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THE AGORA OF ATHENS

THE HISTORY, SHAPE AND USES OF AN ANCIENT CITY CENTER

BY

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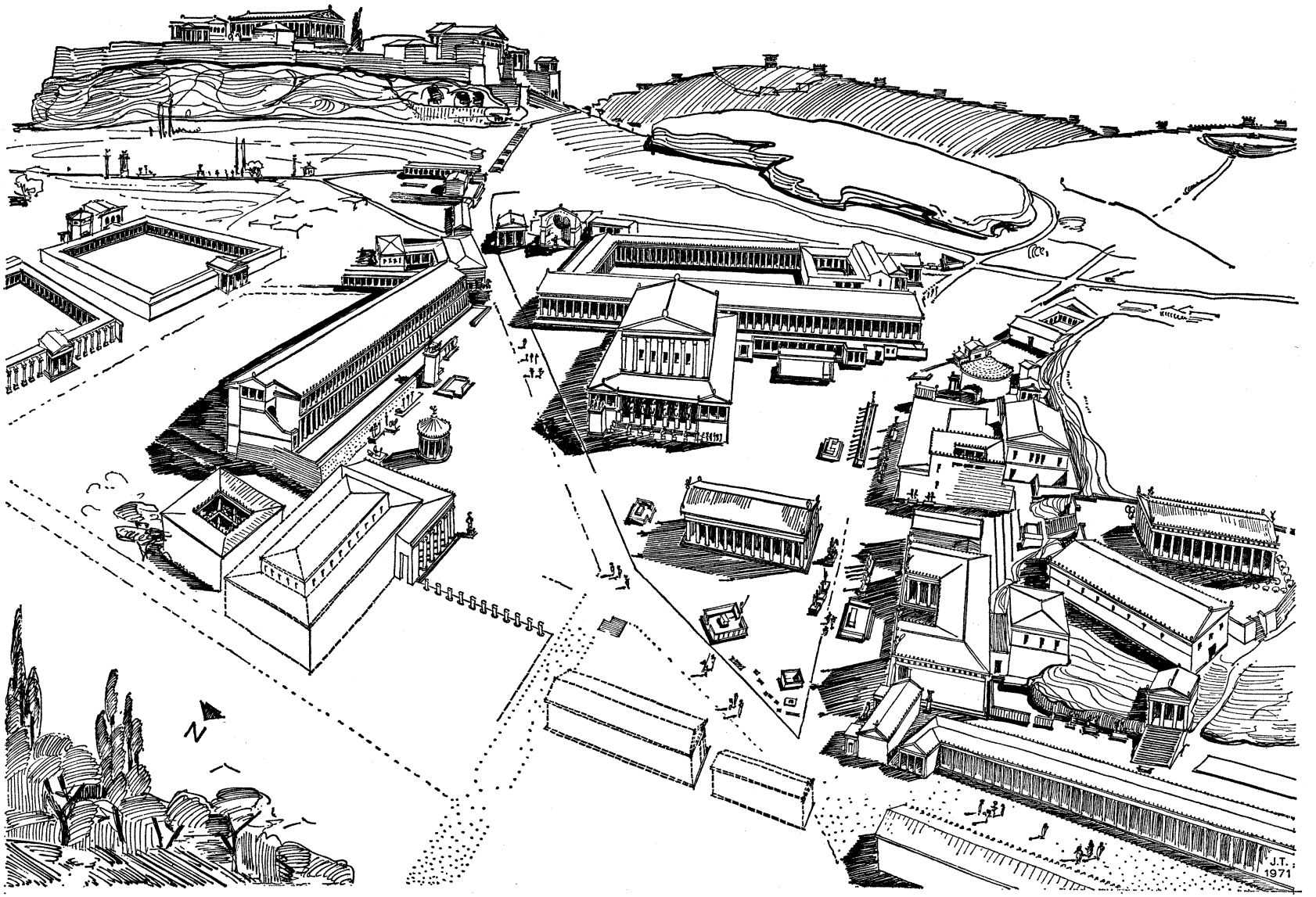

Fig. 1. The Agora and Environs in 2nd Century after Christ. Perspective (J. Travlos)

I. BEFORE SOLON

The open area at the northwest foot of the Acropolis which was to be occupied by the Agora of classical times was not particularly inviting to the earliest inhabitants of Athens (Pls. 1,10). Exposed to the cold north wind, lacking readily accessible water, remote from the early roadstead of Phaleron, this region suffered by comparison with the district that lay to the southeast of the Acropolis, between the Acropolis and the Ilissos River. Thucydides in a familiar passage (II, 15, 3) observed "In earlier times the Acropolis as it now is was the city, together with the area at the foot of the Acropolis, especially the part which was turned toward the south." The truth of this statement has been fully borne out by the discoveries of the past fifty years.[1] Already in the Neolithic Period the caves and sheltered ledges on the south slope of the Acropolis were thickly inhabited. From that time onward habitation was continuous and intense throughout the southern area, as shown by the innumerable domestic deposits, wells and graves that have come to light and that continue to be found either through systematic exploration or through chance finds made in the course of building.

In historical times the balance as between the southeast and the northwest areas was gradually redressed. When Eleusis with its fertile plain and famous sanctuary came under Athenian domination greater importance attached to the roadway that led northwestward from the Acropolis toward Eleusis.[2] Traffic through the northwest area was swollen also by the development of the harbor of Peiraeus which was, and still is, readily reached by a road leading out from the west side of our area.[3] This district, moreover, was found to lie so low that it could be supplied by gravity pipelines bringing in water from outside the city to supplement the yield of the local wells (cf. below, p. 199). When the time came for substantial public buildings there was available here a large stretch of land regular enough so that it could be levelled with a minimum of outlay and with just enough slope toward the northwest to assure good natural drainage.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let us glance back to see what can be recovered of the history of the northwestern area in the long centuries before it was chosen as the site of the civic center.

The evidence for this early chapter is limited in both quantity and kind. In the first place, virtually no architectural remains exist. There is no reason to believe that any substantial building had stood in the area before the 6th century, and such slight houses or shrines as may

[1] For a judicious discussion of the Thucydides passage cf. A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, II, Oxford, 1956, pp. 49–61. The recent archaeological finds are summarized and assessed by John Travlos, Π.Ε.Α., Ch. I: 3500–600 B.C.

[2] Athenian tradition put the subjugation of Eleusis in the time of Erechtheus while admitting that its effective incorporation into the city state of Athens came about only with the synoikismos by Theseus: Thucydides, II, 15, 1–2; Pausanias, I, 5, 2; I, 27, 4; I, 36, 4; I, 38, 3; Apollodoros, III, 15, 4f; Plutarch, *Theseus*, 10, 3. For a general discussion of the wars between Athens and Eleusis cf. G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Princeton, 1961, pp. 24–29, 53, 63, 234.

[3] The systematic development of Peiraeus was initiated by Themistokles during his archonship in 493/2 B.C. (Thucydides I, 93, 3); but it is hard to believe that the sheltered inner harbor had remained completely unexploited until that time. Cf. Judeich, *Topographie*², pp. 69, 430.

have existed were destroyed by the Persians in 480/79 B.C. or by the Athenians themselves as they rebuilt their city. Early habitation is attested, however, by the presence of household wells which prove the existence of dwellings in their vicinity. The earliest wells are of the Neolithic Period, and all subsequent periods are represented save only the Early Bronze Age. Another fruitful source of information on these early periods is the series of graves which begins with a single example in the Middle Bronze Age, continues with significant numbers of burials in the Late Bronze Age and comes to an end in the late 6th century B.C. In addition to illustrating burial customs and the state of arts and crafts, these burials help in defining the lines of the roadways that served the area; the graves appear to have been placed normally in small family groups at the sides of the roads (Pl. 2).

NEOLITHIC PERIOD

We may now proceed to a brief historical review, beginning with the Neolithic Period.[4] This period, the earliest yet attested for Athens, is best represented in our area by household rubbish recovered from a score of shallow wells clustered around the northwest shoulder of the Acropolis.[5] The wells indicate the existence here of a hamlet before 3000 B.C. The bleak site was chosen, no doubt, because of the ease with which water could be tapped as it emerged through artesian action from between the fractured geological strata of the Acropolis. Among the best preserved objects are several water jars of Red Burnished ware, shaped by hand, simple but well proportioned (Pl. 14, a). Potsherds illustrate other ceramic techniques of the period in both red and black wares, polished and incised. A highly stylized marble statuette of a female figure attests the sophisticated tastes of the Athenians already at this time (Pl. 14, b).[6]

BRONZE AGE

The first phase of the Bronze Age, i.e. the Early Helladic Period (roughly the 3rd millennium B.C.) is almost a complete blank in our area. It is represented only by a handful of potsherds, among them a couple of fragments of the sauceboats so characteristic of the age.

The Middle Helladic Period (about 2000–1550 B.C.) is more fully represented. Interspersed among the Neolithic wells on the northwest shoulder of the Acropolis were five wells of this time, shallow, irregular pits filled with broken pottery, animal bones, stone tools (Pl. 15, a, b).[7] The remains of habitation are now much more widely dispersed. Throughout the whole area of the recent excavations the clearing of bedrock has yielded a random sprinkling of sherds of typical Middle Helladic pottery, especially Gray Minyan with its soapy, silvery fabric and Mattpainted ware decorated with the simplest of geometric designs. Here and there, notably on the northwest and northeast slopes of the Areopagus, small domestic deposits have been

[4] All the material relating to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages is presented by Sara A. Immerwahr in *Agora*, XIII to which the reader is referred for details.

[5] *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, pp. 330–338; VIII, 1939, pp. 221, 226. In addition to the work of the Agora Excavations on a limited sector of the North Slope, important discoveries of prehistoric material were made in the more extensive exploration conducted in this area in the 1930's by Oscar Broneer under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies. Excavation reports have appeared in *Hesperia* since 1932 with detailed presentation of important lots of prehistoric material in *Hesperia*, VI, 1937, pp. 539–570 (Hazel D. Hansen, "The Prehistoric Pottery on the North Slope of the Acropolis, 1937") and VIII, 1939, pp. 317–433 (Oscar Broneer, "A Mycenaean Fountain on the Athenian Acropolis"). Broneer has summarized his historical conclusions in *Antiquity*, XXX, 1956, pp. 9–18, "Athens in the Late Bronze Age."

[6] T. L. Shear, *Hesperia*, VIII, 1939, p. 235, fig. 33; S. Weinberg, *A.J.A.*, LV, 1951, p. 128; C. Renfrew, *A.J.A.*, LXXIII, 1969, p. 29; *Agora*, XIII, No. 219, pp. 16–17, 48, pl. 14.

[7] *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, pp. 335–338, figs. 18–20.

found. At two points stratified road deposits begin with gravelly layers of the Middle Helladic Period immediately above bedrock: in the line of the road that ran, and still runs, east to west at the north foot of the Areopagus,[8] and again in the line of a road running from northwest to southeast beneath the southern part of the classical Agora.[9] In the Middle Helladic Period, therefore, we may assume for the first time widespread, though sparse, habitation. The earliest burial yet known in the area of the Agora is likewise of Middle Helladic date; it came to light beneath the west edge of the Agora. The burial was made in a small irregular pocket approached through a vertical well-like shaft; the offerings comprised a cup and a bowl of very crude hand-shaped pottery.[10]

It was only well on in the Late Helladic or Mycenaean Period (about 1550–1100 B.C.) that Athens became a place of consequence. The scale of her development is most clearly indicated by the massive fortifications of Cyclopean masonry by which the top of the Acropolis was encircled in the 13th century.[11] These walls are comparable both in extent and in the quality of their masonry with those of the more famous and richer contemporary towns such as Mycenae and Thebes. Of the palace that stood on the Athenian hilltop only slight vestiges remain, and the private houses that were discovered on the north slope in the 1930's appear to be the unpretentious dwellings of refugees. In the open land beneath the classical Agora there is only a very little evidence, and that dubious, for habitation in the Mycenaean period proper. Several shallow wells scattered at random throughout the area were in use in the final phase of the Bronze Age (Late Helladic III C) and in the Submycenaean Period. They are enough to indicate a revival of settlement at that time. Clearly the main settlement of the Mycenaean period is to be sought elsewhere, probably to the south and southeast of the Acropolis.

Although the area to the northwest of the Acropolis was little esteemed in the Bronze Age as a place to live, or perhaps for that very reason, it was then a popular place for burial.[12] Forty-six tombs of Mycenaean date have been encountered thus far, and many more undoubtedly exist in places where excavators have stopped short of bedrock (Pl. 2). The great majority of the burials, some thirty, took place in Late Helladic III A 1–2, i.e. in the 14th century B.C.; but three are as early as Late Helladic II B (*ca.* 1450–1425 B.C.), while several are as late as III C, i.e. the 12th century. The burial places are of two kinds, simple trench graves with single interments, and chamber tombs that might be used repeatedly for successive burials by the same family.

The Mycenaean tombs are widely and irregularly scattered. There are, however, several compact groups. One such is a row of four chamber tombs on the north slope of the Areopagus. Another concentration has been noted beneath the northeast corner of the Agora where chamber tombs and trench graves occur in close proximity to one another. A small group has come to light beneath the western part of the main Agora square and a sprinkling beneath the south central area. In view of the fragmentary nature of our evidence speculation as to the basis of distribution is not profitable. We may assume, however, that here, as in other Mycenaean settlements, the grouping was by family or clan; in some cases series of tombs probably bordered

[8] *Hesperia*, XXV, 1956, p. 49.

[9] *Hesperia*, XXXV, 1966, p. 45.

[10] T. L. Shear, *Hesperia*, V, 1936, pp. 20f. The two vases and with them the burial itself were assigned in the original publication to the Neolithic Period. But the shaft, which was the only means of access to the tomb, was certainly closed in the Middle Helladic Period as shown by the Gray Minyan and Mattpainted potsherds in the filling; it would be hard to separate the burial from the filling. *Agora*, XIII, pp. 92–93, pls. 27, 28, 71.

[11] For the fortification and palace on the Acropolis, cf. Sp. E. Iakovidis, Ἡ Μυκηναϊκὴ Ἀκρόπολις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν, Athens, 1962.

[12] Convenient summaries of the distribution of Mycenaean tombs in the Agora have been given by Emily Townsend (Vermeule) in *Hesperia*, XXIV, 1955, pp. 187–189 and XXXV, 1966, pp. 55f. For a more detailed account the reader is referred to Sara A. Immerwahr, *Agora*, XIII, pp. 97–110.

roads. A surprising phenomenon is the occurrence of so many chamber tombs in comparatively level places despite the fact that this type of tomb was more suited to hillsides. The cause may have been a desire to maintain family associations. After a modest beginning with trench graves in level ground a family whose pretensions had risen to the point of opening a chamber tomb may have preferred to keep to the original burial place.

The single graves were simple pits sunk in the soft bedrock. They were large enough to accommodate the body laid out on its back with a vase or two at head or foot. No trace of coffins has been observed in such graves, but the mouth of the pit was sometimes covered either with small stones or with rough stone slabs. A typical adult burial found beneath the northeast part of the Agora is shown in Plate 15, c. Above the head lay two vases of Late Helladic III A or B date, one a three-handled jar, the other a round-mouthed pitcher, and a small bronze knife (Pl. 15, d).[13] The group of ten small vases of Plate 16, a, comes from the simple trench grave of a child beneath the north central part of the Agora.[14] Particularly attractive is the lily bowl with its three rim handles for suspension. Among the other offerings in this grave were a handful of seashells, a comb and a pin of ivory, a necklace of glass-paste beads, and a small gold pendant; it was evidently the grave of a girl. The pottery indicates a date in Late Helladic II B, making this one of the earliest burials of the Mycenaean Period yet found in Athens.

The chamber tombs, roughly rectangular in plan, were hollowed out of the living rock and approached through a rock-cut passage (dromos). In level places the floors of these passages sloped steeply down toward the door of the chamber and were sometimes provided with shallow steps cut in the rock. The actual doorway was blocked with rubble masonry after each burial and was further protected by filling the dromos with the spoil from its own digging, finely broken and packed so hard as to be distinguished only with difficulty from the living rock. In none of the Agora tombs was the doorway given any architectural embellishment. The size of the chamber was limited by the faulty nature of the local geological formation which is little more than solidified clay. The largest of the tombs (below, p. 6) measured on the floor 4.30 × 5.90 m., but few had a floor area greater than six square meters. The bodies were normally laid out on the floor of the chamber. In one tomb (below, p. 5) each of two bodies had been enclosed in a simple wooden coffin, a rare practice in Mycenaean times and perhaps to be explained in this instance on the hypothesis that the bodies had been brought home from distant parts, possibly a battle field. When more space was required for newcomers the skeletons of the ancestors were shoved to one side. In only one case was a burial pit found below the floor of the chamber (p. 6). In one instance also niches for child burials were opened in the sidewalls of the dromos.[15] Several of the tombs had been used only once; others had been re-opened for successive burials up to a total, in one case, of fourteen or more spread over a period of almost three hundred years.[16] The tomb offerings consisted chiefly of vases with a little jewelry for the women, an occasional weapon and bronze razor for the men.

A brief account of a couple of the Mycenaean chamber tombs will serve to illustrate the type. Both date from Late Helladic III A, i.e. early in the 14th century B.C. Our first example came to light in 1965 beneath the terrace of the Middle Stoa toward its east end (Fig. 2, Pl. 16, b).[17] The builders took advantage of the sloping bank of a gully, but nevertheless they

[13] *Hesperia*, XXI, 1952, p. 108, pl. 27, a; *Agora*, XIII, Grave XVII, pp. 208–209, pls. 48, 79.

[14] *Hesperia*, XXI, 1952, pp. 107f., pl. 26, c; *Agora*, XIII, Grave XVI, pp. 205–208, pls. 47, 65–66, 75, 77, 79, 87.

[15] *Hesperia*, XXI, 1952, p. 105, fig. 4, pl. 25, b, A; *Agora*, XIII, Tomb XIV, pp. 201–203, pls. 45–46, 65, 77, 79, 83.

[16] E. Townsend, *Hesperia*, XXIV, 1955, pp. 187–219, figs. 1–8, pls. 71–77; *Agora*, XIII, Tomb VII, pp. 183–190, pls. 39–40, 65–67, 77, 83.

[17] E. T. Vermeule and J. Travlos, *Hesperia*, XXXV, 1966, pp. 55–78, figs. 1–4, pls. 19–24; *Agora*, XIII, Tomb XL, pp. 242–247, pls. 59, 75, 90.

were obliged to step down the floor of the dromos. The chamber was large enough (1.75 × 2.72 m.) to accommodate two burials on either side. Four interments were in fact made, two to the left of the door, then two to the right. All were found in order by the excavators.

The skeleton marked A on the plan was that of a woman, the mother of several children. She had been provided with a single vase, a pyxis-alabastron, and a conical bead of purple steatite. The woman's remains had been covered to a depth of a foot by rock crumbled from

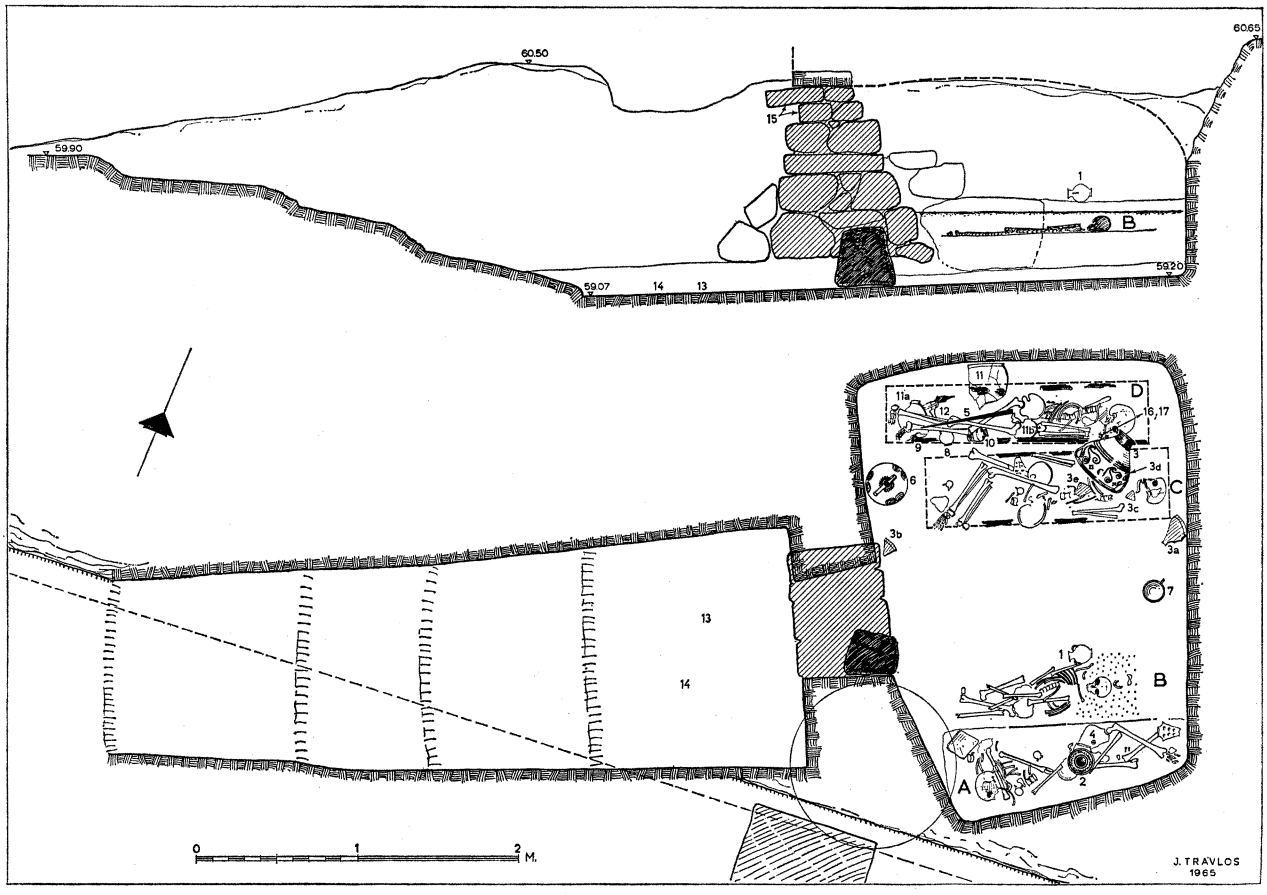

Fig. 2. Mycenaean Chamber Tomb beneath Terrace of Middle Stoa (J. Travlos)

the ceiling before Burial B was made. The new arrival was a slightly built boy of thirteen to fifteen years. He too was accompanied by only a single vase, a small, two-handled jar.

Burials C and D, actually made before A and B, were so similar to one another in all respects as to suggest that they had been made on one and the same day. Long shreds of much decayed wood attested the use of coffins for both these burials, simple rectangular boxes barely big enough to hold the body. Burial C was recognizable as that of a tall man about fifty-three years of age. At his feet, outside the coffin, had been placed a handsome ewer decorated with spiral argonauts and flowers. Burial D comprised the earthly remains of a man aged about twenty. Of all four he had been most generously treated by his family. On his left wrist he had worn two almond-shaped beads, one of amber and one of carnelian, strung no doubt on a cord. On top of the coffin had been laid a bronze spearhead, delicately profiled and exceptionally long (Fig. 3). A large krater decorated with argonauts had also rested on top of the coffin. Five other vases lay beside or beneath the coffin. Two were complete, a two-handled and a three-handled jar decorated with spirals. Three were both broken and incomplete, a red mottled

cup, a kylix, and a krater with strap handles. These vessels had perhaps been used at the funeral ceremony. A fragment of the cup was found in the dromos together with a broken kylix, evidence, perhaps, of a parting libation for the dead.

Those who blocked the doorway after the last burial used among other stones a rough slab of river conglomerate, a type of stone not found naturally in the area of the Agora. This may be recognized as part of a gravestone which may originally have stood above the tomb to

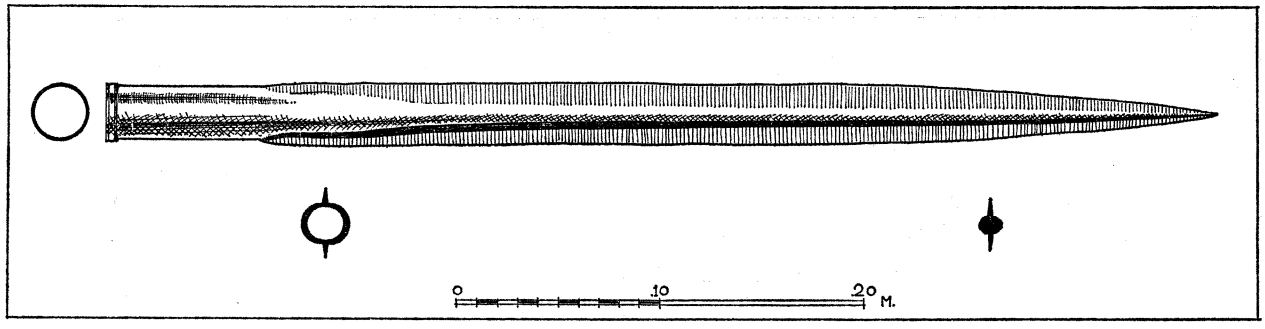

Fig. 3. Bronze Spearhead from Mycenaean Chamber Tomb (B 1287, L. 0.54. J. Travlos)

mark the entrance for the convenience of those who had to re-open it from time to time for subsequent burials. As such it would have been a very modest equivalent of the well known sculptured stelai which stood above the royal shaft graves at Mycenae.

The rock roof of the tomb collapsed, probably already within the late Mycenaean Period, making additional burials impossible. No account was taken of the old tomb when the area was levelled in the early 6th century B.C. to become part of the Agora. By a happy chance the foundations of the Middle Stoa, erected in the 2nd century B.C., straddled and protected the tomb. For centuries thereafter the throngs who promenaded on the stoa terrace trod unknowingly above their sleeping ancestors.

The second Mycenaean chamber tomb over which we may pause was the largest of a series of four set into the steep northeastern slope of the Areopagus (Fig. 4, Pl. 17, a).[18] Thanks to the sloping terrain the floor of the long dromos could be practically level. The chamber, measuring *ca.* 4.30 × 5.90 m., had fully five times the area of the first tomb. This permitted a more lavish use of space. The body, instead of being laid out on the floor, was lowered into a deep pit in one of the inner corners of the room. The cover of the pit was a massive stone slab. Across each of the short ends of the chamber a bench was hewn out of the living rock; here were placed most of the offerings so that the middle of the room was free for the funeral rites. After the funeral the doorway was walled up in the same simple way as in the other tomb, and the dromos was filled with the spoil from the original quarrying. Some six centuries later a simple grave of the Geometric Period was unwittingly sunk into the top of this filling.

The offerings found in the chamber were numerous, varied and rich; they date from soon after 1400 B.C. Inside the door to the left stood two large jars and a long-handled copper lamp, employed no doubt in the funeral ceremonies. On the stone bench to the left of the door rested six terracotta vases and a large casket of ivory. A smaller ivory box (Pl. 17, b) was found on the floor of the tomb near the grave pit together with a number of bone pins and a bronze mirror. Also on the floor, heaped in three places, lay about one hundred thin gold ornaments of the kind familiar in richer Mycenaean graves; their edges were perforated for stitching to

[18] T. L. Shear, *Hesperia*, IX, 1940, pp. 274–291, figs. 12–32. The tomb was roofed soon after excavation in 1939 in the hope that it might remain accessible, but the rapid deterioration of the bedrock through exposure to the atmosphere necessitated refilling after World War II. *Agora*, XIII, Tomb I, pp. 158–169, pls. 29–33, 65, 67, 75, 77, 80.

cloth. A little ash near the middle of the floor marked the place of a fire, kindled perhaps for light, heat or fumigation.

The stone cover slab of the grave pit was found lying to one side; the earth fill of the pit yielded no trace of human remains. Yet the presence of the offerings and the gold ornaments from the grave clothes leave no doubt that a burial had been made. The remains of the deceased must therefore have been removed. The modern excavators in fact observed a dis-

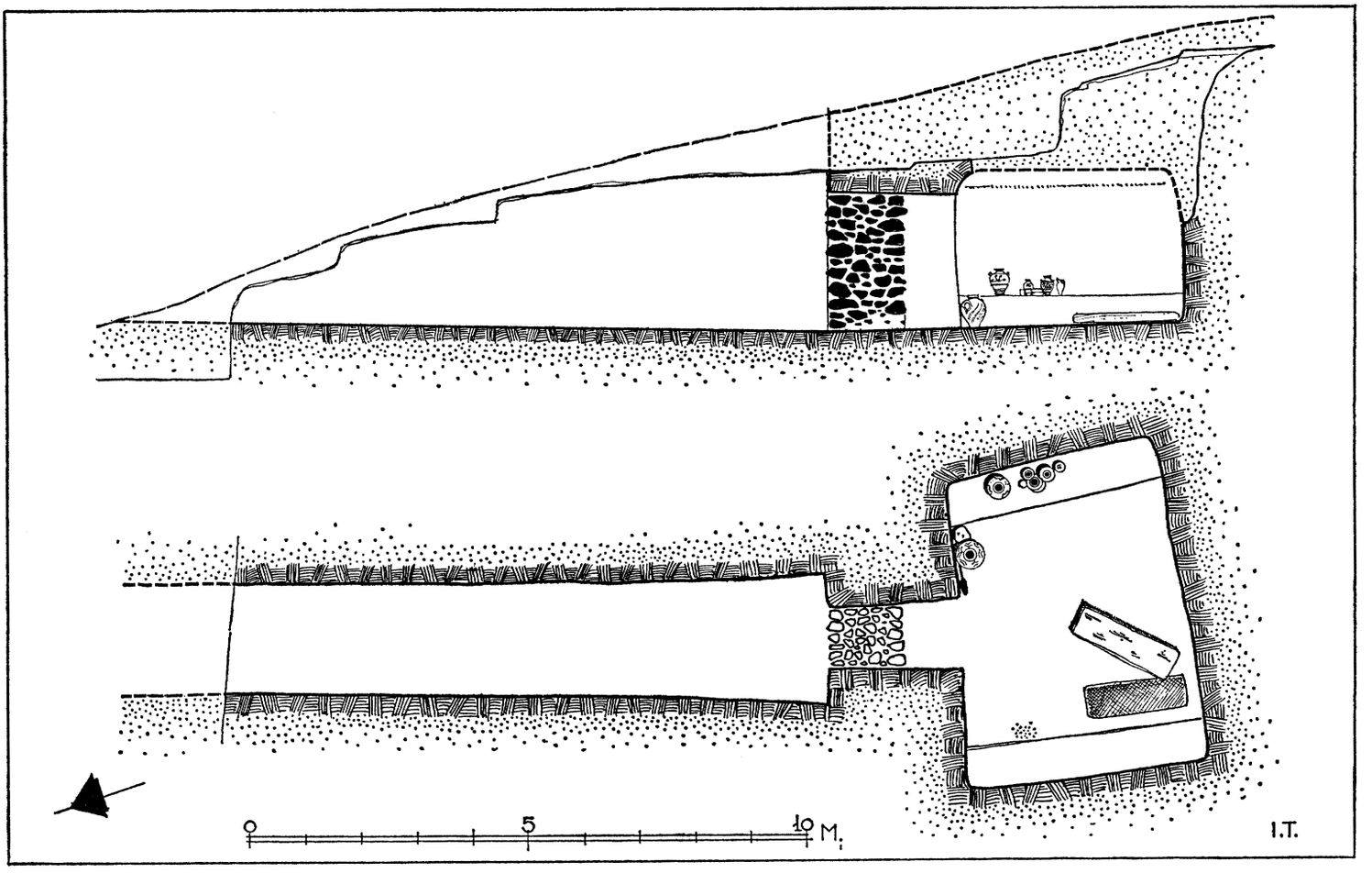

Fig. 4. Mycenaean Chamber Tomb on North Slope of Areopagus (J. Travlos)

turbance in the fill directly above the grave pit. We may suppose that the roof of the excessively large tomb had collapsed soon after the interment and that the family, knowing the exact position of the grave pit, had dug down and removed the body.

The most precious among the furnishings of the tomb is the larger ivory casket (Pl. 18). The main part of the box, 0.112 m. in diameter, was hollowed from a single tusk; top, bottom, and lug handles were cut from separate pieces. In the carved band that encircles the box griffins, with the bodies of lions, the heads and wings of eagles, pull down deer in a rugged landscape studded with windblown pine trees. In its power and pathos, its technical virtuosity, and its good preservation, this piece takes a high place among all known carvings of the Mycenaean Period.[19] The ivory, of course, came from abroad, from Egypt or from Syria.

[19] T. L. Shear, *Hesperia*, IX, 1940, pp. 283–287; H. J. Kantor, *Archaeology*, XIII, 1960, pp. 15–17; E. T. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, Chicago, 1964, p. 219.

Further evidence of contact with the eastern Mediterranean is provided by the large plain jar that stood in one of the front corners of the tomb chamber (Pl. 17, a). This vessel has been shown to belong to a type that was produced in Canaan and widely exported. It was filled surely with some characteristic product of the Near East, conceivably myrrh, incense or balm that might be useful in funeral rites.[20]

The rich furnishings of this tomb combined with its location tempt one to associate it with the royal family who dwelt on the Acropolis. In this period, however, a royal tomb would almost certainly have been round and vaulted, of the tholos type which is known elsewhere in Attica, e.g. at Marathon, Menidi and Thorikos. Another objection is the lack of continuity. Our tomb was certainly used only once, and the neighboring tombs were much too modest for royalty. We shall do better, therefore, to think of the large chamber tomb as belonging to a noble family that flourished long before Theseus and longer still before the Trojan War.

The three smaller and less well preserved chamber tombs that came to light on the north slope of the Areopagus may well have belonged to the same family or clan. One of these lesser tombs yielded among other offerings a set of bronzes (Pl. 17, d). They comprised a rapier of the horned type, 0.74 m. in length, a shorter sword, an instrument with a convex and finely drawn cutting edge that is hesitantly but probably rightly identified as a razor, and a one-handled bowl. All these had been placed on a wooden table beside the body of the last of three persons to be buried in the tomb.[21]

In the other tombs of the Mycenaean Period weapons are rare, an occasional bronze dagger, a broken sword, arrowheads of obsidian or bronze. Only one other bronze vessel has been found, a small, spouted bowl. Nor were the women's burials of this cemetery more generously furnished: a few beads of semi-precious stone or glass paste, an occasional steatite pendant, a simple comb of ivory. Gold is conspicuous by its rarity. Apart from the thin shroud ornaments found in the richer chamber tombs on the Areopagus, the only significant piece is a signet ring from a disturbed tomb of the early 14th century (Pl. 17, c).[22] In the lively but enigmatic scene on the bezel a male figure with staff in hand hastily leads off a pair of long-skirted women, perhaps to captivity.

The vases that accompanied the burials of the Mycenaean Period are also modest both in number and in quality. The total collection, numbering just over two hundred pieces, contains few outstanding examples, the majority being good run-of-the-mill products of their time. Occasionally the potter betrays a hankering after vessels of precious metal as when a two-handled goblet is shaped and colored to simulate a gold cup or when a set of tall-stemmed clay drinking cups are covered with tinfoil to give the appearance of silver.[23]

From the meager evidence of these few tombs and their furnishings one may venture on a few cautious generalizations. Already by 1400 B.C. Athens was a fully integrated part of the Mycenaean world, sharing the widespread koine in burial practices, in pottery shapes and

[20] T. L. Shear, *Hesperia*, IX, 1940, p. 282; V. Grace, "The Canaanite Jar," *The Aegean and the Near East (Studies for Hetty Goldman*, New York, 1956), p. 101; S. A. Immerwahr, *Archaeology*, XIII, 1960, p. 12. On the use of scented oil at funerals cf. R. Hampe, *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 1969, pp. 38f.

[21] H. A. Thompson, *Hesperia*, XVII, 1949, pp. 155–158; *Agora*, XIII, Tomb III, pp. 170–177, pls. 34–36, 66–67, 76–77, 81. A group of terracotta vases from this same tomb proved on examination to have been plated with tin: S. A. Immerwahr, *Hesperia*, XXXV, 1966, pp. 381–396.

[22] T. L. Shear, *Hesperia*, IV, 1935, pp. 318–320, figs. 6–8. Shear argued for the Minotaur leading off captive Athenian maidens (*A.J.A.*, XXXVII, 1933, p. 540). A. W. Persson saw the scene as Hermes Psychopompos conducting the dead to the nether world (*The Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times*, Sather Classical Lectures, XVII, 1944, p. 101). Nilsson repeatedly expressed his scepticism of any mythological interpretation (*Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*[2], Lund, 1950, pp. 39f.; *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, I[3], Munich, 1967, p. 356, note 1). *Agora*, XIII, Tomb VIII.

[23] Cf. *Hesperia*, XXIV, 1955, pp. 202–204 for an appraisal of the vases from the Chamber Tomb under the Temple of Ares; many of Miss Townsend's observations apply to the Agora collection as a whole. The subject is dealt with at greater length by Mrs. Immerwahr in *Agora*, XIII, pp. 114–147. F. H. Stubbings' study of the Mycenaean pottery of Attica came too early to take account of much of the Agora material (*B.S.A.*, XLII, 1947, pp. 1–75).

decorative motives, in weapons and jewelry. Some of the vases are so similar in clay and shape to those of the Argolid as to suggest importation, but the majority may be presumed to be local Athenian products. We have sure instances of importation from the eastern Mediterranean in the Canaanite jar and the ivory used for the pyxides from the great chamber tomb. But not a single object of Cretan manufacture has been recognized, a curious gap in view of the close connections suggested by the legends of Theseus, Minos, Ariadne and the Minotaur. If the ivory caskets, the bronze rapier, and the long spearhead from the chamber tombs were made in Athens, as is quite possible, they indicate local craftsmanship of a high order; if these objects were imported, they are evidence of very discriminating taste among Athenians of the period. The high proportion of chamber tombs that were intended for repeated use, some of which did in fact continue to be employed by generation after generation, may be taken to indicate a settled and fairly peaceful state of affairs. The scale of the tomb furnishings, if one may argue from such evidence, suggests a society not in affluent but in comfortable circumstances. The tombs of the reigning family, should they one day come to light, may be expected to yield furnishings of a style more in keeping with the grandeur of the fortifications on the Acropolis.

SUBMYCENAEAN PERIOD

Habitation in the area of the classical Agora began, as we have seen, toward the very end of the Mycenaean Period. Burials, however, continued to be made in the district in the Submycenaean Period, the twilight years of the Bronze Age (11th century B.C.).[24] Because of their simple form and the frequent absence of furnishings, the graves of this period cannot always be recognized as such. Only seven burials in the area have been assigned with certainty and ten others with probability to Submycenaean times. They are widely scattered: on the top of Kolonos, beneath the northeast corner of the classical Agora, and to the south of its southeast corner. In all cases these groups of tombs undoubtedly bordered roads. The burials of this period are all single. They were made in trenches like the simpler graves of the Mycenaean period proper. Now, however, the trench was commonly walled and was sometimes also covered with rough stone slabs. The furnishings, when present, normally consist of one or two simple vases laid at the head or feet of the outstretched body. The period is best known, in fact, from the character of its pottery which is nothing but a debased and weary survival of the Mycenaean.

The absence of chamber tombs in the Submycenaean Period, the meagerness of the grave offerings, and the inferior quality of the pottery indicate an economic and cultural decline even in Athens which, according to the credible ancient tradition, was spared the direct ravages of the invading Dorians. This same tradition informs us that Athens, in fact, became a place of refuge for people driven from their homes in other parts of Greece by the invaders. Some such movement may account not only for the resumption of habitation in the area of the Agora but also for the sudden establishment of a new burial ground about a half kilometer to the northwest of the Agora in the area later to be occupied by the Dipylon and Sacred Gates. This new cemetery was to have a continuous history until well down in the Christian period, and through

[24] The Submycenaean Period in Athens is best documented by the results of the German excavation at the Dipylon. For an admirably clear short account of that excavation cf. G. Karo, *An Attic Cemetery, Excavations in the Kerameikos of Athens*, Philadelphia, 1943. For the definitive publication of the material of this period cf. W. Kraiker and K. Kübler, *Kerameikos, Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen*, I: *Die Nekropolen des 12. bis 10. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1939. For recent comprehensive accounts of the period cf. V. R. d'A. Desborough, *The Last Mycenaeans and their Successors*, Oxford, 1964; Carl-Gustaf Styrenius, *Submycenaean Studies*, Acta Instituti Atheniensis Regni Sueciae 8°, VII, Lund, 1967. All these scholars have had access to the Agora material and have taken cognizance of it. The Agora finds of the Submycenaean, Protogeometric, Early and Middle Geometric Periods are to be published in the Agora series of monographs by Evelyn L. Smithson.

most of this long span it was to be the principal burial ground of the city. Nevertheless burials continued to be made in the area of the Agora until the end of the 7th century and, under special circumstances, until the end of the 6th.

PROTOGEOMETRIC AND GEOMETRIC PERIODS

After about a century in the doldrums of the Submycenaean Period the craft of ceramics recovered in Athens. A new spirit re-invigorated both the shapes and the decoration of vases. Starting in the early 10th century the new style persisted through various stages for some three centuries. The style and the period also have taken their name from the "Geometric" decoration of the vases, the earliest, incipient phase being termed Protogeometric. Once more the evidence for the study of the period comes chiefly from graves, supplemented in increasing degree, however, from other sources, especially from the debris recovered from household wells.[25]

The period is represented by seventy-eight burials and thirty-five wells. In the Protogeometric phase there were marked concentrations of burials on Kolonos Agoraios and beneath the northeast corner of the Agora, evidently in continuation of the Submycenaean cemeteries in those areas. The majority of the burials of the Geometric Period proper have come to light at the north and northwestern foot of the Areopagus where they seem to have been placed in relation to ancient roads. For the most part the graves occur in small groups of three or more, clearly family plots, although normally there is no trace of enclosing walls.

In two instances we have to do with larger family burial grounds that remained in use for long periods of time; these were protected by walls. The first lay at the southeast foot of Kolonos Agoraios, between the steep hillslope and the early road that skirted the east foot of the hill.[26] The plot measured about 6 × 17.50 m. and was bounded on three sides by a massive stone wall, on the fourth side by the steep natural scarp (Fig. 5). Of the total of twenty-two burials twenty formed a continuous series made over a period of about sixty years or two generations in the second half of the 8th and the early 7th century B.C.; the remaining two graves were of infants laid away in the ancestral burial ground at the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 6th century. Ten in all of the burials were of infants, the rest of adults. Significant similarities in the shape of skulls and jaws indicated close family relationships such as might be inferred also from the orderly placing of the graves. These graves contained no weapons and only a few modest pieces of jewelry of bronze and iron, but the number and high quality of the vases indicate a family of distinction. The same is evident from the fact that the old cemetery, though it lay at the very edge of the busy square of classical times, was never overlaid by a building; it appears to have been respected, perhaps as a sacred place, throughout antiquity (below, p. 73). One of the individual graves is described below, p. 14.

A second walled family burial plot lay on the steep west slope of the Areopagus, again at the side of an age-old road (Fig. 6).[27] The enclosure was an irregular rectangle in plan with overall

[25] V. R. d'A. Desborough in his *Protogeometric Pottery*, Oxford, 1952 took account of much of the Agora material of that period. See also the revision of his earlier views in *The Last Mycenaeans*, pp. 258–270. Characteristic grave groups of Early Geometric times have been presented by C. W. Blegen, *Hesperia*, XXI, 1952, pp. 279–294 and by E. L. Smithson, *Hesperia*, XXXVII, 1968, pp. 77–116. The Agora material of Late Geometric times is accessible through monographs by R. S. Young, *Late Geometric Graves and a Seventh Century Well in the Agora*, *Hesperia*, Supplement II, 1939 and by Eva Brann, *Agora*, VIII, 1962. Important too are Miss Brann's *Hesperia* articles: "Late Geometric Grave Groups," XXIX, 1960, pp. 402–416; "Late Geometric Well Groups," XXX, 1961, pp. 93–146; "Protoattic Well Groups," *ibid.*, pp. 305–379.

[26] R. S. Young, *Late Geometric Graves*, *Hesperia*, Supplement II; Young's absolute dating of Late Geometric has been repeatedly challenged and should probably be raised by as much as a quarter of a century. The graves have been listed in summary form with revised dating by E. Brann in *Agora*, VIII, p. 111 and "Index of Deposits."

[27] R. S. Young, *Hesperia*, XX, 1951, pp. 72–110.

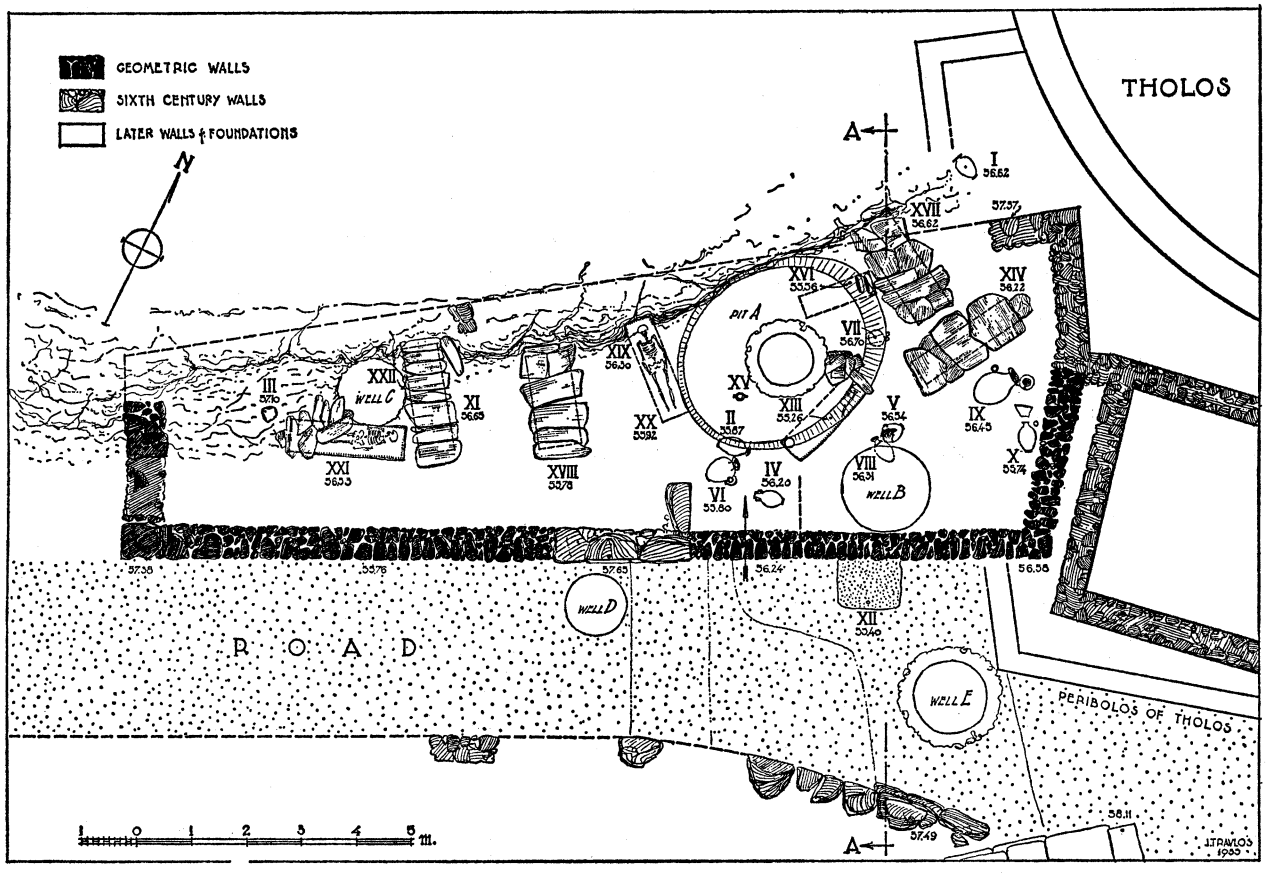

Fig. 5. Family Cemetery of 8th Century B.C. at Southeast Foot of Kolonos (J. Travlos)

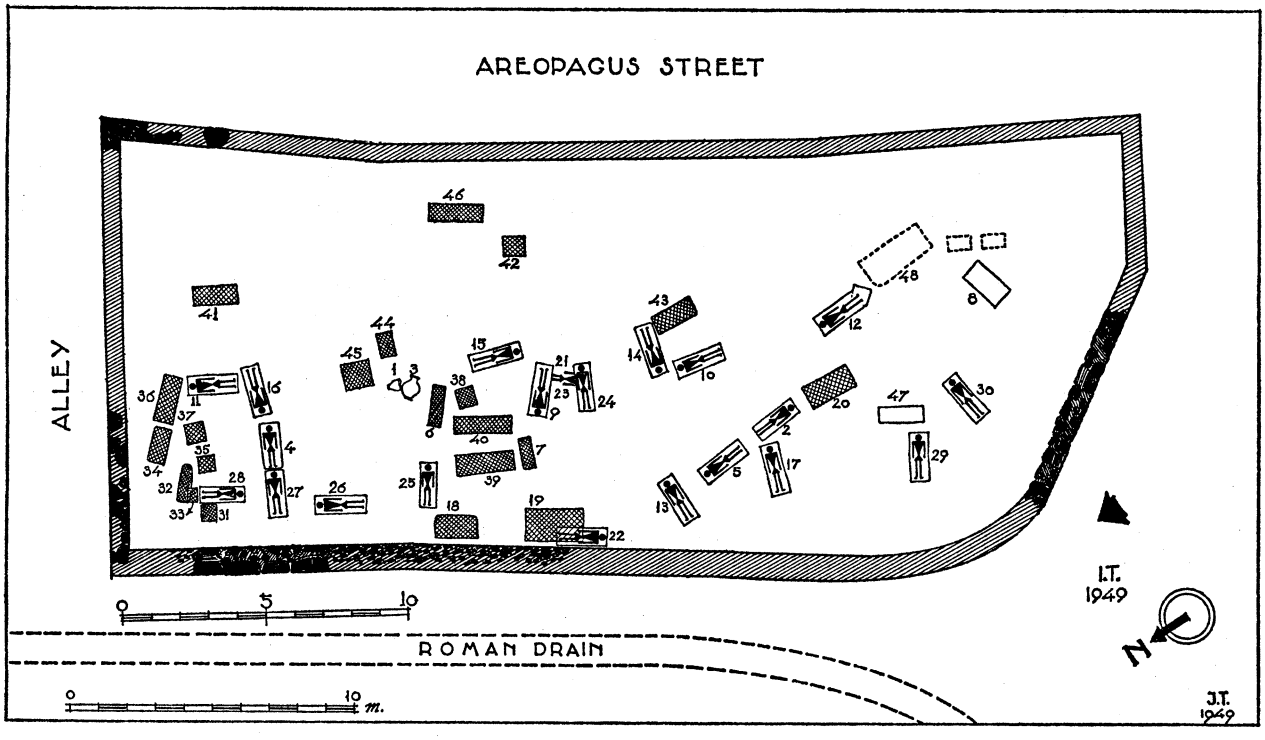

Fig. 6. Family Cemetery of 6th Century B.C. on West Slope of Areopagus (J. Travlos)

dimensions of about 16 × 36 meters. Slight remains of a rough stone wall survive on all four sides. Within this area at least forty-eight burials had been made. Twenty-two were inhumations, twenty-one cremations, two burials of infants; three were indeterminate. The earliest interment dates from the late Geometric Period, i.e. the late 8th century B.C., but the majority were of the 6th century, extending down to its end. The grave furnishings in this plot were more modest than those of the first, consisting almost entirely of small and ordinary vases. But the fact that burials were allowed to be made here near the middle of the city until such a late date suggests that the plot belonged to some powerful family.[28] For a typical grave see below, pp. 15–16.

We may consider briefly the various types of burial practised within the Protogeometric and Geometric Periods. The most striking innovation of this age was the practice of burning the body. A few instances of cremation were observed in the cemetery by the Dipylon already in the Submycenaean Period.[29] Thereafter burning was to be regular for adults throughout the Protogeometric Period and through early Geometric times until about the end of the 9th century. Then inhumation was revived, and the two rites persisted together in varying proportions until Christian times. Even in the Protogeometric Period, however, the corpses of children were normally buried in graves. From the 8th century B.C. infants were laid away in large vases (pithoi, amphorae or pitchers) set down in pits in the ground.

The reason for the change from inhumation to cremation is obscure. It may have been due simply to a desire in an unsettled and perilous age to prevent the body of a loved one from being ravaged by hostile man or beast.[30] However uncertain the cause, the procedure is clear, and it remained remarkably uniform for centuries. The body was burned on a wood fire after which the charred bones were carefully gathered and placed in a large terracotta jar, usually an amphora. This was set down in a small pit sunk in the floor of a larger rectangular pit into which were dumped the ashes and the remnants of offerings that had passed through the fire along with the body. Charred figs and grapes found among the ashes in one grave may be remnants of a funeral meal.[31] Personal ornaments were placed in the urn together with the charred bones. Around the urn were stacked terracotta vessels suitable to hold the food and drink for the journey to the other world or for the life beyond the grave. Other needs of the journey might also be met. Beside the urn in a woman's grave of about 900 B.C. were deposited terracotta models of two pair of heavy travelling boots.[32] In the corresponding position in a man's grave his family would place tools and weapons, sometimes bending his iron sword into a hoop to be set like a wreath on the shoulder of the urn.[33] The mouth of the ash urn was normally closed with a small vessel such as a mug. The upper part of the urn pit was carefully packed with earth and sometimes given further protection by a covering of stones or sun-dried brick. The upper levels of the graves in the area of the Agora were too disturbed to yield any evidence of grave markers. But the existence of markers of some sort is implied by the careful spacing of the graves in relation to each other. In the better preserved cemetery at the Dipylon rude stone grave markers have survived above a number of burials, and these were accompanied in

[28] A sarcophagus (A 1129) of island marble and late archaic date was found built into the wall of a drain below the cemetery, *ibid.*, pp. 75–77. If this is to be associated with the cemetery, as suggested by Young, it adds to the distinction of the family, for it is unmatched in Athens of that time in the richness of its material and the beauty of its workmanship.

[29] *Kerameikos*, I, *Die Nekropolen des 12. bis 10. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 10f.; C.-G. Styrenius, *Submycenaean Studies*, pp. 21–86. Cf. V. R. d'A. Desborough, *The Last Mycenaeans*, p. 71 for occasional instances of cremation within the latest Mycenaean Period.

[30] Cf. H. L. Lorimer, "Pulvis et Umbra," *J.H.S.*, LIII, 1933, pp. 161–180; G. E. Mylonas, "Homeric and Mycenaean Burial Customs," *A.J.A.*, LII, 1948, pp. 56–81; *idem*, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, Princeton, 1966, pp. 135, 176–186; M. P. Nilsson, *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*[2], pp. 616–619.

[31] R. S. Young, *Hesperia*, XVIII, 1949, p. 282.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 282f., 296f., fig. 12, pls. 67, 70.

[33] For a particularly illuminating example cf. C. W. Blegen, *Hesperia*, XXI, 1952, pp. 279–294, pls. 73–78.

some cases by fragments of the large vessels into which libations to the dead were presumably poured.[34] Similar arrangements no doubt existed above the Agora burials.

The nature of the various types of burial practised in the course of the Protogeometric and Geometric Periods may best be illustrated by brief accounts of several characteristic examples. We start with a girl's grave of about 1000 B.C. (Pl. 19).[35] This was one of a group of three closely contemporary graves found beneath the north end of the Stoa of Attalos; it is now displayed in the gallery of the Agora Museum. One of the three burials had been made in a simple trench cut in the soft bedrock. In the other two cases the floor and walls of the trench had been lined with thin stone slabs to produce a "cist," a type of grave that came into common use at the close of the Mycenaean Period. The tops of the graves below the Stoa were protected only by a layer of field stones. In the girl's grave the body had been laid out full length on its back, head to the south. Over each shoulder was a long pin for fastening the peplos, one of bronze, the other of iron with a bronze ball near its top. The girl had worn a simple bronze bracelet on either wrist, a bronze ring on a finger of the left hand. Beside the body had been placed three small and one medium-sized oil flasks and a medium-sized wine pitcher. The vases are good but modest examples of the Protogeometric class; the scale was adapted to the tender age of the dead.

An adult body in the period of the girl's grave would undoubtedly have been cremated. We may illustrate a cremation burial of a woman over a century later in date (*ca.* 850 B.C.). It was found in 1967 at the northwest foot of the Areopagus (Pls. 20–22).[36] An intrusion of the classical period had shaved away the upper covering of earth down to the crude bricks that overlay the urn pit. Some of the ash from the pyre had survived near by. Among the ashes were many fragments of vessels that had gone through the fire, most of them small, handmade bowls and lidded jars with pointed bottoms, all decorated with incised designs, a curiously primitive type of ware reserved for funerary use; it was perhaps intended to symbolize the coarse kitchen vessels with which the woman had had to do in her lifetime and of which she might have need in the other world. The burnt debris also included fragments from a number of small, openwork baskets (kalathoi) skillfully shaped in terracotta; they resemble the wool baskets to be seen beside spinning women on vase-paintings of the classical period. Such symbols of the woman's life on earth would have been appropriately consigned to the flames together with her earthly body.

A number of intact containers stacked around the ash urn (Pl. 20, a) may be supposed to have held supplies for the journey to the other world or perhaps for sustenance in that new world. They comprised an amphora of medium size, a globular, lidded box (pyxis), two small and one medium-sized pitchers, i.e. vessels suitable for food, oil and wine. These are normal offerings. More lavish provision is symbolized by an unusual terracotta object (Pl. 20, b). The lower part is evidently a model of a wooden dowry chest intended for the storage of household linen. The lid, however, supports five unconnected and unrelated containers. These are marked by their conical tops and trapdoors as granaries of a type that can be traced back to the Old Kingdom of Egypt. The two small holes at the base of each cupola may have served for fastening some adjunct of wood, a lower door for the withdrawal of the grain or perhaps a ladder to permit access to the trapdoor above. The basic symbolism, we may suppose, once again pertained to the future: a supply of grain for bread-making on a generous scale. There may be other implications. Did our lady come of a landowning family which made some symbolic display of its wealth and its status even at the funeral?

[34] *Kerameikos*, V, i, pp. 7f., 34f.; Δελτ., XX, 1965, B¹ l, p. 40.
[35] H. A. Thompson, *Hesperia*, XXIII, 1954, p. 58, pl. 16, a, c.
[36] E. L. Smithson, *Hesperia*, XXXVII, 1968, pp. 77–116.

The large ash urn from the woman's grave is evidently the work of one of the ablest Athenian potters of the time (Pl. 21). The proportions are pleasing; the profile is beautifully clean; the geometric patterns are effectively placed and meticulously executed. The urn was filled to half its height with charred bones which proved to be those of a middle-aged woman of light build. With the ashes had been deposited some of the dead woman's precious and more personal belongings (Pl. 22). A pair of delicately carved pyramidal ivory seals attested her status as the mistress of a wealthy household. Four long pins (three of bronze and one of iron) and a pair of bronze fibulae made up a set for fastening the dress. A triple necklace of over eleven hundred disk-shaped glass beads and a massive glass pendant was undoubtedly a product of Egypt, Syria or Phoenicia and an exceedingly rare instance of an import at this early date. There was also jewelry of gold. A set of rings comprised three narrow and three broad hoops, the latter engraved with simple crisscross patterns. Our lady's chief treasure was surely her pair of earrings (Pl. 22, b). A trapezoidal plate of heavy gold is decorated front and back with geometric patterns in filigree. To the lower edge are attached three pomegranates, the clustering leaves done in granulation. A broad strap made of twisted gold wires rises from the top of the plate. The straps were found hooked over in such a way as to suggest that on a gala occasion these magnificent jewels might have been hung from simple wire rings set permanently in pierced ears. This is a very early instance (in post-Mycenaean times) of the use of granulation and filigree work, yet the delicate techniques have been competently handled.

The wealth and discriminating taste attested by the furnishings of this grave mark the deceased as a member of one of the leading families of Athens. It is little wonder that the area of her grave, in the environs of which some nine other burials of about the same period have been found, was treated as a holy place throughout later antiquity (below, p. 120).

The regular practice of burning the bodies of adults fell off, as we have seen, about 800 B.C. In the large family plot to the south of the Tholos which was in use in the second half of the 8th and the early 7th centuries (above, p. 10) inhumation prevailed. Infants were here laid away in large jars. Adult bodies were placed on their backs at the bottom of trench graves dug down through the earth sometimes into the soft bedrock. Ledges were left at an appropriate level to support the ends of rough cover slabs of slate. In Plate 23, a, we see an infant burial at the upper left, an adult skeleton already exposed in the lower left, and an adult grave with cover slabs still in place to the right.[37] In this last burial, a woman's, seven vases had been placed over the chest of the corpse and beside the head.[38] A simple bronze ring was found on one of the fingers and two more on the floor of the grave together with a round terracotta bead. In one of the jars were four fibulae of iron with sail-shaped catch plates and one of bronze.

The set of vases in the woman's grave, as normally in these early burials, included containers for both food and drink (Pl. 23, b). They are good representatives of the Attic Geometric style at the height of its development in the third quarter of the 8th century. Characteristic of the grave offerings of this time are the large, cheese-shaped pyxides. Shape and decoration are patently derived from basketry, a circumstance which accentuates the incongruity of the horses which are occasionally attached to the lids either replacing the knob or standing above the knob. Here, as with the granaries from the earlier grave, some symbolism may be intended. From Aristotle's discussion of the classification of citizens in early Athens it appears that the original criterion of rank, viz. the volume of one's farm produce, was supplemented subsequently by the number of horses that one could maintain.[39] If this be so, our lady, with

[37] R. S. Young, *Hesperia*, Supplement II, p. 93, fig. 64.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 87–93, figs. 58–61 (Grave XVIII). The grave was dated by Young in the last quarter of the 8th century. For an up-dating to the third quarter of the century cf. E. Brann, *Agora*, VIII, p. 127.

[39] *Ath. Pol.*, 7, 3–4. On the symbolism cf. J. Fink, *Arch. Anz.*, 1966, p. 487.

the three spirited horses on her largest pyxis, may be supposed to have come of a knightly family, a rating that is suggested also by the number and quality of her grave offerings.

The absence of weapons among the graves in this family plot and their paucity in Athenian graves of the 8th century B.C. in general may be indicative of more peaceful and settled times. Equally suggestive is the appearance on Athenian Geometric vases from the second half of the 8th century of the first scenes that can with any degree of probability be related to epic poetry. Among the most interesting of such vases is an oinochoe from a man's grave in the family plot near the Tholos (Pl. 24).[40] The vase is a technical curiosity. Two tubes of terracotta pass through its body crossing at right angles; they are open at the ends, but they do not communicate either with the interior of the vase or with one another. This was evidently a device to speed the cooling of wine when the jug was placed in a vessel of cold water; hence the vase may be regarded as an ingenious but impractical ancestor of the wine cooler (psykter) of classical times. In the midst of the battle scene that encircles the jug is a pair of linked figures who share a great square shield. The figures have been plausibly identified with the Moliones, the twins against whom Nestor contended both in battle and in sport.[41] The figure-of-eight or "Dipylon" shields that are carried by other warriors on the vase are perhaps a deliberate touch of archaism intended to suggest the heroic times of long ago. We may venture to believe that the vase painter was inspired by epic poetry though probably by some poem earlier than the *Iliad* itself.

Excavation in the deeper levels here and there in the region of the Agora has brought to light remnants of stately amphorae that must once have stood exposed above graves of the 8th and 7th centuries in this area as in the cemetery by the Dipylon. We are fortunate in having one such vase in a fairly complete state (Pl. 25).[42] This amphora was recovered from a mass of debris in a deep rectangular shaft in the northeast shoulder of Kolonos Agoraios (see below p. 186). The dumping took place about 540 B.C., but the shape of the vase and the style of its painting point to a date near the end of the 7th century. The hand has been recognized as that of the first great master of the black-figure style, a man who took his name, the Nettos Painter, from a scene of Herakles killing the centaur Nettos on another monumental grave amphora that stood in the Dipylon cemetery. The faded and weatherbeaten state of the Agora vase is doubtless due to long exposure to the elements. The great, somber sphinxes that fill the two sides of the vase will have held guard for a generation or more above the grave of some well-to-do person. The amphora must have seemed old-fashioned when taken down. The new graves were now being marked by tall stelai of limestone or of marble on top of which sphinxes were carved in the round.[43]

The burial customs of the 6th century may be illustrated from one of the graves in the family cemetery on the west slope of the Areopagus (pp. 10–12). Let us choose No. 10, the grave of a boy of 16 or 17 years who died soon after the middle of the century.[44] His body was laid on its back on the floor of a deep pit measuring about 0.68 × 1.70 m., head to north. There was no trace of coffin or of covering apart from the earth filling of the pit. The offerings had been

[40] R. S. Young, *Hesperia*, Supplement II, p. 69, fig. 43 (Grave XIII); E. Brann, *Agora*, VIII, no. 44, p. 36; no. 304, p. 65 with bibliography.

[41] *Iliad*, XI, 706–761; XXIII, 638–642. This interpretation was first proposed by R. Hampe, *Frühe griechische Sagenbilder in Böotien*, Athens, 1936, pp. 87–88. Among subsequent discussions cf. especially T. B. L. Webster, "Homer and Attic Geometric Vases," *B.S.A.*, L, 1955, pp. 38–50; K. Friis Johansen, *The Iliad in Early Greek Art*, Copenhagen, 1967, pp. 23–25.

[42] E. Vanderpool, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, pp. 367–371, figs. 1–4; K. Kübler, *Altattische Malerei*, Tübingen, 1950, p. 26, fig. 16, pl. 83; J. D. Beazley, *The Development of Attic Black-Figure* (Sather Classical Lectures, XXIV), 1951, p. 15; *idem*, *A. B. V.*, p. 5, no. 2.

[43] The earliest of the marble sphinxes is assigned by Miss Richter to *ca.* 600 B.C., *The Archaic Grave Stones of Attica*, London, 1961, pp. 9f., figs. 1–7, 191.

[44] R. S. Young, *Hesperia*, XX, 1951, pp. 91f., fig. 8, pl. 40, a.

placed around head and feet. They comprised seven small vases (Pl. 26, a): four oil flasks (lekythoi) and three unguent jars (lydia). The oil flasks were presumably still conceived of as receptacles for sustenance on the journey to the other world. They would also have been appropriate for the olive oil used as a rubdown by an athlete, and the scenes on the two decorated flasks do in fact suggest the athletic activities of a young man, on one a runner between two instructors, on the other a pair of nude riders. The ointment jars are of the distinctive shape known as the lydion from their place of origin, Lydia. The small size and massive walls suggest costly contents, perhaps again a dressing for anointing the body after exercise.

This was one of the most generously furnished of the many graves in the cemetery on the west slope of the Areopagus. Since we are undoubtedly dealing with the burial ground of a prominent family, we may take this economy as indicative of greater restraint in the archaic period in such forms of honor to the dead. At this time families who had the means and the inclination lavished their attentions not on the offerings to be buried in the grave but on the carved marble monument to be placed above the grave.

We may conclude our review of burial customs with a note on a series of small deposits that have some sepulchral implications but that were probably not actual graves.[45] About a score of such deposits have been found more or less intact in the residential and industrial districts bordering the Agora to south and west, while the existence of perhaps as many again is attested by the occurrence of their characteristic furnishings in disturbed contexts. The practice flourished in this part of Athens throughout the 4th century; an occasional instance may be slightly earlier or later. The remains normally consist of a shallow depression two or three feet in diameter full of ash and charcoal and numerous small vases usually broken and damaged by fire. The baked state of the earth shows that the fire took place on the spot. The group of vases illustrated in Plate 26,b, from such a pyre in the courtyard of a house at the west foot of the Areopagus, is characteristic.[46] It comprises a couple of shallow banded saucers with rim handles, a pair of drinking cups (skyphoi), a small lidded bowl (pyxis), a little pitcher, two casseroles, an alabastron made of soft limestone, and a lamp. The date is late 4th century B.C. Most of these vessels are of types familiar from domestic deposits, but the alabastron and the banded saucers are ritual objects that are found in graves. On the other hand, no human bones have been identified with certainty in the pyres; the shallowness of the deposits and the absence of markers also count against their being burials. In the light of our present knowledge they may be thought of as the residue from memorial services comprising ritual meals.[47]

So much for the evidence to be drawn from graves. The other significant source of information for the history of pre-Solonian times in our area is the household wells.[48] We have already seen that enough wells of the latest Mycenaean and of the Submycenaean Period have been found to indicate a beginning of habitation. From the Protogeometric Period onward the number and the topographical distribution steadily increase. In the periphery of the classical Agora wells continued to be dug and used throughout antiquity. Beneath its central part, however, the sequence breaks off early in the 6th century B.C. Since extensive levelling operations occurred at the same time we may connect both phenomena with the formal establishment of the Agora as a public place for community life.[49]

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 110–130.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–119, pl. 51, a.

[47] Similar pyres are known also from the excavations at the Kerameikos and at Trachones to the east of Athens, but no precise clue to their significance has yet been obtained from either archaeological or literary evidence. Cf. *Agora*, XII, pp. 45, 198f.

[48] For a good summary of the state of the area in the 8th and 7th centuries cf. *Agora*, VIII, pp. 107–113. The distribution of graves, wells and roads is illustrated by the plan, *ibid.*, pl. 45.

[49] *Hesperia*, XXIII, 1954, p. 36 (area of the Heliaia); XXXV, 1966, p. 45 (area of Middle Stoa); XXXVII, 1968, p. 68 (area of Eponymous Heroes).

The close spacing of the wells suggests that habitation was already quite dense in our area in the 8th and 7th centuries. Of the houses themselves, however, only the merest shreds have survived, beneath the Tholos, the Heliaia and the Southeast Fountain House. In no case is enough preserved to yield a complete plan. The buildings were certainly modest both in scale and construction. The remains consist of short lengths of light, stone wall socles and clay flooring.[50]

The one activity apart from mere living and dying that is attested in our area in pre-Solonian times is the making of pottery. A well of the Protogeometric Period beneath the very middle of the classical Agora has yielded a quantity of rubbish from a potter's workshop, notably trial pieces for testing the progress of firing (p. 186). Beneath the southwest corner of the square, deep below the level of the Classical Period, are the remains of a small potter's kiln of the 7th century B.C. (p. 186), while a small pit outside the southeast corner of the square was filled with debris from the making of pottery and terracotta figurines of the same period.[51]

The lines of the principal thoroughfares serving the area remained remarkably constant throughout antiquity for the simple reason that they were dictated by the terrain. Several of these roads are now well established through the discovery of stratified deposits of road gravel. Excavation in 1939 at the north foot of Kolonos Agoraios revealed continuous stratification from the level of the modern street down 12 meters to bedrock.[52] The lowest pottery overlying bedrock was of the Neolithic period; from that time onward traffic has been passing this prominent point in a northwest-southeast direction. Much of the traffic originated near by in the valley of the Kephissos River and in the plain of Eleusis, but this was also the natural approach from central Greece and the Peloponnese. On entering the area of the classical Agora the roadway forked. One branch, or rather the main line, made for the Acropolis. Its course through the area of the Agora shifted slightly from age to age in a direction from west to east. The westernmost and earliest section thus far observed (beneath the middle of the South Square) was already much used in the Middle Helladic Period.[53] Its latest course, familiar to us as the Panathenaic Way, was established after the construction of the Middle Stoa and the Stoa of Attalos in the 2nd century B.C. Another branch of the main artery, diverging beneath the northwest corner of the Agora, ran almost due south, skirting first the east foot of Kolonos and then the west slope of the Areopagus to take one into the southern parts of the city. The course of this road is clearly defined by deposits of road metal at several points going back to the 7th and 8th centuries.[54] Both the walled family burial plots that we have discussed above had been placed in relation to this thoroughfare. We may assume that already in pre-Solonian times, as was certainly the case in the classical period, a third branch of the main artery took a course slightly south of east from the point of divergence beneath the northwest corner of the Agora. The extensive prehistoric cemetery beneath the northeastern corner of the Agora was presumably served by this road.

Another almost equally important thoroughfare ran from west to east at the north foot of

[50] *Hesperia*, Supplement IV, pp. 3–8, Building A: potter's establishment of the 7th century B.C. below the Tholos; XXIII, 1954, p. 36: house walls beneath the Heliaia demolished early in the 6th century B.C.; XXV, 1956, p. 48: houses to the south and north of the Southeast Fountain House dating from the late 7th and early 6th century B.C. The "Oval House" of the 8th century B.C. excavated in 1932 at the north foot of the Areopagus may be an enclosure related to an early cemetery rather than, as first proposed, a dwelling; D. Burr, *Hesperia*, II, 1933, pp. 542–640; E. Brann, *Agora*, VIII, pp. 109f.; *Hesperia*, XXXVII, 1968, p. 60.

[51] *Agora*, VIII, pp. 110f., 131.

[52] *Hesperia*, VI, 1937, pp. 338f.; IX, 1940, pp. 299f.

[53] *Hesperia*, XXXV, 1966, p. 46.

[54] *Hesperia*, VI, 1937, pp. 4f., 120, fig. 64 (area of Metroon); Supplement II, pp. 6–8, figs. 1, 2 (south of the Tholos); Supplement IV, p. 106 (east of the Tholos).

the Areopagus and the Acropolis.[55] On this line traffic entered from the lower valley of the Kephissos and from Peiraeus. At the northwest foot of the Areopagus the road bifurcated; one branch continued eastward at a low level toward the eastern parts of the settlement, the other angled steeply upward on a southeasterly course towards the entrance to the Acropolis. The high antiquity of these roads too is attested by stratified deposits of gravel, in one case, at the northeast foot of the Areopagus, reaching back into the Middle Helladic Period. Additional evidence of early use is provided also by the groups of graves, Mycenaean to Geometric, that were evidently placed in relation to these roads.

[55] *Hesperia*, XXV, 1956, pp. 47–49; XXXV, 1966, p. 49; XXXVII, 1968, pp. 56–58.

II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGORA

The Agora as a great center of community life developed slowly in the course of the 6th century B.C. (Pl. 4). Athens presumably had a simple agora before this time, but we know almost nothing about it. Apollodoros in his work *On the Gods* recorded that the title Pandemos was given to Aphrodite in her shrine "in the neighborhood of the ancient Agora," because all the Demos gathered there of old in their assemblies[1] (ekklesiai). No other writer mentions a primitive agora, and we can surmise that most Athenians had never heard of it. The suspicion arises that Apollodoros' learned note involves confusion between Aphrodite Pandemos, placed by the evidence of Pausanias (I, 22, 3) and inscriptions on the western approach to the Acropolis, and Aphrodite Leader of the Demos, whose shrine stood at the northwestern approach to the known Agora (pp. 160, 223). But even if one doubts Apollodoros' testimony, the west end of the Acropolis, not far from its entrance, would be appropriate for a simple prototype of the Athenian Agora, and the saddle between the Acropolis and the Areopagus, where the ground is comparatively level, is perhaps the most suitable spot.

We can conjecture that the "ancient Agora" was comparatively small in extent and modest in form, probably containing little except a few simple shrines; one should not imagine extensive public places or substantial and well-developed public buildings in the early archaic city. In the later city it may have continued to exist as a minor *carrefour* and a subsidiary religious center; but by the end of the 5th century the new Agora had already become highly venerable, and the old had apparently been forgotten. Thucydides does not mention it, though it would have been relevant to his purpose, in his account of early Athens (II, 15).

The place chosen for the classical Agora was where the steep hillsides below the rocks of the Acropolis and the Areopagus yield to more level ground, leading gently downwards to the bed of the Eridanos brook on the north (Pl. 27). It was in the district known as Kerameikos or Potters' Quarter (p. 186) and possibly in the deme called Kerameis, though this is not so clear. On the west the contours rose more steeply again to the low but dominant hill which came to be called the Kolonos Agoraios (Pl. 28). The site was still within easy reach of the Acropolis and its western entrance, but it offered ample room in which the agora of a great city could grow. One is tempted to associate the adoption of this site and the early development of the Agora with the man whom the Athenians thought of as the father of their democracy, and to call it the Agora of Solon, but in fact we cannot tell who was responsible. Burials in the central area ceased at the end of the 7th century, though they continued on some of the neighboring hillslopes into the 6th (pp. 10, 12); at about the same time domestic wells and other evidence for habitation

[1] Jacoby, *F.G.H.*, II B, no. 244, frag. 113; *Agora*, III, 731, p. 224; cf. Judeich, *Topographie*², pp. 62, 285f.; Martin, *Agora Grecque*, pp. 255ff.; Travlos, Π.Ε.Α., pp. 24, 28, 34. A. N. Oikonomides, in *The Two Agoras in Ancient Athens*, places the old Agora below the Acropolis to the southwest (more finds relating to a cult of Aphrodite have been made at the foot of the Acropolis in this direction). This is a possible site, though not so appropriate; but Oikonomides completely disregards the archaeological evidence when he says that the move did not take place till after the Persian Wars. For further discussion of this elusive and unprofitable subject see *Phoenix*, XX, 1966, pp. 285–293. On Aphrodite Pandemos cf. now E. Simon, "Aphrodite Pandemos auf attischen Münzen," *Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau*, IL, 1970, pp. 5–19.

came to an end. Bedrock over a large area in the southern and middle part of the square was levelled and dressed; minor ridges and gullies were smoothed out. Pottery in the earliest layer of gravel shows that this was done at about the turn of the century, but how far the treatment extended is not clear. Ancient streets on the north, west and south provided a framework; a diagonal street running northwest to southeast (the Panathenaic Way or dromos) formed an axis (pp. 17, 192–193); the east side was at first less clearly defined.

Architectural development, as far as we know, began modestly in the southwestern sector, which later came to be known as the archeia (public offices) and at the northwestern corner. By the early 5th century (Pl. 4) a series of public buildings and shrines had accumulated along the street on the west side;[2] at the south end were buildings probably intended for the use of the Council and its committee the Prytaneis; at the north end was the first of the stoas, the Basileios, and in between were shrines probably of Zeus, Apollo and the Mother of the Gods (the cult of the Mother was closely associated with the Bouleuterion or Council House). The venerable pre-democratic Council on the Areopagus continued to meet on its hill to the south. General assemblies were probably held in the Agora in the 6th century, and there seems to have been a primitive theater; but by the turn of the century these activities had moved to specialized sites elsewhere, to the Pnyx hill, southwest of the Agora, and to the south slope of the Acropolis. The architects of the tyrants, Peisistratos and his sons, were much occupied on the Acropolis; but they built a fountain house southeast of the Agora, fed by an aqueduct on which the water supply of the region was to be based for many centuries; and the civic buildings continued to develop in their time. In 521 B.C. the younger Peisistratos, grandson of the tyrant, when holding the office of archon, established the Altar of the Twelve Gods on the north side of the Agora; it was soon to become what Pindar calls the omphalos, the navel-stone of the city. The formal limits of the Agora were marked by boundary stones; and from the time of Kleisthenes, who at the end of the 6th century after the expulsion of the tyrants carried the development of democratic institutions a stage further, though its monuments were still modest and sparse and its buildings somewhat primitive in character, this spacious square was unmistakably the focus of Athenian life, the seat of the main institutions of law and government (except the Ekklesia itself). The law courts no doubt met in or near the Agora, and the probable purpose of the large square enclosure, built early in the 5th century in the southwestern area, was to house the most important of them. At the same time the Agora was a major religious center and, together with the immediately adjoining regions, the scene of the market and of multifarious commercial and industrial activities.

In the early years of the 5th century (Pl. 5) the greatest efforts of the Athenians and the most lavish expenditure of their funds had to be devoted to defense, and before worthy public buildings and temples could be fully provided the Persian invasions intervened. The year 480 B.C. marks a violent break. The invaders left the old buildings burnt and dilapidated. For a time potters from Kerameikos and metalworkers from Kolonos encroached on the western side of the Agora. Reconstruction was slow at first, and like the original development it began at the southwest corner, which remained a key point in political life; here the Tholos was built for the committee of fifty Prytaneis, while the old Bouleuterion, or Council House, and the court building were restored. Kimon beautified the square by the comparatively inexpensive means of planting trees and laying out walks;[3] but the Poikile or Painted Stoa too was probably built in his time, and the shrine of Theseus, not far from the Agora, was refurbished to

[2] The discovery in the Agora of bits of several pedimental groups (head of a large poros lion, fragments of lion and bull from a small poros pediment, marble fragment of a man struggling with a lion; see *Agora*, XI, pp. 31ff.) raises the possibility that there were other temples on unknown sites in or near the archaic Agora; but it is also possible that the fragments have strayed from elsewhere.

[3] Plutarch, *Praecepta ger. reip.*, 24; *Kimon*, 13, 8. On trees in the Agora see *Agora*, III, pp. 219–221; and Index *s.v.* Trees.

receive the hero's bones. From the middle of the century, under the direction of Perikles and Pheidias, the Athenians devoted a great part of their resources to a splendid restoration of their shrines. The Hephaisteion on the hill to the west transformed the aspect of that side, but its completion was delayed in favor of the Parthenon, and in the square itself no more temples were built for a hundred years. Shrines of less imposing form multiplied. The Altar of the Twelve Gods remained a focal point and with its enclosure was rebuilt about a century after its original construction. In the later decades of the 5th century, after the great effort on the Acropolis had slackened, the Agora received a bigger share of attention, and several important public buildings were erected there — the Stoa of Zeus on the northwest, the South Stoa, and a new Bouleuterion; but architectural achievement was handicapped and limited by the distractions of war and civil strife. The Stoa of Zeus, on the northwest, a splendid companion to the old Basileios, may be considered a worthy appendage of the Periclean building schemes, though not completed till after 421 B.C.; the South Stoa, containing magistrates' offices, was a practical building, economical in construction; it belongs to a later and more difficult phase at the end of the century. The Peace of Nikias in 421 B.C. had brought a hopeful renewal of building activity, but the Sicilian Expedition and the resumption of the war with the Peloponnesians placed a fearful strain on the city's resources, and by the end of the war (404 B.C.) Athens was near exhaustion. Not much was added to the Agora in the early part of the 4th century, except that a handsome new fountain house was built in the southwest corner, and the old terracotta aqueduct was reconstructed in stone and extended.

The Agora of the 5th and early 4th centuries was architecturally simple and informal (Fig. 7). Plato makes Sokrates in the *Gorgias* (517 b) condemn Kimon and Perikles for indulging the Athenians' taste for affluence and grandeur. These strictures now seem strangely misdirected; but in any case we may note that Sokrates has to look beyond the Agora for his illustrations. The machinery of government was becoming increasingly complex, and great numbers of citizens took part in various ways; but the physical provision for their political activities remained remarkably limited and unpretentious. The Agora was not, like the Acropolis, a show-piece, a symbol of the wealth and power of Athens. In Perikles' time it was still an open tree-lined square, with comparatively modest architectural adornment here and there. It was subject to no master plan; its growth was spasmodic, and the result was not a complete and coordinated whole. One sees no trace of the hand of Hippodamos, the architect from Miletos who planned Peiraeus, where the local agora was named after him Hippodameia. Of the major buildings, most notably the stoas, each had a highly individual character, matching its peculiar function in the life of Athens. In spite of some important additions the Agora of Alkibiades and even of Lykourgos was essentially the same in form and spirit.

Athens recovered from her defeat and humiliation, and in time architectural activity was renewed (Pl. 6). Lykourgos, who played an important part in the economy of the city in the third quarter of the 4th century, was a great builder, honored for his work at the theater, the gymnasia and elsewhere. The rebuilding of the Temple of Apollo Patroos on the west side was finally carried out in his time; but the one major project in the Agora which belongs to this period, the large peristyle on the northeast, probably designed to provide more satisfactory accommodation for some of the law courts in place of certain simpler structures of earlier date, was never finished.

This was an ominous failure. The Athenians were to create no more great buildings in their own manner and out of their own resources. The Agora subsequently underwent two major transformations, each of which radically changed its character, but neither of these would have taken place without the patronage of wealthy foreign powers. During the troubled years of the century and a half after the Macedonian conquest and the death of Alexander (323 B.C.) the

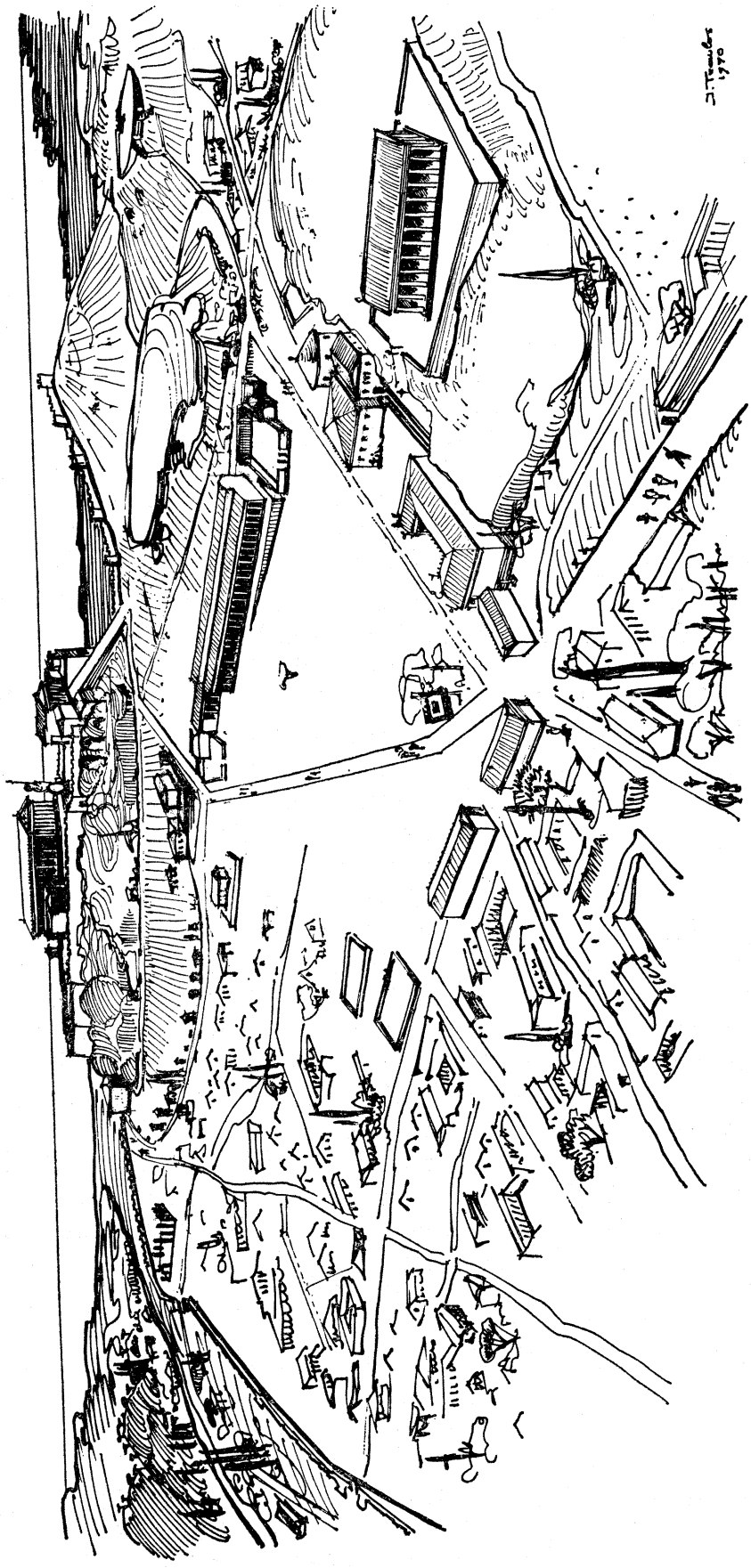

Fig. 7. The Agora from Northwest, Middle of 4th Century B.C. Perspective (J. Travlos)

situation remained unchanged. Then the kings of Pergamon, splendid patrons of Hellenic culture, took Athens in hand (Pl. 7). In the Agora Attalos II, grateful for his Academic education, donated to the city the great two-storeyed stoa on the east side. Across the whole of the southern part of the Agora the Middle Stoa was built, single-storeyed but vast in extent, the largest element in a complex of old and new buildings apparently intended as a consolidation of the facilities for the law courts. The original square court building was incorporated in a modernized form; but the South Stoa was obliterated and replaced by a single-aisled colonnade, South Stoa II. In its scale and non-Athenian architectural style the Middle Stoa too smacks of royal patronage. No specific name can be associated with the building, but we know that in this period Hellenistic kings vied with one another in bringing gifts to the venerable city. The Agora was now an interesting mixture of old and new. In spite of the rebuilding of the Metroon, the ancient shrine of the Mother of the Gods in which records were housed, with a long colonnade facing east on to the square, the north and west sides retained much of the character of an early Greek agora; the east and south with their long stoas were thoroughly Hellenistic.

The city suffered with the rest of Greece under Roman republican rule. Athens unfortunately took the side of Mithridates King of Pontos in his war against Rome, and in 86 B.C. Sulla made a successful and violently destructive assault on the city. Many of the monuments of the Agora were severely battered; the south side suffered worst, and for a long time metalworkers and marbleworkers established themselves in this area. The Middle Stoa survived, but the buildings further south were not restored till the time of Hadrian.

Under Augustus the Agora entered another new phase. A great new market building, situated a little to the east, was initiated by Julius Caesar and completed by his successor. Hitherto the main square, though well studded with altars, statues and other smaller monuments, had remained free from large buildings. Now a covered theater, with which the name of Augustus' great minister M. Agrippa was associated, was placed prominently in the middle of the south side, towering above the stoas; and as if the vacuum was still not thought to be adequately filled, a temple similar in size and style to the Hephaisteion was built in the northwestern part of the square. This temple was one of several much older buildings, erected outside Athens in the country demes in better days and now threatened with dilapidation, which wholly or partly were transplanted for the embellishment of the Agora. One can attribute these developments, which gave the Agora something of the aspect of a Roman forum, to the patronage of the imperial family, to whom the Athenians showed their gratitude and homage by the installation of appropriate cults, with numerous altars and statues. Most of the old monuments were still standing, though somewhat overshadowed, and it was on these that Pausanias concentrated his attention when he examined the site in the middle of the 2nd century after Christ (Fig. 1; Pl. 8).

"Though Athens suffered in the Roman wars," says Pausanias (I,20,7), "it flourished again in the reign of Hadrian." The great benefactions which Hadrian lavished on his beloved Athens were mostly in other parts of the city, though his library was not far away, to the east, just north of the Roman market. In the Agora, the Nymphaeum, an ornate fountain house at the southeast corner, was the terminal of a branch of the new system of water supply which he gave the city. In the same period a basilica was built with its front on the eastern part of the north side; and southwest of the Agora, on the slope of the Areopagus, a bathing establishment, originally built in simple form in the 2nd century B.C., was given the more complex and luxurious character typical of the age.[4]

[4] *Hesperia*, XXXVIII, 1969, pp. 394–415; XL, 1971, pp. 262–264. Cf. A. Kokkou, Δελτ., XXV, 1970, A', pp. 150–173 on Hadrianic buildings at Athens.

For another century the Agora retained its elaborate and composite form with little change. Then in A.D. 267 barbarian invaders, the Heruli, sacked the city and reduced the Agora to ruins. Very soon afterwards a new city wall was hastily built, enclosing a small area north of the Acropolis; the western stretch of this wall ran along the eastern edge of the Agora and southwards to the Acropolis; fortunately for the archaeologist many precious bits and pieces from the debris were incorporated. Athens was to revive yet again and burst its narrow bonds; but although the Hephaisteion still stood and the Tholos was crudely patched up, and on the southern part of the site a great gymnasium was built, for the Agora as political center of Athens the year 267 was the end (Pl. 9).

Before we proceed, a note of warning must be sounded. Continuous and precise correlation between the material remains and the history of Athens as presented by our literary authorities must not be expected. The archaeological evidence is often complicated and yet incomplete and difficult to interpret; often it provides a fairly clear sequence, but without secure absolute dates. With due caution we can associate certain stages in the development of the Agora, as of the city in general, with particular events and particular personages — Solon, the Peisistratidai, Kleisthenes, Kimon, Perikles, Lykourgos — but the association must at many points remain tentative and somewhat nebulous. Even when we have special evidence for connecting a certain name with a monument — Peisianax with the Poikile for instance (p. 90) — we cannot always say just what part that person played. He may have provided leadership and inspiration in a project; he may have carried the necessary proposal by his eloquence; in some cases he may have provided funds from his own resources. One thing we can say with more confidence — at least from the time of Kleisthenes onwards the Athenian Demos itself, in the Ekklesia and the Boule, given a lead no doubt by enterprising or ambitious individuals and served by democratically chosen boards of officials, was the true creator of the architecture of the city, and of the Agora in particular, in its greatest days, approving each project, scrutinizing its progress, and checking the expenditure of every drachma.[5]

[5] See J. S. Boersma, *Athenian Building Policy from 561/0 to 405/4 B.C.*, Groningen, 1970, p. 104; this useful book was received too late for anything more than brief reference. The same applies also to Fordyce W. Mitchel, *Lykourgan Athens: 338–322 B.C.*, Louise Taft Semple Lectures for 1968, University of Cincinnati, 1970.