Ο Αλαρίχος στην Αθήνα

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When the new Acropolis Museum opened in 2009 it exhibited for the first time ever the mutilated metopes from the east and north side of the Parthenon. The occasion brought front and center the following query: when and who could have possibly wrought such extensive damage to those masterpieces of the classical age? At first glance, it is instantly clear that 792 out of the temple’s 92 metopes were defaced so violently that the theme depicted by their sculptures is barely recognizable. During the same time period, it is also noticeable that, for a length of 12 meters, the larger of the temple’s eastern pedimental sculptures were also removed or hurled to the ground and destroyed. Similarly, many of the pediment cornices and parts of its drum seem to have also been removed.

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.
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 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 fire at the Parthenon occurred. Scholars engaged in studying the history of the temple speak vaguely about the fire and its impact. Two have formulated premises supported by solid arguments which have been generally accepted. However, neither scholar links the arson to the destruction of the sculptures or mentions it in any way. In 1973, John Travlos attributed the fire to the raids visit Athens by the Heruli in 267 AD. He also maintained that the temple’s repairs were carried out by Emperor Julian the Apostate during his brief reign (361–363). The extensive damage wrought on the Athenian Agora by the Heruli had convinced J. Travlos that it had included the Acropolis despite the fact that the only existing historical account of Athens being raided by the Heruli does not confirm it. Still, a number of other scholars argue that the Rock was no included in the raids by the Heruli.

The weakness in Travlos’ theory lies in the length of the time period of almost one century between the temple’s destruction and its repair. It also lies in the complete silence on the part of those who would have normally sung Emperor Julian’s praises over having repaired such a significant temple with a view to perpetuating the ancient cult. In the epistle of Julian to the Athenians, he makes no mention of the matter. Unfortunately the repairs of the Parthenon cannot be pinpointed in time on the basis of technical evidence nor can they be dated on the basis of spolia from other earlier monuments which were used as repair materials.

Six years later, Alison Franz challenged the theory of J. Travlos and formulated her own. In her theory, she maintained that the arson was perpetrated by Alaric’s Visigoths (396–397) and the repairs were made by Herculus, Iliricum’s Praetorian Prefect. Franz based her argument on the numerous marble fragments archeologists recovered in an early 5th-century wall of the Athenian Agora. The fragments had their origin in the Parthenon and came from coffers and Doric columns which had constituted part of the cella’s interior prior to the fire. Their large number and their excellent condition ruled out the possibility that the temple could have possibly been destroyed upon Athens by the Heruli in 267 AD. He also maintained that the temple’s repairs were carried out by Emperor Julian the Apostate during his brief reign (361–363). The extensive damage wrought on the Athenian Agora by the Heruli had convinced J. Travlos that it had included the Acropolis despite the fact that the only existing historical account of Athens being raided by the Heruli does not confirm it. Still, a number of other scholars argue that the Rock was no included in the raids by the Heruli.

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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 the 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 a wealth of evidence such as the time continuity: Herculius' construction projects in his effort to fortify the cities of Illyrikon at the Emperor's orders\textsuperscript{20}; the well-known inscription in Hadrian's Library\textsuperscript{21}; and the homage 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{23} 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 Materninos Kynegios\textsuperscript{27}, 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{29} to assist them in their task. This atmosphere of utter license and oppression has been admirably conveyed to us by Libanius' epistle «ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶν»\textsuperscript{30} [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 decree 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} «… τυρανικὴν γὰρ ὕπαρξεν ἐξομοιώτας τάτως ἅνωθεν μελλάντων φωνῶν ισθήτα καὶ δημοσίωτως ἀποκαλόμενην».

While and all this was happening in the East, the situation in Greece was an entirely different matter. Up until me-

\textsuperscript{18} That is the Heruli invasion (267 AD).
\textsuperscript{19} According to J. Boardman and D. Finn, \textit{The Parthenon sculptures}. London 1985, p. 214, the interior colonnade and the roof of the temple were restored in the 5th century.
\textsuperscript{20} Τ. Λογγηγῆς, \textit{Ιστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ναῶν Ζ΄}. Athens 1978, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{21} Ἡ Ἱερολόγος, \textit{Πολιτεύουσα Ἐπέκταση}. (as above note 12), p. 132, n. 2. A. Frantz (as above note 16), p. 401 (IG II/III no 4224).
\textsuperscript{22} By the sophist Apronianus. A. Frantz, ibid, note 53, J. Pollini, (as above note 6), p. 211.
\textsuperscript{24} R. Boardman, (1963), p. 59. (1963), p. 59. of the temple of Zeus in Apameia (idem, p. 60, 64) and of the Maenion in Gaia (Máρκος Διάκονος, Βίος Άγιου Πορ-
θηρίου, Β. Κουτσόμη, ed., Thessaloniki 2003, p. 201 221).
\textsuperscript{25} Α. Frantz, «Herculius in Athens. Pagan or Christian?», \textit{Akten des VII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie}, Trier 1965, p. 527 530.
\textsuperscript{26} For a concise history of the period see Π. Ἀθανασιάδου Fowden, «Ο μέγας αἰών»,
\textit{ἴθυπνος Φωδονίου Ζ΄», p. 32 91.
\textsuperscript{29} Λιβάνιος, \textit{Πολιτεύουσα}. (idem, p. 60, 64) and of the temple of Zeus in Apameia (idem, p. 60, 64) and of the Maenion in Gaia (Máρκος Διάκονος, Βίος Άγιου Πορ-
θηρίου, Β. Κουτσόμη, ed., Thessaloniki 2003, p. 201 221).
\textsuperscript{30} G. Fowden (as above note 25), p. 717. Π. Ἀθανασιάδου Fowden (as above note 24), p. 87. G. Fowden (as above note 28), p. 63.
\textsuperscript{32} Π. Ἀθανασιάδου Fowden, ibid, The law was revoked after two years.
\textsuperscript{33} Π. Brown, \textit{The world of Late Antiquity}, p. 103, 104, 106, 107. idem, «The rise and function of the holy man in Late Antiquity», \textit{JRS LXXI} (1971), p. 87. «Above the holy man is a man of power».
\textsuperscript{34} Well known in Antioch and Alexandria. It is significant that the law of Arcadius imposing the destruction of pagan temples in the open country (Cod. Theod. 16, 10 16) suggests that the action should take place "… sine turba ac tumultu".
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 Panathinaean 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 Franz, that the fire may have been set by Alaric’s Visigoths, acquires significant weight. The historian Zosimus is the one responsible for the overall impression that, out of respect for it, Alaric and his Gothic armies did not harm the city of Athens, especially after a vision in which Athena, fully armed, accompanied by Achilles appeared to them above the city’s walls. Nevertheless, the analysis of the sources and archaeological testimonies indicate that this naive tale is far removed from reality. The fortified wall whose repairs are said to have been undertaken by Valerianus and which followed the ancient wall's traces was in a state of extreme disrepair. Worse, its great length was prohibitive, incapable of forestalling Alaric’s barbarians who had already stormed Pireaues. 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 Athena aside, Zosimos also tells us the following: “...Ταύτῃ ὁ Ἀλάρος τὴν ἄρρητα στέγην ὑπεύθυνος μὲν ἀπέστη τῆς πόλεως ἐπιχείρήσεως, ἐπεισοδιοφθάσας τὸ δὲ τῶν ἀθηναίων τῶν λαβόντων καὶ δόντων, εἰσῄει σὺν ἀλήθεις Ἀλάρος εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας τιμὶς φιλοσεβασμός ἀπῆλθε, λοιπῶν μὲν τε καὶ κοινωνίας ἐπιστάσας τὸν ἐν τῇ πόλις λογαρίσματι, καὶ προσέτη δόρα ται λαβὼν ἐπιχείρησε τὴν τε πόλιν ἀξιλαβή καὶ τὴν Ἀθηναίαν πᾶσαν καταλιθεῖν...” 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\(^57\) who had recently converted to Christianity. This is corroborated by numerous pieces of evidence on the destruction on the Ancient Agora\(^58\); the southern slope of the Acropolis; Asklepieion\(^59\); Dipylon\(^60\); and a number of other locations\(^61\). The sanctuary of Nemesis at Rhamnous where the cult statue was found shattered\(^62\) 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\(^63\). It necessitated that the Parthenon's destroyers be imbued with 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\(^64\). 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\(^65\) by the metope's resemblance to a Christian icon theme, the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

In his *Life of Maximus*, Eunapius\(^66\) 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: «... οὗτος Ἀλάριχος ἔχων τοὺς βαβαίρους διὰ τῶν Πυλῶν παρῆλθεν, ὡσπερ διὰ σταδίων καὶ ἱπποκρότου πεδίου τρέχων τοιαύτης αὐτῷ τὰς πύλας ἀπεδίευξε τῆς Ελλάδος ἢ τε τῶν τινὰς ἄστις ἑρῴων ἀναλύσεως προσπαθηκευτέρων ἀσβέστηκαν...». In other words, together with the Visigoth armies, those who wore the brown garments, passed «ἐξολοθρείως προσπαθηκευτέρων» the Thermopylae. The excerpt from the text conceals no mystery (as some have claimed\(^67\)) and can be interpreted in the following manner: groups of disorderly monks\(^68\) 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\(^69\).

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\(^70\). 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 Arians\(^71\). 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 (Φιλοστόριος, 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 Colloquium in memory of George Carpenter Miles*, New York 1976, p. 12, 13.


\(^{60}\) G. Δεσπίνης, *Συμβολὴ στὴν μελέτη τοῦ ἐργοῦ τοῦ Ἀγορακρίτου Συμβολὴ στὴν μελέτη τοῦ ἐργοῦ τοῦ Ἀγορακρίτου*, vol. XXIV, p. 52.

\(^{61}\) As in the roman bath, fount during the Athens Metro excavations, in Amalias street.

\(^{62}\) Γ. Δεσπίνης, Συμβολὴ στὴν μελέτη τοῦ ἐργοῦ τοῦ Ἀγορακρίτου Συμβολὴ στὴν μελέτη τοῦ ἐργοῦ τοῦ Ἀγορακρίτου, Athens 1971, p. 64, 65. Coins of Constantius fount in graves in the temple indicate that the destruction took place after 361.

\(^{63}\) Λιβάνιος, *op. cit.*, (n. 26), p. 100 «... καθεῖλε νεὼς οὐκ ἐλάττῳ τοιοῦτο ποιησάντων τῶν καθαιρούντων ἢ τῶν αἰσχωμα-

\(^{64}\) Λιβάνιος, *op. cit.*, (n. 26), p. 100 «... καθεῖλε νεὼς οὐκ ἐλάττῳ τοιοῦτο ποιησάντων τῶν καθαιρούντων ἢ τῶν αἰσχωμα-

\(^{65}\) As in the case of the temple of Zeus in Apameia, according to Theodorotos (G. Fowden, *Bishops and Temples*, (as above note 28), p. 38.

\(^{66}\) As in the roman bath, fount during the Athens Metro excavations, in Amalias street.


\(^{69}\) G. Fowden, (as above note 67), ibid.

\(^{70}\) D. Kinney, (as above note 25), p. 718.

Christianity 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 «πάνω και χρόνω και πολυχειρία και πολλοῖς τυλίγωνθεν καυτίδαις»73. It must have been the Parthenon ravaged by fire when, Synesius of Cyrene, grieved, wrote those words describing his visit to Athens. 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 traditions75 and was graced by new public edifices76 and buildings dedicated to the Emperors77. 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 century78 were few and relatively small. The conversion of temples into Christian churches79 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.

Χαράλαμπος Μπούρας

Ο ΑΛΑΡΙΧΟΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ

Γ. Σωτηρίου, ΕΜΜΕ, Α1, p. 51 57. Ι. Τραυλός, Χριστιανικά Αθήνα, Αθήνα 1962, p. 725 731. Α. Ορλάνδος, Η ξυλόστεγος Χριστιανική Ακρόπολη, Αθήνα 1956, p. 138, 155, 162, 183 186, 517, 520, 521.

77 A. Kazhdan, Ulfilas, ODB, p. 2139.
