

Preserving and Conserving Nestor

In chapter 4, I argue that no archaeological project is ever finished, once begun—which may be a shocking and unwelcome revelation to many readers (and archaeologists). The notion that we can write a final report about our discoveries is an artifact of antiquated attitudes and no longer supportable. For this reason I suggest that preservation of sites and excavation records is as important as publishing books. Blegen was scrupulous in preserving his excavation records, as was Marion Rawson, his principal collaborator at Pylos. In Pylos in the 1990s, we found enormous numbers of still unpublished artifacts in the local museum and were able to determine exactly where they came from. We found evidence for ritual burnt animal sacrifice of Homeric type and new wall-painting scenes that included a female archer and a procession of ships. Renewed studies and excavations at the Palace of Nestor itself have also contributed greatly to our knowledge of social and political organization in the Early Mycenaean period.

After turning sixty, I began to anticipate retirement and to think about what comes next—not for me, but for the archaeological field projects that I have directed over past decades. Responsible archaeologists—and I would like to be considered one of them—face problems today that I could hardly have imagined as a graduate student.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ARCHIVED

When Carl Blegen died in 1971, the Department of Classics at the University of Cincinnati celebrated his successes, even as it mourned his passing. In a foreword to Blegen's final Pylos book, posthumously published, his successor, Jack Caskey, wrote: "This volume comes directly from his hand: another task finished, like many before."

Pylos, like Troy before it, had been the pride and joy of the department, but things soon began to change. Caskey had other priorities. The results of his fieldwork at Lerna (1952–1959) remained largely unpublished, as did those from a



FIGURE 20. Mt. Olympus, the estate of William and Louise Taft Semple in Cincinnati. Courtesy of the Indian Hill Historical Society.

decade of campaigns at Ayia Irini on Kea. Will Semple, who had brought Blegen to Cincinnati, died in 1962, and he and his heiress wife, Louise Taft, had personally funded Blegen's activities (see figure 20). Although they endowed the department on their deaths, the department considered Pylos to be finished.

By 1993, when I returned to Cincinnati, this time as a faculty member, not as a student, the Department of Classics was distancing itself still further from Blegen's legacy, and there was no systematically organized archaeological archive. Some records had even been given away to other universities, including Berkeley.

I myself had co-directed an archaeological survey on Kea in 1983–1984 and another at Nemea (1983–1989), and I had already begun the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project. Even before returning to Cincinnati, I did think a bit about the long-term preservation of archaeological records, but as the years passed, I became increasingly frustrated. One source of that frustration was that Classical archaeologists had been encouraged to send electronic data for archiving to a repository at the Center for the Study of Architecture in Philadelphia. I sent Pylos data there and imagined it would be permanently curated and made available to future researchers. But in 2002 the director of the repository sent a form letter to me and other contributors:

Announcing the termination of the Archaeological Data Archive Project.

The Board of Directors of the [Center for the Study of Architecture] has determined the Archaeological Data Archive Project should cease operation, effective

immediately. . . . All files will be returned to the owners in current forms so that they can see to their proper care and preservation elsewhere. . . . Archaeology is hardly alone in finding it impossible to fund an archives for digital data. Archaeologists will, however, be taken to task more strongly than many scholars because their data cannot be recreated, once lost. Their experiments cannot be replicated.¹

Dispiriting indeed, but an action not without parallel. Important research initiatives, critical to archaeology, frequently collapse for lack of funding. A crisis precipitated in 1998 by the retirement of Minze Stuiver at the University of Washington is a noteworthy example: his pioneering radiocarbon and dendrochronological calibration laboratory in Seattle was shuttered. The *Chicago Tribune* quoted Austin Long, a geosciences professor at the University of Arizona and editor of the journal *Radiocarbon*: “You can count on one hand the number of labs that can do this. Decommissioning one of the foremost is a shame.”²

It is important that departments supporting archaeological research take care to preserve data. If they don’t, who will? Archaeology does not produce replicable results. The center in Philadelphia was correct in saying that archaeological data cannot be reproduced. Nor do the data we gather become irrelevant with the passage of time. The preservation of archaeological archives, the conservation of the sites we dig, and the curation of the finds we retrieve are as important as our publications, since they are unique. This can be a difficult concept to grasp, even, or perhaps especially, by natural and physical scientists, whose studies are explicitly designed to be repeatable.

Archaeologists spend millions of dollars on fieldwork, too often with little thought to the future. Should we not think of archives, finds, and sites as investments that will pay dividends for future generations? Our research yields vast repositories of information that can be exploited by those yet unborn—as has been our own experience at Pylos in restudying Blegen’s discoveries. In any case, it is virtually impossible to publish all finds from any excavation. Excavators prioritize those that best address their research questions.

THE LEGACY OF BLEGEN AND NESTOR AT PYLOS

Pylos is today, we think, a success story in preservation, conservation, and curation. How this came to be and why it makes a difference is the story told in the remainder of this chapter.

Blegen’s first priority in publishing his excavations at Pylos had been the thirteenth century B.C.: the architecture of the Palace of Nestor, its wall-paintings and painted floors, the contents of rooms, and the Linear B tablets from its Archives and elsewhere. It was only in his third book about Pylos that he turned his attention to earlier periods.³ There he and his colleagues meticulously described Early Mycenaean graves, as well as remains found beneath and near the later Mycenaean palace. But they nowhere tried to reconstruct life and society at the start of the

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19 May 1953

Dear Professor Blegen,

Thank you very much for your letter, and the transcription of the most exciting tablet. I've only been looking at it for half an hour, and most of the first line still baffled me completely, but the second and third lines certainly look to me like:

di-pa	me-zo-e!	qe-to-ro-we :		1
δέπας	μέζων	κ'ετρωφης		
di-pa-e	me-zo-e	ti-ri-o-we-e :		11
δέπαςε	μέζοε	τριωφης		
di-pa	me-wi-jo	qe-to-ro-we :		1
δέπας	μέφωv	κ'ετρωφης		
di-pa	me-wi-jo	ti-ri-jo-we :		1
δέπας	μέφωv	τριωφης		
di-pa	me-wi-jo	a-no-we :		1
δέπας	μέφωv	ανωφης		

[Dual? otherwise
δέπαςε would have
to be masculine.]

There still might be room for coincidence, but there seem to be too many things clinching it:

- 1) The fact that "larger" comes before "smaller", and the number of handles in descending order 4,3,0 within each category.
- 2) The fact that Chadwick and I had already presumed $\text{ε}+\text{τ}$ as "Four", $\text{Α} \text{ξ} \text{τ} \text{η} \text{φ}$ as τριποδισκος , and η^- as "not-having".
- 3) The fact of the four plurals (including ti-ri-no / ti-ri-no-de) each corresponding to their proper Greek declensions.

There are, of course, still one or two irregularities:

- 1) ~~The Greek word δέπας, considered by some a non-IE loanword, is neuter and consequently forms its plural δέπασε, classically.~~
- 2) The ending me-zo-e for the singular in the first entry must be taken as a scribal error, I suppose.

The last entry helps to explain a Knossos phrase which has long puzzled me: $\text{η} \text{η} \text{η} \text{η} \text{η}$ on 5 lines of No 872a, the 6th line giving the context of the tablet with the ideogram

This evidently resolves itself into $\text{di-pa a-no-wo-to δέπας ανόφατος}$, the equivalent of the Pylos "earless jug". The variation in the form of the compound word is parallel in the 2 alternative Greek forms for "2-eared":-

ἀμφ-ώης from *ἀμφ-ώσης [κισσόβιον ἀμφώες, Theocr.]
ἀμφ-ωτος from *ἀμφ-όφατος

To us, your tablet 641 does seem extremely encouraging; and we would be very gratified if it helped to bring you into the ranks of the "skeptical believers". But evidently the job is much more difficult than we imagined, when some things fit so convincingly, and yet other tablets seem to offer no progress.

Chadwick and I have 2 or 3 lectures to give at Oxford and to the British School: would you have any objections to our including the phrases of Pylos 641 on a slide? We will treat the matter as being still sub judice.

Thank you again for your exciting letter,

Yours,
Michael Ventris

Best wishes for this year's work

PS: - [ε]τ in line 1 could be a-no-we = a-no-we "one-handed". Cf a-no-we etc [a-no-we] is supposed to be more archaic than a-no-we but the evidence of the ideogram is less explicit.

FIGURE 21. Michael Ventris's letter that convinced Blegen and others that Linear B had been deciphered. American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 22. The House on Ploutarchou St. in central Athens occupied by “the Quartet.” American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Archives, Carl W. Blegen Papers. All rights reserved.

Late Bronze Age. We have had to do that ourselves, in many instances by examining records and unpublished finds from his excavations.

First, however, we needed to organize the various treasures that constitute Blegen’s legacy (see figure 21). Anyone who adopts an abandoned archaeological project, a so-called legacy excavation, confronts this Herculean task.

We were fortunate to have copies of many of Blegen’s paper records at the University of Cincinnati, even some originals, and in 2012 we began to organize these according to modern archival standards. We also had in hand an inventory of original Pylos documents in Athens, where their fate had been happier than in Cincinnati. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens in 1971 had inherited the impressive neoclassical mansion that Blegen and his wife, Elizabeth Pierce Blegen, shared for most of their adult lives with Bert Hodge Hill and his wife, Ida Thallon Hill (see figure 22). Hill had been the director of the American School when Blegen arrived as a student in 1910, and Blegen soon became his best friend. While serving as Hill’s assistant director, Blegen fell in love with Elizabeth. She had come to Athens as a student on the recommendation of Ida, her professor at Vassar, with whom she was romantically involved. Not without a bit of heartbreak, the four made compromises and formed what they called “the Quartet.”²⁴

Lucky for us, all the members of the Quartet were packrats, Blegen the worst of them. When the American School cleaned the Quartet’s house after his death, it retrieved and inventoried hundreds of letters, excavation records, and

personal diaries. The collection became the centerpiece of the school's institutional archives.⁵ These documents cover critical periods in the history not only of Greek archaeology but also of the Greek nation, since Carl, Elizabeth, Bert, and Ida were well-known figures in the social, intellectual, and political circles of Athens in the early and mid-twentieth century.

EXCAVATING BLEGEN'S STOREROOMS

So much for Blegen's paper records. Actual artifacts from his excavations at Pylos also had mostly been ignored since his death. We confronted this reality in a dramatic way when, in 1995, Cynthia Shelmerdine, director of museum operations for the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project, sent Sharon Stocker to look in local storerooms to see if she could find excavated pottery similar to what we had recovered in our intensive survey. Cynthia knew more than most about these storerooms, since she had worked in them as a graduate student.⁶

A seed was planted in the course of that visit. Stocker was determined to reorganize the storerooms and to make Blegen's finds more accessible to researchers. Thus for three years in the later 1990s, under her direction, graduate students and other volunteers devoted parts of their summers to cataloguing and photographing artifacts. Even Emmett Bennett, the scholar who had excavated many of the Linear B tablets in 1952, was on hand to decipher his own handwriting on labels he had written then.

In good time, we learned that large numbers of finds from Blegen's excavations remained unpublished. Some would reveal significant and previously unknown facts about the nature of Mycenaean society.

Animal bones are a case in point. Blegen had collected them from his digs at a time when many other excavators thought faunal remains could tell us nothing about ancient society that we could not deduce from reading ancient literature or from common sense. He stored them in large cardboard barrels that had held food sent from America to Greece as relief aid after World War II. Hill and Blegen had both participated in those efforts, and Blegen had served as cultural attaché at the U.S. embassy in 1945–1946.⁷

Inventorying the bones began in 1998, a bit shy of 300 kg of them. Study continued over seven summers (2000–2007). We discovered that cattle bones lay on the floor of the palace Archives at the time of the Main Building's destruction, ca. 1180 B.C. (see figure 23). Similar groups of burnt cattle bones had been found buried in pits northwest of the Main Building. The bones had been burnt at a very high temperature in a previously undocumented Mycenaean sacrificial rite, although one well-known from Homer and later Greek practice.

It was impossible for us not to recall Homer's description of the arrival of Telemachos, son of Odysseus, in Pylos, accompanied by Athena disguised as Mentor:

Even as the sun rose, leaving the sea to ascend into the brazen sky,
so that it might shine on immortals and mortals,
they arrived at Pylos, the well-built citadel of Neleus.

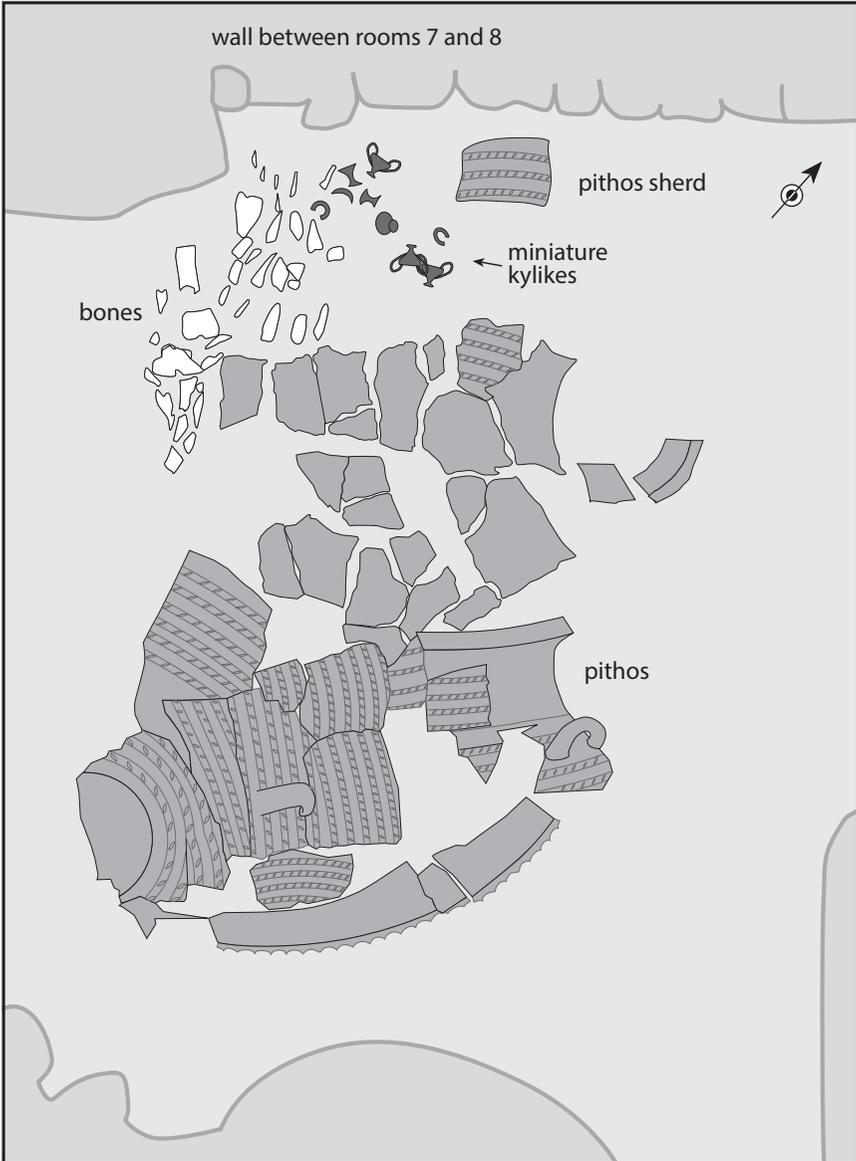


FIGURE 23. Animal bones, miniature kylikes, and a large ceramic container (pithos) on the floor in the Archives of the Palace of Nestor. Rosemary Robertson. Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved.

The Pylians were assembled on the seashore to sacrifice pure black bulls to dark-haired Poseidon, the earthquake god.⁸

Nestor sat with his sons, while meat was put on spits and roasted. One of them, Peisistratos, gave Athena and Telemachos a share of innards from the sacrificed bulls and poured wine for them into a goblet of gold.

The bones we rediscovered were not only burnt, but were calcined and brittle. What's more, only parts of the skeletons of the cattle were present, lower jaws and leg joints. Similar body parts were de-fleshed, wrapped in fat, and immolated on the altars of heavenly divinities in Classical Greece—as dictated by the ancient Greek etiological myth of Prometheus's sacrifice to Zeus at Mecone. The practice, however, was not known from the Bronze Age, and certain historians of religion even denied that the Mycenaeans had sacrificed animals.⁹

That animal bones were disposed in special places after a sacrifice was not so surprising. What was difficult to explain was their presence on a floor in the palace's Archives. What were they doing there? Blegen also was puzzled:

A considerable heap of burned animal bones lay in the western corner, and close beside them near the northwest wall were found 11 diminutive kylikes, probably votive offerings. What these apparent remains of sacrifices and dedicatory vessels had to do in the tax collector's office raises an unsolved problem.¹⁰

The bones, which we now understand represent eleven head of cattle, are indicative of sacrifice on a grand scale. If meat were distributed to those in attendance at the rite, as was customary in Classical Greece, a couple thousand people could have been fed. But how did the bones end up in room 7, the archivist's office, a place where Linear B tablets were inscribed, not stored?

Stocker and I suggested that bureaucratic practice mandated verification that a sacrifice had been completed. Had the palace not been destroyed, we assume these bones would have been collected and buried in a pit like the others. On the day the palace was destroyed, there was a scribe in room 7, recording a sacrifice to Poseidon.¹¹ The diminutive drinking cups surely were used in this rite, as Blegen suggested, and two bronze knives lying nearby could have been employed to slaughter the cattle.

A second surprise led to another major expansion in our program of research. Many walls and floors of the palace were covered with painted plaster (murals, not true frescoes). Mabel Lang, a professor of Greek at Bryn Mawr College, had studied the paintings. Assisted by Piet de Jong, a renowned British draftsman, Lang composed a lavishly illustrated volume that was published in Blegen's series of books about Pylos. De Jong, an architect by training, had come to Greece after World War I to help rebuild villages in northern Greece that had been destroyed by the Central Powers. He soon found himself working for Wace at Mycenae and for Arthur Evans at the Palace of Minos at Knossos in Crete, then for many years at Pylos as a valued member of Blegen's team. His reconstruction of the Palace of Nestor's Throne Room is widely reproduced in college textbooks today (figure 9).¹²

One might be forgiven for assuming that these two major authorities, Lang and De Jong, had said all that could be said about the Pylos paintings. But their "team" comprised only the two of them and one conservator. It is thus understandable that, as we started to clean and register all the thousands of pieces of



FIGURE 24. Wall-painting of a female archer from the Palace of Nestor. Rosemary Robertson. Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved.

decorated plaster from Blegen's excavations, we soon discovered that many had not been published. Among the fragments, we even found compositions previously unknown to Mycenaean art.

One such scene depicted a female archer (see figure 24). Its two fragments were found in 1939, in Blegen's first season of excavation. They had then been packed away and taken to Athens in anticipation of the outbreak of war with Italy and Germany. Afterwards, the pieces of plaster were returned to Pylos, but forgotten. Blegen had commented on the larger of the two in his 1939 notebook without realizing what he had in front of him:

Courses of good room with fine walls. Just east of this room was found the best fragment of plaster with braceleted hand. Other fragments of painted plaster were numerous. This must be dug very carefully.

That braceleted hand holds a bow and, because of its white skin, should belong to a woman archer. She is clothed in a style of dress well-known in Minoan and Mycenaean art.¹³ While there is no other depiction of a female figure with a bow in Mycenaean or Minoan wall-painting, representations of archers do appear on



FIGURE 2.5. Wall-painting of three ships at sea from the Southwestern Building at the Palace of Nestor. Rosemary Robertson. Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved.

engraved seals and in other media—including women who may be goddesses. Those most similar to our composition are, however, several centuries older than our wall-paintings, from the time of the Minoan New Palaces. Was our archer perhaps inspired by a sealstone recycled from an Early Mycenaean tomb?

Another major find followed the archer: a frieze, some six feet in length and two feet high, with three ships sailing through a purple sea teeming with fish (see figure 25). Its closest parallels are also in art from earlier phases of the Late Bronze Age, particularly the miniature Ship Fresco found at Akrotiri on Thera.

The discovery of this wall-painting was almost accidental. One day in the summer of 1998 I noticed a long, very heavy slab of plaster high on an upper shelf in a storeroom. The ancient plaster was still encased in the modern plaster of Paris used to stabilize it when excavated. What was it? With some difficulty we lowered the slab onto a table. It wasn't labelled and the surface was badly burnt. Over the next several years, however, our conservators succeeded in joining other fragments to the slab, and a polychrome composition emerged. Scientific analysis of paint allowed us to determine the original hues of pigments and to produce a watercolor reconstruction.¹⁴

While colleagues studied the painting, Stocker and I poured over Blegen's field notebooks. Our detective work soon proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the frieze had fallen from high in the monumental entrance hall (64, in figure 8) of the Southwestern Building. Like the Main Building, the Southwestern Building has an inner hall with a central hearth surrounded by four columns (65). Unlike the Main Building, where wall-paintings depict processions of men and women, emblematic lions and griffins, pairs of men dining at tables, and a singing bard with a lyre, those of the Southwestern Building feature scenes of war and overt expressions of power.

Lang and De Jong were able to restore on paper most of one painted wall of hall 64. At the bottom was a dado of faux stone, above it a row of seated dogs. Still higher on the wall, Mycenaean warriors clad in skirts and greaves, their heads protected by boar's tusk helmets, engage barbarians clothed in animal skins in combat (Lang called them "Tarzans"). Our ship frieze now crowns that composition. Viewed as whole, the wall is an emblematic representation of the might of Mycenaean Pylos on land and sea. Such statements seem appropriate to the headquarters of the *lawagetas*, perhaps the war-chief of the Mycenaean state.¹⁵

PRESERVING THE PALACE

Not only did paper records and artifacts need our attention. The Palace of Nestor itself was calling. In the 1950s, Blegen diligently reburied its remains with earth following each excavation season, a time-consuming process that archaeologists call "backfilling." The Greek Ministry of Education was, however, quick to recognize the touristic value of the archaeological site. After first considering a proposal to

rebuild the Main Building, as Evans had done for parts of the Palace of Minos at Knossos, a light metal protective shelter was erected in 1959. Backfilling was no longer necessary, and tourists could visit the Palace of Nestor year-round.

In 2010, however, concerns were raised about the stability of the shelter, which was desperately in need of repair. A consulting engineer predicted imminent collapse, but that cloud had a silver lining. We had an opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry of Culture, first in designing a new, more suitable shelter and then in excavating trenches to hold its support-posts. In this way we were able to open a new window on the pre-palatial history of Pylos.

The Pylos Regional Archaeological Project had already determined that the Early Mycenaean settlement near the acropolis of the Palace of Nestor had expanded around a Middle Helladic core.¹⁶ This village likely drew people into it from marginal agricultural areas to the east of Aigaleon, the mountain range that would, in the thirteenth century B.C., mark the boundary between the two provinces of the kingdom of Nestor.

Much of the Middle Helladic settlement is deeply buried under later alluvium or washed away by erosion, but Blegen's team did locate traces of it. For one week in 1959, Marion Rawson excavated northwest of the acropolis in a field belonging to the George Petropoulos family. There she found remains of three superimposed buildings, the lowest dating to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, the highest near its end. Reexamination of artifacts from her excavations and other soundings made here and there in the vicinity of the palace led Stocker and me to conclude that in the Middle Helladic period the area had been continuously occupied.¹⁷

Such a history of unbroken Middle Helladic habitation is unusual in Messenia. We think it possible that early in the period those who lived at Pylos had already begun to depart smaller settlements in the area in favor of residing in the community at Pylos. One such small settlement, a half mile toward the sea from the Palace of Nestor, was, in fact, wholly abandoned after the first stage of the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁸

Not only had the Pylos settlement increased greatly in size by the Early Mycenaean period, the acropolis was then fortified for the first time.

We now know more about earlier buildings under the palace than did Blegen, thanks to architectural studies by the University of Minnesota and to excavations in preparation for the new shelter. An important first step was made in the 1990s when a Minnesota team came to Pylos to produce a measured stone-by-stone plan of all the walls that Blegen had uncovered. Michael Nelson, an architect and archaeologist working with that team, summarized his observations in a landmark Ph.D. thesis.¹⁹

In that work, Nelson demonstrated how several building systems, all Cretan in origin (ashlar, pseudo-ashlar, orthostat, and ashlar-shell), were introduced at Pylos in the same chronological order as on Crete. Nelson postulated that at least three mansions with ashlar façades stood on the Early Mycenaean acropolis.

Two decades later, we uncovered stratigraphical evidence supporting Nelson's sequence of wall types, while digging the trenches for the support-posts for the new shelter. We learned that ashlar stonework was more widespread on the acropolis than we had imagined. We also found Early Mycenaean painted plaster, proving that the local elite who lived in the mansions on the acropolis appreciated rooms finely decorated in Minoan style.²⁰

These same excavations produced evidence that the Early Mycenaean elite were organizing large-scale feasts, just as later in the thirteenth century B.C.²¹ We can only speculate about the occasions, but it is certainly possible that sacrifices were held when a high-ranking individual who lived in one of the mansions on the acropolis died. A stepped gateway led through the Early Mycenaean fortification wall, down the slopes of the acropolis toward the beehive tomb that Blegen called Tholos IV and two new tholos tombs that we found in 2018. Funerals clearly were an arena for display, and the elite of Pylos were concerned to establish a link between the living and the dead.

WHEN DOES IT EVER END?

Archival, artifact conservation, and architectural preservation projects are continuing at Pylos, and none is ever likely to be finished. Permanent commitment to an archaeological site is required, and that is worrisome for an archaeologist approaching retirement. The problems are both financial and conceptual. Current policies of many foundations and governmental institutions can be myopic, focusing on sites alone, to the detriment of artifacts and documents. Site conservation was, for example, the central theme of the Euromed Heritage II project, celebrated in Hodder and Doughty's *Mediterranean Prehistoric Heritage: Training, Education, and Management* (2007). American professional organizations jumped on the same bandwagon, probably because care for sites is relatively easy to sell to private donors. The deterioration of a major monument like the Palace of Nestor is obvious to visitors. Archives and the overwhelming majority of finds from excavations, on the other hand, escape public gaze.

Archaeological sites are also the principal concern of Greek antiquities legislation.²² Article 36, Section 8, of the appropriate Greek law states that an excavation should use nondestructive methods so far as possible; that it should care for the preservation of finds, preferably in situ, and their consolidation and conservation; that appropriate methods for the restoration of monuments should be followed; and that the director of the project should also care for the landscape design of the excavated site. The emphasis is on monuments. The only reference to artifacts is a clause stating that "moveable finds shall be transferred without undue delay preferably to the nearest public museum or to an appropriate place of storage."

Professional conservators hired by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports continue to work at the Palace of Nestor today, providing first aid to the walls of the Main Building, now having been exposed to the air for six decades. Conservation of Blegen's records continues in Cincinnati in cooperation with the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. That institution has become a leader in the long-term care of data, both electronic and paper. The archives of excavations that it has sponsored at Ancient Corinth (since 1889) and in the Athenian Agora (since 1930) are totally digitized.²³ The fact that both Corinth and Athens were important city-states in antiquity makes knowledge about them a desideratum for all interested in ancient Greece.

Earlier in this chapter, I spoke of the shifting priorities in the Department of Classics at the University of Cincinnati, which abandoned Pylos after Blegen's death. Other factors also contributed to the neglect, among them attitudes toward publication shared by most Classical archaeologists in the twentieth century. In 1976, on the island of Kea, on the porch of the house where we lived while working at Ayia Irini, Jack Caskey told me over an ouzo that it was the duty of an excavation director to present a definitive "final publication" to the world. Caskey understood such a publication to be a place where readers would find facts, with little interpretation, and where the director's vision would be the authoritative voice. I suspect that Caskey had received the same advice from Blegen—whose style was similarly laconic. In light of such a philosophy, there would never be much need to return to excavation records, finds, or architectural remains. Reports written, certified by director, job done.

As a graduate student, one alternative model caught my attention. Colin Renfrew had transcribed a daybook from the 1890s British dig at Phylakopi on Melos.²⁴ He had presented a carbon copy to our Cincinnati library in 1963, and I was thrilled when I found it. Primary records could tell us things that published reports could not.

Excavation records, in fact, permit archaeologists to question and revise their predecessors' interpretations. We also can use them for studies our mentors did not imagine: social history, network analysis, political theory, the reproduction of institutional practice. If we want to understand contemporary praxis in archaeology, we need to denaturalize the present state of affairs by asking what if different decisions had been made at critical developmental junctures in our field. Archives open the doors.

But discovering old records and helping others to find them is only part of the story. Ensuring resource sustainability is the other side of the coin.

Electronic data from Pylos sit on departmental servers for the time being, where they are accessible to researchers. Most large universities now also offer long-term safety nets: data storage in their libraries, the missions of which, after all, include information curation. In Cincinnati, we have uploaded to our library's server all records from an intensive survey of the territory of the ancient Greek

colony of Dyrrhachium/Epidamnus in Albania—from concept to fieldwork to final publication.²⁵

But what about routine long-term care for a site and the finds from it? There are no easy or inexpensive solutions. Only a thirty-year commitment to Pylos has enabled our own accomplishments in the aftermath of Blegen's excavations. Archival and conservation programs have contributed immeasurably to what we know about the Palace of Nestor, not only in its final phase but in the Early Mycenaean period. It is the picture of the settlement at that time together with the agricultural landscape, which I discussed in the previous chapter, and the mortuary landscape, to which I turn next, that yield the fullest picture of any pre-palatial Mycenaean kingdom in Greece, Mycenae included.