

Excavations on Thera and Therasia in the 19th Century: A Chronicle

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Abstract

The nineteenth-century excavations on Thera and Therasia took place at two periods: the first in 1866 and 1867 and the second in 1870. The investigations uncovered the Late Cycladic civilization of Thera, although at the time this could not be assigned to a chronological context, in the absence of any parallels: Minoan antiquities, the Cycladic civilization and the Mycenaean sites on the Greek mainland were all still undiscovered. The archaeological finds could not, therefore, be appreciated in their true historical dimensions. The excavations occasioned by the eruption of the volcano in 1867–70 were characterized by the approach and methods of the period, including evolutionism and the nascent Palaeolithic archaeology. These excavations were almost forgotten about for 100 years, partly because they were not related to ancient literary sources (as with Schliemann's excavations conducted a little later), and partly because they could not be exploited for national purposes. This article provides a chronicle of the birth and evolution of these investigations.

Introduction: Speaking of the Past is an Index of the Present

The basic assumption of this paper is that any account of the past is an account that is formulated in a present. 'History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time' (Benjamin 2003: 395). This present is not a vacuum, as Walter Benjamin said in 1940, but has a life of its own and is unique; it brings the circumstances of its time to bear upon the manner in which it constructs the past. It implants them in the narrative, and history as well as archaeology are swept along by political events and their interpretations, and they acquire substance and form both from these and from the subject studied.¹

So it was with the first manifestations of Aegean archaeology, on the islands of Thera and Therasia (Figure 1).² Two factors make

the 19th-century investigations on Thera suitable for an inquiry into the circumstances that gave rise to them and determined their methods. The first is that we are genuinely dealing with the beginning: these were the first systematic archaeological excavations in Aegean prehistory. They commenced in 1866 and continued at intervals until 1870, which means that they took place before the excavations at Troy, Mycenae and Knossos. They were truly the first steps, and the scientific choices and related fields can therefore be seen more clearly. Given that these first investigations did not last many years, we may borrow a metaphor from archaeological terminology and claim that they constitute a closed group of actions, and it is therefore relatively easy to deal with them. The second factor is that the excavations have been resumed in recent decades after a long interruption of almost

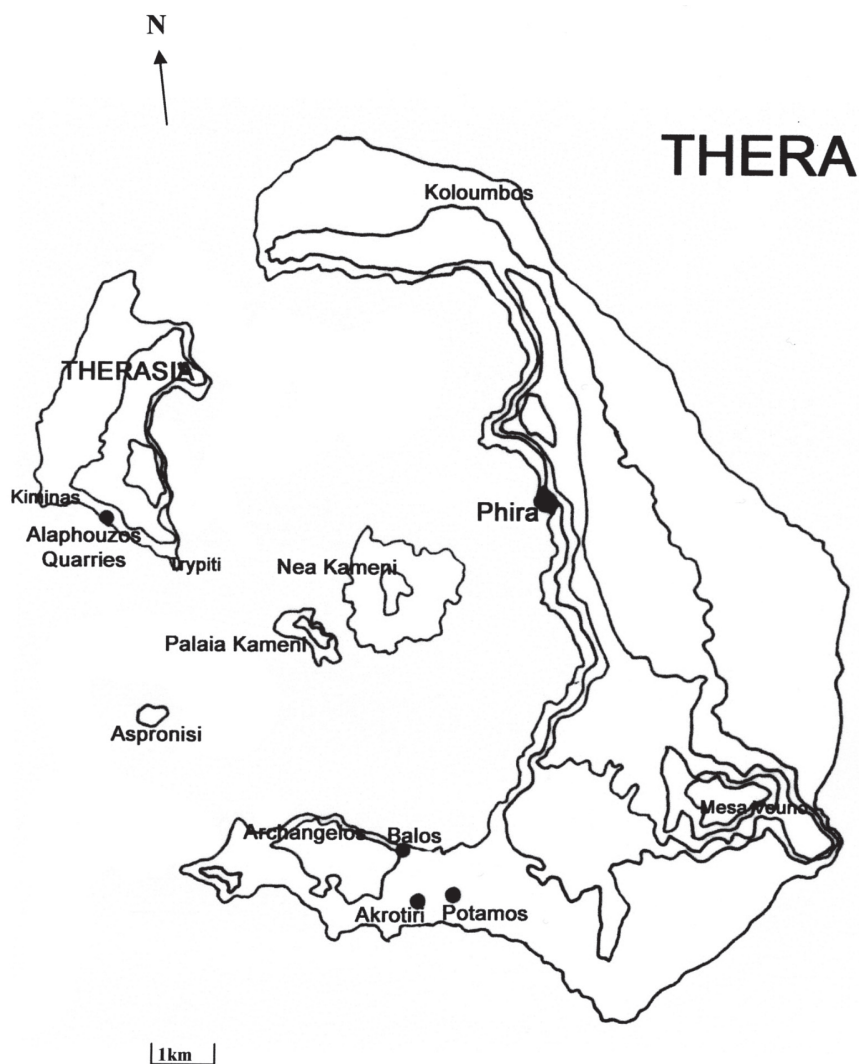


Figure 1. Map of Thera showing the locations of sites mentioned in the text.

exactly a century. This second period of excavation offers a convenient comparison. We can observe the differences and similarities and thus better assess methods, conclusions and, above all, what is owed to the circumstances of the day.

The earliest investigations on Thera were governed by the innovative spirit of evolutionism, the exponents of which were the geologists who worked on Thera. They were the ones who devised the methodology and posed the questions on the basis of which

the excavations were carried out. They thus shaped their subject, at the same time giving it the form and interpretation with which it was disseminated.

The conduct of the excavations on Therasia and Thera and the interpretation and handling of the finds, despite being an event determined historically and scientifically by wider factors, was nevertheless an episode with a contingent aspect. It was due to the chance event of the eruption of the volcano, which provoked international interest and

brought the geologists to the island. The participation of geology, as an academic discipline with its own methodology and questions, in the formation of the field of archaeology and the elaboration of its methods was precisely the practice at this time in France and Britain, where important Palaeolithic excavations were taking place. And this was not contingent: contingency simply followed the trend. The same was true of the political aspect. The French scientists who came and worked under the rumbling of the volcano were certainly brought there by the chance event of the eruption, but at the same time they were borne along by the waves of the great expansion of French imperialist policy in the eastern Mediterranean: their presence was facilitated or caused by the presence on the island of the Suez Company, which was there in order to procure materials needed for the construction of the port facilities associated with the canal. And all this took place against the background of the upheavals in the region resulting from the Cretan uprising, which revived the Eastern Question. It may be said, therefore, that the scientists on Thera played a double, diverging role: on the one hand, they brought 'scientific progress' in the context of evolutionism; but, on the other, they were nonetheless representatives of the Great Powers, who came to bring scientific illumination travelling in their country's warships and working in tandem with its economic interests. In their own minds, however, these heirs to the Enlightenment and champions of the global nature of evolutionism did not believe for a moment that the ecumenical truth that they invoked was the truth of the powerful western states, which was realized through the practice of imperialist conquests.

This, however, was not the only coordinate of the beginnings of Aegean archaeology. On the contrary, it may be described as transient. The evolutionist geologists, who looked in the geological strata for occupation phases and

brought the natural sciences to the heart of a field that traditionally belonged to history or art history, soon went away. One constant presence, however, both before and after the French investigations, was the romantic love of antiquity, principally on the part of the Germans. Ancient Greece served as the absolute example of perfect beauty, and the Athenian democracy played its role in the rhetoric of the young, bourgeois nation-states. This tendency found expression in the presence on Thera of Ludwig Ross, and later the German archaeologists who worked with Hiller von Gaertringen at the end of the century, and who had completely different objectives. Their approach involved minute scrutiny of the written sources, while the material remains were to be considered in the context of art history. The two currents co-existed and undoubtedly influenced each other. The latter found expression in an absolute preference for the Classical and Archaic periods, while the former dwelt on prehistory.

The excavation of Thera is also a very good example of the oblivion into which archaeological finds can fall. Not that somebody took a conscious decision to consign them to oblivion: they were quietly replaced by other finds more readily exploitable by politics and political ideology. This did not happen suddenly. Every present is imperceptibly dissolved by the next one, and the dwellings on Thera gradually acquired the status of just a minor excavation; there were other finds, more readily exploited for ideological ends, at Mycenae, Knossos, and other such sites. From the 1880s on, the ideological exploitation of ancient Greece intensified greatly. It should be recalled that this was the period that saw the unfolding of the Great Idea—that is, the liberation of the Greek populations still living under the Ottoman empire—and archaeology was called upon to furnish suitable arguments. Yet we should not forget that, during the same period, the foreign archaeological schools also

followed this trend, albeit for other reasons, and did all they could to promote the archaeology of Classical Greece (Kotsakis 1990; 1998; Fotiadis 2001).

There is a danger that the view that archaeological investigation has different versions at different periods, which are determined, *inter alia*, by politics and ideology, will seduce us into a relativist approach. If all these versions are games of their own time, and their time believes them to be 'objectively' correct, it follows that the present, our own version, which will soon become the past, will suffer the same fate. All versions thus risk acquiring a relative equality that results in an attitude of tolerance and moderation, but above all in the complete effacing of their historicity. An attitude of this kind goes hand-in-hand with a similar modern view, the postmodernist view, which is itself connected with a way of approaching the past. It is an eclectic attitude, set in the context of the many and frequently contradictory approaches to the past, which makes possible the rapid fragmentation and simultaneous projection of fragments from different places and moments in time. The endeavour made in this paper to comprehend the conditions that gave birth and form to specific archaeological choices seeks to avoid such a situation. If we accept that the relation of a period to its historical past is moulded by current circumstances and is part of the historical moment, then we have to accept that it possesses the inviolable uniqueness of the historical moment. I hope the present paper to be a contribution in this direction.

The French Scientific Mission to the Morea and Thera

Thera first became the object of a scholarly investigation, in the modern sense of the term, in 1829, when it was visited by members of the French Scientific Mission to the Morea. It accompanied the French military mission

to the Peloponnese under General Maison in 1828–29, during the course of the Greek struggle for liberation. The objective of the military mission was to drive the forces of Ibrahim Pasha from the Peloponnese. Greek independence was on the verge of becoming a reality and—quite apart from any diplomatic designs, the manoeuvring of the Great Powers in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the military or economic expediencies motivating the French campaign—the Scientific Mission included a number of enthusiastic philhellenes who promoted the ideology of liberation (Zioutos 1956; Droulia 1999). The model for the Mission to the Morea was the famous scientific mission that accompanied Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt. Its members were given instructions to do something similar for Greece, and a few decades later the same thing happened in Algeria. All three missions accompanied military campaigns and all three were connected with the imperialist expansion of French interests in the Mediterranean. Knowledge of the nature and history of remote countries, based on a model of world evolution, was associated with imperialist expansionism and went hand-in-hand with the scientific beliefs of the day (Trigger 1989: 110–47; Droulia 1999: 47). The head of the mission was Bory de Saint-Vincent (1778–1846), a prolific writer, naturalist, soldier and member of parliament (Zioutos 1956; Polychronopoulou 1999b). The mission set out from Toulon at the beginning of February 1829 amidst general euphoria, with the breeze of philhellenism swelling its sails.

The Mission's work on Thera was devoted mainly to geology, and in particular to the volcano. Thera and the other Cycladic islands were visited only by Bory de Saint Vincent, with a few collaborators, in autumn 1829. Their observations on Thera are contained in two parts of volume II.2: the section on *Géologie et Minéralogie* and that on *Vulcanologie* (Bory de Saint-Vincent 1834: 258–86). Both sections

include detailed descriptions of the terrain of the island and its rock formations, and they also provide some historical information.

Interestingly, for our subject, Bory de Saint-Vincent (1836: 469) refers in passing to the antiquities he saw on Santorini: 'The volcanic islands of Santorini... are equally interesting from the point of view of archaeology and of geology. Amongst other antiquities, I saw in the middle of fields sown with cotton a small cubic temple of white marble, which no one had seen before me.' His comments on the position of a number of tombs between the geological strata provided support for the early views relating to the presence of human occupation before the great volcanic destruction and must have circulated widely, for they were repeatedly cited three decades later, during the 1866 eruption (Lenormant 1866a).

Another aspect of the Mission's activity has not been properly clarified. Did Bory de Saint-Vincent conduct archaeological excavations on Santorini or not? He himself makes no mention of doing so, but there is some evidence that he did carry out brief excavations in addition to his geological investigations (Pègues 1842: 75; Brongniart 1844: I, 577). He probably chanced upon prehistoric strata in which he found 'tombs' with 'coarse' pottery, which he attributed to the Phoenicians (Lenormant 1866a). The description of the tombs, particularly the position in which they were found, beneath the volcanic tephra—that is, in pre-eruption levels—would suggest prehistoric finds.

The entire activity of the Scientific Mission to the Morea lasted only a few months, and in the Cyclades it was a matter of just a few weeks. However, the volumes published over the following years had a great impact in Europe. It was the first time, and indeed the last for many years, that a group of scientists from various disciplines had worked on Greek soil in an organized, collective manner, and at so high an institutional level, under the aegis of

the French Academy. The spirit of their work was in keeping with the great flowering of the natural sciences in the early 19th century. Their contribution to archaeology marked a break with current literary archaeology. The scientists on the Mission tried to record, classify and create a base of archaeological knowledge and information, as they had done in the natural sciences. The European travellers who preceded and succeeded them were individuals, their activities were the result of their own initiative, and they are to be seen rather in the tradition of the antiquarians of the preceding centuries; they did not produce the well-organized work of a Mission that was—it should not be forgotten—part of a military expedition. In the following years, the work carried out in the Aegean by various scientists and various disciplines resumed its earlier fragmented nature (Valenti 2001: 187).

When, some 15 years later in 1846, the French School at Athens was established, it was regarded by its founders as the successor to the Scientific Mission to the Morea. According to Joseph Guignaut (Etienne 1996: 8), it was 'the distant but legitimate successor to the French intervention in the glorious struggle for Greek independence'. The foundation of the French School at Athens was the fruit of historical junctures and circumstances, a combination of scientific aspirations, ideological currents, and political expediency (Valenti 2001: 177; Gran-Aymerich and Gran-Aymerich 1992). Over half a century later, at the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the French School at Athens, the French director, Theophile Homolle, continued to declare that the work of the Scientific Mission to the Morea was a glorious precedent, and linked the mission of the French School at Athens with its work. And fairly recently, in the special volume marking the 150th anniversary of the School in 1996, the Mission to the Morea was again referred to as the model for all subsequent missions not involving excavation (Etienne

1996: 8). It may be said, therefore, that the line of French investigations on Thera began, both substantively and formally, in 1829, when Bory de Saint-Vincent walked the Koloumbos peninsula, saw the antiquities, and, as a true representative of the Eurocentrist views of the great age of imperialism, considered himself to be the first to have seen them.

Ludwig Ross on Thera

In the 1830s, only a few years after the members of the Scientific Mission to the Morea, Thera was visited several times by another important visitor, Ludwig Ross, who travelled in the Aegean between 1835 and 1841, calling at Thera amongst other islands. Ross (1806–59) was an important and controversial figure in Greek archaeology. In the early years of Greek independence, he was one of the first ephors of antiquities appointed by the new state and, through his position and career, influenced the practices and principles of Greek archaeology.

Ross was an exponent of German philhellenism in what was now its official form after King Otto had arrived in the new state, and also of German romanticism. He cultivated Greek archaeology mainly as art history, in the German tradition of Winckelmann. Having an excellent knowledge of ancient literature, which he taught in the newly founded University of Athens, he may be considered one of the last representatives of literary archaeology. At the same time, however, his daily involvement in the practical aspects of archaeology (he was the restorer of the temple of Athena Nike) kept him fully apprised of archaeological practice. The transition from a learned study of the ancient world, largely through literary sources, to the management of the material remains that emerged continuously from the soil and required both study and protection, found concrete expression in his person (Stoneman 1987: 351–62).

Ross was an indefatigable traveller. During his journeys he wrote travel literature in the form of an epistolary diary accompanied by countless drawings. It was an account of his movements, intermingled with incidents drawn from contemporary life, and his writings are considered one of the best sources for the situation in the Greek provinces in the early years of independence (Ross 1840–45). His interests and aims converged with those of the Scientific Mission to the Morea, but in all other respects their work was quite different. It may be no coincidence that Ross, whether deliberately or unwittingly, completely ignored the work of the Mission. They belong to two different traditions: German romanticism promoted the holding up of ancient Athenian grandeur as the perfect example to justify the national aspirations of Germany, while the French heirs to the Enlightenment, with their uniform world model of evolution that led their scientific and archaeological investigations, provided the ideological basis for imperialist political ambitions.

Ross first visited Thera at the beginning of September 1835. He stayed about a month and wrote four letters devoted exclusively to the island. It was here, too, that he carried out the only excavation conducted by him in the Aegean islands. In his letters, he deals at length with the history of the volcano.

I concentrate here on his activity on Mesa Vouno, where he carried out his excavation. At the beginning of his account, Ross explains why he selected this site: first, because there were various antiquities scattered on the surface and tombs cut into the rocks, and second because the action of the winds had removed the layer of pumice and volcanic tephra and had stripped the site, so that it would be easy to excavate. From his description, it seems that these tombs may have been earlier than the Classical period, but no evidence is cited that might help to date them. He adds that he bought a few more vases. The excavation

did not live up to his expectations and he left a week later. The site of this excavation is unknown, as, too, is the present location of his finds.

Ross's investigations are normally of little interest for Aegean Prehistory, but since prehistoric archaeology at this period was non-existent (i.e. no distinction was drawn between prehistoric and classical archaeology), it is possible that some of the evidence he reported, and some of the finds, were in fact much earlier than he thought. It is possible, for example, that some of the 'poor' vases that he says he collected from the countryside were Late Cycladic, given that similar vases are known to have been part of collections on Thera at the same period.

The Social Situation on Thera about 1860: The Values of a Bourgeois Way of Life

Thera's entry into the field of archaeology took place abruptly in the 1860s, owing to two chance events: the construction of the Suez Canal, completed in 1869, and volcanic activity that began on Thera in 1866 and lasted for five years. Both these events provided an opportunity for archaeological excavations and gave them a new direction, far removed from the study of literary sources or the hunt for art treasures.

Before turning to them, let us examine the situation on the island more closely. Towards the middle of the century, Thera was an emerging urban centre and a powerful commercial force in the Aegean. It was also an important exporter of industrial raw materials in the Cyclades —specifically, of *pozzuolana* ('Theran earth'). For a decade, from 1859 to just after 1868, the quarrying of *pozzuolana* increased to meet the needs of the Suez Canal Company. Thera is said to have had a population of about 17,000 inhabitants (today its population is c. 6,000) and to have been a considerable wine producer. Newspapers were

published, although rather sporadically, and consuls of many European states were based on the island. Commercial contacts with Russia, particularly Odessa, were very close and intensive.

At the beginning of February 1836, King Ludwig I of Bavaria, a romantic lover of the ancient world and father of the young king of Greece, Otto, visited the Cyclades in the hope of finding the lost arm of the Venus de Milo. Here is Ludwig Ross's description of the king's arrival at Thera, at the same time affording a glimpse of its society (Ross 1851: 122):

At daybreak, the king disembarked near the lower slopes of the steep rock, from which a path winds up to the main village, Phira. What a spectacular sight... There, on the remote island, that nonetheless prospers in wine-production and shipping, amongst the dense and varied population wearing wide naval trousers, was an entire consular corps in official uniform. Representatives of Austria, Britain, France, Russia, Sweden, Holland and other powers, too, with their cocked hats and embroidered costumes...

Communications, commercial and naval enterprises, and contacts with western Europe and Russia were all conducive to acceptance of a spirit of innovation. This was expressed in a variety of forms, mainly of a commercial nature, but also cultural (e.g. the creation of archaeological collections), which were to be found alongside the formation of a bourgeois way of life and bourgeois values. There were many on Thera who supported the new king George I and the Constitution. When the tip of the volcanic cone emerged from the sea in the form of a small island in 1866, the physician Joseph De Cigalla named it *George*, amidst general approval, despite the objections of the newly arrived king, who protested that he did not wish his name to be associated with volcanic disasters. The community of lettered Catholics, many of them collectors of antiquities, played an active role in both the

geological and the archaeological investigations. It was mainly they who welcomed the foreign scholars, geologists and archaeologists and assisted them in their work. But they were not the only ones: a number of notables, a variety of men of letters and cultured Therans, such as G. Kanakaris, who compiled a geological history of the island (Kanakaris 1867), were also in a position to be affected, albeit partially, by influences from Europe, and with them the new 'bourgeois' values.

It is worth taking a brief look at the life and career of De Cigalla, one of the local protagonists in the events that were to follow. A member of the Catholic community who had studied in Italy, he enjoyed great prestige and social standing and, in addition to his career as a doctor, he was also the most important local scholar known throughout Greece. He frequently wrote in *Pandora*, a journal with a varied content, on all kinds of subjects: literature, botany, medicine, geology, and frequently archaeology. Acquainted with archaeological developments in northern Europe he also conducted excavations himself. De Cigalla enjoyed close relations with the Academies of Science in Paris and Vienna, to which he sent regular reports on geological phenomena and archaeological excavations, as did two other men of letters, Guillaume Delenda and Da Corogna. He was held in high esteem by his fellow islanders due to his generosity and scholarship. He followed the excavations on Therasia at close hand and wrote several articles about them for various journals. He was to be found everywhere, with geologists, ambassadors, and soldiers. He kept a diary of the volcano on his own initiative, since he realised the importance of recording every detail of the course of the volcanic activity. Fouqué (1879: 39) refers to De Cigalla as one of his main sources of information for the highly important early phases of the eruption, when there was no geologist present to monitor and record them. He formed and expressed an

independent opinion on various issues, mainly archaeological, though also on other matters, such as the sequence and the nature of eruptions. His writing is charming and powerful (e.g. De Cigalla 1866).

Brief reference may also be made to the general political conditions of the eastern Mediterranean. When the eruption of the volcano occurred and the archaeological excavations took place on Therasia, the southern Aegean was the theatre of major upheavals. A revolt had broken out in Crete that was to last from spring 1866 to December 1869 (that is, the entire period of the volcanic phenomena). The Eastern Question had come strongly to the fore in the context of the Cretan uprising. The Great Powers were on the alert: both France and Russia moved to promote their position and attempted to exploit the situation to their own advantage, while the British were rather hostile to the Cretan uprising. All the Great Powers, who were promoting their own interests in the conflict, continually changed their views, intentions and stances during these years (Driault and Lhéritier 1925: 180-238; Dakin 1972: 170-87).

Did this situation on Thera have any effect on the excavations? Not directly, certainly, though perhaps indirectly and occasionally. There was intensive international movement in the southern Aegean. Small Greek ships broke the blockade, taking volunteers and supplies to Crete, and Thera was a potential (and the southernmost) station en route. The ships that put in at the island were not only mercantile vessels: the eruption seems to have furnished an opportunity for various warships to call at Thera, in addition to the ones making routine trips and patrols. This also enabled them to check on movements to and from Crete, which may have been an additional reason why the official French presence on the island grew so rapidly, and why warships of other nationalities, such as the *Reka* of Austria, also put in there.

The Construction of the Suez Canal and the Quarrying Work on Thera

Amidst all this activity, pozzuolana continued to be quarried regularly on the south coast of Therasia, the bulk of it destined for Suez. And it was here that the archaeological discovery was made, between the two headlands Trypiti and Kimina, opposite Aspronisi. The layer of pozzuolana was quarried in vertical slices, from the surface down to its natural bedrock, which was the pre-eruption level. Some of the stones inside the pozzuolana were not *ejecta* from the eruptions, but were placed in straight rows, and readily identifiable as walls of buildings. The first scholar to see these walls and note their archaeological significance was A. Christomanos, later Professor of Chemistry at Athens University and a member of the Scientific Committee formed by the Academy of Athens to monitor the volcanic eruption (Fouqué 1879: 95; Dumont and Chaplain 1888: 20).

Prior to 1866, the Therans were certainly aware of the existence of walls in the open-cast quarries, and some of them probably realized that they were ancient. They took no action, however, partly because of their drive for productivity and for securing a high return from the labour they were employing, and partly because people were not sufficiently aware of the importance of these finds. In September 1866 the owners of the quarry in Therasia, who conducted the excavation on their own initiative, noted down how much it cost them, how many workers they employed, and for how many days; their account reveals clearly their concern to avoid financial loss.

Not only the existence of these ancient buildings was known, but probably also that of the finds associated with them, since Late Cycladic [LC] vases were to be found in collections on Thera earlier than 1866. Nevertheless, it was only the second event, the eruption of the volcano, that aroused significant interest in them. It could be said that the

quarrying on Therasia created the preconditions for research, and immediately afterwards, when the volcanic eruption occurred, scholars found the field prepared for them.

Volcanic Activity from 1866 to 1870

Of the long series of eruptions of the Thera volcano, it was that of 1866 which attracted the greatest international attention and was the best studied and described. The volcanic phenomena began on 26 January/7 February 1866 and lasted for a long period: the latest volcanic activity to be mentioned occurred in October 1870, so it continued for almost five years (Fouqué 1879: ch. 2; Friedrich 1994: 184-87).

The eruption began with the appearance of fissures, movements of rocks, and rumbling in the bay of Vulcano on the island of Nea Kameni, where there was a small settlement. In the days that followed, the phenomena steadily intensified and spread, with intense flames and gas emissions. The Greek Government was the first to react and to monitor the events appointed a scientific committee, one of whose members was the same A. Christomanos, who had been the first to note the ancient building on Therasia. On 22 February 1866, the ship *Aphroessa* arrived on Thera carrying the members of the committee.

From March 1866 onwards, the eruptions became stronger and stronger, and there were human victims. This circumstance led to a minor economic crisis on the island. Ships now avoided putting in at Thera, leading to a shortage of basic materials and also to the paralysis of trade. It began to become difficult to dispose of Thera produce and crops had to be destroyed.

French interest quickly made itself felt. The French had always taken a special interest in Thera because of the existence on the island of the Catholic community (of which they were the official protectors), and that interest

was now especially strong on account of the presence of the Suez Company. To monitor the volcanic phenomena on Thera, the French Academy rapidly formed a special scientific committee, which immediately sent an advance party to Thera, consisting of F. Fouqué and de Verneuil. Throughout their mission, the two geologists sent letters to the Academy containing descriptions and interpretations of events.

The advance party of the French Academy of Sciences arrived on Thera on 20 March. Along with them arrived François Lenormant, a well-known scholar, as a special emissary (perhaps an unofficial political representative?) of the emperor Napoleon III. At the same time, interest was shown by the other power that had especially close relations with Thera: Russia. They were followed by the Prussians, with von Seebach, who monitored the phenomena for a long period, made drawings and wrote some important articles on the eruption, and by the Austrians. The Austrian consul on Syros, von Hahn, visited Thera frequently at the beginning of the eruption, and devoted his attention not only to the volcano, but also to excavations on Thera. The French presence, however, was patently the largest and longest.

In the first few weeks, particularly after a rain of stones which claimed one human victim, the population of the island began to show signs of panic. At this point, Fouqué's public actions on the island are of some interest. He twice intervened through letters to the local authorities. On the first occasion, he wrote to the *Eparchos* of the island, explaining the natural events in order to calm public opinion. In this letter, published in the Athenian newspaper *Aion* in its issue of 21 March 1866, he sets out the reasons why large-scale eruptions, dangerous for the population, were not to be expected. On the second occasion, he sent a report to the Academy of Athens, also published in *Aion* on 30 May 1866. Despite his brief stay on the island, he was the

only one of the foreign scholars who played an active role in the formation of public opinion, possibly as a result of the personal relations he had developed. This may explain why the following year, when he made his second visit, he was able to carry out his geological and archaeological investigations fairly easily.

The investigation of the volcanic phenomena in 1866 was assiduous and systematic, and was the first scientific study of the eruptions of the Santorini volcano (for full bibliography, see Reck 1936). An assessment of it is attempted in the prologue to Alexander McBirney's recent translation of Fouqué's book (Fouqué and McBirney 1998). After his last visit to Santorini in 1875, Fouqué finalized his conclusions and published his work in 1879 (Fouqué 1879: 434-51).

The Historiography of Thera at the Beginning of the Eruption: Lenormant's mission

The international interest aroused by the eruption of the Thera volcano was, of course, focused on geology, but at the same time it also attracted attention to the history of the island. The geologists themselves turned to the history of the eruptions in order to establish the chronological pattern through the sequence and intensity of volcanic phenomena. From the outset, the main question to which historians and geologists turned was that of the earliest human occupation: did human settlement on the island precede or succeed the huge eruption that created the caldera? When the disaster occurred, was Thera inhabited or not?

François Lenormant, on his return to France, submitted a report to Napoleon III, in which he summarized what was known of the history of the volcano and the island up to that time and demonstrated how this was connected with the sequence of volcanic eruptions. This report was read to the French Academy and published in its proceedings (Lenormant 1866a). Its importance is that it consists of a compila-

tion of what was known of Thera's past and (more importantly) interpretations of it, just a few months before the commencement of the excavations, and before Fouqué's investigations. It thus provides us with a brief account of the state of knowledge at the time that the excavations began. In it one can find the controversial issues of the time: the presence of the Phoenicians (as related by Herodotus IV.147) and the date of the eruption. There was also the question of the 'coarse' vases spread all over the island (Geometric, but probably LC as well): must they be assigned to the Phoenicians? We now know that the LC civilization just before the Minoan eruption does not have any features related to what is later known as Phoenician; but at the time, without any information about the civilizations preceding the eruption, Herodotus's reference was crucial.

The Adventures of the 'Lenormant pithos' in the Louvre

Lenormant's visit in March 1866 produced the most serious evidence for prehistoric finds from Thera, which are now known to be connected with the phase directly before the eruption. This evidence is the pithos published by him in 1866, still before the excavations on Therasia (Lenormant 1866b: 258):

From Santorini, ancient Thera, I brought the vase in plate... This vase belongs to the earliest period of the archaic pottery of Thera... It can easily be shown that its manufacture goes back to the period of the Phoenician colonists, which preceded the arrival of the Dorians on Thera...

Lenormant was wrong. At that time there were no parallels to assist him in assigning this pithos to a group of similar pottery, but it is now clear that the pithos in question belongs to the LC phase of Akrotiri and dates from the period immediately before the eruption. However, Lenormant had to assign it somewhere, to some culture and above all to some

historical period. Given that some of the early 'island' Geometric vases, including some from Thera itself, had already been studied, there was ready to hand a group of pottery (the Geometric vases from Thera) to which this pithos could be assigned, since Lenormant considered—correctly—that it was earlier than the finds of the Classical period. The pithos was thus assigned to that group and considered to be the work of the Phoenicians.

It is perhaps worth dwelling a little longer on its history. Lenormant evidently took the vase out of Greece with no difficulty. It may be recalled that the archaeological law passed in 1834 prohibiting the exporting of antiquities was in force, and the removal of the vase was therefore illegal. Later the vase formed part of the Witte collection and when this collection came into the possession of the Louvre, the pithos, too, came to the museum, where it is now on display (CA 296). Since at the time several Geometric vases were known from Thera, for a few years it fuelled further confusion between Geometric and prehistoric pottery (both categories being regarded as belonging to the Geometric period), and gave rise to a large literature on the question of whether they could properly be attributed to the Phoenician settlement of the island. Such confusion between prehistoric and Geometric finds was common at the time. Since no pre-classical civilizations had yet been singled out and studied, all finds that seemed earlier than the Classical period were duly considered to be Geometric. There was similar confusion about the Mycenaean vases found at Ialysos on Rhodes (Fitton 1996: 31).

The Delenda Collection of Antiquities

There is other equally interesting evidence relating to the same pithos. We learn how Lenormant acquired this vase from his report to Napoleon III after his visit to Thera (Lenormant 1866a). The widow of Nikolaos Delenda,

a Catholic notable of the island who owned a large collection of antiquities, gave him four vases, one of which was of large dimensions. This is unquestionably the one that came to the Louvre in 1890.

What was this collection, and what did it contain? Traces of it can be found in other references dating from the middle of the 19th century. The most important of them is by Ludwig Ross: on his fourth visit to Thera, in early September 1843, he referred to the Delenda collection, which had been formed over the previous four years, and he provides a catalogue of the antiquities contained in the collection, going on to mention another one owned by Dalezios (Ross 1912: 88). Ross added how pleased he was that love for the ancient heritage, a feature of the Italians, was also gradually being cultivated in Greece.

The creation and display of collections of antiquities on Thera is an interesting matter. To date, evidence exists for four such collections: those of De Cigalla, Delenda, Nomikos and Dalezios (Lenormant 1866d: 988). We also hear of a Chigi collection, from which Fouqué's companion de Cessac bought vases. This phenomenon is an indicator of certain values, and perhaps also of a fashion, which was followed mostly by Catholic notables and men of letters (three of the known collectors were Catholics). It was through them that the modes of Europe reached the island. The creation of antiquities collections thus had less to do with a national consciousness, a perception of the past, or the idea of the continuity of the Greek nation, but rather was connected to the adoption of customs and values that came directly from Europe. Nevertheless, the fact that the Greek government of Otto and later of George I was animated by philhellene ideals of German inspiration and strongly projected a love of ancient Greece was not alien to the 'fashion' for collections on Thera, as in other parts of Greece. The collectors, moreover, all of them prosperous men of good social

status, were aware that the artefacts they were collecting had an economic, as well as a symbolic value. There are indications that the objects in the collections frequently changed hands, either as gifts (wedding presents, for example) or through sale, for great numbers of Thera vases appeared in the museums of Europe at this period, just after the middle of the century.

Hiller von Gærtringen refers also to these collections. In 1896, he visited the Nomikos collection, which contained 'pre-Mycenaean' (he presumably means Early Cycladic) vases from Thera and Therasia. At that time, two other collections existed—those of De Cigalla and the widow of Nikolaos Delenda. Later, in 1901, Hiller von Gærtringen wrote an article on the antiquities of Thera in the Greek review *Armonia*, in which he states that the artefacts included in these collections had found their way into the newly founded Archaeological Museum of Thera (Hiller von Gærtringen 1901: 467; 1902: 3). Given that Hiller was the moving force behind the foundation of the Thera museum, and also that he enjoyed enormous prestige on the island, he would unquestionably have had accurate information about the antiquities in the collections.

Today, the only collection of which there are clear traces is the Nomikos collection. Reference was made to this by the British Hellenist James Theodore Bent, who visited the island some years after the French excavations (Bent 1885: 146). In 1956, after the earthquake that caused much damage on Santorini and apparently to the collection itself, the remaining artefacts in it were transferred to the Thera Archaeological Museum.

A Scientific Disagreement between Archaeologists and Geologists

In the context of the collaboration between geology and archaeology, and of the general scientific climate in which the investigations

in Thera were carried out, it is worth mentioning the temporary dispute between Lenormant and other scholars who based their arguments on the testimony of Bory de Saint-Vincent; Lenormant (1966a) disagreed with the latter. The question that was of concern to him was the most vital of the period, and it involved geological and historical issues equally: did the first inhabitants of Thera come to the island before its central part collapsed and the island was covered with masses of volcanic ash, or only later, when Thera had assumed its present form? In the former case, the inhabitants would have been Phoenicians, as Herodotos states (Herodotus IV.147), and in the latter, the destruction would have taken place earlier than the 14th century, while the island was still unoccupied. This was the view advanced by Lenormant.³

Let us examine the line of argument he developed in the spring of 1866, after his return to France from his visit to Thera, while the volcano was still active.

Is it possible to determine the period... of this enormous destruction? Does it date from historical times, or must it be put back further... before the appearance of human beings in the Aegean? No ancient author refers to the collapse of the original volcanic cone of Kalliste (the earliest name of Thera), or gives any hint at the event, though it must have left indelible traces on the human imagination. Nevertheless, a view generally accepted today... tends to consider that the destruction occurred in the historical period and places it between the first settlement of Phoenicians on the island in the 14th century BC and the settlement of the Dorians, who came from Sparta in the 10th century BC. This view is based primarily on the evidence of Bory de Saint-Vincent, who claimed that below the layer of pumice he regularly found large vases of a primitive style peculiar to Thera and of Phoenician origin... My own investigations... lead me to believe that Bory de

Saint-Vincent's information is inaccurate. Santorini and Therasia have no trace of human occupation before the destruction. The Phoenician colonists of the 14th century occupied and cultivated the island under the same conditions as the modern inhabitants. On the surface, not below the layer of pumice, are to be found objects that can be attributed to the civilisation of the first Canaanite inhabitants... vases, scarabs, clumsy statuettes of Astarte made of clay or marble, identical with the images of the goddess from Cyprus or Babylonia... It is therefore quite evident that... the fearful demolition... is an event that antedates the arrival of the Phoenician colonists. (Lenormant 1866a: 270)

Lenormant's arguments were based mainly on literary sources. Things were to change after only a few months.

The Disagreement is Resolved by the First Excavations, and Lenormant Admits his Mistake

Only a few months later, in September 1866, the first excavations were conducted on Therasia by S. Alaphouzos and the physician N. Nomikos. This excavation proved that the case put forward by Lenormant was mistaken. Lenormant recognized this and cited the evidence that proved it in an article he wrote in the *Revue archéologique*:

In the report I addressed to his Majesty the Emperor... I came to the conclusion that humans inhabited the island only after the collapse of the cone. Bory de Saint-Vincent... asserted a contrary view... Recent discoveries have demonstrated that I made an error... It is the duty of every scholar, when new evidence proves that he has made an error, to admit it and... proclaim the truth. I am therefore the first to publish these finds... (Lenormant 1866c: 425).

The argument that disproved his view was the position of the newly discovered buildings

in the geological strata. The stratigraphical sequence made it clear that the buildings on Therasia rest on a pre-volcanic stratum.

The very same disagreement also arose for a short time at the beginning of the excavation. A. Christomanos believed that the quadrilateral building discovered on Therasia was constructed by its inhabitants before the major destruction of the prehistoric period (Fouqué 1867: 7; Christomanos 1899). De Cigalla, on the other hand, an eyewitness to the excavation who saw what was happening with his own eyes, believed it to be a tomb that had been cut later, after the eruption of the volcano, into the pumice of the pre-eruption period (De Cigalla 1866: 643).

The continuation of the excavation proved Christomanos to be right. It should be noted, as a symptom of the difficulties attending the early steps of archaeology, that modern archaeological practice, involving reading the sequence of deposits, was not yet standard methodology. The antiquarians of the time, such as Lenormant, did not adopt it and had greater faith in the literary sources. By contrast, it is notable that those who came from the natural sciences (Bory de Saint-Vincent, Fouqué and Christomanos) were more at ease in an excavation, and had a positivist confidence in what they saw before their eyes.

The Excavations on Therasia by S. Alaphouzos and N. Nomikos

There are detailed descriptions of the first excavation on Therasia by the excavators themselves. It took place in the quarry owned by S. Alaphouzos, the mayor of Oia. As far as we know, he was a literate man who enjoyed a certain economic ease, since it is repeatedly stated that he himself funded the investigation. The excavation was carried out in September 1866 by Alaphouzos himself, his son Ch. Alaphouzos, and his relative N. Nomikos, a well-known antiquarian and col-

lector; as we are informed, it 'lasted for three days and employed 13 workmen full time'. It should be noted that, although brief, this excavation had objectives that were set at the outset. The excavators were aware that the main problem was the date of the earliest human occupation of the island.

The second phase of the excavation took place at the beginning of October the same year, and also lasted only a few days. It was again conducted by the same two excavators (Nomikos and Alaphouzos), but now Joseph De Cigalla was also present and he personally wrote reports and articles, translated Nomikos's texts, and sent letters to the French Academy of Science (De Cigalla 1866). The excavators themselves state explicitly that it was their intention to attract the attention of scientists. At the end of the first phase of excavation, in September 1866, Nomikos compiled a report that he sent to the Athens Academy, and which was also published in the newspaper *Aion* (on 10 October 1866); it was translated by De Cigalla and placed at the disposal of Lenormant, who used it as the basis for his article (1866c) in *Revue Archéologique*, mentioned above.

The excavators, after establishing the stratigraphy of the site, proceeded to ascertain its use. It had to be shown whether or not it was a tomb. The dimensions of the building were ascertained. Since the exterior side of the walls could not be cleaned, because of the risk of collapse, only their internal faces were cleaned, and the excavation proceeded in other directions, uncovering the interior of the other rooms. It soon appeared that it was a building comprised of many rooms preserved to a great height, with doors and windows still in place. In order to interpret the ruins, two points of comparison were used: the buildings of ancient Greece (which the Therasia structure did not resemble in any way) and those of modern Santorini (with which the excavators also felt there was no resemblance). Finding

no typological parallels, they turned in other directions and to other issues, and attempted to discover a chronological framework for the building. To this end, they resorted to the Three-Age system already in use at this period (Trigger 1989: 73-80); and since no metal objects had been discovered inside the structure, they assigned it to the Stone Age. This dating was probably the work of De Cigalla, who was well acquainted with the archaeology of central and northern Europe. The fate of the finds from this first excavation is unknown. In the following years, however, they were certainly in the Nomikos collection, and some were also in the hands of Alaphouzos, where they were seen and described by Fouqué and by Heinrich Schliemann.

It is worth examining how Lenormant (1866c) ended his brief report in *Revue Archéologique*, and how he attempted to assign the new finds to a historical context. First, he tried to define the Phoenician presence on the island, both chronologically and in cultural terms, in relation to the finds from the excavation on Therasia. The Phoenicians were considered to be responsible for the tombs at Koloumbos described by Bory de Saint-Vincent in 1829, cut into volcanic tephra and not into pre-eruptions levels, and therefore constructed after the major eruption. Before the Phoenicians settled on the island, Thera had been occupied by a people who were 'not wild, like the earliest inhabitants of Galatia, who lived in caves', but semi-civilized and advanced seafarers. The myth of the Argonauts was to be associated with this people, which dwelt on the island before the Phoenicians. It may be noted that the placing of the Phoenicians *after* the people who developed prehistoric culture on Thera is here made for the first time, at the very outset of the discovery of the LC settlement.

This short report was Lenormant's last activity on Thera. After it, he withdrew from the field and is never heard of again in connection with Thera: Fouqué's *magnum opus* 13 years

later contains not a single reference either to Lenormant himself or to his 'literary' views. Could this quasi- *damnatio memoriae* possibly be due to his relations with Napoleon III and the change of regime? Whatever the case, the field henceforth belonged unquestionably to the geologists.

Fouqué Replaces the Therans and Proceeds to Establish the Stratigraphy

Fouqué visited the site of the excavation on Therasia in March 1867, several months after the building had been revealed. It was his second and final visit to Thera while the volcano was still active. In spring 1867, a second excavation season began at Fouqué's instigation, with clearer methodology and aims (Fouqué 1879: 99).

Fouqué's methodology was dictated by the aims he set himself. His objective was still the same as that of the previous excavators—that is, to investigate whether the occupation of Thera preceded or followed the major volcanic eruption. However, he also had a number of more specific questions that were ancillary to this main purpose. He wanted to investigate on which geological strata the building was founded and to clarify the character of the building: things would be different if it were a tomb—that is, a subterranean building—in which case the argument based on the stratum on which it was founded would be invalid, since its users could have cut it from an overlying stratum after the eruption. If, however, it were a house, a structure built above ground, the foundation level would be almost the same as the occupation level. Furthermore, even if this problem were to be solved and the buildings proved to be built above ground, it would still have to be determined whether the cloak of volcanic material enclosing them had been deposited before the original eruption, and was not the result of later landslides, which would

preclude dating the building before the eruption (Fouqué 1879: 95). Fouqué was therefore concerned to locate the palaeosol, the thin layer of organic deposits, which would also be a secure witness to the determination of the pre-eruption strata, probably with human occupation (Fouqué 1869: 929).

He answered both these questions affirmatively, relying on archaeological and geological observations. The first was solved by the discovery of doors and windows, demonstrating that the building stood above ground (Fouqué 1867: 13; 1869: 928); the second by comparison of the stratigraphy of the stones and pumice filling the building with the layers of volcanic material that buried the building on the outside (Fouqué 1867: 13-14). His personal contribution consisted in cleaning the area around the building from the outside to reveal the exterior of the walls. He did this wherever he could, stopping more often than not out of a fear that they would collapse.

The Skull of the Dead Man and the Austrian consul

One of the most interesting finds on Therasia was the human skeleton discovered in one of the rooms in the building. As we read the first and also the later reports, including the final publication by Fouqué, we repeatedly find the following phrase: 'The Austrian consul on Syros, Herr von Hahn, made a cast of the jaw of the dead man and took it away to study'. In his final publication, indeed, Fouqué (1879: 99) adds that the study produced nothing of interest. The precise reason for the consul's interest was not stated.

Von Hahn is a well-known figure during the first years of the Greek state. He was one of the people responsible for organizing the administrative machinery of the state in accordance with German models; he is mentioned specifically as having organized the Ministry of Justice. Later he became Prussian

ambassador in Greece, consul to Turkey based in Ioannina, and then Austrian consul in East Greece, based on Syros. This, however, is not why he is well-known. He is regarded as the first man to study the Albanian language, customs, institutions, and above all oral testimony. He turned his attention to the Albanian-speaking peoples of the Balkans, taking the view that they were indigenous and were descended from the Illyrians and also from the Pelasgians, thus advancing the unbroken historical continuity of the Albanian people. His *Albanischen Studien* (1854) marks the beginning of Albanian historiography. In Greece, his name is often linked with that of Fallmerayer, though his views never provoked the storm of protest that broke upon those of Fallmerayer (Grimm 1964).

In 1866, von Hahn made two trips from Syros to Santorini: one to follow the volcanic eruption and another when he learned of the find on Therasia (Grimm 1964: 231). It was then, apparently, that he made the cast. But why was he so interested in the human skeleton? His interest was probably due to his view that the Albanians were descended from the Pelasgians and Illyrians, and—according to the ancient sources—Pelasgians lived in the Cyclades. It may have been his aim to take measurements and compare them with those of modern Albanians, in order to prove some ethnic affinity. It should not be forgotten that, at this period, anthropological studies of this kind were carried out seriously and were widely accepted. Samuel Morton's *Crania Aegyptiaca* may be cited as an example: published in 1845, it used measurements of actual skulls and depictions of ancient Egyptians in ancient Egyptian monuments as a basis for the formulation of theories about the antiquity of their descent and their continuity down to his day. In these years, the theory of different human races was being formulated, based on different biological features, which, as we know, furnished arguments for a variety

of racist theories (Trigger 1989: 111-14). Von Hahn's expectation of finding some anthropological proof of his theories was in keeping with the epistemological climate of his day. He did not proceed further with this kind of investigation, for he died soon afterwards.

Fouqué's Lonely Walks on Akrotiri

After his excavation on Therasia, Fouqué continued his work in the spring of 1867 in the south of Thera. He soon was able to appreciate the archaeological interest of the valley in which the modern excavations near the village of Akrotiri are being conducted (Fouqué 1867: 19). While exploring the geological strata, alerted by the finds on Therasia, he began to wonder whether there might be traces of ancient buildings in southern Thera. A local inhabitant took him to a place in a winter torrent, and showed him part of a wall in the pumice. Fouqué wanted to excavate the area around the wall to investigate to what extent the foundations of the building that could be seen were founded in pre-eruption strata or in the later volcanic deposits. He would be able in this way to confirm the conclusions from Therasia on an issue that was also the main focus of his archaeological investigations. He was unable to do so, however, because of a misunderstanding (probably of a financial nature) with the owner of the land.

This is the story as told by Fouqué himself. It is my belief that he did not come to Akrotiri by chance. He had probably been given information by Georgios Kanakaris, who took a special interest in geology. De Cigalla later preserves the information that the French excavations of 1870 were carried out on the property of Kanakaris, and we know that the site of these excavations was the one suggested to the excavators by Fouqué. Kanakaris, author of a book on the geology of Thera published in 1867, makes particular mention of the area of Akrotiri, which he knew well,

because he came from the village of Emporeion nearby and had an intimate knowledge of the surrounding area. The visit of Fouqué to his property was probably no coincidence.

Fouqué was encouraged by the antiquities he found in the valley south of Akrotiri and systematically visited all the valleys, ravines and winter torrents in the area, in places where, thanks to the actions of water, there was a good chance that part of the volcanic tephra had been swept away and the bedrock underneath laid bare (Fouqué 1867: 20; 1879: 104). He was interested in horizontal as well as in vertical stratigraphy. His investigations in the valley to the east of the one in which the present excavations are being conducted led him to locate another stratum containing archaeological traces (Fouqué 1867: 19): this was Potamos, the valley in which the Germans excavated in 1899 (see Figure 1).

The Excavations on Thera by the French School at Athens

The previous excavations had an episodic and personal character: both the Therans and Fouqué himself had excavated at their own personal initiative, without explicit approval from institutional authorities. Things changed within a few years. Three years later, the French School at Athens, founded only 24 years earlier, sought to follow the thread of Fouqué's investigations. 'The researches of M. Fouqué, which coincided with the discovery of prehistoric antiquities everywhere in Europe, raised many problems but solved none'. So later wrote the Director of the School, Emile Burnouf (1879: 110), comparing the investigation on Thera and Therasia with similar ones in Europe and requesting funds to continue this activity. It should be noted that the excavations represented a new direction for the French School, which had hitherto concentrated more on its educational objectives and less on research. This

was only its third excavation, following notably the work carried out by Ch. Beulé on the Athenian Acropolis in 1852–53.

Burnouf took up his post in 1869 and sought to give the School a more ‘scientific’ character, departing somewhat from the hitherto aristocratic education of its young members. He therefore insisted on founding and running a natural sciences department, which functioned for a few years (1869–73). When the new director took up residence in Athens, the French Minister of Education had ambitious designs for the School: he wished to make it the centre of a huge educational network with branches in the Middle East, which would undertake the dissemination of French language and culture, together with scientific research (Radet 1901: 158; Gran-Aymerich 1998: 183). These educational designs were part of France’s efforts to increase her influence in the Middle East. Alongside diplomacy, the tried and invariably successful method of cultural intervention through the provision of educational services, especially the teaching of French, formed part of a more general political project. We may recall the intense French activity in the revived Eastern Question in the middle of the 1860s, the diplomatic activity in connection with the Cretan revolt, and the huge project of the Suez Canal. The School was thus called upon to contribute to the implementation of French political designs by strengthening French education and culture throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. These designs were interrupted and greatly diminished from as early as the following year, due to the Franco-Prussian War. When Burnouf took up his post, however, they were still at their height and it was against this background that he sought to add a new field to the activities of the School by founding the department of natural sciences. This is of importance to the French excavations on Santorini since the archaeological interest taken by the School in the volcanic islands lasted only as long as this

department functioned. And the only man to staff it was the geologist Herni Gorceix, who excavated on Santorini and was a close colleague of Fouqué.

H. Mamet and H. Gorceix at Akrotiri

The investigations of H. Mamet and H. Gorceix lasted about one and a half months, from 30 April until June 1870. During this time, they kept the Director of the School in whose name they were acting informed through regular letters (Gorceix and Mamet 1870; Mamet and Gorceix 1870). The two sites located by Fouqué in the valley of Akrotiri were partially excavated and the excavations were extended to two more sites, one in the bay of Balos in the caldera and one on Archangelos hill. Not only did Gorceix and Mamet continue their exploration at the specific sites suggested by Fouqué, but they also espoused his entire rationale—that is, his attempt to combine archaeological and historical evidence with the geological record and to use methods drawn from the natural sciences. So, even if these excavations were conducted by a more official body, they may be regarded as the continuation of Fouqué’s work. Moreover, Fouqué himself had the last word on the excavations on Akrotiri conducted by Mamet and Gorceix, since it was he who prepared the final publication, based on their notes, comments and drawings.

Let us turn now to what they actually did. The two excavators started on a point in the valley of Akrotiri at which a wall was visible. Their first task was to establish the stratigraphy—the geological stratigraphy, of course (Gorceix and Mamet 1870: 199; Gorceix 1870: 187). They then attempted to locate human remains in relation to this geological sequence (Gorceix and Mamet 1870: 200–201; Gorceix 1870: 187). Despite the problems of stability, buildings were partly uncovered that seemed slightly different from those on Therasia, and

which closely resemble those that are known today from the excavations at Akrotiri (Fouqué 1879: 104-18).

The Excavation at Balos and the Find that Cast Doubt on Fouqué's Chronological Arguments

The only site that Gorceix and Mamet discovered for themselves is that of Balos, in circumstances similar to those on Therasia. Again while extracting pozzuolana, this time in the open-cast quarries at Balos near Akrotiri, on the edge of the caldera, the workmen came to the pre-eruption layer containing stones and man-made remains and, once again, walls appeared. The excavators were then taken there by the workers and made their most important discovery. Both the finds and the structures were similar to those already known from Akrotiri. But the excavators' interest was drawn mainly to an unexpected discovery, one which overturned all Fouqué's arguments and the dates assigned to the finds: a small bronze saw. To preclude all possibility of its being later in date, they carefully reported its find-spot, on the floor, beneath dozens of metres of tephra. Fouqué's entire argument that the finds on Therasia belonged to the Stone Age were based on the absence of metal. Things now changed (Gorceix and Mamet 1870: 202).

Fouqué himself, however, who later published this excavation (Fouqué 1879: 118-23) refrained from regarding this find as a line of cleavage that invalidated his earlier conclusions. He confined himself to stating that metal was found, but that it was an isolated phenomenon. Finally he dated the eruption of the volcano to just after 2000 BC, on an absolute, not relative chronology, supported mainly by geological arguments (Fouqué 1879: 121-31). He was not so wrong after all—as we now know.⁴

Gorceix and Mamet visit Therasia

During their stay on Thera, Gorceix and Mamet also visited Therasia, since they were intending to extend their work to this island. The situation had changed, however. The continuing work of pozzuolana extraction from open-cast quarries resulted in growth which, at some point, entailed the demolition of the house, as Burnouf (1879: 119) explained. Precisely when and for what reason it was demolished remain unknown. Certainly, in May 1870, when the two French scholars visited Therasia to resume the excavation, they found it already destroyed (Radet 1901: 343).

Were things like this, however? Was the demolition of the house necessary? Was its demolition in fact due to economic or technical constraints? All the references I have found to this act of destruction, which occurred very soon after the excavation, were by the Frenchmen (with a remarkable exception, Fouqué), not the Greeks, who were concerned to indicate first, that the house no longer existed, and second, that it was a great pity that it had been demolished. Except for Burnouf, no reference is made to the reasons for the destruction. A phrase used by Hiller von Gærtringen (1901: 91) led me to doubt Burnouf's version: he recounts how he visited the spot at which the house was found and reports the words of the inhabitant of Therasia who took him there, 'The doctor made a field of it'. That is, he razed it to the ground. Surprisingly, the perpetrator of this act of demolition was the doctor, the physician—that is, Nomikos, and not Alaphouzos, the owner of the quarry. Public opinion, as expressed by this islander, held that responsibility lay with the self-same Nomikos who kept a collection of antiquities, who had vases from the excavation on display in his house, and who wrote the excellent report three years previously on the excavation on Therasia. Why did he destroy something that, logically, he would have regarded as his own

work? Probably his action is explicable only in terms of the values of the time, according to which only portable finds—especially those that might be regarded as works of art—were of interest.

The Return: The Antiquities find their way to the French School at Athens

At the end of their time on Santorini, Mamet and Gorceix found themselves faced with an important problem: what was to be done with the antiquities unearthed at Akrotiri? This was the first time that the problem had arisen on Thera of what to do with the finds from an organized and systematic excavation. No provision is mentioned for the buildings revealed. The excavators note simply that they drew them very carefully. The finds were more controversial: the excavators themselves presumably believed that they should be handed, along with the accounts, to the funding organization, namely, the French Ministry of Education. On their return, however, a surprise was in store for them. When the cargo of antiquities arrived in Piraeus, the Greek Government reacted by confiscating them. We learn this from a letter to the French Minister of Education from the Director of the School, Emile Burnouf, dated 30 June 1870, in which he gives an account of the situation.

Mm. Mamet and Gorceix... returned to Athens three days ago. Unfortunately, the Greek administration... seized the boxes containing the objects brought by these gentlemen, and the samples of stone and tubes of volcanic gases collected by M. Gorceix. Baron Baude, the French chargé d'affaires in Greece, agreed this morning to undertake the matter.⁵

The rest of the episode is derived from Radet's account of the character and efficiency of Gorceix:

Affable and decisive, he overcame the obstacles and, under the eyes of the aston-

ished customs officials he carried on his shoulders the famous olive tree-trunk that is 40 centuries old, and which is now one of the most important sights in the School's small museum (Radet 1901: 46).⁶

We do not know what happened next. Baude's intervention was presumably effective, because the antiquities from Thera were soon in the French School and formed part of its collection.

This episode raises many questions. The French School would undoubtedly have been greatly embarrassed, since it faced a serious dilemma. It had on the one hand to conform with Greek law, and on the other to satisfy the French Ministry that had funded the excavations. All the more so, since the Director was to ask repeatedly for increased funding for the following years. What arguments could he use to convince the funder to increase the funding, when the fruits of the endeavours would not go to French museums? The fate of the antiquities was at the same time the fate of the direction taken by the School. It is conceivable that the housing of the antiquities in the French School at Athens in the end represented a compromise by both sides.

A Changed Situation

In the three years that elapsed between Fouqué's visits in 1866 and 1867 and the visit by Mamet and Gorceix in 1870, the situation had changed significantly. At the beginning of 1866, when the first signs of the volcanic eruption were apparent, the French had an important presence and influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, with the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Company had no further interests in the southern Aegean; and while the volcano remained active until about the middle of 1870, after four years of activity it no longer aroused the same excitement as in the early months.

Meanwhile, archaeology in Greece was evolving. Schliemann began to dig at Troy in 1870 and at Mycenae in 1874. The academic community in Germany was initially more than reserved towards the wealthy amateur, but under the pressure of the general enthusiasm for his successes gradually came to accept him (Marchand 1996: 118-24). Aegean archaeology under Schliemann's influence was moving in a completely different direction. Fouqué's geological strata interested him not in the least. Schliemann visited Thera in March 1870 and left unmoved (Meyer 1969: 242-43; Traill 1995: ch. 5). With Homer and Pausanias in his hands, he strove to interpret the ruins in conformity with the immortal epics (Polychronopoulou 1999a: 65-124). In Greece, archaeology was becoming more and more important, through the mediation of German romanticism, official philhellenism, the expansionism of the Great Powers, who tried to make sure that their trophies also included antiquities from the countries under their influence or rule, and Greek nationalism, which was a constant factor for many years.

Interests had thus begun to turn elsewhere, to other areas and periods. In addition to these general trends, however, archaeology was also affected by immediate, catalytic events. The most important of these as far as the French School at Athens was concerned was the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, followed by the Commune and the change of regime. 'It was a terrible period, which was cut in the middle by an abyss, the War', wrote Radet (1901: 154) 30 years later. The repercussions for the School at Athens were enormous. In 1871, after the end of the war and the political upheavals, mobilization came to an end, the members returned in a heavy atmosphere of defeat, and the School resumed its activities. But nothing was quite the same, neither the School nor its policy. The excavation of Santorini in the following years passed into obscurity.

The New Aims and the Abandonment of Thera

A few decades after these events, in 1898, the French School celebrated its 50th anniversary, which provided an occasion for one of its members, Georges Radet, to write a book on the School's history and work. He discoursed at length on the enormous repercussions of the war on the fortunes of the school. New circumstances were created, there was a retrenchment of activity, and objectives were modified; attention now fell more on academic output and less on education. The year 1870 ushered in the long period of French-German rivalry, which found expression in archaeology in a race for excavation permits at brilliant historical sites such as the panhellenic sanctuaries (Etienne 1996: 9).

With regard to Thera, there are two important documents that reveal the new situation in the School, the relations between the French Ministry of Education, and the more general situation after the defeat. The first is a letter from Emile Burnouf to the Minister of Education dated 27 July 1871, in which he expounds on the significance of the excavations conducted by the French School on Thera. This contains details about the antiquities, and also about the state of the School and its future prospects. Above all, it reveals the now open competition with German academics, a rivalry that was profoundly to affect the work of the school.⁷

I have the honour of conveying to you the memorandum on the excavations conducted on Santorini by Mm. Gorceix and Mamet, members of the French School. The memorandum is accompanied by 21 plates, amongst which are ground-plans and sections of the houses excavated, drawings of vases and stone tools, and a bronze saw... The number of antiquities brought from Santorini to the School is greater than 300... I cannot send these antiquities to

Paris, because Greek legislation forbids the exporting of any ancient artefact...'

There follows a description and assessment of the excavations. The director elaborates at length on the great amount of work achieved with the small amount of funds available, and requests further disbursements. He insists on the importance of the finds, stressing that they are the earliest in Greece, and that it is a great honour for the French School. To convince the Minister, he also alludes to the financial benefit: 'As regards the material value of the objects retrieved in the excavations... I assure you that it is much greater than the sum of 2000 francs used to discover them.' Finally, he insists:

Please, Mr. Minister, be sure, after you have taken note of the memorandum by Mm. Gorceix and Mamet, to forward it, as usual, to the President of the Academy of Inscriptions et Belles Lettres... It is of very great importance that this memorandum is published with its plates...

The director was right to be concerned. The memorandum was never published. Not only this, but the excellent drawings and photographs that accompanied it were lost and, despite Burnouf's protests, were never found—a huge loss to the documentation of the excavations at Akrotiri (on the fate of this memorandum, see Merrillees 2001). I believe that this omission was not fortuitous. For all that there would be an element of neglect, or that this oversight might be the product of certain poor relations on the part of the Director, it is at the same time a symptom that reveals that the interests had changed.

The sequel to this development is evident in a second important document: the Director's report on the activities of the School in the years 1871–72, the first report to the Ministry of Education after the war.⁸ The new objectives are clearly set forth in it. The School attempts to reclassify its interests, and to define aims and priorities:

I am convinced that in the face of the enormous output of erudition on the part of Germany, we must prove ourselves equal and not be left behind by our rivals... The School at Athens has great potential for this kind of study, not only with regard to archaeology, but also to matters relating to the modern life...

The report of 1872 clearly reveals the change of direction in the aims of the School. Prominence is certainly given to the successes of Gorceix and Mamet, but there is no request for funding for excavations on Santorini. 'The view was taken that these excavations related to a very distant past, that geological rather than archaeological knowledge was required, and therefore the Academy paid no more attention to them'. So, some 30 years later, Radet (1901: 168) rationalized the abandonment of these excavations with great frankness. To the best of my knowledge, no one in the French School turned his attention to the prehistoric antiquities of Thera and Therasia in the following years—at least no one conducted any field investigation. Interest was shown only in the vases brought from Thera (Dumont and Chaplain 1888).

It was not until about 1920 that certain members of the French School showed some interest in pre-Classical antiquities, mainly in Crete. In 1922, the site of Malia was assigned to the French School at Athens for investigation, and in the same year the Thera vases in the School collection were published (Renaudin 1922). According to Louis Renaudin, who studied them, the publication was occasioned by the general reclassification of the antiquities of the School after the First World War; but, equally, interest in them may also have been due to the fact that the School had just undertaken the excavation of Malia. On Santorini itself, it was not until 29 years later, in 1899, that a certain interest in prehistoric antiquities emerged, when the German excavators of Classical Thera undertook a very

short excavation, in the last year of their stay on Thera, in the ravine of Potamos.

Conclusions

The way in which the finds from Thera and Therasia were interpreted, in the general context of evolutionism, with emphasis on the field of geology and with the use of the natural sciences, and perhaps also their isolated nature at the time of their discovery, made them unsuitable for ideological exploitation. They were not suitable for invocations of the grandeur of Greece, no mythology or epic poetry lay behind them, nor did they proffer works of art that could be added to the overall gallery, both real and ideal, of classical beauty.

In Greece, archaeology was called upon to offer ideological confirmation for the young state whose identity was still being formed. Archaeology was assigned an important role: it processed the certificates of high origins, vindicated the existence and unity of the modern Greek people, and cultivated national rights to areas that had not been unified with Greece (Kotsakis 1990; Herzfeld 2001). At the same time that powerful Europe was formulating a past as stages of a uniform evolution that would provide it with arguments for a global, ecumenical, human culture, and would thus vindicate its imperialist policies, the smaller nations were drawing attention to their difference. In this context, Thera was not suitable for exploitation of this kind.

Moreover, no-one thought that the prehistoric antiquities of the island might be a probable source of works of art that would attract funding from the major European and American museums. In the 1870s and 1880s, the French School and the German Institute vied with each other for the right to excavate important archaeological sites, invariably displaying their prestige and influence (Marchand 1996: 77). There were no such ambitions on Bronze Age Thera; no-one seemed to be moved by its 'coarse' pottery.

Thus, under the pressure of the official institutions and of an archaeological practice that assigned Greek archaeology to the history of art, archaeological excavation over the following decades concentrated on Classical Greece. At least 30 more years were to pass before, around 1900, archaeology established itself in places that lay outside the geographical field of the mythological narratives, with the investigation of the settlements in the Cyclades or Neolithic Thessaly.

When in 1967, exactly 100 years after the beginning of the excavation at Thera, Spyridon Marinatos resumed the investigations in the very same place that the Frenchmen Mamet and Gorceix had begun their work, a very strong mythological association underlay this venture. Frost (1913) and other scholars (Luce 1960) had pointed to Thera as a possible Atlantis. Marinatos himself never endorsed this view completely nor rejected it; he let others weave an aura of mystery around his excavation, profiting from it enormously. Atlantis is almost forgotten now, but it is worth remembering that, to find its way into the modern era, Santorini had to make a detour via Plato and Classical Athens.

Notes

1. A number of works have shaped the ideas and methodology underlying the present work. I am indebted mainly to Marc Bloch (1974) and Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (1974). I have also consulted Bourdieu (1980), Sahlins (1985), Christenson (1989), Shanks and Tilley (1992), Trigger (1989), Diaz-Andreu and Champion (1996), Meskell (1998), and Lowenthal (1985).
2. When I began this research, it was certainly not my intention to chronicle the investigations on Thera. The work I undertook was the study of the finds from the earlier investigations on Thera and Therasia, before the

excavations of Spyridon Marinatos. Unexpectedly, the subject took me directly to the 19th century, and to the events and situations which determined those investigations. In my attempts to locate the finds, I found myself in the fields of modern history, amongst 19th-century political situations and the ideological and scientific choices of that period. This chronicle emerged naturally from the needs of the investigation. The main work on the 19th-century investigations on Thera and Therasia, which will include the factual evidence, will be published in Greek in 2006.

3. The Lacedaemonian colonization nowadays is placed in the middle of the 8th century BC and therefore the Phoenician presence, following Herodotus' calculations, in the 11th century. It should be noted, however, that no traces of the Phoenician presence in the Aegean are attested before the 10th century.
4. The dating of the Minoan eruption and consequently the destruction of Akrotiri continues to be a very controversial matter, although nowadays the range is narrower: between the middle of the 17th century, more or less, to the last quarter of the 16th century BC. For a synthesis of the views see Manning 1999.
5. Archives of the French School at Athens: File Thera. This file is a copy of the one in the Archives nationales in Paris.
6. This olive trunk conserved in the volcanic ashes, near or inside one of the buildings of Balos, was the pride of the French excavators. Now it is lost, probably due to disintegration. Another trunk with branches was discovered recently in the Akrotiri excavations.
7. Archives of the French School at Athens: File Thera.
8. Archives of the French School of Athens: File Thera.

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