

Esther Solomon

“Entangled” Archaeological Objects: A Debate on the Significance of Museum Practice

In 1979, the decision of the Greek government to include Minoan artefacts in a touring exhibition at the Louvre in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of New York caused strong protests in front of the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion. Nearly 50.000 Cretans from all over the island, farmers, students and even priests, some of whom had never visited the museum, protested against the “up-rooting” of the Cretan antiquities. Some of the people (archaeologists included) who spent day and night in front of the museum’s gates in order to prevent the police forces from removing the antiquities, did not even accept the necessity to lend the exhibits to the foreign museums, in their words, “to export their cultural heritage”. The appeal of this popular reaction led to the exclusion of the Minoan artefacts from the above exhibitions, an event celebrated with traditional dances in a confirmation of the habitually emphasised link between the archaeological practice and the local cultural traditions.

How did local people manipulate the Greek national rhetoric concerning the importance of the ancient past of the country? How do people who took part in the protests remember the event thus forming their identity and cultural memory? What hegemonic practices did they try to resist? This paper, based on extensive ethnographic research, reconsiders older interpretations of the Cretan protest, while it explores the unexpected ways archaeological heritage can cause social action at the intersection between the local, the national and the global.

CV

Esther Solomon obtained her BA in History and Archaeology from the University of Ioannina and continued her postgraduate studies in Sheffield, London and Florence, Italy. She completed her PhD in Social Anthropology at University College London.

She has worked as museologist at the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki and several other museums in Greece and in Italy. She is now lecturer in museology at the University of Ioannina. Her research interests include the politics of the past, the making of museum representations and the impact of cultural heritage on social identity.

Esther Solomon

Lecturer in Museology

University of Ioannina

8, Pericleous Street

Cholargos, 15561

Athens, Greece.

Tel. +306932401088

Email: [estersol@hotmail.com](mailto:estersol@hotmail.com)