

SECTIONS NN - Ξ

EXCAVATION SUMMARY - 1946

Foreman George Nikolaidis; 6 workmen

The objective of this year's small excavation was to clear the southern part of the section to bedrock, in order to make it available as a museum site, if desirable, or as a place in which to dump earth from other parts of the excavations, if necessary. The area contained the VI century cemetery, the terraced region of the Hellenistic - Early Roman period at the base of the Areopagos, and one large Early Roman water tank, all of which had been investigated in 1939-1940. In addition, a second Roman water tank, a great shaft built underground and containing a well beside it, the Great Drain over a stretch of 30 M., and early house walls to the west of it (in Section Ξ), demanded further clearing and archaeological investigation. Most of the work planned was done, although there remains a small area along the west edge of the section which has not been cleared to bedrock, and further small investigations are necessary along the edges of the cemetery.

The Built Shaft (116-118/KE-KST)

This consists of a rectangular chamber 3.65 M. long (N*S) by 1.30 M. wide (E*W) at the bottom, cut in the rock to a depth of 6.45 M. The sides of the chamber to more than half its height are of dressed bedrock; above walls are built of large squared conglomerate blocks, four courses high to east and north, three to west, and two courses, resting on rough polygonal construction of small limestone blocks, at the south. The whole is roofed over by five cover slabs, leaving an aperture at the south end for the drawing of water. The well-head at the surface was missing. Below this opening a well 1.20 M. in diameter goes down through the floor of the shaft to a depth of 24.85 M. It is lined with Roman well tiles, four to each drum; it was cleared in 1939 to the depth indicated, and then abandoned because the flow of water was too great to cope with. At the end of the 1939 season we were satisfied that we were within a meter of bottom. In addition to the well, a cave 4.50 M. long (N*S) by 3.40 M. wide (E*W) opens out from the SW corner of the chamber at its bottom; this cave is natural. When we dug the shaft

and well in 1939 we took out the latest kind of Roman pottery to our bottom (-24.85 M.); the well and shaft had evidently been reused in the Late Roman period. The coins found in the shaft in 1939 ran as (I) late as Theodosius II and Honorius. This year, cleaning a little in the recesses of the "cave" and at the north end of the shaft itself, we found small amounts of undisturbed fill which produced V century B.C. sherds. The fill immediately over the cover slabs of the shaft at the north and south ends, and the fill thrown in against the outside face of the west wall when it was built, all produced sherds of the late V and perhaps the earliest IV centuries B.C. It seems quite certain then that the shaft was dug and built early in the IV century B.C., at the same time as the Great Drain.

The digging and building of the shaft must have entailed considerable trouble and expense. Its primary purpose is clear - to store a large volume of water (the natural cave at the south serving as an auxiliary storage basin) which would be always available for the drawing of considerable quantities at any one time. The secondary purpose - the use to which the water was put - we could not fathom through lack of evidence. It would seem that the shaft must have been made for an industrial establishment rather than for a private house. As a source of water it must have been most satisfactory; it seems to have been in continuous use from the early fourth century before Christ up to the Herulian destruction in 266 A.D., with a resumption of activity in later Roman times. It is perhaps worth noting that when we resumed excavation in the middle of May this year the water-level in the shaft stood about 2 M. below its mouth; at the end of July water level had fallen by about 1.50 M., the decrease undoubtedly helped by the digging of three other wells in the neighborhood. (One of these gathered nearly 1.50 M. of water in its bottom after we had finished digging it; when we started to take water out of the shaft, it promptly went dry).

During these centuries of use the shaft naturally had various periods of surface works connected with it. These were:

- 1) Early IV century B.C.: to east and north of the mouth of the shaft an area of which only the east edge has been defined was paved with poros slabs. Water basins in the form of a terracotta basin and an amphora broken off at the shoulder, both set into the ground

to the north, made use of the water, conducted to them in tile conduits. At the west a retaining wall built in polygonal style of neatly fitted small stones stood on top of the west wall of the shaft over its whole length, turning at the north toward the west to join the east wall of the Great Drain.

2) Late III or early II century B.C.: a rebuilding was made, in which the porous pavement was covered by a floor of small pebbles in cement. The NE and SE corners of this floor are preserved, with a door in the south wall at the SE corner. The floor has a slight slope to north and east, and at the NE corner a built-in catch basin collected water. The east wall is partly preserved, of very thin construction (25 cm. thick); the angle where it meets the floor was waterproofed with many thin layers of whitewash or fine cement.

3) Post-Sullan: the pebble-floor establishment seems to have been destroyed in 86 B.C.; it was replaced by an apparently temporary arrangement of which part of one wall is preserved, standing on the pebble floor, and with its outside ground-level indicated by the plaster on its face.

4) Early Roman: a square tank was built, probably in the first century A.D., just to the north of the shaft mouth. Its walls were of various reused blocks and rubble in hard cement; it had a waterproof floor with upward-slanted edges and outlet toward the east to the post-Sullan drain. This tank itself had six periods: the first with a floor having up-turned edges, on which it was possible to discern attempts to stop leakage caused by cracks by laying down thin layers of cement. The outlet was at the level of the top of the upward slope at the edge of the floor, so that it was impossible entirely to empty the bottom of the tank. In the second period this was rectified by filling in the floor to the level of the top of its sloping edges, laying a new floor, and laying a new outlet pipe. The third and fourth periods correspond to the first and second: the earlier a floor with up-turned edges, the later a floor filling in the hollow in the bottom of the earlier so that floor and side-walls met at a 90 degree angle. Fifth and sixth periods are a similar pair; by this time the post-

Sullan drain at the east had gone out of use and the outlet for the water was toward the north. The fifth floor¹ was made of reused flat Roman rooftiles. Two sherds which could be approximately identified were found: one of the I century A.D. in floor II, and one of the (? second half of the) second century in Floor IV. Obviously this tank, standing just beside the mouth of the shaft, used the latter as a source of water. A similar juxtaposition was found farther to the north, where a smaller tank (again early Roman) built in the same way, and again with an earlier floor with upward bevelled edges filled in by a later floor, stood just beside a well from which water could be drawn to fill it. That the Roman tank was destroyed at the time of the Herulian destruction is a probable assumption; as found in 1939 the tank stood up like an island after the very late Roman fill (V-VI C.A.D.) fill had been cleared away around it, going to a depth of 1.50 M. below its floor level to the west, and 1 M. below it to the north. Unfortunately we cannot identify the uses to which the shaft with its various surface waterworks was put; but it is of interest as showing the continuity of some small industrial enterprise on the same spot from early in the IV century B.C. to after the middle of the III century A.D.

THE GREAT DRAIN

In 1939 an abundance of evidence was found to show that the west branch of the Great Drain in section NN went out of use after the Sullan destruction, when building stones were pilfered from its walls and it became choked with water-deposited sand containing masses of late second century pottery and coins. No evidence was found at that time as to the date of its construction, except that it superseded a wide channel cut in stereo, which had become choked with sand deposited by water late in the V century B.C. This year we dug a mass of the fill that had been thrown into the area between the east wall of the great drain and the west wall of the built shaft when both were made; it was retained toward the north by the polygomal wall of small stones over the shaft, which turns west at the northwest corner of the shaft, and at its west end bonds into the back of the east wall of the drain. All the pottery found in this fill was of the latest V century B.C.; characteristic pieces

were a red-figured bowl with representations of a kantharos at the center of the floor and inside the ring foot underneath, and a black glazed fish-plate of the earliest sort - obviously the ancestor of the fish-plates so characteristic of the IV century.

In three places farther to the north, one at the east side of the drain and the other two at the west, pottery from fill immediately behind the drain wall confirmed this dating. In one of these trenches (between the west wall of the drain and House L - a Roman house with three rooms, two of which have marble-chip mosaic floors, cleared in 1939) we got evidence not only for the early IV century date of the construction of the drain wall, but also evidence for the dating of House L in the II century A.B.

The drain wall is built in various styles: in places of squared blocks of conglomerate, in others of squared blocks alternated with polygonal construction in a sort of checkerboard pattern; elsewhere of good polygonal construction in limestone, and still elsewhere of small stones. In two places small rectangular openings in the west wall of the drain served as outlets for the drainage from houses beside the main drain. A large side drain was cleared, running east from the great drain as far as the north-south road which skirts the foot of the Areopagos at the east edge of the section. This drain seems to have gone out of use in the III century B.C. and to have been built over by houses, the cuttings for the foundations of which carry right across it. We found no evidence of a road running east-west over the course of this drain; nor did we find any evidence for a main north-south street over or beside the course of the great drain itself. No road-metal was found anywhere; the early houses at the west of the drain seem in places to have used the west drain wall itself as their outer wall foundations. Unless the drain was covered with stone slabs, which would have had to be about 2 M. long and of which none were found, there is no room for a road here. The evidence seems to indicate that the drain was always an open trench, never covered; a main north-south street must have passed somewhere to the west.

In digging to the west of the drain (in section $\Xi \Xi$) we uncovered some bits of early house walls (V-IV c. B.C.). It is noteworthy that house walls running west from the drain wall and at right angles to it always come at points where the style of construction of the drain wall itself changes. This suggests the theory that each stretch of a particular kind of construction in the drain wall represents the length of a house-lot beside the drain; and that here the drain walls were built not by the Demos of the Athenians as a public work, but by individual owners of property beside the drain to protect their holdings from being undermined by water.

A long wall of polygonal construction to the west of the drain and not quite parallel to it was uncovered to bottom; it stands to a maximum height of 1.55 M. This wall seems to have been built immediately after the Persian destruction; the lowest fills to east and west of it contained ostraka of Aristeides, Themistokles, and Hippokrates Alkmeonidou. The filling over bedrock in front of this wall (i.e., to the east of it) was mostly of water-washed sand; here, approximately at the bottom of the valley between the Areopagos and the observatory hill, the drainage of the basin took its natural course. The latest sherds from this water-deposited sand come down to the middle of the V century B.C. We may therefore trace the history of the drainage of the area as follows: 1), to the middle of the V century no artificial arrangements were made to canalize the drainage, which took a natural course in the bottom of the valley, to the east of the polygonal retaining wall; 2) after the middle of the V century a channel was cut in hardpan to canalize this flow; 3), early in the IV century another channel was cut, partly reusing the older one, and walls were built along its sides to form the west branch of the Great Drain, which here continued in use until the time of the Sullan destruction. Prior to the construction of the drain, drainage from the west had simply flowed out into the natural drainage channel along the east of the polygonal wall; when the great drain was made 3-4 M. farther to the east, a series of poros blocks, with a water channel cut in their upper surfaces, was laid from the polygonal wall to the drain, to carry the water the additional 3-4-M. necessary in order to dispose of it in the great drain. Bits of house walls running west from the

polygonal wall belong to houses which lay to the west of it; some of these walls, of the early V century, bond into the back of the polygonal wall, while others, of the IV century, merely abut against it.

WELLS

Four wells were dug; three in NN and one in ΞΞ. The last was partly dug in 1940; it was a great shapeless pit cut in soft bedrock, narrowing toward its bottom (at a depth of 3.50 M. below the surrounding bedrock) to an oval well-like cutting with a plentiful water supply. The pottery from this pit was Protogeometric, but it was very scanty. Most of the filling was of stereo, probably fallen from the pit's own sides to choke up the lower part and cause the abandoning of the well. There was no deposit of pots from the period of use at the bottom.

Of the three NN wells one had been started in 1940 and left unfinished. It went to a depth of only 9.05 M. and had no well deposit. It was filled in early Roman times and produced many scraps of sigillata ware; one bowl with stamp and relief decoration was nearly complete. The well had a poros well-head, perhaps reused from another well or from an earlier period of the same well.

Another well which had certainly been reused (ΞΞ/KA) had been made at much the same time - first century A.D. It was lined with well-tiles from top to bottom (depth 17.60 M.). The tiles were carefully made and fitted, and some of them had been mended with lead clamps before being set in place in the well - apparently they became cracked or broken between the tile factory and the well. It was necessary to repair them for use; no other tiles would have fitted, as the well is slightly funnel-shaped, increasing in diameter from top to bottom (diameter at top .76 M.; at bottom, 1.24 M.). Each drum of tiles (3 tiles to the drum at the top, 4 at the bottom) is very slightly greater in diameter at the bottom than at the top, and each drum is made to fit the ones above and below. The fill of the well from bottom (-17.60 M) to -11.50 M was stratified, producing pottery from the first to the middle of the third century A.D. The lowest level produced a number of fragments of shallow marble basins, some of them unfinished, suggesting that the factory or workshop which produced them was nearby. A wooden pulley-wheel from the well

at the same level may have been used in the same workshop. A tank for water stood just beside the mouth of the well to the south. Among other finds from the Roman levels of this well were a good small marble head of a youth (? III century B.C.) and many pieces of good Roman glass. The well went out of use at the time of the Herulian sack; it was rediscovered and used in Byzantine times. The fill from the mouth to -11 M. produced coarse early Byzantine water jars without glaze of the IX-XI centuries A.D.

The fourth well dug (99/KA) was late IV century B.C. and had a small deposit of water pots from its period of use at the bottom. Its upper fill, however, from some distance below the mouth was II century and produced a number of fragmentary figurines, some of them unfinished, and moulds. These may be connected with similar terracottas found only a few meters away in 1939; there must have been a coroplast's workshop nearby in the second century B.C.

SMALL FINDS

The small finds from this season's digging were mostly routine - stamped amphora handles, lamps, and the like. Worthy of mention are two large terracottas in the manner of those found at Myrrina - a draped woman, her skirts swept back by the wind, and a nude man in the act of drawing his sword. A small group of earlier (IV century) figurines, hand-made, contained various animals - pig, horse, dog, and cat - as well as fragments of jointed dolls. A large sarcophagus of island marble was removed from the drain wall into which it had been built. Although most of its side-walls and all of its cover are missing the profile is complete, and material as well as mouldings suggest that it dates from the second half of the sixth century. Eight ostraka were found in the early fills to the west of the great drain: three of Themistokles, ~~three~~ two of Aristeides, two of Hippokrates Alkmeonidou, and one of Kallixenos the son of Aristonymos.