



Frontispiece Pericles on the Pnyx, justifying the Akropolis expenses (1928).

# The Christian Parthenon

Classicism and Pilgrimage in Byzantine Athens

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church.<sup>47</sup> On the basis of this burial, it is believed that Athens rather than Thebes was the provincial capital at that time. On the other hand, the burial and inscription may reflect only Leon's personal devotion to the cult of the Theotokos at Athens, regardless of where he had his headquarters. We will see that in the twelfth century the governors stationed at Thebes made the pilgrimage to the Parthenon, in one case in violation of imperial orders. In fact, it is possible that Leon was buried inside the church itself, as a number of tombs were found beneath the floor of the narthex and inside the north exterior peristyle.<sup>48</sup>

To conclude, even after Justinian's closure of the schools, Athens may have continued to be a center of learning. In the disturbances that followed, it held out as one of the main bastions of imperial power in the southern Balkans, but its role and fame as a university town was yielding to the glory of its temple on the rock. At about the time of Leon's burial, the city's religious standing was overtaking its administrative importance. Athens was about to be identified almost exclusively with the cult of the Theotokos in the Parthenon, which wiped away the stain of ancient paganism. In the minds of many, Athens was about to become the most pious Christian city in the empire where it had once been a city "addicted to idols."

<sup>47</sup> Orlandos with Branouses (1973) 127–131 (no. 164).

<sup>48</sup> Korres (1996a) 136–161, here 147 and 159 nn. 54, 55, citing previous bibliography. For another Leon *protospatharios* who, around the same time, built the church of Skripou near Orchomenos and was presumably buried in it, see Papalexandrou (2003) 63–64.

### 3 | Imperial recognition: Basileios II in Athens (AD 1018)

#### An emperor in Athens

In 1018, the Byzantine emperor Basileios II visited Athens. But Basileios was no ordinary emperor, and 1018 was no ordinary year for the empire. The church of the Mother of God in Athens was about to be recognized by the most powerful and victorious ruler in the Christian world.

Basileios was born in the purple in 958, during the reign of his grandfather Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (d. 959). He was crowned two years later, in 960, by his father Romanos II (959–963), so fifty-eight years before he came to Athens. His rights to the throne were set aside, though never denied, for thirteen years by two interlopers, the military emperors Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969) and the latter's nephew and murderer Ioannes I Tzimiskes (969–976). In those years Byzantine armies trounced the empire's enemies and expanded the borders in Mesopotamia and toward the Danube. But when Basileios came to the throne at 18 – with his brother Konstantinos VIII, who always remained in his shadow – he reigned rather than ruled, as he was under the thumb of court politicians. Moreover, he was threatened by the military families, who had come to regard the throne as a prize for their valor. It was not until 985 that Basileios rid himself of his eunuch handlers, and the rebels were not finally put down until 989, with the aid of soldiers sent by a brother-in-law, Vladimir of Kiev, who converted to marry Basileios' sister Anna. These soldiers became the Varangian unit of Rus' and Scandinavian mercenaries. Basileios thereafter ruled according to his own mind, allowing no one to become too great, promoting talent over birth, spending years on campaign with his armies, hoarding massive amounts of coin in his vaults, and never marrying. He would rule in this fashion, the most powerful monarch in the Christian world and Near East, for another thirty-six years, until his death in 1025. His was the longest reign of any Roman emperor.

Basileios led many campaigns against the empire's neighbors in the East, but the foe that occupied most of his attention was Byzantium's long-standing enemy to the north: the Bulgarians. Under tsar Samuel, their

state had recovered from the defeats of the 960s and 970s and began to aggressively raid Byzantine territory in Makedonia and Greece, as far south as the Gulf of Corinth. Basileios and his generals fought against Samuel and his boyars for some thirty years. The dramatic ending of this struggle has led many historians to conclude that the intention from the start was to conquer Bulgaria once and for all, that the annual battles and skirmishes mentioned in our sources were part of an overall strategy for total victory. But that assumption has been questioned. It has been proposed that Basileios intended only to hold the Bulgarians at bay and that this so-called total war was in fact punctuated by fairly long periods of truce during which the emperor gave every indication of recognizing the legitimacy of his enemy. It was not until the battle of Kleidion in 1014, when the Bulgarians suffered a massive defeat, that the terms of the conflict changed. This defeat, it was said, caused tsar Samuel to die of grief. Later Byzantine tradition even held that Basileios captured 15,000 Bulgarian soldiers, blinded them all, and sent them back to their master, each hundred being led by a one-eyed man. This atrocity, exaggerated and possibly invented, was later linked to the nickname of *Boulgaroktonos*, or the “Bulgar-Slayer.”<sup>1</sup> After Samuel’s death, Bulgarian leadership fell apart, until finally all of his would-be heirs and successors had either died or surrendered. In 1018, Basileios found himself in possession of the whole of the Balkans, as far north as the Danube and as far west as Serbia. And the first thing that he did was go to Athens.

The historian Ioannes Skylitzes, writing toward the end of the eleventh century, tells us that Athens was the destination of Basileios’ tour of Greece. The emperor marched south past Thessaly to Zetounion (modern Lamia), where he gazed upon the bones of the Bulgarians killed when his general Nikephoros Ouranos had routed Samuel in 997, and then on to Thermopylai, where he saw the wall called Skelos that had been built by a certain Roupenios to hold back Bulgarian raids.<sup>2</sup> The pace of this march was apparently leisurely, with time to admire the sites associated with the past generation of warfare. The emperor would then have marched through Boiotia, whose capital was Thebes, and then on to Attica, entering Athens from the north between Mts. Parnes and Pentelikon. The purpose of the visit, we are told, was religious: “after reaching Athens and giving thanks for his victory to the Mother of God, adorning the temple with magnificent and expensive dedications, he returned to Constantinople,”<sup>3</sup> still by land, arriving in 1019. He entered the City

through the Golden Gate and held a triumphal parade that featured Samuel’s daughters as well as other members of the Bulgarian royal family. This procession culminated in the Great Church, i.e., Hagia Sophia, where the 60-year-old emperor, crowned by victory and glory, sang hymns to God before retiring to his palace.

An additional stop in the emperor’s itinerary is known to us from a note added to Skylitzes’ text in the twelfth century by Michael, bishop of Diabolis (Devol, south of Ochrid). Michael had independent, detailed, and, it appears, reliable knowledge of the events. He adds that Basileios stopped at Thessalonike on the way back from Athens where he investigated and put down a conspiracy. Michael says nothing regarding any celebrations there to parallel those in Athens and the capital. Of course, we should not expect that these authors are giving us a complete record of everything the emperor did, but the thank-offerings, hymns, gifts, and processions that took place in Athens and Constantinople were notable enough to be remembered. Nothing comparable seems to have taken place in Thessalonike, though it is difficult to imagine an emperor spending time in that city without attending services at the church of St. Demetrios.<sup>4</sup>

It is a pity that we do not have more information about Basileios’ stay in Athens.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that he took his armies with him, but it is also improbable that he traveled without a guard. The armies probably remained in the northern Balkans, where they could more easily be provisioned and could watch over the recently annexed territories, while the emperor was accompanied by officers and his elite unit of Varangians. It is possible that it was one of Basileios’ Varangians who carved, during the visit to Athens of 1018, a long and long-since illegible runic inscription on both sides of the giant lion statue (about 3 m tall) that used to stand by the entrance to the Peiraieus harbor (Fig. 15). This statue was carried off in 1688 by Francesco Morosini, the Venetian admiral and adventurer who bombed and exploded the Parthenon during his siege of Athens. The Lion of Peiraieus still guards the Arsenal of Venice.<sup>6</sup> Can the inscription be associated with Basileios’ visit? The Varangians tended to travel with the emperor, and no other emperor traveled to Athens during the period of the Guard’s existence (988–1204). We have to admit, however, that this connection is weak. The inscription could have been carved by any Northman who happened to

<sup>1</sup> See now Stephenson (2003); for the reign and its historian (Ioannes Skylitzes), see Holmes (2005).

<sup>2</sup> For Byzantine Zetounion and Thermopylai, see Koder and Hild (1976) 283–284 and 273–275.

<sup>3</sup> Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories: Basileios II and Konstantinos VIII* 43 (p. 364). For Basileios’ triumph in Constantinople, see McCormick (1986) 178.

<sup>4</sup> Michael’s notes are printed in smaller font in Thurn’s edn. of Skylitzes. In general, see Ferluga (1967) 167; Holmes (2005) 76. For Basileios and St. Demetrios, see below.

<sup>5</sup> For a romantic and “Hellenist” reconstruction, see Schlumberger (1900) 398–410. See below for this interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> For Morosini and the antiquities of Athens, see Sacconi (1991); Chatziaslani (1996).



15 Lion of the Peiraeus (now in Venice), drawn when the runes were more legible by F. Lindström (taken from K. Gjerset, *History of the Norwegian People*, New York 1915).

arrive at the Peiraeus, either a pilgrim on his way to the East or by an off-duty or on-assignment guardsman.<sup>7</sup> The inscription can no longer be deciphered, though “it would have been interesting to know what a Swedish Viking wished to confide to a Greek lion.”<sup>8</sup>

Byzantine emperors never traveled without a retinue, but we cannot be sure who else accompanied Basileios on this detour through Greece, which

<sup>7</sup> For the Guard in general, see Blöndal (1978), esp. 230–233 for the inscription. For the possible link with Basileios’ visit, see Schlumberger (1900) 408. The historian Michael Attaleiates says that Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–1081) dismissed many Varangians “to far-away fortresses” after a mutiny: *History* 296 (p. 212). For Varangians wintering dispersed in the provinces without the emperor, see Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories: Michael IV* 4 (p. 394). For other runic inscriptions in Byzantium, see Ciggaar (1974) 313–314, as well as the Hagia Sophia inscription.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Jones (1984) 267–268.

the Byzantines called “the lower regions” of the empire (*ta katôtika*). In the mid tenth century, Basileios’ grandfather, the scholar-emperor Konstantinos VII, compiled a treatise that listed exactly the protocols regarding imperial expeditions. But it is highly unlikely that Basileios, a ruler of ascetic habits, dragged such a vast baggage-train around with him as is specified here, including a butler and staff, the palace plate, special wines and delicacies, folding benches and thicker rugs, in sum twenty pages’ worth of provisions (wardrobes, books, medicine, etc.), “so that nothing at all is lacking in the imperial service.”<sup>9</sup> These instructions were almost designed to ensure that emperors never left the capital. But Basileios in particular, we are told by the historian Michael Psellos (born late in that emperor’s reign), was a frugal ruler who did not indulge in the luxuries of the palace even when he was in the capital, nor did he ease the hardships of campaigning for himself.<sup>10</sup> So in 1018 Athens was probably spared a visit by the entire palace staff.

The bishop at the time of Basileios’ visit may have been a certain Michael. His epitaph is carved on one of the Parthenon columns and dated to 1030 (see Fig. 13): “Our most saintly metropolitan Michael passed away on the 13th of the month of August, in the 13th indiction, of the year 6538.” We also possess a stamp made by his seal, which features the Theotokos on one side and his name and office on the other. He is attested in office only after 1027, so it is conceivable that another man was bishop of Athens nine years earlier, during Basileios’ visit.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, we know nothing of the thousands of others who witnessed the ceremonies in Athens and attended upon the emperor and his heavenly protectress. Nor can we be sure what exactly Basileios dedicated in her church. We should not rush to identify his gifts with the few objects and adornments that we happen to know from the other literary and archaeological sources regarding the furnishings of the Parthenon (to be discussed below). Possibly what he gave came from the spoils of the recent war. At any rate, his gifts would have conformed to tradition. For example, in the early ninth century the chronicler Theophanes praised the emperor Michael I (811–813) for making Christmas gifts of gold to the patriarch of Constantinople and the clergy and for “sumptuously adorning the holy sanctuary, giving golden vessels set with stones and a set of four curtains of ancient manufacture,

<sup>9</sup> Konstantinos VII Porphyrogenetos, *Treatise on Military Expeditions* (pp. 94–151, esp. 102–105). For a summary, see Dimitroukas (1997) v. I, 271–275.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 1.4, 1.32. In this work Psellos is doing more than recording history: Kaldellis (1999b) esp. c. 6 for Basileios’ asceticism.

<sup>11</sup> Epitaph: Orlandos with Branouses (1973) 44 (no. 57). Seal: Laurent (1963) 445 (no. 596). For a list of known bishops with their dates, see Fedalto (1988) 489–493.

splendidly embroidered in gold and purple and decorated with wonderful sacred images.”<sup>12</sup>

Before attempting to explain why the emperor went to Athens in the first place – an unexpected choice far from strategic areas – we should consider one more possible piece of evidence relating to his visit there. It has been suggested that the so-called Gunther tapestry depicts Basileios’ triumphal entries into Athens and Constantinople in 1018–1019. Made of silk and currently in Bamberg, it depicts an emperor on a white horse receiving crowns from two flanking female figures that, according to Roman convention, represent the *tychai* (personified fortunes) of two cities. According to the prevalent history of this tapestry, it was sent as a gift by the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos to the western emperor Heinrich IV, but was instead used as a shroud for the latter’s envoy, the archbishop Gunther of Bamberg, who died on the return journey. It was once proposed by A. Grabar that this hanging depicts Basileios at Athens and Constantinople, but alternative theories have since been proposed and there does not appear to be any easy way to decide among them. For instance, the tapestry may represent Ioannes Tzimiskes’ triumph of 971 over the Rus’ and Bulgarians, or two cities captured and renamed by him in that war (Preslav-Ioannoupolis and Dorostolon-Theodoroupolis), or two cities captured by Nikephoros II Phokas in 965 (Tarsos and Mospouestia).<sup>13</sup> The identification of the figures with Athens and Constantinople now seems to be unlikely, as cities offering crowns in this way were understood to have been captured by the emperor, and Constantinople would not have been shown in a way that made it seem equal to Athens. The link between the Gunther tapestry and Athens seems, then, to have been broken.

## Interpreting imperial pilgrimage

So why did Basileios go to Athens? We must first recognize how unusual his action was. As far as know, no emperor had visited Athens since Konstas II in the seventh century. That emperor’s stay there during the winter of 662–663, as opposed to, say, Corinth, was perhaps significant for the emergence

<sup>12</sup> Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia* s.a. 6304 (de Boor v. I, p. 494; Mango and Scott p. 678).

<sup>13</sup> For the original identification, see Grabar (1968); tentatively accepted by Beckwith (1961) 98–100 and Muthesius (1992) 240–242. For Tzimiskes, see Prinzing (1993), though the figures cannot represent the *demoi*; Stephenson (2001) 57–63 and (2003) 62–65. For Phokas, see Papamastorakis (2003a), who offers the strongest arguments, including a new theory as to how it arrived in the West.

of Athens as a regional center, but Konstas was only in those parts to begin with because he was taking a fleet to Italy. For later emperors, Athens was too far and out of the way, and not on the way *to* anything. It was too expensive to move and maintain a proper imperial retinue there for any length of time.

The palace-based emperors of late antiquity (395–610) rarely left the capital. When they did so for religious reasons, they usually did not go far. Leon I (457–474) would visit Daniel the stylite at Anaplous on the Bosporos.<sup>14</sup> In 563, Justinian, at the time over 80 years old, went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Germia or Myriangeloi (“Ten Thousand Angels”) in Galatia (central Asia Minor), to fulfill a vow.<sup>15</sup> That was an extraordinarily long journey for an emperor of that period. In the middle period (610–1204), many emperors were active military commanders, whose wars often took them beyond the borders of the state. The few stay-at-home emperors rarely left the vicinity of Constantinople. It was said that Leon VI (886–912), Basileios’ great-grandfather, had visited Mt. Olympos in Bithynia, which in this period was a famous and revered monastic center, to pray for a son and heir. That son, Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos, crossed the Sea of Marmara and in his turn climbed Mt. Olympos to be with the monks before he died (959).<sup>16</sup> But many emperors of this period were campaigners and so visited many famous shrines and churches. For example, in 795, Konstantinos VI visited Ephesos after an engagement with Arab raiders. He prayed at the church of St. John and granted a substantial tax-break to the local fair.<sup>17</sup> In 1176, Manuel I Komnenos visited the popular shrine of the Archangel Michael at Chonai in Asia Minor (ancient Kolossai) en route to his disastrous battle with the Turks at Myriokephalon.<sup>18</sup>

These visits, then, were either to locations near the capital or did not involve a great detour from the route the army was following anyway. And pilgrimage could be combined with military operations. For instance, soon after the end of the civil wars, in 989, Basileios II himself had visited Thessalonike “in order to honor the famous martyr,” i.e., St. Demetrios, the patron-saint of the city. But our source (Ioannes Skylitzes again) goes on to tell us that Basileios installed a force in the city to prevent raids by

<sup>14</sup> *The Life of St. Daniel the Stylite* 44, 48–49, 51, 54, 55, 57, 63, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia* 18.148. For the shrine, see Mango (1986b).

<sup>16</sup> Theophanes Continuatus, *Book VI: Konstantinos VII* 49–50 (pp. 463–466). See Foss (2002) 137.

<sup>17</sup> Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia* s.a. 6287 (de Boor v. I, pp. 469–470; Mango and Scott pp. 645–646, with commentary). See also Foss (2002) 145.

<sup>18</sup> Niketas Choniates, *History* 178. For Chonai in this period, see Magdalino (1993) 129–132.

Samuel.<sup>19</sup> We are told nothing comparable regarding his visit to Athens in 1018, nor is it easy to imagine what strategic importance Athens could have had, especially given that the Bulgarian state had been annihilated and there were no other threats to Greece. Athens was far from Basileios' bases of operations in the northern Balkans and could be reached only by a long march that would have to be retraced. So why go to Athens?

European historians of the nineteenth century who wrote about Basileios' visit to Athens, such as G. Finlay (in English), F. Gregorovius (in German), and G. Schlumberger (in French), had tried to imagine what the medieval emperor thought of the ruins he saw about him, what it meant to him that the temple in which he paid his devotions had been built by Perikles, almost fifteen hundred years ago, to house the statue of Athena. In this respect, they were projecting onto the Byzantine emperor what they themselves would have thought and felt under those circumstances, making Basileios' march to Attica into a romantic rediscovery of Hellenism.<sup>20</sup> There is of course an element of anachronism here: Basileios did not travel to Athens to commune with the Hellenic past or because he believed that Athens was a national center. Even though, as we will see, the Byzantine adoration of the Parthenon was not free of Hellenist undertones, these were very different from those of modern historians.

More recently and pragmatically, another historian has suggested that Basileios sought "popular support in Constantinople and other major cities like Athens."<sup>21</sup> But this explanation is too vague. It is unlikely that Athens would ever have sided with the Bulgarians, and that possibility was moot now anyway. There is also no reason to believe that Basileios was afraid of internal rebellion, as he was in Thessalonike for instance. Southern Greece was one of the few places in the empire that had not produced rebels for centuries; there were hardly any armies there at the time anyway. To be sure, his presence at a major celebration in Greece demonstrated the security of his rule and advertised the victory over the Bulgarians. It would have reassured his subjects and made him more popular. But it does not explain why Basileios went in person – he could have sent a general to represent him, as emperors often did – and it does not explain why his itinerary, of which we have a detailed account, focused on Athens and not on Thebes or Corinth, which were in other ways more important cities for the middle

<sup>19</sup> Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories: Basileios II and Konstantinos VIII* 20 (p. 339).

<sup>20</sup> Especially Schlumberger (1900) 398–410; for the others, see Stephenson (2003) 106–109.

<sup>21</sup> Stephenson (2000) 76; also Pavan (1983) 44.

Byzantine economy and administration of southern Greece (Thebes was the provincial capital).<sup>22</sup> We have to consider less political motives.

In fact, we do not have to look far. Skylitzes tells us that Basileios traveled to Athens for no other reason than to thank the Mother of God in her temple for his victories. The reason for the detour was religious, or imperial-religious, and furthered the rise of Athens' fame as a center for the adoration of the Theotokos. Basileios would not have traveled so far out of his way unless he believed that the Parthenon was among the most important religious sites in his western provinces, if not *the* most important one. At the same time, his visit would have reinforced that belief in others, increasing the shrine's popularity. As we will see in the next chapter, Basileios was not the first to go out of his way to worship at the Parthenon (and this not merely among Byzantines), and, moreover, his visit inaugurated and perhaps promoted a steep rise in its popularity that reached its apogee in the twelfth century. We should note that Skylitzes, writing in the later eleventh century, does not specify which temple Basileios visited in Athens; he just says "the temple," assuming that his largely Constantinopolitan audience would automatically understand that he meant the Parthenon. Basileios, then, traveled to Athens for the Parthenon. The temple of the Theotokos in Athens and the Great Church of God in Constantinople dominated his conception of the religious landscape of the empire, at least its western provinces. And he had a long history of pious association with the Mother of God. When he faced the last of the great rebels, Bardas Phokas, on a battlefield near Abydos in 989, Basileios "rode out in front of his own army, and took his stand there with sword in hand. With his left hand he held the icon of the Mother of the Word close to his chest, making it his surest defense against the wild charge of his enemy."<sup>23</sup>

In this sense, at least, Basileios was the Byzantine whose view of the Parthenon corresponded the most to that of the ancient Athenians who had built it originally (though he probably could not have known that): he used it as a monument for the celebration of a military victory over barbarians. However odd it may sound to modern ears, for him as well as for many other Byzantines the Theotokos was primarily a military figure,<sup>24</sup> just as had been Athena, her predecessor in the temple. But at Athens it took the visit of an emperor in the flush of victory to bring forth the Theotokos' martial

<sup>22</sup> For these cities, see Louvi-Kizi (2002) and Sanders (2002).

<sup>23</sup> Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 1.4, 1.32; for this passage, see Kaldellis (1999b) c. 7.

<sup>24</sup> See Pentcheva (2006). For the Parthenon as a military monument, see p. 14 above.

attributes, which would otherwise have been more subdued in this provincial and probably by now demilitarized center.

In Basileios' eyes, moreover, Athens was *the* city of the Theotokos; at Constantinople he prayed simply to "God." This seems odd, because the city that chiefly enjoyed the favor and special protection of the Theotokos in Byzantine eyes was normally the capital. Ever since the Avar siege of the City in 626, when the patriarch Sergios paraded her icon along the walls and the people prayed to her for deliverance, Constantinople was regarded as consecrated to the Mother of God. There were more churches dedicated to her there than to any other figure and more than in any other city.<sup>25</sup> The most venerable hymn of Orthodoxy, the Akathistos, is in honor of the Theotokos and is traditionally linked to her saving of the City in 626. It is popularly attributed to none other than Romanos, though recent studies have dated it to the fifth century.<sup>26</sup> Its *prooimion*, however, which ascribes victory and gives thanks to the Theotokos on the City's behalf, may well have been added in 626, perhaps by Sergios. It is here that Basileios' pilgrimage to Athens takes an interesting turn in Skylitzes' account.

Johannes Koder has perceptively noted that when Skylitzes describes the honors that Basileios gave to the Theotokos at Athens he alludes distinctly to the first verses of the Akathistos (compare τῆ θεοτόκῳ τὰ τῆς νίκης εὐχαριστήρια δούς with τῆ ὑπερμάχῳ στρατηγῶ τὰ νικητήρια ὡς λυτρωθείσα τῶν δεινῶν εὐχαριστήρια ἀναγράφω σοι ἡ πόλις σου, θεοτόκε).<sup>27</sup> Perhaps when Skylitzes or his source came to the point in his narrative where he had to describe a thank-offering to the Theotokos for an important victory, his mind naturally found the words of a hymn he had doubtless heard many times and probably knew by heart (as many Byzantines did and Greeks today).<sup>28</sup> But regardless of whether the allusion was conscious or not, it implied an amazing transformation in the position of Athens in the Orthodox view of the world: the city that many Christians had cursed for being the home of pagan gods and philosophers was now fit to receive the most exalted praise, which had so far been reserved for Constantinople. As a western visitor to the imperial capital put it in the late eleventh century, "here she is more loved and honored than in any other

<sup>25</sup> For the rise of her cult, see Cameron (1978) and (1981); Limberis (1994). For sources, see Fenster (1968) 100–104. For the churches, see Janin (1969) 156–244 (over 130 are listed, from all periods).

<sup>26</sup> Limberis (1994) 89–97.

<sup>27</sup> Koder (2000) 111–112. The allusion was already noted by the national Greek poet Kostis Palamas in his epic account of Basileios' visit to Athens: *Ἡ φλογέρα τοῦ βασιλιά* 9.181.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Niketas Choniates, *History* 19, for an allusion to the Hymn in the account of Ioannes II Komnenos' triumph.

place in the world. It is said and believed that this is the most special and proper city of the Mother of God."<sup>29</sup> He may have come to a different or more nuanced conclusion had he traveled more in the provinces and been less awed by the sights of Constantinople. Athens, or rather the temple of the Parthenos on the Akropolis, was being recognized by some as the preeminent shrine of the Theotokos, momentarily equal or perhaps even greater to Constantinople as a place sacred to her.

There is, moreover, an irony in the allusion that escaped the notice of Dr. Koder. In the Salutations of the Theotokos, the Akathistos contains a set of very scornful anti-Athenian verses, which I quoted in the Introduction. No text, then, was more appropriate to signal the total rehabilitation of Athens in 1018 than the Akathistos, yet none brought out better, by being invoked in this context and manner, the deep contradictions that rent the image and the memory of Athens in Byzantium. The harder the Byzantines tried to purify Athens by using Christian imagery and symbolism, the more they drew attention to that which they were trying to dispel and exorcise. In praising the temple of the Mother of God in Athens, they exposed the problematic nature of the place and the uniqueness of the building itself. It was never just *any* church, no matter how hard they tried to pretend it was.

Konstas and Basileios may have been the only Byzantine emperors who visited Athens, but they were not the last emperors of Constantinople to do so. In 1209 Henri, the Latin emperor of Constantinople (1206–1216), traveled south to secure his Greek dominions. Among other places, he stopped at Athens, where he spent two days enjoying the hospitality of Othon de la Roche, the city's new lord, and praying in the "eglyse c'on dist de Nostre Dame." We are told this by Henri de Valenciennes, a contemporary who wrote the history of the reign.<sup>30</sup> Henri's visit ushered in a new era of continued fame and prestige for the Parthenon, which it would enjoy henceforth as a cathedral of Notre Dame among the Latin masters of Romania and their backers in the West. That is a story for another time. What is worth pointing out in conclusion is that, while Henri must have prayed in many churches on his travels, only his visit to the church at Athens received any special notice from his historian.

<sup>29</sup> *Anonymous Tarragonensis*, cited in Ciggaar (1995) 128.

<sup>30</sup> Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri de Constantinople* 681 (p. 115). For Athens after 1205 in general, see Lock (1995) 86–88.