ATHENS

The Monuments with
RECONSTRUCTIONS

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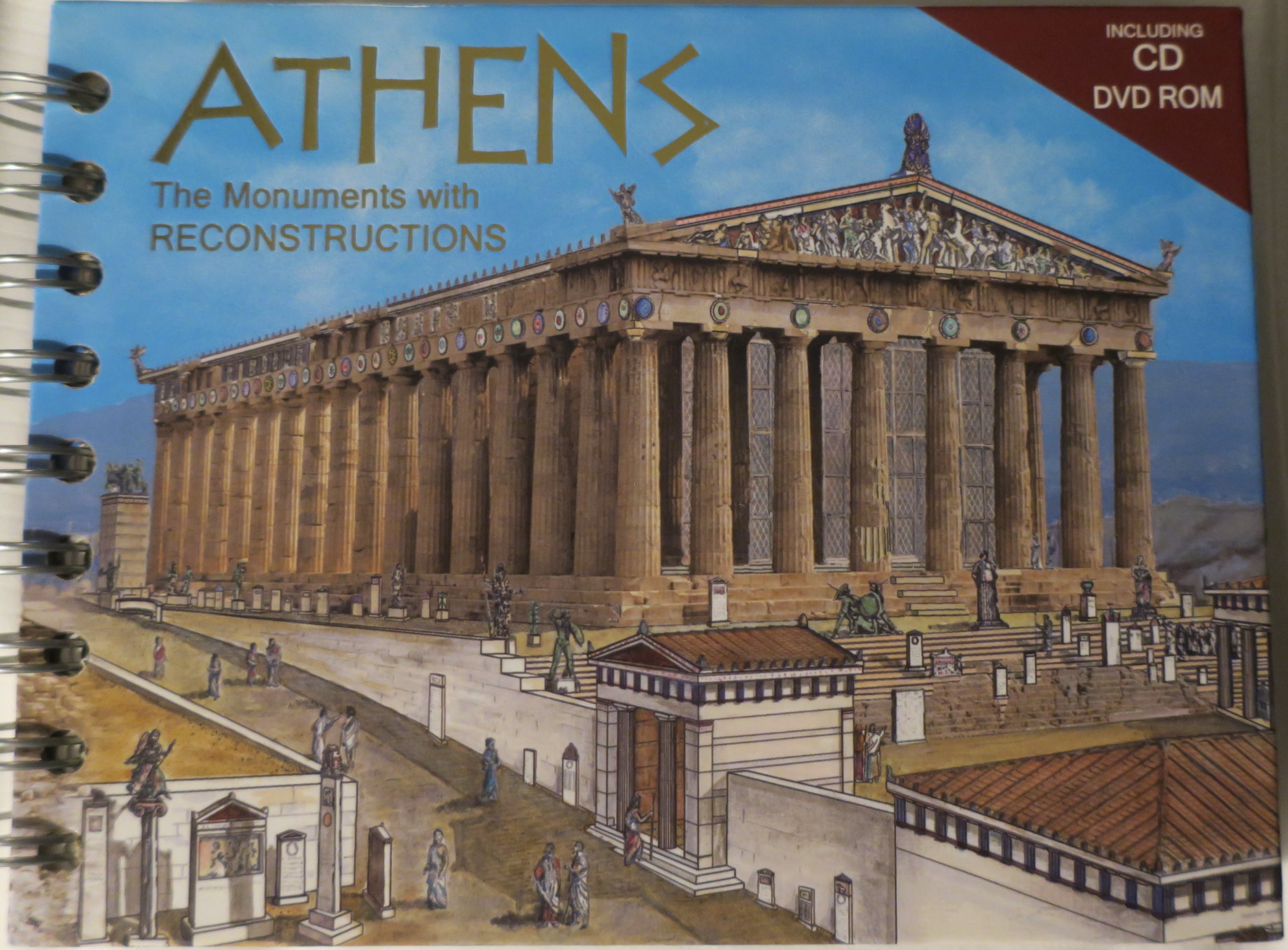

ATHENS

The Monuments with RECONSTRUCTIONS



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**The reconstructions are based on hypothetical proposals resulting from studies of the monuments and research conducted by the contributors to the book*

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR OF ATHENS

Athens is one of the few cities in the world which combine the glory of the past with the achievements of the present and optimism for the future.

The monuments of Athens are sites that go far beyond the simple conception of archaeological monuments. And this because they are not only unique examples of architectural perfection but are also charged with the supreme symbolism of the city's historical and cultural bequest, from the achievements of the fifth century BC to the masterpieces of the Byzantine Age.

The monuments of Athens distinguish periods, remind us of the splendour but also epitomize the concept of civilization itself. Above all, they underline the incorporation of individual consciousness into the collective framework that the principles of Democracy guarantee. They signify the equality and the isonomy of citizens, generations and genders. And all these through inculcating the citizen's love of his city and pride in the conquests of his material and spiritual civilization.

Athens is a city that worthily etches itself in the heart and soul of every citizen. The archaeological guidebook in your hands - outcome of commendable efforts - eloquently links the images of today with the original creations. At the same time, it

links the emotional memories with the objective imprinting of the visible and functions as a proposal for a renewed recommendation of the city to its citizens.

The monuments of Athens are tesserae in the mosaic of history, links in the unique and unbroken chain of life and creation in our city. They are elements of a creative dynamic that continues with new inspiration in our times. A dynamic that ensures the diachrony of our common history, which in its turn ensures the diachrony of our very existence.

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ATHENS - THE ACROPOLIS: THROUGH THE CENTURIES

«ἡμετέρη δὲ πόλις κατά μὲν Διὸς οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται
αἶαν καὶ μακάρων θεῶν φρένας ἀθανάτων·
τοίη γὰρ μεγάθυμος ἐπίσκοπος ὀβριμοπάτρη
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη χεῖρας ὕπερθεν ἔχει»

'but our city, in accordance with the divine will of Zeus and with the thoughts of the blessed, immortal gods, will never be destroyed, because the most magnanimous protectress, the daughter of an almighty father, Athena Pallas, has her hands upon it.'

Solon



The River Ilisos with Philopappus Hill, the Acropolis, the Olympieion and Lycabettos, in the background
(Edward Dodwell, *Views in Greece,* London 1821)

The beginnings of the history of Athens are lost in the mists of the distant past, about which nothing certain and concrete is known, while it is possible that long-forgotten historical events are crystallized in myths and traditions. Whatever the case, excavations on the slopes and at the foot of the Acropolis have brought to light remains that indicate human habitation on this site from as early as the Neolithic Age (4th millennium BC).

The finds from the Early and the Middle Bronze Age are more numerous and bear witness to the existence of buildings on the Acropolis and settlements on its slopes. Remains from the Late Mycenaean period (13th century BC) include sizeable surviving sections of the Cyclopean wall, which girt the sacred rock, as well as terraces and traces of the palace of the king. The city's rich prehistoric past is matched by its mythology, which developed considerably during historical times, either to serve the theatre or for reasons of political expediency.

The Ionian inhabitants of the region claimed that they were autochthons and that they were thus named after their genarch Ion, allegedly son of Xouthos but actually son of Apollo. However, prior to the advent of the Ionians, Athens was home to the Pelasgians. It was they who built the very ancient fortification wall, the 'Pelasgikos', remnants of which are preserved south of the Propylaia and elsewhere on the Acropolis, and it was they who gave the mountains and rivers of Attica the primeval names they bear to this day: Hymettos, Lykabettos, Ilisos, etc.

Important mythical kings of Athens were Kekrops, Pandion, Erechtheus, Aegeus and Theseus, who were great rulers and contributed much to the development and the progress of the land. All of them dwelt in the palace situated upon the Acropolis, at the point where the



Erechtheion was erected later and where some of them were buried. At that time Attica was divided into 12 small polities, the most significant of which were Kekropia (subsequently Athens), Eleusis, and the tetrapolis of Marathon. It seems that during the reign of Kekrops worship of Athena - as opposed to Poseidon - was established and the goddess then gave her name to the city she protected.

Theseus is considered the principal founder of the city. He rid Athens of the blood tribute it was obliged to pay to Minos, King of Crete and Lord of the Seas, and was lauded for many other great feats. He is also accredited with the *Synoecism*, that is the unification of the towns of Attica under the sceptre of the ruler on the Acropolis. Henceforth, the Panathenaia festival was celebrated with pomp and ceremony in commemoration of this event. After Theseus' death the institution of kingship weakened and was soon abolished once and for all, when King Kodros fell heroically defending Athens from the Dorians. Then the people voted that no one was worthy enough to succeed him and, instead of kingship, aristocracy was installed.

The ensuing centuries were not without political upheavals. The city was bedevilled mainly by the disputes between the land-owning aristocrats and the wealthy merchants and craftsmen. Finally, in 594 BC,

Kouros from Anavysos, Athens, National Archaeological Museum

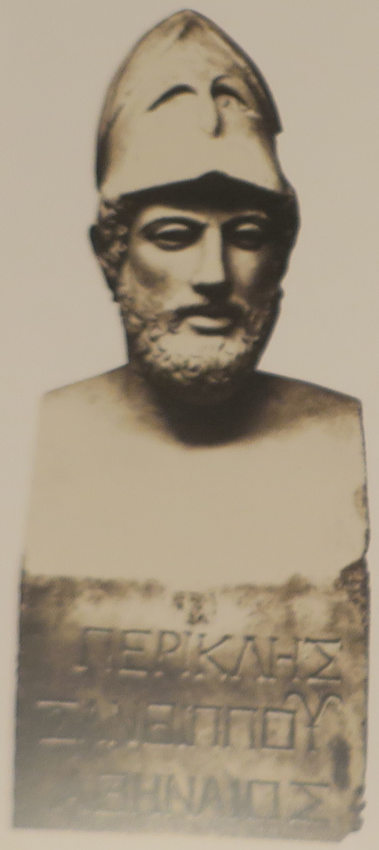


Doric column from the Parthenon. detail

the wise Solon appeared on the city's political scene and introduced a new constitution, founded the Boule of 400, the Ekklesia of the Deme and the supreme court of the Heliaia, which resolved the problem of the debts of the poor to the rich. This constitution was kept essentially even when Peisistratos seized power thrice (560-528 BC). Although this shrewd man governed as absolute archon (tyrant), he proved to be an excellent statesman. He supported the poor, encouraged the Arts and Letters, and adorned the city with many monuments. On the Acropolis, which had in the meanwhile been transformed from seat of the monarch to place of worship, he built a propylon and embellished the Old Temple (*Archaios Naos*) of Athena, the ruins of which lie adjacent to the Erechtheion.

Peisistratos was succeeded by his sons, Hippias and Hipparchos. After the assassination of the latter by the tyrannicides Harmodios and Aristogeition, Hippias showed the true face of tyranny and in 510 BC was finally ousted from power by the Alkmaionides family. One of the Alkmaionides, Kleisthenes, completed Solon's legislation, increased the number of deputies (*bouleutai*) to 500 and prepared the way for the Democracy of Pericles.

In 490 BC, Darius King of Persia decided to punish the Athenians for having supported the revolt of the Greek cities of Asia Minor against him. His enormous army disembarked at Marathon, where the Athenians, led by General Miltiades and with the support of only 1,000 Plataiaians, awaited them. 'The Athenians fighting on behalf of the Greeks, at Marathon crushed the force of the golden-clad Medes' (Simonides).



Bust of Pericles

Ten years later the Persians returned, under their new king, Xerxes. After the battle of Thermopylai they entered Athens, which had already been evacuated. They set fire to the Acropolis and destroyed everything. Xerxes later ascended Mount Aigaleo, in order to watch the naval battle being fought in the straits of Salamis, but what he witnessed was the destruction of his navy by the Athenian fleet under the command of Themistokles. This far-sighted politician believed that Athens' future lay at sea and foresaw the conflict between Athens and Sparta. For this reason he fortified Athens and the Piraeus with impregnable walls, built the harbour in the Piraeus and enhanced

The Odeum of Herodes Atticus (AD 161), the third and most impressive odeum built in ancient Athens, is of the Roman type, with semicircular ground plan. Basic feature of the monument are the successive arcades articulating the façade. The entrances to the skene and the magnificent staircases had mosaic floors. Visible in the background are the ascent to the Propylaia and the right end of the Stoa of Eumenes. In the foreground are typical Athenian houses of the Roman period. ▶

Athens as a maritime power. His building and fortification works were continued on comparable scale by his successor Kimon.

Next came Pericles, who 'thundered and lightened' when he spoke and 'moved the whole of Hellas'. Dubbed 'Olympian', Pericles was elected by the people in 461 BC and remained in power until his death in 429 BC. Under his administration, the city's power and primarily culture, the Arts and Letters, attained their glorious zenith, whilst concurrently the democratic regime was completed and consolidated. But what immortalized Pericles was the building of the superb monuments on the Acropolis, which still dazzle the entire civilized world. Thus, when we speak of 'ancient Athens', we think automatically of Athens and the Acropolis in the Golden Age of Pericles. Then the Acropolis was one great sanctuary, in which principally Athena, goddess of wisdom, of arts and crafts, and of peace, was worshipped. But she had a martial hypostasis too, which gave the city its victory over the Persians. Between the Erechtheion and the Propylaia stood a colossal bronze statue of her (16 m. tall, according to one informant), a work of Pheidias. This was Athena Promachos, protectress of the city.

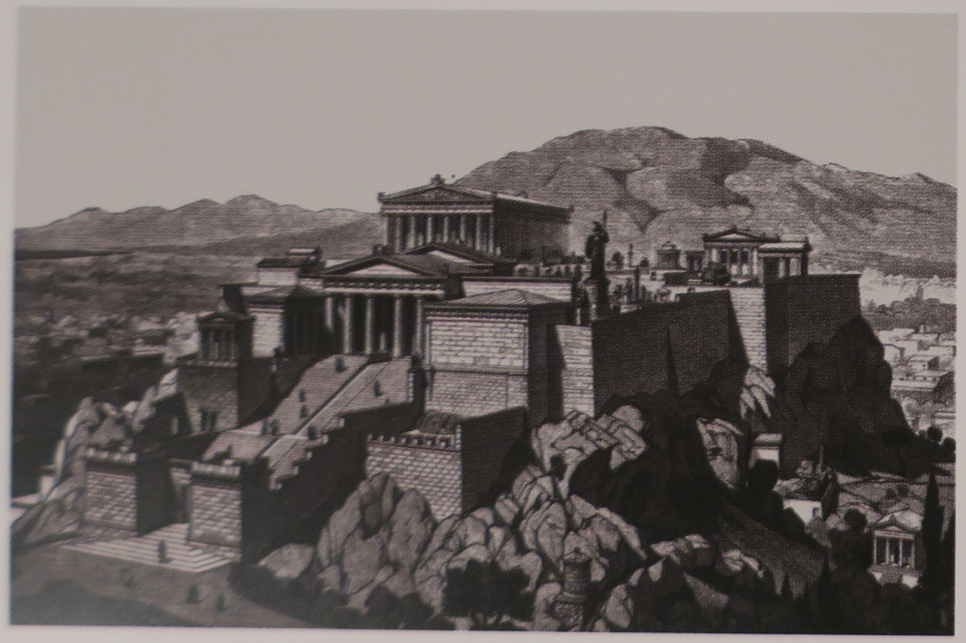
During the fifth century BC all sectors of intellectual activity enjoyed a heyday: philosophy with Anaxagoras, Socrates and others; history with Herodotus and Thucydides; and dramatic poetry - the

The sepulchral monument (AD 114-116) of the benefactor of Athens, the Hellenized Syrian Gaius Julius Antiochus Philopappus, dominates the hill on which it stands. Its impressive decoration is confined to the north front, which was visible from the Acropolis, whereas the burial chamber was on the south side. The rich architectural decoration in the Corinthian order surrounds the three niches, in which are statues of seated figures: the deceased at the centre, with the Syrian kings Antichos and Seleukos Nikator either side. Below these is a relief frieze with representation of a four-horse chariot and standing figures. ▶



poetic genre *par excellence* of Athens – with Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

This wonderful century, with the victories, the glories and the intellectual achievements ended wretchedly with the hostilities between Athens and Sparta, the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC), outcome of which was the defeat of Athens. The city's political life was disrupted, its naval and military might was crushed, and the whole of Greece was decimated and destroyed. Even so, the culture of Athens continued to flourish, with Plato, Xenophon, Praxiteles and Demosthenes. And it was this culture which later dazzled Alexander the Great. Although he vanquished the Athenians and their allies at Chaironeia (338 BC), he respected and honoured Athens, and indeed sent the shields from the booty of the battle of the River Granikos to the city, to be hung on the entablature of the Parthenon.



Reconstraction drawing of the Acropolis from the SW

In 146 BC the Romans subjugated Greece. In the early years of Roman rule Athens suffered great hardships, particularly when Sulla (86 BC) destroyed the city and the harbour of the Piraeus, and seized countless works of art to dispatch to Rome. On the contrary, during imperial times, and mainly the second century AD, Athens enjoyed greatness once again. The city was adorned with numer-

ous monuments, temples, an aqueduct, thanks to its fervent admirer Hadrian, as well as to private citizens such as Herodes Atticus. Another catastrophic blow was dealt in AD 267, by the Herulian hordes, but even after this attack Athens continued to be regarded as the intellectual centre of the ancient world, thanks to its illustrious past and renowned schools of philosophy and the art of rhetoric, at which studied the Fathers of the Church, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus. The closing of these schools during the reign of Justinian, in AD 529, extinguished Athens' glory. It degenerated gradually into a provincial town and followed the fate of the rest of Greece.

Little is known of its history for centuries after. Certainly the Byzantine administration paid it little heed. Franks, Catalans, Venetians, Florentines and Ottoman Turks, who captured Athens at various times, had no knowledge of history and had no idea in which sacred place, the summit of the Acropolis, they installed their palaces and harems, their bureaucracy and armory. So wars, fanaticism and ignorance etched their horrible scars on the masterworks of the ancient Hellenic spirit. (Some details are described in the chapters below.) In 1821 the War of Independence was declared in Greece, leading to its liberation. When Athens was declared capital of the newly-founded Greek State, in 1834, it had no more than a couple of hundred habitable houses, while the Acropolis was a heap of rubble.

Cleaning and repair operations commenced immediately. Athens grew in size - slowly at first - and is now a megalopolis which, together with its environs and Piraeus, has a population of about 4,000,000.

AROUND THE ROCK OF THE ACROPOLIS

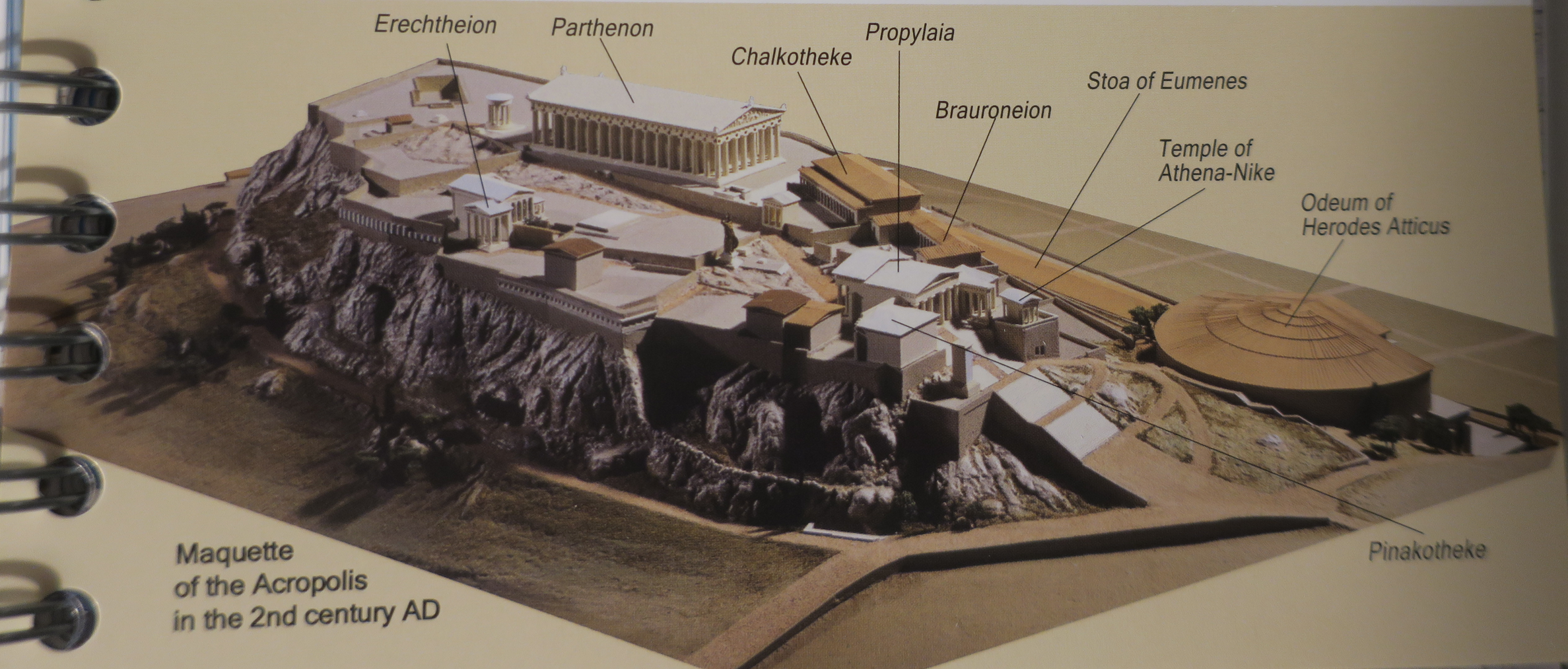
This is the birthplace of justice, democracy, art and beauty. As soon as the visitor approaches the Acropolis, but before he reaches the Propylaia, he will pause a while on a small terrace formed below the pedestal of Agrippa. From there he can look west to the space in front of the sacred rock. At the foot of the rock lie the ruins of the ancient Agora, the Theseion and, further left, the hill that was dedicated to the chthonic deities, the Arai, and later to the war-god Ares, and is known as the Areios Pagos. It was on this rock that the first law-court was founded, where, Athenian tradition has it, Orestes was tried after murdering his mother Clytaemnestra and her paramour Aegisthus, as recounted in Aeschylus' tragic trilogy *Oresteia*. It was on this same historic hill that Apostle Paul delivered his famous speech on 'the unknown God' and Dionysios the Areopagite was the first Athenian to be baptized a Christian, later to become the city's patron saint.

About 500 metres west of the Acropolis stand three hills. The first from the left was dedicated to the Muses (Mouseion), patrons of the Arts and Sciences. It is known today as the hill of Philopappus because at its top is the mausoleum built by the Athenians in the second century AD to honour Gaius Julius Antiochus Philopappus, a Roman ruler of Syria, who was a great admirer and benefactor of Athens.

The second hill is of the Pnyx, the sacred venue of the Ekklesia of the Deme, cradle of Democracy, where for the first time in human history citizens gained the right to vote. It was here that Athenian citizens over 30 years of age assembled and took decisions on civic

issues. It was here too that the inspired orations of Themistokles, Aristeides, Pericles, Demosthenes and other distinguished figures were heard.

The third hill is that of the Nymphs, thus named after the homonymous sanctuary that existed there. In 1842 the expatriate Greek magnate Baron Sinas founded the Observatory on its summit.



Maquette of the Acropolis in the 2nd century AD

THE PROPYLAIA

The entrance to the Acropolis was always on its west side. From as early as Mycenaean times (1600-1100 BC) a pathway led to the access, which was guarded by a mighty bastion.

In the years of Peisistratos (6th century BC) the Acropolis was established finally as a place of worship. The ancient sanctuaries were renovated and a magnificent Propylon was built on the site of the prehistoric entrance. This construction was destroyed by the invading Persians in 480 BC and scant remnants of its foundations are preserved on the southeast side of the Propylaia of Mnesikles.

The Greeks used the term '*propylon*' in the singular when this comprised a simple antechamber at the entrance to a sanctuary or a megaron, and '*propylaia*', in the plural, when this was a more monumental entrance including more than one gateway, such as to the Acropolis, Eleusis and Epidauros.

The Propylaia of the Acropolis were built in the time of Pericles by the eminent architect Mnesikles, to replace the Peisistratid Propylon. They are an imposing construction of monumental aspect, befitting the sanctity of the rock and the splendid buildings that adorn it. Their beauty rivals that of the Parthenon and was praised by authors and orators,

The Propylaia (437-432 BC), the multi-functional Doric building designed by Mnesikles, is the monumental entrance to the Sacred Rock. It had 6 Doric columns on the west front and two rows of Ionic columns inside, flanking the passage and leading to the largest of the five gates in the rear wall. Marble beams support the ceiling coffers. The façade of the Pinakotheke is visible to the left. Various singular and inventive solutions were applied in the Propylaia, to cope with the problem of the uneven ground. ▶

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by friends and enemies of Athens. Epameinondas said that if Thebes had the Propylaia of Athens, it would equal it in loveliness.

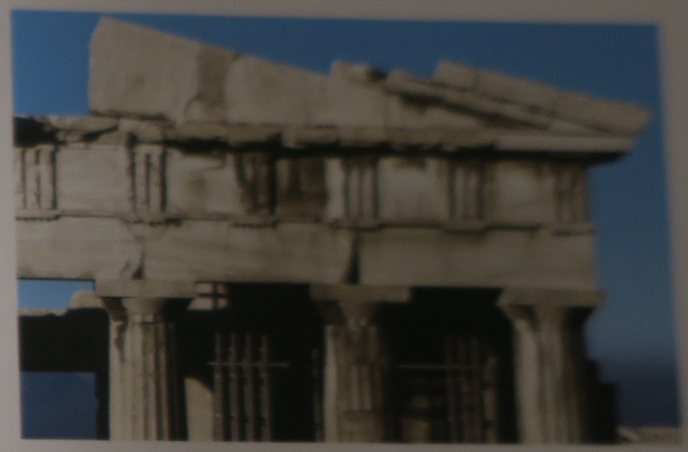
Building of the Propylaia began in 437 BC but was halted in 432 BC, before their completion, on account of the threat of the Peloponnesian War. The fact that this monument is unfinished can be seen from the square bosses used for transporting, lifting and placing the marble blocks in position, which were never removed from the outside wall. Like all the monuments on the Acropolis, the Propylaia were built of white Pentelic marble, with grey Eleusinian marble in places, to relieve the monotony of the white and emphasize some characteristic features.

The Propylaia consist of a central building of rectangular plan (24 x 18.20 m.) and two wings, one to the north and the other to the south. The central building is divided into three parts by two rows of Ionic columns, while a marble wall at right angle to these divides it into two façades, an east and a west, each fronted by six Doric columns and crowned by a pediment. This union of the Doric and the Ionic order is one of the elements that endow this architectural poem with such harmony and symmetry. The wall is punctuated by five gateways, the largest of which (7.37 x 4.18 m.) was also the main entrance.

Pausanias, the ancient Greek traveller from Magnesia in Asia Minor, who lived in the second century AD and whose book *Travels in Greece* is an invaluable source of information on archaeology, history, mythology and geography, speaks admiringly of the building's ceiling, which was supported by marble beams and coffered. From traces of colour still discernible in the coffers, we can imagine the phantasmagoric appearance of the ceiling, which

presented the picture of a bright blue sky spangled with golden stars.

The north wing was occupied by a large hall, the so-called Pinakotheke (Picture Gallery), on the walls of which were paintings by great artists of the fifth century BC, such as Polygnotos. Mnesikles intended to erect a corresponding building in the south wing, but he met with opposition from the priests of the nearby sanctuary of the Graces and the priesthood of Athena Nike. He therefore modified his plans and designed a smaller, open hall with a colonnade in the north part and another in the west, facing the temple of Athena-Nike.



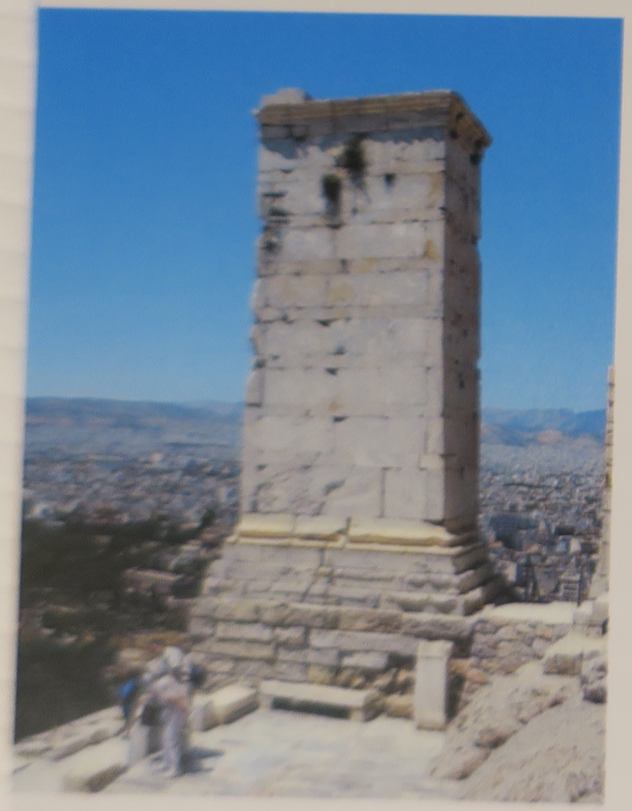
The Propylaia, detail of the east front

In addition to exquisite paintings, the Propylaia were decorated with sculptures, such as Hermes Proylaios, the Graces (charming and delightful deities, who attended festivals), and the bronze Leaina by Amphikrates, a monument in honour of Leaina, friend of Aristogeiton, who while being tortured by the Tyrant Hippias bit and cut her tongue, so as not to betray the Tyrannicides.

In Classical times the ascent to the Propylaia was along a ramp 80 metres long by 20 wide. This facilitated not only the movement of men but also of pack-animals, used for carrying materials, and of the cattle and sheep intended for sacrifices, in the major processions such as that of the Panathenaia. Later, in the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius (AD 41-54), a monumental staircase was built, and in the third cen-

tury AD the gateway now known as the Beulé Gate, after the French archaeologist Ernest Beulé, who discovered it, was constructed.

Half way up the ramp looms the high and massive Hymettan marble pedestal of a statue. This was erected in the second century BC and upon it was set a four-horse chariot (quadriga) of some benefactor of Athens, perhaps Eumenes II, King of Pergamon (197-158 BC). Later, towards the end of the first century BC, this was replaced by the quadriga of another benefactor of the city, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (63-12 BC), Roman general and son-in-law of Emperor Augustus.



The base of the monument of Agrippa

The Propylaia submitted to the fate of the Acropolis and of Athens. In the Byzantine Age they became the seat of the Archbishopric. Under the Franks the administrative services of the Duchy of Athens were installed there. The Florentine Nerio Acciaiuoli used them as his residence and added a tall square tower to the south wing, which was demolished in 1875. In the Ottoman period the Turkish garrison commander lived in this tower and the Propylaia were converted into a munitions and gunpowder store. The Propylaia were dealt their mortal blow in 1645, when they were struck by lightning, which ignited the gunpowder, causing irreparable damage to the masterpiece by Mnesikles.

THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA-NIKE

The delectable Ionic temple of Athena-Nike is perched atop a tower to the southwest of the Propylaia. The view from this tower is breathtaking, encompassing the entire Saronic Gulf, Piraeus, Salamis, Aegina, the Peloponnese and mounts Aigaleo and Poikilo. For this reason, already from prehistoric times, this strategic position was used as a look-out post for spotting would-be invaders, mainly from the sea. In Late Mycenaean times a high tower was built here, to control access to the gateway to the Mycenaean citadel.

From this vantage point we readily recall the fascinating tales about the reign of King Aegeus, which are shrouded by legend: about the ship with the black sails of mourning, which departed each year for Crete to pay the tribute Athens owed to Minos. The tribute was the fresh and nubile youth of Athens, seven boys and seven girls, who were lost in the arenas of Crete, in death sports with bulls. They were devoured, it was said, by the Minotaur. About how Theseus was among the potential victims one year but slew the monster and then, with the help of the Cretan Princess Ariadne, managed to find his way out of the Labyrinth, the maze-like palace of Knossos. And how on his homeward voyage, perhaps out of sadness because the god Dionysos had kept his beloved Ariadne on Naxos, Theseus neglected to hoist the white sails of victory on the ship. So it was that the aged Aegeus, from his seat upon this tower, espied the black sails out at sea and, believing his son to be dead, in his despair and sorrow ended his life, by casting himself down onto the rocks.

The Nike who was worshipped here was identified with the goddess Athena, who was worshipped all over the rock. Because the wooden cult effigy (*xoanon*) of Athena, which represented her standing and holding a pomegranate in one hand and a helmet in the other, had no wings, it was called '*Nike apteros*' (Wingless Victory). It was later said that the Nike had flown to Athens but because she should never leave the city again, her wings were no longer needed. So the priestess of the temple was always a full-blood Athenian, born of an Athenian father and mother.

Already by Archaic times a small poros temple of Athena-Nike, with altar, had been erected on top of the Mycenaean tower. This was destroyed, however, during the Persian invasion of 480 BC, along with the other sanctuaries from the Peisistratid era. Building of the Classical temple commenced after 421 BC, in the time of the so-called Peace of Nikias. Nikias was an Athenian politician renowned for his honesty and prudence, who tried to bring the Peloponnesian War to an end by suing for peace with the Spartans in 421 BC. The temple was commissioned from the architect Kallikrates, who also participated in the design of the Parthenon.

The temple of Athena-Nike, amphiprostyle tetrastyle, with four Ionic columns on the east front and four on the west, is built of Pentelic marble. It is 8.27 metres long, 5.44 metres wide and the height of the columns is 4.66 metres. The crepis on which it stands is three-stepped, further enhancing the temple's characteristic Attic grace and elegance.

Represented on the east frieze were gods of Olympus. Athena held pride of place, standing between Zeus and Poseidon. Aphrodite and Eros, Demeter and Kore flanked the



The tower and temple of Athena-Nike, from the west

company. Perhaps they were discussing the battles being fought on the other three sides of the frieze, battles between Greek and Persian cavalry, as well as battles of Greeks against other hoplites, a more precise interpretation of which is impossible. Unfortunately, part of the frieze has been destroyed, while the original reliefs from the north and west sides are today in the British Museum and replicas have been placed on the temple.



Temple of Athena-Nike

The Nike Temple was pulled down by the Ottoman Turks in 1687 and its material used for fortification works. Fortunately these *spolia* were found in 1835 and the restoration of the monument was thus possible. A second reconstruction was carried out in 1940, while a third is underway (2004).

In the late fifth century BC, a parapet one metre high was built

on three sides of the tower (north, west and south). The external face of the parapet was adorned with reliefs of superlative art, which are now housed in the Acropolis Museum. Unknown but gifted artists (perhaps Kallikrates himself was one of them), intoxicated by the victorious wars of Athens, had visions of ubiquitous Nikai serving the goddess Athena. Ethereal, light and airy and in perpetual motion, the winged Nikai sped with zeal to prepare the animals for sacrifice and the trophies from battles against barbarians, to offer these Nikai to the goddess Athena, seated on a rock and waiting at the centre. The most engaging of them seems to be loosening her sandal, in order to step barefoot on the altar. Her dress, clinging to her as if wet, reveals her firm and supple body, modelled in accordance with the canons of the 'rich style' that dominated sculpture in the last quarter of the fifth century BC.



Nike loosening her sandal, from the parapet of Athena-Nike

THE PARTHENON

'O nobility! O beauty simple and true! Goddess whose worship signifies logic and wisdom, whose temple is an eternal lesson in conscience and honesty, I reach the threshold of your mysteries late ...
The world will not be saved unless it returns to you ...'

Ernest Renan, Prayer upon the Acropolis

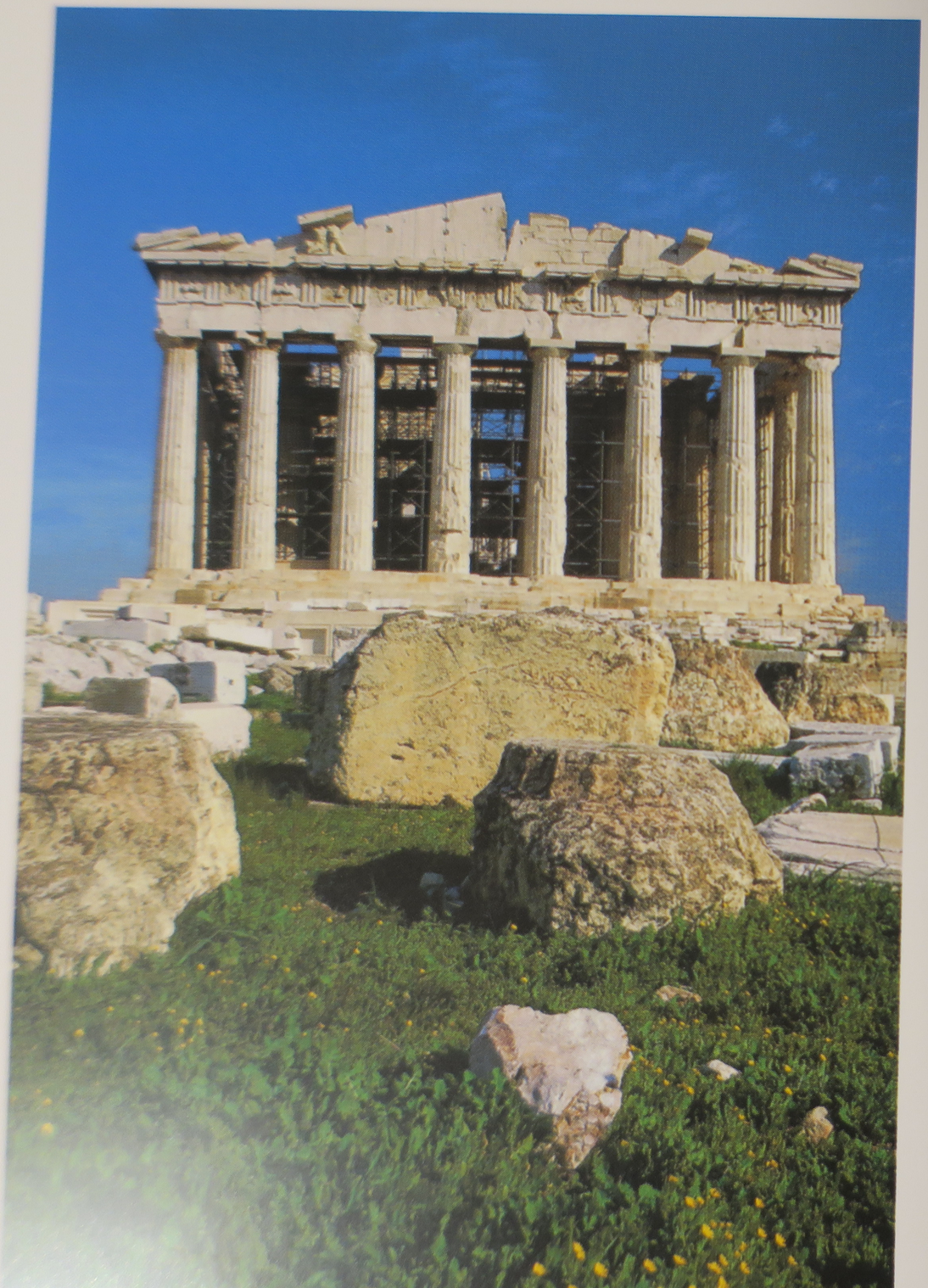
On the highest and most conspicuous point of the sacred rock stands the Parthenon, the culminating achievement of ancient Greek civil-ization. This monument is not the work of a single artist, nor of a single decade alone. It is the creation of an entire people, of an entire culture. Countless generations toiled for centuries until they succeeded in crystallizing their experience and sagacity in this quintessential manifestation of their spirit, the temple of the goddess Athena.

The present Parthenon is not the first to be built on this spot. As can be seen from its foundation, the Old Temple that was destroyed by the Persians in 480 BC – before it was completed – was also of marble, but longer and wider than today's Parthenon and with six columns on its fronts. Traces of an even earlier poros temple also exist. In oth-

The Parthenon (449-438 BC), seen here from the northwest, is a Doric peripteral temple of uniquely harmonious proportions. The pediments, the metopes and the continuous frieze around the top of the cella walls (i.e. on the inside of the pteron) all bore sculpted decoration. Numerous *ex-votos* and sculptures were set up around the temple and in the forecourt of the Chalkotheke (right). Visible in the lower right corner is the roof of the Brauroneion and to the left is the propylon of the precinct of the Parthenon. Many inscribed votive stelai were placed here too. ▶







er words, many previous attempts had been made prior to 447 BC, when Pericles commissioned the construction of the final Parthenon from Iktinos and his collaborator Kallikrates, architect of the Athena Nike temple. However, even though these were both famed artists, it seems that Pheidias, close friend and artistic adviser of Pericles, was appointed 'overseer of all'. He was also creator of the monument's sculpted decoration. The building itself was finished in 438 BC and at the Panathenaia of that year the Athenians first beheld the ivory-and-gold statue of their goddess. The rest of the sculpted decoration was not completed until a few years later, in 432 BC.

Initially only the rectangular cham-

Parthenon, west front

ber behind the cella, in which the public treasury of the city was kept, was called Parthenon, which means chamber of the Virgin goddess Athena Parthenos. From the fourth century BC onwards, this name was extended to the whole building, which was previously known as the Great Temple (*Megas Naos*) or simply Temple. It is not known what rites were celebrated inside the Parthenon and there is no mention of it in connection with the Panathenaia, since the peplos carried in procession was offered to the *xoanon* in the Erechtheion. Thus, the Parthenon should be considered as more of a political and cultural symbol, since – as is apparent in the famous 'Epitaph' recorded by Thucydides – Pericles' ambition was to impose the hegemony of Athens through her intellectual and artistic superiority.

The Parthenon is constructed completely of Pentelic marble. It is a peripteral temple in the Doric order, with amphiprostyle cella, and is 69.51 metres long by 30.86 metres wide. There are 8 columns on each front and 17 (double the number plus one) on the long sides, 10.45 metres high, that is a total of 46 columns, since the corner ones are counted twice. Each column has 20 flutes and is not of the same diameter for its entire height. A little way above the base, the column shafts begin to swell gracefully, to narrow above as they near the capital. That is, they appear to bend slightly under the weight they bear, but resist this force as if they were alive! This curvature is called *entasis* and it is this which principally endows the entire building with elegance, elasticity, and vitality.

The axis of the columns is not perpendicular to the stylobate either. All lean towards the centre and the four corner ones even more so, having an inclination of some 7 centimetres. On the one hand this counteracts the impression given by some large edifices

that their upper part is 'escaping' outwards into the void, and on the other it imparts greater stability to the building and ensures more effective resistance to possible earthquakes. And because the four corner columns, visually isolated in the void, would appear slimmer than the others, their diameter was enlarged, while concurrently their distance from the neighbouring ones was reduced. Indeed, no line in the Parthenon is absolutely straight. The horizontal line of the stylobate and of the steps on the long sides are slightly curved. In the middle the level is 11 centimetres higher than at the two ends and this curvature is transmitted to the whole building, up to the roof. Through such refinements, the optical illusion that very long horizontal lines appear to curve and in the middle is corrected, and the problem of rainwater, which is shed outwards rather than forming ponds on the stylobate and the steps, is solved.



Parthenon, northwest corner

Above the epistyle is the frieze of triglyphs and metopes. The roof had a timber frame covered with marble tiles. On the epistyle of the east side, there are square holes above the columns. These were made in order to hang the 22 Persian shields sent by Alexander the Great from the booty taken in the battle of Granikos, in 334 BC. Of the elaborate sculpted decoration that complemented the architectural perfection of the monument - that is

the 92 metopes, the two pediments and the Ionic frieze of the cella - several parts have survived, most of which are now in the British Museum and a few in the Acropolis Museum.

Represented on the metopes of the east side are scenes of the Gigantomachy, the struggle of the gods against the Giants, in which the goddess Athena was a protagonist. On the metopes of the south side were scenes of the Centauromachy, the battle between the Lapiths of Thessaly and the Centaurs who became drunk at the nuptial feast of the Lapith King Peirithous and wreaked havoc. The King of Athens, Theseus, friend of Peirithous, also took part in this incident. On the metopes of the west side were scenes of the Amazonomachy, the battle between Theseus, again, and the female warriors, the Amazons, who were besieging the city. On the north side were scenes from the Trojan War. These subjects are encountered on many other monuments, but in the case of the Parthenon they take on a special significance. By representing the victories of the gods and heroes over monsters and attackers, the Athenians were lauding their recent victories at Marathon and



Parthenon, north frieze, horsemen



Parthenon,
north frieze,
hydriaphoroi

Salamis against the invaders from Asia. Their symbolism is overt. It is the triumph, after a long and bitter struggle, of law, democracy and civilization over barbarity and tyranny.

Not all the metopes are in the same style. There is no doubt that the great designer and creator of the sculpture was Pheidias, but, as was natural in the execution of a work on this scale, not only were his pupils employed – who would have had a uniform technical education – but also independent artists, each with his own stylistic mannerisms. Even so, all the sculptures are truly handsome and with the appropriate coloration they bore in Antiquity were surely striking in effect.

Several fragments of the statues that adorned the two pediments of the temple survive to this day, despite suffering repeated damage. The subject of the east pediment was the Birth of Athena. According to a strange tradition, Zeus one day had an excruciating headache and when Hephaistos struck him on the head, Athena leapt forth in panoply, to the astonishment of the attendant gods. Zeus sat opposite his daughter, on his throne, and between them a Nike descended, to offer a wreath to the newborn goddess. The gods flanking them, standing or sitting on thrones, witnessed the scene, while Dionysos at the left edge watched the chariot of Helios (the Sun) rising, and the group of Aphrodite and her mother at the right edge correspondingly watched the chariot of Selene (the Moon) setting. The last pair reclined nonchalantly in Olympic repose, as if still unaware of what had taken place at the centre of the pediment.

This event took place one morning on Mount Olympus, dwelling place of the gods, whereas the story of the west pediment took place in Athens, on the Acropolis itself. It was

there that Poseidon and Athena met in contest to prove him/herself worthy of assuming protection of the city. At the centre of the pediment were the two deities, majestic and vigorous figures full of movement, Poseidon holding his trident and Athena her spear. In the very middle was the sacred olive tree that Athena offered the city and between Poseidon's legs was the spring that gushed from the rock when he struck it with his trident. Athena was victorious with her olive tree and gave her name to the city of Athens. To right and left were the chariots which had brought the god and goddess, after these came the messengers Hermes and Iris, the families of Kekrops and of Erechtheus, and the two ends of the representation closed with two recumbent males, personifications of the rivers Kephisos and Ilisos. Of all these fifty statues, none has remained in position and the very few pieces visible on the pediment today are casts. Most of the originals are in the British Museum in London. Of the few remnants kept in the Acropolis Museum, the most complete is the superb group of Kekrops with his daughter.

Unprecedented and unique in the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon is its Ionic frieze, which surrounded the outside wall of the cella, running for a length of 160 metres and including some 600 figures of gods, men and animals, a remarkable composition depicting the Panathenaic Procession.

A festival in honour of Athena had existed since time immemorial, in the years when Erechtheus was king. In the reign of Theseus, who united all the demes (subdivisions of the tribes) of Attica, it was named the Panathenaia. The Panathenaia acquired great splendour during the tyranny of Peisistratos and even more under Pericles. The Small Panathenaia

were celebrated annually, but the Great Panathenaia, which were held every four years in the month of Hekatombaion (15 July-15 August), were even more glorious. The festival lasted eight days and included athletics games, equestrian events, music contests, boat races and so on, achieving its climax on the last day with the magnificent procession that commenced from the Kerameikos, passed through the Agora and made its way up to the Acropolis, where the goddess Athena was presented with her new peplos. This peplos was a large piece of cloth that had taken a priestess, together with the so-called *ergastines* and the little *arrhephoroi*, nine months to weave. It was yellow in colour and decorated with scenes from the Gigantomachy. The peplos was placed on a trireme, like a sail on its mast, and transported to the Acropolis. The city's population followed *en masse,* commonfolk, metics, archons and other officials, priests, musicians and pre-eminent members of Athenian society, bearing offerings and animals for sacrifice.

Represented on the west side of frieze is the first stage in the ceremony, which takes place in the Kerameikos and shows the preparation of the horsemen. One is donning his chlamys, another is bridling his steed, some are conversing with one



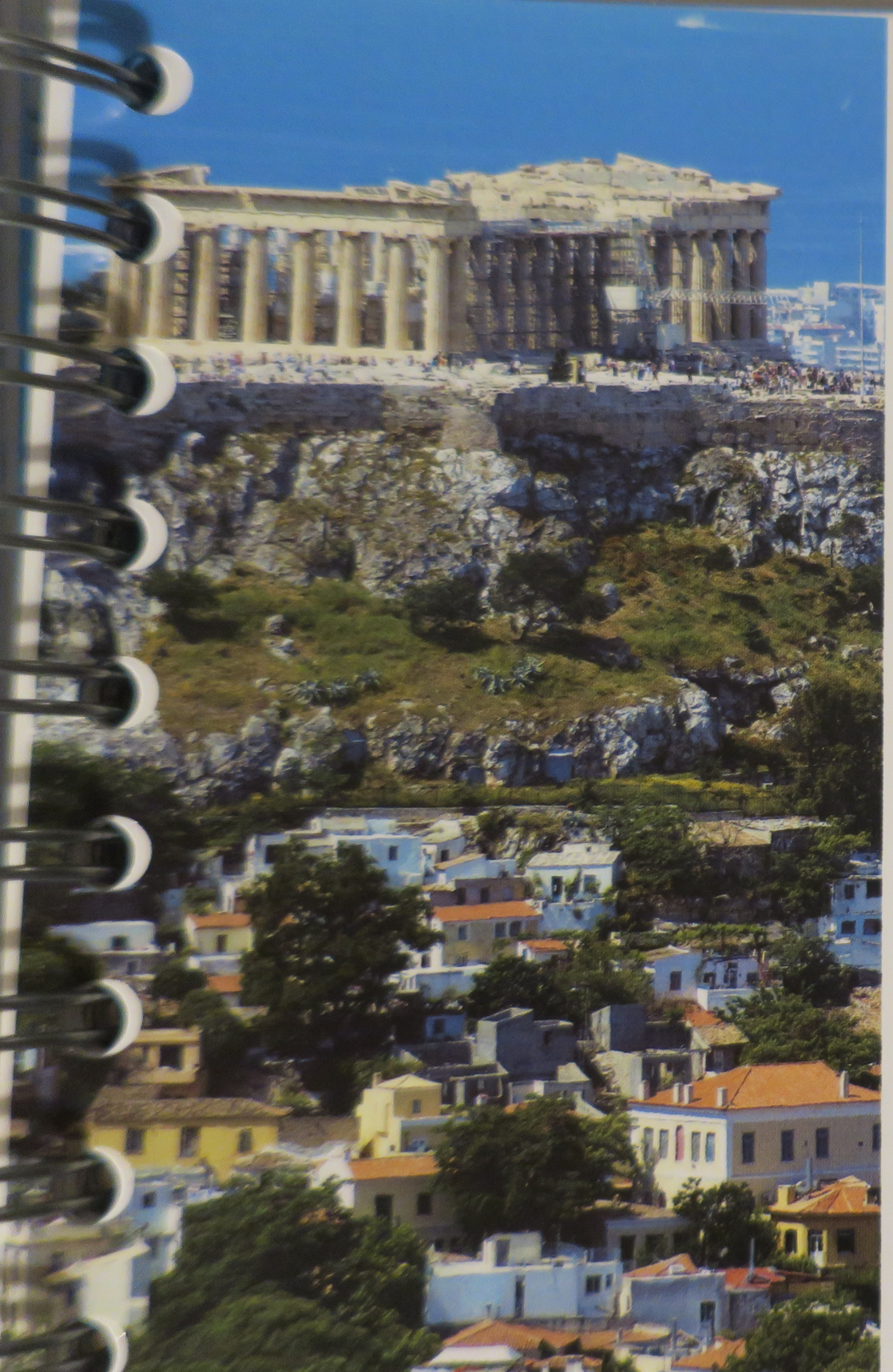
The Varvakeion Athena,
a small-scale copy of the statue
of Athena in the Parthenon

another and others have already mounted their horses. On the north side and in parallel on the south is the actual procession making its way towards the Acropolis. Represented are the riders, the racing chariots, the *thallophoroi* (elderly men holding olive branches), musicians, a host of cattle and sheep for the sacrifices, the *skaphephoroi* with trays full of fruits, the *hydriaphoroi* carrying water pitchers, the *kanephoroi* maidens with *kanistra* (baskets) on their head, with ribbons to bedeck the sacrificial animals, and others in the throng.

On the east side is the end of the procession. A group of men appears to be waiting for its arrival, another male figure receives the peplos from a child and a priestess takes offerings from two little girls. At the centre, last, are the Twelve Olympian Gods, who have come to the Acropolis to honour the great festival of Athena with their presence.

The interior of the Parthenon was not divided into three parts like most other temples, but into four: the pronaos, the cella proper, a square chamber behind the cella - that which gave its name to the whole building - and the opisthodomos. There was no communication between the chamber and the cella. The pronaos and the opisthodomos were prostyle, each with six Doric columns. The cella proper was called *hekatompedos*, that is it was 100 Attic feet in length (approx. 30 m.) and was divided into three parts by two, two-storey colonnades that surrounded the chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos at the far end of the cella.

Pausanias provides information on this colossal statue, which he saw in the second century AD. There are also various copies of it, the most important of which is the so-called Varvakeion Athena, now in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Of marble and



only 0.95 metres high, this statuette is much smaller than the original, which was about 10 metres tall and stood on a base about 2 metres high. The core of the cult statue was wooden, the flesh parts were of ivory while the garments, the helmet and so on were revetted with sheet gold. The gold parts weighed 1,150 kilogrammes and were detachable, meaning that they could be removed and reapplied at any time. This meant that when, on one occasion, Pheidias was accused by Pericles' enemies of having kept some of the gold for himself, he was able to prove his innocence by taking off the gold parts and weighing them.

The goddess was represented standing, in an Attic helmet impressively decorated with sphinxes and winged horses, and holding to her breast the *aegis* (a goatskin shield, a miraculous defensive weapon which Zeus had presented to his daughter Athena). In her right hand she held a chryselephantine Nike, almost 2 m. high, while her spear rested against her left shoulder. In her left hand she held her shield upright,

Parthenon, view from the southwest



Parthenon: Kekrops and Pandrosos, from the west pediment

on the inside of which was coiled the *oikouros ophis* (household snake) of the Acropolis. The inner surface of the shield was adorned with scenes of the Gigantomachy and the outer with scenes of the Amazonomachy. Pheidias was accused once again by Pericles' political opponents, this time of impiety because, as they claimed, he had represented himself as a bald old man and his friend Pericles as a hoplite in the Amazonomachy. Even the soles of Athena's enormous sandal were decorated with reliefs, these of the Centauromachy, while represented on the base of the statue was the birth of Pandora (whom Zeus had sent to earth to punish men after Prometheus had stolen fire), with gold figures affixed to the marble. Nothing has survived of the statue. According to one account, it was one of the many sculptures taken to Constantinople, where it was later destroyed by fire.

The Parthenon remained in good condition well into Roman times. The damage began in the Christian era when, in the reign of Justinian, the decision was taken to convert the large pagan temples into Christian churches. So the Parthenon became a church of the

Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) and later of the Virgin of Athens (Panaghia Atheniotissa). In 1204, the Franks of the Fourth Crusade turned it into a Catholic church, and after 1460 the Ottoman Turks used it as a mosque, even building a minaret at the southwest corner.

However, the Parthenon suffered its greatest destruction at the hands of the Venetians, who were besieging the Turkish-held Acropolis. On 26 September 1687, the Venetian doge Francesco Morosini set up his artillery on Philopappus Hill, opposite, and bombarded the Acropolis. A shell fell on the Parthenon, causing an explosion of the gunpowder that the Turks were storing inside it and reducing Iktinos' masterpiece to a pitiful ruin. And as if this were not enough, Morosini tried to remove some of the statues from the west pediment, which fell down and smashed in the process.

In 1802, Lord Thomas Elgin, at that time Ambassador of Great Britain to the Sublime Porte, obtained the sultan's permission to remove a few stones and inscriptions from the Parthenon and other monuments on the Acropolis. At his behest, 14 metopes, 17 of the statues from the two pediments, almost two-thirds of the frieze, one column capital - which he sawed in two to transport it more conveniently - and many more pieces from the other monuments were taken. These are nowadays exhibited in the British Museum.

As soon as the late Melina Mercouri became Hellenic Minister of Culture, she spoke about these marbles at the international conference of ministers of culture from 119 countries, held in Mexico in 1982, and requested their repatriation. Since then and to this day, the Greek Government continues its efforts to achieve this goal.

THE ERECHTHEION

To the magnificence and masculinity of the Doric Parthenon is juxtaposed the Attic elegance and feminine grace of the Erechtheion. Its architect, to us anonymous, succeeded in finding solutions to particularly difficult problems, such as the great difference in ground level and the motley crowd of gods and heroes whose cults were observed here. The Erechtheion was no ordinary temple dedicated to the worship of just one deity, it was the most sacred space on the Acropolis, a temple of numerous gods and heroes, and a tomb of heroic kings of prehistoric Athens. So skilfully did the architect accommodate all these elements that he presented a seemingly harmonious architectural unity.

Worshipped in this sacred space were Mother Earth (Ge) and Hephaistos, Athena and Poseidon. Buried here was Erechtheus who had subjugated Eleusis, introduced civilization to Attica and whose identity was later conflated with Poseidon. He, like the mythical King Kekrops, was represented with a serpentine lower body, in order to emphasize that he was an 'earth-born' or autochthonous hero of Attica. Here was kept the sacred *xoanon* of Athena and here dwelt the sacred *oikouros ophis*. Next to this space were the tomb of Kekrops and a sanctuary dedicated to his daughter Pandrosos, nursemaid of Erechtheus.

The Erechtheion (421-406 BC), a singular building in the Ionic order, served the cult of various chthonic deities associated with Athenian tradition. The temple comprises a central building and porches on the northwest (left in the photo.) and the south side (in the middle), where six Karyatides uphold the roof. This part of the temple is built on the foundations of the destroyed Archaios Naos, which can be seen in the foreground. An outstanding feature of the exterior of the Erechtheion is the frieze of dark grey Eleusinian stone, to which figures sculpted in white Pentelic marble were affixed. To the west of the monument were the Pandroseion and the tomb of Kekrops. ▶



The building of this monument was also among the ambitious plans of Pericles, even though work did not begin until after the Peace of Nikias, in 421 BC. The project was interrupted during the ill-fated Sicilian Expedition and the temple was finally completed in 406 BC, by the architect Philokles.

The interior arrangement of this rectangular building with its many peculiarities and secrets is not known for certain, because many parts were demolished when it was transformed into a Christian church in the seventh century AD. Nevertheless, it is certain that the east porch with the six slender Ionic columns, 6.80 metres high, led into the temple of Athena Polias. Above the three-level Ionic epistyle runs a frieze of dark Eleusinian marble, to which white marble reliefs were attached. Unfortunately the remains are so scant that it is impossible to restore the subject presented.



Erechtheion, detail

Inside the marble cella stood the very ancient cult effigy of the goddess, the *xoanon* made of olive wood – the olive was the goddess's sacred tree. The Athenians believed that it had been carved without the agency of human hand and had indeed fallen from heaven (*diipetes*) to honour the city of Kekrops. In the ritual of the Panathenaia this *xoanon* was robed with the peplos that had been woven by the young *arrhephoroi*. In front of the goddess was the gold lamp with



Erechtheion, east prostyle porch

the undying flame, which was filled with olive oil only once a year and the smoke from which escaped through a bronze palm tree. These were works of the sculptor Kallimachos, who because of his passion for detail and perfection was dubbed '*katatexitechnos*' (a compound epithet derived from the words *kata* (much) + *teko* (to melt) + *techne* (art), since he melted the statues excessively in his effort to make them perfect).

The cella of the temple of Athena did not communicate with the west part of the building, which was dedicated to Poseidon-Erechtheus and was entered through the wonderful Ionic porch on the north side of the Erechtheion. This section was three metres lower than the temple of Athena, because it followed the natural gradient of the ground, and was divided into two parts. In the east one Poseidon-Erechtheus was worshipped and there were altars of Hephaistos and the hero Boutos, while underneath was a crypt of uncertain purpose, perhaps the dwelling place of the *oikouros ophis*, to which offerings were made each month.

The west part was called '*prostomiaios*' because it was a chamber before the well-head (*stomion*) of the cistern located in its southwest corner and which should be identified as the Erechtheis Sea, that is the brackish water which, according to Athenian myth, gushed forth when Poseidon struck the rock with his trident. Pausanias narrates that the sound of the waves could be heard here whenever a south wind was blowing.

The most memorable external feature, however, is surely the north porch, comprising four columns on the front and two at the sides. Wherever one looks, one cannot get one's fill of the beauty of its sculpted decoration, with the Ionic column capitals more ornate than

usual, the coffered ceiling and above all the imposing portal frame carved with rosettes and palmettes, which would all have been painted and embellished with gilded metal ornaments in Antiquity. The north porch of the Erechtheion is the most resplendent jewel of Attic art, which attained its apogee in the late fifth century BC. In the ceiling there is a hole that was never closed, because it was believed to have been made by a thunderbolt hurled by Zeus, or, according to another version, by the trident of Poseidon when he quarrelled with Athena. Correspondingly, there was a gap in the floor, in which three holes can be seen, like traces of a trident on the rock. Pilgrims made libations there.

To the right of the north porch is a doorway leading into the Pandroseion, the temenos of the nymph Pandrosos, where Athena Pallas offered her great gift to her city: the olive tree. The tree we see today was planted by Queen Olga in the early twentieth century, on the site of the ancient sacred olive.



Erechtheion: Karyatid



The most original and admirable architectural creation in the Erechtheion is the porch of the Korai, which is situated on its south side, opposite the Parthenon. These are the familiar Karyatides, a name which prevailed from the Roman period onwards, perhaps because the figures reminded the ancients of the beauty of the girls from the city of Karyai in Lakonia, who performed ritual dances in honour of Artemis.

The Karyatides are six lovely maidens who proudly behold the Parthenon and the sacred way along which the Panathenaic procession passed. On their head they bear a *kalathos* embellished with Ionic cymatium, through which the roof of the porch is supported. They wear an ankle-length chiton with pleats recalling the flutes of Ionic columns, and although they appear to stand firmly on the stylobate, the flexion of one leg imparts a sense of ease and grace, as if they are oblivious to the weight of the roof they uphold. The figures appear at first sight to be identical, but when examined more attentively, each one has a distinct personality. One has pierced ears and there are minor differences in the hairstyle. On all of them, however,

Erechtheion: Porch of the Korai

the hair falls on the shoulders so as to reinforce the weak point of the statue's neck. Their arms have not been found, but it is possible that with one hand they held their dress and in the other an attribute, perhaps a phiale.

The second Karyatid from the left, on the façade, was removed on the orders of Lord Elgin and a cast put in its place. The Athenians were so upset by the loss that grandfathers told their grandchildren that the laments of her five keening sisters could be heard in the dead of night. Today all the Karyatides of the Erechtheion are replicas, while the originals have been transferred to the Acropolis Museum in order to protect them from atmospheric pollution and other hazards.



Erechtheon: Ionic capital

The idea of substituting Korai for columns is not an innovation on the Erechtheion, since it is encountered on earlier monuments such as the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi. Nonetheless, the reason for their existence at this point on the building is one of the unanswered questions and mysteries that the Erechtheion conceals. Certainly it must be connected in some way with King Kekrops, who was buried in a prehistoric grave under the porch.

Despite the many changes made to the Erechtheion – by Christians when they converted it into a church, by the Franks – who used it as a palace, by the Turkish garrison commander who housed his harem there, the building survived in quite good condition until 1827, when a large part was destroyed by bombardment during the War of Independence.

THE NEW ACROPOLIS MUSEUM

The Acropolis Museum was founded in 1878. The New Acropolis Museum was inaugurated on 20 June 2009. It is located about 300 metres southeast of the Parthenon, in the historical Makrygiannis neighbourhood. The building, of 14,000 square metres, constructed in glass, marble and cement, tells the story not only of Solon, Peisistratos, Kleisthenes and Pericles, but also of Socrates, Plato, Pheidias.

The exhibits are unique, universal and, above all, radiant.



On entering the museum, the visitor encounters a glass floor, beneath which the finds brought to light while digging the foundations of the museum are preserved and enhanced. An entire ancient neighbourhood, which the visitor will be able to tour in about one year from now.

Just beyond the museum foyer is the first gallery, that of the Slopes of the Acropolis. Quite spacious and with a glass ramp, it alludes to the ascent to the Sacred Rock. On one side are finds from the sanctuaries on the lower slopes of the Acropolis, and on the other are objects of everyday life, used by the wealthy residents of this area. At the centre of the hall, welcoming visitors, are two terracotta Nikai (Victories), which come from a settlement of the Roman Age on the south slope of the Acropolis.

At the far end of the gallery is a glass staircase, at the top of which are exhibited sculptures from the pediment of the Hekatompedon or the Archaic Parthenon. At the centre of the poros pediment, painted in vivid colours, are two lions attacking a bull, while at the left edge, Herakles vanquishes Triton, a sea monster with human head



and fish tail. Coiled on the right side of the pediment, watching the struggle, is a three-bodied daemon, with three torsos of a man, terminating in a snake tail. In all probability this is a representation of Nereus, also a sea-daemon, with the ability to metamorphose, as is perhaps implied by the attributes held in the hand of each of the three bodies: water, fire and bird (a clever way of denoting air).

We have already entered the gallery of Archaic Works, in which visitors are able to wander freely among the statues, all displayed freestanding so that details of their body and hairstyle can be clearly seen. At the centre is the Kritias Boy and around him are dozens of Korai, since the deity worshipped on the Acropolis was Athena, and fewer Kouroi with proud deportment, and alongside them the famous Horsemen and the votive plaques.



Nereus or triple-bodied monster

The Boy (480 BC) is a marble statue of a young athlete, with fine features and handsome body. His hair is wound round a circlet. His eyes were of another material. In this work, the sculptor Kritias frees the body from its static form.

The Korai are votive statues that the Athenians dedicated to their goddess for her delight - the Greek word for statue (agalma) derives from the verb to delight (agalloumai) - and, since this is their mission, the Korai should smile. The great archaeologist Christos Tsountas observed that perhaps this famous Archaic smile was born by chance, in the craftsmen's efforts to emphasize the curvature of the lips. It was liked, however, and was soon achieved intentionally, so as to impart a sweet, happy expression and radiance to the face.

For the first time in the history of Western culture, the statue was no longer a cold and inanimate representation but a vital and expressive creature, who thinks, feels, communicates with gods and mortals. The



The Kritias Boy



The Chian Kore

first Korai were produced in the workshops of Ionia in the sixth century BC and were much appreciated by Athenian artists, who continued to sculpt them in their city. All are beautiful, richly coloured, with elaborate hairstyles, dressed in chitons and draped himatia, and adorned with jewellery.

Impressive and coquettishly attired is the large Kore, while the visitor's gaze is surely captured by the Kore with almond-shaped eyes and discreet sombre smile.

The Peplophoros Kore is so called because she wears a plain Doric peplos over a flimsy chiton. And although the garments are smooth, without drapery, and the statue appears at first glance very archaic, the artist succeeded, through gentle modelling and few curves, in conveying the lines of the Kore's body and giving her life, which culminates in her bright, smiling face with beaming gaze and wavy hair on which traces of red pigment are preserved.

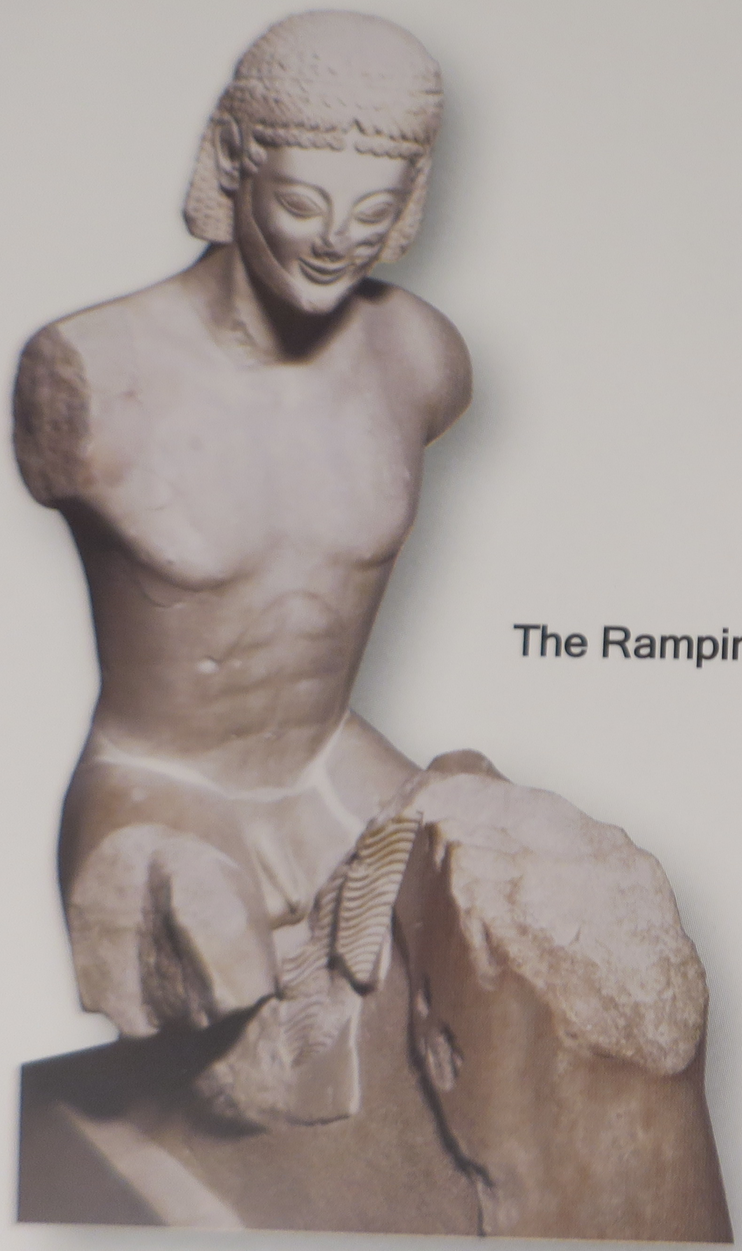
The Chian Kore, bedecked in jewellery and with

embroidered robe, preserves quite a lot of her coloration. Perhaps the tallest Kore, 2 metres high, more serious and majestic than the others, is attributed to the sculptor Antenor. Very important too is the Kore who does not smile at all, heralding the period of the 'Severe Style' and known as the Kore of Euthydikos, from the name of its dedicator.

The famous Moschophoros or 'Calf-Bearer' (ca 570 BC), carved in Hymettan marble, is a votive statue of a young man named Rhombos, who comes from some demos in Attica to offer the calf for sacrifice to the goddess. It resembles closely contemporary Kouroi. As in these statues, the left leg is to the fore and the characteristic Archaic smile lights up the face. However, this figure is not an independent statue but a composition, characterized by the calm and tenderness of the dedicator. The eyes were inlaid in coloured stones and, although these are missing, the face is expressive and lively,



The Moschophoros



The Rampin Rider

in sharp contrast to the impassive head of the calf, which is resigned to its fate.

In the same gallery is the best known of the Archaic horsemen on the Acropolis, the so-called Rampin Rider (ca 550 BC). It is named after the French collector who at one time owned its head. This is now in the Louvre Museum and a cast of it has been placed on the statue. The rider's body is angular and strong. His hairstyle is sophisticated and crowned by a wreath of oak leaves.

Equally superb is the relief of 'Mourning Athena', a work in the Severe Style, in which the goddess is represented simply garbed in a Doric peplos, leaning against her spear and contemplating a stele.

Visitors go up to the third storey of the museum, where is the second gallery, which is devoted to the world famous Parthenon sculptures. Here, the Parthenon frieze is incorporated into the rectangular

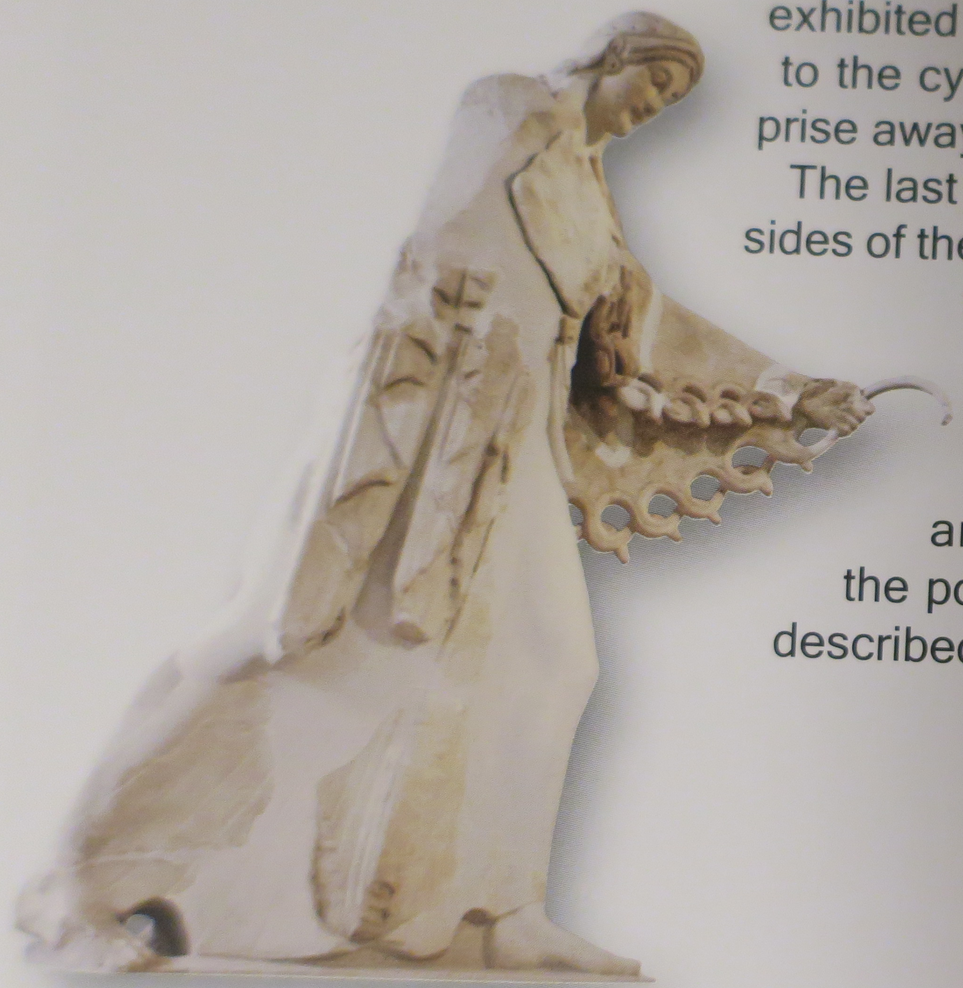
concrete core of the building, which is of the same dimensions as the cella of the Parthenon.

With the metopes placed between the columns, the development of the figures on the two pediments and the unification of the authentic sculptures that escaped the predations of Lord Elgin with casts of those now in the British Museum, we have, for the first time, the opportunity of admiring the entire sculpted decoration of the Parthenon. A decoration filled with action, with scenes of Gigantomachy, Centauromachy and Amazonomachy.

However, the most original and unique sculptural decoration of the temple is the frieze, which represented the procession of the Panathenaia, the greatest festival of Athens. Of overall length 160 metres, it features some 600 figures of gods, men and animals. The greater part of the frieze



Pensive Athena



Statue of Athena from the Gigantomachy pediment

is in the British Museum and one badly mutilated block exhibited in the New Acropolis Museum bears witness to the cynicism of Elgin, who used even a crowbar to prise away the relief representation.

The last part of the exhibition is on the west and north sides of the gallery of Archaic Works. Displayed here are the coffers from the ceiling of the Propylaia, the sculptures of the frieze and the parapet of the temple of Athena Nike, the sculptures of the frieze of the Erechtheion and, of course, the authentic Karyatids from the porch of the Erechtheion. All these have been described in detail in the respective chapters.

THE THEATRE OF DIONYSOS

Dionysos was the god of vegetation, the vine and wine, and his cult spread rapidly throughout Greece during the sixth century BC. A horrendous death awaited anyone who denied Dionysos, such as King Pentheus, as we see in Euripides' tragedy Bacchae. According to Athenian tradition, when the god reached Attica he came ashore at Marathon, which was in the deme of Ikaria (mod. Dionysos). King Ikaros received him with honours and the god taught him how to tend the vine. But the king's subjects, who drank wine for the first time, thought that Ikaros was trying to poison them, killed him and buried him under a tree.

This episode is a myth to explain the beginning of worship of Dionysos in Attica, in which women of all ages abandoned themselves to orgiastic rites. Transformed into maianads, they rushed into the woods and vales, where they killed billy goats and ibexes and ate their raw flesh, in order to awaken the dead god and bring the renewal of vegetation. All these sacred rites were associated with vegetation, fertility, death and eternal resurrection, and aimed at the purification and reinvigoration of the forces of life. In springtime the Dionysia continued with grandness and good humour, with dances and hymns, with the rustic, improvised

The theatre of Dionysos was founded in the late 6th century BC and was renovated several times in its history. In the Roman period it had a two-storey Corinthian scaenae frons, decorated with statues of Satyrs and Sileni. The Doric paraskenia, which had been built in Hellenistic times, were kept. The theatre was entered through two marble propyla and in conspicuous positions in the cavea stood portrait statues of Roman emperors. Many of the marble seats in the front row (proedria) and in the cunei were reserved for high-ranking officials, whose names are inscribed on them. Visible on the left is part of the odeum of Pericles. ▶







Theatre of Dionysos: marble seats from the proedria

song, the dithyramb, and mime performances with action (Gr. drases), from which the word drama derives. The men of the chorus were dressed in goatskins and resembled satyrs. The ode of the goats (Gr. tragoi) was the seed from which tragedy sprouted.

In the sixth century BC, Peisistratos introduced the worship of Dionysos to Athens and organized the Great Dionysia, which were celebrated in the month of Elaphebolion (March-April). At that time a great actor and poet appeared, Thespis from the deme of Ikaria. He instituted the first actor and wrote the texts that the chorus and actor would recite, whereas these were formerly improvised. The texts now referred to the sufferings not only of Dionysos but also of other historical and mythological figures. The mask was introduced, because the actor played several roles, and with a portable stage the Arma Thespidos (Cart of Thespis), that is strolling players, toured all the demes of Attica. Usually they erected the stage opposite some natural elevation, so that the spectators could watch the performance unimpeded. In front of the stage the chorus danced in the orchestra (which means literally dance floor, since it derives from the Greek

verb orchoumai = to dance) a circular dance around the altar of Dionysos, the *thymele*.

The south slope of the Acropolis, where there was the sacred precinct of Dionysos Eleuthereios, was an excellent place for creating the cavea of a theatre. That is why the earliest of the known ancient theatres was built there, with wooden seats and a wooden moveable skene. In this theatre, in the fifth century BC, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes were presented for the first time.



Votive relief

In the fourth century BC, during the archonship of Lykourgos, the cavea was rebuilt of stone and acquired the form it has to this day, whereas the skene was altered many times in the ensuing centuries. The maximum width of the cavea is 100 metres and the maximum depth 90 metres. It had 78 rows of seats, which were divided into two tiers by a diazoma that was also the passage of the Peripatos, the road encircling the sacred rock. The greater part of the theatre has been destroyed, but it is estimated to have held an audience of about



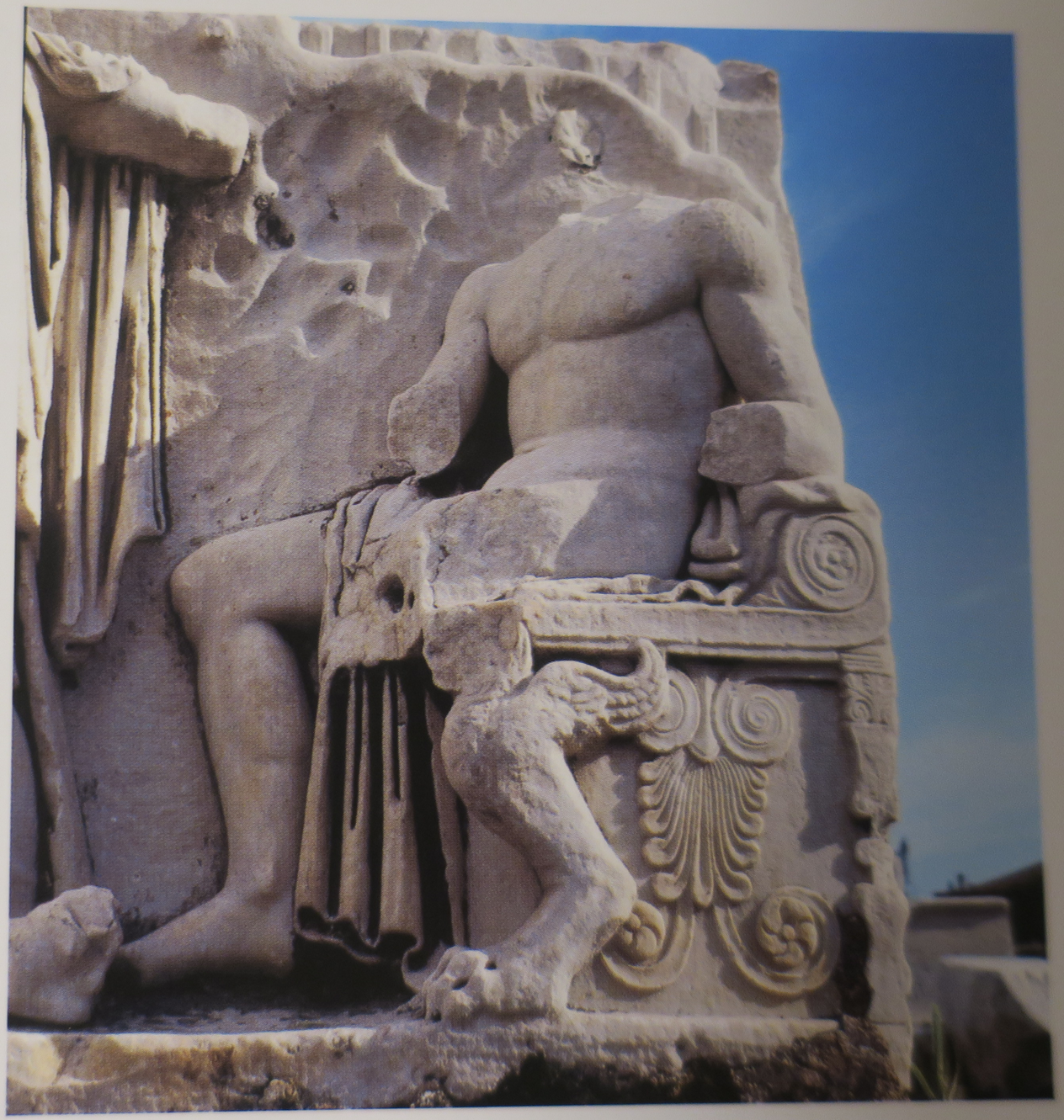
Reliefs from the so-called Bema of Phaidros

17,000. The 67 marble front seats were very elegant and intended for officials, archons and priests. At the centre was the throne reserved for the priest of Dionysos Eleuthereos.

In Roman times the form of the theatre changed twice, once in the reign of Nero (1st century AD) and once in the archonship of Phaidros (3rd century AD). The proscenium was enlarged and brought down into the space of the orchestra, which thus became semicircular. A magnificent two-storey scaenae frons was erected in the area of the skene, the orchestra was paved with marble slabs and a parapet was built around it to protect the spectators from the gladiators and wild beasts. Sometimes the back of the parapet was blocked, the orchestra was filled with water and mock naval battles were fought with model ships, a particularly popular spectacle in the imperial period.

The sculptures adorning the proscenium today represent scenes from the mythological cycle of Dionysos. The first relief, left, illustrates the birth of the god: Zeus seated and Hermes in front of him with the infant, while at either edge the Curetes dance the *pyrrhichion*.

The Curetes were daemons who raised Zeus and were worshipped mainly in Crete. They were considered creators of the war-dance called the *pyrrhichion*. Next, Ikaros is depicted sacrificing a goat to the god, and beside him are his daughter Erigone and her dog Maira. To the right is Dionysos with a Satyr, then comes a Silen in an Atlas pose, followed by gods and heroes paying homage to Dionysos, below the rock of the Acropolis. Satyrs and Silens were



Zeus, relief from
the proscenium
of the theatre of Dionysos



Monument of Lysikrates

daemons of the forests and mountains, devotees of Dionysos and symbols of fertility.

To the northeast of the theatre of Dionysos, the old Plaka quarter of the city of Athens begins. There, in Lysikratous Street, stands another elegant ancient monument, popularly known as 'Diogenes' Lantern' but which is in reality the choregic monument of Lysikrates. Choregoi were wealthy Athenians who undertook to sponsor dramatic performances in the theatre of Dionysos and competed with one another as to who would present the best. The winner was awarded a bronze or gilded tripod. Lysikrates was one such victor and built this monument in 334 BC, in order to set upon it the tripod he had been given as a prize.

THE STOA OF EUMENES

Between the Theatre of Dionysos and the Odeum of Herodes Atticus extends the Stoa of Eumenes II, King of Pergamon, which was built in the second century BC by this admirer of Athens, to provide shelter for spectators in the event of bad weather and to be used as a place to stroll. It was 164 metres long, constructed of poros and marble, and housed *exvotos* and choregic monuments. Above the stoa are the ruins of the Asklepieion, the sanctuary of the healing god Asklepios, which was built in 421/0 BC, after the plague which decimated Athens, whilsk the city was in the throes of the Peloponnesian War.

THE ODEUM OF HERODES ATTICUS

Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes was a wise and noble Athenian citizen who hailed from the deme of Marathon and lived in the second century AD. He was an eloquent orator and mentor of all the Sophists and many distinguished personalities of the day, among them the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. He served as Eparch of Asia, while in Athens he was honoured with the office of high priest of the Panathenaia. It was then that he devised a way of concealing the wheels of the ship carrying the peplos of Athena to the Acropolis, so that it appeared to glide. Herodes Atticus inherited

from his father an enormous fortune, which he used for public benefit projects, such as revetting the Panathenaic Stadium with marble, building therapeutic bathing pools at Thermopylai, the Nymphaion at Olympia, the Stadium at Delphi and so on. When his wife Aspasia Annia Regilla died, Herodes mourned her excessively and in AD 161 he built in her memory the odeum that now bears his name.

The Odeum of Herodes Atticus is built in the type of the Roman theatres. The skene is 35.40 metres long and two-storeyed, the orchestra is 18.80 metres in diameter and paved with black and white slabs of Karystos marble, while the auditorium, which comprises 32 rows of seats, has a capacity of about 5,000. The roof was of cedar wood. The façade, a large part of which still survives, was magnificent, three-storeyed, with arched architraves over the portals. The cavea has been restored and every summer, during the Athens Festival, it fills with people – as in Antiquity – who come to watch not only performances of ancient drama but also concerts, ballets and operas.

The auditorium of the Odeum of Herodes Atticus (AD 161) is 97 metres in diameter and has a capacity of 5,000 spectators. The semicircular orchestra was paved with marble flagstones in two colours. In the lower part of the skene building were elaborate architectural structures, while in the upper were three ranks of archways and niches, in which statues were placed. However, the most impressive architectural achievement of the odeum was its wooden roof, which did not rest on internal supports. ▶



THE OLYMPIEION

The area of the Olympieion is filled with mythological and historical memories. To the south of the *peribolos*, where the River Ilisos once flowed, was a chasm in the ground which the Athenians believed was the spot where the last of the receding waters from Deukalion's flood vanished. Indeed, they claimed that at this point Deukalion had built an altar dedicated to Zeus. Here existed the Kallirrhoe Spring and the Cave of the Nymphs, and somewhere hereabouts Boreas abducted Erechtheus' daughter Oreithyia, whilst she was picking flowers on the banks of the Ilisos. It was in this area that the heroic last king of Athens, Kodros, came out disguised as a peasant, sickle in hand, and beseeched the Dorians to kill him, in order thus to save his city and his people. Close to the Kallirrhoe Spring, in the shade of a plane tree, Socrates gathered his disciples, while not far away were the most important gymnasia in ancient Athens, the Kynosarges and the Lyceum (Gr. *Lykeion*, after Apollo Lykeios).

The temple of Zeus Olympios is built upon a large terrace, 200 metres long by 130 metres wide. The *peribolos*, 668 metres in perimeter, is built of poros and supported by buttresses at 5.30 metre intervals. Building of the temple began in the time of Peisistratos, in the sixth century BC. The

The colossal Corinthian temple of Zeus Olympios is presented here in its third, Hellenistic phase. It was completed in Roman times. There were 3 rows of 8 columns on front and back, and 2 rows of 20 columns on the long sides. The ceilings of the ptera were coffered and the cella was most probably only partially roofed. Around the edge of the grand, paved precinct of the temple stood statues of Emperor Hadrian, dedicated by the Greek cities. Visible in the background, right, is a Roman bathhouse. ▶





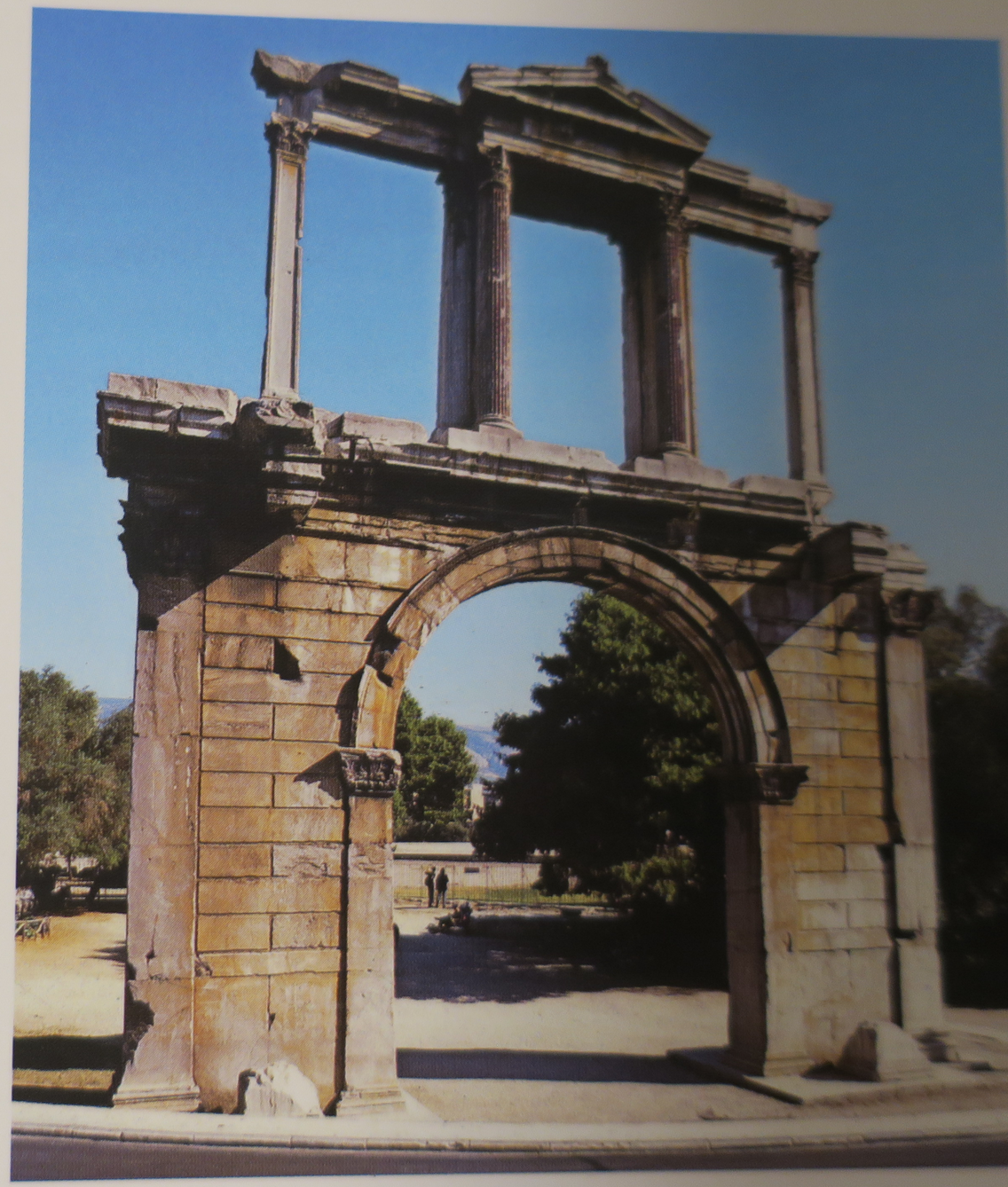
first temple was of poros, with huge columns 2.38 metres in diameter, but was never finished. In 175 BC, Antiochos IV Epiphanes tried to continue the project and commissioned the Roman architect Cossutius Decimus to supervise works. He changed the plan of the temple, used Pentelic marble for its construction and put up columns in the Corinthian order. Again work stopped, because of Antiochos' death. The temple was not completed until AD 132, by Emperor Hadrian, that is seven centuries after Peisistratos had begun the project.

The temple is in the Corinthian order, dipteral, with two rows of 20 columns on each long side and with three rows of eight columns front and back. Of this forest of 104 gigantic columns, 17.25 metres high, only 16 survive today. Inside the sanctuary there was a chrys-elephantine statue of Zeus and close to this a second statue portraying Hadrian. This colossal temple, which was one of the largest in Antiquity and the largest in the Corinthian order (110.35 x 43.68 m.), was greatly admired in the ancient world. The Roman author Titus Livius (Livy) remarked that it is the only temple on earth whose size is commensurate with the greatness of the god.

The neighbourhoods which developed around the temple were called the New City or Hadrian's City. They were separated from the Old City at the point where the Athenians erected the Arch of Hadrian, in honour of the great benefactor of Athens. The monument consists of an arched gateway, above which is a row of four Corinthian columns, the middle two of which are crowned by a small pediment. On the narrow frieze on the east side, above the arch, there is an inscription which declares: 'This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus'. Correspondingly, on the west side, is another inscription: 'This is Athens, the old city of Theseus'.

A short distance from the Olympieion, on the left bank of the Ilisos, is the Panathenaic Sta-

dium, which was first laid out in the archonship of Lykourgos, in the fourth century BC, and rebuilt of marble by Herodes Atticus, in the second century AD. It was destroyed in the dark ages of the Ottoman Occupation but in the late nineteenth century Georgios Averoff, benefactor of the nation, paid the expenses of revetting it with marble, so that the first International Olympic Games of the modern age could be held at this venue in 1896.



Arch of Hadrian

THE AGORA

The site of the ancient Agora is dominated by the Theseion. This lovely marble temple, built atop the hill of Agoraios Kolonos, is preserved in very good condition and though smaller than the Parthenon rivals it in beauty and architectural perfection.



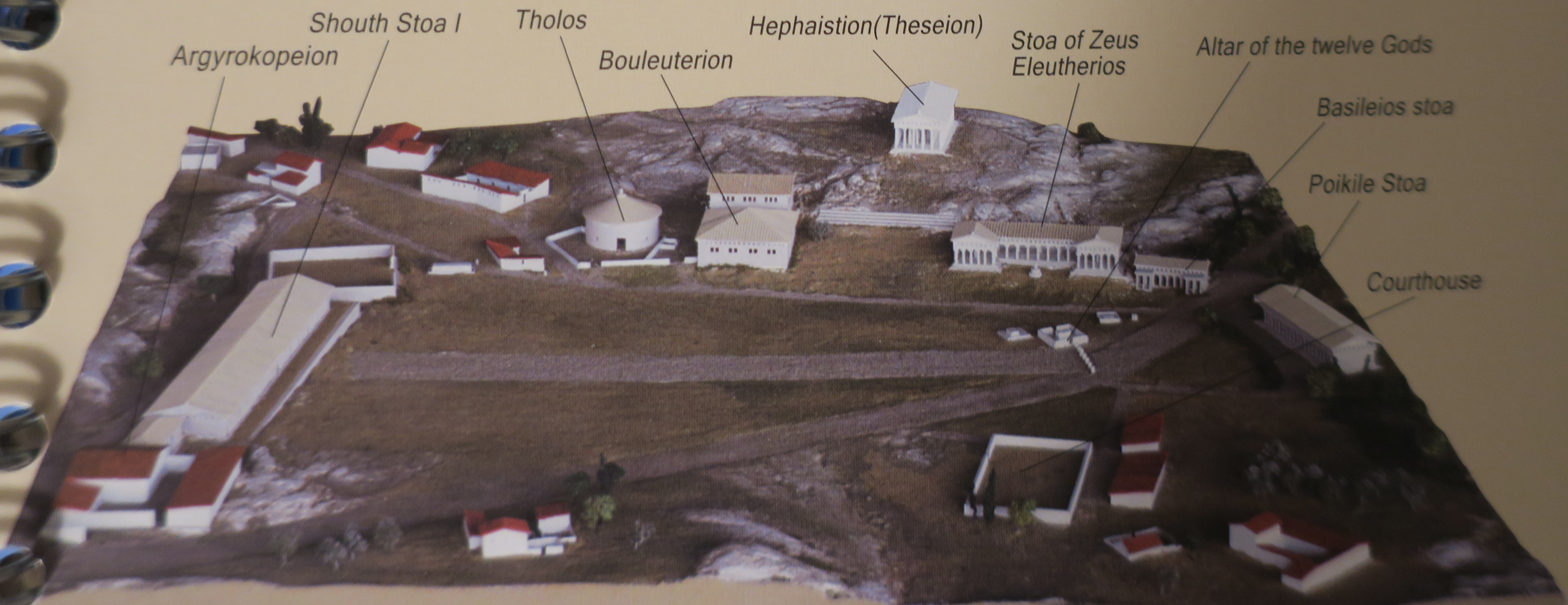
The name Theseion had been given long ago to the temple and to the surrounding area, although it is now known to be a misnomer, since the temple was in fact dedicated to Hephaistos and Athena. Traces of foundries and workshops have been found on the

Temple of Hephaistos, Theseion

slopes of the hill and Hephaistos was patron god of smiths and metalworkers, while Athena was patron of craftsmen and particularly potters (Gr. *kerameis*), after whom the surrounding area was named Kerameikos (i.e. 'Potters' Quarter').

Building of the Hephaisteion began in the mid-fifth century BC and seems to have been completed around 420 BC. The architect is anonymous to us, but is the same as built the temples of Poseidon at Sounion, Nemesis at Rhamnous and Ares in the Athenian Agora. The temple is in the Doric order, peripteral, with six columns front and back and 13 on the long

Maquette of the Agora, as is was in the 4th century BC



sides. The columns display a slight entasis and incline lightly towards the centre, as on the Parthenon. The cella housed the statues of Hephaistos and Athena, works of the great sculptor Alkamenes. Represented on the metopes were the Labours of Herakles and of Theseus, while the subjects of the reliefs of the internal frieze were the Centauromachy and the Battle of Theseus against the Pallantides – the 50 sons of Pallas, brother of Aegeus, who revolted against Theseus to claim the throne but were vanquished by him. A few fragments of the statues from the two pediments, which represented most probably the Centauromachy and perhaps the Apotheosis of Herakles, are exhibited in the Stoa of Attalos. In Christian times the Hephaistion was converted into a church of St George, which was used for worship until 1833, when the temple was declared a national monument.

Between the hills of Agoraios Kolonos and the Areiopagos lies the site of the ancient Agora, which was the heart of public life in Athens. In Antiquity the Agora was not only a venue for commercial transactions, but also the place where citizens met to learn news and discuss matters, since the means of communication available in a modern city did not exist. The word agora derives from the verb ageiro, which means to gather, to assemble. The Agora is an irregular quadrilateral space bounded by stoas and rows of buildings, and traversed diagonally by the

The Roman Agora, of Caesar and Augustus (late 1st century AD), is enclosed by an Ionic colonnade of Hymettan and, in some places, Pentelic, marble. During the reign of Hadrian the whole area was paved with marble flagstones. On the north and south (right in the photo.) sides the surrounding stoa had a second row of Doric columns with smooth shafts, whereas on the west and east sides there were shops. The two propyla of the building (the east one is visible in the background) led to the eastern and the western quarter of the city. ▶



Triton from the Odeum of Agrippa

Panathenaic Way. Here were the public services, government buildings, civic sanctuaries, portrait statues of 'the good generals and the Tyrannicides'.

Visible on its west side and at the foot of the hill of the Hephaisteion are the circular foundations of the Tholos, which was the headquarters of the state administration. It was here that the 50 prytaneis of the 'presiding tribe' - that is one-tenth of the bouleutai -, who held executive power for 30 days, took their meals. Some of them stayed in the Tholos day and night, on the alert. The Tholos was built in 470 BC to replace an earlier building which had been destroyed by the Persians. The standard weights and measures found there are now

The Odeum of Agrippa, built in AD 15, was 25 metres high - the tallest building in the Agora. It had large windows on three sides and was surrounded by two-storey porticoes lower down. In a second phase, *c.* AD 150, the south part probably functioned as a lecture hall and the north as a concert hall with about 500 seats. Spectators entered through an impressive open portico with statues of Tritons and Giants instead of columns. Statues of seated philosophers also adorned the entrance until AD 267, when the building was destroyed in the Herulian raids. ▶

displayed in the Stoa of Attalos. To the north of the Tholos was the New Bouleuterion, constructed in the late fifth century BC. This was where the Boule of 500 assembled. East of the Bouleuterion are the foundations of the Metroon, which housed the sanctuary of the Mother of the Gods and the state archives.

In front of these buildings was the enclosure of the Eponymous Heroes. Set on a high, continuous marble pedestal were bronze statues of the 10 heroes who gave their names to the 10 tribes of Attica. All citizens frequently passed this way because on the façade of the dais were wooden 'notice-boards', on which public announcements, official reports, amendments to legislation, conscription commands etc. were posted. A little beyond the Metroon are the foundations of a small temple of the fourth century BC, which was dedicated to Apollo Patroos, because Apollo was father (Gr. pater) of Ion, founding-father of the Ionians. Adjacent to this temple was a Π-shaped stoa in which Zeus was worshipped as god of freedom (Zeus Eleuthereos).

In the same line, a little way beyond the railway track, is the Basileios Stoa, seat of the Archon Basileus, under whose presidency the council of the Areopagus frequently convened there when crimes of murder, arson and impiety were being tried. Recent excavations

The Tholos (470 BC), a circular building, stood in the southwest part of the Agora, next to the Hellenistic Metroon and the Bouleuterion (visible right). It had a socle of poros blocks, built in the isodomic system, and an upper structure of mud bricks coated with thick plaster. Characteristic features were the conical roof with imbricated tiling and the Ionic tetrastyle propylon, which was added in Roman times. There is evidence of the existence of two windows, either side of the entrance. The small outbuilding directly right of the propylon housed the kitchen facilities essential for preparing the meals for the prytaneis, who dined in the Prytaneion. ▶



have brought to light, north of Adrianou Street, part of the Poikile Stoa, erected by Kimon around 460 BC.

The temple of Ares that stood in the Agora was a construction of the fifth century BC, which that was relocated here in the first century BC. To the north of it was the altar of Twelve Gods and to the south the odeum that was built in the late first century BC by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa and could accommodate an audience of 1,000. The colossal statues of one Giant and two Tritons we see today originally adorned the odeum and in secondary use decorated the propylon of a large later building which was possibly the commandery or lodgings of the Byzantine empress Eudokia, the Athenian-born wife of Emperor Theodosius II the Younger.

There were three stoas on the south side of the Agora - the Middle, the East and the South - and west of the last was the Heliaia, perhaps the biggest and most formal Attic courthouse. Occupying the east side of the Agora is the now fully restored Stoa of Attalos, which was built in the second century BC by King Attalos of Pergamon. Two-storeyed, 116.50 metres long and 19.50 metres deep, it today houses many interesting finds from the Agora excavations. Adjacent to the stoa is a street which led to the place of the Agora in Roman times.

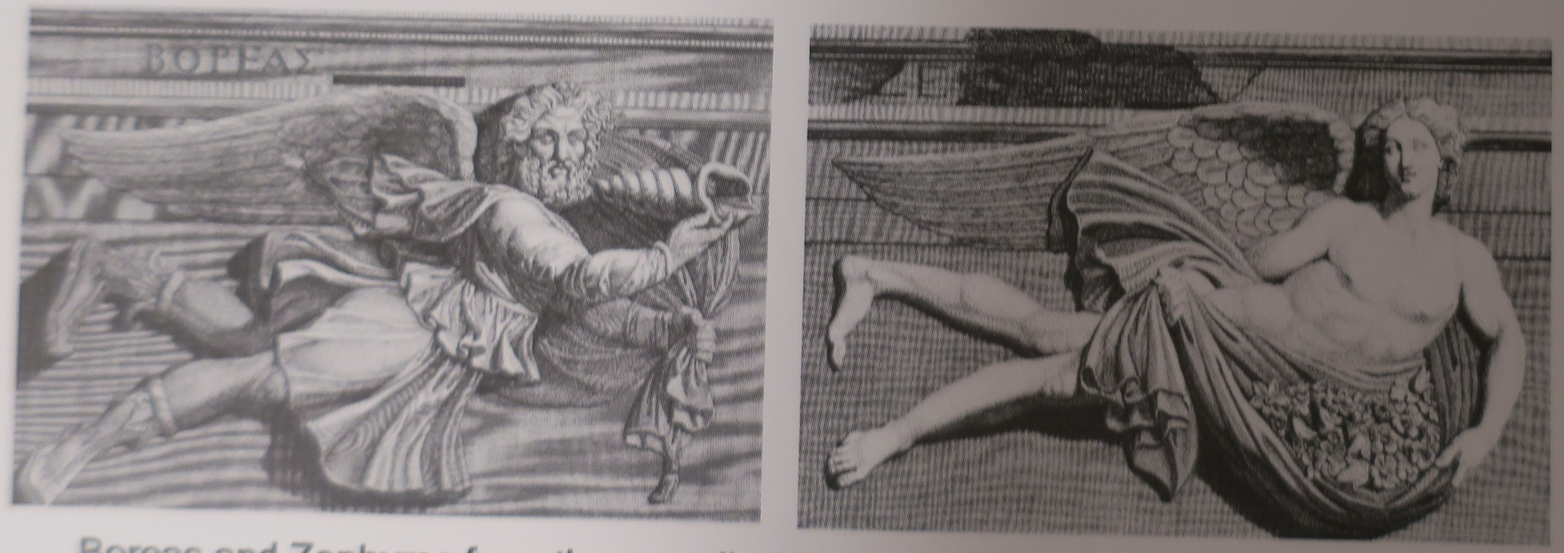
East of it stood a huge building of the second century AD, known

The entrance to the Library of Hadrian (2nd century BC) faces the ancient Agora. In contrast to the other walls, which are of poros, the wall on the entrance side is of Pentelic marble. On the right is the majestic fourcolumned propylon in the Corinthian order, which is flanked by a series of Corinthian columns with smooth, monolithic shaft set upon a base of marble from Karystos. The cornices with modillions followed the projecting colonnade. Dominant feature of the interior was the peristyle of 100 Phrygian marble columns. ▶



as the Library of Hadrian, which included lecture halls, a library, a concert hall and a lovely garden with pool.

The best-preserved monument in this area is the Horologion or Clock-tower, which was built by the astronomer Andronikos from Kyrrhos and served as a sundial and a water-clock for the Agora. It is in the form of an octagonal tower, on each side of which are reliefs with personifications of the winds, which is why it is popularly known as the Tower of the Winds.



Boreas and Zephyros from the so-called Tower of the Winds

The octagonal building that housed the water-clock (horologion) of Andronikos Kyrrhestos (2nd century AD) is constructed of Pentelic marble and stands on a three-stepped crepis. Represented on the entablature of each of the eight sides are relief figures of the winds; there was a sundial on each side too. At the two entrances are two-columned propyla in the Corinthian order, while the cylindrical projection at the back housed a water cistern. This virtually abutted the so-called Agoranomeion, to which a monumental stairway from the propylon of the Agora also led. The conical marble roof of the Horologion was crowned by a bronze weathervane in the form of a Triton. ▶



THE KERAMEIKOS

Two neighbourhoods of ancient Athens, situated on the northwest side of the city and belonging to the deme of Kerameis of the Akamantis tribe, were known by this name: Exo Kerameikos, which was *extra muros*, and Eso Kerameikos, which was *intra muros* and constituted the central part of the city, the Agora. The name Kerameikos derives from the potters' workshops that existed in the area. The two Kerameikoi communicated via the Dipylon (Double Gate), which was the main entrance to the city of Athens. This comprised two gateways in the west part, 3.45 metres wide and protected by two towers, and another two gates and two towers respectively in the east part, between which was a courtyard 21.50 metres wide by 36.50 metres long. This yard, closed in all directions, was a trap for any enemy who tried to breach the entrance.



View of the Kerameikos excavations from the southeast

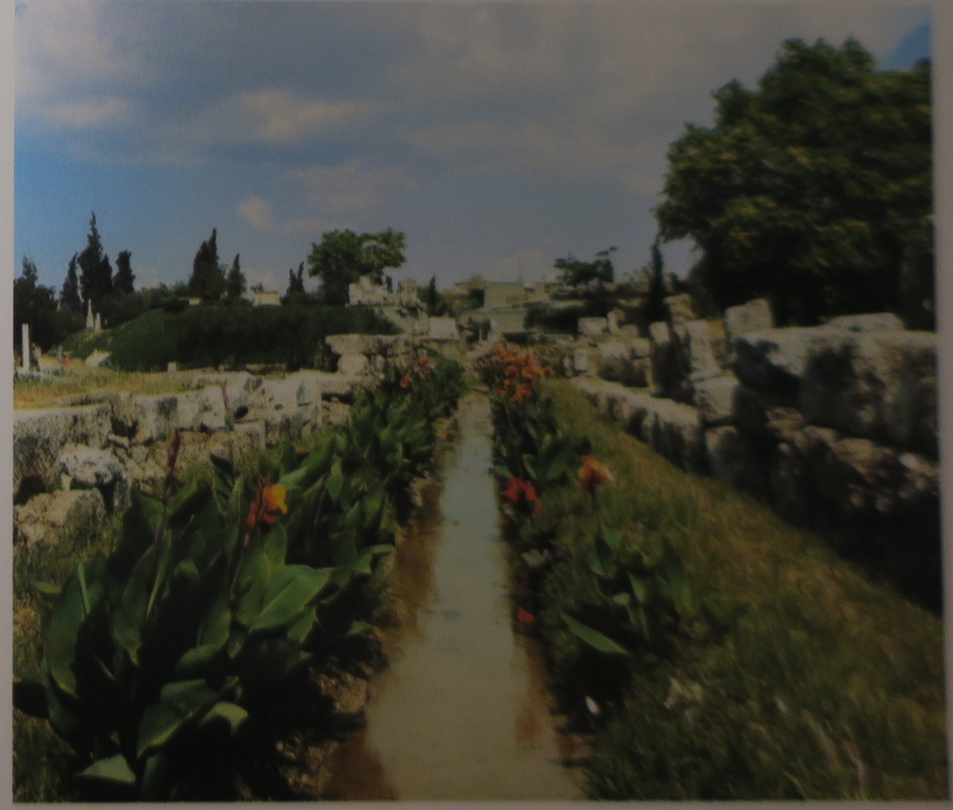
The Dipylon was the starting point for the roads leading to the Piraeus and to the Academy of Plato, while from inside it began a wide avenue, the Pana-



Marble loutrophoros, 4th century BC

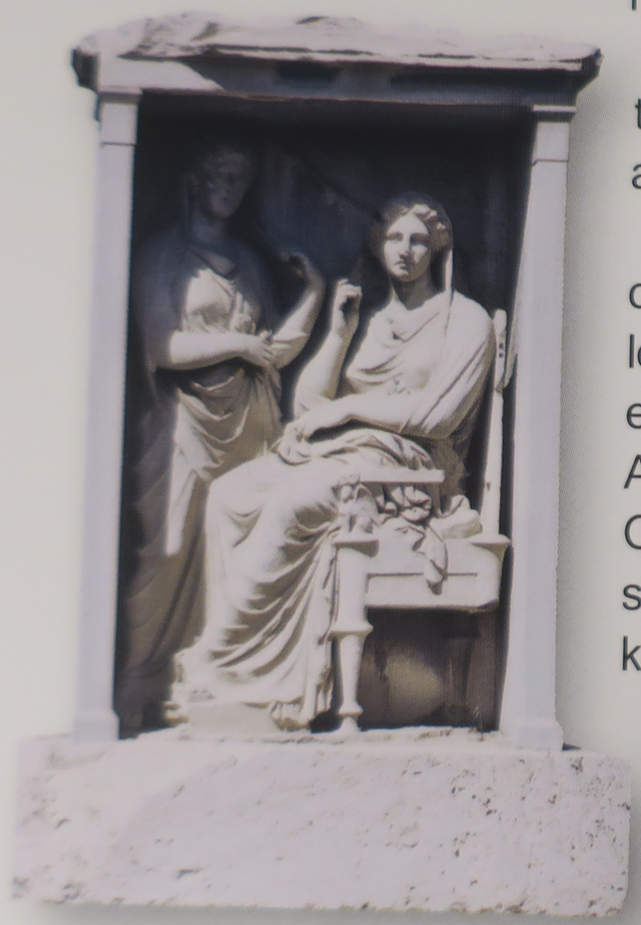
thenaic Way, which crossed the Agora and terminated on the Acro-polis. Not far to the southwest of the Dipylon there was a second gate, also fortified, which was called the Hiera (Sacred) Pyle because from here ran the *Hiera Hodos* (Sacred Way), along which the procession of the Eleusinian Mysteries progressed to Eleusis. Alongide it ran the River Eridanos, which is today just a small stream. Between the Dipylon and the *Hiera Pyle* stood a building complex known as the Pompieion, inside which all preparations were made for the major festivals, such as the procession of the Panathenaia.

The Athenians buried their dead outside the city walls and so over the years Exo Kerameikos was turned into the most important cemetery of ancient Athens. The most significant part of this cemetery was the road leading to the very lovely suburb of the Academy, where Plato taught. It was an avenue 40 metres wide, lined by funerary monu-



River Eridanos

ments of distinguished Athenians, as well as by tombs with multiple burials *(polyandria)* of the heroes who fell in battle for the glory of Athens. In this sacred place Pericles delivered his famous Epitaph speech and the funerary orations of Demosthenes and Hypereides were heard. Here too, as Pausanias informs us, were buried the reformist Kleisthenes, the politician and general Thrasyboulos, the tyrannicides Harmodios and Aristogeiton, the orator Lykourgos, and Pericles himself.



Grave stele of Demetria and Pamphile, 4th century BC

The best preserved and most impressive part of the cemetery are the private tombs lining the Sacred Way and located south of the church of the Holy Trinity. These tombs were embellished with wonderful monuments that bear witness to the Athenians' good taste as well as to their respect of the dead. Outstanding are the tomb of Dionysios, with a very handsome statue of a bull, and the tomb of Dexileos, a horseman who was killed at the age of 20 years in the Corinthian War of 394 BC. Represented on the superb relief that adorns his tomb is a young man on horseback slaying his opponent who has fallen to the ground. The spear and the other accoutrements were of bronze. Some of the finds from the Exo Kerameikos have been removed to the National Archaeological Museum, while others are displayed in the on-site Kerameikos Museum.

THE NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM



The National Archaeological Museum, situated in Patision Street, was founded in the late nineteenth century. It is the largest museum in Greece and the most important museum in the world for the study of ancient Greek civilization.

The earliest finds exhibited date from the Neolithic Age, that is from around the late seventh millennium to 3000 BC. They come from all over Greece as well as from Troy, but mainly from the citadels of Sesklo and Dimini, which are located in Thessaly, near the town of Volos.

Neolithic man was no longer a nomadic hunter-gather who dwelt in caves but was a farmer and stock-raiser settled in permanent organized villages. He used stone and bone tools to till the soil, to build, to spin and to weave. He made a host of vases, at first monochrome and later bichrome and trichrome, painted with simple but lovely geometric motifs - zigzag lines, spirals and meander pat-

Geometric amphora from the Dipylon



Large Cycladic figurine

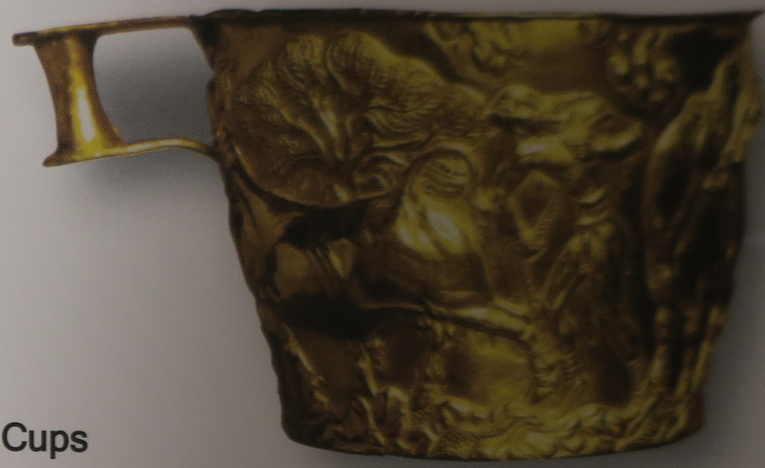
terns. Another kind of decoration was to incise motifs in the clay with a pointed tool. He also made clay figurines, characteristic among which are the *kourotrophos* no. 5937, that is a female holding a baby in her arms, the female figurine, no. 5940, and the steatopygous type, no. 5941, with exaggerated breasts and buttocks. The statuette no. 5894 is of a male figure, seated, with pronounced genitalia. Obviously these last examples are associated with fertility and reproduction.

An important part of the Prehistoric Collection is devoted to Cycladic Culture. This is the conventional name given to the Bronze Age culture that flourished in the islands of the Cyclades from the early third to the late second millennium BC, in order to distinguish it from the other two cultures which developed in parallel in the Aegean, the Minoan on Crete and the Helladic on the Greek Mainland. It is a singular culture with its own distinctive physiognomy. From the white marble of Paros the Cycladic islanders made vessels and figurines. These figurines are the hallmark creation of Early Cycladic Culture and are very reminiscent of modern sculpture. They are schematic but very elegant and on the majority the bodily proportions are correctly rendered. They were found in graves, in which they were placed presumably to ward



Mycenaean sealstone





The Vapheio Cups

off evil and protect the dead. Most of them are female figures. Outstanding among the male examples are two musicians: one standing and playing a double aulos (no. 3910) and the other seated on an elaborate throne and playing a harp (no. 3908). The use of the clay 'frying-pan' vessels, which are flat on one side, with incised decoration, and hollow on the other, remains an unsolved puzzle. One suggestion is that they were filled with water and used as mirrors.

The picture of Aegean culture is completed by the famous wall-paintings of Thera. Excavations close to the modern village of Akrotiri have brought to light a prehistoric city which was buried under a thick layer of pumice and pozzuolana (Theran earth), after the eruption of the island's volcano around 1650 BC. The so-called Spring fresco, the fisherman, the boxing boys, the antelopes, the young priestess, and the expedition of the fleet are wall-paintings full of light, colour and the joy of life, which adorned the houses of this



Gold funerary mask of an Achaean king

city. Exhibited in the other galleries on this floor is an unrivalled collection of ancient Greek vases, Geometric, black-figure, red-figure and so on, as well as other pottery.

The most splendid collection in the museum is the Mycenaean. It is impossible to do justice, not just here but in a whole book, to this magnificent and fascinating chapter of Greek history. All we can do is remember a few salient points. First, that the name Mycenaean is given to the civilization which flourished in mainland Greece in the Late Helladic period (1580-1100 BC). Second, that in 1876 Heinrich Schliemann discovered the royal shaft graves on the citadel of Mycenae, proved

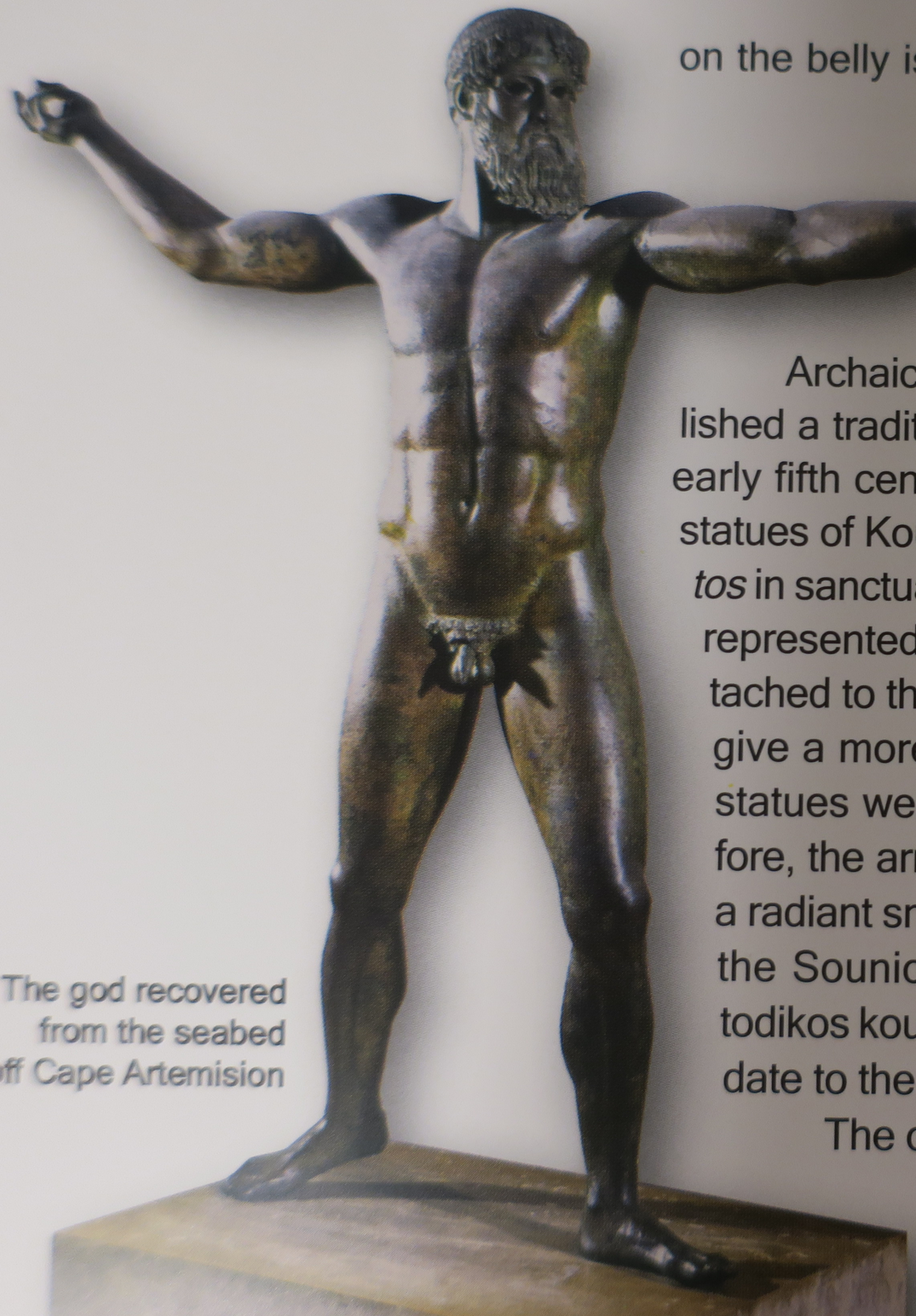
the existence of the Mycenaean civilization and the historical basis of the Homeric epics, in which no one previously believed. Third, that in 1952 the British architect Michael Ventris deciphered Linear B script and discovered that the language of the Mycenaeans was Greek.

In this gallery the visitor can marvel at the pure gold masks that covered the face of the dead, the exquisite jewellery, seal rings with various devices, bronze daggers inlaid with gold and silver decoration, swords with gold hilts, miniatures in ivory, the astonishing Vapheio cups, the 'warrior vase' and the wonderful wall-paintings from Mycenae and Tiryns.

Around 1100 BC the last Greeks, the Dorians, arrived from the North, ushering in a period of upheavals and migrations, during which the use of iron spread throughout Greece. The most characteristic monumental works of the Early Iron Age are large clay vases with geometric decoration, from which the period is conventionally named Geometric. An outstanding example of Geometric art is a clay amphora 1.62 metres high, which was found near the Dipylon and was a funerary monument. Depicted



The Valomandra Kouros



The god recovered from the seabed off Cape Artemision

on the belly is the deceased surrounded by mourners. The most typical pattern is the meander or Greek key, in numerous variations. The amphora is a work of mature Geometric art and dated around 750 BC.

Archaic sculpture appeared around 700 BC and established a tradition that lasted for two hundred years, until the early fifth century BC. Its most distinctive creations are the statues of Kouroi and Korai, which were dedicated as *ex-votos* in sanctuaries or set up on tombs. At first the kouroi were represented *en face* with the legs joined and the arms attached to the sides of the body. In time the artists began to give a more accurate rendering of the human body. The statues were enlivened, with the left leg projected to the fore, the arms bent at the elbow and the face illumined by a radiant smile. We can see the great progress made from the Sounion kouros, no. 2790 (*c.* 600 BC) to the Aristodikos kouros, no. 3938, and the Kroisos, no. 3851, which date to the end of the Archaic period.

The collection of sculpture from the Classical period

(5th and 4th centuries BC) is exceptionally rich. Among the most impressive exhibits are the Poseidon or Zeus of Artemision. This splendid bronze statue, which epitomizes all the harmony and balance of the Classical spirit, was brought up from the seabed off Cape Artemision in Euboea and represents either Poseidon poised to throw his trident or Zeus ready to hurl his thunderbolt. It is dated around 450 BC and is possibly a work of the renowned artist Kalamis. Outstanding among the reliefs is a large marble work from Eleusis, representing the goddess of agriculture Demeter presenting a sheaf of wheat to the Prince of Eleusis, Triptolemos. Behind him, Demeter's daughter Persephone, full of tenderness, observes the scene.



Head of the ephebe from Antikythera

Likewise rich is the collection of Classical marble sepulchral monuments of extraordinary art. Some are funerary stelai, such as that of Hegeso, no. 3624, and others that are in the shape of a vase, such as the lekythos of Myrrhine, no. 4485. The grave stele from the Ilisos, no. 869, shows the dead youth, his father contemplating him sadly, and at the youth's feet his faithful dog and slave boy lamenting him.

Spectacular among the Classical statues is the bronze ephebe of Antikythera, work of a Peloponnesian artist, although the actual subject is not certain. Remarkable too are the bronze Marathon boy and the handsome head of a female, no. 3602, which was thought of old to portray the goddess Hygieia. The sculpture collection is completed by many love-



ly statues and reliefs of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, from Epidauros, Rhamnous and elsewhere in Greece.

Another important exhibit in the museum is the Varvakeio Athena, a small-scale copy of Pheidias' statue of Athena, which was housed in the Parthenon. The Diadoumenos is also a copy, made in Roman times, of the masterpiece by the great Argeian sculptor Polykleitos.

A masterpiece of Hellenistic sculpture (3rd-2nd century BC) is the boy jockey from Artemision, his face full of the passion characteristic of this era. Of the same period is the bronze expressive portrait of a man, no. 14612, which was found on the island of Delos.

The National Archaeological Museum hosts other interesting collections, such as those of bronzes, jewellery - donated by Helen Stathatos - and the Egyptian Collection.

Archaic grave stele of a javelin-thrower

SOUNION

Sounion lies 67 kilomteres southeast of Athens, at the point where the Attica Peninsula ends. Even the least romantic visitor will succumb to the majesty of the immense blue sea, will let his eye roam over the picturesque coastline and the small islets as he gazes out to the Peloponnese and the Cyclades, will be enchanted by the sunset and abandon himself to dreams.

The summit of the headland is, as it were, crowned by the white columns of the ancient temple, so wonderfully attuned to the landscape, because Sounion, like every corner of Attica, has its history, as always interwoven with that of Athens. A history going back to most ancient times, since graves of the third millennium BC and



various objects attesting to the existence here of a prehistoric settlement have been found.

Sounion became a cult centre at an early date. Already in Homer's *Odyssey* it is called *'hiron akron'*, that is, holy cape. The deities most worshipped here were Athena and Poseidon. Of course, the dominant figure in the Attic pantheon was Athena, but it seems that worship of Poseidon was equally deep rooted, since the Greeks were always a maritime people and the god whom sea-tossed mariners needed to placate was Poseidon. So it was his temple which stood on the highest point of the headland, whereas Athena was worshipped in a *temenos* (sacred precinct) on a hillock above the centre of the shore, about 400 metres from the temple of Poseidon.

On the coast of the west cove was the settlement of Sounion, which in Antiquity was one of the wealthiest demes of Attica. It belonged to the Leontis tribe until 200 BC and to the Attalis tribe thereafter. During the festival of the Panathenaia, a regatta was held at Sounion.

The Athenians were quick to grasp the great strategic importance of the cape and fortified it in order to control the sea routes to the islands and especially to Euboea, from where came the cargoes of grain to feed the population of Athens. This happened during the Peloponnesian War, after 413 BC, when the Spartans captured the fort of Dekeleia and

The marble temple of Poseidon at Sounion (c. 440 BC) is in the Doric order and peripteral, with 6 columns on front and back, and 13 on the long sides. It stood on a terrace which covered the Archaic foundations - now exposed -, in the midst of numerous ex-votos. The altar was located on the esplanade to the south (left in the photo.) and rituals took place here, as they probably did before the temple was built. On the pediment was a scene with Athena and Poseidon, and on the internal frieze - visible above the entrance - was the Centauromachy. The metopes were not decorated. ▶





blocked the overland route to Euboea. Mainly, however, the Athenians wanted to protect, at all costs, the greatest source of their wealth: the precious mines of argentiferous lead at neighbouring Laurion. The income from these mines had allowed them to build, at Themistokles' behest, 200 triremes with which they routed the Persian fleet at Salamis in 480 BC. So they built on the crest of the cape a semicircular wall, about 500 metres in length and more than 3 metres wide, reinforced with square bastions at 20-metre intervals. Many sections of this fortification are preserved in quite good condition, mainly on the northwest side, and below this point they cut the beach rock in the sea and constructed a small ship-shed for two triremes, which presumably patrolled the area.

The visitor enters the sanctuary of Poseidon, which occupied the summit of the rock, from the northwest side, where the foundations of a rectangular building, 15 x 8 metres, are visible. This was the propylaia or monumental gateway to the sanctuary, built of poros in the sixth century BC and later revetted with marble plaques.

Right of the propylaia is a square chamber, in all probability the guardhouse, and continuing on from this is a stoa 25 metres long and 9 metres wide, which had in addition to the columns on the façade a second internal colonnade of 6 columns. At right angle to this stoa, on the west side, extends another, smaller, stoa, 21 metres long and 5.50 metres wide. The devotees gathered in these stoas during the festive celebrations, particularly in inclement weather.

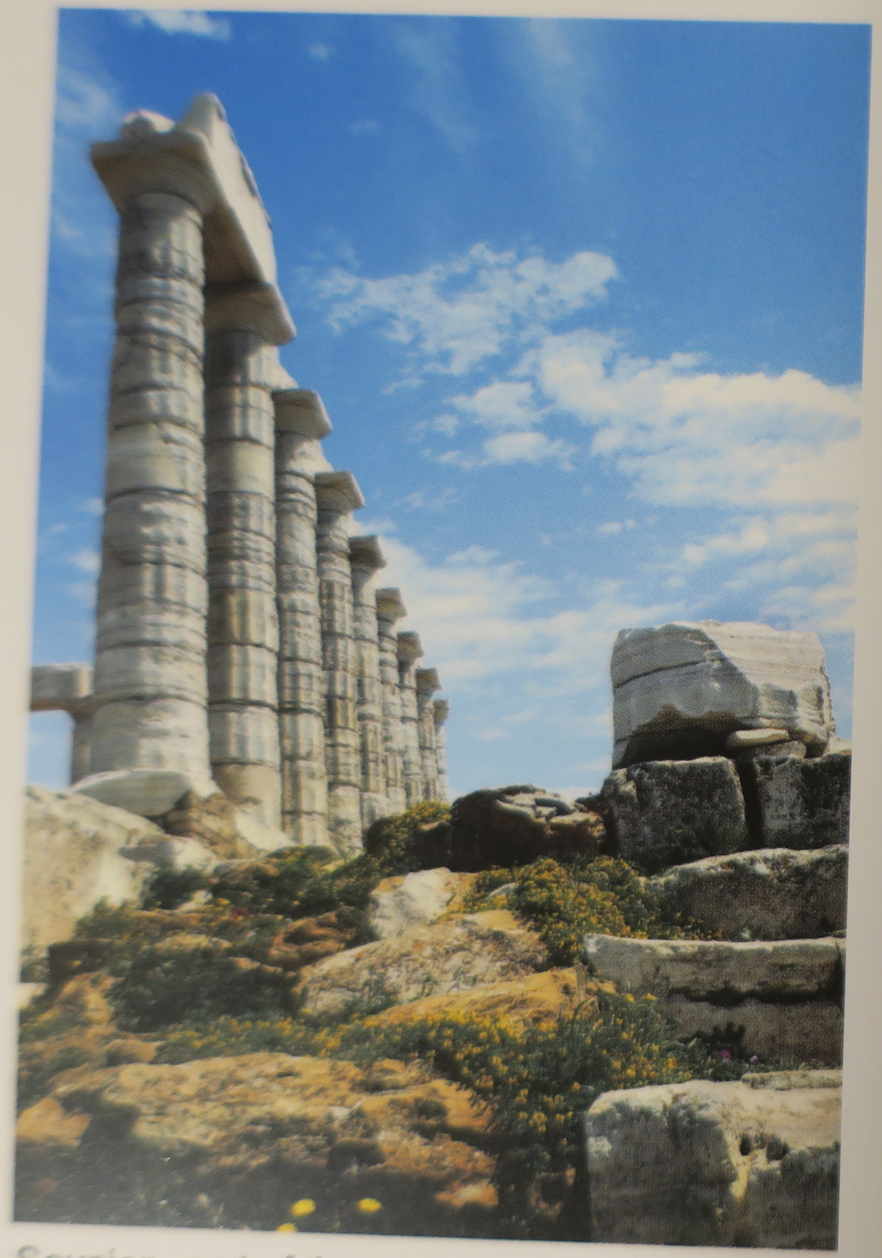
South of the propylaia, at a distance of some 30 metres, stands the temple of Poseidon, building of which was begun by Pericles, to replace a previous poros one which had also

fallen victim to the predatory Persians in 480 BC. The white marble of which the Periclean temple is constructed was from the quarries of Agrileza, which were very close to Sounion, above Laureotikos Olympos. This marble does not contain those elements present in Pentelic marble, thanks to which it acquires over time that warm honey hue distinctive of the Acropolis monuments. It is not as resistant as Pentelic marble either, and is eroded constantly by the briny spray of the sea. That is why the architect of the temple - anonymous to us - tried to make the flutes of the columns shallower and to reduce them to 16 instead of the usual 20. Archaeologists have come to the conclusion that this architect was the same one as designed the Theseion, the temple of Ares in the Athenian Agora and the temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous.



Interior of the temple of Poseidon

The temple stands on a crepis measuring 31 x 13.50 metres. It is Doric, peripteral and amphiprostyle, with six columns on front and back and 13 on the long sides. The columns are slender, 6.10 metres high, and do not display the entasis of the columns on the Parthenon. The interior of the temple comprises the pronaos, the cella in which there was the cult statue



Sounion, part of the colonnade of the temple of Poseidon

of the god, and the opisthodomos. The floor was entirely of marble.

There is no testimony of how this temple was destroyed, but it is obvious that this is due to the ravages of time and of human hands, particularly of sailors who used the column drums as ballast and so carried them to many European cities. One old tradition claimed that the temple was a palace in which a princess lived. Every day, as the first sunbeams fell, the princess left to visit her sister, who lived in the 'palace' of Aegina. Every evening, as the sun set behind the mountains of Aegina, she returned with the last rays of sunlight to the 'palace' of Sounion.

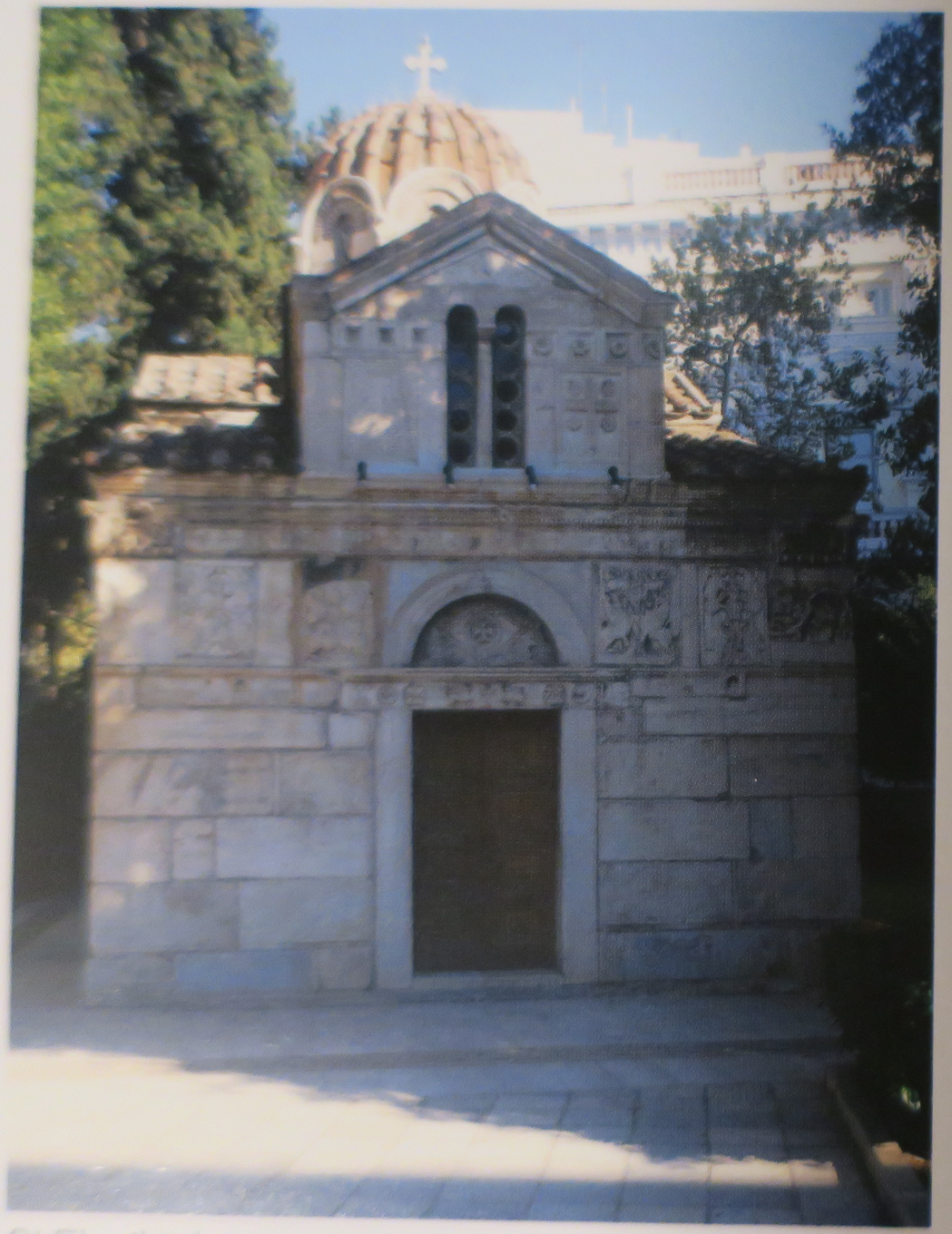
Just a few metres from and beside the temple, parts of 12 kouroi were found, two of which are colossal and now housed in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Sounion has inspired many poets, among them Lord Byron who carved his name on the right *anta* of the temple's façade.

BYZANTINE ATHENS

With the spread of Christianity and the demise of the ancient pagan world, the star of Athens began slowly but surely to wane, even though this city put up a stronger resistance to the change than others, thanks to its illustrious cultural heritage and the reputation and influence of its philosophical schools. However, Emperor Theodosius II, who abolished the last sanctuaries still functioning in the fifth century AD, and Emperor Justinian, who closed the philosophical schools in the sixth century, dealt a mortal blow to the city of Pallas. There is very little information on Athens from the seventh to the ninth century, but its insignificance can be assumed from the fact that it belonged administratively to the 'thema' (province) whose capital was Thebes. Even so, Athens managed to endow Byzantium with two important empresses: the very beautiful polymath and poet, Athenais-Eudokia, daughter of the sophist Leontios and wife of Theodosius the Younger, in the fifth century, and the equally beautiful and dynamic Irene the Athenian, wife of Leon IV, in the eighth century.

From the tenth to the twelfth century the city enjoyed a moderate revival. Constantinople showed interest in Athens. Emperor Basil the Bulgar-slayer visited the Parthenon, which was by then a church dedicated to the Virgin. Clerics of the stature of Michael Choniates came here, as well as artists who built numerous little but lovely churches. This creative period was, however, short-lived. Within a short time Athens reverted to being an impoverished backwater.

Of the 300 or so churches that seventeenth-century travellers saw in Athens, only



St Eleutherios

a handful survive to this day. The present metropolis (Greek Orthodox cathedral), dedicated to the Annunciation to the Virgin, was built in the mid-nineteenth century with spolia from 70 small churches which had been demolished.

Adjacent to the metropolis is the most original of all these churches, known as the small metropolis or the Virgin Swift-hearing (Panaghia Gorgoepekoos) or St Eleutherios. The icon of this saint inside the church is hung with hundreds of silver ex-votos (tamata) representing babies, because St Eleutherios is believed to 'free' (Gr. eleutheros = free) pregnant women, in this quality replacing the ancient Eileithyia or Eleutho, goddess of childbirth. This attractive little church was built in the twelfth century and is of cruciform plan with dome, but differs from traditional churches in the construction material.

The architect gathered together remnants of monuments (spolia) from virtually all the historical periods and placed them with unique skill and imagination so as to present a most harmonious ensemble replete with elegance and grace.

Visible on the south exterior wall are reliefs of various periods and friezes with triglyphs and metopes. On the west wall are ancient and Byzantine stelai, inscriptions and a relief with representation of dancing girls. On the north are stelai again, with decorative motifs, some with reliefs of human figures and one depicting vases upon shields. Last, on the façade of the church are two Corinthian columns, right and left, Byzantine reliefs with symbolic animals and the coat of arms of the Villehardouin and de la Roche families. Represented on the architrave are two lions flanking a cross, and just above is an ancient frieze with the Attic calendar. Various symbols from the zodiacal cycle denote the months and scenes



Kapnikarea

illustrate the main festivals in each, while at the right edge is the prow of the ship of the Great Panathenaia, which carried the peplos to Athena.

At the intersection of Ermou and Aiolou streets stands another Byzantine church, of the eleventh century, dedicated to the Virgin and known popularly as Kapnikarea, perhaps after the name or the occupation of the donor Kapnikaris, or after the Kamouchades, who wove opulent textiles in the neighbourhood. It is of cruciform type with a dome upheld by four columns. The exterior is particularly pretty and interesting, with careful masonry in which ancient architectural members are incorporated.

The church of Sts Theodore, not far from Kapnikarea in Aiolou Street, also dates from the eleventh century and is built of cloisonné masonry (stones encased by thin bricks). The church of the Holy Apostles, in the Agora opposite the Theseion, is eleventh-century too. The lower walls are of rubble masonry but in the upper parts there is ornamental brickwork with pseudo-kufic lettering.

The church of the Saviour of Lykodemos or St Nikodemos, which stands at the junction of Amalias and Philellinon streets, is of octagon type with dome. It was built in the early eleventh century by the donor Stephanos of the Lykos family. In the Ottoman period it was the katholikon of a monastery. In the mid-nineteenth century it was purchased by the Russian State on behalf of the Russian community in Athens. At that time the high bell tower was added and the interior was decorated by the Bavarian artist Ludwig Thiersch. The external masonry of the church is enlivened by a band of ornamental brickwork and other ornaments, such as stars and pseudo-kufic lettering.

THE DAPHNI MONASTERY

Daphni, which is 9 kilometres outside Athens, on the national road to Corinth, is the largest, most splendid and most important Byzantine monument of Athens. The polychrome marbles paving its floor and revetting its walls, and the superb mosaics executed with tesserae of different marbles - white from Penteli, yellowish from Paros, bluish from Hymettos and black from Eleusis - against the shimmering gold ground, inspired a folk poem:

'O golden Mistress of Daphni, great is your grace with the tessera, with the line, with the pearl.'

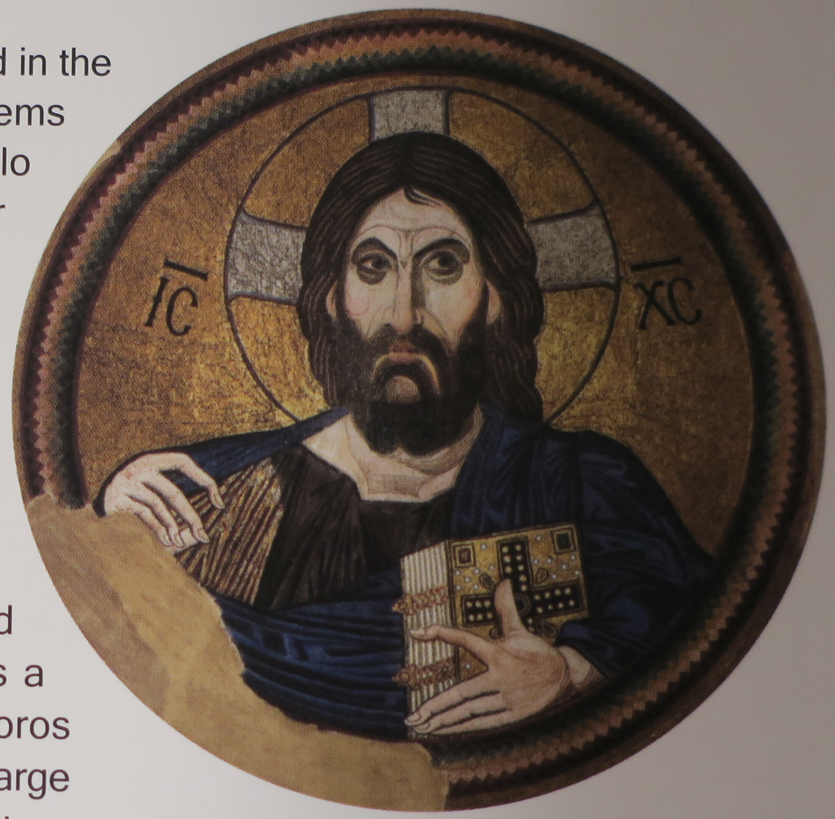
The monastery was built in the sixth century on the site of an ancient sanctuary of Apollo Daphnephoros, many



The Daphni monastery

architectural members from which were used in the construction of the katholikon. Indeed it seems that the foundation owes its name to Apollo Daphnephoros, even though there are other versions of the etymology, as well as the legend of Queen Daphne, whose life was in danger on her ship at sea and to thank God for her salvation built the monastery and endowed it with her entire fortune of countless florins in barrels.

After a period of decline, the monastery was reorganized in the eleventh century and the katholikon we see today was built. It is a church of octagon type, built of regular poros blocks and bricks in cloisonné masonry. The large dome is 8 metres in diameter and 5.27 metres high from its base. The interior is divided into the sanctuary, the naos, the narthex and a porch, the Gothic arches of which are a later addition made during the period of Frankish rule. Daphni is famed above all for its wonderful mosaics, which date from the late eleventh century. Illustrated on the large surfaces are scenes from the life of the Virgin and the life of Christ, and on the smaller ones (cross-vaults



Daphni monastery Christ Pantocrator

etc.) are depicted figures of prophets, saints and martyrs, as well as scenes from Holy Scripture. Apart from gold, the other dominant colour is white, seen on the garments of the saints, the wings of the angels and the dress of the Virgin. If we look carefully at the body of Christ in the Baptism, which is not hidden in the waves of the Jordan but can be seen clearly and is anatomically correct, at the noble and rather melancholy figures of a few young saints and angels, reminiscent of ancient ephebes, at the saints who resemble more closely ancient philosophers than the sunburnt hermits of the desert, we can understand how much the artist was influenced by the ancient Classical spirit. So we have here the phenomenon which is known as the Komnenian 'renaissance' (after the Komnenos dynasty of Byzantine emperors, 1057-1185). The same does not apply, however, to the figure of Christ Pantocrator, which occupies the vault of the dome and which has been compared with the famous statue of David by Michelangelo. With his brow furrowed with wrinkles, his face ascetic, his gaze penetrating and stern, this is not the sweet and pure Nazarene of love but the terrible god of the East, who will crush sin.

The monastery's floruit did not last long. In the thirteenth century the Franks came, under Otto de la Roche, and used Daphni as a family cemetery. Cistercian monks of the order of Cîteaux installed themselves in the monastery at that time. When the Ottomans arrived they expelled them and during the sixteenth century Orthodox Christian monks returned. The monastery was finally abandoned in the early nineteenth century.

THE KAISARIANI MONASTERY

The monastery of Kaisariani, which dates from the eleventh century, is situated on a picturesque slope of Mt Hymettos, amidst woodland of pine and cypress trees.

The sanctuaries of the ancient deities worshipped in the area (Aphrodite, Demeter) have left their traces on the masonry of the katholikon, the lintel of the refectory and even the fountain, in which an ancient marble ram's head - from the Archaic buildings on the Acropolis - has been placed. In Antiquity many springs of crystal clear water burbled here, which were considered miraculous and were believed to impart fertility, protect pregnancy and cure barren women.

The monastery was named either after the monk who founded it, perhaps named Kaisarios, or after an epithet of the Virgin 'Syriani', or after an icon of the Virgin that originated from Kaisareia.

Within the precinct wall, which in former times protected the monastery from invaders, are the bathhouse, which follows the tradition of the Roman thermae, the monks' cells, the refectory and the kitchen with the chimney, as well as the katholikon of the monastery, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin.

The narthex of the katholikon, the side chapel *(parekklesion)* of St Anthony, the bell tower and the other buildings of the monastery complex were built later, during the Ottoman period. At that time, as well as earlier in the Byzantine Age, the monastery was

an important spiritual and intellectual centre, with a library and a school.

The katholikon is a cruciform church with dome supported on four columns with Ionic capitals. Its construction is austere and geometric, with cloisonné masonry devoid of decorative brickwork, the only decoration being the bricks set in parallel arcs above the windows. Noteworthy is the marble iconostasis, which is made of materials from an antecedent Early Christian church.

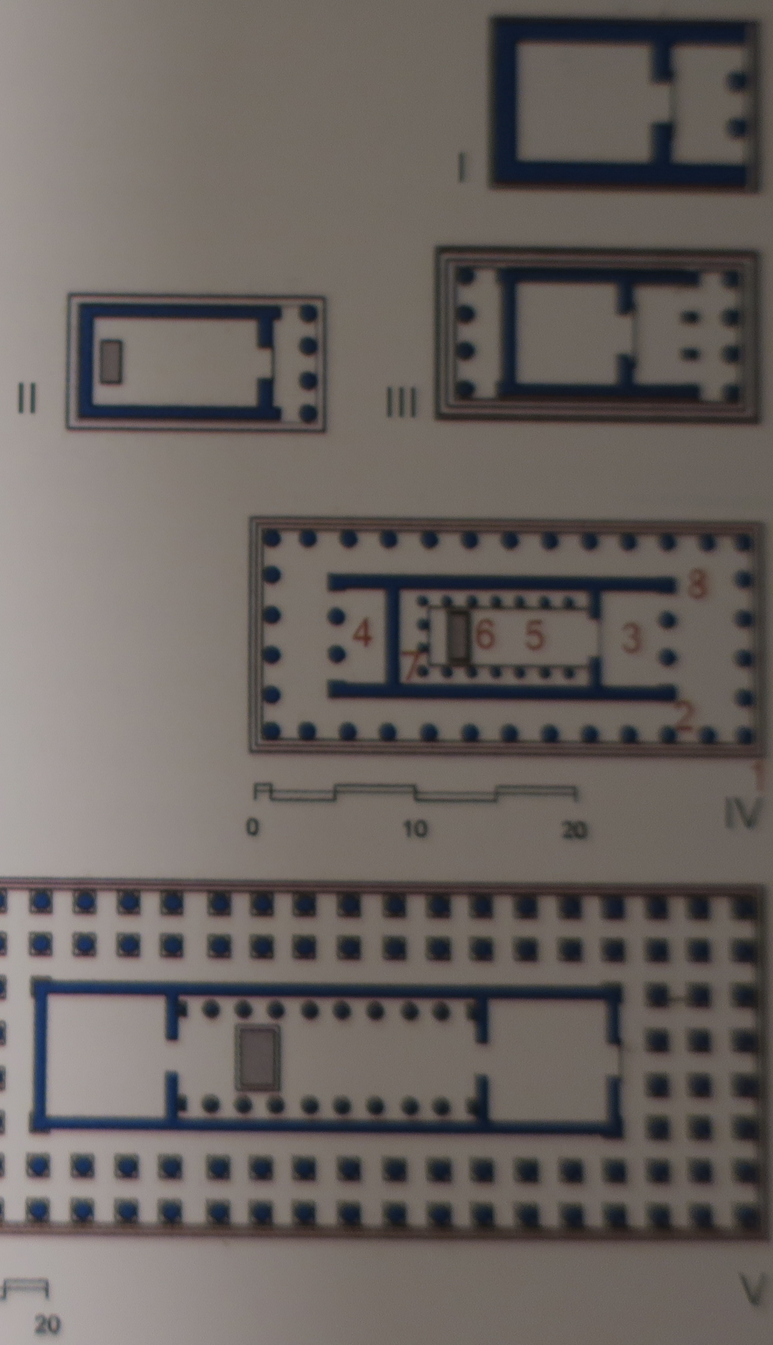


The Kaisariani monastery

The wall-paintings, distinguished by their harmonious colours, balanced arrangement of compositions and serene expression of the figures, are of the so-called Cretan School and dated to the sixteenth century. The wall-paintings in the narthex were executed in the seventeenth century by a Peloponnesian artist, Ioannis Hypatos.

TEMPLES - ARCHITECTURAL ORDERS

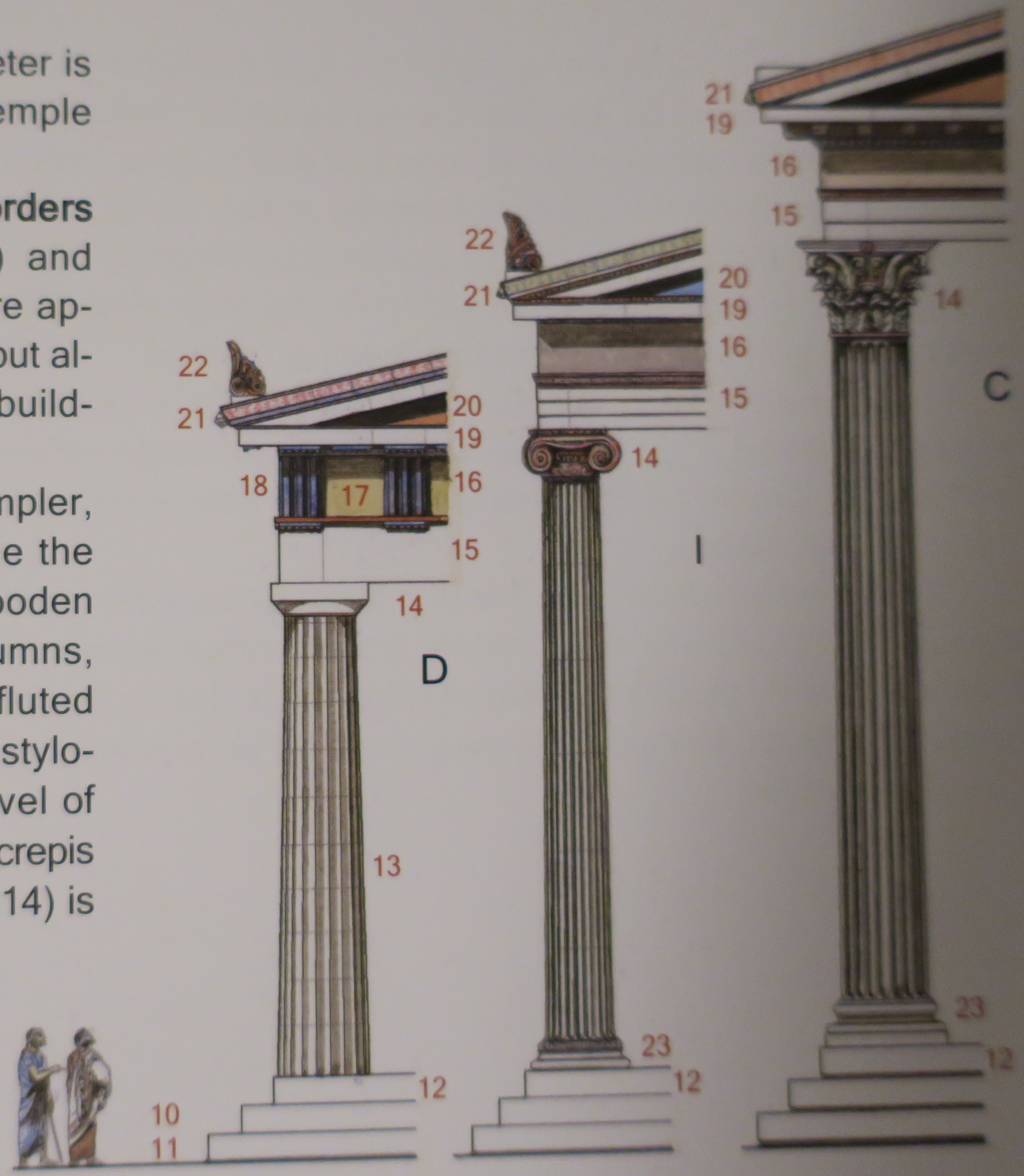
Temples are the most important buildings in ancient Greek architecture. Their size and type vary, but their entrance normally faces east. The plainest and smallest type is the temple *in antis* (I). The prostyle (II) is also of simple type, whereas the amphiprostyle (III) is more complex, with columns on front and back. The peripteral temple (IV) is the most representative type, characterized by the colonnade known as the pteron (2), which surrounds the central part, the cella (5). The pronaos (3) is in front of the cella and may be *in antis* (IV), which means that it has columns between pillars (8), or prostyle (V). The opisthodomos (4) has a similar form. The cella, which worshippers were not allowed to enter, housed the cult statue (6), which was usually framed by an internal colonnade, often two-storeyed (7). The double



pteron around the perimeter is typical of the dipteral temple (V).

The architectural orders are: Doric (D), Ionic (I) and Corinthian (C). They were applied not only to temples but also to public and private buildings.

The Doric order is simpler, since it transfers to stone the earlier morphology of wooden constructions. The columns, which usually have fluted shafts (13), stand on the stylobate (12), the highest level of the usually three-stepped crepis (10). The column capital (14) is



also simple, while above the epistyle (15) runs the frieze (16), composed of triglyphs (18) and metopes (17), which are often carved with relief representations. The cornices (19) are decorated with a cymatium at the edge and with mutules and guttae on the under surface. The triangular pediment (20) completes the classic composition (base - body - top) and on many temples was adorned with sculptures. It is framed by the raking cornices, above which is the sima (21). Akroteria, usually with palmette ornaments (22), crowned the apices, while waterspouts in the form of animal heads were common.

The Ionic order has more slender columns, set on a base (23) and with fluted shaft ending in a taenia. Typical is the capital (I-14) with large volutes. The epistyle is tripartite, with a small composite cymatium, while the frieze of several Athenian monuments has relief representations.

The Corinthian order, also slender, was applied later and is distinguished by its column capital (C-14) with small volutes and acanthus leaves. The cornices of later monuments also have modillions instead of or in addition to dentils, which usually decorated smaller buildings. Many architectural features were painted in colour, in simple or in encaustic technique.









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