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THE STOA OF THE HERMS


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THE STOA OF THE HERMS

"The Stoa of the Herms" is an Athenian public building known from literature and lately from inscriptions too. It seems to belong right in the Agora. The Agora excavators always thought so, until the last few years. On most Agora plans since the 1930's the Stoa of the Herms appears in dotted outline on the north side next to the northwest corner; the Stoa Poikile is another dotted outline east of it. But in 1981-82 the Stoa Poikile was found to adjoin the northwest corner. No room is left for a separate Stoa of the Herms, and the Agora excavators and some colleagues now take the view that it lies outside the Agora, on one of the streets running into the northwest corner. Yet this hardly fits the indications. I shall argue that "Stoa of the Herms" is another name for the Stoa Basileios, one of the three excavated stoas inside the corner. Let us consider first the literary and epigraphic evidence for this name, "Stoa of the Herms" (§ I), then the remains on the ground (§ II), and last the vagaries of stoa nomenclature (§ III).

Aeschines is the only surviving author to use the name. Whereas many honorary Herms stood out of doors in the area called "the Herms" (of which more below), Aeschines happens to mention that the three Herms honouring the victors of Eion were set up ἐν τῇ κτισί τῆς τῶν Ἕρμων (3 Ctes. 183). The context gives the location of the Stoa, in the Agora. To show how Athenian victories were more fitly commemorated in the old days, Aeschines points to three fine memorials in three public buildings — the Eion Herms in the Stoa of the Herms; the painting of Marathon in the Stoa Poikile; and the honours for the exiles of Phyle, as recorded in the Metroon archives (ibid. 183-187). He turns from the Eion Herms to the painting of Marathon with these words. προελθεῖτε δὲ τῇ δυνασία καὶ εἰς τὴν κτίσιν τῆς Ποικίλης ἀπάντων γὰρ ὑμῖν τῶν καλῶν ἔργων τὰ υπομνήματα ἐν τῇ ὑγορᾷ ἀνακείται, "Pass on in thought to the Stoa Poikile as well—for the memorials of all your great deeds are displayed in the Agora" (ibid. 186). A moment later, he comes to the third building: ἐν τοῖς τοιαὶ μητρώαι παρὰ τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ "Yet again, in the Metroon beside the Council House". It thus appears that the Stoa of the Herms is likewise "in the Agora", in the same square as the Stoa Poikile (at the north) and the Metroon (at the southwest). Aeschines would not so express himself if our Stoa was on a street outside the square.

The Stoa of the Herms was also mentioned by Antiphon in a lost speech (Nicocles fr. 29 Sauppe), as we learn from Harpocration s.v. Ἕρμων. For Harpocration the notice of Antiphon serves only to distin-

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1 J. Travlos' plans of 1970 were for most purposes the last to show the Stoa of the Herms and the Stoa Poikile in this fashion. See e.g. T.L. Shear, Jr., Hesperia 40 (1971) pls. 45-46; Travlos, Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens (New York 1971) 577 fig. 722; H.A. Thompson and R.E. Wycherley, The Athenian Agora XIV. The Agora of Athens (Princeton 1972) pls. 5-9; Wycherley, The Stones of Athens (Princeton 1978) 26 fig. 9, 42 fig. 15, 81-83 figs. 28-29. The same plans were updated to 1974 for The Athenian Agora. A Guide (Athens3 1976) 28-33 figs. 7-10, 338 fig. 159.

2 See n. 7 below. Travlos' posthumous work Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Attika (Tübingen 1988) contains conflicting plans, p. 40 fig. 36 and p. 46 fig. 45, that suggest how opinion evolved. In the one, a plan of 1982, the two stoas are still side by side—and the excavated remains are labelled as the Stoa of the Herms. In the other, of 1984, they are labelled as the Stoa Poikile, and the remains of the Stoa of the Herms have been omitted.

3 "It is now likely that [the Stoa of the Herms] should be sought further to the northwest" (Shear, Hesperia 53 [1984] 40, reporting the excavation of 1980-82). "Further archaeological work immediately to the west of the Stoa Poikile should reveal the Stoa of the Herms" (G. Bugh, The Horsemen of Athens [Princeton 1989] 219). But in 1989-93 the remains immediately to the west were identified as the altar and precinct of Aphrodite. "[The latest finds support] a growing conviction that the Stoa of the Herms is to be sought just outside the northwest corner of the Agora, to the northwest of the altar of Aphrodite" (J.McK. Camp, Hesperia 65 [1996] 257, reporting the excavation of 1994-95).

4 For this use of τοίνυν, "introducing a fresh item in a series", see J.D. Denniston, The Greek Particles (Oxford 2 1950) 575.

5 ὅτι δὲ καὶ Ἕρμων (Sluiter: Θρακῶν mss.) ετού τε ἐλέγχετο κτλ.
guish the Stoa from the area called "the Herms". He does not consider how the Stoa and the area are related.

Finally, there is a note on Athens' "three stoas", appearing as a scholium in almost the same form at Dem. 20 Lept. 112 and at Aesch. 3 Ctes. 184 (in the Laurentianus). It is important as a last residue of antiquarian knowledge of these stoas. τρεῖς ἡκατοτέρων ἑλευθερίων, ἡ δὲ τῶν Ἑρμῶν, ἡ δὲ Πεισιονάκτεως, ὁπὸ Πεισιόνακτος τοῦ κτιστοῦ. αὐτῇ δὲ γραφέντος ἐν αὐτῇ τῶν ἐν Μαραθῶνι καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν Ποικὶλη ἐκλήθη.

In announcing that "Athens had three stoas"—i.e. three that chiefly matter for readers of Classical literature—the note is more accurate and helpful than anyone could have guessed before the Agora excavations completed our picture of the northwest corner of the square. For it is just here, on either side of the Panathenaic Way, that the archons and other magistrates conducted business in three adjacent stoas—the Stoa of Zeus (Eleutherios) and the Stoa Basileios at the west, and the Stoa Poikile at the north. Attic authors and later belletrists have much to say of all three, though less of the Stoa of Zeus than of the other two. The note also deserves some credit for explaining the name "Peisianakteios"—which other sources mention only as an alternative to Poikile—as due to a founder Peisianax. An eminent Peisianax of that period is plausible on prosopographical grounds, and a red-figure caption may even associate the name with the paintings in the Stoa.

But the note is also confused. To identify the three stoas as the Stoa Basileios, the Stoa of the Herms, and the Stoa Poikile is to omit the Stoa of Zeus. Furthermore, if the Stoa of the Herms is on the same footing, Athens had four notable stoas. In the past it was suggested that the missing Stoa of Zeus had another name, either Stoa of the Herms (so C. Robert, long ago) or Stoa Basileios (so H.A. Thompson, from 1937 onwards). Since both suggestions are now disproved, we must acknowledge that the Stoa of Zeus has indeed dropped out of the tally. It will not do to argue that it was omitted advisedly, as being later than the other three (it is dated archaeologically to the 420's, whereas the Stoa Basileios and the Stoa Poikile are dated archaeologically to the early fifth century, and the Stoa of the Herms to the same period on the word of Aeschines). This relative dating would not be known to ancient commentators; nor would it be relevant to the elementary purpose of the note, to help students with their reading.

Something has gone wrong in the transmission of the note. It is not hard to see what it was. Of the three actual stoas at the northwest corner, the Stoa of Zeus is mentioned least in literary sources—in surviving sources, only as the haunt of Socrates or of Diogenes. On the other hand, the name "Stoa of the Herms" was to the fore in that much-read speech of Aeschines. So the one stoa was dropped, and the other added, in the canonical list of three. And it was natural to insert the Stoa of the Herms between the Stoa Basileios and the Stoa Poikile because "the Herms" themselves, the area so called, were known to be situated thus, between or beside the two stoas. Harpocration in his authoritative entry Ἐρμαὶ, largely repeated by Photius and the Suda, quotes a topographic account beginning ἀπὸ γὰρ τῆς Ποικὶ-
The Stoa of the Herms

The Stoa of the Herms extend the so-called Herms (= "Callicrates-Menecles" FGrHist 370 F 2).

The note then is misleading in its extant form because it presents "the Stoa of the Herms" as additional to the others. This is only a name that has been substituted for the rightful Stoa of Zeus. The real value of the note is that it draws attention to those "three" stoas of the Agora as familiar landmarks in Athenian literature.

Next the epigraphic evidence. Two inscribed decrees end with a provision for posting a copy "in the Stoa of the Herms". The one, with the closing words ετή σα... ἐν τῇ ετῶν Ἐρμῶν, is a decree of Athens' cavalry honouring the cavalry commanders of 282/1.12 The other, with the closing words ετή σα... εἰς τῆς ετῶν τῶν Ἐρμῶν, is a decree of mercenary cavalry honouring the same commanders of the same year.13 It is clear that in 281 the two stelai were set up side by side in the Stoa, to be removed together in the Early Roman period and immediately re-used in building foundations. The decree of the mercenaries was re-used in the Roman temple of Aphrodite about 25 m. north of the Stoa Basileios, the other in a building about 40 m. further to the northwest.14

So much for "the Stoa of the Herms". The area called "the Herms" is relevant too. It extended, as we saw, "from the Poikile and the Stoa of the Basileus". This cannot quite mean between the two stoas, for their adjacent ends are separated by the Panathenaic Way, here about 15 m. wide. Rather, the Herms must have stood directly in front of either stoa, on either side of the Panathenaic Way.15 If so, they are entirely within the square. This follows just as surely from other references. Xenophon would like to see the cavalry make a circuit of the Agora, ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν Ἐρμῶν "starting from the Herms" (Eq. Mag. iii 2). The comic poet Mnesimachus, also thinking of the cavalry (for they have much to do with the Herms), directs a person εἰς ἄγοραν πρὸς τοὺς Ἐρμᾶς "into the Agora up to the Herms" (PCG VII F 4.2-3). Hugesander apud Athenaeus tells of an arrogant cavalry commander who set up a viewing stand πρὸς τοὺς Ἐρμᾶς "beside the Herms", so that his mistress could watch him in the Panathenaic procession (IV 64, 167 F); it was customary to watch the procession in the Agora, and indeed near the northwest corner.16

At the same time, the area of "the Herms" is close to "the Stoa of the Herms". Whereas Aeschines places the three Eion Herms within the Stoa, Demosthenes on quite another occasion says that the victors ἐπιγράμματος ἐν τοῖς Ἐρμαῖς ἔτυχον "got an epigram at the Herms", or "among the Herms" (20 Lept. 112). It is a locative phrase, as the context demands, and as the language indicates (the epigram on those three Herms would be ἐπὶ τῶν Ἐρμῶν). And whereas the two cavalry decrees of 281 were set up within the Stoa, two civic decrees honouring the cavalry, the one a little later than 281 and the other of 186, were set up πρὸς τοῖς Ἐρμαῖς "beside the Herms".17 The first of these was found in the same Roman building as the one cavalry decree, at the northwest; the second comes from the Ceramicus. The two venues, in "the Stoa of the Herms" and in the area called "the Herms", are almost equivalent. Perhaps the Stoa was more select; or perhaps the space there ran out after 281.

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12 J. Threpsiades and E. Vanderpool, Arch. Delt. 18 A (1963) 103-109 no. 1 (SEG XXI 525, Iscr. Stor. Ellenist. I no. 16). A civic decree for other cavalry commanders was found nearby (n. 17 below).
13 Camp, Hesperia 65 (1996) 252-258. A tribal decree for a cavalry commander was found with it (ibid. 258-259).
14 Camp, Hesperia 65 (1996) 252, 254, 257 describes the find-spots of both inscriptions.
15 So Agora Guide 92: "Many of those beside the Royal Stoa have now been found, and another group may be expected to come to light near the Painted Stoa which stood on the other side of the Panathenaic Way". The expectation had already been fulfilled (n. 21 below).
16 The cavalry commander was a grandson of Demetrius of Phalerum (LGPN II s.v. Δημήτριος 451). Socrates with Euripides and Hagnon watched from the Stoa of Zeus (Aesch. Socr. Miliades: n. 10 above). Aeschines, renowned for his verisimilitude, meant to evoke the celebration of either 414 or 410, i.e. after the completion of the Stoa during the Peace of Nicias and before Euripides' departure for Macedon in 408.
From all this evidence we conclude that the Stoa of the Herms is in the Agora (Aeschines), and so is the area called "the Herms" (Xenophon, Mnesimachus, "Callicrates-Mnesicles" apud Harpocration), and also that the Stoa and the area are adjacent (Demosthenes vis-à-vis Aeschines, and the inscriptions). The note about the "three" stoas does not prove that the Stoa of the Herms makes a fourth, distinct from the three of the Agora.

II

Now for the archaeological remains. Let us train our eyes upon the ground at the northwest corner of the Agora. Since 1970, since the excavation first of the Stoa Basileios and then of the west end of the Stoa Poikile, it has been apparent that "Callicrates-Menecles" was exactly right. The Herms of the Agora were concentrated at these two stoas.

Fragments of about two dozen different Herms—heads, shafts, bases—have been found at the little Stoa Basileios or in the little precinct in front. Three bases were in situ right beside the Stoa at the north end, two on the single front step, the other beside the outer corner of the wing. A fourth base was further out in the precinct, towards the south; though not in situ, it will not have moved very far. The inscriptions on these bases show that each Herm was dedicated by a Basileus to commemorate his tenure of the office; the dates range from init. saec. IV a. to med. saec. II p. The shaft of another Herm bears lists of Prytaneis from the early third century after Christ. The precinct was marked off with curbs and steps so that the same ground level was maintained from the fifth century down to the end of antiquity. It was meant for the display of monuments, above all Herms.

More fragments of shafts and heads, representing another eight Herms, have been found at the Stoa Poikile. Two small bases, probably for Herms, are in situ at the west front corner. Only the end of this very large Stoa has been uncovered; there will be many more Herms further east. So the Herms of the Agora do indeed "extend from the Poikile and the Stoa of the Basileus". "Callicrates-Menecles" also said that the Herms "were set up in great numbers both by private individuals and by magistrates". The Herms of the Basileus at the Stoa Basileios are a leading example of the second type.

It is the latter excavation, west of the Stoa Poikile, that has now produced one of the two cavalry decrees that were avowedly set up "in the Stoa of the Herms". The foundation of the Aphrodite temple in which it was re-used is about 25 m. north of the Stoa Basileios (as was said) and only 5 m. west of the Stoa Poikile. In 1981-82 three other cavalry documents were found in the excavation closer to the Stoa Poikile. For the rest, the cavalry are associated with the Stoa Basileios rather than the Poikile. The excavations here produced more substantial monuments than the decrees—which as we know were discarded in the Early Roman period, perhaps as being of less interest. The base signed by the sculptor Bryaxis, commemorating victories in the anthippasia, was found in situ long ago—at a point right beside the south end of the Stoa Basileios. In the more recent excavation a fragment of another imposing cavalry monument was found nearby. From a well in front of the Stoa come other striking remnants.

21 Shear, Hesperia 53 (1984) 40-43. The two bases are seen at p. 12 fig. 8 (Camp, Athenian Agora 70 fig. 40, Agora Guide 4 104 fig. 59).
22 Two are published by Bugh, Hesperia 67 (1998) 81-90, but the find-spots are not illuminating—a Byzantine level and "a well". At Horsemen 220 Bugh mentions a third, an uninscribed (?) fragment of an equestrian relief (I 7515).
24 A relief showing the cavalry of Leontis (Shear, Hesperia 40 [1971] 271-272).
The fragments of a bronze equestrian statue, life-size. And rather plentiful archives of cavalry tablets and tokens. It is also worth mentioning a monument that probably stood atop a Hellenistic gate attached to the west end of the Stoa Poikile—a statue group commemorating a rare exploit of the Athenian cavalry. For although this is beside the Poikile, the gate looks south towards the area in front of the Stoa Basileios.

III

Dare we identify "Stoa Basileios" with "Stoa of the Herms"? It seems perfectly feasible as a matter of nomenclature. The Stoa Poikile had another name, "Peisianakteios". The Stoa of Zeus was sometimes called by a fuller name, ἡ στόα (ἡ) τοῦ Δίος τοῦ ἐλευθέριου "the Stoa of Zeus of the Free". In both cases the first name is more popular and informal than the second. The "Stoa Poikile" is so called by the orators and a comic poet (Aeschines, Demosthenes, [Demosthenes], Theognetus), all addressing an Athenian audience, and in fourth-century inscriptions. Thereafter it is so called by belletrists affecting an easy Attic style (Aelian, Alciphron, Lucian, and also Apuleius). Only antiquarian writers record the name "Peisianakteios" as well. Diogenes Laertius found it in some philosophic source for Zeno (VII i 5), Plutarch in some historical source for Cimon (Cim. 4.5). The Stoa of Zeus happens not to be mentioned by the orators or comic poets—except by Hypereides, who expounded the epithet ἐλευθέριος tendentiously (Harpocration s.v. ἐλευθέριος Ζεὺς [fr. 197 Jensen]). Even so, the short and simple name "Stoa of Zeus" occurs regularly in Athenian decrees, since this large Stoa was a favourite place for posting inscriptions. The fuller style, "Stoa of Zeus of the Free", is used only by philosophic writers in portraying Socrates to a Panhellenic audience.

Now as between "Stoa Basileios" and the "Stoa of the Herms", the latter is undoubtedly popular, appearing in the orators (Antiphon and Aeschines) and in Hellenistic inscriptions. But whenever "Stoa Basileios" is named, official business is in view. The name occurs only once in the orators, in [Dem.] 25 Aristog. 23, a passage that describes how the Areopagus meets in secret session by roping off the Stoa: Harpocration cites this very passage for the name (s.v. Βασίλειος στοά). It occurs in Aristophanes' parody of official dining (Eccles. 685). It occurs in the republication of Draco's law on homicide, which is posted "in front of the Stoa Basileia" (IG I² 104.7-8); the Basileus himself, who administers the law, has just been mentioned (line 6). It occurs in the record of Socrates' indictment for impiety, again before the Basileus himself (Pl. Euthyphro 2 A; Theaet. 210 D). It occurs in [Arist.] Ath. Pol. (7.1) as the setting of the kyrbeis. In short, "Stoa Basileios" is conspicuous for official business. That explains why the name is bandied by later belletrists (Aelian, epistolary [Aeschines], Philostratus), and "Stoa of the Herms" is not.

25 Shear, Hesperia 42 (1973) 165-168; Hesperia 53 (1984) 24 (where it is conjecturally assigned to the gate mentioned below).


27 Shear, Hesperia 53 (1984) 19-24, comparing Paus. 1.15.1. C. Habicht, Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece (Berkeley 1985) 77-82, suggests that Pausanias' monument, being described as a "trophy", was erected on the actual site of the encounter. But it seems better to suppose, and Habicht does so as an alternative, that Athens was threatened by the enemy at some point outside the walls, possibly at the Dipylon gate, which was nearby.

28 For still other traces of the cavalry in the Agora and its vicinity, see Bugh, Horsemen 219-220.

29 For full references, see Wycherley, The Athenian Agora III. Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia (Princeton 1957) nos. 47-98, on the Stoa Poikile.

30 See Wycherley, Testimonia nos. 24-46, on the Stoa of Zeus (also on his statue, which is more often referred to).

31 IG II² 689, 28-29 with Hesperia 26 (1957) 57 (SEG XVI 64), πῶς τῶν στοάς τοῦ Δίος; IG II² 690.11-12 with Arch. Delt. 29A (1973) 17 (SEG XXIX 103), πῶς τῶν στοάς τῆς τοῦ Δίος; Hesperia 5 (1936) 416-417 no. 13, 7-8, ἐμπροσθὲν τῆς τοῦ Διός] στοάς. Hesperia 32 (1963) 20-21 no. 20.8 (SEG XXI 458), ἐμπροσθὲν τῆς τοῦ Διός] στοάς.

32 They are listed in n. 10 above. But Diog. Laert. VI ii 22, apropos of Diogenes the Cynic, uses the short name "Stoa of Zeus".

33 See Wycherley, Testimonia nos. 4-23, on the Stoa Basileios.
The two stoas which we know as the Basileios and the Poikile at first dominated the square. They were about the first buildings to be constructed after the Persian Wars (the Basileios was perhaps more of a reconstruction), and it was many years before they were joined by the Stoa of Zeus. At the outset, the two names were "Stoa Basileios" and "Stoa Peisianakteios". The former is taken from official business. In the other stoa the business was not so clear-cut, else the name would refer to it. A name of similar form and of quasi-similar meaning was chosen instead—"Peisianakteios", after a public man who had to do with it. It must have been intended as a pun, with "Anax" jostling "Basileus". Yet both stoas soon became known for other things, and both were renamed, again in the same spirit. After the Stoa Peisianakteios was adorned with paintings, it became a "Painted Stoa", Poikile. And after the Stoa Basileios was adorned with Herms, it became a "Stoa of the Herms".