



What is Classical Archaeology?

Introduction

More than any other branch of archaeology, classical archaeology has a history. It is not simply that people have been concerned with the material culture of Greek and Roman antiquity for a very long time now, and that attempts to put the remains of Greek and Roman sculpture and architecture into some sort of order go back to the 18th century. It is also that what scholars do with that material culture today is in dialogue not just with the Greek and Roman past but with the history of its own scholarship.

It is for this reason that this volume opens with two discussions of the nature and tradition of classical archaeology that have a strongly historical focus. Understanding what questions classical archaeologists have asked, why they have asked these questions, and why some questions have raised and continue to raise particular scholarly sensitivities depends upon understanding the history of the discipline.

Part of the peculiar position of classical archaeology arises from the way in which it is both a branch of archaeology and a branch of Classics. Interest in the material culture of Greek and Roman antiquity has arisen not simply through the intrinsic interest of the material but through interest in the relationship between the material world and the world of classical texts. At the same time, the wealth of classical texts offers classical archaeologists a resource not available to prehistoric archaeology. Yet the way in which the questions asked by classical archaeologists, and the sites which they investigate, have been determined by classical texts has often been seen as a weakness, rather than a strength. Archaeologists working in prehistory have frequently found themselves impatient with what they see as the reduction of material culture to providing illustration to texts. They have been impatient too with

classical archaeology's tendency to pay attention to certain classes of artifact (above all to "works of art") and to ignore other classes of artifact. For them, classical archaeology has too often seemed to be a treasure hunt where the clues are provided entirely by texts, in the tradition of Schliemann digging at Troy with Homer in hand.

Our two discussions of the nature of the subject are drawn from scholars who come from the opposite ends of classical archaeology. One is a specialist in Greek and the other a specialist in Roman archaeology. Yet more importantly in this context, one is a scholar whose primary training was in Classics, whose first publication was an artifact study (of arms and armor), and whose university positions were always associated with departments of Classics. The other is a scholar whose training was in archaeology and who until recently had held positions entirely in archaeology departments. The very different perspectives offered from these different backgrounds offer a comprehensive foundation for understanding the classical archaeology to which they and the rest of this volume serve as a guide.



I (a)

What is Classical Archaeology?

Greek Archaeology

Anthony Snodgrass

A book like this, and especially a chapter like this, must have it as its prime aim to describe and not to prescribe, however strong the temptation to become prescriptive may be. This is all the harder when disagreement prevails, as we shall see that it does today, over any final definition of classical archaeology. The task of this first contribution is to address the question from the point of view of Greek archaeology: it will incorporate certain approaches that are not explicitly confined to ancient Greece, but which would be quite differently formulated in a Roman context.

The first task might be to set out, in simplified outline, some different and rival positions taken today on this issue of definition. The positions are not as mutually incompatible as this simplified form may suggest; they have already co-existed for some years, and direct confrontations between them do not happen that often—thanks partly to the fact that in many cases they prove to divide along the boundaries of nationality and language. Yet we can take the analysis one step further by trying to identify the (often implicit) issues which divide the groups from each other. In first putting together a list of specimen answers to the question “What is classical archaeology?” and concentrating on those approaches that are essentially characteristic of the Greek branch of the subject, I hope we can give a fair spectrum of the views commanding the most support among the practitioners of Greek archaeology, without excluding the beliefs, accurate or distorted, of the educated general public. The list should be not merely an abstract, but also an operational or behavioral one, in the sense of conforming to what classical archaeologists actually *do*. With this preamble, we can attempt our listing:

1. Classical archaeology is by definition a branch of archaeology. It is the term used to denote that branch of the subject which concerns itself with ancient

- Greece and Rome; it can employ not only the entire range of methods used in archaeology at large, but also some additional ones of its own.
2. Classical archaeology is a branch of Classical studies; its objective is to use material evidence to throw light on the other, non-material cultural achievements of the ancient Greeks and Romans, preserved for us mainly through the medium of written texts. For this reason, it can hardly participate in the aims, the theories or the debates of archaeology as a whole, which cannot possibly share the same objective.
 3. Classical archaeology is essentially a branch of art history, directed at discovering and establishing, in the arts of antiquity, a visual counterpart for the intellectual achievements of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Because its subject matter is more fragmentary than that of many later periods of art history, it must use certain peculiar techniques of discovery and reconstruction; but its aims are not essentially different.
 4. Classical archaeology is none of the above. It is an autonomous discipline operating according to its own principles, and pursuing aims which are palpably different from those of non-classical archaeology, non-archaeological Classics, post-Classical art history, or indeed any other discipline. Its over-riding concern is the purely internal one of imposing order on the vast body of material with which it must deal. One has only to look at its output to see the truth of this.

The first three of these are more “idealist” positions than the fourth, though their supporters usually turn out to practice what they preach. No. 1, in particular, purports at the outset to be little more than a tautology; but it may prove to conceal at least as strong a prescriptive element as Nos. 2 and 3. The latter more openly embody an agenda, each presenting the Greeks and Romans as readily separable from all other prehistoric or ancient peoples, with cultural and especially artistic achievements that require special treatment (less obviously, they are also responses much more likely to come from a Greek than from a Roman specialist). No. 4 differs in being a confessedly operational definition, derived from observation of actual practice and telling us nothing about the nature of the subject: as such, it can hardly be adopted as a program, but its supporters might argue that it is nevertheless tacitly accepted by the great majority of Greek archaeologists, even when they protest their allegiance to one of the other three. As already hinted, any suggestion of irreconcilable differences of outlook within Greek archaeology would be an exaggeration. In the end, these are indications of priorities rather than absolute positions: few if any classical archaeologists would embrace any one of them to the total exclusion of the others. But the modern history of the subject is the history of the reciprocal ebb and flow between these four fundamental viewpoints, or combinations of them.

There are certain key issues which tend to determine the individual's choice of position and, explicitly or more often implicitly, to divide this position from the others. The most important of these relates to the surviving ancient texts, or “sources” as they are often called in historical circles—slightly misleadingly, since the majority of them date from centuries later than the events, or works, which they

describe. The ancient texts explicitly lie at the heart of the argument of position No. 2 above: it is they which have preserved most of the “other . . . cultural achievements” of the Greeks and Romans, and according to this view, the function of classical archaeology is to supplement them with the evidence derived from material remains, on which the texts have much less to say. Even so, there is often some information to be found in the texts which has at least an indirect bearing on the material record: a statue may perhaps be connected with a known work, attributed by some ancient author to a known artist; a deposit at an identifiable site may perhaps be connected with a documented event in the history of that site. It will clearly be a source of satisfaction if the material evidence is found to be compatible with the textual account, and much ingenuity is spent, by the upholders of this view, in trying to reconcile them.

Less obviously, textual evidence is almost as important a factor for the supporters of position No. 3, who concentrate on the products of Classical (and especially Greek) artists. Although unaided archaeological discovery, at first haphazard and later systematic, would in due course have brought to light the magnitude of the Greek achievement in the visual arts, the historical fact is that, long before most such discoveries were actually made, they were confidently anticipated on the basis of the ancient texts. The pioneering work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann in the mid-18th century (see below, p. 17) was directly inspired by his knowledge of the ancient (especially the Latin) sources for Greek art, and characterized by his deference to them; his model for the phases of development of Greek art was directly based on a pattern much earlier adopted for Greek poetry. Many of Winckelmann's most illustrious successors have retained similar attitudes, and almost all later narratives of Greek art have accepted (though with a very different terminology) the skeleton of his outline for its development.

As a consequence, this general position can reasonably be claimed as the “founding definition” for Greek (but only for Greek) archaeology. Already while Winckelmann was studying the collections of ancient art works in Rome, excavations at the Italian provincial sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii were actively under way; but Winckelmann took a disparaging view of these and their potential value. Greek art history had been pointed on a course which it was long to follow: one which distanced it from field archaeology and assimilated it to philological scholarship. More importantly, this approach was to prove so fruitful and so satisfying that, for many of its exponents, Greek archaeology *became* Greek art history, and nothing more.

This discussion of texts may be briefly extended in a different direction. Ancient writings survive not only in the manuscripts of authors, but in the lettering which may occur on the material objects revealed by archaeology, often in association with works of art: on the pedestals of statues, beside painted figure- or relief-scenes in ceramics, very commonly on coins and occasionally on buildings, but above all on stones which have been inscribed in their own right, as records of events or transactions. The study of such writings belongs mainly to two sub-disciplines, epigraphy and numismatics, which are often distinguished from archaeology, though occasionally subsumed within it. Here, the former alternative will be followed: partly on

pragmatic grounds (many distinguished archaeologists do not possess these skills, while most of their own exponents do not also practice archaeology), partly on theoretical: the raw material for these disciplines may often be brought to light by archaeological discovery, but their training and methods, their interests and goals, from that point on proceed according to quite separate principles.

If attitudes to the ancient Greek texts do not create a clear division between positions Nos. 2 and 3 above, then nor does the valuation of Greek art. Its primacy may be made explicit in position No. 3, but study of actual practice suggests that its pre-eminence may equally be taken for granted by No. 2. Throughout the universities of the western world, Classical courses have existed for a century and more in which the study of Greek literature, history, and thought is combined with that of art, but not of any other aspect of Greek archaeology. Book-length studies of Greek art abound, ranging from simple text-books to high-level works of synthesis (Robertson 1975 still stands out among these for its combination of broader insight and close detail); whereas comparable treatments of Greek archaeology as a whole have been few and recent (Etienne and Etienne 1992[1990] is invaluable as an historical summary; Snodgrass 1987 and Whitley 2001 analyze current positions). All this suggests a strong belief in the educational value of Greek art, to supplement if not to match that of literature—just as a brief study of Renaissance art has featured in many a course devoted to early modern European history. What distinguishes position No. 2 is that it does not explicitly privilege art history: for the purposes of research at least, if not of teaching, it keeps its door open to the whole range of material culture. The guiding principle here is one dictated by the accompanying study of history: material discoveries, of a non-artistic kind, have repeatedly been used to throw light on historical events, or to reflect the processes of documented history. Thus, no account of the Persian Wars would be complete without mention of the archaeological discoveries made at Marathon or in the destruction deposit on the Athenian Acropolis; the monuments of the Periclean building program could hardly be omitted from a narrative of the growing centralization of the Athenian Confederacy, or the tombs at Vergina from the study of the rise of Macedon. The status of positions Nos. 2 and 3 can be summed up as embracing, between them, the more traditional approaches to Greek archaeology.

The “operational” definition of classical archaeology in position No. 4, by its rejection of all such high-sounding programmatic pronouncements, keeps both these approaches at arm’s length. The risk is that, in doing so, it lapses into cynicism: from focusing on the activities of the army of solitary scholars producing a corpus of brick-stamps or terracotta revetments, bronze safety pins or iron weapons, or assembling and publishing the undecorated pottery, the lamps or lead weights from a given excavation, it reaches the ostensibly reasonable conclusion that classical archaeologists are making no measurable contribution either to Classical studies or to the history of art. Nor do their activities any longer have a true counterpart in world archaeology as practiced today, as position No.1 might seem to imply. They are simply “doing their own thing.” This argument ignores the pedagogical and instrumental function of these apparently mundane activities, as a training for higher things. Many of those undertaking such research would rather

be dealing with broader issues, and have every intention of moving on to such activity; those who are in university posts must already do so in their teaching.

But this position has the merit of having incidentally uncovered a more profound truth about classical archaeology: that it is a discipline devoted to the archaeology of objects, one which is traditionally governed and organized, not by competing objectives or theories, approaches or models, but by classes of material. Individual practitioners have for long made their reputations as experts on a given class of artifact, sometimes more than one. Any large library of classical archaeology proclaims this, if not by its subject-headings, then by the titles of the books within them: monographs devoted to categories and sub-categories of arms, bronzes, gems, stone reliefs, terracottas, vases, and many other types of artifact; or multi-volume excavation reports which are divided up according to a similar scheme. It is difficult to find another discipline, in the 21st or even the later 20th century, which remains similarly dominated by taxonomy and typology. This is the basis for the criticism that classical archaeology has become a self-contained, even hermetically sealed, branch of scholarship whose activities and findings are of only intermittent interest even to its most closely related sister subjects, and of none at all to the wider intellectual community.

Such attitudes, however, traduce traditional classical archaeology and present a caricatured version of it. Certainly there are also more positive things to be said about it. We may briefly look back to the time when the subject first came into existence. Though it would be misleading to try to identify this with a precise historical moment, the nearest approach to such a landmark, for Greek archaeology, is certainly to be found somewhere in the mid-18th century, when Johann Joachim Winckelmann was compiling his ground-breaking works on Greek art (between 1755 and 1767: abridged translations in Irwin 1972), and when James Stuart and Nicholas Revett were measuring and drawing the most important surviving buildings of Athens (Stuart and Revett 1762, 1787, 1794, and 1816). Such a dating reinforces the status of the study of Greek art as the “founding definition” of the subject, as embodied in position No. 3 above. What is often forgotten, however, is that Winckelmann’s pioneering work was essentially laying the foundations, not just for the study of Greek art, but for the whole discipline of art history, of all periods. So central was the position that classical archaeology once occupied.

The contribution of the excavation and study of the surviving material remains on the ground was only to come much later. An awkward fact, but one to be assimilated into any history of field archaeology as applied to Classical Greece, is that its great period of flowering, from about 1875, came about largely in response to the challenge from Aegean prehistory, and specifically to the discoveries of Heinrich Schliemann at Troy, Mycenae, and elsewhere (Aegean prehistory is itself excluded from this account because of the quite distinct, and increasingly divergent, course which it has followed). Yet the wide popular interest aroused by the revelation of the Bronze Age civilizations of Greece had convinced the Classicists that they must offer something similar of their own. The result was a whole series of large-scale, long-running excavation projects, some of them continuing with little interruption for well over a century, concentrated on major sanctuary sites. Like much else in



Figure 1.1 The heyday of the “great sanctuary excavation”: Archaic sculptures unearthed at the Sanctuary of Artemis, Corfu, 1911. Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge.

Greek archaeology, they have no real parallel anywhere else in the world (Whitley 2001:32–36 gives a good summary of them).

Their relevance here is that, for a period of about two generations’ length, the discipline which they represented was generally seen as occupying the heartland of archaeology as a whole. Until the rapid rise of prehistoric world archaeology in the 20th century, public perception of the nature of archaeology was dominated by the Mediterranean lands in general and Greece in particular. When, for example, the Archaeological Institute of America was set up in 1879, its founders took it for granted that Greece would be its main focus of interest; many archaeologists with other interests, especially those centered in the New World, withdrew from the Institute. The establishment of an American School of Classical Studies in Athens followed soon after (1881) and the first large-scale American excavation in Greece, at the Argive Heraion, in 1892 (Dyson 1998:37–60, 82–85). Several European countries were meanwhile following a parallel path. This era saw the peak of prominence for classical archaeology (Figure 1.1); since then, a decline in scale and in profile has been, for most countries in the world, an inescapable fact. To maintain the goals and methods which had once brought such success, though perhaps a natural human reaction to such an experience, is hardly the answer.

But it is time for something more constructive and less pessimistic. Some may believe, like the present writer, that a way forward can be found through a more explicit association with non-classical archaeology, as intimated in position No. 1 above; but they have to admit that they may still be in a minority. Yet to identify

the distinctive fields of activity in classical archaeology, and its unique strengths, it is not necessary to embrace this or any other prescriptive position: achievements of enduring value can be found in the past more easily than in the present, and in many different areas of the discipline.

Connoisseurship

This field is, by common verdict, the first place to look for such achievements. This is “connoisseurship” in its stricter sense: the close study of works of art with a view to attributing them to an individual artist or workshop. This was a product of the subject’s coming of age, long after the time of Winckelmann; its first main application was to Greek sculpture, and to the lost masterpieces of its greatest artists. Adolf Furtwängler (1853–1907) (Figure 1.2) argued in effect that, if one brought together all the references in ancient literature which described a given work of Classical sculpture—a task already accomplished before his time—and assembled all the copies of Roman date which appeared to derive from one and the same Greek original—his own achievement—then it was reasonable to expect the two classes of evidence, on occasion, to meet up: the lost masterpiece of the texts (the more mentions, the greater its presumed fame) and the lost original of the copies (the more copies, the wider its presumed impact) might sometimes, if there were no contradictory feature, turn out to be one and the same. Nothing could bring the original back into existence, but much that was new could be learned about it and, more important, about its creator (Furtwängler 1895[1893]). His declaration of faith, in the Preface to his best-known book, makes striking reading:

It may be further objected that it is not yet time, while we are still so behindhand in the knowledge of the general development of the separate forms, to inquire into the individualities of the several artists. The study of these forms, however . . . is inseparable from—nay, even identical with—the inquiry into the individualities to whom precisely this or that particular development of form is due. (Furtwängler 1895:ix)

Armed with such respect for the Great Artist as initiator of every important “form,” Furtwängler (who held that even copies of works by Raphael or Michelangelo would be more valuable than any number of originals by lesser contemporaries) would set Classical art history on a new path: the pursuit, not just of art or even of great art, but of the Great Artist. He could (and still can) be credited with a huge, if still provisional, extension in our knowledge of the favored styles of Myron, Pheidias, Alkamenes, Polykleitos or Praxiteles: it is easy enough to criticize him for pushing his evidence too far, often writing of the lost original as if he had it actually in front of him; harder to demonstrate an instance where he was wrong. This is in part because even today, more than a century later, our knowledge of the great age of Greek sculpture, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., remains a shifting, uncertain quantity: further discoveries have brought to light a steady trickle of major originals, but an invariable accompaniment to such finds has been the disarray of the experts,

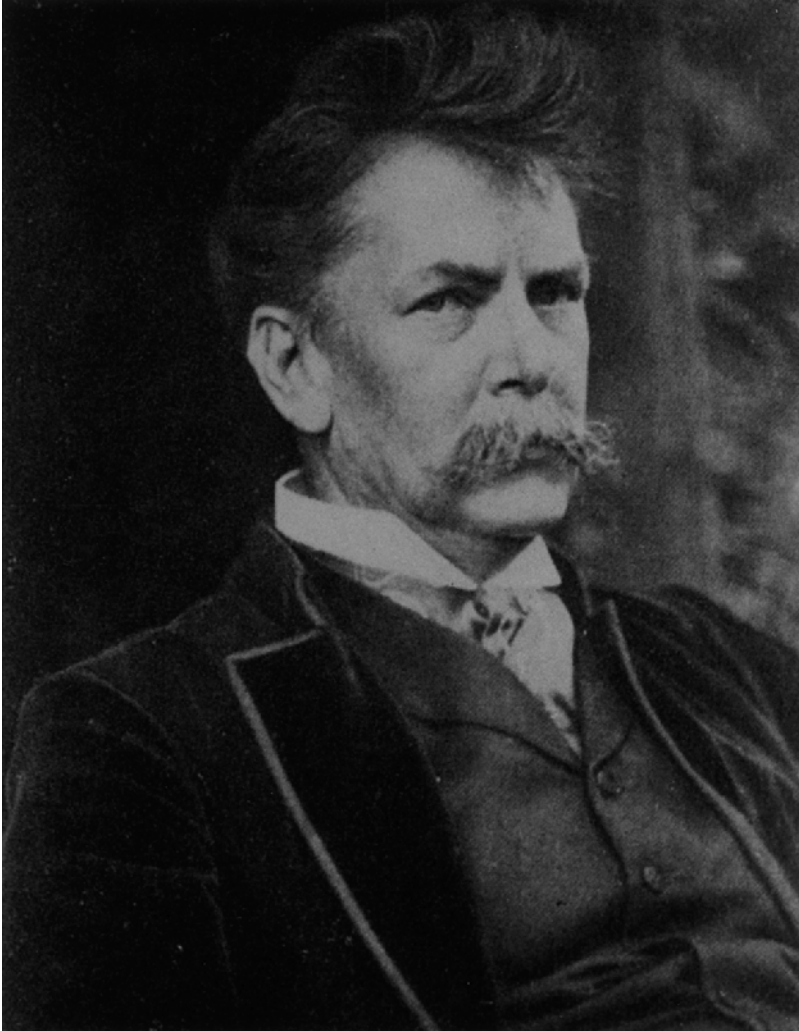


Figure 1.2 Adolf Furtwängler, 1853–1907. Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge.

as they seek to assimilate them into existing knowledge by attributing them to one or another great name.

A very different application of connoisseurship followed soon afterwards; and, as with Furtwängler, it is inseparably associated with the name of a single scholar, J. D. Beazley (1885–1970) (Figure 1.3). Beazley devoted almost his whole working life to the study of Athenian painted pottery. Here was a class of material which offered two great advantages over Greek sculpture: it consisted, to all appearances, entirely of original work, and it vastly exceeded surviving sculpture in sheer quantity. The disadvantages were less absolute: there was virtually no ancient literary evi-

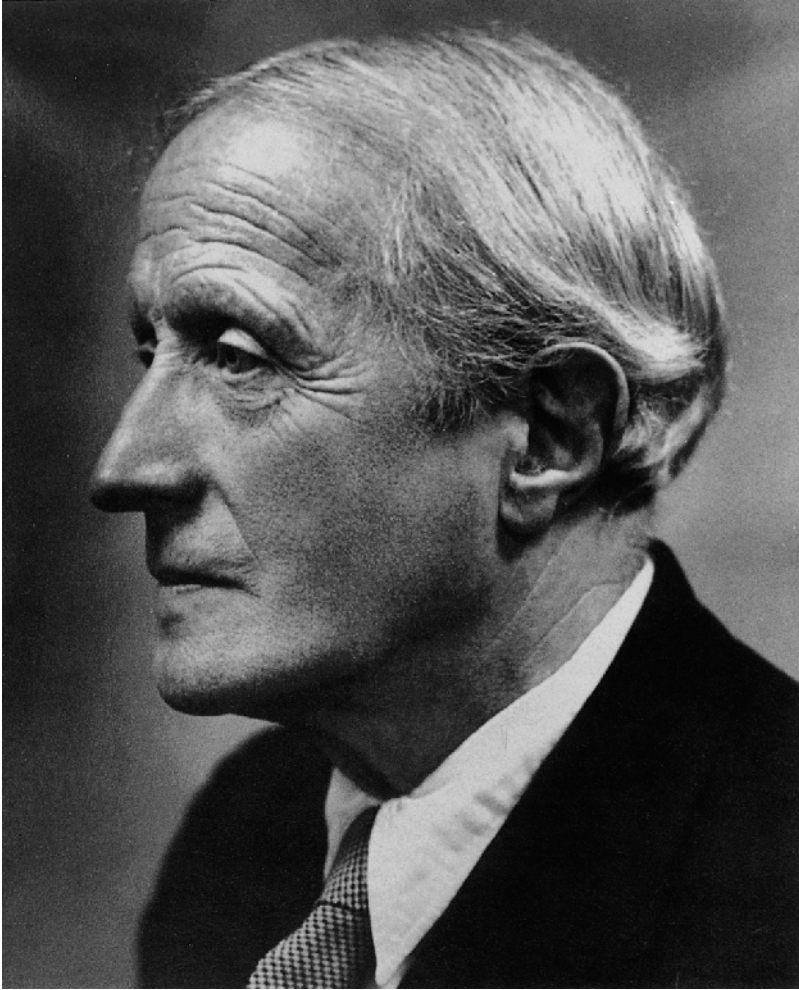


Figure 1.3 Sir John Beazley, 1885–1970. Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge.

dence to deploy in this case and, more problematically, the artistic status of even the finest painted pottery was perhaps open to question. Yet, long before Beazley, scholars had noted that decorated Athenian vases, at their best, embodied drawing and composition of a standard that had never been matched in this medium; and had speculated that these works could reflect, at a distance, the vanished contemporary masterpieces of another attested field of Greek art, contemporary wall- and easel-painting. A few had gone further and, making use of the occasional survival of painters' signatures, had put together groups of works which seemed to come from the hand of a named individual.

Beazley carried this last activity to a much higher level. Working his way through a good proportion of the tens of thousands of Athenian black- and red-figure vases

in the world's collections, he was able to assemble them into groupings, which could in each case be associated with the hand, the group, the circle, the manner, or the following of an individual painter (Beazley 1956 and 1963, his canonical works, present catalogues of such attributions). Unlike his predecessors, Beazley did not turn first to the signed pieces: he was looking for subtler criteria. When a body of paintings showed a similar level of anatomical knowledge and technical skills, with other linkages to suggest that they must be of broadly the same date, then how could they be apportioned among individual hands? His answer lay, not in those overall effects for which the painters were consciously striving, but in the trivial differences of rendering which they unconsciously, yet regularly, observed: in their drawing, for example, of the ear or the nose, the knee-cap or the ankle. The analogy with handwriting has been well suggested—with Beazley as a master graphologist. There is plenty of supporting evidence from other media to strengthen the belief that such differences of detail can and do reveal different hands: the most relevant is perhaps that from Renaissance painting where, in the previous generation, Giovanni Morelli had applied a closely similar method, and to a wide measure of acceptance. But Beazley's attributions won a measure of unanimity that was unmatched. During and after his time, too, Beazley's methods have been applied, with varying but generally reasonable success, to other classes of Greek pottery from outside Athens or of earlier date.

Debate in recent years has nevertheless arisen, not in the main about the validity of Beazley's work, but about its value (for a fierce defense of both, see Boardman 2001:128–138). The expected difficulty of securing unanimity, after Beazley's death, over the attribution of new works did not really materialize: the vast range covered by his own attributions could simply absorb them. Instead, some younger classical archaeologists have treated Beazleyan attribution as a closed book, and have tried to put this same body of material to different, and to them more interesting, uses. Sometimes, as in its application to chronology (see below), there has been a hidden dependence on Beazley's system. But other new fields of study have grown up which appear to owe less and less to him: the epigraphy and the significance of the various kinds of painted or scratched inscription on Athenian vases; the whole question of the economic importance (or lack of it) of their production and distribution; above all, the choices of subject in the paintings, their iconography, their meaning and the light that they throw on the cultural patterns, whether universal and enduring or time- and place-specific, of Greek society. This last, the most fruitful of these approaches, sometimes referred to as *iconologie*, has been especially associated with French-speaking countries: one work in particular, *La Cité des images* (Bérard et al. 1989[1984]—a book which uses Beazley only for purposes of reference) has become an indispensable aid to modern study.

A much more direct and radical confrontation with Beazley came with the arguments brought together in Vickers and Gill 1994. Here was an attempt to undermine the very corner-stone of Beazley's work, his belief in the vase-painter as artist and in his work, at its best, as "High Art"—a belief to which he had largely converted the professional world, and which the art market had long taken for granted. Vickers and Gill argue that high esteem for Greek pottery is a purely

modern construct, not shared by contemporaries, who reserved their admiration for the vessels in gold and silver, of which black- and red-figure pots are cheap copies; that even the most exquisite of the drawings, on which Beazley had expended such effort and insight, were themselves no more than copies of original designs on lost work in precious metals. This venture has received a chilly reception: it threatens not only Beazley's achievement, but the whole underpinning of the subject, at least as practiced in the 20th century. The search for the individual behind the work of art had become the crowning endeavor of the discipline: what if the largest known group of "creative artists" of ancient Greece proved to be nothing of the kind? Of what use was the scrupulous and scientific attention to detail in vase-painting studies, if central elements of that detail turned out to have been irrelevant? If and when the threat recedes altogether (many would hold that it already has), it will still leave the memory of a moment of fleeting awareness that perhaps even the work of Beazley, and much more obviously that of other attribution studies in Greek art, has not advanced beyond the status of the highly convincing hypothesis.

Greek Architecture

To nominate this as the next field of achievement will doubtless cause surprise in some quarters: notably in Britain, where as a branch of study and teaching, it is today in rapid retreat, in Classical courses as in schools of architecture. But, to illustrate a point made at the outset about national differences, the same by no means applies to France, Germany, Greece, or the United States: in these and several other countries, the subject is still pursued assiduously. One reason for this is pragmatic: without continued expertise in the identification and interpretation of Greek architecture, it would be quite impossible for these countries to maintain their long-standing field projects at such sites as Olympia, Delphi, the Acropolis, or the Agora of Athens. These are sites which constantly bring their explorers face to face with major remains of Greek (and Roman) architecture: they are places where "marble rules" (note the anecdote in Whitley 2001:57 and the title of Dyson 1998).

If, in this kingdom of marble, Greek sculpture had always claimed precedence, it is architecture that holds the advantage in other ways. Its symmetry and precision make it obviously more susceptible of accurate measurement, and therefore of restoration on paper or in the round. Unlike sculpture (and like painted pottery), it is largely free of the pitfalls posed by ancient copying: Greek buildings have seldom been mistaken for anything else. The ancient sources offer relatively little, nearly all of it in small, isolated pieces of testimony: the one continuous text that survives, the *Ten Books* of Vitruvius, belongs to a time and place too far removed from the heyday of Greek architecture to be a genuine "source." Indeed, the modern study of the subject can be more or less dated from the time when it broke free of dependence on Vitruvius. What grew up instead was a uniquely mathematical, even "scientific," branch of classical archaeology, and this probably has something to do with its current lack of academic popularity.



Figure 1.4 The heyday of Greek temple building (so-called “Temple of Concord”) at Akragas in Sicily (c. 425 B.C.). Photo by Robin Osborne.

But there is another unusual dimension to the study of Greek architecture: its influence on later practice, which has excelled that of Greek sculpture in cross-cultural diffusion and in sheer duration, if not in the power to arouse the passions. The Classical, it has been well said, is the only universal style in architecture, and Greek temple building stood at its heart (Figure 1.4). Its influence extends, with interruptions, through time, via Roman architecture, the Italian Renaissance, Palladio and Inigo Jones, into Neo-Classicism and the specific “Greek revival” of the 1780s, and across huge geographical distances. Even in the practice of today, its reign cannot be said to be over in the same sense, or to the same degree, as can that of Classical Greek sculpture.

The drawings of Stuart and Revett (above, p. 17) began a tradition of learned investigation which can match that of any branch of the subject. For, despite many appearances of repetition and homogeneity, Greek temple architecture, in particular, embodies frequent, subtle variations (Coulton 1977 is the most accessible account). These are carried to an extreme level in the Parthenon (447–432 B.C.) which, despite repeated protestations of its untypical quality, continues to exemplify Greek architecture for most people. As has been known for some time, the deliberate deviations from the horizontal and the vertical in the Parthenon mean that, for example, every one of the 46 external columns differs from every other one; but during the current program of restoration, it was also found (summer 2002) that

each of the hundreds of rectangular blocks that made up its inner walls is also unique, and has only one placement in a correct reconstruction. The expertise required for analyzing such complexities today is considerable; but it is dwarfed by respect for the mathematical and engineering skills of its original builders. The author of the most learned and detailed handbook of the 20th century, William Bell Dinsmoor (Dinsmoor 1950, with earlier editions) also presided over the construction in the 1920s of the millimeter-accurate reproduction of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee.

Topography and Regional Survey

For our third example, we turn to an aspect which has a long and honorable tradition, but which has also taken a new lease of life in the past three decades. At its origin there lay the notion of *mapping* the Greek landscape of antiquity: of drawing on to the largely blank outline of a modern physical map the cities and villages, rivers and mountains, frontiers and routes of the Classical world. If the ancient sources, yet again, provided the starting point for this endeavor, they proved to be defective in more ways than usual: geographical texts are few and impressionistic, with sparing use of distances and bearings and virtually no description of the landscape; maps are largely displaced by itineraries; historical sources, preoccupied with the urban and religious scene, tend to ignore not only rural settlements, but even such features as physical relief. The results can be seen in the small-scale, sparsely lettered “modern” atlases and maps of Classical Greece, some of which were reproduced without change for nearly a century, until their welcome replacement by the Barrington Atlas (Talbert 2000); only for a few select regions (Curtius and Kaupert 1881–1900, for Attica and other contemporary work, also mainly German, elsewhere) was a fuller coverage achieved.

The pioneering age of this activity had begun very soon after 1800: for all the distinction of early French work in the Peloponnese (the *Expédition Scientifique de Morée*), it became and for a time remained a specialty of British travelers, with their propensity for rural rides and small-boat sailing (see Whitley 2001:44–47, for a convenient summary). They took as their prime task the location of the documented sites of Greek history, but even this limited aim encountered many obstacles: genuine survival of ancient toponyms was relatively uncommon, relief features—ignored by the ancient texts—intruded, and the actual 19th-century landscape differed in every way from their often false and idealized visions of its ancient counterpart. Many of the more important problem cases of identification were still solved, though a few have survived to divide scholarly opinion right up to the present day.

On the foundation of these tireless labors, the late 20th century was to build a new kind of archaeological concept: regional surface survey. Although not perhaps explicitly conceived as an alternative to excavation, that is what it rapidly became. Economic factors, with the growth in the cost of funding an excavation team and its accessories, played a part here; but there was also a methodological dimension,

almost an ideological one. If excavation, at its best, could only recover the detailed sequence of deposits in a limited sample of a single site, then might not more be learned from discovering a lot less about a much larger area? Excavators of towns and cities had long since recognized that any conclusions that they drew, as to the population, the prosperity, the occupations, the rise and decline, the external contacts, or any military involvement, and consequent damage of their site, were no more than inferences, based on an assumption that the excavated sample had been representative; and that it was, at the very least, a useful check on these findings to examine the whole surface of the unexcavated parts of the site to see if any discordant evidence were visible there.

Now this kind of ancillary activity was to become an end in itself, but with a marked change of direction. Attention was diverted from urban sites to the open country. This meant relinquishing the aid of the ancient sources, which had little or nothing to contribute on the rural sector. The existing political map of the ancient world was to be supplemented by an economic one. The previous focus on known and identified sites was replaced, first, by investigating any location with the characteristics known to have been favored in certain periods—naturally fortified hilltops, for instance; later, by a completely open-ended search of an entire sector of the landscape, without any preconception of what might be found. By the 1980s, this last practice, known as intensive survey, was prevailing all over the Greek world and beyond: region after region was traversed by teams of fieldwalkers, spaced evenly across the fields. From the start, there were surprises: none greater than the general density of the finds which could be picked up on any piece of cultivated terrain. But this material was unevenly spread, in space and in time: the small but dense concentrations, which sometimes occurred at intervals of only a few hundred meters, were widely interpreted as marking the locations of farms or other agricultural structures. It was a further surprise to find that these reached their peak of frequency in certain relatively short historical periods; and that, in many regions, the Classical and earlier Hellenistic era (the fifth to third centuries B.C.) had witnessed the high point of this exploitation of the cultivated landscape in the whole of its 5,000-year-long history from Neolithic times to the present day. For the first time, the ancient city had been given a local context: its imagined history, as an island of habitation in the otherwise empty territory on which it depended for its maintenance, had to be re-written. Classical archaeology had also been able to draw on one of its most priceless assets: the huge quantity and density of finds, and the availability of vastly larger samples than in most areas of world archaeology.

Chronology

No account of Greek archaeology would be complete without brief discussion of this, the intermittent concern of every archaeologist, working on anything from the early hominids to the recovery of a recent murder victim. Classical archaeology can achieve a precision in its dating which, at least if taken in proportion to the distance

in time, is probably as high as anywhere in the world. This is not merely because, for much of the period between 500 and 100 B.C., a documented history exists with fairly close calendar datings of events: it also results from the nature of the material evidence. With painted pottery and buildings, in particular (to say nothing of coins), a whole series of contexts have been found which link the surviving materials with the calendar dates. In rare cases, this can be both direct and datable to the year: for example, the inscribed building accounts of the Parthenon and a few other temples survive, enabling us to date their completion exactly, thanks to our knowledge of the sequence and dating of the annually-elected magistrates at Athens; while a series of late Athenian black-figure pots (Panathenaic amphoras of between 379 and 312 B.C.) actually carry the name of the magistrate for that year.

Most other fixed points for Greek archaeology are more indirect and inferential. It is, for instance, an exceedingly probable conjecture that the Athenian burials in the mound at the battlefield of Marathon, with their associated pottery, date from immediately after the battle in September, 490 B.C.; it is a much less trustworthy assumption that every one of the works of art found damaged and buried in pits on the Athenian Acropolis was a victim of the Persian destruction of the city in 480 B.C. From this level downwards, there is a gradation from near-certainty to probability to reasonable likelihood, and from datings to the year to approximations of about a generation. The historical sources may give only a rough guide; the identification of an historical event or individual may be uncertain; and allowance has often to be made for human propensities, such as the retention of old objects for several generations (to take an uncomfortable instance, both the Marathon mound and the Acropolis deposit contained works by a vase-painter, Sophilos, who is reckoned to have been at work getting on for a century earlier).

The framework of chronology for Greek antiquity, gradually built up by scholars during the 20th century, was tested towards its end by two new and radical proposals for revision. One of these (James et al. 1991) affected only the later prehistoric and protohistoric periods of Greece, leaving later eras undisturbed: its result, by way of an adjustment of the Egyptian chronology, would have been to bring down the date of the fall of the Mycenaean palaces from about 1200 to about 950 B.C. Even so, if only about five hundred years, rather than eight hundred, intervened between the Greece of Agamemnon and that of Pericles, this would not be without its effects on broader Classical studies. The other project (Francis and Vickers 1983, with a series of later articles) took over in time more or less where the first left off, addressing historical times down to and including the earlier fifth century B.C.; again, the proposal was for the lowering of dates, in this case by the less drastic margin of some two generations. While neither attempt has convinced more than a handful of scholars, both have had the salutary effect of focusing attention on the framework of superimposed conjectures which makes up much of the traditional chronology, and of inculcating a more flexible attitude to it.

Such flexibility will undoubtedly be needed when, in the not too distant future, it becomes possible to apply the more accurate scientific dating methods to the historical period of Greek and other Mediterranean civilizations. Obstacles to this have persisted: the radiocarbon determinations for the first millennium B.C. are,

for technical reasons, too imprecise to offer any improvement on traditional means. Tree-ring (dendrochronological) dates are potentially of an unmatched precision, but Greece offers few appropriate settings for long-lived species and, so far, the long sequences of tree-rings and closely datable episodes have only been established for locations and periods at some distance from the Classical world. Meanwhile, both these methods have proved applicable to the Aegean Bronze Age where their results, when confronted with the much looser conventional chronology adopted for that era, have created some disarray. It is surely only a matter of time before a datable tree-ring sequence emerges for historical Greece, or for some region in close enough touch with it to produce a match of archaeological sequences, and it would be folly to expect that, when this happens, the traditional datings will be confirmed at every point.

Before we leave this topic, there is an important link to be established with our earlier discussion. In the material record of ancient Greece, it is above all to the pottery sequence that we turn for dating purposes. Pottery can be depended upon for two vital assets, full seriation and quantitative profusion. In relative terms, the Athenian and a few other series can be followed without a break for more than half a millennium, with enough historical fixed points to make up a credible absolute chronology as well. And it is pottery which, more than any other kind of artifact, can be relied on to occur in whatever context is being investigated, not excluding the surface finds of the fieldwalker. Yet when we ask on what foundations the dating and continuity of the series rest, the answer is often a surprising one: for in many cases, it is not from observation of stratified sequences in excavations, still less from association with dated historical events, but from the practice of connoisseurship. By building up a sequence of painters' careers, one is also (thanks to the limited duration of any individual's working life) building up a series of chronological phases. A long-lived painter may be represented in more than one such phase, but this will merely increase the chance of synchronisms with the work of others; by the end, the network will retain its collective validity even if attributions are questioned. Yet even beyond the realm of painted pottery, in areas where attribution can hardly operate, we can find some at least of the same potential: the plain black wares, produced in the later historical period by many Greek cities, have also proved susceptible of detailed seriation (Rotroff 1997 is a good example of what can be done with it).

Conclusion

Our selective survey of four topics has, it is hoped, fairly represented both the traditional and the more recent activities within the archaeology of Greece. Several connections between them, some unexpected, have emerged. Connoisseurship, for instance, widely seen as an "extreme" development within the subject, taking it further and further away from the practices of other archaeologies, has turned out to be vital even in strictly archaeological fields: not only for chronological studies, but also for modern surface survey, which depends heavily on such museum-based

research for the understanding of the damaged and fragmentary materials with which it must operate. It could be added that, even in architectural studies, there are many buildings which, though provisionally dated by means of historical texts, have acquired a more detailed and sometimes conflicting chronology through the excavation of pottery and other artifacts which underlie their foundations.

Returning for a moment to the four representative positions with which we began, we find that each of them makes a continuing contribution to the progress of the subject: classical archaeology needs them all, provided that none is allowed to usurp the whole discipline. If position No. 1, with its insistence that classical archaeology is a kind of archaeology, has now become the ruling principle in some quarters, it will never reach the point of eliminating the study of the ancient texts and works of art, championed respectively by positions Nos. 2 and 3. The more cynical attitude displayed in position No. 4 has proved to embody only a part of the truth: the archaeology of Greece *is* a discipline which can speak to others, and can be expected to do so more and more widely in the future.

NOTE

The references for this chapter are on pp. 48–50.



I (b)

What Is Classical Archaeology?

Roman Archaeology

Martin Millett

Definitions and Perceptions

To understand classical archaeology we need to appreciate something of its history and also to have some knowledge of its changing status. As a long-established discipline, the origins of which can be traced back to at least the 18th century, it sometimes seems to be unchanging and conservative in nature. I hope to demonstrate that both these impressions are false. Before considering this, we need to define the scope of the subject. Broadly, there are two current approaches that can perhaps be characterized by distinguishing “Classical Archaeology” from “the archaeology of the classical world” (with a deliberate difference in the capitalization used).

“Classical Archaeology” tends to be used by those who think that the material evidence from the Greek and Roman worlds (including architecture, works of art, coinage, etc.) has particular and individual characteristics which set their study entirely apart from any other discipline. The skills required are refined and they provide classical archaeology with a unique toolbox which enables the Greek and Roman worlds to be studied through material culture—but only if deployed by those immersed in the full range of evidence about Greece and Rome. This sets classical archaeology apart from the archaeology of other periods and places. From this perspective, the subject is seen not as a sub-discipline within archaeology but rather as a distinctive and specialist branch of Classics, employing methodologies largely founded in long-established traditions of detailed empirical study based on generations of past work.

In contrast, “the archaeology of the classical world” can be seen as a broadly based discipline, rooted in the social sciences, that shares with the archaeology of

other periods methodologies developed to enable us to “read” the material culture of past societies. These methodologies are generic and, although each individual society studied through archaeology has distinctive characteristics and used objects in different ways, the approach to each is similar and the archaeology of the Classical world is thus the adaptation of archaeological methods to another particular place and time. Hence, the study of Greek painted pots or figured Roman mosaics benefits from the application of approaches developed for the analysis of objects from other periods and places. So too methods developed in classical archaeology can be deployed in the study of other human societies.

I would suggest that in contemporary classical archaeology we should be moving towards a new integration drawing on both these traditions, building on their strengths and aiming to create a “contextual classical archaeology.” This recognizes the separate and distinctive contribution that classical archaeology can make to our understanding of the world of Greece and Rome through its own material-based agenda. Equally, it acknowledges the contribution that the archaeology of the Classical world can make in broader debates, not simply in providing another data set for analysis, but instead in helping to develop ideas that have broad relevance to the archaeology of other periods and places.

Historical Perspectives: Origins

To understand the development of the subject we need to place it within a broader historical and political context. The roots of classical archaeology lie much further back in time than is often acknowledged since a familiarity with, and interest in, the artifacts associated with the Classical past are deeply entrenched in the self-definition of the peoples of Europe. Appreciating the centrality of objects to the definition of cultural identity is essential if we are to understand the role of archaeology in western society. The Romans appropriated art objects from the Greek world, bringing them to Italy and copying them as part of the process whereby they appropriated Greek culture in order to legitimate their own cultural dominance (Strong 1973). They did not confine their interest to the Greeks, taking a profound interest also in the past of other areas like Etruria or Egypt, and it is significant that sculpture and works of art became central to the display of status in the private sphere as well as the public. Objects were thus of key importance, and references to the past were a central feature of cultural definition.

An example of this phenomenon is the way in which the Emperor Constantine removed objects from ancient sanctuaries like Delphi and set them up in his newly founded capital at Constantinople (Figure 1.5). Some objects from Constantinople, like the great quadriga now on the porch of St Mark’s in Venice or the porphyry statue of the Tetrarchs, were later transferred to Venice after the sack of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade in 1204 (Favaretto and Da Villa Urbani 2003:188–189, 192–193). Here they were again used to decorate the buildings of the new Mediterranean power, providing appropriate linkages back to the Classical—specifically to the imperial Roman—past.



Figure 1.5 Snake Column dedicated at Delphi, later taken to Constantinople (Istanbul). Photo by Martin Millett.

This process of using objects to create and legitimate imagined historical links long continues as a key theme. It is within this old-established tradition that we should place Napoleon's transfer of antiquities from Rome (and elsewhere) to Paris as part of his creation of the cultural identity of his empire (Gould 1965). Similarly, the modern trend for rich collectors to buy antiquities looted from Clas-

sical sites is part of a continuing obsession with owning and controlling objects from the past in order to define status in the contemporary world. The centrality of Classical material in this process is because—until very recently—the Greek and Roman past has been essential to the self-definition of civilization both in the Latin Christian west and the Orthodox Christian east. An exclusive interest in the Classical world is arguably changing now as Christianity becomes less central to the definition of western society and as the fashions in collecting have become broader and cultural looting has spread to exploit other centers of past civilization across the globe.

The physical evidence of the Classical past can thus be seen to have been widespread in European society throughout the Middle Ages. The systematization of the study of objects also has a deep history, although it is customary to see its roots in that reawakening of interest in the past referred to as the Renaissance. The whole of this concept of a “Renaissance” is questionable, not least since it is certain that the Church maintained an awareness of the Classical past in all its guises throughout the Middle Ages. This is well illustrated by the persistent reuse of classical sculpture, inscriptions, and so on in church buildings in Italy and elsewhere long before the 14th century (Greenhalgh 1989). The process of reworking Classical material nevertheless did become much more widespread, especially from the 15th and 16th centuries.

This increased fashion for ancient material brought about, first, a considerable interest in the aesthetics of ancient art—itself deeply bound up with the creation of new works of art. This was followed by two parallel trends: first, the wish to understand the material better and, second, the desire to find more of it. This process intensified during the 18th century as the connections between Italy and Northern Europe developed. On the one hand, the interests of those who traveled south to see and collect antiquities stimulated further exploration and systematization of knowledge since this helped define social and class identities at home. At the same time, such a demand arguably enhanced the status to be gained from knowledge of and ownership of classical objects. It is against this background that we see a burgeoning of the study of Classical antiquities. This is represented both by the collectors and those who worked for them, acting as clerks and agents in collecting and also in ordering and researching the objects (Schnapp 1996:258–266). The development of this knowledge and its dissemination represent the birth of classical archaeology in the modern sense. This knowledge was closely associated with the ruling classes in Europe, with royalty closely associated with the early exploration of Pompeii and with Vatican control equally important elsewhere in Italy. Significantly, in the new American Republic, there was a parallel interest, specifically in Roman styles, stimulated in part by the perceived political relevance of the Roman Republic. This is reflected in the active adoption of Classical architectural styles in public building and the use of Greek and Roman models for public iconography (Dyson 1998:7–8).

Although we should not underestimate the knowledge accumulated by earlier generations of scholars, those who characterized the second half of the 18th century made a considerable new contribution in applying the ideas that were evolving in

other branches of knowledge to further the systematic study of antiquities. In this sense, Winckelmann, whose formulation of a framework within which ancient sculpture could be understood and related to Classical texts, should perhaps be seen not only as the father of art history but also as the first theoretical archaeologist (Leppmann 1971). It is in any case notable that this tradition—of the systematic study of objects—was certainly developing in advance of the tradition of artifact classification in European prehistory (Gräslund 1987; Trigger 2006:40–67).

Of equal importance to the development of classical archaeology in this period was the growth in the scale of printing, with the production and dissemination of engravings of antiquarian topics and ancient buildings effectively internationalizing knowledge and stimulating further interest (Salmon 2000). This fed back to stimulate the exploration of monuments not only in Italy at sites like Pompeii and Herculaneum, but from the onset of the Napoleonic Wars also in the Ottoman world (especially in what is today Greece and Turkey). Previously, excavations of this period have not been viewed as very systematic and those writing histories of archaeology too often consider that proper excavation techniques developed only much later. However, it is increasingly evident that, when considered in their proper context, excavations undertaken to obtain antiquities in this period were well recorded (Bignamini 2004; Bignamini and Hornsby 2010); we have a wealth of publications that describe sites and objects, making sense of them in relation to ancient texts and especially emerging topographic knowledge. Through these processes of travel, exploration, study, and publication, classical archaeology emerged as a distinctive branch of learning connected with antiquarianism as closely as with other branches of Classical learning.

One of the perceptible changes that characterized the growth of classical archaeology during the 19th century is its increasing association with the creation of contemporary political identities. This has already been noted in the United States where the relevance of Rome to the new republic was clear. Paradoxically, another early example is offered by the Emperor Napoleon and his systematic exploration of the buildings of Rome during that city's French occupation. A deliberate association was created between ancient Rome and Napoleon's empire so the physical remains of the past were given considerable and careful attention (Ridley 1992). Later, the newly unified states of Italy and Greece also looked back to the past to create their own individual national identities in the present. In Italy, archaeological exploration and display of imperial monuments were key instruments in creating Rome as the capital of the new state. In Greece, a parallel process involved defining a particular golden age—the great age of Pericles—as a symbol of national identity at the expense of later periods of “foreign occupation,” the evidence of which came to be deliberately cleared away (Beard 2002:49–115). Although from a contemporary perspective this clearly distorts the evidence, creating nothing more than a modern myth, it remains politically powerful, as witnessed in the manipulation of the Classical past for the opening ceremony of the Athens Olympics in 2004. Nationalism has undoubtedly provided an important impetus to the systematic exploration of the past.

The most extreme example of such a use of classical archaeology comes from Mussolini's Italy in the 1930s and 1940s when an ideal of the Roman past was central to the construction of the political ideology of the present. This stimulated the large-scale excavation of Roman sites and the presentation of archaeological remains for public display: examples include the Ara Pacis and the Roman Forum. Not only were objects and excavated sites in Italy and overseas used in this process but the whole grammar of architecture and urban planning in Rome was remodeled to help recreate this imagined past through the construction of such monuments as the Via dei Fori Imperiali and the Piazza Augusto Imperatore (Barbanera 1998:119–154).

A major trend during the 19th century was the desire of the northern European powers and the United States to develop active interests in the archaeology of the Classical world, arguably as a cultural extension of their own rivalries. Learning about the Classics was central to the education of the elites who governed the European powers, largely as a development of earlier medieval systems of learning that were based within the framework of Christianity. This educational tradition was also replicated to a lesser extent in North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. With the growth of increased competition between these various powers, interests in the ownership of antiquities spread, together with the increased association of both collecting and excavating to promote national interests. Involvement with the cultural property of the Classical world became a matter of pride both for powerful individuals (such as Heinrich Schliemann and Arthur Evans), independent archaeological societies (such as the Archaeological Institute of America) and also nation states. The acquisition of material like the Pergamum altar in Berlin brought prestige to museums in the main cities of the great powers. Thus, international rivalries were played out through the development of museum collections and through the sponsorship of great excavations. For instance, Olympia became symbolic of German interests, Delphi with the French, and Knossos the British. Similarly, it was essential for the great powers to establish cultural bases in Greece and Italy to mark their established links with the origins of western civilization. The French Academy was founded in the mid-17th century but the others were primarily late 19th-century creations, albeit growing out of earlier institutions. In Rome, the German Archaeological Institute was constituted in 1871, the British School opened in 1900, and the American Academy was created in 1905.

Given the centrality of such connections with the past and in particular the key role of the study of Classics in the education and self-definition of the ruling elites of Europe, these developments should occasion little surprise. Although some would stress how conscious parallels were drawn and the Roman empire was used as a model for the British and other empires (Hingley 2000), this probably underestimates the way in which the Classical past was implicitly central to the whole perception of those in power (Freeman 1996). This is clearly the case in the United States of America where the impetus for exploration was much more loosely associated with the political establishment (Dyson 1998).

Historical Perspectives: Development

One of the consequences of the growth of economic prosperity and political capital within both the United States and Britain from the second half of the 19th century up to World War I was an expansion of and investment in higher education. In Britain, since the Classics were at the center of elite education, one of the consequences was the growth in the provision for classical archaeology. In Cambridge, the curriculum reforms of 1879 went hand in hand with the growth of the collection of sculptural casts while the first appointment to teach classical archaeology came in 1883 (Beard 1999). Similarly, in Oxford, the Chair of Classical Archaeology was created in 1883. Although such an expansion was also seen in the United States, the pattern of development was different, first, because of the strong influence of German scholarship and, second, through an increased trend towards graduate programs (Dyson 1998:95–102). Nonetheless, on both continents, this period marks the beginning of the widespread academic study of the subject.

It is interesting to note how the development of the subject in Cambridge was initially concerned with broad interdisciplinary approaches encompassing domains such as mythology and anthropology rather than archaeology in any narrow sense. By contrast, the traditions that became dominant in the United States and Germany tended to be concerned more with the systematic study of Classical art. The development of classical archaeology in universities went side by side with the growth of excavations and of research on objects by scholars working in museums and those of independent means. Despite the broad perception of the subject by some, however, a narrower and largely empirically based approach came to dominate the subject and by the last decade of the 19th century its boundaries seem to have become defined both geographically and in terms of subject matter.

Some insight into this is provided by the definition used for the Professorship of Classical Archaeology at Oxford in 1883. Arthur Evans wrote:

I understand that the Electors . . . regard “archaeology” as ending with the Christian Era. . . . Further it appears that a knowledge of Semitic or Egyptian antiquities is to be admitted: anything in short Oriental, but Europe, except for Europe of a favored period and a very limited area (for I take it that neither Gaul, Britain or Illyricum were ever “classical” in Jowett’s sense) is to be rigorously excluded! (Arthur Evans cited in Joan Evans 1943:261)

It is clear from this that the boundaries of classical archaeology had—at least in Oxford—been fairly closely defined by this stage as relating solely to the core areas of Greece and Rome. It is perhaps ironic that Evans served with distinction at the Ashmolean Museum and led the major excavations at Knossos which produced such spectacular evidence for the flowering of Bronze Age Crete and the use of the writing system known as Linear B. The decipherment of this script in 1953 and the demonstration of its importance in the development of the Greek language ensured, of course, that Bronze Age Aegean archaeology has subsequently become central to the discipline of classical archaeology.

Despite the incorporation of the Aegean Bronze Age, the limits of the subject defined in the late 19th century have continued to be widely accepted. However, one present trend is to use a broader definition that encompasses the lands the Greek and Roman worlds controlled and those with whom they had close contacts. For the study of Roman archaeology the origins of this trend lie in the late 19th century. Those trained in Classics in northern Europe had often taken a keen interest in the archaeology of the countries where they lived, although understandably these areas never attracted serious attention from those living in the United States. With the increasing systematization of archaeological knowledge, such study was drawn more into the mainstream. This is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the study of the frontiers of the Roman empire. The empire-wide collation of inscriptions for the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (initiated in Berlin in 1863) included the frontier provinces like Germany and Britain, and a growing interest in the Roman army led to systematic campaigns of excavation designed to understand monuments such as Hadrian's Wall in the years just before and after World War I. Although some of the scholars engaged on this work were parochial in their interests, others like F. Haverfield, E. Birley and I. A. Richmond came to take an empire-wide view of the issues raised.

This established a continuing trend that now enables us to understand Greece and Rome better within the context of the sophisticated but non-literate societies with whom they interacted (for instance, in the Iberian peninsula). Equally it opens up the whole subject of cultural change and interaction, in particular the ways in which classical culture spread across Europe away from the Mediterranean. Thus, the archaeology of the Roman provinces has to some extent become subsumed within the broader domain of classical archaeology.

The range of subject matter incorporated within classical archaeology is, therefore, clearly diverse. This can be illustrated by some of the different interests of those who have worked within the Faculty of Classics at Cambridge since the 1880s, developing a variety of particular and specialist methodologies vital to the study of ancient societies. These include the study of Greek religion and its material manifestations, Greek and Roman architecture, Greek, Etruscan and Roman art history and iconography, Greek pottery, Greek and Roman numismatics, and epigraphy (including the analysis of Linear B tablets). In addition, others have deployed field-work skills through excavation at key sites such as Mycenae, Carthage, and Rome, as well as survey in Italy, Greece, the Iberian peninsula, and Britain. In some ways, this range of activity well characterizes the practice of classical archaeology, although it still has a much stronger connection with art history than other areas of archaeology.

Contrasting Social Contexts: Britain and the United States of America

In Britain, academia was not protected from what Harold Macmillan called the "wind of change" that blew through the world in the decades following World War II. While Classics lost its dominant position in the education of the elites, new

disciplines like archaeology rose in popularity, especially with the expansion of university education from the 1960s onwards.

The manner in which Classics lost its position in British education is complex and has many facets, but the underlying trends are associated with the social revolution connected with the loss of empire and world economic dominance and with the decline in international influence that took place in the middle of the 20th century. The association of Classics, especially education in the Greek and Latin languages, with the traditional elites who had run the empire undoubtedly contributed to the subject's changing position within society. Such social changes lay behind its rejection as politicians sought greater emphasis on subjects of "relevance" within the curriculum of state education.

The development of archaeology in Britain during the same period contrasts greatly with the story of Classics. Before the late 1960s, it was almost absent from university teaching and considered a subject only appropriate for post-graduate study. Two things altered this situation radically. Post-war economic development, particularly the rebuilding of cities and later the construction of motorways, resulted in a boom in field archaeology in Britain. Increased expenditure on rescue excavations followed from political campaigning about the consequences of development for the historical environment and there was thus a huge rise in demand for trained archaeologists. Second, the growth in university education that was a product of 1960s political initiatives drew in students from a broad social range. This stimulated a diversification in provision of courses in new and attractive subjects including archaeology. These two changes fed off each other to ensure that a new generation of people came into the subject which had obtained a certain "alternative" cachet, at least in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Through a complex combination of circumstances, many of the newly created university archaeology departments were also successful in taking advantage of the funding roller-coaster that characterized the public sector in Britain in the last decades of the 20th century. The result was that while Classics suffered a decline, archaeology thrived with a massive increase in staff and student numbers.

The boom in archaeology brought many people into contact with the archaeology of the Roman world through first-hand experience of excavation. At the same time a number of the academics working in the new archaeology departments developed field projects, giving students from a wide social range their first experience of the Classical world. This changed the face of classical archaeology as many, trained in archaeology departments rather than in Classics, developed interests in the subject. This had a social significance, as well as academic consequences, since many of these incomers were beneficiaries of the 1960s widening of access to university education and did not come from the same socio-economic groups as those who still received a Classical education. In that sense, in Britain, the archaeology of Greece and particularly Rome, became democratized. Also significant was the way in which these changes led to a diversification of approach, while the development of a new disciplinary self-confidence has meant that archaeology is less often the "handmaiden of history" and has taken a lead in defining new intellectual approaches.

The story of post-war classical archaeology in the United States provides something of a contrast, for the period represents one of increasing economic prosperity and cultural self-confidence. Equally, while in Europe the study of the Classical world was in inevitable decline, in the United States it had only ever been a specialized interest and its development after 1945 shows strong elements of continuity with the earlier part of the century. However, increased resources became available to support it; not only was there a strong tradition of private philanthropy which continued to fund archaeological work, but there was institutional growth in the universities for which new government research funding became available.

Classical archaeology also benefited from the increased global influence of the United States of America, as it became the country to which others looked as a center of academic power. Links with European countries increased and a number of refugees from pre-World War II Germany, who had made their homes in America, became significant academic leaders. These influences broadened the base of classical archaeology as resources were found for the continuance of major field projects in the Mediterranean. These were, initially, mainly excavations following the models set earlier in the century, with a focus on important sites like the Athenian Agora. New projects were also begun, however, such as the American Academy at Rome's important excavations at Cosa. These endeavors may be characterized as representing a fairly conservative tradition of excavation but the resources were available on a scale that was the envy of many in Europe and as a result there was a continuing strong tradition of field training. Similarly, the resources available to major museums at home ensured a continuing strength in the traditions of art historical scholarship (Dyson 1998:217–285).

Classical archaeology in America was at first relatively insulated from some of the new theoretical ideas that came to dominate other branches of the subject during the 1960s. This was partly because of institutional structures through which classical archaeology commonly remained separate from both contract archaeology and the academic discipline of Anthropology—which included prehistoric archaeology. However, it was also a product of self-confidence in its academic traditions and the economic circumstances which enabled it to prosper while the discipline in Europe suffered contraction. It is perhaps a paradox that these circumstances of prosperity provided less scope for the cross-fertilization of ideas than was seen in Britain in the 1970s.

A New Classical Archaeology

The first wave of disciplinary change in classical archaeology in Britain is closely associated with people such as my predecessor at Cambridge, Anthony Snodgrass. He and others did much to integrate classical archaeology into the mainstream of the broader discipline (e.g. Snodgrass 1980; see chapter 1[a], this volume). In particular, there was a concern with the deployment of contemporary archaeological methodology to address a range of key social issues regarding the emergence and operation of the Greek polis, or city-state. Comparable wide-ranging work also

happened in the United States, particularly among those who turned to large-scale field survey as a result of these new ideas. Comparable work in prehistoric periods was pioneered also by Michael Jameson and others at Franchthi Cave in the Greek Argolid, where a full range of the techniques of environmental archaeology were used to understand an exceptionally long habitation sequence (Dyson 1998:252–253).

The genesis of both approaches lies in the “New Archaeology” or “processual archaeology” of the 1970s, but the success of integration is shown by the way in which classical archaeology has since become more central to methodological and theoretical debates, making contributions to various schools of thought and approach. Furthermore, through the development of field practice in archaeological survey, classical archaeology has also made a distinctive and original contribution to the repertoire of the broader archaeological discipline, while at the same time setting its own agenda of historical questions to be addressed in Classics as a whole.

This development needs to be put in context with increasing methodological sophistication of work on the archaeology of the Classical world. Although conventional skills in object analysis and description remains vital, the framework within which they are discussed is now more open. Equally, contemporary classical archaeology routinely deploys an enormous range of techniques drawn from the natural sciences as well as more traditional disciplines. For instance, archaeobotany aids in the understanding of agrarian systems; geomorphological and soil studies contribute to our knowledge of the processes of environmental change; the chemical analysis of clays provides new dimensions to our knowledge of pottery production and distribution. At the same time, approaches drawing on other social sciences have provided insights into topics such as the evolution of houses and have encouraged provocative rethinking about issues of cultural identity.

These changes have resulted in something of a blurring of the boundaries that once seemed to separate our subject from the rest of archaeology. At the same time there has been an increasing interaction between archaeologists and those working on other aspects of the Classical world. This has been characterized by a greater readiness on the part of both ancient historians and archaeologists to learn from each other, to respect each other’s approaches and to use information in a genuinely interdisciplinary manner. In both these respects, the field has arguably become more difficult to categorize, and it would seem we are increasingly concerned with a mixture of approaches to the archaeology of the classical world rather than with classical archaeology as such. In many ways this takes us back to the interdisciplinary ideal of Cambridge Classics in the late 19th century.

Classical Archaeology Today

Within what is now a diverse and vibrant discipline it is difficult to identify particular trends as being of especial significance. Instead I would like to pick out a series of issues which interest me, simply to illustrate something of the character of the contemporary subject. This approach is arguably itself typical of the move in con-

temporary archaeological theory away from broad generalizing, or processual, approaches towards an interest in the way material culture is deployed by human societies in historically particular contexts. Through this shift in theoretical perspective, it is notable that the tradition of context-specific and interdisciplinary archaeological study of the Classical world has become increasingly relevant to the broader discipline. The particularly rich and diverse sources of evidence available to us, together with the supply of developed and sophisticated studies of other data sets, mean that it is possible to approach the historically contingent circumstances of the Classical world with unusual subtlety. The examples I am going to explore are related to my own research on the Roman world, but there is an enormous range of other research in other areas on which I could have drawn.

One core theme has been the attempt to understand cultural change within the Roman provinces. I believe that classical archaeology more generally has much to learn from the experience of Roman provincial studies which, by their very nature, rely much more heavily on material evidence than on texts. It is notable that, although the Roman empire was a large and long-lived political structure, its archaeology displays both common characteristics and enormous diversity. Indeed, far from the standardized and culturally uniform entity that is sometimes portrayed, the empire's development and operation have wide interest and broad contemporary relevance. There has long been a realization, through study of the provinces, that the Roman empire was not monolithic but rather—given the slow speed of communication and the strengths of local traditions—that it was a heterodox grouping of societies under a single political structure. More recently there has been an increasing appreciation of the *bricolage* that comprised Roman identity itself and the broad mix of influences that created the metropolitan character of the empire.

An illustration of these issues concerning the character of empire can be provided with reference to the very northwest of the Iberian peninsula, a zone far from Italy that was only finally incorporated by Augustus. Here, a strong and independent pattern of cultural identity was emphasized in particular by the establishment of distinctive fortified hilltop settlements known today as *castros*. These seem to have formed the foci for close-knit social groups who had a reputation as warriors. The houses in these settlements were distinctive, stone-built, round houses, very different from the traditions of the Classical Mediterranean. Following the Roman conquest of this area, we see the successful incorporation of these people into the imperial system. A particular contribution of the region came from the soldiers recruited to serve Rome as auxiliary troops—indeed, the people of the region contributed one of the largest numbers of soldiers in the western empire. This form of service certainly represents integration into the empire, but the region does not show strong evidence for the adoption of the new forms of building and settlements that are generally seen as typical of Roman cultural identity. Instead, there is a very strong pattern of continuity of sites and traditional forms of building, with only some modification at the margins. Although some *castros* were abandoned, they seem to have remained central to the perceptual geography of the region with rural sites carefully placed to be able to see them (Millett 2001). Some would certainly see this as evidence for some form of cultural resistance to Roman imperialism, but



Figure 1.6 Lintel inscription from Citânia de Briteros, Portugal. Photo by Martin Millett.

such explanations are too simplistic—as illustrated by the way in which at the castro site of Citânia de Briteros, Latin inscriptions are added to the door lintels of some houses (Figure 1.6). Neither the form of the inscriptions nor the names recorded suggest particularly Roman characteristics while the decoration and house form are strongly traditional. However, the very act of adopting Latin and inscribing it illustrates an internalization of Roman ideas within a distinctive traditional context.

Brilliant historical work has been done on issues such as these, drawing on archaeological evidence, especially in Gaul (Woolf 1998). Archaeology has a unique contribution to make as it provides voices for the many peoples of the empire who have left no literature and who are represented now only by the anonymous evidence

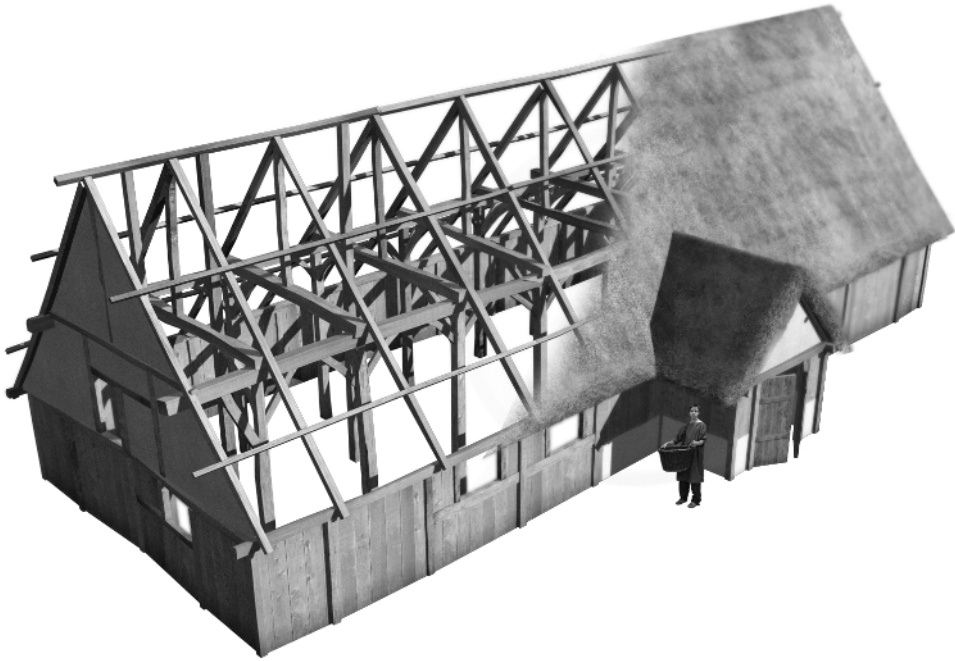


Figure 1.7 Hall reconstruction, Shiptonthorpe, East Yorkshire. Courtesy of Mark Faulkner, based on architectural analysis by Martin Millett

of their settlements, possessions, rubbish, and graves. It is thus important that the archaeological methodologies followed are not determined simply by an agenda derived from textual sources. Such work has recently been pioneered by Louise Revell (2009) in an examination of the construction of identities in the Roman provinces. In such endeavors, archaeology has different strengths at two particular scales of analysis.

First, archaeology is the only source of evidence for life at the local scale, from which we can establish something of the rhythms of everyday existence in the domestic sphere and how they changed. Archaeological excavation and associated artifact studies provide an array of techniques through which we can establish patterns of development of houses themselves and explore how the households who lived in them were structured and how they evolved through time. Both in the Mediterranean and in the provinces, we now possess interesting syntheses assessing the character of architectural development and its social implications, but the exploration of individual households provides fascinating insights into the complexities of people's lives and into how both individuals and groups used artifacts to create their identities within the broader context of Roman power structures (Wallace-Hadrill 1994; cf. Nevett 1999).

An instance of this type of approach in a far-flung province is provided by work on a small block of landscape in eastern Yorkshire. Here at one excavated site,

Shiptonthorpe, we see the construction of a fairly standard form of house replacing an earlier type built in a distinctively local tradition (Figure 1.7). The house is adjacent to the Roman road and, in contrast to other settlements nearby, seems to have adopted a full range of the material culture associated with Roman hegemony in Britain—even down to the use of waxed wooden writing tablets. Although by no means sophisticated by continental standards, the lives of its occupants, presumably a family of the aspirant “middling sort,” certainly seem to have bought into the culture of Roman Britain. The only markedly distinctive feature of their way of life lay in the way that the whole settlement was peppered with burials, both of neonatal infants and of a range of animals. These were not randomly distributed across the site; indeed a careful study of their distribution has enabled us to identify the social rules which seem to have governed their burial. It is very difficult to establish whether this behavior was determined by traditional religious beliefs or represents something else, but the grammar of their burial certainly moves debate about these people’s lives beyond established discussions about any so-called Romanization (Millett 2006). In this way the interrogation of archaeological evidence is raising new questions, forcing us to address cultural change in a different way. Some other more wide-ranging social analyses using burial evidence are beginning to emerge, especially in the study of Roman provincial society (Pearce 2000; Gowland 2001).

Archaeologists in the Roman provinces have been rather successful in developing approaches for understanding sites in the provinces through the excavation and the analysis of patterns of artifact use and distribution, both locally and regionally. They have been less successful in using similar approaches for the detailed understanding of the much larger-scale settlements that typify the center of the empire and where monumental art and architecture could also contribute. The problems are understandable as the sheer scale of the sites and the quantities of finds make the task daunting, but progress on understanding local patterns of society in the core of the empire demands that we rise to this challenge.

The enormous scale of the Roman empire also defies approaches which are based on the small scale alone. This does not imply that its investigation should attempt to write grand narratives based on simplified explanatory frameworks. Nevertheless, it seems very important to acknowledge the role of the unintended consequences of the growth of imperial power on indigenous societies. This means that we have to take approaches that acknowledge the agency of individuals but also pay due attention to the powerful overarching forces that shaped their worlds and with which they had to interact. Thus, for instance, the historical events that led to Roman military expansion into northeast Spain during the Second Punic War created new circumstances for the peoples who lived at Cesse. The selection of their settlement, Tarraco (now Tarragona), as a Roman base and its subsequent choice by Augustus as his center of operations during the Cantabrian Wars changed the circumstances within which they lived (Keay 2006). This is not to deny that individuals influenced the shape of the settlement that developed, only to emphasize that bigger events had consequences, like the creation of major communication links and the stimulation of large-scale movements of goods and people, which must be understood if the complexities of the empire are to be understood.

At a practical level, this involves moving above the level of the site to appreciate the broader development of the landscape in all its dimensions. Archaeological survey has long been used to map rural landscapes. While these methods have made a significant contribution to understanding the broad patterns of landscape change through the whole of the Classical period and beyond, they are not without their limitations. Recently there has been much discussion of the methodological limitations of survey and how these can be mitigated (e.g. Francovich and Patterson 2000; Alcock and Cherry 2004). These debates represent an increased maturity of approach to survey archaeology but can be rather inward-looking. Equally important issues are often overlooked, including whether the scale of analysis and the level of chronological resolution are appropriate for making comparisons at the supra-regional level and thus for understanding changing imperial systems. Although there has been some success in making comparisons across broader areas, these issues have too rarely been given the attention they deserve.

Another form of larger-scale work is also important if we are to understand the Roman empire. Large individual sites, particularly cities and towns, characterize the empire and are presently far too poorly understood. While there has been a long and productive tradition of excavation on ancient urban sites, even the largest campaigns of excavation can only examine a tiny proportion of an urban landscape. Thus, with the exception of a small number of sites, like Pompeii, our evidence for towns is derived from “keyholes” which give an immense amount of detail about very small samples of the site—forming a doubtful basis for broad generalization. One product of this is a heavy reliance on more extensively excavated sites combined with composite generalizations derived from a mosaic of limited excavations in a variety of towns. Given the current emphasis on local variation and particular local histories, this is clearly unsatisfactory.

One answer to this lies in the deployment of new technologies for understanding whole towns. An example of this type of work is taking place in the Tiber valley around Rome where we are attempting to examine the variability in Roman urban settlements. This work exploits basic modern technologies to map large areas, allowing us to look at varying urban forms of entire sites rather than the small samples that can be examined by excavation. The main technique is geophysical survey, principally magnetometry, which is widely used in rescue archaeology in Britain and enables a rapid survey to provide a plan of buried archaeological deposits. Such work can offer some spectacular and surprising results although whether it works depends on the characteristics of the soil. At Falerii Novi we were able to produce a good and detailed plan of most of the town (Figure 1.8) using this technology (Keay et al. 2000). Although the level of detail produced is variable and the complexity of the development of a site is not revealed in its entirety, it is wrong to suggest that the method can only be used in conjunction with excavation. The detailed analysis of the plan of Falerii Novi, combined with the addition of surface survey and topographic detail, provided an overall understanding of the site’s development that would otherwise have been impossible without very extensive excavation (Millett 2007). While it is true that some of these hypotheses can only be tested with further work—either different forms of survey or excavation—the



Figure 1.9 Portus, the port of imperial Rome at the mouth of the Tiber River. Computer graphic simulation of part of the harbour of Portus. AHRC Portus Project: <http://www.portusproject.org>

Prospects

It should be clear from this review of the discipline that an integration of classical archaeology into a broader discipline is the product of historical trends and that we are consequently seeing something of a renaissance in the subject. Contemporary classical archaeology should continue to develop, forming a fine bridge between Classics and archaeology. We should not allow it simply to be a structure that is scarcely visible yet functional; rather, it ought to develop its own distinctive engineering and elegant architecture. This will transform classical archaeology into a laboratory for investigating the use of material culture in literate and proto-literate societies alike. In creating this laboratory and developing this subject, we will combine the sound use of traditional methods of study with the best innovations from the contemporary world.

One of the unique aspects of archaeology is its ability to discover new evidence through fieldwork and finds analysis. Discovery is not enough, re-thinking meaning is also vital. It is the constant process of discovery, combined with the questioning, re-envisioning, and expanding of horizons, that makes classical archaeology so invigorating and absorbing a subject.

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