

*Speros Vryonis*

### **The Ghost of Athens in Byzantine and Ottoman Times**

It may seem that the consideration of the long and undistinguished history of a once politically great and culturally brilliant city such as Athens constitutes a futile intellectual exercise in antiquarianism. And yet who is to say that this history is not of interest to us today when Athens is once more the capital and hydrocephalic center of the Greek nation at a time when the European Community has sought the common civilizational roots which can contribute to the stronger sense of a large European political, economic and cultural unity. The story of the very survival of the city, its inhabitants, and its historical memory during the two thousand years that separate its Roman conquest and its liberation from the Ottoman yoke is a little known but not uninteresting saga of *Graecia capta*. The history of the Parthenon, in some ways Europe's most famed and revered building, is the most conspicuous symbol of both the vicissitudes and survival of Athens during these centuries of violent historical change. Dedicated to the pagan patroness of the city, and goddess of wisdom this Periclean architectural jewel was converted to a Byzantine church and rededicated to yet another virgin protectress and patroness of wisdom (Divine), the Theotokos Athenaitissa and so it remained the principal church of the city and its Greek inhabitants until the Latin conquest of Athens in 1204. Thereafter it became the cathedral church of the Latin rulers of Athens for two and one half centuries. When in 1456 Mehmed II conquered Athens the Parthenon passed from the Latin to its Muslim phase for it was eventually transformed into a mosque for the city's new Islamic rulers. Such it remained until the liberation of Greece in 1830 and Islam was expelled from the sacred temenos on the Acropolis<sup>1</sup>. Few buildings in Europe have seen such a long and complex cycle of continuous life and function. The building was, in the nineteenth century and down to the present restored, to the degree possible, to its original form. And yet it entered its fifth life cycle: having

1. J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens*, London 1971, pp. 444-457.

been successively a temple to Greek paganism, a church first in the Greek and later the Latin rite, and thereafter dedicated to the Muslim cult, the Parthenon, semi-destroyed, became a principle temple in the cult of Western European secularist culture<sup>2</sup>. As such, today far greater numbers have come to pay homage and or lip service to the Parthenon in Athens and to its far-flung remnants as distant as the British Museum in London, than ever did in all its previous periods and life. The number of tourists that visited Greece in 1991 alone surpassed 9,500,000, and those of you who have visited the Acropolis cannot but recall the long lines at the ticket office and the ongoing stream of visitors winding serpentine-like around the various monuments much like religious pilgrims at other shrines.

The survival of Athens is a very interesting cultural phenomenon then in both the history of the modern Greek people and the history of the self-awareness of modern Europeans. At the former level it has operated in the very unspectacular realm of the mundane concerns and struggles for everyday survival. At the second level, i.e. that of modern European self-consciousness, it has operated on the educational, intellectual, cultural and psychological levels. Thus for the latter Athens, Athenians, Athenian history and culture are understood to be those of classical Athens, and the Athenians of later times are the weak, shadowy ghosts of that glorious past. Conversely for the medieval and modern Athenians it is their classical ancestors who are perceived only dimly and as their past ancestral ghosts, and whose primary concern is with the here and now.

Nevertheless, in both modern Greek and European perceptions there is a consciousness and awareness of Athens and the Athenians with corresponding and varying degrees of importance of their continuity in their respective cultures. How this has been perceived in Byzantine and Ottoman times will concern us for the remainder of this exercise.

In the year 474 the Theban poet Pindar composed the famous dithyramb immortalizing Athens and which was so flattering that the Athenian are said to have paid him 10,000 drachmas for this flattery. Though the price seemed steep for those days, I can think of few other subscribed poems which have paid such handsome dividends to the patron:

2. The Greek Ministry of Culture, Athènes. *Affaire Européenne*, Athens 1985.

Αἶ τε λιπαραὶ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ αἰοίδιμοι,  
Ἑλλάδος ἔρκεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθῆναι, δαιμόνιον πολίεθρον.

Oh gleaming and violet-crowned, and famed in song, the fortress  
of Greece, famous Athens, city divine<sup>3</sup>.

The poetic eulogy of Athens by Pindar, occasioned by the crucial role in defeating the Great Persian king, which Athens played, proceeds by some decades the magnificent architectural and artistic projects by which Pericles adorned Athens. This immortalization of Athens and the virtues of the Athenians in the written word and in the marble monuments of the Acropolis created an undying legacy and historical memory which never died out in the memory of the Greeks and of the Europeans, first because an impressive portion of this ancient Greek literature survived and became an integral part of the educational system of the modern Europeans as well as of the ancient, Byzantine and modern Greeks<sup>4</sup>. Second the Acropolis and the Parthenon remained not only as undying monuments to this glorious past, but also they continued a life of their own.

With the decline of Athens' political and economic might, the city slipped from the epicenter of the history of the Mediterranean being replaced successively by Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople and Ottoman Istanbul. This transformed Athens into a provincial town, the size of its population declined, much of the city's institutions and buildings disappeared to be replaced by others less well-known. When in 267 AD the Germanic tribe of the Heruli took the city they subjected it to a rather savage pillaging with the result that for some years the ancient Agora was abandoned and its buildings left in ruins<sup>5</sup>. When in the latter fourth century of the Christian era the learned Synesius of Cyrene visited Athens he wrote back to his brother the following account of his rather ungenerous impression of Athens and the Athenians:

3. Pindar, Fragment 76 (46).

4. N. Loraux, *The Invention of Athens. The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, Cambridge 1986; T. B. L. Webster, *Athenian Culture and Society*, London 1973; G. T. W. Hooker (ed.), *Parthenos and Parthenon, in the special number of Greece and Rome* (Supplement 10), 1963.

5. H. Thompson and R. E. Wycherly, *The Ancient Agora*, Princeton 1922, pp. 208-209.

Cursed be the ship-captain that brought me to this spot. There is nothing in the Athens of today of any note, except the famous names of places. Just as, when a beast has been sacrificed, only the skin remains as a reminder of the living thing that was within, so here, now that philosophy has taken its departure from this spot, there is nothing left to do but to roam about and gaze in wonder at the Academy, and the Lyceum, and forsooth! the Painted Stoa, which gave its name to the philosophy of Chrysippus, but is now no longer painted, since the Governor has carried off the pictures in which the Thasian Polygnotus stored his art. In our days it is Egypt which nourished the seeds which she has received from Hypatia. Athens, once the home of wise men, is now famous only for her beehive-keepers. So it is with the pair of learned Plutarch scholars, who fill their halls with students, not by the reputations of their lectures, but by the wine jars of Hymettus<sup>6</sup>.

Synesius, accustomed to the schools of cosmopolitan Alexandria and to the magnificence of the imperial capital in Constantinople, saw Athens as a boring rustic town of little interest.

The accuracy of Synesius' description cannot be doubted, up to a point, but there is evidence that he has oversimplified and that indeed Athens was not quite so dull or uninteresting as he proclaimed. Indeed there is considerable evidence that though Athens had undoubtedly declined to the status of a provincial town, nevertheless it remained throughout the 4th and 5th centuries a provincial town with a well organized system of schooling that attracted students from throughout Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Armenia<sup>7</sup>. Further, it became the scene for a lively struggle in the last phase of paganism's efforts to withstand the onslaught of the Christian church and the Christian state of Byzantium.

This struggle between Christianity and the old ancestral religion was

6. The translation is that of J. W. R. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece*, New York 1909, p. 123. For the text of this and other comments on Athens by Synesius, *Epistolographi Graeci*, ed. R. Hercher, Amsterdam 1965, pp. 662, 722. Also, more generally, J. Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene. Philosopher-Bishop*, Berkeley 1982.

7. The doctoral dissertation of J. E. Duneau, *Les écoles dans les provinces de l'empire byzantin jusqu'à la conquête arabe*, Paris 1971, pp. 331-346.

a long one and the former seems to have triumphed, with a vengeance, in the 6th century. Thus the contest, which lasted for some centuries, commenced with the appearance of Paul himself:

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, "What will this babbler say?" ... And they brought him unto the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?"

Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you" ...

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter". So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them<sup>8</sup>.

It is of no little interest that Paul, in his preaching and discussions, encountered the representatives of two of the Greek philosophical schools still active in Athens. The encounter of the philosophers, especially of the Neo-Platonists, as well as of the professors in the local schools, with the proponents of Christianity, was to run a lively course. Finally, the philosophers would abandon Athens, momentarily for the Persian court in the sixth century, after Justinian's decree forbidding pagans to teach in the schools. Shortly thereafter the schools of Athens collapsed and closed forever<sup>9</sup>. Between the preaching of Paul and the legislating of Justinian,

8. *The Acts of the Apostles*, 17: 16-34, translation King James version.

9. P. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism. The First Phase. Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from its Origins to the 10th Century*, Canberra 1986, pp. 73-79.

however, these schools seem to have had a most lively existence. Thanks to the surviving testimonials of famous students who studied and the professors who taught in Athens we know rather more about these schools, their curricula, organization, subject matter, professors and students than we might have expected. Certainly the most famous of the students who carried out their studies, at least in part, at Athens were the two Cappadocian church fathers, St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzenus and from the latter's oration on the former we know a great deal about the curriculum of courses which St. Basil followed in Athens, and further we are informed as to certain other extracurricular activities in student life of fourth century Athens<sup>10</sup>. Roughly contemporary with them were the future emperor Julian<sup>11</sup> and the great pagan orator Libanius of Antioch. Libanius has left us detailed and precious pages on the school life of both Athens and Antioch<sup>12</sup>, whereas Julian has left us a long discourse addressed to the local boule or senate of the Athenians<sup>13</sup>. Finally, we have the writings of yet another fourth century student at Athens, Eunapius of Sardes, that inform us as to the schools, their professors and students<sup>14</sup>.

From the prosopographical studies of the students known to have studied in Athens during the fourth century of the Christian era, their number is 44, we know that they came from some 33 cities and districts of the eastern half of the empire. These included, among many others, the cities of Tarsus, Ankara, Antioch, Caesarea, Nicomedia, Alexandria, Corinth, Athens, and Constantinople. Of students who attended the Neoplatonic Academy in the fifth and early sixth centuries some 41 are known by name. The largest number are either from Athens or Alexandria, but they came also from Damascus, Pergamum, Constantinople: thus the educational institutions could attract a universal student body in the 4-5-

10. On all this, Walden as in note 6 above, *passim*. Also P. J. Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea. Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, Toronto 1981, I-II.

11. J. Bidez, *La vie de l'empereur Julien*, Paris 1965.

12. Walden as in note 6 above, *passim*. A. J. Festugière, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne. Libanius, Chrysostome et les moines de Syrie*, Paris 1959.

13. For the text and translation, see W. C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, vol. II, London 1969, pp. 242-291.

14. For the text and translation, see W. C. Wright, *Eunapius, Lives of the Philosophers*, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, Cambridge 1968, pp. 342-565.

6th centuries<sup>15</sup>. This indicates that, at least as a college town, Athens was not completely ruralized and boorish.

Professor Thompson's excavations in the Athenian agora tend to complement the testimony of the written sources, for the former reveal a very considerable building activity in the formerly abandoned agora area, rebuilding on the older structures of the tholos, the Metroon, and the bouleuterion<sup>16</sup>. Travlos has supposed that the new large building in the central agora, built c. 400, may have constituted a gymnasium with palaestra, baths, teaching rooms, and library<sup>17</sup>. Eventually the older, larger circuit of the city walls was repaired.

Though intellectual activity was on a much lower level than had been the case during earlier times, and though the various schools of philosophy seem to have given way to only one, that of the Neoplatonists, nevertheless one could receive education in philosophy, especially in rhetoric, but also in other subjects as well. A graduate of the schools of Athens and contemporary of St. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzenus, records the program of studies which his friend Basil had followed while in Athens:

Who was to compare with him in rhetoric ... though he had not the rhetorician's cast of mind? Who excelled him in philology and in the understanding and practice of the Greek tongue? Who gathered more narratives, understood better the forms of metre, or laid down the laws of poetry more exactly? Who went deeper into the systems of philosophy, both that of high philosophy which folds its face upward toward the sky, and that which is speculative and is more concerned with the daily actions of life, as well as that third kind which deals with demonstrations, oppositions and arguments that is called Dialectic? ... of astronomy and geometry, and the properties of numbers, he obtained such an insight that even with the best he could hold his own ... And with medicine ... both theoretical

15. Duneau, *op.cit.*

16. H. Thompson, "Athenian Twilight: AD 267-600", *Journal of Roman Studies* 49 (1959) 66-67.

17. Travlos, "Χριστιανικά Αθήναι", in *Θρησκευτική και ηθική εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, I, Athens, pp. 717-718.

and practical he made himself thoroughly familiar<sup>18</sup>.

The teacher and orator Himerius describes a similar course of studies followed by the proconsul Hermogenes when he enrolled in the school of Himerius. The offerings were thus sufficiently varied and rich to enable aspirants to government or ecclesiastical service to finish there their higher studies. Though Athens could not compare to Alexandria as a late ancient center of Greek learning, still it was considered one of the principal centers of learning in late antiquity. Its teachers were well known and served, along with Athens' golden tradition, to attract numerous and excellent students from most social classes and from most of the eastern provinces.

Whereas Alexandria reigned supreme in the fields of the study of poetry, science and medicine, Beirut in the realm of legal studies, Athens for long was preeminent in the discipline of rhetoric and by the fifth century in philosophy as well. Famous professors of rhetoric in Athens included Julian and Proaeresius, as well as Himerius in the fourth century. In the following century there was added a revival of philosophical studies in the Neoplatonic school, centering in the activities of the prolific Proclus. Teaching and the schools in Athens seem to have been of two natures. There were the teachers/schools who were paid and appointed by the state, and those who operated privately and without official state subsidy. As to the state appointed teachers there seem to have been three in Athens under the principal "chief", and there also seems to have been a state appointed grammarian. Finally, we must assume, from certain other evidence, that there was at least one state appointed city physician, by the emperor himself, but ultimately and finally appointed by the local governor. The proconsul resident in Corinth seems to have had direct jurisdiction over the schools and the students, whatever their nature, state or private, and we see that in cases of disputes and disorders the heavy hand of the state was represented by the proconsul. Usually the invitation, as well as the salary, were provided by the Athenian council or boule, whereas often the choice of a state/municipal professor was preceded, at least in the realm of rhetoric, by a rhetorical competition where the topics were set at the time of the per-

18. The translation in Walden, *op.cit.*, p. 126. Gregory of Nazianzenus, *Oration* xliii, 23.



formance. When the famous sophist and professor Julian died at the end of a successful career in Athens c. 330, Eunapius describes the tense moment when the Athenians and indeed the whole ancient world of education waited anxiously to see who would succeed to this famous chair.

... After the death of Julian, the city was all agog to learn who would be his successor as head of the school, a large number of aspirants presented themselves, each claiming to be supreme in the field of sophistry ...

Eunapius gives the names of seven who were chosen to compete for the prestigious appointment:

Now, although all these were nominated, the two of least importance had only the name of being so, and their power ended with the platform and the desk. But in the case of the others, who were more powerful, the sympathies of the city became straightway divided, and not of the city only, but of the whole Roman Empire, and the division took place, not on the question of eloquence, but on the question of nationality in the matter of eloquence.

For the East was clearly reserved, like a huge fee, for Epiphanius, Arabia fell to the lot of Diophantus, Hephæstion, out of respect for Proaeresius, withdrew from Athens and went into retirement, while to Proaeresius were sent the students from the whole of Pontus and the neighboring regions

... but from Bithynia as well, the Hellespont, and the parts above Lydia, stretching through what is now called Asia, to Caria and Lycia, and ending at Pamphylia and the Taurus. All Egypt fell to his lot ... This that I have said was true in general for ... there were some differences in these nations in the case of a few youths ...

The ensuing events soon became caught up in the intrigues of each sophist and his particular supporters so that the matter for some time remained unresolved.

Finally, they had to await the arrival of the new proconsul of Corinth to decide the matter: The proconsul arrived sooner than was expected. Entering Athens, he straightway called the sophists to a conference, thereby causing in their ranks general consternation.

However, they came, though reluctantly with many a hem and a

haw. Themes were set, and the sophists, being unable to escape, spoke, each striving to do his best. The applause was given as prearranged, by bands of summoned claquers, and so all separated, dismay reigning supreme in the ranks of Proaeresius' friends.

The competition proceeded, upon the presupposition that no one would clap or demonstrate when they had finished. Proaeresius asked that the two speediest secretary tachygraphers be introduced to record his speech:

When, much to the alarm of all, this request too had been granted, Proaeresius began to speak influently, and with a sonorous ring at the end of every period. The audience, which had been enjoined to keep silence, was unable to contain itself for wonder, and a deep murmur went through the room. As the speaker advanced in his subject, and was carried beyond all bounds of what would be considered for any human being possible, he entered upon the second part of his speech, and filled out the statement of the case; but leaping about the platform and acting as if inspired, he left that part, as though it needed no defence, and turned quickly to the other side of the argument. The short-hand secretaries could hardly keep apace of him, and the audience, moved to break their silence, were speaking in all parts of the room. Then Proaeresius, turning to the writers, said, "Observe now, carefully, whether I remember all that I have so far said", and word for word, without making a single slip, he went over the whole case a second time. Then not even the proconsul regarded longer his own injunction (not to clap), nor did the audience care for his threats, but, caressing the breast of the sophist, as if he were the statue of some god breathing inspiration, all who were present prostrated themselves before his hands and feet ... His rivals lay racked with envy ... After that no one dared oppose Proaeresius<sup>19</sup>.

This lively historical picture of a scene from the election of a professor to his chair, the involvement of the students, and their organization according to geographical provenance into compact bodies, as well as the role of the state, are all indicative of a process and educa-

19. The translations in Walden, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-157.

tional phenomenon which was considered important by the state and society. It indicates some type of contrast with the archaeological evidence of the fourth century.

The social status of the sophist or teacher of rhetoric in the fourth and fifth centuries remained prestigious and profitable despite the decline of ancient society and many of its institutions. Though his main concern was learned discourse rather than gainful business endeavour, nevertheless the road to economic gain was open to the more successful sophists. He enjoyed a type of municipal glory and while en route from one place to another the towns in between felt honored whenever such a sophist would deign to halt and speak to the citizens. The state accorded teachers tax immunities (*ateleia*) and freedom from the performance of state *leiturgies* or *munera*. Diocletian's edict granting tax immunity to teachers and physicians is repeated in the Justinianic Digest. At an earlier period their salaries were paid either by the emperor or by the town, but increasingly the burden fell on the town *curia* or council. The price edict of Diocletian states that the sophist could collect 250 *denarii* per student per month. With the tax reforms of Diocletian their salaries came to be paid in so many measures of wheat, jars of olive oil etc. Naturally these were paid only to those teachers appointed by the municipality. The private teachers had to amass their income directly from their students. Increasingly the difficulty of collecting student fees emerges as an important concern from the part of the teachers, and there are accounts of the means which teachers employed to make their school more attractive. This included a wide variety of entertainments and pleasantries which would appeal to young men in the flower of youth: particularly banquets, *symposia* etc.

A high point in the academic year was occasioned by the formal lecture that the sophist would deliver before the public. It was of course a major municipal celebration that brought glory upon the city, the sophist, his students and the parents of the latter. These were usually pyrotechnical displays of the rhetorical agility and wit of the sophist, and the theme might be set by the audience, on which occasion the sophist would have to declaim *ex tempore*. This assumes a remarkable degree of homogeneous and sophisticated education in both rhetoric and the vast body of Greek literature on the part of the sophist, the students and the body of the citizenry. Let us look for a moment at the reaction of the

audience on the occasion of these public displays.

The enthusiasm in the lecture hall was ... often great; hand-clapping and shouting were the approved methods of expressing admiration, and old men and men that were sick were at times known to jump from their seats and wildly gesticulate. Libanius sometimes used to chuckle in secret over the thought that he had one student who shouted like fifty ordinary mortals. Being thus forced to pause in his speech, Libanius would smile upon the student, and even step down from the platform and run up to him. Proaeresius was hailed as a god on one occasion by his ecstatic audience and escorted from the hall by the proconsul in person and his body guard. Sometimes when the rivalry between different sophists was great, the audience was packed, and the applause given at a prearranged signal, and in concert, under the leadership of one band. When a sophist was famous and his speeches “took”, snatches of them were hummed on the street, or the students, congregating after lecture, would try to patch together the parts they had brought away in memory<sup>20</sup>.

Contemporary authors have preserved the great pride, haughtiness and vanity of the sophists of the age with pithy anecdotes.

Polemon, the famous sophist who was commissioned to speak at the formal ceremony opening the Olympeion in Athens in 130 AD, was a veritable paragon of these qualities:

Polemon, according to Philostratus, acted toward cities as their superiors, towards provinces as anything but their inferior, and toward divinities as their equal. On the occasion of his first visit to Athens, he did not, as sophists generally did, begin his address by referring to the glory of the city and the insignificance of his own fame, but said, “They say, Athenians, that you are intelligent listeners: We shall see”<sup>21</sup>.

A second sophist, Hadrian of Tyre, when he was appointed to a teaching position in Athens, initially addressed the proud Athenians as follows:

20. The translation as well as the general description, in Walden, *op.cit.*, pp. 252-253.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

Once again come letters from Phoenicia<sup>22</sup>.

These learned professors were not without wit, even at that last ultimate hour of life: "Polemon is said to have given instruction, just before he died, that he should be buried before the breath had left his body, and, when the door of his tomb was about to be closed, to have cried, 'Hurry, Hurry! I would not want to be seen above ground with my mouth shut' "<sup>23</sup>.

Having already said something about the program of studies on which the student embarked when arriving in famous Athens, we should perhaps take note that student life in fourth-fifth century Athens was not all studies and it would seem that academic life had its rougher and more pleasurable side. How was it, first, that students from abroad, would decide to go study in Athens? In the case of Libanius the question is particularly relevant for Antioch was a great, bustling metropolis where there was never a dull moment. Further it had its own schools. Libanius, up to the age of 15, was a typical Antiochene youth, devoted to the pleasures and the easy life<sup>24</sup>. But on reaching the ripe old age of 15 he was suddenly consumed by a desire to learn, so, he tells us, he abandoned the hippodrome and the exciting horse races, he no longer frequented other public entertainments, going so far as to sell his pet doves. He turned with a passion to the learning of the classical Greek authors. Five years later he decided to become a sophist. All this still does not explain to us why he chose to leave his beloved Antioch and its famous schools. It seems that an acquaintance of his, a rather ordinary Cappadocian lad, told him stories of school life in Athens and so intrigued Libanius that the latter made up his mind that he must go to that famous college town. This story is not unlike thousands of similar cases from contemporary American school life.

When Libanius, as St. Basil, Gregory Nazianzenus and countless others arrived in Athens for their freshman year they unexpectedly ran into the more physical side of student life, from the very first moment that they disembarked at Piraeus. Here student gangs or press corps lay in wait for newcomers, immediately surrounded them and attempted to

22. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

24. For what follows and much else on Libanius the student, see Walden, *op.cit.*, pp. 282-295.

shanghai them to the domicile of their teacher. There was a certain amount of hazing, some physical but mostly psychological, intended first of all to assure that as many of the newcomers as possible would enroll in the classes of the chief sophist of each of these press gangs. These latter were often organized according to the provinces from which the student hailed. Once brought to the domicile of the sophist-teacher, Libanius was locked up in a tiny cell in the teacher's home and the two communicated through the locked door. Only after Libanius took the oath that he would become his student and thus join the sophist's student gang or club, was he released. Then he was paraded to the public bath, and after a mock struggle between those students supporting and those opposing his entrance, he was led into the bath, he bathed, and then donned the official cloak of the student. He was also expected to host his gang at a banquet.

In these episodes, and a number of them have been described by contemporary participants, we see a side of education which is familiar to us from medieval and modern university life. There is student organization, hazing, and a kind of personal relation to the teacher. Also it is obvious that there is a strongly physical side of school life which was not limited to the teacher's rod and whip. Student violence, in fourth-century Athens, was both more massive and far more violent than anything that an individual teacher could master. And, often, the teachers were the object of physical and psychological attack of one or another student gang, so that the former had to be on their look-out. Further the teacher had to discourage the newer students from a life of the pleasures encouraged by the fact that they were away from parental scrutiny. The fourth century Athenian sophist Himerius addressed his students, on the first day of classes, in such a manner:

Before I initiate you into the rites of my school, let me tell you what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do. Let every one give ear, whether he now comes for the first time to be initiated or has already reached the last stages of initiation. You must throw aside the ball, and put your attention on the pencil. Close the playground, and open the Muse's workshop. Run no more about the lanes and alleys of the town; stay at home and write instead. Avoid the public theatre; give ear to a better theatre. Luxury and daintiness do not fit well with study; show yourselves, while with me, severe

in your lives and superior to luxury. This is my proclamation, this my law-much in little. Those of you who listen and obey, shall sing Iacchus, Iacchus many times, for those of you who heed not my words and disobey, I hide my light and close the temple of my wisdom. This proclamation is for you all, but especially for you, young men, who are newcomers and have just joined my class<sup>25</sup>.

Gregory of Nazianzenus, himself a graduate of the school of Athens, has caught the lighter spirit of the students in a charming vignette:

The most of the young men at Athens ... are sophist-mad ... for they are a mixed crowd, and young, and not easily restrainable in their impulses. They do just such things as we see done at horse-races by lovers of horses and public shows. They jump and shout, throw dust into the air, play the charioteer from their seats, lash the air for a horse with the finger as a whip, and make believe to shift their horses from one chariot to another, though really they can do none of these things which they pretend to do. With the greatest ease they exchange drivers, horses, stalls, and managers. And who are they that act thus? The poor often and the needy, who perhaps have not enough for their own support for a single day. Exactly similar are the actions of the young men with reference to their teachers and the rival sophists, in their endeavors to increase their own numbers and to bring by their efforts added prosperity to their professors. The whole proceeding is, indeed, quite astonishing and absurd. Towns, roads, harbors, mountain-tops, plains, and even the inhabitants are, for the most part, taken possession of, for they, too, are divided in their sympathies<sup>26</sup>.

Indeed it was the violence which had, particularly, appealed to Libanius when he opted for studies in Athens:

I had heard ever since I was a boy, of the battles between the student-corps waged in the very streets of Athens; of the clubs and swords and stones and wounds; of the indictments

25. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.

that resulted from all this, and the defences that were made, and the sentences that were pronounced, of all the wild and daring deeds undertaken by the students to win for their teachers gain and glory. I held these fellows brave for the dangers that they ran, and their cause a just one; not less so than that of those who take up arms in their country's defence.

And I prayed to the gods that it might fall to my lot, too, to win such laurels; to run down to the Piraeus and to Sunium and the other ports and waylay the new arrivals as they disembarked from the trading-vessels; and then to go to Corinth and stand trial for my conduct; and to string dinner on dinner in endless succession, and after quickly going through my money to cast about for somebody from whom to borrow more<sup>27</sup>.

The physical and violent side of student life began with the initiation rites in the early fall when the new students landed in Piraeus, continued throughout the year, and culminated in the Great Battle. This latter memorable encounter of all the student gangs took place in the lyceum, resulted in considerable physical harm and usually ended up with students in jail, and trials before the proconsul in his courts at Corinth. Libanius' accounts of student swords, clubs, and stones undoubtedly refers to the Great Battle itself. Though the teachers enjoyed an elevated social status, they were not themselves always immune from student violence. When Libanius finally returned to Antioch and founded his own school, he was personally witness to an interesting act of violence perpetrated by the students at the expense of an unnamed professor:

They stretch a carpet on the ground and then take hold of it on all four sides —sometimes more, sometimes fewer, according to the size of the carpet. Then placing the unhappy victim in the centre, they toss him as high as they can (and this is not a short distance), accompanying their actions with laughter. Great is the amusement also for the standers-by, as they behold the pedagogue spinning in the air and hear him cry out as he goes up and again as he comes down. Sometimes he falls on the carpet, which is held high above the ground, and he is then saved, at other times, missing the carpet, he strikes the

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 314-315.



ground, and leaves the field, with some of his limbs maimed or bruised —danger being thus added to insult. And worst of all, even such an event arouses the mirth of the students<sup>28</sup>.

This is but a short and incomplete sketch of Athens as an educational center in late antiquity and the early middle ages. Whereas the archaeological remnants give us “concrete” visions of a smaller and declining Athens, they have failed to fill these less presumptuous structures with the pulse, volume, color and smell of the life which truly transpired in that Athens. It is sufficient to read Libanius, Eunapius, Gregory Nazianzenus and Himerius to feel the lively and often violent pulse of Athenian life in the first Byzantine centuries. One wonders what life was like in Synesius’ Cyrene, in the hot Libyan sands, far removed from the heartlands of Christianity and Hellenism?

Thus if we see a lively survival of the traditions of late philosophy, rhetoric, grammar and schools in fourth-fifth century Athens, what do we know about the Athenians and their ancient gods, goddesses, and heroes, about their splendid ceremonies? We know that Constantine had made Christianity the religion of status, that Constantius, his son, had issued persecutory legislation and that by the late fourth century sacrifices, the temples, and statues had been forbidden by imperial law.

The written texts are sparse and have not been systematically combed, but still they indicate that the Athenians remained attached to the old sacrifices and ceremonies, though how extensively it is hard to say. Zosimus, the pagan historian who wrote about 501 AD, indicates that the cults of Athena and Achilles were still vital in late fourth century Athens. He attributes the salvation of the city from the devastating earthquake of 375 and from the attack of Alaric (396-397?) to the intervention of the goddess and the hero, mentioning that a pagan priest had placed an image of Achilles below the cult statue of Athena in the Parthenon<sup>29</sup>. The Panathenaia seem to have existed in some form or other in the fourth century, and there is specific reference to older processions and sacrifices. The fourth century Porphyry, formerly a student in Athens, refers to a few of these by way of his treatise *Peri Apoches*

28. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

29. Zosimus, IV. 18; V. 6. See now the magnum opus of Frank Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*, Leiden 1993, I, pp. 283-332.

Empsychon wherein he attempts to avoid animal sacrifice and insists on complete abstention from the eating of the flesh of animals slaughtered in religious sacrifice. As an example of a religious ceremony in which the offerings to the gods exclude animal flesh he writes:

It seems that the sacrificial procession of Helios and the Horae carried out by the Athenians, even today, testifies to (the above). Then advance in procession dog-tooth grass on wheat cakes, pulse, oak (acorn? oak leaves?), fruit of the arbutus (komaron), barley, dried fig cakes, barley and wheat cakes, sacrificial bread, and chutros (pot feast?)<sup>30</sup>.

Having argued that the earth-produce offerings to the gods are more ancient in time and more pleasing to the gods, he goes on to describe an ancient Athenian animal sacrifice:

Since his time and until today the aforementioned ones still sacrifice the ox on the Acropolis during the Athenian Di-poliei in the same manner. Having placed on the bronze table meal and ground cake, they parade around it the apportioned oxen of which that one which tastes (the cakes) is slaughtered. And there are (still) today clans who carry these out: Those who slaughter the beast are all called boutupoi after Sopatros; those who drive it about (the bronze table), are called kentriadai. The former they call (meat) carvers because of the banquet from the served up meat. Having stuffed the hide, in preparation when they will go to the court for judgement, they sink the knife into it. (This refers to the earlier explanation which I have not here translated). Thus not even in ancient times was it holy to slay those animals which labor for our livelihood, and now also must this be observed<sup>31</sup>.

Though the laws of the late fourth and early fifth century specifically forbade sacrifices and worship in the pagan temples we know that this was not thoroughly enforced as it was very difficult. Zosimus relates the difficulties of the government's officials in Greece when it came to the enforcing of these harsh and intolerant laws:

30. *Prophyrii philosophi platonici opuscula selecta*, ed. A. Nauck, Leipzig 1896, pp. 137-138.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Praetextatus, who held the office of proconsul of Hellas, said that this law would render the life of the Greeks unlivable if it should forbid the traditional performance of the most holy mysteries which hold the human race together. He therefore allowed them to carry out all these things according to the patrimonial tradition and he let the law lie in abeyance<sup>32</sup>.

The fifth century Neoplatonist and pupil of Proclus, Marinus, continues to speak of a variety of sacrifices:

I have reflected that, even in the sacrifices, the suppliants at the altars present offerings not all of the same value. Some seek to show themselves worthy of participating with the Gods by offering whole bulls and goats, not to mention the composition of hymns in prose or verse; while others, having nothing similar to offer, present only cakes, a few grains of incense, or a short invocation and are favorably heard<sup>33</sup>.

Porphry has stressed that it is not the size of the sacrifice which pleases god, but that this derives from other factors<sup>34</sup>. Marinus goes on to give certain references to Proclus' observances which are of concern to us here. When Proclus arrived in Piraeus and as he proceeded to the city of Athens he stopped at a sacred spring, dedicated to Socrates, to drink his first water<sup>35</sup>. Further he celebrated the birthdays of both Plato and Socrates<sup>36</sup>. He purified himself monthly by immersions into the nearby sea<sup>37</sup>. For cures of the ill he took them to the sanctuary of Asclepeus at the foot of the Acropolis<sup>38</sup>. In particular:

Under no circumstances did he neglect to render the customary homages, and on fixed yearly dates he went to visit the tombs of the Attican heroes, those of the philosophers, of his friends ... he performed the rites personally. After having fulfilled this pious duty towards each of them he went to the

32. Zosimus, IV. 3.

33. A. N. Oikonomides, *Marinus of Neapolis. The Extant Works on the Life of Proclus and the Commentary on the Dedomena of Euclid*, Chicago 1977, p. 15.

34. *Prophyrii, op.cit.*, p. 149.

35. *Marinos of Neapolis, op.cit.*, p. 33.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Academy ... and in another part of the building, in common with others, made libations in honor of all those who had practiced philosophy.

And after all that, this holy person traced out a third distinct space, offered a sacrifice to all the souls of the dead who rested in the building<sup>39</sup>.

In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus records yet another ancient patrimonial celebration that was observed by the Athenians in the fifth century AD.:

Moreover the Athenians still sing in song the praise of Athena's victory, and they make of this a festival of Athena's victory over Poseidon, and as the triumph of the intellectual over the generating order, and as (signifying) that after the creation of those necessary to inhabit this land, they set out on the life of the mind. For Poseidon is the protector of birth and Athena the ephor of the intellectual life<sup>40</sup>.

Certainly paganism was still alive and vital, despite the undoubted blows that the state and church had dealt it. Libanius had cried out against the hordes of black clad monks who went about pillaging churches and monasteries and stealing their lands. But when he was still a student in Athens he availed himself of the opportunities to visit all the ancient religious ceremonies that were still being honored, going so far afield as Sparta to witness the religious ceremony of the Scourging.

From the above we catch a glimpse of the twilight of pagan and philosophical Athens. It was indeed a twilight, but one which brought a last ray of Hellenic glory to it and helped to enshrine that memory deeply into the literary topoi of 1000 years of Byzantine literature, and eventually into that of modern western Europe.

There are strong indications that the Athenians were strongly conscious of their glorious past, and were often reminded of it. The emperor Julian, after his ascension to the throne, addressed a long letter to the senate and the people of Athens in which he reminds them of their noble ancestry and poses the question as to what their relation is to their

39. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

40. *Proclus Diadochus in Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig 1903, II, 173; A. J. Festugière, *Proclus, Commentaire sur le Timée, introduction et notes*, Paris 1966, I, p. 228.

great ancestors. This was to become a familiar literary topos in Byzantium and so we should pause over the beginning of this letter:

Many were the achievements of your forefathers of which you are still justly proud, even as they were of old; many were the trophies for victories raised by them, now for all Greece in common, now separately for Athens herself. In those days when she contended single-handed against all the rest of Greece as well against the barbarians ...

Then he continues by moving his focus onto the contemporary Athenians:

Then if this was your conduct of old, and from that day to this there is kept alive some small spark as it were of the virtue of your ancestors, it is natural that you should pay attention not to the magnitude merely of any performance ... but that you should rather consider whether one has accomplished this feat by just means<sup>41</sup>.

Julian takes up the theme of the Athenians once more in the *Misopogon* where he gives it a biological twist:

For just as in the case of plants it is natural that their qualities should be transmitted for a long time, or rather that, in general, the succeeding generation should resemble its ancestors; so too in the case of human beings it is natural that the morals of descendants (*ta ethe ton apogonon tois progonois*) should resemble those of their ancestors. I myself, for instance, have found that the Athenians are the most ambitious for honor and the most humane of all the Greeks. And indeed I have observed that these qualities exist in an admirable degree among all the Greeks, and I can say for them that more than all other nations they love the gods, and are hospitable to strangers; I mean all the Greeks generally, but among them the Athenians above all, as I bear witness. And if they still preserved in their characters the image of their virtue, surely it is natural that the same thing should be true of the Syrians also, and the Arabs and Celts and Thracians and Paeonians, I mean the Mysians on the

41. For the translation and the text, see W. C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. II, p. 243.

very banks of the Danube, from whom my own family is derived, a stock wholly boorish, austere, awkward, without charm and abiding immovably by its decisions; all of which qualities are proofs of terrible boorishness<sup>42</sup>.

What of the Athenians themselves? Pamprepeius (440-484), teacher, politician, and poet has left a fragmentary encomium of one of the more prominent Athenians of the fifth century, Theagenes the patrician. It is completely and unashamedly encomiastic, attributing to Theagenes an Attic genealogy. He attributes to him the blood of all the Attic heroes, historical and other brilliant figures, including Ajax, Telamon, Erechtheus, Miltiades and Plato<sup>43</sup>. The cult of ancient ancestry had, by the second century, taken deep root in both Athens and Sparta, alongside other brilliant memories which the Athenians still recalled in and outside their schools. Synesius grumbled at the airs that the Athenians put on:

I shall not only gain relief from my present trouble by this voyage, but I shall also free myself from the necessity of prostrating myself in the future, out of respect for their learning, before those who come from that city. These people differ in no way from us other mortals, at least as far as their understanding of Aristotle and Plato goes. But they walk among us like demi-gods among demi-asses (mules), because they have seen the academy and the Lyceum, and the fresco- painted Hall, wherein Zeno taught - which is no longer fresco- painted for the governor has stripped the place of its paintings<sup>44</sup>.

The conflict between the old patrimonial religion of the Athenians and the new religion of the state naturally began to take its toll in Attica. A long series of imperial laws, going back to those of Constantius and his brother Constans in 346, set in motion the government program of legislating paganism out of business:

It is Our pleasure that the temples shall be immediately closed in all places and in all cities, and access to them for-

42. *Ibid.*, p. 451.

43. H. Gerstinger, *Pamprepios von Panopolis. Eidyllion auf die Tageszeiten und Enkomion auf den Archon Theagenes von Athen nebst Bruchstücken anderer epischer Dichtungen und zwei Briefe des Gregorios von Nazianz im Pap. Gr. Vindob. 29788 A-C*, Vienna - Leipzig 1928, pp. 41, 80-81.

44. For the translation see Walden, *op.cit.*, pp. 122-123.

bidden, so as to deny to all abandoned men the opportunity to commit sin. It is Our will that all men shall abstain from sacrifices. But if perchance any man should perpetrate any such criminality, he shall be struck down with the avenging sword. We also decree that the property of a man thus executed shall be vindicated to the fisc. The governors of the provinces shall be similarly punished if they should neglect to avenge such crimes<sup>45</sup>.

Similar edicts are profusely proclaimed in the latter fourth and early fifth century, a sure indication that the state and church have intensified a process which had not yet been effective in society, and where pagans continued to flock to the temples and to perform sacrifices. The mere repetition of such laws in such profusion indicates that the process was a very slow one. The legislation seems to be contradictory, in part, for though in most cases closing of temples, removal of their images, even tearing down of the structures are prescribed, yet there are instances which are not quite so severe. A case in this latter spirit is the decree of 382 addressed to Palladius Duke of Osrhoene:

By the authority of the public council We decree that the temple shall continually be open that was formerly dedicated to the assemblage of throngs of people and now also is open for the common use of the people, and in which images are reported to have been placed which must be measured by the value of their art rather than by their divinity; We do not permit any divine imperial response that was surreptitiously obtained to prejudice this situation. In order that this temple may be seen by the assemblage of the city and by frequent crowds, Your Experience shall preserve all celebrations of festivities, and by the authority of Our divine imperial response, you shall permit the temple to be open, but in such a way that the performance of sacrifices forbidden therein may not be supposed to be permitted under the pretext of such access to the temple<sup>46</sup>.

45. C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions. A Translation with Commentary, Glossary, and Bibliography*, Princeton 1952, p. 472.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 473.

This is obviously a half way measure reflecting the inability of the state to close all the temples at once and to forbid entry into them. Thus at Osrhoene people may visit the temple, and are to be allowed to observe all “festivities” without the right to perform sacrifice. Other pre-scripts however order either the closing of the temples or else their destruction, and the penalties for violators, whether pagan worshippers or state officials, are famous. So widespread and deeply rooted was the ancestral religion that even the church had to fear it from its own clerics, as is evidenced from the writings of John Moschus. He informs us that the archbishop of Thessaloniki, a certain Thalelaius, not only refused to worship the Holy Trinity but actually continued to reverence the pagan idols<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, as we might expect, in Athens the struggle between the Galileans and the idolators, was a long drawn-out one. It is perhaps symbolic of this resistance in Attica, that the most telling intellectual polemic against the new religion was the composition of a former student in the schools of Athens, the Neoplatonist Porphyry, the author of the surviving *On Abstinence from Animals*, a treatise which in arguing for bloodless pagan sacrifice is a veritable history of Athenian sacrificial rites right down to his own day<sup>48</sup>. We can shift once more to the invaluable archaeological evidence which Professor Thompson and his colleagues have brought to the light in his brilliant excavations of the Athenian agora. The excavations seem to indicate that in the early fifth century the tradition of the ancient terra cotta figurines, linked to ancient religion, comes to an end. As for the famous ancient clay lamps, those of the fourth century continue, for the most part, to be decorated with pagan figures and symbols. Nevertheless, clay lamps of this century begin to appear with Christian symbols, and by the fifth century the majority of those found in the agora carry henceforth the Christian symbols. This is certainly a strong indication that Christian tastes began to predominate in the fifth century, gradually pushing the pagan motifs off the producing end of this domestic industry<sup>49</sup>. Nevertheless, the excavators have found no traces of a Christian building or sanctuary in the fifth century agora.

47. *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 87,3 2897.

48. Entry “Porphyry”, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, New York - Oxford 1991, III, 1701-1702; J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre*, Leipzig 1913.

49. Thompson and Wycherly, *op.cit.*, p. 215.



There is, further, a debate as to the period in which the principal pagan temples and monuments of Athens were converted from pagan to Christian usage, the dating ranging between the fifth to the sixth-seventh centuries<sup>50</sup>. The archaeological evidence here has to give way to the scant mentions in the sources.

The life of Proclus by his student Marinos gives us a brief glimpse as to the progress of Christianity in two major Athenian shrines: That of the temple of Asclepius and the Parthenon. Among the many activities of Proclus in Marinos' vita, there is one that relates the story of the Neoplatonist philosopher Archidas and his daughter Asclepegeneia. The latter became so seriously ill that even the doctors despaired of her salvation. The father thus took his daughter to Proclus:

The latter ... ran to the Asclepius temple to pray to God in favor of the patient—for Athens was still fortunate enough to possess it, and it had not yet been sacked<sup>51</sup>.

It is clear that Marinos believes the Asclepieum to have still been a functioning pagan temple in some portion, or perhaps all, of the lifetime of Proclus (d. 485), and that at sometime in his own (Marinos') lifetime the temple was sacked by the Christians. It is estimated that Marinos died before the end of the fifth century, which if true would lead to the conclusion that the temple was taken over by the Christians and sacked in the late fifth century. Undoubtedly this was an important shrine, given the fact that it was dedicated to the god of healing and health.

Marinos informs us that Proclus had lived in the house previously occupied by the Neoplatonist professors and philosophers Syrianus and Plutarch, and that it was close by the Asclepieum and therefore also at the foot of the Acropolis. Archaeologists have tentatively identified the remains of his house in recent years. As for the abandoning of the Parthenon Marinos writes:

His choice of the philosophic life proves how dear he was to the goddess friendly to wisdom. But the goddess testified to that herself when the statue of the goddess which had been erected in the Parthenon had been removed by the people who

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50. A. Frantz, "Paganism to Christianity in the Temples of Athens", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19 (1965) 187-205; Travlos, *op.cit.*

51. Marinos of Neapolis, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

move the immovable. In a dream the philosopher thought he saw coming to him a woman of great beauty, who announced to him, that he must as quickly as possible prepare his house "because the Athenian Lady wishes to dwell with you"<sup>52</sup>.

The inference is clear: In the lifetime of Proclus the cult statue of the patron goddess of the city was finally removed from her most famous temple. The text does not reveal whether Proclus finally received the statue itself, but its removal reminds us of the imperial laws which called for the removal of all such statues from the temples. But it is not clear whether either the Parthenon or the Asclepieum were immediately converted to churches, or whether this took place in the following century.

Legal, religious and economic factors finally combined, in the sixth century, to put an end to the lively tradition of the Athenian schools. Justinian's draconian financial measures, for his ambitious projects elsewhere, resulted in the drying up of funds for municipal life, Procopius specifically referring to the fact that Justinian finally removed the public subsidies for the municipal physicians and teachers of liberal studies. Further an imperial law added to this economic factor an important legal one, as Justinian decreed that:

We forbid any teaching to be carried out by those who are infected with the sacrilegious foolishness of the Hellenes<sup>53</sup>.

The chronicler Malalas states specifically that the emperor issued a *prostaxis* that he sent to Athens and which specifically forbade the teaching of law and philosophy in that city<sup>54</sup>. The historian Agathias, in a famous passage whose interpretation has been disputed by some, relates that there was a flight of many of the better known philosophers from Byzantium to Iran during the reign of Justinian:

Damascius the Syrian, Simplicius the Cilician, Eulamius the Phrygian, Priscian the Lydian, Hermeias and Diogenes of Phoenicia, and Isidor of Gaza, the flower ... of the world, thought that the kingdom of Persia would be a far better place to live in. For they believed ... that the ruling power in Persia was most just and such as Plato would have had, a union of

52. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

53. Codex Iustinianus, I. 11. 10; Lemerle, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

54. Lemerle, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

philosophy and kingly rule ... Taking these popular reports to be true and encouraged by them, and being, further, owing to their refusal to conform to the established order at home, prevented from living in safety in Greece, they straightway wandered forth, and settled in a strange and foreign land<sup>55</sup>.

The philosophers realized in the end that philosophy was not a discipline to which Chosroes had been exposed, and so they returned to Byzantium. Nevertheless their momentary exodus is spectacular and is undoubtedly connected to the new persecution of paganism by the state. All these measures, together, delivered the coup de grace to the Athenian schools, to the golden tradition, and in a sense to paganism more broadly. It is undoubtedly the period when the conversion of the pagan monuments to Christian use was fully consummated.

The old, traditional municipal institutions and their pagan and Hellenic function thus come to an end with the reforms of Justinian and as the result of a long term struggle between paganism and Christianity which had, by Justinian's time, been going on for two centuries. We saw some of the most important traces of this struggle in the expulsion of the statue of Athena from the Parthenon and in the sacking of the Asclepium by the Christians in the fifth century. Certainly by the sixth these and many other pagan monuments were converted to the Christian cult.

We return momentarily to Professor Thompson's excavations in the agora. These reveal that various buildings in that region were destroyed by fire in the 580's and so the archaeologists have conjectured that the invading Slavic tribes must have been the vehicles of the destruction<sup>56</sup>. This is quite possible as we know that from 597 there were major, but unsuccessful, Slavic sieges of the city of Thessaloniki in the north<sup>57</sup>, and further south at the site of ancient Olympia a very early Slavic cemetery was accidentally discovered when the foundations for the new museum were being laid some 34 years ago<sup>58</sup>. The only difficulty with the latter is

55. The translation in Walden, *op.cit.*, pp. 127-128.

56. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

57. S. Vryonis, "The Evolution of Slavic Society and the Slavic Invasions in Greece: The First Major Slavic Attack on Thessaloniki, AD 597", *Hesperia* 50 (1981) 378-390.

58. S. Vryonis, "The Slavic Pottery (Jars) from Olympia, Greece", in Vryonis (ed.), *Byzantine Studies. Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century*, New Rochelle, pp. 15-42.

that though the vases are undoubtedly of Slavic origin, their dating is very difficult. They could date anywhere from the late sixth to the mid seventh century. If the fragments of Slavic pottery uncovered in the Bathhouse at Argos can indeed be dated to the latter sixth century<sup>59</sup>, then the likelihood of a Slavic incursion and destruction in parts of Athens would be strengthened. This would be a rather spectacular contribution to the decline of the city, a decline already consummated institutionally by the radical transformations of city life in late antiquity and the early middle ages.

### *Seventh-Tenth Centuries*

The long period from the seventh to the tenth century has veiled the city's history in obscurity as in the seventh-eighth century literary production was very scant, and the empire's provincial archives have disappeared. Though historical writing reemerges in the early ninth century after an absence of one and one-half century, it concentrates on Constantinople, the activities of the imperial court, the bureaucracy and military class. This overpowering centripetality in the generation of Byzantine formal culture has prevented us from retrieving the history of Byzantine provincial life for very extensive periods.

The meager evidence does permit us to assume that Athens continued to exist as a small provincial town, now bereft of the last semblances of its old municipal forms and of its schools. There are a few exotic references to some type of educational system in Athens through which the famed Theodore of Tarsus is supposed to have passed. But even if this were true, which is not at all certain, there is no substantial survival of the formal educational system through the Middle Ages. Nevertheless the city "enjoyed" an imperial visit in 662-663 when Constans III wintered there with the imperial army en route to Sicily via Corinth<sup>60</sup>. Its aristocratic families were sufficiently distinguished to furnish two empresses in the latter half of the eighth and early ninth

59. P. Yannopoulos, "La pénétration slave à Argos", pp. 323-372, and, P. Aupert, "Céramique slave à Argos (585 ap. J.C.)", pp. 373-394, both in Supplement VI of the Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique, Études Argiennes (1980).

60. A. Stratos, *To Βυζάντιον στον Ζ' αιώνα. Τόμος Δ'. Κωνσταντίνος Γ' (Κωνσταντίνος) 642-668*, Athens 1972, IV, pp. 177, 212-213.

century. The famous Irene, empress 797-802, was brought to Constantinople there to marry Leo IV, whereas her kinswoman Theophano was also brought from Athens to the capital to wed Stauracius. The chronicler Theophanes relates the circumstances under which Theophano was selected to marry Nicephorus' son Stauracius:

On the twentieth of the month of September Nicephorus, having carried out a vast selection of virgin maidens throughout the whole of his empire for the marriage of Stauracius his son, he selected Theophano the Athenian and relative of the blessed Irene<sup>61</sup>.

In effect the reference here is to the famous imperial concourse of beauty through which all the most beautiful daughters of the provincial aristocracy were gathered in Constantinople there to compete in a beauty contest regulated by a standard, called "to basilikon metron", the imperial measurement, and thus to choose the wife of the future emperor of Byzantium.

Two centuries later, in 1018-1019, at the successful conclusion of his long and brutal wars with the Bulgars Basil II made his way to Athens via Thermopylae:

Arriving in Athens and having offered his thanks for the victories to the Theotokos and having adorned her temple with brilliant and luxurious offerings, he returned to Constantinople<sup>62</sup>.

From the time of the empress Irene into the reign of Leo VI, the city also served, occasionally, as a place of exile to which the rulers sent political trouble-makers. There is little overt reference, however, to the activities of this provincial town. During the regency of the empress Zoe sometime around 913 the citizens of Athens, troubled by the oppression of the imperial official Hase, besieged him in the altar of the church of the Virgin, that is in the Parthenon where they stoned him to death<sup>63</sup>. Incidental finds of bronze and gold coinage, of the seventh and eighth centuries, indicate the presence of some type of money economy and local commercial activity<sup>64</sup>.

61. *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. G. de Boor, Hildesheim 1963, I, p. 483, also p. 444.

62. *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn, Berlin 1973, p. 364.

63. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1838, p. 880.

64. J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century. The Transformation of a Culture*,

The bishop of Athens, John, attended the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 680-681, in the eighth century the bishopric of Athens was elevated to the status of an archbishopric, and before 981 to that of a metropolitanate, all of which incidental details indicate a slow but steady rise of Athens as a rather more important provincial town after the turn of the seventh century.

In the midst of the historical darkness which enveloped the city of Athena for some three and one-half centuries there is one remarkable body of Athenian written sources that testifies to the undeniable continuity of the Greek speakers in the ancient cradle of democracy: This is furnished by the very Parthenon itself. In 1973 the late Anastasios Orlandos and the brilliant Hellenist Leandros Vranoussis published the Christian inscriptions of the Parthenon, 235 altogether, for the most part inscribed on the columns of the west side of the former temple which now constituted the narthex of the Christian church. Of these inscriptions five are in Latin, the remainder in Greek. While it is true that this body of inscriptions records no major historical event in the narrower sense, they provide us an extremely valuable historical window onto the little-known life and culture of Athens in the Dark Ages. A rudimentary statistical analysis of these inscriptions is enlightening: From the sixth century to 819 they have preserved the dated death notices of eight of the city's bishops; of nine archbishops between 841-975; and of eleven metropolitans between 981-1175. In addition 80 clergy from the various lower ranks are immortalized on the pagan deity's columns<sup>65</sup>. Occasional officials from the city's political life are also commemorated:

Leo, the slave of God and imperial protospatharios and general of Hellas passed away in the month of August, the eleventh year of the indiction, in the year 6356 (= 848)<sup>66</sup>.

Cambridge 1990, p. 250; Stratos, *op.cit.*, p. 184; S. Vryonis, "An Attic Hoard of Byzantine Gold Coins (668-741) from the Thomas Whittemore Collection and the Numismatic Evidence for the Urban History of Byzantium", *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloshkog Instituta* 8 (Belgrade, 1963) 291-300; P. Charanis, "The Significance of Coins as Evidence for the History of Athens and Corinth in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries", *Historia* 4 (1955) 163-172.

65. A. K. Orlandos and L. Vranoussis, *Τα χαράγματα του Παρθενώνος ήτοι επιγραφαι χαραχθεισαι επί των κιόνων του Παρθενώνος κατά τους παλαιοχριστιανικούς και βυζαντινούς χρόνους*, Athens 1973, p. 35.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Those who inscribed these inscriptions were sufficiently educated in the use of the learned language. Further, there can no longer be any doubt as to the continuity between the late ancient inhabitants of the city and those of the medieval period.

*Ancient and Medieval Athens and Athenians in the Cult of Literary Hellenism, 11th-15th Centuries*

The development of classical studies in ninth century Byzantium revived the cult of literary Hellenism and turned the attention of the learned Byzantine authors to the literary, political, philosophical and historical accomplishments of Athens and Sparta. A tenth century author, Nicetas Magistros, boasts of himself:

We are Spartan on our father's side, and Athenian on our mother's side<sup>67</sup>.

At the same time that Byzantine literati praised, and concerned themselves with the greatness of ancient Athens and the ancient andres Athenaioi, some seeing a strident disparity between the Athenians of old and the city's contemporary inhabitants.

The famous eleventh century polymath and reviver of Platonic studies, Michael Psellus, is aware of this great difference and he makes use of it in literary simile almost as a *topos koinos*. In a rather unpleasant and highly rhetorical letter addressed to an unknown cleric Psellus informs his correspondant that he has purposely delayed in writing and further that he writes to him in a brusque military manner since

The military battalions and siege machines deprived him of his philosophical paideia and of its corresponding manners.

He continues:

Formerly, the (ancient) Milesians were brave. These days also our happiness (and pride) in discourses have degenerated into an unenviable state. And I have (thus) suffered the very same condition (fate) as the (ancient) Athenians. For these, also, the Academy and the *Stoa Poikile* of Chrysippus are

67. Nicetas Magistros. *Lettres d'un exilé (928-946)*, ed. L. G. Westerink, Paris 1973, p. 57; S. Vryonis, "Introductory Remarks on Byzantine Intellectuals and Humanism", *ΣΚΕΨΙΣ* 2 (1991) 115, and *passim*. For the cult that arose about famous Athenian families in late antiquity, see note 43 above.

mere shadows as is also the very name of the Lyceum, just so with me there have remained merely the names of the bodies of knowledge, for circumstances have deprived (me) of the excellence of philosophy and the very names in all these<sup>68</sup>.

It seems that this letter reflects Psellus' fall from political grace when he was shut up in a monastic cell:

I could not converse with even one Platonic book, indeed with the entirety of philosophy, nor with even one book of Demosthenes that I might include the opposite science<sup>69</sup>.

Most Byzantine officials, literati and hierarchs saw appointments to provincial towns as a prison sentence. Byzantine astyphilia saw life in Constantinople as the only choice for civilized men, and Byzantine literature is pungently peppered with the complaints of officials who have been thus condemned to a kind of exile from the Queen of Cities. Psellus writes to the krites of the Peloponnese and Hellas in regard to the new dioicetes who has been appointed to administer the city of Athens:

My most glorious lord, the (new) dioicetes of Athens, no sooner had he seen fabled Hellas than he began to lament loudly his own fate as though he had gazed on (the desolated) land of the Scythians. For he rejoices neither in the Stoa Poikile, nor in the new academy, nor in the Piraeus but rather the many colored (poikilas) mentality of the Athenians render him many-colored disasters.

But this man, o most noble lord, who does not share in our (high) education, does not know (even) how to persuade Hellas to pay its taxes. Do you, therefore, persuade him by words if you will, or by deeds and threats, and further, return to us this man so that he does not hate Hellas, but also as one who will have something nice to say about it<sup>70</sup>.

To the literary genre of the sophisticated Constantinopolitan's distaste for provincial life Psellus has slipped in a brief glimpse of reality: a population which will not, or cannot, pay its taxes and the resultant

68. *Μιχαήλ Ψελλού ιστορικοί λόγοι, επιστολαί και άλλα ανέκδοτα*, ed. C. Sathas, *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi*, Hildesheim 1972, V, pp. 471-472.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 472.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 268.



political discomfort of the local provincial official.

In a third letter, addressed again to an unknown individual, Psellus expresses his own attitude to contemporary Athenians:

Do not marvel if I am a friend of Athenians and Peloponnesians. As for the former I love them each separately for different reasons. But I love them all together (as a community) because of Pericles, Cimon and because of the ancient philosophers and orators. For one is obliged to love the children because of their fathers even though the former do not possess the character traits of the latter. It is for this reason that I have striven on behalf of other Athenians and now on behalf of this particular Athenian. For, not only is he covered by this more general cause for loving the Athenians but he is also a paternal friend<sup>71</sup>.

Psellus believes the contemporary Athenians to be the descendants of the ancient Athenians and because, he says, we revere the memory of their great ancient ancestors we must also honor the descendants even though they do not share the same virtues with their ancestors. This is not unlike the mentality of many modern Europeans and Greeks who first came to contemplate the relation of the ancient to the modern Greeks in the nineteenth and twentieth century. It is the sentiment, in part, of modern Philhellenism, and yet it is as old, indeed far older, than Psellus<sup>72</sup>.

Over a century later, in 1182, Michael Choniates (Acominatus) ascended the Athenian metropolitan throne and became the religious shepherd of the Athenians down to the Latin occupation of the city in 1204. Brother of the famous historian Nicetas Choniates, Michael studied with the learned classical scholar Eustathius later the archbishop of Thessaloniki, and like his brother Nicetas was much influenced by ancient Greek literature<sup>73</sup>. So highly developed was the cult of ancient Hellenism, in Michael Choniates, that when he first went to Athens to assume the metropolitan throne he prepared a highly rhetorical logos

71. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

72. See the poem of Constantine Cavafy "Philhellene", translated into English by Rae Dalven, *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, expanded edition, New York 1968, p. 39.

73. See the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan, entries under Choniates-Michael, Choniates-Nicetas, and Eustathius of Thessaloniki.

embaterios, thus addressing his new flock in the Parthenon, become church of the Virgin, in the classicizing language of the Second Sophistic:

O my most powerful inheritance, I would address to you my εἰσιτήρια or ἐμβατηγία, as you are the Athenians (descended) from indigenous Athenians of those who devoted their time to naught else save saying and listening to something new<sup>74</sup>.

He continues:

I did not know for sure if I was really appointed protector of the noble Athenians because I had not yet learned clearly that Athens survived physically and it was the Athens of old and not a merely spoken name ... First of all I did not yet know if the ancestral virtues had remained uncorrupted among the Athenians<sup>75</sup>.

The metropolitan wonders if

Time has prevailed to such an extent that the nobility of your excellent ancestors has been debased by the descendants and has been corrupted ...<sup>76</sup>.

This highly developed cult of ancient Hellenism in the cultural personality of the new ecclesiastical head of Athens had raised high expectations as to the cultural level of contemporary Athens. Naturally, the Athenians could not understand his sophisticated embaterios logos and of course Michael was rudely awakened to the social and cultural realities of contemporary Athens, all a far cry from those that had distinguished the city in antiquity, and which still graced the folios of the texts on which Michael had been educated. With all that, the hierarch saw Athens and the Athenians in direct line of descent from their famous ancestors but with very great differences as to the civilizational level of ancestor and progeny.

Michael was obliged to flee his church in the Parthenon and his

74. *Michael Choniates-Acominatus, Μιχαήλ του Ακομινάτου του Χωνιάτου τα σωζόμενα*, ed. S. Lambros, Athens 1879, I, p. 93; K. Setton, "Athens in the Later Twelfth Century", *Speculum* 19 (1944) 179-208, later reprinted in Setton's collected articles on Athens, *Athens in the Middle Ages*, Variorum Reprints, London 1975; S. Vryonis, "Introductory Remarks ...", pp. 122-125.

75. M. Choniates (ed. S. Lambros), *op.cit.*, I, p. 98.

76. *Ibid.*, I, p. 99. For a similar description of Athens in 1154, in what has become a literary topos, *Georges et Demetrios Tornikes, Lettres et discours*, edited and translated by J. Darrouzès, Paris 1970.

beloved Athens in the wake of the Latin conquests of the Fourth Crusade. Athens here entered on its substantial history as a political and religious center of western knights and archbishops down until the Ottoman conquest two and one-half centuries later<sup>77</sup>.

Thus both Psellus and Choniates have given voice to the disparity between the Athenians of yore and those of their own times, Choniates with pathos and bitter disillusion, but Psellus in a more sympathetic and realistic tone. Theodore Metochites, once prime minister at the imperial court and the leading intellectual of his time and country has brought the ancient Athenians within his grandiose view of world history. He too, like Psellus and Choniates, saw a broad type of cultural continuity between the ancient Greeks and his contemporaries:

The cause of this would seem to me to be that the Greeks most likely remembered everything, and they honored and rescued their own and related affairs as though deeming them worthy of remembrance and so (they have) sent them on down in time and to us, we who are sharers with them in race and language, and who are also their successors in these things<sup>78</sup>.

He was, unlike his predecessors, preoccupied with the great changes or differences in the political institutions, temperament and style between the ancient Athenians and his own Byzantine society, and he meditates upon these differences in the short treatise entitled, *Περὶ τῆς Ἀθηναίων πολιτείας* (On the Polity of the Athenians)<sup>79</sup>. Having also composed essays on monarchy and democracy, in which he stressed the superiority of, and his own preference for monarchy, Metochites informs his readers that for a long time he had meditated on, and discussed with his friends, the differences in the governments of the ancient Athenians and Lacedaemonians. He characterizes the governments of the two

77. For Frankish Athens see the works of K. Setton: *Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1388*, Cambridge 1948; Also his two chapters in Vol. III of *A History of the Crusades*, ed. by H. W. Hazard, general editor K. Setton, Madison 1973: "The Catalans in Greece, 1311-1380", pp. 167-224, and, "The Catalans and Florentines in Greece, 1380-1462", pp. 225-278.

78. *Theodori Metochitae miscellanea philosophica et historica*, ed. C. G. Müller and T. Kiessling, Amsterdam 1966, p. 595; S. Vryonis, "Introductory Remarks ...", pp. 116-117.

79. Metochites, *op.cit.*, pp. 642-652.

leading ancient Greek cities as pure democracy and prudent aristocracy (ἄκρατος δημοκρατία, εὐλαβεστέρα ἀριστοκρατία)<sup>80</sup>. He follows the accepted evolutionary scheme, canonized by Aristotle, according to which all the ancient Greek states began as small monarchies and evolved through the stages of aristocracy, oligarchy, and some of them into tyranny and democracy. Because of Greek geographical configuration the Greeks early turned to the sea, occupying the islands, coastlands, and finally colonizing abroad. With this observation Metochites introduces a maritime dialectic which explains, for Athens, the emergence of what he calls pure democracy. The two vector forces in this political dynamic are the demos and aristokratia, and his political and emotional preferences lay with the latter in consonance with Byzantine political theory. For the Byzantines the best form of government was that of absolute monarchy, consecrated by centuries of practical application and with theoretical and legal basis in Greek political philosophy, Christian eschatology and Roman legislation.

Demokratia for the Byzantines signified ochlokratia, that is the rule of the capricious and unruly mob<sup>81</sup>.

Metochites states that with the significant turn to maritime life and endeavor, the Athenians

realized that in such affairs the masses (τὸ πλῆθος) were very useful and that without the demos and the masses (τῶν πολλῶν) it would not be possible, in any way, to succeed in the maritime way of life. Thereupon they provided (cared) for the city's masses ... but rather than controlling them they became enslaved to them<sup>82</sup>.

For it is said that:

“maritime anarchy is more powerful than fire”. Thus they failed, so to speak, as they degenerated into democracy and were ruled by the unruly mob<sup>83</sup>.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 642.

81. M. Anastos, “Byzantine Political Theory: Its Classical Precedents and Legal Embodiment”, in S. Vryonis, *The “Past” in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, Malibu 1978, pp. 13-54; S. Vryonis, “Byzantine ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963) 289-314.

82. Metochites, *op.cit.*, p. 646.

83. *Ibid.* The editor of the text identifies this indirect quote with lines 606-607 of

The appearance of the institution of tyranny in Athens and the rule of the Peisistratidae are seen by Metochites as a natural reaction to the rebellions (στάσεις) of the Athenian ochlos:

For thus does it most often occur that tyranny springs up from pure, irrational and rebellious democracy<sup>84</sup>.

Metochites quite naturally proceeds to justify the rule of the tyrants, in the face of the ugliness of the disturbing mob:

And for many years the Peisistratidae ruled the city of the Athenians, in truth, not badly at all, for they attempted to rule according to law and removed from all outrage, and in particular it was Hipparchus who most of all ... adorned Athens, more so than any other earlier or later politically illustrious men<sup>85</sup>.

Here Metochites distorts to such an extent that he eclipses, for reasons we have already underlined, the much greater accomplishments of the democracy in the fifth and fourth centuries. In continuing his analysis he relates that with the collapse of the tyranny the demos once more asserted itself, this time so vigorously that Athens was ruled democratically for a long time and until the imposition of absolute authority by the Macedonians and the Romans.

Though the Athenians improved on the older Solonian legal system during the democracy, nevertheless Metochites continues to ascribe to the demos the innate qualities of corruption and destruction:

The demos abused power, despised the aristocracy (τοὺς εὐγενεῖς) cursing them on little provocation. And the demagogues, donning the hollow and stupid strength of the masses, and pretending to be very favorable to them and flattering, they filled them with rashness and inflamed them against the nobles (τῶν ἀστέων)<sup>86</sup>.

In his deprecatory description of the Attic citizenry the Byzantine bureaucrat reproduces a classical type:

The demos of the Athenians is, by nature, revolutionary (νεωτεροποιόν), and they are hot blooded in nature and hasty

Euripides' *Hecuba*.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 646-647.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 647.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 648.

to undertake all affairs, being bold also in conspiracies. And because of this they often attain their goals by virtue of their unexpected initiatives ... And such entirely were the Athenians under democratic rule with their ready wit and sharpness. Thus were they always on the tongues of the many and the subject of gossip whether carrying out brave and wondrous deeds, or partly failing and committing evil deeds. And such a people had they become, as Thucydides says, that neither could they remain quiet nor could they allow others to remain at peace. Rather were they always stirring up affairs among themselves at home or abroad<sup>87</sup>.

Metochites is forced to admit, however, that the Athenian demos was greatly admired during the period of Athenian greatness because of the successes of the demos in mounting the greatest and most successful naval expeditions, and also for the discipline and soundness of policy with which the demos carried out its affairs.

In particular it is for its dedication to wisdom that our Byzantine praises the city of the Athenians:

And as for Wisdom what can one say? Athens was considered to be the brilliant treasury of all culture and of all forms of discourses among mankind. And just as some other land or city is famous in producing the necessities of life, thus is also the fame of the city of wisdom<sup>88</sup>.

It is Athens which has offered its own philosophers and wise men, but which has also attracted others from other cities and lands who have come there out of love for wisdom and all culture,

just like some universal workshop, for the whole world, of this praiseworthy intellectual state which has been ordained by God<sup>89</sup>.

Athens sent forth the products of this cultural formation to the whole world which has been thus enriched and beautified.

Having immersed himself in a long contradictory analysis of the polity of the ancient Athenians, during which he has repeatedly attacked

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 648-649.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 651.

89. *Ibid.*

and defiled the demos on the one hand, and yet praised its accomplishments in political, military and intellectual cultures on the other, Metochites takes the easy way out of his dilemma in the last paragraph of his essay. He says that as to the reason for the greatness of the ancient Athenians,

it has no other cause, for those who contemplate correctly their great prosperity and celebrity among the Greeks and barbarians during the unhealthy period of the pure democracy of the Athenians (a condition contrary to nature) than in the nobility of the mind and its ability to utilize the appropriate means intelligently in all matters and at all times<sup>90</sup>.

Metochites has penetrated beyond the external and superficial in the relation of ancient and contemporary Athenians to see what, if anything, in their history is of value to his own times. This is almost a humanistic approach to the study of history and removes itself from antiquarianism. He straddles the dilemma of the lack of freedom in Byzantine society by condemning the Athenian democracy as an ochlocracy (mob rule) while at the same time praising that intelligence and nobility of mind of the ancient Athenians which enabled the demos to accomplish such wondrous deeds both political and cultural. Though Metochites was greatly influenced by the form of ancient Greek thought and writings, he paid much more attention to their contents than many of his Byzantine predecessors. I am not aware of any other insightful Byzantine analysis which has as its exclusive subject the nature of Athenian democracy.

### *Athens under the Turks*

When in 1456 the Ottomans took the city the Acropolis became a Muslim fortress for the next three and one-half centuries, with the exception of a short-lived Venetian interlude. The fame of the ancient city with its brilliant cultural accomplishments had, from the ninth century, entered the realm of Arab learned literature inasmuch as the translations of Aristotle, Galen and of many other Greek philosopher, physicians, scientists and mathematicians had penetrated, and had created, Islamic science, medicine and philosophy thus spreading the city's fame through-

90. *Ibid.*, p. 652.

out the realms of Islamic secular learning. The Fihrist of the tenth century Arab encyclopedist al-Nadim dedicates a great deal of space and attention to ancient Athens of the philosophers, and speaks of Athens as a city of scholar and wise men, as a city famous for learning. Thus Greek philosophy, science, medicine, geography and mathematics were a part (much watered down) of that Islamic formal culture which the Ottomans inherited from their Iranian and Arab inculcators<sup>91</sup>.

In the case of the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, he had further access to living Greek culture through his associations with such figures as Critobulus and George of Trebizond, and his library in the saray had a section consisting of Greek manuscripts that included works of Homer, Arrian, Polybius, Ptolemy, Xenophon, Hesiod, Pindar as well as Greek texts on medicine and mathematics<sup>92</sup>.

When the Ottoman army had entered Athens the sultan proceeded from Corinth with his court and came to see the famous city. Critobulus, the author of a detailed biography of Mehmed in Greek records, briefly, the visit:

He was greatly enamored of that city and of the wonders in it, for he had heard many fine things about the wisdom and prudence of its ancient inhabitants, and also of their valor and virtues and of the many wonderful deeds that they had done in their times when they fought against both Greeks and barbarians. So he was eager to see the city and learn the story of it and of all its buildings, especially the Acropolis itself, and of the places where those heroes had carried on the government and accomplished those things. He desired to learn of every other locality in the region, of its present condition, and also of the facts about the sea near by it, its harbors, its arsenals, and, in short, everything. He saw it, and was amazed, and he

91. *The Fihrist of al-Nadim. A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, B. Dodge, editor and translator, New York 1970, II, pp. 575, 590, 591, 596, and more generally pp. 571-711; F. Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, Berkeley 1975, pp. 28-29, 33, 35, 42, 141, and *passim*; S. Vryonis, "The Impact of Hellenism: Greek Culture in the Moslem and Slavic Worlds", in R. Browning editor, *The Greek World: Classical, Byzantine and Modern*, London 1985, pp. 254-259.

92. A. Deissmann, *Forschungen und Funde in Seria mit einem Verzeichnis der nicht-islamischen Handschriften in Topkapu Serai zu Istanbul*, Berlin - Leipzig 1933.



praised it, and especially the Acropolis, as he went up into it. And from the ruins and remains, he constructed mentally the ancient buildings, being a wise man and a Philhellene and as a great king, and he conjectured how they must have been originally. He noted with pleasure the respect of the inhabitants of the city for their ancestors, and he rewarded them in many ways. They received from him whatever they asked for<sup>93</sup>.

Mehmed was, by all accounts, an exceptional man but his knowledge and enthusiasm for the fame of the ancient Athenians was not shared by his successors. It seems that the contemporary Athenians of Mehmed's time still retained a remembrance of the greatness of their ancient ancestors. However the plight of the city and its inhabitants under Ottoman rule was apparently drab at best, disastrous at worst. It is best summarized by a two page chronicle of the city which notes briefly the most important events in the city's life during much of the sixteenth century:

(The Metropolitans of the City)

On January 2, 7036 (1528) Lord Lavrentios the good hierarch came to Athens.

In August, 7058 (1550), Lord Kallistos the good hierarch came to Athens.

In April, 7073 (1565) the blessed Lord Sophronios came to Athens.

(The Plague)

...

In 7032 (1524) there was the plague of Matzakes.

In 7041 (1533) there was the plague of the priest Yialouris.

In 7042 (1534) there was the plague of Koutroules Vilaras.

In 7043 (1535) there was plague and many died.

In 7062 (1554) the son of Karydios came from Constantinople and brought the plague to Athens on the 12th of December. It lasted 3 years and 10,000 died.

(the Devishirme-Paidomazoma-The Taking of the Children)

In 7051 (1543) they took the children from Athens, 22nd of April.

93. *History of Mehmed the Conqueror* by Kritovoulos, translated by C. T. Riggs, Westport 1970, p. 136.

In 7055 (1547) they took the children from Athens, 28th of December.  
In 7061 (1553) they took the children from Athens, in the house of Gia-koumakes.

In 7065 (1557) Friday June 18th, the slave entered the house of Zoes and took the children.

In 7068 (1560) October 25th, the slave entered the house of Kyriakos Manos and took the children.

In 7074 (1556) the first of September they took the children from the house of Kyriakos.

(Eclipses)

On Thursday the 14th of April 7052 (1538) the sun was lost from the 9th hour until the 12th hour of the day.

On Friday in 7052 (1544) the moon was lost from the first hour to the 4th hour of the night. This was written the 6th of April 1606<sup>94</sup>.

If such were the grim realities in the lives of the descendants of the Athenians of that long past golden age, what happened to the ghost of Athens? Had it finally been laid to rest? We see no mention of it in this terse, gloomy chronicle written by a contemporary Athenian. It was still going about however, and haunting both Greeks and Turks. We have already seen that Mehmed was impressed by the reverence of the contemporary Athenians for their famous ancestors:

He noted with pleasure the respect of the inhabitants of the city for their ancestors<sup>95</sup>.

If we move forward some one and three-quarter centuries we see that the Athenian ghost is walking about the pages of a contemporary Turkish author, Evliya Chelebi who, in his monumental travel diary, records his visit to this provincial town. He entitles his chapter on Athens:

“The Fortress of Athens, the City of the Ancient Wise Men”<sup>96</sup>, indicating that the history of Athens as a center of learning was firmly entrenched in the Muslim/Ottoman world view. The perception of this

94. *Ecthesis Chronica and Chronicon Athenarum*, edited with critical notes and indices by S. P. Lambros, Amsterdam 1969, pp. 85-86.

95. Kritovoulos-Riggs, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

96. Evliya Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesi, türkçeştiiren Z. Danişman, Istanbul 1971, vol. XII, p. 142.

historical fact had of course a shadowy after-life that in the Islamic world took on a dreamy and mythological nature. Evliya informs his Ottoman reader that the city was founded by Solomon and that he built a palace there for his wife Belkis Ana. Eventually Filikos (Philip of Macedon) expanded the city and his son Alexander the Great gathered 7,000 scholars and wise men in the city, among whom, he tells us, were:

Fisagoras (Pythagoras), Tevhidi (the monotheist), Bokrat (Hippocrates), Plato the Divine and Batlamyos<sup>97</sup>. Plato, as he weakened toward the end of his life and had been unable to find a suitable medicine to prolong his life, left Athens and died at the city gates of Pech exclaiming: "My beautiful garden, Athens"<sup>98</sup>.

Evliya seems to have been impressed in particular by the historical and monumental curiosities of the city.

In short, in this city of Athens, there are such wonderful statues made from marble that the eyes of men are dazzled, as though each one were alive<sup>99</sup>.

His knowledge of the city's past history, is understandably, impoverished and strangely truncated:

Because of the nature of the Rum, having increased in the time of His Excellency David, peace be upon him, they first built the city of Filibe in Macedonia, then the city of Byzantion and then afterward they founded the city of Athens. Subsequent to this Constantine built Istanbul and he took Athens. The city then passed from (their) hands to the Spaniards, thereafter to the Venetians and finally in the time of Fatih it passed into Ottoman hands. It is waqf of Mecca and Medina. It is a kadilik of 300 akches and has all the administrative institutions<sup>100</sup>.

As he does for so many other Ottoman towns, Evliya presents suspiciously well-rounded statistics for contemporary Athens, much as the authors of any modern guide book would illumine their readers. The Acropolis, he says, has 300 tiled houses which have bay windows and

97. Evliya Çelebi-Danişman, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

100. *Ibid.*

balconies, but no gardens. The town below has three Muslim quarters, 3 Friday mosques, 7 smaller mosques, 1 medresse, 3 smaller schools, 3 hammams, 2 dervish monasteries, 2 hans and 500 stores. The city has a total of 7,000 tiled houses, more than 10,000 of the citizen inhabitants are infidels (in 1530 the register of taxable hearths recorded 2,297 taxable households), the city is clean, the Christians are wealthy and the Muslims are insignificant. The city possesses 300 churches, 3,000 monks and 4,000 wells<sup>101</sup>.

We have already seen his reference to the abundance of ancient statuary in the city and it is of no little interest to examine what Evliya had to say about the Parthenon.

Inside the fortress I saw a mosque the likes of which I have never seen. Its length is 250 feet and its breadth 80 feet. It has 60 marble columns ... and it is an ornamented two story mosque. In addition there is a separate mihrab (niche) with a pulpit supported by 4 red porphyry columns. Above these columns ... was built a vault ... Here the wise Plato hung a night lamp which placed fire stones on the east walls (?meaning?). At dawn the light remained in the mosque ... Atop the four columns and the small pillars adjacent to them the master builder built a marble seat for Plato so that the man's intelligence would be illustrious. As Plato sat on it he could instruct the people. All four corners of the mosque's floor were paved with marble. The length and width of each stone was 5 cubits. The mosque has a 3 story door on the left side of which there is a drinking glass made of decorated white marble that will hold five men. At the time they were building (the Parthenon) they gave them wine with this drinking glass and in drinking they left not one drop. Men were so large in those days that they could drink such a large glass of wine in one gulp ... Now the marble carver, chipping away on the inside of this drinking glass, made a ritual spiggot. The ceiling behind the middle door was carved by Halkari Fahmi Chelebi. The height of the middle door is 20 cubits. The vault in the

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146; O. L. Barkan, "Tarihi demografi arařtırmaları ve osmanlı tarihi", *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 10 (1952-1953) 1-26.

middle of the building where they used to play the organ and bell, they call the (orphan vault). For it remains empty ... On the outside, on all four sides, there are 60 columns each the height of 25 cubits. Arranged in order and atop these columns are menacing statues. These marble statues, fearful and ugly in form (include): Demons, Satan, the devil, women whose husbands have more than one wife, cruel monsters, fairies, angels, dragons, those who will appear on the last days of the world, Antichrist, Hamelet'ul arzi Hut, and finally a thousand type of creatures: elephants, rhinoceros, giraffe, spongers, snakes, scorpions, turtles, crocodiles, mermaids, rats, cats, lions, bibr??, leopards, lynx, ogres, gerrubiya, Azrail, Mikail, the throne of God, the bridge to heaven, the scales, heaven, hell, purgatory, the place of the final judgement ...<sup>102</sup>.

*The Emergence of Athens into the Light of History: Ioannes Benizelos and Panayis Skouzes*

The city of Athens emerges from its ghost-like existence in the eighteenth century and takes on substantial and realistic historical form in the writings of two Athenians, the teacher Ioannes Benizelos and the fugitive-adventurer merchant Panayis Skouzes, who have left us precious and incisive writings that deal with the history of Athens in the eighteenth century. Athens thus emerges from the murkiness of its vague life as the ghost of Periclean Athens, wandering through the unlikely

102. Evliya Çelebi-Danişman, *op.cit.*, pp. 144-145. Still unexplored for the knowledge of the ancient and Byzantine history of Athens among the Ottoman Turks is the *Tarikh-i Medînetü'l hukema* (History of the City of Wise Men) written by the cadi of Athens, Mahmud Efendi some time after 1738. Through the intercession of two Greek priests, who translated ancient and Byzantine Greek texts into modern Greek, and through the intermediary of a third Greek who then translated, the modern Greek version into Ottoman Turkish, the cadi composed an extensive tripartite history of Athens from antiquity to his own day. The 291 folios of the work include: The pre-ottoman history of Athens, the Morea and Euboea, the Ottoman history of these areas, and a discussion of the ancient Greek monuments of Athens during the period 1688-1715. See C. Orhonlu, "The History of Athens (*Tarikh-i medînetül hukema*) Written by a Turkish Kadi", *Actes du I<sup>er</sup> Congrès International des Études du Sud-Est Européen* (Athènes 7-13 Mai 1970), Tome II. *Histoire*, Athens 1972, pp. 529-533.

religious climates of Christianity and Islam, and its inhabitants take on flesh, names, and effective historical activity though still wrapped in the Periclean shroud of the ancient days. Our two authors overlap substantially in time as they were both born in the eighteenth century (Benizelos c. 1735 earlier than Skouzes, 1777) and both died in the nineteenth century (Skouzes 1847 later than Benizelos 1807). Each has chosen as his theme the history of his “fatherland”, Athens, an almost unique genre-topic in Greek historiography since late ancient times, centering on the latter part of the eighteenth century as each was eyewitness to much that transpired in the city of Athens during that period of tumultuous change. Benizelos, a scion of one of the leading aristocratic families of the city, professor in one of the city’s two public Greek schools, wrote his history in the classicizing language and attempted to write a comprehensive chronological account of Athenian history from the time of the mythological king Cecrops to his own day. The language of the text, though purist, is simplified, crystal clear, and makes for rapid, fascinating reading. Skouzes, though also of a considerable family (the “second class families” in the social structure of Athenian society), managed to finish but two years of the public Greek school before economic and political adversity reversed the family’s fortunes, resulting in the jailing of father and son, successively, for debt, and the removal of the boy from school at the age of eleven. Thereafter he passed through a series of apprenticeships to cobblers, merchants, monks, and ship captains. In short, his father enrolled him in the vast and rough school of life. His chronicle is thus recorded in the undeveloped form of the vernacular so common in the memoirs of his contemporaries, the heroes who fought in the Greek Revolution. The vista of his narrative is strictly contemporary and very significant. Classical references are extremely rare, as in contrast to the two histories of Benizelos whose allusion to the ancient ancestors is a marked feature. Both men take as the high point of the drama the tyranny of the Ottoman zabit of Athens Hadji Ali Aga Hasseki, who dominated the life of Athens from the 1780’s to the 1790’s. Our two authors describe a complex series of events that radically disoriented the traditional society of the Athenians and began its transformation within the gridwork of the decline of the Ottoman state, administration, economy, and the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the economic, commercial institutions of western Europe.

Side by side with the realistic historical picture that Benizelos and Skouzes achieve, Benizelos dedicates a very substantial portion of his texts to what he considers to be the origins of the Athenians, their “Patris”, and what he refers to as “patriotismos”. In effect, then, the first historian of Athens in early modern times sees contemporary Athens and Athenians as deriving in an unbroken line of descent from the ancient Athenians. Benizelos marries present to the past in the history of Athens. The learned Benizelos has divided his history into two major parts. The first, entitled *Παλαιά ιστορία της πόλεως Ἀθηνῶν* (pp. 77-155 of the published text concern antiquity; 105-115 deal with Byzantine, Latin, and early Ottoman Athens; 116-155 handle early Ottoman Athens). Though he is somewhat detailed on the ancient period, he has little to say for much of the Byzantine, Latin and early Turkish periods. Benizelos justifies the inclusion of the long and ancient history of Athens on the following grounds:

Wishing to compare the history of my fatherland (patris), and of my times, I adjudged it a good thing to construct first a short epitome of its ancient history (archaeologia) so that the (entire) composition will derive from the same beginning. My goal is not simply to give information to later generations, of past events, but that also they might have past examples of future occurrences, as is always the case in this ever changing and unstable life<sup>103</sup>.

In short, he sees the historical life of his contemporaries in a kind of historical continuum that goes back to very ancient beginnings and that thus his second historical treatise, *Ἱστορία νέα τῶν ἐν Ἀθῆναις συμβεβηκότων* (pp. 159-422) cannot be treated in a historical vacuum. Since it is the history of the Athenians in the period of 1754 to 1805, it must be tied into all the earlier history of Athens that he has been able to reconstruct on the basis of such ancient, Byzantine and western audiors as were available to him.

He adopts the theme of the autochthonous character of the ancient Athenians and thus ties his own Athens to the Attic soil *ab initio*:

Greece, which after these events became so famous and

103. Ioannes Benizelos, *Ἱστορία τῶν Ἀθηνῶν*, editors I. Kokonas, G. Bokos, supervised by M. I. Manousakas, Athens 1986, p. 77 (hereafter cited as Benizelos).

glorious in the original beginnings of its birth, did not always receive the same inhabitants. For the more powerful and more numerous attacking the weaker and being numerous, they expelled them and ruled over their land, and others in turn expelled them. Because of this, and as they had, nowhere, secure habitations, neither did they build towns nor did they concern themselves with planting and cultivations of the earth, but took care only of what was regularly necessary to live. Actually it was the more fertile land of Greece that experienced these changes and upheaval. It is for this reason that its inhabitants were named autochthonous, indigenous, and tettigophoroi (wearers of cicada shaped hairpins). But they also lived in the same manner, scattered out here and there in many regions of Attica, holding their women in common<sup>104</sup>.

Benizelos' theme of the autochthonous origins of the Athenians is of course a well known topos in ancient Greek writings, and because of his schooling he most certainly must have known this via some of these texts. It is, however, impossible, to ascertain what the average contemporary Athenian may have known of this tradition of autochthonous origin<sup>105</sup>. His "Archaeologia tes patridos", "The archaeology of the fatherland", thus begins with the first of the mythical kings Cecrops (1555 B.C.) and ends with the seventeenth and last, Codros. He follows, thereafter, the history of the Athenians according to their changing forms of government: the governments of the archons, the tyrants and the democracy. The apogee of their history follows the Graeco-Persian wars when Pericles raised Athens to new heights in the realm of education and political authority. The decline of its brilliant polity he attributed to the abandoning of civic patriotism:

For they corrupted and renounced that patriotism and the

104. Benizelos, p. 77.

105. For classical references: Euripides, *Ion*, 21-30, 589-590; Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1076: Ἄττικοί μόνον δικαίως ἐγγενεῖς αὐτόχθονες; Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 24 ff: Ταύτην γὰρ οἰκοῦμεν οὐχ ἑτέρους ἐκβαλόντες οὐδ' ἐρήμην καταλαβόντες οὐδ' ἐκ πολλῶν ἔθνων μιγάδες συλλεγόντες ἀλλ' οὕτω καλῶς καὶ γνησίως γεγονάμεν, ὥστ' ἐξ ἧσπερ ἔφυμεν, ταύτην ἔχοντες ἅπαντα τὸν χρόνον διατελοῦμεν, αὐτόχθονες ὄντες καὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων τοῖς αὐτοῖς, οἷσπερ τοὺς οἰκειοτάτους, τὴν πόλιν ἔχοντες προσειπεῖν· μόνους γὰρ ἡμῖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὴν αὐτὴν τροφὴν καὶ πατρίδα καὶ μητέρα καλέσαι προσήκει. Loraux, *op.cit.*, pp. 148-150, 193-194, 277-278, 301-302.



customs of their ancestors, and the Athenians much more gave themselves over to the luxuries, to the festive celebrations, and to the theater, on all of which they wasted the public funds<sup>106</sup>.

These developments, he continues, came at a time when the Greeks were dissipating their strength in an interminable warfare among themselves that contributed, along with their moral decline, to physical exhaustion. By Roman times Athens had become a city which, though still possessed of educational importance, was revered not so much for its contemporary significance in this domain as for its long departed power and brilliance. Benizelos quotes Julius Caesar who, having faulted the Athenians for siding with his foe Pompey, stated the principle clearly:

I forgive these living Athenians by virtue of those long deceased (the classical Athenians)<sup>107</sup>.

This attitude toward the descendants of the Athenians of the great classical era we have already encountered in the writing of the emperor Julian the Apostate, of the eleventh century bureaucrat and polymath Michael Psellus, and in the reactions of the city's Ottoman conqueror Mehmed II<sup>108</sup>.

Though Benizelos is aware of Athens' importance as a famed educational center where Julian, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzenus completed their higher education in the fourth century of the Christian era, his knowledge of the city's history thereafter falters and for the period from the latter sixth to the latter twelfth century he has nothing whatever to record:

Similarly Justinian the Great assisted Athens. But from that time and for up to seven hundred years there is nothing to be read (in the sources) concerning Athens. This is due either to the lack of historians or because its affairs were very quiet<sup>109</sup>.

The enormous gap in his knowledge of Athenian history during the heart of the Byzantine period is little ameliorated by the disparate facts that he records on Frankish Athens, the Ottoman conquest and settlement.

106. Benizelos, p. 94.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Our historian encounters a similar paucity of historical sources for the classical period of Ottoman rule in Athens.

From that time (the surrender of Athens to Mehmed II), likewise, we have no history of Athens, or at least I was not able to find one. We can, probably, assume that the condition of Athens, much as that of the other cities in Greece, was such as would resemble the conditions of all those cities which had fallen under Ottoman slavery intact. As a result of this and from what the Frenchman monsieur Spon relates of his trips to Dalmatia, Greece and Athens in 1675 ... it appears that the citizens (of Athens) preserved some remnant of their antiquity<sup>110</sup>.

Benizelos then proceeds to certain generalizations as to the condition of Athens in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. The actual administration of the city was in the hands of the more noble, the richer and older families, the so-called archons:

As for education, in which she had in older times been the throne of education and wisdom, Athens had declined to such ignorance and barbarism that not only the common folk but the very aristocracy itself could barely write their names<sup>111</sup>.

There were, he asserts, learned men in Athens during that time. However:

These (learned men) transported the invaluable goods of learning from foreign lands to the beloved land of their fatherland. For in those years not even the name of a Hellenic school was to be heard in Athens.

Quoting from a seventeenth century letter of one of the Athenian archons (Mpenaldes, who actually wrote very high Greek), Benizelos describes the evils that vexed Athens in the latter half of the seventeenth century<sup>112</sup>.

The Athenians experience four great evils: Plague, hunger, captivity, and fire<sup>113</sup>.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 128. Though Benizelos seems to associate this with ecclesiastical difficulties, in effect the latter which he quotes seems to point to the Venetian expedition of Morosini

The period of the Veneto-Turkish wars, during which Athens momentarily changed hands, inaugurated a period of great suffering for the Athenians, and the four evils which lashed Athens were to become the hallmark of Athenian historical experience again in the latter half of the eighteenth century when once more the Ottoman Empire was locked in deadly combat with another Christian power, Moscow.

In the year 1687 Francesco Morosini ... arrived in Spetses with his armada on the eleventh of September, and thence proceeded to Aegina. The nearness of the winter and the fame of Athens caused him first to turn to this metropolis. So immediately he landed at Porto Draco, a port of Athens. The brothers Gasparis, both Demetrios and Petros, Spyridon Peroules, and Argyrus Mpenaldes came down to greet him and informed him that the Turks had shut themselves up in the citadel, having previously procured quantities of foodstuffs and military supplies, awaiting in addition to these, reinforcements from the serasker in Thebes<sup>114</sup>.

Morosini, deciding to strike quickly, dispatched 8,000 infantry under Daniel Delfino

directly to the Acropolis there to bombard it, and 870 cavalry to prevent the arrival of the reinforcements from Thebes. The infantry division bombarded the citadel, the cavalry dug trenches, and the besieged resisted for some days. But since the awaited reinforcements from Thebes did not appear, and as that most beautiful and marvelous temple of Athena was destroyed by a bomb which the besiegers hurled and as a result of which the gunpowder exploded, that is the gunpowder magazine, wherein were also stored the most precious things, the besieged raised the white flag and asked for peace<sup>115</sup>.

The withdrawal of the Turks from Athens and the entry of the Christian forces produced massive rejoicing and Morosini consecrated

which momentarily took possession of Athens in 1687. On this brief Venetian interlude, K. Setton, *The Venetians in Greece (1684-1688)*. Francesco Morosini and the Destruction of the Parthenon, Philadelphia 1987; J. M. Paton, *The Venetians in Athens 1687-1688, from the "Istoria" of Cristoforo Ivanovich*, Cambridge 1940.

114. Benizelos, pp. 132-133.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

the first church, in the name of St. Dionysios the Aeropagite, where he and his officials rendered thanks to God for the conquest of the city.

And the people of Athens rejoiced in common, with the new masters, for the supposed freedom which it suddenly and unexpectedly enjoyed<sup>116</sup>.

This period of rejoicing was soon and abruptly terminated when the evils of which Mpenaldes had written, began to beset Athens:

Because first, the plague struck the city from which many of both the army and citizens died<sup>117</sup>.

Second, Morosini could not hold the city because of the continuous Turkish attacks and so he prepared to abandon Athens and to move to the attack of Euboea. Thus the Athenians, realizing that they would be "exposed to dangers from the Turks"<sup>118</sup> as they would be without defense, appealed to Morosini to send them elsewhere:

Therefore he took them with him, sending them safely on the ships, some to Aegina, some to Salamis, and the others to the Cyclades islands. Many (also) went to Corinth. The majority of the most noteworthy (Athenians) fled to Nauplion where the Venetian aristocracy generously awarded them land and annual incomes, and there they remained until the capture of Nauplion by the Turks in 1715. This painful withdrawal of the Athenians from their beloved fatherland occurred in March of the same year. Athens was abandoned as a tent in a vineyard and as a hut in a cucumber bed, completely deserted for three entire years<sup>119</sup>.

The scattering of the Athenians in the first instance occurred out of fear of the enslavement which they would suffer on the return of the Turks to Athens. When the Ottoman representative returned to the deserted city some 70 Athenian families sought him out as "they were possessed by the desire for their fatherland"<sup>120</sup>. Abdul Pasha spoke encouragingly to them in a meeting where Nicholas Cheiles, "familiar with the Ottoman dialect", represented the returning Athenian families and

116. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

119. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

informed the pasha that great patience was needed in order to bring back the mass of refugees to Athens:

Pasha Effendi, up to the present only a few (of the refugees) have gathered here, for we have great difficulty in bringing the remainder, and so patience is needed. This is so because in those lands, where they presently reside, there is greater freedom (ἐλευθερίας περισσοτέρως), which is pleasing to the majority. Because of this we must try every convenient and pleasing manner to induce them to return so that the city may be inhabited again and the land of our most powerful and compassionate ruler may be filled once more<sup>121</sup>.

The Porte found a solution to the resettlement of the abandoned city by bestowing three years of tax free status to Athens and by offering to those who should resettle in the city the return of their properties. The property of those who refused to return was to be confiscated. Since many chose not to return, Benizelos relates, a number of the Athenian archons, Benizelos, Palaeologus, Latinos, and others, went to Istanbul where they purchased, from the state, at a reasonable price, all the abandoned properties of those Athenians who decided to remain in the “foreign” lands<sup>122</sup>.

The temporary fall of Athens to the Venetians, the destruction of the Parthenon, and the flight of the Athenians constitute the major events that Benizelos recounts in any detailed form for the Turkish period in the fifteenth-seventeenth centuries, in his “Ancient history”. He does include a notice on the founding of a Greek School in the eighteenth century, to which we shall return later.

Perhaps more important is the general picture of Athens which he delineates for the mid-eighteenth century of a provincial town which enjoyed relative peace, a regularly and smoothly functioning municipal government, security and economic prosperity. We hear little of Mpe-naldes’ four evils. He gives us an account of the socio-political structure, which, where it is supplemented by the narrative of Skouzes, enables us to grasp the structure and a little of the dynamics of Athenian society. The municipality is referred to as the κοινόν, the commonwealth, and it

121. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

122. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

displayed both a considerable social stratification and political division. Consisting of 36 mahalles, each mahalle (enoria) was jointly responsible for its taxes and so with the death or desertion of any member or members of the mahalle, the remaining members had to share the tax burden of the departed. The koinon could and often did contract loans for civic purposes. It assessed contributions for civic services, for water supply for irrigation in particular. Its citizens were πολῖται or συμπολίται, and their attachment to, or love of the city is termed πατριωτισμός “patriotismos.” Accordingly πατριωτισμός, though difficult to define, is nevertheless a concept and goal which somehow, often vaguely, concerned the citizen.

Though the Christians always constituted the majority of the Athenians, nevertheless the smaller community of Muslims was, by virtue of its preferred status in the Ottoman state, a constant and important presence. Up to mid-eighteenth century they were far eclipsed by the Christians (Greeks and so-called Greek-Albanians) in the economic realm of the city’s life. Skouzes describes pithily the fiscal relations of the koinon to the Ottoman state in mid-eighteenth century, when Esma Sultana promoted her favorite Hadji Ali Aga to the zabitlik or voivodlik of Athens:

Because of this she promoted and enriched him and bought him, as his possession, the malikian of Athens. And from this he took the tithes (tenth) of all production of Athens, except for the haradj, the public customs, and the courts. For the haradj belonged to the Janissaries, the customs to the hazine (the sultan’s treasury), and the court (the cadi’s court) belonged to the Sheihulislam<sup>123</sup>.

From all this we see that the koinon is an institution-legal entity which is at one and the same time a legal, administrative and economic body with obligations to the state. Thus the taxes of the koinon functioned to support the harem, the sultan, the religious institutions of Islam and Janissary corps. As of the eighteenth century Benizelos asserts that

Athens was in a good state and could be set as a model for

123. Panayis Skouzes, *Η τυραννία του Χατζή-Αλί Χασεκί στην τουρκοκρατούμενη Αθήνα 1776-1796 όπως την αφηγείται ο Παναγής Σκουζές*, edition and commentary by T. Papadopoulos, Athens 1975 (hereafter Skouzes), p. 65.

the other cities of Hellas, as it was, in reality, enviable and famous. Its greatest good fortune consisted of its good and noble citizens who, in an aristocratic form, always constituted the administration of the city. Such were the Palaeologoi, Benizeloi, Gerenai, Kapetanakai, Taronitai, Latinoi and others<sup>124</sup>.

Thus in describing the preeminence of the “aristocratic” families he refers to the κατάλογος προεστώτων, “the catalogue of the proestotes”, the twelve or so leading families who really ran and directed the affairs of the Athenian koinon. Both Benizelos and Skouzes enable us to ascertain the social, economic and political structures of the koinon and further to see its internal and external dynamism in the interplay of economic forces that set Christian against Muslim, the representatives of the state against the subjects, and the various “classes” against one another within the koinon.

The first class of the koinon were, accordingly, the twelve or so families of the aristocracy who because of their comparatively greater wealth were able to devote their full time to municipal government. It was they who constituted the proestotes.

The second class consisted of some twenty to thirty families who, though not so wealthy as the archons, nevertheless had considerable wealth and were known as the noikokyraioi. Skouzes gives us a specific example of such a person:

He told me that my grandfather ... possessed: 1,200 olive trees, a total of 80 sheep ... 2 orchards, 40 stremmata of vineyards (roughly ten acres), fields of madder, a soap shop, two cobbler workshops, meadows, three spitokatheses and capital which he invested in oil, cheese, butter, wheat, honey etc ... He had the grocery shop and collected all the cheese of Attica with his brother Elias Skouzes and George Skouzes (sic). There were two other brothers ... and all had economic establishments<sup>125</sup>.

They often handled the economic affairs of the proestotes, and were active socially and politically in the give and take of the affairs of the

124. Benizelos, p. 151.

125. Skouzes, p. 102.

koinon.

The third class, the παζαριται, the bazaar people, included mostly craftsmen and their ρουφέτια, or guilds. They dealt in the usual objects of commerce: fur, skins, olive oil, cheese, soap, foodstuffs, shoes, leather, guns, etc ...

The fourth class were the farmers who lived outside of Athens in the suburbs and nearby rural areas.

Only the farmers, the fifth class, were lower than them, though it is difficult to discern what differentiated the farmers and the xotarides<sup>126</sup>.

On the eve of the tyranny of Hadji Ali, Skouzes asserts that the city had a population of 1,500 Christian, 350 Ottoman, 30 African, and 25 Turkish Gypsy families. He adds that the Gypsies were all iron smiths, and that the Africans made straw hats. The total number of families in the rural villages of Attica he places at about 1,500<sup>127</sup>. Thus the population was very small and yet it was ethnically and religiously diverse.

The city itself was divided into 36 enories or quarters:

The Turkish houses were half of them adjoined to Christian houses and the other half were intermixed with the Christian ones. The Turks got along quietly with the Christians (prior to the tyranny of Hadji Ali). One third of the Turks, the poorest ones, were cobblers, tanners, barbers, tailors. The remainder had no craft whatever. The wealthy landowners lived off their produce. They sold their produce, most of them, to the Christian merchants before the prices would drop, and they gave over their goods without difficulty and without written documents. From 1800 to 1821, when the revolution broke out, they gave themselves over to luxuries and to soft life to such a degree that they were selling their lands to the Christians<sup>128</sup>.

Each of these 36 quarters carried the name of its principal church with an enclosure inside of which were cells, small houses, between 8 and 25 in number. The church had its warden and an older woman known as klesarissa. She lived in one of the cells, cleaned the church, lit the candles and went about striking the doors of the enorites with a stick when there

126. So identified by Papadopoulos in his introduction to Skouzes, pp. 21-24.

127. Skouzes, pp. 110, 122, 137-139.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 122.



was a night liturgy. Each church had also a priest and occasionally a deacon.

Every cell housed a poor person who had no home and was unfortunate. The enorites would go to the cells and hire men and women to do their work both inside and outside the city. The inhabitants of the quarter sent, to those who were invalids, bread, oil, olives, food, wood and other things. Very few Athenian women had servants, so they would hire the women from the cells when they need help in thread making, and in the making of cloth from silk and other materials. They hired these poor people also for the gathering of the olives, harvesting of the grapes. Thus did the poor and needy live and survive. The work of charity included substantial contributions from every class in Athens. On Christmas and Easter even the proestotes appointed two noikokyratoi (second class) and a priest to go about the guilds and the entire city to collect whatever each individual wished to give. The same was effected through the wardens of the churches who gave from the church collections, the abbots of the monasteries doing similarly. With this collection they bought shoes, scarves, hats and other things at cheap prices which they then apportioned to the unfortunate people living in the quarters as well as to a few aristocrats who had become impoverished.

All the enories-quarters owned donations given to them by the inhabitants of the quarter: olive trees, mostly, but also a few fields. Each quarter thus owned between 100 and 200 olive trees, and a few even owned shops in the bazaar. They had also some small gardens. Because of the charity of the Athenians there was not a single beggar in the streets of Athens (before the tyranny of Hadji Ali), for over 1,000 souls lived within the quarters under these circumstances<sup>129</sup>. The Ottoman structure included the annually appointed voivode-zabit, the kadi who presided over the Sharia court, and the dizdar with his garrison on the Acropolis. Present also was the local mufti who was expected to deliver legal opinions on principles of Islamic law. The Islamic state structure theoretically exercised three basic functions. It supervised directly the obligations and the daily life of the Turkish community in Athens, it sat atop the municipal structure and organization of the local Christian community, and third it enforced on both communities the policies and

129. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-139.

commands of the central government in Istanbul. It enforced order, obedience, and the payment of fiscal obligations.

At the local level the proestotes played a crucial role in administration:

They assembled daily at the *κοινσίγιον* (council) examining affairs that were current. Once a week, on Monday, they assembled in the residence of the metropolitan, in the synodic chamber, with the metropolitan, and there they judged, individually, the cases and differences which the people (*λαός*) had with one another, and no one could reject their decision. They did not frequent the voivode or *cadi*, except for Friday when they went simply to greet them. For municipal needs and for some few who were in jail, they (proestotes) had two younger men from the same assembly as the proestotes, or from the second class, who were called *ἐπίτροποι* of the city. These *epitropoi* would, when need arose, go to the voivode and *cadi*, bearing always the instruction and opinion of the proestotes, and would express freely what was necessary as coming from the mouth of the community (*κοινότης*)<sup>130</sup>.

The voivode was obliged to bear himself carefully with the proestotes and to follow their opinion. If the proestotes were favorably disposed to him they could propose his renewal for a second and third term in Istanbul. The people manifested great respect and reverence to the proestotes, but the Turks did so as well, and

The proestotes responded to the people with love, care and *patriotismos* (civic patriotism), and they were as sparing of the public purse as they were with their own<sup>131</sup>.

In this period of relative calm and security the affairs of the Greeks were in the ascendancy:

Business affairs were in the hands of the Greeks for the Turks were neither able, nor did they know how to do business. Of the properties and mulks of the region, the Turks

130. Benizelos, pp. 152-154. For further details on Athens in the eighteenth century, see, Ph. N. Philadelphus, *Ιστορία των Αθηνών επί Τουρκοκρατίας (1400-1800)*, Athens 1902, I-II; D. Kambouroglu, *Ιστορία των Αθηναίων επί Τουρκοκρατίας*, Athens 1889-1896, I-III.

131. Benizelos, p. 154.

possessed barely a small fraction. Because they were few in number and poor, they were humbled before the Greeks and subject to them<sup>132</sup>.

Unfortunately neither Skouzes nor Benizelos says much as to economic life of the period prior to the mid-eighteenth century. They turn to the structure and the details of the city's economic life only in the careful account of the tyranny of Hadji Ali Aga when the breakdown of order in the Ottoman state system and economic order in the latter half of the century put into vigorous movement economic and political "class interests".

Both authors do, however, take notice of the state of education and learning in Athens, Benizelos much more than Skouzes. We have already noted that Benizelos had the benefit of a substantial schooling and education whereas Skouzes, from a family of noikokyraioi of the "second class", was removed from the Greek School after only two years of matriculation because of the fiscal oppression which destroyed the economic fortunes of his family. It is of interest to note that the latter's brief schooling impressed the young Skouzes with all its negative aspects:

Similarly I wish to describe the punishment which the teachers provided. If the child should come to school late, the ready punishment was that of the teacher-wild monk. He had a whip called "ox sinew" and with it he struck each of the student's open hands once and he then put him to stand upon one foot for a short while with the other foot swinging free. But if the teacher wished to do otherwise he had the falanga ready. They put both of his feet (in the falanga), then two boys tied the falanga and the teacher beat the boy on the feet. The falanga was a stick of one meter to six roupia in length, with two holes of a roupi's distance between them. There was a string, with two knots at the ends so that it would not slip through the holes in the stick. They placed the feet in the sticks and would turn the stick thus squeezing together the feet at the ankles, and the teacher would beat the individual on the feet. Many boys would urinate on themselves from fear on hearing the wild teacher when he would yell "you, accursed of

132. *Ibid.*

God” at the boy. However in the Greek schools of Athanasios Benizelakis, and later of Samuel Kouvelanos, all this was diminished. Nevertheless the falanga and the whip were not absent even from these schools<sup>133</sup>.

This is a sobering account of one aspect of education (*paideia*) and of its inseparable connection with physical punishment (designated by the same word, *paideia*). Skouzes suffered a difficult and cruel childhood, having remained in the Greek School only two years. Having been trained, for the rest of his life, in the School of realism that awaited all youngsters thrown out into the world at such a tender age, he had not stayed in school long enough to remember anything about it save for its physical violence. His comparative evaluation of the Athenian schools is reflected only in his quantitative measurement of the physical punishment doled out to the students by the “wild monks”.

Benizelos, born, raised and educated before the ruthless tyranny of Hadji Ali, benefited from all the advantages coming to a child born into one of the most ancient and respected families of the Athenian archons. He not only attended the old school of the *koinon* but was eventually appointed to the Greek School of John Dekas where he taught from 1774 to 1806, for 32 years. For him the education of the Athenians was a matter of the first order of importance and thus he comments on the founding of the first school, and the succession of teachers, as well as on the founding of the other Greek School, as central events in the city’s history:

In regard to education, Athens, which in ancient times was the throne of education and wisdom, had declined to such ignorance and barbarism that not only the common people but even the nobles themselves could barely write their names<sup>134</sup>.

Despite this very low rate of literacy and the lack of educational institutions, Benizelos goes on to say that Athens was never completely devoid of learned men, but,

They transported the most valuable goods of education from some foreign land to this beloved land, their fatherland. For in those times not even the name of a Greek School was to

133. Skouzes, p. 91.

134. Benizelos, p. 118.

be heard in Athens<sup>135</sup>.

It is for this reason that Benizelos praised the monk Grigoris Soteris for the great benefaction and honor which he bestowed on his compatriots,

as once more he summoned to their ancient seat the Muses who had long before departed ...<sup>136</sup>.

Soteris had studied ancient Greek and Latin in Italy and having returned to his fatherland at the beginning of the century,

and finding his fatherland buried in a deep ignorance, he set as his first care and labor the purchase of a house which, at his own expense, he transformed and built into a school (and gymnasium) of Greek studies. He was not only the founder but also the first teacher in his own school, teaching, without charge, the enkykleia Greek subjects to those of his compatriots who came to him. In 1788 he went to the capital where he was ordained metropolitan of Monemvasia and so by a sealed letter he dedicated and gave the school to the koinon of his fatherland so that it might be eternally named the school of Greek lessons granting it also his own library<sup>137</sup>.

Benizelos then lists, and describes briefly, each teacher in this first Greek School of Athens down to his own times when its principal was Samuel Kouvelanos, an Athenian. After the time of Soteris the founder, the annual salary of the scholarches (principal) was set at 200 ducats sent each year from the bank of Venice from an endowment which was established by Melos, Epiphantos and Stephan Routas, Athenians.

In the middle of the century another Athenian, living in Venice, endowed a second Greek School, being moved to do so, as Benizelos asserts, by divine zeal and civic patriotism. He gave the school a library, and from the endowment the bank of Venice paid the teacher annually a salary of 200 ducats, and finally it doled out 25 ducats each to twelve students enrolled there.

May those initiators and creators who negotiated such a good deed be in effect revered and honored by God and

135. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

136. *Ibid.*

137. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

mankind, and may they be eternally blessed and happy. It is they whom the wealthy of our nation should imitate, and especially the ecclesiastical proestotes<sup>138</sup>.

Benizelos' account on the restoration of public schools in Athens in the eighteenth century indicates the further stratification of Athenian society as well as the beginning of the uplifting of the Athenians from the ignorance of the centuries. At the time of the French Revolution and the termination of the long political life of the Venetian Republic, and for some two years thereafter, the annual payments from the Greek endowments in Venice halted and for this period of time Benizelos taught without salary. He warns his reader that if the Athenians do not step in to assist the public schools the fatherland will again slip into a state of ignorance and again illiteracy will prevail, much to the shame of the city.

Such was the nature of Athenian society in the mid-eighteenth century, as emerges primarily from Benizelos and secondarily from Skouzes. In terminating the first of his three works on the history of Athens Benizelos has accomplished what he set out to do in the *Ancient History of the City of Athens*. He has established a long time scale by going back to the legendary king Cecrops and then sketches in the highlights of the ancient history of Athens: the evaluation of their political institutions, the role of the great Athenian statesmen, the development of Athens as the promising leader of the Greek city state world, its center as the seat of wisdom. Similarly he traces the city's decline, the Macedonian and Roman conquests. His purpose in dwelling on the ancient period is to glorify his fatherland, eighteenth century Athens, and to show that its contemporary fortunes came at the end of long centuries of historical development. He admits to a lack of historical sources for most of the Byzantine, Latin and early Ottoman periods of Athenian history. But he attempts to give a picture of the city's not unimpressive culture by the mid-eighteenth century, and he does so in order to prepare the reader for the transition of the city's decline and misfortunes in the second half of the century.

Turning to the part of Athenian history contemporary with him, that history which he witnessed and experienced, Benizelos commences 'Ιστορία νέα τῶν ἐν Ἀθῆναις συμβεβηκότων with the year 1754. He

138. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

perceives this *New History of Affairs Occuring in Athens* as a history of the decline, disorientations, and destruction of the Athenians, their national polity, and of the rise of the Turks in this new development of the city's affairs. In all this the account of Skouzes confirms the narrative of Benizelos by recounting his own fortunes and the destruction of his family's position and wealth. Benizelos refers to both the external and the internal forces and dynamics which disturbed the flow of Athenian history from 1754 to 1795. Though he recounts his history chronologically by listing events according to each successive year, nevertheless there is cohesion and unity in his historical analysis, narrative and aetiology. Tracing the internal strife and upheaval within the city against the broader background of the more general transformations of the social, economic, fiscal and political developments of the declining Ottoman Empire, he brings in as well the empire's wars with Russia. Religious differences also emerge at crucial moments of tension between the Athenian Greeks and Turks.

Each of the authors gives considerable attention to the visitation of the terrifying plague, a constant blight on the Athenians as we have already seen from the sixteenth century anonymous chronicle of Athens and again from the seventeenth century letter of Mpenalides the Athenian archon. From Benizelos' history we perceive the onset of the plague in April 1778 and by the time it had run its course about 600 children and a few adults had perished. The Athenians had not accustomed themselves yet to inoculation against the plague, Benizelos referring to such inoculations as "life-saving"<sup>139</sup>. In the year 1789 the plague once more came to Athens and struck the inhabitants twice, first on January 30, and again on March 9, reaching its peak on June 20, after which it began to slacken, departing from Athens by early August. It devastated the Athenians, both Christians and Muslims, as it eventually carried off 30 to 40 per day, and one day as many as 500 died. After June 20, the fatalities began to decline to two per day, then to one, eventually to one every two weeks. According to our author some 1,200 Greeks and 500 Turks perished from its ravages. At the same time there was a shortage of grain as the agricultural production of the previous year (1788) had been sparse, and so the plague of 1789 was also accompanied by the spectre

139. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

of starvation in Athens.

The double ravages of plague and starvation were such that the proestotes developed plans to contain, to the degree possible, both these lethal threats to the Athenians. When the first evidence of the plague appeared on January 30, it struck the family of Constantine Ademakes newly arrived from Levidia. One of his children fell ill at the evening time and he died during the night. This in and of itself was not sufficient to prove the presence of the plague as no other households had yet been affected, but the suddenness of the child's death was enough to arouse suspicion. Further, Constantine had recently returned from a stay in Levidia where the inhabitants had greatly suffered from the plague and which had spread thence into Thebes and Euripus.

It is significant that the news of the child's death had already been reported to the proestotes the very next morning. Immediately they sent representatives to remove the Ademakes family from the city, despite the fact that the latter protested that it was winter and this would work a hardship on them. Accordingly they were constrained to depart from Athens to the family's property at Peristeri one hour's distance. Thus expelled were Constantine, his wife, their remaining children, his father and mother, his mother-in-law, and the woman who had massaged the throat of the now dead child. Within thirty days Constantine witnessed the death of all of them burying them with his own hands, and he himself finally followed his loved ones. He remained unburied three days as there was no grave-digger to bury him until a wood-cutter passing by dug a ditch, hurled him into it, and covered him with a little dirt<sup>140</sup>. From January 30, until March 9 no one else in the city passed away from the plague and so it seemed that the prompt action of the proestotes had saved the city.

Similarly, the proestotes made efforts to provide the hungry city with grain and foodstuffs as Athens had suffered severe drought the previous year. In contrast to Athens, Thebes and Levidia had an abundance of grain and other supplies, but they too were now suffering from the plague. The proestotes adopted what seemed to be a prudent measure in an effort to procure the necessary foodstuffs while avoiding contamination by the plague that now raged in Boeotia. They ordered the garrison-

140. *Ibid.*, pp. 333-335.



ing of the city's gates to prevent entry into Athens from Thebes and Boeotia and vice-versa. As for the scarcity of food they sent Athenians to the villages of Thebes which had not yet been struck by the plague to purchase wheat and flour and then to be brought to Athens there to be distributed to the bakeries. Thus hunger was momentarily dealt with and without incurring the contagion from the plague. Benizelos asks next, how could these men and their animals go back and forth when these villages were also being beset by the plague? Thus when the plague finally attacked these villages the commerce in grain and foodstuffs came to a halt:

Thence the scarcity of food resulted in starvation. A grain or flour seller was nowhere to be found, and the bakeries closed. The people wandered, weeping, in search of food. Whenever it was heard that cargo with flour and wheat had arrived from the Theban villages and that all that had been transferred to the ovens, there was then to be seen a sorry spectacle worthy of tears: A mixed crowd of men, women, youths, old men, children and infants standing by the doors of the bakeries from dawn to dusk, all of them belching dryly and hungrily, pale, gaping, shriveled up from hunger and waiting, with their arms crossed, for the bakeries to open. But when the windows, and not the doors (for the mob would have surged inside), opened you could hear but one mournful voice and you saw them all shoving, striking each other, and one hurling down another so that they might succeed in getting a piece of bread, some obtaining two obols' worth, others one obol's worth, but many others left with hands empty of bread but with eyes full of tears. One day when a large multitude of both men and women had gathered they set upon the dwellings of the zabiti, of the cadi, and of the proestotes with loud shouts and cries demanding flour or else that the gates of the city be opened and each should be allowed to go wherever he desired in order to find food. For, they said, it would be better to die once from the plague, should God will it, rather than to die every day from starvation. Thus permission was given, by virtue of public announcements that whoever wished could go, unhindered, wherever he wished and wherever he should find food to live.

Thus many rushed out immediately, took food, and brought it back. One must marvel how it was that up until then the disease had not spread following such (commercial) intercourse. It was in this manner that starvation came to pass<sup>141</sup>.

Under these circumstances it was not long before the plague struck again, on March 9, afflicting the church of the great Panayia in the middle of the city and market place, and near the council building of the proestotes. There resided in the church grounds three adults (one priest and two monks), a boy, and more than three children who were being instructed in school lessons. One of the monks became ill, a widow was summoned to rub him down and then she returned to her house. That same night the monk died, and so the proestotes went the next day to interrogate the priest. Then they inquired of the widow if she had seen any boils or rashes on the monk's body. She replied in the negative but observed that he had vomited blood. Thereupon the proestotes sealed the priest and his circle in the church, and the widow with her two daughters and one adopted daughter in her house, sending daily to all of them food<sup>142</sup>. Within one week all those in the church died. Thirteen days later the widow and her children were still alive, and the plague had not as yet struck them. She proceeded to bleed herself and her child, but to no avail. Three days following the phlebotomy her smallest child came down with the plague, so she moved out of the city to her orchard. It was there that the small daughter died, then the second child, and the public grave-digger buried them in the orchard. Two days later the mother became violently ill, only the older daughter (15 years old) remaining healthy. The neighbors, by now frightened for their own safety, forced mother and daughter to flee. But as the mother was by now too weak to move the grave-digger loaded her on his mule and led her away, the weeping daughter following behind the mule and her mother. In three days her mother and another old woman died alongside the chapel of St. Marina, and the relatives hired the wife of the grave-digger to care for the desolate daughter. She was the only survivor of the nine souls on whom the plague

141. *Ibid.*, pp. 335-336.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 338, remarks that after the experience of this plague one should have isolated each individual, removed his clothing, washed him from head to foot in vinegar, and put on him new clothing. Had all this been done, he states that probably many fewer would have perished.

had descended<sup>143</sup>.

From that time the disease began to spread and to afflict one or two houses each day. The inhabitants of these houses, all they removed from the city, to the country chapels and to the open fields. At that time other Athenian families arrived from Thebes, Euripus and Levadia fleeing the plague in those regions, and these also they took and removed from the city. The symptoms of the illness included shiverings throughout the body, headache, and vomiting. As the disease spread day by day Easter arrived, which we celebrated saddened and fearful, for we went to the church very terrified of approaching one another and without performing the traditional embrace, the "Christ is risen". On that same day many went out to the neighboring countryside for protection some going to the monasteries, others to the orchards, others elsewhere to wherever each could ... The city remained emptied of its inhabitants, whereas the fields and rural chapels were full of those infected and struck by the illness. If anyone chanced to walk about inside the city he was overcome by fear and sadness in seeing the streets, market places, and squares deserted, and if he walked about just outside the city even though he might have a heart of stone, he would dissolve in tears. He would see heaps and piles of people in the open air and under the burning sun, men, women, youths and the aged, some suffering heavily from wounds, others dying, and the dead remaining unburied for two and three days for the grave-diggers (there were only two) could not get to them in time. One would see still others seated beside their dead ones, weeping, and awaiting their turn to be wept over by still others. Many husbands buried their wives with their own hands, and many mothers buried their children, whereas numerous nursing infants (were to be seen) drinking milk from the breasts of their dead mothers. In short these fields and plains were the very vale of tears. The majority of the Ottomans, since it is contrary to their religion, neither went out to the countryside for protection, nor being

143. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

inside the city did they take measures to protect themselves. Thus the disease was further inflamed by the illogic of religion and so it attacked them more violently and daily it sent many of them to enjoy, according to the teachings of Muhammad, piles of pilaff and rivers flowing with milk and honey. The sickness continued to rage until the twentieth of June ... In the beginning of August it came to an end and those who were protecting themselves in the countryside returned to the city. From the plague 1,200 Greeks and 500 Turks died<sup>144</sup>.

The pages of Benizelos give us a moving picture of the plague, its horror, as well as the efforts of the proestotes to enforce measures that would protect the Athenians from both the disease and starvation, and the effect on the bodies and mentality of Christians and Muslims. Having dealt with the plague of 1789 in great detail, Benizelos greatly abbreviates the description of its recurrence in 1792 which this time ran its course from March to June, killing up to 800 Greeks and 300 Turks<sup>145</sup>.

Skouzes had personal experience of the plague, first through the death of his mother, and then as assistant to a Sinaite monk who during the plague of 1791 (sic) was so much in demand among the inhabitants of the villages of Phila and Vasilikon (in Euboea), among the Vlachs of the mountainous regions, and among the citizens of Levadia, that he badly needed such a boy to assist him in performing incessant religious services to ward off the effects of the plague. The desperation and mortality of the provincial populations of Boeotia and Euboea were such that the monk and his two young charges were soon involved in a very profitable economic enterprise<sup>146</sup>.

It was not only drought and plague which disrupted agricultural production and complicated the commerce of foodstuffs, but the very malfeasance of the Ottoman administrative system in 1778, 1783, 1790

144. *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340.

145. *Ibid.*, p. 352. Skouzes, p. 84, records the death of his mother in the plague of 1788 (see footnote to edition of his autobiography, 43, p. 154, for the correct date) 13 hours after the first onset of the symptoms. She died eight months into pregnancy and when she was laid in the ground it was noted that the fetus was still alive and moved though she was dead.

146. Skouzes, pp. 93-98, records that in the large village of Phila some of the villagers believed the departed to be werewolves who would arise from their graves and choke the living. As the plague worsened some villagers began to exhume the deceased and to burn their hearts with red hot irons.

and more generally during the career of Hadji Ali Aga was so oppressive that the jailings, taxation, and angareies (corvées) removed the farmers, merchants, and guildsmen from their economic activities so extensively that hunger and starvation became the familiar companions of the Christian Athenians<sup>147</sup>.

The appearance of foreigners, especially the Russians and Albanians, and of banditry which tended to be associated with the threat to Ottoman authority, further contributed to the destabilization of life. We have already seen the results of the appearance of the Venetians in Athens in 1687, the excitement of the Athenians at their momentary liberation and the final flight of the population when the Venetians departed and the Ottoman returned. The few Ottomans who returned to the city lived in fear of the Venetians in Nauplion, as well as the local Christian bandits who made incursions into Attica. A similar tense situation came to prevail in Athens with the arrival of the Russian fleet off the coast of Mane and the rebellion of the Greeks in the Peloponnese. In 1768 the Ottoman government had ordered that all firearms and weapons be removed from the hands of the Greeks, specifically in Athens, but more generally elsewhere as well, so that the Christians would not be tempted to rise in rebellion against Ottoman rule and authority. The appearance of a powerful Christian armada of course constituted a serious threat to the sultan and to the Turkish settlers in Greece. Consequently the lines of religious separation between Greeks and Turks in Athens created an atmosphere and situation which directly threatened the lives of the Athenian Christians. Benizelos describes the anguish and terror of the Greeks of Athens:

In the beginning of the year (1770) we heard of the arrival of the Russian fleet in the Peloponnese and of the revolution of the Lacedaemonians. From that point on conditions worsened daily, for the Turks became enraged with the Greeks. The Greeks, terrified and without assistance, attempted to respond to the Turkish rage with gifts and humility. The slightest slander was no longer rejected (by the Turks) as was formerly the case ... but was accepted as a documented and indisputable fact .... The proestotes proceeded with utmost circumspection

147. Benizelos, pp. 268-269, 281, 342-345.

and care so as not to irritate the Turks in even the smallest detail. But, they showed themselves solicitous of all the affairs of the Turks: On the citadel (Acropolis) they repaired the artillery, they filled the cisterns with water, they sent two priests to the villages to counsel the villagers to remain obedient and quiet, and they went to Anapli to prostrate themselves before the all high satrap Misinoglou to assure him that they are faithful to the empire ... The Turks, not satisfied with all this, demanded a mutual assurance, that is that the Greeks should become hostages, one for the other and further that for greater security we went, by turn, from two or three quarters of the city, up to the citadel to sleep there. Despite all that many Turks often planned to put the Greeks to the sword. One day they went to the mufti and began to make representations to him that: "The Greeks are infidels", and that: "So soon as they have the opportunity they shall fall upon us as the Greeks of Mystra fell upon our wretched correligionnaires whom they cut down mercilessly with their women and children. Thus it would be much better for us to do to them that which they will do to us". Further they also demanded a fetva so that they could carry out their decisions immediately<sup>148</sup>.

In a long response the mufti dissuaded the Athenian Turks from the massacre of the Greeks and he did so for both religious and political reasons. First, the Athenians, unlike the Peloponnesians, have not taken up arms against us, he said. To the contrary, they have been completely obedient: Whosoever of the Muslims should harm in any way the infidels, he should understand that he sins grievously against God and the Prophet. Aside from religion, the Mufti adduced a second, political reason for abstaining from the plan to massacre the Greeks:

"If however, you should put into effect your impious and God detested plan, I myself do not understand in what way you will be able to carry it out. You barely number 200 men capable of bearing arms, whereas such among the Greeks number beyond 2,000. They, when they see you attacking them, and seeing themselves destroyed, one way or the other,

148. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-216.

every law of behavior and justice will force them to resist with whatever means they possess and to defend their life. In such a battle, it would seem to me, many Greeks will be killed, but only a few of you will remain". With such words the mufti calmed the rage of the Ottomans. Nevertheless the situation of the Greeks remained dangerous<sup>149</sup>.

Benizelos highlights the fear which gripped the Greeks of Athens:

One can imagine how wretched and frightful life was in such a time and land, when the Turks breathed nothing else but murder and blood against the Christians and when ten Greek heads were not worth one cent<sup>150</sup>.

By 1771 and after the burning of the Ottoman fleet by the Russians, the tension in Athens became even greater. Mitromaras, an Albano-Greek from the Attic village of Menidi, and who had joined the Russian fleet, now established himself with his bandits-warriors on the island of Salamis, and proclaimed that he had been sent by the Russian Tsarina Catherine to prepare an army for the destruction of the Turks and for the liberation of the Greeks. When this report arrived in Athens, many Athenians crossed to Salamis to join him and so in a short while Salamis became a bandits' next.

Many of the Athenians, and some were of the most respectable, went to Salamis out of fear of the Turks and Albanians, for rumors were constantly spread that they were about to slay the Greeks and that once more an army of Albanians would come to Athens<sup>151</sup>.

The raids of Mitromaras' forces angered the Turks further so that the Greeks of Athens were once more in serious danger. The Turks, being unable to avenge themselves on Mitromaras vented their rage on the local Athenians:

The Turks, together with the Albanians, swords in hand, gathered in the coffee houses like wild beasts, they roared against the Greeks and prepared to put us all to the sword<sup>152</sup>.

Once again the mufti, together with the zabit Huseyn Aga, intervened to

149. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

150. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

151. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

152. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

stop the impending slaughter.

The effects of the two Russo-Turkish wars and the measures of the Porte to suppress the rebellious Greek population of the Peloponnese introduce yet another element in the turbulent life of Athens in the second half of the century, that of the Muslim Albanians. A warrior-like society of mountaineer clans from the north, the bellicose qualities of the Muslim Albanians became increasingly evident in the history of the declining Ottoman Empire. Skouzes reports that with the rebellion in the Peloponnese the Ottomans sent 25,000 Muslim Albanians to suppress the Greeks there.

It is for this reason that Arvanitia entered the Peloponnese and plundered it (they enslaved, ruined, and destroyed). Years later the empire heeded the complaints of the Peloponnesians and sent its fleet, issuing orders that both Christians and Turks should attack them and they then pushed them (the Albanians) out of the Peloponnese. As they moved through Derveni the Athenian Kountouriotēs and others attacked them and barely 5-6,000 returned to Arvanitia<sup>153</sup>.

This late movement of Albanians had opened the eyes of other Albanians to likely prospects for the future. In addition the Kountouriotēs had deprived the retreating Albanians of the vast booty that years earlier they had taken from the Peloponnese. The numerous Albanian *condottieri* were scattered about in Attica and Boeotia looking for opportunities to exploit the situation and to improve their status by "offering" their services. Both Skouzes and Benizelos give a colorful picture of the Muslim Albanians as they attempted to carve out a place for themselves in a declining empire which, also threatened by the Russians from outside, was fast losing its authority in its own provinces. In particular they began to penetrate the provincial military forces which were entrusted, in this case, with the security of Athens and Attica. In Attica the *meydanbashi* and the *bulukbashi* were in charge of such security and had at their disposal 50 to 80 regulars, two-third of which were Albanians and one-third Turks. They received as salary 5 *kurush* per month and one and one-half *oka* bread per day.

The position of the *meydanbashi* had been held by the Albanian

153. Skouzes, pp. 67-68.



Yiaholiouri who had prospered financially from the position until with the arrival of the zabiti Hadji Ali Aga when he was removed from the position. He determined to regain this post by force and to utilize it to plunder both Athens and Attica<sup>154</sup>. For this purpose he went to Arvanitia and there recruited 750 men. Thereafter he marched through Levadia and Thebes, recruited as many Albanians as he could find there in the service of others, and in addition recruited those of them who were “lending” their land at 30 to 50% interest. These, as they saw the powerful force of Yiaholiouri

followed him for the plunder (τα πλιάτσικα) and perhaps they had in mind, later, massacre and enslavement ... and thus their number rose to 1,500<sup>155</sup>.

In 1777, after having sacked both the Turks and Greeks of Thebes, they dreamed that in Athens also they would have the same good fortunes, only with greater and larger booty<sup>156</sup>.

Once they had arrived in Kapandriti, Yiaholiouri and his comrade Tzatzos Delvinote sent a letter to the Athenian proestotes ordering them as follows:

From us the Bulukbashi Yiaholiouri and Tzatzos Delvinote to you, the elders of Athens: Upon request of our present letter, and without any excuse or delays send to us food for our animals, as well as bread, meat, and shoes, and prepare for us also the mourasele (written document) so that we can come as friends to your land and to protect you. If you should resist you should know that just as the letter is “burned”, we shall set fire to the four corners of the city and you shall lament your poverty<sup>157</sup>.

The reply from the Athenians was that they have prepared for him, cannon balls and dynamite<sup>158</sup>.

Hadji Ali, the zabiti of Athens who had earlier dismissed Yiaholiouri from service, summoned the Turks and Greeks outside the church of the Holy Apostles and informed them as to the nature of the Albanians, that is as he understood the matter:

154. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

155. *Ibid.*, p. 120. On page 68, he relates the number as 3,000.

156. Benizelos, p. 261.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

158. Skouzes, p. 136.

Even without the example of wearied Thebes, the mentality of the Albanians must be well known to all of us. They do nothing else, wherever they should pass, than to loot and murder ... For you are aware that they go to war neither to defend their fatherland not for any glory wherein they would easily shed their blood. Rather they are thieves and they go about only for plunder, always attempting to attack there where they find empty doors. But whenever they encounter resistance, after a light attack they run away, not wishing to be deprived of their plunder, which they acquired in some other land, wishing at the same time to save their lives<sup>159</sup>.

Thus the Greeks advised Hadji Ali not to await the attack of the Albanians in the unwallled city but to take the initiative and attack the Albanians while they were still in the countryside. The plan was successful, the Athenians won the victory and one-fourth of the Albanian force was slain, the remainder withdrew to Arvanitia but threatened to return in greater numbers<sup>160</sup>. It was the Athenians, as we saw, who had persuaded the zabit to go out to attack the Albanians in Kephisia by telling him that that was what the ancient Athenians had done:

Just as once they had done to the Persians at Marathon, and they related to him the story. It was in this matter that the decision was taken<sup>161</sup>.

Inasmuch as Yiaholiouri had threatened to return to Athens with another force from Arvanitia, in order to wreak vengeance for the blood of the slain and then to plunder and enslave, the proestotes and the zabit agreed to wall Athens. This they accomplished in three months<sup>162</sup>.

One year later, in 1778, yet another Albanian, Maksut, was descending to the Peloponnese with 6,000 Albanians, intending at the same time, to take revenge on the Athenians. Consequently Hadji Ali sent the Greeks to the island of Salamis and the Turks to the citadel, at the same time that Maksut wrote to him demanding that he be appointed guardian of the city. Inasmuch as all the Athenians were secure and beyond the reach of his Albanian army, he continued his march into the Pelo-

159. Benizelos, pp. 263-264.

160. Skouzes, p. 68.

161. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

162. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

ponnese<sup>163</sup>.

Against this background of disturbance one should examine the shambles of the Ottoman provincial administration. In fact the *Ίστορία Νέα* is a conscious delineation of the decline and malfunction of the Ottoman administrative and fiscal system which brought with it a decline in the lives and affairs of the Christians of Athens. The “war” or struggle between the zabit of Athens, Sari Musellim, and his rival, Hamouzagazade (which ended in 1755) inaugurated a period of financial difficulties for Athens, for, as Benizelos says:

Though the war had come to an end, the fruits of that war emerged, that is the expenses of the war which totaled 300 poungia of aspers. These were paid by the good Athenians, that is only by the Greeks, in the following years (1756-1758)<sup>164</sup>.

This fiscal oppression was intensified when in the year 1759, during the reign of the sultan Mustafa Athens became a malikian, not having been so formerly<sup>165</sup>.

Hereafter the imperial taxes of the city were rented out to individuals on an annual basis, a fact which marked a turn for the worst in the economic conditions of the city, and its inhabitants who increasingly became the objects of ruthless exploitation. The annual purchaser of the malikian had but one year to pay the state treasury and to secure his own profits as well, all at the expense of the local inhabitants. The fiscal weakness of the Ottoman state increased the tensions within its own structure as provincial officials began to compete with one another in the provinces for fiscal rights over the same subjects. The weakness of the political center was such that it was often powerless to reign in the ambitions and rapacity of its own officials who, because of the state’s weakness, were more or less free to exploit and to manoeuvre the ruled. Reference has already been made, above, to the Albanians as a local military, political, and fiscal factor in this process. In the case of Athens, the Athenians, the zabit, and the proestotes, they were often the object of the fiscal rapacity of the pasha of nearby Euripus. Following the removal of the zabit Sari Musellim and the levying of the entire cost of

163. Benizelos, p. 267. It was after this episode that the city was walled.

164. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

165. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

that affair on the Christian Athenians,

the Turks (of Athens) began to rise and to take control of affairs, and the Greeks began to decline in the city's affairs<sup>166</sup>.

Benizelos notes that with this general change in the political and economic conditions in Athens, and with the passing of the older and more experienced proestotes,

there also declined that most excellent administration of the city, which had been the pride and example of the other cities in Greece. It was not altered completely, nor was that patriotic zeal completely effaced, for their successors (as proestotes) salvaged traces of it<sup>167</sup>.

The pashas of Euripus exploited these conditions to benefit from this vital provincial city which was not far distant from Euripus, in the years 1756-1758.

In addition to the municipal contributions which the Greeks paid in the aforementioned years, the leaders, that is the pashas of Euripus, oppressed Athens. They did this by sending, constantly, their representatives on various pretexts to confiscate and to collect money. Indeed during the time ... of the Athenian zabıt Huseyn Effendi, Sopasalan Pasha, the governor of Euripus, effected much evil with the uninterrupted sending of his agents<sup>168</sup>.

The account of Benizelos is replete with examples of this clash of authority between the pashas of Euripus and the zabıt of Athens. In all this the Athenian proestotes and metropolitans are the principal victims, secondary victims also include the zabıts and the local Turkish magnates, and finally the bulk of the oppression is passed on to the entirety of the Greek populace as it was victim of the fiscal exactions of the Euripus pashas. As we saw the "war" between the zabıt Sari Musellim and the Athenian Turkish magnate Hamouzagazade had to be paid by the Christians over a three year period. Finally the cost that the central authority paid for this chaotic condition in the provinces is to be seen first in the appearance of the derebeys and of the great pashas such as Ali Pasha of

166. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

167. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

168. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

Yannina, of Pasvanoglu in Serbia, and of Mehemet Ali in Egypt.

In 1759 the vexations from the Euripus pasha had become so unbearable that the proestotes and metropolitan called a special meeting to deal with the city's condition and the measures to be implemented which would bring a halt to the continuous raids and exactions of the pasha. They took the decision to send a special embassy to Istanbul to present their case and to this purpose sent the metropolitan and certain of the proestotes. This complaint/petition was well received and they were given a *hatti humayun* prohibiting absolutely the presence of the pasha and his agents in the city. Henceforth the pasha of Euripus was not to have any authority in the affairs of Athens<sup>169</sup>.

The fate of the imperial order is perhaps one of the clearest indications of the decentralization of sultanic authority and of the alienation of much of this authority by various factors, both Muslim-administrative and indigenous (Muslim and Christian). Within nine years of the issuance of the *hatti humayun* the new pasha of Euripus, Said Ahmed, issued a *buyurdi* ordering the examination of new churches allegedly constructed in Athens,

according to the custom of the pasha when they wish to collect money and to pillage with such pretexts. But the Athenians, as their land was freed from the authority of the pasha by virtue of the imperial *hatti humayun*, and there was no truth in this allegation (for Athens was full of ancient churches ...) they repulsed the agents of the pasha<sup>170</sup>.

The pasha was enraged and suspecting the Turkish agas, rather than the proestotes, immediately sent a letter to the sultan condemning the local Turks of being trouble-makers who had taken the official food requisitions and sold them to the land of the Franks

in order to profit more, thus violating and completely disregarding the imperial laws which strongly forbid the export of foodstuffs to foreign kingdoms<sup>171</sup>.

The sultan's government in Istanbul was persuaded by the falsehoods

169. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

170. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

171. *Ibid.*, p. 198. The economic implications of this paragraph are important as they indicate that there was a movement for large landowners and speculators to sell agricultural produce on the European market.

of the letter and so issued an order to the pasha of Euripus to summon the Turkish agas to Euripus and there to exile them. The agas in turn appealed to the metropolitan of Athens, Bartholomew, to intervene, which he did effectively. Taking the agas to Euripus with him the metropolitan presented the pasha a healthy bribe of 20 poungia of kurush and an extra 7 poungia of his own, and so he was mollified. In this manner the pasha took the money of the Athenians even though no new churches whatever had been built in the city<sup>172</sup>. As for the hattı humayun which the sultan had issued in 1759, by 1768 it had become a beautifully calligraphic but dead letter.

Only one year later, in 1769, on a trumped up charge, the metropolitan Bartholomew was about to be convicted of converting a Muslim to Christianity. For his final conviction, however, an ilam or juridical decision of the cadi of Athens was necessary. The cadi “kindly” delayed the final decision and summoned the metropolitan’s archdeacon to meet with himself that evening in order to decide the matter. During this nocturnal meeting the cadi informed his Christian guest that in order to halt the issue of the ilam, that would certainly condemn the metropolitan on an extremely grave charge, 1,100 kurush would have to be given. This was, naturally, paid out and the metropolitan was freed of his charges and from the jail. A short while later, by virtue of the intercession of the proestotes and by virtue of yet another and more substantial bribe of 6,000 kurush, the pasha of Euripus terminated the prosecution of the metropolitan<sup>173</sup>.

The semi-dissolution of order in Athens subsequent to the Greek rising in the Peloponnese and the arrival of the Russian fleet presented a golden opportunity to the pasha of Euripus to establish his authority in Athens. The establishment of the Albano-Greek Mitromaras (originally from Menidi in Attica) in Salamis with his bandit lembesses contributed to the local unrest as well to the “reasons” for the pasha’s intervention in 1771. Aside from the raids of the lembesses in Attica, Athens seems to have been in a particularly unfavorable condition. Consequently when the post of zabit was offered to Huseyn Aga he refused it on the grounds that

172. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

173. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

it appeared to him too expensive<sup>174</sup>.

He had obviously to buy the post and as he realized that he had not sufficient funds he did not accept the position. Benizelos observes:

However the matter may have been, we owed Huseyn Aga a great deal, for he had with God, saved us unexpectedly from great damage, and thus we should have given the difference (in the price of the office) which they were demanding in the capital for the office of zabit, instead of removing him<sup>175</sup>.

The expense of the office was such that Huseyn Aga could not manage it without the contributions of the proestotes and the Athenians. They, on the other hand, were suffering financial oppression, in addition to which, many Athenians had fled to Salamis thus complicating the matter of the payment of taxes and bribes.

In 1791 the head of the military garrison of the city was the Muslim Mehmed Pasha of Yannina, who had always treated the Greeks gently. But the financial chaos which had afflicted the proestotes and the Athenians also affected him and his relations with the Greeks:

For the necessary funds for the food and payment of his soldiers had not been sent from the capital, as had been promised. Thus his men rebelled and behaved impudently before him, demanding their salaries with their swords in hand. Thus pressured, he jailed the proestotes until they paid, from the municipal funds, 8,000 kurush for the salaries of his men, as well as 133 kurush daily for the feeding of their animals.

The pasha justified this act to the proestotes as follows:

I shall acknowledge, o elders, that it is not just that the poor people should have to pay these aspers, but neither is it unjust that I be denied this from you, being forced to pay my men, as you yourselves see. The empire is to blame, which, sending me to guard the region, did not provide the necessary expenses<sup>176</sup>.

The state had, in a certain sense, ceased to function effectively at this provincial level, relegating its burdens to a population already crushed by its massive and creaking tax system.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

175. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234. Also, p. 228.

176. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

It was under these circumstances that Huseyn Pasha, of Euripus, took the decision to establish his authority in Athens, in order to riot and destroy<sup>177</sup>.

With this in mind he wrote to Mehmet Pasha in Athens that he would send his agent Chatal Ali Aga to make recommendations, to examine the matter of evil doers and banditry, and to restore order<sup>178</sup>. Mehmet Pasha was outraged at the aggression of the pasha of Euripus and refused his intervention. He sent out his own troops and they turned Chatal Ali Aga from Athens forcing him to return in shame to Euripus. Soon afterward Osman pasha received the complaints of two Jewish merchants who stated that they had been robbed in the streets of Athens. On this pretext he sent his bashaga with troops to Athens only to be told by the Athenians:

We know nothing of this matter<sup>179</sup>.

The bashaga demanded a sum of money and when this was refused he sent his men, who took in hand the two Greek epitropoi of the city. Mehmet Pasha in turn dispatched his troops who then secured the epitropoi and removed the bashaga from the city abruptly and without giving him any money.

The pasha of Euripus proceeded to write a letter to the sultan angrily charging that it was not only the island of Salamis but the very city of Athens itself which had also become a lair of rebels who were rising against the empire, and that the Athenians were Moscovites and that they are in intimate contact with the lembesses of Salamis. He condemned the head of the military garrison in Athens as ineffective, because many of his troops had deserted him and therefore he was no longer in a position to enforce law and order. He concluded his angry letter to the sultan by urging that Chatal Ali be ordered to Athens there to restore order to the disintegrating situation.

The sultan consented to the proposal of the Pasha of Euripus with the result that Chatal Ali Aga was sent to Athens with 500 soldiers. But the malikian sahibi of Athens, Ismail Aga, obtained a second firman invalidating the first, and so Chatal Ali Aga was forced to stay outside the city,

177. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

178. *Ibid.*, p. 235. The historian describes Chatal Ali as "a most evil and blood-thirsty man who sows desolation and catastrophe wherever he goes".

179. *Ibid.*, p. 236.



in Menidi, without entering Athens. The Greeks inside the walls, relates Benizelos, trembled in the expectation of the shedding of their own blood. The executor of the command of the Pasha of Euripus was not stayed by the second firman and so finally entered the city with his 500, whereupon the proestotes were forced to come out and to receive him formally. A few days later he imprisoned all the proestotes, threatening to execute them. With the view of threatening them further he had his men prepare the sharpened stakes, outside the jail where the proestotes could see them for the impalement of the Greek elders. When finally, thus threatened with the refinements of Ottoman justice, the proestotes paid him 40,000 kurush he released them. After hanging a Greek fisherman, as an example to the rest, he departed, leaving 300 of his soldiers in Athens,

ostensibly as guards of the land, but in truth they were just so many thieves who were fed and paid by the Greeks ... such are the law and order which our Ottoman leaders establish<sup>180</sup>.

These 300 "guards" began to carry out their accustomed rapacity and thefts and to conduct themselves insolently even to the local Turks. Eventually the troops came to blows with the local Turks in a kind of shooting war in the streets of Athens. The new Athenian zabıt finally went to the pasha of Euripus, settled the matter by paying him a bribe of 5,000 kurush, and the Pasha removed a further 150 of his troops from Athens, leaving there the remaining 150<sup>181</sup>.

By 1774 with the appearance of a weak zabıt in Athens the local Turks not only began to abuse the Greeks, beating them and stealing their possessions, but more ominously the pasha of Euripus, encountering no resistance from the zabıt, once more interfered in the city's affairs. Daily his agents were to be seen entering Athens on one pretext or another, all of them false, simply to "destroy" and to "steal"<sup>182</sup>.

The arrival of a new and energetic zabıt, Hadji Ali Aga, in 1775, served as a severe restraint on the rapacity of the neighboring pasha. Though the new zabıt was welcomed by the Greeks, as he seemed effi-

180. *Ibid.*, p. 238. Mehmet Pasha had to leave, and the "law and order" of the Athenians were "enforced" illegally and contrary to the orders of the central government, by the Pasha of Euripus.

181. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

182. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

cient and energetic, they did not at first realize that in bring him they had introduced a lion into the sheepfold. A man with inordinate ambition, of considerable political sense, and of boundless greed, he was eventually to destroy the local political, social, economic, and cultural order. One of his first measures was to bring the local Turks to order, thereafter putting an end to the willful aggression and tyranny of the Pasha of Euripus and prohibiting the entry of the pashalis on the grounds that Athens was under the jurisdiction of the sultan's harem. Further, he asserted, Athens had a zabit and a cadi so that whenever there were legal cases and differences they could be tried and decided in Athens before them. He expelled the remaining 150 Albanian soldiers of the pasha, paying them off in cash<sup>183</sup>.

The political tension between the zabit and pasha came to a head in 1791 when the latter, on the pretext of collecting a loan made to the city of Athens by a money lender, went with his army to occupy Athens. Hadji Ali was prepared, closed the city gates and met fusillade with fusillade and cannonade with cannonade. Eventually Hadji Ali managed to obtain an order from Istanbul empowering him to arrest the pasha and to behead him. Though the latter escaped the wrath of the zabit, the Athenians, nevertheless were left to pay the bill of the small "war" of these two Ottoman officials. The Greeks of the city had to deliver to their new zabit 50 poungia of aspers for their new "freedom"<sup>184</sup>.

We see, from these sordid details, that from 1753 to 1791, that is for an entire generation, the decline of Ottoman central authority had set the pashas of Euripus and the zabits of Athens (both appointed by imperial firmans of the central administration in Istanbul) on a path of uninterrupted civil war in the provinces that in the end brought great suffering to the Christian population of Athens merely because Istanbul was not able to carry out its functions as the central administering force. Effective power had passed from Istanbul to the Turkish officials of Euripus and Athens as well as to many of their Albanian retainers.

The core of the narratives of Benizelos and Skouzes was neither the pashas of Euripus nor any other of the distresses which the Athenians suffered, i.e. banditry, Albanians, plague, starvation, the central govern-

183. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-248.

184. *Ibid.*, p. 351.

ment or foreigners. Our authors are primarily concerned with what they call the tyranny of the Athenian zabıt Hadji Ali Aga, also referred to as Hasseki because of his connections with the Ottoman court circle. Though all the above mentioned factors, as well as the decline of Ottoman central authority, brought great misfortune to the Athenians, a far greater evil than all of them combined was the zabıt Hadji Ali who, from his first assumption of the office of zabıt in the city in 1775 and throughout his several assumptions of this office, and until his death by strangulation at the hands of an imperial executioner in 1795 on the island of Cos, remained the greatest of all plagues on Athens. For 20 years he was able to manipulate the local and regional political, economic, and social forces of Attica, Boeotia, and Euboea, as well as the court circles of Istanbul so as to emerge as a real power in regional and imperial political life. His fiscal tyranny almost destroyed Athens and enabled him to accumulate the financial resources to acquire landed wealth and real political power. He was a master of bureaucratic intrigue, knowing how to operate within the corrupt administration and able to play off Christian against Muslim, the proestotes against the “second class” noikokyraioi and the masses.

It seems that Hadji Ali assumed the office of zabıt in Athens for the first time in 1775 and it would appear that either then or in 1776 he had purchased a sham of the malikian of Athens<sup>185</sup>. Seeing the affairs of Athens in a sad state he set his house in order by removing first the pasha of Euripus from the province, including his 150 Albanians, and then by reducing the local Turks to obedience. Soon thereafter he revealed his grimmer side by unleashing a program of rapacious fiscal measures for the citizens, and by quickly overturning the ancient order and customs of local government. He ignored completely the opinions and advice of the proestotes, abusing and threatening them with a vile and unrestrained tongue. He showed himself to be, simultaneously, zabıt and cadi, as well as proestos. The proestotes feared him and so bided their time without revealing to him their deeper thoughts and plans. Soon the zabıt sent two Greek proestotes and two Turks to Istanbul there to renew him in his office for a second year. Once in the capital the two Greek proe-

185. Skouzes, p. 65, says it was bought for him by Esma Sultan, the sister of Sultan Selim.

stotes, in presenting the matter to the officials, immediately and unreservedly condemned Hadji Ali and his administration. Hadji Ali, however, already had his supporters in the bureaucracy of the capital and so they secured a delay of decision until Hadji Ali himself should arrive in Istanbul. Once in the capital, Hadji Ali bribed the judges, had the Greeks thrown in jail and so, seemingly, had won the day. The Greeks were able to muster powerful support in town, were released and Hadji Ali finally lost his effort to obtain the renewal of his position, and a certain Asan Aga became zabit in 1776<sup>186</sup>.

The Athenians had not really rid themselves of Hadji Ali for in 1776 he bought a portion of the malikian of Athens and returned to the city on the excuse of selling the wheat and barley which he had amassed for 1775. In effect he had returned to win local support for his return to office of zabit in the following year. He succeeded in winning many of the Turks to his side, the metropolitan Bartholomew as well, and he began to flatter the proestotes. But the latter remained faithful to the zabit Asan Aga. Hadji Ali then changed his policy toward them by threatening them so that many began to change their minds. After much procrastination the representatives of the proestotes set out for Istanbul to propose the renewal of Asan Aga and thus to oppose Hadji Ali. As one of the proestotes had betrayed these designs to Hadji Ali, the latter assembled a large mass of the common people, on the next day, and along with his Turkish supporters he began to condemn the proestotes as corrupt ravagers of the city who had spent foolishly the money of the poor, and condemning them he did the same with the zabit Asan Aga.

And the plebeian masses, like water which runs wherever someone directs it and wherever it is undesirable, immediately and without thinking about it, agree with the speech of Hadji Ali. Indeed they began to yell and to complain about the proestotes, at the same time calling Hadji Ali their father<sup>187</sup>.

Simultaneously, and ostentatiously, with the consent of the people, Hadji Ali removed the proestotes from their position and replaced them with others<sup>188</sup>. He then wrote to Istanbul that because the present zabit

186. Benizelos, pp. 246-250.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

188. *Ibid.*, p. 258, later Hadji Ali removed the new proestotes and replaced them with the old ones. This shows his insight into their psychology, for he was able to make them

is incompetent the rayas beseech the mercy of the sultan to grant them as zabit their malikian sahibi Hadji Ali. He sent this letter with two proestotes, and with the support of the metropolitan Bartholomew and the local Turk Makfi. He was successful in securing the post for a second term in 1777. Benizelos, who understood clearly the skills of Hadji Ali in manipulating the first and second classes of the local Greek magnates, the ecclesiastical head, and the Athenian masses, finishes this section of his history:

Behold what carelessness and division bring about<sup>189</sup>.

In his second year as zabit Hadji Ali had dropped the veil which had earlier hidden his true intentions, and now he set forth to build his palaces, thus indicating his long term plan to stay in Athens. But already the city was heavily in debt to Turkish money lenders as well as to Greek lenders from other cities. The Turkish loans had become very heavy as further interests had been compounded up to 30%. Realizing that such asphyxiating debt was a serious bar to the realization of his own economic plans (for the money of the Athenians would be siphoned off for others), he wrote to Istanbul to have some of the debt cancelled,

because ... Athens ... can no longer meet it ...<sup>190</sup>.

He requested specifically that the lenders be denied the right to collect their interests and that they be restricted to the repayment, solely, of the original capital. The *muvvela* arrived from Istanbul and freed the city of one-half of the debt. The Turks were to be repaid with 15% interest whereas the Greek lenders were to receive only their original capital, but with no interest whatever. These interests which were removed from the city's debt, however, Hadji Ali managed to collect by other means from the *koinon*, the commonwealth of Athens.

In 1778, now firmly ensconced in Athens and master of its internal politics and economy, Hadji Ali was renewed as zabit for a third time. Having defeated the Albanians the previous year Hadji Ali decided to wall the entire city and to this purpose he amassed all the working hands of Athens and put them to the task. All the guildsmen were required to work and so the job was done in less than three months<sup>191</sup>. When it was

understand who was in control and that they should fear to displace him.

189. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

190. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

191. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

finished Hadji Ali presented a bill of 45,000 kurush to the Athenians and the city had to pay it:

Alas the walls became a prison for the Athenians whereas they benefitted the tyrant<sup>192</sup>.

To contemporaries Hadji Ali was of such a nature that neither could he satiate himself nor could he lie still. Because of his various building projects the people were incessantly vexed by *angareies* (corvées) like those of Pharaohs:

The farmers and laborers were not free to work their own land or that of others for pay, except sometimes and secretly when they would go over the walls of the city at night<sup>193</sup>.

The city's contributions became heavier because of his rapacity and greed and because of the heavy expenditures which he incurred, nor was he required to give any responsible accounting. He created monopolies by buying all the revenue and produce ahead of time and at the prices which he himself set. No one had the right to sell his produce wherever and for howsoever much as he might wish. The *proestotes*, either through fear or personal interest, did not carry out their obligations as they did not oppose these economic policies of the *zabit*. The people groaned and often, when they had the opportunity, they brought charges against him when in the fall he set out for Istanbul<sup>194</sup>. One of the local Turkish notables, Mustafa Aga Hamouzagazade, with some other Turks and the Greeks of the "second class", began to attack Hadji Ali and the *proestotes* by condemning them to the pasha of Euripus, who immediately summoned the *proestotes* to appear before him. The latter fled to Salamis, thus biding their time safe from further mischief at the hands of the pasha<sup>195</sup>.

The affair became complex, in 1779, when the Kapudan Pasha exploited the Athenians during the course of this intrigue to take money from them. So soon as Hadji Ali became aware of the plot to remove him and that letters accusing him of malfeasance had been sent to Istanbul he notified his agents in the central administration to turn over the letters to him. Hadji Ali then set out to defame the Athenians in

192. Skouzes, p. 69.

193. Benizelos, p. 269.

194. *Ibid.*

195. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

court circles and on returning to Athens he exiled Hamouzagazade and other Turks to Zeitounion. Further, the officials in Istanbul, whom Hadji Ali had previously bribed, sent some 70 Athenians who had come to Istanbul to place charges against him. All were placed in chains and jailed in Athens. He wished to execute the two ring leaders but the proestotes firmly protested, asserting that punishment by execution was not customary in Athens. But the last card in this complex intrigue had not yet been played. It was the metropolitan Bartholomew who, despite the written entreaties of Hadji Ali and the proestotes that the affair had ended and that he should return, put no faith in the words of the zabiti and instead decided to go to Istanbul. For, Benizelos adds, the metropolitan rejoiced in intrigues and upheavals. In the capital he joined the Athenians who were still there and together they brought new charges against Hadji Ali. Being experienced in these matters, and having important connections in the capital, Bartholomew successfully bribed the crucial officials and won the case against his enemy. It was in this manner that Hadji Ali was summoned to Istanbul there to settle his affairs with the Athenians. After a detailed hearing in the appropriate court the magistrate ordered that a *hatti humayun* be drawn up forbidding Hadji Ali henceforth ever to return to Athens<sup>196</sup>.

His third term as zabiti of Athens had been considerably more complex than the previous two terms as his ambitions and greed had grown, his ability to manipulate the proestotes had become masterful, but, he was not able to cope with the metropolitan and other Greek and Turkish notables. Further his control of the bureaucracy in Istanbul was far from complete, as there was room for local Greek interests to play a countermanding role. Nevertheless the political and economic factors were beginning, increasingly, to separate out the “classes” of the Athenian Greeks who more and more tended to side with, or against, the zabiti and correspondingly to become more divided among themselves.

It was not until 1783 that Hadji Ali, through the efforts of his ally in Athens, Makfi, along with others, could return to Athens as zabiti for a fourth term. It seems that his yoke on the Athenians became far more burdensome than before,

for in addition to his building of houses and to the daily

196. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

angareies (corvées) he began now to buy property, a practice which was worse and more destructive than all the others .... He expanded, with his innate greed, into the purchase of private property, thus buying chiftliks, orchards, olive trees, all against the will of the owners, both Turks and Greeks. For all these he paid whatever price he wanted, and to some he gave nothing whatever<sup>197</sup>.

He wished also to create his own olive grove and so he “confiscated” the best fields near the city at a very low price and to many he gave no money at all for their fields. He removed from the old olive groves all those trees that he desired and that could be replanted in his new fields-estate just outside the city. Simultaneously he got intensely involved with the building of his mansions both inside Athens but also in Kephisia and Arakle. Because of all this activity the intensification of angareies immobilized the farmers and craftsmen so that they could not tend to their own economic affairs, a condition that we have already seen in his previous terms of office as zabıt. The public debt of the city of Athens had, in the meanwhile, increased to 80,000 kurush.

By 1784 many Athenians had fled the city and sought refuge in Thebes, Levadia, and Euripus. But by 1785 he was forced to go into hiding in Istanbul, in the palace of Esma Sultana where he stayed for two years. In 1788 he finally emerged from his comfortable sanctuary and subsequent to his tortuous intrigue, in both Istanbul and Athens, he succeeded in returning to Athens as zabıt for a fifth term in 1789. On this, his fifth tenure, Benizelos writes:

He did not return, as in the past, with some good mixed in with his evils, but only with bare evil. Thus the corruption and tyranny which he enforced on the Athenians from this point and until his death surpassed incomparably those of the previous twelve years<sup>198</sup>.

He began his fifth term with tortures, beatings, executions, and large scale financial extortions of both individuals and families, on the one hand, and of the city on the other. From a number of those jailed he took 40 pounigia of aspers, ostensibly for the debt owed the Kapudan Pasha.

197. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

198. *Ibid.*, p. 331.



In addition he burdened the koinon with 700 poungia of aspers as debt by virtue of promissory notes written out in strange names for which not even one obol had ever been lent, nor did the Athenians know the names in which these notes were written. Similarly in the villages Hadji Ali added crushing sums of money to the small amounts they had formerly owed him. Though the Athenians had bought the tax of the city (*mukataa*), Hadji Ali collected the tax for himself without paying anything to the authorities, so that the koinon had to pay the tax a second time.

He enforced, as well, the *angareies* making them heavier and more burdensome than previously. All were required to perform this forced labor: villagers, craftsmen, merchants, and the *pazaritai* (people of the bazaar)<sup>199</sup>. On top of this heavy oppression the city was decimated by the plague in 1789. In the following year, 1790, Hadji Ali tightened the noose around the necks of the Athenians, for the new sums of money that he now demanded were far beyond the fiscal means of the inhabitants. As they were unable to pay, the *zabit* began to jail the “debtors” for two to three months, thus forcing them to sell their properties to pay the demanded money. Soon the jails became so crowded that there was standing room only, and those who were too poor to pay, stayed from six to twelve months. Some died from the beatings and others from the sheer hardship. The condition of the jailed widows and of married women whose husbands had fled the city, was worse. They were roughly dragged from their houses, some were placed in irons for a long time, and every eight to ten days whippings were cruelly administered to these women after being tied to a column and their buttocks’ bared. They were jailed for five to six months, and of course a number of them died.

The *zabit* took all the olive oil that was pressed in the oil presses, leaving none at all for the consumption of the Athenians. Further he demanded of them more than they had actually produced so that once they had surrendered their produce they naturally had no more to give. For this too they were sent to prison. On the other hand those who were able to come up with the surplus now demanded were indeed released from prison but were soon faced by the inexorable demands of the *zabit* that they come up with the payment of produce that their relatives and

199. *Ibid.*, pp. 331-332.

neighbors had not been able to muster and to pay.

Both the possessions and the bodies of the Athenians were subjected entirely to the tyranny of Hadji Ali<sup>200</sup>.

Though he was exiled from Athens in 1792, he managed to establish himself in Istanbul as a famous and respectable potentate, and from there he directed his ongoing economic “enterprise” of the systematic exploitation of Athens through the new zabıt that had replaced him. In that year he enforced new financial obligations and *corvées*. When in 1793 his underling Ibrahim was renewed in the zabıtlık of Athens, Hadji Ali became yet more powerful and esteemed in Istanbul,

among these very members of the court among whom he had apportioned lavish gifts. In Athens his mere name spread terror to all, and all his commands had to be carried out eagerly and immediately<sup>201</sup>.

By this time the substantial oppression of Hadji Ali had caused many Athenians to flee the city which, in any case, had become a cage in the hands of a sadistic jailer. As he became wealthier and more powerful Hadji Ali in Istanbul decided to conspire, through his bribery, to remove the *bostandjibashi* (in charge of the sultan’s bodyguard) and to take over that position for himself. He almost succeeded but at the last moment the *bostandjibashi* acted in time, condemned Hadji Ali to the sultan and exiled him to Chios. Soon after his arrival in Chios his friends at court managed to secure his pardon and Hadji Ali returned to Istanbul via his beloved Athens, where he stayed for a brief visit. In Athens he had found the zabıt Ibrahim Effendi not fully subservient to his demands. Consequently in 1794 he had the zabıt removed and replaced him in Athens with Mulla Kadiri who was slavishly subservient to his patron, and to his local friend Melek Effendi he entrusted the supervision of his vast Athenian economic enterprise<sup>202</sup>.

Melek Effendi, who had become powerful and affluent by 1794, had begun as a very humble and poor Athenian Turk who some twenty years earlier had owned a small coffee house in which he barely earned his daily bread serving coffee and lighting the pipes of both Greeks and Turks. He

200. *Ibid.*, pp. 342-344.

201. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

202. *Ibid.*

began his rise to prominence during the first Russo-Turkish war by availing himself of the internal strife of the Greeks and above all through the tyranny of Hadji Ali. All these events culminated in the impoverishment of the Greeks and to the enrichment of the Turks. His sudden rise to great wealth and power led him, as in the case of many poor men who become wealthy, to conduct himself arrogantly, in this case to his fellow Muslims. It was through him that the commands of Hadji Ali were effected, and none dared disobey or even to show displeasure in obeying. Melek Effendi oversaw the entire, vast system of *corvées* which produced the buildings of Hadji Ali's desire. He actually stayed in the palace of the former *zabit* and there received the *proestotes*.

Though the absence of Hadji Ali himself from Athens somewhat alleviated the burdens on the Athenians, his restlessness was spurred on by his insatiety and soon he was scheming as to how to increase his exactions:

Because in the midst of such wealth as he had acquired from the Athenians the wretched man was insatiable and could not calm down<sup>203</sup>.

Having summoned, secretly, one of the Athenian *proestotes* he ordered him to carry out whatever Melek Effendi should order, and then he sent him back to Athens. In the meantime Hadji Ali wrote to Melek Effendi to collect from the abbot of the monastery of Penteli 2,500 *xists* of olive oil, and from Dionysios Petrakes the abbot of Asomatoi, 1,500. The sums were so outrageously exorbitant that the latter could not pay and so abbot Petrakis decided to go to Istanbul to try to lessen the payment by pleading with Hadji Ali.

On the return from Istanbul of the Athenian *proestos* previously summoned by Hadji Ali, Melek Effendi called a meeting of the body of the *proestotes* and read to them the secret plan of Hadji Ali to relieve the city of its great debt:

The aga asks that two or three of you go to the capital to meet with him. Further, he wants you to draw up a promissory note signed by the entire community, without writing in anything else, only your signature (in Turkish this is called *beyazan* and in Italian *bianca carta*), because he has the

203. *Ibid.*, pp. 355-356.

intention of paying the entire debt<sup>204</sup>.

In this demand the proestotes foresaw the final and complete destruction of Athens, since it was understood that Hadji Ali would fill in the actual figures of the sum of money on the promissory note which the Athenian municipality would be legally forced to pay to Hadji Ali. The proestotes were terrified of both Melek Effendi and Hadji Ali and so did not dare refuse to prepare this “carte blanche”, or promissory note. Benizelos explains that they feared,

because the truth is that these men were in danger of losing their heads<sup>205</sup>.

The proestotes, having prepared the note and having procured the many signatures, chose the men that were to take the promissory note to Istanbul, as well as a letter for the patriarch. So soon as they arrived in Istanbul they went immediately to the konak of Hadji Ali where they stayed, believing that they were hiding so that the lenders would not have them jailed. In effect this was a fiction which Hadji Ali used to exploit and to mislead them more easily. Then Hadji Ali entered and wrote in on the blank, signed promissory note enormous loans which the Athenians had never ever seen or received, raising the sum to 397 pougia of aspers<sup>206</sup>. The promissory note was written up by one of the secretaries of the patriarchate in the names of two strangers. Hadji Ali then sent this on to the patriarch to have the latter confirm and attest the document. Instantly upon reading the document the patriarch suggested that the note was fraudulent and in examining the Greeks he began to blame them for planning to destroy their own fatherland. But after many entreaties from them he finally confirmed the document's validity.

What was the purpose of this promissory note and why has Benizelos related the circumstances under which it was drawn up in such detail? It is the key to the understanding of the entirety of Hadji Ali's career as the zabit of Athens, as well as to the understanding of the disastrous plight of the sultan's imperial authority and of the Athenians' despair and destruction:

It is apparent that the greed of Hadji Ali had no other

204. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

205. *Ibid.*

206. *Ibid.*, p. 491, which at the rate of 500 aspers per poungi is equal to about 98,500 aspers.

purpose than that through this promissory note to take possession of all of Athens and to make of her his own *chiftlik*, just as the Beyzades had done with Zeitounion<sup>207</sup>.

By this legal document, given as a kind of blank check for the holder to fill in the amount of money owed and payable, Hadji Ali planned to take possession of all property and cash that he had not already alienated through the devices of his twenty years of violent exploitation. His rapacity was such that it is estimated that 40% of Athenians had fled the city in order to escape his tyranny. Skouzes records that during Hadji Ali's oppressive rule:

Two-fifth of the Athenians fled as they no longer had the means to pay the taxes, for he had denuded them of money, all diamonds, gold, copper and clothing. And they sold their lands to the tyrant himself and to the Ottomans. For the latter did not have to pay exactions nor did they suffer tyrannies, angareies (corvées) and other things which the Christians suffer. They fled secretly, in entire families, to Anatolia, to the isles of the Aegean Sea, to the Peloponnese, Salamis, Megara, Thebes, Levadia, Chalcis, and other places<sup>208</sup>.

He writes graphically of his own escape, with his father, of scaling the walls at night and going into Boeotia and Euboea where they found refugees all along the road<sup>209</sup>.

When the flight of the Athenians from their city commenced, they would disappear a few at a time, from their mahalle or enoria, and their absence would not be noticed until Sunday during the church services. But the tax and other arbitrary levies which they had formerly paid to Hadji Ali would have to be assumed by their relatives or by their neighbors in the mahalle. This meant that people who planned to run away had to do it secretly lest their neighbors, fearful of shouldering further arbitrary contributions, report them. Thus escape over the city walls seems to have become a common occurrence, even though Hadji Ali had placed guards on the walls to apprehend the fugitives<sup>210</sup>.

After Hadji Ali had built these walls around Athens, the Athenian

207. *Ibid.*, p. 361.

208. Skouzes, p. 110.

209. *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 92.

210. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

farmers and guildsmen secretly fled the city and

more than 200 fled to Constantinople, the farmers bringing with them the iron parts of their plows. In the process of petitioning they went to the Kapudan Pasha of the grand vizier in the sultan's divan, and they threw down their ploughshares in a row, shouting that the sultan should give them some other land they might go and settle there<sup>211</sup>.

Not only had he denuded Athens of a vast proportion of its Athenians, but he had simply confiscated most of their wealth and private property.

When later a reckoning was made of all these illegal confiscations,

with all that he had confiscated, in cash and similarly in all their produce and all the remainder of their property of which he had denuded them, they reckoned it to be more than 12,000 pougia (of aspers), that is 6,000,000 kurush 3,000,000 talara, or 18,000,000 drachmas, without reckoning the typical *corvées* and other times<sup>212</sup>.

It is obvious that Hadji Ali had accumulated enormous wealth, and had almost converted Athens into autonomous regional estates of vast proportions. He had, as Benizelos explains, transformed Athens into *his own chiftlik*, and had utilized his official position to accumulate wealth which he in turn invested in land and in the political manipulation which formed the bases of his economic growth. This process worked to the disadvantage of the local Greeks who saw their economy, social and local political structures destroyed. The process and the phenomenon were similar to the evolution of social, economic and political forces that saw the emergence of vast semi-private estates "kingdoms", through the exploitation of the peasantry and urban populations (mostly Christians in the Balkans, and Muslims in Asia Minor) elsewhere. This wealth enabled Hadji Ali, momentarily, to aspire to power in Istanbul itself. In the end he did not have a sufficient power base to maintain such a ruthless system of oppression, and finally the governmental center and the province combined to destroy him. He was strangled and beheaded in Cos, and his head was brought to Istanbul where it was displayed for three days before the Babi Humayun, for the customary admonition and

211. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

212. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

edification of the passers-by.

His temporary success in transforming the *koinon* or “common-wealth” of Athens from an independent municipal entity with effective political, social and economic organization and structure into his personal chiftlik is, further, to be understood against the background of local, regional and international forces and patterns of commerce. Prior to the rise of Hadji Ali, production and consumption were ultimately embraced within economic forces at all three levels. Though our chroniclers do not go into great detail as to this aspect of Athenian life nevertheless they report on certain affairs which indicate clearly that local capital accumulation was an important fact in Athenian society.

In 1770, the local Athenian consul of France, Gasparis, found himself in a very favorable position to exploit certain economic conditions which were created by the appearance of the Russian fleet. The Hydriote and other merchants spread the rumor in Athens that with the approaching political turbulence it would be advantageous for the Athenians to dispose of their bumper olive crop, to sell their olive oil quickly so as to “liquify” their assets thus enabling them to transport their wealth more easily elsewhere. Accordingly the Athenians sold their olive oil cheaply at 28, 30 and 35 paras per xist, begging the Greek and Turkish merchants to buy their produce. Gasparis took advantage of the cheap prices, borrowed from the Athenian money lenders (τοκισταί) more than 20,000 kurush, and proceeded to buy large quantities of Athenian oil at these cheap prices. He sold all his merchandise in the markets of Marseilles at 3 kurush per xist (there were about 40 paras per kurush) or at more than three or four times the cost of the oil. With this handsome profit he bought “French” goods, i.e. cloth, coffee, sugar (the latter two from the New World) etc ..., bringing them back to Athens, where there was scarcity of these commodities, and sold them for even more profit. He paid off his previous debts and loans and produced a profit of 50,000 liras. In such a manner local merchants were able to exploit the local and international markets to accumulate substantial wealth<sup>213</sup>.

Benizelos notes the appearance of a certain Alexander Palikoutzes Sklavounos in Athens where he married the daughter of one of the

213. Benizelos, p. 222. He showed himself very generous to the victims of the various plagues in Athens, providing food, care, and shelter for them, Benizelos, p. 352.

proestotes (Nicholas Logothetis) and settled there. Sklavounos was a ship captain who carried out maritime commerce under the Venetian flag. He thus sailed and traded, returning always to Athens to visit with his growing family. But in 1765 he moved his family to Venice and by 1770 removed the Venetian flag from his vessel and joined the fleet of the Russian admiral Alexis Orloff. He then sailed into Porto Draco (Piraeus) and as part of the Russian fleet and pirate he captured a Turkish ship from Thessaloniki that was loaded with rice.

Twenty years later yet another Sklavounos, from outside Athens, appeared as the holder of a promissory note obliging the city of Athens to pay him a large sum of money. He had inherited the note from his brother, the ship captain Christophoros Sklavounos, who had lent money to the koinon of Athens against the payment of 20,000 xist of olive oil. The captain having died in Istanbul, the heir now demanded the payment of the 20,000 xists of oil or its equivalent in cash, 80 pountia of aspers<sup>214</sup>. Here we witness the complex of maritime trade and money lenders against agricultural produce. Local and “foreign” money lenders were investing and speculating in local Athenian produce for the local, regional and international markets<sup>215</sup>. Further, the zabiti and malikian sahibi, Hadji Ali, returned after his first tenure of the office 1776 to collect a portion of the Attic wheat and barley production as his right, which he must have then placed on local, regional or international markets, or in some combination thereof<sup>216</sup>.

Perhaps more spectacular is the life story of Panayis Skouzes himself. His father had lost his sermaye (capital) as a result of the rapacious economic measures of Hadji Ali and had been jailed, as was his son also. Panayis Skouzes was “apprenticed” to a monk from Mt. Sinai resident in a metochion in Euboea, a monk who became economically very active during the onset of the devastating plague of 1791. He was much in demand for the performance of the agiasmos (religious blessings with holy water) in the villages, monasteries and pastoral groups of Euboea and Boeotia where the plague was killing large numbers. The monk needed assistance so he took Panayis Skouzes and another boy into his

214. *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 456.

215. See examples of these money-lenders in Benizelos, pp. 222, 259.

216. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.



service for the chanting of the “Kyrie Eleison”, and as Panayis had had two years of his schooling it was something he could manage. The monk had the absolute minimum of possessions for his task: a horse, on which he rode, and a mule with two casks or large bags in which to carry away the offerings from the thankful faithful who would give various items for the agiasmos. Skouzes relates that every evening, upon their return to the metochion, the two bags would be full of the day’s offerings: olive oil, barley, wheat, figs, sausages. In the beginning the Sinaite charged in addition one kurush for each agiasmos, but upon realizing the extent of the demand for this service he soon raised the fee to 60 paras.

It was not long before the transhumant Vlachs of the area began to demand the services of the monk in their sheep-folds. At this point the Sinaite drew up a defter or codex so that when he was paid for his service he would write down the name of the Vlachs and then would inform them that he would send the names to Mount Sinai where the monks would commemorate the Vlachs in their prayers. Further, as the demands for his services were great and constant, this was a more convenient form of payment inasmuch as he would hurry to make the rounds and could put off collections until that time when the plague would subside. On this codex then the Vlachs would inscribe, each by the side of his name, the number of animals that he would contribute. Each of these sheep-folds had between 2,000 and 3,000 animals, and so the Vlachs began to inscribe as many as 10 heads of animals, two or three of cheese, and one of butter, each by his own name. After visiting and performing the agiasmos at a number of sheep-folds Skouzes notes that they had already accumulated some 350 animals.

Thereafter the monk and the two boys were summoned to the monastery of St. Nicholas in the village of Vasilaion, for the villagers had been infected by the plague and the survivors had abandoned both the monastery and the village. On opening the gates of the deserted monastery the Sinaite told the two boys, first thing to strip off all the silver crowns and hands (offerings), two candle sticks and to place them in the two sacks on the mule, and only then did he begin his agiasmos. The monks of the monastery pledged, in the monk’s codex, fifteen goats.

As the plague was also devastating Levadia the monk was summoned there for his holy services. Taking one of the boys only, he left Skouzes to go to collect the animals that had been promised and inscribed on the

codex. The latter learned not only to herd the animals, but also to harvest grain.

By June the metochion in Levadia informed the Sinaite that it was harvest time and that he should hasten to Euboea there to perform the agiasmos because of the plague. So the Sinaite, horse, mule and two boys proceeded to the fields of Levadia where with the performance of each agiasmos they collected four bundles of grain, loading them on the mule. Two days later they had to buy a second mule because of the quantity of the harvests and their collection.

Ultimately we accumulated a stack (of grain) greater than the stacks of those who had sown the grain<sup>217</sup>.

In the month of August a Hydriote ship came and they sold to the Hydriot merchants all the accumulations of butter, cheese, as well as all the male goats from among the animals they had collected during the plague.

We see from this picturesque description that the monk, and/or his monastery, was also involved in the accumulation of capital first by levying produce on farmers, monasteries, villagers and pastoralists, and then ultimately selling it within the regional commercial network wherein the Hydriote captains and merchants were the middle men. It was also, understandably, an excellent “business” schooling for the lad Skouzes.

After the death of his father in 1794 Skouzes made his way to Smyrna where he eventually boarded ship as a sailor. By the turn of the century he was captain on a ship that made the run Smyrna-Syros-Trieste. In 1803-1804 he was captain of a Greek ship that loaded wine and made the trip from Barcelona to Montevideo, Uruguay. During the blockade of the Napoleon wars he used to load grain in Odessa, run the British blockade and sell his cargo in Spain<sup>218</sup>.

We return to Hadji Ali and the conversion of Athens and Attica into his chiftlik or private possession, and the reduction of the inhabitants to a type of serfdom, held captives by the city’s new walls and by its notorious jails. With his 12,000 olive trees, fields and shops he established monopolies through the exploitation of which he could invest in the larger regional and international markets. It was a period when

217. Skouzes, p. 97.

218. See the introduction to the text of Skouzes by Papadopoulos, p. 28.

many other Turks, who still owned lands in Attica, began to profit from this condition and which caused them to take on a life of great luxury. Their new found taste for the luxuries that were imported in this international commerce eventually forced them to mortgage and to lose their lands by the time of the Greek Revolution.

Benizelos' history of Athens is a historical work which has many of the characteristics of the Greek Enlightenment, and which characteristics came to the Greek world along with other features from the European Enlightenment. Unlike older traditional chronicles of the post-Byzantine Greek world, which were Christian and salvational in scope and structure, Benizelos' work is completely secular rather than religious. It is, essentially, concerned with the history of his own contemporary Athenian society. A second feature, also secular and the product of the Enlightenment, is his concern with the history, institutions and ethical features of the ancient Athenians. He is not at all concerned with the history of salvation and neither does he mention the coming of Christ. Further, he has almost nothing to say about Byzantium and Byzantine Athens. His "archaeologia" of the fatherland, Athens, and in great detail, linked the history of eighteenth century Athens with that of its ancient ancestors, the glorious Athens of antiquity. Specifically the origins of the contemporary Athenians and of their history go back to the times of Cecrops and Pericles<sup>219</sup>.

Though Benizelos has given us no detailed account of what subjects he was taught in the Ἑλληνικά Σχολεῖα of Athens and what subjects, subsequently, he himself taught, he does mention the curriculum as consisting of ἑλληνικά μαθήματα, Hellenic subjects. From other sources we know that these fitted in with the old, traditional enkykleios paideia of late antiquity and the Byzantine era, whose contents were taught in Italy as well as at the Greek schools of Yannina<sup>220</sup>. Benizelos had a

219. For these Enlightenment features in the intellectual world of the diasporic, Ottoman, and Venetian Greeks one should consult the excellent dissertation of P. Kitromilides, *Tradition, Enlightenment, and Revolution. Ideological Change in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Greece*, Harvard University, Cambridge 1978, pp. 79-101 in chapter two, entitled "From Providential Chronicle to the History of Hellenism, The Historization of Neohellenic Consciousness". There is an excellent summary by C. Dimaras, in *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους*, Athens 1975, volume XI, pp. 306-359.

220. On εγκύκλιος παιδεία in antiquity, H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, New York 1964, pp. 243-244. In Byzantium: P. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*.

considerable knowledge of the political history and institutions of ancient Athens, displayed this knowledge in the first part of his work, and must have also taught it to his students during the long period of his teaching activity. He knew, for instance the demographic figures for ancient Athens in the time of its governor Demetrios of Phaleron, and records also the five part oath which the Athenian ephebes swore on entering that body<sup>221</sup>. Though he claims the ancient Athenians as his ancestors, Benizelos says nothing of the history of salvation, and all but omits the history of Byzantine and Latin Athens. In addition he quotes others, and argues, to the effect that though Athens declined because of luxury, wasteful spending, and internal strife, nevertheless “the living are to be forgiven because of the dead”. Finally there are still traces of continuity in contemporary Athens, with their glamorous past. That is the reason, he writes, that the later visitors to the city honor Athens.

The study of classical Greece, in this case ancient Athens, served a second function in the historiographical “theory” of the Enlightenment, that of moral edification. One studied the classical past in order to learn from its rich treasure of correct and ethical political and military behavior. This too is a marked feature in the history of Benizelos. In both his ancient and modern Athens he is very much aware of class/social distinctions among the Athenians: kings, aristocrats, artisans, merchants, craftsmen, farmers and what he calls the δῆμος or λαός. He praises them all when they exhibit social, economic and political harmony, and criticizes them sharply when they indulge in στάσεις, ταραχαί, as well as in διχόνοια and lack of unity. Ειρήνη-peace, σέβας and εὐλάβεια are essential virtues; the ultimate polity is the fatherland, that is the κοινόν or commonwealth of Athens, and the sum total of all such political virtues is what he calls πατριωτισμός, “patriotismos” the love of the fatherland. In this case πατριωτισμός means love of the city of Athens, just as in Aristotle’s *Politics* the πόλις or city is the ultimate political institution in which all lesser associations culminate. The city has εὐκλεία or φήμη,

*The First Phase*, Canberra 1986, pp. 113-116, 148, 150, 305; C. Constantinides, *Higher Education in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century (1204-ca 1310)*, Nicosia 1982. For the Ottoman period: Philadelphus, *op.cit.*, volume II, pp. 184, 252. For a detailed bibliography, N. Svoronos, *Επισκόπηση της νεοελληνικής ιστορίας*, Athens 1976, pp. 246-254. The bibliography has been provided to the text by S. Asdrachas.

221. On the oath, Benizelos, p. 92.

fame, and its inhabitants seek ἐλευθερία, freedom. This complex of forms, qualities and values conform with much of the secular political and social theory of the Enlightenment, but they have to be seen in the light of the political and social realities of the Ottoman Athens. All the termini technici come from richly political philosophers, and Benizelos applies them to both spoken and unspoken, or rather to set examples of, ancient Athenian civic virtue for his own Athenian contemporaries.

This brings us to a marked characteristic of Enlightenment historiography, that is the use of the classical past for the moral edification of the modern citizen. Benizelos picks many examples from the achievements of the ancient Athenians either to castigate various social groups in eighteenth century Athens, or else to exhort them to imitate the civic virtues of their ancestors. In the very proeimum of his history Benizelos tells his readers that he will compare the history of contemporary Athens with its “archaeologia” (ancient history), so as to provide present day Athenians with examples of what history might bring about<sup>222</sup>. The example of the seventeenth and last mythical king of Athens, Codrus, becomes, in the hands of Benizelos, the opportunity to present eighteenth century Athenian leaders with the case of a king who chose death in battle in order to save the independence of Athens:

At war with the Dorians, he learned from the oracle that army would prevail whose monarch would be slain in the war. Taking off, then, the royal emblem and having joined the front ranks of the army, he made of his compatriots the victors through his own blood. Oh! What an example for the proe-stotes of this day and age, both the secular and religious proe-stotes, who not only do not offer their life, but they do not even abandon temporary gain for their subjects<sup>223</sup>.

Benizelos develops his theory of the necessary behavior of social classes or groups as essential to πατριωτισμός by pointing to the

222. Benizelos, p. 77. For a richly “edificatory” application of ancient history to the Greek Present, see the political treatise of the Phanariote Athanasios Christopoulos, edited by L. Vranouses, “Πολιτικά Σοφίσματα. Ανέκδοτον έργον του Αθανασίου Χριστοπούλου”, in *Επετηρίς του Μεσαιωνικού Αρχείου* X (1960) 17-162.

223. Benizelos, pp. 79-80. This is the first of a series of sharp criticisms and charges at the expense both of the well-to-do and of the masses, for their lack of civic virtue, that is of πατριωτισμός.

Athenian law giver Solon:

At that time there were many rebellions and disturbances and also tyrannies of the archons and of the rich against the poor.

He attempted to alleviate the social violence and the cruelty of the laws of Draco:

For this wise law giver (Solon) understood well the innate proclivity of his compatriots toward ἐλευθερία (freedom) of which he did not judge it advantageous to deprive them completely ... At the same time he acknowledged the lawlessness and aggression of the demos, which he reckoned to curb and to reign in with this constitution. Thus ... one can conclude that the government of Athens was united in both aristocracy and democracy<sup>224</sup>.

He also sees inimitable civic virtue, that is “patriotismos”, in the activity of the Athenian statesman Aristides and Themistocles:

There excelled in these affairs Miltiades, Aristides, and Themistocles. The latter two though of an entirely different character and because of this were always opposed to one another, nevertheless when it came to the common affairs of the fatherland, they both fought and struggled, in unison and with all good zeal and “patriotismos”. As for his Aristides’ disregard for money and his voluntary poverty he was nevertheless, and by common vote of the fatherland, appointed treasurer of the city’s money. He lived, throughout his life, a poor man, and he died poor. What rare virtues these are today among us Christians!<sup>225</sup>

The civic virtue which here concerns Benizelos has to do with civic fiscal matters, evidently a domain in which the proestotes of the eighteenth century were not always circumspect. He comments on this contemporary φιλαργυρία, greed, by presenting his reader the example of the civic virtue of Aristides vis-à-vis the financial affairs of ancient Athens.

For Benizelos civic virtue and its condition in Athens were not

224. Benizelos, pp. 80-82. Later he expresses a similar desire and hope for a kind of harmonious equilibrium between the proestotes and noikokyratoi on the one hand, and of the urban masses on the other.

225. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

unrelated to education in the city's Hellenic schools. He laments what he considers to have been the neglected state of education in seventeenth century Athens and the economic threat to the civic virtue and glory of modern Athens. He underlines this intimate relation between ἑλληνική παιδεία, Hellenic education, and πατριωτισμός, civic patriotism in his praise of Pericles. Having criticized him for the introduction of wasteful panegyreis and theatrical shows, he nevertheless concludes:

Athens in those times was at its height, both in the affairs of war and education<sup>226</sup>.

The civic virtues of πατριωτισμός were, for Benizelos, present in the ancient polity even in those years after the disastrous defeat of the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War, especially in the case of Thrasyboulos who, after the removal of the Thirty Tyrants, restored the Athenian democracy:

The complaints of the Athenians against the comrades and affiliates of the tyrants were many and justified. But Thrasyboulos, without giving any heed to the complaints, first gathered the compatriot refugees, and then proclaimed that famous amnesty and at once restored to the fatherland freedom and peace. Oh! what a most beautiful example!<sup>227</sup>

Here our historian praises political virtues exemplified by an Athenian over two millenia earlier, as a model to be imitated in the badly factionalized society of his own day.

Demetrios of Phaleron, who governed the Athenians under the Macedonian aegis (c. 318-307 B.C.), restored peace and prosperity to the turbulent lives of the Athenians, and out of gratitude the latter erected 360 statues of him in the city:

All the historians testify, in harmony, that never had Athens rejoiced in better and more felicitous administration ... He is worthy, indeed, of being set as an example to those ecclesiastical proestotes of our own times<sup>228</sup>.

These classical allusions to ancient Athenian statesmen and their civic virtues were no doubt literary and the product of an education in

226. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

227. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

228. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

the Hellenic schools of late Turkish Athens. Yet some of this ancient history had by this time spread to Athenians more generally. In a speech that Benizelos delivered following the liturgy in an Athenian church and on receipt of the news of the beheading of Hadji Ali, the public teacher once more made a pointed classical allusion to the Christian congregation:

The teacher, as was the custom, praised the compatriots and athletes of freedom, and then moved on to that part of his discourse on love and harmony demonstrating that it was the antithesis of these virtues which had brought the fatherland to such a condition. Finally, he terrified them with that which, of old, their compatriot Demosthenes teasingly but truthfully addressed to the boule which body was rejoicing on the hearing of the illness and death of Philip: "Why do you rejoice ... o men of Athens, because Philip is ill or that he died? Now if in the future you do not take care, another Philip will arise over you". And continuing this example, the speaker added, that just as Philip grew and became great, not so much from his own power as from the carelessness of the Athenians, thus also now the disorder and dissension of the same citizens made of Hadji Ali, from something poor and insignificant, something great<sup>229</sup>.

The allusion to Demosthenes and Philip must have been familiar to many in the audience and thus its paradeigmatic application to Hadji Ali and current Athenian society was both comprehensible and realistic. Even in the account which the relatively uneducated Skouzes gives of the years of Hadji Ali, wherein classical allusions are largely absent, the short text betrays a general familiarity of some basic facts of ancient Greek history. In the account of the attack of the Albanian chieftain Yiaholiouri, with his Albanians, on Athens, Hadji Ali had been content to await their attack within the city of Athens (which at that time was not yet walled). Skouzes relates:

The Athenians took counsel and proposed to Hadji Ali that plan, to march out, on which they had previously decided, and so they attacked the enemies outside the city. It was this

<sup>229</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 416-417.



also that the ancient Athenians had done to the barbarian who in order to capture Athens had come to Marathon. And they related the story to him (Hadji Ali). And later they told him when they rebuilt the walls (of Athens): “Just as Xerxes threatened them in some future times, thus the Albanians also now threaten us (to return)”. Taking counsel the decision was taken and the city was walled<sup>230</sup>.

It is in the text of Benizelos that the Athenians first produce “modern” written testimony of a self conscious and articulate nature that they considered themselves to be the offspring of the glorious Athens of the Periclean age. Aside from the extensive reference to ancient Athens in the early part of his history, and aside from the use of classical examples for the purpose of the moral edification of contemporary Athenians, Benizelos gives further expression to this contemporary resonance in response to the classical ancestors in his reference to the Parthenon. In his account of the Venetian conquest of Athens in 1687 he noted Morosini’s destruction of the temple of Athena as a tragic event:

And that most beautiful, that most wondrous and famous temple of Athena collapsed from a bomb which the besiegers fired, and simultaneously the gunpowder caught fire, that is the storehouse for the gunpowder ...<sup>231</sup>.

Whereas the destruction of his “most beautiful” Parthenon was an event removed from him by over one century the despoiling of the ruined monument of its precious sculptures by Lord Elgin was an event which he not only witnessed, but for which he has left written testimony. In the penultimate entry of his *Ephemerides*, the diary which served as the basis of his newer history of Athens, he records the arrival of Lord Elgin’s agents in Athens:

Toward the end of July of the same year (17)99, Milord Elgin, the plenipotentiary ambassador of Britain at the Ottoman Porte, sent Roman and Neapolitan “craftsmen” to Athens in order to excavate and to search the depths of the earth for the ancient marbles and buildings, and also in order

230. Skouzes, p. 68.

231. Benizelos, p. 132.

to take down from that famous temple of Athena those most distinguished statues which dazzled and astonished all the travellers (visitors). As for this second matter, they were not given permission (to remove them)<sup>232</sup>.

But Benizelos' hopes were betrayed by higher powers and "the sound of the saw was heard with increasing persistence as 1802 wore on"<sup>233</sup>. Such was the anxiety of Lord Elgin in Constantinople that from the removal of the first metope from the Parthenon in July 31, 1801, his supervisor in Athens, Lusieri, had to request additional saws from the ambassador in order to keep pace with the pressure that the latter was exerting on him.

Mr. Hunt wrote to your Excellency on my behalf to send a dozen marble saws of different sizes to Athens as quickly as possible. I should require three or four, twenty feet in length, to saw a great bas-relief (the centerpiece of the east frieze) that we could not transport unless we reduce its weight<sup>234</sup>.

Elgin had given to Lusieri and others a general order to ransack the world of Greek antiquities wherever they should find them: The Dardanelles region, western Asia Minor, Boeotia, Olympia and the Peloponnese, and above all Athens:

I should wish to have, of the Acropolis, examples in the actual object of each thing, and architectural ornament - of each cornice, each frieze, each capital - of the decorated ceilings, of the fluted columns - specimens of the different architectural orders, and of the variant forms of the order - of metopes and the like, as much as possible. Finally, everything in the way of assiduous and indefatigable excavation. This excavation ought to be pushed on as much as possible be its success what it may<sup>235</sup>.

232. *Ibid.*, p. 464.

233. C. Hitchens, *Imperial Spoils. The Curious Case of the Elgin Marbles*, New York 1987, p. 46; I. Gennadios, *Ο Λόρδος Έλγιν και οι προ αυτού ανά την Ελλάδα και τις Αθήνας ιδίως αρχαιολογήσαντες επιδρομείς 1440-1837. Ιστορική και αρχαιολογική πραγματεία*, Athens 1930.

234. Hitchens, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

235. *Ibid.*, p. 45; A. H. Smith, "Lord Elgin and his Collection", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 36 (1916) 207.

Lusieri carried out Milord's order, in Athens, with a ferocious efficiency, whereas in Istanbul Elgin sought to arrange for the necessary firman, documents, and finally for shipping. He proceeded to purchase the ship *Mentor* for the transportation of the first crated booty from the Acropolis. On January 5, 1802, the *Mentor* sailed from the Piraeus loaded with ten crates of sculptures and moulds taken from the Acropolis, the small ship reached Alexandria, Egypt on February 13. It was to return to Athens on August 22, whereupon it took on the following:

Two reliefs, Temple of Victory  
Part of Parthenon frieze.  
Two other reliefs. Temple of Victory.  
Part of Statue, and one piece of column.  
Part of Parth ... frieze.

...& part of a small torso found in Parthenon.

...& part of an arm found in digging beneath the Parth ...

...& 2 other pieces of frieze.

Angle piece of frieze, 2 inscriptions, part of a shoulder  
belonging to one of the pediment groups.

Part of Parthenon frieze.

Part of the great relief taken from the modern wall of the  
Acropolis<sup>236</sup>.

On September 16, 1802 the *Mentor* left the Piraeus and sailed south. Beset by storms and drawing water, the ship made for the harbor of nearby Cythera on the 17th where, at the entrance to the harbor, the *Mentor* fell on rocks. Heavily laden with its precious cargo, the *Mentor* sank during this storm, in 72 feet of water, at the entrance to the harbor of Cythera. After long and arduous efforts its treasures from the Acropolis were finally rescued by the persistence of the Greek sponge-divers from Simi and Calymnos, who had been hired for this work. The diving prowess of these Dodecanesian sponge-divers had long been known, not only in antiquity but also among the Ottoman Turks<sup>237</sup>.

The second ship, the *Braakel*, loaded on a spectacular cargo of looted

236. Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 231.

237. On the nature of these divers and their pay, Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 206, 244, 248-251, 258-259.

treasures and departed Athens in February of 1803. Its hold included:

The principal statues of the East Pediment, viz. the Theseus, the Demeter and Kore, the Iris, the single Fate, and the pair of Fates; and from the West Pediment the Hermes and the Ilissos. There were also two metopes, seventeen cases of Parthenon frieze, seventeen inscriptions, the Dionysos from the monument of Thrasyllus, seven Egyptian pieces, parts of the cornice and architrave of the Erechtheum, the soffits of the Theseum, the four slabs from the frieze of Nike Apteros, which were the first objects to be saved from the Mentor, the two fragments supposed to be from Mycenae, the sundial of Phaedros, and many minor fragments<sup>238</sup>.

When Elgin made his solitary visit to the city he was so successfully ravaging, in 1802, the Reverend Hunt, a scholar that Elgin had recruited for his embassy to the Porte, and whom Elgin had previously sent to reconnoitre the antiquities situation in the Peloponnese<sup>239</sup>, related to Elgin the contents of a letter sent him by the local school-master, Ioannes Benizelos. The letter was written, evidently, after the departure of the HMS Braakel from the Piraeus, heavily laden with the choice booty from the Parthenon and Acropolis. In this letter we see that the anxiety over the statues and marbles of the Acropolis, which Benizelos had expressed in the *Ephemerides*, had been richly justified, and that contrary to the teacher's expectations, Elgin had indeed acquired some sort of written "permission" from the sultan's government to remove them. He wrote to the Reverend Hunt, after the departure of the Braakel:

I am sure if you saw Athens today you would be very unhappy. One thing only would make you sad as it does all those who have some understanding of these things: the last deplorable stripping of the Temple of Athena on the Acropolis and of the other relics of antiquity.

The Temple is now like a noble and wealthy lady who has lost all her diamonds and jewelry. Oh, how we Athenians must take this event to heart, and how we must praise and admire

238. Hitchens, *op.cit.*, p. 48; Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 254.

239. T. Vrettos, *A Shadow of Magnitude. The Acquisition of the Elgin Marbles*, New York 1974.

those ancient heroes of Rome (Pompey and Hadrian) when we look on these things!<sup>240</sup>

The awareness of the Athenian historian Benizelos as to the fate of the treasures from the Parthenon and the Acropolis brings the “Ghost of Athens”, the shadowy remembrance of things long past, squarely into the active historical consciousness of the contemporary Athenians, and, it would seem, also into the active consciousness of the modern Greeks more generally. The English traveller John Hobhouse gives an interesting confirmation of this condition:

Yet I cannot forbear mentioning a singular speech of a learned Greek of Joannina, who said to me, “You English are carrying off the works of the Greeks, our forefathers. Preserve them well because we Greeks will someday come and redeem them”<sup>241</sup>.

The attachment of the Greeks to the Parthenon, to the Acropolis, and indeed to the remnants of their classical ancestors, becomes, everywhere, more and more manifest. During the Greek siege of the Acropolis in 1822, the Greek minister John Coletis wrote to the officer in charge of the artillery to spare the ancient buildings, with especial mention of the Parthenon. When the besieged Turks began to strip the monuments of their lead, the Greeks offered to send them bullets if only they would leave the monuments intact. When in 1837 the Greek Archaeological Society was established its president, Neroulos, assembled the Society for its first meeting on the Acropolis and addressed it:

These stones are more precious than rubies or agates. It is to these stones that we owe our rebirth as a nation<sup>242</sup>.

Today the Parthenon is the dominant symbol of the Greek nation<sup>243</sup>.

240. *Ibid.*, p. 104. For the reference to Pompey and Hadrian, earlier in the text of Benizelos, see Benizelos, p. 102.

241. Hitchins, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

242. All this is brought together in R. Browning, “The Parthenon in History”, in Hitchins, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25.

243. See the controversy surrounding the coming of the exhibit “The Greek Miracle: Classical Sculpture from the Dawn of Democracy. The Fifth Century”, to the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., and to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, 1992-1993. In particular the local Greek coverage in the special issue of the *Ethnikos Keryx*, November 14-15, 1992, for the Greek point of view. For hostile reviews one should read the review in the *New York Times*, March 12, 1993 by Holland Cotter. For a scurrilously political review,

At the same time the reception of classical Athens by modern western Europe was cemented by the arrival of the Braakel and the other ships, carrying the booty of Elgin, at the shores of Albion. The Greek Revival had already begun, nurtured by the rise of classical scholarship and its entry into the educational systems of Europe, by the visit of Nicholas Revett and James Stuart to Athens where they sketched the Athenian antiquities for the Society of Dilettanti.

The publication of these drawings in four volumes, between 1762 and 1830, marks an epoch in the appreciation of ancient Greek art. Combined with the writings of Johann Winckelmann on ancient Greek art, they created a new aesthetic and historical basis for this Greek Revival. The arrival of the Elgin marbles on the scene added, to this basis, the physical artifacts of Greek art themselves. Henceforth ancient Athens entered vigorously into the lives and education of Germans, French, English, Americans and others. Such have been the power and potency of the "Ghost of Athens"<sup>244</sup>.

The long-term financial haggling between Elgin and the Parliament was settled in June of 1816 when the House of Commons voted to purchase the collection for 35,000 pounds, a sum less than half the amount which Elgin had expended on his enterprise. The reception which he and his "collection" had been accorded greatly depressed the Scottish lord. A recent author, writing of Elgin's long struggle to acquire, and then to dispose of, the marbles, resulted in the

loss of his fortune, his reputation, his wife, and the lower part of his nose<sup>245</sup>.

which constitutes a libel of all Greek people from Homer to Mr. Mitsotakis, one should read the tirade of Senior Staff Writer for *Time* magazine Robert Hughes, January 11, 1993, pp. 48-49.

244. F. M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, New Haven - London 1981, pp. 38-46, and *passim*; R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, Cambridge 1989; F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer, 1795*, Translated with Introduction and Notes by A. Grafton, G. Most, J. Zetzel, Princeton 1988, pp. 3-35; E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany. A Study on the Influence Exercized by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge 1935; M. Badolle, *L'Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (1716-1795) et l'Hellénisme en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1926; G. Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influence on Western Literature*, New York 1949; W. Leppmann, *Winckelmann*, New York 1970, pp. 261-300.

245. Hitchens, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

But for Western Europe the acquisition proved to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest, bargains of the century. And, as Hobhouse's Greek from Yannina foretold, the modern Athenians are demanding that this precious heritage of their ancient Athenian ancestors be returned to its home.