

# ACTIVITIES IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA: 1956

(PLATES 28-33)

THE past year was one of the most active in the quarter century during which the American School of Classical Studies has concerned itself with the Athenian Agora.<sup>1</sup> Archaeological excavation, to be sure, was on a modest scale. But the reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos, begun in the summer of 1953, and the restoration of the Church of the Holy Apostles, started in 1954, were both virtually completed. At the same time steady progress was maintained in the study and publication of the results of the excavation.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

Excavation was confined this year to the region outside the southwest corner of the Agora proper. In previous seasons an extensive area of private houses and shops lying in the valley between the Areopagus and the Hill of the Nymphs had been explored and published by Rodney S. Young under the title, "An Industrial District of Ancient Athens."<sup>2</sup> The work of the past year represents an extension of the earlier excavation over an area of *ca.* 1100 square meters on the lower slopes of the Hill of the Nymphs. The need for completing archaeological exploration in this region was made urgent by the necessity of putting in final shape the western edge of the Agora excavations to conform with the rearrangement of the adjacent public square (Plateia Theseiou) which is being carried out by the Greek Ministry of Public Works and Communications. Field work extended over the months February through May, 1956, under the supervision of Mr. Alan Boegehold.

The removal of a very considerable mass of earth, ranging in depth from four to six meters, brought out more clearly the existence of the saddle previously suspected between the Hill of the Nymphs and Kolonos Agoraios. It also brought to light an additional length of the important ancient road which entered the city through the Peiraeus Gate and passed through this saddle on its way eastward toward the heart

<sup>1</sup> The regular scientific staff comprised John Travlos, Eugene Vanderpool, Lucy Talcott, Alison Frantz, Virginia Grace, Judith Perlzweig, Claire Grandjouan, Maria Savatianou and Margaret Larson Lethen. Several past members of the staff were able to devote part of the year to their study of Agora material: Margaret Crosby, Dorothy B. Thompson, G. Roger Edwards, Evelyn B. Harrison, Evelyn L. Smithson, Eva Brann. Alan L. Boegehold, a first-year member of the School, supervised an area of excavation. Elizabeth G. Caskey and C. W. J. Eliot continued to assist the enterprise, the one in the study of coins, the other in lecturing to conducted groups of visitors.

The Greek archaeological authorities were courteous and helpful as ever in dealing with the great variety of problems that rose in the course of the year.

<sup>2</sup> *Hesperia*, XX, 1951, pp. 135-288.

of the city. A few meters were exposed of a cross street which led southwestward from the main road in the direction of the city gate on the high saddle between the Hill of the Nymphs and the central Pnyx Hill.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest structural remains in the area belonged to a bronze-casting establishment of the 4th century B.C. The most characteristic part was a casting pit of a form now recognized as typical (Pl. 28, b). The pit, flask-shaped in plan with a maximum width of 1.70 m. and length of *ca.* 5 m., was sunk in the soft bedrock to a depth of 1.43 m. A narrow stairway led down to the bottom of the pit from the east; square shoulders at the junction of stairway and pit proper would have facilitated boarding off the stairway at the time of casting. The filling of the pit yielded quantities of tumbled crude brick, ash, soft earth and hundreds of fragments of a mould for making a draped statue (Pl. 28, a). One fragment retains the imprint of a left hand with extended fingers of life size (Pl. 28, a, lower right). The mould, as usual, had been built up in two layers, an inner of fine clay and an outer of coarse clay containing much grit, the total thickness being two to three centimeters. Among the fragments are numerous funnel-shaped pour mouths, air vents, air channels, etc. The only indication of the use of piece moulds is given by a fragment which retains a ring-shaped impression left perhaps by the stump of an arm or leg (Pl. 28, a, lower left).

Although none of the mould was found actually in place, it may be assumed on the analogy of other such establishments discovered in the Agora that the mould stood upright in the middle of the pit, that a fire was kindled around it to bake the clay and to melt out the wax, and that the space between the mould and the walls of the pit was then hastily packed with earth to provide support for the mould during the process of pouring.<sup>4</sup>

It is hoped that a comprehensive study can soon be made of this and the other evidence for bronze-casting in the region of the Agora between the 6th century B.C. and the late Roman period.

The casting pit, having been used, filled and abandoned, was overlaid by a substantial dwelling house in the later 4th century B.C. Of this building there remain only the lowest foundations, patches of pebble mosaic in three of its rooms, a flask-shaped cistern and a well.

Habitation continued in the area throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the plans of the houses undergoing numerous alterations although the ground level remained fairly constant. At the time of the Herulian sack in A.D. 267 much of the area was occupied by a large sprawling house which comprised among various other rooms a garden courtyard and a square chamber, 7.04 x 7.28 m. in plan, with a simple terrazzo floor which had been overlaid in the last days of the house by a layer of clay

<sup>3</sup> See the general plan of western Athens in *Hesperia*, XX, 1951, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Compare the casting pit of the Hellenistic period found in 1947 on the west slope of the Areopagus: *Hesperia*, XVII, 1948, pp. 170 ff.

flooring. On this floor, beneath the burnt debris from the destruction of the house, lay an interesting assortment of furnishings: vessels of glass and terracotta, several iron tools and small bronze instruments, the bronze bases for three statuettes, part of a bronze candelabrum inlaid with silver, a panel of ivory veneer in a simple geometric scheme perhaps from a casket, and an ivory head of a satyr likewise worked in such a way as to suggest that it had been attached to wood (Pl. 28, c). The date of the destruction is given by three compact groups of coins which lay on the floor of the room; none is earlier than Valerian I (A.D. 253-260) and none later than Gallienus (A.D. 253-268) so that there need be no hesitation in attributing the damage to the Herulians in their raid of A.D. 267.

Here, as so commonly in the region of the Agora, the Herulian sack was followed by a period of desolation. Then the area was partially re-occupied for a time in the late Roman period with houses built in a flimsy style. A still longer period of desolation separated the abandonment of these dwellings from the revival of the area as a residential district in the 11th and 12th centuries. From this building period there remained the wall foundations of two substantial houses, the most characteristic feature of which was the large pithoi or storage jars of terracotta and of masonry set below the floors of the rooms. These houses in turn were destroyed and levelled, perhaps by Leon Sgouros of Nauplia in his destructive raid of A.D. 1204.<sup>5</sup>

The latest, and historically one of the most interesting, of the structural remains in the area was a gateway belonging to the so-called Chaseki Wall which was hastily thrown around the town by the Turks in the year 1778. This will have been the Gate of Drako, and the fact that it falls directly above the line of the ancient roadway which, as noted above, led in from the Peiraeus Gate toward the heart of the city is one more indication of the remarkable continuity in the principal thoroughfares of Athens. As so often in the past, this wall too had been put together of re-used materials, among which were ancient building blocks so battered from repeated re-use as to be scarcely recognizable.

#### THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY APOSTLES

The conservation<sup>6</sup> of this small church of the 11th century which rises above the southeast corner of the ancient Agora was practically completed by the end of 1956

<sup>5</sup> W. Judeich, *Topographie von Athen*<sup>2</sup>, Munich, 1931, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> For earlier reports on the undertaking cf. *Hesperia*, XXIV, 1955, pp. 55-57; XXV, 1956, pp. 65-66. Grateful acknowledgment is made of further financial support from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, arranged through the good offices of Mr. A. C. Campbell, a trustee of the Foundation, who visited the site in March. Mrs. Henry D. Sharpe and Mrs. Murray S. Danforth of Providence, Rhode Island, have generously contributed toward the cost of planting around the church and of constructing stairs, retaining walls and paths. The Fertilizer Company of Athens (Glass Division) has donated the window glass.

The work of conservation has continued to be supervised by Mr. John Travlos and Miss Alison Frantz.

(Pl. 29). The main fabric of the building, i. e., walls, columns, and domes, had already been put in order in the previous year. The roofs have now been restored; as many of the soft-colored old tiles as were sound have been retained and supplemented by new terracotta tiles of Byzantine type made to order. The three outer doorways of the narthex have been closed with doors of panelled oak, discreetly carved in the Byzantine style. Thin marble slabs pierced with circular lights fill the lunettes above the doors; surviving fragments of the old panels gave the design for the relief carving on the outer face.

The exploration of the building had brought to light various fragments from the original marble altar screen: a large part of one of the thin orthostates, several pieces of the massive and richly carved epistyle, the capital and part of the shaft of one of the supporting columns. The missing portions have been filled in with new marble carved with the same designs (Pl. 29, b). In the sanctuary behind the screen an altar has also been reconstituted of old fragments found in the area, supplemented with new. On the evidence of small pieces of inlay found beneath the modern floor of the church a panel of intarsia worked out in marbles of various colors has been inserted in the floor of the central square, a common feature in Byzantine churches of the period. The surviving wall paintings, which date chiefly from the 17th century, have been cleaned but not restored.

After the area in front of the church had been thoroughly explored, it was terraced, and a flagged pathway was carried down from the roadway that borders the south side of the Agora. Care was taken to leave visible the western foundations of the building as it had been in its two later periods, and architectural members from the church too faulty to be incorporated in the restoration have been placed in readily accessible positions. Other architectural marbles of the Byzantine period found elsewhere in the excavations have been assembled in this area and displayed on benches and retaining walls in such a way as to constitute an outdoor museum of the period. To the south of the church a small marble fountain in neo-classic style and dated 1872 which was found on the north slope of the Acropolis has been set up and again made to flow.

The retaining walls which support the church yard have been laid out so as to constitute the restoration of outer walls of three neighboring ancient buildings: the Southeast Fountain House to the south, South Stoa I to the west and South Stoa II to the north. Thus the ancient as well as the mediaeval remains have gained greatly in clarity. The area has been planted with olive, laurel, cypress, plane and a variety of flowers. Benches which will eventually be shaded by the trees command pleasing views over the excavations.

The Holy Apostles thus rehabilitated both inside and outside will afford the visitor a good idea of Byzantine architecture in what is generally admitted to be its finest period in Greece. The building, moreover, retains its sanctity, and though it has

no longer a parish to serve, it may be used for sacred purposes on saints' days, and on occasion, it is hoped, for the singing of Byzantine music.

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STOA OF ATTALOS

The market hall that bounded the east side of the Agora was erected by Attalos II King of Pergamon early in his reign, 159-138 B.C. Just 2100 years later, on September 3rd, 1956, the building was rededicated for use as the Agora museum (Pl. 30).<sup>7</sup> The ceremony, which took place in the presence of Their Hellenic Majesties, King Paul and Queen Frederika, with a goodly number of the people of Athens and many visiting scholars in attendance, formed part of the celebrations commemorating the 75th anniversary of the American School of Classical Studies.

At the time of dedication the fabric of the building was virtually complete, the greater part of the public exhibition space was in order, and much archaeological material had already been transferred from the Excavation House to the basement storerooms of the Stoa. In the remaining months of 1956 work continued on the making of shelving and cabinets for the storerooms, on equipping the workrooms and offices, and on transferring the remainder of the archaeological finds. It is hoped that the whole undertaking can be completed early in the year 1957.

By the end of 1955 the basement and the lower storey had been completed except for three Doric columns and the walls at the south end; the first five columns and most of the main walls of the upper storey were also in place. Within the year 1956 the masonry of the walls was finished throughout, the remaining 85 marble columns were erected together with the elaborate marble entablature that crowns the façade, mosaic floors were laid throughout the colonnades of both storeys and on the terrace, wooden ceilings were inserted in the two main storeys, oak doors of ancient type were constructed for the six ancient shops that have been restored as individual rooms, and the greater part of the tile roof was laid.

A great effort has been made to incorporate in the reconstruction a maximum amount of the ancient masonry that had survived in place. In general the stone work had suffered grievously in the fire of A.D. 267 which calcined and cracked the limestone to the point where it was barely capable of sustaining its own weight let alone that of the new construction. After a careful survey and consultation with the Department of Restoration in the Greek Ministry of Education it was decided to dismantle a small section of the shop-front wall of the building in the height of the upper storey. At the

<sup>7</sup> For earlier reports on the project cf. *Hesperia*, XXIII, 1954, pp. 55-57; XXIV, 1955, pp. 59-61; XXV, 1956, pp. 66-68. The reconstruction has been supervised throughout by the New York firm of Messrs. W. Stuart Thompson and Phelps Barnum, represented on the job by Manuel A. Tavarez. John Travlos has provided the evidence for the original design and has seen that the new conformed with the old. George Biris as Consulting Engineer worked out the solutions for the many unusual technical problems and supervised their execution.

northeast corner, however, it proved possible to preserve the ancient walls to their full height, together with one ancient cornice block which had never left its place. All that remained of the south end wall, approximately half the height of the lower storey, was also retained, its calcined inner face bearing grim testimony to the damage that could be done by burning the woodwork of an ancient stone building (Pl. 32, b). In these places the ancient masonry was relieved of the weight of the new by the use of pillars and beams of reinforced concrete which for the most part were incorporated in the thickness of the walls.

A close examination of the loose-lying marble blocks from the superstructure of the building revealed that they too had suffered so much from the fire and their subsequent fall that very few could with safety be incorporated in the reconstruction of a building that was to be used again for public purposes. Representative pieces of the elements that constitute the façade were nevertheless inserted in the new material near the south end of the building (Pls. 31 and 32, b), where they are in full view of every visitor since the entrance to the building is now as in antiquity at this point. The remainder of the façade is thus left clear and clean, enabling one to appreciate its original appearance undistracted by patch work.

The visitor interested in the history of the building will find further help in the second shop from the south end. This room has been fitted out as a "museum of the Stoa." On its shelves are displayed fragments from many of the more delicate ancient members such as the column capitals of the four different types. Here too are drawn plans and elevations of the building, a plastic model of its north end at a scale of 1:50 and a set of photographs to illustrate the condition of the building before reconstruction.

Among the most precious remains of the Stoa are the fragments of the architrave from its lower front order which bear the name of King Attalos and so establish the identification of the building. It had been hoped that these fragments might be incorporated in the reconstruction at their proper place in the façade. A major difficulty arose, however, when an intensive epigraphic study by Professor B. D. Meritt failed to yield a restoration which could be regarded as certain in respect of the full wording.<sup>8</sup> Since the length of the inscription could not be fixed, neither could its precise position within the length of the façade. Had some one of several possible restorations been arbitrarily selected and carried out, embarrassment might well have been caused by the subsequent discovery of additional fragments, several pieces having come to light in the course of the recent excavations. Other deterrent factors were the appalling condition of the inscribed fragments which might well have imperilled the stability of the building had they been incorporated, the difficulty of reading the now heavily weathered letters at their original height, and the disturbing effect which

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Hesperia*, XXVI, 1957, pp. 83-88, no. 31, pls. 18-21, 26-27.

would have resulted from the insertion of so many pieces of old material in the new. The Archaeological Council of the Ministry of Education, to whom the problem was referred, voted against the incorporation of the ancient fragments. Accordingly the smaller and more fragile pieces have been placed in the epigraphic storeroom beneath the Stoa terrace, while the larger fragments have been laid out on a low pedestal in front of the building where they may readily be seen and studied by all visitors (Pl. 21).

Near by, in front of the terrace wall and opposite the mid point of the Stoa, a partial restoration has been made of the tall pedestal which was erected here contemporary with the Stoa to support a four-horse chariot group in bronze. The many surviving blocks from this monument indicate that its pedestal was closely similar in design and scale to that of the so-called Monument of Agrippa at the entrance of the Acropolis. Elsewhere in front of the terrace wall have been set up a number of marble drums from isolated columns which must once have stood here, doubtless crowned by bronze statues.

The principal exhibition gallery comprises the combined length of ten of the original shops of the lower storey near the middle of the building; the ancient dividing walls, having completely disappeared in this area, were simply omitted from the reconstruction (Pl. 33, a). For most times sufficient natural light has been assured by the enlargement of the ancient windows in the back wall of the Stoa and by the glazing of the shop doorways. Supplementary illumination is available in the form of four continuous rows of fluorescent lights above a false ceiling of translucent plastic.

Within the long gallery a representative selection of the finds from the excavation has been set out in chronological sequence beginning with the Neolithic Period and ending with the Turkish. Private life is abundantly illustrated by the material from wells and graves, while the inscriptions, ostraka, kleroteria, dikasts' ballots, and water clock constitute a unique assemblage of evidence for the study of the mechanics of public life in the ancient city state.

To the south of the long gallery a smaller exhibition hall has been gained by throwing together the space of three ancient shops; this room has not yet been installed.

Four of the ancient shops of the lower storey have been restored as individual rooms. One of the four contains the "museum of the Stoa" mentioned above (p. 104). A second houses a special exhibition to illustrate the wine trade in the ancient Mediterranean chiefly on the basis of the amphorae in which the wine was carried. In the third is illustrated the use of terracotta in the manufacture of roof tiles, water pipes, drain channels, well-heads, etc. The fourth shop is to serve as an information center and a room for the sale of photographs, publications and replicas of ancient objects.

It is proposed to place in front of the walls in the colonnade of the lower storey a certain number of the better preserved statues. The first to be set up was Apollo

Patroos, the cult statue by Euphranor found near the temple of Apollo on the west side of the Agora by the Greek Archaeological Society in 1907, subsequently displayed in the National Museum and now brought back to within sight of his former home (Pl. 32, b).<sup>9</sup> Some characteristic inscribed stelai have also been placed against the inner columns in such a way as to profit from the excellent cross-lighting.

The great bulk of the material from the excavation is not, however, suitable for public display. Provision has been made in the basement and in the upper storey for the storage of this category, under conditions which permit it to be readily found and studied by scholars. Thus the inscriptions are accommodated in a basement room beneath the terrace; here they are laid out on simple wooden shelving with well lighted work tables placed at convenient intervals (Pl. 33, b). Two other large basement rooms beneath the colonnade of the Stoa have received the fragmentary sculpture and architecture, the whole wine jars, the household pots and the many thousands of containers of potsherds preserved for documentary purposes.

Another large class of "study material" consists of the hundreds of groups of objects (vases, lamps, terracotta figurines, jewelry, weapons, etc.) recovered from closed deposits such as wells, cisterns and graves. Glass-doored cabinets for the storage and display of this material have been erected in the rear aisle of the upper colonnade; they are closed off from the public by means of a screen of translucent glass in aluminum frames. The resultant damage to the aesthetic effect of the great colonnade must be balanced against the convenience of having all the material found in the Agora excavations readily accessible under one roof, and adequate space was not to be found elsewhere in the Stoa.

The area at the back of the upper storey originally occupied by shops is now used in part for the accommodation of additional "study material," such as coins and small finds, and in part for workrooms, studies and administrative offices. Washrooms for the staff have been provided in the upper storey, for the public in the lower storey.

The general model of the Agora at a scale of 1:200 has been placed in a glass case in the front aisle of the upper colonnade in such a way that the visitor as he looks down on the ruins of the ancient buildings may be helped in visualizing their original appearance by turning his head toward the model. The model of the Acropolis, made at the same scale by Professor Gorham P. Stevens, now stands at the south end of the upper colonnade beside a great opening in the south wall which commands an excellent view of the actual Acropolis.

In addition to providing a convenient museum where everything from the Agora excavations can be studied in immediate conjunction with the place where it was found and used, the reconstruction is fulfilling other expectations. Many visitors have acknowledged that it has brought them a new conception of the scale of ancient civic

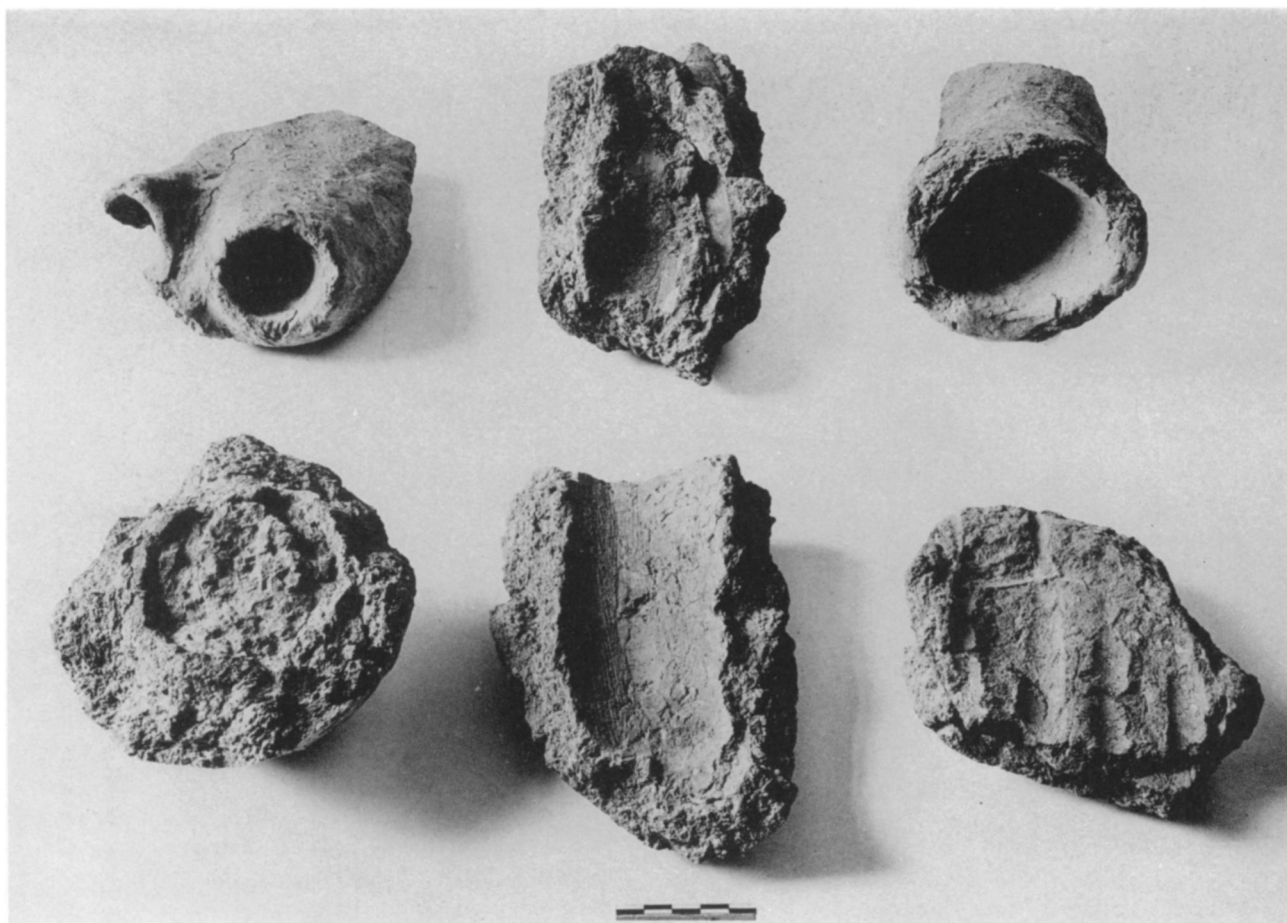
<sup>9</sup> Thanks are due to the Director and staff of the National Museum for facilitating the transfer of the statue.

architecture. The play of light and shade from hour to hour within the double colonnades is something that could not have been realized from paper studies alone. Architectural drawings and plaster models, moreover, had failed to bring out the satisfactory relationship in scale between the two storeys of the building whether viewed from within or without. The actual reconstruction has also allayed many fears as to the relation between the Stoa and its setting: in length and height it was adequate to its function of closing the east side of the square, yet it sits so low that its roof does not rise above those of the neighboring houses, nor does it compete for attention with either the Acropolis or the Temple of Hephaistos.

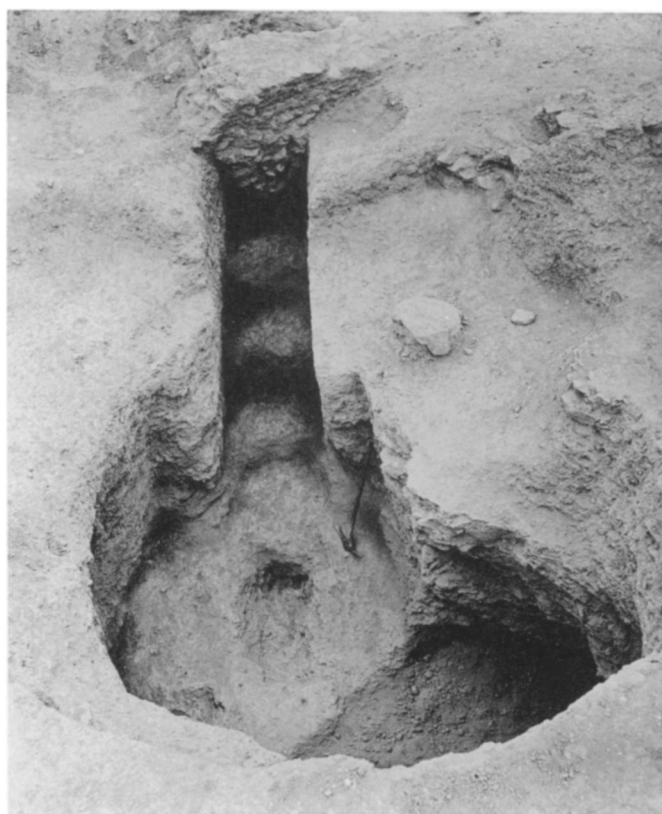
The day of dedication provided striking evidence of the versatility and practicality of the stoa type of building. Some 1500 guests sat in comfort in the lower colonnade through the middle hours of a warm September day; after the formal ceremony the guests ascended to a reception in the upper colonnade where again the space was ample and the air agreeably cool.

HOMER A. THOMPSON

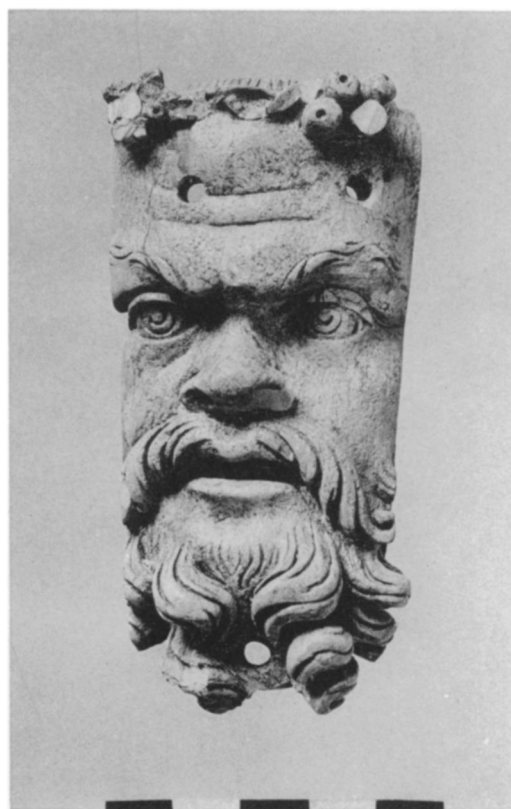
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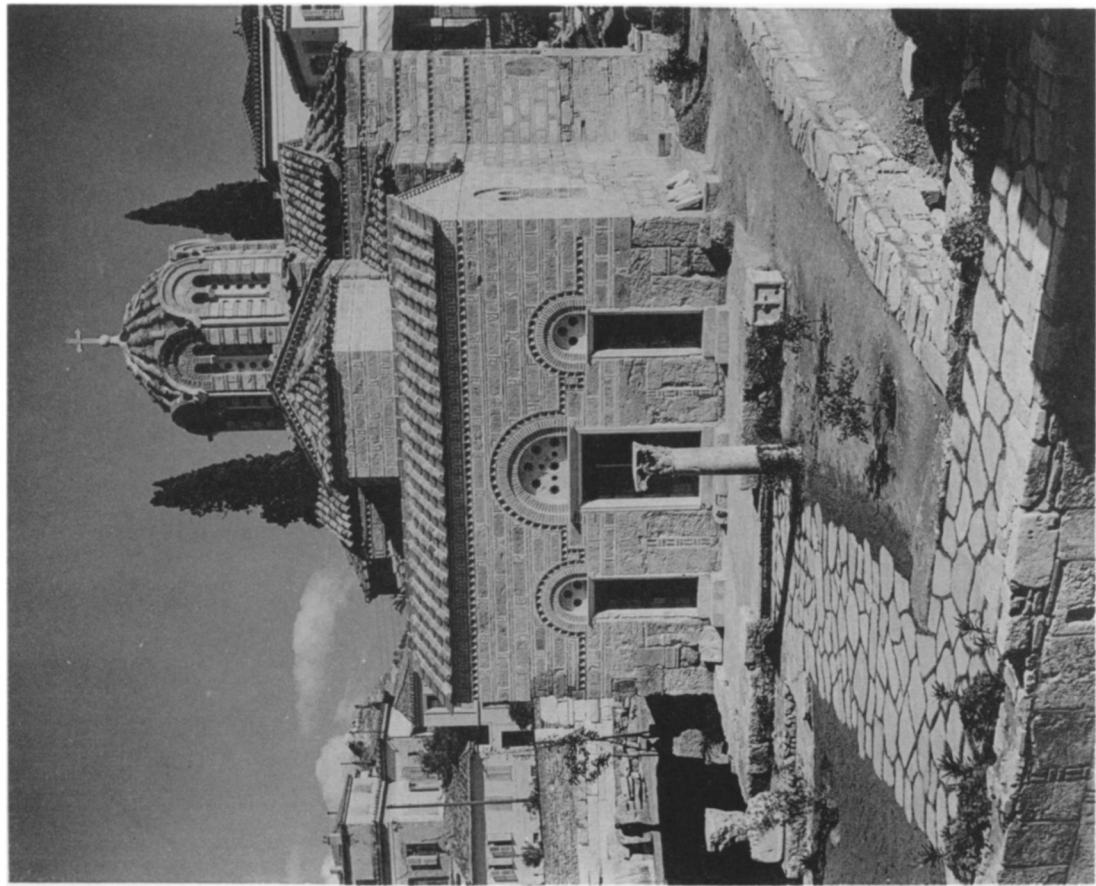
a. Fragments of Mould for casting a Bronze Statue



b. Casting Pit of 4th Century B. C.



c. Ivory Head of Satyr



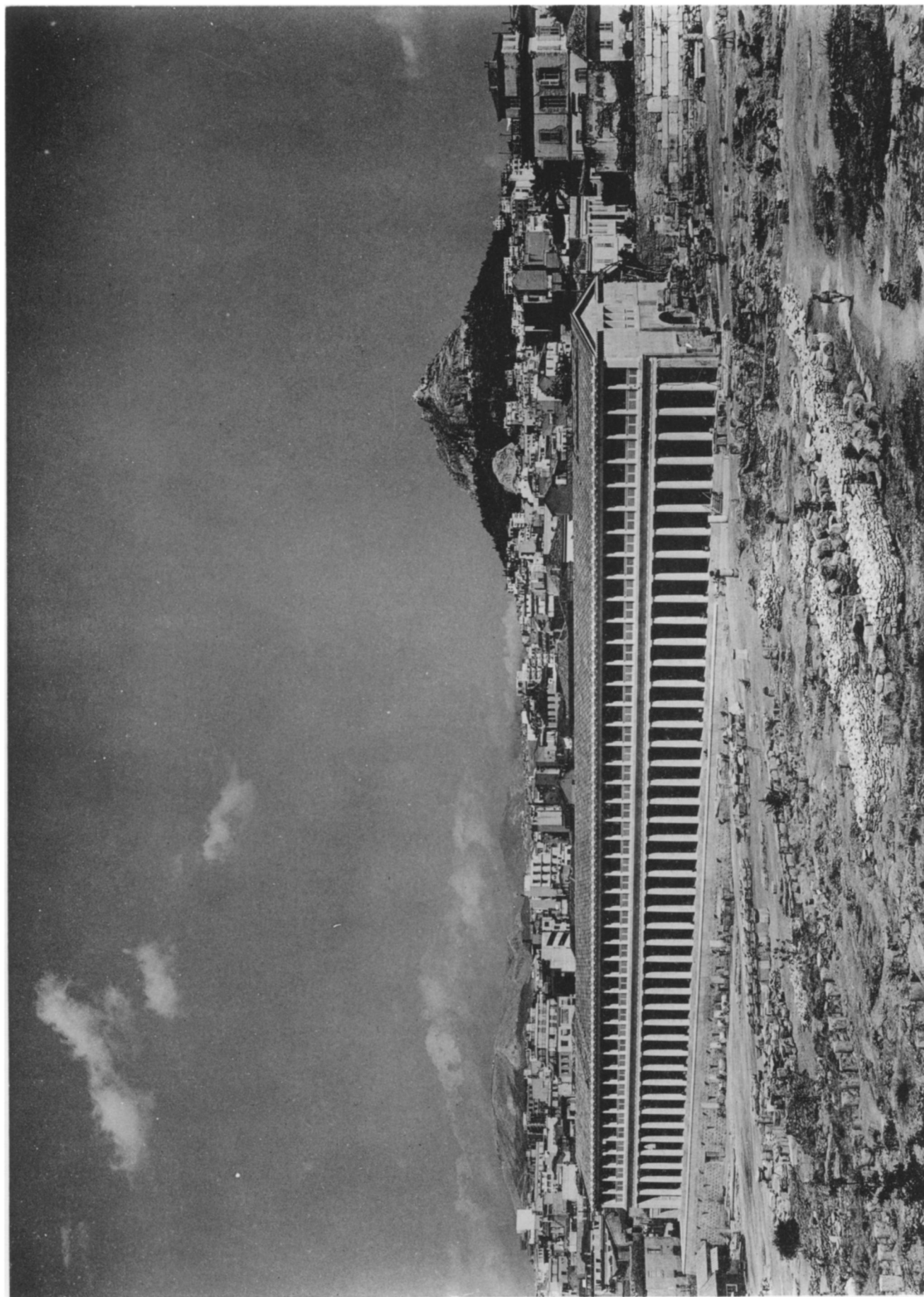
a. View from the Southwest



b. Interior

Church of the Holy Apostles

HOMER A. THOMPSON: ACTIVITIES IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA: 1956



Stoa of Attalos from the Southwest, December, 1956

HOMER A. THOMPSON: ACTIVITIES IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA: 1956

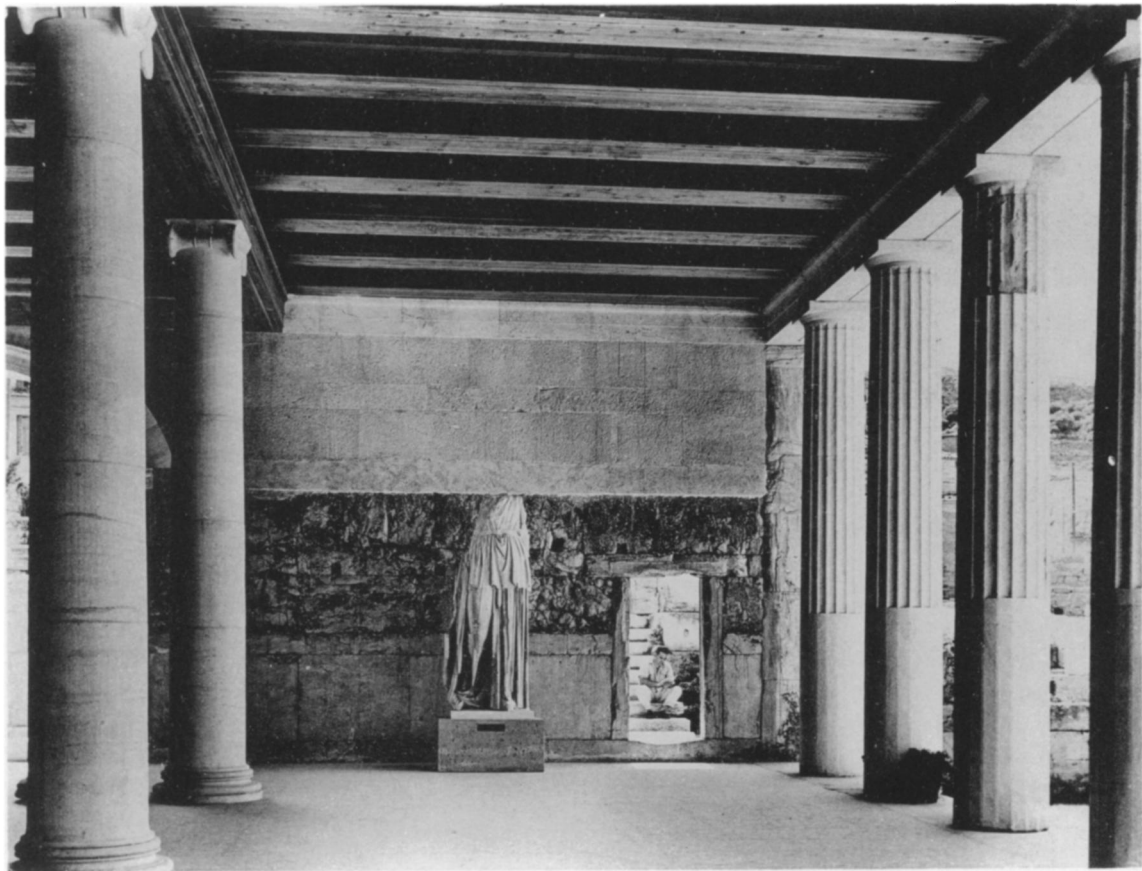


Stoa of Attalos: South End of Façade

HOMER A. THOMPSON: ACTIVITIES IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA: 1956



a. Upper Colonnade from the South



b. Apollo Patroos at South End of Lower Colonnade

Stoa of Attalos

HOMER A. THOMPSON: ACTIVITIES IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA: 1956



a. South End of principal public Gallery



b. Epigraphic Storeroom beneath Stoa Terrace

Stoa of Attalos