

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278022149>

# The Greek Agora in its Peloponnesian Context(s)

Chapter · September 2015

---

CITATIONS

2

READS

5,194

1 author:



**Jamieson Donati**

Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas

47 PUBLICATIONS 130 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Geophysical Survey in Greece: Recent Developments, Discoveries and Future Prospects [View project](#)



A Regional Approach to Ancient Urban Studies in Greece Through Multi-Settlement Geophysical Survey [View project](#)

Jamieson C. Donati

## 8 The Greek Agora in its Peloponnesian Context(s)

**Abstract:** This paper explores the structure and mechanics of the Greek agora by focusing specifically on three urban contexts in the Peloponnese from the eighth century B.C. through the Late Classical period (Argos, Elis and Megalopolis). Although largely underrepresented in established discourses on the Greek agora, the diverse archaeological evidence from the Peloponnese has the potential to recalibrate traditional narratives, helping to formulate a more nuanced appreciation of Greek commercial and civic space independent from an Athenocentric model.

It is argued here that the Peloponnesian experience offers new perspectives into the urban integration, and the structure and use of the Greek agora because of divergent conditions from city to city. Rather than articulate a universal model of the Greek agora, this paper demonstrates that there is often great variation among agoras, even among cities within a single region of the ancient Mediterranean. In fact, none of the Peloponnesian agoras included in this study are exactly alike. This is because the Greek agora responded to unique urban conditions within a particular context. Its spatial mechanics and social structure are never exactly replicated elsewhere. Ultimately this leads to the conclusion that there cannot be just one definition of the Greek agora, but many.

### Introduction

The basic characteristics of the Greek agora have long been familiar to classical archaeologists and historians. As a physical entity the agora was the nodal center of an ancient Greek city. Important roads converged from various directions and the agora became a distribution point in the constant movement of people, money, goods and ideas. Traffic circulated into and out from a harbor, city gate or perhaps an important sanctuary. Often a sacred or processional way crossed right through. In plan the agora could be quite simple, essentially consisting of a flat open space surrounded by various administrative, religious and commercial structures. Sometimes its spatial limits were well defined with stoas formally enclosing the central area or boundary markers that clearly indicated what elements stood inside and outside the agora. Yet other times the built environment was fragmentary with only a scattering of buildings that provided no sense of an architectural ensemble.

As a social entity the Greek agora was a venue where a community of citizens could assemble. It was the political heart of a city. Here, people could discuss affairs of the state within civic structures, such as a bouleuterion (senate house) or ekklesiasterion (meeting venue of the popular assembly). Law codes and public decrees were put on display and judicial proceedings were held in courthouses. Also conspicuous were various cults and sanctuaries. A large urban temple might be nearby, a heroon might honor a legendary city founder or lawgiver, and religious festivals with athletic and dramatic events took place throughout the year. Finally, the agora was a vital

center for trade and commerce. Open space and commercial buildings, especially stoas, provided retail space for sellers and workers of various trades.

These are the basic components typically associated with the Greek agora. Yet while all are certainly true in one way or another, they paint a rather incomplete picture with no clear sense of space, time and development. None of these components as a whole were necessarily specific to any one agora in particular, nor did they appear in every Greek city throughout every period. As the present study will show, the Greek agora was a complex social and physical entity. While it is true that certain trends can be identified over time, the agora was inherently heterogeneous and evolved under different circumstances unique to a particular city. Elements that characterized certain agoras might have been radically different elsewhere. This is because, like all spatial and visual elements within an urban context, the Greek agora responded and interacted with a unique ensemble of sociopolitical, religious and economic needs. The factors that contributed to its structure and mechanics were distinctive, and its organization and use never reappeared exactly the same way in another urban setting.

## History of Scholarship

In the discipline of classical archaeology, the study of the Greek agora is intimately tied to Greek urban history. Like every element of ancient Mediterranean civilization, how one understands the built environment is constantly dictated and altered depending on the source material and the changing attitudes and methodologies of intellectual inquiries. The Greek agora, for example, has largely been viewed through the prism of select examples and a devoted interest in its political (mostly Athenian democratic) underpinnings. Over the years these factors have continued to shape vantage points, and it becomes challenging to integrate new models, because the majority of classical archaeologists and historians remain content in recycling the more familiar history.

During the early years of archaeological fieldwork in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the notion that the Greek agora—like the central square of a modern European capital—must lie at the heart of an ancient city compelled excavators to search actively for its remains. Its discovery often became a primary objective, because they believed that the agora's impressive collection of public buildings would provide a firm foothold on the topography of an ancient city. In several instances, such as at Corinth in the Peloponnese (Fowler and Stillwell 1932), these convictions proved to be true. At the same time, beyond simply revealing and unearthing, there was little progress during these early years to advance a more nuanced understanding of Greek commercial and civic space. Buildings from different periods were often grouped together and presented as a composite model of the Greek agora, usually to

the detriment of earlier phases, which generally preserved fewer monumental structures (fig. 8.1).

A breakthrough in the study of the Greek agora occurred in the 1930s, when the American School of Classical Studies at Athens initiated large-scale excavations in the Athenian agora that continue to the present (Camp 1986). The results provided a wealth of information about the early development and subsequent Greek and Roman phases of the agora in one of the most prominent Greek urban centers in the ancient Mediterranean. Besides offering valuable insights into the architectural and spatial growth of the agora, the rich epigraphical testimonia, pottery deposits and other small finds, such as official weights and transport amphorae, provided tangible evidence for how the Athenians used their commercial and civic space on a daily basis. There was also great interest among classical archaeologists and historians in drawing parallels between the initial manifestation of the Athenian agora and Athenian democracy (Coulson et al., eds., 1994). Many public buildings in the agora were dated to the period immediately following the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/7 B.C., and several of these structures, such as the Old Bouleuterion with its hypostyle hall form, became prototypes for the conception of Greek civic buildings in classical archaeology (fig. 8.2). In a sense, democracy now had a physical presence in the modern human consciousness of the ancient Greek built environment.

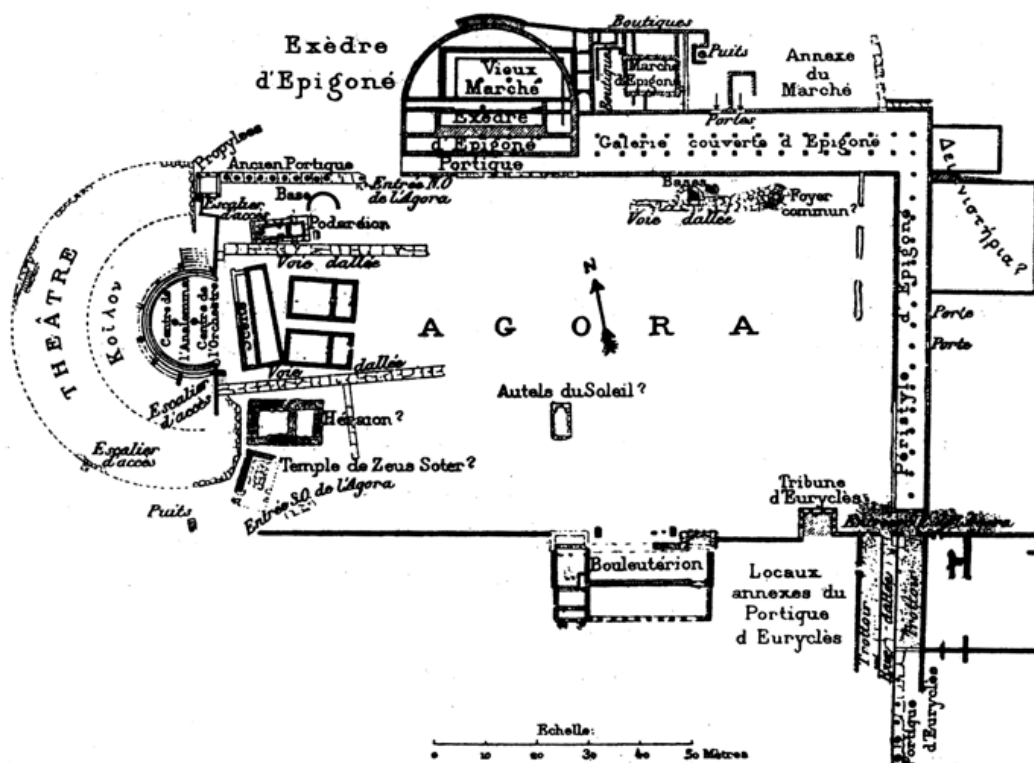
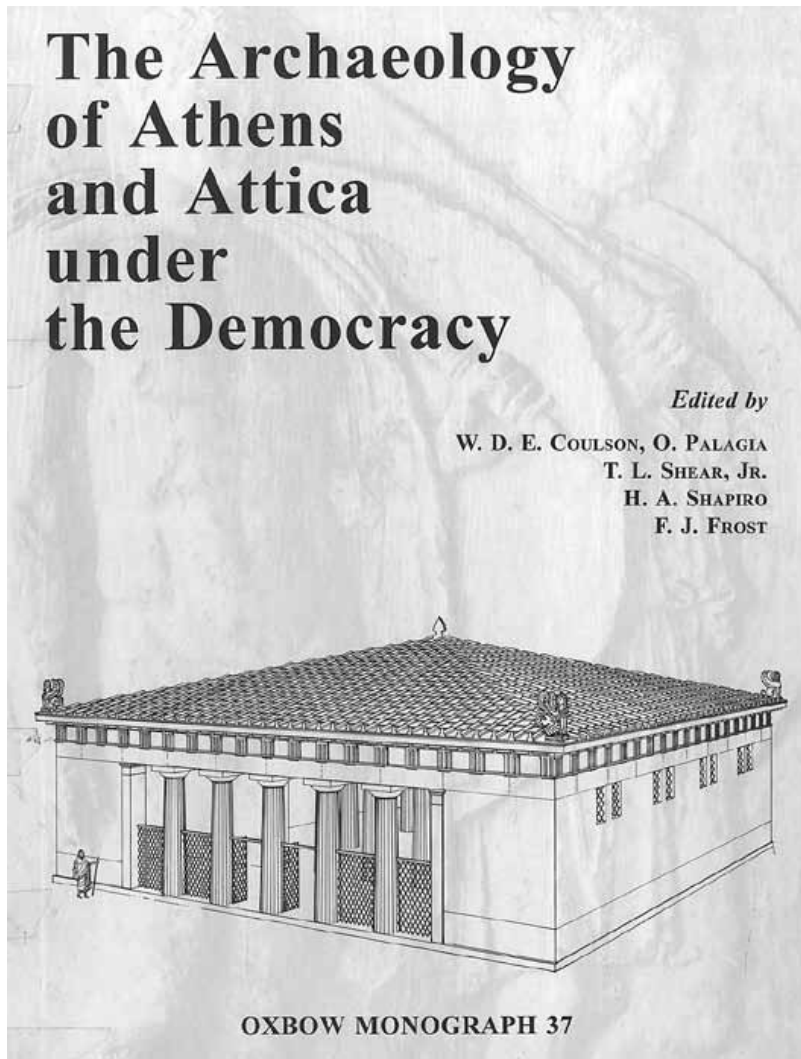


Figure 8.1: Agora of Mantinea (as published in *Mantinée et l'Arcadie Orientale*, G. Fougères, 1898).



**Figure 8.2:** Old Bouleuterion in the Athenian Agora (cover illustration of *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy*, W.D.E. Coulson et al., eds., 1994).

While the Athenian agora will always remain indispensable, it has projected an image that potentially deters a better appreciation of the Greek agora, not only in Athens, but elsewhere. This has led to the inevitable result that perceptions of the Greek agora often place excessive emphasis on the Athenian model and its democratic institutions. This may have been necessary fifth years ago when excavations in the Athenian agora and the publication of the material dominated one's understanding of Greek commercial and civic space. However, classical archaeologists and historians now have at their disposal a much more diverse body of source material at such places as Thasos, Kassope, and Megara Hyblaea, and there is greater interest among scholars in exploring alternatives to Athens and Athenian democracy (Brock and Hodkinson, eds., 2000; Hansen and Nielsen, eds., 2004). Yet with few exceptions

these changing attitudes and a wider archaeological sample have not sparked a broad reassessment of the Greek agora (Hoepfner 2006). The impact of Athens cannot be underestimated. The Athenian agora continues to influence how classical archaeologists and historians perceive less well-preserved agoras.

Good examples of this circumstance are the long-standing problems surrounding the identification of the Greek agora at Corinth. Despite positive evidence to the contrary, including concentrations of state owned property and public buildings, many have been unwilling to recognize the area beneath the Roman forum as the Corinthian agora, because, as they argue, it lacks the prerequisite civic buildings among other conditional requirements (Donati 2010). What exactly these prerequisite civic buildings should look like in the archaeological record and the extent to which Corinth as a conservative oligarchy required such institutions on the same scale as Athens are issues that remain unanswered.

Another important source for the Greek agora is Roland Martin's still influential monograph, *Recherches sur l'agora grecque* (Martin 1951). Before this study few had attempted a broad synthesis of the archaeological and literary evidence related to the Greek agora (Tritsch 1932; Wycherley 1942). None could be compared to the large corpus of material presented by Martin, who traced the development of the agora from Homer to the Hellenistic period. His history was masterfully arranged, almost reading as a novel that described the agora's humble origins, to its classical apex corresponding with Ionian innovations in Greek town planning, and ultimately in what Martin saw as its decline and folly during the Hellenistic period. Beyond the twists and turns of his calculated narrative, Martin laid the foundations for an appreciation of the mechanics of the Greek agora and his methodologies and conclusions are still relevant today.

Although Martin explored possible Near Eastern and Aegean Bronze Age influences, he ultimately concluded that the Greek agora was an original creation of Greek urbanism. Its manifestation, utilization and representation within the Greek city were closely intertwined with Greek urban practices. As Martin showed, the agora during the Archaic period (650–480 B.C.) was characterized by its spatial irregularity: buildings were few and lacked any sense of forming an architectural ensemble and open space provided the community with an accessible gathering venue. Despite its rather modest form, especially compared to contemporary sanctuaries, Martin argued through a skillful dissection of the literary and archaeological evidence that the early agora was a critical component of Greek political, judicial, religious and agonistic livelihood, just as it had been in the Homeric epics.

According to Martin, the turning point for a new conception of the Greek agora had its origins in the aftermath of the Persian Wars with the innovations of the fifth century B.C. town planner and theoretician Hippodamos of Miletus. It was in the Ionian Greek cities of Asia Minor that new aesthetics in urban planning and architectural forms were fully realized and then applied. Rational forms were now preferred over the irrational, and the Greek agora became integrated into the urban fabric of

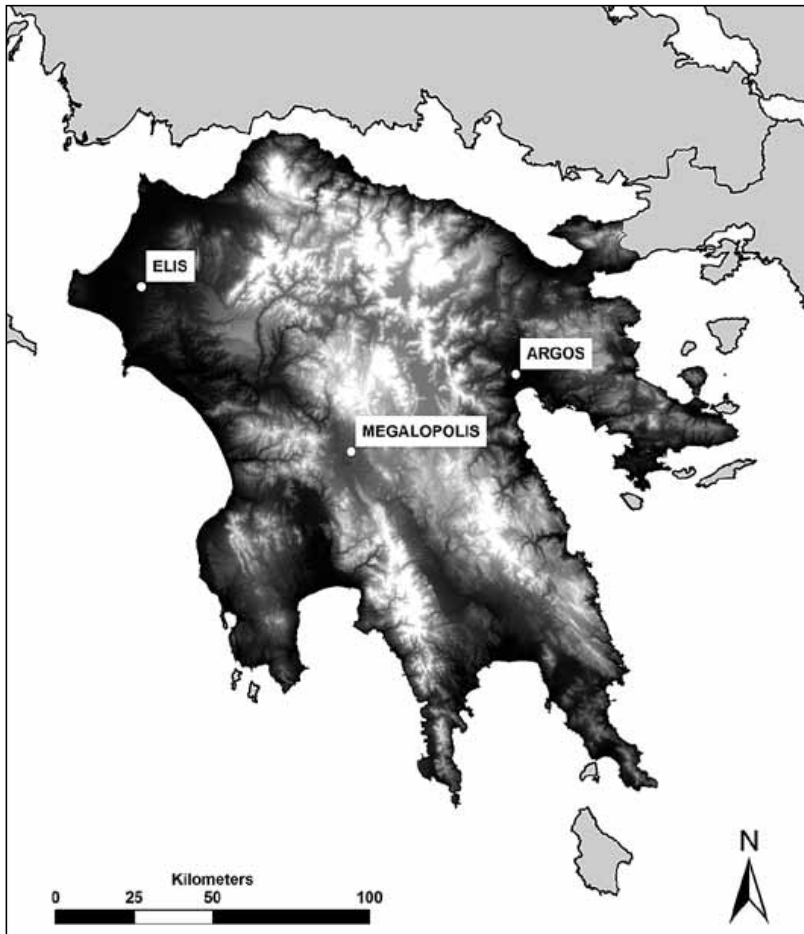
the city at a privileged location. The built environment of the agora itself took on a more complex appearance during the fifth century B.C., and its architectural form and overall expression were closely crystallized with its diverse functions. In Martin's model, the diffusion of a more structured ensemble finally reached Mainland Greece from Asia Minor by the end of the fifth century B.C. and achieved maturity during the following century.

Notwithstanding its positive impact on Greek urban studies and influential presentation of the dynamics and morphology of the Greek agora in a comprehensive history, there are nonetheless shortcomings in *Recherches sur l'agora grecque*. One is struck by the inherent limitations of undertaking such a massive study. This is especially apparent in the chapters that explore the archaeological evidence for Archaic and Classical agoras by region. A full treatment of the material at each site was not possible, and in most instances Martin could only offer abridged summaries that fit into his narrative when convenient. In addition, the limited archaeological material available in the period following World War II is noticeable. Martin relied heavily on the Athenian agora and an archaeological sample that favored the monumental Hellenistic cities of Asia Minor.

Since Martin, only a handful of studies have appeared that explore the wider physical and social dynamics of the Greek agora across multiple settlements (Kenzler 1999; Hoepfner and Lehmann, eds., 2006; Giannikouri, ed., 2011). The major contribution of these works is that they integrate recent archaeological material into discussions on the Greek agora, such as the Archaic agora at Megara Hyblaea on Sicily (Vallet, Villard, and Auberson 1976; Gras and Tréziny 2001) and the Hellenistic and Roman agora on Kos (Rocco and Livadiotti 2011). Even so, the trend in classical archaeology remains publishing the excavations of individual sites, rather than pursuing diachronic multi-context histories. Ongoing and recent fieldwork at such places as Pella, Mantinea, Aphrodisias, Kythnos and many other locations throughout the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions are critically important for recalibrating standard perceptions and misconceptions about the Greek agora. Multi-settlement and multi-regional discourses are now possible; however, they are relatively scarce, because such a task entails confronting large amounts of diverse material.

## Peloponnesian Models

This study investigates the Greek agora from a different angle by focusing on the Peloponnese, and more specifically the settlements of Argos, Elis and Megalopolis (fig. 8.3). By reshaping the dialogue squarely into a regional framework, one can detect localized trends within multiple archaeological contexts. In many ways the Peloponnese is ideal for further exploration. Even though the region formed the backbone of Greek culture and was the territory where some of the oldest and most histori-



**Figure 8.3:** The Peloponnese showing the three sites included in study (ASTER GDEM is a product of METI and NASA).

cally significant cities and sanctuaries were located (e.g., Sparta, Corinth, Olympia), the settlements here are often overlooked. Some of the most influential surveys on Greek urbanism either ignore the Peloponnese altogether or at best give cursory attention to the region. Everything from Roland Martin's landmark study, *L'urbanisme dans la Grèce antique* (Martin 1974), to Wolfram Hoepfner and Ernst-Ludwig Schwandner's polemical overview of the Greek city and democratic ideals, *Haus und Stadt in klassischen Griechenland* (Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994), refrain from integrating Peloponnesian settlements into their historical narratives.

When Peloponnesian settlements do receive attention, the discourse primarily focuses on Argos, Corinth and Sparta. The three are usually grouped together as classic examples of de-nucleated settlements that coalesce into a single dominant urban center by a gradual process spanning several centuries (Hölscher 1998; Osanna 1999). Part of the reason is because Thucydides famously characterized Sparta during the fifth century B.C. as a collection of small villages arranged *kata komas* (separate communities) in the old tradition (Thuc. 1.10). For the most part archaeological



excavations at Argos and Corinth have confirmed the existence of loose settlement clusters from the location of early burials. This Peloponnesian model of staggered development is often used to create a regional dichotomy between “old-fashioned” Mainland Greece and the rational town planning of the Greek West and Ionia. Seemingly straightforward, this contrast often disregards the fact that a number of Peloponnesian settlements were grid-planned cities as early as the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Halieis in the southern Argolid (Boyd and Jameson 1981) and Arcadian Trapezous near Megalopolis (Karapanagiotou 2005) are just two examples.

From the approximately 130 Greek cities known to have existed in the Peloponnese during the Archaic and Classical periods (650–323 B.C.), the archaeological and literary evidence confirm nearly twenty different agoras (Hansen and Nielsen, eds., 2004). In the majority of instances, however, knowledge of these agoras is limited to snippets of information from an ancient author, inscription or partially excavated context. For example, Pausanias mentioned in the second century A.D. that the agora in the Achaean city of Aigion had a grave monument of a certain Talthybios (Paus. 3.12.7) and that the agora in the southern Laconian city of Oitylos had a wooden image of Apollo Karneios (Paus. 3.25.10). Similarly, excavations near the theater at the harbor settlement of Epidaurus in the Argolid revealed boundary stones inscribed “boundary of the agora” (Petrounakos 2011). Yet without more substantial archaeological evidence none of these sites are helpful in formulating comprehensive models of the Greek agora.

It is with great disappointment that the Spartan agora remains indefinable. Even though Pausanias gave a detailed description of the monuments, civic buildings and sanctuaries in the Spartan agora, as it existed in his time (Paus. 3.11.2–11), sporadic excavations over the past century have been unable to resolve its identification. One possible location for the Spartan agora is on the Palaiokastro hill, approximately 200 meters east of the monumental stone theater and urban sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos. Here, excavations have brought to light a large circular platform of uncertain function dating to the Hellenistic period, a long Roman Stoa toward the east, and what appears to be the southern end of another monumental Roman stoa north of the circular platform. Some scholars believe that the two stoas defined the southern and western sides of the Spartan agora (Waywell 1999, 1–14; Kourinou 2000, 97–129). Even if the Palaiokastro hill is the correct location of the Spartan agora—so far only a tentative suggestion—there are still too many uncertainties. Only a few structures have been found in the putative Spartan agora and few remains date earlier than the Hellenistic period. While the literary sources are indeed useful, including the lengthy description of the site by Pausanias, it is impractical to grasp the spatial and architectural elements of the Spartan agora without better evidence.

On a more positive note, ongoing archaeological fieldwork projects in the Peloponnese should shed new light on the Greek agora. Old sites excavated in the nineteenth and early twentieth century are being reexamined and new sites are being discovered for the first time. For example, the 39<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classi-

cal Antiquities has renewed archaeological fieldwork in the agora at Mantinea, more than a century after the original French excavations. Recent excavations at Messene by the Archaeological Society at Athens have uncovered a large Hellenistic stoa along the northern side of the agora with measuring devices (*sekomata*) in situ (Themelis 2007). Subsurface structures have been identified in the Messenian agora by a concurrent geophysical survey. In general, geophysical survey and remote sensing are quickly becoming important methodological tools for studying and reconstructing Greek agoras within the Peloponnese and the surrounding urban environments. Over the past five years geophysical surveys have taken place at Sikyon (University of Thessaly, Institute for Mediterranean Studies), Tegea (Hellenic-Norwegian Excavations at Tegea), and at numerous settlements in Triphylia (German Archaeological Institute's Ancient Triphylia Survey). Finally, satellite remote sensing is being employed by the present author to explore the urban development in and around the agoras of Elis, Mantinea and Megalopolis.

The present study concentrates on three Peloponnesian settlements (Argos, Elis and Megalopolis), whose urban apparatus becomes known from the archaeological and literary evidence. This means that one can draw tangible conclusions about the structure and development of each agora, and how Greek commercial and civic space ties in with the broader patterns of urban history at each site. Time plays an important role here. In each city one must consider how elements changed over time and what factors, either internal or external, contributed to these changes. The Argive agora is tremendously instructive in this respect, because, as a Peloponnesian settlement with a rich history, one can trace its development from the eighth century B.C. to the end of Late Antiquity. At present, Argos and Corinth are the only Peloponnesian cities where the archaeological material permits such an extensive exploration over a wide time span.

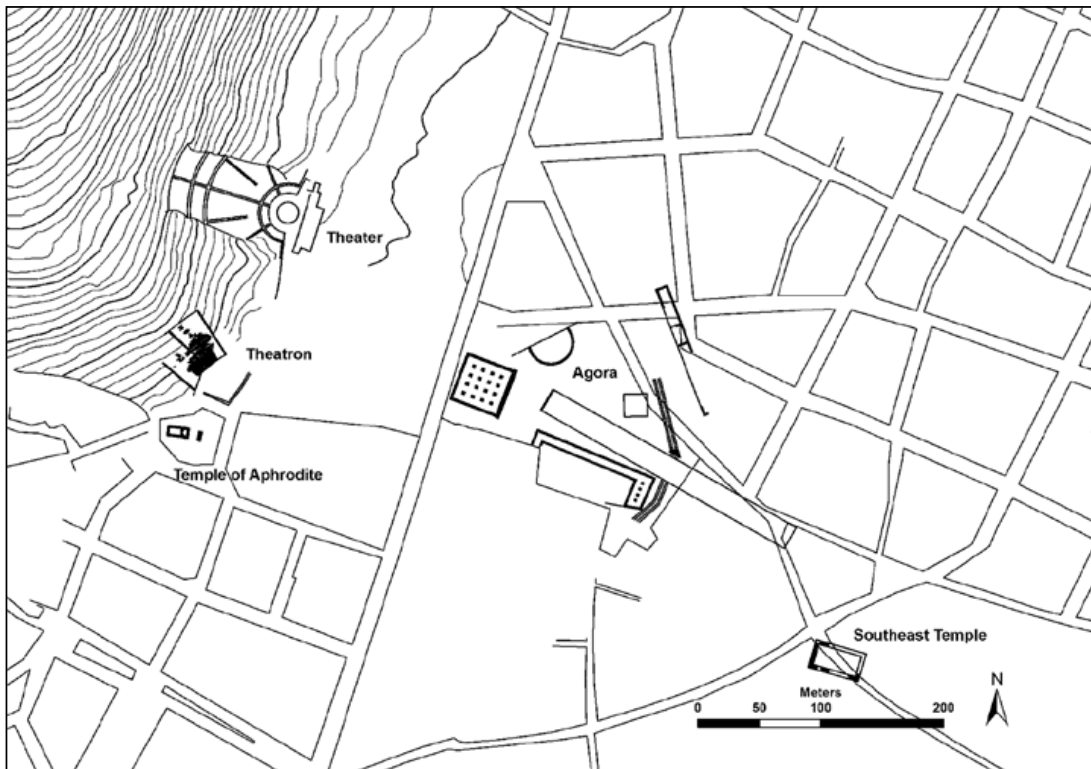
The two other settlements, Elis and Megalopolis, offer an interesting contrast to the conventional sequence of gradual Peloponnesian urban development. Since both were established following a synoicism in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. respectively, the agoras at these sites serve as alternative models. Without the influence of any significant prior occupation, Elis and Megalopolis adapted to the needs of a population at a specific moment. This provides a unique opportunity to observe how the Greek agora responded to such conditions, while offering valuable insights into the integration and manifestation of the classical agora. The Classical context of the Elean and Megalopolitan agoras is critical for a more balanced understanding of Greek commercial and civic space. The spatial and architectural dynamics of these agoras diverge considerably from the Athenian agora, as well as from each other, demonstrating that the Greek agora cannot be defined in one way.

## Argos

The Argive agora lies at the southwestern corner of the present day town of the same name, just below the ancient acropolis known today as the Larissa hill (fig. 8.4). Here, an irregular area has been the focus of systematic excavations by the French School at Athens for more than 100 years. The current boundaries of the agora are artificially defined by features of the modern town, whose roads and property lines limit the extent of archaeological excavations. The basic structure of the Argive agora consists of a natural ridge along the southern side that rises slightly above the surrounding topography. During the fifth century B.C., a north-facing stoa with an inverted wing along its eastern side was built here. The western boundary of the agora was defined by a large hypostyle hall contemporary with the stoa and identified by the French archaeologists as the bouleterion. Since the front of this building faced east, it likely marked the agora's western border; however, some argue that the western boundary of the agora was closer to the Larissa hill, near a rock-cut theatron and sanctuary of Aphrodite (Marchetti and Rizakis 1995, 441–443).

The lowlands north of the stoa were susceptible to annual flooding and required proper drainage throughout the history of the site. Beginning around 500 B.C., and with significant additions in the following centuries, a large collection channel and conduit for water was built to carry excess water through the agora (Pariante, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 212). The northern section of the agora was characterized by a more loose arrangement of structures. A large krepidoma at the northwest, perhaps a terrace wall or the bottom courses of a building, may tentatively be identified as the southern temenos of the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios, one of the oldest and most celebrated cults at Argos. Instead of running parallel or perpendicular to other structures in the agora, this putative sanctuary had a diagonal orientation. A semicircular orchestra, only partially exposed and dated to the fourth century B.C., abuts the krepidoma along the same axis. The diagonal orientation of the krepidoma and orchestra is countered by a long structure tentatively identified as a second stoa at the northeast that is only partially excavated and of uncertain date. The opposing diagonal alignments of these three features (krepidoma, orchestra and a northeastern building), together with the southern stoa and hypostyle hall, gave the Argive agora an unusual triangular appearance.

Before the Roman period the central space of the agora was free from major constructions. By the fourth century B.C. the main feature was a racetrack set slightly off-axis from the southern stoa. It began just in front of the hypostyle hall and continued more than 200 meters toward the east. Since the eastern side of the agora remains largely unexcavated, it is difficult to understand the original urban plan. One would assume that the agora continued as far east as the end of the racetrack, but this cannot be confirmed without proper excavations. Foundations belonging to a Hellenistic temple that almost certainly had a classical predecessor lay approximately seventy meters south of the end of the racetrack. This is the best evidence for the southeastern



**Figure 8.4:** Argos (drawing J.C. Donati).

boundary of the agora. Other structures within the agora include a square fountain house beneath a Roman nymphaeum that might date to the fifth century B.C. and a small Hellenistic temple.

One of the debates surrounding the Argive agora deals with the sociopolitical factors that contributed to its formative stages. The most common model creates a union between the democratic government established at Argos in the 460s B.C. and the origins of the agora (Courtils 1992; Viret Bernal 1992; Leppin 1999). The second half of the fifth century B.C. was indeed a period when monumental architecture in the Argive agora becomes recognizable in the archaeological record. The important question here is whether these developments were sparked by the needs of a new democratic constitution, or whether they were a continuum of evolving urban practices. The first explanation faithfully follows the established narrative of the Athenian agora, where a strong connection is drawn between the democratic reforms at the end of the sixth century B.C. and the enhancement of civic space. In the case of Argos, however, an examination of the material evidence indicates that the Argives began the process of preparing their commercial, religious and civic space before the democratic government came to power.

Admittedly it is difficult to characterize the formative stages of the Argive agora, because the built environment does not take on permanent architectural form until the end of the sixth century B.C. Therefore, one cannot definitively say whether Argos

had an agora before 500 B.C. There are indications, however, that early developments had an impact on its ultimate placement within the city's urban fabric.

During the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., Argos consisted of small villages all clustered around one another (Hall 1997, 93–99; Vink 2002, 54–56). From what can be extracted from the archaeological evidence, the southwestern village where the agora would eventually develop acquired a heightened significance during these early stages. The signs of occupation, such as burials and modest architectural remains, are more numerous and more diverse here than elsewhere. Deposits with iron slag, metal fragments and clay indicate that artisans were working around the southern stoa and semicircular orchestra in the second-half of the eighth century B.C. (Roux 1968, 1020–1021; Pariente 1992b, 676). These are contemporary with two or three structures beneath the southern stoa that have the same orientation as the classical building's northern colonnade (Piérart and Thalmann 1978, 783). While this is not evidence that Argos had an agora at the end of the eighth century B.C., it does show that the spatial parameters of the agora, at least on the southern side, were very likely influenced by an arrangement of structures that predate any classical building by as much as 300 years.

By the middle of the seventh century B.C. burials were confined to communal cemeteries that bordered the periphery of the inhabited area (Hall 1997, 99; Vink 2002, 58). This development is consistent with contemporary trends in Greek urban practices where the dead were frequently restricted to large cemeteries beyond the immediate areas of habitation. Yet compared to the previous century, new constructions around the classical agora and elsewhere are noticeably less, although one does clearly observe a tighter urban environment. Argos is a classic case of a de-nucleated settlement coalescing into a single dominant urban center by a gradual process spanning several centuries.

The late sixth century B.C. construction in the Argive agora is of special interest. Significant alterations to the built environment show that the Argives intended to transform the area into something more formal. At this time an open-air drainage channel and conduit for water was built: a crucial addition for the construction of permanent structures in the lowlands north of the southern stoa (Pariente, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 215–216). It is worth noting the similarities to early drainage systems at Athens and Corinth that were vital for the initial development and expansion of the agoras in these cities (Thompson and Wycherley, 194–195; Morgan 1953, 131–134). Contemporary with the waterworks are a series of walls on top of the southern ridge (fig. 8.5). They have the same orientation as the northern colonnade of the southern stoa, and, it will be recalled, the late eighth century B.C. structures that preceded them (Pariente, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 212–213). These walls were not from simple domestic structures. One building was more than thirty meters in length, and besides many Attic black-glaze cups, a number of lead weights were discovered in associated levels. Also found were eleven lead plaques. One is inscribed and deals with the delivery of a diverse number of commercial goods, such as straw (Piérart and



**Figure 8.5:** Archaic foundations beneath the northern colonnade of the southern stoa in the Argive agora from southeast (photo J.C. Donati).

Thalman 1987, 590–591; *SEG* 1987, nos. 284–286). Other weights and lead plaques came from later levels and should be associated with commercial activity here. None of these small finds have been published in detail, but they obviously have important implications on early developments in the Argive agora.

The Argive agora had at least one permanent stone temple by the beginning of the fifth century B.C. This was the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios, one of the oldest and most important cults at Argos. It was here that public decrees and law codes were inscribed on bronze plaques or stone pillars and put on display. This is detailed by Thucydides, who specifies that a 420 B.C. treaty during the Peloponnesian War was inscribed on a stone pillar in the Argive agora within the sanctuary of Apollo (Thuc. 5.47.11). As it turns out, the precise location of the sanctuary remains elusive, although there is



**Figure 8.6:** Doric architrave block with nail holes originally from the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios in the Argive agora (photo J.C. Donati).

good reason to suspect that it was at the northern side of the agora based on the find-spots of later inscriptions related to the cult and the krepidoma near the semicircular orchestra (Marchetti and Rizakis 1995, 445–454, 467–472; Courbin 1998). In addition, Doric architrave blocks and an inscribed altar dedicated to Apollo, found reused in a Late Roman structure within the hypostyle hall, appear to have originated from the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios (Roux 1953, 116–123; Bommelaer and Courtils 1994, 61–68). Stylistically the architrave blocks date to the early fifth century B.C., and there is general agreement that they come from an archive building within the sanctuary or even from the temple itself. A number of these blocks bear nail holes and some of them even have bronze nails still attached with bronze fragments (fig. 8.6). These are from bronze plaques that were once attached to the temple, remarkably similar to Thucydides’ statement at 5.47.11 that the sanctuary housed public decrees (Charneux 1953, 395–397; Courtils 1981, 609).

The connection between Apollo’s cult and public record keeping shows that the god was a vital guarantor of political life at Argos. Apollo provided the city’s inhabitants with religious and political authority, as did the similar cult of Apollo at Corinth whose imposing sanctuary and temple also served as a repository for public decrees near the Corinthian agora (Bookidis and Stroud 2004, 410). The close connection

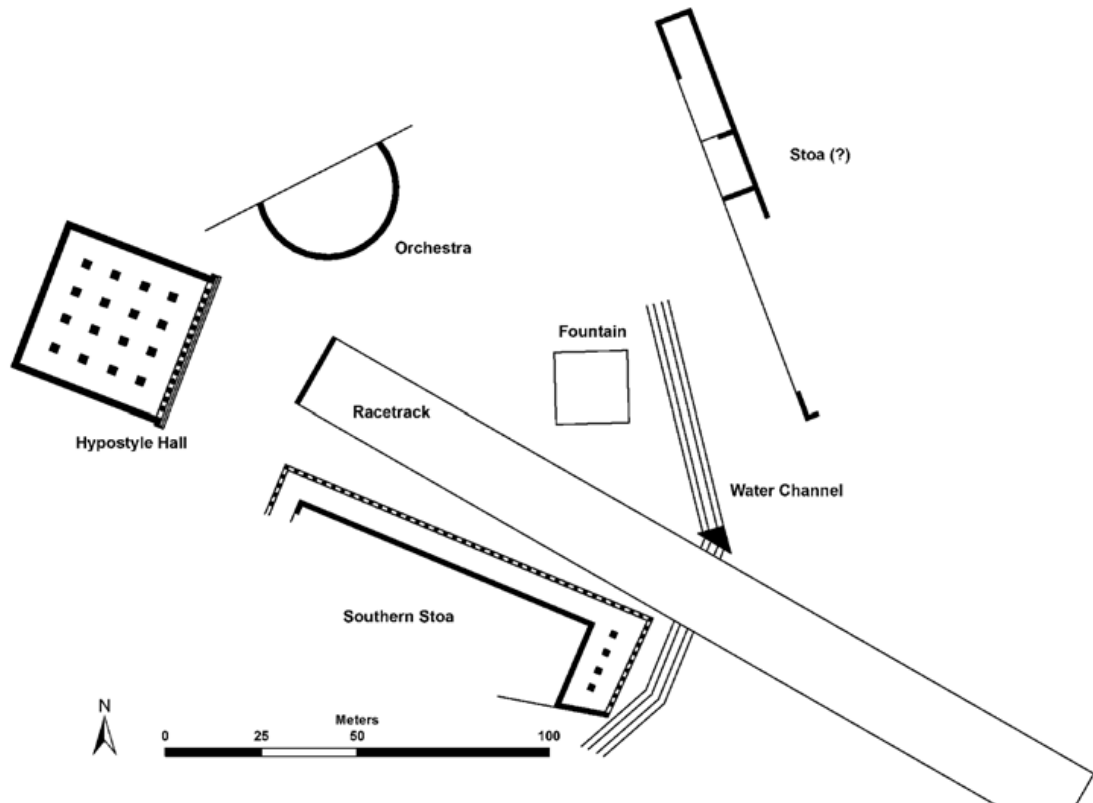


**Figure 8.7:** Archaic inscription from the Theban dedication in the Argive agora (Pariente 1992a, p. 228, fig. 2).

between the Argive agora and Apollo Lykeios is further confirmed by Sophocles in the *Electra* (6–7), who, alluding to the epithet of Apollo as the wolf-god, describes the agora at Argos as “of the god who kills wolves” (τοῦ λυκοκτόνου θεοῦ ἀγορὰ Λύκειος).

A heroon to those who fought in the legendary Theban expedition was likely constructed in the Argive agora by the end of the sixth century B.C. (Pariente 1992a). The heroon consisted of a number of upright boundary markers surrounding an open central space. Circular cavities on two or three sides of each marker were for the placement of wooden bars. Interestingly, the holes do not correctly line up for the erection of a boundary fence in their present arrangement near the semicircular orchestra, and not surprisingly the stratigraphy indicates that the heroon was re-erected here sometime in the Late Roman period. One marker carries an inscription that reads “of the heroes at Thebes” (ἡρώων τῶν ἐν Θέβαις). The early lettering style dates to the middle of the sixth century B.C. (fig. 8.7). Pausanias mentions that he saw statues of the seven leaders who died at Thebes in the Argive agora (Paus. 2.20.5). He further says that the Argives adopted the statue group after the play of Aeschylus produced in 467 B.C. As others have noted, Pausanias must be referring to another Theban dedication, rather than this heroon, which dates before the production of Aeschylus’ play (Pariente 1992a, 203). That there did exist an earlier Theban dedication is certain. Less clear is whether it was originally erected in the Argive agora. Similar monuments from other cities (e.g., Corinth, Athens, Elis) show that small heroa dedicated to legendary heroes or lawgivers were ubiquitous in Greek agoras (Kenzler 1999, 184–195); therefore, the Theban dedication would not be out of place in such a context.





**Figure 8.8:** Agora of Argos in the fourth century B.C. (drawing J.C. Donati).

Two trends emerge from this brief description of the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. developments in the Argive agora. First, the Argives set about to create a more complex urban center. Water channels prevented seasonal flooding from occurring and the boundaries of the agora were given greater definition. The southern side was defined by the natural ridge and a series of commercial structures, while the northern side was marked by the sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios. Second, one observes an ensemble that combines commercial and religious structures. These significant alterations to the built environment demonstrate that the Argives intended to transform the spatial environment into something more formal and lasting. All of this occurred within the space of what is recognized as the classical agora, showing that the initial architectural stages of the Argive agora emerged by 500 B.C. while the city was governed by an oligarchic constitution.

Throughout the classical period the Argive agora witnessed intense building activity, including the construction of conspicuous public facilities, more urban sanctuaries, and commercial and cultural venues (fig. 8.8). According to the archaeological record, construction remained stagnant until the addition of the southern stoa and the hypostyle hall in the second-half of the fifth century B.C. Excluding the Apollo Lykeios sanctuary, these were the largest structures built in the Argive agora until now. The southern stoa was a monumental successor of the earlier buildings on the

southern ridge, while the hypostyle hall occupied a previously undeveloped location. Both appear to have been part of a single building program: the northern colonnade of the southern stoa is so closely aligned with the southern wall of the hypostyle hall to preclude any disassociation (Marchetti and Rizakis 1995, 463–467). Pottery deposits beneath the southern stoa place its construction, and therefore likely that of the hypostyle hall, in the third-quarter of the fifth century B.C.

In plan the hypostyle hall was nearly a perfect square with sixteen pillars providing internal support (Bommelaer and Courtils 1994). The building communicated directly with the agora toward the east. The French archaeologists Jean-François Bommelaer and Jacques des Courtils reconstruct the building with a monumental Doric facade having fourteen columns. This is a hypothetical reconstruction considering that no Doric columns or architrave fragments have been discovered and the building only survives to stylobate level at the southeastern corner. Despite uncertainties in the architectural details, the hypostyle hall must have been an impressive building in the Argive agora.

There is no direct evidence, such as an inscription or small finds, to explain the function of the hypostyle hall. Because of its large size and approximate architectural parallels with other hypostyle halls thought to be bouleuteria (e.g., Athens, Sikyon), many classical archaeologists and historians identify the building as the Argive bouleterion. One must admit, however, that architectural parallels before the Hellenistic period are relatively scarce. The few examples that do survive from the fifth century B.C. show that hypostyle halls were inherently multifunctional, they were not confined to a Greek agora, nor were they necessarily used for political gatherings. In size and scale the closest contemporary parallels are the Telesterion at Eleusis (Travlos 1988, 91–169) and the Odeion of Pericles at Athens (Camp 2001, 100–101), neither of which were civic structures. It is not until the Hellenistic period that one finds examples of square and rectangular hypostyle halls frequently being used for civic gatherings, such as the bouleuteria at Sikyon and Dodona (Gneisz 1990, 316–317, 351–352). Even so many Hellenistic hypostyle halls were not bouleuteria (e.g., Thasos, Delos). The notion that the hypostyle hall at Argos was a civic structure is one possibility; however, it is preferable to remain cautious on a specific identification until further evidence turns up in the archaeological record.

Other buildings within the Argive agora include the southern stoa (Pariante, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 213–214), which dates to the third-quarter of the fifth century B.C., and a northeastern structure (Pariante, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 215), which might date to the same period or later. The incorporation of monumental stoas in the Greek agora was an increasingly common phenomenon throughout the fifth century B.C. and the presence of one or more stoas at Argos should be viewed within this architectural tradition. As a physical entity the stoa was used to great effect as an organizer of space. Routinely it was placed along the perimeter of an open area, as the southern stoa in the Argive agora, where it became a monumental backdrop to the everyday commotion taking place in the agora. Three Hellenistic inscrip-

tions reused as building material in Roman renovations to the northern foundations of the southern stoa mention *agoranomoi*, officials responsible for market regulations (Vollgraff 1904, 427; Piérart 2001, 492–494). Cavities on the upper surface of one of the inscriptions indicate that the inscribed block was used as a measuring device (*sekoma*) for liquids and grains, whose capacity was certified by the *agoranomos*.

Since the original context of the *agoranomoi* inscriptions is uncertain, one cannot be certain whether activity related to trade and commerce was the primary function of the southern stoa, let alone whether such activity occurred here after its initial construction in the fifth century B.C. There was certainly precedent for trade and commerce in this area of the Argive agora from the lead weights and an inscribed plaque associated with predecessor buildings of the southern stoa dating to the end of sixth century B.C. This evidence, in combination with the *agoranomoi* inscriptions, alludes to a continuity of function even though a gap exists between the material evidence.

Other facilities in the agora included a semicircular orchestra and a racetrack in front of the hypostyle hall. Both date no earlier than the fourth century B.C., and it is possible that they were not constructed until the Hellenistic period. The orchestra was an open-air venue bordered by a course of limestone blocks that defined the boundary of the semicircular area (Pariente, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 214–215). Its western end was cut nearly in half by the aforementioned krepidoma. The starting line of the racetrack with sixteen lanes began in front of the hypostyle hall and continued more than 200 meters eastward (Piérart and Thalmann 1987, 585–588; Piérart and Touchais 1996, 51–52). For its entirety, the running surface of the racetrack consisted of a hard-packed gravel surface. The only exception was the halfway mark where the running surface crossed over the late sixth century B.C. drainage channel. Here, the Argives built a triangular holding basin and platform for the racetrack to pass over, and they even placed a stone pillar to mark the halfway point.

It is challenging to understand how the inhabitants of Argos used these venues on a daily basis without contextualized small finds recovered through excavations or insights from an ancient source. The racetrack obviously accommodated footraces at certain times throughout the year, but this must have happened only occasionally depending on what athletic events corresponded to Argive religious festivals. Likewise, some scholars are keen to view the semicircular orchestra as serving religious and cultural needs. Suggestions range from it being used by chorus dancers associated with unknown rites for the cult of Apollo Lykeios (Moretti 1993, 6; Pariente, Piérart, and Thalmann 1998, 215), and for dancers involved in matrimonial contests connected to the legendary Argive past (Marchetti 1996, 120).

It is worth noting the almost identical arrangement in the Corinthian agora, where a fifth century B.C. circular platform of uncertain function stands near the starting line of a contemporary racetrack (fig. 8.9). On a general level, therefore, one can say that the Greek agora was a venue that could accommodate large groups of people to witness public spectacles, just as it could accommodate commercial, civic and religious gatherings. During religious festivals that were sponsored by the state,



**Figure 8.9:** Circular platform in the Corinthian agora from southwest. The starting line of racetrack in the left background (photo J.C. Donati).

the agora was the preferred, and even the most practical site to hold athletic events or dances connected to urban festivals. At Argos the specific details of these events are obscure.

At least one urban sanctuary was added to the Argive agora in the fifth century B.C. Foundations of a large temple have been recovered approximately seventy meters south of the eastern end of the racetrack (Consolaki and Hackens 1980). The proximity between temple and racetrack implies that the former was integrated into the agora, or at least very close to its southeastern corner. If this is true, then the southeastern temple, like the earlier sanctuary of Apollo Lykeios along the northern side, was a peripheral feature providing definition to the Argive agora. The foundations of the temple were constructed from large poros blocks, out of which an east-facing temple can be reconstructed. Fragments of Doric columns and capitals survive, but stylistically they date to the third century B.C. Wall blocks and columns of an earlier structure that were reused in the foundations of the temple imply the existence of a classical predecessor. Further support comes from a number of architectural terracottas recovered from the building that date to the middle of the fifth century B.C. Although it is unclear to which deity the temple was dedicated, several Hellenistic coin blanks found intentionally deposited inside the temple indicate that the cult had an administrative function in the Argive state.

The patterns in the spatial organization of the Argive agora throughout the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. provide an image of a city that adopts a more monumental and multifaceted urban center. The spatial limits are more clearly defined with monumental public buildings that look inward toward the central space. Some structures, such as the southern stoa, appear to have cultivated past tendencies in the built environment. Other venues, such as the orchestra and racetrack, created new spaces for human ventures. Commercial activity was likely prominent, two urban temples provided moral and legal authority, and an earlier heroon made a connection with the city's legendary past. Athletic events and perhaps religious festivals took place here. Not only was the agora a suitable urban venue for festivals because of its openness and proximity to urban sanctuaries, but it was also a symbolic location for uniting the population. Finally, it is possible that civic magistrates assembled in the hypostyle hall. However, one cannot assume that civic officials only gathered in the largest and most elaborate public buildings, or that these types of buildings only were intended to serve the needs of civic officials.

The diverse venues in the Argive agora show that this space was the public and religious heart of a community of citizens. It is this characteristic in particular—the ability of the agora to forge a common thread in the everyday pursuits of its citizens at a common location—that help one appreciate the overall mechanics of the Argive agora within its urban context.

## Elis

The Elean agora is situated within a level region between the southern banks of the Peneios River and the city's ancient acropolis (fig. 8.10). The topography and identification of buildings in and around the agora have been the primary focus of archaeological fieldwork for more than one-hundred years by the Austrian Archaeological Institute at Athens (1910–1914; 1960–1981) and the Archaeological Society at Athens (1960–present) with the support of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities.

Elis was a significant settlement in the northwestern Peloponnese, serving as the administrator of the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia and the Olympic Games. According to the ancient geographer Strabo and historian Diodorus (Strabo fig. 8.3.2; Diod. 11.54.1), the city was established as the center of a polis in a synoicisms that took place in 471 B.C. (Roy 2002). Before this date, however, the surrounding Elean communities, apparently without a central city for administration, were powerful enough to expand their influence through warfare or favorable alliances and impose perioikic status on neighboring towns (Roy 1997; 2002, 251–252). This included settlements in the regions of Akroreia and Pisatis, and perhaps even those within Triphylia further south. The most significant gain of the Eleans was the seizure of Olympia from nearby



**Figure 8.10:** Elis: satellite image (DigitalGlobe © 2015).

Pisa around 570 B.C. (Paus. 6.22.4). Not only did the Eleans host the Olympic Games, but they used the sanctuary for their own administration and set up public documents there (Hansen and Fisher-Hansen 1994, 86–89; Crowther 2003; Nielsen 2007). Several bronze inscriptions from the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. relate to the Games, but many refer to the Elean state. These deal with the use of land, treaties with other states and *leges sacrae* in the Elean dialect (Minon 2007, nos. 2–20). In addition, civic buildings at Olympia were used by Elean officials for the administration of the sanctuary and perhaps internal Elean affairs. A bouleuterion dating as early as the sixth century B.C. and a prytaneion of the fifth century B.C. have been identified through archaeological excavations (Mallwitz 1972, 125–128, 235–240; Morgan and Coulton 1997, 112–113) and descriptions of the site by Xenophon and Pausanias (Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.31; Paus. 5.15.8–9; 5.20.10; 5.23.1; 5.24.1,9).

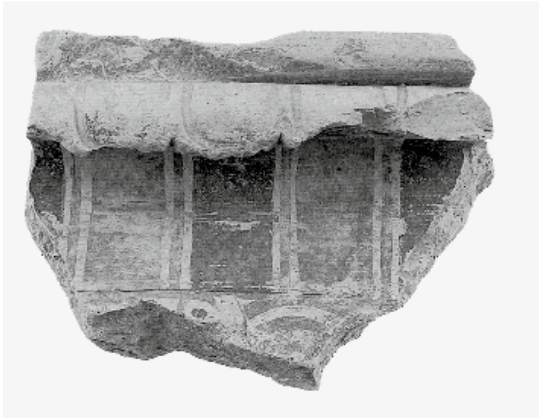
The unique circumstances of the Elean state creates an interesting environment from which to explore the structure and development of its agora. Many factors present in the sociopolitical structure of Elis, including its transition from a decentralized community into a bipolar political entity, are not often encountered in other Greek settlements. From the sixth century B.C. onwards, the political organization of the Eleans was closely intertwined with the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, even after the establishment of Elis following the synoicism of 471 B.C. Significant constitutional reforms were also concurrent with urban developments. Considering the epigraphical and literary evi-

dence, a conservative oligarchy dominated by a few influential families gradually gave way to a more inclusive oligarchy over the course of the sixth century B.C. (Minon 2007, no. 4; Arist. *Pol.* 5.6.10–11). This administrative arrangement in turn transformed into a democracy sometime in the first half of the fifth century B.C. The potential influence of these constitutional changes on the urban layout of Elis, as well as on the structure and administration of Olympia, are important when one examines the agora.

The advantage of studying the Elean agora, and then placing it within the wider context of other Greek agoras, is that the city is almost exclusively a classical and post-classical creation. Beyond some early burials and a scattering of archaic material whose relationship with an early settlement is unclear, very little material at Elis dates before the synoicism. Unlike Argos and Corinth, this provides a good opportunity to observe how a classical agora developed without the influence of an earlier settlement of significant size and population.

Instead of confirming that Elis was created *ex nihilo* following a synoicism, as one learns from Strabo and Diodorus, the archaeological evidence demonstrates that there did exist an early, albeit small settlement before 471 B.C. (Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999; Eder 2001). Sustainable signs of occupation appear during the eighth century B.C. Even though the remains are rather modest, they leave no doubt that people were congregating at Elis during an early period. The evidence largely consists of graves and pottery associated with burials found near the Hellenistic theater and along the slopes of the acropolis (Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999, 10–24). No architecture dating to this early period has been discovered, there are no signs of early cults, and the mortuary evidence is quite limited.

During the sixth century B.C., precisely when the Eleans were exerting their regional influence on surrounding communities and at Olympia, there are recognizable changes in the urban fabric. As at Argos and Corinth, the tendency in Greek urban practices was to eliminate burials from the domestic and public quarters of the city in favor of group cemeteries at the periphery. Something similar yet on a smaller scale occurred at Elis, because the theater area and southern region of what is recognized as the classical agora cease to be used for burials (Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999, 24–33). More intriguing evidence are a handful of painted architectural terracottas found immediately south of the classical agora (fig. 8.11). Two *sima* fragments are quite early and date around 580–560 B.C. based on similarities in style and workmanship to the early architectural terracottas from Olympia. Three other *sima* fragments date to end of the sixth century B.C. In total, the five *sima* fragments are the earliest evidence of architecture at the site (Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999, 25–33, 37–39). They likely came from small temples near the classical agora, but so far no contemporary foundations have been discovered. Another important discovery was an early bronze inscription found southwest of the classical agora that records a judicial process (Siewert 1994; 2001; Minon 2007, 15–17, no. 1). It was discovered among numerous fifth- and fourth-century B.C. terracotta figurines and other votives that presumably came from a nearby sanctuary (Mitsopoulos-Leon 2001). Considering the



**Figure 8.11:** Archaic terracotta sima discovered in the vicinity of the classical agora at Elis (Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999, pp. 27–28, fig. 14c).



**Figure 8.12:** Archaic bronze inscription discovered in the vicinity of the classical agora at Elis (Eder and Mitsopoulos-Leon 1999, p. 25, fig. 13).

early letter style and its boustrophedon arrangement, the inscription dates to the first half of the sixth century B.C. (fig. 8.12). This bronze object is unique at Elis and predates the earliest Elean inscriptions at Olympia by twenty-five years or more.

How one interprets the significance of the judicial inscription has important implications for the development of the agora. Some argue that the bronze plaque proves that judicial events were held in an Elean agora by the early sixth century B.C. and that the agora had an administrative function during this period. Peter Siewert surmises that the document was put on display in a nearby sanctuary associated with the contemporary architectural terracottas (Siewert 2000, 25). That the area of the classical agora functioned as a venue for political, judicial and religious meetings during the sixth century B.C. is certainly appealing. The termination of burials around the agora suggests that space at Elis was being restructured to fulfill other needs. The architectural terracottas imply the existence of early sanctuaries, and the bronze judicial document may have been stored in an archive of a sanctuary close to the agora. As similar evidence from Apollo cults at Argos and Corinth show, public documents were often displayed in a sanctuary next to the agora.

In truth, the evidence from archaic Elis is too slight to draw any tangible conclusions. The uniqueness of the judicial inscription does present a dilemma. Might its small size (smaller than a human hand), and the fact that archaeological excavations have not recovered any similar documents leave open the possibility that it was brought to Elis from Olympia much later? That the judicial inscription was found in a sacred deposit of the fourth century B.C. more than two centuries after it was inscribed should raise additional questions about its original provenance. Apart



from this inscription, the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia was the exclusive repository of Elean state documents by the end of the sixth century B.C. and throughout the fifth century B.C. Also peculiar is the lack of in situ architecture from this period at Elis. Were early structures in the area of the classical agora built of perishable materials that are more difficult to identify in the archaeological record? For now these are questions that remain unanswered.

Despite the limitations of the early material, the contextualized evidence clarifies two important details about Elis: (i) the synoicism did not lead to the creation of a new settlement where none existed before, and (ii) the patterns of habitation at Elis underwent changes during the sixth century B.C., although the exact nature and significance of these transformations are ambiguous. Regarding the first point, the contradiction of the material evidence with the literary accounts of Strabo and Diodorus is striking, especially since the ancient authors are explicit in the date and details of the synoicism. Most scholars explain the discrepancy between the archaeological and literary evidence through a different interpretation of the term synoicism (Roy 2002). Rather than accept the notion that synoicism amounts to a completely new city, as it did at Megalopolis (see below), there is consensus that the synoicism resulted from political and constitutional developments, perhaps to strengthen the position of the Elean state by uniting surrounding communities. Elis may have been a modest settlement before the synoicism, but it was probably not yet a polis-center.

It is important to note the divergence between Elis and other settlements in the Peloponnese. By the early fifth century B.C., the agoras at Argos and Corinth included spring houses, canals, workshops, stoas, sanctuaries, monumental stone temples, heroa and a modest collection of commercial and multipurpose venues. Nothing of the sort has been discovered in the agora at Elis. If the early settlement did have a place where people congregated for economic, religious and administrative needs, and if this place was the same as the classical agora, then it was largely an undeveloped public space with few permanent buildings.

Looking at the structure of the classical agora, the establishment of a polis-center at Elis following the synoicism did not lead to an immediate transformation of the urban environment. Substantial changes were slow to develop and stone architecture does not appear until the fourth century B.C. When visiting the site in the Roman period, Pausanias said that the Elean agora looked nothing like the large uniform agoras of the Ionian cities, commenting instead that it was built in the “older manner” (ἀρχαιότερα) with stoas separated from one another and with streets passing through them (Paus. 6.24.2). In other words, the Elean agora was not like the symmetrical and compact agoras defined by stoas and other monumental public buildings on all sides, often found in the grid-planned Hellenistic cities of Ionia (Martin 1951, 372–417). While Pausanias’ description of the site does not have any bearing on the appearance of the classical agora, his observation that the Elean agora was built in the “older manner” is the impression from the excavated remains today.

In plan the classical agora consisted of a loose group of buildings roughly arranged around an irregular open area (fig. 8.13). On the whole its spatial boundaries were sporadically, if not poorly defined, despite the presence of two monumental stoas that provided some semblance of structure. The West Stoa, a large three-aisled stoa in the Doric order, defined the western boundary of the agora and separated the public area from the city's western suburbs. Along the southern side of the agora, the South Stoa had an unusual double-sided arrangement with colonnades on both sides. Inside, the stoa was divided by a central partition wall. That these structures marked the western and southern limits of the Elean agora, at least in the Roman period, is made explicit by Pausanias who saw the West Stoa after entering the agora from the northwest (Paus. 6.24.2–3) and described the South Stoa as facing the agora and the exterior (Paus. 6.24.4–5). Both buildings were boundary markers that separated features inside the agora from those outside.

The northern and eastern regions of the Elean agora are less well defined. Sporadic archaeological excavations have revealed a scattering of foundations from small structures and bases from monuments, most of which date to the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Orlandos 1961, 133). None give clear definition to the spatial parameters of the agora. The only exceptions are a square Hellenistic structure with a central courtyard and surrounding rooms of uncertain function (Walter 1913, 149; Tritsch 1932, 73; Mylona 1984, 65–67), and the theater constructed out of an artificial

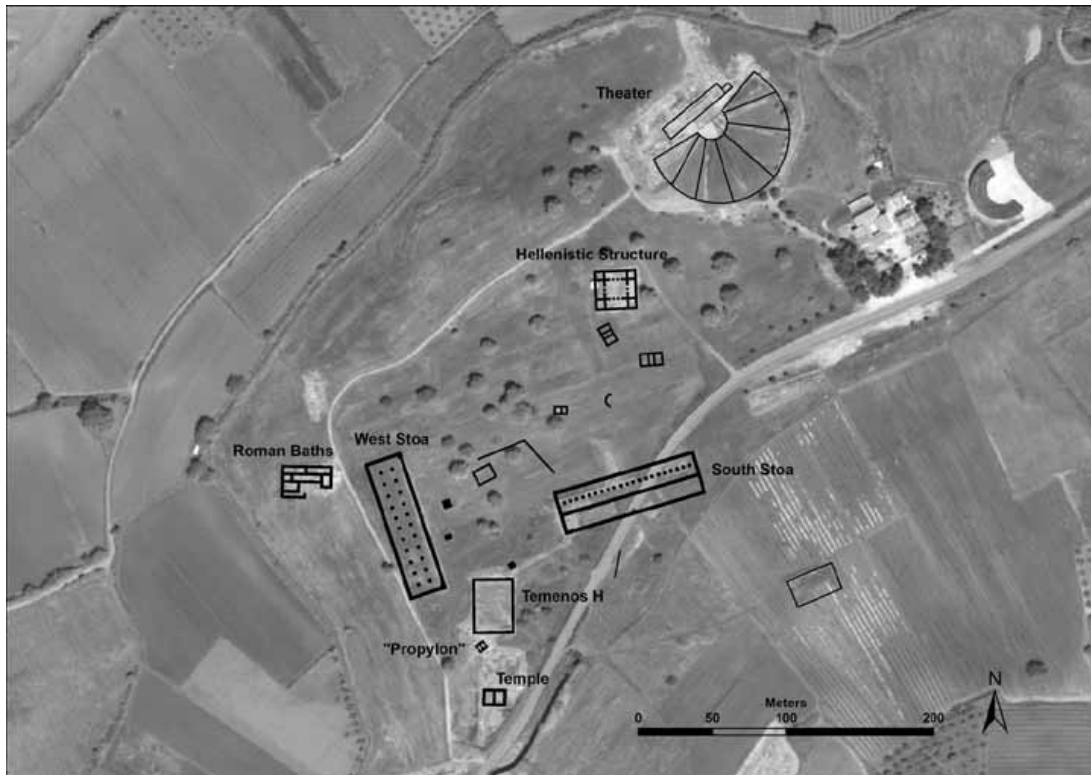


Figure 8.13: Agora of Elis: satellite image (DigitalGlobe © 2015).

earthen mound around 300 B.C. (Glaser 2001). Both stood near the agora's northeastern corner, since domestic structures near the theater imply that the public sphere ended somewhere close by (Mylona 1982, 50–51). The discovery of hundreds of Hellenistic bronze voting disks from the theater marked on one side with a di-gamma and alpha, an abbreviation for *Fᾶλις*, the dialectic name of Elis, and on the other side with a delta-alpha, an abbreviation for *damosion* (public property), demonstrates that the Elean popular assembly convened meetings here (Baitinger and Eder 2001).

Religious structures were located southwest of the agora along the eastern side of a north-south road leading to a recently excavated domestic quarter of the city. The buildings here included a large rectangular structure (Temenos H), which appears to be an open-air Hellenistic temenos, a small structure originally described as a propylon of uncertain date and use, and a west-facing temple with a pronaos that dates to the fifth century B.C. (Walter 1913, 148–149; 1915, 61; Tritsch 1932, 72). The temple is one of the earliest surviving examples of stone architecture at Elis. A small stoa was built south of the temple in the following century (Mylona 1984, 65–67). Many other buildings of Hellenistic and Roman date stood here. None have been studied or published in any detail. From the discovery of Late Roman kilns, the region southwest of the agora was partly used as an industrial quarter after the third century A.D. (Andreou and Andreou 2007, 18); however, there is no evidence yet to suggest that artisans were active here at an earlier period.

According to Pausanias, the region immediately south of the Elean agora served as a venue for urban cults of Aphrodite (Paus. 6.25.1). He saw a temple of Aphrodite Ourania behind the South Stoa with a chryselephantine cult statue by the fifth century B.C. sculptor Phidias, and an open-air sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos with a bronze cult statue by the fourth century B.C. sculptor Skopas. No physical remains of these sanctuaries have been identified, though archaeological fieldwork south of the South Stoa has been sparse. Whatever the case, the identification of Phidias and Skopas as sculptors may serve as tentative evidence that the cults of Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos date no later than the fifth and fourth century B.C. respectively.

This is the current state of the Elean agora and the monuments in the general vicinity of the commercial, religious and civic center of Elis. Of the archaeological remains uncovered to date, no structure of any measurable size was built in the Elean agora until the fourth century B.C. This was the situation despite the presence of classical sanctuaries south and southwest of the agora built with stone architecture and expensive cult statues. The date of initial construction in the Elean agora depends on how one interprets the chronology of the two monumental stoas.

Lacking any firm stratigraphic data from the early twentieth-century excavations, the West Stoa tentatively dates to the fourth century B.C. (Walter 1913, 147–148; 1915, 64; Tritsch 1932, 73; Coulton 1976, 45, 237). This is based on the style of terracotta sima fragments (antefixes, painted lion head water spouts) found within the building and its monumental three-aisled form (ninety-six by twenty-five meters) which

finds the best parallels in the architectural traditions of the fourth century B.C. and afterward. No columns or other architectural fragments from the building's superstructure survive and it is only from the description of Pausanias that the stoa can be restored in the Doric order (Paus. 6.24.2–3) (fig. 8.14). The sheer monumentality of the West Stoa meant that space in the Elean agora could be more tightly regulated, both visually and physically. It was also an opportunity for the architect to experiment with the internal plan of the building. The organization of space in three aisles with two internal colonnades was not common in Greek stoa architecture (Coulton 1976, 79). In the Peloponnese, this arrangement is only met elsewhere with the Stoa of Philip at Megalopolis, discussed below.

The identification and function of the West Stoa is also ambiguous. Pausanias refers to the building as the place where the *hellanodikai* spent much of their time, and where they erected altars to Zeus in front of the colonnade (Paus. 6.24.2–3). The *hellanodikai* were a group of Elean officials that had responsibilities related to the Olympic Games and the Elean state (Minon 2007, 532–535). Besides serving as judges at Olympia, they also administered the compulsory thirty-day training period before the festival in the gymnasia at Elis. As an administrative institution, the *hellanodikai* can be traced back to the second-quarter of the fifth century B.C. from epigraphical evidence; they numbered anywhere between two and ten officials depending



**Figure 8.14:** Eastern foundations of the West Stoa in the Elean agora from south (photo J.C. Donati).

on the period, and they were selected by lot among the members of the Elean boule (Crowther 2003, 65–66). Of course, the association of the *hellanodikai* with the West Stoa from Pausanias' testimony does not prove that the stoa had an earlier connection with these Elean officials.

The chronology of the South Stoa is better understood thanks to a subsequent study of the building in the 1970s and 1980s by the Austrian Archaeological Institute at Athens (Mitsopoulos-Leon 1983). The results revealed that the stoa in its present state does not date before the early first century A.D. based on pottery recovered from the foundations. There was no convincing evidence that any of the surviving wall courses date to an earlier period (Mitsopoulos-Leon 1990; Pochmarski 1990). This was a surprising discovery, because Pausanias speaks explicitly about the circumstances of the stoa's initial construction (Paus. 6.24.4–5). According to him, the stoa was financed from the spoils of a war against Corcyra (Corfu). He further says that the building was known to the Eleans as the Corcyrean Stoa. The battle in question is often dated by historians to 435–432 B.C. (Tritsch 1932, 72; Heiden 2006, 54). This is a period when Thucydides reports that the Eleans aided the Corinthians in a dispute with the Corcyreans (Thuc. 1.27.2; 1.46.1). The South Stoa was the building that Pausanias saw in the second century A.D., but it was not the original stoa. A Greek predecessor that no longer survives must have existed where the South Stoa in its Roman phase now stands.

Besides the testimony of Pausanias, additional evidence for an earlier stoa comes from terracotta *sima* fragments (antefixes, painted lion head water spouts) that presumably adorned the building (Walter 1913, 143–144; 1915, 64–65; Tritsch 1932, 72–73). These date to the fourth century B.C. and were found nearby. The important question is whether the double-sided South Stoa in the Elean agora retained the features of its presumed Greek predecessor. One argument in favor is the position of the stoa between the agora and the urban sanctuaries of Aphrodite described by Pausanias. The South Stoa divided the two spheres from one another, and, at least in the Roman period, acted as a monumental backdrop for both venues. The double-sided ground plan was likely inspired by its dual function between agora and urban sanctuary. The presence of at least one Aphrodite sanctuary in the fifth century B.C. may have dictated the placement of the South Stoa. The building was not aligned with the southern end of the West Stoa, but was positioned further north. This arrangement was perhaps made necessary by the preexistence of the Aphrodite sanctuary, which prevented the architect from constructing the building further south.

There is no evidence for the function of the South Stoa, beyond its proximity to the agora and the urban cults of Aphrodite. Pausanias only mentions that he saw statues lining both sides of the central partition wall (Paus. 6.24.4–5). No other ancient author mentions the building. On a general level, the South Stoa and the West Stoa reflect urban trends of the fourth and third centuries B.C., when monumental structures defined the public sphere from other parts of the city. These stoas were often multifunctional and could have been used for commerce, gatherings of state officials,

judicial hearings and a host of other activities. That these types of monumental buildings appear in the Elean agora around the fourth century B.C. signals that the Eleans incorporated current trends in Greek urban planning and architecture into their built environment. Where no large structures had existed before, the Eleans adorned the agora with monumental edifices like other Greek cities. Even though it took 100 years or more after the synoicism of the city, the Elean agora was progressing toward a more permanent and elaborate public area, rather than just an open expanse of space.

Although future excavations might alter the picture, the Elean agora demonstrates that a Greek agora does not require an elaborate built environment during the fifth century B.C. Stone architecture is virtually nonexistent throughout the century. This was the case despite the proximity of the agora to sanctuaries with temples and costly cult statues. The Elean agora also shows that there is not always a correlation between a democratic constitution and the elaboration of civic space. Elis was a democracy during the fifth century B.C., and there is ample evidence for Elean civic bodies from this period in the epigraphical testimonia, but so far no classical civic buildings have been identified outside of Olympia. In the case of Elis, the purpose of the classical agora was not necessarily for the accommodation of civic officials and civic activity, and there is no measurable effect of city administration on the built environment until the theater was built around 300 B.C. When the monumental stoas appeared around the fourth century B.C., the Elean agora maintained a relatively modest appearance. Compared to other cities, the agora was always an undeveloped space within the city.

## Megalopolis

The city of Megalopolis was positioned in the middle of a large upland basin in southwestern Arcadia. There was never a major urban settlement here until Megalopolis was created around 370 B.C. by a group of Arcadian settlements (Roy, Lloyd, and Owens 1988; Hornblower 1990). Under the constant threat from Sparta, the city was established for political and defensive purposes. A new and large city provided added security for the Arcadians under the aegis of a single city-state, which acted as a barricade against Spartan interests in the Peloponnese. After the synoicism, Megalopolis joined with Mantinea and other Arcadian cities to form an Arcadian Confederacy. Like the new city the primary purpose of the Confederacy was to restrict Spartan interests in the Peloponnese. Epigraphical evidence from the fourth century B.C. shows that Megalopolis was likely the largest and most influential city in the Confederacy (Nielsen 2004, 521; Roy 2005, 262–263).

The second quarter of the fourth century B.C. marked an important period in the history of Greek urbanism in the Peloponnese. The political tug of war between Sparta, Thebes and Athens forced settlements to become deeply involved in regional

conflicts within their own territories. Alliances were formed and smaller settlements realized that survival was difficult without the help of a more powerful polis. The prevailing instability in the Peloponnese led to new urban experiments as smaller communities sought safety in numbers, often with the assistance of a regional power interested in limiting the influence of a rival. Megalopolis was a product of these political realities, but it was not an isolated example. The Arcadian city of Mantinea underwent an almost simultaneous synoicism in 370 B.C. The new city succeeded an older settlement that was forced to depopulate by the Spartans in 385 B.C. While in the southwestern Peloponnese, Messene was established with the aid of Thebes around 370 B.C.

An appreciation of the historical events and wider regional trends that led to the creation of Megalopolis is critical for an understanding of its built environment and agora. Unlike Argos and Corinth, which took centuries to reach physical maturity, the public structures, sanctuaries and residential quarters at Megalopolis had to be devised and constructed on a rapid scale. A new population had to be brought inside the city under difficult circumstances. Megalopolis likely became the largest Arcadian city only ten to twenty years after its foundation. A new civic and religious identity had to be forged where none had existed before. The city had to be defensible in the face of an immediate threat from Sparta. Megalopolis was also required to be a leader in the newly formed Arcadian Confederacy.

The speed and complexity in which these events unfolded in the fourth century B.C. provide an exceptional opportunity to observe how a Greek agora responded to such conditions. The intention was to give its citizens and even its rivals the semblance of an organized and respectable city with a structured agora and venues to accommodate members of the Arcadian Confederacy. The desire to convey this message led to the creation of progressive building types that complemented one another in a single venue. The spatial structure of the agora at Megalopolis was very different from Argos and Elis. Rather than look backward at its predecessors, the Megalopolitan agora anticipated trends in Greek urban planning of the Hellenistic period.

Looking at the structure and organization of the city, two features immediately stand out (fig. 8.15). First, the Helisson River divided Megalopolis into nearly two equal parts. Usually a large river acted as a peripheral feature in a Greek urban center. Yet the city founders chose to include the river inside the settlement and make it a central feature of the new city. This circumstance created defensive liabilities, because the two places where the Helisson River entered and exited Megalopolis became natural weaknesses in the fortification of the city. Only fifteen years prior in 385 B.C., the Spartans successfully breached the fortification walls at Mantinea by damming the Opsis River that flowed through the town. This action caused extensive damage to the mud brick walls and flooded parts of the urban center, leading to the surrender of the city. When the Mantineans rebuilt their city in 370 B.C., they redirected the river around the fortification walls to eliminate a reoccurrence of the same catastrophic events. The inhabitants of Megalopolis were obviously aware of what happened at nearby



**Figure 8.15:** Central urban area of Megalopolis: satellite image (DigitalGlobe © 2015).

Mantineia. By incorporating the Helisson River into the urban fabric, other factors beyond just the protection of the city must have been taken into account.

The second feature of interest is that the monumental public buildings and sanctuaries of Megalopolis were central features of the new urban environment. This arrangement was a calculated attempt by the town planners to enhance the heart of the new city with civic, commercial and religious structures. In addition, they chose to divide the public quarters into two separate parts by using the Helisson River as a natural boundary marker. The agora was positioned along the northern side, while the theater, the meeting hall of the Arcadian Confederacy called the Thersilion, and a stadium were located along the southern side. It is with this composition that one can better appreciate the function of the Helisson River in the urban fabric of the city. There must have been a symbolic appeal of distinguishing two types of public zones that reflected the dual role of Megalopolis in the Arcadian Confederacy and its own civic administration. The agora served the municipal requirements of the citizens, while the public buildings south of the Helisson River were reserved for public spectacles and official meetings of the Arcadian Confederacy.

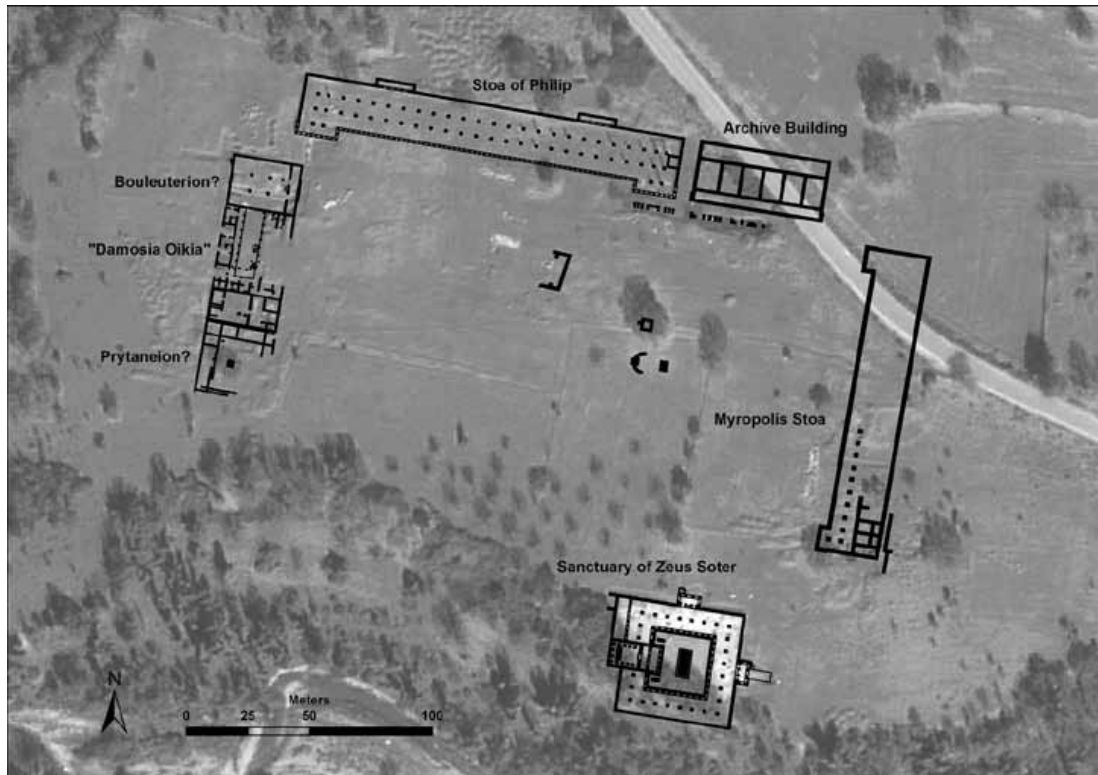
The Megalopolitan agora was highly regular in plan (fig. 8.16). The central open area was large and defined on all sides by monumental public buildings at right angles to one another. According to the archaeological excavations carried out from 1890–1891 by the British School at Athens (Gardner et al. 1892) and from 1991–2002 by



the German Archaeological Institute at Athens (Spyropoulos et al. 1995; 1996; Lauter and Spyropoulos 1998; Lauter 2002; Lauter 2005), large scale construction began only a few decades after the foundation of the city and many buildings within the agora were complete by the end of the fourth century B.C. (Roy 2007).

The western side of the agora was lined with a continuous complex of administrative and religious buildings. These included from north to south: (i) a hypostyle hall at the northwestern corner identified as the bouleuterion, (ii) a long structure with a series of rooms arranged around an internal peristyle court, (iii) a courtyard building, and (iv) a peristyle structure with an altar, hearth and a series of rooms. The excavations of the German Archaeological Institute directed by Hans Lauter found evidence for many successive phases based on stratified deposits and the style of roof tiles (many stamped) and other architectural fragments (Lauter-Bufe and Lauter 2011). The first phase of construction dates to the middle of the fourth century B.C. Afterward, there is good evidence that most buildings were extensively damaged by the Spartan sack of Megalopolis in 223 B.C. and rebuilt during the second century B.C. This catastrophic event at the hands of the Spartan king Cleomenes II is evident throughout the agora and the public buildings south of the Helisson River.

One of the better-preserved structures along the western side of the agora is the hypostyle hall (Lauter-Bufe and Lauter 2011, 32–50). In form the building consisted of a broad forecourt and a room supported by four internal columns. Access into



**Figure 8.16:** Agora of Megalopolis: satellite image (DigitalGlobe © 2015).

the building was through a colonnaded facade that communicated directly with the agora. Although the number of columns is uncertain, architectural fragments recovered from the site indicate that the exterior of the building was in the Doric order. Several fragments of Ionic columns suggest that the interior of the building was decorated in the Ionic order. In its present state the hypostyle hall belongs to renovations following the Spartan sack of Megalopolis in 223 B.C. This is evident from the secondary use of architectural fragments; some members, including the Ionic column fragments, were badly damaged by fire. Additional evidence for the Spartan devastation comes from a destruction layer with broken terracotta antefixes, presumably from the original roof of the building. Despite the damage, the renovations appear to have adopted the basic form of the original structure. Many limestone orthostate blocks are still in situ and probably come from the building's initial phase, as do architectural blocks from the superstructure reused for building material.

The question concerning the identification of the structure as the bouleterion is intriguing and touches upon the difficulties confronted by classical archaeologists and historians in distinguishing the function of a particular building. As with the hypostyle hall in the Argive agora, mentioned above, there is no archaeological evidence to suggest that the Megalopolitan boule assembled inside. This is something that is inferred based upon traditional concepts of building typologies in Greek Architecture. If the hypostyle hall was the bouleterion at Megalopolis, a hypothesis that cannot be excluded, then it is an early example of a building type that does not mature until the Hellenistic period.

In the excavation reports, the peristyle and courtyard buildings south of the hypostyle hall are referred to as *damosia oikia* (public house), an indication of their assumed administrative function (Lauter-Bufe and Lauter 2011, 65–90). Destruction layers and architectural spolia imply that the buildings were rebuilt during the Hellenistic period following the Spartan sack of the city. Sometime in the Roman period the southern wall of the hypostyle hall was shortened to enlarge the peristyle building and a new facade was given to the buildings.

The structure south of the peristyle and courtyard buildings was the final complex along the western side of the Megalopolitan agora (Lauter-Bufe and Lauter 2011, 90–103). Only the limestone foundations of the walls and the supports for the peristyle courtyard survive. Two interesting architectural features are a ground-level altar from the central courtyard constructed out of limestone blocks and a hearth in one of the northwestern rooms. Pottery deposits from the foundation walls place the building's initial phase to the middle of the fourth century B.C. Other contextualized finds include more than 200 Hellenistic stamped terracotta roof tiles marked with the names of individuals who donated money for the reconstruction of the building following the Spartan destruction in 223 B.C. These include the famous historian Polybius and the general Philopoemen, both citizens of Megalopolis in the second century B.C. Some of the roof tiles were marked as *damosioi* (public property), an indication that the reconstruction was under the supervision of the state.

The use of the building is a matter of debate. The altar indicates that the complex was at least in part a sanctuary. Some of the roof tiles were stamped as “Philopomen to Zeus” (Φιλοποίμην Διί), which shows that the Megalopolitan general made a dedication to Zeus by partly funding the reconstruction of the roof (fig. 8.17). On the other hand, the hearth and the arrangement of rooms around a central courtyard may be a sign that the building served as the prytaneion. The only certainty is that the building had a function of civic importance. Prominent Megalopolitan statesmen were involved in the reconstruction of the building, which apparently was also tied to the cult of Zeus.

Along the northern side of the Megalopolitan agora stood the Stoa of Philip and the partial remains of what Pausanias identified as an archive building (fig. 8.18). The Stoa of Philip is the best-preserved and most visible monument within the archaeological site today (Spyropoulos et al. 1995, 122–125; 1996, 269–275, 278–282; Lauter and Münkner 1997; Lauter and Spyropoulos 1998, 415–417, 420–426). Pausanias is the only ancient writer to associate the stoa with Philip (Paus. 8.30.6), but this is confirmed by the discovery of a stamped roof tile marked “property of the Philippeion” (Φιλιππείου) found in the eastern wing of the building (*IG* V.2, 469.6). According to Pausanias, the stoa was not built by the Macedonian king, but dedicated to him by the inhabitants of Megalopolis. During the second half of the fourth century B.C., the Arcadians sought the aid of the growing power of the Macedonians to help settle regional disputes in the Peloponnese. As a way of bargaining for their loyalty, Philip gave the Megalopolitans additional territory in Arcadia shortly after his victory at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C. (Spyropoulos et al. 1995, 123). The construction of the Stoa of Philip symbolized the partnership between Megalopolis and a powerful foreign ally, who could help protect the city by maintaining a strong front against Sparta and rival Arcadian factions.



**Figure 8.17:** Stamped roof tile from southwestern building (prytaneion?) in the Megalopolitan agora (Lauter-Bufe and Lauter 2011, Taf. 101b).



**Figure 8.18:** Stoa of Philip in the Megalopolitan agora from southeast (photo J.C. Donati).

At nearly 160 meters in total length, the Stoa of Philip was one of the largest stoas ever built in the Peloponnese of any period. Its presence within the agora was dominating and arresting. It had a monumental Doric facade flanked by two projecting wings on either side. Inside there were two internal colonnades in the Ionic order that accentuated the length of the building by creating three separate aisles like the West Stoa in the Elean agora. Two symmetrical exedras with Corinthian colonnades were set along the back wall of the building, and one of them had a rectangular base for the display of a life-size statue group, perhaps the Macedonian royal family (Spyropoulos et al. 1995, 124–125). The Stoa of Philip was clearly meant to impress the viewer both outside and inside, and convey a message of power, authority and a relationship between Megalopolis and a powerful foreign king.

The recent architectural study of the stoa by the German Archaeological Institute at Athens argues that the building was erected sometime between 340–330 B.C. (Lauter and Lauter-Bufe 2004, 151–153; Lauter 2005, 235). This is a chronology based on architectural similarities with other buildings at Megalopolis (Thersilion, sanctuary of Zeus Soter) and historical considerations following the death of Philip in 336 B.C. Others are less willing to accept an early date for a monumental stoa that typologically falls better within the architectural traditions of the third and second

century B.C. For example, the equally monumental South Stoa in the Corinthian agora is now dated to the beginning of the third century B.C. from a reassessment of the associated pottery deposits, and the large stoa in the Messenian agora also dates to the same century. The core issue here exposes a number of dilemmas in modern archaeological practice. Lacking datable finds and pottery from secure deposits, how much emphasis can be placed on stylistic considerations and architectural conventions? For the Stoa of Philip at Megalopolis the answer has important implications. The building is either a forerunner of architectural trends in Greek urban planning, or else it squarely falls within these trends.

Set on the same axis and separated from the stoa only by a narrow corridor, a large civic building complemented the Stoa of Philip by creating an integrated architectural ensemble on the northern side of the agora (Lauter and Spyropoulos 1998, 438–444; Lauter-Bufe and Lauter 2011, 147–157). Square pillars along the southern side acted as a monumental colonnade, which provided access into a long corridor and a series of rooms. Only two rooms have been recovered so far through excavations. The word that Pausanias used to describe the building is ἀρχεῖα (Paus. 8.30.6), which can refer to any kind of administrative building. Its prime location next to the Stoa of Philip and a series of conspicuous Hellenistic dedicatory monuments in front of the building indicates that it was a civic structure of some importance.

Since the nineteenth century British excavations, archaeological fieldwork has never resumed here. From the architectural reexamination of the structure in the 1990s, Hans Lauter argued that the building, as it now stands, dates after Megalopolis was sacked by the Spartans in 223 B.C. This is suggested by wall blocks that are in secondary use, as well as holes for iron clamps that do not match with adjacent blocks. Lauter did believe that the lowest course of foundation blocks might predate the Hellenistic renovations. These as well as reused blocks from the upper walls appear to come from an earlier third century B.C. incarnation of the archive building. Beyond this, the available material evidence does not permit any greater degree of precision.

Even though the eastern side of the agora remains largely unexcavated, sporadic fieldwork has confirmed that another monumental stoa stood here. This is usually identified with the Myropolis Stoa that Pausanias says was built by the third-century B.C. tyrant Aristodemos (Paus. 8.30.7). This places the building securely in the Hellenistic period. It is not known whether the stoa had a predecessor, or whether the eastern side of the agora was void of any construction until the Hellenistic period.

Looking toward the southern side of the agora, most of the area has been completely wiped away by the Helisson River. One exception is the sanctuary of Zeus Soter at the southeastern corner. It was one of the city's most important and conspicuous urban sanctuaries and its execution was innovative (Lauter-Bufe 2009). Two monumental entrance propylons provided access into a large, square temenos. Inside, the sanctuary was marked out by a double colonnaded portico in the Doric and Ionic orders that surrounded a rectangular altar. On the western side of the complex, and directly on axis with the eastern propylon, stood the temple with a hexastyle Doric

facade that projected out into the central court. The entire architectural composition adhered to a strict geometry where all elements were aligned with one another. This kind of tight ensemble was more characteristic of the Hellenistic period and until recently the sanctuary was thought to date to the third or second century B.C. (Martin 1951, 491; Coulton 1976, 61, 171; Jost 1985, 226). However, pottery deposits below the northern foundations from the German excavations confirm that the sanctuary dates to the end of the fourth century B.C. (Gans and Kreilinger 2002, 188; Lauter-Bufe 2009, 69–78). The architectural novelty of the complex makes it one of the earliest peristyle sanctuaries in the Greek World. As with the Stoa of Philip and possibly even the bouleuterion, one observes here a building that breaks away from the conventional boundaries of Greek architecture and in this particular instance creates new horizons in the conception of Greek sacred space.

By the end of the fourth century B.C., and only two generations after the foundation of the city, the agora at Megalopolis achieved a monumental architectural form rarely observed before the Hellenistic period. Although the buildings were conceived of separately and had distinct features, their overall execution and presentation was as an architectural ensemble. Unlike some agoras where new structures had to be inserted carefully and at times haphazardly into a well-established urban center, the town-planners at Megalopolis had the advantage of beginning with a clean slate. Under these conditions it is constructive to observe their intentions and goals. The focus revolved around generating an impressive collection of civic buildings, urban sanctuaries and multipurpose structures within a single and lucid venue. Right angles and symmetrical forms were favored over an irregular appearance. Newer building types, such as the peristyle sanctuary and the monumental three-aisled stoa, were preferred over more conservative forms of architecture. There seemed to be a general willingness to experiment with buildings and signal a new period in the formation of the Greek agora. This is a significant point to observe. One comes to learn that its architectural conception and spatial development anticipate what is to come in the Hellenistic period.

## Conclusions

The Peloponnese offers new perspectives into the urban integration, structure and use of the Greek agora. As Argos, Elis and Megalopolis demonstrate, there is potentially great variation among agoras within a single region of the ancient Mediterranean. In settlements with an extensive history of occupation, such as Argos and Corinth, the architectural development of the Greek agora was often a gradual process. The Argive model for staggered development is constructive, because one can appreciate the factors that contributed to its placement and use over many centuries. Even though permanent structures and venues do not materialize until around 500 B.C., earlier

urban developments influenced why this space became a focal center for the community. As early as the eighth century B.C. the location of the Argive agora acquired a heightened significance with more numerous burials and constructions. The picture is still incomplete, however, and the evidence does not reveal when, so to speak, the agora became the agora. The idea of an early urban space reserved for a mixing of communal activities is most apparent at Greek colonial settlements. To cite a well-documented example, the late eighth- and early seventh-century B.C. urban planners at Megara Hyblaea in Sicily intentionally demarcated an area of the city to function as an agora (Vallet, Villard, and Auberson 1976). In its initial conception, the agora remained a simple open area framed by roadways, and only later did the inhabitants construct permanent buildings.

The Elean and Megalopolitan agoras serve as alternative models to the gradual development of Greek commercial and civic space that one has come to recognize at places such as Argos, Athens and Corinth. Here, new urban experiments in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. mark a different phase in the history of the Greek agora. This is best exemplified with the Megalopolitan agora, which in the fourth century B.C. amassed an impressive collection of tightly packed structures that surrounded an open rectilinear space. Monumental stoas, urban cults, and commercial and administrative offices were all integrated together within the span of only a few generations. The town planners of Megalopolis worked with an entirely new conception of Greek urban planning, one that is observed elsewhere at places such as Messene, Priene and Kassope. Here, the rigid placement of buildings in relation to one another was preferred over irregular forms, and the agora became a venue defined by monumental stoas built in canonical orders. Other Peloponnesian cities would eventually come to adopt these new aesthetics, as the monumental stoas in the Elean agora and the South Stoa in the Corinthian agora attest.

In bringing together these Peloponnesian agoras, this study illustrates the need to integrate different models in our conception of Greek commercial and civic space. It highlights the complexities of the Greek agora and the many factors that contribute to its development. Taken together, the Peloponnesian experience allows one to acknowledge that patterns of urbanism are irregular and varied.

## References

- Andreou, E., and I. Andreou. 2007. *Ἡλις: η πόλη των Ολυμπιακών αγώνων*, Athens.
- Baitinger, H., and B. Eder. 2001. "Hellenistische Stimmrücken aus Elis und Olympia: Neue Forschungen zu den Beziehungen zwischen Hauptstadt und Heiligtum," *JdI* 116, pp. 163–257.
- Bommelaer, J.-F., and J. des Courtils. 1994. *La salle hypostyle d'Argos (Études Péloponnésiennes 10)*, Paris.
- Bookidis, N., and R.S. Stroud. 2004. "Apollo and the Archaic Temple at Corinth." *Hesperia* 73, pp. 401–426.

- Boyd, T.D., and M.H. Jameson. 1981. "Urban and Rural Land Division in Ancient Greece," *Hesperia* 50, pp. 327–342.
- Brock, R., and S. Hodkinson, eds. 2000. *Alternatives to Athens: Varieties of Political Organization and Community in Ancient Greece*, Oxford.
- Camp, J.M. 1986. *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens*, London.
- . 2001. *The Archaeology of Athens*, New Haven.
- Charneux, P. 1953. "Inscriptions d'Argos," *BCH* 77, pp. 387–403.
- Consolaki, H., and T. Hackens. 1980. "Un atelier monétaire dans un temple argien?," in *Études argiennes (BCH Suppl. 6)*, 1980, pp. 279–294.
- Coulson, W.D.E., O. Palagia, T.L. Shear, Jr., H.A. Shapiro, and F.J. Frost, eds. 1994. *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica Under the Democracy. Proceedings of an International Conference Celebrating 2500 Years Since the Birth of Democracy in Greece, Held at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, December 4–6, 1992*, Bloomington.
- Coulton, J.J. 1976. *The Architectural Development of the Greek Stoa*, Oxford.
- Courtils, J. des. 1981. "Note de topographie argienne," *BCH* 105, pp. 607–610.
- . 1992. "L'architecture et l'histoire d'Argos dans la première moitié du Ve siècle avant J.-C.," in *Polydipsion Argos: Argos de la fin des palais mycéniens à la constitution d l'État classique (BCH Suppl. 22)*, M. Piérart, ed., Athens, pp. 241–251.
- Courbin, P. 1998. "Le Temple d'Apollon Lycien à Argos: quelques suggestions," in *Argos et l'Argolide: topographie et urbanisme. Actes de la table ronde internationale, Athenes-Argos, 28/4–1/5/1990*, A. Pariente and G. Touchais, eds., Paris, pp. 261–269.
- Crowther, N.B. 2003. "Elis and Olympia. City, Sanctuary and Politics," in *Sport and Festival in the Ancient Greek World*, D.J. Phillips and D. Pritchard, eds., Swansea, pp. 61–73.
- Donati, J.C. 2010. "Marks of State Ownership and the Greek Agora at Corinth," *AJA* 114, pp. 3–26.
- Eder, B. 2001. "Die Anfänge von Elis und Olympia: zur Siedlungsgeschichte der Landschaft Elis am Übergang von der Spätbronze- zur Früheisenzeit," in V. Mitsopoulos-Leon, ed., 2001, pp. 233–243.
- Eder, B., and V. Mitsopoulos-Leon. 1999. "Zur Geschichte der Stadt Elis vor dem Synoikismos von 471 v.Chr. Die Zeugnisse der geometrischen und archaischen Zeit," *ÖJhBeibl* 68, pp. 1–39.
- Fowler, H.N., and R. Stillwell. 1932. *Corinth I: Introduction, Topography, Architecture*, Cambridge.
- Gans, U.W., and U. Kreilinger. 2002. "The Sanctuary of Zeus Soter at Megalopolis," in *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults: Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11–13 June 1994*, R. Hägg, ed., Stockholm, pp. 187–190.
- Gardner, E.A., W. Loring, G.C. Richards, and W.J. Woodhouse. 1892. *Excavations at Megalopolis, 1890–1891*, London.
- Giannikouri, A., ed., 2011. *The Agora in the Mediterranean: From Homeric to Roman Times, International Conference, Kos, 14–17 April 2011*, Athens.
- Glaser, F. 2001. "Das Theater von Elis und das Problem einer Hölzernen Skene," in V. Mitsopoulos-Leon, ed., 2001, pp. 253–256.
- Gneisz, D. 1990. *Das antike Rathaus: das griechische Bouleuterion und die frühromische Curia*, Vienna.
- Gras, M., and H. Tréziny. 2001. "Mégara Hyblaea: Retours sur l'agora," in *Architettura, urbanistica, società nel mondo antico. Giornata di studi in ricordo di Roland Martin*, E. Greco, ed., Paestum, pp. 51–63.
- Hall, J.M. 1997. "Alternative Responses Within a Polis Formation: Argos, Mykenai and Tiryns," in *Urbanization in the Mediterranean in the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries BC*, H. Damgaard Andersen, ed., Copenhagen, pp. 89–109.
- Hansen, M.H., and T. Fischer-Hansen. 1994. "Monumental Political Architecture in Archaic and Classical Greek Poleis: Evidence and Historical Significance," in *From Political Architecture to*



- Stephanus Byzantius: Sources for the Ancient Greek Polis (Papers from the Copenhagen Polis Center 1)*, D. Whitehead, ed., Stuttgart, pp. 23–90.
- Hansen, M.H., and T.H. Nielsen, eds. 2004. *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, Oxford.
- Heiden, J. 2006. “Die Agorai von Elis und Olympia,” in *Die griechische Agora*, W. Hoepfner and L. Lehmann, eds., Mainz, pp. 53–58.
- Hoepfner, W. 2006. “Die Griechische Agora im Überblick,” in *Die griechische Agora*, W. Hoepfner and L. Lehmann, eds., Mainz, pp. 1–28.
- Hoepfner, W., and L. Lehmann, eds. 2006. *Die griechische Agora*, Mainz.
- Hoepfner, W., and E.-L. Schwandner. 1994. *Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Munich.
- Hölscher, T. 1998. *Öffentliche Räume in frühen griechischen Städten*, Heidelberg.
- Hornblower, S. 1990. “When Was Megalopolis Founded?,” *BSA* 85, pp. 71–77.
- IG V.2* = Hiller de Gærtringen, F., ed. 1913. *Inscriptiones Graecae. Vol. V. Inscriptiones Arcadiae. Fasc. 2*, Bern.
- Jost, M. 1985. *Sanctuaires et cultes d’Arcadie (Études péloponnésiennes 9)*, Paris.
- Karapanagiotou, A.V. 2005. “Preliminary Notices on the Discovery of a Planned, Classical Town near Kyparissia, Gortynia,” in Østby, ed., 2005, pp. 331–350.
- Kenzler, U. 1999. *Studien zur Entwicklung und Struktur der griechischen Agora in archaischer und klassischer Zeit*, Frankfurt.
- Kourinou, E. 2000. *Σπάρτη: Συμβολή στη μνημειακή τοπογραφία της*, Athens.
- Lauter, H. 2002. “‘Polybios hat es geweiht...’: Stiftungsinschriften des Polybios und des Philopoimen aus dem neuen Zeus-Heiligtum zu Megalopolis (Griechenland),” *AW* 33, pp. 375–386.
- . 2005. “Megalopolis: Ausgrabungen auf der Agora 1991–2002,” in Østby, ed., 2005, pp. 235–248.
- Lauter, H., and H. Lauter-Bufe. 2004. “Thersilion und Theater in Megalopolis. Das Bauensemble im Licht neuer Forschungen,” *AA* 2004, pp. 135–176.
- Lauter, H., and N. Münkner. 1997. “Locus superior. Aus der Philipps-Halle in Megalopolis,” *AA* 1997, pp. 389–405.
- Lauter, H., and T. Spyropoulos. 1998. “Megalopolis. 3. Vorbericht 1996–1997,” *AA* 1998, pp. 415–451.
- Lauter-Bufe, H. 2009. *Das Heiligtum des Zeus Soter in Megalopolis*, Mainz.
- Lauter-Bufe, H., and H. Lauter. 2011. *Die politischen Bauten von Megalopolis*, Darmstadt.
- Leppin, H. 1999. “Argos. Eine griechische Demokratie des fünften Jahrhunderts v.Chr.,” *Ktéma* 24, pp. 297–312.
- Mallwitz, A. 1972. *Olympia und seine Bauten*, Munich.
- Marchetti, P. 1996. “Le centre politique et religieux d’Argos,” in *L’espace grec: 150 ans de fouilles de l’École française d’Athènes*, École française d’Athènes, Paris, pp. 114–122.
- Marchetti, P., and Y. Rizakis. 1995. “Recherches sur les mythes et la topographie d’Argos, 4. L’agora revisitée,” *BCH* 119, pp. 437–472.
- Martin, R. 1951. *Recherches sur l’agora grecque, études d’histoire et d’architecture urbaines*, Paris.
- Martin, R. 1974. *L’urbanisme dans la Grèce antique*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris.
- Minon, S. 2007. *Les inscriptions Éléennes dialectales (VIe–IIe siècle avant J.C.)*, Geneva.
- Mitsopoulos-Leon, V. 1983. “Die Südhalle in Elis,” *ÖJhBeibl* 54, pp. 41–103.
- . 1990. “Zur Chronologie der S-Stoa in Elis. Eine Entgegnung,” *ÖJh* 60, pp. 153–154.
- . 2001. “Tonstatuetten aus Elis,” *ÖJh* 70, pp. 81–116.
- Mitsopoulos-Leon, V., ed., 2001. *Forschungen in der Peloponnes. Akten des Symposions anlässlich der Feier “100 Jahre Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut Athen,” Athen 5.3.–7.3.1998*, Athens.
- Moretti, J.-C. 1993. *Théâtres d’Argos (Sites et Monuments 10)*, Paris.

- Morgan, C.H. 1953. "Investigations at Corinth, 1953: A Tavern of Aphrodite," *Hesperia* 22, pp. 131–140.
- Morgan, C.M., and J.J. Coulton. 1997. "The Polis as a Physical Entity," in *The Polis as an Urban Centre and as a Political Community (Acts of the Copenhagen Polis Center 4)*, M.H. Hansen, ed., Copenhagen, pp. 84–144.
- Mylona, G.E. 1982. "Ἡλις," *Ergon* 1981, pp. 50–52.
- . 1984. "Ἡλις," *Ergon* 1983, pp. 65–67.
- Nielsen, T.H. 2004. "Megalopolis," in *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, M.H. Hansen and T.H. Nielsen, eds., Oxford, pp. 520–522.
- . 2007. *Olympia and the Classical Hellenic City-State Culture*, Copenhagen.
- Orlandos, A.K. 1961. "Ἡλις," *Ergon* 1960, pp. 129–135.
- Osanna, M. 1999. "Il Peloponneso," in *La città greca antica: Istituzioni, società e forme urbane*, E. Greco, ed., Rome, pp. 129–160.
- Østby, E., ed., 2005. *Ancient Arcadia. Papers from the Third International Seminar on Ancient Arcadia, Held at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 7–10 May 2002 (Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 8)*, Athens.
- Pariante, A. 1992a. "Le monument argien des 'Sept contre Thèbes'," in *Polydipsion Argos: Argos de la fin des palais mycéniens à la constitution de l'état classique (BCH Suppl. 22)*, M. Piérart, ed., Athens, pp. 195–229.
- . 1992b. "Travaux de l'École française en Grèce en 1991. Argos. 2. Terrain Karmoyannis," *BCH* 116, pp. 676–683.
- Pariante, A., M. Piérart, and J.-P. Thalmann. 1998. "Les recherches sur l'agora d'Argos: résultats et perspective," in *Argos et l'Argolide: topographie et urbanisme. Actes de la table ronde internationale, Athenes-Argos, 28/4–1/5/1990*, A. Pariante, and G. Touchais, eds., Paris, pp. 211–231.
- Petrounakos, S.G. 2011. "Η Αγορά της Αρχαίας Επιδαύρου," in *The Agora in the Mediterranean: From Homeric to Roman Times, International Conference, Kos, 14–17 April 2011*, Giannikouri, ed., Athens, pp. 153–164.
- Piérart, M. 2001. "Travaux de l'École française en Grèce en 1999. Argos. Secteur de l'agora," *BCH* 124, pp. 489–497.
- Piérart, M., and J.-P. Thalmann. 1978. "Travaux de l'École française en Grèce en 1977. Argos. II. Agora: zone du portique," *BCH* 102, pp. 777–790.
- . 1987. "Rapport sur les travaux de l'École française en Grèce en 1986. Argos. 1. Agora," *BCH* 111, pp. 585–591.
- Piérart, M., and G. Touchais. 1996. *Argos: Une ville grecque de 6000 ans*, Paris.
- Pochmarski, E. 1990. "Zur Chronologie der S-Stoa in Elis," *ÖJh* 60, pp. 7–17.
- Rocco, G., and M. Livadiotti. 2011. "The Agora of Kos: The Hellenistic and Roman Phases," in *The Agora in the Mediterranean: From Homeric to Roman Times, International Conference, Kos, 14–17 April 2011*, A. Giannikouri, ed., Athens, pp. 383–423.
- Roux, G. 1953. "Deux études d'archéologie péloponnésienne. I. Autel à triglyphes bas trouvé sur l'Agora d'Argos," *BCH* 77, pp. 116–138.
- . 1968. "Chronique des fouilles et découvertes archéologiques en Grèce en 1967. Argos," *BCH* 92, pp. 1003–1045.
- Roy, J. 1997. "The Perioikoi of Elis," in *The Polis as an Urban Center and as a Political Community (Acts of the Copenhagen Polis Center 4)*, M.H. Hansen, ed., Copenhagen, pp. 282–320.
- . 2002. "The Synoicism of Elis," in *Even More Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis (Papers from the Copenhagen Polis Center 6)*, T.H. Nielsen, ed., Stuttgart, pp. 249–264.
- . 2005. "Synoikizing Megalopolis: The Scope of the Synoikism and the Interests of Local Arkadian Communities," in Østby, ed., 2005, pp. 261–270.

- . 2007. “The Urban Layout of Megalopolis in its Civic and Confederate Context,” in *Building Communities: House Settlement and Society in the Aegean and Beyond (British School at Athens Studies 15)*, R. Westgate, N. Fisher, and J. Whitley, eds., London, pp. 289–295.
- Roy, J., J.A. Lloyd, and E.J. Owens. 1988. “Tribe and Polis in the Chora at Megalopolis: Changes in Settlement Pattern in Relation to Synoecism,” in *Proceedings of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Athens 4–10 September 1983*, Athens, pp. 179–182.
- SEG = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.
- Siewert, P. 1994. “Eine archaische Rechtsaufzeichnung aus der antiken Stadt Elis,” in *Symposium 1993. Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschicht*, G. Thür, ed., Cologne, pp. 17–32.
- . 2000. “Due iscrizioni giuridiche della città di Elide,” *Minima Epigraphica et Papyrologica* 3, pp. 19–37.
- . 2001. “Zwei Rechtsaufzeichnungen der Stadt Elis,” in V. Mitsopoulos-Leon, ed., 2001, pp. 245–252.
- Spyropoulos, T., H. Lauter, H. Lauter-Bufe, and U. Kreilinger. 1995. “Megalopolis. Vorbericht 1991–1993,” *AA* 1995, pp. 119–128.
- Spyropoulos, T., H. Lauter, H. Lauter-Bufe, U. Kreilinger, and U. Gans. 1996. “Megalopolis. 2. Vorbericht 1994–1995,” *AA* 1996, pp. 269–286.
- Themelis, P. 2007. “Μεσσήνη,” *Ergon* 2007, pp. 42–59.
- Thompson, H.A., and R. E. Wycherley. 1972. *The Agora of Athens: The History, Shape, and Uses of An Ancient City Center (Athenian Agora XIV)*, Princeton.
- Travlos, J. 1988. *Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Attika*, Tübingen.
- Tritsch, F. 1932. “Die Agora von Elis und die altgriechische Agora,” *ÖJh* 27, pp. 64–105.
- Vallet, G., F. Villard, and P. Auberson. 1976. *Mégara Hyblaea, 1. Le quartier de l'agora archaïque*, Paris.
- Vink, M.C.V. 2002. “Sanctuaries and Cults in an Early Urban Context: Argos c. 900–500 BC,” in *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults: Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11–13 June 1994*, R. Hägg, ed., Stockholm, pp. 53–61.
- Viret Bernal, F. 1992. “Argos: du palais à l'agora,” *DHA* 18, pp. 61–88.
- Vollgraff, W. 1904. “Inscriptions d'Argos,” *BCH* 28, pp. 420–429.
- Walter, O. 1913. “Vorläufiger Bericht über die Grabungen in Elis 1911–1912,” *ÖJhBeibl* 16, pp. 145–151.
- . 1915. “Vorläufiger Bericht über die Grabungen in Elis 1914,” *ÖJhBeibl* 18, pp. 61–76.
- Waywell, G.B. 1999. “Sparta and its Topography,” *BICS* 43, pp. 1–26.
- Wycherley, R.E. 1942. “The Ionian Agora,” *JHS* 62, pp. 21–32.