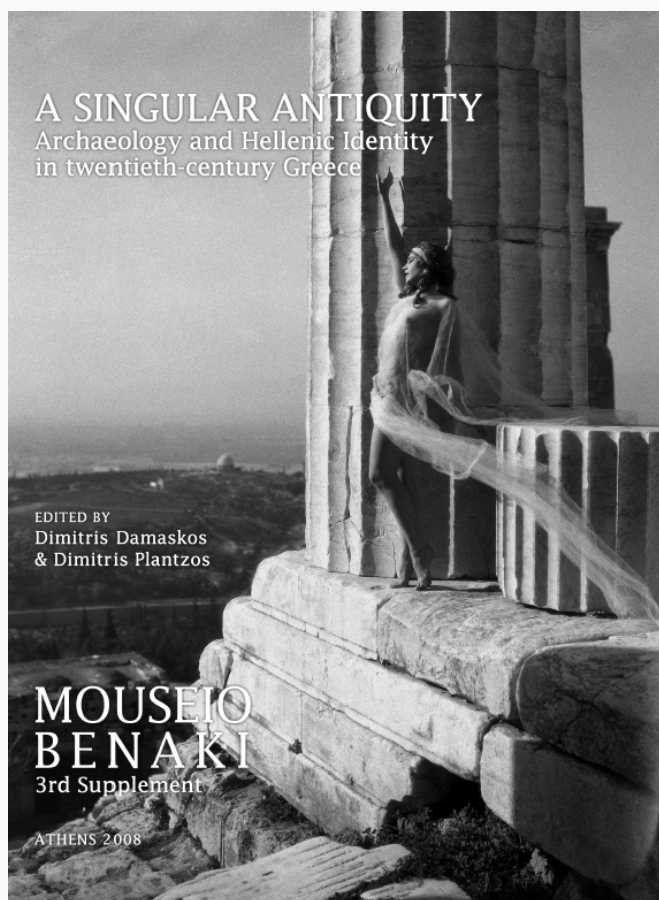


Μουσείο Μπενάκη

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



Preface

The Editors

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Dimitris Damaskos & Dimitris Plantzos

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	9	NIKI SAKKA	
		The excavation of the Ancient Agora of Athens: the politics of commissioning and managing the project	111
INTRODUCTION			
DIMITRIS PLANTZOS			
Archaeology and Hellenic identity, 1896-2004: the frustrated vision	11	DAPHNE VOUDOURI	
		Greek legislation concerning the international movement of antiquities and its ideological and political dimensions	125
PART I.			
ANTIQUITY AND THE GREEK ANTIQUITIES			
MARK MAZOWER		DELIA TZORTZAKI	
Archaeology, nationalism and the land in modern Greece	33	The chronotopes of the Hellenic past: virtuality, edutainment, ideology	141
MICHAEL HERZFELD		VASSILIS LAMBROPOULOS	
Archaeological etymologies: monumentality and domesticity in twentieth-century Greece	43	The rehearsal of antiquity in post-modern Greek fiction	163
GEORGE TOLIAS		PART II.	
National heritage and Greek revival: Ioannis Gennadios on the expatriated antiquities	55	GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY: PARADIGMS AND IDEOLOGIES	
ANDROMACHE GAZI		KOSTAS KOTSAKIS	
‘Artfully classified’ and ‘appropriately placed’: notes on the display of antiquities in early twentieth-century Greece	67	Paths to modernity: Dimitrios R. Theocharis and the post-war Greek prehistory	175
MARLEN MOULIOU		VANGELIS KARAMANOLAKIS	
Museum representations of the classical past in post-war Greece: a critical analysis	83	University of Athens and archaeological studies: the contribution of archaeology to the creation of a national past (1911-1932)	185

DIONYSIS MOURELATOS		ANGELIKI KOUFOU	
The debate over Cretan icons in twentieth-century Greek historiography and their incorporation into the national narrative	197	The discourse on Hellenicity, historical continuity and the Greek Left	299
OLGA GRATZIOU		DORA F. MARKATOU	
Venetian Monuments in Crete: a controversial heritage	209	Archaeology and Greekness on the centenary celebrations of the Greek state	309
ALEXANDRA BOUNIA		DIMITRIS DAMASKOS	
Ancient texts, classical archaeology and representation of the past: the development of a dialogue	223	The uses of Antiquity in photographs by Nelly: imported modernism and home-grown ancestor worship in inter-war Greece	321
VANGELIS CALOTYCHOS		ELENA HAMALIDI	
The dead hand of Philology and the archaeologies of reading in Greece	237	Greek Antiquity and inter-war classicism in Greek Art: Modernism and tradition in the works and writings of Michalis Tombros and Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika in the thirties	337
DIMITRIS PLANTZOS		ARTEMIS LEONTIS	
Time and the Antique: linear causality and the Greek art narrative	253	An American in Paris, a Parsi in Athens	359
YANNIS HAMILAKIS		DIMITRIS PHILIPPIDES	
Decolonizing Greek archaeology: indigenous archaeologies, modernist archaeology and the post-colonial critique	273	The phantom of classicism in Greek architecture	375
PART III.		MARIA DIAMANDI	
THE IMAGINED REALITIES OF GREEKNESS		The archaeologist in contemporary Greek novel	383
DIMITRIS TZIOVAS		AFTERWORD	
Reconfiguring the past: Antiquity and Greekness	287	DIMITRIS DAMASKOS	
		In place of a conclusion	403
		INDEX	409

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

