

left us by the ancients. What can we do, then, to prevent the total obliteration of archaeological sites?

One approach to this problem was that adopted by Sir Arthur Evans, the discoverer of the Palace of Minos at Knossos, Crete. Being a man of some wealth, Sir Arthur eventually came to the conclusion that reconstructing the palace, at least in part, would not only protect the fragile remains, but also enhance the experience of the tourist, who would come away more familiar with the Minoans and their way of life. Generations of tourists have indeed thanked him for his partial rebuilding of Knossos, especially after visiting the other Minoan palaces, which remain essentially as they were excavated and demand a great deal of imagination if one is to grasp their original splendor. On the other hand, many archaeologists passionately believe that Sir Arthur was wrong to "tamper with" archaeological ruins, and recent studies of the palace at Knossos do in fact suggest that Evans' reconstructions are not always correct. For example, there is now some evidence to suggest that the famous Dolphin Fresco on the wall of the Queen's Room actually belongs on the floor of the room above. No wonder that some scholars wish that Evans had simply erected a protective roof over the site, along the lines of the "shed" now protecting the Bronze Age ruins at Akrotiri on the island of Thera.

The question of whether to reconstruct or not is still with us today - in particular, in regard to the Parthenon in Athens. Most of us are aware of the ruinous state of what was once the grandest temple in the Greek world: besides the damage done to the building in past centuries, modern acid rain is endangering those parts of the temple lucky enough to have survived into the 20th century. Not too long ago Greek authorities were considering the erection of a protective "bubble" around the entire Acropolis, but now a new plan has been adopted: the reconstruction of the temple almost in its entirety.

The March 26, 1990 issue of Time magazine contained an article entitled "To Heal Athena". It reported that "modern science has come to the rescue [of the temple] ... Researchers have catalogued the debris around the Parthenon and puzzled out its place among the ruins. The temple can be not only preserved but also, to an astonishing degree, reconstructed. Now Greece must decide how far to go". Some scholars want to go very far indeed: they support a plan to supplement the original stones to be used in the reconstruction with new stone that would enable almost half the temple to be rebuilt. Not only would the Parthenon thus be stabilized, they argue, but also tourists "would come away with a far more accurate idea of how the Periclean-age Parthenon really looked". These scholars are clearly people dear to the long-departed spirit of Sir Arthur Evans!

The Reconstruction Quandary

by P.Y. Forsyth

One of the major problems facing archaeologists today is how to preserve the ruins of antiquity. Such important monuments as the Colosseum in Rome are in imminent danger not only at the hands of natural forces (e.g., earthquakes), but also at the hands of man: the pollution generated by human beings is literally eating away the stones

will be used to locate the original places of the marble blocks that now lie on the ground of the Acropolis. Moreover, "none of the surviving original marble figures [sculptures] will stay on the Acropolis. Finely sculpted scenes of pageantry are being removed and marble copies or white concrete casts will be put in their place".

Is the "Committee for the Restoration of the Acropolis" going too far? I for one have no problem with removing the deteriorating sculptures and replacing them with copies, nor do I doubt the urgent need to stabilize the ruins (even a small earthquake could do severe damage at this point), but I wonder if I am ready to gaze upon a restored Acropolis. There is a certain majesty in the existing ruins that I will miss, and (shades of Sir Arthur!) there is always the chance that someone will "get it wrong" and we will be left with an imposter. We can only hope that those in charge will "do the right thing", lest we lose what little we have forever.

However, there are dissenting voices: for example, the Time article quotes Derek Linstrum of the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York as saying: "The mixture of materials and the contrast between old and new would not in fact reproduce anything like the original concept of beauty; and here one must stress the need not to impair the beauty and the harmony still displayed in the Parthenon, ruin though it is." Another scholar even claimed that any reconstruction "will be a new building that from a historical point of view is a falsehood".

As of August 25, 1990, it seems that those who favour massive reconstruction are winning the debate. On that day, the Reuter's news service reported that, on the Acropolis, "three temples are being dismantled and rebuilt, including the massive Parthenon, and extensive work is being done on the marble entrance and the 154-metre hillside". Thus it appears that not only the Parthenon, but also the Erechtheum, the Temple to Athena Nike, and the Propylaea (the entrance gate) are now part of the reconstruction plan. The report goes on to explain that the temples are to be dismantled "block by block" and computers