

## ANCIENT AGORA OF ATHENS

The Ancient Agora of Classical Athens is the best-known example of an ancient Greek «agora», located to the northwest of the Acropolis. The agora was the center of political and public life in Athens. It was a large open area surrounded by buildings of various functions. The agora was utilized for commerce, political, religious and military activity. Meetings were held four times per month to enact legislation, to hear embassies, and deal with defense of the city-state located there, and anyone who happened to be in the agora when a case was being heard would probably have been able to view the spectacle, though only those adult male citizens appointed by lot, would have been able to serve as jurors. The agora was further the location of a temporary theater and of burial sites

The agora existed since the 6th c. b.C. At its final  $\phi\omicron\rho\upsilon$ , the site was located at the intersection of three existing roads with the Panathenaic Way, the main road in Athens. It was organized by Peisistratus, who removed private houses from the agora, closed wells, and made it the center of Athenian government. He also built a drainage system, fountains and a temple to the Olympian gods. In the 5th and 4th century BC there were temples constructed to Hephaestus, Zeus and Apollo.

Starting in 480 BC, the Second Persian invasion of Greece caused many Athenians to flee the city, leaving it largely abandoned. The city was almost completely destroyed, but the Athenians returned following the defeat of the Persians in 478, and the Agora was rebuilt. There were no more major changes until the 2nd century BC when the east and south sides of the square were remodeled by wealthy foreign rulers.

The Agora remained the center of Athens until 267 AD, when it was once again sacked. After fighting had ravaged much of the city, the Athenians quickly reconstructed the wall, but enclosed a much smaller area. The agora and the acropolis were left on the outside of the wall and were susceptible to further damage. This reconstructed wall is of great archaeological importance because it contains pieces of ruined buildings including Hadrian's Library and the Stoa of Attalos. After centuries of periodic barbarian invasion, the agora was abandoned after the Slavic invasion of the 6th century.

The first excavations started the 19<sup>th</sup> century and go ahead up to now.

