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The 'reservoir' of Hadrian in Athens

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In 1847 Athenian workmen began digging at Ayios Demetrios church in Ambelokipi, northeast of the then village of Athens (fig. 1). Their goal was to increase the flow of what they thought was a natural spring.¹ They discovered that the water was coming from an underground Roman aqueduct. Periodic campaigns to clean the tunnel and put it back into working order were conducted throughout the rest of the century. In 1870, while digging on the lower SW slope of the Lykabettos hill in order to build a purification tank for this system, engineers uncovered remains of an ancient hydraulic structure,² along with a section of aqueduct which fed into the rear of the building and, in front of the whole, pieces from an ornamental Ionic façade (fig. 1).

The existence and date of the Roman aqueduct in Athens has long been known thanks to an entablature block, now in the National Gardens, which bears half of its dedicatory inscription (fig. 2). The other half of the inscription was recorded in a drawing by Cyriacus of Ancona who visited the Lykabettos hill in 1436.³ The full inscription states that the Emperor Antoninus Pius completed and dedicated the aqueduct begun by his father the Divine Hadrian. Antoninus' imperial titular dates the dedication of the façade and the completion of the aqueduct to 140, two years after Hadrian's death.

On the Lykabettos hill two white marble Ionic column bases and two steps from the ornamental façade still remain *in situ* (fig. 3). All other architectural members have been lost.⁴ The hydraulic structure behind the façade was excavated only by the engineers, who then built the modern purification basin on top of the ancient building. Thus, there is no detailed record of exactly what was found at the site, or its relationship to the modern water basin. The remains on the Lykabettos pose two essential questions: what was the appearance of the hydraulic structure, and what was the function of the complex as a whole? The first problem must be approached by considering the ancient blocks and their relationship to the modern building. Accounts of the building are given in two 19th-c. studies of the ancient water supply, but neither makes clear whether they are discussing the ancient or the modern architecture. Ziller's study⁵ provides no measurements for the building, and the measurements given in Kordellas are exact-

- 1 J. Colety, "Abzugs-Kanale und Wasserleitungen von Athen," from the *Αρχαία τὰ Κράτους, Οθωνικὸ Ἀρχεῖο* (Ἐσωτερικῶν Φ. 23i (Athens 1835) 5. I would like to thank Mrs K. Dimakopoulou who will publish material from these archives for this information. See also *Ταχύτερος Φήμη*, 2 July 1845, 3, on a controversy over whether to release the water at Agios Demetrios that the Turks had apparently "sealed". The water coming from under the church was still considered a "source"
- 2 *Αὐγή*, 7 August 1870. This article describes the Hadrianic structure as round and paved with pentelic marble slabs. An article appearing in *Αὐγή* 27 August, 1870 describes a church existing over the reservoir. One other *Αὐγή* article, 12 September, 1870, also refers to the structure as a church. Beginning in the article in *Αὐγή* 28 September, 1870, the three-aisled building is described as the reservoir itself. I assume that there was initial confusion because the building had been re-used as a church, as pointed out in A. Kordellas, *Αἱ Ἀθήναι Ἐξεταζόμεναι ὑπὸ Ὑδραυλικῶν Ἐπόψιν* (Athens 1879) 87.
- 3 *CIL* III 549. See B. Ashmole, "Cyriac of Ancona," *ProcBritAc* 45 (1959) pl. 7 for photographs of Cyriacus' drawing of the Ionic façade preserved in three different codices.
- 4 Note that in R. Stroud and C. Vermeule, "Review of E. W. Bodnar's Cyriacus of Ancona," *Speculum* 37 (1962) 264, the authors list having seen an epistyle block in the National Gardens in Athens with the following measurements: 1.11 m long, 0.10 m height of the first fascia, 0.20 m height of the first fascia and moulding, 0.09 m height of the second fascia. The authors thought that this might belong to Hadrian's 'reservoir'. I was unable to locate such a block during my investigations between 1994 and 1997.
- 5 E. Ziller, "Untersuchungen über die antiken Wasserleitungen Athens," *AthMitt* 2 (1877) 120-22.