

## LEGACIES OF MEDITERRANEAN PREHISTORY

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### **Introduction**

One of the most interesting developments in archaeology in the last twenty years or so has been the erosion of the ontological and epistemic certainties of the discipline. It is now increasingly accepted that archaeologists no longer discover the truth which is out there, but instead they actively produce the ‘archaeological record’ out of material fragments of the past. In examining this process of production, and working in a social climate where issues of identity and identity politics feature prominently, archaeologists have gradually come to realize

that they are only one of many groups and constituencies that actively engage with the material traces of the past and generate stories about it. However discomfoting this realization may be, it has forced archaeologists to reconsider the notion of the archaeological process as a linear, one way, objectified search for the truth. Increasingly archaeologists realize that the stories they now tell from a position of relative authority echo a multitude of previous and current rehearsals by archaeologists and non-archaeologists alike. Monuments, sites, artifacts and their representations are constantly interwoven in the web of present-day lives. Moreover, terms such as ‘consumption’ and ‘use’ are no longer adequate in describing and explaining the myriad reworkings of the past, as they imply a passive appropriation of the archaeological production. Several studies have shown that this relation is one of active engagement, often involving the strategic deployment of archaeological knowledges, and often their disregard or active rejection (e.g., Bender 1998; Herzfeld 1991; Hamilakis 2003a). These engagements thus are of importance in their own right as social frames of meaning and practice, often associated with serious consequences and effects, such as in the case of class, racial, ethnic or nationalist conflicts which find legitimacy in the material past. Given that no intellectual production happens in a social vacuum, they are also important in exploring their link to the social production of archaeological knowledges. Understanding the legacy of the Mediterranean prehistoric past (or for that matter, any other past) is thus not an optional extra, an amusing appendix to the serious scholarship that had preceded it. Instead, it is a necessary exercise in understanding and explaining the stories narrated in all other parts of this book.

The Mediterranean, of course, evokes in the imagination of various publics primarily the classical rather than the prehistoric past, to the extent that prehistoric Mediterranean cultures are often conceptually incorporated into the classical realm (e.g., ‘Minoan’ Crete – cf.

Hamilakis 2002, and below) by archaeologists and non-archaeologists alike. Exceptions here are certain cases (all islands) such as Malta, Sardinia, Menorca and, interestingly, ‘Minoan’ Crete where the visual and material prominence, the distinctive features of the prehistoric past, and of course the history of their archaeological production have endowed them with a unique legacy that contributes to processes of local (*and* localized) identity and empowerment (Figure 1), as well as to more globalized redeployments and re-workings. Even in these cases, however, their more recent legacies are little known, or have been examined primarily in relation to outsiders’ views. The present discussion is geared to promote further, closer and more detailed re-examinations of the legacies of the Mediterranean prehistory, including both its monumentally impressive *and* its less materially prominent versions.

>> **Insert Figure 1 about here**<<

With these thoughts in mind (and notwithstanding the concern over the validity of a pan-Mediterranean perspective and its arbitrariness, discussed earlier in the book), this chapter will explore the legacy of Mediterranean prehistory by focusing on three case-studies: Pharaonic Egypt, Cycladic figurines and Sardinian *nuraghi*.

### **What Time Is This Place? Pharaonic Egypt**

*“Egypt, a fabled land of ancient wonders, basks under timeless blue skies and almost perpetual sunshine. The Nile is the lifeblood of Egypt and as important today as it was in the times of the Pharaohs. It wends its way amongst white-sailed feluccas – a cruise is unforgettable... One experience that really shouldn’t be missed is exploring the bazaars. Narrow streets are crammed with stalls and shops selling everything from exotic, sweet-scented spices to jewelry and brightly coloured woven goods. Haggling is a way of life and you should be prepared to barter.”*

This is Egypt from the perspective of a modern, package holiday catalogue. Old stereotypes die hard. The factual inaccuracies of this passage (i.e., the statement on the importance of the Nile, unless it is meant ironically, with reference to the tourist industry) are the least interesting. Of more importance is the amazing resilience of certain stereotypical images of the past and the present in Egypt. Some 130 years earlier, in 1869, Thomas Cook took his first party of tourists (a then new but already formed category of modernity) to Egypt (Gregory 2001: 124); and yet, the timeless (and thus static) image of the country that has become synonymous with the pharaonic legacy, the mythical dimensions of the sail along the Nile, the Orientalist image of the bazaar and of haggling and bartering, all seem to have survived more or less intact to the present day. The knowledge shared by some present-day tourists, that these are indeed stereotypes, is part of the post-modern tourist experience as play, in which both the locals and the tourists participate (Urry 2002: 84-93). Yet the complexities of pharaonic *and* present-day Egypt remain largely hidden. The pharaonic legacy is one of those extremely rare examples where archaeology and antiquity, travel, colonialism, Orientalism, tourism, nationalism, imperialist appropriations and claims, quests for origins and artistic styles, western modernist frameworks, local national and supra-national counter-discourses, all intersect, are all played out and clash. The associations are endless, the material traces of this legacy and its accompanying literature vast.

At the center of it all, and almost at the beginning is the pharaonic past of Egypt, the complex social and material configurations starting roughly at the beginning of the third millennium BC; but where do we put their end? A conventional mark could be at roughly 1000 BC with the Nubian conquest of Egypt (Kemp 1989: 319). Yet dynastic titles, writing

(hieroglyphs), religion, and many material culture forms continued through to the Hellenistic and Roman conquest, and even later, until the Emperor Theodosius ordered the destruction of all non-Christian temples and inscriptions in AD 391, and so contributed to the forgetting of the hieroglyphs and thus the (temporary) decline in the impact of the pharaonic legacy.

The pyramids, the hieroglyphics, the mummies, the obelisks, deities such as Isis and the falcon-god Horus, and above all the Nile and its power, form the recurrent and ubiquitous icons and themes which, with some temporary absences, would become omnipresent and omnipotent in the history of much of humanity to the present-day (see now also ‘Encounters with Ancient Egypt’, and especially Humbert and Price 2003; Jeffreys 2003; MacDonald and Rice 2003; Ucko and Champion 2003 — the series was published after this chapter was completed). The monumentality, time-depth and resilience, elaboration, immediacy, and especially for westerners, the strange mixture of the exotic and the familiar, are some of the features that have contributed to this unique phenomenon. Above all, however, these constructions are the mediated images and materializations produced by colonial and imperial powers, discourses and practices, be it through the archaeological processes (via the invention of the self-contained archaeological field of Egyptology), the travel writings, or the countless imitations and reproductions of pharaonic images.

Already from the Classical period, pharaonic Egypt exercised fascination and attracted many visitors, from the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek historian Herodotus (who left an account that would be copied and used repeatedly), to the travelers who left behind so many graffiti in Greek and Latin. The Alexandrian conquest in 332 BC and the subsequent Ptolemaic period established a social and political order firmly rooted (to a large degree) in the pharaonic legacy (Hölbl 2001): Alexander adopted a pharaonic title and saw himself as son of the Zeus-Ammon (a

syncretic religious entity combining the supreme Greek Olympian deity, and his pharaonic equivalent, god of the sun, Amun – Hölbl 2001: 308; Kemp 1989: 198). The Ptolemaic leaders were deified and worshiped, in a religious tradition that incorporated many Egyptian elements, and were portrayed in a manner reminiscent of the pharaohs. During its foundation, the harbor of the city of Alexandria was presided over by *Isis Pharia* (Curl 1994: 3). The Roman conquerors continued the tradition; pharaonic religion was officially adopted by Rome, and Augustus himself was deified in an ancient Egyptian manner. According to Curl (1994: 8), this prompted a Classical Egyptian revival, expressed in various ways, from the appropriation and removal of pharaonic obelisks, to the adoption of material forms such as the pyramids, and the major influence of pharaonic deities of Isis and Osiris in Greco-Roman culture (Curl 1994: 8-25). Finally, the legendary Cleopatra (Cleopatra VII Philopator), who was in charge of the administration of Egypt in 47 BC, appeared on coins with the epithets and headdress of Isis (Hölbl 2001). The influence of the pharaonic legacy, especially in religion, survived into the Judeo-Christian tradition, whether in the archetypal forms of deities (Rice 1997: 197), the symbols, or the representational scenes of god-kings' immaculate conceptions (cf. Kemp 1989, fig. 70). The theme of Isis nursing Horus would find its way into the iconography of Mary and Jesus; the resurrection of Osiris came to be echoed in the resurrection of Jesus; and the influence of the hieroglyphic *ankh* can be seen in the form of the Christian cross (Reid 2002: 24).

Despite its pharaonic borrowings, the new Christian order declared — through the political authority of the Christian Emperors — war on all pagan forms (including temples, and writing). As a result, the hieroglyphs were forgotten, and for many centuries the pharaonic monuments of Egypt would evoke biblical connotations for westerners: the pyramids became

Joseph's granaries (Reid 2002: 24). Mummies were thought to have magico-medicinal value: in the 1580s John Sanderson shipped to England six hundred pounds of 'mummy' to be used for medicine (Reid 2002: 24). A similar belief was found among Medieval Arab writers (El Daly 2000). Meanwhile, however, the distant echoes of the pharaonic past remained alive in western countries, not only through classical and biblical writings, but also and more importantly through the material traces of that past, such as the obelisks which Roman Emperors had moved to Rome (and which were to be later appropriated by Popes, in a gesture signifying the power of Christendom – Hassan 2000; Parker 2003), but also all remnants of the Greco-Roman Egyptian revival. Undoubtedly, pharaonic monuments would have acquired multiple meanings for the Egyptian people as well, yet these meanings are either unrecorded, or their records are not easily accessible to western audiences.

A turning point in the fortunes of the pharaonic legacy was the conquest of Egypt in 1798 by Napoleon. It signifies not only the beginning of the modern western colonization of Egypt, but also the start of the European archaeological involvement in the area, and the foundation of the field of Egyptology (Reid 2002: 1). Moreover, it became the trigger for an explosion in the multiple appropriations of the pharaonic heritage, several waves of Egyptian revivals, and various expressions of 'Egyptomania' which continue unabated to the present day. With the accidental discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799 and its decipherment in 1822, the world of pharaonic Egypt became much more accessible and open to various re-configurations and re-appropriations. An early example of the Orientalization of Egypt, which had already begun, was the engraved frontispiece of the first volume of the *Description de l'Égypte* (the scholarly report of the Napoleonic expedition) published in Paris in 1809: the Egyptian landscape is devoid of any human presence, any signs of contemporary life, or any

indications of its Islamic and Arabic present. It is dominated instead by plentiful pharaonic monuments, in an idyllic peaceful setting, complete with palm trees. In the frame, Napoleon in the form of Apollo or Alexander leads the battle against the Mamluks, and paves the way for the twelve Muses to return to their mythological land of origin, Egypt (Reid 2002: 2-3).

The European colonization of Egypt went hand in hand with its archaeological colonization, expressed in various forms, from the foundation of the main museums which would be dominated by the Europeans until the 1950s (Reid 2002: 7), to the control of other archaeological institutions and the erasure of the Egyptian contribution to the writing of the pharaonic past. For example, the Egyptian Museum, inaugurated in 1902 in order to exhibit the finds from the pharaonic period, celebrates in its sculptural and inscriptive decoration many European Egyptologists but no Egyptian ones; moreover, two female relief statues flanking the main entrance of the museum, and representing Upper and Lower Egypt, are portrayed in a 'wet drapery' look, evoking the Orientalist connotations of the East (in this case Egypt) as feminine and sexually available (Reid 2002: 5-7; cf. Said 1978: 190).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as archaeological work in Egypt intensified, Egypt became an increasingly central pre-occupation for the European and western imagination, but also for the European political powers: competition for the control of Egypt and the overland route to India via the Suez isthmus increased (Barrell 1991: 120). Egypt and its pharaonic past was a major theme in the Crystal Palace World Exhibition in 1851. As noted above, a few years later, in 1869, the first Thomas Cook tourist group would arrive, signifying the beginning of new phenomena of modernity: the construction of a new type of traveler (the tourist, in this case, the 'cookies'!) who comes from the middle classes rather than the aristocracy, but also the production of the tourist gaze (Urry 2002), and of new ways of managing leisure time. The sail

along the Nile, which had already acquired mythical dimensions, would now be done on steamers (and not the traditional sail boats, the *dahabeah*), allowing the development of ‘mass’ tourism and creating the loaded divide between the tourist and the traveler. The latter treated this development with contempt: as one traveler, Laporte, put it, “when you visit a country of the past, do not be persuaded to despise the institutions of the past” (from Gregory 2001: 125).

The plentiful travel writings of the time focus on the pharaonic and other monuments, but they also contain commentaries of Egypt’s present, and comparisons between past and present, self and other, ‘East’ and ‘West’. They are as much reflections of western identity and imagination as they are constructions of the Oriental other. In some cases, the immediacy of the pharaonic past, which was noted with amazement, was found surviving in the lives of present-day Egyptians (Gregory 1999: 137). This well known allochronic attitude (Fabian 1983) created a temporal distance between self and other, and declared present-day Egyptians as being outside the space of modernity (Pratt 1992). Very often, however, an opposite attitude is found: a sharp distinction is drawn between the pharaonic past and nineteenth century Egyptians; at the time when race was at the center of European imagination and concern, and the racial identity of ancient Egyptians was highly contested in intellectual circles and linked to contemporary politics (Champion 2003), travel writings project a sanitized gaze: the (western) self was identified with the pharaonic past (Gregory 1995: 38), whereas the (Egyptian) contemporary other needed to be kept at bay, was often treated with revulsion (Gregory 2001: 133), and even became the subject of de-humanizing descriptions, expressed at times (as in the writings of Florence Nightingale) as ‘genocidal fantasy’ (Barrell 1991; Gregory 1995: 46-47).

Above all, these discourses, in common with many other colonial discourses, practices, and new devices of western modernity such as photography and, much later, the invention of

the moving image, constructed Egypt as a spectacle, as a theatrical performance, and eventually as movie film. Travel writing was a form of scripting, and other representational devices such as sketching and drawing (mostly pharaonic monuments) constructed Egypt as a series of snapshots, stills and frames (Gregory 1999; 2001). Many travelers used visual metaphors (kaleidoscope, diorama, panorama, magic lantern show) to describe Egypt (Gregory 2001: 141). A recurrent theme at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the homology which linked the experience of ancient Egypt with that of cinema (Lant 1995; 1997): the dark space of the cinema reminded one of the enclosed space of a tomb; a parallel was drawn between mummification and the ability of the cinematic image to preserve life and defy time; and the act of film projection evoked the archaeologists' description of their discoveries, casting torchlight in the darkness (Lant 1995: 79-80). Timothy Mitchell has shown how the process of the colonization of Egypt (as was often the case with nineteenth century European colonization) was a process of representation, whereby Egypt was enframed and re-ordered in an object-like fashion. Egypt "was to be made picture-like and legible, rendered available to political and economic calculation. Colonial power required the country to become readable, like a book, in our own sense of such a term" (Mitchell 1988: 33). The decipherment of the hieroglyphics that allowed Egyptologists to 'read' ancient Egypt (like a book) comes to mind.

**>> Insert Figure 2 about here<<**

The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922 had an enormous impact in Europe and America, spearheading a new and much more intensive phase of Egyptomania, expressed in architecture, decorative styles, furniture, jewelry and advertising (Figure 2) — it was instrumental in shaping the style known as Art-Deco (Curl 1994: 211). Significantly, a number of cinema buildings were constructed in Egyptianizing style. One of the most interesting

examples, the Carlton building in Essex Road, Islington, London, still survives today as a bingo club (Curl 1994: 217). The Pharaonic legacy had a key impact on a number of intellectual traditions too, with one of the most prominent being Freudian psychoanalysis. As is well known, Freud himself had a number of Egyptian antiquities in his collection, and he often relied on pharaonic Egypt (but also on the ‘Minoan’ past and archaeological metaphors in general) for his theory of dreams and memory (Gere 2002; Armstrong 1999).

Meanwhile in Egypt itself, the western discourses on pharaonic Egypt as the cradle of civilization were appropriated by Egyptian, western-educated intellectuals who realized that they could challenge European colonialism. After the occupation of the country by Britain in 1882, national imagination promoted Egyptian national identity based on the pharaonic past as the foundation of civilization (Hassan 1998: 204; Gershoni and Jankowski 1995; Reid 2002: 2). The 1919 revolution for independence appealed to pharaonic Egypt for legitimization; the pyramids became a prominent theme in nationalist poetry, and discourses on rebirth and the resurrection of ancient glory and hegemony abounded (Hassan 1998: 204-205). As previously marginalized social strata entered the social and political discourse, however, this situation was to change dramatically. These new social forces had more affinity with Arab/Islamic ideas and modes of expression, and as a result, the national discourse abandoned the pharaonic legacy, which was now seen as despotic, tyrannical, and above all divisive: the link of Pharaohs with modern Egyptians was seen as a western ploy of allocating a separate ancestor to separate Arab peoples (Pharaohs for Egyptians, Assyrians for the Iraqis, Phoenicians for the Lebanese, etc.), with the aim of destroying a pan-Arabic national identity (Gershoni and Jankowski 1995: 82). The beginning of the political de-colonization with the coup of Nasser in 1952 signified the official sanctioning of this ideology, only to be partly reversed in the 1970s with President

Sadat, who changed the name of the country back to Egypt (which was known after Nasser as the southern province of the United Arab Republic). A separate strand of Egyptian nationalism, that of integral nationalism, attempted to reconcile the two positions, by declaring pharaonicism as one of the many golden ages of Egypt and as belonging to all Arabs, creating thus an identity where Islamicism and pharaonicism are seen as compatible (Gershoni and Jankowski 1995: 110).

According to one report, the Muslim extremist who assassinated Sadat in 1981 shouted “I have killed Pharaoh”. If this was not simply used to signify (as in the Koran and the Old Testament) the ‘tyrant’, it may have expressed dramatically the dilemmas of modern Egyptian identity, attempting to negotiate the pharaonic and Arabic/Muslim legacies (Hassan 1998: 210-211). Images from ancient Egypt can be found in many contexts today, from the logo of the prominent *Al-Ahram* newspaper (the pyramids), to the planes of *EgyptAir* (representations of the falcon-god Horus). The weight and importance of the pharaonic legacy in present-day Egypt, however, is a matter of debate. Hassan (1998) suggests that today the pharaonic legacy is simply a matter of schoolbooks and of state, ‘official’ history, whereas Meskell (2001) finds many examples of recent, ‘unofficial’ representations of the pharaonic past (and some fusion of pharaonic and Islamic heritage), indicating not simply nationalist propaganda, but an affinity and connectivity with this past.

Tourism is undoubtedly the present-day arena where the pharaonic past is played out in the most prominent manner. The passage at the beginning of this section demonstrates how the colonial stereotypes are being perpetuated. Yet the remnants of 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism are not the only form of colonization currently at play. Tourist development is a major source of income for Egyptian society, but this apparently neutral statement of neo-liberal economics

fails to declare who benefits most from this development and at what cost. Most tourist development is managed and controlled by western companies (Mitchell 2001; Meskell 2001), and local populations living near archaeological sites have been often forced to relocate so that a pristine, sanitized image of civilization can be presented, ready for mass consumption. The case of Gurna is a well known example (Mitchell 2001): 1300 families living in mud-brick houses amongst the Theban necropolis were forcibly removed, after they had been portrayed as ‘uncivilized’, and after they had been blamed for the 1947 outbreak of cholera, which was caused, according to government officials, by poor hygiene (rather than poverty). The relocation study, which was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), required that the aesthetics and culture of Gurna be preserved in the new, ‘neo-traditional’ style settlement built for the displaced villagers.

Pharaonic Egypt continues to fascinate diverse audiences, from Orientalists, to new-age groups, mystics and afrocentrists, as well as the general public. It is omnipresent, from Memphis, Tennessee to Japan, and from the dollar bill (with the image of the unfinished pyramid of the Great Seal) to Las Vegas, and the building of the University of Cape Town. Along with these, are several fringe and very often racist interpretations, focusing around extra-terrestrial agents which they see as responsible for the creation of pharaonic culture, something they would not dare do with a Greek temple or another European monument (Roth 1998). This is not to mention, of course, the whole genre of Hollywood productions that combine Orientalism, colonialist archaeology and new age mysticism. This legacy has been and will no doubt continue to be deployed in the service of diverse agendas, be it intellectual (e.g., the recent Black Athena debates), overtly political or economic. It is also extremely prominent in cyberspace. Meskell noted (1997: 1073) that a search using the word ‘Egypt’

brought up over a million websites. A similar test at the time of writing (February 2003) raised the number to nearly seven million. Several publications of the ‘Rape of the Nile’ variety testify to western post-colonial guilt, but as Reid has noted (2002: 11) they portray Egyptians exclusively as victims. More importantly, they rarely address present-day neo-colonial regimes of practice, the continuing economic and political imperial domination, and the various forms of local resistance that often draw upon elements of the pharaonic past.

### **Art Lovers, Looters and Ship-Owners: The Story of Cycladic Figurines**

*“We have the great good fortune, my husband and I, to spend our summers sailing in the Aegean. My husband is an ardent fisherman, always in search of the best waters for his nets. I found my own fascination in asking the villagers on the islands to show me antiquities and ruins, the fragments of the past one inevitably finds almost everywhere in Greece. Soon we were both interested - especially in the Cycladic objects with their timeless forms and mysterious origins; and we concentrated our efforts in collecting them.”*

*(Dolly Goulandris, Foreword in Doumas 1968)*

A present-day visitor to the Cycladic islands in the Aegean, or to the cities and resort towns around Greece, will notice that among the main replicas of antiquities offered for sale are some small, abstract white figures, sometimes made of marble, other times of resin or other materials, including metals such as silver. They take the form of jewelry, decorative statuettes or even sculptured soap (Broodbank 2000: fig. 9). Often the original form has been transformed into a shape only vaguely reminiscent of its prototype. These are replicas of a very well known group of artifacts — the Cycladic figurines. Theirs is a story of changing cultural biographies of artifacts, of taste and connoisseurship, of looters, forgeries, rich ship-owners,

collectors, prominent museums, nations and nationalism. Their story is also one of destroyed archaeological sites, and erased social memories.

The artifacts are stylized in shape, anthropomorphic, mostly female in form (with a few males portraying specific actions), made of marble, and of a height rarely exceeding 1 m. (and more often ranges between 10-50 cm). They are dated to the Early Bronze Age which in the Aegean spans the third millennium BC. They were found mostly in graves, but were clearly circulating widely in settlements before their deposition, and they are the products of the small-scale, agricultural and fishing communities of the Cycladic islands. Their meanings and role for the society that produced and used them remain elusive, for reasons that will become clear below. The interpretations offered range from votive offerings and representations of deities (for the larger in size) (Renfrew 1991), to representations of actual persons or stereotyped personae (Doumas 2002: 68), to representations of venerated ancestors, and objects associated with “the acquisition and movement of high status women (and less commonly men) within and between the tiny and necessarily exogamous communities of the Cyclades” (Broodbank 1992: 543; see also Broodbank 2000).

In a country that has been constructed by the European imagination as a ‘classical land’ and the cradle of western civilization, pre-classical antiquities inevitably were overshadowed, unless of course they were linked (however tenuously) in some way to the classical past through mythology or the Homeric epics (as in the case of the Late Bronze Age, or Mycenaean period). Cycladic figurines formed another aspect of the prehistoric past that was ignored until recently. From time to time, marble Cycladic figurines from looted graves would appear and be noted by writers as early as the late eighteenth century (Marthari 2001: 164). The looting continued (as with other types of antiquities) and these artifacts found their way to European

and American museums. In the era when Greece meant exclusively classical civilization and Greek art was defined by the classical canon, these abstract figures were seen as curiosities, a product of a primitive and ‘barbaric’ society (Gill and Chippindale 1993: 602). They were nevertheless collected by museums, as representative of the work of a primitive era.

Their fortunes, however were to take a dramatic turn from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. An important factor in that change was the discovery of these artifacts by sculptors and painters who, in their search for inspiration, turned to what they saw as the abstraction and simplicity of their form. The British sculptor Jacob Epstein discovered the figurines in the Louvre in 1902-1905, and compared them to the work of the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, believing that he had been inspired by them. Likewise, Henry Moore was inspired by the figurines and owned three of them himself, as did Picasso, while Alberto Giacometti equally acknowledged his debt to the figurines. Suddenly, these artifacts were transformed from ‘monstrosities’ to high art, closely linked to modernism. Collectors of modernist art began to acquire Cycladic figurines. The publication by an art critic of a lavishly illustrated book on the *Art of the Cyclades* (Zervos 1957) further fuelled this demand. As a result of this demand in the art market, a huge number of Cycladic cemeteries were looted to supply collectors and museums (mostly in the west) with Cycladic figurines. The looting and the surfacing of figurines peaked in the 1960s and 1970s.

Gill and Chippindale (1993) have provided an impressively detailed and meticulously documented study of the phenomenon and its material and intellectual effects (see also Chippindale and Gill 1993; Gill 2002). Between 85% (Gill and Chippindale 1993: 625) and 90% (Broodbank 2000: 58) of a corpus of approximately 1600 existing Cycladic figurines are without secure archaeological context, and most of them are likely to be the result of looting.

Given estimates that only one in every ten graves contained a figurine, these artifacts must represent the looting of several thousand graves and several hundred cemeteries. The decline in the circulation of these figurines in recent years may mean that most of the cemeteries available for looting have been exhausted (Broodbank 1992). Because of preservational conditions in the Cyclades, few Early Bronze Age settlements survive; cemeteries thus would have provided the most important archaeological contexts for the study of the Early Cycladic society. Not only did the massive scale of looting result in the destruction of the context of these artifacts (making the attempt to produce interpretative accounts almost impossible), but it also brought about the erasure of perhaps some of the most important aspects of the social memory and history of the Early Bronze Age Cyclades.

Furthermore, as the demand in the art market exceeded the available supply, and prices reached seven figures, a whole cottage industry of fakes emerged. The raw material and the technique and style of production make it almost impossible to authenticate Cycladic figurines, especially when Cycladic marble is used. As a result, an unknown number of the existing figurines (many of which have been meticulously studied and arranged into typologies by unwitting archaeologists) must be fake. Marthari (2001: 166) narrates the story of one of the most able forgerers, a sculptor and folk poet from the island of Ios, Angelos Batsalis ('Niotis').

Cycladic figurines have now become objects of art, rather than of archaeology, and much of the discourse surrounding them is that of aesthetics, art history, 'masters' and masterpieces, taste, and connoisseurship. Attempts to define a canon in terms of body proportions and to detect (in line with attribution attempts in classical archaeology and modern art) hands, masters and workshops (Getz-Preziosi 1987; Getz-Gentle 2001) are not only futile given the above problems (Gill and Chippindale 1993; Gill 2002), but more importantly

impose upon Early Cycladic society a modernist discourse on art that would have been alien to the farmers, fishermen/women and part-time craftspeople of the islands. Instead of the living experience of Cycladic society, of relations of production and consumption, of embodied, power and gender interactions, we get (partly out of necessity, and partly out of choice) a language of transcendental spirit, of cross-cultural, trans-historical aesthetic appreciation. This is evident in their usual representation as isolated objects, in dark blue or black backgrounds and lit with atmospheric lighting.

Recent archaeological observations and finds are increasingly at odds with some of these discourses: we now know that most of these figurines were painted in bright colors, in sharp contrast to the image of whiteness and purity that the aesthetic discourse has projected on them; many of them were likely meant to lie on their backs, rather than standing upright, as they are now more commonly displayed (Broodbank 2000). Not only did connoisseurship and taste, as an upper class distinction mechanism, create the demand which destroyed much of the archaeological past of the early Cyclades, it also defined the mode of experience and understanding of these figurines, obscuring and erasing their aspects that do not fit with that dominant mode of understanding.

One could argue here, with some justification, that the insistence on the archaeological context, and the emphasis on the effects of looting reveals a vested interest on the part of archaeologists, which is not necessarily shared by others. Indeed, much of the recent expanding literature on looting fails to acknowledge this problem, ignoring the social and political context within which looting takes place. An extreme expression of this archaeological fetishization of the 'record' (Hamilakis 2003b) was the opinion expressed by one archaeologist that the way to deal with the intensive looting that followed the illegal occupation of Iraq by USA and its allies

in 2003 was to shoot and kill some looters (Kennedy 2003). As will become obvious below, the case of Cycladic figurines shows that while the destruction of the archaeological context is an important issue to highlight, the entanglement of looting with the politics of class, aesthetics, and nationhood need to be taken seriously into account. Poverty and social deprivation, coupled with the alienation that many people feel towards the local archaeological past (as the centralized, state promotion of the classical past overshadows localized Cycladic prehistory), have encouraged the looting of Cycladic figurines; but the market for them and the tolerance for their trafficking has resulted from the interweaving of upper class aesthetic taste, archaeological discourses and national narratives.

One of the most important private collections implicated in this story is the Goulandris collection, now the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art, located in Athens (Mouliou 1995). The collection was assembled mostly in the 1960s by Dolly Goulandris, from one of the richest ship-owning families in Greece. As she herself noted in a catalogue of her collection published in 1968 (see quotation above) “I found my own fascination in asking the villagers on the islands to show me antiquities and ruins...”, concentrating on Cycladic figurines because of their “timeless forms and mysterious origins.” In a country where all antiquities belong to the state by law, and which has ratified and enforced, since its foundation in the nineteenth century, the most comprehensive legislation for the protection of antiquities, the adventures of Mrs. Goulandris were not only allowed but were actively encouraged by the state. By contrast, the two Naxian antiquities looters arrested in Athens a few years ago with a suitcase full of Cycladic artifacts were sentenced to fifteen years in prison without suspension (Marthari 2001: 166). The social justification of this paradox is predicated on the premise that with the Goulandris collection, Cycladic figurines will stay in Greece. If we are to consider the position

of antiquity in the continuous formation of Hellenic national imagination (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996; 1999; Hamilakis 2003a), as well as the interesting homological link made between the 'exile' of antiquities and the exile of persons (Hamilakis 1999a) and which sees looted antiquities as the 'archaeological orphans' that must be kept and protected at home rather than be sent to exile (see, for example, Marthari 2001: 161), then the encouragement and support of the Goulandris collection by the state becomes more easily explainable. Gill and Chippindale (1993: 606) have noted that the white marble figurines seen against a blue background, as they are usually exhibited at the Goulandris museum, reproduce the national colors, thus reinforcing the link between the artifacts, the collection, and the Greek national imagination. At the same time, this relationship has to do with class and class interests (and their support by the state), and the lack of any debate on the ethics of collecting and of archaeological practice in Greece. Rich collectors exploit the position of antiquity in the national imagination to secure state support, while engaging in the prestigious collecting of Cycladic figurines. They thus exchange economic capital for symbolic capital, recognizable and exchangeable not only within the country (as they are portrayed as national benefactors, acquiring thus political power) but also internationally, as possessors of a renowned collection held in high esteem among art lovers. In short, the looting-collecting of Cycladic figurines, in addition to its material and intellectual consequences, has political consequences too, which are often neglected in the discussions on the ethics of collecting and looting.

This collection received wider international attention when Colin Renfrew published a glossy, lavishly illustrated book discussing some of the figurines. The book, which carried the telling title *The Cycladic Spirit: Masterpieces from the N.P. Goulandris Collection* (1991), provoked strong reaction from reviewers (e.g., Elia 1993; Broodbank 1992). In the debate that

followed, which went unreported in Greece, the author was forced to concede that “collectors are the real looters” (Renfrew 1993). Unfortunately, the debate did not address the broader issues of the politics of collecting in terms of class, class identities and their social consequences, consequences as (if not more) important as those to the archaeological material.

The most recent act in this saga was staged in Manhattan, New York, in the spring of 2002. A large exhibition, hosted by the Onassis Foundation and co-organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, aimed at placing figurines into their archaeological and social context, and at educating the public on the consequences of looting. The exhibition was curated by Christos Doumas, who has worked in the Cyclades for many decades (Doumas 2002), and has himself struggled in frustration against looting. Paradoxically he has also been the curator of the Goulandris collection (Doumas 2000), in charge of cataloguing, conserving and studying the material (Doumas 2002: 12). The title of the exhibition, ‘Silent Witnesses’, was chosen to signify the lack of archaeological context that renders these figurines muted. And yet, despite these laudable intentions, the organizers borrowed artifacts from a number of museums which have been key players in the generation of demand for Cycladic figurines, among other antiquities (Dyson 1998: 277): The Metropolitan Museum of New York, The J. Paul Getty Museum, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, as well as the Goulandris Collection-Museum of Cycladic Art. Moreover, the aesthetic discourse dominated the exhibition, starting with its subtitle (‘Early Cycladic Art of the Third Millennium B.C.’); the introductory texts by the curators of the above museums equally emphasized the same discourse, as did Mrs Goulandris, who noted that this exhibition would broaden the impact of Cycladic art “by revealing to all those who came in contact with a distant but eternally present ‘modern’ art its fundamental characteristics: simplicity, and elegance of form and purity of line” (in Doumas 2002: 9).

Despite the attempts to present the archaeological context of the figurines (by exhibiting the excavation and finds of a partly looted cemetery, dug by the Greek Archaeological Service), one reads with astonishment in the introductory chapter by the curator of Greek Antiquities at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art: "... the execution of the marble slabs of an actual tomb remind us that the word 'art' may be applied not only to the funerary offerings but also to the surrounding structure" (Mertens 2002: 14). So, rather than contextualizing the aesthetic, this exhibition is in danger of aestheticizing the context itself. The title of a Greek newspaper article referring to the exhibition (echoing a *New York Times* article) leaves no doubt about how this event was perceived: 'The Picassos of the Cyclades' (Anon. 2002; Figure 3). The same article notes, however, that some of the visitors in this exhibition felt in the marble 'silent witnesses' from the Cyclades, echoes of the tragedy of 9/11, demonstrating how diverse the meanings and associations of past material culture can be.

>> **Insert Figure 3 about here**<<

### **From Sites to Sights, From the Living to the Mummified Past: Sardinian Nuraghi**

*The numerous nuraghi which are spread all over Sardinia, occupy a very relevant place among the archeological sites that have been left in the Western Mediterranean basin by the various cultures which have, over the centuries, lived in these lands. These majestic buildings have a prominent role in the Sardinian landscape so much so that they remain stamped on the visitor's mind as a characteristic image of this mysterious and extraordinary land and are a symbol and emblem of a whole population.*

The above passage is from a tourist website; it refers to the approximately 7000 stone-built, conical, tower-like structures — the *nuraghi* — originally built during the Bronze Age (roughly 1500 to 400 BC), with the most complex multi-tower structures built towards the end

of that phase. This category, often used to imply homogeneity (the nuragic culture or the nuragic people), masks a great diversity in terms of size, form, function, social role and significance. The early typical examples had a residential function and enclosed an internal chamber of around 4 m. in diameter, but the later ones had a diversity of roles and include some massive and elaborate complexes. They are often strategically located and inter-visible (Blake 1998).

The nuraghi may have been built in the Bronze Age but they were constantly remade (and not simply re-visited or re-used) for long afterwards. This was true in the Punic period (sixth-third centuries BC), but more so the case in the Roman period, where many previously occupied nuraghi continued in use, and many more formerly abandoned nuraghi were re-occupied (as settlements, granaries, and cult sites). The variety of the forms involved indicates that their re-use was an active choice, and included modification and elaboration of the existing structures. In the case of the nuraghe Aidu Entos-Bortigali, part of the original tower's structure is inscribed with a Latin inscription (in a 'poorly formed script'), declaring the site as boundary of a local Sard tribe, making perhaps a statement of Romano-Sardic identity (Blake 1998: 64; 1997). Alternatively, the intentional use of the structure signifying historical continuity, collective memory, and links with the earth, territory and the local ancestors, may have projected a statement of local resistance to the external Roman occupation. The need to inscribe the statement, to externalize it, literally to cast it in stone, and the use of the medium of Latin (the symbolic structure of the occupier) to express that resistance, may have made the statement much stronger: it might have demonstrated an ability to converse in the medium of the powerful other, making sure at the same time that the intended audience received that message in the language they could understand.

Some nuraghi continued to be used in the Medieval period (for domestic, funerary and storage purposes) although less extensively than in the Roman period. The early Christians named some nuraghi after saints' names and some churches used raw material from nuraghi, while in other cases they were built on top of them. In one recent case, in the village of Sagama, an altar was constructed in the shape of a nuraghe and a statue of the Virgin Mary was placed on its top (Blake 1998: plate 4). Nuraghi also became signifiers of Sardinian regional identity and they even serve as logos of a pro-independence political party whose followers are mockingly known as *nuraghisti* (Odermatt 1996: 117-118, n. 10).

Odermatt (1996) has studied in detail the local reactions and dynamics around the recent social life of a well known nuraghe, that of Losa, near the village of Abbasanta. He narrates a number of important processes that can be found in several locales across the Mediterranean: the valorization of a monument as a result of external appreciation and esteem; the use of monuments for the expression of local identity; the conflict between local people, tourist agents, and state archaeological apparatuses over the right to project and represent antiquity and its monuments; and the consequences of a transformation of a living site into 'heritage' sight. Losa, one of the most photogenic and famous nuraghi on the island, was transformed through archaeological excavation and 'protection', from a living place fully integrated with the livelihood and social experience of the local people, into a national monument and heritage site to be gazed at, used as a backdrop for family portraits, and staged for tourist consumption. State archaeological activity, local amateur restoration projects, and the visits by prominent figures such as King Vittorio Emanuele III and Mussolini (between 1926 and 1939) were some of the contributing factors.

At the same time, however, the monument became a signifier of local identity, and of the region's desire to catch up in development terms with the Italian mainland. A local shopkeeper ordered postcards of the nuraghe, which in their captions declared it as a 'national monument' and thus their region's contribution to the nation. The link to the nation was reconciled with a strong sense that the monument belonged to the village of Abbasanta, contributing thus to the strengthening of local boundaries (Odermatt 1996: 106). It also operated as contact zone (Pratt 1992; Clifford 1997) and meeting point between the locals and the tourists who knew about it and came specifically to visit. In the 1970s, however, as mass organized tourism flooded the island, the state archaeological service decided to develop the site for mass tourist consumption. The interventions (which involved clearance that was seen by the locals as destruction, and fencing off of the site) meant that the power to represent the site was taken away from the hands of the local people: for them, a symbol of local identity was transformed into a symbol of commercialization. Clashes with the archaeological service followed, the local authorities abandoned the site, and local tourist agents turned to other monuments in the vicinity. While Losa continued to participate in the local political discourses and negotiations, it ceased to be a local contact zone; as local people and agents lost the power to represent 'their' monument, their affinity to it was transformed into alienation.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The above case-studies expose a number of important issues, only some of which can be discussed here. To start, it is clear that archaeological thinking and practice cannot be separated from the non-archaeological account and the post-prehistoric legacies of the past: the aesthetic discourse produced by artists and collectors of Cycladic figurines has

heavily influenced their archaeological treatment in interpretation and public exhibition, a treatment which reinforces in its turn their aestheticization. Moreover the power dynamics of the case, with some archaeologists depending on the wealthy collectors for financial support and access to the material, has had an impact on the archaeological stories told, as well as on the lack of debate in some contexts (such as Greece) on the ethics and politics of private collecting. Likewise, the political-archaeological colonization of Egypt wrote out of the pharaonic past any contribution by *Egyptian* archaeologists.

If all archaeology is (discursive and material) representation (see Hamilakis 1999b), then an issue that cuts across all three cases as well as many others is the politics of representation, the ability (or the lack thereof) of groups or individuals to put forward and disseminate their version of an archaeological story. The archaeological and political colonizers of Egypt enframed and scripted Egypt according to their own politically expedient view: this was an Orientalist, patriarchal view that appropriated its pharaonic past. The wealthy figurine collectors may be derided in many recent archaeological writings, but they are the ones who have the means to run the show (literally), by disseminating their version of the Cycladic past, and by disguising the ethical and political effects of their action. Similarly, the local people of Abbasanta lost control of the power of representing their local heritage once the state archaeological service decided to engage in large scale interventions. Above all, there must be countless stories on alternative, local reworkings and remakings of Mediterranean prehistory that have gone unrecorded, or are little known and publicized.

Issues of identity have been central here, as with most engagements with the material past. It is important to note that the processes of constructing and negotiating identity involved,

not only the diverse publics but the archaeologists and other scholars as well. Archaeologists, travelers and scholars of various kinds were constructing their own identity as they were ‘clearing up’ pharaonic Egypt for the west to admire and gaze upon; they constructed themselves as the pioneers who wrestled with the vagaries of the Orient to shed light on the origins of western civilizations. The identities of the colonizer and the colonized are mutually constituted, however, and these discourses often empowered local voices to construct their own identities. For early Egyptian national intellectuals the western admiration of the pharaonic past was an indication of the glory of the Egyptian nation during its golden age, a claim that was challenged by Arab nationalists who saw in the rhetoric the continuous western colonization of the area. Cycladic figurines came to be subtly written into the body of the national history, an act that conveniently justifies the existence of Greek collectors, as their acts are portrayed as an attempt to keep the figurines at ‘home’. In Greece, however, it is the classical and not the prehistoric past that forms the ‘golden age’, being simultaneously the golden age in the western imagination. As a result, the prehistoric past remain largely unexplored and undervalued, save for the Late Bronze Age, which is seen as linked to the Classical past through writing (Linear B) as well as tenuous mythological and epic links. In this case, later prehistory has become classical archaeology and thus an appendix to the national past.

**>> Insert Figure 4 about here<<**

In Sardinia, the nuraghi (as in other cases such as the megalithic monuments of Menorca; see Figure 4) operate more as local and regional rather than national signifiers, and their link to national heritage constitutes an attempt to elevate their importance, on the one hand, and to emphasize the contribution of Sardinia to the national project, on the other. Similarly, the Minoan past forms an important aspect of the Cretan local/regional identity,

while it is often portrayed in local discourses as the foundation of Hellenic civilization, thus revealing an ambivalent incorporation into the national body which reserves the right to superiority (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996; Herzfeld 2003). The link between national identity and the material past has been extensively discussed, but as these cases show, national identities based on antiquity can be diverse and ever-changing, often simultaneously articulating local, national and global processes.

Cases such as the Minoan past and more so the pharaonic past are of course supplying endless resources for the construction of western identities of all kinds, from neo-feminists (in the case of Minoan Crete with its supposed matriarchal society — Christ 1995; also the most prominent neo-feminist appropriation of Catalhüyük: see papers in Goodison and Morris 1998), to Afrocentrists, mystics and neo-paganists, in the case of Egypt. Above all, they constitute an extremely important tourist resource (e.g., Knossos is the second most visited archaeological site in Greece after the Athenian Acropolis), which for countries like Egypt is vital for their survival. Yet the political and cultural economy of archaeo-tourism deserves close scrutiny (Silverman 2002), as does the recent phenomenon, found in Egypt and elsewhere, of ‘enclave’ tourism: the construction of the tourist experience which avoids any contact with the local ‘other’ save for the sanitized and pre-packaged parades of that other in traditional costume taking place within the resort (Mitchell 2001). Moreover, the heritage industry, in its attempt to deliver stereotypical tourist-friendly ‘sights’ ready for tourist consumption, often divorces archaeological locales from the web of local daily life, thus depriving the area of some important local-global contact zones.

In sum, the legacies and cultural biographies of Mediterranean prehistory, apart from providing a fascinating chapter of social archaeology and history, invite us to rethink the links

between knowledge and power, and archaeological stories and public discourses; they invite us further to consider the intellectual and material effects of our practice. Moreover, these legacies challenge some of the fundamental archaeological notions, including perhaps some of the underlying premises of this volume. How can we date monuments that, to use Blake's phrase (1998) (with reference to the Sardinian nuraghi, but which has more broad applicability), have been in the process of becoming for four millennia? Is it useful still to employ categories such as prehistory to describe these monuments? And, on what grounds can we distinguish between 'original' engagements with the material culture, and its later remakings and reworkings?

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## List and Captions for Figures

**Figure 1.** The cover of the fourth volume of the recently launched magazine, *Kritopolis: Fight for the Study of Cretan Civilization* (published in Athens), portraying imagery from ‘Minoan’ Crete (the magazine logo, however, imitates a representation of the Labyrinth, dated to the historical times, but evoking the ‘Minoan’ Past). The magazine, which deploys ‘Minoan’ imagery extensively, is a good example of a reworking of the prehistoric past to project local and regional identity.

**Figure 2.** Promotional poster for the renowned 1930s American magician ‘Carter the Great’, (Charles Joseph Carter) playing on his name-sake, Howard Carter, and on public perceptions of pharaonic Egypt as mysterious, magical and dangerous (Brier 1992: fig. 17).

**Figure 3.** The ‘Silent Witnesses’ exhibition, as reported in the Athens daily newspaper, *Eleftherotypia*.

**Figure 4.** Imitations of Menorcan prehistoric monuments in a tourist development on the island (photo by Y. Hamilakis).