

Public Abstract

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Title:Pottery from Two Late Roman Wells in the Athenian Agora

Two recently excavated wells at the east end of the Painted Stoa in the Athenian agora have yielded new evidence for the fate of this building in Late Antiquity. The pottery from the wells sheds new light on how the Painted Stoa was used in the late Roman period, and its quantity over time challenges previously held assumptions about destruction and decline in the area of the classical agora during the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.

Unlike most other excavated late Roman wells in the Athenian agora, all of the ceramic material was kept from these deposits, allowing for a more nuanced analysis of the pottery. This dissertation presents a quantified study of the pottery from the two wells, demonstrating changes in well function over time. In addition, through a close examination the pottery in context, an argument is made for a chronological adjustment for pottery of the late 4th and early 5th centuries A.D. in Athens, particularly for Attic gouged jugs and for two-handled versions of Late Roman Amphora 3. When this adjustment is made, many deposits that were previously dated to the end of the 4th century can no longer be associated with a destruction of Athens at the hands of Alaric. While there may be some evidence for barbarian invasions in Athens, life did not stop for very long, if at all; therefore, other possible explanations for the archaeological remains from this time period in the agora must be considered, such as the construction of the so-called Palace of the Giants. These two late Roman wells and many others like them are a better indication of continuous prosperity in Athens through the 4th and 5th centuries, and a paradigm of decline and fall should not be allowed to drive our interpretation of the archaeological record for this period.