

M I S C E L A N E A

† AXEL W. PERSSON

Axel W. Persson was born on the 1st of June, 1888. He started his academic career as a philologist, wrote a fine thesis on Xenophon, and in 1915 became lecturer at the University of Lund. But already at an early stage he had become attracted by archaeological problems. He continued his studies as a pupil of Martin P. Nilsson, spent a year at the École Française d'Athènes, and published his first archaeological books and articles. One of these dealt with Carian inscriptions (*Inscriptions de Carie*, «Bulletin de correspondance hellénique», XLVI, 1922, pp. 394-426), a subject to which he was to revert many years afterwards. In 1921 he exchanged his lectureship in Greek for one in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History.

At that time the Crown Prince of Sweden—the present King Gustaf VI Adolf, himself a distinguished archaeologist—inaugurated by his initiative a series of Swedish archaeological undertakings in classical lands. Persson became one of his friends and collaborators, and was one of the leaders of the first large Swedish excavation in Greece, that of Asine, 1922-1926. In 1924 he was made Professor of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History in the University of Uppsala. Almost every year he went to Greece, excavating or travelling. He had the greatest luck in discovering Mycenaean antiquities of any archaeologist since Schliemann, and the splendid treasures that he found in 1926 in the royal tomb at Dendra made his name world-famous. After excavations at another Mycenaean site, Berbati, in 1935 and 1936, he returned to Dendra in 1939 and had the incredible luck to find again a rich un plundered Mycenaean tomb. When in 1938 he started explorations in Caria, his original aim was to find connexions between the Minoan culture and Asia Minor. The work at Mylasa had to be interrupted because of the political situation, but ten years later Persson started a large-scale excavation of the sanctuary of Zeus at Labranda. The work continued in 1949 and it was during the preparations for the campaign of 1951 that he died. The work at Labranda and Berbati is now being continued by his pupils.

The books and articles written by Persson during the last thirty years of his life practically all dealt with his excavations and with problems in Aegean archaeology connected with his own discoveries. One of the things that interested him most was the problem of script and language. When in 1926 he found at Asine a Mycenaean vessel fragment with incised signs, he

believed that he had a key to the solution of the problem of the Minoan linear script, assuming that the mainland form represented a stage intermediate between the Minoan and the Cypriote. Persson's publications on these matters (*Schrift und Sprache in Alt-Kreta*, «Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift», 1930, Program 3; *Die spätmykenische Inschrift aus Asine*, «Corolla archaeologica Principi Hereditario Regni Sueciae Gustavo Adolpho dedicata», Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Rom, II, Lund 1932, pp. 208-215) became the subject of a heated discussion: there were many who accepted his readings, but scholars with an expert knowledge of the linear scripts—such as Evans and Sundwall—were strongly opposed to them. It must be said, however, that Persson's theories and his subsequent studies of Cypro-Minoan inscriptions (*Some Inscribed Terracotta Balls from Enkomi*, «Symbolae philologicae O. A. Danielsson octogenario dicatae», Upsala 1932, pp. 269-273; *More Cypro-Minoan Inscriptions*, «The Swedish Cyprus Expedition», III, Stockholm 1937, pp. 601-618) stimulated the discussion and were partly responsible for a revived interest in these problems.

Axel W. Persson was an inspiring teacher, and most of the Swedish classical archaeologists of to-day have been his pupils. Swedish archaeology owes much to his enthusiasm and to his great ability to create interest in archaeological work among non-specialists he was a man of great personal charm and had a large number of friends all over the world. He knew and understood the Greeks well and was extremely popular among the peasants and shepherds of Argolis. During the war he went to their aid as one of the relief organization of the Red Cross, and the strenuous work of those years seems to have been one of the causes of his premature death, on the 8th of May, 1951.—*Arne Furumark*.

† BENITO GAYA NUÑO

El 26 de febrero de 1953 ha fallecido en Soria, a los cuarenta y cinco años, nuestro colaborador Benito Gaya Nuño.

Al sentimiento de todos los que lo tuvieron por compañero de tareas se añadirá, en quienes conocieron las vicisitudes de su vida, renovada admiración por la serena fuerza con que supo conquistarse, día a día, su propia dolorosa existencia. Benito Gaya Nuño había nacido en Tardelcuende (Soria) el 9 de febrero de 1908 y a la edad de doce años se había establecido en aquella capital, donde realizó brillantemente los estudios del bachillerato. Apenas había terminado el primer año de Ciencias Exactas en la Universidad de Zaragoza, cuando, en 1924, queda gravemente afectado por la parálisis infantil. Acepta la desgracia con serenidad inesperada en un joven de dieciséis años y se dedica completamente a los estudios, poniendo en ellos toda su ambición y toda esperanza de consuelo.

En 1936 le esperaba una nueva desgracia, al desaparecer su padre en circunstancias dramáticas, y Benito Gaya Nuño hubo de atender a su propia familia. A los propios estudios hubo de añadir la dura fatiga de las lecciones privadas.

En 1943 obtenía por oposición la cátedra de Griego en el Instituto de Bilbao y al año siguiente era trasladado a la de Soria. En 1948 leía en la Universidad de Madrid su tesis «Estudios sobre escritura y lengua cretenses», obteniendo con sobresaliente por unanimidad el grado de doctor. El Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas le concede a continuación por este trabajo el premio Luis Vives.

La muerte le ha sorprendido en el pleno fervor de sus investigaciones, cuyos temas predilectos eran, por una parte, la toponimia y arqueología de su región natal y, por otra, la hermenéutica minoica. De su constante actividad en el campo de nuestros estudios, desde su tesis doctoral hasta su desaparición, dan fe los numerosos artículos publicados en *Emerita* y el volumen *Minoiká* recientemente publicado por el Instituto Antonio de Nebrija.

Con Benito Gaya Nuño nuestros estudios pierden un investigador infatigable que prometía una contribución notable al esfuerzo común, sobre todo en la nueva fase de la hermenéutica minoica que está abriendo la completa edición del material epigráfico. Mas con él desaparece también un serio y apasionado vulgarizador de los problemas de la civilización minoica y de las otras grandes culturas del mundo indomediterráneo. Su curso sobre la «civilización de Mohenjo-Daro», desarrollado en 1949 en el Instituto de Humanidades de Madrid, y la conferencia sobre las escrituras cretenses dada en aquel mismo año en la reunión de catedráticos de lenguas clásicas en Santander, habían iniciado la actitud divulgadora de la cual podíamos prometernos, en un futuro más o menos próximo, la adquisición de nuevas fuerzas al restringido círculo de los especialistas en la hermenéutica minoica y una apreciación cada vez más amplia de la importancia de nuestros estudios entre los investigadores del mundo hispánico.

Nuestra revista, que más de una vez había solicitado la colaboración de Benito Gaya Nuño y hubiera deseado incorporarle a la dirección de la misma, recuerda con honda pena al colaborador y amigo.