

# THE RESTORATION OF CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY MONUMENTS IN GREECE DURING THE LAST TWENTY YEARS

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**Key words:** Acropolis, Restoration, Parthenon, Acropolis of Lindos.

**Abstract:** In the last twenty years the Greek Ministry of Culture, funded by the European programmes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> CSF and the NSRF, has realised large-scale preservation, conservation and enhancement projects on important monuments and archaeological sites all around Greece. Among them there acquire significant position those that belong to the period of classical antiquity because they are often in ruined conditions, and they have a structure of large blocks unbound by any mortar; in addition, these monuments, scattered all around the country, comprise a large number in need of intervention. These interventions follow, on the one hand, the guidelines set by international statutory provisions, such as the Venice Charter, and on the other, the methodology developed by the *Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments* as far back as 1975. The unique character of every monument however defines the final result.

The article focuses on typical restoration works carried out on important archaeological sites in Greece, such as the Epidaurus complex, Apollo Epikourios and the monuments of the Lindos Acropolis, whereas the project of restoring the Acropolis monuments plays a pivotal role in the discussion.

**Rezumat:** În ultimii douăzeci de ani Ministerul Culturii din Grecia, finanțat prin programul CSF-III și prin Fondurile Europene Structurale și de Investiții, a realizat mari proiecte de păstrare, conservare și îmbunătățire a unor importante monumente și situri arheologice de pe teritoriul Greciei. Dintre ele, o poziție importantă o au cele care aparțin perioadei antichității clasice, pentru că acestea se găsesc de obicei în condiții de ruină și au o structură din blocuri mari de piatră zidite fără mortar; în plus, printre aceste monumente, răspândite pe teritoriul întregii țări, sunt multe care au nevoie de intervenții. Aceste intervenții urmează pe de o parte prevederile unor documente internaționale, cum ar fi Carta de la Veneția, și pe de altă parte metodologia dezvoltată de *Comisia pentru conservarea monumentelor Acropolei* încă din 1975. Caracterul unic al fiecărui monument definește, însă, rezultatul final.

Articolul se axează pe lucrările tipice de restaurare desfășurate în importante situri arheologice din Grecia, cum ar fi complexul din Epidaur, Apollo Epikourios și monumentele acropolei din Lindos, proiectul de restaurare a Acropolei având un rol crucial în cadrul discuției.

## Introduction

When the matters concerning the restoration of monuments had internationally matured and the Venice Charter was composed,<sup>1</sup> in Greece there was an intense reflection on the extensive reconstructions of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that lead to a new approach on monument intervention. The restoration of the portico at Vravrona 50 years ago introduced a new period for the restoration of monuments in Modern Greece, which, after abandoning empiricism, was characterised by the implementation of scientific methods and specific guidelines.<sup>2</sup> However it took ten more years in order to systematise a scientific approach of restoring monuments in the years following the change of the regime in 1974.

In 1975, the Ministry of Culture established the first interdisciplinary Committee<sup>3</sup> that undertook the supervision of the works concerning the Athens Acropolis. For some time, the monuments have suffered serious damage due to the effects of inappropriate older restoration interventions and the severely polluted environment (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> In the next 25 years, about thirty additional committees were established concerning the most important monuments in Greece, of all historical periods, and which were facing serious structural problems.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Venice Charter 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Bouras 1967, pp. 171-178.

<sup>3</sup> The *Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments* has twelve members. Two professors of architecture specialized in monument restoration, four professors of archaeology, one chemical engineer, one civil engineer and the Heads of the Departments of the Ministry of Culture for a. the Restoration of Ancient Monuments, b. the Ancient Antiquities, c. the Conservation and d. the Ephorate of Athens Antiquities.

<sup>4</sup> Bouras 1977, pp. 4-10. Extensive references to the environmental conditions of that period in Papanikolaou 2012, pp. 17-50.

<sup>5</sup> The restoration was funded by the Archaeological Society at the beginning and by the Management Fund for Archaeological Projects Execution from 1992 to 2013.