

THE PRESENT STATE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE NEAR EAST*

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SOON after I had suggested the title of the present talk I realized just how ambitious it was. There has been a nagging suspicion that I ought to have changed the subject; but it had, for me, the merit of putting down into a coherent form some of the thoughts I have had in a quarter of a century of digging holes in the Near East and wrestling with the problems of excavation reports and scholarly syntheses.

To understand the present state of the discipline I shall have to briefly survey the history of archaeological endeavour in the Near East. I should then comment on its present health and ills before proceeding to some fervent hopes for its future.

As this is to be very much a personal view, I should perhaps initially give some idea of just what archaeology means to me. My involvement with this particular pursuit seems to have been largely predetermined, mainly it seems by a process of elimination. First inspiration came from a then recent edition of Hammerton's *Wonders of the Past* which I was given as bed-time reading at the age of about ten. It contained intriguing sections on Archaeology, Anthropology, Palaeontology, etc., and as it was a period soon after the discovery of the Tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amun and the Royal Graves at Ur, I was impressed. The house was an old sandstone building not far from Mount Gambier and the walls contained a magnificent series of small fish and snail-like fossils. With a hammer and cold chisel I started to make a collection of these; but the resultant roasting from my Grandfather suggested that I should scrub ichthyology, palaeontology and geology from the slate of possible future professions. A few years later, in my final year at school, my English master was to suggest that my only possible future lay in digging postholes—it was prophetic, but I wasn't to know it then. Certainty came with an intelligence test to which I was subjected on discharge from the Navy in 1946—a test which seemed to me to be almost entirely mathematical and physical, but which apparently determined that I was well suited to read anthropology and archaeology. I've always been

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hesitant to follow the reasoning behind that particular judgement, as I had liked mathematics. Now when it is becoming more and more a useful tool for the archaeologist, I shall have to learn a completely new terminology. I had written to Gordon Childe when I was in New Guinea and his advice had been to start by reading anthropology at the University of Sydney. Fortunately at the same time the University had appointed J. R. B. Stewart and so I was able to read both archaeology and anthropology at this institution. I knew then what archaeology meant to me; I'm not so sure that I do now.

Definitions of the subject are almost as numerous as archaeologists, but I think that all would agree that it involves the collection, description and study of objects and situations which can in any way be associated with past human activity. As someone once remarked, the archaeologist is concerned with the fossilized remains of human behaviour. These major points of concern are fairly easy to determine. They are nothing more than a description of the basic minimum that any archaeologist does. It is the aims and procedures of the various practitioners, in performing these minimal tasks, that has led to the confusion of the subject of the present day.

A recent volume which has been hailed as perhaps the most important archaeological work of this generation has this to say on the subject:

Archaeology is an undisciplined empirical discipline. A discipline lacking a scheme of systematic and ordered study based upon declared and clearly defined models and rules of procedure. It further lacks a body of central theory capable of synthesising the general regularities within its data in such a way that the unique residuals distinguishing each particular case might be quickly isolated and easily assessed. Archaeologists do not agree upon central theory, although, regardless of place, period and culture, they employ similar tacit models and procedures based upon similar and distinguished entities—the attributes, artefacts, types, assemblages, cultures and culture groups. Lacking an explicit theory defining these entities and their relationships and transformations in a viable form, archaeology has remained an intuitive skill—an inexplicit, manipulative dexterity learned by rote.¹

Harsh words, but, I fear, only too true.

The quite obvious mess has prompted considerable soul-searching amongst archaeologists in recent years and this has led to the emergence of a group of angry young men and women, many of whom whilst practising as archaeologists eschew their own identity and prefer to be hailed as prehistorian, anthropologist; anything in fact rather than archaeologist, a word which has recently often become associated with the adjective "old", and consigned to a limbo where

¹ David L. Clarke, *Analytical Archaeology* (London, 1968), p. xiii.

it is associated with its practising muddle-headed old archaeologists and their motley collection of ill-recorded objects. Dirt archaeologists and art historians apparently find them congenial company. One is reminded immediately of the rather nice story of an English country gentleman whose younger ne'er-do-well son had just come down from Oxford with a third. "Hell," he said, "if it had been a second he could have gone into the Church; now he will have to become an Archaeologist."

This multiplicity of occupational terminology is unfortunate in that there appears to be a real danger of the discipline losing its identity, but perhaps they are only growing pains and we can go along optimistically with Clarke that "Archaeology is a discipline in its own right, concerned with archaeological data which it clusters in archaeological entities displaying certain archaeological processes and studied in terms of archaeological aims, concepts and procedures",² that "no single approach can have the sole prerogative of accuracy and informative utility" . . . and "the progressive development of archaeology depends on the continuing existence of many vigorous rival archaeologies which by a shotgun approach and stochastic multilinear 'scanning' trajectories may together cumulatively develop the discipline's potential".³

Together with other academic disciplines, the basic philosophy and history of archaeology are normally traced to the mood of inquiry which stems from the Renaissance, but it is only within the last two hundred years that in the Near East we can see the practical development of all those varied facets of the subject with which we are now familiar.

To be sure, we can go well back into antiquity to demonstrate man's interest one way or another in his own past and achievements; the Dynastic Egyptians had Royal Commissions into the condition of some of their past monumental glories, Nabonidus, King of Babylon, excavated at Ur, his daughter, Belshalti-Nanna, had her own private museum of local antiquities; various travellers in the Near East from the early centuries A.D. recorded and described some of the more obvious monuments of the past, travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries catalogued, described and collected antiquities for their patrons in England and Europe; the Ashmolean, the world's first public museum, was opened at Oxford in 1683; but it wasn't until it was fully realized that the soil of the Near East contained untold treasures and information about our own cultural inheritance that any systematic attempt was made to reclaim it.

This realization came during the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century with furious activity in Egypt, excavations at Khorsabad by Botta and, soon after, Layard at Nimrud and Nineveh. At about the same time Boucher de Perthes was recognizing the antiquity of man in the geological strata at

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

Abbeville. A few years later (1859) Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, followed in 1863 by Sir Charles Lyall's *The Antiquity of Man*.

In 1865 E. B. Tylor, a real artefact man, published *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, followed in 1877 by Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society*. These and a spate of similar researches, in the middle of the nineteenth century, gave the final impetus to wholesale exploration and excavation in the Near East.

There appears, however, not to have been very much system to this exploration; the motives were varied and so were the methods of attack.

The Palestine Exploration Fund was founded in May 1865 and by June of the same year had laid down the principles upon which an investigation of the archaeology, geography, geology and natural history of Palestine was to be based. They were: that whatever was undertaken should be carried out on scientific principles; that the society should, as a body, abstain from controversy and that it should neither be started nor conducted as a religious society. In the immediate succeeding years the fund commenced a wide-spread and responsible series of excavations at such important biblical centres as Jerusalem and Jericho and a wide geographical survey of the region. Kitchener was one of the early men engaged in this project and his maps of Palestine are still amongst the best that we have; the fund still flourishes and with a few minor aberrations it has stuck to its principles.

At the same time, in 1865, a former Union Colonel from the American Civil War was appointed by Abraham Lincoln as the American Consul in Cyprus. General, as he was by this time, Louis P. di Cesnola became the first major collector, documenter and student of ancient Cypriot artefacts and he has earned the title of one of the most proficient and prolific looters of antiquities that the Near East has yet seen. In answer to criticisms of his excavation methods, Cesnola quite freely admitted, in his volume *Cyprus: Its Ancient Cities, Tombs and Temples*, that his methods of recovery of objects were perhaps not those of "the usual manner adopted and advocated by most archaeologists".⁴ He did, however, amass a magnificent collection of artefacts, most of which are now published. The main beneficiary was the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, a body which acquired both the bulk of his collection and the benefit of his experience, when he was appointed Secretary and then Director of that august institution, on his return to New York.

Cyprus has an unhappy archaeological history and Cesnola set a pattern which was, wittingly or unwittingly, followed for a very long time. The records of excavation and exploration under the early years of British rule were, if anything, worse than they had been under the Turkish authorities—tomb

⁴Louis P. di Cesnola, *Cyprus: Its Ancient Cities, Tombs and Temples* (London, 1877), p. viii.

looting and dispersal, even of government collections, were common. Cyprus has always suffered from having a wealth of too easily accessible first-rate museum material.

In the early years of the British mandate, one Max Ohnefalsch-Richter was excavating with some distinction and I recall one very nice story which I think is true. It was told to me when I was a member of the Kouklia excavations and apparently occupying rooms which had belonged to this distinguished archaeologist many years previously. One old local recalled an occasion when Ohnefalsch-Richter had been literally under house arrest and confined to these very same rooms. He was able to continue his excavations at night by employing a house boy to sit in the house with a lamp and an old typewriter, which he pounded hour after hour in a simian rhythm, just to keep the guards assured. Night digging in Cyprus is still popular, certainly no longer amongst the archaeological fraternity, but the rewards from a tomb full of complete pots are now great indeed. The problem was so prominent in the 1950s that various members of the Department of Antiquities were specially assigned to prowl the known cemetery fields at night armed with camera and flash bulb—they managed quite a few prosecutions.

These round-the-clock operations were not confined to Cyprus. Even Warren, who was excavating in Jerusalem for the Palestine Exploration Fund, was forced by official circumstances to live up to his name and work at night in a series of deep shafts and tunnels along and through the walls of the old city. He gained a great deal of very valuable information, but it is not a method of recovery one would recommend to budding excavators.

What was going on in Egypt during the nineteenth century? For the earlier part of the period I can do no better than quote from the one person who can make Cesnola look like a small-time shoplifter. The depredations of Giovanni Belzoni and his French rival Mr. Drouetti were to fill the vaults of the British Museum and the Louvre as well as decorate the pavements of London and Paris with remains of Egypt's past glory. A description of one of Belzoni's exploits follows:

Of some of these tombs many persons could not withstand the suffocating air, which often causes fainting. A vast quantity of dust rises, so fine that it enters into the throat and nostrils, and chokes the nose and mouth to such a degree that it requires great power of lungs to resist it and the strong effluvia of the mummies. . . . In some places there is not more than a vacancy of a foot left, which you must contrive to pass through in a creeping posture like a snail, on pointed and keen stones that cut like glass. After getting through these passages, some of them two or three hundred yards long, you generally find a more commodious place, perhaps high enough to sit. But what a place of rest! surrounded by bodies, by heaps

of mummies in all directions; which, previous to my being accustomed to the sight, impressed me with horror. The blackness of the wall, the faint light given by the candles or torches for want of air, the different objects that surrounded me, seeming to converse with each other, and the Arabs with the candles or torches in their hands, naked and covered with dust, themselves resembling living mummies, absolutely formed a scene that cannot be described. In such a situation I found myself several times, and often returned exhausted and fainting, till at last I became inured to it, and indifferent to what I suffered, except from the dust, which never failed to choke my throat and nose; and though, fortunately, I am destitute of the sense of smelling, I could taste that the mummies were rather unpleasant to swallow. After the exertion of entering into such a place, through a passage of fifty, a hundred, three hundred, or perhaps six hundred yards, nearly overcome, I sought a resting place, found one and contrived to sit; but when my weight bore on the body of an Egyptian, it crushed it like a bandbox. I naturally had recourse to my hands to sustain my weight, but they found no better support; so that I sunk altogether among the broken mummies, with a crash of bones, rags, and wooden cases, which raised such a dust as kept me motionless for a quarter of an hour, waiting till it subsided again. I could not remove from the place, however, without increasing it, and every step I took I crushed a mummy in some part or other. Once I was conducted from such a place to another resembling it, through a passage of about twenty feet in length, and no wider than that a body could be forced through. It was choked with mummies and I could not pass without putting my face in contact with that of some decayed Egyptian; but as the passage inclined downwards, my own weight helped me on: however I could not avoid being covered with bones, legs, arms, and heads rolling from above. Thus I proceeded from one cave to another, all full of mummies piled up in various ways, some standing, some lying, and some on their heads. The purpose of my researches was to rob the Egyptians of their papyri; of which I found a few hidden in their breasts, under their arms, in the space above the knees, or on the legs, and covered by the numerous folds of cloth that envelop the mummy.⁵

Some years later in reference to this period Howard Carter was to remark: "Those were the great days of excavation. Anything to which a fancy was taken, from a scarab to an obelisk, was just appropriated, and if there was a difference, with a brother excavator, one laid for him with a gun."⁶

It was a wild and woolly period, a race to acquire objects by fair means or foul to fill the cavernous galleries of newly born museums and private collec-

⁵ G. Daniel, *The Origins and Growth of Archaeology* (New York, 1968), pp. 37-8.

⁶ H. Carter, *The Tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen*, Vol. I, p. 68.

tions. The splendid basic collection in the Nicholson Museum at this University was made during this period. Little attention was paid to the finer points of "recording in situ"; description, when it was given, concentrated on the spectacular and in Palestine biblical research was given a "shot in the arm" from which it has never fully recovered.

It is possible to look on these years simply as an experiment or a testing of the hypotheses which had been put forward in the earlier part of the century. It *was* an age of collection but it had served to demonstrate beyond any doubt the quantity of artefacts which were available in the area. With this assurance the next period in the exploration of the Near East, the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth century, was to witness not only a greatly increased activity on the part of learned institutions, but also a much more sober and systematic approach to the acquisition and recording of objects.

It was the age of the real giants of Near Eastern Archaeology, Sir Flinders Petrie in Egypt and Palestine, Albright and Pere Vincent in Palestine. Sir John Myers in Cyprus; Evans in Crete; Garstang in Turkey and Palestine, Reisner and Fisher again in Egypt and Palestine—Woolley and Hall and the Oriental Institute of Chicago in Mesopotamia. It was a period also of the great feminist movement into the field—Dorothy Garrod, Gertrude Caton Thompson and Hetty Goldman. They, all of them, carried over into this new age one certain bequest from their predecessors. They did things in a big way. It was these years which witnessed the opening up of the Empire section of Near Eastern archaeology—Thebes, Karnak, Memphis, Tell-el-Amarna in Egypt, Jerusalem, Jericho, Megiddo, Beth Shan, Gaza in Palestine, Boghaz Koy in Turkey, Byblos in the Lebanon, to name but a few. Dorothy Garrod demonstrated the great antiquity of man in the area in her excavations at Mount Carmel. It witnessed, too, the establishment of a relative and absolute chronology throughout the region. By the end of the age it was possible to say that A was earlier than B was earlier than C and even to give real figures to the age by reference back to the written records of Egypt, and it now became possible to place much of the pillaged record of the previous century into an historic setting. The deciphering of the records of Empire, the demonstration of man's antiquity in the region, the evidence which accumulated of daily contact from one region to another, the establishment of a chronology, dictated that the major concentration of this phase should be on history.

The Second World War took the best part of a decade from concentrated archaeological research in the Near East; but it does appear to have given the practitioners time to think. Certainly the large-scale excavation of sites like Boghaz Koy, Byblos and Uruk took up again where they had left off, but the period from the mid-40s saw the arrival of a new group of archaeologists—men

and women who had been trained in the far more exacting and critical approach of the archaeology of Europe, England and America. The sites to which this group was accustomed were smaller, poorer and for the most part concerned with the lives and remains of everyday men. Accent in the Near East has moved in these twenty-five years from an overwhelming concern with kings, queens and kingdoms to a concern with man in general and his local environment. On the whole, excavation is now on a much smaller scale and mindful of admonitions such as those of Sir Mortimer Wheeler that, "at the best, excavation is destruction; and destruction unmitigated by all the resources of contemporary knowledge and accumulated experience cannot be too rigorously impugned",⁷ a new care has crept into the work of recording. Gone are the days when the excavator would give his foreman instructions for the day and leave the site. Constant surveillance of small teams of workmen is now the basic minimum of care which is demanded. Yet, in this case, one can see a problem for Near Eastern Archaeology; the sites are too vast for a "piddling" approach and the result of much work has been a tiny, very carefully dug hole from which the net result in information is often almost nil.

Whilst this new care for stratification and the recording of objects is perfectly obvious and even striking in the more recent practice of the discipline, other factors have had more profound effect since World War II. The discipline has suddenly, perhaps too suddenly, found itself with a whole array of new assistants in the form of aid from the natural and mathematical sciences. This new age has seen the birth of Carbon 14 and Thermoluminescence dating; the growth of Palaeobotany, the soil sciences and geology, to name but a few, as increasingly important aids in the recovery, recording and study of archaeological data. The Near East has not in this busy period had time yet to digest this material assistance properly and all too often these benefits are envisaged as a type of pill, which, if taken, should automatically cure the headaches of the discipline. It is too often forgotten that these new techniques are themselves in their infancy in their application to archaeological data, and far from taking a weight from archaeological shoulders, they demand an even more rigorous system and care in the collection of archaeological material.

What then is the present position of the subject and its health and ills?

On the credit side the past has bequeathed to us sufficient vertical excavation, often enough checked by the careful stratification of recent years, to give us a fairly accurate picture of the sequence of at least the major events in the history of the Near East. It is surely not everything we would wish it to be, but there is sufficient of a temporal skeleton to allow us to put the cultural sequences in order. Back to 2000 B.C. we can be pretty well assured that our

⁷ Sir M. Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, Pelican A356 (London, 1954), p. 15.

absolute dating can't be too far out, at the worse perhaps a century—at the best quite accurate indeed. There is enough correlation now between written records and the stratified sequence to allow this comparative method of absolute dating to offer us a far more accurate means of the assessment of time than can either Carbon 14 or thermoluminescence. Beyond 2000 B.C. these new aids grow in importance; but they both still have their problems of application and computation.

The past twenty-five years has again seen the record of settled life in the Near East pushed back into the tenth millennium B.C. and the slow but increasing tempo of technological achievement can now be traced in a generally unbroken sequence from these initial settlements in Palestine, Mesopotamia and Turkey to full settlement, the establishment of village and ultimately urban life.

If one says this sort of thing quickly, looks at the spate of new volumes turned out annually and counts the number of expeditions at work in the Near East, one might be impressed by the fact that all was well with the subject, that the main story was written and that future work could be used to refine details. Such is far from the case, as a brief survey of the region will demonstrate.

In Cyprus, in spite of the detailed and widespread work of the local Department of Antiquities under such excellent direction as that of Dikaios and Karageorghis, in spite of nearly fifty years of careful work by the Swedes, the French, the British and my predecessor in this chair, James Stewart, we still see only a very patchy historical reconstruction. The various cultures of the Neolithic, almost the best documented period in the island's history thanks to the labours of Porphyrios Dikaios, still can't be put into a workable sequence and we certainly have no knowledge of whether Cyprus has a Mesolithic and Palaeolithic past. The remains of the Early and Middle Bronze Age inhabitants are represented solely by tombs. The settlements are there, but no one has cared to dig them; the Late Bronze Age, the best documented period with the excavation of such wealthy cities and towns as Enkomi, Kition, Kourion, Kouklia, Pigadhes and a host of other smaller sites of the period, gives us a complete imbalance in the record and again tomb groups still constitute the most immediate evidence for the sequence of events. The same remarks hold good for the Iron Age and the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The Byzantine and Medieval archaeology of the island is practically non-existent. The island is very small, only about 3500 square miles, and yet until the mid-50s no thorough geographical exploration had taken place—and even now I should think that little more than a quarter of the surface area has received any detailed planning. We can't yet speak of patterns of settlement with any degree of accuracy. Practically no work has been done on the copper deposits and industry of the island and yet it is always quoted as the "raison d'être" for the wealth of Cyprus from

1500 B.C. onwards. The archaeology of the island has remained married to those proven wealthy sites first exploited by Cesnola and Ohnefalsch-Richter.

If we turn to that much ill-used area of Palestine and the Levant, we again see the influence of the past hanging heavily on the archaeological scene. The region had in no way suffered the awful calamities of Egypt and Cyprus; I think mainly because there is little in the region which would have promised the immediate spectacular results for collectors. Palestine in particular has always been something of a backwater used mainly as a corridor of passage by the wealthier communities to the North, East and South, but as the geographical home of three of the world's major religions it had its quite obvious importance for other aspects of archaeological research. The discovery of the Bible has long been the background to activity in the area. The region has been fortunate in that some of the finest field practitioners of the first part of this century were to make it their stamping ground—Petrie, Albright, Vincent and, more recently, Kathleen Kenyon and De Vaux have seen to it that the historical, biblical and archaeological record is systematically documented; but their researches have continued along the line of exploration *primarily* concerned with biblical illumination. Surface exploration when it has taken place has concentrated on identifying biblical place names and, in the process, sites which weren't real contenders have been ignored. Detailed work by the Israeli Department of Antiquities in the past ten years has certainly filled in much of this gap for their area of the region, but practically the whole of Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon remains an archaeological blank. It wasn't until the 1920s that Dorothy Garrod was able to demonstrate a long and continuous palaeolithic and mesolithic occupation in the region and only from the 50s on, with the careful work at Jericho, Beidha and Eynan, that we had any line on the period of the first settlements. A great deal is now known about the Bronze and Iron Ages, but it is surprising that even within these periods we are more often than not left without vital information. The later periods, particularly those of the Byzantine and Arab occupations, are very poorly recorded. The work has again continued to concentrate around those major sites first opened up in the last century.

In Egypt we see a similar picture. The initial work by Belzoni and his contemporaries had been concerned with the looting of monumental art forms—the sort of thing that was only likely to occur on the great royal sites of the country. Egypt was fortunate in having the genius of Flinders Petrie to put its records into some order. From the end of the nineteenth century, Petrie worked diligently together with other British, American, French and German scholars to tidy up and order the ravages of the past; but the great bulk of energy continued to be expended on the monumental sites of the country. There have been large-scale excavations and clearances since Petrie's period, notably those

of Emery and the Egyptian Department of Antiquities at Sakkara following Petrie, Pendlebury and others at Tell-el-amarna, the Americans at Giza, etc., but note that all of these are still the record of Egypt's most prominent dynasties. Very little work indeed has been done on the settlements of the pre-dynastic period, so little in fact that in spite of Petrie's original seriation of artefacts, there is still almost complete argument as to the sequence of pre-dynastic culture. The post-dynastic period, anything indeed of our era, is very little known.

This concentration on Egypt's dynastic record has surely been vital for the basic chronology of the ancient Near East, but someone once remarked that it really was a pity that Egypt had provided so many written records to the initial researchers. We know nothing or next to nothing of the daily life of the major part of ancient Egypt's population, the people who really built up the glories of the Dynastic period.

The 300,000 square miles of modern Turkey largely escaped the activities of the early collectors and the first special work was the rather romantic episode of Schliemann at Troy, where he excavated from 1872 onwards. There had been earlier recognition of the vast classical sites along the Western coast of Turkey: and Pergamon, Ephesos, Priene and Didyma had received perennial visits by the dilettante society of London from the early eighteenth century. It was, however, only in the early years of the twentieth century with the German excavation at Boghaz Koy, following on the earlier activity at Charcemish and Sendjirli, that the important Hittite history of the area was recognized.

There really was very little major archaeological activity in Anatolia until the late 20s and 30s when wide-spread research was initiated by the Oriental Institute of Chicago and the newly formed Turkish Department of Antiquities. Garstang and others had worked very successfully in the country from early on in the century, but serious British interest only began in the late 40s, with the establishment of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara. The last twenty years have seen an almost explosive expansion in our knowledge of ancient Anatolia—I need only cite the quite remarkable programme of exploration and excavation conducted by Mellaart. His neolithic-chalcolithic sites of Catal Huyuk and Hacilar have opened up a completely new and highly sophisticated world in the Near East; but Turkey is a huge country and the fact still remains that there is no single region in which even a full sequence of the cultures can be given.

The early work of Botta and Layard in Syria and Mesopotamia was not followed up by wide-spread research and apart from the important work of the German scholars Koldewy at Babylon and Andrae at Assur our major knowledge of Mesopotamian history and pre-history is very much an event of the past fifty years. The Oriental Institute of Chicago commenced a major programme of research in the area in 1929 and in the process excavated many of the great

dynastic sites of the country. The Germans have continued to work at the site of Uruk from roughly the same period. The French too have been busy and the work of Hall and Woolley of the British Museum at the great site of Ur has given us some of the glories of Mesopotamia's past. As with Egypt, however, the major concentration has been on a study of the development of the minor and monumental arts and in addition both regions are still at present very much provinces of the epigraphic aspect of archaeology. I do not here regret that we have these written records, many of which still await translation, but rather that the epigraphist and the objects man have always seemed to have the utmost difficulty in co-operation. It was not until the 1940s with the work of the Englishman, Seton Lloyd, the Iraqi, Fuad Safar, and the American, Braidwood, that the true antiquity of the area became recognized. Earlier work by Mallowan, to whom the archaeology of Mesopotamia owes a great deal, had hinted at the past, and we now recognize the Northern section of the region as one of the three, in the general area of the Near East, in which we have some evidence of the transition period from a mesolithic to a fully sedentary neolithic age.

With all the work that has gone on in the Near East there is still no single unit area in which we can piece together the full sequence of events. The archaeological reconstructions are written by transposing the known sequence in one area to fill in the gaps of another; I'm not suggesting that this is a confidence trick—it is simply the only method open to us, at present, of giving a picture of general historical development throughout the Near East.

Nearly all of this work to date, apart from the sheer joy of collecting, has concentrated on Archaeology as a handmaiden to history, the simple piecing together of technological sequences.

A fourth phase in the archaeology of the area is getting under way with the commencement of environmental and spatial studies and it is in these fields that a bright future seems likely for the discipline, but for this future we will require a changed accent in the collection of archaeological material.

Before we consider the possible future of archaeological activity in the Near East, there are a number of other features which have influenced its present position and which are likely to play an increasingly important role in the future. The first of these is cost; it is now a very expensive undertaking indeed. In the past twenty-five years an average small excavation budget would have multiplied by a factor of ten. Labour, equipment and transport costs have risen astronomically, but there is allied with this the fact that one needs a number of highly trained specialists to cope with the increasing records and samples one must collect. The days when a McAlister could run an excavation on his own are over. With this increase in cost there has come a change in the financing of archaeological exploration and governments are playing an

increasingly important part. Private and Museum finance, now, is normally requested as a supplement; this has perhaps one beneficial effect—the excavator is no longer tied to those sites which are going to produce quantities of Museum material. It fits in well with the prevailing attitude of many Near Eastern governments which now, no longer, allow any of their antiquities to leave the country.

Their attitude is understandable if one considers the past pillage of the region; but I wonder if it is not a little short-sighted. Objects are still dug out illegally and there is a flourishing underground traffic to the antiquities markets of London, Rome, Paris and New York, to mention but a few centres. It leads, automatically, to the destruction of valuable evidence and the maintenance of a costly antiquities control service in the areas concerned. Most of the Museums of the Near East are stuffed to bursting point and many problems would be solved if local Departments of Antiquities could see their way clear to allow a little of their multi-represented artefacts to be sold at nominal cost to the universities and museums of the world. It would, overnight, knock the bottom out of the embarrassing illegal antiquities market and at the same time fill a growing demand for teaching and exhibition collections, material moreover which is equally an inheritance of Western civilization.

One can't ignore the effect of the present political situation in the region: it has closed off complete areas to any form of archaeological endeavour, but more important it has made drastic changes in the way of life of many of the inhabitants—an important factor if one considers the almost complete blank which is the ethnographic record of the region.

Taking all these factors into account, it seems we need to do some radical re-thinking of our future programmes.

To return to an earlier point, the introduction of new techniques from the social, natural and mathematical sciences gives some real hope that, ultimately, the discipline can reorganize itself into a systematic science. Already considerable work has been done in the construction of experimental models, which give some indication of the possibilities which lie ahead. Ideally, these models demand, of course, a far more precise system of collecting, recording, description and study than is usually the custom in archaeological practice. At the moment we are bogged down in a morass of subjective terminology and poorly recorded material. Probably at least half the museum collections of the world are unpublished, either chance finds or the result of unpublished excavations.

I feel that the time has come to, if not call a halt, at least minimize the number of excessively expensive and quite often reduplicative excavations in the area. It would do none of us any harm and it would allow the expenditure

of time and money on the very vital necessity of putting the house in order. All unpublished excavation material needs to be published, the museum collections of the world need to be intensively studied and a new universally accepted descriptive terminology worked out. Instead of excavation as field work, the desperate need is for a widespread geographical/archaeological survey of the area. We really do need to know the patterns of settlement, the limits of the areas of economic and ancient political influence—we need to know the trade routes and trading patterns of the entire region, the industrial resources which were available to each community. We need to know the sizes of settlements and these can be easily estimated in a careful survey. The relationship of settlements, cult centres and burial grounds can be determined and a host of other relationships which are still visible in the everyday life of the present inhabitants. This brings us to a further need—ethnographic research in the Near East is virtually non-existent. We can take a good, guided guess that the inhabitants of the present day are in large part direct descendants of those people with whom we are concerned as archaeologists. There was a striking illustration of this a few years ago, when an Israeli research unit, involved in an intensive survey of the Via Maris—the age-old route from Southern Palestine to the Egyptian Delta, found on the desert sands, still undisturbed after 5000 years, groups of circular camp sites, which produced, on the one hand, pottery of First/Second Dynasty Egypt and, a few metres away, the remains of the ceramic products of the earliest of the Bronze Ages in Palestine. These groups of sites were obviously those of contemporary traders, following a custom of exchange which the Bedouin of the area continue to this day. Many of the social customs, evidenced by the records of the Old Testament, again have visible present-day expression in the life of the herding Bedouin.

If we are to put any life at all into the precisely described artefacts of the past, we will need an intensive programme of such research. Many of the age-old customs of the area are fast disappearing and with them a vital side of archaeological research.

If we are to have excavation, and I think we must, it will need to be much more rigorously controlled, both by the sponsoring institutions and particularly by the local Departments of Antiquities.

I don't believe, as some do, that we should dig in a desperate effort to get everything that we can whilst it is still there. It is going to be there for many generations to come—with all the frantic activity of the past 150 years I doubt that we have excavated at more than half of one per cent of the sites available. With remarkably few exceptions, the areas of those sites we have excavated would generally represent from less than one per cent to about five per cent of the area of the site. As I have said before, we have concentrated on vertical stratigraphy and the present archaeology and ancient history of the Near East

is written on the absolute minimum of evidence. It is not all suddenly going to disappear before our startled gaze.

Apart from rescue excavations, I think we would do well to consider a procedure in which excavation permits could be restricted within a much wider programme of research—a programme which would commence with a geographical, archaeological and ethnographic survey of some easily defined area. This first step could reasonably be expected to produce a historical settlement pattern of the area chosen, with all sites and natural resources planned and modern comparative evidence available in the ethnographic record.

Only after all this was done would a programme of excavation commence; vertical digging could be restricted to an initial check of the stratification of chosen sites, sufficient to give a full relative history of the occupation of the area, and would go from there to horizontal excavation. By horizontal excavation I mean the careful stratigraphic digging of a meaningful area of occupation—enough to give the layout of the village or town in each of its phases of settlement and destruction. Such digging, under the direction of a careful and thoughtful excavator, should be able to offer evidence for the use of individual rooms, houses, public buildings, industrial quarters, etc. Ideally, one would excavate an entire site in this manner; but there are the restrictions of allowing our successors to check our results. Undoubtedly the years to come will see considerable improvements in the techniques of excavation. It is only with some broadly based method such as this that we may ultimately be able to offer a picture of human and cultural change and development which may have some meaning for an understanding of our own present position.

The University of Sydney could offer a great deal to such a programme of research. It has already made very substantial contributions to the Archaeology of the Near East. In the early part of this century, Grafton Elliot-Smith, amongst a host of other interests and pursuits, made an important name for himself as an Egyptologist and sixty-one years ago delivered, in this same Great Hall, a series of four lectures on "Ancient Egypt and the Dawn of Civilization".

Vere Gordon Childe, who graduated from this University in 1914, stands amongst the giants of the world of archaeology. I can certainly do no better than quote the words of Glyn Daniel, himself in the forefront and certainly the leading British historian of the discipline:

The mature science now exists, but one of the main persons who made it mature because he set out and popularized the new synthesis of man's past—with a wealth of comparative archaeological knowledge which no one had before, or then, or perhaps ever again—was Gordon Childe. An Australian, who came to Oxford as a post-graduate student, he travelled the world and summarized the knowledge of prehistoric Europe in his 'Dawn

of European Civilization', first published in 1925. It is in its seventh (1957) edition, a classic of archaeology.⁸

Or again, after quoting Childe's preface to *The Danube in Prehistory*:

This statement of archaeological method, in 1929, is a classic one, and, in a sense, here is the moment to break off any account of the growth of archaeology. Here in the most remarkable preface to 'The Danube in Prehistory' is a statement of aims, methods, and limitations which is with us all today and which can and should be reread with profit by everyone at the present day. Childe wrote many books, and will be remembered not least for his masterly attempts at a general synthesis of our knowledge of man's prehistoric past as revealed by archaeology.⁹

Gordon Childe is usually remembered as a pre-historian of the European scene, but his volume *New Light on the Most Ancient East* remains the basic general comparative study of the region to this day. No one since his time has had the courage to bring it up to date. He is a constant reminder of the need to train, amongst all the specialists, students with a good basic knowledge of the comparative archaeology of the entire region, for surely one of the most difficult problems in this age of intensifying, specialized research will be to find the scholar who can fit the mosaic together.

The University is building up a tradition in this broad vision; for again such a man was J. R. B. Stewart, my predecessor in this chair. Stewart had excavated with Sir Flinders Petrie at Tell el Ajjol (in Palestine) in the early 1930s, with Winifred Lamb in the Balikisir plain of Western Turkey, had been Assistant Director of the British School of Archaeology at Athens and was certainly at the forefront of the Archaeology of Cyprus. He was a first-rate scholar of the Byzantine and Medieval periods of the Near East and a numismatist of some standing. His Near Eastern section of the Nicholson Museum *Handbook* is an intensive general cover of the entire region and still much sought after today and he has written the definitive volume on the Early Bronze Age of Cyprus. His death at the age of forty-eight was a tragedy.

As Australians, with our cultural heritage firmly rooted in the past of Western Europe and through that area to Rome, Greece and beyond to the formative period in the ancient Near East of most of our religious, social and technological customs, we should be very much concerned.

I am hopeful that we can continue this tradition and at the same time indulge in the possibilities of the future—the Department of Archaeology is flourishing, as never before, and we are already receiving most generous co-operation from the Departments of Physical Chemistry, Geology and Soil Sciences. The University of Sydney is one of a very few, anywhere in the world,

⁸ Glyn Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

where students can read the archaeology of the classical and ancient Near Eastern worlds together. There is, in addition, a flourishing sub-department of pre-History within the Department of Anthropology and an inter-disciplinary course of Historical Archaeology. I firmly believe that as archaeologists we should take every available opportunity of co-operation with these kindred disciplines and, with Clarke, I don't for a moment believe that any single branch of the discipline is necessarily the right way to approach the subject. I think there are many right ways and without any of them the subject would be the poorer. We can surely offer those vigorous rival characteristics which, Clarke has suggested, are vital for the progressive development of the subject.