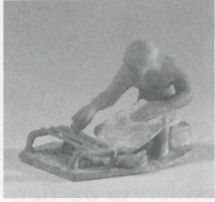# 5 (a)

Urban Spaces and Central Places

The Greek World

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Urban Spaces: Conditions and Mirrors of Social Life

In the fifth century B.C., public life within the city of Athens became so concentrated and intense that the Athenians were forced to change the fundamental structure and organization of their urban spaces (Hölscher 1991; 2005). Population estimations are controversial, but the assumption for Attica of around 200,000 inhabitants (including 30,000 male citizens), one-third of them living in Athens itself, should be approximately right. Forty times a year, that is every nine days on average, the people's assembly was called together, with a quorum of 6,000 participants. The day before (normally) the council of the Boule with its 500 members from all parts of Attica came together in the Bouleuterion in the *agora*. All this must have caused many hundreds of male citizens to set out for the capital from the countryside in order to join their urban fellow-citizens early in the morning, all of them suspending their normal activities and gathering in the common assembly space. In the Tholos, a round building next to the Bouleuterion, 50 *prytaneis*, the executive committee of the council, were permanently on duty. In addition, there was the old council of the Areopagus with its approximately 150 members, although this group, with its powers restricted to trying homicide cases and some religious offenses, rarely met. Even more important, the number of public law courts around the agora increased rapidly to perhaps five in number, involving more and more of the 6000 potential members of juries and trying judicial cases for perhaps 200 days a year. Apart from all this, state religious festivals, several of which included large processions through the streets, sacrifices, and banquets in the main polis sanctuaries, were celebrated on some 30 days of the year (see Thompson and Wycherley 1972; Millett 1998; Hölscher 2005).

All this activity would have affected public life enormously, with mass move-ments of people often overcrowding the streets. The agora in particular seems to have been disrupted from its everyday functions with increasing frequency. It was not only the political and juridical institutions, the gatherings of the people's assembly, of the council and the prytaneis, which disturbed normal routines there. Other events and manifestations took over this space, above all the numerous rituals and spectacles of great religious festivities watched by a multitude of citi-zens from the surrounding porticoes, as well as from temporary stands. Proces-sions moved from the periphery to urban sanctuaries, to the temples of Athena on the Acropolis and of Dionysus on its south slope; conversely they set out from the city to far-away places such as Eleusis or Delphi. The music contests and even the athletic games of the Panathenaia were celebrated in the agora, with a short racetrack at its center and the finish of a longer racecourse for horses in one of its corners. Theater performances at the festival of the Great Dionysia originally had their place on the agora. It becomes no wonder that, in the course of time, some of these functions would be transferred to other sites. From the early fifth century B.C., for example, the theater festival was held near the sanctu-ary of Dionysus to the south of the Acropolis. At approximately the same time the people's assembly was installed on the Pnyx hill, although ostracism—the casting of ballots to exile a political figure for ten years—continued to take place in the agora. Athletic games had to wait until later in the fourth century B.C. with the construction of a stadium near the Ilissus River.

Generally speaking, the structured spaces of societies and their forms of cul-tural life are interdependent. Specific forms of life require specific spaces, and conversely these spaces determine the forms taking place therein. Societies form these spaces according to what they require for their conception of life, and these self-created spaces in their turn condition societies in their mode of living. Since the time when Greeks conceived and established themselves as polis communities, urban spaces had become the primary condition of communal life. Civic life formed urban space, and urban space formed civic life.

Historical changes to cultural spaces, therefore, are crucial indicators of changes in cultural life. In the specific case of Athens, the increasing concentration and intensification of space for political activities testify to an increasing politicization of the Athenian citizen-body. The subsequent relocation of specific functions from the agora to other areas both mirrored and actively promoted the growing autonomy of specific cultural realms: religion, politics, economy, theater, sports, education, and so forth.

The Origin of the Polis in the Eighth and Seventh Century B.C.: Structuring Social Spaces

A Greek polis was a kind of city-state. It normally consisted of a central "urban" settlement and its territory—a plain of fertile farmland, possibly with smaller dependent settlements, and surrounding marginal areas of uncultivated pasture,

woods and mountains. The geological conditions of Greece favored the emergence of such separate political entities, without ultimately determining their size. Yet a definite step towards conceptualizing the polis was taken only during the eighth century B.C. (Osborne 1996:70–136, 197–202).

In Athens, Argos, and Corinth, the separation of burial grounds from the area of urban residence between 750 and 700 B.C. has been observed (Morris 1987:62–69, 183–196). From that time onwards cemeteries were placed outside the living spaces, betraying a clear conceptual division between an urban "inside" and the world "outside." City walls, which protect and at the same time define the space inside, have only rarely been definitely identified in this early period, mainly on the Aegean islands. The concept of a walled city, however, is found both in the Homeric epics and in local myths, and at Eretria the entrance of the main country road into the city was marked by a great protective hero sanctuary (Altherr-Charon and Bérard 1980). At the same time, in Athens, the Acropolis was defined as the central cult place of the community, both by new sorts of votive offerings and by marking the borders of the city-goddess Athena's property within which no human dwelling was permitted. Moreover, a first civic meeting place, an "old agora," must have originated within the same period in an area whose location remains hotly debated (Robertson 1998; *contra* Hölscher 2005). This early date is suggested by the fact that, by the first half of the sixth century, the "old agora" had obviously become too cramped and was replaced by a new one (Camp 2005). An analogous structural differentiation of communal spaces can be recognized or at least supposed, with greater or lesser plausibility and for more or less similarly early periods, at Argos, Corinth, Sparta, and Eretria.

These public spaces of early Greek cities were often connected to each other by a main street that also served as a "sacred axis" (Hölscher 1998b:74–83). In Athens, as well as at Eretria, the most important road connecting the settlement with other parts of Greece was bordered by the most important necropolis, for which it may also have served as a racecourse for funeral games. This road led to the main city gate, separating inside and outside, where religious rites of entrance and exit were performed. It then continued to the agora and to the main cult center of the polis. At great religious festivals, processions advanced along these axes from the periphery to the center, and vice versa. In Athens, the procession of Dionysus passed along this road from the Academy to the god's urban sanctuary, and part of this route was also taken by the procession of the Panathenaic festival, leading from the entrance to the city at the Dipylon Gate and ending on the Acropolis; at Miletus, a comparably important procession passed from the urban precinct of Apollo Delphinios to the extra-urban sanctuary of Didyma. In all such cases, the citizens came to experience for themselves the structured space of their polis.

Last but not least, the territories of these emerging *poleis* were increasingly conceived as, and formed into, structured concentric areas of human culture, with the urban center as its core, surrounded by an intensely used peri-urban zone, the arable land in the extra-urban zone, and the wildness of the "edge-land" (*eschatia*) with its mountains, pastureland and woods. This wider territory was

conceptually occupied by sanctuaries and appropriated by the urban and rural population alike in regular festivals and rituals (de Polignac 1995).

The same structure underlies the cities of the Homeric world, displayed in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. We should see these poems not as descriptive reproductions of existing urban situations but as cognitive "urban" concepts of the eighth century B.C. Homeric men live in a structured cosmos called the polis, which means not only an organized community but also a significantly defined space (Hölkeskamp 2002). Thus, the "ideal" polis of Scheria is said to have been set up by erecting a wall around the polis, building houses for men, erecting temples for the gods, and distributing the fields (Homer, *Odyssey* 6.7–10). Normally, Homeric cities contain an agora and a main sanctuary, are protected by a city wall, and possess a territory of fertile farmland, surrounded by a girdle of pasture, forests and wild mountains.

In other cities, founding myths confirm this concept. At Megara, the hero Alkathoos had first to kill a dreadful lion before he founded the city by erecting a great defensive wall (Pausanias 1.39–44; Bohringer 1980). Cities were conceived as islands of safety, surrounded by a zone of relative security, within a wilderness of permanent potential danger. Plato says that the first cities were founded for protection against wild beasts (Plato, *Protagoras* 322a–b). This concept of human cultural space is most clearly described on the fictional shield made by Hephaestus for Achilles (*Iliad* 18. 478–608; Schnapp 1996:122–129). Here two cities are depicted, misleadingly dubbed by scholars "the city in peace" and "the city in war"; they are, in fact, an "inside" and an "outside" city.

Particularly clear and fascinating examples of Archaic cities have been pre-served and excavated in the area of Greek colonization, above all in Southern Italy and Sicily. Megara Hyblaia, founded in 728 B.C., is a surprisingly early example of a large-scale regular grid of streets (not yet orthogonal but parallel to each other) which, planned and laid out at the beginning, defined equal plots for houses, and left a free area for the agora (Mertens 2006:63–72). Similarly, in these colonies the territory was regularly divided into equal pieces of farmland and assigned to each of the colonists. Altogether, this is an impressive conception of a totally new community devising its communal spaces according to radically rational, egalitarian categories (Castagnoli 1971:10–54; Hoepfner 1994:1–10; Greco 1996).

In the old cities of mainland Greece, which had grown over centuries, such urban and rural divisions would have been hard to realize. The experience of colonization has sometimes therefore been perceived as a decisive stimulus behind a new conception of the city. However, it seems rather romantic to suggest that these colonists—forced to leave their home cities after years of social struggle and crossing, in inexperienced fashion, the sea with its incalculable dangers—might have invented totally new concepts of society and urban spaces. And, indeed, we have already seen that Homer, around 700 B.C., describes the mythical foun-dation of Scheria by Nausithoos as containing all the essential aspects of this concept: city walls, houses, temples, and an organized distribution of arable land. Obviously, these ideas and ideals were developed in the old centers of mainland

Greece where, however, such concepts were difficult to push through within the time-honored structures of society and settlement. In the vacuum of the new world, by contrast, old wishes and hopes could be transferred into reality. This is in fact the contribution of the newly founded colonies: to testify more clearly than the old-established centers the way in which all Greeks conceived their living spaces.

Early Iron Age Greece may have been unique among ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures in these developments. A certain caution is required, however, since the urban centers of the city-states of Phoenicia have not yet been sufficiently explored. One may ask whether, beside the local rulers and their residences, communal institutions with corresponding communal spaces existed in those cities too. However that may be, it was in Archaic Greece that the polis with its public spaces developed its specific form.

A basic aspect of this new urban (and at the same time social) structure was the intentional separation of what we define, not quite adequately, as "public" and "private." The crucial fact about the origin of the Greek polis was the emergence or, rather, the creation of "public" spaces. Such spaces served as communal areas for the communal activities of inhabitants, who only through this process developed a specific political coherence and who thereby became a polis community.

These public spaces were destined for the three main elements of this conceptual community, those comprising the basic forces of the polis: (1) the agora for the (male, adult) citizens; (2) the sanctuaries for the gods of the polis; and (3) the cemeteries for the dead ancestors. Each of these spaces had its own functional focus, and their increasing separation appears to have been a dominant feature in the political development of Archaic Greece (Altherr-Charon and Bérard 1980; Hölscher 1998b).

In cities where the major sanctuary of the polis deities was situated on a steep acropolis, as in Athens, Megara or Cyrene, the installation of the agora in a separate area was imposed by necessity (Martin 1951; 1974:266–275; Hölscher 1998b:29–45; Kenzler 1999). The same phenomenon is represented at Rome, with the Capitoline Hill as a sacred citadel, crowned by the temples of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Juno Moneta, and the forum at its foot (Hölscher 2005). On other sites, the main sanctuary seems to have developed from early times near or at the border of the agora. In very early settlements like Zagora on the island of Andros and Emporio on Chios, the sanctuary location may have been determined by the development of a ruler's palace, with a meeting place adjacent to a communal sanctuary (Mazarakis Ainian 1997:171–176, 197–198). At Dreros on Crete, the agora developed beside the temple of Apollo, and at Argos the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios was situated at the northern edge of the agora area (Hölscher 1998b:50–52).

Nevertheless, there was always a clear distinction made between the political center of the agora, where the people's assembly was held, and the cult center of the main poliadic divinity. The agora was not a secular space; it could contain numerous and various cult places, particularly for political gods such as Zeus Agoraios or local city heroes (Martin 1951:174–186). In Athens, for example,

water basins set at the entrance for ritual purification protected the agora, and proceedings like the people's assembly were inaugurated by a purificatory sacrifice. But the agora as such was never a sanctuary of a specific god or goddess, and the political activities carried out there comprised no religious service.

This distinction between the realms of cult and of policy was a basic feature of the Greek polis (Hölscher 1998b:43–45, 49–62). The agora, on the one hand, was the space where the political members of the community, the adult male citizens, deliberated on questions of communal interest. This was a space of debate and contest, controversies and conflicts, and final decisions. The main poliadic sanctuary, on the other hand, was a space where the whole community came together, united in religious rituals, celebrating unanimously their common god or goddess. This was a space where the controversial decisions of the agora were fixed by inscriptions and sanctioned by divine authority, where the instability of policy was counterbalanced by the stability of religious cults. Only in the newly founded Roman cities, from the fourth and third century B.C. onwards, was the main temple of the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno and Minerva) firmly combined with the forum, testifying to the powerful religious foundation of the Roman empire on the basis of a common state cult (Lackner in press).

In this context, the cemeteries, as the third realm of a certain "public" significance, were the space of the exemplary power of the ancestors. Regularly evoked by sepulchral rites, the great forefathers represented models of behavior and values, merit and glory, for the present generation (Morris 1992). Somewhere between the eternal greatness of the gods and the efforts and struggles of living men there was the unquestionable ideal of the ancestors.

These public spaces imply also three aspects of "cultural time": (1) the unstable political present in the agora; (2) the timeless eternity of the gods in the sanctuaries; and (3) the normative memory of the past in the burial grounds.

In historical reality, we find that such concepts were realized in a great variety of ways according to specific natural conditions and/or human decisions (Greco and Torelli 1983). In cities like Athens, Megara, and Cyrene, the agora was placed in a flat area, separated from the acropolis, where roads from various surrounding regions came together. In other places, such as Miletus and Iasos on the Ionian coast, Thasos in the Northern Aegean, and probably also Naxos in Sicily, it was situated near the harbor, again far away from the main sanctuary or sanctuaries which might be placed at the center or even at the opposite end of the urban area.

Particularly interesting are some newly founded cities where no compelling landscape features influenced the installation of public spaces (Greco and Torelli 1983). Eretria, founded in the eighth century B.C. on a coastal plain, had its main sanctuary, dedicated to Apollo, in the center of the settlement, while the agora was installed (in the sixth century) in a separate area towards the sea. A similar situation is met at Olbia, on the north coast of the Black Sea. At Megara Hyblaia in Sicily, also founded on level ground, the agora consists of an irregular space left free in an area where three systems of parallel streets met (Figure 5.1); the partially recovered sanctuary or sanctuaries of the deities of the polis were
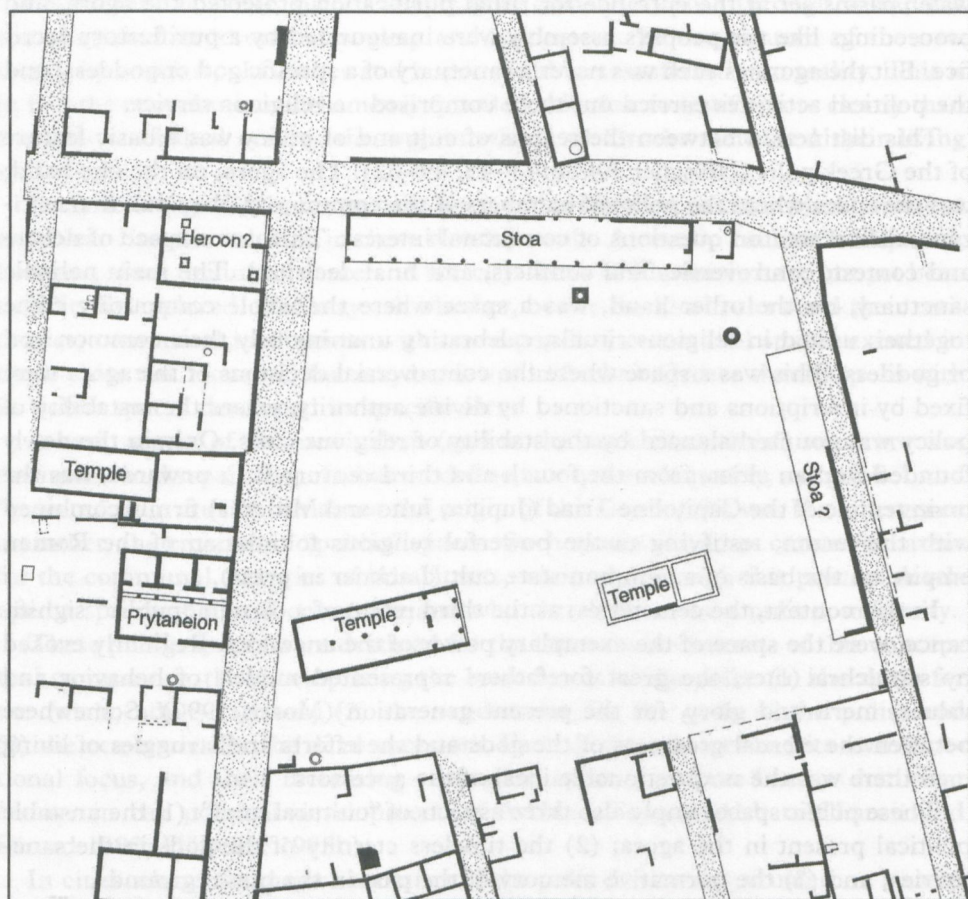
Figure 5.1 Plan of the agora area of Megara Hyblaia

probably dispersed in various other areas near the northern city wall and along the seaside (Gras and Tréziny 1999). Better known is the situation in Selinus, a daughter colony of Megara Hyblaia, where the agora was again situated in the center (where city quarters met at different orientations), while the great urban sanctuary was situated at the edge of a plateau looking towards the sea, allowing the greatest possible visibility for arriving ships from the east (Mertens 2003; Mertens 2006:175–89).

Even more complex is the situation at Akragas with its old sanctuaries of Zeus and Athena on a cliff, an agora on the gentle slope of a valley at the city's center, and a series of classical temples on the steep edge of the city towards the large coastal plain, overlooking the city wall. These temples provided a magnificent urban façade for those who approached the city from the harbor or who passed by on the main coastal road from Selinus to Gela (Mertens 2006:261–66, 317–8). Last but not least, in various cities the main urban sanctuaries and the agora were

installed one beside the other. Thus, at Argos, the agora, in the center of the city, had the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios at its northern side; likewise, at Syracuse, the agora and the main temple precinct lay side by side in the urban center on the island of Ortygia (Di Vita 1996:268–274). Particularly impressive is the situation in the city center of Poseidonia-Paestum where the Greek agora is framed by two large sanctuaries, the twin temples of Hera to the south and the temple of Athena to the north (Mertens and Greco 1996:248–252). Otherwise, at Himera, the agora and the adjacent temple area were placed immediately after the entrance to the city from the harbor plain (Di Vita 1996:290–292), while, at Metapontum, the agora, together with the major sanctuary of Hera and Apollo, was situated opposite the main entrance from the harbor (Mertens 1985; Mertens 2006:157–63).

In most of these places—and particularly impressively at Athens, Miletus, Syracuse, and Selinus—a "sacred axis" connects, in various constellations, these public spaces not only with each other, but moreover with the main entrance/exit of the city, often in connection with the main necropolis beyond the city walls.

In the case of Athens, the agora was the most dynamic center of the city, undergoing a rapid development from Archaic to Hellenistic and Roman times (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). At the beginning, Greek agoras were essentially large open areas, lacking in elaborate architecture, and therefore difficult to explore by archaeological methods (Greco 1998). Their primary role was to provide space for all kinds of public gatherings: people's assemblies, athletic and musical games, commercial activities, and so forth.

As at Athens, specific facilities seem to have been rare in agoras. Most important were circular installations within these areas, described in Homer as a *hieros kyklos* (sacred circle) and attested by excavations in various cities, being sometimes surrounded by temporary wooden stands (Kolb 1981:10–19, 53–58; Kenzler 1999:243–248). One of their functions was as a meeting place for assemblies, with the speaker in the center, the elder noblemen seated in an inner circle, and the other men of the community standing around them. Their names, however— *orchestra* at Athens, *choros* at Sparta—suggest that they were also used as places for religious manifestations. At Athens, we know of theater performances; at Sparta, we hear of dances of young men and women. In the same context must be seen the racecourses for athletic contests, found in the agoras of Athens, Argos, and Corinth. For longer foot or horse races, the major street leading from outside the city into the agora must have been used, as is known from Athens and Elis. The explanation for the central significance of such phenomena is that they were not merely events of collective entertainment, but also played a crucial role in the constitution of the civic community. Dances of youths and maidens were presentations of their beauty and nobility, and not least of their readiness for marriage, while athletic contests served as a trial run for wooing. At Sparta, the main street leading to the agora had allegedly been the racecourse for the wooers of Penelope, and similar myths are known from Argos (Marchetti and Kolokotsas 1995:221– 266). Thus, the earliest installations of the agora served the councils of the political community, presided over by the elders, and the festive rituals of the younger generation, on whom lay the hopes for the polis' future.
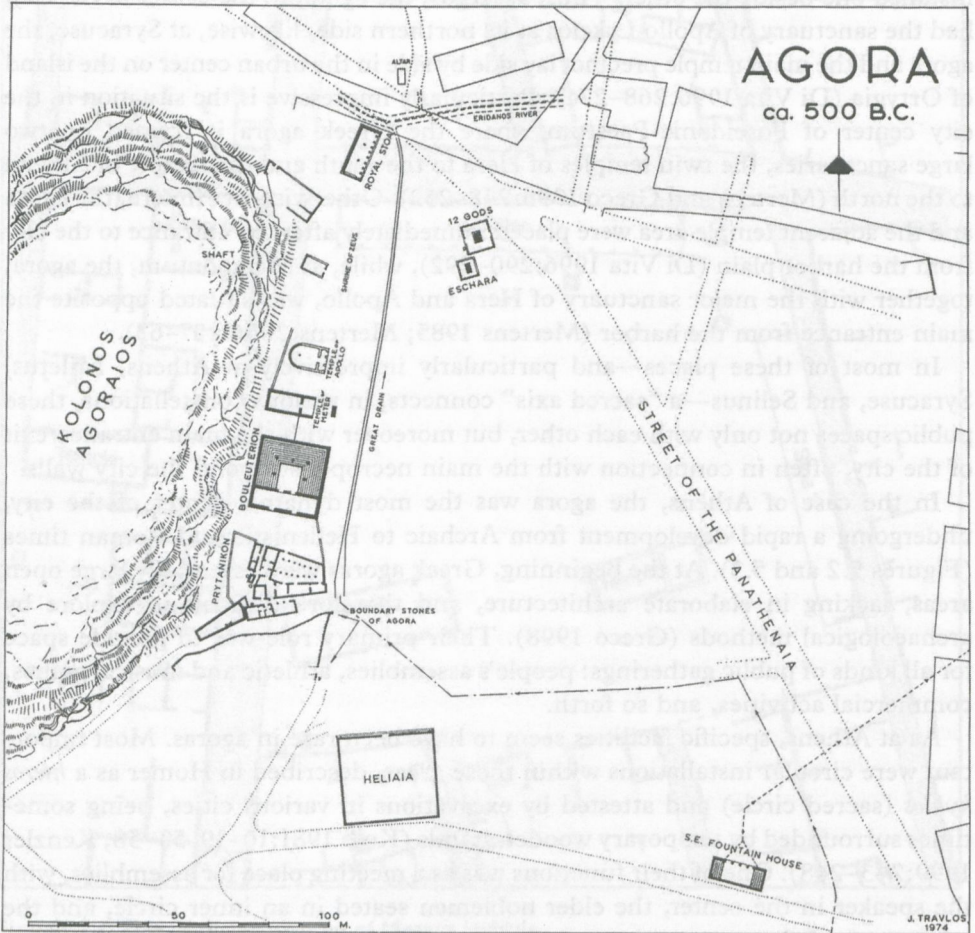
Figure 5.2 Plan of the classical agora at Athens, as it was ca. 500 B.C.

The surroundings of the agora seem at first to have been constituted chiefly by private houses. At the foundation of Megara Hyblaia a division of the urban space into equal private plots was carried out all around the open area of the agora; only later were some of these estates turned into public property to be used for public buildings (Gras and Tréziny 1999).

Civic Density and Monumentalization of Public Spaces in Archaic Times

In the course of time, agoras were conceived, planned, and realized in a more and more monumental form. In Athens, as noted, an "old agora" of uncertain location and increasingly inadequate size, was replaced or succeeded in the second quarter
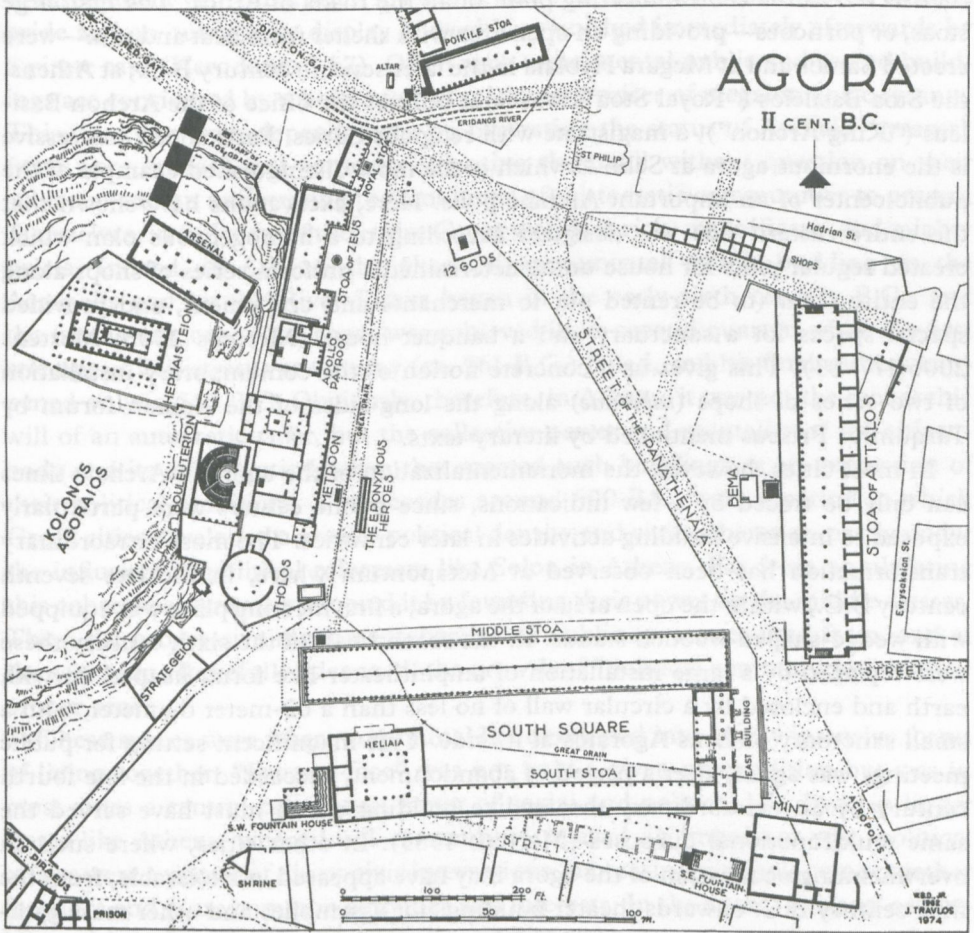
Figure 5.3 Plan of the classical agora at Athens, as it was in the second century B.C.

of the sixth century by a new public area of larger dimensions (Camp 2005). At approximately the same time at Rome, a small meeting place in front of the senate house was extended by the king Tarquinius Priscus into a large forum between the Palatine and the Capitoline Hill (Carafa 1998). Contemporaneously, at Selinus, a first great agora was planned at the beginning of the sixth century, one generation after the colony's foundation (Mertens 2003; Mertens 2006:175–83).

Within and around these areas, various architectural installations were designed, resulting step-by-step in a certain monumentalization of the civic centers of Archaic cities (Martin 1951; Kenzler 1999:304–321). At Megara Hyblaia, two or three temples for unknown divinities and a hero sanctuary were built in the agora, at Cyrene, a cult place of the founder hero Battos. Somewhat later, at Athens, the classical agora acquired sanctuaries for Zeus, who elsewhere was often named *Agoraios*, and Apollo, as well as a sanctuary of the Twelve Gods

that served as the central meeting point of all the roads of Attica. The first large stoas, or porticoes—providing an open area with shelter from heat and rain—were erected Samos and at Megara Hyblaia in the later seventh century B.C.; at Athens, the Stoa Basileios ("Royal Stoa") was later built as the office of the Archon Basileus ("King Archon"), a magistrate with religious duties. Particularly impressive is the enormous agora at Selinus which is the most distinguished example of the public center of an important Archaic polis. Here, excavations have shown that the entire eastern side was designed according to a homogeneous plan which created regular plots for house units, determined a uniform series of shops along the entire front (to be rented out to merchants and craftsmen), and provided special spaces for a sanctuary and a banquet house (Mertens 2003; Mertens 2006:177–83). This gives us a concrete notion of the contemporary installation of two series of shops (*tabernae*) along the long sides of the Roman forum by Tarquinius Priscus mentioned by literary texts.

In most cities, however, the monumentalization of the agora in Archaic times can only be traced by a few indications, since public centers were particularly exposed to intensive building activities in later centuries. The most extraordinary transformation has been observed at Metapontum where, in the late seventh century B.C., within the open area of the agora, a first meeting place was equipped with wedge-shaped wooden stands. In the second half of the sixth century these were replaced by a large installation of amphitheater-like form, heaped up with earth and enclosed by a circular wall of no less than a 62-meter diameter, with a small sanctuary of Zeus Agoraios at its side. This magnificent setting for public meetings was again, after a period of abandonment, succeeded in the late fourth century by an extraordinary theater-like building which must have served the same multifunctional purposes (Mertens 1985). In other cities, where such an overwhelming occupation of the agora may have appeared less tolerable, from the fifth century B.C. onwards theater buildings for assemblies and other mass gatherings were placed more at one side of the area (as at Mantineia and Morgantina), or even in definite separation from the agora (as at Argos, Sparta, and Athens).

Many further examples of early monumentalization are suggested by literary sources, above all by Pausanias, although their actual origin in Archaic times is often a matter of hypothesis which only future excavation can confirm or deny. All in all, however, there can be no doubt about the general development of urban centers towards monumental architectural forms: not only in the primarily functional buildings of the agora but also in the sanctuaries where the deities of the polis were represented and worshipped. From Samos to Athens, Corinth to Corcyra, Metapontum to Selinus, the Archaic period—and above all the first half of the sixth century B.C.—was an era of widespread monumental temple building.

Historically, this urban development towards architectural monumentality testifies to a strong desire to lavish great economic wealth and much skilled manpower to enhance the splendor of the city. The ideological and ethical connotations may be recognized in Herodotus' famous story about the agora with its new council house on Siphnos, both dating to around 530 B.C. and both built entirely

of resplendent white marble. This was at one and the same time a matter of great pride and an outrageous display of wealth—punished immediately afterwards by a pirate raid (Herodotus 3.57). Often such monumental public and sacred buildings are considered by scholars to be typical enterprises of megalomaniac tyrants. This view, however, depends both on overrating the status of Archaic "tyrants" (who were, in fact, not autocrats imposing their will without question on their subjects) and on underrating the ambitions of aristocratic communities to present themselves, in full view of the entire Greek world, as rich, magnificent, and mighty poleis. Indeed, in Athens, the phase of monumental temple building on the Acropolis and by the River Ilissus began in the early sixth century B.C., and the new laying-out of the agora was achieved in its second quarter, while the first attempt of Peisistratus at tyranny (ca. 561 B.C.) failed, and his final success happened only in 546 B.C. Obviously, therefore, in Athens, it was not the monarchic will of an autocratic ruler, but the collective power and mentality of the citizen-body and its aristocratic leaders that created such buildings as an expression of their political ambitions. The decades around 600 B.C. were a period in which Greek cities developed a greater political density and civic coherence, partly under the influence of political reformers like Solon in Athens. Far from annihilating this coherence, tyrants promoted it by founding their power on the middle classes. Thus, the progressive monumentalization of public spaces resulted from, and at the same time forcefully advanced, the growth of "political communities" in their proper sense.

These spaces were where communal life developed into highly intensive forms of living together. "Face-to-face" was not only a given precondition but was in most cities a central conceptual factor of social and political life. Even in larger states like Athens, where local communities played an important role, political affairs were a matter of direct civic interactions. Increasingly, people came together for more and more common activities and interests. In the agora, citizens' assemblies, although still of limited power, must have become more numerous. Likewise, the council of elder citizens assembled with increasing frequency. Jurisdiction was more and more institutionalized in public places. At Athens, the first law-courts must have not only involved hundreds of jurors but also attracted many spectators. Lavish festivals, with dances, theater performances, religious processions and banquets, were enacted more and more in the area of the agora. Again at Athens, the Panathenaic festival must have transformed the newly established agora for several days into a crowded and vivid urban center. Moreover at Athens, as also elsewhere, the solemn funeral processions to the Kerameikos cemetery must have crossed the agora, where they may have been observed and admired by numerous spectators as manifestations of influential families—a situation that in Rome was later turned into the famous ritual of public funerals in the forum. Growing wealth too must have promoted increasing commercial activities in and around the agora. And last but not least the increasing leisure time of the upper classes encouraged people to come together, here and elsewhere, to meet friends and fellow-citizens in an atmosphere of lively discussion and entertainment.

The Political Activation of Public Centers in Classical Times

In fifth-century Athens, on its way towards a democratic manner of government, the enormous increase of a "civic presence" in the agora, as described in the introduction, was due to the augmentation of old and the institution of new functions, entailing new purpose-built structures (Camp 1986:61–150). A new large council house, a circular building for the council's permanent representatives (the *prytaneis*), new law courts, and several porticoes with public functions all strongly emphasized the political character of the area. The great achievement of Cleisthenes, the initiator of these reforms, was summed up in the general statement that he "brought the Athenians together."

Symptomatically, it was in this period that the political character of the agora was first visually emphasized by political monuments in the strict sense (Hölscher 1998a; 1998b:84–103). The earliest sculptural monument with primarily political associations erected in the public space was the group of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who had assassinated Hipparchus, son of Peisistratus. At the edge of the meeting-place for the people's assembly, they represented the ideal models of "democratic" behavior to be imitated by all living citizens. Two or three generations later, a large monument for the eponymous heroes of the ten Athenian tribes, ideal representatives of the citizen-body of Athens, was erected in the agora as well, and came to serve as a public notice board for the city's increasing population. A splendid Painted Portico (Stoa Poikile) was built, containing a cycle of paintings depicting Athens' mythical and historical deeds of glory, above all the Battle of Marathon against the Persians. Such monumental self-celebration served to define the collective identity of the polis within the community, as well as against its arch enemy. Later, individual political ambitions competed more and more through the erection of honorary statues for contemporary politicians. A whole set of rules, norms, and laws regulated the dedication of such statues, covering issues such as for what sort of person, at what point in their life or after death, in what more or less visible location, near which other famous monuments, at what cost to the state or the dedicant, and so forth. All this testifies to the highly competitive character of the political center of the polis: such monuments are not only mirrors reflecting political reality but are forceful factors in political practice itself. Monuments become weapons, to be used in the political space of the city.

The significance of this phenomenon is made clear by the Athenian orator Lycurgus who claims that, while other cities had statues of athletes in the agora, at Athens there stood great statesmen and the tyrant-slayers (Lycurgus, *Against Leokrates* 31). Similarly, Vitruvius reproaches the people of Alabanda in Asia Minor because they had set up images of lawyers in the gymnasium, but of discus-throwers, runners, and ball-players in the agora (Vitruvius 7.5.6). The polis' political center, if rightly conceived as such, was defined as a political space by monuments of policy and images of politicians. By implication, this demonstrates that the realm of politics had by now obtained a certain autonomy, with its own rules, requirements, and modes of behavior.

The intellectual conception of social space that underpins this development appears to have had Hippodamus of Miletus as its most prominent representative (Aristotle, *Politics* 1268a; McCredie 1971; Gehrke 1989). To this individual are ascribed the most ambitious city designs of classical Greece: the layout of Miletus after its destruction by the Persians in 494 and its liberation in 479 B.C.; Athens' newly founded harbor city, the Peiraeus, between 479 and ca. 450 B.C.; and the Athenian colony of Thurii in South Italy in 444 B.C. The ascription to him of the 408 B.C. plan of Rhodes remains doubtful (Hoepfner 1994:17–67; 1999:201– 315). The proverbial "Hippodamian lay-out" of cities, which is a matter of constant controversy, is difficult to deduce from what remains of these cities. It cannot have been, as was long thought, the orthogonal grid plan, which in fact had already been adopted in colony foundations of the Archaic period. Rather, his great achievement was a rational distribution (*diairesis*) of functional spaces. The territory surrounding the polis was to be divided into: one third for meeting the costs of the state's sacred institutions, one third for paying the warriors, and one third for "private" farming. Obviously, these same principles cannot have been adopted for the city area, but some analogous categories may well be supposed, such as sacred, political and residential areas, each set into functional relation to the other. Moreover, without any recognizable relation to his division of urban space, Hippodamus devised, in a theoretical essay, an almost utopian, and again tripartite, concept of an ideal society consisting of warriors, farmers, and craftsmen. He is an outstanding exemplar of a new type of high-flown intellectualism that developed during the fifth century B.C., the clearest expression of which is given by the philosopher Xenophanes:

> Not from the beginning did gods give all things to mortal men,
> But in the course of time men themselves found by searching the better. (B18)

The far-sighted character of such town planning may be recognized by the fact that at Miletus, in the (re-)founding of 479 B.C., large areas were defined and reserved for public spaces—to be "filled out" only in Hellenistic times by architectural enterprises such as surrounding porticoes and the like (Hoepfner 1994:17– 22; 1999:207–212).

Visualizing Public Order and Political Identity in Late Classical and Hellenistic Times

Late Classical and Hellenistic towns display a wide variety of concepts regarding public spaces. The most prominent feature is that the cityscape now is consciously conceived and shaped as a visual context, explicitly expressing the basic principles of its public order and presenting the crucial elements of its collective memory and identity. Cities become self-referential images of their own ideal and ideological significance.

There are five main features to this new visualization of urban spaces. First, on the level of urban planning, comes a rational configuration of the main public

places and buildings. Second, on the level of architectural typology, is the creation of clearly defined and widely adopted functional devices, particularly for theaters, bouleuteria, prytaneia, gymnasia, etc. with significant façades emphasizing the building's public importance. Third, in terms of architectural design, there develops a system of unifying façades surrounding public and religious spaces in long porticoes, integrating other buildings and forming large rectangular layouts of agoras and urban sanctuaries. Fourth is a more and more widely diffused practice of decorating such spaces with significant public monuments, representing the divinities and heroes of the community, recording the glorious past of the city, and celebrating the leading members of the citizen-body. Fifth, and finally, appears an increasing orientation towards a citizen audience participating in collective festivals and observing public rituals and events, as well as of foreign visitors admiring the grand tradition and glory of the city. This visual self-celebration and self-reflection became the main motor behind the development of public spaces in late Classical and Hellenistic cities in Greece.

To begin with an old traditional place, at Athens, the agora—which had been a conglomerate of heterogeneous political buildings, juridical installations, sacred areas, and public monuments—was transformed by large unifying porticoes along its sides (Camp 1986:153–180). Typically, foreign kings (particularly the Attalids of Pergamon who ideologically claimed the heritage of Athens' cultural traditions) took the most impressive initiatives. These rulers framed the agora with a monumental two-storied portico at the east side and a smaller portico in front of the sanctuary of Meter at the west side, and they concentrated all viewpoints on a high pillar monument dedicated to the royal donor. Since political activities were more and more transferred to other places, especially the theater, and since a stadium was built in the Ilissus valley for athletic games in the later fourth century B.C., the agora became more and more a place for public monuments, recording the glorious memory of the city. Moreover, it was transformed into a place where the citizens came together to enjoy that atmosphere of historical greatness, and a place where philosophers of the Stoic school continued the great intellectual tradition of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and a place where tourists admired the age-old center of Greek culture.

Towards the middle of the fourth century B.C. the ancient city of Priene in Asia Minor was re-founded according to a totally new, "modern" plan, including an orthogonal street grid, despite its irregular site on the slope of Mount Mykale which caused a considerable unevenness of perpendicular streets (Rumscheid 1998). Under these peculiar conditions, all traditional requirements of Greek cities were fulfilled by a rational design, clearly separating all essential functions: at the center the agora, aligned with the main street axis and, perpendicular to it, the two hubs of culture and education—the theater above and the gymnasium below. The steep rock above the city, being almost inaccessible, was used mainly as a citadel, a kind of military acropolis, while the main sanctuary of the polis goddess, Athena, was integrated on a lower ridge within the street system as a sacred acropolis. The agora was from the beginning conceived as a political center, later giving access to a bouleuterion and a prytaneion, and with a separate market

place beyond its western edge. In the course of time, this place was more and more shaped into a closed area of political representation: framed by regular, unifying portico buildings, with a stage-like space for ceremonies and performances, bounded by the honorific monuments of leading citizens, linked by a stepped terrace with an adjoining portico for spectators, and—finally—marked by an elegant entrance arch at the eastern exit. Compared with the vivid multifunctional character of the Athenian agora in the fifth century, this is a solemn visual monumentalization of civic identity.

More ambitious was Megalopolis, founded in 369 B.C. in the middle of the Peloponnesus as the capital of a new league of Arcadian cities. Megalopolis had two focal areas, opposite to each other on both sides of the River Helisson (Lauter 2002). To the north, the civic center of the agora has a multifunctional architectural complex on its western side, containing buildings for the three main political institutions of the city. These were the council (*boule*), its executive committee (*damiourgoi*), and the military commander (*polemarchos*), as well as a sanctuary of Zeus, the god of these political institutions. Large winged porticoes gradually framed the northern and eastern sides. Opposed to this is the magnificent complex of the theater, the greatest in Greece, and the adjoining Thersileion, a highly innovative hypostyle hall, both serving the league's assemblies. As at Priene, public areas were set in relation to each other according to clear principles of spatial opposition.

The most challenging task, however, was of course the design of the new metropoleis of the Hellenistic monarchies, with the royal palaces as new centers of gravity. Around 400 B.C., King Archelaus IV of Macedonia, fueled by great ambitions, transferred his residence from Aigai to Pella. There he started to build, according to the rules of "modern" Greek urbanism, his new city, which then was realized on an even greater scale by Philip II (Siganidou and Lilimbaki-Akamati 1997; Akamatis 2001). Their main concern was the configuration of palace and polis, and this resulted in an antithetic structure, bringing the king's dominance clearly to the fore. The palace was erected on a steep hill, while the city expanded at its feet in a large regular grid of orthogonal streets, the center of which was occupied by the agora. This magnificent public place consisted of a wide, almost square, open area, surrounded by uninterrupted unifying porticoes. Two main doorways on the east and west sides, opening towards the main street of the city, provided access to this space, as did two minor passageways on both northern angles. Within the porticoes regular series of shops were installed, for foodstuffs and handicrafts, while the more distinguished northern wing probably served public functions. Further excavations are needed to determine whether some monument marked the center of the agora. Whatever the case, major public architecture, political or religious, seems to be lacking: a sanctuary of Aphrodite and Meter as well as a peristyle building, perhaps a public archive, are situated nearby, but beyond the surrounding porticoes. The agora itself appears primarily as a secular zone of civic intercourse and public trade.

At the same time, the old Macedonian residence of Aigai was transformed into a ceremonial residence for dynastic rituals like weddings and burials. Here too

the palace, mainly consisting of large and lavish banquet halls, was built on a mountain slope, in a dominant position over the city area. Between these two poles, some conspicuous links were installed. On the edge of the agora, a sanctuary of Eukleia was embellished with rich votive-offerings from Queen Eurydike, thus demonstrating the royal presence in this cult of public significance. Moreover, between the palace and the agora, as a "hinge" between the ruler and his people, a theater served as a space of public ceremonies—for example, the conspicuous royal wedding at which Philip II was murdered.

The unsurpassed zenith of Hellenistic city building was Alexandria, initiated by Alexander the Great himself, and designed by Ptolemy I as the future capital of Egypt (Hoepfner 1994:235–256; 1999:455–471; Grimm 1998). The orthogonal plan had three main streets: one longitudinal (where the main public buildings and facilities were aligned), and two perpendicular. One of these led to the island of the gigantic Pharos lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the other to the royal palace quarter. As at Priene, the urban center was still the agora with its law court and other public buildings, but this was surrounded by additional public facilities that hitherto had been placed more at the fringes of Greek cities. There was, for example, a famous gymnasium, center of Greek education, and a public park, probably of sacred character and containing an artificial hill (with a sanctuary of the god Pan) that offered a magnificent view over the whole city. On the other hand, the palace quarter too had a public face, turned towards the city, with buildings and monuments of highly official and ideological character. These included a monumental peristyle construction for the reception of foreign guests, a sanctuary of the Muses with the fabulous royal library, and probably also the tomb of Alexander, the founder hero of the city and of Ptolemaic rule over Egypt. Thus, in Alexandria, the two main forces of the capital, royal and civic, are inextricably interconnected with each other in the city's topography.

The same holds true, under very different conditions, for Pergamon, where a small local citadel was expanded into the capital of the Attalid kings (von Hesberg 1996; Radt 1999). The most striking feature of this place is the installation, on the acropolis, of a coherent complex of palace buildings in close connection with monumental state sanctuaries: the precinct of Athena, with famous monuments of victories over the Gauls, the monumental altar building for Zeus, and the theater with an adjoining temple of Dionysus, who was worshipped in Pergamum as a "leader" of the rulers' dynasty. In early Hellenistic times, the area between the palace-fortress and the still restricted residential quarters seems to have been occupied by a sort of agora (Rheidt 1992). Later, when the city grew to a veritable metropolis, a new, rectangular agora of "modern" type was founded at a greater distance, while a heröon-like building for the ruler-cult was established at the border between the palace area and the city. As in Pella, the separation of the palace area, and the corresponding independence of the city from the palace, seem to have been clearer than in Alexandria, where a more assertive concept of the ruler led to a stronger domination of the city by the king's presence.

It was this concept of political monumentality and forceful kingship with which Rome had to compete when it aimed for a dominant political position over the

Greek world. But it was not until the time of Augustus that such urban plans were transferred, on a grand scale, to Rome where they were adopted and further developed in order to establish and strengthen the power of Roman emperors.

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NOTE

The references for this chapter are on pp. 198–202.