

Μουσείο Μπενάκη

A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece



Preface

The Editors

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A SINGULAR ANTIQUITY

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in twentieth-century Greece

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Dimitris Damaskos & Dimitris Plantzos

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PREFACE

MODERN GREEKS ENVISAGE their collective past as a cultural commodity; authentic, usable and eternally present. Archaeology has been instrumental in constructing the nation's identity, built on the tangible evidence it produces. This is by no means just a Greek phenomenon, a peculiarity of the state that inherited 'the glory that was Greece'. The rapport, however, between archaeological research and national(ist) strategy presents some interesting facets in a country which has been struggling, for most of the twentieth century, to counter the predicaments of modernity with the promise of modernization. And it is these peculiarities, concerning the Greek archaeologist as much as the historian and the social anthropologist, which prompted this publication.

Most of the papers collected in this volume were delivered at the 'Antiquity, Archaeology and Greekness' conference held in January 2007 at the Benaki Museum. Many of the papers were later revised by their authors, and some new papers have been added. The purpose of the conference was to investigate and assess the role of antiquity and archaeology in the forging of a national identity

in twentieth-century Greece. Our stated aim at the time was to trace the steps, intentional or otherwise, which have determined the present state of Greek archaeology – as an academic discipline, as an educational practice, as the producer and at the same time the consumer of a multi-layered cultural reality. In the process, there emerged a wider picture of Classical antiquity as a cultural presence in Modern Greece – and a daunting one at that. What resulted from the conference, and what we hope this volume is offering in a more structured fashion, is the intricate network of Greek archaeologies, or rather the archaeologies of Greek modernity (and within it): academic and institutional, or alternative, habitual and indigenous.

We thank all those who helped us with the conference then and with this publication now, and especially Professor Angelos Delivorrias for his encouragement and hearty endorsement of our project since its early days.

We are also deeply grateful to the Propondis Foundation and its President, Mr Diamantis Diamantides, for the generous financial support which made both the conference and this publication possible.

The Editors

