

THE FOURTH-CENTURY SKENE OF THE THEATER OF DIONYSOS AT ATHENS

(PLATES 91, 92)

FEW MONUMENTS in the history of Athenian architecture have been held under closer scrutiny than the Theater of Dionysos. Yet despite nearly a century of critical debate by both students of Greek architecture and scholars of Attic drama, a number of important questions remain unresolved. Prominent among them is the appearance of the original stone skene of the Theater, traditionally considered to have been completed during the administration of Lykourgos between 338 and 326 B.C.¹ It is the reconstruction of this building, together with its related problems, which is addressed here.²

The first significant attempt to understand the architecture of the Theater in its various phases was that of Dörpfeld in 1896;³ while later investigations have produced valuable contributions to the study of this monument, none has superseded Dörpfeld's pioneering effort.⁴ Yet Dörpfeld did not always fully substantiate the claims made in his original work,

¹ [Plutarch], *Moralia*, 841 c, d, and 852 c attributes the completion of the Theater to Lykourgos, activity usually associated with the construction of the stone skene. J. Travlos (*Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens*, New York 1971, p. 538), however, considers that the theater of Lykourgos should be connected with the immediate predecessor of the stone skene, which itself was built nearer the end of the 4th century. Although it does not seem necessary to dissociate Lykourgos' name from the skene, the precise date of its construction does not bear directly on the discussion of its form that is undertaken here.

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

- Bulle = H. Bulle, *Untersuchungen an griechischen Theatern* (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften XXXIII), Munich 1928
- Dörpfeld and Reisch = W. Dörpfeld and E. Reisch, *Das griechische Theater: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Dionysos-Theaters in Athen und anderer griechischer Theater*, Athens 1896
- Fiechter, I, III, IV = E. Fiechter, *Antike griechische Theaterbauten*, V, VII, IX: *Das Dionysos-Theater in Athen*, I, III, IV, Stuttgart 1935, 1936, 1950
- Pickard-Cambridge = A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Theater of Dionysos in Athens*, Oxford 1946

² Research for this article was conducted at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, initially in connection with my doctoral dissertation, "Athenian Architectural Activity in the Second Half of the Fourth Century B.C.," University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 1982, funding for which was provided in part by a Gorham Phillips Stevens Fellowship from the School in 1980/1981. Continued study of the Theater in 1984 was aided by a grant from the Faculty Development Fund of Clark University and a summer stipend from the American Philosophical Society; work was completed while I held a J. Paul Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History of Art and the Humanities in 1985/1986. I am most grateful to these institutions for their support. I am also indebted to the Greek Archaeological Service both for permission to study the Theater and for kind help in facilitating access to the material. In particular, I would like to thank G. Dontas and E. Touloupa, past and present ephors of the Akropolis, and M. Korres and T. Papathanasopoulos, successive directors of the restoration project in the Theater. I am grateful as well to the two anonymous reviewers at *Hesperia* whose suggestions have helped to improve this article; the author, of course, is solely responsible for any shortcomings that remain. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the 86th General Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (abstract, *AJA* 89, 1985, p. 354).

³ Dörpfeld and Reisch, pp. 6–96.

⁴ Two other major studies also valuable for a basic understanding of the architecture of the Theater and its history are Fiechter, I, III, IV and Pickard-Cambridge.

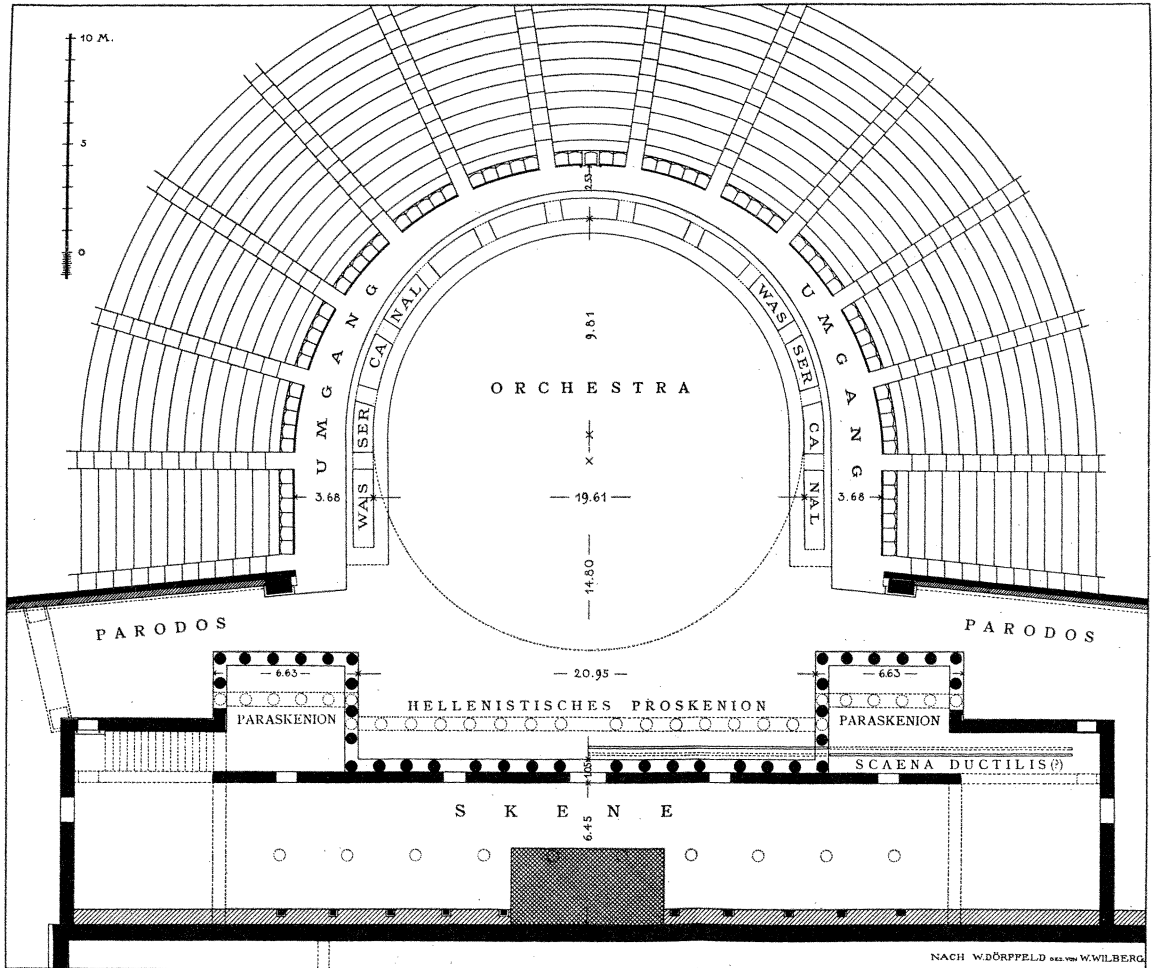


FIG. 1. Theater of Dionysos: skene and orchestra (Dörpfeld and Reisch, pl. 4)

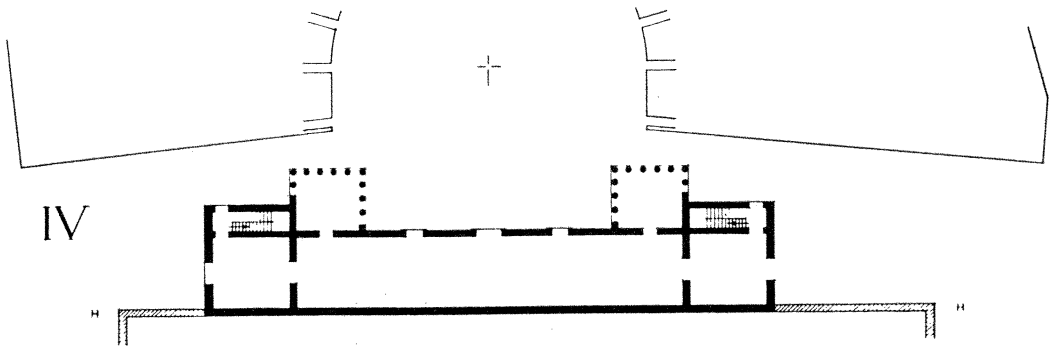


FIG. 2. Theater of Dionysos: skene (Travlos, p. 548, fig. 685, IV)

with the result that many were later questioned and some rejected entirely. Although more recent studies have vindicated Dörpfeld on a number of crucial points,⁵ his treatment of the skene has remained problematic, and one essential element in particular has never been accepted: the presence of a colonnade across the central section of the structure. Evidence derived from a recent examination of the extant material from this building now enables us to resolve many of the questions surrounding it and to reassess the placement of the Theater both in the development of Athenian architecture and in the history of stage design.

The 4th-century skene, as reconstructed by Dörpfeld, consisted of a long central building with projecting paraskenia and lateral wings at either end. Except for the wings, the façade was decorated with a colonnade, open on the paraskenia but closed in the central section where it was directly backed by a stone screen wall (Fig. 1). Later remodeling in the Hellenistic period, which reduced the projection of the paraskenia and added a stone proskenion, and yet more extensive changes, inflicted at various intervals in Roman times, altered the original plan considerably and greatly obscured the evidence for it. As a result, much of Dörpfeld's restoration remained open to question.

For the central colonnade, Dörpfeld essentially relied on the tenuous observation that the length of the foundations between the two projecting paraskenia was closely divisible by 34 frieze units, calculated from extant fragments of the frieze course of the paraskenia. These could be divided evenly into 17 axial spacings of two triglyphs and two metopes (such as were used in the paraskenia), although Dörpfeld chose a somewhat more complicated division of only 12 columnar spacings of two metopes and two triglyphs, plus two wider axial spacings with three metopes and three triglyphs, and one central spacing with four metopes and four triglyphs.⁶ Dörpfeld argued for the latter solution because, with lower column diameters of *ca.* 0.51 m., the normal spacing gave an actual intercolumnar distance of only 0.76 m., an uncomfortably tight squeeze between columns.⁷ The three wider

⁵ For important revisions in the history of the Theater which essentially return to the original theories of Dörpfeld, see P. Kalligas, «Ἐργασίαι τοῦ ἱεροῦ Διονύσου Ἐλευθέρεως», Δελτ 18, 1963, B'1 (1965), pp. 12–18, and M. Maaß, *Die Prohedrie des Dionysostheaters in Athen*, Munich 1972. Cf. also the summaries in Travlos, pp. 537–539 and W. Wurster, "Die neuen Untersuchungen am Dionysostheater in Athen," *Architectura* 9, 1979 (pp. 58–76), pp. 60–68.

⁶ Dörpfeld and Reisch, pp. 65–66. The length of the foundations between paraskenia measures 21.59 m. on axis. Calculation of the axial spacing over this distance is as follows:

0.253 m. = triglyph width; 0.382 m. = metope width

0.635 m. = frieze unit (0.253 + 0.382)

1.270 m. = normal axial spacing (2 triglyphs and 2 metopes)

1.905 m. = axial spacing of 3 triglyphs and 3 metopes

2.540 m. = axial spacing of 4 triglyphs and 4 metopes

21.59 m. = 34×0.635 (or 17×1.27)

21.59 m. = $(12 \times 1.27) + (2 \times 1.905) + 2.54$

⁷ $1.27 - 0.51 = 0.76$ m. (The lower column diameter is known from preserved columns and from traces left on the stylobate of the paraskenia.) The width of the intercolumniation would place the façade of the skene in Vitruvius' pycnostyle class of temples (*de architectura* III.3.1–3), a type to which Vitruvius objects because it forces worshipers to pass between the columns in single file rather than arm in arm. Although we are not here dealing with temple architecture, one would expect the same general principle to apply; if anything, the distance ought to be greater than in temples. It requires a very cautious step for one person of average girth to pass through a space only three-quarters of a meter wide.

spacings allowed easier access to the interior and provided an adequate number of entryways for performances.⁸ The doors were arranged symmetrically in the façade, the larger one placed in the middle and flanked by the two smaller ones, themselves centered between the central opening and each corner.⁹

All later investigators, recognizing that the evidence for Dörpfeld's reconstruction of the colonnade was largely circumstantial and arguing that such a combination of columns and wall was unknown at this early a date, consequently rejected the idea of the colonnade, which was therefore omitted in virtually all subsequent reconstructions of the scene building, its central section fronted instead simply by a plain wall (Fig. 2).¹⁰ It is possible, however, to demonstrate not only that a colonnade and wall could have existed in this position, as Dörpfeld had speculated, but that indeed they did exist.

Among the members of the entablature attributed to the scene building is a fragment of an architrave-frieze block (both courses having been carved together) that belongs to a re-entrant angle. Because of its critical role in the reconstruction of the skene's façade, it warrants a detailed description (Fig. 3; Pl. 91:a-c).¹¹ Though broken at the left, the right end of the block is well preserved, including a small portion of the front face with the architrave and, above it, the beginning of a metope (Fig. 3:b). The end, cut at an angle of approximately 45° to the front face, extends about 0.37 m. before breaking off at a rough edge (Fig. 3:d). The extant original surface preserves two vertical bands of anathyrosis, separated by a recessed area picked with a point. At the base, just before the break, is a cutting for a dowel. The rest of the surface is cut back at a sharp angle; this part of the surface does not belong to

⁸ Customarily, it has been thought that the skene of the 5th century used three doors, although it has been suggested that all extant tragedy could have been produced with fewer (no more than one, in fact); cf. P. Arnott, *Greek Scenic Conventions in the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford 1962, p. 42. It is doubtful that the 4th-century scene building would have restricted itself to such a degree (see p. 434 below); certainly Hellenistic skenai could have several openings.

⁹ As corroborative evidence for this arrangement, Dörpfeld referred to features of the later Hellenistic proskenion which could be explained on the basis of his arrangement for the 4th-century skene (Dörpfeld and Reisch, p. 66): the later proskenion had a wider central intercolumniation like the central section of its predecessor; it also used the same number of columns, 16; and the later Hellenistic interaxial, ca. 1.34 m., was perhaps adopted in order to absorb the extra space provided by the two lateral doors flanking the middle one in the original structure, openings which apparently were abandoned in the Hellenistic remodeling. Because many of these details of the later skene seemed questionable themselves, however, they did little to strengthen Dörpfeld's reconstruction of the original form of the building.

¹⁰ Objections were first raised by E. Bethe, review of Dörpfeld and Reisch, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1897 (pp. 704-728), pp. 721-722, and thereafter were taken up by others, e.g., O. Puchstein, *Die griechische Bühne*, Berlin 1901, pp. 131-134; E. Fiechter, *Die baugeschichtliche Entwicklung des antiken Theaters*, Munich 1914, p. 9; J. T. Allen, *The Greek Theater of the Fifth Century Before Christ* (University of California Publications in Classical Philology 7), 1920, p. 12; A. von Gerkan, review of Fiechter, I, III, *Gnomon* 14, 1938 (pp. 232-246), pp. 240-241. Allen was incorrect in his statement that Dörpfeld himself eventually abandoned the idea of the colonnade; cf. Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 149-150, note 3. The plan given in Travlos, p. 548, fig. 685, IV, reproduced here as Figure 2, is that which is currently generally accepted.

¹¹ For previous mention of this block, as well as other extant members of the architrave-frieze course, see Bulle, pp. 36-40 and pls. 8, 10:b; Fiechter, III, pp. 10-12 and pls. 1, 2. The block (inv. no. 335) currently lies within the stoa of the Sanctuary of Dionysos immediately south of the skene.

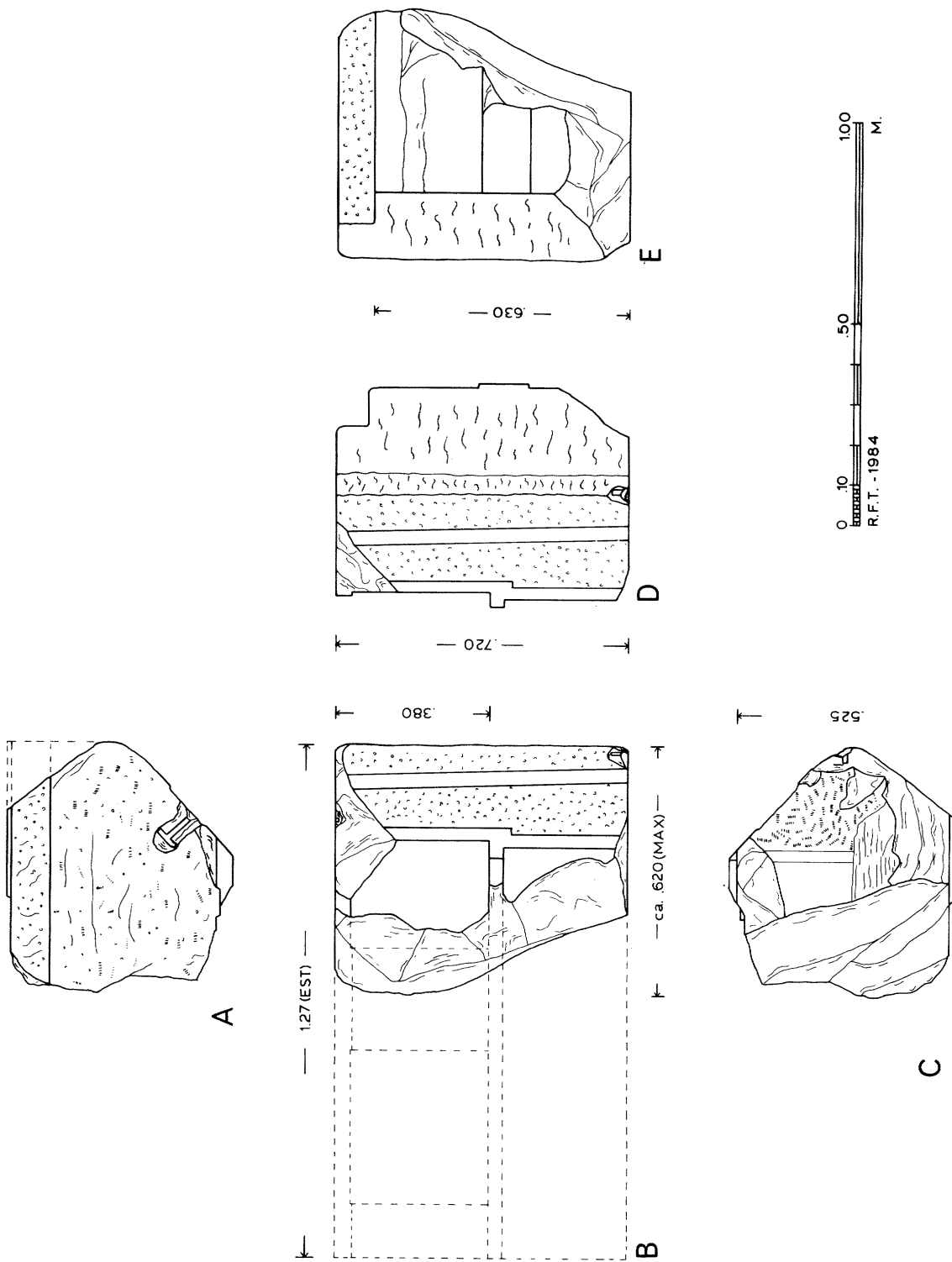


FIG. 3. Architrave-frieze block from a re-entrant angle of the skene

the original working of the block but rather was roughly recut at a later date, undoubtedly at the time of the Hellenistic remodeling of the skene, as were many of the other extant architrave-frieze blocks.¹² The back face displays a broad taenia set approximately at the level of the division between architrave and frieze; above is a small ledge at the upper edge of the block (Fig. 3:e).¹³ The top surface of the block, worked with a combination of toothed chisel and point, preserves a cutting for a T-clamp (Fig. 3:a). In all details the block conforms to the extant examples of the architrave-frieze course belonging to the paraskenia, and its assignment to the building therefore may be confirmed. The original length of the block would have been *ca.* 1.27 m., the same as the canonical axial spacing of the paraskenia colonnades and the length of the other regular architrave-frieze blocks. Its placement at a re-entrant corner is established by the angled termination of the end of the block.

The bottom surface of the fragment reveals the most crucial information regarding its placement, indicating that it belongs over a column (Fig. 3:c; Pl. 91:c). At the right, the angled end is worked with a toothed chisel where it was positioned over the capital, the slightly rough texture helping to create friction between the two surfaces and so aid in holding the block in place. The rest of the underside, which was exposed to view, received a smooth polished surface; a small portion of this area is preserved just before the block breaks off at the left. Between the two areas, a faint weather line marks the width of the relieving margin of the abacus.¹⁴

There are four re-entrant angles to which this block may belong, at either of the two outer angles where the paraskenia join the lateral wings of the stage building, or at either of the two inner angles where the paraskenia meet the skene's central section (Fig. 4). The first position can be eliminated because the wings were faced with solid walls, a fact clearly attested by three original orthostate blocks still *in situ* on the west wing, immediately adjacent to the corner of the west paraskenion (Pl. 91:d).¹⁵ Moreover, these walls continued some distance forward along the outside faces of the paraskenia, as shown by a cutting for a T-clamp in the top surface of the first stylobate block forward of the outer re-entrant angle

¹² The original right-hand end of the block, indicated by dotted lines in Figure 3, is restored on the basis of other architrave-frieze blocks of the skene and from blocks of the building's stylobate (see, e.g., Pl. 91:d). It is a common way of joining architectural members at both outer and re-entrant angles; cf. R. Martin, *Manuel d'architecture grecque*, Paris 1961, pp. 462–470.

¹³ The ledge was originally decorated with an ovolo molding at its base, now unfortunately broken off but preserved in other examples.

¹⁴ Bulle (p. 39) mistakenly stated that the underside of the block displayed no preparation for its positioning over a column. Although much worn, the toothed chiseling, the weather line, and the smoothed surface are clearly visible in strongly raking light.

¹⁵ This area is the best preserved section of original construction anywhere in the skene. At the corner itself and for a length of about five meters to the west, the foundations, euthynteria, stylobate, and bottom course of orthostates all preserve original 4th-century construction. Only the string course and the second row of orthostates belong to the Hellenistic remodeling of the structure. Forward of the corner, the first few blocks of the foundations and euthynteria, together with the first stylobate block, are also in their original positions. The remaining material, including the two columns, was reset in the Hellenistic period, or even later. Bulle's arguments (Bulle, pp. 27–44) for the entire rebuilding of this section have never found favor: cf. Fiechter, III, p. 16; Broneer, review of Bulle, *AJA* 39, 1935 (pp. 415–418), pp. 416–417; Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 154–155.

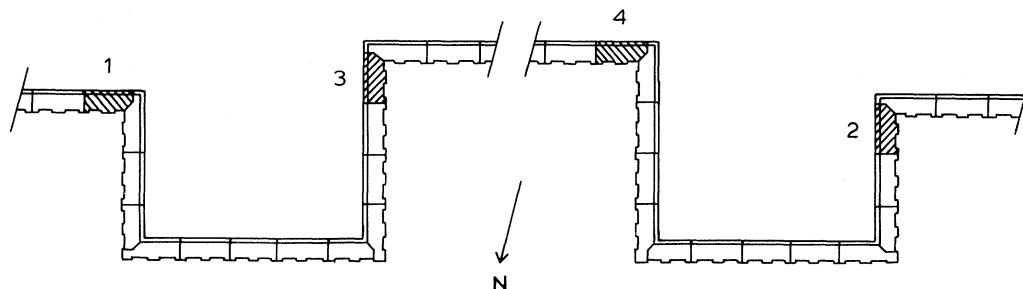


FIG. 4. Entablature of the skene: plan showing possible positions for the block from the re-entrant angle

on the west paraskenion.¹⁶ The cutting, at the northern end of the block and fully 0.71 m. from the re-entrant corner, would not have been allowed to show. Because the axial spacing precludes the placing of either a column or an anta at precisely the position of the clamp cutting, the wall itself must have extended this far forward.¹⁷ Position no. 2 therefore is also eliminated.

Only two positions remain, nos. 3 or 4 in Figure 4, the two inner re-entrant angles between the paraskenia and the central section of the skene; in either place the re-entrant block must have been set over a column. Having confirmed the presence of a column in this position, there can be little doubt that the colonnade continued along the entire central section of the skene, especially when we call to mind Dörpfeld's calculation that such a colonnade could exactly fit in this space.¹⁸

The evidence for the wall set directly behind the colonnade hinges on two series of poros blocks placed on the back half of the conglomerate foundations which extend beyond the central section of the skene behind the east and west paraskenia (Fig. 5 [the blocks in question are to be found next to the letters M and N], Pls. 92:a, b). Dörpfeld associated this material with the euthynteria of a wall, although he did not support his view with any argumentation other than simply to point out that the position of the blocks would allow the colonnade to occupy the front portion of the foundations.¹⁹ In addition, he noted a single block of Hymettian marble lying on one of the poros blocks at the west, attributing it to the next course above, the toichobate. Yet the association of this material with the skene is not self-evident, a fact which led some to doubt Dörpfeld's attribution.²⁰ The marble block, for

¹⁶ The clamp cutting was re-used in the Hellenistic remodeling of the skene. It could not have been first carved at that time because no other blocks of the Hellenistic stylobate have clamp cuttings.

¹⁷ For calculation of the precise axial spacing and arrangement of the outer returns of the colonnades on the paraskenia, see below pp. 431–432 and footnote 29.

¹⁸ See above, p. 423 and footnote 6.

¹⁹ Dörpfeld and Reisch, pp. 66–67.

²⁰ E.g., Fiechter (who believed the blocks were not in their original places [I, p. 25]), although he admitted that they did not belong with the Roman blocks either.

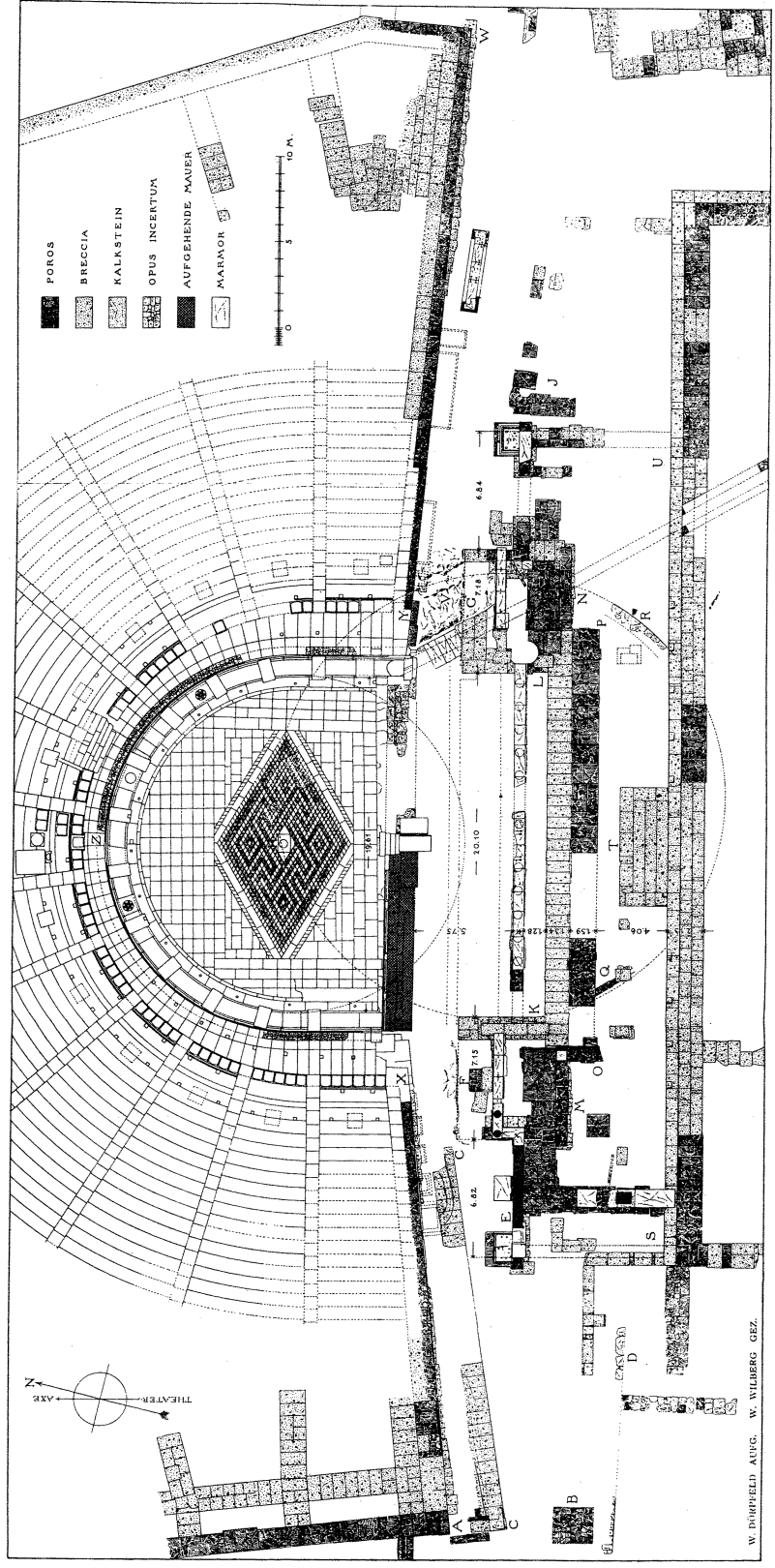


FIG. 5. Theater of Dionysos: skene and orchestra, actual state plan (Dörpfeld and Reisch, pl. 3)

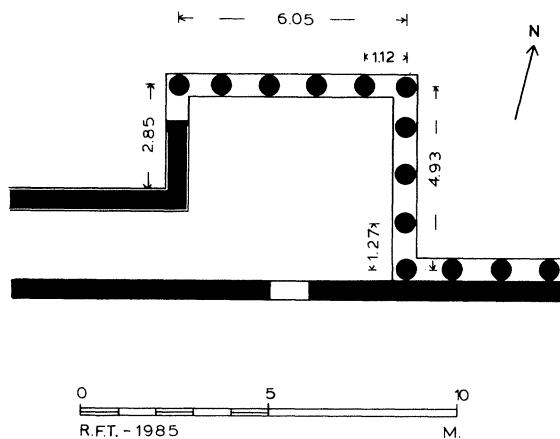


FIG. 6. West paraskenion, restored plan

instance, certainly is not *in situ* because one end is finished smooth rather than with anathyrosis. Moreover, the poros blocks themselves are grouped with several other similar blocks definitely dating from the Roman period of rebuilding and with which conceivably they might be associated. There are several characteristics, however, which distinguish them. Although similar in material to the Roman blocks, they do not correspond in dimension; nor are they so haphazardly laid. On the other hand, each set of poros blocks does match the other very well. Not only do the dimensions of the blocks correspond, they are also grouped in the same manner, two shorter blocks flanking a longer middle one. In addition, they have nearly identical pry marks and dowel holes on their top surfaces.²¹ Even more significant, both series correspond to the original euthynteria course as it is preserved on the wing walls. Especially telling is the observation that the level of the upper surfaces of the blocks, lower than that of the Roman blocks they abut, matches that of the euthynteria of the paraskenia colonnades precisely.²² Finally, the blocks can not have served as underpinnings for the colonnade, because, as we shall see, calculation of the columnar spacing indicates that the colonnade was placed on the front half of the foundations (Fig. 6).

This evidence, taken as a whole, strongly suggests not only that the blocks belong to the 4th-century construction of the skene but that they have not been moved from their original position. The supposition therefore that they served as a euthynteria course for a wall on the back half of the foundations stretching across the central section of the skene is well founded.

²¹ The shorter blocks are *ca.* 1.24 m. long, except for one, the easternmost block behind the east paraskenion, which is somewhat longer, *ca.* 1.33 m. The single longer block at the east measures *ca.* 2.16 m., the corresponding block at the west, *ca.* 2.19 m. The depths of the blocks average *ca.* 0.68 m., with no block differing from this figure by more than about 0.03 m. The heights of the blocks measure *ca.* 0.39 m. The distance between dowel holes on the group of blocks at the west is *ca.* 2.17 m.; at the east it is *ca.* 2.13 m. These measurements are sufficiently consistent from one group to the other for the euthynteria course. Even in the superstructure of the skene, the dimensions of blocks may vary by as much as a centimeter.

²² Cf. Fiechter, I, pl. 5, section 5-5, which illustrates this correspondence.

Furthermore, the wall almost certainly extended the full height of the columns. The existence of a separate euthynteria and toichobate for the wall makes it likely that this is the case. Were it the intention to have a wall of only half or three-quarter height, intercolumnar blocks set along the back half of the line of columns would have sufficed, as is usual for the construction of such a system.²³

The wall and the columns placed in front of it would have fitted comfortably on their foundations and would have coordinated closely with the continuation of the colonnade on the inside returns of the paraskenia (Fig. 6). The foundations, *ca.* 1.35 m. deep, would have accommodated a wall *ca.* 0.50 m. thick, the same thickness as that of the wing walls (known from the orthostates preserved *in situ*), and a stylobate directly in front supporting columns *ca.* 0.51 m. in diameter at their base, the same as those on the paraskenia.²⁴ With a full column placed on the front half of the foundations at the re-entrant angle, there is precisely enough room on the inner face of each paraskenion to fit a colonnade with three interaxials of regular spacing (1.27 m.) and a contracted interaxial at the outside corner (1.12 m.).²⁵ The normal interaxial at the re-entrant angle results in a metope (of reduced width) at the corner, as our surviving block suggests.²⁶ This calculation also indicates that it is correct to restore full columns here, because only with the projection of a full column does the colonnade on the inner return fit properly on its foundations.²⁷

²³ See H. Büsing, *Die griechische Halbsäule*, Wiesbaden 1970, p. 15. It is possible that the wall may have been pierced by windows in order to allow more light into the interior, although a fair amount would have penetrated through the large doorways. Windows would also have had the advantage of alleviating the long stretch of blank walls on the wings. Since there is no concrete evidence for them, however, none appear in the reconstructed elevation of the skene in Figure 7.

²⁴ W. B. Dinsmoor (*The Architecture of Ancient Greece*, 3rd ed., London 1950, p. 248, note 4) is incorrect in stating that the foundations were not sufficient to support both a wall and a colonnade of stone. He is followed by F. E. Winter, "The Stage of New Comedy," *Phoenix* 37, 1983 (pp. 38–47), p. 42.

²⁵ The length of the foundations, measured from the center of the forward half of the foundations of the skene's central section to the center of the front foundations of the paraskenia, is 4.93 m. The length of the colonnade, measured on axis, equals this figure precisely ($[3 \times 1.27] + 1.12 = 4.93$ m.).

²⁶ Rather than a full metope or half-triglyph, the two other common treatments of the frieze at the re-entrant angle, but both of which require an increased corner interaxial. The re-entrant block from the skene, though attesting the presence of a metope at the corner, does not preserve the original length. This can be calculated, however, as 0.271 m.:

$$0.525 \text{ (architrave depth)} - 0.253 \text{ (triglyph width)} = \frac{0.272}{2} = 0.136$$

$$0.136 - 0.025 \text{ (setback of metope from triglyph face)} = 0.111$$

$$0.382 \text{ (normal metope width)} - 0.111 = 0.271$$

For the formula, as well as a detailed explanation of the various solutions to the problem of the re-entrant angle in the Doric order, see J. J. Coulton, "The Treatment of Re-entrant Angles," *BSA* 61, 1966, pp. 132–146; cf. *idem*, *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*, Oxford 1976, pp. 131–137, and *Ancient Greek Architects at Work: Problems of Structure and Design*, Ithaca 1977, pp. 129–137.

²⁷ Dörpfeld and Reisch, p. 67. The reduced projection of half-columns would have placed the front stylobate of the paraskenia uncomfortably near the back edge of its foundations. Moreover, such a solution would cause further difficulty in the interaxial spacing on the outside returns of the paraskenia. The reconstruction of an anta at the corner, which normally demands a triglyph above it in the frieze, is precluded on the basis of the metope found in this position.

Dörpfeld continued the colonnade across the front of the paraskenia, where the foundations are of sufficient length to accommodate five columnar spacings.²⁸ On the outer returns, measured from the center of the corner column to the face of the wing wall, the foundations could accommodate two axial spacings, with the frieze again ending at the corner with a metope of reduced width.²⁹ Here Dörpfeld continued the colonnade with two columns, terminating it with an anta which projected *ca.* 0.51 m. forward from the corner, a distance equal to the lower column diameter. Although we have shown that the wall extended slightly farther forward,³⁰ some later investigators actually continued it around two full sides, leaving open only the inner side facing the central section of the skene.³¹ With the exception of the number of columns on the outside returns, however, it is possible to justify Dörpfeld's reconstruction.

Dörpfeld based his open colonnade on a single architrave-frieze block from an outer corner which has the telltale markings of its placement over a column, that is, the same traces now observed for the re-entrant angle block.³² Yet critics rightly pointed out that this indicated that just one side of each paraskenion had to be open and so defended a possible reconstruction of a colonnade only on the inside face of each paraskenion. A more detailed consideration of the available evidence, however, effectively eliminates this possibility.

At each outer corner of the paraskenia, one frieze block, terminating in a metope, was joined to a second that ended with a full triglyph on two adjoining faces. Both blocks

²⁸ There is no excess of room, however. The foundations across the front of each paraskenion, measured from end to end, equal *ca.* 7.15/7.18 m., those between the paraskenia 20.10 m. (Fig. 5), a total of 34.43 m. for the skene's foundations, excluding the returns of the paraskenia (7.15 + 7.18 + 20.10). The colonnade itself is nearly as long. The central section equals 21.59 m. (see footnote 6 above). With a hexastyle façade, the front of each paraskenion would measure on axis 6.05 m. ($[2 \times 1.12] + [3 \times 1.27]$); and the distance from the edge of the stylobate to the center of the corner column at each of the two outside angles is *ca.* 0.29 m. (one half the lower column diameter, *ca.* 0.26 m., plus the setback of the column from the edge of the stylobate, 0.03 m.). Thus the length of the colonnade at stylobate level amounts to 34.27 m. ($[2 \times 0.29] + [2 \times 6.05] + 21.59$), leaving only 0.16 m. ($34.43 - 34.27$) for the setback of the stylobate from the foundations on the outer sides of the paraskenia, 0.08 m. at each end. On the west paraskenion where the original stylobate and foundations are preserved, the setback measures 0.09 m., very close to the calculated measurement. Because the presence of the colonnade across the central portion of the skene was not accepted, however, this discrepancy between the length of the foundations and the size and placement of the superstructure above has been widely misunderstood and misinterpreted in the past, even to the extent of suggesting that the foundations of the paraskenia are too long for the superstructure, rather than too short as is actually the case (e.g., Bulle, pp. 27–47, esp. p. 40; Puchstein, *op. cit.* [footnote 10 above], pp. 131–133). The problem is simply one of minor miscalculation; the builders had probably not settled on the exact dimensions of the colonnade at the time the foundations, built with pre-cut blocks, were laid; cf. Pickard-Cambridge, pp. 155–156.

²⁹ The distance from the center of the corner column to the face of the wing wall can be estimated at *ca.* 2.80 m. A contracted corner interaxial of 1.12 m. plus a normal axial spacing of 1.27 m. leaves 0.41 m. to be divided between the remaining half-triglyph (0.127 m.) and a reduced metope of *ca.* 0.283 m. ($2.80 - [1.12 + 1.27 + 0.127] = 0.283$), close to that calculated for the inner re-entrant angle (see footnote 26 above).

³⁰ See pp. 426–427 above.

³¹ Fiechter, III, p. 17; he later abandoned the idea, albeit for insufficient reasons (IV, p. 15). More recently, it has been revived by Winter, *op. cit.* (footnote 24 above), p. 41, note 12, and plan on p. 42.

³² Dörpfeld and Reisch, p. 65 and fig. 21, p. 64. The block (inv. no. 70) currently lies within the skene.

terminated at the other end with a half-triglyph. (The possible arrangements of the two corner blocks are shown at the four outer corners in Figure 4.) One block of each type is preserved: the first (that which was mentioned by Dörpfeld), with a metope at its left end (Pl. 92:c);³³ the second, with two full triglyphs, one of which is at the left end and the other on the adjacent face (Pl. 92:d).³⁴ Both preserve traces on their bottom resting surfaces indicating their placement over a column. Were just the inner sides of the paraskenia open, the only possible positions for them would be at either the northeast corner of the west paraskenion, facing east, or at the northwest corner of the east paraskenion, facing west. Because the blocks are “left-handed”, either could be placed at the second position, but neither can be made to fit the first, which requires a “right-handed” block. One of them therefore belonged at the northeast corner of the west paraskenion, facing north, or at one of the outer angles; in any of these positions, it necessarily sat above a column. The establishment of a column at one of the forward corners of the paraskenia therefore indicates that the open colonnade almost certainly extended across the entire façade of each paraskenion. Because the walls on the outside returns of the paraskenia reached at least as far as the clamp on the top surface of the stylobate,³⁵ only one likely position remains for the termination of the colonnade, in the position of the first column from the corner. Thus, we may suggest that Dörpfeld’s reconstruction be revised in this respect: the colonnade was open over only one intercolumniation on the outside faces of the paraskenia, not two.³⁶

The frieze continued over the front walls of the lateral wing, again beginning with a metope of reduced width and ending with a full triglyph at the corner. It is difficult to measure the length of the wings closely because the remains of the ends of these appendages are very poorly preserved, but the evidence indicates that it was equivalent to 11 frieze units, less the reduction of the metope at the re-entrant angle.³⁷ Moreover, the toichobate and orthostate blocks of the wing walls measure 1.27 m. in length, the same as that of the normal architrave-frieze blocks, thus suggesting a consistent alternation of joints up through the level of the entablature. Finally, one extant block of the architrave-frieze course is roughened over its entire underside, establishing its placement over a wall. It is of canonical length, 1.27 m., and terminates with a half-triglyph at each end; therefore, it does not

³³ The right end of the block was recut in the Hellenistic remodeling of the skene.

³⁴ The block is illustrated by Fiechter (III, pl. 1:7), although he does not show the bottom surface. In 1984, however, I was able to inspect this face of the block (inv. no. 72), which is now located within the skene.

³⁵ See pp. 426–427 above.

³⁶ Cf. Dörpfeld and Reisch, p. 68, fig. 22. It is possible (provided the second “left-handed” block were used on the front of the paraskenion, at either the inside or outside angle) that the wall on the outside face of each paraskenion extended as far as the corner itself, but this option does not seem to have been exercised often, if at all, in the design of the stoa with wings, the building type most closely related to the skene; of the eight examples collected by Coulton (*The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa* [footnote 26 above], p. 196, fig. 23), all have at least one intercolumniation open on the outside returns of the wings. (On the derivation of the skene from the stoa with wings, see p. 433 below).

³⁷ Measurements given for the estimated lengths of the wing walls by Dörpfeld (Dörpfeld and Reisch, pl. 3 [Fig. 5]) and Fiechter (III, pl. 24) vary only slightly: *ca.* 6.82/6.85 m. Thus, there remains as much as *ca.* 0.25 m. for the reduced metope at the re-entrant angle ($[10 \times 0.635] + 0.253 + 0.25 = 6.853$), not far from that calculated at the other re-entrant angles (see footnotes 26 and 29 above).

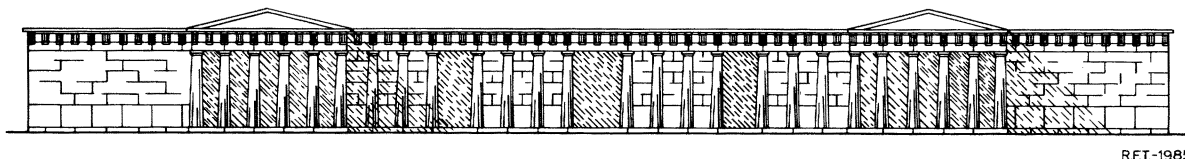


FIG. 7. Skene, restored elevation

belong over the closed portion on the outside returns of the paraskenia but should be placed on one of the wings.³⁸

Thus, the reconstruction of the first stone skene (Fig. 7) calls for a structure with a colonnade extending across the major portion of the façade, closed in the central section and open on the paraskenia. Only the wings at either end were faced with blank walls. The origin of the basic Π-shaped plan is not difficult to trace. With the restoration of the continuous colonnade, the skene bears a close resemblance to the 5th-century Stoa of Zeus Eleuthereiou in the Athenian Agora, itself highly innovative as the first stoa with projecting wings.³⁹ The form of the projecting colonnades themselves is very close; in both buildings they consist of hexastyle façades that recall the canonical Doric temple front. Although the skene increases the number of columns on the inside returns, it follows the Stoa of Zeus in having only one open intercolumniation on the outside. It also copies its predecessor in the employment of a metope at the re-entrant angle.⁴⁰ The choice of Hymettian marble in the crepidoma, a material first used in this position in the Stoa of Zeus, is found again in the step-stylobate of the scene building. The addition in the skene of the two lateral wings is readily explained by the special demands imposed by the site and function of the Theater. These appendages help formally to give extra length to the building without extending its central section unduly, and in practical terms, they provide much needed space for dramatic productions.⁴¹ Moreover, their ancillary nature is underscored by their lack of colonnaded fronts. Given the close associations between the two buildings, it therefore seems inconceivable that the architect of the skene did not study the Stoa of Zeus with great care and attention.⁴²

³⁸ In 1984 I inspected the bottom surface of the block (inv. no. 333), today located in the stoa of the Sanctuary immediately south of the skene. Only the front, top, and one end are illustrated by Fiechter (III, pl. 1:4). Dörpfeld also illustrated the front face, but his drawing appears to indicate a length several centimeters greater than 1.27 m. before breaking off (Dörpfeld and Reisch, p. 63, fig. 20). Although the face of the block is broken away at the right, it does preserve its full length, 1.272 m., proving it to be a regular architrave-frieze block that terminates at both ends with a half-triglyph.

³⁹ For the basic study of the Stoa of Zeus, see H. A. Thompson, "Buildings on the West Side of the Agora," *Hesperia* 6, 1937 (pp. 1–226), pp. 5–77.

⁴⁰ See above, p. 430 and footnote 26.

⁴¹ No actual evidence exists to indicate precisely for what purpose they were used. Dörpfeld (Dörpfeld and Reisch, pl. 4) suggested that one may have been used as a staircase to the roof, and that the other held a *scaena ductilis*, but he admits that this is conjecture, noting that the interior arrangements of the wings are not known for certain (*ibid.*, p. 60).

⁴² Pace Coulton (*The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa* [footnote 26 above], p. 83), who asserts that the skene and Stoa of Zeus were not really comparable until the Hellenistic period. Yet Coulton was

The stone scene building is sometimes thought to have been modeled directly on its wooden predecessor.⁴³ Although the architect of the Lykourgan skene certainly would have taken into consideration earlier arrangements of the stage, the change to stone necessarily involved different design problems altogether, the solutions to which were only to be found in the realm of monumental architecture. It is also likely that the wooden predecessor of the skene, given the very nature of the material from which it was made, could vary considerably according to the demands of different productions. The "Life of Lykourgos" reports that the statesman was responsible for establishing canonical texts of the three great tragedians, to be used in all performances of their work.⁴⁴ This statement implies that prior to this time the scripts were variously handled, a diversity of interpretation that would naturally extend to other aspects of production as well. With the introduction of standard texts, we should likewise expect to find a similar move towards uniformity in stage sets. If, in fact, Lykourgos commissioned the stone skene (and there seems little reason to doubt this attribution), to a great extent his motives must have been due to his desire for such a fixed setting. The 4th-century architect therefore would have sought a form which managed to combine features from a number of earlier stage designs. The choice of the Stoa of Zeus as model was well made; its Π-shaped plan, which furnished such a splendid backdrop for the shrine in front of it,⁴⁵ also admirably suited the needs of the Theater, serving to frame the dramatic action and to provide an adaptable façade for the various requirements of the different plays.⁴⁶ Moreover, the imitation of the 5th-century building had the added advantage of direct association with the age which Lykourgos endeavored to enshrine.⁴⁷

The skene thus joins numerous other examples of classicistic design in 4th-century Athens,⁴⁸ but as remarkable as are the parallels between this building and its 5th-century

assuming that the skene did not have a colonnade across its central section in the 4th century.

⁴³ E.g., M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, Princeton 1961, pp. 67–69.

⁴⁴ [Plutarch], *Moralia*, 841f.

⁴⁵ H. A. Thompson and R. E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora*, XIV, *The Agora of Athens*, Princeton 1972, p. 97.

⁴⁶ There is no archaeological evidence to support Dörpfeld's own conjecture of a movable, wooden proskēnion placed in front of the central section of the skene between the paraskēnia (Dörpfeld and Reisch, pp. 69–70); the skene itself would have been sufficient to accommodate the plays satisfactorily, as Pickard-Cambridge (pp. 156–157, 172–174) points out. Dörpfeld's objections to a low stage, approximately four or five feet high, at least if erected directly in front of the skene between the paraskēnia, appear well taken, however; in particular, such a stage would seem to preclude the use of the three doors in the central section (*ibid.*, p. 69).

⁴⁷ For recent discussion of Lykourgos and the history of Lykourgan Athens, see F. W. Mitchel, "Lykourgan Athens: 338–322," *Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple*, 2nd ser., 1966–1970, Cincinnati 1973, pp. 165–214; W. Will, *Athen und Alexander. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Stadt von 338 bis 322 v. Chr.*, Munich 1983, esp. pp. 48–100; and S. Humphreys, "Lycurgus of Butadae: An Athenian Aristocrat," in *The Craft of the Ancient Historian*, J. W. Eadie and J. Ober, edd., Lanham, Maryland 1985, pp. 199–252.

⁴⁸ For an introduction to examples of classicism in 4th-century Athenian architectural style, with references to additional bibliography, see L. S. Meritt, "An Imitation of the Antique in Architectural Mouldings," *Hesperia* 35, 1966, pp. 141–149; and R. F. Townsend, "A Newly Discovered Capital from the Thrasyllus Monument," *AJA* 89, 1985, pp. 676–680.

prototype, their differences are equally significant, marking as they do the separation between 5th- and 4th-century architectural style in Athens. The Stoa of Zeus was a free-standing structure, which H. A. Thompson has described as “probably the best result which an architect could achieve if he wished to make of a stoa a complete and self-contained unit.”⁴⁹ The skene, on the other hand, did not stand apart as an independent building but rather was integrated within a much larger complex, connected to elements both in front and behind. Set against the stoa of the Sanctuary to the south, with which it shares a common back wall, the skene thereby helps to link the areas of the temenos and Theater together. A more subtle arrangement governs the relationship with the rest of the Theater in front of it. An imaginary line joining the forward edges of the stylobate of the two paraskenia precisely describes a tangent to the circumference of the orchestra circle, clearly reflecting a conscious effort to relate the stage building to the orchestra and auditorium beyond. The decision to have five columns on the inner returns of the paraskenia, rather than four as in the Stoa of Zeus, may well have been made in order to provide the added projection needed for this element in the over-all design. A complex like the Theater of Dionysos, which evolved over a considerable period of time, could not expect to provide the precise symmetry possible in groupings planned all at once, but given the limitations imposed upon it, the 4th-century Theater and Sanctuary of Dionysos do realize a certain integration of elements. The skene, as a pivotal point in this scheme, thus becomes an important element in a greater whole and as such differs markedly from the independent buildings of the 5th century, looking forward instead to the complexes of the Hellenistic period.

The revised plan also appears to be much more in keeping with the design of stage buildings as it developed in the 3rd and 2nd centuries. Although skenai with projecting paraskenia continued to be built, the more common form became the proskenion design, a colonnaded screen set directly in front of the actual scene building, which commonly omitted paraskenia at the ends. The central section of the Athenian stage building, though lacking this feature per se, does provide the formal design of the proskenion façade. With a flat roof over this section, it could also have been adapted to the practical function that the proskenion very likely came to serve, as a high stage on which the actors performed. It has been suggested that New Comedy, introduced in Athens during the later part of the 4th century, was best accommodated on just such an elevated stage (the ἐπισκήνιον);⁵⁰ moreover, a flat roof would have served effectively even in traditional performances of tragedies as a platform for divine appearances (the Θεολογέιον).⁵¹ In keeping with needs of this sort, a horizontal rather than sloping roof has been restored over the central section of the skene in

⁴⁹ Thompson and Wycherley, *op. cit.* (footnote 45 above), p. 100.

⁵⁰ For a recent consideration of this ongoing debate, together with references to earlier bibliography, see Winter, *op. cit.* (footnote 24 above). Winter favors the idea of an early form of the proskenion stage in the 4th-century Theater of Dionysos, although his interpretation of the remains differs considerably from that presented here.

⁵¹ Pickard-Cambridge (pp. 55–56) provides the evidence of the plays themselves for the use of this element of stage design.

Figure 7.⁵² The colonnaded screen creates a false proskenion that may well have served as a prototype for this element which only achieved its full development later. The Athenian skene can be viewed as a forerunner rather than as an exception, thereby placing the Theater of Dionysos more within the mainstream of the development of Greek stage design, a position better in keeping with Athens' known role as the leader in Greek drama.⁵³

The particular manner by which wall and colonnade are joined in the central section of the skene is itself noteworthy and underlines the experimental nature of the concept. Essentially, it represents a wedding of 5th-century Attic architectural tradition with Peloponnesian design of the 4th century. Athenian architects as a rule avoided the combination of wall and column, recognizing each as an individual structural element with load-bearing capacity. It was superfluous therefore to join the two together. In addition, they were formally quite distinct; on the rare occasion when a wall was relieved by an attached vertical element, a pilaster was generally felt to be more suitable. In contrast to Attica, on the other hand, the interplay between column and wall forms one of the major characteristics of 4th-century architecture in the Peloponnese. Whether engaged with the wall or applied against it, the column sacrificed a portion of or even all its load-bearing capacity and became fundamentally a decorative element.⁵⁴ With this transformation, the Classical tenet was broken that firmly equated the appearance of an architectural member with its tectonic role.

The skene of the Theater of Dionysos combines the new transformations occurring in the Peloponnese with its own native architectural heritage. The close juxtaposition of wall and column in the central section of the scene building recalls similar alignments found in the emerging architectural aesthetic outside Attica. The row of columns appears to be ornamental since it certainly did not function as a true colonnade, through which one entered the building. Not only did the wall preclude this possibility but the diminutive columnar spacing prevented it as well. The colonnade appears as a kind of architectural relief to alleviate the long stretch of masonry set directly behind it. In this sense the colonnade is in fact decorative. Yet, despite such appearance, the colonnade of the skene serves an indispensable

⁵² It must be admitted that there is still little archaeological evidence one way or the other for this element of the building, owing to the total absence of any fragments of the geison, not to mention any members of a possible episkenion. There is some support, however, for the reconstruction of the paraskenia with sloping roofs. First, there is no doubt that the 4th-century structure had a geison, because the pry marks and dowel holes for shifting and securing the blocks exist on the top surfaces of the architrave-frieze members. When all other parts of the superstructure from the paraskenia are represented in multiple examples, the total disappearance of this member therefore is somewhat odd. Although it is risky to argue *ex silentio*, it may be that the Hellenistic remodeling, in addition to its other changes, also eliminated a sloping roof over the paraskenia. If this were the case, the geisa may not have been re-used because the top surfaces of the blocks were cut on an incline, an acceptable form in a sloping roof but obviously useless for a flat one. More significant is the fact that the architrave-frieze members were recut to accommodate large horizontal beams that precluded the continued use of the ledge found at the top of the blocks. The ledge probably served to hold a coffered ceiling, while the oversize beam cuttings are most sensibly explained as supports for a flat roof. Had such a roof existed in the original structure, no recutting should have been necessary.

⁵³ Winter (*op. cit.* [footnote 24 above], p. 41), argues strongly for Athenian leadership in the development of New Comedy theater.

⁵⁴ G. Roux, *L'architecture de l'Argolide aux IV^e et III^e siècles avant J.-C.*, Paris 1961, pp. 393–394, 397.

structural function; it alone, not the wall which acts as a screen, supports the entablature of the building. In maintaining its original load-bearing capacity, the colonnade adheres to its Classical role and thus to the traditions of 5th-century architecture.

Although the skene is the most extensive application of this particular combination of wall and colonnade, two other closely contemporary examples in Athens demonstrate the same basic principle. One occurs in the east stoa of the Asklepieion immediately adjacent to the Sanctuary of Dionysos on the south slope of the Akropolis. There, the first five intercolumniations at the west end of the stoa and the first at the east are closed off by a screen wall set along the back half of the full columns. The juxtaposition produces the impression of engaged columns, but just as in the skene, the columns are the only load-bearing elements, not the wall.⁵⁵ And in the Lysikrates Monument to the east of the Theater on the Street of the Tripods, intercolumnar screens again close off the colonnade. In this instance, the slabs between columns help to secure the entablature and roof above, but there is no question that the columns were intended as the primary means of support. The original design called for open intercolumniations, and the panels apparently were added only as an afterthought, perhaps when, in the course of construction, doubt arose whether the columns alone were sufficient to hold up the entablature and the solid block of marble that forms the roof.⁵⁶ Thus, what was intended originally as a monopteros became a pseudoperipteral tholos.⁵⁷

The examples of the stoa in the Asklepieion and the Lysikrates Monument demonstrate tentative experimentation with the combination of wall and column that is developed further in the skene of the Theater. Although none is the first manifestation of this architectural motif, the manner by which it is handled bears a distinctly Athenian stamp. The continued use of the column as structural support invokes the Classical tenets of 5th-century architecture when other contemporary examples of column and wall have abandoned this principle. As a conscientious reflection of building practices of a century past, it adds another facet to the classicizing nature of the building, whose over-all design, as we have seen, recalls one of the last significant architectural creations of that age. Ironically, however, and

⁵⁵ G. Allen and L. D. Caskey, "The East Stoa in the Asklepieion at Athens," *AJA* 15, 1911, pp. 32–43. Some have questioned Allen and Caskey's reconstruction of the intercolumnar walls as high as the entablature. Cf. R. Martin and H. Metzger ("Recherches d'architecture et de topographie à l'Asclépieion d'Athènes," *BCH* 73, 1949, pp. 316–350), who argue that only a low parapet extended between columns; cf. also H. Büsing (*op. cit.* [footnote 23 above], p. 12), who proposes that the wall extended three-quarters the height of the columns. The considerable thickness of the wall, however, suggests that it may well have extended the full height.

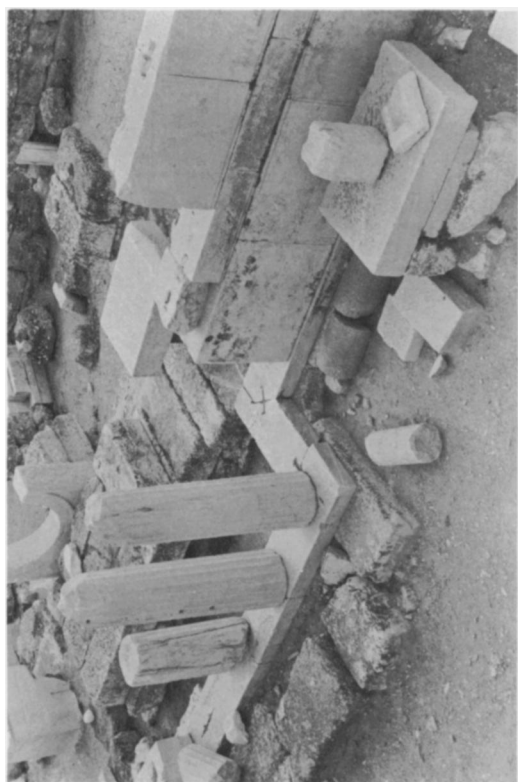
⁵⁶ H. Bauer, "Lysikratesdenkmal, Baubestand, und Rekonstruktion," *AthMitt* 92, 1977, pp. 197–227.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. R. McCredie ("The Lantern of Diogenes and Lysikrates, Son of Lysitheides of Kykknos," in *Studies in Honor of Sterling Dow* [GRBS Monograph 10], K. J. Rigsby, ed., Durham, North Carolina 1984, pp. 181–183), who suggests that the Lysikrates Monument may reflect Macedonian influence. Whether or not one accepts this hypothesis, such an eclectic work is likely to have drawn inspiration from a number of sources. The Attic origin of the monument's specific combination of column and wall therefore cannot be precluded; this possibility gains credibility given the parallels for it among contemporary Athenian buildings. Moreover, the monument displays other Athenian characteristics as well; cf. Townsend, *op. cit.* (footnote 2 above), pp. 382–394, esp. pp. 391–394, together with additional bibliography.

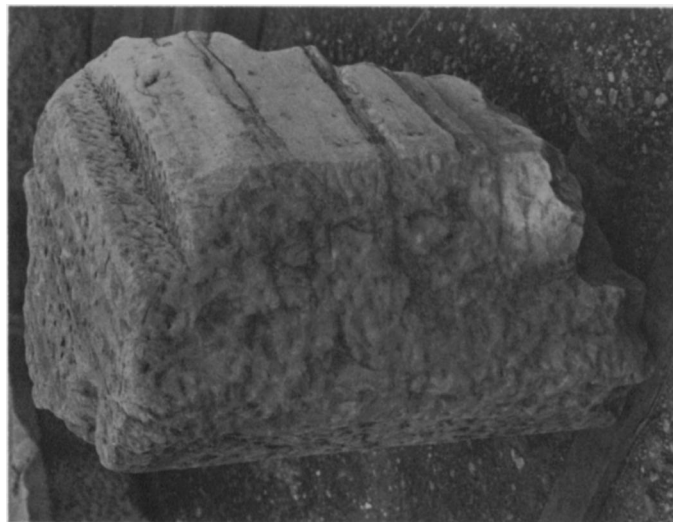
this is a point seldom made in connection with architectural classicism in 4th-century Athens, in every other sense the building has gone well beyond the Classical. Thus, what had been a freestanding structure became, through a reduction in scale and deliberate juxtaposition to other elements, a decorative façade that is but one element in a large architectural complex. And what had been intended as an adherence to architectonic principles led to a considerable ambiguity, perhaps even confusion, between structure and appearance. Architectural complexes, façade architecture, division between structure and appearance: these are all catchwords associated with Hellenistic architecture but usually unspoken in the context of “classicizing” Athenian buildings of the 4th century. And yet all are present in the first stone skene of the Theater of Dionysos.

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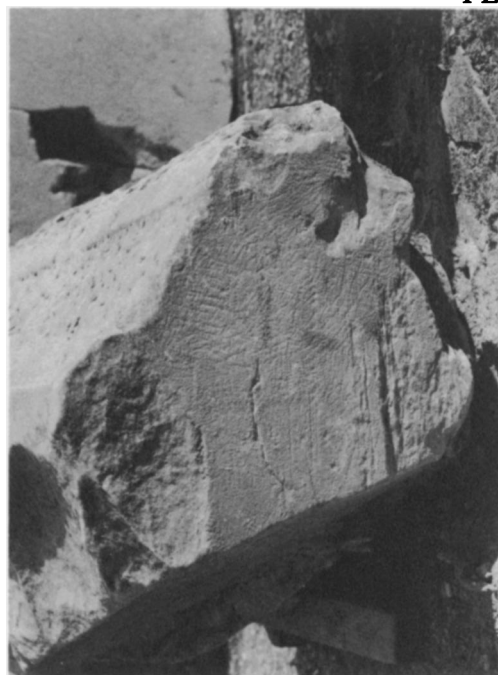
a. Corner between the west paraskenion and the west wing, from the northwest



b. Architrave-frieze block from a re-entrant angle, front view

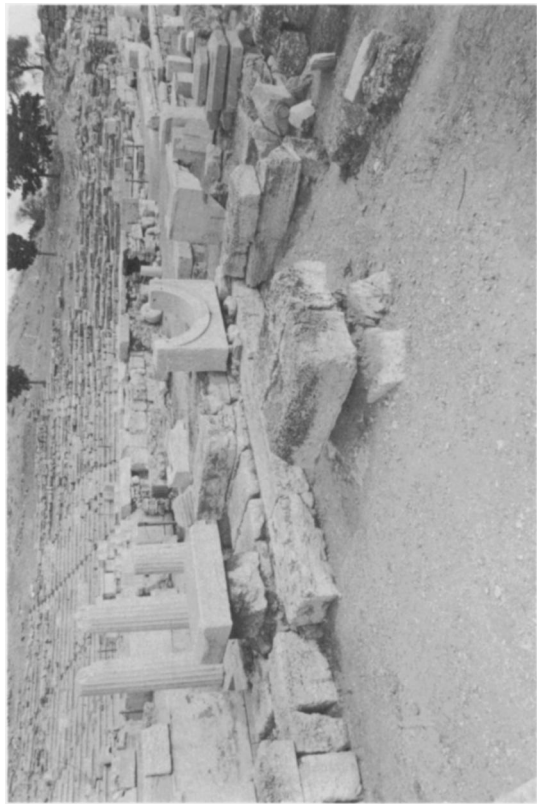


c. Rear view of b



d. Bottom view of b

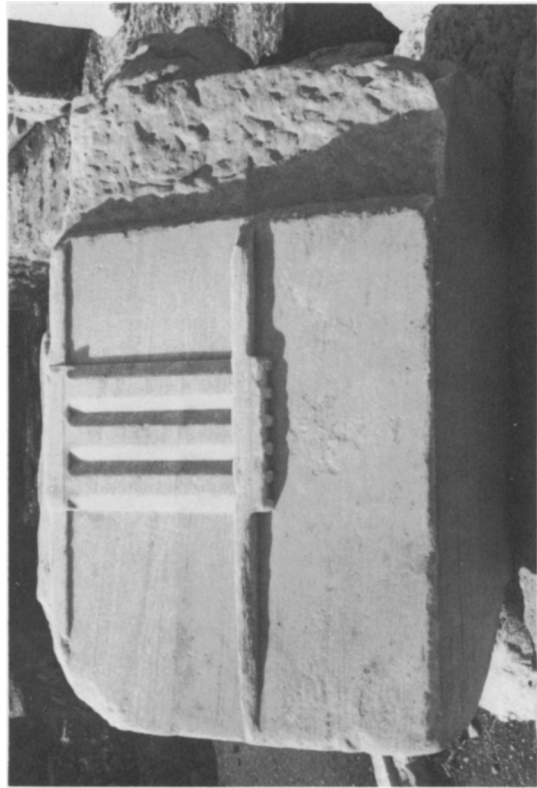
RHYS F. TOWNSEND: THE FOURTH-CENTURY SKENE OF THE THEATER OF DIONYSOS AT ATHENS



a. Poros blocks behind the west paraskenion, from the south



b. Poros blocks behind the east paraskenion, from the west



c. Architrave-frieze block from an outer corner of the skene



d. Architrave-frieze block from an outer corner of the skene