

The late Peter Connor, right (co-director of excavations at Jebel Khalid 1986-1996) and Graeme Clarke ponder an object from Jebel Khalid.

## JEBEL KHALID TWENTY YEARS ON

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*An Australian team, based on the University of Melbourne and the Australian National University, has been working at a Greek site in North Syria since 1986. Here are some of the highlights of their work—so far.*

Jebel Khalid consists of a large outcrop of limestone (a mesa covering some 50ha) on the west bank of the river Euphrates, *circa* 60km south of the present Syrian/Turkish border in the middle of what is known as the Big Bend of the Euphrates—where the river curves closest to the Mediterranean in the course of its long journey down to the Persian Gulf (fig. 1). On the opposite bank lies another rocky mountain (Jebel es-Souda): the effect of this geological formation is to create a permanent defile through which the river must flow, even when it is in spate. This naturally forms a strategic point—all river traffic must pass through this defile, the river serving as the great arterial highway being navigable for another further 120km upstream and, downstream, all the way out into the Gulf. And it also makes a suitable point for crossing it. The river, fed by the snow-melt from Anatolia, is at its highest during the summer months—when an army might be on the move—and a narrow crossing-point (via a pontoon bridge of boats) is highly desirable for the awkward and potentially dangerous manoeuvre of getting an army across the river. In such a manoeuvre an army is often in some disarray and certainly vulnerable to attack.



Figure 1 Location map of Jebel Khalid.

In 301 BCE, as the squabbling and ambitious generals of Alexander the Great continued their fighting for control over the territories won by Alexander, the Macedonian general Seleukos I acquired the area of North Syria from Lysimachos as the spoils of victory after the battle of Ipsos. To consolidate his control over this newly-won territory—still vulnerable to counter-attack from Cilicia and Anatolia—Seleukos I established a series of urban foundations in a land largely occupied by a local population settled in hamlets and villages or roaming as pastoral nomads. Among these foundations—attractive to both veteran soldiers and land-hungry Greeks and Macedonians alike—were such planned “cities” (*poleis*) as Antioch, Lattakia and Apamea as well as less ambitious settlements which had the dual function of establishing control over their regional areas as well as providing defence against potential invading enemies. A series of these settlements was established along the crucial Euphrates corridor at intervals and Jebel Khalid appears to be one of them, along with (among others) the twin settlements at “Zeugma” to the north (Seleukeia/Apamea) and Dura-Europos much further down-river to the south.

This context for the establishment of the settlement on Jebel Khalid is based on the fact that it was a virgin site when the immigrants arrived and their arrival can be dated to the first decades of the third century BCE—the earliest coins (out of the 614 so far found on site) include two of Alexander, two pre-300 posthumous Alexanders, one of Lysimachos (c.306–281) and 7 of Seleukos I (c.305–281), and the earliest datable (Attic) pottery and lamps also date to early in the third century (none earlier)<sup>1</sup>. The name given to this settlement is not known for certain—being abandoned at the end of the Greek period it naturally does not figure in Roman itineraries and maps. The most likely candidate is “Amphipolis”, described in one of our literary sources as being besides the Euphrates and close to Europos (= Djerablus, on the Syrian/Turkish border)<sup>2</sup>—it was common to give the new settlements names from the Greek homeland, especially from its northern reaches (as other homesick colonists have done at other times).

Although there is good farmland along the river flats and terraces and along the permanent waterway of the Wadi Abu Qalqal a few kilometres to the north, Jebel Khalid was not an immediately obvious site for a new settlement. There is no natural water up on the Jebel—settlement entailed that deep cisterns for water-storage had to be laboriously quarried out along with

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks are due to Dr Ted Nixon (Macquarie University) for the analysis of the coins, and to Dr John Tidmarsh (University of Sydney) for the analysis of the imported pottery. Dr Heather Jackson has analysed all the lamps.

<sup>2</sup> Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. Amphipolis.

elaborate systems for water-harvesting—and for the most part the surrounding territory was suitable only for low-yielding crops from dry-farming and for grazing by sheep and goats, given the low annual rainfall. But the military function was clearly imperative.

And the defensive role envisioned for the site soon became apparent—3.4 km of circuit walling were promptly erected within the first quarter or so of the third century, along with thirty bastions and towers, all in a uniform “header and stretcher” construction technique.<sup>3</sup> This included massive city gates, protected by twin-towers 17m square, and a double entry-way, one for foot/donkey traffic and one for wheeled vehicles. A zigzag sally-port from the north tower of the gateway complex enabled the defenders secretly to emerge and surprise any enemy battering at the gates, attacking them from the rear.<sup>4</sup> And at the high point in the north-west corner of the Jebel a special semi-circular tower was constructed, an impressive 15m x 18m, to control any attack along both the northern and the western walls, and, being curved, all the better to deflect any battering artillery from enemy siege-engines.<sup>5</sup> Greeks had managed to conquer their way across Asia partly because of their superiority in siege-craft: they had now the problem of defending themselves against fellow-Greeks equipped with those same skills in siege-craft. (The arms-race is not just a modern phenomenon.)

A separate walled acropolis, enclosing 2.2ha, complete with its own gateway, postern gate and towers was also constructed in the same technique on the highest ground of the Jebel. So even if the outer elaborate defence system should fail and be breached, the acropolis provided a highly defensive fall-back position. A deep cistern (c. 6.5m both in depth and in diameter) and the provision of a series of magazines or store-rooms in the Acropolis Palace (equipped with large *pithoi* or storage jars) are all testimony to the military-thinking behind the planning for this new settlement.

But this settlement was planned to be not simply a military fortress. From the outset the site was surveyed and laid out to cover some 30ha—the standard size for a moderate town in the Seleucid/Ptolemaic period—and it was laid out on an “Hippodamian grid” with the streets running strictly north/south and crossing east/west, the rectangular street blocks (insofar as the rocky

<sup>3</sup> For full description of the Jebel Khalid walls, P.J. Connor and G.W. Clarke, ‘Jebel Khalid in North Syria: The First Campaigns’, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 9/10 (1996/1997) 151-183.

<sup>4</sup> For details see G. Clarke et al., *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates. Report on Excavations 1986-1996*, volume 1 (= *Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement* 5) (Sydney, 2002), 17-23.

<sup>5</sup> For details see G. Clarke et al., (n.4) 1-15.

terrain allowed) measuring 35m x 90m with an east/west alley-way intersecting the blocks at mid-point (at least these are the measurements of the one *insula* excavated) (fig. 2). All this stands in sharp contrast with Dura-Europos, settled about the same period; it remained just a simple military outpost for a good century and a half until the course of the second half of the second century BCE, when the characteristic “Hippodamian grid” pattern for its streets was eventually laid out.



Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the site of Jebel Khalid.

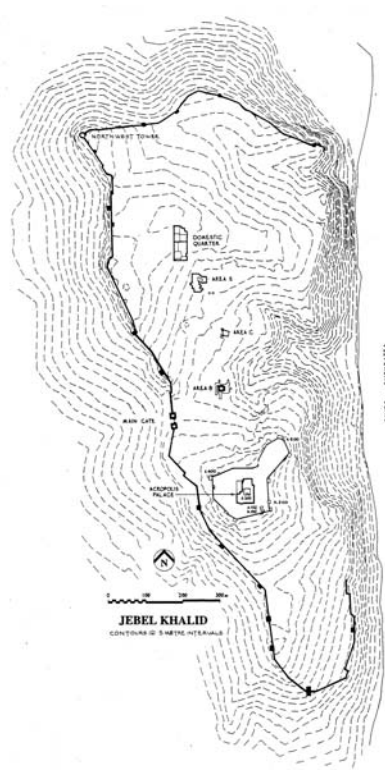


Figure 3 (right). Contour map of Jebel Khalid showing areas so far investigated.

The ambitions for the site are obvious—by the course of the third century, not only had the defences been constructed, but urban facilities such as a Stoa (a colonnaded set of work-rooms or shops) and other commercial buildings had been erected (Areas S and C in fig. 3), a temple had been built (Area B in fig. 3), domestic houses had been occupied and up on the Acropolis the double-storied palace was already finished and functioning. We happen to know precious little about daily living during the two and a half centuries of

the Seleucid period—it is a notorious “black-hole” in Hellenistic history—apart from the internecine behaviour of various members of the ruling (and often dysfunctional) Seleucid dynasty. It is the unique contribution of the archaeology of Jebel Khalid that by it we can begin to reconstruct some of that lost history and throw light into that notorious black-hole. At other sites, the Hellenistic phase is generally buried beneath later occupation levels—whether Parthian, Roman, Sassanian, Byzantine, Arab or Ottoman—and survives as foundation debris only. By contrast, Jebel Khalid was left abandoned at the end of the Greek period (fig. 3).

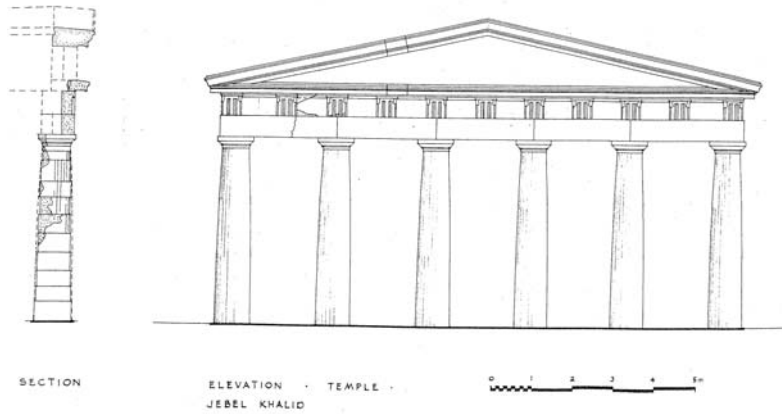


Figure 4. Western façade of Jebel Khalid Temple.

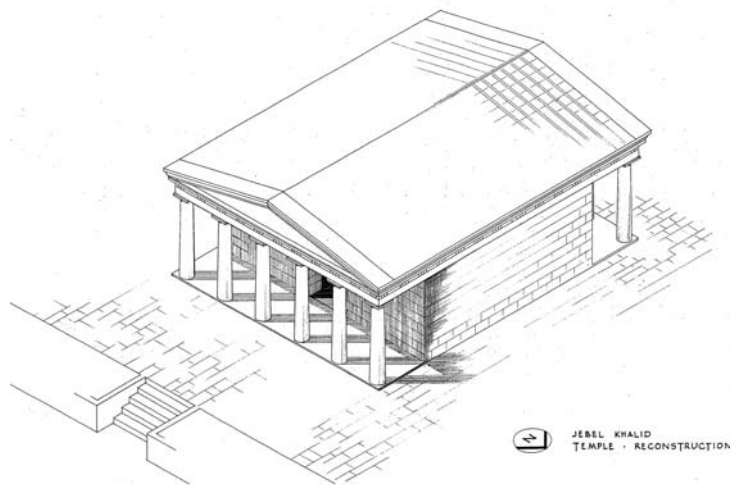


Figure 5. Reconstruction of Jebel Khalid Temple.

Very early in the life of the settlement a site was chosen for the religious needs of the community and its visitors in the centre of the town, on a direct axis with that Stoa, and immediately visible if you entered the site on the landward side from the Main Gate or if you arrived by river and walked up from the quays on the river-side (the wharves are visible currently under water—the water-level being now permanently raised as a result of the construction of the Tabqa Dam, downstream, across the Euphrates). Excavation has revealed (Area B in fig. 3) that an eastern-facing Temple was erected, with a cella measuring 11m x 13m and equipped with a double portico, on both the western and eastern sides, in a modified and simplified Doric order (fig. 4). The cella itself was divided into three chapels (the *adyton*). This is a remarkable and deliberate piece of hybrid religious architecture (fig. 6).

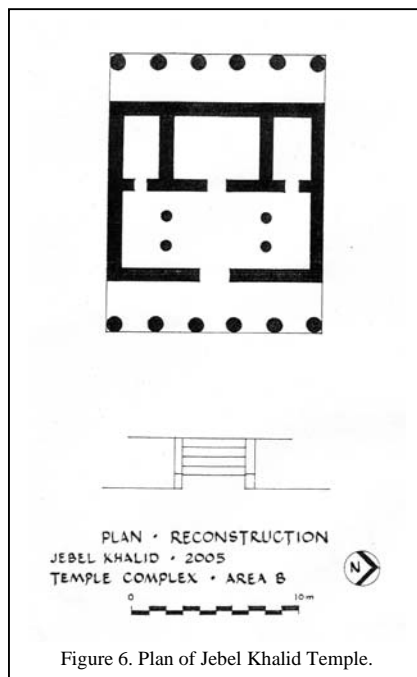


Figure 6. Plan of Jebel Khalid Temple.

The squarish proportions of the cella with its tripartite *adyton*—eastern temples are often dedicated to multiple deities—conforms to a standard formula for a Mesopotamian temple, and is nothing like the proportions or lay-out of a standard Greek temple, whereas the double portico with its Greek architecture is a thoroughly Greek resolution to an architectural problem (“amphiprostyle”): it obviates the unaesthetic blind-wall that would have confronted the visitor approaching the Temple via the Main Gate, whilst preserving the eastern orientation standard for Mesopotamian religious buildings. This all suggests that it was deliberately designed to meet the needs of a mixed ethnic

community—not exclusively for Greeks and Macedonians only—and thus provides some hint at the ethnic make-up of the immigrant community (not only garrison soldiers but any native wives and servants, local merchants as

well as passing traders, not to mention the indigenous population from the surrounding countryside) (fig. 5).<sup>6</sup>

The fragmentary statuary recovered in the course of the temple excavation tells the same story.



Figure 7. Marble Toes from Temple.



Figure 8 (right). A Second Set of Marble Toes from Temple.

Fragments deriving from at least three over-life-size marble statues have been recovered, including parts of arms, legs and feet, carved in Greek style (figs 7 & 8). Syria does not produce marble of its own suitable for statuary, so marble statuary is rare in Syria. Scientific analysis has produced a surprise; it revealed that this marble was expensively imported all the way from the Aegean island of Paros and in fact came specifically from the underground marble quarries there which produced the very finest of the crystalline and translucent white marbles called “lychnites” (so-called because it was mined by the light of lamps or *lychna*). It is a unique import into Syria—even for the later Roman period. It says much about the ambitions of the builders of Jebel Khalid and the importance they gave to the site that they should arrange to import such rare luxury material prestigiously to adorn their temple. No torso fragments have been recovered which strongly suggests that only the exterior limbs and heads were in marble and that the bodies consisted of wooden or

<sup>6</sup> For excavation details and analysis see G. Clarke, ‘The Jebel Khalid Temple’, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 19/20 (2006/07), 133–139, including references to previous reports.



clay armatures covered with costly robes—a thoroughly Greek statuary technique called “acrolithic”.<sup>7</sup>

But as well as this evidence for Greek sculpture in the temple there have been recovered some more local images.



Figure 9. Limestone Head from Temple.

A nearly life-size limestone head, found buried amongst the temple debris, shows intriguing Hellenizing features (fig. 9). The stylized beard, without moustache, is a Hellenistic trait (termed in the literature an “underchin beard”) and the subject’s thick neck in proportion to his somewhat bullet

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<sup>7</sup> For details see G. Clarke, ‘The Jebel Khalid Marbles’, *Mediterranean Archaeology* 21 (2008) forthcoming.

head is almost for sure to be an attempt to depict, in local style, the muscular hero Heracles—the fillet around his abundant hair represents his divinized status. But he is given some local features as well. The prominent, thick ringlets are features, for example, that figure standardly on representations of the Semitic god Melqart (regularly assimilated in iconography with Herakles) as is the round earring on his right earlobe—so there is the possibility that this is intended to be a representation of Herakles-Melqart. At all events this is a divine image that Macedonians/Greeks and local worshippers alike would have been comfortable with and in turn reflects the hybrid nature of the temple architecture itself. It is an exciting discovery and makes an important contribution to the repertoire of Hellenistic sculpture in Syria.



Figure 10. Small Marble Head from Temple.



Figure 11. Crude Limestone Image from Temple.

And then there are indigenous images from the temple also—a small marble head with heavy brows over deep-set eyes and triangular nose (and very rudimentary mouth) and a crude limestone head (figs 10 & 11). Clearly these catered for the tastes of a local population not otherwise very visible in the archaeological record from the site.

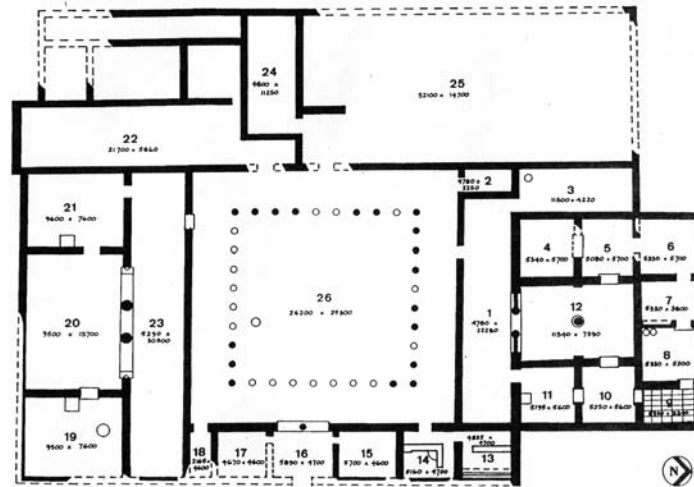


Figure 12. Plan of Acropolis Palace.

Meantime, up on the Acropolis, there had been planned and erected the Governor's Palace—an extensive administrative building with allowance for domestic quarters in its upper floor (fig. 12). Here Greek taste prevailed—as well as facilities for worshipping in Greek style at a drum altar in an open courtyard (room 3 in fig. 12). There is an internal peristyle courtyard (room 26 on the plan) surrounded by a Doric colonnade, ten columns to a side, with full Doric detailing (unlike the simplified Doric of the temple in the town below)—fluted columns, lion-headed water spouts, *guttae*, elaborate cornice moulding (showing traces of colour) etc., and with evidence for the more delicate Ionic order in the upper storey. And, throughout, the building was decorated with stucco in the Greek manner, panels of solid colours in the more pedestrian rooms (red, black, ochre, white, duck-egg blue) but in the large entertainment or reception rooms in elaborate masonry-style plasterwork (designed to imitate panels of variegated marble). Provision was made for large dining-halls (fig. 13), rooms 12 and 20 on the plan (with kitchens to either side and associated store-rooms) where the governor and his garrison troops could dine and carouse together in true Macedonian fashion—the pottery shows repetitious quantities of standard issue bowls and plates for mess dining, along with jugs, amphorae, deep-bowls/kraters as drinking equipment: their hemispherical drinking-cups were of glass (which they

managed to smash in quantity).<sup>8</sup> A bath-room suite (rooms 13 and 14 on the plan) provided for water-heating and bathing facilities, with an adjacent room with a multi-person toilet trough (flushed out by the bathing water—an early example of environmentally correct use of recycled waste water!).



Figure 13. Graeme Clarke (in younger days) excavating Room 12 of Acropolis Palace.

At first sight the overall plan of this building appears to be basically Hellenistic—axial and strictly orthogonal around a peristyle courtyard. But even here there are features that are rather borrowed from the eastern/Achaemenid tradition—the long antechambers (rooms 1 and 23 on the plan) with their indirect ‘bent’ entries from the colonnade, leading to the ‘broad rooms’, the hypostyle rooms 12 and 20, are not in the contemporary mainland Greek tradition. (Contemporary mainland palatial buildings would have had a multiple series of small dining rooms.) And even within that peristyle courtyard there is good evidence for garden planting round the inside perimeter of the courtyard—an amenity common within the Mesopotamian tradition but as yet unknown in third-century Greece.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> Thanks are due to Dr Margaret O’Hea (University of Adelaide) for the analysis of the Jebel Khalid glass.

<sup>9</sup> For full details on the Acropolis Palace see G. Clarke et al. (n.4) 25-48.

Jebel Khalid Acropolis Palace happens to constitute far and away the best-preserved example of a local governor's residence of the Seleucid era.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 14. *Insula* plan B/B+.

How did people other than the Governor live? Evidence we currently have is from a block of houses measuring 35 m E/W and 90m N/S, the only one fully excavated of several blocks side by side on a steep hillside (fig. 14). The position, on a south-facing slope, is ideal for housing, according to ancient writers Xenophon and Aristotle, as it takes full advantage of shade in summer and the warmth of the sun in winter. At a distance of nearly a kilometre from the Governor's Palace and 750 m from the Main Gate (and possibly nearby Agora), these houses were more likely to be élite residences belonging to officers or prominent businessmen, than the homes of ordinary foot soldiers.

The best preserved houses, seven in number, date from the middle of the second century BCE, when there was a major rebuilding and renovation of the earlier dwellings, traces of which we have found below the floors of the second-century houses. These earlier houses, dating from the early third century, to judge from the coin and pottery finds, may have been more uniform in size whereas the second-century houses show a great deal of variation in size and layout. The largest covers 772 sq m. on the ground, regardless of whether it had an upper storey, which is uncertain. At least one house did have an upper storey. All walls recovered are made of field stones but if there was an upper storey it was probably of mud brick, although finds of mud brick are rare. The amount of stone tumble found on opening a trench

<sup>10</sup> See further G. Clarke, 'The Governor's Palace, Acropolis, Jebel Khalid', in Inge Nielsen (ed.), *The Royal Palace Institution in the First Millennium BC. Regional Development and Cultural Interchange between East and West* (Aarhus 2001) 215-247.

suggests that the ground floor walls were completely of stone and not mudbrick on a low stone socle, as is more usual in the Near East. Stone, of course was readily available from the Jebel and even today, the local village houses are constructed of it. These walls were then covered in a thick layer of rough plaster and finished with a fine layer of stucco.

Roofs were tiled, not flat, and this, a Greek rather than Near Eastern custom, would have facilitated the collection of water in the winter rains. In fact, only two cisterns were found in the whole block, cut into the bedrock in a bottle shape. In contrast, in Athens each house had its own cistern. One of the cisterns, in courtyard no. 101, is easily accessible from the street, so may have been available to other families, perhaps by arrangement. The other, however, in Courtyard no. 22, is deep within the house and can only have been shared by the house next door, which had an internal door opening onto it. So otherwise, families relied on water collected from the roof in large pots under the eaves, or, especially in summer, had their slaves and donkeys constantly going down the ravine to the river Euphrates to collect water.

The favoured house plan was to have the private quarter of the house furthest away from the point of entry, to ensure privacy. Four of the seven houses follow this plan and they all have their main room, flanked by other rooms accessible only from that room, facing south over the courtyard. The courtyard is the heart of the house, a feature common to both Greek and Near Eastern tradition. The largest house, the House of the Painted Frieze, had two courtyards, one for formal use and the other, containing the cistern, for workaday activities. But the other three surviving house layouts are quite differently oriented, although they all have their courtyards, with the main room opening onto them.

The houses must have been rather dark inside. We have found no windows but know from Hellenistic houses elsewhere that they were placed high on the wall, and of course only on walls looking to the outside. Most light would have come through the doorway. For example Room 19, a very large room and undoubtedly the most important room or *oikos* of the house, could not have had any windows and must have obtained light only through the three doors at the south, looking out over the court. The decoration of the walls in this room was striking. Here we found the remains of the plaster *in situ* and many more fragments in the soil, so have been able to reconstruct the original appearance of the wall. At the base were yellow, black and red panels, below an elaborate frieze consisting of three pattern bands either side of a narrow panel, at eye level, featuring goat chariots driven by little *Erotas* (later known as Cupids). This is the first Hellenistic figured frieze to be found in the Near

East and is a reflection of the inhabitants' desire to express their Greekness, even in this remote outpost. But not all rooms were decorated this elaborately. As far as we can tell, most had monochrome red or yellow walls. The red colour would have had waterproof properties so was used also for courtyard walls.

Unlike the Acropolis Palace, no bathroom or toilet has been found in any of the houses. Probably the families had portable washbasins (*louteria*) and tubs of stone or metal, which they took with them when they left, or which were robbed by post-abandonment activities. It is also possible, particularly in a military settlement, that there were communal facilities in another area of the Jebel. As for toilets, they probably used pots and then emptied them on the fields for manure.<sup>11</sup>

Some idea of the lifestyle can be gained from a survey of the many tonnes of pottery excavated from the houses. Rarely was a whole vessel found but even small sherds can be drawn and reconstructed on paper so that we know what vessels were there. It has been proved by scientific analysis of the clays that Jebel Khalid had its own pottery workshops which produced both tableware vessels and the coarser vessels needed for kitchen use and storage. No kilns have yet been found but these are more likely to have been nearer the river, for availability of both clay and water.

Imports of black-glazed pottery from Asia Minor and Antioch, relief moulded bowls from the same area, the red-glazed Eastern Sigillata A wares, also from Antioch, and green-glazed pottery from Mesopotamia or down river enhanced the inhabitants' table wares, but the huge majority of table vessels was locally-made, in shapes familiar all over the Hellenistic world. For drinking there were hemispherical bowls in both pottery and glass. For pouring wine there were some elegantly-shaped jugs. Table amphoras are rare but we have some idea of what they looked like from their representation on the nozzle of lamps (fig. 15). The krater, or mixing bowl for wine and water, was less elaborate than those of previous periods, but still present in large numbers. Drinking was obviously an important aspect of life.

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<sup>11</sup> The *insula* of houses is being published by H. Jackson in *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates* Volume 4 (forthcoming).



Figure 15. Lamp with amphora nozzle.

For eating, large platters were available for dinner parties but most plates found were small and simple, suggesting individual and quite small portions of food. Particularly popular was the so-called fish-plate, a small saucer-shaped dish with a central well either for dipping sauce or for draining off oil. The larger platters were rarely flat-floored but more like shallow dishes, implying that the food served in them was rather sloppy. For food preparation in the kitchen there were many sturdy large bowls with knobbed rim, good for grasping while stirring, grinding or mixing. Many of these kitchen vessels were traditional Syro-Palestinian shapes, a factor which hints at the presence of non-Greeks in the kitchen area. But it is the cooking pot assemblage which



really suggests that not only the cooks but also the eaters preferred local cuisine. On other Greek sites there has come to light a huge range of cooking ware. For example, in the Athenian Agora, forty different types were found. At Jebel Khalid we have only three types of cooking pot and all are traditional Syrian shapes designed to cook stews or gruel. The “new” Greek casserole and Italian baking pan were not found at Jebel Khalid. While it is fairly easy to assume that those doing the cooking (and buying the utensils) were native Syrians serving their masters, if those masters were *all* Greek colonists, one would expect a greater demand for the sort of food that Greeks elsewhere were cooking in their casseroles and baking pans. It seems more likely that the second-century inhabitants of the houses were accustomed to, and preferred, local cuisine. This does not necessarily mean that they were not Greeks but it could mean that at this period, the inhabitants were a mixture of second-generation colonists who were already acclimatised to local conditions.

Another factor that emerged from the study of the cookpots was the predominantly small size, suggesting that cooking was done in small amounts for a small number of people at a time. The concept of a set mealtime, when the family sits down together, is perhaps a modern one, so one need not assume that families in the *insula* were small. Indeed the architecture and size of most of the houses indicate large households. So, for this sort of food, perhaps cooking was done at different times for different groups and, if one can judge from the distribution of fragments, in any area of the house, perhaps on a portable brazier. Many ovens have been found, often in pairs, but these ovens were domed bread ovens. Most are in the open air, in courtyards where ventilation would be no problem. Where an oven was placed inside a room it was usually by the door.

The large number of storage jars, especially the *pithoi*, one of which could be a metre in diameter and weigh 70 kilograms, proves the agricultural self-sufficiency of the site in the second century. Another factor is the relative shortage of imported amphoras (carrying wine or oil) at this phase, compared with the early third-century phase, when wine was imported from Rhodes. By this time, the inhabitants of Jebel Khalid were growing their own wine and olives. Today, olives flourish in the valley below the Jebel.<sup>12</sup>

If the pottery can tell us much about the lifestyle and prosperity of the inhabitants, the study of the figurine fragments from the whole site can tell us something about their cult loyalties. In fact, most fragments were found in the

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<sup>12</sup> The Jebel Khalid pottery is published by H. Jackson and J. Tidmarsh in *Jebel Khalid Report Volume 3: The Pottery (Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement 7)*, in press.

houses so are particularly valuable as they are not votive offerings at a public shrine but private choices from a domestic context. Aphrodite is represented, not only in her nude or semi-draped form but also indirectly by the many small figures of women wearing festival head-dresses (*stephanai*), who may represent her devotees (fig. 16). It is difficult to distinguish her known attributes (e.g. child-nurturing, doves, geese, roosters) from those of several other Near Eastern deities such as the Oriental Mother Goddess, Cybele, Astarte and Atargatis, so it is quite likely that at Jebel Khalid she was increasingly merged or confused with those goddesses. Other members of the Greek pantheon represented are Dionysus, possibly Apollo, Demeter, Eros and of course Heracles, from whom the Macedonian family claimed descent and who was also the protector of private houses. The unmistakable head of Heracles, wearing his lion-skin, was also carved into the gemstone of a ring, which was obviously used as a sealing device and was found in one of the houses.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 16. Woman with *stephane*.



Figure 17 (right). Astarte plaque.

Exclusive reference to Astarte/Atargatis is found in the so-called 'Astarte' plaques, which, a survival from the Persian period into the Hellenistic, are found in the earlier contexts at Jebel Khalid, so far only in the houses (fig.

<sup>13</sup> Published by Heather Jackson, 'Two engraved gems from Hellenistic Jebel Khalid', *Antike Kunst* 47 (2004) 34-46.

17). Intriguingly, none has been found from the post-150 BCE phase and one wonders what replaced them. Their early presence is further proof of the involvement of the indigenous population in the early settlement of Jebel Khalid. If they do represent the goddess Atargatis or her worshippers, it is a reminder that Jebel Khalid was the nearest Greek settlement to Hierapolis, the seat of the Syrian Goddess, Atargatis herself. One would expect some contact with that cult.



Figure 18. Persian rider.

Another thoroughly local and indigenous figure is the 'Persian rider', so called for the style of his cap. This figure is of a completely different

technique and tradition from the 'Greek' figurines. Whereas the Greek figures are mould-made, the Persian riders are handmade from solid clay and portray a schematic human figure welded to his horse, like a centaur (fig.18). Not only are they present in the early phase but continue appearing throughout the life of the site, testifying to their importance in the life of the inhabitants and again suggesting a strong local Syrian connection. We don't know what or whom the rider represents: an actual deity, a hero cult, or something else? Sometimes the rider is carrying a child or a musical instrument. Perhaps he simply represents the aspirations of the male population to own a horse and go hunting.

Certainly horse-riding was a major occupation represented by the figurines. There are many fragments of Greek-style horses and riders, alongside the ubiquitous Persian riders. The horses are stocky animals, with front leg raised as though about to gallop. The riders vary in size and dress but there is a significant group representing naked child riders, one of whom is wearing a wreath. The identity of the child is uncertain but it may be Eros, Attis or a syncretism of both. One unique rider is a woman carrying a child in arms. Apart from horses, there is quite a menagerie of animals among the figurines. There are many birds, predominantly roosters but also doves, pigeons and geese, cattle, the odd camel, a ram's head, panther and lion. These small fragments certainly tell us a great deal about the lifestyle of the inhabitants.<sup>14</sup>

If ever one was in any doubt about the presence of women in a military settlement, one has only to look at the metal finds of earrings, pins, cosmetic instruments and fibulae to be sure of their presence. Even more compelling are the frequent finds of spinning and weaving equipment such as clay loomweights, spindle whorls of bone or stone, bone spindles. Traditionally women did the spinning and weaving. In several places in the houses, very large deposits of loomweights were found against a wall, suggesting a large loom had been stored there. The weaving activity could have included making carpets for the floors, for Jebel Khalid, unlike most Greek settlements on the coast, has no mosaic floors. The floors were simply of beaten earth, with sometimes a thin layer of crushed limestone.

In conclusion, the material evidence of the architecture, pottery and small finds in the domestic houses paints a picture of prosperous families able to afford imported luxury items from both East and West, able to afford and find artists to paint their walls in an elaborate Greek style, supporting a

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<sup>14</sup> For full publication of the terracotta figurines see H. Jackson, *Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates* Volume 2 *The Terracotta Figurines* (Mediterranean Archaeology Supplement 6) (Sydney, 2006).

flourishing local pottery industry, making their own wine, weaving their own carpets, pursuing activities such as riding and hunting, worshipping a mixture of Greek and Near Eastern deities, in a society of merging cultures (fig. 19).



Figure 19. Heather Jackson with her excavation team of the housing *insula*.

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