

ATHENS AFTER THE LIBERATION

PLANNING THE NEW CITY AND EXPLORING THE OLD*

(PLATES 80–86)

ATHENS on the eve of the Greek Revolution of 1821 displayed a three-dimensional record of the city's historical development; it was also a remarkably picturesque place. Monuments of antiquity and of the Roman period, elegant Byzantine churches, remains of the Frankish conquest, mosques with tall minarets, and secular buildings were still preserved almost intact, while the houses, all built of stone, with their ever present courtyards and verdant gardens, completed the picture. The wall of Haseki, built in 1778, surrounded the city, and the Acropolis, "the Castle", with its successive fortifications constituted an invulnerable fortress. On its summit an entire quarter for the Turkish garrison and their families had been created, and a small mosque had been constructed within the Parthenon after its destruction by Morosini in 1687 (Fig. 1, Pls. 80, 81).

The Athenians, with the help of the villagers of Attica, revolted against the Turks on the 25th of April 1821, and on the 10th of June 1822 they gained control of the Acropolis. During this siege the first destruction of Athens and its monuments occurred. In the four subsequent years, however, when the Athenians ruled their own city, they were able to display notable cultural achievements. At that time they also took care of their antiquities: on the initiative of the Philomousos Society, founded in 1813, they collected various antiquities, decided to found a temporary museum and simultaneously brought to light many monuments by removing the buildings which kept them from view.

In the same period, Kyriakos Pittakis, the first Greek archaeologist, having been appointed supervisor of the water supply, discovered at the northeast corner of the Acropolis, below the cliffs, the famous Klepsydra spring mentioned by Pausanias (1.28.4). It was the first certain identification of an ancient monument at a time when students of Athenian topography were trying unsuccessfully to identify the various monuments.

Athens, however, before its final liberation, was destined to suffer another destruction, this time a thorough one. In June 1826 the Turks, with numerous forces under Kioutakhi, besieged the city, and the following year after severe attacks took the Acropolis as well. The dramatic aspects of this struggle and the frightful destruction to the city and its monuments are related in detail by Karoris in his *Diary*, Makryannis in his *Memoirs*, and Sourmelis in his *History*.

*This paper was delivered in Greek but has been translated for publication.

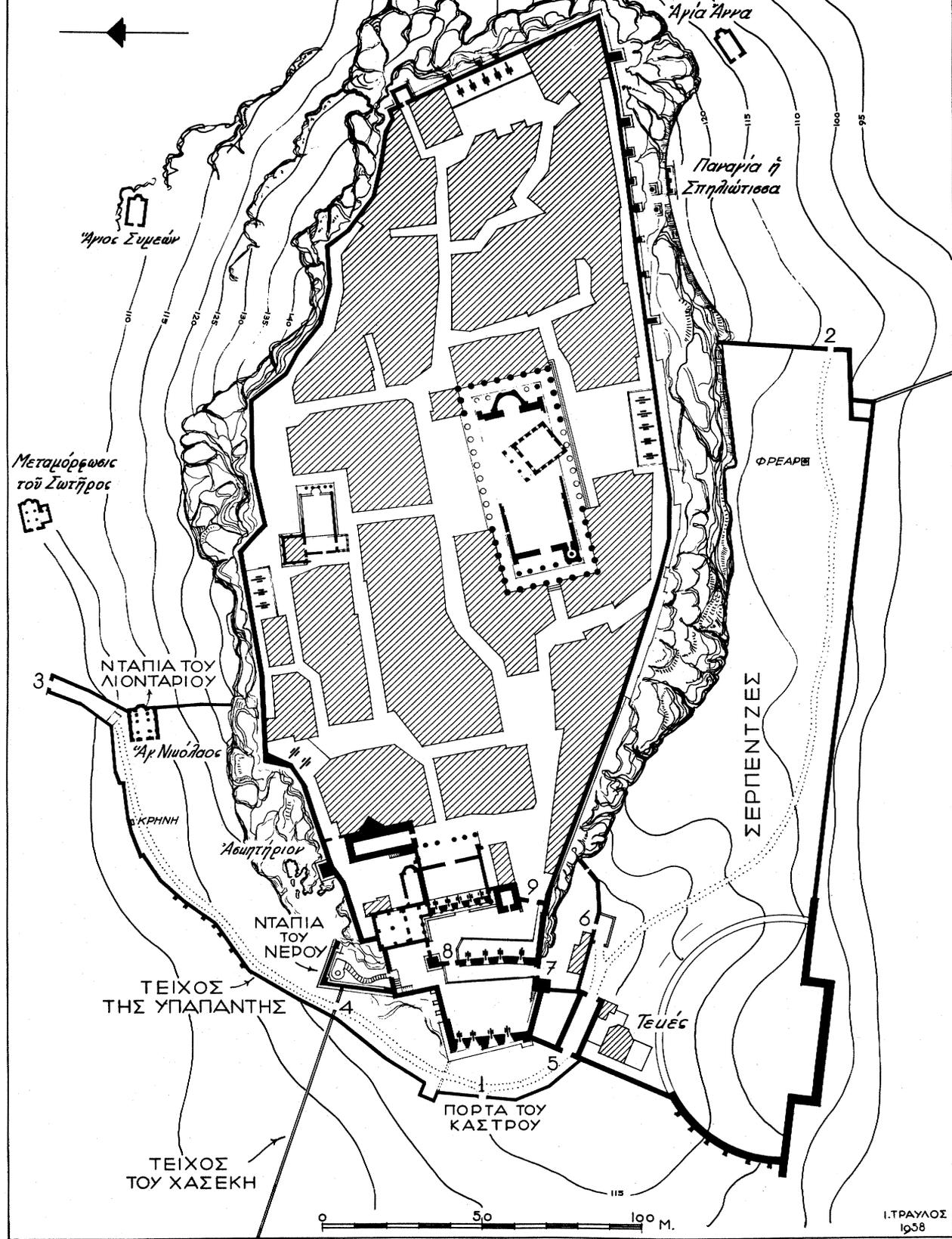


FIG. 1. The Acropolis at the time of the Greek uprising, 1821

Only after the signing of the London Protocol on the 3rd of February 1830, by which Greece was recognized as a free and independent country, did Athens gain its freedom; in 1833 it was pronounced officially the capital of the new Greek state.

The first persons to suggest that Athens should be the capital were two inspired architects, Stamatis Kleanthes and Eduard Schaubert, who also drew up the first city plan. They arrived in Greece in 1830 and in 1831 began to put together a complete topographical plan of Athens on which the design for the new layout of the city would be based. The two friends and colleagues mapped with particular care the old city, the Turkish wall surrounding it, and a great expanse beyond the wall, on which they marked the rural roads whose location (as shown by more recent excavations) coincided with that of the ancient roads.

Their exact and careful work shows with what great care the two architects drew up the future plan of Athens (Pl. 82:a). The extended memorandum which they attached and the sound ideas which they expressed in it concerning the future expansion of the city to the north, as well as the provision to leave a large stretch to the north of the Acropolis free for excavation, make their plan invaluable.

With regard to the excavations they characteristically wrote:

Finally, an additional advantage of the shift of the city to the north is the fact that the ancient city of Theseus and Hadrian will remain uninhabited, and thus it will be possible to excavate there. Even if the present condition of Greece does not permit such a thing, later generations would surely condemn us if we had not foreseen it. We would wish especially that the north slope of the Acropolis with its sanctuaries should be freed of the accumulated earth which piled up there during the past centuries.

The area which they recommended for excavation is marked on the plan in color; it comprised a zone bounded by the present-day Hastings, Hephaistos, Pandrosos, Haghia Philothei, Hadrian and Phrynichos Streets.

At first the inhabitants received the plan with enthusiasm and were eager to release and allocate the areas necessary for creating public squares and for opening roads in the old city, as envisioned in the plan. Best of all, they were in complete accord with the idea that the area to the north of the Acropolis should be expropriated, that is, the area which had been designated for excavation.

The decree declaring Athens the capital of the newly found Greek State was signed on the 29th of June 1833. At the same time the plan of the two architects was approved. Its execution began at once, as did the laying out of the new streets and squares on the ground, as well as the appraisal of the houses and plots involved. Only then did the inhabitants realize the consequences of the new plan and see that with the demolition of their houses most of them would remain homeless or would lose their land.

The strong opposition and the inability of the State to provide the funds necessary for expropriations forced the government to postpone the execution of this plan. Simultaneously the architect Leo von Klenze arrived from Bavaria to study the situation and proceed with a revision of the plan. Klenze, whose plan was approved in 1834, made

certain changes at the expense of the integrity of the original plan, but he kept the archaeological zone at almost the same size (Pl. 82:b).

A basic change in the plan was the transfer of the Palace from Omonoia Square, where it had been placed by the first architects, to the Kerameikos, the place where, much later, the most important cemetery of the ancient city was discovered. The garden of this projected Palace would have included a large area of the hill of St. Anathasius and the Kolonos Agoraios, together with the Theseion. The location, fortunately, was judged unsuitable, and another opinion finally won out, namely that the Palace should be built on the axis of Hermes Street at the eastern edge of the city. As a result, important excavations could take place later in the area of the Kerameikos.

Immediately after the approval of Klenze's plan the Turkish wall which hindered the normal expansion of the city was torn down, and houses began to be demolished for the opening of new arteries through the old city, that is, Athena, Aiolos and Hermes Streets. But this was done without the previous assurance of housing for the population. The tragic situation which now prevailed was further complicated by the arrival in Athens of new inhabitants from all parts of Greece, and even from abroad. Finally, without allowing the time required to prepare the necessary accommodations, sections of the army and the governing authorities began to arrive from Nauplia for permanent installation in the capital.

The hasty transfer of the government authorities, without the existence of the essential housing, was the greatest mistake of the early years of the city's formation, and it resulted in the faulty implementation of the plan. The excellent idea of the two architects Kleanthes and Schaubert that a great area should remain free for excavation was no longer realizable. The State was forced in 1836 to include in the town plan also the reserved area to the north of the Acropolis and to allow the building of new houses.

With these various changes in the city plan and the construction of many hundreds of new houses, it was thought necessary to make a detailed registry of properties and to enter on the new plan, as approved, plot boundaries. The architect Stauffert compiled in 1836 a topographical plan on the scale of 1:1250, a plan which is outstanding for its accuracy in the most detailed plotting of all the houses, lots, and churches then extant. On this plan Stauffert also drew in red ink all the new houses built after 1836, that is, in the interval 1836-1843.

On the basis of this topographical plan and with the help of old photographs, plans, and descriptions I have compiled a new topographical plan, and I have made detailed plans of individual buildings. This has made possible the construction of a model of Athens around 1842 (Pl. 83). The model, on a scale of 1:1000, was made especially for the "Museum of the City of Athens" of the "Vouros-Eftaxias Foundation" which is housed in the mansion of Dekozis Vouros on Klauthmonos Square. The execution of the model was undertaken by the artist Nikos Gerasimov.

In this model one can see the extent of the old city and as many monuments as were then preserved. It also brings out clearly the northward development of the new city.

In spite of all the difficulties in the execution of the new plan and the creation of the archaeological area to the north of the Acropolis, the State still tried to expropriate certain houses in order to expose surviving ancient monuments. It also took special care in uncovering the monuments of the Acropolis. Immediately after the withdrawal of the Turkish garrison in 1833, in spite of the fact that the Acropolis continued to be used as a fort, work began on the clearing of the site with the demolition of the houses which covered the entire surface of the rock. After 1834, when the whole hill was designated an archaeological area by royal decree, the archaeologists proceeded to dismantle the mediæval buildings and the later fortifications. At the same time began both the first excavation and efforts for the preservation and restoration of the monuments. At that time were found the architectural members of the Temple of Athena Nike which had been incorporated a little before 1687 into the Turkish bastion in front of the Propylæia; in 1835/36 the temple was restored by Ludwig Ross, Christian Hansen, and Eduard Schaubert.

Ross and Pittakis directed these first excavations, but systematic investigations and excavations, down to bedrock, were conducted in the years 1889–1900 by Panayotis Kavvadias and Georg Kawerau. Subsequently, Nikolaos Balanos undertook the work of restoration of the monuments. These activities resulted in the verification of the topography of the Acropolis and permitted the study of its monuments (Fig. 2, Pl. 84:a); they also enriched our museums with unique finds of the Archaic period, such as the Korai and the other dedications reverently buried in the earth by the Athenians after their defeat by the Persians in 480/79 B.C.

The founding of the Archaeological Society in 1837 gave new impetus to archaeological investigations. The Society set up archaeological collections and systematized archaeological research in Athens. Then, with ample financial support from the State, great expanses of land were expropriated around the Acropolis, and many excavations were conducted, mainly by Greek archaeologists.

On the south side of the Acropolis the activities of the Archaeological Society began in 1848 with the unearthing of the Odeion of Herodes Atticus, and in 1862 excavations took place in the Theater of Dionysos. A few years later the Asklepieion was uncovered (1876) and the Stoa of Eumenes (1877–1878). Finally, at the beginning of this century the position of the Odeion of Perikles was determined, to the east of the Theater of Dionysos.

On the north side, in the area of the old city, a chance discovery in 1837 had extraordinary importance for the topography of the ancient city. During the building of the house of Doctor Treiber, at the corner of Hermes and Haghioi Asomatoi Streets, was found the monument of Euboulides, mentioned by Pausanias on his tour while traveling between the Dipylon Gate and the Agora (Fig. 3). Thus it became possible to fix the location of the ancient Agora on the extensive level area to the north of the Areopagus and east of the Kolonos Agoraios. This hypothesis was verified in 1861, when the Archaeological Society excavated the imposing ruins preserved in the area and identified them (after the discovery of an inscription) as the Stoa of Attalos, which Athenaios clearly stated was situated in the Agora.

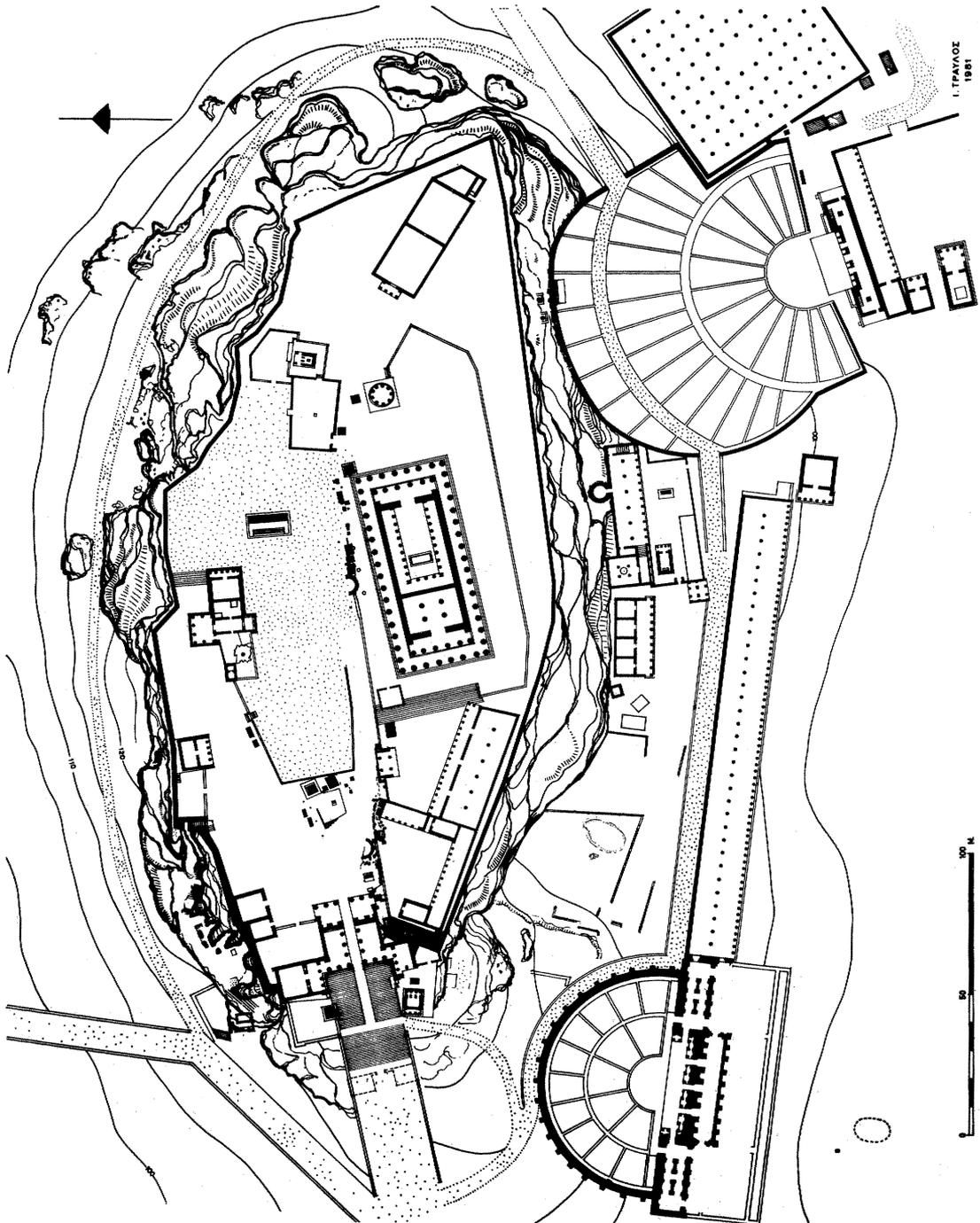


FIG. 2. The Acropolis and adjacent monuments in the 2nd century after Christ

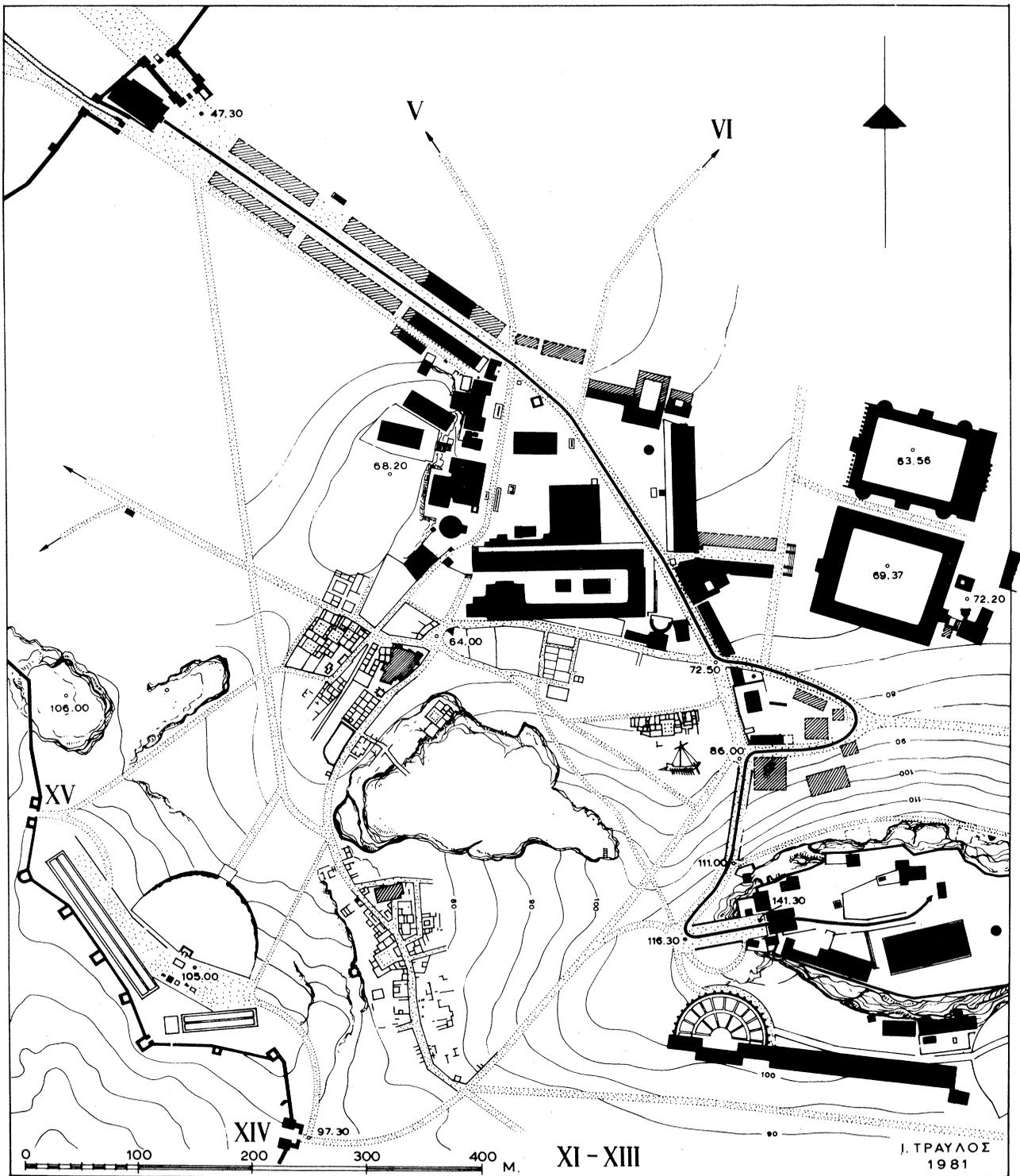


FIG. 3. The Athenian Agora and the course of the Panathenaic Way from the Pompeion to the Acropolis

In the area of the Agora the Archaeological Society had also excavated a few years earlier (in 1859) the so-called Stoa of the Giants, while slightly later, with the collaboration of the German Archaeological Institute, the Society uncovered at the foot of Kolonos Agoraios the temple and cult statue of Apollo Patroos, as well as the Metroon. Dörpfeld himself then identified a part of the Panathenaic Way leading from the Dipylon to the Agora, and oversaw the excavations that took place on the occasion of the cut opened for the Athens-Piraeus Railway (1891/92). He also undertook various investigations on the north and west slopes of the Areopagus where he believed the continuation of the Athenian Agora should be sought. More recent excavations in this area, however, have demonstrated that the extremely important finds of Dörpfeld, as well as those discovered subsequently on the west slope of the Areopagus, formed part of a settlement; they have allowed us to ascertain what Athenian houses were like in classical times.

Starting in 1863 the Archaeological Society also carried on excavations in the area of the ancient cemetery of the Kerameikos. In 1869/70 the researches of the architect Ernst Ziller revealed the plan of the ancient Stadium; its restoration in marble was completed in 1896, in time for its use in the first Olympic Games. Also important for the monuments of Athens were two excavations at the end of the 19th century. In 1885, after a fire which reduced to cinders the wooden shacks of the commercial market place on the site of the Library of Hadrian, the Archaeological Society was able to expose the entire layout of the Library. A little later, in 1890, the Archaeological Society began systematic excavations in the area of the Roman Agora of which only the Propylon of Athena Archegetis was initially visible. At that time the southeastern corner and the eastern propylon of the complex were found.

As a result of these investigations, and in consequence of the excavations of the Olympieion (1886–1907) and of the abundant chance finds from various parts of the city, students of Athenian topography were able to formulate the first definite conclusions. I refer in particular to the study of Walter Judeich who, on the basis of deductions from excavations and from epigraphical and literary evidence, published in 1905 his valuable book on the topography of Athens; he brought out a new edition in 1931 with various additions.

The large excavations, however, which have taken place in the last 50 years in different parts of the city have given us new evidence for our understanding of the topography of Athens. We are now in a position to follow the city's building expansion without a break from the time when the first inhabitants established themselves up to and including the Middle Ages.

In more recent times systematic and well-organized excavations have taken place in the great sanctuaries and on the archaeological sites.

From the very beginning of the 20th century the German Archaeological Institute carried on extensive excavations in the Kerameikos. These exposed the most important cemetery of the city as well as the Pompeion, referred to by Pausanias, a large part of the city wall together with the Dipylon and the Sacred Gate, and the roads leading to the Piraeus, Eleusis, and the Academy of Plato (Fig. 4).

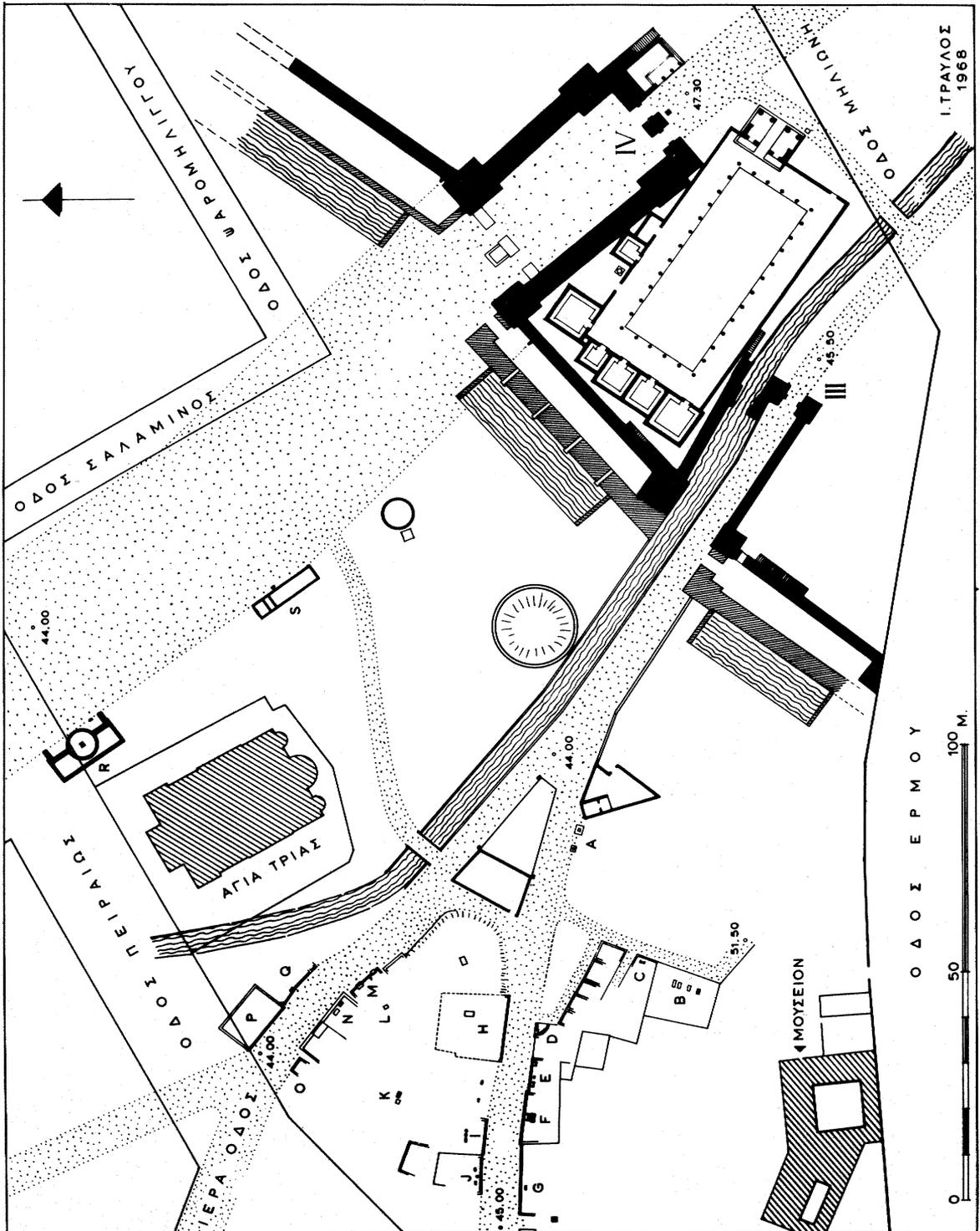


FIG. 4. Section of the Kerameikos Cemetery outside the Sacred Gate (III) and the Dipylon (IV)

In 1930–1937 Homer Thompson, first with Konstantinos Kourouniotes and later with Robert Scranton, carried out excavations on the Pnyx which revealed the architectural history of the site and of the surrounding area, where remains of the city wall and the cross wall (Diateichisma) were studied (Pl. 84:b).

Also important were the excavations which took place on the North Slope of the Acropolis. In 1931 Oscar Broneer uncovered the shrine of Eros and Aphrodite and in 1937 the Mycenaean Spring deep in the cave of Aglauros. In 1936–1940, when Arthur Parsons investigated and studied the Klepsydra Spring, he discovered also a series of wells of the Neolithic period which constitute the earliest indication of life in Athens.

Worthy of interest, but smaller in extent, were the investigations in later years on the Acropolis, in the Library of Hadrian, and the Roman Agora. In the area of the Olympieion, where I undertook excavations in 1961, I was able to discover very ancient remains, thus verifying the words of Thucydides that on the South Slope of the Acropolis the earliest settlement, the city before Theseus, was located. Important buildings of the classical and Roman periods were also found in this area (Fig. 5).

Plato's Academy, for which scholars had been looking since the end of the 18th century, was unearthed in the period 1929–1940 with the financial assistance of Panayotis Aristophron.

The most important scientific event of the last 50 years, however, has been the uncovering of the Athenian Agora through excavations carried out by the American School of Classical Studies. It was the first systematic and extensive excavation to have taken place in the ancient city exactly on the spot which the architects Stamatios Kleanthes and Eduard Schaubert had the foresight to reserve for excavation in their original plan. Before the excavation there were 350 houses in this area which had been built in the 19th century on top of the ruins of the houses of the period of Turkish domination.

The excavation of the Agora began in May of 1931 and has continued until today with an interruption of only six years during the Second World War. During that time American archaeologists have worked under the direction of Theodore Leslie Shear (1931–1945), then Homer Thompson (1946–1968), and lastly, until the present time, Theodore Leslie Shear, Jr. I count myself truly fortunate to have had the luck to take part as architect in these remarkable excavations.

According to the information provided by these excavations the Agora was established on this site in the 6th century B.C. and remained in the same place for at least 850 years until its destruction by the Herulians in A.D. 267. The plan of the Athenian Agora is very simple: a large rectangular open area, on the sides of which were located the various edifices, temples, public buildings, courts, and stoas described by Pausanias and other ancient writers (Fig. 6, Pl. 85). The excavated monuments have almost all been identified with certainty. The excavations have also permitted us to illustrate by means of a series of plans the changing shape of the Agora and to follow its historical and architectural development from its establishment in the Archaic period to the middle of the 2nd century after Christ when Pausanias visited and described it. We must look for the commercial market place of Athens elsewhere, specifically on the site

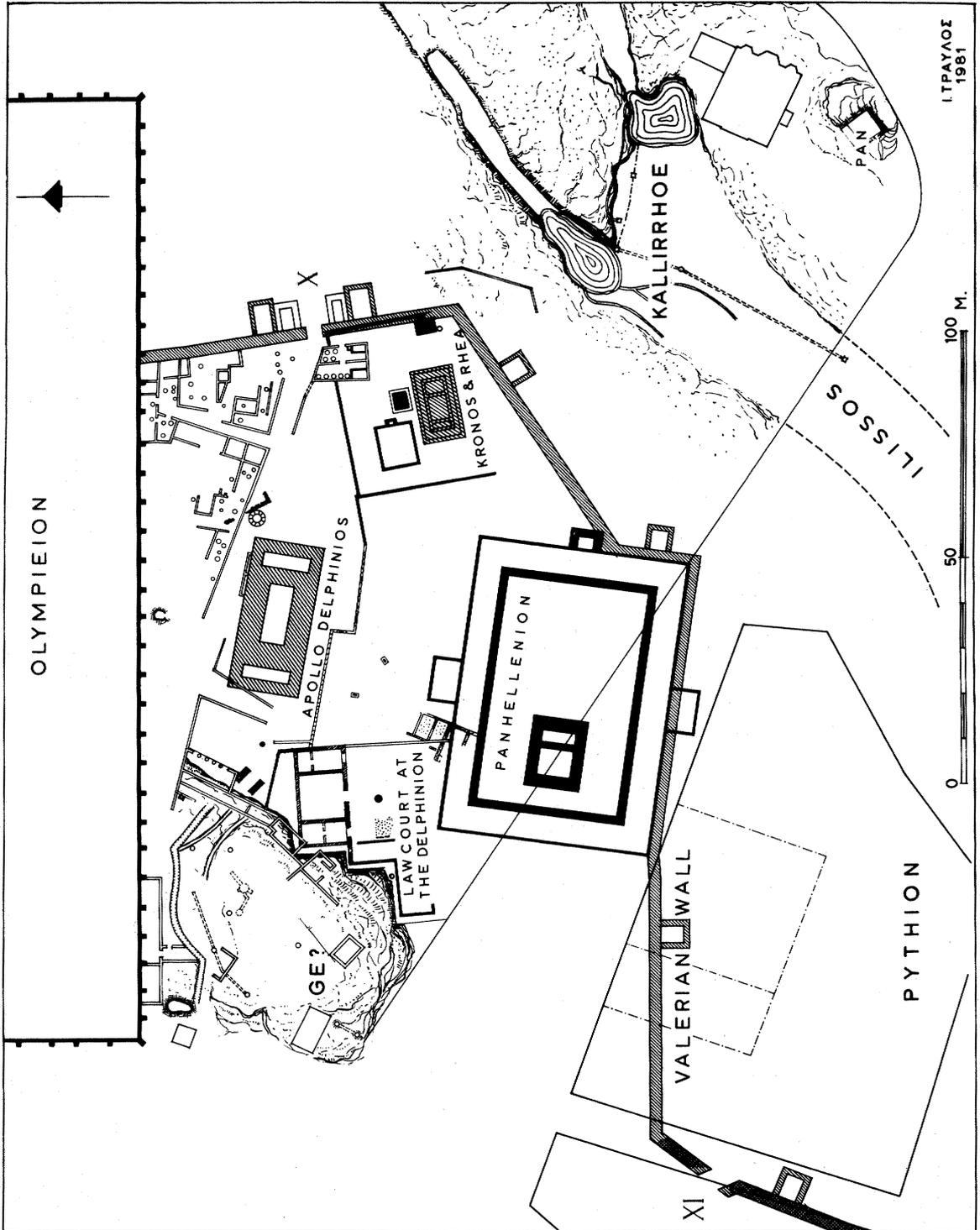


FIG. 5. The sanctuaries and other monuments which came to light in 1961 to the south of the Olympieion

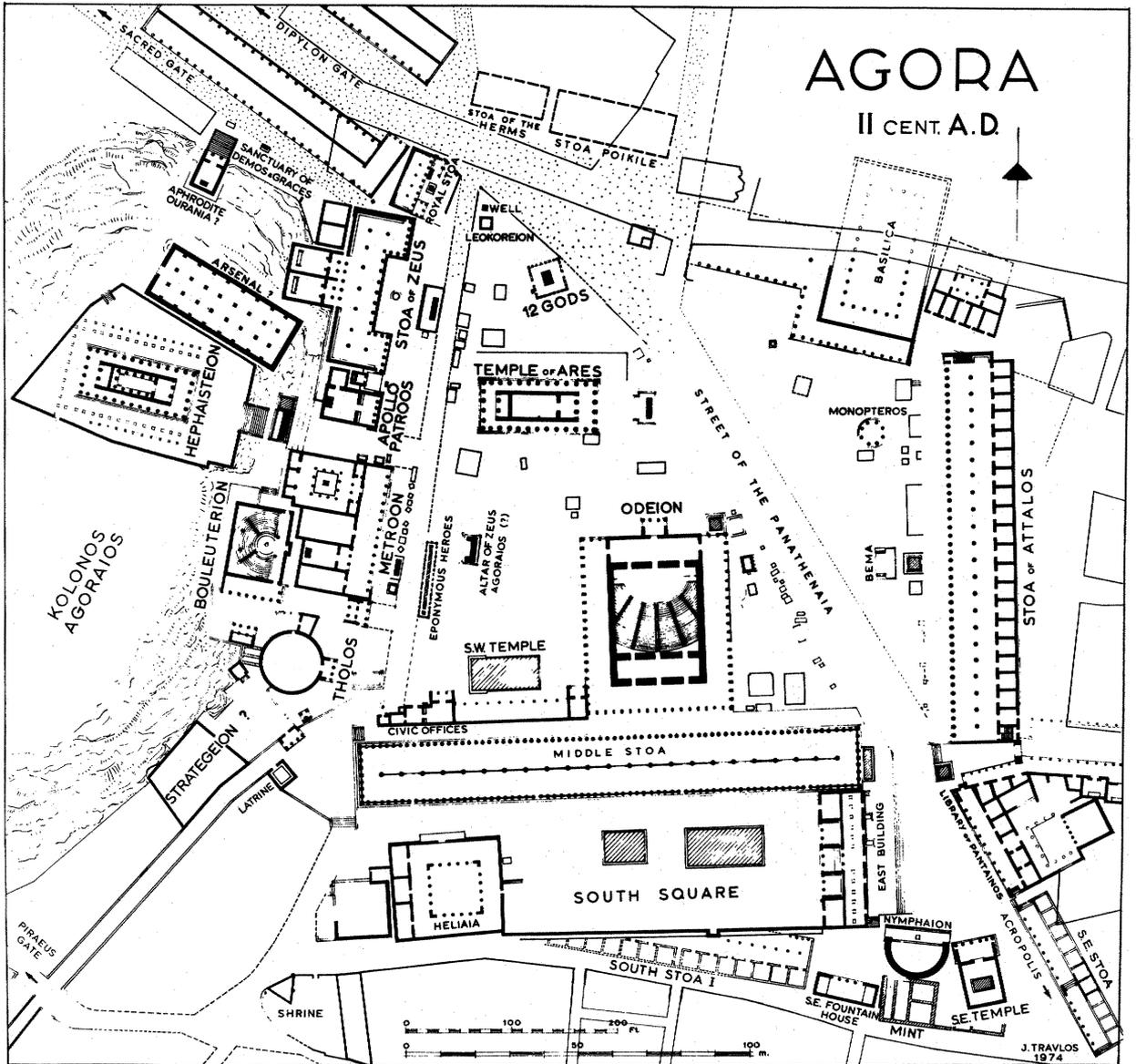


Fig. 6. The Athenian Agora in the 2nd century after Christ

of the later Roman Agora. We must also look in the same direction, i.e. toward the east, for the Diogeneion, the Gymnasium of Ptolemy, and the famous Theseion.

In A.D. 267 almost everything was destroyed by the Herulians, who set fire to the buildings of the Agora. The Athenians themselves completed the destruction through systematic demolition in order to use the material—stones and architectural members, statues and inscriptions—in erecting the small new inner circuit at the north of the Acropolis which reached as far as the Library of Hadrian (Fig. 7). Later, around A.D. 400, the large complex of the “Gymnasium of the Giants” was built in the open space of the Agora, and here was concentrated the intellectual life of the city (Fig. 8).

Today all the known buildings of the Agora have been excavated with the exception of the Painted Stoa (Stoa Poikile), and this famous structure is being sought in the excavations which are now going on in the western part of the north side of the Agora. The visitor to the site can recognize the monuments described by Pausanias and many more. And when he completes his tour, following once more the ancient roads, bordered as in ancient times by trees, he arrives at the spacious and inviting Stoa of Attalos (Pl. 86) where are exhibited the finds from the Agora dating from Neolithic times to the last years of Turkish rule.

The excavations which have been conducted throughout the whole of Athens by the Third Ephoreia of Classical Antiquities and by the Ephoreia of the Acropolis on the occasion of the building of new houses have yielded most important new conclusions concerning the topography of the ancient city (Fig. 9). Besides abundant small finds, the remains which have been brought to light allow us to define with accuracy the line of the circuit of the ancient city and its gates, the location of the ancient roads along the lines of the roads in prehistoric times, and the sites of the ancient cemeteries.

A great gain for the history of the ancient city has also come from the discovery of several sanctuaries, unmentioned by our literary sources, in various parts of Athens.

In 1952–1954, Yannis Miliades discovered the important sanctuary of Herakles Pankrates at the intersection of the present Vasileos Konstantinou and Vasileos Georgiou Streets. Unfortunately, he did not live to finish his study of the sanctuary and its many finds, which he was preparing with so much dedication during his last years. This memorable scholar also excavated between 1955 and 1959 the sanctuary of Nymphe just in front of the Odeion of Herodes Atticus; the identification was made possible by a boundary stone and by the large number of loutrophoroi found in the excavation.

Finally, in 1958, Yannis Threpsiades unearthed at the west of Theseion Square the temple of Artemis Aristoboule, which was founded by Themistokles himself after the victorious outcome of the Persian Wars.

The picture of the ancient city of Athens which we have today may be regarded as complete. Most of the monuments known from ancient authors have been identified, while the extent and, in more general terms, the elements that went into the formation of the ancient city have been ascertained.

Basic bibliography for Athens and its excavations is as follows:

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JOHN TRAVLOS

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

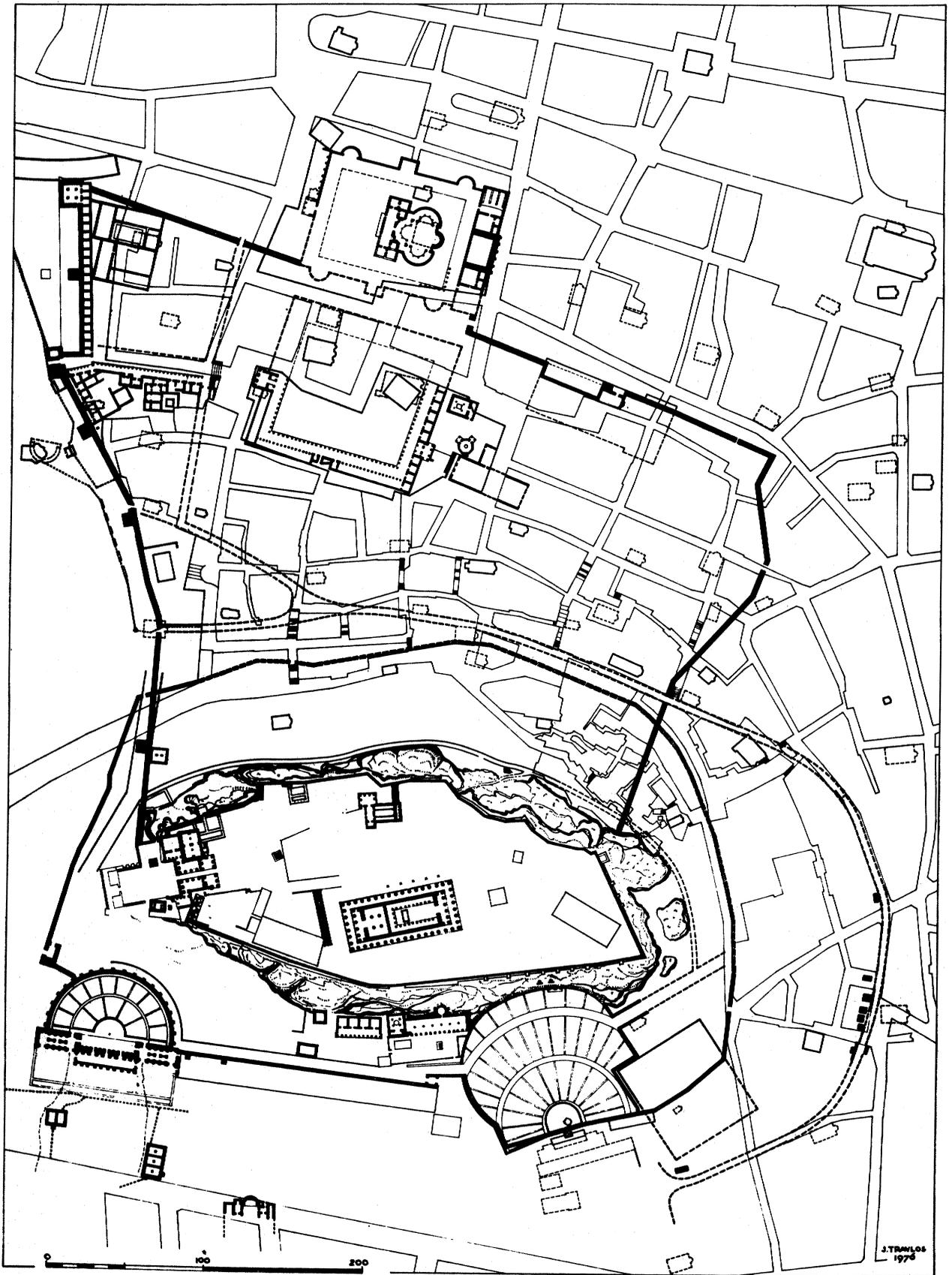


FIG. 7. The Post-Herulian Wall with the small area which it enclosed to the north of the Acropolis

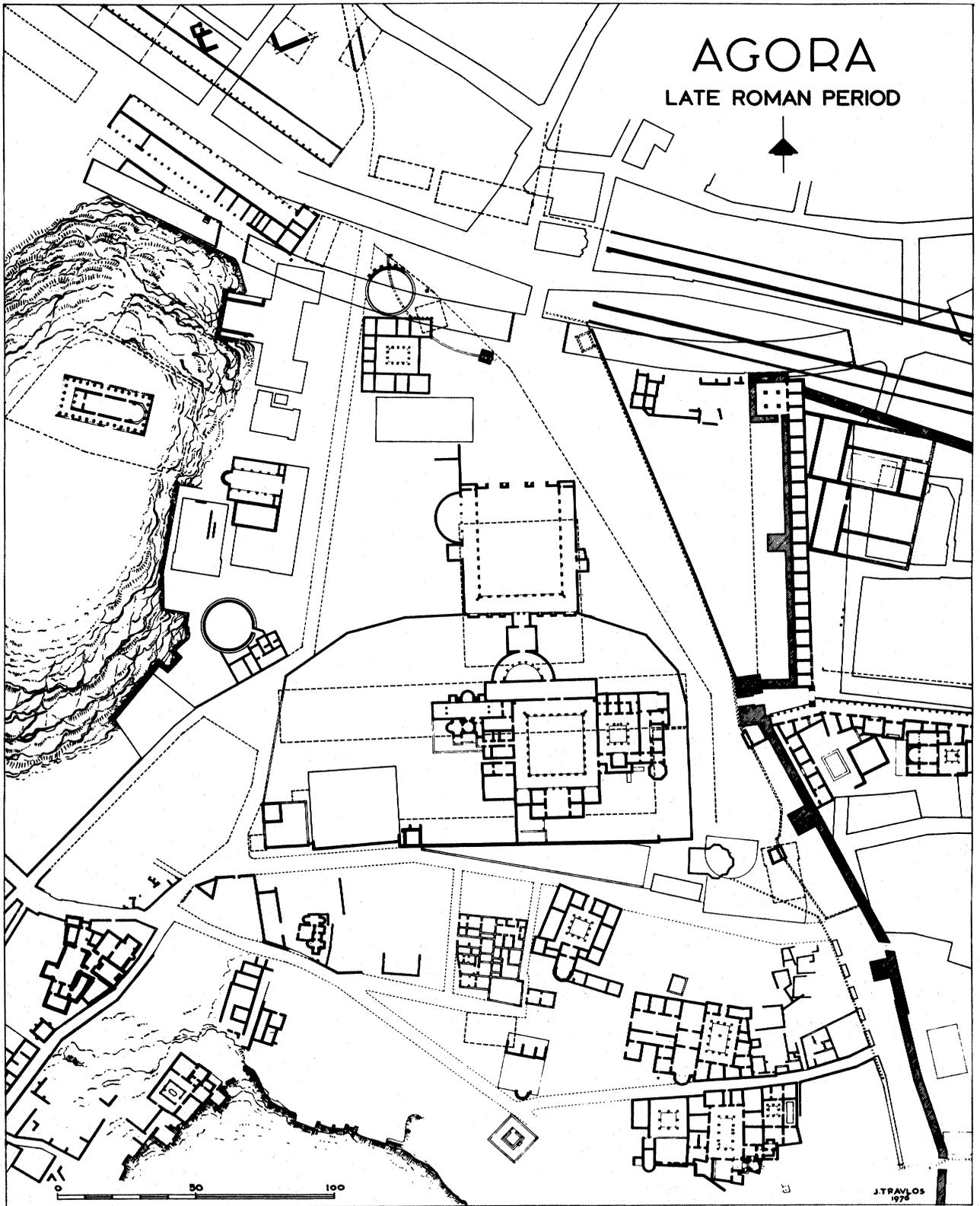
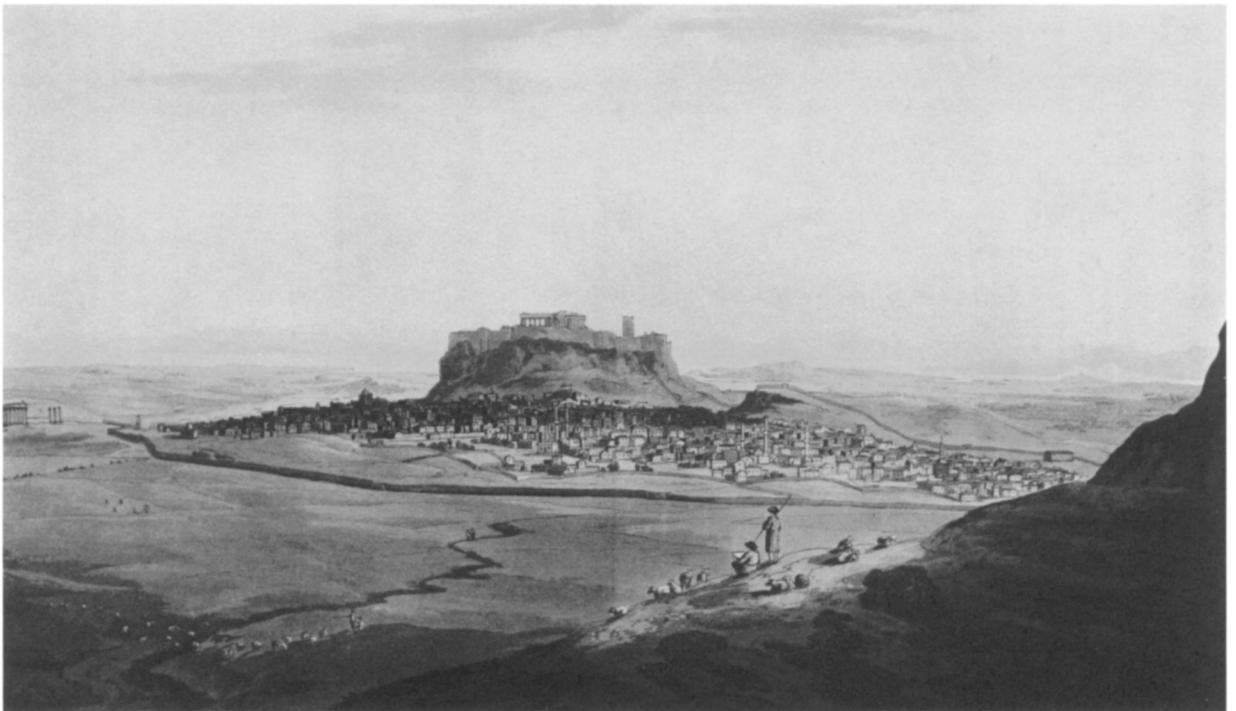


FIG. 8. The area of the Athenian Agora in the 5th century after Christ with the Gymnasium of the Giants and the philosophical schools



FIG. 9. Plan of Athens showing the location of the buildings and the fortification wall of the ancient city in relation to the modern city



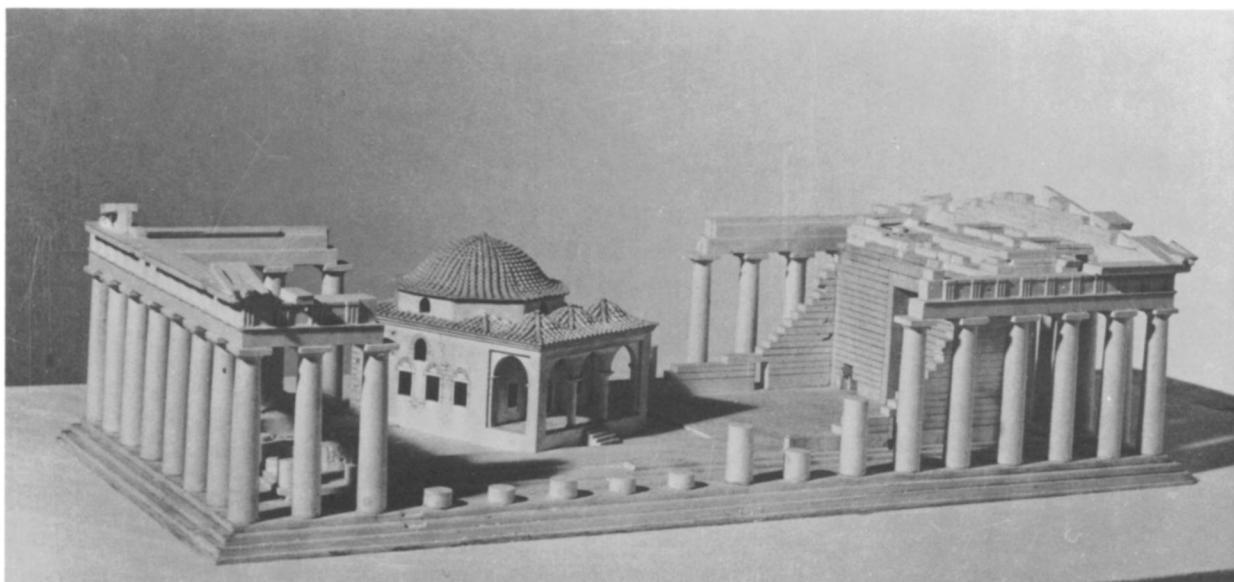
a. General view of Athens from Lykabettos (Hobhouse, 1810)



b. Plan of the City of Athens by the engineer Coubault, 1800 (Gennadius Library)



a. The Acropolis in the time of the Turkish occupation (Dodwell, 1805)

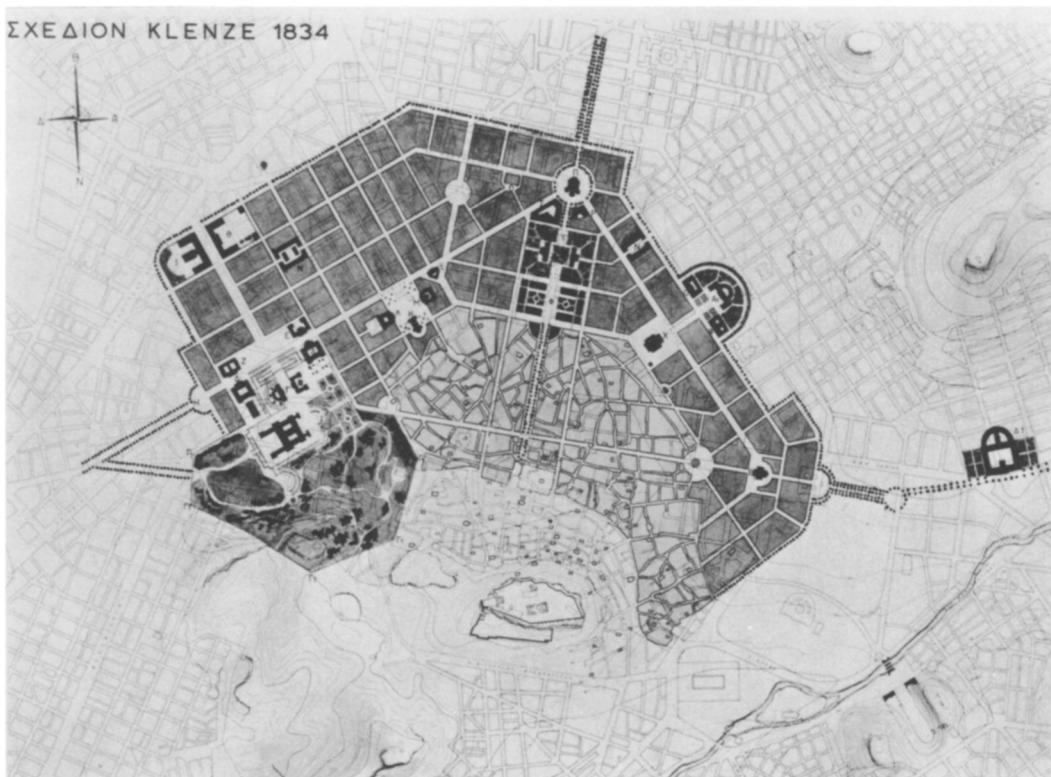


b. Plaster model of the Parthenon with the mosque which survived until 1842 (Museum of the Stoa of Attalos)

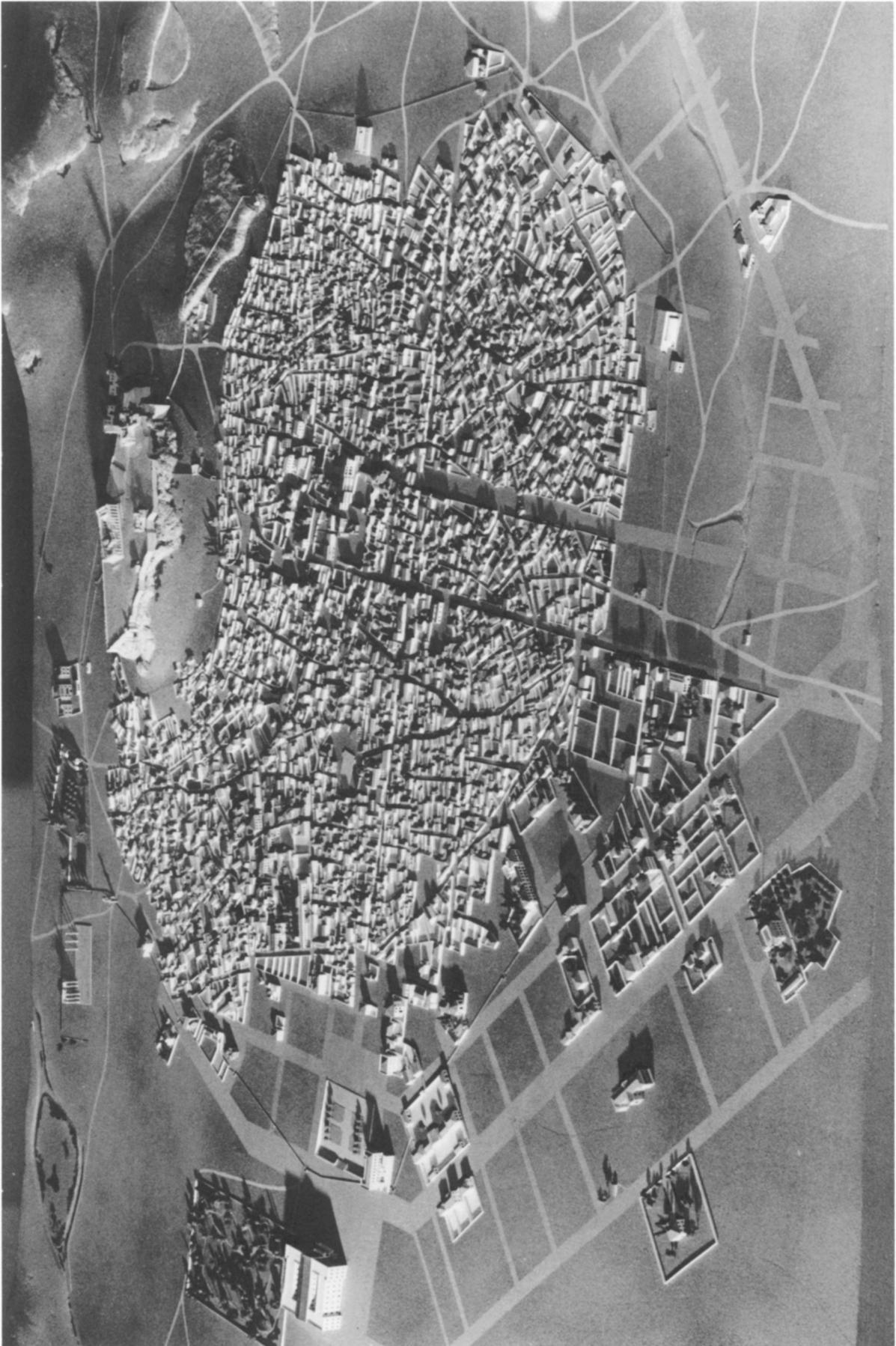
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a. The first city plan of Athens, 1833. Architects: Stamatis Kleanthes and Eduard Schaubert

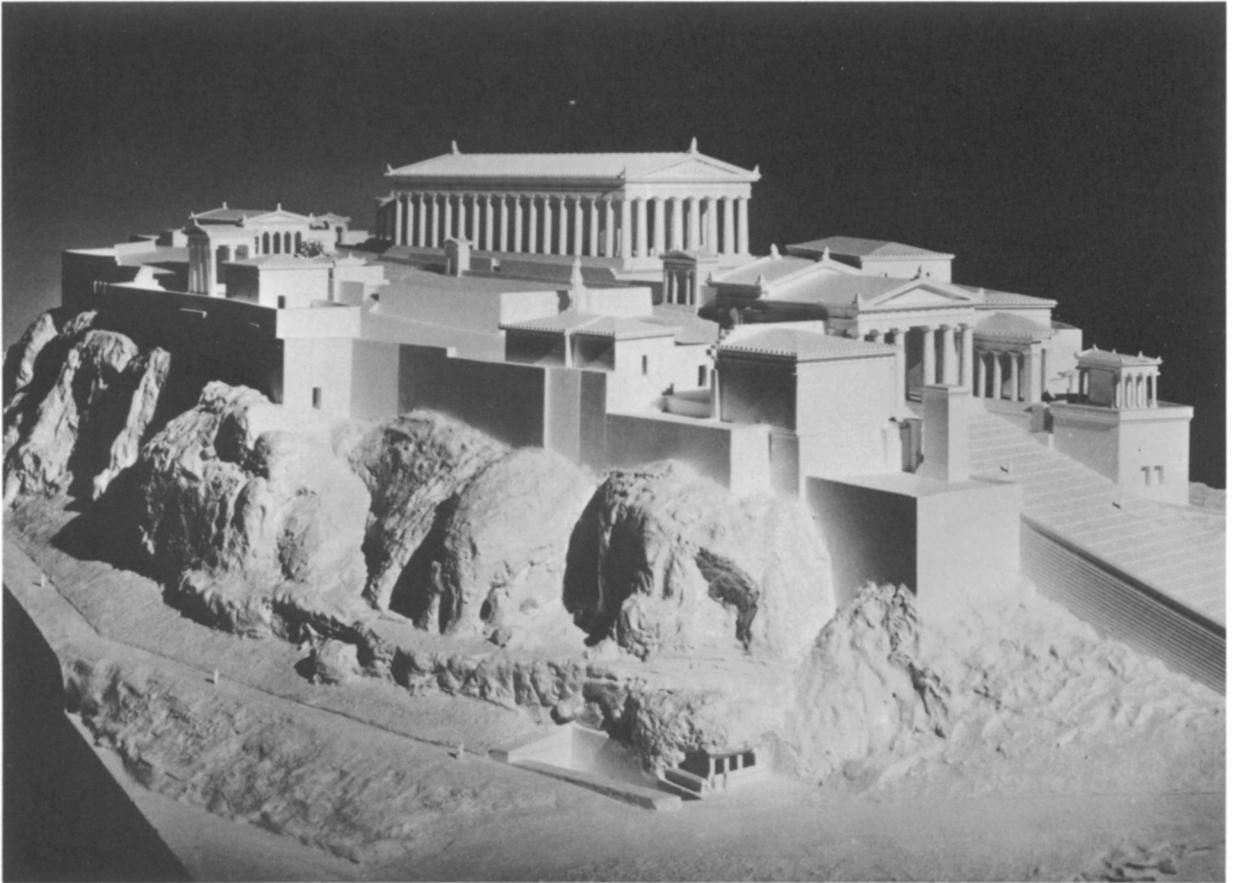


b. The city plan of Athens as it was modified by the architect Leo von Klenze, 1834

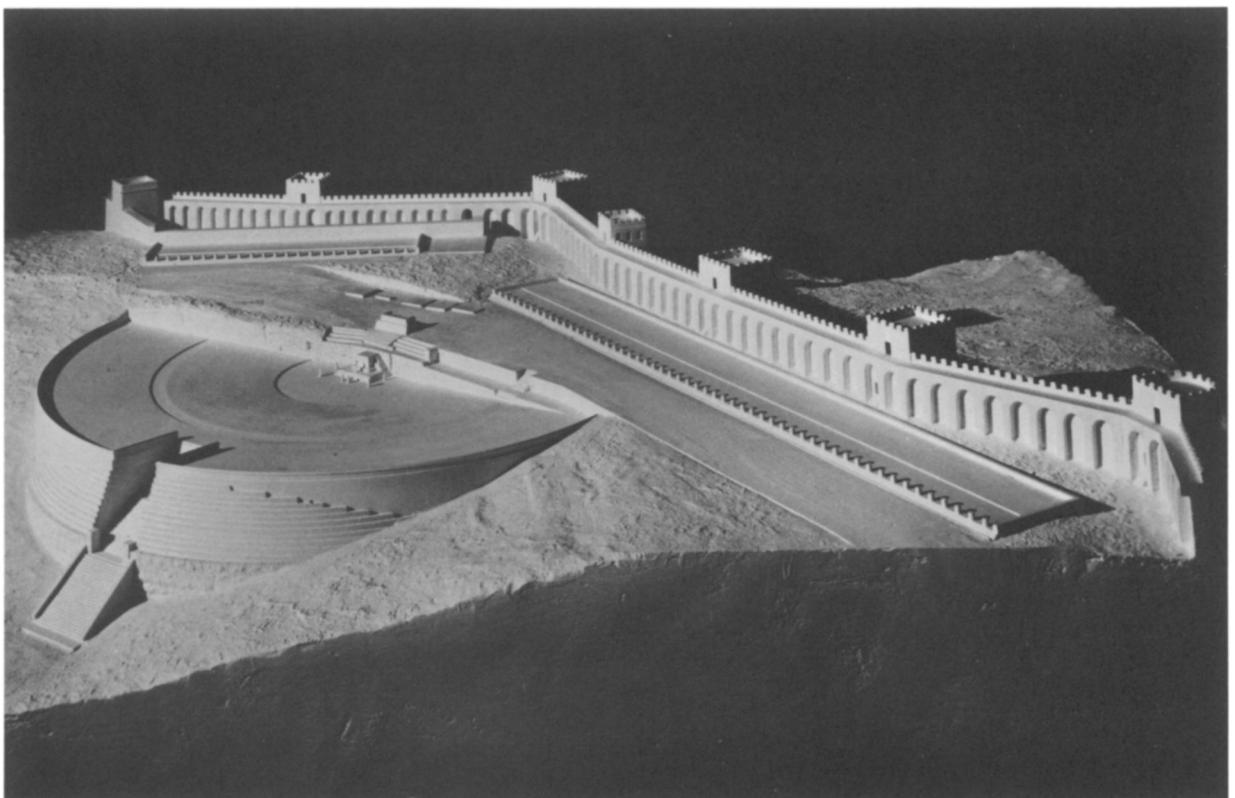


Model of Athens in 1842. View from the north (Museum of the City of Athens)

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a. Plaster model of the Acropolis in the 2nd century after Christ (Museum of the Stoa of Attalos)



b. Plaster model of the Pnyx and a section of the cross wall (Museum of the Stoa of Attalos)



a. The west side of the Athenian Agora in the 2nd century after Christ
(plaster model, Museum of the Stoa of Attalos)



b. The Athenian Agora in the 2nd century after Christ, from the northwest
(plaster model, Museum of the Stoa of Attalos)

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a. The north end of the Stoa of Attalos. Rebuilt 1956



b. The colonnades of the Stoa of Attalos. Rebuilt 1956