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KK EXCAVATION REPORT 1936

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Section KK, the area inside the modern fence around the so-called Theseion, was cleared to bedrock in order to determine the entire history of that portion of Kolonos Agoraios. Excavation revealed that the hill is naturally steeper than its modern contour, which is the product of much levelling and filling.

The first human remains lie in a cemetery that extended over the east and west slopes. One adult grave contained, beside the unburned skeleton, two vases of the period transitional between Submycenaean and Protogeometric. The later burials vary in type. Three adult Protogeometric graves are examples of cremation burial; two adult Geometric graves of inhumation. The most complete child's grave contained eight Protogeometric miniature vases including a feeding bottle with a spout, together with a bronze ring and bronze spirals for the hair. Two other children were buried in amphorae, and three babies each in a circular hole in the ground. One child and one adult were found stretched out unburned without a single offering. That these graves are merely survivors of a large rifled cemetery is clear from the grave-cuttings in bedrock and from the Protogeometric and Geometric sherds found near-by in deposits of later periods. The cemetery does not seem to have extended in space much north of the temple nor in time beyond the very earliest Geometric phase.

Thence down to the early fifth century the hill must have been uninhabited. Then, along the west slope, simple houses or workshops were built. The workshops dealt chiefly in metal; they dumped the waste from the working of bronze, lead and iron into convenient pits and holes. Even a few of the casting pits and smelting furnaces have survived. It seems natural to identify the temple that dominated this community as the temple of Hephaistos. No inscribed dedication appeared nor any positive evidence for an earlier sanctuary. When the west slope of the hill became much frequented, at some time between 480-470, the ragged surface of bedrock was dressed off and the holes filled. In one pit the filling material included a number of burned vases that certainly look like a Perserschutt. This dump provided extremely fine fragments from red figured and black figured vases of the early fifth century, together with ostraka of Themistokles, Aristides, Hippokrates, Megakles, Kydrokles, and Kallixenos. The high percentage of vases painted by masters suggests that we have to do with a dump of votive objects from a sanctuary.

The temple itself yielded but little to investigation. The foundations were completely exposed and were found to vary in courses of substructure from six to none below the euthynteria, according to the contour of the hill. Their entire face had been long exposed and suffered the loss of occasional blocks, probably from early Byzantine times till the latter part of the last century, when they were restored or patched. Not a single clod of the original earth thrown

in against the foundations from bedrock to euthynteria has survived. Dumps of working chips of poros and marble, however, from the time of the building of the temple escaped intact in deep holes. Careful study of the pottery found with this waste should be of assistance in dating the construction of the temple. Work must have been begun about the middle of the fifth century, but the building of the terrace wall around the temple which involved leveling off the hilltop and filling in cisterns and workshops in the vicinity must have dragged on well down into the fifth century B. C. In two of these disused cisterns bronze shields were thrown; one bears a boasting inscription that it was taken by the Athenians from the Lacedaemonians.

In Hellenistic times private houses sprang up outside the terrace wall and some time after the middle of the second century B.C. the hill was included in the general scheme of enlarging the Agora region. A closed building, measuring inside 14m. x 42m. with two interior rows of piers or columns and the unusual feature of buttresses against its walls, was set into the north side of the hill against the terrace wall. The orientation of the building shows a striking divergence from that of the Theseion and the buildings along the west side of the Agora but approximates that of the ancient road in section MM. Its purpose has not yet been determined.

Somewhat later the hilltop was levelled farther and filled higher for a monument, very possibly an exedra, that is shown to the southwest of the temple on the Antike Denkmaler plan. In addition, on the south side of the

temple itself, within the precinct wall, a garden was laid out. Some fifteen shrubs in two rows neatly oriented with the columns, formed an alley of convenient width for two people to walk abreast. Pots, shaped like modern flower-pots with holes in the bottom, were set well below ancient ground-level where, split by the heavy roots of the plants, many of them have survived to this day. On either side of the alley and at the east end, are traces of slighter planting. The contours of the hill top on the other sides of the temple would have obviated the need of cutting holes in bedrock, and this prevents our knowing whether the garden extended all around it. This landscaping scheme involved also a monumental stairway leading up from the Agora between the Apollo temple and the Metroon directly to the Hephaisteion. Two Early Roman villas naturally show us that the region soon became a popular residential district. They lay along the northwest slope, elaborate in their decoration with colored marble revetments, stucco cornices, and painted walls and ceilings, one room warmed by a hypocaust, another watered by a cistern.

After three hundred years of life in these agreeable surroundings, the inhabitants were driven out by the Herulian invaders and everything except the temple was destroyed. About the time of Justinian the temple turned Christian. Late pottery and a Slavonic buckle bear witness to some small settlement clustered around the church in the darkest ages. By the 10th-11th centuries the flourishing settlement

here included sizable houses and a monastic complex with its storage pithoi and handsome cistern, covered by a barrel-vault, and a garden or orchard. The dead were buried in vaulted graves, approached by steps from the east, placed close against the church foundations. Traces of fourteen Christian burials were found by us; others had previously been dug in the peristyle and cella of the temple. After 1204, when the hegoumenos of the monastery fled to establish St. John the Hunter on Hymettos, the monastery seems to have fallen into disuse. Late Byzantine remains are scanty.

A fragment of the Turkish fortification wall of 1778 was cleared just to the west of the temple. We discovered that the whole area, bare almost to bedrock in Turkish times, had been filled in at about 1890 by the Greek authorities.