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Ancient Marbles to American Shores: Classical Archaeology in the United States, by Stephen Dyson, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1998.

by

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One of the aspects of 20th century archaeology in America that would undoubtedly perplex our 19th century predecessors is the extreme intellectual distance between Americanist, anthropological archaeologists and our counterparts who work in the classical world. We belong to different professional societies, publish in different journals, occupy different academic departments, and draw our inspiration from different intellectual sources. Crossovers exist, but are comparatively rare, and are viewed with suspicion by all. One of my professors once announced to a seminar that if classical archaeologists didn't start doing something interesting, we would "have to take over."

Yet the relationship between Classical and Americanist archaeology was historically much closer. The founding of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) in 1879, today seen largely as an enterprise of classical archaeology, was attended by prominent Americanists, such as Frederic Ward Putnam. The founder of the Institute, Charles Eliot Norton, conferred closely with John Wesley Powell and Lewis Henry Morgan while sponsoring the groundbreaking research of Adolph Bandelier in the American Southwest. The School of American Research, originally the School of American Archaeology, was conceived as a partner institution to the American schools in Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem. *Art and Archaeology*, an early periodical published by the Institute and aimed at a popular audience, regularly included articles on New World excavations and discoveries. And yet the legacy of this early period of close interaction is poorly understood and rarely acknowledged by those on either side of the table.

Stephen Dyson, an eminent classical archaeologist and past president of the AIA, intends *Ancient Marbles* to place the American tradition of classical archaeology within a historical framework. In so doing, he seeks both to fulfill the mandates of disciplinary history and to touch on broader trends in American social and cultural history. The breadth of coverage required by such an approach, he acknowledges in the preface, makes this work more of a synthesis than of primary scholarship. His earlier work (for instance, Dyson 1989) set the stage for this more comprehensive treatment, which itself is a harbinger of several current historical projects regarding the AIA and related institutions (cf. Allen n.d.).

Dyson's work describes a complex intellectual and institutional lineage that has not previously been systematically outlined. The founding of the AIA in 1879 was the culmination of a century of American interest in classical archaeology and provided an institutional setting within which research could be promoted. The late 19th century expeditions to Assos and Cyrene, for example, provided crucial experience for a new generation of fieldworkers and an American presence in the Mediterranean, a foundation subsequently enhanced by the establishment of the American schools. Dyson charts the subsequent growth of classical archaeology in the American university system and out-

lines the distinct intellectual "lineages" that emerged. He examines such issues as the role of emigre European scholars in the expansion of the discipline, gender politics, and the "museum tradition" that bound art history and archaeology together with connoisseurship, aestheics, and education (157). Profiles of influential scholars, such as Francis Kelsey, Carl Blegen, and Hetty Goldman, provide context for their work and document the complex relationships between people, institutions, and ideas.

Many of the projects and personalities thus presented are of greatest relevance to a specialized audience, and students of classical archaeology will find *Ancient Marbles* to be a substantive overview of the development of their field. It is the broad framework of Dyson's argument, however, that is of greatest interest to his anthropologically-trained counterparts. It is abundantly clear that the two schools of archaeological practice, for instance, are based upon dramatically different sets of cultural principles. Archaeology, in the eyes of Norton and his associates, was a means through which the heritage of "western civilization" could be experienced and made tangible. Excavation of Mediterranean sites and the display of associated finds and art objects thus had deep cultural relevance. American participation in this process was a critical component in establishing national legitimacy. The rise of classical archaeology in the post-Civil War period, then, should be seen as a component of a broadly-based American cultural nationalism that encompassed the construction of public museums, the rise of the historic preservation movement, and the establishment of national parks (cf. Conn 1998; Rothman 1989; Runte 1987; Unrau and Willis 1987).

The role of archaeology in the New World, by contrast, was more complex and related largely to perceptions of Native American society. The absence of a shared history between Indians and Americans of European descent limited the utility of an archaeology based in cultural identity. The use of archaeology and anthropology to reform Indian policy advocated by Powell, Alice Fletcher, and their contemporaries resonated with the ideological agendas of their classical counterparts, but this mode of activism did not persist with the expansion of a professional, academic discipline in the 20th century. The conservatism of classical archaeology can be attributed to the persistence of the cultural goals of its practitioners, while Americanist archaeology, without such an anchor, continually remade itself in an effort to remain relevant.

Dyson clearly argues for consideration of sociological factors in the production of knowledge within classical archaeology. His discussion of excavations in Athens that have been in progress since the 1930s provides particularly strong examples of this process, evoking the preoccupation of the German elite with classical Greece at the beginning of the 19th century that has been examined by Suzanne Marchand (1996). The focus on the Agora, as the "original seat of Greek democracy" (180), was originally seen as providing a counterbalance to the spread of dictatorship in Europe. At the same time, however, the project adopted some of the strategies of fascist archaeology employed in Rome and elsewhere, such as callous displacement of population, ultimately 10,000 residents were relocated from the medieval core of Athens to make way for the excavations. The expansion of American classical archaeology after the Second World War was stimulated by political opportunities produced by the Allied victory as well as by the use of ideological capital associating victorious democracy with ancient Greece. As an added nuance, Dyson suggests that the conservatism of the American scholars of the postwar period, itself a corollary of the perceived social "values" promoted by their work, isolated them from a rising generation of European archaeologists who had different uses for the past.

Another important lesson derived from Dyson's work is that the distinction between classical and Americanist archaeology constructed by their practitioners is largely lost on the general public. *Art and Archaeology*, continuing in the tradition of earlier, eclectic journals such as *Monuments of the Past*, originally featured articles by many prominent Americanist archaeologists. Struggles over editorial control toward the end of the 1910s were closely linked to perceptions of bias toward one field or another and regarding the nature of the audience. The success of *Archaeology*, which succeeded *Art and Archaeology* after a long hiatus, may be due to the fact that such squabbles are irrelevant to its readership, who see common themes in the study of the past that partisans prefer to downplay. Such popular interest is a reflection, however, of the deeper cultural relevance of archaeology to modern society.

The major accomplishment of *Ancient Marbles*, then, is that it provides a substantial building block in a larger social history of archaeology in America. Our disciplinary structures are the product of institutional legacies and intellectual boundary maintenance, not deep truths about the past. The fact that we define our activities so narrowly tells more about us than about our predecessors, and by stepping across such boundaries we gain a far greater appreciation for what archaeology really is.

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