

Postcards from the Edge of Time: Archaeology, Photography, Archaeological Ethnography (A Photo-Essay)

YANNIS HAMILAKIS, ARIS ANAGNOSTOPOULOS

University of Southampton, UK

FOTIS IFANTIDIS

University of Thessaloniki, Greece

In this photo-essay we present and discuss an experiment with digital photography as part of our archaeological ethnography within the Kalaureia Research Programme, on the island of Poros, Greece. We contextualize this attempt by reviewing, briefly but critically, the collateral development of photography and modernist archaeology, and the links between photography and anthropology, especially with regard to the field of visual anthropology. Our contention is that at the core of the uses of photographs made by both disciplines is the assumption that photographs are faithful, disembodied representations of reality. We instead discuss photographs, including digital photographs, as material artefacts that work by evocation rather than representation, and as material memories of the things they have witnessed; as such they are multi-sensorially experienced. While in archaeology photographs are seen as either official records or informal snapshots, we offer instead a third kind of photographic production, which occupies the space between artwork and ethnographic commentary or intervention. It is our contention that it is within the emerging field of archaeological ethnography that such interventions acquire their full poignancy and potential, and are protected from the risk of colonial objectification.

KEYWORDS Photography, Archaeology, Archaeological ethnography, Social anthropology, Senses, Materiality, Kalaureia, Greece

Introduction

In one of Aris's visits to a neighbour of the sanctuary of Poseidon, a ship mechanic by trade, the latter pulled out a hefty tome on horses. It was an 'Encyclopaedia of

Horses' published by DK publishers in Britain. Aris thought he meant to demonstrate his passion for horses, which was already known to him. 'No,' he insisted, 'I bought this book in one of my trips abroad, because I love horses. But it kept a surprise for me in store. Look at this.' He turned to a page with a picture of an old man on a horse. The caption to the photograph said something about the 'Pindos horse', which apparently was figured here, but not much else. 'This is my father', the neighbour insisted. It turned out that, ages ago, a gentleman had arrived at the farmstead kept by his father near the sanctuary of Poseidon, and taken some pictures of him riding the horse. That same person had written the book. Aris asked whether the neighbour's father had received anything for this. 'He did not understand, he was an illiterate man', the son told him. What about himself, Aris insisted, but he waved the question away and changed the subject. It was probably too late for all this, Aris thought back then, too late to press for claims on memory as property. To discover a picture of your long-dead father inside a book on horses in some European capital is surely to marvel at the unexpected trajectories photographs can take. It is also to feel a sense of awe at your own inability to control photographic representations, once they have taken off.

This is a photo-essay, an experimental attempt to combine archaeological ethnography with the use of creative, digital photography. Our experiment took place within the Kalaureia research programme (www.kalaureia.org), centred around the excavation of the ancient sanctuary of Poseidon, on the island of Poros, Greece. The authors are all team members of this project, engaged in a collaborative production of an archaeological ethnography: a critical and dialogic space which enables the understanding of 'local', unofficial, contemporary discourses and practices to do with this archaeological site, as it is currently being constituted by various official and alternative archaeologies (for a discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of this project, see Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos, this volume).

The incident narrated above is only one of several examples which alerted us to the fact that our own photographic voracity in this project is by no means innocent. We did not enter a pristine backwater to photograph 'ways of life' or 'archaeological processes'. Instead, we entered a field where 'locals' are familiar with the power of the image, and the circulation of visual material in local, national, and global arenas. They are alert to the multiple regimes of value created by the circulation and exchange of images, and have developed multiple ways of interacting with, influencing, breaking and exploiting it. With these thoughts in mind, in this essay we will start by critically reviewing in turn the links between archaeology, socio-cultural anthropology (the two parent disciplines of archaeological ethnography) and photography. We will then outline briefly our ideas on how digital, creative photography can be deployed as part of archaeological ethnographic projects, before we describe the use of photography as part of our project. Finally, we will present, with commentary when needed, some examples of this photographic work.

Archaeology and photography as collateral devices of modernity

Odd that no one has thought of the disturbance (to civilization) which this new action causes.

Roland Barthes (1981: 12)

Equally odd, we may add, that there is so little discussion on the collateral development of the photographic and the archaeological. Yet, as recent studies have shown (e.g. Shanks, 1997; Hamilakis, 2001, 2008, in press; Bohrer, 2005; Lyons et al., 2005; Downing, 2006; Hauser, 2007), there is much to be gained by studying the links between photography and archaeology as devices of Western modernity that came into existence more or less at the same time, and partook of the same ontological and epistemological principles. Barthes (1981) was one of the first to note the importance of the fact that the same century had invented history and photography. When in 1839, the scientist and politician François Arago (1786–1853) was urging the delegates in the French Chamber of Deputies to buy Daguerre's invention, one of his arguments was the archaeological applications of the new technique, while the other key personality credited with the invention of photography, Fox Talbot, had an active archaeological interest and is considered as one of those who deciphered the cuneiform script.

Within a few months from its invention, photography was being used extensively in capturing images of antiquities, in bringing 'home' traces of the material past, especially at a time when the emerging nation states were putting restrictions on the export and movement of antiquities. If the fundamental event of modernity is the reframing and capturing of the world as picture, as suggested by Heidegger (1977), then both photography and modernist archaeology partook of this process of visualization and exhibition. Both shared the epistemological certainties of Western modernity, be it the principle of visual evidential truth ('seeing is believing'), the desire to narrate things 'as they really were', or objectivism. Both archaeology and photography objectified, in both senses of the word: archaeology produced, through the selective recovery, reconstitution and restoration of the fragmented material traces of the past, objects for primarily visual inspection. Photography materialized and captured a moment, and produced photographic objects to be gazed at. But they both also partook of the modernist inquiry on the *individual and national self as other*, as something external that can be materialized in objects and things, gazed at, dissected and analysed (Downing, 2006). They also both attempted to freeze time: photography by capturing and freezing the fleeting moment (see Berger and Mohr, 1982: 86), and archaeology by arresting the social life of things, buildings and objects, and attempting to reconstitute them into an idealized, original state. Photography also facilitated a fundamental illusion of the modernist, especially national, imagination: the re-collection, the bringing together of things (in the form of their photographic representations), and the creation and reconstitution of the whole, of the corpus, of a national or archaeological totality (see Hamilakis, 2007).

Modernist archaeology and photography partook of a novel, Western conception of the body and of the sensuous self, one that was grounded on Cartesian dualism, and on the prioritization of an autonomous and disembodied sense of vision (see Crary, 1992). But they also reinforced further that conception, be it through objects exhibited in a museum behind glass cases or photographs to be gazed at. They thus both promoted a certain way of seeing that was largely disembodied and desensitized. Yet, despite these dominant developments, Western modernity, scarcely a monolithic entity, harboured diverse scopic regimes, and other vernacular modernities came into existence, both within and outside the European core (see Pinney, 2001; Pinney and

Peterson 2003; Lydon, 2005). Modernist archaeological cultures were also expressed in diverse ways, but were also constrained at the same time by the elite character of the enterprise. More importantly, both archaeology and photography produced material artefacts which, by virtue of their materiality, invited a fully-embodied, multi-sensorial and kinaesthetic encounter (see Wright, 2004), resulting in an as-yet-unresolved tension. It was the tactile properties of photography especially that encouraged Walter Benjamin (2008 [1935–1936]) to celebrate photography as the new mimetic technology that could enrich the human sensorium, acting as a prosthetic sensory device (Buck-Morss, 1992; Taussig, 1993).

In the areas known as the classical lands, photography was active from its invention. The first daguerreotypes of the Athenian Acropolis were produced in 1839, the same year that the process had become officially known. Within a few years, a large number of commercial photographers produced photographic reproductions of the most famous classical monuments, guided mostly by classical authors or biblical references. These started circulating widely as individual photos or photographic albums, producing a new visual economy of classical antiquity (see Sekula, 1981; Poole, 1997). A photographic canon was established from early on with regard to the monuments to be photographed, but also the specific angle chosen, the framing, and so on (see Szegedy-Maszak, 2001). This photographic canon contributed to a new way of seeing classical antiquity, one based on an autonomous and disembodied gaze, emphasizing classical monuments in splendid isolation, devoid of other material traces and of contemporary human presence (Hamilakis, 2001). Archaeologists and photographers in the 19th century worked in tandem: the first were producing staged themes, selected, cleansed and reconstituted classical edifices out of the material traces of the past; and photographers were framing these themes (in an equally selective manner) and they were reproducing them widely. They both thus contributed to a new simulacrum economy of classical antiquity. Rather than losing their magical aura, their 'unique apparition of a distance, however near [they] may be', as Benjamin would have wanted it (2008: 23), classical antiquities with their endless photographic reproductions, gained further in auratic and thus distancing value, and their already high esteem within the Western elite visual economy was strengthened even more, as they were now the originals of a myriad of reproduced images (see Hamilakis, 2001).

Through photography, classical monuments, in their visual-cum-tactile photographic renderings, reached many more people than before. This photographic corpus had an inherent potential, through its evocation of materiality and tactility, by showing buildings and objects, and through the materiality and tactility of the photographic object itself, to be appreciated in a fully embodied and multi-sensorial way. This potential, however, in order to be fulfilled, required a counter-modernist embodiment of the self, one at odds with the dominant Western one. It may be the case that in certain contexts, that potential was indeed fulfilled, but overall, things turned out otherwise. As Taussig put it,

history has not taken the turn Benjamin thought that mimetic machines might encourage it to take. The irony that this failure is due in good part to the very power of mimetic machinery to control the future by unleashing imageric power on a scale previously only dreamed of, would not have been lost on him, had he lived longer (1993: 26).

Photography and anthropology

The development of the new field of visual anthropology over the past few decades was a complex process that incorporated both a critique and an affirmation. The critique was aimed towards previous methods and assumptions surrounding visual representations. Modern anthropology defined itself through a violent distancing from 19th-century ‘armchair’ versions of anthropology. Earlier anthropologists had contented themselves with second-hand information from missionaries and travellers, or at the very least with information that was brought to their ‘veranda’ by willing locals. Their concern was mostly with typological distinctions between ‘tribes’, languages, or racial ‘types’, and the assorted artefacts that documented the rise and extinction of distinct cultural traits. Photography was widely used to visually document indigenous tribes, in an effort that largely resembled typological representations in archaeology (for a critical review of racial hints in ethnographic photography, see Poole, 2005).

After World War I, fieldwork methods were transformed, and the physical presence of the researcher amidst the people studied gradually became the *sine qua non* of ethnography. ‘Being there’ became the central claim to anthropological knowledge, and a complex visual metaphor evolved. Ethnographic narrative was a first-hand account of an impartial observer; the eye of the ethnographer replaced the photographic lens, thus privileging vision over other senses in imparting and consuming ethnographic experience (Pink, 2006: 8). Simultaneously, photography gradually became suspect for it undermined the authority of the ethnographic eye: it was too facile an indication of ‘being there’, associated with the amateurism of tourists and the superficial gaze of journalists (see Pinney, 1992; Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2005: 5). Although founding figures of fieldwork anthropology, such as Malinowski or Evans-Pritchard, took many photographs, only some of which featured in their works, they edited these very carefully and altogether avoided discussing the conditions of their production (Wolbert, 2001; Poole, 2005: 166; Pink, 2006: 7).

The suspicion towards visual testimonies developed over the years to what at least one commentator described as anthropology’s ‘iconophobia’ (Taylor, 1996). Even after visual anthropology emerged as a subfield in the 1960s, anthropologists by and large have deemed visual evidence as ‘insufficient’, unless accompanied by the textual testimony of the ethnographer (Stoller, 1992; Loizos, 1993; MacDougall, 1997). In fact, for this critique, ‘textuality itself, and textuality alone, is the condition of possibility of a legitimate (“discursive, intellectual”) visual anthropology’ (Taylor, 1996: 66, discussing Bloch, 1988).

It was only natural then that the renewed interest in imagework coincided for anthropology with the ‘crisis of representation’ of the 1980s and 1990s (Pink, 2006: 12–13). Textual and narrative techniques that produced an objective effect in ethnography were put to the test and found wanting (for a summary, see James et al., 1997). As Pink claims, critical reflection on ‘power relations and truth claims in the wider anthropological project [...] inspired new forms of representing anthropologists’ own and other people’s experiences’ (Pink, 2006: 13). Besides raising the subject of reflexivity, which has always been crucial in visual ethnography, this critique also brought to the fore the subjectivity of the ethnographer as an instrument of ethnographic understanding.

The present moment is one in which anthropology is still trying to overcome its ‘logocentrism’ (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2005: 6) and devise other modes of representation that convey more fully the ethnographic experience. Within the discipline, however, there is still resistance to accepting an independent life for images, and demands that these be clothed in words in order to enhance their descriptive depth. The image is still deemed too ‘shallow’, despite Taylor’s convincing argument to the contrary (1996). The issue has risen in practical terms for us when constructing this essay: should we leave the evocative presence of photographs to speak for itself, or should we dress it in our own words? And if so, what would the content of these words be? Should it provide a backdrop for the reading of the pictures, should it complement it with ethnographic information, or should it accompany it with a comment that expresses our own feelings towards it? We concluded, albeit tentatively and instinctively, that at the source of this conundrum is a tacit fundamental assumption: that words and images are used in ethnography as representations of ethnographic truth. We feel that the only way out of this impasse is to claim a new life for both images and words, a life of evocation rather than representation, in order to create fleeting instances of meaning between reader/viewer and writer/photographer/ethnographer. In our photo-essay, we put forward a modest proposal to treat visual and textual cues as of the same order, as material artefacts embedded in histories of archaeology and transversed by archaeologies of visual representations.

Beyond representation: photographs as evocative material artefacts

Given this heritage, and the associated debates, what is to be done with photography in contemporary archaeology, beyond its usual role as documentation? How can we counter the traditions of the autonomous gaze, and of disembodied encounters partaken by both modernist archaeology and early photography? How can we benefit from the experience of visual anthropology and the debates that it provokes? More pertinently, is there a place for an active role of photography within archaeological ethnography? Luckily, in bringing about such a role we can build not only on the growing body of critical work on the collateral development of early photography and modernist archaeology, part of which we discussed above, but also on experimental ventures in contemporary photography, and, of course, on new technological innovations, the most important being digital photography, with its various possibilities of enhancement and artistic modification. In tandem with this critical and experimental work in photography, the critique of the ontological basis and of the bodily configurations of modernist archaeology allows for a deployment of photography in archaeology on a completely different basis. Finally, the still fluid and experimental nature of the field of archaeological ethnography, the contours of which we trace with this volume, offers possibilities for collaborative work between photographers and archaeological ethnographers.

As Bateman has noted (2005), in any excavation there are normally two types of photographic production: the official, normally tightly controlled documentary photographic record (both the on-site photography, and the finds photos in the lab or the museum afterwards); and the unofficial snapshots produced mostly by students and by visitors to the site. We advocate and offer here a third kind of photographic

production: photography that is between artwork and visual ethnographic commentary. While a similar kind of photography has been attempted in other projects (e.g. Bateman 2005), we propose here its use as part of collaborative archaeological ethnography. It is our contention that the creative use of digital photography can be of immense value to the emerging field of archaeological ethnography. Given our conception of archaeological ethnography as sensuous, fully embodied scholarship (see Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos, this volume), we treat a photograph not as visual representation but, to paraphrase Laura Marks, as ‘material artefact of the object it has witnessed’ (2000: 22; see also Edwards and Hart, 2004).

Digital photographs are no less artefactual and material than analogue photographs: they too are experienced materially, be it on screen or in their printed versions on paper (Sassoon, 2004: 197). Digital photography, with its possibilities of retouching and reworking, has helped dispel and undermine further the myth that photographs re-present, they reproduce faithfully reality. They are rather material artefacts, artistic objects, contemporary interventions, commentaries upon other artefacts and objects, and upon other interventions, in our case of archaeological and ethnographic nature. In other words they are memories, that is reworked renderings of the things they have witnessed. They do not represent, but rather recall. They do not show, but rather evoke. As such, they are material mnemonics, and as all memory, they are reworkings of the past, not a faithful reproduction of it (see Hamilakis and Labanyi, 2008). Like all mnemonic recollections, they can be comforting and consoling, as well as uncomfortable, unsettling, and disturbing.

Photographs can also lead to unexpected associations; they can unearth, bring to the surface, but also throw into sharp focus things that were always there but were not seen, nor felt and experienced. For example, in archaeological projects, the kind of photography that we advocate here can frame, focus on and bring to the surface the hidden or overlooked materialities: the remnants and traces of periods and lives not officially valorized as worthy of archaeological documentation, or the remnants of the continuous biography of a site, as is being transformed by archaeological *and* non-archaeological agents (see theotheracropolis.com photo-blog, for another example). We suggest that within a sensuous archaeological, multi-temporal ethnography, photography can be framed as, but also experienced through, haptic visuality (see Marks, 2000), or rather through fully embodied, performative and multi-sensory visuality. Photographs can be touched with the hands as well as the eyes, and they can evoke texture, smells, tastes, and sounds, be it through the depiction of their theme, or the angle chosen, or the manipulation and reworking of the image. The same techniques can also help evoke and recall different times and temporalities, diverse, human and material biographies. Our thesis here resonates with what Chris Pinney has called ‘corporetics’, as opposed to aesthetics, which he defines as ‘the sensory embrace of images, the bodily engagement that most people (except Kantians and modernists) have with artworks’ (2001: 158).

Recent calls for the visualization of archaeology (e.g. Cochraine and Russell, 2007), well-meant, important and pertinent critiques that advocate the opening up of the discipline to new forms of expression, often ignore the historical, ontological and epistemological links between archaeology and visual devices such as photography,

oblivious thus to the problematic baggage that this historical link entails. Moreover, they seem to assume that creative artistic practice on its own, without critical historical interrogation and ethnographic contextualization, has in itself the power to transform archaeology. We contend instead that it is within the framework of collaborative archaeological ethnography that such use of photography attains its full potential (see Castañeda 2000–2001). This is not to deny the importance and power of the medium of photography itself, nor to suggest that it is in need of external validation. Within the context of archaeological ethnography, photography becomes another form of ethnography and the photographer becomes an ethnographer: she/he turns our attention to certain fleeting moments, to specific overlooked objects and artefacts which are exposed and lit from certain revealing angles, and to momentary situations that deserve scrutiny, interrogation, dialogue, and critique. The ‘freezing of time’ thus becomes in this case a revelatory moment. But this photo-ethnographic work will need the other forms of ethnographic work, such as the in-depth and long-term participant observation, and the multiple ethnographic conversations, in order to acquire its full power and poignancy. Archaeological ethnography opens up the space for such dialogue, allows diverse local voices to enter into conversation with the photographer, and challenges their stated or implicit assumptions. Photography can operate as the performative and multi-sensorial commentary on some of the issues these conversations have brought up, and it can expose others that would require further ethnographic exploration.

Moreover, archaeological ethnography can constantly alert us to the danger of reproducing a colonial photographic regime, of objectifying, in other words, people and things alike, by invading, capturing and appropriating their realities. In providing a historical and social context, ethnography can also counter the de-aestheticization or anaestheticization of photography (Buck-Morss, 1992), that is its divorce from the human sensorium and its elevation into an abstract, timeless, ‘aesthetic’ value, which, in association with archaeological monuments, often acquires the connotations of high ‘taste’ (see Bourdieu, 1986). Ethnography also brings to the fore the political, so often masked but in reality inseparable from the aesthetic, as they are both about what can (that is, what is allowed to) be seen and experienced, and what not (Ranciere, 2006). Finally, ethnography allows local people to ‘talk back’, comment on the photographs, select or reject certain photographic interventions, or produce, display and circulate their own.

We have also found Castañeda’s notion of photography as ethnographic installation (this volume) of much interest: the idea that photographic interventions, both the photographic process itself but also the exhibition and circulation of photographs, can provide an arena for further ethnographic encounters, can produce unexpected reactions, trigger memories, and evoke personal and object biographies that would otherwise have remained untold (see Hoskins 1998). Moreover, the return of the photographic production (both our own but also other, archival and historical ones) to various local communities, beyond the opportunities it offers for further dialogue, constitutes a fundamental ethical act of sharing knowledge, images, material artefacts.

As Mitchell has observed (2005), echoing Jay’s work (1993), much of the critique on visibility in recent years has been characterized by iconophobic suspicion and

anxiety (see the example of anthropology, above), unintentionally perhaps revealing the power of images to evoke and elicit reactions, indeed demand such reactions from humans. While we would still advocate the need to historicize and critique the scopical regimes of modernity, in its various configurations, we would concur with Mitchell and others that, rather than resorting to iconophobia, we should treat images as sensuous material artefacts that have the capacity to produce and enact relationships, arrange and rearrange the material social field. In this project, we attempt to move beyond critique in order to demonstrate some of this power.

Photography as part of archaeological ethnography in Kalaureia

In the Kalaureia archaeological ethnography project we used photography right from the start. The two of us who worked as the main ethnographers (Aris and Yannis) routinely took many ethnographic photographs, but it was with the addition to our team of Fotis Ifantidis, an archaeologist and a photo-blogger, that photography became an important part of our project. After a short exploratory visit in May 2007, Fotis joined the team for three weeks in May and June 2008. He thus formed part of the ethnographic team, and he took a large number of photographs of the site, of the visitors, of the workmen and the archaeologists, of the town and its people, of the surrounding landscape and seascape. Fotis's work became the topic of discussion, debate and critique within the broader archaeological group, including the workmen. His photographic production was put into circulation immediately (another advantage of digital technology), and was thus subjected to feedback, and to instant critique (see Bateman 2005), operating in other words as an ethnographic installation from the very beginning. In the summer of 2008, we set up a photo-blog (kalaureiainthepresent.org) and we hope to produce a separate-volume photo-essay (in English and in Greek) which will merge ethnographic accounts and photography.

When we circulated the idea of doing a series of portraits for the workmen as a way of honouring and valorizing their contribution to the archaeological process, the reaction was mixed, both from the archaeologists and from the workmen. One of the workmen, Mr M, responded to our request to take his portrait by saying, half-seriously: 'if you want to honour someone you dedicate a statue to him'. He also asked if there would be any financial benefits to them from this work. M's initial reaction to our idea constituted not only an eloquent and witty way of articulating his resistance to photographic objectification, but it brought to the fore the political economy of archaeological practice, and labour relationships on site. The workers filmed each other with their mobile phones and then showed it around, for laughs. They downloaded saucy films and played them loud. The fact that *we* wanted to photograph them, however, was suspicious, since they felt they would not be able to control the trajectory of the picture which, based on their experience, could be used to mar their public profile.

Most workmen (including Mr M) were, however, convinced, especially since they understood that they would maintain part of the control of the photographic process. They had a series of photos taken in various poses and at various times, and *they* themselves selected the one that was to be circulated further (see Berger and Mohr, 1982: 26). At the end of the excavation season we produced a series of large-scale

paper versions of these portraits and offered them to the workmen, during the feast held to mark the end of the season, a gesture that resulted in further reactions and comments, mostly positive, and in any case of much ethnographic interest.

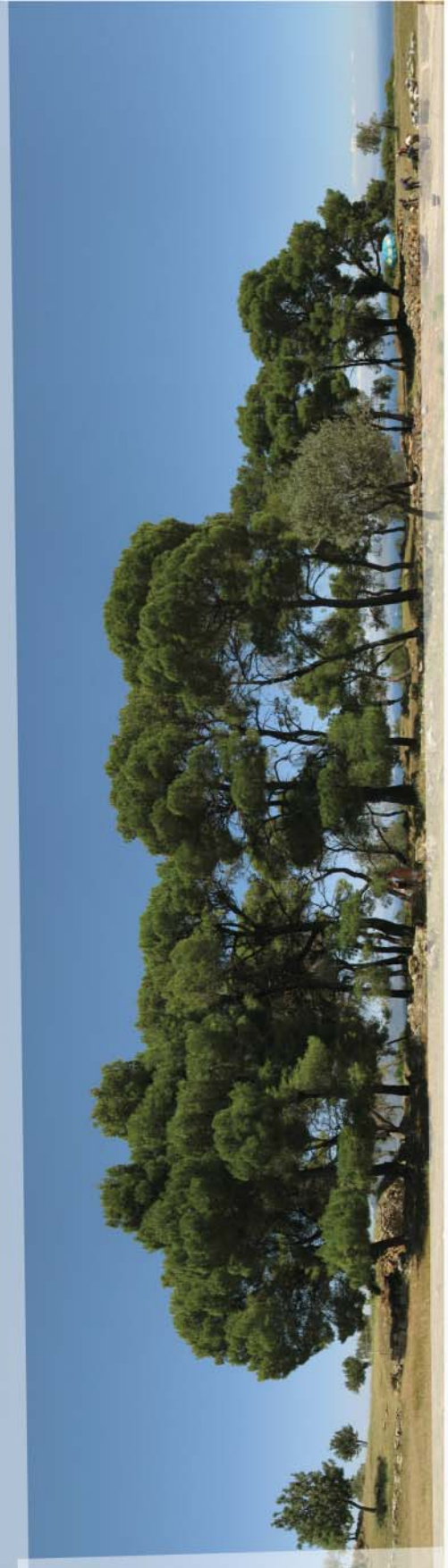
In August 2008 we exhibited some of these photos at an open-air photographic exhibition organized by the local community at Galatas, on the Peloponnesian coast, opposite Poros but only a five-minute boat trip away. We engaged in a dialogue with the viewers, a venture, however, which was less successful than we hoped, mainly because of a lack of the appropriate context for such viewing. After securing their permission, we included some of the photographic portraits of the excavation workers, who all live in Galatas and the villages nearby. Some months later, in November 2008, Aris went to the dig to talk to the workers who were clearing ground for the next excavation season. Upon seeing him, Mr M started telling him that he (Aris) was in big trouble since the father of one of the workers was looking for him. He wanted, Mr M said, to complain about our use of the picture of his son at the exhibition, and he claimed he was going to bring the case all the way to the European Court. The other workers joined in, in what turned out to be a premeditated practical joke. Caught unawares, Aris was trying to figure out how much of this was true and how much they were making up. He contented himself with laughing self-consciously, and mumbling something to the effect that they had sought permission to display these photos from everyone portrayed. Mr M would not have any of that. He warned Aris that the ‘old-man’s money piled up would surely overshadow the tallest skyscraper’. He had the money to litigate us to death, it was implied. The joke went on for a while, despite Aris’s protestations, increasing his sense of unease.

In the era of the internet, of blogging, and of omnipresent mobile phone cameras, it would be naive and patronizing to believe that local people are immune to or ignorant of the universal circulation of images and their value connotations, expressed in economic terms. This plain fact, which we have to negotiate constantly, transforms any visual form of expression we attempt. When we use photographs as material artefacts in order to evoke responses and ethnographic situations, we have to answer to both those portrayed — or their relatives — and those who question the very act of photography as some sort of appropriation. When we use photographs as evocative evidence of ethnographic involvement, we cannot divest them of their contestable meaning, and the remembrance of contestation during and after their production and their circulation. So we cannot claim that these photos ‘represent’ something, but instead we must deal with them as material artefacts caught in a web of power and signification.

The textual component of this essay is not meant to act as the scholarly validation of photography; it rather provides some clues that situate those images historically and ethnographically as contested things, and lay bare the processes that led to their production. In this photo-essay, we present a small sample of the photographic work carried out as part of the Kalaureia project. It is hoped that this artwork (the combined effect of images and words, words seen as both images and as signs) can convey the sense of ‘being in the ethnographic field’, of being attentive to its evocative materialities and temporalities, of coming into direct contact with the texture and tactility of the place, but also its multiple and intermingling layering. The insights gained through this evocative experience are of a different order from those gained

by a conventional essay, generating as they do affect and emotion in a much more poignant manner. Thus they lead to an alternative production and experiencing of the archaeological site, a site where ancient buildings are temporarily decentred, and olive trees and early 20th-century ceramics acquire relevance and import, as much as ancient classical finds.

All photographs are by Fotis Ifantidis, unless otherwise stated. The text is by the two remaining authors but incorporates feedback and commentary by Fotis. The arrangement of the photos takes the viewer into a tour, starting from the temple, walking around the site, and ending at the town of Poros.



Should you break the yellowish foam with your fingers, the aroma of pine resin stays with you for a while,

pungent and refreshing. The whole area, nay, the whole island, smells like this, of pine tears. The long gushes along the trunk are a reminder of the families of resin-collectors; they came from the nearby islet of Aggistri and settled on Poros around the turn of the 20th century. A wound that still bleeds, next to the negative monumental, a scar that refuses to forget the sweat and the toil of making a livelihood out of pines.

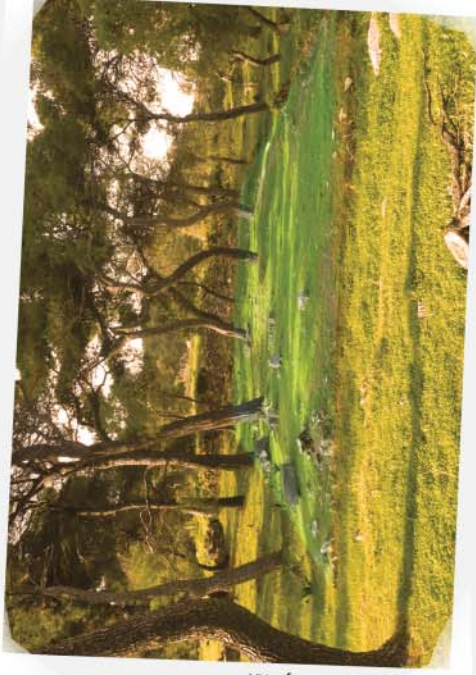


Photo by AA

It is a void in the world filled with words. And images. And pine trees. The ancient Temple of Poseidon, the remnants of which were removed to the very last stone, and used as building material, has left its enormous footprint on the ground. But its absence is far mightier than any material trace. The site and the area in general are known as "Temple of Poseidon". It is a name that, by mere abundance in guides, maps, websites, speculations, myths, discussions, thoughts, has superseded its referent.

On second thoughts, it is not a void at all, it is rather a negative presence, the presence of a negative, no less material, and much more evocative than any standing columns and impressive classical architecture.



One of these families of Arvanites settled on and around the sanctuary. In time they made a proud home, working the resin, tilling the land, picking olives. They kept many horses. At one time, forty horses were roaming the sanctuary, according to one descendant of the family. Another, a nephew, drew this tiny horse head with red lead when he was nine. It lies next to his and his cousin's initials on the inside of the ancient perivolos wall that surrounded the temple. When asked why the horse, he said "I do not know what got into us then"



Photo by YH



Now you see it, now you don't. Stones that drew the "interested public" like magnets. Columns, made of marble, that iconic material of an equally iconic past. White, tubular, sparkling in the sun. Evidence of ancient glories to many. To the specialist, insignificant remains of a much later age, carried over from god-knows-where and deposited here sometime in the 1960s, very close to where the temple stood. Matter out of place, as the inquisitive leg of Fotis suggests. Still, they ran the gamut of colours, the shapes and the textures of a Greek archaeological site in collective memory. But they did not belong here; they were removed by the excavators in 2008, leaving another imprint on vegetation, albeit a temporary one.

Another stone that drew us like a magnet. Some sort of attractor for photos, discussions, presentations, knowledge. A material embodiment of many different temporalities. A fault-line in linear time. The archaeologists keep their tools by it and they often gather around it for cigarette breaks. Mr M's foot probes its silence and the evidence of a traveller, a passenger or a sailor, bred in the classical ideals of western modernity, who left his mark on it during a visit in the month of June, possibly in 1847: H.T. SWAIN. Mr. M, who had adopted the stone as a footrest and ashtray during one excavation period, referred to him as a "looter", and wanted to whitewash the name of the brash foreigner from its face.





Panoramas were favoured by the 19th c. photographers of ancient classical lands. Here, a panorama of a different kind. We have decided here to decentre the ancient building: the *stoa* that, due to its good state of preservation often stands in photographic representations for the absent temple, and centre instead this photographic artefact around a humble olive tree. The oldest olive tree on site, stands on the spoil heap from the 1874 excavations, which made the site known to archaeologists. A tree that is not simply nature, but a monument in itself a monument that recalls (but does not monumentalise) the attempts of the farmers who lived amongst the ancient ruins to domesticate this land, to plant roots for the generations to come.

Olive trees are for children and grand children. It was not meant to be.



But not just yet.

Children will grow up here, play amongst the ruins, and will often leave their marks, in the form of initials, and next to them their age and date.

Iota, Gamma, Mi: "I should be Poseidon!", he told us, still full of rage, a couple of years ago.

Chi, Gamma, Mi, the brother who, sadly died last spring in his early seventies, before we were able to meet him...

A stone that partakes of multiple times, that remembers many hands, that preserves a plurality of memories, that unites and reconnects...

a stone that divides too...

1978 was the year. The cement floors, the ruined, abandoned animal pens, amongst the ancient statue bases and inscriptions, what was left from the compulsory, contested expropriation of the land, and the subsequent demolitions. And nearby, nailed on the wriggled skin of a redundant olive tree, a rusted key that cannot find a door to open.





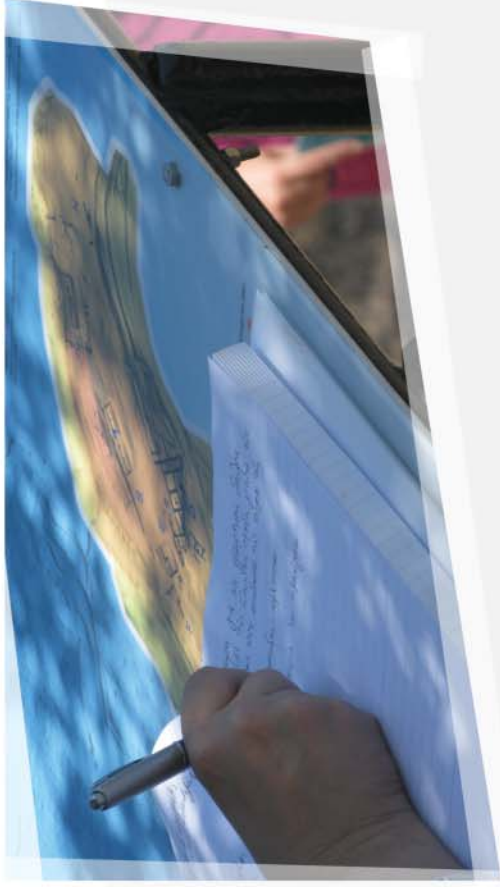
.....And we were left to re-collect the fragments of a memory that refuses to be erased...

fragments



Archaeological
workmen/women do not just
digs most enjoy building
things, crafting, creating,
making things with their
hands. The supervising
archaeologist was
concerned that the new
terrace wall built by the
workers looked
"too ancient"...





Us and them. Between us, a rope. For a good and sound reason. Still, a rope. Our sign, "visitors welcome", is attached to a metal fence door. And on the way out, we ask visitors to sign the notebook. Words abound at this site, words that are written or inscribed, hurled at each other or confided, loud or hushed. We catch and preserve only some of these words. In this case, and under the obligatory congratulatory remark, the cryptic but wholly serious statement: "History cannot be sliced into pieces." But there is always someone who is looking over your shoulder.

This man is Atlas, he has shouldered the weight of the world. Men and women like him abound, he is not unique. In fact, he is the rule, and subtly becomes iconic of everyday toil in an absurd and hostile state. The ancient god - Poseidon or Zeus? and does it matter? - from his Olympian heights, his monumental pedestal, remains indifferent, for he was born so by an exclusivist imagination that keeps wishing to become collective. But for the elderly Mr. A, who used to live up here next to the sanctuary, the daily pilgrimage, on horse back, to the land of his youth is reassuring. The place that harbours his memories may have become an archaeological zone, but he has not given up yet. Nor has his horse.





Archaeologies of demolished national dreams, archaeologies of futures past. A street sign in one of the roads of the housing project (just outside the old town of Poros and on the way to the sanctuary) created to receive refugees after the, catastrophic for the Greek state, 1917-22 Asia Minor campaign; it reads: "Kalaureia Street".

Archaeology does not just exhume things, it also plants new roots for the uprooted. Not far from that spot: the recently erected statue of the ancient orator Demosthenes, who allegedly died at the sanctuary of Poseidon; "Have you found his tomb yet?" one of the most persistent questions of local people. He is buried today amongst the ruins of the tourist industry, amongst the smells of burning fat from the "souvlaki" shops and the restaurants, which honour the god of the sea by serving usually excellent octopus.

In the meantime, tempus fugit - usually on a red motorbike - but scripta manent - usually as street signs.

tempus

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Vasko Démou and to an anonymous reviewer for constructive comments and advice on an earlier version.

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Notes on Contributors

Yannis Hamilakis is Reader in Archaeology at the University of Southampton, and has published extensively on the politics of the past, on archaeology and national imagination, on sensuous, embodied archaeology, on social memory, and on Aegean prehistory. He also studies the links between archaeology and photography from the 19th century to the present. He coordinates the archaeological ethnography project of the Kalaureia Research Programme. Address: Archaeology, School of Humanities, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17, 1BJ, UK. Email: y.hamilakis@soton.ac.uk

Aris Anagnostopoulos is Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Archaeology at the University of Southampton and works as ethnographer for the Kalaureia Research

Programme. He has trained in social anthropology and urban history and holds a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Kent, Canterbury. His dissertation studied the creation of public space in early 20th-century Crete. He has worked as documentary researcher and scriptwriter. Address: Archaeology, School of Humanities, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17, 1BJ, UK. Email: a.anagnostopoulos@soton.ac.uk

Fotis Ifantidis is an archaeologist and photo-blogger, and a PhD candidate at the University of Thessaloniki. Since 2006 he has maintained a photo-blog on the excavations at the Neolithic site of Dispilio in northern Greece, experimenting with the visual interplay between art and archaeologies (visualizing-neolithic.blogspot.com). He is also the main contributor in The Other Acropolis photo-blog (theotheracropolis.com). Address: 94 Theagenous Charisi Street, 54453 Thessaloniki, Greece. Email: fotisif@hotmail.com