view of assessing his place in the history of Mycenaean archaeology, is that he rarely discussed his finds again. Although he claimed that he had opened up a new field for archaeology, he did very little to cultivate it; he noted close similarities between pots found at Mycenae and examples from tombs dug on Rhodes between 1868 and 1871, but failed to follow up this promising lead. He

12. Meyer 1962, 93.

13. Meyer 1962, 95.

14. Ludwig 1931, 237.

15. Ludwig 1931, 296-297.



made no attempt to explain Stamatakis's inconvenient discovery of a sixth grave, in which the finds seemed clearly to indicate two successive burials. His later efforts were essentially inspired by the same desire to make great finds as before. Thus, in 1880 he investigated the tholos tomb known as the "Treasury of Minyas" at Orchomenos, which is a virtual twin of the "Treasury of Atreus" at Mycenae, but found nothing, although he did make some acute observations on the prehistoric pottery in associated layers.<sup>16</sup> His excavations at Tiryns in 1884 were more substantial. His collaborator, the architect Dörpfeld, brought much-needed system into his excavating technique. For the first time the plan of a Mycenaean palace was fully revealed, and the parallels with that of Odysseus could be made; but apart from fragments of the wall-paintings very little was found. It may have been frustration at this that led him to bully the unfortunate ephor sent to oversee the excavations, and he left the 1885 season to Dörpfeld's direction. Reports of a large building with great storage jars at Knossos attracted his close attention, but, believing himself to be cheated by the land-owner, he did not close the deal. He even deserted the prehistoric world entirely to dig on Kythera for the remains of the fabled Temple of Aphrodite; perhaps he hoped to rival the German discoveries at Olympia, but again the big find eluded him. The one constant in these later years was his interest in Troy; he had already commented in the midst of his Mycenae excavations, "but how different is the civilisation which this treasure shows from that of Troy", and he worried at this problem, essentially for the rest of his life. Finally, in his 1890 excavation at Troy, he uncovered characteristic Mycenaean pottery in a layer far above that in which he had found 'Priam's Treasure'; but how he would have coped with this we do not know, though he might more readily have abandoned the identification of Agamemnon's burial than that of Priam's city and treasure, since already in 1885 he was writing, under the influence of scholarly theories then prevalent, that the Grave Circle burials were in fact Phoenicians.<sup>17</sup>

In a way it is hard not to feel sympathy for Schliemann, since his strenuous efforts to become a scholar acceptable in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen never really succeeded, and often this is more to their dis-

credit than his, although his methods of carrying on controversies and of dealing with those who, often correctly, questioned his findings and pointed out difficulties were not such as to endear him to anyone, let alone self-important German scholars. But this is different from allowing him the credit for fathering Mycenaean archaeology. To be honest, all that he did at Mycenae was turn up a lot of material, which he left to others to relate to finds made elsewhere in the Aegean and study properly, as was being done within two years of their discovery by Newton of the British Museum and the German archaeologists Furtwängler and Löschcke. It was very important material, but for Schliemann its greatest interest was as corroboration of the tradition of the royal burials in the citadel, and he never made the attempt to deal with the difficulties that this theory produced or even to explain his interpretation fully. Although he gave what I believe to have been in the main a truthful account of his discoveries, it was hardly an adequate one. The true father of Mycenaean archaeology was Chrestos Tsountas, who dug at Mycenae from 1880 onwards, uncovering the remains of the palace and many other buildings on the citadel and the Mycenaean cemeteries all round it. Although he too hardly gave a completely adequate account of his discoveries, his first Greek account of "the Mycenaean civilisation" in 1893, revised and expanded to be published with J.I. Manatt's assistance in 1897 as *The Mycenaean Age*, was the first great work of synthesis on Aegean prehistory, breaking it away largely from the link with myth and describing it in its own terms, within a historical framework that, as Newton had already seen, could be related to the history of Egypt. To continue the metaphor of paternity, it was Tsountas who nurtured and brought to early maturity the infant that Schliemann had rather casually engendered. Tsountas truly founded prehistoric Aegean archaeology, with the aid of materials supplied by Schliemann and others; but because his discoveries were not so dramatic, his name has been forgotten except by the professionals, while Schliemann's rather lucky discoveries in the final weeks of his one season at Mycenae have ever since cast their glamour over professional scholars and the general public alike.

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16. Schliemann 1882, 122-163.

17. Ventris and Chadwick 1956, 7.

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