

# Antiquity

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## Editorial

WE are privileged to print in this number of ANTIQUITY, with the kind permission and at the suggestion of Professor Grahame Clark (his literary executor), a remarkable document written by the late Professor Gordon Childe shortly before his sudden and universally lamented death in Australia last autumn. Childe has left us three posthumous documents: first *The Prehistory of European Society*, published in February of this year and which, with the sixth edition of *The Dawn of European Civilization*, is reviewed in the following pages by Professor Piggott; secondly, his final lecture to the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London (now moved to new premises at Gordon Square, W.C.1) and, thirdly, the autobiographical note which we publish here under the title of 'Retrospect'. Inaugural lectures are publicized and published, and we have before us Professor Ian Richmond's inaugural lecture as Professor of the Archaeology of the Roman Empire at Oxford, and Professor Dorothy Whitelock's inaugural lecture as Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge, and we await with interest the publication of the inaugural lectures of Professor Grimes and Professor J. D. Evans at London, Professor de Valera at Dublin, and Professor R. J. C. Atkinson at Cardiff. But valedictory lectures could be even more interesting than initial statements of hope and policy: we would think they should be compulsory. It is good to know that Gordon Childe's valedictory address will be published by the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London in what they now propose to call their *Bulletin* (old style *Annual Report*).

Childe's statement, which we are most happy to publish here, is more than a valedictory address; it is also, in a kind of way, an obituary. Sir Mortimer Wheeler has declared (ANTIQUITY xxxii, 1958, 4) that obituaries and epitaphs should be written 'during the fulness of its subject's life and work', and this embarrassing practice, which would rapidly put the necrology offices of *The Times* and The British Academy out of business, may be a good thing. What is obviously impossible is that they should be done by the subject when he is full of life and work. No man is wise enough to write his own obituary. He knows too well his three conflicting personalities, the self he thinks himself to be, the self—the *persona*—that he projects to the world, and thirdly (this he knows so badly) the self which the world sees. Childe's 'Retrospect' is remarkable in many ways—not least in its declaration, by one of the three or four really great prehistorians the 20th century has yet seen, of what he was trying to achieve and what he thought he had achieved; it should, incidentally, be read in conjunction with his *History* (Cobbett Press, 1947) and his *Society and Knowledge* (1956).

It was in *Society and Knowledge* that Childe wrote, only three years ago: 'I am an archaeologist and devote my time to trying to gather information about the behaviour of men long since dead. I like doing this and my society pays me quite well for doing it. Yet neither I nor society can see any practical applications for the information I gather; we

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are indeed quite sure that it will not increase the production of bombs or butter.' And those who have read his article in *ANTIQUITY* (1933, 410) entitled 'Is Prehistory Practical?' will have seen how difficult he found it to answer the question in the affirmative. In 'Retrospect' we see him unconcerned with the practical utility of prehistory; here he writes as a scholar looking back on a long and brilliant life of scholarship, and with the modest effacement which was so characteristic of him, misses his own greatness—his great contribution to systems and to absolute dating in chronology, his pan-European background, his synthetic distillation of European scholarship at its best to all of us at our language-bound worst. We once asked Dr Bernabò Brea why he dedicated his *Sicily before the Greeks* to Childe, and he replied: 'Because I did not begin to understand European prehistory until I had read *The Dawn* and *The Danube*.' How true this was for so many people, who learnt, in the twenties and thirties, when they learnt post-Palaeolithic prehistory, Childe's prehistory.

The great puzzle of Childe at all times was to what extent he was a Marxist (or a Marrist) and to what extent he paid lip-service to an Outsider philosophy. He used to complain in public at breakfast in hotels that there was no *Daily Worker* available for him to read, although *The Times* had been delivered to his bedroom with his morning tea. To what extent was his avowed love for Russia and his intellectual contortions in *Scotland before the Scots* a pose? He has himself described his post-Oxford job in Australia as 'a sentimental excursion into Australian politics'; his Marxism/Marrism was also a sentimental excursion into the use of new archaeological and historical models. It was, most certainly, no conscious pose, for as 'Retrospect' so clearly shows, Gordon Childe was always deliberately seeking the answer to historical problems.

For a while he sought them in the works of Russian prehistorians and we remember vividly the delight with which he would quote the passage from Mongait's 'The Crisis in Bourgeois Archaeology' which has now been made available to all of us in Mikhail Miller's *Archaeology in the U.S.S.R.* (Atlantic Press, London, 1956). 'Bourgeois archaeology, like history, is distinguished by extreme idealism (A. Goldenweiser). The English historian Collingwood goes even further . . . and Daniel follows after Taylor. . . . Contemporary bourgeois archaeologists serve the political aims of their governments. . . . More and more often even the scholars who are hostile to us are obliged to turn to the achievements of Soviet Scholarship. . . . Among bourgeois scholars there are not only our ideological enemies, there are also progressive scholars who are friends of our country and who understand very well the universal significance of our science. One of these persons is . . . Gordon Childe. Childe has not yet succeeded in overcoming many of the errors of bourgeois science. But he understands that scientific truth is in the socialist camp and is not ashamed to call himself a pupil of Soviet archaeologists.'

Of one thing we can be sure: Childe's attitude to Soviet archaeological scholarship changed during his lifetime. He had been asked to write a volume on *Russia* for the series of books entitled *Ancient Peoples and Places*, and wrote in the last few days of August, 1957, to the editor of that series: 'I gather you're still hoping to get a book on Russian prehistory out of me. But you won't. . . . Even if one did explore the unpublished collections in remote museum magazines . . . I shouldn't find the evidence to produce a coherent story that would convince me, for I don't believe it yet exists. One cannot just enumerate a number of archaeological "facts" in any old order; they must be set at least in a chronological frame. But the relative and absolute chronology for the neo- and palaeometallic stages is just hopelessly vague. The official Russian schemes are really guesses that do not even attract, still less convince me. Passek's division of Tripolye is terribly subjective and I see no reason why Tripolye A (whatever it is) should be put nearer 3000 than 2000 B.C. An equal uncertainty affects the absolute dating of the Kuban culture. . . . I don't feel

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inclined to choose between such divergent guesses without convincing evidence. And I think to publish one guess, however often its guesswork character be repeated, is positively harmful and misleading. Yet the choice must be made in arranging the material for a book and the arrangement is thus the assertion of one hypothesis that no amount of reservations will banish from the reader's mind. . . . Until there be evidence to support one well-grounded hypothesis on the main issues a book on prehistoric Russia would be premature and misleading. We may expect C 14 dates to resolve the major issues. But a summary of the Russians' guesses, as though they were facts, *à la Hančar*, is worse than useless.'

We publish these words (which should be read in conjunction with Dr Klindt-Jensen's review of Hančar in the last issue of *ANTIQUITY*) not only because they are intrinsically interesting, but because they are written by a man who wrote *Scotland before the Scots*. The great value of 'Retrospect' is that it shows the mental adventure of one of the most distinguished and learned of pre-historians, and shows how he ventured sentimentally and seriously into Marxism and ventured away again. The comments which he wrote in the last few years of his life (and which we have quoted) on Russian prehistory are devastating. We hope they will be answered, and our columns, no less than those of *The New Statesman and Nation*, are wide open to Russian comment and criticism. We have written to the Cultural Counsellors of the Russian and Chinese Embassies requesting them to keep us informed of developments in the knowledge of the ancient past made in that enormous zone of the ancient world from the Volga to Vladivostock, and we welcome the publication in German of Professor Brjussow's *Geschichte der Neolithischen Stämme in europaischen teil der U.S.S.R.* (Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1957) as much as we eagerly await fuller news of Professor Ying Ta's discovery in Chengchow of a settlement of the Shang-yin dynasty covering 27 square miles, estimated to be larger and earlier than Anyang. There are no frontiers in prehistory, and we hope there will be many prehistorians from eastern European countries and from Russia and China at the Hamburg conference this autumn. We hope too that the widespread rumour that the Russians intend to invite the 1962 International Conference of Prehistoric and Protohistorical Sciences to meet in Moscow, is well-founded. What could be more exciting than a visit to the archaeological treasures of Leningrad and Moscow and Kiev? We welcome the splendid evidence of Russian-British archaeological co-operation for the forthcoming Byzantine Exhibition mentioned below (p. 119).

These words are being written in the eastern marches of Finland and the view from our window over the famous Imatra rapids shows four factories—two in Finland and two in Russia. It is even more ridiculous to draw these hair-line frontiers in archaeology than it is to do so in the modern world—because the modern world demands political entities and affiliations, and in the study of the prehistoric past we have no affiliations. The prehistoric past is illiterate, anonymous and unpolitical. We are all, whether we be in Leningrad or Peking or Harvard or Oxford, studying the same problems, and the nature of our results is an index not only of our knowledge but of our objectivity. It is to the enduring fame of Gordon Childe that his work and his worth were uncurtained, and that the whole world has been the wiser for his scholarship (as for his scholarly adventures) as it is the sadder for his death. Here was a truly great man who did not know how great was his scholarship and his influence, and who was not fully aware from time to time of the ideological camps into which his scholarship was leading him. We mourn his passing and hope that his greatest monument to scholarship and to the revolution in European prehistory associated with his work, namely *The Dawn of European Prehistory*, will be, from time to time, brought up to date and kept in print. But we realize that as scholarship intensifies, there must be very few who will have both the broad vision and the detailed knowledge which Gordon Childe combined in such an excellent, endearing and authoritative way.

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We have become accustomed in the last few months to claim and counterclaim about linguistic identifications. The identification of Linear B as Greek, by Ventris and Chadwick (ANTIQUITY XXXI, 1957, 4), has been denounced by Professor Beattie. In our present issue we publish an article from the pen of Professor Pope denouncing the identification by Professor Cyrus Gordon of Linear A as Akkadian. We believe that the minutiae of linguistic controversy are as much above the head of the average reader of ANTIQUITY as they are above the Editor's head, and that detailed linguistic controversy must be pursued elsewhere, in learned journals reserved for this specialist purpose. What we want here in ANTIQUITY are impartial summaries of controversial and technical disputes written in such a way as we can readily understand their relevance to the facts of ancient history and archaeology, which we, in this journal, seek to review.

Having said that, readers may wonder why we have published the short article from Joyce Reynolds, Olwen Brogan and David Smith on *Inscriptions in the Libyan Alphabet from Ghirza in Tripolitania* that appears in the present number. Is this not, readers may say, a deliberate invitation to detailed linguistic discussion? Not at all: it is publication—and a first publication, we are glad to state—of new and intriguing material. It will be published in full elsewhere. Meanwhile: what do these inscriptions mean, and in what language are they? Address your answers to Mrs Olwen Brogan, 5, Belvoir Terrace, Cambridge, England.

It is rare for matters of archaeological politics to become matters of national discussion. True, in England in the eighteen-seventies, members of the House of Commons had the privilege of hearing Sir John Lubbock and Mr Gladstone on ancient monuments, pre-history and Schliemann's discoveries at Mycenae and Troy. But surely nothing has ever happened at Westminster to compare with the recent discussion of Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall. On 25 February the Minister of Works answered questions on the reconstruction of Stonehenge and the Wall, and in the course of his speech said what *The Observer* rightly singled out as one of the sayings of the week, namely, that 'there are often two opinions on every subject—the correct and the incorrect'. The discussion was prompted by the announcement of the proposed repair of Stonehenge and by an article by Jacquetta Hawkes in *The Observer* on 9 February in which she accused the Ministry of Works of trying to take 'the spirit of Subtopia' to the Wall. The Minister of Works agreed that Dame Irene Ward was entirely correct in her assumption that Jacquetta Hawkes's article was 'absolutely inaccurate and unfounded'; but the Minister's ears must have reddened when he found in *The Observer* for 30 March these charges repeated in an article amusingly called 'Back to the Wall'. Mr Francis Noel Baker raised the whole issue on the adjournment of the house at 8.14 p.m. on 2 April in an elegant and learned speech, which initiated a debate that went on until the House adjourned at four minutes to ten. One hour and forty-two minutes of debate on archaeology!—can you believe it, although the date was April the second and not the first? And a debate full of remarkably well-informed and sensible speeches. Of course the main issue has not resolved—indeed the whole problem of repair and conservation at Stonehenge, and at Hadrian's Wall, as at Mycenae, and the Agora and acropolis at Athens, is not easily to be resolved. We shall revert to this general issue again. Suffice it to say here three things: how splendid that the House of Commons could talk archaeology for a hundred minutes—and talk it so well; secondly, how nice to read such praise for the Ministry and the Ancient Monuments Board (but what is happening to Nympsfield, Notgrove and Barclodiad y Gawres—monuments with no M.P.s to defend them?); and thirdly, let us urge every archaeologist to buy *Hansard* 585, No. 86—the thirty-three column adjournment debate on Hadrian's Wall is a collector's piece and compulsory reading.