Ο Αλαρίχος στην Αθήνα

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The re-examination of the written sources and of the aftermath of the damages to the Parthenon confirms Alison Frantz's view that the ancient fire was instigated by the fanatical newly baptized Christian Visigoths led by Alaric, who suppressed the ancient religion by destroying its sanctuaries through methods known in the East. The systematic chiseling away of the metopes of the temple and the destruction of statues seems to have been concurrent with the fire.

We have no information, be it direct or indirect, on the ravages described above. Nevertheless, the erosion wrought by the atmosphere on the marbles' collision surfaces indicates that the metopes' defacement occurred during the antiquity and cannot be attributed to Medieval or more recent times. Without a doubt, the attempt at extensive destruction was a deliberate one and, what is more, resulted in the first significant drop in the artistic value of the Great Temple's sculpted masterpieces. Another destructive event which should also be construed as deliberate was the ancient fire which ravaged the cella's interior and damaged the remaining edifice extensively. The fact that the temple's wooden roof stood 14 meters above ground makes it practically an impossibility to have caught on fire by accident.

Keywords
End of 5th century, Athens, Visigoths, Parthenon.

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1 A. Michaelis, Der Parthenon, Leipzig 1871.
2 All the metopes of the East, North and West sides of the temple were defaced with exception of one, be the North West corner (no XXXII). The metopes of South side were in good condition, till 1687.
ments of these statues indicates the oldness of the destruction.
5 M. Kokkéz, «Ο Παρθενώνας από την άρχαια έποχη μέχρι τον 19ο αιώνα», ΙΕΝ Τομηγοριώτης επ., Athens 1994, p. 147 Ν. 53. Two or three metopes at the middle of the west façade were probably de faced also by the fire, with damaged the cornices above them.
6 See J. Pollini, «Christian desecration and mutilation of the Parthenon», AM 122 (2007), p. 214, n. 50. The complete loss of their fragments (contrary to those of the south metopes) makes sure that the mutilation took place many centuries ago.
and an almost absolute certainty that we may safely attribute its burning to arson. There are no testimonies to corroborate such a grave matter but the wealth of archaeological evidence allows us to study the damage as well as its subsequent resolution, i.e., the repairs aiming at making the temple operable again.

The above mentioned significant indications that both the destruction of the sculptures and the fire owed their existence to deliberate actions lead to the premise, if not the certainty, that both the destruction and the fire must have happened simultaneously: Not only was the intention uniform but the effort exerted in destroying the temple was a concerted one. Destroying the metopes and accessing the cornice of the eastern pediment necessitated the use of scaffolding as high as 12 to 16 meters. What is more, setting the temple on fire necessitated amassing enormous quantities of flammable material within the cella's interior. It is also safe to assume that the pedimental parts of the east side were destroyed at that time as well just as it is safe to assume that the destruction cannot be linked to efforts to establish the Parthenon as a church since it would have necessitated using its western side as the front of that church and not the east. The conversion of the Parthenon into a church occurred much later and not until the temple had been restored and the cult of Athena had resumed for some time.

Thus, the question remains as to when the great, ancient temple operable again. Scholars engaged in studying the history of the temple speak vaguely about the fire. In 1973, John Travlos attributed the fire to the raids visiting the history of the temple speak vaguely about the fire. However, neither scholar links the arson to the destruction of the sculptures and the fire owed their existence to deliberate actions lead to the premise, if not the certainty, that both the destruction and the fire must have happened simultaneously: Not only was the intention uniform but the effort exerted in destroying the temple was a concerted one. Destroying the metopes and accessing the cornice of the eastern pediment necessitated the use of scaffolding as high as 12 to 16 meters. What is more, setting the temple on fire necessitated amassing enormous quantities of flammable material within the cella's interior. It is also safe to assume that the pedimental parts of the east side were destroyed at that time as well just as it is safe to assume that the destruction cannot be linked to efforts to establish the Parthenon as a church since it would have necessitated using its western side as the front of that church and not the east. The conversion of the Parthenon into a church occurred much later and not until the temple had been restored and the cult of Athena had resumed for some time.

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13 That is, between 267 and 363 A.D.

14 Mainly of Libanios, Mamerinos and Ammianus.

15 The columns used to support the roof of the temple were taken from an hellenistic stoa of Athens, Ἰ. Τραυλός, «Ἡ πυρπόλησις τοῦ Παρθενῶνος», (as above note 7), p. 226-232, fig. 3. For the various marble architectural members used to repair the jamb of the main door, see M. Κορρές, Μελέτη ἀποκαταστάσεως τοῦ Παρθενῶνος 4, Athens 1994, p. 61 ff, fig. 25, p. 69 ff and pl. 9.


17 W.B. Dinsmoor, Jr, New Fragments of the Parthenon in the Athenian Agora, Hesp. 43 (1974), p. 132 ff. The fire damage however happened before 435 AD (the year of the Theodosius II edict imposing the destruction of pagan temples) given that the wall in which the Parthenon fragments were found is older. See above note 26.
stroyed as far back as 250 years\textsuperscript{18} prior to their new use. At the same time, they constituted tangible evidence that they had been re-used far more recently. All of the above points in Franz’s theory coincide with the time period during which the Visigoths raided Southern Greece (395–396) and do not appear to have the weaknesses of points of Travlos’ theory do. A. Franz argues that the temple, ten years after its destruction, owes its restoration to Prefect Herculius\textsuperscript{19}. This is corroborated by the temple were restored in the 5th century. All of the above points in Franz’s theory coincide with the time period during which the Visigoths raided Southern Greece (395–396) and do not appear to have the weakness of life paid to Herculius by the Athenians who even honored him by erecting a statue of him\textsuperscript{22}.

It is unimportant whether Herculius was a Christian\textsuperscript{25} or not; perceived against the broader background of a building project implemented in Greece where the followers of the old cult were still the overwhelming majority and where the way of life had changed little, such a detail holds no significance. Between 312 and the middle of the 5th century\textsuperscript{24}, the violent conflict between Christians and pagans (\textit{ethnikoi}) in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt—the empire’s eastern provinces, included plundering and pillaging ancient temples\textsuperscript{25} and works of art. As it has been documented by a plethora of written accounts, especially in the large cities the unrest between pagans, heretics, and Orthodox Christians never abated. The driving force behind the systematic destruction of ancient temples were groups of fanatic monks\textsuperscript{26}, high-ranking officials such as Maternios Kynegetos\textsuperscript{22}, and even bishops who wielded enormous power\textsuperscript{28} within their sphere of influence. Especially in cities where the pagans were the majority, the bishops would ask the imperial army\textsuperscript{27} to assist them in their task. This atmosphere of utter license and oppression has been admirably conveyed to us by Libanius’ epistle \textit{«τύπτο τῶν ἑτέρων»} [in favor of temples] as well as by the contradictory imperial laws and decrees\textsuperscript{31} of the time which were either abused or deliberately ignored. Prior to the orders of Arcadius and Honorius in 398\textsuperscript{32} and the Edict of Theodosius II\textsuperscript{33} in 423, destroying ancient temples may have officially been against the law, yet the temples were destroyed all the same\textsuperscript{34}.

In his epistle, Libanius pays particular attention to the activities of the zealot-monks\textsuperscript{35}. A decrees issued in 390 is also indicative of the times as it forbade monks to enter cities\textsuperscript{36}. The concept of the ‘holy man’\textsuperscript{37} and the fear that another wave of Christian martyrs would rise again, or the cities would be subjected to a surge of uprisings\textsuperscript{38} turned the militant monks in the East flagrantly unprincipled. According to Eunapius\textsuperscript{39} \textit{«… τυρανικὴν γὰρ ἐξηκοι … ἐξοικεῖται τῇ πάσῃ ἅμως τῶν μελλόντων φωνῶν ἵσθαι καὶ δημοσιοτητίκως ἀγιασμον».} And while all this was happening in the East, the situation in Greece was an entirely different matter. Up until me-
dieval times and with the exception of the Thessaloniki monks there is not a single account corroborating the existence of monks or hermits behaving in such a manner. Bishops were few and far between (with Bishop Jovianus of Corfu being the sole exception) and did not seem to encourage violent acts within cities where the followers of the old cults were still holding sway. Especially in Athens, the cult of Athena and its Panathinaea procession would continue as late as 411–412 and the schools of philosophy would not fall silent until almost a century later. The conversion of temples into churches that ensued shows that the claim of the Christians on the ancient legacy as their own was not limited to the intentions and efforts exerted by the State but also spread to the architectural monuments that had survived. Over time, the conversion to Christianity of the upper social classes reduced fanaticism and the sharp conflicts characteristic of the 4th and 5th centuries.

All the accounts making reference to the Athens of approximately 400 verify in the most convincing manner that the destruction of the Great Temple was not the work of a handful of Athenians-turned-Christian. A destruction of such magnitude and terrorist overtones could only happen in the hands of foreigners. Thus, the theory of Alaric’s barbarians, that the fire may have been set by Alaric’s Gothic armies did not harm the city of Athens, especially in respect for it, was not limited to the intentions and efforts of the Theodorik’s barbarians who had already stormed Pireaus. The city, which apparently Alaric did not destroy, was confined to the north of the Acropolis well protected by its post-Roman fortifications known as the post-Herulian wall. An on-site visit and investigation reveals instantly something very important: that small, walled-in Athens did not connect to the Acropolis which was an autonomous fortified sanctuary and had its own entrance, known today as the Beulé Gate.

On the subject of this, the tale about Athens aside, Zosimos also tells us the following: «...Ταύτην ὁ Ἀλάριχος τὴν όψιν ὑπὸ ἔνεγχον πάσης μὲν ἀπέτυπης τῆς πάλαις εὐχαρίστης, ἐπισκευασμένον τῷ ὑπάρχοντες τῶν Ὀθώνων τῶν κατοικίων τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Ἀθη

It is thus evident that the city surrendered, thus escaping looting and pillaging. However, anything outside the post-
Roman wall did fall prey to the barbarians who had recently converted to Christianity. This is corroborated by numerous pieces of evidence on the destruction on the Ancient Agora; the southern slope of the Acropolis; Asklepieion; Dipylon; and a number of other locations. The sanctuary of Nemesis at Rhamnous where the cult statue was found must have been another Visigoth fatality.

It is also certain that the same fate befell the Acropolis. Either it had surrendered, accepting the terms stipulated or it was seized after its only gate had been stormed. Looting of the temples ensued, followed by the systematic destruction of the Parthenon.

As it has already been noted, destroying the Parthenon was no easy task. It necessitated that the Parthenon's destroyers be imbued by wrathful loathing against the ancient cult. It also required that the invaders' effort and organization was equal to or greater than those observed in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt at precisely the same time frame. The metopes of the Parthenon's south side remained intact possibly because the invaders had run out of means or time for destruction that had been available to them, as was the case of temple destruction in the East. One and only one metope (nr XXXII) on the north side escaped the wrath of the invaders. This oversight on their part may be explained by the metope's resemblance to a Christian icon theme, the Annunciation of the Mother of God. In his Life of Maximus, Eunapius gives an account of Alaric's descent on and his unencumbered passage through the Thermopylae. He then proceeds to provide us with an essential piece of information: «...ὅτε Ἀλάριχος ἔχων τοὺς βαβύλων διὰ τῶν Πολύων παρηθήνη, ὅπερ δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐπιορκόσισαν πεποίθην τῶν τρέχων τοιαύτας αὐτῷ τὰς πρόκλεις ἀπεδείχτω τῆς Ελλάδος ἢ πεῖ τῶν ταῦτα μετὰ ἐργῶν οἰκείων προσπαιδευκόλοντος ἀσβείας...».

In other words, together with the Visigoth armies, those who wore the brown garments, passed «εἰσοδεύσας προσπαιδευκόλοντος τοῦ βαβύλων...» the Thermopylae. The excerpt from the text conceals no mystery (as some have claimed) and can be interpreted in the following manner: groups of disorderly monks followed the Visigoth army with the sole purpose of plundering and destroying any and all pagan elements in Greece. The monks, who no one dared stop in the East or in Constantinople, made it easy for the Visigoth army to pass through the Thermopylae. It has even been argued that they may have been individuals disguised as monks.

Be that as it may, the Eleusis sanctuary was thoroughly destroyed and never re-opened its doors after the raid. Corinth and Olympia were destroyed next. Suffice it to say that, even later, when Alaric marched into Rome and plundered it, the frenzy over destroying ancient temples had not yet abated. Even the hostility manifested against the inhabitants of Greece (pagans and Christians alike) may have been hiding some ulterior religious motives, given that the German-speaking barbarians were followers of the heretic Arius. They had espoused Chris-

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57 The destructions out of the Post Herulian precind were enough to create the general belief that the city was captured and completely destroyed (Φιλοστόργιος, XVI 2). See also A. Frantz, Late Antiquity, (as above note 31), p. 52. The two different opinions about the events of the year 396 came out from the lack of information about the fortified parts of the ancient city. See also A. Frantz, Some in vanders of Athens in Late Antiquity, «A Colisium in memory of George Carpenter Miles», New York 1976, p. 12, 13.


59 T. Gregory, «The Christian Asklepieion in Athens», 9th Annual Byzantine studies Conference, Durham 1983, p. 39, 40. The cutting to pieces of numerous statues of the Asklepieion is an indication of the raid upon the sanctuary at the same time. In this case, the function of the pagan temple after 450 AD (i.e. the return of Proklos in Amalias street).

60 The Athenian Agora VII, p. 53, 63 64.


63 Eunapius, (as above note 39), p. 476.


66 G. Fowden, (as above note 67), ibid.


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tianity shortly before the raids through the teachings of Ulfila \(^{72}\) and his disciples who adhered faithfully to the dogmas promulgated by the arch-heretic. During the barbaric raid against it, the city of Athens witnessed the loss of buildings and works of art which «...» \(^{73}\). It must have been the Parthenon ravaged by fire when, Synesius of Cyrene, grieved, wrote those words describing his visit to Athens. \(^{74}\) Few are the historical accounts dating back to that time. It appears, however, that during the 5th century, the city, which had become larger, was rebuilt in the spirit of its traditions \(^{75}\) and was graced by new public edifices \(^{76}\) and buildings dedicated to the Emperors. \(^{77}\) The new city resumed its cult of Athena and philosophy witnessed a revival, attracting students from foreign lands. It is in the spirit of all that has been mentioned as well as in the spirit of social peace that such pagan monuments as the Parthenon were restored at the beginning of that century. The Christian basilicas erected in the city during the 5th century \(^{78}\) were few and relatively small. The conversion of temples into Christian churches \(^{79}\) was accomplished with many a delay and with the bare minimum of architectural adjustments as necessitated by the temples' new function. In Athens, with the exception of the Asklepieion, we encounter no other case of a church having been built in the exact location of an ancient temple using the latter's building materials. Everything shows that the Athenians espoused the new religion unhurriedly and without any particular zeal.

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**Xαράλαμπος Μπούρας**

**Ο ΆΛΑΡΙΧΟΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ**

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\(^{73}\) Λιβάνιος, (as above note 26), p. 104, on pagan temples in the East provinces.

\(^{74}\) As the palace in the Athenian Agora. \(^{75}\) J. Travlos, *Athenian Agora* XXIV, (as above note 31), p. 95 116.

\(^{76}\) A. Frantz, «A public Building of Late Antiquity in Athens», (IG II, 5205), Hosp. 48 (1979), p. 194 203, pl. 62 64.


\(^{76}\) As the palace in the Athenian Agora. \(^{77}\) P. Castren, *Late Antiquity* (as above note 25), p. 321, 322. J. Pollini, (as above note 6), p. 211.