

THOLOS AND PRYTANIKON

I.

Athenian decrees of the third and second centuries B.C. honoring the members and officers of a prytany close with the stipulation that they were to be inscribed on stone stelai and set up in the Prytanikon: *σιῆσαι ἐν τῷ πρυτανικῷ*.¹ The Prytanikon is known to us only from this formula and its identity and location have long puzzled topographers. Koehler² suggested (rightly as we shall see, but without adequate proof) that the Prytanikon was the Tholos and the region about it. This view was accepted by Wachsmuth.³ Judeich, however, identifies it with the later Prytaneion which he places on the northeast slope of the Acropolis.⁴

¹ In a forthcoming number of *Hesperia*, Mr. Sterling Dow will publish the prytany decrees found in the Agora excavations and will discuss all the Athenian inscriptions of this type. He will show that down to the middle of the second century B.C. the formula *σιῆσαι ἐν τῷ πρυτανικῷ* either occurs or may be restored with certainty in all prytany decrees. After this time the place of setting up varies. In *I.G.*, II², 972 of about 140 B.C., the formula at the end is irregular and no restoration can be suggested. *Σιῆσαι ἐν τῷ πρυτανικῷ*, however, is not admissible. *I.G.*, II², 977 of 134/3 (?) specifies *οἱ ἐν ἐπιπέθειον εἶναι φάληται* (cf. also *Hesperia*, II, 1933, p. 163, no. 9 of 125/4). *I.G.*, II², 1003 and 1004 of 125/4 and 122/1 were found on the Acropolis. In the latter *σιῆσαι ἐν τῷ πρυτανικῷ* has been restored, perhaps incorrectly, for I hope to show that the Prytanikon was in the Agora. If the restoration is correct, then we must assume that this inscription (and probably also its mate, 1003) was carried up from the lower city to the Acropolis as building material. In *I.G.*, II², 1049 and 1050 of the middle of the first century B.C., *ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ* is prescribed. This change in the place of setting up of prytany decrees was perhaps occasioned by the great building activity in the Agora about the middle of the second century and in particular by the building of the great "south stoa" which so narrowed the southwest entrance to the market square that it may have seemed inadvisable to set up other monuments there. I am indebted to Mr. Dow for much helpful information about decrees of this type, and especially for giving me access to his provisional list of the Agora examples. Dr. Homer A. Thompson has also made some suggestions.

² *Hermes*, V, 1871, p. 340.

³ *Die Stadt Athen*, II, p. 315.

⁴ *Topographie von Athen*², p. 304, note 7. His view (p. 297) that the Prytaneion seen by Pausanias (I, 18, 3 and I, 20, 1) was a Hellenistic building and was located on the northeast slope of the Acropolis, and that the earlier Prytaneion was in or near the "old Agora," seems quite unfounded. It is a modification of a theory originally proposed by Curtius (cf. p. 297, note 1) and is an attempt to reconcile the facts that, whereas one would expect to find the Prytaneion in or near the market, Pausanias actually saw it on the north slope of the Acropolis as he was on his way to the eastern parts of the city. If, however, we place the Prytaneion somewhere on the northwest slope of the Acropolis, not too high up, we satisfy both these requirements, as well as the far more important one that the Prytaneion—the city hearth—be a fixed point. Doro Levi has stated the case for a single Prytaneion at some length in *Annuario*, 6–7, 1926, pp. 4–7, but Judeich seems to consider his reasons insufficient.

Another point which has caused trouble is the apparent confusion among lexicographers and scholiasts between the Tholos and the Prytaneion,¹ although it is clear from Pausanias that the two were quite distinct and were separated from each other by no little distance. He saw the Tholos near the southwest corner of the Agora, where it has recently been discovered, and the Prytaneion somewhere on the northwest slope of the Acropolis below the Aglaurion.² Lexicographers, however, identify the two.

Let us examine the passages in which the two are confused. Timaeus in his *Lexicon Platonicum* defines the word Tholos thus:³ *θόλος οἶκος περιφερέης, ἐν ᾧ οἱ πρυτάνεις συνεισιδιῶντο : πρυτανεῖον δὲ ὀνόμασται, ἐπεὶ πυρῶν ἦν ταμιεῖον.* He states definitely that the Tholos was also called Prytaneion, a statement which one finds it hard to believe. It may be that he too saw the difficulty and added by way of explanation the words *ἐπεὶ πυρῶν ἦν ταμιεῖον.*⁴ Timaeus' definition is repeated almost word for word by Photios and Suidas.⁵ Hesychios among his definitions of the word *σκιάς* says *καὶ τὸ πρυτανεῖον.*⁶ Finally the scholiast on Aristophanes' *Peace* 1183 gives the location of the statues of the Eponymous Heroes as *τόπος Ἀθήνησιν παρὰ πρυτανεῖον* whereas it is quite clear from Pausanias⁷ that they were near the Tholos not the Prytaneion.

Modern writers have treated this confusion between Tholos and Prytaneion in a variety of ways. Some have accepted the passages and have concluded that the Prytaneion at Athens was a round building. Others, seeing the difficulties, have sought to explain them, but none of the explanations offered is really satisfactory, and the problem remains. No one has seen that the key to the situation is the rare word *πρυτανικόν* which if substituted for *πρυτανεῖον* in the above passages clears up the difficulties at once. We now have the lexicographers telling us that the Tholos, or Skias, was also called the *Prytanikon*, a name that is eminently suitable for the building that was the headquarters of the prytanes;⁸ and the scholiast on Aristophanes' *Peace* 1183 now gives us some real information, namely that the statues of the Eponymous Heroes stood near the Prytanikon or Tholos.

It is easy to see how the mistake arose. Every Greek city-state had its Prytaneion and the lexicographers were well acquainted with the word. They did not, however, know

¹ Most recently it has troubled J. Charbonneaux, *B.C.H.*, 1925, pp. 158 ff., and Doro Levi, *Annuario*, 6—7, 1926, pp. 1 ff.

² The Tholos, *Paus.* I, 5, 1. The Prytaneion, cf. p. 470, note 4. For the Tholos and all other Agora buildings mentioned in this paper see pp. 343 ff. of this number of *Hesperia*. Cf. also Karo in *Arch. Anz.*, 1934, pp. 126 ff.

³ The text of Timaeus' *Lexicon* is published in Hermann's edition of Plato, Vol. VI, pp. 397 ff. (Leipzig, 1877—1880).

⁴ Cf. Charbonneaux, *l. c.*, pp. 161—2.

⁵ Photios, *Λέξεις* s. v. *θόλος*, 1; Suidas, *Lexicon*, s. v. *θόλος*, 1.

⁶ Hesychios, *Lexicon*, s. v. *σκιάς*. *Σκιάς* was another name for the Tholos (Ammonios, quoted by Harpocration, *Lexicon*, s. v. *θόλος*); Photios and Suidas, s. v. *σκιάς*; cf. also *Etymologicum Magnum*, s. v. *σκιάς*.

⁷ I, 5, 1. Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 53, 4 places them in front of the Bouleuterion, which was near the Tholos (Pausanias, *l. c.*).

⁸ The words *ἐπεὶ πυρῶν ἦν ταμιεῖον* in Timaeus, Photios, and Suidas become superfluous.

the word *πρυτανικόν*, which seems to have been peculiar to Athens, and so they changed it, whether deliberately or through carelessness, to *πρυτανεῖον*. This change, once made, would hardly be corrected.

II.

Thus from literary sources we can make a fairly good case for the identity of Tholos and Prytanikon. Let us see if the finding places of the prytany decrees bear this out. It has frequently been observed that unless an inscription is found actually *in situ* or can be assigned on architectural grounds to a near-by building it is dangerous to argue that its finding place is also the place where it was originally set up. This is true in general, but the circumstances under which the stone was found may alter the case.

Inscriptions found in modern walls, or indeed in walls of any period, can lay but little claim to being near their original location, for they have obviously been selected by someone because of their suitability as building material and have been transported, who can say whether five metres or five hundred, from the place where they were found to the place where the wall was being built. The case of inscriptions found lying in earth fill, however, is different, and if this fill be that which accumulated shortly after the destruction of the site at the close of the classical period, then the chances that the inscription is still near where it once stood are fairly good. And, finally, if a number of inscriptions of a given type be found in a fairly limited area, some pieces actually coming from the earliest destruction fill, then one may say with some confidence that they were once set up in that neighborhood.

With these points in mind, let us look into the finding places of prytany decrees of the third and the first half of the second centuries B.C., those, that is, that were to be set up in the Prytanikon. The inscriptions of this group published in the *Corpus* are for the most part chance finds and have come to light in the course of modern building operations.¹ One would therefore not expect their proveniences to be especially significant. Yet it is worth noting that, even in the case of these, the great majority come from the region between the "Theseion" and the Tower of the Winds.² It was this fact that led Koehler to place the Prytanikon somewhere in the Agora, and of the buildings there he thought that it was most likely to be connected with the Tholos. And this fact, alone, as Kirchner has pointed out,³ is enough to dissociate the Prytanikon from a Prytaneion on the northeast slope of the Acropolis.

¹ They are as follows: *I.G.*, II², 674, 678, 702, 790, 832, 848, 864, 890, 899, 902, 910, 912 through 921, 952 (967), and (989).

² Many come from along the line of the western part of the so-called "Valerian" Wall (*Judeich*², pp. 108 and 165; *A.J.A.*, XXXVII, 1933, pp. 307 and 541). This part of the wall, which passes near the Church of Hypapanti, the Psomas house, the Stoa of Attalos, and the Church of the Panagia Pyrgiotissa so often mentioned as the finding places, was built largely of ancient material, much of which probably came from the Agora.

³ *Klio*, 8, 1908, p. 488.

In the course of the Agora excavations over forty new prytany decrees and fragments have been found.¹ The provenience of all these is known precisely. Twelve come from Section B, twelve from Section Z, five from Section E, three from Section OE,² three from Section H, two from Section I³ and one each from Sections Γ, ΣΤ, Λ, Μ, Ν and Ξ. A glance at the plan on page 312 of this number of *Hesperia* will show that the sections from which the largest number of prytany decrees come are near the southwest corner of the Agora. Here, too, is the Tholos, its porch in Section Z, the main circular part of the building in Section B.

I shall not attempt to review in detail the proveniences of all the Agora prytany decrees, for many of them, like those found hitherto and published in the *Corpus*, may be



Fig. 1

classed as chance finds since they come from modern or medieval walls.⁴ I shall select a few only the circumstances of the finding of which seem especially significant, referring to them by their Agora catalogue numbers.

¹ Here and below I give only approximate figures, for at present it is not possible to say certainly how many separate decrees are represented by the numerous small fragments found. Many certainly will belong together, and a number have already been so grouped. Such groups I have counted as one. Further study will doubtless reveal other combinations. It is probable too that among the more than twenty-eight hundred inscriptions which now make up the Agora collection, there are fragments of prytany decrees as yet unrecognized.

² OE = Old Excavation. These three inscriptions were found during the excavations of the Greek Archaeological Society on the east slope of the Kolonos Agoraios (*Judeich*², pp. 331 ff.), were published by Professor Oikonomos, and now appear in the *Corpus* as *I.G.*, II², 674, 913, and 918.

³ Of one of these (I 431 = *Hesperia*, III, 1934, p. 61, no. 50) two more fragments were found recently in a modern house in Section II.

⁴ These include all the pieces from Sections ΣΤ, I, Λ, Μ, Ν, Ξ, and II.

I 1024 is the lower part of a stele which is still leaded into its base (Figs. 1 and 2; preserved height, including base 0.99 m.). It was found lying under a hard-packed fill of late Roman times about twenty metres northeast of the Tholos, in front of the small propylon of the Bouleuterion, on the east side of the great drain which passes through this part of the Agora.¹ Stele and base together form a heavy and awkward mass which



Fig. 2. I 1024

could scarcely have been moved far from its original position.

I 787 is the upper part of a stele—preserved height 0.58 m., width 0.375 m.—which was found lying in late Roman fill eight metres east of the Tholos. It is broken below, and the edges of the gable top are somewhat damaged but it shows no signs of ever having been used as building material.

I 625, I 811, I 818 and I 820 are four small to medium sized fragments, all parts of the same stele, the first two being actually contiguous. They were found in late Roman fill directly in front of the Tholos.

I 247 (= *Hesperia*, III, 1934, p. 31, no. 21) is a stele of which seven (*l. c.*, p. 35) joining fragments have been found. Although the fragments were found in the wall of a modern house, it is to be noted that this house had a very deep cellar, which reached down well into late Roman fill. It seems, therefore, quite possible that the diggers of the cellar found the stele lying more or less intact in the fill and that they broke it up for use in their walls. The east wall of this cellar still stands supporting the modern Eponymon

Street. When it is finally removed other fragments of the stele may well be found. The mid-point of the cellar is about twenty-three metres east of the Tholos, and several metres east of the great drain.

I 656 and 1057 are two smallish fragments from different stelai. They come from late Roman fill ten and two metres respectively east of the Tholos. I 1029 comes from the gravel fill of the great drain (late Roman) fifteen metres east of the Tholos.

The above-mentioned inscriptions are all from Section Z, that is, from the region directly in front of the Tholos. Those from Section B, equal in point of number to the Z

¹ On the great drain see *Hesperia*, II, 1933, p. 103 and *A.J.A.*, XXXVII, 1933, p. 306.

pieces, come in no case from late Roman fill, all having been found in walls or in medieval fill. Their number, however, and the fact that most of them come from the northern half of the section, suggest that the place of setting up was not far off. Two of them, I 1462 and I 1860, come from the retaining wall on the south and west sides of the court of the Bouleuterion, immediately behind the Tholos. This wall appears to have been built shortly after Sulla's sack of Athens in 86 B.C. It is made almost entirely of second-hand material—big blocks, statues, inscriptions, etc.—bonded together with a rather weak, sandy mortar. Much of this material must have been available on the spot.¹

Mention must also be made of two complete stelai, containing prytany decrees, which were re-used as cover slabs of the great drain. I 1025 was found at the same point in the drain as I 1024 mentioned above. I 165 (= *Hesperia*, III, 1934, p. 21, no. 19) comes from Section E, in front of the Metroön.

The only other section besides Z in which prytany decrees have been found in late Roman fill is Section H. Here, just in front of the temple of Apollo Patroös, was found the lower half of a stele with a small joining fragment² (I 600, preserved height 0.73 m.), and, a few metres farther north, several small bits from another stele (I 979). These, however, must be regarded as exceptions.

Thus the evidence derived from the finding places of prytany decrees locates the Prytanikon at the southwest corner of the Agora in front of the Tholos,³ and suggests that it may also have extended some distance to the east of the drain. Literary evidence also points to the identity of Tholos and Prytanikon. We may conclude therefore that Prytanikon was one of the names applied, in official parlance at least, to the Tholos and its "precinct."

¹ On this wall and the objects found in it see this number of *Hesperia*, p. 348.

² Another piece of this stele, *I. G.*, II², 910, was found near the Tower of the Winds.

³ After the manuscript of this article had been sent to the printer, another large fragment of a prytany decree was found in Section B, about eight metres north of the Tholos. It formed part of a wall of Byzantine times in which a number of large blocks had been used. The new fragment preserves most of the lower part of a stele (Ht. 0.70 m., W. 0.47 m., Th. 0.14 m.) broken away above and at the left and slightly reworked along the right edge of the face. The breaks, however, are fresh and sharp and the letters clear, many still retaining the red paint which was used to emphasize them. It seems certain that this stone was never used in any other wall than the one in which we discovered it, and that it comes from nearby together with the other large ancient blocks of which the wall was built. The freshness of this newly found piece contrasts with the battered condition of another fragment of the same stele which joins above (I 432 = *Hesperia*, III, p. 12, no. 16). The latter was found in Section I some two hundred metres to the east, and has suffered considerably in the course of its travels.