

TOPOGRAPHICAL NOTES: NORTHEAST CORNER AGORA

In the course of the excavations of the Athenian Agora many monuments have been discovered whose purpose, history, and original location were not immediately apparent. As the excavations continue on the north side of the ancient square, the meaning of some of these antiquities is becoming more explicable. In particular, two discoveries made more than twenty years ago can now be understood on the basis of the road system of classical times, together with the Roman revisions in this system, at the northeast corner of the Agora.

It will be necessary first to describe this road system as it has emerged in the new excavations. In the area northwest of the north end of the Stoa of Attalos, sandwiched between and cut through by a large Roman building complex, there have been uncovered two streets. One of these runs in a northwest-southeast direction (we will call it the 'East-West Street') + note the earlier discovery of this in Section Sigma, nb. p. +, while the other joins the former at right angles from the north (the 'North-South Street'). Both were in existence already in very early times, and both continued in use into the Roman Period. A built drain with large cover slabs lay beneath these streets running in the East-West Street past the north end of the Stoa of Attalos and turning at the intersection with the North-South Street to run northwards beneath the latter, probably down to the Eridanos. In early Roman times (give date ?) both streets were encroached upon at the northwest corner of their intersection by a stoa the construction of which caused a shift of the East-West Street some 2,50 meters to the south. Later, in the second century after Christ, a large Basilica was built which joined the earlier stoa and completely blocked off both streets.

The importance of these streets as principal thoroughfares on the Agora is shown not only by their longevity, but also by the fact that the

North-South Street was paved by large poros blocks in the mid-Fifth century B.C. These blocks are reused from an archaic structure (give inventory numbers?) and show heavy wheel ruts on their upper surfaces (Fig. ; the missing line of blocks in a north-south direction was pulled out by the builders of the previously mentioned street drain, the more circular hole further north is from a modern cesspool which cut through the drain and the street). With this history of the road system in mind, we may suggest interpretations for the two earlier discoveries.

A. The Horos of the Sacred Road to Delphi

This stone bears an inscription which is self-explanatory: "Ὅρος ἱερῶς / ὁδῶ δι' ἧς πορεύεται ἡ Πυθαῖς ἐς Δελφός. It was originally suggested +A.W. Parsons, "Klepsydra and Paved Court of Pythion," *Hesperia* XII, 1943, pp. 237-238+ that this horos stood at some place along the Panathenaic Way and that the 'Sacred Road to Delphi' was another name for the Panathenaic Street. The Pythais was then supposed to proceed along the Panathenaic Way from the Pythion +note on placement+ out through the Sacred Gate, and along the Sacred Way toward Eleusis. After Daphne, however, the procession would have turned "to the right across the Thriasian Plain and up the gorge toward Phyle" +Hesp. 1943, p. 238+. From Phyle the normal way was through Thebes to Delphi and this was surely the route followed by the Pythais whose departure was so tempered by celestial signs over Harma just above Phyle (Strabo +.

The earlier part of this supposed route is unnecessarily long and tortuous however, for it involves a crossing of Mt. Aigaleos whereas the closest route to Delphi from Athens is northwards, through ~~Ab~~barnai, to Phyle. The only justification for this detour through Daphne is the supposed need for the Pythais to stop at the sanctuary of Apollo there +Pausanias I, 37, 6+. Such a route for the Pythais is difficult, unnecessary, and

unattested.

Since the horos was found just meters southeast of the intersection of the North-South Street and the East-West Street, and meters northeast of the juncture of the former with the Panathenaic Way, we can better imagine that the Pythais came down the Panathenaic Way to the point where the North-South Street branched off. The procession will have proceeded up this street, out the Acharnian Gate of Athens, and northward through the Attic plain to Parnes and the Phyle pass. Our horos stone will have stood at some point along this street, most likely at the point where the North-South Street branches off the Panathenaic Way, or else at the intersection of the former with the East-West Street.

This suggested placement of the horos is supported by the condition of the stone and its discovery context vis-a-vis the history of the street system at the northeast corner of the Agora. The back of the horos shows the typical signs of use as a threshold; it is heavily worn and has a pivot hole. Because the stone was found in fill of the fourth or early fifth century after Christ, it is obvious that this reuse as a threshold must have occurred earlier. We are entitled to suggest that the reuse occurred in the second century after Christ when the North-South Street was closed by the construction of the Basilica.

At the present time we are not in a position to know what, if any, new route the Pythais took to Delphi after the mid-Second century. Nor do we know what new arrangements there were in this period for the entrance to the Agora at the northeast corner. Only future excavations to the north and east can determine the answers to these questions. It may not be only coincidence, however, that the last recorded theoria to Delphi occurred in the closing years of the first century after Christ +Colin, *Culte d'Apollon Pythien*, no. 63, p. 154; *FD III*² p. 66+.

B. The Podos Base

This square base located meters southwest of the restored southwest corner of the columnar facade (previously known as the 'Northeast Stoa') of the Basilica was discovered in 1951 +HAT, Hesperia XXI, 1952, p. 102+. Three courses of this monument were preserved the lowest of which was the euthynteria. Above this were two step courses with the upper preserving the weathering traces of a block 0,82 meters square which will have been the top step. The lower step course has a series of mason's marks whose form indicates that the base was moved to its present position in Roman times; such a chronological placement is confirmed by the pottery in the layers which gathered up against the monument. Although this pottery was very scrappy, it shows that the monument was in position sometime in the second century after Christ.

This new placement of the base is almost certainly to be seen as a result of the construction of the Basilica and its columnar facade which closed off the two streets in this corner of the Agora. Although we can not prove the original location of this monument, and may never be able to do so since the constructions of the Basilica and of the Athens-Piraeus Railroad have destroyed so much of the area, one candidate for the original position is obvious. This is at the intersection of the North-South and East-West Streets; that is, at the northeast entrance to the Athenian Agora where the monument might well have carried, as suggested in the original publication, a large herm. +HAT, and note on herms at entrances+

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