THE SANCTUARY OF ZEUS HYPSISTOS AND THE ASSEMBLY PLACE ON THE PNYX

(PLATES 87 and 88)

IN THE EARLY 1930's the definitive excavation of the Assembly Place on the Pnyx was carried out by Konstantinos Kourouniotes and Homer A. Thompson.[1] They defined in their publication three different building phases. During the First Period, the construction of which was dated around 500 B.C., the auditorium was oriented towards the Agora.[2] The Second Period, which was dated to around 400 B.C., involved a complete reorientation of the auditorium. By the construction of an earthen embankment the natural slope was reversed 180 degrees.[3] The Third Period, to which belong most of the remains visible today, represented a reconstruction and an enlargement of the second auditorium (Pl. 87). Part of the bedrock to the south was quarried away, thus creating in the front of the auditorium a rock-cut bema with a vertical scarp to right and left. The blocks that were quarried from the front part were used to build a new retaining wall for the earthen embankment; the lower part of the megalithic masonry has survived to this day. The excavators tentatively dated this final building phase to Hadrian's time, i.e., the second quarter of the 2nd century after Christ.[4]

In the scarp to the east of the bema there are still niches which belonged to the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos.[5] The identification of the sanctuary is secured by a number of votive plaques, some of which were found at the foot of the east scarp beneath the niches. The majority of the niches are cut into a roughly dressed surface, set back to a maximum depth of 0.20 m. behind the smooth face of the scarp. The area set back terminates towards the west at what seem to be the ends of four steps cut into the rock. Kourouniotes and Thompson thought that these steps and the area set back were part of a recess in the Pnyx hill south of the Assembly Place of the Second Period and that here the worship of Zeus Hypsistos was established in the 1st century after Christ. According to the excavators, most of the sanctuary was quarried away in connection with the construction of the Third Period, leaving intact

[1] I am most grateful to the First Ephoreia of Athens for giving me permission to remeasure parts of the Assembly Place and the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos, and to Professors Paavo Castrén and Joakko Frösén, both former directors of the Finnish Archaeological Institute at Athens, for continuous support and encouragement throughout the whole project. I also want to thank Tryggve Gestrin, Jukka Moisanen, Staffan Ohlson, and my wife, Dr. Jeannette Forsén, for their assistance. Both the text and the references have profited from numerous suggestions made by Professor Homer A. Thompson and *Hesperia*'s two unnamed readers. Grants from Oskar Öflundin Säätiö and Nordenskiöldsamfundet enabled me to carry out this project. The photographs for Plate 88:a and c were taken by Moisanen, for Plate 88:b by the author.

[2] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 96–113 and 215–216. Recently, Thompson (1982, pp. 136–137) has suggested a lowering of the date to around 460 B.C. for the First Period. See also Hansen 1982, pp. 241–242.

[3] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 113–138 and 216–217. The excavators assigned this construction to the period of the Thirty Tyrants, 404/403 B.C. Moysey (1981, pp. 31–37), however, assigns this first rebuilding to the restored democracy. *Contra* Moysey, see Thompson 1982, pp. 139–140 and Krentz 1984, pp. 230–231.

[4] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 139–192 and 216–217.

[5] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 193–200.

only the south wall of the sanctuary and the niches in it. After the final construction of the Assembly Place, the worship continued, and niches were then cut into the scarp of the Third Period both west and east of the recessed area, in the middle of which a great central niche was cut, presumably to hold a statue of the god (Fig. 1:AA, Pl. 88:a).

Kourouniotes and Thompson cited three points in support of their conclusions on the priority of the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos vis-à-vis the Third Period of the Assembly Place. First, they could not find any other reason why the architect of this final construction phase did not set the great scarp still further back, thus cutting away the scar representing the earlier recess, than that he respected the sanctity of the place and therefore left part of the shrine intact. The second argument rested in the height of the niches above the floor of the auditorium of the Third Period. The lowest niche would have been about two meters above the floor, i.e., at a height the excavators found unlikely in comparison to similar sanctuaries and taking into consideration the small size of the lettering on the dedicatory plaques. Finally, they thought that the plaques from the sanctuary could be shown to be both earlier and later than the presumed construction of the Third Period. When trying to assign the plaques to their original niches, the excavators declared that a certain plaque, which according to them must have been dedicated shortly after the final construction, could be assigned with "complete certainty" to one of the niches outside the recessed area.

While continuing the excavations in 1936–1937, this time south of the Assembly Place, Thompson and Robert L. Scranton found two stoas which architecturally seemed to be contemporary with the Third Period. As the stoas could be shown to have been constructed during the third quarter of the 4th century B.C., Thompson suggested a redating of the Third Period to *ca.* 330–326 B.C.[6] This date has been generally accepted.[7] In redating the Third Period, Thompson did not comment on how this would affect the suggested priority of the sanctuary. John Travlos combined Thompson's original theory of the priority of the shrine with the redating of the Third Period and thus makes the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos older than 330 B.C.[8] Such an early date is highly dubious, however, as Thompson himself mentions in a note,[9] since all the plaques found actually belong to the Roman period and since the cult of Zeus Hypsistos is a latecomer to Greece.

In order to evaluate Kourouniotes and Thompson's theory, that the recessed area was part of the original sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos which existed before the final remodeling of the Assembly Place, the three arguments on which they based their theory should be reexamined. The question of why the architect of the Third Period did not set the great

[6] Thompson and Scranton 1943, pp. 297–299.

[7] See for instance McDonald 1943, p. 80; Travlos 1971, pp. 466–467; Hansen 1982, pp. 241–249, and Romano 1985, pp. 441–454. The fact that a considerable amount of Roman pottery was found in the fill of the Third Period is problematic. According to Kourouniotes and Thompson (1932, pp. 181–185), 12 baskets of pottery out of 150 collected were of Roman date. The occurrence of this late material was isolated, however, and might belong to a later intrusion in the fill. To quote Thompson (1932, p. 299): "The late pottery was found in limited areas, directly behind the great retaining wall and among the masses of broken stone banked against the inner face of that wall. The late material may have reached that position in the course of a completion or extension or repair of the retaining wall, conceivably in consequence of the removal of stones from the wall and the filling behind it."

[8] Travlos 1971, p. 569.

[9] Thompson 1982, p. 142, note 32.

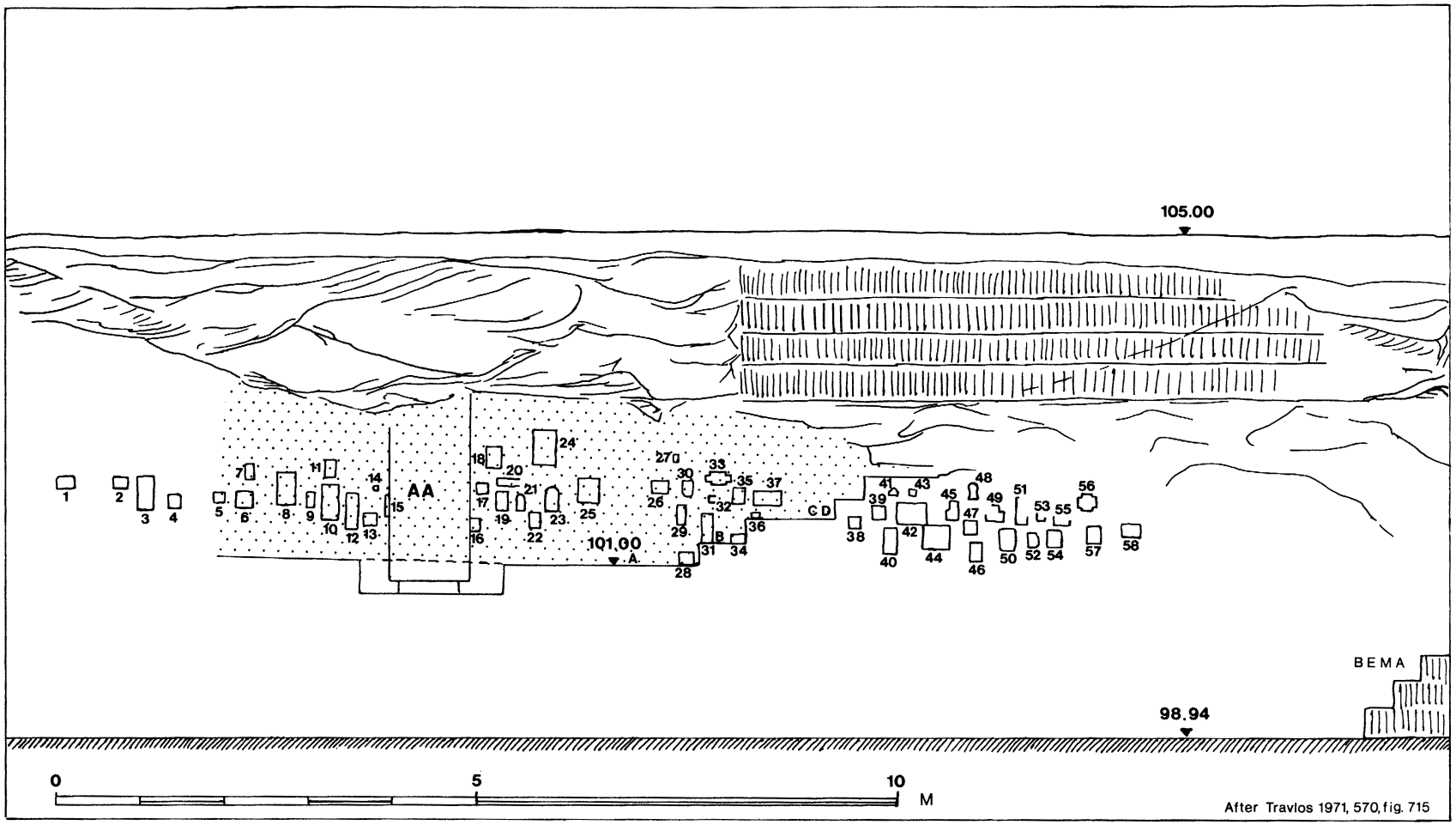

FIG. 1. The niches belonging to the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos. The floor of the auditorium of the Third Period is indicated by the elevation of +98.94 m., and the bottom of the recessed area (dotted) by the elevation of +101.00 m.

scarp back further, in order to get a completely smooth wall, truly is puzzling. Kourouniotes and Thompson's explanation, that the architect was respecting the sanctity of the shrine, seems logical at first glance but loses some of its force in view of the jagged line of the four steps above the western stairs leading up to the bema (Pl. 88:c).[10] These four steps were certainly not part of the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos (the excavators presumed they could have been part of a southern entrance to the auditorium of the First or Second Period, or both). There must have been some additional reason why the scar was left in the great scarp east of the bema.

As their second argument Kourouniotes and Thompson held that if the bottom level of the recessed area was taken as the floor of the original shrine, then the majority of the niches would have been at the same height above the floor as those in similar sanctuaries. This statement seems somewhat unclear to me. In two of the three sanctuaries to which they refer, the heights of the niches above the ground level are not given in the publications;[11] in the third one, the sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite on the North Slope, the heights of the niches above the ground level seem to vary between *ca.* 1.5 and 2.9–3 m.[12] But if the bottom line of the recessed area in the scarp east of the bema represented the original floor of the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos, then the niches would have been cut into the wall at heights between *ca.* 0.2–0.3 m. and 1 m., a level that seems surprisingly low to me (see Fig. 1).

Still another objection could be made to the thesis that the bottom level of the recessed area, in view of the heights of the niches in the wall, would constitute an appropriate floor level for the original sanctuary. If the original floor were the one marked by the bottom level of the recessed area, why would the dedicators, after the final construction phase of the Assembly, have continued to cut niches at the same level as the niches in the recessed area, when the floor of the new sanctuary had been lowered by nearly two meters?[13] The fact that all niches, whether inside the recessed area or outside it, are placed roughly at the same level seems to me to indicate that they were cut during a period when the floor level was more or less the same. One could also ask if it is logical to reckon the level of the niches from the rock-cut floor as the excavators did. In their reconstruction of the auditorium of the

[10] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, p. 160.

[11] The ones in question here are the sanctuary of Apollo on the North Slope of the Akropolis and the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Daphni near the Sacred Way to Eleusis. See Kavvadias 1897, cols. 6–15; Wide 1910, cols. 35–43; and Travlos 1937, pp. 25–33. The level of the niches above the floor depends, of course, on the height at which the level of the floor is reconstructed. If one believes the rock floor in the cave of Apollo to have been the floor in use, then the niches inside the cave in Kavvadias' plate 3:I seem to be set at a height of something between *ca.* 1.5 and 3 m. (a very rough estimate made in comparison with the measurements of the whole cave, which according to Kavvadias [1897, col. 6] was 7.3 m. high and 4.3 m. wide).

[12] Broneer 1932, pp. 39–44. Broneer (p. 42) says that niches 1 and 2 are at a level not more than 1.50 m. above the Roman floor. Niches 3 and 4 are slightly higher than 1 and 2. Broneer gives no heights for the other 18 niches, but inscription I, which is just above niche 12, is said (p. 44) to be at a level of *ca.* 1.90 m. above the level of the Greek floor. Thus niches 12–19 must be at a level between *ca.* 1.5 and 1.8 m. Niche 11 is at least 0.5 m. above inscription I, niche 10 about 1 m. above this inscription. Niches 5–7 seem to be at a level roughly similar to or somewhat lower than niche 11.

[13] In the sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite, the niches from the Roman period (1–4 and 20–22), when the level of the floor of the sanctuary had been lowered, are set considerably lower in the rock than the earlier niches.

Third Period the excavators assumed that the rock-cut floor beneath the niches during the Third Period was covered with earth to a thickness of about 0.5–1.00 m.[14] This would mean, of course, that the niches were located at a more appropriate level above the floor.

Finally, Kourouniotes and Thompson were of the opinion that one plaque (BM 805), which seemed to be later than the final construction phase, without doubt belonged to a niche outside the recessed area, thus showing that the niches outside the set-back area were later than those inside it. They also stated that they had succeeded with a fair degree of probability in placing all the other plaques known to them in their proper niches, but they gave no clue as to how. As the assignment of the plaques to their respective niches might be interesting not only for establishing the chronology of the sanctuary but also for gaining knowledge about the cult, and as new plaques from the shrine have come to light since 1932, I have considered it worthwhile to measure and catalogue all the niches.[15]

Description of the Niches (Fig. 1)[16]

AA. Large central niche. Pres. *ca.* 2.00 × 0.90–0.95 × 0.30–0.35.

1. Quite well preserved. Rectangular with slightly rounded upper corners. 0.18(0.165) × 0.23(0.22) × 0.04(0.025).

2 a. Quite well preserved. Rectangular? Left side unclear because of 2 b. 0.17 × 0.23 max. × 0.05(0.04).

b. Well preserved. Probably cut later, deepening left part of 2 a. Rectangular. 0.17 × 0.20(0.19) × 0.08(0.06).

3. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.42 × 0.215 × 0.075(0.07).

4. Badly eroded. Rectangular. *Ca.* 0.19 × *ca.* 0.20 × *ca.* 0.05.

5. Badly eroded. Rectangular? *Ca.* 0.10 × *ca.* 0.17(?) × 0.035(0.02). In middle, *ca.* 0.01 above bottom, iron nail preserved *in situ.*

6 a. Well preserved. Rectangular? Right side unclear because of 6 b. 0.205 × 0.22 max. × 0.02.

b. Well preserved. Rectangular. Probably cut later, deepening right part of 6 a. 0.205 × 0.14(0.125) × 0.07(0.04).

7. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.17(0.16) × 0.13 × 0.025(0.02). Midway on left and right sides and top of niche, three large (diam. *ca.* 0.02–0.035) deep (*ca.* 0.04–0.055) holes, perhaps for wedges, each extending *ca.* 0.01 into back of niche.

8. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.40 × 0.23 × 0.03. In middle of sides, two large (diam. *ca.* 0.02–0.025) deep (*ca.* 0.04–0.05) holes, perhaps for wedges. The hole on the left extends *ca.* 0.015 into the back of the niche, that on the right *ca.* 0.005.

[14] I have estimated the thickness from Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pl. III.

[15] Apart from the niches, there are also beddings for four dedications in the narrow ledge at the foot of the receding surface. These, marked as A–D in Figure 1, have the following dimensions (the first figure indicates the measurement parallel to the scarp and the second one the measurement perpendicular to the scarp): A (0.10 × 0.09), B (0.10 × 0.08), C (0.12–0.13 × 0.12), and D (0.13–0.14 × 0.15). To judge from their size, these beddings do not seem to have been designed for votive plaques but could perhaps have been designed for other kinds of dedications (see notes 19 and 20 below). Kourouniotes and Thompson mention two further beddings in one of the rock-cut benches above the niches, as well as iron pins in the face of the rock for suspending dedications. I did not succeed in finding any traces of these.

[16] The following measurements indicate maximum height, width, and depth of the niches in meters; minimum measurements are given in parentheses. For those niches which have been reused, "a" indicates primary use, while "b" and "c" indicate secondary use, involving recutting. The distinction made between holes meant for nails and those meant for wedges is drawn arbitrarily: small, round holes supposedly were used for nails while larger, sometimes irregular holes were used for wedges.

9. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.185 × 0.115(0.11) × 0.035(0.03).
10. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.42(0.41) × 0.24(0.23) × 0.05(0.04).
11. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.23(0.22) × 0.165(0.15) × 0.05(0.04). In upper part, *ca.* 0.04–0.05 from top and *ca.* 0.03 from each side, two holes for nails. In right-hand one, iron nail preserved *in situ.*
12. Well preserved. Rectangular, perhaps somewhat narrower in middle. 0.42(0.41) × 0.165(0.155) × 0.05(0.045).
13. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.155(0.15) × 0.175(0.165) × 0.03(0.02). About 0.01 to right of niche, at mid height, large hole (diam. *ca.* 0.02), perhaps for some kind of wedge or nail.
14. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.065(0.06) × 0.075(0.07) × 0.035(0.03). About 0.02–0.03 outside left and right sides and top, three large holes (diam. *ca.* 0.015–0.02), perhaps for some kind of wedge or nail.
15. Quite well preserved. Rectangular? 0.18(0.16) × ? × 0.04(0.035). Right part cut away by niche AA.
16. Badly eroded. Rectangular? *Ca.* 0.16 × ? × *ca.* 0.02. Left part cut away by niche AA.
17. Quite well preserved. Rectangular with swelling sides. 0.16(0.15) × 0.17(0.15) × 0.045(0.04). Slightly above mid height, just outside sides of niche, two rectangular holes (0.025 × 0.01), probably for wedges.
18. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.26 × 0.20(0.19) × 0.05(0.03). In middle of sides, two holes (diam. *ca.* 0.01) for nails(?), left-hand one just inside niche, right-hand one just outside.
19. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.23 × 0.17(0.165) × 0.03(0.025).
20. Quite well preserved. Rectangular, without any clear right side. 0.125(0.12) × 0.32 min. × 0.04(0.03). In upper left corner, hole (diam. *ca.* 0.01) with nail fragment *in situ.*
21. Well preserved. Rectangular with arched top. 0.25(0.205) × 0.17(0.165) × 0.05(0.04).
22. Quite well preserved. Rectangular but with somewhat irregular lower left and upper right corners. 0.17(0.165) × 0.18(0.17) × 0.04(0.035).
23. Quite well preserved. Rectangular with arched top. 0.275(0.235) × 0.185(0.17) × 0.045(0.04). In upper right corner, hole (diam. 0.01–0.02) filled with lead. In middle of left side, *ca.* 0.02 inside niche, iron nail *in situ.*
24. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.43 × 0.265 × 0.09(0.07).
25. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.31 × 0.28(0.27) × 0.06(0.05).
26. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.17(0.165) × 0.22(0.21) × 0.055(0.05).
27. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.09 × 0.08(0.075) × 0.05(0.045). The sides slope in, creating a smaller inner area *ca.* 0.055 × 0.05.
28. Badly eroded. Rectangular? *Ca.* 0.14 × *ca.* 0.17 × *ca.* 0.03(0.02).
29. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.245 × 0.135(0.13) × 0.07(0.04).
30. Well preserved. Nearly a trapezoid, narrowing towards bottom, with lower corners rounded off. 0.19 × 0.14(0.07) × 0.045.
31. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. Upper right corner missing. 0.38 × 0.155(0.145) × *ca.* 0.03.
32. Quite well preserved except for right side missing. Rectangular? 0.075 × *ca.* 0.075(?) × 0.03(0.02).
33. Quite well preserved. *Tabula ansata* form. Rectangular main part 0.155(0.15) × 0.23 × 0.03(0.02); ansae 0.13 × 0.025 (left side) and 0.12 × 0.05 (right side). In the corners where the ansae protrude, four holes (diam. 0.01) for nails: on right, inside ansa, just where it protrudes from rectangular main part; on the left, just inside rectangular main part before start of ansa. In all holes, except upper left, iron nails *in situ.*
34. Badly eroded. Rectangular? *Ca.* 0.13 × *ca.* 0.22 × *ca.* 0.02.
35. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.19 × 0.15(0.145) × 0.03(0.02). Just inside top, two holes (diam. 0.01): 0.025 and 0.04 from left and right sides, respectively.

36. Quite well preserved. Nearly a trapezoid, narrowing towards bottom end, with lower corners rounded off. 0.10(0.085) × 0.18(0.08) × 0.035. In upper corners, two holes (diam. 0.01) for nails.

37. Badly eroded. Rectangular. 0.18 × 0.32 × 0.035(0.02). In top and bottom, 0.03–0.04 from corners, four holes (diam. 0.02–0.035) *ca.* 0.04–0.055 deep, probably for wedges, each extending *ca.* 0.01 into the back of the niche.

38. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.14 × 0.13(0.12) × 0.04(0.035).

39 a. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.205(0.195) × 0.19(0.185) × 0.03(0.025). Halfway up each side, *ca.* 0.01 outside the niche, two large holes (diam. 0.02–0.03) *ca.* 0.03 deep, probably for wedges.

b. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.135(0.125) × 0.145 × 0.05(0.04). Probably cut later, deepening lower right corner of 39 a.

40. Well preserved. Rectangular, narrowing somewhat towards top. 0.32 × 0.195(0.17) × 0.05(0.035).

41. Well preserved. Nearly a trapezoid, narrowing towards top; sides bulge inward slightly. 0.13(0.12) × 0.135(0.08) × 0.035(0.03).

42 a. Quite well preserved. Rectangular? Right side unclear because of 42 c. 0.28(0.275) × 0.27(?) × *ca.* 0.03.

b. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.21 × 0.185(0.175) × 0.06(0.04). Probably cut later, deepening lower left corner of 42 a. On left just inside niche, *ca.* 0.035 from upper corner, hole for wedge (0.025 × 0.005 × 0.07).

c. Quite well preserved. Nearly rectangular, narrowing somewhat towards bottom. 0.275(0.265) × 0.16(0.12) × 0.065(0.045). Probably cut later than 42 a but perhaps at same time as 42 b, deepening right side of 42 a. Just outside niche on left, 0.09 above lower corner, large hole (0.025 × 0.005 × 0.075), probably for wedge.

43. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.105 × 0.15(0.14) × 0.03(0.025).

44. Quite well preserved. Rectangular with upper left corner somewhat protruding. 0.29(0.27) × 0.34 × 0.06(0.055). At mid height on left and right, just inside niche, two deep (0.09) holes (left-hand, 0.02 × 0.015; right-hand, 0.02 × 0.01), probably for wedges.

45. Quite well preserved. Basically rectangular, but with enlargement 0.03–0.04 wide and 0.20 high (probably later disturbance) on lower left side. 0.275 × 0.14 × 0.08(0.07).

46. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.21 × 0.155 × 0.03(0.025).

47. Quite well preserved. Basically rectangular, but with enlargement 0.015 high and 0.11 wide (probably later disturbance) on left side of top. 0.16(0.15) × 0.16(0.155) × 0.04.

48. Quite well preserved. Irregular form. Top arched, sides bulging inwards, thus somewhat resembling keyhole. 0.195 × 0.13(0.10) × 0.085(0.065).

49. Quite well preserved except for badly eroded upper left corner. Basically rectangular but with enlargement 0.07 wide and 0.14 high on lower right side. 0.25(0.14) × 0.26(0.19) × 0.06(0.04).

50. Well preserved. Nearly a trapezoid, narrowing towards bottom. 0.25(0.245) × 0.21(0.155) × 0.045(0.035). About 0.03–0.04 outside niche, 4 holes (*ca.* 0.02 × 0.005), 2 on each side, perhaps for some kind of wedges.

51. Quite well preserved, except for totally eroded upper right corner. Rectangular? 0.33 × 0.18 × 0.045(0.04).

52 a. Only partly preserved. Rectangular? Left side of 52 a was destroyed by 52 b. *Ca.* 0.13 × ? × 0.025(0.02).

b. Quite well preserved. Rectangular. 0.17(0.165) × 0.115 × 0.05(0.035).

53. Lower part quite well preserved; upper part totally eroded. Rectangular? ? × 0.12 × 0.035.

54. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.21 × 0.14 × 0.03(0.025). In each corner, nail hole (diam. *ca.* 0.01). In lower left-hand hole, fragment of nail *in situ*.

55. Badly eroded; upper part totally eroded. Rectangular? ? × *ca.* 0.17 × *ca.* 0.03.

56. Quite well preserved. *Tabula ansata* form. Rectangular main part 0.22 × 0.14(0.11) × 0.03(0.025); ansae 0.15 × 0.03(left side) and *ca.* 0.15 × 0.05(right side). Three holes (diam. *ca.* 0.01) for nails: one in middle of bottom intruding *ca.* 0.005 into back of niche; the other two, in lower parts of ansae just outside rectangular main part.

57. Well preserved. Rectangular but with top and right side bulging somewhat. 0.205(0.195) × 0.17(0.155) × 0.065(0.04).

58. Well preserved. Rectangular. 0.14(0.13) × 0.235 × 0.06(0.05).

The finds possibly originating from the sanctuary consist of votive plaques (mostly with a representation of some part of the human body as well as a dedicatory inscription,[17] occasionally with only one of the two[18]), small altars,[19] and other kinds of dedications.[20]

Some of these finds were made in the vicinity of the shrine[21] and can thus be attributed to it with certainty, while some were made elsewhere in Athens[22] and therefore can be assumed to have originated from this shrine only because we know of no other sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos in Athens. I consider here only plaques that are intact or of a size which can be easily restored, as these are the ones that might be successfully assigned to their original niches.

[17] *IG* II^2 4783 (2nd century); 4784 (2nd century); 4799 (2nd–3rd century); 4800 (2nd–3rd century); 4801 (2nd–3rd century); 4802 (2nd–3rd century); 4803 (2nd–3rd century); 4804 (2nd–3rd century); 4805 (2nd–3rd century); 4806 (2nd–3rd century); 4807 (2nd–3rd century); 4808 (2nd–3rd century); 4809 (2nd–3rd century); 4810 (2nd–3rd century); Thompson 1936, pp. 154–155, fig. 4:a; Thompson 1936, pp. 154–155, fig. 4:b; Meritt 1960, p. 63, no. 107 (2nd–3rd century); Forsén 1990, pp. 10–11 (late 1st–early 2nd century); Lajtar 1987, p. 165 (2nd–3rd century). The dates given here, as well as in notes 18–20, 28, and 29, are those given in the respective publications and all refer to the Christian era. All these dates are based on the letter forms and, needless to say, contain a certain margin of error.

[18] Plaques with only a representation of part of the human body: British Museum 803; Berlin Staatliche Museen 721. Plaques with dedicatory inscription only: *IG* II^2 4766 (1st–2nd century); 4798 (2nd–3rd century); 4843 (*aetate imperat.*); Thompson 1936, p. 154, fig. 4:c; Thompson 1936, p. 156, fig. 6:b.

[19] *IG* II^2 4738 (1st–2nd century); 4811 (2nd–3rd century); Thompson 1936, pp. 155–156, figs. 5, 6:a; Meritt 1948, p. 43, no. 34 (2nd–3rd century); Meritt 1954, p. 256, no. 40 (1st century); Meritt 1957, pp. 89–90, no. 35 (2nd–3rd century); Meritt 1960, p. 63, no. 108 (2nd–3rd century).

[20] Protome of bearded man: *IG* II^2 4737 (1st–2nd century). Eagle on top of small column: *IG* II^2 4782 (2nd century).

[21] Of the finds enumerated in notes 17–20, *IG* II^2 4766, 4798–4807 and B.M. 803 were found beneath the niches. Thompson 1936, pp. 154–155, figs. 4:a, b, and 6:b were found in the loose earth overlying the hilltop south of the Assembly Place. Forsén 1990, pp. 10–11 was found in a deeper layer north of the bema. A small marble altar (Thompson 1936, pp. 155–156, figs. 5, 6:a) was found in a small natural depression in the rock-cut floor of the First Period, northwest of the great bema. *IG* II^2 4783 was found in a deeper layer close to the retaining wall of the Third Period.

[22] *IG* II^2 4804–4810 and Berlin, S.M. 721 had been reused as building stones in a modern house north of the Akropolis and Meritt 1960, p. 63, no. 108 in a modern house on the north slope of the Areopagos. Meritt 1948, p. 43, no. 34, Meritt 1954, p. 256, no. 40, Meritt 1957, pp. 89–90, no. 35, and Meritt 1960, p. 63, no. 108 were all found on the Agora, Meritt 1957, pp. 89–90, no. 35 built into a Byzantine wall. *IG* II^2 4784 was found in the Roman Agora, *IG* II^2 4738 near the Propylaia, and *IG* II^2 4782 on the South Slope of the Akropolis. Lajtar 1987, p. 165 and *IG* II^2 4843 were found somewhere in Athens. *IG* II^2 4737 and 4811 are stored in the Archaeological Museum in Piraeus, suggesting that they were found in the vicinity of Piraeus.

Description of the Plaques

Found in the Vicinity of the Sanctuary[23]

1. B.M. 799 = *IG* II^2 4803. Female breast. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.15 × 0.15 × 0.032–0.041 (0.07). Possible niches: Nos. 17 and 47. Nos. 13 and 22 might also be possible, but No. 13 seems too shallow and No. 22 somewhat too large.

2. B.M. 800 = *IG* II^2 4804. Female breast. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.197 × 0.170 × 0.039 (0.039). Possible niches: Nos. 6 a and 39 a. No. 39 a is perhaps to be preferred as it is deeper.

3. B.M. 801 = *IG* II^2 4805. Pair of eyes. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. 0.091 × 0.141 × 0.046 (0.003). Possible niche: No. 43.

4. B.M. 802 = *IG* II^2 4799. Pair of eyes (only one preserved). 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.092–0.093 × 0.127 × 0.056. The plaque was probably originally about 0.02–0.03 higher and slightly less than double in width (eight letters were once recorded [*IG* III 149] before the nine that are inscribed on the part that has survived). Possible niche: No. 58.

5. B.M. 803 = Travlos 1971, p. 571, fig. 716:a. Right foot turned to right (only forepart remains). *Ca.* 0.16 × 0.15 × 0.054 (0.013). If the whole foot was shown (I know of no anatomical *ex voto* from Greece with only part of the foot), the plaque must have been 0.30–0.35 wide and perhaps 0.20 high. If the lower part of the leg was also shown, the plaque could even have been 0.30 high. Possible niche: No. 44.

6. B.M. 804 = *IG* II^2 4800. Vulva. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.145 × 0.196 × 0.047 (0.013). The plaque was probably originally more or less rectangular, perhaps 0.01–0.02 higher. Possible niches: Nos. 2 a, 26.

7. B.M. 805 = *IG* II^2 4801. Face from eyebrows downwards. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.234 × 0.201 × 0.066 (0.047). Possible niche: No. 50.

8. B.M. 806 = *IG* II^2 4806. Pair of arms. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.16 × 0.191 × 0.06. The plaque was at least 0.03 higher, if the right hand was also shown, perhaps even 0.25–0.26 higher. Possible niche: No. 18.

9. B.M. 807 = *IG* II^2 4804. Female breast. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.123 × 0.163 × 0.026 (0.027). Nearly intact, the plaque was perhaps slightly higher. Possible niches: Nos. 13, 22, and 28. Of these, the evidence for niche No. 28 is inconclusive because of its bad preservation. The comparatively thin B.M. 807 seems to fit well with the relative shallowness of niche No. 13.

10. G.I.B.M. 61 = *IG* II^2 4798. Plaque with inscription only. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. *Ca.* 0.12 × 0.161 × 0.045. Possible niches: Nos. 13 and 22. No. 22 would perhaps fit better because of its greater depth.

11. PN I 6 = Thompson 1936, pp. 154–155, fig. 4:a. Female breast. 0.195 × 0.215 × 0.045 (0.045). Possible niche: No. 6 a. The shallowness of No. 6 a, however, makes this assignment uncertain.

12. PN I 1 = *IG* II^2 4783. Pair of female breasts. 2nd century after Christ. 0.10 × 0.20 × 0.03 (0.032). As Kourouniotes and Thompson noted,[24] no niche seems to fit this *ex voto* perfectly. Niche No. 58 is the closest.

13. E.M. 3221 = Forsén 1990, pp. 10–11. Back part of a male torso. Late 1st–early 2nd century after Christ. 0.25 × 0.12–0.13 × 0.05 (0.06). The plaque seems originally to have been 0.16–0.18 wide. Possible niche: No. 18.

[23] The measurements indicate height, width, and thickness of the plaques in meters. Figures within the parentheses indicate the additional height of the relief. All measurements, apart from those of the Berlin and Boston plaques, are my own. When approximate heights are given, it is owing to the fact that the plaques are mounted in modern bases, thus making an exact measurement impossible. The dates are those given in the respective publications. B.M. = British Museum; E.M. = Epigraphical Museum (Athens); G.I.B.M. = Greek Inscriptions of the British Museum; PN I = Pnyx Inscription.

[24] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, p. 199.

FOUND IN THE AGORA OR ELSEWHERE IN ATHENS

14. Berlin, S.M. 718 = *IG* II^2 4809. Female breast. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. 0.196 × 0.165 × 0.045 (0.025). Possible niches: Nos. 19, 21, 23, 39 a, and 42 b. Of these Nos. 19 and 39 a are perhaps too shallow. No. 42 b should probably be preferred to Nos. 21 and 23, since the latter are arched and the *ex voto* in question is rectangular.

15. Berlin, S.M. 719 = *IG* II^2 4810. Female breast. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. 0.16 × 0.11 × 0.045 (0.045). Possible niches: Nos. 7, 9, and 52 b. Nos. 9 and 52 b seem to fit better because of their depth.

16. Berlin, S.M. 720 = *IG* II^2 4808. Pair of eyes with the bridge of the nose. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. 0.13 × 0.155. Possible niches: Nos. 13, 22, and 28. Of these, No. 28 is very badly preserved.

17. Berlin, S.M. 721 = *Beschreibung*, p. 250, no. 721. Female abdomen and thighs. 0.16 × 0.10 × 0.025 (0.035). Possible niches: Nos. 7, 9, 48, 52 b. Of these, No. 7 seems preferable because of its relative shallowness.

18. Roman Agora = *IG* II^2 4784. Pair of footprints. 1st–2nd century after Christ. 0.30 × 0.235 × 0.8. Possible niche: No. 25.

19. Boston, M.F.A. 08.34b. = Lajtar 1987, pp. 165–166. Vulva. 2nd–3rd century after Christ. 0.15 × 0.124. The top of the plaque is arched. The plaque may have been a few centimeters higher. Thus niches Nos. 13 and 17 seem too small. The Boston plaque could fit into niches Nos. 7, 22, or 35, but none of these niches is arched. The arched niches Nos. 21 and 23, on the other hand, seem much too large.

This review of the evidence demonstrates that, because of irregularity of the niches (even the rectangular ones) and the fragmentary state of most of the plaques, the assignment of the plaques to their original niches cannot be made with more than a fair degree of probability. Apart from **7**, which Kourouniotes and Thompson thought they could assign to niche No. 50 with complete certainty, **3** (niche No. 43), **4** (niche No. 58), **5** (niche No. 44), **8** (niche No. 18), **13** (niche No. 18), and **18** (niche No. 25) can also be associated with a single niche. Niche No. 18 could have been cut first for **13** and later reused for **8.** Other niches that have been recut, and thus probably reused, are Nos. 2, 6, 39, 42, and 52.

Of all the plaques considered, only two, **12** and **19**, seemed impossible to place. Kourouniotes and Thompson thought **12** could have been placed in one of the sanctuary walls that were cut away as the Third Period of the Assembly Place was constructed.[25] The two plaques could just as well have been accommodated in niches that were destroyed when the great central niche was cut. **12** may have been found close to the outer retaining wall at a depth of one meter for the same reason that **13** was found north of the bema in a deeper layer,[26] that is, when niches were destroyed or reused, the earlier plaques were buried in the neighborhood of the sanctuary.

The tentative attribution of plaques to niches does not seem to reveal any clear chronological difference between the niches cut into the recessed area and the ones cut outside it. Two of the earlier plaques probably came from niches inside the recessed area, but this could very well be due to a coincidence as reused niches (thus originally holding the earlier plaques?) were found on each side of the recessed area. One should not forget, however, the difficulty in trying to establish the chronology of the sanctuary in this way. The fact that the plaques can be dated only approximately may very well conceal chronological differences between the niches.

[25] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 199–200.

[26] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, p. 197 and Curtius 1862, p. 27.

The study seems to indicate that the niches were reused and that earlier dedications were removed from the sanctuary and sometimes buried in the neighborhood.[27] All the plaques, except for one, that were found beneath the niches, and so could have fallen out of them after the sanctuary was abandoned, belong to the later dedications.[28] All the earlier dedications, apart from the one found beneath the niches, have either been found buried in the neighborhood of the sanctuary or dispersed over Athens.[29] Apart from **12** and **13**, one of the altars also seems to have been deliberately buried.[30]

The sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos must be dated on the basis of the dedications offered to it, the dates of which range between the 1st and 3rd centuries after Christ. None of the dedications, however, bears an inscription typical for the beginning or the end of this period. Thus, the sanctuary is given a floruit of something like 200 years, from around the middle of the 1st century to somewhere before the middle of the 3rd century after Christ. This date fits well with the fact that the cult of Zeus Hypsistos is a latecomer to Greece.[31]

So far, I hope to have demonstrated that the recessed area in the scarp east of the bema cannot have been connected originally with the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos. It must represent part of a construction that existed not only long before the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos was founded but also before the final remodeling of the Pnyx *ca.* 330–326 B.C. It must then be connected with one of the phases of the Assembly Place before the Third Period and could represent part of a southern entrance, perhaps most likely of the Second Period. Such a deep cut into the rock would hardly have been necessary for an entrance to the First Period auditorium, which followed the natural slope of the hill.

Kourouniotes and Thompson did not find any traces of the original front line of the auditorium of the Second Period, and in their reconstruction they left the southern part of the Assembly Place open.[32] Travlos tentatively reconstructed the front of the auditorium as a curved line,[33] without, however, giving any evidence for it. Travlos' proposal seems later to have been accepted by Thompson.[34]

[27] This is a well-known practice in Greek and Roman sanctuaries. Compare, e.g., the deposits found in connection with the Asklepieion at Corinth (*Corinth* XIV, pp. 113–114).

[28] Of the twelve dedications found beneath the niches by George, Earl of Aberdeen, in 1803, *IG* II^2 4798–4807 are dated 2nd–3rd century, whereas one, *IG* II^2 4766, is dated to the 1st–2nd century. One of the twelve (B.M. 803) lacks any inscription and therefore is not possible to date.

[29] To the earlier dedications (apart from *IG* II^2 4766) belong *IG* II^2 4737 (1st–2nd century), *IG* II^2 4738 (1st–2nd century), Forsén 1990, pp. 10–11 (late 1st–early 2nd century), Meritt 1954, p. 256, no. 40 (1st century), and perhaps also *IG* II^2 4782 (2nd century), *IG* II^2 4783 (2nd century), *IG* II^2 4784 (2nd century), and *IG* II^2 4843 (*aetate imperat.*).

[30] Thompson 1936, pp. 155–156, figs. 5, 6:a. See note 21 above.

[31] The earliest known dedications to the cult of Zeus Hypsistos are from Edessa and date to the first half of the 2nd century B.C. See Cook 1925, pp. 876–890; Cook 1940, pp. 1162–1164; Nock 1974, pp. 414–443; and Taceva-Hitova 1978, p. 62. Homer A. Thompson kindly suggests that the cult of Zeus Hypsistos might have been established to retain some presence of Zeus in this place after the Altar of Zeus Agoraios (which once probably stood above and behind the bema of the Third Period) had been transplanted to the Agora in the 1st century B.C./1st century after Christ. See *Agora* XIV, pp. 160–161.

[32] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 120–122, fig. 16.

[33] Travlos 1971, p. 473, fig. 595.

[34] Thompson 1982, pp. 138–139, pl. 18:b. Thompson admits that there remains great uncertainty regarding the scheme of the front part of the auditorium but on the other hand does not object to the fact that the model (pl. 18:b) of Period II shows the front part of the auditorium as a curved line.

Eleven meters north of the scarp Kourouniotes and Thompson found some cuttings in the rock floor of the auditorium of the Third Period, which they interpreted as the pivot socket and threshold of a door about 1.60 m. wide.[35] These cuttings clearly had to be earlier than the final remodeling of the Assembly Place. Believing in the priority of the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos vis-à-vis the final remodeling, Kourouniotes and Thompson were of the opinion that these cuttings possibly should be connected with the sanctuary in its early form before the enlargement of the Assembly Place. They thought that one "might restore here a northern entrance leading up to the sanctuary by a short stairway which was cut away in the quarrying of Period III."[36]

The attribution of the cuttings in the rock floor to a door about 1.60 m. wide seems to be somewhat insecure.[37] While examining the site, I could not find any clear pivot socket nor any clear-cut ends to the cuttings, which are at least 2.65 m. long. The cuttings seem to have continued in both directions parallel to the great scarp of the Third Period (Pl. 88:b). Most of the construction to which the cuttings once belonged must have been obliterated during the last rebuilding phase of the Assembly Place; the cuttings must be connected with an earlier phase than the Third Period.

As the living rock on the east side of the axis of the Assembly Place originally was higher and the slope steeper, the construction to which the cuttings once belonged must have been cut quite deep into the rock. This would not have been necessary for the Assembly Place of the First Period, where the seating followed the natural slope. For the Second Period, when the seating area was reversed 180 degrees, it might have been necessary to cut down the bedrock towards the front line east of the axis, thus creating a kind of scarp similar to that of the Third Period.[38] The cuttings under discussion could perhaps constitute the remains of such an earlier scarp.

Apart from the jagged line in the scarp and the cuttings eleven meters north of it, which I have tried to prove to belong to the Second Period, there is the jagged line showing four other steps above the western stairs leading up to the bema of the Third Period (Pl. 88:c). According to Kourouniotes and Thompson, this early stairway "presumably provided a southern entrance to the auditoria of the First and Second Periods."[39] Assuming that this stairway above the western part of the bema also belonged to the construction of the Second Period, there would be three minor parts preserved from the original front line of the auditorium of the Second Period.[40]

[35] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, p. 195, note 1.

[36] *Loc. cit.*

[37] Kourouniotes and Thompson's interpretation could have been influenced by the fact that the recess under the central niche in the middle of the area set back in the great scarp is about 1.60 m. wide and more or less opposite the cuttings in the rock floor. This recess, however, is without doubt cut later than the other part of the scar in the great scarp, most probably in connection with the cutting of the central niche.

[38] The retaining wall of the Second Period is made of local limestone, which, as in the case of the Third Period, could have been quarried from this corner.

[39] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, p. 160.

[40] McDonald (1943, pp. 74–75) suggests that the rock-cut seats, lying above the great scarp on either side of the bema of the Third Period, would have belonged to the construction of the Second Period. The perfect alignment between the benches and the great scarp and the symmetry in the arrangement of the two banks

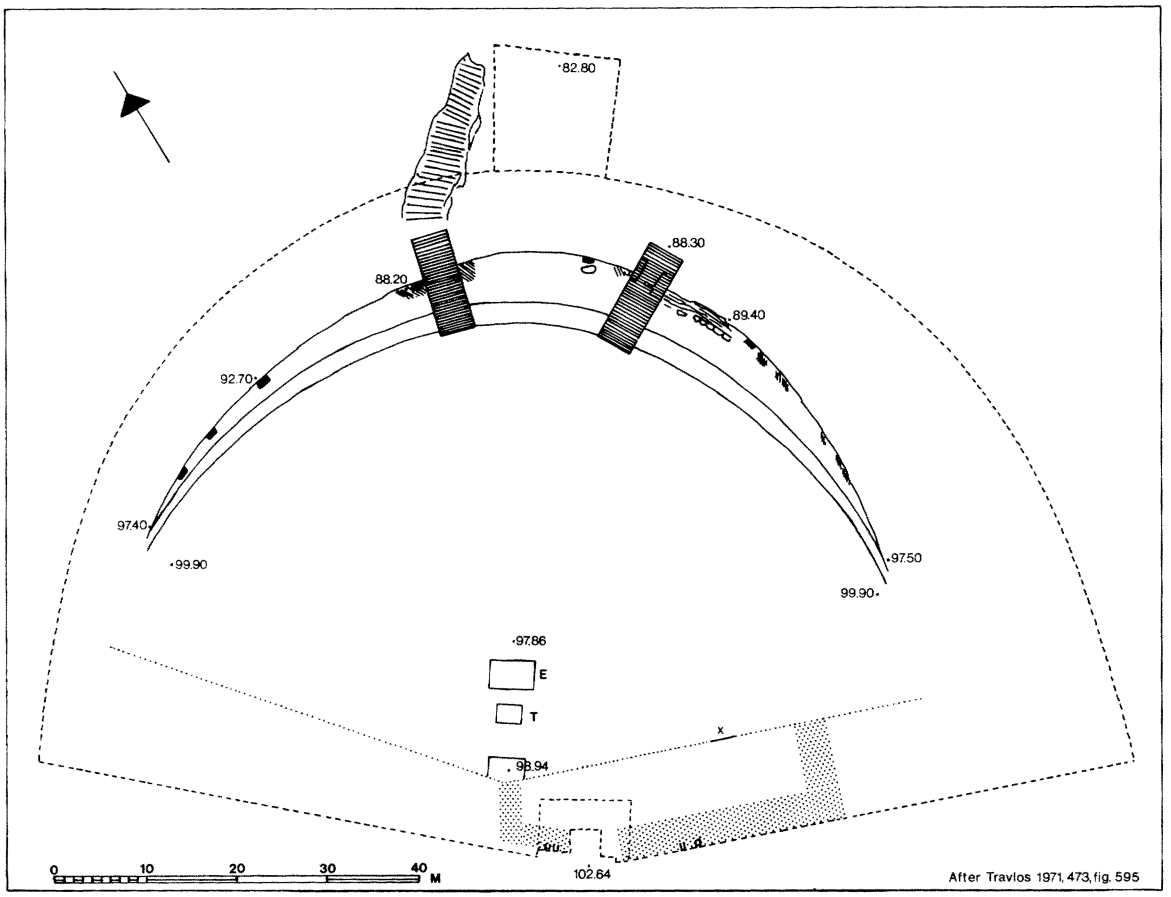

FIG. 2. The Assembly Place of the Second Period (after Travlos 1971, p. 473, fig. 595). × marks the cuttings 2.65 m. long, visible in the rock floor, which form part of the front line of the Second Period (shown as a dotted line). The bema is situated in the obtuse angle of the proposed front line. E marks the location suggested for the bema by Kourouniotes and Thompson, T the one suggested by Travlos. The dashed line surrounding the Assembly Place of the Second Period indicates the visible parts of the Third Period. At right angles to this dashed line, the preserved steps of the two staircases are shown as short parallel lines. A possible reconstruction of these staircases is indicated by the two shaded areas.

The reconstruction of the front line of the auditorium of the Second Period on the basis of the three minor parts preserved remains highly hypothetical. If, however, the cuttings in the rock floor eleven meters north of the great scarp are presumed to constitute the remains of an earlier scarp belonging to the Second Period and the line representing these cuttings is extended, the result is a front line similar to that of the Third Period, i.e., having an obtuse angle in the middle (Fig. 2). Furthermore, if the Assembly Place of the Second Period is assumed to have been symmetrical, the obtuse angle should be reconstructed on its axis, i.e., straight behind the spot where the excavators in 1932 tentatively placed the bema.

of seats above the bema, however, seem to indicate contemporaneity in design. See also Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 165–166.

If the bema of the Second Period is placed in the obtuse angle, it would be situated *ca.* 11 m. behind the spot Kourouniotes and Thompson tentatively suggested and *ca.* 5.5–6 m. behind the spot Travlos chose in his reconstruction (Fig. 2).[41] The bema, however, would still be situated *ca.* 1–2 m. in front of the spot McDonald suggested.[42] The newly proposed front line of the auditorium and place of the bema would give a total seating area of *ca.* 3,000 sq. m., i.e., between those proposed by Kourouniotes and Thompson (*ca.* 2,600 sq. m.)[43] and by Dinsmoor and McDonald (*ca.* 3,200 sq. m.).[44]

It goes without saying that it is impossible to establish the original extent and purpose of the two stairways described above. The stairway that is partially preserved in the east scarp, in the middle of the niches belonging to the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos, to judge from the preserved parts might have offered an entrance to the auditorium at a point suitable for a diazoma. The second stairway, of which a faintly distinguishable jagged line is preserved above the bema of the Third Period (Pl. 88:c), might in its turn, to judge from its position, have provided an ascent to the bema of the Second Period. Unfortunately we will never know for certain how to recreate the front line of the Assembly Place of the Second Period, as this was so badly destroyed during the final remodeling of the Assembly Place on the Pnyx.

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[41] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 121–122, fig. 16; Travlos 1971, p. 473, fig. 595.

[42] McDonald 1943, p. 75.

[43] Kourouniotes and Thompson 1932, pp. 126–127 and Thompson 1982, pp. 138–139.

[44] Dinsmoor 1933, p. 181; McDonald 1943, pp. 72–75.

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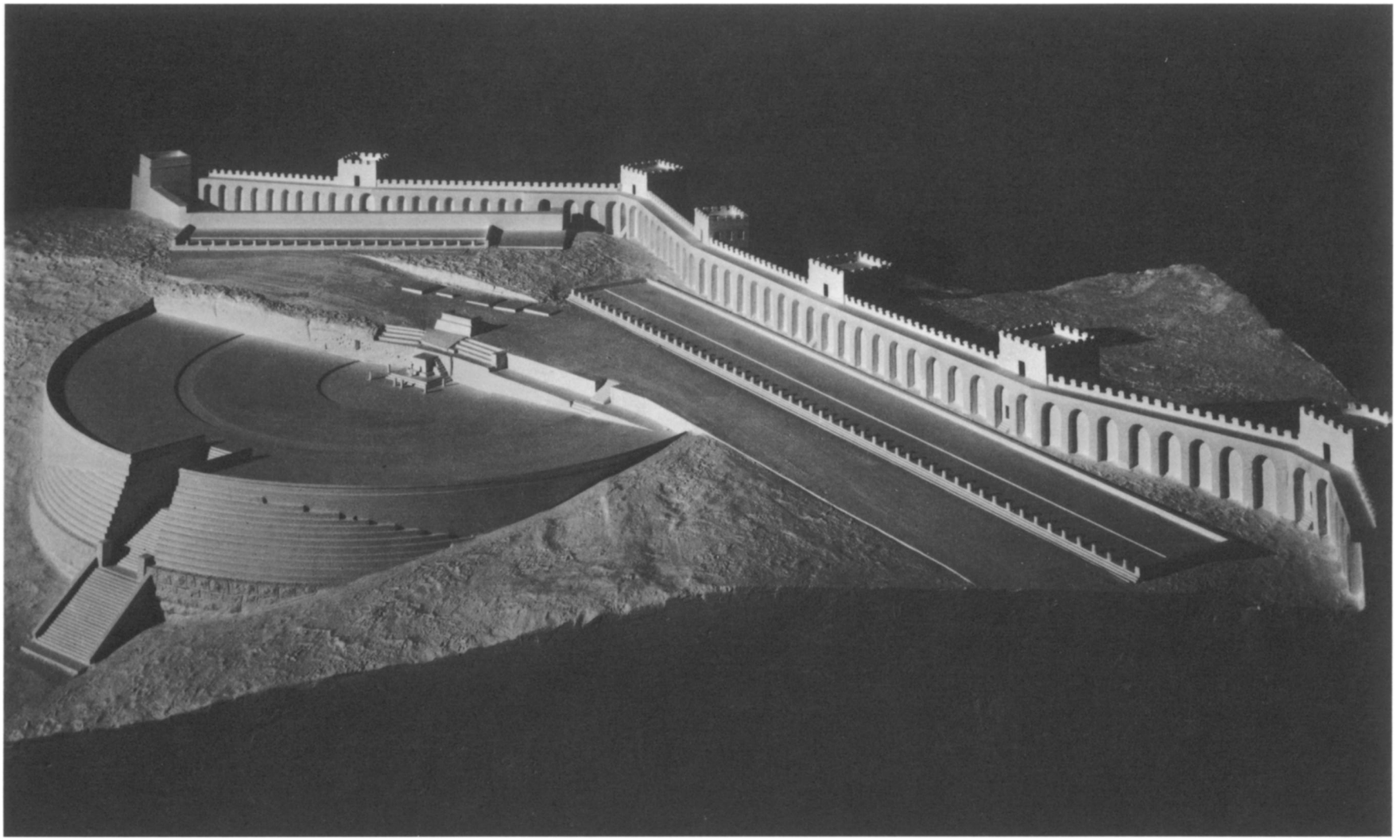
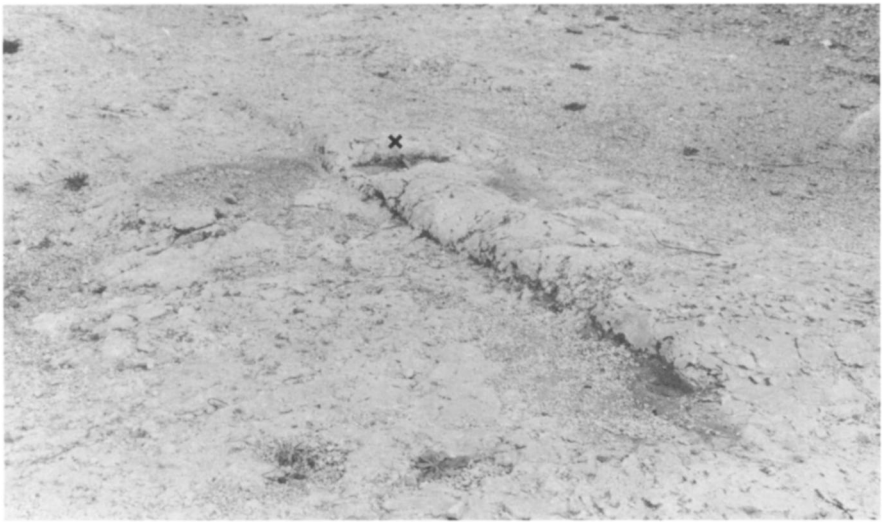


Model of Third Period of Assembly Place, from north (Thompson 1982, pl. 19)

PLATE 88

a. Scarp east of the bema with niches and recessed area



b. Cuttings in rock floor of Third Period. Cutting for Third Period at center (x)

c. Bema of Third Period. Ends of four steps of earlier, destroyed staircase visible at right, above western stairs (arrow)