Ivan Milekovi

The Philosophers in the City: Spaces of Academy in Stone and Text

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University Private University

Vienna

May 2024

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Spaces of Academy in Stone and Text

by

Ivan Mileković

(Serbia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University Private University, Vienna, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Ivan Mileković**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 21 May 2024

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Signature

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between fifth-century Athenian Neoplatonists and the cityscape. Utilizing both textual and material evidence, it examines the construction and reception of physical, conceived, and imagined spaces within the context of the Neoplatonic Academy. This study challenges the prevailing scholarly consensus that the Neoplatonic Academy was confined to the household boundaries due to the secretive and secluded nature of the institution. By employing a spatial reading of two fifth-century Athenian Neoplatonic hagiographies and contextualizing them with material evidence, the thesis posits that the depicted spaces are constructions combining contemporary materiality with an idealization of classical Athens. Special attention is given to the house, described in the Life of Proclus written by Marinus of Neapolis. Contrary to the view of archaeologists, this thesis contends that the topographical reference to the house is not an accurate depiction but rather a symbolic placement correlating to multiple aspects of the hagiographical character of Proclus. By contextualizing these sources within the educational landscape and topography of Roman and late antique Athens, the thesis aims to reconstruct the lived spaces of the Neoplatonists. Furthermore, by exploring the architectural development of the early fifth century and comparing it with evidence from the eastern Mediterranean world, notably Kom el-Dikka, the thesis identifies two potential buildings with educational functions during this period: the Palace of the Giants in the Athenian Agora and the Library of Hadrian, along with the tetraconch built within. Understanding the spatial correspondence of these two buildings and the contemporary renovation by prefect Herculius between 408-410, the thesis argues that they formed a new urban area, centered around educational buildings which were most likely utilized by the Neoplatonic Academy

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Expressing gratitude to all those who have helped in the making of this thesis, even with rhetorical skills as limited as my own, would require nothing less than a panegyric! Leaving panegyrics to the memory of the great rhetors of antiquity, I would still like to express a few words of thanks. Respecting the tradition of Marinus and Damascius, my first expression of gratitude goes to my supervisors. Gyuri Gereby has supported me ever since we first met in Budapest. Had it not been for his invitation and support, I would never have had the courage to apply to CEU and embark on the vast sea of international academia. His advice in the earliest stages of this thesis helped formulate my research scope; advice without which this thesis would never have fulfilled its true interdisciplinary potential. I am grateful to Volker Menze for his clear and sharp comments, always given with the best of intentions. His meticulous attention to detail has permanently influenced my writing

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List of Abbreviations

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CTh = Codex Theodosianus

Eunapius Vit. Soph = Eunapius from Sardis, *Lives of Philosophers and Sophists*

IG = Inscriptiones Graecae

IpByz = *Villes et peuplement dans I' Illyricum protobyzantin. Actes du Colloque organise par l'Ecole francaise de Rome 78, (Rome, 12-14 mai 1982), Paris 1984.*

PAAH = *Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*

Philostratus Vit. Soph = Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*

PLRE = *J. R. Martindale, The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, 1I, AD. 395-527, Cambridge 1980.*

Synesius Ep. = Letters of Synesius

Thuc. = Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Vit. Isidor = Damascius, *Life of Isidore.*

Vit. Procli = Marinus, *Life of Proclus or On Happiness*

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The population of the cities of the Greek oikumene is often regarded as being oppressed in the emerging Christian empire.[1] This narrative, specifically highlights the city of Athens. Traditionally regarded as the capital of the Hellenic world, both in ancient times and in contemporary scholarship, Athens is frequently seen as an isolated oasis of paganism in Late Antiquity.[2] In this historiographical current, significant attention is directed towards the Neoplatonic Academy, established at the beginning of the fifth century, and closed by Justinian in 529. CE.[3]

Due to its attention in this scholarly narrative, the material and visual culture of the late antique history of Athens has not been as neglected as some other regions of Greece.[4] However, many aspects of the life of the late-antique city remain understudied or marginalized, such as Christianity or the life of the non-elites.[5] Despite its reputation as a significant center, Athens was as a provincial town. It didn't serve as the seat of the praetorian prefecture of Illyricum, which was located in Sirmium and later Thessaloniki, nor was it the seat of the province of Achaia, which was centered in Corinth.[6] Athens' importance was largely symbolic. It was

[1] M. Sághy, E.M. Schoolman, "Introduction", in: M. Sághy (ed.), *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th–8th centuries),* CEU Press: Budapest 2017, 1-8.
[2] This historiographic trend, along with a long discussion on secondary literature is given in: A. Kaldellis, *The Christian Parthenon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009, 1-10.
[3] A. Frantz, "Pagan Philosophers in Christian Athens", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119/1 (1975), 29-38.
[4] This problem is discussed in a recent volume on late antique and Byzantine Greece, see: A.Dunn (ed.), *Byzantine Greece: Microcosm of Empire? Papers from the Forty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies,* London: Routledge 2023.
[5] See: C. Breytenbach, E. Tzavella, *Early Christianity in Athens, Attica, and Adjacent Areas,* Leiden: Brill 2023.
[6] J. Preiser-Kapeller, *Byzanz: Das Neue Rom und das Welt des Mittelalters*, C.H. Beck: Münhcen 2023, 33-50; T. L. Shear "Athens: From City-State to Provincial Town", *Hesperia* 50/4 (1981), 356-377.

regarded for its classical heritage, and especially its role as an educational center within the later Roman Empire.[7]

Addressing all the potential questions posed by material and visual culture of late antique Athens is a work which calls for much more than the scope of this thesis. Through this thesis, my focus lies solely on one aspect of the city's late antique history, centered on one of its most significant institutions, the Neoplatonic Academy. Through this lens, I seek to understand the spatial context surrounding the Academy and reconstruct its relationship with the urban landscape of fifth-century Athens.

The thesis comprises of two analytical chapters. The first chapter examines the textual depiction of spaces, primarily through the perspectives presented in Marinus' *Life of Proclus* and Damascius' *Life of Isidore*. This section of the discussion delves into references to the topography of fifth-century Athens, exploring their correlation with contemporary material evidence. A significant focus of this chapter will be on the social life of the Athenian Diadochi, particularly the significance of the household as a spatial topos. The second analytical chapter investigates the evolution of educational landscapes in Athens from the second to the fifth century. It examines the teaching practices outlined in the texts and their evolution over the period covered by the chapter. Furthermore, this chapter scrutinizes the material evidence pertaining to the architecture of educational institutions, not only in Athens but also in other Mediterranean cities. The overarching aim is to comprehend the evolution of educational topography in the fifth century and to contextualize the Neoplatonic Academy within this framework.

[7] I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, "Athens in Late Antiquity – Learning and Paganism", in: I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, L.v Alvensleben, *Athens II: Athens in Late Antiquity,* Tübingen, Mohr-Siebeck 2020, 1-33.

1.2. **The Academy and the *status quaestionis.***

Education in the later Roman world has been extensively researched, with Athens holding a prominent position as one of the most significant educational hubs. The intellectual milieu of late antique Athens is often explored through two key sources: Philostratus' *Life of Sophists* and Eunapius' *Life of Sophists and Philosophers*, both of which shed light on the educational landscape of Athens from the second to the fifth century.[8] A substantial strand of scholarship has also focused on references to the city by some of its most notable students, including figures such as Libanius, the Cappadocian Fathers Gregory and Basil, and the emperor Julian (commonly known as Julian the Apostate).[9]

Further scholarly attention has also turned towards the schools, sophists, and educational institutions within the city. One notable contribution in this regard is the work of Edward Watts.[10] In his book *The City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria*, Watts delves into the social, cultural, and intellectual contexts shaping education in the two cities from the second to the sixth century. In the case of Athens, Watts offers an examination of the evolution of philosophical instruction and the emergence of the Neoplatonic Academy in the fifth century CE. However, his analysis does not extend to exploring the Academy's relationship with its urban landscape or delving into the material sources related to the Academy.

[8] For an overview of the scholarship regarding Philostratus in general, and *Life of Sophists* in particular, see: E. Bowie, J. Elsner (eds.), *Philostratus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009; On the *Life of Philosophers* of Eunapius, and subsequent scholarship on the subject, see: R. Goulet, *Eunape de Sardes. Vies de philosophes et de sophistes. Texte établi, traduit et annoté par R. G. Tome I. Introduction et prosopographie*, Les Belles Lettres: Paris 2014.

[9] See: Libanius, *Between City and School*: *Selected Orations of Libanius, trans. R. Cribiore,* Liverpool University Press: Liverpool 2016; R. Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch,* Princeton University Press: Princeton 2007, 42-111; S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome,* University of California Press: Berkeley – Los Angeles 2015, 117-118; H.G. Nesselrath, "Julian's Philosophical Writing", in: H.U. Wiemer, S. Rebenich (eds.) *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, Leiden: Brill 2020, 38-63.

[10] E. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 2008.

The material evidence from the fifth century CE has been excavated and documented by the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, as part of the Agora excavation project. A significant figure in this endeavor was Alison Frantz, alongside Homer A. Thompson, who were active in the project since the 1930s. To date, the most comprehensive resource offering an overview of late antique material, particularly from the fifth century, is Alison Frantz's *Agora in Late Antiquity*, published as the twenty-fourth volume of the Agora series.[11] The most notable contribution of this study lies in the thorough presentation of the material, not only through Frantz's contributions but also through additional chapters authored by Thompson and John Travlos, primary excavators responsible for excavation of much of the material discussed within the volume.

According to the discussion presented in the book, the Academy operated within a secluded space.[12] Frantz proposed that Neoplatonists in fifth-century Athens sought refuge from the Christian environment by retreating to semi-private institutions housed in the so-called Areopagus villas.[13] Subsequent scholarship on the material culture of fifth-century Neoplatonism in Athens largely upheld Frantz's hypothesis. Further studies have built upon this foundation, notably the work of Swedish archaeologist Arja Karivieri, who examined the identification of House Chi as the House of Proclus.[14] Additionally, a recent study by Ada Caruso delves into the potential for archaeological investigation of the Platonic Academy, tracing the material related to the development of Platonic teaching in Athens, from Plato in the fourth century BCE to the Neoplatonic Academy of Plutarch.[15] This research also offers valuable insights into the material discussed in this thesis.

[11] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity*, Athens: American School of Classical Studies1988.
[12] Ibid, 34–48.
[13] A. Frantz, *Pagan Philosophers*
[14] A. Karivieri, "*The 'House of Proclus' on the Southern Slope of Acropolis: A Contribution",* In: P. Castrén, *Post-Herulian Athens*, Athens: Finnish Institute at Athens 1994, 115-139.
[15] A. Caruso, *Akademia: Archeologia di una scuola filosofica ad Atene da Platone a Proclo (387 a.C – 485 d.C)*, Pandemos: Atene-Paestum 2013

Scholarship has partially addressed the spatial environment of the Academy and its depiction in textual sources. Notably, Edward Watts explores the diverse spatial contexts outlined in sources pertaining to late antique philosophy, including those originating from Athens.[16] Similarly to the previously discussed study by Watts, a notable limitation is the lack of study of material sources.

1.3. **Sources and Methodology**

The aim of this thesis is to challenge the prevailing narrative regarding the relationship between the Academy and the city of Athens. My hypothesis suggests that the Academy was not a secluded and secretive institution, as argued by Alison Frantz, but rather held a significant position within the social, cultural, and urban fabric of fifth-century Athens. To investigate this hypothesis, I will adopt an approach that combines and compares the material and textual evidence pertaining to the spatial aspects of the Academy. The thesis will investigate the spatiality of two main textual sources dealing with the Neoplatonic Academy in the fifth century: the *Life of Proclus*, written by his disciple and successor Marinus, and the *Life of Isidore*, written by Damascius, the last Diadoch of the Academy. For contextualization, I will also integrate Plutarch's and Eunapius' accounts of philosophers and sophists. Furthermore, the thesis will examine references to educational spaces and topography in the works of two fourth-century orators, Libanius and Himerius.

The two primary textual sources are specific in that they are pagan hagiographies. As such, they contain certain information which might be considered factual, but most of it is a carefully constructed narrative.[17] However, it is important to note that while pagan

[16] E. Watts, "The Late Ancient Philosophical Scene", in: A. Marmodoro, S. H. Cartwright, *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018, 12-31.
[17] M. Hinterberger, "Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations*",* in: S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography vol. II: Genres and Contexts*, Farnham: Ashgate 2014: 25-61

hagiographies share similarities with Christian ones, they do not entirely correlate with each other. The main distinction lies in the fact that pagan hagiographies draw upon the tradition of Greek philosophical lives. [18] While their primary function is to fashion the image of a holy man, they also depict them as exceptional philosophers, emphasizing the superiority of their philosophical viewpoints. Additionally, these texts highlight the excellence of their students, further enhancing the image of the central figure.[19]

These are well reflected on Marinus' Life of Proclus. An additional aspect of this text lies in the fact that it is also a commemorative oration. Alongside portraying Proclus as a holy man and highlighting his exceptionality as a Neoplatonic philosopher, the text underscores his contributions to the civic community of Athens.[20] This aspect is particularly relevant in terms of spatiality, as it situates Proclus' life almost entirely within the context of Athens This is fashioned not only by emphasizing his personal relationship with the city, but also referencing its topography which will be discussed in the thesis.

The second main textual source explored in this thesis is somewhat more specific. In reality, it is a collection of excerpts from Suda which are titled as *Philosophical History*.[21] Following the reconstruction of the original text by Johann Rudolf Asmus in 1909, subsequent scholarship has labeled this work as the *Life of Isidore*.[22] However, in her critical translation to English, Polymnia Athanassiadi decided to use the title given in the Suda.[23] While Damascius does provide plethora of contextual information on the intellectual and social climate of the later fifth and early sixth centuries, the text, at least through the surviving excerpts, primarily focuses on the persona of Isidore. This is why I have chosen to title it *Life of Isidore* for the

[18] I. Männlein Robert, "Einführung in die Schrift", in: I. Männlein Robert (hrsg.), *Über das Gluck, Marinos das Leben des Proklos.* Mohr-Siebeck: Tübingen 2019, 3-49.
[19] A. Urbano, *The Philosophical Life*, Catholic University of America Press: Washington DC 2013, 1-31.
[20] I. Männlein Robert, *Einführung in die Schrift.*
[21] P. Athanassiadi, *Introduction*, in: *Philosophical History* (edited and translated by P. Athanassiadi), Apameia: Athens 2001, 19-71
[22] J.R. Asmus, "Zur Rekonstruktion von Damascius' Leben des Isidorus." *Byzantinishce Zeitschrift 18/2 (1909),* 424-480.
[23] Athanassiadi, *Introduction*, 58-62.

purposes of this thesis. Furthermore, the reference to spaces in the *Life of Isidore* are not as clear as those in the *Life of Proclus*. Nonetheless, it does offer valuable insight into the life and ambiance of fifth-century Neoplatonists.

This thesis acknowledges that the spatiality of texts is not simply a literary construct. Although carefully constructed, they reflect the physical environment. The methodology applied is inspired by the methodological framework set by Basema Hamarneh and Paolo Cesaretti, of "spaces within" and "spaces beyond." [24] Spaces within entail the materiality and its treatment in the texts, while the spaces beyond entail the construction of imaginary spaces. While Hamarneh and Cesaretti discuss these two forms of textual spaces in the case of the Lives of Holy Fools, I find it applicable to the study of Lives of Neoplatonists as well. In this context, the spaces within would entail the material space as described in the text.[25] Although the spaces beyond discussed by Hamarneh and Cesaretti entail the construction of idealized paradisaic space, in the sources discussed in this thesis, this would entail the construction of an idealized Athens, which will be analyzed through the concept of Sophistopolis in the first analytical chapter.

Apart from examining the reception and construction of the city in textual sources, this thesis also seeks to reconstruct the potential lived space inhabited by the members of the Academy, as well as to position it within the urban landscape of fifth-century Athens. To accomplish this, I delve into the architectural material excavated by the American School of Classical Studies. The thesis focuses on the main urban areas, concentrated around the Agora and the Acropolis. Special attention is directed towards the group of so-called Areopagus villas, notably House Chi (i.e. the House of Proclus), as well as other buildings in fifth-century Athens

[24] B. Hamarneh, P. Cesareti, "Spaces Within, Spaces Beyond: Reassessing the Lives of the Holy Fools Symeon and Andrew (bhg 1677, 115z)", M. Veikou, I. Nillson (eds.), *Spatialities of Byzantine Culture From the Human Body to the Universe,* Leiden: Brill 2022, 595-613.
[25] This approach is also discussed in: B. Hamarneh, P. Cesareti, *Testo agiografico e orizzonte visivo*. Edizioni Nova Cultura: Roma 2016, 60-82.

with documented educational functions in preceding centuries. These include the Library of Hadrian and the Palace of the Giants located on the Agora. Considering that many of the layers discussed in this thesis have been disrupted or destroyed to reach earlier layers of the buildings, the research heavily relies on legacy data accessible through detailed excavation reports.[26]

This thesis does not seek to provide a definitive answer regarding the location of the Academy or the role of Neoplatonists in the cultural, socio-political, or religious life of Athens. Instead, it aims to explore the relationship between materiality and spatiality of textual sources, as well as their connection to archaeological evidence. Furthermore, it seeks to reconstruct the urban landscape while acknowledging the potential influence of Neoplatonists on the life of the city. Through this interdisciplinary discussion, I hope to present a fresh perspective and potential direction for further research of both textual sources, as well as urban history and architecture of fifth-century Athens.

[26] On study of legacy data, see: O. Bobou, A. C. Miranda, R. Raja "Introduction", In: O. Bobou, A. C. Miranda, R. Raja, *Archival Historiographies: The Impact of Twentieth-Century Legacy Data on Archaeological Investigations,* Turnhout: Brepols 2022, 1-9.

2. Building Sophistopolis: Life of Philosophers Between the Agora, the Temple and the House.

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the spaces of social interactions within narrative sources and its correlation with the physical environment, as evidenced by material artifacts. I am purposely using the term "space of social interaction" instead of the broader term of "social space".[27] Here, I am interested primarily in the physical space in which social activities take place, and their treatment in texts. In the context of the Neoplatonists of fifth-century Athens, this would refer to spaces where members of the academy interacted with the population of the city and participated in social and political activities.

By employing an approach which compares the textual treatment of space with material evidence, I aim to challenge the prevailing consensus in scholarship. Firstly, I seek to challenge the notion that the Neoplatonic Academy was secluded from society, operating within the semi-secrecy of a private house. Through contextualizing the social activities of the Neoplatonists within the relevant topoi of late antique philosophical lives, I will argue that the household does indeed constitute a separate topos, but not one that negates the social engagement of philosophers. Additionally, I will explore the relationship between the material environment and the narrative spaces, as well as the influence of the physical environment on the construction of such spaces.

In the first subchapter, I will provide an overview of the narrative sources and identify various topoi of social life constructed within them. The second subchapter will present an overview of the architectural and epigraphic evidence that could be connected to the social lives and spaces in which the Neoplatonists acted. Finally, in the third subchapter, I will offer

[27] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell: London 1991, 68-80.

my concluding remarks on the relationship between narrative depictions and the physical evidence.

2.2. **The Textual Sources**

In the hagiographical narrative of Proclus, Marinus, his pupil, successor, and the author of the work, emphasizes that in order to be a good philosopher, one must also be a good citizen.[28] For the Neoplatonists, there were three categories of virtue. First, encompassing of natural (φυσικός), ethical (ἠθικός) and political (πολῖτῐκός). Second, the so called theoretical (θεωρητικός) or purifying (καθαρτικός). Lastly, there was the highest form, known as the theurgical (θεουργικῶς) virtues.[29] The aim of philosophical life, as practiced by the Neoplatonists, was to attain the highest form of virtue. In this regard, participation in public life, achieved through the cultivation of natural, ethical, and political virtues, was considered the primary and essential element of a proper philosophical life. An examination of the life of Proclus, an exemplar of fifth-century philosophical living, provides valuable insights into the involvement of philosophers in the civic affairs of late antique Athens.

Most importantly, Marinus informs us that Proclus participated in city assemblies, using his philosophical Parousia (φιλοσόφῳ παρρησίᾳ) to guide the civic debates.[30] In Classical Athens, it had been the duty of every natural-born citizen above the age of thirty to participate in the assembly. However, the metics, that is the legal residents of foreign origin, were not allowed to participate in the civic assembly.[31]

Being born in Constantinople, and growing up in Xanthus,[32] Proclus arrived in Athens as a student of philosophy, around the age of twenty, only after attaining rhetorical education

[28] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 3.
[29] Marinus, Vit.Procli: 3. 45-50. While the main elements composing the scheme of virtues do not change among Neoplatonic authors, there are different names attributed to them. All of them, however, go back to Plato and his discoveries of physical, ethical, political and theological virtues, cf. Edwards (2001), n. 31.
[30] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 15.
[31] M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, OK 1991: 86-125.
[32] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 6.

in Alexandria.[33] As such, he was a metic. This raises a question among scholars of how it was possible for a metic like Proclus to participate in the workings of the Athenian assembly? A.H.M. Jones has argued that, during Roman rule, many of the magistrate were appointed by the Emperors. As such, the birth-exclusive nature of the civic assembly has been gradually lost.[34] In his commentary on Marinus' *Life of Proclus*, Mark Edwards agrees with this interpretation.[35] Given that the Constitutio Antoniana of 212 granted Roman citizenship to all free residents of the Empire, there is no indication, either from the text or contextually, that the institution of metic persisted into the fifth century CE. Consequently, I do not believe the question of Proclus' participation in the assembly as a metic to be meaningful.

However, the question posed by scholars on Proclus' citizenship right has its foundation in the text, as the the assembly in which Marinus situates Proclus is resembling that of Classical Athens. By the fifth century CE, the civic assemblies such as that of classical Athens were a distant past.[36] Although city assemblies played an important role in the decurial system of the later Roman Empire, by the beginning of the fifth century, such form of civic government started to crumble.[37] While Proclus did likely participate in some sort of city assembly, it is unlikely that their working was similar to that described by Marinus.

Marinus highlights that the working of the assembly was based on deliberations. In classical democracy, the democratic right of Athenian citizens was exercised through participation in democratic deliberations of the assembly.[38] For Aristotle, a citizen is an individual "with authority to participate in deliberative and judicial powers."[39] The deliberative act was not practiced by the entire body of the assembly. Addressing the assembly was rather

[33] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 10.
[34] A.H.M. Jones, *The Greek City: From Alexander to Justinian*, Clarendon Press: Oxford 1940, 60.
[35] Edwards (2001), n. 140.
[36] C. Mossé, *La fin de la démocratie athénienne,* Presse Universitaire: Paris 1964.
[37] J.H.W.G Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001, 104-137.
[38] D. Cammack, "Deliberation in Ancient Greek Assemblies", *Classical Philology* 115/3 (2020), 486-552.
[39] Aristotle Politics: 1275b20: ἐξουσία κοινωνεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς καὶ κριτικῆς

reduced to a small group of people.[40] As Daniela Cammack argues, the classical Athenian demos was divided between two groups. Those who performed democracy by public deliberation, and those who participated through collective actions, such as listening and voting.[41]

In an ideal democratic assembly, the act of public deliberation was reserved for the wisest. In a fifth century BCE account of a Sicilian rhetor Athenagoras of Syracuse, Thucydides notes a quotation by Athenagoras, stating that "the wise make the best counselors", and "the many, having listened, judge the best."[42] While it remains unlikely that such deliberations would make any meaningful decisions in the second half of the fifth century CE, the act of public deliberation by the wisest – in this case Proclus, fits the ideals of the classical Athenian democracy.

Placing Proclus in the context of classical Athens is more than a mere anachronism. In the later Roman rhetorical discourses, it was common deliver deliberations in the framework of an idealistic city, constructed on the basis of classical Athens. This idealized city, was fashioned through a democratic assembly in which the interlocutor would give his oration. Like a *Deux ex Machina*, he would then proceed to guide the assembly into resolving a complex issue, featuring tyranny, war and other type of external or internal enemies.[43] This idealized framework of a classical city has been labeled as Sophistopolis, by Donald Russel.[44] Although Marinus' portrayal of Proclus does not depict him conveying complex ideas of the author through public orations, the setting nonetheless evokes a Sophistopolis. Similar to the rhetor of a Sophistopolis, Proclus provides invaluable guidance to the city, not only through deliberate speeches but also through other actions described in the text.

[40] D. Cammack, *Deliberation.*
[41] D. Cammack, "The Demos in Demokratia", *Classics Quarterly* 69/1 (2019), 42-61.
[42] Thuc. 6.39.6; D.Cammack, *The Demos*.
[43] Ibid.
[44] D.A. Russel, *Greek Declamation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, 21-40.

For Neoplatonists, philosophers had a duty towards the Polis. By striving for the proper exercise of political virtues, an ideal Neoplatonic philosopher was expected to serve as public advisor, guiding the entire community towards a virtuous life.[45] Furthermore, it was the duty of an ideal Neoplatonist to uphold the dignity of a citizen. As noted by Damascius in his *Life of Isidore*, Marinus remained "true to the traditional dignity of philosophers",[46] nor did he ever wish to "exceed the status of a private citizen".[47] For Damascius, the ideal of a philosopher involved being a member of the demos and thus fulfilling public duties. However, this did not necessarily entail active participation in politics or possessing political skills. For instance, Damascius notes that Marinus lacked social skills.[48] In a similar manner, he notes how Isidore, despite being a good counselor with a profound sense of justice, was easily deceived.[49] As the lowest form of virtue, Neoplatonists were hesitant to solely engage in politics. Marinus noted that although Proclus was proficient in politics, he hesitated to focus solely on political activity, instead dedicating himself to higher forms of virtue. Nevertheless, he devoted himself to training future public figures in accordance with philosophical life.[50] The role of a philosopher in relation to the polis, therefore, is that of a counselor. This role is aptly defined by Simplicius in his commentary *On Epictetus' Handbook*, where he emphasizes that the philosopher's duty in a city is to cultivate trustworthy and respectful citizens.[51] This role is exemplified by the two heads of the Academy, Proclus and Marinus. Actively engaged in civic life, the sources depict them as exerting influence, providing guidance, and educating not only individuals but also the entire community of late antique Athens.

[45] This point is discussed by Edward Watts, cf. E. Watts, "The Late Ancient Philosophical Scene", in: A. Marmodoro & S. H. Cartwright, A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018, 12-31.
[46] Damacsius, Isidore 100 A. 21: […] μμένων τῇ παραδοθείσῃ σεμνότητι τῶν φιλοσόφων
[47] Ibid 100 A. 25: […] οὐδὲ ἄλλως ὑπὲρ τὸν ἰδιώτην
[48] Ibid 101 A.
[49] Ibid. 15-17.
[50] Marinus, Vit.Procli: 14.
[51] Simplicitus, *On Epictaeus Handbook,* 65. 1.

Although the sources in question offer insight into the social sphere of the Athenian Neoplatonists, their primary function is the fashioning of the life of a pagan holy man.[52] Much like their contemporary Christian counterparts, the pagan saints are exemplars of lives lived according to the principles of pagan divinity. In terms of Neoplatonic hagiographies, John Dillon denotes two distinct features: philotheos (lover of gods) and theophilos (beloved by the gods).[53] In the context of the Life of Proclus, Marinus highlights the second feature from the very beginning, noting that the patron goddess of his birth city of Byzantium (i.e. Constantinople) watched over him since his birth.[54] Likewise, he notes that Proclus' was brought up in Xanthus, a land sacred to Apollo, which in return meant that Proclus' grew up as if nurtured by the leader of the Muses.[55]

In addition to the evident divine favor highlighted at the outset of Marinus' narrative, numerous references also underscore the philotheotic aspect of the holy man. Notably, Marinus emphasizes that the path toward theurgic virtue encompasses adherence to traditional models of piety. Before engaging in the practice of theurgy, one must venerate the customary cults. In the case of Proclus, these were not only the customary cults of the city of Athens, as Marinus also notes that he worshipped gods and rituals of various origins, whether Greek, Egyptian, or Persian.[56] The connection between piety and advanced forms of philosophical inquiry is also noted by Damascius, who observes that Isidore, in his youth, was not particularly pious, leaving piety to those more experienced.[57]

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[52] see: G.Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 102 (1982), 33-59.
[53] J. Dillon, "Proclus as Theios Aner", in: Irmgard Männlein-Robert (Hrsg.): *Über das Glück. Marinos, Das Leben des Proklos,* Mohr – Siebeck: Tübingen 2019, 231-247.
[54] Logically, the unnamed goddess at hand is most likely Tyche (Fortune) of Constantinople, although Mark Edwards proposes (Edwards 2001, n. 66) that this might have been Hecate or Rhea. What is striking is that later on in the same passage, Marinus notes the same goddess guided him towards study of philosophy in his sleep (Vit. Procli: 6: 155: αὕτη γὰρ αὐτῷ ὄναρ φαινομένη, ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν παρεκάλει). As we know from later on in the text (Vit. Procli. 9), that it was Athena who guided him towards study in Athens, which suggests that Marinus' speaks of Athena in this context as well.
[55] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 9: ἐπιστημῶν ἡγεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῷ Μουσηγέτῃ θεῷ
[56] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 19.
[57] Damascius, Vit. Isidor: 59.D

As previously discussed, active participation in political life was deemed unworthy of a practitioner of theurgical virtues. In this sense, an ideal pagan holy man would have to be an ascetic, completely isolated from the material world. Most notably, a pagan holy man would have been secluded from society, either entirely or through occasional withdrawals, as was the case with Pythagoras in the late antique tradition.[58] As Garth Fowden notes, isolation from society, termed "unsocial philosophy" ("φιλοσοφία ἄκοινώνητος"), was very common among the Neoplatonists.[59] However, from the sources discussed here, it does not seem that striving for theurgical virtues necessarily entailed isolation from society. Rather, the examples above show that Marinus, and to a lesser extent Damascius, fashioned the philosopher in such a way that they practiced the life of a holy man within the civic ambiance of fifth-century Athens.

This connection is further articulated through the care that philosophers take of the city, which exceeds the boundaries of social interaction, and enters the sphere of the supernatural. For example, having attained theurgical virtues, Proclus was able to plea the gods to save Athens from natural phenomena, such as draught and earthquakes.[60] This example clearly demonstrates the reconciliation of the life of holy men and the social duties of philosophers. Even while practicing the highest, theurgic form of virtue, they still fulfilled their duty in attending to the city.

Although philosophers were dedicated to the civic community, Watts notes that a significant portion of the philosophers time was also dedicated to maintaining their households.[61] While the practical concerns of estate management, as discussed by Watts, may find applicability in other cities like Alexandria or Aphrodisia, the sources of Athenian provenance do not point out to anything related to practical concerns of estate management.

[58] G. Fowden, *Pagan Holy Men*, 54-59.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Marinus, Vit.Procli: 28.
[61] see. Watts, *The Late Ancient Philosophical scene.*

Rather, in case of Athenian sources, there is a strong emphasis on the symbolic notion of a philosophical household.

The Neoplatonic Academy of Athens was run through the sucession of the Diadochi (διαδοχή – lit. successor). The succession, along with the entirety of the inheritance—both intellectual and physical—was termed the diadochica (διαδοχικών*)*. This entailed a construction of a chain of succession that goes back to Plato. For Neoplatonists, the Heads of the Academy were fashioned to be parts of the divine race (*ίεράς γενεάς)*.[62] This topos in Neoplatonic sources constituted the idea of the Hermaic chain, through which all the souls of philosophers were bound to the soul of Hermes.[63] The mystical chain of soul-binding, was also transposed to the concept of philosophical family.[64] In such cases, it was not uncommon for a Head of the Academy to adopt his successors. Such an example can be seen in the Life of Proclus. Upon coming to Athens, Proclus was entrusted by his teacher Syrianus to the original head of the Academy, Plutarch. While under the instruction of Plutarch, Marinus notes that Proclus spent two years living as Plutarch's lodger.[65] In a similar manner, after Plutarch's death – Syrianus took Proclus in and took care of him as a designated successor.[66] Marinus notes that Proclus himself fashioned Syrianus as his father, and Plutarch as his forefather.[67]

The fashioning of a philosophical family among the Athenian Diadochi also highlights the relationship between the successors and the biological families of their predecessors. For example, Marinus notes that Proclus learned theurgic invocations from Asclepigeneia, Plutarch's daughter. He specifically highlights the fact that such invocations were preserved as

[62] see: G.Fowden, *The Pagan Holy Man.*
[63] The earliest mention of this term is Eunapius' *Life of Sophiststs* in his description of Porphyri (Eunapius, Sophists 9.4.11). Proclus claimed that all knowledge hangs on this chain, cf. Edwards 2001: n.604.
[64] One of the forms of expression of the philosophical life in late antiquity was through the life in a *philosophical* family. Apart for genetic relation between certain philosophers, this family also consisted of the adopted successors. Likewise, it would sometimes expend beyond the physical and chronological boundaries, to the entire line of Neoplatonic succession – often through conventional naming. see: U.Hartmann, *Der Spätantike Philosoph*, Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GMBH 2018: 1282 – 1309.
[65] Marinus, Vit. Procli. 12.311: ἐπεβίω αὐτῷ ἐπιδημήσαντι ὁ πρεσβύτης.
[66] Marinus, Vit. Procli. 12.314-315.
[67] Marinus, Vit. Procli. 29.729-730: καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ Συριανὸς καὶ ὁ προπάτωρ, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐκάλει, Πλούταρχος.

a sort of family tradition, handed down from her grandfather Nestorius, through her father Plutarch, all the way to herself.[68] In this way, Marinus highlights the legitimacy of Proclus as the Diadoch of Plato by emphasizing that the theurgical rituals kept within Plutarch's family circle extend to Proclus himself. Consequently, he is considered a member of the family. The significance of the biological relatives of the Diadochi is also evident in Damascius' account of the inheritance of Hegias. Although portrayed in a negative tone, the legitimacy of this penultimate Diadochos, as Damascius claims, is rooted in the fact that Plutarch was his grandfather. Despite the generally negative portrayal in Damascius' account, the author still shows respect towards the genetic lineage of Plutarch.[69]

The legitimacy of the Diadochi is likewise established through the concept of the household. Apart from being part of the same philosophical family, the successors of the academy have inherited the residences of their predecessors.[70] It was not an uncommon practice in Athens for scholarchs to inherit the estates of their predecessors when they took over the school. Eunapius, for example, informs us that in the first half of the fourth century, Julian of Cappadocia, a teacher Eunapius himself studied with, left his house to Prohaeresius who inherited his rhetorical school.[71] Eunapius is clear that Julian's house also served as his school.[72] However, such conclusions cannot be easily drawn for the case of the house of the Diadochi. Marinus is never explicit in stating that this house was indeed the seat of the Academy, as I will discuss in the next chapter. He does, however, provide a few pieces of information on the house itself, placing it in the neighbourhood of the Asklepion and the Theater of Dionysus. He also emphasizes the visibility of the house from the Acropolis.[73]

[68] Marinus. Vit. Procli 28. 680-683.
[69] Damascius, Isidore. 145b.
[70] Marinus Vit. Procli. 29.727-730.
[71] Eunapius, Vit. Soph. II 9.4.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Marinus Vit. Procli 29. 730-733.

The sources are clear that this home was part of the diadochica. Apart from Marinus, who claims that this house was inherited by Proclus from his predecessors, Damascius asserts that the diadochica extends beyond the Academy. According to his account, most of diadochica does not come from Plato, clearly putting that the property expanded during the fifth-century, most notably during the times of Proclus.[74] It is evident from this excerpt that the Academy was not the sole constituent element of the diadochica. I contend that, apart from the institution of the Academy, the diadochica also encompassed property, including the official residence of the Diadochi, which Proclus inherited from his predecessors. The official nature of this residence is further emphasized by Marinus, who mentions several social functions hosted at the house of the Diadoch. Most notably, he informs us that Proclus held private gatherings with his closest friends in his home after completing his official duties at the Academy.[75] Although Marinus does not offer much detail about the nature of these gatherings, they served a distinct social function.

Another dimension of the house owned by the Diadoch is its religious significance. Marinus situates the house of the Diadoch within the religious topography of the city, emphasizing its proximity to the Asklepion. The connection between Proclus and Asclepius is highlighted by Marinus in two instances. Firstly, in an episode where Proclus treats Asclepigeneia, a kinswoman of Plutarch, by offering a sacrifice at the Asklepion.[76] Notably, instead of praying for himself, Proclus acts as an intermediary between a human and a god.[77] The theophilotic connection between Asclepius and Proclus is further emphasized by an epiphanic vision: a dream in which the ill-stricken Proclus saw a snake, a zoomorphic

[74] Damacsius, Isidore 102.
[75] Marinus Vit. Procli 22.
[76] Marinus. Vit. Procli: 29.
[77] I. Männlein-Robert , "Vom Piräus zur Akropolis, oder: Das spätantike Athen der Hellenen. Zur Bedeutung von Wegen und Räumen in der Vita Procli des Marinos", in: I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, L.v Alvensleben, *Athens II: Athens in Late Antiquity,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 2020, 281-310.

apparition of Asclepius, crawling over his head. This epiphany signaled the philosopher's future recovery.[78]

In the same chapter, Marinus informs us of an apparition of Athena, which came to Proclus in a dream after the removal of the chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos from the Parthenon, sometime between 472 and 485 CE.[79] As Marinus narrates, after the removal of the statue, a messenger informed Proclus of Athena's will to move into his house.[80] It is striking that in this case, Marinus posits the house inhabited by Proclus as a religious space. Certainly, households in the Graeco-Roman world were spaces of religious practices, through different cults and rituals associated with household religion.[81] However, in this instance, what Marinus highlights is not the personal piety of Proclus expressed through household rituals. Rather, he positions the house as a substitute for the deconsecrated temple.

2.3. **The Material Evidence**

While the narrative sources emphasize the public engagement of Neoplatonic philosophers in Athens, they are not explicit about the specific locations of these interactions. Considering the previous urban layout of the city and its evolving functions, it is likely that such interactions would have occurred primarily in the Agora. In classical and Roman periods, social life occurred in designated areas of the city, with the Agora serving as a central hub. In contrast, political activities were concentrated in the area of Pnyx[82]

[78] Marinus. Vit Procli: 30.
[79]On the removal of the sculpture and its dating, see: F. Alto-Bauer, *Phidias in Kosntantinopel?*, Bonn: Schnell und Steiner 2024, 46-48.
[80] Marinus, Vit. Procli: 30.739-742: ἐδόκει γὰρ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ ὄναρ φοιτᾶν παρ' αὐτὸν εὐσχήμων τις γυνὴ καὶ ἀπαγγέλλειν ὡς χρὴ τάχιστα τὴν οἰκίαν προπαρασκευάζειν· «ἡ γὰρ κυρία Ἀθηναῖς» ἔφη «παρὰ σοὶ μένειν ἐθέλει».
[81] On the household religion in Graeco-Roman world, see: A. Sofroniew, *Household Gods: Private Devotion in Ancient Greece and Rome,* Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum 2015; On various aspects of intersection between ancient household and religion, see: C.E. Barret, J. Carrington (eds.), *Households in Context*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press 2024.
[82] K. Kourouniotis and H. A. Thompson, "The Pnyx in Athens," *Hesperia* 1 (1932), 137-138.

The layout of the late antique city underwent a substantial transformation compared to the classical and Roman periods, particularly following the Siege of Herulii in 267 CE (fig. 1).[83] The urban tissue of the city, went through severe damage. This devastation rendered a large portion of the city uninhabitable, persisting into the fourth century.[84] The debris left after the siege was repurposed for the construction of new fortifications, resulting in the delineation of a trapezoidal-shaped area north of the Acropolis, with the Acropolis itself forming its southern boundary.[85]

In this revised urban layout, the functions of the pre-existing urban centers have been assumed by the Agora, which served as the sole social and political hub of the late-antique city.[86] In this urban environment, the social activities of the philosophers would have taken place. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that in the absence of the Pnyx, the assembly which Proclus attended must have taken place on the Agora (fig. 1). While the Life of Proclus lacks precise topographical details, Eunapius mentions in several instances that the assembly meetings, along with other public functions, occurred in an open theater.[87] According to Alison Frantz, the only functional theater after 267 was the Theater of Dionysus on the southern slope of the Acropolis (fig. 2).[88] If we trust the functional setting described in Eunapius' account, then the assemblies, like the one which Proclus attended, most likely took place at the Theater of Dionysus.

The material collected from the Agora provides additional insight into the relationship between the Neoplatonists of the Academy and the city. Two inscriptions found at the Agora, dated to the late fourth and early fifth centuries, mention a certain Plutarch, who is most likely

[83] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity,* 1-13.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid. 6-7.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Eunapius, Vit. Soph. II 6.11; II 6.16; II 10.47; II 10. 53.
[88] A. Frantz, "The Date of the Phaidros Bema in the Theater of Dionysos", *Hesperia Supplements, Studies in Athenian Architecture, Sculpture and Topography. Presented to Homer A. Thompson 20(1982)*, 34-39+194-195

identifiable with the eponymous Diadochos.[89] The first of the two is an honorary inscription from the base of a statue, which mentions that Plutarch set up the statue to honor Herculius the Illyrian prefect (fig. 3).[90] It was a well-established practice since the second century for local notables to set up honorary statues for imperial officials as a form of civic loyalty.[91] As much as such statues praise the one who is honoured, they also honour the one who commissions them. In cases attested from late antique Athens, they were either commissioned by the civic bodies or by local notables such as Plutarch.[92] In both cases, the mechanism is the same: it either praises the loyalty of the entire civic body towards the emperors or imperial officials such as prefects or governors, or it embodies civic loyalty through the actions of a notable individual. This is also reflected in the formulaic language of the inscription, where Plutarch equates himself as "treasurer of speech" (μύθων ταμίης) with Herculius, the "treasurer of laws" (θεσμών ταμίην).

A question arises regarding the occasion of Plutarch's dedication. The original location of the statue, found in situ, was at the entrance to the Library of Hadrian. As Alison Frantz argues, the Prefect of Illyricum, Herculius, who served from 408 to 410,[93] also funded the rebuilding of Hadrian's Library.[94] His building program was largely focused on the educational institutions of Athens, receiving widespread acclaim from the city's intellectual elite. In the same time, another honorary statue to Herculius was erected by a certain sophist named

[89]It has been widely accepted that the Plutarch mentioned in historical accounts is indeed the Diadoch and the founder of the Neoplatonic Academy. However, this view was challenged by Erkki Sironen, who pointed to the title "σοφιστής" mentioned in IG II/III^2 4428. According to Sironen, the Plutarchos mentioned in this inscription, who is also the benefactor of the Panathenaic processions noted in II/III^2 3818, is not the same individual as Plutarch the Neoplatonist. Garth Fowden addressed this perspective in his work The Pagan Holy Men in Late Antique Society, arguing for a stylistic usage of the word "σοφιστής" and asserting that they indeed refer to the same person. This argument is further discussed in E. Sironen's work "Life and Administration in Roman Attica in Light of Public Inscriptions," published in "Post-Herulian Athens" (1994).

[90] IG II/III^2 4428

[91] R.R.R. Smith, "Cultural Choice and Political Identity in Honorific Portrait Statues in the Greek East in the Second Century A.D.", *The Journal of Roman Studies 98 (1998),* 56-93

[92] U. Gehn, "Athens", in: R.R.R. Smith, B. Ward-Perkins (eds.), *The Last Statues of Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016, 190-200.

[93] PLRE II, Herculius 2

[94] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity.* 63-68.

Apronianus on the Acropolis, adjacent to the statue of Athena Pallas, which attests to this.[95] What remains distinctive in the inscription set up by Plutarch is the association of the two honorific formulas. While formulations praising a prefect's upkeeping of the law are well-attested in the formulaic expressions, the expression "treasurer of myths" (μύθων ταμίης) is unique. I would argue that it denotes the social duties of the Head of the Academy. While, as a benefactor, Herculius gifted the rebuilt library to the citizens of Athens, Plutarch poses himself as the one whose duty is to uphold its function.

In certain cases, notable citizens had statues dedicated in their honor. Such is the case of an honorific statue dedicated to Plutarch by the citizens of Erechteus, an Attic deme. As the base-inscription mentions, the eponymous honorand had spent all of his wealth (πλοῦτον ὅλον προχέας) by funding the Panathenaic procession three times.[96] While the exhaustion of wealth is undoubtedly a formulaic exaggeration – what should be noted is the fact that Plutarch funded the Panathenaic processions. This goes well beyond the typical responsibilities expected of a philosopher serving as the moral guide of the city, as depicted in the narrative sources. Instead, it presents the Diadoch as a significant benefactor of the city, for which he received the respect of the citizens.

While the epigraphical sources point out to the public engagement of the Neoplatonists, the sole distinctive space of social life depicted in the sources is that of the house. According to Mark Edwards, Marinus' topographical description of the house's location has prompted archaeologists to view the Life of Proclus as a "treasure-seeker's map".[97] This approach, rightfully described by Edwards, led to identification of an object excavated in 1955 (House Chi) as the House of Proclus.[98] The excavated portion of House Chi, consists only of the

[95] IG II/III^2 4225.
[96] IG II/III^2 3818
[97] M. Edwards, "Introduction", in: *Neoplatonic Saints The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Studnets (translated by Mark Edwards),* Liverpool University Press: Liverpool 2001, Iii-Iiii
[98] J. Meliades, "Ἀνασκαφαὶ νοτίως τῆς Ἀκροπόλεως", ΠΑΑΗ (1955), 36-52.

northern part of the building. This section is delineated by the Dionisiou Areopagitu street, while most of the building remains unexcavated. (fig.4).[99] The excavated structure comprises a central hall with an apsidal ending (marked as χ), flanked by two smaller rooms on each side. Additionally, there are two rooms on the eastern part of the structure. One room has an irregular four-sided layout (marked as δ), connected to the central hall and extended by a three-niched square wall on the north. The second room (marked as β), delineated by the modern street, does not directly communicate with the adjacent room (δ), nor does it have any direct entry to the central apsidal hall.

The interior wall of the semicircular apse comprised four semihexagonal and three semicircular niches, likely intended for housing sculptures.[100] The function of the apsidal hall has been a subject of much debate. According to Alison Frantz, it served as a lecture theater, similar to the one described in the house of Julius by Eunapius.[101] A contended view is put forth by Jean-Pierre Sodini, who claims that such apsidal structures were used as triclinia.[102] Arja Karivieri, on the other hand, argues that the seven niches in the apse correspond to the seven endings of a sigma couch, typically used for dining purposes. She draws an analogy with the Villa of Falconer at Argos, suggesting that it aligns with the function of a triclinium. (fig. 5).[103]

It remains challenging to definitively determine the nature of the structure based solely on the excavated remains. The argument presented by Alison Frantz, however, lacks plausibility. A central hall with an apsidal ending was a common architectural feature in late antique urban villas of the late fourth and early fifth centuries across the Empire. Therefore, this design is not unique to Athens but rather reflects a general trend in private architecture of

[99] Ibid.
[100] A. Karivieri, *The 'House of Proclus' on the Southern Slope of Acropolis: A Contribution",* in: P. Castrén, *Post-Herulian Athens*, Athens: Finnish Institute at Athens 1994, 115-139.
[101] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity.* 42-44.
[102] J.P. Sodini, "L'habitat urbain en Grèce à la veille des invasions", *IpByz (1984):* 341-397.
[103] A. Karivieri, *The 'Houes of Proclus'.* On the analogies with Villa of Falconer and the dining culture in late antiquity, see. S. Malmberg, "Dazzling, Dinening", in: L. Brubaker, K. Linardou (eds.), *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19) – Food and Wine in Byzantium,* Farnham: Ashgate 2007, 75-91.

the time. Frantz herself acknowledges that similar architectural layouts can be observed in the villas neighboring House Chi. She suggests that all of these homes functioned as philosophical schools.[104] The question of whether houses could function as philosophical schools will be discussed in the next chapter. However, based on the function of the apsidal hall, it cannot be concluded that House Chi is indeed the house described in the Life of Proclus. The excavated structure is more likely a common late antique villa, part of the group of Areopagus houses.[105] This residential zone consists of several elaborate villas with a common architectural layout, located in the area between the South Slope of the Acropolis and the Areopagus hill (fig. 6).

The notion that House Chi was indeed the residence of the Diadochi has been contested by Polymnia Athanassiadi. Instead, she proposes House C as the possible location for the philosophers' dwelling (fig. 7). This proposal is based on the architectural layout consisting of circular rooms and peristyle courtyards, as well as the abundance of waterworks present in the structure, which could serve a potential religious function. Athanassiadi concludes that this could have been the house in which the heads of the academy dwelled. Another observation made by Athanassiadi is that the house was transformed into an episcopal basilica in the aftermath of the confiscation of pagan property by Justinian in 529.[106] According to Athanassiadi's argumentation, this was a symbolic gesture made by Justinian in the process of creating a Christian tradition that emphasized this area as the location from which Paul delivered his Areopagus sermon.[107]

While Athanassiadi's argumentation does not definitively prove that House C is the house described in the Life of Proclus, it demonstrates that the methodology applied in both cases of identification, which seeks to identify the dwelling of the Diadoch based on the general

[104] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity,* 42-44.
[105] A. Quaderni, *La Casa Nella Grecia Romana*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar 2006, 231-278.
[106] P. Athanassiadi, *Appendix I The House of Damascius?,* in: *Philosophical History* (edited and translated by P. Athanassiadi), Athens: Apameia
2001, 343-348.
[107] *Ibid.*

topographical reference or existence of certain decoration, can be applied to almost any of the Areopagus houses. Furthermore, the visibility from the Acropolis is hardly a direct topographical reference, as the line of sight from the Acropolis encompasses the entire cityscape. Although House Chi is currently visible, albeit partially (fig. 8), so is the entire area inhabited by the Areopagus villas (fig. 9). As such, the topographical layout given by Marinus does not necessarily denote the precise location of the house which Proclus inherited. Rather, Marinus advisedly refers to the fact that the House of Proclus was one of the Areopagus villas.

2.4. Citizen or Ascetic: The Social Life Between Space and Place?

Finally, there remains the question regarding the relationship between the social life of philosophers as depicted in narrative sources with the material reality. The philosophical life of Athenian Neoplatonists is constructed in alignment with three prevailing modes of philosophical living in late antiquity. Firstly, that of the citizen-philosopher.[108] This model is prominently highlighted in the narrative sources, which underscore the concern that the heads of the Academy demonstrate for the civic community of Athens—not only by influencing its decisions but also by educating its forthcoming leaders. The second model of philosophical life is that of the holy man (θεῖος ἀνήρ).[109] This is expressed by the ascetic lifestyle of the philosopher, dedicated to piety and the practice of theurgical virtues.[110] These two models are inherently somewhat contradictory. If solely dedicated to the highest virtues, the philosopher would abstain from engaging in political virtues in any capacity. However, in the lives of Athenian Neoplatonists in the fifth century, these two forms of philosophical life were reconciled. While refraining from active political engagement and sometimes lacking the requisite skills, philosophers participated in civic life as guides, educators, and benefactors.

[108] On this topos in late antique philosophical lives, cf. U.Hartmann, *Die Spätantike Philosoph.* 1811-1819.
[109] U.Hartmann, *Die Spätantike Philosoph,* 1257-1282.
[110] G. Fowden, *The Pagan Holy Man*.

They even went beyond this role to the extent of practicing theurgical virtues, as exemplified by Proclus.

While neither Marinus nor Damascius directly allude to specific topographical details, the urban layout of fifth-century Athens suggests that these social interactions with the public likely occurred in the area of the Agora. Though it is impossible, and to some extent unnecessary, to pinpoint the exact locations within the Agora frequented by philosophers, the broader social topography of the city can be reconstructed. Marinus asserts that Proclus took part in the deliberative assemblies of the city. A more detailed account by Eunapius indicates that such civic functions were conducted in an open-air theater, consistent with the practices of Classical and Roman Athens. The only remaining open theater structure still in use in the fifth century was the Theater of Dionysus. Therefore, it can be inferred that most civic duties were carried out in this location, marking its significance in the Athenian topography.

Epigraphical sources attest that Plutarch was a significant benefactor of the city and an active participant in civic affairs. While there are no similar sources regarding the later heads of the Academy, it underscores their perceived duty towards the city as depicted in narrative sources. The narrative sources do portray an ideal of a philosopher engaged in civic life, fitting the Classical prototype of philosopher's engagement, there is no reason to believe that fifth century Neoplatonists were not involved in civic affairs. However, it should be noted that the duty towards the city is clearly practiced by the Diadochi and not necessarily by the entire membership of the Academy. Therefore, this duty is most likely a symbolic obligation of the heads of the Academy, constructed in texts, but also evidenced in reality, as the sources concerning Plutarch demonstrate.

The third form of philosopher's life is within the philosophical family.[111] As Garth Fowden argues, the Diadochi established their authority by using the metaphor of the Platonic

[111] U. Hartmann, *Die Spätantike Philosoph,* 1282-1309.

chain of succession, which portrayed a shared philosophical family lineage from Plato through Plutarch and his successors.[112] The space in which such a form of living took place was the house constituting part of the diadochica. It was not only the inheritance of the house that constitutes its authority, but also its location within the topography. Marinus deliberately articulates the position of the house as lying between the Theater of Dionysius and the Asklepion, visible from the Acropolis. In terms of urban layout, this is a vague position that could correspond to any of the villas around the Areopagus. As a major residential area of the city, it is highly unlikely that Marinus intended to refer to the area in such a general sense. In pagan hagiographies, there was a recurring theme of situating the dwelling of the holy man in the vicinity of the gods, reflecting a religious topography.[113] The emphasis of the Acropolis and the Asklepion in relation to the House of Proclus aligns well with this topos. As previously discussed, the spatial proximity to Asklepion portrays the close connection of Proclus with Asclepius, as well as the philotheotic nature of the holy man. In the same manner, the visibility of the house from the Acropolis does not relay a precise topographic reference, but highlights the fact that Athena looks over Proclus. I concur with Hartmann's argument that this is a symbolic placement. Similarly, the Theater of Dionysus should not necessarily be interpreted as a religious landmark but rather as a socio-political one, as previously argued.

In contrast to the approach of archaeologists, who attempt to interpret Marinus' topographical layout as a clear indication of the location of the house, I propose a more symbolic interpretation within the religious and political context of fifth-century Athens. The three modes of philosophical life are symbolically represented in three distinct spaces: civic life in the Theater of Dionysius, the life of a holy man in the temples of Asclepius and Athena, and the life within the philosophical family through the space of the household. Although

[112] G. Fowden, The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 102 (1982), 33-38.
[113] U. Hartmann, *Die Spätantike Philosoph,* 693-701.

symbolic, this topography was still constructed in relation to the physical environment. Therefore, there is no reason to dismiss the possibility that the House of Proclus was situated in the residential area of the Areopagus. However, based solely on this description, pointing to the exact location would be challenging.

According to Irmgard Männlein-Robert, Marinus makes references to mnemotopoi of classical Athens, indicating major topographical points of the ancient city.[114] However, I disagree with Männlein-Robert's interpretation. While the framework in which the lives of philosophers are depicted is classicizing, the settings referenced are contemporary to fifth-century CE Athens. Marinus, and to lesser extend Damascius, portray social interactions within the context of a Sophistopolis. Unlike most rhetorical Sophistopolis, which typically depict a generic timeless city, the one described in these texts is specifically that of fifth-century CE Athens. By situating contemporary topography in a classical frame, Marinus aims to situate Proclus' life amidst the most significant religious and social institutions of the city at that time. In doing so, Marinus offers an idealized version of the philosopher's life, in line with the ideals of Classical Athens. While not entirely reliable as historical sources, the texts of Marinus and Damascius, even through sophisticated constructions, provide insights into the urban history and social dynamics of Athens during the fifth century CE, and particularly the specific environment that a pagan holy man would have adapted to. An environment, which aims to connect the Athens of the fifth century CE to Classical Athens.

[114] Irmgard Männlein-Robert , *Vom Piräus zur Akropolis*.

3. Teaching and Preaching: The Educational Topography of Late Antique Athens

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the spatial characteristics of the educational landscape of late antique Athens, as well as its corresponding topography. When referring to the educational landscape, I encompass various forms of educational endeavours, such as instruction in rhetoric and philosophy. The chapter investigates the era spanning from the second to the fifth century, as the evolution of the educational environment during the late fourth and early fifth centuries, as depicted by Philostratus and Eunapius, can be linked back to the second century and the phenomenon known as the Second Sophistic.[115] The exploration of material culture looks in building with confirmed educational function in preceding centuries. Especially, I inquire into the development of such objects in the urban transformation of the city in the aftermath of the Siege of Heruli in 267. CE.

While the existing studies disused in the introduction explore the educational practices, they do not focus on the spaces in which this type of teaching took place. Apart from two studies of Ada Caruso, there have been no further studies concentrated on the educational topography of imperial and late antique Athens.[116] In this chapter, my objective is to address this gap in scholarship. In the first subchapter, I utilize spatial analyses of the textual sources, specifically focusing on Eunapius' and Philostratus' *Lives of Sophists*. It should be noted, that in Late Antiquity, the term sophist did not denote the same prerogative meaning as in Plato, but rather, it denotes different types of professional teachers.[117] For contextualization, I will also

[115] G. Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire*, London: Routledge 1993,
[116] A. Caruso "Lecturing in Athens. Investigations on the 'Topography' of the Second Sophistic: An Overwiev", in: V. Napoli, F. Camia, V. Evangelis (eds.), *What's New in Roman Greece?*, Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation Institute of Historical Resarch 2018, 303 – 317; A. Caruso, *Akademia: Archeologia di una scuola filosofica ad Atene da Platone a Proclo (387 a.C – 485 d.C)*, Atene-Paestum: Pandemos 2013.
[117] E. Szabat "Teachers in the Eastern Roman Empire (Fifth — Seventh Centuries). A Historical Study and Prosopography", in: T. Derda, T. Markwiecz, E. Wipszycka (eds.), *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el - Dikka and Late Antique Education*, Warsaw: JJP Supplement 2007, 177-225.

inquire into reference to educational spaces in Himerius and Libanius. Lastly, I will examine similar spatial references in the *Life of Proclus* and Damascius' *Life of Isidore*, aiming to reconstruct the spatial configuration in which such teaching occurred. In the second subchapter, I delve into the evolution of potential sites with educational roles in fifth-century Athens, drawing from material sources. Through this exploration, my goal is to reconstruct the spatial arrangement within which the fifth-century Neoplatonists likely conducted their teachings, while also contextualizing them within the cityscape.

3.2. **Educational Landscape of Late Antique Athens: Textual Sources**

From the late second to the sixth century, Athens was one of the most important and vibrant educational centers of the late antique world.[118] It should, however, be noted, that before the fifth century AD, that is the establishment of the Neoplatonic Academy by Plutarch, Athens was not solely a center for philosophical education. Philosophy did play an important role in the education landscape of Athens, especially since the establishment of the four philosophical chairs by Marcus Aurelius in 176. AD.[119] In addition to endowing the state-funded chairs of philosophical teaching, Marcus Aurelius also established a fifth chair dedicated to rhetorical teaching.[120]

[118] The importance of Athens as an educational center has been well discussed in scholarship. The abundance of sources, such as orations of Gregory, Basil and Libanios or Eunapius' Life of Sophists – offer an inquiry into the educational ambiance of late antique Athens, see: Watts *City and School*; I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, L.v Alvensleben, *Athens II: Athens in Late Antiquity* 2021; J. Stegner, *Education in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022.

[119] J.H. Oliver, "Marcus Aurelius and the Philosophical Schools at Athens", *The American Journal of Philology* 102/2 (1981), 213-225.

[120] There is a debate in scholarship, whether a public chair of rhetoric existed before Marcus Aurelius. In the Lives of Sophists, Philostratus claims that a sophist Lollianus was the inaugural holder of the chair (Philostratus: Vit. Soph 56). Yet, he was most likely active during the reign of Hadrian, which led researchers to believe there were two chairs. One municipal, and another imperial. However, further on he informs us that Marcus Aurelius appointed a certain Hadrian to the chair of rhetoric, before his visit to Athens and official endowment in 176. AD, which lead scholars to a conclusion about the pre-existence of a public chair. The most likely conclusion is that Marcus Aurelius switched the endowment of the chair from municipal to imperial, raising its salary to 40000 sesterces. This issue is well discussed in: I. Avotins, "The Holders of Chairs of Rhetorics at Athens", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79(1975), 313-324.

Although only one chair of rhetoric was funded by Marcus Aurelius, rhetorical teaching played a much more significant role than philosophical instruction in the educational landscape of the Roman city. In addition to the public (i.e., state-endowed) chairs, the Athenian educational landscape was bustling with private teachers who offered their services to students from all parts of the empire. These encompassed a wide array of subjects, ranging from philosophy to law. [121] Yet, from the perspective of a student, these forms of education were not mutually exclusive.

The structure of the rhetorical schools, and particularly the curriculum in late antique Athens, was not hierarchical. It allowed a student the freedom to choose the teachers with whom they wished to study. In other words, a typical student in second and third-century Athens was not necessarily bound to a single teacher but could engage the services of multiple teachers by paying for their instruction. Although the inner workings of the school were largely at the discretion of the sophists, Philostratus provides an account of how private sophists in Athens may have operated. According to him, Proclus of Naucratis, one of the sophists he himself studied under during the last decade of the second century, set a price of a hundred drachmae, which granted members access to attend lectures and use the library in Proclus' house for a year.[122] In this sense, one should not think of these schools in the modern institutional sense of the word. In most cases, they were not long-lived institutions, and having inter-generational continuity was rare.[123] In this sense, a student could benefit from the service of different sophists, each offering their services in a manner similar to that of Proclus of Naucratis.

Simply attending the lectures of a sophist would categorize one as a listener or attendee. However, there are certain examples from second and third-century Athens in which a more

[121] E. Watts, *City and School*, 24-48.
[122] Philostratus. Vit. Soph. 21. 604.
[123] S. Holder, "The Inner Structure of the Schools in the 3rd and 4th century Athens", in: I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, L.v Alvensleben, *Athens II: Athens in Late Antiquity,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 2020, 227-247.

intimate and exclusive relationship between the sophist and his pupils developed. Some sophists maintained an inner circle of advanced pupils.[124] One such case is described by Philostratus in the school of Herodes Atticus, whose inner circle he labels as the Clepsydrion.[125] As Philostratus claims, after a lecture that was open to all (πάντας ἀκροάσει), Herodes invited his ten best pupils to a private dinner, during which they conversed over a water-clock (*clepsydra*).[126] The two cases described by Philostratus, those of Proclus and Herodes Atticus, provide insight into the structure of the schools in the third and fourth centuries. While most teaching was public, meaning it was at least open to those who could pay a fee, there was also a private teaching component centered around the discussions of the sophist's inner circle. Although there is not an abundance of information on the workings of other types of teachers at the time, especially those teaching philosophy, the structure of teaching was likely similar to that of the rhetorical schools.

The textual sources provide a few references to the educational landscape of the second and third centuries. Among these, one of the most valuable accounts is the third century *Life of Sophists* written by Philostratus. He highlights that rhetorical declamations were delivered at various locations in the city, particularly in temples and odeum.[127] However, we must distinguish between a public rhetorical declamation, given for a specific occasion, and the didactic declamations given to students for the purpose of their education. One of the spaces certainly used for public lectures was the Odeon of Agrippa on the Athenian Agora. Philostratus makes several references to this building. Most notably, he describes a contest between Alexander Peloplaton and Herodes Atticus. Philostratus notes that the Scythian sophist challenged the famed Athenian sophist in a public deliberation held at the theater called Agrippeion, which is in fact

[124] E. Watts, *City and School*, 30-31.
[125] Philostratus, Vit. Soph 10.585.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Philostratus Vit. Soph 533 (Olympeion), 554 (Serapeum), 551 (Herodion).

the Odeon of Agrippa. As Philostratus points out, this place, which was common for lectures, was attended not only by Herodes' students but also by other Athenians. [128]

Aside from the reference to the Agrippeion, there are no other direct references to specific public landmarks in second or third-century Athens. However, other sources do suggest that lecturing did take place in structures resembling theaters. One such example is Lucian's ekphrasis, in which he describes an ornamented lecturing hall.[129] Based on comparisons with similarities outlined by Himerius in one of his orations, Ada Caruso proposes the possibility that such a hall, with its detailed decoration, did indeed exist in Athens.[130] I would, however, call for caution in making such a claim, as there is no indication of any material evidence to support it. However, Ada Caruso may be correct in suggesting that both the *ekphrasis* of hypothetical theatrical halls were based on the actual material environment. While it is unlikely that both Lucian and Himerius speak of a realistic lecturing hall, the two descriptions do suggest that teaching did take place in halls with theatrical seating. Although the Agrippeion is the only one we can certainly claim to have been used for public lectures, there is no reason not to speculate that similar, smaller halls existed across Athens.

Philostratus does mention that certain educational practices took place in the houses of sophists. Most notably, he points out Herodes' house in the Athenian deme of Marathon.[131] It is clear from his description that Herodes organized the meetings of his inner circle in his house.[132] However, there is no indication that other forms of instruction took place in it. In the instances where houses are mentioned by Philostratus, as is the case of Herodes and Plutarch of Naucratis, they served as spaces for additional learning. In this sense, the landscape of

[128] Philostratus Vit. Soph 571.
[129] Lucian, *De Domo*.
[130] A. Caruso "Lecturing in Athens. Investigations on the 'Topography' of the Second Sophistic: An Overwiev", in: V. Napoli, F. Camia, V.Evangelis (eds.), *What's New in Roman Greece?*, NHRF Institute of Historical Resarch: Athens 2018, 303 – 317.
[131] Philostratus, Vit. Soph 562.
[132] Philostratus, Vit. Soph 571; 579.

Roman Athens, does reflect the educational practices described in the texts. This includes public lecturing, open to all, which would take place at odeums or other theater-like structures, as well as the more intimate gatherings of advanced students, which occurred in private houses.

After the Siege of the Heruli in 267 CE, the intellectual climate in Athens did not change significantly. According to Eunapius, regular teaching continued by the beginning of the eighth decade of the third century.[133] However, what did change significantly, was the social position of Sophists. As Watts rightfully argues, in the aftermath of the Siege of the Heruli, Athenian agriculture deteriorated. Consequently, education became the backbone of the Athenian economy.[134] The multitude of teachers in the economically challenged city led to more exclusivity in school structures, which resulted in clashes among various sophists or, in other cases, groups of students. This climate is well described by the most prominent fourth-century students to Athens, the Cappadocian Father Gregory and Basil, and the orator Libanius.[135]

The most common act of violence between different schools was related to student recruitment. A vivid description of this is given by Eunapius. As he informs us, his own teacher Prohaeresius, one of the most prominent sophists of the mid-fourth century, struck a deal with a captain friend of his. The captain was to gather all the students coming by his ship and take them straight to Prohaeresius.[136] Apart from securing financial stability through a regular influx of students, Eunapius claims that this steady stream of students from various parts of the Empire also provided support for Prohaeresius when he was to be elected to the public chair.[137]

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[133] Eunapius' claims how certain Paulus and a Syrian called Andromachus were renowned rhetoricians in Athens, at the time when Plutarch returned to Rome from Sicily, which can be dated around 371/2: Eunapius. Vit. Soph. 457.
[134] E. Watts, *City and School*, 41-48.
[135] D. DeForest, "Between Mysteries and Factions: Initiation Rituals, Student Groups, and Violence in the Schools of Late Antique Athens", *Journal of Late Antiquity 4/2* (2011), 315-342.
[136] Eunapius, Vit. Soph 64G; Eunapius informs us that it was customary for a student to be 'kidnaped' in the middle of the night, usually by his compatriots or relatives, and taken to a specific school in which he would be initiated in a ritual with bathing, before swearing an oath to the specific Sophist. In this way, sophists would secure an influx of student, as well as their loyalty – which is a striking difference to the educational landscape of the second and third century. This custom is also mentioned by Gregory and Libanius, see: D. DeForest, *Between Mysteries and Factions*.
[137] Eunapius Vit. Soph. 488B.

But did this new climate significantly influence the change in educational spaces? Eunapius informs us that his teacher, Julian the Sophist, was forced to move his teaching from the public lecture theaters to his own home due to the clashes and violence between student groups. Eunapius describes that this home possessed a marble theater modeled after the public ones.[138] This passage from Eunapius was used by Alison Frantz to argue that the apsidal structures of the Areopagus villas followed the layout of such theaters, providing evidence that they functioned as schools, as mentioned in the previous chapter.[139] Apart from Julian's reference, there is no other evidence to suggest that teaching, whether of philosophy or rhetoric, exclusively occurred in private houses in late antique Athens. While the house owned by Julian was inherited by his successor Prohaeresius, Eunapius is clear to point out that Prohaeresius continued teaching in public lecturing spaces after Julian's death.[140]

The case of Julian's house suggests that public theaters served as model spaces for lecturing, a practice likely continued into the fourth and fifth centuries. The oration linked to Lucian's ekphrasis by Ada Caruso highlights the existence of theatrical lecture halls as a standard for teaching in late antique Athens. In Oration 64, Himerius speaks at length about addressing large public theaters (ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ μεγάλοις θεάτροις) but is happy to return to the small one (μικρὸν θέατρον), which is the source of his inspiration.[141] He refers to theaters as places of teaching in a few more instances. In Oration 7, he mentions how his life is lived in the theaters, referring to the place of teaching.[142] The same technical term is used in Oration 54, speaking of the place in which the newly arrived students are gathered.[143] Again in Oration 69, Himerius refers to the opening of theaters.[144]

[138] Eunapius Vit. Soph. 483: καὶ τὸ θέατρον ἦν ξεστοῦ λίθου, τῶν δημοσίων θεάτρων εἰς μίμησιν, ἀλλὰ ἔλαττον καὶ ὅσον πρέπειν οἰκίᾳ
[139] A. Fratnz, *Agora in Late Antiquity*, 47-48.
[140] Eunapius Vit. Soph 489.
[141] Himerius Oration 64.
[142] Himerius Oration 7.2: τὴν ἐμὴν πολιτείαν ἔχει τὰ θέατρα
[143] Himerius Oration 54. 1: Ὡς ἡδύ μοι πάλιν τὸ θέατρον.
[144] Himerius Oration 69. 1: ὥρα τὸ θέατρον.

It's still a matter of scholarly debate what the term θέατρον denotes. According to Lauren Pernot, in Greek antiquity, it is used to denote three different things. Firstly, the physical space: a theater attached to a sanctuary or an independent structure such as odeons. Secondly, it may refer to the gathered audience. Lastly, it denotes the very act of deliberation.[145] Although there is no reason not to agree with Pernot's assertion, it should be noted that *theatron* is first and foremost a space. Cases outside of Athens further support this claim. For example, when Libanius took the public chair in Antioch, he started teaching in a covered theater (οὗ θέατρον ὑπωρόφιον) located in the city's Bouleterion.[146] In a similar manner, public theaters of such function are attested throughout the eastern Mediterranean from the late fourth to the sixth century.[147] Aside from references to such theaters in the work of late antique authors, two public educational complexes are further attested by sources. Firstly, the complex of Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria, excavated by the Polish Institute of Mediterranean Archaeology, offers valuable material insight, as I will discuss further on. A second complex is attested in Constantinople. An addition to the Theodosian Code from 425 regulates public teaching in Constantinople. Importantly, it forbids those teaching in public auditoria to offer additional lessons to their students in private homes.[148] Yet, it recognizes that those who wish to teach only to a selected group of students inside their own homes ("intra parietes domesticos docent") may continue to do so.[149]

The regulation from the Theodosian Code is not only clear about the existence of public teaching auditoria in the capital, but also about two modes of teaching: private and public. I believe this to be comparable to the educational landscape of Athens from the second century onwards. In other words, it confirms the division referred to by Eunapius and Philostratus, in

[145] L. Pernot, *La Rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde Gréco-Romain*, Institut d'études Augustiniennes, Paris: 1993, 399-403.
[146] Libanius Oration 22.31.
[147]G. Cavallo "Places of Public Reading", in: T. Derda, T. Markwiecz, E. Wipszycka (eds.), *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el - Dikka and Late Antique Education*, Warsaw: JJP Supplement 2007, 151-157.
[148] CTh XIV 9.3: Sin autem ex eorum numero fuerint, qui videntur intra capitolii auditorium constituti, ii omnibus modis privatarum aedium studia sibi interdicta esse cognoscant scituri
[149] CTh XIV 9.3: …si ipsis tantummodo discipulis vacare maluerint, quos intra parietes domesticos docent, nulla huiusmodi interminatione prohibemus.

which the major mode of education was public, held in spaces such as Agrippeion or other similar theaters. A second mode is private education, limited to the inner circle of a sophist, and held in their house, as was the case with sophists such as Herodes Atticus, or for those who would offer additional money, as was the case with the house of Proclus of Naukratis. While the Theodosian Code prohibits publicly funded chairs from gaining additional income by offering private tutorials, there is no indication that this also relates to private (i.e., non-state-funded) sophists. I would also like to note that inner circles of teachers were not necessarily based on additional income, but rather on the additional discussions between students and teachers.

As we have seen, the educational landscape of Athens from the second to the early fifth century was dominated by private sophists and rhetorical teaching. Philosophical teaching was present in the city, but to a much lesser extent. Eunapius mentions the introduction of the Iamblichian tradition of Neoplatonic teaching to Athens in the latter half of the fourth century. However, by the end of the century, he fears that the teaching of this tradition is hanging by a thread.[150] Paradoxically, by the middle of the fifth century, various sources confirm that the Iamblichan tradition became the dominant form of philosophical teaching in the Roman world.[151] Although philosophical teaching occurred in various centers across the Empire, including Alexandria and Constantinople, sources highlight Athens as the foremost hub for such instruction.[152] Marinus, for instance, asserts that Proclus, feeling constrained by the emphasis on rhetoric in Alexandria, was driven to seek out Athens for a more profound study of philosophy.[153]

While it is plausible to interpret Marinus' claim as a rhetorical device praising the intellectual environment of Athens, a deeper exploration of the educational landscape in the fifth-century allows for a more nuanced interpretation. As Watts argues, the opportunities for

[150] Eunapius Vit. Soph 505.
[151] E. Watts, "Athens, Educational Reform, and the Future of Philosophy", in: I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, L.v Alvensleben, *Athens II: Athens in Late Antiquity,* Tübingen, Mohr-Siebeck 2020, 247-259.
[152] On Alexandria: E. Watts, *City and School*, 204-232. A single chair of philosophy is mentioned in Constantinople in CTh XIV 9.3: **Unum igitur adiungi ceteris volumus, qui philosofiae arcana rimetur**
[153] Marinus, Vit. Procli. 9

philosophical education in the first half of the fifth century were limited. Constantinople possessed only a single chair, while philosophical education in Alexandria waned following the aftermath of Hypatia's death.[154] The philosophical school of Plutarch developed within this context. In a letter written to his brother around the year 400, Synesius gives a description of the early teaching of Plutarch. As he recounts, Plutarch and a small group of his disciples gathered in one of the lecturing halls, essentially mimicking the grandeur of classical philosophy.[155] While Synesius's account may seem negative, it should not be interpreted as reflecting the lack of quality in Plutarch's school. Synesius contrasts Hypatia's true wisdom with what he sees as Plutarch's sweet-tongued sophistry.[156] The passage reflects the rivalry between the circles of Plutarch and Hypatia, with Synesius aiming to assert the superiority of his own circle, rather than simply expressing a documentary fact about the unimportance of Plutarch's circle.[157] By the end of the fifth century, the Academy of Plutarch developed into one of the most important educational institutions in the Mediterranean. Damascius informs us that during Proclus' tenure as Diadoch, the annual income amounted to a thousand soldi annually.

It is essential to note the purpose of this education. Unlike rhetorical or legal education, which aims to prepare students for public service, philosophical education, at least in its broadest terms, is aimed at acquiring virtue.[158] The Neoplatonic teaching that took place in the Academy followed a clear path based on the Iamblichan hierarchy of virtues, discussed in the previous chapter. In the Athenian Neoplatonic narrative, the path towards virtue was often compared to an initiation.[159] The mystical experience was also reflected in the curriculum. Marinus notes that initially, a student was to learn the works of Aristotle, starting with the logical, ethical, political,

[154] E. Watts, *Athens, Educational Reform*.
[155] Synesius Ep. 136
[156] Ibid.
[157] Supporting view is expressed by Watts, see: E. Watts: *Athens, Educational Reform,* 253-254.
[158] J. Stegner, *Education in Late Antiquity*, 141-189.
[159] Marinus. Vit. Procli. 13

and physical treatises: the Organon, the Nicomachean Ethics, Politics, and Physics.[160] After mastering these, progresses to studying Aristotelian theology and later advances to Plato's works.[161] Following the acquisition of the political virtues through the study of such philosophical works, the purificatory virtues would be attained through the study of Orphic and Chaldean traditions, as well as the practice of appropriate rituals.[162] Subsequently, the most advanced students would engage in practicing theurgical rites.

In practical terms, the educational routine at the fifth-century Academy resembled that of Athenian schools in preceding centuries. Seminars, held primarily during the day, were the main mode of instruction. Here, members of the Academy would study and actively engage in discussions centered around the writings of earlier philosophers.[163] In addition to these public gatherings, Marinus informs us of more intimate meetings between Proclus and his closest students, which were held in his house.[164] The only explicit reference to spaces associated with the Academy, aside from the House of the Diadochi, is the Garden of Plato, as mentioned by Damascius. According to his account, this garden was the sole part of the diadochica that belonged to Plato himself. [165]

According to Diogenes Laertius, Plato used to teach in the garden near Colonus.[166] I do not wish to delve into a detailed discussion about the nature of this garden or whether it was the location of the Old Academy. Instead, I simply note its presumed position in the topography of classical Athens. John Dillon suggests the possibility that Plato's garden was part of one of his two estates, either in the deme of Iphistiadae or in Eiresidae.[167] Alternatively, it could have been located in the area mentioned by Diogenes Laertius, presumed to be the academy,

[160] Marinus. Vit. Procli 13. 318-320: Ἐν ἔτεσι γοῦν οὔτε δύο ὅλοις πάσας αὐτῷ τὰς Ἀριστοτέλους συνανέγνω πραγματείας, λογικάς, ἠθικάς, πολιτικάς, φυσικάς…
[161] Marinus. Vit. Procli 13. 320-323.
[162] Marinus Vit. Procli 18.
[163] Marinus Vit. Procli 22.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Damascius, Vit. Isidor. 102.
[166] Diogen Laertius, III. 5.
[167] J. Dillon, "What happened to Plato's Garden?", *Hermathena* 134 (1983), 51-59.

northwest of the Dipylon gate, near Colonus (fig. 10).[168] Whatever its exact location, it lay well beyond the scope of the post-Herulian city. Although the tradition of such a garden existed among fifth-century Neoplatonists, it is unlikely to assert continuity between the physical environment of the Old Academy and the Neoplatonic one established by Plutarch. Instead, the spaces occupied by this academy were likely similar to those used by sophists from the second to the early fifth century.

3.3. **Educational Topography and its Built Environment**

The material evidence from Roman Athens can point out to the educational topography of the city. While identifying specific houses owned by sophists remains ambitious and, to a certain extent, impossible, at least three monumental public buildings can be associated with educational activities with full certainty. Namely, the Library of Hadrian, the Library of Pantanios and the Odeoon of Agrippa.[169] During the subsequent transformation of Athens, following the Siege of the Herulii, the Library of Hadrian and the Odeon of Agrippa survived, while the Library of Pantanios was demolished during the siege.

In this subchapter, my aim is to delve into the material evidence concerning the educational landscape of fifth-century Athens. I begin by examining Alison Frantz's arguments regarding the function of Areopagus villas as philosophical schools. Then, I explore the material evidence related to the Odeon of Agrippa and the Library of Hadrian during the fifth century, reassessing their likely functions based on architectural layout and construction. Through this examination, I seek to gain insight into the educational topography of late antique Athens and the position of the Neoplatonists within it.

[168] A.Caruso, *Akademia: Archeologia di una scuola filosofica ad Atene da Platone a Proclo (387 a.C – 485 d.C)*, Pandemos: Atene-Paestum 2013, 100-104.
[169] A. Caruso, *Lecturing in Athens*.

3.3.1. The House as Teaching Space: Case of Areopagus Villas

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is often assumed that teaching of various subjects in fifth-century Athens, including philosophy, took place inside houses. While textual sources distinguish between public teaching in theaters and more intimate instruction in the house of the sophist, there is a possibility that such theaters were indeed domestic, as seen with Julian of Cappadocia. Drawing from material evidence outside of Athens, it has been argued that certain late antique villas can be identified as philosophical schools, as exemplified by the maison de la Cathédrale de l'Est in Apamea.[170] However, I would like to explore whether any elements of the Areopagus villas indicate a definitive function as schools.

Among the houses on the Areopagus, the five most well-preserved ones, namely houses A, B, C, D, and Chi (the House of Proclus), share a similar layout, consisting of rooms surrounding a central peristyle courtyard.[171] Yet, this is again not a characteristic exclusive to Athens but rather a common feature of late antique urban villas, especially in the Greek-speaking world.[172] Frantz is correct that the most prominent rooms of the houses had an apsidal ending. However, the lack of elevation in the flooring of the apse, as well as the rectangular basis of the room, suggest that there is no indication that these rooms functioned as lecturing theaters. Rather, they correlate to the principles of later Roman household architecture.

According to Ada Caruso, it is not the spatial layout but rather the decoration of the house that points to its educational function.[173] The textual sources attest that such decoration consisted of statues of gods, philosophers, and, in the case of the House of Julian, especially muses.[174] However, this type of decoration was common in many houses of the imperial Roman

[170] V. Drbal, "Socrates in Late Antique Art and Philosophy: the Mosaic of Apamea", *Series Byzantina* 7(2009), 19-29.
[171] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity*, 37-42.
[172] P. Bonini, *La casa nella Grecia romana. Forme e funzioni dello spazio privato fra I e VI secolo,* Roma: Edizioni Quasar 2006,
[173] A. Caruso "'Mikra theatra'. Criteri esegetici per l'identificazione dei luoghi dell'insegnamento domestico tra il II e il VI sec. d.C.", *Antiquité Tardive* 29 (2011), 169-191.
[174] Eunapius, Vit. Soph. 483

and late-antique world and does not necessarily indicate that the owner was a teacher.[175] As Caruso argues, decoration alone is not the decisive factor in determining the educational function of the house. Instead, it is the specific depictions of teaching practices combined with certain spatial features, such as built-in benches or the existence of writing surfaces, that indicate its educational purpose.[176]

The most prominent iconographical motif depicting philosophers is that of seven philosophers seated in a semi-circle, found in various contexts such as the Roman catacomb of via Dino Compagni and the mansion de la Cathédrale de l'Est in Apamea (fig. 11). Some scholars have suggested that the niches in the apses of some Areopagus houses were intended for statues of philosophers arranged in a similar semi-circular fashion.[177] However, the absence of any such statue found in situ makes this hypothesis speculation. Even if we were to accept that the niches were intended for statues of philosophers, it would not provide conclusive evidence of the houses' function as schools. The depiction of seven philosophers, often a modified version of the Seven Sages, was a popular theme in later Roman household decoration. Placing such statues under niches may have been a common practice, as evidenced by mosaics depicting the seven philosophers under arcades, such as the mosaic of the Seven Sages in the villa at Nerodimlje (fig. 12).[178]

Caruso's proposal is logical, but the general lack of such evidence makes it challenging to definitively identify houses as schools. Additionally, I partially disagree with Caruso's assessment that the layout of the house is not a decisive indicator of its function. While the layout, combined with epigraphical sources and decoration, can suggest the educational role of a household structure, as seen in Apamea, the presence of a household theater must be clearly

[175] L. Stirling, *The Learned Collector*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2010, 165-228.
[176] A. Caruso, *Mikra theatra.*
[177] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity,* 44-47.
[178] On this mosaic, see: S. Djuric, "Mosaic of philosophers in an early byzantine villa at Nerodimlje", VI coloquio internacional sobre mosaico antiguo (Palencia - Merida, octubre 1990), Guadalajara (1994), 123-134.

indicated by the architectural features of the object. In this sense, we should also differentiate between those houses whose function was that of a school (as is the case with the House of Julian) and those houses in which some form of instruction took place (as is the case with Proclus or Herod). The latter could take place in any sort of space, and there is no indication that private discussions took place in theaters. However, when considering the former, a theater-like structure seems necessary. In that sense, the material evidence from fifth-century Athens does not point to any of the Areopagus villas functioning as schools. While some of them might have been owned by sophists and philosophers, public declamations and discussions must have happened elsewhere.

3.3.2. The Palace (?) of the Giants

Despite its deteriorated state in the aftermath of the Siege of the Heruli, the Odeon, presumably built by Marcus Agrippa in the first century BCE, continued to function throughout the fourth century. This first-century structure was located in the central part of the Agora, to the south of the Panathenaic way (fig. 13). The layout of the first phase of the building consists of two rectangular forms. The inner one encloses the auditorium with an elevated cavea and the scene, and includes an additional entry lobby to the south. (fig. 14). The outer rectangle flanks the inner one on the northern, western, and eastern sides. Its walls were built from light limestone, and the middle zone of the outer rectangle was spaced out by columns and square pilasters. Based on reconstructions offered by Homer A. Thompson, the original building was two storeys high (fig. 15). However, there is no material to attest the existence of an upper storey, other than Thompson's hypothesis based on the structure and height of the walls.[179]

Around the middle of the second century the Odeon of Agrippa underwent reconstruction, marked as Phase II of the building. Most notably, the auditorium was reduced by half of its size,

[179] H.A.Thomspon, *The Odeon at the Athenian Agora*, Hesperia 19/2 (1950), 31-141.

while the scena was transformed into an elongated porch on the northern side of the building. The porch was elevated and made accessible by seven flights of stairs, flanked by eight long pedestals (fig. 16) The entablature of the porch was supported by square pedestals decorated in relief, adorned with statues of Titans (Giants) (fig. 17.).[180] The change in the architectural layout of the building likely followed a shift in its function, as argued by Homer Thompson. The most notable functional change was the transformation of the scena into a portico. Unlike the previous structure, which had an enclosed area used as a proscenium, the new structure did not have the functional layout used for dramatic performances. The updated architectural design reflects the function described in the text. Rather than merely serving as one of the local odeum utilized by the sophists for public deliberation, it seems more probable that the structure was intentionally repurposed for educational use, rather than being altered due to some form of damage inflicted upon it during the second century.

Although Homer Thompson argues that the Odeon was as burnt during the Siege of Heruli, there is no material evidence to confirm this hypothesis.[181] Though the question of whether the odeon remained in function throughout the later third and fourth centuries remains open, based on the references given by Eunapius, I would presume it retained its original function. However, its state likely deteriorated over time. At the beginning of the fifth century, the odeon underwent a second significant transformation.[182] The third phase of the complex, labeled as the Palace of the Giants, expanded the original structure further southward (fig. 18), taking over the area previously occupied by the Middle Stoa, South Stoa II, and two temples.[183] The layout of the new complex was structured around three main areas: a northern peristyle court, which served as the entryway, connected to a central court. On the eastern side of the

[180] Ibid, 99-134.
[181] H.A. Thomspon *The Odeon*, 135-141.
[182] H. A. Thomspon, "The Palace of the Giants", in: A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity*, 95-117.
[183] Ibid, 97.

complex, there was a third, smaller peristyle court, bordered by square rooms on the northern, southern, and eastern sides (fig. 19).

The northern section of the building comprised an open colonnaded square area measuring 29.40x37.80m, with its northern entrance flanked by the monumental figures from Phase II (fig. 20). To the west, it adjoined a semi-circular chamber with low elevation (room 5), followed by a square room adjacent to it (room 6), and two additional quadrangle rooms on the eastern side of the colonnade (rooms 7 and 9). A large rectangular chamber (room 10) and a semicircular room (room 11) served as connectors between the northern and southern courts. Homer Thompson and Richard Wicherly observed their linkage via a series of steps.[184] The semi-circular room, connected through a gallery, led to the southern court, which was surrounded on all four sides by porticos. Moving southward, the courtyard connected to a spacious chamber, with two similarly sized smaller chambers flanking it to the east and west on each side (rooms 15-18). Despite being considerably smaller in size, the majority of the rooms were clustered around the eastern courtyard. Interestingly, Thompson observes that these rooms comprised a shallow basement, situated 1.40 meters below the courtyard level, accessible via a ramp or possibly stairs.[185] Most striking in this area is the octagonal room on the easternmost side (room 36). A separate northwestern section of the complex comprises four rooms, believed to have served as bathing facilities. According to Homer Thompson, the bath included a three-room caldarium (rooms 43-45) and an elongated frigidarium (room 42). The enclosed eastern and western parts of the building served as gardens.

The renovated complex has initially been identified as a gymnasium due to its layout consisting of peristyle courtyards, a bathing complex, and its previous educational function.[186] It seems improbable that the institution of the gymnasium persisted into the fifth century. Sofia

[184] H. A. Thompson, *The Palace of the Giants,* 102; H. A. Thompson, R. Wycherley, *The Agora of Athens: The History, Shape and Uses of an Ancient City Center, Vol XIV,* Athens 1972, 212-213.
[185] H.A.Thompson, R. Wycherley, *The Agora of Athens*, 212.
[186] H.A. Thompson, *Odeon at the Athenian Agora.*

Remijsen notes that while the pre-existing gymnasiums with baths were not abandoned in late antiquity, their function underwent significant changes. The baths became the primary component, while the palaestrae were repurposed as entertainment sections, as Remijsen labels them.[187] In this context, it seems unlikely that the primary function of the courtyards was that of a palaestra. Considering the existing layout, the size of the rooms, and the presence of the bathing complex, Thompson argues that this complex served as a residential palace, utilized by provincial authorities during their visits to the city.[188]

This identification, however, raises certain scepticism. As Garth Fowden notes, it was not in Athens but rather in Corinth where the provincial seat was located.[189] Likewise, it was uncommon for provincial administrators to construct palaces outside of their provincial capital. There are some similarities with the Palace of the Dux Ripae at Dura Europos, which Thompson draws as a parallel to the Palace of the Giants (fig. 21).[190] However, the number of rooms as well as their size are significantly smaller. While Dura was the seat of the Dux Ripae, explaining the existence of the official palace, it remains unclear why a similar palace would exist in a city such as Athens.[191] It should also be mentioned that the Palace of the Dux Ripae predates the complex on the Agora by two centuries, as it was built during the reign of Elagabalus (218-222) and abandoned after the Sasanian conquest of Dura in 257.[192] While the peristyle structure of the building shares similarities with certain trends in fourth-century domestic architecture, such as the Palace of Theodosius/Parthenios in Stobi (fig. 22) or the palace in Apollonia (fig. 23), the Agora complex is notably larger in size and boasts a

[187] S. Ramijsen, *The End of Greek Athletics in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, 164-172.
[188] H.A. Thomspon, *Palace of the Giants*, 110-116.
[189] G. Fowden, "The Athenian Agora and the Progress of Christianity", *Journal of Roman Archaeology 3 (1990),* 494-501.
[190] cf. H.A. Thomspon*, Palace of the Giants*, 116.
[191] On the Palace of the Dux Ripae, see: S.B. Downey, "The Palace of the Dux Ripae at Dura-Europos and "Palatial" Architecture of Late Antiquity"*, Studies in the History of Art 43(1993),* 182-198.
[192] Ibid.

significantly more spacious layout. In this regard, the parallels from other cities drawn by Thompson appear to be more akin to the Areopagus houses rather than the Palace of the Giants.

As Thompson notes, the builders of the fifth-century complex disregarded most of the older foundations, except for those of the Odeon of Agrippa. As he claims: "Not only did the North Court of the Palace assume the same axial emplacement as the Odeon, but in its shape and dimensions it closely approximated its predecessor. One is tempted in fact to suppose that the original intention was to have the North Court coincide completely with the Odeon." Thompson's assertion can be explained not as a coincidence but rather a deliberate intention by the architects of the fifth-century building to preserve the existing function of the Odeon. Despite the expansion of the complex southwards, its primary core remained centered around the northern area, particularly dominated by the semicircular room. The presence of stairs, the slight elevation of the ground, and the striking resemblance to the older structure of the Odeon strongly indicate that the semi-circular room in the new complex (room 11) retained its function as an auditorium, rather than being simply an elevated hallway, as Thompson suggests.[193] This is further affirmed by the legacy data from the excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies in 1935. The preservation of late antique material on the bedrock cuttings of the rock, as well as the intact marble floor indicating a spatial layout of an odeon, suggests that there were limited adjustments to the semi-circular hall during the fifth-century renovations. In other words, although slightly renovated, the room retained its original function.[194]

The presence of an auditorium suggests a function distinct from that of a palace. Comparative material dated to the early fifth century, may help us assert the function of the complex on the Agora. Namely, the complex at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. The large

[193] Cf. Thompson, *Palace of the Giants,* 102-104.
[194] Agora Report: 1935 ΩΔ.

complex from central Alexandria, excavated by the Polish Institute of Mediterranean Archaeology since 1960, offers a unique case of a well-preserved educational institution of late antiquity.[195] Although not fully excavated, the major outline of the complex may be reconstructed. The complex consists of at least twenty lecture halls, all rectangular, concentrated in southern and northern areas, divided by a colonnaded passage (fig. 24). The northern area is dominated by a circular odeon, behind which there was presumably an enclosed garden, or possibly a peristyle courtyard.[196] The most notable characteristic of the complex is the interior arrangement of the rooms, consisting of stone benches lining along three walls. In most cases, stone benches were elevated in a stepped manner, usually arranged in rows of three or more. However, cases of single benches lining the walls have been attested. A dominant feature of the interior layout is a central dais opposite to the entrance. Although different in form, ranging from an elaborate throne-like construction (fig. 25) to a mere elevation above the existing benches (fig. 26).[197] Such a form, most likely reserved for the teacher, around whom the students were seated, is often compared to the synthronon of early Christian churches.[198]

The interior layout of the auditoria at Kom el – Dikka highlights the material environment in which teaching took place.[199] The teacher was likely seated on an elevated chair, with students encircling him, while a pedestal in the center of some of the auditoria

[195] See: T. Derida, T. Markiweicz, E. Wipszycka (eds.),, *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el-Dikka and Late Antique Education*, Warsaw: JJP Supplements 2007.
[196] G. Majcherek, "The Late Roman Auditoria of Alexandria: An Archaeological Overview", in: T. Derda, T. Markiweicz, E. Wipszycka, *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el-Dikka and Late Antique Education*, Warsaw: JJP Supplements 2007, 11-51.
[197] Ibid.
[198] G. Majcherek, *The Late Roman Auditoria*, 28; R.Sorajbi, "The Alexandrian Classrooms Excavated and Sixth-century Philosophy Teaching" In: P. Remes, S. Slaeva-Griffin (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, London: Routledge 2014, 30-40.
[199] The identification and subsequent interpretation of the educational function of the complex at Kom el-Dikka, raises certain skepticism among scholars. This issue is acknowledged by Roger Bagnall in the introduction to the volume on Kom el-Dikka, and I agree with him, and the assumption that Kom el-Dikka was an educational complex, see: R. Bagnall, "Introduction", in: T. Derida, T. Markiweicz, E. Wipszycka (eds.),, *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el-Dikka and Late Antique Education*, Warsaw 2007: JPP Supplements, 3-9.

suggests the presence of a central pulpit. This pulpit may have been where students conversed with the teacher and the rest of the student body. The existing stone furniture clearly indicates the function of the room as lecture theaters, confirming the theater-like structure of lecture halls described in textual sources. However, it should be noted that the lack of stone furniture does not necessarily exclude the existence of other types of furniture, such as the sophists' chair or the pulpit, which could have been made of wood.[200]

Returning to the Palace of the Giants, certain structural similarities can be observed, particularly in the rooms of the eastern area of the complex. Thompson notes the presence of foundations made of rubble masonry on the sides of the rooms. According to his assertion, these foundations could have served to support the stairs. Yet, he notes that the existence of proper stairs is uncertain.[201] Taking into consideration that such rubble foundation is common in all eastern rooms of the Palace of the Giants, it remains unlikely that all of them supported stairs. A similar building technique can be attested at Kom el-Dikka, where rubble foundation was used to support the elevated seating benches of the rooms. In the well-documented archaeological practice in Athens, it is known that reaching the classical layers of a building often entails the destruction of certain layers from the fifth century, which may not have been meticulously documented. In this case, most notably, the remains of the flooring. However, those remains that were preserved point out to the interior layout of the room. Namely, the remains of room 41 suggest the presence of a bedrock and earth foundation, utilized for flooring, concentrated in the central part of the room. The border of the room is filled with foundation of rubble masonry. [202] Although there are no remains of marble or other flooring, a similar arrangement of the pavement tiles in auditorium J at Kom el-Dikka revealed that the

[200] J.S. McKenzie, *"The Place in Late Antique Alexandria 'Where Alchemists and Scholars Sit (...) Was Like Stars",* in: T. Derida, T. Markiweicz, E. Wipszycka (eds.), (eds.),, *Alexandria: Auditoria of Kom el-Dikka and Late Antique Education*, Warsaw: JJP Supplements 2007*,* 53-85.
[201] H. A. Thomspon, *Palace of Giants*, 104-105.
[202] Ibid.

room functioned as an auditorium, despite the stone benches being dismantled afterwards. (fig. 27).[203]

Similarly, the variation in height between the eastern rooms and the central corridor can be attributed to their presumed functions. In this context, the elevation of the rooms was likely achieved not by raising the seating upwards, as seen in Kom el-Dikka, but rather by lowering the floors—following the natural elevation of the terrain. A specificity of the octagonal room in the eastern part of the building compromises another similarity with Kom el-Dikka. Namely, what Thompson identified as a well posted below the eastern wall is similar to water tanks found in several of the auditoriums at Kom el-Dikka, which were placed in the middle of the seating benches.[204] While their function is still speculated about, it most likely had an educational purpose.[205]

In previous scholarship, the existence of baths in the complex have been crucial for its identification. According to Thompson, and previously Leslie Sheer, the baths are too small for a gymnasium, leading them to identify the complex as a gubernatorial palace. [206] The design of the bathing area within the complex, with its limited access restricted to those within the building, suggests a deliberate emphasis on privacy. While this has been a definitive argument for its previous identification, the existence of a similar, though larger, bathing structure in Kom el-Dikka might suggest that the Palace of Giants could be an educational institution. I do not wish to claim that the presence of baths definitively proves the complex's educational function. Rather, it indicates that the deliberate privacy of the bathing area does not necessarily imply that the building had a residential purpose.

Thompson correctly argued that the so-called Palace of the Giants on the Agora cannot be compared to a classical gymnasium. From the architectural layout alone, it is also

[203] G. Majcherek, *The Late Roman Auditoria,* 23.
[204] Ibid, 28-30.
[205] See. R.Sorajbi, *The Alexandrian Classrooms Excavated.*
[206] H.A. Thomspon, *Palace of the Giants*, 98

implausible to consider it a gubernatorial palace. I concur with Thompson's original argument that the new complex likely retained the previous function of the Odeon of Agrippa. However, due to the lack of comparable material, particularly from sites like Kom el-Dikka, it was not possible for Thompson to definitively determine its function as a fifth-century educational institution, which most likely prompted his later interpretation.

3.3.3. The Library of Hadrian

As mentioned in the previous chapter, an inscription set up by Plutarch attests that Hadrian's library was another educational institution that underwent reconstruction at the beginning of the fifth century. Aside from the renovation of the rooms in the eastern part of the building, which were likely used to store scrolls, the most striking addition is a tetraconchal building in the middle of the peristyle courtyard, which has been identified as a church (fig. 28).[207] According to Arja Karivieri, the church was most likely endowed by Athenian-born Empress Eudocia. The placement of the church, in what was built by Hadrian as a specific cultural center of the Roman city, has been interpreted as a symbolic act, in which the Christian imperial authority wished to send a message to the pagan elites of the city.[208]

However, the interpretation of the fifth-century building as a church remains uncertain. There is no clearly Christian decoration, nor any other material evidence that might be directly connected to liturgy. Thus, the architecture of the tetraconch stands as the only indicator of a possibly Christian function of the building. The identification of late antique tetraconch buildings as churches is a common mistake in older archaeology. For a long time, the tetraconch type was considered an indigenous Christian architectural form.[209] However, the development

[207] A. Karivieri, "The So-Called Library of Hadrian and the Tetraconch Church in Athens", in: P. Castrén (ed.), *Post-Herulian Athens*, 89-113.
[208] Ibid.
[209] This is discussed in: W.E. Kleinbauer, "The Double-Shell Tetraconch Building at Perge in Pamphylia and the Origin of the Architectural Genus", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 41 (1987),* 277-293.

of a double-shelled tetraconch type can be traced back to the architecture of second-century civic buildings, as seen in the tetraconchal building on the Piazza d'Oro in Tivoli.[210]

Another argument put forth by Arja Karivieri for identifying the tetraconch building as a church is the mosaic decoration preserved in the conchae (see fig. 29). According to her interpretation, the similarities between the mosaic in this building and those found in the episcopal basilica in Stobi suggest a possible identification as a Christian basilica.[211] Yet, Karivieri overlooks the fact that the mosaic decoration of the Stobi basilica was executed by a mosaicist school operating in the Balkans, most likely in the middle of the sixth century, and certainly during Justinian's reign. [212] Likewise, it was not dedicated solely to the decoration of Christian church buildings, but also to profane buildings, as seen in the villa in Nerodimlje.[213] This challenges the dating that places the building of the tetraconch during the reign of Empress Eudocia (421-450).

The mosaic decoration suggests that during the late fifth or more likely early sixth century, the tetraconch building underwent transformation into a church. However, I believe that the building was not erected at that time, but rather contemporaneous with the renovations of Herculius in 408-410. This is supported by the late fourth-century pottery sherds used to fill the area of a pool upon which the foundation of the tetraconch has been built.[214] The existence of elevated seating in the apses of the building may led to an interpretation that these were synthrona of the early church. However, while a synthronon could be placed in the eastern apse, the presence of four synthrona in a church is unprecedented. The elevated seating consisting of stone benches in the four conchae of the tetraconch, follow the structural layout of auditoriums

[210] J. Vaes, "Christliche Wiederverwendung antiker Bauten. Ein Forschungsbericht", *Ancient Society 15-17 (1984-1986),* 305-443.
[211] Karivieri, *The So-Called Library of Hadrian*.
[212] Г. Цветковић-Томашевић, *Рановизантијски подни мозаици*, Завод за заштиту споменика културе: Београд 1978.
[213] S. Djuric, Mosaic of *Philosophers*
[214] J. Travlos, "ΑΝΑΣΚΑΦΑΙ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥ", ΡΑΑΗ 1951, 41-63.

as previously discussed. In this sense, these were most likely the benches of four separate lecture halls, similar to those in Kom el-Dikka, while the central colonnaded peristyle was not the nave of the church, but rather a hallway connecting the four semicircular rooms (fig. 30).

3.3.4. The School for the People! A Roman Prefect and His Building Programme

The function of Hadrian's library during the fifth century retained the same role it had in the second century CE: that of a cultural center of the city.[215] A question then arises: why would the prefect of Illyricum fund such a reconstruction? As Edward Watts argues, in the aftermath of the siege of the Heruli, education became the backbone of the city's economy.[216] Although archaeological evidence suggests the existence of other branches of the economy, such as marble workshops and marble trade, it is very probable that agricultural production in south Attica stagnated.[217] Consequently, the importance of education as a source of income for the city of Athens increased.

Much of the early fifth-century city was in ruins, with some of the most important areas covered by rubble.[218] Another siege of Athens, led by Alaric in 396, though much smaller in scale, further contributed to the decline of prosperity in the built environment.[219] In this sense, it is not unprecedented for the regional authority, and that is the prefect, to contribute to the rebuilding of a city. Strikingly, instead of concentrating on the streets and communal buildings, the renovation of Herculius was focused on the Library of Hadrian. However, this was not the sole building erected by Herculius in the city, but I believe it to be a part of a larger building programme.

[215] A. Karivieri, *The So-Called Library of Hadrian*.
[216] E. Watts, *City and School*, 38-47.
[217] H. Saradi, D. Eliopolous, "Late Paganism and Christianisation in Greece", in: L. Lavan, M. Mulyran (eds.), *The Archaeology of Late Antique Paganism*, Leiden: Brill 2011, 263-311.
[218] A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquit*y, 16-24.
[219] Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity*, 49-57.

I concur with Alison Frantz and her argument that the contemporary reconstruction of the Odeon of Agrippa during the early fifth century, along with that of Hadrian's library, can both be attributed to Herculius.[220] The existence of an epigram mentioning the Empress Eudocia, located in front of the entrance to the Palace of the Giants, led scholars to believe that the building was erected as a palace by the empress. [221] As previously argued, it seems unlikely that this was a palace. Furthermore, there is no source to attest to a building program by the empress. Lastly, the dating of the Palace of the Giants is contemporary to that of the tetraconch in Hadrian's library, as they were constructed by the same masters.[222] This is attested by common masonry, consisting of two layers of same stone, topped and bottomed by a layer of brick, reminiscent to opus vittatum (fig. 31 and 32).[223]

The construction of the complex known as the Palace of the Giants altered the layout of the Agora significantly. It became the focal point of civic life, dominating the new cityscape of the Agora, situated right in its center. However, it is noteworthy that around the same time, long porticos were erected along the streets leading from the Panathenaic way (east of the entrance to the Palace of Giants) up to the entrance of Hadrian's Library.[224] I therefore argue that this was a deliberate urbanistic act, through which a new center of urban life was formed, dominated by the Palace of the Giants and Hadrian's Library, both of which served an educational function for at least a century.

While previous scholarly attempts to link the Palace of the Giants with the tetraconch from Hadrian's Library and associate it with empress Eudocia, I propose a different interpretation. Rather than attributing these structures to a church and a palace built by empress

[220] Ibid, 60-63.
[221] E. Sironnen, "An Honorary Epigram for Empress Eudocia in the Athenian Agora", *Hesperia 59/2* (1990), 371-374.
[222] The idea that these two buildings were constructed by same architects has been expressed before. However, not as a proof of common building project, but rather, as evidence that same workers constructed both ecclesiastical and profane buildings, see: H.A. Thompson, *Palace of the Giants*.
[223] The masonry is also discussed in: A. Frantz, *Agora in Late Antiquity*, 63-68.
[224] T. L. Shear, "The Athenian Agora: Excavations of 1970", *Hesperia* 40/3 (1971), 241-279.

Eudocia, I suggest that they are part of a deliberate building program by Prefect Herculius, dating to the period of 408-410.[225] This urban redevelopment program by Herculius, aimed to revitalize the core of late antique Athenian social, economic, and cultural life, which centered around education. Therefore, this initiative was not primarily a reaction to the altered built landscape resulting from the Siege of Herulii. Instead, it seems more likely it was a reconstruction effort after the Siege of Alaric in 396. This reconstruction led to the relocation of the central areas of civic life outside the post-Herulian walls and into a new area between the Palace of the Giants and the Library of Hadrian.

3.4. **Where did the Neoplatonists teach?**

The alterations in the built landscape of late antique Athens at the beginning of the fifth century align with shifts in the educational landscape, both locally and across the Empire. The expansion of the imperial administration during this period prompted efforts to regulate education, as evidenced by regulations found in the Codex Theodosianus of 425. These changes undoubtedly influenced the educational landscape of the later empire, which increasingly emphasized preparing individuals for roles within the imperial administration. Consequently, centers like Alexandria and Constantinople gained greater importance for acquiring education, particularly in fields such as rhetoric and law, compared to Athens.

While rhetorical education, which had traditionally dominated Athens' educational landscape, waned in importance, the city emerged as a pivotal center for philosophical learning. Despite this shift, Athens' significance as an educational hub remained undiminished. The rise of the Neoplatonic Academy, founded by Plutarch the Neoplatonist and rooted in the Iamblichan tradition, solidified Athens' position as the foremost institution for philosophical

[225] cf. G.Fowden, *The Athenian Agora;* Thompson, *Palace of the Giants*; Karivieri, *The So-Called Library of Hadrian*.

education in the Empire. Although it cannot be definitively stated that the Academy was the sole locus of learning in fifth-century Athens, it undoubtedly held a central role in the city's educational landscape. Textual sources suggest that the physical spaces and teaching methods employed by the Academy remained largely unchanged from previous centuries. Lecture halls structured like theaters facilitated public deliberations, while intimate discussions among advanced students took place in settings like the Diadoch's house.

It is apparent that teaching in fifth-century Athens did not solely occur within private residences. Instead, it likely took place in various public spaces. Building upon archaeological evidence from late antique Athens, I posit that two plausible venues for such instruction could have been the Library of Hadrian and the Palace of the Giants on the Agora. The architectural layout of these structures, reminiscent of theaters, along with the presence of an odeon in the Palace of the Giants, suggests a continued educational function into the early fifth century. Moreover, it is improbable that they ceased their educational activities in the aftermath of the Siege of Heruli. Instead, it is more plausible that they suffered damage during the Siege of Alaric in 396, prompting subsequent renovation efforts between 408 and 411. Therefore, it is unlikely that their original educational function underwent a radical transformation in such a short timeframe.

The ancient educational institutions, incomparable to that of modern universities, likely did not operate within a single centralized building. It is also unlikely that all of their activities were confined to one place. The diadochica, as described in historical sources, consisted of multiple locations, including the house of the Diadoch. Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that their activities were dispersed between different sites, such as the Library of Hadrian and the Palace of the Giants. This hypothesis gains further support from the historical abandonment of the Palace of the Giants around 530, which coincides with the closure of the Academy in

529. [226] Additionally, this dating aligns with the transformation of the tetraconch in Hadrian's library into a church, as evidenced by comparative dating of the mosaic with similar examples from the northern Balkans.

[226] On the abandonment: H.A. Thomspon, *Palace of the Giants*.

Conclusion

The spatial ambiance inhabited by the Neoplatonists of the fifth-century Academy can be divided into two aspects: the constructed space and the physical space situated in the urban landscape of late antique Athens. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive but are rather intertwined. Both attest to the relationship of the Neoplatonists with the city. Beyond situating them in the material environment, the physical space that the Neoplatonists most likely inhabited highlights their relationship with the prefectorial government and their importance in the cityscape. The idealized space, as conveyed through texts, also reflects the correlation of the Neoplatonists not only with the material environment of their surroundings, but also with the social space they inhabited.

The articulation of space in fifth-century Neoplatonic hagiographies points to an idealized cityscape. However, the material environment described in these texts is not generic. Rather, it corresponds to the topography of fifth-century Athens, as attested by material evidence. The detailed reference to the contemporary topography is not merely a rhetorical device aimed at approximating the narrative to the public. More than that, it is a careful construction of an idealized city. This contemporary topography is connected to the functions of certain topoi of classical Athens. In this way, the treatment of the cityscape in the texts has a dual nature. On one hand, it correlates with the realistic topography where the lives of philosophers are situated. Simultaneously, it functions as an imaginary space, an idealized Athens that combines elements of fifth-century CE with those of fifth-century BCE.

Beyond idealization, which is achieved by equating the contemporary city with its classical predecessor, the creation of an idealized space highlights the Neoplatonists' reverence for Athens. The social duty of philosophers and their appropriate political role are portrayed as efforts to guide the entire civic community toward a virtuous life. Consequently, this leads to a city that can maintain its carefully narrated classical glory. Epigraphical sources indicate that

this is not merely a literary construction. Instead, the social ideal constructed in the texts expands the reality in which the Diadochi aimed to fashion themselves as public benefactors.

The formulation of spatial ambiance in the texts provides only a general reference to the spaces inhabited by the Neoplatonists. While these texts, in their own right, offer insights into the spatial ambiance of the Neoplatonists, they do not present a realistic view of the material reality. However, contextualizing these sources within the educational landscape and topography of Athens can help reconstruct their position within the cityscape. The renovation of two educational institutions in early fifth-century Athens, as discussed in chapter three, corresponds with the emergence of the Neoplatonic Academy as a central point in the educational landscape of late antique Athens. As proposed previously, these two buildings were utilized by members of the Academy. More importantly, the new urban center conceived by the prefect Herculius' renovation of 408-410, marked by these educational institutions, suggests the public character of philosophical instruction during the fifth century. Contrary to Alison Frantz's argument, sources from fifth-century Athens do not indicate that philosophical teaching took place in private houses. Such instruction, and notably that of the Academy, was connected to the new public space established and articulated by the renovations of prefect Herculius.

Contrary to the prevailing opinion, both textual and material sources indicate that the Neoplatonists were neither isolated nor secretive. Instead, they aimed to position themselves centrally within the city. While the actual relevance of the Neoplatonists remains inconclusive from the sources discussed, it is clear that they were not an isolated community. Rather, they actively participated in the civic life, situating themselves within the spatial and social ambiance of fifth-century Athens, both in constructed and real terms.

The research presented in this thesis, does not offer a new and definitive understanding of late-antique Athens, as the aim was to offer a fresh perspective on the sources. Instead of

furthering circular argumentation between the textual and material sources, the thesis aimed to offer a starting point for a new understanding of the city, both the real and the imagined. Resituating the place of the Neoplatonists, opens topics for further discussion, and novel understanding of the civic dynamics of the city. Reassessing Athens, beyond the idea of a city of secluded pagan elites, as well as the exploration of the interaction of the population with the built environment of the city leads to many unanswered questions, or those that are to be reassessed, such as the presence and role of Christians or their interaction with the pagan population.

Illustrations

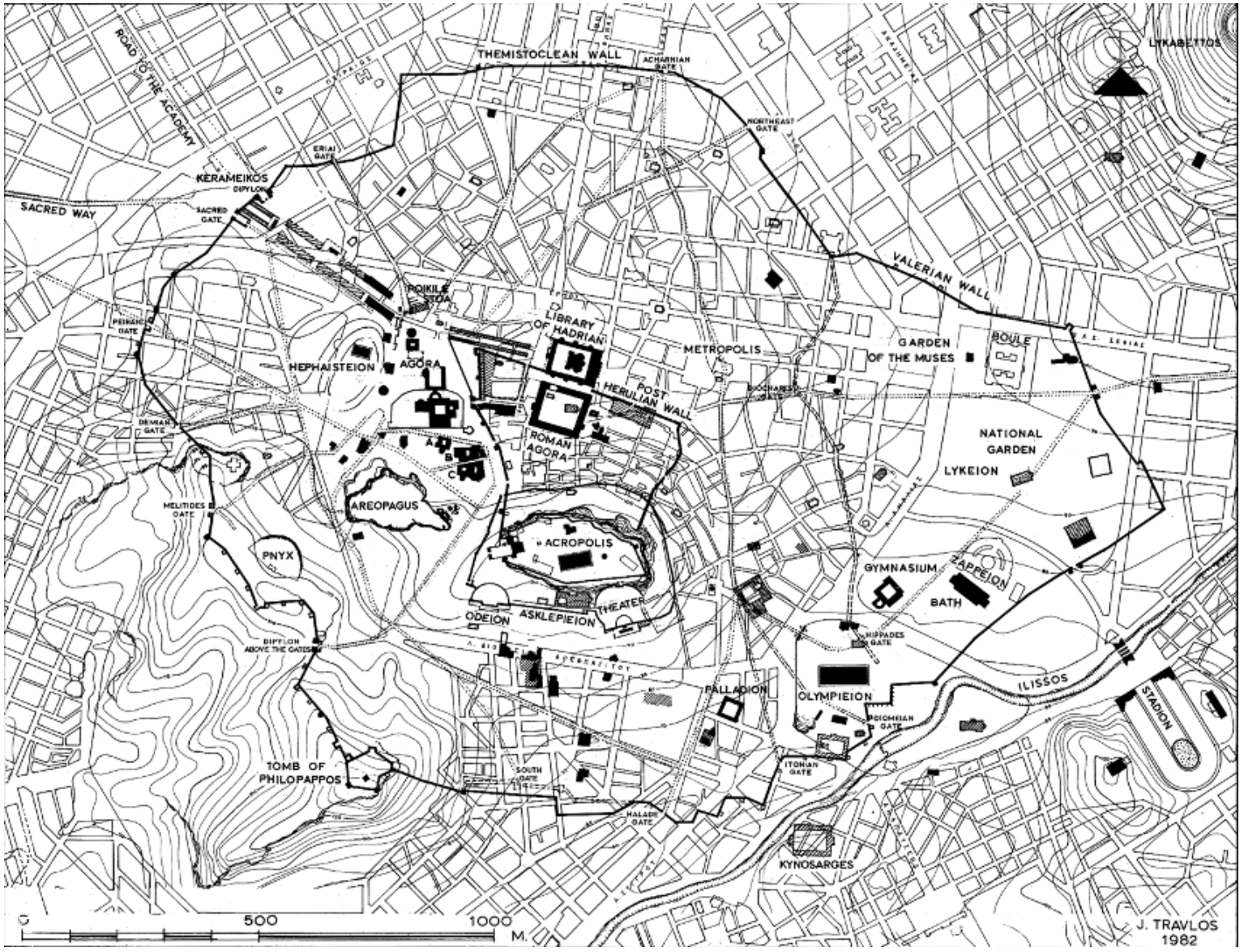

Figure 1: **Plan of fifth-century Athens.**

(Frantz 1988: Plate 4).

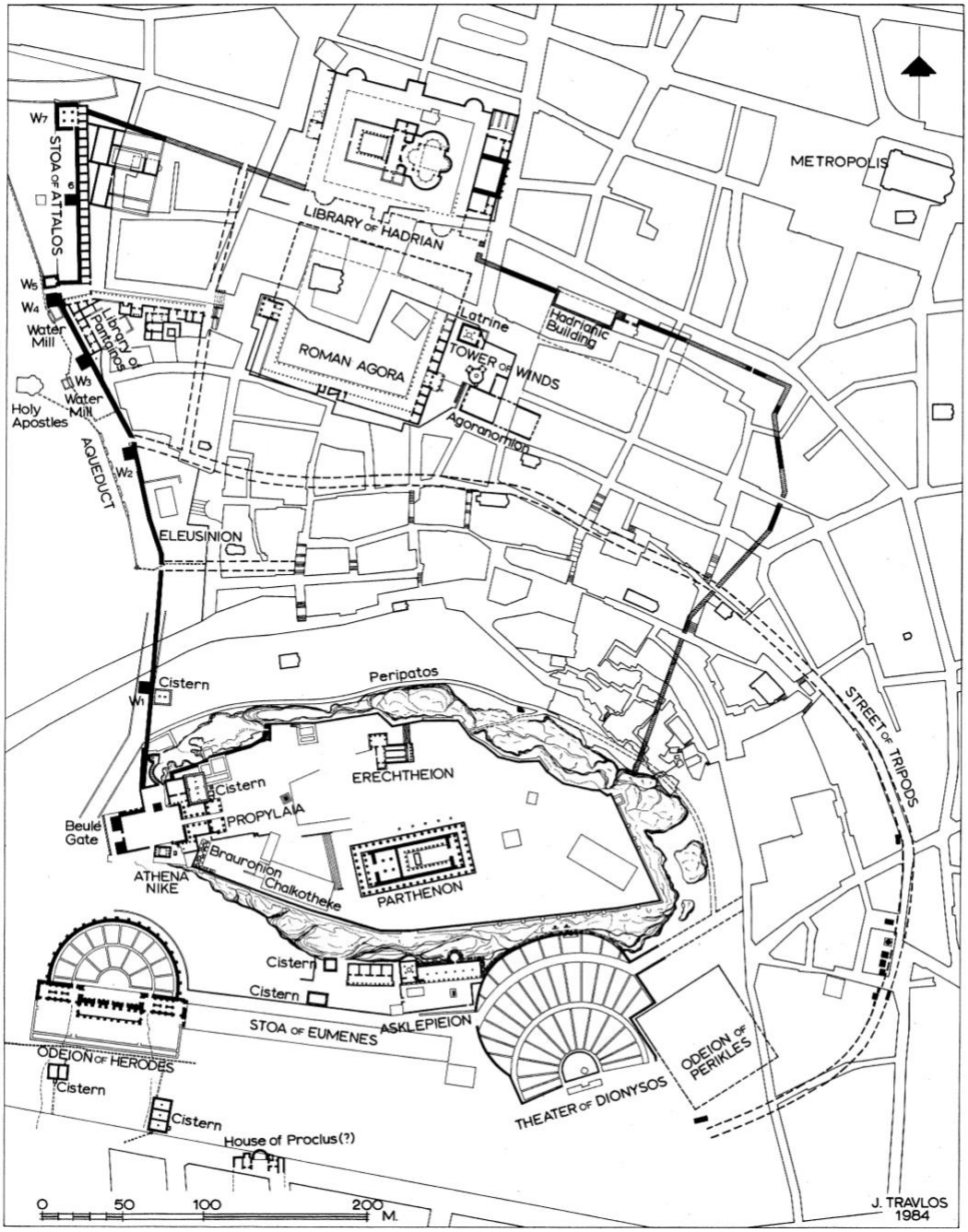

Figure 2: **Plan of the Acropolis with the position of the Theater of Dionysius**

(Frantz 1988: Plate 5)

Figure 3: **The inscription from a base of a honourary statue to Herculius the Prefect.**

(Gehn 2016: fig.15.1, p.195)

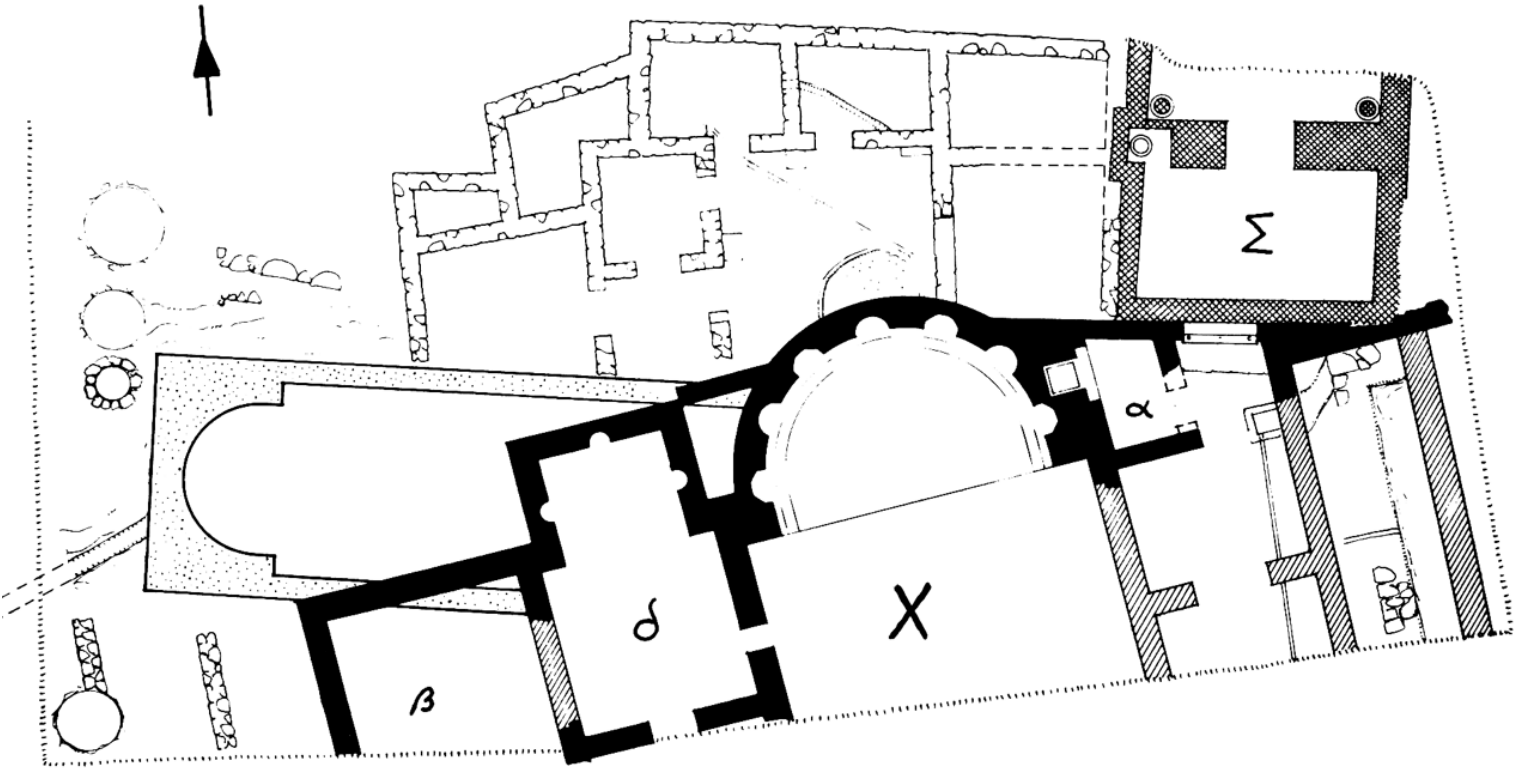

Figure 4: **Plan of the House Chi (House of Proclus).**

(Castrén 1994: fig. 11)

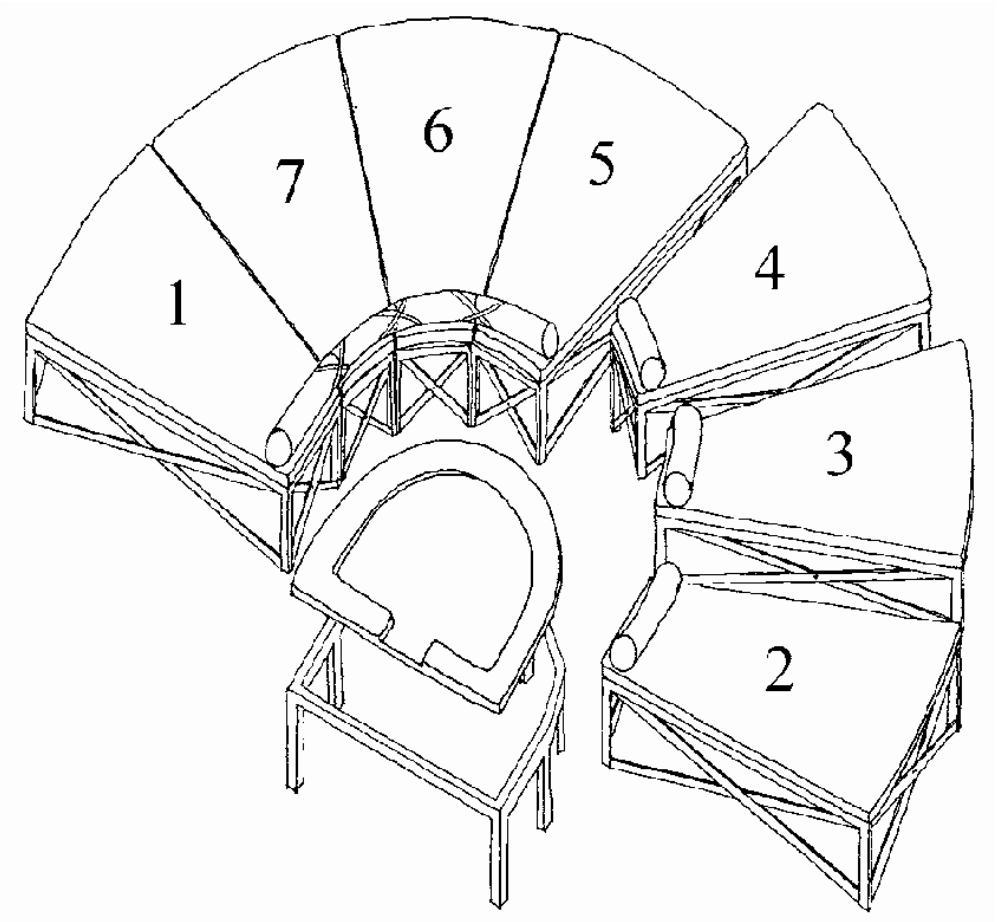

Figure 5: **The reconstruction of a sigma-couch from the Vila of the Falconer in Argos.**

(Malmberg 2007: fig.11)

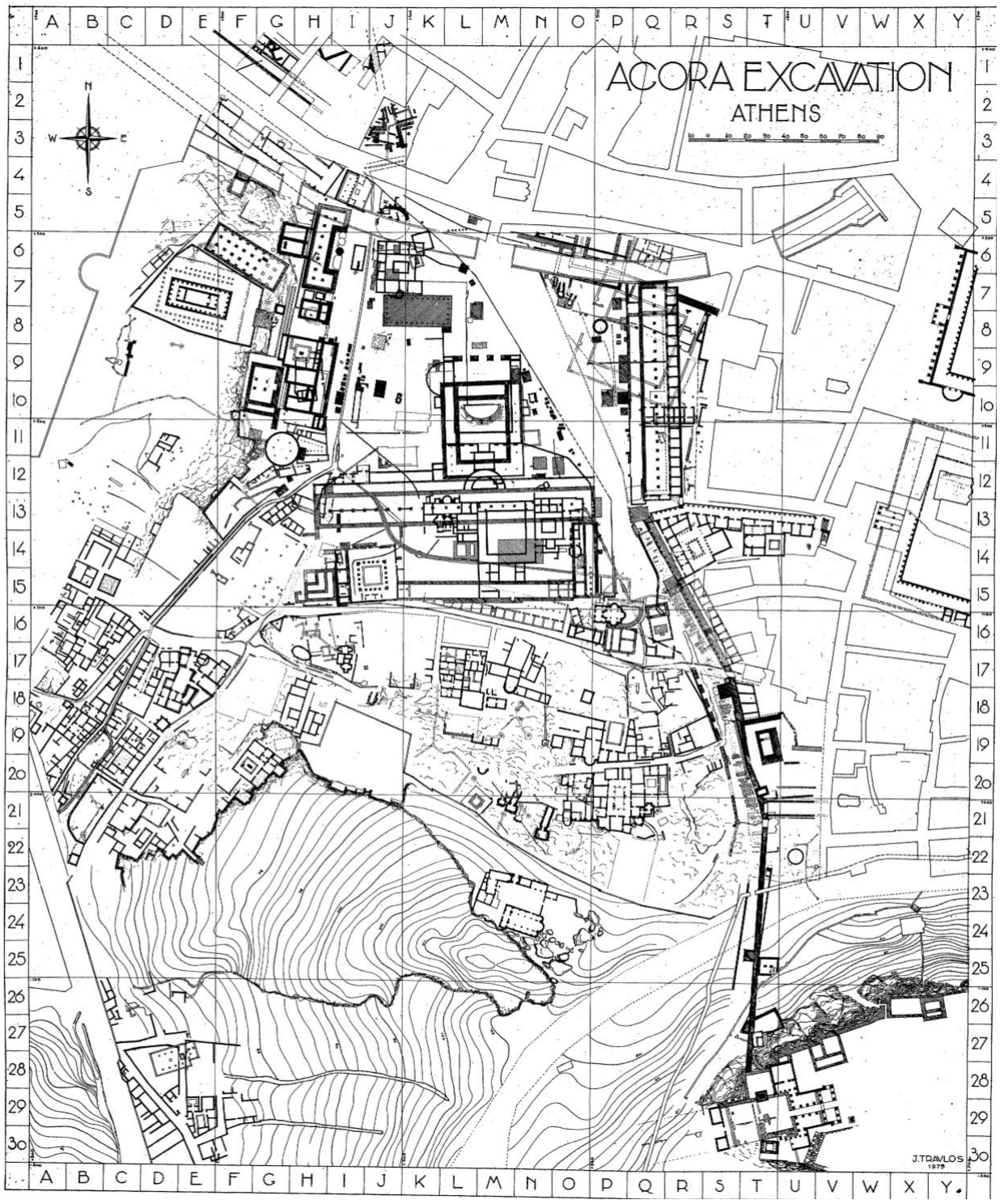

Figure 6: **Actual state-plan of the Acropolis, showing the Areopagus residential zone. to the north and south of the Areopagus hill, and south-west of the Acropolis along Dyonisus the Areopagite.**

(Frantz 1988, Plate 3).

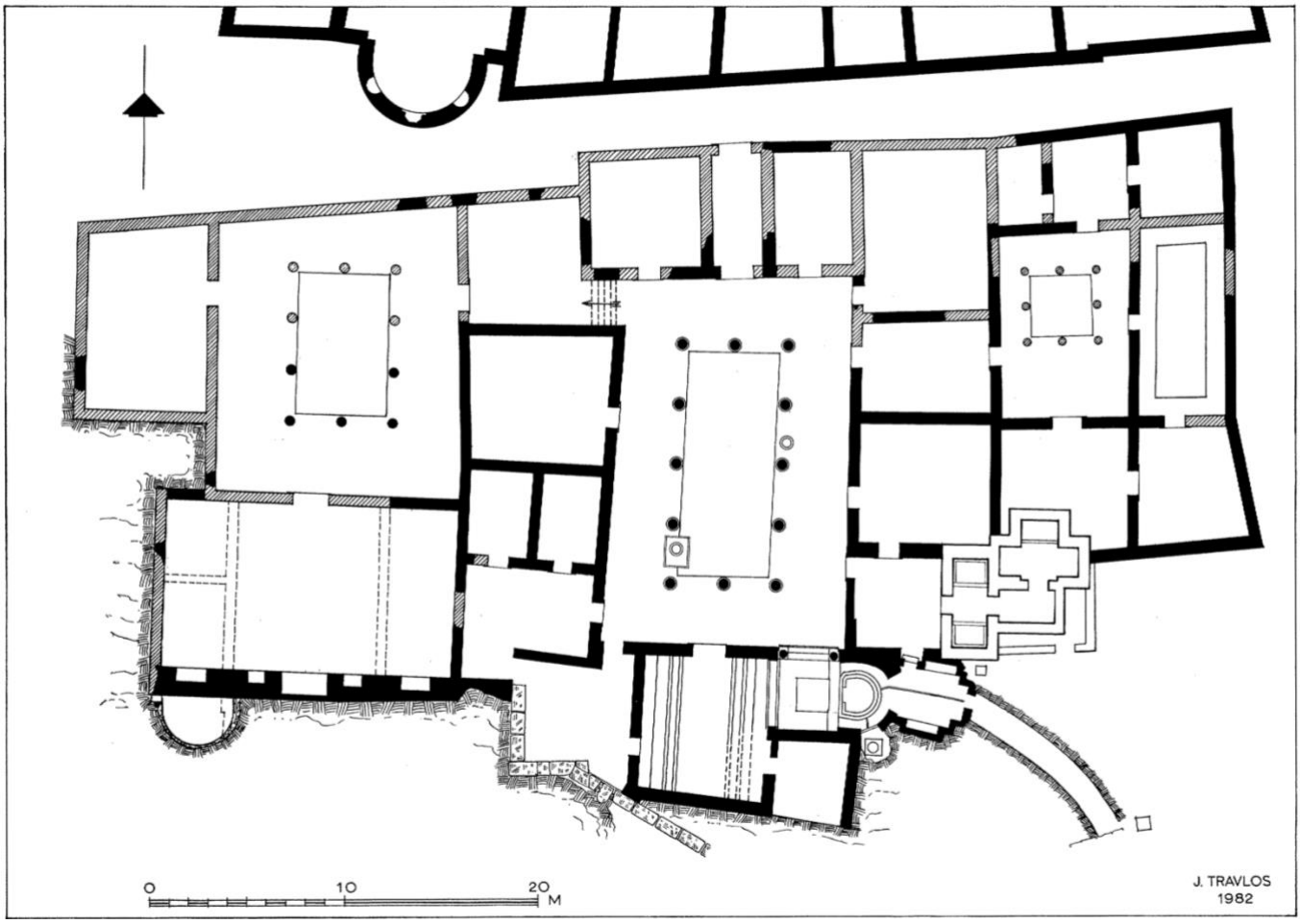

Figure 7: **Plan of the House C.**

(Frantz 1988: Plate 27/a)

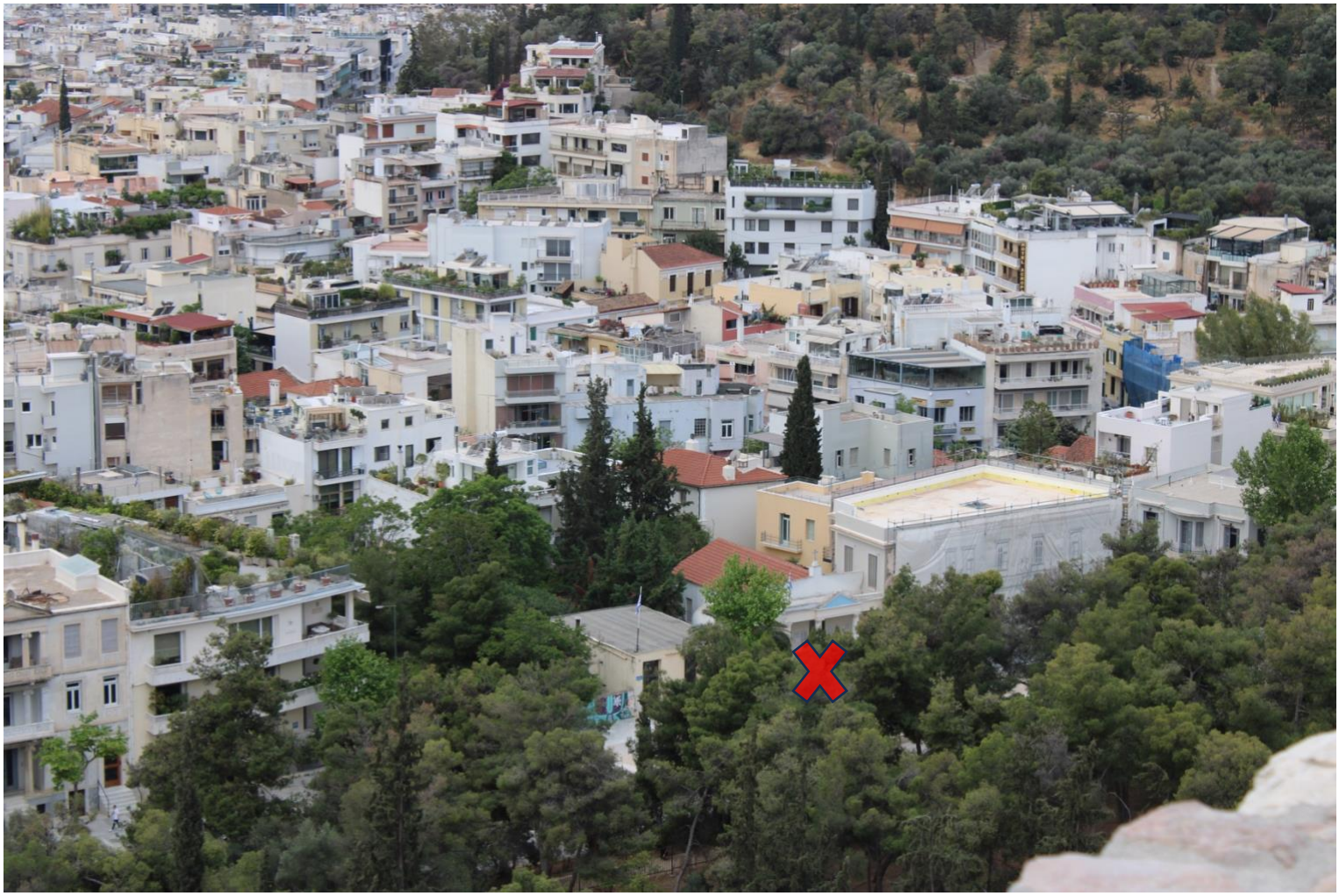

Figure 8: **The view on the location of House Chi (Marked with X) from the Acropolis.**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 30.4.2024).

A

Figure 9: **View on the Areopagus residential zone, north-east of the House Chi.**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 30.4.2024).

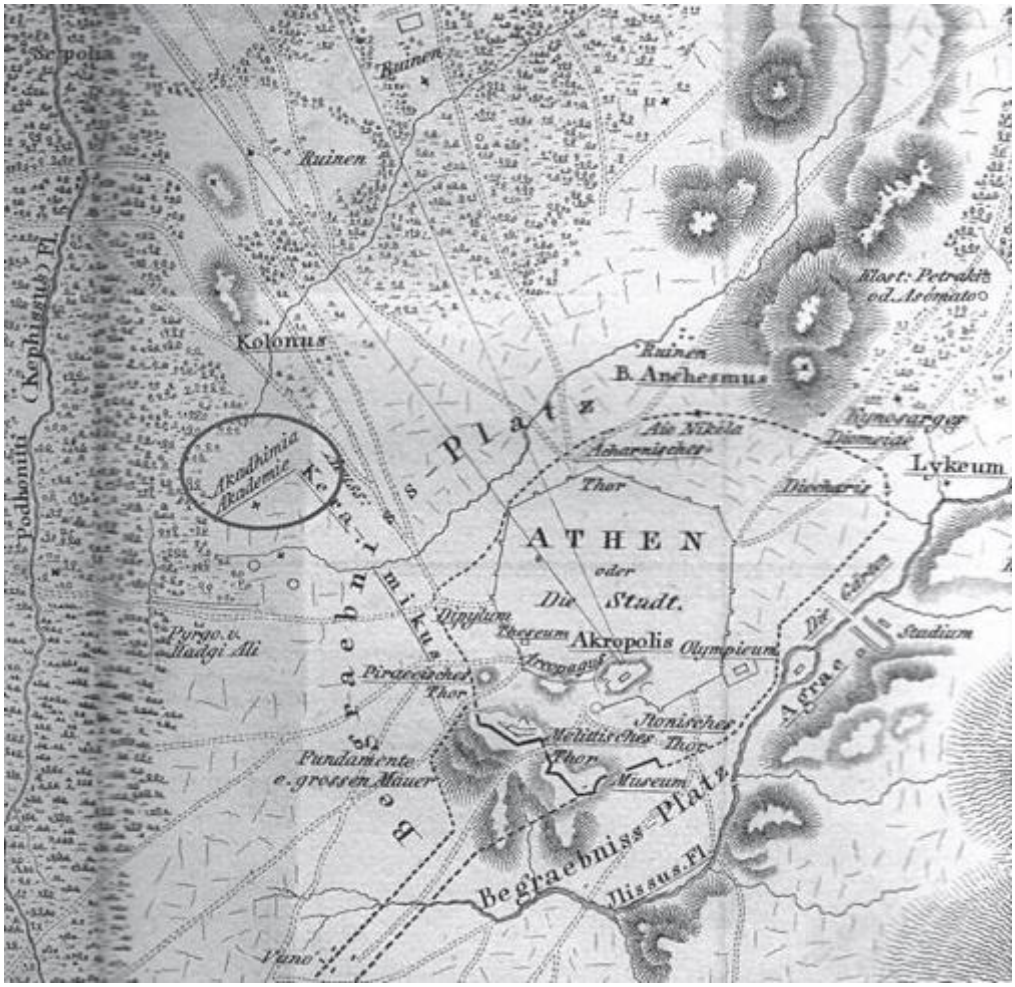

Figure 10: **Position of the Old Academy on Leake's Plan of Ancient Athens.**

(Caruso 2013, p. 54)

Figure 11: **Apamea Philosophers Mosaic.**

(Photo: G. Fowden, May 1989)

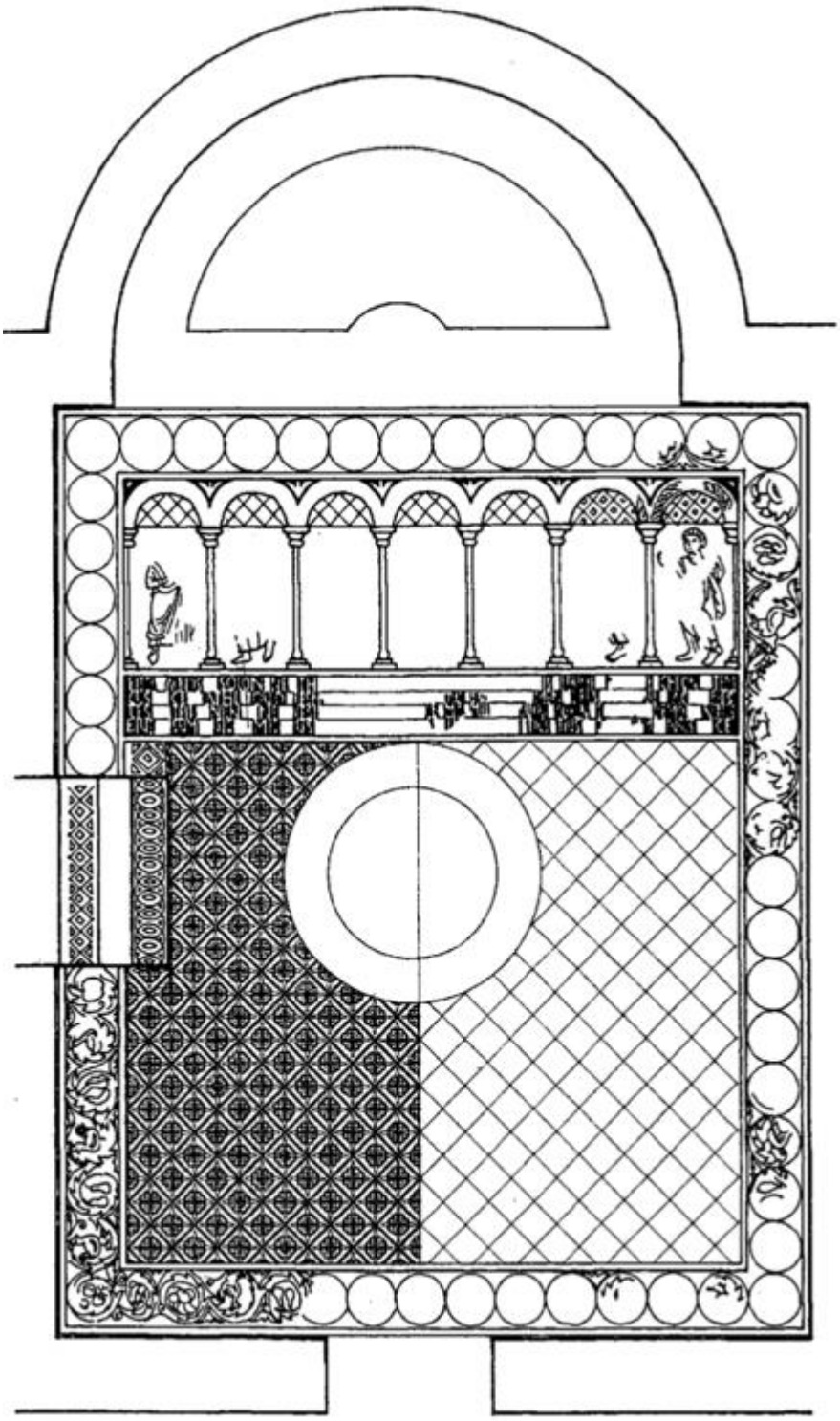

Figure 12: **Reconstruction of the Mosaic with Depiction of Philosophers, Nerodimlje Villa, first half of the sixth century.**

(Djuric 1994, p. 125)

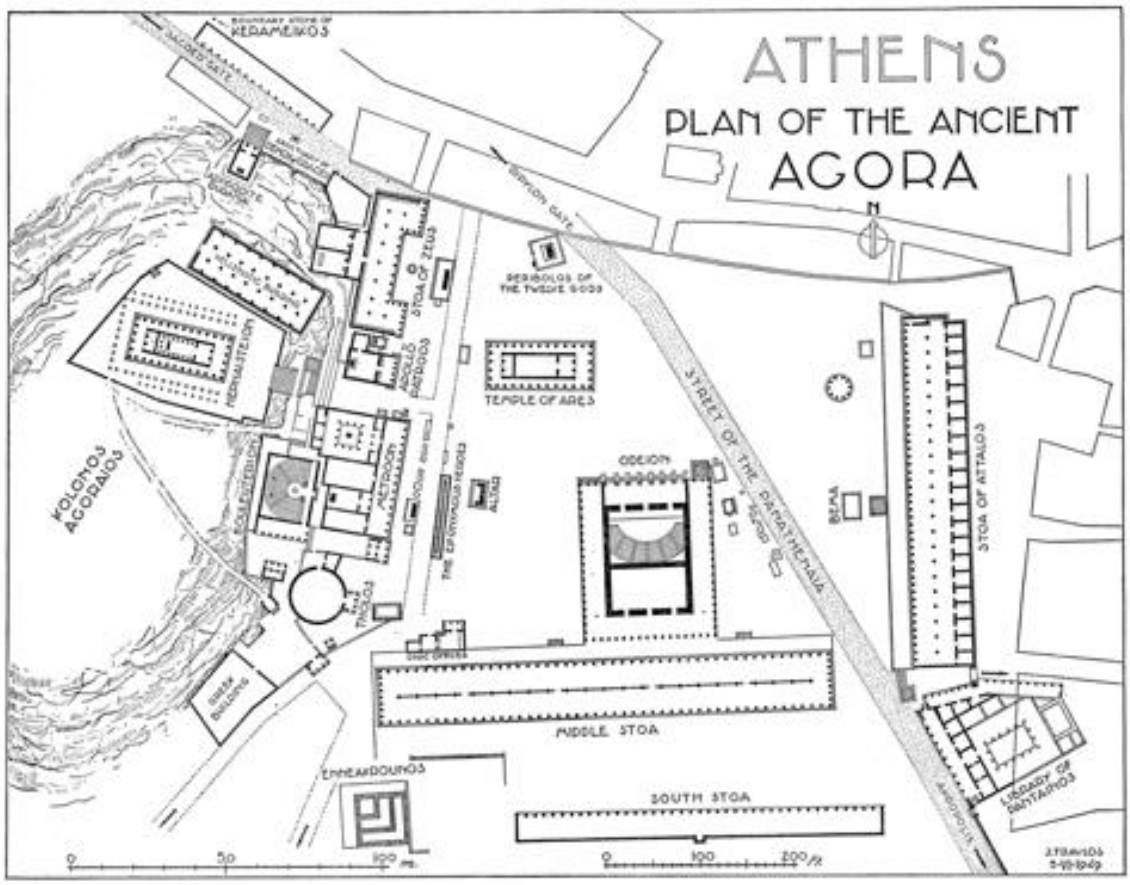

Figure 13: **Second Century Layout of Agora.**

(Thompson 1950, p.33)

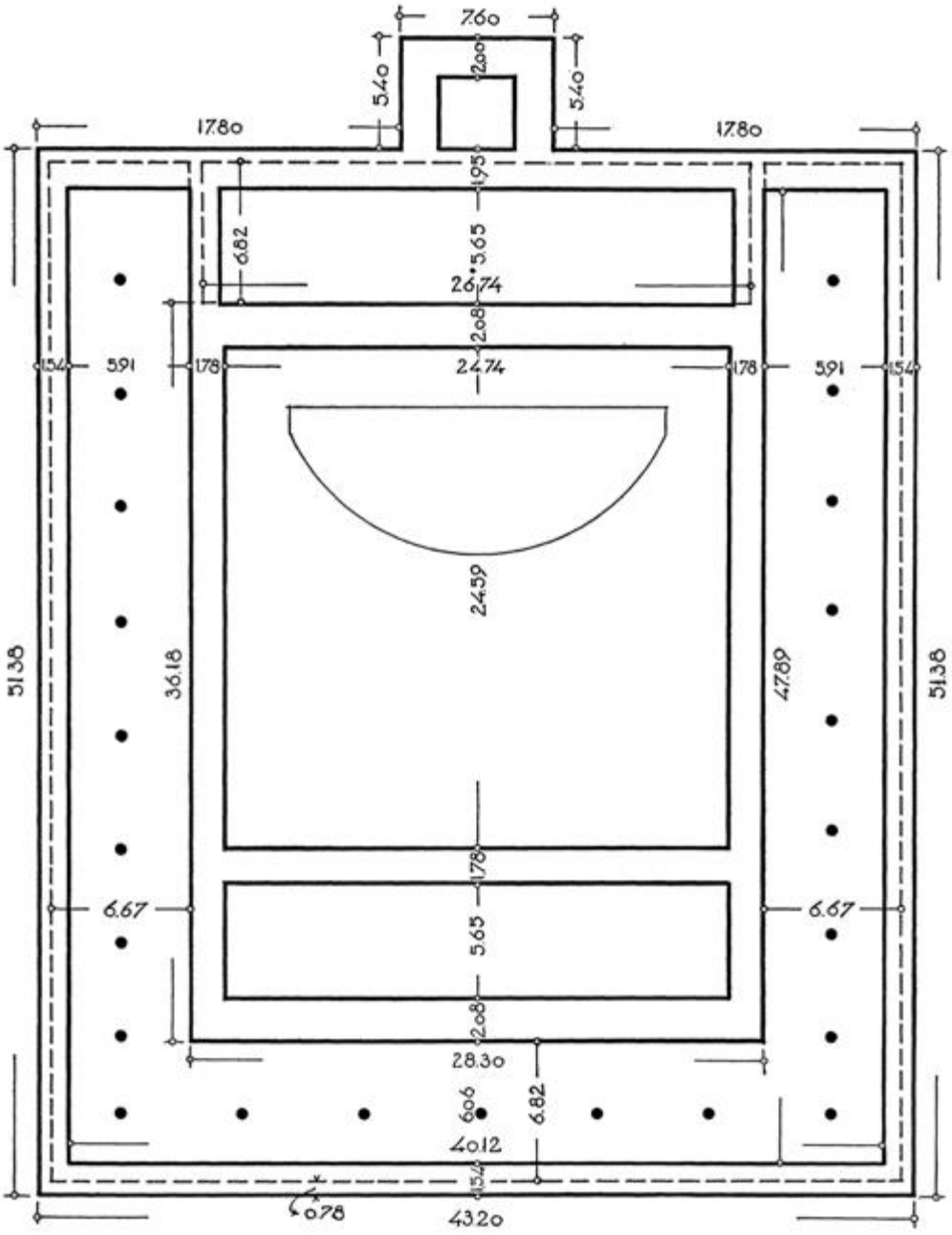

Figure 14: **Diagrammatic Plan of Odeon, Phase I.**

(Thompson 1950, p. 39).

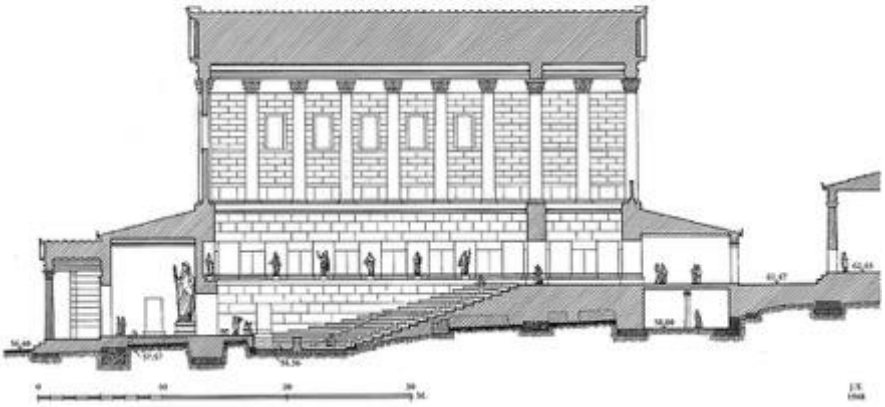

Figure 15: **Cross section of the Odeon, Phase I, reconstructed by Homer. A Thompson**

(Agora Excavations Online Database: 2008.20.0068)

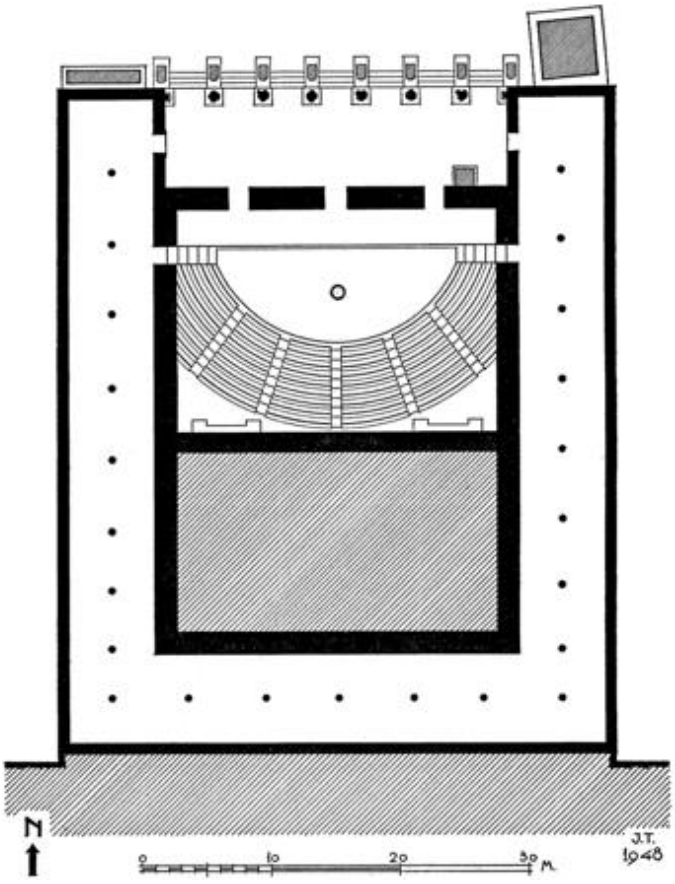

Figure 16: **Plan of the Phase II of the Odeon.**

(Thompson 1950, p. 100)

Figure 17: **Statues of Titans (Giants) decorating the Northern Porch of Odeon, Phase II.**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 27. April 2024)

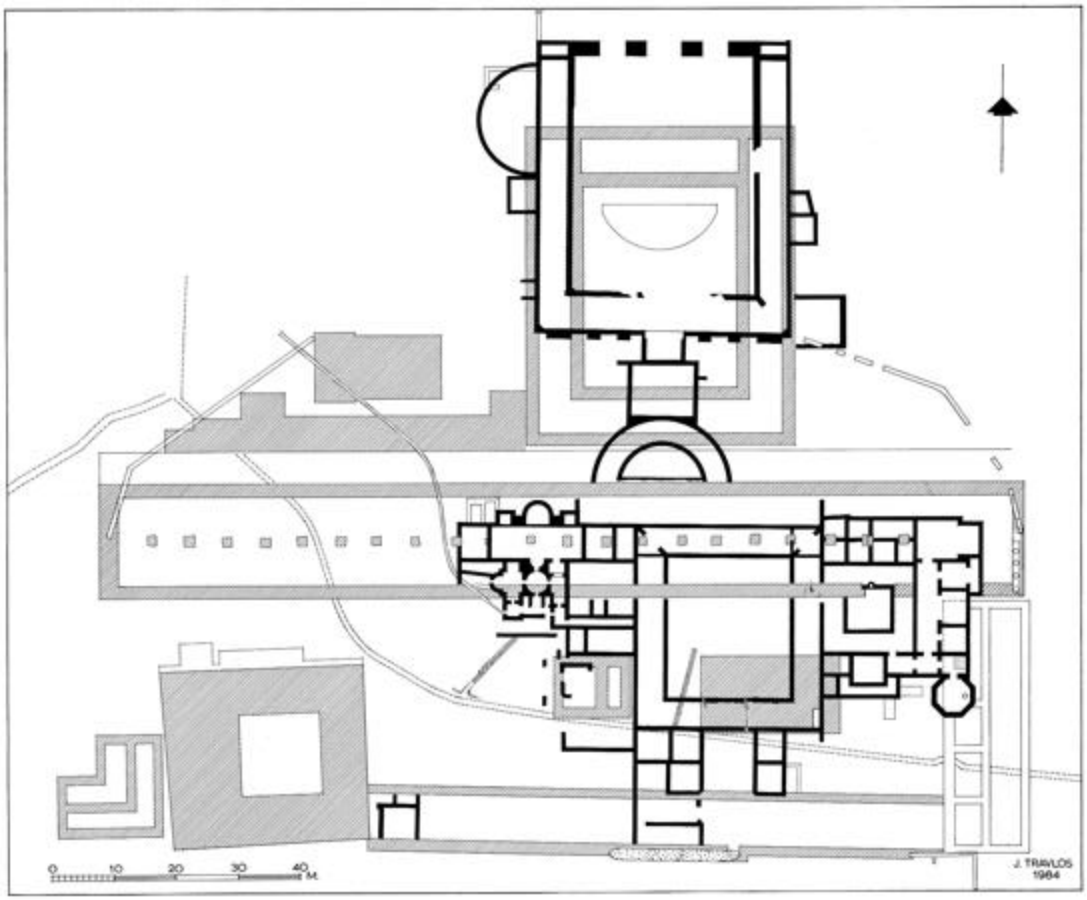

Figure 18: **Location of the Palace of the Giants (Odeon Phase III) with regard to earlier structures.**

(Frantz 1988, plate 53)

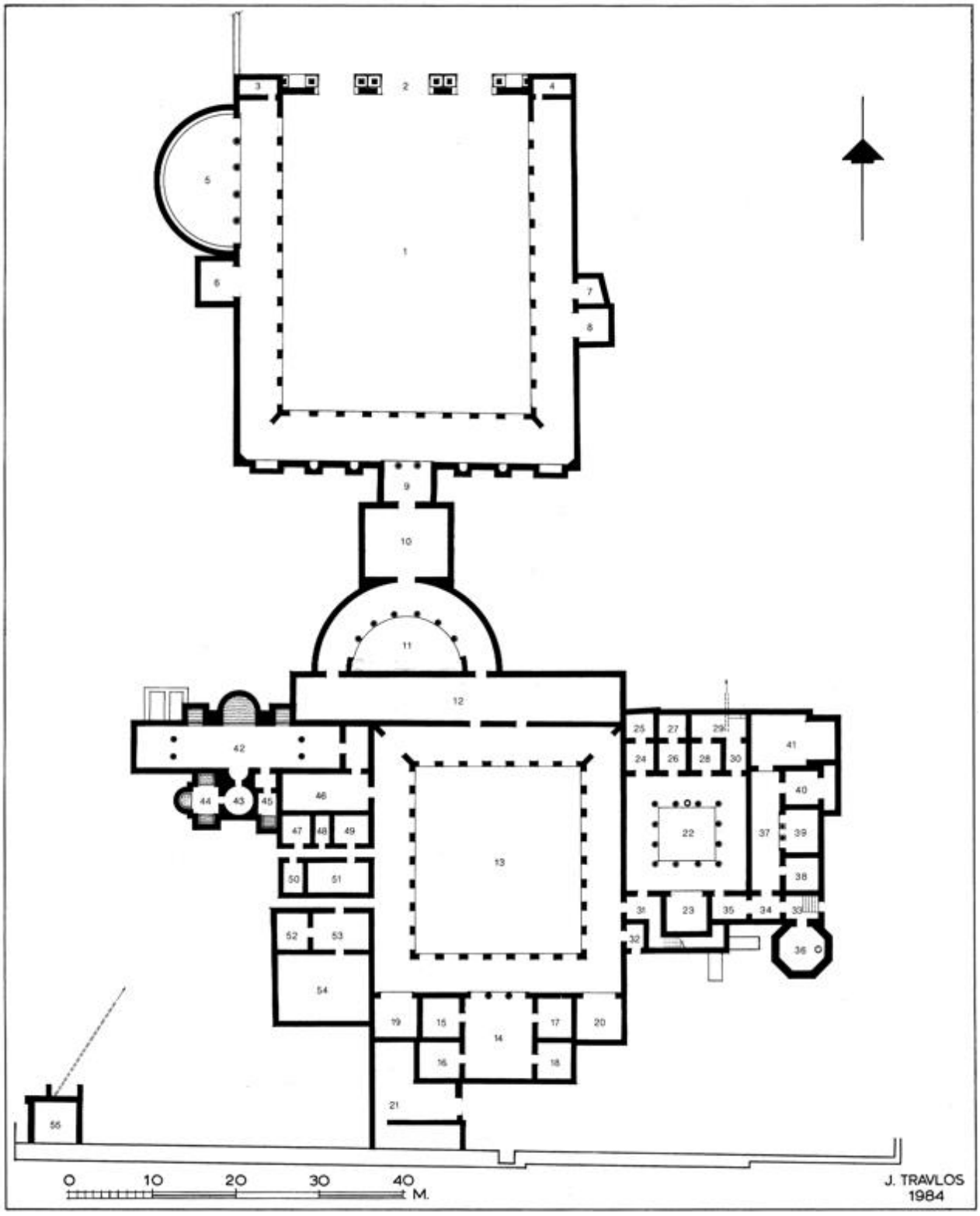

Figure 19: **Layout of the Palace of the Giants.**

(Thompson 1988, plate 54)

Figure 20: **The Northern Court of the Palace of the Giants.**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 27.4.2024)

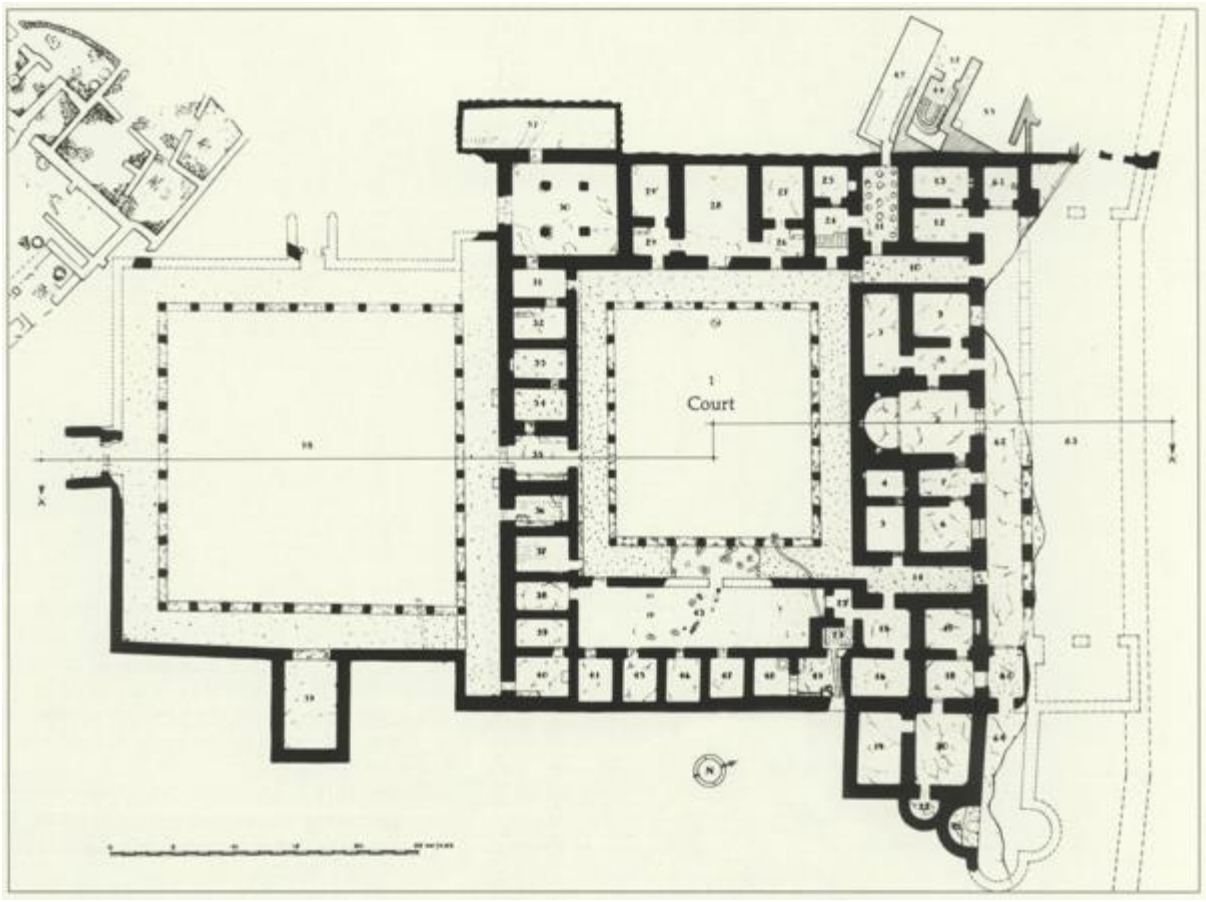

Figure 21: **A. Henry Detweiler's reconstruction of the Palace of Dux Ripae.**

(Downey 1993, p. 184)

Figure 22: **Aerial view of Palace of Theodosius/Parthenius in Stobi.**

(Source: Balkan Heritage Restoraton Project)

Figure 23: **Fourth Century Palace in Apollonia (Cyrenaica).**

(Downey 1993, p. 193)

Fig 24: **Layout of the complex of Kom el-Dikka.**

(Majcherek 2007, p. 13)

Figure 25: **Throne- like dais, Auditorium K at Kom el-Dikka.**

(Majcherek 2007, p. 25)

Figure 26: **Simple dais, Auditorium N at Kom el-Dikka.**

(Majcherek 2007, p. 23)

Figure 27: **Floor layout, Auditorium J at Kom el-Dikka.**

(Majcherek 2007, p. 24)

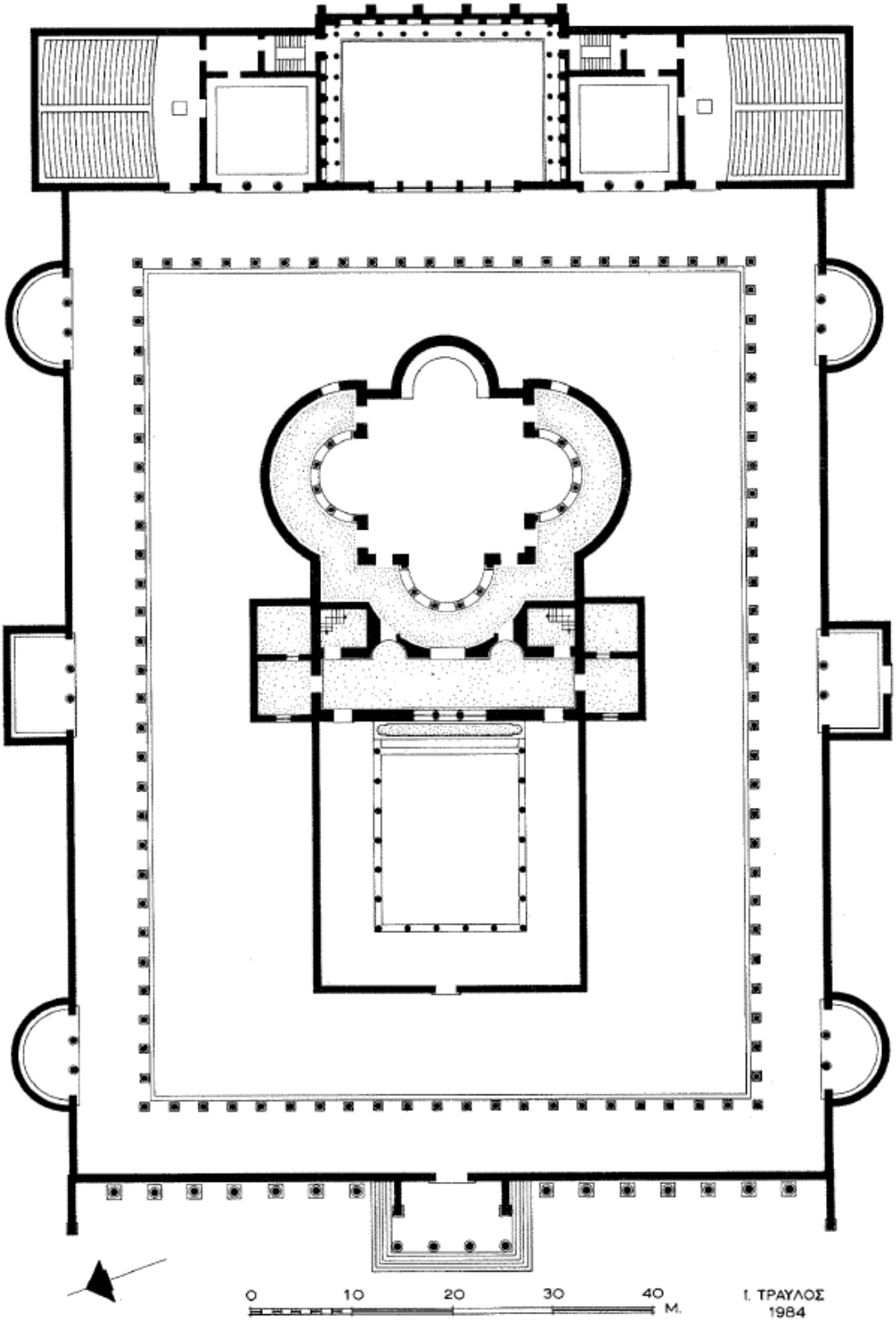

Figure 28: **Plan of Hadrian's Library after reconstruction (408-410).**

(Frantz 1988, plate 51b)

Figure 29: **Mosaic Fragments in the Conchae of the tetraconch in Library of Hadrian.**

(Photo: I. Milekvoić, 30. April. 2024)

Figure 30: **Colonnaded Atrium, tetraconch in Library of Hadrian**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 23. April 2024).

Figure 31: **Detail of Masonry at the tetraconch in Library of Hadrian.**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 30. April 2024)

Figure 32: **Detail of Masonry at Palace of the Giants on the Agora.**

(Photo: I. Mileković, 30. April 2024)

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