

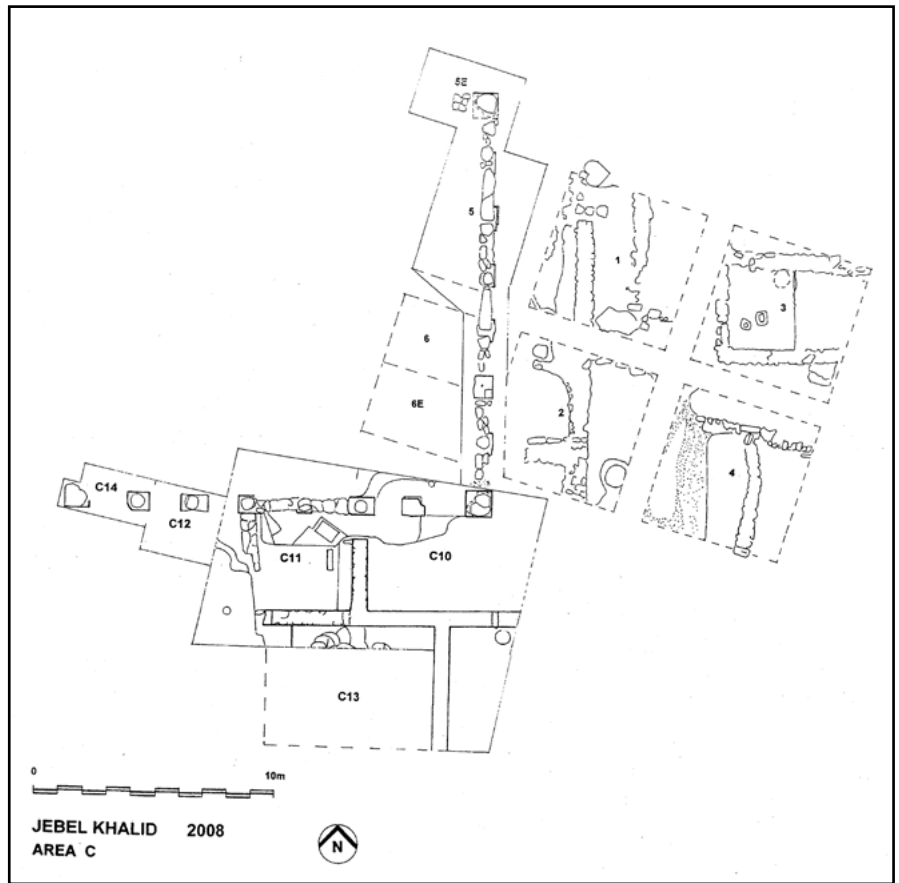
diameter of c. 65~75cm) – a further 11 unfluted drums, with chamfered edges, were recovered this season (showing some traces of plastering): a series of weak secondary fieldstone walls, running north/south, sitting on soil, subdivided the original colonnade on its south side.

Whilst it is clear that rooms opened off the colonnade (it is 4m deep) on this south arm the full dimensions of these rooms are yet to be determined - and whether any further rooms possibly opened beyond.

Little in the way of artefactual objects was recovered though a fragmentary strigil and a stone ball (limestone) are noteworthy (five lamp fragments recovered all belong to the course of the second century BCE). The pottery produced few fine wares or domestic wares (not one figurine fragment) and largely consisted of jugs, jars (at least 72), deep bowls (24), amphoras (17) - for the provision of oil?- and a noticeable collection of large water jars with pitched interior, a number of which were left in situ within the colonnade, still sitting in circular stands cut into the bedrock. The users of this area got very thirsty. This is not a domestic assemblage. The only feature uncovered is a large circular limestone basin set into the floor in one of the interior rooms opening off the southern arm of the colonnade (a *loutron*?).

Further work is required to verify the full lay-out of this important public building, especially on the north side of the court where traditionally a deeper (more sheltered) wing is to be found (cf. Vitruv. 5.11.1f.), but the most plausible conclusion is that Area C has produced a palaestra, with a central courtyard 17.5m square surrounded by a colonnade of 28 columns. So far as I am aware this is the first Hellenistic palaestra so far discovered in Hellenistic Syria – and illustrates, once more, the early high ambitions for the site entertained by the founders of Jebel Khalid, with the provision of a Greek-style combined physical training (especially for the contact sports of boxing and wrestling) and educational facility.

Finally, on behalf of the Excavation Directors I would like to thank all who helped make the 2008 season such a success. In particular we give our appreciation to the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, to its Director General, Dr Bassam Jamous, to the Director of Excavations, Dr Michel el Maqdissi, and to our Representative, Mr Hikmat Awad (Homs). Thanks to Dr. C. E. V. Nixon for the analysis of the coins. Area C plan by Barry Rowney.



Plan of the 2008 trenches in Area C, Jebel Khalid.

THE ACROPOLIS

Dr John Tidmarsh

In 2006, three plots were laid out on the southern extremity of the Acropolis (to the south of the Governor's Palace) to investigate a series of long, narrow structures, visible on the surface, which ran north-south and seemed to abut the south wall of the Acropolis. These structures appear to have been associated with the Acropolis fortifications and thus were possibly arsenals, storerooms, or barracks.

By the end of the 2008 season the structures in all three plots had been substantially delineated although further exploration to the east of the current plots is necessary for completion.

The 2008 excavations have confirmed the existence of four main phases of occupation. Phase II was represented by two large rooms (Rooms II.1 and II.2), constructed on bedrock and with floors of tamped earth, along with an adjacent courtyard (II.3). Room II.1 did not extend to the southern wall of the Acropolis but opened into an east-west corridor (c.2m wide) to its south. Although very little pottery or other artefacts were recovered from the corridor, its tamped earth and thin plaster surfaces were clearly earlier than Rooms II.1 and II.2; thus the corridor, which may have been in use from the time of the construction of the Acropolis wall in the 3rd century BCE, should be assigned to Phase I.

The second room, Room II.2, lay to the north of Room II.1; east of Room II.2 was a courtyard (II.3) with a thick plaster floor, tannur, two small plaster-lined storage bins and, in the south-west corner, the remains of a larger stone-lined



Dr John Tidmarsh shows off the recently discovered flute.

bin. The courtyard was entered from the north.

The walls of this Phase II structure were all of fieldstone, some 20 to 50cm in length, and lacked the careful workmanship seen in the adjacent Governor's Palace. On the other hand, the rooms were of quite large dimensions

and the whole complex may well represent the residential quarters of important officials or guests.

Following the 2006 season it was suggested that the chronology of Phase II should be assigned to the late 3rd or early 2nd centuries BCE; the coins recovered from the Phase II deposits in the 2008 season support this chronology, with all dating to the reign of Antiochus III [223–187 BCE].

Overlying the Phase II levels in all three plots was a thick homogeneous layer of ash, burnt animal bone, pottery (predominantly, but not exclusively, common ware), and numerous iron nails. This layer had been encountered in 2006 and interpreted then, as now, as a fill or clearing deposit rather than an occupation or destruction level. The deposit was thickest in plot 102, the plot closest to the Governor's Palace. This fact, along with the dates of the stamped amphora handles, lamps, and coins from the deposit—as well as the presence of Eastern Sigillata A pottery—suggested that it was laid down over much of the 2nd century and into the early 1st century, probably as the result of continual dumping of rubbish from the Governor's Palace on the summit of the Acropolis further to the north. From within this rubbish deposit were also recovered moulded ("Megarian") bowls of high-quality, a fragment of millefiori glass, and part of a worked bone flute, or αὐλός; these objects give us some insight into those evenings of feasting and music which were an important part of Greek culture throughout the Seleucid realm.

Towards the end of the 2nd century BCE the Phase II walls were almost completely dismantled and replaced by four north-south fieldstone walls as well as a more substantial east-west wall (Phase III). Two of these north-south walls used as their foundations the lower courses of Phase II walls. The Phase III north-south walls appear to run right up to, and abut, the southern wall of the Acropolis, form-

Room II.2 had a thick plaster floor; tannur; two small plaster-lined storage bins and, in the south-west corner, the remains of a larger stone-lined bin.





Dr Heather Jackson stands within the Area S at Jebel Khalid in front of one of the many ovens excavated in this area.

ing at least one narrow chamber suggestive of a storeroom or arsenal (although no definite evidence of either has so far emerged).

The remains of a flimsy east-west wall and a further tan-nur (constructed from a broken pithos)—both uncovered in plot 101—represent late Hellenistic squatter activity (Phase IV) also seen in the Governor's Palace and Domestic Quarter.

AREA S **Dr Heather Jackson**

Area S, perhaps a commercial area, is located on flattish land at the top of a path up the ravine from the river Euphrates, i.e. a convenient position for the portage of goods to and from river transport. The colonnade of a large public building facing east onto an apparently empty space had been found in previous excavations (1989-1993) but no complete picture had emerged either of the boundaries of that building or the surrounding building complex. The 2006 campaign re-opened excavation in this area and made some progress towards defining the complex to the north and west. This year (2008) we have established the northern and western boundaries, which enclosed the complex apparently without access on those sides. The western boundary wall acts as a retaining wall for a road

leading to the Housing Insula. The northern boundary wall, a thick double one with a drain on the exterior, lies almost across the mouth of a stone quarry, which was probably used for the building of walls here and in the Housing Insula: all the walls are of stone and not of mud brick, at least on the ground storey.

Inside this enclosure to its south is the building with the colonnaded front, which contains some originally very large rooms (subdivided in later phases), an inner courtyard and steps to an outer court facing east. A long N/S wall appears to divide it from a different complex to the north, which contains a row of symmetrically sized and placed large rooms opening into one another. These are neither shops nor domestic rooms – could they have been the offices of river transport officials or companies? A deep, rectangular pit cut in the bedrock in one room could have had an industrial use. The only domestic features found were several ovens but these largely belong to the third and last phase when a squatter-type settlement was in residence.

The 2008 team also excavated further east towards the river. Here a N/S street was found, probably serving the quarry. This area produced, on either side of the street, a maze of primary, secondary and tertiary walls, reflecting the three main phases of occupation. One room (T36) was used as a dump in the later 2nd century BCE, the date attested by a stamped amphora handle and several lamps from that period. A significant find in the same room was an Egyptian amulet of faience. Another highlight was the discovery of a fragmented wine press and stone vat, *ex situ*, in the courtyard area to the east of the colonnaded building. This indicates wine-making but not necessarily on a commercial scale. The function of Area S is still uncertain.

Excavation underway in Area S at Jebel Khalid.

