

## The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 16 (2019)

The *H*istorical Review  
La Revue *H*istorique



VOLUME XVI (2019)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques  
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research  
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

### Palimpsests of memory: the medieval city of Athens in modern and postmodern contexts

Jenny P. Albani

doi: [10.12681/hr.22821](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.22821)

Copyright © 2020, Jenny P. Albani



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

#### To cite this article:

Albani, J. P. (2020). Palimpsests of memory: the medieval city of Athens in modern and postmodern contexts. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 16, 89–118. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.22821>

# Articles

## PALIMPSESTS OF MEMORY: THE MEDIEVAL CITY OF ATHENS IN MODERN AND POSTMODERN CONTEXTS

Jenny P. Albani

---

**ABSTRACT:** This article addresses attitudes towards the medieval past of Athens from modern to postmodern times. Athens, a symbol of classical civilisation, had become a provincial Byzantine centre. From the proclamation of Athens in 1833 as the capital of the modern Greek state to about 1880, archaeological research in Athens focused on classical antiquities at the expense of the preservation of monuments of the Middle Ages, which was regarded as a period of decline. The historical and artistic value of Athenian medieval monuments has been acknowledged since the late nineteenth century. The international progress of Byzantine studies, the national narrative on the continuity of Greek history, the political concept of the Megali Idea (“*Great Idea*”), and contemporary state policies based on “diachrony and synergy” contributed to this significant ideological shift. Athens is, however, still renowned and admired worldwide for its classical past, with its medieval cultural heritage less highlighted.

---

“Hail, O Athenian Lady, more serene,  
More beautiful upon your throne of thrones;  
Of Pallas victrix, and of Athens shield!”  
—Kostis Palamas, *The King’s Flute*<sup>1</sup>

This article addresses attitudes towards the medieval past of Athens (fifth to mid-fifteenth centuries) from modern to postmodern times (nineteenth to twenty-first centuries),<sup>2</sup> showing how cultural memory can be altered and even reconstructed as circumstances change over time.<sup>3</sup> Issues relating to time,

---

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from the prayer of Emperor Basil II to the Virgin in the Christian Parthenon (in Canto IX). Kostis Palamas, *The King’s Flute*, trans. by Theodore Ph. Stefanides and Giorgos C. Katsimbalis. Athens: Kostis Palamas Institute, 1982, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to warmly thank Professor Dede Fairchild Ruggles, University of Illinois, Associate Professor Nikolas Bakirtzis, Cyprus Institute, Dr Ioanna Christoforaki, Academy of Athens, Dr Antonis Tsakalos and Ms Sofia Gerogiorgi, Byzantine and Christian Museum, for their stimulating comments on my draft. I extend my gratitude to the anonymous readers for sharing with me their expertise as well as to Mr Dimitrios Doumas and Dr Damian Mac Con Uladh for editing the English text.

<sup>3</sup> This term can be understood as “the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts”. Astrid Erll, “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction”, in *Cultural Memory*

identity and memory in their personal, social, and cultural dimension have become crucial in the past 20 years, during the so-called postmodern period.<sup>4</sup>

To begin with, I will indicate the main features of the medieval fabric of Athens closely, which is connected with its fortifications. Then, I will discuss the policies regarding the medieval monuments during the planning and development of Athens as the capital of the Kingdom of Greece and also the Byzantine influence on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Athenian architecture. I will argue that, despite Athens' rich Byzantine cultural heritage, the city's medieval monuments were allowed to deteriorate until the emergence of Romanticism as an intellectual and aesthetic movement in Europe, the development of scholarly interest in Byzantium in Greece itself, and the writing of the Greek national history within the framework of nineteenth-century historiography. The last section of the article claims that since the 1970s the Greek state has laid emphasis on the cultural management of the surviving Byzantine monuments and incorporated them into the Athenian cultural landscape: they are nowadays protected by Greek law, successfully integrated into the urban fabric, open to the public and used for cultural events. My purpose is, on the one hand, to interpret the limited material evidence from the Middle Ages in Athens within the context of the historical, political and social background of its development and, on the other, to highlight contemporary initiatives to involve surviving Byzantine monuments in the interplay between the past and the present.

### *Medieval Athens (330–1456)*

Medieval Athens remained part of Byzantine territory until 1204, when the Crusaders dissolved the empire. The city then formed part of the Frankish Duchy of Athens. In 1311 it came under Catalan rule and in 1385 surrendered to the Florentines. In 1456 the city was conquered by the Ottomans,<sup>5</sup> whereas since 1833 it has been the capital of the modern Greek state.

---

*Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara B. Young, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008, p. 2. On cultural memory, see also Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory", in Erll et al., *Cultural Memory Studies*, pp. 109–118; Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", *New German Critique* 65 (1995), pp. 125–133; Adrian Velicu, "Cultural Memory between the National and the Transnational", *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 3/1 (2011), pp. 1–4.

<sup>4</sup> Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory", pp. 109–110.

<sup>5</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, s.v. "Athens" (S.B. Bowman), pp. 221–222.

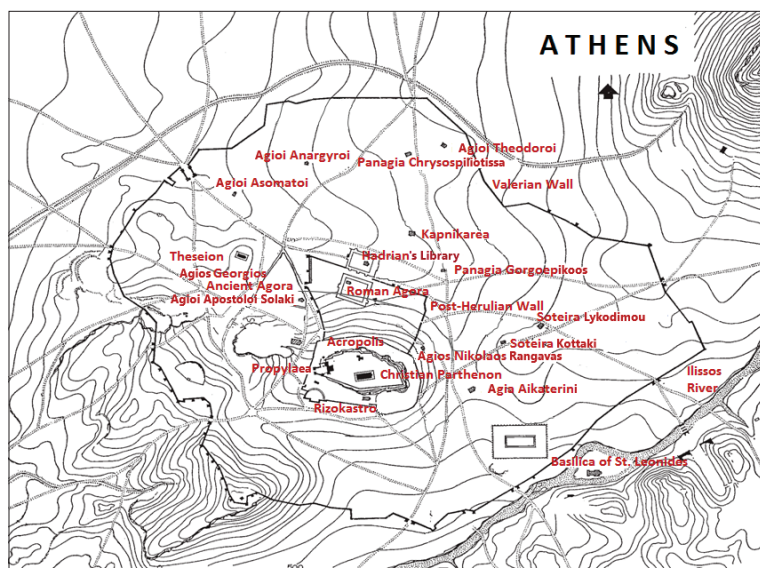


Fig. 1. Map of medieval Athens (sixth–twelfth century). Based on Ioannis K. Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξη των Αθηνών: Από των προϊστορικών χρόνων μέχρι των αρχών του 19ου αιώνας* [Urban development of Athens: from the prehistoric period to the early 19th century], Athens: Kapon & Angeliki Kokkou, 2005<sup>3</sup>.

The medieval city (fig. 1), which during antiquity was dominated by the Acropolis, was demarcated by a triple belt of fortifications:

- ♦ The Valerian Wall (253–260), approximately 8,000 meters long, partly coincided with the Themistoclean Wall, which dated back to the fifth century BC. This wall was possibly repaired and reinforced with towers by Emperor Justinian I (527–565). In Roman times and the Middle Ages, it constituted the outermost fortification of the city; from the twelfth century onwards, it seems quite likely that it no longer served its defensive purpose.<sup>6</sup>
- ♦ The Post-Herulian Wall was built in the wake of the plundering of the city by the Heruli in 267, probably during the reign of Emperor Probus (267–282).

<sup>6</sup> The Roman general Sulla destroyed the wall of the classical period in 86 BC. The Valerian Wall, constructed with reused architectural members from demolished ancient buildings over the ruins of the classical fortification, was extended to the east to include the so-called Hadrian's city. Nikos Tsoniotis, "Νέα στοιχεία για το υστερορωμαϊκό τείχος της Αθήνας" [New evidence on the late Roman fortification of Athens], in *Η Αθήνα κατά τη ρωμαϊκή εποχή: Πρόσφατες ανακαλύψεις, νέες έρευνες* [Athens during the Roman period: recent discoveries, new evidence], ed. Stavros Vlivos, Athens: Benaki Museum, 2008, pp. 55–56; Charalambos

It mainly consisted of architectural members of destroyed monuments of the Ancient Agora and encompassed a small portion of the city, leaving a large part of classical Athens defenceless.<sup>7</sup>

♦ The Acropolis, the city's last line of defence,<sup>8</sup> was fortified already since antiquity, whereas the wall was reinforced during the Byzantine period. In the early thirteenth century, the Rizokastro, a defensive structure that enclosed the foothills of the Acropolis, was erected by the Franks using second-hand building material.<sup>9</sup>

---

Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα, 10ος–12ος αι.* [Byzantine Athens, 10th–12th century], Athens: Benaki Museum, 2010, pp. 29–34; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens, 330–1453”, in *Heaven and Earth: Cities and Countryside in Greece*, ed. Jenny Albani and Evgenia Chalkia, Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Benaki Museum, 2013, pp. 169, 171, 173.

<sup>7</sup> Angeliki Vavylopoulou-Charitonidou, Eleni Makri and Constantinos Tsakos, “Το Ριζόκαστρο. Σωζόμενα υπολείμματα: Νέες παρατηρήσεις και επαναχρονολόγηση” [The Rizokastro: The preserved remains: new observations and re-dating], *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 14 (1987–1988), pp. 350–363; Tsoniotis, “Νέα στοιχεία” [New evidence], pp. 55–74; Tsoniotis, “La città antica a nord dell’Acropoli e le sue sopravvivenze nel paesaggio urbano di Atene contemporanea”, *Archeologia e Città: Riflessione sulla valorizzazione dei siti archeologici in aree urbane. Atti del Convegno internazionale tenuto a Roma presso il Museo Nazionale Romano di Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, l’11 e il 12 febbraio 2010*, ed. Alice Ancona, Alessia Contino and Renato Sebastiani, Rome: Palombe, 2012, p. 110; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 30–33; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, p. 169; Dimitris Sourlas, “Πρόσφατες Αρχαιολογικές έρευνες στη Ρωμαϊκή Αγορά, στη Βιβλιοθήκη του Αδριανού και τις όμορες περιοχές” [Recent archaeological research at the Roman Agora, Hadrian’s Library and the neighbouring areas], in *Αρχαιολογικές Συμβολές. Τόμος Β: Αττική* [Archaeological contributions, vol. 2, Attica], ed. Stavroula Oikonomou and Maria Doga-Toli, Athens: Nicholas and Dolly Goulandris Foundation–Museum of Cycladic Art, 2013, p. 152; Elissavet Tzavella, “Burial and Urbanism in Athens (4th–9th c. AD)”, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 21 (2008), p. 368. It is worth mentioning that recent excavations at present-day Adrianou Street (nos. 78–80) revealed a gate and a tower of the Post-Herulian Wall. They have been both attributed to the Justinianic reinforcement of the city fortifications. Tsoniotis, “La città antica”, p. 107, fig. 8, pl. 11; Sourlas, “Ανασκαφικές έρευνες” [Archaeological research], pp. 155–162. For a reconsideration of the generally accepted dating of the Post-Herulian Wall to the late third century, see Isabella Baldini and Elisa Bazzechi, “About the Meaning of Fortifications in Late Antique Cities: The Case of Athens in Context”, *Focus on Fortifications: New Research on Fortifications in the Ancient Mediterranean and the Near East*, ed. Rune Frederiksen, Silke Müth, Peter I. Schneider and Mike Schnelle, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016, pp. 696–711.

<sup>8</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 35–38.

<sup>9</sup> Vavylopoulou-Charitonidou, Makri and Tsakos, “Ριζόκαστρο” [Rizokastro], pp. 329–363; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 40.

♦ In 1778, as the Valerian Wall had fallen into disuse, the Ottoman voivode Hadji Ali Haseki built a new defensive enclosure with a smaller circumference.<sup>10</sup>

In the aftermath of the closure of the philosophical academies, by a decree issued by Emperor Justinian I in 529, Athens lost its leading role as a centre of learning, according to mainstream scholars.<sup>11</sup> However, recent studies<sup>12</sup> argue that the city continued to play an important administrative, ecclesiastical, and – probably – cultural role during the so-called Dark Ages of economic, social and spiritual crisis that the empire endured from the seventh to the ninth centuries. The administrative and economic centre of the city was located within the Post-Herulian Wall. From the tenth century to Frankish rule – safeguarded within the secure and flourishing environment of the empire – Athens experienced a new period of prosperity, which was reflected in its urban plan with new neighbourhoods emerging beyond the Post-Herulian Wall. These spread over the Ancient Agora, the south slope of the Acropolis and today's localities of Thiseio, Syntagma Square, the National Garden and the Olympieion. Aside from residences, these districts included workshops, outdoor spaces, churches, cemeteries and an outdoor arena intended for physical exercise, the *tzykanisterion*.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ioannis K. Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξις των Αθηνών: Από των προϊστορικών χρόνων μέχρι των αρχών του 19ου αιώνας* [Urban development of Athens: from the prehistoric period to the early 19th century], Athens: Kapon & Angeliki Kokkou, 2005<sup>3</sup>, pp. 195–200. See also the description of the Haseki Wall in 1841 by Panagiotēs Skouzes (1777–1847), an Athenian aristocrat, a member of Filiki Eteria (Society of Friends) and a fighter in the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829). Aikaterini Koumariānou, *Αθήνα, η πόλη-οι άνθρωποι: Αφηγήσεις και μαρτυρίες, 12ος–19ος αιώνας* [Athens, the city–the people: narratives and testimonies, 12th–19th century], Athens: Potamos, 2005, pp. 142–143.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Kazanaki-Lappa, “Medieval Athens”, in *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002, p. 640; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, p. 171; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, s.v. “Athens” (S.B. Bowman), p. 221.

<sup>12</sup> Luca Zavagno, *Cities in Transition: Urbanism in Byzantium between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (AD 500–900)*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009, pp. 33–60; Anthony Kaldellis, *Ο βυζαντινός Παρθενώνας: Η Ακρόπολη ως σημείο συνάντησης χριστιανισμού και ελληνισμού* [The Byzantine Parthenon: the Acropolis as a meeting point of Christianity and Hellenism], Athens: Psychogios, 2013, pp. 115–143.

<sup>13</sup> Kazanaki-Lappa, “Medieval Athens”, pp. 642–644; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, pp. 173–174; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 34–35.

During the Middle Ages, many of the ancient streets of the city, such as the Street of the Tripods,<sup>14</sup> the Sacred Way and the Panathenaic Way, and particularly those streets that led to the eight gates of the northern part of the Post-Herulian Wall,<sup>15</sup> were preserved with almost the same layout, although in certain points their width was reduced.<sup>16</sup> Medieval streets were planned and overlaid in the localities of the Ancient Agora and Kerameikos.<sup>17</sup>

The ancient and Roman monuments, albeit deteriorated, coexisted with the buildings of the medieval city,<sup>18</sup> whereas some of the ancient temples were converted into Christian churches. The most important of these conversions was that of the Parthenon, which was turned into a church dedicated to the Virgin (Panagia Atheniotissa),<sup>19</sup> the cathedral of Byzantine Athens and a significant place of pilgrimage for the faithful who visited the site from across the empire during the Middle Ages. Indicative of the importance of the Christian Parthenon within the sacred landscape of the Byzantine Empire is the pilgrimage of Emperor Basil II (976–1025), in 1018, mentioned by the eleventh-century historian John

<sup>14</sup> Tsoniotis, “La città antica”, p. 111.

<sup>15</sup> Five of them have been identified through archaeological research. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 40–42, 45–46; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51–59; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, pp. 171, 173; Tasos Tanoulas, *Τα Προπύλαια της Αθηναϊκής Ακρόπολης κατά τον Μεσαίωνα* [The Propylaea of the Athenian Acropolis during the Middle Ages], Athens: Archaeological Society of Athens, 1997, *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> The dating of this conversion is controversial; scholars have dated it from the late fifth to the seventh century. Robert Ousterhout, “‘Bestride the Very Peak of Heaven’: The Parthenon after Antiquity”, in *The Parthenon: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Jenifer Neils, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 302–303; Anthony Kaldellis, “The Christianization of the Past”, *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections, Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Anastasia Drandaki, Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Anastasia Tourta, Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Benaki Museum, 2013, pp. 46–47; Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, pp. 172–173, 176; Tanoulas, *Προπύλαια* [Propylaea], p. 9; Isabella Baldini, “Atene: la città Cristiana”, in *Gli Ateniesi e il loro modello di città: Semimari di storia e archeologia greca I, Roma, 25–26 giugno 2012*, ed. Luigi M. Caliò, Valeria Parisi and Enzo Lippolis, Rome: Quasar, 2014, p. 319. On the history and importance of the Parthenon as a Byzantine church and pilgrimage centre, see Kaldellis, *Βυζαντινός Παρθενώνας* [Byzantine Parthenon], esp. pp. 144–160, 193–245; Stefanos Alexopoulos, “When a Column Speaks: The Liturgy of the Christian Parthenon”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 69 (2015), pp. 159–178. The Christian Parthenon was also used for burials. Tzavella, “Burial and Urbanism”, p. 353.

Skylitzes, to express his gratitude to the Virgin for his great victory over the Bulgars.<sup>20</sup>

The occupation of public spaces by dwellings, and also the erection of buildings over the ruins of ancient structures constituted a common urban practice during the Middle Ages. The large middle Byzantine neighbourhood that consisted of abodes and craftsmen's workshops in the locality of the Ancient Agora, the ancient edifices of which were now derelict, the settlement established on the site of the temple of Olympian Zeus and its immediate vicinity, as well as the residences and buildings designated for artisanal activities, built on the *koilon* of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, are a few typical examples.<sup>21</sup> As for the Acropolis, there was a complex of dwellings, possibly erected during the middle Byzantine period, intended to accommodate its garrison.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to the medieval houses that were built of low-quality materials, the numerous churches which were erected during the city's heyday (tenth–twelfth centuries), mainly north of the Acropolis, were particularly elaborate structures.<sup>23</sup> They were small, cross-in-square churches with elegant octagonal domes that featured special morphological elements and have been termed “Athenian”. The harmonious proportions of these churches and the orderly articulation of their volume were influenced possibly by the classicism of the surrounding ancient monuments.<sup>24</sup> Their large number, the liturgical connection of the Athenian cathedral – the Christian Parthenon – with the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople,<sup>25</sup> and a text by Dimitrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid (ca. 1216–1236), acknowledging the church of Panagia Atheniotissa as far-famed and listing it together with the cathedrals of Constantinople and

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Hans Thurn, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973, p. 339. On the significance of this imperial pilgrimage, see Kaldellis, *Βυζαντινός Παρθενώνας* [Byzantine Parthenon], pp. 153–160.

<sup>21</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 56–57, 74–85, 87, 96–98.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>23</sup> At least 40 churches and chapels were in use in Athens in the middle Byzantine period. They were *katholika* (main churches) of monasteries, private and parish churches. Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, p. 175.

<sup>24</sup> Their masonry follows the cloisonné system. Moreover, they have brickwork decoration and sometimes also pseudo-kufic ornaments indicating Arabic influences. Their common feature is the abundance of high-quality architectural sculptures. Bouras, “Byzantine Athens”, pp. 175–176; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, s.v. “Athens” (S.B. Bowman), pp. 222–223.

<sup>25</sup> Alexopoulos, “When a Column Speaks”, p. 165 et seq. On the importance of the church of Panagia Atheniotissa, see also Kaldellis, *Βυζαντινός Παρθενώνας* [Byzantine Parthenon], *passim*.



Thessaloniki,<sup>26</sup> elucidate the religious significance of Athens in the middle Byzantine period. The ambitious projects of the erection and decoration of the church of Soteira Lykodimou<sup>27</sup> and the katholikon of Daphni Monastery,<sup>28</sup> situated 11 kilometres northwest of middle Byzantine Athens, corroborate this assessment. On the other hand, three epigrams by John Geometres reveal that in the eyes of a tenth-century Byzantine writer, Athens, with its classical past, was by no means culturally insignificant but still competed with the empire's capital, Constantinople.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Alexopoulos, "When a Column Speaks", p. 174.

<sup>27</sup> On the church, see Charalalmbos Bouras, "The Soteira Lykodemou at Athens. Architecture", *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 25 (2004), pp. 11–24; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 232–237 (with the previous bibliography).

<sup>28</sup> On Daphni monastery, see Georgios Pallis, "Τοπογραφικά του Αθηναϊκού Πεδίου κατά τη μέση βυζαντινή περίοδο (9ος–12ος αιώνας)" [The Athenian plain in the middle Byzantine era, 9th–12th century], *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 23 (2013), pp. 141–144; Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou, "Αναζητώντας τον ιδρυτή της Μονής Δαφνίου" [Looking for the donor of Daphni monastery], *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 40 (2019), pp. 193–222 (with the previous bibliography).

<sup>29</sup> In the poem *On Athens and Constantinople* (*Εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας καὶ τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν*), the beauty of Erechtheus' city, which emerged from the earth, is compared with the beauty of New Rome, which originated in the sky. Since the beauty of the sky is superior to that of the earth, Constantinople is more beautiful than Athens. The poem *On the wise men of Athens* (*Εἰς τοὺς σοφοὺς τῶν Ἀθηναίων*) points to the Athenians, proud of their wise men, that the Platos, the Socrates, the Xenokrates, the Epikouroi, the Pyrrons and the Aristotles are no longer alive (the plural is used ironically). All that remains in Athens is Mount Hymettus and honey, the sepulchral monuments and the souls of the wise men. On the other hand, the Constantinopolitans enjoy faith and words of wisdom. The last poem is more political, calling Athens to worship the sovereign city. Athens has the olive tree, but Constantinople the sceptres of power; Athens has honey, but Constantinople rhetoricians and wise men, which are sweeter than honey; Athens enslaved Xerxes, but Constantinople subjugated the whole world to her power and Athens, first of all. Therefore, Athens has to worship the sovereign city. Maria Tomadaki, "Ἰωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ἰαμβικά Ποιήματα: Κριτική έκδοση, μετάφραση και σχόλια" [John Geometres, Iambic poems: critical edition, translation, and comments], PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2014, pp. 181–182, 393–394; Herbert Hunger, "Athen in Byzanz: Traum und Realität", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990), p. 51; Andreas Rhoby, *Reminiszenzen an antike Stätten in der mittel- und spätbyzantinischen Literatur: Eine Untersuchung zur Antikenrezeption in Byzanz*. Göttingen: Preust & Gutschmidt, 2003, pp. 76–77; Kaldellis, *Βυζαντινός Παρθενώνας* [Byzantine Parthenon], pp. 33–35.

*Byzantine Athens in the Modern Context (1830–1970)*

Regarding Byzantine Athens in its modern context, we should examine the response of the modern Greek state to medieval Athenian history and monuments, which was dictated by ideology, political priorities and financial means. Athens was selected as the capital for the revival of its ancient glory, while Byzantium occupied an ambiguous position in Greek collective memory.

At the outset of the Greek War of Independence in 1821, Athens, despite the devastation it had suffered as a result of warfare and the continuous foreign occupation, preserved many of its ancient and medieval monuments. The medieval fabric was maintained almost intact also under Ottoman rule and still survives, to some extent, in the old section of the city since the main thoroughfares of today's urban environment are either identical with their ancient predecessors or have been laid out with the same orientation.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, during the siege of the city by the army of Ottoman general Reşid Mehmed Pasha (Kütahi) from July 1826 to May 1827,<sup>31</sup> its buildings were almost completely destroyed. In 1833, shortly before Athens became capital of the newly established Greek state, the German Hellenist traveller Ludwig Ross described the city as an amorphous

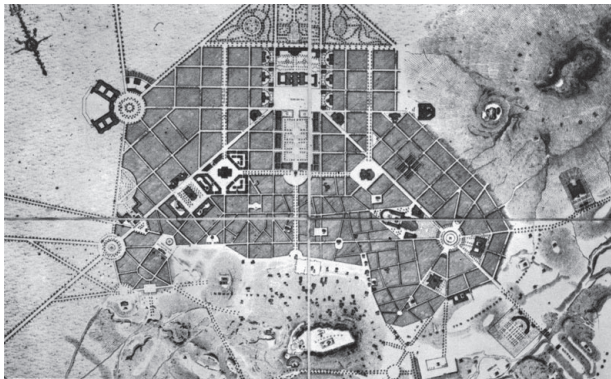


Fig. 2. Plan of Athens by Stamatios Kleantis and Eduard Schaubert, 1831–1832. Based on Kostas E. Biris, *Αι Αθήναι από του 19ου εις τον 20όν αιώνα* [Athens from the 19th to the 20th centuries], Athens: Melissa, 2005<sup>5</sup>, pp. 9–10.

<sup>30</sup> Nikos G. Moschonas, “Preface”, *Αρχαιολογία της Πόλης των Αθηνών/Archaeology of the City of Athens*, accessed 7 June 2019, <http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/En/index.aspx>; Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξις* [Urban development], p. 226.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 120; Kostas E. Biris, *Αι Αθήναι από του 19ου εις τον 20όν αιώνα* [Athens from the 19th to the 20th centuries], Athens: Melissa, 2005<sup>5</sup>, pp. 9–10.

and gloomy mass of ruins and debris. Being a fervent lover of antiquity, he was pleased with the ruined state of the 115 Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches of the city as it enabled him to retrieve ancient *spolia*.<sup>32</sup> According to the book *Athens and Attica: Journal of a Residence There* (London, 1836) by the English traveller Christopher Wordsworth, the high number of Athenian churches – more than 300 – is a peculiar feature of the city. Most of them were, however, devastated and, therefore, public planted squares should take their place.<sup>33</sup>

The negative attitude of Ross and Wordsworth towards the city's medieval monuments was not an isolated phenomenon. It is true, however, that during the elaboration of the first urban plan of Athens (1831–1832) (fig. 2), which the layout of the modern city partially followed, the architects Stamatios Kleantis and Eduard Schaubert propounded in an interpretative memorandum the repair and maintenance of the derelict churches that had survived the struggle for independence.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Byzantine monuments supplemented the value of their classical counterparts.<sup>35</sup> Leo von Klenze, who had proposed amendments to the original plan, was also interested in the documentation and preservation of all the medieval structures of the city, including the Byzantine, Latin as well as Ottoman monuments.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, with the 1834 regency law “On the Scientific and Technological Collections, on the Discovery and Preservation of Antiquities and their Use”, the state showed an interest in the protection of antiquities, including the medieval monuments.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, in practice, the medieval past of the city was substantially downgraded during the first building phase of modern Athens, from 1833 to

---

<sup>32</sup> Alexandros Papageorgiou-Venetas, *Αθήνα: Ένα όραμα του κλασικισμού* [Athens: a vision of classicism], Athens: Kapon, 2001, pp. 24–25.

<sup>33</sup> Koumariou, *Αθήνα* [Athens], p. 337.

<sup>34</sup> Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξις* [Urban development], p. 244; Angeliki Kokkou, *Η μέριμνα για τις αρχαιότητες στην Ελλάδα και τα πρώτα μουσεία* [The concern for antiquities in Greece and the first museums], Athens: Kapon, 2009, p. 112; Eleni-Anna Chlepa, *Τα βυζαντινά μνημεία στη νεότερη Ελλάδα: Ιδεολογία και πρακτική των αποκαταστάσεων, 1833–1939* [The Byzantine monuments in modern Greece: ideology and practice of restorations, 1833–1930], Athens: Kapon, 2011, p. 34; Biris, *Αθήναι* [Athens], pp. 29–30.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Argyro Loukaki, “Whose Genius Loci? Contrasting Interpretations of the ‘Sacred Rock of the Athenian Acropolis’”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87/2 (1997), p. 312.

<sup>36</sup> Papageorgiou-Venetas, *Όραμα* [Vision], p. 30; Kokkou, *Μέριμνα* [Concern], p. 112.

<sup>37</sup> The law was dated 10/22 May 1834. *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* [Government Gazette], no. 22, 16/28 June 1834, pp. 176–190. Cf. Antonis Bekiaris, “Η ανακάλυψη των βυζαντινών μνημείων το 19ο αιώνα” [The discovery of the Byzantine monuments in the 19th century], in *Από τη Χριστιανική Συλλογή στο Βυζαντινό Μουσείο (1884–1930)* [From the Christian

1880. In the pressing need to find buildings for the housing needs of the new capital, the state adapted many Byzantine churches to other uses, removing their typological and morphological features in the process.<sup>38</sup> A typical example of a medieval building that underwent a radical change of use is the church of Panagia Gorgoepikoos, which in 1841 was converted into a public library.<sup>39</sup> Other churches were demolished as part of the expropriation of church land, either to secure funds for other projects or in the context of the city's street planning.<sup>40</sup> The middle Byzantine church of Panagia Kapnikarea is the most famous case of an Athenian medieval building that came close to being torn down in 1834 as a result of laying out Ermou Street. It was rescued after the intervention of King Ludwig I of Bavaria (1825–1848), Othon's father.<sup>41</sup>

Simultaneously, the country's scientific community, which was imbued with the ideal of archaeolatry (devotion to antiquity), played a significant role

---

Collection to the Byzantine Museum, 1884–1930], ed. Olga Gratzou and Anastasia Lazaridou, Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, 2006, p. 144; Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], pp. 31–32. On the legislation on Byzantine heritage at the turn of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, see Stamatis T. Chondrogiannis, *Byzantium in the World: Artistic, Cultural and Ideological Legacy. From the 19th to the 21st Century*, Thessaloniki: Centre of Byzantine Research, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2017, pp. 83–85, 138–139.

<sup>38</sup> Stavros B. Mamaloukos, “Οι χαμένες βυζαντινές εκκλησίες” [The lost Byzantine churches], *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], *Η Καθημερινή: Επτά Ημέρες* (24 December 1995), p. 12; Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], pp. 36–37.

<sup>39</sup> The marble columns of the church were replaced with pillars and its bell tower was demolished. Eleni Kounoupiotou-Manolessou, “Οι σωζόμενες βυζαντινές εκκλησίες” [The preserved Byzantine churches], *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], *Η Καθημερινή: Επτά Ημέρες* (24 December 1995), p. 15; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 159; Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], pp. 45–46; On the church and the relevant bibliography, see Charalambos Bouras and Laskarina Boura, *Η ελληνική ναοδομία κατά τον 12ο αιώνα* [Church architecture in Greece during the 12th century], Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 2002, pp. 44–49; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 158–165; Manolis Korres, “Αναχρησιμοποίηση λίθων: Ναός Παναγίας Γοργοεπηκόου” [Reuse of stones: Church of Panagia Gorgoepikoos], *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 39 (2018), pp. 29–66; Ioanna Stoufi-Poulimenou, “Σχετικά με τη χρονολόγηση της Παναγίας Γοργοεπηκόου στην Αθήνα” [Regarding the dating of the church of the Panagia Gorgoepikoos in Athens], *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 39 (2018), pp. 195–206

<sup>40</sup> Mamaloukos, “Χαμένες βυζαντινές εκκλησίες” [Lost Byzantine churches], p. 12; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> Kounoupiotou-Manolessou, “Σωζόμενες βυζαντινές εκκλησίες” [Preserved Byzantine churches], p. 14; Mamaloukos, “Χαμένες βυζαντινές εκκλησίες” [Lost Byzantine churches], p.



Fig. 3. Churches of Profitis Ilias and Taxiarchai. Engraving by James Skene, 1838. Courtesy of Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation.

– with very few exceptions<sup>42</sup> – in the demolition of major medieval monuments and building remains for the benefit of antiquities, without, in many cases, systematic documentation.<sup>43</sup> Among the characteristic examples of this practice was the demolition of all middle Byzantine antiquities within Hadrian’s Library during the excavations conducted in 1885 and 1886,<sup>44</sup> and also, in 1849, of the middle Byzantine church of Asomatos “Sta Skalia” (“On the Steps”), which was immediately adjacent to the facade of the Library.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, from 1862 onwards, all remains of the Byzantine neighbourhood established inside the

12. On the church, see Bouras and Boura, *Ελλαδική ναοδομία* [Church architecture in Greece], pp. 49–50; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 196–202.

<sup>42</sup> The prominent architect Lysandros Kaftantzoglou expressed strong objection to the destruction of the wall paintings of Gorgoepikoos in a newspaper article in 1862. Moreover, he suggested measures for the protection of Byzantine churches. Foreign scholars, such as the French art historian and archaeologist Adolphe Napoléon Didron, also expressed views opposing the destruction of medieval monuments. Kokkou, *Μέριμνα* [Concern], pp. 114–116; Bekiaris, “Ανακάλυψη” [Discovery], pp. 144–145.

<sup>43</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 120; Dimitris Plantzos, “Archaeology and Hellenic Identity, 1896–2004: The Frustrated Vision”, in *A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-century Greece*, ed. Dimitris Damaskos and Dimitris Plantzos, Athens: Benaki Museum, 2008, pp. 14–15.

<sup>44</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 44, 153–154; Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], p. 38.

<sup>45</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 148–153; Evi Touloupa, “Ο Άγιος Ασώματος στα Σκαλία” [Agios Asomatos sta Skalia], in *Ευφρόσυνη: Αφιέρωμα στον Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη* [Delightful: tribute to Manolis Chatzidakis], Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, 1992, vol. 2, pp. 593–600.

Roman Agora were removed, for the sake of excavating earlier strata, while the demolition of the middle Byzantine churches of Profitis Ilias (1848) and the Taxiarchai (1850) (fig. 3) had already paved the way.<sup>46</sup> In an attempt to give prominence to the purity of the classical form of the Propylaea, the Frankish Tower<sup>47</sup> on the Acropolis was dismantled in 1875 by the Archaeological Society



Fig. 4. Ancient Agora of Athens. Based on photo by Aimee Cardwell (<https://www.flickr.com/people/jonezes>), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

of Athens, with funds provided by the excavator of Troy and Mycenae, Heinrich Schliemann, a fact that nonetheless attracted fierce criticism.<sup>48</sup>

Neither the clergy, who were responsible for the religious monuments, nor congregations were fully aware of the great historical and artistic significance of medieval churches.<sup>49</sup> Hence, seven of the twenty-four Byzantine churches

<sup>46</sup> Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 56, 68–72, 168–172, 238–239. On the church of Profitis Ilias, see also Stefan Sinos, “Die sogenannte Kirche des Hagios Elias zu Athen”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 64/2 (1971), pp. 351–361. On the church of the Taxiarchai, see Charalambos Bouras, “The Middle-Byzantine Athenian Church of the Taxiarchs near the Roman Agora”, *British School at Athens Studies* 8 (2001), pp. 69–74

<sup>47</sup> On the Frankish Tower, probably constructed between 1403 and 1435, and its function, see Tanoulas, *Προπύλαια* [Propylaea], passim, esp. pp. 311–312 and 317–319; Giorgos Pallis, “Μεσαιωνικοί πύργοι στα παράλια της Αθήνας” [Medieval towers on the Athenian coastline], *Διαχρονία: Πόλη και Ύπαιθρος στη Μεσόγειο* 3/2 (December 2012), p. 157.

<sup>48</sup> Kokkou, *Μέριμνα* [Concern], pp. 113–114; Tasos Tanoulas, “The Propylaea of the Acropolis at Athens since the Seventeenth Century: Their Decay and Restoration”, *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 102 (1987), pp. 472–473; Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], p. 38. It is also worth noting that two medieval churches in the Propylaea are no longer preserved. One of them was probably a Frankish chapel dedicated to St. Bartholomew. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 140–141.

<sup>49</sup> Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], p. 32.

were torn down, whereas the majority of the surviving buildings went through drastic structural intervention in order to serve as parish churches.<sup>50</sup> As a case in point, the late tenth-century church of Agioi Apostoloi Solaki at the Ancient Agora (fig. 4) was expanded westwards between 1877 and 1891.<sup>51</sup>

The preservation and promotion of the classical past at the expense of the medieval monuments and remains continued to be a purposeful decision, advocated by the state and various scientific bodies until the final decades of the nineteenth century. At that time two new scientific associations, the Historical and Ethnological Society (1882) and the Christian Archaeological Society (1884), were founded, to research and promote medieval and modern Hellenism.<sup>52</sup> Reacting against Fallmerayer's theory on the racial identity of the Greek nation,<sup>53</sup> essays by Spyridon Zambelios (1852–1857) and the five-volume *History of the Greek Nation* (1860–1874) by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, the two foremost Greek national historians, established the uninterrupted historical continuity of Hellenism from antiquity to modern times on the basis of a tripartite historical schema (ancient, Byzantine and modern eras).<sup>54</sup> Terms related to

---

<sup>50</sup> Masonry consolidations, addition of bell towers, additions to the narthex and extension of other spaces can be noted among them. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43, figs. 28–29; John McK. Camp II, *The Athenian Agora: A Short Guide*, Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2003, fig. 69. On this church, see Alison Frantz, *The Athenian Agora*, vol. 20, *The Church of the Holy Apostles*, Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1971; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 122–126.

<sup>52</sup> Biris, *Αθήναι* [Athens], p. 226. Chondrogiannis, *Byzantium*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>53</sup> In his books (*Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters*, pt. 1, *Untergang der peloponnesischen Hellenen und Wiederbevölkerung des leeren Bodens durch slavische Volksstämme*, Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1830; *Welchen Einfluß hatte die Besetzung Griechenlands durch die Slawen auf das Schicksal der Stadt Athen und der Landschaft Attika? Oder nähere Begründung der im ersten Bande der Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters aufgestellten Lehre über die Entstehung der heutigen Griechen*, Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1835; *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters*, pt. 2, *Morea, durch innere Kriege zwischen Franken und Byzantinern verwüstet und von albanischen Colonisten überschwemmt, wird endlich von den Türken erobert: Von 1250–1500 nach Christus*, Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1836), the Austrian traveller, journalist, historian and politician Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861) argued that the ancient Hellenic population in Greece was replaced by Slavs and Albanians during the Middle Ages.

<sup>54</sup> Antonis Liakos, “The Construction of National Time: The Making of the Modern Greek Historical Imagination”, *Political Uses of the Past: The Recent Mediterranean Experience*, ed. Jacques Revel and Giovanni Levi, London: Frank Cass, 2001, pp. 27–42; Dean Kostantaras, “Byzantine Turns in Modern Greek Thought and Historiography, 1767–1874”, *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 12 (2015), pp. 185 et seq.; Despina Christodoulou,

antiquity, *medium-aevum* and modernity to divide historical time were also in use in Western Europe from the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, medievalists and art theorists, spearheaded by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905), expressed scientific interest in the Middle Ages.<sup>56</sup> The French scholar Paul Durand is an early case in point: he studied, drew and recorded his remarks on several Athenian Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches during four visits to the city (1839–1840, 1842–1843, 1847 and 1864).<sup>57</sup> In 1887 the British architects and artists Robert Weir Schultz and Sidney Howard Barnsley

---

“Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography”, in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson, London: Routledge, 2010, pp. 451–461; Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque: L’apport de Spyridon Zambélios (1815–1881)*, Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, Fondation Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 2005, passim, esp. pp. 242–269; Koubourlis, “Εννοιολογικές πολυσημίες και πολιτικό πρόταγμα: ένα παράδειγμα από τον Κ. Παπαρηγόπουλο” [Conceptual polysemies and political priority: an example from K. Paparrigopoulos], *Τα Ιστορικά–Historica* 15/28–29 (June, December 1998), pp. 31–56; Koubourlis, “Όταν οι ιστορικοί μιλούν για τον εαυτό τους: Ο ρόλος του εθνικού ιστορικού στους πρωτοπόρους της εθνικής σχολής” [When the historians talk about themselves: the role of the national historian as conceived by the pioneers of the Greek national school], in *Ιστοριογραφία της νεότερης και σύγχρονης Ελλάδας, 1833–2002* [Historiography of modern and contemporary Greece, 1833–2002], vol. 1, ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Triantaphyllos E. Sklavenitis, Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2004, pp. 81–100; Elli Skopetea, *Το “Πρότυπο Βασίλειο” και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα: Όψεις του εθνικού προβλήματος στην Ελλάδα (1830–1880)* [The “model kingdom” and the Megali Idea: aspects of the national problem in Greece (1830–1890)], Athens: Polytypo, 1988, pp. 171–189; Chondrogiannis, *Byzantium*, pp. 40–43.

<sup>55</sup> Antonis Liakos, “Constituting the Modern World as the Future of Greek Antiquity: Rubens on the Changing Structure of Historical Time”, *Knowing Future Time In and Through Greek Historiography*, ed. Alexandra Lianeri, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016, p. 335.

<sup>56</sup> Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], pp. 62–63; Ioannis Koubourlis, “Οι οφειλές του Σπυρίδωνος Ζαμπέλιου στη γαλλική ρομαντική ιστορική σχολή” [The intellectual debts of Spyridon Zambelios to the French Romantic historical school], *Η Διεθνές Πανιώνιο Συνέδριο* [VIII International Panionian Conference], Athens: Society of Kytherian Studies, 2009, vol. 4/1, p. 442. According to Alois Riegl, there is no distinction between high and humble art, as artistic value is a relative rather than an absolute concept (Alois Riegl, *Der moderne Denkmalkultus: Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung*. Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1903, pp. 3–6). On the re-evaluation of Byzantium (Byzantine revival) within the redefinition of the Middle Ages during the nineteenth century under Romanticism, see Chondrogiannis, *Byzantium*, pp. 43–70.

<sup>57</sup> A British bombardment in 1944 destroyed most of Durand’s archive, including calendars, notes and drawings, in the Municipal Library of Chartres. The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive in Athens possesses 254 of his drawings, depicting Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches of Athens. Toulia Kalantzopoulou, *Μεσαιωνικοί ναοί της Αθήνας από*



started to record Byzantine monuments in Athens, Thessaloniki and other regions in Greece with measured drawings, watercolours and photographs.<sup>58</sup> Other members of the British School at Athens also produced, from 1890 to 1903, photographs and drawings of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments of Attica, now kept in the archives of the school.<sup>59</sup> Restoration work on Byzantine monuments commenced towards the end of the nineteenth century and one of the first monuments to be treated, with the participation of European experts, was Daphni Monastery (1885–1897).<sup>60</sup>



Fig. 5. Athens Ophthalmological Clinic, 1843–1855. Photo: Author

*σωζόμενα σχέδια του Paul Durand* [Medieval churches of Athens from preserved drawings by Paul Durand], Athens: Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, 2002, pp. 17–23.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Ousterhout, “The Rediscovery of Constantinople and the Beginnings of Byzantine Archaeology: A Historiographic Survey”, in *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753–1914*, ed. Zainab Bahrani, Zeynep Çelik and Edhem Eldem, Istanbul: SALT, 2011, p. 197; Eugenia Drakopoulou, “British School at Athens Research on Byzantine Attica”, in *Scholars, Travels, Archives: Greek History and Culture through the British School at Athens*, ed. Michael Llewellyn Smith, Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Eleni Calligas, London: British School at Athens, 2009, pp. 145, 149–150.

<sup>59</sup> Drakopoulou, “British School”, pp. 145–151, esp. n. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Chlepa, *Βυζαντινά μνημεία* [Byzantine monuments], p. 76.

Under the influence of European Romanticism, the neo-Byzantine (or Helleno-Byzantine) style emerged in Greece (1840–1870).<sup>61</sup> It had, to a certain extent, an impact on the architecture of Athens, starting with the city's Metropolitan Cathedral, designed by Theophil Hansen and Dimitrios Zezos (who altered Hansen's original plans).<sup>62</sup> After Zezos' death (1853), the project was undertaken by François Boulanger. Lysandros Kaftantzoglou designed the churches of Agios Georgios Karytsi, erected on the site of a demolished Byzantine church,<sup>63</sup> and Agia Eirini,<sup>64</sup> whereas Zezos built the church of Zoodochos Pigi<sup>65</sup> and designed the church of Panagia Chrysospiliotissa,<sup>66</sup> all of which – in neo-Byzantine style – today constitute listed monuments of modern culture. Progressively, the style dominated ecclesiastical architecture mainly in the post-war years.<sup>67</sup> Secular buildings, public as well as private, that conformed to the neo-Byzantine style, are more rarely encountered, with Athens Ophthalmological Clinic (1843–1855, following the plans of Kaftantzoglou with later additions by Gerasimos Metaxas)<sup>68</sup> (fig. 5) and the residence of the folklorist Angeliki Chatzimichali (1924–1927), designed by Aristotelis Zachos,<sup>69</sup> being the best-known examples, both of which are also listed monuments of modern

---

<sup>61</sup> On this early neo-Byzantine style in Greece, see Chondrogiannis, *Byzantium*, pp. 70–73. On the revival of Byzantine architectural sculpture in nineteenth-century Athens, see Giorgos Pallis, “Η αναβίωση της βυζαντινής αρχιτεκτονικής γλυπτικής στην Αθήνα του 19ου αι.” [The revival of Byzantine architectural sculpture in nineteenth-century Athens] (forthcoming).

<sup>62</sup> His plans were awarded in an architectural competition in 1846. Biris, *Αθήναι* [Athens], pp. 132–133. Dimitris Philippidis, *Νεοελληνική αρχιτεκτονική: Αρχιτεκτονική θεωρία και πράξη (1830–1980) σαν αντανάκλαση των ιδεολογικών επιλογών της νεοελληνικής κουλτούρας* [Neohellenic architecture: architectural theory and practice (1830–1980) as a reflection of the ideological choices of Neohellenic culture], Athens: Melissa, 1984, pp. 93–95.

<sup>63</sup> Biris, *Αθήναι* [Athens], pp. 135–136.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137–138.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206–207.

<sup>67</sup> Philippidis, *Νεοελληνική αρχιτεκτονική* [Neohellenic architecture], pp. 93–98, 140–143; Chondrogiannis, *Byzantium*, pp. 150–152.

<sup>68</sup> Maro Kardamitsi-Adami and Aristeia Papanikolaou-Christensen, *Το Οφθαλμιατρείο Αθηνών, 1843–1993: Εκατόν πενήντα χρόνια από την ίδρυσή του* [Athens Ophthalmological Clinic, 1843–1993: 150 years since its founding], Athens: DIA, 1993; Philippidis, *Νεοελληνική αρχιτεκτονική* [Neohellenic architecture], p. 93, n. 246; Biris, *Αθήναι* [Athens], pp. 141–142. According to Biris (p. 141), the original plan was designed by Christian Hansen.

<sup>69</sup> Since this building is characterised by eclecticism, it features several neo-Byzantine morphological elements. See “Οικία Αγγελικής Χατζημιχάλη” [House of Angeliki Chatzimichali], Αρχαιολογία της Πόλης των Αθηνών/Archaeology of the City of Athens, accessed 5 June 2019, [http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/arxeio\\_more.aspx?id=257](http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/arxeio_more.aspx?id=257).

culture. Prominent sepulchral monuments at the royal cemetery of Tatoi, such as the mausoleum of King Constantine I, Queen Sophia, and King Alexander (1936–1940), as well as the tombs of Prince Nicholas (1938), a fervent supporter of Byzantine archaeology, and his wife Helen (1957), are also in neo-Byzantine style.<sup>70</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Byzantine Athens appeared to be ideologically associated with the modern Greek notion of the historical destination of Hellenism, the so-called Megali Idea (“Great Idea”):<sup>71</sup> in 1910, just a few years before the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), the Greek “national” poet Kostis Palamas published the epic-lyric poem *The King’s Flute*, which focuses on the prayer of the triumphant Byzantine emperor Basil II to the Virgin at the Christian Parthenon.<sup>72</sup> Ten centuries after the epigrams of John Geometres, a modern poem provides a link between Byzantine Athens and Constantinople: Palamas’ poem, structured in 12 cantos, narrates the emperor’s land trip from Constantinople, in the Byzantine north, to Athens, in the south, with references to the spatial, historical, political and cultural unity of these territories. Accentuating the significance of Byzantine Athens, Palamas relates it to the importance of modern Athens, the contemporary national centre of Hellenism, and by highlighting the victories of Hellenism in the Middle Ages, he enhances the Greek aspirations of his times.

#### *Byzantine Athens in the Postmodern Context (1970–present)*

The postmodern context refers, at an international level, to the historical period since the 1970s and is mainly associated with a wide range of cultural movements characterised not only by pluralistic views, social criticism and irony but also interest in the preservation of memory. Byzantine culture has undergone reappraisal and received acknowledgment in Greece along with the international progress of Byzantine studies.

---

<sup>70</sup> Giorgos Pallis, “Ο νεοβυζαντινός τάφος του πρίγκηπα Νικολάου στο Τατόι και το πρότυπό του” [The neo-Byzantine tomb of Prince Nicholas at Tatoi and its model], *Διαχρονία* 5 (September 2002), pp. 113–118.

<sup>71</sup> The Μεγάλη Ίδέα (“Great Idea”), the goal of reviving the Byzantine Empire, dominated Greek foreign and domestic politics from the War of Independence in the 1820s through the Balkan Wars at the beginning of the twentieth century. Skopetea, *Μεγάλη Ίδέα* [Great Idea], pp. 251–360.

<sup>72</sup> On Palamas’ relationship with the Great Idea, see Elizabeth Kefallinos, “The Hymn of Athens by Kostis Palamas: A Poem about Athens or Athens as a Poem?” in “Thinking Diversely: Hellenism and the Challenge of Globalisation”, ed. Elizabeth Kefallinos, special issue, *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand)* (2012), pp. 367–370.



Fig. 6. Map of modern Athens, 1890, from Nikolaos G. Politis (ed.), *Λεξικόν εγκυκλοπαιδικόν* [Encyclopaedic dictionary], vol. 1, Athens: Bart and Hirst, 1889, p. 213.

Significant for the cultural life in Greece during this period was the foundation of the Ministry of Culture and Sciences (the present-day Ministry of Culture and Sports) in 1971 during the dictatorship of the colonels to manipulate artistic and spiritual creation. Its development in normal political conditions, after the restoration of democracy, into a dynamic administrative institution with policies based on the concept “diachrony and synergy”<sup>73</sup> has given the

<sup>73</sup> The diachrony of Greek civilisation as the basis and axis of cultural policy presupposes a holistic approach of the cultural heritage through the ages. According to this view, the monument is not only a museum exhibit or an object for research and restoration. It is, moreover, a contemporary cultural experience, a source of inspiration, and often an element

medieval past of Athens the value it deserves. Specialised departments of the ministry are entrusted with the study, conservation, restoration and promotion of the medieval monuments of the postmodern city<sup>74</sup> on the basis of the updated archaeological law 3028/2002 “On the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in General”.

Moreover, the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, a public institution founded in 1914 and administratively associated with the ministry, aims, through its updated permanent exhibition<sup>75</sup> but also its scientific initiatives,<sup>76</sup> to establish a connection between the medieval artefacts of its collections and the monuments of the city. The museum possesses, inter alia, a large and significant collection of Byzantine sculptures, many of which come from Athenian monuments, rendered by accomplished Athenian or Attic workshops.<sup>77</sup> Connections with the Byzantine Parthenon are provided by fragments of architectural sculptures on display,<sup>78</sup> namely four fragments from

---

of everyday life. The second axis, synergy, is the convergence of the various components of cultural activity. It refers to the cooperation of state institutions and the private sector for multiple outcomes. Evangelos Venizelos, *Διαχρονία και συνέργεια: Μία πολιτική πολιτισμού* [Diachrony and synergy: a cultural policy], Athens: Kastaniotis, 1999, pp. 71–72.

<sup>74</sup> For example, the consolidation and restoration works of Petraki and Kaisariani monasteries as well as the conservation of the mosaic decoration of Daphni Monastery. Charakleia Koilakou and Eleni Gini-Tsoforoulou, “1η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων: Στερέωση μνημείων–αναστηλωτικές εργασίες” [First Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities. Consolidation of monuments–restoration works], *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον: Χρονικά* 41 (1986), p. 20; Eleni Gini-Tsoforoulou, Aikaterini Pantelidou-Alexiadou and Charikleia Koilakou, “1η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων: Αναστηλωτικές εργασίες” [First Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities: restoration works], *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον: Χρονικά* 40 (1985), p. 75; Eleni Manolessou, Aikaterini Pantelidou-Alexiadou, Charikleia Koilakou and Eleni Gini-Tsoforoulou, “1η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων: Συντήρηση ψηφιδωτών – τοιχογραφιών – εικόνων [First Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities: conservation of mosaics–wall paintings–icons], *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον: Χρονικά* 41 (1986), p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> The permanent exhibition of the museum includes a thematic section on Byzantine Attica (II.5. Attica: A Byzantine province).

<sup>76</sup> For example, the organisation of the conference “Byzantine Athens” (21–23 October 2016) in collaboration with the University of Peloponnese.

<sup>77</sup> It is not, however, known for all of them from which Athenian monuments they come from. Maria Sklavou-Mavroeidi, *Γλυπτά του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου Αθηνών* [Sculptures of the Byzantine Museum], Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, 1999, passim; Bouras and Boura, *Ελλαδική ναοδομία* [Church architecture in Greece], pp. 39–40.

<sup>78</sup> On the contrary, the Acropolis Museum, founded in 2009, focuses only on the archaic and classical phases of the Acropolis and the Parthenon, providing sparse information on the – equally important – medieval period. Cf. Dimitris Plantzos, “Η κιβωτός και το έθνος:

a curved marble frieze with floral decoration in relief, which probably belonged to the interior decoration of the apse,<sup>79</sup> a marble slab from the ambo<sup>80</sup> and four inscribed fragments from the architrave of the *phiale*.<sup>81</sup>



Fig. 7. Remains of the three phases of the medieval church in the court of Hadrian's Library. Photo: Author.

Fragments of architectural sculptures and the mosaic pavement from the fifth-century Basilica of St. Leonides,<sup>82</sup> also known as the Basilica of Ilissos, a significant early Byzantine church to the east of the Olympieion, and a marble

<sup>79</sup> Ένα σχόλιο για την υποδοχή του Νέου Μουσείου Ακρόπολεως”, *Σύγχρονα Θέματα* 106 (July–September 2009), p. 16; Plantzos, “‘Il n’y a pas de hors texte’: το Μουσείο της Ακρόπολης και τα απόνερα του ιδεαλισμού”, *Τετράδια Μουσειολογίας* 7 (2010), p. 28; Alexopoulos, “When a Column Speaks”, p. 161.

<sup>79</sup> Inv. no. BXM 394a–d. Anna Pianalto, “Fragments of a Curved Frieze”, in Drandaki et al., *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium*, p. 61 (no. 7); Sklavou-Mavroeidi, *Γλυπτά* [Sculptures], p. 42 (no. 34).

<sup>80</sup> Inv. no. BXM 393. Ibid., p. 63 (no. 74).

<sup>81</sup> Inv. no. BXM 395. Ibid., p. 178 (no. 246).

<sup>82</sup> A fragment, probably from the frame of a gate (inv. no. BXM 289), a slab from an ambo with relief decoration (inv. no. BXM 290) and 19 fragments of a mosaic pavement depicting a variety of decorative themes: birds, ivy leaves, vine leaves and grapes, laurel wreaths, geometric motifs, rosettes, etc. Dimitrios Konstantios et al., *Ο κόσμος του Βυζαντινού Μουσείου* [The world of the Byzantine Museum]. Athens: Ministry of Culture. Byzantine Museum, 2004, pp. 35 (no. 5), 90, 94 (no. 74); Sklavou-Mavroeidi, *Γλυπτά* [Sculptures], pp. 62 (no. 72), 40 (no. 31).

impost from the fifth-century Basilica of Klematios on Lycabettus Hill<sup>83</sup> represent the early Byzantine religious architecture in Athens. Moreover, visitors can see three early Byzantine tombs inside the museum's gardens, transported there by crane from an excavation in Koukaki, not far from the Olympieion, in the centre of Athens.<sup>84</sup> Architectural sculptures from Athenian middle Byzantine monuments in the museum include those of the third phase of the Christian building in the courtyard of Hadrian's Library, namely the middle Byzantine church of Megali Panagia<sup>85</sup> (fig. 7), from the church of Agios Ioannis Mangoutis<sup>86</sup> and Petraki Monastery.<sup>87</sup> A detached fifteenth-century wall painting depicting the Virgin and Child between the initials F-A and L-S – probably denoting the names of Francesco I Acciaiola, the Florentine duke of Athens (1451–1460), and

<sup>83</sup> Inv. no. BXM 20. Konstantios et al., *Ο κόσμος* [The world], p. 36 (no. 7). No remains of the Basilica of Bishop Klematios, situated on the slope of Lycabettus Hill, exist nowadays. Bouras, "Byzantine Athens", p. 170.

<sup>84</sup> Antonis Tsakalos, "Transforming Excavation Finds into Museum Exhibits: Examples from the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens", in *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art*, vol. 7, ed. Svetlana V. Maltseva, Ekaterina Staniukovich-Denisova and Anna V. Zakharova, St. Petersburg: Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University and Moscow Kremlin Museums, 2017, pp. 180–184. On the excavation, conducted during the construction of the Athens Metro, see also Eutychia Lygouri-Tolia, "Φρέαρ Πετμεζά" [Petmeza shaft], in *Η πόλη κάτω από την πόλη: Ευρήματα από τις ανασκαφές του Μητροπολιτικού Σιδηροδρόμου των Αθηνών* [The city beneath the city: finds from the excavations of the Athens Metropolitan Railway], ed. Liana Parlama and Nikolaos C. Stampolidis, Athens: 2000, p. 122.

<sup>85</sup> A marble capital with acanthus decoration (inv. no. BXM 1062). Sklavou-Mavroei, *Γλυπτά* [Sculptures], p. 173 (no. 239). On the church, see Bouras and Boura, *Ελλαδική ναοδομία* [Church architecture in Greece], pp. 50–52; Charalambos Bouras, "Επανεξέταση της Μεγάλης Παναγιάς Αθηνών" [Re-examination of Megali Panagia Church, Athens], *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 27 (2006), pp. 25–34; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 210–211.

<sup>86</sup> Two eleventh- or twelfth-century closure slabs of marble with elaborate decoration in relief and a metrical inscription mentioning the donors of the restoration of the church, Germanos Sporgites and his children (inv. nos BXM 1049 and BXM 1050). The inscription on a marble slab, also in the collection of the Byzantine and Christian Museum (inv. no. BXM 1048), mentions the erection of the church in 871. In 1835 the building was demolished. Sklavou-Mavroei, *Γλυπτά* [Sculptures], p. 87 (no. 120). On the church, see Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 191–193; Bouras and Boura, *Ελλαδική ναοδομία* [Church architecture in Greece], pp. 36–37.

<sup>87</sup> A fragment of a lintel (inv. no. BXM 1056) and a slab with geometric relief decoration (inv. no. BXM 1051). Sklavou-Mavroei, *Γλυπτά* [Sculptures], pp. 98 (no. 137), 134 (no. 180). On the katholikon of the monastery, dedicated to the Archangels (Asomatoi Taxiarchai), see Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], pp. 223–229.

Lorenzo Spinola, a Genoese aristocrat – and their coats of arms is attributed to the Latin phase of the demolished church of Profitis Ilias in the Roman Agora.<sup>88</sup>

The Byzantine churches in the historic centre of the city<sup>89</sup> (fig. 6) as well as those on its outskirts have been restored and are treated as protected archaeological monuments. Open to the public, religious services take place in them occasionally. The church of Agioi Apostoloi Solaki, a Byzantine monument dated to the late tenth century that features a special architectural type, dressed masonry and remarkable brickwork decoration, was restored, removing all later additions dated from the nineteenth century, between 1954 and 1956, by the American School of Classical Studies during the excavation of the archaeological site of the Ancient Agora. In its interior, fragments of post-Byzantine wall paintings, which either comprised the church's decoration (eighteenth century) or belonged to the nearby church of Agios Spyridon, were preserved.<sup>90</sup> The church of Agioi Apostoloi Solaki forms part of the archaeological site (fig. 4) and can be visited, whereas once a year, on the feast day of the Holy Apostles, on 30 June, mass is held. The restoration and integration of this Byzantine monument into the archaeological site of the Ancient Agora is a successful accomplishment of the Agora landscaping project.<sup>91</sup> Together with the reconstructed Stoa of Attalos, a Hellenistic monument which operates as a museum, and the classical temple of Hephaestus and Athena Ergane – the so-called Theseion – it bears testimony to the continuous use of the site through the ages.

---

<sup>88</sup> Inv. no. BXM 1111. Anastasia Lazaridou, "The 'Virgin of the Catalans'", in Drandaki et al., *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium*, pp. 314–315 (no. 164).

<sup>89</sup> Thirteen middle Byzantine churches are nowadays preserved in the historic centre of Athens: the katholikon of Petraki monastery dedicated to the Asomatoi Taxarchai (first half of the tenth century), Soteira Kottaki on Kydathinaion Street (last decades of the tenth century), Agioi Apostoloi Solaki at the Ancient Agora (late tenth century), Agioi Anargyroi on Psyri Square (around 1000), Soteira Lykodimou on Philellinon Street (1015–1031), Agioi Asomatoi on Agion Asomaton Square near the Theseion (first half of the eleventh century), Agioi Theodoroi on Klafthmonos Square (1049 or 1065), Agios Nikolaos Rangavas in Plaka (mid-eleventh century), Agia Aikaterini on Lysikratous Street (second half of the eleventh century), Panagia Kapnikarea on Ermou Street (third quarter of the eleventh century), Agios Ioannis Theologos in Plaka (late twelfth century), Metamorphosis on Theorias Street in Plaka (late twelfth century), Panagia Gorgoepikoos on Mitropoleos Square (early thirteenth century). The third building phase of the church inside Hadrian's Library (Megali Panagia) also dates from the middle Byzantine period. Moreover, according to Charalambos Bouras, the partially preserved church of Agios Seraphim or Agios Nikolaos on the northern slope of the Acropolis is a middle Byzantine building. Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 243.

<sup>90</sup> Craig A. Mauzy, *Agora Excavations, 1931–2006: A Pictorial History*, Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2006, figs. 190–195.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76–101; Camp, *Athenian Agora*, pp. 44–45.



On the other hand, remains of the three building phases of the Byzantine church (fig. 7) inside the courtyard of Hadrian's Library provide an interesting insight into the coexistence of a pagan and a Christian monument.<sup>92</sup> Also, a section of the Post-Herulian Wall that was used for a long period during the Middle Ages has been consolidated and is visible at the Library archaeological site.

Some other Byzantine churches in the historic centre of Athens retain their religious function and are integrated into contemporary life. In combination with public squares, as in the case of Panagia Gorgoepikoos, Agioi Asomatoi (fig. 8), and Soteira Lykodimou, or located at street intersections, such as Agioi Theodoroi, Agios Ioannis Theologos and Panagia Kapnikarea, they constitute landmarks within the densely built postmodern urban landscape. They play host to activities and events associated with Greek and EU educational and cultural campaigns and routes.<sup>93</sup>

The monasteries of Daphni, Kaisariani and Agios Ioannis Kynigos, on the outskirts of medieval Athens, are middle Byzantine monuments open to the public and used for school educational programmes. Due to their exquisite natural setting, they are part of a network of cultural routes, like the churches of Agios Petros, Panagia Mesosporitissa and Taxiarchis at Kalyvia Thorikou, in Mesogeia.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, Daphni Monastery, which still preserves the building interventions

---

<sup>92</sup> This quatrefoil Christian building, which features marble revetments and floor mosaics, was erected in the early fifth century. Several scholars argue that it was a Christian church, the first cathedral of Athens, while, according to others, it was a secular building constructed by Herculus, proconsul of Illyricum (402–410). Destroyed by fire, it was replaced in the sixth century by a three-aisle basilica which was succeeded in the twelfth century by the church of Megali Panagia. This middle Byzantine church was pulled down in 1885 for the sake of archaeological excavations on the site. Ousterhout, "Peak of Heaven", p. 297; Bouras, "Επανεξέταση" [Re-examination], pp. 25–26; Dimitris Sourlas, "Die Hadriansbibliothek in Athen: Ein historisch-archäologischer Überblick", *Antike Welt* 6 (2014), p. 23; Baldini, "La città", pp. 27–28.

<sup>93</sup> For example, the Gorgoepikoos and Agioi Apostoloi Solaki churches were included in the pivotal European Pegasus project "A school adopts a monument", which was coordinated by the Hellenic National Committee of the International Council of Museums. See "Συμμετοχή σε ευρωπαϊκά προγράμματα: Το σχολείο υιοθετεί ένα μνημείο (1995–1997)" [Participation in European programmes: The school community adopts a monument (1995–1997)], Hellenic National Committee of the International Council of Museums, accessed 16 November 2019, <http://network.icom.museum/icom-greece/drastiriotes/draseis>.

<sup>94</sup> Maria Lagogianni et al., "Οι 'Πράσινες Πολιτιστικές Διαδρομές' το 2012" [The "Green Cultural Pathways" in 2012], *Διεθνές Συμβούλιο Μουσείων: Ελληνικό Τμήμα. Ενημερωτικό Δελτίο* 9 (2012), p. 32; Jenny Albani and Alexandra Seleli, "Exploring the 'Green Cultural Pathways' in the Prefecture of Attica: A Case Study", *Sustainability and Culture-Sustainable Cultural Management: Conference Reader*, ed. Iphigenia I. Taxopoulou, Olga Drossou and Chrysanthos Vlamis, Thessaloniki: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Greece, 2013, pp. 29–30.



Fig. 8. Agioi Asomatoi in Thiseio. First half of the eleventh century. Photo: Author.

carried out by Cistercian monks during the Latin occupation of Athens, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and, also because of its superb mosaic decoration, attracts large numbers of Greek and foreign visitors.

In the ongoing excavations, the research into the ancient stratification continues to take priority. There are cases, however, in which the Byzantine remains are also preserved, enhanced and promoted. The systematic excavation conducted at the Makrygianni site, south of the Acropolis, where the Acropolis Museum is located, has brought to light building remains that date from the Bronze Age (3500–3000 BC) to Frankish rule. Following its systematic documentation, the remains of an early Byzantine neighbourhood with small residences alongside large and luxurious ones (fifth–sixth centuries) came to light, which were enhanced together with the surrounding earlier remains to form a unique museum display, as they are visible beneath the glass flooring of the museum’s ground floor in front of its entrance (fig. 9). Archaeological research has established that in the tenth to twelfth centuries, the deserted spaces of the buildings were occupied by new houses, pottery and metalwork workshops. The architectural finds that this local excavation yielded are now accessible through the museum’s entrance courtyard.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup> *Το Μουσείο και η Ανασκαφή: Ευρήματα από τον χώρο ανέγερσης του Νέου Μουσείου της Ακρόπολης. Κατάλογος έκθεσης* [The Museum and the excavation: finds from the site on



Fig. 9. The Acropolis Museum, the architectural remains. Photographic Archive of the Directorate of Archaeological Museums, Exhibitions and Educational Programmes, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports.

South-east of the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, on the pedestrian precinct of Dionysiou Areopagitou Street, the ground plan of the House of Proclus can be traced within the slabs. Proclus (412–485), a Neoplatonic philosopher, was the scholarch of the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens from 450 until his death. His large villa, dated to the early fifth century, was excavated hurriedly

---

which the New Acropolis Museum stands; exhibition catalogue], ed. Stamatia Eleftheratou. Athens: Organisation for the Construction of the New Acropolis Museum, 2006, pp. 10–20, figs. 4, 11–13; Stamatia Eleftheratou, “Η αρχαιολογική ανασκαφή στη βάση του Μουσείου” [The archaeological excavation in the museum’s foundations], *Ανθέμιον* 20 (November 2009), pp. 6–10; Petros G. Kalligas, “Σταθμός Ακροπολις” [Akropolis station], in Parlama and Stampolidis, *Η πόλη κάτω από την πόλη* [The city beneath the city], pp. 28–39. For a detailed report on the pottery and metal workshops excavated, see Nikoletta Saraga, “Εργαστήρια κεραμικής βυζαντινών χρόνων στο οικόπεδο Μακρυγιάννη” [Byzantine ceramic workshops at the Makrygianni site], in *Αρχαιολογικά τεκμήρια βιοτεχνικών εγκαταστάσεων κατά τη βυζαντινή εποχή: 5ος–15ος αιώνας* [Archaeological evidence of artisanal installations during the Byzantine period: fifth–fifteenth century], Athens: Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation, 2004, pp. 257–278.

in 1955, during the construction of Dionysiou Areopagitou Street. Although minimally presented to the public, the remains of the House of Proclus appear harmoniously embedded in the cultural landscape of the so-called Athenian Walk, created within the framework of the Project for the Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens.<sup>96</sup> Four more large villas (A, B, C and D), dated to the first half of the fifth century, were excavated on the north slope of Areopagus Hill and are open only to scholars.<sup>97</sup> Recent research attributes them to the urban aristocracy of Byzantine Athens and not to Neoplatonic philosophers, as previously suggested.<sup>98</sup>

Archaeological excavation during the construction of the Athens Metro has brought to light a late Roman bath complex (third–fourth century) on the southwestern side of the National Garden/Zappeion, near the intersection of Vasilissis Amalias and Vasilissis Olgas avenues, rebuilt and expanded in the fifth–sixth centuries. Later, in middle and late Byzantine times, storage and workshop units appeared in this area and to the south.<sup>99</sup> Visual access to the late Roman bath is nowadays gained in situ, under a cover supported by a metal shed, measuring 16 by 26 metres.

Finally, digital technology has also contributed to the familiarisation of the general public with medieval Athens. Numerous websites, including those of the Ministry of Culture and Sports,<sup>100</sup> the National Hellenic Research Foundation<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Dora Galani, “Έργο: Πεζοδρόμηση Δ. Αρεοπαγίτου–Αποστόλου Παύλου (Ανάπλαση–Διαμόρφωση Δικτύου Πεζοδρόμων, και Κοινοχρήστων και Ελευθέρων Χώρων στην Περιοχή της Ακρόπολης)” [Project: Pedestrianisation of D. Areopagitou–Apostolou Pavlou (Regeneration–formation of a network of pedestrian roads, public and open spaces in the area of the Acropolis)], *Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες* 70 (March 1999), p. 79, figs. on p. 79; Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξις* [Urban development], pp. 132, 134, fig. 83; Alexandros Papageorgiou-Venetas, *Ο Αθηναϊκός Περίπατος και το ιστορικό τοπίο των Αθηνών* [The Athenian walk and the historical landscape of Athens], Athens: Kapon, 2010, pp. 135, 138–139, fig. 134.

<sup>97</sup> Researchers interested in visiting this archaeological site for study purposes must obtain permission from the Ephorate of Antiquities of the City of Athens.

<sup>98</sup> Zavagno, *Cities in Transition*, pp. 33–36. For the interpretation of these buildings as private schools, see Travlos, *Πολεοδομική εξέλιξις* [Urban development], pp. 130, 132, fig. 84, pl. vi.

<sup>99</sup> Olga Zachariadou, “Φρέαρ Ζαππειού” [Zappeion shaft], in Parlama and Stampolidis, *Η πόλη κάτω από την πόλη* [The city beneath the city], pp. 135–137; Bouras, *Βυζαντινή Αθήνα* [Byzantine Athens], p. 95.

<sup>100</sup> Odysseus Portal, accessed 28 November 2018, <http://odysseus.culture.gr>.

<sup>101</sup> Nikos Moschonias, “Η τοπογραφία της Αθήνας στη βυζαντινή και μεταβυζαντινή εποχή” [The topography of Athens in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine times], accessed 28 November 2018, [http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/chapter\\_more\\_6.aspx](http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/gr/chapter_more_6.aspx).

and the Church of Greece,<sup>102</sup> provide information on the history of the city and its Byzantine monuments. Moreover, the ministry has created online educational material on medieval Athens to enhance relevant teaching in schools.<sup>103</sup>

### *Epilogue*

The city of Athens, a symbol of classical civilisation, was also a significant city of the Byzantine periphery during the Middle Ages. The main fortifications of antiquity – the outer defensive enclosure and the wall that defended the Acropolis – were preserved in the Middle Ages, just like several of the ancient streets of the city. Moreover, a large number of ancient monuments coexisted with medieval structures, whereas some pagan temples – the Parthenon among them – were converted into Christian churches.

From the proclamation of Athens in 1833 as the capital of the newly born Greek state to about 1880, archaeological research decided conclusively that emphasis should be placed on the glorious ancient past of the city at the expense of the preservation of monuments and remains of the Middle Ages, which were deemed a period of decline. Nevertheless, later, with the gradual development of Byzantine studies, the division of Greek history into ancient, medieval and modern periods, as well as the state policy that revolved around the Megali Idea, the historical, artistic and archaeological value of the medieval monuments was eventually acknowledged.

Today, the medieval monuments of the city, mostly middle Byzantine churches, have found their proper place as *lieux de mémoire* – to use a term coined by Pierre Nora – within the densely populated fabric of the historic centre of postmodern Athens or coexist with the ancient monuments within the city's declared archaeological sites. As Nora aptly notes, "there are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory".<sup>104</sup> Architectural environments of Byzantine memory no longer exist in Athens.

---

<sup>102</sup> "Athens", Religious Greece, accessed 28 November 2018, [http://www.religiousgreece.gr/athens-attica/-/asset\\_publisher/lpcrESIL5iOO/content/athena](http://www.religiousgreece.gr/athens-attica/-/asset_publisher/lpcrESIL5iOO/content/athena).

<sup>103</sup> Follow Obyseus, accessed 28 November 2018, <http://followodyseus.culture.gr>.

<sup>104</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de mémoire*", in "Memory and Counter-Memory", special issue, *Representations* 26 (1989), p. 7.



Fig. 10. Byzantine Athens, detail. Oil on canvas, by Yannis Moralis, 1966–1967. Private collection. Photo: Dr Ioanna Christoforaki.

Athens is still renowned and admired worldwide for its classical past, with its medieval cultural heritage much less highlighted. The painting “Byzantine Athens” (1966–1967)<sup>105</sup> (fig. 10) by Yannis Moralis (1916–2009), recently presented in a retrospective exhibition<sup>106</sup> of this prominent painter of the Greek twentieth-century *avant-garde*, epitomises the modern (and postmodern) perception of medieval Athens as a city with a mixed – pagan and Christian – identity par excellence. In a two-layered composition, antique statues and architectural sculptures of white marble in the foreground set against the dull, earthy-coloured backdrop of a Byzantine church, an optical complement to them, capture the viewer’s attention.

*Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports*

<sup>105</sup> The painting (oil on canvas) belongs to a private collection.

<sup>106</sup> The exhibition “Yannis Moralis” was held at the Benaki Museum–Pireos 138, Athens, from 20 September 2018 to 10 February 2019.