



## Dialogos lectures

NIA lecture Series for young Scholars

### *The lost virgins of the Parthenon: a reappraisal of the nomenclature of the temples on the Athenian Acropolis*

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#### *Abstract*

The origin of the name *Parthenōn* 'Virgin Room' for the Great Temple of Athena on the Athenian Acropolis (our 'Parthenon') has never been satisfactorily explained. It was certainly used for the entire building in various literary texts of Hellenistic and Roman date. But this is not so in the inscriptions of the Classical period, in which Athena's *tamiai* made annual inventories of her treasures. Here, the term appears in opposition to the *Hekatompedon*, which certainly designates the east room in which the chryselephantine statue of Athena stood. Under the assumption that *Parthenōn* must refer to something in the same building which was later called that in its entirety, scholars have almost invariably identified the original *Parthenōn* with the west room of the Great Temple. However, there is no obvious explanation why this space should have been called 'Virgin Room'. On the basis of a reanalysis of the nomenclature preserved in the inscriptions and the archaeological remains this article challenges the premise that the *Parthenōn* must be looked for in the Great Temple. It will then propose that it can be more comfortably identified with a part of the temple which is habitually known as the 'Erechtheion'.