

This paper examines a series of structures located around the fringes of the agora at Athens. They share a consistent ground-plan and, I will argue, were dedicated to the same function: commercial and industrial activity.

Three of the buildings (Early Building I, Early Building II, and Building E) form a triangular complex just outside the southwest corner of the square, slightly to the south of the Tholos. A fourth (the Classical Commercial Building), which has still not been excavated in its entirety, is located north of the public square, behind the Stoa Poikile. The remains of another (the Brick Building) lie under the Stoa of Attalos, and a sixth (Greek Building \square) stood on the north side of an east-west road just north of the Stoa of Attalos.

All of these structures are characterized by a uniform plan, consisting of a series of rooms of approximately equal size set side by side. In some cases there are two rows of rooms, back to back (Greek Building \square , Early Building II, Brick Building), and the plan of Greek Building \square included a large courtyard as well. All but one were built in the 5th or the early 4th century. Construction techniques vary, from ashlar to polygonal masonry (sometimes within a single building) to mud-brick.

Most of the buildings provide clear evidence of industrial and commercial activity by the presence of one or more of the following: plastered basins and drains, metal slag and waste, chunks of pigment, marble dust and chips, pieces of pumice, and substantial concentrations of coins. Furthermore, all but one contained at least one saucer pyre, a type of deposit that is frequently associated with industrial activity. It thus seems likely that the buildings were constructed expressly for the use of artisans.

Two other structures may tentatively be placed in the same category. The Poros Building southwest of the agora (also known as the "Prison of Socrates") boasts two rows of rooms, here with a corridor between them, and a courtyard (as in Greek Building \square). It contained pyres, and abundant marble chips attest to industrial activity in its northern rooms. The case of a final example is less straightforward. A large square structure south of the Tholos has tentatively been identified as the *Strategeion* on the basis of its large size and proximity to the Tholos-Bouleuterion complex. It is similar to the Poros Building in plan (rows of rooms, corridor, courtyard), and contained a pyre, features that associate it with the other structures under consideration here. Excavation this past summer, however, unearthed a highly unusual hoard of about 400 Athenian tetradrachms under the floor of the building, a discovery that perhaps adds weight to the argument that this was a public structure.

The substantial construction of some of these buildings and their locations near public offices have led to their identification as public buildings (civic offices, law courts, prison). I suggest that although they may have been built at state expense, their purpose was the accommodation and encouragement of industrial and commercial activity and the generation of income in the form of rents.