

National Narratives and Archaeology: Thoughts on Koreaness and Hellenism

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This article attempts a comparative study of efforts by three countries to construct their respective national narratives (sequences of historical events) and support them with archaeological evidence. Korea, Greece and Cyprus, the last two included within the cultural sphere of Hellenism, are geographically distant and seem unrelated, since their historical destinies never touched before the mid-twentieth century. However, parallel circumstances in which the nation-building processes took place, similar aspirations, and interesting differences make their comparison illuminating. It is argued that all national narratives reflect modern preoccupations rather than historical realities. They are ruled by a more or less common set of parameters and the archaeological record can support these parameters in specific ways. Finally, the ways in which other countries have used archaeology and different narratives to manipulate in their turn the national identities of Greece, Korea and Cyprus are also studied.

Keywords: nationalism, national narrative, archaeology, national identity

The spark for this article was ignited five years ago. It was in spring 2003 when, on the occasion of the United States of America's attack on Iraq and subsequent looting of the National Museum in Baghdad, the consequences of political acts on the world's heritage found themselves the focus of international media. Iraqi monuments were considered innocent fatalities of military action. However, the very "monuments" which news cameras recorded in all their restored madness, i.e., the "ruins" of Babylon extensively rebuilt beyond recognition or repair, told a different story. It was as if the aspirations of the totalitarian regime were

embodied in its “archaeological” interpretation of Mesopotamian antiquity. The walls of Babylon eloquently described modern Iraq. The question seemed plausible: What if archaeology and its outcome, the narrative of the past woven with material remains, were not passive victims but proactive, indeed formative, elements of national and international affairs? The idea is not new, but wide-ranging studies bringing together varied study cases have yet to be attempted. Out of all the ways in which the life of communities can be enriched and shaped by archaeology, the creation of national narratives is perhaps the most influential.¹ The very foundations upon which people’s claims for independence lie are linked with their history. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, countries have fostered narratives of history and identity using objects and monuments with claims (or pretexts) of “national” importance.

This article will neither cover a large sample of archaeology-related national-narrative-building examples nor will it exhaustively examine the proposed study cases. It will simply venture into a brief examination of the ways in which two peoples within three countries in strategic areas on the world map (Greece, Korea, and Cyprus) have dealt with and used relics of their past. The timeframes are different: Greece gained independence in 1830 after more than 377 years in the folds of the Ottoman Empire and survived wars against Turkey, Bulgaria, Italy, and Germany until as late as 1974; Korea was colonized by Japan from 1910 to 1945 and endured a war (1950-1953) and division which continues to this day; and Cyprus was separated from the British Empire in 1960 and experienced an invasion and subsequent partition in 1974. The article at hand will identify similarities and variations in the parallel cases of the three countries and will interpret their efforts to create coherent and persuasive narratives based on their material heritage. The choice of countries is arbitrary yet meaningful, since their destinies are comparable and their differences evocative. In any case, the core argument accepts a set of parameters that imbibe all national narratives and claims that the archaeological record can support these parameters in specific ways, more or less traceable, in every case examinable. The ways in which other countries, neighbors, invaders or benefactors, have used archaeology and different narratives to manipulate in their turn the identities of Greece, Korea, and Cyprus are also within the scope of this paper.

1. The word “narrative” is used to denote a construct that describes a sequence of fictional or non-fictional events. In this sense, “national narratives” are “stories” that use (or ignore) historical events as episodes illustrating the creation and progress of nations.

My aim is not to point the finger at history mongers or expose falsifiers (in some ways the retelling of any past event invites manipulation, which can be viewed by some as forgery) but to briefly review the geographically distant but unexpectedly comparable study cases. There is enough material, both in the form of archival sources and secondary bibliography, to justify authoring books on them (indeed such books have been produced, for example the works by Pai Hyung Il and Demetres Kyrtatas used in this article: Pai 2000; Kyrtatas 2002). The precarious feat of historical juggling attempted employs a large number of names, sites, periods, and artifacts. To aid the reader, a roughly chronological sequence has been adopted, examining early nineteenth century Greece first, pre- and post-war Korea next, and Cyprus in the 1960s to 1980s last. Hopefully, readers will be able to follow this bold attempt and will find its suggestions illuminating and conducive to future research.

Narratives of Hellenism

The geographical setting of Hellenism today centers on a small peninsula and almost a thousand islands around it at the extreme southeast of Europe. Although this area (with the addition of Asia Minor, present-day Turkey) has been the Greek heartland since at least the second millennium BC, Greeks shifted from as far west as Gibraltar and as far east as the Hindus Valley.² Despite their long history as a people sharing a culture and a language of extraordinary continuity, the first time a self-confessed Greek state was created was AD 1830, when modern Greece gained its independence from Ottoman Turkey.³ Therefore, the emerging nation had to create a narrative to bring together all the disparate strands of its millennia-long history and foster a “History of Greece”

2. The archaeology of the Greek diaspora has only recently been studied in earnest. For an excellent introduction, see Boardman 1994.

3. The Mycenaean kingdoms (second millennium BC) and the poleis, like Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Thebes, and others (early first millennium to fourth century BC) were perhaps the earliest state formations in Greece; Greeks ruled Hellenistic kingdoms (fourth to second century BC), formed a significant population within the Roman Empire (second century BC to fourth century AD), and were the majority of the Byzantine Empire (fourth to fifteenth century); after the fall of Constantinople, capital of Byzantium, in 1453, most Greeks prospered within the Ottoman Empire (fourteenth to twentieth century) and fewer within lands belonging to Italian city-states like Venice and Genoa (thirteenth to twentieth century). The position of the Greek national and cultural element within these states varied, but not one of them had ever termed itself “Greece.”

(Kyrtatas 2002:114-7, 129-31).⁴ The main tool for this nation-building effort was Greek language; art and archaeology played second fiddle to this eloquent body of evidence. However, artifacts were viewed as easier to appreciate and more difficult to falsify. Both written and material sources were used to construct a persuasive narrative of the Greek past as a coherent body extending from prehistory to the present.

In order to understand the ways in which this process took place, a few words have to be said about the state of Greek studies before 1830. The discipline of Greek archaeology was founded in the eighteenth century, based on a philological tradition that had already started in the third century BC. By the early nineteenth century its main advocates were European scholars immersed in classical literature. Their text-biased view of Greek culture was enlivened with fragments of mainly classical art and architecture that travelers and Grand Tourists encountered in lands once belonging to Greek states and now under the control of the Ottoman Turks.⁵ The appreciation of these material remains from antiquity had started in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe but their systematic study reached maturity with the German Johann Joachim Winkelmann (1717-1768). His achievements, mainly the application of stylistic analysis on artworks and their empirical study through an idealized and ideological lens, were related to the Enlightenment movement, seeking democracy, freedom of speech and thinking, universal emancipation, and progress in ancient Greece (Kyrtatas 2002:91-8).

From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, several monuments were removed from the Greek heartlands to Western Europe.⁶ The aim of the looters was not only the acquisition of something beautiful. Greek thinking was considered to be the forerunner of the principles that would allow Europe to extend its rule across the globe through colonial expansion. This affinity could be verified not only by reinventing Greek art in the neoclassical style but also by owning masterpieces of the culture that lay the foundations for the triumph of

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4. The Greek consciousness is considered to have first appeared as a unifying element of Greek-speaking states during the Persian Wars (499-448 BC), when the poleis of the Greek peninsula successfully resisted military campaigns by the Persian Empire.
 5. The term “classical” is here used to denote both the Classical era (490-330 BC) and its heritage, which continued throughout Hellenistic and Roman times.
 6. The fifth century BC “Parthenon Marbles” or “Elgin Marbles” from the Athens Acropolis, now in the British Museum, London, are only the best-known of several looted sculptures and sculp-

the West. Travelers that spoke no modern Greek would casually dismiss the “locals” as unworthy of these treasures and would have them shipped back to their museums for “safekeeping.” Greek luminaries protested vehemently against this looting. Remarkably, even before independence was achieved in 1830, measures had been taken by freedom fighters for the preservation and protection of their monuments.

Even non-Greek members of the Ottoman ruling class like Ali Pasha (1741-1822), an Albanian warlord, showed sensitivity toward their land’s archaeological wealth. The bloodthirsty tyrant, immortalized by George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, attempted one of the earliest excavations on Greek soil, at the ruins of the Roman city of Nicopolis near Actium. It was during a relaxed excursion with the Danish antiquary Peter Oluf Brøndsted (1780-1842) in the fall of 1812 that he retrieved a few slabs of marble, unassuming enough yet proudly baptized “honourable things” (Vingopoulou 2006:58-9, 65-8). In his own words the “ignorant local,” the “man of war and woes,” is proved surprisingly versatile and the fascination with antiquities is shown to be contagious. Furthermore, several of the foreigners who visited Greece were indeed able to communicate with the “locals” and recognized in them qualities familiar from their school-time readings of ancient texts. Philhellenes fought in the war of independence between 1821 and 1830 and remained in the young country to help with the management of its heritage. Their romantic notions, seeing the bleak reality of the war-ravaged land as a crust over a heart of ancient magnificence, were unsubstantiated. Nonetheless, they helped the new state forge a Greek identity, much needed in the difficult post-Napoleonic era of reactionary politics (1815-1848). Important excavations (several of which continued for over a century) were organized by foreign archaeologists operating through national “schools” or institutes. They still conduct field research, publish results in French, English, German, Italian, etc. and allow Greece to manage the finds, often contributing to their exhibition in museums; the local State Archaeological Service is usually too busy with rescue excavations and bureaucracy to produce research of any note (Zoes 1990:43-54). Thus, the “framing” of the Greek past is

ture groups in European museums, e.g., the pediments of the Temple of Aphaea in Aegina from the turn of the fifth century BC now in the Munich Glyptothek, the Hellenistic “Venus de Milo” in the Louvre, Paris, or the frieze from the fifth century BC Temple of Apollo Epikourios in Bassae, also in the British Museum. Relevant to this article discussion of the Parthenon Marbles, see Hamilakis 1999.

still to a large extent undertaken by “benevolent” foreigners.

The Greek national narrative after the liberation from the Ottoman Turks and throughout the nineteenth century harked back to a classical past, practically ignoring periods before the sixth century BC and after the third century BC. It differentiated Greeks from their neighbors, with which they often engaged in war. Greece was a European nation, more western than near eastern, and used its classical monuments as proof (Kyrtatas 2002:111-4). Ironically, it was striving to emulate the very style and principles that powerful western nations had created after its own antiquity. From the 1920s (and not without the help of foreign scholars) the study of Byzantium began to be developed. The medieval empire (circa AD 330-1453) was a period closer to the country’s modern population in mentality, language, and religion than the classical era. A new brand of nationalism tried to bridge the gap between the small and poor country and the bleached-marble glow of romantic classicism. The advantage of Byzantium was that, despite its multinational character, it was Christian in religion and had assumed a Greek veneer over the centuries. Therefore, the Byzantines were ideal ancestors for modern Greeks. This merging of the antique and the new has continued throughout the twentieth century with varying degrees of success, mainly depending on the political climate. For example, during the military junta of 1968-1974, classical antiquity was celebrated as the country’s heyday and Byzantium solely as the source of Orthodox religiosity. The period of political freedom after the restoration of democracy witnessed a shift toward alternative narratives of rural and urban folklore, viewed mainly through a Marxist lens.

In the 1990s, the national obsession with the 2004 Olympic Games and changes in Balkan politics (i.e., the dissolution of Yugoslavia) prompted another shift towards traditional readings of the past. The new Acropolis Museum, a work of colossal proportions, marks a turn to a kind of “extended” classical antiquity incorporating the Archaic and Hellenistic eras (seventh to early fifth and fourth to second century, respectively). This period is believed to represent the country better than any other. Within a largely Orthodox Christian Balkan Peninsula with an Ottoman past (both elements shared by Greeks, too), the defining element of Hellenism seems to be the good old ancient spirit.

To briefly summarize:

- In the formative process of the Greek national narrative, the role played by non-Greeks has been pivotal; “ignorant” pashas or scholarly Europeans, rulers or antiquaries, excavators systematic or not, idealists or looters, they shaped the way Greeks view themselves. A similar phenomenon will be observed in the cases of Korea and Cyprus.
- Some European scholars tried to connect the Greek past with their own national narratives; dismissed by subsequent scholarship, their grip on popular imagination remains alive, just as Japanese colonial narratives of Korean history are perpetuated in general works on the subject.
- There has been a constant effort in the West to exalt the position of Greece within world culture and to subsequently deny Greeks their own heritage by branding it “universal” and declaring them unfit to be its keepers. Instead, major vestiges of their past have been transported to western museums, allowing “civilized” countries to become the “true” keepers of that past. The attitude of Greeks toward foreign interpreters of their heritage ranges from adoring acceptance to bitter rejection. Possessiveness towards archaeological treasures is rarely matched with their systematic study. On the contrary, long-running foreign excavations, survivors of nineteenth century colonialism, continue to this day. The situation is similar in Cyprus, but Korea represents a departure that will be examined later on.
- A lot of effort and controversy have surrounded the interpretation of Greece’s archaeological wealth. There exists a dynamic tension between the worship of the classical past and the appreciation of the Byzantine and later heritage. The stress on one or the other varies between political or cultural groups and from one decade to the next. Both sides aim at deciphering the enigma of Greek identity. Interestingly, the historical dimension of this identity is taken by all parties to be beyond question.

Narratives of Koreaness

Korean national destiny differs from the Greek, the country being a political as well as cultural entity since the Unified Silla period (AD 668-935). By the time the 1910 Annexation Treaty was signed, Korea had a remarkably long tradition

not only in written and material cultural products but also in national historiography with a specifically Korean identity in focus (starting with the twelfth century *Samguk sagi*, or *Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms*).⁷ The story of archaeological research in Korea has been shorter, starting during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) and being revived in the 1970s (Barnes 1999:26, 32-3). Its birth was linked to foreign rulers (as in Greece) but underwent a subtler manipulation. The standard established by the Japanese authorities for the management of the country's heritage in the early twentieth century was rigorously scientific and extremely condescending (Barnes 1999:30):

The Korean people did not know the importance of the ancient remains and relics.

This is the first phrase of a chapter titled “Scope of the Work for the Research on and Preservation of Ancient Remains and Relics” included in the 1931 review of heritage work during the first twenty years of Japanese occupation (Sekino 1931:3). The patronizing tone brings to mind representations of the Orient, within Western literature, as an immature entity in need of an interpretation by the advanced West, a scheme developed in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). The inevitable political agenda of the Japanese is made manifest in the words most commonly used to describe the nature of Korea’s historical contact with Japan: “intimately associated” and “intimately related.” Both races were seen to be of common ancestry; Korea was thought to have been ruled by Japanese emperors between the fourth and seventh centuries and its present state was considered backward and stagnated, in contrast to Japan (Pai 2000:35-41). The colonial rulers undertook the task of civilizing the inferior Korean people and tried to “preserve” their heritage—transferring artifacts to Japanese museums being a part of this salvation effort. Similarities with the official looting of Greek antiquities are indeed striking. Korea’s heritage was “safeguarded” from alternative readings as well as robbers; it was submitted to systematic political exploitation and was framed into an indoctrinating narrative.

The appropriation of Korean culture by the “dominant” Japanese culture

7. A geographical and historical exposé on Korea, similar to the one given for Greece, is not deemed necessary for the purpose of this article; it is hoped that the readership of this periodical is familiar with the basic outlines of Korean history.

took a distinctly different shape from the tactic followed by Greece's "admirers." Japanese imperialism assumed a superiority aspect, incorporating and assimilating the peninsula's contributions to world culture into its own fold. When mentioned alongside Korea, Japan was "Japan proper" (Sekino 1931:22-3); Korea was simply an annex. China was also often quoted as a source of influence. Indigenous Korean characteristics, especially early ones, were downplayed. Korea had to be younger, derivative, backward, and less impressive in its achievements than the land of its masters (Pai 2000:23-56). In addition to the Japanese before World War II, Western scholars after the War applied their own periodization and cultural criteria in their study of East Asian archaeology, cutting the evidence to fit their ready-made frames. Korea was affected by this compartmentalization, as restricting as the Japanese narrative on the derivative nature of its culture (Nelson 1993:4-5, 10-1).

To counter this barrage of cultural manipulation, there developed and still survives in Korea a strong, almost athletic, urge to amass as many proclamations of the importance of its monuments as possible, by UNESCO and other international organizations. The country's position in the arena of internationally recognized sites of cultural patrimony is a source of collective pride, parallel to (and some times despite) its remarkable economic development in recent years (Academy of Korean Studies 2006; Pai 2000:12-4). The civilization of Korea has to be proven innovative and unique in comparison to China and Japan and resilient to assimilation. The sufferings of the past century have been projected back into time to create a national martyrology that promotes the heroism of its victims against successive waves of invasions and vicissitudes (Pai 2000:2, 11). The vigor and antiquity of Korean heritage have to meet with international recognition and the narrative of its long and adventurous history is to be founded on the glory of its material remains. The very Koreaness of the land had to be proven not only for the present but also for the distant past, prompting what was succinctly termed as "ethnicity in retrospect," i.e., the tendency to study the past in order to elucidate the formation of the Korean people (Nelson 1993:3, 262-7).

To briefly summarize:

- The Japanese narrative for Korean history viewed it as derivative and inferior to Japanese and Chinese history. The Korean answer to this was successful in its rejection of historically and archaeologically unfounded assumptions (and sometimes of plausible suggestions). A preoccupation with politics in the production of scholarly work on the peninsula is both self-confessed and con-

scious. It is possible that such a tendency will continue as long as the country is divided, since narratives have to address, accommodate, and justify this painful issue, which finds an interesting parallel in the case of Cyprus.

- Field archaeology in Korea today is exclusively performed by local scholars, a situation that differs from the reality of Greek archaeology, dominated by foreign institutions. Koreans have had a consciously nationalistic approach to their degree of involvement in the shaping of their country's past, but also the circumstances have been different from the outset. The end products, i.e., the published results of excavations to be studied and quoted, although in both cases purporting to aspire to standards of scholarly objectivity, are undoubtedly colored by the agendas of their creators, by the questions they ask rather than the answers they give.
- Apart from having initiated the study of Korean archaeology, the Japanese organized a legal framework, conducted scientifically advanced research and, regardless of the colonial agenda, published important books on Korean heritage (Pai 2000:35). Their investigations of sites that are now within the borders of North Korea are especially valuable, given their subsequent inaccessibility. Similarly, Western scholars encouraged the education of Korean colleagues, worked for the advancement of Korean studies all over the world, and promoted the country's cultural patrimony. Their views, which inevitably differ from the "mainstream" national narrative of Koreans, have contributed to its shaping even by virtue of contradiction.
- The focus of the material heritage of Korea has been based on its immediacy and ability to convey desired messages without words. Contrary to the Greek language, which is the mortar of the Greek nation-building process, Korean literature is uneasily dependent on Chinese prototypes (Pai 2000:15). Beyond historical texts that are sometimes patchy, archaeological finds coming out of the womb of a motherland are reassuringly unique in style and Korean in origin. Consequently, emphasis is given to categories of material production that are indigenous or peculiar to Korea, for example the wall paintings of Goguryeo tombs, the gold crowns of Silla royal burials, and the inlaid celadon of Goryeo kilns.

Cypriot Identity under Scrutiny

The final study case is Cyprus, an island in the eastern Mediterranean that has

been a part of Hellenism since it was colonized by the Mycenaeans in the fourteenth century BC. Since the early thirteenth century AD it followed a different historical trajectory, ending in 1878 with the British colonial regime that a long resistance would terminate in 1960. Throughout their history, Cypriot Greeks, the majority of the island's population, defined themselves as Greek in identity, language and culture, and indeed continue to do so although their nation-state is separate from Greece.⁸

Interest in Cypriot antiquities began in the nineteenth century through their systematic looting. The superb collection of items from various sites and periods removed by Luigi Palma di Cesnola (1832-1904) and housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (where Cesnola served as director between 1879 and 1904) has interestingly always been branded "Cypriot," although antiquities of equally provincial style from other areas, outside the Greek heartlands, have traditionally been termed "Greek." This "Cypriot idiosyncrasy" sets the island's material record alongside rather than within the Greek canon and was supported by the first archaeologists excavating on the island, mostly British in origin and with a political agenda. Finds on the whole questioned this separation, although the very nature of an island culture lent itself to the building of an isolated historical narrative.⁹ Cyprus in early and mid-twentieth century bibliography was a land of its own, where Greeks were just another wave of settlers that proved unusually successful.

The reasons for such an approach were political. Since the nineteenth century there have been strong voices among the island's intellectuals demanding its "unification" (*enosis*) with the Greek state. These voices soon gained popular support and enosis became the national cause of Cypriot Greeks and the headache of British colonial rule. As the twentieth century progressed, Cypriot resistance (fuelled by propaganda from mainland Greece) gained momentum and ended in open conflict (1955-1960). The colonial administration promoted the claims of the Turkish Cypriot minority as a counterweight; the colonial scholarly community stressed the island's individuality rather than its Greek identity. The eventual independence marked a golden age of studies on Cypriot

8. For a challenging study of archaeology's role in Cypriot politics and vice versa, see Knapp and Antoniadou 1998.

9. A similar island narrative has been constructed for another large island in the eastern Mediterranean, Crete, part of the Greek state since 1913. However, since the first millennium BC, the history of Crete has been safely ensconced within the wider Greek historical narrative.

antiquities between 1960 and 1974. It may have been the traditional power of the Greek Orthodox Church, personified in Archbishop Makarios III (1913-1977), the country's religious and political leader, that helped the so-called Middle Ages, i.e., the Byzantine and Lusignan periods (fourth to fifteenth centuries), to enjoy special attention in the published record. For example, the conservation and documentation work on UNESCO-protected Byzantine churches was commemorated with a lavish publication, uncoupled with anything of equal luxury on other epochs of Cypriot art (Stylianou 1963). The Greek Orthodox element of the island's culture was promoted as a balance to increasing Turkish involvement in its politics. Accordingly, the scant but fascinating early Islamic material remains (seventh to tenth centuries) and the much more abundant Ottoman monuments (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) remained obscure.

The invasion by Turkish troops in 1974 and the subsequent occupation of the northern half of the island marked an explosion of work on Cypriot archaeology. Foreign archaeological missions published evidence that supported the country's Greek historical narrative. The systematic looting of antiquities in the Turkish-occupied north resulted in several international court cases.¹⁰ At the same time, an effort to place even more sites under the protection of UNESCO betrayed an awareness of the role archaeology played in the country's national cause against an act of political violence.¹¹

To briefly summarize:

- Cyprus, contrary to Greece and Korea, created its national narrative in order to stress the connection with another country rather than distance itself from it. The colonial narrative it was trying to challenge stressed the island's individuality, its frequent invasions and assimilation into powerful foreign cultures, comparable to the British Empire. Tellingly, the most expensive, indeed extravagant, museum on the island was erected on the site of the earliest Mycenaean settlement, at Maa-Palaeokastro, excavated by the country's pre-eminent archaeologist, Vassos Karageorghis, between 1979 and 1986 (Karageorghis and Demas 1988). It was on this barren promontory that the first Greek-speak-

10. The story of the thirteenth century dome fresco from a church in the village of Lysi, removed by the Turks and after several adventures having found its way to the United States of America, is probably the best documented case, see Carr and Morrocco 1991.

11. The way in which UNESCO-protected monuments have been used in nationalistic conflicts round the world deserves a special study.

ing settlers landed on the island. The title of the museum commemorating their coming is disarmingly honest: Museum of the Mycenaean Colonization of Cyprus.¹²

- The separation of the island in two near-halves in 1974 is of vital importance in any reading of its history; it is as if the present is projected onto the past, just as early Korean history is viewed through the lens of contemporary nationalism. Every account seems to either explain or justify the claims of the Greek and Turkish communities that remain locked in a spiraling trajectory of conflict. The role of international mediation in the form of UNESCO-protected sites is seen as necessary in order to legitimize the national narrative. The care extended over archaeological monuments in the south is contrasted with their looting in the occupied north.

The construction of any historical narrative calls for a series of choices as to what will be included or not. The criteria for this selection are eloquent testimonies of the principles and preoccupations of the compilers and audiences of the narrative. The scholarly community is usually more aware of the arbitrary character of the selection, and its own narratives reflect the varied political, social, and scholarly concerns of its members. Despite the undoubted role archaeology has played in the nation-building process of both Greece and Cyprus, contemporary cultural politics are rarely discussed in general books, especially the ones dealing with antiquity; actually, most scholars are not even aware of the political agendas that informed the development of their discipline. The narrative they adopt appears cohesive. This contradicts with the state of Korean studies, which are consciously nationalistic (Nelson 1993:2, 5). Perhaps the discipline has not yet had time to mature and its arguments remain relatively unsophisticated in their honesty; perhaps the narrative was being developed during the post-modern period, when issues like “discourse” and “narrative” were high on the jargon list and therefore found themselves applied more readily on the nascent publication record. In any case, the extent of political self-awareness of the Korean archaeology student can potentially be higher than that of her/his Greek colleague.

It would be desired not only to go deeper into the study of the two nations and three countries, but to include further case studies of national narratives con-

12. “Mycenaean” here literally translates as “Greek.”

structed with the assistance of the archaeological record. Archaeology is never performed just to decipher antiquity; it is mainly used to understand the present. This understanding inexorably leads to its deployment as a tool for the manipulation of the past, in plights of varying degrees of political tainting. It is up to the researcher to be aware of these realities and inevitably take the stand that best suits her/his sensibilities.

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