

## Μουσείο Μπενάκη

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



### Museum representations of the classical past in post-war Greece: a critical analysis

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### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

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## Museum representations of the classical past in post-war Greece: a critical analysis

‘WHAT DOES “ASK” THE SOURCES mean?’<sup>1</sup> This is a core question that must preoccupy all historians and interpreters of the past, who read the past according to the questions they subject their sources to and the kind of conceptual theories they use. The choice of theory and methodology undoubtedly defines the structure, breadth and content of a research project and consequently the production of knowledge. Historians are, in a way, like the fishermen;<sup>2</sup> the kind of fish they catch depends on the kind of net they cast in the water.

This paper’s ‘fish’ is museum constructions of the classical past in post-war Greece,<sup>3</sup> which will be critically investigated using a complex set of ‘nets’. These are the Foucauldian concepts of ‘discourse’<sup>4</sup> and ‘representation’,<sup>5</sup> change management<sup>6</sup> and organizational theories as well as theories deriving from the field of developmental psychology and human ecology.<sup>7</sup>

The aim is to shed light on the process of production through which Greek museum exhibitions construct, order, represent and interpret the classical past. It is also to explore the essential factors and forces, whether driving or restraining, that have been shaping this process of production since the late forties. The intention is to unmask the poetics and politics of museum representations of the classical past and view both within the historical, cultural and political contexts of a long-standing intellectual tradition. Thus, these museum representations will be investigated both in their historical development and in comparison with contemporaneous examples. The former route, chronological in nature, will allow us to better assess the changes<sup>8</sup> that occur from 1948 onwards; the latter, more discursive

and contextual in perspective, will help us collect relevant evidence and clues which will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the various interconnecting systems that contribute to the representation of the classical past in the Greek museum.

Studying museum representations of the classical past: discourses, systems and changes from 1948 to the present day

With the outbreak of World War II, the Greek Archaeological Service<sup>9</sup> was placed in the unfortunate situation of having to dismantle all the archaeological museum exhibitions around the country and rebury the antiquities in the ground in order to secure their safety and survival during wartime operations. However, ‘destroying’ the work that past generations of Greek archaeologists had created, meant that archaeologists in Greece after the war were faced with the great challenge of producing new museum displays and embarking on a fundamental reorganisation of museums in the country. This long and historically chequered post-war period, which can only be reviewed in summary fashion, may be conventionally divided into three large chronological chunks, themselves defined by important landmarks of an institutional and/or historical nature: a) 1948-1976, the *regeneration period*: this is the time of intensive reorganization and gradual maturation of Greek archaeological museums, when *the classical past as linear evolution of art* prevails as the dominant interpretative museum paradigm; b) 1977-1996, the period of un-

sustainable archaeological museum expansion: throughout this phase the interpretative paradigm of *the classical past as empirical and objective analysis of archaeological finds* was developed and consolidated, alongside the previous model which had in the interim been broadened to cover other forms of art apart from sculpture and pottery. A parallel demand for a more educational museum and thus one more useful to society, which could and should narrate interesting stories about the past gradually emerged. This 'Museum-School' conceptual model was steadily embedded and diversified, by means of educational programmes targeting school groups and other interested audiences. It failed, however, to replace the two earlier leading interpretative paradigms in the production of permanent museum displays; it was, nonetheless, tested for the purposes of temporary museum exhibitions, presented in Greece and abroad, though it only had a marginal influence on the making of permanent exhibitions; and c) 1997 to present day, the period of great opportunities (legal, financial, scientific, technological) and of pressing challenges (institutional, ideological, social and epistemological). This changing landscape offers fertile ground for the propagation of eclectic museological and museographical options, consciously or unconsciously followed. However, the need for a mindful, humane, socially open, conceptual museum model that can also offer a more theoretically rounded cultural interpretation of the classical past is more necessary than ever.

Some twenty years ago, Anthony Snodgrass and Chris Chippindale, commenting on the subject of classical archaeology, remarked that 'our choosing to venerate the classical as classical says something about ourselves but not of itself or about classical society'.<sup>10</sup> Today, classical archaeology is going through profound changes, and museum constructions of the classical past, as one of the most powerful and telling disciplinary systems, can potentially reflect and express these changes.

This process of changing our views and tools for looking at the classical past is still very much in progress, encompassing not one but many archaeologies of Greece with a plurality of agendas, theoretical positions and interpretations.<sup>11</sup> Many maintain that we cannot assume there is, or indeed should be, a single manifesto or rhetoric for the ways classical archaeology should work or indeed that the classical past should be represented in the museum. Instead, what classical archaeologists must do is to ask 'un-

settling questions about what, and whom, the subject is for' and try to 'make the best of, a plurality of answers'.<sup>12</sup>

Naturally, the range and number of archaeological exhibitions available for this study is vast. It is impossible to present all the different examples within the space of a single article, thus we shall focus on a few eloquent and illustrative ones.

The regeneration period (1948-1976). The classical past as linear evolution of art

The end of World War II and later of the civil war in Greece signaled a new era for Greek museums. In 1948, at the dawn of the post-war reformation, when the nation was still embroiled in a devastating civil war, the reopening of three galleries in the National Archaeological Museum was cheerfully greeted by the print media of the time. Newspaper commentaries and literary texts by leading intellectuals assigned to this reopening a symbolic meaning.<sup>13</sup> George Seferis experienced the return of the statues to the museum galleries as a 'chorus of the resurrected, a second coming of bodies that gave you a crazy joy'.<sup>14</sup> Marinos Kalligas identified the museum reopening with the need for national resurrection and the urgent need for a strengthening of the nation's collective conscience and unity:

'The reopening of the National Archaeological Museum is a cultural event of global significance. Undoubtedly our National Museum is the most important museum of its kind worldwide. [...]. These objects belong to the era that gave birth to a new mythology, which we could call European mythology, that is precisely the symbolic representation of the values that have guided us, at least up to now. This is exactly why the reopening of the Museum acquires a further significance, for it provides the opportunity to weigh up [the symbolic representation of the classical and European] values, and to judge whether it is worth fighting for their survival or instead for their replacement by other values which represent a new state of affairs. We welcome the opening of the Museum as an auspicious turning point for the revival of cultural values in our land'.<sup>15</sup>

In subsequent years, an 'unfreezing' process started for Greek museums and an array of forces, events, personali-

ties, norms and ideas shaped the 'systems' through which their interpretative approaches toward the representation of the classical past were determined.

The outcome of the Civil War was one of the core elements in preserving Hellenist archaeology.<sup>16</sup> Greece's new foreign relations were made explicit, firstly with an open British intervention during the civil war and, secondly, with the commencement of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 which allowed the continuous involvement of the USA in the political, economic and administrative life of Greece. During this period, the country started a long process of social redevelopment and economic recovery, with the financial aid of the American Marshall Plan. Greece became a sort of disputed cultural territory during the Cold War era and museums and archaeological sites such as the Ancient Agora of Athens became closely associated with what Artemis Leontis<sup>17</sup> identified as 'capitalist neo-colonialist strategy' and Ian Morris called 'continentalist archaeology'.<sup>18</sup>

This is the essential point of departure for understanding the direction Greek archaeology has taken since and also for studying Greek museum development and exhibitions. Hellenism, the Greek Classical past and its material culture, all continued to be worshipped as quasi-metaphysical entities. This veneration of the classical past eventually led to neutralizing the theoretical element in Greek archaeology and to the discipline becoming cut off from intellectual changes across the board.<sup>19</sup>

Major public works alongside rapidly expanding urbanization and non-stop land development resulted in an unprecedented increase in the number of rescue excavations around the country. The unearthing of thousands of antiquities meant the formation of numerous archaeological collections and the creation of many new museums to house them. The constant demands of field work forced state archaeologists to concentrate most of their efforts on organizing the rapidly multiplying archaeological collections and compiling their basic documentation records and classification strata. Classifying archaeological objects accurately is a very valuable exercise, but it is a preliminary to the major task of interpretation, not a substitute for it. Under these conditions, however, the demanding work of archaeological interpretation had to be a secondary priority or set aside until time and resources would allow. Moreover, the standing archaeological legislation of the time (Codified Law 5351/1932) did not include any substantial provisions for museum organization and development.

Last but not least among the forces that affected archaeological practice at the time was the gradual transformation of Greece into a popular tourist destination, which had an immense impact on the quality and extent of the country's development. A 'tourist archaeology' gradually gathered momentum, as sites, antiquities and museums were attributed, by state and public alike, with an added value of a monetary nature – mundane, perhaps, though expedient nonetheless.<sup>20</sup> Greek archaeology and its monumental material culture were called upon to satisfy the demands of the state for economic development by exploiting its tourism potential<sup>21</sup> and Greece established a post-war reputation as a historical and archaeological dreamland. The Greek daily press followed with intense interest the steady reconstitution of state museums in Athens and the regions, and observations such as the following hit the headlines:<sup>22</sup> 'The slow reorganization of museums hampers tourist development' (1954), 'An archaeological country without museums. All our provincial museums are in a state of suspension and abandonment' (1957), 'The creation of provincial museums will contribute to the growth of tourism in the periphery but also to a rise in the artistry of the Greeks' (1959), 'The museums must become living organisms' (1962), 'Campaign for a better organization of our museums' (1975).

Museum paradigms *par excellence*. The national 'shrines' of ancient art and their legacy

During this period, the National Archaeological Museum and the Acropolis Museum, the two national shrines of Greek classical art, formed the museum paradigms *par excellence*. The post-war redisplay of the National Archaeological Museum has been variously characterized as 'the priceless jewel of Greece',<sup>23</sup> and 'the greatest archaeological undertaking of this era in Greece [...] an achievement that offered the ancient Greek art to the Greeks and the world as seen and interpreted by a great connoisseur of art'.<sup>24</sup> Similar remarks were made about the Acropolis Museum, the 'most splendid museum'<sup>25</sup> and its wonderful exhibition that became 'a milestone'<sup>26</sup> of Greek museological history and philosophy. Since the early forties, Christos Karouzos and Yannis Miliadis, the celebrated directors of those institutions, together with Semni Karouzou, curator at the National Archaeological Museum, had been advocating the reform<sup>27</sup> of Greek archaeological museums and had formulated an intellectual approach



towards museum display, altogether different to that existing before 1940.

Christos Karouzos, acting director for the period 1942-1964, and his wife Semni Papaspyridi-Karouzou, Keeper of the Vase Collection for the period 1932-1964, worked painstakingly, with 'integrity, passion and virtue'<sup>28</sup> and against many odds<sup>29</sup> to redisplay the museum collections 'brimful of sacredness [...] creativity and spiritual breadth'<sup>30</sup> and to create an exemplary museum dedicated to the veneration of high ancient Greek art. Their interpretative model of ancient art shaped the Museum's post-war image and identity and became a prominent prototype that consciously or unconsciously guided the exhibition practice of many other Greek archaeological museums.<sup>31</sup>

A liberal in his political orientation, Christos Karouzos studied archaeology and philology at the University of Athens under Christos Tsountas and then at the Universities of Munich and Berlin under Buschor and Pinder. With a deep knowledge of the history of Western art, he developed and published his interpretation of ancient Greek art.

Semni Papaspyridi-Karouzou was the first woman ever employed in the Greek Archaeological Service. She studied archaeology at Athens University under Tsountas, but her archaeological personality was very much influenced by John Beazley and Ernst Buschor. She was a dedicated lover of Greek art, regardless of the historical period (archaic, classical or Hellenistic), but she often expressed her dislike of Roman copies.<sup>32</sup> She had a profound trust in the transformative power of museums and used to say that 'in Greece [...] the main source of national and aesthetic education was the archaeological museums'<sup>33</sup> and that an ideal museum visit could stand as an initiation that 'needed time, comfort, devotion [...] and thorough knowledge'.<sup>34</sup>

Through the couple's writings, we can come closer to their views on archaeology, ancient art, the principles of museum exhibiting and the museum's association with pedagogy and the concept of Greekness.

In his seminal essay on 'The cultural reformation in the study of ancient art', Karouzos surveyed changing attitudes toward the interpretation of ancient art.<sup>35</sup> He remarked that the positivism of the nineteenth century was originally resistant to any type of theorizing; earlier historians of art had not made the distinction between the stylistic or formal elements of an art work and its iconographical aspects, and this approach had prevented them from seeing the true essence of art. For him, his contemporary



Fig. 3. National Archaeological Museum. A view of the vase galleries (1991).

Fig. 4. National Archaeological Museum. A view of the vase galleries, after the latest redisplay (2007).

research development improved the analytical description by looking for the details and by understanding their coherence within the whole; thus, it could better appreciate the essence, what he called the 'the original meaning', of an artwork. His methodological tool for understanding any art form, such as that of ancient sculpture, was formal analysis. But as he constantly broadened his thinking, his interests went beyond this.

Karouzos believed that 'all eras had the same value' and in effect art historians should write art history not by judging the artistic qualities or deficiencies of certain eras but by looking at the particularities of every period: 'what each period wanted and what it had to say'.<sup>36</sup> He also overtly believed in the redemptive power of ancient art as well as in the unavoidable 'subjectivity' of the interpreter. For him, the real value of Greek art lay in its power to engage its viewers, whether specialists or lay people, in

a kind of personal interpretation and meditation.

These are important points of departure especially when they apply to museum displays. Recognizing the drawbacks of older<sup>37</sup> more traditional practices that had dictated museum exhibiting before the forties, the Karouzos' model aimed to present the classical past as a linear evolution of art, placing the emphasis on arranging the collections in taxonomic categories, according to chronology, typology and stylistic production of different workshops.<sup>38</sup> The overall aim was to illustrate the evolving ideological, philosophical, political or social ideas of ancient society, by focusing on the stylistic particularities of each individual artistic era. The artefacts were enlisted to help narrate the 'spirit' and 'soul' of the ancestors; some were selected to be used in palimpsest-like illustrations of the evolution of ancient Greek art. The model, however, enhanced the obvious aesthetic values of the displays, which were left to speak for themselves without the interference of any socially or historically meaningful concepts and interpretation. The archaeological narrative of the objects was implied but not made explicit. History was thus self-evidential and *a priori* incorporated within the objects. This conceptual framework stipulated aesthetically simple and harmonious museographical solutions, in accordance with the 'noble simplicity and calm grandeur'<sup>39</sup> of the ancient works of art, which should be presented 'with lucidity and vividness [...] and knowledge [...] concealed behind the visual pleasure'.<sup>40</sup>

Karouzos' position on theories of art and of the museum is also clearly revealed in the following text: 'I accept, as other [art historians] did before, that a Museum of the History of Art has as its main objective not to serve History tout court but the History of Art. [...] A well-organized Museum of the History of Art acts as an illustration to a handbook on Art History; it can also act as an illustration to a handbook on history only by coincidence'.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, for Semni Karouzou a good museum display 'should [...] lack predisposition and submission to a pre-determined form before an understanding of the material and a study of its needs is achieved. [...] [It should be devoid] of all the weaknesses that characterize some of the modern museums and galleries'.<sup>42</sup>

Thus their redisplay work in the Museum, which coincided with most of the early post-war period till the late sixties, followed these general principles. The first post-war temporary exhibition (1948-1954) they developed,<sup>43</sup> aimed

to illustrate the main periods of ancient Greek art and was regarded as a foretaste of the permanent museum displays they would organize soon after. For them, a good exhibition demanded of its author an excellent level of intellectual preparation and a thorough knowledge of the history of ancient art, a very good command and documentation of the material, good comprehension of the history of European Art, the ability to understand the *Zeitgeist* that characterizes every period as well as aesthetic sensibility and cultivation.<sup>44</sup> These qualities in conjunction with any external factors relating to the available space or the quality of the collections, would determine the curators' final choices.<sup>45</sup>

From an epistemological standpoint, the exhibition was grounded in the scientific maxims of ordering and dividing the objects 'as the material dictated' and as the 'scientific research, stylistic analysis and experienced eye' suggested into chronological periods, regions, styles and artistic personalities.

With regard to the presentation of pottery in the National Archaeological Museum, the theoretical structure was drawn up in accordance with Beazleyite *connoisseurship*,<sup>46</sup> that is the scrutinizing of works of art in order to attribute them to an individual artist or workshop, as bearers of style. That approach was in keeping with the development of pottery studies during that period when Beazley's attributions had drawn a measure of consensus that was unmatched.

For Karouzos, there was an unbreakable bond between the physiognomy of ancient Greek art, its principles, its ideals and the notion of Greekness: 'We talk about ancient Greek art because the scholars gather and understand the characteristics of Greekness from the examples of this ancient art; and these are the same intrinsic characteristics we have in mind when talking about the Greekness of our contemporary art. [...] [These are also the qualities] that a European sees and [automatically] feels much more familiar with than when encountering the arts of other peoples'.<sup>47</sup>

In his important essay on 'The educational role of museums', we again see his ideas on this subject: 'The Museum of any type [...] must not only be a sort of specialized workshop for the experts but must become an important part of the people's spiritual and mental life'.<sup>48</sup> For him, the art of teaching in a museum relied less on the psychology of the recipient than on the instructor's profound knowledge of his subject matter. He expressed his great

reservations about popularized forms of archaeology and art, what he called the 'danger of the illustrated classics' and amateur pedagogy, that encouraged teachers to give prime importance to learning theories and communication methods and less to the quality and breadth of scientific knowledge. These views are clearly in direct contrast with current post-modern museological theories on communication, learning and interpretation. And although it would be an anachronism to pass judgement on them as elitist and conservative in today's terms, they certainly raise some concerns regarding the capacity of the National Museum to establish thereafter an effective communication pathway with its lay audiences.

However, the scientific, educational and artistic input of that first post-war redisplay of the 'resurrected antiquities'<sup>49</sup> was recognized and highly praised by everyone<sup>50</sup> in the early post-war years. For its authors, the Museum could finally be 'a schoolhouse for youngsters and kids who grew up without antiquities [... a place] to be revitalized in the Greek miracle', 'the most important School of Greek education for the entire world'.<sup>51</sup>

Moving on to the post-war reorganization of the Acropolis Museum, its aesthetic and philosophical exhibition rationale was strikingly similar to that of the National Archaeological Museum. This work was largely the outcome of one person's personal vision, wisdom, aesthetic sensitivity and expertise, that of Yannis Miliadis, director of the Museum for the period 1942-1964. Miliadis' redisplay<sup>52</sup> was very much conditioned by his view of the museums as stifling closed places, a sort of prison wherein once sun-drenched art objects were obliged to live away from their natural sunlit environment and were jumbled together in an arbitrary way often producing some unhappy matches. Thus, he focused his work on finding ways to mitigate this imprisonment by creating a warm semi-natural environment for the displays, essentially 'as little museum-like as possible'.<sup>53</sup> A real humanist and classical aesthete who had studied history of ancient and modern art in Germany, he advocated that 'ancient places are sealed with the stamp of History and of Art'<sup>54</sup> and that 'a modern museum is both a work of science and art'.<sup>55</sup>

In 1952, the remodelling<sup>56</sup> of the Acropolis Museum was under way. This was undertaken in three stages starting in 1954 and ending in 1964. In 1956, the press applauded: 'this Museum is a work of love. Miliadis loved the Museum passionately and this enthusiasm gave him

the strength to create a new and wonderful Museum of the Acropolis'.<sup>57</sup>

The rationale adopted by these two national museums acted as a kind of meso-system<sup>58</sup> which inspired and shaped the exhibition philosophies of other important archaeological museums in Greece. The purpose of the new Museum of Ancient Olympia, for instance, and of its exhibition was to reflect the glorious and enduring life of the most renowned Pan-Hellenic sanctuary and through it to outline the sensational history of ancient Greek art. The organization of the exhibition followed the stereotypical pattern of arranging the material in chronological order and typological groups, assuming an informed audience.

In the Museum of Delphi, the pre-war, object-oriented, linear and purely aesthetic exhibition, which made liberal use of large-scale plaster reconstructions, was disparaged in the post-war period as being scientifically incorrect. The collections were then reassembled according to more 'objective' scientific principles, thus creating a chronological sequence, with each gallery being dedicated to an individual monument or a homogeneous group of objects.

In the Kerameikos Museum, the philosophy behind the exhibition was the traditional one of scholarship. In the sculptural displays, Gisela Richter's<sup>59</sup> connoisseurship of stylistic evolution and her legacy to the field of sculptural studies could be clearly detected. In the language of museum exhibitions, this formalist methodology translated into linear and chronological displays which did not postulate any knowledge on the part of the visitors beyond their sheer power of observation and aesthetic judgement.

Most of these exhibitions remained unchanged, 'frozen' in time for many years and some of them were still on view as late as the nineties. However, by then new demands had arisen and driving forces were being shaped as a result of the gradual evolution of society, the rising level of education, the general modernization, the growth in tourism and new trends in archaeological resource management. In the light of these developments, the traditional functions of the national museums and their legacy seemed outmoded.<sup>60</sup> Newspaper commentaries<sup>61</sup> concentrated on various issues, such as the lack of organization, the inadequate provision of services for the public, poor management and marketing strategies, shortages of personnel, lack of funding, the enduring presence of intellectual elitism, and above all the need for new aesthetically attractive and intellectually stimulating exhibitions and archaeolog-





Fig. 5. Newspaper article welcoming the inauguration of the Museum of Ancient Agora in Athens in 1956 (source: *To Vima*, 4 September 1956, 3).

ical interpretation. Thus, they argued that the national museums and their ilk had gradually declined from being ‘museological cornerstones’ and ‘priceless jewels’ to ‘cracked window[s] on the Hellenic culture’,<sup>62</sup> ‘stifling’<sup>63</sup>, ‘cold, inhospitable and old-fashioned [...] museum-monuments of classical museological philosophies’.<sup>64</sup>

Divergent museum cases and their cultural context

In the fifties, a diversion from the dominant interpretative model was provided by the Museum of the Athenian Ancient Agora which was organized by the American School of Classical Studies. As a museum paradigm, it influenced other, mainly regional museums whose collections, no matter how important, were not distinguished by major works of art but rather by archaeologically important objects which narrated the story of everyday life in antiquity.

The American School of Classical Studies, along with its commitment to the excavation project<sup>65</sup> which ‘raised Hellenist archaeology and the professionalization of the American School to new heights’,<sup>66</sup> was also responsible for the erection of a museum on site and for the landscaping of the entire area. In 1949 the School decided, with the approval of the Greek authorities, on the reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos II, a project which was regarded as ‘a terrific challenge’ and ‘the most monumental and daring undertaking to which the School had ever committed itself’.<sup>67</sup> It was also perceived as ‘a contribution of the first rank to classical scholarship and as an expression of American friendship for Greece’.<sup>68</sup> The inauguration ceremony took place on 3 September 1956 in the presence of the Greek royal family, the Greek prime minister, many ministers, the leaders of the opposition parties, many visiting scholars and hundreds of ordinary people.<sup>69</sup> For Greek state officials,<sup>70</sup> the site and its museum represented a diachronic paragon, as valuable and significant as ‘a text of Platonic philosophy, a passage from the Bible, a school or a church’. For those reasons, the Greek state expressed its immense gratitude to the researchers from the American School who had resurrected the site and thus contributed decisively to the revival of the birthplace of democracy and to the protection of universal freedom, justice and solidarity. For the American government,<sup>71</sup> the restoration project and the creation of the museum ‘was the American people’s debt of honour to ancient Athens [...] the symbol of Democracy, the most valuable ideological inheritance of Ancient Greece. [...] [Thus the restored Stoa became] a living monument and dedication to the voice of freedom [...] representing common ideals between USA and Greece’.

However, enthusiasm for the resurrection of the ancient monument was not unanimous. The heated arguments among exponents<sup>72</sup> and opponents<sup>73</sup> of the project focused on matters such as scientific accuracy, contemporary site management, ideology and international politics. For its opponents, the reconstructed stoa represented a reinforcement of the dominant state ideology and the rhetoric of Western (American) imperialism and capitalism which was exemplified by the personification of American dollar donors as modern analogues of Hellenistic rulers.

As to the museum’s exhibiting rationale, it was not just linear and chronological but also theme-oriented. It was an innovative interpretative approach, which was largely

## Museum representations of the classical past in post-war Greece: a critical analysis



Fig. 6. Museum of Ancient Agora in Athens.  
A gallery view (1991).



Fig. 7. Museum of Ancient Agora in Athens.  
A gallery view, after the redisplay (2006).

imposed by the notion of the historical and associative function of the finds as ‘valuable supplements to the ancient authors’.<sup>74</sup> Traditional archaeologists frequently stressed dependencies between archaeology and history, by seeking to equate their archaeological discoveries with certain historical events and by effectively making them speak in seemingly traditional historical language.<sup>75</sup> However, the relationship between written texts and artefacts and their respective values as sources of evidence for the ancient world is not always clearly defined, and archaeologists have often felt uneasy about the role of material culture being reduced to providing illustrations to texts. In the exhibition of the Agora Museum and its philosophy, the excavated material has been used conventionally to supplement and illustrate the literature and history written by ancient authors, whose work is already known, albeit generally just implied in the conceptual space of the Agora museum exhibition. And here it is perhaps relevant

to remember Anthony Snodgrass’ warning about the ‘positivist fallacy’<sup>76</sup> of classical archaeology. This fallacy may appear in museum representations of any type and consists in making archaeological prominence and historical importance into almost interchangeable terms as well as equating what is observable with what is significant.

A revolutionary air of change was felt again some twenty years later, in 1975, in the Archaeological Museum of Volos and the Greek museological landscape in general. George Hourmouziadis’ renowned redisplay in the Neolithic and burial customs galleries of the Volos Museum and his particular style and philosophy marked a departure from the traditions of archaeological reports and museum exhibiting of the seventies and could be seen as an attempt to instil new life into the firmly cemented Greek museum culture. His propositions for and work on displays, which introduced the discourse of New Archaeology for the first time into the Greek museum, were



Fig. 8. Archaeological Museum of Volos. A view of the burial customs gallery (1991).



Fig. 9. Archaeological Museum of Volos. A view of the burial customs gallery, after the redisplay (2005).

founded on his belief in the social role of archaeology and the dynamics of a school-like rather than a temple-like museum.<sup>77</sup> This type of museum, being more ‘democratic’, accessible and educative, could train visitors to be active rather than passive recipients of the past. Hourmouziadis denounced stereotypical approaches based on chronological order and topographical determination and aimed to subvert the idea of a museum as a conservative institution for the sanctification and adoration of high art. He wanted to transform it into a cultural institution of the history of civilization. For this goal, he selected displays on their historical, social and educational rather than aesthetic or artistic merit; he also used various interpretative means such as replicas and reconstructed objects, photographs with present-day ethnographic parallels, simulated excavation stratigraphy and situational contextual displays in the form of recreated authentic burial groups.

The redisplay of the Museum of Volos was Hourmouziadis’ museological archetype and *magnum opus*. Although its realization preceded the final formulation of his museum theories in the eighties, it undoubtedly manifested the nucleus of his vision for an essentially educational museum. In the writings he published soon after, Hourmouziadis expounded further his ideas on the historical, social, ideological and epistemological roles of the archaeological museum in modern Greek society. Within a surprisingly post-modern frame of mind, he approached the museum as a cultural process embedded in a given social context where a web of interrelated forces exists. He also spoke about the subjectivity of archaeologists as in-

terpreters of the past and the possibilities of creating open channels of communication between the authors of an official display and the diverse museum audiences.

Hourmouziadis’ work certainly impressed<sup>78</sup> but his theoretical seeds did not manage to germinate immediately in the unreceptive or resistant fields of the dominant archaeological and museum discourse. And whenever his model was tried out or even partly adopted in other museums and exhibitions, it tended to involve the presentation of the prehistoric rather than the classical past. It did, however, endure and was considered irreplaceable as the recent redisplay of the Archaeological Museum of Volos proves. In 2004, the Neolithic and burial-customs galleries were refurbished but retained the thirty-year old Hourmouziadis’ museological and museographical solutions.

The period of the unsustainable archaeological museum expansion (1977-1996). The classical past as empirical and objective analysis of archaeological finds

In 1977, a succession of events and changes indicated the transition to a new phase of archaeological and museum development in Greece, during which previous approaches were ‘refrozen’.<sup>79</sup> Others came to signpost ‘unfreezing’ and gradually ‘moving’ processes in certain domains of Greek archaeology, in legal frameworks that determined the structure of the Archaeological Ephorate and its human resources, in politics that reinforced the appropriation of antiquities for national and international purposes,

and in society at large that intensified its demands for a more educational and democratic museum.

There were many leverage points causing these changes to happen and here the spotlight will be turned on the most striking ones.

First, in 1977 Presidential Decree 941 was implemented to provide for a new administrative structure of the Archaeological Service, based on two key elements: the epistemological and the institutional. Hence, the permanent division of the Ephorates into those of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities on the one hand and Byzantine on the other was put into effect, along with the administrative scheme that allocated one of each type to two or more rural districts. The same Decree provided for an increase in the number of all kinds of posts in the Archaeological Service, a development made necessary by the dramatic growth in archaeological work, museum and field, all over the country. This unprecedented expansion gradually exacerbated the existing malfunctions in the Service<sup>80</sup> and caused even more discontent among the archaeologists and demands for more flexible and effective administrative schemes. Under the fast growing pressure for more rescue excavations and intensified bureaucratic work, state archaeologists were in no position to dedicate time and energy to composite complex interpretative approaches towards their research subjects and museum collections and even less to the implementation of thoroughly thought out museum displays and activities. Ten years later in 1987, Anthony Snodgrass, in his book *An Archaeology of Greece: the Present State and Future Scope of a Discipline*, expressed his amazement but also his concern:

‘The historically conscious visitor to Greece today [would be] rightly impressed by the steady increase in the number of local museums and in the quality of exhibition. What he or she may not appreciate is that what is actually displayed is merely the beautiful tip of an unsightly iceberg. Almost every museum in Greece is compelled to conceal in its storerooms a mass, growing year by year at an alarming pace, of material unsuited to exhibition, which is often unpublished and sometimes destined to remain so’.<sup>81</sup>

The daily and periodic press continues to follow the state of affairs in the museum sector closely and produces articles with suggestive headlines<sup>82</sup> that turn the spotlight on various important issues: ‘Museums for all the people’

(1977), ‘Archaeological education in Greece is underdeveloped’ (1980), ‘Our museums are for ... the museum. They don’t inform or approach the public’ (1982), ‘The museum and the school’ (1982), ‘The National Archaeological Museum, a cracked window on the Hellenic culture’ (1984), ‘The Heart of the museums malfunctions’ (1984), ‘The Museum is not a mausoleum... Greece is full of ancient monuments but the Greeks do not know them’ (1986), ‘The lonely statues. The Greeks treat museums snobbishly, even now that there is no admission fee’ (1989), ‘Labyrinths and clues. The Greek museums and how they are exhibited’ (1991), ‘Let’s revive the museums’ (1992), ‘Museum policy in Greece. Common ills’ (1993).

In 1977, Manolis Andronikos unearthed the celebrated finds of the royal tombs of Vergina. Great Bronze Age and classical sites such as Knossos, Mycenae, Athens, Olympia, Delphi, Delos, etc. had traditionally received much more, almost exclusive, scholarly and public attention compared to the peripheral and more far-flung parts of the Greek world such as Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia and Thrace. Hence, Vergina took on a complex symbolism signposting a new era for the development of Greek, and more specifically Macedonian and Hellenistic archaeology, which from the periphery came to the centre of national and international interest among specialists, politicians and the general public. The significance of the archaeological research in Vergina operated at various levels and pointed in different directions. At the epistemological level, and in contrast to earlier experience in the archaeological history of southern Greece, most of the research in Macedonia was conducted by Greek archaeologists. The excavation in Vergina caused surprise and excitement by giving a more physical aspect to the historical view of Philip II and of Alexander the Great. From a cultural and political perspective, Vergina and the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, as the rightful host of the Vergina finds at that time, proved once more how archaeology and antiquities can be appropriated locally and globally for political purposes as symbols of national imagery and identity.<sup>83</sup> Vergina reflected a serious international issue in the sensitive Balkan peninsula, the Macedonian Question, especially as this gathered momentum following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the declaration of autonomy of its southernmost republic. From 1991, as is very well known, the erstwhile Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece entered a long and fiercely contested dispute



Fig. 10. Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.  
A view of the Vergina gallery (1992).



Fig. 11. Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.  
A view of the 'Gold of the Macedonians' gallery (2006).

centring on either side's nationalist claims that involved the renegotiation of Macedonia's classical and Hellenistic past in the context of its modern present.

Macedonia had not originally attracted intense interest in archaeological research for a number of reasons. From 1977 onwards, however, the explosion of systematic and rescue excavations in the entire region dramatically changed the state of archaeological affairs and historical research in Macedonia. Vergina by virtue of its scientific merit and its ideological dimension contributed first to a modern popularization of archaeology among the Greek people and secondly to a general awareness of the interdependence of academic and broader social and political processes. This archaeological 'fever' endured and was systematically reinforced by the excavators of Vergina and other Macedonian sites with the recovery of important new findings, with their frequent reports and interviews in the mass media, with the preparation of various exhibitions in Greece and abroad<sup>84</sup> and the publication of lavishly illustrated academic and popular books. People saw in the 'Tomb of Philip' a way to boast of and enhance both Greek and local Macedonian prestige. The Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki which hosted the finds enjoyed a sort of renaissance and became a kind of National Museum of Macedonian Archaeology and the most interesting museum paradigm for this period.

The temporary exhibition *Treasures of Ancient Macedonia*, which took place in the museum in 1978, stands out as a pioneer museological landmark for its artistic, scientific, political and economic (i.e. touristic) significance.

For the first time, the then recent discoveries from Vergina were put on display for public contemplation and admiration. The exhibition enjoyed immense popularity, publicity and state support; further, it provided the core of the material for the subsequent formation of a number of permanent galleries in the museum and the organization of many block-buster exhibitions travelling to USA, Canada, Australia and Europe. The exhibition took part in the European competition for the annual Museum Award. This was in recognition of its significance as the first temporary exhibition of ancient Greek art with a special subject and of such international magnitude. Certainly, the uniqueness of the displays and the public fascination with them helped a lot. Also, the fact that the organisers made a point of producing clear statements regarding the aims and objectives of the exhibition as well as producing supplementary material (e.g. catalogue, leaflets, etc.) contributed to its success. In addition, the rejection of the conventional method of showing metalwork in chronological order, arranged by categories within serried ranks of show-cases, and the preference for a careful and 'scientific' arrangement of the finds according to geographical district and burial context suggested a new interpretative approach. In fact, in subsequent museum presentations of the material, either in the same museum or abroad, this categorization became standard practice and a museological vogue. Last but not least, special care was taken with the aesthetic embellishment of the environment within which the objects would be staged. This interest translated into attempts to create the impression of an underground chamber tomb

or generally of an enclosed shrine containing the Macedonian ancestral heritage, which would evoke deeper emotional responses and aesthetic admiration for the beauty, variety and functionality of the displays.<sup>85</sup> The exhibition *Alexander the Great: History and Legend in Art*, which followed soon after in 1980 was equally dazzling.

In essence, the long-term value of these museum undertakings was also that they laid the foundations for the later development of temporary exhibitions which became a distinct, meaningful and important independent museum category. The various practical issues and intricacies involved in the preparation of temporary displays, such as lack of space, restricted budgets, or the need for novel museographies, suggested a new set of requirements that Greek archaeological museums would have to meet and satisfy from then on.

The Vergina legend and its aftermath, however, caused some scepticism and disbelief regarding the manner in which archaeological research was taught, conducted and valued in Greece. In the late eighties, an interesting dispute emanated from the caustic slogans (e.g. 'Vergina syndrome')<sup>86</sup> of a Greek academic who described and condemned the modern phenomena of 'treasure hunting' and the ecstatic exaltation over archaeological finds by members of the Greek archaeological community. Another argument pointed at the traditional ways employed by archaeological museums to communicate using the logic of the spectacular and unique masterpiece-display at the expense of the ordinary and non-spectacular, albeit historically significant archaeological artefact. It was argued that museum philosophies contributed to a distorted picture of the historical reality by feeding visitors predetermined ideas about material valuation and archaeological practice. In general, the objects in such a museum display were not contextualized; instead, they became icons of art and technological excellence, displayed and elevated in a highly aesthetic setting, but still in splendid isolation and remoteness from their original environment. The displays remained mute; they were magically seductive and strangely detached, whereas the threads of history were left dangling and unconnected.

In 1977, the law previously banning the export of Greek excavation finds before they had been thoroughly examined and published was rescinded and replaced by new legislation (Act No. 654/1977) which allowed the export of antiquities for the exclusive purpose of temporary exhi-

bitions abroad, as a result of a decision by the Council of Ministers. The debate regarding loan exhibitions of Greek antiquities to foreign countries was almost a century old,<sup>87</sup> when the issue of 'unfreezing' the archaeological and cultural affairs of the country resurfaced in the late seventies. This legal amendment opened up possibilities for the preparation of a series of touring exhibitions to foreign museums all around the globe. After an initiative sponsored by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1979, France, the USA and the USSR were the first countries to host Greek antiquities as part of an exhibition on Aegean art.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, however, the decision provoked a great turmoil of reactions<sup>89</sup> and controversy across the spectrum of Greek society (i.e. politicians, archaeologists, other intellectuals and the Greek public), and created ethical dilemmas and divisions within Greek archaeology and Greek society. The issue of exporting antiquities was vividly captured in numerous headlines and features in the national press, and was also manifested through public discussions and strong protests intended to familiarize the general public with the issue and raise awareness about the international appropriation of its cultural patrimony. Between 1977 and 1979 feelings of generalized discontent ran high over the 'indignity', the 'sacrilege', the 'national humiliation', the 'insulted pride', the 'politics of window-dressing' and the 'commoditization' and 'selling-out of antiquities' that suggested 'a great poverty of mind and hypocrisy'. In February 1979 the reaction against the 'kidnapping of the gods' turned into an unprecedented 'battle of the amphoras'<sup>90</sup> staged on the island of Crete, where the people of Herakleion demonstrated their unanimous opposition to the government's plans to include objects from the collections of the local archaeological museum in the touring exhibition. As the press at the time and later research suggested, the 'battle for the amphorae' came to symbolize the opposition of ordinary people to foreign policies of dependence, played out in the exportation of valuable and unique antiquities to the USA, whose military presence in Crete had always been a thorny issue.

Undoubtedly, global politics and Greece's position at any given point in time within dynamically changing international arenas was, if not always then very often, reflected in the discourse of travelling exhibitions that became valuable cultural ambassadors at the service of the nation. Hence the country's friendly or inflammatory relationships with neighbouring countries (such as Turkey) or with powerful

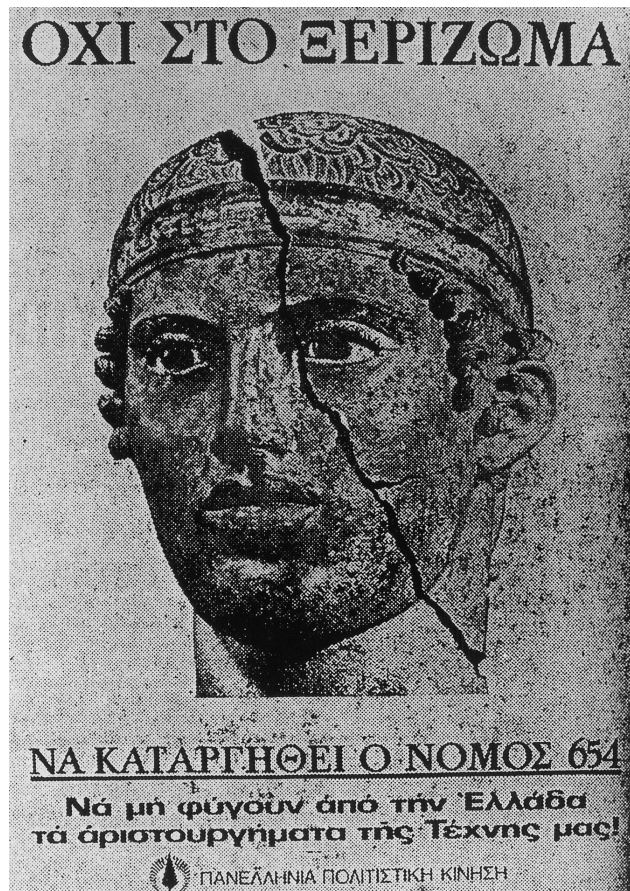


Fig. 12. Poster prepared as part of the campaign against Law 654/1977 that allowed the export of antiquities for the purpose of temporary exhibitions outside Greece.

nations such as the USA, Greece's accession to the European Community in 1981 and its role within the Union ever since, ambitious national endeavours such as the hosting of the Olympic Games or its affiliations with the dynamically progressing Greek diaspora and other political expressions comprise the discursive 'cultural' exo- and macro-systems that have affected the discourse about exhibitions for the last thirty years. Moreover, the use of artworks as symbols, vehicles of ideological messages and heralds of national rhetoric through touring exhibitions is a globally established phenomenon and they operate as engines of cultural global diplomacy.

So, in this maiden travelling exhibition, Greek archaeology and museum displays were called upon to abandon their innocence and make various political statements. It must be stressed, however, that the highly politicized cli-

mate that surrounded this, and other exhibitions that followed, was implicit in the various macro- and exo-systems that influenced the choice of the exhibition themes<sup>91</sup> and their reception by Greek and foreign politicians. There was no explicit political resonance in the narrative and rhetoric of the exhibition *per se*. This, instead, maintained an aura of 'neutrality' which was shaped and enhanced by the arrangement of the displays according to traditional art historical canons. The exhibition narrative was developed based on a progressive itinerary through Aegean art and so aesthetics was the overall organizing principle, with emphasis on the scholarly unfolding of correct chronological, typological and stylistic orders. And this was a recurrent pattern in many of the exhibitions that followed.

Travelling exhibitions of Greek antiquities, as a distinct cultural system, have marched rapidly to a 'moving' and 'refreezing' stage, with national and international politics and agreements acting as leverage points for making decisions on what will be loaned where and when. Moreover, the different cultural norms of the receiving audiences dictated for the most part the philosophy, museographical styles and scenographies as well as the marketing of the 'shows', with the USA, Canada and Australia being markedly more commercialized than their European counterparts, creating an array of by-products to supplement the exhibitions (symposia, lectures, films, books, gift goods, museum reproductions, social events, etc.). Travelling exhibitions expanded immensely, not only in quantity but also in the range of themes covered. Of all the possible topics, those generally preferred have always been themselves of 'classical value and quality', such as classical humanism, the miracle of Athenian democracy and classical education, the Aegean sea and its grandeur as the cradle of Hellenism and of European culture, Alexander the Great as a historical superstar, the Macedonian Greeks and their treasures (perhaps the most travelled theme), the Olympic athletic ideal and later – from the nineties on – the glory of Byzantium. Occasionally, other politically neutral topics also came to the fore, such as the enduring maritime might of Greece, the imagery, spiritual and physical expression of Eros, or the Mycenaean world. Overall, the unbroken continuity between ancient and modern Greek culture and the legacy of the ancient Greek world to modern Europe or the West as a whole were common denominators and the usual canvases on which any chosen theme could then be painted in glittering colours.

Looking at the interpretative choices and arrangements of these exhibitions, they mostly conformed to the standard practice of presenting chronologically linear narratives, occasionally enriched by thematic sub-categories and a good dose of supportive historical information and photographic illustrations. In most cases, the juxtaposing of splendid and aesthetically unique objects with a jumble of more commonplace artefacts led the exhibition organisers to adopt presentation strategies of a more didactic, instructive and moving nature.

When it comes to assessing the significance of these exhibitions, this can be viewed firstly by looking at their popularity and secondly and most importantly by estimating their long-term contribution to the institution of cultural exchanges and changing museological mentalities in the country. The maiden exhibition on Aegean art, and many that followed, attracted media and public attention. From a political point of view, the Graeco-Turkish dispute over the Aegean has been sustained and at times dangerously escalated. Nevertheless, the great legacy, especially of the early pioneer exhibitions, was that they forced politicians, archaeologists, other intellectuals and the Greek public at large to view classical heritage – and the protection of cultural property – from a new and challenging perspective. And no matter how much turmoil and anxiety such challenges bring, they also have the power to create the necessary conditions for modernization and development. From a museological perspective, these exhibitions signalled, in the long run, the beginnings of a new museum culture in Greece. The demands of the global cultural museum scene acted as driving forces for the adoption of a new museological mentality that would eventually lead to the steady modernization of local museum practice. This modernization would entail: the introduction of aesthetically more pleasing museographies; the enhancement of the intellectual accessibility of the collections; the promotion of the educational role of archaeological museums; the offer of better visitor services; the aspiration to attract bigger audiences; and overall a better public understanding of the value of the past.

Alongside the travelling exhibitions, local temporary exhibitions<sup>92</sup> also emerged in the late seventies and gathered momentum in 1985 with the proclamation of Athens as the first European ‘City of Culture’. The international magnitude of that year’s events and their political and cultural significance at home brought a pleasant breeze

of change into the preparation, production and final realization of temporary archaeological exhibitions. Special financial aid, provided mostly by central government but also by corporate sponsorship, as well as the appointment of interdisciplinary teams of experts were two of the principal driving forces that transformed temporary exhibitions from self-indulgent scholarly exercises into public events with ‘well-considered educational purposes’.<sup>93</sup> Temporary exhibitions, as a distinct and important independent museum category, have represented ever since an alternative narrative route to the past. Thematic exhibitions as a conceptual scheme and as a practical undertaking have also been subsequently endorsed by numerous permanent exhibitions which varied according to the nature of the archaeological objects available for display.

From the very first exhibition in the National Archaeological Museum entitled *The Child in Antiquity*, the range of potential themes has been vast, covering various fields of interest and chronological periods: Athenian democracy, classical education, art, philosophy, the arts, maritime history, athletic contests, women in antiquity, Greek jewellery, ancient music and dance, legendary personalities and many others. The reasons behind their creation were similarly diverse: honorific (i.e. international yearly celebrations on specific topic, EU festivals, anniversaries etc.); disciplinary (interest arising from new fascinating archaeological discoveries or from joint projects with European partners); patriotic (the Macedonian issue, the hosting of the Olympic Games); bilateral (the work of foreign archaeological institutions in Greece, cultural ties between Greece and other countries, etc), or purely educational and visitor-oriented. Last but not least, their interpretative approaches, expressed through the use of more daring juxtapositions of authentic objects and enriched interpretative media (gallery labelling, catalogues, audio-visually, plaster models and much more) along with aesthetically more appealing museographical presentations created some optimism regarding the educational potential of the Greek archaeological museum.

In 1983, the founding of the Hellenic National Committee of ICOM prepared the ground for making international codes of ethics and practices acceptable to the Greek cultural sector. Since then, there has been an abundance of activities (hosting of international museological conferences, publications, workshops, etc.), educational programmes and seminars set up in many venues with various target au-





Fig. 13. View of the temporary exhibition 'Mind and Body', National Archaeological Museum, 1990 (photo: Courtesy of the Hellenic National Committee of ICOM).

diences. In the late eighties, the so-called 'Museum:School' seminar for teachers interested in museum education and in the mid-nineties, the 'Melina Project: Education and Culture', a co-operative venture between the Ministries of Culture and Education were launched, as two major strategic projects in the field of museum education.

Although museum education in Greece was destined to thrive in the form of regular cultural programmes<sup>94</sup>, anxieties regarding field and post-excavation archaeological practices were steadily growing. In 1984 during the Second Conference of the Association of Greek Archaeologists, many professionals expressed anew their anxiety for the tremendously onerous volume of bureaucratic deskwork that kept them from insightful exposure to new archaeological and museum theories and practices. Around the same time, foreign archaeologists started to be critical of the theoretical backwardness of classical archaeology and its two-and-a-half-centuries-long 'Great Tradition'.<sup>95</sup> They argued that many classical archaeologists had been reluctant to taste the 'nouvelle cuisine' offered by New Archaeology which seemed to them: 'seductive in appearance but nutritionally unsatisfying',<sup>96</sup> thus the 'Great Di-

vide' between new archaeological deduction and classical archaeological induction grew bigger.

The voices of local activists advocating the need for the introduction of new interpretative systems to Greek archaeology and archaeological museums were also heard loud and clear. A. Zois, A. Tsaravopoulos<sup>97</sup> and G. Hourmouziadis were the most forceful in their attempts to detect and all were analyzing the restraining factors that held Greek museum archaeology back from fulfilling its social role.

Zois focused on the organizational rigidity and the lack of material resources and administration frameworks (in the Archaeological Service, University departments and individuals alike) which inhibited the production of good scientific research and studies. Tsaravopoulos criticized the monolithic and boring character of many regional archaeological museums; he traced the sources of this malady to the museums' treasure-driven rationale, the enforced centralized archaeological administration, the lack of a comprehensive national museum policy, the unsatisfactory and old fashioned museum architecture, the geographically uneven distribution of museums around

the Greek regions and last but not least the burdensome accumulation of hundreds of thousands of archaeological finds in overflowing storage rooms.

Since 1976, Hourmouziadis has been pointing up the existence of a museological problem in Greece, which has resulted in the ‘distancing’ of museums from their public. For him, the museological problem was not a technical or empirical one (i.e. inappropriate or insufficient museum premises, lack of adequate storage and security systems, lack of personnel, etc.) but essentially epistemological. He claimed that ‘no specific museological theory has been so far put forward. [...] [Therefore archaeologists] were not in a position to locate museum exhibitions that have become theoretically out-dated, for none has been grounded on any sort of theory’.<sup>98</sup>

He also talked about the ideological, hegemonic, ‘hoarding-up treasures’ attitude of the Greek museum which adopted canons of shallow aestheticism and historical eclecticism; thereby, the Greek museum sustained certain empirical, particularistic and formalistic exhibition norms such as those of ‘ancestor worship’ and the notion of the historic continuity of the Greek nation. His observations led him to the eventual conclusion that the Greek archaeological museum has been turned into a sanctified temple-like institution (*ναός*), a place of religious mysticism and hierarchical discipline that has, not surprisingly, been fairly unpopular with a non-specialist public.

In 1999, he reiterated his claim regarding the absence of defined museological theories in Greece, something which had deprived museums of any chance of producing ‘educational or simply recreational experiences’.<sup>99</sup> He contended that the museum was a system that managed national ‘attributes’ and juxtaposed static ‘images’ with ‘controlled’ information. As such, it got trapped within the rigid contours of standardized national allusions and lost its functional qualities, for it remained true to its age-long aesthetic and object-oriented rationale. He proposed the creation of a new museological theory which would provide for the operation of any museum on the following three post-modern principles: a) approaching the archaeological subject through a more universal, rather than narrowly national, spectrum of attitudes and values; b) subverting the static nature of museum objects by dynamically inscribing them within a vivid story-line, that incorporates audio-visual interpretative media and has connections with everyday issues familiar to everyone; c) empowering the visitor to



Fig. 14. View of the educational programme ‘Sunday Tales’ run in the National Archaeological Museum in 2006. Target group: families with children.

manage the production of information in the museum, in order to be able to judge, consume and reject.

The period of great opportunities and pressing challenges (1997 to the present day). Towards cultural interpretations of the classical past

Since 1997 the Greek archaeological museum has been exposed to many opportunities of a legal, financial, scientific and technological nature, not to mention great challenges at all levels and on all fronts, institutional, ideological, social and epistemological. All of these have acted as incentives, leading the sector to ‘unfreeze’, abandoning previously established realities and slowly ‘move’ toward changes that can lay the foundations for new modes of managing, interpreting and exhibiting the past, classical or otherwise, in the Greek museum. This process of change is still very much on-going, therefore we cannot assess it as a ‘closed’ entity. Nor can we isolate any individual museums and focus the spotlight on them, as has been attempted for the two preceding periods. We shall, however, outline an array of measures, landmarks and administrative schemes that have acted as leverage points in these changes.

First, between 1997 and 2004, the doctrine of diachronic and synergistic processes in culture was propagated by the Ministry of Culture.<sup>100</sup> Within this ideological spectrum, Law 2557 ‘Institutions, measures and actions for cultural development’ was implemented in 1997,



Fig. 15. Promotional banner for the redisplay of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki (2006).

introducing for the first time the term of museum policy and some relevant special measures on the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage. In 2002, Law 3028 'On the protection of antiquities and cultural heritage in general' was passed to replace the seventy-year-old Codified Law 5351/1932. The new legislation broadened the scope of cultural heritage, offering protection to monuments and cultural goods of all historical periods; it also established legal provisions for the museum sector for the first time and a definition of what a museum was. In 2003 more developments came to the fore with a new Presidential Decree (P.D. 191) that provided for the administrative and scientific restructuring of the Ministry of Culture.

At the same time, the European Union's Community Support Frameworks II and III were financing a large number of structural interventions in museums and archaeological sites all around the country, aimed at improving the quality and at reinforcing the overall develop-

ment of the cultural sector. More specifically, Operational Programme 'Culture' 2000-2006, through its Priority line One ('Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage') developed actions and measures designed to achieve the upgrading of the museum infrastructure, an increase in visitor numbers to museums, monuments and archaeological sites and the improvement of services offered to them. The flow of development funds in conjunction with the national vision and challenge of hosting the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens were the two most decisive driving forces that helped overturn existing museum practices, a project only comparable in scale and intensity to the one experienced in the early-post war regeneration period. Nevertheless, these developments demanded a fresh look on priorities, innovative strategies and policies – that were not always forthcoming – and generated a long-standing debate on public spending for cultural ventures.

Within this framework, the writing of detailed museological and museographic reports as baselines for the making of new exhibitions not only intensified but now conformed to specific and demanding guidelines. These guidelines, in effect, created fertile ground for more interdisciplinary projects. Exemplary new museums and exhibitions, such as the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, created benchmark work that inspired and guided other museum undertakings.

Since the late nineties there have been so many new exhibitions or redisplays that it is not easy to elaborate on their interpretative approaches or on any specific discursive trends. What we can nevertheless remark is that this is a period of diversity and eclecticism, at least as regards the aesthetics and the range of 'technical aids' endorsed by various exhibition curators. Less daring or diverse have been the changes at a conceptual and interpretative level. Insufficient time, tight budgets or pressing deadlines for the completion of new exhibition projects, not to mention reservations about breaking away from previously established interpretative patterns may be some of the restraining factors in the production of altogether innovative archaeological narratives.

Today, it is widely accepted that classical archaeologists have often been 'shy of, and resistant to, archaeological theory'<sup>101</sup> compared to other disciplines and practitioners of archaeology. As Anthony Snodgrass explained in a recent study: 'Classical Archaeology is a discipline devoted to the archaeology of objects, one which is traditionally

governed and organized, not by competing objectives or theories, approaches or models, but by classes of material [... It...] remains dominated by taxonomy and typology. [and...] has become a self-contained, even hermetically sealed, branch of scholarship'.<sup>102</sup>

Indeed, traditional classical archaeology, with its concentration on elite goods, aesthetics, judgement of styles and taste has often been criticized for having forgotten that 'we are studying the works of men, not typological ciphers and that cross-cultural stylistic influences occurred by means of actual people, rather than walking cultures'.<sup>103</sup>

Today, the concrete walls of the intellectual 'Great Divide' are not so solid anymore. In the last twenty years, Greek classical archaeology has undergone profound changes. New theoretical positions and the steady development of new methodologies have urged and helped classical archaeologists to come up with a new set of questions regarding their subject matter, and these changes should be reflected in museum interpretations as well.

In a recent book on classical archaeology, its editors remind us that 'our knowledge of the material culture of the Greek world is now so firmly based that we can readily answer the question of what an object, an assemblage, or a site is'. More importantly, they suggest that 'the hard questions which classical archaeology still has to face up to are questions about how objects relate to each other and above all to people'.<sup>104</sup> Certainly, the breadth and depth of the questions classical archaeologists can pose to archaeological objects about social life and their material associations can be enormous. Today's museum constructions of

the classical past can and should be similarly broad-ranging. In this process of opening up the classical world and classical heritage to multilayered theorizing, museums can be at the cutting edge of disciplinary discourses. There are many ways of viewing the past and its meanings. 'Theory' is not an optional extra for field and museum archaeologists, since the way they read the past is on the basis of a body of suppositions.

Therefore, by way of conclusion what we can reiterate is the need for a more theoretically comprehensive analysis and redefinition of the current roles and scope of the Greek archaeological museum as a knowledge producer in terms of the interpretative approaches it follows. For, as has gradually been acknowledged<sup>105</sup> over the last few years 'the museum visitor is capable of being gloriously subversive in the messages taken from exhibitions or thoroughly disempowered by omissions, oversights and generalities'. It is now time for museum curators to take up the task of interpreting their subject matter from many viewpoints and interconnecting angles. If this is seen as a call to arms for more scholarship and experimentation, museums and exhibitions can be the bulwark supporting new ways of working with and interrogating the past and its material culture, which can then be made accessible to non-specialist and thus to society as a whole.

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## NOTES

\* All photos are by the author, unless stated.

1. Liakos 2006, 199.

2. Liakos 2006, 199.

3. See Mouliou 1997, and for a brief account in Greek, Mouliou 1999. See also Hourmouziadi 2006, 69-87. On matters of management and organization of Greek state archaeological museums, see Voudouri 2003.

4. In relation to archaeology, 'discourse' is an institutional-

ized way of thinking that indicates how archaeological records, archives, exhibitions etc. can be constructed around local and global structures and networkings, methods and technologies of cultural production, ideas, rules, values, procedures, forms of rhetoric, narratives, institutions, people, means of dissemination, buildings, etc. These elements create specific frames of mind, dominant ideologies and power relations that affect our reception of and views on the past and its meaning for the present. For a general introduction to theories of discourse, see White 1978; MacDonnell 1986; Hall 1997, 6. On

discourse theories in archaeology, see Shanks & Hodder 1995, 24; Shanks 1996, 103-4. For a discursive understanding of the museum, among the extensive literature see Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Karp & Lavine 1991; Sherman & Rogoff 1994; Pearce 1995; Bal 1996; Lidchi 1997; Hein 2000; Sloan 2003; Preziosi 2003; Lord 2005.

5. Representation is a signifying practice performed in diverse social contexts and institutional sites, including museums. The archaeological museum, as one representational system of the archaeological discourse, appropriates, reproduces and employs many of archaeology's materials and working methods (i.e. techniques, styles, narratives, classifications, values, people etc.). From a large body of relevant literature, see Hall 1997; Bounia 2006; Liakos 2007.

6. Change management and organizational development theories can prove useful both for the understanding of institutionalized structures, such as state managed museum services, and for the assessment of the forces that define their present and future perspectives. A balanced model of change management must look at the three dominant traditions that have guided thinking about organizations, namely the technical, political and cultural systems, which are exposed in a context of environmental pressures and interrelated components of economic, political and cultural nature. The cultural system underscores the constructed nature of organizational phenomena, and views organizations as cultural cognitive systems of values with shared symbols, beliefs and interpretations that tie people together and form a common organizational culture. See Nadler 1993; Kotter & Cohen 2002; Tichy 1983; Lewin 1947; Goodstein & Burke 1993. For the application of these theories in the museum sector, see Sandell 2003.

7. Urie Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Systems Theory* (1979) offers an important conceptual model for the understanding of individuals or organizations. This consists of four types of nested systems with bi-directional influences: a) the *micro-system*: the immediate environment (i.e. the archaeologists as interpreters of the past, seen as a community of influential archaeological personalities with their own ideological and epistemological identities); b) the *meso-system*: a system comprised of connections between related environments (i.e. the archaeologists of the Greek Archaeological Service and the political leaders of the Ministry of Culture, or the Archaeology Departments of universities, Greek and foreign, with their human resources); c) the *exo-system*: the external setting which influences development in direct or indirect ways (i.e. legal regulations, museum policies, international codes of museum conduct such as ICOM's, examples of museum excellence, the ideas and needs of various audiences as receivers of the cultural product, etc.); and d) the *macro-system*: the larger cultural, economic and political context that creates the background against which all the above operate (i.e. grant narratives entrenched in the workings of classical archaeology such as Greek nationhood, Hellenism, Classicism, Western humanism and others).

8. Much of the current work on change management is indebted to the work of Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, who developed profoundly influential models of the *Three Phase*

*Model of Change and Force Field Analysis*. The first provides that an organizational change (ideological, institutional, practical) consists of three main phases: a) the *process of unfreezing*, when the motivation and willingness to embrace change develops; b) the *process of moving*, when multiple and consistent leverage points or complementary strategies come to the fore to move the organization forward through its transitional state of change and support its sustainable development; c) the *process of refreezing*, that is about stabilizing and cementing (institutionalizing) change. The second model supplements the first and provides a framework for looking at the factors that influence group and organization behaviours and dynamics; these forces can be 'driving', i.e. moving changes forward, or 'restraining', i.e. promoting the maintenance of the status quo and inhibiting change. See Lewin 1947; Goodstein & Burke 1993; Ticky 1983, 57.

9. Petrakos 1994, 81-102.

10. Snodgrass & Chippindale 1988, 724.

11. The bibliography that encompasses new approaches to classical archaeological theory is vast; As an indicative sample that provides extensive supplementary bibliography, see Dyson 1998; Morris 1994a; Morris 2000, 3-76; Morris 2004; Shanks 1996; Whitley 2001; Osborne 2004; Alcock & Osborne 2007.

12. Morris 1994c, 4.

13. Leontis 1995, 138-40.

14. Seferis 1986, 38-39.

15. Kalligas 1948, 2.

16. See for instance the opening speech by Nikos Zahariadis, given on the occasion of the Seventh Party Congress in October 1945 (quote from Xydis 1969, 245 n. 87 and originally published in the leftist newspaper *Rizospastis*, 6 October 1945): 'Our own mission is to prove that in spite of the fact that we exist in the same spot and that our language is derived from ancient Greek, the Greek nation, ethnologically and socially, has no relation with the regime and the slave society of racial discrimination that prevailed in ancient Greece [...] nor with the barbarism of Asiatic despotism and of serfdom which characterized the empire of the East Roman state'. However, this position was later challenged by other party members; see for instance an article published in the newspaper *I Avgi*, 3 March 1977, 1; 14).

17. Leontis 1995, 63-64; 109-10.

18. Morris 1994b, 11; Morris 2004, 259.

19. Morris 1994b, 12; Morris 2000, 37-76; Morris 2004.

20. For the use of this term, see Silberman 1995, 261; also Trigger 1984.

21. The veneration of the Aegean, for instance, as an idyllic setting, evoking Greece's classical heritage, has repeatedly constituted a core advertising asset in the Greek National Tourism Organization's advertising campaigns. R. Eisner (Eisner 1993, 244-45), who has studied the history of travel to Greece since the beginning of the tourist boom, distinguished two main groups of tourists: the eco-tourists who sought a new Romanticism and

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the cultural-tourists seeking a new Classicism.

22. These headlines appeared in: *To Vima*, 19 May 1954, 3; 6 October 1957, 1; 6; 8 July 1959, 2; 16 September 1962, 5; *I Avgi*, 1 February 1975, 2; 18 April 1959, 3 respectively.

23. *I Avgi*, 18 April 1959, 3.

24. Petrakos 1995, 110.

25. *I Avgi*, 4 August 1956, 2.

26. *To Vima*, 9 August 1953, 3.

27. See Karouzos in *To Vima*, 12 September 1948 and 14 September 1948; also reprinted in Karouzos 1995, 238-47. See also Miliadis 1957, 19.

28. The Karouzos' work and legacy with regard to the post-war regeneration of the National Museum has been appraised many times over both in academic articles and the press. Here is a selection of the most characteristic commentaries: on Christos Karouzos, see Dontas 1987; Kunze 1981; Petrakos 1995; *To Vima*, 15 January 1948, 2; 7 September 1950, 1-2; 13 May 1954, 3; 4 September 1956, 1-2; 4 April 1967, 1-2; 31 March 1967, 2; 1 April 1967, 2; *I Avgi*, 31 March 1967, 2. For Karouzos' work in general see Despintis 1987; Devambezi 1969; Chatzidakis 1987; Kalogeropoulou 1987; Petrakos 1995. On Semni Karouzou's contribution, see Andronikos in *To Vima*, 9 April 1989, 58; Langlotz in *To Vima*, 21 February 1954, 3; 6; National Archaeological Museum 1997. On her life, see Karouzou 1984a.

29. See Karouzou 1956; Vanderpool 1949; Weinberg 1948.

30. Karouzou 1982, 5.

31. For a critical comment see Tsaravopoulos 1983; Tsaravopoulos 1985; and various newspaper clips: *Ta Nea*, 4 February 1989, 25; *I Avgi*, 7 February 1982, 5; 12 August 1984, 12; 21.

32. Karouzou 1983, 13; 65.

33. Karouzou 1956, 849-50.

34. Karouzou 1983, 178.

35. Karouzos 1981, 78-103.

36. Karouzos 1981, 85.

37. For an early post-war critical stance toward the pre-war displays of the National Archaeological Museum, one can read Karouzou 1956, 850; Karouzou 1957, 1204; Karouzou 1967, xiv; Karouzou 1982, 7; Langlotz 1954. For a cultural analysis of archaeological exhibitions in the 19th and early 20th c., see Kokkou 1977; Gazi 1999; and Gazi, this volume.

38. Karouzou 1956, 850.

39. These were defined by J.J. Winckelmann as the basic characteristics of Greek Art, in his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764).

40. Karouzou 1956, 849-50.

41. Karouzos 1981, 137-38.

42. Karouzou 1983, 177.

43. For a very detailed presentation of the early post-war redevelopment of the National Archaeological Museum, see Mouliou 1997, 122-24; 127-30; 132-36.

44. Karouzou 1956, 850; Karouzou 1967; Karouzou 1984b, 62-63.

45. See Karouzos 1981, 142-68; Karouzou 1956, 850; Karouzou 1967; Karouzos 1984b, 62-63.

46. On Beazley's legacy, there is an extensive literature. For a very small sample, see Kurtz 1985; Whitley 1997; Morris 2000, 62-64; Morris 2004; Snodgrass 2007, 20-23.

47. Karouzos 1981, 10-11.

48. Karouzos 1981, 137.

49. Karouzou 1967, ivii.

50. To cite some characteristic appraisals by foreign and Greek intellectuals: 'A carefully selective display [...] with excellent lighting and clear and informative labels [...] the museum will rank, not only as one of the richest, but also as one of the most agreeable and comprehensible of the museums in Europe' (Vanderpool 1949, 196); 'It is a new manner, really magnificent [...] a splendid synopsis of the ancient Greek artistic production in a didactic, [aesthetically] pleasing and convincing way [...] a miracle to delight the eyes and enlighten our mind [...] a great artistic and national service' (E. Papanoutsos in *To Vima*, 7 September 1950, 1-2); 'That exhibition satisfie[d] both the modern needs and the needs of the artworks [...] All the knowledge regarding the essence of the Greek sculpture was used constructively [...] and so symmetry is avoided. Every statue stands free in the space and is visible from all around [...] the lucidity of the galleries comes as much as possible near to the one experienced in an open-air ancient sanctuary' (Langlotz 1954, 3; 6).

51. Karouzou 1967, ivi; Karouzou 1956, 849-50.

52. Brouskari 1974, 13-15; *I Avgi*, 4 August 1956, 2; 9 December 1964, 2; *To Vima*, 11 September 1956, 2; 21 July 1959, 2; 6 December 1964, II.6; 9 December 1964, 2.

53. Miliadis 1964.

54. Miliadis n.d, 1.

55. Miliadis 1957, 19.

56. See Miliadis 1957 where the archaeologist explains his exhibition rationale.

57. *To Vima* 11 September 1956, 2; see also *I Avgi*, 4 August 1956, 2.

58. See n. 7 above.

59. For a critical appraisal of her methodological work, see Dyson 1998, 145-49.

60. Foreign researchers rejected Karouzos' and Miliadis' representational schemes for 'relying on broken statuary and bits of pottery stacked in glass cases, and with virtually no interpretative material of any kind. [...] One gets the impression

that to come and genuflect before this shrine to archaic and classical art is supposed to be the sole and satisfying object of the pilgrimage'; see McNeal 1991, 62.

61. *To Vima*, 6 July 1986, 38; *To Vima*, 22 January 1989, 54.

62. *I Avgi*, 12 August 1984, 12; 21.

63. *To Vima*, 15 May 1994, G.8.

64. *I Avgi*, 7 February 1982, 5.

65. For the history of the excavation in Ancient Agora, see mainly Merritt 1984; Camp 1990. Also Sakka, this volume.

66. Morris 1994b, 34-35.

67. Merritt 1984, 178-82.

68. Merritt 1984, 63.

69. Merritt 1984, 61-64; Thompson 1957.

70. From the inaugural speech of the then Secretary of State, K. Tsatsos. See *To Vima*, 2 September 1956, 3.

71. Extract from the inaugural speech of President Eisenhower, which was read in Athens by his personal envoy. See *To Vima*, 4 September 1956, 4.

72. See Thompson in *To Vima*, 4 September 1956, 3-4.

73. See *To Vima*, 4 September 1956, 3-4; *To Vima*, 9 September 1956, 3; *I Avgi*, 17 September 1958, 2.

74. Camp 1990, 238.

75. Snodgrass 1983, 144.

76. Snodgrass 1983.

77. See Hourmouziadis 1980; Hourmouziadis 1976; Hourmouziadis 1984. For a recent review of his exhibition work, see Hourmouziadi 2006, 77-82.

78. See M. Andronikos in *To Vima*, 19 July 1976, 1; 5.

79. See n. 8 above.

80. For an overview of the problems archaeologists of the Greek Archaeological Service were facing, see Association of Greek Archaeologists 1987; Kakavoyianni 2002; Athanasoulis 2002; Gerousi & Pantou 2002; Themis 2002; Konstantios 2002; Athanasoulis et al. 2002.

81. Snodgrass 1987, 98.

82. *I Avgi*, 3 September 1977, 4; *I Avgi*, 5 November 1980, 4; *I Avgi*, 7 February 1982, 5; *To Vima*, 10 August 1982, 1, 5; *I Avgi*, 12 August 1984, 12; *I Avgi*, 6 December 1984, 4; *To Vima*, 6 July 1986, 38; *To Vima*, 22 January 1989, 54; *To Vima*, 23 June 1991, B.12/46; *To Vima*, 17 May 1992, 38; *To Vima*, 31 October 1993, B.3/35.

83. From the very extensive literature on Macedonia and its cultural politics, see Brown 1994; Danforth 1995; Kotsakis 1991; Kotsakis 1998; Karakasidou 1997; Kofos 1990; Triandafyllidou 1997; Mouliou 1996; Morris 1994b; additionally,

from the vast literature on the politics of the past see Atkinson et al; Brown & Hamilakis 2003; Díaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; Gathercole & Lowenthal 1989; Graves-Brown et al 1996; Hamilakis & Yalouri 1996; Herzfeld 1982; Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Lowenthal 1985; Lowenthal 1988; Meskell 1998; Silberman 1989; Shanks 2004; Andreadis 1989; Kalpaxis 1990; Kokkinidou 2005; Liakos 2007.

84. See Mouliou 1996.

85. Rhomiopoulou 1978.

86. Zois 1987; Zois 1990, 105-10.

87. Petrakos 1982, 79-92.

88. The exhibition was entitled 'Mer Égée, Grèce des Îles' and was hosted in the Museum of the Louvre (26 April – 3 September 1979); it was presented some months later in the Metropolitan Museum in New York with the title 'Greek Art of the Aegean islands' (1 November 1979 – 10 February 1980) and the Pushkin and Hermitage Museums (27 January – 8 March 1981 and 10 April – 25 May 1981).

89. The relevant literature and newspaper coverage is very extensive. See Mouliou 1996; Hamilakis & Yalouri 1996; Petrakos 1982, 79-92; Petrakos 1991a; Petrakos 1991b; Petrakos 1991c; Voudouri, this volume. For the coverage of the subject in the Greek press, see: *I Kathimerini*, 8 December 1978, 3; *To Vima*, 21 July 1977, 4; *To Vima*, 31 May 1978, 5; *To Vima*, 14 June 1978, 1; *To Vima*, 30 November 1978, 5; *To Vima*, 2 December 1978, 5; *To Vima*, 3 December 1978, 12; *To Vima*, 12 December 1978, 5; *To Vima*, 20 December 1978, 17; *To Vima*, 30 December 1978, 5; *To Vima*, 12 January 1979, 5; *To Vima*, 14 February 1979; *To Vima*, 2 March 1979, 1; 5; *To Vima*, 8 December 1991, 9; *To Vima*, 22 March 1992, 30; *I Avgi*, 23 November 1978, 4; *I Avgi*, 6 January 1979, 4; *I Avgi*, 14 June 1991, 19; *I Avgi*, 29 June 1991, 17; *I Avgi*, 13 February 1992, 11.

90. Oionoskopou 1988.

91. See Mouliou 1996; Mouliou 1997, 283-311.

92. Mouliou 1997, 259-82.

93. See Tzedakis 1988, 17.

94. In 2002, the Ministry of Culture organized an exhibition entitled *Παιχνίδια Πολιτισμού*, along with a publication and a website, to celebrate this long process of gaining experience in the making of educational programmes. See Ministry of Culture 2002.

95. From a larger selection, see Renfrew 1980; Snodgrass 1986, 193; Culham & Edmunds 1989; Dyson 1993; Dyson 1998; Snodgrass & Chippindale 1988; Tanner 1994; See also above n. 4-5.

96. Boardman 1985, 52-53; Boardman 1988.

97. Zois 1990; Tsaravopoulos 1983; Tsaravopoulos 1985.

98. Hourmouziadis 1984, 16.

99. Hourmouziadis 1999, 25.

100. Venizelos 1998.  
 101. Osborne & Alcock 2007, 4.  
 102. Snodgrass 2007, 17.  
 103. Arafat 1990, 50; 66 n. 17-18.  
 104. Osborne & Alcock 2007, 3.  
 105. Kavanagh 1996, xi.

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