The **inner surface** of the mastoid portion presents a deep, curved groove, the **sigmoid sulcus**, which lodges part of the transverse sinus; in it may be seen the opening of the mastoid foramen. The groove for the transverse sinus is separated from the innermost of the mastoid air cells by a very thin lamina of bone, and even this may be partly deficient.

Borders.—The **superior border** of the mastoid portion is broad and serrated, for articulation with the mastoid angle of the parietal. The **posterior border**, also serrated, articulates with the inferior border of the occipital between the lateral angle and jugular process. Anteriorly the mastoid portion is fused with the descending process of the squama above; below it enters into the formation of the external acoustic meatus and the tympanic cavity.

A section of the mastoid process (Fig. 139) shows it to be hollowed out into a number of spaces, the **mastoid cells**, which exhibit the greatest possible variety as to their size and number. At the upper and front part of the process they are large and irregular and contain air, but toward the lower part they diminish in size, while those at the apex of the process are frequently quite small and contain marrow; occasionally they are entirely absent, and the mastoid is then solid throughout. In addition to these a large irregular cavity is situated at the upper and front part of the bone. It is called the **tympanic antrum**, and must be distinguished from the mastoid cells, though it communicates with them. Like the mastoid cells it is filled with air and lined by a prolongation of the mucous membrane of the tympanic cavity, with which it communicates. The tympanic antrum is bounded above by a thin plate of bone, the **tegmen tympani**, which separates it from the middle fossa of the base of the skull; below by the mastoid process; laterally by the squama just below the temporal line, and medially by the lateral semicircular canal of the internal ear which projects into its cavity. It opens in front into that portion of the tympanic cavity which is known as the **attic** or **epitympanic recess**. The tympanic antrum is a cavity of some considerable size at the time of birth; the mastoid air cells may be regarded as diverticula from the antrum, and begin to appear at or before birth; by the fifth year they are well-marked, but their development is not completed until toward puberty.

Petrous Portion (*pars petrosa* [*pyramis*]).—The petrous portion or **pyramid** is pyramidal and is wedged in at the base of the skull between the sphenoid and occipital. Directed medialward, forward, and a little upward, it presents for examination a base, an apex, three surfaces, and three angles, and contains, in its interior, the essential parts of the organ of hearing.

Base.—The base is fused with the internal surfaces of the squama and mastoid portion.

Apex.—The apex, rough and uneven, is received into the angular interval between the posterior border of the great wing of the sphenoid and the basilar part of the occipital; it presents the anterior or internal orifice of the carotid canal, and forms the postero-lateral boundary of the foramen lacerum.

Surfaces.—The **anterior surface** forms the posterior part of the middle fossa of the base of the skull, and is continuous with the inner surface of the squamous portion, to which it is united by the **petrosquamous suture**, remains of which are distinct even at a late period of life. It is marked by depressions for the convolutions of the brain, and presents six points for examination: (1) near the center, an **eminence** (*eminentia arcuata*) which indicates the situation of the superior semicircular canal; (2) in front of and a little lateral to this eminence, a depression indicating the position of the tympanic cavity: here the layer of bone which separates the tympanic from the cranial cavity is extremely thin, and is known as the **tegmen tympani**; (3) a shallow groove, sometimes double, leading lateralward and backward to an oblique opening, the **hiatus of the facial canal**, for the passage of the greater superficial petrosal nerve and the petrosal branch of the middle men-