MINOR SHRINES IN ANCIENT ATHENS

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Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city full of idols; . . . standing in the midst of the Areopagus he said, "Men of Athens, I find you in all things excessively *daimon*-fearing." [Acts 17. 16 & 22]

The Athenians more than all others show piety towards the gods. . . . I have already said that they more than all others show an excess of zeal in the cults of the gods. [Pausanias 1.17.1; 24.3]

PAUL FOUND A VERITABLE FOREST of "idols" at Athens—this is the meaning of the adjective *kateidolos*, as one may see by analogy with such words as *katadendros*.[1] Pausanias found shrines of a remarkable variety of deities wherever he went in his extensive tour of the city. The all-pervading *deisidaimonia* or religiosity observed by these two is further illustrated not only in the literature of all periods and in the copious epigraphical records, but also in monuments found *in situ*, including some notable recent discoveries.

The multiplicity of cults and the variety and complexity of religious life were naturally reflected in the visible architectural aspect of the city. There were gods everywhere; their shrines were scattered throughout the city and suburbs. Of course there were certain obvious concentrations. The greatest was on the Acropolis, its western approaches[2] and the adjacent Hill of Ares, the steep northern and southern slopes and the caves which penetrated the rocks on these sides. The agora was full of shrines, some of great civic dignity, some unimportant and obscure; curiously, it had no great temple until a comparatively late date, but the Hephaisteion on the hill overlooking it from the west compensated to some extent. Other shrines were strung out along the road which ran northwestwards, through the main city gate, the Dipylon, past the cemeteries to the Academy, where there was a cluster of ancient cults. Most important of all, outside the Acropolis and the agora, was the region diametrically opposite to the Academy, in south-eastern Athens,[3] around the temple of Zeus Olympios and on the banks of the neighbouring river Ilissos. But accumulating evidence shows more and more clearly that the main concentrations and the principal archaeological zones by no means

[1] See *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968) 619–620.

[2] See *Phoenix* 20 (1966) 285 ff.

[3] W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen* (Munich 1931) 381 ff.; cf. *GRBS* 4 (1963) 157 ff.; 5 (1964) 161 ff.; *BSA* 55 (1960) 60 ff. (Neleion); *Phoenix* 17 (1963) 88 ff. (Ilissos valley); for the curious shrine of Pankrates in this region see *Ergon* of Greek Archaeological Society, 1955 (for 1954) 3; *AJA* 57 (1953) 281.

PHOENIX, Vol. 24 (1970) 4.

account for all the sacred precincts of Athens, that there were others, more sparsely distributed but still numerous, in less well known quarters, sometimes embedded amongst the houses and shops. Many of these would consist of a simple *temenos*, a piece of ground set apart for the god, marked off and enclosed in some way, with an altar for sacrifice and modest dedicatory monuments; some might have a small temple, some a stoa or colonnade.[4]

In the streets of course there were always the ubiquitous Herms, square pillars surmounted by a head of Hermes, who amongst other things was the great god of streets and gateways (cf. Paus. 1.24.3 and Thuc. 6.27.1). The Athenians, we are told, invented this form of image, and set them up everywhere at the doors of both shrines and private houses. There must have been hundreds in the city; many Herms and Herm bases have been found in the agora excavations.[5] Though regarded with veneration, as is shown by the wrath of the pious when in 415 B.C. a group of young hooligans mutilated many of them, the ordinary simple Herms hardly constituted shrines in themselves; but passers-by, in somewhat casual fashion, paid their respects. Apollo too was a street-god, with the title Agyieus; he was represented in truly aniconic form as a tapering pillar or elongated half-egg, and these objects too, we are told, were set up at Athens in front of doors.[6] None has been found, and they were presumably much less common than Herms. More like a true shrine was the Hekataion, sacred to Hekate, a goddess who was worshipped particularly at cross-roads or places where three roads met.[7] She was shown with three heads and three bodies, facing three ways. Many small dedications to her in this form have been found, illustrating the popularity of her worship; and the aspect of her little shrines can perhaps be illustrated by reference to remains which have been found to the south-east of the agora,[8] on the way up to the Acropolis. The Hekataion, if such it is, was set characteristically in a corner at a cross-roads, where the processional way of the Panathenaia was crossed by an east to west street. In the middle was a circular socket, probably for a base on which the triple figure stood; around this were four square sockets as if for posts supporting an enclosing fence; but apparently this was not thought

[4]Birgitta Bergquist, *The Archaic Greek Temenos* (Lund 1967) is a thorough and useful work in this connection, but confines itself to precincts with at least a temple, and with greater architectural pretensions than most of those we are now considering.

[5]See now E. B. Harrison, *The Athenian Agora* 11, *Archaic and Archaistic Sculpture* (Princeton 1965) 108 ff.; a further group of Herm bases, together with fragments of Herms, has recently been found in front of a stoa newly excavated at the north end of the west side of the agora (see forthcoming report in *Hesperia*).

[6]Cf. Aristophanes *Vesp.* 875, and commentators.

[7]See E. B. Harrison, *op. cit.* (above, n. 5) 86 ff.

[8]*Hesperia* 28 (1959) 95 f.; 29 (1960) 333.

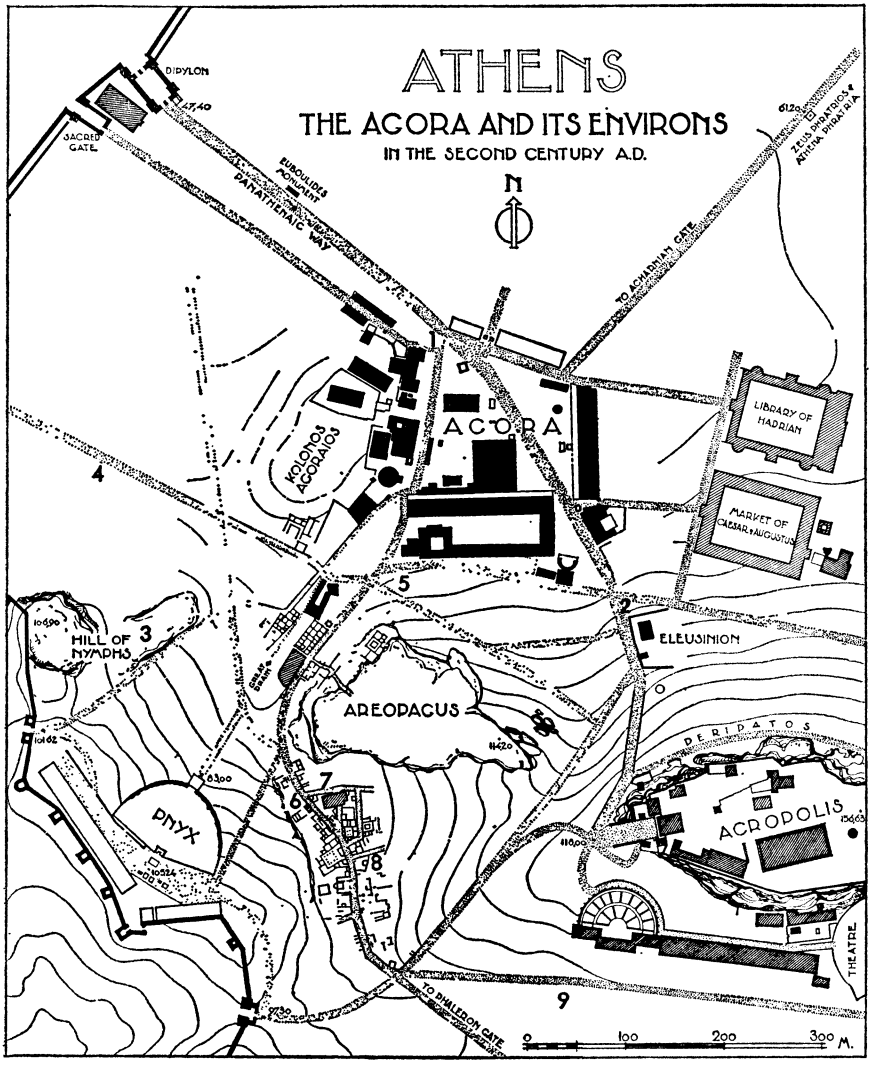

Figure 1

ATHENS, AGORA AND ENVIRONS (J. TRAVLOS)

1. Herms.
2. Hekataion.
3. Shrine of Zeus.
4. Shrine of Artemis in Melite.
5. Triangular shrine.
6. Small temple.
7. Triangular enclosure.
8. Shrine of Amynos.
9. Shrine of Nymphe.

This plan in its original form appeared as Plate I in *The Athenian Agora*, Vol. III; *Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia* (Princeton 1957).

sufficient protection in view of the exposure of the shrine to traffic on the roads, for a wall of rubble masonry, with an entrance at the east end of the north side, was next built around it. The whole square structure measured no more than three metres each way. It was not built as we have it until Roman times, but there may well have been a simpler earlier Hekataion on the spot; and in any case there must have been many such at cross-roads in Athens in earlier periods.

These were deities of the streets by nature and function. Others simply happened to have their shrines on ordinary city streets amongst the houses and shops. The region south-west of the agora and west of the Areopagus now provides the best illustration. But before dealing with remains found *in situ* one might look at one or two inscriptions which mention shrines not yet located on the ground and throw a little light on their distribution. Like other ancient cities Athens did not have a systematic method of naming streets and numbering houses. In documents concerned with the disposal of house-property the site is commonly defined by reference to the neighbours; and one's neighbour might be a god. On one of the marble *stelai* which record the sale of the property of Alkibiades and his associates, confiscated because of their sacrilege in 415 B.C., we read, "Property of Diodoros: a house in Kydathenaion, which has a porch with two pillars"—and surely a Herm—"to which is adjacent the shrine of Artemis Amarysia from Athmonon."[9] Kydathenaion was a deme and populous residential district on the north side of the Acropolis. Athmonon was a country deme a few miles north-east of Athens (the modern name of the place, Marusi, is a relic of the ancient cult). Such cults of the Attic demes not infrequently had counterparts established within the metropolis.[10] The Athenians imported many cults from other cities, and indeed from non-Greek sources, to enrich the pattern of their religious life. Artemis Amarysia came originally from Amarynthos in Euboia.

Another inscription dealing with the sale of confiscated property, dated in the fourth century, mentions "two workshops in Melite, to which are adjacent on the east a house of Philokrates of Hagnous, on the west a workshop of Hierokleides of Hermos, on the north a house of Philokrates of Hagnous, on the south the road leading from the shrine of Herakles Alexikakos (Averter of Evil) to the agora."[11] This shrine was probably in the extreme western part of the city, between the Hill of the Nymphs and the Pnyx hill.

[9] *Hesperia* 22 (1953) 272 (Stele 6, lines 78–79). Note also Andokides 1.62, from which we gather that Andokides' house was adjacent to the shrine of the hero Phorbas.

[10] For the cults of a deme, Erchia, and counterparts in the city, see the important inscription published by G. Daux, *BCH* 87 (1963) 603 ff.

[11] *Hesperia* 5 (1936) 400; cf. *AJA* 63 (1959) 67.

Western Athens comprised a series of rocky hills, strung out north to south, with valleys adjacent and saddles between. The district was residential, with an industrial element, and included two of the more populous city demes, Melite and Kollytos. Shrines on the Hill of the Nymphs above have long been attested by inscriptions carved in the rock. One of these, near the top and the Old Observatory, marks the place as sacred to the Nymphs. A recent study has shown that these particular Nymphs were probably the daughters of Hyakinthos, sacrificed according to legend for the good of the city.[12] Hyakinthos himself, as we learn from an inscription, had a shrine at Athens, and this may have been in association with his daughters; indeed the hill may be what was known in antiquity as the Hill of Hyakinthos (the present name is modern). If the identification is correct, these Nymphs were also known as *genethliai*, i.e., concerned with childbirth; and it is worth noting that St. Marina, to whom is dedicated the church which stands just below the spot a little to the east, is also concerned with birth and children, and may well be a true successor to the Nymphs.

A little further down the hill, just below the church, if one searches hard one can still find an inscription in letters about three inches high cut deeply in the hard rock. It runs right to left and reads *horos Dios*, boundary of Zeus; nearby is another reading *horos* only. They may be dated in the sixth century. Presumably a portion of the hillside was marked off as sacred to Zeus. One imagines that the sanctuary consisted simply of *temenos* (sacred plot) and altar; a temple, even a small one, or other substantial building would have left some trace. Nothing is known from literature of a shrine of Zeus on this spot. But a boundary stone has more recently been found in the valley just below to the east, bearing an inscription which shows that it was a boundary of a shrine of Zeus with a cult epithet which might possibly be Exopsios (the inscription is unfortunately incomplete and open to doubt).[13] Exopsios means "looking out," and certainly from the hill-side Zeus could look out and view the agora and the city as a whole. The stone is dated in the fourth century B.C., and so would belong to a later demarcation.

At the northern foot of the Hill of Nymphs, about half way along the street which leads from the south-west corner of the agora to the Peiraeus Gate, a small temple of peculiar interest in Athenian cult and history was found by chance during building operations in 1958.[14] An

[12]M. Ervin, in *Platon* 9 (1959) 146 ff.; cf. Judeich, *Topographie* 398.

[13]For the rock-cut inscriptions see *IG* 1^2.863 and Judeich, *Topographie* 398; for "Exopsios," B. D. Meritt, *Hesperia* 26 (1957) 90; E. Vanderpool, *Hesperia* 35 (1966) 274 f., questions the reading Exopsios, but I have tried to show that although defective it cannot be anything else; see *Hesperia* 37 (1968) 121 f.

[14]J. Threpsiades and E. Vanderpool, "Themistokles' Sanctuary of Artemis Aristo-

inscription reveals that it belonged to the men of Melite, and that the deity was Artemis; and the shrine may well be one which was associated with the name of the most distinguished Melitaean, Themistokles. Pottery shows that the site was occupied from the eighth century at least, but there is no definite evidence for a cult till the fifth. The plan of a small temple, facing west, was clearly revealed, though the remains are scanty. In front of it, placed obliquely, was an altar, and just beyond this a short section of an enclosing wall was found; most of the wall was outside the excavation and the full extent of the enclosure is not known. The temple consisted of a cella about 3.6 m. square, with a porch between antae or projecting walls 1.85 m. deep. There were no columns. Thus the building represents the Greek temple in its basic, almost irreducible form, with the minimum elaboration of plan or architectural adornment. The western outlook, instead of eastern, is very unusual but not unique.

The foundations and elements in the lower walls seem to show that the temple was first built soon after 480 B.C., but most of the surviving remains belong to a thorough rebuilding, apparently on the same plan, with some re-used material, in the following century. The walls, .45 m. thick, were partly of irregular masonry, partly of squared blocks. The threshold consisted of a block of Hymettian marble, with cuttings for a two-leaved wooden door and for an outer grill. In the western part of the floor of the cella was a layer of small stones set in mortar, probably an underpinning for a floor of pebble mosaic. This room presumably contained the statue of the goddess at its eastern end.

About 3 m. west of the facade of the temple were found, *in situ*, two blocks of poros which must have been the foundation of the altar. The altar itself, another poros block, with a moulding at the bottom (the top, now mostly broken away, would probably have had upturning "bolsters" at either end), was found lying nearby. It was not placed on the axis of the temple, nor indeed did it have the same orientation, but was placed obliquely on almost the same line as the adjacent peribolos wall. The latter was built of rough polygonal masonry; outside was a street, its course marked by a late drain.

The finds show that the cult was maintained throughout the rest of classical antiquity. The inscription mentioned above, cut about 330 B.C., gives at the top a dedication by Neoptolemos son of Antikles to Artemis, made "when Chairylle was priestess." Below is a decree of the demesmen

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boule," *ArchDelt* 19 (Athens 1965) 26 ff.; cf. *AJA* 63 (1959) 279.

P. Amandry, in *Charisterion for A. K. Orlandos* (Athens 1967) 265 ff., offers some criticisms of Threpsiades' and Vanderpool's account; he thinks that the building excavated was a treasury, and the main temple was elsewhere; but this building is sufficient, and it is not very likely that such a local shrine and cult would have required two temple-like buildings.

of Melite honouring this man for services rendered in connection with the cult. The relevant section of the inscription is almost obliterated; but one may naturally assume that the rebuilding of the temple was due to him.

"Themistokles himself gave offence to the majority," says Plutarch in his *Life* (22.1), "by founding the shrine of Artemis. He called the goddess Aristoboule, on the ground that he had given the best advice to the city and to Greece, and he built the shrine near his house in Melite. A portrait (*eikonion*, which may mean a picture or a statue) of Themistokles stood in the temple of Aristoboule even in my day, and it is clear that he was a man heroic not only in spirit but also in appearance." Whether the story is wholly true or not, it seems that popular tradition connected Artemis Aristoboule with Themistokles; and since the place, in the region of Melite, and the time of origin of the cult are right, it is hardly rash to identify the remains with the shrine of Plutarch's story. When Themistokles fell into disfavour and disgrace, it would not be surprising if for a time the shrine was neglected and disowned. In the following century he was permanently installed as one of the glorious heroes of Athenian history; the temple was naturally restored, and perhaps the shrine also became a kind of *heroon* of Themistokles.

The valley which runs southwards from the agora, with the Hill of the Nymphs and the Pnyx on the west and the Areopagus on the east, presents a much more coherent picture; in fact it now provides our best example of a residential district of Athens, and a number of interesting shrines are interspersed among the houses.

A little to the south-west of the agora, across the important street which bordered its south side, and at a point where several streets converged, the excavators found in 1966 a curious triangular structure which in any case could hardly be anything but a small shrine, and which was fortunately identified as such by a boundary-marker.[15] The triangle is an equilateral of about 8.6 m. each way, with the northern side running approximately east to west along the street. The wall was solidly built of blocks of Acropolis limestone in polygonal style. There is no sign of an entrance, and the triangle was probably an *abaton*, an "untrodden" area normally inaccessible to worshippers. An open *temenos* would be required of course too, and this probably consisted of ground to the east, west, and south, entered by a gateway in a wall which ran eastward from the corner of the triangle.

The boundary stone, of Pentelic marble, stands *in situ* against the east end of the north side of the triangle; at the west end of the same side is a socket for a similar marker. With brevity and economy infuriating

[15] *Hesperia* 37 (1968) 58 ff. and 123 ff.

to the modern investigator the stone-cutter carved nothing more than TOHIERO, meaning "(this belongs to) the shrine," and omitted the name of the occupant. The fine letter forms indicate a date not long after the middle of the fifth century, and this is probably the time when the triangular structure was built. The cult, however, may have been much older. A massive rectangular foundation discovered at a lower level in the middle of the triangle, and dated probably in the sixth century, may well belong to an earlier altar.

No dedications have been found to give a clue to the character of the deity. The form of the sanctuary is very appropriate for a heroon, the shrine of a hero rather than an Olympian god.[16] The Athenians were much given to the cult of the heroized dead, and there were many hero-shrines in the city, some of great ones like Theseus, some of obscure and shadowy figures whose character was mysterious even to the ancients. It was never forgotten that the agora and its environs occupied ground which in earlier periods, Mycenean and Geometric, had been used for important burials, and which possessed a traditional sanctity.[17] Beneath the triangular enclosure two small circular pits cut in bedrock may well mark the place occupied by ash urns; and in the surrounding area a number of burials of the Geometric period were found, notably one of a lady of wealth and rank, buried about 850 B.C., with her fine gold ornaments which included an exquisitely worked pair of ear-rings. A little to the south of the triangle a curious elliptical structure, comparable in size and shape to the peribolos of Nymphe (see below p. 293), had already been found many years ago.[18] It may be dated in the eighth century B.C.; at first it was thought to be an oval house, but it now seems more probable that it was a sacred enclosure; above its ruins was found a votive deposit of the seventh century, containing figurines, vases and plaques. There is however no evidence to show a direct continuity between this ancient cult and that of the triangular shrine.

The identity of the hero is purely conjectural. Not far to the west of the site a little marble plaque was found, carved with an eye in relief, and bearing an inscribed dedication, which may be dated in the third or second century B.C., to the Heros Iatros;[19] but the healing shrine of this Doctor Hero was probably near the shrine of Theseus, which was probably to the east of the agora. There was also a certain Heros Strategos,

[16]For comparable shrines see G. Lalonde in *Hesperia* 37 (1968) 125–126; note the shrine of the Tritopatores, Judeich, *Topographie* 410–411.

[17]For cults probably connected with ancient burials see *Hesperia* 22 (1953) 47 f.; 24 (1955) 195 f.; 202; 27 (1958) 148 ff.; 35 (1966) 48 f.

[18]*Hesperia* 2 (1933) 614 ff., 636 ff.; *Athenian Agora Guide* (1962) 154 f.

[19]*Hesperia* 17 (1948) 39. For the Heros Iatros see Demosthenes 18. 129; 19. 249; cf. *Athenian Agora* 3, *Testimonia* (Princeton 1957) 115; for a recent account of the Heros Iatros see C. Kerényi, *Asklepios* (London 1960) 72 ff.

Hero General;[20] a dedication to him has been found in the agora, and his cult may have been associated with the Strategeion, the office of the Generals, which was in the region south-west of the agora; but again it would be rash to place him in the triangular shrine.

Continuing southwards one traverses the "industrial district," with its workshops and houses.[21] There were Mycenean chamber tombs cut in the hill-side to the west, but these were apparently forgotten in classical times. The main street continues to climb and curve around the south-western foot of the Areopagus; and at this point, on the western side, to the right as one ascends, one can see the foundations of a *naiskos* or miniature temple, with a circular altar-base in front of it.[22] The little building is only about 2 m. wide east to west and 2.5 m. deep north to south, but the socle is well built of solid masonry. The south end is open, and there is no porch; thus it represents an even simpler form of shrine than the temple of Artemis. Presumably it stood in a small precinct and housed a cult statue, but there is no evidence to show who the occupant was. There were no doubt many tiny temples like this in Athens, and another has in fact been found more recently on the hillside to the south-west, on the saddle between the Pnyx and the Hill of Philopappos. This is a little larger but has a similarly elementary plan; a little of the superstructure has survived, including the upper part of a small pediment. The little shrine in the valley below, originally built in the sixth century, was encroached upon in the fourth by a rectangular building identified by two inscribed boundary stones as a *lesche*, a kind of lounge or club-room, in which people could sit and talk (we know there were many at Athens). Whether this had any connection with the ancient cult we cannot say; but the use of boundary-markers would seem to indicate that it was on sacred ground.

On the opposite side of the street was a much larger precinct, triangular in form, measuring about 45 m. on its longest side, and enclosed by a good solid wall.[23] A cross-wall cut off a much smaller triangle at the south end, and in this was a small temple—small, but not minute like those we have just been examining; it measured 3.96 by 5.2 metres, and

[20]See *Athenian Agora* 3, *Testimonia* 176.

[21]See R. Young, *Hesperia* 20 (1951) 135 ff.; the southward extension of the valley, first excavated by Dörpfeld and other German archaeologists at the end of the last century, has recently been reworked by Professor J. W. Graham of Toronto in connection with a study of houses, *Hesperia* 35 (1966) 51 ff.

[22]Judeich, *Topographie* 299. Judeich suggests that there was also a shrine of Zeus Xenios (god of strangers or guests) hereabouts; it is attested by a boundary-stone found built into the wall of the *lesche* mentioned above; the inscription, *IG* 1^2.886, shows that the shrine belonged to a clan called Thymaitis. Note also *Hesperia* 36 (1967) 98.

[23]Judeich, *Topographie* 291 ff.; cf. I. T. Hill, *The Ancient City of Athens* (London 1953) 192.

had a porch facing south. The occupant of this shrine has been the subject of much dispute; it now seems unlikely that it was the ancient and famous shrine of Dionysos in Limnai (in the Marshes),[24] but there is evidence of a Dionysiac cult. At the moment we are only concerned with its general form and its setting and place in the scheme of this quarter of Athens. Streets bordered it on all sides, the main thoroughfare on one side and side streets on the other two. Across the streets to east and west are remains of houses, except where the tiny temple stood.

Still further south and still on the east side of the main street, at a point opposite a small fountain-house which probably served this locality (the recent investigations have shown clearly that the great and famous fountain Enneakrounos, the Nine-spouted, was not here, as the original excavators thought), was another precinct which is fortunately identified by a number of inscribed dedications as belonging to one Amynos, the Helper, a hero who had powers of healing.[25] Graham's examination of the area has defined the form and extent of the sanctuary more clearly. It was an irregular quadrilateral, narrowing towards the south, enclosed by a wall of blocks of various shapes. On the west was the main street, on the north a narrow street which led up towards the Acropolis; on the other sides houses seem to have been adjacent. One notes again how the shape of the precinct was determined by peculiar local circumstances, in contrast with the neat rectangular enclosures which one finds in well-planned cities. The total area was about 250 square metres. The entrance was at the north end of the west side, and was later provided with a porch of two marble columns. A healing shrine needed water, and in the middle of the area was a well, whose water was augmented by a conduit leading from the great aqueduct built by the tyrants in the sixth century to supply southern Athens. The first excavators thought that they detected remains of a small covered shrine or chapel set against the eastern precinct wall; but further examination seems to have shown that there was nothing more than a retaining wall for a terrace. At this point part of a marble table for offerings was found, decorated with snakes.

Among the dedications were several of the type customary in healing shrines, representations of parts of the human body. The inscriptions,[26] mostly of the fourth century B.C. but extending down to the second, show that one of the religious corporations who called themselves *orgeones* was concerned with the maintenance of the shrine, and that Amynos was closely associated in cult with Asklepios, the great healing god who had

[24]This was more probably in south-eastern Athens; see G. T. W. Hooker, *JHS* 80 (1960) 112–117; cf. *GRBS* 4 (1963) 170–171.

[25]Judeich, *Topographie* 289; Hill, *op. cit.* (above, n. 23) 193. I am grateful to Professor Graham for additional information sent by letter about this site.

[26]*IG* 2^2.1252, 1253, 4365, 4385 (probably also 4386 and 4387) 4422, 4424, 4435, 4457.

his own shrine, much more elaborate, containing a temple and stoas, on the south slope of the Acropolis, and with one Dexion, who was said to be the poet Sophocles sanctified after his death and added to the list of healing heroes at Athens.[27]

Finally, if after reaching the head of the valley one bends round eastward, south of the Areopagus, and reaches the south-western slopes of the Acropolis, one finds yet another curious little shrine, discovered a few years ago, when the area was being cleared up and investigated before the construction of a more convenient and handsome approach for modern playgoers to the theatre of Herodes.[28] It comprises an elliptical enclosure, happily identified by dedications and an inscribed boundary-marker as belonging to an obscure personage known as Nymphe, the Nymph or Bride. The site is nearly 200 yards from the south-western cliffs, and the shrine is not one of those which were immediately dependent on the Acropolis. Indeed it stood in an area occupied mainly by houses in the fifth century and in Hellenistic and Roman times, and these have left remains in the form of wall-socles, wells, cisterns and water-pipes. In the fourth century the house immediately above the shrine to the north was abandoned, and the space was used as a small open square, supported by a retaining wall strongly built of large blocks of poros. Thus we have a situation not unlike that of the shrines west of the Areopagus.

The *peribolos* measured about 12 m. north to south by about 8 m. east to west. The wall is best preserved on the west and south, and reaches a height of 1.10 m.; it is made of irregular blocks of limestone of various sizes, which no doubt originally carried an upper structure of unbaked brick. When it was built is not clear, perhaps towards the end of the sixth century. Even this simple enclosure does not represent the most primitive form of the shrine. The masses of pottery found on the site show that the cult went back to an earlier date, when presumably the shrine was marked off by some less solid means. The enclosure contained an altar, of which traces of the foundations have been found, and votive stelai or squared upright pillars of marble, which must have carried offerings to the deity. One of these was found standing in its place on a base, another fallen (it has now been set up again). A marble fragment which was found nearby represents the draped left leg of a woman. It is of excellent

[27]See *RE* 5, *s.v.* "Dexion," 287; F. Kutsch, *Attische Heilgötter* (Giessen 1913) 22; O. Walter, in *Geras A. Keramopoullou* (Athens 1953), who dissociates Sophocles-Dexion from the Amyneion and would have his shrine on the south slope of the Acropolis.

Note that there was yet another healing shrine, of Zeus Hypsistos, on the Pnyx up above; see *GRBS* 5 (1964) 176.

[28]See *Ergon* 1957 (for 1956) 9 ff. and 1958 (for 1957) 5 ff.; 1960 (for 1959) 157 ff.; *AJA* 62 (1958) 321; G. Daux, *BCH* 82 (1958) 367; M. Ervin, *Archeion Pontou* 22 (1958).

workmanship of the late fifth century; and if, as is quite probable, it belonged to the cult statue, the little shrine received a notable embellishment at this time.

The name of the deity was first revealed by graffiti on some of the dedicatory vases, and then confirmed by a stone marker, found not actually *in situ* but undoubtedly belonging to the shrine. It bears an inscription which shows that it was a Boundary of the Shrine of Nymphe, cut in fine letters which may be dated late in the fifth century B.C. The provision of such markers commonly indicates some clearing up or reorganization of a sacred spot, and this evidence, possibly combined with the new statue, seems to show that the old shrine was the object of some attention in this period. The cult continued, to judge by the dedications, until the second century B.C., and then it ceased, at least on this spot. It may be that the shrine suffered badly in the destruction wrought at Athens by Sulla in 86 B.C. In general, as we know from archaeological (especially epigraphical) and literary sources, the Athenians showed remarkable piety and pertinacity in maintaining ancient cults in late Hellenistic and Roman times. In this case the cult may have been transferred to one of the shrines higher up on the Acropolis slope, perhaps that of Aphrodite Pandemos (Goddess of All the People); this is suggested by one of the late inscriptions on the theatre seats, which reads, "(This is the seat of) the priestess of Aphrodite Pandemos and Nymphe."[29] In the old *temenos* there was no temple or other building to restore when prosperity returned in the time of Augustus; the site was forgotten and built over.

It is by no means clear who this Nymphe was, or what name one should attach to her, if indeed one should give her a particular name at all. Suggestions have been put forward—that she was Oreithuia, who was carried off by Boreas the North Wind, or Aglauros, daughter of Kekrops, or Kreousa, daughter of Erechtheus and mother of Ion the eponymous ancestor of the Ionian race; or the Bride of Zeus Meilichios,[30] the "gentle" god— this title was a euphemism for Zeus in the character of chthonian or underworld deity, who had several shrines at Athens. For this last identification a little evidence is provided by the discovery in the shrine of a marble stele of the late fourth century, carved in relief with a bearded snake (a creature commonly associated with this god and indicative of his chthonian nature), and inscribed with a dedication to Zeus Meilichios. Perhaps one might call the deity Hera Meilichia; but for cult purposes she was known simply as Nymphe, and one cannot go safely beyond that. The masses of votive debris comprise vases of various

[29] *IG* 2^2.5149; cf. A. N. Oikonomides, *The Two Agoras in Ancient Athens* (Chicago 1964) 7, 16, 22.

[30] By Daux, *op. cit.* (above, n. 28).

types, painted plaques, masks and figurines; particularly characteristic is the *loutrophoros*, a tall-necked water-jar used for the bridal bath, and the discovery of large numbers of these shows that the deity was intimately connected with marriage.

Raising one's eyes from the little peribolos to the exquisite Doric forms of the Parthenon towering above, one encompasses the whole range of Athenian religious architecture from the simplest to the most sophisticated. In between are the small temples of which examples have been noted above. It might be said that plain walls and stone slabs hardly merit the name of architecture; but in fact these simple structures were an essential part of the architectural pattern of Athens; and they were scattered about the city.

Aristotle in the *Politics* (7.11.1.) recommends that for the dwellings of the gods a suitable place should be chosen, the same for all. Pausanias (9.22.2) praises the people of Tanagra in Boeotia because they have their houses in one place, their shrines in a separate place, up above, "a pure and holy spot away from men." At Athens such segregation was obviously not achieved or even desired. There is no reason why one should not accept the district which we have been examining as fairly typical. Some cities possessed what was called an Agora of the Gods, a closely packed assemblage of important cults. At Athens the Acropolis was an elevated place, pure and holy and aloof from common human affairs; and several different spots might be considered in some sense Agoras of the Gods. But gods and heroes also lived in many modest or even humble abodes on ordinary streets as next door neighbours to ordinary citizens. If one wishes to understand the character of Athenian *deisidaimonia*, one must look at the whole city, with even more thoroughness than Pausanias, and at the many unpretentious shrines set in diverse places.

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