

THE TOPOGRAPHY OF ELEUSIS¹

(PLATES 10-12)

THE SOUTH side of the great Eleusinian plain is for the most part open to the sea. The western end of the plain, however, is cut off from the water by a long and moderately high range of hills, the so-called Eleusinian Mountain, which runs from east to west at a very slight distance from the coast.² In this ridge two separate peaks stand out, one toward the eastern end with a rather gentle, flat top, and the other toward the west more abrupt and with only a small level area on its summit (Fig. 1 and Pl. 10).

On the western hilltop no traces of ancient habitation have been found except for the remains of a building of the Hellenistic period which was most likely of a military nature.

The settlement of Eleusis, from the earliest prehistoric times in which it was founded, was established on the eastern eminence and, in the beginning, more especially on the southern and eastern side of the hill. Only at the beginning of the first millennium before Christ, in the Geometric Period, did it extend also to the north side. This area too was included within the extensive fortified enceinte which appears from that time onward to have protected the settlement.

High on the summit of the eastern eminence was the acropolis of Eleusis, fortified, at least from Mycenaean times, by a special wall. On the eastern flank of the hill, lower down and outside this fortification wall, was founded in very early times the Sanctuary of Demeter, to which reference is made in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and which my late teacher, Konstantine Kourouniotes, had the good fortune to locate when he excavated the Telesterion.³

Private habitations began to disappear from the east slope even in the Geometric Period and their places were taken by the expanding Sanctuary of Demeter, which by the time of Peisistratos extended up to and beyond the foot of the hill. In this period the sanctuary was surrounded with a very strong fortification wall which enclosed the settlement as well, in this way serving Athenian political purposes since through this stronghold Athens sought to control a point that was vital to her defence and to dominate the roads which provided communication with the Peloponnese, with Thebes, and indeed with the whole of northern Greece. In the same way the sanc-

¹ This article was translated from the Greek by H. A. Thompson and was delivered by him as a paper on behalf of the author at the 49th General Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in Yale University, December 30th, 1947. I am deeply grateful to him for the interest he has taken in my work on Eleusis.

² Curtius-Kaupert, *Karten von Attika*, pls. VI and XXVI.

³ K. Kourouniotes, *Ἀρχ. Δελτ.*, XIII, 1930-31, *Παράρτημα*, pp. 17 f.; G. Mylonas, *The Hymn to Demeter and her Sanctuary at Eleusis*, Washington, 1942.

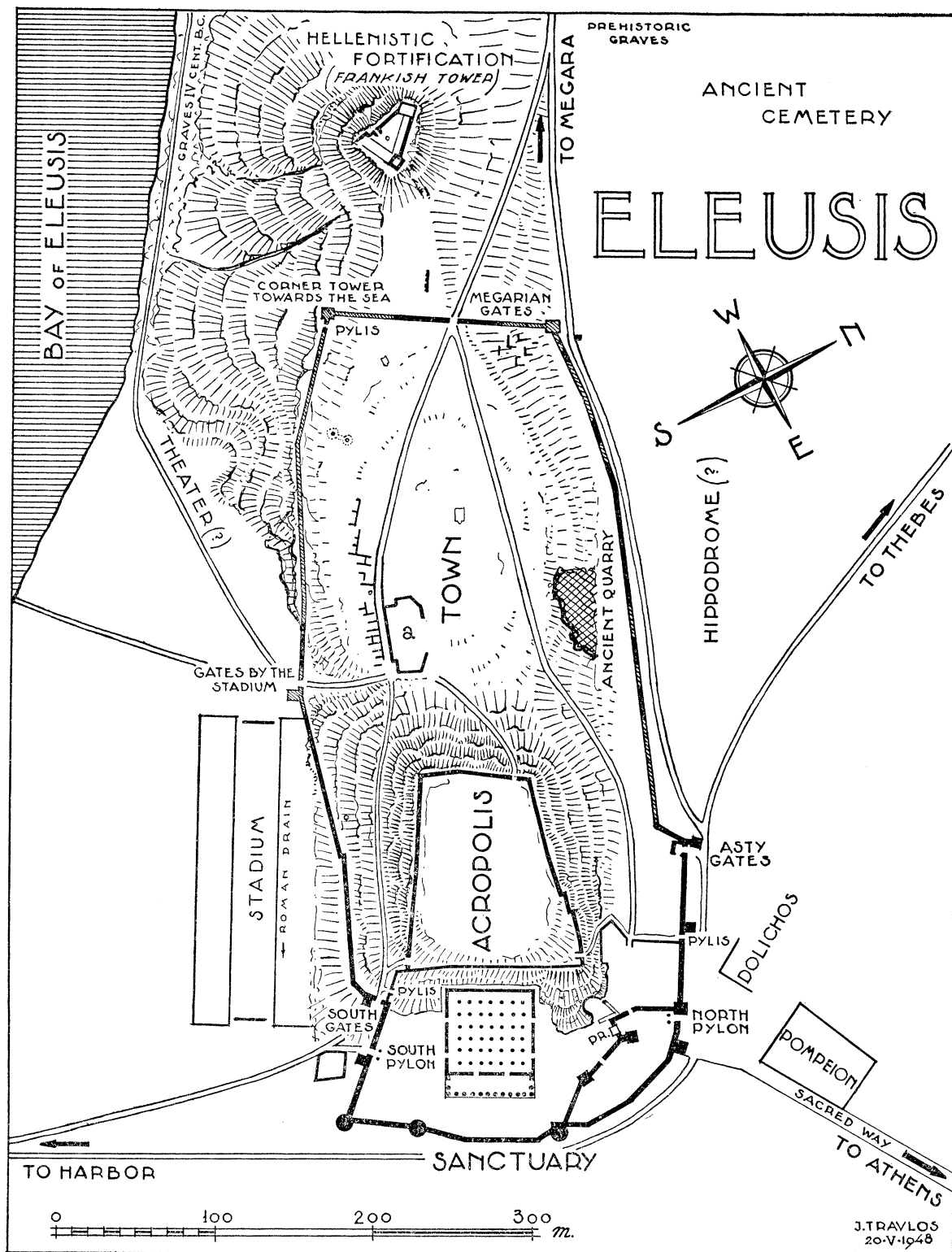


Fig. 1. Eleusis at the End of the Fourth Century B.C.

tuary continued to expand,⁴ attaining its greatest extent in the 4th century B.C. while at the same time the settlement spread westward nearly as far as the western summit.

The sacred area (Fig. 2) formed a continuation of the settlement, and was included within the outer enceinte; yet from very early times it was separated from the residential area by a second wall. Within the sacred area two divisions are to be distinguished: the sanctuary proper, embracing the sacred court which was dominated by the temple of Demeter and Kore, the Telesterion,⁵ rising in its midst, and the subsidiary area in which were the dwellings of the priests and the administrative buildings of the sanctuary. These two divisions of the sacred area were separated from each other by still another wall (the *diateichisma*, as it is called in the inscriptions) through which they communicated by means of a propylon.⁶

The extent of the sanctuary proper has been defined fairly closely from the circuit wall that has been found. Doubt could exist only regarding the extent of the subsidiary area, and in particular as to its western limit in the direction of the town. For the accurate determination of the extent of the sanctuary on this side we are helped by the inscription which contains the long account of the overseers (*epistatai*) of Eleusis of the year 329/8 B.C. and especially by the following section of the inscription: *μισθωτέι τοῦ διατειχίσματος ἀνελόντι τὰ σαπρὰ καὶ τῶν πύργων καὶ τοῦ πυλῶνος καὶ τοῦ παρὰ τὸν Κηρύκων οἶκον ἄχρι τῆς πυλίδος τῆς ἀπαντροκὸν τοῦ δολίχου.*⁷

It is generally believed that the cross-wall (*diateichisma*) mentioned in the inscription was the old Peisistratean wall which was preserved for a long time, even after the northeastern extension of the sanctuary occurred in the time of Kimon, as an inner enceinte around the sanctuary proper.⁸ Noack, who supposed that the Peisistratean wall came to an end in front of the Cave of Pluto, was of the opinion that the repair mentioned in the inscription concerned this section of the wall.⁹ When the northward continuation of the Peisistratean wall came to light, Kourouniotes logically supposed that this continuation of the wall should also be regarded as a cross-wall, and to it he referred the latter part of the passage in the inscription.¹⁰ Kourouniotes came to this conclusion because, like Noack, he believed that the gate (*Pylon*) men-

⁴ For the form of the Sanctuary in its various periods, see K. Kourouniotes, "Das eleusinsiche Heiligtum von den Anfängen bis zur vorperikleischen Zeit," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, XXXII, pp. 52 ff.

⁵ K. Kourouniotes and J. Travlos, *Τελεστήριον καὶ Ναὸς Δήμητρος*, 'Αρχ. Δελτ., XV, 1933-35, pp. 54 ff.

⁶ This propylon was replaced in Roman times by the "Lesser Propylaia," as they have been called to distinguish them from the "Greater Propylaia" which were in the outer peribolos.

⁷ *I.G.*, II², 1672, lines 23-25.

⁸ For a plan of the Sanctuary in this period see *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, XXXII, p. 67.

⁹ F. Noack, *Eleusis: die baugeschichtliche Entwicklung des Heiligtums*, Berlin, 1927, pp. 210 f., pl. 15.

¹⁰ K. Kourouniotes, 'Ανασκαφαὶ Ἐλεουσίνος, 1934, 'Αρχ. Δελτ., XV, 1933-35, Παράρτημα, p. 13 (with plan).

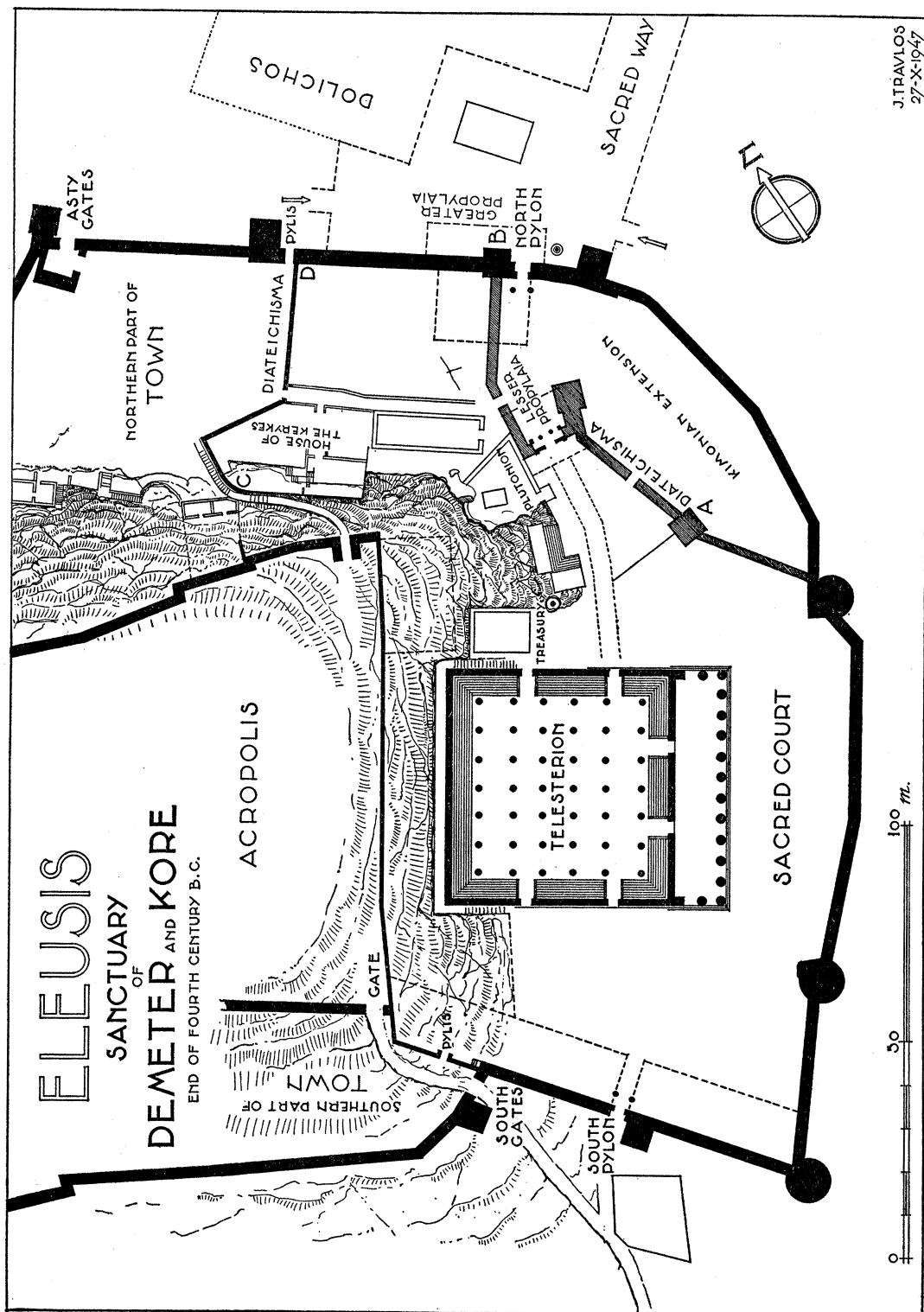


Fig. 2. Sanctuary of Eleusis at the End of the Fourth Century B.C.

tioned in the inscription was the old Peisistratean entrance which was covered over in the middle of the first century B.C. by the Lesser Propylaia.

Granted, however, that the inner Peisistratean entrance is referred to in an earlier inscription as the "Propylaia of Demeter and Kore,"¹¹ it follows that by the term gate (*Pylon*) in the inscription of 329/8 B.C. is meant some other gateway, presumably the principal entrance of the sanctuary in the outer wall, which at a much later date (the middle of the 2nd century A.D.) was replaced by the Greater Propylaia.

Hence the repairs mentioned in the former part of the passage from the inscription (*μισθωτῇ τοῦ διατειχίσματος ἀνελόντι τὰ σαπρὰ καὶ τῶν πύργων καὶ τοῦ πυλῶνος*) had to do with the whole section of the old Peisistratean wall (*diateichisma*) as far as the gate (*Pylon*) which, as we have seen, is to be found in the outer enceinte (AB on the plan in Fig. 2).

In the second part of the passage from the inscription, as Kourouniotes also observed, since the loan which was made on account of the works was related specifically to the repair of the cross-wall (*τὸ προσδανεισθὲν εἰς τὸ διατείχισμα*), we are justified in supposing that the section from the House of the Kerykes to the postern was regarded as another separate cross-wall, so that the phrasing of the passage in the inscription would be clearer if it were written *καὶ τοῦ διατειχίσματος τοῦ παρὰ τὸν Κηρύκων οἶκον ἄχρι τῆς πυλίδος τῆς ἀπαντροκὸν τοῦ δολίχου*. Nor is it difficult to identify the section of cross-wall meant by the inscription.

In the course of our most recent excavations the discovery of a boundary stone *in situ* inscribed "Limit of the Sanctuary" (*ὄρος ἱεροῦ*) made it clear that all the area previously excavated to the west of the Lesser Propylaia also belonged to the Sanctuary.¹² This section of the Sanctuary is comprised between the hill of Eleusis and the fortification wall of the enceinte, and its limit toward the west must have been fixed by a separate wall by which, moreover, the sanctuary would have been separated from the town (Pl. 11).

A long stretch of this wall was discovered, fortunately, toward the flank of the hill alongside the very ancient road leading to the Acropolis, a road which fixes the limits of the Sanctuary still more securely (Pl. 12, 1). The northward continuation of the wall has not yet been excavated, but it must have linked up with the outer enceinte near the postern in the latter wall. It was on this wall, therefore (CD on the plan in Fig. 2), which divided the Sanctuary from the town and which served as a cross-wall, that the repairs were carried out as recorded in the latter part of the passage from the inscription. Our gain from this interpretation is considerable inasmuch as the exact extent of the Sanctuary in this direction is now fixed with certainty and consequently also the beginning of the town is established; the position of the

¹¹ I.G., II², 1187 and H. Hörmann, *Die inneren Propyläen von Eleusis*, Berlin, 1932, p. 17.

¹² J. Threpsiades, 'Επιγραφὰι ὄρων ἐξ Ἑλευσίνος, 'Αρχ. Δελτ., XIV, 1931-32, Παράρτημα, p. 31, and K. Kourouniotes, 'Αρχ. Δελτ., XV, 1933-35, Παράρτημα, p. 17.

House of the Kerykes is defined and from the position of the postern which still survives in the wall of the enceinte it is easy now for us to fix also the position of the Dolichos.¹³

Regarding the town of Eleusis, nothing was known until the discovery of the inscription which was published by Kourouniotes in the first volume of *Eleusiniaka* in 1932 (pp. 189-208). This inscription, dating from the second half of the 4th century B.C., gave us a starting point for investigating the area of the city by means of extensive excavations, which resulted in the accurate determination of the area and the shape of the city at least as they were at the time of the inscription.

The small surviving piece of this inscription, broken on three sides, is a fragment of a building account which has to do with the repair not only of the gates of the town, as Kourouniotes supposed, but also, as we shall see, of the gates of the Sanctuary.

The first lines up to the 9th deal with the repair of the doors of a gate the name of which is not preserved. Then are recorded in order up to the 37th line the various repairs which were carried out: on the Megarian Gate, on "the Postern near the Corner Tower toward the Sea," on the Gate by the Stadium, on the South Gate, and, finally, on the Postern near the South Gate. From the 37th line to the end of the preserved part of the inscription the repairs mentioned concern structures adorned with columns (propylaia) which are to be sought within the Sanctuary.

Of the gates mentioned in the inscription only one, the Megarian, was identified by Kourouniotes, viz., with the gate that had recently been excavated by him to the west of the Greater Propylaia and at a distance of about 100 metres from that structure (Fig. 2).¹⁴ Thereafter we continued the investigation over the whole hill, but only on its south side did we discover the wall of the town and that at the point where this wall joins the wall of the Sanctuary; thence we followed it for a distance of about 250 metres toward the west (Pl. 12, 2). At a point very close to the junction of the two walls appeared certain traces of a gate which we identified, because of its position, as the "South Gate" of the town.¹⁵ Over all the remaining south side of the hill, systematic quarrying, which unfortunately still continues, and modern construction have completely obliterated every trace of the wall so that we shall never be able to fix with certainty its further course.

¹³ The sanctuary of the hero Dolichos would appear to have been opposite the above-mentioned postern, i. e., at the northwest corner of the "Roman Court," at the point where the flagging is interrupted (a circumstance which in itself justifies the hypothesis of the existence of an earlier structure). Fig. 2 and Pl. 11.

The Dolichos must not be confused either with the Stadium or with the Hippodrome (Ἀρχ. Δελτ., XV, 1933-35, Παράρτημα, p. 14). The building which we discovered in the course of our most recent excavations along the right side of the final section of the Sacred Way and which we identified with either the Dolichos or the Pompeion (Πρακτικά, 1938, p. 40) must now, since the position of the Dolichos has been fixed as above, be regarded as the Pompeion.

¹⁴ Ἐλευσινιακά, p. 205.

¹⁵ Ἐλευσινιακά, p. 208. footnotes.

In the area between the Acropolis and the western summit, our excavations brought to light remains of habitation, in the shape of streets, houses, and cisterns, showing that the city extended westward of the Acropolis a much greater distance than we had previously supposed (Fig. 1, Pl. 10, 2).¹⁶

Philios, who in 1892 undertook a small excavation on the summit of the western hill and established that beneath the ruins of the preserved "Frankish Tower" there remain traces of an ancient fortification, supposed that the city extended to that point.¹⁷ This hypothesis is very probable, and in the Hellenistic period when the stronghold was built on the hill, this fort may have been connected with the town by means of a narrow, fortified road. In any case, however, the town's westward limit was defined by a separate fortification wall of which, fortunately, I have quite recently succeeded in identifying a few indubitable traces. The remains consist of cuttings made in the living rock for the better bedding of the wall blocks.

Westward of these cuttings not a single trace of ancient remains has been found to indicate that the settlement extended further in that direction. A little cleaning of the bedrock near the cuttings for the wall brought to light an ancient wagon road which crossed the line of the wall exactly at the point where the beddings were interrupted. To the west this road followed the gentle slope of the north flank of the hill and headed toward Megara, while eastward, toward the middle of the town, the road divided into two branches which provided thoroughfares within the town in that direction.

At this point, therefore, in the western wall of the town, there existed a gate which, by virtue of its relation to the road leading to Megara, must be identified with the "gate toward Megara" (τὰς πύλας τὰς Μεγαράδ' ἐξιόντι) of the inscription, and the gate must be placed here rather than at the point where we had supposed it to be before this evidence was available.

That the western limit of the settlement is marked by the section of the western wall that has been found is confirmed by the discovery of the north wall which extends to the line of the west wall. In the beginning I had supposed that the north wall had run along the hill and that it had been completely destroyed by the continual quarrying of the hill on this side as elsewhere. Having recently observed, however, that at least one of the quarries had been worked also in antiquity,¹⁸ I was led to seek the wall in

¹⁶ For the ruins brought to light in this part of the settlement see Kourouniotes, *Ἀρχ. Δελτ.*, XIII, 1930-31, *Παράρτημα*, p. 30; XIV, 1931-32, *Παράρτημα*, p. 29; *Ἐλευσινιακά*, pp. 240-251; *Eleusis, A Guide to the Excavations and Museum*, 1936, p. 70.

¹⁷ *Πρακτικά*, 1892, p. 32.

¹⁸ The traces of the ancient quarry have been obliterated by the continual quarrying with dynamite in recent times. It may be taken as certain, however, that this quarry was used also in antiquity because it is the only part of the hill of Eleusis in which the nature of the stone resembles that of the blocks employed in the fortification walls and generally in the buildings of Eleusis. We have to do with the "Eleusinian stone" as it is commonly called in the inscriptions: *Ἐλευσινιακὸς λίθος* (*I.G.*, II², 1672) or τῆς Ἐλευσινιακῆς πέτρας or ἐκ τῆς Ἐλευσίνι λιθοτομίας (*I.G.*, II², 1666). This

another position. Actually, at a distance of only a few metres to the north of the foot of the hill and parallel to it I found a series of large blocks lying at intervals in a perfectly straight line and extending a great distance up to the line of the west wall, their tops barely projecting above the ground. These blocks certainly belong to the north wall of the town and it is hoped that through a systematic excavation the whole wall of this side will be exposed.¹⁹

What course was followed by the wall in those parts where quarrying has removed every trace of it we cannot define with certainty. I believe, however, that the restoration suggested on the plan (Fig. 1) will miss the mark by very little.

With this sketch of the fortifications of Eleusis before our eyes, we may now easily fix the exact location of the other gates mentioned in our inscription. We may attempt also the restoration of the inscription, at least insofar as it concerns the names and positions of the other gates which must have been mentioned in the now missing part.

Kourouniotes rightly observed that the gates are mentioned in the inscription in a local sequence. Since, therefore, the South Gate is mentioned last and since we have determined that the Megarian Gate was on the west side, it is natural to suppose that the enumeration of the gates began with the north side. Now we have already located three openings in this side of the wall: the North Gate (*Pylon*) which was the principal entrance to the Sanctuary, westward of this the little entrance which we have identified with "the Postern (*Pylis*) opposite the Dolichos," and still farther to the west, exactly at the angle in the wall, the gate which Kourouniotes excavated and which I am naming the Asty Gate, since it gives on the road leading toward Athens.

In the part that is now lost from the beginning of the inscription there would logically have been recorded the repair of the above three gates. From their order, moreover, we infer that the first nine preserved lines of the inscription referred to the last of the three, i. e., the Asty Gate.

The inscription next refers to the Megarian Gate, the position of which we have fixed, and then to repairs which must be referred to a smaller entrance, a postern, as Kourouniotes rightly inferred, completing the relevant line to read "the Postern near the Corner Tower toward the Sea." The western wall containing the Megarian Gate would have formed junctions with the northern and the southern walls by means of normal corner towers. Through one of these towers, viz., the one toward the south and the sea, is fixed the position of the postern that was being repaired.²⁰ This tower

quarry, moreover, is clearly recognizable on the plan of the Dilettanti: *The Unedited Antiquities of Attica*, London, 1817, pl. 5.

¹⁹ Philios also, it seems, fixed the line of the north fortification wall on the basis of these traces. *Πρακτικά*, 1892, p. 32.

²⁰ This postern was identified by Kourouniotes (*Ἐλευσινιακά*, p. 198) with the postern mentioned in Xenophon's account of the activities of the Thirty Tyrants in Eleusis (*Hell.*, II, 4, 8): τὸν δὲ ἀπογραφάμενον ἀεὶ διὰ τῆς πυλίδος ἐπὶ τὴν θάλατταν ἐξίέναι. All the western part of the town,

also helps in defining the position of the Gate by the Stadium, because that gate is mentioned in the inscription right after the postern and for this reason must be sought on the south side of the hill. The most suitable site for this gate is that indicated on the plan because at that point only is the ascent at all gentle and, besides, traces of an ancient road are preserved. That the Stadium lay on the south side of the hill had been established from another inscription but its exact position was not known. Now, however, that we have accurately defined the extent of the town in this direction and have fixed the position of the Gate by the Stadium, I believe that we may look for the Stadium close alongside the gate, i. e., on the slope of the hill below the walls of the city and of the sanctuary. Its precise position is perhaps indicated by a drain of Roman times that was found here in earlier excavations; having a fall from west to east it follows closely the foot of the hill and served probably to carry off the rain water from the Stadium.²¹

The position of the South Gate has already been fixed as near the Sanctuary. This gate would seem also to be the last gate in the wall of the town because the postern referred to in the inscription as near the South Gate is the one inside the enceinte in the lighter wall that separated sanctuary and town.²²

From line 37 of the inscription onward, as already noted, the repairs have to do with a column-adorned entrance, a propylon, very probably the porch which would have existed on the inner face of the south gate of the Sanctuary, the South Gate (ὁ νότιος πυλῶν) as it is called in other Eleusinian inscriptions.²³ The repairs recorded

however, and consequently also the fortification wall enclosing it are much later than the time of the Thirty Tyrants. The Ephor of Antiquities, Mr. John Threpsiades, who on the instruction of Kourouniotes supervised the excavations on this part of the hill of Eleusis, informs me that in the course of these excavations no pottery later than the middle of the fourth century came to light. It follows that before the middle of the fourth century B.C. the town terminated toward the west much closer to the Acropolis and was enclosed by an earlier fortification wall in which must have existed the postern mentioned by Xenophon.

²¹ The north side of the "theatre" of the Stadium consisted simply of the hill slope with a total length of 225 metres. The south side was formed of an earth embankment, to support which a very long retaining wall was built. A large section of this wall was discovered by Philios who rightly supposed that it belonged to the Stadium. (*Ath. Mitt.*, 1894, p. 183).

The Stadium of Eleusis was a simple construction of earth embankments like the majority of Greek stadia, e. g., those of Olympia and Epidauros, regarding the latter of which Pausanias observed (II, 27, 5): καὶ στάδιον, οἷα Ἕλλησι τὰ πολλά, γῆς χώμα. For the Stadium of Eleusis such construction is testified also by the inscription *I.G.*, II², 1862, ll. 5-8: καὶ ἐκφορήσαντα τὴν γῆν ἔξω τοῦ ἱεροῦ εἰς τὸ θέατρον τὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ σταδίου. Cf. *Ath. Mitt.*, 1895, p. 266. For the earlier excavations in the area of the Stadium and the discovery there of the very important cemetery of the Geometric Period, see A. Skias, 'Ἡ παναρχαία Ἐλευσινιακὴ νεκρόπολις, *Ἀρχ. Ἐφ.*, 1898, pp. 29 ff. The latest burials in the cemetery, according to Mr. Rodney S. Young, may be dated on the evidence of the vases found in them to the beginning of the seventh century. Since, therefore, nothing of later date was found in the excavations (Skias, *loc. cit.*, pp. 38-41), we must believe that immediately after the last burial, or possibly a little later, the Stadium was constructed.

²² Traces of this postern are preserved in the basement of the Guard's House near the Museum.

²³ *I.G.*, II², 1672, line 305. That a gate intended for defence might also have a propylon we

in the final surviving lines of the inscription refer to some other propylon, which is characterized as within the wall. We are aware of no other propylon within the enceinte save only the Propylaia of Demeter and Kore in the position now occupied by the Lesser Propylaia.

We cannot with assurance determine with what works the now missing remaining part of the inscription dealt. I believe, however, that there would have been recorded in sequence the details regarding the repair of the small gates in the *diateichisma*²⁴ and of the Acropolis gates,²⁵ which are needed to complete the catalogue of the gates of the stronghold of Eleusis, with the basic repair of which the whole inscription appears to be concerned.

The determination of the position of the various gates on which we have concentrated in this study has a wider importance inasmuch as we have thereby been able to fix with assurance the line of the outer enceinte and the extent of the area which it enclosed, an area which contained, in addition to the Acropolis and the town, the famous Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. It has shown us also the arrangement of the inner walls which separated these divisions from one another. The truly precious inscriptions by which we have succeeded in interpreting the ruins, dating as they do from the second half of the fourth century B.C., give us a glimpse of Eleusis at the period in which the Sanctuary and the town were at the height both of their topographical extent and of their fame. In the following centuries works of repair are recorded, and are attested also by the ruins themselves. Only in the Roman period, when the sanctuary was completely revamped with new and splendid buildings, did Eleusis spread beyond the limits of her ancient walls, especially toward the east, i. e., toward the plain, and southward in the direction of the sea. Evidence of this is given by the ruins of large public buildings and of private houses which have come to light at various points within the modern town. Whether or not this new extension of the city was enclosed by a fortification wall we do not know; up to the present we have found no sign of such a wall.

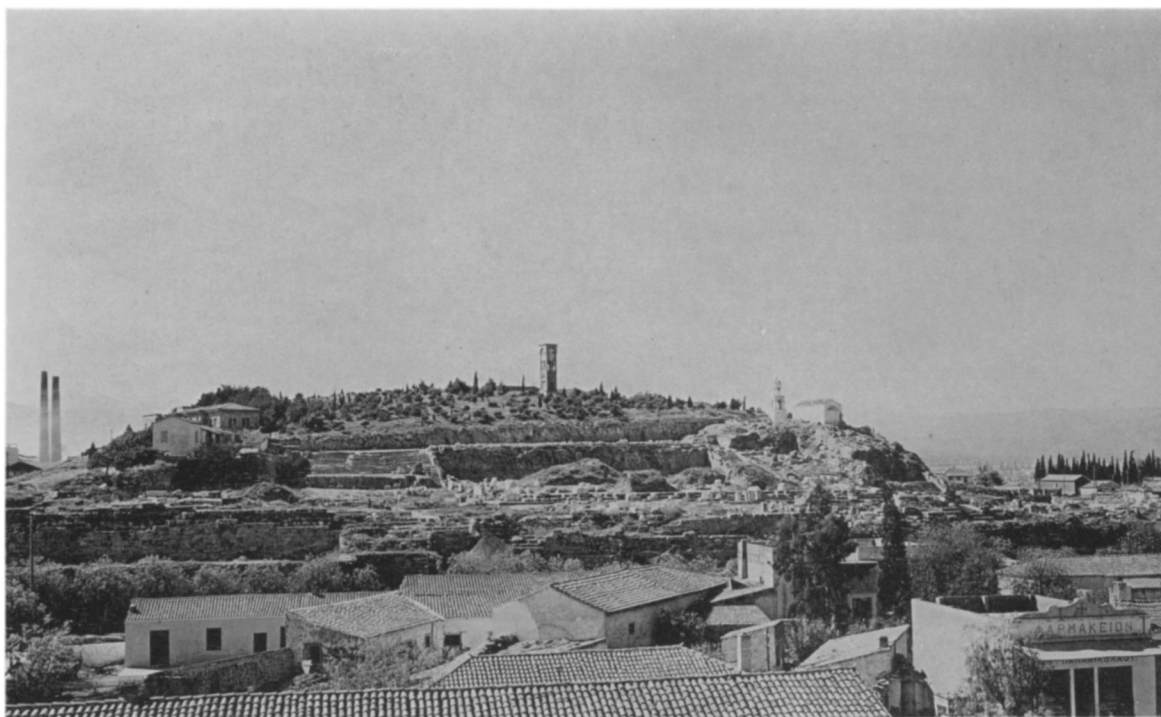
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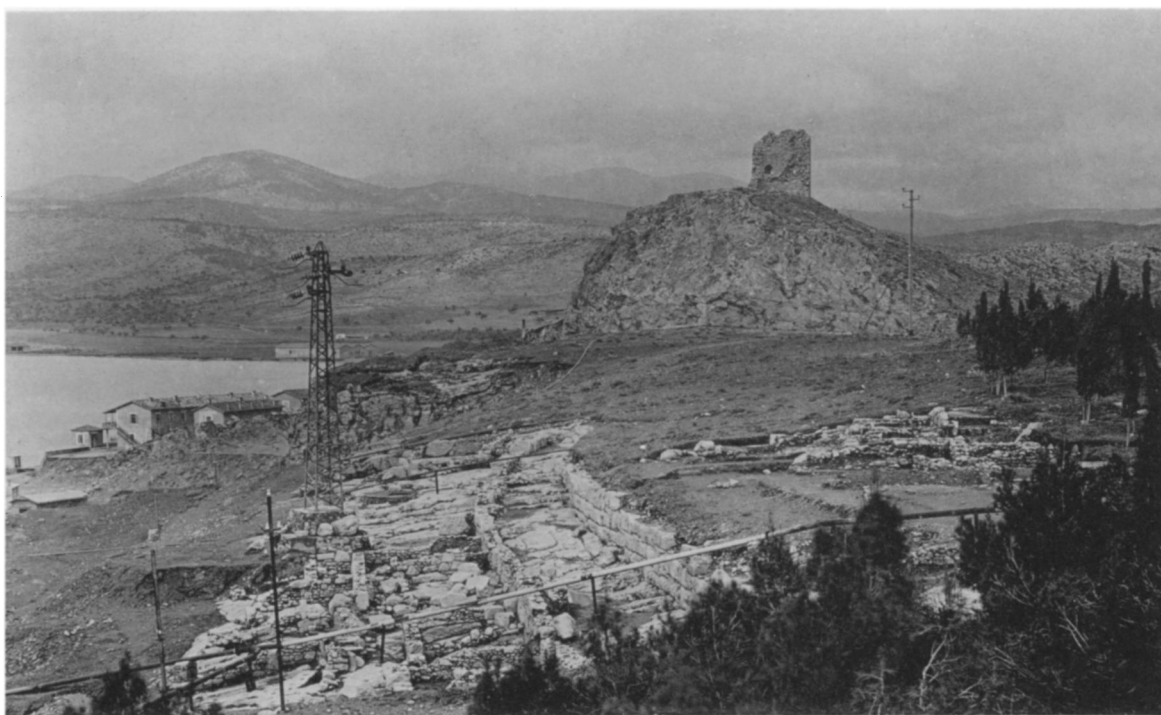
know from the surviving columns of the propylon belonging to the gate that was built after the Persian Wars (Noack, *Eleusis*, p. 35). But also the south gate in the older Periclean wall, as we have established recently, had a similar propylon on its inner side (Kourouniotes and Travlos, *Συμβολή εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομικὴν ἱστορίαν τοῦ Ἑλευσινιακοῦ Τελεστηρίου*, Ἀρχ. Δελτ., XVI, 1935-36, p. 26).

²⁴ In the *diateichisma* AB of Fig. 2 there were two postern gates of which the one, still preserved to the left of the Lesser Propylaia, is perhaps to be identified with the *πύλις τοῦ ἱεροῦ* of I.G., II², 1672, line 122. The second postern we have conjectured because some opening was essential for communication between the two subsidiary parts of the Sanctuary. Finally, a third postern must have opened in the *diateichisma* CD to give access to the town.

²⁵ The Acropolis, as shown by the very early roads which have been discovered, had the following gates: one opposite the South Gate of the town, a second gate toward the west, and a smaller entrance, a postern, in its north side, near the northeast corner of the Acropolis wall (Figs. 1 and 2).



1. Acropolis of Eleusis from the Southeast. (In the foreground, the Ruins of the Sanctuary.)



2. Ruins of Town of Eleusis to West of Acropolis, from Southeast. (On hilltop, Frankish Tower.)

J. TRAVLOS: THE TOPOGRAPHY OF ELEUSIS



Air View from East. E: "The Roman Court." A: Greater Propylaia. B: Lesser Propylaia. CD: Wall Separating Sanctuary and Town. F: Postern Gate of Town. G: Site of Sanctuary of Dolichos

J. TRAVLOS: THE TOPOGRAPHY OF ELEUSIS

PLATE 12



1. Section of Wall separating Sanctuary and Town. (In front of the Wall, the Road toward the Acropolis.) View from the North



2. South Wall of the Town. (In the distance, the Museum.) View from the West