

INVESTIGATIONS IN THE AREA

OF THE THOLOS

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In gathering evidence for the history of the building we have been obliged to strip away the ancient accumulation around it down to the level of the sixth century B.C. At this depth has appeared a complex of foundation walls, of limestone polygonal construction, and apparently of private houses. Toward the west they extend under the Tholos up to the east foot of Kolonos Agoraios; toward the south they adjoin the burial plot of the eighth and seventh centuries which was explored two years ago; northward they continue beneath the foundations of the Hellenistic Metroon to the area of the earliest Bouleuterion. In front of them, i.e., along the east side of the area, passed the roadway that led south from the region of the market-square between Kolonos Agoraios and the Areopagos and that served the buildings of the west side of the Agora region at least from the eighth century onward.

These early buildings comprised series of rooms that were grouped around or were flanked by colonnaded courts. The removal of certain masses of earth next season should permit of the recovery of their plans. In general they appear to have been built in the early part of the sixth century B.C., and to have continued in use during much of that century. Those toward the north were apparently aban-

done in the third quarter of the century, conceivably when the main line of the Great Drain was laid and when the level of the adjoining parts was raised by earth filling. The pottery found on the floor of the southernmost house would suggest that it survived longer. It may well have been destroyed by the Persians.

It was above the ruins of these southern houses that the Tholos was erected. To the original building may be assigned the circular wall of poros blocks, 0.70 m. thick, that rest in part on dressed bedrock, in part on an underpinning of broken stone. This wall is preserved to a maximum height of two courses. Contemporary with the wall are the interior columns, likewise of poros and unfluted. Previous excavation had revealed the stumps of three of the columns in position in the west part of the building. The trimming of the sides of a late pit which had been set through the floor in the northeast part of the building produced the bedding for a fourth. (The stump of this column had been found in 1933 in late Roman accumulation nearby). On the basis of the four points thus established it became possible to determine the scheme of the interior supports and to expose the lower parts of the two remaining columns. The columns fall into an east and a west group of three each. Each group lies on the arc of its own circle. These circles are equal in radius to one another but they are considerably greater than that of the outer wall. The centers of all three

circles fall in a straight line, viz. the east-west axis of the building. While the columns of each group are spaced 4.54 m. center to center, the terminal columns of the east and west groups are set 6.30 m. apart so that the mid part of the building is remarkably open.

For the date of construction of this, apparently the earliest Tholos, a terminus post quem is provided by the late black-figured pottery found in the debris overlying the floors of the earlier houses. This terminus is made more precise by the discovery in the construction debris of the building of ostraka of Themistokles and Kallixenos, deriving probably from the ostrakophoria of 482 B.C. The earliest accumulation above the newly established ground level around the building has yielded pottery of ca. 470-460 B.C. A date shortly after the Persian troubles is thus indicated.

The building subsequently experienced many vicissitudes. Two fragmentary blocks of a string course may be assigned to its wall by reason of their precise correspondence in curvature and width. Yet their workmanship and their material (Hymettian marble) suggest that they derive not from the original construction, but from a remodelling of early Hellenistic times. One of these blocks had been re-used as the cover of a drain which had served the building before the construction of its porch. The porch itself, if one may judge from the pottery found in its underpinning and from the great proportion of re-used material in its foundations, is to be regarded as post-

Sullan. The strange history of the block of the string course would suggest, therefore, that the Tholos suffered in 86 B.C. That it did suffer, and that seriously, is proved by the incorporation of many of its poros wall blocks in the foundation of a small fountain-house to the southeast, a building to be dated probably in the first century B.C. There is nothing to indicate that the original floor of the building was other than of packed earth. The mosaic of marble chips is shown by pottery extracted from beneath it to be not earlier than Augustan. The super-imposed floor of marble slabs must consequently be later still; how late is not yet apparent.

That the building shared the sack of 267 A.D. is indicated by the discovery of pottery of the third century A.D. in pits deep around the foundations. In the course of the fourth century the Tholos was rebuilt; its new walls, as shown by a surviving part, were of cheap rubble masonry reinforced externally by a ring of concrete ca. 0.70 m. wide that was carried around the building. Its floor of marble slabs, damaged apparently in the sack, was repaired with coarse mosaic patches. In this its final form, however, the Tholos was short lived. Its porch and much of its floor were overlaid by the foundations of a large private house that would seem to have been erected as early as the fifth century A.D.

The culinary aspects of the Tholos have been well illustrated by the current exploration. In all its periods the building was provided with adequate drainage. The earliest channel, carefully made of large poros blocks, led

away from the east side of the circle in the direction of the Great Drain. Most of it remains in place. It was replaced subsequently, though before the construction of the porch, by two successive channels of terracotta that followed much the same line. Still later, when the mosaic was laid, the floor was given a marked pitch toward the southeast and the waste was carried off from a sink hole close against the inner face of the wall, and thence through still another terracotta channel to the Great Drain.

It is tempting to associate with the kitchen of the Tholos ~~again~~, several refuse dumps that came to light to the southeast of the building. The earliest of these deposits occupied an irregular depression ca. 1.00 m. in diameter, and ca. 0.50 m. deep which was found full of ash, charcoal and broken pottery; plain black-glazed table ware. After the depression was filled, its top was covered over and the rubbish concealed by a layer of clean clay. The pottery from this dump may be dated ca. 470-460 B.C. A second deposit falls toward the end of the fifth century. It filled a depression much larger than the first, an irregular pit ca. 1.60 m. deep, ca. 3.20 m. in diameter, but in the character of its filling and of its final covering it was closely similar. Again, in the early third century B.C., when the ground level to the southeast of the Tholos was raised presumably in connection with some building activity, much of the filling material consisted of little plates and saucers of a very simple type. The

The association of these refuse dumps with the Tholos is suggested not only by their proximity to the building, but also by the occurrence in the earliest of them of several pieces incised  $\Delta E$  which, as Miss Talcott has elsewhere suggested, probably stands for  $\Delta H M O \Sigma I O N$ .

On the construction of the Tholos, the area around it, i.e., presumably the Prytanikon, was delimited by an enclosure wall of which the east side may still be followed through most of its length. Its massive foundation of irregular blocks of Acropolis limestone supported a levelling course of poros and a superstructure of polygonal limestone. This wall followed closely the line of an earlier parapet wall that bounded the north-south road on its west side. The west branch of the Great Drain would seem to have been carried past the southeast side of the Tholos in the early Hellenistic period.

The Tholos itself, as noted above, would seem to have suffered severely in late Hellenistic times, in all probability in the ravaging that followed on Sulla's capture of the city in 86 B.C. The subsequent reconstruction involved many alterations in the area of the Tholos. The course of the west branch of the Great Drain was shifted farther south, and this permitted of the enlargement of the precinct of the Tholos. The new enclosure wall is largely preserved. Above the abandoned course of the earlier drain, some 9.00 meters to the southeast of the Tholos, a rectangular structure was built with massive foundations measuring 6.22 x 3.92 meters. This building

would seem, however, to lie outside the Tholos enclosure, nor is its precise character yet apparent. Just within the enclosure and at about the same time a fountain was erected, its front toward the Tholos. It got its water through a pipe-line coming from the west and discharged its waste into the new course of the Great Drain.

Among other structural remains examined this season we may note a building of peculiar plan that was set close against the north side of the Tholos, apparently toward the end of the fifth century when the new Bouleuterion and the broad stairway leading to its forecourt were built. The detailed study of this structure must await the preparation of an accurate plan. In the fork of the Great Drain, between its main line and its west branch, are the foundations of a large rectangular structure (ca. 9.90 m. east to west, ca. 5.70 m. north to south). It conceivably supported an exhedra intended for the display of sculpture. The scanty available evidence for its chronology suggests a date in the early Hellenistic period. It must have contracted seriously the thoroughfare leading out from the southwest corner of the market square.

Of small finds that bear directly on the site we may note a fragment from the edge of a marble basin inscribed in characters of the late sixth century: ]O BOVLEYT[  
It was found within a few meters of the southeast corner of the Old Bouleuterion and undoubtedly formed part of the furniture of that building. Fragments of public measures of terracotta have been found around the Tholos in contexts

Z 1160  
I 4869



ranging from the second quarter of the fifth century into the early third century B.C. They show that the practice of keeping such measures in the Tholos long antedates the specific reference made in the well-known inscription of the second century B.C.

Here too may be mentioned a small marble plaque that was found beneath the late Roman house just to the southeast of the Tholos. It bears, in lettering of perhaps the second century A.D., the record of the dedication of some plants offered by one Olympos son of Alexander of Pallene, to the Phosphoron, i.e., to the vestal divinities who, as we know from other sources, were worshipped in the Tholos.

Z 1074

I 4745