

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-009-16023-0 — Archaeology, Nation, and Race  
Raphael Greenberg, Yannis Hamilakis  
Frontmatter  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY, NATION, AND RACE

*Archaeology, Nation, and Race* is a must-read book for students of archaeology and adjacent fields. It demonstrates how archaeology and concepts of antiquity have shaped, and have been shaped by, colonialism, race, and nationalism. Structured as a lucid and lively dialogue between two leading scholars, the volume compares modern Greece and modern Israel – two prototypical and influential cases – where archaeology sits at the very heart of the modern national imagination. Exchanging views on the foundational myths, moral economies, and racial prejudices in the field of archaeology and beyond, Raphael Greenberg and Yannis Hamilakis explore topics such as the colonial origins of national archaeologies, the crypto-colonization of the countries and their archaeologies, the role of archaeology as a process of purification, and the racialization and “whitening” of Greece and Israel and their archaeological and material heritage. They conclude with a call for decolonization and the need to forge alliances with subjugated communities and new political movements.

Raphael Greenberg is Professor of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University. He has conducted numerous excavations and published widely on the Bronze and Iron Age Levant and on the social and political contexts of archaeology in Israel/Palestine. His book *The Archaeology of the Bronze Age Levant* won the G. Ernest Wright Award and the Biblical Archaeology Society Publication Award.

Yannis Hamilakis is Joukowsky Family Professor at Brown University where he teaches archaeology and Modern Greek Studies. He has published widely on archaeological theory, politics of the past, decolonization, archaeology and the senses, and the Neolithic and Bronze Age Aegean. His *Nation and Its Ruins* won the Edmund Keeley Book Prize, was shortlisted for the Runciman Prize and has been translated into several languages. His edited book, *The New Nomadic Age*, was among the best books of 2019 as listed on *Artforum*.

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## Advance Praise for *Archaeology, Nation, and Race*

This is one of the most interesting and thought-provoking archaeology books that I have read in a long time. It is truly a meeting of two deep-thinking minds – Yannis Hamilakis musing on Greece and Rafael Greenberg musing on Israel. Universally regarded as two of the most thoughtful, intellectual, and politically active archaeologists working today, both with impeccable credentials, one couldn't ask for two more devoted and opinionated (in a good way) scholars, who don't fear to speak their minds and advocate for the causes that they hold dear.

- Eric H. Cline, *George Washington University*

We get to eavesdrop on two accomplished archeologists as they discuss the high stakes of the interplay of nationalism with notions of antiquity. This comparison of the Israeli and Greek instances is ultimately about the meaning of archeology itself, as a discipline that is no less concerned with the present than it is with the past.

- Katherine Fleming, *New York University*

National archeology stands out as a field in which politics is both uniquely dominant and entirely suppressed. Two top experts offer a frank discussion of archeology's role in the history of nationalism in their respective countries and of its costs. They uncover the various manners in which archeology functions as both a means and an end in struggles of liberation and conquest, which are often driven by spatial imagination and fantasies no less than by material aspirations. A must-read for anyone interested in archeology, in ancient and modern Israel and Greece, and in critical thinking about nationalism. This is a uniquely original contribution to the ever-urgent question: who owns the past?

- Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Tel Aviv University*

These two scholars provide fascinating insight into how and why archaeology has been a critical tool in building two very different nations – Greece and Israel. Using conversation rather than dry exposition, Greenberg and Hamilakis also show that science, no matter how entangled with religion and nationalism, can upset our narrow ideas about history. An essential book for anyone curious about the way we create our past to control the present – and future.

- Andrew Lawler, *Author of Under Jerusalem: The Buried History of the World's Most Contested City*

*Archaeology, Nation, and Race* is a serious pleasure – a smart, wide-ranging, and spirited conversation, not just between two highly knowledgeable and thoughtful interlocutors, but between the Hellenic and Hebraic, local and global, seen and unseen, dead and living. Greenberg and Hamilakis each come steeped in the particulars of the national archaeologies to which they've devoted their lives; both are also deeply open, and committed to challenging themselves and the cultural and political assumptions that surround them. This book has a refreshing urgency about it.

- Adina Hoffman, *Yale University, author of Till We have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City*

Two leading scholars have a fascinating conversation comparing the contribution of archaeology to the mythical constitution, racialization, and crypto-colonialism of Israel and Greece. Shedding new light on the Eurocentric models of Hebraism and Hellenism, they conduct a masterful critique of purification and idealization, and invite us to envision a decolonizing scholarship that forges activist alliances.

- Vassilis Lambropoulos, *University of Michigan*

It may seem paradoxical that it should be archaeologists who unravel the ideological underpinnings of global modernity, but Greenberg and Hamilakis are uniquely qualified to perform this long-overdue task of conceptual excavation. Taking the twin cases of Greek and Israeli nationalism – and emphasizing their sometimes unexpected and even shocking commonalities – they deploy a disarmingly dialogical format to expose the intersections of race, antiquity, territoriality, and cultural hegemony in a formulation that the world has, for far too long, largely taken as the natural order of things.

- Michael Herzfeld, *Harvard University, author of Subversive Archaism: Troubling Traditionalists and the Politics of National Heritage*

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# Archaeology, Nation, and Race

Confronting the Past, Decolonizing the  
Future in Greece and Israel

**RAPHAEL GREENBERG**

Tel Aviv University

**YANNIS HAMILAKIS**

Brown University



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*To Giorgos Hamilakis (1933–2021), an archaeophile*  
*To Moshe Greenberg (1928–2010), rodef shalom*

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## Preface

This dialogic encounter is the by-product of a seminar that we taught jointly at Brown University in the spring of 2020 titled “Archaeology, Materiality, and National Imagination in Israel and Greece.” At the time, we sensed that such comparative endeavors, in teaching and research, are rare, and that there was a lot to be gained from a side-by-side examination, beyond what we had each done on our own. After concluding the course and reading our students’ papers and online feedback, we engaged in a series of lockdown-induced video discussions in which we summed up what we had learned in preparing this course, what the class had raised in discussions, and what new insights had emerged. As the subject has never received sustained attention, we thought that these insights would be of interest to students of nationalism, archaeology, and the politics of the past, both in the countries we study and beyond them. We have, therefore, edited our discussion, extended our research of certain topics, expanded on a few salient points, and added references, leaving the dialogic structure intact to highlight our hope that this is the beginning of a discussion rather than its conclusion.

Our ambition is to go beyond well-rehearsed schemes of archaeology and nationalization, and provoke each other to explore themes that are rarely explored and brought into the foreground, partly because they are too difficult or because they are too sensitive or even explosive, epistemically and politically. We therefore begin, after presenting our individual paths to a critical archaeological stance in Chapter 1, by exploring the relation between the origins

of archaeology and emerging Hellenic and Zionist nationalisms in Chapter 2, extending the discussion to the enduring impact of imperial structures in 20th-century national archaeologies and to the long history of Jewish–Hellenic entanglement, especially with respect to the idealized individual and national body. In Chapter 3 we discuss the important – but rarely acknowledged – role of archaeology in the constitution of Greece and Israel as contemporary crypto-colonized states that serve as buffer zones for the West and as staging-grounds for assertions of Western cultural values. In Chapter 4 we explore the concept of purity and the processes of purification in their archaeological as well as broader national and religious expressions. Chapter 5 examines the inherently racialized premises of colonial–national modernity and recent ancient DNA studies, juxtaposing them with the contradictions and fluidity inherent in “Greek” and “Israeli” identities. In Chapter 6 we reflect on archaeology as decolonizing action: What is it in archaeology itself – in its origins, in its methods, in the way archaeologists think and act – that must be reimagined and redesigned? Our short conclusion, Chapter 7, sums up the broader themes that emerged throughout this exploration and ends on an optimistic note, celebrating the revolutionary potential of matter, its ability to endure, to surprise us, to resist.

The value of this dialogic endeavor lies not only in the juxtaposition and comparative exploration of two national archaeological projects, something which has never been attempted previously, but also in its constitution of a space “in-between,” a space that has gained its individual autonomy beyond our own respective preoccupations, a fertile terrain and a field from which several “lines of flight” (to recall Deleuze) could be attempted: grounded in decades of research and reflection, we offer a wide range of thoughts, refracted through the contemporary moment. We hope that what has emerged in this in-between space, in this autonomous territory, will be of interest well beyond archaeology and anthropology more broadly, and the specific national contexts. We also hope that these thoughts and ideas will find their own flight paths, to re-emerge in other discussions and projects in the years to come.

## Preface

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We thank the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World, the Center for Middle East Studies, the Program in Modern Greek Studies, and the Program in Early Cultures at Brown University which supported our course, Sam Kimball, who transcribed the original dialogue, and the students of our seminar for their passion, enthusiasm, and dedication: Sara Al-Rabiah, Ana González San Martín, Jacob Leiken, Jinette Jimenez, Sam Kimball, Rebecca Mandelbaum, John Metz, Kelley Tackett, Sunshine Wu, Parker Zane. Three anonymous referees provided very useful feedback and advice, and a number of friends and colleagues read and commented on earlier versions, showing us what care, love, and attention mean when dealing with one's ideas and writing: Michal Aviad, Hannah Bernick, Vangelis Calotychos, Maria Choleva, Michael Herzfeld, Vassilis Lambropoulos, Eva Mol, Felipe Rojas, Gideon Solimani. An invitation by the British School at Athens to give a seminar on March 8, 2021, came at the right time offering us encouragement and further food for thought: we are grateful to the many hundreds who attended, to its director, John Bennet, for the invitation, and to its staff for facilitating the event. Our editor at Cambridge University Press, Beatrice Rehl, embraced this project enthusiastically from the beginning and shepherded it into production with care and professionalism. We are thankful to various archives and publishers who gave permission to reproduce illustrations and to various friends who facilitated the whole process: Katerina Athanasaki, Tawfiq Da'adli, Jodi Magness, Yannis Nikolopoulos, Donald Rallis, Konstantinos Thanasakis, Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan. Finally, Yannis Hamilakis would like to thank Avgoustinos and Spyros at the bookshop "To Lemoni" in Athens who, in the middle of a long lockdown and with the libraries closed, worked hard to find every book he requested. It proved once again how valuable, indeed indispensable, small independent bookshops are . . .

*Jerusalem and Sitia (Crete), August 2021*