

Μουσείο Μπενάκη

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



Decolonizing Greek archaeology: indigenous archaeologies, modernist archaeology and the post-colonial critique

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AUGUST 1834, the Athenian Acropolis. The town of only a few thousand people is getting ready to welcome King Otto once again, amidst a climate of celebration and excitement. Everything had been prepared down to the last detail by Leo von Klenze, the architect of the Bavarian court, who was now in charge of the huge feat of transforming the Acropolis, the most sacred locus of the classical ideal, from a fortress into an archaeological park. Work on the Acropolis had been in progress for some time now, but it was not going that well. Klenze believed that the king's visit, and the ceremony that he had so carefully stage-managed, would give new impetus to the effort. Athenian maidens, dressed in white and holding flags depicting the goddess Athena, had formed two rows, from the Propylaea to the Parthenon, while for Otto a throne had been prepared, decorated with laurels. Klenze started his speech:

'Your Majesty,

Apart from all the other good deeds that the new Hellas owes to you, you cared to give to this country and to the whole of the enlightened world, a clear proof of your high parental protection and [concern] for the great history, the most stable historical basis of this beautiful country.

How was it possible to achieve this in a more suitable and more dignified way, but for you to show your care for the existing remains of this great past, the monuments of Hellenic Art.

Hence, your Majesty cared to order me to direct the start of the work which will protect them from further damage, so that the monuments of this renowned Acropolis can be

preserved for the coming centuries, the seat of the glory of Athenians three thousand years ago, the highest and most perfect masterpieces ever to be born by the imagination of the human mind [...].

Your Majesty has stepped today for the first time on this glorious Acropolis, after so many centuries of barbarism, walking on the road of civilization and glory, along which passed the Themistocleses, the Aristideses, the Cimons and the Pericleses, and this is and it should be in the eyes of the people, the symbol of your glorious reign. [...] All the remnants of barbarism will disappear, not only here but in the whole of Greece, and the remnants of the glorious past will be surrounded with new radiance, as a solid basis for the present and the future.'

Thus ended Klenze's speech, but most of his audience could not understand him, as he spoke in German. A Greek translation was, however, distributed to the participants later. Then, Otto, with three strokes on the drum of a fallen column, declared the official inauguration of the restoration project, while at the same time, as was reported in a Nafplion newspaper, the band of the British warship 'Madagascar' was playing 'national tunes'. It did not however, specify, which nation's tunes these were... This ceremony, with its silences, its ironies and its allusions, offers, I think, the best introduction to the theme of this paper.¹ It is my intention to make three points: a) No exploration of the relationship between archaeology and national identity in Greece can afford to ignore the close link between and the mutual constitution of national imagination and colonial ideology and practice, from the eighteenth

century onwards; b) the archaeology that emerged out of this mutual constitution was a peculiar, official, modernist archaeology, which replaced, to a large extent, a series of indigenous, alternative, pre-modern archaeologies; c) the decolonization of Greek archaeology, in other words its divorce from both the colonial ideology and practice and the national imagination, requires the emergence of a range of counter-modernist archaeologies,² a process that paradoxically necessitates a reconnection with some of the elements of these pre-national archaeologies.

Modernist archaeology as a colonial-cum-national apparatus

Discussion of the links between archaeology and the national imagination very rarely touches on colonialism. It seems that most people have taken the classification produced by Bruce Trigger in his seminal 1984 article in *Man* too literally. Trigger, in reflecting on the political role of the discipline, recognised three types of archaeology: colonialist, nationalist, and imperialist, and although in his conclusions he warned against treating these as monolithic and absolute categories, few people have taken these warnings into account.³ But his description of colonialist archaeology as being something fairly distinct, and found in situations of settler colonialism or where European colonial powers exercised significant control over long periods of time, and where the local material past was denigrated in favour of the glorification of the colonizer's past, fails to take account of the diversity and the complexity of the colonial experience, both in the European heartlands and in the colonies. I would argue that Greece provides just such an example, offering a complex and fascinating case where colonialism and nationalism have worked in unison.

Greece is not a country that was ever formally colonized, of course, and hence it has rarely featured in any discussion of post-colonialism, at least not until recently. But that situation has changed in the last few years. In the field of comparative and critical literature, for example, works such as those by Gourgouris,⁴ Calotychos,⁵ or Tziouvas,⁶ among others, have shown the potential for situating Greece within the discourse of post-colonial studies. Historians⁷ and human geographers⁸ have also started addressing the interface between colonialism and nationalism in Greece, both in terms of the role of the European

powers, but also in terms of the nature and character of Greek nationalism and its internal colonizing role. Finally, the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld⁹ has suggested that it is instructive to describe Greece as a crypto-colony. He defines crypto-colony as one of the 'buffer zones between the colonized lands and those as yet untamed', and which were 'compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence', a relationship which was 'articulated in the ironic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models'.¹⁰ I would argue, however, that the crypto-colony of Greece was subjected to the material effects of colonization in ways similar to colonies proper.

The scholarly shift described above was not necessarily the result of new archival or other evidence, but of insightful rereading of the available data, through the lens of post-colonial studies. Even a cursory look at the institutionalization of archaeology and at the role of material heritage would provide further validity and support to the points raised by this debate. It is well known that after the establishment of the Greek state it was mostly the circle of Bavarian intellectuals and administrators around the first king, Otto I, who laid the foundations for the development of archaeology as an institution in Greece: from the protagonist of our opening episode, the architect Leo von Klenze, who first suggested that the Athenian Acropolis should cease to be a fortress and become instead an organized archaeological site and who was instrumental in the transformation of the site from a palimpsest of multicultural material presence into a monumentalized and purified locale for the worshipping of classicism, to Ludwig Ross who initiated the materialization of Klenze's vision, and was the first professor of archaeology at the University of Athens and Maurer, a member of the council of regency during the Othonian reign, who drafted the first official archaeological law.¹¹

Even before the Bavarians arrived in Greece, however, the country and the broader region had been subjected to other forms of colonization. It was ideas of nationalism as a distinctive ontological apparatus of western modernity that colonized the region from as early as the eighteenth century, ideas which were also based on the elevation of the ancient Greek classical past to the cornerstone of western civilization. Nationalism, as Partha Chatterjee has shown us,¹² is a derivative discourse, and despite its anti-colonial pronouncements, on time, history, continuity, identity,

and gender it in fact shares the same ideological worldview as colonialism. They are both fundamental ideologies of Western modernity, and they share a conviction as to their civilizing or nationalizing sacred mission, in patriarchy, in the bounded, individualizing self. Above all, they both share the conviction that these norms of Western modernity are culturally and morally superior, they constitute, at the end of the day, the natural and only conceivable state of being for societies.¹³

The increase in Western travellers to Greece in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was one material expression of such ideological colonization, as the by now highly praised ancient Greek classical artefacts were objects much craved by the Western antiquarians, diplomats and aristocrats. Colonialism is about the grip that things have on people, Chris Gosden reminds us.¹⁴ And these things, had an enormous, almost erotic grip on specific groups of Western Europeans, with well-known consequences.¹⁵ So this colonization, far from being only ideological, acquired specific practical and material forms in the shape of the hordes of antiquarians, possessed by the 'marble fever'¹⁶ who claimed to know the value and the history of these ancient things much better than the ignorant inhabitants of the country itself, and attempting to remove them, using the stick and the carrot, in order to exhibit them in more appropriate surroundings. While these travellers (but also many other Western scholars, diplomats, and politicians) obviously constituted a diverse group, many if not most of them firmly believed that the place for these ancient things, the sacred relics of the European Golden Age, was not there, in the Ottoman periphery, nor in any future institutions of the peculiar statelet which was about to emerge, but in the grand museums, universities, and private collections of Western Europe, close to people who not only saw themselves as the only persons able to appreciate their aesthetic value, but also as the direct descendents of the people who had created these ancient things. We should not forget that many of these people who were possessed by the 'marble fever' and who engaged in their forcible removal were not uneducated looters but academics, representatives of august institutions, societies and universities, statesmen and diplomats.

Paradoxically, these same people, these 'educated looters', were also often the people who often played a decisive role in setting up the first institutions of modernist archaeology in Greece. By way of example, let us remind

ourselves that the first organized movement for the constitution of modernist archaeology, before even the foundation of the state, the establishment of the Filomousos Etaireia in 1813, was due, to a large extent, to 'foreigners' (who constituted roughly half of its membership). One of the main aims of this initiative was to facilitate the search for antiquities by travellers and other Western Europeans, and people well known for their appropriation of antiquities, such as Gropius (subsequently Austrian consul) and the English architect and antiquarian C.R. Cockerell, played an important role in this process.¹⁷ It was the same Cockerell who, only a few years before, had looted the sculptures from the temple of Aphaea in Aegina, despite strong protests by its inhabitants, which, in a well-known colonial trope, he attributed to their ignorance, superstition, and greed. He noted in 1810:

'It was not to be expected that we should be allowed to carry away what we had found without oppositions. However much people may neglect their own possessions, as soon as they see them coveted by others they begin to value them. The primates of the island came to us in a body and read a statement made by the council of the island in which they begged us to desist from our operations, for that heaven only knew what misfortunes might not fall on the island in general, and the immediately surrounding land in particular, if we continued them. Such a rubbishy pretence of superstitious fear was obviously a mere excuse to extort money, and as we felt that it was only fair that we should pay, we sent our dragoman with them to the village to treat about the sum'.¹⁸

So the glorification of the ancient Greek classical past may have led to the ideological and material colonization of Greece, but its adoption as a national charter myth by the Hellenized middle classes and its intellectuals also contributed immensely to the formation of the nation state. While the post-colonial discourse can thus be of immense value in re-examining the neo-Hellenic, neither conventional labels and categories, nor the simplistic binarism of colonizer and colonized / conqueror and subject could do justice to the Greek case, hence the qualifications used by scholars, from 'crypto-colonialism', to 'surrogate colonialism',¹⁹ to 'self-colonization'.²⁰ Likewise, for archaeology, the classification proposed by Trigger and discussed above, would not work. The local past rather than being deni-

grated, was glorified, but at the same time was appropriated by the West as its own ancestral heritage. Yet, the grip that ancient classical objects had on the Western intellectuals and the middle classes speaks of the typical colonial desire for appropriation and possession; at the same time, plundering and appropriation went hand in hand with the establishment of modernist, national archaeological structures, often by the same groups of people. Both ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’ steeped in the same charter myth, were worshipping the same ancestral objects and were partners in creating the modernist structures of professional archaeology. What I suggest, therefore, is that we need to study again the social history of Greek archaeology as a complex process by which orientalist classicism, the Western European imagination, and the colonial desire for the possession of classical objects encountered the national fantasy of Greek diasporic scholars and merchants. And this was a fantasy which needed the materiality and the sensory intimacy and immediacy of classical antiquities in order to acquire substance, historical depth, and validity.

But I want to go one step further. I suggest that this encounter amounted to a severe clash. A clash, not between nationalism and colonialism, but one that has not been hitherto identified. The clash between the colonial-cum-national, modernist, official archaeology with the non-official, indigenous archaeologies²¹ of ordinary people in the multiethnic and multicultural land that was becoming the nation state of Greece. This requires some explanation. For a start, it is clear that I adopt here a wide definition of archaeology, not strictly as a scholarly activity or a profession but something closer to the etymology of the word, *as the discourses and practices involving ancient things*. In that sense, archaeology is something that is practised not only by the official state and by scholarly bodies, and by the educated and the professionally trained archaeologists, but also by other groups and individuals who have created and maintained discourses and interpretations about the material traces of the past, and/or engage with them through a series of meaningful practices. I therefore, suggest, that prior to the emergence and the institutionalization of official, modernist archaeology, there existed in Greece, as elsewhere, indigenous, unofficial, alternative archaeologies, both discourses *and* practices involving ancient things, and which, as in the passage by Cockerell above, were dismissed by Westerners, as irrational ‘superstitions’. It is with these that the official, colonial-cum-national archae-

ology clashed, and which it attempted to replace from the beginning of the nineteenth century. This statement and conclusion derives from extensive work through a diverse range of data, from folk tales, to travellers’ accounts, to the practices such as the use of ancient *spolia*. Below, I have space to refer only to a small sample, but a more detailed account will appear elsewhere.²²

Indigenous archaeologies in pre-modern Greece

Visitors to the Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum today encounter a very interesting artefact: the ‘Ceres or Demeter from Eleusis’, in fact a first-century BC caryatid, not a representation of the goddess. The artefact had been a desirable commodity since it was spotted by travellers, at least as far back as the seventeenth century. The Cambridge don Edward Clarke, who removed the statue in 1801 and was responsible for its transfer to Cambridge, has left an extremely interesting account of the event: ‘We found it’, he notes, ‘in the midst of a heap of dung, buried as high as the neck’,²³ and he continues:

‘The inhabitants of the small village which is now situated among the Ruins of Eleusis still regarded this Statue with a high degree of superstitious veneration. They attribute to its presence the fertility of their land; and it was for this reason that they heaped around it the manure intended for their fields. They believed that the loss of it would be followed by no less than the failure of their annual harvests; and they pointed to the ears of bearded wheat among the sculptured ornaments upon the head of the figure, as a never-failing indication of the produce of the soil’.²⁴

Clarke managed to secure a permit from the local Ottoman governor, in exchange for a telescope belonging to Elgin’s employee, Lusieri. But the main obstacle remained the resistance of local people, who, in Clarke’s words, were ‘respecting an idol which they all regarded as the protectress of their fields’, and in front of which they used to place a burning lamp during Christian festival days, as they did with Christian icons.

Local people refused to collaborate in its removal, and they believed that the arm of any person who dared to touch the marble or disturb its position would fall off. Interestingly, it was the local priest who intervened and

secured the removal. Eleusinians, as later travellers such as Dodwell will record,²⁵ lamented the loss of the statue for the years to come, and sure enough, several poor harvests followed. But the aftermath of this story is perhaps best encapsulated in the final paragraph of the relevant text from the website of the Fitzwilliam Museum, the current home of the statue:

‘Recognising the quality and importance of this statue, Clarke decided to remove it. He winched the statue out of its dungy bed and shipped it to England. But it did not travel willingly. The ship carrying the caryatid, and other items collected by Clarke, sank off Beachy Head on the south coast of England.’²⁶

Only a few years after this event, in 1813, the ‘Ceres of Eleusis’ had become, at least for the English, Cambridge-educated aristocrat, politician and friend of Byron, Hobhouse, the ‘Cambridge Ceres’.²⁷ This story speaks of the colonial desire to appropriate the highly valued objects of the golden age of the Western imagination. More importantly, it vividly illustrates the fundamental clash I referred to above. It is the clash between a pre-modern, indigenous archaeology, in this case practised by the local people of Eleusis, with the modernist, Western antiquarianism and archaeology, in this case represented by Clarke. The people of Eleusis were practising their own archaeology: they had noticed the statue, they had exhibited it very close to its original context, they created a discourse around it which was based on its sculptural details such as the representations of the ears of corn, and they venerated it and dedicated to her heaps of dung, as the most appropriate substance for a deity that, like dung, guarantees the fertility of their fields. The modernist archaeology of Clarke orientalized these people and their discourses and practices, believing in its own superiority, ironically based on false knowledge about the statue. It advocated its removal to the more appropriate surroundings of Cambridge University, where it could be appreciated visually by English connoisseurs. The indigenous archaeology of the Eleusinians, ironically, paid more attention to context than Clarke’s archaeology did, and it also enabled a multisensory experience of the object that included the olfactory contact with the heap of dung, which offended Clarke’s nose as much as it did the noses of the curators of the Fitzwilliam Museum.²⁸

The story of the statue from Eleusis is only one example

of the alternative indigenous archaeologies that existed prior to the era of modernist, national archaeology. The stories and legends about ancient Greeks assembled by Kakridis from a variety of sources (mostly of the nineteenth century), echoing pre-modern attitudes, are of particular relevance in shedding light on these indigenous archaeologies and their constitution of time, temporality and materiality. According to many of these, the large and impressive buildings that were encountered in the countryside and built before the contemporary era had been there from the ‘time of the Hellenes’ (*ton kairo ton Ellinon*). These Hellenes or ‘Linides’²⁹ were beings with supernatural properties; most of them were giants and much stronger than anybody else, although some stories recount that in addition to these giants there were also other beings of miniscule stature living alongside them. These bodily properties were responsible for their loss and disappearance: the giants were so tall that once they fell down, they could not get up. And as for the tiny Hellenes, once they fell into their plate of food, they would drown like flies in milk. And in case of doubt, some narrators would add that these accounts are also to be found in the Gospels. What interests me in these stories is that some of these features are directly linked to ancient statues. In fact, it seems that the statues themselves are the Hellenes, or the ‘Linides’. For example, it is noted in the stories that most of the time these people were naked,³⁰ thus making an association with sculptural representations of the human body, such as the archaic *kouroi*, or later naked figures. In other cases,³¹ the Hellenes are able to stand up even though some of them do not have heads, a reference to the headless statues, and in others, they were blind,³² a reference perhaps to the disappearance of the painted representation of the eye on a marble statue, or the missing inlaid eyes on a bronze statue. So, these statues were not the feats of Hellenes, they were *themselves* the mythical Hellenes, and these were the beings who created the huge buildings that the nineteenth-century people encountered.³³

It is clear from the above that in these stories, the distinction between objects and humans becomes blurred, evoking recent anthropological discussions on the agency of objects, and the fluidity in the boundaries between people and things in various non-Western worldviews.³⁴ The human-like attributes of ancient things, especially those in the shape of the human body, is a recurring theme. On the basis of the above, it is tempting to project onto these stories

both a chronological and a genealogical grid, as the national historiography and the tradition of folklore studies, with their well-known nationalizing role, have done; to see these stories, in other words, as representing genealogical and ancestral links. These Hellenes, according to this scheme, were seen by the nineteenth-century Greeks as their ancestors. Likewise, the phrase *o kairos ton Ellinon*, ‘the time of the Hellenes’, could be taken to reflect a worldview that is structured around a linear chronology, with clear distinctions between past and present. Both claims, however, would be misleading. In these stories, there is no evidence that nineteenth-century Greeks saw the Hellenes as their ancestors; indeed, most of the features encountered in the stories emphasize otherness, not similarity or allegiance. As for their sense of temporality, this is where things become extremely interesting. While it is clear in the stories that the Hellenes are associated with another time (*o kairos ton Ellinon*) and that this *kairos* has preceded their own time, this does not mean that it is past, gone for good, forgotten. I mentioned above that according to these stories, the Hellenes had largely disappeared, due to the misfortune of having been born giants or in a few cases, miniscule beings. In fact, not all of them had disappeared. A nineteenth-century story from Acarnania recounts how the grandfathers of some contemporary Greeks who travelled to Istanbul, had heard that there was an old woman, still living there, who was from the Hellenic race, so they went to see her.³⁵ In other stories, Hellenes are still to be found living in the forest, while they often engage with contemporary people in contests of strength.

In this worldview, therefore, the time of the Hellenes partly co-exists with the nineteenth century; it bursts into it and disrupts the temporality of the present. In modernity, we perceive time as successive, linear, unidirectional. Moreover, our historical and archaeological writings, indeed all our lives are based on the idea of a clear separation between past and present, and on the unchangeability of the past.³⁶ Yet several of the discourses and practices that I have discussed here speak of a different sense of historicity³⁷ and a different temporality. This is a temporality which, as discussed by the philosopher Henri Bergson,³⁸ is defined by co-existence rather than succession. The Hellenes may have been from a different time, but some of them are still alive and interacting with contemporary people. But it is the *durability* and the persistence of the materiality of antiquity that enables this other time to co-exist side by side

with the present. Material antiquities, therefore, activate and re-enact multiple temporalities. These temporalities were experiential and non-chronological, and they were embedded in the fabric of social life. The time activated by material antiquities co-existed and came into contact with religious time; witness for example the fact that some folk stories attribute the tales about the Hellenes to the Gospels or the fact that the ancient buildings became Christian churches or mosques or that ancient traces and fragments were incorporated into the fabric of such buildings,³⁹ practices that had been in operation for many centuries prior to the nineteenth century. Similarly, the veneration of some statues, such as the one from Eleusis, resembled the veneration of Christian icons – recall the lamp burning in front of it. The time activated by ancient material traces also co-existed with the temporality of working and farming the land, as became clear from the example of the Eleusinian statue. After all, it was through working the land that many of the material traces of the past were first encountered. A fragment from a classical temple, embedded in a Byzantine church, for example, perhaps reworked or partly modified in the Byzantine era, allows the co-existence of different times simultaneously: the classical (or in the emic perception, the ‘ancient times’, ‘old times’ or the ‘time of the Hellenes’) and the medieval/Byzantine, as well a variety of social times such as the religious, the agricultural (if found when working the land) and so on.

Multisensory engagement with the material traces of the past was a key feature of this indigenous archaeology. To this sensory dimension we should also add the animate properties of ancient things, especially of statues, the attribution of agency to them, and the blurring of the boundaries between humans and non-human entities. In almost all of the cases that I have discussed here, this indigenous archaeology treats material objects of the past as integral to the routines of daily life and to the fabric of social space, not as separate entities to be isolated, cordoned off for protection and exhibition purposes, as happened with official modernist archaeology. When these artefacts are exhibited, such as in the case of the inscriptions, reliefs and sculptures embedded in buildings, often above the entrances,⁴⁰ it was done in the spaces of ordinary social life, be it houses or places of worship, not in specially designated locales.⁴¹ The logic of conservation, which is fundamental to Western modernist archaeology, is alien to this indigenous archaeology, and while certain practices such as the embedding



Fig. 1. An engraving by William Pars, depicting the production of Muslim tombstones out of ancient architectural fragments, amongst the ruins of Teos, in Asia Minor (source: Chandler 1971, table 11).

of ancient pieces into buildings or a resistance to pillaging by Western travellers, amounted to their protection, in other cases ancient things were ‘destroyed’, either through modification and reworking, when for example, ancient columns and burial stelae were transformed into Muslim tombstones (fig. 1),⁴² or through their use as raw materials for buildings, for example when ancient marble was processed to produce lime.⁴³ Yet, I would argue that these practices were akin to the view which saw ancient things as active, dynamic and changing, and where their death or transformation would have been part of their biography. Indeed, this is the logic which is encountered in a number of non-Western contexts today, be it with regard to Zhu Botswana rock art, which is left alone to be reclaimed by the rock,⁴⁴ or Native American Zuni artefacts which are meant to disintegrate, and go back into the ground.⁴⁵

The story of the replacement of these alternative archaeologies by the modernist archaeology with its linearity, conservation ethic, exhibitionary complex,⁴⁶ and emphasis on autonomous vision, is well known.⁴⁷ The material fragments of antiquity, rather than being dispersed in the various spaces of daily life, where they could have been ex-

perienced by the moving and multisensory body during its daily routines, were now gathered in museums for mostly visual appreciation and admiration. Ancient ruins were constituted as enclosed archaeological sites, heterotopic locales, divorced from daily routines and social time, from their multitemporal and multicultural past and present. The indigenous alternative archaeologies I outlined above were castigated as superstitions (by Western travellers) or innocent and naïve beliefs of simple folk, demonstrating nevertheless their allegiance and continuity with their Hellenic ancestors (according to national folklorists). The materiality of an antiquity transformed by modernist archaeology provided tangible truths for both the national and the Western colonial imagination.

Yet, modernist official archaeology is not a monolithic and homogenous entity. I have claimed elsewhere that imported Western Hellenism became *indigenous Hellenism*,⁴⁸ especially towards the end of the nineteenth century, thus creating a hybrid modernity, thanks to the Paparrigopouleian synthesis, but also the official and historically legitimated incorporation of Christianity into the national narrative; indigenous Hellenism constituted perhaps the

most significant (but still partial) emancipation of the national from its colonial partner. The archaeology that was produced in this syncretic process was a hybrid modernist archaeology. Despite the clash that I have outlined above, pre-modern ideas were grafted onto the peculiarly modernist Greek present. Christian Orthodox worship merged with the sacralization of the classical material past, encountered in both the Western and national imagination, and resulted in the national semi-religious worship of classical antiquities. Elements that we encountered in the indigenous, pre-modern archaeologies such as the animate properties and human-like qualities of antiquities, including their emotive reactions, are encountered today both in official discourse (by politicians, as well as professional archaeologists) and in the public arena. In the crusade for the Parthenon marbles, for example, it is the marbles themselves that demand their repatriation,⁴⁹ and their nostalgia and sadness, as they stay ‘imprisoned’ in the British Museum, are often evoked on various occasions, be it in articles in serious newspapers, the poetry of Kiki Dimoula, or the newspaper articles by Manolis Andronikos.⁵⁰

Several anthropological and other studies have shown that modernity is produced in distinctive ways in different contexts, especially outside the north-western European core. If there are multiple modernities, then there are bound to be multiple modernist archaeologies. In that sense, the thesis advocated in the recent important book by Julian Thomas on archaeology and modernity⁵¹ is in need of some qualification on two counts: first, contrary to his view that archaeology would be inconceivable under historical conditions other than those of Western modernity,⁵² I have demonstrated above the existence of indigenous archaeologies in pre-modern Greece; and second, contrary to his portrayal of modernist archaeology as something largely homogenous and coherent, I have mentioned here and have developed more fully elsewhere⁵³ the thesis that the modernist national archaeology of Greece is a hybrid and syncretic one, incorporating pre-modern elements. It is clear that the discussion that Thomas’ contribution has initiated is in need of further examples, outside his largely north-west European ones.

Decolonizing Greek Archaeology?

By way of conclusion, I want to address my third point,

the need to decolonize Greek archaeology. How can this decolonization be achieved?

Obviously, this final point and this question are not easy to tackle; any attempt to do so requires a long, sustained and collective discursive and practical effort, rather than a short treatment in a conference volume. I suggest, however, that some of the answers will come from a willingness to learn from the current hybridity in official modernist archaeology, and perhaps to reconnect with some of the elements of pre-modern archaeologies. The aim here is not to demolish official modernist archaeology *tout court*, nor to accept uncritically the principles of pre-modern archaeologies. This would be both unrealistic and undesirable. We could, for example, benefit by exploring other strands in Western modernity, besides the dominant representationist paradigm, such as, for example, the materialist paradigm that rejected mentalism, cognitivism and representationism in favour of human (and thus archaeological) practice as a sensuous activity.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the reconnection that I am talking about is more of a counter-modern, reflective experiment, a genealogical exercise which can not only illuminate the colonial-cum-national roots of Greek archaeology, but also question many of its current practices and orientations, once their genealogy and logic are exposed. For example, we should pose some critical and urgent questions, such as: to what extent is it desirable to continue producing archaeological sites that are divorced from the routines of daily life and from social time? Why continue restricting access to them and thus pre-determining the mode of their experiencing? Why should official archaeological authorities not allow the public to experience ancient material traces and artefacts through a multisensory engagement (through touch, as well as vision, for example)? And given the orientalist and Eurocentric bias at the core of colonial and national archaeology, why should the material traces of the past not be allowed to re-enact and activate multiple times and evoke multiple identities, rather than continue to be treated as indicators of a singular temporality, chronometric devices and aesthetic values for the glorification and the materialization of certain chosen golden ages? Why not recognize that official archaeology today has to respond to a different audience from that of say thirty or fifty years ago? That in a radically transformed country where roughly 10% of its current inhabitants are recent immigrants with different perceptions of identity,

history and religion, Greece's richly diverse, multiethnic and multicultural material past needs to be highlighted and promoted as such, in museums, in exhibitions, at archaeological sites, in education? Will the new Museum of the Acropolis dare to show the diverse, eventful and multicultural life of the site, from early prehistory, through the Medieval, Christian, Frankish, Ottoman and Muslim, and early modern, to the contemporary? Or will it

continue to glorify the single temporality of the classical, albeit with technological, architectural and museological innovations?

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NOTES

* Many thanks to the participants of the conference upon which this volume is based for their constructive comments. Some of the ideas on indigenous archaeologies were developed while I was a Getty Scholar at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2005-2006), and I wish to thank my fellow scholars there, and Charles Stewart in particular for feedback and comments; these ideas were also more formally presented on two occasions: as part of the Stanford Lectures I delivered at Trinity College Dublin in March 2006, and in a paper for the 'The Making of Modern Greece' conference, held at the Centre for Hellenic Studies, Kings College London (7-9 September 2006). I am grateful to the organizers of and participants in these events. An extended and fully documented version of the argument outlined here will be published in the Stanford Lectures volume.

1. For further discussion of this ceremony, and references, see Hamilakis 2007a, 58-64.

2. Cf. Thomas 2004b, 31.

3. Trigger 1984.

4. Gourgouris 1996.

5. Calotychos 2003.

6. E.g. Tziouvas 2001.

7. E.g. Fleming 1999, esp. 155; Fleming 2000.

8. E.g. Peckham 2004.

9. Herzfeld 2002.

10. Herzfeld 2002, 900-1.

11. Cf. Kokkou 1977; Hamilakis 2007a for further discussions. I do not wish to denigrate here the role and contribution of indigenous archaeologists and officials in this process. In any case, as the constitution of the Hellenic national imagination was to a large extent the work of scholars, merchants, diplomats and politicians of the diaspora, and as the archaeologists, writers and others who dealt with Greece were trained in the West, the boundaries between what constituted indigenous and non-indigenous scholars and archaeologists in these early years were often fluid and hazy.

12. Chatterjee 1986.

13. Chatterjee 1986, 11.

14. Gosden 2004.

15. See Simopoulos 1993.

16. Tolia 1996.

17. Velianitis 1993.

18. Cockerell 1903, 54.

19. Fleming 1999, 151-52; Fleming 2000, 1221.

20. Calotychos 2003, 47-53.

21. The term, not without its problems, has been inspired by the lively discussion that is currently taking place in contexts such as the USA, Australia, or New Zealand (and to a lesser extent, Africa or Asia) on the archaeology of and by native groups, with its distinctive epistemology, often radically different from the epistemology of the official, Western archaeology (see e.g. Smith & Wobst 2005; Watkins 2000). This project clearly has a political relevance in addition to its scholarly one, but it is not without its problems (see papers in Hamilakis & Duke 2007). Critics, for example, have pointed out that these indigenous discourses often reproduce essentialist attitudes towards ancestry and genealogy (e.g. Ingold 2000, Ch. 8). By using this term here, I do not imply a direct analogy with these phenomena, nor do I attribute any primacy or supremacy to an indigenist discourse. While in the USA, for example, this term may empower marginalized and persecuted groups, in Europe it may fuel racist and xenophobic practices against anybody who is perceived as threatening 'indigenous' values (Hamilakis 2007b). I am also aware that by using the term 'archaeology' here for these alternative practices, I may unintentionally inscribe them within the same modernist discourse that I am critiquing. While I concede that this danger does indeed exist, I still believe that, given certain qualifications and contextual clarifications, the term is still useful and important. In my case, it achieves a twofold aim: it valorizes these practices as being as important as the practices of official archaeology, and not just ignorant superstitions, as they have often been labelled; and it shows that a pre-modern

European context can in fact inform the current discussion on alternative conceptions of the material past, as much as any non-European context.

22. Hamilakis, in preparation.

23. Clarke 1814, 772.

24. Clarke 1814, 772-73.

25. Dodwell 1819, vol. 2, 583.

26. http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/pharos/collection_pages/ancient_pages/GR.1.1865/TXT_SE-GR.1.1865.html, last accessed 18 February 2008.

27. Hobhouse 1813, 369.

28. Of course, it would be naive to suggest that the indigenous archaeologies of pre-modern Greece have remained static and unchanged over many centuries, or that they were unaffected by intellectual and social developments, such as for example, the increasingly important role of teachers who spread ideas about a national 'resurrection' and the glorious ancestral heritage, and the huge wave of Western travellers who came to Greece in search of classical antiquities, especially in the late 18th and the early 19th c. Such links and entanglements should be central to any study of pre-modern indigenous archaeology, admittedly not an easy task. Indeed, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that in this example, the locals' belief that the statue had the power to guarantee the fertility of their fields, can be attributed to the association of Eleusis with the ancient goddess Demeter, and the assumption made by travellers, and no doubt, local educated people, that the statue did indeed portray the goddess. Even so, the *practices* described here, associated with late 18th and early 19th c. local worship of the statue, constitute a distinctive worldview, albeit one engaged in a dialogue with the emerging, modernist official worldview.

29. Kakridis 1989, 18.

30. Kakridis 1989, 18.

31. Kakridis 1989, 32.

32. Kakridis 1989, 19.

33. Folk tales like these constitute a body of evidence with distinctive interpretative problems, while being at the same time the staple of *laographia*, the national mission of which has been extensively explored in the literature. My reading here, however, works against this nationalizing logic. Indeed, I argue that the ontologies and archaeologies that emerge from these reveal a different logic from the national, modernist one. Nevertheless, problems such as the dating, the character, and the genealogy of these stories still remain. For example, Kakridis attributes many of them to the 19th, and others to the 20th c. without further, more precise dating information. Some of these stories may reflect the absorption and incorporation of ideas and stories about ancient Greeks disseminated through education, heard recounted by travellers or by Greek scholars. Even so their mix-

ing with other, local beliefs, especially those of a super-natural and 'non-rational' or simply counter-modernist kind, is of interest here. Furthermore, most of these stories originate in the countryside and among ordinary 'peasant' folk, which does not make them more authentic or pure, of course, as a national folklorist would suggest, but constitutes them as a different and undervalued category of evidence (in comparison to the much studied literary and scholarly cultural production), but a hybrid one nevertheless. Finally, I argue here that these stories should be studied along with the parallel study of pre-modern *practices* involving antiquities, some considerably older than the 19th or the late 18th c.

34. Gell 1998; Tapsell 1997.

35. Kakridis 1989, 18.

36. Cf. Fasolt 2004.

37. Cf. Hirsch & Stewart 2005.

38. Bergson 1991; cf. Deleuze 1991; Al-Saji 2004.

39. Papalexandrou 2003.

40. E.g. Gennadios 1930, 139; Marindin 1914, 179.

41. Here is a characteristic passage from the English antiquarian J.B.S. Morritt's letters: 'It is very pleasant to walk the streets here [he refers to Athens of the late 18th c.]. Over almost every door is an antique statue or basso-rilievo, more or less good though all much broken, so that you are in a *perfect gallery of marbles in these lands*. Some we steal, some we buy, and our court is much adorned with them' (Marindin 1914, 179, my emphasis).

42. E.g. fig. 1, for an 18th c. pictorial representation of this practice.

43. Hamilakis 2007a, 68, for references.

44. Ouzman 2006, 347.

45. Sease 1998, 106; cf. Hamilakis 2007b for further discussion.

46. Bennett 1988; cf. Hamilakis 2001.

47. Hamilakis 2007a.

48. Hamilakis 2007a.

49. According to official government documentation.

50. See Hamilakis 2007a, 243-86 for detailed documentation.

51. Thomas 2004a; cf. also Thomas 2004b with a response.

52. E.g. Thomas 2004a, xi; Thomas 2004b, 31.

53. Hamilakis 2007a.

54. Cf. Rowlands 2004, 202.

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