I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted
Whose lights are fled
And garlands dead
And all but he departed.

Thomas Moore (1779–1832)
Oft in the Stilly Night

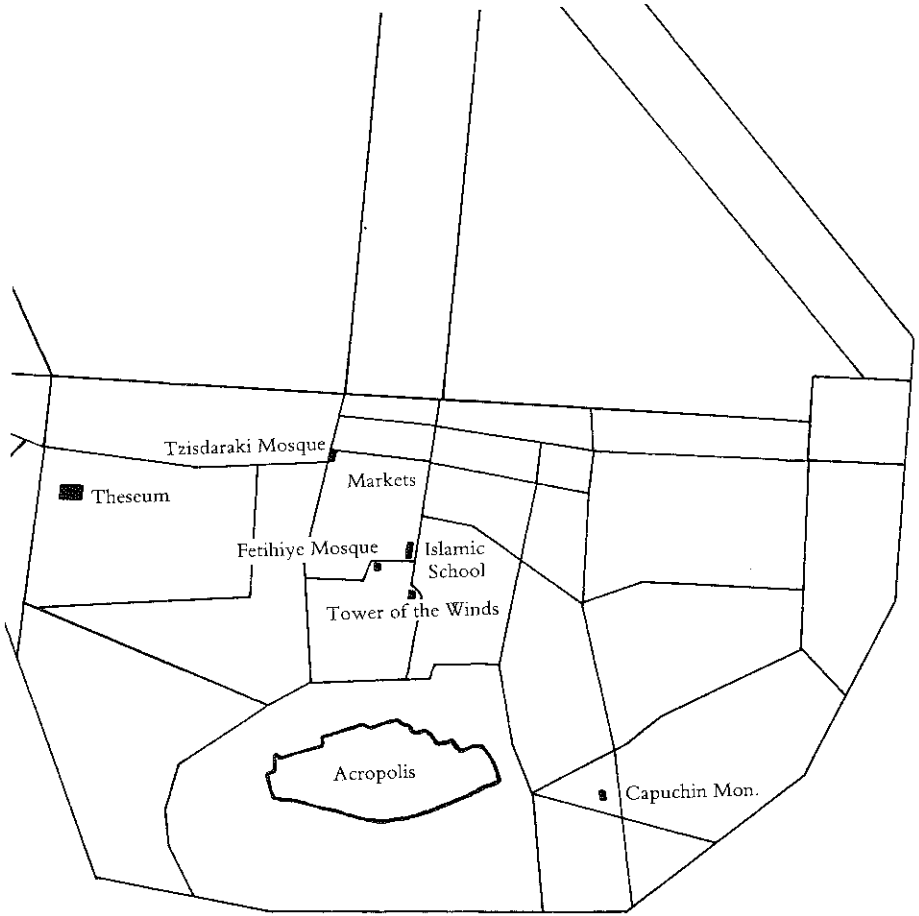
TURKISH ATHENS

THE FORGOTTEN CENTURIES 1456–1832

MOLLY MACKENZIE

ITHACA PRESS
READING
1992

PLAN OF CENTRAL ATHENS



Sultan Mohammed II, Conqueror of Athens

I

The Coming of the Turks

IN June 1456 the city of Athens surrendered to the forces of the Ottoman Sultan, a surrender which had been made inevitable by the capture three years earlier of the great Byzantine capital of Constantinople. Once again, as under Byzantine rule, Athens became a minor provincial town in a widespread Empire, but this time the Empire was not Christian but Moslem and its capital of Constantinople was known as Istanbul.

Athens had travelled a long downhill road between the days of its splendour in the fifth century BC and its surrender to Islam. For a time a powerful city state which dominated its often unwilling allies, it had in turn suffered defeat at the hands of the Spartans, the Macedonians, and finally the Romans. But although between them they stripped it of all economic and military power, it remained a famous centre of pagan culture and learning, to which pilgrims continued to flock. It was not until the founding of Constantinople in AD 320 and the recognition of Christianity as the religion of the Byzantine Empire that paganism declined and with it pagan Athens. Even then, the city continued for a time to attract students, Christian as well as pagan, and two Church Fathers, St Basil the Great and his friend, St Gregory of Nazianzus, studied at its Schools. They became almost as devoted to the classics as to Christian writings and were warm admirers of 'truly golden Athens, the patroness of lovely things'.[1]

A second step in Athens' downward course was taken in the fifth century when Theodosius II ordered the closure of all temples not converted to Christian use. The Parthenon became the cathedral of Athens, no longer dedicated to Athena Polias but to another virgin, the Mother of God, and the Theseum, the Erechtheum, and the temple of Olympian Zeus were all consecrated as churches. Finally, in the following century, Justinian closed the Schools of Athens altogether: many of the teachers fled to Persia for fear of persecution, and the existence of Athens as a centre of education and art was at an end.

All the same, though shrunken in size and importance, Athens was still able in the eleventh century to arouse enough enthusiasm for one of Byzantium's greatest emperors, Basil II, to visit it on his way back from a victorious campaign against the Bulgars. He wished to celebrate his Triumph in the once famous city and to pay honour to its monuments. He offered prayers of thanksgiving for his victories in the cathedral and presented it with many of the treasures he had captured from the Bulgars. Before leaving he gave orders for the ruined temples to be repaired and the other ancient buildings cared for, in the hope of giving back to the city an illusion of its former glory.

Basil visited Athens of his own free will, but others were not as fortunate: many came unwillingly, some in disgrace and exile, others as reluctant officials who, while extorting as much money as possible from its inhabitants, pulled every string in their power to have themselves moved from 'this far corner of the Empire',[2] and to return to civilized Constantinople. Besides, the Athenians were regarded as a stiff-necked, argumentative people: the eleventh-century scholar and statesman, Michael Psellus, who deplored the government's neglect of Greece, mocked the sufferings of a newly-appointed governor who, 'as soon as he beheld famous Greece, bemoaned his lot . . . Neither the multi-coloured porch nor the Academy nor the Piraeus gave him pleasure, but the multi-coloured opinions in Athens gave him trouble of every sort'.[3]

Conditions continued to deteriorate: under a corrupt and inefficient administration, agriculture and industry declined while pirate raids and taxes both increased. A few scholars and lovers of the ancient city were, however, still to be found, among them Michael Choniates who was Archbishop of Athens from 1182 until its capture by the Latins in 1204.

Michael arrived in Athens, his mind filled with visions of its splendid and heroic past, and the present reality came as a shock: all around him he saw grinding poverty and material decay. Only the magnificent buildings on the Acropolis still stood 'beyond the envy and destruction of time'. (The Archbishop could scarcely be expected to foresee the gunpowder which blew up the Parthenon in the seventeenth century, the pillaging by foreign visitors in the eighteenth and nineteenth, and the aeroplane, the trampling feet of tourists and the pollution which have done such devastating damage in our day.) What he did see was that the glory of the city itself had 'wholly perished'. It was no longer 'a city of learning, hospitable and surpassing all other cities', but had become 'a hell of sorrows, a vale of tears and lamentation', where 'the sheep graze among the ancient buildings, little trace of which still remains'. It had suffered from centuries of neglect as much as from enemy attack and piracy: the Agora was like an empty field, surrounded by squalid, broken walls and derelict houses. No one, he wrote, could 'look upon Athens without tears'[4] — the crumbling buildings, the deserted streets and the ragged half-starved population.

The people were not only poor but ignorant as well, and spoke a barbaric Attic dialect which it took Michael three years to master sufficiently to make himself understood. 'Since living in Athens', he wrote bitterly, 'I have become a barbarian myself'.

But he was not indifferent to their need, and he turned his whole attention to bettering their condition, materially as well as spiritually. Throughout his twenty-two years as archbishop, he remained their firm and courageous champion, continually struggling, in spite of frustrations and disappointments, to uphold 'right against wrong, virtue against vice' and the weak against the powerful and selfish. To improve the appalling living conditions, he repaired old houses in the lower town and built new ones. He wrote numerous impassioned letters to the emperor, high officials and everyone he

knew of importance in Constantinople, complaining of extortionate governors, excessive and unjust taxation, corruption, piracy, and the buying up of agricultural land by rich townsmen, and imploring their help to end the abuses. But, although he met at times with a sympathetic response, conditions failed to improve: the Imperial administration had become hopelessly corrupt and inefficient and, though a greedy governor might occasionally be censured or dismissed, in a short time his replacement would prove himself equally rapacious.

Michael had his happier moments, however: it was a joy to live on the Acropolis, surrounded by its ancient glories amid 'the music of birds, swans, nightingales and other sweet singers . . . the loveliness of the countryside, the temperate climate, the fruit raising, the fertile land . . . the same Acropolis too where I sit now as I write and seem to bestride the very peak of heaven'.

The Cathedral in particular—the former Parthenon—gave him constant delight: he loved it for its superb setting, the beauty and balance of its proportions, and its glorious treasures piled up through the centuries. The city was dotted, too, with beautiful little churches built for the most part during the previous two centuries, either on Imperial orders or by wealthy officials who took a genuine interest in the city or hoped to be remembered for such acts of piety rather than for their innumerable extortions. Many of these churches can still be seen today: the church of the Holy Apostles in the Agora, the two Saints Theodore in Klafthmonas Square, the Kapnikaria in Ermou Street, the jewel-like Panayia Gorgoepiko (or Little Metropolitan) dwarfed by the ugly nineteenth-century Cathedral, St John the Theologian beside the steps leading up to the Acropolis, and the church of the monastery of Sotira-Lycadimos, now the Russian church, in Philhellene Street. There were also several monasteries outside the city: St John the Hunter, Kaisariani, the Asteri on Mount Hymettos, and—most splendid of all—Daphni with its breathtaking mosaics.

This was Byzantine Athens and it was brought to an end in 1204 when the Latin forces of the Fourth Crusade, sworn to rescue the Holy Land from the Infidel, turned aside instead to capture and sack

the rich Christian city of Constantinople. Later in the year a section of that army invaded Greece and appeared outside Athens. Feeling that resistance was hopeless and would only cause unnecessary suffering, the Archbishop surrendered the city and retired to the island of Kea. He did not, however, forget the people of Athens whom he had served devotedly for so many years, but wrote tirelessly to them, doing his utmost to console and advise them and regretting his inability to help them more. Old and poor, ill and homesick for his beloved Athens, he died some fifteen years later. Writing in the nineteenth century, the German historian, Gregorovius, described him as 'the last great citizen and the last glory of that city of the sage'.[5]

With the capture of Athens by the Latins, a Burgundian noble, Otho de la Roche, became ruler of the city and the surrounding countryside, initiating a period of foreign occupation which was to last for over six hundred years, during which time the fortunes of Athens revolved first around the Latins and afterwards the Turks. Under the Burgundians the Duchy of Athens became the most prosperous state in Greece, famous as a centre of chivalry and civilization. But Burgundian rule ended some hundred years later in 1311 when the duke of Athens and his allies—which included almost all the Latin states of Greece—were disastrously defeated by the forces of a newcomer, the Catalan Grand Company. This consisted largely of Catalan mercenaries, rough hard men renowned for their fighting qualities. They had been employed by the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II to fight the Turks in Asia Minor but had quarrelled with him and, after devastating Thrace in revenge, had moved westward in search of plunder and food. By the time they reached the Duchy of Athens they had grown tired of their roving life and asked the duke's permission to settle in the Duchy. The duke refused and appealed to his allies for help in driving out the unwanted intruders. A battle took place near Thebes in which the Burgundian forces were defeated and the duke and almost all the barons and knights killed. The victorious Catalans occupied Athens but seventy-seven years later, grown soft from settled living, they were in their turn driven out by a mercenary force from Italy under

the command of a member of the wealthy Florentine banking family of Acciaiuoli.

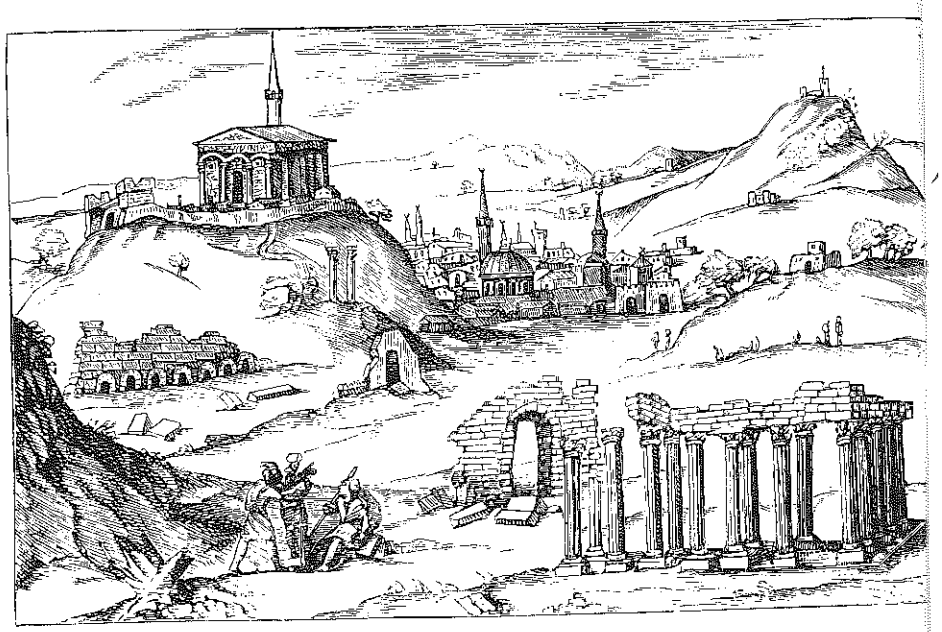
During all these years the people of Athens, with a few exceptions, had been treated as a serf population, lacking all rights of citizenship and forbidden to buy, sell, or own land or property. The Latins, separated from the native Greeks by differences of religion and language, and regarding themselves as a superior race, lived their own life on a different plane. Roman Catholicism became the official religion, a Catholic archbishop headed the clergy, and Catholic bishops replaced Orthodox, though the Greek priests were left free to carry out their duties to the people at large. A number of the more important churches were given over to the Roman Catholics, among them the Parthenon-Cathedral and the famous Byzantine monastery at Daphni, which was presented to the Cistercian Order. The Greeks deeply resented this slighting of their religion as well as the loss of so many of their finest churches, especially their beloved Cathedral, and all efforts of the Catholic clergy to convert them failed dismally. Clinging with stubborn determination to their own faith, they showed a sullen hostility towards the Church of their conquerors.

The situation improved a little under the first two Florentine dukes (1388–1435), who were able and good rulers. As the Florentines were a small minority and the Turks were a growing threat to the eastern borders of the Duchy, the dukes wisely made a number of concessions to gain the goodwill of their Greek subjects. For the first time since 1204 Greek became the official language of the Duchy: a few Greeks were granted citizenship and given official appointments and, though small in number, they formed the nucleus of a Greek middle class which under Turkish occupation was to become of some importance. Marriage between Roman Catholic and Orthodox was freely permitted and the Orthodox archbishop was allowed back into Athens.

The second Florentine duke, Anthony, was particularly popular with his Greek subjects. He was himself half Greek and had married a Greek. He loved Athens and spent vast sums of money on repairing and enriching the Acropolis and on rebuilding many of the

houses in the lower town which had been badly damaged or destroyed during attacks by Catalans, Burgundians, Navarrese, Florentines, and Turks. During his rule the Duchy enjoyed one of its most prosperous periods under Latin occupation and this prosperity was shared by the Greeks.

Anthony died childless in 1435 and under the rule of his two nephews who succeeded him in turn—selfish, arrogant and inefficient rulers—Athens sank into a state of decay and misery. With the ever present threat of Turkish invasion, life became so insecure that many people fled from the Duchy. So strong, too, had Ottoman influence become that no action, it seemed, could be taken without first obtaining the sultan's approval and, when a quarrel broke out between the last two claimants to the Duchy, each appealed to him for support. His choice proved fatal for the city: when his appointed duke returned to Athens at the head of a Turkish army and with orders that he be accepted by the population, he imprisoned and murdered his rival and set about avenging himself on his political opponents. With Constantinople in his hands the sultan was already making plans to incorporate Athens into his Empire and the duke's behaviour gave him the excuse he wanted. He despatched a second army to depose him and occupy the city in his own name.



Athens in 1672, by Jacques-Paul Babin

II

A Portrait of a Turkish Town

TWO years after the surrender of Athens to the Ottoman army, the Sultan Mohammed II visited the city on his way back from a successful campaign against Byzantine forces in the Peloponnese. As the archbishop of Athens had fled, the abbot of Kaisariani Monastery presented the sultan with the keys of the city, 'which Mohammed was so glad of that to testify his joy and content and to recompense the messenger, he exempted this convent from all manner of taxes and customs'.[1]

The sultan was a man of taste and education, and 'he was greatly enamoured 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 . . . so he was eager to see the city and learn of it and of all its buildings, and especially the Acropolis itself'. Athens did not disappoint him, but 'he saw it and was amazed, and he praised it, and especially the Acropolis as he went up into it, and from the ruins and the remains he reconstructed mentally the ancient buildings, being a wise man and a Philhellene and a great King, and he conjectured how they must have been originally'.[2]

The city Mohammed saw must have closely resembled that described by Cyriacus of Ancona, who had arrived there in the spring of 1436 while it was still a Florentine possession. Cyriacus was greatly impressed by its 'huge walls . . . Both inside the city

and outside in the fields were marble buildings beyond all belief—houses, sacred shrines—as well as various works of art remarkable for their marvellous execution and enormous columns, but all in heaps of shattered ruins'. There was the 'splendid Temple of Mars [the Theseum] in the open country of Athens, still standing intact with its twenty-four columns', the Tower of the Winds, the Temple of Olympian Zeus 'with enormous marble columns, most of which have fallen down', and Piraeus 'now utterly in ruins due to its age', though 'at the port there are still parts of two round towers, here and there the foundations of huge walls and at its mouth a large marble lion'.[3]

The main hall of the Propylaia (which had been turned into the ducal palace) delighted him with its 'six large columns . . . supporting a marble coffered ceiling, and twenty-four beams arranged in three rows of eight . . . the stately marble walls were built of polished blocks of marble all of equal size. Entrance was by a single huge door, a marvellous thing'.[4] Cyriacus would also have noticed the square tower in front of the Propylaia, ninety feet in height, which had been built as a watch tower by the Franks. It remained standing throughout the Turkish occupation and was only pulled down in 1874 when the archaeologist Schliemann paid for it to be dismantled so as to leave the Acropolis in a state of classical purity.

But not unnaturally Cyriacus' greatest praise was reserved for the Parthenon, 'this huge wondrous temple of the Goddess Pallas, the noble work of Phidias: it is tall, with fifty-eight columns of marble seven feet in diameter, is decorated everywhere with handsome statues . . . built of solid polished marble . . . this extraordinary marvellous temple'.[5]

After the Turks moved into Athens the Acropolis became a Turkish fortress and Christians were forbidden to set foot on it. The military commander took up residence in the Propylaia and the Erechtheum was set aside for his harem. The Parthenon itself underwent another conversion, this time to a mosque: a minaret was built at one corner and its Byzantine wall paintings were covered with a layer of whitewash. Around the ancient buildings little huts sprang up to house the garrison and their families.

With the Turkish conquest Athens sank into an obscurity which few foreigners attempted to penetrate. Not surprisingly, as travel to Greece had become extremely hazardous, Athens was not on either the trade or pilgrim route to the east, Turkish armies were still warring westward, and the Aegean was infested with pirates. One visitor, however, known as the Wiener Anonymous though thought to be a Greek, arrived in Attica eight or nine years after the occupation and wrote a guide book in Greek, giving the first description of the city under the Turks. But most writers of the time simply gave imaginary accounts of Athens which they concocted without actually going there. In the sixteenth century Martin Kraus, a learned professor of Greek and Latin at Tübingen University, went so far as to question the city's very existence: he wrote to a Greek official in Istanbul, saying 'Our German historians write that Athens is completely destroyed and has been replaced by a few fisherman's huts. Is this true?'[6]

An early account was given by a German who went to Athens entirely by accident in 1588. Reinhold Lubenau of Königsberg was an apothecary who had been attached to an embassy sent to the sultan's court by the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II. When he wished to leave at the end of eighteen months, the head of the embassy attempted to keep him there by force. Fortunately for Lubenau he had made an influential friend in the British Ambassador, Sir Edward Barton, and he turned to him for help. Barton provided him with false papers as a British subject and smuggled him on board a Turkish galley under the command of Hasan Pasha, an official who was making a tour of inspection in the Aegean. During the voyage Lubenau kept a journal and wrote down his impressions of the places they visited. Among them was Athens.

Hasan Pasha's galley reached Piraeus late one evening in October. It remained there for one day only, while Hasan Pasha held a conference with the local Turkish officials, but Lubenau made the most of that day. He was guided round Athens by a physician, Abraham Sfortius, a Jew who had been converted to Christianity and had studied medicine at Padua. Lubenau enjoyed

the company of this 'fine old pious man, well versed in Greek, Italian and Latin as well as Turkish and Hebrew', and took a deep interest in everything he saw in Athens. Unfortunately, Turkish mistrust prevented him from visiting the Acropolis or even making a drawing of it, but the town itself he found 'still very large and rather well built'.[7] Its people—mostly Turks, Greeks and Italians—seemed healthy and content. The town appeared prosperous too, with a lively trade and abundant food owing to the fertility of the surrounding countryside, and large supplies were bought for Hasan's galley.

After this brief stop, Lubenau travelled on to Venice with Hasan Pasha, and finally reached his home in Königsberg the following year. His journal ends with a prayer of 'Thanksgiving for his preservation through so many perils'.[8]

During the following century visitors began to come to Athens in greater numbers. Among them, the Turkish Moslem Evliya Chelebi who gave an enthusiastic, if at times extravagant, description of the Acropolis as he saw it in 1667.

> The Castle is ancient and simple in its construction, oriented from East to West upon a precipitous reddish rock in the middle of a plain. Such a fortress was never built on the face of the earth so great it is and mighty. For it rises fully two hundred feet from the ground. Every stone of the castle is as big as an elephant's body or the dome of a bath, squared and smooth, of white virgin marble.

The blocks were fitted 'one on top of another, without whitewash or mortar'. He was impressed by the security of its situation: to capture it would be 'in no way possible from any of the four points of the compass. For it is impossible to undermine it or to train guns on it, and there is no place from which this strong fort is overlooked.'[9]

The Parthenon in particular with its wonderful state of preservation, aroused the enthusiasm of all visitors. The French Ambassador to Istanbul, Baron de Courmenin, described it in 1630 as 'so undamaged and so little affected by the hand of time that it seems to have been only just constructed'.[10] And Wheler, writing some fifty years later, called it 'not only still the chief ornament of the

Citadel but absolutely for Matter and Art, the most beautiful Piece of Antiquity remaining in the World.'[11] But Chelebi who, as a Moslem, could visit it freely, gives the most detailed description:

> In the middle of the fortress there is one mosque, marvellous and luminous, famous among the philosophers and travellers of the world. It measures two hundred feet by eighty. Within are sixty white marble pillars with shafts and capitals, all set symmetrically and in two storeys one atop the other. But four columns between sanctuary and apse have shafts of ruby-red marble. Each one is a divine piece of artistry, an example of the philosopher's stone as it were, so shining and clean that it mirrors the colour of a man's face and is worth the whole of a country's taxes . . . The Temple floor is paved in white blocks each ten feet square . . . Each of the shining white marble blocks in the walls of the mosque is as big as an elephant, and the marvel in all this is that no builder, however great his skill, can distinguish the places where they join . . . it is like some impregnable fortress not made by human agency. There is no such magnificent mosque in the whole atlas of the globe. In civilized countries no sanctuary exists to equal it. May its construction remain eternal unto the completion of time. Amen.[12]

The Turkish occupation of Athens in 1456 brought few changes in the appearance of the town itself. A number of churches were turned into mosques and a few new mosques were built, whose graceful minarets added an eastern element to the skyline. Among them was the Fetihiye (Victory) Mosque erected to commemorate the Turkish conquest. After independence it was used for a time as a military bake-oven and has now become an archaeological workshop. Otherwise, Athens remained fairly unchanged. Its magnificent situation roused the admiration of everyone who saw it. The slopes of the mountains surrounding the city were covered with olive, orange, lemon, and pomegranate trees as well as herbs which 'give the air such a delicious fragrance that one marvels at it'.[13] The countryside was rich in plant life and many varieties grew wild on the Acropolis, while the town itself gave 'the impression of a fantastic garden'.[14]

Many people, however—the Turks in particular—preferred living outside the town. About nine miles away, on the south-west slopes of Mount Pendeli, was the village of Kiphissia, then 'a small country town in a fertile plain of paradisiac beauty, with three hundred houses, all tile-roofed'. Half the inhabitants were Moslem

and half Christian: it possessed two mosques, 'a seminary, a school, an oratory, a bath, a fine khan and ten shops. Its hills and uncultivated lands were covered with olive trees. On every hilltop was a chapel'.[15] The village changed little until modern times. At the start of the nineteenth century Hobhouse called it

> a delightful spot . . . the favourite resort of the Turks of Athens during the summer and autumnal months, and is alone of all the villages of Attica adorned with a mosck . . . in the middle of it is an open space, where there are two fountains, and a large plane-tree, beneath whose overhanging branches is a flat stone, which is so carved into squares as to serve for a draught table, and round which the Turks are seen sedately smoking, or engaged in their favourite pastime.[16]

'Almost two hours from Athens', was the mountain of Hymettos. A herbal paradise since

> on no other mountain can be found medicinal herbs in such number as are to be found here . . . Among the foothills of the mountain is a marvellous and very old monastery [Kaisariani] . . . whose water, weather and general construction are not to be equalled in the whole of creation . . . when it rains on the hills around the monastery, the lovely smells arising from the coolness of leaves and plants and trees and the earth's myriad flowers fill the nostrils: which is why the honey of Hymettos is of such renown.[17]

The town of Athens itself often disappointed foreign visitors who arrived with minds filled with images of the splendid city of the past. It had shrunk considerably in size and population under the Latins, and in the early days of Turkish occupation 'had no walls to defend itself: in so much that they have been frequently surpris'd by the Pirates from Sea, and sustained great Losses from them: until some years since they secured all the Avenues into the Town by Gates, which they built anew, and made the outmost Houses, lying close together, to serve instead of Walls. These they shut up every Night: and are by them reasonably well secured from these Corsairs.'[18]

Though he was impressed by the Acropolis when he visited Athens Baron de Courmenin found the town 'less than half as impressive as she formerly was, as one can see from the ruins, which have suffered less from time than from the barbarity of nations which have many times pillaged and sacked the town'.[19]

Sensitive visitors such as the French naval officer, La Borderie were saddened by the sight of 'this once splendid city all grown over with grass', whose 'wonderful buildings and great theatres are in ruins and turned into small dwellings'.[20] Its reputation had declined to such an extent that one of his fellow officers was content to admire the marble lion of Piraeus without troubling to visit Athens. According to a French geographer, Antoine de Pinet, nothing remained of the famous city 'except a little castle and a village which was not even safe from wolves, foxes and other wild animals'.[21]

But Sir George Wheler poured scorn on people like Pinet who called Athens a small village, suggesting that their only glimpse of it must have been 'from the Sea through the wrong End of their Perspective Glass'. Only the Acropolis, he pointed out, could be seen from the sea and it 'hides all the rest of the Town spread out upon the Plain North of it'.[22]

Though impressed by Athens' beautiful situation, the Jesuit Father Babin described the town with less enthusiasm:

> Instead of the superb buildings . . . and rich Temples which formerly adorned the city, only narrow unpaved streets are now to be seen and insignificant houses built from ancient ruins, whose sole ornaments are a few marble columns placed haphazardly in the walls and marble stones marked with a cross which have been taken from the doors or windows of old ruined churches.[23]

Almost all the houses were, however, constructed of stone unlike the wooden fire-traps of Constantinople.

Chelebi, in contrast, was lavish in his praise:

> In all the seven climes of the earth among the world's marvels and the strange things of time there are not so many wondrous creations worth seeing as those that exist in this town of Athens, this pleasant town, its wide bay of Phaleron, its surrounding valleys . . . whatsoever traveller has not seen this city with his own eyes, let him not say that he has seen the world.

He was impressed by the cleanliness of the streets with their surfaces of beaten sand: stone paving was unnecessary 'because there is never any mud'. As a whole he considered the houses 'well and strongly built, beautifully decorated and large inside, with gardens',[24] cisterns and bake-ovens.

Turkish Governor of Athens in 1809 by Duprais, with the Tower of the Winds and the Tzisdaraki mosque

IV

Life Under the Turks

ALTHOUGH at first the coming of the Turks made little change in the appearance of Athens, it altered the lives of the people drastically. And this final phase of foreign domination was to be no brief affair but would last for over three and a half centuries.

As Ottoman policy was to spare the places that submitted but to masssacre, pillage, and destroy without mercy wherever opposition was encountered, the Athenians wisely put up no resistance to the Turkish occupation. Besides, while they did not go so far as to welcome the Turks, they regarded their coming with comparative indifference. Long accustomed to living under a foreign regime, they saw little to choose between Latin and Turkish rule, and the Ottoman conquest merely added yet another chapter to the long story of alien occupation, during which Burgundians had replaced Byzantines, Catalans Burgundians, and Florentines Catalans until finally the Latins had themselves been replaced by the Turks.

Under Turkish occupation, Athens became a part of the Ottoman system of administration: this consisted of a civil governor, a military governor of the Acropolis, the mufti or religious leader and a chief justice. Up to 1760 the governor paid a fixed sum every year for his appointment, which he retrieved out of fines imposed on law-breakers. Christian merchants also had to pay a tax on every item exported from the city in addition to the regular Customs dues. When a man died without male issue, all his property went to

the governor: this applied to Christians and Moslems alike: only people under a foreign consulate's protection were exempt.

The governor also had the power to fine a Christian community if a murder were committed and the murderer not caught or if a man were killed by falling from a tree or other accident. A guard of archers roamed the streets of Athens by day and night, arresting law-breakers of every kind, from thieves to drunkards and debauchees, thus swelling the governor's revenue from fines.

Turkish punishments were appallingly harsh: a man might have the soles of his feet beaten to a pulp for theft or riotous behaviour, a Christian his hand cut off if he raised it against a Moslem: a married woman, if a Christian, who was convicted of adultery, was heavily fined or, if unable to pay the fine, was paraded through the streets of the town seated on the back of a donkey, facing its tail. But the penalty for a Moslem was infinitely worse: she was tied up in a sack and thrown into the sea. An unmarried girl, accused of adultery, was first examined by an old woman and, if no longer a virgin, was sold into slavery.

The Ottoman governors were not above the law themselves, and were sometimes sharply rebuked by the Porte (the sultan's government). In 1759 Governor Tzistarakis, an Athenian Turk, blew up a column in the Temple of Olympian Zeus as he wished to incorporate it into the mosque he was building in Monastiraki Square. He was heavily fined and dismissed from his post as Ottoman law forbade the removal of ancient monuments without the sultan's permission. His mosque now houses the Museum of Folk Art.

Corruption was as rife in Athens as in the rest of the Empire. In the seventeenth century a cousin of the French Ambassador to Istanbul was shocked to learn how 'place and position are sold in such a way that civil servants try by all means to recoup what they have spent on buying their position with something over to buy a new one when their term of office is over'.[1]

As well as the Turkish officials, there were a varying number of Greek town councillors, chosen for life from the most important Greek families. These councillors acted as advisers to the Archbishop and judged cases between Christians so as to save

them from being caught up in the tangle of Moslem law, though all disputes between Moslems and Christians had to be settled by a Turkish judge. Often the town councillors were able and public-spirited men, through whose efforts Athens 'even under the Ottoman yoke was nevertheless in a good condition and could be cited as an example to the other cities of Greece . . . they were respected by both Greeks and Turks and possessed considerable influence with the Government'.[2] At other times (especially after 1754 when 'things began to change for the worse, owing to scandals and troubles among the citizens themselves'[3]) the councillors were 'distinguished for their empty pride and sinister principles',[4] men who cared only for their own pockets and did nothing for their poorer fellow citizens, whom they exploited even more ruthlessly than the Turks did and were fiercely hated in return.

At first the Athenians accepted Turkish rule without particular hostility but it was not long before its disadvantages became only too apparent. To the ever-present danger of an outbreak of religious fanaticism were added other serious if lesser handicaps: Christians were not allowed to carry arms, to ride horses, to wear Turkish dress, or to build a house higher than a Moslem neighbour's, and they were forbidden to ring church bells, to build new churches, or repair old ones without special permission. They also paid higher taxes but, to make up for this, were not liable for military service. All the same, they were left in no doubt as to their inferior status.

The worst feature of early Ottoman rule and the one which aroused most bitter resentment was the hated child tribute which applied to all parts of the Empire. One Christian boy in five had to be handed over to the Turkish authorities to be brought up as a Moslem and educated for the upper branches of the Civil Service or to become a member of the Janissary corps (the sultan's bodyguard). Refusal to give up a child was punishable by death. A few parents were pleased to have their children given a good education and the opportunity to rise high in the sultan's service, but to most of them the tribute was an unacceptable horror, to avoid which many families fled to parts of Greece under Venetian rule. Some-

times friendly Turks would hide a child or substitute one of their own, glad to know that he would have the chance of a brilliant career. By the start of the seventeenth century the child tribute was already falling into disuse and had been completely abandoned by the end of it, but during the first century and a half of Turkish rule it caused deep distress and resentment.

During the greater part of the Ottoman occupation the Athenians, like Christians in other parts of the Empire, were primarily occupied with the question of survival, not only as individuals but as an entity. That they succeeded was no small achievement. Governed by men of different race, language, and religion, they were faced with the ever-present temptation to adopt Islam, an action which automatically made the convert a member of the dominant race with all its attendant privileges. That there were so comparatively few renegades may be attributed largely to the Church, which not only represented all Orthodox Christians in their relationship with the Turkish authorities but was also a major element in binding the Greeks into a consciously ethnic group. Hopeless though their situation often seemed, the Greeks determinedly held fast to their religion and language and successfully studied how best to exploit their own reserves of strength as well as Turkish weaknesses.

In this they were helped by possessing a number of advantages not shared by Christians in all parts of the Empire. In the seventeenth century Sir George Wheler could say of Athens that he had seen 'but few Towns in Turkey that have preserved themselves as well as this, nor that enjoy greater privileges under the Tyranny of the Turks'.[5] A number of these privileges had been obtained at the time of the conquest, in particular the favoured position of the Orthodox Church and the right to a certain say in the government of the city through the appointment of Greek town councillors. Taxes, though heavy, were less oppressive than in many parts of the Empire.

In 1645 the Athenians further improved their position by paying a large sum of money to the Porte in return for having their city attached to the sultan's harem and placed under the protection of

the Chief of the Black Eunuchs, a man who possessed great power and authority, appointed the governor, and strongly influenced the choice of other high officials. According to another story, Athens had gained its favoured position through the influence of a beautiful Athenian slave girl, Vasiliki, who became the favourite of Sultan Ibrahim I. Whatever the initial cause, both the substantial bribe he received and his own interests led the Chief Eunuch to keep all taxation under his personal control, which saved the Athenians from being exploited by a mob of lesser officials.

One of their most prized privileges was the right of appeal to the Chief Eunuch over the head of the governor, and of this they made full use whenever a governor or other official seemed to be stepping beyond the borders of his prerogative. Wheler was impressed by their determination to retain what rights they possessed.

> Although the faint Hope the Athenians have of ever gaining their Liberty from the Turkish Tyranny, constrains them to live peaceably under their Government, without running into Rebellion against them, or fomenting any Factions in the State . . . yet they forbear not to show themselves sensible of the injuries committed by the Sultan's Ministers, and to complain of them and, with notable Industry, to prosecute the Vindication of their own Right.[6]

As an example he cited a mission which had been sent to Istanbul while he was in Athens, to protest over the exactions of a new governor who was showing himself in an excessive hurry to recoup the money he had paid for his post. When this mission achieved no result, the Athenians, undeterred, despatched a second one under Michael Limbonas which was a brilliant success.

The Chief Eunuch recognized the justice of the Athenian complaints and dismissed both the governor and the military governor, fined them heavily, and ordered them to restore the money they had illegally seized. Three other officials who were also implicated were sent to the galleys. When Limbonas returned to Athens with the Chief Eunuch's orders, the Turks were so outraged by this decision in favour of a subject race that they prevented him from carrying them out. He was compelled to go back to Istanbul to ask the Chief Eunuch to send a personal representative to Athens to see that his commands were implemented, and returned 'triumphantly

to the Mortification of the Turks in the Town and the Satisfaction of the Athenians.'[7] But his triumph was short-lived: he was murdered by a group of Turks as he was leaving the Chief Justice's house. Still uncowed, the Athenians sent another deputation to Istanbul to demand justice, and the murderers were arrested, tried and sentenced, some to life imprisonment and others to exile. Justice may have been uncertain under Ottoman rule, but could at times be obtained even by a subject race.

When on another occasion the Athenians sent a deputation to Istanbul, to protest against a governor's extortions, the eloquence and forceful arguments of their leader, Demetrius Palaeologus, so impressed the Chief Eunuch that, drawing a silver inkpot from his secretary's belt, he said: 'Take this inkpot and from today I appoint you governor of Athens.'[8] Appalled by this sudden change in his fortunes, Demetrius protested that the Turks of Athens would never submit to being ruled by a member of a subject race, but the Chief Eunuch was adamant and insisted on sending him back as governor. The unfortunate man's worst fears were soon realized; the Turks revolted and, with the help of some jealous Greeks, broke into his house and murdered him.

Enmity did not always exist between the two races, however: on a number of occasions Greeks and Turks banded together against a particularly obnoxious governor. In 1754, with 'Athens in a very mutinous disposition',[9] both races revolted, set fire to the hated governor's house, murdered his equally detested secretary, and would certainly have murdered him if he had not succeeded in fighting his way through the mob to the Acropolis where he was pursued and besieged. When the revolt eventually collapsed the Athenians were punished by the imposition of a huge fine.

Athens' relatively satisfactory situation under the jurisdiction of the Chief Eunuch came to an end in 1760 when it became part of the Imperial estates. This lost it many of its administrative and legal privileges as well as the Chief Eunuch's protection. From then on the post of governor was auctioned to the highest bidder, which meant that larger and larger sums had to be recovered by taxation. Though Khalil Agha, the first governor under the new

system, was popular with Greeks and Turks alike and was generally known as 'the Good', he unfortunately died before he had held office for long, and Athens was auctioned again and again to increasingly avaricious officials until in 1775 it was inflicted with the cruellest and most acquisitive governor in all its history, Hadji Ali Haseki.

Haseki was the lover of the sultan's sister and, as such, had considerable influence, but he was 'rapacious, greedy, shameless and tyrannical',[10] hated by both Turks and Greeks. He and his officials (who included some of the wealthy Greeks) exploited the people so savagely that in desperation the two races united to send a deputation to Istanbul to complain to the Grand Vizier. Among its members were farmers who brought with them their ploughshares, which they flung at the vizier's feet, begging him to give them land elsewhere as living in Athens had become unbearable.

The vizier deprived Hadji Ali of his office but he managed through bribery to have himself reinstated a few years later. He then banished all the prominent Turks who had opposed him and began a veritable reign of terror among the Greeks, imposing huge fines on whomever he felt could be forced to pay, and imprisoning or executing any of his victims who had the temerity to protest. He expropriated agricultural land, compelled the workers to do forced labour for him, and imprisoned a large number of men and women for non-existent debts or in retaliation for the escape of their relatives from the city. One Easter 'everyone was in prison' and suffering appalling conditions. 'The men had to stand upright, there was no room to sit', and both men and women were regularly flogged in an effort to compel them to pay him more money. Athens was reduced to poverty: almost half the population fled from the city after Haseki had stripped them of all their money and possessions, and the situation became so desperate that in 1795 the abbot of the Petrakis monastery, Dionysius Petrakis, went to Istanbul to beg help for his monastery and for Athens. Haseki was in Istanbul at the time and, learning of Petrakis's intentions, tried to poison him. The abbot managed to avoid swallowing more than a few drops of the poisoned coffee offered him and escaped death, though 'it was

a fearsome poison . . . his beard fell off and his teeth were injured'.[11]

As soon as he had recovered, the abbot appealed to the patriarch and to the sultan to have Haseki banished from Athens. As the sultan's sister had died a few years earlier, the governor had lost his protector and the Porte were willing to listen to the abbot's complaints. Haseki was found guilty and banished to Cos, where 'presently he was beheaded . . . and thereby our country was delivered from Tyranny against all hope and expectation.'[12]

Conditions in Athens improved at once, people were released from prison and, after twenty years of oppression, those who had fled returned and the city 'began to prosper and to be beautiful'.[13]

Under the Turkish occupation Greek relations with the authorities varied from time to time and often depended on outside factors. During a war with Venice in the seventeenth century Christians had lived in terror of death as the sultan had spoken openly of accompanying an attack on Venetian-held Crete by a general massacre of his potentially disloyal Christian subjects: fortunately the threat was never put into action. Later in the century, however, when Morosini's army attacked Athens, the Greeks bore out the sultan's worst suspicions by welcoming the invaders and offering them their help against the Turks.

At times Turkish officials protected the Christians against threats from Moslem citizens: in the eighteenth century Greek rebels on Salamis, encouraged by the Russians, raided the mainland and so enraged the Moslems of Athens that they planned to massacre the entire Christian population. 'Early in 1771', wrote the contemporary Greek historian, John Benizelos, Russian supported rebels 'came under the Muscovite flag and took Coulouris (Salamis) . . . thieves and evil-doers from the villages round Athens and not a few Athenians' joined them and 'Salamis became a headquarters of robbers under the name of Moscow'. The rebels 'made raids and disturbances every day in the environs of Athens' and the Greek Athenians were consequently 'in perpetual fear of the wrath of the local Turks and Albanians'.[14] Fortunately the Governor took the Christians under his protection and forbade a massacre.

The Acropolis possessed a garrison of

about a hundred Turks of the Country who reside there with their Families. Their houses overlook the City, Plain and Gulf, but the situation is as airy as pleasant, and attended with so many Inconveniences that those who are able and have the Option, prefer living below when not on duty . . . the Rock is destitute of Water fit for drinking, and Supplies are daily carried up in earthern Jars, on Horses and Asses. The Garrison is always on its guard for fear of Pirats who . . . do a great deal of Mischief, wherefore all Night a Part of them by turns go the Rounds of the Walls, making a great Halooing and Noise to signify their Watchfulness and that if Pirats or other Enemies come, they are ready to receive them.[15]

Marc Coronelli, the official Venetian Geographer, who was in Athens shortly before Morosini's attack, considered that 'the soldiers in the garrison practically enjoy a synecure living inside the fortress with their families, watching for a possible invasion by corsairs who frequently make sudden attacks.[16]

It was not only the corsairs they watched for: the Athenian Turks were hostile and suspicious of foreign Christians, regarding them all as possible spies, and a visit to Athens could be hazardous for the unwary Christian. In 1588 Lubenau, although accompanied by a Turkish soldier from an Ottoman official's galley, was seized roughly by three Janissaries when he tried to make a sketch of the Acropolis (ignoring warnings not to do so) and was only released after he had paid a sizeable ransom while, in spite of his protests, his portfolio of drawings was confiscated.

Robert de Dreux, the Capuchin almoner to the French Ambassador in Istanbul, also ran into trouble when he visited Athens. Delighted though he was by the city's beauties which, he felt, more than made up for the discomforts of his journey there, the visit itself cannot have been altogether comfortable since, whenever he went sightseeing on his own, he was pursued by Turkish children shouting insults and hurling stones. When he climbed the Hill of the Muses, an old Turk accused him of spying on the Acropolis opposite and threatened him with violence, but fortunately an Albanian appeared who recognised his Capuchin habit and rescued him from the Turk. On another occasion de Dreux foolishly ignored a guide's friendly warning to keep away from the

Acropolis as the Turks of Athens were less tolerant than those of Istanbul and suspected any Christian who approached too closely. When the soldiers of the garrison noticed him examining the walls with suspicious care, they shouted threats and threw stones, and he only escaped hurt by ignominious flight.

Sir George Wheler and Dr Jacob Spon, who spent a month in Athens, did not find the garrison Turks any more accommodating: they were only able to overcome Turkish mistrust sufficiently to gain permission for a single visit to the Acropolis. Wheler described with what 'great Difficulty we obtained the Favour of seeing the Castle', as the Military Governor

> being newly come thither, and scarce settled in his Place knew not whether he might safely gratify us. But an old Souldier of the Castle, his Friend and Confident, for three okas of Coffee [four kilos], two to the Governour and one to himself, persuaded him at last to give way: assuring him that it was never refused to such Strangers as it appeared that we were.[17]

Although the two men examined everything as closely as possible on their one visit, even with the permit they were not allowed to make notes or sketches on the spot, and Wheler had to write up his observations from memory.

Francis Vernon, who was in Athens at about the same time, spoke of the 'brutally barbarous' behaviour of the Turkish garrison,[18] who suspected him of spying when he tried to take measurements of the Acropolis buildings, and would have shot him if it had not been for the intervention of the popular British Consul, Giraud, who seems to have spent a considerable amount of his time rescuing foreigners from the Turkish soldiers. As a Christian visitor was automatically considered a suspicious character, he had to show special caution if he were to avoid being arrested or shot out of hand. He also had to know how much he should offer in the way of presents or bribes to the governor, the military governor, the mufti, and other important personages, to ensure their protection during his stay and to obtain permission to visit the antiquities: in addition, there were the smaller tips to less important but still useful people.

The Greeks had to show even greater caution and to alter their way of life to conform with the demands of the occupation. At the time of the conquest agriculture had been their chief livelihood: though the Athenian farmers lived in the town, they went out into the country every day to cultivate their land. Their olive groves stretched for a long distance and the fertility of the soil made food plentiful and cheap: fish, oil, aniseed, cheese, and honey were among the commodities to be found in the market, in addition to wool, leather, raw silk, and soap.

The unsettled years which followed the Turkish conquest caused the economy to decline, but by the 1670s Athens had become fairly stable while peace between Turkey and Venice brought traders and travellers to the city. An English merchant described the olive trees as standing 'so thick to the west of the city that they seem to be a wood',[19] while vineyards covered a large part of the land lying between Athens and the sea.

The disastrous Venetian invasion shattered this prosperity and the Athens to which people began to drift back in 1692 was 'desolate almost to extinction'.[20] Fourteen years later a French archaeologist reported that it was still almost empty.

Conditions improved after the first Russo-Turkish war ended in 1718, and Athens entered on one of the most prosperous and happy periods of its life under Ottoman rule and enjoyed a number of years of peace and good government under a young reforming sultan, Ahmed III, and his successor. A revival of the economy took place, based on cattle-breeding and the production of olives, corn, and honey. By the middle of the century, however, a great many of the Greeks had given up farming and turned to trade since much of the agricultural land had been taken over by rich Turks who liked to set themselves up as landed proprietors. Where this happened most of the actual cultivation was now done by Albanians as 'the lordly Turk and lively Greek neglected pasturage and agriculture'.[21]

The Greeks still clung, however, to their vineyards and olive groves, which were watered by the Kiphissos river outside the city and stretched for more than six miles. There were also a number of

vineyards and olive groves lying between Athens and the Saronic Gulf. Above them were public cisterns which provided water for the gardens and trees below: each owner paid for their use by the hour and the price varied according to the scarcity or abundance of water. The Greeks were to a large extent dependent on their olive crop and in bad winters when the north wind blew so hard as to destroy the blossom, there was a poor crop and this spelt disaster.

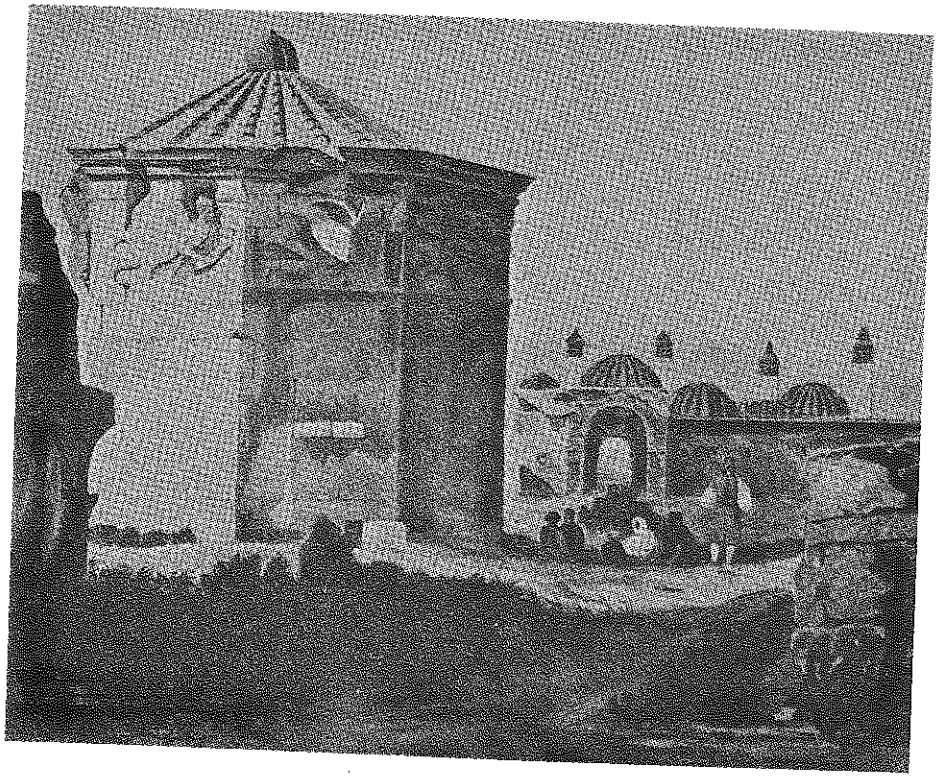
Attica would have produced enough grain to feed its small population, had not the law forbidding its export been continually evaded, which meant that almost every year a grain shortage brought Athens close to starvation. In 1765 the shortage was so acute and protests so threatening that a wealthy citizen opened his granaries to the public. But at the same time the governor was selling a large part of the following year's harvest to a French merchant in order to raise the money he needed to buy a renewal of his official appointment, thus recreating the same famine conditions.

It did not take the Greeks long to become successful merchants: 'all traders in some degree',[22] they showed a 'natural Dexterity in all the little Matters they undertake . . . as in buying, selling and all their Domestick Affairs'.[23] All the trade of Athens was in their hands as 'the Turks had neither Capacity for nor Knowledge of Business'.[24] The Greeks were determined to preserve that monopoly: no competition was permitted and Jews were not allowed to settle in Athens, as 'they would never be able to live in harmony with the Greeks who were equally cunning and successful traders'.[25] Though the Turks would have welcomed Jewish immigrants, the Greeks threatened bodily harm to any who came. Even in the nineteenth century, Jews were still not allowed to stay longer than three days.

Making the most of this monopoly, Greek merchants developed a sizeable trade in a number of commodities produced in Attica, such as silk, cotton, nuts, and wax. For a time Piraeus provided a satisfactory outlet for these goods as it possessed 'a large, fine and safe harbour, where many vessels might lie at anchor',[26] but by the middle of the seventeenth century piracy, neglect and lack of defences had emptied it of all but a few fishing boats. Trade

declined sharply and was mostly confined to 'little matters' among the Greeks themselves. A few French ships used the port but they came 'seldom from England'.[27] All the same, the greater part of the governor's revenue came from Customs dues: the next largest was from tithes paid for acorns gathered in the neighbourhood of Athens. (The value of these acorns lay in the size of their cups which contained an ingredient used until quite recently in tanning.) A few small industries—pottery, soap-making, dyeing, ironwork, and olive pressing—also flourished.

The situation improved considerably towards the end of the eighteenth century. A war with Russia had gone badly for the Turks who were forced to sign a treaty in 1774 which gave Russian merchant ships free navigational rights in Ottoman waters. This proved of immense value to the Greeks since Russian Consuls—often Greeks themselves—granted a number of Greek ships the right to fly the Russian flag, which entitled them to Russian protection: this in turn led to a rapid increase in Greek trade and shipping and to the formation of a nucleus of a merchant navy which was to serve the country well in the War of Independence. Before long the Greeks had become the dominant commercial class in the Ottoman Empire and their growing trade with western Europe also benefited other sections of the population.



The Tower of the Winds and the Islamic school

V

Religion and Education

IF there was one section of the Greek population which found Turkish rule preferable to Latin, it was the Orthodox Church. Not only was it freed from the hated Roman domination and confirmed in the possession of all its property, but the archbishop was able to exert more power and influence than he had since Byzantine times. To the Ottomans the Church was not only a religious body but a political one as well: as its head the archbishop had jurisdiction over all Christians, regulated their lives, and settled differences between them. Because of his position as their leader and representative, the welfare of the Christians depended to a large extent on his wisdom and tact.

Like all Ottoman officials, the patriarch in Istanbul was at the mercy of corrupt Ottoman practices. He had to pay a large bribe to the Porte for his appointment and could only recover this sum from his archbishops, who in turn had to retrieve their payments from the people under their care. In spite of the evils of the system, many of the archbishops were able, good men, popular with their congregations and discreet enough to keep on good terms with the Turkish officials. A few were learned men from the start while others learned from experience to become skilful rulers of the Church, respected by Greeks and Turks alike. Anthimus III, who was archbishop in the second half of the seventeenth century, was a well-educated and highly respected man who had studied both

ancient Greek and the Church Fathers and possessed 'a good House on the Hill'[1] with a fine library.

To represent the Christian community could be both difficult and dangerous, and the archbishop had to be an astute and cautious man to avoid running into trouble with the Turkish authorities. In 1687, when the Venetians attacked Athens, Archbishop Jacob I (who detested the Turks for murdering his friend Michael Limbonas) headed a Greek mission to welcome Morosini at Piraeus and to beg his protection against the Turks. For this temerity the patriarch—under pressure from the Porte—deposed and excommunicated him as a traitor to the Empire. In the following century Anthimus IV, who became archbishop at the age of twenty-five and was a great lover of learning, was deposed for encouraging a rising against an unpopular governor. He was imprisoned for a time and had to pay a huge fine to secure his release, but was later reinstated as archbishop to the joy of the Christian population, who were devoted to him.

Not all the archbishops were good men, however. Anthimus IV's successor, Bartholomew, was an ambitious and avaricious intriguer, who had bought his position at a high price and harshly taxed the Athenians to recover his outlay. A number of them finally revolted in an effort to force his resignation or deposition. As he had been foolish enough to quarrel with the governor—an equally rapacious and tyrannical man—the people's complaints were listened to, and he was denounced as a traitor and imprisoned.

As in Athens, so in Istanbul. The patriarch was often an influential man, to whom the sultan and his advisers were prepared to listen, and his Christian followers appealed to him for help on many occasions. After the Venetian withdrawal from Athens, the exiled Greeks living on Salamis were anxious to accept the sultan's offer of an amnesty and return home. First, however, they wished to make their peace with the patriarch (who had severely castigated them for their support of the Venetians), not only for the sake of their souls but also in the hope that he would intercede for them with the sultan and procure them better terms. To this end they sent him a heart-rending appeal for forgiveness and reconciliation,

describing their sufferings from plague and corsair raids.

> The sea brings the pirate galleys of the barbarians, who in their turn bring with them fearful captivity and fresh cause for lamentation. The sea-shore of Salamis is resounding then with tumult and wailing—wretched pregnant mothers enduring the pangs of birth before their time and young babes done to death with stones, young maids in their prime becoming the fearful victims of tyrannical lust and those who had reached an honourable old age closing their lives in slavery.[2]

This appeal softened the heart of the patriarch and won them his forgiveness and good offices with the Porte, which was in any case anxious to resettle the Greeks in their ruined and empty city.

But neither the patriarch nor the archbishop could have wielded such authority if the Orthodox Church had not possessed considerable influence with the population: to the Greeks the Church not only pointed the way to salvation but represented what alittle remained of past glories as well as being their protector and go-between with the Turkish authorities. Athens possessed a large number of churches—between two and three hundred—and, while some were tiny, many were built of marble. A number of them were open regularly for services although others were only used once a year on their saint's day. One of the most important, St George Ceramicus, formerly the Theseum, had neither been damaged nor turned into a mosque as it was outside the Turkish residential area, but the Greeks were not allowed to hold services there as it was considered too magnificent for a subject race. Once a year only, on St George's day, it was opened to them in return for a substantial bribe. From this it gained the nickname of 'The Idler'.

As well as churches, there were also a number of monasteries (and 'thousands of monks') in and around Athens: Kaisariani, in its enchanting situation on the slopes of Mount Hymettos, was an object of admiration and pilgrimage. More than three hundred monks lived there and 'except for Jews, the monks welcome all who come, feeding them and giving them every hospitality'.[3]

In those difficult days the Church did not neglect its old and its poor. Every parish had a priest and the larger ones a deacon as well, a churchwarden, and an old woman who acted as sacristan, swept the church, lit the candles, and used to 'knock on the doors

of the parishioners with a cudgel when it was time for them to get up and attend Mass'. Every church had cells or sheds in its garden, and the old woman lived in one of them.

. . . in the other cells lived poor folk who had no home. And the people of the parish hired them men and women both, for work in their house and fields, and so they had a livelihood . . . The parishioners would send them bread, a little oil, olives, plates of food, firewood etc: they would take on the women as servants by the day and get them to run errands and to spin cotton and yarn and silk and sailcloth, and in the harvest season to gather the grapes and olives. So the poor who had no fields of their own and the old who had no home were able to live without having to beg.[4]

And it was the custom in Athens on the Eve of Christmas and the Resurrection of the Lord that the archons [Town Councillors] would appoint two householders and a cleric to go around the bazaar and all the town, collecting what anyone would give: likewise from the churchwardens something from the churches' tithes, and from the monasteries also—whatever the abbots and the well-to-do monks could offer. And with these collections they would buy shoes, kerchiefs for the women, fezzes etc. And they would distribute these among the poor pensioners of the parishes and to certain well-born people who had fallen on bad times and who had only a house left or a little farm, and suffered hardship because they were unused to working.[5]

The churches all had olive trees and a few fields, donated over the years as votive offerings by their parishioners: from a hundred to two hundred and more trees. Several of the churches had workshops in the bazaar. They had small market gardens also.[5]

Every Christian used to dedicate whatever he wished towards the lighting and decoration of the church, and the assistance of the poor people living in the cells. Thus there were no beggars in the town except for a few strangers now and then. Nor did the poor of Athens go elsewhere to beg, since they could keep alive this way. More than a thousand souls lived in the parishes and a great quantity of women became nuns, who did not marry, and the cells were full and the inmates busy at all manner of labour.[7]

An Englishman, John Galt, who visited Athens in the early nineteenth century, was not, however, impressed by the Church's care of its needy. 'The only provision for the Athenian poor', he wrote, 'consists in two or three little apartments which are granted free to helpless women: infirm and needy men retire into the monasteries. For their sakes,' he added, 'I regard the Greek monks as really of some use.'[8]

The Orthodox Church was not generally admired by European visitors and until the twentieth century few appreciated either Byzantine architecture or painting. In the eighteenth century Richard Chandler mocked at the church wall-paintings as 'extravagant, ridiculous and absurd beyond imagination',[9] while Hobhouse probably expressed the view of most foreigners when he said that 'neither the temples of the Mohametans nor those of the Christians add anything to the appearance of the town'.[10] The Protestants in particular spoke scathingly of the Church as riddled with superstition and possessing an overbearing, bigoted, and ignorant priesthood. Few made any effort to understand either its ritual or the tight-rope position it occupied under the Ottomans, and jeered at the Greeks who 'confide in holy water, which is sprinkled on their houses yearly by a priest, to drive away any demons who may have obtained entrance'.[11]

Even with what help and protection the Church could give them, life under Islamic rule was not easy for Christians, and inevitably a number of them suffered severely. The Jesuit priest Babin, while critical of the Greek Athenians as a whole, admitted that many were 'brave and virtuous',[12] and gave two examples: one was a young girl who was attacked in her house by a gang of Turks and suffered sixty knife wounds in defence of her virginity. The British and French consuls had her wounds dressed and sent her to an island to convalesce but complained that the Greeks, to their shame, did nothing to help her. In a second case a child chose death in preference to renouncing Christianity.

In the eighteenth century, after a war with Russia, some Athenians were accused—rather at random it seemed—of helping the Russian-supported rebels on Salamis. Those wealthy enough to pay large ransoms were released but two others, a poor fisherman and his son, were executed. A third victim, a young gardener Michael Bakanas, was wrongfully accused of taking supplies across to Salamis. As he had neither money nor influence and refused to save his life by accepting Islam, he too was executed and died bravely, protesting that it was better to die a Christian than to live a Moslem. The first hero and martyr of the Liberation, he was

later canonized as St Michael the Less, or the New Martyr, as those who died for their faith under the Turks were called.

The most famous of the Athenian martyrs was St Philothei, a rich and nobly-born woman who lived in the sixteenth century. She became a nun after her husband's death and founded a convent dedicated to St Andrew. To this was attached a hospital, a girls' school, and a workshop where the nuns taught poor Athenian girls to weave and helped them to sell their work. St Philothei also bought a farm at Patision and a vast stretch of land on which the modern suburb bearing her name is built. The eleventh-century church, the Omorphi Ecclesia, still stands on the slopes of Tourkovouni on what was her property. The Turks hated her because she used her money to ransom Christian slave-girls from Turkish harems and hid runaway slaves. One night a gang broke into her house and beat her up so severely that she died of her injuries.

Legends were not slow to grow up around her name: it soon began to be said that, while her husband was still alive, Philothei used to give oil to the poor secretly out of their private stocks. Terrified of her husband's anger when all the jars were empty, she filled them with water and prayed to the Virgin for help. A little later her husband went to check their supply and found all the jars were full of oil: St Philothei then confessed that her pity for the poor had led her to give away their entire supply which had, however, been miraculously replaced by the Virgin.

Kind and charitable to the poor St Philothei might be, but her charity did not always extend to others. She quarrelled with another saint, Timothy, the bishop of Euboea, and violently abused the Athenians in a letter to a high Church dignitary, in which she accused them of behaving towards her with 'every manner of hostility and wildness'.[13] She continued

> The people of Attica do not know the difference between good and evil, therefore they hate virtue and love vice . . . they are a people without religion, decision or shame, wicked and reckless, with mouths open for insults and reproaches, grumbling, barbarous-tongued, loving strife and trouble and gossip, petty, loquacious, arrogant, lawless, crafty, inquisitive and wide-awake to profit by the misfortunes of others.[14]

But the Athenians forgave her insults (or perhaps never knew of them) and, loving and admiring her as their own special saint, rejoiced when she was canonized in 1599, ten years after her death.

Though the Orthodox Church looked after the spiritual and material welfare of its people, there was one area in which it did little or nothing. During most of the Turkish occupation education was at a very low level in Athens and men of learning were few. The setting up of schools by subject races was frowned on by the Turks, and children had either to go abroad, if the parents were rich enough, or be taught secretly: only rarely and through the payment of a large bribe could permission be gained to open a school.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century the patriarch in Istanbul became seriously concerned about the lack of education and ordered the archbishop of Athens to set up a school where 'the Holy Scriptures may be learned and to help as far as possible those willing to teach and those anxious to learn'.[15] A number of Athenians who had studied abroad, particularly in Italy, returned to the city and taught privately, and the first school was opened in the following century by an Epirote priest attached to the Greek Church in Venice. Unfortunately the funds he collected were insufficient to keep the Academy going, while Turkish hostility created endless difficulties. When a boy from the Peloponnese, Christopher Angelos, arrived in Athens to study at the Academy, he was arrested, stripped of all his books and money and very nearly executed as a spy. He managed to escape and fled to England where he spent the rest of his life, first at Cambridge and then at Oxford. Shortly after this episode the Academy was forced to close.

During its short life, however, its head professor was for a time a man of considerable reputation as a philosopher and teacher: he was Theophilos Corydales, a friend of that brilliant and controversial patriarch, Cyril Lucaris, who called him 'the unchallenged master of Levantine philosophy'.[16] Corydales had studied medicine and philosophy at Padua where Lucaris was a fellow student, and in 1624 the patriarch summoned him from Athens and

appointed him Director of the Patriarchal School in Istanbul. Corydales instituted a general reform and modernization of the School and started new courses in Philosophy and Science. His career was sadly brought to an end by the deposition and execution for treason of his patron Cyril Lucaris in 1638. Corydales was removed from his position because of his support of Lucaris' doctrines, which were influenced by Calvinism and had been condemned as heretical, but was later reinstated and appointed for a brief period archbishop of Arta, only to be again deposed for his support of Lucaris' principles. This time he remained in retirement until his death in 1646.

Education in Athens had to wait until the eighteenth century before any further efforts could be made. Then, during a period of economic revival, the number of educated men increased and two schools were founded. The first, the Seminary of Greek Studies—a revival of the earlier Academy—was set up by a monk, Gregory Sotiris, in 1717 and endowed by two rich Athenians who had made their money in Venice and Spain respectively. Sotiris taught at his school without pay and, when the number of pupils increased, he brought in other teachers as well, but he soon ran short of money to pay their salaries. Even while it had the necessary funds, the school was not a great success: it was generally looked down on as old-fashioned though Sotiris himself was admired as a man of learning and integrity. A more modern school was opened in 1750 by John Deka, a Greek living in Venice, who built a schoolhouse which he endowed with sufficient funds to support a master and twelve students. The students attended a seven-year course, after which time they were replaced by another twelve. In 1774 the historian John Benizelos was appointed director. When Napoleon confiscated the Deka property in Venice, the school fell into difficulties and for a time Benizelos taught without salary. Dionysius Petrakis, the abbot of the Petrakis Monastery, came to the rescue by making the school a grant which covered the teachers' salaries as well as school expenses. In 1810 the school was amalgamated with the Seminary.

Up to the middle of the eighteenth century the standard of education still remained very low. Richard Chandler complained that the Turks were 'a people never yet illumined by science. They are more ignorant than can easily be conceived. The Greeks are as bad and pass their time reading legends of their saints.'[17] While admitting that the Athenians still respected learning as much as they had in Byzantine times, he was scornful of their two schools which taught almost nothing but religion.

By the end of the century, however, the population of Athens had increased and the city become moderately prosperous. A number of merchants had acquired considerable wealth and influence and were beginning to develop political interests. Though education was still poor ('pitiful' according to John Galt), it was spreading gradually and, in spite of the wretchedly inadequate schools, most of the men could read and write. Few parents could, however, afford to give their children further schooling, and books were hard to come by. But contact with Western ideas influenced the outlook of the more intelligent and better read Athenians, and made them increasingly dissatisfied with their position as a subject race. The picture of a free and independent country was taking shape, though opinion about the means of achieving it was divided between the hope of foreign intervention and the feeling that eventually it would have to be gained by the Greeks' own efforts.

Early in the nineteenth century a step forward was taken when three leading Athenians founded the Philamuse Society, with the object of furthering the education of intelligent young Greeks. Membership was open to any Greek or foreigner, who wished to contribute towards the Society's aims of publishing useful books, encouraging education and helping poor but intelligent students to continue their studies abroad. The Society had its foreign headquarters in Vienna and at the start 'attracted the support of kings and princes, of nobles and philosophers, and men of every rank'.[18] Among them were the Czar Alexander of Russia, the kings of Bavaria and Saxony, Capodistria, Metternich, Talleyrand, and Wellington, whose donations helped its rapid expansion. That enthusiastic Philhellene, Frederick North, Earl of Guilford (whom

Byron rather unkindly called 'the most illustrious humbug of his age and country'[19]) was elected president in 1815. The Philamuse Society made an important contribution to the spread of education but was suspected of revolutionary tendencies by the Turkish authorities and, after a time, by some of the rich Greeks as well.

Interest in the education of young Greeks was not confined to their own countrymen and the Orthodox Church. In the seventeenth century the Roman Catholic Church was already bestirring itelf in this direction and in 1645 Jesuit priests came from France to open a school in Athens: it proved so unpopular, however, with both Turks and Greeks that it soon moved to Chalkis in Euboea, which already had a small Catholic population. The Capuchins who replaced them in 1658 were more successful: they were also interested in the preservation and restoration of ancient monuments and made the first detailed town plan of Athens. To them, too, was owed the introduction of the tomato, which they grew in their monastery garden.

The first Capuchin friar to settle in Athens was Father Simon, who in 1669 bought the monument of Lysicrates (334 BC) and some adjoining houses in the Plaka district for a monastery which was to include a guest house for Christian travellers from all countries and of all denominations. The monastery lasted until the War of Independence and the Lysicrates monument is still to be seen. The Greek who sold it to Father Simon afterwards had second thoughts and refused to hand it over on the pretext that foreigners were not allowed to own ancient monuments for fear that they might damage them. The case went before the Town Councillors who ruled in favour of the Greek, but Father Simon appealed to the Turkish judge who gave him custody on condition that he did not damage it and allowed all who wished to visit it.

At first Father Simon was regarded with the same suspicion as the Jesuits, and the Turkish children threw stones at him. But he soon showed himself to be such a wise and good man that he became generally popular with both Turks and Greeks, and the Capuchin habit well enough known to allow its wearers to walk unmolested around the town. To such an extent did Father Simon

gain the love and confidence of the Greeks that they allowed their wives and daughters to remain in the room when he was invited to the house—a privilege never accorded to Orthodox monks or Moslem imams. There were times too when Father Simon was called in to help settle quarrels between members of a Greek family.

But not even the Capuchins could always avoid trouble: the friars opened a school for the education of Turkish, Greek, and Catholic boys, and one of Father Simon's successors, Father Louis, gave a small picture as a prize to a Greek child. This was snatched away from him by a Turkish boy as he was leaving the school. Father Louis grabbed the thief by his gown, which tore, and Turkish passers-by raised an outcry that the Infidel was beating a Moslem, a crime punishable by death. The Turkish judge summoned to the scene condemned the friar to death, but the French Consul secretly sent a gift of sugar to the governor who promptly reversed the judge's decision on the grounds of insufficient evidence. The friar was handed over to the consul for safe-keeping and the Turkish witnesses persuaded to repudiate their evidence.

VI

The People of Athens

THOUGH only Moslems were allowed to live on the Acropolis, the lower town possessed a mixed population, predominantly Christian but including a number of Turks (just under one-third before the Venetian invasion and one-fifth afterwards), as well as a few pagan negroes and Turkish gypsies. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century the number of inhabitants was estimated at seventeen thousand, though by the time of the Venetian attack a hundred years later it had shrunk to ten thousand. According to the British Consul of the time, there were about two thousand houses: over half were inhabited by Greeks, six hundred by Turks, and a hundred and fifty by Albanians. By the start of the nineteenth century the population had again risen to seventeen thousand, which included a few families of Latin merchants living under the protection of the French Consul.

The Turks, though a minority, never for a moment forgot that they were the dominant race and 'were more than enough to keep the Christians fully sensitive of their mastery . . . they awe with a look the loftiest vassal'. Originally warring nomads from central Asia, they had built up their empire through continuous fighting: it was as conquerors that they had come to Athens and it was by right of conquest that they remained there, though as a rule living on peaceful terms with their Christian neighbours and showing hostility only in times of political crisis. Though harsh and savage in war