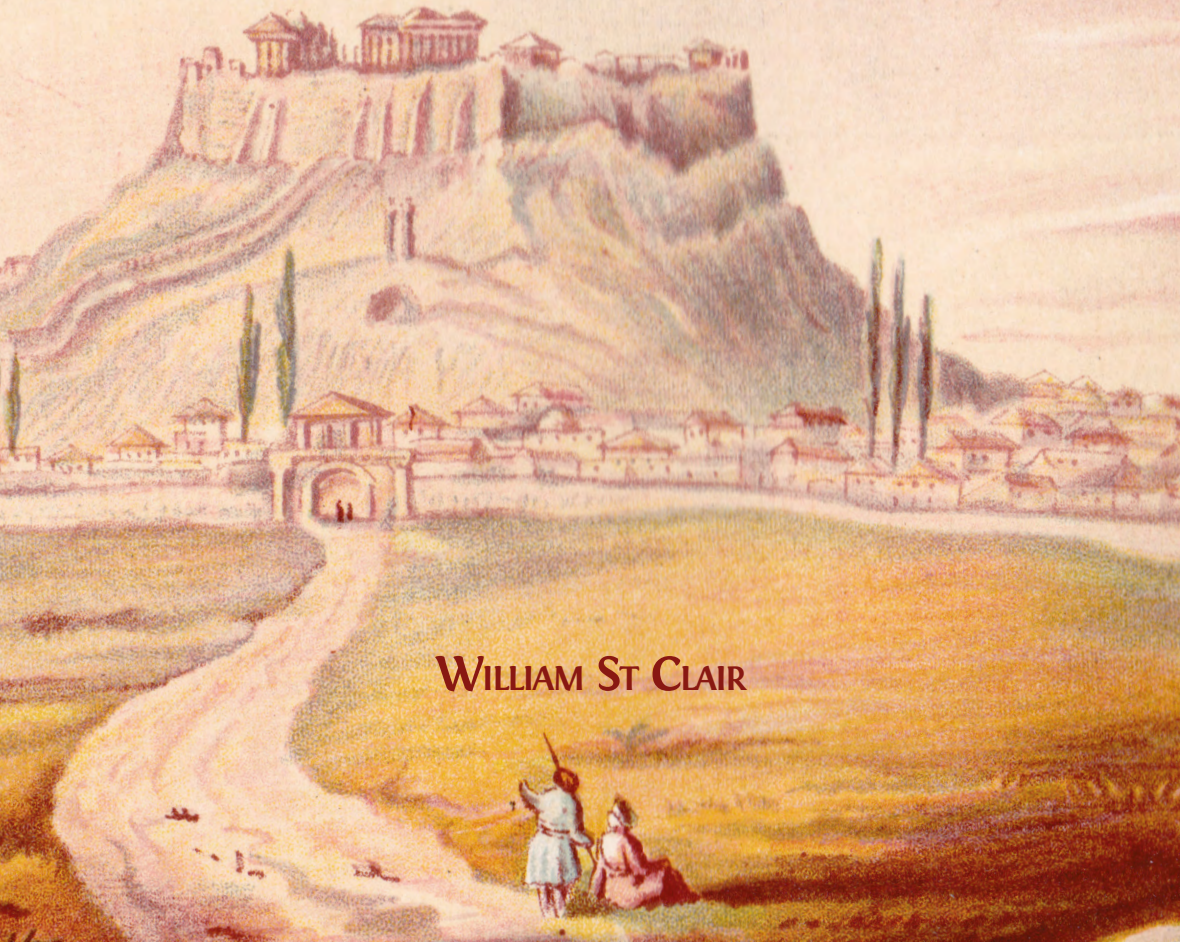


Who Saved the Parthenon?

A New History of the Acropolis
Before, During and After the
Greek Revolution



WILLIAM ST CLAIR



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Cover image: Figure 2.7. 'View of the Acropolis from the banks of the Illysus, Sep^r 1824.' Chromolithograph from a contemporary amateur picture. From: William Black, L.R.C.S.E., Surgeon, H.M.S. Chanticleer, *Narrative of Cruises in the Mediterranean in H.M.S. "Euryalus" and "Chanticleer" during the Greek War of Independence (1822–1826)* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1900), frontispiece. The chromolithograph was made by McLagan and Cumming of Edinburgh c.1900. Public domain.

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13. The Last Days of Ottoman Athens

When Reschid's army reoccupied the Acropolis on 7 June 1827, the Ottoman Government planned that their stay would be permanent. They appointed Omer Pasha as voivode (governor) of the two provinces of Attica and Negropont (modern Euboea), with Youssouf as the local bey (deputy governor) in Athens, plus a *cadi* (judge), a *disdar* (military commander of the Acropolis) and an imam (Muslim religious leader). The first *disdar* was Şehla (the 'cross-eyed') Ibrahim Pasha, but he was soon replaced by Osman Agha, a major in the reformed Ottoman army. The garrison consisted of five hundred and forty-four men, both infantry and cavalry.¹

For a time almost the only inhabitants of Athens were the Ottoman officials and army but gradually the Greek population drifted back, and in 1828 most of the Ottoman military forces were withdrawn north to take part in a war that had broken out between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In 1831, the garrison was thought to consist of one hundred and forty men, mostly Albanians, not much larger than it had been in 1821 at the outbreak of the Revolution.² With artillery batteries mounted on the Hill of Philopappos, which was now surrounded by a defensive ditch, as well as on the Acropolis, the Ottoman forces were able to dominate the town and re-impose the pre-1821 normality.³

In prolonged negotiations among the powers for a settlement, it was decided that the province of Attica, including Athens, should become

1 Noted by Ilicak, 'Revolutionary Athens', 15, from Ottoman archives.

2 Edward J. Dawkins, the British Representative, to Foreign Office, 3 February 1831, from Nauplia, Kew FO 32/20, 31.

3 Röser, Jacob von, *Tagebuch meiner Reise nach Griechenland. in die Türkei, nach Aegypten und Syrien, im Jahre 1834 bis 1835* (Mergentheim: by subscription, 1836), 97.

part of the new state. Although the Treaty of London included a face-saving device for maintaining a nominal Ottoman suzerainty, this was a clear interference in the affairs of a foreign country, contrary to one of the provisions of the post-Westphalian system of European nation states. And it was yet another insulting demonstration of the non-European status of the Ottoman Empire, as the Ottoman leadership at once pointed out.⁴

But even after the Ottoman Government was induced to give grudging consent to a plan to tolerate a peace settlement involving some measure of internal autonomy, the Ottoman army was in no hurry to leave Athens. Sometimes it was said that the new war with Russia nullified the treaties and agreements to which Russia had been a party. Later it was claimed that Ottoman claims for financial compensation for lands and properties near Thebes, part of a buying-out of long-established Muslims and the sources of income of many of their mosques ('vacoufs') had not been settled.⁵ An area comprising the Peloponnese and some islands became a *de facto* state, with its capital in Nauplia, but no peace had been agreed and the frontiers were not settled.

Western visitors, including artists, authors, architects, and military and naval men had begun to visit to Athens again in small numbers after the fighting ended in May 1827, and were soon again an established community centred on a hotel run by Pierre Gaspary, who doubled as French consul and *de facto* representative of the interests of the provisional government of Greece. And, as in pre-Revolution days, the Ottoman authorities gave the western visitors every welcome. In August 1832, Bey Youssouf, seated with a white greyhound at his feet, and attended by twenty silent and armed personal slaves, honoured the young French poet Alphonse de Lamartine with tobacco served in amber pipes decorated with silk ribbons and with coffee provided in tiny china cups basketted in silver filigree thread.⁶ As had been a custom for as long as anyone could remember, when the bey heard that an

4 Discussed by Chesney, Colonel R.A., *The Russo-Turkish campaigns of 1828 and 1829: with a view of the present state of affairs in the East*, 3rd ed. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1854), 7, with quotations from the reports of official Ottoman reactions at 13–15.

5 Reports of the negotiations for the Ottoman forces to leave Athens and Attica, with some letters from the Ottoman side, in Kew FO 32/36.

6 Lamartine, i, 86. Another description of the courtesies in Trant, 260.

important visitor had arrived at the borders of his jurisdiction, he sent a man with a horse to welcome his guest. Various referred to by western visitors as Seyktar and Selictar, Youssouf was the cousin, sword-bearer, and deputy in Athens of Pasha Omar in Negropont.

Lamartine also met Georg Gropius, the Austrian consul, who had now lived in Athens for thirty-two years, again welcoming visitors and showing them round the ancient sites as he had done before the Revolution. He had memories of Byron and of happy days, as well of the sieges of the Acropolis in 1821 and 1826–1827, in which his interventions had saved many lives. A picture of the meeting between Lamartine, accompanied by his wife and sick daughter Julia, and Gropius and his local family that took place at his consular house, was included in a near contemporary translation of Lamartine's book, as shown as Figure 13.1.



Figure 13.1. 'M^r de Lamartine with the Greek Family of M^r Gropius'. Engraving.⁷

Lamartine, already famous in France as a poet and politician, claimed to be the new Byron.⁸ And he sympathized with Gropius who maintained that Byron had been unfair to him in the successive editions of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, protesting that he had never 'profaned' the scholarly

7 *Travels in the Holy Land; or, a visit to the scenes of our Redeemer's life by Alphonse de Lamartine, in 1832–1833. Translated from the original Paris edition by Robert Huish (London: printed [for] William Wright, [n.d.], [1837]), opposite 92. No attribution given.*

8 'c'était moi, j'étais lui'. In his *Dernier Chant de Childe Harold* published in 1827, iv, 8.

work in recovering knowledge of antiquity by becoming a dealer in antiquities.⁹ Whether he had forgotten his earlier life or was simply re-inventing himself for new times, the documents show that before the Revolution he had been both an agent and a dealer; that he had lost clients whom he tried to deceive; and that he had made the arrangements for many antiquities to be exported to collectors, including a marble foot broken from a metope from the Parthenon.¹⁰

When in 1830, three years after the 1827 surrender, western visitors were again allowed into the Acropolis, they had to be accompanied by Youssouf's guards and were required to keep to set routes.¹¹ Bey Youssouf refused entry to any woman not wearing a veil, a condition that at least one western woman refused.¹² Muslim men were admitted only if they wore a turban, an item of dress that was now emerging as an external marker of Muslim identity although turbans of a kind had been worn by Orthodox Greeks before the Revolution, and were being replaced across the Ottoman territories by the fez.¹³ Youssouf, who spoke fluent Greek and some Italian but not Turkish, may have been a Muslim born in the territory that was to become part of independent Greece, one of many for whom their previous identity was no longer an option.¹⁴

Youssouf reintroduced the Ottoman practices that had helped to stoke resentment before the Revolution of 1821. In 1832, having monopolized

9 'M.Gropius ne rendait point offense pour offense à la mémoire du grand poète; il s'affligeait seulement que son nom eût été traîné par lui d'édition en édition, et livré à la rancune des fanatiques ignorants de l'antiquité; mais il n'a pas voulu se justifier, et quand on est sur lieux, témoin des efforts 'constants que fait cet homme distingué pour restituer un mot à une inscription, un fragment; égaré à une statue, ou une forme et une date à un monument, on est sûr d'avance que M. Gropius n'a jamais profané ce qu'il adore, ni fait un vil commerce de la plus noble et de la plus désintéressées des études, l'étude des antiquités'. Lamartine, *Œuvres complètes de M.A. de Lamartine, nouvelle édition* (Paris: Gosselin and others, 1850), 5, 102.

10 Discussed with plentiful references to contemporary documents, including some in German not previously used in modern accounts, by Bracken, C.P., *Antiquities Acquired. The Spoliation of Greece* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975), 70, 99–100, 126, 129, and 143–53.

11 'et suivre machinalement', Lacour, 173.

12 Lacour, 173. She is noted as 'Mlle D'.

13 The requirement for visitors is mentioned by Michaud and Poujoulat, i, 104. The changes to headgear were among the reforms brought in by the Ottoman Government after the Revolution.

14 His lack of Turkish emerges from the remark of Gauttier d'Arc, 121. He was also a noted drinker of rum. The bey is mentioned under his various names, by Trant, 274; Frankland, i, 300; Lacour, 173; and in the manuscript correspondence of Dawkins, the British representative, at Kew.

the supply of food to the Greek food shops, he demanded 18 paras an 'oke' for beans, and when the representative of the Greek shopkeepers said they could only pay fourteen, he was knocked down by one of the guards and died next day.¹⁵ There followed calls among the Greeks to massacre the Muslims, to set fire to the bey's house, and to start the Revolution again.¹⁶ But Ottoman forces were on hand and Ottoman justice was rightly feared. Two French doctors told Edgar Quinet, who visited in 1829, that they had 'witnessed the putting to death of a man first flayed alive and then hung up to a tree by iron hooks fastened in his breast' where he remained alive for a week.¹⁷ And although in the surrender of 1827 the Greek soldiers had been allowed to leave the Acropolis with their lives, any who were later captured faced Ottoman justice and its practice of public display and performance. Lekkas, one of the captains who had led the demand to kill the surrendering Muslims in Athens in 1822, was put to death by staking, the most prolonged and painful of the Ottoman capital punishments.¹⁸

The older Ottoman traditions of diplomacy by antiquities were also revived. When J.-B. Bory de Saint Vincent, the commander of the scientists and archaeologists who accompanied the French military force, arrived at Phaleron in the autumn of 1829, wearing the uniform of a colonel in the French army and accompanied by two French soldiers, he demanded to be taken to meet the bey or the pasha. If the *bim bachi* (military equivalent of sergeant major) did not do what he asked, he declared, he would write to the king of France who would write to the sultan who would then cut off his head. Such was the effect of Bory's

15 An oke was roughly equivalent to three pounds in the imperial measures of weight still widely used in the Anglophone world. There were 40 paras to a piastre, 100 piastras to 1.05 British pounds sterling as the exchange rate stood at the time. Noted by Claridge, R.T., *A Guide along the Danube from Vienna to Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens, the Morea, the Ionian Islands and Venice ...* (London: F. C. Westley, 1837), a book that reports many prices. After 1833, the official local currency was changed to the drachma, equivalent to about 3 per cent of a pound, which was divided into 100 lepta.

16 Letter from Finlay to Sir Richard Church, Athens, 5 December 1832. Church papers BL Add MSS 36566, 44. The actions of Bey Youssouf, who was said to be already rich, were also noted in a letter from Gaspary to Fauvel, from Athens, 14 September 1830, transcribed by Fauvel Clairmont, no. 91, 242.

17 Heath, Richard, *Edgar Quinet, his early life and writings ... With portraits, illustrations, etc.* (London: The English and Foreign Philosophical Library, vol. 14. 1877), 113, an account that adds other details to those in Quinet's printed book.

18 Finlay, *History*, Tozer edition, vi, 285.

'aplomb' on 'these animals,' as he wrote in a private letter, that he was immediately escorted to meet Youssouf and accorded every courtesy. Next day, according to Bory's account, Youssouf volunteered to let him take away the whole Monument of Lysicrates to be transported to the French ship then at anchor in the Bay of Salamis. He may have known that Napoleon had commissioned a replica of the monument to be built at St Cloud outside Paris.

Bory, more interested in the flora and fauna than in the antiquities, accepted some Hymettan honey instead, but there is no reason to doubt the story. The Ottoman authorities knew that General Maison, the commander-in-chief of the French expeditionary force who was itching to seize Athens, had already established a military observation on the border at Megara in preparation, and was only stopped from invading when the British representatives, including Stratford Canning, insisted that the international mandate, that extended only to the Peloponnese, should not be breached.¹⁹

The Acropolis had been stocked with enough provisions and ammunition to resist a three-year siege, Youssouf told visitors, and his forces would never give it up 'although the Sultan commanded it'.²⁰ He told the foreign community that if the Ottoman authorities were forced by the powers to cede Athens, they would destroy the ancient monuments as Reschid had planned to do in 1826.²¹

In other ways too, the conflict sputtered on. When bands of armed irregulars from beyond the still-unsettled northern frontier began to make raids against the returning Greek population, the Ottoman troops did not interfere, effectively conniving at a slow cleansing of the Greek population, little different from what was to be practiced by the expansionist Greek state later in the nineteenth century.²² There was talk among the Greek leaders too that territories whose inhabitants had played a bigger role in the Revolution, and which had suffered more than Athens, notably Crete and Samos, ought to be given preference as

19 The episode is described in Bory de Saint-Vincent, J.B., 'Le Voyage en Grèce (1829)', edited by Adrien Blanchet in *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* Year 1937, vol. 55, no. 1, 26–46, especially 42–44. Bory seems to have confused the names of the Monument of Lysicrates and the Tower of the Winds.

20 Alcock, Thomas, *Travels in Russia, Persia, Turkey, and Greece, in 1828–9* (London: privately printed, 1831), 179.

21 Alcock, 178.

22 Dawkins, the British Representative, to Foreign Office, 24 February 1831, from Nauplia, Kew FO 32/20, 247.

the boundaries were negotiated. However, in the minds of the Greek Government now established at Nauplia and later at Poros, and of the powers and their publics, Athens was symbolically too valuable to be traded. Lord Aberdeen, the British Foreign Secretary, who had visited Greece before the Revolution, and who was himself a collector of antiquities and author of a thoughtful book on Hellenic architecture, wrote in his instructions to Sir Robert Gordon, a member of his family, when he was appointed British Ambassador: 'it must in truth be admitted that it may not be very easy to make a Turkish Plenipotentiary fully comprehend what are the real motives, which, in opposition to reasons founded upon geographical, statistical and political considerations, make us desirous of including Attica within the boundary of the Greek State.' But if the British were prepared to be pragmatic, he continued, the French would insist on the symbolic. They would, he declared, 'sacrifice their notions of strict right to the claims of imagination and sentiment'.²³

In June 1830, the French diplomat Achille Rouen, the local representative of the three powers, personally informed Omar that the powers must insist that the Ottoman Empire remove all its forces from Athens by September of that year.²⁴ However, two years later, the red flag still fluttered on the Acropolis. At last, in early 1833, the powers decided that they must enforce their will, if necessary by force. A Bavarian military contingent arrived with Otho, the second son of King Ludwig I, who at the London Conference the previous year had been chosen by the great powers to be king of Greece. On 1 April, according to the account of Franz X. von Predl, a Bavarian officer who was present, a contingent of three hundred Bavarian troops were welcomed to Athens by the people.²⁵ On 4 April talks began with the *disdar*, named as Ali Alendar, who had

23 Aberdeen to Robert Gordon, 8 April 1829, Kew FO 78/179. His book on Greek architecture was discussed in Chapter 9.

24 Michaud and Poujoulat, i, 87–89.

25 A plain account is given by Predl, F.M.X.A. von, *Erinnerungen aus Griechenland in den Jahren 1832, 1833, 1834, und 1835* (Würzburg: Hellmuth, 1836, and another edition, 1841), 76–95. A sardonic account by Temple, Sir Grenville, Bart., *Travels in Greece and Turkey; being the second part of excursions in the Mediterranean* (London: Saunders and Ottley, 1836), i, 83, who arrived some days later, presents the episode as one of muddle. Finlay, who was present, noted: '12 April. The Bavarian troops took possession of the Acropolis with the usual military order, the Turks quitting in little bands of 10 & 12 with dirty ragged clothes. 2 richly caparisoned horses, a mule & and a man pulling a ram by the horns — a good picture'. Finlay, *Journals and Letters*, i, 67. Slightly different dates, which can be explained by the use of the two calendars, were given by Klenze, quoted in English translation by Hamilakis, *Nation*, 59.

only been in post for about four weeks, and had evidently been sent in order to arrange the transfer. In accordance with Ottoman courtesies, he sent horses to enable the Bavarian commander and his staff to visit the Acropolis as his guests, where he entertained them with coffee and tobacco. A few days later, the Ottoman garrison, of whom there were sixty to seventy men, marched to Negropont (Chalcis) to be taken by sea to an Ottoman-held territory soon afterwards. On 12 April, the Bavarian commander Colonel von Baligard arranged a fork supper ('dejeuner à la fourchette') at a table set up within the Parthenon, which 'Bavarians, Greeks, Turks, Arabs, and many artists and scholars' attended.²⁶ The three senior Ottoman officers present at this feast are named as Osman Effendi, Ali Alendar, and Dervend Ali, all of whom acknowledged the toast to King Otho.²⁷ In their handover of the Acropolis, the Ottoman authorities adhered, to the letter, to the conventions of European war and of how European wars were then ended. In military terms, the decisive event had taken place at Negropont some days before, when the Ottoman army, in the presence of British warships ready to fire their heavy cannon at the Ottoman positions, vacated the naval port and the island of Euboea, so making it impossible for the Ottoman Government to supply their troops in Attica by sea.²⁸

It seems likely that these pre-surrender events had been choreographed in advance. Indeed, as the negotiating parties knew, imagined futures had already exercised their economic as well as symbolic and political power. As the negotiators knew, much of the land in Attica and Euboea hitherto owned by Muslims had been bought by western speculators, including some prominent philhellenes, who correctly sensed a one-way bet if Athens were to become the capital of a new state.²⁹ In settling the boundaries of independent Greece, the territory was divided more or less on the line where fighting had ended, each side taking what it held. Exceptionally, in the case of Athens and Attica, the ancient Hellenes and

26 Predl 83. Many, we can be confident, were officers of warships and Predl mentions Finlay as being in Athens at the time.

27 Predl, 82.

28 Discussed in letters from James Dawkins, the British representative to Greece, who was present, in FO 32/36, notably his letter of 25 April 1833 from Nauplia, at 233.

29 For example: 'The Swedish commissioner is extremely anxious to conclude the sale of property in Attica and Negropont, a fourth of which belongs to himself, but he does not adopt so readily as might have been expected the Presidents' proposal to purchase it in one lot on account of the Greek Government'. Report from Dawkins, the British resident minister from Nauplia, the then capital, 11 August 1830. BL Aberdeen papers, 43, 235, 142.

their modern champions, who had provided much of the justification for the conflict, as well as mobilizing foreign resources, were also given their share.

A junior Bavarian officer, Christoph Neezer, later claimed that he was the first to spend a night on the post-Ottoman Acropolis, using a fallen marble column as a pillow, evidently preferring symbolism to comfort.³⁰ On a day soon after, all the inhabitants of Athens were invited into the Acropolis to witness the ceremonial hoisting of the new blue and white national flag.³¹ Simultaneously, on 3/15 April 1833, by Royal decree a secretariat was established 'to support the excavation and discovery of lost masterpieces of art, to look after the safeguarding of those already existing and to exercise vigilance to ensure that they are not taken abroad.'³² This was a reference to Elgin and to the many others who had been permitted to remove antiquities in the pre-Revolutionary era.

In the archives at Kew, there are many boxes of contemporary documents that record the international negotiations week by week, year by year, including reports from ambassadors, reports of conversations among diplomats, drafts of possible agreements regarding boundaries, external affairs, defence, constitution, judiciary, army and navy, finances, rights of citizens and of foreigners, amnesties—indeed the whole panoply of what was needed to establish a modern European nation state that had almost no existing institutions to build on. What is striking to anyone familiar with the rapid emergence of the Acropolis as one of the most famous places in the world, is that none of the main negotiating or reporting documents mentions Athens, whether the documents were prepared by the Ottoman Government, the provisional Greek Government, or the governments of European countries. Neither the city nor the Acropolis is mentioned in the Treaty of London of 6 July 1827 nor in the ratification documents.³³ In the collection of official documents published by the provisional government of Greece in 1833, the only reference to Athens is in a Response by Capodistria, the

30 A paraphrased translation into English from his *Memoirs* (in Greek) published in Athens in 1836, is given by Norre, 202. Another extract translated into English by Fani Mallouchou-Tufano in *Dialogues*, 299. Quotations from other sources in German in Seidl, Wolf, *Bayern in Griechenland. Die Geschichte eines Abenteuers* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1965), 96. I have not been able to reconcile the dates mentioned in all cases, partly because the two calendars were in use.

31 Klenze quoted in translation by Hamilakis, *Nation*, 59.

32 Quoted by Amalia Pappa in Tsarouchas, 19.

33 Transcribed with its protocols, in Recueil, 1–14.

president of the provisional government, to James R. Dawkins, the British representative, about the surrender of fortresses on the coast: 'It is not impossible that the feeble garrison of Athens and of two three other places, comprised in the delimitation set out in the first article of the protocol of 22 March follow the examples of the garrisons of western Greece.'³⁴ As Gropius remarked, almost as an aside, not as a secret but as a fact so well known that it did not need to be pointed out, the proposed Austrian terms had included a draft article: 'All the fortresses in Greece shall be destroyed, and the Greeks shall construct no others without the consent of the Porte. The Acropolis of Athens and perhaps of Corinth shall be excepted: they are not maritime and are of little importance.'³⁵ Unlike the fortresses that could be supplied by sea, neither Athens nor Corinth could be held for long against a hostile force able to besiege them by land. The geo-military and hydro-military weaknesses of the Acropolis of Athens noted long ago by Thucydides and proclaimed in the stories in stone of the Periclean Parthenon and Acropolis did not need to be explicitly spelled out. At the time of the 1833 handover, the military value of the Acropolis was now almost nil and what form the future symbolic value for the neo-Hellenes would take was still to be decided.³⁶

The Bavarian garrison remain encamped on the Acropolis for two years until, on 18 March 1835, it was formally handed over to the civilian control of a Bavarian-led, local Greek National Archaeological Service.³⁷ On that day, for the first time in more than five millennia, the Acropolis of Athens ceased to be a fortress, and apart from brief periods during the two world wars, it has remained so ever since.³⁸ It had become heritage.

34 Response of Capodistria, the president of the provisional government, to Dawkins, the British representative 11/23 May 1829. Recueil 18, my translation.

35 Kew FO 352/22, papers of Stratford Canning. Undated c.1829. The texts of the formal treaties and protocols governing British relations with the Ottoman Empire, the protectorate over the Ionian Islands and their incorporation into Greece, and some internal Ottoman decrees or 'firmans', are usefully collected in a semi-official publication, Xenos, Stephanos, *East and West* (London: Renshaw, 1865). These documents contain no reference to the ancient monuments.

36 To be discussed in Chapter 21.

37 Summarised from the primary sources, with particular attention to what they record about the Parthenon and other ancient monuments by Norre, 119. The Archaeological Service was formally established in 1837.

38 A point made explicitly at the time of the completion of the change by Nollhac, Stanislav de, *La Dalmatie, Les Iles Ioniennes, Athènes et le Mont Athos* (Paris: Plon, 1882), 196.