

# THE PROGRESS OF THE FIRST CAMPAIGN OF EXCAVATION IN 1931

## PLATE III

The Agora or market place of ancient Athens was the area in which the principal public buildings of the city were located. In it were the Royal Stoa, where the chief magistrate had his office, the Senate House, where the legislative body met and where important treaties were filed, the Prytaneum and Tholos, the painted Stoa and the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherius, temples of Apollo and of Demeter, of Ares and of Hephaestus, altars of the gods and innumerable statues of gods, of heroes and of illustrious men. Thus the Agora was the most important part of the ancient city, after the sacred precinct of the Acropolis. Although few traces of its monuments remain above ground the boundaries of the Agora are approximately known from references given by ancient writers to its buildings in their relation to the geographical terrain. In this way we are certain that the area lies north of the west end of the Acropolis, north of the Areopagus, and east of the Kolonos Agoraios, the hill of the Agora, on which now stands the well preserved temple that is traditionally called the Theseum although scholars are generally agreed that it should be identified as the temple of Hephaestus.

Because of the importance of the site of the Agora in antiquity the region has long been designated by the Greek Government as an archaeological terrain, and its ultimate excavation has always been on the programme of the Greek archaeological authorities. Shortly after Greece secured her independence from Turkish rule a decree of King Otho, published on July 18, 1833, declared the area expropriated for archaeological excavation and set a price for the property at the rate of seventy lepta the square pik, which is equivalent to about fourteen cents for  $5\frac{1}{2}$  square feet. Although this amount is trifling in comparison with the present value of the land, for which an average sum of three dollars has been paid for the same unit, other pressing needs of the Government prevented the realization of the plan either at that time or at several later attempts to revive it. Some excavations, however, have been made in the area. In the years 1859 to 1862 and in 1898 to 1902 the Greek Archaeological Society uncovered the entire Stoa of Attalus, and the so-called Stoa of the Giants was excavated by the same society in 1859 and in 1871. But as neither of these buildings is mentioned in the itinerary of Pausanias, investigations in search of the Stoa Basileios were undertaken below the Kolonos Agoraios by the German Archaeological Institute, under the direction of Professor Dörpfeld, in 1896–1897, and by the Greeks in 1907. These excavations resulted in the uncovering

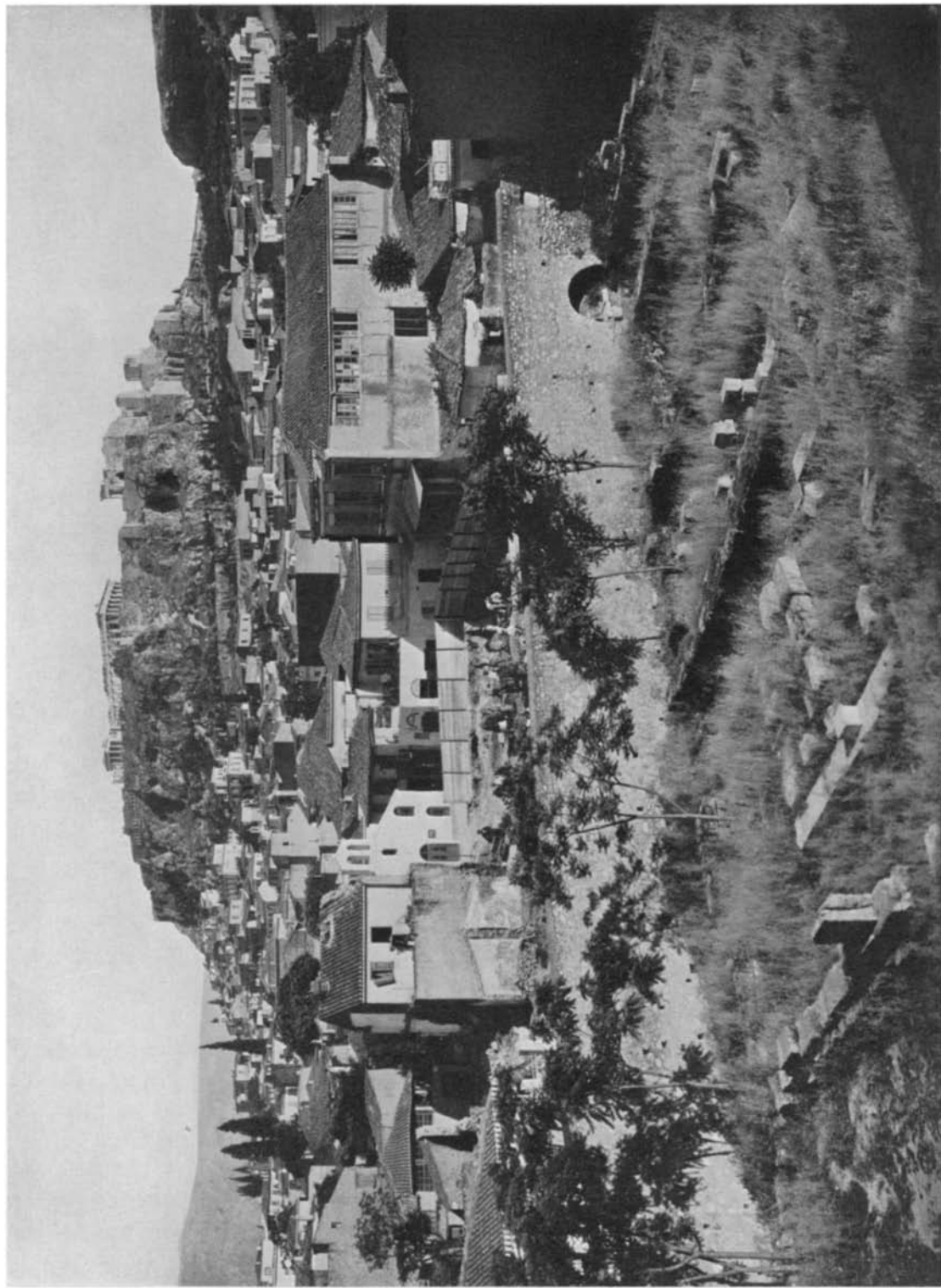


Fig. 1. View of the Agora from the West showing the Area of the Old Excavations and Sector E of the New Excavations

of a series of foundations which have not yet been satisfactorily interpreted, and in the important discovery of a colossal statue of Apollo, which is probably the cult-statue of Apollo Patroos by Euphranor.

The excavations in the area were not extensive or long continued because the district is thickly settled with houses, as is clearly shown by the photographs reproduced in Plate III and in Figure 1, and consequently the costs preliminary to excavation are exceedingly high. But the value of property everywhere in Athens has been steadily increasing in recent years in proportion to the growth of the population and of the prosperity of the country. The restrictions on construction in the area of the Agora were burdensome to the property owners, and it became apparent that if excavations were not begun at once the expense of acquiring the property would increase to such a point as to prevent effectually archaeological investigation of the terrain on the large scale which was clearly indicated to be necessary. At this juncture of the situation, in 1924, the Greek archaeological authorities consulted with Dr. B. H. Hill, Director of the American School of Classical Studies at the time, as to the possibility of the project being undertaken by the American School. After much discussion of ways and means between the Greek Authorities and Professor Edward Capps, representing the School, it was finally agreed that the American School would conduct the excavation with the coöperation of the Greek Archaeological Society. As has been explained by Professor Capps in the Foreword, the enterprise is controlled by a Commission composed of members of the Board of Trustees and of the Managing Committee of the School under the chairmanship of Professor Capps. The Greek Archaeological Society is represented by its secretary, Professor George P. Oikonomos, and by the presence on the staff of Professor A. D. Keramopoulos of the University of Athens.

The entire area of the Agora covers about twenty-six acres of land on which are built six hundred houses with between 6,000 and 7,000 inhabitants. As the excavation of this terrain in its entirety seemed too large an obligation for the American School to assume, and as the eastern part of it is distinctively the market of the Roman period, it was agreed that the Greek archaeological authorities should assume the task of excavating the eastern part, leaving to the Americans the western section, which is the site of the specifically Greek Agora. The American zone includes about sixteen acres of land situated between the Kolonos Agoraios on the west and the east side of the Stoa of Attalus, and bounded on the north by the Athens-Piraeus electric railway, and by the Areopagus and the Acropolis on the south. In this area 367 houses and parcels of land are located and the immediate aim of the first campaign was the discovery, beneath these streets and houses teeming with modern life, of some conspicuous landmark of the ancient city which would serve as a point of departure for future exploitation of the site. The constant guide in topographical researches in the area has been the admirable and authoritative work on the topography of Athens by Professor Walther Judeich, a book which is a mine of information and a masterpiece of interpretation (*Topographie von Athen*, 2nd ed. Munich, 1931).

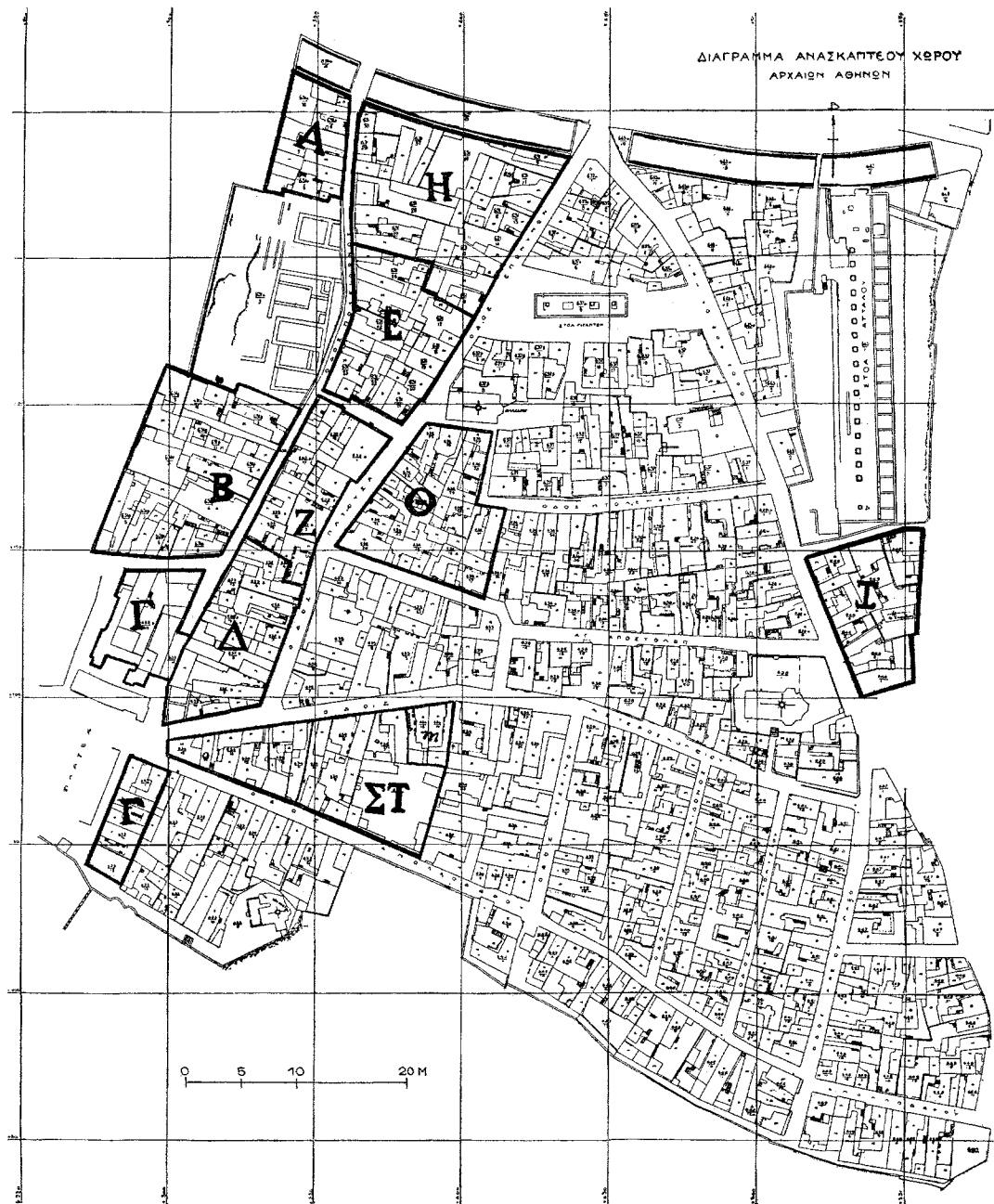


Fig. 2. City Plan of the American Zone of the Agora

In order to enhance the probability of the discovery, at an early stage of the campaign, of a building which could be identified with one of those mentioned in Greek literary records, parts of six city blocks were selected for trial excavation. These blocks are marked on the plan of the area which is given in Figure 2, and are designated by letters of the Greek alphabet. The two northern sections, A and E, adjoin the site of the earlier excavations, and it was hoped that their clearance might reveal the Royal Stoa, and might clarify some of the problems involved in the interpretation of the foundations which had been previously uncovered. Figure 1 shows the site of Sector E of the new



Fig. 3. Sector E. The first House to be Demolished

excavations, which lie on the east side of Poseidon Street, with the area of the prior excavation in the foreground and with the Acropolis in the distance beyond.

The fifteen houses in Sectors A and E came into the possession of the American School in April 1931 and demolition of them was begun on April 20. The contract for wrecking the houses was awarded, after competitive bids, on very favorable terms, since the contractor paid \$1,000 to the School for the materials in addition to clearing the terrain to street level. The demolition was conducted under the eye of a member of the scientific staff, who salvaged any ancient marbles which had been built into the walls of the modern houses. The first house to be torn down was located on Eponymon Street in the south-east corner of Sector E, Fig. 3. The work was performed slowly and carefully so that ancient blocks in the walls might not be overlooked (Fig. 4), but the site was sufficiently

cleared by May 25 to permit the start of excavations on that date. The campaign was initiated without formal inauguration, but with the blessing of the priest of the neighboring church of the Virgin of Vlasaros and in the presence of Professor Oikonomos and of members of the American School. The work was continued for a period of ten weeks and as the average depth of the deposit of earth was found to be ten feet it involved the removal of about 7,000 tons of earth. The carting away of the excavated material was done by contract, let after competition to the lowest bidder, and the contractor secured from the police the designation of places for dumping, which were outside of the



Fig. 4. Sector E. The Progress of the Demolition

city, along the sacred way to Eleusis. The workmen engaged in the excavation were under the control of Sophokles Lekkas, a foreman who had acquired skill and experience from his service in many archaeological campaigns at Corinth.

Special attention has been paid to the development and perfection of the system of accurate recording and of careful description of the objects which are found from day to day. An archaeologist of the staff has the supervision of each area of excavation. The areas are divided into squares of one metre so that the place of finding is immediately obvious, and the depth is reckoned from a fixed point determined by the height above sea level. The scholar in charge of an area keeps a field note book in which all details of the progress of the excavation are neatly and fully recorded. The areas are designated by letters of the Greek alphabet and when an object is found it receives a serial number

prefixed by the letter of the area. It is then entered in the note book with the specification of the exact place of discovery and with a description which includes its dimensions. A drawing of it is made in the book or else a space is left for the subsequent insertion of a small photograph. A tag with the date of finding and with the serial number of the area is attached to the object which is sent to the workrooms. There it is washed, its serial number is checked by the finder, and it is handed to the cataloguing department. It then receives a final inventory number which is entered in an inventory book, and a full description of it is written on a catalogue card, which carries a small photograph



Fig. 5. Sector E. The Start of the Excavations

of the object in its upper left corner. The color of the card indicates the type of object such as sculpture, pottery, terracottas, lamps, etc., and the position of the tab marks other specifications as, for example, the period, whether Greek, Roman or Byzantine. The object is finally placed in a drawer or on a shelf in the position designated by its serial number. By this accurate method of recording nothing from the excavations can go even temporarily astray, and any object desired can be at any time immediately located. All the discoveries are housed in a building in a corner of one of the expropriated blocks, marked *m* in the northeast corner of *ΣΤ* on the plan given in Figure 2. The ground floor of this house has been transformed into a provisional museum, and the remainder of the building is used for headquarters for the staff, for work and study rooms, for the coin-cleaning apparatus and for the cataloguing department. Here, too,

technical experts are constantly occupied with piecing together broken marbles, or with cleaning and sorting and mending the innumerable shattered vases.

Shortly after the start of excavation, which was made at the southern end of Sector E under the supervision of F. O. Waagé (Fig. 5), a heavy shower of rain filled the excavated area with a deep pool of water which temporarily caused a suspension of operations (Fig. 6). But while the problem of the disposal of the water was under consideration by the staff an underground vent was opened by the pressure of the water above it and the water flowed away with great celerity. The explanation of this fortunate occurrence



Fig. 6. Sector E. The Excavation Flooded

was revealed at a later stage of the campaign by the discovery of a great drain or water-channel, which passes through this area in a direction from south to north and with a gentle slope towards the north. The drain, a short section of which is shown in Figure 7, is admirably constructed with a stone floor, with walls built of polygonal masonry which date from the latter half of the sixth century B.C., and with a cover of heavy limestone blocks. This structure has suffered various vicissitudes, for the original cover has been broken away at several points and has been replaced by inscribed marble stelae. But even at a comparatively late date, subsequent to such repairs, a considerable volume of water must have poured regularly through the drain because the surface of the marble is badly worn wherever the stelae have been accessible to the action of the water. The objects found in the earth with which the channel was



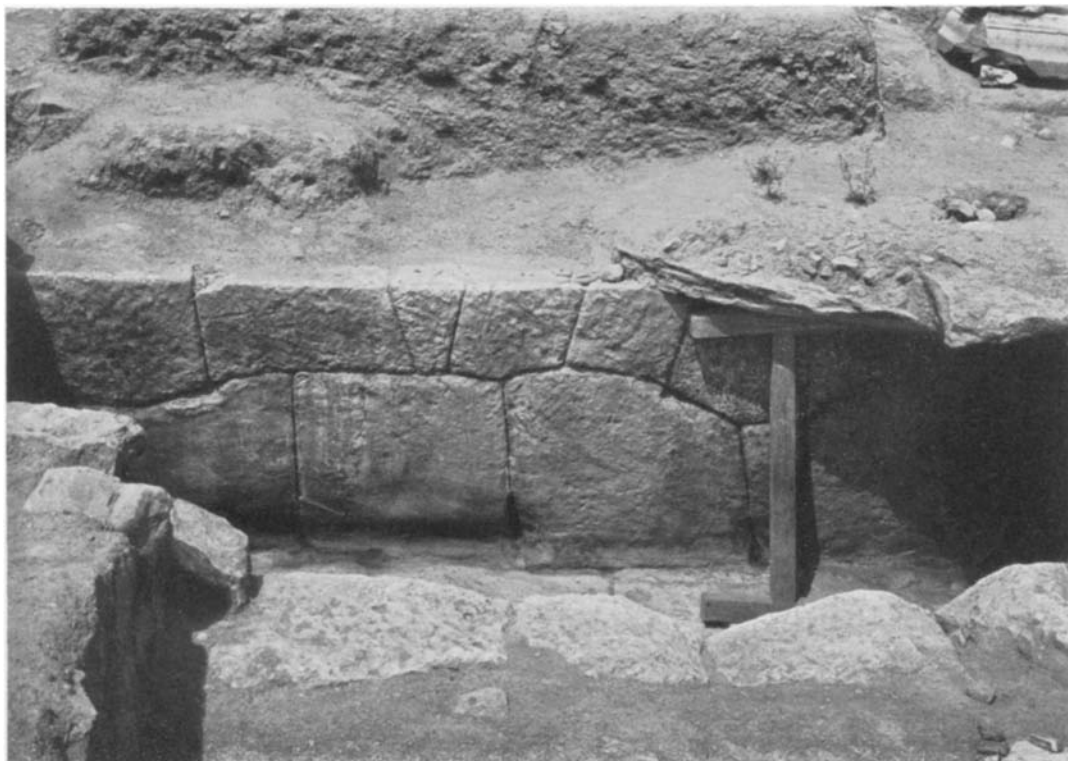


Fig. 7. Sector E. The Large Drain



Fig. 8. Sector E. View from the East during the Excavation

partially filled are uniformly of the Roman period, first to fourth century A.D., but water in this neighborhood must always have had an outlet through this drain to a greater or less extent.

As the excavation of this area progressed it became apparent that a road or street, passing through the Agora from north to south, had been uncovered in this sector, and

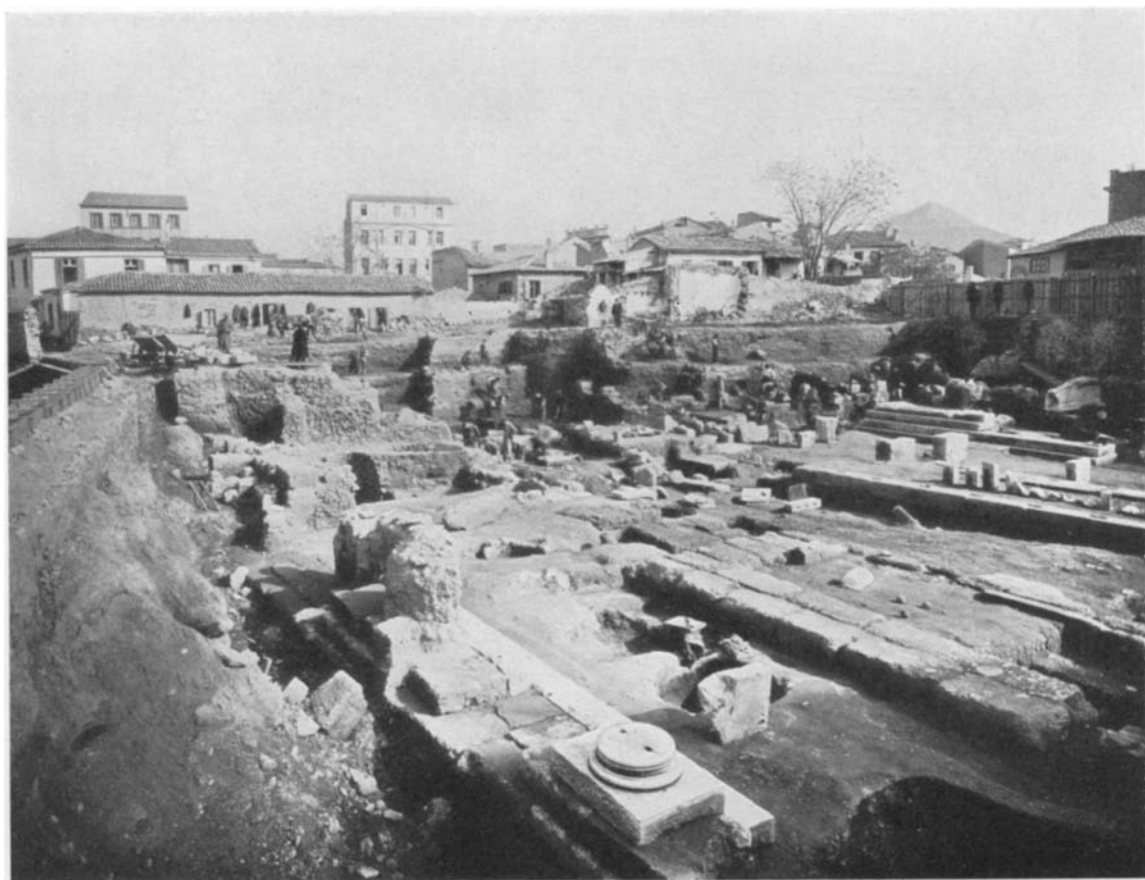


Fig. 9. Sector E. View from the Southwest

that the course of the water-channel lay beneath this street. Support of this view is furnished by the discovery of two buildings, one on the west side of the area and the other on the east, each of which faces the broad way lying between them. A view of the area in course of excavation, taken on July 22, 1931 and reproduced in Figure 8, shows the front of the building on the west side as it was partially cleared. Since the foundations behind this structure in the area of the earlier excavations showed that it was a narrow building, and since the new excavations proved that it was a long hall with a columnar façade, it was provisionally identified as the stoa mentioned next after

the Stoa Basileios by Pausanias, in front of which stood statues of Zeus Eleutherius and of the Emperor Hadrian. Subsequently confirmation of this interpretation was provided by the discovery of a statue of Hadrian lying in the great water-channel in front of the north end of the stoa.

On the east side of the street a small marble building, with four steps on its west face, was uncovered. The size and type of the structure indicate the probability that it was an altar, as is suggested by Professor Stillwell in a later article, and as literary references to the altar of the Twelve Gods point to its location somewhere in this section of the Agora, this building has been provisionally identified as that altar.



Fig. 10. Sector A before the Demolition of the modern Houses

A third building in this sector has a curious shape. It is a long, narrow rectangle with a row of post holes on each side. The posts have cuttings to support a railing by which the area was fenced, and a row of light foundation blocks in the interior marks the base on which the objects thus protected were placed. No satisfactory explanation of this building is available, and the only possibility which has been suggested is its interpretation as the Stoa of the Herms. But no evidence whatever has been secured to warrant such a deduction, and the solution of the problem must await some fortunate discovery in the further extension of the field of excavation.

The appearance of this area near the close of the season of 1931 is shown in Figure 9 which is a view from its southwest corner. A piece of the stylobate of the Stoa of Zeus appears in the foreground, with the heavy foundations on which it is based seen

from behind. Beneath these foundations, at a depth of about three metres below the euthynteria of the stoa, a small area was uncovered which is paved with large blocks of irregular shape. This may be an early paved court or street, but it cannot be further investigated until after the complete removal of the adjoining section of the modern Poseidon Street.

Just in front of the south end of the Stoa of Zeus a marble herm was found with a well preserved bearded head. Professor G. P. Oikonomos has kindly consented to



Fig. 11. Sector A. View of the Area from the Northeast before the Beginning of the Excavation

prepare a study of this statue for publication in a later *Agora* number of *Hesperia*. In a late wall nearby a statue of a woman and several inscriptions had been imbedded. The inscriptions and the statue, which had been broken into four large pieces, are published in subsequent articles in this number.

The property in Sector A was acquired shortly after that in E and the excavation of it proceeded simultaneously under the supervision of Dr. Homer A. Thompson. Figure 10 gives a view of the area from the south before the demolition of the houses, and the same terrain, as it appeared when cleared to street level is shown in Figure 11, which was taken from the northeastern direction with a short stretch of Poseidon Street visible in the foreground. The excavation of this area revealed, at an average depth of

three metres below street level, the foundations of a building which faces east and extends north and south throughout the area for a distance of about forty metres. It is cut at the north end of the area by the road-bed of the Athens-Piraeus electric railway. The records show that similar foundation blocks were removed when the railway was constructed so that it is clear that the building extended beyond the

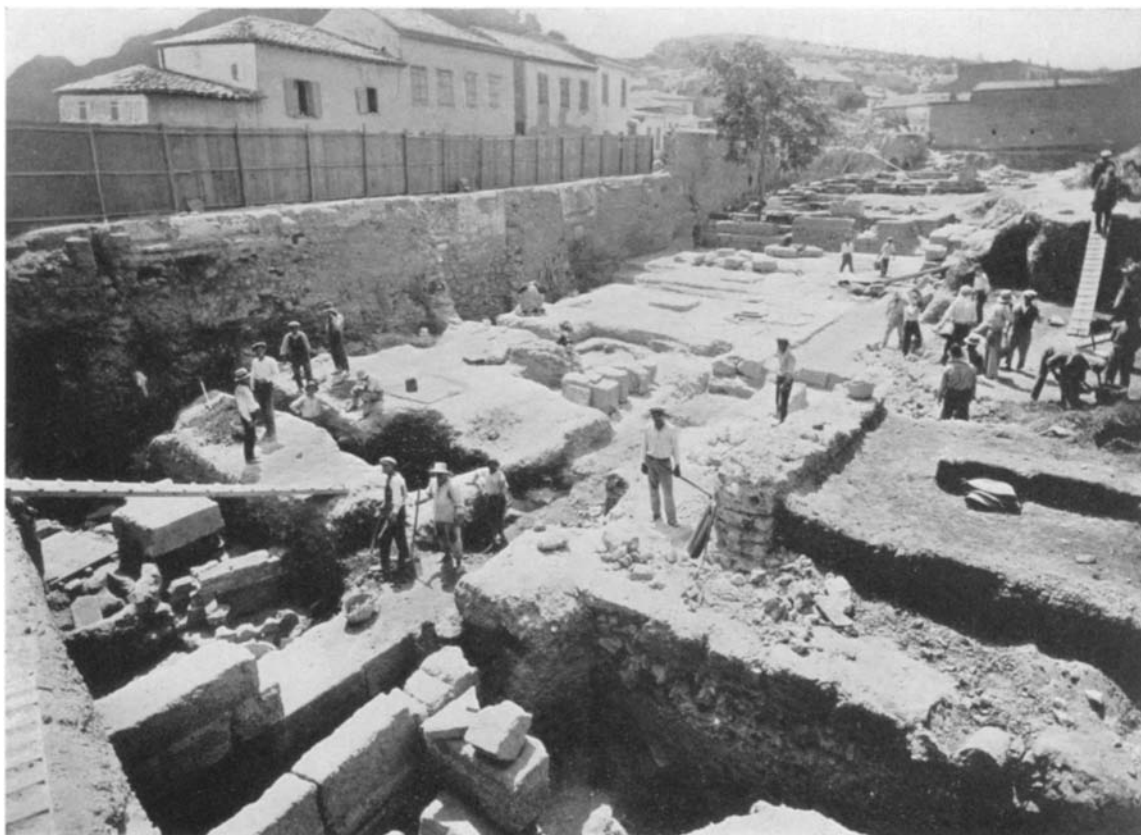


Fig. 12. Sector A. View from the Northwest at the Close of the Season

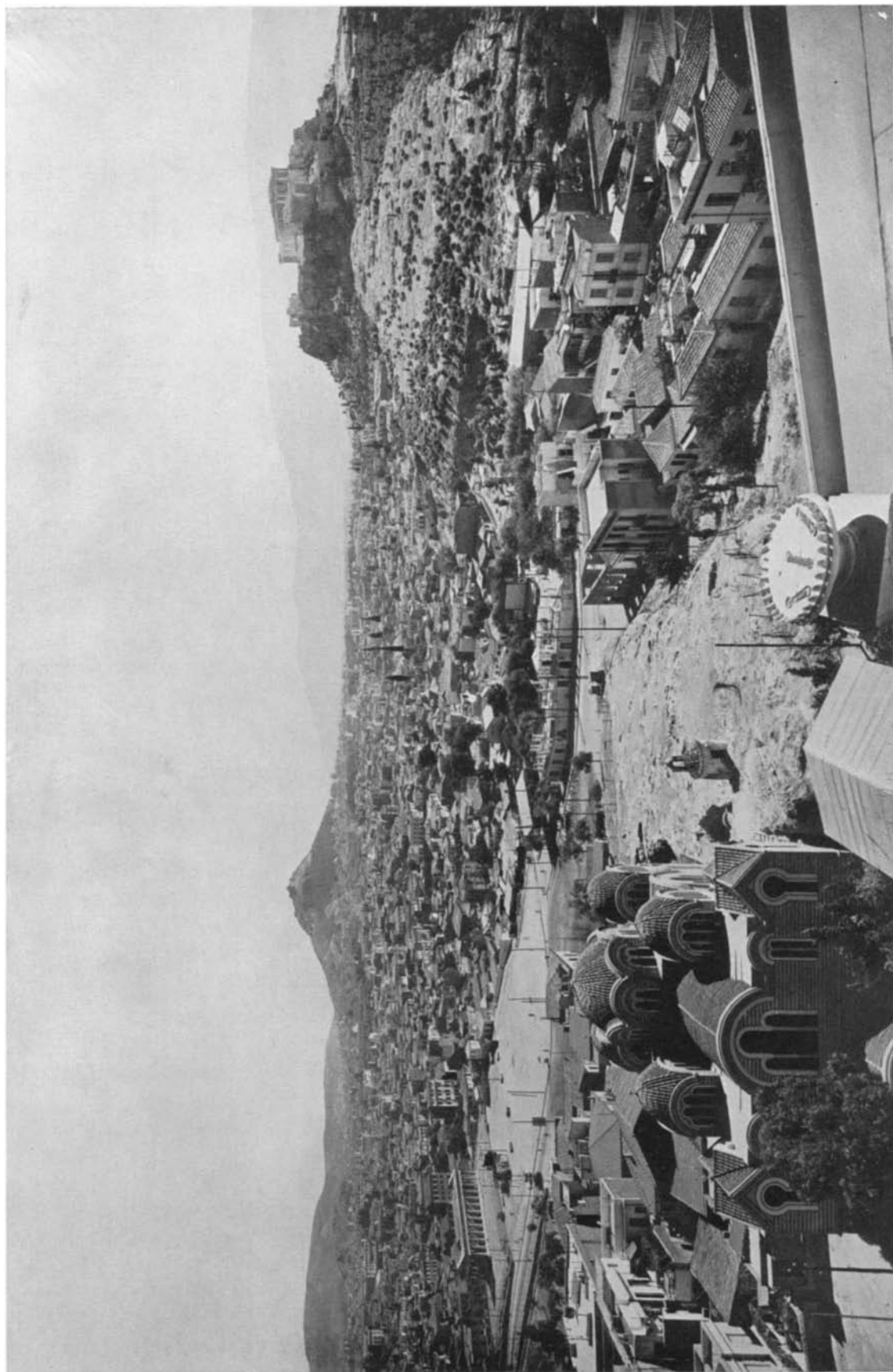
railway to the north, but the determination of its northern limit must await future investigation in an area which lies outside of the designated archaeological terrain of the Agora.

The foundations which were uncovered belong to a long narrow building constructed with two rows of columns. A view of the area as it appeared near the close of the season of 1931, taken from the northwest, is given in Figure 12. The shape of the building is clearly that of a stoa, and as it lies at the base of the Kolonos Agoraios, on the right as one enters the Agora, the position exactly fits the description given by Pausanias of the location of the Stoa Basileios. Thus the identification of the new

building as that stoa may be regarded as definitely established. It is interesting to observe that the site of the building almost exactly coincides with the hypothetical position assigned to it by Professor Judeich. This building is fully described from the architectural point of view by Professor Stillwell in his article on the architectural discoveries, and it will be discussed historically after the completion of the excavation of the neighboring terrain on the east.

The objects found in the course of the campaign will be published in succeeding articles by various members of the staff. These studies are necessarily of a preliminary nature, and they will differ in the degree of completeness with which the material is presented. It will not be feasible or desirable to attempt the annual publication of all groups of objects, and some articles in future numbers of *Hesperia* will represent the study of material, here omitted, which shall have been accumulated in the course of more than one campaign.

T. LESLIE SHEAR



The Agora as seen from the Observatory