The background of the entire page is a detailed architectural plan of the Acropolis Peripatos in Athens, Greece. The drawing is rendered in a light brown or sepia tone. It shows the complex arrangement of buildings within the peripatos, including the Propylaea, the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, and the Temple of Athena Nike. The plan also depicts the surrounding walls and the topography of the acropolis hill, with contour lines indicating the slope. The overall style is that of a technical architectural drawing.

# Let's Go to the Acropolis Peripatos

A Teacher's Guide

Ministry of Culture  
Acropolis Restoration Service  
First Ephorate of Prehistoric & Classical Antiquities  
Department of Information & Education



## THE NORTH SLOPE

**O**ur walk begins at the Beulé Gate west of the Propylaea, from which we follow the little path that goes to the north slope. The approach is fairly difficult; the remains limited. Notable on the north side of the Acropolis is a series of caves in the rock. Here were the

earliest dwellings of prehistoric times. With the passage of time the caves became cult places dedicated to the twelve gods or to lesser local divinities with their shrines around the main cult of Athena, patron goddess of the city, at the top of the Sacred Rock.

Sacred caves on the north slope of the Acropolis

# The Klepsydra

**T**his is a spring with a history going back into pre-historic times. That there was a supply of water in the area appears to have been known as early as the Neolithic period. The first fountain house, however, was built here much later, in 470-460 B.C., perhaps by the politician Kimon. It was a simple rectangular construction, with a built-in draw-basin next to the spring. The north part had a paved court for collecting rain water from the north slope of the Acropolis. Located at the intersection of the Panathenaic Way with the

Peripatos, Klepsydra was initially approachable only from outside the Acropolis by way of a stairway leading from ground level down to the lower level of the spring. During the 3rd century A.C., however, a succession of landslides damaged the spring and blocked the entrance, so that the only means of approach was by a stairway that began behind the Agrippa Monument at the Propylaia. Water was now drawn from a well over which was a vaulted roof. Klepsydra continued in use during Byzantine times and the Frankish domination.



In much earlier times the spring had another name: Empedo; she was the nymph who was worshipped in the cave. Later on the spring was called Klepsydra, from the greek words for water and to steal, because at times it had water and at other times it ran dry.

*Perhaps you did not know that...*

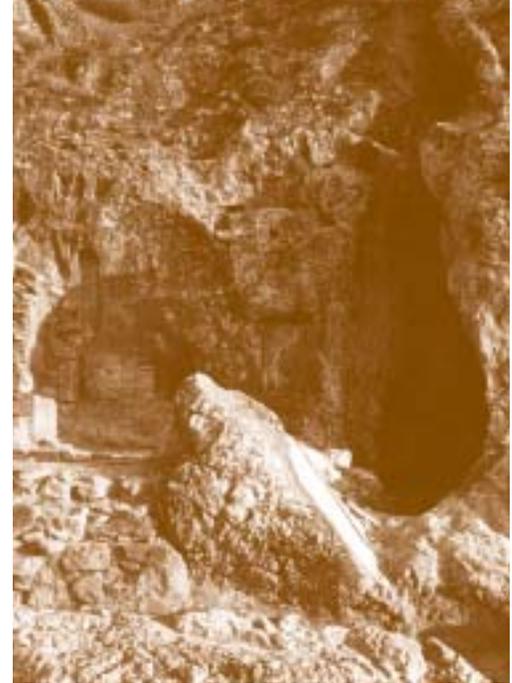


Klepsydra today

## THE SACRED CAVES

### The Sanctuary of Apollo

**T**he cave was dedicated to the cult of Apollo Hypoakraios, that is Apollo “under the cliffs” or “under the long rocks”. This is known from inscribed reliefs, dedicated by the nine Archons, that were found in front of the cave. Apollo was worshipped here in two other forms as well: Patroos and Pythios. He was called Patroos because, according to mythology, at this place he loved the daughter of Erectheus, Kreousa, who gave birth to Ion, an ancestral hero of the Athenians. Apollo had the epithet Pythios because he slew Python, the terrible snake of Parnassos, and established his famous oracle at Delphi. His sanctuary here on the north slope of the Acropolis, however, was also known to the ancient writers as the “Pythion”, because from this point the “Pythaïstai”, devotees of the god, set out on their sacred mission to Delphi, to offer sacrifices there and to bring back the sacred fire for their sanctuaries.



The Sanctuary of Pan and the Nymphs

### The Sanctuary of Zeus

**T**his cave has been identified as the Sanctuary of Zeus Olympios or Astrapaios, from the greek word for lightning. The rectangular cutting visible today in front of the entrance to the sanctuary, may have been for the altar where

offerings were made to the god. According to tradition, it was here that the Pythaïstai stood to watch the mountain of Parnes for the lightning signal to begin their sacred mission to Delphi.

### The Sanctuary of Pan and the Nymphs

**N**ext come a series of little caves, all dedicated to the cult of Pan and the Nymphs. There are three such niche-like openings, three little caves that held, perhaps, the cult statue of the god and dedications to Pan and the Nymphs. The cult of Pan himself appeared in Attica after the victory of the

Greeks at Marathon (490 B.C.) in which the horned, goat-bodied god was thought to have played an important part. The ancient Greeks believed that Pan’s wild shouts wrought havoc and fear or –as the name Pan suggests– panic among the Persians, thus contributing to their defeat.

## The Aglaureion

The sanctuary was dedicated to Aglauros, one of the daughters of the mythical king of Athens, Kekrops. Legend has it that the sanctuary was founded at the spot from which Aglauros threw herself from the Acropolis in panic when she had opened the forbidden chest and found Erichthonios there in the form of a snake. It used to be thought that the sanctuary was located in the next in the series of caves, the largest on the north slope. In the depths of the cave there appears to have been a spring, which was in use only for a short span during Mycenaean times. The cave communicated with the Acropolis by a stairway, cut into the walls of the rock, which went through the Acropolis Wall and led to the sanctuary of the Arrephoroi. The Arrephoroi were two little girls chosen to live for one year in the sanctuary, where they helped with weaving the peplos of Athena. On the night of

the mysteries of the Arrephoroi, they evidently descended this secret passage to the north slope of the Acropolis carrying on their heads the holy objects, the arreta which could not be mentioned. Leaving behind them the cave with the long-forgotten spring, they went to the neighbouring sanctuary of Aphrodite “in the Gardens” and Eros where they left their sacred burden. Yet the finding of an inscription outside another large cave on the east side of the Acropolis suggests that this may be a more likely location for the Aglaureion than the cave on the north side. It was at the Aglaureion that the Athenian youths, as ephebes, took the oath that they would defend their land and that they would not dishonour their weapons.

Near the Aglaureion was the Anakeion, a sanctuary dedicated to the cult of the Dioskouroi.

## The Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Eros

The last sanctuary on the north slope is connected with the cult of the goddess of beauty and her winged son. A pathway leads from the cave with the Mycenaean spring to this point here, in the middle of the north side, directly below

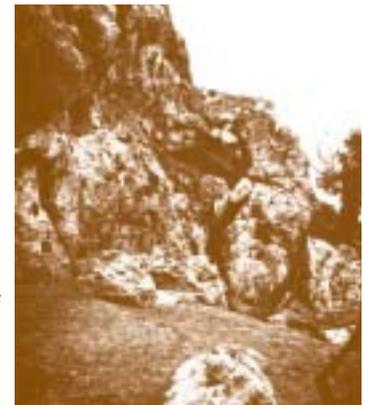
the northeast corner of the Erechtheion. Niches cut in the rock and many votive offerings showed this place to be the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Eros.



East of the Acropolis, near the banks of the Ilissos river, there were three sanctuaries corresponding to some of those on the north slope of the Acropolis. These are: a precinct or temenos of Apollo Pythios, another Sanctuary of Aphrodite “in the Gardens”, and a large Sanctuary of Zeus Olympios.

Perhaps you did not know that...

We may suppose that the same divinities were worshipped likewise in these two areas.



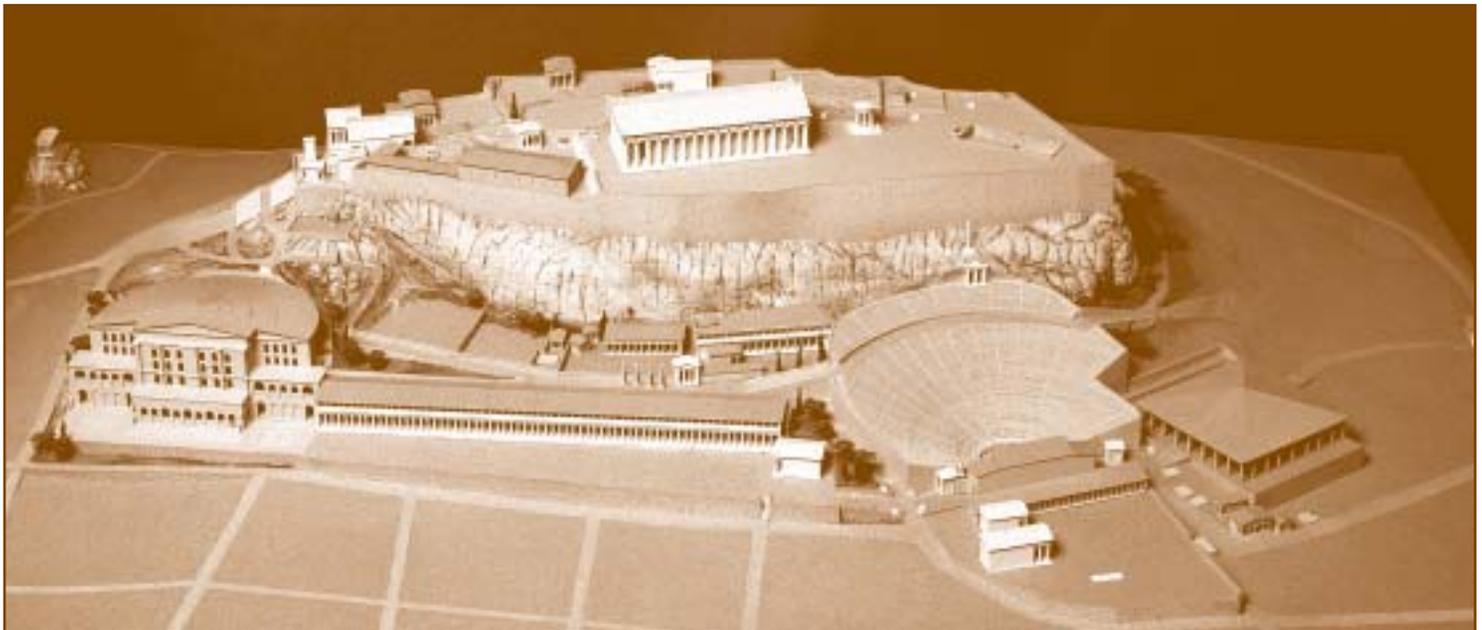
The Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Eros

# THE SOUTH SLOPE

The south slope is just as steep and unsuitable for the construction of an entrance to the top of the Sacred Rock as are the north and east sides. It is, however, the brightest side, the side with the most sunlight, and the one chosen by the ancient Athenians for building their most important sanctuaries, theatres, stoas and other subsidiary buildings for various functions.

The south side is therefore considered today to be one of the most important of all the archaeological areas in Athens.

The Peripatos ran along the entire south slope, going right through the cavea of the Theatre of Dionysos. Leading to the south side also was Tripod Street, which began in the area of the Prytaneion, on the north side of the Acropolis near the Agora.



The south slope of the Acropolis as it was down to the 2nd century A.C. Model at scale of 1:500. Study and design: M. Korres. Construction: P. Demetriades

## The Odeion of Pericles

A few foundations are all that remain of this building, which was erected at the same time as the Parthenon (447-442 B.C.). Like the Parthenon, it belonged to the building programme initiated by Pericles for the glory of Athens. It was built for the musical contests held during the Great Panathenaia. It was a rectangular, hypostyle construction that held around 5,000 spectators. The main entrance was on the south side toward

Tripod Street. It had also two side entrances, east and west. The most striking feature of the building was its wooden roof, which was said to have been copied from the tent of the Persian king, Xerxes, resembling on the outside a four-sided pyramid. In 86 B.C., the building was burned down by Sulla. It was rebuilt in 61 B.C. and it is believed to have been totally and finally destroyed in 267 A.C. during the Herulian incursion.

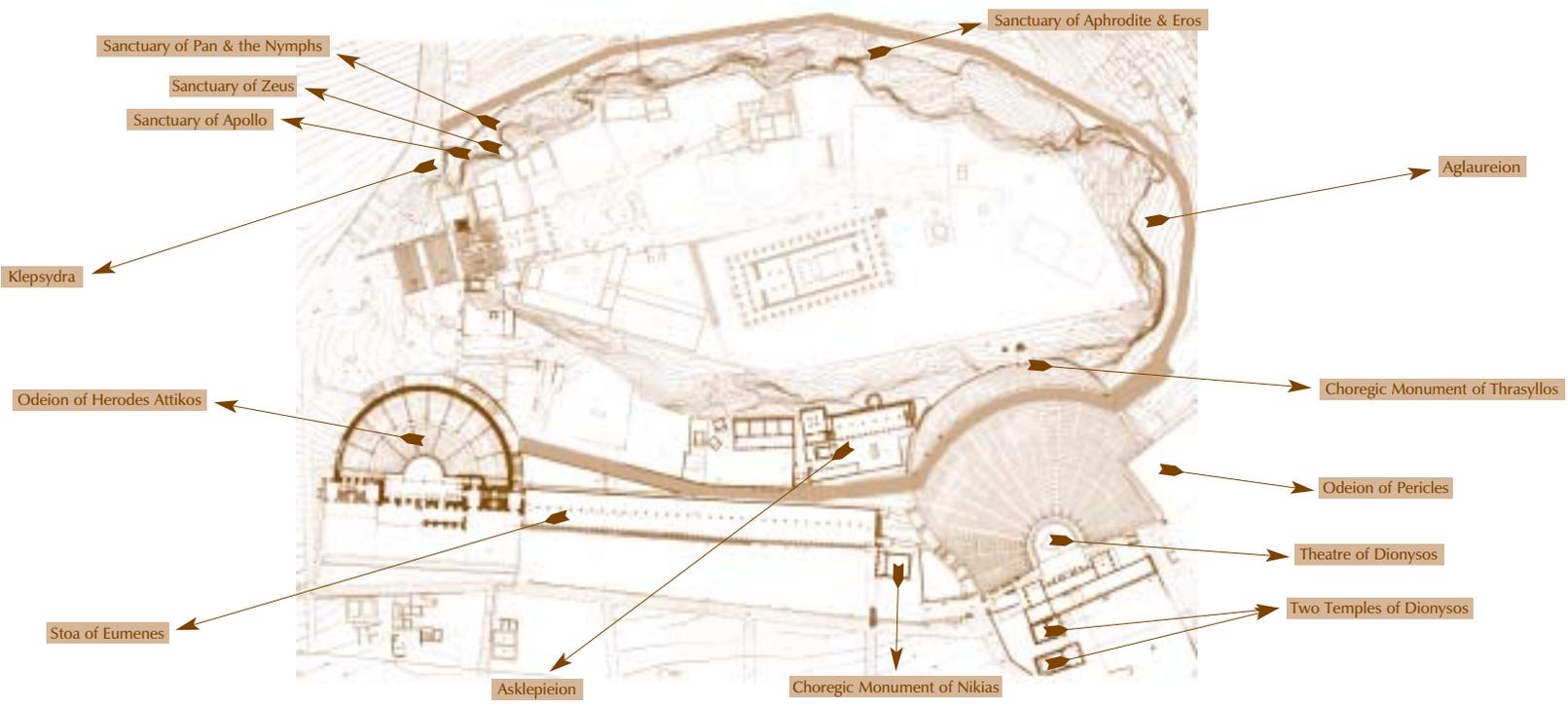


*Perhaps  
you did not know  
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The idea of an architectural development around a centre was particularly striking in the exterior and interior of both the Odeion of Pericles and the Telesterion at Eleusis. It has therefore been suggested that the two buildings were designed by the same architect, Iktinos.



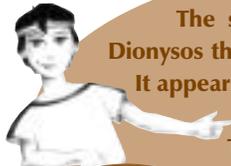
The Odeion of Pericles



# The Theatre of Dionysos

**T**o the west of the Odeion of Pericles, the Peripatos cuts through the cavea (koilon) of the Theatre of Dionysos. This is the earliest theatre in the world, and it was the prototype of all the ancient Greek and Roman buildings of this sort.

The theatre of Dionysos was closely connected to the sanctuary of the god, which was just to the south of it. The theatrical contests that took place in the theatre were connected to the worship of the god. They were not separate artistic performances, but took place as part of the festival of the Great Dionysia, the Dionysia-in-the-City, as they were called. This was a spring festival in honour of Dionysos that lasted several days (end of March - beginning of April). The architectural development of the theatre of Dionysos followed the needs of his cult and the development of drama. By the middle of the 6th century B.C., after the first, archaic temple of Dionysos had been built of poros stone, a circular orchestra was formed north of this on a level some 3 m. higher. Its purpose was to provide a space for the cult dances of the god's worshippers.



**The sort of presentation given in the Dionysos theatre changed in Roman Imperial times.**

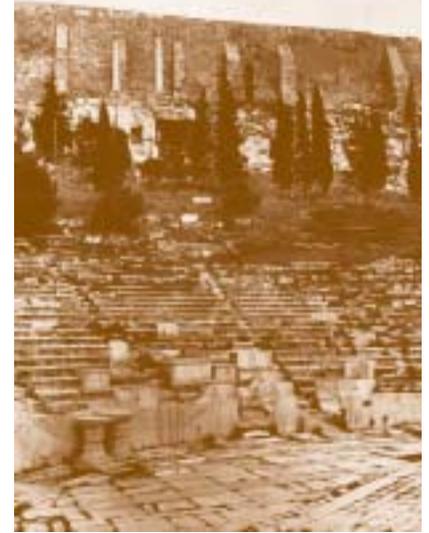
**It appears to have been transformed into an arena for animal fights, duels, even for naval combat.**

**This explains the marble parapet around the orchestra, the purpose of which was evidently to retain the water necessary for the naval performances.**

*Perhaps you did not know that...*

The gentle slope of the south side, moreover, provided a suitable place for the audience to view the Dionysiac performances. During the 5th century, the first cavea was formed, probably with wooden bleachers. Behind the orchestra, a permanent wooden stage building (skene) was erected as an exhedra for the hypokrites, the actors. It was at this time that the first plays of the great tragedians were performed here. The music contests were held originally in the Agora and it may well be that their transfer to the Odeion of Pericles, which was next to the theatre, took place around the same time.

The theatre was completed, taking on its monumental form, around 330 B.C. under the Athenian archon Lykourgos. All the wooden bleachers were replaced by stone seats and the seating capacity of the theatre was increased from 5,000 to 17,000. Later on in Hellenistic times a marble proskenion with columns was added in front of the skene. This was rebuilt again in the Roman period with three storeys. It had become more monumental and imposing and it invaded some of the orchestra, the floor of which was now paved with marble.



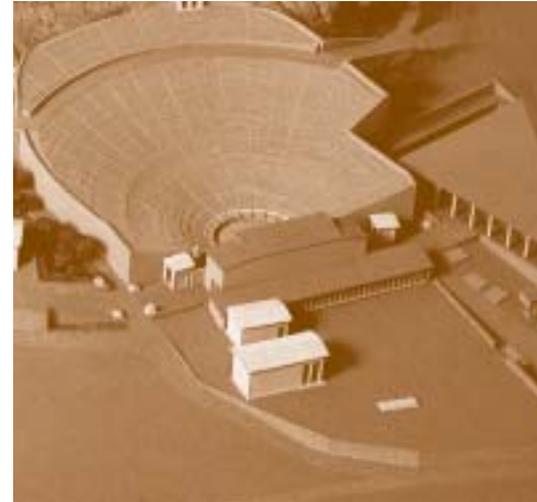
View of the Theatre of Dionysos from the south

# The Sanctuary of Dionysos Eleutherios

**T**he sanctuary of Dionysos is to the south of the theatre. The ancient peribolos wall encloses an earlier, archaic temple, a later temple and the altar of the god. The archaic temple, datable in the 6th century B.C., was relatively small and “distyle-in-antis”, that is, with two columns between the parastades (side wall ending in an anta or corner-post) of the pronaos (entrance porch) at the east end. Inside the temple there was a wooden statue of Dionysos, that was supposed to have been brought there by Pegasos, a priest of the god who came from Eleutherai, a small town on the border of Attica and Boiotia. The transfer

of the statue symbolised the introduction into Athens of the official cult of Dionysos Eleutherios.

Ruins of the later temple of the 4th century B.C. are preserved a bit to the south. It was probably Doric and it appears to have had a colonnade, perhaps a later addition. Only the foundations are preserved with the sub-foundations for the base of the cult statue. This, according to Pausanias, was of gold and ivory (chryselephantine), and may have been the work of the sculptor Alkamenes. Preserved today, precisely east of the later temple, are the remains of the



The Sanctuary of Dionysos Eleutherios

rectangular altar of the sanctuary.

Far better preserved is another altar of marble, round, and decorated with garlands and satyr masks.



*Perhaps  
you did not know  
that...*

On the first day of the festival of the Great Dionysia, the wooden statue of the god was taken to another temple of the god in the area of the Academy. After that it was returned to the temple of Dionysos Eleutherios with great pomp and ceremony, in remembrance of the first introduction of the cult from Eleutherai. The citizens spent the whole day in festivity, singing and dancing in the streets. The next days were devoted to the plays.

# THE CHOREGIC MONUMENTS

The monuments made by the choregoi, the donors, to commemorate their victory in the drama contests are known as choregic monuments. They were usually in the form of a small temple, or a single column and sometimes a cylindrical base. On these the victorious choregoi placed their prize: a bronze cauldron or lebes on a tripod stand. These were known simply as tripods. The name of the choregos was inscribed on the monument, together with that of the

archon serving at the time of the contests. Inscribed as well were the names of those who took part in the presentation. The ancient Tripod Street took its name from the many such monuments along its course, which Pausanias tells us began in the Prytaneion area on the north side of the Acropolis and ended at the theatre of Dionysos. The best preserved choregic monument today is the one erected by Lysikrates to commemorate his victory in the drama contest in 334 B.C.

## The Monument of Thrasylos

The choregic monument of Thrasylos was erected in 319 B.C. above the theatre of Dionysos, to commemorate his victory as choregos in the drama contests of that year. The natural hollow in the rock has been enlarged in order to form the interior of the monument. Great doors closed the rectangular opening. A three stepped base on top of the monument held the choregic tripod. Around 270 B.C., Thrasylos' son, Thrasykles, added two more choregic tripods to his father's monument, left and right of the central tripod. These were replaced in 200 A.C. by an equal number of

statues. The central figure, which represented Dionysos, was removed by Lord Elgin in 1805 and is today in the British Museum. Above the Thrasylos monument there are two columns of approximately the same size, each with a three-sided Corinthian capital that held a choregic tripod. These formed other choregic monuments of Roman times.



Stuart & Revett,  
middle of the 18th century

The Monument of Thrasylos  
and the two Choregic Columns  
of Roman times above it



Most of the building blocks of the Nikias monument were incorporated in the Beulé Gate in the Late Roman façade of the entrance to the Acropolis between the two massive towers there. The blocks still remain in the Gate.

Perhaps  
you did not know  
that...

## The Monument of Nikias

In addition to the Thrasylos monument, there is another important monument near the southeast end of the Stoa of Eumenes. This is the choregic monument of Nikias, erected in 319 B.C. It was probably in the form of a prostyle hexastyle Doric temple with the entrance in the west end. Only the foundations remain in place.

# The Asklepieion

The sanctuary was established after 420 B.C. by a private citizen named Telemachos, who brought the cult of the god Asklepios to Athens from Epidauros. The sanctuary comprised a building complex, the most important being the temple of the god, erected during the 4th century B.C. Pausanias tells us that the cult statues of Asklepios and Hygeia were within the cella and that the sanctuary altar stood east of the entrance and exactly opposite to it. The Asklepieion also included a stoa of two storeys that served as the Dormitorium, the Sacred Sleeping Chamber where the patients received therapy. In the north wall of the stoa a cave had been formed from



(Photo: R. Christodolopoulou)

The Asklepieion today

which “pure” therapeutic water flowed. The existence of the spring obviously determined the location of the sanctuary, since water was thought to be important in the healing process and was necessary for the functioning of the cult. At one end of the stoa there was a room with a receptacle built into the centre for the remains of sacrifices. Perhaps there was some connection here with hero-worship or other chthonic cultic rites. The last important building of the complex was the Ionic stoa, the so-called Katagogion, the inn. This was a simple stoa of one floor with four rooms in a row along the back that were used as guest-rooms for visitors. The Asklepieion suffered many catastrophes and it was rebuilt many times down to the 5th-6th centuries A.C., when it was torn down and replaced by a church dedicated to the Ayioi Anargyroi (literally the “penniless saints”), who in Christian tradition were physicians and even today are called upon for help in the therapy and recovery of the sick. This is yet another example of a place continuing to be sacred and of its connection with the ancient god’s abilities as healer.



Model of the Asklepieion down to the 2nd century A.C.



Both in the Asklepieion at Epidauros and in the Athenian sanctuary of the god, the method of therapy used was incubation.

The patient spent the night in the sanctuary where the god appeared to him in his sleep in order to cure him or to show him the course of therapy he should follow in order to get well.

Perhaps you did not know that...

# The Stoa of Eumenes

**T**he stoa was presented to the city of Athens by the king of the Hellenistic state of Pergamon, Eumenes II (197-159 B.C.). It was an imposing two-storeyed building of some length, which provided the audience of the Dionysos theatre with a shelter from rain and sun. The façade of the ground floor had a row of 64 Doric columns, and 32 Ionic columns formed the interior colonnade. On the upper floor, the roof was supported by two rows of columns corresponding to those below, but differing in style. The order

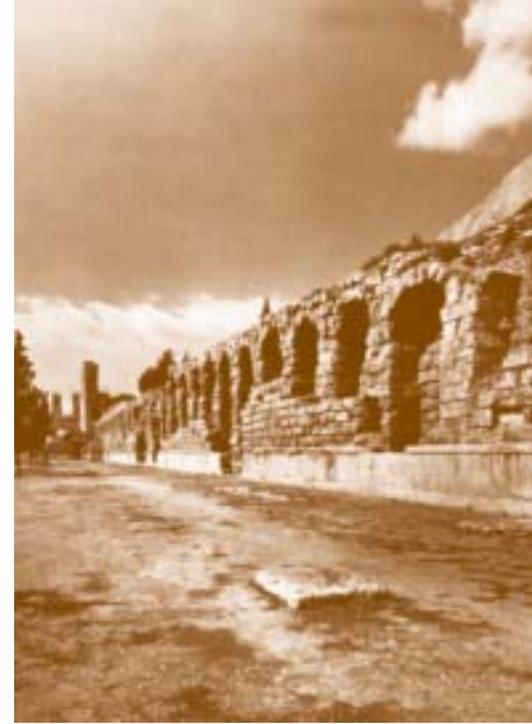
of the exterior colonnade was Ionic, whereas the interior columns had capitals of a more unusual type, the so-called Pergamene style with schematised channels. Through its west wing the ground floor of the stoa communicated with the lower section of the Dionysos theatre, while the upper floor led directly through the upper part of the theatre to the Peripatos.

The Stoa of Eumenes was totally destroyed in the middle of the third century, perhaps with the Herulian incursion of A.D. 267.



*Perhaps you did not know that...*

**The stoa of Attalos in the Ancient Agora of Athens is very similar to the Stoa of Eumenes. Attalos II was the brother of Eumenes and he too wanted with his building to show his gratitude to the city of Athens, where so many rulers of the Hellenistic kingdoms had studied.**



The north wall of the Stoa of Eumenes.  
View from the east.

# The Odeion of Herodes Attikos

It was built around 160 A.C. by Herodes Attikos, a rich orator and sophist of the time, in honour of his wife, Regilla. It is one of the most beautiful and imposing buildings of antiquity, with a façade of three storeys, and a height of 28 m. The interior had rich architectural and sculptural decoration. Its semi-circular orchestra was paved with marble slabs and the cavea had marble seats. The stage building must have been particularly impressive. Literary sources,

supported by archaeological evidence, describe the building as being entirely roofed with cedar wood. It held 5,000 spectators and was used primarily for musical events. The Odeion communicated with the much earlier Stoa of Eumenes by way of a stairway along its eastern side.

The Odeion of Herodes Attikos continued in use until the time of the Herulian incursion when it was destroyed by fire.



The Odeion of Herodes Attikos



Perhaps  
you did not know  
that...

The Odeion of Herodes Attikos was the third odeion of Athens. The first, and earliest, was the Odeion of Pericles. This was built, as we saw, very much earlier, around the middle of the 5th century B.C., and it had already been abandoned by the time the Odeion of Herodes was built. The second Odeion in Athens was the Odeion of Agrippa in the Ancient Agora, which is dated to around 15 B.C. After it was refurbished in the middle of the 2nd century A.C., it was no longer suitable for musical events, but only for lectures. Thus Herodes' decision to present the city with an Odeion, met a real need.

# The Peripatos of the Acropolis

The ancient road that went around the Acropolis below the Sacred Rock was known as the “Peripatos”. A 4th century B.C. inscription cut in the cliff of the north slope gave its length as 5 stades and 18 feet, that is to say around 1,100 m. It was called the “Peripatos” because it gave the ancient Athenians an opportunity for a stroll along the north, east and south sides of the Acropolis while visiting the many singular monuments and admiring the Attic landscape, which in those days must have been especially beautiful. Today’s visitor may well have some difficulty in following the ancient paths, especially on the north slope where the lay of the land is steep and uneven. Yet it is worthwhile seeing from close by a series of cult and other installations that are less well known to the general public than those on top of the Sacred Rock.

Following the ancient Peripatos, you can visit the sanctuaries of the north slope, in your imagination you can listen to the music contests of the Panathenaia in the Odeion of Pericles, or see the dramatic contests held in the Theatre of Dionysos in honour of the god. You can see the ancient Athenians rushing to the Sanctuary of Asklepios, not only to worship the god but also to be healed, in one of the first hospitals of Athens. Finally, walking through the Stoa of Eumenes you may converse with the ancient citizens themselves. Yet most of all the visitor will be impressed by the richness and brilliance of the interior decoration of the Odeion of Herodes Attikos, our well-known Odeion where all of us have seen some play or other in the course of the cultural programmes that take place there in summertime.

Written and edited by Irene Kaiimara

Translated by M. Caskey • Plan of the Acropolis: M. Korres • Menon’s sketch: I. Benekou

Photographs: I. Travlos, Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Athen, Tübingen 1971

Photographs of the models: S. Mavrommatis • Designed by AltSys

*The educational resources about the Acropolis Peripatos are presented in two booklets, entitled “Let’s Go to the Acropolis Peripatos”. The present one is addressed to the teacher and it describes the topography of the north and south slopes of the Acropolis. The other, in the form of a story, is a pathfinder addressed to the child. The two booklets form part of the educational material of the Museum Kit, “Let’s Go to the Acropolis”, but they may also be used independently.*

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Peripatos Inscription (4th c. B.C.)

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