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Teaching the Greek Past in the Age of Austerity: University of Athens and Foreign Schools in Athens

Kazuhiro Takeuchi*

Abstract

When entering the center of Athens, we first see the Hellenic Parliament once served as the palace of Kings Otto and George I. Then, along Panepistimiou Street, there are many historical buildings: Numismatic Museum (housed in the mansion of Heinrich Schliemann), Archaeological Society at Athens, Bank of Greece, and ‘the Trilogy’ of neo-classical buildings including Academy of Athens, University of Athens, and National Library of Greece. Most of all, the University of Athens played a significant role in the modernization of Greece in terms of human resource development as well as symbolism in the capital landscape.

Well, what kind of role is the University of Athens playing in history education in Greece of today? How is it placed in the European and global contexts? In this paper, I analyze some characteristics of history education at the University of Athens, with a particular focus on the context of archaeology in Greece. In what follows, after an overview of the university (1), I will illustrate briefly the undergraduate curriculum (2) and the additional postgraduate programs (3) at the Department of History and Archaeology in the School of Philosophy. Then, within the framework of history and archaeology education in Greece, the activities of foreign schools in Athens will be highlighted (4). Finally, I will draw attention to the current situation of archaeological research and teaching in Greece under the global financial crisis (5).

Keywords: University of Athens, Classical Cultures, Archaeology, Foreign Schools in Athens, Fiscal Austerity

When entering the center of Athens, we first see the Hellenic Parliament once served as the palace of Kings Otto and George I. Then, along Panepistimiou Street, there are many historical buildings: Numismatic Museum (housed in the mansion of Heinrich Schliemann), Archaeological Society at Athens, Bank of Greece, and ‘the Trilogy’ of neo-classical buildings including Academy of Athens, University of Athens, and National Library of Greece. Most of all, the University of Athens played a significant role in the modernization of Greece in terms of human resource development as well as symbolism in the capital landscape: (**Fig. 1**).

Well, what kind of role is the University of Athens playing in history education in Greece of today? How is it placed in the European and global contexts? In this paper, I analyze some characteristics of history education at the University of Athens, with a particular focus on the context of archaeology in Greece. In what follows, after an overview of the university (1), I will illustrate briefly the undergraduate curriculum (2) and the additional postgraduate programs (3) at the Department of History and Archaeology in the School of Philosophy. Then, within the framework of history and archaeology education in Greece, the activities of foreign schools in Athens will be highlighted (4). Finally, I will draw attention to the current situation of archaeological research and teaching in Greece under the global financial crisis (5).



Fig. 1: University of Athens. Photo K. Takeuchi.

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¹ cf. Hamilakis 2007; Karamanolakis 2008; Karamanolakis 2014; Millas 2017; Repoussi 2011.

1. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Shortly after the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in 1832, the University of Athens was inaugurated in 1837. It has been the oldest higher education institution of the modern Greek state and the first university in the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean area². In 1932, it was formally renamed as the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών). In 2017, the university marked its 180th anniversary.

It should be remembered that the University of Athens is a public, self-governed legal entity under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. At present, it has 33 departments at 8 schools (**Table 1**). According to the official statement, there are 2,100 academic staff, 1,000 administrative staff, 40,000 undergraduate students, 14,200 postgraduate students (Master), and 8,800 Ph.D. candidates³.

Table 1: Schools and Departments of the University of Athens.

8 Schools	33 Departments
Economics and Political Sciences	Economics; Communication and Media Studies; Political Science and Public Administration; Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies
Education	Primary Education; Early Childhood Education
Health Sciences	Medicine; Dentistry; Pharmacy; Nursing
Law	Law
Philosophy	Philology; History and Archaeology; Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology; Psychology; English Language and Literature; French Language and Literature; German Language and Literature; Italian Language and Literature; Spanish Language and Literature; Music Studies; Theatre Studies; Russian Language and Literature
Physical Education and Sport Science	Physical Education and Sport Science
Science	Physics; Chemistry; Mathematics; Biology; Geology and Geoenvironment; Informatics and Telecommunications; History and Philosophy of Science
Theology	Theology; Social Theology

2. Department of History and Archaeology: Undergraduate Curriculum

History education is provided by the Department of History and Archaeology in the School of Philosophy. While divided into the course of History and the course of Archaeology and History of Art, both are closely interrelated in the department research and teaching. As of 2019, there is 35 academic staff, covering a wide range of research areas and periods⁴.

Guideline for Studies (Οδηγός Σπουδών) of the academic year 2018-2019 gives us a glimpse into the department policy, curriculum, and syllabus⁵. To obtain a bachelor's degree, students are required to successfully complete 52 three-hour courses, which correspond to 156 teaching hours (each course corresponds to three hours of teaching per week throughout the semester). The minimum period of study for graduation is 8 semesters.

The undergraduate curriculum clearly shows that history and archaeology education at the University of Athens considerably focuses on Greece, Europe, and Eastern Mediterranean (**Table 2**). At least, there are no Asian History, Islamic History or even Global History courses here⁶. The fact that Ancient Greek and Latin Philology are offered for any students in the department as basic courses may well reflect the characteristics of history education in this university.

Table 2: Undergraduate Curriculum of Academic Year 2018-2019.

	History		Archaeology and History of Art	
	Winter	Spring	Winter	Spring
Core Courses	Introduction to Historical Studies	Ancient History B	Introduction to Archaeology	Prehistoric Archaeology B
	Introduction to World History	Medieval Western History A	Classical Archaeology A	Prehistoric Archaeology B

² See the self-portrait online: *Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών: Μια αυτοπροσωπογραφία*.

³ See the official website [https://en.uoa.gr] (Access on 20 September 2019).

⁴ See the website [http://en.arch.uoa.gr/academic-staff.html] (Access on 20 September 2019).

⁵ See the guidelines for studies online: *Οδηγός Σπουδών του Προπτυχιακού Προγράμματος Ιστορίας και Αρχαιολογίας 2018-2019* and *Οδηγός Σπουδών του Μεταπτυχιακού Προγράμματος Ιστορίας και Αρχαιολογίας 2018-2019*.

⁶ The Department of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies was established as part of the School of Philosophy in 2003, then integrated into the School of Economics and Political Sciences in 2013. The area of Asian Studies plans to receive its first students in the future, focusing on the Japanese and Chinese cultures. See the website [http://en.turkmas.uoa.gr] (Access on 20 September 2019).

	Ancient History A	Byzantine History B	Byzantine Archaeology A	Classical Archaeology B
	Byzantine History A	Modern European History A	History of Art A	Byzantine Archaeology B
	Early Modern Greek History A	Modern Greek History A		History of Art B
				History of Art
Specialization Courses (Compulsory)	Methodological Problems of History	Medieval European History B	Archaeology of the Near East	Topography, Architecture, Town Planning
	Ancient History C	Early Modern Greek History B	Specialist Course in Archaeology and History of Art	Classical Archaeology C
	Early Modern European History B	History of the Ottoman Empire B	Prehistoric Archaeology A	Excavation, Archaeological Record Processing, Museology
	Modern Greek History B	History of the Post-War World	Roman Archaeology	History of Art C
			Post-Byzantine Archaeology	
Optional Courses (Seminar)	Ancient History	Ancient History (Roman Periods)	Prehistoric Archaeology	Prehistoric Archaeology
	Medieval European History	Byzantine History	Archaeology of the Near East	Prehistoric Archaeology
	Early Modern Greek History A	Byzantine History	Prehistoric Archaeology	Prehistoric Archaeology
	Early Modern European History	Early Modern Greek History	Prehistoric Archaeology	Archaeology of the Near East
	History of the Ottoman Empire	Early Modern Greek History	Classical Archaeology	Classical Archaeology
	Modern and Contemporary Greek History	Early Modern Greek History	Byzantine Archaeology	Classical Archaeology
		Modern European History	History of Art	Classical Archaeology
		Contemporary History		Byzantine Archaeology
				History of Art
				Museology
Optional Courses (Non-Seminar)	Byzantine History	Ancient Greek History	Prehistoric Archaeology	Prehistoric Archaeology
	Byzantine History	Byzantine History	Prehistoric Archaeology	Prehistoric Archaeology
	Early Modern Greek History	Early Modern Greek History	Archaeology and Archaeometry	Classical Archaeology
	Early Modern Greek History	Modern Greek History	Prehistoric Archaeology	Classical Archaeology
	Modern European History	History of the Turkish Peoples	Classical Archaeology	Byzantine Archaeology
	Modern Greek History	Early Modern European History B	Byzantine Archaeology	Byzantine Archaeology
	Modern and Contemporary Greek Political History	Modern European History	History of Art	Museology
		Modern and Contemporary History	Museology	

		Contemporary History		
Basic Courses	Ancient Greek Philology A	Latin Philology A	Early Modern Greek Philology A	Pedagogy A
	Ancient Greek Philology B	Latin Philology B	Early Modern Greek Philology B	Pedagogy B
	Ancient Greek Philology C	Byzantine Philology		Pedagogy C
	Ancient Greek Philology D or Linguistics			Pedagogy D

3. Additional Postgraduate Programs: Interdepartmental, European, and Global Perspectives

The Department of History and Archaeology provides a variety of additional postgraduate programs. First, in the ‘Interdepartmental Postgraduate Programs’, the Department of History and Archaeology have organized an interdisciplinary program of postgraduate studies entitled *Cultural Heritage Management: Archaeology, City and Architecture*, in collaboration with the Department of Architecture of the University of Patras and the Department of Cultural Technology of the University of the Aegean⁷. The main purpose of this program is to educate early-career scholars specializing in the management and administration of historical city centers and adjacent areas and to promote interaction between the disciplines of archaeology and architecture. There is also *Postgraduate Course in Museum Studies*, a two-year interdisciplinary postgraduate program between the Department of History and Archaeology and the Department of Geology and Geoenvironment of the University of Athens, in collaboration with the Department of Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art of the Technological Educational Institution of Athens⁸. It is like a curator’s course in a Japanese university.

Second, beyond the framework of a country, *Mediterranean Doctoral School in History* as one of the ‘European Programs’ was jointly created in 2010 by the University of Athens, Boğaziçi University Istanbul, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Universidad Pablo de Olavide de Sevilla, and Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia, with an aim to provide advanced level training in research and the appropriate skills to exercise research and professional activities of high quality in universities, institutions in the public and private sectors⁹. Postgraduate students from the affiliated universities spend one academic year at one or two of the foreign-affiliated universities, participating in the host institution’s doctoral training program at the same conditions as local students. This program promotes comparative research and inquiries in the history of cross-border transfers and overseas relations in the Mediterranean area, comprising the relations of this area with other world regions. It should be noted that the Boğaziçi University is participating in this program.

As a distinctive program, *European Master of Classical Cultures* is an internationally integrated, interdisciplinary program in Classical Studies, including Ancient History, Classical Philology, Classical Archaeology, and adjacent disciplines. It is now supported by 16 affiliated universities from 9 European countries¹⁰. Students will complete all course requirements and the regulations about these courses at no fewer than two, and no more than three universities. They must also acquire a minimum of 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points at each of the two affiliated universities of different national languages. As an Erasmus Curriculum Development Project, the planning and the implementation of the Master program have been subsidized by the European Union since 2006. I think this is an intriguing program that takes advantage of European cultural diversity and historical backgrounds.

Besides that, *European Master in the Political and Cultural History of Medieval, Modern and Contemporary Europe* is a two-year program. The students, who must already be admitted to the MA program of their university¹¹, spend the

⁷ It is in function since the spring semester of the academic year 2008-2009. See the website [<http://en.arch.uoa.gr/postgraduate-studies/interdepartmental-programmes.html>] (Access on 20 September 2019).

⁸ It was established in 2003. See the website [<http://en.arch.uoa.gr/postgraduate-studies/interdepartmental-programmes.html>] (Access on 20 September 2019).

⁹ See the website [<http://en.arch.uoa.gr/postgraduate-studies/european-programmes.html>] (Access on 20 September 2019).

¹⁰ See the website [<https://emccs.uni-muenster.de/index.php/en/>] (Access on 20 September 2019). The affiliated universities include University of Athens, Universidade da Coruña, Universität Freiburg, Universität Hamburg, Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, University of Cyprus, Università degli Studi Palermo, Università degli Studi di Perugia, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań, Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Universidad de Salamanca, Université de Toulouse II - Jean Jaurès, University of Valladolid, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut – Rom.

¹¹ See the website [<http://en.arch.uoa.gr/postgraduate-studies/european-programmes.html>] (Access on 20 September 2019). The affiliated universities include University of Athens, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Instituto Superior de Ciência do Trabalho e da Empresa of Lisbon, Università degli Studi di Pisa, Universidad Pablo de Olavide of Sevilla.

second year of their studies at one of the other universities, or the third and fourth semester at two of the other universities. The program is supported by the European Erasmus program.

Third, it is noteworthy that the Department of History and Archaeology launched a new ‘English-taught Program’. *Master in Greek and Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology* is a one-year Master’s program taught entirely in English, devoted to the advanced study of the archaeology of Greece, the wider area of the Aegean, Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean, including Mesopotamia¹². The taught part of the program consists of three core and three optional modules (10 ECTS each). The 15,000-20,000-word dissertation is on the subject of the student’s choice, supervised by a member of staff (15 ECTS). The program aims to provide its students with the systematic knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills required to assess the archaeological record as professional researchers or specialists. This program is also suitable for those with a degree in humanities, classics and other related subjects, who wish to prepare for doctoral research, to pursue a career in commercial archaeology, the museum sector, or the heritage industry at large. It sounds like an ambitious attempt in the current globalizing world and it may be trying to attract students from non-European countries.

As a whole, academic staff and students at the Department of History and Archaeology could benefit from the prominent position of Athens as the center of classical archaeology and culture in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

4. Foreign Schools in Athens

Another aspect of history education and research in Greece is the activities of foreign schools, mostly located in the center of Athens (Fig. 2). The foreign schools of archaeology in Athens (and Rome) represent a scholarly tradition now approaching two hundred years of activity in the institutionalized form (Table 3). These foreign schools are 19th and 20th century European (and North American) research institutions established for the study of the Greek past: schools, academies, and institutes dealing with classical archaeology, philology, art history, as well as the practicing arts¹³. As Frederick Whitling makes clear in his recent monograph, classical archaeology and the scholarly study of antiquity have influenced perceptions of cultural tradition, historical links, and common roots in the modern (post-1800) ‘Western’ world¹⁴.

Table 3: Timeline of Establishment of Foreign Schools.

1820	Greek War of Independence, 1821-1832	
1830	Greek Archaeological Service, 1833 Archaeological Society at Athens, 1837 University of Athens, 1837	Mycenae
1840	French School at Athens, 1846	Delos, Delphi
1870	German Archaeological Institute at Athens, 1872/1874	Olympia, Tiryns
1880	American School of Classical Studies in Athens, 1881 British School at Athens, 1886	Athenian Agora, Corinth Knossos, Sparta
1890	Austrian Archaeological Institute at Athens, 1898	Achaia, Aigina
1900	Italian School of Archaeology at Athens, 1909	Arcadia, Phaistos, Gortyn
1940	Swedish Institute at Athens, 1946/1948	Asine, Chania
1970	Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece, 1975 Canadian Institute in Greece, 1976	Eretria Mytilene, Boeotia, Euboia
1980	Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens, 1980 Netherlands Institute in Athens, 1984 Finnish Institute at Athens, 1984 Belgian School at Athens, 1985 Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1989	Throne, Zagora Peloponnesos, Zakynthos Arethusa Thorikos Peloponnesos, Ionia
1990	Danish Institute at Athens, 1992 Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens, 1995 Georgian Institute at Athens, 1998	Peiraieus Kephallonia, Crete
2010	Romanian Archaeological Institute in Athens, 2017	
2020	Japanese Institute at Athens, 2022 (tentative)	

In terms of a ‘European University’ of sorts, the foreign schools and domestic institutions form programs of study and teaching in collaboration. It has been pointed out that the foreign schools would take an additional role as a form of

¹² See the website [<http://meditarch.arch.uoa.gr/home.html>] (Access on 20 September 2019).

¹³ cf. Sakka 2002; Voutsaki 2017, 12, 15; Whitling 2018, xxv. On this point see also Murata 2012, 14-17.

¹⁴ Whitling 2018, xi.

‘classical colleges’, at the same time both national and international¹⁵. Such a structure could stand a good chance of receiving significant European funding for research and tuition, as an additional supplement to the nationally funded budgets of the foreign schools themselves.

Now, under the law of Greece, almost all foreign expeditions in Greece are accepted through these schools, and the number of such expeditions is strictly limited to three per country per year. This is one of the major differences between Greece and many other countries that allow excavation by the mission and is one of the reasons that Japanese research institutes, which do not have permanent local bases in Greece, find it difficult to conduct independent research.

Against this background, I would note that Japanese scholars have established a non-profit organization, *Association for Researchers of the Ancient Greek Civilization*, in 2014 and are now preparing to open the ‘Japanese Institute at Athens’ in 2022 (tentative)¹⁶. If realized, it will be the first institute established by a non-European country. The institute is expected to be a hub for research and education for Japanese and international scholars and students.



Fig. 2: German Archaeological Institute at Athens. Photo K. Takeuchi.

5. Archaeology in the Greek Crisis

Finally, we have to look at the current situation of archaeological research and teaching in Greece. As is well known, following the global banking collapse of 2008, Greece faced a sovereign debt crisis, beginning in late 2009. It still affects all aspects of the public and private sectors in the country. Educational and working environments have greatly changed in 10 years. Most recently, Dimitris Plantzos, Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Athens, published an article to examine the effects of the prolonged recession on archaeology in Greece¹⁷ (the description here owes much to it).

Using the extensive statistics now available, Plantzos points out a fact as the ‘good news’ that the revenues from museums (Acropolis Museum, National Archaeological Museum, etc.) and archaeological sites (Acropolis, Knossos, Olympia, Epidaurus, etc.) have risen considerably in 2017¹⁸. Part of the increase in visitors and revenue is thought to be a side effect of ‘crisis tourism’, which is unrelated to Greek politics but affected by the unstable situations in North Africa (from Tunisia to Egypt), the Middle East (especially Syria), and Turkey¹⁹.

On the other hand, he also reveals the ‘bad news’ that in the Greek universities (all state-dependent) the number of archaeology professors nationally fell from 140 in 2008 to 72 in 2014, a reduction of almost 50 % in six years²⁰. At the same time, it follows that ‘archaeology graduates, - some also equipped with postgraduate degrees and doctorates - faced

¹⁵ Whitling 2018, 220.

¹⁶ See the website [<http://www.lit.kobe-u.ac.jp/ancient-greek/english.html>] (Access on 20 September 2019).

¹⁷ See Plantzos 2018; also 2008; 2014; 2017; 2019.

¹⁸ Plantzos 2018, 172-175.

¹⁹ Plantzos 2018, 173-174.

²⁰ Plantzos 2018, 177.

a job market on the verge of absolute collapse, with no new openings for the space of almost a decade'²¹. As a result, great numbers of young and highly trained specialists from both public (universities) and private (the Benaki Museum, the Museum of Cycladic Art, the Foundation for the Hellenic World, etc.) institutions in Greece had to seek employment elsewhere in the country's collapsing market or even abroad. As Plantzos calls it, a 'lost generation' has arisen for Greek archaeology²².

In this paper, I focused on the history education program now carried out by the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Athens, the transborder initiatives of the foreign schools in Athens for educating and researching the Classical culture, and the influence of fiscal austerity on Greek archaeology. Greece is geopolitically incorporated into Europe, the 'Western' world, but the Greek past is not only of the Greeks and the Europeans but of mankind as well. I believe therefore we should keep an eye on the history of Greece and history education in Greece from our point of view.

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²¹ Plantzos 2018, 177.

²² Plantzos 2018, 177-179. On this point see also Hanink 2017.

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