

# Rhetoric and the Architecture of Empire in the Athenian *Agora*

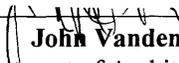
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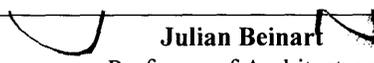
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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE  
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# **Rhetoric and the Architecture of Empire in the Athenian Agora**

by John Vandenberg Lewis

Submitted to the Department of Architecture  
May 12, 1995  
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## **Master of Science in Architecture Studies**

### **Abstract**

The various political regimes of ancient Athens established and legitimated their power through civic architecture and public rhetoric in the agora. A study of the parallel developments of architectural and rhetorical form, supported by previously published archaeological evidence and the well documented history of classical rhetoric, demonstrates that both served to propel democracy and, later, to euphemize the asymmetrical power structures of the Hellenistic and Roman empires. In addition, civic architecture and rhetoric worked in unison following analogous patterns of presentation in civic space. Civic imperial architecture in the agora may be thus understood to function as the stageset and legitimator of imperial political rhetoric in the agora.

Thesis Advisor: Julian Beinart, Professor of Architecture and Planning

**Table of Contents**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction                               | 5   |
| Words and Architecture                     | 10  |
| Rhetoric and the Architecture of the Agora | 20  |
| Pre-Classical Athens, 1450-500 BC          | 21  |
| Classical Athens, 500-404BC                | 35  |
| Late Classical Athens, 404-323 BC          | 98  |
| Hellenistic Athens, 322-31 BC              | 118 |
| Roman Athens, 86 BC- AD 267                | 131 |
| Conclusion                                 | 152 |
| Afterword                                  | 154 |
| Illustrations                              | 156 |
| Bibliography                               | 179 |

## **Introduction**

## **Introduction**

### **The Role of the Agora in Athenian Public Life.**

The agora of Athens was the central meeting place for the people of Athens, their marketplace, and the site of most of their civic buildings. As such it was the crucible for change and improvement in the arts and in the politics of the city that was the cradle of Western civilization. However, perhaps due to its multiple roles as political, commercial, and intellectual center of the ancient city, the agora reveals a difficult, if not unanswerable conundrum concerning the origins of Athenian democracy: we do not have sufficient evidence to determine which came first, the agora as an open space or democracy as speaking in public. What we do know is that in the agora there were interdependent and parallel developments in the two preeminent means of expressing political will and power: public rhetoric and civic architecture. The art of argumentation and speech, rhetoric, and the art of enclosing and legitimating public activity, architecture,

were intimately associated in Athenian public life. Rhetoric was not simply the explicit means of propaganda and dispute, it was an evolving art that served to encourage or discourage various regimes through bodily presentation and personal accountability *in public space*. Likewise, the agora was not simply the public space of the city, it was an accumulation of monuments and buildings designed to psychologically reinforce the permanence of current regimes and to stand as evidence for or against the contentions of *rhetoric*. We are therefore uninterested in determining which of the two came first, rhetoric or public space; their very interdependence suggests that one without the other is so altered as to become unrecognizable. The agora without rhetoric is a marketplace. Rhetoric without the agora is simple declamation.

Thus is established the tripod of Greek politics: the regime, its speaking participants, and the place for speech. All four regimes discussed in this paper can be characterized by particular, meaningful variations of the three constituent parts of governance. This paper will refer to archaeology, surviving literature, and related modern studies to elucidate the various parallel forms of rhetoric and civic architecture in the agora, always with reference to politics and governance. In chronological order the paper covers the following periods: pre-Classical tyranny, the democratic and Hellenistic periods, and the

Roman occupation to the Herulian sack of Athens in 267AD.

Pre-Classical Athens was a slowly evolving warren of houses surrounding the palace of the tyrant. The tyrant survived by military strength and a code of suspicion. In such a political climate uncensored speech was impossible, and public meetings except to receive the word of the tyrant by edict were impossible. The speech of pre-democratic Athens was of only three permissible varieties: the tradition of orality and poetry that served to perpetuate the mythology and folk traditions of the culture, the workaday talk of private and commercial life, and the edicts of the tyrant. Political speech was entirely in the mouth of the tyrant and his appointed archon. The rigid hierarchy of pre-Classical society was starkly evinced by the relationships established between people by speech and the architecture of the city. Men were either governed or the governor. The governed put their bodies into the architectural space of the palace, made temporarily public, in order to hear but not to speak.

The oral tradition of archaic Greece, long established as a highly sophisticated art form, may have contained the seeds of rhetoric, the art of arguing and speaking. The seeds were not to sprout, however, until the advent of uncensored speech among the members of the *polis*. Following the rise of the archon Solon in 594 the dominance of the

aristocracy was disrupted. Laws were written and read to the public; civic institutions consisting of representatives of the Athenian tribes were established. The resulting importance of literacy and public participation in politics led inevitably to the Classical form of the agora: public speech was possible only if there was space for it; the space was possible only if upheld by law and public institutions; and the institutions were the embodiment of public will as expressed in speech. The tripod was stable and we cannot safely postulate a first, pre-existing leg. The constitution of Solon, the agora as an open space surrounded by civic buildings, and the practice of public speech were instituted simultaneously. The *actual* acceptance of the constitution after millennia of oligarchy, the *actual* construction of the civic buildings, and the *actual* common practice of public speech by a people unused to participation were undoubtedly gradual; but the archaeological and historical evidence indicates that they were conceived simultaneously. They were, in fact, one body.

The beginnings of democracy were not without setbacks. The constitution of Solon was abolished by Pisistratos and a powerful aristocracy in 560, and the accompanying institutions of public speech and civic agora were shut down. The agora continued to function as a marketplace, but without uncensored speech until the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 508. The new,

purely democratic constitution remained in place as the foundation of government throughout the fifth century. Rhetoric and civic architecture in the agora were, from then on, the means of political presentation in Athens.

The agora was a sloping, tree-shaded floor surrounded by informal groupings of civic and commercial buildings. The Philosophers and their students sat in the stoas in small groups and practiced dialogue, a carefully constructed form of argumentation meant to find out the truth. Late in the century when there arose a need for a theater for meetings of the ever-growing *Ekklesia* one was constructed outside of the agora on the Pnyx, not for reasons of topography, but apparently to separate that hierarchical form of oratory from the democratic agora. Though archaic Homer could conceive of a city as a group of men without defensive walls or aggressive ships, the Classical understanding of the city of Athens was dependent on architecture: the *polis existed* because there was rhetoric in the agora.

Athens did not survive long as the capital of an empire. She suffered numerous military defeats at the end of the fifth century, emptied her treasury in efforts of war and diplomacy, suffered oligarchic revolts and Spartan occupation, and finally succumbed to the Macedonians in 323. By pleading a glorious past Athens won the favor of the Hellenistic monarchs and was allowed to

maintain the democratic constitution and local control of the magistracies and courts. The sanctity of the agora as the place of democracy, however, was spoiled. Foreign kings and patrons poured money into civic building projects that greatly aggrandized and beautified the agora but which established men over other men. The Athenians had resisted and prohibited monuments to individuals in the agora, and had specially avoided architectural arrangements that allowed *rhetors* to sway the crowd. They recognized the incompatibility of patronage and democracy, and feared that the axial, frontal architecture of the Hellenistic speakers' platforms and theaters would allow speakers to get undue influence over the *demos*. The agora of the Hellenistic era was a place of oratory where the Classical agora had been a place of dialogue. To make the new hierarchical form of rhetoric possible *bemae* were constructed where flat floors had been. Theaters accommodated foreign speakers who held forth to large crowds of spectators whose ability to participate and disagree was limited by the architecture. The appearance of Hellenic democracy remained fairly intact but the actual form of governance was insidiously misrepresented. Behind the apparently Hellenic civic architecture were private, aristocratic patrons, and behind the artfully composed speeches of the *rhetors* was a system of class distinction, oligarchy, and foreign political dominance. Rhetoric and architecture comprised the gilt,

two-edged sword of Macedon's campaign to euphemize the asymmetrical distribution of power in the Empire.

Later, during the occupation of Philhellene Rome, the Imperial tactics of Hellenistic Athens were perfected and continued. Rome continued the practice of private Imperial patronage, but with explicit Imperial aims. The Romans were well practiced in an architecture of persuasion: the Empire was established by urbanizing conquered populations and reminding them of the might of the Empire by constructing monuments designed to overawe. The scale of the Roman projects in Athens exceeded anything previously seen in the city. The Odeion of Agrippa, built in the middle of the agora in a symbolic gesture of *sub corona*, dominated the ancient city and established the political primacy of Rome. All visual axes into the agora were terminated with temples and other monumental structures. New speakers' platforms and theaters were built, and a new form of political oratory was performed. Foreign speakers, fluent in Greek and highly trained in the art of self-presentation, stood in front of and above the silent, non-participating crowds. The rhetoric was carefully and expressly designed to perpetuate class distinctions and to propagate the political ideals of the educated aristocracy. Form triumphed over content as Plato feared it would, and, therefore, rhetoric ceased to function as a tool of democracy; it became instead an *arrière-garde*, a

perpetrator of unequal society. It was certainly joined in this task by the architecture of the agora that served as such an impressive and legitimating backdrop for oratory.

Civic architecture and rhetoric in the agora, through many transformations of form and means of presentation, were the tools of politics in ancient Athens. They served democracy briefly but otherwise perpetuated inequality.

This is primarily a synthesis of generally accepted, though heretofore discrete, theories of archaeology, architecture, and the history of rhetoric and politics. I consider the conclusions my own, but am indebted to the carefulness of many whose work precedes my own. In particular, the compilers of the vast literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence of the Athenian agora, among them R.E. Wycherley, Homer A. Thompson, J.B. Ward-Perkins, John M. Camp, and John Travlos, have provided me with an elegantly researched foundation for this study. I have relied upon *The Oxford History of the Classical World* and other volumes of general political history for the background history that accompanies each chapter. For the history of public rhetoric I acknowledge A.N.W. Saunders, Maud Gleason, and Ian Worthington's collection of essays. I have been motivated by Hannah Arendt's and Richard Sennett's insightful readings of Greek public life. I am especially grateful to Professor Julian Beinart for his guidance and encouragement, and to Professors Michael Dennis, Lawrence Vale, and Stanford Anderson who have read and criticized the manuscript. I thank you.

**1.**

**Words and Architecture**

## Words and Architecture

“The *vita activa*, human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something, is always rooted in a world of men and of man-made things which it never leaves or altogether transcends. Things and men form the environment for each of man’s activities, which would be pointless without such location; yet this environment, the world into which we are born, would not exist without the human activity which produced it, as in the case of fabricated things; which takes care of it, as in the case of cultivated land; or which establishes its through organization, as in the case of the body politic. No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature’s wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings.”<sup>1</sup>

So writes Hannah Arendt as the introduction to her first essay in *The Human Condition*. She thereby establishes the central reason, or generative idea, of public architecture. The civic structure of any place of human habitation, and primarily of the city, attests to

the ‘presence of other human beings’. But what is the form of the ‘manmade things’, the architecture of the public realm that we can never leave or transcend? The ancient Athenians understood that the public realm of the city was simultaneously a product of the public condition of men and the shaper of that condition; the cause and the product of publicness. As such, the public space of a city can be understood as the crucible of culture, as opposed to nature; the place in which the accumulated accomplishments of mankind are probed, reconceived, questioned, even overturned. It is the place of words,<sup>2</sup> beyond which there is nothing conceivable.<sup>3</sup>

As the place of words, the structure and arrangement of the public realm in the classical world was a product of and generator of modes of verbal articulation. The manner and means of speaking, discussing, and, occasionally, writing, were evident in the architecture that accommodated speaking, discussion, and reading. That architecture, the agoras of Greece and the fora of the Roman Empire, had certain formal characteristics, the meanings of which are revealed in the light of a study of rhetoric, the art of public speaking. But, if tradition, religious

<sup>1</sup> Arendt, 1958, p.22

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a25 and 1178a6, Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249E-250D. I write here of the possibilities of political life, not individual life in which the limits of words and culture were believed to be transcendable through contemplation. In the *Phaedrus* Plato discusses the reality of the soul and its premortal knowledge of what he called the Ideas, the higher realities of which the things of the world are mere reflections. The Ideas cannot be perceived through the senses; only through contemplation and the correct use of dialogue.

symbolism, and aesthetic concerns likewise influenced the form of civic space in the classical world, why should we be concerned with a study of the influence of rhetoric on the form of civic space?

To answer that crucial question it is necessary to elucidate the Greek and Roman conceptions of the condition of publicness and the role of speech in the *polis* and republics/empires respectively.

This chapter is therefore concerned with establishing, in general terms, the interconnectedness of words and architecture in the Greek mind. To illustrate this fundamental conception reference is made to three very different pieces of modern scholarship supported by ancient quotes. This argument serves as an introduction to the more specific argument that is the crux of this research: that architecture and rhetoric were interdependent political tools in the Athenian agora. Once the fundamental interconnectedness of words and architecture is established, it will be impossible to see the parallel developments of architecture and rhetoric as mere coincidence. Architecture and rhetoric were not simply coetaneous institutions. They were two halves of the whole of the art of politics in the Athenian agora.

### ***Zoon Logon Ekhon: a Living Being Capable of Speech.***

One of the central objectives of Classical, Socratic philosophy was the definition of man. Following the Greek logical methods, attempts were made to define man by listing and describing the attributes and characteristics peculiar to him. Aristotle's conclusions regarding these distinctively human traits at once strengthen and represent the prevailing Greek notions concerning the human condition.

Aristotle limited his list of exclusively human activities to the following: *nous*, contemplation of the ideal; the pursuit of the 'good life' through purposeful action; and *logos*, or speech and reason as a means to discovering the order of nature. The primary characteristic of the fruits of contemplation was that they could not be rendered in words,<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, *nous* was necessarily removed from the political realm of the city. Action and speech, however, were fundamental to the political life of Athens. The agora was the place of action, the deeds that free men performed; and of speech, the process of subjecting ideas and the relationships between men to words. Free men, as opposed to slaves or pre-democratic men, stood in the agora and engaged in action and speech: these activities exceeded

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a25 and 1178a6.

the enslaved and domestic condition of barbarians and pre-democratic men, and were considered essential to the condition of individual men as members of the *polis*. In other words: people who did not engage in speech and action in public lacked two fundamental components of true humanity. They were mere animals, incapable of apprehending *logos*, though obviously not deprived of the faculty of speech and the ability to do work. Elemental to humanity, then, was public life.

The public condition of man as a speaking, heroic, individual presence in the public realm of the city changed over the periods covered by this paper. As the *polis* grew the significance of individual action decreased, and the preeminence of speech as the essential public attribute of man became firmly entrenched. Speech and action, equivalent in the minds of the early Greeks, began to separate as the Greek conception of violence as a means of political action was superseded by a belief in the superiority of persuasion. As Hannah Arendt explains:

“In the experience of the *polis*, which not without justification has been called the most talkative of the bodies politic, and even more in the political philosophy which sprang from it, action and speech separated and became more and more independent activities. The emphasis shifted from action to speech, and to speech as a means of persuasion rather than the specifically human way of answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done. To be political, to live in the *polis*, meant that

everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence. In Greek self-understanding, to force people by violence, to command rather than to persuade, were pre-political ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside the *polis*, of home and family life, where the household head ruled with uncontested, despotic powers, or of life in the barbarian empires of Asia, whose despotism was frequently likened to the organization of the household.”<sup>5</sup>

It is an examination of the evolution of speech and the parallel evolution of public architecture in the Athenian agora that illuminates the political history of the ancient city. The progress from conversation, described by Arendt as ‘answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened’, to rhetoric, the art of persuasion, matches the simultaneous progress from vernacular building without a truly public architecture to the elaborate architectural stage sets of the Roman Empire. In the midst of this long evolution was the *polis* of dialogue, of carefully constructed arguments that were the vehicle of democracy during the Golden Age of Athens and through the career of Plato. In addition to Arendt’s observation that ‘to force people by violence, to command rather than to persuade’ were tyrannical and pre-political methods of control, this study of rhetoric as a function of civic architecture and government reveals that the highly evolved, formal rhetoric of Hellenistic and Roman Athens was actually

<sup>5</sup> Arendt, p.26

post-political and tyrannical, though in the guise of democratic publicness.

The public condition of man as an ‘animal capable of speech’<sup>6</sup> existed in stark contrast to his private life, the life of the home in which ‘the household head ruled with uncontested, despotic powers’. ‘Despotic powers’ were those that inhibited speech, prevented the *vita activa*, and reduced man, and, more often, women, to the condition of laboring animals. The architecture of the pre-democratic city of Athens was a manifestation of tyranny; the city was an aggregation of private households around the ruling household of the tyrant. Information, in the form of edict, emanated from the house of the tyrant to the heads of the lesser houses, and from them to their families. There was no tradition of argument and no place to gather for discussion. Later, after the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes, the new institution of public speech was accompanied by an architectural setting that promoted and legitimated the equality of men that was the touchstone of democracy. That setting, however, was prone to subtle manipulation, as was the structure of rhetoric itself, and both were easily co-opted by the post-democratic regimes that occupied Athens after the 5th century. The imperial purposes of both Macedon and Rome were perpetuated in the agora as the form of

rhetoric evolved to embody the hierarchy and class distinctions of empire, and the new speakers’ platforms, theaters, and monuments of the agora gave credence to the speakers and their messages.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the interconnectedness of words and architecture was fundamental to Greek culture. Following are three compelling examples of modern scholarship that affirm the intimate interdependence of words and architecture in Greek thought. The relevance of these examples depends of the broadest purpose of rhetoric as the conscious construction of words into arguments and statements as the central tool of philosophy, and on the role of architecture as civic art and manual craft.

Indra Kagis McEwen,<sup>8</sup> referring to Plato’s declaration that Socrates’ ancestor was Daedalus, the mythical first architect, proposes that philosophy, centered on *logos*, order of and by words, was preceded by and rested upon architecture, the craft that inspired wonder and let the order of *kosmos* be seen. Her poetic reading of the Daedalus myth places Greek architecture at the roots of Western thought, not merely as a symbol of order and reason as has been previously postulated, but as a highly refined craft that revealed the *kosmos*, the true order, of the *polis*.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a25 and 1178a6.

<sup>7</sup> Gorgias, in his *Helen* (9-10), places great emphasis on the emotive power of the well-spoken word. In remarkably similar terms, E. J. Owens writes about the civic architecture of the Roman empire (p.140) and its ability to sway the ‘audience’.

<sup>8</sup> McEwen, pp.3-6

Her argument proceeds with a traditional reading of Homer's celebrated lines:

"Children are a man's crown, towers of a city; horses are the *kosmos* of a plain, and ships the *kosmos* of the sea; wealth will make a house great, and reverend princes seated in assembly (*ein agorei*) are *kosmos* for folk to see."<sup>9</sup>

from which she extracts the Greek concept of *kosmos* as the real nature and order of a thing revealed by another thing. The other thing, the object that reveals *kosmos*, is not necessarily symbolic of the thing itself, but, by its *eidōs*, its self-evident form, reveals the true nature of the thing. Thus horses, though not apparently similar to plains, reveal the nature of the plain by their *eidōs*; they are fast on a flat surface, they raise their heads to see the horizon, they eat grass. Likewise ships must exclude water in order to function, but even as they exist separate from the sea their form reveals the true nature of the water as fluid, moving, fatal. McEwen argues that the peripteral temples of Greece, given exterior colonnades simultaneous to the advent of the pre-Classical *polis*, reveal the true nature of the *polis* as a group of men, evenly spaced, working in unison.

Philosophers recognized that words were both the normal means to truth and the limitation of the truth that could be apprehended by speaking man. Even so, words were the fundamental carriers of meaning, and the study of the structure of the

universe, which was the primary purpose of Greek thought, was based on argumentation, questioning, structuring statements, and writing: arrangements of words all. The very mathematical theorems that were supposed by the Greeks to contain a purer truth than normally encountered in nature were communicated verbally. Therefore, at the conjunction of *kosmos* and the search for *kosmos* through words was architecture: it was the master craft in a culture that treated well-crafted objects as the embodiment of *kosmos*, the verbal articulation of which is *logos*. Well-crafted temples were the objects *par excellence* of Greek cultural production, and, in embodying *kosmos* so eloquently, they became the beginning of further searches for *kosmos* through other objects: ships, sculpture, cities. McEwen further elaborates this concept with a discussion of one characteristically Greek method of drawing *kosmos* out of the well-crafted object. She enters a lengthy discussion of the practice of binding, or fixing, moving objects to see them as they really are.<sup>10</sup> The true moving, divine nature of certain things is best revealed by binding or otherwise immobilizing them. The animated statues of Daedalus were bound in order to emphasize their ability to move. The immobilization of *kosmos* by the bindings of words is philosophy; the process of revealing truth by giving it verbal articulation. Out of this process of humanizing a truth that, by nature, far exceeds the normal human realm of

<sup>9</sup> Homer, *Epigram* 13

<sup>10</sup> McEwen, p. 5

understanding comes one of the fundamentals of Western thought: how can we understand the truth of the universe if we are limited in our pursuit of it by the culture-specific meanings of words? If our senses are too dull to perceive the Platonic ideal forms floating above the mouth of the cave, and if our words are poorly suited even to express the little that our senses perceive, then can we, as speaking animals, really *know*?

The Greek's could, in fact, glimpse and understand the *kosmos* before the beginnings of philosophy as a verbal exercise. The pre-Classical philosophers understood that words and craft objects must function together<sup>11</sup> to reveal the true nature of things. Thus Anaximander, the first to write philosophy in prose, did so only after completing a well-crafted model of his cosmology. The two together, prose (transcribed common speech) and model (an architectural object of fine craftsmanship) revealed truth in a way unforeseen in Greek history. Not only did the model nonverbally reveal *kosmos*, as craft objects had for centuries, but the accompanying prose bound the understanding of *kosmos* into culturally transmittable form by subjecting it to words. We may interpret this moment as the beginning of Western thought. Suddenly the Greek mind of poetic, subjective, non-linear thought was faced with the possibility of

objectivity and science, but only at the cost of limiting and confining the means of seeing true order. Speculations about the true order of the universe were opened to all intelligent speakers of words, but were simultaneously limited to the cultural means of communication. The truth was an elusive, running beast that could be studied only if bound by words, so that the *kosmos* of the beast could never be known, only approximated. To enter the realm of human comprehension the beast must, in effect, cease to exist in its natural form. Architecture was the means of binding truth before the emergence of words, or philosophy, as the means to comprehension. It was the foundation of verbal philosophy, and, at least until the eighteenth century,<sup>12</sup> words and architecture played mutually supportive roles as the engines of public life. More specifically, the practice of rhetoric within the architectural setting of the agora was the basis of political life in Classical Athens.

In the 5th century Athens saw the flowering of verbal philosophy. The goal of the Classical Athenians was to fix, or bind,<sup>13</sup> the entire universe with words. The truths that they sought most fervently were those associated with the life of the *polis* as a group of men living together; politics was the art of living as a community.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.72-75, see also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 981a30-b2

<sup>12</sup> This is McEwen's contention, and, like most of her book, is a drastic simplification of history.

<sup>13</sup> McEwen is using new words to describe a long-understood principle of Greek philosophy. Plato and Aristotle both spoke of the inability of words to communicate the whole truth, but were resigned to the idea that teaching required words. Socrates believed that man's reliance on words made the truth ultimately unknowable.

Accompanying the democratic rhetoric of the agora were the necessary craft-objects that revealed the *kosmos* of Athenian political life to the *demos*. These were the civic buildings of the agora, which, at their most communicative, embodied the ideal relationships between members of the *demos*: equitable, equal, participatory relationships. Though George Hersey does not write specifically of the civic architecture of Athens, his discussion of the meaning of temples reveals, as does McEwen's less traditional proposition, that architecture and words were always associated in the Greek mind.

In *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture* Hersey argues convincingly that the form of Greek temples was fundamentally based on a verbal system of trope,<sup>14</sup> in which the names of each part of the temple were associated through rhyme, common root, and other linguistic similarities to various performances of ritual sacrifice,<sup>15</sup> stories of heroes and gods from the mythology, and other events of cultural importance. The temples could be *read* in an almost literal sense.

Hersey's argument begins with an explanation of the use of trope to make poetic connections between things. Trope is the practice of linking things by naming

them with similar sounding words so that correlations, through pun and homonym, can be made where none obvious might otherwise exist.<sup>16</sup> Thus the Greeks could link the music of Orpheus to the imposition of law on barbarian peoples. Hersey writes:

"The myth about Orpheus. . . whose lyre charms beasts, actually records the moment when law was first introduced into the society that invented the myth... the words for law are derived from the words for tendons, that is, the sinews of the body politic. . . 'and that nerve, or cord, or force that formed Orpheus's lyre' became 'the union of the cords and powers of the fathers, whence derived public powers'. Vico is here building on tropes of *corda*, which means tendon or sinew, lyre string, and also the musical chords those strings sound when played. The musical harmony of Orpheus's lyre introduces social harmony, in turn, for the earliest laws were poems. . . which taught the Greeks about the deeds of their ancestors and the edicts of their gods. Thus law and morality were first conceived of as a body of ancestral edicts preserved in works of art. By the same token, the beasts Orpheus charmed are not real beasts but lawful mankind's barbarian ancestors, who lived before the first laws were chanted. Such is the analytic power of trope."<sup>17</sup>

With this and many other examples of the 'analytic power of trope' Hersey establishes the importance of wordplay as an essential device in Greek literature. More important to this study, however, is Hersey's well-supported contention that trope also

<sup>14</sup> Hersey, pp.1-10

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.11-36

<sup>16</sup> *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 237

<sup>17</sup> Hersey, p.5

operated in architectural ornament. Through a detailed investigation of the names for the decorative elements of the temples and the extended, tropologic meaning of those words in the larger context of sacrificial ritual, mythology, warfare, and politics, Hersey postulates that architecture was a record of sacrifice. To the Greeks the temples and their constituent details were cosmic shorthand. They revealed not only the *kosmos* of Greek religion, but the structure of the *demos*, the origin of art, and the origin of politics. The all-encompassing spectacle of Greek religion contained all the troped signs of democracy. The Panathenaic festival was troped by the Parthenon, and the order of the *polis* was revealed in the festival. The whole compact Greek cosmology was bound as a package and could be unraveled, or revealed, at any point, just as the dimensions of any one element of a temple could be derived from the dimensions and proportioning system of any other single element.

A reading of *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture* demonstrates the immediate validity of Hersey's claim, but also provides us with an opportunity to extend his claim to include the more general connectedness of language and architecture in the Greek mind. Trope existed in architecture because, as McEwen similarly states, the Greeks considered words and craft to be the two parts of the whole of the Greek effort to reveal and bind the true order of things. Just as Anaximander built a model of the

universe and then transcribed his verbal description of the model to accompany and complete the craft object, the Greeks in the time of Pericles built buildings and ornamented them with tropologic objects. Words and architecture, in tandem, were the engine of philosophy, the effort to find order.

Perhaps the most direct link between architecture and words in the Classical world was the so-called 'art of memory', a system for organizing and categorizing the contents of even very long and complex rhetorical pieces for public presentation before the advent of printing. Frances A. Yates, in her revolutionary essays "Three Latin Sources for the Classical Art of Memory," and "The Art of Memory in Greece: Memory and the Soul" gathers the ancient sources dealing with the methods of memory-aid of the ancient orators and discovers that rhetoric's relationship to the setting of architecture was far more than contextual; she reveals, in fact, that the very architecture of specific buildings served as a mental ordering device for the rhetorical presentations that occurred within that architecture. The *rhetor*, faced with the imposing task of communicating large amounts of detailed information without the aid of a written outline, pictures himself standing in the vestibule of a building facing the interior. In the hall he places, in the form of an appropriate symbol, his central argument or thesis; in the kitchen he places one subtopic, complete with specific examples of supporting evidence

placed on the table, the counter, the floor, and then proceeds to place the other subtopics in other rooms until the entire building is mentally populated with memory aids. Later, after this mental preparation, and during the discourse or argument in public, the building with its contents can be called to mind and the argument or thesis can be presented in fine detail, in any order that the situation demands, and without a word forgotten. The mental structure of rhetorical composition was architectural. Words were embodied by buildings, and the order of the building was the order of rhetoric.

The connection thus established between architecture and the cultivated mnemotechnics of the *rhetors* is direct and unbreakable. An easy logical extension of the theory enables us to equate the order of architecture with the order of rhetoric. Classical Greek building was a means of ordering the world *and* words. A simple, powerful political device is thus brought to light: architecture reveals the true order of the *polis* and monumentalizes the accomplishments thereof; rhetoric reveals the will of the *demos* and formalizes the public act of speaking; architecture orders rhetoric; the agora, the place of public speech and public building, is the place where the *polis* is ordered.

Yates does not establish interdependence between architecture and rhetoric, however, since her argument is primarily concerned

with the *exterior* (architectural) means of imposing order on the content of rhetoric, but not with the role of rhetoric as a means of ordering, or making sense of, architecture. So: in the preceding pages the fundamental interconnectedness of words, in general, and architecture, in general, has been established; but the more specific interdependence of the civic architecture of the agora and the form of rhetoric practiced in and around that architecture still needs illumination. The following chapters, which trace the actual parallel developments of the architecture of the agora and the rhetoric practiced therein, are dedicated to illuminating their interdependence.

On at least four levels the Greeks saw a fundamental coexistence of architecture and words. Architecture was the manmade environment that testified to the presence of other men and the place for the distinctively human activity of speech. Architecture and spoken or prose words formed a whole as a complementary manifestation of *kosmos*. Architecture was poetically linked, by way of trope, to ritual and myth; and architecture was the mnemonic tool capable of structuring and ordering words in rhetoric. That words and architecture were integral in the minds of the Greeks is abundantly evident. It is with this whole of words/architecture in mind that we can proceed to discuss in detail the congruence of the two in the Athenian agora.

**2.**

**Rhetoric and the**

**Architecture of the *Agora***

## **Rhetoric and the Architecture of the Agora**

The following chapter is a detailed examination of the parallel developments of rhetoric and civic architecture in the Athenian agora over the course of four political eras. Starting with a description of the modes of public speech and architecture in the pre-Classical period, before the Solonian democratic reforms, the essay will progress to the Classical, democratic city, and then to the Macedonian and Roman empires which dominated the city politically from approximately 400BC to the Herulian sack in 267 AD. The abundant archaeological and epigraphic evidence will be cited in detail next to references to the history of rhetoric and politics of the four eras. This synthesis of two histories, both already meticulously documented, will make no original claims about rhetoric and civic architecture as isolated phenomena, but purposes to reveal both in a new light through comparison and synthesis. In this sense the essay is not primarily concerned with the assembly of history; instead it is an attempt to illuminate the beginnings of

politics through an expansion of the context in which civic architecture is evaluated. The goal is to exceed the traditional formal, philological, even poetic and religious readings of the meaning of Athenian civic architecture. The new, expanded reading places architecture, *de facto* and not through metaphor, at the crux of politics.

Architecture and speech were integral, and were the two halves of a dynamic critique of life in the *polis* and under the empires.

If the stones of Athens can speak, as R. E. Wycherley has written,<sup>18</sup> they do so not only descriptively (as a backdrop to Athenian public life) and metaphorically (as symbols of the order of the *polis*), but intimately, from *within* politics. It is of architecture's intimate connection to political rhetoric that history and archaeology testify.

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<sup>18</sup> Wycherley, 1978, p.vii

## Pre-Classical Athens, 1450-500 BC

“When we are about to enter the polis (city) around which runs a lofty wall, a fair harbour lies on either side of the city and the entrance is narrow and curved ships are drawn up along the road, for they all have stations for their ships, each man one for himself. There, too, is their agora, place of assembly, about the fair temple of Poseidon, fitted with huge stones set deep in the earth. Here the men are busied with the tackle of their black ships with cables and sails, and here they shape the thin oar-blades . . . And as Odysseus went through the city . . . he marveled at the harbours and the stately ships, at the meeting-places where the heroes themselves gathered, and the walls, long and high and crowned with palisades, a wonder to behold.”<sup>19</sup>

This, the only remaining description of a city (*polis* or *asty*) to be found in Homeric poetry has been accepted as a description of a late-Mycenean or Ionian fortified settlement. It, along with the vague descriptions of Troy found in the *Iliad*, and the impressionistic images of Odysseus’ palaces in Ithaca, of Nestor in Pylos, of Menelaos in Sparta, and of Alkinoos in Phaeacia are all that remain of

the Mycenean cities in literature. The descriptions indicate that some details of the palaces of the Mycenean rulers were still remembered in the days of the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. However, to clarify the tenebrous descriptions of Homer it is necessary to turn to archaeology.

The limited archaeological remains of Mycenean Greece are consistent with the later Athenian tradition that, before the city, there were several kingdoms in Attica.<sup>20</sup> The 13th-century fortifications of the Acropolis of Athens are understood to date from the unification, through *sinoecism*,<sup>21</sup> of the surrounding villages into the city of Athens, mythically brought about by Theseus and celebrated annually thereafter. Whatever the distortions of myth, we know at least that some such union enabled the Athenians to resist the Dorian and Boeotian invasions of Attica. Athens also had sufficient momentum to remain a center of Mycenean tradition and launch the tremendously prosperous Ionian colonization after 1050.

Following the most common order of political development in Greece,<sup>22</sup> the tyranny of Athens was succeeded by oligarchy centered on the archonship. The archon was a member of the ruling aristocracy chosen to lead the city, especially in affairs of war and building. The

<sup>19</sup> *Odyssey*, VI, 260-269 and VII, 40-45.

<sup>20</sup> Murray, p.22

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle

<sup>22</sup> See Jeffrey for an easy, brief history of the pre-Classical era.

aristocracy built its power continuously in the early half of the first millennium by monopolizing public offices and by operating a system of sharecropping which allowed them to keep the common people under a yoke of debt and labor.

In 632 Cylon attempted to overthrow the oligarchy, but failed. Draco's code, an attempt, perhaps, to appease the rebels, left the oligarchy intact but began a tradition of writing and promulgating the law.

The first successful challenge to the authority of the aristocracy was by the archon Solon in 594. He liberated debt-slaves whether held on the land as sharecroppers or sold abroad. He laid the foundations, albeit rudimentary, of democracy by establishing limited economic freedom, by making the *Ekklesia* independent of the archons, by instituting the *Heliaea*<sup>23</sup> and making the magistracies responsible to the people. But he was unable to secure internal peace, and after many years of struggle the popular leader Pisistratos made himself tyrant (first in 561-550 and finally in c. 545). The tyranny lasted until 510, when his son Hippias was driven out. The 6th century was an era of remarkable development in Athens. Athenian trade dominated the eastern Mediterranean, Solon himself became the first Attic poet, and the tyrants, with generous patronage, attracted poets from elsewhere. Athens was becoming a cultural center. Material

prosperity greatly increased, in agriculture, manufacture, and trade. Many foreigners settled in Athens, and by 500 the population was already large, talented, and diverse.

Leading up to the prosperity of the 6th century was a series of developments that would fundamentally influence the Greek world for the next five hundred years. The league of colonies that resulted from the rapid colonization of Ionia with Athenian transplants disintegrated under the combined impact of the Lelantine war of 730 and the cultural divergence between the Athenians and the colonists. The newly independent colonies, usually under the leadership of adventurous or deposed members of the old oligarchy, became city-states, and took the essential administrative form by which they could still be recognized five hundred years later. Each large city, centered on a fortress of the oligarchy and surrounded by a loose network of tributary villages, was its own nation, though most of the Aegean spoke Greek and had similar religious practices. The Aegean was effectively a loose affiliation of states, constantly at war one with another, but frequently united by their common heritage to fight the 'barbarian'. The usual state of affairs in the Aegean, however, was strife between neighboring Greek city-states, which eventually prepared the largest of the urban populations for revolution: conscription, for centuries,

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<sup>23</sup> The *Heliaea* was the principal law court in Athens.

preyed upon the commoners as pawns in internecine warfare.

The most vivid and historically illuminating account of the transition from the Mycenaean fortified hill towns of the Early Helladic Aegean to the *poleis* of the later Greek city states is found in the work of Homer. The *Iliad*, especially, contains as a central theme the repeated attempt to understand and define the radical developments toward the city-state that were sweeping the Aegean in the 8th century. Though no detailed descriptions of the epic's major cities appear in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, an evaluation of the language used to characterize the cities and the accumulated partial descriptions of their physical and social character reveal a surprising undercurrent of cultural self-evaluation throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Homer's epithets, or adjectival phrases, and his partial descriptions of the cities of Troy and Scheria, reveal an 8th-century awareness of the emergence of new urban paradigms. In light of recent archaeological discoveries of Mycenaean and Greek Ionian towns and according to our historical understanding of the confusion surrounding the emergence of the city-state as the urban type that replaced the Mycenaean citadel-city, the *Iliad* can be read as a record of that emergence. Homer, though drawing on a continuous oral tradition that had its roots in Mycenaean civilization, was concerned with evaluating and understanding the new social order that reflected the

beginnings of the city-state. Accordingly, he constantly contrasts his descriptions of the citadel-city of Troy with his descriptions of the idealized *polis* of Scheria. Both cities are repeatedly called sacred, but they are crucially different. The differences were certainly poignant and meaningful to Homer's 8th century audiences in the Greek world.

Troy was described as a Mycenaean citadel-city. It was *euteikheos*, or 'well-walled', virtually impregnable atop a steep outcropping of rock, and centered on a fortified palace in which the aristocracy lived. It was removed from the water and could survive siege because there were springs behind the walls. It was typical of the Mycenaean cities of the day, and, if Troy were not an actual city, we could read Homer's descriptions and assume that he was metaphorically recalling Mycenaean Athens. All the physical elements of the two cities, handed down to the modern reader by literature and archaeology, are strikingly similar. But Stephen Scully, in his otherwise excellent evaluation of Homer's role in evaluating the 8th-century emergence of the city-state, states that Homer's inclusion of free-standing temples in his description of Troy is anachronistic. Peripteral temples, an invention of the late 8th century, were endemic to the new city states. They represented what Anthony Snodgrass has identified as one of the three fundamental elements of the *polis*: the institution of state

worship in state-built edifices.<sup>24</sup> Scully's error lies in his assumption that the Mycenaean city of Troy, a product of the beginnings of the oral tradition of Homer, already ancient in his day, could not be the site of peripteral temples of the 8th century. Archaeology refutes this claim: in 8th century Athens, where Homer had a willing audience, the Acropolis was still crowned with its Mycenaean citadel, perhaps in partial ruins, while the lower city contained crude peripteral temples. Thus Scully's application of the traditional critical reading of Homer as "an amalgam, or pastiche, of old and new, an essentialized, poetic creation,"<sup>25</sup> however correct in its application to literary forms, is not necessarily correct in its application to the physical city of Troy. Troy may well have been in the process of transition from oligarchic citadel-city to the more cosmopolitan paradigm of city-state. There may have been freestanding temples within the walls, near the already ancient palace.

Scheria, described in the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, represents the new paradigm completely. It has few of the physical characteristics of the older city of Troy. Troy sits on a steep outcropping removed from the sea for defensive purposes. Scheria lies on a low plane near the sea, with a port through which she trades with many foreign cities. Troy has an acropolis crowned by the citadel

and the city temples. Scheria has a city center with a group of freestanding temples.<sup>26</sup> Troy has been under siege for ten years, its people forced to huddle behind the city wall. Scheria is an idealized *polis*, far from the danger of war. These differences constitute a profound metaphor for the Greek urban world of the 8th century: the new paradigm is political and ideal; it has transcended the brutality, violence, and paranoia of the old order.

In addition to the constant violence of the Greek world, the increasingly cosmopolitan experiences of the Greeks added to their discontent. Greek ships traded the entire length of the Mediterranean and came into contact with civilizations that were to have a permanent impact on the Greeks' relatively provincial culture. In Egypt the Greeks learned architecture and record-keeping. In Phoenicia they learned trade and naval war. In Asia Minor they learned how to form military leagues between cities and an appreciation of the crafts and sculpture. In the 720s the Athenian Poet Hesiod complained of the narrow oligarchic society that didn't permit him to be a truly educated man of the world.<sup>27</sup> Just a few years before Homer had written as an insider, as a member of the aristocracy. Greek culture was inexorably shifting from an elitist oligarchy to a more inclusive standard allowing

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<sup>24</sup> Snodgrass, p.61 See also Scully, pp.81-99

<sup>25</sup> Scully, p.3

<sup>26</sup> *Odyssey*, VI.9-10

<sup>27</sup> Hesiod, 100

intimations of populism. This was the great opening of the Greek mind.

This opening was gradual and confused, and regularly stifled by the aristocracy.

Nonetheless, over the next century after Hesiod the opening crystallized into a rough system of constitutional agreements between the ruling aristocracy and the common people. In some cases there was still tyranny, and in others there was anarchy, but common to them all was, in the end, the achievement of some form of constitutional government based on city-states.

But the paths to constitutional government were diverse. In Sparta the lawgiver Lycurgus laid down the rules for a system of military training that propelled Sparta into the preeminent military position in Greece, thereby helping it maintain mastery over a large part of the Peloponnese, a huge slave (*helot*) population, and trade near the coast. Sparta was also able to gain a more insidious control over the rest of the peninsula by threat of military power. In the process of this gradual Spartan revolution of military techniques, the social structure of the city was also reformed, and a constitution was written to guarantee to all Spartans a limited amount of political equality, which, no matter how tyrannical it might have seemed to the later Greeks, actually surpassed the hopes of Hesiod. The rights granted to the *homoioi*, the landowners, of Sparta were

primarily concerned with voting and public speech. Though the rights were limited, and the speech was probably rare and heavily censored, at least the Spartans were groping toward politics.

In 657 in Corinth, Cypelus, a half-member of the aristocracy, took over as tyrant of the great city, and was able to appease the people by establishing some limited freedoms of public speech, probably modeled on the earlier Spartan trial. In Corinth, Sparta, and throughout the Aegean there was widespread talk of justice and freedom by the end of the seventh century. This growing perception of the insufficiency of the old rules in a rapidly expanding world, combined with the rise of the *hoplite* battle formation, in which large groups of citizens fought side by side whereas in the past they had merely backed single aristocratic warriors, fomented the demise of oligarchy.<sup>28</sup>

By 600 most Greeks were colonists. As such, most had recent family memories of confronting the prospect of establishing new cities. The questions of self-government, social organization, and city form that they must have confronted seriously, must have led to answers that exceeded the confines of the old system. Literacy spread quickly in the colonies. Most of them were positioned for maximum contact with other, non-Greek cities for trade. And the almost mythical legacy that sustained the aristocracy in the

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<sup>28</sup> See *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, pp.28-30

mother cities must have seemed pale and fragile when displaced to foreign lands.

Therefore, we can conclude that the relatively static oligarchic tradition of mainland Greece, with all of its accompanying fortress-centered cities, could not stand up to the expansionist, cosmopolitan attitudes of the late seventh century. The tradition ended decisively in Athens at the turn of the century with the career of Solon. In 594, in response to almost complete Athenian dissatisfaction with the recent oscillations between oligarchy and tyranny, Solon established the Areopagus to run the city. The Areopagus was a group of aristocrats beholden to the people by constitution. The first assignment of the new council was to abolish all debts between the landowners and the citizens in exchange for the right of the landowners to keep their property and their lives. The abolition of sharecropping, which had burdened the average Athenian with one sixth of his income, suddenly freed large sums of money for commerce, provided some meager leisure time for the laboring populace, and angered the aristocracy sufficiently that there was quickly a revolt and a return to tyranny under Pisistratos in 546. The tyranny did not end until his son was evicted from the city fifty years later to be replaced by an old-fashioned oligarchy. The audience had changed, however, and the oligarchy could not last.

Though the area of the Classical city of Athens had been inhabited continuously from the Stone Age, much of its history was as a loose aggregation of small houses. The form of the settlement can only be approximated based on the archaeological remains of other, better-preserved Stone Age and early Helladic settlements in the area, and not from direct evidence. All we know is that the early settlement was not urban, had only temporary fortifications, if any, and that it was centered on the Acropolis at the crossroads of Attica. The urban history of Athens began in the Helladic Age, when a tyrant apparently rose to a position of providing defense for the occupants of Athens in exchange for a share of agricultural production. Eventually an elaborate, maze-like palace was constructed, and was surrounded by a warren of private houses in every direction. Due to subsequent development the only substantial remains are the massive defensive wall, its two gates, and traces of the palace (*figure 1*). Most of the development was on the top of the Acropolis, though there are some remains of Mycenaean houses on the slopes. The existence of the city can be attributed to at least two factors: first, steady agriculture, and, second, the need for defense from invading foreign tribes, most notably the iron-equipped invaders from the North who attacked but could not overcome Athens. Indeed, Athens was the only major Mycenaean city to survive the invasions, and her citizens forever after attributed their supposed racial superiority in

Attica to the unbroken line of descent traceable to the almost-mythic Mycenaean civilization.<sup>29</sup>

To deduce the architectural form of the archaic, Bronze Age city we must turn to fresher archaeological sites of Helladic, Minoan, and Mycenaean civilization. Two that shared Athens' status as important, urban, fortified centers were Gournia and Tiryns.

The Minoan city of Gournia (*figure 2*), which was actively trading with the Greeks throughout the Helladic period, was typical of the settlement patterns of the Minoan and many other civilizations around the Aegean, and had many characteristics in common with Athens. The city consisted of a central palace surrounded by a dense residential area. Despite its inconvenience to water and agricultural land, Gournia sat upon a high, defensible rock outcropping. The organizational pattern of the city indicates the social arrangements that prevailed during its construction. The central palace, home of the oligarchs, was the only building to merit architectural treatment. It was large and imposing and could be seen from throughout the city, thus establishing the dominance of the aristocracy. It also surrounded the only open meeting place in the city. The central courtyard may have been periodically opened to the public, but even those rare occasions must have been closely

chaperoned. In the regional praxis of the Mediterranean the Minoan palace held the position of temple, and the aristocracy must have been accorded many of the privileges of godhood. The architecture of the city perpetuated the rule of its patrons both by the symbolic preeminence afforded the oligarchy by the design of the palace, and by the tight control of public space. The people were kept down by an inflexible and inherently hierarchical architectural tradition that inhibited political speech.

The excavations of the Mycenaean citadel-city of Tiryns (*figure 3*), completed in the 1920s, especially illuminate the form and organization of Mycenaean Athens. A fortified palace sits upon a hill, surrounded by a dense labyrinth of residences and a massive outer wall. The courtyard of the palace was the only open space large enough for complete assemblies of the people of the town, and might have served additionally as the market, though there is no direct evidence to support the claim. The courtyard, essentially a geometric peristyle within the residential irregularity of the city complex, might be considered an early agora, both in function and in form. As a conceptual diagram, the citadel-city of Tiryns educes the later Classical city of Athens with its relatively regular and ordered agora in the heart of the city. Even the continuation of the tradition of a surrounding colonnade leads us to deduce the Mycenaean beginnings of the

<sup>29</sup> Hill, pp.8-31

Hippodamean and Hellenistic agoras that postdate Tiryns by almost a millennium.

Pirates and other invaders attacked frequently, and, by the Dark Ages of Greece, had become so powerful that even important cities like Gournia and Tiryns were reduced to the lowest levels of material subsistence and cultural production. Both cities were eventually overrun and destroyed by the invading Dorians.

The extremely limited prehistoric archaeological remains uncovered in Athens (*figure 1*) disclose its essentially Late Helladic character. Like Gournia and Tiryns, Athens was an essentially tyrannical city, with a warren of private houses surrounding the central palace, all enclosed by an uneven defensive wall. The city was confined entirely to the top of the Acropolis until the Mycenaean, or Late Helladic, period. However, as the threat of invasion decreased after the 10th century Athens began to spread onto the surrounding plain, especially toward the site of the later Classical agora.<sup>30</sup> The agora was a sacred site from the beginning of these expansions. Most of the remaining Mycenaean tombs excavated in Athens have been found in the agora, as have a number of shrines and other repositories of sacred

relics.<sup>31</sup> The role of the open space was not public, however. In fact, political life, in which men might converse freely in relatively uncontrolled space, did not yet exist and would not for many centuries. Mycenaean Athens was oligarchic and tyrannical. The people and the tyrant lived side by side under an unwritten code of cooperation by which the people shared their crops and other wealth with the tyrant in exchange for military protection, festivals, and other disbursements of aid and entertainment. The city probably congregated rarely, and the meetings were hardly democratic: the tyrant, in a time of disaster or celebration, probably called his subjects to the courtyard of the palace and spoke to them through proclamation and edict.<sup>32</sup> It seems unlikely that there was any discussion or other participation by the common people. Society was rigidly hierarchical, as evidenced by the architecture and the oligarchic political tradition handed down throughout the archaic period. The palace probably had only minor architectural embellishment, and the houses of the people were at best crude.<sup>33</sup> There was no understanding of urban planning except as topography dictated, and, when compared to contemporary cultures in the Mediterranean, there was even surprisingly little religious

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<sup>30</sup> Travlos, pp.52-53

<sup>31</sup> Hill, figures 3 and 5

<sup>32</sup> This political, as opposed to physical, *synoikismo*, (as attributed to Theseus at Athens), required the hierarchical power arrangements I have described. I am drawing conclusions where there is very little data. The arrangements of Mycenaean cities, the oral tradition that may have been continuous from the Myceneans to the Greeks, and the political tradition of oligarchy all seem to indicate the tyrannical government I am describing.

<sup>33</sup> Rider, p.26

architecture apart from the tombs of the burial cult. Nonetheless, Classical Athens would be unique in its relationship to the achievements of its ancestors: whereas all other Mycenaean cities were destroyed by the invading Dorians, Athens was never destroyed. The later Classical Athenians lived amidst the gradually decaying ruins of the Mycenaean city.<sup>34</sup> Athens grew up out of the Mycenaean ruins and therefore had a close architectural link to the Bronze Age heritage. The seventh century development of the stoa<sup>35</sup> and peripteral temple, with their rhythmic rows of columns and decorated capitals, was undoubtedly derived in part from the Mycenaean remnants on the Acropolis. This architectural inheritance contributed directly to the classical refinements of the civic architecture of the agora, the place of democratic meeting, despite its purely aristocratic genealogy. Aristotle must have had this lineage in mind when he wrote in his *Politics* "A citadel, or acropolis, is suitable to oligarchy and one-man rule; level ground to democracy."<sup>36</sup> Certainly he spoke of both the spatial and the political shifts that occurred between the

Mycenaean citadel and the later democratic agora on the plains.

There was undoubtedly a marketplace in the archaic city.<sup>37</sup> Its form was consistent with its exclusively pragmatic purposes: it was probably no more than a widened street<sup>38</sup> where booths could be set up and people could congregate to transact business under the auspices of the oligarchy. A fraction of every transaction went into the coffers of the palace, so supervision, and even spying, were probably common in the marketplace.<sup>39</sup> In such an environment the tyrant was unassailable. There was little opportunity, precedent, or even inclination, to criticize the ruler, especially in the open space of the market. Discussion occurred in the private space of the houses or not at all. Rule was by coercion, not by persuasion.

Even so, a rich oral tradition of poetry, myth, and allegorical promulgation of the law slowly evolved during the archaic period. It is indicative of the rigidity of society, however, that the most celebrated poetry of the era, Homer's epics, were concerned with aristocrats.<sup>40</sup> Achilles and the other heroes

<sup>34</sup> Vallet and Villard, p.20

<sup>35</sup> Coulton, chapter 1. I write here of the development of the stoa as a multipurpose structure. It had long existed, perhaps since Minoan times, as a formal type, though its use before the 7th century was probably religious only. See also: Dinsmoor, *The Architecture of Ancient Greece*, p.8 ("We have abundant literary and monumental evidence that the Greek temple, if not the lineal descendant of the Mycenaean palace, at least had an ancestry in common.") and Ward-Perkins, *Cities of Ancient Greece and Italy*, p.10, where the importance of distinguishing between the borrowed building types and the urban types, which were not borrowed, is emphasized. Athens' architecture may well have had prehistoric precedents, but its civic form in Classical times was entirely new.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 1330b

<sup>37</sup> Travlos, p.52

<sup>38</sup> Ward-Perkins, 1974, pp.10 and 45

<sup>39</sup> Forrest, p.16

were the vanguards of military *phratries*, in which aristocrats fought one-on-one with enemy aristocrats and enlisted their people as support. In the Archaic Greek mind, action and victory, even accomplishment at its most basic, were the sole domain of the aristocratic, or noble, life. The common people were laboring animals without hopes or expressible opinions.

Thus we are confronted with the difficult task of choosing the vocabulary with which to discuss archaic Greece. The nature of the relationships between men in the city preclude the later Greek use of the word *politics*, which depends on individual action and public speech for its very existence. As a result, the words *dialogue*, *rhetoric*, and even *discussion* are likewise unavailable to us as we discuss the archaic city. Greek culture, even in the most cosmopolitan cities with extensive contact with other cultures, was pre-political. Perhaps our modern inability to apprehend the reality of pre-political culture, with all its accompanying limitations on speech, assembly, meaningful action, and individuality, requires the following analogical rendering of life in the pre-political city of Athens. The analogy reveals the parallel conditions of life under tyranny and domestic life.

We can, through induction from the well-documented domestic life of democratic Athens, know a great deal about life in the pre-political city. As Hannah Arendt makes clear, the Classical Athenians lived in a city of two discrete realms: the public, political realm, and the private realm of the household. They understood the political realm as existing in stark contrast to the private. In the public space of 5th Athens men were permitted to act and speak, and the machinery of government ran on debate and the power of individuals to make significant achievements. The governing principle was that no man should exceed the bounds of persuasion in attempting to influence policy. In the domestic sphere, however, men ruled their families by coercion and dictate. The two realms existed side by side and each revealed, by contrast, the true nature of the other.

The Classical Greeks considered the pre-Classical city to be like the household, in which the head of the family ruled with uncontested, despotic powers. But the differences between the democratic realm of politics and the despotic realm of the household did not end there. The public realm was actually understood to transcend

<sup>40</sup> It is noteworthy that one of Protagoras' criticisms of Homer, in which the opening sentence of the *Iliad* is considered incorrect because it is in *command* form instead of the more democratic *request*, reflects the evolution of the role of speech from pre-Classical to democratic times. Homer spoke as an aristocrat, about aristocrats, to mixed audiences. The tradition of orality that Homer perpetuated assumed a certain hierarchical relationship between poet and audience, whereas the democratic tradition of dialogue and the even later tradition of rhetoric had to maintain at least the appearance of equality between speaker and audience. Not until the late Roman empire did Athens again see speakers overtly *command* the people in the agora. See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1456b15 and Gagarin, Michael, "Probability and Persuasion: Plato and Early Greek Rhetoric," in Worthington, pp.46-47

the workaday life of survival, whereas the home was merely the result of the unions formed between people to live physically and temporally. Families lived together in private because they were driven by wants and needs. Domestic life was the product of appetites that were considered distinctively mortal and human. Hannah Arendt even suggests that individual maintenance was “the task of man and species survival the task of the woman. . . .” And:

“Natural community in the household therefore was born of necessity, and necessity ruled over all activities performed in it.”<sup>41</sup>

In contradistinction to the life of the household was the life of the *polis*.<sup>42</sup> Though the life of the household was the historical prerequisite for the transcendent life of the *polis*, once established the domestic and public spheres were so fundamentally contraposed as to obscure their common lineage. It was this complete conceptual separation of public and private that we must regard as foreign to modern life. Our modern republics are concerned with what many social economists have termed ‘housekeeping’, or securing the temporal welfare of the ‘children’ of the state. These housekeeping activities would have been entirely out of place in the Greek political realm, just as issues of public policy were foreign to the home.

Thus we can work backwards from the well-documented Classical conception of the household to a general understanding of the pre-political life of the archaic city. In brief: the archaic city was, by analogy to the household, a family at whose head sat the tyrant, or the aristocracy, and whose concerns were primarily housekeeping. The affairs of the city were concerned with necessity and survival, and there was no *polis* because there was no transcendent realm in which to exceed the mundane tasks of eating, reproducing, and making war.

We have previously noted that the condition of tyranny is the *uncontested, despotic* power of the ruler. It is important to elaborate on these two conditions. First, uncontested power: just as the audiences of the poets were passive observers and the members of a household were not free to challenge the dictates of the head of the house, the people in the archaic city were silent. They had no opportunity to speak except in normal conversation. They were the passive recipients of instruction with an obligation to obey. The edicts of the tyranny were uncontested because there was no institution of speech and discussion. And, since he was uncontested, the tyrant was also unaccountable for his words and actions. This structure, based on the imposition of will by one person on many others who were deprived of agency, was necessarily static, and truly remarkable circumstances were

<sup>41</sup> Arendt, p.30.

<sup>42</sup> Plato, *Politics*, 1333a30, 1332b32, and the first paragraphs of Aristotle’s *Economics*.

required to upset the structure. These will be discussed at the beginning of the next section.

Second, despotic powers: the power of the tyrant over the people was secured by his ability to do violence to dissenters. Not only could the ruler refuse verbal contest from his people, as above, but he maintained their silence by coercion. The individual lives of the people were less valuable than the stability of the hierarchy.

“The uncontested, despotic power of the tyrants was so complete for so long that the later philosophers, no matter how individually opposed to *polis* life, based their very methods of the assumption that freedom was located exclusively in the political realm, that necessity is primarily a pre-political phenomenon, characteristic of the private household organization, and that force and violence are justified in the sphere because they are the only means to master necessity. . . and to become free.”<sup>43</sup>

In pre-political Athens violence was the only liberating act. It was the only means to achieve freedom, which was the essential precondition for the felicity of wealth and health, which the Greeks termed *eudaimonia*. To the Greeks anything less was worse than death. In his discussion with Eutherus in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*,<sup>44</sup> Socrates is confronted with this attitude. Eutherus, by necessity, is a laborer and is sure that the effects of the toil will destroy his body and reduce him to begging before long. Socrates suggests that he find employment as a slave,

but in a good house where he will not be abused. Eutherus responds that he could not bear servitude, and that he would rather labor. Both toilsome labor and begging were better than servitude, even under the best master. The view from the democratic era back into Athens’ pre-political history was of an entire people reduced to subhuman conditions of servitude; conditions that even the lowest Athenian laborers of the Classical era found repugnant and dehumanizing.

A common theme in the histories of the classical world is the correlation between the economic circumstances that allowed leisure and the subsequent emergence of political life.

The beginnings of democratic ideas, marked by Solon’s code of laws, made it necessary to write laws and defend them in court. The accompanying need for literacy and the inevitable study of forensic oratory were the first examples of studied rhetoric, but the art of public speech was in its infancy and very few were literate. The literature of Athens and the democratic tradition were still perpetuated mainly by oral tradition.

Nonetheless, the architecture of Athens was already evolving rapidly to accommodate the new requirements of public life, even if politics was still dominated by the aristocracy. The earliest civic buildings in the agora were excavated twenty-five years ago

<sup>43</sup> Arendt, p.31

<sup>44</sup> *Memorabilia*, II.8

near the southwest corner of the agora. These were constructed approximately during the archonship of Solon, though precise dating, due to an almost complete lack of literary and epigraphic material from the period, is impossible. There is little doubt that the buildings served civic functions and that they were considered part of the open space of the agora.<sup>45</sup> They may be considered the first architectural formalization of the civic activities of the agora, and, as such, indicate the growing importance of democratic politics during the 6th century. The first new buildings were the Archeia, or offices of the archon, (*figure 9*) and were probably occupied by Solon himself, and later by Pisistratos the tyrant and then the democratic reformer Cleisthenes. Though irregular in plan, as was characteristic of archaic Athens, they were buildings certainly substantial for their time, and seem to form a planned, coherent scheme. They occupy the site of the later, democratic Tholos, Metroon, and Bouleuterion, which, despite obvious formal differences, reveal a certain continuity from the archaic to the democratic period. There is little doubt about the general function of the buildings as the offices of the archon, but more specific interpretations of their function remain elusive; our knowledge of the workings of the 6th century constitution are minimal. At least we can interpret the buildings as the first of their kind and the impetus for later civic building in the agora. The councils might have sat in the open

courtyard, (*figure 9*), which leads us to the obvious, but heretofore not made, comparison between the architecture of the Archeia and that of the Mycenaean citadel of the Acropolis that was undoubtedly a part of the building tradition of the Athenians. Both buildings were irregular in plan but presented a monumental front to the city, and, more significantly, both had as their nuclei large open courts surrounded by columns. There is no surviving evidence of the political intentions of the builders of the Archeia except the ruins, which are strikingly similar to the ancient stronghold of the aristocracy. Perhaps Solon's Council of Four Hundred, sitting in the Archeia in quorum, had consciously chosen the ancient architecture of their nearly legendary Mycenaean forbears to legitimate their tenuous claim to power. Any Athenian with a knowledge of that earlier and glorious tradition, if brought before the council, would surely associate the power of past kings with the new accommodations of the council.

The Archeia was insufficient for meetings involving all of the Four Hundred, however, so it is not surprising that adjacent to the Archeia a probable setting for large outdoor meetings has been found. Just to the northwest of the Archeia a semicircular cut was made in the rock of the Kolonos hill. The date of the cut is uncertain, but surely it preceded the construction of the Old Bouleuterion in the early 5th century. It is

<sup>45</sup> The Archeia has been recently discovered to lie within the boundaries of the archaic agora as delimited by the boundary stones discussed in Thompson and Wycherley, p.117

safe to assume that the *Boule* met in this rough theater on wooden seats arranged in a semicircle, with the audience facing the agora. Though the remains of these ancient structures are minimal and badly damaged, they are hardly mute. They evince the struggles of early democracy in a city with a long history of oligarchic rule.

At the end of the 6th century, perhaps seventy-five years after the construction of the Archeia and the theater, the Council of Five Hundred was established by Cleisthenes. The new council was to be the principal instrument of democratic government to represent the revolutionary end of the old aristocratic council. As such it needed worthy accommodation. The Council's new Bouleuterion and Metroon as representations of the new democratic order will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

## **Classical Athens, 500-404 BC**

In the previous section we noted that ideas of freedom stemmed from the cosmopolitan trade culture and repression in the 8th century and were articulated by Hesiod over 120 years before the reforms of Solon. Despite the staying power of early democratic ideas they were not actually translated into fact until the reforms of Solon in 594, but then only briefly. Solon's reforms were quickly reversed by an oligarchic counter-revolution in 545 led by the popular leader Pisistratos. He was followed by his son Hippias whose tyranny lasted until 510, when he was driven out of Athens. An attempt by the aristocrats to gain control after the expulsion of Hippias failed, and the way was opened for lasting democratic reforms.

In 510, Cleisthenes, the head of a noble house that had supported Solon, sensed the reality of the new Athenian hunger for democracy sooner than his rivals, and, in Herodotus' words "added the people to his faction, the people who had previously been ignored, now by offering them a share of everything. . ."<sup>46</sup> Even though Cleisthenes' motives appear to have been selfishly interested in securing his own political future, the changes he instituted served as a model for Athenian democracy for the next 200 years.

The underpinning of the new system was the recognition of small local units, previously weak tributaries to the large cities, as independent from the central aristocracy. Each local unit chose its own mayor and council, and was thereafter self-administered. For larger, state issues, as in times of war or constitutional crisis, the *demes* were grouped into geographical districts which were in turn divided into ten new tribes. The army, the modified Solonian council, and parts of the central administration were based upon the tribes. Fifty members of each tribe were chosen to serve on the newly revamped Council of Five Hundred, described by A.H.M. Jones as "the coordinating body which held the administrative machine together."<sup>47</sup>

The system was designed to allow individual Athenians, even those from rural villages, to act politically according to their own confidence; and, at the same time, to act as member of the state to develop the sense of nationality which was crucial to survival. Cleisthenes avoided tampering with existing cults, social groups, and patterns of land ownership. He simply acted at the right moment, in accordance with the prevailing attitude, and in time to avoid trouble. He created a new political structure, gave it the authority to act by basing it on an inviolate constitution, and allowed the offices of

<sup>46</sup> I cannot find the source for this quote. It appears without reference in *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.35

<sup>47</sup> Jones, p.105

power to be filled with relative equity.<sup>48</sup> This was the beginning of democracy, though a few sweeping international events were yet to transpire that would establish democracy as the way of life throughout the so-called Classical Age of Athens.

Athens' new active foreign policy was at first checked by an unsuccessful intervention in 498 in the Ionian revolt and soon by the attention of the looming Persian Empire to the east. The inevitable war with Persia had been fermenting for over 50 years, during which the Ionian cities had resisted Persian assimilation and had formed a Greek league with Sparta at its head. In Miletos the Persian-installed governor was deposed by the people, who were consequently brutalized by an overwhelming Persian army. The result was a panhellenic fit of patriotism in which most cities were able to overthrow their tyrants. The consequent euphoria motivated the first large-scale interstate cooperation among the Greeks, who united against Persia, but without the military support of Sparta.

As punishment Persia sent an immense army to Marathon where the small Athenian army, virtually unaided, was victorious. There were at least three lasting effects of the astounding victory. First: the Athenians began what would eventually be a long tradition of justifying military actions and ruthless domination of their conquered foes with

appeals to their supposed racial and national superiority. Second: they established their military superiority, even though many of their opponents outnumbered them. Lastly, and perhaps of most consequence, the Athenian people found the political confidence to use the constitution of Cleisthenes to its fullest. They invoked ostracism which effectively ended the prospect of non-military aided tyranny.

In 482 silver was discovered at Laurium and was used to build a new fleet of 200 maneuverable, fast warships, which proved crucial in the second Persian attack in 480. Persia returned with even larger armies and a huge navy, but was again soundly defeated by the Athenians. This time they limped home without their fleet. Athens and the rest of the Mediterranean world recognized the technical superiority of the Athenian war machine: fast and effective triremes at sea, and apparently invincible hoplites on land.

The immense military and moral effort of Athens in the two Persian wars established her position as the most energetic and enterprising State in Greece; a fact, however, which soon drew her into rivalry with Sparta, still the accepted Greek leader. Sparta's refusal to champion the mainland Ionian states which revolted from Persia in 479 gave Athens a chance. In 477 the Delian League was founded, comprising most of the Aegean islands and the Greek cities of the Asiatic

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<sup>48</sup> These events, and those that follow are presented here in deceptive simplicity. Hornblower and others provide clear, easy summaries of the political history of the Classical era.

and Thracian coasts. The war with Persia was successfully continued until Cimon's victory at the Eurymedon in c. 467. Athens had a severe setback when she supported an Egyptian revolt against Persia (459-454); but by the peace of 448 Persia practically recognized the Athenian Empire, agreeing not to send her fleet west of Phaselis and of the Bosporous, nor her army nearer than three days' march of the Ionian cities.

Before this, war had broken out with the Peloponnesians, in which Athens lost the battle of Tanagra in 457, but won the campaign, conquering Boeotia and winning over Phocis, and gaining victories over Corinth and Aegina. Meanwhile she had reduced to submission a few seceding states in the League; she now strengthened her position by improving her fleet, by cleruchies and garrisons, by a better organization of the tribute, by supporting democracies against oligarchies, and by encouraging the states to look upon herself as the capital of Greece. The League had become an Athenian Empire. Hostilities with Sparta ended in 446 with the signing of the Peace of Callias.

The victory at Marathon against the largest empire in the world and the likelihood of Persian retaliation united Greece briefly with Athens at its head, a position that Sparta refused to recognize. Athens was threatened by Spartan invasion three times during the fifth century, and was saved each time by

Spartan reluctance. Sparta's weakness at home, where the large *helot* population constantly rebelled, distracted her from the military campaigns that might have guaranteed a powerful Spartan empire in the Aegean. The *helots*, unlike the slave population of Athens, all spoke the same language, had the same genealogy, had frequent contact as a group, were brutally oppressed, and were heavily armed. These conditions required the constant attention of the Spartan army. Without the opposition of their strongest neighbor the Athenian accomplishments in the 5th century went virtually unimpeded.

Corinth also had a powerful army, but developed it at the cost of cultural and political development. Corinth remained a 6th-century city during the flowering of Athens and had little to offer the rest of Greece.

The other Greek powers, most notably Thessaly, Argos, and Thebes, had sided with the Persians. The heavy-handed invaders quickly became very unpopular in Greece, as did the powers which had sided with them.

Thus Athens, by her own enterprise and energy, and through the misfortunes and blunders of the other Greek powers, rose to the head of Greece. As the empire grew, however, Athens was found guilty of many of the missteps of her neighbors. The empire was frequently disrupted by rebellion and the

Athenian army spent more and more of its resources on maintenance and enforcement as the 5th century progressed. We can identify seven significant aspects of Athenian manipulation of her protectorates, and perhaps glimpse the massive inconsistencies of the gentle, equitable democracy's tyrannical hold over her protectorates. The army enforced the following Athenian interventions in the governance of her tributary states: taxation and requirement of other economic tribute, military maintenance of trade routes and hair-trigger garrisons near most tributary cities, persecution of anti-Athenian elements in the law courts, exportation of religious propaganda as an assertion of Athenian superiority, redistribution of acquired territory to the Athenian poor, restrictions of citizenship that favored Athenians, and the political support of oligarchies. Through these and many other forms of economic, military, judicial, religious, territorial, social, and political interference Athens quickly became as unpopular as Persia. Athens was easily accused of hypocrisy as she flourished as a democracy while the rest of the Empire languished under her paradoxically tyrannical foreign policy.

It was no surprise that in 431 Sparta agreed with Corinth, her old ally from the Peloponnesian Wars to "liberate Greece from Athenian oppression." Most of Greece sided with the new Spartan League.

In 430 Athens invaded Corinthian territory in search of lumber with which to maintain the fleet. This precipitated the second Peloponnesian War which lasted until 404 with the defeat of Athens. Through mismanagement and unnecessary ruthlessness the Athenians lost their empire. It had never been great, and had survived only under threat of military retaliation for rebellion. It is ironic that Athens was engaged in such despotic foreign policies while at home she prospered as a democratic city. The revenues of the empire funded the great achievements of art, literature, and architecture for which Athens is still revered. Perhaps the *Oedipus* plays of Sophocles, written during the decline of the poorly managed and tragic Empire, were allegories of the rule of Athens. However clumsy the administration of the empire the real accomplishments of the Classical Athenians were artistic, political, and academic.

But it was the military history of Athens that made her the cultural center of Greece. There were at least five culturally beneficial results of war during the Classical period. First, the presence of Persia in Ionia during the Persian wars made those wealthy city-states the target of early and unmitigated aggression from Persia. As a result many of the great minds of Ionia evacuated to Athens, the perceived center of Greek power. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, Athens' first systematic philosopher and friend of Pericles, came in 480 during the Persian

invasion. Hippodamus of Miletos, the great city planner, arrived in Athens at about the same time, and planned the Peiraeus for Pericles' Athens before traveling the Mediterranean planning other Greek towns. There were many others who had no small effect on the artistic production and academic accomplishments at Athens during the 5th century.

Second, the wealth of plunder, foreign imperial taxes, and tribute gorged the coffers of the Periclean treasury. He, in turn, dispersed the money for the architecture and sculpture of Ictinus, Mnesicles, and Phidias. The workmanship and aesthetic refinement of the period were not to be paralleled until the Hellenistic period with its private sponsorship and immense tributary empire. Nonetheless, Athens was unable to complete more than a few temples before the decline of her military strength in the Aegean brought a slowing of building and civic improvements. Athens still had a rather casual and uneven civic center, though the Acropolis became one of the richest and most noted religious centers in the region.

Third, the government and many wealthy Athenians sponsored drama, festivals and processions. Greek tragedy blossomed during the time of Pericles whose inner circle of friends included Sophocles in addition to Ictinus, Callicrates, Anaxagoras, and perhaps Socrates. The spectacles involved many of the poor who found time for leisure for the

first time when the tributes started pouring into Athens.

Fourth, as men became wealthy with the spoils of military conquest they were expected to subject themselves to the Liturgy tax. This voluntary assessment on the rich conferred status on the benefactor who generously overpaid. Though monuments to individuals were strictly forbidden in the agora, it is certain that many of the improvements made there were with private donations, the sources of which were known to the people. The esteem of the *polis* for the rich was in direct proportion to the generosity of the donations paid by the wealthy benefactors. Thus poets and sculptors, painters and musicians were paid well by the rich to embellish Athens' public life as a means of ensuring both the preeminence of Athens as a cultural center and the continuing favor of the *demos* toward the benefactor.

By the development of tragedy and later of comedy, history, and oratory, Athens had become indisputably the literary center of Greece. During the ascendancy of Pericles, painting and sculpture flourished there as never before; between 447 and 431 the Parthenon, the Propylaea, and many other buildings were completed. Most Greeks eminent in art, letters, and science visited Athens, and many settled there. Socrates, himself an Athenian, laid the enduring foundations of mental and moral science and

assured Athens' primacy in philosophical studies. Trade prospered while the fleet preserved maritime peace.

But her power and ambitions alarmed Sparta, and the rest of Greece was nervous; in 431 the Peloponnesian League and the Boeotians went to war, "to free Greece from the tyrant city." The war lasted, with an interval of uneasy peace, for twenty-seven years. By 404 the whole political structure of Cimon's and Pericles' generations was in ruins: Athens was a dependent of Sparta under the heel of the Thirty Tyrants, the Long Walls to the Peiraeus were destroyed, and the fleet reduced to a dozen ships. After the conflict the population of Athens was barely half its former total.

However tyrannical Athens' foreign policy before the fall of the Empire, at home the *polis* thrived on a system of radical democracy in which even the poorest of the citizens put the law to effect every day. The democratic political life depended on free public speech. From the first stirrings of democracy under Solon, and all through the Classical age, the agora was the place of public rhetoric, in the form of dialogue<sup>49</sup> and oratory, which was the engine of democracy.

Our modern rhetorical methods are fundamentally different from those of the Classical Athenians, however, and we must examine their methods in order to understand their government and their public architecture.

During the 5th century, for the first time, a conceptual distinction was drawn between casual conversation or 'an unreflective conception of speech' and the art of rhetoric as 'self-conscious speech-making'.<sup>50</sup> Previous distinctions between casual conversation and poetry had been understood since prehistory, but the division of prose into natural and composed<sup>51</sup> types was a direct result of the 5th-century elevation of the status of rhetoric, including both dialogue and oratory, to its new position as an art of politics.

Classical texts on poetics and rhetoric are illuminated by an understanding of Classical Greek architecture. In fact, the Classical *techne*, or formal devices of composition, governed the making of all Classical art in a general way so that they can be applied to any subject, to any class of artistic production.<sup>52</sup> The *techne* dealt universally, within the compact Greek cosmos, with the

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<sup>49</sup> Which Chaim Perelman defines as the process of argumentation designed to "win the adherence of the minds addressed." Dialogue was more than a means of structuring logical arguments, it was a means of consensus building in a democratic city. Perelman, p.6

<sup>50</sup> Carol G. Thomas and Edward Kent Webb in Worthington, p.6

<sup>51</sup> "rhetoric was established as an art (*techne*) of speaking when Plato and Aristotle combined the study of manner with that of matter." *Ibid.* (My emphasis) But the rhetoric developed by Plato and Aristotle was not concerned with oratory, to which Plato at least was antagonistic, but with finding truth through dialectical reasoning as Socrates had.

<sup>52</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.2.1

general ‘ordering and distribution of matter’ and ‘the place to which each thing is to be assigned’.<sup>53</sup> It is to this universality of the applicability of the *techne* that the Athenian arts owe their profound unity of composition and purpose. To the *techne* is also owed the interchangeability of our analyses of rhetoric and architecture: what we say of one’s composition and significance we may say of the other’s.

The 5th-century classification of prose into conversation and rhetoric mirrors the parallel distinctions between vernacular building and architecture. Rhetoric and architecture were governed by the *techne* and thus assumed a potentially pristine existence distinct from nature and the casual. The distinction was revealed in the balance, symmetry, focus, proportionality, order, and, indeed, perfection of the works of art, especially in comparison to the haphazard, casual forms of the vernacular. Thus the *techne* were paradigmatic and were recognized in all art forms: architecture and rhetoric were ordered with the same ideals of composition that governed the form of poetry, sculpture, dance, drama, etc. All pursued the ideals of symmetry, balance, focus, and so on. Indeed, what characterizes any Classical Athenian artistic work composed according to the

*techne* is its identity as something ‘complete and whole’, ‘perfect’, distinct from its mundane surroundings.<sup>54</sup> Its consistency of composition and strong demarcation of limits<sup>55</sup> make it “a *temenos*, a special object cut from the rest of the universe by virtue of its special order.”<sup>56</sup>

According to Aristotle, the purpose of such ‘perfect objects’ is to ‘instruct and persuade’.<sup>57</sup> Both rhetoric and architecture have a political role. Rhetoric is a medium of explicit political messages. Architecture is a vehicle of political symbols. In Classical Athens both communicated ideals of harmony, focus, unity, and hierarchy.

But the capacity for rhetoric to convey political ideals was doubled when it was first considered an art. It was no longer limited to explicit communication, but, as it became informed by the *techne*, it took upon itself the potential of poetic content: the balance, harmony, symmetry, and hierarchy of its composition contained political meaning in and of themselves.<sup>58</sup>

The application of the *techne* to rhetoric was slow during the 5th century, and the Classical ideal of informal dialogue in the agora countered the development of formal

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<sup>53</sup> Cicero, *Ad Herennium*, I.2.3

<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, VII.2-4

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Tzonis and Lefaivre, p.5

<sup>57</sup> Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, I.2.1

<sup>58</sup> Perrine, p.4

rhetoric.<sup>59</sup> The compositional ideals of symmetry, balance, focus, and so on, were not fully applied to public speaking until after the 5th-century prohibitions on large-scale oratory were mitigated. Nonetheless, the Classical Athenians made a formal study of oratory and began the process of applying the *techné* of poetry and architecture to rhetoric. Thus Protagoras and the other early sophists incubated the art of rhetoric even during the age of Socrates.<sup>60</sup> The great philosopher criticized rhetoric systematically: rhetoric is a ‘knack’ (*empeiria*), he says, whose special ability is to persuade others. But it brings conviction without knowledge since it is used to address an audience that is less knowledgeable than the orator, and is only effective in such an unequal setting. Thus the *rhetor* has the ability to sway the audience without necessarily “knowing justice and injustice.” Rhetoric, Socrates continues, together with cooking, sophistry, and cosmetics, is concerned with appearances, not knowledge. It is not rational and is as far from philosophy as cooking is from medicine. The flourishing of rhetoric in the agora, despite the complaints of Socrates is analogous to the simultaneous construction of the symmetrical, balanced, harmonious Parthenon about the artfulness of which Socrates also complained.<sup>62</sup>

The victory of Athens over Persia so soon after Cleisthenes’ empowerment of the *demes* is often referred to as the event that galvanized the confidence of individual members of the *demoi* in exercising their constitutional rights of ostracism and free speech in the agora. It was precisely that newfound willingness to criticize and even evict their leaders that propelled the individual members of the *demoi* into the arena of potential conspicuous heroism that had previously been the exclusive privilege of the aristocracy. The average Athenian of the Classical age, willing to stand in front of the *demoi* and commit himself to a certain political position through dialogue and oratory, found in that accountability the chance to be a sort of political Achilles; a hero for all to see. But instead of pre-political violence, the new methods of persuasion were verbal. Men gained influence through force of words, not through strength of arms. The new arena of conflict was the agora, a level dance-floor at the heart of the city where, ideally, only the most treasonous and blasphemous speech would be prosecuted. Disputes were no longer settled by bloodshed outside the city walls, but by argument in the agora.

<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 272d-273c. Plato elaborates the opposition between dialectic and rhetoric with much the same terms that he used to contend with the sophists.

<sup>60</sup> *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p.1,000

<sup>61</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 449 a to 480 b-d

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

The new freedom of speech, with its accompanying individual accountability for words spoken in public, was practiced in a variety of ways endemic to the political inclinations of the speakers. During the Golden Age of Pericles the preferred method of public speech was dialogue. The participants, most notably Socrates and his followers, but many others as well, sat in the shade of the stoas, or under the numerous trees in the agora, and carefully constructed arguments. Their purpose was not simply to contend, but to pose questions and elicit answers, or, in the case of Socrates, to pose questions that might inspire debate without certain answers. In the *Gorgias* Plato explains Socrates' dislike of oratory. This so-called Socratic method became an essential tool of philosophy for many of the later philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle in the next century.

Socrates and his academic descendants were mentors to their students, but they valued a non-hierarchical relationship between student and teacher. Dialogue required equality. One could not stand above his students at a podium and engage them in dialogue. In keeping with this notion, the agora was not equipped with speakers' platforms, pedestals, theaters, or other architectural accommodations for speechmaking. Such architectural settings were seen as disruptive to the process of dialogue because they necessarily placed one man above others,

and recalled the formal edicts of the pre-political city. The Athenians were never entirely pragmatic. Though speakers' platforms certainly would have been useful in a city of 75,000, and laws certainly could have been enacted to regulate the influence of speakers over the populace, the Greeks understood the agora as a localization and spatialization of the purely temporal activities that it accommodated. Thus dialogue, inherently equitable, engendered an architectural setting that resolutely refused to accommodate asymmetrical power.

The floor of the agora was commonly referred to as the *choros*, which meant both *the dance* and *the dancing floor*. Greek dance, traditionally an accompaniment to simultaneous music and poetry, had certain formal characteristics that made it commonly intelligible as a symbol of the condition of the city. As an appendage to drama, dance told stories. When the dance floor was level and no dancer could stand above the others the dance symbolized equality and harmony among the members of the *polis* or the characters in the drama. When the dance floor contained pedestals that individual dancers or actors might stand upon, higher than the others, the dance symbolized inequality, tyranny, or the undue influence of an individual over the city. If, as Indra Kagis McEwen states with regard to the *choros*, "the place for the dance is a precondition for dancing,"<sup>63</sup> then the agora of the Classical

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<sup>63</sup> McEwen, p.63

city of Athens can be interpreted as the level dance floor on which the order, harmony, and inherent equality of the democratic city are symbolized. Despite the usefulness of speakers' platforms, theaters, and the like, the Athenians studiously avoided any architectural accommodations for unequal relationships between men in public space. This is all the more remarkable as we remember that Athens still had a very real aristocracy, and that they rubbed shoulders with the poor every day in the agora. The two very unequal worlds of aristocracy and commoners danced as equals,<sup>64</sup> in dialogue, in the agora.<sup>65</sup>

Late Classical commentators found that the diversity and social equality of the agora "disturbed their sense of political decorum and gravity."<sup>66</sup> Aristotle strongly recommended that "The market square for buying and selling should be separate from the public square and at a distance from it."<sup>67</sup> But he was no enemy of equality in the agora;<sup>68</sup> on the contrary he proposed to elevate political dialogue, necessarily practiced between dissimilar people, by separating it from the mundane activities of the commercial square. He thought that politics, especially the administration of justice in the courts, was demeaned by a

too-close association with business. Other commentators similarly argued for the 'majesty of the law' by assigning it the ennobling qualities of *orthos*, or dignity and uprightness, a characteristic of great men, that might go unnoticed in the crush of the market.

The political reality of Athens was informal discussion in the crowd of the agora, but it was inevitable that the informal political functions of the agora should gradually specialize, formalize, and evolve into separate institutions of government. The need for public speeches was recognized, as was the necessity of law courts in which evidence and arguments could be presented to the audience of jurors. Dialogue and discussion were insufficient to some of the tasks of government.

"We know most of all that, if order in the agora scene was imposed by bodily comportment, comportment alone could not counter the effects of simultaneous activities on the human voice. In the swirling crowd conversations fragmented as bodies moved from knot to knot, an individual's attention broke and shifted. The Athenians created a place for a more sustained experience of language in the Council House (Bouleuterion) on the west side of the agora, employing there a principle of design contrary to that of simultaneity."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Josiah Ober, in Worthington, p.93

<sup>65</sup> Edward M. Harris, in Worthington, p.133, refers to Euripides' *Supplices* 429-437. See also McEwen, p.74

<sup>66</sup> Sennett, p.56

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, p.310

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.212 "a city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence."

<sup>69</sup> Sennett, p.56 Sennett uses the word "simultaneous" to refer to the "broken" and "swirling" quality of

The Classical ideal, however, was equitable dialogue, as is amply evinced by the literature<sup>70</sup> and archaeological remains of the 5th century. The Bouleuterion, as we shall see, was a self-contained institution that served particular purposes for which dialogue was insufficient. The agora was the focus of debate and the crucible of political change.

The relationship between democracy and the Empire was close in that Athens often supported democracies in her more tractable tributary states. In addition, there was a domestic connection: the revenue from the Empire, greatly increased by the political operations of Cimon in the 460s, led to the democratic reforms of Pericles and Ephialtes in 462. These reforms increased the power of the *Ekklesia*, or popular assembly. In the beginning of the 6th century Solon had left Athens a primarily aristocratic state, and Cleisthenes had done little to amend the inequities of Solon with his machinations at the end of the 6th century. Aristotle regarded Solon's introduction of 'appeal to the people' as one of the most 'democratic'<sup>71</sup> events in Athenian history, but also recognized that it remained only symbolically democratic until the introduction of jury pay in the 460s, which allowed large popular juries (*dikasteria*) to

serve without a loss of income to the jurors.<sup>72</sup> In the next decades additional forms of democratic remuneration for services were instituted, including pay for attendance at the council of 500 (the *Boule*) which prepared the *Ekklesia*'s business, and at the city festivals. Athenian democracy was paid for by its often unwilling protectorates.<sup>73</sup>

Two factors at least contributed to the democratic power of the *Ekklesia*. First, it was a small group in which the vote of an individual member was always recognized and influential, and, second, its power was further increased by the fact that large portions of the city population were excluded from the democratic process. Women, slaves, children, subject allies, and foreigners living in the city were not allowed to vote. Of the remaining 40,000 men who participated in democracy by voting, as many as 6,000 (the approximate seating capacity of the Pnyx, where the *Ekklesia* met when important issues needed a vote) served on the *Ekklesia* during important policy debates.

In theory at least the *Ekklesia* was sovereign in Athenian politics. Its power, however, was carefully circumscribed by a number of institutions and other, unofficial fixtures of public Athens.

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informal dialogue.

<sup>70</sup> For example: Thucydides 3.83

<sup>71</sup> Rhodes, 1981, p.54

<sup>72</sup> Rhodes, 1972, p.100

<sup>73</sup> Meiggs, p.34

The first limit on the sovereignty of the *Ekklesia* was the flourishing, vigorous life of the 139 *demes*, the constituent towns of Attica. Each *deme* provided, according to its population, a certain number of councilors to the *Boule*. But participation on the *Boule* was only a fraction of the political power of the *demes*. Just as the democratization of Attica was never completed, so too its political centralization: Attica was a federal state within which existed a number of national and local loyalties, each with its own inclination to self-government. Decrees made by the leaders of individual *demes* to their constituencies were not always in accordance with the law of Athens. In at least one case a *deme* even determined to build its own civic center as an effort to assert its right to self government through debate in its own agora.<sup>74</sup> These miniature city-states within the confines of Athenian-controlled Attica, however independent they thought themselves to be, at least relied upon the Athenian praxis of political life with all of its components: agoras as the setting, public speech as the vehicle, and councils as the institutions of government. In addition to local governments, the *demes* also had vigorous local religious customs that served to distinguish them from Athens. Proof of this religious autonomy, which Athens never tended to suppress by the doctrinaire imposition of its own religious views, were the extensive religious calendars, large local festivals, and even trips to consult the oracle

at Delphi, a dangerously political maneuver.<sup>75</sup> But there were very real limits on the autonomy of the *demes*. They could have no foreign policy of their own and their military preparations and fortifications were a matter of state superintendence and provision.

The second limit on the strength of the *Ekklesia* was the *Boule*, the council of 500 members chosen from throughout Attica whose purpose was to preview and select the business of the *Ekklesia*. Though the *Boule* has been frequently called an agent or appendage to the *Ekklesia*, these criticisms of its role are founded on the assumption that the *Boule* was representative of a cross section of the people. Evidence suggests otherwise. The members of the *Boule*, since the legislation of Cleisthenes in 507 and until 411, were not paid. In addition, the members of the council were not chosen by lot from the *demes* until about 450. The change from an aristocratic to a democratic *Boule* was gradual. During the first half of the 5th century the *Boule* was constituted almost entirely of wealthy Athenians, and the interests of the people were represented only inasmuch as the councilors held the common interest in trust. The easiest way to circumvent the decision of the lot, which would ideally have generated a random membership in the *Boule* from among the men of Attica, was to be willing to donate time, and therefore money, when most

<sup>74</sup> *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.137

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138, and Rhodes, 1972, p.66

citizens were unwilling. Thus the *Boule*, even after the institution of membership by random selection (lot) had a membership of higher average social rank than the *demos* at large. The *Boule*, run by confident semi-professionals with political ambitions, even superseded the *Ekklesia* on occasion. The councilors occasionally exceeded their responsibilities and discussed foreign policy and otherwise invaded the authority of the *Ekklesia*. But, for all of the *Boule's* usefulness as a limit on the power of the *Ekklesia*, it had its own built-in governor: the members of the *Boule* could serve for only one year, and could hold office only twice.

The third check on the power of the *Ekklesia* was the quorum of generals. These military leaders had tremendous power during wartime, and even in times of peace they were given great executive latitude. The *Ekklesia* and other governing bodies were not highly trained in strategy and were so large that infiltration by spies was a reality; thus the generals formed military policy with next to no supervision by the other councils. In addition, the generals had no limit on the number of times that they could be reelected to office. The only real check on their power was the privilege of the citizens to depose them through vote or ostracism.

Fourth, the 'demagogues', or popular leaders, such as Cleon and Hyperbolus,

exercised great power by persuasive rhetorical skill demonstrated in the agora. These men began to rise at the end of the 5th century when the prohibitions against political harangues in the agora began to soften. With their newfound opportunity to address the crowd, perhaps from the steps of the stoas, the demagogues were able to sway public opinion and gain very real power. Their constant risk was ostracism, as Cleon and Hyperbolus discovered.

Finally, the *Ekklesia's* own procedural rules contained features that reduced its democratic autonomy and effectiveness. It met much less often than the other councils, especially the *Boule*, thus limiting its own ability to practice informed debate. Also, and of inestimable importance, the members of the *Ekklesia* did not vote by ballot. As they sat on the theater on the Pnyx they were divided by tribe, and were required to vote by raising their hands for the other members of the *polis* to see. Thus they were held accountable for their votes and decisions in a way that no other democratic institution ever had been. Their aristocratic tendency to 'militate against democracy'<sup>76</sup> was consistently and systematically mitigated by the institutions and practices mentioned above.

As we have seen, there existed in democratic Athens a carefully devised system of checks on the power of the largely aristocratic

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<sup>76</sup> *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.141

*Ekklesia*. These checks took the form of participation, whether institutional or purely individual, in public life through speaking and voting, debating and deciding in the agora. In continuation we will examine the actual processes of public speaking and the architectural setting for those speeches in each of the institutions and practices already mentioned. We will see that in classical Athens the agora was the place of public speech except in certain events of very specific character, and that the individual civic buildings in the agora were designed to establish certain relationships between speakers and audience. We will start with the Bouleuterion, the meeting place of the *Boule*.

**The Precinct of the Mother of the Gods: the Accommodations for the *Boule* in the Agora**

The principal governing body of democratic Athens at the end of the 6th century was Cleisthenes' Council of Five Hundred, constituted of fifty members of each of the ten *phyles* of Attica. Its role as the first new democratic institution after the tyrannical reign of the previous fifty years and as the most effective single check on the powers of the aristocratic *Ekklesia* gave it a dignity worthy of better accommodations than the old Archeia. The small civic Archeia not only failed to meet the programmatic

requirements of the Council, but carried the stigma of multiple layers of association with tyranny and oligarchy. It was hardly an appropriate architectural accommodation for the democratic Council, even if the Five Hundred were more aristocratic than the average Athenians. Their first meeting place, built directly after the reforms of Cleisthenes, was the Old Bouleuterion.

The Bouleuterion, literally 'the building of the *Boule*', was built with public funds. Its architecture represents a complete break from the past and had no known architectural predecessors. The council hall was supported by interior columns and provided theater-style seating for the councilors, whose numbers required a level of enclosure and acoustic protection not afforded by the outdoor theater of the 6th century. In front of the concentric, banked seats was a level floor where the speakers stood to address the Council. There is some evidence of rich decoration in the hall, as a marble basin, uncovered in the excavations, might attest. The south wall of the Old Bouleuterion faces the north wall of the remains of the Archeia, undoubtedly still in use in the beginning of the 5th century, and together form a precinct that is somewhat secluded from the marketplace of the agora. Also associated with the precinct are the remains of the coetaneous Council House and records office, about which very little is known. The entire precinct (*figure 9*) was dedicated to and associated with a small temple of the

Mother of the Gods (labeled ‘Temple of Meter’ in *figure 4*), built at the same time as the Bouleuterion. The temple had two columns *in antis* and therefore is one of the first evidences of the effort to architecturally unify the west side of the square and the later tendency to surround the edges of the agora with colonnades.

Toward the end of the 5th century an entirely new Council House was built adjacent to the Old Bouleuterion, which probably continued to be used, but as a records repository and annex to the New Bouleuterion. There are very few remains of the significant building, and surprisingly no reference to it in the literary and epigraphic records of the otherwise heavily documented period. The site, directly west of the Old Council House, placed the New Bouleuterion outside the agora in the preferred position for a formal meeting place. Instead of facing the interior of the agora as the majority of the Classical shrines and stoas did, the semicircular, axial theater of the Bouleuterion was removed to the back of the enclosed precinct of the Mother of the Gods. This placement might belie the civic function of the building, especially in light of the fact that there was plenty of available land for such an expensive and monumental building at the very edge of the agora, except in the context of the prevailing Classical attitude that

theaters were not appropriate to the informal democratic activities of the agora. The Athenians of the 5th century, as evidenced by this and many other otherwise apparently irrational decisions about the form and siting of civic buildings, were always wary of the ability of individual speakers to gain undue influence over the members of the *demos*. As Pericles warned the people of Athens: “the virtues of the many should not be left to one man’s speaking.”<sup>77</sup> They refused to build the axial, theater-like buildings that were so important to the function of the *Boule* and the law courts in the middle of the agora for fear that they would be used by persuasive *rhetors* to sway the public and endanger democracy. Theaters and speakers’ platforms tended to engender demagoguery, which had already been proven by the example of Pisistratos to be inimical to true democracy. Access to the few necessary theater-type buildings near the agora was always controlled, and their purposes were strictly limited to legal and legislative proceedings. They were not open to casual public use. These prohibitions and regulations were not designed to stifle speech, but, as Wayne Booth has said about modern rhetoric, as long as individuals agree on conventions by which they can reason together, rhetoric becomes “a supremely self-justifying activity,” which can provide the basis for consensus through “warrantable consent.”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Pericle’s Funeral Oration, lines 7-8, quoted from Saunders, p.33 Aristophanes also distrusted oratory. In the *Clouds* he wrote a “comic caricature of rhetoric as a vehicle for persuasive falsehood.” (Michael Gagarin in Worthington, p.47 ) Gagarin claims that fear of oratory was the product of a fundamentally conservative critical position. If so, all of the literature reviewed for the writing of this paper was written by conservative authors.

<sup>78</sup> Booth, p.139

About a century after the construction of the New Bouleuterion its Late Classical occupants cleared away the screening wall of the precinct and applied a new, more monumental facade to the Bouleuterion, and provided an axial approach so that the imposing east wall could be seen from the middle of the agora. An Ionic Propylon was built to the southeast, and a new porch of grand Ionic columns was built along the entire length of the New Bouleuterion.<sup>79</sup> These modifications were in keeping with the changing attitudes concerning the appropriate use of the agora under the Macedonian Empire: whereas the Classical Athenians valued their freedom from rhetoric and other forms of propaganda and indoctrination, including architectural, the Hellenistic city had no such inhibitions.<sup>80</sup> They were concerned with monumentalizing the power of the empire and aggrandizing the civic facilities of the agora as testaments of the strength and glory of the city.

Also associated with the interior of the precinct of the *Boule* was the earliest known *bema*, or speakers platform, in Athens.<sup>81</sup>

*Bemae* were large rectangular stones with

table-like tops that were mounted by those who wished to address a large, assembled crowd. This form of speech, which required the relative passivity of the audience and implied the superiority of the speaker over the audience, was considered by Plato, among many others, to be inimical to democracy. It is very telling, therefore, that again, as in the siting of the New Bouleuterion, the *bema* was placed inside the precinct, where the crowd could not attend casually. Its placement behind the precinct wall made it perfectly suited for the speeches that must have been a regular fixture of the proceedings of the *Boule*,<sup>82</sup> and made it practically useless as a place for political harangues. If the *bema* had been placed within the public, open space of the agora it might have countermanded the democratic ideals of the *polis*, however popular it might have been. Athens, even during the decay at the end of the 5th century, still practiced democracy by dialogue in the agora, and still made calculated architectural moves to ensure the continuation of dialogue, instead of oratory, as the preferred form of public speech.

<sup>79</sup> Thompson and Wycherley, p.33

<sup>80</sup> Sherwin-White, p.12

<sup>81</sup> Antiphon, IV, 40; 419/8 BC

<sup>82</sup> McDonald, p.134 The author suggests, basing his argument on architectural conventions of axial arrangements of speaker to audience, that the *bema* was placed in such a way that the audience sat on the south side of the *bema* so that the New Bouleuterion was an impressive backdrop to the speaker. Whether or not this speculation is true, or based entirely on theatrical traditions foreign to the Classical Greeks is unclear. At any rate, it might serve as additional evidence that the placement of the *bema* was not arbitrary, and that the influence of elevated speakers was known. No such theatrical stage set in the agora proper is revealed by literary, epigraphic, or archaeological evidence, though a *bema* in the agora would certainly have attracted the attention of writers during a period when even the location of every money-changer's table was documented.

Another of the very few literary descriptions of the proceedings of the *Boule* in the New Bouleuterion suggests that the *Prytaneis*, or special members of the *Boule*, sat in special seats facing the rest of the Council. The *Prytaneis* were the fifty representatives of one tribe that was chosen by lot to be in charge of the operations of the *Boule* every day for one tenth of the year. They received special treatment in a variety of ways, including free lodging in the precinct, free food, additional pay, and the special, perhaps more comfortable, seats in the Bouleuterion. A foreman was chosen from among the *Prytaneis*, also at random, to oversee all of the operations of the Council for the allotted period, but was not allowed to serve more than once in his life. This fact allowed that fully half the members of the Council sat as foreman during their lives, a truly democratic arrangement. Whether or not the foreman had an extra-special seat we do not know. What is important to understand about this special seating is that no equivalent accommodations for men of any rank are mentioned in any of the sources on the Classical agora. Pericles himself, perhaps the most popular and powerful man in all of Attica during the Golden Age, sat in the agora with the crowds and listened to the poets and philosophers. There was no throne nor special seat except within the formal confines of the *Boule*'s precinct.

When the Thirty Tyrants, installed by the Spartans as a symbolic affront to conquered Athens in 404, sat in judgment in the agora they chose the special seats of the *Prytaneis* as their thrones. From these seats, about which so much is implied by their service to the Thirty, the Tyrants meted out death penalties, issued edicts, made laws, and commanded the army. Perhaps we do not overreach the limits of the descriptive evidence of the special seats if we guess that they were elevated, comfortable, and somehow grand, like thrones. They certainly would have been out of place in the free, unsupervised space of the agora.

Our most detailed evidence of the anti-democratic misuse of inherently hierarchical arrangements like the special seats is found in Xenophon's *Hellenica*.<sup>83</sup> He describes how Kritias, one of the Thirty Tyrants, ordered his swordsmen to stand at the barriers, which apparently separated the special seats and the speakers' floor with its central, altar-like speaker's platform from the general seating of the Council, where the assembled *Boule* could plainly see them. Such was their presence that when the Council saw one of its members, Theramenes, dragged from the speakers' floor, they

“remained silent, seeing that the men at the barriers were like Satyros and the space in front of the Bouleuterion was full of guards.”

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<sup>83</sup> Xenophon, *Hellenica*

Though similar abuses by the tyrants surely happened in other places in the city, it is significant that the surviving documentation describes an event that occurred in the only place where there were preexisting arrangements that established hierarchical relationships between people. The Athenians ran the risk of fomenting events that could weaken or destroy democracy when their architecture promoted a few men over many.

Xenophon continues: “Theremenes leapt on to the hearth” (the speakers’ platform) seeking to escape from the swordsmen and perhaps to plead for help from the *Boule*. But Satyros’ men “dragged him from the altar.” A poetic interpretation of these events, which so poignantly occurred at the end of democracy, gives metaphorical content to a representative of the *Boule* meeting his end atop the speakers’ platform; a neat but tragic symbol of the death of dialogue and its replacement by edict. We cannot rightly say that the unequal architectural arrangements of the Bouleuterion and the rhetorical forms that they engendered caused the end of democracy, but we can identify them as the points at which the conquering Tyrants were able to get a hold on the city. The Tyrants did not sit on the level dance-floor of the

agora because it did not contain the appropriate symbols of dominance. Athens’ own civic monuments, constructed to promote democracy, were co-opted by a tyrannical regime because they contained inherently hierarchical arrangements for inherently hierarchical rhetoric.

### **The Eponymous Heroes**

The locus of the informal debate that was so important to the democratic machinery of Athens was the monument to the Eponymous Heroes. The monument, consisting of a long pedestal, like a speakers’ platform, with ten bronze statues standing in a row on its top,<sup>84</sup> (*figure 19*) commemorated the founding of the ten tribes. It was constructed at the southwest corner of the agora near the Archeia and the Heliæa at what must have been the actual center of civic activity in the agora at the time of its construction.<sup>85</sup> The pedestal was surrounded by a low wooden fence upon which the *demos* could lean to read the official notices that were posted on tablets hung on the pedestal. The site is

<sup>84</sup> My descriptions concord with the reconstruction of the Monument by William Dinsmoor. Most of the archaeological remains of the Monument date from the early decades of the 4th century, which is technically outside of the Classical period covered in this section. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the monument, perhaps in a less elaborate form, occupied nearly the same site during the 5th century. We have no direct archaeological remains of the 5th century Monument, except that we know it included statues of the Ten, and we can surmise, based on surviving 5th century sculpture, that they must have stood upon a pedestal or pedestals. These deductions are not fail-safe, but are probably certain enough to serve as the basis for the above discussion.

<sup>85</sup> The opposite sides of the agora, the north and east edges, were dominated by commercial market activities. No civic buildings were built at those sides until the very end of the 5th century, when a courtroom was constructed at the northeast corner. I assume that the civic activity in the agora centered on the southwest corner.

frequently mentioned in the literature of the end of the 5th century as being a popular gathering place where the people assembled to discuss politics and gossip about the latest legal and governmental scandals.

The Ten Eponymous Heroes are yet another indication of the significance of the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in Attica. In establishing the ten tribes in 508/7, Cleisthenes abolished the old system of four Ionian tribes. As previously mentioned, all the members of the *demos* were assigned to one of the ten new tribes based on where they lived. All rights and many of the privileges of the individual citizens depended on membership in one of the ten tribes, and membership was hereditary. As John Camp writes:

“One served in the *Boule* as a member of a tribe, and one fought in the army - where one’s life literally depended in part on the shield of the next man in line - in a tribal contingent.”<sup>86</sup>

Besides companionship in war, membership in a tribe determined the associations that Athenians had in worship and feasting. Membership in a tribe, then, was a central feature of Athenian democracy: it determined the bonds of loyalty that were crucial to political, martial, religious, and social life. The Monument to the Eponymous Heroes embodied the tribal underpinnings of Athenian society.

After creating the ten tribes, Cleisthenes sent the names of one hundred early Athenian heroes to the oracle at Delphi. The oracle chose ten names, after which the ten tribes were subsequently named. The term Eponymous denotes this naming: the tribe Leontis, for example, was named after the Hero Leos. Thus the Heroes, the eponyms, stood for all of the members of the *demos*. Their placement atop a pedestal is significant.

Two common architectural types were suggested by the pedestal: altars and *bemae*. Altars were associated with worship and sacrifice, and were generally understood to be sacred, sanctified places where contact between mortals and immortals might occur, and where sacred actions were performed. The *bemae*, or speakers’ platforms, served both pragmatic and symbolic purposes. They allowed a speaker to stand above an audience to be seen and heard better, and also symbolically elevated the speaker to a position of power and influence. In the compact Greek cosmology, in which meaning was not compartmentalized and isolated, the similarities of altar, *bema*, and sculpture pedestal must have been striking and rife with meaning that might not be clear to the modern student. All three were concerned with the elevation, both literal and figurative, of humans from the mundane to the transcendent. Thus an offering placed on an altar, a hero standing on a pedestal, and a

<sup>86</sup> Camp, p.97

speaker standing on a *bema* were held in reverence because they exceeded the mundane realm. It is not surprising, then, that the ends of the pedestal of the Eponymous Heroes held tripods, symbols of the divine oracle at Delphi and reminders of the divine favor with which the Ten had been selected. To further blur the distinctions between altar, *bema*, and pedestal, the members of the tribes were often seen kneeling in worship before the image of their Eponym, where they might, just minutes later, read the legal notices concerning their tribe as if the Hero were speaking to them. The act of worshipful prostration before a god or hero and the act of listening to, or reading the words of a speaker or hero were considered analogous. There is little reason to question the Athenian hesitance to place *bemae* in the agora. Any speaker to stand thereon might momentarily enter the realm of gods and heroes and supersede dialogue.

Besides the role of altars as places for worship and sacrifice to the gods, certain altars were also used as platforms for the swearing of oaths. Immediately in front of the Stoa Basileios near the northwest corner of the agora square lies a large block of rough limestone with a flat top. Its ‘unprepossessing appearance’<sup>87</sup> is belied both by its prominent location and by its important function in archaic and Classical

Athens. It blocks access to at least a quarter of the length of the important Stoa in which the old tablets of the Solonian and Draconian laws were stored. This association between the commemoration of early democratic laws, still much revered in Classical times, and the stone altar is not coincidental. The *lithos*, as it was called, is mentioned repeatedly in the contemporary literature as a platform upon which sacred and legal oaths were taken by public servants. For example: “they took the oath near the Basileios Stoa, on the stone on which were the (sacrificial) parts of the victims, swearing that they would guard the laws.”<sup>88</sup> And: “The council took a joint oath to ratify the laws of Solon, and each of the thesmothetes swore separately on the stone in the agora.”<sup>89</sup> Additional references to the *lithos* further clarify its use: it was the altar upon which all incoming magistrates swore allegiance to the laws and the people before accepting office. There is even evidence, though not as unequivocal as that of the Classical period, that the same *lithos* dates back to the time of Solon, and may have determined the placement of the Stoa Basileios many years later. Archaeologists have suggested that the stone may have originally served as the lintel of a Mycenaean tholos tomb,<sup>90</sup> which would further enrich the symbolic import of the otherwise uninteresting rough-hewn altar. Again we are faced with compelling

<sup>87</sup> Camp, p.101

<sup>88</sup> Pollux, VIII.86

<sup>89</sup> Plutarch, *Solon*, XXV.2

<sup>90</sup> Camp, p.102

evidence that altars, pedestals, and *bemae*, all of them called simply '*lithos*', whatever their designated purposes, occasioned similar psychological imagines in the Athenians. They were not mere podia, but symbolic, even transcendent architectural elements.

The role of the pedestal as an architectural means of elevating, and therefore aggrandizing, heroes is a convenient introduction to the Classical attitudes surrounding the monumentalization of men in the agora.

Among the legal restrictions that governed building within the square of the agora was a limitation on the types of monuments that could be built. Generally speaking, only monuments to gods and dead heroes were allowed. The monumentalization of living mortals was consciously avoided, even on those occasions when the heroics of an individual helped save the city from disaster. The agora was full of monuments, especially along the north edge, but not one of them was dedicated to a living man. Even the Stoa Basileios, the so-called Royal Stoa, enthroned the tablets of the law, not an actual king.

In the humanistic culture of Athens the commemoration of a god or hero was particularly significant. The Greek gods were immortal men, with all of the foibles of mortality including laziness, lust, greed, and

vanity. When mortals exceeded the common, mundane accomplishments of life with extraordinary virtue or valor they became heroes. Theological speculation frequently concerned itself with the possibility of heroes ultimately becoming gods,<sup>91</sup> and in the Hellenistic period even living men could become gods if sufficiently virtuous.<sup>92</sup> The Classical ideal of the virtuous, heroic individual, however, had no room for such ideas and limited hero worship to a very limited number of individuals, many entirely fictional and all dead, who were heroic inasmuch as they championed democracy and the interests of the *polis*. The roots of the Classical hero-cult undoubtedly had their roots in the Mycenaean and Homeric civilizations, but were modified to match the requirements of democracy rather than building directly on the inherited aristocratic tradition.

Of the statuary monuments in the classical agora, most were *herms*, sacred cult emblems associated with boundary markings and magical rites. The remaining statues represented gods with certain associations to places in the agora, and heroes. All of the commemorated heroes have in common their roles as particularly valiant defenders of the *demos*. The Eponymous Heroes, the heads of Cleisthenes' Ten Tribes are one example. Other examples follow.

<sup>91</sup> Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 415 b.

<sup>92</sup> "Never have gods been so human, and humans so godlike."

### **The Monument to the Tyrannicides**

Of continuing importance to the cultural memory of Athens was the oppression of the people under the tyrants. The city was in constant danger of the power of the still-wealthy aristocracy, who harbored few kind feelings toward the common members of the *demos*, and well remembered the preceding millennium of oligarchic rule. Consequently, the actions of men to subvert the aristocracy were idealized and commemorated often in the agora. The most notable of those monuments were the statues of the Tyrannicides.

In 514 Hipparchos, the son and successor of the Tyrant Pisistratos, was assassinated by Harmodios and Aristogeiton. Though the assassination appears to have been the outcome of a personal grudge and failed to end the Pisistratid tyranny, the tyrannicides were immediately canonized as the great heroes of Athenian democracy, hopes of the revival of which had remained intact during the tyranny. They were the first historical, as opposed to mythical, heroes to receive honors in the form of statues in the agora.<sup>93</sup> The polemarch offered them *enagismata*, the offerings previously associated only with the ritual sacrifices to the mythical heroized dead, and thereby effectively instituted the

Classical practice of commemorating the heroes of democracy as virtual gods in the agora. The *enagismata* was offered immediately after the assassination, but the statues were undoubtedly commissioned after the fall of the Pisistratid regime. The two statues, both of fine bronze, were placed on marble pedestals in the middle of the agora. They were of monumental scale, and in the striding, triumphant posture often given Zeus in his statuary monuments. They were among the most famous sites in Athens and, according to the literature, made a great impression on visitors to the agora. In fact, Aristophanes the Classical poet, in his *Lysistrata*, has the leader of the chorus say “I will take my stand beside Aristogeiton” in the agora, an attempt to cumulate the favor of the *demos* by association with the hero.

The site of the statues itself was of particular importance in an era that strictly guarded the square for the exclusive use of the *demos*. The Athenians recognized that the site conferred a unique distinction upon those who were honored there. For a long time they were very hesitant to grant any other honorary statues.<sup>94</sup> To be “set up in bronze in the agora” implied that the man so honored was more than an ordinary mortal, that he had indeed assumed some of the stature of godhood. Demosthenes said:

“The Athenians of those days, although Themistocles and Miltiades and many other

<sup>93</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.9.38 See also Demosthenes, XX.70 and Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXIV.17.70.

<sup>94</sup> Aeschines makes two charges against the legality of the decree of Ctesiphon to honor Demosthenes in the agora. His first is purely technical, but the second refers to the law that stipulated that any honors granted by the Council and the Assembly could be announced only in those two places and nowhere else. Aeschines, 3.32-48

achieved far nobler deeds for the city than the generals of today, did not set up bronze statues of them nor make a great fuss over them.”<sup>95</sup>

He recognized the hesitancy of the democratic Athenians to honor men where ideally no inequality should exist. The very next hero of democracy to be honored with statuary in the agora was the admiral Konon, whose monument was not erected until the first decades of the 4th century. During the 5th century, the Golden Age of democracy, only two mortal men were heroized in the agora, and they were civic symbols more than men. In revering the statues the Athenians were paying homage to the ideal of democracy rather than the accomplishments of two men.

This hesitancy to honor mortals in the agora extended to all kinds of heroes, not only political. In the other Greek cities, so similar to Athens in many respects, there was a fundamentally different attitude toward canonizing men. For example, the other cities built statues of victorious Olympic athletes in the agoras. Athens, though one of the most successful contenders in the contests, never honored her winning athletes with public statues. Lykourgos, in his observations on the superiority of the Athenian agora over that of the other Greek cities, noted:

“You will find that in the other cities statues of athletes are set up in the agoras, in Athens statues of excellent generals<sup>96</sup> and the Tyrannicides.”<sup>97</sup>

The rest of the shrines and monuments in the agora likewise consistently commemorated the popular, democratic achievements of the city instead of the individuals who had played crucial, heroic roles in those accomplishments. It was in the agora that the *demos* found constant reminders of past glories and democratic accomplishments. These were before the eyes of the jurors as they assembled every morning to hear the cases, bore witness to the ostracisms that were performed before the Monument to the Tyrannicides, and formed a magnificent part of the backdrop to the Panathenaic Procession, the yearly festival of Athena and democracy.

Two of the most important shrines of the Classical period contained no images of the associated heroes. The Heroes were represented only in the names of the shrines, which stood more for the ideal of democracy than for the heroes themselves. Theseus, the mythical founder of Athens and the ‘Hero of Democracy’, was remembered in the Theseion, perhaps the most celebrated shrine in the city. In the early years of the 5th century, the great reformer Cimon was sent,

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<sup>95</sup> Demosthenes XXIII.196 See also Thompson and Wycherley, p. 158.

<sup>96</sup> He is referring to the 4th century statues of the generals who were honored for helping Athens out from under the oppression of the Thirty Tyrants. The erection of these monuments belongs to the Late Classical period, which differs significantly from the period treated in this section.

<sup>97</sup> Lykourgos, *In Leokratem*, 51

on the advice of the Delphic oracle, to the island of Skyros to find the bones of Theseus. Cimon returned with a skeleton of exceptional size, complete with armor and a spear, all appropriate for the story of the great hero. The return of the bones to Athens was celebrated with a festival and the dedication of a new shrine in the agora. The event was not innocent, however. The political implications were enormous: Theseus was the legendary protector of the poor, and the establishment of the shrine in 475 must have been purposefully coordinated to symbolically bolster the common citizens against the prospect of aristocratic counterrevolution. There is literary evidence that the Theseion was the site where the citizens gathered to cast lots and decide who would serve on the juries, which were still dominated by the aristocracy at that early date before the establishment of jury pay. According to Plutarch, the Theseion was an important meeting place for the poor, voting members of the *demos*. It stood for

“all humbler folk and those who are afraid of their superiors, since Theseus himself was a protector and helper and received kindly the entreaties of humbler folk.”

To add poignancy to good politics, in 415, on the day of the politically symbolic mutilation of the Herms, symbols of military virility, on the eve of the planned Athenian invasion of Sicily, the destitute Athenians who had been camping between the Long

Walls outside the city were encouraged to gather with their arms at the Theseion.

In addition to the shrine to Theseus, there was a shrine to Leos and his daughter near the agora. Its precise location cannot be determined from the literature, but its role as a monument to the ideal of democracy is clear. Again, as in the Theseion, there was no statue to commemorate the heroes. Leos, under the orders of the oracle, sacrificed his three daughters to save the city from a plague. The offering was effective, and a shrine was established to heroize the saviors. Documents from the end of the 5th century state that Hipparchos was killed in front of the Leokorion. Whether or not this was the case, at least the shrine was able to endow the assassination of the Tyrant with additional meaning: *leos* means people, and *Leokorion*, besides denoting the shrine of Leos, means “the place where the people were purified.” *Leokolos* means “he who cares for the people”<sup>98</sup> and was the traditional title of Leos. Though the monument was probably constructed in the 6th century, it was a fixture of the Classical Panathenaic Procession and considered a part of the agora.<sup>99</sup> Thus the tendency of the democratic Athenians to memorialize democracy itself, and not the men who made it possible, is further established.

<sup>98</sup> These quotes are from Judeich, *Topographie*<sup>2</sup>, p.339, a source that I have been unable to find. I am quoting them from Thompson and Wycherley, p.122 as a secondary (or possibly tertiary) source.

<sup>99</sup> The monument has not actually been located, but it was included by Pausanias in his tour of the agora.

Nevertheless, the changing political climate of the early Hellenistic era, which will be discussed in detail in the next section, allowed for the proliferation of private monuments within the previously sacred agora.

### **The *Ikria* and the Orchestra**

The agora was well suited to be the scene of festivals and processions. The open space at the convergence of the major streets of Athens and the raised platforms of the stoas allowed large crowds to gather and get good views of spectacles of all kinds. In the literature there is frequent mention of *ikria*, wooden structures of upright posts to which planks were attached for seating during the festivals. Traces of these structures have been found at various points along the Panathenaic way, including prominent sites within the agora square. We do not know enough about the *ikria* to say whether or not they were permanent or temporary.

Other seating for dramatic events in the agora is better known. The *orchestra* is best understood in the context of Timaios' quote of Socrates saying that one could purchase the works of Anaxagoras from the *orchestra*,

and goes on to explain that the *orchestra* was

“the central place of the theater, and a conspicuous place for a panegyris (festal gathering), where stood statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton.”<sup>100</sup>

Archaeologists have determined to within a few yards the location of the Tyrannicides, and we can deduce that the *orchestra* must have occupied the very center of the square.<sup>101</sup> Other evidence from the literature concords with the placement of the *orchestra* in the center of the agora.

The *orchestra* served as a dance floor, which, as has been previously indicated, made it particularly important as a place where the order of the *polis* was revealed in dance. It would appear that the agora, which has so far appeared to be completely free of the axial, frontal architectural accommodations for presentation to a passive audience, did indeed have a theater at its very center. But a careful reading of the history of the Classical period controverts that appearance thoroughly. Photios illuminates the history of the Classical agora with the following explanation of *ikria* as

“the things in the agora from which the Athenians watched of old the Dionysiac contests before the theater in the shrine of Dionysos was constructed”<sup>102</sup>

and in the process indicates that the theater facilities in the agora were replaced by a theater that has subsequently been located

<sup>100</sup> *Lexicon Platonicum*, *Apology* 26 d, e

<sup>101</sup> Thompson and Wycherley, pp.127-129

<sup>102</sup> Photios, *Lexicon*, 526 quoted from the Naber Translation

outside the agora. The poet Suidas records that he competed in the seventieth Olympiad (held at the very beginning of the 5th century) during which the performance was interrupted by the collapse of the *ikria*.<sup>103</sup> Many people were injured and, perhaps as a result, a new theater was constructed in Athens. In accordance with this and other stories, William Dinsmoor and other authorities have dated the construction of a theater on the south slope of the Acropolis to 500BC.<sup>104</sup> That theater has since been named the Dionysos Eleuthereus and is certainly the replacement for the *ikria* at the *orchestra* in the agora. Once again literary, epigraphic, and archaeological testimonia have combined to prove the complete exclusion of theater-like architectural arrangements in the agora. The inherent tendency of these structures, whether simply pedestals for speaking or more elaborate theaters with seating, to allow speakers to get undue political influence over the audience made them inimical to democracy. The Athenians were well aware of this danger and disallowed theatrical accommodations in the agora.

### **The Lykeion**

We have already seen that the prohibition of theatrical arrangements in the agora was accepted despite the crowding that would recommend such conveniences. Large crowds would certainly have benefited from comfortable seating arrangements had the notion of passive audiences been acceptable in the context of the radical equality of Classical Athens. However, the *demos* did not include children, so it was only natural and completely acceptable for children to sit as passive listeners when facing their teachers at school. The three *gymnasia* of Athens relied heavily on the passivity of the large groups of children who attended classes. The informal discussion that characterized the teaching of adults in the philosophical schools of the agora was inappropriate for children, and impractical with large groups.

If we believe Philochoros' assessment that the Lykeion, or Lyceum, the most important of the three schools, was founded by Pericles during the first third of the 5th century,<sup>105</sup> then we can understand the subsequent location of the school facilities at the edge of the city away from the agora. Though the agora, as the center of the city and an easy

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<sup>103</sup> Dinsmoor, p.120

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209 note 1.

<sup>105</sup> The historical 'facts' have led to many inconsistent theories concerning the founding of the Lykeion. Philochoros' argument seems as strong as any and serves my purposes well.

walk from most of the residential neighborhoods of the Classical city, was a likely site for the *gymnasia*, it was in fact rejected in favor of a very inconvenient site in the suburbs. The reasons might be numerous,<sup>106</sup> but our purposes dictate that we should investigate the location of the Lykeion as a function of the Athenian prohibitions against theater arrangements in the agora. The Lykeion required theaters. There was no other practical way for the teachers to address the large groups of students. It is possible that the inconvenient location of the schools with their theaters was due to the threat that they posed to democracy in the agora.

When the students of the Lykeion reached adulthood they were permitted to mingle freely in the agora and participate in the discussions of the various philosophical schools that met there. The meetings of the Stoics in the Stoa Poikile are one such example of the open meetings that must have served as a continuation of the training that was begun in the Lykeion and the other *gymnasia*.<sup>107</sup> Thus we find Plato and Aristotle both teaching children in the Lykeion and leading discussions of philosophy, politics, and science with men in the agora.

### **The Assembly on the Pnyx**

Perhaps the richest and most informative example of the exclusion from the agora of architectural accommodations for focused, sustained oratory is the Theater on the Pnyx hill.

The archaeological remains already interpreted above, supplemented by ancient texts, have shown that the agora was the center of government in Athens. The *Boule* met in a compound at the edge of the agora, the law courts were clustered around the south edge of the square, and the shrines and monuments of political heroes were scattered around the entire open space of the agora. We should assign special significance, then, to any place of political assembly outside the civic agora, particularly if it housed the *Ekklesia*'s largest meetings. As has been already noted in some detail, the *Ekklesia* was the supreme authority, if somewhat mitigated by the *Boule* and the system of *demes*, of Athens during the 5th and 4th centuries. The date of the establishment of the meeting place located on and named after the Pnyx hill is not certain, though archaeological and other evidence suggests that there were theater-like arrangements

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<sup>106</sup> It is tempting to read too much into the placement of the Lykeion away from the agora. Besides the prohibitions on theaters in the agora, as mentioned above, there were also prohibitions on the presence of young children in the agora. This fact, and the obvious educational benefits associated with a suburban site away from the noise and dust of the agora, combine to make our study of the Lykeion suggestive at most. There is too little evidence to justify greater political readings than have already been made through the evidences of the shrines, the pedestals, and the Archeia.

<sup>107</sup> Coulton, pp.10-12, and Wycherley, 1978, pp.227-233

(figure 14) there as early as the end of the 6th century<sup>108</sup> when the theater of Dionysos was also moved out of the agora to the Acropolis. The authorities assume that in the 6th century the people assembled, when they were allowed to, in the agora itself, quite likely on the same *ikria* that served as seating for the *orchestra*. Plutarch tells a story that seems to support this notion. Solon, he writes, “leaped forth suddenly in the agora,” and, when a crowd gathered, climbed up on “the Herald’s Stone”<sup>109</sup> and recited a poem. The stone appears to be a *bema*, perhaps even the *lithos* mentioned above, used by a herald for propaganda. Later, after the replacement of Solon’s government with the tyranny of Pisistratos, the tyrant entered the agora with self-inflicted wounds and attempted to persuade the people that he was the victim of a plot. The people met in assembly in the agora and granted him a bodyguard. Again Solon “came forth into the agora” and reprimanded the assembled people for giving up their freedom to the tyrant. Though this anecdote hardly constitutes sufficient evidence to conclude that the *Ekklesia* met in the *agora* during the 6th century, we can assume, based on probability, that they did.<sup>110</sup> One thing that we can be practically certain of is that the ‘people’ mentioned in the story were not representative of the *demos*, but of

the aristocracy. Any less benign tyranny might not have been so lenient with their popular archon.

We are interested in the Pnyx because it existed separate from the agora despite its purpose as a civic meeting place. Why should an elaborate meeting place be constructed at a short distance from the agora when the civic center still contained more than enough room for its construction? Why was the Assembly constructed so unnecessarily high on the Pnyx? Why was such an expensive semicircular excavation made to accommodate such infrequent meetings? These puzzling questions can be answered only in light of the Athenian understanding of the separation of dialogue and oratory, and of the role of bodily self-presentation in public space.<sup>111</sup>

It is necessary to enumerate the difficulties of the location of the Assembly on the Pnyx instead of in the agora. As the civic center of Athens, the agora seems to be the logical location for the Assembly, unless we can determine that something about it was deemed inappropriate to the agora. As has already been extensively documented, the agora was actually, despite its somewhat chaotic and haphazard appearance,<sup>112</sup> a well

<sup>108</sup> It is of course possible, even likely, that the people assembled on the slope of the Pnyx before there was a theater actually constructed there. It was common practice in Greece for people to assemble casually on an appropriately formed hillside if no other conveniences were available.

<sup>109</sup> *Solon*, 8.2

<sup>110</sup> This assumption is common among historians and archaeologists. See Thompson and Wycherley, p.48

<sup>111</sup> The importance of bodily self-presentation to democracy will be described only briefly in this paper. For detailed studies see Sennett and Gleason. Sennett’s book is general, but has three chapters devoted to Greek and Roman public self-presentation. Gleason focuses on the orators of the Roman Second Sophistic.

controlled civic center from which certain activities were excluded if they were thought inimical to democracy. It is likely, therefore, that the reason for removing the Assembly from the agora was that something in its arrangement or purposes was considered inappropriate to the agora as the place of informal gathering and dialogue. If this was the case, as in some of the other monuments that were not allowed to encroach on the informal space of the agora, such as the Bouleuterion and the *bemae*, then the tremendous inconvenience of constructing the Assembly outside the agora lends validity to the claim that civic architecture and rhetoric were interrelated. The following conditions strongly suggest that the agora was by far the most convenient location for the Assembly:

First, as already mentioned, the agora contained an orchestra that was not only large enough to seat the entire *Ekklesia*, but was their traditional meeting place. Even if the *ikria* were dilapidated, it seems likely that, barring other reasons to remove the *Ekklesia* from the agora, they would continue to meet there, even if that required new and expensive construction.

Second, there was no lack of space for new construction in the agora. Seating the 5,000 members (the number mentioned by

Thucydides as the average number of active members during his day) in the agora would have been easy. Later accommodations seated many times that number easily. In the Classical period much of the agora was still undeveloped and there was certainly no lack of space for such an important civic structure as the Assembly, the meeting place of the premiere governing body of democratic Athens. In Demosthenes time, when the agora was much more encumbered with monuments, the light *skenai*, or market booths, that occupied much of the square, were regularly moved and removed to accommodate the changing civic demands of the space.<sup>113</sup> Surely similar flexibility was possible during the 5th century.

Third, it has been suggested that the Assembly was moved to the hillside in order to take advantage of the natural slope there, but at least two facts belie that reasoning. Not only was the floor of the agora itself sufficiently sloped at the north end to very comfortably accommodate the theater arrangements required by such a large congregation, but when the Theater on the Pnyx was actually laid out at the end of the 5th century it was built *against* the direction of the slope (*figure 15*). The seating was constructed, at tremendous expense during a time when Athens' coffers were severely depleted, on top of a huge artificial

<sup>112</sup> It is important to remember here that the agora was not chaotic and haphazard by design or neglect, but rather because of a lack of dedicated funds during the first half of the 5th century. A later section will treat the intentions of the Classical Athenians for their civic center. Briefly, these were to encircle the agora with a relatively regular series of colonnades and to avoid dominating monuments.

<sup>113</sup> Demosthenes, XVIII, 169

embankment of stone facing into the hill. The speakers' floor and platform actually stood in an excavation in the hillside. The idea that the topography of the hill prompted the move from the agora seems ludicrous in light of the extraordinary efforts of the Athenians to remedy a slope that they obviously considered ill-suited to their needs.

Fourth, the Athenians never considered the site satisfactory. The slope was exposed to the north wind, the climb up the hill was an inconvenience, and the distance from the agora was undoubtedly bemoaned by the members of the *Ekklesia* who began every session with informal conversation in the agora before walking up the hill for the formal meetings.

Despite the enumerated inconveniences of the chosen location of the Assembly on the Pnyx, there is only one record of a formal meeting of the *Ekklesia* in the agora during the 5th century. After the defeat of the allies of the Thirty Tyrants at Peiraeus the men from the upper city of Athens gathered in the agora and deposed the Thirty. This was an exceptional circumstance, and may have resulted in part from the urgency of the task at hand. The subversive revolutionaries must have been able to accomplish their task only in the busy market place, where they could go from citizen to citizen without attracting the attention of the police of the tyrants. A meeting on the Pnyx would have been too easily observed and interrupted by the

tyrants. The agora retained its function as a place of popular and informal assembly.

There were two reasons to move the Assembly out of the agora and to the Pnyx, and they were strong enough to override the previously enumerated reasons to stay in the agora. First was the need for accountability among the voting members of the *Ekklesia*. As Richard Sennett writes:

“To act rationally requires one to take responsibility for one's acts. In the small Bouleuterion seated voters could be individually identified, and so held responsible for their decisions. The organizers of the Pnyx sought to do the same in the larger political theater. The theater's clear design, its raked fan of seats with regular terraces and aisles, made it possible for the spectators to know other men's reactions to the speeches and how they voted, forming a contrast to the visual imprecision of the agora, where a person would have trouble seeing more than the few neighbors standing immediately nearby.

“Moreover, in the Pnyx people had an assigned seat of some kind. The details of how seating worked are unclear; some historians have argued persuasively that throughout the Pnyx people sat according to the tribe to which they belonged. There were originally ten tribes of the city, later twelve or thirteen, and in both its early and later configurations the Pnyx was divided into wedges for them. Each tribe occupied a wedge. When votes were made by ballot in the Pnyx, the ballots—made of stone—were cast by tribes or by *demes*...each group putting the ballots into stone urns, which were then counted and announced for that particular group.”<sup>114</sup>

In addition to the accountability that was ensured for the tribes by counting their votes and assigning them responsibility as a group, the form of the Assembly engendered individual responsibility. Votes were often taken by show of hands, a fact that Sennett fails to mention, thereby requiring the individual members of the *Ekklesia* to commit themselves to personal, individual responsibility for their decisions. But the usual state of affairs in the Pnyx, with voting by ballot and counted by tribe, led to the joint responsibility of the members of the *demos* for the decisions they took. In particular, a tribe that voted for a policy that later failed, even if their vote was not unanimous, was penalized for their failure. The penalties might take the form of withholding money or services from the tribe, or even reproach in court. Thus the tribes as groups, not only as individuals in the agora, held responsibility to the polity, and that responsibility was guaranteed by their accountability in the Assembly. The fan shaped, terraced theater permitted the representatives of each tribe to observe and respond to the votes of the other tribes.

Thus the Pnyx served a crucial service that the agora could not. Though the fundamental wellspring of Athenian democracy was *isegoria*, or ‘equality in the agora’ as

guaranteed in the Cleisthenic reforms, the *parrhesia*, or free speech, which it led to was insufficient in its relatively unstructured form as practiced in the agora. The very freedom, even chaos, of free dialogue, *parrhesia*, in the agora “invited the perils of rhetorical flux.”<sup>115</sup> In other words:

“In the simultaneous and shifting activities of the agora, the babble of voices easily scattered words, the mass of moving bodies experiencing only fragments of sustained meaning.”<sup>116</sup>

In the Assembly on the Pnyx; where the audience congregated in relative silence and passivity, not participating except as listeners, less engaged in the heat of debate than in the agora, facing a trained rhetor; the *Ekklesia* was subject to the single, sustained voice of the speaker. Meaning was focused and structured. It was directed at the people and was artfully composed according to rules of rhetoric to persuade, to convince, to manipulate, and to gain adherents. Thus

“the spaces where people listened, were so organized that the listeners often became victims of rhetoric, paralyzed and dishonored by its flow.”<sup>117</sup>

The second reason for the removal of the Assembly from the agora stemmed from the paradox created by the inadequacies of the two forms of public speech in Athens. If informal dialogue in the agora was sufficient for the individual decision making that was the heart of democracy but was insufficient

<sup>114</sup> Sennett, p.65

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52

for the sustained and focused debates of the various assemblies, then places of focused rhetoric needed to be built. But, once constructed, the axial, fan-shaped theater meeting places of the assemblies allowed the possibility of uncontested, despotic power through rhetoric. The two forms of public speech were fundamentally different, even opposed, and could not exist side by side in the agora. So: out of a need for directed rhetoric and accountability in the assemblies the Bouleuterion and the Theater on the Pnyx resulted, but they could not occupy the agora. The two rhetorical forms required by a democracy that placed accountability on individuals in the agora and on tribes in the assemblies engendered two types of architectural accommodations. The agora, with its constant activity and myriad random chances for interaction between members of the *demos*<sup>118</sup> was the setting for dialogue. The assemblies, which needed to participate in sustained and directed debates under the influence of powerful and educated rhetors sat in theaters which legitimated and facilitated formal rhetoric. The Theater of the *Ekklesia* was removed from the agora at the beginning of the Classical period because its form was incompatible with the activities of the agora. The move required tremendous expense and effort, and was never convenient for the *Ekklesia*, but was so

central to the workings of Classical democracy that it was never questioned.

The Athenians feared the individual, influential orator and his ability to sway the people.<sup>119</sup> They understood the occasional need for formal rhetoric, but carefully separated its architecture from the agora. A skilled speaker, usually a highly educated man reading from a professionally prepared speech, made it his art and his practice to manage the fear and enthusiasm of his audience, to manipulate them and elicit their sympathy. Thus by subtle means the great rhetors defeated the very democracy that guaranteed them free speech. They practiced a gentle form of subversion of the wills of their audience. They were tyrants without doing violence. Historian Josiah Ober:

“The courts, like the Assembly, ran on a fuel of sophisticated rhetoric which the Athenians recognized was potentially corrosive to the machinery of the state.”<sup>120</sup>

In fact, during the wars with Sparta in the last quarter of the 5th century, Thucydides faulted the irrational use of words, the *hubris* of the orators and the *Ekklesia*, and the unraveling of the ideal unity between words and action as the causes of the contention in the Aegean. He wrote: “what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.”

Later he continues, refining his observations:

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<sup>118</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, p.310

<sup>119</sup> The most articulate proponent of this Classical wariness of oratory was Pericles. Ironically, he voiced his wariness in oratory: Pericle’s Funeral Oration, lines 7-8, in Saunders, p.33

<sup>120</sup> Ober, pp.175-176

“To fit in with the change of events words, too, had to change their original meanings. Any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one’s unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action...anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, and anyone who objected to them became a suspect.”<sup>121</sup>

The power of rhetoric held the entire city in a state of suspended reason. Even the usual patterns of dialogue, of listening to both sides of the argument, were disrupted. Democracy was consumed by rhetoric on the Pnyx hill.

The archaeological history of the Pnyx reveals its real nature as a place outside of strict democracy. Ancient records and recent finds have established that the Pnyx was constructed in three phases. In the years preceding 500 a section of the hillside was leveled to accommodate the *bema* and a large audience of aristocratic members of the *Ekklesia* (figure 14). In 404, during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants, the auditorium was reversed so that the audience faced the hill and a terrace was erected for the speakers’ platform. In 330, well after Plato’s observations of the decay of dialogue into formal rhetoric, the Theater was enlarged greatly, and a formal, elaborate colonnade was constructed as a backdrop to the *bema*. The *bema* was reconstructed as an elaborate altar. The three phases of construction

coincided with three non-democratic periods in the history of the city: the initial construction was accomplished in the unstable years between the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/7 and the beginning of the Classical era; the second phase occurred during the oligarchy of the Thirty Tyrants; and the third phase (figure 16) occurred at the very end of Late Classical Athens during an era of notoriously irrational rhetoric and poor leadership in the *Ekklesia*. Though it is true that the treasury of Athens was severely depleted during most of the Classical period, it is noteworthy that the Theater, though already inadequate for its expanded role in Pericles’ Athens, did not receive funding during the construction of the Acropolis monuments. The Golden Age city did not put a high priority on public oratory or its accommodations. Only with the growing popularity and ascendancy of the great orators, Demosthenes, Isocrates, and Aeschines, all active during the middle of the 4th century, did attention return to the Assembly on the Pnyx as a place of passive listening. Athens in the 5th century was still a place of informal gathering and dialogue. Plato inherited this bias and spent a substantial part of his career attacking the rhetors of the 4th century.<sup>122</sup> He saw their artful oratory as a threat to the balanced, individual system of discussion and dialogue in the agora.

<sup>121</sup> Thucydides, 242

<sup>122</sup> *Phaedrus*, 270a, 271d, e, 272

## **The Tholos**

After the demolition of the old Archeia by the Persians in 480, a new tholos, or “round building” was built to replace the old rooms as the new headquarters of the *Prytaneis*, the executive committee of the *Boule*. During the thirty-five or thirty-six days that a tribal contingent held the presidency of the *Boule* its members were fed at public expense in the Tholos. In addition, one third of the *Prytaneis* was expected to be on duty in the building at all times, so at least seventeen men in charge of the emergency operations of the city slept in the Tholos every night of the year in rotation according to tribe. Thus, though the most important meetings were held on the Pnyx, the daily official functions of democracy were performed in the Tholos and the New Bouleuterion, making them, in effect, the heart of official Athens.

The round form of the building, which contemporary writers referred to as the *skias*, or sun-hat, is unique among Athenian 5th-century monuments. Despite the obvious importance of the shape, in light of the function of the building, there have been no consistent theories to explain its break with the agora praxis of long, rectangular stoas and compact rectangular official buildings. The research for this paper has uncovered two possible explanations for the anomalous form of the Tholos.

The first is that the building, so important to democracy, was constructed directly over the Archeia, which had housed aristocrats in a large version of an aristocratic house. In a fine example of the symbolic power of civic architecture, the Tholos occupied the same site as the old aristocratic monument, which some had called ‘the King’s house’, with an entirely new form, thus co-opting the political associations of the site while simultaneously establishing a new institution with none of the aristocratic overtones of the old. It is pure conjecture to associate the round, inherently non-hierarchical form of the building with its democratic purposes, but the connection is tempting. It is just as likely that the shape was pure architectural whim, or even response to the exigencies of an awkward site.

An additional possibility for explaining the odd shape of the Tholos has its roots in tribal ritual. There is archaeological evidence that on certain ritual occasions the members of some tribes retired to religious sanctuaries where they participated in ritual dining as a large group. The dinner was eaten in a large, round tent, probably with a center pole around which tables were arranged at which people ate sitting up. This dining configuration differed greatly from the usual preference of eating in a reclining position on couches in a square room. It is possible that this tribal ritual of social and political consolidation was co-opted by the Athenian state democracy for what would be obvious

symbolic reasons. The tribal contingents of the *Prytaneis* met and consolidated their democratic rule through an architectural and official reperformance of old tribal rites in the Tholos. The Tholos was singularly ill-suited for oratory, but must have encouraged conversation and dialogue between the members of the *Prytaneis*, the governors of Athens.

Whatever the reasons for the anomalous form of the Tholos, it is significant that it was not similar to the Archeia. Its form allowed a complete break from the aristocratic tradition of the site.

The apparently intentional reuse of the site of the Archeia demands further explanation. The Archeia originally served as the palace of the Pisistratids, from which they could control the public life of the city by their presence at the edge of the agora. Following their expulsion in 510 and the institution of the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/7, the elegant and symbol-laden decision was made to build the new dining hall of the governing body of democracy directly over the old dining hall of the tyrants. The site of the Archeia had served as the location of power in Athens since the days of Solon. By rebuilding on the site, the *Boule* established themselves as part of a long tradition of power, but, through an elegant manipulation of architectural form, they were simultaneously able to break with the aristocratic portion of the tradition. The

result was a symbolic transfer of power from the aristocracy to the people. The Athenians, ever conscious of the value of symbols, certainly recognized the economic elegance of the politics of the Tholos.

### **The Stoas**

The buildings and monuments mentioned so far have all been essential to the workings of democracy in the agora, but, even considered as a group, had relatively little impact on the appearance of the agora during the 5th century. The Old and New Bouleuteria and the Tholos formed a precinct at the edge of the agora, and helped to define the limits of the civic square, but were relatively modest buildings with little ornamentation and cheap construction. Their symbolic value was important to the democratic meaning of the agora, but their architecture was unrefined and hardly suited to constitute the whole of the civic architecture of the great city. Many writers have used the scanty, unrefined civic construction of the 5th century as evidence that Athens was still relatively unsophisticated with regards to non-religious building and that the agora functioned as a civic center because it was an open space, not because it was a well-designed stage set for the public life of the city. What they have failed to see is that the stoas around the agora

bridge the perceived philosophical gap between Athens' relatively chaotic and unrefined agora and the highly developed and ordered agoras of the Ionian cities of the day. It is important to study the actual construction of the Athenian agora, but equally important to investigate the intentions of the Athenian builders. What would they have built given an easier site, more abundant funds, and the military security to pursue construction in the agora with the same fervor that they did on the Acropolis? The stoas provide us with the clues that allow us to unravel a complex and rich history of civic building in the Aegean which may inform our understanding of the intentions of the Athenians.

An analysis of the stoas of the 5th century follows:

At the beginning of the 5th century, within a few years after the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes, most of the open space of the agora was dedicated to the temporary structures of the market. The permanent civic structures were centered on the west side of the agora, primarily at the southwest corner where the Archeia and the Precinct of the Mother of the Gods formed the early meeting places for the *Boule* and the *Prytaneis* where previously the Pisistratid tyrants had their

palace. It is not surprising that the agora was still mostly an open space in the city with only minimal accommodations for the young democratic government. Despite the chaos of the agora, its boundaries had already been officially established and were enforced by law against residential encroachment on all sides. Even at the very beginning of the 5th century the boundaries were reinforced by buildings that visually and physically defined the edges. At the northwest corner of the square, next to the road the Panathenaic Way, which led to the important Dipylon Gate, stood the Royal Stoa, or Stoa Basileios.

### **The Stoa Basileios**

The Royal Stoa, or Stoa Basileios, as it later came to be known, is the oldest known in Athens.<sup>123</sup> Its construction probably dates back to the end of the 6th century, though it was rebuilt after the Persians destroyed it in 480. It served for a century as the office of the king archon (the *basileus*), where he was assisted by two *paredroi* in his duties as the enforcer of religious law. Aristotle described his duties as follows:

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<sup>123</sup> Pausanias, *On Elis*, VI, 24, 2, quoted from Thompson and Wycherley, p.82. Pausanias writes about the old-fashioned kind of agora, in which the stoas stood as individual buildings, and the Ionian, (as at Miletos and Priene), in which the stoas are continuous around the periphery of the agora. By Pausanias' definition the agora of Athens remained old-fashioned, though somewhat modernized during the Hellenistic period. It is important to note that the geographic distinction is Pausanias', and that the reasons for the two types of stoa are probably economic as much as geographic; only where adequate funding was available were continuous stoas built. Otherwise their development was piecemeal. See also Wycherley, 1962, pp.110-119

“The *basileus* is first responsible for the Mysteries, in conjunction with the overseers elected by the people...also for the Dionysia and the Lenaion, which involves a procession and a contest... He also organizes all the torch races and one might say that he administers all the traditional sacrifices. Public lawsuits fall to him on charges of impiety, and when a man is involved in a dispute with someone over a priesthood. He holds the adjudications for clans and for priests on all their disputes on religious matters. Also all private suits for homicide fall to him.”<sup>124</sup>

The term ‘king archon’ might be deceptive. He was not a tyrant, but a sort of cardinal in charge of certain civic activities with religious associations. The title may well have been taken from the pre-Classical officer who occupied the stoa in the times of the tyrants.

During the Classical period the stoa housed the *basileus*, his assistants, and the tablets of the law. The portico of the stoa was apparently open to passers-by so that they might enter and read the tablets and see the trophies from past dramatic contests. As proof of the continuing intimate connection between religion and government in Athens, the Stoa was the site of the *lithos*, previously mentioned as the altar, or *bema*, upon which all entering magistrates swore their allegiance to the law. As the shelter for the tablets of the law, and as the backdrop for the *lithos*, the Stoa Basileios served a crucial role

in Athenian civic life. Aristotle reveals the predominant Athenian understanding that the laws of the city were associated with both the *lithos* and the Stoa, and that the connection might have existed from the times of Solon.

“Solon established a constitution and made other laws, and they ceased to observe the ordinances of Draco, except those relating to homicide. They wrote up the laws on *kybeis* and set them up in the Royal Stoa and all swore to observe them. The nine archons, taking an oath at the *lithos*, declared that they would set up a golden statue if they transgressed any of the laws.”<sup>125</sup>

Though archaeological evidence does not support Aristotle’s contention that the Stoa existed in the time of Solon, it is very likely that the *lithos* did, and that from the beginning of the 6th century the laws of the city were given, sworn allegiance to, and published at the site of the Stoa Basileios. In fact, at the end of the 5th century, after the city had undergone various changes in government, from the Cleisthenic democracy of the Golden Age, through the reign of the Thirty Tyrants, and back to democracy, it was decided to reaffirm the old, democratic laws based on the laws of Draco and Solon, and to inscribe them on stone and set them up in the Stoa Basileios. There are numerous references to the *stelai* containing the law in the literature of the late 5th century. The Stoa was enlarged and the entire constitution was placed in the Stoa for the public to read.

<sup>124</sup> Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia*, 57

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 1-2

### **The Stoa Poikile**

The construction of the Stoa Poikile in the agora was a part of the ambitious but not entirely accomplished rebuilding plans of Pericles after the destruction of the Persian wars. It cannot be dated precisely, but was likely completed before 460.<sup>126</sup> Peisanax, a character never mentioned outside of the accounts of the Stoa, was apparently responsible for its construction, but may have been an agent of the government responsible only for the reading of the decree associated with the announcement of the construction project. He became the stoa's eponym until the fame of the many colorful paintings that decorated the interior and exterior of the stoa lent it the popular name Poikile, or many-colored. Peisanax was related to Cimon by marriage, and the stoa may have been part of Cimon's plans for the beautification and ordering of the agora.

Cimon, the *strategon*, or head general of the army, took it upon himself to beautify the agora after the destruction of the Persians in 480. He started with the relatively inexpensive remedies of planting plane trees and laying out paved walks through the agora. His ambitions, though, were to aggrandize the agora, and to unify its edges with stoas as many other Greek cities,

especially in Ionia, were doing at the time. His ambitions were never accomplished: he was ostracized in 461. But he is as likely a candidate as any, including Pericles, as the builder of the Stoa Poikile. It is possible that he donated the funds for the construction. He was immensely wealthy and had made other generous donations to the city, despite the general disapproval with which conspicuous benefaction was held during the 5th century. Cimon's attempts to beautify the agora were in keeping with the general dissatisfaction with the relatively chaotic and archaic civic accommodations of the agora. The combined impacts of Persian vandalism, inadequate public funds, and old construction guaranteed that the Athenian agora, despite the efforts of Pericles, Cimon, and many others, would remain one of the least refined in Greece throughout the Classical period. The construction of the Stoa Poikile, therefore, insignificant as it was in the context of the large agora, should not be trivialized. It represented an under-funded attempt to bring the agora up to Aegean standards during the years when Athens was widely considered the model of democracy.

The stoa itself was a microcosm of the democratic agora. There are numerous accounts of the activity of the stoa. The Scholiasts in Aristophanes' *Frogs*,<sup>127</sup> written in 405, tells the reader that the Hierophant of the Mysteries made an official proclamation

<sup>126</sup> The remains are sparse, but there are many mentions of the stoa in conjunction with stories containing people whose actions can be dated fairly precisely. I am using the dates from Thompson and Wycherley, p.90

<sup>127</sup> Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 369

in the Stoa Poikile. Diogenes Laertius<sup>128</sup> mentions an altar in the stoa, but we know nothing about the cult that it served. Plato never makes the stoa the setting for the dialogues of Socrates, though we know from other accounts that Socrates was a familiar presence in the shade of the stoa.<sup>129</sup> There are many mentions of the 4th-century use of the stoa as a law court.<sup>130</sup> Demosthenes mentions that the stoa was used when the courts were too full, and we know that juries of 500 members met there on occasion.<sup>131</sup> The most celebrated use of the stoa, however, was as the *de facto* headquarters of Zeno's philosophical school, which, perhaps as a nickname, became known as the "stoics" by association with the stoa. Zeno was recorded to pace up and down the stoa addressing his students who sat on the steps.<sup>132</sup> The patience of the stoics for Zeno's constant harangues in the Poikile was exceptional in Athens even during the decline of the 4th century; the stoa was still a place of informal and lively discussion as we see in Lucian.<sup>133</sup>

The stoa continued as an important fixture in Athenian public life for hundreds of years. One can imagine the various philosophical seminars held there, especially in the winter when the south-facing colonnade with its elevated plinth must have been a comfortable

place to relax in the sun and talk. The remains of the stoa have been found in the hastily constructed walls that were erected after the Herulian sack of Athens in ad 267. The stoa might have been destroyed during the Herulian vandalism in the agora.

### **The Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios**

The Stoa of Zeus was constructed directly adjacent to the Stoa Basileios in the third quarter of the 5th century. The stoa was a Monumental building in the Doric order with two projecting wings. In keeping with the building priorities of the 5th century, this religious structure is of the finest Pentelic marble, whereas most of the contemporary civic buildings were of limestone and unbaked brick. The building, despite its overt religious importance, was also a civic monument. It was dedicated to Zeus Eleutherios, the Zeus of Freedom, or the divine guarantor of continuing freedom from foreign domination and slavery. The role of Zeus Eleutherios as a civic Patron, a divine protector of democracy, allowed his cult to be housed in a civic building type. Other

<sup>128</sup> VII, i, 14. I have been unable to locate the primary source in translation. I refer to Thompson and Wycherley, p.93

<sup>129</sup> For example: Plato, *Euthyphro*, 2a. as quoted in Wycherley, 1957, p.25

<sup>130</sup> *Inscriptions Graecae*, II2, 1641, lines 25-30 as recorded in Wycherley, 1957, p.45

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 1670, lines 34-35, and Demosthenes XLV, 17

<sup>132</sup> See note 89.

<sup>133</sup> Lucian, *Jupiter Tragoedus*, 15, 16, 32, and 33.

gods with less civic importance who had temples in the vicinity of the agora were worshipped in more typical temples. Significantly, the cult of Zeus Eleutherios is said to have been founded after the last battle of the Persian wars in 479, at the historical moment when Athens was liberated from the possibility of Persian occupation and mastery. The cult was established to remember freedom, and the association was maintained by adorning the stoa with the shields of the martyrs who had defended Athens from the barbarians. The travel writer Pausanias recorded a dedicatory inscription that he saw on one of the shields:

“When he fell in battle honors were paid to him by the Athenians; amongst other things they dedicated his shield to Zeus Eleutherios, inscribing on it the name of Leokritos and his achievement.”<sup>134</sup>

Later in his account of the stoa Pausanias records the success of the Athenians at the battle of Thermopylai in 480 BC:

“The Attic contingent surpassed the other Greeks in valor that day and of the Athenians the greatest prowess was shown by Kydias, a young man then going into battle for the first time. He was killed by the Gauls, and his family dedicated his shield to Eleutherios Zeus, with the inscription, ‘Here am I dedicated, yearning for the young manhood of Kydias, the shield of an illustrious man, an offering to Zeus, the first shield through which he stretched his left arm, on the day when furious war against the Gaul reached its height.’ This was the inscription on the shield, until Sulla’s men removed (in

86 BC), amongst other things at Athens, the shields in the stoa of Eleutherios Zeus.”<sup>135</sup>

Like the Stoa Poikile the Stoa of Zeus was decorated with pictures. Paintings were used as decorations in both sacred and civic buildings, among them the Bouleuterion and the Classical buildings on the Acropolis. Pausanias’ tour of the building includes the following, which not only describes the content of the paintings in the stoa, but reveals some very important facts about the allegorical content of civic and religious monuments in the agora:

“Behind is built a stoa with paintings of the gods called twelve. On the wall opposite is painted Theseus, and also Demokratia and Demos. Here is also a picture of the exploit at Mantinea of the Athenians who were sent to help the Lacedaimonians...In the picture is a cavalry battle, in which the most notable figures are, among the Athenians, Grylos, the son of Xenophon, and in the Boeotian cavalry, Epaminondas the Theban. These pictures were painted for the Athenians by Euphranor, who also made the Apollo called Patroos in the temple nearby.”<sup>136</sup>

Like the other monuments in the agora, the commemorative content of the Stoa of Zeus was allegorical and political. Instead of simply serving as a shrine to the god Zeus, the stoa contained a picture of Theseus, the mythical founder of Athens and hero of the poor. Instead of serving as a temple where votives and sacrifices could be made, the stoa also contained the allegorical figures of Demokratia and Demos, the objects of Zeus

<sup>134</sup> Pausanias, I.26.2

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, X.21.5-6

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, I.3.3-4

Eleutherios' protection. The remaining pictures mentioned by Pausanias contain images of heroics in battle, where the barbarians were defeated and the good of the people was ensured. Likewise, the shields and other memorials of battle stood as testimonies to the continuing virility of the *demos*. The stoa, ostensibly a religious shrine, was actually a temple to democracy and the *polis*, and the colossal statue of Zeus, spear raised, striding to battle, was democracy placed on an altar, or *bema*, for all to see.

It is entirely appropriate to the civic nature of the stoa that it was used by the Athenians as an informal meeting place. It is clear from several passages in Plato and Xenophon that Socrates often met with his friends and students on the steps of the stoa. As John Camp indicates, there is no direct evidence that the stoa ever served an official function as a civic building, but its placement along the west edge of the agora with the administrative buildings is suggestive. It is possible that the literary references to a 'Thesmotheteion', where the six Thesmothetai, or judicial archons, met to deliberate and dine, is the stoa of Zeus Eleutherios. The informal use of the stoa, however, whatever its official functions, places it squarely within the catalogue of civic buildings in Classical Athens. It was an important fixture in the agora, and perfectly accommodated the dialogue and democratic

conversation of Socrates and other Classical Athenians.

### **The South Stoa I**

It was not until the end of the 5th century that a long stoa was built to define and lend visual order and unity to an entire side of the agora. The so-called South Stoa I was built despite an almost empty treasury at a time when the existing civic offices could no longer contain all of the increasingly specialized administrators and councilors. In addition to their inadequate size the old offices, among them the Bouleuteria, the Tholos, and the various law courts and official stoas, were also deemed insufficiently refined and orderly for the capital of the empire. At the end of the 5th century the agora amply evinced the intentions of the city to enclose, architecturally unify, and otherwise dignify the edges of the agora, but the overall impression was still of an unrefined, disorderly, even shoddy and provincial marketplace. About one third of the linear distance along the edges of the agora square was already faced with regular colonnades, and these were of ever increasing quality and harmony. However, there remained enormous amounts of construction to accomplish the ideal form of the agora. The

South Stoa I, though constructed sloppily and with some of the cheapest materials available, brought the Athenians much closer to their dream of an architecturally unified agora than any other 5th century building, including the monumental Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios. Along with the old southeast fountain house, to be described in this section, the new eighty-meter long stoa<sup>137</sup> effectively unified and defined the previously ragged southern edge of the agora proper. It left only the east edge of the agora without architectural distinction, and must have been perceived as an obvious and major portion of the slowly-built plans to dignify the edges of the agora with stoas; its colonnade served this purpose in overt conjunction with the Stoa Poikile and the Stoa of the Herms on the north, the Stoa Basileios and the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios on the west, and the fountain house and the facade of the Heliaea on the South. In addition, the myriad small, architecturally insignificant shrines that had occupied much of the west edge of the agora during most of the 5th century were removed toward the end of the century to make room for a monumental, axial staircase leading to the imposing facade of the Hepheisteion just outside the agora square. The combined effect of these construction projects

significantly altered the face of the agora. No longer could the monuments of the early part of the 5th century be seen as a haphazard arrangement of buildings at the edge of a bustling market. Their role as the official meeting places of democracy came into abrupt focus with the construction of the South Stoa I. They were members of a larger ensemble for the first time in the history of the city.

The Ionian and many other Greek cities already understood that an effective way to provide dignified accommodations for officials and magistrates was to build their offices behind handsome colonnades. From the end of the 5th century this method of building became very common throughout the Aegean. In fact, there was hardly a consequential town that did not have its agora with at least one simple stoa by the end of the 4th century,<sup>138</sup> despite almost constant war and other setbacks.

Knowing that stoas had already been in use for centuries it is surprising that the prominent site at the south end of the agora had not been occupied by civic buildings already. Though no identifiable remains of a preexisting building have been found on the site of the South Stoa I,

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<sup>137</sup> The trapezoid delimited by the boundary stones has a total circumference of about 750 meters. After the construction of the South Stoa I slightly less than 250 meters, or about one third, of the circumference were formed by regular, unified colonnades. These were mostly the fronts of the stoas, but the facade of the Heliaea might have had a colonnade, and the southeast fountain house was essentially a small stoa in plan. The continuing construction at the edges of the agora well into the 2nd century bc perpetuated this theme until virtually all of the agora was enclosed by architecturally unified colonnades and porticoes. Even the streets leading to the agora were lined with colonnades and stoas.

<sup>138</sup> Coulton, pp.212-295

“one should not rule out the possibility that an earlier and simpler predecessor stood on the site; this would explain the fact that the adjacent square enclosure to the west, identified with probability as the Heliaea, was given a doorway in its east side.”<sup>139</sup>

The site seems the most likely for the few buildings referred to in the epigraphy and literature of the 5th century whose ruins have not yet been located. The trend toward enclosing the agora with unified colonnades might predate the construction of the South Stoa I, but earlier construction was undoubtedly coarse and insignificant in comparison to the grand South Stoa I.

The use of the stoa cannot be determined precisely, though there is compelling evidence that it served functions similar to those of the Stoa Poikile which it faced across the square. The rooms at the back of the stoa, however, seem to have been dining rooms or restaurants, and, knowing the Athenian love of official dining, the stoa may well have housed the lunch rooms in which the magistrates met to make deals and nurture useful relationships with those in power.

These and many other speculations about the form and use of the South Stoa I have been made by Thompson and Wycherley. They conclude:

“Without pressing any particular identifications one can maintain that the stoa played an important and varied part of Athenian

public life, and one can see it as a modest precursor of the great north stoa of the Agora of Priene...(which) was a more sophisticated version of the same type of building, and its character was similarly both religious and political.”<sup>140</sup>

It is noteworthy that the varied functions, religious and administrative as indicated in greater detail by Thompson and Wycherley, but also commercial, were contained without alterity behind a single, regular colonnade. The characteristically Late Classical tendency to avoid individual articulation of buildings in the agoras in favor of completely unified, regular stoas was already fairly evolved at the time of the construction of the South Stoa I. It seems evident that this and the earlier stoas at Athens were the first attempts there to completely enclose the agora with regular colonnades. Thus the eventual form of the agora before the Roman modifications, with its continuous colonnades and studied absence of architectural hierarchy, was late in coming; it had been the theoretical ideal since at least the middle of the 5th century.

### **The Ideal Form of the Classical Agora: Hippodamus and the Classical City.**

As has been briefly mentioned, the agora of Athens was considered suboptimal by the

<sup>139</sup> Thompson and Wycherley, p.76

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.78

Athenians themselves. For a variety of reasons they were unable to build the agora in its ideal form, though a significant amount of construction was accomplished toward the end of the 5th century. The following section will attempt to discover the reasons for Athens' inability to construct an ideal agora.

At the beginning of the 5th century the greatest efforts of the Athenians and their most lavish expenditure of civic funds was devoted to defense. Before adequate and worthy accommodations for the increasingly powerful and specialized government could be constructed the Persians attacked and halted all progress. The year 480 was a pivotal one for the construction of the agora. The invaders left the old buildings toppled and burned. For a decade after the vandalism of the civic architecture of the agora the surrounding residential areas and the shops of the potters and the metalworkers encroached on the agora without official intervention. Reconstruction was slow and, like the original civic development of the square, it started at and focused on the southwest corner which apparently had never ceased to be the center of democratic life in the city. The Tholos was constructed over the ruins of the Archeia for the committee of the fifty *Prytaneis*. The court building and the Old Bouleuterion were restored, and Cimon began his program of beautification. He depended on comparatively inexpensive means, such as planting trees and paving walkways, but later his improvements grew

more lavish and reveal his hopes for the agora. During Cimon's period of greatest influence the Stoa Poikile was constructed, as was the Theseion where the Founder's bones were received. Under the direction of Pericles and Phidias, from the middle of the 5th century, Athens devoted a significant portion of her resources to the elaborate restoration of the shrines. The Hepheisteion was built over the west side of the agora, visible from the orchestra, but its completion was delayed in favor of the Parthenon on the Acropolis. It is interesting to note the Classical Athenian tendency to separate the *res sacra* from the *res publica*; no new shrines or temples were built within the boundary stones of the square for over a hundred years, though religious architecture remained the first priority in Athens until the Hellenistic times. Toward the end of the 5th century the agora was paid more attention, and the great period of civic construction began; a period nonetheless frequently interrupted by debt and the diversion of funds to defense. At the northwest the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios was built by Pericles to accompany the old Stoa Basileios. The South Stoa I, though completed after the years of Pericles and with poor construction technology, represents the goal of the Golden Age to architecturally unify the edges of the agora with colonnades. The peace of Nicias in 421BC was marked by an optimistic renewal of civic building activity, but the ill-fated Sicilian expedition, on the day of the symbolic mutilation of the herms in the

agora, and the resumption of the war with the Peloponnesians placed a tremendous burden on the city's resources. By the end of the war in 404 Athens was exhausted and had forfeited the relative public unity that had characterized her politics during the first half of the century. Without the necessary funds and public mandate to complete the construction of the agora, the Athenian ideal civic agora was never achieved.

The agora of the 5th and early 4th centuries, which are referred to here as the Classical and Late Classical periods, respectively, was surprisingly humble and informal, even chaotic. In his *Gorgias*, Plato has Socrates chide Pericles and Cimon for freeing the reigns of Athens' taste for grandeur and conspicuous display of wealth. These condemnations appear strange to us in light of what we know about the apparently provincial backwardness and poor construction of the agora until we note that Socrates had to support his position by referring only to buildings outside the agora. The buildings in the agora, it seems, were completely in keeping with the ascetic tastes of the great philosopher. Despite the rapid diversification of government into more and more specialized offices and the greatly increased numbers of participating citizens after the establishment of compensation for jurors and other reforms, the physical provisions for these political activities

remained crude and poorly built. Unlike the showpiece Acropolis, with its gleaming marble and fresh paint, a symbol of the Golden Age city and its harmonious politics, the agora was not representative of the wealth of the city. Throughout the Periclean age the agora was little more than a tree-lined open space with sparse and relatively modest architectural facilities. There was no master plan as there was on the Acropolis. Its growth was spasmodic, frequently disrupted by a depleted treasury and the priority of war. The result was that the Greek ideal agora, a coordinated and unified whole of geometric purity, was not completed. There are only slight evidences of the great Classical tradition of agora-building, and Hippodamus, the friend of Pericles who planned the Classical grid and unified agora of Athens' port, Peiraeus, left no distinguishable mark on the agora of the upper city. Even the major stoas completed during and immediately after the building projects of Pericles and Phidias, evidential as they are of an effort to unify the square with continuous colonnades, are each of highly individual character. Thus the Hippodameia, as the newly planned and closer-to-ideal agora of the lower city of Piraeus was named, remained Athens' only uncompromised civic space. The great agora of Athens, the center of democracy and of the empire, was archaic,<sup>141</sup> chaotic, and so contingent upon the topography of the

<sup>141</sup> For a discussion of the importance of *kosmos* (orderliness and harmony) in Classical city-building, see Wycherley, 1978, p.265. The agora of Athens "reflects the astonishing vitality and vigor of Athenian life, and the phases and vicissitudes of Athenian history" rather than the "state of *kosmos* which, in the Greek view, was a constituent of ideal beauty."

ancient city that the very civic forms that its brand of dialogue engendered in newer cities throughout the region were unattainable in Athens. It is surely one of the great ironies of history that Athens was unable to fulfill the expectations of its Classical architects and philosophers until the advent of massive royal patronage in the Hellenistic period. Democratic Athens met in an essentially archaic agora. Oligarchic, Hellenistic Athens met in a quite Classical, democratic agora. Architecture was the *arrière-garde* of political Athens. It was powerfully conservative.

To understand the *avant garde* of Classical civic architecture, the agoras that kept pace with the content of democratic rhetoric, it is necessary to study the so-called Hippodamean towns.

Aristotle, writing in the mid 4th century BC, tells that Hippodamus of Miletos was a student of political theory before he became the only recorded Classical urban planner.<sup>142</sup> Aristotle attributes to him various radical political ideas<sup>143</sup> and the invention of orthogonal street layouts. He wrote:

“The arrangement of the private dwellings is thought to be more agreeable and more convenient for general purposes if they are

laid out in straight streets, after the modern fashion, that is, the one introduced by Hippodamus of Miletos; but it is more suitable for security in war if it is the contrary plan, as cities used to be in ancient times; for the arrangement is more difficult for foreign troops to enter and to find their way about in when attacking.”<sup>144</sup>

This passage and the mentions of Hippodamus in the texts of Harpocration and Photios, in which he is identified as an architect, indicate that Aristotle considered the supposed inventions of Hippodamus to be primarily aesthetic, not necessarily pragmatic. But the lines attributed to Aristotle reveal only a bare concept of the form of an orthogonally ordered city. It is possible, as Ferdinando Castagnoli<sup>145</sup> suggests, to glean additional knowledge from a study of the cities attributed to Hippodamus. Among these are the rebuilt Peiraeus (‘during the Persian Wars’<sup>146</sup> first quarter of 5th century), the original layout of Thurii (444-443 BC), and Rhodes (408-407 BC). The last is highly improbable, though, “since by then he would have reached an age unusual even for city planners.”<sup>147</sup> The ancient literature confuses a number of dates concerning the construction of Peiraeus, and the evidence for the plan of Rhodes is not entirely authentic. Nonetheless, Peiraeus and Thurii are generally recognized as the work

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<sup>142</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, II, 1267b, 21

<sup>143</sup> Wycherley, 1964, first page of article.

<sup>144</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 1330b, 21

<sup>145</sup> For more detailed discussions of Hippodamus see Castagnoli, pp.66-72, Ward-Perkins, 1974, pp.14-17, and Owens, pp.51-75

<sup>146</sup> Quoted from Castagnoli, p.66

<sup>147</sup> Zucker, p.33

of Hippodamus. In addition, various scholars<sup>148</sup> have agreed, supposing that he was born at about 500, that Hippodamus was also involved in the replanning of his hometown of Miletos after its complete destruction at the hands of the Persian invaders in 479.

### **Peiraeus**

Peiraeus, the busy and prosperous port town of Athens, was Hippodamus' most famous project, and the central agora was named after the architect: '*Hippodameios agora*'.<sup>149</sup> Peiraeus was referred to in all of the ancient authors who mention Hippodamus, the only town to be so consistently catalogued.<sup>150</sup>

It is ironic that Peiraeus should have surpassed Athens as the premier example of democratic, Classical planning. The smaller city had long been considered a mere appendage to the larger polis of Athens. But, after the replanning of Hippodamus in about 460, the town became, in addition to its role as the port of Athens and an important

industrial area, a showplace of 'modern' urbanism and so superior to Athens in its clear, geometric layout and broad, unified agora that "Themostocles thought Peiraeus more useful than the upper city," says Thucydides,<sup>151</sup> "and often advised the Athenians, if they were hard pressed, to go down to it (Peiraeus) and face their enemies with the fleet."

It is difficult to imagine the importance of Peiraeus during the flowering of Athens. The archaeological remains are very scarce and elusive, and, consequently, much epigraphic evidence has undoubtedly been lost. Nonetheless, Peiraeus was unique in importance. Situated on a small, almost insular peninsula seven kilometers to the southwest of the agora of Athens, it was developed by Themistocles and his successors in the 5th century as a strong and well-planned port to replace the old roadstead at Phaleron. Besides its role as a naval base and the place of transport for Athenian products such as pottery and oil, it was also a sort of *nemesis* of Athens, complete with all of the facilities of government, but contrasting in natural setting and urban form. If Themostocles' advice had been followed, Peiraeus might have become

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<sup>148</sup> Among them: Castagnoli, von Gerkan, Ward-Perkins, Judeich, etc. Their reasoning generally similar: they postulate that if the architect and planner was in Miletos, old enough to be involved, and one of the few experts available during the years of reconstruction, it was highly unlikely that his talents would have been ignored.

<sup>149</sup> Xenophon, *Hellenika*, II, 4, 11

<sup>150</sup> The lexicographers Harpocration, Hesychius, Photios, and many others all mention Peiraeus as the work of Hippodamus, but the other cities associated with his work are mentioned only sporadically, as if their formal characteristics only recommend them as Hippodamean towns. Hippodamean, in the minds of these writers, might have meant 'gridded, with a regular agora' more than 'built by Hippodamus'.

<sup>151</sup> Thucydides, I.93.7

the new center of Attica, replacing the venerable but archaic and unplanned city of Athens, which might have become a mere relic, full of history and religious associations but devoid of appropriate urban form.

The modern port of Athens rests directly on top of the old city of Peiraeus, and so obliterates almost all of the remains of the Hippodamean town. The scanty remains, however, are highly illustrative of the ideals of Hippodamus. Bits of once impressive fortifications and gates have been unearthed and reveal the limits of the city. The remains of the less substantial constructions are more elusive.

*Horoi*, or boundary stones, have been found in abundance, and demarcate areas of particular use. One set delimits the harbor, another the grid of streets, and yet others set the bounds for the propylon and the agoras, one in the middle of the city, another at the edge of the harbor. These may be assigned to the work of Hippodamus, the essence of whose planning methods consisted of *diairesis*, the meticulous division of a site, and *nemesis*, or 'dealing out' the functional allocation of subareas within the site. The site was very difficult, with uneven edges and steep topography, and we can only guess at the particulars of Hippodamus' solutions to these problems. There are no more than hints left. The lines and intersections of the

straight streets have been discovered at various locations throughout the modern city. Vestiges of orthogonal intersections remain, which, combined with the scanty descriptions in the literature, make it certain that the city were planned according to a geometrically regular grid of rectangular blocks with a hierarchical system of streets, some as wide as fifteen meters. At the outlying areas of the city some concessions were made to topography. Only the slightest remains of houses are to be found, and these are similar to those in Athens, except entirely rectangular.

Of primary interest to this study is the form of the Hippodamean agora. It lay at the center of the town and was connected to a second, commercial agora at the seaport.<sup>152</sup> The apparently exclusive commercial use of the port agora justifies the use of the word *emporion* to identify the area in the ancient literature; it was a place of buying and selling, and perhaps handle most of the imports and exports that moved through the bustling harbor. The remains of continuous, regular stoas have been found at the *emporion*, effectively placing it in the architectural lexicon of Miletos, Rhodes, and Priene rather than with the archaic agoras of Athens and Corinth. Thus an archaeological and historical link is established between the Hellenic, Classical planning tradition, insofar as it was concerned with geometric regularity, unified, continuous stoas in the

<sup>152</sup> Pausanias' account of Peiraeus is not as detailed as that of Athens. He mentions only the general layout and disposition of the major features of the city.

agoras, and the partial segregation of commercial from civic activities, and the later Hellenistic tradition. Late Hellenistic Priene, with its grand stoas and architecturally unified agora, was the direct descendant of the Classical Hippodamean towns. What is more, throughout most of the Golden Age of Athens the Athenians were within walking distance of a fine example of orthogonal planning. It is not surprising, then, that the most important democratic assemblies of the upper city occasionally convened in Peiraeus.<sup>153</sup> If the 5th century Athenians shared any of the views of their 4th century counterparts, namely Aristotle and Plato, about the superior form of Peiraeus, then Athens must have seemed backwards indeed.<sup>154</sup> There is no substantial evidence that the *demos* ever seriously considered moving their operations to the port city, but the idea of rebuilding the agora of Athens, where the venerable ancient shrines might have been incorporated into a modern, orderly agora like that of Peiraeus must have been discussed. With sufficient time and funds it might have been built.

Thus the form of Peiraeus, so important in its day, dimly emerges. The city was considered beautiful in its prime. The site was more

difficult than either Miletos or Rhodes, and was apparently mastered by Hippodamus. The older upper city and Peiraeus must have contrasted strikingly. Whereas Peiraeus was planned all at once according to the genius and vision of one man, Athens grew haphazardly over many centuries. Thus the Greek ideal of *kosmos*, of beauty, harmony, and order was achieved only in individual buildings in Athens, but throughout the port city of Peiraeus.

Most of the conclusions made concerning the specific form of the agora of Peiraeus have been derived from the more complete archaeological remains at the other Hippodamean towns. The archaeology of Miletos and Rhodes, and the surviving descriptions of Thurii reveal the characteristics that may have been Peiraeus' also. These cities were prominent in the democratic world of the Aegean during the 5th century, and participated with Athens in an active and mutually beneficial exchange of intellectual, political, and cultural achievement.

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<sup>153</sup> There are slight remains of a great theater at Peiraeus, used not only for dramatic presentations but as a meeting place for the general *Ekklesia* of Athens. One inscription mention an Old (possibly pre-Hippodamus?) Bouleuterion and an Old Strategeion in the city. See Rhodes, p. 120. It appears that the democratic, Cleisthenic offices of Athens were duplicated in Peiraeus so that the instruments of government could occasionally function in the harbor town.

<sup>154</sup> In fact, the dialogues of Socrates in Plato's *Republic* take place in Peiraeus, as if the Hippodamean town were somehow more appropriate than the venerable city of Athens to radical political discussion. At very least the discussion of the ideal forms floating over the mouth of the cave must have derived meaning from the context of sparkling new Peiraeus in a way impossible in Athens except on the Acropolis.

## **Miletos**

The relationship between the great Ionian city of Miletos, longtime enemy of the Persians, and Athens was tumultuous but marked by profoundly influential intercourse. In 499 Miletos instigated the Ionian revolt, at the end of which was the city's defeat at Lade. The city was captured, the temple of Didyma was burned, and the city was razed. The loss ended what had been a long period of great prosperity in which the Milesian philosophers Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, the mapmaker Hecataeus, and many fine painters and sculptors had ensured Miletos' position among the cultural and intellectual elite of the Greek world.

After the Persian defeat at Mycale in 479 Miletos joined the new Delian league under the leadership of Athens. There were some hostilities between the two cities and Athens imposed a garrison and imperial controls on the city. Despite the problematic relations between Miletos and Athens, many of the best minds and talents of the Ionian city left the East and settled in Athens where the intellectual climate was more conducive to their creative endeavors. Among these were the poet Timotheus, Aspasia, the mistress of Pericles, and Hippodamus, whose first recorded commission as an urban designer was the port city of Peiraeus.

Hippodamus is an elusive figure, and it is not entirely clear that he spent a few years in Miletos after the Persian conquest, though some evidence suggests that he did. It is therefore safe to assume that he, as the only systematic urban designer mentioned in the literature of the times, participated in, or possibly took charge of, the redesign and reconstruction of the city. The new city was based on an orthogonal grid of streets and had an enclosed, regular agora at its center (*figures 10 and 11*). These were the hallmarks of Hippodamus, and we can assume that he was involved in their design.

Recent excavations have revealed one of the most sophisticated urban designs of the Classical era. The city was based on a regular grid of streets, rigidly orthogonal, containing two distinct but contemporary grids of uniform housing blocks separated from each other by an elaborate but, as was typical of the Greeks, informal zone of public buildings (*figure 11*). The principle of the layout is deceptively simple. It actually contained subtleties that can only be glimpsed today but which made it one of the most admired and beautiful cities of its day. These subtleties arose from the application of the grid to the highly irregular terrain, from the juxtaposition of private housing blocks to the public architecture of the area surrounding the agora,<sup>155</sup> and from the variations of street width that must have corresponded to

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<sup>155</sup> As at Megara Hyblea, according to Vallet, 1973, p.4

neighborhood divisions and commercial activities throughout the city.

The civic realm of the city, with which we are primarily interested here, was provided ample space in the plans, though the construction of the buildings required centuries. There was sufficient room granted for all of the civic, religious, and mercantile institutions of the large city, and these were arranged carefully within the public area so as to remain close but separate, as befitted the ideal of the Classical age. Each of the zones within the civic area of the city was placed in a clear, functional relationship to the harbor, the domestic quarters, and the landward highways.

Castagnoli notes that the plan was conceived all at once, but that many centuries were to pass before it was completed.<sup>156</sup> As the city grew and recovered from the Persian sack its various parts were able to expand accordingly within the open-ended framework of the grid of streets. The North Agora was the first area to be developed, in accordance with the Greek notion that a settlement could not be a *polis* without an agora where the life of the city might be transacted. A long stoa of offices and shops faced the harbor. There was a colonnaded court behind it fronting an impressive public

Prytaneion. These projects were begun in the 5th century, but only very slowly completed. The South agora, with its vast, nearly symmetrical square surrounded by completely unified stoas, was planned in the time of Hippodamus, but was not completed until the end of the 4th century after the occupation of Miletos by the Macedonians and the accompanying patronage of wealthy individuals. Throughout the 5th and 4th century developments there is ample evidence to suggest that the Classical plans, so carefully conceived in the first third of the 5th century, were rigorously followed until the Roman occupation. Though the architectural treatment of the stoas in the South Agora was certainly Hellenistic, the master plan within which they were built, and according to which they conscientiously maintained a regular, unified façade surrounding the agora, was Classical and Hellenic.<sup>157</sup> In fact, the geometric regularity and the ideal of the unified, enclosing colonnade may have had Ionian precedents.<sup>158</sup> Even in the Hellenistic era, at the zenith of scenographic planning, the architects of the Milesian agora assiduously avoided axial monumentality. There is every reason to believe that their adherence to the Classical plan influenced them in that decision. The informal, non-hierarchical, but elegant plans that were endemic to the

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<sup>156</sup> Castagnoli, p.14

<sup>157</sup> Ward-Perkins, 1974. p.14

<sup>158</sup> Zucker, pp.33-34 It is also interesting to note that the agora of Megara Hyblea, founded by Attic settlers in 728 bc, had an almost perfectly regular and orthogonal street grid from the very beginning, and was centered on an agora with regular, unified stoas on three sides. It is evident that Hippodamus was more of a codifier of previously existing conventions of urban design than an inventor of new systems.

democratic 5th century determined the physical form of the city throughout the Hellenistic period, even though the political structure and associated rhetorical forms practiced in the agora of Miletos after Alexander were inherently formal and hierarchical.

The story of Miletos must necessarily lead to the following questions: If Miletos was reconstructed to better approximate the ideal urban forms that were considered representative of democracy, then why didn't Athens, as the cradle of democracy and as the head of the Empire do likewise? Why did the Classical cities of Peiraeus, Miletos, Olynthus, Rhodes, Thurii, Priene, and many others build according to the ideals of Hippodamus while the largest and oldest cities of the Greek world did not? If Hippodamean planning is to the Classical Parthenon what the ancient agora of Athens is to the archaic Megara, then why did Athens, devoted as she was to democracy, continue to exercise public life in a pre-democratic agora? The similarities between the rest of the Hippodamean towns described in this section, combined with what we know of the political history of Athens, will provide us with answers to these questions.

## Thurii

Thurii, founded by Pericles' Panhellenic Foundation in 443 BC, replaced and occupied a site close to the ancient city of Sybaris in the south of Italy. It was a colony of the democratic city, and was intended to serve as a trade and military outpost for the Empire. Its wealthy population of Athenians, not the usual caste of outlaws, expatriates, and disenfranchised poor, included Herodotus, Lysias,<sup>159</sup> and Hippodamus, who apparently planned the city and made it his home for a number of years.<sup>160</sup> The plan of the city, unavailable in illustration, conformed to the Hippodamean standards: an orthogonal grid of streets, here *per strigas*, centered on an extensive compound of public spaces and buildings, all of them unified behind continuous façades of stoas. Though the city was short-lived, and its prosperity even briefer, Thurii remains interesting because it reveals the intentions of Athenian builders during the peak of the Golden Age. Though Peiraeus bears witness to the Classical Athenian preference for geometrically pure civic patterns and unified, non-hierarchical agoras, Thurii is a second witness to these preferences, and elucidates the Greek understanding that the orthogonal grid and the uniform agora were not considered valuable for pragmatic reasons only; they

<sup>159</sup> *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p.512

<sup>160</sup> Castagnoli refers to an evidential reference to Hippodamus in a work by Hesychius, the Hellenistic lexicographer whose work survives only in badly damaged medieval manuscripts. I have been unable to locate the source.

were worthy to be the civic accommodations for Athens' wealthiest and most democratic colony.

The actual site of the city has not been located. The only remaining description of Hippodamus' plan is found in the writings of Diodorus,<sup>161</sup> which have been clarified and published by William Dinsmoor as follows:

"...in 443 BC, Hippodamus went with Athenian colonists to Thurii in South Italy, where he laid out another chessboard plan, divided into twenty wards by three main avenues crossed by four at right angles; presumably there were intermediate minor streets."<sup>162</sup>

At the center of the grid was the agora as already described. There may have been separate buildings for the *Boule* and the other offices of the democratic government, though they are not mentioned. One can assume that, as an appendage of Athens and as a representative of her way of governance, Thurii had an active *Ekklesia* and law courts, and a public life centered on discussion in the agora, though this reference to Thurii is intended as evidence to support the claim that the Athenians considered the ideal form of their cities to be in accordance with the Hippodamean system. No conclusions concerning the correspondence of architecture (for which we have sparse information) and the rhetoric of the city (about which we can make only educated guesses) will be made here, as they would

constitute circular reasoning and a definite confirmation bias. It is sufficient to conclude that Thurii, a representative Hippodamean new town, was laid out according to the 5th century Athenian ideal. To link that architectural ideal with the coeval Athenian political ideal of equality and dialogue in the agora is only logical, especially in light of the compactness and consistency of the Greek world view which tended to circumscribe all facets of civic life into one integral whole. The social and architectural history of Thurii, especially when yoked to those of Peiraeus and the other Hippodamean towns yet to be discussed, constitutes a convincing testament to the architectural aspirations of Athens: they considered their own agora archaic and suboptimal, and built regular, architecturally unified, non-hierarchical agoras when circumstance permitted.

## **Rhodes**

Though the role of Hippodamus in the planning of Rhodes has been adequately contested, his methods are evident in the archaeological remains. The influence of Hippodamus was such that his methods of city building remained in effect long after his

<sup>161</sup> Diodorus XII,10. I rely on Dinsmoor, p.214 as a secondary source. The original source is unavailable. See also Ward-Perkins,1974, p.16, who is more certain of the minor streets, though he finds no mention of a civic agora.

<sup>162</sup> Dinsmoor, p.214

death, and the writers of the 4th century even wrongly attributed a number of cities to him. Strabo, writing in the 1st century before Christ:

“The present city (Rhodes) was founded at the time of the Peloponnesian war by the same architect, as they say, who founded the Piraeus.”<sup>163</sup>

The incorrect attribution undoubtedly arose from the plan of Rhodes, which was virtually identical to the plans of the proven Hippodamean towns.

The city was founded in 408/7 according to an ambitious plan of streets on an orthogonal grid with broad avenues every 600 feet. The chosen site is ringed with hills and sits on natural terraces facing a series of harbors. The plan covered more than four square kilometers of steeply-sloped land in such a dramatic arrangement that Diodorus termed the city *theatroeides*,<sup>164</sup> like a theater. The central theme of the plan of Rhodes is, as E. J. Owens writes, ‘planned monumentality’. He continues:

“The purpose of Hippodamean planning was to achieve the ideal state, totally balanced and fully integrated. In laying out Piraeus, Thourioi (Thurii) and Rhodes attempts were made to achieve this. All three show a degree of unity and cohesion between the different elements of the cities

which had hitherto not been apparent in town planning.”<sup>165</sup>

This attempt was especially effective at Rhodes, which inspired Aelius Aristides’ description which emphasizes the order, overall unity, and cohesion of the plan.<sup>166</sup>

This overarching unity was pursued even at great cost. The topography of Rhodes was not conducive to the construction of straight streets, so we are once again forced to conclude that the Hippodamean plans were conceived for reasons not entirely pragmatic. The ‘planned monumentality’ of Rhodes was revered in its day, and undoubtedly served as a paradigm for the Hellenistic builders who brought scenographic planning to its zenith by modifying and perfecting the principles of Hippodamus.

The majority of the authors who have dealt with the Hippodamean tradition and the archaeology of the 5th-century ideal cities have focused on the pattern of streets and on the elaborate drainage systems that were common after the construction of Rhodes. Only occasional mention is made of the agoras that were integral to the street grids. This is excusable for the archaeologists who are concerned with recording facts and who find only fragments of the fragile stoas while the paved streets often survive intact, but the

<sup>163</sup> Strabo, XIV, 654

<sup>164</sup> Diodorus XIX, 45; XX,83. See also Vitruvius’ description of Helicarnassos, (II, 8, 42)

<sup>165</sup> Owens, p.60

<sup>166</sup> Aelius Aristides, XLIII, 6. I use Owens, p.61 as a secondary source. Aelius’ further comments that the entire city of Rhodes had the unity and cohesion of a house lead me to consider the obvious parallels between the courtyard of the typical Aegean houses of the day, in which most of the daytime domestic activities took place, and the agora of Rhodes. Might the agora have been as integrated into the rest of the city, and as indispensable, as the courtyard to the house?

agoras, no matter how elusive their remains, must constitute the locus of our study of Greek urban culture. Little has been written concerning the agora of Rhodes, but enough is known to place it squarely within the Classical tradition of Hippodamus and the larger tradition of the so-called 'Ionian' agoras.

Pausanias, the ancient travel writer, classified the agoras of the cities he visited, and defined them with the shorthand nomenclature 'archaic' and 'Ionian'. His classification was based on the formal characteristics of the two distinct types of agoras commonly found in his day.

The 'archaic' agoras were considered to be the ancient, contingent, irregular open spaces that were found in the oldest cities, such as Athens, Corinth, and Delphi. These were considered to be remnants of pre-democratic society and less than ideal for the workings of the progressive democracies.

The 'Ionian' agoras were the new, planned, architecturally unified, regular agoras of the Classical, or Hippodamean, towns and those towns that were forced to rebuild after

military defeat. Dinsmoor attributes the uniform and formal character of the Ionian agoras to the rigidity of the Hippodamean street grids which required the agoras, as supposedly less important than the streets, to conform to the orthogonal geometry of the grid and to make certain concessions to traffic. Traffic and streets, according to Dinsmoor, were responsible for the regularity and geometric purity of the surrounding stoas, and the Ionian preference for Π-shaped main stoas, set off center from the crossing street to keep traffic out of the middle of the square.<sup>167</sup> E.J. Owens likewise assumes that the Ionian agoras were products of street-grid geometries.<sup>168</sup> We must evaluate these assumptions within the larger context of Greek tradition, politics, and building practices. There is no evidence to support the contentions of Dinsmoor and Owens. On the contrary, the fact that the agoras were built and magnificently decorated centuries before even the most important streets were paved<sup>169</sup> or otherwise embellished suggests that the agoras themselves determined the organization of the street grid, or at least served as a generating module for the street grid in those cities that were planned all at once. Not only

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<sup>167</sup> Dinsmoor, pp.263-264, and 333

<sup>168</sup> Owens, p.62. Wycherley, 1962, pp.70-78 also concludes that the street grids were inviolate in the "Ionian" cities.

<sup>169</sup> An exception to this rule can be found in a number of the cities sited on very steep terrain. Their streets were often paved at the same time that the agora was constructed to avoid erosion. The true embellishment of the streets, however, consistently postdates the embellishment of the agora, usually by centuries. In most of the Greek towns streets were allowed only the barest of functional amenities until the Romans introduced the colonnaded, marble-paved streets that were essential to their monumental city scapes. In the Greek cities the domestic quarters of the city continues to stand in stark contrast to the public areas, particularly the agora. Streets, it seems, were not developed architecturally because they were seen as items of pure necessity and therefore engineering, not architectural, projects.

does the archaeological evidence suggest that the agoras were built first while the streets were simply marked with surveying stones to delimit future domestic development, but there are ample remains at Miletos, Rhodes, Assos, Heraclea, Latmos, Cnidus, Priene, and many other Hippodamean towns that demonstrate the prepotence of the agora over the street grid as a priority in planning decisions. At Priene especially the overarching importance of the agora is abundantly evident: The street grid is interrupted at no fewer than nine points by the agora, four major streets were unnecessarily narrowed and forced up stairs to enter the artificially terraced<sup>170</sup> agora floor, and three streets were rerouted around the outside of the agora stoas.<sup>171</sup> It is clear that the agoras, not the street grids, were the first priority in the design of the Hippodamean towns. There is not one clear example in all of the archaeological literature to suggest that the streets determined the form of the agoras except in their most general geometry. The agoras, on the other hand, were consistently given priority at the cost of traffic efficiency. J. B. Ward-Perkins has observed that the grid of the Classical city “was the formal planning unit and within it individual buildings had to find their

appropriate place.”<sup>172</sup> Archaeology supports his contention inasmuch as it applies to domestic and freestanding monumental buildings, but his statement cannot be accurately applied to the stoas that surrounded the agoras. These broke the grid at their convenience.

In addition it is crucial to note that the orthogonal street grid was not an original contribution of Hippodamus, though the unified agora was. As Castagnoli perceives, ‘Hippodamean’ must be considered a label.<sup>173</sup> It is applied to those cities that conform to the precepts that he tabulated and formalized. He should not be credited with the invention of orthogonal planning; he was “at best an urbanist who based his fame on theorizing a preexisting system”<sup>174</sup> of gridded layouts,<sup>175</sup> seen as early as the end of the 7th century in colonies such as Paestum.<sup>176</sup> As other authors<sup>177</sup> have indicated, the essence of Hippodamean urbanism is not so much in the grid of streets as in the monumental squares, the overall unity and regularity of civic space, and the interest in scenographic effects. We cannot rightly identify Hippodamus, whose work spanned from the design of Miletos in the 470s through the middle of the 5th century, as the inventor of

<sup>170</sup> Coulton, p.64

<sup>171</sup> Per the reconstructions illustrated in *Ibid.*, p.278, and plate 5.

<sup>172</sup> Ward-Perkins, 1974, Introduction

<sup>173</sup> Wycherley, 1949, p.16, and Martin, 1951, p.347

<sup>174</sup> Castagnoli, p.71

<sup>175</sup> Stanislawski, pp.1-18

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39-44

<sup>177</sup> See Pace, p.254, and Cultrera, p.374

the orthogonal system of planning. Its origins were already ancient and well known. To Hippodamus, then, the street grids at Miletos, Thurii, Peiraeus, and possibly but not likely, Rhodes, were simply practical and efficient means to provide domestic quarters in planned cities. It is evident that his real innovations were in the agoras, where he applied his genius and exceeded the tradition in every way.<sup>178</sup>

It is equally evident that the form of the agoras continued to be determined by political ideals and the rhetorical forms that were employed in pursuit of Classical democracy. During the end of the 5th century and throughout the 4th the agora evolved to accommodate increasing specialization and compartmentalization of the traditional activities associated with the agora (*figure 5*). In the 4th century Aristotle noted these changes with relief, but bemoaned the fact that in Athens the agora remained haphazard and backwards. He suggests that the Athenian agora, long the center of democratic discussion in his city, still lacked refinement and the modern amenities of a democratic civic square. He refers to the 'new' (undoubtedly gridded, Hippodamean) cities as examples of the ideal

form of cities.<sup>179</sup> Recommendations that the civic and commercial activities of the agora be separated,<sup>180</sup> both for functional reasons and for the sake of dignity, follow, as does the recommendation that the sacred shrines, the domestic quarters of the city, the commercial market place, and the civic functions of the agora be entirely segregated.<sup>181</sup> With apparent reference to Aristotle, Pausanias, writing two centuries later, praises the city of Tanagra in Boeotia because the people have their houses in one place, their shrines in a separate place, up above, "a pure and holy spot away from men."<sup>182</sup> R.E. Wycherley qualifies this desire for separation of *res sacra* and *res publica* with the example of Athens:

"At Athens such segregation was obviously not achieved, or even desired. There is no reason why one should not accept the district that we have been examining (the center of Athens) as fairly typical. Some cities possessed what was called an Agora of the Gods, a closely packed assemblage of important cults. At Athens the Acropolis was an elevated place, pure and holy and aloof from common human affairs; and several different spots might be considered in some sense Agoras of the Gods. But gods and heroes also lived in many modest or even humble abodes on ordinary streets as next door neighbors to ordinary citizens."<sup>183</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Pausanias (VI, 24, 2) labeled the agoras of the Hippodamean towns Ionic. Though this lineage is generally apparent, the improvements made by Hippodamus to the earlier Ionian agoras were so striking that he must be considered an innovator in this respect. One could not expect him to have spent his first thirty years in Ionia, and apparently receive his architectural training there, without emerging deeply influenced by the Ionian style.

<sup>179</sup> In fact, there was apparently a general dissatisfaction with the "narrow streets in the same irregular manner as Athens." See Philostratus *Apoll.* II, 23, as quoted in Castagnoli, p.72"

<sup>180</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.11.2

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.11.1

<sup>182</sup> Pausanias, 9.22.2

but there is copious evidence to suggest that the Athenians *did* desire segregated civic and commercial activity. Socrates is pictured in the opening scenes of Plato's *Lysis* walking from the Academy to the Lykeion skirting the city wall. He meets his friend Hippothales, who invites him to join him in philosophic and political discussion in a new *palaestra*.<sup>184</sup> The two are relieved to have the opportunity to enjoy the relative peace and quiet of a refuge outside the city walls and far from the noise and bustle of the agora, where Socrates was usually seen in discussion. Despite the close presence of boys wrestling for their military training, others sacrificing at an altar, others engaged in enthusiastic dice games, and a large group playing a ball game in the courtyard, Socrates finds, in contrast to the agora, a relatively peaceful quiet that is perfect for an afternoon of discussion. Likewise in the *Charmides*: Socrates describes how after his return from the campaign at Poteidaia he returned to Athens to seek out his customary places for debate, and significantly includes the quiet, suburban retreat of the *palaestra* of Taureas, far from the agora in the southern part of Athens. The constant noise and

confusion of the commercial activities of the agora often overwhelmed the quiet debates that happened along the stoas and near the civic monuments. The confusion of the agora is evident in Athenaeus' famous citation of Eubolos, the 4th-century comic poet:

"As Eubolos says in the *Olbia*, you will find everything sold together in the same place in Athens— figs, summoners, bunches of grapes, turnips, pears, apples, witnesses, roses, medlars, haggis, honeycombs, chick-peas, lawsuits, beestings-pudding, myrtle, allotment machines, *hykinthos*, lambs, water clocks, laws, indictments."<sup>185</sup>

Lysias, writing at the end of the 5th century, emphasizes the immixing of civic and commercial:

"For each of you is in the habit of frequenting some place, a perfumer's shop, a barber's, a cobbler's and so forth; and the greatest number visit those who have establishments nearest the agora, the smallest number those who are furthest from it. So if any of you finds those who come to my place guilty of base conduct, he will obviously find those who spend their time with the others similarly guilty; and that means all Athens; for you are all accustomed to frequent some place or other and spend time there."<sup>186</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Wycherley, 1978, p.200, my parentheses.

<sup>184</sup> *Palaestrae* were privately-owned small buildings with central courtyards. The ground was covered with sand for wrestling, and accommodations for bathing and dressing were common. The owners were usually wealthy schoolmasters, friends and patrons of artists and philosophers, so the *palaestrae* gradually assumed the role of secluded meeting places and lecture halls. Though their origins are in athletic training, the modern equivalents of the word *palaestra* have meanings more associated with discussion and teaching than with sport. For example: in modern Spanish the word *palestra* signifies a place of public gathering and debate, and in modern Portuguese a *palestra* is a discussion or didactic argument between teacher and student. The original association to wrestling continues as a metaphor for the contest of debate. In this sense Socrates went to the *palaestra* to 'wrestle', though he sat in the shade with his friends.

<sup>185</sup> Athenaeus, XIV, 640b-c

<sup>186</sup> Lysias, XXIV, (*For the Cripple*), 20

The agora was chaotic, noisy, and crowded, verging on ochlesis.<sup>187</sup> Its indiscriminate tolerance of even the most incompatible activities was Aristotle's complaint and the reason that the otherwise gregarious Socrates sought quiet in the suburban *palaestra*. There is little wonder that Athens purposed to separate the commercial activities from the civic. We can only wonder that it took them so long. The actual separation was not accomplished until the construction of the South Square between 180 and 150 BC, which left the agora divided into a small rectangular, essentially Hippodamean, square circled by magistracies and law courts, and a larger square in which both civic and commercial activities were allowed. Again history reveals a great irony in the development of the Athenian agora: the Classical ideal of separating commercial and civic activities was not accomplished until long after the importance of the agora was diminished by the exigencies of Hellenistic oratory. The agora of the 5th century was often too chaotic and noisy to accommodate dialogue, its most lofty activity. The agora of the 3rd century was elegantly suited to dialogue, per the recommendations of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, but had, by then, become the setting for oratory. It is this Greek conservatism of architecture, always lagging behind rhetoric, that makes the Ionian ideal cities so theoretically interesting; they were constructed under circumstances that allowed them to closely approximate the

ideal. The architecture of the agora of Athens was centuries astern the *avant garde* of rhetoric.

To understand the evolution of the agora from the 'archaic' to the 'Ionian' style, it is useful to turn to Priene.

### **Priene**

During the reign of Alexander of Macedon in the middle of the 4th century the river Maeander silted up and forced the relocation of the ancient town of Priene to a new site on a steeply-sloping spur of Mount Mycale. Despite the Late Classical date of its founding, the plan is an evolved and perfected version of the 5th-century Hippodamean plans that had been favored in that region for well over a hundred years.

The plan was generated from a large, impressive central agora (*figures 12 and 13*) from which a rigorously orthogonal grid of broad avenues and narrow minor streets spread in all directions. There were four wide avenues running across the slope. Crossing them were streets that climbed the steep slope and which were often steps carved into the rock. There were elaborate water supply and drainage improvements, many of the

<sup>187</sup> Plato feared that the democracy of Athens would easily devolve into ochlocracy. His ideal philosopher-king undoubtedly justified the Hellenistic Emperors, like Alexander, educated in Athens.

streets were paved, and there were opulent facilities for theater, sports, and worship.<sup>188</sup> The centerpiece of the city, however, was the agora, which eventually became famous throughout Greece. Its siting was carefully planned to maximize the splendor of the view and to ensure the continuing prominence of the civic center (*figure 12*) even if the city grew substantially. The agora may be considered the culmination of the Ionic ideal as established by Hippodamus in the middle of the 5th century.<sup>189</sup> The space was truly the courtyard of the city; it was surrounded by large and well-constructed stoas with marble columns. These were carefully conceived to unify the edges of the square behind a continuous facade.<sup>190</sup> Potentially monumental buildings, such as the Bouleuterion and the Assembly, were constructed at the edge of the square so that they commanded sweeping views of the city and the landscape, but they were set back from the edge of the square just enough that the colonnades of the surrounding stoas could pass in front of them and unify the square (*Top of figure 13*). Though the ideal

of a completely enclosed, architecturally unified agora was not frequently achieved before the Hellenistic age,<sup>191</sup> in Priene the ideal was fully constructed by the middle of the 4th century.<sup>192</sup> We can only guess that Priene was influential enough to motivate the Hellenistic builders to constantly rework the themes of her agora; there is no proof that Priene was a model for agora construction after Alexander. However, the fact of the early construction of the agora of Priene underscores the contention that the ideal of architecturally unified, regular, geometrically pure agoras was Classical. The form of Priene can be indirectly attributed to Hippodamus, the father of Classical, democratic civic architecture.

In fact, Priene is but one member of a list of Late Classical cities whose primary inspiration was Classical. The pedigree of these cities establishes a direct genealogy extending from Hippodamus in the employ of Athens during the Golden Age of Pericles to the beginnings of the Hellenistic era. The fundamental concepts of the Hippodamean

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<sup>188</sup> Wiegand, pp.20-24

<sup>189</sup> Zucker, p.37

<sup>190</sup> Though the colonnades were often built many years after the construction of the buildings that they were designed to screen. See Coulton, pp.277-279, and Zucker, p.10

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173, see also Owens, pp.80-85

<sup>192</sup> There is general confusion in the literature about the historical position of the Ionian agora. There is little doubt that completely unified, geometrically regular, enclosed agoras were mostly built in the Hellenistic age, and so many authors consider it to be a Hellenistic development. If we take into consideration the political and economic climate of the Greek world during the 5th and 4th centuries, however, it is logical to conclude that the Ionian, or Hippodamean, agora was a Classical ideal that was never perfected during the 5th century because the democratic cities were at war, bankrupt, and unwilling to accept the patronage of foreign, princely investors. Again the irony of Classical civic architecture: truly democratic architecture, as understood by the Greeks, was only rarely built before the post-democratic regimes of the Hellenistic world, when their rich patrons, often educated in Athens, let nostalgia for the Golden Age motivate them to construct Hippodamean agoras. The archaeology indicates, however, that the idea was current in the 5th century, as evinced by the examples in this chapter.

schemes are proved to evolve slowly and consistently out of the plan of Peiraeus until the construction of Alexandria, the first truly Hellenistic<sup>193</sup> city. These fundamental concepts included responsive siting, carefully designed orthogonal street grids which provided domestic amenities never seen in the older cities, scenographic planning, and, most significantly, the codification of the ideal democratic agora as an architectural unit, integral with but dominating the city.<sup>194</sup> The new cities were the crystallization of the theoretical aspirations of the Classical Athenians, who, ironically, saw their theories applied only outside Athens. Among the cities planned according to the Classical ideals: Olynthus, Pella, Elean Pylos, Ambracia, Abdera, Herakleia, and the celebrated 'pre-Hellenistic' city of Cnidus. There were many others, some still to be excavated, others completely destroyed. Their role in the 3rd century is clear: they were the exemplars of Classical planning to the Hellenistic builders. The Hellenistic cities can be readily evaluated as descendants of the Hippodamean new towns. It is revealing that the Hellenistic princes, lovers of Classical Greek culture and shameless imitators of all things Athenian,<sup>195</sup> should chose as their preferred method of colony-building the principles of

Hippodamus. His work embodied the democratic and aesthetic ideal of Classical Athens.

Paul Zucker writes of the Classical roots of the Hellenistic uniform agora:

"From the very end of the fifth century on, the late classical and Hellenistic agora developed a typical shape...the tendency toward strict and regular confines became more and more evident and the space, in contrast to earlier times, was conceived as a distinct configuration, a Gestalt. The single structures surrounding (the agora) were architecturally subordinated to the idea of the enclosed space as a whole."<sup>196</sup>

He continues: "Individual temples were mostly framed by colonnades," and "Similar colonnades closed also the courtyards of temples adjacent to the agora, in this way unifying the whole." The colonnades

"represented structurally the transition from the individual architecture of the temples to the free open space of the agora...The totality of these porticoes created the monumental expression of the agoras' public character."<sup>197</sup>

If, as Zucker writes, the tendency was to subordinate the individual buildings to the monumental, public character of the agora, then what determined the tendency? Was it purely the pursuit of an aesthetic ideal, as some have suggested?<sup>198</sup> Or was the form of

<sup>193</sup> Owens, p.68

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.60-61 contains a similar list.

<sup>195</sup> Sherwin-White, pp.20-22

<sup>196</sup> Zucker, p.37, my parentheses

<sup>197</sup> All from *Ibid.*, pp.37-38

<sup>198</sup> Among them Coulton, Dinsmoor, Wycherley, and Owens

these civic monuments somehow a function of politics?

The Greeks, especially at Athens, constantly explored the poetics of democracy. Though purely formal, structural evaluations of Greek sculpture and architecture are productive and rewarding, these works of art were not conceived as separate from the political *milieu* of their production. The Greek cosmology was compact; the compartmentalization of art and politics as we now define them is a post-classical phenomenon. Thus the statues of the Tyrannicides, though formally interesting, achieve their greatest depth of meaning in the context of the democratic agora. They were allegorical pieces, concerned with the power of the *demos*, the survival of the *polis*, and the long history of oligarchy.

Likewise the architecture of the agora. Sporadically at Athens and with virtual polish and completion in the Hippodamean new towns, the ideal of democracy as 'equality in the agora'<sup>199</sup> was embodied in the architecture of the agora. The concerted attempts to remove all monuments to mortal individuals from the agora; the great effort to separate the accommodations for oratory from the agora, the place of dialogue; the removal of mundane and commercial activities from the civic agora; and the

ongoing projects to unify the edges of the agora with rows of equal columns; all constitute democratic poetry. All reveal the Greek preoccupation with political art as an attempt to discover the true order, the *kosmos*, of society through craft. The rows of equal columns, so carefully conceived to screen the monumental façades of individual buildings and give unified order to the civic space, reveal the order of the *polis*. They are as *hoplites*, those defenders of democracy, marching "...with long spear or sword, set foot by foot, lean shield on shield, crest upon crest, helmet upon helmet..."<sup>200</sup> And they are the long lines of citizens reading the laws at the Eponymous Heroes, or awaiting jury assignments at the Stoa Basileios. The democracy of Athens allowed few heroes. The agora, where that radical democracy was reality, allowed few monuments except to democracy itself. The non-hierarchical, rhythmic, continuous stoas, which were the goal at Athens and the built reality in many of the Hippodamean towns, represented the political ideals of equality and participation in public space. Thus Classical rhetoric, in the form of dialogue, and the Classical agoras, in the form of architecturally unified, regular, colonnaded enclosures at the heart of the city worked in unison to perpetuate democracy. Whatever their formal merits, they were political arts in service of the *polis*.

<sup>199</sup> Called *isegoria* by Cleisthenes. It was this equality in public space that led to free speech, called *parrhesia*, which took the form of dialogue in the 5th century. Thus equality required freedom from repression, both real and symbolic, and engendered free speech which took a significantly non-hierarchical form.

<sup>200</sup> Tyrtaeus, fr.11.4-5, quoted from *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.30

Thus, when Aristotle distinguishes the old irregular city form from the new Hippodamean type he is making distinctions that are at once formal and political. The new towns of his day, orthogonal and centered on democratic agoras, were indicative of the ascendancy of democracy as a way of life in the Aegean. As a foreigner living in Athens, drawn there, apparently, by its progressive academic and political climate, Aristotle was enthusiastic about the democratization of the Greek world as evidenced by the new cities.

However, by the middle of the 4th century, when Aristotle was writing, his interest, and especially the attention of Plato, were galvanized by the decay of the Classical system. They lamented the loss of the 5th-century ideals of dialogue in the agora. They could see, in hindsight, the value of the system that produced so much dialogue yet so little political harangue. A.N.W. Saunders writes in his famous introduction to *Greek Political Oratory*:

“...only a small proportion of the extant work of the Classical orators was of this kind (hortatory), consisting, that is, of speeches made in a constituent assembly and intended directly to influence political policy.”<sup>201</sup>

He goes on to explain that oratory was limited almost exclusively to courts of law in Classical Athens, and that the speeches reached the public only as written ‘pamphlets’ aimed at stirring debate. Many of these were in the form of dialogues. The

Classical Greeks were ‘addicted to self-expression’ and ‘presupposed a habit’ of political discussion. They assumed the inherent value of discourse. As Wayne Booth writes:

“the process of inquiry through discourse thus becomes more important than any possible conclusions, and whatever stultifies such fulfillment becomes demonstrably wrong.”<sup>202</sup>

This mentality was responsible for the high level of participation in the day-to-day political debates in the agora.

The 4th century saw the gradual decline of these practices. It was therefore a major preoccupation of Plato’s to reestablish the 5th century ideals of dialogue, necessary as they were, in his opinion, to the smooth functioning of Socratic philosophy and Periclean democracy. Before entering a discussion of Plato’s critique of Sophism, with all that it implies about the form of the agora and democracy in general, it will be useful to cover the general political history of the 4th century, often called the Late Classical period, or the Decline.

<sup>201</sup> Saunders, p.7

<sup>202</sup> Booth, p.137

## **Late Classical Athens, 404-323 BC**

The beginning of the end of Athens as a political power in the Aegean was the incompatibility of her peculiar brand of democracy with the tyrannical chokehold that she maintained on the Empire. For reasons previously enumerated, the protectorates throughout the Aegean quickly tired of Athenian domination. The rapid decline of the Empire began when Sparta grew alarmed at Athens' power and ambition and, with popular support from most of the Empire and military support from the powerful Boeotians, declared war on Athens. The new Peloponnesian League was founded in 431 "to free Greece from the tyrant city." The war lasted, with intervals of fragile peace, for twenty-seven years. By 404 the combined effects of lost trade in the Aegean, military attrition, and public and private bankruptcy had forced the complete ruin of the political structure of Cimon's and Pericle's generations: Athens was a dependent of Sparta under the severe oppression of the Thirty Tyrants. The fleet was destroyed, the Long Walls to the Peiraeus razed, and the male population less than half its former total.

The installation of the Thirty Tyrants was as devastating to Athenian democracy as the

war itself. Their reign was carefully conceived by the Spartans to break the political will of the formerly democratic state both through harsh rule and potent symbolism: the Tyrants took up lodging in the Tholos, held court in the Bouleuterion, converted the Seats of the *Prytaneis* into thrones, and kept the agora under close surveillance to limit speech and political activity there. The Cleisthenic ideals of 'equality in the agora' and free speech were eradicated for the first time in a century. In their place a new, highly theatrical form of rhetoric was favored. Antiphon and other Athenian aristocratic rhetors upheld the power of the Thirty with their perorations in the agora.<sup>203</sup>

The city proved recalcitrant, however, and Sparta saw the hold of the Tyrants quickly slip. Athens made an astonishingly quick recovery. By 403 Athens had regained its democracy and autonomy; ten years later it had a fleet, had rebuilt the Long Walls, and had successfully revolted with other cities against Spartan imperialism. In 377 a new maritime league was formed; in 376 Chabrias won back for Athens supremacy at sea. Athens supported Thebes in its struggle against Sparta till after Leuctra (371), and later assisted Sparta against Thebes, striving for a balance of power. The first half of the 4th century was marked by almost constant warfare, but unequaled material prosperity.

<sup>203</sup> Saunders, p.22 and *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p.74 After the expulsion of the Thirty, Antiphon was charged with treason, tried, condemned, and executed. During the trial he the finest speech of self-defense ever heard, for which he was congratulated by Agathon (Thucydides 8.68). He replied that he would rather have satisfied one man of good taste than any number of commoners.

Trade and manufacture quickly revived. The arts flourished, especially oratory, which, with the innovations of Demosthenes and Isocrates, became the premier art of Athens where before it had been a methodical tool of political debate.<sup>204</sup> Despite the execution of Socrates in 399, a decision made by a dicastery on largely political and anti-intellectual grounds,<sup>205</sup> philosophy also flourished under the guidance of Plato and Aristotle, and reached its height in the third quarter of the 4th century.

But when Philip of Macedon began his policy of expansion in 359, Athens could not decide definitely between war and peace, and became involved in halfhearted skirmishes that effectively reduced her military power and her will to maintain superiority. The naval league lost its most powerful members in the Social War of 357-355 but Athens was still strong at sea and controlled the Hellespont, indispensable for its food supplies. Inspired by the rhetoric of Demosthenes, Athens resisted Philip successfully in the Bosphorous region in 340, but after the defeat at Chaeronea in 338 Athens was satisfied to secure peace with Philip with the loss of the Hellespont. Overawed by Alexander in 335, Athens reorganized its forces during his absence in the East; but in her attempt to free herself of

Macedonian rule in the Lamian War of 323/2 Athens was defeated on land and at sea. Athens was forced to admit a Macedonian garrison in Munychia, and to modify the constitution. It was the end of Athens as a considerable military power.

Throughout the struggles of the 4th century the cause of Athens was championed and repeatedly redefined by the great orators. The rhetoric of the 5th century had been largely limited to dialogue in the agora and forensic oratory in the law courts. With the decay of the democratic city state and its replacement by imperial coalitions the role of political oratory expanded greatly, and the power of the orators even exceeded that of the *demos*.<sup>206</sup> This expansion of rhetoric was made possible by the abandonment of the conservative prohibitions of the 5th century against large-scale oratory in the agora. Despite the efforts of Plato to maintain Socratic dialogue as the engine of democracy, popular taste sided with the sophists and their brand of dramatic, artful oratory.

Rhetoric, especially oratory, had been the subject of systematic study during the 5th century, but its development as an art was hindered by a general mistrust of large-scale oratory for any but certain governmental and

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<sup>204</sup> Saunders, p.11

<sup>205</sup> *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, pp.236-237

<sup>206</sup> Worthington, p.113 "The influence of the (4th-century) orators is evident: by their use of information and its presentation to the audience it is no surprise that in a state in which the *demos* was so powerful, orators such as Demosthenes and Aeschines enjoyed even greater power: testimony, from the way they used it, that information *is* power."

forensic purposes. Nonetheless, by the end of the 5th century orators such as Protagoras, Hippias, and Gorgias had already applied to rhetoric the *techne* of poetry and architecture. Rhetoric, especially the elocution of the law courts, began to be governed by the ideals of symmetry, balance, focus, and harmony that were the simultaneous compositional ideals of the other arts.

In the 4th century the formalization of rhetoric continued to mirror the developments of architecture. As the architecture of the Late Classical period evolved toward ever more elaborate and rigid formal ideals, so too rhetoric. Frances Yates has demonstrated that the rhetorical forms of the 4th century anticipated the culmination of formal development in the Roman Second Sophistic.<sup>207</sup> Ian Worthington has developed a convincing system of diagrams to demonstrate that the orators of the 4th century became so interested in symmetry and focus that their speeches pursued these compositional ideals even at the cost of the truth. Worthington's research, in which he has compared surviving copies of Late Classical speeches to historical fact, has revealed the divergence, ever greater during the 4th century, between oratory as a formal

exercise and Plato's ideal of oratory as a means of seeking the truth. He claims that 'ring composition', the Late Classical method of assuring architectural symmetry in rhetorical composition, held precedence over content and veracity. The perfect symmetry demanded by the architectural *techne*, he claims, required the orator to fabricate stories to be inserted in the speech at key points to maintain rigid balance (*figure 17*). Thus the most elaborate and complicated compositions, those most admired during the 4th century, were likely to contain the greatest number of lies.<sup>208</sup>

This slavish adherence to the rules of formal composition characterizes the decline of the arts from the pinnacle of late 5th century through the Late Classical period, and to the empty artfulness<sup>209</sup> of the Hellenistic age. The ascendance of formalism coincided with the decline of the Socratic pursuit of truth.<sup>210</sup>

Throughout the 4th century the agora of Athens maintained its prominence as a center of education and continued to function as a museum of liberal democracy by the grace of her glorious past, but the reality of her new politics was aristocratic. Throughout the last half of the 4th century numerous small wars and regional political revolutions did much

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<sup>207</sup> Yates, pp.36-38

<sup>208</sup> Worthington, pp.109-121

<sup>209</sup> *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* says that rhetoric 'dried up' and entered a 'period of scholastic and perversely ingenious mannerism' after Demosthenes. p.921

<sup>210</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 270a, 271d, e, 272. Plato calls oratory "an art of spell-binding," and criticizes its "lengthy irrelevance." He calls Pericles the greatest of orators because he was able to accomplish the rare feat of melding oratory and philosophy. The two were close to mutually exclusive in the theory of Plato and the Platonists.

to settle the ongoing class struggle of the 5th century. The balance tilted more and more in favor of the oligarchs, with Athenian democracy rapidly losing ground. Even democratic Rhodes, longtime partner of Athens and exemplar *par excellence* of Classical urban design, chose the heavy-handed rule of the Eastern dictator Mausolus to the virtual tyranny of Athenian foreign policy.<sup>211</sup> The defeat at Chaeronea and the resulting modifications to the Athenian constitution were the beginnings of a new form of diplomacy: the League of Corinth, Classically named but structurally oligarchic, was established with a king at its center and relied on the goodwill of the possessing classes whom it entrenched in power. The oligarchs were never to lose that position of power. The Classical class struggle had been decided: democracy and Athens had lost as a result of Athens' own mismanagement. Athens' foreign policy of imperialism had proven incompatible with her domestic policy of strict democracy.

The widespread literacy of the 5th century, the skill that ensured the continuing currency of democracy, continued to grow in the 4th century. General literacy, at least among the male members of the *polis*, implies general availability of schooling. Organized schools

were common after the reforms of Cleisthenes, flourished in the Periclean years, and became even more commonly available in the 4th century. Costs were low, but the amount of time required for a boy to receive a solid education in literature, sports and military discipline, and music often excluded the poor from any more than the most basic lessons. The ten years of school that the children of aristocrats received gave them a competitive advantage over the poor and perpetuated the age-old distinctions of political power that Classical Athens had tried so hard to eradicate. The curriculum itself was essentially aristocratic. Team sports were discouraged and the new, sophistic forms of oratory were taught at the cost of instruction in Classical dialogue. The education of the 4th century provided the basic cultural and physical skills needed to shine in the *gymnasion* and the *symposion*, and later in the courts and the agora. By the 420s, when Aristophanes' *Clouds* was written to illustrate the conflict between lower and higher education, there was becoming available a systematic form of higher education intended to train young men for public life. These young men were aristocrats.<sup>212</sup> With the fragmentation of Periclean democracy at the end of the 5th

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<sup>211</sup> Finley, 1983, p.194

<sup>212</sup> Andocides, *Against Alcibiades*, 22: "That (the encouragement given by the Sophists to unconcealed breaches of morals) is why the younger generation spend their time in the law courts instead of in the gymnasium, and while the old serve in the forces, the young orate, with the example of Alcibiades in front of them."

The young people of whom Andocides speaks are the aristocratic, idle youth of Athens. He wrote in 392 condemning Alcibiades, whose posturing and aggressive speaking in the agora had earned him two expulsions from Athens during the 5th century. The 'forces' may refer to the military or to voluntary political services.

century, but especially after the expulsion of the Thirty Tyrants, traveling lecturers, “displaying their knowledge of esoteric subjects such as antiquities, anthropology, mathematics, and linguistics, and more especially his skill at public speaking” were common in the agora. The emphasis of the lecturers was “ease of communication and a premium on intellectual showmanship.”<sup>213</sup> The lecturers were wildly popular and began to foment an entire culture of wealthy, highly educated men whose interests lay in rhetorical contests and exhibitions.<sup>214</sup> Among the ‘sophists’ were Protagoras, a fixture in the Golden Age agora who frequently harangued the crowd; Gorgias, whose early demonstrations of oratory in Athens in 427 defined the future of rhetoric; Prodicus, friend of Socrates who taught the ‘correct use of words’ for forensic rhetoric in the Athenian law courts; Anaxagoras, friend of Pericles and eloquent lecturer on philosophy; Hippias of encyclopedic knowledge whose lectures were widely admired; and Herodotus, immensely wealthy flatterer<sup>215</sup> of Athenian pride.

Despite the popularity of the sophists, as evidenced by the huge fees that they began to

command at the end of the 5th century, there remained a fundamental antithesis between these figures and Socrates the Athenian, still the epitome of Classical Athens and the ensample of non-hierarchical dialogue in the agora. Plato dedicated a large portion of his *oeuvre* to the discrepancy between the Classical ideal and the methods of the sophists: they professed knowledge of all sorts, Socrates professed ignorance and doubted the knowability of things; they charged high fees, Socrates’ teaching was free; they strove to perfect form at the cost of truth, Socrates was unconcerned with form except as it aided the pursuit of true content;<sup>216</sup> they heroized and aggrandized themselves in public, Socrates acknowledged the importance of selflessness in democratic process. But the great confrontations between Plato’s Classical ideals and the methods of the sophists in his *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* do not reflect contemporary opinion. In the 5th century the activities of the sophists and the humbler participants in democracy were often difficult to distinguish, and the lecturers themselves apparently spent the majority of their time listening and discussing shoulder-to-shoulder with the men of Athens.<sup>217</sup> Even as the 4th

<sup>213</sup> *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.229

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p.230 In the Late Classical period the Athenians developed ‘epideictic’ (display) oratory which were delivered as a formality at important occasions. They became opportunities for the display of eloquence and virtuosity, and were assured a non-political role as the tradition evolved to favor esoteric topics. Saunders, p.12

<sup>215</sup> Herodotus and the others used what Worthington has called ‘rhetorical *topoi*’, or oft-repeated stock phrases, to mitigate the apparent differences between the aristocratic orators and their common audiences. These included phrases such as ‘All of you will remember that’, ‘You all know that’ and ‘Let us’, all of which tended to gather the audience into the same realm of memories and experience as the orator. This practice fostered a false sense of solidarity. Worthington, p.114

<sup>216</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, 449 a to 480 b-d

century progressed and the discrepancies between the Socratic holdouts and the popular, aristocratic sophists widened, the common perception of the sophists was that they were the mainstays of democracy, the champions of the *demos*, the new Tyrannicides, the agents of Solon. Plato's perceptions were unpopular, but, in hindsight, we can conclude that they were the more accurate: the sophists were indeed propagating an insidious brand of oligarchy that presaged the reign of the Hellenistic kings.

But sophism and its new generation of patrician practitioners countered the dangerous wave of plebeian demagoguery that was ultimately responsible for the death of Socrates. After the reign of the Thirty Tyrants the political climate of Athens became viciously reactionary and policy was determined by nostalgic views of the Golden Age. Even as their participation in various ill-conceived oligarchic coups discredited their claims that sophism was a pure, apolitical art, the educated aristocracy was largely responsible for maintaining a balance of power that enabled Athens to survive much of the 4th century intact. As the century progressed sophism developed in two directions headed by Plato and Isocrates

respectively.<sup>218</sup> Oswyn Murray enumerates their differences in his essay on Athenian education in the 4th century:

“Behind the informal fifth-century world of Plato's dialogues lies an increasingly efficient 4th-century educational establishment attempting to create leaders for a new philosophical age, and studying more or less systematically the various branches of what we know as philosophy, from mathematics to metaphysics. Isocrates was a born educationalist, the most tedious writer Athens ever produced, who unfortunately lived to the age of ninety-eight. He took the sophistic movement forward to offer a training in technique without content: rhetoric became a universal art, suitable for all verbal occasions, not just public speaking. He also offered an education in general culture, and numbers of competent speakers are said to have studied under him; but his theories lacked any incentive to serious thought. They were therefore eminently suited to become the standard pattern for organized higher education. This conflict between Plato and Isocrates developed the systematic theories of logic and of rhetoric which we find in Aristotle; it also developed a polarity between philosophy and rhetoric as two forms of mental activity suited to the adult mind, which was to dominate culture for the rest of the ancient world.”<sup>219</sup>

Murray later notes that “society is composed of interrelating phenomena.”<sup>220</sup> Especially in Athens in the Late Classical period this was true. The two directions of sophism, one

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<sup>217</sup> Josiah Ober, in Worthington, p.93

<sup>218</sup> Plato believed that Isocrates' methods, which foreshadowed liberal education, as inimical to philosophy. Socrates had taught him philosophy as dialogue and didactic argumentation. The Isocratic method required students to listen to their teacher speak. Their ability to participate was limited by the hierarchy that was inherent in the method. Saunders, p.14

<sup>219</sup> *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.230

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p.232

concerned with establishing a rhetorical framework for structuring philosophical arguments and the other concerned with perfecting demagogic form at the cost of philosophy, are reflections of general schisms in 4th-century society.

“This political disruption (the end of the unified city-state of Athens)...is due to individual or sectional self-seeking, which wished to establish its own desires at no matter what cost to the community. The grimmest chapters of Thucydides<sup>221</sup> describe the spread of this evil, which he calls by the name of ‘*stasis*’, division in the state pursued with violence in quest of sectional ends, usually of a kind which we should call ideological. Thucydides specifies the symptoms in a horrifying analysis. This is the positive side of the disease, the virulent pursuit of private aims. The negative side is the reluctance to be active for public ones... It is true at any rate that the practice of oratory arose in direct connexion with the Sophistic movement, and was obviously conducive to exploiting private advantage.”<sup>222</sup>

Even after the fall of Athens at the end of the 4th century there remained a small, dedicated group of Platonists who saw themselves as the carriers of the Classical, Socratic tradition. But Hellenic culture in general, abetted, no doubt, by the Isocratic<sup>223</sup> school

of rhetorical formalism, knelt to and was quickly consumed by the Hellenistic oligarchies.<sup>224</sup> The empty declamations of the Isocratic sophists perpetuated class distinctions and provided a balm for the loss of true democratic action in the agora. They opened the way for the return of oligarchy.

As A.N.W. Saunders notes:

“After (the demise of the city-state) any peace or agreement was one imposed on the Greek world, not generated by it, and any new deal would not arise from a settlement of differences, but from the enactment of a conqueror.”<sup>225</sup>

Dialogue was the means of generating peace and agreement and settling differences.

Oratory was better suited to the impositions and enactments of the imperial conquerors.

As in Classical Athens, the architecture of the 4th century was an agent of current rhetorical forms, though it never quite matched the pace of rhetoric, especially during the meteoric ascendancy of public speaking in the Late Classical period. In general, the architecture of the 4th century became increasingly supportive of oratory in the agora, though old prohibitions, championed by Plato, died slowly. These

<sup>221</sup> Thucydides, III, 82, 83

<sup>222</sup> Saunders, p.26

<sup>223</sup> *Isocratic* has contending meanings: capitalized it denotes a follower of Isocrates and implies pedantry and patrician bearing; starting with the minuscule it signifies a form of government in which all of the people have equal political power.

<sup>224</sup> In fact, the very political nature of the Hellenistic world well disposed toward Isocratic rhetoric. The end of the city-state as the unit of government in the Greek Aegean was the end of purely local politics. The need for propaganda, large-scale oratory, and communication between foreign peoples was best satisfied by oratory. Dialogue was insufficient for the political tasks of the imperial era. It was a *united* Macedon, under the leadership of great kings, that conquered a *fractured* Greece. Isocrates sought to unite Greece and was willing to be a charismatic leader on a pedestal to achieve that unity. This was an anti-Classical ambition. Saunders, p.15

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

changes were fundamentally political and social: the art of architecture remained as culturally responsive as ever.<sup>226</sup> The demise of the city-state was the catalyst for the changes in rhetoric and architecture. Those changes are chronicled in the following section.

### **The Architectural Improvements to the West Edge of the Agora**

The increasing popularity of the sophists, accompanied by the weakening of the Classical Socratic tradition after his death at the hands of demagogues, was responsible for a profound change in the Athenian attitude toward public conduct in the agora. Whereas the Cleisthenic reforms had guaranteed equality in the agora, which had in turn ensured free speech, the 4th century saw the rise of rhetoric as a formal exercise which required an audience, thereby introducing inherently unequal relationships between men in public space. The Classical Athenians were ever wary of the power of individual speakers to unduly influence an audience, and they established loose prohibitions against architectural accommodations that might engender such unequal relationships. Even during the

Golden Age those prohibitions must have occasioned frequent impatience. The early sophists, especially those who had nurtured entertaining styles, constantly drew huge crowds in the agora but could not be heard above the clamor of the market. They were forced to stand on temporary platforms or the steps of the raised stoas to project their voices to as many listeners as possible, but were hindered by the lack of official, well-built facilities for speech-making. There are records of clashes between the daily users of the stoas and the speakers who coopted the steps for public harangues; the activities of the stoas, including the meetings of the philosophical schools and the magistracies, and the mercantile business that was interspersed with the official, were incompatible with the noise, activity, and press of the crowds that characterized the sophists' public performances.

These incompatibilities and the general unsuitability of the Classical agora to large-scale declamation may have been key factors in the development of 5th-century oratory. The largest crowds in Athens were in the agora, but the accommodations for public speaking were assiduously removed to peripheral sites as a safeguard against demagoguery in the agora. The most convenient compromise was the courts of

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<sup>226</sup> In an attempt to maintain regional unity in the face of the Macedonian imperial threat at least one city-state adopted the practices of the coming conquerors: Thebes, Athens neighbor to the North in Boeotia, and her Arcadian League, founded the new city of Megalopolis as the capital of a federal state. The city and its lavish architecture were to be a grand testimony to the supposed staying power of the League, though in the process of monumentalizing her achievements in stone the Thebans found themselves at the head of a large organization that necessarily superseded smaller ones, just like Macedon.

law. These were grouped around the edges of the agora, near the fawning crowds, and also contained shaded, comfortable seating and raised speakers' platforms to increase the effectiveness and impact of the speakers. These courts were unavailable to any but officials and those on official business. The courts became stages for public rhetorical expositions in the form of forensic speeches. In this legal setting many of the great rhetors of Athens got their start, but their art was always tempered by the requirements of litigation.<sup>227</sup> Content was paramount, and, though some lawyers became famous for their speaking ability, their success was also measured by their ability to win cases. Even the lawyerly rhetoric of the courts, moderate as it was in comparison to the loose-cannon bombast of the demagogues outside, was routinely criticized for its artfulness: the triumph of form over content was a known danger to the process of litigation, and the courts were often abused by self-aggrandizing patrician rhetors. Large audiences spent their days in the courts, even when they were overcrowded and uncomfortable, listening enthusiastically to the public entertainment of the speakers.

Under such popular pressure the conservative prohibitions against large-scale oratory in the agora could not last. The disruption of the Spartan victory and the reign of the Thirty Tyrants provided an opportunity to reevaluate the tenets of public life. These were found to be too restrictive, and were abandoned in favor of new standards more in keeping with the popular love of rhetorical display. Thus the agora of the 4th century contained architecturally defined settings for oratory.

In addition to the Classical policies on accommodations for orators, the Athenians abandoned the 5th century practice of disallowing monuments to mortal heroes in the agora and began erecting monumental statues, inscribed stones, and other paraphernalia that established men over men. The ideal of equality in the agora was compromised at great risk to Classical democracy.

Nonetheless, the agora maintained roughly the same haphazard form of incipient order that it had throughout the 5th century. The ideal form of the agora was no more closely achieved in the Late Classical period than it had been in the Classical, despite the

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<sup>227</sup> Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 92f: "A water clock (*klepsydra*) is a pierced pot into which they poured water and allowed it to flow out to the level of a certain hole and thus stopped the speaker. They did this as a measure against a person speaking nonsense in order to prevent others wishing to speak; thus the speaker saying relevant things would have a chance." Quoted from Thompson and Wycherley, p.55. Besides guarding against nonsense, the timers helped avoid undue influence by charismatic speakers. Aristotle (citation unknown) specifies the actual volumes of water allowed for certain cases. Reconstructions of the timer have proven that Aristotle's amounts flowed out of the pots in six minutes. (*Ibid.*, pp.55-56) But many speeches from the 4th century far exceed the limits set by the clock. There is undoubtedly much we don't know about the timing of speeches in the courts and about the speed at which the orators spoke, but it seems that the 4th-century courts were less concerned with the influence of orators on the jury than were their 5th-century counterparts.

prosperity of the 4th century. The little building that was accomplished before submission to Macedon is no less significant for its paucity, however. We can identify in its forms and its intentions the fundamental thrust of later Hellenistic city building and the continuing evolutionary legacy of Hippodamus.

The most dramatic improvements in the agora during the 4th century were among the civic ensemble on the west side of the square (*figure 5*). It is difficult to date many of these improvements as they were often constructed of the recycled parts of earlier monuments from throughout the city. But we have a fairly clear picture of the goals of the Late Classical builders: they were still concerned with the architectural unity of the façades facing the agora, but they also demonstrated a greater commitment to scenographic effects and a greater sensitivity to urban arrangements of buildings than had their 5th-century forebears. Their ambition was to achieve the perfection that they perceived in the Hippodamean agoras. A catalogue of 4th-century improvements to the west edge of the agora bears witness to their ambition.

But, before investigating that catalogue it is essential to qualify the 4th century achievements with a description of the difficulties facing the builders.

Athens was able to achieve precious little in terms of civic architecture in the 5th century despite need, a public mandate, and strong leadership. Lack of funds, the disruption of frequent war, and a building policy that gave priority to the Acropolis projects combined to ensure the continuing frumpiness of the agora. In the 4th century the circumstances were vastly different but no more hospitable to the improvement of the agora than they had been during the 5th century. War was a constant, but was not so devastating to Athens in the 4th century because she had adopted a policy of hiring foreign mercenaries to fight her wars for her.<sup>228</sup> There was no lack of building funds. The 4th century city was blessed with a material prosperity that far outstripped the most prosperous years of the Golden Age.<sup>229</sup> What Athens lacked, apparently, was commitment and leadership. After the humiliation of the Spartan occupation and the years of tyranny Athenian democracy split into fundamentally opposed factions, wealthy against poor, well-born against commoners, land-owners against laborers. The astounding unity that was the strength of Classical Athens was foreign to the Late Classical city. Any building proposals except for the improvement of religious shrines were forcefully opposed by a significant portion of the *demos*, especially when those buildings were perceived to embody the power of one particular faction. Thus the improvements to the Pnyx where the still-aristocratic members

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<sup>228</sup> Austin, p.62

<sup>229</sup> Rostovsteff, p.123

of the *Ekklesia* met were financed with private funds, much to the perceived impoverishment of its power as a civic symbol.

To a certain extent the great unifying leaders of the 5th century had been demagogues. Pericles and Cimon in particular worked long to garner the favor of the *polis* before taking any official power. The factional politics of the 4th century did not allow the popular figures of the day to rise to such positions of uncontested will. The process of factionalization was undoubtedly circular: as the educated members of the aristocracy, one of whom had been Pericles, saw their chances of power diminish, they made fewer and fewer attempts to cater to the needs of the poor. Their public presence, therefore, contained fewer efforts to appease and please, and their rhetoric demonstrated an increasing division between form and content. The great funeral oration of Pericles, with its panegyric references to the unity and refinement of the city was quintessentially 5th-century in tone and content. A century later we read of Isocrates and Demosthenes practicing to argue opposing sides of cases as if content were easily subsumed by artfulness and polish. Massive popular support for political champions was virtually impossible in the 4th century.

It is not surprising that no more was built for a century after the tyrants than had been built

for a century before. Following is a catalogue of 4th-century civic construction in the square.

### **The Bouleuterion**

The Bouleuterion continued to serve as the meeting place of the *Boule* and the *Prytaneis*. There is some evidence that the interior was improved with new seating and numerous paintings depicting past heroics in defense of the *polis*. As the audience chamber of the Spartan-installed Thirty Tyrants it is somewhat surprising that the 4th-century *Boule* did not do more to symbolize the expulsion of the Thirty. The 5th-century Athenians had taken drastic measures to symbolize their victory over the vandal Persians, including refusing to rebuild desecrated sanctuaries and shrines and letting many of the ruins of the occupation stand as a memorial to the impiety of the barbarians. The 4th-century democrats saw no such need to remember their humiliating defeat, perhaps because they were busy securing their interests in the Aegean, perhaps because there were surprisingly ambivalent popular feelings about the Tyrants, especially among the aristocracy who had benefited from the period of Spartan control. In any case, the Bouleuterion continued to be used much as before.

The role of the building as part of the ensemble of civic building along the west edge of the agora, however, was reconsidered. Whereas the Classical architects had removed it from the edge in an effort to avoid dominating the square with the imposing bulk of the building, the Late Classical architects attempted to introduce the precinct of the Bouleuterion and the building itself into the agora. The precinct was opened to the general public for the first time with a monumental gate with columns and a decorated frieze, the sculpture of which has been lost. The screening wall of the precinct was removed and a new, more monumental façade was applied to the Bouleuterion. An axial approach was devised so that the imposing east wall could be seen from the middle of the agora. An Ionic Propylon was built to the southeast, and a new porch of grand Ionic columns was built along the entire length of the New Bouleuterion.<sup>230</sup> The Bouleuterion was given a new portico which managed to visually link the formerly box-like building with the ever growing row of colonnaded building that ringed the agora. The new columns and the porch lent the building a monumental and theatrical presence that it had not been originally intended to have. Its position at the back of the precinct was still awkward, but the new portico effectively brought the Bouleuterion into architectural accord with the rest of the civic construction in the agora.

The *Prytaneis* was symbolically elevated to a new level of prestige and power by the improvements to the Bouleuterion. Their special seats, once simple indicators of temporary privilege, became closer to thrones as the building acquired some of the architectural trappings of temple architecture. This process of aggrandizing civil servants was foreign to the Classical era when the memory of oligarchy and hero cults was fresh in the minds of the *demos*, but in the Late Classical period, as we will see in greater detail as this chapter progresses, the Athenians were fond of raising monuments to powerful men in the agora.

The *bema* of the precinct of the *Boule* was subject to restricted use until the removal of sections of the precinct wall in the 4th century. After the opening of the precinct and the construction of the new, inviting gate, the *bema* was available to public use. There is no evidence in the literature that the *bema* was used by the public but we may assume that it was. In a time of wildly popular orators, an overcrowded market, an inconvenient theater, and an open precinct it is safe to guess that the *bema* in front of the Bouleuterion was in frequent use, though that use may have been subject to some restrictions since the *Boule* would have been disturbed in their business by large crowds outside their front door. It is easy to picture a popular orator climb the *bema* and address

<sup>230</sup>

Thompson and Wycherley, p.33

the crowd in the agora. His message must have been all the more appealing as he stood in front of the gleaming now portico of the Bouleuterion. The architecture of the square served as a stage set, a *skennai*, for rhetorical displays. The drama of the arrangement of *bema* and monumental *skennai* allowed the speakers to cultivate a depth of influence that was impossible in the 5th-century agora when simple, informal dialogue was the preferred means of public speech. It is a tribute to the art of the rhetors that the Athenians forgot their fear of the “single, sustained voice”<sup>231</sup> and flocked to hear the orators.

In all fairness to Demosthenes and other highly influential orators, their messages were not often aimed at overthrowing democracy or even promoting demagoguery, though they, as aristocrats one and all, might have profited from a revival of oligarchy. In fact, the *bema* at the Bouleuterion may well have been the site of some of the speeches in which Demosthenes urged the Athenians to overcome their quibbles and pledge themselves to a unity of purpose that had made the Periclean city great. In the agora and in the law courts the most persistent theme of the surviving speeches is unity in the face of the Macedonian threat. Furthermore, the events surrounding each of the highly publicized speeches were democratic in the highest degree: before and after the great speakers took the stand the

crowds gathered to discuss the theme of the speech. These discussions, prompted by great oratory, were the foundation of 4th-century democracy. Nonetheless, the danger of unrestrained, forceful words, artfully employed, was real. In her choice to aggrandize the Bouleuterion and other civic buildings and to open the *bema* to public use, Athens was not simply adorning the agora. She was risking the democratic process and fundamentally altering the way that Athenian men spoke to each other.

#### **The Eponymous Heroes and the New Honorary Statues of the Rhetors**

The monument of the Eponymous Heroes, described in the last section, was moved and enlarged in the early 4th century. Its symbolic connection to the *Boule*, the representatives of which were chosen according to the tribes of the Heroes, was reinforced by relocating the pedestal to a position in front of and axially centered on the Bouleuterion. In addition, the pedestal was enlarged and elaborated. The role of the pedestal as an architectural device for symbolically elevating the Heroes was completely understood by the Athenian architects. The symbolic position of the orators as they stood above the crowds on the

<sup>231</sup>

Sennett, p.52

*bemae* must have been likewise understood. The speakers entered the realm of gods and heroes when they addressed the *demos* from a raised platform. They joined the company of revered defenders of the *polis*, among whom were the Eponymous Heroes, the Tyrannicides, and Zeus himself.

Such was the popularity of the Late Classical orators that the *polis* occasionally revered them with honorary statues along the Panathenaic Way in the agora. This was such a break from the piety of the past that we may identify this radical new trend as evidence of a fundamental, paradigmatic shift in the politics of Athenian public life. The Athenians had assiduously avoided all monuments to mortal men during the Classical century, but popular opinion swung against those conservative prohibitions, motivated, no doubt, by the opinion-making of the very orators who stood to be honored in statuary. Thus the roll-call of honorary statues in the 4th-century agora, which placed mortal men next to gods and the deified heroes of the state, was reminiscent of the Homeric promise that heroism was the potential of mortals. The idea was counter to the Classical notion of equality and is

evidence of the status and political power of the aristocracy in the post-Periclean city.<sup>232</sup>

Among those honored with heroic statuary was Demosthenes.<sup>233</sup> His figure, cloaked and upright with hands clasped in the posture of formal oratory, stood on a pedestal somewhere in the agora. There was also a statue of Pericles, completed half a century after his death, wearing a general's helmet, his features idealized. There were many others so honored, so that by the time of Aristotle the agora was heavily populated with memorials and honorary statues, many of them commemorating the deeds or talents of men still alive. More often than not the men were pedestaled for their rhetorical skill. There are even recorded instances of statues being toppled after poor performances by the orators. One of these returned to plead for the restoration of his monument in the agora at Corinth.<sup>234</sup>

These statues were heroic, and soon the practice of commemorating living men began to be extended and abused. Deinarchos attacked Demosthenes because he proposed expensive statues for the tyrants of Pontus, and for his fellow orators Demades and Diphilos.<sup>235</sup> The great donor

<sup>232</sup> Aristophanes, in the *Ecclesiazusae*, 205-207, written in 393 BC criticizes the aristocratic money-grabbing that was rife in the early 4th century.

“It’s your fault, people of Athens, who live  
On public money, but all you think about  
Is private gain, every man for himself.”

<sup>233</sup> Thompson and Wycherley, pp.158-160

<sup>234</sup> Gleason, pp.5-10

<sup>235</sup> Dinarchos, I, *Against Demosthenes*, 43, 101

Lykourgos was honored after his death with a statue that was erected under the stipulation that it be placed 'in the Agora anywhere except where the law forbids',<sup>236</sup> thus illustrating the decay of the Classical standards. The Athenians' scruples against erecting monuments to mortal men in the agora began to soften. The most sacred area of the agora, the very center next to the Tyrannicides, was considered forbidden ground during the 5th century, and two extant decrees of the 4th century contain the clause that the agora was open to commemorative statuary 'except beside Harmodios and Aristogeiton'.<sup>237</sup> But even the sacred Tyrannicides were soon crowded by a forest of private statues. Antigonos and Demetrios, Hellenistic unifiers of Macedon, were given exceptional privileges in the 3rd century. They were deified with the title *soteres* (saviors), were made *eponymoi* with a new tribe each, and a decree passed in their honor guaranteed them gold-covered statues in the agora at the side of the Tyrannicides.

In spite of Classical restrictions, the door was open for virtually unimpeded personal aggrandizement in the agora. By the end of the 4th century statues of wealthy men, minor dignitaries, generals, athletes, and foreign benefactors so crowded the agora that the Tyrannicides and Demokratia were barely distinguishable amid the horde of pretentious newcomers.

The climate of hero-worship in the 4th century could not have been more counter to the 5th-century refusal to commemorate the victories of Olympic athletes in the agora. A spirit of self-congratulation and a patience with the pomp of the idle aristocracy tainted the public life of 4th-century Athens and led to the softening of democracy. The indecisive, half-hearted foreign policy that led to the eventual victory of Macedon was surely symptomatic of the politics of bravura and oneupsmanship that centered on the Late Classical agora. The Spartan, authoritarian flavor of Plato's utopian proposals in *The Republic* must be read in the political context of the 4th century: the unity and cohesion of the 5th century democracy was still a fresh memory, but the reality of Plato's generation was enough to inspire proposals of one-man rule.

#### **The Law Courts**

The importance of the law courts in the 4th century made the informality of the 5th century, when the official business of legislation and litigation were often held in the open or on the steps of the stoas, seem undignified and insufficiently structured. The majority of the building in the 4th century,

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<sup>236</sup> Quoted from Thompson and Wycherley, p.159

<sup>237</sup> Agora Inscription II<sup>2</sup>, 450, 646

therefore, focused on accommodating the burgeoning culture of law.

Isocrates complained that the courts of his day were far below the standards of the last century.<sup>238</sup> In his *Socrates' Defense*,<sup>239</sup> Xenophon portrays Hermogenes warning Socrates that the men who sit in the courts are often provoked to irrational rage and condemn innocent men to death, while at other times they are moved by clever oratory to pardon the red-handed.<sup>240</sup> "In courts such as these, some claimed that it was the rhetoric that mattered, not the law."<sup>241</sup> For example: Plato has the Sophist Gorgias claim that rhetoric provides the speaker with the key to success in the Athenian courts and Assembly, while knowledge of the just and the unjust provided by the laws is not a prerequisite for winning favorable verdicts.<sup>242</sup> In one of his famous orations Demosthenes informs us that the Athenian courts are so frivolous that they have acquitted guilty men on the basis of a few "witty remarks."<sup>243</sup> This observation, remarkably enough, is from a speech composed for delivery in court.

Modern writers have been no less judgmental. B.B. Rogers, the British Barrister who translated the writings of Aristophanes, opined the following:

"It would be difficult to devise a judicial system less adapted to the due administration of justice. A large assembly can rarely if ever form a fit tribunal for ascertaining facts or deciding questions of law. Its members lose their sense of individual responsibility to a great extent, and it is apt to degenerate into a mere mob, open to all the influences and liable to be swayed by all the passions which stir and agitate popular meetings."<sup>244</sup>

W. Wyse pinpoints unrestrained rhetoric as the culprit:

"The speeches of the orators are convincing proof, if proof be needed, of the vices inherent in such a system. The amount of injustice done cannot now be estimated, but it is sufficient condemnation of the courts, that appeals to the passion and political prejudice, insinuating sophistry, and outrageous misrepresentations of law are judged by shrewd and experienced observers suitable means to win a verdict."<sup>245</sup>

M.I. Finley concurs with Plato:

"(The orators) were successful advocates because of their rhetorical skill, not their juristic proficiency, and in their speeches stylistic demands were overriding."<sup>246</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Isocrates, VII.33-34

<sup>239</sup> Section IV

<sup>240</sup> This was made possible in part by the method of tabulating jury votes. Though in some cases the jury voted by raising hands, thus remaining accountable for their individual votes, there were elaborate machines provided in some of the courts to keep the ballots secret. A juror could vote as he felt without fear of reprisal at the hands of the riotous mob of spectators. There was no easy compromise between the accountability and the safety of the jurors.

<sup>241</sup> Edward M. Harris, "Law and Oratory," in Worthington, p.130

<sup>242</sup> Plato, *Gorgias* 454b-e

<sup>243</sup> Demosthenes, 23.206

<sup>244</sup> Rogers, pp.xxvi-xxvii

<sup>245</sup> Quoted in Bonner and Smith, pp.288-289

Though there is sufficient evidence to claim that these condemned orators were capable, on occasion, of simultaneously polishing their speeches *and* engaging in rational litigation, the above citations do identify a crucial failure of the 4th-century courts. The predominance of rhetoric over sound advocacy may have been the reason for the increased popularity of the law courts during the Late Classical period. The drama of the speeches was all the more compelling because the fate of individuals was on the line. Thus a spectacular rhetorical style could ensure the continuing popularity of a litigator with a losing record in court.<sup>247</sup> Plato's criticism of the Sophists was correct and perceptive; their willingness to pursue perfect form at the cost of the truth was the central failing of 4th-century democracy.

Whatever the role of oratory in weakening democracy, the system to ensure the fair treatment and representation of all men, it was a resounding success as entertainment. We read of immense juries serving in the 4th century, many of them as large as 1,500 members. Aristotle wrote:

“The Heliaea is the greatest court of those at Athens, in which public cases were tried,

1,000 or 1,500 dicasts (jurors) assembling for the purpose.”<sup>248</sup>

In addition to the jurors, any remaining room in the courts was filled to standing with idle spectators.<sup>249</sup> The agora was filled with gossipers. The actions of the courts were the daily bread of sensationalist news-mongering in the market.<sup>250</sup> More attention was paid by the gossipers to the virtuosity of the rhetoric than to the legality of the trials. Numerous literary references from the 4th century bear witness to the existence of an aristocratic subculture of idle spectators in the courts.<sup>251</sup>

Again the vast differences between the Classical city and the city of Plato are evident. “No ideal was more cherished in classical Athens than the rule of law.”<sup>252</sup> Pericles, quoted in a famous passage by Thucydides, praises the Athenians for their obedience to those in office and to the laws. The wording of Pericles statement is itself reflective of the male citizens' ephebic oath, which all men of age eighteen swore and promised to ‘heed wisely’ the commands of the magistrates and the laws, both current and future. The ideal was also celebrated in Attic tragedy. Aeschines<sup>253</sup> clarifies the distinction between oligarchy and democracy

<sup>246</sup> Finley, 1951, p.89

<sup>247</sup> For example, even the great Demosthenes apparently lost all of his court cases and political debates between the years 352 and 348, yet remained the most popular figure in Athens. See *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p.330.

<sup>248</sup> Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia*, 68.1

<sup>249</sup> Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1109

<sup>250</sup> See entries 281 and 611 in Wycherley, 1957

<sup>251</sup> Wycherley, 1957, pp.145-150

<sup>252</sup> Worthington, p.132

<sup>253</sup> Aeschines, I.4-6

by indicating that the former is inferior because its law is not constant. It is subject to the fluctuations of whim of the unopposed ruler.

Though the supremacy of law is still referred to in a number of 4th-century cases, the law's interpretability and negotiability become a conspicuous theme of 4th-century legal proceedings. Most notable is Demosthenes' statement that the laws are, of themselves, 'lifeless and ineffective',<sup>254</sup> it is the decisions of the jurors (obviously under the influence of orators like Demosthenes) that gives the laws their vitality and worth. The 5th-century tendency to revere the laws in the abstract, as codified principles to be upheld as a matter of course, yielded to the 4th-century confidence in the rhetors to use their wit to redefine the laws. So:

Demosthenes and the other orators were agents in the interpretation of the law, not mere executors of the constitution. The danger of the new ideas is obvious: in the heat of passion inspired by the orators the laws were subject to abuse of all kinds. The most cherished ideal of Classical Athens was the plaything of the great *rhetors* of the Late Classical city.

To accommodate the new culture of legal oratory courts were constructed that facilitated oratory. Very little of these buildings remains. Of the major courts, among them the Heliaea, the Parabyston, the

Desmoterion, and numerous unnamed courts in and around the agora, only the Heliaea can be sufficiently reconstructed for us to see the form of a court building. It could seat at least the 1,500 jurors mentioned by Aristotle, all arrayed in a fan of wooden bleachers facing a speakers platform. The orator must have been able to address upwards of 2,000 people easily. Of the remaining courts we know only what the writers have handed down to us. There are snippets that suggest that the other courts, though much smaller than the Heliaea, were also designed to facilitate hortatory rhetoric. Their location around the agora must have induced public participation to the point where oratory dominated the public life of the city. The days of quiet dialogue in the shade of the stoas were practically ended.

But, as in the 5th century, the Late Classical developments in the agora were humble in comparison to the construction outside the agora. The Assembly on the Pnyx received opulent renovations and further evidences the importance of large-scale oratory at the end of democracy.

<sup>254</sup>

Demosthenes XXI. 224-225

## The Pnyx

There were two important periods of renovation and modification of the Pnyx during the Late Classical period. It is very significant that these occurred in direct correspondence to the reign of the Thirty Tyrants and to the peak of the autonomy of the aristocratic Assembly, respectively. The Pnyx, defined above as a place of oratory intentionally separated from the agora in the early Classical period to avoid harangues in the place of dialogue, was greatly enlarged and refined during the ascendancy of powers whose continuing rule depended upon their ability to propagandize the people with speechcraft.

The Thirty Tyrants mistrusted the agora as a place of public meeting and kept it under surveillance during their reign. They preferred the axial, hierarchical arrangements of a theater for their meetings with the people. Surrounded by guards<sup>255</sup> the Tyrants read edicts to the assembled people. There was no opportunity for discussion or vote. The casual, free-form space of the agora would have been poorly suited to this kind of communication.

In keeping with their campaign to co-opt the power symbols of the democratic city and to modify them for their own purposes, the

Tyrants spent a large amount of money and labor improving the Pnyx (*figure 15*). A large berm was constructed to increase the capacity of the seating, a tall *bema* was built from which to address the crowds, and, possibly, though there are no remains, a *skena* was constructed as a dramatic architectural backdrop for the speaker. All of these changes were in keeping with the new role of the Pnyx as an architectural legitimizer of the Spartan regime.

The most dramatic changes, however, were symbolic, not functional. The 5th-century theater had been constructed unnecessarily high on the slope of the hill in order to secure the view of the ocean behind the speaker. The sea was the wellspring of Athenian military and economic fortune, and the source of her pride in legend and history. As the *Ekklesia* met in session, the view of the sea in the distance must have served as a unifying reminder of Athens' miraculous victories at Salamis and in the Aegean to secure the Empire. The trireme had long been an important symbol of Athenian supremacy at sea. In the last few years of the 5th century the Thirty Tyrants went to great pains to reverse the *bema* and seating on the Pnyx so that the audience faced the land. Plutarch records the event as an act of symbolic subjugation,<sup>256</sup> and it does not escape him that the new orientation of the theater was highly impractical. No other theater in Greece was built contrary to the

<sup>255</sup> As in Xenophon, *Hellenica* previously quoted.

<sup>256</sup> Plutarch, *Themistocles*, 19, 4

slope, and few required such labor to construct. The Spartans, ever a dominant force in land battles, forced the *Ekklesia* to face the Tyrants on their own terms and eradicated part of the memory of past Athenian strength.

The new theater seated 6,000 and continued to serve as the preferred meeting place of the *Ekklesia* throughout the 4th century. But, despite the recent enlargements, the theater was outgrown and was once more enlarged at the end of the Late Classical period. In about 330 a new embankment was raised to extend the seating capacity to over 10,000. In addition, the approach to the theater, long ignored, was given a facelift and a grand axial stairway. Directly opposite the stairway was an elaborate *bema*, approached by its own flights of stairs. Behind the *bema* was a massive embankment, which was designed to be topped with two large stoas as architectural *skennai* to aggrandize the theater, though these were only partially built. The elaborate Isocratic oratory of the end of Late Classical Athens was accommodated in equally elaborate architecture. The gentle symbolism of the Classical theater was superseded by grand architectural set-design in the Late Classical theater in keeping with the 'decadence'<sup>257</sup> of pre-Hellenistic politics. Plato's ideal of words standing on their own merit was past. The new ideal was less concerned with truth and focused on form. Words, divorced from the Socratic search for

truth, sought validity in the trappings of monumental architecture. The Hippodamean ideal of continuous, unified, non-hierarchical facades surrounding the agora was not compatible with the highly expressive, individualistic temperament of the Late orators.

But the Hippodamean ideal was still valid in the agora, if not in the theater. The remaining 4th-century improvements to the civic architecture of Athens purposed to achieve the elusive architectural unity and regularity that Athens had been pursuing since Hippodamus. These were constructed after the capitulation of Athens in 322.

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This is Dinsmoor's term for the abandonment, both political and architectural, of the stern ideals of the 5th century.

## **Hellenistic Athens, 322-31 BC**

The Hellenistic period, falling as it did between the reigns of Alexander the Great of Macedon and Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, is often subject to superficial treatment in the historical literature. Nonetheless, the period is particularly interesting in Athens, which, despite its drastically reduced military role and its commercial status as just one of many cities far from the capital, remained the cultural and intellectual center of Greece throughout its three centuries of subjugation to various Macedonian kings. The central feature of the period is the establishment of Greek monarchies from the Balkans to Afghanistan. The cultural implications of Greek expansion to the East were profound, but the greatest changes for Athens were political. The needs of the competing monarchies led to important administrative and military developments which served to perpetuate monarchy. The alliances formed between cities to form kingdoms were stronger and longer-lasting than any of the federal leagues seen during the 5th and 4th centuries in Greece. Civic life changed accordingly, perhaps nowhere better documented than in Athens. The great city was able to rest on its laurels and was spared destruction on a number of occasions because of its almost mythical stature as the heart of Greece. The Macedonians granted Athens administrative

independence, but were ultimately responsible for the future of the city and profoundly influenced her politics.

After 322, though comedy, philosophy, and physical and historical science continued to thrive in Athens, the decline of creative thought began. After 300 Zeno and Epicurus were Athens' greatest figures, and, recognized by all as the cultural center of the Greek world, Athens began to live on its past. Politically the story of the century after Alexander was one of frequent struggles to rid itself of Macedonian domination, often temporarily successful, but always with the help of one or other of the Diadochi, who, if successful, abused his power. They all wanted Athens as an ally and a military station. Athens was finally crushed between them in the war against Antigonos Gonatas (266-262), and Athens' independence was forfeited. Athens was free again in 228; and as a small State had comparative peace, while Rome was establishing its power in Greece. Athens' last independent action was when it sided with Mithridates against Rome. Reduced by Sulla after a siege (87-86), Athens pleaded its glorious past; but he retorted that he was there to punish rebels, not to learn ancient history. Thereafter Athens was a cultured university town to which men came from all parts of the Roman Empire, but with no autonomous history, and little creative thought.

The greatest political change in Athens to result from the power of the new monarchies was the concretization of the Late Classical swing toward oligarchy euphemistically portrayed as democracy. Though the Hellenistic kings often imposed mandatory oaths on their subjects that intentionally confused the office of the king with the magistracies of past democracies,<sup>258</sup> most of the actual tyrannies were confined to the edges of the Greek world and were usually replaced quickly by the gentler, more diplomatic rule of the monarchs. The real threat to Athenian democracy lay in the informal monopolization of power by the aristocracy. While the kings posed as Hellenic democrats, they could also hold responsibility for the increasing power of the aristocratic families on whom they relied for military and political strength.

In the Classical Athenian democracy a delicate balance had been struck between the power of the wealthy and the rights of the underrepresented poor. The liturgy provided the rich with an opportunity to supply the shrines and the magistracies with much needed funds in exchange for great prestige as virtual heroes of the *polis*. Nonetheless, as has been already mentioned, the people were loath to allow individuals to gain too much power, at least before the 4th century. Pericles and his family were once turned down after making an offer to fund the construction of some much-needed civic

buildings in Athens because the influence they might have gained from such a donation would have made them prime candidates for ostracism. Instead the Athenians opted to use tribute money and allay the cost of the buildings. No such prohibitions against the influence of the rich existed after the capitulation of Athens. The city became dependent on the aristocrats for its very survival.

By the end of the 4th century the balance of Classical democracy had shifted in favor of the wealthy. The aristocrats now played a crucial role in mediating between Athens and the king. Thus they held the city for political ransom and gained extraordinary power. Philippides, the fabulously rich comic poet of the early 3rd century, conferred such benefactions on the city that he was honored with a public monument bearing the inscription: “and he has never said or done anything contrary to the democracy.”<sup>259</sup> The irony of the epigraph should not be lost on us, and neither should we overlook the poetry of the thanks he received: his wealth placed him on a pedestal next to the Tyrannicides and the Eponymous Heroes in the agora.

The wealthy had employed their wealth for their own political gain throughout the Classical period, and with ever more blatant tactics, but the Hellenistic period saw wealthy individuals gain overwhelming

<sup>258</sup> As is the oath of the citizens of Cos. See *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, p.332

<sup>259</sup> From Austin’s record of a decree issued on behalf of Philippides. Quoted from *Ibid.* p.333

prestige by the most obvious means. There were no longer any but the subtlest prohibitions against the purchase of popular favor. In Athens a reform was carried out by a tyrant backed by Macedon. The new allowances gave the rich much greater latitude than previously allowed. The story of Phillipides illustrates the new honors available to the rich:

“When he was appointed *agonothete* (a new honorary position at the head of all competitions and festivals, in 284/3 bc) he complied with the will of the people voluntarily from his own funds, offered the ancestral sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the people, gave to all the Athenians presents at all the contests and was the first to provide an additional contest for Demeter and Kore as a memorial of the people’s liberty, and augmented the other contests and sacrifices on behalf of the city and for all this he spent much money from his own personal resources...”<sup>260</sup>

The cities devised many new honors designed to compensate rich donors for their generosity toward the *polis*. Phillipides was additionally honored with a gold crown and a bronze statue in the theater and his descendants were given free public meals and seats of honor at the contests. The new system of honors inevitably left power with the rich.

The new dominance of the rich over the poor, cloaked as it was in the trappings of democracy, was perfectly conceived to assure the decline of real popular control

over civic life. Even the virtually incorruptible magistracies established by Cleisthenes became the tools of the rich. Thus the very checks on the power of the popular *Ekklesia* became so powerful in their own right that the decrees of the Assembly became virtually meaningless. The power of the *demos* was given to the rich in exchange for new buildings, additional holidays and festivals, and a variety of petty gifts.

But the Hellenistic changes were long in coming. Aristotle himself, writing in the years preceding the Macedonian victory, had already offered his advice to oligarchs who aspired to real political power within the otherwise legitimate democratic offices of Athens:

“Those who enter into the office may also be reasonably expected to offer magnificent sacrifices and to erect some public building, so that the common people, participating in the feast and seeing their city embellished with offerings and buildings, may readily tolerate a continuation of oligarchy.”<sup>261</sup>

If this indeed became a common practice, as the evidence indicates, then the ‘democracy’ of Athens was incapable of countering the *de facto* restriction of public service to the rich. Even the popular law courts, seen as dangerously ochlocratic, were given over to the wealthy through a system of jury preselection that favored the aristocratic and politically conservative. Thus all of the magistracies, offices, festivals and other trappings of democratic public life remained

<sup>260</sup> Austin, #43, quoted from *Ibid.*, p.333

<sup>261</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, VI.1321<sup>a</sup>

intact, but their composition was entirely aristocratic and the new government was little more than an elaborate descendant of the pre-Classical oligarchies against which the heroes of Classical Athens had rebelled.

The architecture of the Hellenistic age is elegant proof of the insidious misrepresentation of the Hellenistic oligarchy: it pursues the Classical, Hippodamean ideal in the agora but with funds donated by wealthy Athenians and foreign kings. Thus the form of the public realm of Athens was democratic, but the reality was oligarchic. Aristotle perceived the deception and was charged with impiety, the indictment raised against Socrates in 399, and, rather than let the Athenians “sin twice against philosophy,” he left the school in the hands of a friend and retired to Chalcis in 322. He died that year the last of the great Athenian thinkers.

Likewise, the public rhetoric of the Hellenistic city was practiced entirely by highly-educated aristocrats whose agendas were self-serving and whose art tended to perpetuate class distinctions and the oligarchic *status quo*. Even Demosthenes augured the Hellenistic condition of rhetoric with his artfully composed but ultimately

selfish court battles.<sup>262</sup> However, Demosthenes’ Late Classical attitudes held him to continually define the limits of *hubris*, or excessively forceful public behavior, in an attempt to illustrate the consequences of allowing the Classical limits of public behavior to be breached.<sup>263</sup> Thus his court battles, selfish as they may appear, were primarily concerned with the prohibitions against individual ascendancy in the agora. The Hellenistic orators opposed the concerns of the Late Classical orators: they intended to gain fame, popular favor, and public honor, and, in the process, their caste was entrenched and empowered. The power of the aristocracy was in part assured by the artfulness of their oratory: not only did it serve them as a means of explicit propaganda, but it replaced the Socratic method of pursuing the truth through dialogue with a new method less susceptible to popular rebuttal.

Hellenistic oratory paralleled the simultaneous formal developments of architecture. Increasingly, following the tradition of the Late Classical period, the compositional rules of architecture and the other arts were applied to rhetoric until content was almost entirely subsumed by form. The elaborate, scenographic

<sup>262</sup> Josiah Ober in Worthington, p.90

<sup>263</sup> I refer here to his legal complain *Against Meidias*. Meidias, himself an aristocrat, had assaulted Demosthenes in the agora. Demosthenes took him to court and successfully charged him with *hubris*, thus gaining a victory for democracy, which depended so completely on prohibitions against forceful behavior in public. However, Demosthenes also secured a victory for himself that was not so beneficial for the *demos*: he managed to cloak the gist of his argument, which, after all, was a petty spat between two apparently spoiled aristocrats, in such a way that the mixed jury was blinded to his stature as a rich, educated orator. His artful rhetoric was capable of concealing the truth of the Late Classical society: the rich were gaining control through persuasion and subtlety.

architecture of the era was mirrored in the complicated, symmetrical compositions of Hellenistic oratory. Ian Worthington writes:

“What emerges from the historical narrative in speeches is that the attendant distortions and lies appear to have been tolerated, almost expected, by the people.”<sup>264</sup>

The readiness of the Hellenistic orators to deceive, and the willingness of their audiences to be deceived, typifies the Hellenistic tendency to veil the oligarchic reality of the Empire with a gauze of Classical appearances.

Following is a catalogue of the Hellenistic additions to the agora (*figure 6*) and an explanation of the rhetorical forms that they legitimated.

### **The Square Peristyle**

In the northeast corner of the agora a very large peristyle courtyard was partially constructed starting soon after the Macedonian conquest. It measured more than 120 feet on a side and presumably replaced the earlier structures on the same site. Those have been identified as law courts, but little is known about their dimensions. It is assumed that the Peristyle was also used as a

law court, though this conclusion is conjectural.

The Peristyle was never completed and was used for only a very short time. It is perhaps most useful as an example of the economic hard times that afflicted Athens after the complete cession of her commercial Empire to Macedon; the local government was bankrupt, the Empire was not yet actively investing in the city, and the political will and unity that had pulled her through past straits failed Athens after Alexander.

Increasingly Athens came under the influence of one or another Hellenistic kingdom as they vied to balance Macedonian control. King Ptolemy Soter<sup>265</sup> of Egypt, a powerful Hellenistic king, is mentioned in the decree honoring Callias, and in 223 King Ptolemy Euergetes was awarded the extraordinary honor of being named an Eponymous Hero. The tribes were increased from ten to thirteen through the process of honoring foreign donors in an attempt to end the severe economic depression of the late 4th century. The Kings statue, contrary to every democratic principal of the last century, was raised in the agora as a hero.

At the end of the 3rd century war broke out again, with Rhodes, Pergamum, and newly formidable Rome on the side of Athens against Philip V of Macedon. Philip failed to

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<sup>264</sup> Worthington, p.114

<sup>265</sup> The title *Soter* means *savior* and signifies the official deification of the bearer. Deification of mortals and the recently dead was unheard of before the Hellenistic period in Athens.

take Athens by force in 200 and instead carried out an outrageous and unnecessary campaign of vandalism outside the walls and in the surrounding *demes*. These acts of impiety so angered the Athenians that they passed a decree recorded by Livy:

“All statues and pictures of Philip as well as of all his ancestors in both the male and female line should be taken and destroyed; that all holidays, rites, and priesthods instituted in his honor or that of his forefathers should be disestablished; that the places, too, in which a dedication or inscription of this import had been placed should be accursed. A final clause made valid against Philip all the decrees formerly voted against the Pistratidae.”<sup>266</sup>

The fulfillment of this *damnatio memoriae* against the monarchy of Macedon is evident in the monuments of the agora. The two tribes named after Demetrios and Antigonos, the honorary Macedonian Eponymous Heroes, were disbanded and their statues in the agora were removed and destroyed. Within months a new statue was raised, and the associated tribe was named after King Attalos of Pergamum. References to the Macedonians were expunged from the records. The Athenians were so incensed that, instead of melting and reusing the valuable bronze of the statues of the unpedestaled Heroes, they were smashed and thrown into a well, where they were uncovered in the excavations of this century.

The 2nd century saw the beginnings of the intervention of Rome in the Aegean. Various Hellenistic monarchs called on the aid of Rome as the Macedonian power decayed and the competition between the provincial kings became fierce. The eventual victory over Philip V and Macedon was achieved by Rome and her allies in 197, and a period of relative independence began for Athens. It is after the Roman victory that the cultural and intellectual influence of Athens can be most clearly seen. Drawing on the traditions of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Zeno, the founders of the philosophic schools of the Academy, the Lykeion, and the Stoa, Athens became the cultural center of the Mediterranean. Anyone who aspired to be regarded as educated and cultured traveled to Athens for a period of training in logic and rhetoric, which had become the two accepted means of teaching philosophy after Plato and Isocrates. The city was crowded with wealthy foreigners, especially in the agora. Among the new sophisticates were numerous princes of the royal houses from throughout the Hellenistic Empire. These included Antiochus IV Epiphanes the soon-to-be king of Syria, a number of Pergamene princes including Attalos and Attalos II,<sup>267</sup> and members of the houses of Egypt, Cappadocia, and the Pontus. All of these and many other made vast contributions to Athenian resources in the 2nd century,<sup>268</sup> particularly in the form of buildings, which

<sup>266</sup> Livy, ILIV.4-8

<sup>267</sup> Hansen, p.40

<sup>268</sup> Davies, p.100

were considered the most enduring and extravagant munificence. After the troubled and impoverished 3rd century the agora went through a major renaissance of building and beautifying. The following catalogue of buildings records that renaissance.

### **The Hellenistic Metroon**

The increasing specialization of the civic offices in the 3rd and 2nd centuries combined with the deterioration of the Old Bouleuterion prompted the construction of the Hellenistic Metroon. It contained facilities for dining, meeting, worship, and official record-keeping. The four rooms varied in depth, decreasing toward the south, so that the back wall conformed to the irregularities of the old structures behind it. The front, however, goes a long way toward unifying the west side of the agora. Previously, the colonnades of the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, the Stoa Basileios, and, to a lesser extent, the added façades of the Tholos and the entry gates to the *temenos*, had each constituted isolated but coherent efforts to unify the edges of the agora according to the Hippodamean ideal. The new Metroon succeeded in completing the process that had been started as early as 500 BC, though the west side of the agora continued to be an aggregation of

cooperative pieces instead of a single, continuous building as was the Ionian praxis. The architects apparently made an effort to rectify the unevenness of the alignment of the west buildings with the Metroon. Its siting and orientation, combined with the simple repetition of its colonnade emend the casually provincial character of the Classical buildings and lend to the square a truly picturesque aspect that the earlier architects had not anticipated.

The shrine to the Mother of the Gods was aligned axially with the entrance to the Bouleuterion and with a large *bema* near the Eponymous Heroes. This and other subtle axial alignments of new structures with old effectively unified the agora where relative architectural chaos had been the rule. But the alignments also established relationships between monuments and offices that the Classical architects would have purposefully avoided. The connection established between the ever more aristocratic members of the *Boule* and the monumental Eponymous Heroes contains deep political significance: the architect empowered the *Boule* by associating them with the Heroes.

Despite the Hellenistic awareness of the power of architecture to concretize unequal relationships between people, the agora was lavished with buildings that consistently pursued the Hippodamean ideal of architectural unity and equality. The largest building projects in the Hellenistic agora

were the South Square with its impressive stoas and Aristotelian separation of functions, and the massive Stoa of Attalos. But it is important to remember that the Classical, democratic character of these projects belied their service to the aristocracy.

### **The South Square**

The important south side of the agora was in poor repair by the 3rd century. The South Stoa I, built as it was during a time of economic hardship with poor construction standards, was probably abandoned by the end of the 3rd century and was soon thereafter demolished. In its place a new complex of stoas was constructed that accomplished one of Aristotle's goals for the agora: that the commercial and civic activities be separated for pragmatic and symbolic reasons (*figure 6*).

The old Heliaea, probably the most important law court at the time, was incorporated into the new construction, as was the southwest fountain house. The new buildings formed an oblong rectangular space entirely enclosed within regular colonnades according to the Hippodamean ideal. The area became an agora within the ancient agora, a small-scale fulfillment of the

intentions of the preceding 200 years during which the architects of Athens, hampered by war, lack of funding, and lack of civic cohesion and leadership, had been able to make only sporadic, but nonetheless provocative, progress toward the Hippodamean ideal.

The new small agora was enclosed by the South Stoa II, which was constructed above the demolished South Stoa I of the 5th century, the East Building, and the grand Middle Stoa. That the new complex took its orientation from the Heliaea is apparent. There is an "organic bond between the Heliaea and the South Stoa II."<sup>269</sup> The schedule of construction of the South Square was carefully coordinated with a complete reorganization of the northeast corner of the agora. The Late Classical Square Peristyle, a major law court, was demolished after the Middle Stoa was constructed, and the materials were used to build the South Stoa II. We may infer that the Square Peristyle was left intact only until new accommodations became available in the South Square; it was then demolished to provide material for the last construction phase of the South Square and to make room for the new Stoa of Attalos, which will be discussed later in this section. There is consequently reason to assume a definite continuity of function from the Square Peristyle to the South Square.

<sup>269</sup>

Thompson and Wycherley, p.66

There is also undeniable evidence that the completion of the South Square was coordinated with the razing of the ancient buildings to the south of the Tholos. These have been demonstrated by the archaeologists to be associated with the law courts.<sup>270</sup> Thus we must conclude, though there is little on-site evidence to support the contention, that the South Square was Athens' new judicial compound,<sup>271</sup> around which the offices and courts of the Hellenistic age were grouped. The courts, now with much smaller juries than those of the Late Classical period, were probably held in the stoas and the Heliaca. The East building probably served as an entrance lobby and checkpoint for entering jurists. The Hellenistic government had a certain amount of control over the legal proceedings of the courts, and certainly made it their business to screen the audiences in the courts. We do not know what the restrictions on audience members were, but it would have been entirely in keeping with the Hellenistic tradition to allow only political allies of the regime to attend the courts, unless on trial. The courts were undoubtedly a political tool, and were therefore tightly controlled.

In an elegant and innovative example of urban design the Middle Stoa served both the main agora and the South Square. The Doric

building, with columns on all four sides and a screen wall under its ridge beam between the colonnades, presented similar façades to the two squares. An elaborate system of screens and windows set in a low parapet between the columns assured that the courts had privacy and good light. The building was impressive in scale, and built with the finest craftsmanship available, though the materials were unpretentious. But the Stoa, nearly twice the length of the shabby South Stoa I and placed closer to the center of the agora, was an impressive backdrop to the commercial and political activities that surrounded it. The perforated screens and the rhythmic colonnade, especially in the direct Attic sun, must have fully satisfied the Hellenistic taste for opulence and finery. The stoa was set on a high terrace with surrounding steps. The extreme west end of the terrace was occupied by a monument base which apparently carried a heroic four-horse chariot group, perhaps commemorating a great general. Since at that point the floor of the terrace lay more than twelve feet above the floor of the agora, the monument might easily have been the most prominent in the whole agora.<sup>272</sup>

It is revealing that the South Square was constructed during a time of severe economic depression in Athens.<sup>273</sup> The political climate of the Hellenistic age, combined with the

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>271</sup> This conclusion is common, but not at all certain. John Camp (p.177) believes that the South Square was a market and sites as evidence the appropriateness of the stoas for commercial activities and the proximity of the mint. In either case we see a partial fulfillment of the Classical wish for separate civic and commercial agoras.

<sup>272</sup> As reconstructed by Dinsmoor in *Ibid.*, p.67

decidedly Mysian construction details and techniques<sup>274</sup> that are evident in the Middle Stoa, suggests that the stoa was built with private funds by foreign craftsmen. Thompson and Wycherley go so far as to suggest that the Middle Stoa was funded and built by the same king Attalos who constructed the famous Stoa of Attalos,<sup>275</sup> though there is no direct evidence to confirm or deny the opinion. In any case, the existence and form of the South Square reveal a pattern of Hellenistic administration in Athens: foreign princes, well disposed toward Athens for a variety of reasons,<sup>276</sup> donated vast sums of money for the construction of essentially Classical buildings in the agora. The Classical liturgy, which won great prestige for the donors but which carried with it a real prohibition against ostentation and *hubris*, was replaced by a system that allowed, even encouraged, princely donors to invest in the city in exchange for public recognition in the form of statuary and honorary magistracies.<sup>277</sup> The Hellenistic city had little economic strength of its own, but thrived like never before under the patronage of monarchs.

The South Stoa II, however, bears evidence of local funding and construction, and testifies to the weakness of Athens under the Macedonian Empire. Some years passed between the construction of the Middle Stoa and that of the South Stoa II. The abasement of standards in material, workmanship, and elegance of design betray the change of auspices from the foreign, wealthy donors to the local magistracies. The relative shabbiness of the South Stoa II portrays the poverty, mismanagement, and lack of will that adumbrate the civic government of Athens during the years of foreign domination.<sup>278</sup>

The South Square is a compelling example of the Hellenistic role of cities. The new rulers of the Hellenistic world found the city to be a suitable and enduring medium of propaganda as well as control and, outside Greece, of Hellenization of native peoples. Although in reality Athens lost her overall freedom of political action, the very foundation of her Classical existence, she benefited in other, more tangible ways. The kings of the Empire, both Macedonians and conquered tyrants of the East, were wealthy and willing benefactors who stood to gain

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<sup>273</sup> Barton, p.80

<sup>274</sup> The region of Mysia was one of the wealthiest during the ascendancy of the Hellenistic kings. The cities of Assos and Pergamon were among the urban masterpieces of Mysia.

<sup>275</sup> Thompson and Wycherley, p.68

<sup>276</sup> Rostovtzeff, pp.630-632, 803

<sup>277</sup> Ferguson, pp.278-311 The author quotes the most illuminating ancient document on the subject of royal donations to imperial protectorates (Polybios V, 88-90) in which are listed the various gifts of the Hellenistic monarchs to Rhodes after the earthquake of 224 bc. Among Ptolemy's contributions were one hundred architects and three hundred fifty masons or workmen. At least this number were employed by the monarchs at Athens.

<sup>278</sup> Cary, p.112

popularity and political solidarity by associating themselves with the birthplace of democracy. By means of an expansive program of urban building the Hellenistic dynasts proclaimed not only their greatness and the stability of their power, but their cultural enlightenment and generosity. Thus, to reiterate a point already made, the Hellenistic monarchs built in the democratic, Hippodamean idiom in an attempt to solidify their power. Their architecture, therefore, upheld the status quo by borrowing euphemistically from the architecture of the Periclean age. The architecture of democracy had become a potent political symbol, but the very ambiguity and openness that allowed it to serve democracy so successfully made it eminently transferable to totalitarian politics. In the service of the monarchs, the architecture of democracy misrepresented the politics of its builders. It proclaimed them champions of the people and of free speech though their policies were tyrannical and favored the wealthy. In order to win the favor of conquered people, the Hellenistic kings regaled them with the architecture of the 5th-century Athenian *demos*.

### **The Stoa of Attalos and the *Bema***

The epitome of monarchic munificence in Athens was the Stoa of Attalos (*figures 17 and 18*), built in coordination with the South Square during the 3rd century. The Hellenistic benefactors of Athens competed with one another for the greatest share of glory in Athens. Many of them were educated in the famous philosophical schools there, and were the richest patrons of her art. Athenian advisors were in every Hellenistic court, and Attic Greek was the *lingua franca* of educated society throughout the known world. The city represented cultural refinement, education, and sophistication, and became a colony of idle, wealthy expatriates discussing sophist dogma in the agora in imitation of the imagined life of Socrates. Though the penury and squalor of the residential quarters persisted, the agora became a highly-decorated stageset of Hellenistic culture. King Attalos II of Pergamum was a pupil in the academy in Athens and the sponsor of vast pseudo-Classical construction in his home city. His patronage of Athens changed the face of the agora more than the work of any other individual.

The stoa was the first well-conceived effort to bring the long-neglected east side of the agora into conformity with the colonnades that had already unified the other three sides.<sup>279</sup> Though the two-story stoa was

stylistically more advanced than the Middle stoa, it was obviously conceived as part of the general attempt to unify the edges of the agora. It was carefully sited at a perfect right angle to the new developments at the South Square, its floor level matched that of the Middle Stoa, and the terraces of the two buildings were similar. Together the stoas formed a coherent enclosure for the agora where previously only a haphazard array of wooden booths, cloth tents, and food carts had stood. Whatever the commercial activities of the agora in the Hellenistic age, and we know very little, they took place in front of the grand, unified stoas. The agora of Athens finally achieved its Hippodamean ideal at least two hundred fifty years after the death of the Classical planner.

In keeping with the Hellenistic role of the stoa as a backdrop, or *skena*, for the theatrical life of the agora and the drama of the oratory that was practiced there, a large and elaborate *bema* was erected as part of the stoa project. It was sited directly in front of the terrace of the stoa, on axis with the very center of the colonnade. The *bema* served as a platform for large-scale public addresses to the assembled crowd and elevated the speaker to the same level as the floor of the monumental stoa. The view from the floor of the agora, where the audience either stood or sat to listen, was of an individual man, his

face almost twenty feet above the ground, backed by the two-story expanse of the stoa.

The architrave of the stoa read:

“King Attalos, son of King Attalos and Queen Apollonis, built the stoa...toward the *demos* of the Athenians.”<sup>280</sup>

The words of the orator were backed by royal patronage in the form of the stoa. Any speech given by an ambassador or supporter of the Macedonian Empire was legitimated by the palpable presence of the monument. Any speech contrary to the Empire must have been enfeebled by the monument, which stood as evidence against the speech. The architecture of the agora, particularly the Stoa of Attalos with its *bema*, were conservative agents: they upheld the Macedonian regime, entrenched an unequal social structure, and euphemized the post-democratic relationship between patron and citizen. Without the monumental architecture of foreign, princely munificence, the Empire might have appeared bankrupt, transitory, incapable of grand projects; but instead it appeared extravagant, permanent, and powerful. The architecture of the Hellenistic agora quelled dissent and exaggerated the weakness of organized opposition to the Empire. In this regard at least it served much the same purpose as the pre-Classical citadels had; it perpetuated inequality and countered change.

<sup>279</sup> After the construction of the Stoa of Attalos 512 meters of the 650-meter circumference of the agora consisted of repetitive colonnades. Most of the remaining 138 meters were left open for the market booths at the northeast corner of the square and for street openings at the corners of the square.

<sup>280</sup> Agora Inscription 6135, quoted from Wycherley 1957, p.46

It is therefore ironic that the Stoa of Attalos was the one ancient building to be reconstructed in the agora after the archaeological excavations of the 1950s. The building is not representative of Athens, but of the foreign domination of the city. Its architectural merit aside, and it was surely one of the finest buildings in Athens, the Stoa opposed Classical democracy and does not represent the great achievements of the city. Built during the most beggared years of Athenian will and creativity, the Stoa represents the power of architecture to infix a foreign power in a city that has given up on rule by the *demos*.

But the power of the *demos*, if not real, at least remained as a Classical ideal that determined the appearance of the government and its civic architecture. The aristocratic government was still composed of the magistracies and offices that were established by Cleisthenes, and the architecture of the agora still pursued the ideals of Hippodamus. Not until the rule of the Romans after 31 BC did the government finally adopt all of the offices and appearances of an Imperial protectorate. It was then that the architecture of the agora acknowledged an ideal other than the Hippodamean.

The increasing fragmentation of the Hellenistic empire under the strain of internal competition between monarchs led to its eventual submission to Rome. In 146 the

Roman general Mummius undid the Achaean League and completely destroyed the capital city of Corinth. From that year on Greece was technically ruled as a Roman province. However, there is virtually no archaeological evidence of the end of the Hellenistic rule and the beginning of the Roman; in fact, the projects of king Attalos in the agora were completed after the Roman victory without so much as an interruption. There is ample evidence that Athens was given special treatment by the Romans, many of whom were educated in the Athenian tradition and spoke Greek. It was not until the later revolts against Rome that Athens finally came under real Roman domination as a protectorate.

## **Roman Athens, 86 BC-267 AD**

The demise of the Hellenistic Empire was gradual, the end result of an accumulation of internal troubles and the encroachment of the young Empire of Rome from the West.

In 88BC the Athenians' tradition of poor foreign policy management reached its nadir when they sided with King Mithridates of Pontus in his feeble revolt against Rome. In 86, Athens and Peiraeus were besieged in a long and bitter campaign by the Roman general Sulla whose superior weaponry and numbers against an already debilitated Athenian army left much of the city in ruins.

Numerous large stone catapult balls have been uncovered in the agora excavations to prove the extent of the Roman campaign and the sophistication of her military apparatus. At first the Agora was beyond the 400-yard range of the catapults, but the Romans broke through the walls in several places and targeted the agora for further destruction. The South Square was heavily damaged, and the South Stoa II, the Heliaea, and the East Building were all destroyed.

The archaeology of the agora shows that it regressed to commercial and industrial uses, and that its service as a civic center was temporarily suspended.

From 86 on, Athens' fortunes were intimately tied to Rome's, whose civil wars in the 1st century were all fought on Greek soil. The wars brought numerous prominent Romans to Athens, among them Julius Caesar, Pompey, Brutus, Cassius, and Mark Antony, each of whom supported the city and was later heroized in the agora. Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, were honored as the new Tyrannicides with statues next to Harmodios and Aristogeiton. Mark Antony was also honored shortly before his disastrous loss with Cleopatra to Octavian in the Battle of Actium in 31. Octavian (later Augustus), propelled by his victory, became the emperor.

Her consistently poor decisions to back perennial losers like Mithridates, Brutus and Cassius, and Antony assured Athens' cultural, economic, and political aridity in the 1st century.

But, as the end of the millennium approached, Athens' cultural and educational achievements, so admired by the Romans, led to her recovery under generous Roman patronage. As Horace famously phrased it, the literature and culture of "captive Greece take her fierce conqueror captive."<sup>281</sup>

Together with the already-mentioned generals and politicians came Roman men of letters such as Ovid, Horace, and Cicero to study in the eminent capital of education and philosophy. As early as 50BC Roman

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<sup>281</sup> Horace, *Epistles*, II.1.156

benefactors of the city were common and fulfilled the role of the wealthy Hellenistic monarchs of the preceding centuries for essentially the same reasons. The new building projects, besides replacing the facilities that were wrecked during the siege of Sulla, reflect Athens' role as an educational center. They include cultural and educational monuments including libraries, *odeia*, lecture halls, *gymnasia*, and schools (figure 7). These benefactions, however intended to glorify and solidify the cultural institutions of the city, were built according to Roman paradigms and with the distinctively Roman traditions of education and social hierarchy in mind. The architects, for the most part, and many of the builders were foreign to Athens, and virtually all of the patronage for civic projects was with Roman money, both public and private.

The Roman Empire had already made good use of the earlier Greek military and administrative practice of assimilating conquered native populations through urbanization.<sup>282</sup> They did not spare Athens this process. The agora quickly came to resemble a Roman forum in many ways, and the politics and administration of the city were heavily influenced by Roman models.

In rhetoric Athens continued to teach Rome, but the striated society of the Empire

provided aristocratic Athenian orators with further impetus to continue the post-Classical practice of entrenching and perpetuating class inequalities through rhetoric. In fact, the pyramid of Roman society enhanced aristocratic rhetoric and provided the sophists with a caste system that structured and lent subtlety to the Athenian tradition. *Paideia*, the refinement and level of education that an individual might acquire through a lifetime of study and exertion, was, for the aristocrats of both Athens and Rome, a form of symbolic capital. Its development resulted in eloquence, and required large investments of time, money, effort, and social position.<sup>283</sup>

The conspicuous display of *paideia* was the art of the Athenian and Roman *rhetors*, and the effectiveness of that display depended upon eloquence. The long tradition of euergetism,<sup>284</sup> as embodied by the liturgy, in Athens was the earlier, Classical analog of rhetoric in the city under Rome: instead of the voluntary tax on the wealthy to pay the costs of maintaining the public monuments the Roman system worked on ostentatious donations. Wealthy citizens and visitors to the city were expected to provide urban amenities, including fuel to heat the baths, public entertainment and holidays, and porticoes in the marketplace. Thus the elite established with their poor fellow citizens a relationship that was asymmetrical, but simultaneously reciprocal: the poor citizens

<sup>282</sup> Pound, entire article

<sup>283</sup> Lucian, *The Dream* 1: "Education requires effort, a great deal of time and no small expense, as well as a distinguished social position."

<sup>284</sup> I use the word coined, apparently, by Maud Gleason. 'Euergetism' is the practice of donating money to a city in exchange for prestige and public honors, just as Ptolemy Euergetes had so generously.

returned, in the symbolic form of deference and praise, what the benefactors bestowed in material gifts. The rich donors effectively converted their economic capital into symbolic capital, producing, in the process, relations of dependence that had an economic basis but which were disguised as moral, civil relations. This transformation of money to deference worked by grace of a mutual disavowal of the reality of rule by the aristocracy. The exchange of munificence for obeisance continued to function as long as both sides participated voluntarily. The voluntariness of the exchange transformed an otherwise purely economic social order into one of apparently deep, inevitable, legitimate relations between wealthy ruler and poor underclass. Maud Gleason writes:

“Thus the structured display of material generosity served as a strategy of political legitimation for the liturgical class, defining it *vis-à-vis* other groups in society and providing a stylized and structured context in which the wealthy could compete with one another without damage to their class interests.”<sup>285</sup>

Public rhetoric was another ‘stylized and structured context’ in which the wealthy maintained the asymmetries of society and publicized the generosity of their benefactions. The sons of wealthy families were trained from early adolescence, by competing with their peers, to display the cultural superiority that set them apart from the poorer classes, who, literally, spoke a

different language. The champions of rhetoric, competing in a simulacrum of the mortal battles of the Homeric heroes, appeared to win honor and *paideia* through valor in combat. This dramatization, by rhetorical competitions, of combat valorized *paideia* and concretized the gap between the uneducated and the educated; the discrepancy came to seem in no way arbitrary, but inevitable, preordained, even genetic.

In stark contrast to the Classical Athenians’ willingness to expose themselves in public debate, to ‘take off their clothes openly’<sup>286</sup> and otherwise assert their strength and civility, the Roman orators in Athens practiced a highly-controlled, careful form of rhetoric, the purpose of which was to enforce the manliness of the speaker and perpetuate class distinctions. Instead of removing the clothes that served as indicators of status and wealth, as the democratic Athenians had, the Roman *rhetors* assiduously cultivated mannerisms, styles of dress, facial expressions, and gestures that affected great power and ease in the face of dangerous rhetorical ‘combat’. Rhetoric was a calisthenics of manhood and proper aristocratic bearing. All of the arts of deportment and self-presentation were practiced for public display, where one’s adequacy as a man and as a hero of the people was under constant judgment. This

<sup>285</sup> Gleason, p.xxi

<sup>286</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 38

culmination of the Sophism of Isocrates, practiced

“to enforce by the weight of one’s very presence the submission of those beneath one in the social hierarchy, and to command respect from one’s reluctant peers,”<sup>287</sup>

was so opposed to the manner of Socrates that we might easily forget that Roman oratory had its roots in Classical dialogue. Socrates’ appearance and manner, according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, was unaffected, virile, and forthright:

“a man of strong physique and great powers of endurance, and completely indifferent to comfort and luxury. He was remarkable for his unflinching courage, both moral and physical, and his strong sense of duty. Together with this went an extremely genial and kindly temperament and a keen sense of humor.”<sup>288</sup>

Whereas the Roman sophists practiced role-playing and self-presentation, Socrates and the Classical practitioners of dialogue were unconcerned with appearances and presentation. The 5th-century Athenians used rhetoric as a device of philosophy; the sophists as a means of display, expression, and socio-political manipulation. Thus the complaints of Plato during the early days of the divorce of rhetoric from philosophy and democracy.

The transformation of rhetoric was not an isolated occurrence but integral to a general shift from the Classical ideal of non-hierarchical, democratic culture to the

Roman Imperial paradigm. Whereas the Classical Athenians had accommodated the civic activities of their cities within regular, continuous rows of equal columns, the Romans innovated a much more aggressive paradigm of urbanization. Just as Socratic dialogue was insufficient to the needs of Roman Imperial administration, so too the loose, open, democratic plan of the typical Hippodamean city. If Sennett speaks of the Classical realization that the machinery of government needed the fuel of ‘a single, sustained voice’,<sup>289</sup> Roman urbanism can be seen as the tangible expression of an evolved form of this focused, centralized political will. The tight design of the Bouleuterion and the theater on the Pnyx, the places of oratory in the Classical city, became the model of entire Roman cities. The Roman *urbs* was conceived as a social condenser and as a vehicle of political persuasion. It did not encourage discussion nor chance encounters with people of different political views, but propagated the will and doctrine of the central authority. This was accomplished through various innovations in urban design and architecture. The abandonment of Hippodamean planning as the Greek ideal of urbanization opened the way for the introduction of Roman imperial architecture which, with its overawing scale, urban presence and forceful axiality, was a powerful engine of psychological conquest. The agora became a place of imperial display

<sup>287</sup> Gleason, xxii

<sup>288</sup> *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p.998

<sup>289</sup> Sennett, p.52

and ostentation to which the little remaining democratic architecture bowed.

In their effort to maintain order and peace in the far-flung protectorates of the Empire, the Romans increasingly relied upon the city as a means of assimilating native cultures. Rome established competitions for honors, titles, and funds in which cities participated and vied for recognition. The awards, occasionally vast, were given to those cities that most fully complied with the Roman paradigm. Rome was an urban culture, and used its aggressive program of urbanization to assimilate the newest citizens. Thus the distant cities on the periphery of the Empire sought, without ongoing military or administrative compulsion, to become Romanized. It was to urbanization that Rome owed the remarkable longevity and stability of the Empire.

The new urbanism of the Roman Empire contained a number of significant innovations and served as a framework for new types of civic architecture. Among the innovations were a number of formal devices that may have had their roots in Greek urbanism but which achieved new levels of refinement and sophistication at the hands of the Romans. The urban innovations included a studied use of grand axiality, centrality, and controlled vistas.<sup>290</sup> Ferdinando

Castagnoli elucidates the political content of these urban design tactics:

“Axial symmetry embodied the concept of military discipline and centralized political power, focusing the city upon a single point,<sup>291</sup> where the magistrate exercised his authority. The same was true of the military camp. This idea of a central focus becomes more evident when the Roman plan is contrasted to the layout of the Hippodamean city, in which the uniformity of the pattern is accompanied by the concept of decentralization. This is characteristic of the Greek city, because it corresponds to the looser political plan.”<sup>292</sup>

Among the architectural developments were an unforeseen monumentality of individual buildings, a rapidly-perfected virtuosity in the design of interior space, and a fine sense of siting civic monuments relative to the rest of the city. The result was that government became omnipresent and seemingly omnipotent. All major vistas through the streets and open spaces of the city directed the eye toward an example of the wealth and strength of the central government. Fountains, temples, magistracies, baths, libraries, monuments, statues, *gymnasia*, and even latrines<sup>293</sup> were built to represent power. These were carefully dispersed throughout the city so that hardly a corner could be turned without the presence of the Empire being amply evinced by rich, monumental architecture. In fact, every town with

<sup>290</sup> There is a longer list in Nash.

<sup>291</sup> see von Gerkan, p.128

<sup>292</sup> Castagnoli, p.121

<sup>293</sup> Travlos, pp.342-343

pretensions to political or commercial importance quickly developed a 'standard set' of civic buildings, often beyond the city's budget, in hopes of achieving the grandeur of 'a little Rome'.<sup>294</sup> The set ideally included what Vitruvius listed as forum and basilica; treasury, prison, and council-house; theater and porticoes; baths; *palaestra*; and harbors and shipyards. Vitruvius especially concentrates on the differences between Greek public space and the space of the Roman Forum, noting that the agora is simple and geometric, the forum vast, elaborate, and imposing.<sup>295</sup> Even small, impoverished towns adopted austerity measures to raise the necessary funds for construction.<sup>296</sup>

The civic amenities that gradually became common to almost all Imperial cities of any importance were the temple, the forum, and the basilica. These three elements constituted a unitary complex that established the hierarchy of the empire at the scale of the town. The forum served as the open space that allowed the people to gather to see extravagantly-staged displays of Imperial rhetoric and architecture; the basilica, enclosing one end of the forum, served as a multipurpose civic enclosure and as a massive monument to the Empire; the temple, usually sited opposite the basilica to

enclose that side of the forum, was always an impressive, monumental structure that helped establish an aura of divine favor and credibility<sup>297</sup> on the events and official proceedings of the forum and basilica. If funds were available, the remaining two sides of the forum were often enclosed with other civic buildings. Thus the meetings of citizens in the forum were always in the shadow of Imperial monuments. The presence of the government was not passive, as in democratic Athens, but forceful, demanding, and looming. This architectural and urban assertiveness was entirely consistent with Roman aggression.

In the forum, in the presence of overwhelming symbols of Roman dominance, the audiences of provincial citizens behaved in a manner completely adverse to Classical Athenian public comportment. In 5th-century Athens there were few audiences, and these were small, as dictated by the nature of dialogue. Men in the agora did not often settle for mere watching and listening, but actively participated. They preferred to stand when speaking, not only to let the voice carry, but because strong men were brave, upright, *orthos*.<sup>298</sup> In the Roman forum the audience gathered to listen and to watch. Their participation was limited to applause and

<sup>294</sup> Carter, John, in Barton, p.40

<sup>295</sup> Vitruvius, Book V

<sup>296</sup> Carter, John, in Barton, p.32

<sup>297</sup> Carcopino. p.209: "The ancient religion of Rome was still able to lend the hallowed association of its traditions to the splendor of the Imperial spectacles and shows."

<sup>298</sup> Sennett. pp.49-50

cheering, and there was no opportunity for rebuttal or argument.<sup>299</sup> The crowds were large, and the oratorical displays that they sat to observe were arranged so that the social and cultural gap between the speaker and his audience was clear and unassailable. The architecture of Athens and Rome upheld their respective traditions of public rhetoric. The presence of Rome in conquered Athens introduced the *tenue* of Roman citizenship: men were expected to know their status and hold their tongues.

Though the congruence of architecture and rhetoric in the service of politics was already an ancient idea during the reign of Rome, no precedent authority had accomplished such an all-encompassing synthesis of the two arts. Though the architecture of the democratic agora and the dialogue that was practiced therein were in complete harmony, the relationship was loose and flexible. In Rome and her protectorates, however, the fit between civic architecture and the rhetoric that it nurtured grew increasingly tight and unambiguous. Elaborate rituals determined the character, order, and content of public life in ancient Rome. A typical speech in the forum was regulated by an extensive set of external controls, traditions, regulations, and expectations, most of which were assizes of Imperial edict. The speaker was almost always a member of the upper, educated classes. His speech was often announced

ahead of time, and he might enter the forum through a grand arch to the applause of the waiting crowd. Even if unannounced, his presence as a speaker was indicated as he climbed the speakers platform or took position at the top of a flight of steps in front of an imposing, frontal monument. It was common for the orator to hire professional applauders (*laudiceni*)<sup>300</sup> and to otherwise ensure his apparent success by artificial means. In oratorical competitions it was not uncommon for the opposition to hire professional hecklers to disrupt the flow of the speech and ruffle the orator.<sup>301</sup> The orator might choose one of the many civic monuments in the forum as the backdrop for his declamation according to his message and intentions: the column of Trajan in Rome might abet a speech on heroism, war, and the might of the empire; the library at Athens might enhance the apparent education of the speaker who stood in front of it; the Odeion might overawe a recalcitrant crowd and even lend to the orator some of the aura of Agrippa, its munificent and powerful patron. In contrast, the stoas of democratic Athens were abstract, continuous, and free of explicit meaning and associations except to democracy itself. A speaker in Athens might launch his tirade from any point along the platform of the stoa with equal effect, but, after the construction of the magnificent Roman monuments in the agora, his platform of choice might place him in an

<sup>299</sup> Carcopino, pp.209-210

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188

axial relationship to the overwhelming entry portico of a civic building (figures 20 and 21).

### The Odeion of Agrippa

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, son-in-law of the Emperor Augustus and builder of Rome's magnificent Pantheon, visited Athens in 15 bc. To him may be attributed the largest single benefaction to Roman Athens, the Odeion of Agrippa (figures 20 and 21). The Odeion was a lavish marble theater for 1,000 spectators under a roof with a clear span of over eighty feet. The building, certainly the richest in Athens at the end of the millennium, inspired the Athenians to honor the donor with a triumphal arch bearing his name at the entrance to the Acropolis.<sup>302</sup> The Odeion fulfilled the recommendation of Vitruvius to Augustus: "The majesty of the Empire is expressed through the eminent dignity of its public buildings."<sup>303</sup>

The theater represents a symbolic act of *sub corona*, or imperial subjugation.<sup>304</sup> Roman treatises on architecture equate the line of the cornice with the wreath of laurels or crown of the Emperor. The Odeion, the tallest

building in the agora, not only dominates the square visually, but symbolically: the cornice of the theater metaphorically gathers all of the political life of Athens under itself and declares the administrative presence of Rome supreme. To the Athenians, who fully understood the poetic content of the depiction of the victory at Marathon on the frieze of the Parthenon,<sup>305</sup> the Odeion represented a final Roman *coup* of Athenian autonomy and democracy. The legendary accomplishments of their ancestors were subsumed by the overwhelming and quite inevitable presence of Rome as embodied by the bulk of the Odeion. A quick survey of the Roman agora shows how aggressively this impressive but far from beautiful building intruded on the square: its bulk, siting, and frontality all assert its importance as a civic monument, and its axial relation to the center of the Middle Stoa introduces it wholly into the context of the earlier monuments. Even its details emphasize the complete dominance of the building. Its Corinthian columns proclaimed the foreign origin of the building and overwhelmed the Doric stoas that lined the agora. The Auditorium was fronted by a shallow portico of six colossal figures. These comprised three pairs in each of which a Triton, Roman god of the sea and of naval warfare, was coupled with a Giant,

<sup>302</sup> Dinsmoor, p.83

<sup>303</sup> Vitruvius, p.1

<sup>304</sup> Hersey, p.38 The author quotes Onians, *Origins*, 145, 478, n.2 (source unavailable). "...in Rome when a prisoner was taken he or she was said to be *sub corona*." The *corona* was the cornice of a building, the crown (if we use Vitruvius' interpretation of Roman architecture as being modeled on the human body) and dominated everything below it in much the same way that its proportions and dimensions governed the design of the rest of the building.

<sup>305</sup> There are eighty figures on the frieze, equal to the number of Athenian dead at Marathon. The frieze portrays the Panathenaic festival and commemorates the victory at Marathon. *Ibid.*, p.117, and

symbol of Roman mastery on land.<sup>306</sup> The figures appear to be enlarged adaptations of similarly-symbolic figures from the Parthenon. Other adaptations of Athenian symbols, including the olive tree and serpent of Athena, are evident in the ruins of the Odeion.<sup>307</sup>

The building apparently served double duty as an educational center and as an auditorium for plays and musical performances, but its potency as a political symbol, though not a programmatic function of the building, must be seen as one of its primary purposes. A symbolic comparison of the Odeion in the agora to the Roman imperial *fasces* is particularly illuminating.

The *fasces* were the bundles of trimmed branches or rods (*virgae*), customarily of elm or birch and bound together by red thongs (*figure 22 left*), carried by the retinue of imperial officers. The bundle symbolized the tenure of *imperium* and was carried by an equal number of *lictors*, or official attendants to an imperial procession, in the fore of all Roman officials who held an active command in the Empire. The imperial officer was represented by an ax placed in the middle of the tight bundle (*figure 22*

*right*). The number of rods in the bundle thus indicated the power of the officer and his entourage: dictators and provincial rulers with *imperium maius*<sup>308</sup> ranked twenty-four *fasces*; kings, consuls, and promagistrates followed twelve; praetors six, and legates five. The *fasces* of the Emperor and victorious republican generals were garlanded with laurel. The *virgae* thus stood for the governed people; the red thongs indicated the role of the law in binding and ordering the republic; the ax, with which the *virgae* may have been cut, revealed the power of the leader to govern the people and hold them accountable and subject to the law and to his command. To show deference or respect for the citizens of a city the officer often commanded his suite to remove the ax from the bundle upon entering a governed city and to dip the *fasces* before the crowd. Conversely, the ax might remain in the *fasces* and be held aloft to symbolically assert the power of the officer over the city.

Such symbolic representations of power were ubiquitous in the Empire. Just as the *fasces* economically and unequivocally affirmed the authority of the officers, so the architecture of the Empire maintained the power of the central authority as vested in the Emperor

<sup>306</sup> Travlos, p.365

<sup>307</sup> The eclectic borrowing of architectural elements that was so common in Roman architecture discloses its fundamentally formalistic nature. Roman architecture, particularly in the provinces, was disposed to exalt outward appearance at the expense of true poetic meaning. The tropologic content of the Greek temples was essentially poetic, but those same forms, transferred to Roman civic buildings, were separated from the context of ritual sacrifice that made them poetic. Hersey, pp.8-38

<sup>308</sup> The power of the Emperor to command in war, interpret the law, and administer the death penalty. The responsibilities of the *Imperium Maius* were often delegated to provincial kings and other officers of the Empire. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, pp.542-543

and his constituent delegates. Thus the *fascēs* elucidates the imperial role of the Odeion in the agora: the Odeion was the representative of the Emperor and the imperial patrons of the city of Athens. Its size, central location in the city and in the agora, and its explicit imperial symbolism make it equivalent to the ax in the *fascēs*. The Greek stoas surrounding the Odeion are the *virgāe*, representatives of the governed people,<sup>309</sup> and their number and opulence ultimately credit the strength of the governor. The people of Athens (represented by the stoas and the *virgāe*), are bound to the authority of the Emperor (represented by the Odeion and the ax) by the laws and social rules of the empire<sup>310</sup> (taught by the Roman orators and represented by the red thongs).

Despite the impressive efficacy of the symbols of imperial strength, they were meaningless if not accompanied by explicit indoctrination and propaganda. The specifics of the Roman way of life were communicated by the orators who traveled the Empire and spoke to the citizens. This propaganda was upheld by the symbols of the Empire even after the orators left to speak elsewhere.

As Maud Gleason so clearly illustrates, the content of imperial oratory had a profound impact on the social order of the Empire. During the reign of Hadrian, especially, oratory was the most efficient means of disseminating the ideas and ideals of Roman

urban life. The spectacle of a great orator speaking in front of the architectural monuments of the Empire accomplished the same task that Anaximander and his philosophical descendants attempted: the conjunction of words and architecture consummated the representation of order. Explicit, unequivocal words, supported by implicit, symbolic architecture had revealed *kosmos* in Classical Athens. In the Roman world they joined to reveal the supremacy of imperial power.

The placement of the Odeion at the crossroads of Athens, at the site that most closely approximated the place of the forum in the typical Roman *castrum*, encompassed further political meaning. The diagrammatic, universal model of the *castrum*, or Roman imperial military camp, which was often modified to satisfy local conditions, was nonetheless used with rigid consistency throughout the Empire. Its layout came to have political meaning that probably exceeded the intentions of its quasi-religious planners. At the crossing of the *cardo* and the *decumanus* a *forum* was constructed as the civic center of the city. The typical *castrum* focused on the monumental *praetorium*, or headquarters of the military *praetor*, and thus acknowledged the hierarchy of the Empire and the power of the military officer in command. The loose application of the *castrum* plan to many of the conquered cities of the Empire thus

<sup>309</sup> This document, p.90

<sup>310</sup> Boardman and Hammond, pp.90-102

imposed certain political associations on the new *fora* and civic buildings at the center of the city, no matter how freely arranged: the Roman monuments, whatever their use, stood in place of the *praetorium*. The Odeion of Agrippa, therefore, contained overtones of praetorian government.

### **The Library of Pantainos**

The area just outside the southeast corner of the square was left strangely undeveloped until the Roman era. Its prominence as a major intersection along the Panathenaia would suggest that the site was valuable for both commercial and civic uses but there are only sparse residential remains, all of which date from the archaic period. The first building of any public importance to be erected on the site was the library known by the name of its Athenian donor, T. Flavius Pantainos (*figure 23*).

Its construction during the 1st century AD places it within the period of great Empire-wide construction that coincided with the reigns of the 'Five Good Emperors'. Trajan, the builder of the greatest of the *fora* at Rome and numerous cultural monuments throughout the Empire, guided the Empire through its most secure and prosperous period in history. Those years of prosperity left their mark on Athens with the construction of the Odeion of Agrippa and

the Library of Pantainos, both impressive in their provincial setting.

The library was ingeniously sited and arranged to fit an awkward plot of land at the south end of the stoa of Attalos. It faced the Panathenaic Way to the west and was bounded by important streets to the north and south. A series of rooms for the storage of books and other records formed three sides of a colonnaded courtyard which also opened onto other rooms which were probably rented to businesses in order to increase library revenues. The west face of the building was of surprisingly unsophisticated rubble masonry construction, though the walls were shaded by a portico of blue marble Ionic columns. The building did not have a monumental aspect.

A comparison of the Library to others of equal size in the Empire reveals that the Pantainos was simple, plain, and austere for its day, a fact that is all the more apparent for its location in Athens, the literary and cultural center of the world during the 1st century. We know nothing of the generosity of its patronage, but must assume, based on what we know of the family of the patron and the nature of the commission, that there was no lack of funds. The relative plainness of the façade and lack of pretension in the layout of the reading rooms is best explained by the nationality of the architect and patron; the building conforms to the Athenian preference for casually domestic rows of

rooms behind a regular colonnade. We may understand the architecture as Classical: its membership to the great lineage of Hippodamean stoa-building is apparent. It does not belong to the Roman tradition of freestanding, imposing, monumental structures.

The library's casual appearance is deceptive; it masks a sophisticated piece of urban design. Its three colonnades, open courtyard, and linear arrangement of rooms were artfully composed to define the edges of three streets and the corner of the agora. In addition, the neutral, regular, stoa-like façades were perfectly suited to be backdrops for the monumental statuary that was erected between the Library and the South Square.

The building is an elegant agglomerate of Athenian and Roman ideas. The inscription above the main entry to the Library survives and epitomizes Roman Athens:

“To Athena Polias and to the Emperor Caesar Augustus Nerva Trajan Germanicus and to the city of the Athenians, the priest of the wisdom-loving (philosophical) Muses, Titus Flavius Pantainos, the son of Flavius Menander the head of the school, gave the outer stoas, the peristyle, the library with the books, and all the furnishings within them, from his own resources, together with his children Flavius Menander and Flavia Secundilla.”<sup>311</sup>

The donor describes himself as a priest of the philosophical muses, the son of the head of a philosophical school, and the generous donor

of a civic amenity to the city of Athens. No *résumé* could be more indicative of the spirit of the age.

The dedication to deified Trajan with the epithet Germanicus dates the construction of the library more precisely than that of any other monument in the agora. By the end of his reign Trajan, having fought the Dacians in AD 102 and the Parthians in 115, was known by the epithet Germanicus Dacius Parthicus. The date of the Library is therefore between the Emperor's accession in 98 and his Dacian campaign in 102. It is evident that Trajan was worshipped as a great patron of the city and as a god in the Library. Remains of a large statue of Trajan with a Dacian captive crouching at his feet along with the base for a second statue dedicated by Trajan's priest were found in the Library.

The Library in its described form was an expansion of an earlier building that was probably one of Athens' famed schools of philosophy. It is likely that Pantainos' father headed the school. The transformation of the edifice from school of philosophy to donor's monument is illustrative of the Romanization of Athens.

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<sup>311</sup> *Agora Inscription I 848*

### **The Cults of the Imperial Family**

After Trajan, the emperor Hadrian took the throne in 117. He was almost obsessively Philhellenic and especially fond of Athens, which he visited at least three times during his extraordinarily busy twenty-year reign. He made Athens the center of his religious life, erecting the grand temple of Olympian Zeus which contained two monumental statues, one of the god and one of himself. Pausanias published a list of Hadrian's benefactions to the city which included a shrine to Panhellenian Zeus and Hera, a Pantheon, a library, and a large *gymnasium*. The Athenians revered the donor and expressed their gratitude for these and other gifts by making the emperor an Eponymous Hero and erecting at least ninety-four altars to him in the city.<sup>312</sup> A great arch bearing his name was raised near the Olympeion in honor of his many generous donations. Along the west edge of the agora in a prominent location near the stoa of Zeus a heroic marble statue of an idealized and armed Hadrian was erected. His cuirass was decorated with images appropriate to the Roman view of Athenian educational and cultural primacy: Athena stands on the back of the Roman Wolf, which suckles Romulus and Remus, and is bracketed by two winged Nikai. Archaeological evidence suggests that at least two more buildings in the agora,

neither listed by Pausanias, were also raised by Hadrian.

The location, form, and iconography of the Hadrianic monuments illuminate the role of Athens as a college town dependent on the endowments of powerful men and the foreign Empire for her sustenance. Hadrian's symbolic armor was aptly designed: Athena, patroness of Athens and goddess of learning, stands on the back of the fierce and nourishing Wolf of Rome.

### **The Basilica**

Though we cannot determine with any certainty the patronage of the Roman basilica in Athens, it was likely one of the donations of Hadrian. Stratigraphy and architectural remains date the building to the reign of Hadrian. The typical three-aisled hall was used by Roman residents in Athens as the center for their markets, law courts, and administrative offices, much as the stoas were used by the Greeks.<sup>313</sup> Only one end of the building has been excavated, but we know that the basilica was very large and was opulently decorated with marble revetment and sculpture.

The Athenians, after pleading leniency from Sulla, had been allowed almost continuous

<sup>312</sup> Camp, p.191

<sup>313</sup> Martin, 1972, p.88

self-administration and exceptional diplomatic latitude. Nevertheless, even with her magistracies intact, relations with other cities, including the lifeline to Rome, were under the administrative supervision of officials appointed by Rome. The basilica was a potent reminder and palpable reflection of the intrusion of Roman government into the public affairs of the old agora (*figure 7*). Similar basilicas throughout the Empire were symbols of the power of the central government and its ultimate control of civic life in the provinces.<sup>314</sup>

But the basilica did not simply remind the people of Athens of the strength of the Empire, it actually disciplined the Athenian body to behave as a Roman body. Richard Sennett explains:

“The Romans sought to create a space in which a person was meant to move forward, rather than be distracted by sideways movement; Roman space had a spine...

“...the surfaces of the Greek Parthenon were designed to be seen from many different points in the city, and that the viewer’s eye traveled round the building’s exterior. The early Roman temple, by contrast, sought to station the viewer only in front. Its roof extended in eaves on the sides; its ceremonial decoration lay all on the front face; the paving and planting around it was oriented to a person standing in front. Inside the temple the building similarly gave directions: look forward, move forward. These bossy boxes

were the origins of the visual directives made in Hadrian’s Pantheon, with its spine and bilateral symmetries...

“The geometry of Roman space disciplined bodily movement, and in this sense issued the command, look and obey.”<sup>315</sup>

The rigor and discipline of the axial, linear, frontal Roman buildings in Athens imposed ideals of Roman bodily comportment on the Athenians. Archaeologist Malcolm Bell notes:

“Many of the political and commercial activities that in the agora required free space have been displaced to the periphery in this well-planned world (of the Roman city)...there was little need for the ambiguous values of the stoas.”<sup>316</sup>

The directional space of the basilica, representing imperial discipline, replaced the ambiguous space of the stoas, the enclosures of democratic space.

### **The Tyrannicides**

Harmodios and Aristogeiton continued to be the heroes of Athenian democracy for centuries after its demise. The efforts of the post-Classical politicians to appease the people of Athens with appearances of democracy were largely successful, even during the height of Roman control. It was common for orators, even those sent by the

<sup>314</sup> Homo, p. 46

<sup>315</sup> Sennett, pp.112-113

<sup>316</sup> Bell, Malcolm, “Some Observations on Western Greek Stoas,” (unpublished manuscript, American Academy of Rome, 1992) quoted from *Ibid.*, p.114

Emperor, to refer to the Tyrannicides as examples of Athenian virtue while simultaneously upholding the Empire and its rigid imposition of law on the provinces. Thus their heroism was transferred from the *demos* to the Emperor and they became the symbolic champions of the same social inequality that they had supposedly fought to overthrow.

Joining the Athenian Tyrannicides in their new calling as agents of the Empire were the so-called Roman Tyrannicides, Brutus and Cassius. The two played key roles in the assassination of Caesar and held numerous positions of great military and political importance throughout the Empire during the last century BC. As heroes of the Roman Senate, which Caesar had ruthlessly overridden during his reign, Brutus and Cassius were entitled Heroes of the Republic, despite the continuing fact of imperial rule. Thus their virtual apotheosis in the agora of Athens was at best a mixed political message: as supporters of the Senate their careers were loosely democratic, but their service as military *praetors* in the provinces combined with their continuing support of the emperors established them as members of the vanguard of Roman imperial society.

The statues of the Roman Tyrannicides were placed next to the Athenian Tyrannicides on a new, enlarged pedestal which was moved to a new location in front of the Odeion. Its

placement on axis with the portico of the Roman building further propelled the propaganda of the Empire, clearly at the cost of the integrity of the Athenian symbols of democracy. At the time of this and the other politically-motivated developments in the agora it was undoubtedly very difficult for the illiterate population of Athens to maintain the memory of true democracy; the selfsame government that was designed to free them from tyranny was obliterated by an opaque shroud of repeatedly co-opted political symbols whose original meanings had been forgotten except in literature.

### **The Designed Perspectives of Roman Athens**

We turn briefly to the Roman *fora* to better understand the Athenian agora during the reign of the emperors.

Richard Sennett entitles his essay on Roman civic architecture “The Obsessive Image” and sees embodied in the imposing monuments of the Empire a command to the people to “look and obey.”<sup>317</sup> His evaluation of the great ‘pantomime’ of Roman public life closely parallels our present concern with architecture and political rhetoric. The Roman theatrics of bodily self-presentation in the *fora* evolved out of one aspect of the study of Classical Greek rhetoric: from

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<sup>317</sup> Sennett, p.101

Cicero's *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *pronuntiatio*<sup>318</sup> the Roman orators chose *elocutio*, or the methods of presentation, both bodily and rhetorical, as a focus for their efforts to perfect large-scale oratory. With the withering of the city-state and the other institutions which gave deliberative oratory its special significance, rhetoric as a whole became increasingly identified with *elocutio*, which the Classical philosophers had considered but one of the lesser parts of rhetoric. Thus deliberation, or Socratic rhetoric, was superseded by a formalistic concern with appearances.<sup>319</sup> This was a fulfillment of the worries of Socrates as previously enumerated.<sup>320</sup>

Richard Sennett explains the formal changes of the Roman forum that mirrored the above changes in rhetoric:

“As in the provincial cities, the geometry of power in Rome’s center eroded the display of human diversities. As the Forum Romanum became more regular, the city’s butchers, grocers, fishmongers and merchants took themselves off to separate quarters of the city, leaving the business of the forum, in later Republican times, to lawyers and bureaucrats; then, as the emperors built their own forums, these political pets left the Forum Romanum to follow their masters into new spaces. The buildings became, in modern planning jargon, more ‘mono-functional’ ...

“As diversity ebbed, this ancient center of Rome became a place given over to the ceremonial, the Forum Romanum becoming a point at which power donned the reassuring robes and roles of pantomime...Speakers harangued the crowd from the Rostra, originally a curved platform jutting out of the Comitium, the voice of the speaker reinforced by a solid building behind him. When Julius Caesar moved the old Rostra to a new site in the Forum Romanum...he meant this new speakers’ stand to be a place of ceremonial declaration rather than participatory politics. The speaker no longer spoke surrounded by people on three sides; instead he was placed like a judge within the earliest basilicas. Outside, his voice now projected poorly, but no matter. The orator was meant to appear, to point a finger, to clutch his breast, to spread his arms: he was to look like a statesman to the vast throng who could not hear him, and who had lost the power to act on his words in any event.”<sup>321</sup>

The political sycophant Velleius Paterculus, in an attempt to praise Emperor Augustus, evoked the effects of these and other visual changes to the public realm of Rome:

“Credit has been restored in the forum, strife has been banished from the Forum, canvassing for office from the Campus Martius, discord from the senate house; justice, equity, and industry, long buried in oblivion, have been restored to the state...rioting in the theater has been suppressed. All have either been imbued with the wish to do right or have been forced to do so.”<sup>322</sup>

<sup>318</sup> Cicero, *Ad Herennium*, III, xvi-xxiv, quoted in Yates, p.5

<sup>319</sup> David Cohen in Worthington, p.74, writes: “In essence, rhetoric is redefined: its centering in civic discourse, persuasion, argumentation, and deliberation are ‘forgotten’, and one appendage of the art of rhetoric is detached and substituted, in splendid isolation, for the whole.”

<sup>320</sup> p.43 of this document

<sup>321</sup> Sennett, pp.114-115

The daunting presence of the emperor became increasingly inevitable after the reign of Augustus. His forum, built near the old Forum Romanum, began a grand tradition of forum-building that culminated in the construction of the Forum of Trajan. These new *fora*, following the imperial designs of 1st century AD, were “ceremonial space, dignified, empty of business, unseemly sex, plain sociability;”<sup>323</sup> they indeed imposed the will of the emperor on the people. They were empty of the civic vitality that had been so essential to the democratic functions of the Athenian agora.

“The history of the Forum Romanum foreshadowed the sequence of great imperial forums that would be built under the Empire. By the end of the Imperial era these composed immense ceremonial spaces through which Romans moved as along a spine, facing enormous, cowering buildings which represented the majesty of the (emperors) who ruled their lives...The birth of the Forum Iulium, and the growth of the Imperial forums, (made) these spaces ever more daunting as the voices of the citizens grew weaker...(T)he visual control which the Romans practiced in making cities on the frontier had now come home. Though cosmopolitan Romans loathed the provinces, by Hadrian’s time the visual orders Romans gave to conquered peoples ruled their own lives as well.”<sup>324</sup>

It is the rigidity of Roman visual order and its metaphorical intent to embody the

oppressive government that most drastically altered the face of the Athenian agora after the democratic era. Where “the ambiguous values of the stoa”<sup>325</sup> had so elegantly typified the openness and equality of democratic dialogue in the agora, the Roman additions to the agora exemplified the hierarchy and rigidity of the Empire. These additions can be categorized as buildings, some important examples of which we have already examined in this section, and as the largely un-programmatic structures that will hereafter be called ‘stageset architecture’.

In keeping with the Roman tendency to enforce imperial rule through grand architecture and manipulative rhetoric, many of the additions to the agora, especially after Augustus and during the reign of Hadrian, assertively manipulated the visual experience of the procession of the Panathenaia. The quadrennial Panathenaic Festival, organized at Athens in 566 BC, was the celebration of the birthday of Athena and of the democracy that ennobled the people of Athens. The population of the city followed a group of maidens and young men leading sacrificial animals through the Dipylon gate in the northwest wall of the city, and down the Panathenaic way to the agora (*figure 8*). They passed through the middle of the agora and then continued to the Acropolis to perform the rites associated with the

<sup>322</sup> Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, xx, cxxvi, 2-5, quoted from *Ibid.*, p.116.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.117-118, my parentheses

<sup>325</sup> See note #289

Parthenon and Athena. During the years of Roman rule the festival continued as an annual celebration of the city but with imperial overtones.

The presence of the Empire was palpable from the beginning of the procession to the Parthenon. At the Dipylon gate the Romans constructed a frontal temple on the axis of the straight 'boulevard' of the Panathenaic Way, both sides of which were lined with monumental arcades and stoas (*figure 8*). At periodic intervals between the colonnades monuments were placed, most of them commemorating the heroes of democracy. As the procession approached the northwest corner of the agora it passed between the ends of the Classical Stoas Basileios and Poikile and then into the square. The Roman projects in the square effectively completed the Classical attempt to completely encircle the agora with colonnades, though the theme of regularity, harmony, and repetition was forsaken in favor of the Roman preference for massive monumentality and axial arrangements of buildings. The Romans constructed altars and a latrine at the southwest corner of the square, a monumental colonnade in front of the civic offices at the Middle Stoa, the Odeion as the focal point of the agora, a purely scenographic Nympheion, a number of prostyle temples at the ends of crucial axes, and sited the basilica to effectively enclose the previously barren northeast corner of the square. These numerous and ambitious

projects were carefully conceived to manipulate the experience of the participants in the procession: no longer were street axes left untruncated, no longer were the poor residential and industrial neighborhoods of north Athens visible to the casual observer, no longer was the eye of the visitor allowed to democratically wander as it might from one non-hierarchical stoa to another. The hierarchy of the Empire was written indelibly in the Roman language of civic architecture, and the people could not deny the prepotence of Rome, even in their most sacred native festival.

Much has been written concerning the monumental architecture of the agora, and we need not belabor the common thesis that these monuments were inherently political and representative of centralized, imperial power. However, the subtler stageset architecture of the agora has received very little attention despite the rich lessons those monuments contain. Of particular consequence are the colonnades that the Romans constructed to line the Panathenaic Way.

Classical Athenian democracy had thrived on a sort of brutal honesty. The mingling of rich and poor in the agora, and the similar mix of wealthy and poor houses in the residential neighborhoods served to constantly bear witness to the remaining inequalities of the city. The presence of beggars in the agora ensured that the lawmakers were not ignorant

of the plight of the disabled, the homeless, and the destitute. A remarkable vein of charity, attributable at least in part to the presence of a diversity of people in the civic space of the city, ran through the Classical constitution. The converse of this Classical openness and honesty was the extreme separation of functions and people in the Roman city. Whereas the 5th-century Athenians ennobled the poor, the Romans screened their dilapidated houses from the public realm of the city with elaborate and richly decorated colonnades. Whereas the Athenians consciously fostered casual associations between rich and poor, educated and simple, native and foreign in the unimposing, undirected space of the agora, the Romans established elaborate stagesets of architecture to lend credence to the rhetoric that perpetuated class distinctions. Whereas the tendency of the Athenians to build opulent architecture was tempered by a healthy suspicion of private donation and monument-building the Romans lavished the agora with elaborate and purely scenographic structures such as the Nympheion. Any complete description of this Roman stageset architecture will contain an analysis of its political and social intentions.

Likewise, any evaluation of Roman imperial rhetoric must recognize political and social intentions. The two analyses, of parallel developments architectural and rhetorical, reveal the inequality and asymmetry of political and social relationships between

those who perform (builders and orators) and those who form the audience (citizens and conquered people). More particularly, in the Roman Empire the architecture of the great patrons and the rhetorical performers of the central authority embodied the praetorian culture of Rome. The architects and young students of rhetoric imitated the forms of the preceding generation and gradually came to clothe imperial culture in the wraps of ancient democratic forms. These forms were politically powerful; they evoked the highly revered Athenian tradition and effectively euphemized the inequity of imperial Rome. The result was, for many generations, the smooth-flowing cultural reproduction of the patterns of urbanization and rhetoric. There were momentous evolutions of public life during those generations, but the institutions of Rome were *perceived* to be unchanging. Thus, the people of Roman Athens lived a lie. Though their first acceptance of foreign patronage had involved a collective disavowal of the accompanying symbolic deterioration of democracy, their later acceptance of Roman dominance was in a haze of forgetfulness, ignorance and apathy.

If there is one lesson that Rome can teach, it is that *presentation matters*. Architecture and rhetoric, well presented according to the highly polished *techne* of the late Empire, were a shorthand that encoded, embodied, misrepresented, and perpetuated the complex reality of socio-political structure, all with an elegant economy of *elocutio*. Architectural

and rhetorical presentation extorted deference and enforced one's relation to others within the hierarchy of the Empire. It is apparent that, in a relatively static society like the Empire, individuals can learn their 'place' without ever bringing the rules of social order to a level of conscious evaluation through discourse. Architecture and rhetoric imposed the geometry of the Empire on the people and replaced the consciousness of Socratic discourse with a spectator mentality.

The role of individual participants in public life in the late Empire was fundamentally different from the role of Classical Athenians in the agora. The 5th-century Athenians cultivated an awareness of the relationship between themselves and the *polis*. Men were individual actors in the city. The citizens of Roman Athens, however, cultivated a fine sensitivity to the subtleties of deportment, public role-playing, and physiognomy. The result was that Roman oratory was highly refined where Classical Greek oratory had been so recently added to the arts; but also it dulled the spectators' awareness of their role as active, participating members of the community. This shift from the Greek awareness of self and *polis* to the Roman awareness of mannerisms and other indicators of social position paralleled the increasing centralization and universalization of the Empire under a rigidly hierarchical power structure.

In our century, Michel Foucault has suggested that the Roman concern with the subtleties of self-presentation fits within the context of the political developments of the end of the Empire. In the imperial period, he writes, the direct competition of aristocrats for position within the pyramid of society gave way to a system of "revocable offices which depended...on the pleasure of the prince." The subtle and complex language of architectural and rhetorical mannerisms, gestures, and metonymy accommodated the increasing complexity of the relationship between the aristocratic leader and his subjects. There was an intensification of interest in those "behaviors by which one affirms oneself in the superiority one manifests over others."<sup>326</sup> To extend Foucault's reading of personal deportment to the scale of the Empire: a formal language of architecture and rhetoric was developed to sustain the Empire and its otherwise arbitrary asymmetrical social relations by presenting them as inevitable, traditional, established. It is perhaps the great irony of classical politics that imperial Rome adopted the forms of Athenian rhetoric and architecture to propagate the Empire.

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<sup>326</sup>

Foucault, p.85

## **Conclusion**

## Conclusion

Each of the four political systems surveyed in these essays relied upon civic architecture and public rhetoric. A simple formal evaluation of the developments of rhetoric and architecture from pre-Classical Athens, through the democratic age, and to the end of the imperial period reveals an apparent conservatism. The repeatedly-reused forms of the classical world seem to have evolved slowly, following the rules of *praxis* and *techne*, so that we can trace many of the themes and forms of early Greek architecture and rhetoric through two thousand years to the end of the Roman Empire. The methods of Homer, Anaximander, Socrates, Demosthenes, and Polemo appear to occupy points along a continuum of rhetorical development. Similarly, the pre-Classical megaron, the Parthenon, the monuments of Pergamon, and the Pantheon of Rome appear to occupy a concurrent continuum of architectural evolution. This apparent conservatism is deceptive.

The Greeks understood architecture to embody meaning and order. Political order was not the least of the *kosmos* revealed by architecture. Thus, to the ancient Athenians, the significance of civic architecture was a function of political context: the political

persuasion of the sponsoring regime determined, to a large extent, the meaning of the buildings, despite their remarkable formal consistency. The Stoa of Attalos, for example, though a direct descendant of the Classical stoas that symbolized the equality of the citizens of the democratic *polis*, emblemized the foreign domination of Athens during the Hellenistic era and served to aggrandize the builder at the cost of equality in the agora. Architecture was a political tool. It served to propel democracy for a short time, and otherwise served to legitimate asymmetrical power arrangements and perpetuate the *status quo*.

In the same manner, rhetoric was the engine of public life, the ‘combat’<sup>327</sup> through which the difficulties of civilized urban life were debated and resolved. Its development as the art of public speech paralleled the development of architecture. The post-democratic regimes of Athens subtly maintained the appearance of democratic participation in public speech, thus endearing themselves to the expressive Athenian *demos*, when in reality rhetoric evolved away from dialogue and into oratory, the sole domain of the educated, possessing class. By the end of Rome’s domination of Athens oratory had become a highly stylized means of perpetuating class distinctions and concretizing the Empire. Through its dramatic unfolding, however, the form and means of rhetoric remained remarkably

<sup>327</sup>

Gleason, p.159

consistent. The evolution of rhetoric from Gorgias to the orators of the Second Sophistic contained few revolutions.

The apparently conservative evolution of architecture and rhetoric, particularly in the agora of Athens, masks the deeper potentials of the two as powerful agents of political control. In order to appease the Athenian *demos* the *forms* of Classical democracy were appropriated by the Hellenistic patrons and the Roman Empire. The fact of foreign political mastery was insidiously misrepresented by 'conservative' architecture and rhetoric. The Greek orders of architecture and the Classical rules of rhetorical composition were adopted and subtly manipulated by the Roman conquerors so that Athens was slowly assimilated into the Empire by the persuasive power of formal languages that she herself first spoke. The open, undirected, ambiguous space of the Classical agora which had perfectly suited Athenian democratic dialogue was gradually supplanted by the closely controlled, directional, unequivocal space of Roman imperial urbanization and oratory, all without abandoning the fundamental forms of the Greek architectural tradition.

So we can conclude that any arrangement of public space that encloses and ennobles, but in no way impinges upon, speech between people is 'Greek' and democratic. Conversely, those arrangements of civic space that impose an order on the events that

transpire therein insomuch that free speech is hindered or controlled or the ability of the people to meet is checked are 'Roman' and imperial. Likewise, the rhetoric of democracy must allow discussion, contention, disagreement, and rebuttal; in short, it must be participatory and require the accountability of the speaker for his contribution in public space. Any rhetorical forms that either explicitly engender unequal relationships between men or insidiously disguise inequality are inimical to public life.

To end where we started: the Classical philosophers agreed that an essential human characteristic is the ability to speak, and to speak freely. Any arrangement of civic space that sets political limits on speech causes us to be less human, to behave more like mere animals. The looming presence of the Odeion in Athens stultified Socratic discourse, and, therefore, represents the attempt of the Empire to be an ax among the *fasces*, a hero with a *phratry*, a shepherd to the sheep of poverty and illiteracy.

## **Afterword**

Though my interest in the confluence of civic space and the forms of speech that are used in it is strong enough to be self-contained, I was motivated to begin this research in earnest after hearing the word ‘fascist’ lightly overapplied to civic architecture, especially that which we call ‘classical’. It has been applied to such a variety of buildings and urban settings that I am unable to identify their commonalities and derive a working definition of the word. The etymology led me to Rome, whence all roads lead to Athens.

The history of the civic heart of Athens as it evolved to accommodate the public life of four ancient eras reveals two opposed paradigms of public architecture. These were evoked by a study of the parallel development of rhetoric, for the Athenians were a talkative people and their public life was verbal as well as spatial. The first paradigm is the non-Classical, the sometimes tyrannical, sometimes imperial, always assertive, rigid, hierarchical system of rule by the few. This was the political reality of Athens before and after democracy, though the various non-democratic regimes asserted their will with varying degrees of directness.

The second paradigm has its ancestry enmeshed in that of tyranny. It evolved out of rule by the few partly as a reaction against

oppression, but also as a slow mutation. The resulting mongrel strain, all topsy-turvy in the ancient world, was a political ship Argo: not one timber of the tyrannical ship was left intact; all had been replaced piecemeal with the finer stuff of democracy through a period of remarkable cultural continuity.

The foundation of the first paradigm was a code of suspicion and an all-encompassing system of controls that assured the continuance of aristocratic rule. In its more refined forms oligarchy was capable of sophisticated modulations of architecture and rhetoric as tools of political control. Perhaps it was the immense security of the *Pax Romana* that permitted the artists of the day the liberty to develop these sophisticated modulations while they remained absolutely sure of their class dominance. In Roman Athens much of the appearance of democracy and self-rule was maintained during the unequivocal domination of the Empire.

The foundation of the second, democratic paradigm was *free speech in the agora*. The rhetorical and spatial components of that ideal are examined in this paper. The possibility of free speech implied a lack of authoritarian suspicion, uninhibited meetings between speakers, and safeguards against petty autocracy and political intimidation. The agora, a relatively level *choros*, or dance floor, and its civic architecture provided the spatial setting that was essential to the

continuation of free speech. It spatialized and legitimated the public life of the *demos* with as much force as the pre-Classical citadel on the Acropolis had championed the tyrants.

Surprisingly little has changed. The two paradigms are universally applicable. Any polity of any significance can be at least loosely defined as either self-propelled or herded.

But it is easy and common to equate democracy with freedom from regulation. The public life of Athens was supremely regulated. The Athenians worshipped the law. They knew that the invincibility of the *hoplites* was found in their order, the speed of the triremes in the rhythm of the rowers, the solidity of the temples in the discipline of their columns. Free speech was tempered by accountability. Men put their bodies into public space to make their words democratic: without the risk of bodily self-presentation in the agora their words might have flown like Icarus.

“I warn you, Icarus, to fly the middle course, lest, if you go too low, the water may weight your wings; if you go too high the fire may burn them. Fly between the two...fly where I shall lead.”<sup>328</sup>

Unbound words were anarchic, irresponsible, unregulated, lawless, the potential enemies of the *demos*.

Thus the requisite components of democracy can be listed: free speech, opportunity for rebuttal, general participation, voluntary acceptance of the bridle of law, bodily accountability for public speech, the spatialization of the order of the *polis*, freedom from compulsion.

This list may be applied to any form of communal discourse to evaluate the form's worthiness as a means of democracy. The unilateral media of television and radio do not satisfy the requirements of democracy; they provide only artificially regulated, unilateral speech. There is no opportunity for rebuttal, participation is debased, there is no bodily accountability. Its space is illusory, its compulsion is insidious. The participatory environment of 'cyberspace' comes much closer to the mark, though it conspicuously fails to provide a framework of accountability and regulation. The virtual communications of electronic space are unhinged, unbound. They flare out of control and divorce participants from their words. Furthermore, participation is not yet general, but limited to an educated 'information aristocracy', membership in which is expensive and time-consuming.

A generalization of the ancient Athenian and Roman paradigms to our modern political realm leads me to conclude that we have many *fora*, but no agora.

<sup>328</sup>

Ovid, *Icarus and Daedalus*

Figures

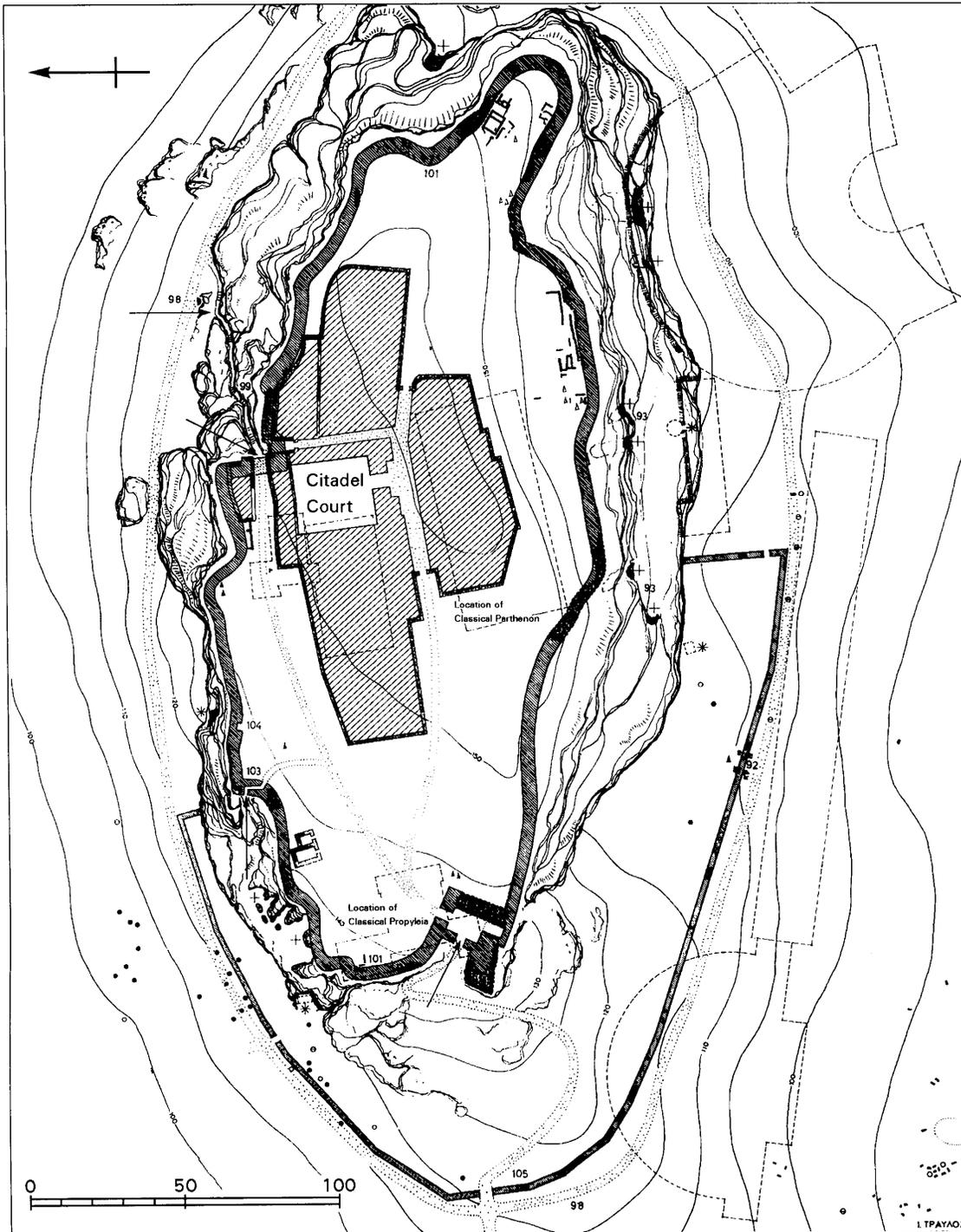


Figure 1

The Late-Helladic Citadel of Athens, circa 1000 BC

Figures

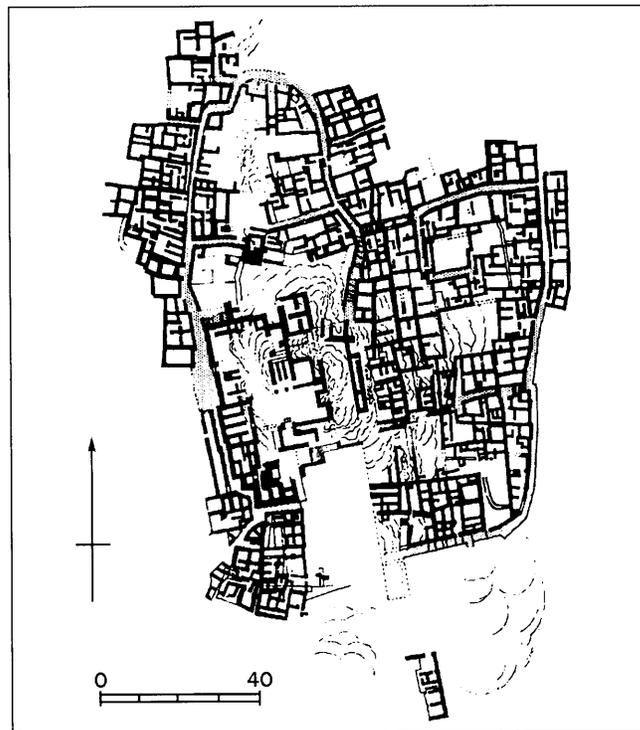


Figure 2

The Citadel City of Gournia, Mid 2nd Millennium BC

Figures

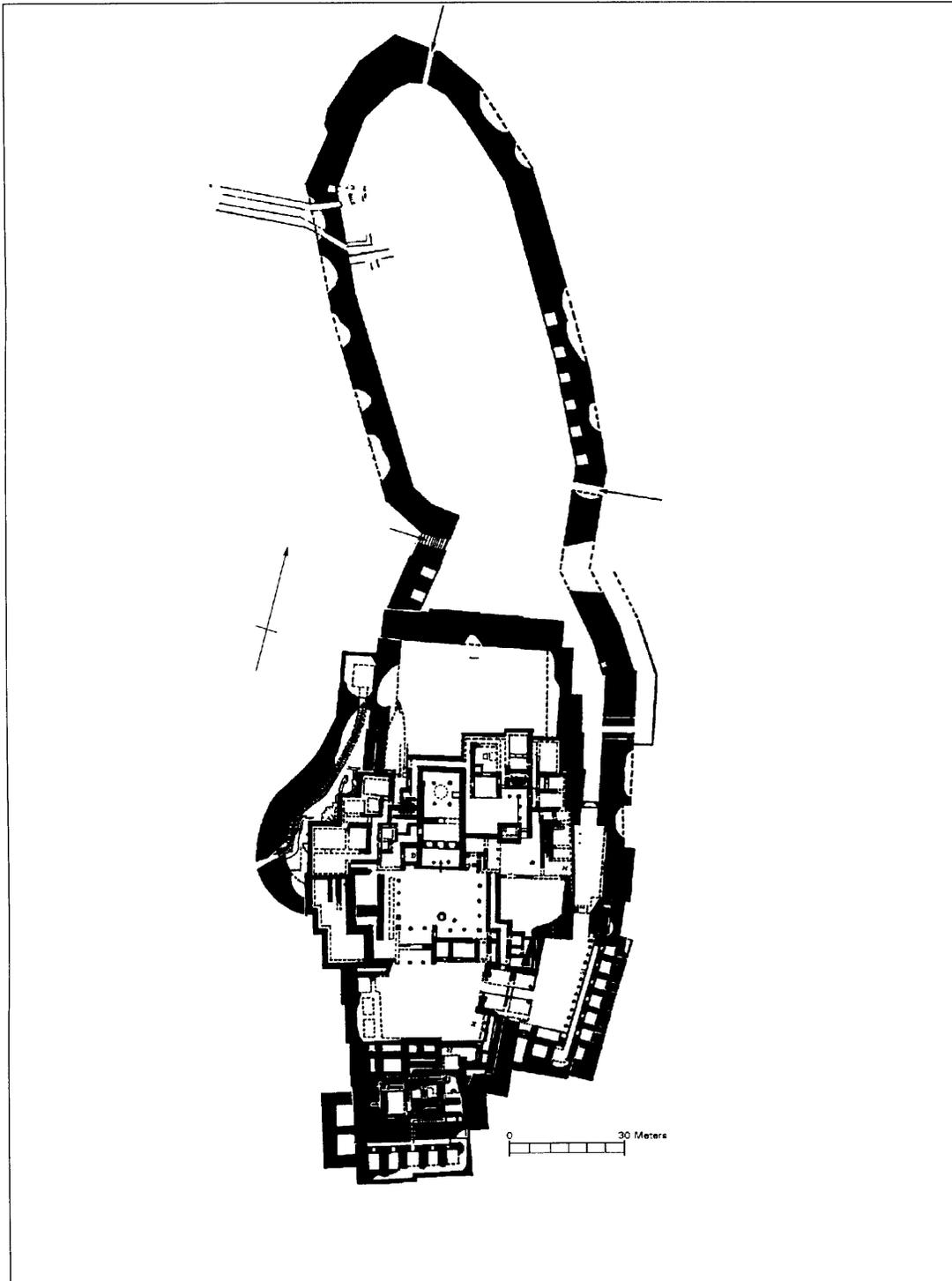
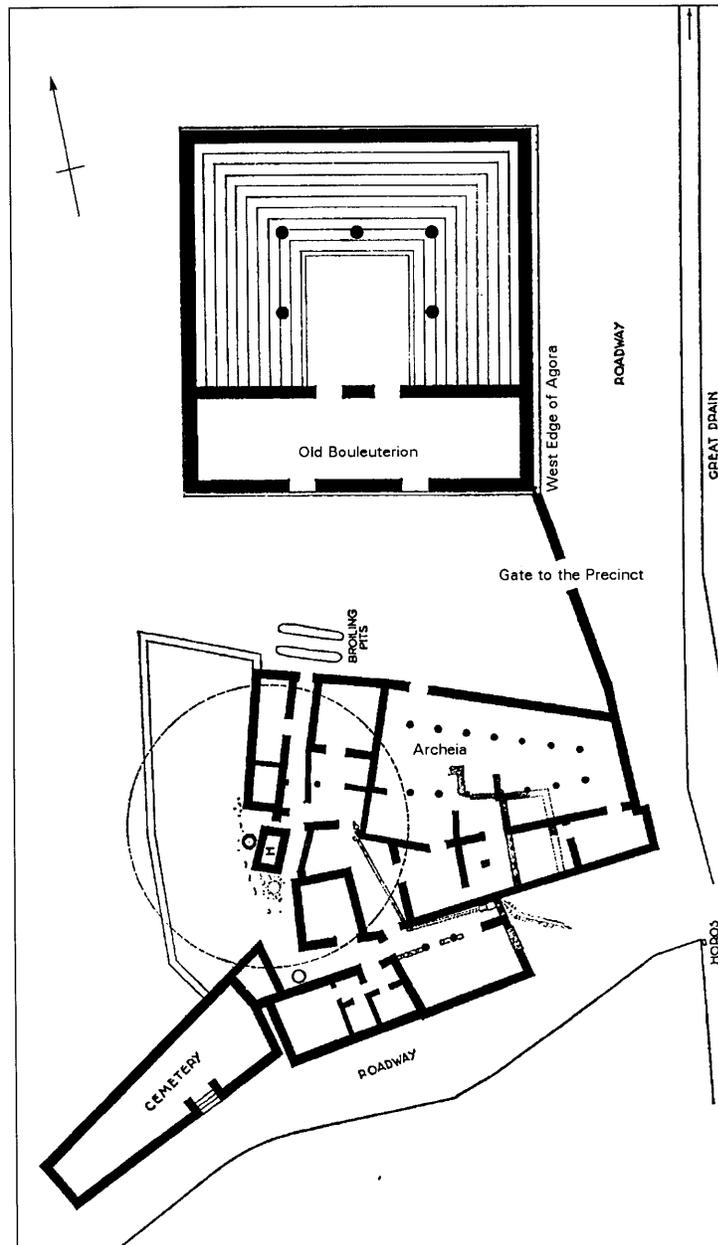


Figure 3

The Late Helladic Citadel City of Tiryns

## Figures



**Figure 9**

### The Precinct of the Mother of the Gods

The Old Bouleuterion is above, the Archeia ('Prytaneion') below. They and the wall that connected them formed a precinct, dedicated to the Mother of the Gods, from which the bustle of the market was excluded.

Figures

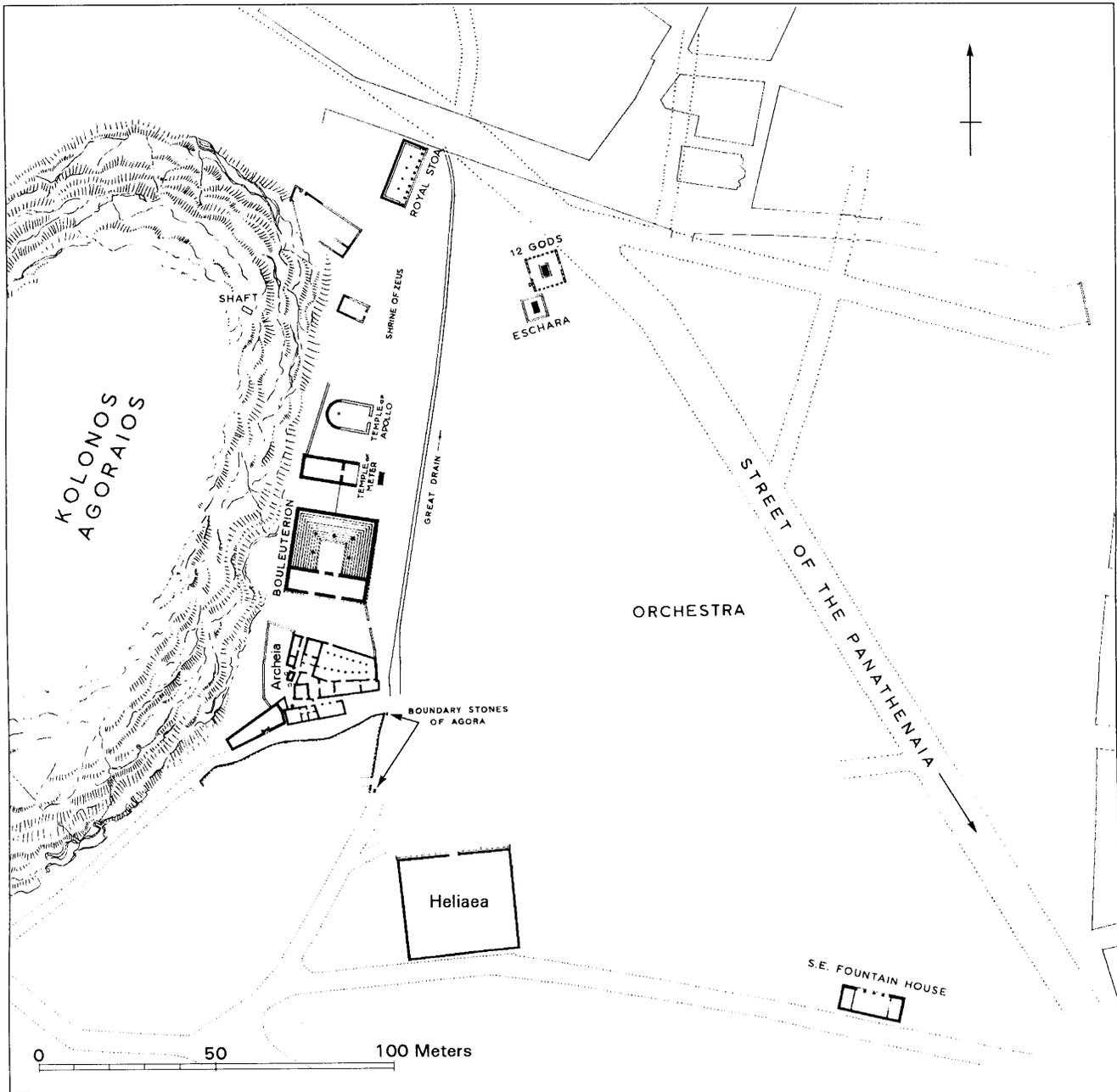


Figure 4

The Agora circa 500 BC

Figures

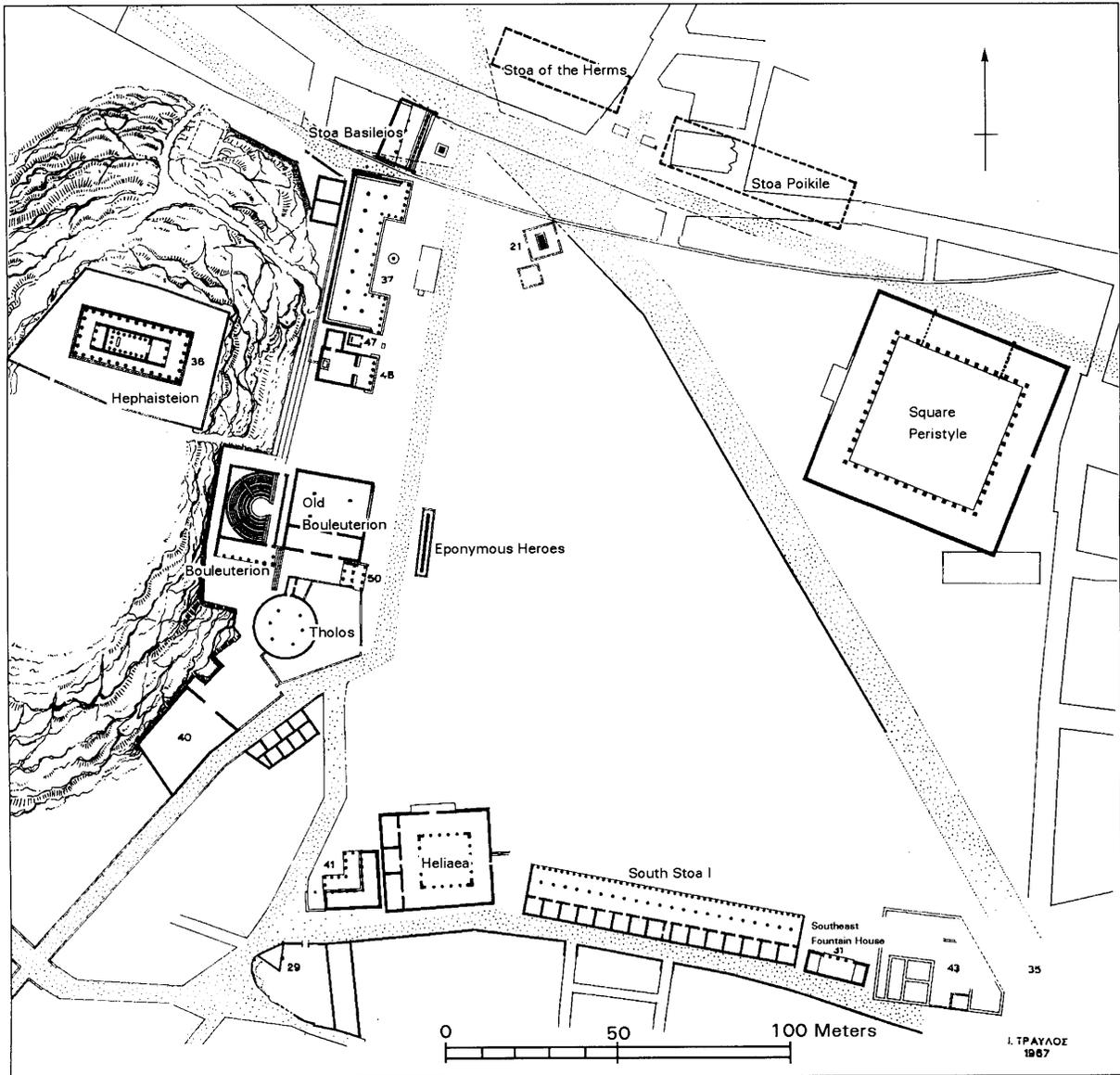


Figure 5

The Agora circa 350 BC

Figures

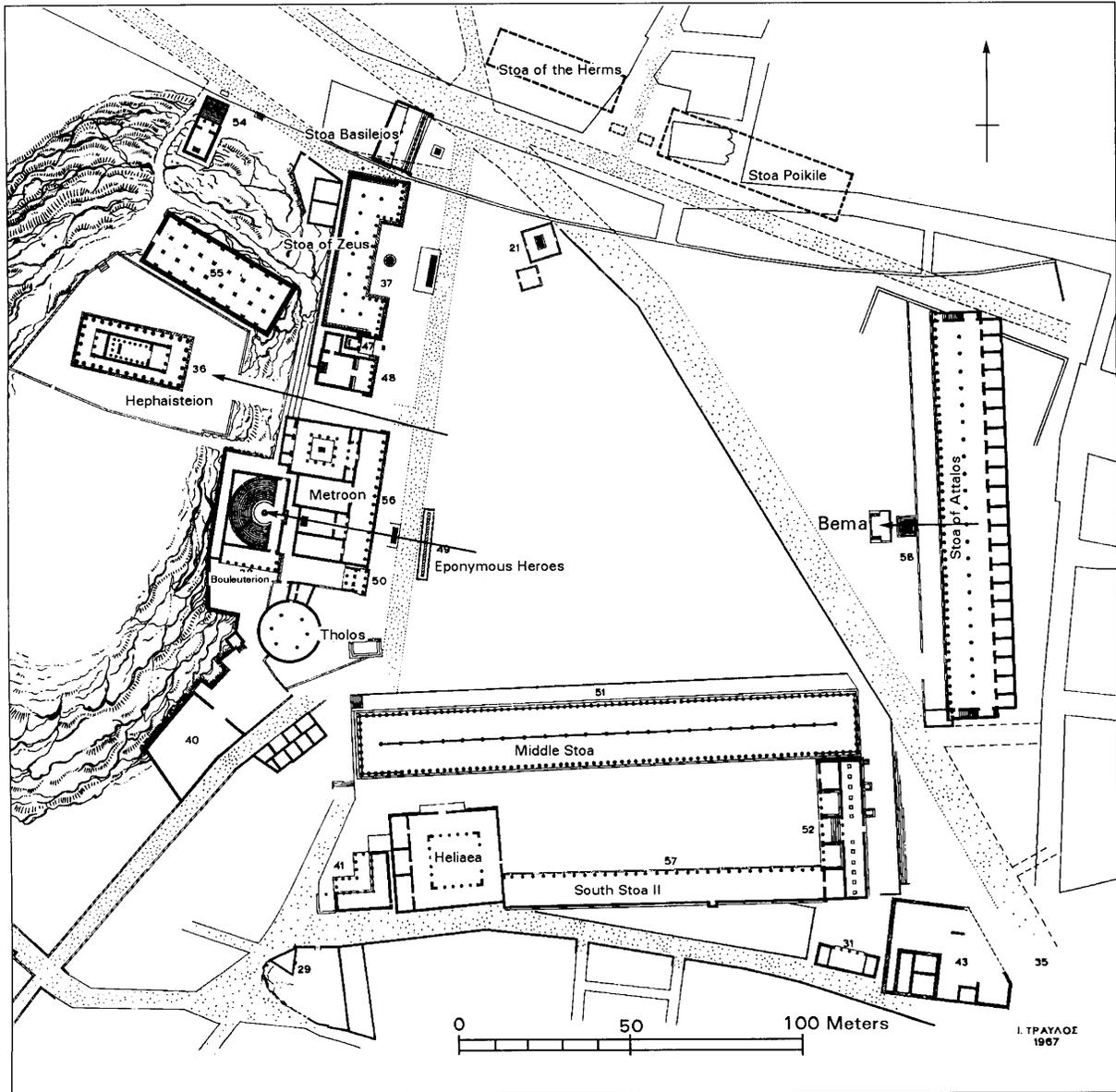


Figure 6

The Agora circa 150 BC

Figures

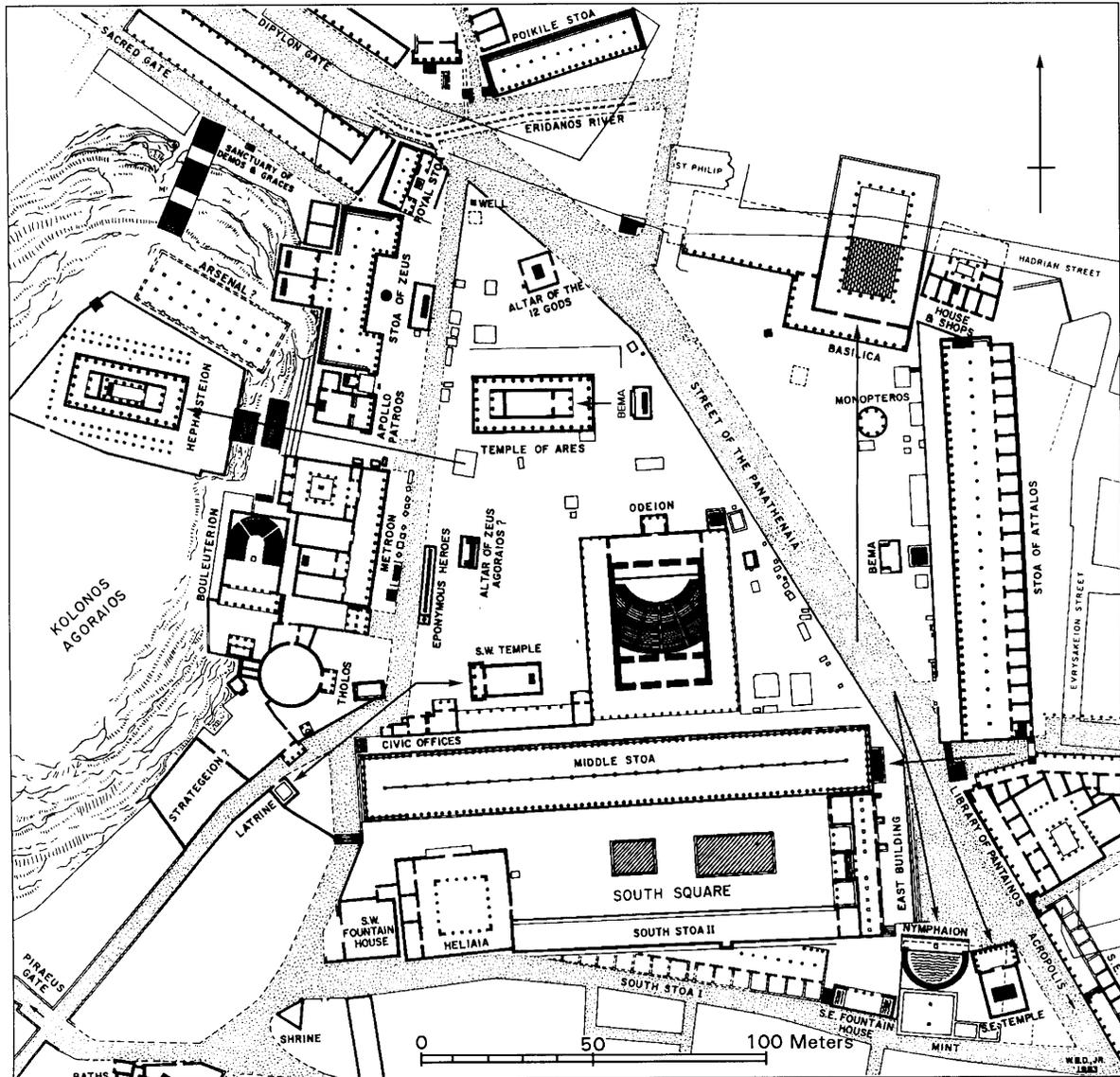


Figure 7

The Agora circa AD 150

Figures

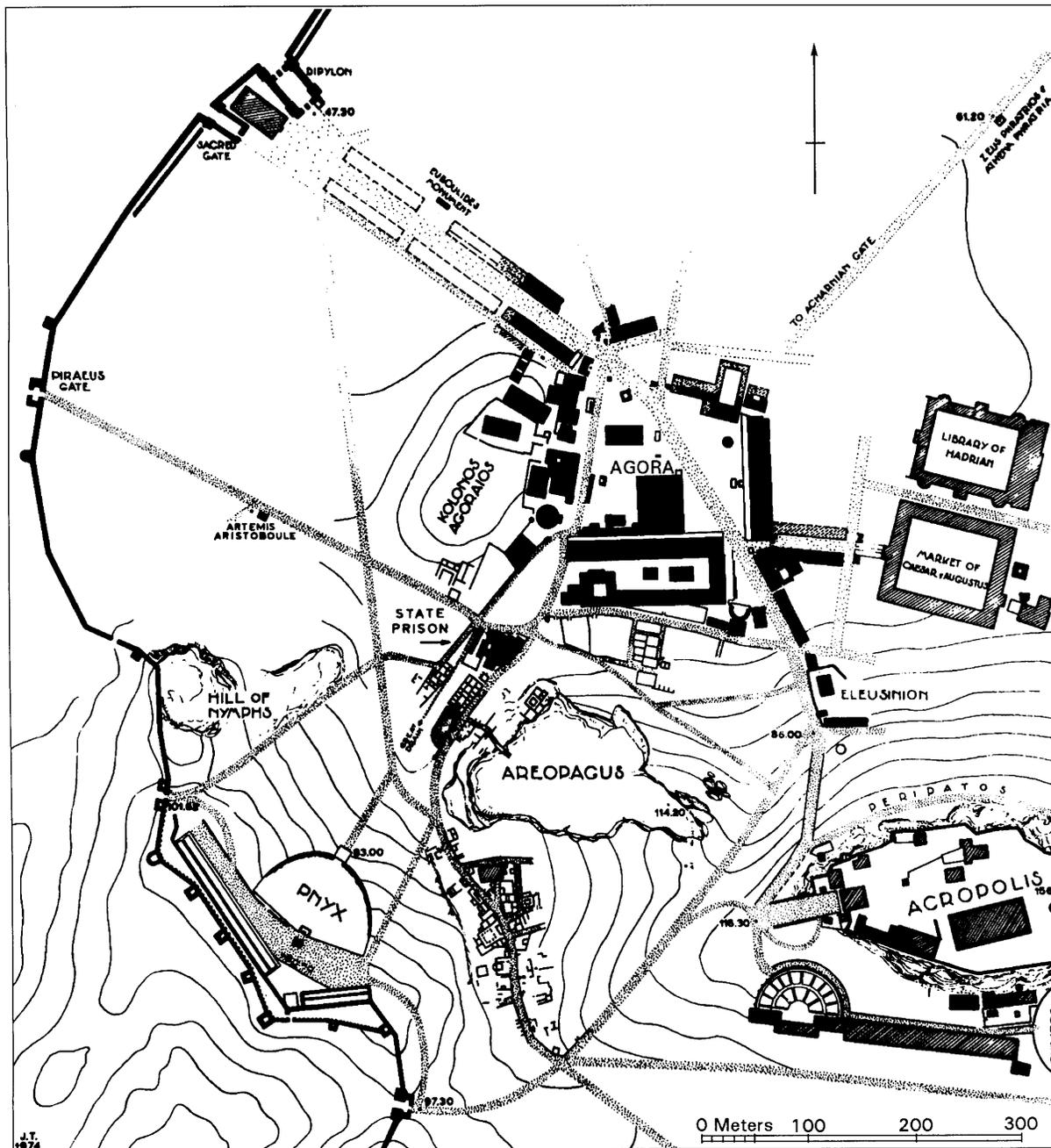
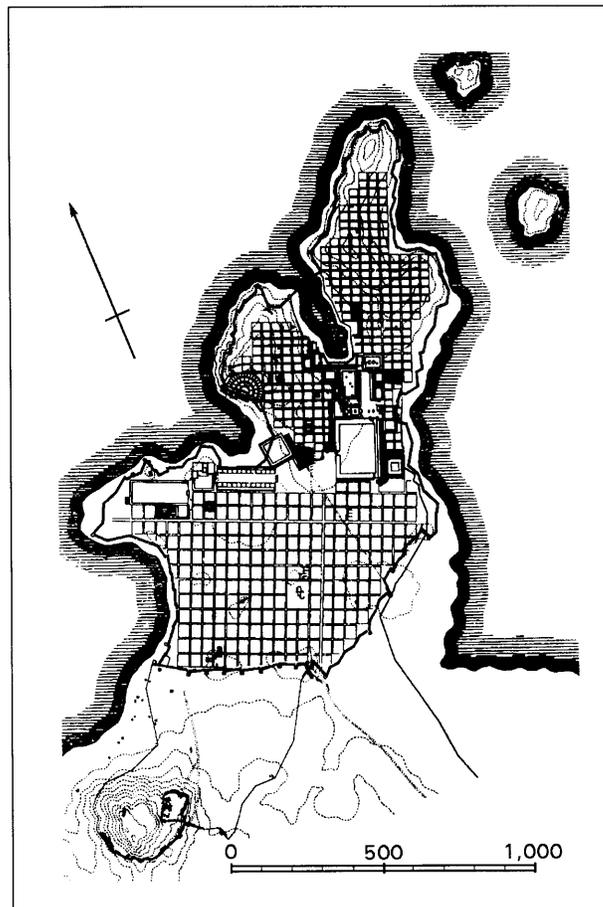


Figure 8

The Agora and Environs circa AD 150

The Panathenaic way begins to the north of the city outside the Dipylon Gate, passes diagonally through the agora, and up the hill to the acropolis. The Way is aligned so that the long wall of the Parthenon, the goal of the procession, becomes visible as the participants enter the northwest corner of the agora.

## Figures



**Figure 10**

### The 5th-Century Plan of Miletos

The two grid patterns were designed and constructed simultaneously. The large open area at the center of the city was gradually built according to the ideals of Hippodamus who probably participated directly in the design, though the agoras were unfinished during the three centuries following his death.

Figures

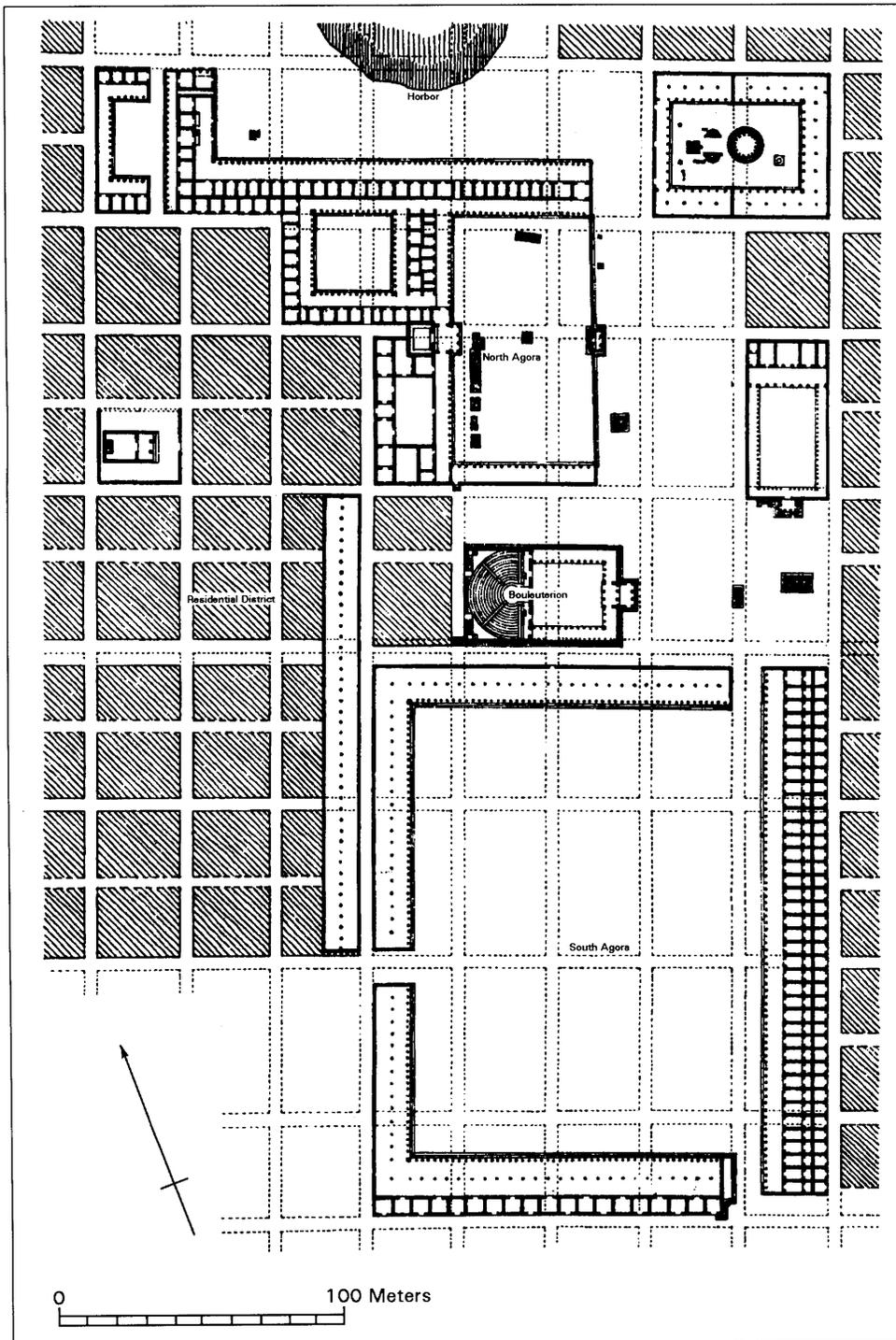


Figure 11

The Agoras of Miletos

The North Agora was begun in the 5th century. The South Agora, though obviously an evolution of the Classical ideal, was built during the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods.

## Figures

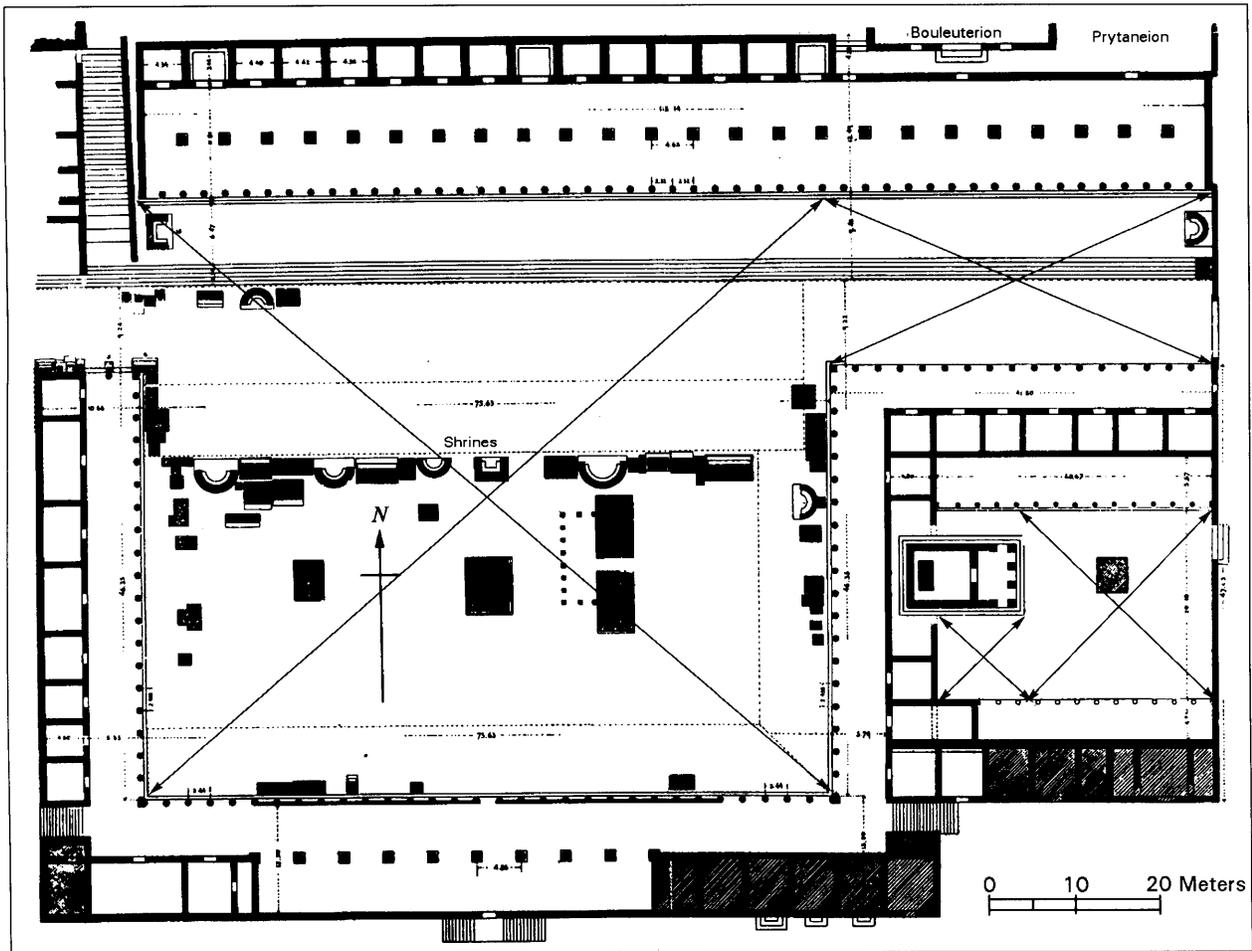


Figure 13

### The Agora of Priene

The Bouleuterion and Prytaneion, both visible at the upper edge of the figure, were set back from the edge of the agora so that the colonnade of the North Stoa could pass in front of them and unify the edges of the square. Though the stoas were one-sided, they could be entered from the back by stairways that ascended from street level.

## Figures

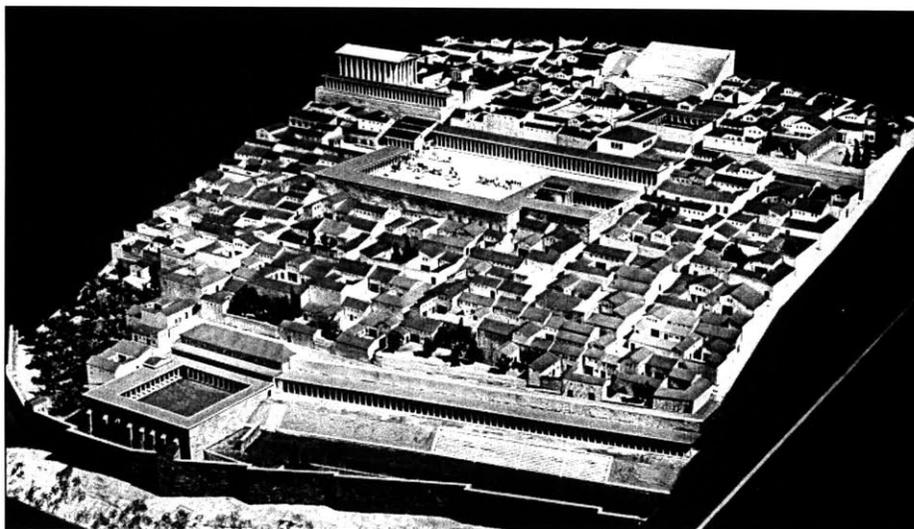


Figure 12

Model of Priene Viewed From the Southeast

The agora was built on an artificial terrace overlooking the valley. The Late-Classical ideal of separated functions; civic, commercial, and sacred; is evident in the plan.

## Figures

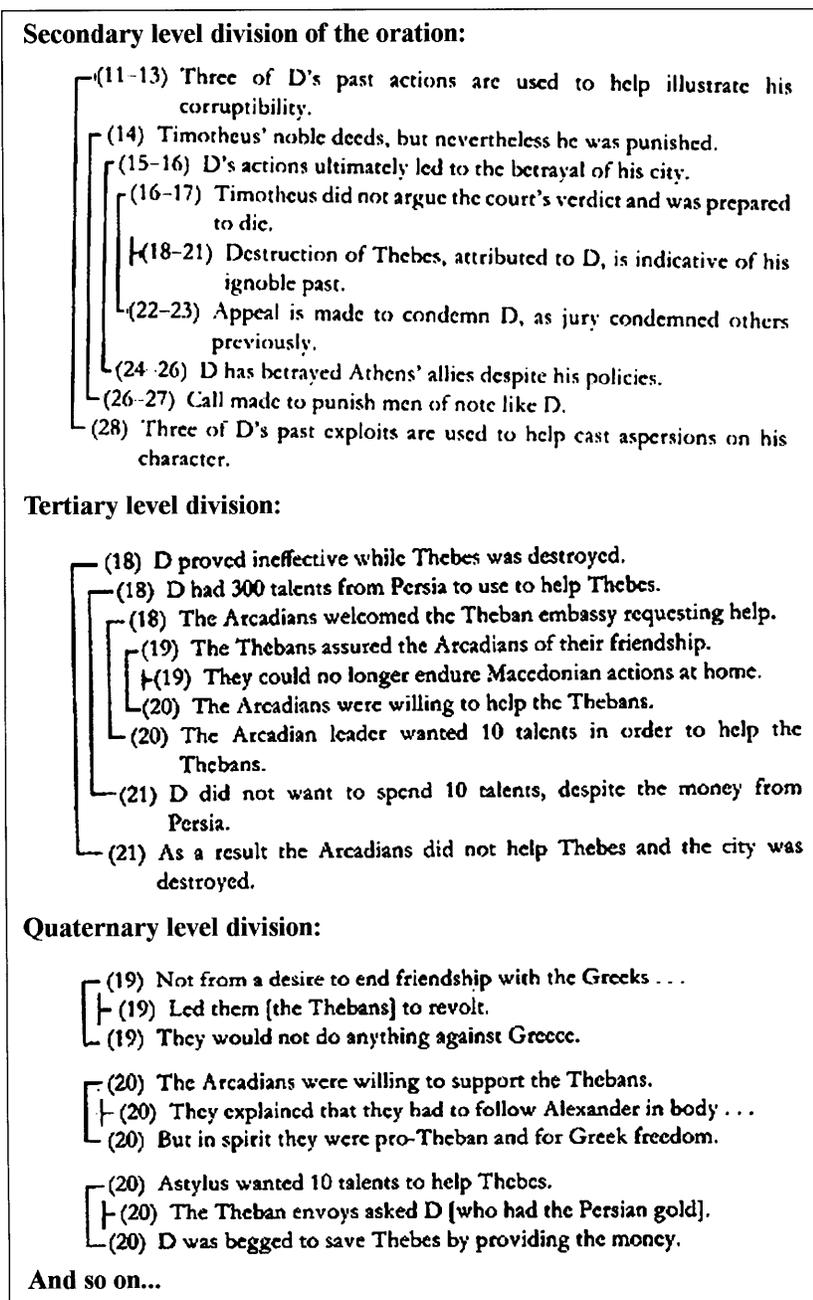


Figure 17

Ian Worthington's Diagrammatic Deconstructions of Oration 1.11-28 of Dinarchus.

Dinarchus is accusing Demosthenes of betraying Athens. The Complexity of the ring structure flags it as likely to contain fabrications for the sake of formal symmetry. Ian Worthington proves that the oration does contain lies invented to maintain the perfect symmetry of the speech.

Figures

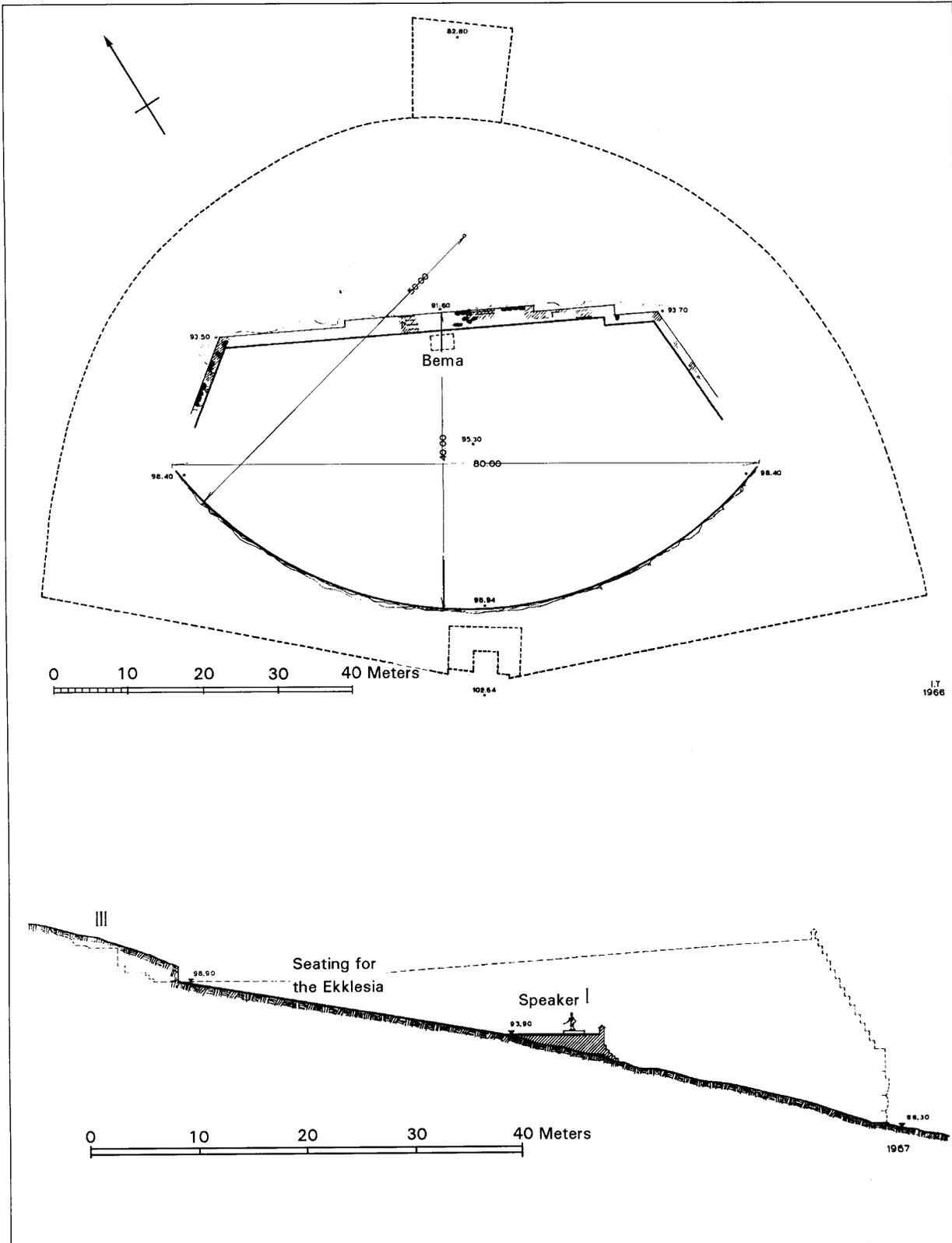


Figure 14

The First Period of the Theater on the Pnyx Hill, circa 510 BC

Figures

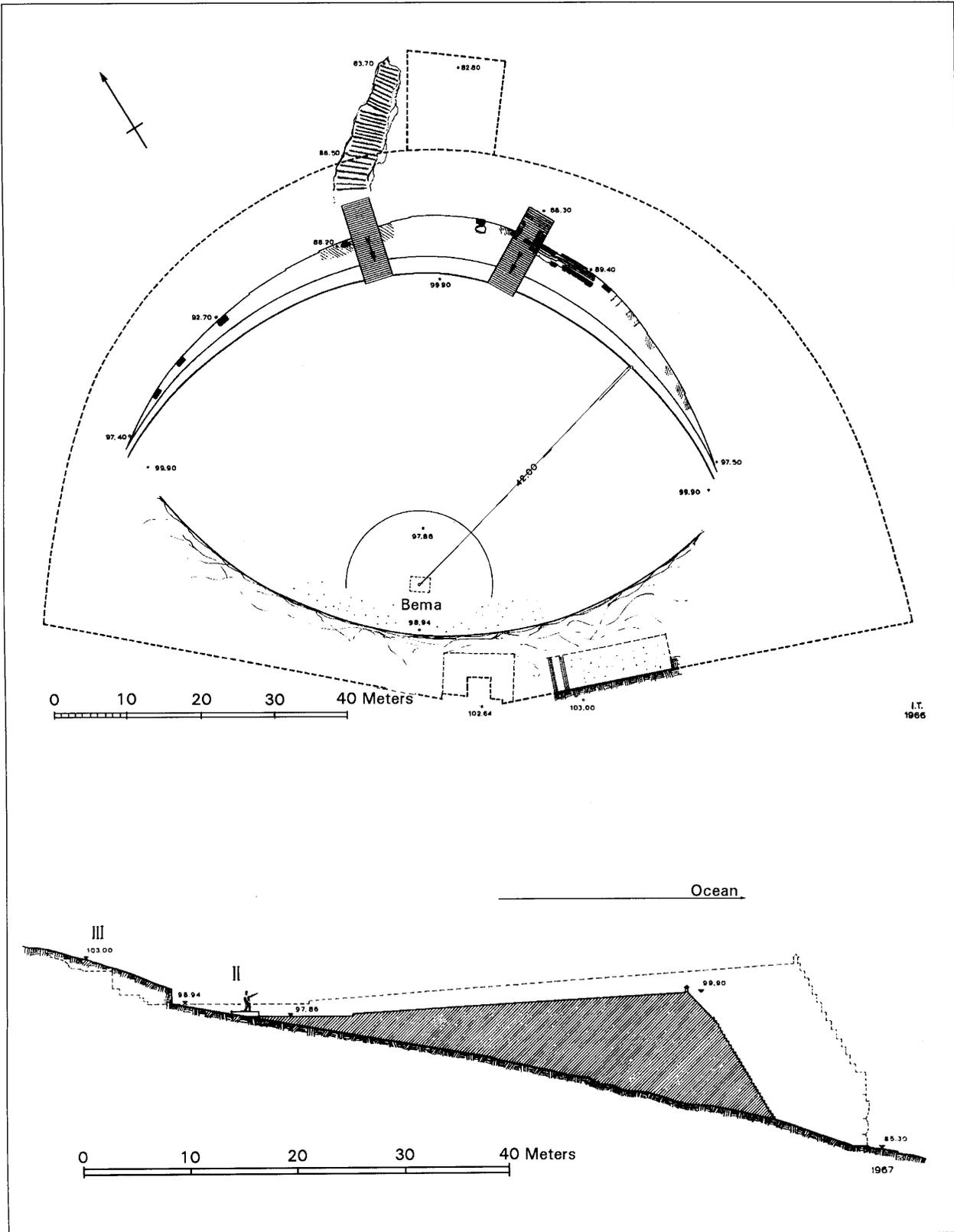


Figure 15

The Second Period of the Theater on the Pnyx Hill, circa 404 BC

Figures

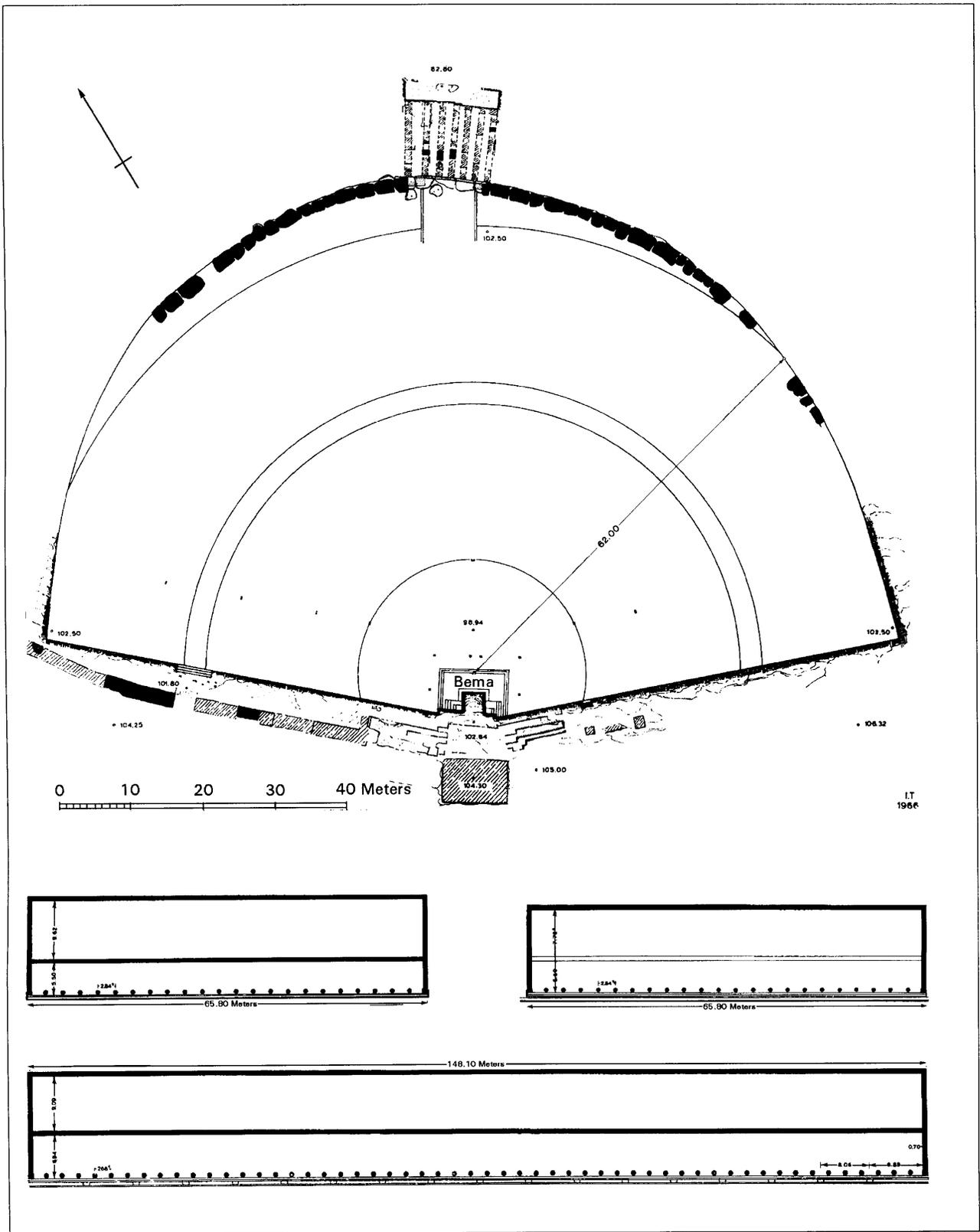
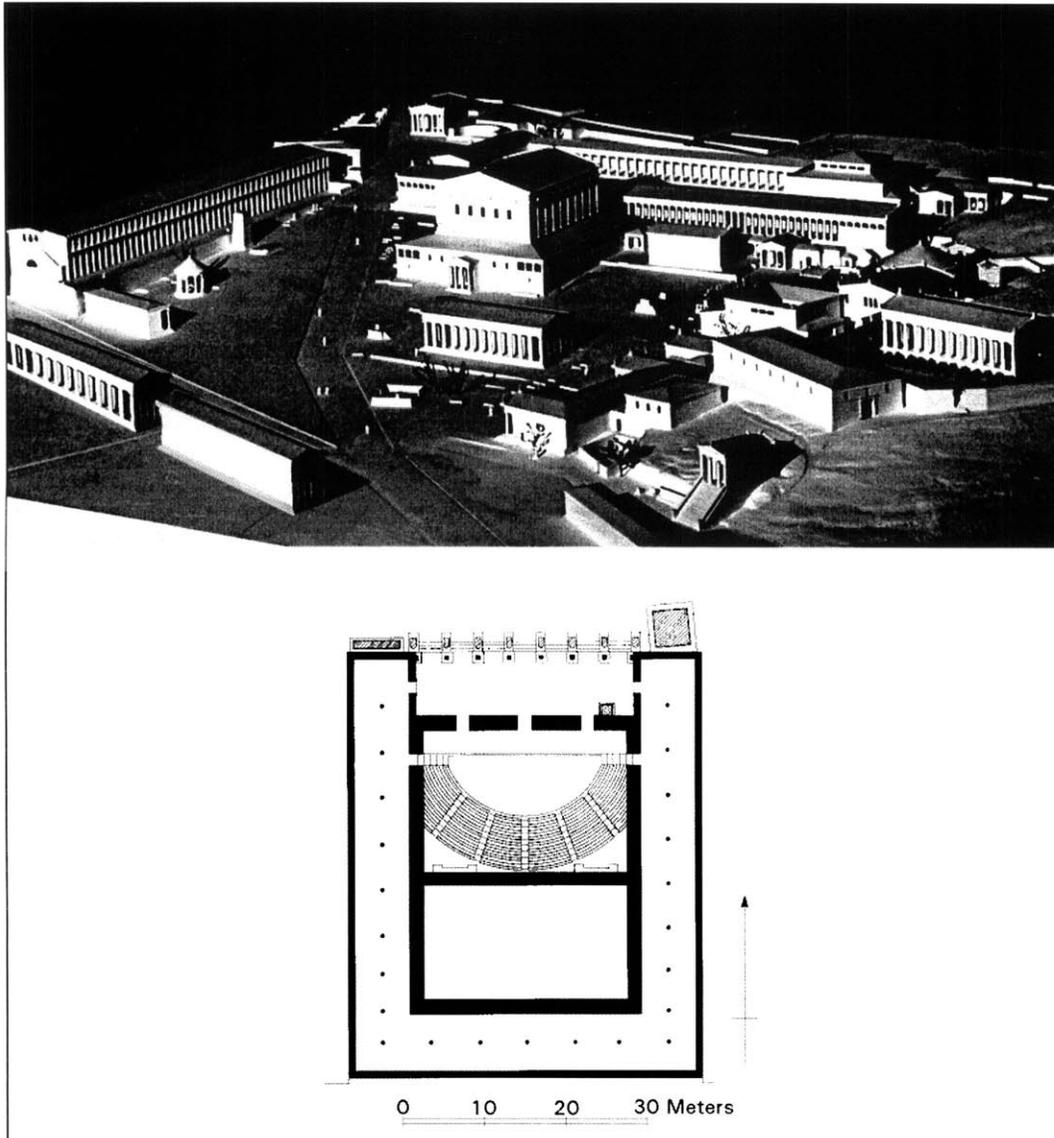


Figure 16

The Third Period of the Theater on the Pnyx Hill, circa 330 BC

## Figures



**Figure 20**

### The Odeion of Agrippa in the Agora

The rigorous symmetry of the plan, the bulk of the building, and its siting at the center of the agora are all indicative of the role as a symbol of the sovereignty of Rome.

## Figures



**Figure 18**

The Reconstructed Stoa of Attalos

The road on the right is the Panathenaic Way leading to the acropolis. View is from the northwest.

Figures

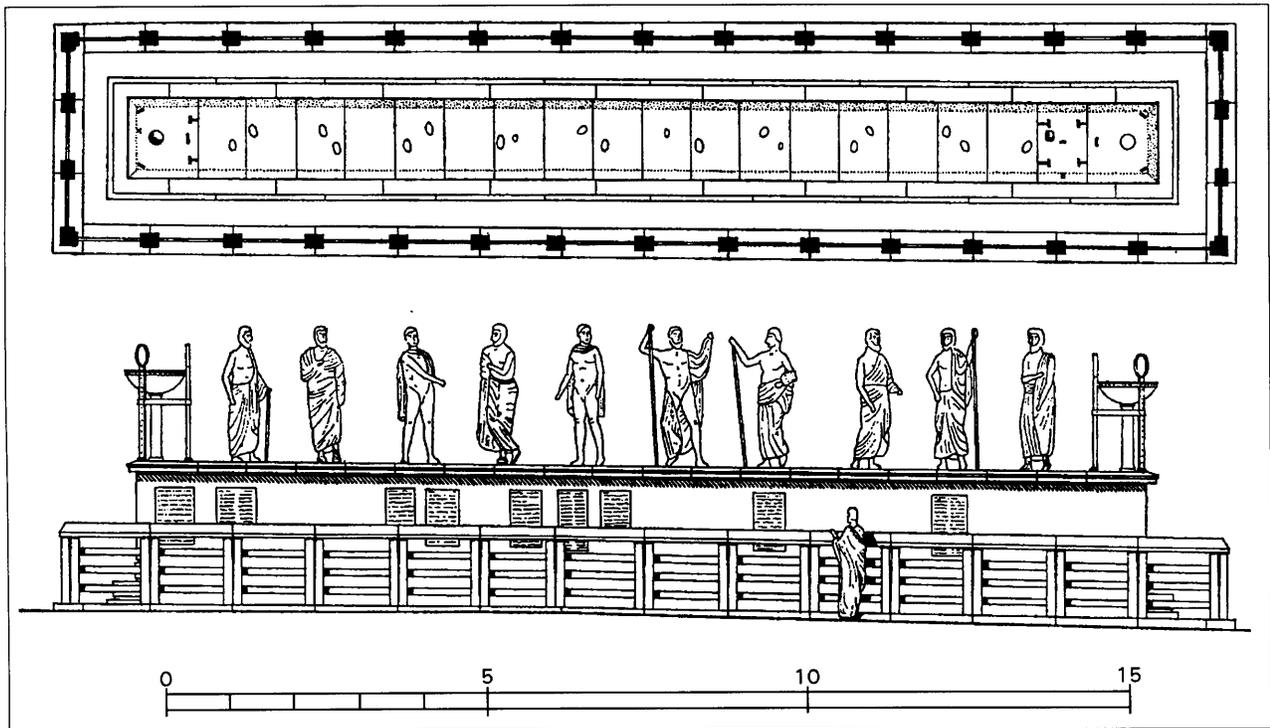


Figure 19

The Monument of the Eponymous Heroes

Figures

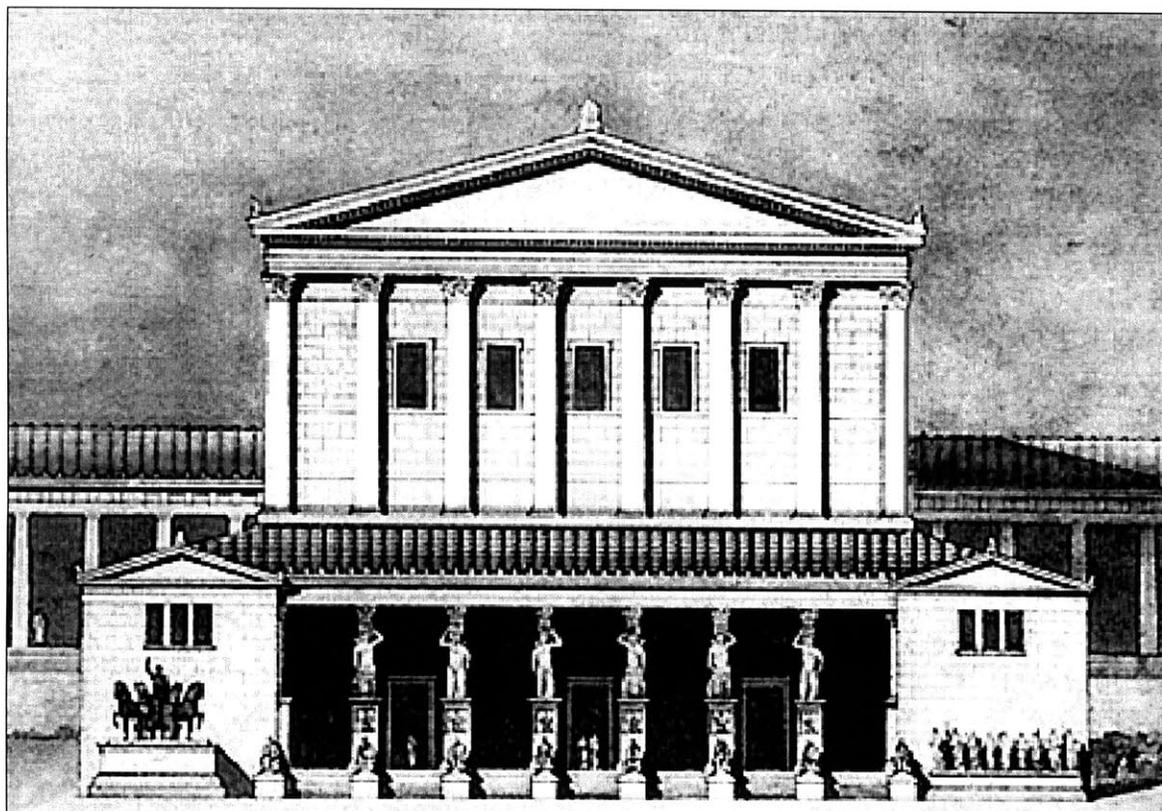


Figure 21

The Façade of the Odeion of Agrippa

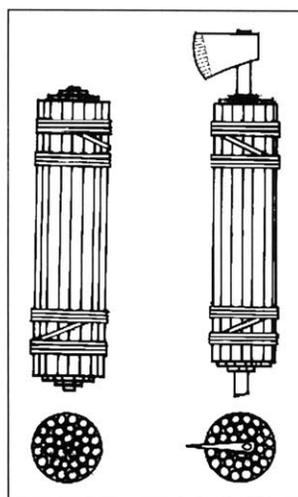


Figure 22

The *Fasces*

## Figures

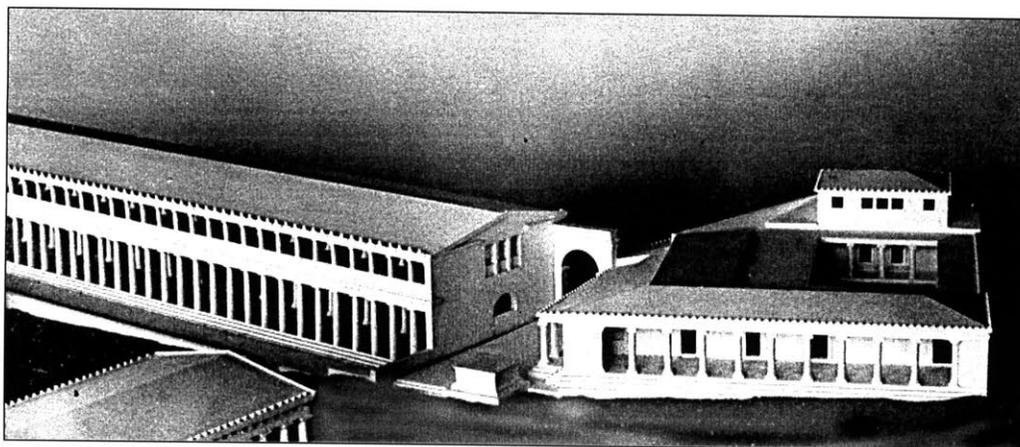


Figure 23

### The Library of Pantainos

The library completed the southeast corner of the square with a stoa-like porch that continues the line of the Stoa of Attalos. It was the only 'background' building of Athens' Roman era. It was also the only civic building built and designed by native Athenians. The Classical ideals were still current during the reign of Hadrian, but almost choked by the dominance of Roman architecture.

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