

1 **Has It Always Been Extractive Archaeology?**

Originally used to describe the removal of natural resources particularly for export with minimal processing, 'Extractivism' is the economic model common throughout the Global South (Warnecke-Berger, Ickler 2023), but also appear as an appropriate model to outline patterns of archaeological activities in Cyprus in the second half of nineteenth century and in the transition to the twentieth. The exploitation of antiquities on the island, mainly driven by ideological and economic interests of Western museums and collectors, marked up a radical change in the approach to the ancient history of Cyprus.

Extractive archaeology by its nature triggers processes of competition among different actors at different levels and activates mechanism of accumulation, in a chain where like local diggers supply collectors with antiquities, collectors supply museums with antiquities. In this model the 'collection' becomes the reference unit for a broad phenomenon which virtually has no limit, firmly based on the supply and demand balance. This is capitalism, simply!

Dimensions of collecting and dimensions of collections were dramatically increasing when Luigi Palma di Cesnola arrived in Cyprus as Consul of the United States to the Ottoman Sublime Porta in 1865, side by side with his colleagues in diplomacy and potential pseudo-archaeologists, George Colonna Ceccaldi, Dominic Colnaghi, Luis and Charles de Maricourt.¹ Both the processes of competition and accu-

1 Masson 1993; Yon 2011, 42; Bonato, Emery 2010; Bombardieri 2015.

mulation mentioned above are well visible in the ongoing formation of collection of antiquities since the first years of their exploration (and exploitation) of the island.

Bounia and colleagues recently analysed the contested perceptions of archaeology in modern Cyprus (Stylianou-Lambert, Bounia 2016; Bounia, Nikolaou, Stylianou-Lambert 2021; see also Knapp, Antoniadou 1998), identifying three main actors interacting on common ground, but with only incidentally concomitant ideological perspectives (and interests). The three actors in the field are Cypriots/local diggers, Cypriot intellectuals/antiquities dealers, and colonial rulers/foreign archaeologists, collectors and museums.

While the former appear functional to the action of the latter, providing services and information that constitute the premise of the extractive initiatives in the field, the Cypriot intellectuals/antiquities dealers are credited with the desire to look at the island's antiquities as a basic element in the construction of national identities. To these are owed instances of cultural protectionism and the initiative to create and support institutions of protection and promotion that still exist today on the island.

Members of the Greek-speaking *élite* increasingly acquired a significant financial and cultural weight in Cyprus, thus becoming the most powerful part of the Ottoman merchant class. This growing financial strength could not be translated into equivalent political prerogatives. Thus, in this direction, the intellectual movement of the so-called 'Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment' played a major role in the expansion and the expression of the Greek national ideology (Patinio-tis 2015; Papageorgiou 1997, 56; Tabaki 2003). Early proclaims and political initiatives aiming at the unification of Cyprus and Greece emerge with the onslaught of the Greek Revolution and the creation of the modern Greek State and the first President of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias, called for the union of Cyprus with Greece already in 1828 (Papageorgiou 1997, 56-7). These aspirations remained at a peak during the last years of Ottoman occupation and became the predominant political issue during the entire colonial period.

Following Rüsen's theory on historical consciousness, it might be argued that Cypriot intellectuals/antiquities dealers appear using the past by a traditional mean of identification (Rüsen 2014, 72; see also Bonacchi 2022, 140-6). This way, the past is interpreted for the sake of understanding the present, but even more clearly as a tool for anticipating a desired future. Thus, this interest does not appear neutral or autonomous; on the contrary, it is welded in turn with political and cultural instances that again call into question the action of foreign actors on the island.

With the handover of Cyprus from Ottoman authority under British rule in 1878, Greek Cypriot intellectuals began to use the growing Western interest in the Classical Past as a strong political

tool in the strategy of asserting the island's Hellenic identity (Michael 2005, 24-56; see also Hamilakis, Yalouri 1996) and its long-standing aspirations for *enosis* with Greece. This produced two apparently divergent needs. The first is the need to promote local collections and establish museums on the island where archaeological objects may be exhibited, emphasising this link with Greece and 'educate' the Cypriot audience. In 1882, the Cyprus Museum - Greek in its architecture - with marble imported from Greece for the construction of the entrance *pronaos*, was promoted on the strong initiative of the Greek Cypriot intellectual *élite* (Stanley-Price 2001; Merrillees 2005; Stylianou-Lambert, Bounia 2016, 69-72).² The second parallel need is to encourage foreign expeditions to the island, stimulating the acquisition of collections of Cypriot antiquities by major Western museums, to keep European interest in Cyprus' classical past and Hellenism alive.

The community of Turkish Cypriot intellectuals is also confronted with a similar need and the necessity of constructing the identity of the island, using antiquity as a foundation to justify political demands and cultural claims. The past chosen by this community is, by contrast, the medieval past, linked to the Lusignan dynasty. Likewise the Cyprus Museum and with similar accents, the Musée Lapidaire was founded in Nicosia in 1928 (Bounia, Nikolaou, Stylianou-Lambert 2021, 120; Stylianou-Lambert, Bounia 2016, 69-72).

In parallel, colonial rulers/foreign archaeologists, western collectors and museums developed their extractivist standard in this scenario, with increasing negative effects on the potential of archaeological research (Given 2024). With the events that have shaped the current connotation of archaeology in Cyprus through the twentieth century, it must be noted that the practice and perception of the actors in the field is very similar to that described and proclaimed as early as the nineteenth century. The extractivist model stimulated a paradigm, explicit in practice, involving foreign expeditions to the island. This stimulus has not been unrelated to feeding the logic behind illegal and clandestine digging, which take the form of a parallel channel of supply for private collecting on the island and beyond, in the vast supposedly post- or de-colonial phenomenon.³ As Stylianou-Lambert and Bounia stigmatised, "the first interest in the antiquities

² Interestingly, among the founding members of the Cyprus Museum was Demetrios Pierides, whose collection of antiquities is the earliest core of Pierides family antiquities gallery, currently exhibited in the nation's oldest private museum, the Pierides Museum in Larnaka. Ideological issues have been described behind Demetrios Pierides' legacy and collecting activity in these terms: "he would collect ancient artefacts, thereby preventing their illegal export to Europe and America" (Koudanaris 2002, 1).

³ See a general overview of practices and networks of illicit traffic of cultural goods in Brodie, Yates 2019; as to the specific case for Cyprus see Given 1998; Alphas 2017 and Pilides, McCarthy 2014.

of Cyprus came from looters and treasure-hunters” (Stylianou-Lambert, Bounia 2016, 72), and rather than being just the original sin, this phenomenon requires an evidence-based active engagement.

This is a dynamic picture that still needs in-depth reflection, especially in the search for the deepest roots of this set of interrelated phenomena. The earliest history of Cypriot archaeology in the eighteenth century is a horizon still largely dominated by the interests of antiquarianism and the history of collecting, but it undoubtedly constitutes a fundamental chapter in understanding many of the phenomena we have briefly outlined here.

In this perspective, the following pages are devoted to the analysis of a particular moment of transition that constitutes the genuine genesis of European interest in the Antiquity of Cyprus. A moment in which the evidence takes the tangible form of archaeological objects, losing the more ethereal form of scholarly references. We may investigate this gradual change through the practice of three Italian travellers who stayed on the island at the end of the eighteenth century. Through their stories, we will try to observe the island’s antiquities as they emerged to their attention, what form they might take and what practices they might produce. Attention, forms, and practices that our travellers passed on to those who followed them in the following two centuries.