

Hellenizing Mycenae: from Heinrich Schliemann's excavations to National Museum*

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In the 1870s, Heinrich Schliemann's excavations in Mycenae brought to light an unknown civilization. His intellectual network exploited the impact of these fascinating discoveries by implementing a double appropriation process. Many foreign intellectuals and members of the upper class sought to engage with the impressive findings. Meanwhile, a Greek intellectual elite played a pivotal role by Hellenizing Mycenaean antiquities to integrate them within a vision of a glorious national past. These processes were brought together with the inauguration of the branch of Mycenaean Archaeology by the Greek king and the establishment of the National Museum.

Keywords: Mycenae; Schliemann; Hellenization; National Museum; Modern Greek identity

Introduction

The European social and political elite frequently engaged with cultural traditions that included conspicuous ceremonies, state visits, and dazzling artefacts and monuments, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century when classical antiquity was

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one of the factors that shaped the self-determination of the newly-formed nation states, not least the newly formed Italy and the somewhat older Greek state.¹ Against this background, the Graeco-Roman tradition played a crucial role in educating the European upper classes.² Above all, the ostensibly aristocratic ideals of the Homeric poems offered a powerful model for colonial and imperialist European powers, notably the British Empire.³

For liberal British intellectuals and politicians, such as Evelyn Baring, Earl of Cromer, the Homeric world reflected ideals that remained valid for Victorian Britain, and used antiquity to ‘validate the British imperial enterprise and provide it with venerable precedents’.⁴ In similar vein, the politician William Ewart Gladstone highlighted the supposed cultural, racial, and political similarities between Homeric Greeks and Victorian society.⁵ In doing so, Gladstone wished to transfuse Homeric civic virtues into the British public sphere.⁶

The growing interest in Greek antiquity had a profound effect on the politics within the geographic area where many of the legendary sites were located, the newly formed Greek state. Consolidating a national exceptionalism – based on the appeal to antiquity– was, in the eyes of some scholars today, initially an external concept that exemplified the country’s crypto-colonial status, a territory where European powers developed a particular perception of Hellenism as a symbol of Western culture.⁷ This perception of Hellenism reflected a view of Greek antiquities as a universal heritage possessing an unsurpassed aesthetic and ideological perfection, which the European powers had to safeguard as a pillar of Western culture. Since the mid-1820s, the

1 K. Vlassopoulos, *Politics: antiquity and its legacy* (New York 2009) ch. 1.

2 S. Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: art, opera, fiction, and the proclamation of modernity* (Princeton 2011) 2–3; M. Wienfort, ‘Dynastic heritage and bourgeois morals: monarchy and family in the nineteenth century’, in F. L. Müller and H. Mehrkens (eds), *Royal Heirs and the Uses of Soft Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London 2016) 163–79.

3 F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven 1981) 159–70; D. Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: religion, Homer, and politics* (Oxford 2004) ch. 6.

4 J. Toner, *Homer’s Turk: how classics shaped ideas of the East* (Cambridge 2013) 165–86. See also C. A. Simmons, ‘The claim of blood: Gladstone as king of Greece’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 13.2 (1989) 227–37.

5 W. E. Gladstone, ‘Homeric characters in and out of Homer’, *The Quarterly Review* 102 (1857) 204–51; Toner, *Homer’s Turk*, 162–8.

6 W. Koelsch, ‘W. E. Gladstone and the reconstruction of Bronze Age geography’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 12.3 (2006) 329–45; P. Den Boer, ‘Homer in modern Europe’, *European Review* 15.2 (2007) 171–85. Significantly, Gladstone composed the preface to Schliemann’s publication about the excavations of Mycenae: H. Schliemann (ed.), *Mycenae: a narrative of researches and discoveries at Mycenae and Tiryns* (New York 1878) v–xl; G. Graziadio and E. Pezzi, ‘Schliemann and the so-called Agamemnon’s mask’, *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici Nuova Serie* 48 (2006) 113–31.

7 A. Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism: mapping the homeland* (Ithaca NY 1995) 45–52; M. Herzfeld, ‘The absent presence: discourses of crypto-colonialism’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101.4 (2002) 899–926. See also D. Plantzos, ‘Scenes of Greece’s heterotopy’, in Y. Aesopos (ed.), *Tourism Landscapes: remaking Greece* (Athens 2015) 200–11.

European powers abolished the First Hellenic Republic, declared Greece a Kingdom, and, in 1832, offered the Greek throne to the son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria, Otto Friedrich Ludwig von Bayern. During Otto's reign (1832–1862),⁸ the Greek state became ever more consciously the inheritor of classical civilization.⁹

However, the engagement with antiquity was an internal commitment just as much as an external precept. Greek intellectuals were eager to view antiquity as proof of national destiny, embracing what Hamilakis has called indigenous Hellenism, an ideological narrative that maintains the seamless moral and cultural supremacy of Greek identity through ancient and modern times.¹⁰ Although not exclusively tied to nationalist discourses from the early days of the Greek state, the perception of antiquity as an organic tissue of the nation was implemented through a systematic institutionalization of the ancient heritage, which became bound up with the state and with its bureaucratic mechanisms.

At the same time, rediscovering antiquity aroused an emotional response in Greek intellectuals who saw the nation as a collective body of ancestral origin. Gourgouris explores the nation as an emotional edifice that constructs its narrative by appropriating discourses and imagined (or real) territories of previous historical formations.¹¹ For instance, as modern Greece needed to encompass the territory of its invented ancestors,¹² it instituted its perception of nationality by expanding its historicity and – as we shall see here – Hellenizing Mycenaean antiquity. This emotional concern led Greek authorities and intellectuals to link physical sites with modern concepts, such as national pride and national heritage, in such a way that ancient artefacts came to play a role in present narratives.

That role embraced claims of Greek continuity from ancient times to the present. It also unified concepts such as religion, origin, and state by standardizing and projecting them into the Greek past. This emotional connection that mapped as Homer's Mycenae became indispensable for the ideological construction of the modern Greek identity.¹³ Mycenae's ambiguous status as both the territory of the Homeric poems and – prior to the decipherment of Linear B – an enigmatic prehistoric site captured the imagination of Greek intelligentsia and the wider public. It became a site in which

8 R. Beaton, *Greece: biography of a modern nation* (Chicago 2019) 109–11.

9 E. Bastéa, *The Creation of Modern Athens: planning the myth* (Cambridge 2000) 53–68; D. Plantzos, 'Time and the Antique: linear causality and the Greek art narrative', in D. Damaskos and Plantzos (eds), *A Singular Antiquity: archaeology and Hellenic identity in twentieth-century Greece* (Athens 2008) 253–72.

10 Y. Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins: antiquity, archaeology, and national imagination in Greece* (Oxford 2007) 291–2.

11 S. Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: enlightenment, colonization, and the institution of Modern Greece* (Palo Alto 1996).

12 Gourgouris, *Dream Nation*, 31.

13 M. Mazower, 'Archaeology, nationalism and the land in modern Greece', in Damaskos and Plantzos, *A Singular Antiquity* 33–41.

spectacular finds triggered sociopolitical responses to ancient past that shaped modern Greek perception of self.

As noted by Voutsaki, ‘Greece was as much in need of external recognition and internal consolidation as ever.’¹⁴ The Greek state systematically appropriated Greek antiquities as a symbolic apparatus to gain national prominence and create international connections,¹⁵ Although Greece’s diplomatic influence was too weak to shape the international agenda, its aesthetic appeal had a profound effect on international elites who were attracted by the universal value ascribed to Greek antiquity.¹⁶ In other words, antiquity was used as a soft power resource to shape the preferences and modes of conduct of others through appeal and attraction.¹⁷ Culture wielded a significant influence on international relations,¹⁸ for it contributed to Greece’s international identification as the heir to the illustrious ancient Greek civilization.

After Otto’s deposition due to his inability to cope with critical national affairs, the need for a new King became pressing. Gladstone’s political expertise and views on legendary Greece briefly made him a suitable candidate for the Greek throne and he was informally invited to become King of Greece.¹⁹ Such a proposal not only recognized Gladstone’s political capabilities but also reflected the perception of antiquity as a sociopolitical powerhouse for the British imperial aspirations in Greece. Despite Gladstone’s merits, the successor to the Greek throne was the son of the future

14 S. Voutsaki, ‘The Hellenization of the prehistoric past: the search for Greek identity in the work of Christos Tsountas’, in S. Voutsaki and P. Cartledge (eds), *Ancient Monuments and Modern Identities: a critical history of archaeology in 19th and 20th century Greece* (London 2017) 130–47.

15 Y. Hamilakis and E. Yalouri, ‘Antiquities as symbolic capital in modern Greek society’, *Antiquity* 70 (1996) 117–29; T. Riotte, ‘Between politics and dynastic survival: 19th-century monarchy in post-revolutionary Europe (1815–1918)’, in C. Jordan and I. Pollard (eds), *Realms of Royalty: new directions in researching contemporary European monarchies* (Bielefeld 2020) 89–104. Yet the legitimization of the Greek monarchy depended more on the Byzantine past than on prehistoric times: Voutsaki, ‘The Hellenization of the prehistoric past’, 137. As early as 1863, the otherwise unknown Danish writer Hans Høxbro von Langhorn redacted an ostensible genealogical tree that connected King George I of Greece with the Palaeologus family, the last dynasty of the Byzantine Empire. The table was translated into Greek by the archaeologist and writer Stefanos Koumanoudis and published in the *Bulletin of The Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece* (Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος), 1.2, 1928, 131–44. Similar pseudo-historical analyses were later published in the press and in monographs.

16 J. S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics* (New York 2004) 5–7; T. W. Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1768 to 1913: the long nineteenth century* (Edinburgh 2015) ch. 5.

17 Nye, *Soft Power*, 11.

18 G. M. Gallarotti, ‘Soft power: What it is, why it’s important, and the conditions for its effective use’, *Journal of Political Power* 4.1 (2011) 25–47.

19 Simmons ‘The claim of blood’, 145–76; J. Paulmann, ‘Searching for a royal international: the mechanics of monarchical relations in nineteenth century Europe’, in M. H. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds), *The Mechanics of Internationalism: culture, society, and politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford 2001) 145–76; Riotte, ‘Between politics’, 100.

King of Denmark, Prince Christian William Ferdinand Adolphus George of Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg. George I, King of the Hellenes (r. 1863-1913), as he became, was presented as a guarantor of internal unity and an antidote to civil strife.²⁰

It was with George's ascent to the throne that antiquity came even further to the fore: it began to be systematically employed as a symbolic framework connecting the Greek populace with its imagined past and legitimizing the monarchy. (And this despite the fact that classical Athens was not a monarchy.)²¹

In this context, the excavation of Mycenaean antiquities in the 1870s possessed considerable potential as an enticing opportunity for a new national landmark under the seductive influence of the German businessman and amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann. As early as 1854, the Greek press had proclaimed the national importance of excavating Mycenae: it would bring to life the dazzling world of Homer and would create a new perspective on Greek antiquity.²² The Mycenaean world had become an excellent resource to prove the Greek dominion of the region, pushing back the Hellenic character of the Peloponnese hundreds of years. This new dimension in Greek history also served as a direct reaction to Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer's claims that the Greek population had been extinguished.²³ The ideological implications of this new archaeological discovery led Greek intellectuals and academics to Hellenize Mycenaean civilization and to convert it from an unknown prehistoric culture into a symbol of prestige for the Greek nation.²⁴ However, this objective could not be fulfilled following practices similar to emblematic European museums. In a state of limited resources, such as Greece, the transition to the national museum model was both belated and carried out in haste; in the *fin de siècle*, administration of antiquities in Greece effectively progressed from the royal curiosity cabinet to national exhibitions and from a few individual peculiar memorials to total archaeological landscapes.²⁵ To address these developments, a new institutional establishment –the national museum– began popularizing national heritage. Although the Archaeological Museum of Aegina was the first museum to be established in Greece, as long ago as 1828, the social realities of the 1880s and 1890s were entirely different, permitting us to consider it as a separate national mechanism of control.²⁶

20 S. G. Ploumidis, 'An antidote to anarchy? Images of monarchy in Greece in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 45.2 (2021), 240–54.

21 M. Hatzopoulos, 'Μεσσιανισμός και μοναρχία: Σχετικά με τους όρους νομιμοποίησης της δυναστικής εξουσίας στην Ελλάδα τον ύστερο 19ο αιώνα', in P.M. Kitromilides and M. Hatzopoulos (eds), *Διακυμάνσεις του Νεοελληνικού Πολιτικού Στοιχειογράφου από τον 19ο στον 20ό Αιώνα* (Athens 2014) 13–45.

22 *Athina* 15 September 1854, 1–2.

23 Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 115.

24 P. Karolidis, *Η Ελληνική Βασιλεία ως Εθνική Ιδέα* (Athens 1916).

25 J. Wienberg, 'The perishable past: on the advantage and disadvantage of archaeology for life', *Current Swedish Archaeology* 7 (1999) 183–202; T. Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge: selected essays* (London 2018) 9–171 see also Wienfort, *Dynastic Heritage*, 163–79.

26 S. L. Dyson, *In Pursuit of Ancient Pasts: a history of classical archaeology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (New Haven 2006) 133–4; Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, 7–9.

The establishment of the national museum in Greece provided a fitting space for exhibiting universal values and giving expression to Greece's glorious past. Hamilakis perceives Greek national museums as 'repositories of the sacred symbolic capital of antiquity' or 'temples of the nation'. This connection bridged the symbolic prestige of antiquities with the national identity rooted in Greek heritage.²⁷ At the same time, the national museum functioned as an educational resource that homogenized the Greek narrative and affirmed the universal character of Mycenaean antiquities. The national museum claimed the lineal continuity between ancient heritage and modern Greece by arbitrarily bridging historical periods and presenting itself as the bearer of an axiomatic national narrative.²⁸

In the sections that follow, we contend that the remarkable archaeological findings at Mycenae presented an opportune avenue for the international elite and the Greek state alike. Schliemann's network and Mycenae's Homeric links and international allure compelled and attracted international interest. At the same time, the Greek state aimed to achieve two key objectives. The first was to project its prestige and allure on the international stage as the guarantor of the Greek heritage; the second was to validate Greece's cultural legacy and national imaginary, as the Greek king sought to create a new archaeological classification of the Mycenaean findings.

To explore these arguments, we examine the sociopolitical engagement with the Mycenaean antiquity by interpreting its social impact. We begin by briefly outlining the history of the excavations at Mycenae and addressing the symbolic status that the site acquired in the late nineteenth century. Mycenaean antiquities stand as a compelling case study showcasing how the sociopolitical context of the period played a pivotal role in nationalizing and institutionalizing Greek heritage, reinforcing the national narrative. In so doing, we aim to explore the process of external and internal Hellenization of Mycenaean antiquity and explore their impact on the establishment of the National Museum.

The chronicle of the excavations and their international appeal

The first archaeological interventions by the modern Greek state in Mycenae took place in 1841, long before the period we have been discussing, when the newly founded Archaeological Society at Athens commissioned the archaeologist Kyriakos Pittakis to clear the soil blocking the entrance known as the Lion Gate, to clean the interior of the tholos tomb known as the Treasury of Atreus, and to dig around the Tomb of Clytemnestra. The Treasury of Atreus and the 'Tomb of Clytemnestra' were not first excavated with the emergence of the modern Greek state. The former was initially excavated by Lord Elgin in 1802, and both tombs were subsequently excavated by Veli

27 Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 46–8.

28 Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, ch. 3; V. Antoniadis and A. Kouremenos, 'Selective memory and the legacy of archaeological figures in contemporary Athens: the case of Heinrich Schliemann and Panagiotis Stamatakis', *The Historical Review* 17 (2020) 181–204.

Pasha in 1810. Veli Pasha's excavations eventually resulted in the two half-columns of green serpentine from the Treasury of Atreus being brought to the British Museum.²⁹

It was, however, Schliemann who, inspired by the Homeric epics, determined the course of Mycenaean archaeology some decades later.³⁰ The German entrepreneur and self-taught archaeologist was a true cosmopolitan, always eager to transmit the news of his discoveries to the great European capitals and to use the press to showcase his important work in order to gain recognition.³¹ Schliemann's early attempts to obtain an excavation permit for Mycenae in early 1870 were unsuccessful. According to his letters, he later that same year came to an agreement with the General Ephor of Antiquities, Panagiotis Efstratiadis, to conduct an archaeological excavation at the site. Schliemann's plans, however, did not proceed. Instead, he excavated the site of Hissarlik, in the Ottoman Empire, which he identified as the Homeric Troy, provoking the enthusiasm of intellectuals such as Gladstone and the keeper of Greek and Roman antiquities at the British Museum, Charles Newton.³²

In early 1873, Schliemann requested again to excavate at Mycenae, but his proposal was rejected because of his inadmissible terms.³³ In February 1874, he conducted illegal excavations at the site, which were terminated by the authorities, but a month later, he received official permission.³⁴ However, he did not begin excavating because of a legal dispute regarding the so-called Priam's Treasure found in his earlier excavation at Hissarlik. On 31 May 1873, Schliemann's excavations at Troy uncovered Priam's Treasure – initially named by Schliemann 'Helen's Jewels' – a collection of jewels and other valuable artefacts.³⁵ Schliemann smuggled the treasure to Greece and attempted to persuade Greek authorities to allow him to excavate at Mycenae and Olympia. Having failed to achieve his aim, he legally exported Troy's antiquities from Greece. In April 1874, the director of the Imperial Museum, Philippe Déthier, arrived in Greece

29 E. Neumeier, 'Rivaling Elgin: Ottoman governors and archaeological agency in the Morea', in B. Anderson and F. Rojas (eds.), *Antiquarianisms: contact, conflict, comparison* (Oxford 2017) 140–2.

30 In the 1870s, Schliemann conducted excavations at Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns. Excavating these renowned sites made him arguably one of the most recognizable Germans of the century. See W. M. Calder III, 'A new picture of Heinrich Schliemann' and H. Döhl, 'Schliemann the archaeologist' in Calder and D. A. Traill (eds), *Myth, Scandal and History: the Heinrich Schliemann controversy and a first edition of the Mycenaean Diary* (Detroit 1986) 17–47, 95–109.

31 N. Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής των Μυκηνών 1870–1878* (Athens 2011) 19.

32 Dyson, *In Pursuit of Ancient Pasts*, 138–41; Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 19–23; L. Godart, *Da Minosse a Omero: Genesi della Prima Civiltà Europea* (Turin 2020) ch. 1.

33 Schliemann requested that the finds remain in his possession until his death: Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 26.

34 Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 50; N. Karadimas, 'Η γέννηση της προϊστορικής αρχαιολογίας της Ελλάδας κατά τα έτη της θητείας του Παναγιώτη Ευστρατιάδη ως Γενικού Εφόρου Αρχαιοτήτων (1864–1884)', in A. Matthaiou and A. Chatzidimitriou (eds), *Πρακτικά Συμποσίου εις Μνήμην Παναγιώτου Ευστρατιάδου (1815–1888)* (Athens 2021) 335–54.

35 G. Uslu, *Homer, Troy and the Turks: heritage and Identity in the late Ottoman Empire, 1870–1915* (Amsterdam 2017) 50–1. See also Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 31–6 and 61–9.

with instructions to claim half of Troy's antiquities, as had been agreed between Schliemann and the Ottoman Empire. Immediately after his arrival, Greek authorities withdrew Schliemann's permission to export Troy's antiquities and excavate at Mycenae. The dispute was resolved in April 1875 when Schliemann made a payment of 46,000 francs to the Ottoman Empire.

Finally, in 1876, he secured a permit and began his excavations in the summer.³⁶ From the start, the Greek press enthusiastically covered the news about the discovery of 'monuments of the immemorial Greek art and religion'³⁷ and exalted the site's national importance. Schliemann dug inside the Mycenaean acropolis, at the Tomb of Clytemnestra, and at Grave Circle A.³⁸ The latter produced significant finds such as gold and bronze objects, weapons, gold funerary masks, and engraved stelae.³⁹

Schliemann rather hastily ended his excavations and left Mycenae in December 1876. During the works, he had been accompanied by his wife Sophia Engastromenos, who actively participated in the excavation and worked as deputy director in Schliemann's absence.⁴⁰ Schliemann's work was overseen by the representative of the Archaeological Society at Athens,⁴¹ Panagiotis Stamatakis, who continued work at Mycenae after Schliemann's departure, collaborating with international experts on the findings (*Ephemeris* 22 April 1877, 2). The interest Schliemann created for Mycenae through telegrams published in the Greek dailies of the time (*Ephemeris* 17 August 1876, 2; *Ephemeris* 18 November 1876, 1) aroused the curiosity of antiquarians and academics.

The press's fascination with the excavations at Mycenae, together with Schliemann's conspicuous activities and international connections, also attracted the attention of foreign authorities and aristocrats who began visiting and incorporating the site in their archaeological tours.⁴²

One of the first international visitors at Mycenae was the Emperor of Brazil, Pedro II, who made an unofficial trip to the eastern Mediterranean in 1876. Among the archaeological sites that he visited were Troy and Mycenae, while the latter was being

36 O. T. P. K. Dickinson, 'Schliemann and the Shaft Graves', *Greece and Rome* 23.2 (1976) 159–68; Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 19–61 and 77–82; A. Leriou, 'Η ανακάλυψη της μυκηναϊκής Πελοποννήσου μέσα από τον ελληνικό εθνικό Τύπο (δεκαετία 1830 – δεκαετία 1920)', in S. Raptopoulos (ed.), *Η Ιστορική και Αρχαιολογική Έρευνα στην Πελοπόννησο, όπως Προκύπτει από τα Αρχεία των Γ.Α.Κ. Νομών Πελοποννήσου και Αρχεία άλλων Φορέων* (Tripoli 2014) 234–56.

37 'Μνημεία τῆς παναρχαίου ἑλληνικῆς τέχνης καὶ θρησκείας', *Palingenesia* 29 July 1876, 4. English translations of newspaper articles and other primary sources in Greek are our own.

38 Dickinson, 'Schliemann and the Shaft Graves', n. 46; Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 84; D. Mason, 'The date of the tomb of Clytemnestra', *Annual of the British School at Athens* 108 (2013) 97–119.

39 Dickinson, 'Schliemann and the Shaft Graves', 163–4; Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 118–31; Graziadio and Pezzi 'Schliemann and the so-called Agamemnon's Mask', 113–16.

40 Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 87.

41 The official institution in charge of the excavation; its vice president, Spyridon Fintiklis, visited the site on various occasions (*Ora* 25 November 1876, 2).

42 Leontis, *Topographies of Hellenism*, 10–1.

excavated by Schliemann.⁴³ Schliemann seized the opportunity to advertise the emperor's visit in a report in *The Times* on 30 October 1876.⁴⁴ He recounted the areas that Pedro II visited and the parts of the acropolis that attracted his attention. The local daily *Argolis* also featured the emperor's visit, claiming that the prefect, the mayors of Nafplio, Argos, and Mycenae, along with Schliemann and Stamatakis, welcomed the emperor at the site while he was accompanied by his royal Chamberlain, the French diplomat and racial theorist Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, and one courtier of the Greek royal family. *Argolis* reported of this royal visit:

They guided them around the ongoing excavations, which they briefly examined. Later they descended to the so-called tomb of Agamemnon or Treasury of Atreus, wherein a fine repast was served with proper care at the expense of the aforementioned authorities and, in particular, the generous mayor of Mycenae, Mr P. Nezos, who had procured a young lamb well-roasted in the Greek fashion.⁴⁵

The highlight of Pedro's visit was the repast at the Treasury of Atreus, which Schliemann believed was the burial site of the legendary king Atreus, mentioned in Homer.⁴⁶ Schliemann's effort to exhibit the monumental nature of the site reflects his need for external recognition and his attempt to construct a royal myth at Mycenae. The decoration of the tomb with laurel branches on this occasion fashioned an aristocratic ceremony and illustrated the noble status of the site.⁴⁷

Pedro's royal Chamberlain also published a brief account of the visit, claiming that he was 'delighted to see Mycenae again: The contemptible Schliemann is excavating there. He has found bas-relief, which, if genuine – I consider him capable of anything in the way of duplicity – is of capital interest and will change opinions once again on the origins of art.'⁴⁸ Schliemann's dubious reputation is apparent, especially due to his hasty archaeological activities and controversial deals with Greek and Ottoman administration. The emperor also visited the excavation house to see the Mycenaean artefacts (*Argolis* 23 October 1876, 2).⁴⁹

43 Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, n. 248.

44 H. Schliemann, 'Appendix B: Reports to the *times*', in Calder and Traill, *Myth, Scandal and History* 240–60.

45 *Argolis* 23 October 1876.

46 Schliemann, 'Appendix B', 243.

47 Schliemann, 'The Mycenaean diary, 1876', 142–228.

48 Schliemann, 'The Mycenaean diary, 1876', n. 141.

49 The relation between Schliemann and the Emperor continued the following year when Pedro visited him in his residence in London. Schliemann claimed: 'His Majesty spent two hours in examining with great attention my large album of Mycenaean photographs, and repeatedly congratulated me on the results of my excavations', S. Hood, 'Schliemann's Mycenae albums', in G. Korres, N. Karadimas and G. Flouda (eds), *Αρχαιολογία και Ερρίκος Σλήμαν: Εκατό Έτη από το Θάνατό του. Ανασκόπηση και Προοπτικές. Μύθος – Ιστορία – Επισήμη* (Athens 2012) 70–8. It is no surprise that Schliemann dedicated the 1878 Mycenae volume to the emperor.

Following Pedro's tour, more upper-class visitors arrived at the site, further enhancing its international appeal. In December, the Russian ambassador and German chargé d'affaires visited the monument to see the newly excavated material (*Ora* 2 December 1876, 3). During his stay at the Tatoi Palace, the Carlist claimant to the Spanish throne, the Infante Carlos, Duke of Madrid (Carlos de Borbón y Austria-Este), visited Mycenae to glance around the site, accompanied by the Greek king's messenger (*Avgi* 14 December 1876, 3; *Proinos Kiryx* 14 December 1876, 3). A little later, Schliemann welcomed at the site Prince Friedrich of Saxe-Meiningen, who communicated the prestigious discoveries to the German Archaeological Society upon his return to Berlin (*Morning Post* 20 December 1876, 6). Interestingly, British dailies exulted that after 'thousands of years the Prince was the first person to enter the town of Mycenae in a carriage' (*Morning Post* 15 December 1876, 5).

By late 1876, various intellectuals began publishing Schliemann's discoveries exalting Mycenae's treasures. Charles P. Daly, president of the American Geographical Society of New York, dedicated a feature in the Society's journal to highlight the excavations.⁵⁰ Although at first reluctant to adopt Schliemann's narrative, Daly completed his publication the following year, when more were known about the site, claiming that

the tombs and the objects found in them is [sic] one of the most interesting archaeological discoveries that has ever been made, and as they relate to what is known as the heroic age in Greece, a period in respect to which we may be said to know nothing except what is found in the poems of Homer, they are of the deepest interest.⁵¹

Soon, foreign scholars incorporated the Mycenaean antiquities into their works and compared them with other Bronze Age settlements.⁵² Archaeologists and classicists, such as Ernst Curtius, began visiting the site (*Palingenesia* 30 November 1876, 3), aiming to witness at first hand the extraordinary finds (*Dresdner Nachrichten* 24 December 1876, 3; *Ephemeris* 30 March 1880, 1; *Palingenesia* 1 April 1880, 4; *Ephemeris* 12 September 1889, 3), which completed the discovery of the two counterparts of the Trojan war (Fig. 1).

Numerous other members of the foreign elite visited Mycenae and were captivated by the finds (Fig. 2).⁵³ Similarly, renowned dailies –especially British, German, and

50 C. P. Daly, 'Annual address. The geographical work of the world in 1876', *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 8 (1876) 45–95.

51 C. P. Daly, 'Annual address. The geographical work of the world in 1877', *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 10 (1876) 1–76 (15).

52 J. T. Johnston, 'To the members of: The Metropolitan Museum of Art,' *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 8 (1878) 119–30 (122); T. Bayard, 'Ephesus, Cyprus, and Mycenae', *The North American Review* 126.260 (1878) 111–31; C. T. Newton, *Dr. Schliemann's Discoveries at Mycenae: essays on art and archaeology* (London 1880) 246–302.

53 These included diplomats (*Ephemeris* 8 June 1877, 2; *Ephemeris* 24 March 1879, 2; *Karteria* 13 April 1883, 4; *Aion* 8 November 1886, 4; *Aion* 16 March 1887, 4; *Nea Ephemeris* 25 April 1890,



Fig. 1. A group of visitors, including architect and archaeologist, Wilhelm Dörpfeld (left, holding his hat), his wife, Anne Dörpfeld (centre, sitted), German ambassador, Count von Wesdehlen (right), and his wife, Augusta Alexandrine von Pourtales (right) at the Lion Gate, perhaps 1891 © German Archaeological Institute at Athens.

5; <https://www.dainst.blog/people-at-the-dai-athens/2022/06/17/mykene-63/>, accessed 3 December 2023); aristocrats (*Ephemeris* 26 April 1878, 1; *Palingenesia* 26 January 1888, 3; *Ephemeris* 22 October 1889, 3), upper-class European citizens (*Alitheia* 9 February 1880, 3; *Ephemeris* 16 September 1883, 2; *Palingenesia* 29 January 1888, 2; *Ephemeris* 7 October 1890, 3); Greek ministers (*Aion* 25 June 1884, 7; *Stoa* 2 July 1884, 2; *Nea Ephemeris* 14 May 1890, 2). Particularly noteworthy are the visits by European and Mediterranean royalty, such as Princess Theresia of Bavaria (*Ephemeris* 14 August 1883, 2); Prince Hassan of Egypt (*Ephemeris* 31 August 1883, 2); Prince Henri d' Orléans (*Nea Ephemeris* 1 October 1887, 2); Prince Johann II of Lichtenstein (*Nea Ephemeris* 25 April 1889, 4); the future King of Italy,



Fig. 2. A group of travellers visiting the ‘Tomb of Clytemnestra’, April 1892 © German Archaeological Institute at Athens.

American—, such as the British *The Graphic*, dedicated large features to Schliemann’s activities and the Mycenaean wealth (*The Graphic* 4 November 1876, 18 and 16 December 1876, 7). What mainly fascinated the international press was seeing the Homeric world vividly coming to life. The unearthed skeletons were named after Homer’s heroes and heroines, such as Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and the precious finds appeared to belong to them (*The New York Herald* 12 December 1876, 5).

It is against this background that we encounter Schliemann’s public attempt to approach King George and connect him with Mycenae. After unearthing the tombs of Grave Circle A,⁵⁴ Schliemann dispatched an unprecedented telegram to George, which was published in at least four national newspapers:

Victor Emmanuel III (*Ephemeris* 17 February 1890, 2); the Prince and future King of Saxony, Frederick Augustus III (*Ephemeris* 17 April 1890, 2); the Russian heir-apparent Alexander III (*Ephemeris* 29 October 1890, 2); and Empress Victoria of Germany (*Nea Ephemeris* 31 October 1889, 2; *Palingenesia* 4 November 1889, 2–3).

54 One of the most recognizable artefacts of the site is the so-called mask of Agamemnon, found in Shaft grave V: O. T. P. K. Dickinson, ‘The “face of Agamemnon”’, *Hesperia* 74.3 (2005) 299–308.

It is with great pleasure that I announce to Your Majesty that I have discovered the monuments, which the tradition proclaimed by Pausanias indicates to be the tombs of Agamemnon, Cassandra, Eurymedon, and their comrades, murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus, during a feast. The tombs are enclosed within a double parallel stone circle, undoubtedly constructed in honour of these distinguished personages. Inside the tombs, I discovered an infinite number of archaeological objects of pure gold. This treasure alone is sufficient to fill a large museum, which will become the most renowned in the world and will attract myriad foreigners to Greece from every country for years to come. Since I work out of sheer and mere love for science, I naturally do not lay claim to this treasure, which I grant intact to Greece with infinite enthusiasm.

Your Majesty, may these treasures become the foundation of immeasurable national wealth, God willing.⁵⁵

On Schliemann's initiative, this telegram connected the legendary Homeric legacy with the modern Greek national imaginary, and it set the foundations for the monarch's future engagement with and interest in the Mycenaean civilization. The king had already visited the antiquities at Mycenae three years before Schliemann's excavation (*Aion* 21 March 1873, 3).⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that between 1863 and 1867, Stefanos Koumanoudis, then secretary of the Athens Archaeological Society, was assigned the task of educating King George. This direct link may have had significant influence on King George's subsequent involvement in archaeological matters, as we shall see below. Furthermore, following the royal marriage between King George and Queen Olga in 1867, Koumanoudis also played a pivotal role in educating the Queen.⁵⁷ Later, Schliemann returned to Athens and met the king at the Tatoi Palace. He wished to exhibit the newly found Mycenaean antiquities at the royal palace but, after discussing the idea with Koumanoudis' wife, Aikaterini Petrou Nikolopoulou,⁵⁸ she persuaded him not to proceed with a formal proposal to the king.

55 J. Davis, 'Mycenaean Greece: From Crete to the mainland of Europe and back', in Y. Galanakis (ed.), *The Aegean World: a guide to the Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean antiquities in the Ashmolean Museum* (Athens 2013) 119–31. *Alitheia* 22 October 1876; *Merimna* 19 November 1876; *Avgi* 20 November 1876; *Ephemeris* 20 November 1876.

56 The first modern Greek king to visit the site during a tour of Greek antiquities was Otto, who toured the area of Mycenae and Tiryns accompanied by the archaeologist Ludwig Ross in March 1873, according to P. Karolidis, *Σύγχρονος Ιστορία των Ελλήνων και των Λοιπών Λαών της Ανατολής από τον 1821 μέχρι τον 1921*, II (Athens 1922) 187–8. See also Ross's narration of the trip: *Wanderungen in Griechenland im Gefolge des Königs Otto der Königin Amalie* (Halle 1851) 133–42.

57 V. Petrakos, *Η Εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογική Εταιρεία: Η Ιστορία των 150 Χρόνων της 1837* (Athens 1987) 198–7 and 266–7.

58 Vasilikou, *Το Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, n. 329.

The founding of Mycenaean Archaeology: Greek identity and national museum

Showcasing the Mycenaean discoveries to the wider public was crucial for instilling national pride. This is why, despite the locals' wish to create a local museum in Mycenae or Argos, the Greek authorities decided to continue with plans to exhibit the finds in Athens.⁵⁹ In contrast to other European states, where significant artefacts were housed in glorious private collections, most archaeological finds in Greece remained at the excavated sites.⁶⁰ (Some Greeks did possess private collections of antiquities.) Similarly, the international interest sparked by Mycenae's discoveries, evidenced by high-profile visits and numerous publications, created additional pressure to appropriately preserve and display these findings, with their significant influence on Western perceptions of Hellenism.

The excavated material from Mycenae was properly catalogued by Stamatakis and eventually shipped to Athens. By late 1876, it was in storage in the National Bank in Kotzias Square, with a view to exhibiting it in the halls of the Polytechnic (*Avgi* 11 December 1876, 2; *Ephemeris* 21 January 1877, 2).⁶¹ However, the documentation process moved slowly because of the large amount of material. In a letter to the German philologist Max Müller on 28 January 1877, Schliemann complained that the Archaeological Society had not yet found a suitable place for the exhibition and that only very few guests had had the opportunity to see a small part of the Mycenaean collection (Fig. 3).⁶² (Fig. 3 accurately depicts these high-class dynamics but also women's perspective: they appear as visitors to the collection on an equal footing to men.) Schliemann's haste to exhibit the archaeological finds reflected his impatience to fulfil the expectations of the international public. Not surprisingly, among the few distinguished guests who had the opportunity to visit the exhibition was the Greek royal couple, on 27 January 1877, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh.⁶³

The Greek authorities too were concerned about the slow progress in cataloguing the findings, as the Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education, Georgios Milisis, made clear in a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandros Kontostavlos.⁶⁴ To avoid disappointing British visitors, who had been informed about the discoveries at Mycenae through the press (*Illustrated London News* 24 February 1877, 16; *The*

59 *Merimna* 16 November 1876, 3.

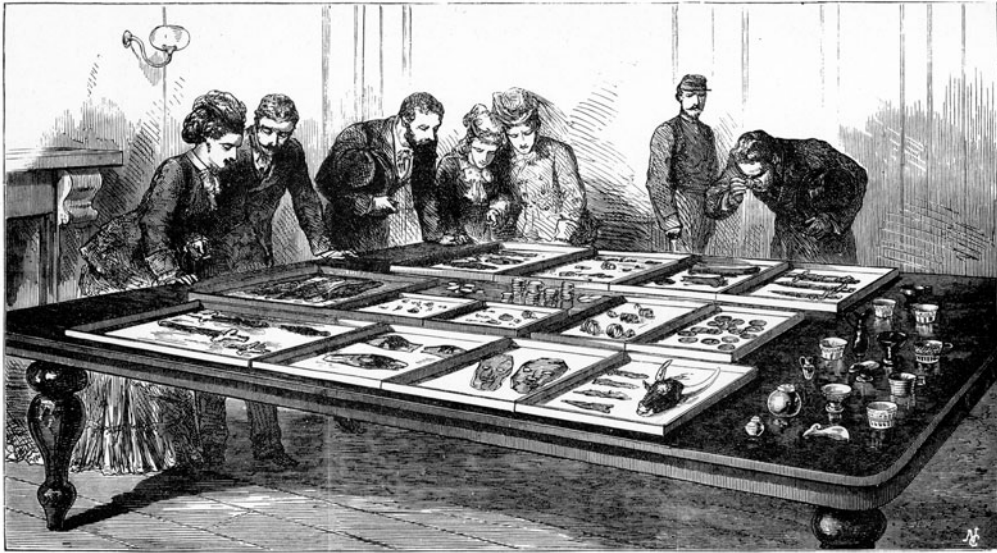
60 A. Gazi, 'Displaying archaeology: exhibiting ideology in 19th and early 20th century Greek museums', in Voutsaki and Cartledge, *Ancient Monuments and Modern Identities* 95–116. See also Dyson, *In Pursuit of Ancient Pasts*, 78.

61 Gazi, 'Displaying archaeology', 131–8.

62 Gazi, 'Displaying archaeology' 162–3. See also *Ephemeris* 12 March 1877, 2 and 26 March 1877, 2.

63 E. Meyer, 'Schliemann's letters to Max Müller in Oxford', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 82 (1962) 75–105 (letter 22).

64 Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, n. 42.



EXHIBITION AT ATHENS OF THE MYCENÆ TREASURES DISCOVERED BY DR. SCHLIEMANN

Fig. 3. Exhibition of the Mycenaean Antiquities in Athens © American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Archives, Heinrich Schliemann Papers.

Graphic 16 June 1877, 1), Milisic recommended that the Embassy of Greece in London be notified about the delay in inaugurating the exhibition.

In October 1877, the exhibition was completed, and the Mycenaean Museum opened its gates to the public.⁶⁵ In a period when archaeological antiquities in Greek museums were mainly visited by foreigners or Greek intellectuals, such an exhibition had a symbolic significance that aligned with the Hellenization of heritage. It is significant that, following Schliemann's departure, the Archaeological Society assigned the excavation of Mycenae to Christos Tsountas, who between 1886 and 1897 explored almost the entire citadel, five of the tholos tombs, and more than a hundred chamber tombs, producing a considerable amount of material.⁶⁶

Tsountas played a pivotal role in creating the cultural capital that would connect Mycenae with the Greek national imagination and would contribute to the Hellenization of ancient heritage.⁶⁷ Following European aesthetic and sociocultural movements, he sought to align the origins of the Mycenaean civilization to Western parallels, in order to make Greece part of enlightened Europe rather than the despotic East.⁶⁸ Tsountas assimilated 'the pre-historic past into the Greek sense of history and collective identity',⁶⁹ and creatively incorporated modern perceptions such as state and

65 Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 165.

66 Gazi, 'Displaying archaeology', 95–116.

67 See Voutsaki, 'The Hellenization of the prehistoric past', 140–7.

68 Voutsaki, 'The Hellenization of the prehistoric past', 141.

69 Voutsaki, 'The Hellenization of the prehistoric past', 130.

nation to depict an idealist concept of Greek culture. Even though his methodological approach followed scientific rigour, his first publications on prehistoric archaeology stress the connection between the classical and Mycenaean periods,⁷⁰ adopting the nationalist idea of a Greek identity within the Homeric and Mycenaean world.⁷¹

In addition, beyond Schliemann's opportunistic approach, the Mycenaean collection reflected Greek ambitions to showcase a national and prestigious heritage at a state institution, since in the European *fin de siècle*, as Bennett argues, the museum gradually shifted from a site that served the establishment into a mechanism of governmental control and national pride.⁷² This dynamic development towards the nationalization of heritage alongside the international appeal that Mycenaean antiquities generated, led the Greek king to engage with the Mycenaean antiquities.

On 19 November 1891, the king issued a Royal Decree inaugurating a new field of archaeology, Mycenaean Archaeology, which encompassed the prehistoric sites discovered in Mycenae, Tiryns, Spata, Menidi, Vafeio, and Dimini.⁷³ The Royal Decree incorporated the Mycenaean antiquities into the newly constructed National Archaeological Museum as part of its permanent collections. In addition, it designated the hall where the exhibition had to be displayed and named it the Mycenaean Hall. Thus, the king assumed the role of the official founder of a branch of archaeology and formally incorporated the Mycenaean artefacts into the existing volume of Greek heritage.

In this context, the objective of the National Museum was to establish knowledge and power,⁷⁴ effectively providing another tool of community homogenization over and above governmental power. This institution attracted a greater number of people who recognized Mycenaean heritage as a national asset. George's conscious attempt to associate modern Greece with the Mycenaean antiquities and to ideologically appropriate the past in the present can be summarized in Koumanoudis' remarks in the proceedings of the Archaeological Society at Athens: 'The entire collection should be properly displayed at the Polytechnic School ... in glory and honour of ancient and modern Greece.'⁷⁵ This statement echoes the perception of archaeological sites as

70 Voutsaki, 'The Hellenization of the prehistoric past', 132.

71 Karadimas, 'Η γέννηση της προϊστορικής αρχαιολογίας', 343.

72 Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, 5.

73 Government Gazette Issue 329, 21 November 1891. On this issue, see also K. Paschalidis "'(...) Έρρωσο. Ερρίκος Σχλιέμανν": Η ανακάλυψη του μυκηναϊκού πολιτισμού και η δημιουργία του Μυκηναίου Μουσείου μέσα από τις αναφορές των πρωταγωνιστών της', *Διαλέξεις του Συλλόγου Φίλων του Ιστορικού Αρχείου της Αρχαιολογικής Υπηρεσίας 2015–2016*, <https://www.blod.gr/lectures/erroso-errikos-shliemann-i-anakalypsi-tou-mykinaikou-politismou-kai-i-dimiourgia-tou-mykinaiou-mouseiou-mesa-apo-tis-anafores-tonprotagoniston-tis/> (2016), Accessed 3 December 2023.

74 Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, 1–6.

75 'Καὶ ἐδῶ ἡ ὅλη συλλογὴ ἐν τῷ Πολυτεχνεῖῳ εὐπρεπῶς νὰ κατατεθῆ ... πρὸς δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν τῆς παλαιᾶς τε καὶ νέας Ἑλλάδος', S. Koumanoudis, 'Ἐκθεσις τῶν ἐν ἐτῷ 1877 πεπραγμένων ὑπὸ τοῦ συμβουλίου', *Πρακτικά της ἐν Ἀθῆναις Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας* 33(1878) 4–30; E. Konstantinidi-Syvriddi and C. Paschalidis, 'The

heterotopic spaces where collective past and present fundamentally converged to create a new perception of material culture and antiquities.⁷⁶ Mycenae offered indigenous Hellenism a greater time depth and provided a sense of national exceptionalism and cultural prestige,⁷⁷ especially thanks to the vast amount of gold found in the excavations. At the same time, western Hellenism witnessed the integration of Mycenaean artefacts into a modern institution that exemplified a panoramic view of the Greek heritage. Indigenous and western Hellenism, thus, provided a dynamic panorama of cultural perception that at times clashed or converged. By rendering them accessible to visitors, the Greek state established a cultural space where Mycenaean antiquities garnered international acclaim.

The transfer of the Mycenaean collection to the National Museum took place between 1892 and 1893,⁷⁸ and showcased the objective to display archaeological finds to the general populace as educational and authoritative objects that recreate a lived past.⁷⁹ The incorporation of the Mycenaean antiquities into the national museum supports Bennett's claim that museum artefacts become 'inherently and irretrievably, rhetorical objects'.⁸⁰

In the Royal Decree, this rhetorical dimension is illustrated in the claim that Mycenaean civilization shaped the course of Greek art – even though Mycenaean objects were still described as pre-Hellenic. This legislative action reproduced the national narrative, according to which later periods of Greek history owed their exceptionality to Mycenaean Greece. It not only highlighted the significance of the new archaeological branch but also provided Greek historiography with the necessary connecting elements for creating a linear perception of the national past, effectively drawing on the ethno-racial connection between the land and its inhabitants. Although Mycenaean antiquities had long been vaguely attributed to Greeks such as the Achaeans or the Homeric heroes, their scientific interpretation in the late nineteenth century formally included them within the Greek heritage.

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unacknowledged Panayotis Stamatakis and his invaluable contribution to the understanding of Grave Circle A at Mycenae', *Archaeological Reports* 65 (2019) 111–26.

76 Y. Hamilakis, 'The Other "Parthenon": antiquity and national memory at Makronisos', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 20.2 (2002) 307–38; E. Ioannidou, 'Toward a national heterotopia: ancient theaters and the cultural politics of performing ancient drama in modern Greece', *Comparative Drama* 44/45 (2010/2011) 385–403.

77 Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins*, 291–2.

78 Vasilikou, *To Χρονικό της Ανασκαφής*, 165 and 187.

79 D. Plantzos, 'Το παρελθόν ως τραυματική εμπειρία στο παρόν', in N. Papadimitriou and A. Anagnostopoulos (eds), *Το Παρελθόν στο Παρόν, Μνήμη, Ιστορία και Αρχαιότητα στη Σύγχρονη Ελλάδα* (Athens 2017) 117–35.

80 T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics* (London 1995) 146.

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