1. The history of archaeology in Cyprus

The first archaeological discoveries in Cyprus were made by European amateur collectors and “treasure hunters” who visited the island in the course of the 19th century. These early explorers, whose interest was mainly on fine “art objects” that would embellish their own collections or be sold for profit to major European museums, have to be credited for the identification of many archaeological sites and the publication of the first archaeological accounts. Such practices, however, led to a wave of illegal excavation and tomb looting, both by locals and foreigners, which was meant to satisfy an increasing market of antiquities in Europe and the USA.

The rise of scientific archaeology in Cyprus should be placed in the 1890s, when the British Museum conducted the first systematic excavations in various sites of the island. Soon afterwards Cypriot archaeologists started researching the ancient past of the island and by 1905 a new Antiquities Law was enacted which regulated the distribution of finds and set the basis for the protection of cultural heritage on the island.

It was not until the 1920s and early 1930s, however, that the Swedish Cyprus Expedition established a complete chronological framework for Cypriot archaeology and led the foundations for future scientific research.