

EROS AND APHRODITE ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF THE ACROPOLIS IN ATHENS

IN most books on the topography of Athens reference is made to the numerous small niches cut in rock at various points on the North Slope of the Acropolis,¹ but hitherto only in the case of one group of niches has it been possible to connect them definitely with a known sanctuary. This is the cave of Apollo where most of the niches are found and where some of the votive plaques that once occupied the niches have been discovered. From this cave as far east as the underground ascent into the citadel west of the Erechtheum the North Slope has been carefully investigated;² but the eastern part is less well known. Some of the earlier topographers, however, notably Carl Boetticher,³ called attention to the niches; and in Curtius' and Kaupert's *Atlas*⁴ a plan of the North Slope is given with the several groups of niches numbered and described. The results of these investigations are restated in Judeich's *Topographie von Athen*,⁵ where the statement is made that so far (new edition published 1931) it has not been possible to assign the niches to any definite sanctuary. In view of these facts it seemed unlikely that any new light would be thrown on the subject without excavating, and it was not without surprise that I discovered, while looking at the architectural material built into the north wall of the Acropolis, two inscriptions cut in rock among a large number of votive niches. These inscriptions made certain, what seemed already obvious from the presence of the niches, that an ancient shrine had existed at this place, and furthermore furnished us with the information that the deities worshiped were Eros and Aphrodite. In order to obtain some evidence for the extent and nature of the sanctuary an investigation of the site on a small scale was undertaken in January, 1931.⁶ Although the excavation failed to produce what I had most hoped to find, some fragments of the marble plaques which must have been set up in the niches, the investigation was not in vain.

¹ See Carl Boetticher, *Untersuchungen auf der Akropolis von Athen*, pp. 218–220; T. H. Dyer, *Ancient Athens*, p. 447; Adolf Boetticher, *Die Akropolis von Athen*, p. 51; Curtius and Kaupert, *Atlas von Athen*, p. 21; Walther Judeich, *Topographie von Athen*, II ed., pp. 301–305.

² The most extensive work here was done by Kavvadias and published in the *'Aex. 'Eφ.*, 1897, pp. 1–31 and 87–92.

³ *Loc. cit.* He counted no less than eighty niches on the whole north slope exclusive of those found in the caves and observed the fact that only on the north side are such niches found.

⁴ p. 21.

⁵ p. 304.

⁶ I am greatly indebted to Dr. N. Kyparisses, Ephor of Antiquities of Attica, for kindly lending me the aid of his foreman Stauros and several of his experienced workmen.

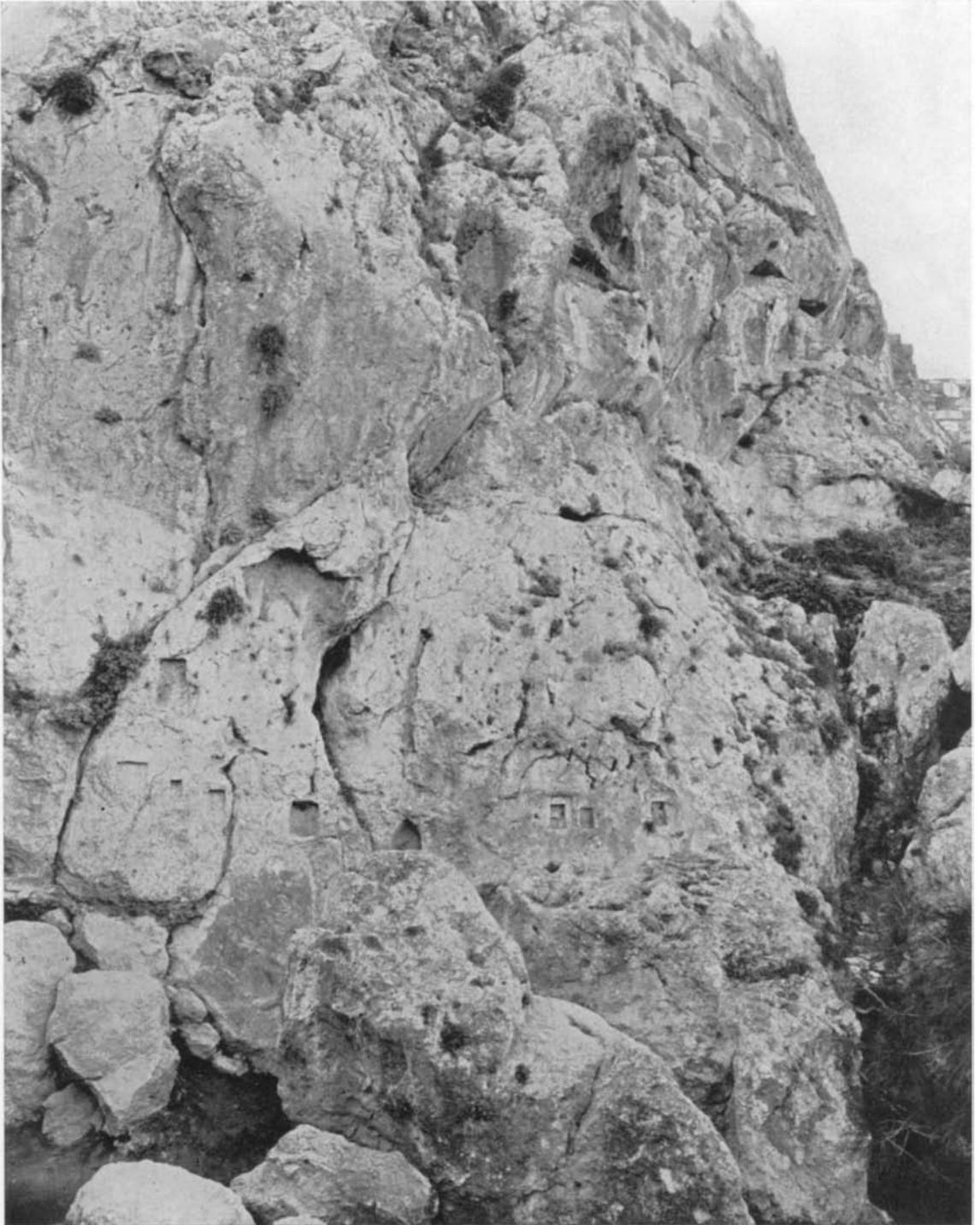


Fig. 1. The Sanctuary. Above: the wall of the Acropolis

THE SANCTUARY

The sanctuary is located near the middle of the North Slope directly below the point where the Acropolis wall makes the obtuse angle at which are the traces of the Mycenaean postern gate, east of the Erechtheum (see Fig. 1, which shows the drums of the pre-Persian Parthenon built into the Acropolis wall a little to the west of the sanctuary). As can be seen in the plan (Fig. 2) the excavated area is limited toward the south and southwest by the Acropolis rock. The large piece of rock on the south side (marked A in Figs. 2, 6, and 7) is broken off from the main mass of rock (B) and a cleft between the two forms a natural, curving passage wide enough for a man to pass through. This passage is continued toward the northwest, where another separate piece of rock (E Figs. 2, 6, and 8) leans against the main cliff (B). Close to E toward the east is rock F, which has some ancient cuttings to be described later. Along the north side of the excavation is a rock marked G, and close to it near the northeast corner is rock H, both of which have traces of ancient tooling. The smaller boulders which now lie between the rocks already described, chiefly between F and G, show no such marks, and it is uncertain whether they lay in their present position at the time when the sanctuary was in use or have rolled down later; but, as we shall see below, they are of no importance for our present investigation, since the Greek ground level was certainly higher than the top of these stones.

The area enclosed by rocks A, B, E, F, G, and H (Figs. 2, 6, 7, and 8), was at one period artificially leveled; but toward the north and east the hill slopes steeply to a lower level. On the east side alone are there traces of ancient walls. The two parallel walls $\alpha-\alpha$ and $\beta-\beta$ (Figs. 2 and 4) extending northward from rock A are probably not earlier than the Roman period; but their exact date is difficult to establish. Wall $\alpha-\alpha$ rests on a layer of earth, *ca.* 0.25 m. deep, in which was found, extending well under the wall, several large pieces of a coarse pot (Fig. 3) with parallel ribs round the body. The wall is made of unhewn stones laid in earth without foundation. The south end of the wall for a distance of 1.40 m. is now covered with earth enclosed by a wall (shown in dotted lines on the plan) made at the time of our excavation in order to save a cypress tree which has its roots in the ancient wall. Before this enclosure was made the east face of the entire wall was laid bare.

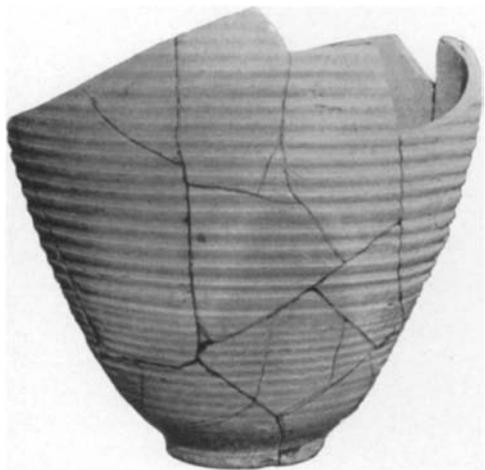


Fig. 3. Roman pot from the Sanctuary

The other wall ($\beta-\beta$) farther east extends from rock A toward the north into the unexcavated area. Only about four metres of this wall could be cleared, because the difficulty of dumping

SANCTUARY OF EROS AND APHRODITE

ATHENS 1931

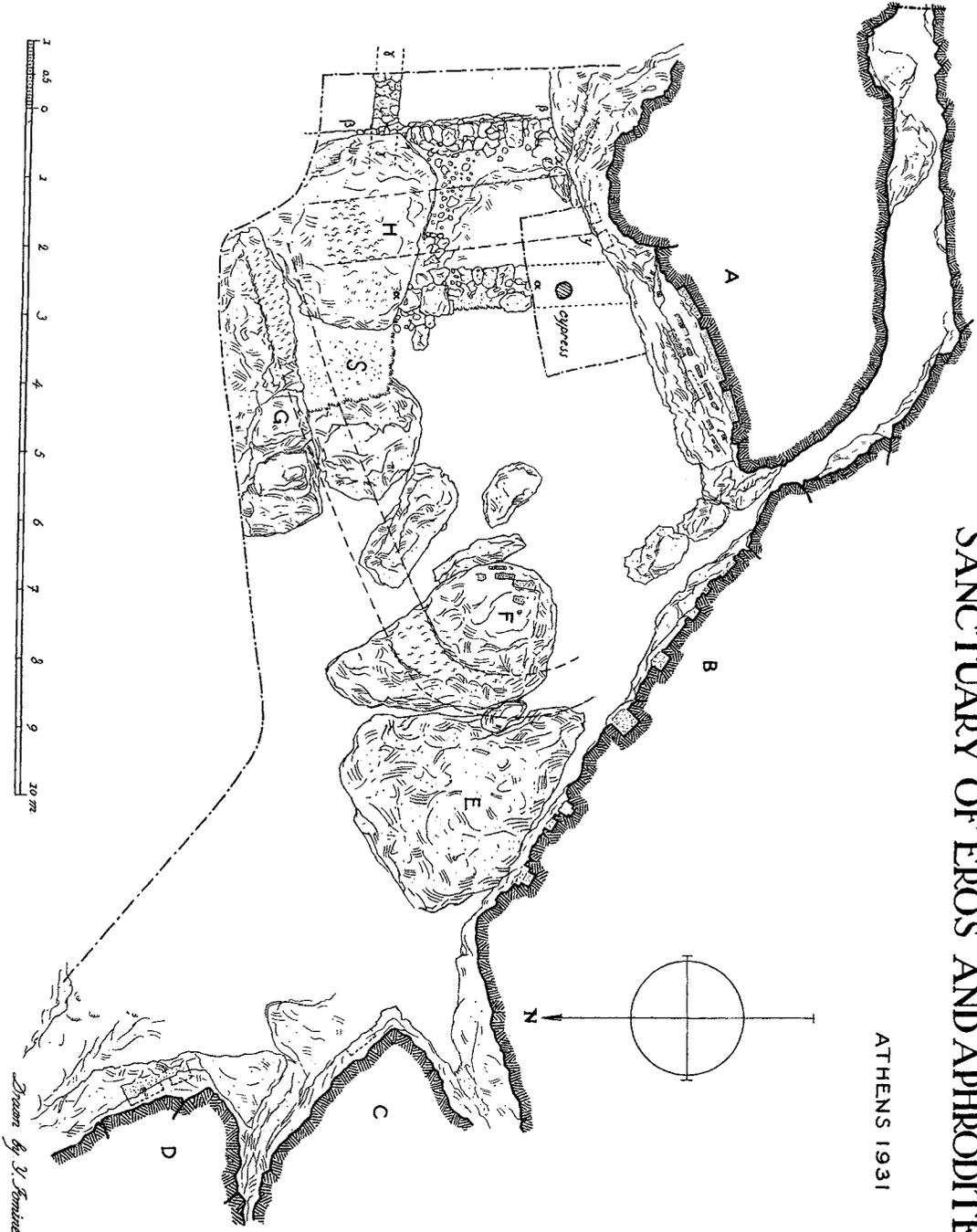


Fig. 2

Drawn by W. Fendler

the earth without the use of cars made it impossible to extend the excavations farther in this direction. Wall β - β is built much in the same way as wall α - α . It rests on a layer of earth, but begins at a much deeper level than α - α because of the abrupt drop of ground level at this point. It was built as a retaining wall for the higher area toward the west. Consequently it has only one face, that to the east, whereas on the west side it was left rough with small stones and earth packed against it. The sherds found in this fill are mostly prehistoric; but a few coarse pieces appear to be Roman. Moreover, the prehistoric sherds are not all of one period. Most numerous are Early Helladic; but mixed with these were found some typical examples of Minyan and Mycenaean ware. The fill extended uniformly between walls α - α and β - β ; and this fact, together with the close similarity in construction, leads to the conclusion that the two walls are of the same date.

A third wall, γ - γ (Figs. 2 and 4), running approximately east and west has been laid bare for a distance of 1.25 m. It is certainly earlier than the other walls we have described, for it extends well under wall β - β in the earth upon which the latter rests.



Fig. 4. East end of the Sanctuary, showing walls

Wall γ - γ is built of small stones which rest directly on stereo. The numerous sherds of prehistoric pottery found at this point (Fig. 5) and the appearance of the wall itself seem to indicate that wall γ - γ dates before the classical era; but without further excavation it is impossible to determine with certainty to which period it belongs.

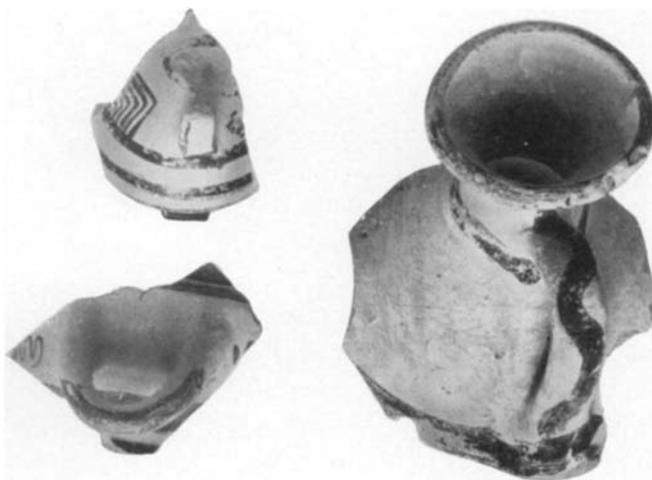


Fig. 5. Mycenaean sherds from east side of Sanctuary

The ground level belonging to wall α - α on the west side was probably about even with the bottom of the wall, *i.e.* some 0.25 m. above the present level or possibly somewhat higher. Unfortunately, no evidence from stratification could be obtained here, for it is clear that the whole area was disturbed in Byzantine times or later, since late sherds were found in the fill down to stereo. But what is even more puzzling is the fact that part of the area had been excavated in modern times. In the corner formed by rocks A and B, as well as north of rock E, modern bricks and sherds were mixed with the fill down to the bottom, and in the passage between rocks A and B, which was filled almost to the top, the earth had been dug away from the opening into the passage for a distance of *ca.* 1.50 m.¹

The significance of the two Roman walls α - α and β - β will be discussed later; but first we must inquire into the existing evidence for the extent of the sanctuary in Greek times. On the face of rock A between the points *x* and *y* are some rough tool marks (Figs. 2, 6, and 7) which seem to show that a wall abutted against the rock at this point. The picked surface has a width of *ca.* 0.90 m., and corresponding to it are traces of a bedding on the top surface of rock H (Figs. 2 and 7). As the rock is lying now, this surface is not perfectly horizontal; but it appears that the east end of the rock settled

¹ The only reference to excavations in this vicinity that I have been able to find is in Carl Boetticher, *op. cit.*, pp. 217 ff. The author apparently had to discontinue his work before it was completed; but it is not evident from his account exactly what places he cleared.

down after the bedding for the wall was cut.¹ This may have taken place at the time when the ground level was lowered and the two Roman walls were built, for in wall β - β , which extends under rock H, a large block (partly visible in Fig. 4) was inserted under the rock as if to keep it from sliding farther down, whereas the rest of the wall is built of smaller stones. That the rock has settled since it first fell is further indicated by wall γ - γ , the west end of which actually extends under the rock, although it is not impossible that this wall was already built before the rock had rolled down from above. In view of these facts it seems certain that the rough dressing on the top of rock H is contemporary with the similar dressing on the face of rock A, and that both were dressed off for the same purpose. The reason can only be that a wall extended from rock A toward the north in the direction indicated by the dressed surface of rock H. It cannot have extended beyond the north edge of rock H, because close to it toward the north is rock G, which shows no horizontal bedding for a wall.

We must assume that the wall, whose existence is shown by these dressed surfaces, turned the corner on rock H and from there extended toward the west as far as to rock F. The latter shows no sign of having been dressed off; but the wall was probably very low on the north side, whereas on the east side, where it served also as a retaining wall, it had to be higher and more carefully constructed. There is one more indication that the Greek sanctuary cannot have extended farther toward the north. On rock F is a depression, 0.60 m. wide (see plan, Fig. 2, and Figs. 1, 6, 7, and 8) and corresponding to it is a similar cutting on rock G (Figs. 2, 6, and 8). It begins at the east end of rock G and extends with a marked incline toward the west. The cutting on rock F continues the incline to about the middle of the rock and there makes a bend toward the south and extends with a gentler incline as far as the edge of the rock. This cutting cannot have been made as a bedding for a wall, for in that case it would be horizontal, but must be a path coming from the east and leading into the sanctuary (see Fig. 6 and plan, Fig. 2, where the direction of the path is marked by dotted lines). A rock-cut path extending all around the Acropolis has been observed by the topographers² and its exact extent is recorded in an inscription cut in rock some forty metres to the east of our sanctuary.³ From this path, which was at a lower level, the path leading into the sanctuary must have branched off and wound its way up the steep slope. I very much regret that the depth of the fill and the difficulty of dumping made it impossible at the time to investigate farther the direction of this path.

The connection of the path with the sanctuary is unmistakable, and we are thus able to determine with a fair amount of certainty both the extent and the level of the Greek sanctuary. Had there been no wall on the north side, the path would probably have turned directly into the enclosure at its northeast corner. Thus the path must have

¹ I owe this suggestion to Dr. Homer Thompson.

² See Judeich, *Topographie von Athen*, plan II.

³ The inscription was found by Carl Boetticher (*op. cit.*, p. 219) in 1862, but was not published until later. See *I. G.* II, 1077 and cf. Judeich, *op. cit.*, II ed., p. 181.

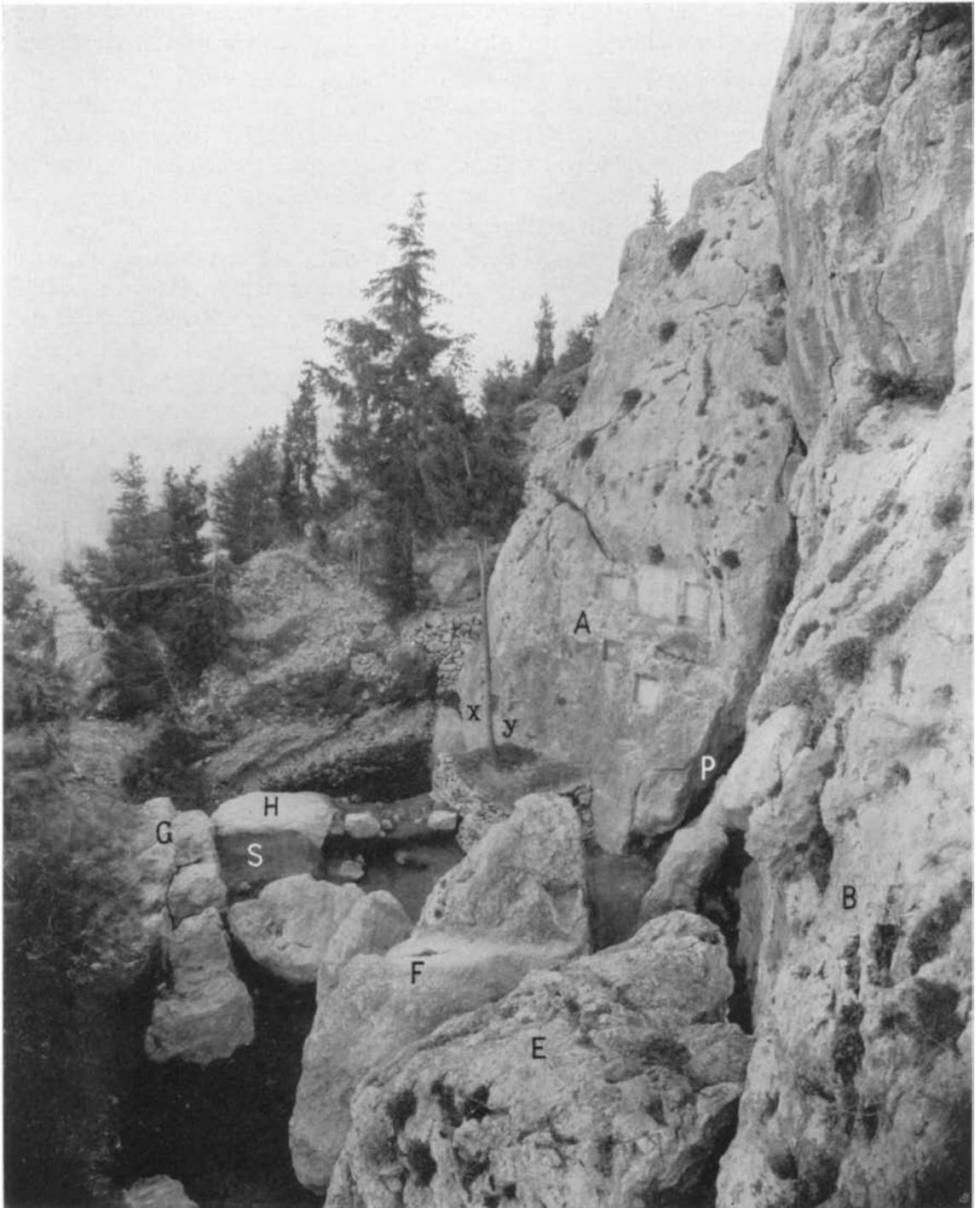


Fig. 6. Sanctuary of Eros and Aphrodite, from west



Fig. 7. Sanctuary, from northwest, showing niches

followed close to the wall outside the sanctuary to the point where it turns the corner on rock F. If the incline of the path is continued within the sanctuary, it gives the right height for the two inscriptions and for the best, and probably the earliest, of the niches. These, as appears in figures 1 and 7, are cut at a higher level on the south side than on the north, and for this reason we must assume that the ground level of the sanctuary also rose toward the south.

The narrow passage between rocks A and B we cleared from its opening for a distance of 8.50 m. At first as one enters, it is entirely covered over, the two rocks coming together above and the crack between them being filled with earth and stones (the entrance to the passage is marked P in Figs. 6 and 7). But about five metres from the entrance there is an opening from above large enough so that, before the earth was removed, one could descend into the passage at this point. Now there is a sheer drop of *ca.* 6 m. from this inner opening to the bottom of the passage. This opening explains the fact that before the excavation the passage was filled with earth almost to the top. During heavy rains a stream formed on the upper slope pours into the passage through this hole carrying with it earth and stones from the débris above. From the inner



Fig. 8. Sanctuary, from east, showing niches and rock-cut path

opening the passage was cleared for a distance of 3 m., beyond which point large pieces of rock made further progress impossible.

The earth with which the passage was filled contained objects of all periods down to mediaeval times, including a fragment of an inscription which will be discussed later. No undisturbed ancient stratum could be observed below this late fill, which rested directly on a layer of soft, clayey earth covering the native rock. But in a small pocket near the mouth of the passage and below the level of the earlier excavation two late Roman lamps (Fig. 17, 3 and 4) were found together. It is not likely that both these lamps could have been washed down from above without breaking,¹ hence they had probably come from the sanctuary.

It seems natural to suppose that this passage was in some way connected with the sanctuary from which it was directly entered, and for this reason an attempt was made to reach it from the other end. On the east side of rock A we gained entrance into what appeared at first to be a natural cave. It was filled to the very top with earth,

¹ One of the lamps was struck with the pick when found, but before the excavation both were entire.

dumped from above. After a large amount of this earth had been removed near the entrance the top fell in. We did not empty the "cave" again; but from its top it is possible to see that it is connected with the passage we have just described. Whether the large rocks which now separate the "cave" from the passage were there in ancient times or have fallen in more recently, I was not able to determine.

In Roman times the sanctuary underwent a thoroughgoing alteration. The Greek wall on the east side was removed, and the Roman retaining wall β - β was built slightly farther east. Although this extends beyond the circuit of the Greek sanctuary, it is not likely that the enclosure was enlarged. The sanctuary proper was limited by a second wall, α - α , which was built immediately inside the line of the Greek east wall. As a bedding for this inner wall rock H appears to have been dressed down again, but farther north no such bedding was made. The rock-cut path must have fallen into disuse, and the sanctuary may now have been entered at the northeast corner.

Between rock H and a smaller piece of rock to the west a packed *strosis* S (Figs. 2, 6, and 8) was found, composed of broken-up soft rock. Below this layer is an earth fill containing potsherds chiefly of prehistoric date; but with them were some Greek sherds. No distinctly Roman sherds were found, and it must remain uncertain whether the *strosis* is Greek or Roman. If Greek, it can only be a bedding for the north wall; but it is more probably connected with the Roman entrance into the sanctuary. The Roman ground level was so much lower than the Greek that the path on rock F could no longer have been used and the enclosure must have been entered from below. The lower niches in rock A (Fig. 7, 1-4) were probably cut after the floor level had been lowered, since they are at a lower level than the rock-cut path. Some niches are outside the sanctuary proper. It is not unlikely that the ancient shrine was replaced by an early Christian chapel, and some of the niches may well belong to such a late occupation of the site.

The niches vary greatly in size and shape, and give the impression of having been cut at different periods. On the north face of rock A are nine niches (numbered 1-9, Fig. 7).¹ Beginning at the east side there are two rectangular niches (1 and 2) close

¹ The sizes of the niches numbered 1-22 in figures 7 and 8 are:

1. H. 0.275	W. 0.25	D. 0.11	12. H. 0.27	W. 0.30	D. 0.07
2. H. 0.29	W. 0.27	D. 0.16	13. H. 0.165	W. 0.11	D. 0.06
3. H. 0.35	W. 0.27	D. 0.20	14. H. 0.245	W. 0.17	D. 0.09
4. H. 0.21	W. 0.23	D. 0.17	15. H. 0.34	W. 0.28	D. 0.24
5. H. 0.40	W. 0.52	D. 0.10	16. H. 0.38	W. 0.31	D. 0.25
6. H. 0.80	W. 0.81	D. 0.11	17. H. 0.25	W. 0.18	D. 0.16 & 0.10
7. H. 0.63	W. 0.61 & 0.52	D. 0.16 & 0.10	18. H. 0.21	W. 0.16	D. 0.09
8. H. 0.33	W. 0.42	D. 0.10	19. H. 0.26	W. 0.175	D. 0.13
9. H. 0.49	W. 0.42	D. 0.20	20. H. 0.39	W. 0.47	D. 0.13
10. H. 0.19	W. 0.25	D. 0.08	21. H. 0.37	W. 0.30	D. 0.20
11. H. 0.49	W. 0.35	D. 0.20	22. H. 0.40	W. 0.51	D. 0.30

These measurements are only approximate, for many of the niches are irregular in shape. The depth is in each case measured at the bottom of the niche.

together, at a level not more than 1.50 m. above the Roman floor, and farther north at a slightly higher level are two more, one rectangular (3) and one arched (4). These four are all outside the Roman sanctuary wall, and one (3) is cut in the area dressed down for the Greek wall. All are too low to belong to the Greek floor level, and it is not unlikely that they belong to early Christian times.

Farther west are two sets of niches separated by a projecting ledge of the rock. On this ledge are at least nine depressions for plaques which were not inserted into the face of the rock but merely fastened at their lower ends (see plan, Fig. 2, and Fig. 6). Below the ledge are two rectangular niches (8 and 9), the westernmost of which has a cutting in the bottom, into which a projecting piece of the marble was fitted. Of the three niches above (5-7) the easternmost (5) is the smallest and is less deep than the other two. The middle one (6) is the largest in the whole sanctuary. The westernmost (7) is very carefully cut with a base slightly wider and deeper than the rest of the niche. These three, which are all very carefully made, are most probably Greek.

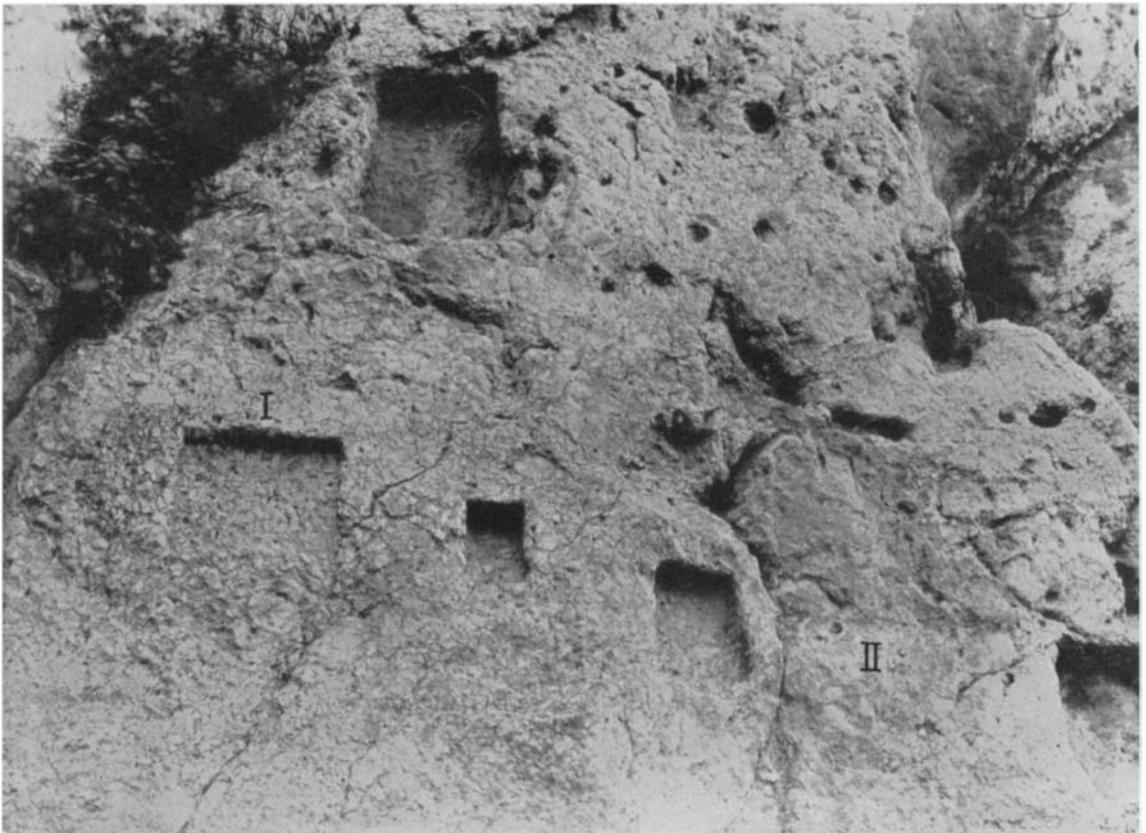


Fig. 9. Rock-cut inscriptions I and II

into the natural passage between rocks A and B, *ca.* 1.90 m. above the highest level of the rock-cut path at F. The face of the rock has been dressed back for a space measuring *ca.* 0.75×0.22 m., and on this surface the inscription is cut in three lines. It reads:

Τῶι Ἐροσι ἡε εορτῆ
 τ]ετραδῑ ἡισταμέν[ο
 Μονιχιδν[ο]ς̄ μεν[ός]ς

The letters, which are slightly over 0.035 m. in height, are carefully and deeply cut; but the face of the rock through the long exposure to rain and air has flaked off in places, thus totally obliterating some of the letters. Enough remains, however, to establish the reading beyond dispute.

The date is approximately the middle of the fifth century B.C.; the form of the *sigma* with three bars shows that it cannot be much later than 446, the forms of *alpha*, *epsilon*, and *rho*, on the other hand, preclude a date early in the century.¹

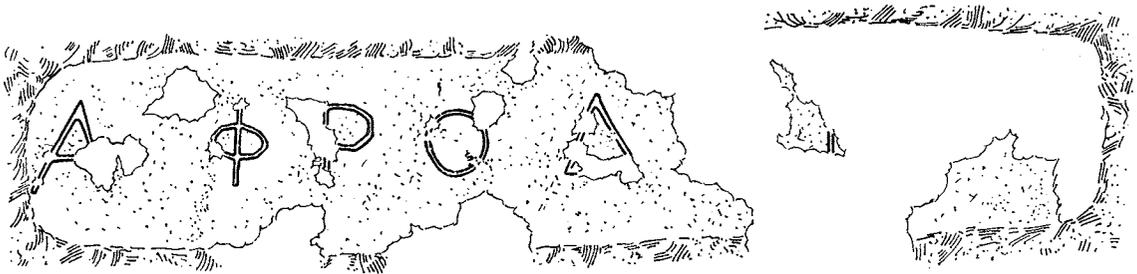


Fig. 11. Rock-cut Inscription II

The only irregular feature of the spelling is the omission of the sign for the rough breathing before *εορτή*, but this can hardly be considered an indication of Ionic influence. With the article immediately preceding, it is unlikely that the second rough breathing was distinctly pronounced as a separate letter, and, furthermore, the same word appears, without the sign for the rough breathing, in the dative, in an inscription dating about 476 B.C.²

II. The second inscription (Fig. 11) is also on rock B to the right of the Eros inscription and at a lower level (Fig. 9, II). The dressed surface on which it is cut measures 0.43×0.075 m. Only five letters and a faint trace of a sixth remain, but these are sufficient to show that the word is *Ἀφροδ[ί]τ[ε]*. The space allows for nine letters, hence the case is probably dative. The letters resemble those of the preceding inscription but are somewhat smaller, 0.031 m. high. The *omicron* is slightly smaller than the rest of the letters. The *phi*, which is the only letter not found in the other inscription, has a small

¹ The letter forms are almost identical with those in *I. G., Ed. Min.* 394, I, which is dated in the year 446/5.

² Cf. E. S. Roberts, *Introduction to Greek Epigraphy*, p. 105.



Fig. 12. Inscription III



Fig. 13. Inscription IV

Ἐπι Νικοκλέ[ους ἄρχοντος ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀιγι-
 δος δευτέρα[ς πρωτανείας, ἦι Νίτων Θεοδ-
 ώ]ρου Πλωθεύ[ς ἐγραμμιάτευεν. Μεταγειν-
 ι]ῶνος δευτέραι, μετ' εἰκάδας τρίτη καὶ
 εἰ]κοστῇ τῆ[ς πρωτανείας· ἐκκλησία· τῶν
 προέδρων ἐπ[εψήφισεν Ἑγίας Ἠγησίου Σο-
 υνιεύς καὶ σ[υνπροέδροι· ἔδοξεν τῶι δήμ-
 ωι νῦν Στρατ[οκλῆς Εὐθυδῆμου Διομεεύς
 εἶπεν ἐ]πειδ[ὴ

circle, but the upright stroke is no longer than the other letters. Although none of the letters is characteristic for dating, there is good reason for believing that the two inscriptions are of approximately the same date.

Two other inscriptions, which have no direct connection with the sanctuary, were brought to light by the excavation. Both were certainly set up on the Acropolis and have been washed down with the earth into the sanctuary.

III. (Fig. 12).¹

... Ἀθε]ναίαι
... Κολ]ονέθεν ἀ[νέθεκεν

Lower left corner of marble slab with the bottom edge slanting and the corner beveled. The back is somewhat roughly cut with a raised border round the edge (see section, Fig. 12). The material is a variety of island marble.

The letters are scratched, not cut with a chisel. Part of two lines is preserved, the lower line turning the corner. The reading of the second line is open to doubt because the letter next to the last may be either a *mu* or a *nu*.

IV. (Fig. 13).²

This is part of a decree, of which the upper left corner is preserved, cut on white marble. The inscribed surface forms an acute angle with the left side of the slab. The top moulding is broken away and the back is roughly chiselled off. The thickness varies between 0.06 and 0.08 m. Height of letters 0.006 m.

The name of the archon Nikokles dates the decree in the year 302/1 B.C. Seven other decrees from the same year have been found, all of which date in the second half of the year. Our inscription is important chiefly for showing the order of the prytanizing tribe and the correspondence of the date of the second prytany with the date of the month Metageitnion.

MISCELLANEOUS FINDS

1. (Fig. 14, 1). Fragment of large archaic palmette of coarse-grained island marble. The preserved length is 0.44 m. The leaves, of which three are preserved on the right side, are raised with a plain edge surrounding each leaf. The back is smooth. On the edge above the largest leaf was a small projection (visible in Fig. 14, 1). The large size of the fragment suggests that it is part of a ridge acroterion.³

2. (Fig. 14, 2). Fragment of marble decoration with broad acanthus leaf carved on the top. Coarse Roman work. Length of fragment, 0.30 m.

¹ Found January 17, 1931, close to rock A, ca. 0.30 m. below the surface, now No. 12700 in the Epigraphical Museum. For the occurrence of demotics in inscriptions before the time of Kleisthenes see Wilhelm, *Ath. Mitt.* XXIII, 1898, p. 475.

² Found January 14, 1931, in the underground passage directly under the inner opening from above, now No. 12699 in the Epigraphical Museum. The name of the proedros is conjectural. It may have been a son of Hegesias son of Hegias, who was active in public life in Athens in the years 349/8 and 339/8. See Kirchner, *Prosographia Attika*, I, p. 411, No. 6331.

³ Cf. Th. Wiegand, *Poros-Architektur*, p. 182, Fig. 191; Clark and Bacon, *Investigations at Assos*, pp. 145 and 155, Fig. 7; Furtwängler, *Aegina, Das Heiligtum der Aphaia*, pp. 279 ff., pl. 98.

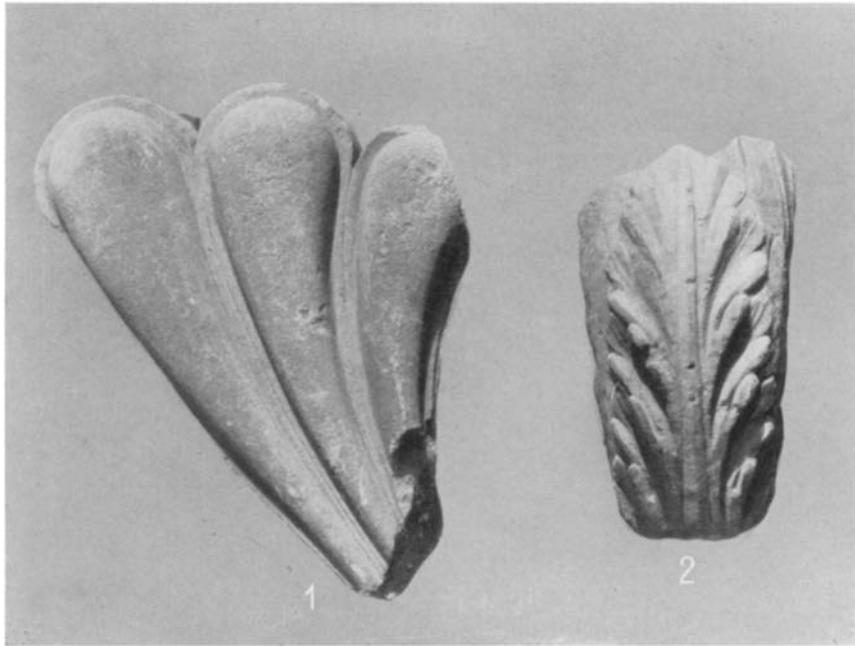


Fig. 14. Marble fragments from the Sanctuary



Fig. 15. Black-figure sherd



Fig. 16. Red-figure sherd

3. (Fig. 15). Small fragment of black figured amphora with row of athletes on the neck. Parts of two figures preserved. The fillets in the hair are purple, other details are rendered by incised lines.

4. (Fig. 16). Fragment of red figured lekythos with the figure of a quadriga. For contrast every other horse is painted white. Late careless work.

5. (Fig. 17, 1). Small flask with two perforated lugs.¹ On one side is the figure of a man riding a horse and carrying a double ax or cross on his right shoulder. The body is in profile but the head is in front view. On the other side (shown in Fig. 17) is a man seated sideways on an ass or a horse. Total height of flask, 0.067 m. Though it differs from the more common type of pilgrims' flasks, it belongs to this same general class, of



Fig. 17. Terracotta objects from Sanctuary

which the most common variety is the Menas flask. The figures on our flask are interesting, because they apparently represent the pilgrims rather than the saint whose shrine they visited.

6. (Fig. 17, 2). Upper half of mould for Christian lamp,² with a cross on the discus and alternating triangles and heart-shaped leaves on the rim. The edge is broken away all around the mould.

¹ There is a similar flask, but with a different figure, in the small museum at Monasteraki, Athens. Cf. A. M. Schneider, *Ath. Mitt.*, LIV, 1929, p. 133, Fig. 28; Conze, *Perganum*, I (2), 324, Fig. 112; Baur, *Stoddard Collection*, No. 592. For a discussion of the pilgrims' flasks see Leclercq, *Manuel d'Arch. Chrét.* II, pp. 527ff.; Dalton, *Byz. Art and Arch.*, p. 606.

² Cf. Broneer, *Corinth*, IV, ii, *Terracotta Lamps*, Type XXXI, pp. 118ff.

7. (Fig. 17, 3). Late Roman lamp found near the opening to the underground passage (see p. 40). On the discus is a rosette and on the rim are two parallel grooves.¹

8. (Fig. 17, 4). Late Roman lamp found together with the preceding. On the discus is the figure of Eros to left blowing a double flute. In front is an altar beside which a goat is lying. On the reverse is the signature EY.² The date of the two lamps is the fourth century A.D.

THE CULT

The question now remains to be answered whether the sanctuary under discussion can be brought into relation with any known cult of Eros and Aphrodite. With regard to the worship of Eros in Greek times we know very little; in fact, before this not a single sanctuary to him has been discovered. Judging from the testimony of Euripides³ and Plato⁴ we are led to believe that no such sanctuary existed in Athens in the fifth century. Yet we have Pausanias' descriptions of two very ancient altars to Eros in Athens, and our inscription proves that the two Greek writers are not to be taken literally. Moreover, we learn from earlier literature⁵ that Eros was considered one of the oldest deities, although in the established religion of the Olympians he became merely the attendant of Aphrodite. In the early conception, which persisted in some local and obscure cults and is reflected by the dramatists of the fifth century, Eros had an independent existence as a nature god who first came into being after Chaos and Ge and Tartaros, "Eros, most beautiful among the deathless gods."⁶ According to Orphic tradition Eros was the very source and impulse of life sprung from the world-egg.⁷ It was but natural that he should be associated with Aphrodite, to whom the same powers were ascribed; and because of this association Eros, too, is represented as coming from the island of Cyprus.⁸

The festival to Eros mentioned in our inscription was celebrated on the fourth day of Mounychion, corresponding to April-May of our calendar. It was a spring festival in which Eros doubtless was honored as a god of vegetation. It would be interesting to know what part, if any, Aphrodite played in the festival. That the ritual was chiefly in honor of Eros follows from the fact that Aphrodite is not mentioned in the same inscription; but it may be safely assumed that the two deities who were worshiped in the same sanctuary were closely related in cult practices. It is probably more than a coincidence that the fourth day was sacred to Aphrodite,⁹ and in Plato's *Symposium*¹⁰ Eros is said

¹ *Ibid.*, Type XXVIII, Nos. 964-1002.

² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

³ "Ἔρωτα οὐ σεβόμεν, *Hippol.*, 538 ff.

⁴ τούτων (βασιῶν καὶ θεσιῶν) οὐδὲν γίνεται περὶ αὐτόν, *Symp.*, 189 C.

⁵ Hesiod, *Theog.*, 116 ff.; Theognis, 1275 ff.; and cf. Aristophanes, *Birds* 693 ff.

⁶ Hesiod, *loc. cit.*

⁷ *Orph. Hymn.*, VI.

⁸ Euripides, *Hippol.*, 1269.

⁹ Cf. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 433.

¹⁰ 203, C.

to have been born on her birthday.¹ In Italy the whole month of April was sacred to Aphrodite,² and in Cyprus a festival in her honor was celebrated on April first.³

With regard to the worship of Aphrodite in Athens our information is more complete. Pausanias mentions no less than five statues⁴ and three shrines⁵ to her, and others are known from different sources. Pausanias' description of ancient Athens appears in many ways confused, and endless disputes have arisen concerning some of the monuments which he saw and described. Hence any monument mentioned by him that can be located by archaeological evidence becomes doubly important because it helps to fix his route through the city. In the nineteenth chapter of the first book, after his description of the Temple of Zeus Olympios and of the sanctuary of Apollo Pythios, the periegete comes to the district called the Gardens. Here he mentions a Temple of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις* and near it a statue of the goddess made like a herm and carrying an inscription to the effect that Aphrodite Ourania was the oldest of those called Fates. He further remarks that there was no story told either about the temple or the statue, and finally he mentions the famous statue of Aphrodite in the Gardens made by Alkamenes. Immediately after this account he takes up the other monuments along the banks of the Ilissus.

This sanctuary of Aphrodite, as Pliny the Elder⁶ informs us, was outside the city walls, and its proximity to the Olympieum and the Ilissus leaves little doubt about its approximate location. But in a later passage, after his description of the Temple of Athena Polias and that of Pandrosos, Pausanias describes the ceremony of the Arrephoroi, whose dwelling was not far from the Temple of Athena. In this description he interjects the parenthetical sentence: *ἔστι δὲ περιβολὸς ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς καλουμένης ἐν Κήποις Ἀφροδίτης οὐ πόρρω καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ κάθοδος ὑπόγειος ἀντομάτη, τάντη κατίασιν αἱ παρθένοι.*

The passage offers difficulties to grammarians and topographers alike.⁷ The construction of the passage immediately preceding the parenthetical sentence is so harsh as to be almost unintelligible as it stands. But the topographical difficulties are even greater.⁸ The whole passage is translated by Frazer as follows: "Two maidens dwell not far from the Temple of the Polias: the Athenians call them Arrephoroi. These are lodged for a time with the goddess; but when the festival comes round they perform the following ceremony by night. They put on their heads the things which the priestess of Athena gives them to carry, but what it is she gives is known neither to her who

¹ Cf. Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen*, p. 4, 1.

² Cf. Preller-Robert, *Gr. Mythologie*, I, 358.

³ See Martin P. Nilsson, *Gr. Feste*, p. 368; Chr. Blinkenberg, *Le Temple de Paphos*, in *Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Hist.-filol. Meddelelser*, IX, 2, 1924, p. 23.

⁴ I, viii, 4; xix, 2; xxiii, 2.

⁵ I, xiv, 7; xix, 2; xxii, 2.

⁶ *Nat. Hist.*, xxxvi, 16. Cf. *I. G.*, I, *Ed. Min.*, 324, 85.

⁷ See Hitzig's and Bluemner's Pausanias *s. l.*, where some explanations of the construction are offered.

⁸ Carl Robert (*Hermes* XVI, 1881, p. 87) refers to the passage as "den sehr verworrenen Bericht des Pausanias über den geheimen Gang der Arrephoren," and Jane Harrison (*Prolegomena*, p. 132) suggests that Pausanias may have "confused the later sanctuary of Aphrodite (in the Gardens) with the earlier sanctuary of the goddess close to the entrance to the Acropolis."

gives nor to them who carry. Now there is in the city an enclosure not far from the sanctuary of Aphrodite called Aphrodite in the Gardens, and there is a natural underground descent through it. Down this way the maidens go. Below they leave their burdens, and getting something else, which is wrapt up, they bring it back. These maidens are then discharged, and others are brought to the Acropolis in their stead." Had we not known the location of the so-called Gardens we should naturally suppose that the peribolos into which the maidens descended by a natural underground passage would be somewhere near the Acropolis, and W. H. S. Jones in his translation of Pausanias for the Loeb Classical Library disregards the topographical difficulties and renders the sentence freely: "the maidens descend by the natural underground passage that goes across the adjacent precincts, within the city, of Aphrodite in the Gardens." He thus takes *ὁ πόρρω* as independent of the genitive which he renders as dependent on *περίβολος*. This is certainly a gain in intelligibility; but it may be a question whether the usage of Pausanias permits such a rendering of the text. The phrase *ὁ πόρρω* is one of which Pausanias is very fond; but in every case but five it is either followed or preceded by a genitive.¹ In this instance where a genitive immediately precedes *ὁ πόρρω* it seems most natural that they should go together. This, however, leaves *περίβολος* without a modifier, and Pausanias gives no further information about the enclosure into which the maidens descended. Furthermore, he says that the peribolos is in the city, whereas we know from Pliny that the Temple of Aphrodite was outside the city walls. Thus we are left with the information that the two girls on their highly secret mission had to make their way in the night outside the Acropolis wall through a crowded part of the city to an enclosure somewhere along the banks of the Ilissus but inside the city walls. In the light of the two inscriptions just discovered and the sanctuary described above, I believe it is possible to offer an easier explanation of the disputed passage. We now have a sanctuary of Aphrodite at the place where we might expect that the Arrephoroi descended from the Acropolis.

First let us see how the separate features of our sanctuary agree with Pausanias' account of the descent of the Arrephoroi. The topographers have tried to identify the underground passage, through which the maidens descended, with one of two existing stairways between the north porch of the Erechtheum and the Propylaea. The westernmost of these is certainly ancient;² of the other, which is underground, a few steps

¹ The phrase is used by Pausanias in all 76 times, 5 times without a genitive, 35 times preceded by the genitive, and 36 times followed by the genitive.

² Jane Harrison (*Myth. and Mon. of Anc. Athens*, p. 163) followed the view that the westernmost of the two stairways is the one by which the Arrephoroi descended (so Dörpfeld, *Ath. Mitt.*, XII, 1887, p. 59), and immediately below it she located the Aglaurion. But Kavvadias (*Αρχ. Έφ.*, 1897, 26 ff.) later excavated the more eastern descent and found the traces of the earlier stairway. Accordingly he located the Aglaurion in the cave below this stairway, and here, too, he assumed that the Arrephoroi descended. Judeich, *op. cit.*, p. 182, 2, is noncommittal and cites Belger (*Berl. Phil. Woch.*, XVII, 1897, 1212 ff.) who correctly points out that as the text of Pausanias stands there is no mention of an underground passage down from the Acropolis. He falls back on the explanation, offered by Mommsen (*Gr. Heortologie*, 447) that "das Mysterium der Handlung war nicht durch den Ort, eher durch die Zeit, die Nacht, geschützt."

are preserved near the top, apparently of Turkish date. But below these steps are cuttings for a wooden stairway, which doubtless existed in Greek times and very likely served as a connection between the sanctuary of Aglauros and the Acropolis.¹ Pausanias, however, does not say that the Arrephoroi left the Acropolis by an underground passage, but that the peribolos which was the goal of their secret mission was entered through such a passage. Neither does he state the exact starting point on the Acropolis, but it must have been in or near the Temple of Athena Polias, since the priestess of Athena gave them the sacred objects to put on their heads.²

The whole action of the ceremony becomes clear if we admit that the sanctuary just discovered is the peribolos mentioned by Pausanias. Below the underground stairs to the Aglaurion a modern path leads eastward to the new sanctuary, and it is reasonable to suppose that the same path may have existed in ancient times, connecting with the rock-cut *περιπατος* below. The immense chasm, through which the descent from the Acropolis began, might well have lent color to Pausanias' weird description of the place. The only inaccuracy which remains is the impression which the Greek text gives that the subterranean passage and the sanctuary are immediately contiguous, while actually one must first pass through the one and thence by a short path reach the other.³

It can hardly be a coincidence that a sanctuary of Aphrodite which fits so well the account in Pausanias should be found close to the place where we would naturally expect the Arrephoroi to have descended. We can only conclude that there were two sanctuaries of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις*, a more ancient one, which we have just discovered on the Acropolis slope, and a later one, with a temple containing the famous statue of Alkamenes, near the Ilissus.

There is really nothing very startling in this duplication of sanctuaries. Pausanias speaks of two Aphrodites Ourania in Athens, one near the Temple of Hephaistos,⁴ and another near the Aphrodite in the Gardens.⁵ In a recently printed article by Professor Keramopoulos, which he kindly let me read in proof, he has shown that the Aphrodite Pandemos was also worshiped in two places in Athens, in the sanctuary below the Propylaea, and in the market near the Temple of Hephaistos. But the second can be none other than the Aphrodite Ourania mentioned by Pausanias, the two cult names Ourania and Pandemos (or *ἡγεμόνη τοῦ Δήμου*)⁶ being applied to the same image. Pausanias' account shows further that the cult of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις* and that of Ourania were

¹ Kavvadias, *loc. cit.*

² The location of the house of the Arrephoroi, which Pausanias mentions in the same connection, can have no bearing on the route which they followed. Dörpfeld (*loc. cit.*) locates the house northeast of the Erechtheum.

³ Doubtless the passage in the sanctuary itself was somehow used in the ceremony; but until we know how it connected with the cave to the east it is unsafe to make any definite statement about it.

⁴ I, xiv, 7.

⁵ I, xix, 2.

⁶ Cf. *I. G.*, II⁵, 1161 b.

closely related,¹ and from other sources we know that both are oriental cult names which came to Greece from Cyprus. The worship of Aphrodite in the Gardens, *i. e.* as a vegetation divinity, was widespread,² and in the island of Cyprus was a place named after her Hierokepia.³ Hence we are justified in assuming that the district called "Gardens" in Athens received its name from the worship of the goddess. We have already pointed out that the Eros in our inscription was doubtless worshiped as a god of vegetation, and with him Aphrodite, called Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις*, would fittingly be associated.⁴ The cult name need not imply that the sanctuary was located in a garden, but merely that the goddess was worshiped with ceremonies appropriate to the name; besides, a small sanctuary open to the sky, such as the one we have found, could easily have been planted with trees and flowers.⁵ At present there is a grove of pines and cypresses round the site.

But what would be the connection between the cult of Athena Polias and that of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις*, to justify the secret ceremony of the Arrephoroi? If we could be certain what the sacred objects were which the maidens carried, this question would probably be answered. But in the festival of Arrephoria, of which the secret ceremony was doubtless a part, Pandrosos, the daughter of Kekrops, was also honored.⁶ The name Arrephoroi sometimes appears as Hersephoroi, "dewbearers," and although this form may be late and based on a false etymology,⁷ it nevertheless points to a connection of Herse with the rite of the Arrephoria. The daughters of Kekrops were originally nymphs of the earth, and the names Pandrosos and Herse, derived from two different words meaning dew,⁸ indicate how their cults arose. The meaning of these names and the connection of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις* with the ceremony have led some scholars to believe that the objects brought by the Arrephoroi were nothing else than dew-laden boughs.⁹ Whatever was the exact nature of these offerings, this much seems certain, that the rites of the festival had to do with the growth of vegetation and the fertility of the soil.

To this identification of the newly discovered sanctuary with an early shrine of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις* the objection will naturally be raised that the text of Pausanias

¹ Lucian (*Dial. meretr.*, vii, 1) says that a heifer was to be sacrificed to Ourania *ἐν Κήποις*.

² See Jane Harrison, *Myth. and Mon. of Anc. Athens*, p. 210; Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, II, p. 642; Preller-Robert, *Gr. Mythologie*, 358 ff.

³ See Dümmler in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, I, 2756 ff.

⁴ Judeich (*op. cit.*, p. 321, note) makes the statement that "Gottheiten der Triebkraft und Fruchtbarkeit sich über den ganzen Umkreis der Burg verteilen," and to these divinities can now be added the two worshiped in the new sanctuary.

⁵ In the sanctuary of Asklepios on the South Slope of the Acropolis trees were planted, according to an inscription found on the site. Cf. *I. G.*, II³, 1649, and see Judeich, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

⁶ Cf. *I. G.*, II³, 1383; III¹, 887. For a discussion of the subject see Farnell, *op. cit.*, I, p. 289.

⁷ Cf. *I. G.*, III¹, 318, 319, and see Hiller von Gaertringen in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, s. v. *Errhephoroi*.

⁸ The two words *δρόσος* and *ξρόση* also mean "young things," and Jane Harrison (*Myth. and Mon. of Anc. Athens*, p. xxxiv) explains the ceremony on the basis of this less common and more poetical meaning.

⁹ See Preller-Robert, *Gr. Mythologie*, I, 211, and Harrison, *loc. cit.*

does not admit of such an interpretation. To this problem three solutions may be offered, each one already suggested by authors who knew nothing of the new sanctuary. One solution is to translate the passage in Pausanias as W. H. S. Jones has done by taking the genitive *τῆς καλουμένης ἐν Κήποις Ἀφροδίτης* as depending on *περίβολος* and *οὐ πόρρω* as standing alone. The passage would then read, more literally rendered: "There is in the city a peribolos of Aphrodite, called Aphrodite in the Gardens, not far away, and through it a natural subterranean descent; there (or, by this) the maidens go down." Since *οὐ πόρρω* is used by Pausanias without a genitive,¹ such a translation is conceivable; but the presence of the genitive makes the meaning ambiguous. It has this to recommend it, that *περίβολος* is thereby defined as belonging to Aphrodite, whereas according to the more common translation it stands alone. The second possibility is that the text, on account of the reference to two sanctuaries of Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις*, has become corrupted.² The extraordinary syntax of the preceding sentence and the harsh change of construction lend probability to this supposition. The third, and to me the most probable, explanation is that Pausanias himself confused the two sanctuaries.³ Having recently seen the Temple of Aphrodite by the Ilissus and the two cult statues connected with it, he might easily have made the mistake when told about a second sanctuary to Aphrodite *ἐν Κήποις*. Whichever of these explanations is the correct one, the close agreement of all the features of the new sanctuary with Pausanias' description makes it highly probable that the peribolos with the subterranean descent of Pausanias' account is none other than the newly discovered sanctuary.⁴

Our excavation on the site of the sanctuary failed to bring to light any fragment of votive plaques that could be connected with the cults of Eros and Aphrodite; but one inscription found near the Clock of Andronikos may belong to it. It reads: *Ἀφροδίτη κατ' ὄναρ*.⁵

The discovery of a sanctuary where Eros and Aphrodite were jointly worshiped as gods of vegetation in Greek times may throw new light on some of the vase paintings in which the two deities appear. On Attic red-figured vases Eros, sometimes alone, sometimes with Aphrodite, is often represented carrying wreaths and flowers or shaking apples from a tree,⁶ and on one late vase in the National Museum in Athens⁷ he is engaged in watering flowers from a hydria.

¹ I, viii, 5; II, xiii, 7; II, xxxi, 4; III, xx, 7; IX, x, 1.

² See Hitzig-Bluemner, *op. cit.*, I A, p. 295; Jahn and Michaelis, *Arx Athenarum*, p. 73.

³ Cf. Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 132.

⁴ This conclusion, however, is based on the results of the preliminary excavation of the site. Further digging might necessitate a modification of this view.

⁵ *I. G.* III¹, 188.

⁶ For the discussion of Eros as a vegetation divinity see Harrison, *Prolegomena*, pp. 634 f. The vase paintings referred to are so numerous that only a few can here be pointed out: Baur, *Stoddard Collection*, No. 151, pl. XI; Robinson and Harcum, *Cat. of Gr. Vases in the Ontario Museum*, 372, pl. LXV; Smith, *Br. Mus. Cat. of Vases*, III, E 704; Ridder, *Vases Peints*, 856, pl. XXIV.

⁷ See Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 636, Fig. 172.

One alabastron in the Hope Collection of Vases¹ is of particular interest. In the middle of the picture is seated on a chair a draped female figure wearing a high diadem(?). In her lap is Eros, who has thrown his arms about her neck and kisses her. To the right is a female figure nude to the waist. She is seated on two cushions which lie on a rock, and in her left hand she holds a patera containing some objects, probably fruit. A fillet hanging from the patera indicates that the contents are sacred offerings. To the left of the main group is another woman fully dressed. She has a spray in her right hand and in her left a patera which seems to contain flowers. Behind her is a small female figure holding a wreath and a mirror. Her small size—she is about half as large as the other women in the picture—shows that she is a servant. Myrtle sprays and small plants indicate that the scene is in the open, while a tall thymiaterion to the right of the central group, as well as the offerings carried by the two women, shows that a sacred ceremony is depicted. In the background is suspended a votive object. The central seated figure can be none other than Aphrodite, and it is tempting to see in the picture a scene from the festival of the Arrephoria, described by Pausanias. The two maidens, having arrived in the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the Gardens, are bringing their offerings, their attention being riveted on the two deities in the centre. The plants and sprays are fitting attributes of Aphrodite ἐν Κήποις, the thymiaterion and the votive object indicate a sanctuary. Some of the details do not conform to what we know of the ceremony. The offerings are held in the hands and are apparently uncovered; but exact representations are rarely found on vases. The vase is Cumaeian, but the style of decoration shows so strongly Attic influence that the scene may well have been copied from an Attic vase.²

¹ Tillyard, *The Hope Vases*, No. 287, pl. 40.

² Tillyard (*op. cit.*, pp. 18 and 151) without attempting an interpretation of the figure points out the similarity of this vase with Attic vases of the fourth century.

OSCAR BRONEER

ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA

- p. 2. Fig. 2. For "proper right" *read* "proper left."
- p. 39. Fig. 7. For "northwest" *read* "northeast."
- p. 45. Inscription IV, l. 4. For *δεντέ[ραι, μετ' εικάδας* *read* *δεντέ[ραι μετ' εικάδας*.
- p. 55, l. 20. The discrepancy between the account of Pliny and that of Pausanias with regard to the location of the "Gardens" may be explained by the fact that the city walls were extended under Hadrian and thus may have included a sanctuary which in Pliny's day was *extra muros*.
- p. 73, l. 2. For "of Corinthian work" *read* "of Corinthian work in the first quarter of the sixth century."
- p. 74, l. 16. For "right" *read* "left."
- p. 75, l. 1. For "left" *read* "right."
- p. 80, l. 12. For "phiale" *read* "pyxis."

Mr. Humphry Payne's *Necrocorinthia* was not available before the article went to press. The following references may now be added:

- p. 65, MP 218. Cf. Payne, p. 292, II, Early Corinthian, 625–600 B.C.
- p. 67, MP 209. Cf. Payne, p. 306, Fig. 141, Middle Corinthian, 600–575 B.C.
- p. 69, MP 5 and 6. Cf. Payne, p. 310, Fig. 152, Middle Corinthian, 600–575 B.C.