Bridging the Gap(s) between 'European', 'Balkan' and 'Greek' Archaeolog(ies)y.

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Abstract
The present paper examines the relationship between the terms 'European' and 'Balkan' archaeology and the way this is reflected on archaeology in Greece. More specifically, it discusses three main factors, most notably the seemingly sequential progress of archaeology, access to funding, and university rankings and publishing schemes all of which contribute to the perceived 'backwardness' of 'Balkan' archaeolog(ies)y when compared to 'European' ones. The chasm between these two, and the way this influences archaeological practice in Greece is then studied by comparing archaeology in Northern Greece, an area traditionally perceived as the link between the wider Balkans and Southern Greece, a region regarded as the cornerstone of the 'Western' world. The role of the foreign archaeological institutions and the Greek state in this divide is studied, arguing that the approaches of both towards Northern Greece are hindering the region from reaching its full archaeological potential. The paper concludes by providing some preliminary thoughts on future steps moving beyond dualisms and towards a more inclusive archaeology.

Keywords: Balkans, Macedonia, Northern Greece, colonialism, nationalism.

Introduction[1]

How should a Greek citizen whose ancestors came as refugees to Greece from the Black Sea region, educated at a British University, currently living in post-Brexit Britain, self-define? Is this person Greek given their nationality? Do they feel European living in an

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in-between part of Europe, as Britain currently feels like? Or is it Balkan, given its wider cultural influences, that shaped them into an adult? This identity crisis that many people are currently experiencing due to ever-shifting political circumstances, far from being an abstract theoretical construction, is rather a lived reality, the effects of which are evident in every aspect of our lives.

Archaeology, being an inherently political discipline, is not immune to contemporary political developments. 'European' archaeology, 'Balkan' archaeology, and 'Greek' archaeology are all terms connected to different yet frequently overlapping approaches linked to specific regions and archaeological materials. If one was to follow a geographical-based approach, then a straight-forward link starting with the smallest region, that is Greece, and moving towards the largest one, i.e. Europe, could be established with the Balkans acting as an intermediate stage between these two. However, even twenty years after Maria Todorova's (1997[2009]) book, this 'intermediate' stage is often overlooked since Greece, which is often viewed as the cornerstone of 'Western' civilization, is not typically associated with the same notion of 'backwardness', traditionally link to the Balkans. The same disassociation holds true in regard to 'Greek' archaeology which is typically not classified among 'Balkan' archaeologies.

This is of course not to argue that these categories are fixed and rigid but instead that they are fluid since they are the outcomes of complex historical circumstances. The present fragmentation of the archaeological communities within Europe further complicates things as it creates a situation in which all archaeologies within Europe are 'European' but some are more 'European' than others (Babić et al. 2017: 8–15). Furthermore, the term 'Balkan' archaeology traditionally refers to the archaeologies of the Balkan countries with the notable exception of Classical Greece primarily due to sites found in Southern Greece (Babić et al. 2017: 13). Nationalistic political agendas typically utilising 'ethnogenesis' as their main device have long shaped 'Balkan' archaeologies (Gimatzidis 2018a; Novaković 2021), frequently leading to their perception by Western Europeans and Americans alike as outdated (Todorova 1997[2009]) despite recent efforts focusing on translocality (e.g. Gori & Ivanova 2017; Gavranović et al. 2020). The heterogenous historical circumstances specifically within the Balkan Peninsula and the strong influence of different archaeological schools of thought, particularly of the German one, are all often perceived as signs of backwardness (Babić 2014; 2015; Palavestra & Babić 2016; Novaković 2021).

As for the term 'Greek' archaeology this too is far from strictly defined. Even within such a small field temporal and geographical divisions do exist. Prehistoric, Classical, Byzantine and Ottoman archaeologies have all followed different trajectories (e.g. Kotsakis 1998; Fotiadis 2001; Kolovos & Vionis 2019; Moudopoulos-Athanasiou 2020). Moreover, the way 'Greek' archaeology – or to be more precise archaeologies – came to be practised both within the modern Greek state and outside of it gave rise to different colonialist and indigenous archaeologies (Hamilakis 2008; 2009).

Yet, the underlying causes of the 'omission' to classify 'Greek' archaeology alongside other 'Balkan' ones are more closely linked to both past and contemporary socio-political situations than to the archaeological material itself. The fact that most of the area making up the Balkan peninsula was a region of the Ottoman empire for many centuries, along with the relatively recent creation of the modern states now occupying this region created numerous problems within the wider region. The presence of communist regimes in most

of these states following World War II, the Yugoslav wars during the 1990s and the financial crisis of 2008 with the surrounding discussions of a possible 'Grexit', all contributed to two very turbulent centuries. It is within this context that various 'Balkan' archaeologies were born and practised with a very specific agenda and through equally specific means (Gori & Ivanova 2017; Gimatzidis 2018a; Novaković 2021). It is therefore easy to see how in this sequential narrative, especially regarding archaeological theory – usually documented in stages from cultural-historical approaches to processualism, followed later by a shift to a post-processual paradigm (Trigger 1989 [2006]; Barrett 2021: 39–74), with more posthumanist-based theories recently being added to the mix (e.g. Olsen 2010; Witmore 2007; 2014) – can cast a negative shadow on 'Balkan' archaeology, as this is yet to catch up to the latest developments in European archaeological discourse (Babić 2014; 2015).

The aim of this paper is twofold: first to examine the intricate relationship between 'European' and 'Balkan' archaeology, and second to emphasise the peculiar role of 'Greek' archaeology as a field perceived in different ways depending on the audience. The first part of the paper discusses the reasons behind the seemingly 'backwardness' of 'Balkan' archaeology compared to 'European' archaeology by focusing on the myth of the perpetual progress of European archaeology, funding politics, and university rankings and access to publishing schemes. Subsequently, it is argued that the chasm between 'European' and 'Balkan' archaeology is reflected in 'Greek' archaeology which is traditionally linked to sites in Southern Greece, largely ignoring Northern Greece and its Balkan connotations. Data driven from the work of the foreign schools in Greece and the way state archaeology treats the area are combined to further demonstrate this chasm within 'Greek' archaeology. Finally, in the last part of the paper, a few preliminary thoughts are provided in order to bridge the different gaps and truly diversify archaeology as a discipline.

Europe and the Balkans or Three contributing factors in the perpetuation of the 'backwardness' of 'Balkan' archaeology

The relationship between Europe and the Balkans has always been both a turbulent and a tainted one. Owing to the peculiar political circumstances mentioned above surrounding the Balkan states, the region as a whole is frequently perceived as the 'other' of the rest of Europe. This alterity of the Balkans and its equation in Western imagination to a somewhat 'backward' or 'primitive' region (Todorova 1997 [2009]) is of course multifaceted and aspects of it are unavoidably echoed in archaeological discourse. By analogy, 'Balkan' archaeology is equally 'backward' since it rarely makes use of the latest theoretical models, nor does it apply the fanciest new scientific analyses (Babić 2014; 2015; see also Barrett 2016; Ribeiro 2016; 2021). Additionally, the fact that 'archaeological culture' is still the most dominant approach in 'Balkan' Archaeology does not really create an ideal context in which the sub-field that is 'Balkan' archaeology could reach its full potential (Gori & Ivanova 2017: 5–8). Granted, from a Western European perspective, 'Balkan' archaeology, with its seemingly outmoded theories and practices might indeed be perceived as outdated despite warnings against such approaches (Hamilakis 1996). Yet,

there are three main factors behind this perception, which greatly contribute to the perpetuation of 'Balkan' archaeology as a somewhat 'backward' one.

The sequential progress of archaeology

The first of these contributing factors is the myth of the sequential progress of both archaeological theory and the scientific methods employed both in the field and especially in the lab. Both of these large sets of approaches are frequently organised in a chronological order, from those proposed in the early 20th century to the latest ones. In this linear progress of theories and methodologies, 'new' is the new sexy, while earlier concepts are often viewed as outdated (Babić 2014; 2015). Consequently, anyone not adopting the latest methods is typically seen as not having familiarised themselves with those, leading to their work to also be regarded as outdated. However, this seemingly endless invention of new theories and scientific analyses is not always a real advancement from past approaches. In other words, progress for the sake of progress is not a real advancement that promotes innovative approaches which in turn create new knowledge (Ribeiro 2016). It is rather the ambition of typically tenured, white, male, academics of mature age and with a privileged socio-economic background to 'dethrone' the leading scholars of the past generations in order to assert their dominance within the field (Sherratt 2011: 14).

Furthermore, these methods are not even unanimously accepted within 'European' archaeology since even the term itself is a vague and problematic one (Babić et al. 2017). Accordingly, a lot have been written especially over the last couple of years either in 'defence' or 'against' things (e.g. Olsen 2010; Harman & Witmore 2023 cf. Barrett 2016; Ribeiro 2016) while a similar critique has been voiced against new scientific analyses (Maran 2019; 2022). For instance, while material-wise both British and German archaeologists might be interested in similar themes, their approaches can significantly vary. This does not necessarily mean that one is inherently superior or inferior to the other but rather that they stem from different academic traditions. In regards to 'Balkan' archaeology, most of it is still largely influenced from the German school of thought which only seemingly appears atheoretical. In reality, these approaches are influenced by the tradition of positivism, a school of thought which frequently makes non-Western archaeologists reluctant to participate in theoretical debates (Babić et al. 2017: 14).

Rather than passively accepting the latest theory or scientific analysis that is frequently conceived and subsequently applied to a completely different context (Palavestra & Babić 2016; Ribeiro 2016; 2022), archaeologists working in the Balkans should employ a more critical model, one which will take into consideration both the latest advancements but also the nature of the material and the socio-cultural circumstances attested in the Balkans. This means that a more critical stance should be adopted towards concepts developed elsewhere before applied to material from the Balkans. A reconciliation is therefore indeed much needed between more 'conservative' and 'progressive' approaches, one that will make use of the vast array of concepts and analyses that we now have at our disposal before creating models appropriate to the study of each individual site. However, there is an important obstacle which greatly hinders this reconciliatory approach, one which often acts as a mechanism of power: funding.

Funding from Europe

Funding is among the main reasons behind the seemingly backwardness of 'Balkan' archaeology. New technologies, especially the ones that are lab-based often do not come cheaply and the considerable lack of funding for those in countries with less resources creates a particular power dynamic within the continent. Given that the Balkan countries could be classified among those with less resources available to archaeologists, people working on material from sites located there typically seek external funding. Funding for research is in many cases limited in Balkan countries which were hit hard by the financial crisis of 2008. European grants which might have been used to kickstart a more inclusive archaeology are unfortunately unevenly distributed among the European countries. It is telling that during the Horizon 2020 programme (2014-2020) the three largest economies of Europe, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, received over 40 percent of the total funds, amounting to 22 billion euros, while countries like Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania combined received less than 1 billion (Schiermeier 2020). Moreover, Greece, Croatia and Bulgaria – the only Balkan countries that are EU members – collectively received less than 2 billions.

This uneven distribution of funds greatly contributes to the perpetuation of the notion of 'backwardness' in regard to 'Balkan' archaeology, as its practitioners simply cannot afford to use the same techniques as their counterparts in other parts of Europe. This funding-based inability is often perceived as lack of awareness or familiarisation with the latest techniques which in turn positions 'Balkan' archaeology at an earlier, outdated stage in the supposedly sequential development of archaeological theory and technologies. In light of this conundrum, Balkan archaeologists either pursue collaborations with foreign institutions or ship their material to labs based in other countries for analysis. What therefore frequently develops over time is dependencies and not truly meaningful collaborations, given that the involved parts are not participating on an equal basis (Niklasson 2013; 2016: 235–250). Instead, their relationship is typically characterised by a very specific power dynamic tilting in favour of the most well-funded party, which holds both the knowledge and the means to apply this knowledge to the material (Ribeiro 2022; Ribeiro & Giamakis 2023).

In turn, this situation further complicates things within each Balkan country as what is essentially created is a two-tier system between well-established archaeologists working on well-known sites and others working on lesser-known sites (Heath-Stout & Hannigan 2020). The first group is often able to use the social status of their site in order to develop their networks and their international contacts in order to gain access to the latest technologies. In contrast to that, the second group which typically operates in what is often perceived as lesser-known sites, but arguably of equal importance to both the scholarly and the wider community, has a hard-time gaining access to the latest methodologies due to the lack of funding. This fragmentation can also take a geographical form as in the case of Greece in which the South is the primary part of the country where the foreign schools mostly operate, while the North is usually overlooked, a phenomenon which is further discussed later in the present paper.

University Rankings and Access to Publishing Schemes

A third major contributing factor in the perceived 'backwardness' of 'Balkan' Archaeology which to a large extent stems from funding is the reproduction of stereotypes through university rankings and differential access to publishing schemes. Starting with the first one, it should not come as a surprise that universities found in richer economies tend to occupy the top places in world rankings. For subjects like archaeology according to the QS (2023) the only universities located in the Balkans that made it into the top 250 list were the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece (51-100) and the University of Belgrade, Serbia (201-240). At the same time, the top ten universities for archaeology were all but one (Leiden, the Netherlands) North American and British institutions with the top three being Cambridge, Oxford and UCL. Similar to this, the Times Higher Education (2022) ranks the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece between 301-400, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece at 401-500, the University of Belgrade, Serbia at 501-600, and the University of Zagreb, Croatia at 601+. Once again, the top ten spots are taken by North American and British institutions this time with no exception till the thirteenth position which is occupied by the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany.

The problems with those rankings and the arbitrary nature of the evaluation criteria have been thoroughly discussed elsewhere (Ribeiro & Giamakis 2023). At this point it will suffice to stress the fact that Balkan universities score so low in lists created based on criteria conceived elsewhere does not reflect the quality of work produced in these universities. Given that the evaluation criteria are closely associated with access to resources it is perhaps unsurprising that the universities that top these lists are primarily North American and British ones. Contrary to most Balkan countries where higher education is free (Brajković 2016), these institutions support themselves through hefty fees due to the adoption of a neo-liberal model of organisation (Moshenska 2021). An obvious correlation can be suggested here – students who can afford to attend those universities are upper and middle class and can participate in summer schools, international conferences and excavations therefore further enhancing their inherited economic and social capital. In contrast to that, given that education in the Balkans is free the student body could afford to come from a more diverse socio-economic background. Students there are however more limited in their career developing choices as there are socio-economical limitations in regards to both their personal and institutional circumstances.

Nowhere else are these institutional limitations so evident than from publishing (Heath-Stout 2020). As discussed elsewhere, open access publishing is a great way to increase your visibility through multiple outputs and attract more funding to your projects (Ribeiro & Giamakis 2023: 11). Yet, the unreasonably high costs traditionally associated with open access schemes are contributing to the perpetuation of gatekeeping. For example, the cost of an open access article in the Journal of Archaeological Science is $3,920, while in the Journal of Archaeological Research $2,890. Researchers based in Balkan universities are therefore facing a significant barrier to publishing in those journals not due to the quality of their work but due to the financial resources available to them which are significantly lesser compared to their counterparts based in North America and Western Europe.

Moreover, it is not just the financial limitations that researchers from the Balkans have to overcome but also language barriers, and status and affiliation biases. A recent study focusing on the American Journal of Archaeology revealed that the majority (56%) of authors were nationals of the United States (154), followed by the United Kingdom (32), Greece and Canada (tied at 17), Italy (12), and Australia (11), making Greece the only Balkan country represented in this list (Heath-Stout et al. 2023: 157). All of these metrics, especially in regards to the so-called 'high' impact journals, are usually drawn for journals based in the English speaking world based on criteria of dubious quality and consistency. For instance, in the Scimago Journal and country rank (2022) in the field of archaeology, the highest ranked journal is Radiocarbon. On the same ranking the European Journal of Archaeology occupies the thirtieth position. Does this really mean that Radiocarbon's impact and prestige are that much higher than the European Journal of Archaeology's? What about the fact that eight out of the top ten journals are focused on archaeological science or that the only Balkan-based journal (Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry - Greece) occupies the forty-third position in the same table? How feasible really is for a researcher based in a Balkan country where financial resources and infrastructure are both limited to publish their paper in one of those 'high' impact journals especially the ones focused on archaeological science? Of course, for a selected few, academia might seem a truly meritocratic place because one is usually surrounded by peers of a similar background. Yet, the truth is that meritocracy in academia is a myth that favours specific parts of the society in specific parts of the world (Sandel 2021; Shott 2022; Ribeiro & Giamakis 2023) with the Balkan countries definitely not among those.

The peculiar case of a century-old chasm in 'Greek' Archaeology

In a much-publicised (and heated) debate in the Greek parliament going as far back as in 1976, the then conservative prime minister Konstantinos Karamanlis argued that 'Greece belongs to the West', only for the leader of the opposition and Greece's newly established centre-left party Andreas Papandreou to reply to him that 'Greece belongs to the Greeks' (I Avgi 1 Mar 2022). This decades-old debate (Herzfeld 1982; Zacharia 2008; Calotychos 2013; Steiris et al. 2016) is constantly lurking in the background in the Greek political scene, and every so often an incident will once again bring it back to life.

In relation to archaeology, it is often argued that Greek archaeology as practised in the Western World is primarily a product of western modernism (Shanks 1996; Hamilakis 2007; 2008; 2013). Greek antiquity, and by consequence archaeology, found significant support in the intellectual salons of nineteenth century Europe while it still largely remains a child of its time. Especially after the Greek War of independence and following the rise of the intellectual movement of Philhellenism, Greek antiquity was increasingly perceived as the foundation stone of nineteenth century Europe (Voutsaki & Cartledge 2017; Harloe et al. 2018). Soon after this, the excavations by Heinrich Schliemann and Arthur Evans further increased the grandeur of Greek Antiquity as evidenced by the archaeological remains. The material evidence significantly strengthened the centrality of Greek antiquity in the European collective consciousness. 'Greek' Archaeology therefore gradually came to be seen as an integral part of 'European' Archaeology in the same way that Greece came to be seen as an integral part of Europe. This is something that is still being

capitalised by Greece as it is telling that the country has been awarded 1.7 billion euros though Horizon 2020, while at same time the other two Balkan countries participating in the programme, Croatia and Bulgaria only received 138 and 161 millions respectively (European Commission - Funding and Tender Opportunities 2023). Yet, what is fascinating is that despite this somewhat central position of Greece within the European social imagination, the divide between 'European' and 'Balkan' Archaeology as described above is reflected in the microcosm of 'Greek' Archaeology itself.

More specifically, discussions featuring 'Greek' Archaeology are usually centred around southern Greece, while the northern part of the country typically consisted of Greek Epirus, Greek Macedonia and Greek Thrace is frequently absent from those. These regions are often either completely omitted, or only briefly discussed in archaeological syntheses contributing to the perpetuation of the perception of these areas as backward ones (Coldstream 1977 [2004]; Osborne 1996 [2009]; Lemos 2003; Knodell 2021). Northern Greece is therefore typically treated as an area peripheral to the ancient Greek world, both within archaeology but also in politics. In relation to ancient Macedonia in particular, the fact that for quite some time Philip II and Alexander III were perceived in very negative terms as the 'barbarians' who ended democracy in the Classical World certainly casted a shadow over the historiography of the region (Kotsakis 1998; Xydopoulos 2006: 31–46; Hamilakis 2007). Moreover, one could further attribute this exclusion of northern Greece from mainstream archaeological narratives to the political circumstances under which these regions, conventionally named the 'New Lands', were unified within the Greek Kingdom following a series of successive wars starting with the Balkans Wars of 1912–1913. With the exception of the Macedonian Front of 1915–1918 (Stefani et al. 2014; Shapland & Stefani 2017), these areas, for reasons not necessarily related to archaeology, were only excavated to a very limited degree up until the 1950s (Kotsakis 2017). It is precisely because of this seeming lack of sites comparable to those at Mycenae, Olympia or Delphi that Northern Greece remained largely underexplored and therefore absent from grand archaeological narratives. The influence of archaeological sites over the socio-political circumstances is further exemplified in the case of Crete which was also unified with Greece around the same time as the northern parts of the country in 1913. Yet, what is worth noting here is that Crete was never considered a somewhat backward region in the same way that northern Greece and Greek Macedonia in particular were, nor was it excluded from the main archaeological discourse. This recognition can largely be attributed to the excavations by Arthur Evans which predated the events of 1913 and made the site widely known.

Eventually all these socio-political disparities led to the creation of a regional chasm between southern and northern Greece. Southern Greece is usually perceived as the cornerstone of 'Greek' Archaeology and consequently inherently 'European'. Unfortunately, this perception led to the adoption of a 'purist' approach to antiquities which tried to eradicate its Ottoman monuments especially in Athens (Hamilakis & Yalouri 1999; Giannakopoulou 2015). In contrast to that, northern Greece is seen as a peripheral region to the core of Greek Antiquity, a region somewhat backward, which belongs to the Balkans. It is worth noting that despite the recent turn to the region's Ottoman past (Kolovos & Vionis 2019; Moudopoulos-Athanasiou 2020; 2022), these narratives have provoked a sense of almost resistance led by Greek authorities and certain

archaeologists typically based in Greece, who in certain instances approach the area as one which has to prove its 'Greekness' through its material culture to fend off any claims against this (e.g. Despoini 2009; Kottaridi 2014; 2016; cf. Gimatzidis 2018a; 2018b; Gori et al. 2017). The fact that this chasm was created and is still sustained by the complicated relationship between archaeology and politics is further evidenced by its perpetuation through primarily two channels. The first one is the way foreign archaeological schools operate within Greece, while the second is the way in which the Greek state manages archaeological projects in the northern part of the country.

Foreign schools and northern Greece as terra incognita

Foreign archaeological institutions are still primarily operating in southern Greece despite the fact that the recent excavations from at least the past three decades in northern Greece have uncovered an unprecedented breadth of archaeological discoveries. Therefore they, perhaps unconsciously, reproduce the same kind of narratives and ideas that were prevalent in the intellectual salons of 19th century Europe in regards to what can be classified as 'Greek' Archaeology, and consequently act as the foundation stone for Europe. Data drawn from the websites of the four major archaeological schools in Greece, the British School at Athens (BSA), the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCA), the École française d'Athènes (EFA) and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Athen (DAI Athen) further showcase their preference towards projects in southern Greece. It is telling that only one of the nine recent projects funded by the BSA took place in northern Greece in Olynthos (British School at Athens - Research 2023), while only two out of the eighteen total projects organised by ASCA were in roughly the same region in Molyvoti, Thrace and on the island of Samothrace (American School of Classical Studies at Athens - Affiliated Projects 2023). EFA-sponsored excavations seem a little more evenly spread out as four of the seven projects are located in the north part of the country (Thasos, Philippoi, Dikili-Tash, Terpni) (École Française D'athènes - Sites De Fouilles 2023). In contrast to that, the DAI has no active projects in Northern Greece even though it is currently funding at least seven excavations in Greece (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut - Projekte 2023). Admittedly, the fact that the number of permits that each foreign school can receive for fieldwork is limited to three permits for independent projects and another three for collaborations with the Greek Archaeological Service hinders their capacity in regards to the number of active projects (Law No 3028/2002). However, their fascination and insistence with specific parts of the country is far from incidental. All these schools have long been associated with specific sites in southern Greece ever since their establishment in the nineteenth century. The BSA are still actively involved in Knossos and generally in Crete, ASCA in the Athenian Agora, EFA in Delphoi and Delos, and DAI in Olympia and Kerameikos. Yet, in some instances as for example in the case of the Athenian Agora, the circumstances under which permits were given could at the very least be characterised as dubious (Hamilakis 2013). Despite that, it is telling that these close links which were the outcome of certain political circumstances evident in the newly founded kingdom of Greece in the nineteenth century combined with ideas on what could be identified as 'ancient Greece' cultivated in the European intellectual salons, are still present. The foreign schools are still actively engaged

in these locations, essentially continuing a centuries-old tradition associating themselves with certain prestige-bearing locations found in southern Greece. Of course, this is not to say that foreign schools and the allure of the well-known sites in southern Greece are the ones to blame for the absence of archaeological projects associated with them in northern Greece. The treatment of this part of the country almost as a *terra incognita* from the foreign institutes is only one side of the coin, with the other one being its treatment as a contested territory by the Greek state, a region which has to re-affirm its 'Greekness' at any given opportunity.

State and archaeology in northern Greece

As already discussed above, most of the archaeological syntheses on ancient Greece exclude territories such as Northern Greece, placing them on the periphery of the ancient Greek world (Coldstream 1977 [2003]; Osborne 1996 [2009]). When they do refer to these areas they only do so briefly, without going into much detail about either the sites or the archaeological material discovered there (Whitley 2001; Lemos 2003; Hall 2007 [2014]). Of course, archaeological reasons do exist behind this tendency as historical ones do too. Most of these syntheses typically start with the Mycenaean civilisation, then proceed to the so-called Dark Ages, and from then to the tripartite distinction between Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic, all of them placed within certain centuries. Given the fact that Greek Macedonia does not follow the exact same chronological development (Gimatzidis 2020; 2022; Gimatzidis & Weninger 2020), the area is typically viewed as a backward one. This archaeology-based misconception which is also tied to the current socio-political circumstances prevalent in the area is of course nothing new. What is interesting here is the way the Greek state has managed this situation and communicated with the wider public though the media. The most high-profile archaeological news, including discoveries, usually attracts a lot of media attention while politicians, particularly conservative ones, frequently take advantage of this in order to promote their political agendas. The area is still treated by the state as an in-between territory that needs to prove its 'Greekness' to the outside world, a narrative which in turn unavoidably affects the archaeological narratives and reinforces already present stereotypes (Sakellariadi 2021: 56). The significance of the archaeological discoveries and their close association with the political scene is evidenced by the prime ministers' visits to them. The most well-known example is of course the case of Amphipoli which attracted the world's interest in 2012-2014 (Christidis 2014). This is not the place for an in-depth analysis of the excavations and the circumstances under which this was carried out (Hamilakis 2016; Plantzos 2017; Giamakis 2022). What is of relevance here is the phrases that the then prime minister Antonis Samaras used to describe the discovery to the Greek public. During his visit to the excavation in August 2014, he exclaimed that the "*land of our Macedonia continues to move us and impress us*" while he proceeded by saying that this discovery, which is described as a "*unique treasure*", "*weaves a unique mosaic of our Greek history, for which all Greek should be proud*" (Proto Thema 12 Aug 2014). A month later, at the annual Thessaloniki International Fair, he further mentioned that the excavations at the Kasta tumulus at Amphipolis, provide "*yet another confirmation of the Greek identity of our Macedonia*". He further expanded by accusing the Republic of North Macedonia that "*at the same time that some people are building modern*

folly statues and to appropriate our history, ancient Macedonians and the Macedonian land themselves are speaking out" (I Efimerida 6 Sep 2014).

Following the Prespa Agreement in 2018, the bilateral treaty between Greece and North Macedonia relationships between the two countries were supposedly smoothened. Yet, nationalistic overtones in public speeches did not completely disappear from the public sphere. A recent case in point is the new museum at Aegae, the first capital of the ancient Macedonian kingdom which was officially opened in 2022 by the current Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis. While it is not uncommon for politicians to open such institutions, his presence there was of rather symbolic value as was his opening speech. The Prime minister stated that "*the burials at Vergina are of artistic, historical but above all national importance*" while continuing by encouraging all of the Greeks to visit them in order to feel proud and see the "*unity of the Greek civilisation*". He later continued his speech by emphasising that further research in the wider area is much needed in order to substantiate the continuation of the ancient values through Christianity, implying the strong and uninterrupted continuation of Hellenism throughout the ages (Prime Minister's Office 19 Dec 2022).

Beyond dichotomies OR against the chasm itself

What this paper has shown so far is that 'European' and 'Balkan' archaeology are usually seen as polar opposites rather than closely intertwined terms, and that this chasm is also reflected in Greece, a country frequently torn between its geopolitical position and its cultural capital. Naturally this situation is reflected in archaeology, deeply influencing its practices and approaches, given its character as an inherently political discipline. Different theoretical frameworks, access to funding and publishing schemes, the work of the foreign archaeological schools and the role of the state in communicating archaeological research to the wider public, are all enmeshed in the same system in which various types of archaeologies emerge (Sakellariadi 2008; 2011). It would be naïve to assume that there are easy solutions to complicated situations in which archaeology is but a mere constituting factor among many others. Yet, if archaeology is really sincere about diversifying its practices and tackling its endemic inequalities, then it is worth trying to move beyond labels and dichotomies.

That is of course not to say that there is something inherently wrong with labels, categorisation and classification. Labels can be useful in helping us better understand the material we are studying, but more often than not they are deeply embedded in contexts carrying a particular ideological load. Unfortunately, despite Trigger's (1984) cautious warnings against taking labels too literally, archaeologists are still typically keen to put theories, techniques, and the material itself into tight little boxes. Therefore, labels such as 'European', 'Balkan', 'Classical' have certain connotations based on the contexts in which they first emerged. The question here should not be how to get rid of those labels or to change the context in which they emerged but rather on influencing the current narratives around them. In other words, we should stop reproducing contexts that perpetuate the ideological load that these terms carry. Different steps could be taken at different levels if archaeology is really to diversify its practices and ultimately have a viable future in an increasingly neo-liberal and technocratic world.

The first step would be to encourage truly meaningful collaborations between foreign institutions and Balkan-based ones, especially in terms of field projects. Taking the example of Greece as described above, most of the foreign excavations typically consisted of foreign participants. If local archaeologists did take part in those, this was in limited numbers. This is harmful to both the foreign institutes and the Balkan-based ones (Ribeiro & Giamakis 2023). Foreign archaeologists miss out on the chance to experience a different kind of archaeology, therefore expanding their knowledge of how the discipline is perceived and subsequently practised in the country in which they are working. Having this context will help them move beyond stereotypes such as 'backwardness' while greatly enhancing their understanding of the people currently residing in the area in which they are excavating. As for local archaeologists, these too miss out on the opportunities to receive training on the latest techniques or familiarise themselves with the latest theories, thus excluding them from the international academic debates.

This is of course not to say that the current situation is what it used to be 20 or 30 years ago or that the number of collaborative projects has not increased in the last 10 years. No one denies that change has been happening. However, the most pertinent question here is for whom have things really changed over this past decade. As Heath-Stout and Hannigan (2020) have shown, due to the hefty fees that these projects typically have, especially for their field schools, a large number of students are being excluded from these. The only way for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in these field schools is to either pay the participation fee which is frequently estimated at around a few thousands of euros or by knowing the 'right' people (Ribeiro & Giamakis 2023). It follows that the point here is not to create an oversimplified chasm between foreign archaeologists using the latest developments in the field and local archaeologists who simply cannot afford these techniques but rather to adopt a more ethical approach. However, archaeologists should always be mindful of the fact that familiarisation does not automatically equate to adoption. While local archaeologists should be given the chance to familiarise themselves with the latest techniques, this has to be done in a respectful manner. Local practices might still be preferable in local contexts for multiple reasons (Palavestra & Babić 2016). Mutually respectful interactions, hybridity and flexibility should be at the core of this approach for new narratives to emerge.

To what extent the latest techniques could be applied to the Balkans is a matter of context that might differ between sites and regions (Palavestra & Babić 2016). Regardless of that, familiarisation with new techniques could potentially increase the possibilities of securing funding for projects proposed by archaeologists working in the Balkans. As already discussed above, Balkan countries are receiving a tiny fraction of European funding. One of the possible contributing factors in this is that their proposals might often be considered as less attractive, especially when these do not always involve the latest techniques or theories coming out of, primarily, West Europe and North America, a movement aptly named the Third Science Revolution (Kristiansen 2014; Ribeiro 2019). Familiarisation with these theoretical and methodological frameworks, with adjustment and adoption to an extent suitable to the material and archaeological contexts found in the Balkans, could hopefully contribute to 'bridging' the gap between the funding received by Balkan countries and the rest of Europe.

This is of course not to suggest that Balkan countries need to fully adopt theories and technologies conceived in completely different environments, but rather to suggest a two-way constant dialectic process between archaeological practice in Balkans and the rest of Europe. Balkan archaeologies will always have a region-specific character. There is nothing inherently wrong with that, in the same way that Iberian or Scandinavian archaeology will always have a distinct character too. Yet, what these archaeologies do not have is the prerogative connotation of backwardness usually associated with the Balkans. Familiarisation with the latest advancements in the field outside of Balkan therefore does not mean that 'Balkan' archaeologies should be practised in the exact same way as other archaeologies. Which brings us to the next step – multivocality (Gimatzidis 2018a).

The need for immediate results based on hard evidence is increasingly becoming commonplace in a neo-liberal world. Yet, a discipline as varied as archaeology, a methodological and theoretical meeting point of hard science, humanities, and social sciences, should embrace its inherently dialectic nature. Multivocality stemming from different origins, approaches and interpretations should be accepted as a main constituent of our discipline. It is under this light that the differences between Europe and the Balkans should be understood. While 'European' archaeology might be strongly influenced by colonialism, 'Balkan' archaeology largely emerged in a nationalistic environment (Trigger 1989 [2006]; Gosden 2005; Hamilakis 2007; Voutsaki & Cartledge 2017; Giamakis 2022). Balkan nations started gaining their independence mainly from the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Many of them were subjugated by the Ottomans for nearly four centuries. Therefore, one of the main aims of archaeology as practised within these newly established states was to provide evidence of a continuation of each given nation throughout the ages (Hamilakis 2007; Damaskos & Plantzos 2008; Tziovas 2014; Novaković 2021).

No state archaeology is innocent of this. Slovenes were linking themselves to Venetians and Etruscans, Albanians and Bosnians to Illyrians, Serbs to the neolithic Vinča, while Croats were searching for evidence of their supposedly Iranian origin. The common denominator between all of these is the fact that all of these populations were seeking to link themselves to pre-Slavic peoples in order to trace back their origin during antiquity and not just in medieval times, when Slavs came into the region (Novaković 2021: 301). Greece, being in a favourable position given its ancient monuments, was among the first Balkan nations to suggest this diachronic continuation of the nation throughout the ages. The monumental work of Konstantinos Paparigopoulos was the first to bring forth a tripartite system of historical periods starting with ancient Greece to the Byzantine Empire and, from there, to modern Greece, therefore implying the unbreakable continuation of the Greek nation through the ages (Hamilakis 2007). This process is not just a historical reality but rather a multifaceted fact which influences the way archaeology is being practised, history is being taught, and bilateral relationships between nations are formed (Papakosta 2017; Skoulariki 2020; Sakellariadi 2021). One has to look no further than the political scene within the Republic of North Macedonia to see similarities between this and the phenomena mentioned here in regards to the rest of the Balkans states (Gori 2017).

Of course, all of this is not to say that since the origins are different, one should be content with the way 'Balkan' archaeology is currently being practised. As it has been noted,

nationalism, as primarily expressed through cultural historical approaches, is still the primary theoretical model dominating 'Balkan' archaeology (Maran 2017; Tsirtsoni 2017; Gori 2017; 2018; Gavranović 2018; Gimatzidis 2018a). Therefore, no-one denies that 'Balkan' archaeology is in dire need of moving beyond nationalism, but no more than 'European' archaeology needs to go through a more rigorous decolonisation process. Both have plenty of room for improvements and changes in their narratives owing to the particular historical circumstances in which they were conceived. It was the historical circumstances behind the conception of 'European' and 'Balkan' archaeologies that affected archaeological narratives, museums and heritage management, and the teaching of history, albeit in a different way. This does not mean that one system is inherently inferior or superior to the other, but rather that they are just different with aspects of them overlapping and interacting with one another. Overcoming this misconception, especially the one where 'European' archaeology is viewed as the pinnacle of the discipline, would be truly instrumental if archaeologists are really interested in diversifying their field (Marín-Aguilera 2021).

As for the reflection of the chasm in the microcosm that is Greece, this can only be abated once wider processes towards eradicating existing inequalities are in place. In order for archaeological sites in northern Greece to reach their full potential, their Balkan connotations should not be perceived nor treated as a drawback but as a byproduct of the historical processes evident in the region throughout history. Yet, this can only happen when the term 'Balkan' will itself stop being used in a pejorative way. Additionally, bilateral diplomatic relationships between Greece and its northern neighbours, especially the Republic of North Macedonia, will be crucial in the development and management of archaeological sites in the north part of the country. The recently signed Prespa Agreement between the two countries was conceived as a step towards this direction but has unfortunately also contributed towards political polarisation in both countries (Skoulariki 2020; Heraclides 2021). Given the firm grip that politics has over archaeology, the political situation is one that has to be smoothed out before state archaeology in Greece makes any significant effort to change the current narratives regarding northern Greece. Only then can the latter finally stop being treated as a contested region that has to prove its 'Greekness'.

Granted, significant steps towards an 'internalisation' of the research currently carried out in the region have been made, as the participants' background in this year's annual meeting for the archaeological work in Greek Macedonia and Thrace so lucidly demonstrated. According to the official programme (AEMTH 2023), from the 68 number of papers presented there, 11 had contributions from foreign researchers, an ever-increasing number especially over the past decade. However, what is telling is that, with the exception of the American excavation at Samothrace and the Canadian one in Argilos, none of the remaining projects were officially under the auspices of any of the foreign archaeological institutions in Greece. Consequently, even though individual researchers have recognised the significance of the area for the discipline, archaeological institutions are reluctant to truly move beyond their founding ideas regarding the 'splendour' of Classical Greece. It therefore seems that the shadow of the context in which archaeology was perceived as a discipline in the nineteenth century still lies heavily – either consciously or unconsciously – on current archaeological thinking.

Conclusions

'European', 'Balkan' and 'Greek' archaeolog(ies)y are all labels created within specific historical contexts. Given that each of these terms carried a certain ideological load, our responsibility should be to first recognise and subsequently face this by empowering traditionally sidelined groups of people involved in them. If archaeology is really sincere regarding its declarations on equality and diversity, then a first step towards this should be to tackle these phenomena still present within its practices. As long as labels provide us with useful tools to categorise, analyse, and better understand the archaeological material, their use is beneficial to the discipline. However, the moment people start using them to compile official or unofficial rankings, they are perpetuating stereotypical notions associated with the regions linked to these terms. A reconsideration of their context is therefore much needed if the discipline is to move beyond past divides. As this paper has hopefully shown, the reproduction of stereotypical notions and relationships between different regional archaeologies is not only harmful to the discipline, but it also has wider implications given that archaeology is intrinsically linked to politics. Notions such as the continuous upwards trajectory of archaeological theory and science, the 'backwardness' of the Balkans, and the regional divide in 'Greek' archaeology, are all more than just some abstract theoretical constructs as their constant and multilevel reproduction leads to the emergence of phenomena such as funding politics. While there are no easy solutions to these issues, identifying, addressing, and ultimately tackling those issues whilst promoting a culture of multivocality would be of paramount importance in bridging the various gaps that are still shaping the discipline's methods and practices.

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