Review of Greenberg R. & Hamilakis Y., *Archaeology, Nation, and Race: Confronting the Past, Decolonizing the Future in Greece and Israel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022 - DOI: 10.1017/9781009160247

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When this book was published, I had high expectations, first because I am a big fan of the scientific production of one of the two authors, who has inspired and deeply influenced my research on similar topics. Secondly, because I have a strong interest in the two countries subject of this work, Greece and Israel, mainly for professional, but also for personal reasons. Hellenism and Judaism are central in the modernist European project, and the comparative perspective adopted by the authors, is illuminating many key cultural aspects of our society. When I started reading, however, I was somehow sceptical about the choice of treating with a dialogue-comparative structure such themes. I feared that the full articulation of complex concepts like nationalism, colonialism, the intersection or archaeology and race, could have been mortified by such a choice. I had to completely change my mind, because the dialogue between R. Greenberg and Y. Hamilakis adds liveliness and strength to these difficult topics while at the same time it lightens the reading. This was also the aim of the authors, that chose the dialogic structure to be able to construct an autonomous space 'in-between' that could represent fertile ground for further discussions on these and related topics (p. xiv). The book stems from a seminar that the two authors taught jointly at Brown University in spring 2020 and discusses national identities and crypto-colonialism at the intersection between archaeological practice and Hellenism and Judaism. In *Chapter 1. Introduction* (pp. 1–7) the authors present a brief intellectual biography that helps the readers to understand the background of both scholars and the path that has led them to deal with the topics they address in the book. I am convinced that this kind of assessment should be done by all archaeologists at least once during their archaeological life. Even if it seems irrelevant, letting others (and yourself) know one's intellectual background serves to unravel the experiences that led us to choose one approach over another, or a particular research topic, and to be aware of the way we have chosen to carry out our profession. The book proceeds with a discussion on the colonial origins of archaeology in Israel and Greece (*Chapter 2. The Colonial Origins of National Archaeologies*, pp. 8–41), which results in an interesting dialogue on the nineteenth century background of the discipline in the two states, and the shared common features of integration of archaeology into statist project in both countries. Interesting is

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the reflection on the intersection of colonialism and nationalism at the origin of Greek and Israeli nationhood, the archaeologization of the land. This chapter, in my opinion could have been slightly more thorough in the part discussing Israel. *Chapter 3. Archaeology in the Crypto-Colony* (pp. 42–74) opens addressing the concept of crypto-colony by the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (p. 43), and the contradiction between political independence accompanied by massive economic dependency. Within this discussion I found extremely interesting the argumentations on the role of foreign schools and foreign missions and the relationship to local archaeologists. Described as institutions that "*embody the impact of the Classical legacy and its glorification*", they also "*recall, materialize and sustain the colonial legacy of archaeology in Greece, as well as the crypto-colonial status of the county as a whole*" (p. 53). This western paternalism sees "*local archaeologists (Greek, Israeli or otherwise)*" as "*unable to transcend their locality, their passionate attachments, or their patriotism, to become rational and objective observers*" (p. 54). I take up the authors' invitation by enriching this review with observation that can be food for thoughts to investigate another crypto-colonial area, the Balkans, a liminal zone between the European Union and the yet untamed 'new lands' born out of the 1990s revolutions and conflicts, which fit into Herzfeld's definition (buffer state, massive dependence, aggressive nationalism) (p. 58). As an archaeologist working in the Balkans, it happened to me countless times to be looked upon with astonishment for not having any kind of Albanian roots despite working there for almost two decades. It was obvious to more than one foreign colleague that as a Balkan archaeologist I must necessarily have Albanian origins to specialize in such part of the world. I doubt that the same question would have been asked to the many non-Greek archaeologists working in Greece. This attitude reflects the perception of Aegean archaeology as a superior and naturally worthy scholarly subject, in comparison to other Balkan archaeologies. During a workshop in Vienna focusing on the Balkans I presented a provocative talk on the relationship between Balkan and Greek archaeologies in the interpretation of Late Bronze Age networks, and the intersection with German philhellenism (Gori and Ivanova 2017). Following a heated discussion, I was told by a non-Balkan colleague working at a German institution that since I did not come from the Balkans, I could not allow myself to openly criticize the theoretical approach used by my other Balkan colleagues. This remark betrayed a paternalistic approach as local Balkan archaeologists were perceived unable to discuss archaeological theory, an activity which is reserved to Western colleagues. The following *Chapter 4. Archaeology as Purification* (pp. 75–108) points to the purification process in archaeology, involving the cleaning of the sites from any elements that could be considered as disturbing the abstract and idealized archaeological landscape, doesn't matter if these elements are remains belonging to other epochs or humans. An example is Silwan's al-Bustan neighbourhood in Israel, which is related to another idea of purity, the one connected to order and rules. Unlicensed homes had to be demolished to make space for archaeological excavations and their plots confiscated for the benefit of foreigner and tourists and "*restored*" to the ancient pre-Palestinian state (p. 78). I found the process of sacralization of Greece extremely interesting. As Israel, Greece has become a holy land, not only for the sacralization of classical antiquity, but also for the merging of antiquity and Orthodox Christianity (p. 101). The discussion on nation, race and archaeogenetics occupies *Chapter 5. Whitening Greece and Israel. Nation, Race, and Archaeogenetics* (pp. 109–150). Perhaps also due to my scientific interests, this is the chapter that I consider to be one of

the most important and innovative in the book, as this theme is extremely topical and there is a heated debate going on in archaeology, at a methodological-scientific and interpretative level, as well as at a political one. One point that I find interesting is the way in which colonists become indigenous in Palestine, that is by providing a connection to the land based on archaeology (p. 114), and how Israel became at the same time "*indigenous and European through the trope of Judeo-Christianity, which makes the Jews in Israel constituents of Europe while relegating the Palestinians to the status of intruders*" (p. 115). The discussion on blackness and whiteness and the transformation of ethnic and religious diversity is approached through the lenses of national ideas. The whitening of the modern nation in Greece went hand in hand with the whitening of ancient Greece, and it rested on the fertile substratum of the notion of Greek superiority in respect to other nations which was expressed by Winckelmann (p. 126). The whitening of archaeology is an ongoing process that is rooted in the nineteenth century discourses on Greco-Roman sculptures, used to idealize a white superior race (p. 131). Interestingly, while Greece has been appropriated by Europe as vehicle of whiteness and occidentality, the antiquities of Palestine and Syro-Mesopotamia are utilized by Jews of European descent as vehicle for their own oriental indigenity (p. 131). The critic to ancient DNA studies and the reproduction of primordial sociobiological categories based on arbitrary and anachronistic ethnonyms such as Mycenaeans, Minoans Canaanites, etc. (p. 139–140) is addressed in relation to their use to construct a direct connection between the past and the present. Recent scientific publications are also openly criticized for their simplistic reconstruction of past groups dynamics and their impact on present day identity discourses. *Chapter 6. Decolonizing Our Imagination* (pp. 151–179) is a reflection on possible ways to go further and reimagine archaeology as decolonizing action. The decolonization of archaeological practice is regarded as part of the decolonization process of a country as a whole (p. 153). I appreciated the approach of this chapter that is structured in a way that avoids any kind of roadmap or 'to do list' but rather proposes a self-reflection on the issue, discussing their own work within the archaeological practice of Greece and Israel. Interesting is the strategy of archaeological ethnography to counteract the idea of absence: archaeologists encounter things but not people. Archaeological ethnography helps the archaeologist to see and recognize human presence other than the one of dead people (p. 168). It will be difficult to get archaeologists "*to change their concept of themselves, the way they are seen or presented, and the way they are valued in society*" (p. 171), and like the authors I am convinced that this is the only way to decolonize our discipline and imagine how archaeology and archaeologists should be. Archaeology is not about the past, neither is just about the present, it is about multitemporal existence (p. 172). The interest in things ("all *things*") does not lie in the glorious past that they embody, in their antiquity, but in their "*multi-temporality and agency, their sensorial and affective affordances, and their ability to intervene in the present, containing at the same time multiple pasts*" (p. 175). Chapter *7. Conclusion* (pp. 180–183) wraps up the main concepts dealt with in the previous chapter.

I wrote this review while I was working at the Freie Universität Berlin thanks to a scholarship offered by my own institute (ISPC-CNR), and in the same days the Forum Kritische Archaeologie has published a new theme Issue, exactly on *Archaeology, Nation, and Race*. I warmly invite all colleagues who come across this review to read all the seven critical responses to the book. The issue is available at this link:

https://www.kritischearchaeologie.de/en/current_issue.php

References

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