

SECTION NN

Season of 1939

Section NN, on the west and northwest slopes of the Areopagus, is triangular in shape, reaching a maximum length from north to south of 146 m., and a maximum width of 84 m. It lies at the mouth of the valley between Pnyx and Areopagus and is outside the area of the public buildings of the Agora. For this reason remains of large buildings of the Greek period were hardly to be expected here. Nevertheless the area is topographically significant because the important thoroughfare leading from the Agora to the Pnyx and to the southern parts of the city pass through it, and the street running west to the Peiraeus Gate branches from the main thoroughfare within its limits.

The valley slopes gently from south to north. At the north end of our area it is wide and fairly shallow, with gently sloping sides to east and west. To the south the valley is narrower and its sides slope more precipitously; here only the east side lies within our area. The filling over the whole area was very deep; our highest martyra stands to a height of 7.70 m. but in places we reached a depth of nearly 9 m. below the modern surface. Most of this accumulation of filling had washed in from the slopes to east, south and west. At the south end of the area there was an accumulation of silt over 4 m. deep which had apparently been washed in from the south; it produced very late Roman pottery and coins, running into the sixth century. The silted filling in the central and western parts of the area had, on the other hand, been washed down from the northern slopes of the

Pnyx and the Hill of the Nymphs; it was of Byzantine date. Over all lay an accumulation of modern and Turkish times reaching in places a depth of over three metres. Naturally, so large an area, covered by such a depth of fill, could not be cleared in one season. The area may be conveniently divided into three parts as it was excavated: northern, central and southern.

The north part of the area was cleared of the modern and Turkish filling. A long stretch of the Turkish city wall built in 1779⁸ was exposed and removed after having been mapped; its construction toward the east ran into Section ΓΓ. Beneath the upper strata of fill were found the remains of a Byzantine settlement, the continuation of the complex of houses found along the south edge of Section ΠΘ. The remains of three houses may be distinguished, each with innumerable pithoi, and dating from the twelfth century. In this area we stopped digging at the Byzantine level; the houses will be cleared and examined next year. Indications were found of the existence of three late Roman (post-Herulian) houses and an ancient east-west street running across the north end of the section under the Byzantine level. Here, however, the only deep digging was done in the clearing of the great drain to bottom, and in tunnelling through to Section Γ at the north in order to open the course of the drain under Asteroskopeion Street.

In the central area there were no buildings of the Byzantine period; but here we found a deep disturbed filling which produced Byzantine sherds almost to bedrock. The area is occupied by extensive remains of private houses and a bath

of the Roman period with a hypocaust. The disturbance of Byzantine times seems to have been due to digging for building material, possibly for the construction of the houses to the north; the walls of the earlier houses have been thoroughly plundered and very few stones remain. Walls of a house of the fourth century B.C. are preserved in places; there are fragmentary remains of two Hellenistic houses, and of a large post-Herulian Roman house. Of the last the floors of four rooms are preserved, one of them in mosaic of Pentelic marble, Eleusinian stone and red tile tesserae. The trenches for the walls beside these floors had been cleaned out to bed-rock. A short stretch of the aqueduct bringing water from the south for the Roman bath was preserved. The bath itself is built over the great drain, which was no longer in use at the time it was built; since the great drain was allowed to fill itself after 267 A.D. the bath must be a post-Herulian structure, probably contemporary with the similar buildings in Sections ZT, H and in the central area over the Odeion. Another badly preserved Roman building consisting of a long row of rooms was partly uncovered along the east edge of the section; it appears to have been destroyed in 267 A.D. and repaired thereafter in a desultory way.

In the central area we traced the line of a street with a large drain under it which comes from the west, gradually curving toward the north as it nears the line of the north-south street and drain. This drain was examined; the cutting appears to have been made in the Hellenistic period, the drain tiles put in early in the Roman period, and the drain to

have been filled and been abandoned after 267. A shallower cutting beside it to the south contained drain fill of the fourth century and must represent the predecessor of the Hellenistic drain. Little of the road filling was preserved, and what there was was not examined; but the presence of the earlier drain cutting proves that there was a street here in classical times.

In the south area the hillside slopes sharply to the west, dropping over five metres in a space of twenty metres. This slope had been terraced as early as the sixth century, during which it was used as a cemetery. Below at the west ran the great drain, which was cleaned for a distance of 35 m. A deep cutting in the bedrock shows the course of an earlier drain, which the post-Sullan drain runs farther to the east along the foot of the retaining wall of the terraced area. Only one cut to bedrock between the great drain and its post-Sullan successor was completed.

The whole section has been cleared down to ancient or Byzantine levels. When it was found that one excavator could not follow excavation over the whole area, the digging of the Byzantine settlement at the north was abandoned. There would appear to be a full season's work left in this north area alone. In the museum site (central and southern areas) there does not remain a great quantity of earth; but what remains is entirely ancient fill which will have to be dug slowly and with care in order to recover the ground plans and chronology of the various houses. The Roman bath will have to be taken out in order to open up the line of the drain, and the floors of the post-Herulian house taken up

to examine the fill beneath. Six wells remain undug in the museum site, and there can be little doubt that more will come to light. The complete excavation of the museum site with its wells should take most of another season. Experience has shown that one excavator cannot follow digging in the whole area; it will have to be divided into two parts (museum site and north area) and either put in charge of two excavators or dug over a period of two seasons.

STREETS AND DRAINS

The great drain traverses the whole section from south to north, continuing the line of the west branch in Section F. Its whole course could not be opened; one stretch is covered by one of the Byzantine houses, a second by the Roman bath, and a third by filling which had to be left as a road for purposes of excavation. In the south area three successive drains of different periods were cleared. In the central area a section of a wide shallow channel was dug; its filling was of sand which produced geometric pottery. This channel was the natural drainage basin down which rain water flowed before an artificial drain was made for it.

The earliest drain in the south part of the section consists of a deep (2.40 m.) cutting in hardpan, 1.80 m. in width. The course of this cutting could be traced for a distance of 35 m. from south to north, although only a small section was cleared of its filling. No traces of walls built along the sides of the cutting existed; nor did the filling in the cutting show any signs of disturbance caused by the removal of such walls. This filling was entirely of

silted sand stratified in layers and accumulated over a period of about fifth⁴ years, from after the middle of the fifth to the early fourth century. The length of the period of accumulation suggests that the early drain did not have built walls but was simply a wide deep ditch.

The drain in its second period has built walls 1.45 m. apart and preserved at one point to a height of 2.30 m. The construction consists of well-fitted polygonal blocks of limestone, and of squared blocks patched with small stones. The polygonal construction appears to be the original drain wall, the other to be repairs and rebuildings. The line of the built drain is nearly straight; it partly overlies the earlier channel for some distance, where the east wall of the drain actually rests on the sand filling of the earlier cutting. The built drain then must have been built after the beginning of the fourth century. We found no evidence for a close dating of the drain in the one cut we completed beside it at the east. The cutting made for it was so wide that the walls were simply built against the sides of the cut, and no footing trenches were found. This built drain was not found by Dörpfeld farther to the south in his excavation on the slope of the Areopagus. The line of our drain leads directly ~~for~~ for the assembly-place on the Pnyx; the drain probably starts at the foot of the Pnyx, carrying off the drainage from the hillside and the assembly-place itself. The tiled drains found by Dörpfeld under the ancient street in his excavation must empty into the continuation of our drain, to the southwest, beyond the limits of our area.

~~The filling of the drain~~

The filling of our drain was entirely of sand with little change from top to bottom. The sand occupied the gaps in the drain wall where blocks of the upper courses were missing, and in places had overflowed for a considerable distance to east and west. The presence of this sand in the gaps in the wall indicates that the drain had been damaged before it filled. The sand fill produced masses of late Hellenistic pottery; pottery and coins suggest that the drain was abandoned after the siege of Sulla and quickly filled itself.

At some time in the first century B.C. after the siege of Sulla the retaining wall of the terraced area to the east of the drain in the south part of the section was rebuilt. The course of the great drain was adjusted to the east, following the foot of the retaining wall. The post-Sullan drain is in a poor state of preservation; the whole area was levelled down in late Roman times, and the drain was built over for long stretches by a late water channel. Its line was traced, however, for a distance of nearly fifth⁴ metres toward the north; the east and west walls are preserved for short stretches, and a thin layer of the sand fill of the drain was found overlying bedrock. This sand fill produced late Hellenistic pottery and quantities of coins, most of which were of the Athenian cleruchy to Delos. In two places shallow pits in the bedrock produced many lead seals and lead weights of various sizes. The pottery and coins from the bottom of this drain are definitely later than those from the filling of the earlier drain at the west.

Farther north, in the central area, we found only one drain. This had been thoroughly plundered in Byzantine times

and only an occasional block of its west wall was in position. The undisturbed drain filling was, at the upper level, late Hellenistic to Early Roman; later than any filling found in the pre-Sullan drain at the south. As we found no continuation of the post-Sullan drain it is clear that it must swing westward somewhere in the undug area and rejoin the course of its predecessor. The sand filling of the early Roman period was found at the level of the bottom of the drain wall, which had probably been rebuilt after the siege of Sulla. Under the early Roman filling we found a little late Hellenistic drain deposit; below that in a shallow channel in bed-rock a deposit of sand of the sixth and early fifth century. From this deposit came 162 ostraka: 70 of Themistokles, 41 of Hippokrates, 46 of Kallixenos, 1 of Habron, 2 of Aristeides, 2 of Kydrokles. The early sand fill suggests that the drainage channel and probably with it the street followed the same line as the later drain.

Except at the north edge of the section we found no evidence that the drain had ever been covered. At the north it is built of poros blocks in carefully corbelled construction, narrowing its width to 88 cm. at the top, and covered by long slabs laid from side to side. A stretch of drain so covered for a distance of nearly eight metres was opened. In the course of this covered stretch two drains enter the great drain from the east, two from the west. The covering of the drain, the presence of tributaries to east and west, the worn upper surface of the covers, and the presence of a hard-packed road metal at the level of their surface, combine to suggest that an important east to west road crosses the north to south

street at this point; doubtless this road led west to the Piraeus Gate.

We found in a few places slightly to the west of the great drain traces of the north-south street. The section was traversed from north to south by this street, following the line of the drain, crossed at the north edge of the area by an important east-west street, and sending off a branch to the west farther toward the south - the branch leading probably to the ridge between the Pnyx and the hill of the Nymphs. Along the entire east edge of the section we uncovered the edge of the ancient street marked in Dörpfeld's plan in Antike Denkmaler and on Judeich's plan. Its northward continuation was uncovered in Section IT. Throughout Section NN it is supported at the west by a retaining wall, built originally in archaic times at the south, in Hellenistic times in the central area, and rebuilt throughout in Roman times. The highest preserved layer of road metal was of the early fourth century; the lowest of the late sixth century or early fifth. It would appear that this east street connected with Dörpfeld's ancient street to the south and led from the Agora around the west slope of the Areop~~agus~~; and that the street following the west branch of the great drain led from the Agora to the assembly-place on the Pnyx. At one point we found traces of a short cross street connecting the two north-south streets.

THE CEMETERY

At the southeast side of the section the terraced area to the west of the east street was occupied by an archaic cemetery. Twenty-two graves were opened; of these nineteen contained skeletons of adults, one the skeleton of a small child, and two were urn-burials of children. One cutting in the bedrock had been entirely rifled; its was probably originally a grave. The adults were buried in rectangular shafts 1.80 - 2. m. long and 0.55 - 0.70 m. wide. One shaft had been lined with a wall built of small stones on all sides. In no case was the grave covering preserved. The ground level had been lowered and the burials lay only 10 - 50 cm. below the surface of Hellenistic times. Six of the graves had been disturbed in Hellenistic or later times, three by other graves. No rule of orientation had been observed; the direction of the shafts had probably been determined by the line of the terrace wall at the west.

In addition to the burials, twenty-one sacrificial pits were found. Of these there were three types: long rectangular shafts of about the same dimensions as the grave cuttings, long (ca. 1.50 m.) pits of irregular outline, and small irregularly square pits measuring 70 - 80 cm. across. Many of these pits contained large fragments of charred logs up to 18 cm. in diameter; in several cases the nearly complete logs, reduced to carbon, spanned the pits from side to side. Not only the position of these logs, but also the condition of the walls and floors of the pits, hardened by fire, show that the pyres were burned in the pits. In several cases grooves down the ends of the pits, connecting with shallow channels

across their floors, probably served to encourage a draft to help the fire.

Ten of the graves and five of the pits contained pottery. The vases had been placed in the graves as offerings in the normal manner; the vases in the pits were found always burned, often in a shattered condition. The burned filling of the pits contained in addition to the pottery small fragments of calcined bones, probably of animals sacrificed at the funerals. There seemed to be no definite connection between any individual pits and graves.

Except in two cases the pottery from pits and graves was of the sixth century. Attic lekythoi and kylikes ranging in date from before the middle down to the end of the sixth century were found. In addition to the Attic vases a tripod pyxis of Corinthian fabric was found. More unusual were five krateriskoi of Lydian type, found in two of the graves and one of the pits. Some of these may be of genuine Lydian fabric, others imitations.

Two graves were earlier. One contained a skyphos, a cup, and a small oinochoe of the end of the eighth or early seventh century. This grave lay at a higher level than any of the others. The second earlier grave, one of the urn burials, was also of the geometric period. It had been much disturbed by a later grave, and no small vases were found, but the burial amphora was Geometric. In one of the sacrificial pits several fragments of Geometric pots were found; they were not, like the sixth century pottery in the pit, burned. They must have been thrown in when the pit was filled; probably they came from a grave nearby which had been disturbed. A considerable

proportion of the pottery scattered through the filling over the grave area was geometric, and some Proto-attic fragments were found. It is probable that the cemetery was in use from the Geometric period to the end of the sixth century. We have found the west, north and east limits of the area; it is probable that more graves may be found next year to the south.

WELLS AND CISTERNS

Eleven wells were found this year. Six remain untouched; three had to be left unfinished at the end of the season. Two of these are Hellenistic; unfortunately they tap the same inexhaustible source of water that fed the wells in Section H@, and they had to be abandoned. The third well was left at a depth of 24.50 m. at the end of the season. The well connects with a beautifully built shaft, probably for storage, near the surface. Although it must date from a good period it was reused in very late times and has produced only late Roman coarse pottery to the depth reached.

Of the two wells completely cleaned out one was shallow, ending at a depth of only 11.50 m. Most of the pottery was of the late sixth century, but very little of the finer wares was found and nothing will mend up. Occasional second century sherds scattered throughout the fill suggest that the well was made in the late Hellenistic period and refilled with whatever earth was available nearby.

The other well was a tiled well of the second century B.C. The tiles were carefully made and clamped together, with lead, two clamps at each joint. At the bottom there was a small

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deposit of coarse pottery; several early basket-handled water-jars and cooking basins were found. The most interesting object from the well was a plastic lamp in the form of a Bull's head, filled^e and garlanded.

Two shaft cisterns were cleared. Of these, one contained a late Hellenistic deposit, the other a mixed deposit thrown in in early Roman times. A third shaft cistern was connected by an underground passage with a chamber cistern. The shaft had been filled in Hellenistic times, probably in the later part of the third century; several Rhodian amphora handles were found. The chamber had been filled in the first century A.D.; a number of Knidian amphora handles, type XX lamps, and a few fragments of sigillata ware were found.

FINDS

Over 1500 objects have been catalogued this year from Section NN. The majority of these finds consist of amphora handles; several interesting Thasian handles are included among them. From the terraced area at the south we obtained numerous interesting pieces of the early Roman period, including imported stamped sigillata and green glazed relief wares, and the local imitations of both. From the bottom of the post-Sullan drain came many lead seals and weights. A deposit thrown in as filling behind the east wall of the same drain when it was built may have been the dump from a ceroplast's workshop; it included many interesting fragments of figurines and moulds of the third and second centuries.

Finds of interest turned up sporadically in the Byzantine fills of the north part of the area. Among them were a fine fragment of a red-figured krater with a representation of Zeus and Demeter (P 14, 729); a fragment with Athena Parthenos in relief, probably from the discus of an early Roman lamp (L 3703); and a mould for figures in high relief, probably taken from a bronze mirror (T 2010).

Undoubtedly the most important group of finds is the pottery from the archaic graves, already discussed. These not only include several pieces of special individual interest and provide a useful addition to the Agora pottery sequence, but by their very existence, in graves of the sixth century, present an interesting and hitherto unsuspected problem as to burial customs within the city limits at that time.