

JEBEL KHALID ON THE EUPHRATES: AN OVERVIEW

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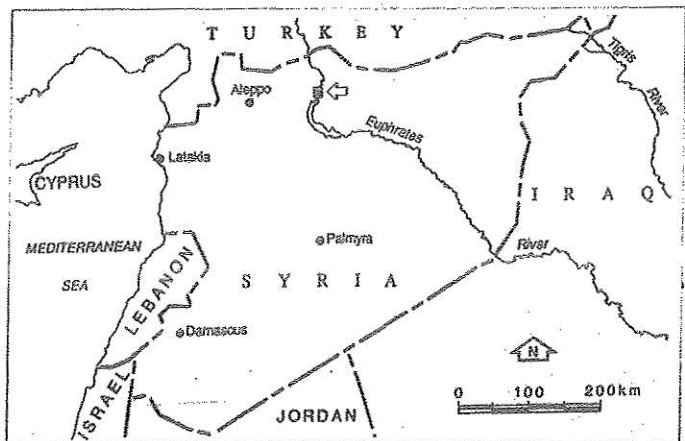
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Abstract

Jebel Khalid on the west bank of the Euphrates in Northern Syria has proved to be a one-period occupation site, established early in the Seleucid period on a virgin site and systematically abandoned at the end of the Seleucid period. Survey and excavations since 1984 have established that there were 3.4km of City Wall with 30 interval towers: one curvilinear tower (the massive North West Tower) and the City Gateway (defended by two large forward-projecting Towers) have been excavated as a sample of this defence system. The well-preserved Governor's Palace on the Acropolis and a near-complete insula of Domestic Houses have also been excavated, throwing much light on the domestic architecture and social life of colonists in the Seleucid period. Work is still underway in excavating in the area of Public Buildings, including two short stoas and an amphiprostyle Doric Temple.

Jebel Khalid consists of a large limestone mesa of c. 50 ha on the west bank of the Euphrates, situated some 2-3 km to the south of the present Tishrin dam in Northern Syria and some 55 km south of the Turkish/Syrian border (co-ordinates 36°22'N and 38°10'E). (fig. 1) At its maximum the Jebel rises to 427m above sea level¹. Whilst it has been intermittently visited by travellers in the past, it has generally been dismissed as yet another Roman-period settlement: this view was reinforced by aerial photography which

Figure 1: Sketch map showing location of Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates





Pl. 1: Aerial photograph of Jebel Khalid

showed clearly a Roman-style «playing-card» encampment in the centre of the site. (Pl. 1) However, systematic survey (1984, 1986) and then subsequent excavation (1987 to present) have shown that all this was deceptive. There is almost no sign of any Roman presence with the exception of the encampment area, and that proved to be a temporary encampment of weak rubble walls (c. 40m x 80m) constructed over ruins dating to the Greek period which lie beneath, covered by up to half a metre of accumulated soil: to judge from a coin found in a sounding trench this encampment dates to the time of Constant II. A scatter of sherds of late-Roman, thin-walled, ribbed brittle-ware from cooking-pots associated with some *ad hoc* fire-places of reused dressed stones is all that remains of this late-Roman visitation. Later in time, the steep riverine cliff-faces saw Christian solitaries in caves

and rock-cut dwellings, they and their visitors leaving behind two Syriac inscriptions, a Christian tomb, a reliquary with a Syriac inscription and a number of Christian graffiti scratched in rock-faces².

Whilst the initial sherding in 1984 certainly indicated Greek-period occupation, excavation since 1986 has confirmed a great surprise – the site is purely Greek, without a trace of any earlier occupation and being systematically abandoned at the end of the Greek period, with minimal and short-lived re-occupation by squatters with late Hellenistic material culture. This sporadic re-occupation does not extend into the Roman period at all. This is dramatically illustrated by the

coins recovered in the course of excavations since 1986, some 430 of them. No coin is earlier than Seleucos I and posthumous issues of Alexander, over 85% are Seleucid issues, there is a sudden cessation of coins in the late 70's BCE, and apart from a stray coin of Nerva, the remaining coins are all dated to the mid-fourth century CE onwards. That is to say, there is a gap of four centuries in the numismatic record, these later coins being found generally in areas of stone robbing³. Soundings taken to bedrock in all areas of the site – walls and towers, domestic houses, acropolis, temple and stoas – have confirmed the purely Hellenistic origins of the settlement, which at its fullest extent covered c. 30ha.

The ancient name for the site is unknown though a recorded, but little known, Thapsacos is a possible candidate: being unoccupied in the Roman period it cannot be expected to turn up in Roman lists and itineraries⁴. Nearby, however, in the villages of Khibet Khalid and Yousef Pasha (the latter now

under water), just to the north of Jebel Khalid, and in their environs, there is extensive evidence of Roman-period occupation, and they may well constitute a suitable candidate for one of the missing places on the riverine itineraries and the Peutinger Map of the Roman period. Neither can Jebel Khalid itself also be a candidate for the elusive Thapsacus, being without evidence of fifth and fourth century BCE occupation (Thapsacus was the crossing-point both for Xenophon and for Alexander).

The reasons for the choice of the site for a major new fortress early in the Seleucid period is clear: between its north face and Jebel es-Soda opposite it commands a river-crossing point, the river being forced to flow between this defile even when in full spate during the Spring and Summer months. It could thus also control all river traffic, as well as serve as a port-of-call for river traders (there are stone quays visible under the present water level). Many similar functions were probably also envisaged for the establishment of Hellenistic Dura Europos, much further downstream, as well as for Seleukeia (Zeugma)/Apamea to the north, upstream.

Survey and mapping, as well as some sounding trenches and geophysical investigations, were executed in 1986. (fig. 2) The survey revealed that there was in total 3.4km of circuit walling, 2.7 km around the landward side of the Jebel, and 0.7 km being the length of the perimeter walling of the Acropolis, itself enclosing 2.2 ha. The steep cliffs on the riverine side, approximately 1.5km in length, were evidently considered an adequate barrier in themselves. Throughout, the construction of the walling is extremely homogeneous, with a header regularly followed by a stretcher, the inner and outer faces of the wall being so staggered that the headers alternate from either side of the wall, locking it internally in strength. (Pl. 2) Chunks of limestone fill the spaces between the inner and outer faces. Headers and stretchers are also

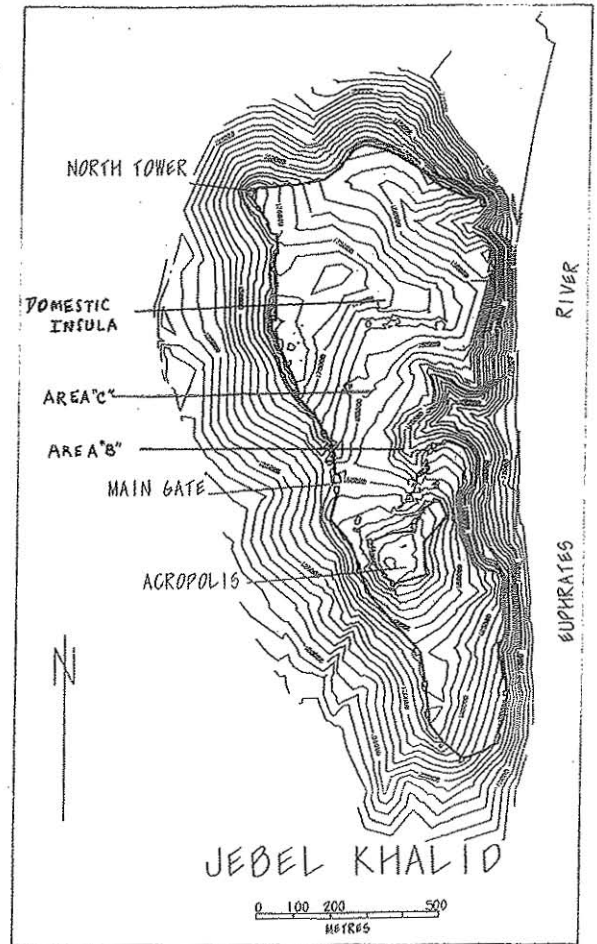


Figure 2: Contour map of Jebel Khalid (c.1:10 000)

Pl. 2: Traces of City Wall, North Face, Jebel Khalid

Traces of City Walls



staggered vertically as well as horizontally, so no compartment sits directly above another. The extreme regularity of the walling, a standard 2.8m in width, using a uniform size of block, c.1.10m long and 0.525m wide and high (=2 cubits x 1 cubit x 1 cubit), suggests that it was all erected in one construction period. (Pl. 3) As the wall clings to the outer perimeter of the Jebel to retain the maximum advantage of the topography, it traces a series of indents and jogs and, in addition, its length is punctuated by some 30 interval batteries, bastions and towers for commanding enfilading fire: some of these towers, especially those built forward of the trace, have their lowest courses constructed in «solid-built» technique, with the wall blocks, again of the same standard size, but in this case laid contiguously, no doubt to gain greater strength against ballistic missiles and battering rams and to provide a stronger foundation for bearing the weight of heavy artillery pieces. The likely date of construction, in the absence of any sign of multiple phases in building, is best conjectured to be within the first few decades of the third century BCE⁵.



Pl. 3: Header and Stretcher construction of City Wall

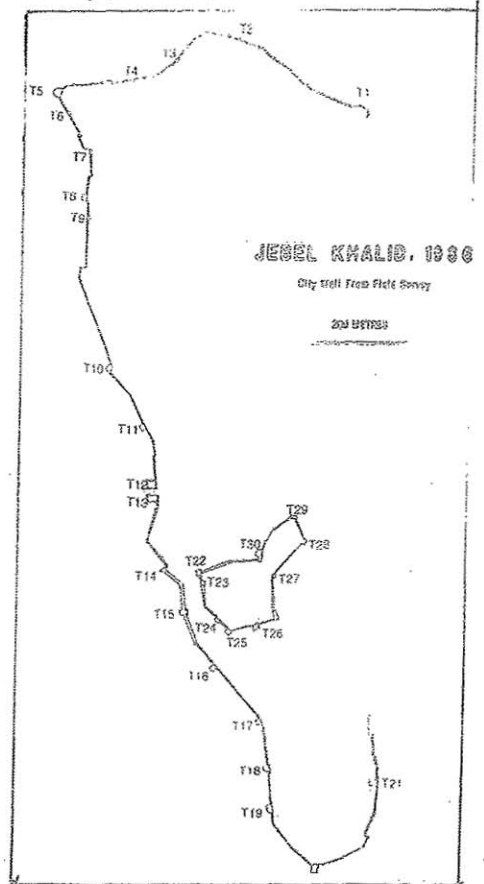
Subsequent to this survey and mapping, the excavation strategy has been to sample the site as follows:

[1] Excavation of one of the thirty interval towers as an example of the defence system (1986/7) and excavation of the Main Gate (1988/91)

- [2] Excavation of the major building on the Acropolis (1988-96), the Governor's Palace
 - [3] Excavation of a complete insula of domestic houses, between four streets (1987 to present)
 - [4] Excavation of a sample of the Public Buildings. Stoa 1 (1989-95), Stoa 2 (2000 to present). Temple (2000 to present)
- [1] North-West Tower and Main Gate⁶

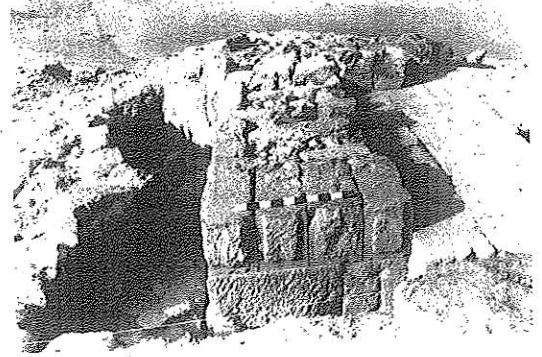
Where the wall turns its sharpest re-entrant angle was in the north-west corner, requiring a forward-projecting tower to provide covering fire over a wide range of walling (T.5 in fig. 3). Not only was this the highest point in the defensive system of the perimeter wall, it also commanded the landward approaches from the north and west over the low saddle of hills from Hierapolis (Membij) and provided distant views of any approach by river

Figure 3: Jebel Khalid: City wall from field survey (c. 1:8000)



from the north. The only likely trace of a postern gate in the whole defence system has been detected nearby, also requiring special protective cover. Altogether the elevated commanding position made this *prima facie* a location of special importance. The decision was therefore made to sample the wall system here by excavation; and, as excavation revealed, the architects of the system had indeed singled out this site for special treatment, providing the only curvilinear tower in the whole system. Measuring 14.5m (N/S) x 18m (E/W) (fig. 4), it is rivalled in size only by the rectangular towers of the Main Gate (each c.16.5m square) and by T.20, the forward-projecting rectangular South-West Tower (c.13.25m x 17.75m), which provided the equivalent defence function on the south-west approaches to the Jebel, at the southernmost point of the defence system.

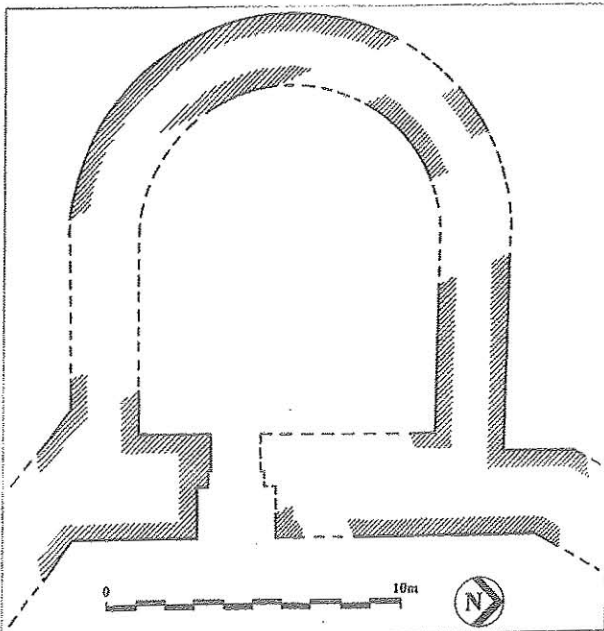
On excavation (1986-7), the sides of the U-shaped tower proved to be «solid-built», with the oblong blocks laid on bedrock end to end, and the next course above laid side by side, thus avoiding coincidence of joins. (Pl. 4) The internal floor of the



Pl. 4: Entrance-way into North West Tower and "solid-built" Tower Foundations.

tower consisted of crushed limestone over quarried and levelled bedrock. True to the classical texts on *poliorcetics*, the tower was not bonded to the adjoining curtain walling, so that if the wall were breached the tower itself might still operate as an independent redoubt. Whilst special effort was required to provide the curved outer surface, all the better for deflecting hostile missiles and for encompassing a wider range in its own ballistic coverage, there was no sign that it ever came under enemy attack. The associated finds, recovered at foundation levels, are consistent with – but do not prove – a construction date within the first third of the third century BCE or thereabouts.

Figure 4: Plan: North West Tower



The likely location of the Main Gate was indicated by two large grass-covered mounds to either side of the modern track that enters the Jebel on its west flank. After four seasons of excavation (1988- 91) the overall plan of the gateway became clear (fig. 5). It consists of two massive forward-projecting rectangular towers, each c.16.5m square, standing 12m apart. Foundations were built up from bedrock cut into the sloping Jebel to ground-level entry-points into the towers from inside the walls: this entailed, in the north tower, a height of 2.07m, in the south tower 2.425m. (Pl. 5) A ledge of c.0.35m projected inside the towers themselves at ground level for receiving the ground-level flooring of timber joists and beams. (Pl. 6) The

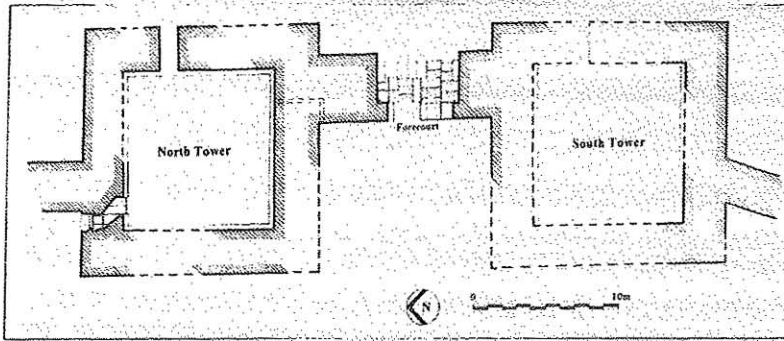
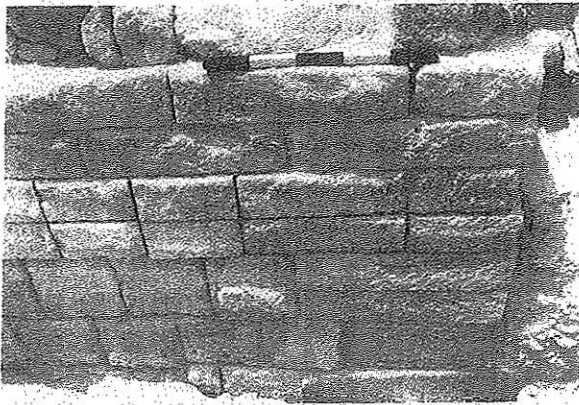
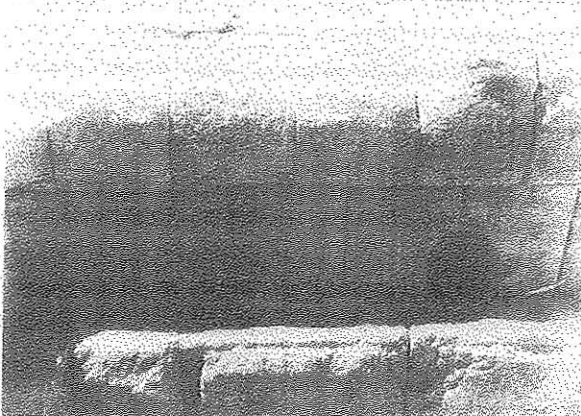


Figure 5: Plan: Main Gate



Pl. 5: Foundation Masonry, South Tower, Main Gate

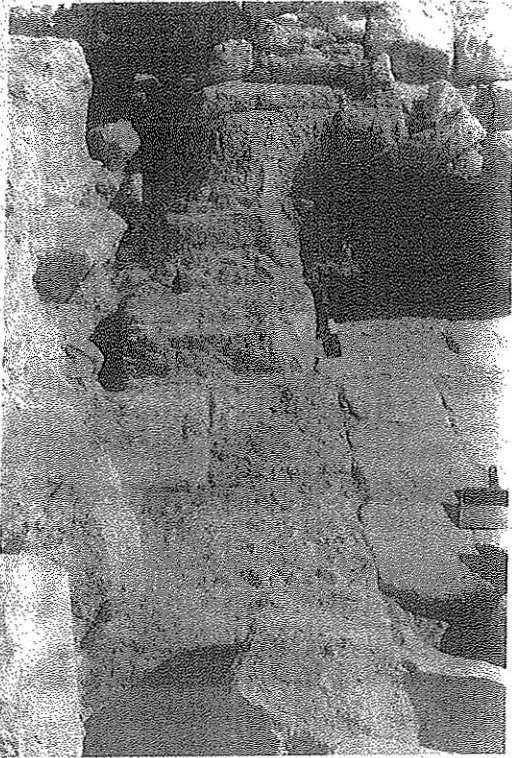
Pl. 6: Ledge for flooring, and drain, inside North Tower, Main Gate



perimeter walls of the towers themselves were «solid-built», varying in width from 2.8 m to 3.0 m, consisting of courses of contiguously laid ashlar blocks, the placement of the blocks in the courses being alternated to avoid join on join. One interesting feature is the

(relatively rarely attested, but in this case quite liberal) use of lime mortar for bedding, especially in the first two courses of the foundation blocks of the towers. Another feature is cladding of slender orthostat slabs of limestone (average dimensions c. 0.84 x 0.77 x 0.27m), laid slightly stepped back from register to register, on the exterior faces of both towers and of the gateway: this revetment adds to the aesthetics of the complex but not, of course, to its military strength. The faces of the towers inside the walls were also given similar attention to «façadism», but in this case not decorative revetting but decorative stonework, the blocks above the foundation level having squarish faces (c. 0.53m square), with some drafting and bevelled edges as well as some rustication.

Spur-walls project between the towers, creating an initial open forecourt 10m x 12m which confronts anyone approaching the gate and which was flanked by the forward projection of the two towers. Between the spur-walls stood a double gateway, 4.63m in total width. The original paving of ashlar blocks of this entry-way was found still *in situ*, a little over a metre below the surface of the modern track (Pl. 7) There were two gates, opening inwards, pivoting on socket holes, the narrower entry-way (for foot and donkey traffic) to the south being c.1.9m wide (about the average width of a postern) and the broader one (for wheeled traffic – there are wheel ruts) to the north being c.2.7m wide. A stone raised 0.210m in the paving indicates where the doors closed against it, with a circular hole cut



Pl. 7: Paved roadway between North and South Towers, Main Gate

into a single stone adjacent for securing the doors by bolts. The one offensive feature of the gateway system is in the north tower where a sally-port emerged via a zig-zag corridor on a well-laid floor from the interior of the tower through the north wall. This suggests that the original Greek approach road to the settlement may have been from a southerly direction, so that the unshielded right flank of anyone approaching the gate would be exposed. The sally-port in the north-west corner of the north tower would, therefore, not be sighted in making such an approach from the south.

The closest parallel to the Jebel Khalid gateway in overall design is the main western entrance at Assos on the Troad, similarly equipped with a flanking pair of forward-projecting rectangular towers (c.8 m x 12 m) of remarkable elevation (c.16m), standing about 11 m apart and furnished with similar spur-walls narrowing to a gateway c.4m wide. In the case of Assos, however, once through this

gateway, one entered into a second rectangular court, a feature not replicated in the simpler but even more massive ground-plan of Jebel Khalid. Finds in the lowest deposits, datable to the period of construction, include coins (two issues of Antiochus I) and ceramics (a number of fragments of fine burnished black (Attic) ware and West Slope sherds) which suggest that a construction period in the first third of the third century BCE or thereabouts would not be an unreasonable conjecture.

[2] The Acropolis Palace⁷

It is apparent that there was once a large limestone outcrop within the Acropolis at the highest point of the Jebel, providing panoramic views of the Euphrates valley both upstream and downstream, and across the river to the east into the Jezirah. The Acropolis itself has a defensive wall, punctuated by nine interval towers and enclosing 2.2 ha. of land. This rocky outcrop was quarried to a rough level leaving an evident quarry face on the western side. The basis of the flooring of the subsequent building is levelled bedrock except where the bedrock slopes away on the northern and eastern sides of the building. Here, foundations were sunk up to 3.55m below the floor level, and underfloor packing of chippings and ashlar blocks was laid until a suitable floor level was attained. In room 12 (fig. 6), for example, the plinth for the central column base is quarried bedrock, designedly left standing 0.44m above the subfloor of the room, which throughout room 12 is levelled bedrock. (Pl. 8). Nowhere, even in foundation trenches, is there any trace of previous occupation.

Unfortunately, with the exception of room 9, all the original flagstone flooring in the building has been robbed and the consequent disturbed deposit of underfloor material, from the construction period, mixed with abandonment deposition, makes the dating of the building hazardous. However, there is sufficient material dating to the third century BCE found in the deposit at this floor level to be certain

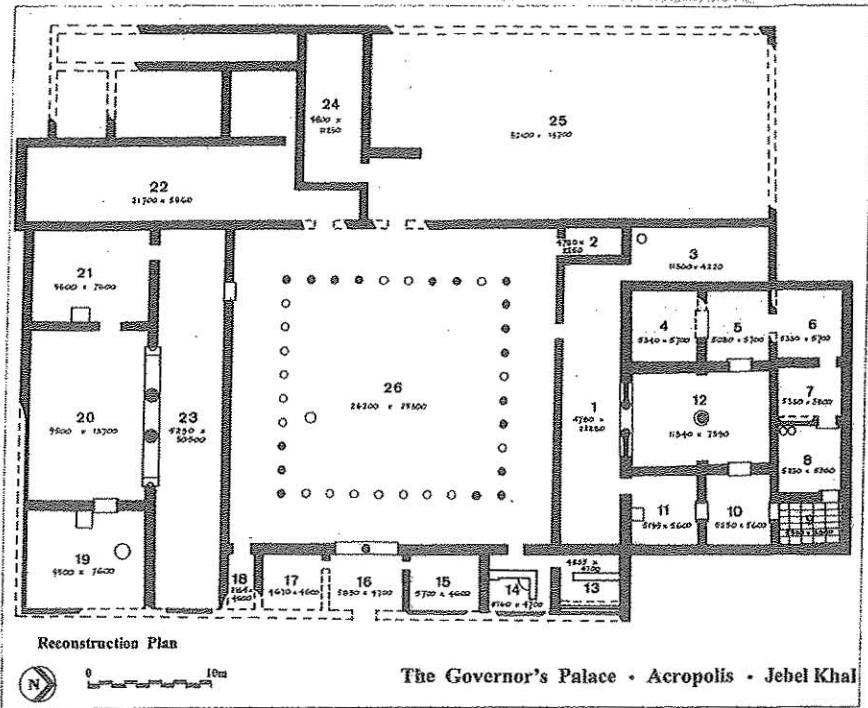


Figure 6: Plan: Acropolis Palace



Pl. 8: Column on plinth and drums, room 12, Acropolis Palace

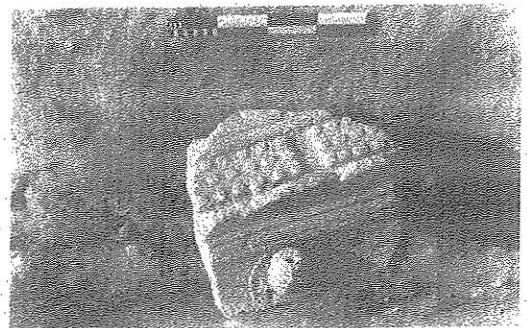
that we are dealing with a construction phase within the third century BCE (pottery, lamps, amphora handles dating from mid-third century⁸, coins of Antiochus I [2], Antiochus II [1], Seleucos II [4], Seleucos III [1], Antiochos III [12]). Abandonment and demolition is to be dated c.70 BCE or shortly thereafter (the run of coins dramatically ceases in the late 70's BCE). There is no Roman material even in rooms where there was some secondary re-

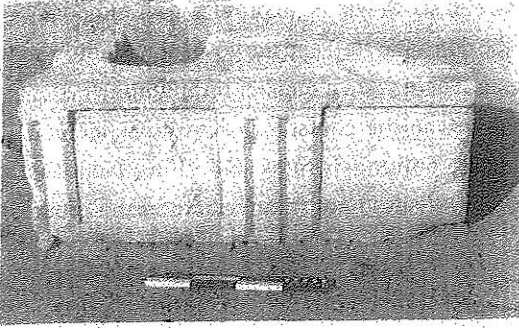
occupation (rooms 2, 15, 22-24): in these rooms the domestic assemblage of artefacts, found in abundance, is all late Hellenistic only.

The building (fig. 6) was planned around a central courtyard ('room 26'), c.25m square, with a large cistern cut in the south-east of the courtyard (at its present measurable widest, 5.58m: the uncleared debris level begins 3m below the mouth). On the four sides of this

courtyard a stylobate was laid on levelled bedrock (c.17m in length) and columns (0.35m in radius) erected on alternate blocks, 10 columns to each side: the order is Doric and all the canonical elements of a Doric colonnade were recovered, including mutules (3 examples), sets of guttae (8 examples) (Pl. 9), triglyphs and metopes (11 examples) (Pl. 10), lion-headed waterspouts (7 examples), capital (1 example) (Pl. 11) and many fragments of cornice moulding. There is insufficient evidence, however, to suggest that this may have been a double-level colonnade.

Pl. 9: Example of guttae, cornice moulding and lion-headed waterspout, Acropolis Palace



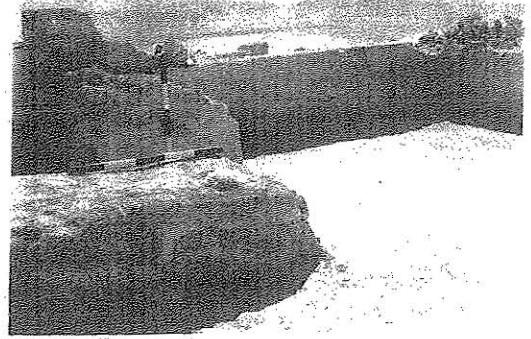


Pl. 10: Triglyph and metope block, Acropolis Palace



Pl. 11: Doric capital, Acropolis Palace

Off the north and south wings of this decastyle courtyard two lengthy corridor rooms open (both with indirect entries towards the western end), and from each of these rooms in turn one entered via colonnaded entrances into a large banqueting hall or audience chamber (rooms 12 and 20), both richly decorated in panels of faux marbling plaster-work. The room on the south measures 13.7 m x 9.4 m and that on the north 7.39 m x 11.34 m; the north room was also decorated with six pilasters and its ceiling was supported by a central, tapering column, and all its doorways were fitted with doors. Both these large rooms were equipped to either side with kitchens and storerooms. Rooms 4, 5, 6 formed a storeroom, food preparation and cooking suite, likewise rooms 9, 10, and 11, all servicing room 12 on the north side. Rooms 21 and 19 similarly serviced room 20 on the south, both having two ovens and storage pits. (Pl. 12) In these large reception rooms 12 and 20 the governor and his men might behave as Macedonians, following their rituals of frequent

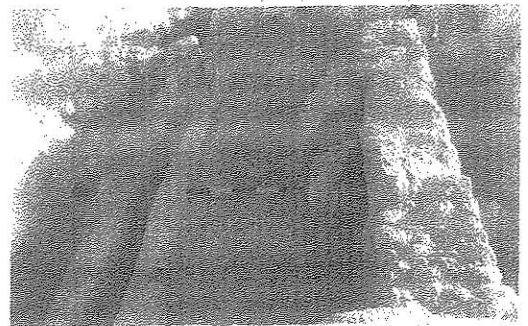


Pl. 12: Raised hearths, Kitchen, room 21, Acropolis Palace

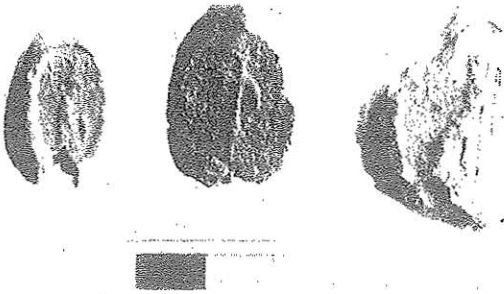
banqueting and drinking together. Rooms 7 and 8 in the north wing were used for storage (room 8 having *in situ* large pithoi).

The gateway into the Palace, from the east (room 16) was flanked by pilasters and supported by a central column, all of which still had plaster adhering (green/blue, black and white): it led directly into the central courtyard. Small rooms to either side (rooms 15 and 17) were presumably guard-rooms. Also opening from the courtyard on the east wing was a washroom with its flooring, consisting of lime mortar, remarkably intact (room 14). It was equipped with two fireplaces for heating water, and its floor sloped and drained into the adjacent room to the north (room 13), flushing out the toilet trough, itself rendered in lime mortar. (Pl. 13). Both rooms were furnished with partition walls to provide some privacy but, given their size, were both intended to be used by a number of people at the same time.

Pl. 13: Latrine trough and drain, room 13, Acropolis Palace



On the south wing, at its west wing, there are two large rooms (rooms 22 and 24), measuring 21.7 m x 5.86 m and 4.8 m x 11.25 m. Both of these rooms produced official Seleucid seals at the lowest floor level⁹, suggesting that their original use may have been for official administrative business, as offices, treasury or armoury. (Pl. 14) Further to the west of room 22 were found well-built header/stretcher ashlar walls, but they are outside the building. Soundings to bedrock confirmed that they do not enclose internal rooms: there are no floors, and high bedrock outcrops inside these areas are still left unquarried. Gaps were left for doorways. It would seem that foundation walls were laid as part of the original floor plan of the building, but that the rooms themselves were never completed – compare the planned extension to the north of the palace of Vergina/Aigai, never completed.



Pl. 14: Seleucid seals from rooms 22 and 24, Acropolis Palace

The vestibule room on the north wing, room 1, gave access to room 3, which proved to be an undecorated, non-peristylar, open courtyard, furnished with a drum altar still standing on its plinth, surrounded by much charcoal, ashy deposit and bone. This was an area reserved for religious ceremonies. Room 25 is a back, walled (garden?) enclosure. The original functions of the small rooms 2 and 18, which both open on to the main courtyard, are not known as they were both robbed to well below floor level, but they are almost certain to have contained stairways to upper-level rooms over the

north and south wings, to provide accommodation for the domestic staff and the governor's family and guests. There were a number of building elements recovered in the course of excavation, including capitals, columns drums and (Ionic) doorway fittings which do not fit anywhere in the ground-floor: they must be presumed to have come from upper-storey rooms. Most rooms produced plaster in quantity, in solid colours of black, red, ochre, white, pink and green/blue: only the large rooms 12 and 20 and the entrance way, room 16, produced plaster with faux marbling, vegetal decoration and geometric designs.

At first sight the overall plan appears to be basically Hellenistic – axial and strictly orthogonal around a peristyle courtyard, equipped with a cistern and raised upon a podium. The long antechambers (rooms 1 and 23), however, with their indirect «bent» entries from the colonnade, leading to the «broad rooms», the hypostyle halls of rooms 12 and 20, are all features rather in the eastern/Achaemenid tradition. The closest parallels in character, function and date would be provided by the citadel and redoubt palaces at Dura (especially the latter), displaying many features in common.

Overall, the multi-functional purpose of such a building as the Jebel Khalid Palace is clear:

Military: as a redoubt, equipped with a separate defence system and towers, along with water storage and magazine rooms;

Strategic: providing long-distance views of all river traffic and of activities across the river in Mesopotamia;

Gubernatorial: equipped with rooms suitable for sitting in judgment, holding audiences and convening councils;

Administrative: with rooms suitable for treasury, armoury, storing archives and documents, offices;

Religious: with an area and permanent altar reserved for religious ceremonies;

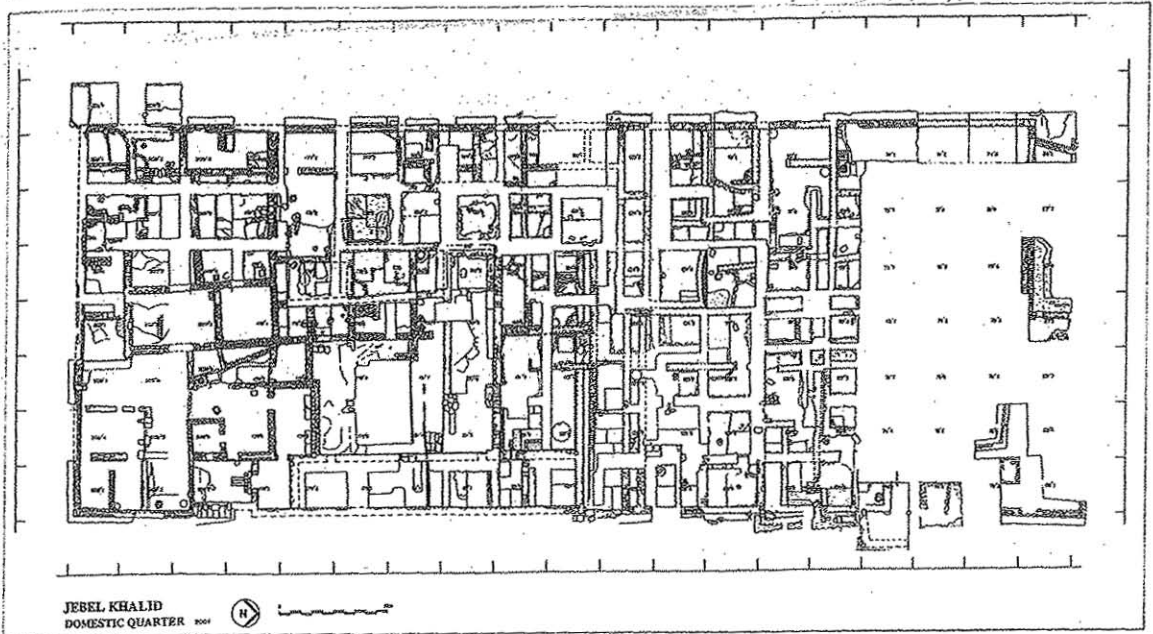


Figure 7: Plan: Domestic Quarter Insula

Service: with four kitchen and storage areas, as well as bathroom and latrine;

Social: with large rooms suitable for entertainment, in which the governor could display the appropriate mixture of authority and camaraderie;

Domestic: with a presumed upper story for domestic, servant and guest quarters;

Recreational: equipped both with an internal colonnaded courtyard and an open but sheltered, walled, rear courtyard, as well as with panoramic views to enjoy;

Imperial: stamping unmistakably on the landscape for all to see from miles around, the might and permanence of the Hellenistic presence and authority.

[3] The Domestic Quarter of Jebel Khalid

Heather Jackson

The housing insulae at Jebel Khalid are built on a steep south-facing slope, nearly a kilometre from the Acropolis and approximately 700m from the

Main Gate (fig. 2). It is reasonably certain that there were other housing areas on the Jebel closer to the Main Gate and Central Area but this elevated area is in the 'classic' optimal position for Greek housing, with its N/S orientation. The gridlines of the insulae can be seen in a good light from the Acropolis and the rectangular 'Hippodamian' layout is assured, as at other Seleucid sites such as Dura-Europos, Apamea on the Orontes, Lattakia, Seleucia in Pieria, Antioch and Apamea on the Euphrates. Due to limited resources, only one insula has been excavated and it is hoped that the coming 2002 campaign will see the completion of excavation of the whole insula (fig. 7).

The importance of the housing insula

While many more sites in Syria are now known to have Hellenistic houses, these are either overlaid with a later period and therefore damaged, or the excavated remains are so fragmentary that they are unreadable as an integral whole. Three of the great cities of the tetrapolis of the Seleucids (Antioch, Apamea and Laodicea) were built over. Seleukeia-in-Pieria was not, but awaits excavation of its housing area.¹⁰ Recent French excavations at Dura-

Europos have tried to isolate the earlier Hellenistic houses around the Agora, whose remains are obscured firstly by the Parthian houses built in the second century BCE and then by the later Roman structures. At Hama (Emesa), several Hellenistic houses were excavated, but they are a series of disembodied rooms.¹¹ There is possibly domestic architecture at, for example, Oumm el'Amed, Tel 'Arqa, Ras ibn Hani, Tel Ahmar, Tel Beydar and Tel Jinderes but no house plans.¹² There are Hellenistic structures and finds at Palmyra but no house plans are yet available.¹³ At Zeugma, the Hellenistic layout of the insulae of Apamea-Osrhoene has been traced, before the recent flooding, but there was no time to excavate individual houses.¹⁴ This is therefore a unique opportunity to study a block of Hellenistic houses in Syria, uncontaminated by Roman structures.

History of excavation

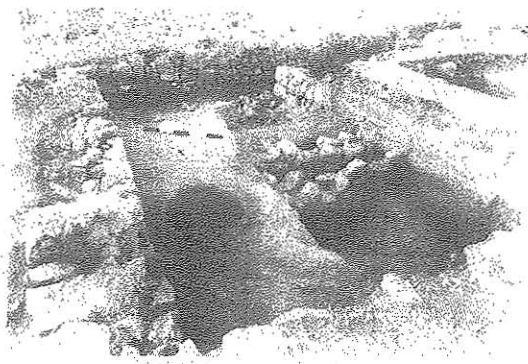
Surveys were carried out in 1986. In 1987, the first sondage was dug in the area, revealing the SE corner of what proved to be the insula. From 1988, excavation proceeded slowly, with only a few teams working on the insula in the annual six-week campaigns. By 1995, enough of the perimeter walls had been excavated to be sure that this was a rectangular housing block 35m wide. In that year, selected grid squares were dug along the western perimeter wall to find the NW corner and the full length of the insula. A corner was found at 90m from the SW corner. The equivalent NE corner has not been found as the bedrock is at surface level here. In 1996, excavation halted with about two-thirds of the insula still unexcavated. In 1997 and 1999, study seasons were held which concentrated on the pottery from the insula. In 2000-1, with renewed but limited funds, excavation recommenced, using eight teams each year, working north from the 1996 excavations.

Summary of salient features

It is difficult to condense so many years of excavation into a short report. The insula will soon be published in detail (in *Jebel Khalid 3*). Its size (35

x 90m) and orientation have already been discussed. Two phases of habitation are strongly evident, evinced by the consistent finding of two floor levels. The primary phase is associated with walls built on bedrock and floors also near bedrock. The secondary phase is associated with radical renovations to the layout, involving the cutting down of primary walls to build new and higher floors, the blocking of primary doorways, the opening of new doorways and the rearrangement of room sizes (Pl. 15). Occasionally there is evidence of a tertiary phase, associated with poorer wall structures and the division of large spaces into smaller. The material evidence from all three phases is entirely Hellenistic but the appearance of Eastern Sigillata A pottery, usually dated to the mid-2nd century, coincides with the construction of the secondary phase structures, where it is found in the fill below the secondary floors as well as on and above the floors. A number of Howland 25B lamps help to locate the beginning of the primary phase in the 3rd century, as do a number of early coins¹⁵. The coin evidence shows a continuous occupation of the insula from the 3rd century to c.75 BCE. The material evidence from the 3rd century is slight but significant. The bulk of material excavated comes from the 2nd century BCE. There may be two reasons for this. One is the method of excavation which leaves the secondary floor partially in place, thus not retrieving all the primary material. The other supposition is that the insula was built gradually over a period of time, and that the earlier structures were fewer.

Pl. 15: T208/2 to south, showing secondary floor and oven above primary walls



1. Walls. The walls are preserved in places to a height of nearly 2 m and are entirely of field stones, with the occasional worked ashlar block rarely included, no doubt surplus from the public buildings or the limestone quarries which are not far away (approximately 350 m). Only two possible mud bricks have been found, not necessarily associated with the walls. It therefore seems certain that, unlike other sites in Syria, the insula walls were entirely of stone, readily available on site.

2. Doorways. These have tall vertical door stones and stone thresholds for the finer rooms. Storeroom doorways appear not to have the door stones and thresholds. The average interior doorway is 1 m wide. Exterior doorways onto the street are variably wider, with two impressive doorways being as much as 1800 mm wide (Pl. 16).

Pl. 16: East Door of House 1, T208/3 to NW



3. Floors. These may be hard-packed earth or a layer of crushed limestone. At primary levels, the bedrock was sometimes levelled and may have been used in outdoor areas as a floor itself. Where the bedrock was left unlevelled, the uneven pockets were packed with small pebbles as floor underlay. The crushed limestone is associated more with outdoor areas in the secondary phase, although a very finely-crushed cement-like form may be found indoors. There are no mosaic floors, neither pebble nor tesserae.

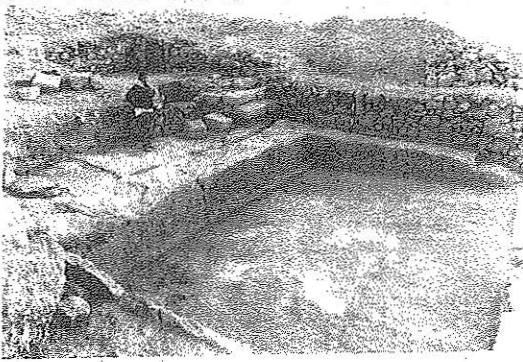
4. Wall decoration. Many small stucco fragments were found in the years between 1988-1995, mainly plain red. In 1995, some large fragments were found of a fine plaster cornice, featuring an egg-and-dart moulding. In 1996, the southern wall of trenches 151/6 and 151/9, comprising the southern half of a very large room, was found to have plaster *in situ*, with orthostat panels of red, black and yellow, in the Masonry Style (Pl. 17). When excavation was renewed in 2000, this room revealed more orthostats *in situ* and fragments, found on the floor, of a figured frieze, featuring Erotes driving goat chariots.

5. Cisterns. The insula contains only two cisterns, widely separated (fig. 7). Both are rock-cut with limestone filtering basins. The cistern in

Pl. 17: Painted stucco orthostats *in situ*, T151/6 to south



the south of the insula (T208/9) has an elaborate system of drains leading into it (Pl. 18). The northern cistern (T98/3) lies at the lower end of a sloping court. Neither was explored deeper than 2.5 m, as they were blocked with large tumble from the walls. However, each has a narrow neck widening to a bottle shape. Whatever the capacity of these cisterns, the water they would gather would not be sufficient for the length of a Syrian summer for the whole insula, so it is presumed that rainwater was also collected from the tiled roofs and that servants



Pl. 18: Cistern, T208/9 to east, as excavated in 1990



Pl. 19: Rock-cut Basin to NE, T151/4-T151/7, in 1995

were available to fetch water from the Euphrates in the hotter months.

There is no evidence of an upper storey. No stairwells such as at Delos have been found but this does not preclude the possibility of wooden stairs leading from the court. No windows have been preserved, in spite of the relatively high preservation of the walls in places.

The Houses

The house boundaries are difficult to establish with certainty and the question of the number of houses within the insula has to be treated with caution. The year 2000 excavations found what appears to be a 3m wide alleyway E/W partially across the width of the insula, although the western end has structures replacing it and even at the eastern end a secondary wall blocked street access. Possibly this alley originally divided the insula. It is certainly the northern boundary of a large house on the SE side, with its street entrance in the eastern perimeter wall, the only entrance in a 50m stretch. The door is the widest found and leads into a rectangular vestibule, with offset entrance either to a court (in its primary form the cistern courtyard T179/4) or up steps to a small anteroom leading to other rooms. A strange feature of this large house is the rock-cut Basin (T179/6 - 179/9)(Pl. 19), which may have served as a more formal courtyard south of a pastas-type long narrow area giving access to what are undoubtedly the main rooms of

the house. The largest room opens onto this area by a very wide and grand doorway in its southern wall. It is this room that contained the figured frieze. Its position, size and wall decoration mark it out as the 'oikos' or main room of the house. An interesting feature is the rectangular hearth on the west side. To the west and south of the pastas area is access to two rooms which have been designated as kitchen areas; both contained multiple ovens. To the East of the levelled Basin or courtyard is a large room on the eastern perimeter, flanked by two smaller rooms. The larger room contained many yellow stucco fragments. It is possibly a smaller 'oikos' in the Delian style. So we may have here the remains of a large and lavish house, with grand entry, two courtyards, one functional and one formal, a splendidly decorated main room giving access to a suite of smaller rooms, other formal rooms opening to the court and kitchens to serve a large household.

The remains of other houses, where they can be identified by the existence of street doors and courtyards, do not measure up to this in size or number of rooms, so we conclude that the insula housed a variety of families and not just the senior officers of the garrison. A street entrance in the southern perimeter, not as elaborate as that above, can only serve a small number of rooms in the south-east corner, unless these, too, belong to the large house and the entrance is a second one. A doorway in the south of the western perimeter (T206/3) gives

entry to a vestibule room, then a large courtyard with 'oikos' (T178/8) and suite of rooms to the north of it. This 'oikos', unlike that of the large house, contained much evidence of domestic activity. An interesting feature is the door between this house and the eastern, larger house, opening on to the cistern courtyard and implying shared water storage. Rooms south of this may well have belonged to this western house but access has not been proved.

A large gap further north in the western perimeter wall (T149/3) may have contained a doorway, but otherwise three more doorways have been found on the west side, north of the houses discussed, and two on the east side. These were the areas excavated in 2000-1 and the finds have not yet been analysed fully. The increased frequency of street doors in the northern part of the insula argues for smaller houses. Indeed, we can isolate at least three in this area, but not with the layout found in the south of the insula, i.e. main rooms north of the court. In one case, there are two good rooms (T124/3 and 99/1) west of a court, whereas in a house on the western perimeter, the main room (T99/5) appears to be east of the court (T99/8). Undoubtedly there is a great variety of house layouts within the insula, and houses changed size during the life of the insula.

Pottery and small finds

The whole insula was rich in pottery. Understandably, jars dominate the assemblage (to be published in *Jebel Khalid 2*, 2002) but tableware is plentiful, with echinus bowls, fish-plates, saucers, large platters, table lekanai and table jugs in fine or semi-fine local wares, mainly in the 'international' Hellenistic shapes used on the Greek mainland. Imported wares include fine black-glazed ware, burnished grey ware, Eastern Sigillata A and green-glazed ware. Glass fragments, mainly from drinking cups, were frequently found¹⁶. Among metal finds were cosmetic and medical instruments, fragments of bronze adornments, arrow heads, tools and thousands of nails. Deposits of clay loomweights

were common¹⁷. Lamp and figurine fragments reflect a strongly western influence, possibly from Antioch, but with a not-insignificant presence of Near Eastern motifs, such as the Persian rider figurines.

The conclusion of the excavation of the full insula in 2002 will provide a much-needed sample of complete domestic houses and new information on domestic architecture of the Hellenistic period in the Syrian region.

[4] Public Building Area

In the low-lying saddle of land situated between the Domestic Quarter and the Acropolis a series of exploratory trenches have been opened in two general areas, designated Area C and Area B. (fig.2) The object of this strategy has been to determine, if possible, the location of any public buildings to be found in these general areas.

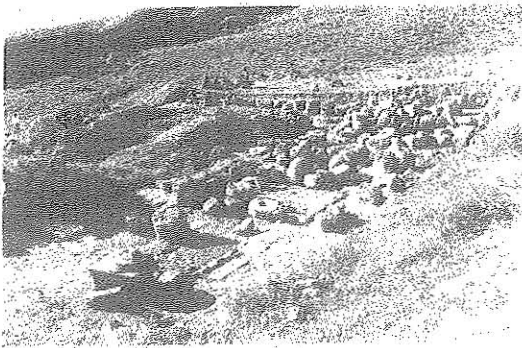
Area C

Here what appear to be two small stoas have been located. One is a short (16m), one-aisled, colonnaded building with a series of rooms behind the portico and with an attached colonnaded wing on its south. A flight of steps gave entry onto the portico. This stoa may be one of the earliest public buildings on the site, two coins of Seleucos 1 being found in its foundations as well as two stamped amphora handles belonging to the first half of the third century. The second, nearby the first building, is still in the course of excavation. It has so far produced a well-constructed stylobate of ashlar masonry, 17.7m in length, with heart-shaped piers at either end standing on square plinths: this would appear to be part of a short pi-shaped stoa. In both cases, to judge from the architectural fragments recovered, the original order was Doric. A commercial district of mercantile public buildings, it would seem, has been successfully located for Jebel Khalid. Both buildings, after initial abandonment, were subject to late Hellenistic domestic re-occupation.

Area B

Some 200m to the south of Area C the remains of a Temple are in the course of excavation. The west end is particularly well preserved. (Pl. 20) The bases of the six columns of the Temple portico are still *in situ* on the stylobate, all six (Doric) capitals have been recovered, column drums (with 20 facets only, not fluted: diameter 0.81m) are scattered in large numbers, and one of the six columns has collapsed in a line so that the height of the columns is known accurately. (Pl. 21) Three metope and triglyph blocks were recovered (one being from the SW corner), as

Pl. 20: General view of excavations at west end of Jebel Khalid Temple



Pl. 21: Collapsed column, metope and triglyph block, and incense altar, Jebel Khalid Temple

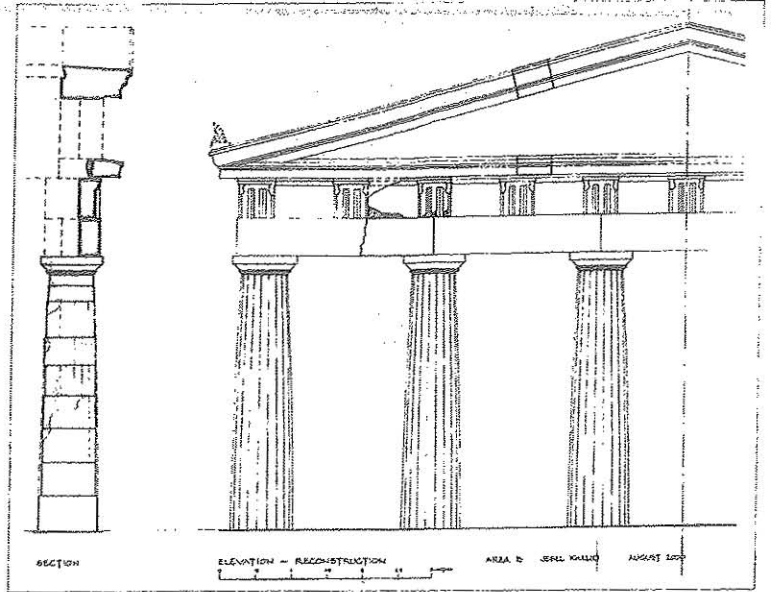


Figure 8: Reconstruction: West façade of Temple

well as several samples of the two varieties of the mouldings from the pediment. (fig. 8) Roof tiles have been collected in great abundance suggesting that the building was still roofed at the time of its collapse. The east end has been subject to considerable robbing but sufficient elements were recovered here (including 18 column drums and a capital fragment) to be sure that the Temple was amphiprostyle, with a hexastyle Doric portico on both east end and west end. A podium was raised towards the east end as the bedrock slopes away, built up with ashlar blocks, currently surviving in three levels. This east end also produced two Ionic volutes along with a block with egg-and-dart moulding, fragments of smaller Doric capitals and several varieties of cornice mouldings. These are all presumed to come from doorway treatments, both lintel and jambs, and the internal fittings of the Temple itself. Despite the rich collection of mouldings, there have been no signs of guttae or mutules.

One extraordinary feature is a line of paving blocks distant by 2.8m from the Temple façades and cella walls; they do not sit on bedrock. At regular intervals of 3.3m are circular cuttings 0.43m in diameter and 0.25m deep. These are for fluted, columnar incense altars. One altar survives complete (0.98m high), another is still *in situ* but shattered,

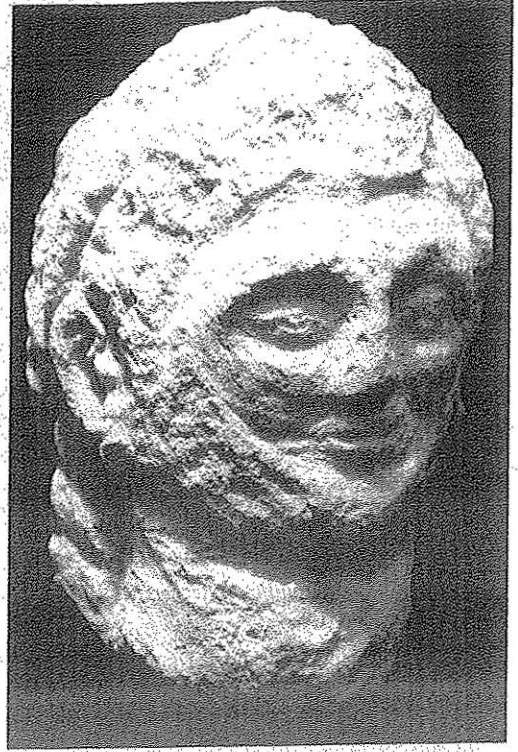
and many fluted fragments from the others were found (Pl. 22). The archaeological evidence suggests that this line of altars surrounded the Temple on all four sides, making a total of 28 altars in all. These unusual altars give the appearance of being modified Doric column shafts (20 flutes), having four shallow horns and a central, circular depression for receiving libations, offerings of grains, fruit, flowers, or for burning incense in a metal firepan. They are not suitable for blood sacrifice.



Pl. 22: Altar line in SW corner of Temple precinct.

Fragments of worked marble from a large statue have been recovered in the course of the excavations, as well as a limestone head and neck of a bearded male, with braids, and wearing a fillet and one earring (Pl. 23). Further excavation may reveal to whom the Temple was dedicated and the extent of the Temple enclosure as well as the internal layout of the cella.

The Temple was so sited that it would be immediately seen by anyone entering the settlement of Jebel Khalid either via the Main Gate on the western side or up from the river on the eastern side: being amphiprostyle it would have provided the identical aspect from either approach. The dimensions of the cella (still to be excavated) are, unusually for a Greek-style Temple, nearly square [c. 13m x 14m], the overall proportions of the Temple [c. 13m x 20m] do not accord with classical canons, the height of the columns is unusually squat for the base-diameter and the metopes are unusually



Pl. 23: Limestone male head from Jebel Khalid Temple

rectangular (apparently the result of the unusually broad intercolumniation). This is the first clear example of a Greek-style religious building discovered within Seleucid Syria, and whilst it is fully Greek in overall appearance, it is proving to be quite individual in detail.

Further work is still needed to sample adequately the Hellenistic settlement of Jebel Khalid, but it is providing remarkable insight into the mode of living and the domestic and civic facilities of what must have been fundamentally a military outpost of «Macedonian» colonists. In particular, more work is required to be able to write the history of the development of the urban site over its 200+ years of occupation and to explain why it underwent a major rebuilding phase in the Domestic Quarter in the course of the second century BCE. Its abandonment coincides with the collapse of Seleucid control in the region.

Notes

1. For a full description of the site, P.J. Connor and G.W. Clarke, *Jebel Khalid in North Syria: The First Campaigns, Mediterranean Archaeology* 9/10 (1996/97), pp.151-183 and Plates 30-34.
2. Full details of publications from the survey of the environs of Jebel Khalid are given in G.W. Clarke *et al.*, *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates. Report on Excavations 1986-1996*, vol. 1, Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement Vol. 5, Sydney 2001 (hereafter = *Jebel Khalid I*) pp.ixf.
3. For full publication of the coins discovered up to 1996, C.E.V. Nixon in *Jebel Khalid I*, pp.291-335.
4. Full testimonia in J.D. Grainger, *A Seleukid Prosopography and Gazetteer*, Leiden, 1997, p.681.
5. For full analysis of the City Wall see P.J. Connor and G.W. Clarke, art. cit. in n.1.
6. For full publication see *Jebel Khalid I* pp.1-23.
7. For full publication see *Jebel Khalid I*, pp.25-48, also Graeme Clarke, The Governor's Palace, Acropolis, Jebel Khalid, in (ed.) Inge Nielsen, *The Royal Palace Institution in the First Millennium BC*, Aarhus, 2001, pp.217-249.
8. For publication of the amphora handles discovered up to 1996, *Jebel Khalid I*, pp. 275-290.
9. For publication of the seals, *Jebel Khalid I*, pp.201-3.
10. Only the circuit walls are extant on the surface. The site is a particularly steep and difficult one, but it was said to house 6000 inhabitants in 219: Polybius 5.61.1. See also J.D. Grainger, *The Cities of Seleucid Syria*, Oxford, 1990, p.95.
11. C. Ploug, *Hama, Fouilles et Recherches 1931-1938, III 1, The Graeco-Roman Town*, Copenhagen, 1985; see especially pp.18-19, Plan II.
12. Oumm el'Amed: M. Dunand, R. Duru, *Oumm el-Amed, Une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux échelles de Tyr*, Paris, 1962. Tel 'Arqa: J.-P. Thalmann, *Tell 'Arqa (Liban Nord), Campagnes I-III (1972-74, Chantier 1, Rapport préliminaire, Syria* 55 (1978); Ras ibn Hani: P. Leriche, *La fouille des fortifications de la ville hellénistique d'Ibn Hani*, in *Archéologie au Levant – recueil à la mémoire de Roger Saidah*, Lyon-Paris, 1982, pp. 276-7. At Tell Ahmar (Til Barsip), the recent Hellenistic finds were from Area C (on the flat land to the east of the Tell) and were disturbed by a plough zone. The author has visited both Tel Beydar (1997) and Tel Jinderes (2000) where Hellenistic structures are being uncovered; there are as yet no plans published.
13. J.C. Balty, *La maison urbaine en Syrie*, in J. Dentzer-W. Orthmann (eds.), *Archéologie et Histoire de la Syrie*, vol.2, Saarbrücken, 1989, p.409.
14. See the reports in C. Abadie-Reynal *et al.* in *Anatolia Antiqua* 4 (1995), pp. 311-324, 5 (1997), 349-370, 6 (1998) pp. 379-406.
15. For full publication of the lamps from the Domestic Quarter see Heather Jackson in *Jebel Khalid I*, pp.147-199. For the coins see C.E.V. Nixon, art. cit. in n.3 (the earliest coin is a posthumous issue of Alexander the Great).
16. For publication of the glass see Margaret O'Hea in *Jebel Khalid I*, pp.245-261.
17. For publication of the loom weights and spindle whorls see Lindy Crewe in *Jebel Khalid I*, pp.217.