Lives in Ruins: Antiquities and National Imagination in Modern Greece

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In March 1996 a peace treaty was signed at Sparta in the Peloponnese. The treaty ended a 27-year war that had caused many casualties on both sides. The signing of the treaty, the text of which was prepared by the academician Konstantinos Despotopoulos, was widely reported in the press. The signatories were leaders neither of countries nor of international organizations. They were the mayors of Athens and Sparta, and they signed the formal end of the Peloponnesian War, which ended in 404 B.C. (Nikitaris 1996).

This was, in many ways, an unusual incident that had all the elements of a staged theatrical performance (irony included perhaps), but it is fair to say that, more than in many other modern societies, the past is omnipresent in Greece. It can be encountered in daily life, in the abundant and in many cases highly visible archaeological sites, in the new Athens metro stations (fig. 3.1; cf. Hamilakis 2001a), in representations, be it company logos (fig. 3.2) or product advertisements (fig. 3.3), in the staging of ancient dramas, in the ceremonies among Greeks in the Diaspora (fig. 3.4), in literature. Below I explore some of these encounters and their meanings, focusing in particular on monuments and antiquities, and investigate the implications for antiquities themselves, for Greek society, and more broadly for modernity and its manifestations, both in the European periphery and in global contexts.

Antiquity in Greek society (as in many other contexts) is often discussed in a simplistic manner as a case of nationalist abuse of the past by the state
Fig 3.1. A large-scale reconstruction of an archaeological stratigraphic section at the central metro station in Syntagma, Athens. The section comes from the extensive rescue excavations during the construction of the Athens metro. (Photograph by the author, April 2000).

Fig 3.2. The new logo of the Athens Concert Hall. A range of subtle meanings is evoked here. The architecture of the hall is linked to the architecture of the Parthenon: a similar linkage is attempted in relation to the cultural contribution of the Concert Hall to Athenian society.

We found a way to make Greece famous again!

Fig 3.3. "Much rarer than the Elgin marbles." A product advertisement addressed to an international audience, deploying, somewhat ironically, imagery from antiquity.
of antiquity with a tragic and disturbing episode of modern Greek history, that is, the foundation and operation of the concentration camps at Makronisos (1947–1950) (see Hamilakis 2002 for a more detailed discussion). I then trace the development and fortunes of antiquity in Greek national imagination and discourse from the 18th and 19th centuries to the present, demonstrating its diverse and eventful biographies, before I return to the case of Makronisos in order to explore some of its meanings. Then I finish with more general points about present and future ambiguities and dilemmas that the national discourse based on antiquities increasingly faces.

"The Other Parthenon"

Makronisos is a small, bare, and uninhabited island off the Attica coast, opposite to Lavrio. Mainly because of its proximity to the capital and its isolated and barren nature (but also partly because of the mentality that sees islands as laboratories and sites of experiments), it was seen from early on as a place for imprisonment and exile. Here the Greek government imprisoned a number of Turkish war prisoners during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), most of whom died of contagious diseases and were buried on the island. During the exchange of populations following the Asia Minor War (1922), a number of refugees were temporarily lodged here on their way to a more permanent residence. In the more recent Greek national consciousness Makronisos has been synonymous with persecution and internal exile during the Greek Civil War (1944–1949) between government forces and the left-communist-backed forces of the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE; see, e.g., Dianoldis et al. 1994; Bournazos and Sakellariopoulos 2000; cf. Close 1993, 1995; Lattredes and Wrigley 1995). In the midst of the civil war, Makronisos was seen as an ideal place to set up vast military camps for the left-wing conscripts and for other citizens, prior to their posting to the mountains of northern Greece. In its first phase (1947–1948) Makronisos housed mostly conscripts, whereas in its second phase (1949–1950) it housed a number of political exiles, including a number of women (Margaritis 2000). Makronisos thus became a major state-run facility to "rehabilitate" left-wing and other democratic citizens and send them to fight in the mountains.

Between 40,000 and 50,000 people or more seemed to have passed through the island. The prisoners were to be "persuaded" (in most cases by force and torture) to denounce their political beliefs and sign a "statement of
We [the Greeks] have 3000 years of history and we will not become slaves to the Slavs (K. Tsatsos, then Minister for Education [and in 1975–1980 President of the Hellenic Republic] in a speech on the island during one of his frequent visits; Skapaneus 4 [1949] 21).

The magazines published on Makronisos were full of articles and iconography referring to classical Greece. A drawing of the Parthenon was part of the logo and cover of Skapaneus, the most important publication of the regime at Makronisos. The link between Makronisos and classical Greece, and the Parthenon in particular, became such a widespread theme that the following appeared in the French Le Monde some years after the camp was closed because of domestic and international outcry: “The passing tourist, intoxicated by the light of the Greek landscape . . . will visit only one of the two Parthenons. The other one is to be found on the horrible concentration camp of Makronisos, where the cries of the tortured are lost in the infinite blue sky” (Le Monde 10 September 1965, cited in Margaris 1966).

Furthermore, the prisoners were forced to build imitations of classical buildings, such as the Erechtheion, the Temple of Wingless Victory (originally both on the Acropolis), four open theaters, which were meant to be replicas of ancient Greek theaters, a replica of the Parthenon on a scale of 20:1, and other, smaller replicas of the same monument (fig. 3.5). Photographic records also show a building that imitates the church of St. Sophia of Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), perhaps the most famous church of Greek Orthodox and one that is laden with symbolism. Remnants of some of these buildings are still visible on the island, which was declared a historical site by the Ministry for Culture in 1989 under Minister Melina Mercouri (ICOMOS 1991; Diafonidis et al. 1994). Here is how the main magazine of Makronisos describes the large-scale replica of the Parthenon:

White, like as if made of marble from Pentel, the small Parthenon in the camp of the First Company, appears like a white vision. It expresses the spirit of optimism, of joy, of beauty, of adoration for the fatherland which the reborn Makronisiotis feels, a feeling which shall not die.

All soldiers admire it and the visitors understand that, in a place where soldiers create such wonderful works, the most advanced mosaic-building and character-reshaping work must be taking place (Skapaneus 3 [1949] 20).
The publications of the regime endeavored to situate Makronisos in the imagined Hellenic national topos and in the ancestral sacred geography, and they frequently referred to the ancient mythological tradition mentioned by Pausanias (1.35.1), in which Helen of Troy is supposed to have stopped on the island with her lover (e.g., Anamorphosis 17.1.49). Furthermore, the regime emphasized the proximity to Attica, with its ancient Greek associations. From Makronisos, the remnants of the famous classical temple of Apollo at Sounio were visible on a clear day. This visual connection was discursively expressed in the official rhetoric as well as in poems written by "rehabilitated" prisoners and published in the Spezemes. The regime's aim was to show not only to the inmates but to all dissidents in Greece that the ancient Greek "spirit," which survived through to the present, was at odds with modern radical ideologies. The inmates at Makronisos, by building the replicas of ancient monuments, could rediscover that spirit (Rodocanachi 1949, 6).

**Nation Building and Antiquities**

What made this deployment of antiquity possible? Why was classical antiquity seen as an important symbolic resource that could be used to "rehabilitate" the "polluted" members of the national body? When did the process start, and how did it develop? A long-term view that traces the entanglement of antiquity with national memory and discourse from the 18th century to the present will help to answer these questions.

Nation building in Greece was mostly undertaken in the 18th and 19th centuries by middle and upper class merchants and intellectuals who were educated in the west and who invested in the prominent position of classicism among the upper classes of Europe (see Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996, 1999 for an extensive discussion and full bibliography for this section). Within the multi-ethnic Ottoman empire (which the area that is today Greece belonged to until the War of Independence in 1821), social organization was based on the millet system, with religion as the main identifier. The Christian population of Greece together with other Christians formed the Rum-millet, and they called themselves Rumoi. Economic and political developments led to the emergence of a merchant middle class during the 18th century, which often clashed with the traditional "autochthonous," mainly land-owning groups. The political and economic influence of the
Orthodox Church, which was mainly ruled by Greek-speaking people, and the use of the Greek language as a lingua franca and language of commerce all over the Balkans, have been considered the most important factors for the "Hellenization" of this new social class. This group, which was already economically connected to the western European bourgeoisie, imported, together with goods and economic capital, a form of symbolic capital in the ideologies of classicism, and especially of Hellenism (that emerged in the mid 18th century; cf. Morris 1994, 16), which were dominant among the western middle classes. The ideas of classical Hellenic antiquity as perceived in Europe at that time formed the basis for the new ideology of the Hellenic nation, seen as the resurrection of classical Greece, a reappropriation and reshaping of Hellenism, which eventually became an altered, indigenous concept. Moreover, classical ideals served as a link between Greek and other European middle-class social ideologies. Above all, they legitimized the existence of the middle class and its political and economic program.

This merchant middle class, unlike the indigenous traditional elites and the ecclesiastical authority, sought a new form of political organization that would not only lead to liberation from the Ottomans, but would also be able to create a "European style" middle class, which would guarantee political emancipation and primarily economic development. The perceived political organization of classical antiquity was seen as more appropriate for the new social conditions, whereas other chronologically closer models (e.g., the Byzantine empire) were seen as too authoritarian and theocratic.

The rediscovery of the Hellenic heritage by the people of Greece therefore was a consequence of a number of processes linked to economic and political developments, as well as to ideological trends such as the glorification of Hellenic classical antiquity by the European middle classes. The establishment of classical antiquity as the symbolic capital for the new nation was therefore a result of the adoption of a Western ideal. This process, however, was far from simple: for people in Greece it was not simply a matter of imitating a trend. It was the reclaiming of the ownership of a heritage. It was an attempt to claim participation in European modernity but from a position of superiority, based on the perception than the people of Greece were direct descendants and rightful owners of classical Hellas. Since then, European powers were (and to a large extent, still are) seen as debtors to Greece. In their turn, many popular discourses in European societies often relegate Greece to the status of a static and fossilized remnant of classical antiquity, and its people are often seen as unworthy descendants of glorious ancestors. People of Greece were and are often seen through the eyes of the past (hence the adjective "modern" to refer to Greece), whereas they themselves were and are claiming a position in the European present and future, based to a large extent on the symbolic capital of the past (cf. Herzfeld 1987).

The foundation of the Hellenic nation on the basis of antiquity initiated the process of the monumentalization of Greek society, the imposition of monumental time over social time (concepts introduced by Herzfeld [1991]): as the establishment of the Hellenic nation-state was seen as the resurrection of Classical Greece (rather than as a process of a secular political development, linked to Europe-wide changes), Greece became conceptually isolated from the social and political processes of the time. As Skopeteas (1988) has shown, the Greek War of Independence won the support of the European Powers by being presented as having no association with other social and political movements at the time (the social time); some of these movements had radical social connotations, threatening thus the authority of the status quo. The Greek War was seen as a moment in the eternal continuum of the Hellenic nation. It was an event that happened in monumental time, separate from the social time of 19th-century Balkans. The creation of this distinctive temporality (based on the position of antiquity) was and still is one of the main features of the Hellenic national ideology.

It is clear therefore that the symbolic capital of antiquities was not simply the basis for the construction of the national imagination. From the beginning it was a legitimizing mechanism for the middle class and an extremely powerful symbolic resource. It is also less known that from the early years of the foundation of the new state, politicians, administrators, and intellectuals made conscious and often controversial decisions of selecting from the symbolic repertoire of antiquity those aspects which could convey best their political and ideological program. For example, there was extensive discussion during the War of Independence on whether to use the resurrected phoenix or the statue of Athena as the state crest. The latter symbol prevailed, not only because it was used in the French Revolution, but also because the phoenix was the symbol of Filiki Eteria, a secret organization that was linked to the radical social movement of carbonarism. If the new state had chosen the phoenix, it possibly would have faced problems in
securing approval by the Great Powers (Droulia 1995; for other examples see Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996). This example also shows that from the start of the Hellenic national project, antiquity was invested with diverse and often competing versions of social meaning, reminding us that the national discourse is rarely linear, singular, and uncontested.

Given the key ideological position of monuments in the above processes, therefore, it comes as no surprise that during the War of Independence and after the foundation of the State, a number of measures for the protection of antiquities were adopted (but on the notion of protection see below). Even before the War, intellectuals were advocating the need to protect monuments. One of the first documents calling for the preservation of antiquities was issued in 1807 by Adamantios Korais, the most eminent intellectual of what is called the modern Greek Enlightenment (Kokkou 1977, 28). The foundation of an archaeological service (even a very basic one) was one of the first measures of the new administration, and the entourage of King Otto (the Bavarian who was to become the first king of Greece), included many prominent archaeologists, architects, and other scholars who played a crucial role in developing a legal framework for antiquities, the teaching of archaeology in the university, and measures to collect, preserve, and reconstruct antiquities (Kokkou 1977). The establishment of the Athens Archaeological Society in 1857 was another crucial development in that respect (Petrakos 1987). From the early years of the foundation of the new state a large-scale program of archaeological activity commenced. It was not simply an excavation and preservation program. It was an immense enterprise of constructing the classical heritage of Greece, of materializing the idealized view of classical antiquity that Western intellectuals and middle classes were living by (Hamilakis 2001b). This process of construction involved measures such as the large-scale demolition of post-Classical monuments, especially in “sacred” places such as the Acropolis (see below); the rebuilding of selective monuments; and the exhibition of isolated, fetishized artifacts of classical antiquity in museums. In this case, as in many other similar ones, it is thus misleading to talk about protection and care of antiquities in neutral objectified terms; we are dealing instead with the production of an archaeological past and with archaeological institutions as devices of modernity, creating the material signifiers of an idealized perception of the past (cf. Hamilakis 1999b).

Dominant versions of national historiography are at pains to try and prove empirically and historically that the population of Greece in the 18th and early 19th century (before the development of a Hellenic national imagination), despite the lack of education and the suffering from what is referred to as “Ottoman oppression” and the “Turkish yoke,” viewed antiquities as national ancestral heritage and managed to find some ways of protecting them. Kokkou, for example, describes the practice of incorporating ancient architectural parts (sculptures and inscriptions) in contemporary buildings, as an attempt to rescue antiquities through the only means available to people at the time (Kokkou 1977, 22; cf. Gennadios 1930; Kalogeropoulos 1994, among many others). A closer reading of the available sources of the time will reveal a different story.

The legends and folk stories assembled by Kakridis (1989), dated to the 19th and early 20th century but reflecting earlier beliefs, are extremely interesting in illuminating the attitudes of the folk inhabitants of the Greek peninsula before the spread of the ideas of Greek enlightenment and the notion of national regeneration. Of course, this body constitutes a distinctive narrative that needs decoding and does not present fewer problems than any other official or unofficial discourse (cf. Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1978; Herzfeld 1982). These stories indicate an interest and active engagement with monuments and antiquities, a feature common in many social contexts (cf. Harmann 2002), but it is clear that “Hellenes” are seen as people distinctive and different from the contemporary ones (the Romioi), living in another time, the mythical time of the Hellenes (O haires ton Ellinon). They often possess supernatural properties and they are seen as giants, which as Kakridis says, probably derived from the impression that the ancient monuments, the architectural remains, and the larger-than-life statues had on contemporary people (Kakridis 1989, 46).

As for the protection of antiquities, the evidence of folk tales and writings in the press paint a different picture. Firstly, there is plenty of evidence for the use of ancient artifacts for purposes such as building material and sources of lime. In an article published anonymously in the Ephemeris ton Athinon (Athens Journal) we find plenty of information on the use of antiquities as construction material by both Christians/Romioi and non-Christians alike; according to this, the sculptors of the islands of Tinos and Mykonos used to utilize ancient marble sculptures as raw material for their work, among other things, in transforming the classical altars into Muslim burial stones (where perhaps the meaning of the strange sculpture would have added to the symbolic weight of the finished product); and the same
source mentions the existence of a huge lime kiln at the Epidavros theater, where architectural parts of the theater and other buildings nearby were used as raw material for the production of lime (Anon 1826). At least some of these enterprises seemed to have been carried out either by authorities and/or by well-off people; at the same time, in some cases ordinary people seemed to have resisted those attempts, not because they considered the artifacts part of their ancient heritage, but because they had invested them with supernatural properties and believed that their destruction would bring misfortune and disaster to them and their livelihoods. For example, in 1759 the Voivoda of Athens, Moustafa Aga Tsisdaraki, destroyed a column from the temple of the Olympian Zeus in order to produce lime for the building of the Kato Pazari (or Tsisdaraki) mosque (the one that survives today at Monastiraki Square and is used as a folklore museum). The inhabitants of Athens attributed the plague that followed to this event, as they believed that the plague was buried under the column (Kambouroglou 1896, 119). They thus protested angrily. In many occasions, fragments from monuments were reused in the building of modern houses (they were mainly placed above the front doors [Gennadios 1930, 139]), not in order to rescue them (contra Kokkou 1977, 22), but as part of the belief in their protective properties. As it is well known from ethnography, passages, such as house entryways, are considered dangerous.

Monuments and especially statues had acquired the identity of persons with human properties and emotional reactions (Kakridis 1989; Gennadios 1930; Kambouroglou 1893). Some tales describe the sculptures as human beings who were mutilated and petrified by magicians; the spirit inside them (often referred to as an Arabian) is frequently heard to mourn for their condition (tale recorded by the traveler Hobhouse; cited in Gennadios 1930, 57–8, n. 57).

I suggest that the national imagination transformed these attitudes toward antiquities into something else. Antiquities, partly through an externally motivated mechanism of valuation, became the symbolic capital on which the new imagined community of Hellenism (denoting the national essence, as opposed to the western Hellenism denoting worship of Classical Greece) was based. Moreover, if, as Gourgouris (1996) has suggested, national imagination can also be seen as a form of dreaming the focus of the nation, hence also as a project that constructs a distinctive spatial realm (cf. Leontis 1995), then antiquities can be seen as the indispensable landmarks in the imagined territory of Hellenism. Their materiality, sense of authenticity, longevity, and link with the earth and territory, were the essential characteristics that made them such powerful devices in the national project.

But this transformation is not as radical as it seems. The new secular religion of nationalism (Anderson 1991; see also below), through a process of cultural syncretism (cf., Stewart 1994) incorporated the premodern ideological substratum: the power and the character of Orthodox Christianity with its ceremonial elements and the worshiping of Christian icons, and the fear and respect toward antiquities, among others. The notion of the Fall, death, and resurrection, so common in Christian tradition, are carried through and find a prominent place in the national narrative: after the Fall, the nation resurrects itself in its former glory. It is no coincidence that the most prominent day of modern commemoration of the "national resurrection” (25 March) is also one of the most important days in the Orthodox Christian calendar. The admiration, fear, and respect of antiquities were partly maintained and partly transformed into ancestral worship (more on this below).

While in the first decades of the foundation of the new state the national project was a vague and fluid process, from the 1880s onward it gradually became a much more rigid enterprise. During that time, the national narrative consolidated itself to present a much more coherent and continuous story. A number of factors were responsible for this change. One of the most important was the need to counter arguments such as the one expressed by the Austrian scholar and politician Hallerwayer who claimed that there was no genetic or cultural link between the inhabitants of ancient and modern Greece. The most effective response came from Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, who became the national historian by establishing a direct link of continuity between ancient and modern Greece, claiming that the Byzantine period was an integral part of the national history and that the Byzantine empire was another expression of Hellenism (Skopetza 1997; Veloudis 1982; Linkos 1994). This crystallization of national narrative was expressed clearly in (and was reinforced by) state education, perhaps one of the most powerful mechanisms of national homogenization (cf. Gellner 1983; Hamilakis 2003). From the 1880s onward the practice of using translations of foreign textbooks in schools was abandoned in favor of using ones written by Greek authors. Much more emphasis than before was placed on Greek history, and in addition to antiquity, the Byzantine period became an integral part of the curriculum (Koulouri 1988).
The turn of the century, therefore, found Greece with a coherent, rigid national narrative emphasizing continuity from antiquity to the present, with classical Athens as the "Golden Age" and with other periods, such as the Byzantine, bridging the gaps with the present. The national topos included a much wider geographical area than the borders of the nation-state at the time. The irredentist dream of "Megali Idea" (Great Idea), which advocated the unification of all Hellenes in the Balkans and Anatolia under one state (cf. Skopetos 1988), remained a powerful ideological and political force until it was buried in the ashes of Smyrna in 1922 in the Greco-Turkish War, an event that marked the formal end of the long, Greek 19th century (cf. Clogg 1992).

Attitudes and perceptions of antiquities were obviously affected by these changes. The crystallization of national narrative, which placed the main emphasis on the classical past, elevated further the social value of classical antiquities. The ethnocentrism in education established further the belief that classical antiquity was the Golden Age, not only of Greece but of humanity over all, and that its superiority was unquestionable. In addition, the restitution of the Byzantine past as an integral part of the national history elevated the value of Byzantine monuments, especially those of ecclesiastic nature, promoting further the fusion between religion and national imagination.

**National Imagination and the Sacralization of Antiquity**

Elsewhere it was suggested that antiquities in Greece became sacralized as a result of their implication in the national discourse and imagination, and the links between nationalism and religion (see Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999 for a full discussion of the phenomenon and extensive bibliography). There is now an extensive body of literature on the links between national and religious imagination (for the most recent addition, see van der Veer and Lahmann 1999). Anderson (1991) has argued convincingly that nationalism should be understood not so much as a political program but as a cultural system that shares many elements with the cultural systems it replaced, with religion being the most prominent. Nationalism therefore absorbed any religious concepts and ritual practices. Other authors, such as Mosse (1976) and Kerzer (1988), emphasized the role of political rituals in the process of national imagination. These rituals, frequently involving embodied formalized practices, often operate as mnemonic devices that aim at constructing and perpetuating the national memory (cf. Conneron 1989).

The adoption of national ideas as the guiding force for Greek modernity, and the crucial role that antiquities played and continue to play in the national imagination, led to the sacralization of antiquity and of the discourses, practices, artifacts, and places associated with it. Additional and more complex dynamics were involved, however, which compounded the above phenomenon. One of the most prominent was the role of Greek Orthodoxy (cf. Kitromilides 1989). I have already noted that the adoption of nationalist ideas was accompanied by the incorporation and reworking of Christian theological beliefs, as the resurrection of the nation was conceptually linked to the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, despite the original tensions between Greek Orthodoxy and nationalism (the official Orthodox church was originally against the War of Independence and the national ideal), from the mid 19th century onward the Church became subject to the authority of the Greek nation-state, and Orthodoxy became fused with Hellenic national identity (Kitromilides 1989). The incorporation of the Byzantine period (with its theocratic connotations) in the body of national history (see above) contributed to this phenomenon.

But the sacralization of the classical past owes a lot to the perception of classical antiquity by the Western imagination. It is well known that for the travelers of the romantic era, the famous loci of classical antiquity were places of pilgrimage, occupying a position similar to the ones occupied by the Holy Land for Western Christians. The visits to the famous classical archaeological sites of Greece were characterized by veneration and almost religious respect (cf. Stowe 1994, cited and discussed further in Szegedy-Maszak 2001). It is this sentiment that led Renan to declare in his 1865 "Prêre sur l'Acropole": "when I saw the Acropolis I accepted the revelation of the divine" (Renan 1985; cf. Tzivolas 2001).

As a result, discourses about antiquities are laden with religious terminology. The most important locus of the national imagination, the Athenian Acropolis, is often referred to as the "Sacred Rock." Attitudes of purity and pollution, common in religious systems of thought, are frequently encountered in discourses and practices related to antiquity. Some of the archaeological activities carried out in the most important (according to the national discourse) archaeological sites, are in fact rituals of purification. In one characteristic example (for more examples see Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999; Kaftanzoglou 2001; Yalouri 2001), between 1836 and 1875, a large-scale purification program took place on the Athenian Acropolis. Just before the
Greek War of Independence the Acropolis was a palimpsest of monuments: apart from the buildings of the Classical period (and of course, the earlier, less conspicuous remains) a plethora of later buildings, houses, a Muslim mosque, and a Medieval tower stood among others (Fig. 3.6). Almost immediately after the foundation of the Greek state, the Acropolis was cleansed of most of its post-Classical monuments (cf. MacNeal 1991; Mallouchou-Tufano 1998; Hamilakis 2001b). The project started at the suggestion of the Bavarian architect Leo von Klenze, and was carried out by him and Ludwig Ross, the prominent archaeologist who came with King Otto; it was continued by Greek archaeologists, such as Kyriakos Pittakis, who had most of the later buildings (including the mosque) demolished, without having previously recorded them. In 1875, the Archaeological Society in Athens, with the financial support of Schliemann, completed the demolition by removing the Medieval tower. The decision caused some strong reactions against the demolition (cf. Hamilakis 2001b). It is interesting that in their discourse the supporters of the demolition emphasized the sanctity of the monument and its need to be “cleansed.”

Hamilakis and Yalouri (1999) discussed a different, 20th-century process of symbolic purification involving antiquities, relating to an event that occurred in the early days of the Nazi occupation of Greece. The night of 31 May 1941, two resistance fighters removed the flag with the swastika from the Athenian Acropolis. This event enjoyed wide publicity (it was broadcast worldwide), inspired one of Picasso’s drawings, and is still acknowledged today. It is also considered as marking the beginning of the resistance struggle against the occupation forces in Greece.

The above examples demonstrate that the sacralization of antiquities has invested them with immense symbolic power. This power, a key authoritative resource in the negotiations of social roles, identities, and sociopolitical dynamics, can become a weapon of the state or power structures, as well as of subordinate groups and individuals against state mechanisms and other hegemonic powers.

The Traps and Pitfalls of a Charter Myth: Antiquity and National Memory at Makronisos

Makronisos can be seen as a dystopia which was disguised as a utopia: the regime tried to convince the inmates that they were “re-creating” with their own hands ancient Greece in the present; that they were fulfilling their destined mission. At the same time this process of building, literally with their own hands, “ancient Greece” in the present, was aimed at inscribing on their bodies the idea that (as was noted above) Greekness is at odds with ideologies such as communism; moreover that the Civil War was just another rerun of the millennia-old national drama where Hellenism fights its “others.” Makronisos and the whole Civil War then became part of the national history, of the national destiny, of the unbroken and inescapable continuity. The Byzantine past, although not absent (cf. the imitation of the church of Ag. Sophia), was dearly of secondary significance in this discourse (mimicking the position of Byzantium/Christianity in the broader national narrative), and operated mostly through the compulsory theological component of the “rehabilitation” program, and as a bridging chronological element in the narrative of continuity.

But how was this national discourse, based on the official version of national antiquity, received by the prisoners? The inmates at Makronisos in their attempt to resist oppression, rather than undermining the
Hellenocentric rhetoric and ancestors' cult, accepted it and attempted to appropriate it in their resistance efforts. At times, it seems that the issue was, which side represented the true values of the classical past best, which side could be considered the real descendants of classical Greeks. There have been very few cases where this rhetoric was undermined. The ironic usage and the "mocking" of the term "New Parthenon" by the surviving Makronisiotes clearly denotes an attempt to ridicule the assumption that the regime could be compared with the "glory" of Classical Athens. This in itself is an acceptance of the ancestral cult and an elevation and glorification of its value. In a leaflet written by one of the prisoners and translated into English by the London-based League for Democracy in Greece in order to raise the issue of Makronisos in the international community, we read (after having read about the tortures): "We appeal to the conscience of all civilised men to throw themselves into the struggle to save us, with the conviction that in so doing they will be helping to save the honour of a small but heroic country, which was the cradle of democracy and civilisation—the honour of Greece" (Proimakis 1950, 12).

This case, of course, can be seen as a tactical battle which exploits the position of classical antiquity in the imagination and culture of the West. Many cases are known in which mostly international "Philhellenic" organizations play the ancient Greece "card" to raise consciousness for an issue in modern Greece. The author of the leaflet was aware of the position of classical antiquity in the imagination and thought of his audience (intellectuals and educated citizens in the west), and he utilized that to achieve his aims.

But this appropriation and tactical deployment of the dominant discourse does not seem to be simply a public calculated performance, as the following example shows. As was mentioned earlier, the Classical temple at Soufion played a key role in the regime's rhetorical devices, which attempted to situate Makronisos in the national time and in the topography of Hellenism. In the poem below, written by one of the prisoners (Rafopoulos 1995, 40), this very temple features prominently:

The Message
As much tighter as I can
(everyday if possible)
I must
With a pen and a piece of paper

The image of classical antiquity portrayed here is different from the official version: a skeletal frame instead of eternal glory, an exhausted, moribund presence instead of vibrancy. Yet, in both versions the temple is vested with moral authority, with eternal symbolic weight. The same author reveals an interesting story which points to the possibilities of resistance by the prisoners in the camp, an aspect ignored in most of the memoirs written by the prisoners. The theater group (operated by the inmates themselves) in one of the camps took the initiative to stage an ancient Greek play. They chose Sophocles' Philoctetes. The author explains (Rafopoulos 1995, 45) that they chose this play in particular because of the implicit associations with the present that could be drawn from its content: the main hero in Philoctetes is abandoned on the remote island of Limnos for 10 years: "No sailor on his own will stops here, there is no port . . ." the play states.

This example may be taken as a case of covert resistance ("the hidden transcripts" [Scott 1990]) but it also adds weight to the argument that the official rhetoric on antiquity is not undermined; rather, what is attempted is to draw from its repertoire the elements that could serve the aims at hand. And while the theatrical performance would have been subject to censorship by the regime, the poem above, expressing a moment of personal contemplation, shows that the relationship of these people with antiquity and its
material manifestations is complex; it is neither simply a matter of submission to the dominant narrative nor of an opportunistic usage. The charter myth of the nation—the supreme position of classical antiquity—is thus adopted by dissident groups who are persecuted by the nationalist state. Their resistance, personal and collective, relies on the same weapons that are used for their persecution.

The imagined community of the nation establishes its mythology upon a social memory based on a highly selective version of classical antiquity, which in its turn is based on the dominant Western constructions of antiquity. Through the analogic thinking of history (one period can be substituted with any other [cf. Sutton 1998]), the Greek Civil War was seen as another reenactment of the millennia-old battle between Greek spirit and “barbarity,” which this time had adopted the face of communism. The dystopia of Makronisos became both the medical institution and the “School” which can cure the “polluted” Greeks, and teach them that the ancient Greek spirit which they were destined by blood and history to carry, cannot be reconciled with “foreign” ideologies such as communism. Makronisos became a fundamental device for the monumentalization of the whole of Greek society, for the imposition of the monumental national time upon social time. Antiquity, with its discursive and material manifestations, seemed to have acted as an allocratic mechanism (Foucault 1983): Greece lived more in the temporality structured by classical antiquity than in the social time structured by the political and social trajectories of the Cold War. At the same time, the inmates of Makronisos deployed the powerful symbolic resource of antiquity, a cornerstone of the charter myth of the nation, for the purposes of resistance, demonstrating once again that once the charter myth has been fully established and has acquired symbolic power, it can be put, reworked and reshaped, to a variety of uses by many and often conflicting social agents and agendas.

Conclusion: The Ironies and Ambiguities of Ancestral Worship

As in many other contexts, the role and meaning of antiquities in Greece, their modes of appropriation, and the social and political agendas associated with them have been diverse and sometimes have undergone significant changes. In this chapter I demonstrate some of this variability, pointing at the same time to common features and characteristics. I suggest that since the advent of the national project (and especially since the formulation of a coherent national narrative at the end of the 19th century) the meanings and attitudes toward antiquities are characterized by some notions that remain powerfully persistent, despite the variations, up to the present day. Ideological mechanisms such as national historiography, state education, the state archaeological service, and museums, among others, have significantly contributed to their perpetuation. At the same time, the process of the creation of these attitudes often has involved the interplay between dominant Western perceptions of antiquity and diverse internal power and ideological dynamics, state/official as well as unofficial/ordinary discourses; in other words, an interplay of structures and social agency. Moreover, breaks and discontinuities fused with reworkings and implicit continuities, resulting in syntetic reformulations of discourses and practices.

Antiquities occupy a central and defining position in the national imagination in modern Greece. They are the material landmarks that define the imagined topography of Hellenism, a locus that extends far beyond the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. Antiquities structure the imagination of the nation, and provide the materiality, aura of authenticity, and the links with earth and territory, which enable it to become a potent, popular force. Antiquities constitute an extremely important symbolic capital which can support and sustain both subordination and resistance. They provide the material manifestations of a shared charter myth upon which both dominant and subordinate groups rely for ideological support, symbolic repertoire, and inspiration.

This process combines a number of tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions. The key position of antiquities, especially classical antiquities, in the national imagination must be reconciled with the fact that classical antiquity is perceived in the Western imagination to be global heritage (cf. Lowenthal 1988). This concept introduces the thorny questions of rights of ownership and claims to the use of the classical heritage in the global cultural economy. The issue of the restitution of the Parthenon marbles is only one aspect of this phenomenon (cf. Hamilakis 1999a). Moreover, Greek national discourse has to deal with the tension caused by the sacralization of antiquity as a result of its entanglement with nationalism, and at the same time its mobilization as symbolic capital in the global cultural economy. In order for it to operate as symbolic capital, antiquities and their representations need to be exchanged for other forms of capital, such as international standing.
respect, and influence; at the same time such transactions have to be masked and disguised as such, in order for the sacred status of antiquity to be maintained. When these transactions become more explicit, debates arise about the commercialization of and even "sacrilege" against antiquity. Witness here the controversies about traveling exhibitions of antiquities outside Greece (see, e.g., Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996). Finally, the national discourse has to deal with the devaluation of the symbolic capital based on classical antiquities, partly as a result of multiculturalism (perceived by many in this case as threat), and the globalization of cultural economy. The decline of classical studies in Western academia is seen as an aspect of this devaluation; the "Black Athena" debate has contributed further to this tension.

These ambiguities, contradictions, and tensions are bound to become more prominent. As the plethora of images from antiquity in the websites set up by diasporic Greeks indicates, the new technologies and expressions of the global cultural economy, rather than leading simply to homogenization, sometimes contribute to the opposite effect, reinforcing the emphasis on roots, locality, and myths of origins (Hamilakis 2000b). Cyberspace, through the use of imagery from antiquity, becomes a cyberplace, a domesticated domain in which the battles of nationhood, perceived cultural superiority, and ownership of the past are staged, acquiring at the same time new ironic twists. On the other hand, the recent waves of immigration to Greece (from Balkan, Asian, and African countries), a more active presence of ethnic minorities, the further integration of Greece into the European Union, and global, social, political, and intellectual developments, have rekindled academic and popular debates on Greek identities and their foundations. Some diasporic voices call for a hybrid Hellenic identity (e.g., Tsirivas 2001), whereas many others reaffirm the established myths of origins and often call for the strengthening of the Hellenic culture and presence (singularly defined). Antiquity, however, continues to enjoy a dominant presence in official and unofficial narratives, from the website of the Ministry of Culture (www.culture.gr) to the restaurants that claim to serve "authentic" ancient Greek dishes, and to the groups of neopagans who promote the worship of the Olympian Gods (cf. http://home-page.mac.com/dodecatheon/). Whatever its recent reincarnations, antiquity still provides a foundation for the national narrative, and although features such as claims to direct continuity are now rarely explicitly stated (save for schoolbooks, national celebration speeches, and extreme right-wing groups), its moral authority is still intact.

REFERENCES

Archeology and Nation Building: A View from Central America

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This chapter examines archaeologists, the pasts they construct, and the present-day interested groups with whom they negotiate those pasts in Central America (fig. 4.1). There is a long history of engagement of archaeologists and archaeological materials in the construction of ethnic and national identity, local power, and global economic and political relationships in this region (Chinchilla 1998; Euraque 1998a; Oyuela-Caycedo 1994). The focus here is on historical and contemporary developments in Honduras. Contrasts between Honduras and its neighbors throw into relief critical dimensions of the way archaeology and nationalism are defined.

The roots of Central American nationalism can be traced to the first half of the 19th century, when the former Spanish colonies gained independence and formed a short-lived republic, represented today by the separate Central American states. The newly independent states engaged in nation-building projects that continued into the 20th century (Hale 1994, 211–16). These included explicit articulation of ideologies of national identity, materialized in widely visible symbols such as flags, anthems, and currency. Nation-building projects also drew on material traces of the past contained within state borders. Archaeology, as the set of practices through which material remains of the pre-Hispanic past were identified and interpreted, was always, consequently, involved with nationalism.

The intersection of archaeology and nationalism was intimately related to