

Section III

1947 Season Preliminary Report

Section III was originally the north-west part of Section NN. At the beginning of the season it was included in Section OO and at the end of April it was made a separate section. It includes the area between the Great Drain on the east and the Theseion Plataia on the west. Its northern boundary is the line of the northern edge of the former Asteroskopiou Street and it extends south for a distance of 85 meters. The land rises gently east to west between the Hill of the Nymphs and the Kolonos Agoraios.

At the beginning of the season the northern part of the area was covered by the modern Asteroskopiou Street which ran east from the Theseion Plataia. In the area just to the south of this street a wide-east-west trench had exposed the foundations of Byzantine Houses II and III and part of Roman Houses B and D.* In the southern part of the area the upper fill had been dug mainly

* NN nomenclature, retained as III designations.

to Byzantine levels, though no buildings had come to light.

The work of the early part of the season was concerned almost exclusively with the removal of Asteroskopiou Street. Approximately 2000 cubic meters of earth had to be removed in order to bring it down to the level at which systematic excavation could be begun.. This was accomplished in early June.

The work of the remainder of the season may be discussed under the following headings:

1. Roads and drainage system
2. Buildings
3. Wells
4. Miscellaneous

1. Roads and drainage system

The modern Asteroskopiou Street was only the last in point of time of many roads which crossed the northern part of the section from east to west. During

the course of its removal successive levels of hard packed road metal were revealed beneath it following the same course as the modern street. We were able to clear six such road levels of the Turkish and Late Byzantine periods over a large area. Between two levels of the Turkish period appeared layers of burned material indicative of extensive fires in this area during that time. About half of the area of the road series was dug to the early Turkish level and the remainder to the Late Byzantine. During these periods the roads were nearly five meters wide.

A test out at the eastern end of the road in this section revealed a continuation of the series of road levels below, the earliest of which is probably to be dated in the 1st or 2nd centuries A.D. There are indications that the road of the Roman period curved to the south-east when it crossed the Great Drain and carried on up the lower slope of the Areopagus possibly to connect with a complex of roads meeting in Section ET or the road running from the Agora around the west side of the Areopagus. It is quite possible, however, that it may have continued on due east around the north slope of the Acropolis. Mr. John Travlos has suggested that this may well be the route of the Street of the Tripods. It should also be noted that a western extension of the line of the road carries it in the direction of the Peiraic gate in the city wall. The continued use of a road route over many centuries down to modern times has been well demonstrated in several instances in the Agora excavations, notable in that of the Panathenaic street. Excavation of the lower road levels of this series may therefore be expected to produce findings of considerable topographical interest.

A second series of road levels running south was revealed along the western edge of the Great Drain. Six levels dating from the 4th century B.C. to Late Roman times were examined in part and it was clear that the route was in use in even earlier times. This series is of particular interest since it is a continuation of a road which was uncovered in Section NN. It is now exposed for 75 meters from the point where it enters the excavations on the lower slopes of the Hill of the Nymphs.

At its widest this road was 2.50 meters and presumably it served only pedestrians and mule traffic. It seems to have gone out of use in the 5th or 6th centuries A.D., cut off at its northern end by a long east-west concrete wall and choked up with debris from the destruction of the houses on either side so that its identity was lost.

The road metal of this series was not as consistently well preserved as in the former, for running down the middle of the entire length of the road is a large drainage channel formed of terracotta tiles which carried water and sewage from the Hill of the Nymphs to the Great Drain. This drain in its present form is a construction of the 1st or 2nd centuries A.D. and the trench dug for it cut down through five of the six levels of road metal which we examined leaving only a narrow strip on either side.

The drain is for the most part formed of terracotta tiles half-oval in section, 0.045 thick, 0.40 wide, 0.42 high and 0.40 long. The tiles are laid in pairs so as to form a continuous elliptical drainage channel 0.84 high and 0.40 wide. At one point the series is interrupted for a stretch of about 2.00 meters for the insertion of a man-hole. Walls of large bricks laid in mortar are built on either side to the full height of the drain and the upper series of tiles is continued on top of the walls, leaving an opening sufficiently large to admit a small man and affording enough elbow room in the drain for him to clear away any stoppages. Contemporary with the construction of this manhole are two small house drains of rectangular terracotta tiles leading in from either side. At three other points along the course of the drain other such house drains utilize its services and it seems possible that a large public latrine along its eastern side may also have emptied into it in part. Above the upper series of tiles, where they are preserved, were found many large complete storage amphorae of strong fabric which served as packing to hold the drain tiles in place and relieve the weight of the earth above.

This drain may possibly be a replacement of an earlier drain servicing this area and it itself during the period of its use required several repairs which

are represented at several points by makeshift covers consisting of stone slabs, or storage amphorai and also by the substitution of flat tiles, laid to form a gabled channel, for the half-oval type.

The silt which filled its interior was removed from about half of the drain in this area and the latest datable objects noted are of the latter half of the 3rd century A.D. This is in accord with the findings in the southern continuation of the drain in NN and in the Great Drain itself. The whole drainage system here apparently was allowed to silt up after the Herulian destruction of 267 A.D.

2. Buildings

Turkish House

The removal of Asteroskopiou Street brought to light considerable remains of the south and west walls of a large Turkish house. The south wall was preserved across almost the entire width of the section and for several meters on into Section OO to the east. A continuation of it was picked up still further to the east in Section OO and it clearly carried on under the unexcavated spur of Asteroskopiou Street which remains. The total exposed length of this wall was approximately 60 metres. The west wall formed a corner with the south wall 18 meters from the western edge of the section and extended to the north for 14 meters. The foundations of three, possibly four, small rooms were uncovered on the northern side of the south wall. Five large pithoi set into the ground inside the west wall were probably used by the occupants of the building. The Turkish east-west road ran along the southern side of the south wall.

The walls are of rubble masonry ca. 0.50 thick throughout with considerable traces of plaster on the outer and inner surfaces. The south wall was much the best preserved, at one point to a height of 2.70. This was set into the earth to a depth of 0.60 below the floor level of the rooms.

The rooms were placed side by side along the northern side of the south wall. Two were 4.00 square; the third, 8.00 x 4.00 may have been divided in

the middle by a mud-brick cross-wall, making a total of four rooms of equal size, but traces of such a cross-wall were not conclusive. Of the two small rooms one had a floor of packed earth cobbled in places with medium sized rounded stones; the other had a carefully constructed floor of small stones overlaid with plaster. Along the west wall of the latter was a small drain formed of terracotta slabs. The third, larger, room had a floor of packed earth, and on its western side was a small crude fireplace formed of two large stones placed to support the wood, with small bricks to serve as a hearth on the floor between.

The good floor of the second of the small rooms was constructed in the 18th century, as evidenced by the pottery found beneath it. This, however, may represent only a late improvement in living conditions and the house itself may have been a construction of the early Turkish period.

In this connection it should be noted that a section of the Turkish city wall of 1778 was uncovered in the 1939 campaign in the southern part of III (then included in NN). This bit of wall ran south-east to north-west and a projection of its line would join it to the line of the Turkish road running along the southern side of this house at a point a little outside the excavation area to the west. A gate in the Turkish city wall is known to have existed at about this point.

Byzantine Houses II and III

The foundations of Byzantine House III and much of the western half of House II with associated pithoi were removed in the early part of the season to permit the use of this part of the area for a service road for the trucks carrying earth from the removal of Astereskopiou Street. Both of these houses were excavated in previous seasons. In the remaining section of Byzantine House II only a small section of the floor of one room and a partly dug square well in an adjoining room were left for the present excavator to examine.

In the center of the floor was found a small pithos into which led a small

rectangular drain tile. It was lined with a thin coat of cement and the lower part of its interior was filled with cement mixed with brick fragments. There was no outlet from it, so that it cannot have served as a floor drain. It must then have been used as a temporary storage for liquids. From the filling beneath the floor the sherds found were of a nondescript nature and could add no further information about the chronology of the house to that obtained by previous excavators. The well (see below, Well at 31-32/K-KA) was dug to a depth of 4.90, at which point it had to be abandoned because of the dangerous condition of its walls.

The foundations of Byzantine House II and the remaining pithoi were removed to permit excavation of the Roman levels beneath.

Roman House D

This house partly underlay the foundations of Byzantine House III. Its foundations were covered by the temporary service road early in the season and were not examined further during this campaign.

Building E

This designation has been given to a large room with a mosaic floor of Roman date in the northwestern part of the area on the southern side of the Kolonos Agoraios. The foundations of the west wall of the Turkish house lay only a scant 0.50 above the level of the mosaic and the builders of the pithoi associated with it had dug deep down through the mosaic destroying much of the design on the western and northern edges. The greater part of the central section had also been destroyed and the disturbed fill over the greater part of the room indicated that this destruction took place in Turkish times. A well of Roman construction reused in Turkish times cut through the south-eastern edge of the floor. All told, however, about one half of the entire mosaic remains, permitting the restoration of the scheme.

The mosaic consists of tesserae 0.01-0.015 m. square of white marble, black and red limestone, and glass paste of various colors. The northwest corner of the room was occupied by a panel, presumably a figured scene, of which there remains only one small patch of brilliant blue background. This was framed by two broad ornamental bands: a 6-strand guilloche and a maeander. The east and south sides of the floor were covered to a width of 2.60 metres by an interlocking design of 8-pointed stars and squares filled with a variety of geometric motifs. Let into this design in the middle of the south side of the room is a large rectangular panel perhaps marking an entrance or other position of some importance; the panel is filled with an elaborate and colorful geometric design. A little marble revetment remains in place on the face of the north wall. Elsewhere the walls were painted and stuccoed. The surviving parts of the lower wall show a floral design, the upper

parts, fallen, a marbled effect. Of particular interest is an elaborately profiled cornice in plaster and fragments of stuccoed ceiling with round and lozenge-shaped panels in high relief. The mosaic floor, to judge from its material and design, would date from the first or second century A. D.; the walls show traces of rebuilding and adjustment. The debris over the floor was of the 5th century A.D.

It seems possible that this room was a part of a large house excavated in Section IIθ just to the north (see below IIθ Roman House D). Its west wall aligns with the outer east wall of the portico of that house. Disturbed fill intervening between the two precludes certainty, but better evidence may be forthcoming when the area to the west of the room is excavated. Traces of the floor and wall plaster of another room adjoining Building E on the north in Section IIθ, were noted, but time did not permit excavation of it.

IIθ Roman House D.

In the course of excavating the area around Building E a section of the south-east corner of this building was uncovered. This corner had not been excavated in 1936 with the rest of the building because at that time it lay beneath Asteroskopiou Street. The plan of the building consisted of a large square central courtyard surrounded by a portico with rooms leading off to the north, east, and west sides.

The walls of the building in the corner excavated this season had been plundered but wall trenches were clearly distinguishable. The corner formed by the inner south and east walls of the portico was definitely established. A continuation of the outer east wall trench was traced, but its line was broken by disturbance

in Turkish times. The outer south-east corner of the portico probably lies in unexcavated fill a little to the south.

Along the eastern edge of the courtyard we uncovered a shallow drainage channel of concrete 1.00 wide which presumably served to catch rain water falling from the eaves of the portico. The drainage was carried from the courtyard by a small rectangular terracotta tile drain leading into a deep catch-basin constructed of brick masonry under the wall of the inner south-east corner of the portico. A similar small drain leads from the catch-basin under the portico to the south. A good floor level of hard packed earth was uncovered in the portico. This had been destroyed in part by the construction of a well and a pithos. Pottery from the destruction debris over the corner of the courtyard and from the fill of the small drainage channel and catch-basin indicate that the house went out of use in the 5th or 6th century A.D.

The main emphasis in the excavation in this season was in the south-eastern part which is included in the new museum site. Here we uncovered extensive remains of several Roman buildings constructed in relation to the north-south road and drain mentioned above.

Building A

On the eastern side of the road between it and the Great Drain we cleared the foundations of a house constructed in the early Empire and which remained in use until it was finally destroyed in the 5th century A. D. The plans of the rooms along the road only could be distinguished though the house clearly extended over the Great Drain at one point, probably carried across by beams inserted in cuttings in the west wall of the Drain. The largest room was 5 meters square.

The eastern wall of the house fronting on the road was probably constructed of large rectangular conglomerate blocks. Two only remain in place. It was possible to trace the wall trench from which the others were plundered for some distance. The inner walls were of earth faced with plaster, the eastern wall of two rooms employing the west wall of the Great Drain as a foundation. The floors of two rooms were paved with terracotta plaques laid in cement, the third was of well prepared clay.

When excavated the floors were found to be covered with a mass of debris and some burned material from the superstructure of the house. Of the roof-tiles none was complete and many periods were represented. A small section of the painted plaster from the wall was found on the floor of one room. Its decoration consisted of bands of red and green with sprays of green foliage between.

A well (see below Well at 48/AB) with a marble well-head and block was situated in the middle of the preserved section of the house. A short length of masonry of rough stones and mortar with a row of broad roof-tiles beside it may represent a crude courtyard laundry. A house drain led from one room into the Great Drain. Space for its entrance was left between the elliptical tiles at this point, so it must be contemporary with the construction of the elliptical-tile repair of that drain. A second house drain leads from the area of the well-head into the street drain west of it.

Roman House B

This large house is located along the western side of the north-south road. Nine of its rooms and part of a central peristyle and impluvium were uncovered entirely or in part during this season. Other rooms undoubtedly are to be found further to the west and north. As in Building A the wall on the street side was of large conglomerate blocks. The walls of two rooms are of stone, brick and mortar construction. One has a poured concrete foundation topped with stone slabs. The others, where preserved, are of earth faced with plaster. Some are preserved to a remarkable height, in one case 2.50 above floor level, in others to shoulder height. In four rooms and on the wall of the peristyle large sections of the painted plaster decoration is preserved. In one case the decorative scheme imitates veined marble; another has a dado below with white panels set off by vertical bands of green and red with floral designs between the bands; in a third the upper part of the wall had broad panels of bright yellow separated by bands of black and red; while a fourth has a plain white ground with vertical lines of black at set intervals. Marble doorsills remain in place at the entrances to four rooms. The impluvium is constructed of large marble blocks with a floor of cement which still shows the impression of the marble plaques with which it was lined. Large marble columns stood at the corners of the impluvium. On the floor of one large room was a small marble base with a cutting in its upper surface possibly for the insertion of a small statue or herm; in front of it a small marble altar lay on its side. Two rooms have floors of marble chips laid in concrete; in the corner of one of these is a shallow footbath let into the floor and lined with cement. The date of construction of the

building has not been definitely established. It was destroyed by fire in the 5th or 6th century A.D.

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Building P

This building lies just to the south of Roman House B. During this season we excavated a part of one large room, exposing its entire east wall, 8 metres long, and 6 metres of its north and south walls. Its walls carry on under the present service road running across the southern end of the section. In Section NN a south wall of another room with the turn of its east wall were also cleared this season.

Its construction is substantial, with poured concrete foundations and walls of large blocks of conglomerate preserved to a height of 1.00 above the floor, which is of hard packed earth. The inner surfaces of the walls retain part of the painted plaster decoration which consisted of a dado painted to imitate veined marble plaques. The upper part of the wall, to judge from the plaster fragments found on the floor, had panels of red and yellow.

An impluvium adjoining this room on the north at the same level may perhaps belong to the same building. The fill above it indicates, however, that it was in use at a later date. It is built of reused marble blocks and has a floor of cement. Part of it was destroyed by Byzantine intrusion.

Evidence for the destruction of the building by fire were abundant². The entire area of the floor which we cleared was covered with carbonized material and above this were masses of broken tiles from the roof. It was clear that the house had not been rebuilt following its destruction.

1. This designation is used since it is so referred to in Section NN where the southern part of the building was uncovered early in the season.

2. Not including the impluvium.

The finds from floor level were of particular interest. In a trough formed of large terracotta plaques lay a well preserved Roman portrait bust of an elderly man. Near a crude hearth on the western side of the room was a bronze thymiaterion with a square stepped base surmounted by an octagonal fuel container. Just above it was a large fragmentary bronze bowl whose rim was decorated with a frieze of animals in relief. Scattered on the floor in the centre of the room were other small bronzes including a completely preserved statuette of a seated Eros. In the southwest corner of the room were found 56 bronze coins dating for the most part from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A. D., the latest of which, a coin of Gallienus (253-258 A.D.), provides us with the date and cause of the destruction, the invasion of the Heruli in 267 A.D.

Latrine

In the southeastern corner of the section between the north-south road and the Great Drain and partly underlying Building A we excavated a small public latrine of the Hellenistic period. In plan it consists of a paved floor 3.00 x 9.00, originally covered with a thin layer of cement over a cobbled base, with a rectangular channel ca. 0.40 deep and 0.25 wide lined with hydraulic cement along each of three sides. The entrance was probably from the street. The east and south channels led into the Great Drain, while the west, which is less completely preserved, may have emptied into the street drain. No evidence for a superstructure was obtained. It is likely that it was actually unroofed.

Other Buildings

The foundations of several other small buildings of Hellenistic date were uncovered in the southeastern quarter of the area.

west of the north-south street. Along the east wall of Building P, at a lower level, were the foundations of the west wall with an associated floor level of a room 3.00 by 4.00 designated Building H. It probably continues on under Building P. A broad drainage channel of mortar runs along its south side. Part of a courtyard(?) 4.00 by 5.00 at the same level just to the south with a well (see below Well at 31/ME) in one corner may be associated with it. A hard packed floor set off in part by a low stone curb between Building H and the courtyard was covered with fragments of roof tiles and pottery. Here we found a terracotta plaque in low relief of Herakles riding a mule and a large black-glazed Hellenistic bowl.

Along the western side of the road were the foundations of a large room 6.00 by 6.00 at a lower level. Byzantine disturbance had destroyed much of its floor.

3. Wells

Five wells were excavated here this season. Two were completely dug, three had to be abandoned because of dangerous conditions. Well at 26/ET: This was located in the southeast corner of the mosaic floor of Building E. Its mouth rose ca. 0.25 above the floor. The upper part was built of small stones and mortar, but from a little below the surface to bottom, at 11.10, it was constructed of good Roman well tiles. There was no distinct well fill, and the sherds were of all periods down to the 19th century. It must therefore have been completely cleaned out, and refilled in modern times.

Well at 31-32/K-KA: This well was originally Roman reused in Byzantine times, in Byzantine House II. The upper part was constructed of large blocks of conglomerate to form a square shaft. But about 2.00 below the surface we encountered a large marble well slab with a circular opening. Below this the well was circular with walls built of small stones. At 4.90 work had to be stopped since the walls were in danger of collapsing. The fill to this point produced little but coarse sherds except for one early Turkish fragment.

Well at 48/AB: This is associated with Building A. It had a circular marble well-head with a rectangular well slab beneath. The construction throughout was of well tiles. It produced little to a depth of 8.60. Between this point and bottom at 9.70 it produced quantities of pitchers and amphorai, many complete, of the 5th or 6th centuries A.D.

Well at 31/ME: This well is located in the courtyard associated with Building H. It had a makeshift well-head of terracotta well tiles on a large porous well slab in whose surface were cuttings for the insertion of uprights to support a pulley. It was not possible to dig it entirely because of the presence of gas. The sherds were mostly coarse except for a Hellenistic terracotta grotesque head. Of interest was a great mass of well cleaned bright red clay which may have been thrown in from some nearby coroplast's or potter's shop.

Well at 20/MB: This well had at one time served a modern theatre in this area and had been partly cleaned out in previous years. It was believed to be originally of ancient construction and we tried to dig it in order to clear the way for our trucks. But gas again prevented its completion and it was refilled.

Wells and Cistern at 47-49/MA: The opening of one well and the mouth of a large cistern (?) cutting into the side of a second wall were noted at the bottom of a deep cut made on the north edge of the latrine at the level of the bottom of the Great Drain. It would be necessary to dig away part of the floor of the latrine to excavate these without danger of cave-ins. Accordingly we did not attempt to clear them this season. The fill above them was of the 5th century B.C.

4. Miscellaneous

Grave at 36/AA: This was a cremation burial of a small child. Small bits of bones mixed with burned material and the fragments of 22 small vases and a Type 8 lamp were found in a small compact pocket. The vases included a black glazed kantharos, two small West Slope kantharoi, two partly glazed plates, eight small unglazed dishes, two one-handled jugs, a pitcher, an unguentarium, two covered two-handled bowls, two covered one-handled bowls, and one covered bowl without handles. The burial may be dated in the early third century B.C.

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At the end of the season the situation in this section is as follows. In the southeastern quarter of the area the Roman level has been cleared. Along the southern boundary bedrock has been exposed in several places and it seems clear that little earth remains between the Roman level and bedrock here. Considerable fill covers the southwestern quarter above the western parts of Building P and Roman House B, which remain to be excavated. A little to the south in NN and to the north near Building E the

bedrock level is high and it may be expected that no formidable quantity of earth remains to be dug here therefore. Along the northern edge of the section in the valley between Kolonos Agoraios and the Areopagus a considerable mass of accumulated silt north of the series of east-west road levels can probably be removed rapidly. The examination of the east-west and north-south road levels will require more painstaking excavation.