

JEBEL KHALID, EXCAVATION CAMPAIGN 2000

REPORT on excavation of the DOMESTIC QUARTER 24/4/00 - 5/5/00

The "Domestic Quarter" is the name given to the housing insula on the south-facing slope of Jebel Khalid. This area has been excavated every season since 1988 but less than half of the whole insula has been uncovered. The insula measures 35 m x 90 m; excavation has been concentrated on the Southern end in previous years.

Aims of the 2000 season.

1. Baulk removal in selected contexts of previously-excavated rooms/courtyards, in order to clarify boundaries of rooms or different houses.
2. Excavation of any grid squares left unexcavated in the Southern part of the insula, so that we have a full plan of the architecture all across this section.
3. Excavation further North of the rock-cut basin and a very large room associated with it, which was partially excavated in 1996. We need to know the boundaries of this room and its function.
4. Analysis of the pottery and small finds from these contexts.

Work completed:

1. Removal of the baulks between 208/4, 208/5, and 208/7.
 - (a) This proved the continuance further East of the East/West wall in 208/5, a primary wall on bedrock.
 - (b) The meagre remains of a North-South wall defining the Eastern boundary of the South entrance room, were found on bedrock, obviously radically modified.

2. Removal of baulks between 207/2, 207/3 and 207/6.
 - (a) No wall found between 207/2 and 207/3, which means that this was a very large room.
 - (b) The North-South wall between 207/3 and 207/6 was cleared, and a possible blocked doorway noted. There was some painted plaster from this context.
3. Removal of baulk between 178/3 and 150/1.

No wall was found in this baulk but useful information was gained on floor levels, particularly the existence of a previously unknown primary floor near bedrock.
4. Removal of baulk between 207/3 and 178/1.

This revealed an upper floor surface, below which several almost-complete pots were found.
5. Removal of baulk between 208/5, 208/6, 208/2 and 208/3.
 - (a) The East West wall running through this baulk was clarified.
 - (b) The South corner of the large East door in the perimeter was cleared and found to be symmetrical with the North corner.
 - (c) An oven was found on the secondary floor in the corner, identical with one previously excavated in 208/2. Two ovens in the same area suggest courtyard use in 208/2.
6. Removal of rubble from 208/8 East.

Here a tertiary wall, excavated in 1988, had collapsed. It was cleared to secondary (?) floor level which was found to be a sloping floor. One of the problems of this area is the difference in level between 208/7 and 208/8, without an intervening wall. The sloping floor is interesting in this respect.

7. Completion of Trench 151/9.

This trench was partially excavated in 1996. This year it was cleared to the floor associated with the painted plaster walls. No further wall structures were found but a clay platform covered with ash is presumed to be a hearth.

Work in Progress

Eight new trenches have been opened and are now in progress.

1. Trench 149/1 incorporates a section of the west perimeter wall of the insula. It was hoped that this would reveal a doorway, as otherwise there is a stretch of wall 25 metres long without access to the road.
2. Trench 150/7 has revealed an important East/West wall with a possible blocked doorway North to be investigated next week.
3. Trench 150/9 yielded 3 different room contexts. In one context excavation went below secondary floor level (and several subsequent tough levels which may have been re-surfacing of floor) to an important primary cross-wall on bedrock.
4. Trench 150/5 was extended North to clear the face of a wide double wall, presumed to be a house boundary. This trench contained two other walls and a large stone ashlar block resting on a good floor.
5. Trench 150/3 is very interesting as it contains the boundary wall of the large room with painted plaster walls, North of the rock-cut basin. This room is now seen to extend the full width of the basin. A door with ashlar blocks as door posts and a stone threshold leads West into another room. A further door South is suspected but not yet excavated.

6 and 7. Trenches 125/4 and 125/7 have been opened to explore the area of the large room. They have not yet revealed any structures.

8. Trench 125/1, on the Eastern perimeter wall, confirms the continuance of this wall, without doorway. It contains an East/West wall. Excavation is currently at a depth of 1.4 m without finding a floor.

Pottery and finds are all consistent with domestic occupation. An interesting factor is the comparative dearth of pottery in the large room. This area contained a large number of iron objects, most of them nails.

Excavation will continue to concentrate on finding structures which contribute to our knowledge of this purely Hellenistic block of houses, and on interpreting the finds in terms of room function.

Heather M. Jackson

HEATHER JACKSON
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE