

POST-HERULIAN ATHENS

Aspects of Life and Culture in Athens
A.D. 267–529

Edited by
Paavo Castrén

HELSINKI 1994

Arja Karivieri

The 'House of Proclus' on the Southern Slope of the Acropolis: A Contribution¹

I. Introduction

At the end of the fourth century A.D. the Visigoths under Alaric ravaged Athens. The city, however, showed remarkable powers of recuperation with a spate of building activity in the beginning of the fifth century. Large villas decorated with colourful mosaics were built around the town evidencing the new wealth of Athens.² One of these large villas was a building constructed on the southern slope of the Acropolis, approximately south-east of the Odeum of Herodes Atticus and south-west of the Theatre of Dionysus

¹ Above all, our thanks are due to Professor G. Dontas, who very kindly left to the disposal of the Finnish Institute at Athens many unpublished photographs and some of the finds from this important excavation that was conducted by Professor Dontas and the late J. Meliades in 1955. The photographs of the excavations are from the files of the Acropolis Museum and the photographs representing the finds were taken by Aristoteles Anagnostou. For assistance we are indebted to Mrs. Choremi. Grateful acknowledgement is made to Mrs. Kyrkou for giving generously her time and counsel. I am greatly indebted to Dr. J. Perlzweig Binder for giving me so many references and so much valuable information on the Athenian topography and on the Athenian lamp production. And I must thank Professors Paavo Castrén and Gunnar af Hällström, Dr. Vappu Pyykkö, Erkki Sironen, and Julia Burman for reading this paper and making helpful comments. Grateful acknowledgement is made to John Calton for reading my manuscript and correcting my English. Any faults or flaws are mine alone.

² Most recently on the subject: Camp (1989), 50–55, figs. 1–21; Castrén (1990), 59–64; *id.* (1991), 474–476; Fowden (1990), 494–501; Frantz (1988), 37–48; Rügler (1990), 279–294, pls. 59–60.

(see fig. 2 a). Part of this large building complex was excavated in 1955,³ before the Dionysiou Areopagitou Avenue was built over it, when the route of the road running along the south side of the Acropolis was diverted down the slope⁴ (figs. 2 a, 12, 27).

Besides many earlier constructions,⁵ the northern part of this Late Roman villa (Building Chi) was found (fig. 11).⁶ Measuring 32 metres in width, this part of the building included a large central hall decorated with mosaics, the southern part of the villa remaining unexcavated beneath the modern buildings. The large hall, measuring 6.4 by 9.6 metres, had a wide apse at a slightly higher level, featuring seven niches above a wall decorated with marble revetment slabs. To the east of the central hall there was a small room with a recess in the thick wall behind the apse. This recess was further embellished by the introduction of two reliefs and a relief base. Other rooms to the east of the central hall had been destroyed by a later construction, but the two rooms on the western side of the large hall had well-preserved walls, and the room flanking the central hall had a rectangular exedra with three niches.⁷

The northern entrance to Building Chi led to a corridor connected to the small room. This entrance was later closed by another construction, known as Building Sigma (figs. 12, 20). This partly excavated building included two rooms decorated with mosaics. The western wall of its southern room was distinguished by a niche comprising a relocated marble arch with a well at the foot of the niche (figs. 20, 21).⁸

Except for the sculpture decoration in the small room, various objects were found in the excavations carried out 40 years ago: a fragment of an inscription with the words σοφίην and βίοντον, a fragment of a statue of Isis and a portrait of a young man. In the room to the furthest point of the west of Building Chi the grave of a piglet together with grave offerings was found. It comprises seven cups, a simple jug, and a lamp whose disk is decorated with the figure of a running Eros; furthermore, there is a sacrificial knife in the neck of the piglet (fig. 31).⁹

The construction of Building Chi was dated to the period following Alaric's invasion in 396 by its excavators, and the stratigraphy indicated abandonment in the sixth century A.D.¹⁰ The archaeological finds, together with the date and location of Building Chi led Meliades, the director of the excavations, to connect this villa with a passage in *Vita Procli*, the biography of the famous Neoplatonist, Proclus (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 29): "(...) Proclus always avoided notoriety so as not to give any occasion to those who wished to plot against him, and the house in which he lived favored him in this. This house, in addition to its other good features, was very pleasant for him, not only because his 'father' Syrianus and his 'forefather', as he called Plutarchus, had lived there, but also because it was in the neighborhood of the temple of Asclepius which Sophocles had made famous, and was close-by the Temple of Dionysus near the Theater, and it could be seen or otherwise perceived from the Acropolis of Athena."¹¹

³ Meliades (1955), 36–38, 46–50, fig. 1, plates 3 β, 4–8; 'Ανασκαφαὶ 1. 'Αθήναι. α) Νοτίως τῆς 'Ακροπόλεως, in *Ergon* 1955, 5–11, figs. 1–6.

⁴ The earlier line of the road can most clearly be seen at the top of the photograph in fig. 12 and in the centre of fig. 27.

⁵ One of these earlier constructions is illustrated in fig. 13.

⁶ Meliades (1955), 46–50, pls. 3–8. *Ergon* 1955, 7–10.

⁷ Meliades (1955), 47–48.

⁸ *Id.*, 48.

⁹ *Id.*, 49.

¹⁰ *Id.*, 48, 50.

¹¹ Transl. by Rosán (1949), 30. Marinus, *Vita Procli* 29 (ed. Masullo (1985));

Thereafter, Building Chi has generally been identified as the House of Plutarchus, the founder of the Neoplatonic School at Athens, and of its successive heads.¹² Jean-Pierre Sodini,¹³ however, prefers to interpret Building Chi and the houses on the Areopagus north slope, featuring similar apsidal structures, as residences representative of those occupied by the upper-class families in the empire. For him the evidence is not sufficient to prove that these houses are philosophical schools, as has been suggested (see below). My purpose in this article is to suggest evidence for the special nature of Building Chi; the special architectural solutions, the decoration, the sculpture and the archaeological finds, all of which point to the importance of this large villa. Building Chi, in my view, on account of its interior appointments and the collection of pagan sculpture accords with what we might expect from a house belonging to a philosopher or a sophist. And yet, a definitive interpretation of the function of the building cannot be made before the southern part of the building is excavated. The date of the adjoining structure, Building Sigma, and its relation to Building Chi will be discussed together with the presentation of mosaics (see below, Chapter V.).

II. The Interpretation of the Large Central Apse in Building Chi

The narrow northern end of the central hall in Building Chi culminated in a large semicircular apse, where the floor was slightly higher than that of the main hall (figs. 12, 14). The walls of the apse were preserved to the height of 3.5 metres and the lower part at least was decorated with marble slabs, since remains of the revetment were visible above floor level (fig. 15). The apse may have been partly separated from the main hall with marble orthostates forming a kind of enclosure in front of the apse.¹⁴ The widening of the apse above the lower part of the semicircular wall covered with marble slabs included three semicircular and four semi-hexagonal niches, probably for decorative statues or portraits. The apse was 4.4 metres in depth and 6.6 metres wide. (Figs. 11, 15)

καὶ γὰρ πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις εὐτυχήμασιν, ἀρμοδιωτάτῃ αὐτῷ καὶ ἡ οἴκησις ὑπῆρξεν, ἦν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ Συριανὸς καὶ ὁ προπάτωρ, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐκάλει, Πλούταρχος ὠκῆσαν, γείτονα μὲν οὖσαν τοῦ ἀπὸ Σοφοκλέους ἐπιφανοῦς Ἀσκληπιδίου καὶ τοῦ πρὸς τῷ θεάτρῳ Διονυσίου, ὁρωμένην δὲ ἡ καὶ ἄλλως αἰσθητὴν γιγνομένην τῇ ἀκροπόλει τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς.

Frantz had missed out the word καὶ from between ἡ and ἄλλως in her reference to Marinus' text (Frantz (1988), 43), which according to Castrén changes the meaning of the phrase quite considerably. Castrén interprets this passage as an indication for the importance of the building in question: "Marinus wanted to stress that the House of Proclus was visible from the Acropolis and *also otherwise* somehow manifest, obviously because of the considerable bulk of the construction immediately below the eyes of the spectator." (Castrén (1991), 475.)

¹² Bibliography: Daux (1956), 232, 234; Vanderpool (1956), 267; Hood (1956), 5–6; Travlos (1960), 132, 134, fig. 83; Frantz (1965), 193, 196; *ead.* (1975), 31–32; Spiro (1978), 5–14, pls. 6–9; Sodini (1984), 350, 375–376, fig. 6 in p. 349 (interprets Building Chi as a residence representative of those occupied by the upper class families in other cities of the empire); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (with Elli Pelekanidou) (1987), 121–123, pls. 178–184; Frantz (1988), 42–46, 87, 91, pls. 27 b, 36 b, 44 a–b; Fowden (1990), 496; Castrén (1991), 474–476.

¹³ Sodini (1984), 350. Fowden follows Sodini's opinion, but accepts that Building Chi, unlike the villas on the Areopagus, can reasonably have a connection with philosophical teaching (Fowden (1990), 495–496).

¹⁴ This piece of information was published in *Ergon* 1955, 8, and was later repeated in some of the secondary sources (for example, Hood (1956), 5–6).

Many of the large Late Roman villas at Athens included comparable apsidal rooms (see for example fig. 16).¹⁵ Alison Frantz has interpreted the apsidal structures in the large houses on the Areopagus as lecture rooms, “private theaters”, of the wealthy sophists.¹⁶ Her basic argument is premised on Eunapius’ statement that the sophists “lectured to their students in their own private theaters” (ἐν τοῖς ἰδιωτικοῖς θεάτροις).¹⁷ Garth Fowden, however, has subsequently argued that these constructions cannot be taken as lecture theatres since they are so typical of large Roman villas.¹⁸

Jean-Pierre Sodini has reservations concerning Frantz’ interpretation.¹⁹ Sodini believes that the apsidal rooms were *triclinia* and connects the use of the *sigma* tables²⁰ with these triclinia. He admits, however, that triclinia do not have to be apsidal, as would seem to be indicated by certain figurative mosaics and find spots of sigma tables.²¹ For example, the Villa of the Falconer at Argos has a rectangular triclinium with access through two columns to a peristyle, and yet the mosaic in the triclinium is semicircular with seven wedge-shaped segments. These segments represent a semicircular couch surrounding a table with a plate adorned with fishes.²² This mosaic may shed some light on the function of the large apsidal room in Building Chi. There, the apse was decorated with seven niches (figs. 11, 14) which, I would like to suggest, corresponds with the seven segments of the mosaic at Argos, where the segments probably marked the amount of the seats into which the couch was divided. Maybe the seven niches marked the seven segments of the sigma-couch in the apse. Even the size of the apse in Building Chi could be suitable for a triclinium with such a bench. These features could suggest that the apse was used for banquets, but, naturally, the use of this apsidal room for philosophical discussions is not ruled out.

III. The Rooms Flanking the Large Central Hall and the Presumed Domestic Shrine of Building Chi

There were other rooms flanking the central hall of Building Chi (see fig. 11). Only the lowest parts of the walls of the easternmost rooms survived, because a building constructed on the same spot in the Middle Ages had destroyed the earlier constructions. But the walls of the western rooms were up to four metres high (figs. 12, 17). The walls of the western rooms were constructed on the bedrock by setting unworked stone blocks or stone material from the adjacent demolished buildings in mortar. The stone masonry

¹⁵ Frantz (1988), 37–41.

¹⁶ *Id.*, 45.

¹⁷ VS IX.1.6 (ed. Giangrande (1956)).

¹⁸ Fowden (1990), 496.

¹⁹ Sodini (1984), 344–350, 359–360, 375–383, 397. Homer A. Thompson and John Travlos among others had previously expressed this hypothesis.

²⁰ The sigma tables are usually interpreted as tables used in religious services, but Sodini argues that the sigma tables do not necessarily have connection with the religious practice (Sodini (1984), 349). Most recently, Dunbabin has come to the conclusion that the mosaic in the Villa of the Falconer in Argos and the sigma tables found *in situ* in secular contexts in Apamea prove that such tables could have served as normal secular dining tables with a semicircular couch (Dunbabin (1991), 128–129).

²¹ Sodini (1984), 378–379. More about the apsidal structures and *stibadia* in Duval (1984), 457–464. A more recent publication on triclinia and *stibadia*, Dunbabin (1991). I am grateful to Dr. Judith Binder for providing me with an excerpt from Dunbabin’s article.

²² Åkerström-Hougen (1974), 16, fig. 3: 105, fig. 61.

was interfaced at intervals by a single or double course of burnt brick (fig. 17).²³ Bricks were used extensively in the building to reinforce corners as well as in the construction of niches. The room to the west of the central hall had a rectangular exedra (fig. 11), which had a semicircular niche of bricks in the middle of each wall.²⁴

Behind the north-eastern corner of the apse was a small, well-preserved room (fig. 11, room α) measuring two by three metres. The western part of this room featured a rectangular recess (figs. 17, 18): here, there were two reliefs,²⁵ one representing the Mother of the Gods in a naiskos and the other depicting a votive scene, possibly an offering to Asclepius (see below), set into the small niches of the north wall. Below these reliefs there was a re-positioned relief base or plinth, the front of which was decorated with a relief from the mid-fourth century B.C.²⁶

The relief featuring the Mother of the Gods in a naiskos depicts the goddess sitting in her throne with a lion on her lap. She is holding a tympany in her left hand and a phiale in her right. This representation is very common: there are over one hundred Mother of the Gods naiskoi from the Agora Excavations alone.²⁷

The smaller, badly preserved votive relief features an enthroned, bearded god and three worshippers. These three figures are of a woman, a bearded man holding an object (?) and a well-preserved representation of a boy leading a sheep before the god. We can see the male god either giving something to the boy or getting something from him. Unfortunately this feature is obscured by a fissure in the relief. We can, however, usefully compare this scene with that of a two-sided relief from the Asklepieion on the southern slope of the Acropolis.²⁸ One side of this relief represents an offering scene with a family of eight, one of whom is leading a sheep to the altar. Although that part of the relief where the god would have been is missing, it seems reasonable to assume (given the stereotypical configuration of such reliefs) that the family is making an offering to Asclepius. The male god in the relief from the large villa could likewise be Asclepius, as the representation bears a resemblance to other known offering scenes from the Asklepieia.

The relief base²⁹ (figs. 18, 19) in the small rectangular room adjacent to the apse was originally decorated with reliefs on three sides, only one of which was visible following the relocation of the base. It is an excellent example of Athenian grave reliefs from the fourth century B.C., dated by Bernard Schmaltz to the middle of the century.³⁰ The crude carving on the fourth side of the block suggests that it was originally set against a wall. The top surface shows that the block was originally a base for a grave monument. The original left side of the block shows two scenes (fig. 19). To the right we see a young man sitting and holding out his hand to an older bearded man. Between them stands another bearded man. Behind the young man, to the left, two bearded men have stopped for a discussion.

²³ Meliades (1955), 47–48.

²⁴ For these niches, see *id.*, pl. 6 α .

²⁵ Both reliefs will be published and analysed by Mrs. Maria Brouskari.

²⁶ Meliades (1955), 48; Schmaltz (1978), 83–97, pls. 27–32.

²⁷ For Mother of the Gods naiskoi, see Vermaseren (1982), pls. 1–59, 85–112. I thank Dr. Judith Binder for pointing out this fact to me and for the reference.

²⁸ Acropolis Museum, inv. no. 3013. Metropoulou (1978), no. 4, p. 16, fig. 10.

²⁹ Height 60 cm. Published by Schmaltz (1978), see above.

³⁰ *Id.*, 84–85.

In its new location, the scene to the left with the young man sitting among the older, bearded men was chosen as the frontal decoration (fig. 19).³¹ Schmaltz argues that the choice of the left side of the originally three-sided monument for the visible front side of the niche was purposeful, and he suggested that the scene could be understood in connection with the philosophical schools in its new location in the small room.³²

Meliades was the first to suggest that the relief base was used as an offering table³³ in its new location, and several other scholars³⁴ have reiterated his interpretation. Another possibility is that the relief base was modified in order to hold a statue base or a plinth where the statue would represent either a god or a revered person.³⁵ This suggestion is based on the fact that much of the top of the relief base had been cut down to a level only slightly higher than the original cutting, creating a rectangular cutting which leaves a raised ridge on the sides at the original height. According to Bernard Schmaltz, the original round cutting of the base for a marble *loutrophoros*, with a diameter of 40 centimetres, was reworked into an oval cutting which could have received a statue plinth.³⁶ He suggests that the oval cutting would have replaced the round one, even though he does not rule out the possibility of the reverse having been the case. This oval recutting could have already been made during the Classical period. Yet, as Schmaltz emphasises, no statues representing the young deceased are known from the Classical period. Schmaltz does not, however, offer any explanation for the rectangular cutting which could be connected with the relocation of the base in Building Chi.

A Comparison with Pompeian Lararia

The niche with the reused sculpture has generally been identified as a shrine,³⁷ which may lead the reader to ask what grounds there are for a domestic shrine in a Roman house and what kind of criteria have been suggested for a domestic altar. The best examples of Roman domestic shrines can be seen at Pompeii, and they were the topic of George Boyce's exhaustive study on Pompeian *lararia* in 1937.³⁸ In the Pompeian *lararia*, the gods worshipped in them were represented either by placing plastic images of the gods within the shrine or by painting their figures on the walls. Provision for sacrifice in front of the images was made by placing a permanent altar on the floor of the room before the shrine, or, more often, by putting a small portable altar within the shrine itself. From these requirements there developed three main types of *lararia*: the simple niche in the wall, the aedicula and the wall painting that is often combined with niche or aedicula.³⁹

³¹ *Id.*, 90–92.

³² *Id.*, 96–97.

³³ Meliades (1955), 48.

³⁴ For example, Spiro (1978), 7, and Frantz (1988), 43.

³⁵ I owe this suggestion to Dr. Judith Binder. Her alternative interpretation for the small room is that it was not dedicated to a divinity, but represents a small room decorated with statues, which is typical of Late Roman villas. She compares the sculptural decoration of Building Chi with the rich collection of ancient sculpture found in the Omega House on the northern slope of the Areopagus.

³⁶ Schmaltz (1978), 94–96.

³⁷ Meliades (1955), 48, pl. 4 β (shrine of Cybele); Spiro (1978), 7; Frantz (1988), 39, 43–45 (shrine of Cybele). Frantz saw this structure as a possible counterpart to one of the small rooms flanking the apse in House A on the Areopagus and to a small room in the west wing of House C with a shallow niche revetted with marble slabs (Frantz (1988), 39, 45).

³⁸ Boyce (1937).

³⁹ *Id.*, 10.

In most cases, the floor of the niche in the Pompeian *lararia* is covered by a tile⁴⁰ or a slab of stone which projects slightly from the wall as a narrow shelf. This shelf came to provide room for the statuettes representing the gods and for offerings and lamps placed in front of them.⁴¹ The wall niche could have the appearance of a miniature temple with an *aedicula* façade, or the domestic shrine could take the form of a niche "hollowed out of a cubical mass of masonry or formed by walls built on the top of a podium and supporting a roof above them."⁴² The second type, the 'pseudo-aedicula', which is always surmounted by a pediment, appears to have been created for the *lararia* of the Imperial period.⁴³

The altars of the Pompeian *lararia* can be divided into two groups. First, there are the large permanent altars on the floor below or beside the shrine, and second, the small portable altars which could be placed within the shrine. Most of the permanent stone altars at Pompeii are of tufa;⁴⁴ others are built up of masonry. The large altars built of masonry were covered over with stucco, and they were either free-standing or built against a wall.⁴⁵ The altars usually had some provision on the top for the fire of sacrifice. The two bolsters of *ara pulvinata*, on each side, are frequently represented.⁴⁶ Others have a rectangular depression in the top⁴⁷ or a concave upper surface (only in altars of masonry). In many cases marks of fire and even of offerings could be discovered on the top of an altar at the time of the excavation. Small portable altars of various materials were more common than the permanent altars, but they could even be used together with the permanent altars. They are usually found in the niche, occasionally together with statuettes or lamps. These small altars were usually rectangular or cylindrical, but one type of altar was made of terracotta in the form of a vase with a circular foot and an opening in the top for incense.⁴⁸

Apart from the usual *lararia*, there are some examples of the *sacellum* proper – a room destined and equipped for the service of a domestic cult.⁴⁹ These rooms were furnished with a niche, a permanent altar and benches for the worshippers. George Boyce suggested that there could have been an intermediate stage between the usual *lararium* and a true *sacellum* represented by shrines with altars and niches within special recesses built in one wall of the atrium.⁵⁰

If the presumed domestic shrine of Building Chi is compared with the Pompeian *lararia*, it can most favourably be compared to the *lararia* representing the pseudo-aedicula type and hollowed out of a cubical mass of masonry,⁵¹ or to the shrines provided with a permanent stone altar.⁵² The *sacella* proper with a permanent altar might be seen as

⁴⁰ Often the shelf consists of a piece of roof-tile, so placed that its flanges form raised rims on each side of the floor in the niche. The roof-tile could have been coated with stucco to make it resemble the bolsters on the top of an *ara pulvinata* and to give the roof-tile the outlines of an altar (Boyce (1937), 10; see for example no. 130, p. 42, pl. 3,1).

⁴¹ Boyce (1937), 10.

⁴² *Id.*, 12–13; compare no. 162, pl. 30,1.

⁴³ *Id.*, 13.

⁴⁴ Compare *id.*, no. 167, pl. 11,1.

⁴⁵ Compare *id.*, no. 146, pl. 12,4.

⁴⁶ Compare *id.*, no. 419, pl. 16,2.

⁴⁷ Compare *id.*, no. 126, pl. 11,2 and no. 365, pl. 39,2.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, 15–16.

⁴⁹ Compare *id.*, no. 132 (pls. 40,3 and 40,4), no. 448 (pl. 40,2) and no. 459 (pl. 41,1).

⁵⁰ *Id.*, 18; compare no. 71 (pl. 39,4), no. 212 (pl. 40,1) and no. 365 (pl. 31,2).

⁵¹ Compare *id.*, no. 162, pl. 30,1.

⁵² Compare especially *id.*, no. 419, p. 85, pl. 16,2, placed in the corner beside the door to the kitchen.

another group of comparative domestic shrines, assuming that the small room in Building Chi is a private cult room. If the relief base was recut to an altar and not to a statue base in its new location, it could be compared with some stone altars featuring a similar rectangular cutting.⁵³ The Pompeiian comparisons suggest that the rectangular cutting in the relief base could be connected with an altar rather than with a statue base, since a statue in the niche would have prevented the sight of the votive reliefs set into the northern wall.

Some Private Shrines in Britain and Gaul

The Pompeiian domestic *lararia* are from the Early Roman period, but later examples for private shrines have been found in Britain⁵⁴ and France. The excavations at Verulamium⁵⁵ in Britain brought to light two structures of masonry at the rear of one of the timber-framed shops at the site. The first one was a cupboard-like form, measuring 1 metre by 0.75 metre, with painted plaster covering the interior. The second structure of similar size adopted its side-wall as its own. The shops were destroyed by fire in about A.D. 155. Sheppard Frere suggested that these structures had a religious purpose, as was attested by a votive deposit buried in the floor when the second structure was built. George Boon,⁵⁶ following Frere, points out the similarity between the Verulamium structure and a similar structure at Silchester which consisted of a pedestal or plinth located axially towards the west side of small room (about 5.5 metres deep and 3 metres wide), and of steps rising between side-walls to a platform. Such a platform appears to have existed in the third phase at Verulamium, where a line of flint-work running along the front of the two cupboard-like structures seems to have been a step.⁵⁷ Boon suggests that "the structures on the Silchester platform, and at Verulamium in its final phase, must have been suitably framed and probably decorated too, perhaps sculptured, and would originally have been coloured: some of the flat-topped bas-reliefs (...) might find a place as backgrounds in shrines, while others, gable-topped, might be set into a wall complete in themselves."⁵⁸ As an example he mentions the interior arrangement of a *lararium* of the 'Casa delle Parete Rosse' at Pompeii, where six bronze figurines (Aesculapius, Apollo, Hercules, Mercury, and two *lares* with a bronze lamp in front) could give a greater visual effect when seen against the gaily-coloured background representing a *Genius* and dancing *lares*.

Although the Verulamium structures were built far away from Greece, in Roman Britain, they have certain similarities with the recess in Building Chi. Both are formed by

⁵³ Compare *id.*, no. 126, p. 41–42, pl. 11,2 and no. 365, p. 76, pl. 39,2.

⁵⁴ See Boon (1983), 33–55.

⁵⁵ Frere (1972), 57–60, pls. XVII–XIX; Boon (1983), 33.

⁵⁶ Boon (1983), 36.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Among other possible domestic shrines, which Boon mentions, are a stone base in a room of the commandant's house at Segontium, a small room with a moulded plinth set against its north wall at Catterick, a chamber with a stone head on a low-stepped platform at Caerwent and an apsidal niche with projecting pilasters rising from the floor of the south wall of Room 2 in Building I on the Colliton Park site at Dorchester. A small shrine belonging to Building XII in Housesteads featured a stone relief of three *Genii Cucullatii* across its front. Unfortunately not one of these Romano-British domestic shrines was preserved intact. (*Id.*, 36, 38, 40.)

⁵⁸ *Id.*, 43, 45.

walls of masonry built on the top of a podium.⁵⁹ Both show remains of plaster coating; in the recess of Building Chi these could be seen within the niche above the repositioned relief base (fig. 18). But as the superstructure of such shrines as those at Verulamium and at Silchester were not preserved, it is impossible to draw further comparisons between the Romano-British examples and the presumed private cult room of Building Chi.

A more important however as an example of the domestic cult practised in a Roman villa is the large villa of Montmaurin in Haute-Garonne, France.⁶⁰ (Fig. 34) In Montmaurin the cult of the domestic hearth was practised in connection with the cults of the Father-God and the Mother-Goddess. In the room numbered 59, a rectangular hearth, which was covered by a marble plaque, represented the primitive hearth with a sacrificial pit under the marble covering.⁶¹ Georges Fouet thinks that the chthonic character of the domestic cult in Montmaurin was indicated by the pit within the hearth of this room and by another sacrificial pit discovered under the floor. A third pit found in the room numbered 38 under the floor of the atrium was dated by the pottery and two coins no earlier than the third quarter of the fourth century A.D.⁶² The large altar of masonry in the room numbered 139 by the main entrance represents the development of the offering table, as it was enlarged and raised for a more general use.⁶³ The next phase was the construction of a polygonal temple in the 'Court of Honour',⁶⁴ which created more public surroundings for the cult practice. In all instances, however, the villa was protected against the evil powers by performing the rites that purified the weak points of the building, the entrance and the left side.

Fouet connects the female goddess of Montmaurin, who would have been represented in Montmaurin by a votive altar of Tutela and two statues of Venus, to Vesta,⁶⁵ and further to Isis in Egypt and Cybele at Rome. When at Rome Cybele was the companion of Jupiter, and in Montmaurin the two gods honoured in the sanctuary, Tutela and Jupiter⁶⁶

⁵⁹ For the structure at Verulamium, see Boon (1983), pl. I. For a podium-like structure in Building Chi, see fig. 17, beneath the recess with the relocated relief base.

⁶⁰ Fouet (1969).

⁶¹ *Id.*, 151, 153–154, 173. There, in connection with the general entrance to the large villa, a corridor no. 60 opened into a small room (no. 59), measuring 3.6 m. by 2.3 m., that featured a rectangular hearth, 0.8 m. deep and 0.95 m. wide. This hearth, built of masonry, was covered by a marble plaque and bricks in the middle. Fouet emphasised that this hearth was not built for ordinary use, which was attested by the discovery of a 60 cm. deep pit under the marble plaque. The pit was filled with charcoal, animal bones, pottery fragments, and three coins, respectively of Tiberius, Trajan and Philippus. The existence of the pit under the marble plaque indicates a cult of the domestic hearth known already from the La Tène -period in France.

⁶² *Id.*, 173–174.

⁶³ *Id.*, 154–155, 173. This altar was located in the small northern room (no. 139, measuring 3.5 m. by 3.8 m.) flanking the main entrance of the villa-area. This room featured a rectangular altar of masonry (1.65 m. wide and 1.2 m. deep) against its north-eastern wall. Even this altar was originally covered by a marble plaque. Near the western corner of the altar, a small jug including a coin of Severus Alexander was found buried in the earthen floor of the room.

⁶⁴ *Id.*, 163–168, 173. The last phase of the polygonal temple in the 'Court of Honour' was dated to the beginning of the second half of the fourth century. The temple was identified by Fouet as the official religious centre of the estate, as is indicated by the votive altars to Tutela and Jupiter found in the area.

⁶⁵ Fouet suggested that Tutela was identified with Vesta, the personification of the fire and of the earth, in Montmaurin and in the whole area. As in Rome common sacrifices were made to Vesta and Jupiter, similarly the votive altar of Jupiter found in Montmaurin would suggest the veneration of the celestial god; this connection of the celestial god and the mother goddess of the earth is attested in several other places. (*Id.*, 166–167.)

⁶⁶ Tutela and Jupiter were represented in Montmaurin by two votive altars, which both have been found in the temple area. (*Id.*, 159–160.)

or Venus and Helios-Serapis⁶⁷, would have represented the celestial and subterranean powers protecting the living and the dead.⁶⁸ This suggestion could shed more light on the interpretation of the sculpture decoration of the small room in Building Chi: the two votive reliefs in the recess could likewise have represented the two opposite powers, the Father-God and the Mother-Goddess.

The position of the reliefs representing the Mother of the Gods and the male god is secondary on the right side of the recess, above the relief base. There might have been other sculpture or wall paintings on the other walls of the niche, but the left wall and the back wall were destroyed so that there is no way of telling if other sculpture or wall paintings really existed. And yet, the existence of the two reliefs dedicated to these two divinities, above a recut relief base, indicates that the small room might have had a religious function. I shall discuss the sculpture decoration of this recess more thoroughly later in this article (Chapter VI.), together with the other archaeological finds from Building Chi.

IV. The Interpretation of Building Sigma

The entrance to the above-mentioned small room with the reliefs was from a corridor connected to the northern entrance of the whole building complex (fig. 17). The northern entrance was later closed off by another construction (Building Sigma in fig. 11; see fig. 20). This construction, which was only partly excavated in 1955, included two rooms that had a common western wall made of large ancient blocks (figs. 20, 21). The wall was distinguished by a niche that was built in the north-western corner of the southern room of Building Sigma. This niche was covered with a marble arch decorated with rosettes, of the same type as those to be found in the Theatre of Dionysus and in the Roman Agora in Athens dated to the first century A.D. Below the marble arch in the niche there was a well covered with a round hollow stone. A fragment of an unfluted column with an Ionic base of Hymettian marble was beside the niche in the south-western corner of the northern room. A similar column was found in the south-eastern corner of the room. (Figs. 20, 21)

Building Sigma has usually been connected with Building Chi.⁶⁹ Marie Spiro, however, has rightly emphasised that Building Sigma, which she dates to the end of the fifth century A.D. using the mosaics in the two rooms as evidence, cannot be associated with the earlier building, because it closed the entrance of the large villa and because its floor level is at least 1.50 metres higher (compare fig. 20).⁷⁰ I could add to her evidence by noting that the wall construction in Building Sigma is different from the wall construction in the villa.

⁶⁷ A bronze head of Helios-Serapis from the central court (no. 90), could represent, as Fouet suggested, Zeus-Helios-Serapis, a connection of the celestial and the chthonic god, not necessarily a proof for a separate cult of Helios-Serapis in Montmaurin. (*Id.*, 168.)

⁶⁸ *Id.*, 176.

⁶⁹ Most recently, Frantz (1988), 44, note 179; pl. 36 b.

⁷⁰ Spiro (1978), 11–12.

V. The Mosaics in Building Chi and in Building Sigma

As far as dating is concerned, one of the most important details in Building Chi and Building Sigma are the delicately composed mosaic floors. There is a large fragmentary mosaic in the central hall of Building Chi and another, semicircular mosaic in the apse which features the same decorative motif as the broad border of the mosaic in the central hall (see figs. 12, 14, 22).⁷¹ The mosaics are in pink, blue, orange, yellow, black and white. The central mosaic represents a large field with a two-strand interlace of larger and smaller circles and ellipses (see figs. 12, 22, 23). The preserved circles are filled with a cross, a rosette with six lanceolate leaves, knots of Solomon and a wheel motif. The yellow interstices between the circles and the ellipses are inscribed with blueish squares. The broad flanking border with an imbrication pattern is separated from the central field by a narrow border of white and black triangles (see fig. 24). The mosaic in the apse has a framing border with a two-strand interlace of small circles and the central field has an imbrication pattern with scales (see fig. 15).

The preserved mosaics in Building Sigma are divided into two rooms (fig. 21).⁷² The southern room has a simple decoration with a polychrome curvilinear design (figs. 25, 26). The colours are light blue, pink, black and white, with occasional yellow. The quadrangular pattern of the two-strand chain distinguishes cross-shaped areas with broad arms, and the centre of each cross is depicted with a simple rectangle. This central pattern has a plain narrow inner border and a broader outer border with small rectangles similar to those represented in the central field. These small rectangles are separated from one another by a network of straight lines.

Between the two rooms of Building Sigma there is a broad threshold decorated with a mosaic which is inscribed with an imbrication pattern. The mosaic in the northern room has a broad border with two rows of intersecting circles which form quatrefoils and concave-sided squares (see fig. 21). The central mosaic field in the northern room of Building Sigma represents a three-strand interlace of large alternating squares and circles which are filled with geometric motifs,⁷³ knots of Solomon, chequer-work, stylised rosettes with six lanceolate leaves, zigzags, wheels, squares set on edge, looped squares set on edge and a circular two-strand guilloche.

Comparisons in Athens

There are three Athenian locations comparable to the mosaic in the central hall of Building Chi: firstly, the mosaic in the northern *ambulatorium* of the tetraconch church in the centre of the Library of Hadrian (figs. 4 b, 10); secondly, the mosaic from Euripidou Street 67, now displayed in the courtyard of the Byzantine museum; and thirdly, the mosaic in the nymphaeum of a large villa on the southern side of the National Garden.

⁷¹ For the earlier descriptions of the mosaics see Spiro (1978), 5–10, pls. 6–8 and especially Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), 121–122, pls. 178–181, where the author has published the sketches on the mosaics that John Travlos made during the excavations in 1955.

⁷² See Spiro (1978), 11–14, pl. 9 and Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), 122–123, pls. 182–184.

⁷³ These can only be seen in the field drawings of John Travlos, which were published in Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), pls. 182, 183 α, β.

These four mosaics have been dated differently by the scholars. The mosaic in the central hall of Building Chi has usually been dated to the beginning of the fifth century A.D.⁷⁴ Alison Frantz mentions the mosaics of the central hall and Building Sigma together, and suggests that the main part of the mosaics could hardly be dated earlier than the middle of the fifth century.⁷⁵

The first of the similar mosaics in Athens, the mosaic in the tetraconch, has generally been dated to the first decade of the fifth century⁷⁶ because of the inscription beside the entrance of the Library of Hadrian. This honorary inscription⁷⁷ is a dedication to Herculus, the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum around A.D. 407–412, who is usually believed to have built the tetraconch. Alison Frantz compares the tetraconch mosaics to the mosaics in Stobi, which were dated by Ruth Kolarik, and wishes to date the tetraconch to the second quarter of the fifth century.⁷⁸

The second comparison for the large mosaic in Building Chi is the mosaic of Euripidou Street 67 which has been dated to the first half of the fifth century.⁷⁹ The third comparison, the mosaic on the southern side of the National Garden, which is very similar to the mosaic in the tetraconch, has been dated to the beginning of the fifth century A.D.⁸⁰

One of the mosaics in question is placed in a church; in the tetraconch in the middle of the Library of Hadrian (fig. 10). The date of the tetraconch is crucial for the dating of the whole mosaic group.⁸¹ The above-mentioned honorary inscription dedicated to the Praetorian Prefect Herculus has been used as dating evidence and connected with the construction of the tetraconch.⁸² However, it seems improbable that the tetraconch could have been built by Herculus, because the inscription beside the library entrance was dedicated to Herculus by a pagan sophist Plutarchus, who most likely would not have honoured the builder of a Christian church. Therefore, the construction of the tetraconch must have taken place after the sophist Plutarchus made the dedication to Herculus, that is after the year A.D. 412.

One motif in the mosaic floor of the southern *ambulatorium* of the tetraconch – a panel of intersecting circles with lozenges at the centres – has a counterpart in a mosaic in the rebuilt Metroön in the Agora.⁸³ Both mosaics have a simple running ivy tendril in the border, but in the tetraconch the ivy tendril border was separated from the panel of intersecting circles by a border of alternating triangles and another border with a two-strand guilloche, suggesting a slightly more developed style. Numismatic evidence gives

⁷⁴ Meliades (1955), 48 (date for Building Chi *ca.* A.D. 400); Travlos (1960), 132, 134, fig. 83 (between the years A.D. 400 and 410); Spiro (1978), 5–10, pls. 6–8 (early fifth century); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), 121–122, pls. 179–181 (first quarter of the fifth century).

⁷⁵ Frantz (1988), 44.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Spiro (1978), 14–26, pls. 12–23 and Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 61, p. 118–121, pls. 174–177 (for the date see Asemakopoulou-Atzaka's note 122).

⁷⁷ *IG II/III²*, no. 4224 (no. 31 in Erkki Sironen's paper).

⁷⁸ Frantz (1988), 73. More about the Stobi mosaics below.

⁷⁹ Spiro (1978), 64–66, pls. 69–70 (the first half of the fifth century); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 63, p. 123–124, pls. 185–186 (the first quarter of the fifth century); Frantz (1988), 68 (before the year A.D. 450).

⁸⁰ Spiro (1978), 54–58, pls. 58–61 (the first decade of the fifth century); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 64, p. 124–125, pls. 187–189 (the first quarter of the fifth century).

⁸¹ I have discussed the tetraconch mosaics and their date more thoroughly in my article "The So-Called Library of Hadrian and the Tetraconch Church in Athens".

⁸² For example, Spiro (1978) and Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987) (see above).

⁸³ Thompson (1937), 195–202; Frantz (1988), 4, 25, 49, 53, 58–61, 121–122, 129–131.

a date after around A.D. 400 for the mosaic floor in the Metroön.⁸⁴ The connection to this mosaic indicates a fifth century date for the tetraconch mosaics. The *terminus post quem* from the inscription and the more developed iconography of the tetraconch mosaics would suggest a later date however, possibly the second quarter of the fifth century. And yet this cannot be the date for the whole group of similar mosaics described above, including the mosaics in the central hall of Building Chi, because the other mosaics in the tetraconch have a more complicated design, including a vase and floral motifs. It is possible that the mosaic in the central hall of Building Chi is the oldest in the group, where all the mosaics represent a central field inscribed with a two-strand interlace, and that the mosaic in the villa-nymphaeum in the southern part of the National Garden and the mosaic from Euripidou Street 67 was made later. But all three were probably made during the first quarter of the fifth century.

Examples from Illyricum

The study of the well-dated mosaics in Stobi supports the suggested date for the tetraconch mosaics, that is the second quarter of the fifth century A.D. The Stobi mosaics have been studied, among others, by Ernst Kitzinger,⁸⁵ Blaga Aleksova,⁸⁶ Momcilo Petrovski,⁸⁷ Carolyn Snively⁸⁸ and Ruth Kolarik.⁸⁹ The best comparison for the tetraconch mosaics is provided by the mosaics belonging to the second phase of the Old Episcopal Basilica at Stobi. These mosaics may quite firmly be dated to the first half of the fifth century A.D., as Ruth Kolarik⁹⁰ has stated. This would give an indication for the date of the tetraconch mosaics representing similar geometrical patterns in the central fields and in the borders, a vessel figure in a prominent place in the church, and good workmanship generally. The tetraconch mosaics are maybe slightly more regular in design and neatly laid than the second phase mosaics, but they are not so elaborately established as the mosaics in the first phase of the Stobi Basilica built above the Old Episcopal Basilica sometime after the mid-fifth century A.D. This would support a dating for the tetraconch mosaics to the second quarter of the fifth century, as the first phase of the mosaics in the Episcopal Basilica has a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 425–450 provided by two coins,⁹¹ both issued in the reign of Valentinian III and Theodosius II, which were sealed beneath the new mosaic floor after the destruction of the Old Episcopal Basilica and before the construction of the Episcopal Basilica proper.

⁸⁴ See Frantz (1988), 59: the latest four coins, of Theodosius I, under the mosaic floor were in fresh condition.

⁸⁵ Kitzinger (1946).

⁸⁶ Aleksova (1982); *ead.* (1982–1983); *ead.* (1986).

⁸⁷ Kolarik and Petrovski (1975).

⁸⁸ Snively (1979).

⁸⁹ Kolarik and Petrovski (1975); Kolarik (1980), 180 ff.; *ead.* (1984), 451 ff. (a revised illustrated version of the former article); *ead.* (1981); *ead.* (1987).

⁹⁰ *Ead.* (1987), 303.

⁹¹ For the new date of the Old Episcopal Basilica and the first phase of the Episcopal Basilica, see *id.*, and especially p. 303, note 17, where she refers to the two coins, nos. 74–428 and 75–104, found beneath the first phase floor of the Episcopal Basilica.

The mosaics in the other building under discussion, Building Sigma, have been dated to the middle of the fifth century or later.⁹² Alison Frantz sees the mosaics in the central hall of Building Chi and in Building Sigma as a complex and she considers them as being slightly later in construction than the mosaics of the tetraconch, that is from the third quarter of the fifth century.⁹³

The mosaic in the northern room of Building Sigma is comparable to those found in Athens, Thebes and Epidauros. The motif in the central field of the mosaic in Building Sigma represents an interlace of alternating squares and circles filled with geometric motifs, and in other comparative mosaics the squares and circles have been filled with geometric patterns or birds. There are two comparable mosaics in Athens, one in Agios Thomas near the Stoa of Attalus and the other in a nymphaeum found in the corner of Nikes and Apollonos Streets.⁹⁴ Both mosaics included squares filled with representations of birds. The two found in Thebes are near Agios Ioannes Kaloktenos and in Pindarou Street 29.⁹⁵ These mosaics have geometric motifs inscribed in squares and circles similar to those of the mosaic in Building Sigma, but some of the squares are filled with the representations of birds.

The Late Roman villa in the Asklepieion of Epidauros had large mosaics in two rooms.⁹⁶ The smaller mosaic is comparable to those in the rooms on the north side of the vestibule of the Athenian tetraconch. The difference is that the smaller mosaic in Epidauros, with its pattern of a central octagon surrounded by squares and diamonds, has birds inside the squares, whereas in the tetraconch the preserved squares surrounding the central octagon were inscribed with geometric motifs and flanked by geometricised floral decoration. The central field of the larger mosaic in Epidauros, however, belongs to the group of mosaics with alternating squares and circles and these are filled with purely geometric designs as in the mosaic of Building Sigma.

It may be that the pattern with an interlace of alternating squares and circles, used in the mosaic of the northern room of Building Sigma, is later than the pattern with an interlace of circles and ellipses represented in the central hall of Building Chi, because the squares in comparable square-and-circle mosaics in Athens and Thebes are often filled with organic motifs. Birds and other organic motifs do not appear in the pattern of circles and ellipses which is typical of the earlier mosaics with an interlace pattern. Therefore, a date

⁹² Spiro (1978), 11–14, fig. 9 (between the middle or second half of the fifth and the sixth century). Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 62 α, p. 122–123, especially note 127 (before the middle of the fifth century).

⁹³ Frantz (1988), 44.

⁹⁴ For Agios Thomas, see Lazarides (1971), 63, fig. 1; Chatzedakes (1973–1974), 184–192, plans 2–5, pl. 127 α (Late Roman or Early Christian); Sodini (1980), 162 (the beginning of the fifth century); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 67, p. 127–128, pls. 195–197 (the second quarter of the fifth century). For Nikes and Apollonos, see Threpsiades (1952–1953) (the beginning of the fifth century); Spiro (1978), 60–64, pls. 63–68 (the second half of the fifth century); Sodini (1980), 162 (the beginning of the fifth century); Kolarik (1981) (the second half of the fifth century); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 68, p. 128–129, pls. 198–199 (the second quarter of the fifth century).

⁹⁵ For the mosaic in Agios Ioannes Kaloktenos, see Lazarides (1973); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 90, p. 152–153, pls. 245–246 (the second quarter of the fifth century). For the mosaics in Pindarou Street 29, see Lazarides (1973–1974), 455–459, plans 1–3, pls. 294–296 (fourth or fifth century A.D.); Touchais (1980), 631, fig. 108; Sodini (1984), 380–381, fig. 31 (the beginning of the fifth century); Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 91, p. 153–154, pls. 247, 248, 249 α (the second quarter of the fifth century).

⁹⁶ Bibliography and illustrations in Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1987), no. 11, p. 61–63, pls. 54–55. The author has dated the mosaics to the second quarter of the fifth century.

in the middle or the third quarter of the fifth century could be proposed for Building Sigma.

Jean-Pierre Sodini detects a difference between the mosaics of churches and profane buildings. He interprets the mosaics in the tetraconch as aniconic and some of the above-mentioned mosaics as mosaics with floral and figurative decoration (the mosaics in the villa-nymphaeum in the southern part of the National Garden, in Metroön, from Euripidou Street 67 and from the nymphaeum in Nikes and Apollonos Streets). The reason for the use of aniconic mosaics would not be the difference in time, but the demand of the clergy for aniconic mosaics in the tetraconch. As a comparison Sodini offers the mosaics in the basilica and the Late Roman villa in Epidaurus, where the mosaics of the villa include figurative motifs but the mosaics in the basilica are purely geometric. He compares this difference in the iconography of the Epidaurian mosaics to the iconography of mosaics in Asia Minor and Syria, where aniconic mosaics decorated religious buildings.⁹⁷

Sodini's theory is not, however, applicable to Athens, because the mosaics in Metroön, in the villa-nymphaeum in the National Garden, from Euripidou Street 67 and in Building Chi are aniconic, as well the tetraconch mosaics, with the exception of a representation of a vase in the southern *ambulatorium*. And yet, these mosaics are stylistically analogous, which could indicate that they are nearly contemporary (see above), at least one of them decorating a private villa (*i.e.* Building Chi) and one to be found in a church.

A Relative Chronology

The mosaic in the semicircular nymphaeum (Nikes and Apollonos Streets) does include representations of birds, as well as the mosaic in Agios Thomas behind the Stoa of Attalus, but so do the mosaics that once decorated the basilica of Ilissus.⁹⁸ This poses problems for Sodini's explanation of aniconic mosaics as being the decoration of religious buildings in Athens. If, however, the existence and the non-existence of floral and figurative motifs can be explained according to chronology, as has generally been suggested,⁹⁹ this would give an explanation for a similar artistic programme in the mosaics of the churches and the profane buildings. With these chronological criteria, the first group of the above-discussed mosaics might include the mosaics with purely geometric or geometricised motifs in the Metroön, in Building Chi, from Euripidou Street 67, in the villa-nymphaeum in the National Garden and the tetraconch in Athens, and in the basilica in Epidaurus. The mosaics with an interlace of squares and circles inscribed with geometric motifs could form the second group (Building Sigma). The third group may consist of mosaics with an interlace of squares and circles filled with floral and organic motifs (Agios Thomas and Nikes and Apollonos Street in Athens, Agios Ioannes Kaloktenos and Pindarou Street 29 in Thebes). The mosaics in the villa at Epidaurus could belong to either of the last two groups, since the mosaic with squares and circles was filled with geometric motifs but the mosaic in the adjacent room included figures of

⁹⁷ Sodini (1984), 388.

⁹⁸ For the basilica of Ilissus, see Soteriou (1919); *id.* (1929), 208–210; Chatzedakes (1951) and *id.* (1952); Sodini (1970), 702; Spiro (1978), 26–36, pls. 24–34; Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1984), 35; Frantz (1988), 73.

⁹⁹ For example, Kitzing (1965); Spiro (1978), LXI–LXV; Asemakopoulou-Atzaka (1984), 18–20, 35–36.

birds. The material at our disposal strongly suggests that Building Chi would predate Building Sigma; the previous dates to the first quarter and the latter to the middle of the fifth century A.D.

VI. Building Chi as a Possible Candidate for the 'House of Proclus'

The archaeological evidence and the location of Building Chi (compare fig. 27) reminded the excavators¹⁰⁰ of a passage in the biography of Proclus (Marinus, *Vita Procli* 29; cited above). Marinus says that the House of Proclus was pleasant for him for several reasons: his predecessors, Plutarchus and Syrianus, had lived there; it was near the Asklepieion and the temple of Dionysus; and it was visible and otherwise perceptible from the Acropolis of Athena. It seems reasonable, however, to interpret this passage in the overall context of writing. Marinus wrote this text as a eulogy to Proclus, where he praises the virtues and piety of Proclus, an indication of Proclus being the rightful follower of Plutarchus and Syrianus in the succession of heads of the Neoplatonic School. Marinus emphasises Proclus' connection with Plutarchus and Syrianus by the fact that Proclus lived in the same house as his predecessors. This house was located in the neighbourhood of the Sanctuary of Asclepius, close-by the Temple of Dionysus, and it was visible and also otherwise somehow manifest from the Acropolis of Athena.¹⁰¹ In this context the passage describing the location of the 'House of Proclus', the centre of the Neoplatonic School at Athens, is determined by sacral, not simply topographical reference points.

It is remarkable that Marinus did not want to stress the Theatre of Dionysus nor mention the Odeum of Herodes Atticus as topographical pinpoints, even though these structures, or what was left of them, were during the fifth century A.D. probably still the best landmarks on the southern slope of the Acropolis. It is most likely that Marinus stressed in this passage the proximity of the house to the nearest important sanctuaries, to the temples of Asclepius, Dionysus and Athena and pointed out how close a contact the Neoplatonic School and Proclus had with Asclepius, Dionysus and Athena, the guardians of the School.

A date soon after Alaric's invasion in 396 was suggested for the construction of Building Chi,¹⁰² but on presently available evidence it is impossible to propose a more exact date. If the house was built by Plutarchus, he would have been in his mature years by the time of the construction, since he lived to a great age and died in A.D. 432. Alison Frantz introduced the hypothesis that a smaller house built by Plutarchus was later greatly enlarged by Proclus, and possibly by his successors, as the significance of the Neoplatonic School increased.¹⁰³ That is a possibility, but Building Chi and Building Sigma seem to have been completely separated from each other: the photographs from the excavations in 1955 suggest that the southern wall of Building Sigma closed off the north-eastern entrance of Building Chi. (See above and compare figs. 12, 17, 20, 21)

¹⁰⁰ Meliades (1955), 48–49.

¹⁰¹ Compare the translation of Rosán above and Castrén (1991), 475.

¹⁰² Meliades (1955), 48, 50; *Ergon* 1955, 10–11.

¹⁰³ Frantz (1988), 44. Ernst Kitzinger concurs with Frantz in the dating and in the hypothesis that the 'House of Proclus' was at first Plutarchus' but later greatly enlarged. (Frantz (1988), 44, note 179.)

The excavators of the 'House of Proclus' stated that Building Chi was abandoned in the sixth century, but it was impossible to give a more precise date.¹⁰⁴ The sixth century abandonment of Building Chi was taken as an indication of the effect of Justinian's edict in 529,¹⁰⁵ when the Emperor Justinian issued a general law forbidding the pagans to teach. According to the edict they should have let themselves be baptised or be expelled and leave their belongings behind.¹⁰⁶ The abandonment of the building was also connected with the closing of the Neoplatonic School after Justinian's edict. The existing archaeological testimony, however, provides no final proof for the effect of the law for Building Chi or the Neoplatonic School.

Sculpture Connected with Building Chi

The following two portrait heads have usually been connected with Building Chi to support the identification of Building Chi as the 'House of Proclus'. Firstly, the head of a philosopher¹⁰⁷ in the Acropolis Museum (fig. 29) has been interpreted as a representation of Plutarchus, the founder of the Neoplatonic School at Athens. Meliades was the first scholar to connect this head with Building Chi¹⁰⁸ and others have followed him.¹⁰⁹ This portrait cannot, however, be connected with Building Chi, because the information on the find-spot is unsubstantiated.¹¹⁰ Another portrait head (fig. 28) that was found earlier in the Frankish wall on the southern slope of the Acropolis, was believed to have decorated Building Chi and thus support the view that the house was related to philosophy in some way.¹¹¹ It is possible, but not certain, that this fragmentary head comes from Building Chi.

The archaeological finds and the decoration of Building Chi show a deference towards art:¹¹² the small recess behind the central apse was decorated with reliefs, two other rooms had niches for statues and the central hall had mosaic floors (figs. 12, 17, 18). Parts of two statues were found during the excavations.¹¹³ The first one is an Early Neronian portrait head¹¹⁴ of a young man (fig. 30 a, b) that was originally inserted into a draped statue. The other is part of a large cult statue of Isis¹¹⁵ from the second quarter of

¹⁰⁴ Meliades (1955), 47, 50; *Ergon* 1955, 11; Frantz (1988), 87, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Meliades (1955), 50.

¹⁰⁶ *CJ* I.5.18.4 (ed. Krüger (1959), 57) and I.11.10.2 (ed. Krüger (1959), 64); Alan Cameron (1969), 7–29. Gunnar af Hällström will present a paper on Justinian's edict in this publication.

¹⁰⁷ Acropolis Museum, inv. no. 1313. Compare Dantas (1954–1955).

¹⁰⁸ Meliades (1955), 49.

¹⁰⁹ For example, Frantz (1965), 193 and *ead.* (1975), 32, fig. 6. See, however, *ead.* (1988), 44.

¹¹⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Judith Binder for pointing out this fact.

¹¹¹ Meliades (1955), 49; Frantz (1988), 43–44, note 172. The head (Athens, National Museum, inv. no. 581), which comes from the southern slope of the Acropolis, has received different interpretations. Most scholars date this portrait, which has several replicas, to the third century A.D., but it has been identified also as Iamblichus, the famous scholar from the fourth century. Rodenwaldt, who dated the portrait type to the second half of the fourth century A.D., proposed that the portrait could represent one of the Neoplatonist teachers (Rodenwaldt (1919), 4, 8–9, 11–12, no. 2, pl. III). (More information about this portrait type in Voutiras (1981), 201–208, pls. 63–68.)

¹¹² Oikonomides (1977), 11–12. Oikonomides wanted to see in the decoration further evidence for the Neoplatonic respect of art, but this kind of decoration is not unusual for large Late Roman villas.

¹¹³ Meliades (1955), 49.

¹¹⁴ Acropolis South Slope, inv. no. NAM 22.

¹¹⁵ Acropolis South Slope, inv. no. NAM 40. This statue has been discussed previously by Walker in her article (Walker (1979), 252–253, 257), and by Walters (1988), 7, note 14; 12, note 49; 15–16,

the first century A.D., which had been cut to form a bust and was found in the filling of the room β, 2.8 metres below the surface.¹¹⁶

The representations of the Mother of the Gods and of a male god (possibly Asclepius) in the niche of the small room as well as the bust of Isis could indicate that the owners of the house honoured pagan gods. Furthermore, this could point to a connection with philosophy and the Neoplatonic syncretism. As a matter of fact, Proclus honoured the Mother of the Gods and purified himself by the rites of the Great Mother every month. Proclus wrote a book on the Mother of the Gods and a hymn to Isis. He healed the daughter of Archiadas, Asclepigeneia, with the help of Asclepius, and the same god gave him relief from his illnesses.¹¹⁷ Proclus had a close relationship with Athena, who had taken him under her special protection and turned him toward philosophy advising him to attend the lectures at Athens.¹¹⁸ His familiarity with Athena was shown clearly when her cult statue had been taken away from the Parthenon by the Christians. The text states: "For it seemed to the philosopher that a beautiful woman appeared to him in a dream and commanded him to prepare his house quickly 'because the Lady of Athens wishes to come to live with you'."¹¹⁹

There exists, however, the possibility that neither the statue of Isis nor the Early Neronian portrait head belong to the original decoration of Building Chi. Both of them may have come into the area after the destruction of the building, as they were both found in the filling of the rooms. The Neronian portrait was found at the eastern end of Building Chi, where the original walls had been destroyed by the Mediaeval construction, and the fragment of the statue of Isis was found in the filling of the room β.¹²⁰

Further Evidence for the 'Neoplatonic Nature' of Building Chi

Among the other finds from Building Chi was part of an inscription (fig. 33), which has been deciphered as a further evidence for the Neoplatonic nature of the villa. The inscription reads:¹²¹

Εἰ σοφίην ὄρᾳ α [
 εἰ βίον [
 ἦδε γὰρ [

63, 70. Walker was the first scholar to publish information on the statue in her exhaustive study on the South Slope Sanctuary of Isis. She suggested a connection between the Isis fragment and the Sanctuary of Isis on the southern slope: the cult statue could have decorated the Hadrianic naiskos. Walters compared the fragmentary Isis statue with cult statues of Isis and with the series of Isis reliefs from Athens in her excellent study on the Attic grave reliefs representing women in the dress of Isis, and she suggested a date in the 40's of the first century after Christ for the Isis statue found in Building Chi (p. 16 and 63).

¹¹⁶ I will publish more detailed descriptions of these two statues separately, together with a third statue that was found in 1955 in the Erechtheiou Street.

¹¹⁷ Marinus, *Vita Procli* 19, 29–31 and 33 (ed. Masullo (1985)); transl. Rosán (1949), 23–24, 32.

¹¹⁸ Marinus, *Vita Procli* 6, 9 (ed. Masullo (1985)); Rosán (1949), 16–18.

¹¹⁹ Marinus, *Vita Procli* 30 (ed. Masullo (1985)); transl. Rosán (1949), 30. Henig (1986), 166; Frantz (1988), 58.

¹²⁰ I am grateful to Professor G. Dontas for this important information.

¹²¹ Acropolis South Slope, inv. no. NAM 24. Meliades (1955), 49; Peek (1980), 36, no. 38. This inscription is, according to Erkki Sironen, probably a private monument, possibly a sepulchral epigram from the later fifth century, but not necessarily connected with philosophy.

This slab was found in the filling of the room δ,¹²² which does not provide further information of the original location of the inscription and its possible connection with Building Chi.

The most interesting find during the excavations of the year 1955 came to light in the westernmost room (fig. 11, room β) 3.5 metres below the surface: it is the grave of an animal with several votive offerings (fig. 31). The bone analysis showed that the animal was a year-old piglet, about 0.7 metre long. The votive offerings included seven ceramic cups with two handles, a simple jug with one handle and an oil lamp decorated with a running winged Eros (fig. 32 a), which was dated by the excavators to the fifth century A.D. The most spectacular find was the iron knife still in place in the neck of the piglet.¹²³

The jug had a flat base, a wide neck, a broad strap handle and an everted lip; the body was neatly wheel-ridged. This type of jug was dated by Henry Robinson to the fifth century A.D.¹²⁴ The oil lamp¹²⁵ represents an Asia Minor lamp with a fishtail in the handle-end (fig. 32 b), a shape which was copied by the Athenian lampmakers at the end of the fifth century. This lamp is an Athenian imitation of an Asia Minor lamp and could be dated to the end of the fifth century. There is a good comparison for this lamp in the Agora collections (L 795)¹²⁶ which has a similar disk representation, but the rim is different and the Agora lamp is of clumsier workmanship.

An important detail could be the fact that the lamp in the piglet grave was unused, which suggests that the lamp was buried unused with the sacrificed pig; it was not burnt in the sacrificial rite. The disk representation in the lamp, however, does not explain the nature of the piglet sacrifice. Therefore I shall go through literary evidence and suggest some solutions to this problem.

This votive offering of a pig has similarities with the offerings made during the Eleusinian mysteries and the offerings given to Demeter Thesmophorus. Pigs were offered in two ways at the Thesmophoria: in the first the animal is not stabbed but hurled into the crevices of the earth to rot. In the second kind of offering the piglet is slain in a blood sacrifice.¹²⁷ The piglet grave does not, however, represent either of these, but it is a combination of the two: the pig was stabbed with a knife, the blood was allowed to flow for the gods and the animal was buried intact in the ground with offerings. The problem in combining the piglet grave with the Thesmophoria is that Thesmophoria was an event

¹²² That is the room to the west of the central hall featuring an exedra with three niches.

¹²³ Meliades (1955), 49, pl. 8.

¹²⁴ Robinson (1959). For comparisons, see M 301 (P 9790), 112, pl. 30 (early 5th c.) and M 322 (P 9786), 114, pl. 31 (5th c.).

¹²⁵ Acropolis South Slope, inv. no. NAA 258. (Figs. 32 a, b)
L. 0.085 m.; W. 0.06 m.; H. 0.029 m. Disk diam. 0.04 m. Intact, unused. Hard clay with small black and white intrusions: light red 2.5 YR 6/6 – red 2.5 YR 5/6 (Munsell Soil Color Charts, Baltimore 1975). Disk: winged Eros running left, holding a large fish (?) in the right hand, two narrow raised framing rings, two filling-holes. Rim: vine (two leaves flanking the handle, four clusters), tendrils between leaves and clusters begin from the disk edge. Nozzle: raised edge around wick-hole, nozzle angle 167°. Double grooves set off underside of nozzle. Handle: solid, 2 grooves above, ending in sketchy fishtail. Base: *planta pedis* within a broad raised ring (diam. 2.9 cm.), centre concave. Taken from non-joining moulds: the upper half is larger than the lower half. An Athenian imitation of an Asia Minor lamp.
Compare: Menzel (1954), no. 629, p. 97, fig. 80.5, from Miletus; Miltner (1937), no. 487, p. 126, pl. IV; Perlzweig (1961), no. 352, p. 101, pl. 11 (Asia Minor lamp) and no. 2381, p. 173, pl. 37 (local imitation).

¹²⁶ Perlzweig (1961), no. 2381, p. 173, pl. 37; she dated the lamp to the fifth century A.D.

¹²⁷ Detienne (1989), 133–135.

for women only.¹²⁸ Therefore a Thesmophorian rite as such could not have been performed in a private villa in Athens. On the other hand, the Eleusinian Sanctuary was in ruins; could they have been performing the rites of the Mysteries?

The Emperor Julian and Neoplatonic Syncretism

If, however, the offering was associated with the cult of Demeter, it might be reasonable to suppose that it could have had a connection with the cult of the Mother of the Gods, as the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*,¹²⁹ written by Julian the Apostate, attests of the connection of these female goddesses: “(...) she [*i.e.* the Mother of the Gods] was that very Deo whom they worship, and Rhea and Demeter too.” Further on Julian specifies:¹³⁰ “(...) the most holy and secret Mysteries of Deo and the Maiden are celebrated when the sun is in the sign of Libra (...) At any rate the Athenians celebrate the Mysteries of Deo twice in the year (...)” The cult of the Mother of the Gods and Attis was combined with the cult of Demeter and Persephone among the Greeks and this may explain the special chthonic nature of the piglet sacrifice. Magna Mater and Demeter are represented together even in two Athenian taurobolic altars¹³¹ of the late fourth century A.D. which represent enthroned Cybele and Demeter flanked by Persephone and Iacchus.

The Emperor Julian, a famous Neoplatonist himself, accords special attention to the use of pigs in sacred rites in the same hymn where he expresses a Neoplatonist interpretation¹³² of the cult of the Great Mother: “Birds, for example, we may eat, except only those few which are commonly held sacred, and ordinary four-footed animals, except the pig. This animal is banned as food during the sacred rites because by its shape and way of life, and the very nature of its substance – for its flesh is impure and coarse – it belongs wholly to the earth. And therefore men came to believe that it was an acceptable offering to the gods of the underworld. For this animal does not look up at the sky, not only because it has no such desire, but because it is so made that it can never look upwards. These then are the reasons that have been given by the divine ordinance for abstinence from such food as we ought to renounce.”

¹²⁸ See Näsström (1990), 98–99.

¹²⁹ Julian, *Oratio V* (Hymn to the Mother of the Gods), 159 B: “...ὡς ἡ παρ’ αὐτοῖς τιμωμένη Δηῶ καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Δημήτηρ.” (Loeb ed. (1980), transl. Wright, 442–443.)

¹³⁰ *Id.*, 173 A, B: “...τελεῖται γὰρ περὶ τὸν ζυγὸν Δημοὶ καὶ Κόρη τὰ σεμνὰ καὶ ἀπόρρητα μυστήρια... δις γοῦν Ἀθηναῖοι τῇ Δημοὶ τελοῦσι τὰ μυστήρια...”. (Loeb ed. (1980), 482–485.)

¹³¹ National Museum, inv. no. 1746 (*IG II/III*², no. 4841) altar dedicated to Attis and Rhea by Archelaos, *kleidouchos* of Hera at Argos, fourth century A.D.; National Museum, inv. no. 1747 (*IG II/III*², no. 4842) altar dedicated by Musonius in A.D. 386; Duthoy (1969), 1, 11–12, no. 6. For further bibliography, see Frantz (1988), 19, note 32 and 33; p. 50–51.

¹³² Julian, *Oratio V*, 177 B–C: “...ὄρνισιν οὖν ἐπιτρέπει χρῆσθαι πλὴν ὀλίγων, οὓς ἱεροὺς εἶναι πάντη συμβέβηκε, καὶ τῶν τετραπόδων τοῖς συνήθεσιν ἔξω τοῦ χοίρου. τοῦτον δὲ ὡς χθόνιον πάντη μορφῇ τε καὶ τῷ βίῳ καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ τῆς οὐσίας λόγῳ. περιττωματικός τε γὰρ καὶ παχὺς τὴν σάρκα· τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀποκηρύττει τροφῆς. φίλον γὰρ εἶναι πεπίστευται θῦμα τοῖς χθονίοις θεοῖς οὐκ ἀπεικόντως. ἀθέατον γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐρανοῦ τοῦτ’ ὁ ζῶν, οὐ μόνον οὐ βουλόμενον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ πεφυκὸς ἀναβλέψαι ποτέ. τοιαύτας μὲν δὴ αἰτίας ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀποχῆς ὧν ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖ εἴρηκεν ὁ θεῖος θεσμός.” (Loeb ed. (1980), 494–497.)

Remarks on Blood Sacrifices

Some Neoplatonists, for example Porphyrius, did not approve of blood sacrifices.¹³³ Marinus, however, tells that Proclus "especially refused to eat anything that had life, although whenever there was an occasion which imperatively demanded it, he would taste a little meat *for the sake of the rite*."¹³⁴ (Italics by the author) In my opinion, this seems to indicate that the Neoplatonists of the fifth century even approved of blood sacrifices whenever the occasion demanded this particular rite. The text of Julian¹³⁵ gives another point of view: pigs were an appropriate offering for the gods of the underworld, because in the nature of their substance they belong wholly to the earth.

The possible connection between the piglet grave and the cult of the Mother of the Gods, who is represented in the votive relief in the small room of Building Chi, could perhaps be attested by the identification of the Great Mother with Demeter and Gaia the Earth Mother all of whom have a chthonic character: the blood of the piglet was let in the sacrifice and the animal may have been buried with the grave offerings as a gift for the earth and the Great Goddess. The use of the blood of a pig, which was sacred to Demeter, in a rite of purification might have produced a mystic connection with the worshipper and his god.¹³⁶ Arthur Fairbanks suggested that men could have sought to remove the cause of some god's anger by using the blood of a pig in mystic sacrifices. In mystic sacrifices to Demeter and Persephone the pig was used to 'purify' the worshipper, as the blood of the animal sacred to the moon-goddess Hecate, the dog, was smeared on those who needed purification, to consecrate them to Hecate.¹³⁷

Another comparison for the piglet sacrifice is given by the analogous offerings made in the Roman ceremonies of *Terminalia*, the feast for the god Terminus.¹³⁸ The blood sacrifice had an important role in the ceremony of setting the boundary stone of a building.¹³⁹ The sacrificial animal was killed and the blood poured into a pit in the ground. The use of honey, wine, crops and incense was attached to this ceremony of *Terminalia*. S. Eitrem emphasised that in this ritual the animal was not dismembered, but the blood was poured directly into the pit that was used for the boundary stone.¹⁴⁰ He believed, though, that the whole animal was burnt in the pit and the libations were made after that. An expiatory sacrifice was likewise given to the local genii and family spirits when someone moved into the house or returned from a longer journey.¹⁴¹

Sacrificial Banquets

The offerings in the piglet grave of Building Chi included seven cups and a pot, which could come from a sacrificial banquet held in the villa, perhaps in the large hall with the triclinium including seven niches (fig. 11). The number of cups indicates that there were

¹³³ Näsström (1990), 76.

¹³⁴ Marinus, *Vita Procli* 19 (ed. Masullo (1985)); transl. Rosán (1949), 23.

¹³⁵ See above, Julian, *Oratio V*, 177 B–C (Loeb ed. (1980)).

¹³⁶ Fairbanks (1900), 256.

¹³⁷ *Id.*, 256–257.

¹³⁸ Eitrem (1915), 430–432 and Rose (1970).

¹³⁹ Eitrem (1915), 430.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Id.*, 431–432.

seven participants in the banquet, and this lends support to my suggestion that a semicircular bench including seven segments was used for the banquet in the large apse of the central hall (fig. 14).

Even if the piglet sacrifice is not directly connected with the religious customs of the Neoplatonists, it does, however, together with the statuary decoration of the building attest to the fact that the owners of the villa respected the old traditions. The reliefs representing the enthroned Mother of the Gods and an offering to an enthroned bearded male god (figs. 17, 18), as well as the statue of Isis, if it belonged to the original decoration of the villa, belonged to a collection of pagan sculpture in the house. The owners could have been either pagans who worshipped the old gods, or, another possibility which has been suggested,¹⁴² Christians who went on as before with decorating their houses with art objects. Martin Henig has pointed out that the difficulty is to distinguish between sculpture kept for its aesthetic value and statues kept for their religious value,¹⁴³ but he emphasises also that “we must not ignore the deepening religious response of the Roman (and provincial) aristocracies in the fourth century, pagan as well as Christian.”¹⁴⁴ He suggested that some Romano-British villas such as that at Frampton in Dorset could have existed “largely to serve the spiritual and ceremonial needs of their owners and friends.”¹⁴⁵ The exquisite mosaics in some Romano-British villas representing recognizable scenes from the pagan imagery could indicate that the owner wished to display the mosaic to those who came to dine with him and to honour the gods. These guests could be fellow votaries of a Neoplatonic cult who came to take part in banquets that were inextricably associated with elevated conversation and acts of worship.¹⁴⁶

Concerning the religious choice of the individuals, Martin Henig writes:¹⁴⁷ “In the Roman world, provided that traditional practices were not challenged (as they were above all by the Christians), every man was free to define the nature of the gods as he wished”, or “he could equate deities one with the other... or he could discover new, previously unknown gods.” If the owners of Building Chi were pagans they were devoted to several different cults, which is typical of Neoplatonic syncretism. The syncretism of Neoplatonists is well represented in the Hymns of Julian to the King Helios and to the Mother of the Gods, or in *Vita Procli* of Marinus.

Objects of Art and Their Religious Aspects

The Emperor Julian identified the Mother of the Gods as the mother and spouse of Zeus, who is enthroned at the side of Zeus.¹⁴⁸ The Great Mother is the counterpart of Athena, who is Forethought among the intellectual gods, as the Mother of the Gods is Forethought among the intelligible gods. Athena shared the throne of Apollo-Helios as Cybele shared the throne of Zeus-Helios.¹⁴⁹ According to Julian Zeus, Hades and Helios Serapis are three gods in one godhead; Apollo is associated with Helios, who is the father

¹⁴² This alternative was pointed out to me by Dr. Judith Binder.

¹⁴³ Henig (1984), 170.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.* (1986), 166.

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*, 162.

¹⁴⁶ *Id.*, 165.

¹⁴⁷ *Id.*, 159.

¹⁴⁸ Julian, *Oratio V*, 166 A–B (Loeb ed. (1980), 462–463).

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*, 166 C–167 C, 170 D (Loeb ed. (1980), 464–467, 476–477; Wright (1980b), 463, note 3).

of Dionysus and who begat Asclepius to be the saviour of the whole world.¹⁵⁰ Julian even endowed the companion of Cybele, Attis, with the attributes of the sun-god Mithras.¹⁵¹ Marinus tells us how Proclus used to say: "(...) it befits the philosopher not to observe the rites of any one city or of only a few nations, but to be the minister of the whole world in common (κοινῇ δὲ τοῦ ὅλου κόσμου ἱεροφάντην)."¹⁵²

What could this syncretism offer for the interpretation of the decoration of the small shrine? It seems reasonable to suppose that the two enthroned deities, Cybele and the bearded male god, could have been interpreted according to the Neoplatonic syncretism, for example as pairs Cybele-Zeus/Helios or Athena-Apollo/Helios, in the same way as the cult of the Mother-Goddess and the Father-God could have been represented in Montmaurin¹⁵³ by the pairs Tutela-Jupiter and Venus-Helios/Serapis. This might be the reason why the earlier reliefs were reused in the small room of Building Chi, and they were set up beside each other above the reused base.

Except for the Omega House (House C) on the northern slope of the Areopagus with its large collection of pagan sculpture,¹⁵⁴ there are two good comparisons for the sculptural decoration of large Late Roman villas at Athens, the villa found in Kekropos Street 7–9 in Plaka and another large villa excavated in the early '80s in the north-eastern part of the National Garden, near the corner of the Basilisses Sofias and Erodou Attikou Streets. The partly excavated villa in Kekropos Street 7–9 was dated to the fourth century A.D.,¹⁵⁵ and its destruction attributed to Alaric's invasion in 396. The excavations revealed a large collection of sculpture, including, among others, two votive reliefs representing Cybele (compare Building Chi), another relief from the fourth century B.C. representing a person with chlamys in front of a horse, and a female head from a fourth century B.C. relief. Remarkable too was the large collection of terracottas from Kekropos Street 7–9, which included, for example, enthroned goddesses, a resting Eros, a dog, muses, a feminine masque and a bust of a philosopher. Furthermore, a steatite statuette representing an enthroned goddess, a figure of Harpocrates and a bust of Isis belonged to the decoration of this villa.

The large villa in the National Garden, which continues under the Erodou Attikou Street, had three periods of occupation.¹⁵⁶ The first Roman house was built in the second century A.D. and destroyed in the middle of the third century A.D. The second villa was built at the end of the third century or in the beginning of the fourth century A.D. The second house was rebuilt after it had been destroyed by fire at the end of the fourth century or in the beginning of the fifth century A.D., and the history of the villa continued through the fifth century until the mid-sixth century A.D. The villa was decorated with wall paintings during the first phase, and the remains of mosaic floors are further proof of the wealth of the villa owners. The mosaics in the fourth-century villa represented geometrical, floral and allegorical motifs (the Four Seasons). An apsidal construction, interpreted as a shrine by the archaeologists E. Spathare and M. Chatziote, was decorated

¹⁵⁰ *Id.*, *Oratio IV* (Hymn to King Helios), 135 D–136 A, 143 C–144 C, 149 B–150 A, 152 D, 153 B (Loeb ed. (1980), 368–369, 390–395, 406–411, 416–419; Wright (1980a), 351).

¹⁵¹ Wright (1980b), 440.

¹⁵² Marinus, *Vita Procli* 19 (ed. Masullo (1985)); transl. Rosán (1949), 24.

¹⁵³ As was suggested by Georges Fouet, see above.

¹⁵⁴ For the Omega House and its sculptural decoration, see: Shear (1973), 156–164; Thompson (1976), 148–150; Camp (1986), 202–211; Frantz (1988), 37–47; Camp (1989), 50–55, figs. 1–21.

¹⁵⁵ Alexandre (1969b), 50–53, plans 19–20, pls. 45–48; Michaud (1971), 819, 821, figs. 29–39.

¹⁵⁶ The preliminary excavation report by Spathare and Chatzare (1983), 23–25, plan 4.

with sculpture: three small marble statues,¹⁵⁷ two of Cybele and one of Hygieia, as well as two votive reliefs, representing Asclepius and Cybele, were found above the floor in the destruction fill dating from the late fourth or early fifth century A.D.

It is striking that there are so few pieces of profane sculpture among all these objects of art. Although we have evidence of sacrifices only from Building Chi, it is likely that the religious aspect of these works of art in the other houses was not forgotten.

These Late Roman houses provide a further piece of evidence of the wealth of the Athenian upper class from the fourth century until the sixth century A.D., as well as an indication of the religious interests of the prominent Athenian families. It seems quite possible that the apsidal structure of the villa in the north-eastern corner of the National Garden was a domestic shrine in the same sense as the shrine in the 'Court of Honour' in Montmaurin, and the small room with the decorated recess in Building Chi. There are, however, several possible instances of Late Roman domestic shrines: Dr. Henig suggested that it could have been more expedient for pagans in fourth-century Britain to use private rooms in their homes for religious cults than "to make offerings to the established temples which were under the risk of confiscations."¹⁵⁸

VII. Did Building Chi Include a Separate Bath Compartment?

It is a fact that Building Chi extended further south (fig. 11), and some trial pits made during the excavations of 1955 in the quarter to the south revealed remains of wall constructions and mosaics which most probably belong to the same villa.¹⁵⁹ In 1961 parts of Late Roman baths were brought to light in the corner of Dionysiou Areopagitou, Parthenonos and Kallisperes Streets, to the south-east of the documented northern part of Building Chi, and according to G. Dontas these baths could belong to the same villa.¹⁶⁰ The excavation uncovered parts of a private bath, a frigidarium with small water basins for individual use which became common at the end of the fourth century. In the south-eastern corner of the excavation area remains of a kitchen were found in the north-western corner of a Late Roman house. The oven and well-preserved kitchen utensils left in their place show that the house was abandoned in haste. A coin of Valentinian II (375–392) was found on the floor which provides evidence along with the pottery and oil lamps that the abandonment took place at the end of the fourth century. Furthermore, one part of the construction of the frigidarium, the south-eastern individual basin, was built around the year A.D. 400 partly on the remains of the western wall of the abandoned kitchen.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ For these statues found *in situ*, see the photograph published in press (*Nea* 12.3.1984).

¹⁵⁸ Henig (1984), 170, 219–220; Black (1986), 150.

¹⁵⁹ Meliades (1955), 47; Dontas (1961–1962a), 89.

¹⁶⁰ Dontas (1961–1962a), 83–95, pls. 30–36, 38–39; esp. p. 89, pl. 33. *Id.* (1961–1962b), 101–103, pl. 37.

¹⁶¹ *Id.* (1961–1962a), 89. The destruction of the Late Roman house at the end of the fourth century may be connected with the arrival of Alaric and the Visigoths in 396. The decisive fills connected with the destruction of Alaric, are in the Cerameicus (see Perlzweig (1961), 53, 63–64, and Frantz (1988), 26–28) and in the Agora (see Frantz (1988), 26, note 91, p. 52–56 for further discussion). Recent evidence for the sack of Alaric was found during the excavations in 1987 at Cerameicus (Catling (1987), 7–8; Rügler in Rügler and Knigge (1989), 87–90). The so-called Building Y had an abandonment horizon over a burnt destruction level. Pottery and especially a coin hoard put into the ground just after the destruction suggest a sack at the end of the 4th c. A.D. The hoard consisted of

Thus even the date of the baths coincides with the chronological evidence given to Building Chi.

VIII. Epilogue

Paavo Castrén has pointed out that there were extensive building activities in the whole area south of the Acropolis as a result of the sack by the Visigoths.¹⁶² One of these new constructions is a building found in the corner of Dionysiou Areopagitou and Makre Streets,¹⁶³ constructed in the ruins of an earlier Roman house that was decorated with wall paintings and mosaics. An apsidal structure opening toward the west was built in the area after the destruction of the Roman house at the end of the fourth century A.D. The history of this house extends until the early seventh century A.D., as coins of Heraclius were found inside the apse.

Alison Frantz proposed that large villas with mosaic floors and baths on the outskirts of the city, especially south of the Acropolis, could be attributed "to wealthy Athenians, perhaps of senatorial rank or with priestly connections or to high officials having a second residence away from the capital".¹⁶⁴ If we use this as an argument, even Building Chi could be included in the same group. And yet, the presently available evidence accords well with the literary description of the 'House of Proclus'. The archaeological material proves that certain rites must have been performed there. That Proclus and his Neoplatonic friends made offerings in a private house and not in established temples would seem to be quite suitable in the political situation of Athens in the fifth century when there were more of those who entered through the narthex than 'narthex-carriers' and even fewer 'true bacchants'.¹⁶⁵

100 coins of Valentinian, Honorius, Theodosius I and Arcadius, the latest of which was dated to the years A.D. 402–408.

¹⁶² Castrén (1991), 474–476.

¹⁶³ Zafeiropoulou (1983), 19–23, plan 3, pl. 19 α.

¹⁶⁴ Frantz (1988), 46.

¹⁶⁵ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 22 (ed. Masullo (1985)); Rosán (1949), 25, and note 16.